

**Preparation & Teaching Ideas for Nocturne by Nancy Faber**  
**By DeeAnn Brown, NCTM – November, 2006**

In the last newsletter, we focused on elementary and intermediate level repertoire that assists in developing **lyric qualities** in student performance. The pieces referenced in the previous article were choices that promote playing with expression, sensitivity and control. One of my favorite pieces from the intermediate category is the Nocturne by Nancy Faber, FJH Music Company Inc. I hope the following ideas for teaching this piece will result in a successful and satisfying experience.

**Preparation:**

One of the challenges the student will encounter is the rhythmic change from pairs of **eighth notes to triplets**. Prior to beginning work on this sheet, I isolate this rhythmic issue by using the metronome at 60 for the quarter and asking the student to first clap quarter notes, then eighth notes, and finally, triplets. Continue this drill for several lessons, mixing up the order of note values. (This type of drill is useful at any time in a student's development. A first year student could clap quarters, half notes and eighth notes. When appropriate, add sixteenth notes into the exercise).

A satisfying performance of this beautiful Nocturne would not be possible without the use of **legato pedal**. Since most measures require an "up" pedal on beat one, it's easy to create an exercise for learning or reviewing legato pedal. For instance, play primary triads on beats 2 and 3, with the single root note on beat one. (This is a perfect time to work on achieving a softer sound on beats 2 and 3 and to reinforce root position triads for Music Progressions, level 4).

The right hand **arpeggio** in measure 5 needs a legato movement. Point out the two root position C Major triads that need to be joined together. Have the student practice just the first four notes, moving the arm and body together for a smooth and easy motion. When they are comfortable with this, add the remaining two notes.

Measure 14 includes a **chromatic** passage. Review or present chromatic fingering drills beginning on different notes (especially black keys).

**First lesson assignment:**

With the preparation work in place, I assign only the first 16 measures. Begin by asking the student to give you basic information concerning this first section. (time signature, terminology, touch). Take turns identifying everything you can see in the 16 measures – pedal, fingering, slurs, dynamic indications, triplets, tempo marks, tenuto marking.

Almost without exception, I start with the left hand. Note recognition is often weaker and I want to encourage hands alone practice. At the lesson, the student will play the left hand alone for 8 measures. We will say aloud the first note in each measure to reinforce note reading plus prepare for playing by memory. After a few repetitions, if needed, I remind the student to play more softly on beats two and three. Go on to measures 9–16 with the left hand practice. Find the similarities and differences.

Now the student is ready to play the beautiful right hand melody. Fingering will need attention in measures 3, 4, 5, 11, and 14. Circle the important changes to insure correct practice.

During the weeks needed to become comfortable playing hands together with pedal for 16 measures, look ahead and **prepare** for the **new rhythm** in the B section. Clap and write sixteenth notes in complete groups of 4 and as played in measures 19, 23, 24. This is great reinforcement for Music Progressions requirements – theory and listening.

**B section:**

When you're ready to assign measures 17-29, remember to do the **investigative work** with the student to discover different dynamics, touch, and terminology.

Continue the pattern of playing left hand alone first. You may want to write in some of the notes to make practice easier, especially the ones with several ledger lines. Remember the plan for the student to name the 1<sup>st</sup> beat notes. He/she will be quite surprised to discover the pattern!

At the lesson, it is sometimes useful to have the student play the right hand while you play the left and vice versa. In doing this, the student is experiencing a steady beat, (perhaps a wiser tempo choice) inflections appropriate to the style, natural body movements and a beautiful tone. It's a subtle way to show expressive playing without words.

**A section, m. 29-45**

Your student will be so pleased to discover that these 16 measures are identical to the first A section with the exception of **two** things! Can you find them? Talk about why the composer would make this change.

**Coda, m. 45-54**

Again, practice the left hand alone and name the 1<sup>st</sup> beat notes. Ms. Faber is opening the door for discussing a pedal point concept or at least a tonic/dominant relationship.

The gentle grace notes for right hand lead to the falling eighth note figure. I like to show the interval pattern for both measures and check the fingering closely. The nocturnal mood of the piece really comes through in the Coda section. It's as if you are falling asleep as the music reaches the ending.

This lovely Nocturne has many attributes – beautiful lyricism, a strong, passionate middle section, five octave range of notes, length of four pages, and the wonderful use of colorful musical terminology. You and your students will enjoy it greatly! Careful **planning** and **preparation** for potential difficulties is the key for student **success** and **motivation**.