



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Curtis Pavey presents: Prelude in A Minor by Maurice Ravel

Process and Practice

Fully present: tips for maintaining focus and engagement over time

- Practice *pianissimo* (B) section at a *mezzo forte* dynamic instead to avoid unnecessary physical tension
- Listen to recordings of performances by others noting different approaches to timing, phrasing, and tempo
- Review extended tertian harmonies and note structural harmonies to help the student understand the harmonic blueprint
- Mark major sections in the piece (ABA')

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

- A Section (mm. 1-9)
 - Can be further split between mm. 1-3 and 4-9
 - Listen for clean pedal changes, a singing RH melody, and quiet/smooth LH arpeggios
- B Section (mm. 10-15)
 - Listen for the counterpoint between the octaves and the thirds
- B Section Practice Steps:
 - Master hands separately first!
 - Practice LH with the top note of RH octaves
 - Combine both hands in chunks of measures locating the most challenging measures that need extra work
 - Don't feel the need to practice it at *pianissimo* (practice it at a more comfortably loud dynamic and gradually decrease the overall dynamic once technically and musically comfortable)
- A' Section (mm. 16-27)
 - Listen for clean pedal changes, a singing RH melody, and quiet/smooth LH arpeggios
 - Exaggerate the dynamic changes for clear expression
 - Can be further split between mm. 16-19 and 20-27

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

- Compare the A and A' sections, noting differences and similarities

- Notice the nocturne-like qualities of the A sections (RH melody against an arpeggiated LH)
- Prepare both hands separately in the B section, noting their lyrical and legato qualities

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

- Choose a tempo that can be maintained in both the A section and the B section
- Locate all *ralenti* indications and consider other places that may require tempo modifications

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

- Play significantly below tempo, listening carefully for smaller shapes (strong vs. weak harmonies)
- Create a story/narrative to help unify the contrasting B section with the pensive A sections
- Exaggerate dynamics and shapes to explore a wider range of tonal color
- Explore places where the tempo can be flexible (*rubato*)

Deep knowing: tips for securing memory

- Outline/map the sections, gaining comfort to start in multiple locations
- Compare the A and A1 sections, noting differences and similarities
- Practice each section in different registers on the piano, to explore how register affects memory
- Harmonic Analysis: help your student to identify (structural) harmonies
- Compare measures 16-17 and 18-19

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

- Perform in various low-stakes situations including for friends and family members
- Record a run-through and make a list of any improvements that are needed regarding memorization, musicality, or technique
- Mental Practice: try to play the piece all the way through away from the piano, noting places unable to recall