

CHOPIN

24 PRELUDES

OP. 28

STUDENTS' EDITION

BY

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TRANSLATED BY
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Study, not only the difficult passage, but the difficulty
itself reduced to its most elementary principles.

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Prelude N° 1

The passion, the impatient ardour, with which this prelude sweeps along, can only be rendered by the accurate punctuation of the syncopated figure which, from bar to bar, pantingly and feverishly carries the melodic line forward to the exaltation of measures 21, 22, 23 and 24. These form the culminating point of a curve afterwards modified by a brief diminuendo during which there is a weakening of the tone only, but not of the pressing and insistent rhythm now become like the beating of a heart exhausted by emotion.

To obtain the full significance of its pathos, this broken declamatory line demands that full value should be given to the silences preceeding the syncopated notes at the beginning of each bar.

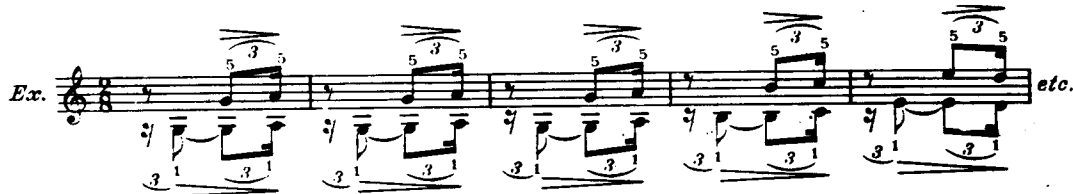
For this effect, we recommend the strict observance of the pedalling indicated in the musical text, the lowering and raising of the foot being effected with crispness and precision.

Practise first, in the following manner, sliding the thumb from one note to another.



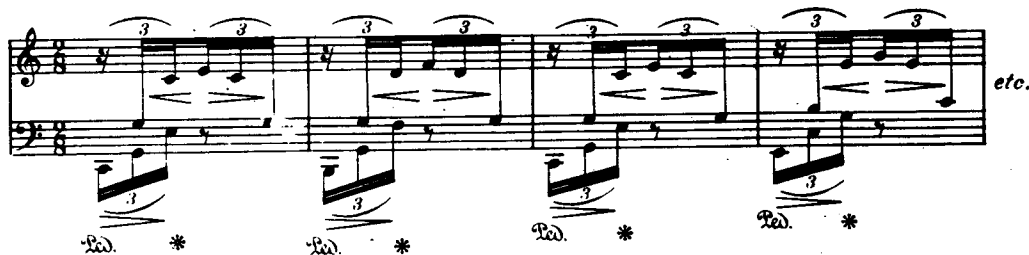
Continue the whole of the melodic part in this way, taking care to bring out its expressive character, paying strict attention to time and to the indications for the use of the pedal.

Then resume the same exercise, but this time add the answer of the upper fingers, which, although underlining the thumb's syncopated design an octave away, re-establishes the rhythmic balance by means of the support which it gains from the second beat of each bar.



Play the two parts absolutely legato and give a slight predominance of tone to the thumb.

Now that the expressive elements of the prelude have been isolated, the precise, and at the same time, running execution of the accompanying figure shared by both hands, must be assured by working thus :



Keep to the fingering in the text and give generous play to the articulation of the fingers. Endeavour to preserve the impetuous character of the piece in spite of the absence of the melodic cell from which it takes its life.

An infallible means of succeeding in this, is to imagine mentally the syncopated and expressively fluctuating figure which is left out, while playing the above exercise and conforming to the dynamics indicated.

This preparatory work should be brought to an end by the study of the following variants, to be transposed into every key and made to conform to the harmonic disposal of the part played by the right hand.

These formulae make excellent exercises for consolidating the position of the hand developing the independence of the fingers : both indispensable factors for a satisfactory technique in the execution of chords of four notes under their different aspects, broken or simultaneous.

The image displays 11 numbered musical variants for the right hand (r.h.), each consisting of a single staff of music. The variants are as follows:

- Variant 1:** A continuous eighth-note pattern starting with a tenuto (*ten.*) on the first note.
- Variant 2:** A continuous eighth-note pattern with tenuto (*ten.*) markings on the first and third notes.
- Variant 3:** A continuous eighth-note pattern with tenuto (*ten.*) markings on the first and second notes.
- Variant 4:** A continuous eighth-note pattern with tenuto (*ten.*) markings on the first and fourth notes.
- Variant 5:** A continuous eighth-note pattern with triplets (*3*) over the first, second, and third notes.
- Variant 6:** A continuous eighth-note pattern with triplets (*3*) over the first and third notes.
- Variant 7:** A continuous eighth-note pattern with triplets (*3*) over the first and second notes.
- Variant 8:** A continuous eighth-note pattern with tenuto (*ten.*) markings on the first and second notes.
- Variant 9:** A continuous eighth-note pattern with tenuto (*ten.*) markings on the first and second notes.
- Variant 10:** A continuous eighth-note pattern with tenuto (*ten.*) markings on the first and second notes.
- Variant 11:** A continuous eighth-note pattern with tenuto (*ten.*) markings on the first and second notes.

We recommend that, when the prelude is executed rapidly, the dry effect, due to excessive crispness should be avoided just as much as the blurred effect resulting from an exaggerated legato.

Both one and the other would be in contradiction with the quivering atmosphere of this piece.

Agitato

1.
C major
Dur.
0 min.30
to
0 min.35

① In Mikuli's edition, the syncopated rhythm of the beginning is preserved throughout these three measures.

Prelude N° 2

To execute this admirable prelude with technical perfection, is a less easy task than its very simple appearance would lead one to suppose.

Every note, every silence even, in the melody played by the right hand, floating like a grievous and poignant lament, above the monotonous rhythm of the bass, is fraught with the most intense meaning, while, nevertheless, the general character of the piece never exceeds the concentrated atmosphere of meditation.

A true interpretation depends therefore, in this case, on a choice of tone-colours which really suggest a feeling of bitterness and dejection.

It should above all be inspired, in the penetrating significance of its punctuation, by the same accents found in human emotion. We fully understand that these preparatory exercises will not suffice, in the case of executants devoid of natural sensibility, to give birth to the qualities required by Chopin's works — but we have, on the other hand, no doubt that intelligent application to the study of tone-colour, as such, will succeed in developing the sense of expressive declamation of which we find such a moving example in this work.

We have already dealt with this kind of execution in our Students' Edition of the Chopin Studies. (Commentaries on Studies N° 6 Op. 10, and N° 7 Op. 25).

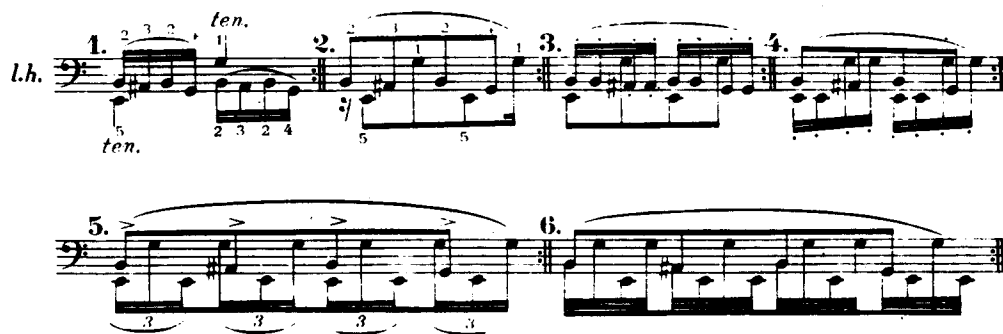
We refer the student to this highly specialized study, and lay stress upon the untold technical value of practising, with varying dynamics, the three exercises whose formulae are recalled below. They should be transposed into every key, the time should be varied, the rhythmic value of the notes modified, as also the fingering and intensity of tone, in conformity with the models indicated in our edition of the Studies.



We repeat that gradation of tone, principally in slow tempo, should be obtained by progressive increasing and decreasing in the weight of the hand, while the fingers confine themselves to the transmission of this weight to the key-board, and the wrist and forearm remain entirely loose and supple.

This observation equally applies to the execution of the left hand — a distant knell heard through the haze, or a faint murmur of the ocean — but here the difficulty is increased by the wide stretches, which render the binding together of the harmonic chain a matter of great delicacy, especially in the subdued tone which is indispensable.

This must be prepared for by the following exercises, to be transposed on to every degree of the scale :



Special attention should be paid to the legato of the middle voice which must stand out slightly — as it must, moreover, when the prelude itself is played. This « nuance » will be facilitated by the close contact with the keyboard of the second, third and fourth fingers, while the fifth finger and thumb, on the contrary, attain the notes which they have to play, by means of a lateral wrist movement.

The softness and regularity of these latter fingers, especially of the thumb, will be in exact proportion to the suppleness of this movement, a kind of swinging portamento, whose amplitude no attempt should be made to diminish.

This will also help to insure the two notes of each chord being put down absolutely simultaneously.

The use of the pedals in this piece, and particularly of the sustaining pedal, cannot possibly, in our opinion, be indicated exactly.

The instrument at the interpreter's disposal, the size and resounding properties of the place where he performs, the particular disposition of his imagination at the moment, all are factors which forbid too premeditated a use of that subtle creator of atmospheres, the pedal.

We may say, however, that it is better not to overburden the harmonic weft of the bass by raising the pedal too rarely or lowering it too far, while, on the other hand, the vibration of the notes of the melody (especially of the „ A ”, held almost throughout bars 14 and 15) would run the risk of unexpectedly fading away if they were not sustained by the resonance of the bass notes vibrating harmonically with them — which is only rendered possible by the use of the loud pedal.

It is a question therefore, of arriving at the necessary compromise.

By way of a technical suggestion, and not in the least with the idea of advising such a use of the pedal in the interpretation of this piece, we suggest that it should be played several times running with both pedals in use together, the sustaining one being subjected to a vibrating motion, at the rate of two throbs per quaver. It will be noticed, that, by this means, the notes of the melody are easily isolated from those of the accompaniment, while the latter remain legato without fear of confusion.

2
A minor
1 min.40
to
1 min.45

Lento *(mf)*

p 5 1 5 1

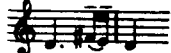
(mf) poco più

vibrato)

dimin. *p slentando*

riten. *sostenuto*

① This prélude must be played throughout as though the bass were written as it is in the first two bars, thus the melodic continuity of the inner voice of the left hand will be insured.

② In our opinion the appoggiatura should be interpreted expressively, in the following manner: 

Prelude N° 3

In order to preserve the fresh, vivid and spontaneous inspiration of this "album-leaf", in all its youthful grace, it is important that the part played by the left hand should not be disfigured by an excessive display of virtuosity.

The rendering of the delicate accents of the right hand, the sensitive underlining of its impulsive rhythm, the tenderness of certain of its inflexions, should be the interpreter's chief concern, and the light and fluid figure of the bass will achieve a poetic value, all the more characteristic for the fact that the discreetness of its murmur will allow the subtle fantasy of the upper part to assert itself more freely.

This discreetness, in the meantime, demands a rare technical perfection, for necessary though it be that the left hand passage should be put in the shade, it is none the less indispensable that its performance should be perfectly accurate, even and harmonious.

This achievement will, we think, be facilitated by the preparatory study, whose elements we indicate below, especially dedicated to the development of these attributes of execution.

1° First practise the movement of passing the thumb under the other fingers, for here lies the greatest obstacle in regular playing.

l.h.

to be transposed into every key

In exercise N° 4, see that all the notes of each chord are attacked absolutely simultaneously and likewise that the hand is displaced with rapidity and looseness.

The first three exercises can all be practiced *mf*, *p*, *pp*. The fourth is to be played *pp*, and in rather an animated Tempo.

2° Then study precision of attack, which, in the softly and rapidly executed passage under our attention will gain on pianofortes of "double escapement" action, by being made not to go beyond the first escapement.

Staccato finger movements executed piano, are the best exercise for this manner of playing, and the one which best enables the player to obtain control of the degree to which the key is lowered.

Before working at the passage itself, the player will do well to practise according to the following formulae, which will make him familiar with the difficulties of lateral hand movements, rendered more noticeable by their execution "finger staccato".

l.h.

to be transposed into every key

3° Rhythmic and legato work at the passage itself, alternately *mf* and *p*, changing the position of the accents and of the hand's resting points.

Exc.

to be transposed on to every degree

These formulae will also make fruitful exercises applied to the four bars during which the left hand joins the right in a voluble conclusion of charming virtuosity.

The sustaining pedal is only to be used in light touches and it must not be left down during the descending periods in the figure played by the left hand.

3
G major
1 min.
to
1 min.05

Vivace
p leggieramente

And. * *And.* * *And. simile*

① This F# sharp may be played by the thumb of the right hand. In this case, the fingering to be used for the four semiquavers which follow, is 1 2 3 1.

(con sensibilita)

(poco espressivo)

5
3
12

ossia

leggiere
p

dim.

① to be played

Prelude N° 4

One may search the melancholy and feverishly passionate works of the singer elect of sorrows, in vain, for a more tragically significant page than this, which contains, in the space of a few bars, one of the most thrilling images of despair ever immortalized in music.

Beneath the wailing insistence of the slow lamentation which the right hand wrings from the piano in long and overwhelming sobs, the left hand seems immobilized in the inflexible indifference of a monotonous rhythm of repeated chords. But, note by note, the harmonies are disaggregated; an almost imperceptible chromatic descent prepares others still more sensitive and penetrating; each of these modifications, as though opening up a wound already healed, is like the renewed gnawing of some intolerable pain, and works itself up to that moment of almost demented exaltation, which Chopin contents himself by underlining with the simple words *stretto* and *forte*. Then, broken, helpless, utterly exhausted by this excess of grief, the melodic line doubles back on itself, and is enclosed once more in the prostrate immobility of that interval of a second, which stamps this prelude with an unforgettable accent.

Now, after a short and formidable silence, comes the dull thud of three muffled chords, which seem to gaze upon eternity from the threshold of an open tomb.

No doubt it is far from possible to translate a sentiment such as this, by means of the fingers alone. But the very quality of it, demands an execution whose technique must be irreproachable.

And though, for the right hand, we can but refer to our remarks on the second prelude, the left hand, on the contrary, calls for some observations of a more practical nature.

It must first of all be laid down, as an absolutely essential condition, that the notes constituting each chord should be attacked strictly simultaneously. To do this "piano" (and "piano" is the colour of the whole piece) constitutes a real difficulty.

In opposition to what one might suppose, it is the individual study of the parts of the chord which will give the best result in this case. We mean, that instead of practising the repetition of each chord as it is written, the fingers must only rest lightly on the surface of the notes of which it is composed, without pressing them down, and then, each position must be practised separately, as follows, after the manner of the exercises known as "finger tenuto"



Reduce the movement of each finger in action, to a minimum, and let it retain permanent contact with the key after pressing it down, that is to say, it must feel the key coming back into position beneath it.

Next, the same exercise, but with two fingers in action, the third simply remaining poised upon the key, still without pressing it down.



Finally press down all three fingers; keep them in continual contact with the keys throughout the exercise.

The whole of the left hand's share of the piece must be practised in this way; the wrist must always remain loose, and the varying intensity of tone should be controlled, as in the right hand, by applying the weight of the hand to the key in a greater or lesser degree. See that the part-playing is absolutely legato, especially that of the parts whose melodic movements mark a change in the harmony. Do not add the pedalling, as indicated in the musical text, until, without its aid, such an impression of continuity of tone has been achieved as would, for example, be produced by a string quartet executing the same passage at the rate of four quavers to a single bowing.

Amongst other works to which the same method of study may be applied with profit, we may mention the *Arioso dolente* of Beethoven's Sonata Op 110, the bass of which originates from an analogous pianistic principle.

Largo *espressivo*

4
E minor
1 min.40
to
1 min.45

p 21

① tenuto sempre

play

resc.

play

stretto *f* *dim.* *p*

smorz. *pp*

Collo

① The change of pedal necessitated by each modification in the harmony is obvious. We recommend, even on French and American pianofortes, which are so sensitive to the action of the foot, analogously with our remark relating to Prelude No 2, a practically uninterrupted throbbing, whose effect will be to isolate the melodic line more fully.

Prelude N° 5

The delicate rustling of leaves in the breeze, elated twitterings in the shadows of the branches, the rippling murmur of waters : — it is an impression of this sort which a true interpretation of these whispering lines should tend to suggest.

But the capricious wanderings of the melodic line will often oppose, with all the snares of its complicated arabesques, the realization of this ideal.

The difficulties which these wanderings entail are of two kinds : one is to combine legato playing with wide stretches in a rather rapid movement, the second is to play with the perfect evenness which is poetically essential, in spite of the inconvenience of certain positions of the hand and of certain thumb movements. And this, of course, applies as much to the left hand as to the right, for they both co-operate in the general impression, by their analogous pianistic writing.

In order to become familiar with wide stretches associated with the principle of legato playing, we recommend the following exercises, whose effect is to develop the power of extension between the fingers, without any fear of the physical inconveniences such as fatigue, heaviness and muscular weakness, which are often the result of this kind of work.

Since the progressive widening of the interval is here combined with a continual movement of the fingers, and the notes on the extremities of the formulae are attained by means of the way in which the hand can use the wrist as a pivot, none of these disagreeable consequences is to be feared, as in the usual extension exercises (which entail fingers fixed to the key-board and stationary hands) and which are not only dangerous, but useless. In indicating the different finger combinations, we have marked the limit of extension which it will be of use to attain by bringing to an end the horizontal line which follows the figures.

The image shows a musical exercise on a single staff. The notation consists of a sequence of notes with various accidentals (sharps, naturals, flats) and stems. Below the staff, there are ten horizontal lines representing fingerings for different intervals. Each line is labeled with a number (1-4) and a pair of numbers (e.g., 1 2, 1 3, 1 4, 1 5, 2 3, 2 4, 2 5, 3 4, 3 5, 4 5). Vertical brackets connect the notes in the staff to the corresponding fingerings on the lines below.

We repeat that no attempt must be made to hold both notes of the interval. The player can confine himself to observing the principles of legato playing, that is to say that each note be joined to the next, somewhat like this :

The image shows a short musical phrase on a single staff. It consists of several notes with stems, connected by a wavy line to indicate a legato (smooth) connection. The phrase ends with the word "etc." written in italics.

and without fearing, as he follows the progression of the intervals, to increase the rocking motion of the hand, which will facilitate the attack of each note. Avoid letting the attack fall on the side of the note.

The same exercise will, of course, be used for the left hand, with the same intervals and the same fingering ; the given formula should be transposed on to every degree of the chromatic scale.

We recommend the following work as a complement to this exercise : it is destined to develop the looseness of the wrist in executing extended legato skips.

r.h. *simile* etc.

l.h. *simile* etc.

With regard to the even playing to which we alluded above, we strongly recommend the following exercises, in which the movement of passing the thumb under the other fingers, in the most inconvenient positions, is especially studied, with a view to the execution of this prelude :

r.h. *etc.*

l.h. *etc.*

Finally, practise the prelude itself according to the text : at first each hand separately and using the following rhythmic formulae.

••••• | ••••• | ••••• | ••••• | ••••• | ••••• | ••••• | •••••

Allegro molto

5
D major
0 min.35
to
0 min.40

p

cresc.

Tempo

(poco rit)

dim.

p

cresc.

dim.

f

(p)

f (p)

p

① The A sharp maintained here in certain editions is a mistake

Prelude N° 6

To give a good rendering of the elegiac and meditative character of this prelude, the melodic design of the left hand should be submitted to a penetrating accentuation, but its intensity should be in strict proportion to its sober character.

Played with exaggerated sentiment, this work often takes on an emphatic character which irremediably perverts it, and transforms into banal superfluities the reserved inflexions, whose quiet restraint gives an aristocratic value to these confidences. They are melancholy, disillusioned indeed, but not despairing; they are pervaded by the bitter sweetness of regret, and it is with sighs, not sobs, that they pursue their even tenor.

The only delicate place in this piece, from a technical point of view, is the arpeggio which, on several occasions and in various positions, brings the thumb into play, as a pivot for the displacement of the other fingers, which momentarily pass across it.

As a preparation for the surmounting of this slight difficulty without sacrificing the expressive necessities of the phrasing, we advise the use of the following exercise :



Practise playing each note slightly portando.

Apart from this question, we refer the performer to our commentary in the students edition of Chopin's Study Op. 25, N° 7, where an analysis of expressive playing, entirely in accordance with the exigencies of this prelude, will be found, dealing equally fully with finger technique and with the use of the pedal, which in this case should be changed as frequently as possible.

The part played by the right hand, which is here limited to that of an accompaniment, is nevertheless extremely important, in as much as it determines the general atmosphere of the tone, and establishes a kind of background of neutral character, which must under no circumstances be confused with that of indifference.

Chopin has placed an accent to be reproduced throughout the piece, upon the first quaver of each beat. This accent, which is so characteristic, and whose regular fall gives this prelude, together with number 15, the same claim to an assimilation with the one described by George Sand in the celebrated anecdote of the „ rain-drop ”, often leads to too much stress being laid upon the crotchets which rhythmically correspond with it. The accent should only affect the upper voice of the right hand and should rather be expressed in the following form :



than with the aspect of a note brought into isolated prominence and followed by a colourless repetition of itself.

The change of finger which allows of this punctuation, will be the object of a preparatory study whose beneficial effect will far outstrip its application to this piece alone.



Shade in this way.

2° The same work applied to the lower fingers.



We believe it to be in the spirit of Chopin's conception, to play the last four bars in the mood of a pensive coda, giving only the gentlest touches to the melodic notes in the left hand, the last of which remains suspended beneath the abating vibrations which die softly away in the right hand.

stake de la nota repetida por medio de la elevación del peso del brazo
apoyando sobre la 1ª nota sin interrumpir el sonido. (fig. 6)

6
B minor
1 min. 35
to
1 min. 40

Lento assai *(simile)*

p sotto voce

mf *(p)*

p *sostenuto*

sostenuto

mp *(1)*

① According to us vibration of this last bass note should continue a little beyond those of the right hand.

Prelude N° 7

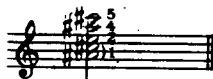
We should not be expected to overburden with a technical commentary, the tenderly nostalgic poetry of these few bars. To play them well, it is enough to play them for oneself, striving to call to mind the touching memory of some moment of chaste happiness. For everything depends here upon the quality of the sentiment.

Too clearly defined, the Mazurka rhythm which pervades these lines may render them pleasant and familiar to excess. It seems to us that one should look for inspiration to the spirit of improvisation, whose very spontaneity equally forbids indifference and sentimentality.

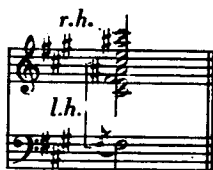
Premeditate nothing, and simply try to be a musician in the etymological sense of the word, to wit, a musician and a poet as well.

The only recommendations which we shall permit ourselves, are concerning the quality of tone of the upper voice in the right hand, which will gain in value by being given a soft predominance; and the pauses on the minims which occur in every second bar and which may, without unduly affecting the rhythm, be imperceptibly prolonged every time.

As regards the big chord in the right hand, in which Chopin so ingeniously uses the thumb on two adjacent black keys :



if the player's hand is too small to do this, the following disposal of the notes must be resorted to :



but in any case he must take care to avoid a general arpeggiando which would completely pervert the rhythmic sense of this harmony.

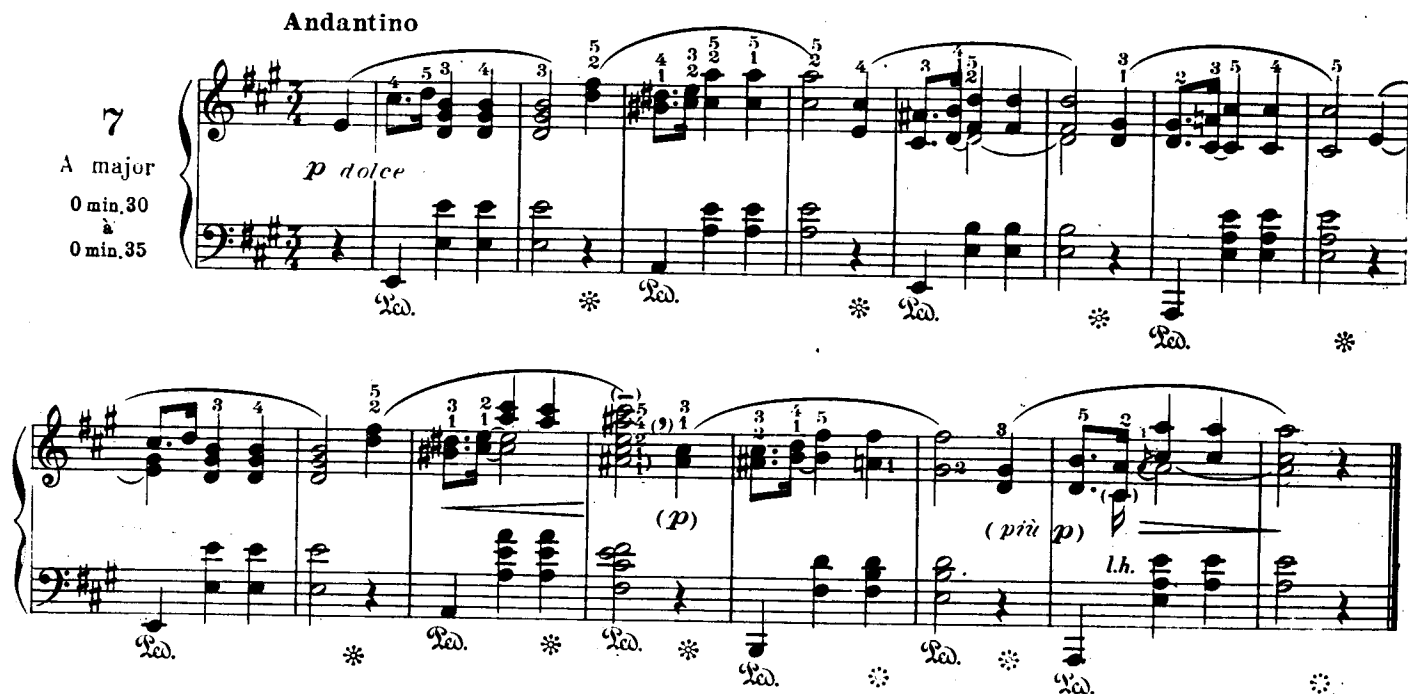
Andantino

7

A major

0 min. 30
à
0 min. 35

p dolce



(p)

(più p)

l.h.

E M. S. 5049 A

Prelude N° 8

To undertake the execution of this prelude with the sole anxiety of triumphing over its, incidentally very considerable, technical difficulties, would be to commit a singular error indeed.

Musically speaking, the demi-semiquaver figure should be effaced before the melodic interest of the theme played by the thumb of the right hand.

It only exists to add to the theme's intensity by the turbulent effervescence of its accompaniment.

It follows its contours, it faithfully embraces each of its sometimes despairing, but ever passionate inflexions, but it could never be predominant; and the pianist's ambition would be singularly misplaced if he sought, in this splendid piece, merely to translate correctly, or worse still, brilliantly, a simple figuration whose expressive dependence Chopin takes such care to underline by writing it in small notation.

There are three elements present in this prelude, whose character we will try to define.

The most important is, as we have said, the theme given to the thumb of the right hand. It is, upon this, upon the firmness of its rhythm, upon the nervous plunging of its impatient punctuation, that the accent of the whole piece depends. Its execution demands a preparatory study whose basis is here given :

1° An exercise to enable the thumb to leap rapidly from one note to another at an ever increasing distance



(to be transposed on to every degree of the chromatic scale)

Take care that the wrist be extremely loose in this exercise, for this alone will make it possible to play the repeated notes in the triplet, and will eventually make it easier to execute the semiquaver in the text.

2° Exercise in expressive legato playing of a melody entirely confined to the thumb :

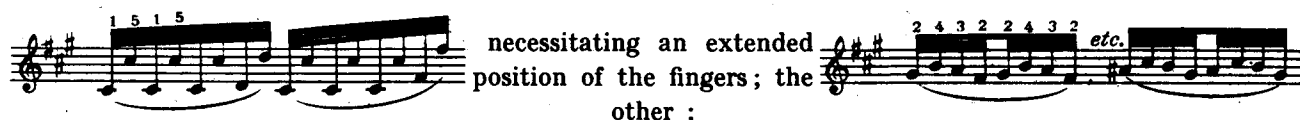


Apply this variant to the whole text of the prelude, practising it in fragments of four bars. Keep an extremely loose wrist, as in the preceding exercise, and strive to attain eloquence in the phrasing of each period. This exercise is, of course, to be practised without the pedal.

3° Practise in its entirety the melodic design of the prelude, using the following rhythms :



Next practise the demi-semiquaver figure, whose difficulty lies in the continual juxtaposition of two opposite movements; one, the design in octaves, which might be figured in this way :



necessitating an extended position of the fingers; the other :

brings about, on the contrary, an inevitable contraction of the hand. It is, therefore, first of all a matter of overcoming, by means of appropriate exercises, the muscular fatigue resulting from a constant repetition of these contrary movements in a rapid tempo.

We advise the use of the following formula as a preliminary study in the practice of tremolando octaves :



(pursue the progression as far as the skip of an octave ; then, without stopping, repeat the same formula a semi-tone higher and pass thus through all the degrees of the chromatic scale.

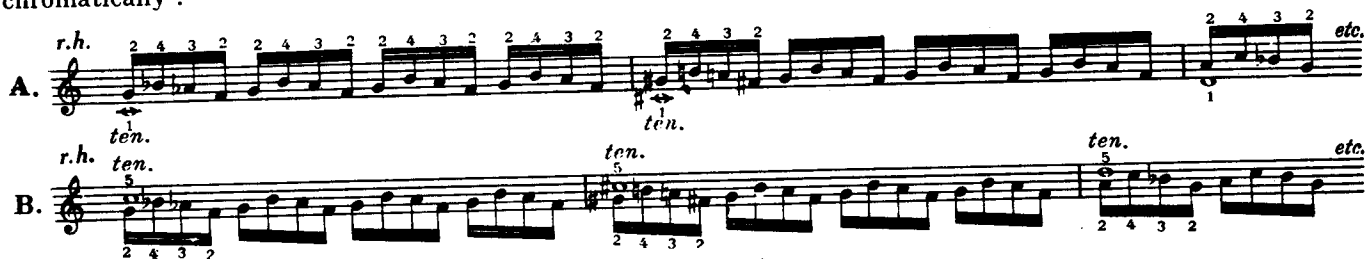
Do not fear, especially when changing position on to the higher keys, to give the hand a lateral movement pivoting it, so to speak, on the wrist, whose absolute looseness we once more recommend).

Next practise, making use of the same formula, Chopin's text, preserving only its melodic design, as follows :



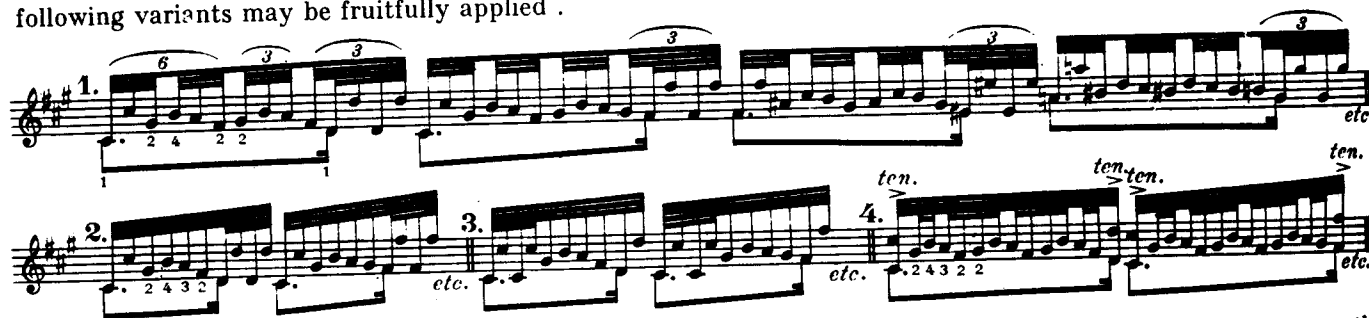
This study is essential, and must not be abandoned until the thirty-two bars occupied by this design can be played in the tempo of the prelude, with ease and without fatigue.

Now the study of the middle part of each group must be broached, by practising the following formula chromatically :



The semi-quavers to be played alternately legato and in finger staccato.

By uniting these two elements, we once more find ourselves face to face with Chopin's text, to which the following variants may be fruitfully applied .



There remains the left hand, whose punctuation is of such great importance as a rhythmic support to the theme. The accent given by Chopin to the first note of each triplet, will only take on its full significance, if the hand is allowed to fall each time from a height, the thumb giving the key a bold and incisive attack, in strong contrast with the legato character of the right hand's design.

The value of the quaver at the end of each group may be slightly shortened, in order to allow the hand to take a new spring for the attack of the following group.

We advise that the whole of the part played by the left hand should be practised separately, in a version modelled on the following notation.



Take care that the pedal be put down with a crisp rhythm and then lifted to allow for a clear silence last for one demi-semiquaver, and that the triplet be articulated with absolute precision.

molto agitato

8
F# minor
1 min.45
to
1 min.50

5 2 4 3 2 5 5 2 4 5

p

tr. * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* *

f

dimin.

tr. * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* *

p

tr. * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* *

f

tr. * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* * *tr.* *

First system of musical notation. The right hand (treble clef) plays a series of chords with a melodic line. The left hand (bass clef) plays a bass line with a circled '1' above the first measure. Dynamics include *p* and *cresc.*. Below the staff are guitar fingering notations: *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* *

Second system of musical notation. The right hand continues with chords and a melodic line. The left hand plays a bass line with triplets. Below the staff are guitar fingering notations: *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* *

Third system of musical notation. The right hand continues with chords and a melodic line. The left hand plays a bass line with triplets. Dynamics include *f*. Below the staff are guitar fingering notations: *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* *

Fourth system of musical notation. The right hand continues with chords and a melodic line. The left hand plays a bass line with triplets. Dynamics include *ff*. Below the staff are guitar fingering notations: *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* * *La.* *

① Mikuli here marks G sharp instead of G natural, having referred to the original text. In spite of this authority, we prefer our version, and believe it to be more appropriate to the harmonic development of this period.

poco riten.

p

p

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

molto agitato e stretto

p

cresc.

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

ff

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

più dim.

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

Musical notation for the first system, featuring a treble and bass staff. The bass line consists of four measures, each marked with a 'Ped.' symbol and an asterisk. The first measure has a '4' below it. The second measure has an accent (>). The third measure has an accent (>). The fourth measure has an accent (>). The fifth measure has a 'dim.' marking above it and an accent (>). The sixth measure has an accent (>). The seventh measure has an accent (>). The eighth measure has an asterisk. The bass line is marked with 'Ped.' and asterisks: Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

Musical notation for the second system, including dynamic markings 'p' and 'poco cresc.'. The bass line is marked with a circled '1' and 'Ped.' and asterisks: ① Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

Musical notation for the third system, including dynamic markings 'pp' and '4' below the bass line. The bass line is marked with 'Ped.' and asterisks: Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

Musical notation for the fourth system, including dynamic markings 'p' and 'lento'. The bass line is marked with 'Ped.' and asterisks: Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *. The system ends with a 'play' instruction and a small diagram of a guitar.

① In spite of the resemblance of the harmonies, we advise the rhythmic use of the loud pedal on every beat, so as to preserve the nervously obstinate character of the bass. Perhaps, and this depends on the instrument in use, it might be entirely suppressed in the bar preceding the Lento, in order to attain the effect of the tone fading away more completely.

Prelude N° 9

Solemn and prophetic voices, with sounds of brass and unrelenting rhythm, dominate the powerful harmonies of this prelude:


They should be isolated by the tragic nobility of their „ timbre ” from the mass of tone which sustains them ; forceful without being brutal, profound without being heavy. Such is the principle of the technical problem with which the interpreter is faced ; a problem, all the more formidable for the fact that the right hand must reconcile these exigencies of tone with an almost exclusive use, in the declaiming of the most important voice, of its weakest fingers, the fourth and fifth.

We have already studied this kind of execution elsewhere (see the commentary of the Student's Edition of Chopin's Studies Op. 10 N° 3.), but there we concentrated on the expressive and singing role of the fingers, rather than on their imperious character.

Certain modifications of detail will therefore present themselves in this case, which are not however, in any way in contradiction with the principles to which we have just alluded.

We recall the fact that the essential rule in polyphonic technique is that of bringing the weight of the hand to bear on the fingers which, musically, play the most important part, and of slackening and relaxing, on the contrary, the muscles of the fingers playing the secondary voices. The difficulty is here increased by the fact that accompaniment itself must be full and sonorous, even in the passages marked piano.

It is therefore necessary for the weak fingers, which have to express this already very robust fundamental tone, to acquire the maximum of solidity ; and here a special position of the hand comes into play, which alone will give the desired result. To establish this mechanism, we will make a choice of the first chord of the prelude in question, but it need hardly be mentioned that any other harmony of four or five notes would serve for the same demonstration.

Play the following chord  with the right hand, placing the fingers in their natural position on the key-board.

Then raise the wrist freely, leaning exclusively on the fifth finger, allowing the other fingers to abandon their keys.

If the movement is executed correctly, the fifth finger will form a right angle with the back of the hand, and will be placed vertically and unbent upon the key, and kept sufficiently stiff to bear the whole weight of the hand. Preserve this position, and leaving the other fingers passive and loose, practise any forms of scales and arpeggios, striving to obtain the maximum intensity of tone, and detaching the notes freely.

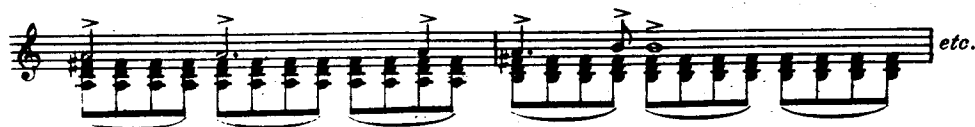


Work in the same way with the fourth finger erect, unbent and firm in its turn, while the others, including the fifth, float beneath the hand, so to speak, without resting on the key-board. When the necessary rigidity and solidity, to be retained even at a distance from the keys between the playing of one note and the next, have been acquired by these fingers, an accompanying formula is to be added, played by the lower fingers in their usual position, the „ melodic fingers ” only preserving the contracted position which we have just studied.

A fragment of Chopin's Fantasia :



or of the Liszt Sonata :



will allow of the immediate application of this kind of execution, making its value and expressive resources better understood than any musically indifferent examples.

Afterwards, practise the text of the prelude, with the following variants :

A. *f* *etc.*
2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3

B. *f* *etc.*
4 5 3 1 4 3 1 4 3 1

C. *etc.*
2 2 2 2 2 2 2

D. *etc.*
1 2 4 3 2 3 4 2 3 4 2 4 3 2 3 4 2 4

E. *etc.*
2 2 2 *simile*

We equally recommend that the exercises preparatory to N° 4, Op. 25, of the Students' Edition of Chopin's Studies should be practised — especially these :

etc.
5 4
2 2 2 3 2 3 2

The difference between the rhythms ♩.♩ and ♩.♩ must be observed with the utmost exactness, both when opposing each other in the two hands, and when, as in the last five bars, they unite in their second aspect, and thus add a heroic accent to the majestic character of this prelude.

Largo

9
E major
1 min.15
to
1 min.20

The musical score is written for guitar in E major and 3/4 time. It consists of five systems of two staves each. The first system begins with a treble clef and a bass clef, with a tempo marking of 'Largo'. The piece starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. The second system includes a first ending bracket marked with a circled '1' and a second ending marked with a circled '2'. Dynamics range from forte (*f*) to piano (*p*), with a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The third system features a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and a decrescendo (*decresc.*) marking. The fourth system includes a piano (*p*) dynamic and a decrescendo (*decresc.*) marking. The fifth system concludes with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, a ritardando (*riten.*) marking, and a final cadence. Fingerings and breathings are indicated throughout the piece.

① Execute 

② Same execution

Prelude N° 10

The same formula, repeated four times, suffices to form the fragile construction of this glistening prelude ; a light, vivid and sparkling figure spreads itself over three octaves, as though in the form of a golden arrow, and disappears in the calm back-water of a few careless chords. It is only possible to hint at an interpretation, whose secret lies in giving delicate point to the contrast between the capricious indolence of the rhythm of the chords, and the sliding agility of the design in semi-quavers.

Technically speaking, certain difficulties may be experienced in the execution of this figure : difficulties caused by the addition of a chord of two notes at the beginning of each beat. According to us, the higher of these two notes ought to chime, rather than ring, like a sort of ethereal „ campanella ” ; this effect can be obtained by detaching it smartly from the rest of the figure, which should be executed *legatissimo*, with running fingers.

To become familiar with this double form of attack, practise the following exercises :

A. *r.h.* *etc.*
to be continued chromatically

B. *r.h.* *etc.*

Gradually render this work more and more efficacious by widening the intervals on which the double notes are played, up to the major sixth inclusively :

Ex. *etc.*
Repeat the process with Example B

Practise the lower part of the right hand passage separately, with the addition of a trill on the first half of each beat, lifting the fingers as little as possible.

Then add the upper note which falls on the beginning of each beat, but at first, holding it throughout the beat, in order to assure a firm position of the hand.

Then practise the figure, as it is written, playing it alternately *legato* and in finger *staccato*, and with the following rhythms :

*Colore al verso delle l'ho
con l'accento al lodo.*

Allegro molto

10
C# minor
0 min. 30
to
0 min. 35

Prelude N° 11

We do not think it would be right to take the indication of tempo which heads this prelude, too literally; Chopin probably made use of it to protect this very brief and slight sketch, from an exaggeratedly sentimental execution. But there is, in the ingenuous grace of its melodic contours, a sort of reserve, a bashful restraint, which would be ill suited by too rapid a tempo or too brilliant an accent. „ Allegretto vivace ” seems to us to be more nearly right, as a heading for this piece, than „ Vivace ”, and more in harmony with the discreet emotion, the tender playfulness, of the musical phrase.

The difficulties of pianistic realization will, moreover, be all the greater in a rendering of less lively tempo and more sensitive delicacy of feeling. Instead of being carried away in the indifferent flow of excessive animation, each note will take on its own importance and melodic significance.

This pre-supposes a playing, which is at the same time free, sensitive and even, and a flexibility of rhythm which will not be attained at the first attempt, in spite of the inoffensive appearance of the musical notation.

The preparatory work should be based on the formulae for legato stretches which we have already given in the notice accompanying the fifth prelude.

As regards double notes, in mixed chords, their execution should remain as clear and fluid as that of the melodic design when in single notes, and it would be well to take the passing difficulty which they entail, as a pretext for a more general study of the various principles of execution which may suit them.

We mention, as a memorandum, the commentaries in the Students' Edition, on the studies in thirds and sixths, in which will be found a certain number of suggestions whose application will constitute the basis of a useful study.

But we wish to attempt a differentiation in the studies for the approach of the technique of double notes in mixed positions, based on the nature of the hands, which we will reduce, rather arbitrarily, to two essential types: the hand with long fingers, and the hand with short fingers. Each of these two cases entails completely different preparatory work, for physiological reasons on which it is unnecessary for us to dwell, although they are generally unrecognized or neglected in the course of study.

For short fingers, exercises preparatory to the playing of double notes must always be established on an arpeggio formula, that is to say that a passage of this nature:

should be practised thus:

or inversely:

This, with the object of avoiding muscular fatigue and heaviness of attack, and besides, of obtaining the maximum of looseness in the wrist movements which accompany the displacement of the hand on the key-board, and render legato playing possible.

For long fingers, to which wide stretches present no difficulty, these exercises are to be replaced by the following:

A. *p* *mf* or *mf* *p*

paying attention to what constitutes the chief technical interest of the formula, the predominance of tone of the staccato voice.

B. *p* *mf* or *mf* *p*

All combinations in mixed double notes can be, to suit the case, practised according to one or other of these principles, and we are not afraid of asserting that their application will enable the student to overcome, in a short time, apparently insurmountable difficulties.

11
B major
0 min. 32
to
0 min. 35

Vivace

p legato

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

p

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

mf

(poco rit.) (tempo)

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

pp

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

Prelude N° 12

In this case, just as in that of the eighth prelude, it is less meritorious to triumph over a difficulty in itself, than to conquer it in the sole interests of a vivid and highly coloured interpretation.

Vehement crescendos, tempestuous squalls precipitated by an obstinate and impatient rhythm, the characteristic bounding of the bass, the trepidation, the feverish pace of a tragic ride on a stormy night : such are the essential elements of this interpretation.

It pre-supposes first and foremost, more indispensably than a perfect mechanism, rare, nervous and imaginative resources. But, it cannot, of course, be translated, until the underlying technical problem is solved.

Once more it will suffice to reduce the difficulties of execution to their most elementary form, and to study their generating principle with care. The benefits of an analysis of this description will make themselves felt afterwards, not only in the interpretation of the particular passages or piece whose pretext it has been, but they will remain durably manifest in the economy of technique in general.

Here, precision in the raising and lowering of the fingers must be combined with looseness of the wrist, to assure the shading of the right hand's design and the clearness of the repetition which places, once every two notes a weak and isolated finger in a very unfavourable position for the carrying forward of the melodic line.

The support which the hand gains from each of the chords whose nervous and insistent rhythm closely pursues the progression of the upper voice, naturally tends to destroy the necessary balance of sound.

This can only be re-established, after having subjected the weaker fingers of the right hand, and especially the 4th and 5th, to a form of training whose object is to develop the firmness of their attack.

We advise the use of the following formulae :



to be transposed into every degree of the chromatic scale.

Lift the fingers high and attack with decision.

Then, embracing Chopin's formula more closely :



Finally, the following formula for trills, in whose execution the greatest possible crescendo must be attained, even at the expense of an involuntary movement of the hand.



Tear off, as it were, the last note of each group, relax the fingers completely for the duration of the silence, then renew the attack firmly.

Afterwards, practise the wrist movements which must regulate the execution of the chords in crotchets



(Take the second chord, as it were, on the rebound of the first one's impulse, then bring back the hands rapidly to their position of attack above the key-board, only contracting the fingers exactly at the moment of placing them on the keys.)

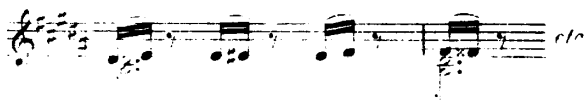
Practise the whole prelude in this way, playing both hands together, and keeping to the shading given in the text.

When this variant has become so familiar that it can be played from memory, revert to two of the preceding formulae, and use them, applied to Chopin's text in the following manner :



See that an energetic accent is always given to the last note of each group.

Before attempting the execution of the piece as it is written, we still recommend the following rhythmic variant :



Play the upper part with generous finger movements, paying strict attention to the rests — keep the fingers which hold the dotted minims, extremely loose on the contrary.

The pedal should be lowered with great decision and raised in the same way. Avoid any blurring of tone, which would diminish the decided, rhythmic character of this attack.

Presto

(simile)

12

G# minor

1 min.10
to
1 min.15

The musical score is written for guitar in G# minor, 12 measures long, with a tempo of Presto. It is divided into five systems. The first system includes a 'cresc.' marking. The second system includes a 'cresc.' marking. The third system includes a 'cresc.' marking. The fourth system includes a 'cresc.' marking. The fifth system includes a 'cresc.' marking. The score features complex fingering and dynamic markings.

The musical score consists of six systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and articulations. Dynamics such as *p*, *cresc.*, and *pif* are used throughout. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. There are also asterisks and 'x' marks under some notes, possibly indicating specific techniques or corrections. The systems are connected by a large brace on the right side.

① This bar and the next, which are omitted in most editions, have been re-inserted here on the authority of Chopin's own correction, rediscovered by Tellefsen.

② We prefer these last two notes played pianissimo, with the mysterious quality of a pizzicato.

Prelude N° 13

One the secrets of Chopin's genius, was that accent of tender melancholy with which he seems, almost involuntarily, to have imbued the major mode.

At first, a happy, peaceful and confident feeling seems to emanate from the tonality, the rhythm and the harmonies of this piece; yet, by some mysterious power which no rule can define, it is a heart heavy with tears and regrets which finally reveals itself. Secret tears, regrets still breathing the happy ardour of the memories which inspire them, a feeling which touches the extreme limits of delicate sensibility, but whose nostalgia is all the more irresistible for the softness, the resignation, of its accent.

The finger difficulties of this piece are null, but not so the difficulties of tone and pedal.

The plaintive penetration of this almost immobile melody, which inscribes itself on the summit of the right hand's harmonies, must be felt, vibrating above the softness of the general atmosphere.

The rhythm of the floating accompaniment played by the left hand, must undulate, as free from stiffness as from undue limpness, and the indispensable legato must be no more hindrance to the expressive delicacy of its line, than to the subtlety of its details. The pedal, or rather pedals, for their combined use is necessary for the confidential quality of the tone, must bathe the whole piece, enveloping it in their liquid embrace.

And, above all, let us try and find in our hearts some great and cherished desire, unsatisfied; like that whose echo thrills in the exaltation of the incomparable modulation into C sharp minor, with an accent no pedagogy could ever teach us.

The execution of the left hand may be prepared by a few exercises based on the special part played by the thumb, which allows the hand to use it as a pivot without letting the point of support taken in this way, disfigure the discreetly even volume of its sound.



The most expressive and the most harmonious way of rendering the return of the first idea, with the addition of those few higher notes, which come and rest upon the melody like fleeting rays of hope, consists in playing the chords containing these notes, in the following manner :



13

F# major
2 min.45
to
2 min.50

Lento

(due Ped.) *legato*
Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

① Ped. - - - Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

p sempre legato
Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

Ped. * (Ped. simile)

più p

① On an instrument whose pedal is sensitive accompany each note of the melodic line with a gentle throb of the foot. We leave a more frequent use of the pedal than we have indicated, to the taste of the interpreter, although we should nevertheless recommend it.

Più lento

p sosten.
(senza sordina)
Ped. * Ped. * Ped. - - - - - Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. * Ped. * Ped. - - - - -

poco cresc.
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. * Ped. Ped. * Ped. * Ped. Ped. - - - - - Ped.

Tempo I!
p
Ped. * Ped. * Ped. Ped. Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. (due Ped. come prima)

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

(dim. e smorzando) (Più lento) *(mp)*
Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

① For the execution of these chords, see the commentary. E.M.S. 5019 A

Prelude N° 14

This prelude has often been considered as a sketch for the finale of the Sonata Op. 35, that mysterious whirlwind, fanned by the icy blast of death — Its disposal is indeed graphically the same : „ the two hands prattle together in unisson ” according to Chopin’s naive phrase: but while, in the Sonata, the virtuoso’s task is to give a realization of the almost spectral appearance of a melodic line devoid of any point of support, it seems to us, on the contrary, that in these few fierce measures, his care should be to bring out the harmonic progression, and to interpret the legato in the sense of weightiness, in view of the character of the piece, which unfurls like a roaring hurricane.

A binding together, by the means of the pedal alone, would not, however, be enough to produce the feeling of a moving mass of liquid, which should be evoked by the compact tone of these heavy waves of semi-quavers.


We must here be inspired by the principle of the old harpsichord players, and keep the fingers on the keys constituting a chord. That is to say we must attempt to give the following impression :



Suffice it to say, that the finger movements, which are indispensable for skimming over the finale of the Sonata, are contra-indicated for the execution of the triplets in this piece.

The finger should, on the contrary, be held in a rather elongated position on the key board, remaining in contact with the keys, and the relief provided by the dynamics which animate the uniformity of the rhythm by their incessant ebb and flow, should be obtained by increasing the weight of the hand and wrist.

The text of this prelude is in itself its own, we may say its only possible, technical preparation. No exercise can replace the formula in broken chords proposed to us by Chopin. The only possible variants are of rhythmical order, and can be resumed in the following examples :

In groups of three notes : 

in groups of six notes : 

Although the initial accent is displaced, the dynamics must be strictly observed throughout this study. The independence of the fingers thus acquired, will be a sufficiently eloquent guarantee to suggest the impression of crash and torment at the *ff* re-entry of the subject.

We have established the fingering of this prelude, with a view to its dramatic punctuation and the heavy legato which it entails.

It is almost impossible to indicate a satisfactory use of the pedal, which is eminently variable, in quality and in action, according to the nature of the instrument.

We recommend however a light touch of the loud pedal, on the third beat of each of the first ten bars — then, from the eleventh bar (*ff*) onwards, it should be lowered vigorously on each crotchet, then, in bars 15 and 16, follow with the foot, the melodic line indicated by the sign (—), afterwards let the muffling of the soft pedal give the impression of the squall receding.

Allegro
pesante

14
E♭ minor
0 min.35
to
0 min.40

(p) *legato (tenuto)*

(cresc.) **ff**

dim.

pp

Prelude N° 15

This prelude, the most important and the most highly finished of them all, whose form is so closely related to that of the Nocturnes, no doubt owes a certain amount of its popularity to Georges Sand's anecdote, which seems to apply to it, and which is quoted in the documentary notice by Laurent Ceillier reproduced at the head of this volume.

Nothing could be less certain than the truth of this story, for there is always room for suspicion in the fertile and romantic imagination of the good lady of Nohant — but in this case the legend coincides happily enough with the spirit of the piece, to serve without inconvenience as a poetic illustration for it.

With one condition however, that the terrific dramatic development to which it gives rise, and which is the only object worthy of the interpreter's attention, should in no way be compromised by a puerile imitation of the regular fall of the celebrated „ rain-drop. ”

The whole of that part of the prelude, whose evolution leads enharmonically to the key of C sharp minor, should create the atmosphere of a nightmare, of a terrifying hallucination such as we have tried to define in the brief epigraph also quoted by Laurent Ceillier.

And at the return of the initial subject in D flat, the theme must not reappear in exactly the same softly melancholy character as at the beginning, but must have assumed, in its tragic contact with the fateful harmonies of the middle section, an accent of aching exhaustion, almost of anguish, which justifies the great sigh, by which an attempt is made, but without success, to efface the memory of the agonizing vision, and which brings this admirable piece to a close, in an atmosphere of indescribable despair.

The technical realization of this prelude may appear easy to pianists for whom the difficulty of interpretation only manifests itself in proportion to the number or rapidity of the notes, and the complication of the writing. We have already laid stress elsewhere, on the weakness of this entirely superficial conception of the matter, which may lead to the most regrettable mishaps.

A Mozart andante, a musical phrase of Schubert or Chopin, the punctuation of one of Schumann's Kinderscenen, demands, in our opinion, a deeper knowledge of the resources of the instrument, than the most heavily scored pianistic writing, and some virtuoso, broken to the pianofortes most imperious exigencies, will perhaps be impotent when it comes to rendering the emotion springing from the simple virtue of sensitive and natural musical elocution. And this, not only because the keenness of his poetic perception may have been blunted by contact with too exclusively instrumental study which, unfortunately, too often replaces a love of music by the cult of the piano, but also because he lacks the special technique demanded by the care of melodic declamation.

We do not aspire to a definition of the laws of such technique, in dealing with this prelude; a whole volume would not suffice for this purpose, and the rules of musical emotion are above all, a matter of personality and taste. But there are certain general principles of touch, and of punctuation, which can be developed by appropriate exercises. Once master of the purely material conditions of an expressive execution, it will be easier to determine its application, according to the inspiration, the imagination or the gifts of the interpreter.

The basis of a study in expressive tone consists in making a scale or arpeggio the pretext for modulations in expression. We give below a few examples of the dynamics by which the most inert, musically speaking, of technical formulae, can be given life.



Pass through all the degrees of intensity of tone from *pp* to *ff*.

Then, taking into account the fact that the most usual melodic figurations generally, only involve a rare use of the passing of the thumb under the other fingers, and frequently rely on conjunct motion, revise the practice of accentuation already indicated with reference to Study N° 3, Op. 10.

Afterwards add the following formulae, which will render the action of the thumb more even, in relation to the other fingers.



to be transposed into every key

We have used a fingering for the melodic part of the right hand in this Prelude, inspired by Chopin's own expressive technique, such as we know it from his indications in analogous passages. The crossing of the 4th and 5th fingers requires special study, which may be based on the following exercises:



Finally, the expressive part played by the left hand, in C sharp minor, may be usefully practised thus :



Play strictly legato, without allowing the fingers to lose contact with the keys.

Sostenuto

15

D \flat major

4 min. 20

to
4 min. 25

① *sotto voce (due Ped.)*

cresc.

p cresc.

ff

dim. p

p cresc.

ff

① The fingers must here substitute one another without, so to speak, allowing the key to regain its point of departure. Apply the pedal in syncopated rhythm, after each of the crotchets in the bass, unless otherwise indicated.

First system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves with notes and rests. Fingerings are indicated above notes. Dynamics include *f* and *dimin.*. A *p* dynamic is also present. A *5-4* fingering is noted below a note in the bass staff.

Second system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves with notes and rests. Fingerings are indicated above notes. A *p* dynamic is present.

Third system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves with notes and rests. Fingerings are indicated above notes. Dynamics include *crese.* and *p*.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves with notes and rests. Fingerings are indicated above notes. Dynamics include *dim. e rit.* and *p*.

Fifth system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves with notes and rests. Fingerings are indicated above notes. Dynamics include *smorzando* and *f*. A measure number *10* is indicated.

Sixth system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves with notes and rests. Fingerings are indicated above notes. Dynamics include *riten.*. Measure numbers *54* and *84* are indicated.

Prelude N° 16

The savage emotion with which this prelude is fired, depends, far more than on the velocity of the right hand's figuration, upon the rhythmic character of the left, which constitutes its real propelling element.

After an introductory bar of great pathos, — a cry of terror whose chromatic chords fall, shuddering, one upon another, the hallucination vision of a flight to perdition breaks upon us, a headlong career with some satanic will in indefatigable pursuit; it is a musical paraphrase, after Berlioz, of the lines of Goethe, which lay open to Faust's horrified gaze, the abysmal depths to which he is being precipitated by an inexorable fate.

While the right hand depicts the ironic hissings of the wind in fury, the sinister lament of the squall, the left hand must suggest the frenzied gallop of the black steeds, carrying the two symbolic figures, through the intermittent flashes of romantic lightning, as they crouch beneath the storm.

The performer's first duty is therefore to make certain of the rhythmic atmosphere of this piece, by practising the left hand separately, until he has succeeded in determining, by its execution alone, the necessary characteristic impression.

The fingering indicated by us in the text, is the only one capable of affirming its indispensable rhythmic accent :

The difficulties involved can be overcome by practising first in this way :



The staccato must be very pronounced, and the wrist movements which it entails, exaggerated, while the notes must be attacked right in the middle.

Then, in order to attain the leap which unites the two bound quavers, on the first and third beats of each bar, and to prepare the hand for the wide stretches which accompany them :



to be continued chromatically, gradually accelerating the tempo, without ceasing to give a strong accent to the first of the two bound notes.

Next, practise the whole of the part played by the left hand, with the following variant, extremely useful for attaining suppleness in linking the notes together.



Finally practise the text itself, striving to obtain, by means of a vigorous execution of this simple formula of accompaniment, a dramatic impression which, by itself, will give it sufficient musical interest.

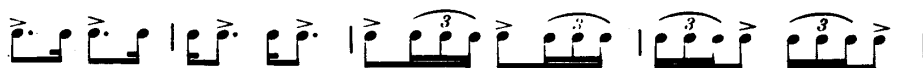
When the left hand returns, accompanied by octaves, at the *ff* re-entry of the initial subject, the preparatory work will entail the study of leaps for the thumb, after the following example :



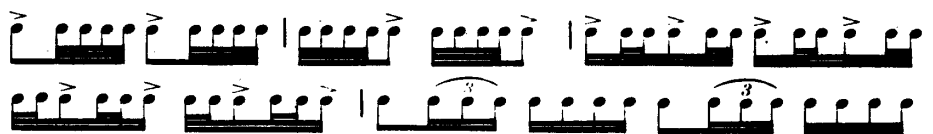
Slide the thumb over the surface of the key-board during the skip which separates the two bound notes, always accenting the first one, which is the rhythmic point of support.

The study of the right hand is chiefly founded on the displacement of rhythmic accents, which alone is capable of assuring, at the same time as the evenness of finger power, indispensable for the rapidity and accuracy of the passage, the gradation of dynamics, which animates it with a constant eddying of intensity of tone.

Begin with the following formulae, which respect the divisions into which each bar falls :



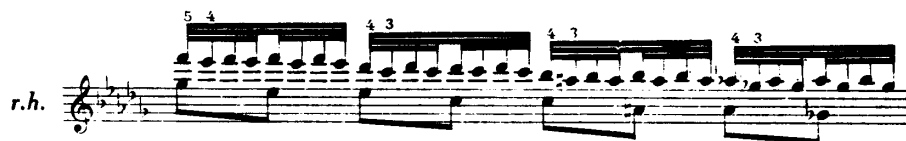
Continue with these, which break the normal cadence at regular intervals, and for this very reason, are more profitable from the point of view of finger independence.



Practise fragments of four bars according to these rhythms, varying the dynamics of the text each time, piano becoming forte and vice versa.

Certain passages of the right hand's figuration will need special study in proportion to the difficulty of their fingering, or of their particular contexture.

For example, bars 7 and 8 of the Presto con Fuoco, which should be prepared thus :

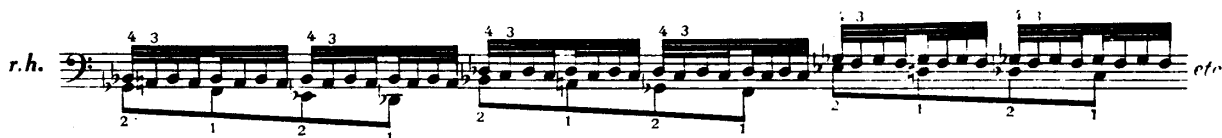


Attain a rigorous legato, in spite of the obstacles entailed by wide stretches.

Then bars 25 to 30 in which the special use of the thumb implies a particular delicate displacement of the hand.



Finally, the four last bars, to be practised thus :



(a piacere)

Presto con fuoco

16

Bb minor

1 min. 15

to

1 min. 20

The musical score is divided into five systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is three flats. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and fingerings. The bass line features several instances of 'Ped.' (pedal) and asterisks. The right hand has complex fingering patterns with numbers 1-5. The fourth system includes a 'ff' dynamic marking. The fifth system has a dashed line above the treble staff indicating an octave shift.

① In spite of the addition of the octaves in the bass, we see no reason to modify the initial accentuation. See the commentary.

The first system of music consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with numerous fingerings indicated by numbers 1-5. A slur covers the first two measures. The bass staff provides harmonic support with chords and single notes. Pedal markings 'Ped.' with an asterisk are placed below the bass staff at the beginning of the first, second, third, and fourth measures.

The second system of music continues the piece. The treble staff features a complex melodic line with many slurs and fingerings. The bass staff has chords and moving lines. Pedal markings 'Ped.' with an asterisk are placed below the bass staff at the beginning of the first, second, third, and fourth measures.

The third system begins with the marking *stretto* above the treble staff. The treble staff has a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and fingerings. The bass staff consists of chords and single notes. Pedal markings 'Ped.' with an asterisk are placed below the bass staff at the beginning of the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth measures.

The fourth system of music shows the treble staff with a melodic line featuring slurs and fingerings. The bass staff has chords and moving lines. Pedal markings 'Ped.' with an asterisk are placed below the bass staff at the beginning of the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth measures.

The fifth system begins with the marking *sempre più animato* above the treble staff. The treble staff has a melodic line with slurs and fingerings. The bass staff has chords and moving lines. Pedal markings 'Ped.' with an asterisk are placed below the bass staff at the beginning of the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth measures.

First system of musical notation. Treble clef staff contains a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and a slur over the last two measures. Bass clef staff contains a bass line with notes marked with 'Ped.' and asterisks. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Second system of musical notation. Treble clef staff contains a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and a slur over the last two measures. Bass clef staff contains a bass line with notes marked with 'Ped.' and asterisks. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Third system of musical notation. Treble clef staff contains a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and a slur over the last two measures. Bass clef staff contains a bass line with notes marked with 'Ped.' and asterisks. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble clef staff contains a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and a slur over the last two measures. Bass clef staff contains a bass line with notes marked with 'Ped.' and asterisks. The word 'cresc.' is written above the first measure. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Fifth system of musical notation. Treble clef staff contains a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and a slur over the last two measures. Bass clef staff contains a bass line with notes marked with 'Ped.' and asterisks. The dynamic marking 'ff' is present. An alternative ending is shown in a separate staff at the bottom right, marked '(or)'. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Prelude N° 17

The true expression of this prelude, a perfect example of the song without words, as understood by Mendelssohn, is not that which is so often given to it by an insipid tempo and a declamation of mawkish sentimentality.

It is from a transport of tender exaltation that it draws the quality of its irresistible accent, and from the feverish elation of a secret happiness.

The realization of an inmost dream, the joyfulness of love, the delight of an unhopd for avowal, such are the poetic arguments which may guide the performer to an interpretation of this piece, in accordance, we are certain, with the wish of Chopin.

The technical problem which presents itself here, is that of achieving the true proportion in intensity of tone, between the melodic line and the accompanying lines embodied with it.

We recommend, first of all, the study of the melodic design of the right hand, which should be isolated from the chords, and given the greatest possible amount of expressive sensibility.

That is to say :



Take care to retain exactly the fingering of the text, and to observe its shading, and also a scrupulous legato, even when two notes in succession are played by the same finger. Completely relax the muscles of the fingers not playing, letting them remain absolutely passive, while retaining at the same time an entirely loose wrist.

Then undertake a preparatory study, identical with that indicated for the Study in E major (Student's Edition, Chopin Op. 10, N° 3), still for the right hand only.



The upper voice standing out clearly above the others, by means of a penetrating pressure of the fingers on the keys : the lower parts discreet but precise, the rebound of the demi-semiquaver triplets being accompanied by a slight wrist movement.

Afterwards, study the left hand separately, with the same rhythm and the same spirit of clearness and suppleness.



It is to the pedal which we must now look, to melt these harmonies thus lightly touched upon. With its assistance the melody, confiding such cherished emotions, will stand out naturally from the rest, owing to the opposition of its own tenuto to the lightness of the accompanying design.

The delicacy of the harmonic language, the expressive subtlety of the inner voices, will sometimes lead to some melodic curve standing out below the principal voice, as, for example, the insistent dramatic design of the bass, in bars 20 and 23, the accentuated motif of the thumb, in bars 44 and 48, etc..., etc...

It is to the characteristic quality of the tone, that we must have recourse, and not to an increase of strength, in order to give these details their right value.

For small hands, we advise that the harmonies of bars 43 and 47, should be distributed according to the following formulae.

Bar 43 :



The same formula for bar 47.

This will give a less refined quality of tone, but will make the execution of the melodic line more expressive and legato.

17
Ab major
2 min. 35
to
2 min. 40

Allegretto

① sopra

Red. (m.g. sopra)

Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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Red.

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① Some editions indicate  here instead of 

The musical score consists of six systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The notation includes various chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. Dynamics include 'Ped.' (pedal), 'cresc.', and 'p'. A circled '1' is placed above a measure in the third system. The key signature has two flats and the time signature is 3/4. The music is written in a style typical of classical guitar sheet music.

① The preceding remark again applies.

The musical score consists of five systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first system includes a *f* dynamic and a *dimin.* marking. The second system features a *f* dynamic. The third system includes a *f* dynamic. The fourth system includes a *pp sotto voce* marking. The fifth system includes a *f* dynamic. The score is annotated with various guitar techniques: *Ped.* (pedal point), ** Ped.* (pedal point with asterisk), and circled numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Slurs and accents are used throughout. The piece concludes with a final chord marked with a circled 1 and a *f* dynamic.

① We advise that this pedal-point on A flat, which should re-sound like a distant bell, up to the end of the piece, be played with the thumb.

First system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef, and piano (p) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with fingerings 5, 5, 3, 4, 5, 3, 4, 3, 2. The left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes. Dynamic markings include *fz* and *pp*.

Second system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef, and piano (p) dynamic. The right hand continues the melodic line with fingerings 5, 2, 3, 2, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 4, 4, 5, 3, 2, 3. The left hand accompaniment includes chords and single notes. Dynamic markings include *pp* and *fz*.

Third system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef, and piano (p) dynamic. The right hand continues the melodic line with fingerings 2, 5, 3, 2, 5, 3. The left hand accompaniment includes chords and single notes. Dynamic markings include *pp* and *fz*.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef, and piano (p) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a triplet of sixteenth notes. The left hand accompaniment includes chords and single notes. Dynamic markings include *pp* and *fz*. The instruction *perdendosi* is written above the right hand.

Fifth system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef, and piano (p) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with fingerings 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1. The left hand accompaniment includes chords and single notes. Dynamic markings include *ppp* and *fz*. The instruction *riten* is written above the right hand.

Prelude N° 18

This vehement recitative should be declaimed in an animated movement, but with great freedom of rhythm.

The burning spontaneity of a start of indignation and revolt must be felt in the articulation of this fiery melodic line, broken into by the cutting accent of chords like those of an orchestral tutti.

It is a wild and ferocious emotion which must be depicted here, the direct and passionate manifestation of a human sentiment, so to speak, out of control, but its disorder is that of genius, and its pathos so profound, because its impetuous mechanism is established by the most conscious art.

It is hardly necessary to add that the material difficulty of the execution of this dramatic page is increased by this factor in interpretation which demands, not only fingers of steel, but also rare powers of tone production and variety of „ timbres ”

The fingering which we give, involving the co-operation of the left hand in the initial phrase, will admit of a more certain rendering of the expressive intensity of the first two bars and their re-exposition in the sub-dominant, but in all the following periods for both hands in unison, a special preparatory study imposes itself, if an interpretation is to be attained which expresses, as it should, the exalted progression leading from measure to measure, we would almost say from anathema to anathema, up to the terrifying conclusion.

Of course, the force of the fingers alone would be powerless to maintain the necessary level of wilful and robust tone in these brief interjections.

The weight of the hand, and even of the forearm, must be added to this, parallel with the indications for crescendo.

To practise the various degrees of intensity obtainable from this combined action of pianistic resources, use the following examples equally suitable for both hands.

A. *ff*

Do not fear to confer an oscillating movement on the wrist, which will allow the hand and forearm to add their effort to that of the fingers. Raise the fingers freely.

B.

C.

Although these exercises do not, at least in appearance, completely embrace the contexture of Chopin's figures, they nevertheless contain, reduced to an elementary formula, the difficulties which hinder their execution. We therefore strongly advise that their study should not be neglected, as we are convinced that it will permit those qualities of resistance to be attained, which will facilitate the desired rendering.

From the ninth bar onwards, the player must avoid too abrupt an attack of the first note of the groups of semi-quavers counteracting the clearness or the declamatory power of the following notes. Rhythmic exercises, whose object is the displacement of the initial accent, will correct this fault.

Ex.

Practise the bar in detached octaves, in this way :

**Allegro molto
agitato**

18
F minor
0 min.50
to
0 min.55

① The fingering to which we allude in the commentary is the following.

First system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef. Includes a measure with a circled '3' above it. Dynamics include *cresc.* and *f*. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. Pedal marks are present below the bass line.

Second system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef. Includes a measure with a circled '(3 5 4 3 2 1)' above it. Dynamics include *f*. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. Pedal marks are present below the bass line.

Third system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef. Includes a measure with a circled '3' above it. Dynamics include *cresc.*. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. Pedal marks are present below the bass line.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef. Dynamics include *f*. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. Pedal marks are present below the bass line.

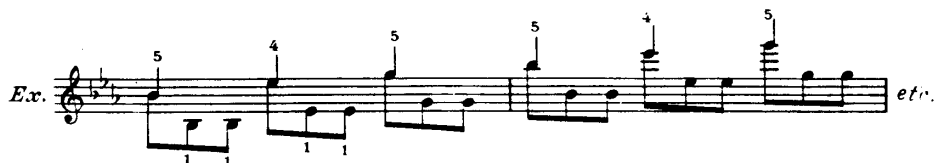
Fifth system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef. Includes a measure with a circled '8' above it. Dynamics include *ff*. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. Pedal marks are present below the bass line.

Prelude N° 19

The first condition of the interpretation of this prelude is that not the slightest constraint should be imposed on the happy flight of the melody, throbbing so tenderly above the rustling of delicate semi-quavers; soaring or poising, hastening or lingering as it will, not the smallest hint of the difficulties which accompany it must be allowed to weigh upon its carefree caprices.

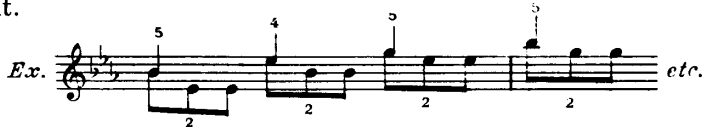
The following exercises, if the indications concerning them are exactly carried out, will enable the player to acquire the necessary suppleness of wrist movements to give the execution its true character of fluid transparency. Compare this prelude to Study N° 1, Op. 25.

1° First, practise the upper melodic line of the right hand, adding to each crotchet played by the upper fingers, the same note repeated twice an octave below, in a rhythm of triplets:



The effect of this exercise is to loosen the wrist movements and to adapt them, to a certain extent, to the expressive needs of the melody. The thumb's repetition ascertains the lightness of its attack, and gives flexibility to this finger, whose natural heaviness might prove an obstacle to the fluency of the execution which, in this prelude, becomes one of the functions of interpretation.

2° The same work applied to the notes played by the second and third fingers, that is to say, the third note of each triplet in the text.



3° Practise the whole of the part played by the right hand with the following variants:

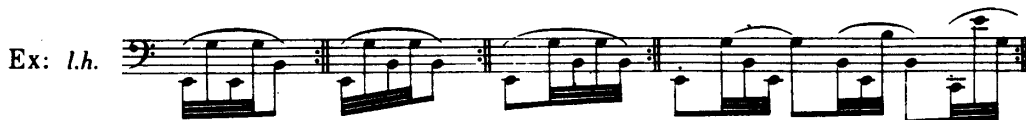


The melody always singing and expressive, the accompanying notes rapid and skimmed lightly.

The hand should be carried across, so to speak, from one note of the melody to another, by means of a supple wrist movement.

The left hand's design, although symmetrical to that of the right, is not, however, to be practised in the same way. It does not entail, like the latter, a melody to be brought into prominence, and is limited to creating a misty atmosphere, against which the air must stand out. The greatest lightness and suppleness must therefore be attained, all importunity of attack on the part of the thumb avoided and the quality of tone of this accompaniment must always be kept in harmony with that of the right hand.

We recommend a study based on the most diverse rhythmic variations, in order to develop flexibility of the wrist in the most unexpected positions, and in order by this means, to accustom the hand to the often very considerable stretches which, when the prelude is performed, must be approached with extreme sureness and perfect evenness of tone.



The use of the sustaining pedal should be controlled rather by the exigencies of the melody, than by respect for the harmonies.

19
E♭ major
1 min.20
to
1 min.25

Vivace
legato
p

①

leg. * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* *

(simile)

leg. * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* *

leg. * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* *

p

leg. * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* *

leg. * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* * *leg.* *

① The original version does not bear the melodic punctuation indicated for the first eight bars: although it is in accordance with Chopin's intentions, we think it right to draw attention to this modification of writing.

5 4

p

cresc.

ped. * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* *

2 3 2

p

cresc.

ped. * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* *

5 2 3 4

p

cresc.

ped. * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* *

3 4 5

p

cresc.

ped. * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* *

2 3 4 5

p

cresc.

ped. * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* *

5 2 3 1 4 3 4 5 2 3 2 bb 4

p

1 1 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 *

5 3 2 4 5 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2

1 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 *

3 1 5 2 3 2 4 5 2 3 2 4 5 2 3 4

1 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 *

2 2 3 3 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2

cresc.

1 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 *

(-) (-) (-) (-) (-)

dimin.

f

p

1 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 * 2 2 *

Prelude N° 20

The tragic solemnity of the rhythm of this piece is made still more impressive by the striking way in which the volume of tone gradually diminishes, calling up the vision of a funeral procession, slowly receding towards the terrible mystery of the unknown.

It would be impossible to find a more noble or more moving subject for a study in tone-colour.

We are going to try to define the quality of attack best suited to each of the groups of four bars whose three succeeding planes result in an expressive structure of astounding simplicity and emotional power.

We cannot conceal the insufficiency of mere words in dealing with a question of this sort, with the necessary clearness. But we are counting on the good will and intelligent application of the reader, to supplement the thanklessness or the imperfections of an analysis, which a single example on the pianoforte would make easily comprehensible.

The attack of the first four bars, marked fortissimo by Chopin, involves all the resources of energy at the instrumentalist's disposal being brought into full play.

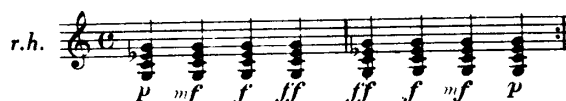
That is to say, that firmness of the fingers alone will not be enough for it, but he must add to this, the weight of the hand, of the forearm, and even of the shoulder itself.

Be it understood that the brutality of a shock which, far from amplifying its vibrations, as is the belief of certain pianists, takes the string unawares, (thus momentarily paralysing its elasticity and, in consequence, its real resounding powers), must of course be avoided.

What must be aimed at, is a sustained concussion of the strings, produced by an irresistible sinking of the keys, by the maximum intensity of weight, and, above all, by a perfect balance of tone between all the notes of the chord.

A slight slackening movement of the wrist, after the attack of each chord; (which the English theorists call „relaxation”), will allow the player to retrieve his forces, for the „kneading” (this seems to us to be the word for it) of the next chord.

First, practise this, by repeating the same chord, with progressive-gradation in intensity of attack;




Practise the left hand in the same way.

Then practise the first four bars of the prelude, with both hands together, repeating each chord four times, following the dynamic gradations indicated in the preceding example; without any pedal, and each time, beginning piano and finishing fortissimo.

The most delicate piece of shading in the prelude, is that of the second period of four bars, marked „piano”. Played too expressively, this fragment loses its fateful character; if, on the other hand, its tone is too weak, it lacks grandeur, and runs the risk of destroying the receding impression of the four following bars. It has always seemed to us, that the happiest way of preserving a characteristic tone-colour for it, is to make the upper voice in the right hand, and the lower voice in the left, slightly more pronounced than the inner voices, whose attack must be softened, more or less as follows :

① Grieg was later to revive this conception in his “Death of Ase” in Peer Gynt.

Effect to be produced :



Practise thus :



For the last period, marked *pp*, whose tone should, so to speak, become quite ghostly, spectral, — absolutely deadened — its rhythmic relief should be preserved, on the contrary, by colouring the inner voice of the right hand slightly, for which the following exercise is a preparation.



Of course the use of the pedal in this prelude, should be one of the very first preoccupations for the interpreter who has the dramatic quality of his execution at heart.

We have striven to mark its distribution in relation to the rhythm and the dynamics, with the greatest precision. We ask the performer to observe our indications in the musical text, and to conform strictly to them : that is to say, a syncopated pedal for the first eight bars ; four the four following bars, both pedals, the sustaining pedal being lightly touched, on each crotchet.

One more word, with regard to the absolutely simultaneous attack of every note in the chord.

A single hint of an arpeggiando would suffice to destroy the characteristic impression of this admirable fragment of music.

Likewise with regard to the squareness of the prelude's rhythmic stature : it is this, with its character of inevitability, which is the true expression here, and not that effeminate rubato, in whose name so many crimes are so often committed against the noble and sovereign thought of Chopin. Pay heed to the tone of the last chord, which comes to place its tragic seal upon the piece, laying open with its sublime impassibility, all the mystery of the beyond. But this is out of the range of the pedagogue.

Largo

20
C minor
1 min.20
to
1 min.25


① Put down the pedal before attacking the first chord.

② The "ritenuto" given here in most editions, does not seem to us in conformity with the fateful rhythm of this Prelude.

* Corrected with pencil by Chopin on Jane Stirling's copy

Cantabile

21
Bb major
1 min.40
to
1 min.45

① Certain editions give  as the notation for the appoggiatura.
② Use both pedals, changing the sustaining pedal on each beat

This is erroneous...
E M S. 5049 A

① This bar has been forgotten in a certain number of editions. E.M.S.5049 A

Prelude N° 22

Of all the wrong interpretations by which this prelude is threatened, the reading most to be feared, is that which treats the magnificent outline of the bass as a mere excuse for the display of infallible technique in octave playing, instead of a vehement expression of noble wrath.

This pianistic conception, — pianistic alas, in the worst sense of the word — is generally aggravated by an exaggeratedly rapid tempo, and most distressingly subordinates the musical and dramatic sense of these pages to the mediocre ideals of virtuosity.

To counter-act this defect, we do not, of course, recommend the ponderous emphasis of a dragging declamation.

The character of the piece, the note of revolt which animates its stormy impetus, demands a palpitating, voluble and highly-strung execution, but the compact yet bounding rhythm can be made to preserve all its impulsive energy, without going to the excess of indulging in a tempo which would rob it of its savage grandeur.

Moreover, it would denote a very superficial understanding of the interest of the composition, if the part played by the right hand were sacrificed to the rest, and simply regarded as an accompaniment to the bass octaves. On the contrary, it is by the maintenance of an absolute balance of tone, and of all the right hand's intensity of expression, which is contrasted to the menacing activity of the left with such pathos, that the piece will successfully assume its true significance, — it is by underlining the tormented accents of those brief entreaties which endeavour to appease the tumultuous flood of the principal rhythm, that that feeling of struggle can be created, whose character should prevail from the very first bars.

By the immediate establishment of these two elements, the progression which follows, leading up from the peroration, to a paroxysm of agitation, will find its true and irresistible animating force.

All indications which could be given here, concerning the execution of octaves, have already been dealt with, in Op. 10, N° 12, and Op. 25, N° 9 and 10, of the Students' Edition of Chopin's Studies, and we can only refer the reader to them.

As regards the right hand, we recommend a wrist attack for each of the chords bearing an expressive accent, that is to say, for the first notes of each group.

As these chords do not admit of the assistance of the thumb, which is so efficacious for volume of tone, and sometimes make their appearance in rather inconvenient positions, their execution should be prepared by means of the following exercises, established with a view to developing the strength and accuracy of their attack.

The image shows three musical exercises, labeled A, B, and C, for the right hand. Each exercise is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Exercise A consists of five measures of chords, each with a '5' above the first note and a '2' below the second note, indicating a specific fingering. Exercise B consists of four measures of chords, each with a '5' above the first note and a '2' below the second note, and a 'V' above the first note indicating a wrist attack. Exercise C consists of four measures of chords, each with a '5' above the first note and a '2' below the second note, and a 'V' above the first note indicating a wrist attack. The exercises are designed to develop the strength and accuracy of the attack for chords that do not admit of the assistance of the thumb.

Molto agitato

22
G minor
0 min.45
to
0 min.50

The musical score is written for guitar in G minor, 4/4 time, and is marked 'Molto agitato'. It consists of five systems of two staves each. The first system includes a tempo and performance instruction block: '22 G minor 0 min.45 to 0 min.50'. The score is filled with complex chordal textures, arpeggiated figures, and various fingerings. Performance markings include 'Ped.' (pedal), asterisks, and 'cresc.' (crescendo). The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The piece is marked 'Molto agitato'.

The musical score consists of six systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system is marked *ff*. The second system is marked *(simile)*. The third system is marked *ff*. The fourth system is marked *(più agitato)*. The fifth system is marked *cresc.*. The sixth system is marked *(risoluto)* and *ff*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The bass staff contains numerous fingerings and articulation marks, including asterisks and the word *Ped.* (pedal). The piece concludes with a final chord and a fermata.

Prelude N° 23

The undulating design of the right hand, the capricious grace and freedom of its melodic contours, demand a technique which is absolutely supple, light and even, in a sense — liquid, and the secret of this, lies in an absolute flexibility of the movements of the wrist.

The thumb can indeed hardly be considered as providing an appreciable point of support in the execution of the figure, for it is only by skimming with the greatest lightness over the notes allotted to it, that it assists in the displacement of the other fingers.

A preparatory exercise which tends to exaggerate the fundamental difficulty of this prelude, will help to explain the way in which we regard the active part played by the wrist, as the main factor in a perfectly free and legato execution of it.



The correct realization of this example is only possible if the wrist maintains a slightly elevated position, keeping the fingers suspended above key-board, and reducing their action in reaching the notes they have to attain to a minimum, by means of its own lateral movement to and fro.

It will be easily understood that this kind of execution, in the „ piano ” colouring, and in the slightly animated tempo required by the prelude, entails practically no effort on the part of the fingers, the movement being entirely determined by the action of the wrist, which makes the hand use the thumb as a pivot.

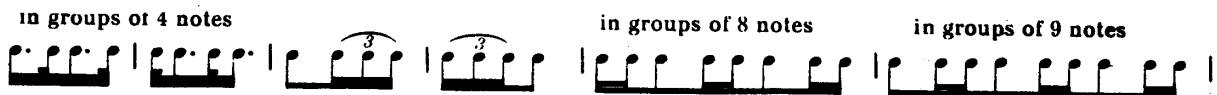
By the continuation of this exercise, in such a way as to diminish the width of the intervals progressively, it gradually approaches the melodic formulā on which Chopin’s text is established.



Practise the following rhythmic modification, on the same intervals; its object is to give the thumb complete lightness, bringing it absolutely on to the same level of tone-production as the other fingers.



After sufficient familiarity has been acquired with these exercises to gain complete mastery over the mechanism of this particular form of technique, the study of the prelude itself should be approached and the following rhythms applied to the upper part, which must be divided into fragments of fours bars, and transposed chromatically into every key.



Practise alternately legato and staccato (from the finger), „ piano ” and in moderate tempo, the staccato must not entail any modifications in the position of the wrist, and must be obtained exclusively by the action of the phalanx.

The best way of making sure of clear playing in the succession of the 5th, 4th, and 3rd finger, is to practise as follows :



It would be well to take the passing introduction of double notes into the delicate arabesques of the figure, as a basis for a study of this new difficulty.



Finally, owing to their close relationship with the technique of this prelude, it would be well to revise the exercises preparatory to Study N° 8, Op. 10 in the Students Edition.

Moderato

23
F major
0 min.45
to
0 min.50

The musical score is written for guitar in F major, marked Moderato. It consists of 23 measures. The notation is in a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) and delicatissimo (*delicatiss.*) dynamic. The first system contains measures 1-4, the second system measures 5-8, the third system measures 9-12, the fourth system measures 13-16, and the fifth system contains measures 17-23. The score includes various guitar-specific markings such as fingering numbers (1-5), slurs, and trills (*tr*). There are also performance instructions like *sc.* (scordatura) and asterisks (*) indicating specific points of interest or technique. The key signature has one flat (Bb), and the time signature is 4/4.

First system of musical notation. Treble staff contains a melodic line with fingerings 4, 2, 1, 2, 1, 5, 1, 3, 4, 1, 3, 4, 1, 8. Bass staff contains a bass line with fingerings 3, 2, 5, 3, 1, 4, 2. The instruction "poco riten." is written above the bass staff. The system ends with an asterisk.

8 a Tempo

Second system of musical notation. Treble staff contains a melodic line with fingerings 5, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 3, 1, 3, 1. Bass staff contains a bass line with fingerings 3, 5, 3. The system ends with an asterisk.

Third system of musical notation. Treble staff contains a melodic line with fingerings 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 3, 1, 3, 2, 1, 3. Bass staff contains a bass line with fingerings 3, 5, 2, 7. The instruction "poco riten." is written above the bass staff. The system ends with an asterisk.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble staff contains a melodic line with fingerings 5, 1, 2, 1, 1, 3, 2, 1, 1, 5, 3, 4, 2, 5, 3, 4, 2, 5, 3. Bass staff contains a bass line with fingerings 4, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 3, 1, 3, 2, 1, 3. The instruction "p" is written above the bass staff, and "dim." is written below it. The system ends with an asterisk.

Fifth system of musical notation. Treble staff contains a melodic line with fingerings 4, 2, 1, 2, 1, 5, 3, 4, 1, 3, 4, 2, 1, 4, 4, 1, 5, 4, 1, 3. Bass staff contains a bass line with fingerings 5, 2, 1, 4, 1, 4, 2, 3, 1, 2, 5. The instruction "smorz." is written above the bass staff. The system ends with an asterisk.

Prelude N° 24

The principal obstacle to the execution of this surprising and dramatic manifestation of Chopin's genius, which forms the last of the preludes, resides in the fusion of the melodic element which asserts itself in the right hand, with such audacity, such liberty, with such passionate ardour and indomitable pride, and the rhythmic element of the left hand, which on the contrary preserves an impressively uniform character, rigidly maintained by the tenacity of a resolved cadence.

The executant must first strive to make sure of the characteristic accent of the bass, and to overcome the difficulties entailed by its wide stretches, which are in direct opposition to the necessary boldness of its attack.

To begin with, the use of the 2nd and 3rd fingers must be overlooked, although it will afterwards play an important part, creating by means of a kind of inner pedal, a sense of legato in each group of notes.

But attention must first be paid to the wide stretches between the outside fingers, that is to say the thumb and the 5th finger.

Ex. Musical notation in bass clef showing two groups of notes. The first group has a '5' above the first note and a '1' above the second note. The second group has a '5' above the first note and a '1' above the second note. Below the first group is the text 'accent on the 5th finger' and below the second group is 'accent on the thumb'.

Musical notation in bass clef showing a sequence of notes with fingerings '5 1 5 1' and '5 1 5 1' above them. Below is the text 'alternate accents'. To the right, there are two chords with the text 'Practise in the same way on the harmonic disposals which follow.' and 'etc.' below them.

When all these combinations have been exhausted by transposition into every key, their study should be renewed, with the addition of the third and fourth fingers.

Ex. Musical notation in bass clef showing a sequence of notes with fingerings '5 2 1 5 3 1' and '5 3 1' above them. Below is the text 'etc.'.

Do the same work with the combinations indicated above.

Next, hold down the inner note of the chord firmly, using it as a pivot to execute the interval between the thumb and the fifth finger, by means of a pronounced rotary movement, letting the hand roll from left to right, and vice-versa.

Musical notation in bass clef showing a sequence of notes with fingerings '3 or 2 1' above them. Below is the text 'etc.'.

Finally practise Chopin's text, striving to instill into each group of 5 notes, an energetic impulse, due as much to a decided and generous movement of the hand in reaching the notes on the extremities of the stretch, as to the individual solidness of each finger.

See that the first note is robustly attacked, and the hand lifted off the key-board after the fifth, thus permitting the next group to be attacked on the rebound.

For supplementary exercises, it would be well to refer to the commentary on Study N° 9, Op. 10 (Students' Edition.)

The work for the right hand should, in our opinion, be divided into two parts : — the first dealing with expressive declamation alone, the second being confined to the study of virtuosity, scales, arpeggios, chromatic thirds, and octaves.

The interpretation of this prelude, as understood by us, leaves us no hesitation in using, for the „, forte ’ whose colour gives the melodic figuration its character, three fingers in conjunction, on each of the notes of the fierce ballad declaimed by the right hand. The savage and intense accent of this half epic and half passionate song, would be ill suited, in our opinion at least, by a punctuation which is merely conscientiously expressive.

What is needed, is the transport, the fiery lyricism of that „, Sarmatian ” soul of Chopin’s, to which Schumann refers in one of his writings.

Besides, the certainty of creating exactly the same intensity of tone, by the use of the same fingers on each note, can but fan the flame of enthusiastic interpretation and add to the generous sweep of the music.

And this matters most of all. The executant must here imitate the violinist, who, in such a case, would not hesitate to give a separate bowing to each note, and yet preserve the legato character of the melody.

The fingers which must co-operate in the combination, are the thumb, the 2nd and the 3rd. To become familiar with the nature of the expressive portamento proceeding from this manner of playing, begin with the following exercises inspired by those used by the singer :



Then, with the following rhythms :

The position of the three fingers used simultaneously on the same key, naturally entails that their extremities should be closely gathered together, and grouped in a single attacking mass, while the fourth and fifth fingers are withdrawn under the palm of the hand. The wrist must remain loose, even in fortissimo, and must carry the whole mass formed by the hand, from one note to another, with a frank and well defined movement.

We know that the advice which we give for the fingering of this prelude will surprise some pianists, and some teachers, who rightly respect the wisdom of scholastic principles. But certain works only draw their beauty from accents which are outside the sphere of scholasticism.

Of course, this fingering only applies to those bars in which its use is justified by the characteristic intensity of the rhythm and of the melody, that is to say bars 3 to 6, 8 to 9, 21 to 24, 26 to 27.

The scales and arpeggios which add their fiery streams of tempestuous lightning to the general atmosphere, must be practised with a view to achieving the greatest energy and the most vital impetuosity.

We refer the reader to the exercises preparatory to this kind of execution, mentioned in the commentary on Study N° 8, Op. 10, of the Students’ Edition.

Material will also be found for the preparation of the robust chromatic scale in descending thirds, in the preliminary exercises for Study N° 6, Op. 25, and for the amplification of the melody, in octaves, in the commentaries on Studies N° 12, Op. 10, and N° 10, Op. 25.

For the execution of the last three bass notes, those three profound D’s, which evoke the sense of tragedy of three booming cannon shots, our advice is that the thumb should be used, with the hand closed, to give it support and solidity.

24
D minor
2 min.25
to
2 min.30

Allegro appassionato

(con slancio)

The musical score is written for guitar in D minor, 2/4 time, with a tempo of *Allegro appassionato* and a performance instruction of *(con slancio)*. The score is divided into two systems. The first system begins with a piano introduction in the left hand, consisting of a series of eighth-note chords. The right hand enters with a melodic line starting on the first measure, marked with a circled '1' and a slur. The second system continues the melodic line, featuring a trill in the right hand and a complex fingering sequence (5 1 3) in the left hand. The third system shows a rapid ascending scale in the right hand, followed by a descending scale. The fourth system concludes with a final melodic phrase in the right hand and a sustained bass line in the left hand. The score includes various technical markings such as slurs, accents, and fingering numbers.

① For the fingering of these first bars, see the commentary on this prelude.

The musical score is written for guitar and consists of five systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first system begins with a treble staff starting on a high G (5th fret) and a bass staff with a triplet of eighth notes. The word *sempre f* is written above the first measure of the bass staff. The second system continues the bass line with triplets and includes a treble staff with a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note figure. The third system features a treble staff with a trill marked '13 tr' and a bass staff with a triplet. The fourth system contains a complex treble staff with a series of notes marked with fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and a trill marked '8'. The fifth system starts with a treble staff marked '31 tr' and includes a treble staff with a series of notes marked with fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

First system of musical notation. Treble clef with a 5-measure rest. Bass clef with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The system includes a slur over the first two measures of the bass line and a *(poco meno f)* dynamic marking over the last two measures.

Second system of musical notation. Treble clef with a slur over the first two measures. Bass clef with a *cresc.* dynamic marking. The system includes a slur over the last two measures of the bass line and a *con forza* dynamic marking over the last two measures of the treble line.

Third system of musical notation. Treble clef with a slur over the first two measures. Bass clef with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The system includes a slur over the last two measures of the bass line.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble clef with a slur over the first two measures. Bass clef with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. The system includes a slur over the last two measures of the bass line and a *cresc.* dynamic marking over the last two measures of the treble line.

Fifth system of musical notation. Treble clef with a slur over the first two measures. Bass clef with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic marking. The system includes a slur over the last two measures of the bass line and a complex fingering diagram above the treble line.

The musical score is arranged in six systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system features complex fingering patterns and a dynamic marking of *ff*. The second system includes a *cresc.* marking and a *V* instruction. The third system is marked *ff stretto*. The fourth system features a *ff* marking and a *V* instruction. The fifth system includes a *stretto* marking. The sixth system is marked *fff* and concludes with a *V* instruction and a final chord marked with an asterisk.