

# How To

## Blend a Musical Smoothie

BY MARIENNE USZLER

### Left-Hand “Smoothie”

The key to playing this piece beautifully is to make the left hand effortless and quietly colorful. Think velvet. Think glide. Think smo-o-o-o-th.

Feel the left-hand figure in Mm. 1-4

- ◆ Open your hand for the octave D
- ◆ Glide over the thumb (be sure to keep it on the key) to the E and F#.
- ◆ As you move to the E and F#, let the hand glide up, floating off gently.
- ◆ Let the gentle “float off” begin the smooth move to the next low D.
- ◆ Play the left-hand figure, watching for a smooth crossover and float off. Do it over and over.
- ◆ Now play the left-hand figure over and over with your eyes closed. (You’ll probably be able to find the low D without having to look for it.)

Create a subtle, but rich, sound.

- ◆ Leave the pedal down throughout.
- ◆ Play the low D with the most tone—rich, but gentle.
- ◆ Whisper all the notes between the low D and the F#.
- ◆ Play the F# float-off with *almost* as much tone as the low D.

- ◆ The low D and the F# form the harmony. The other notes create a “blur.” Play this over and over, eyes closed, *listening* for the “color.”

Once you can play this left-hand “smoothie”, apply the same movements and touches to the left-hand figure in measures 5-7.

Now the left hand is prepared. You won’t have to look at it!

### The Right Hand Sings

The right hand, too, must be smooth, but since it is the *cantabile* “singer” it needs its own kind of special attention.

In the first and last sections, the long four-measure phrases must arch and bend with suppleness. No bumps. No stick-out notes.

- ◆ Play on the pads of the fingers, clinging a little on each of the long notes.

Review:  $\frac{6}{8} = \text{♪}$  gets 1 beat  
6 beats in a measure

## The Gondola

**Success Hint:** Learn this piece hands separately before playing hands together.



Andante (♩ = 120)

*cantabile\** (singing)

Count: 1 and 2 3 4 5 6

*p*

*mp*

*lift*

*Ped. simile* (pedal similarly)

*mp*

(1 and 2 3 4 and 5 and 6 and)

\*The Italian word *cantabile* is pronounced, “con-TAH-bee-lay.”

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- ◆ The notes on beats 3 and 6 should be played with the least tone, like gentle upbeats to the notes that follow.

- ◆ The only exception occurs in measure 7, where all the notes in the second half of the measure must sing out to match the high E and lead gracefully to the D that opens measure 8.

In the middle section, even though the phrases *look* shorter, they must still give the impression of four-measure arches—we need to hear the progression from C through the Bbs to A.

- ◆ The Cs in measures 12 and 16 are dramatic because they are surprising. Give them the deepest, richest tone.

- ◆ The first notes in measure 16 are one of the few places where the right hand plays double notes. The opening of measure 16 is the most expressive moment in the song.

- ◆ The sixteenth-note figures are ripples that propel the song forward, to the downbeat notes that follow.

**DISCOVERY** In  $\frac{6}{8}$  time, how many beats does each rhythm below receive?

$\text{♩} \text{♩} = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}$  beats     $\text{♩} \text{♩} = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}$  beats     $\text{♩} \text{♩} = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}$  beats

- ◆ The only exceptions to this forward motion are the sixteenth-note figures that must glide quietly into the A at measures 15 and 19.
- ◆ The sixteenth-note figures in measures 16 and 17 create bigger ripples since they flip up a third before coasting forward to the Bbs.

At the end, the singer disappears, but with a magical twist.

- ◆ The G is never resolved.
- ◆ The tied thirds in the last measures are the highest notes in the song.
- ◆ The left-hand long notes fade from the G to the D as they seem to evaporate. The Gondola floats away on the horizon ...

#### The Singer Is Accompanied

When the piece is played hands together, the left hand is the quiet “smoothie.” It’s the “pole” that gently pushes the gondola forward.

When you know the piece well, think of the music as forming two big beats in each measure. The gondola sways and moves forward as the pole is changed from side to side.

#### Accompany

Experience what it’s like to accompany a “singer”.

The student plays the left-hand accompaniment, as written.

- ◆ The teacher (or another student) plays the right-hand melody, perhaps in octaves.
- ◆ The right-hand melody might be played by a violinist or a flutist.

The student will discover how to listen to what a “singer” might do. The soloist might push ahead a little, hold back, or need time to breathe. The accompanist must support and be flexible.

#### Plan Your Own Gondola Ride

- ◆ Transpose the left-hand pattern to another key, perhaps

OR

You’ll discover that being able to “float off” a black key at the end of the pattern is more comfortable than finishing the pattern on a white key. But don’t let that keep you from exploring any key you wish. Ending the pattern on a white key will feel something like the pattern in measures 5-7. Just keep remembering to move your hand toward the fall-board as you “float off”.

- ◆ When you improvise a new melody, you’ll need to think in the new key.

Begin the melody as in the original Gondola, then play down the scale to test what the new notes will be. III

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