



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Clavier Companion subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Todd Van Kekerix presents:

"L'Orage," Op. 109, no. 13 by Johann Friedrich Burgmuller

Process and Practice

Fully Present: tips for maintaining focus and engagement over time

- Keep exploring the ominous nature of the piece. Highlight the hymn-like tune that emerges in m. 22. What does this mean in context of what happened previously?
- Transfer finger control (making each note speak) when first reading through the piece.
- Encourage the student to increase the tempo systematically so that the piece remains intact.

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

- Isolate the rolled chord in target practice m. 15, then add m. 14.
- Practice playing RH chords in mm. 16-17. First play RH alone while naming the chords out loud. Next, add the first note of each 16th note group in the LH. Finally, add the remaining LH notes.
- Practice the measures that have decrescendos to hear and feel the decay. For example, start on beat 3 in m. 2, rather than beat 1. When a student is confident with the decrescendo, then start on beat 1 and add the crescendo. This can be done in other parts of the piece as well. Experience this in different octaves on the keyboard so students listen carefully and respond with the appropriate touch accordingly.

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

- In the B section, the LH and RH play off of each other in a more spirited manner. Be sure to identify the importance of matching the tone of the notes marked marcato and with accents in their respective parts to highlight the phrase structure.
- Identify the different tonal areas throughout.

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

- Overlapping sectional practice with metronome increasing from half tempo to full tempo.
- Pay special attention to the transition into D major at m. 22, and mm. 25-31.
- Take special care to highlight that the sforzando in m. 28 is in the context of 'p.' Too often the chords in the RH and the staccato LH notes are played carelessly. The LH staccatos should remain at a whisper leaving.

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

- Revisit the plot of the piece. Has anything been altered as the student has put the piece in their fingers?
- Practice the pacing of the transitions in m. 9, 17, 21, 25.

Deep knowing: tips for securing memory

- Create an abstract that incorporates chord and melodic analysis.
- If the student has access to a digital keyboard, practice playing the piece without sound.
- In the lesson, ask the student to play through the piece in the following manner. Student plays several measures, then the teacher prompts them to stop playing the notes, but to keep the music going in their head. Student then starts playing the notes when prompted by the teacher. This activity could also be completed at home with a parent.
- Perform the piece on different pianos to practice adjusting to the variety of touches needed to “sell” the piece.

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

- Practice playing the piece at half tempo while counting 16th notes out loud, feeling all the micro and macro phrase shapes.
- Record the piece in various settings, school, church, etc. to mimic playing on different pianos.
- Challenge—keep one hand going while the other hand drops out upon cues from the teacher.