

B:2 The Easy Winners

This is a good piece to choose if you are confident with playing higher notes up to A and B; if you are not comfortable with this, maybe consider choosing another piece.

Before starting work on this piece, try to listen online to a recording of the original piano piece played by the composer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdCBT_VHnUk and the flute version of this piece <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJWW4GpX4pQ> which is also available as part of your exam downloads; use the code in the back of your book to access these.

Start by getting familiar with the notes, working on four bar phrases initially. Be careful of the rhythm in bars 6 and 7, (the 2nd and 3rd bars that you play); this is called a syncopated rhythm, which means that some of the notes are off the beat, (fall between two beats). This is a distinctive feature of this style of music, called Ragtime. Read the explanation at the bottom of the sheet music for more details. Try to make up a phrase of words that fits with the 'short long, short short short long' rhythm. Note how notes fall on beats 1, 3 and 4 but not beat 2.

Pay attention to the articulation with slurs, tongued notes and staccato (short notes). You may find it tricky to slur from E to D as in bar 6, (2nd bar you play). Make this into a little exercise, making up your own rhythms to move from E to D and back. Try tonguing at first and then add the slurs. It will get easier the more you practise. Try the same thing with the D to C# slur in bar 11, and the DEDC slurred pattern in bar 18.

The other tricky part may be playing the high notes in bars 15 and 16, as these are higher than you have gone with your scales so far. Again, you can make this into a fun little exercise by working up to the higher A and B in steps from a lower note like D or E. Make sure you take a deep breath and support the air from the bottom of your lungs as you play. Look in a mirror and play a few octave hops on G (from low G to the higher G); watch how your chin and mouth move forward and upwards as you play the higher octave. Aim the air higher up the wall in front of you. Practising octave hops is a really good way of getting confident with those higher notes. Follow the dynamics, and be careful to work on the crescendo in bars 15 – 16.

Once you are confident with the notes, rhythms, articulation and dynamics, aim for a cool, controlled style. You could try playing along with a metronome or metronome app. Then try playing along with the full version and finally the piano backing; practise.