

# 'Le Douze de Decembre'



**Composer:** Ignatius Sancho (1729–1780)  
**Nationality:** British  
**Source/Date:** *Minuets Cotillons & Country Dances* (1767–1775)

'Le Douze de Decembre' features in Ignatius Sancho's collection, *Minuets Cotillons & Country Dances*. The book includes 24 compositions, all of which are written in suitable Georgian musical style, and features a mixture of French and English titles.

Ignatius Sancho was the first composer of African descent to be published in the European tradition. During his lifetime he released four collections of music, including *Minuets Cotillons & Country Dances*, as well as a collection of letters which focussed on political issues. These letters were published two years after Sancho's death, *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African*, and became one of the first published accounts of slavery written in English. Sancho became a symbol of humanity in the Abolitionism Movement of the late 18th century and he remains an important part of our history.

## Preparation



When learning this piece, rehearse both hands separately at first, avoiding the temptation to play this piece at a quicker tempo until both the fingering patterns and quaver (eighth note) patterns are secure. Once assembled, it is better to play slightly under tempo than faster than your ability to play rhythmically accurately and with an even tone. Keeping the left-hand part steady and strictly in time will help control the tempo which will be vitally important to avoid the temptation to rush the quaver passages in the right-hand part.

Good right-hand finger strength is essential to play the quaver (eighth note) scalar passages with balance and control. Try playing your arpeggio and scale patterns as a *staccato* exercise, aiming for an even tone and accurate rhythmic control, starting slowly and building up the speed. Ensuring a flat, relaxed hand and wrist position will allow for a good *staccato* 'bounce'.

Notice the tenuto articulations on the minim (half note) in bar 8 and again on the final note of the piece. These should be played with emphasis, held for their full two beats, allowing the weight of your hand to 'lean' into the note. Enjoy the inverted (lower) mordent on the first beat of bar 15. This small embellishment should be performed with confidence, in time and without interrupting the overall melodic line.

## Performance



A polished performance requires good technical control to deliver a lively but also elegant and graceful sounding dance. The performance instruction '*Allegro con spirito*' translates as 'fast, with spirit'. Make sure to keep the music flowing along, but not so fast as to sound like a frantic dash to the end! Careful observation of both the *legato* phrases, dynamics, and articulations will help bring this piece to life. A subtle *ritardando* in the final bar will help to bring the dance to an elegant finish.

# 'Le Douze de Decembre'

By Ignatius Sancho

**Allegro con spirito**

The musical score is written for piano and bass in 4/4 time. It consists of four systems of music. The first system starts with a *mf* dynamic and includes fingerings 3, 5, 2, 1, 2, 1. The second system features a *f* dynamic and includes fingerings 5, 1, 5, 2, 1. The third system is marked *mp* and includes fingerings 9, 1, 3, 1, 3, 4, 3, 2. The fourth system is marked *f* and includes fingerings 13, 1, 3, 1, 2, 5. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.