Inside Schumann's *The Happy Farmer*

Robert Schumann, *Fröhlicher Landmann, von der Arbeit zurückkehrend*, Op. 68 No. 10, from the *Album for the Young* (1848) — a tune in the left hand

The full title means **"The happy farmer, coming home from work."** It sits two pieces after *The Wild Rider* (Handout 240) in the same *Album for the Young*, and Schumann marked it *Frisch und munter*: fresh and lively. Picture the farmer walking home in the evening, whistling. The surprise is **where the tune is**: not in the right hand, as in most of your pieces, but down in the **left hand**, under a row of light chords: a tune with its accompaniment on top (Handout 356). Another tune in the left hand: Burgmüller's *Ballade*, Handout 382.

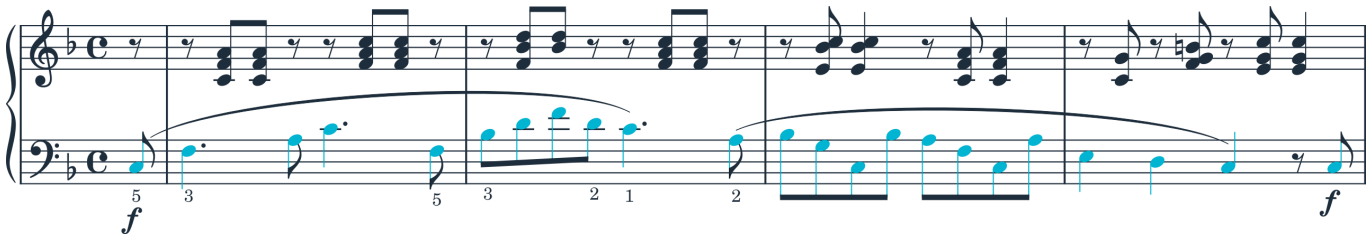
THE FORM · A TUNE, A NEW IDEA, THE TUNE AGAIN

A · played twice	B	A′	B	A′
tune in the left hand · ends on C	new idea	tune on top · ends on F	again	again, note for note
1 – 8	9 – 10	11 – 14	15 – 16	17 – 20

from bar 9 on, the tune moves up into the right hand and the left hand plays it along underneath

Bars 1–4 are one phrase, and bars 5–8 play it again. The second half starts with two bars of something new (**B**), then the tune comes back (**A′**) and this time ends at home, on F. Bars 15–20 repeat 9–14 exactly. Two parts, with the opening tune returning to round off the second: this is **rounded binary** (Handout 354). The key is **F major**, one flat (B♭).

A · THE TUNE IN THE LEFT HAND



Pickup and bars 1–4. The tune in **cyan**. The finger numbers are the ones printed in the Peters edition.

A tune that climbs the F chord

The tune opens with **C–F–A–C**, the notes of the F-major chord, like a whistle going up. Bar 2 turns at the top (B♭–D–F–D–C), bar 3 runs down in broken chords, and bar 4 walks E–D–C and stops on a **C-major chord**. That is V in F major, a **half cadence** (Handout 72): a comma, not a period. So the tune has to start again.

Chords that come after the beat

Count **1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &**. The right hand rests on **1** and on **3**, and plays its chords on the **&** after 1 and 3, and on **2** and **4**. The left hand speaks first and the chords answer, like footsteps after each whistle. In all of bars 1–8 the right hand never plays on beat 1 or 3, so the strong beats belong to the tune.

VOICING · LET THE LEFT HAND SING

The tune is underneath, but it must sound on top

Your right hand is busier and higher, so it is easy to hear only the chords. Turn that around. The left hand plays **forte** and **legato**: let the weight of the arm sink into each key and connect the notes like a singer. The right hand plays **piano**, short and light, fingertips close to the keys. A good test: if someone in the next room can whistle the tune back to you, the balance is right.

LISTEN

Scan to hear the whole piece and the bars on this sheet

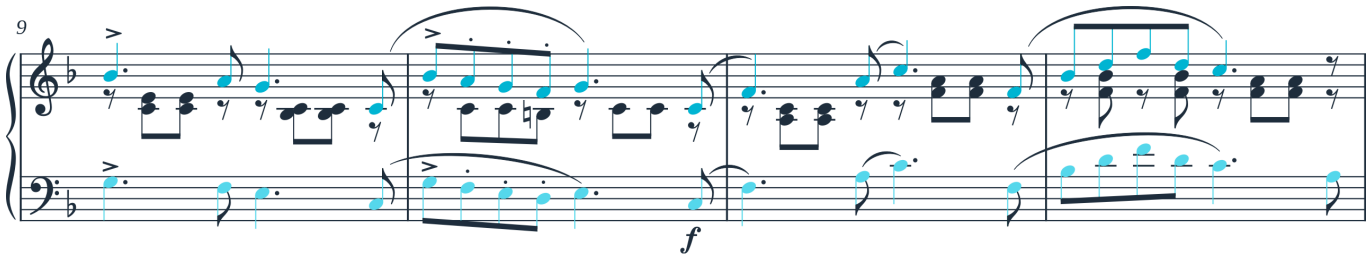
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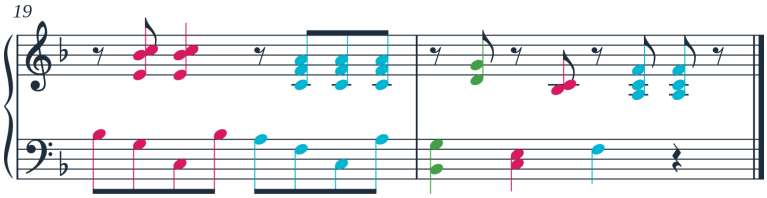
B AND A′ · THE TUNE MOVES TO THE TOP



Bars 9–12. The tune in **cyan**; the left hand doubling it in **light cyan**.

Now the hands swap. The tune moves to the **top of the right hand**, and in bars 11–12 it is the opening tune again, an octave higher. The right hand has two jobs at once: hold the tune with fingers 4 and 5 and keep the after-beat chords going softly underneath with the thumb side of the hand. The left hand does not go back to chords. It plays the tune too: a **tenth** lower in bars 9–10 (an octave plus a third), then an **octave** lower in bars 11–12. Mind the accent on the first B♭ and the B♮ in the inner chords of bar 10.

Bars 19–20 · home at last



Bar 4 stopped on V; the end goes all the way home. Bar 19 is **C7** then **F**; bar 20 is **G minor** (ii, with B♭ in the bass), **C7** (V7) and **F** (I): a full stop (Handout 72). Play the last chord short and in time, then lift both hands together.

PRACTICE RECIPE

1. **Left hand alone, singing.** Play bars 1–8 legato and *forte*, shaping each long slur. Try the printed fingering: 5 on the first C, 3 on F.
2. **Right hand alone, counting aloud.** Say "1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &" and play only on the "&" after 1 and 3 and on "2" and "4," short, light and *piano*.
3. **Hands together, slowly.** Loud below, soft above. Do not let the chords rush to fill the rests.
4. **Bars 9–12: the top voice first.** Play only the cyan notes of the right hand, legato. Then add the inner chords very softly.
5. **Up to tempo.** *Frisch und munter* is a brisk walk, not a run: keep it steady to the end.

TRY IT Play bars 1–4 three ways: chords loud and tune soft, both the same, then tune loud and chords soft. Which one sounds like a farmer whistling on the way home? Keep that one.

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