

C:2 Boston Blues

This is a good piece to choose if you are confident with playing in a jazzy style with accented offbeat notes; 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 piece <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPwykSaDe8M> 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 in three sections: bars 1 – 8, bars 9 – 15, and bars 16 – 24, bearing in mind that phrases often start before the start of the bar. Be aware of when you need to play an A and where it's an Ab; the mix of these notes is a feature of this music. Note where there is use of repetition, for example in bars 1- 5, and in bars 11, 17, 19 and 21.

Then focus on the articulation, with its mix of tonguing, staccato, legato and accented notes. See how the first half is mainly tongued while the second half features slurred phrases; practice in these two sections, bars 1 – 10 and bars 11 to the end. For the first section, make sure you are playing the staccato notes short, then add in the two different types of accents. The accent in bar 6 under the A is an extra push on the note for emphasis, and the one at the end of the phrase in bar 8 under the A is a short, accented note. These are both features of this jazzy style of playing, and it may take quite a bit of practise before you get the hang of it.

Practise the piece slowly, making sure you count the six quaver beats carefully to make sure you are getting the offbeat accents in the right place. The strong beats are beats 1 and 4, so accents on any other beats are called 'offbeat' accents, for example the accent on beat 3 in bar 6 and the one on beat 2 are both offbeat. Be careful with the ties from the third to the fourth quaver in bar 6, bar 14 and bar 22, being aware that you are tying from a weak beat to a strong one; this has the feel of anticipating the beat, and this is another feature of this style of playing. When you are confident with the timing of your rhythms, increase the speed so you are counting in two dotted crotchet beats per bar instead of the six quavers.

Next focus on dynamics. Notice how the piece is generally quite strong and loud, starting mf (medium strong), with use of crescendo and diminuendo throughout. The little crescendo markings in bar 3 and bar 5 are for emphasis; imagine you were saying the same word three times over, making the point a bit more strongly each

time. The crescendo in bar 7 – 8 is to emphasize the end of the phrase in a confident, self-assured forte. Stay forte from there until you reach the gradual diminuendo in bars 13 – 15. In bar 16 the crescendo follows the line of the melody (tune); look how the dynamic (volume) goes higher as the notes go higher! Finally, add the diminuendo on your final note, controlling the sound carefully from the bottom of your lungs as the note gets quieter.

This piece was written for the saxophone, to show off its jazzier, more 'in your face' side. Don't be afraid to show off, as if you were boasting about something! The direction at the start to play 'With a swagger!' is challenging you to do this, so imagine you were a cowboy / cowgirl or a pirate, and that should help to get you in the right mindset!

You could try playing along with a metronome or metronome app, building the speed to about dotted crotchet = 69, (two beats per bar). Then try playing along with the example track; practise both with the track and on your own. When playing on your own, try tapping your toe inside your shoe to keep a steady beat.