



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Clavier Companion subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Andrea McAlister presents: Clowns, op. 39, no. 20 by Dmitri Kabalevsky

Preparation and Presentation

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

- Beethoven - Ecosaise in G Major, WoO 23
- Niamath - Playful Puppy
- Niamath - Penguins

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

- Learn the LH ostinato figure by rote. Play this pattern up the C major scale.
- Improvise a 5-finger melody against the left hand ostinato.
- Play/imitate 5-finger patterns in a variety of touches and articulations. Familiarize the ear and hand by using the exact articulations from the piece.

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

- Maintain the bounciness of the LH rote exercises.
- Encourage close attention to the movements of wrist while executing precise RH articulations.
- Discuss the character of the sections from the very beginning; these characters are great motivation for practice!

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

- Drill LH passages independently.
- RH articulations and wrist motions can be drilled by focusing only on the first three notes, alternating from major to minor.
- Practice RH staccato leaps separately from the slurred passages for accuracy.

Keep it musical: ways to connect and re-connect with the expressive nature of the piece

- Write Emoji faces into the music to remind them of the characters chosen for each section.
- Compare LH ostinato figure to a clown rhythmically juggling balls.

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

- Encourage slow practice with attention to LH changes in mm. 13-17.
- The end can be tricky. Work backward for accuracy, starting with m. 25 and practicing slowly until mm. 22-25 are confident and comfortable.