

Inspiring Artistry

Rebecca Pennington presents:

Ballade, op. 100, no. 15 by Friedrich Burgmüller

Preparation and Presentation

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

- Burgmüller - Arabesque
- Rossi - Atacama Desert
- Atwood - Sonatina
- Kabalevsky - Clowns

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

- What is a Ballade? An Epic Poem. What are some famous epic poems? (Greek mythology, Longfellow, Poe)
- Listen to the piece. Make your own story to go with the music. What is happening? Note the contrast in the B section and the return of the A section.
- Opening LH motive: Practice four different ways each day, e.g. slow and legato, staccato, different tempos, different rhythms, groupings of notes, double notes. When secure, play with both hands and do all of the practice variations with HT.
- Name the LH chords in the B section. How many different ones in this section?
- Broken RH octaves: descending in different keys. Listen for a staccato, robust sound.

Features to pay attention to first; priority steps in reading and absorbing the music:

- Articulation: note staccatos and accents
- Learning sequence: first motive, coda, approach to the reprise (mm. 47-56), B section, whole piece!
- B section: learn the LH chords first, then add the RH

Physical skills and drills for common technical challenges in the piece:

- Opening LH motive and coda: legato, staccato, varied rhythms, varied groupings of notes, double notes.
- Dynamic control of RH chords: practice playing RH chords at varying volumes.

Ideas to connect and re-connect with the expressive and musical nature of the piece:

- In the opening motive, the LH A (m. 7) is a "landing note." We go to this note because it is the highest note, and also outside of the key signature.
- In the B section there are groups of 4-measure phrases. Go to the third measure in each of these groups.
- Connect the musical elements to the story you are telling!

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

- Develop and secure the correct gestures for the LH articulation in the opening motive.
- Isolate the LH sixteenth notes in mm. 3-4, 11-12, 87-90. Vary the practice.
- Practice the leaps at the end of the A section.