

Getting More Out of Czerny

Many piano teachers (including us) use Czerny to develop the skills and pattern recognition to play music from the Classical period. We often begin with either Opus 823 or Opus 599. When our students get past the first dozen or so exercises, even relative beginners can play what feels to them like short classical pieces. They love playing them. We often get comments like, “Wow, I’m really playing classical music!”

That’s the point. Czerny IS classical music. How can you use Czerny, then?

1. Combine short pieces.

Even though some of the early exercises are quite short, you can string them together and make a longer piece. In fact, you could put three of them together and have something as long as, say, the first movement of any of the Clementi Sonatinas. This is long before you may have the ease or skill to actually play Clementi.

Karen once played a concert piece that was made from Czerny Opus 599, Numbers 22-24. You can see below the order and repeats of what Karen played in that concert. All are from Czerny Opus 599. Each exercise has two parts, which I have labeled A, and B.

#22 A – with repeat

#22 B – NO repeat

#23 A – NO repeat

#23 B – NO repeat

24 A – with repeat

24B – NO repeat

23 A – NO Repeat - end with a solid C chord in Left Hand.

This gives you a piece that is 72 measures long (a bit longer than the first few Clementi).

2. Play some of the longer, later pieces as if they were standard classical literature.

There are many of the later exercises that are beautiful and offer a wide variety of moods and styles. Czerny labeled them “exercises”, but they could be called, “Songs Without Words” like Mendelssohn, or “Sonatas” like Scarlatti, or “Bagatelles” like Beethoven. They are in and of themselves, beautiful, short, classical pieces.

You will find 250 recordings of Czerny under the Czerny tab in the Recordings section of this website. We have marked a half a dozen or more our favorites in each Opus. We consider these the best stand-alone pieces to play, just because they are good classical pieces. Check them out and listen for yourself to how wonderful they are! Then open your books and try them yourself.