



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

[Sean Schulze presents:](#)

[Fantasia in D Minor, K. 397 by W.A. Mozart](#)

Preparation and Presentation

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

- Clementi: Sonatina Op. 36, No. 6
- Burgmuller: The Knight Errant Op.100, No. 25
- Tchaikovsky: Album for the Young (The New Doll, Reverie)
- Kuhlau Sonatina Op.20, No. 1
- JS Bach: Short Prelude BWV 925

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

- This work has such a strong operatic flavor - listening to excerpts from a Mozart opera is essential. Don Giovanni is especially helpful given the key and mood similarity.
- Hearing a Mozart piano concerto and particularly a cadenza within one of these works is helpful in order to connect with the improvisatory elements within this work.
- Play the work for the student and ask them to create a narrative or a story. This Fantasia lends itself especially well to this exercise!
- Following on from this I ask students to assign character types and specific moods to the various sections of this work - perhaps even connecting it to the characters in Don Giovanni.
- Listening to various great artists perform the work is always inspiring and illuminating and helps a student understand the interpretive leeway that is possible.

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

- Having a good urtext edition is important before commencing the exploration of this work.
- I like to ask my students to go through the score and identify the different articulation types that are present in the score (legato, staccato, portato, unmarked notes).
- Similarly, I ask my students to identify the different types of textures that are present in the score and to determine how many voices/instruments would be necessary to play various passages.
- Making sure that the clefs are accurately identified can save a lot of time in this work where it is so easy for students to learn entire passages in the wrong clef!

- Developing a good fingering plan and hand distribution arrangement is very helpful before starting to practice the work.

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

- Playing scales and arpeggios in the key of the work along with closely related keys is essential for most students.
- Playing those scales with different articulations is very helpful preparation for this work: playing scales with a two-note slur pattern or with staccato or portato touch for example.
- Playing a standard chord progression with beautiful voicing is helpful given some of the textures in this work
- Practicing an alberti bass figure in D major and related keys is useful to prepare for m.70-83, one of the trickier passages in this work.

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

- I enjoy asking my students to assign different orchestral or vocal sounds (song or speech) to the different sections in this work.
- It is fun to ask students to write their own cadenza for the passage at m.86.
- Following on from earlier, listening to other works (especially non-piano works) by the Mozart is very helpful in expanding the imagination and developing an appropriate stylistic vocabulary from which to draw.
- Playing just the harmonic background as blocked chords is a useful tool in determining the general direction and shaping requirements of the work (M.1-11 is a good example).

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

- Writing in the counts with clear note alignment is a helpful task for most students. The most prominent example is at m.52-53 which is notoriously tricky!
- I ask my students to identify carefully all passages where one hand takes care of two independent voices ensuring they understand exactly what needs to be held and what can be released (m.57 is a great example).
- It is helpful to ask students to create a skyline of the work identifying the dynamic high and low points.