



# Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

**Janka Krajciova presents:**  
***Chanson, Op. 2, no. 2* by Smetana**

## Process and Practice

**Fully present:** tips for maintaining focus and engagement over time

- Practice the piece out of order: play A'B A or B A' A, etc.
- Play extremely slowly (to take away the muscle memory)
- Play faster than performance tempo (notice how this may affect your phrasing)
- Discover new and different ways of practicing
  - Play middle voice/layer staccato
  - Play backward from top to bottom
  - Play dynamics opposite from those indicated
  - Transpose to other minor keys

**Break it up:** useful practice segments; how to connect them and plug them back into the whole

- Practice A and A' sections back-to-back
- Translate "*con tristezza*" in ms. 25 and decide how it will change the sound for the final return of the A section
- Listen for smooth, confident transitions between each section:
  - *Diminuendo* in ms. 9 (end of A) leading into the *mezzo forte* in the B section
  - *Molto crescendo* and *ritardando* in ms. 24-25 (going back to A')

**Layers and outlines:** tips for focusing on how the parts makeup the whole

- Use "stars" to mark the beginning of each new phrase and break up your practice
- Use these same phrase markers to secure memory in small sections
- Play the piece as written with both hands, but choose to intentionally listen to only one selected voice throughout
- Pay attention to the overall phrase structure
  - The A section begins with two-bar phrasing, then switches to a faster harmonic rhythm in ms. 9-10
  - Pace the dynamics in ms. 17-25 for an effective *forte* climax in ms. 24

**Achieving flow:** ideas for finding and maintaining tempo, managing modifications artistically

- Sing the melody and conduct with two pulses per measure as the teacher plays the piece

- Find your starting tempo by audiating the A' section (ms. 25), as the theme is presented here with harmonic intervals and is more difficult and complex
- Find moments where “stretching” time helps with technical difficulties (e.g., ms. 13-14, ms. 23-25)

**Make it mine:** tips for developing and refining a personal, internal sense of the piece

- Play the piece with exaggerated dynamics
- Play this piece without the sustain pedal—how does this affect the sound?
- Consider using the *una corda* pedal for the last two measures (marked “*smorzando*”) or other moments in the piece that you want to make special
- Choose rubato moments when you want to hold back or push forward, especially in repeated material (e.g., ms. 9-12)

**Deep knowing:** tips for securing memory

- Play the right-hand melody with the left-hand bass note only—first with the music, then by memory
- Write out sections of the piece on staff paper, away from the piano
- Practice extremely slowly
- Engage in mental practice (visualizing your performance in the actual performance space)

**Final stages:** tips for ensuring performance readiness, maintaining freshness and spontaneity, and reinforcing an expressive personal connection

- Record yourself performing and listen back, both with and without the score
- Perform for friends, family, and peers; include background on the composer and the specific piece
- Experiment with changing a few things during each performance to keep the piece “fresh” (e.g., dynamics, pedaling, rubato, etc.)