

## C:2 Romany Song

This is a good piece to choose if you are confident with playing long flowing phrases with good breath control and quite wide slurred intervals; if you are not comfortable with these things, maybe consider choosing another piece.

Before starting work on this piece, try to listen online to a recording of it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vDYBqzZWbo> or listen to the example available as part of your exam downloads; use the code in the back of your book to access these.

The piece is in G minor, so it might help to play a G minor harmonic scale on page 12 of your exam pack or free to download from the Masquerade Music website at <https://masquerade-music.co.uk/freemusic.html> before starting to learn the piece.

Start by getting familiar with the notes in the first eight bars, counting **1,2,3, 1,2,3** in your head before you start; watch out for the Bb and Eb from the key signature and the mix of F# and F natural throughout the piece. Once you are confident with the notes, pay attention to the articulation. The phrases are mainly slurred, so aim for a smooth, flowing feel with just a light tongue at the start of each bar. Watch out for places where there are additional tongued notes, such as in bars 4 and 6. After learning the first section, go straight to the last section, bars 25 – 32, which you will see is almost exactly the same in terms of notes and rhythms, except for the final two bars of the piece.

Then look at the second section, which starts the same as the first section but doesn't stay the same, so make sure you spot the differences in notes in bars 11 – 12, and rhythm in bar 13 before the melody becomes completely different to the first section. Finally look at the third section from bar 17 to bar 24, which has a different, contrasting tune. Again, add the articulation once you have nailed the notes. This third section tune is all about the slurred downward leaps and tongued upward leaps, so practise bars 17 – 18 carefully until you are confident with that pattern of articulation.

When you are confident with all of that, pay attention to the dynamics, which cover a fairly wide range with markings from p to f. The piece falls into four bar phrases and eight bar sections, so make sure that you can hear the difference between the dynamics in the different sections or phrases. The first section is a confident mf while the similar second section drops down to p for six bars before a crescendo in bar 15 takes you back to mf in bar 16. The third section is piano again, until a fast crescendo in bar 24 takes you up to forte at the start of the fourth section. The

fourth section splits into two four bar phrases for dynamics, as a fast diminuendo in bar 28 takes you down to piano for the final four bar phrase, ending the piece in a soft, contemplative (thoughtful) mood.

Then work on the phrasing and breathing. You will see that there are breath marks shown as a tick every four bars, which fall at the end of each phrase. You may find that it takes quite a bit of practice to be able to play that much in one breath, so if you need to, you could start by sneaking additional breaths every two bars. Practise some long tones every time you practise, and you will find that your breath control and lung capacity develop to enable you to play these long phrases more easily.

Always breathe deeply, from the bottom of your lungs and control the air carefully as you play, supporting and pushing the air from the bottom of your lungs. Once you can manage a four bar phrase in one breath, start to miss out the additional breaths that you may have added. Bear in mind that exam conditions may affect breathing and breath control, so practise both long notes and this piece until you are confident about the four bar phrases. If you do need to sneak additional breaths, make sure they are as inconspicuous as possible and don't interrupt the flow of the melody!

Romany Song is by the contemporary British composer Philip Sparke, who is famous for his wind and brass band works as well as educational pieces such as this. It is part of a collection of 40 Skilful Studies for Flute, aimed at student flautists. The piece was inspired by the Romany people of Europe but is an original piece rather than being based on traditional gypsy music. The piece has a relaxed, laid back feel and a song-like quality, so think of a simple song like a lullaby, or picture a countryside scene, to get in calm, relaxed mood before performing.

Aim for a speed of about crotchet = 112, (three beats per bar), so practise with a metronome until you are confident and fluent at around that speed. Once you have got the piece to the right speed, try playing along with the example version in your exam downloads; practise alternately with the example version and on your own until you are confident playing it solo.