Fantasia in D Minor, K. 397
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

About the Fantasia in D minor
Mozart's D minor Fantasy is an incredibly rewarding piece to play. In terms of technique, it is a work that can be mastered by intermediate or moderately advanced pianists - the improvisational character of the music makes it shift a lot from page to page, but within the different sections, there are many recurring, relatively easy patterns. However, in terms of musical interpretation, it is a considerable challenge even to the most advanced and experienced musician.

The Fantasy was only published after Mozart's death, and the manuscript is lost. In the first edition, the piece ended at the fermata in bar 97. Whether Mozart had intended to continue the Fantasy or attach it to a Sonata or Fugue remains unclear. In the Breitkopf & Härtel edition that appeared a few years later, ten concluding bars in D major, probably composed by the editor, appeared. This ending has been republished in practically every edition ever since, and are included in the vast majority of recordings of the piece. Mitsuko Uchida was probably the first recording artist to provide an alternative ending, returning to D minor and the arpeggiated chords of the beginning. The Piano Street Edition offers a shorter version based on the same idea.

Preparatory Questions and Exercises
1. How many marked tempo changes can you find in the score? _________
2. Where is the first marked dynamic change in the score? __________
3. The Fantasia's unique mood is created partly by Mozart's use of chromaticism - half tone steps are among the most expressive intervals. On the first page, can you name a few bars which feature the chromatic scale? _____________________________________
4. The fantasy-character is underlined by the many silences and fermatas. But not all fermatas are equally dramatic. For example, compare the fermatas of bars 53 and 54. Which of these do you consider the most important and why? __________________________________________________________________________________________________________
5. Listen to recordings of the Fantasia while studying the score. Try to think of words which describe the character of each part of the Fantasia. Write them into your score where you think there is a change of mood. Suggested bars: 1, 12, 16, 20, 23 and so on.

About the pedal
Many performers make quite generous use of the sustaining pedal in the slow section, and the Piano Street Edition has pedal markings throughout the score. The use of pedal creates richer and more colorful sounds, but it is perfectly possible to play the Fantasia with much less or even entirely without pedal. Do all preparatory exercises without pedaling, and continue practicing like that now and then even when you have learnt the piece. This is applicable to all Classical repertoire, where careful articulation is of the essence.

In some instances, you might find that the suggested pedalling risks blurring or even cancelling out some of the elements of the score. For example: why hold the D octave in the first bar with the fingers, if all the notes are pedalled anyway? In these instances, experiment with half pedaling. Not pressing the pedal down all the way will keep the sound more clear and transparent in the treble, where most of the important articulation takes place.

1. Introduction, bars 1-6: Practice one chord at a time without pedal, repeating each arpeggio at least four times. Play calmly and flowingly. Make sure you hold the D:s in the left hand with your fifth finger and thumb.

2. Introduction, bars 9-11: Play the first bar with the sustaining pedal fully down, and make a crescendo to the top. Stay there and listen to the rich A major chord. Keep holding the pedal down when you play the next bar, making a diminuendo. Making half pedal changes on the E, C sharp and A in the last half of the second bar. Raise the pedal enough to avoid a complete blur, but try to keep something of the chordal sound.
3. Adagio, bars 12-15 etc: Start by practicing the left hand on its own, very slowly. Use a light arm for the repeated thirds, making sure they are exactly simultaneous and very soft.

Then practice the right hand. There are no articulation marks in the score, which means that Mozart probably intended a detached style. But practicing them legato at first could help you find the right singing sound and to give the phrase a forward direction. Then change into playing portato, lifting a tiny bit between notes but giving each note an expressive legato quality.

Then play the first phrase hands together. Balance the different layers - bass, melody and chords - by giving them different touches and dynamics. Emphasize the expressive D sharp in the second bar.

4. Forte chords, bars 20-22
Start practicing without the notes in parenthesis. Relax your hands and lift your arm between each chord. When you add the eighth-notes, play them in this relaxed state.

Make the second last chord the heaviest. Play the 32nds calmly and with a diminuendo.

5. "Sighs", bars 23-27
First practice the two-note slurs on their own, putting the stress on the first note of the slur. Let the wrist drop on the A and then float up when you play the G sharp.

Practice the scale in thirds (bars 26-27) separately. Make a crescendo to forte and then a sudden drop to piano on the last sixteenth. Make the eight-notes in the bass detached but longer than the sixteenths in the treble (portato).
Bars 42 and 43 will need extra practice. Practice one hand at a time and observe the fingerings. With our suggested left hand fingering you will frequently use the second and fourth finger to play parallel thirds. Focusing on this feature will help you memorize the whole passage.

6. Presto runs and arpeggios, bars 34, 44 & 53: Practice the runs in bars 34 and 44 slowly and evenly, with a light arm. Begin with the portions selected below, which are then repeated in lower registers when you play the complete section. The added rhythmizations are only to make the shape of the run clearer. They do not imply any accents, and do not have to be followed slavishly.

In the diminished chord arpeggios, the left hand travels over the right and the right hand goes under the left. When a hand has finished its four notes, move it immediately to the next position.

Practice the chromatic scale in bar 44 slowly. When you begin, lean to the left and make sure there is space between your right arm and and your body. Play with a light arm and keep the elbow out as you move to an upright position.

8. Allegretto, bars 55-69: In Mozart's time, it was unusual to write legato slurs across barlines. This doesn't necessarily mean that you have to make a noticeable lift at the end of every bar. Below we provide a version with longer legato slurs, to show how a majority of pianists actually play this passage. But Mozart's slurs also tell us something about which notes should be emphasized, which is why it still makes sense practicing bar by bar observing Mozart's articulation markings. Begin by practicing the right hand of bars 56 and 58 using the same "sighing" or "drop-and-float" technique as in exercise 5.
In the examples below, pay special attention to the left hand and practice it separately. Note the fingerings carefully and make sure you hold quarter notes and half notes for their full duration (arrows).

9. Left hand accompaniment, bars 70-83: Practice the left hand on its own. Begin slowly, letting the hand rotate as when you turn a door handle. When you increase the speed, make the rotating movement smaller. Also try to add some finger pedal to this accompaniment figure, by holding on to the G:s and F sharps, prolonging them to quarter notes where possible.

10. Cadenza, bar 86: Divide the cadenza into three parts. First, practice the upward scale in D major. The next part ends with the trill on E, which you can rhythmize and practice slowly. The final part is the rallentando at the end. Practice each part slowly at least four times before adding them together and increasing the speed.

Mastering the piece

- Clear articulation (execution of slurs - 'sighs')
- Balance and voicing
- Contrast of moods and dynamics
- Even and controlled scales in presto passages
- Flowing left hand alberti accompaniment
Note the alla breve time signature - if you cannot feel two beats to each bar you are playing too slowly! In the Introduction, feel free to use some rubato to establish the Fantasy character.

Experiment with half pedaling throughout the piece. Not pressing the pedal down all the way keeps the sound more clear and transparent and will allow you to retain more of the articulation.

Hold the left hand D's with the fingers

Half pedal changes.

Slower than the Andante section, but still in Alla breve (two slow beats to each bar). Play this section in strict time.

Emphasize the expressive D sharp.

Listen to how this phrase answers the previous one.

Hold the quarter note over the pedal change.

Bring out the bass line.

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Firm and confident touch, but don’t overdo the f. Focus on heavy left hand octaves.

Use a lighter touch here. You may also want to play slightly faster, to emphasize the restless character of the music.

The p applies only to the last 16th.

Stop abruptly, without preparation.

Don’t start the crescendo until bar 33 – it should be short but intense.

Note the fermata is on the quarter rest – don’t start the Presto too early.

The Presto bars must of course be played quite fast, but if they sound hurried the piece loses some of its seriousness and weight. Vary the speed and dynamics within the run, for example: start slower and make a crescendo/accelerando.
Remember that Allegretto only means moderately fast. Focus on lightness and grace and keep the tempo comfortable.

See worksheet, exercise 8, for tips on articulation. These are Mozart's original slurs, but most pianists continue the legato across barlines.

**Allegretto**

If the tempo is right, this scale can be played non legato.

Note the slur beginning on D, which gives a slight accent to the upbeat.

Stay in a soft dynamic, saving the crescendo until bar 81.

Add some finger pedal by prolonging the G:s and F-sharps
Mozart obviously wants a marked slowing down before returning to the D major theme — he both writes longer notes and marks them rallentando.
Traditional ending:
Probably composed by August Eberhard Müller, first printed by Breitkopf & Härtel 1804.

Alternative ending:
In recent years, a number of pianists and scholars have suggested ending the Fantasy by returning to D minor and the arpeggiated chords of the beginning. Our version shows how to do this in a very simple fashion. Feel free to add more notes or compose your own version!
FANTASIA
K. 397

Andante

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Piano Street Edition

Adagio

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Ending added in Breitkopf & Härtel's 1804 edition, probably composed by August Eberhard Müller.
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