



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Inspires digital resource

Penny Lazarus Presents: Following from Faces of Jazz by Hale Smith Preparation and Presentation

Context: pieces that are helpful to have experienced or played before approaching this one

- First Experiences with Inventions, Canons, and Rounds such as:
 - Canon in A minor by Cornelius Gurlitt (1820-1901)
 - Invention in C Major by Renée Christopher (b. 1955)
 - Etude in Imitation, Opus 218 by Louis Köhler (1820-1886)
 - Autumn Echoes or Follow Me by Florence Price (1887-1953)
- Longer Inventions, Canons, and Rounds where beats are subdivided even further:
 - Inventions in the Royal Conservatory Celebration Piano Repertoire books, Levels 1 and 2, particularly Follow my Leader from Work and Play by Felix Swinstead (1880-1959).
- Follow the Leader, Opus 39, No. 7 by Dmitri Kabalevsky.
- Answering in Reaching Out, for Solo Piano, by Emma Lou Diemer (1927-2024)
- Sonatina in C Major by William Duncombe, c. 1778
- Arabesque by Friedrich Burgmüller (1806-1874)
- Gavotte by Cecelia Chaminade (1857-1944)
- Any of the 12 Country Dances for the Year 1779 by Ignatius Sancho such as All of One Mind from Piano Music of Black Composers, level 2, compiled and edited by Leah Claiborne
- A single Minuet or Polonaise from the Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach, 1725. The Polonaise in B flat Major would be particularly helpful with understanding dotted eighth-note rhythms

Get Ready: creative activities to explore before the first encounter with the score, to prepare a student for deeper engagement and more immediate success

- Use rhythm words for counting. My favorite is the word “won-der-ful” while counting triplets. If counting aloud is difficult for a student, this might be a good time to introduce an alternative method of counting such as Takadimi. Students only need to know the triplet syllables, such as ta-ki-da, and the sixteenth note syllables ta-ka-di-mi while practicing Following.
- Whatever system of counting you and your students decide to use for this piece, have fun by taking turns clapping. One person claps the big quarter note beats while the other claps the beat divisions such as triplets or sixteenth notes. Turn this into a “follow the leader” game where both of you take turns becoming the leader. The leader keeps the steady beat but gets to call out 3’s or 4’s!

- practice drawing groups of 4 sixteenth notes and comparing these to a dotted eighth note with a sixteenth note rest, and then an eighth note followed by a rest and then a sixteenth note. Tap and/or speak these rhythms slowly by changing where the rest falls.
- Using the rhythmic motif presented in the first two measures, echo play with your student, clapping between the two of you. Alternate to a different sound pattern by using Rhythm Cup Explorations by Wendy Stevens or rhythm sticks. Make sure everyone can hear the difference between the sixteenth note divisions and the triplet divisions.

Initial Focus: features to pay attention to first; priority steps in reading and absorbing the music

- Using a highlighter mark the primary motif whenever it occurs. Practice these in each hand.
- Label the sections of the piece: Exposition, Development, Bridge, and Recapitulation. Start the development section hands alone. Notice that the development section is in 3 voices. Review the stemming direction of notes so that students can distinguish between the soprano and alto voices that appear in the right hand.
- Find the descending half-note chromatic scale in each hand!
- Then take turns playing only two voices at a time, switching between voices 1-2-3.
- The Development section is divided into two halves. While the two halves are similar, they are not identical: notice that measures 17 and 18 are slightly different from measures 12 and 13. Highlight the differences. This will prevent many stumbles later on.

Coordination Essentials: physical skills and drills for common technical challenges in the piece

- The Development section measures 7 to 18, is the most challenging technically. Find an exercise that uses grace notes, such as pages 6 and 9 in Carolyn Miller's Sportacular Warmups, Book 3, and use a warmup.
- Create a pentascale exercise: While holding the thumb down, play a triplet pattern of three notes with fingers 5-4-3 with the right hand. Use this pattern moving one note at a time from C to C staying in C Major. Refer also to Sportacular Warmups Book 3 for multiple exercises using triplets.

Expressivity: ideas to connect with the expressive and musical nature of the piece

- Reflect on the title "Following". Why would the composer choose this title for this piece? Who is this piece dedicated to? Hale Smith dedicated Following to the jazz pianist and composer John Aaron Lewis (1920-2009) who formed the Modern Jazz Quartet, a quintessential innovative jazz ensemble noted for consistently high performance standards. (Thank you to Regina Harris Baiocchi for generously sharing her research from her upcoming memoir about Hale Smith with me.) Both John Lewis and Hale Smith were noted for merging classical forms such as baroque counterpoint with jazz, deliberately blurring the boundaries between the two, where serious music and popular music become indistinguishable. For both John Aaron Lewis and Hale Smith, "composing is an artful craft no matter what one calls it." (bruceduffie.com interview with Hale Smith.)
- Talk about the Baroque two-part invention form where a short composition is made up of two independent melodic lines or voices, first presented in one hand and then the other, with one hand always "following" the other throughout the whole piece. Ask the question: How can a two-part invention form stand in as a metaphor for the title of the piece?

Look Forward: approaches to set up for success with refinements that will need attention a few weeks down the road

- The fingering of the first motif is deceptively tricky. Using the suggested fingering, repeat the primary motif out of context until secure. Keep the same fingering even when the motif transposes up a step from D to E as well as the final four measures when the motif returns to the tonal home of D natural minor.