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CHOPIN

PRELUDES,
OPUS 28; OPUS 45,
and the
PRELUDE IN A-FLAT MAJOR

Brian Ganz, Author and Editor

The following performance notes are intended to accompany the G. Schirmer print edition of the *Chopin Preludes, Op. 28* [HL00296523, ISBN 0-634-08444-5]. General performance notes on the *Preludes* and more detailed, individual notes for Preludes Nos. 4, 7, and 8 are found in the printed edition. A recording of the *Preludes*, by artist/editor Brian Ganz, is also included with the print edition.



PRELUDE NO. 1

Keep in mind, in determining a sufficiently agitated tempo for this first prelude, which is marked *Agitato*, that two of the 24 preludes are marked *Molto agitato*. Leave room for greater agitation (and a faster tempo) in those later works. The bracketed metronome marking in the score indicates a suggested tempo range for this prelude. This metronome marking and all others throughout the score are my own, and are suggestions only. Chopin did not often give such markings; he gave none for the *Preludes*. Note also the rare meter, 2/8. To my knowledge this is the only instance of 2/8 time in all of Chopin's works. It is interesting to observe that he opts for the simple time meter of 2/8 rather than the compound-time meter of 6/16. (See the note for Prelude No. 13.)

Consider that one has the possibility of projecting the tenor voice, the soprano voice, or some evolving combination of the two. (See the note for Prelude No. 8 in the print edition.)

MM.1, 21, 24, 27: Chopin uses rhythmic braces to indicate triplets in these measures, and the braces are indistinguishable from his normal slurs. The slurring, however, is quite clear in all measures in which the rhythmic braces are not used: Chopin covers all five notes in the right hand with a single slur. I do not believe he intends the braces in these four measures to indicate two separate slurs; rather, he is clarifying the rhythm. Therefore, I have added single slurs in brackets over all five 16th notes in the right hand in these measures.

M.17: The word *stretto* means "narrow" or "tight" in Italian. Chopin uses the word here (as he does most often) to imply that the tempo presses forward toward a phrase goal as the beats become "narrower" (and therefore faster). For Chopin, *stretto* usually connotes urgency and intensity.

MM. 18-20, 23, 25-6: Again Chopin's rhythmic braces, which he uses in these measures to indicate quintuplets, are indistinguishable from normal slurs. I have added rhythmic braces for all quintuplets in this prelude to clarify Chopin's rhythmic intentions, allowing the braces as Chopin writes them to stand as slurs. This renders the slurring consistent throughout the prelude.

M. 21: Notice that Chopin extends both the *stretto* and the *crescendo* to include this climactic measure, not merely to reach it.

MM. 33-4: Chopin chooses a simple notation in these measures, which may leave his intentions in doubt for some performers. I believe he does not intend the lower notes of the final C major chord to be re-struck in the last measure, despite the fact that the ties do not account for the intervening note values.

M. 34: It is something of a mystery that Chopin usually—though not always—leaves the final pedal mark of a prelude without a release sign, as he does in this prelude. He may have felt it was redundant both to end the piece *and* make the release point of the pedal explicit. The only preludes in all of Op. 28 that have release signs for the final pedal (when the piece ends with pedal) are Preludes Nos. 5 and 15. So as to avoid confusion, I have added release points to the final pedal mark in all other preludes that end with pedal.

Pedaling Possibilities

The pedal markings in Chopin's manuscripts are sometimes difficult to interpret with confidence. For example, in this prelude he places the oval pedal-release sign at slightly different points from measure to measure, despite the similarity of the figuration. At times he places it exactly with the final 16th note of the measure, at times slightly later, most often just before. I have interpreted most of these slight differences as imprecision on Chopin's part, and concluded that he intends *legato* pedaling once per measure, as such pedaling is quite beautiful in this prelude without being heavy or blurry on the modern piano. It also allows a rich *legato* in the melodic voices. In mm. 13-15 Chopin unmistakably (though puzzlingly) places the release sign significantly earlier, and we have reproduced that carefully. Likewise in mm. 29-32. The performer may wish to use light, fractional pedaling in the unpedaled portions of these measures to assist in the *legato* and coloring of the sound.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-8 (1-4, 5-8); 9-16 (9-12, 13-16); 17-24
(17-20, 21-24); 25-34 (25-26! 27-28! 29-32, 33-34)

As I state in the prefatory comments of the G. Schirmer print edition, my phrase diagrams are outlined broadly in groups of whole measures. I generally do not note where phrases reach across bar lines for resolution, for example. Chopin's phrasing often invites a more refined phrasing, with measures sometimes containing both the final notes of a phrase and the beginning notes of the next. Indeed, sometimes these may be the very same notes. The student is encouraged to attempt such detailed phrasing on his or her own.

For Further Exploration

Notice how Chopin delights in moving back and forth between ascending and descending seconds in this prelude. Once a pattern or principle such as this is discerned, it leads to further questions, such as, "To what extent does the principle (or pattern) inform the entire work? Does the composer break the pattern or depart from the principle? If so, where and how?" In this case, is the interval between the two primary melodic pitches within each measure ever anything other than a second? The consistency of the melodic interval throughout this prelude calls forth Chopin's creativity on other levels. For example, the second

four-bar phrase segment (mm. 5-8) forms a loose mirror image of the first. Are there any other mirror images?

The movement from sextuplet rhythm with an opening 16th rest to quintuplet rhythm filling the bar in mm. 18-20 is clearly designed to support, with the *stretto*, the rise in tension toward the climactic m. 21. One question worth pondering is why Chopin returns to quintuplet rhythm sporadically thereafter, with no particular pattern.

There is always one consonant tone (or chord tone) and one dissonant tone in the melodic second featured in every measure of this prelude up to m. 29. In which measures does Chopin begin this melodic second with the chord tone, and in which does he begin with the dissonant tone? Do any interesting patterns emerge?

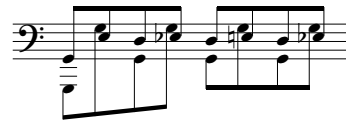
PRELUDE NO. 2

Chopin gives no harmonic clue as to the key of this prelude until the 15th measure, and the only A minor chord is the final one. This may have been one of the preludes to inspire the well-known Schumann review of Op. 28, in which he calls the *Preludes* “remarkable [*merkwürdig*, which can also connote ‘strange’]” and compares them to “ruins, individual eagle pinions, all disorder and wild confusion.” (I quote Jeffrey Kallberg’s excellent article on the *Preludes* in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (1992), edited by Chopin scholar Jim Samson.)

One wonders: Did Chopin set out to compose a piece with the tonic chord delayed to the latest possible moment, or did the piece naturally unfold that way in the spirit of improvisation? Was it Chopin’s intent to leave the listener disturbed by such tonal ambiguity, as Schumann probably was? This question can lead us to an inquiry into the very nature of composing. How much is consciously decided ahead of time? Is disturbance a legitimate purpose of art? Does the tonal ambiguity in this piece disturb you?

Note that Chopin’s opening notation suggests that he intends the B-A#-B-G (etc.) “middle voice” of the left-hand accompaniment to possess its own melodic integrity, perhaps as a brooding counterpoint to the main theme soon to emerge. I believe he returns to a simpler notation for convenience, and not because the voice in question loses its melodic character. Bear this initial notation in mind throughout the prelude. For example, here is how m. 6 would look if notated similarly.

Prelude No. 2: m. 6, l.h.



Observe how the notation highlights the melodic character of the “inner voice.”

M. 5: I recommend a slow and expressive appoggiatura here and elsewhere in this prelude, played on the beat (meaning in this case simultaneous with the fourth eighth) and about equal to a triplet 16th.

M. 18: *Slentando* is similar in Italian to *rallentando*. Note the shared root of the words, *lento*, or slow.

M. 21: Chopin’s use of the word *sostenuto* here may suggest a slightly more measured, tenderly deliberate tempo. The word means “sustained” in Italian. See the note for Prelude No. 13.

MM. 22, 23: I believe the arpeggiated chords in these measures are most expressive if rolled on the beat. I also recommend holding the upbeat to m. 23 (the middle C), until the last note of the final chord is played, thus maintaining a melodic *legato*.

Pedaling Possibilities

The pedal may be used, broadly speaking, for three general purposes at the piano: the combination of tones, connection between tones (i.e. *legato*), and coloring of tones. I refer to these as “the three Cs of pedaling.” Although Chopin gives only one pedal marking in this prelude, in mm. 18-19, this does not necessarily mean we are not to pedal elsewhere. Rather, I interpret this single pedal mark as Chopin’s only explicit request to combine tones in the prelude. The pianist may use the pedal for deeper *legato* and richer tone color for much of this prelude, and perhaps throughout. Acknowledge Chopin’s pedaling here by combining tones quite sparingly (if at all), apart from mm. 18-19.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-7 (1-2, 3-7!); 8-12!; 13-23! (13-19! 20-23)

For Further Exploration

One of the more useful questions we can ask of a musical moment is: “What is occurring here for the first time?” When in doubt about what is interesting or beautiful at any moment in a work, try asking that question. Ask that of m. 17 in this prelude. Then ask the same of m. 19, then m. 20. With a little practice, we can find something new about virtually every measure. Every such “event,” or novelty, contributes to the story the music tells, and the more conscious we are of these musical events, the more vivid and alive the story.

There are two instances of syncopation in the melodic line in this prelude. Can you find them both? Are they alike or different from each other?

PRELUDE NO. 3

This is the first of several etude-like preludes. Though the word *leggiermente* often implies a light, *non-legato* touch, I believe that here Chopin intends both a light and *legato* accompaniment.

M. 3: This is the first occurrence of an accent in the *Preludes*. I take it as axiomatic that a Chopin accent is never merely an accent. Accented notes in Chopin are sometimes more energetic, sometimes brighter, sometimes more expressive, sometimes more lingering, sometimes more poignant, but never merely louder. Therefore, we must always try to discern the interpretive purpose, or character, of a Chopin accent. In this case, I believe he intends the accent to announce the arrival of the perky theme, cleanly projecting over the busy accompaniment. Does the absence of further accents mean that the first note is to be loudest? I think not.

MM. 7-11: The five-bar phrase in this prelude is rare in Chopin, and here it is delightfully piquant. What is it about this prelude that may have brought forth this pesky, “uneven” phrase?

M. 8, 10, 24 and 26: Look closely at the note values Chopin gives to the right-hand chords in these measures. The inconsistency is fascinating. The manuscript makes clear that Chopin originally wrote the left-hand figure an octave higher in mm. 8, 10 and 11. Then he crossed it out and transferred it to the lower octave. As noted in the Paderewski edition, this is probably the reason he notates the two lower pitches in the right-hand chords as quarters rather than as half notes in mm. 8 and 10, since the left-hand’s original register would have caused some encroachment on the right-hand chord, necessitating the release of the pitches notated as quarters. In m. 24, Chopin again appears to notate the chord with the left-hand encroachment in mind. However, the encroaching figure has no effect whatsoever upon the right-hand chord in m. 26. All notes of the chord are whole notes. This notation has implications for the use of the pedal. (See “Pedaling Possibilities.”)

MM. 28-32: Chopin does not write slurs over the left hand in these bars. Notice that the slurs for the left hand have all been a single measure long; in these final measures the right hand receives one long slur, covering more than four measures.

Pedaling Possibilities

Although Chopin indicates no pedaling in this prelude, some slight “moistening” with pedal is quite effective and beautiful. Experiment with a light and not too fast flutter pedal, perhaps a quarter to a half depression, with several light, not necessarily connected, changes per measure (i.e. not necessarily a *legato* flutter). If the notation of m. 26 is taken literally, the whole notes in the right-hand chord necessitate that the pedaling here be deeper and longer than elsewhere in the prelude.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-11 (1-2, 3-6, 7-11!); 12-19 (12-15, 16-19); 20-27; 28-33 (28-31, 32-33)

For Further Exploration

Why do you think Chopin changes the F \sharp in the left-hand figure in mm. 18-21 to F \sharp in m. 22? Identify the right-hand chord in that measure.

Consider my question about the five-bar phrase above. Which measure, if any, feels to you like an “extra” one?

Consider the five- and seven-bar phrases in Prelude No. 2. How are they different from the five-bar phrase in this prelude? (Occasionally I ask a question in the sections “For Further Exploration,” which I leave unanswered in the appendix. This is the first example of such a question. As are some of the questions for which I *do* provide possible answers, those I leave unanswered are always questions without a “right” answer. I encourage you to use them as springboards to your own creative thinking.)

PRELUDE NO. 4

See the print edition of the *Preludes* for a full discussion of this prelude.

PRELUDE NO. 5

Chopin covers almost this entire prelude with a single slur, a very unusual practice for him. With a little imagination, the piece can be seen as a single long phrase, encompassing many smaller phrase segments.

The pianist should highlight Chopin’s dappled use of mode mixture. Mode mixture usually entails the flattening of the sixth degree of the scale. For example, in this prelude Chopin occasionally lowers the B \sharp to B \flat , resulting in minor mode “flavoring” in a major mode context. Furthermore, he moves back and forth quickly between modes in a very playful manner. The breathlessness of the single long musical sentence (involving uninterrupted 16th-note motion in both hands) coupled with the dizzying

combination of major and minor modes makes for a hyper-active, heady brew.

MM. 13-16, 29-32: I am grateful to the Ekier edition for noticing something in Chopin's manuscript that no earlier edition, to my knowledge, has noted: Chopin added quarter-note stems to the third 16th note in all of these measures. This is very easy to miss in the manuscript. One is misled by the fact that Chopin originally added eighth-note stems and beams to the third and fifth 16th notes of these measures (as he did to some 16th notes in the opening measures, for example), and then crossed them out with spidery strokes. Though they are hard to see, Chopin has unmistakably added quarter stems to replace the crossed-out eighth stems on the third 16th of these measures, as Ekier correctly points out.

M. 21: Note the expressive difference from the earlier analogous bar, m. 5. Consult the note for Prelude No. 4, m. 14, and then juxtapose these measures (5 and 21) in the same way so as to bring this expressive difference into sharper focus.

MM. 37-39: Chopin notates the rests here as a single quarter rest per measure rather than two eighth rests. I have followed the example of Paderewski, engraving them as eighth rests for ease of reading. Chopin places the pedal release sign directly below the quarter rest in m. 38 and slightly to its right in mm. 37 and 39. This suggests to me that Chopin wishes the chords to resonate through a *portion* of the quarter rest he notates, and I have therefore placed the pedal release between the two eighth rests.

Pedaling Possibilities

Chopin's pedaling in this prelude is driven in part by concern for *legato* when the harmonic rhythm is faster and extended resonance when the harmonic rhythm is slower. Save for a single editorial pedal marking (clearly distinguished by the dotted line), we have followed Chopin's example in the manuscript and left out any pedal markings when the "recap" occurs in m. 21. However, I recommend pedaling similar to the first time through this material. The pianist may experiment with additional pedaling for added moisture where not marked by Chopin, but should take care to strive for the greatest possible finger *legato*. The additional pedaling should be light, with frequent changes. Try a slow flutter pedal with no more than about 1/3 engagement of the dampers.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-39! (1-4, 5-8, 9-16, 17-20, 21-24, 25-32, 33-37, 38-39)

For Further Exploration

What harmonies can result when the sixth degree of a major scale is lowered? What can happen to the subdominant harmony? To the leading-tone seventh chord?

PRELUDE NO. 6

"There is one [prelude] that came to him through an evening of dismal rain—it casts the soul into a terrible dejection." (I quote Thomas Higgins' translation of George Sand's *Histoire de Ma Vie*, a passage of which appears in the *Norton Critical Score* of the *Preludes*, Higgins, ed.) It is hard to imagine that these words of George Sand refer to the soothing prelude we have come to know as the "Raindrop," No. 15. Although she does not specify to which prelude she refers, many now believe she was writing of this one, No. 6. The expressive repeated-note motive in this prelude may recall a steady, mournful rainfall, though it is doubtful that Chopin himself was inspired by the sound of rain. The title "Raindrop" is certainly not Chopin's, for this or any prelude. He was not fond of fanciful titles, and protested when Sand attempted to connect a musical event in his works with an explicit extra-musical inspiration. However, a concrete mental image or metaphor is frequently helpful to the student and performer, as it can inspire interpretive creativity and bring to life a more vivid tonal imagery. For example, in this prelude, the accents can be interpreted to suggest a throbbing quality in the repeated notes.

Often, pianists must determine whether a composer leaves out markings because he truly wishes them absent or because he believes the performer will understand them to be assumed. This prelude offers an intriguing example of such a conundrum, and again the manuscript is instructive. The accents and slurs of m. 1 would seem to apply to all beats of similar right-hand motivic structure throughout the prelude, perhaps ending with m. 22. However, the manuscript tells a different and rather puzzling story. Chopin at first placed accents and slurs in what seems to be an all but haphazard manner throughout the prelude, in apparent defiance of any intuitive musical logic. To cite one example, he added accents and slurs identical to those in m. 1 through the second beat of m. 6, but omitted them from mm. 9 and 10 when the theme returns, only to include them in several subsequent measures. Moreover, sometimes he included the slur but no accent, again with no apparent musical logic. Then he went to the trouble of crossing out all such markings except those in m. 1 and on the third beat of m. 22. I believe the first lesson to be drawn from this is simply: when markings are absent, be very careful what you assume! Second, I suggest that Chopin made a deliberate choice not to "micromanage" the performer's musicianship, but rather to respect his or her interpretive prerogative. He leaves the accented, slurred pulsing of repeated notes, or their non-pulsing (beyond those marked), to the instincts of the performer.

M. 7: In the general prefatory comments, I suggest a non-dogmatic approach to the interpretation of grace notes in Chopin's *Preludes*. The two in this measure provide an excellent opportunity for such freedom of interpretation.

These grace notes are the first of the *Preludes* to have cross-strokes. Although cross-strokes on grace notes as used by Chopin frequently imply a faster execution, I play the first of the two expressively and before the beat. I prefer to play the second one faster, and also before the beat. Experiment with several possibilities before settling on your preference.

M. 19: It is impossible to say whether the middle note of the right-hand chord on beat 2 of this measure is an F# or a G in Chopin's manuscript. Ekier interprets the note as an F#; in Henle, Paderewski and other editions the note is a G.

M. 26: It is interesting to note that this, the slowest of all the Preludes, is the first to end without a *fermata*. Perhaps Chopin felt that with the slower tempo, no extra time is called for in the final silence of the prelude.

Pedaling Possibilities

Again Chopin seems to have written explicit pedal markings only when they involve a relatively significant combination of tones, leaving them out as unnecessary when the pedal is to be used for *legato* or for coloring. I recommend pedaling through the full beat when four arpeggiated 16ths are played; otherwise, I recommend *legato* pedaling once, twice, or up to four times per beat as called for by the melodic line and the taste of the performer.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-8 (1-2, 3-4, 5-8); 9-14! (9-10, 11-12, 13-14), 15-18, 19-22, 23-26

For Further Exploration

Like many great composers, Chopin was a lover of the lowered supertonic (i.e. flattened II) or Neapolitan triad. Found most often in first inversion, it is usually symbolized "N6" for that reason, and it usually leads to the dominant, often passing first through the tonic 6/4 chord. (See, for example, Prelude No. 8, mm. 24-25, and Prelude No. 12, m. 72.) The darker color of the lowered supertonic offers a particularly expressive path to the dominant. Can you find an extended phrase in the key of the Neapolitan in this prelude? Is the triad itself used in first inversion? Does the phrase lead to the dominant? There are many instances of the Neapolitan in the *Preludes*. This is the first.

In Prelude No. 4 we saw the raised seventh (i.e. the leading-tone) followed closely and expressively by the lowered seventh. Can you find a similar expressive device in this prelude? How does this instance differ from the earlier example?

PRELUDE NO. 7

PRELUDE NO. 8

See the print edition of the *Preludes* for a full discussion of these preludes.

PRELUDE NO. 9

The rhythm of this prelude has long posed a conundrum to editors and performers. A full debate of all elements of this conundrum is best left to another forum. Here I will outline the decision the performer must make and offer a rationale for either of the two possible choices.

In his manuscript, Chopin consistently notates the right-hand 16th notes directly above the third chord of the eighth-note triplets, joining the 16th and the lower notes into a chord with a single stem. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Chopin intends these 16ths to be played simultaneously with the lower notes, in Baroque style. In no case, to my knowledge, does Chopin notate with a single stem notes he intended to be played sequentially. But the earliest editions of the *Preludes*, published during Chopin's lifetime, consistently notate the 16th offset from the triplet.

Prelude No. 9: m. 1, beat 2, r.h.



The edition of Carl Mikuli, still in widespread use to this day, is of particular interest, as Mikuli had been a student of Chopin. His edition offsets the 16ths, as do most subsequent editions. Why this discrepancy?

One clue may be found in the manuscript itself. There is one single beat that has always raised strong doubts about the Baroque interpretation, beat one of m. 8. Despite the fact that the notes in the upper voice in this beat are not the usual dotted rhythm but two equal eighths, Chopin notates the beat exactly like the dotted rhythms in terms of stemming and vertical alignment. Here would seem to be evidence that, in this prelude at least, alignment and stemming alone do not dictate execution, since surely Chopin did not intend the dotted cases and the undotted case to be played identically. This beat, I suggest, may have constituted at least in part the justification for offsetting the 16th notes in the engraving of the first and subsequent editions.

A case can thus be made both for offsetting the 16th in performance, and for playing the 16th simultaneously with the third eighth. Consequently, while we print the

traditional interpretation offsetting the 16ths, we offer both possibilities to the performer and encourage his or her choice between the two. However, I urge the performer to take into account the necessity of distinguishing between the dotted rhythms and the single undotted rhythm of m. 8, beat one. How may this be done? If the performer chooses the traditional interpretation, offsetting the 16ths, it is easy to distinguish this beat: one simply plays it exactly as it is notated in the manuscript, with the second eighth of the upper voice played simultaneously with the third eighth of the triplet. However, if the Baroque interpretation is chosen, in which all 16ths are played simultaneously with the third eighth of the triplet, it is more difficult to see how one may distinguish m. 8, beat one. Here the Mikuli edition provides a solution: in this beat, the upper voice eighth notes are engraved as a duplet independent of the lower-voice triplet, positioned so as to represent a clear two-against-three rhythm.

The entire issue may therefore be summarized as follows: If the performer follows the traditional approach, offset the 16ths when the rhythm is dotted and make the second eighth in the upper voice of the first beat of m. 8 coincide with the third eighth of the lower-voice triplet. If the Baroque interpretation implied by Chopin's manuscript is followed, play the 16th simultaneously with the third eighth of the triplet when the rhythm is dotted, and play the upper voice as a duplet against the lower-voice triplet in the first beat of m. 8.

If the performer follows the traditional approach, I caution that the 16th not be made equal to half of a triplet eighth, but rather represent a true 16th (i.e. one fourth of a quarter) against the triplet accompaniment. I recommend that the 32nd notes equal one half of a true 16th (i.e. one eighth of a quarter note). It is worth noting that the Ekier edition, which adopts the manuscript's version (i.e. the Baroque interpretation), recommends that the 32nd notes be made to equal to one half of the triplet eighth, or one sixth of a quarter note.

See the G. Schirmer print edition for examples illustrating the above points. Consult the section marked "Ornamentation."

Chopin uses the evolving rhythms in the melodic line, from single- to double-dotted, to underscore the increasing stateliness in this most majestic of the *Preludes*. I believe this unusually important rhythmic role was carefully intended by Chopin to follow Prelude No. 8, in which rhythmic evolution plays no role whatsoever. (See the note for Prelude No. 8, in the print edition.)

M. 8: Chopin adds the word "*decresc.*" to the hairpin *diminuendo* in this measure. The word begins at the C-flat,

and dashes extend it to the end of the measure. Because the word appears redundant with the hairpin, I decided to remove it from the score for purposes of visual clarity. However, it is possible that Chopin intended the use of both the word and the hairpin as a form of emphasis. Make the *decrecendo* a vivid one!

M. 11: Again Chopin includes both the hairpin and the word "*cresc.*" in this measure. Because the hairpin, which begins directly on the downbeat, lasts only for two beats here, while the *cresc.* is extended by dashes to last the whole measure, I removed the hairpin in this case for added visual clarity. It is possible, again, that Chopin includes both the word and the hairpin for emphasis, and again I recommend that the *crescendo* be unusually vivid.

M. 12: To the half-note E in the bass on the downbeat of this measure, I add a quarter-note E on the same pitch and the same beat, following Paderewski's example. The quarter note accounts visually for the voice that moves to B on the second beat.

Pedaling Possibilities

Chopin sometimes indicates pedaling through harmonic changes in this prelude. On modern instruments I recommend at least half-changes of the pedal (if not more) when the harmony changes. It is also possible to pedal lightly for added majesty, *legato* and sound consistency where Chopin indicates no pedaling. Pay close attention however, to the quality of your finger *legato* where Chopin does not notate pedal.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-4 (1-2, 3-4); 5-8; 9-12!

For Further Exploration

Chopin was a master of harmonic innovation and experimentation. There are two very interesting harmonic approaches to the dominant in this prelude. Can you find them both?

How might you attempt to tell the rhythmic story of this prelude in words? It might start out with a rhythmic disagreement between the hands. Where would it go from there?

PRELUDE NO. 10

Like Prelude No. 7, this prelude is also a *mazurka*, but a very different one. The tempo is faster, and the right-hand figures are more active and agitated, spanning several registers in a mere two measures. Chopin invests this prelude with a great deal more of the rhythmic dynamism typically encountered in the *mazurkas*. In addition to the characteristic dotted rhythm on the first beat of the measure, there are accents placed in typical *mazurka* style: most often on the third

beat, occasionally on the first or second, keeping things lively and unpredictable. The shifting triplets and duplets of the right-hand figures also heighten the rhythmic agitation. The frequent fifths underpinning the accompanying chords, although not quite the *bourdon* (or pedal point) fifths often found in the *mazurkas* themselves, contribute further *mazurka* “flavoring” to this prelude. Therefore, despite the prelude’s difficulty, the performer must allow it to dance with unflinching grace. In particular, note the elegant rhythmic vitality imparted by the rest in the bass line in mm. 4, 8, 12 and 16, despite the *legato* required of the melodic right-hand line. Observe both the rest and the *legato* meticulously.

It is not possible to say with certainty whether the hairpins that characterize the descending figures in this prelude are *diminuendos* or accents. In Chopin’s manuscript, however, there is a subtle but consistent distinction between these hairpins and those of mm. 3-4, 7-8, 11-12 and 15-16. The latter are angled slightly upward and are generally shorter than those inflecting the descending figure; it is easier to say with confidence that the shorter ones are intended as accents. I have interpreted the longer hairpins as *diminuendos*.

M. 8: The left-hand G# on the second beat of this measure may be a quarter note rather than the half note we have engraved. It is difficult to say with certainty because the notehead in Chopin’s manuscript is small. I have chosen the half note for consistency with mm. 4 and 12.

Pedaling Possibilities

I recommend experimenting with shorter pedaling than Chopin suggests here. I find that silence and separation often best represent the graceful movement of a stylized dance: silence is a lovely sound-metaphor for broken contact with the ground, as imagined dancers leap or turn. I therefore choose to highlight the rests Chopin notates here rather than follow strictly the pedaling.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-4; 5-8; 9-12; 13-18! (13-16, 17-18)

For Further Exploration

Why is the last “A” of m. 6 an A#? How is that A# similar to the F# in m. 22 of Prelude No. 3?

PRELUDE NO. 11

Although a superb *legato* is of great importance in playing Chopin’s music, and was a recurring theme in his teaching, he actually gave the explicit direction “*legato*” relatively rarely to the performer. This is the first instance of his doing so in the *Preludes*. Carl Mikuli described Chopin’s *legato* in this way: “The tones melted into one another as wonderfully as in the most beautiful singing.” (I quote from Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger’s *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*.)

This “melting” quality extends in this prelude to a rhythmic fluidity represented by subtle but frequent shifting from rhythmic grouping in threes (natural to 6/8 time) to grouping in twos. Examples of this shift, which goes by the inelegant name of “hemiola,” occur in mm. 5, 9, and 10, among others. Note and enjoy these well, for there are no such hemiolas in the three remaining preludes written in 6/8 time.

Prelude No. 11: mm. 4-5



I recommend that the single grace notes be played before the beat, and the double grace notes be played on the beat.

Pedaling possibilities

Chopin again indicates longer pedaling than is commonly employed on modern pianos. I recommend fractional changes according to personal taste where Chopin writes longer markings, and frequent, light pedal touches to moisten those passages in which Chopin marks no explicit pedaling.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-10! (1-2, 3-6, 7-10); 11-14 (11-12, 13-14), 15-20! (15-18, 19-20); 21-27! (21-22, 23-25! 26-27)

For Further Exploration

Can you find any hemiolas among the preludes not written in 6/8 time? Why are hemiolas more likely in 6/8 and in 3/4 time than in other time signatures? Which prelude, not written in either of these time signatures, might—with a little imagination—be seen to consist of nothing but hemiolas?

PRELUDE NO. 12

This prelude offers an interesting example of an undeniable mistake Chopin makes in the manuscript, one that leaves his true intent somewhat in doubt. In m. 30 Chopin has arrived at the key of E minor, and this measure ends in what appears to be a half cadence on the dominant, requiring a D# as the leading tone. In the melodic line that rises toward the half cadence, the D is made natural, as it is not yet needed as a leading tone. By the final beat Chopin appears to have forgotten that he has formerly placed a natural in front of the D. How can we be sure he has made a mistake? The lower D of the octave receives no natural in the manuscript, and the possibility we may safely rule out is that Chopin intended a diminished octave, with D# in the lower voice

and D[♯] in the upper voice. Either he forgot to add the sharp in the upper voice, or he forgot to add the natural in the lower voice. I have settled on the “leading-tone” version of D[♯], as the key of E minor normally requires. However, the D[♮] is worth some experimentation. It results in a brief cadence in the minor dominant, B minor, which is lovely and surprisingly sad. Although most performers choose the D[♯], no less an artist than Maurizio Pollini recorded the prelude with the D[♮]!

MM. 9-10: Chopin leaves out the pedal markings in these two measures, perhaps assuming (as he appears to do elsewhere in the *Preludes*) that the performer will presume them to be pedaled identically with the opening. I have added editorial pedal markings consistent with the opening.

M. 36: The manuscript is messy and difficult to read at this measure. It is possible that Chopin does not intend the quarter note F[♯] on the third beat in the right hand. Ekier leaves it out; Henle includes it.

M. 70: Here is a case where a close look at Chopin’s manuscript leaves an otherwise controversial passage clarified beyond doubt. The ear expects the normal V-I cadence (with the octave G[♯] in the left hand on the downbeat) before the deceptive V-VI cadence (with the octave E in the left hand on the downbeat of the following measure), as Chopin gives it in the previous phrase (mm. 66-67). But Chopin has clearly crossed something out in this second phrase and settled unquestionably—though surprisingly—on the octave E in the left hand on the downbeat both in mm. 70 and 71. You will not hear the correct octave on the downbeat of m. 70 in my recording, as I learned the prelude with an edition that had “corrected” the surprising E.

Pedaling possibilities

Chopin’s pedal markings serve well the demonic quality of this very difficult prelude by allowing the *staccato* left-hand chords and octaves to be heard as such. Even where Chopin indicates *legato* pedaling, I recommend that the performer not lose entirely the enormous kinetic energy afforded by separation. Again, I believe the performer may lightly moisten the sound with pedal touches in those passages where Chopin indicates no pedal markings. In particular, I find pedal necessary in mm. 57-60, when the texture becomes extremely thin.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-8; 9-20! (9-12, 13-16, 17-20); 21-24; 25-28; 29-30; 31-32; 33-40 (33-36, 37-40); 41-48; 49-64! (49-52, 53-54, 55-56, 57-64); 65-68; 69-73; 74-81

For Further Exploration

In this prelude, as in others, Chopin has either “misspelled” an augmented sixth chord, or opted for the more easily read

version. Can you find the chord? (We have retained Chopin’s spelling in this case as we have elsewhere throughout the edition.)

Can you find Chopin’s beautiful use of the Neapolitan in this prelude? Occasionally I play a phrase that uses the Neapolitan and substitute the normal, unflatted supertonic to see how that would sound. Then I play it as written, with the Neapolitan. This highlights the Neapolitan’s darker, more intense expressiveness. In this case, Chopin does that for us. The phrase occurs twice, first with the normal supertonic, then with the Neapolitan. Find the two phrases. (This is a special example of the practice of juxtaposition that we first encountered in Prelude No. 4.)

PRELUDE NO. 13

It is worth considering the distinction between simple and compound time signatures here. In simple time, the beat equals a normal, undotted note. In compound time, with time signatures such as 6/8, 6/4, 9/8, 12/16, etc., the beat is a dotted note. The top number does not give the number of beats per measure in compound time; to arrive at the correct number of beats the top number must be divided by 3. Only once in my performing life have I come across the instruction next to a 6/8 time signature to feel it in 6 (in the slow movement of Philippe Gaubert’s *Sonata in A major* for flute and piano). Ordinarily, 6/8 and 6/4 time are to be felt in two. It is easy to forget this in 6/4 time, however, because we are dealing with larger note values, which often lead the eye astray; the grouping into two beats is not as apparent.

A glance at the manuscript of this prelude suggests that Chopin did not understand this metric issue, as he wrote 3/2 as the time signature. 3/2 is simple triple time, in which the beat equals a half note. It is not possible to hear this prelude as genuine simple triple time, however, and so I have followed the example of all other editions with which I am familiar and changed the meter to the compound duple of 6/4 time. However, one must consider the probability that Chopin knew exactly what he was doing in assigning the unlikely meter of 3/2 to this prelude. He did in fact cross out the original meter before writing 3/2, and appears to have struggled a bit before making a decision. One intriguing possibility involves a subtle tribute to his beloved J. S. Bach. Bach was fond of writing works that fluctuate a bit between compound and simple time. Consider the *Corrente* from the fourth *Partita* for keyboard, for example. Most of the piece is to be felt in compound duple time (or 6/4), with relatively few instances of simple triple (or 3/2). (The measures themselves look roughly similar to the eye whether they are to be felt in two or three; no change in time signature is necessary during the course of such a work.) Bach assigns the meter 3/2 rather than 6/4 to this *Corrente*, despite the

predominance of compound duple time throughout. Perhaps Chopin took this 13th prelude, a work with hardly a moment of simple triple to be found, and with a wink paid a kind of numerical homage to the Baroque master by assigning the less appropriate time signature. Be sure, however, to apply your concept of *lento* to a feeling of 2 beats per measure, not 3, and most certainly not 6.

Note how Chopin takes the final four notes of the left-hand figure in m. 7 and spins a subtle hemiola in m. 8. See the related note for Prelude No. 11.

This prelude offers an excellent opportunity to explore a sensuous relationship with the keys through multiple finger substitutions supporting a deep *legato*. Experiment with sliding along the key in different ways for different sounds.

M. 2: I urge the performer to hold the dotted whole notes meticulously through the whole measure (See mm. 10, 17, 19, etc.). In later instances, skillful use of the pedal is required to avoid an overly blurred sound. I recommend fractional pedal changes in mm. 33, 35 and 36, for example. See further thoughts on pedaling below.

M. 4: Although he apparently forgot to add the dot, I assume that Chopin intended the middle C# as a dotted whole note in the manner of m. 12, i.e., despite the recurrence of the C# before the measure ends. I have added an editorial dot in brackets.

M. 7: For recommendations on the execution of this ornament see page 8 of the performance notes in the G. Schirmer print edition as listed above.

M. 21: I believe we may take the simultaneity of Chopin's use of the word *sostenuto* here with *più lento* as a hint that in other cases where he uses *sostenuto* he may be suggesting, as did Brahms years later with the same word, a somewhat slower, more deliberate tempo.

M. 30: I break the second chord of this measure between the D# and the F#, in the manner required by Chopin for the chords in mm. 33-36. Other possibilities exist: the performer may play this chord unbroken, for example.

MM. 33-36: As these chords are marked with a definite break, it is important to break them only at the precise interval indicated by Chopin, not to roll them or break them elsewhere. See the pictorial representation on page 8 of the performance notes in the G. Schirmer print edition.

Pedaling possibilities

Chopin generally marks the pedal for this prelude only where a true finger *legato* (or something close to that for repeated notes) is not possible, although he usually extends the mark over several extra notes. I infer from this that he intends a general tonal richness that calls for frequent

touches of pedal. This is not to suggest that pedal *legato* should substitute for finger *legato*! Where notes are repeated, pedal is of course necessary for *legato*.

This prelude requires utmost skill with fractional pedaling, especially in mm. 33-36; see the note above for m. 2.

It is intriguing that Chopin places the pedal markings for mm. 33-35 above the treble staff rather than below the bass staff. It is hard to explain this or even imagine what significance it may have had for him. The manuscript makes clear that no space consideration was responsible for this placement of the pedal markings; there was plenty of room underneath the bass staff. The effect, however, is visually magical. The modern marking we use made reproducing this elevation of the pedal impractical. In the following example we use *Ped.* and *, which is what Chopin used in his manuscript, to illustrate this magical effect:

Prelude No. 13: mm. 33-36

Apparently Chopin forgot to write a pedal marking in m. 36. I have added an editorial marking in brackets.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-8 (1-2, 3-4, 5-8); 9-20! (9-10, 11-12, 13-16, 17-20); 21-28 (21-22, 23-24, 25-28); 29-38 (29-32, 33-36, 37-38)

For Further Exploration

Do certain genres inspire certain time signatures for Chopin? How many of the *Preludes* are in compound time? How about the *Etudes*? Is there a genre in which all of the works are in compound time? What might this suggest? Why are there no *Mazurkas*, *Waltzes* or *Polonaises* in compound time?

PRELUDE NO. 14

Although Chopin gives only one dynamic mark in this entire prelude, we may confidently take his intention to be the creation of a dramatic dynamic arc, beginning well below *forte*, rising to *fortissimo*, and ending perhaps even more

softly than it began. Note also that there are no slurs whatsoever in this prelude, the only prelude in which that is the case. One other prelude has almost no slurs; that other, however, No. 19, is marked *legato*. I believe Chopin intends a *quasi legato* (in this case very nearly *legato*) articulation for this prelude.

As we did with Prelude No. 4 and the *Mazurka Op. 17, No. 4*, we may draw a parallel between Prelude No. 14 and another work of Chopin, the final movement of the second, or “Funeral March” *Sonata, Op. 35*. Chopin may well have begun composing that movement very shortly after completing the Preludes, perhaps even before. We may again imagine this prelude to be a kind of seed for that fantastical movement, which so puzzled contemporary listeners (as did, of course, many of the *Preludes*). It is not just the fact that the hands move in entirely parallel motion throughout—a single voice in each hand at an octave’s distance—that unites the two works. It is also the new harmonic and melodic territory they both explore, decades ahead of their time. One might say of the sonata movement that it goes beyond the merely “new” and into downright alien territory. Schumann went so far as to write of this movement, in a review of the sonata, “music it is not,” though the review was by no means entirely negative. Almost certainly, Prelude No. 14 is another of those that inspired Schumann’s mixed review of the *Preludes*, cited above in the note for Prelude No. 2.

Pay attention to Chopin’s deft melding of apparently contradictory modes of expression in this prelude. On one hand, the line is almost effervescent. There is virtually no conjunct (stepwise) motion; the triplet figuration dances effortlessly and constantly across fairly large intervals. Furthermore, the texture is enlivened by the organization of the notes into intervallic pairs, although they remain rhythmically grouped as triplets. (See the note for Prelude No. 11.) Note also that the hairpin *crescendos* and *diminuendos* lead most often to and from the midpoint of the measure through m. 6, and then change, leading to and from the downbeat through m. 10. All of this makes for tremendous volatility.

On the other hand, the *tessitura* is quite unusually low for Chopin, giving this music a distinctly growling voice. Moreover, it is marked *pesante*, Italian for “heavy.” This fusion of apparently contradictory modes (a “heavy effervescence” or a “lively growl”) contributes to the prelude’s darkly menacing, almost frightening power, and marks this as another of the varied examples of Chopin’s innovation to be found in the *Preludes*. Chopin’s use of the word *pesante* is quite original here. This distinctive word is most often employed in chordal, or at least texturally dense, passages.

M. 8: In this prelude, Chopin is downright sloppy with his hairpin *crescendos* and *diminuendos* in the manuscript. It is

sometimes not possible to say with precision where they are meant to begin and end, because the lines that form the hairpins do not always extend equally. Also, the second hairpin of M. 8 is indecipherable, as the lines that form the hairpin do not converge or diverge cleanly. I have interpreted it as a *crescendo* because in this context it seems unlikely that Chopin intended three *diminuendos* in a row.

M. 14: Chopin did not add the single flat before the eighth note of this measure in his manuscript, so it is possible that he intended the E^b. Because ascending chromatic motion in the “upper” voice seems to be more in keeping with the spirit of this prelude, and because a break in the manuscript at this point (caused by a large smudge) might have caused Chopin to forget to add the single flat, I add the flat here in parentheses. In this I follow Henle’s example. Ekier leaves the note an E^b.

Pedaling Possibilities

I believe this prelude to be the only one of the 26 in which one may genuinely consider using no pedal whatsoever. Alternatively, light fractional pedaling may be used; “flutter” pedaling is also possible.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-4; 5-10!; 11-19 (11-14, 15-19)

For Further Exploration

To my knowledge, this piece is unique for at least two reasons. Can you determine what they are? Let your imagination play with this admittedly broad question a bit before consulting my thoughts in the appendix. There are hints of both reasons in my comments above.

PRELUDE NO. 15

One may presume that Chopin’s undeserved reputation among some listeners as an effete composer is due at least in part to the frequent excerpting of this very beautiful prelude. Taken alone, it is one of Chopin’s more tender and heartfelt utterances, quite accessible to the untrained ear, and within reach, technically, of the early intermediate piano student. However, if heard too often, it can seem ingratiatingly sweet. It is my firm conviction, however, that to fully appreciate this work one must taste its sweetness in context, both preceded by the demonic Prelude No. 14 and followed by the colossus of the *Preludes*, No. 16. Imagine attributing those preludes to an effete composer! Again I cite this need for context as evidence that Chopin conceived of the *Preludes* as a whole, greater than the sum of its parts, in which no individual prelude can be appreciated optimally without its neighbors.

We saw the instruction *sostenuto* at a tender moment within the body of Prelude No. 13, accompanied by the

words *più lento*. Here, I believe we may take the unusual tempo marking to imply the creation of a sound world of deep sentiment and affection, marked by a subtle reluctance to move ahead and leave each lovely phrase behind. Although Chopin occasionally used the word *sostenuto* to modify tempo markings (most often in the *Nocturnes*), I have found only one other of his works that bears the sole word *Sostenuto* as its tempo marking, the *Prelude in C-sharp minor*, Op. 45.

I recommend playing the grace notes before the beat in mm. 4, 11 (and similar measures), and 39.

M. 2: I have followed closely the notation of Chopin's manuscript of this prelude. Note Chopin's consistent notation in this and similar measures: the C is a dotted half note; the E^b and G^b are half notes. However, I do not believe it is necessary to make excessive efforts to release the E^b and G^b precisely at the third beat. Rather, I believe Chopin is implying a "finger pedal" for added sonorous richness. In any case, Chopin's pedal markings clearly extend the E^b and G^b beyond the notated values. (Note that use of finger pedal may be concurrent with use of the foot pedal.) On the other hand, I do urge the performer to adhere strictly to the holding of voices as notated, as with the leading tone (i.e., middle C) in mm. 3 and 4. Such examples of tonal fullness through the use of finger pedal help to offset the monotony threatened by the repetition of the A^b, or fifth degree of the tonic chord. Carefully note all examples of finger pedal in this prelude, e.g. the extra-stemmed A^b in mm. 3, 7 and elsewhere, and the extra-stemmed G^b of m. 19.

MM. 4, 23 and 79: I recommend that the grouplets in these measures be allowed to unfold spontaneously in the spirit of an improvised decoration. Alternatively, they may be measured or apportioned more strictly, according to individual preference. The examples below illustrate two possible realizations, the first more freely performed, and the second, more strictly measured:

Prelude No. 15: m. 4, beats 3-4

Prelude No. 15: m. 23, beats 3-4

Prelude No. 15: m. 79, beats 3-4

M. 17: It is doubtful whether there is truly an E^b just below the higher F on the last beat of this measure in Chopin's manuscript, (though it is possible to read it thus). We have, however, followed Henle's example in including this note analogously with mm. 11 and 15. Ekier leaves the note out.

MM. 28-30, 44-46: In his manuscript, Chopin used a hairpin to indicate the *crescendo* through these measures, adding the apparently redundant word "*cresc.*," with dashes, in m. 30. It is possible that Chopin intended the hairpin and the word "*cresc.*" to join emphatically in m. 30. However, I have removed the apparent redundancy for visual clarity, choosing to represent the entire crescendo over the three bars solely with the word "*cresc.*" and dashes. See the note for Prelude No. 9.

MM. 33, 49: The final beat in the left hand is an octave C[#] in the manuscript. I have retained that here, though Paderewski reports in his edition that Chopin changed the lower C[#] to the E a third above it in a copy of the first French edition. (The E is the note you will hear in my recording.) Though it occurs twice in the piece, the manuscript affords only one chance to view the measure, as Chopin did not re-notate mm. 44-58.

M. 63: Note the opportunity for expressiveness as the repeated G# finally becomes dissonant and is resolved, first to F#, and then to A, the first and third degrees of the subdominant triad, respectively.

M. 68: It is a mystery to me why Chopin briefly adds a left-hand repetition of the G# in this measure to join that of the right hand, and yet it is one of my favorite moments in this prelude. Because we cannot know the “why” of this lovely unexpected twist (and indeed a “why” may not exist), it has become for me a sort of enigmatic greeting mid-performance from the composer, a kind of musical “wink.”

MM. 79, 80, 88: It is worth noting that the “-ndo” and “-to” endings in Italian are the gerund (acting as a present participle) and past participle, respectively. Therefore, words like *crescendo* and *diminuendo* refer to a change in process, and words such as *animato* and *ritenuto* refer to a change already attained. *Smorzando* may be translated literally as “lessening,” or more poetically “dying away,” and is clearly a process. *Ritenuto* differs from *slentando* in that the former is an attained state —“held back”— and the latter is in process —“getting slower.” Although literal interpretations are not always necessary (and composers themselves do not always know the precise meanings of the Italian words they use), it is, I believe, important to understand the literal meanings of such directives, and then interpret them responsibly and thoughtfully through the prism of one’s convictions, bearing in mind the context in which the words are used.

M. 87: As Chopin set the E^b significantly apart from the C and G^b in the right hand, there is no doubt as to which note receives the accent: the E^b. Note that it is not rare for Chopin to disdain, in his manuscripts, the vertical alignment of simultaneous musical events.

Pedaling Possibilities

I do not, as I have stated before, believe it is necessary to avoid the use of the pedal where Chopin does not indicate it. I believe, however, that we must orient our use of the pedal in such instances toward the enhancement of *legato* and the coloring of tone, rather than toward the combination of tones. In other words, the pedal is used primarily for only two of the three “C’s” of pedaling. (See the note for Prelude No. 2.) Thus the use of the pedal where it is not noted is generally lighter and more discreet than where noted. In particular, pay close attention to the quality of your finger *legato* in the passage from mm. 28-39, and in the similar passage later.

Chopin did not indicate a pedal release at the *forte* in m. 81. As there is no release indication anywhere before the next *Œd.* it was clearly an oversight on Chopin’s part. The question is where Chopin intended the release. Several possibilities exist: experiment with extending the pedal

into the *forte* with infrequent changes; for example, hold the pedal through m. 82, then change the pedal on the downbeat of m. 83. Another possibility, which I favor, is a deep *legato* pedal, one change per quarter note, from the *forte* through m. 83.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-8 (1-4, 5-8); 9-19! (9-12, 13-16, 17-19!); 20-27 (20-23, 24-27); 28-35; 36-43 (36-39, 40-43); 44-51; 52-59 (52-55, 56-59); 60-67 (60-63, 64-67); 68-75 (68-73! 74-75); 76-89! (76-79, 80-83, 84-89)

For Further Exploration

Chopin seems to have set himself a compositional challenge, in the form of a limit, in this prelude. What is that challenge? Put another way, he adopted the musical equivalent of a poet’s rhyme scheme. What is that scheme?

PRELUDE NO. 16

M. 1: It is curious that Chopin gives no tempo marking for the opening measure of this most difficult of all the *Preludes*. *Ad libitum* for this measure would seem to be Chopin’s intention. One frequently hears the opening chord rolled. I prefer the chord unrolled, if one’s hands are sufficiently large; for smaller hands it may be rolled. I recommend that the performer pause at the *fermata* exactly as long as required to take a nice deep breath. Resist the temptation to begin at maximum tempo when the *Presto con fuoco* begins. There must be room for the *stretto* and *più animato* later.

M. 18: Notice that Chopin now connects the *anacrusis* (or pickup) and the first eighth of the beat in the left hand with slurs, rather than the first and second eighths of the beat as he did in the first phrase.

MM. 40-41: Note the two-bar phrase segment in the Neapolitan key of C^b major. We have observed that the Neapolitan is most often heard in first inversion, and have seen it used thus in previous preludes. (See the notes to Preludes Nos. 6 and 12). However, Chopin was also fond of the Neapolitan in root position, perhaps more than any other composer, and here we see the first instance in the *Preludes* of the Neapolitan in root position moving directly to the dominant. (See also the note for Prelude No. 20.) Composers often avoid such motion because of the resulting tritone in the bass. In m. 42, Chopin avoids the tritone quite deftly by preceding the F of the dominant with a decorative E^b.

Pedaling Possibilities

Chopin’s manuscript makes clear that his initial impulse was to change pedal every half measure in the first phrase of the *presto*. He crossed out several *Œd.* and * before settling on very long pedals, corresponding to the harmonic changes. Chopin’s initial impulse, I believe, works better on modern

pianos: it is necessary to change pedal more frequently, at the very least with fractional changes. Experiment with a pedaling that allows some of the rests to be heard; silences so often impart great vitality.

Chopin did not indicate a change of pedal at m. 21. I believe this was an oversight, and I have added an editorial change.

As was his general custom in the *Preludes*, Chopin did not notate a release of the final pedal in this prelude. (See the note for Prelude No. 1.) I recommend releasing the pedal at about the second half of the final measure. I have added an editorial pedal release at that point.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-9! (1, 2-5, 6-9); 10-17 (10!, 11!, 12!, 13!, 14!, 15!, 16-17); 18-25 (18-21, 22-25); 26-33 (26!, 27!, 28!, 29!, 30-33); 34-37 (34!, 35! 36-37); 38-41 (38!, 39!, 40-41); 42-46

For Further Exploration

Can you find other works in which Chopin (or any composer, for that matter) uses the Neapolitan chord in root position? Find examples of the Neapolitan in your favorite works and experiment with rewriting them: explore the sound of different inversions both of the Neapolitan and the subsequent dominant harmony. Pay particular attention to the bass line and any resulting tritones. There is an example of such a tritone among the *Preludes* themselves. Look carefully at Prelude No. 20.

PRELUDE NO. 17

Although Chopin does not explicitly call for a *cantabile* tone in this prelude, this is certainly one of the more song-like preludes, and a singing tone is central to a successful performance. But what does it mean to sing at the piano? I believe that many students confuse *cantabile* with the concept “full voice,” and thus are confused by the notion of a singing tone in the context of a softer dynamic. In other words, the term *cantabile* can seem to be diametrically opposed to the direction *sotto voce* (“under the voice or breath,” i.e. in a hushed tone), which Chopin uses for the final pages of this prelude, one of the most magical and evocative endings of the 24. Can a passage marked *sotto voce* sing? I would say emphatically, “yes.”

I suggest that there are three essential elements of a Chopin *cantabile*: beauty of tone, variety of color and imagery, and, most important, ease of discernment. By the latter I refer to the generosity and clarity with which the performer presents what is intended to be heard as primary to the ear of the listener. In Prelude No. 17, the richness of the accompanying voices in both hands makes this clarity quite challenging, as these voices must be both fully supportive of the *bel canto* line and “translucent” enough to allow that

singing line to be heard as unmistakably primary. This clarity, this ease of discernment, is necessary to a Chopin *cantabile* whether the dynamic is *sotto voce* or *a voce piena* (“with full voice”). Thus, I urge the performer to maintain a *cantabile*—in this sense of the “ease of discernment” of the melodic line—throughout this prelude, even in the magical *sotto voce* of the final pages.

M. 6: Take note of the exquisite V7-IV deceptive cadence to which Chopin returns again and again in this prelude. Note the difference in “flavor” between this deceptive cadence and the more standard V7-VI. Can you find an example of another gorgeous V7-IV deceptive cadence in another work of Chopin in A^b, the third *Ballade*? (See the appendix.)

MM. 19-24: Here Chopin wants an especially gradual *crescendo*: He divides the word “*ces—cen—do*” over 6 measures, an unusual practice for him. In the autograph, he arrives at the final syllable of the word “*crescendo*” at the downbeat of m. 24, which is also the precise point at which he writes *dim*. Here he illustrates an important principle of musicianship: “*dim*.” is not just an instruction to begin getting softer, but may also be a reminder to reach the apex, or high point, of a dynamic arc.

MM. 44-45, 48-49: In view of the prevailing melodic structure throughout this prelude, the absence in the manuscript of ties connecting the second dotted quarter of mm. 44 and 48 to the first eighth of mm. 45 and 49, respectively, would seem to be an oversight on Chopin’s part. I have added an editorial tie in both cases.

M. 65: This first *forzato* is missing in the manuscript. It is also missing in Henle, though it is present in Ekier and many other editions. I have added “*fz*” in brackets. I believe the *forzati* of this *sotto voce* passage are intended as a distant bell-like effect, i.e. within the context of *pianissimo*.

M. 84: *Perdendosi* (accent on the “-*dend-*”) is a particularly evocative word in Italian. It is usually translated as “dying away” or “disappearing.” The literal meaning is worth contemplating: “getting lost,” or “losing oneself.”

Pedaling Possibilities

The performer may find that occasional fractional pedal changes are needed for some of Chopin’s longer pedal markings. I believe Chopin intended the pedaling from mm. 11-17 to be analogous to that of mm. 3-9. In mm. 19-23 and 44-54, Chopin’s pedals are not always conducive to a beautiful and consistent *legato*; here I recommend the continuation of *legato* pedaling, with more frequent changes (to taste) where no pedal is noted. Again, I recommend that pedaling from mm. 36-42 be analogous to that of the opening phrase.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-10! (1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10); 11-18 (11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18); 19-27! (19-20, 21-22, 23! 24-27); 28-34! (28-29, 30-34!); 35-42 (35-36, 37-38, 39-40, 41-42); 43-46; 47-50; 51-57! (51-54, 55-57!); 58-64! (58-59, 60-64!); 65-72 (65-66, 67-68, 69-70, 71-72); 73-80 (73-74, 75-76, 77-78, 79-80); 81-90! (81-83! 84-87, 88-90)

For Further Exploration

Consider the V-IV deceptive cadence noted above, common to two of Chopin's works in A^b major. (The cadence is shown in the appendix. Try to find it in the *Ballade* before consulting the appendix.) Do certain keys lead some composers to think in certain specific ways? Consider Beethoven's works in C minor and Bach's works in D major. Can you see some consistencies among them? What is it about the keys themselves that might stimulate similar modes of musical thought? Can you think of further examples among Chopin's and other composers' works?

PRELUDE NO. 18

Some listeners may be tempted to associate Chopin exclusively with the "prettiness" of his most accessible and popular works. To them I present this prelude. For this listener it remains one of the most vivid musical conjurings of terror ever written. We must not allow the many decades of intervening musical evolution to obscure Chopin's originality here. I urge the performer to convey the elements of this terror with as much conviction as possible: unresolved minor ninths, 16th-note passages in parallel motion full of ungainly disjointed leaps so fast as to sound grotesque, impetuous irregular grouplets that sound as if they are fighting to be set free of their rhythmic moorings, chromaticism that dances on the edge of atonality, an augmented sixth chord (in m. 17) that is almost unmistakably a scream, furious staccato jabs (in m. 18) that punctuate the plunge which follows the scream, to name several. The almost unbearably long grand pause before the final cadence is for me the most frightening element of all. Only Chopin could invest such power in silence. Any complete portrait of the "poet of the piano" would have to include this prelude.

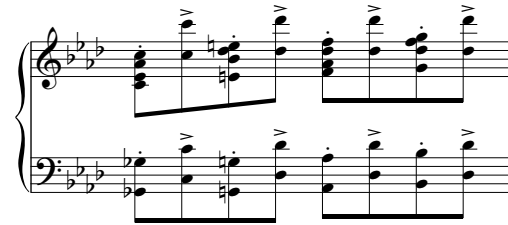
Can you find other elements of musical dread in this prelude? See "For Further Exploration" for ideas.

MM. 5, 7: Chopin originally wrote parallel 16th notes for the left hand an octave below all right-hand 16ths in these measures. Then he deleted some of the left-hand notes. Note the vitality he imparts to these lines by having the left hand depart and rejoin the right-hand 16ths.

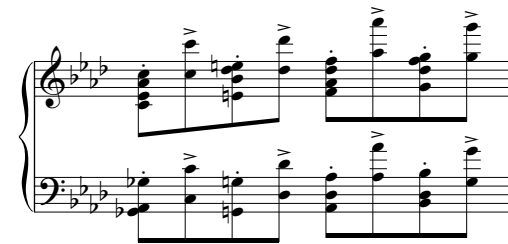
M. 12: Chopin notated this run in 16th notes, although the rhythmically accurate notation would be 32nd notes. I have followed Chopin's notation here.

M. 16: Chopin often crossed out material in his manuscripts, but he usually did so quite thoroughly; it is almost never possible to read what he crossed out. In this prelude the manuscript offers us a rare opportunity to read an original creative impulse of Chopin's, which he subsequently crossed out with light, translucent strokes.

Prelude No. 18: Chopin's first version of m. 16



Prelude No. 18: m. 16 as Chopin rewrote it



Note the static quality of the offbeat octaves in the crossed-out version.

M. 17: This is another example of a reconfigured augmented sixth chord that Chopin notated as a dominant seventh. Again I follow his notation. The chord would be spelled with a B[♯] if spelled "correctly."

Pedaling Possibilities

Finding great dynamism in silence and separation, I generally pedal this prelude more sparingly than Chopin suggests. However, I do recommend moistening the 16th-note passages lightly with slow flutter pedaling.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-4 (1, 2, 3-4); 5-8 (5, 6, 7-8); 9-12; 13-16; 17-21

For Further Exploration

Consider the final V-I cadence. In the context of this prelude, Chopin manages to imbue even this simple, standard progression with a sense of dread. How does he do it? Look carefully for other suggestions of musical "violence" in the prelude. How, for example, does Chopin refute most descriptions of his own public performances in this prelude?

PRELUDE NO. 19

The centrality of the skillful use of pedal to Chopin's concept of *legato* is clear in this prelude. It is one of only four preludes to be marked explicitly *legato*, and yet a complete finger *legato* is actually impossible for normally sized hands. Curiously, there are only two slurs in this entire prelude, and they are quite telling. In both mm. 32 and 68-69 Chopin places a slur that covers only three triplet-eighths in the right hand, beginning with the second eighth of the beat and extending to the first eighth of the next. Chopin implies with these slurs that the actual finger legato takes place in principle with the outward swing of both wrists from the note each hand plays with the thumb to the note played (usually) with the fifth finger. Thus this prelude functions well as an etude for the cultivation of the suppleness of the wrist and forearm required for this swing. This *souplesse* was one of the cornerstones of Chopin's teaching.

As we saw with Prelude No. 9, the editorial process sometimes involves the kind of sleuth work usually reserved for detective novels. This is especially true when attempting to determine whether the composer has made a mistake in notating a specific pitch in the manuscript. In this one prelude I will reveal this process in depth.

In the manuscript Chopin gives the third right-hand note of m. 1 as E^b, but in m. 9 he writes the third right-hand note as G. The E^b in m. 1 might have been a mistake, and some editions do give the note as G. (In fact, I learned the prelude with G in this measure, as you may be able to hear on my recording.) Likewise the G in m. 9 could also have been a mistake. Sadly, we do not revisit the issue in the manuscript in m. 33, as Chopin does not write out this measure, but gives a shorthand instruction to repeat mm. 1-10, as was his usual custom with repeated material. We have a somewhat similar dilemma in m. 49, as the manuscript gives the eighth note in the left hand as G rather than the expected B^b that is given at the analogous point in mm. 51, 57 and 59.

How shall we solve these dilemmas? First we must ask whether either of the two possible notes in each case seems to break a pattern or principle Chopin sets up elsewhere, and if so, whether there is any redeeming logic or need for variety to justify the break. We must also consider the voice balancing and leading both locally and in relation to analogous points.

The material in mm. 1 and 9 is identical except for the single pitch. Is there any reasonable explanation for the change? Let's see. In m. 1, the E^b would double the root rather than the third of the tonic chord in the first beat. Does this choice of pitch enhance the balance of voices? Yes, especially in view of the fact that as Chopin begins the piece he may be eager to establish the tonic firmly. But why might he change the third pitch to G in m. 9? When we restate the

opening phrase in m. 9 the tonic has by now been firmly established, and the G—the third degree of the tonic chord—offers a lovely bit of tonal variety. Furthermore, the unlikely change in pitch violates no principle of voice leading or balancing that might render it suspect. Therefore, we may reasonably conclude that the pitches as they appear in the manuscript are in fact those Chopin intended, and no mistake was made.

Turning to m. 49, we notice that Chopin presents us with one case exactly analogous to the point in question (i.e. the 8th pitch in the left hand), and two others roughly analogous. The exact analog occurs in m. 57, and the rough analogs in mm. 51 and 59. In all three cases Chopin writes B^b rather than G. This predisposes us to consider it likely that the G in m. 49 is a mistake. But can we find another piece of evidence against the G to support our case? Looking closely we see that the left-hand G given in m. 49 coincides with a G in the right hand. Chopin rarely simultaneously doubles the second eighth of a beat with the same pitch class in this prelude. ("Pitch class" refers to notes of the same letter name: All C's are one pitch class, though they are certainly not all the same pitch.) Rather, he consistently relies on the second eighth of each beat to provide chordal richness by not doubling it. How rare is this doubling? As we read very carefully through the prelude, we find a total of only nine cases out of a possible 204, but even this nine is misleading. Of the nine, four are merely the exact repetition of a previous case, so we may say there are only five different instances of the doubling and only one other case where Chopin simultaneously doubles the third of a major triad on the second eighth of a beat. The infrequency of the doubling could not, by itself, be considered a conclusive factor against the G in m. 49. But with the strong evidence of the analogous cases in mm. 51, 57 and 59, we may factor in the rarity of the doubling and confidently consider the G in m. 49 a mistake. I have changed it to B^b.

MM. 1-8: Chopin originally placed slurs as described above (leading from the second eighth of the beat to the first eighth of the next) on every beat in the right hand throughout these measures, then crossed them out. Eventually he left only those in mm. 32 and 68-69. I interpret his initial impulse as evidence of his likely pianistic solution to the problem of *legato* in this prelude. (See the first paragraph of his performance note.)

M. 21: To be fair to Chopin, I should point out that he spells the augmented sixth chord in this measure "correctly," and even changes the spelling mid-bar from a dominant seventh to the augmented sixth at precisely the "right" point. Clearly he understood the principle distinguishing augmented sixths from dominant sevenths; apparently, he simply chose to follow this principle according to his own inner logic.

MM. 62, 63: Note well the chromatic line Chopin highlights with quarter stems.

MM. 68-70: Note the rare—for Chopin—occurrence of a *diminuendo* to a *subito fortissimo*.

Pedaling Possibilities

Chopin clearly intends the pedal to assist with the *legato* he indicates in this prelude. Occasionally he appears to misplace a pedal indication slightly: In m. 27, for example, he marks a pedal that would blur the G^b major of m. 26 briefly with the dominant D^b7 of the subsequent measure. He asks no such blurring at the analogous mm. 18-19, and so I have taken the blurred pedaling at mm. 26-27 to be a mistake, adjusting it to resemble that of the earlier measures. Where he indicates a “dry patch” with no pedal, the *legato* needs no assistance. MM. 7, 39 and 48 are examples of this. The pianist may lightly pedal these measures to keep the sound picture consistent.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-8 (1-4, 5-8); 9-16 (9-12, 13-16); 17-24 (17-20, 21-24); 25-32 (25-28, 29-32); 33-40 (33-36, 37-40); 41-48 (41-44, 45-48); 49-56 (49-52, 53-56); 57-69 (57-60, 61-64); 65-71 (65-69, 70-71).

For Further Exploration

Occasionally it can be quite stimulating to adopt a quasi-scientific stance as we examine the inner workings of a piece. My teacher Leon Fleisher encouraged his students to peer into the “DNA” of a work. Try using the above discussion of the rare simultaneous doubling of the second eighth of some beats in this prelude as a springboard to such an inquiry. For example, consider the first occurrence of this doubling in the prelude. Can you find it? It is a function of the voice leading, and this voice leading itself is quite fascinating, resembling something like the paradox of an M. C. Escher print.

PRELUDE NO. 20

Although Chopin apparently preferred composing dances to marches, two of his best known, best loved works are marches: the “Funeral March” of the second sonata, and this prelude, also funereal. One of Chopin’s large-scale masterpieces is a march, but it is not so entitled: the *Fantasy*, *Op.* 49. It too begins funereally, but eventually reaches luminous heights. Almost all of the handful of *Marches* written by Chopin are funereal in whole or part. Can you think of other works of Chopin that are march-like (or have march-like passages)? Prelude No. 9 is rare for Chopin in being a joyous march throughout.

It is quite unusual for Chopin to begin a work *fortissimo*. Not a single etude, for example, begins *fortissimo*, and this is the

only prelude to begin thus. Chopin was a consummate storyteller, and to begin a work *fortissimo* is, in effect, to begin at a high point of the story. This rarely works in literature or in music. I see this as another piece of evidence that Chopin conceived of the *24 Preludes* as an organic whole, for Prelude No. 20 would seem to need its predecessors as preparation for its aural power. Furthermore, the last two chords of Prelude No. 19 represent, to my ears, a kind of “seed” of what is to follow in Prelude No. 20.

The performer must make a clear distinction between forte and fortissimo throughout the *Preludes*. Be sure to relate the initial sound level in this prelude to *fortes* and *fortissimos* found in other preludes. Make no apologies for Chopin’s rare *fortissimo* opening here. Likewise, be sure to distinguish clearly between the *piano* and *pianissimo* of the repeated second phrase. Ernest Hutcheson points out, in his book *The Literature of the Piano* (1966), that this distinction between *piano* and *pianissimo* is just as important as that between *forte* and *piano*.

M. 3: It is impossible to know with certainty whether the final chord of this measure was intended by Chopin to be minor or major. Apparently he inserted the flat before the last E of the measure in a student’s copy of the *Preludes*. It is possible to find fine editions and recordings that give it in major and equally fine editions and recordings that give it in minor. Therefore, I recommend that performers decide for themselves which reading they prefer. They may even play it differently on different occasions, perhaps not even knowing themselves which chord they’ll choose until the moment arrives. I have done this myself, though I prefer the minor and usually play it as such.

MM. 7-12: Chopin notated mm. 5-8 only once in the manuscript, indicating in his usual manner the repetition of the phrase for mm. 9-12. However, he made clear that the *ritenuto* is intended for both statements of the phrase, and the *crescendo* only for the second. His manner of indicating this repetition almost certainly accounts for his having forgotten to include an “*a tempo*” after the first *ritenuto*. I have placed the *a tempo* in m. 9 in brackets.

M. 12: Observe the root-position Neapolitan chord in the penultimate measure. Chopin is unabashed here about the resulting unusual, stark tritone in the bass octaves on beats 2 and 3. See also the notes for Preludes Nos. 12 and 16.

Pedaling Possibilities

Chopin indicated no pedaling whatsoever in this prelude until the final cadence. There can be no more convincing evidence of the likelihood that Chopin sometimes considers the use of the pedal to be assumed for legato and coloring where no pedal is explicitly marked. I recommend legato pedaling once per beat. Highly skilled pianists may

experiment with pedal changes for all melodic notes, including the 16ths. In this case, make sure the fingers hold all quarter notes through the pedal changes on the 16ths.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-4 (1! 2! 3-4); 5-8 (5! 6! 7! 8!); 9-12 (simile); 13!

For Further Exploration

As Thomas Higgins points out in his “Notes Toward a Performance” of the *Preludes*, Chopin rather humorously added a note in the manuscript implying that it was on the advice of a certain “Monsieur xxx who is often right” that he repeated the second phrase. How does this repetition leave the piece with an unusual structure?

PRELUDE NO. 21

Chopin’s songs, Op. 74, reveal his true genius for melodic beauty, creatively and originally accompanied. While many of his works for solo piano offer evidence of that genius, nowhere is that genius on more brilliant display than in this prelude. Hutcherson calls Prelude No. 21 “an ideal song without words.” As if to signal his intention to create his vocal *magnum opus* of the *Preludes*, Chopin gives the word *cantabile* as the tempo marking. Do not miss the significance of this. Chopin reserves this tempo marking for only a handful of pieces, surprisingly, since his music so frequently exhibits *bel canto* style. Note the absence of an introductory accompaniment. Chopin chooses to burst instantly into radiant song, instead of allowing an introduction to soften the edges of that radiance. All of this argues for a deep, penetrating, multi-dimensional melodic sound, using lots of arm weight for power, but maximizing the “roundness” of the sound with a loose wrist to absorb any hard edge upon impact, and lots of contact with the fleshy part of the finger. Experiment with sliding on the key for even greater tonal variety and richness.

The accompaniment figure in this prelude is among the more fascinating in all of song literature, standing with the best of Schubert and Schumann. It is also a superb legato study and requires creative fingering, hence the multiple fingering suggestions. Use this marvelous accompaniment to cultivate the suppleness that characterized Chopin’s teaching and pianism, for suppleness here is essential to the *legato*.

Notice that Chopin’s hairpin *crescendos* and *diminuendos* hew naturally to the contour of the left-hand figure. The pianist is encouraged to follow organically this dynamic rise and fall of the accompaniment.

M. 2: I recommend an expressive appoggiatura about equal to a triplet-eighth, leaving the principal note equal to about two triplet-eighths. (See the note for Prelude No. 2, and also

the general comments under the heading “Ornamentation” in the preface to the print edition.)

M. 4: Chopin originally gave the right-hand G the value of a dotted half note. He crossed out the dot, but then added no quarter rest. I add a quarter rest in brackets.

For smaller hands it may be necessary to take the upper voice of the tenth in this measure and others with the right hand. According to the Ekier edition, Chopin suggested this division to a student. If you choose to make this division, be sure to make a dynamic distinction between melodic and accompanying voices.

M. 17: Note the sudden, “unprepared” leap to the altered submediant harmony of G^b major, seemingly remote and exotic in the context of B^b major. But look at how Chopin “rides” a chord based on G^b back into B^b major quite smoothly. The chord begins as a G^b7 in m. 25 and then transforms in the last beat of m. 32 to an augmented sixth. This augmented sixth resolves to the dominant of B^b.

MM. 50-53: Chopin offers a lovely study in voicing in these and the final measures in the right hand. Project as primary the voice that Chopin sets apart. (This is the voice that revolves around the D just above middle C.) Note in particular the way this D changes “flavor” in the context of the submediant G minor and the tonic B^b major as the harmony shifts back and forth. We have reproduced meticulously the note values in these chords as Chopin has them in the manuscript. Note that he does not always account rhythmically for missing beats in voices that would require rests to be complete. Observe also Chopin’s unusual overlapping of the left-hand slurs.

MM. 58-59: The final cadence continues the study in voicing, as the formerly highlighted D resolves down through the supertonic C to the tonic B^b. Note the absence of the leading-tone A from the penultimate chord. Recall the similar absence of the leading-tone in the penultimate chord of Prelude No. 18. Although the presence of the seventh (the E^b) in the chord from Prelude No. 21 is partly responsible for the contrast, it is largely the power of context that produces the striking difference in mood between the two chords.

Pedaling Possibilities

We have reproduced Chopin’s pedal markings precisely. Although this prelude is an excellent study in finger *legato* for both hands, I recommend using the pedal lightly to assist in the *legato* even where not marked.

M. 36: Note well Chopin’s pedaling here. Although at first glance there may appear to be little logic in the sudden dose of added resonance, it was unquestionably Chopin’s considered intention. In the following measure he again

considered the same nearly measure-long pedal marking, first placing the release mark at a point similar to that of m. 36, then crossing it out and replacing it with one similar to those in mm. 33-35. Here is another case where what you hear in my recording will differ somewhat from what Chopin suggests.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-8 (1-4, 5-8); 9-16 (9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16); 17-24 (17-20, 21-24); 25-32 (25-28, 29-32); 33-40 (33-34, 35-36, 37! 38! 39-40); 41-45, 46-59! (46-47, 48-49, 50-51, 52-57! 58-59)

For Further Exploration

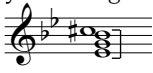
I encourage the pianist to take up a thorough exploration of song literature, with particular attention to the enormous variety to be found in the accompanying material. (My favorites are the songs of Schumann, Schubert and Fauré.) The greater your familiarity with the richness and variety of song accompaniments among the masters, the deeper will be your appreciation for the genius of this prelude of Chopin.

Consider the augmented sixth chord in m. 32. We have noted this chord in Preludes Nos. 4, 12 and 18, among others. Compare those instances to m. 32 of this prelude. How is the augmented 6th chord here different from the previous examples?

PRELUDE NO. 22

Teachers often ask their students which hand or voice is the most interesting or important in a given passage. Where is the melodic line? Which voice does the composer want us to bring out? Here, Chopin has struck, I believe, a rare perfect contrapuntal balance between the hands, asking the performer and listener to fork their attention quite equitably in both directions throughout the prelude. Even most contrapuntal works of Bach ask primarily that our attention dance democratically back and forth between voices (with exceptions, of course), as one voice takes up a subject, or another voice highlights a particularly beautiful counter-motive. But how often is a perfect balance maintained throughout an entire work? Many students of the piano do not spend enough time developing this special skill of divided attention. Use this extraordinary prelude to develop the ability to divide your attention equally in two directions. It is harder to do well than one imagines at first. Of course, the desired musical result is that the two hands sing with equal conviction and compelling beauty.

MM. 1-3 and similar measures: Observe the ties carefully. Be faithful to the “sound picture” Chopin indicates for the second half of these measures.

MM. 5, 6, 7 and similar measures: Notice the prevalence of unusually voiced German augmented sixth chords in this prelude. As we saw in the appendix response to the final question “For Further Exploration” for the previous prelude, augmented sixth chords are considered German if they possess the same four notes as do dominant-seventh chords. They are spelled slightly differently, however, although we have seen that with Chopin that is not always the case. Here he spells them “correctly,” but distributes the notes innovatively: the augmented sixth, normally configured in this way  is rearranged to form a diminished 10th.

Prelude No. 22: m. 4, beat 2-m. 6



The distribution is quite natural and pianistic, however, and so its originality may be easily overlooked. True innovation often appears camouflaged by the very naturalness - one might say “inevitability” - that is a component of its greatness. One must therefore develop a certain alertness for innovation.

MM. 35-38: In these measures, Chopin omitted the ties analogous with those in the opening measures. I presume that this was an oversight, and have added them in brackets.

Pedaling Possibilities

I recommend the use of pedal to assist the *legato* Chopin implies with the slurs in this prelude. The sound world of this very powerful prelude would also seem to demand greater resonance, and therefore more pedal, than Chopin explicitly indicates. I recommend changing pedal approximately every half bar, carefully holding the notes Chopin ties.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-8 (1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8); 9-16 (9-10, 11-12, 13! 14! 15-16); 17-24 (17-18, 19-20, 21-22, 23-24); 25-34!! (25-26, 27-28, 29-30, 31-32, 33-34); 35-41! (35-36, 37! 38! 39-41)

For Further Exploration

Use mm. 17-23 to develop the alertness for innovation to which I refer above. Chopin here offers a very unusual example of a favored device of his that we have seen frequently throughout the *Preludes*. Can you determine the device? What makes its use here innovative?

PRELUDE NO. 23

You may have noticed that Chopin frequently uses a brief modulation to the subdominant key as a harbinger of the approaching end of a work. Bach was very fond of this practice (as were other composers, to a lesser extent), and almost certainly influenced Chopin in this regard. To the tonic chord is added the flatted seventh, or sub-tonic, which turns the tonic chord into a dominant seventh of its own IV chord, or subdominant. What strikes me as essential about this phenomenon is not the motion toward the subdominant *per se* but the transformation of the tonic chord itself. I sometimes refer to this phenomenon in literary terms, drawing a rather fanciful analogy: If we think of the tonic key as the protagonist of the story a work tells, then we may consider the transformation of the tonic (I) chord into the dominant of its own subdominant (V7/IV) as analogous to an inner transformation of the protagonist of a literary work after he/she undergoes the adventures related in the story.

Consider how rarely this “kissing” of the subdominant occurs early in a work. It seems connected deeply to the resolution of issues explored in the body of the story, and thus represents breakthrough, transcendence, even apotheosis. The phenomenon is quite evident in many of Chopin’s works, but a few examples will suffice. Perhaps the quintessential example occurs in the *Berceuse*, Op. 57, where the resulting subdominant, which begins with the transformation of the tonic D^b into a D^b7 at measure 55, is the only departure from tonic and dominant harmony in the entire work. Consider also the *Mazurka*, Op. 63, No. 3 and the *Etudes* Op. 10, Nos. 9 and 12. The *Barcarolle*, Op. 60 is an extraordinary example, because in the climactic measures the tonic chord is transformed into the dominant seventh of its own subdominant *without resolving to the subdominant*, suggesting that, for Chopin, the transformation of the tonic chord alone was sufficient for the experience of resolution and transcendence. In the subsequent denouement of the *Barcarolle*, of course, the subdominant chord is used to great effect. A similar occurrence can be found in the closing material of both the exposition and the recapitulation of the first movement of the *B-minor Sonata*. Many examples of this phenomenon can be found throughout Chopin’s works.

In Prelude No. 23, Chopin takes this principle further than anyone had ever dared. The transformation of the tonic F-major chord into the dominant seventh of its own subdominant (with the occurrence of the E^b in m. 21) is the final, astonishing event of the work. Not only does this dominant seventh not resolve to the subdominant chord, but nothing else happens harmonically at all. Certainly this was a turning point in the evolution of music, perhaps the most dramatic stroke of originality in the *Preludes*. Again, the

accent on the fateful E^b is so much more than an accent. When you play this note, listen to it as it must have struck the very first dumbfounded listeners in the 1830s. Recognize and be aware, as you play, that Chopin is departing with the notion that the tonic always “wins,” even that it is necessary to have a tonic at all as we previously defined it.

Notice that this is the only prelude without a single hairpin *crescendo* or *diminuendo*. Although I do not believe that this means one must play without such inflections, it does suggest that they be subtler than they otherwise might. This will allow the tranquility and even mystery at the heart of this piece to come to the fore.

MM. 12-13: Note the rare (for Chopin) occurrence of an explicit *ritenuto* and *a tempo* in the middle of a short work.

MM. 20-22: The slurs added in brackets here are absent from the manuscript. Chopin may have forgotten them because the space they normally would have occupied is taken up with several words that he subsequently crossed out.

Pedaling Possibilities

Experiment with fractional pedals and pedal changes, searching for gossamer sounds in this prelude. The longer pedal marks in particular may need to be leavened with fractional changes, and very light pedal may be needed for sound consistency where not marked by Chopin. Create a sound “halo” around this otherworldly prelude.

MM. 3, 7, and similar measures: Although I have chosen to represent Chopin’s pedaling exactly as he has it in his manuscript, I recommend interpreting these pedal marks as *legato* pedaling, in view of the single long slur over the left hand in these measures. The slurs were well-considered by Chopin, as he originally placed two slurs over two beats each, then crossed out the division and merged the two into one longer slur.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-4 (1-2, 3-4); 5-8 (5-6, 7-8); 9-12 (9-10, 11-12); 13-16; 17-22! (17-18, 19-22!)

For Further Exploration

Search for examples of the brief use of the subdominant key as the harbinger of the end of a piece in works of Chopin and other composers. Pay particular attention to the works of Bach. Can you find a short keyboard work of Bach in which he reverses the appearance of dominant and subdominant keys, with a subtle modulation to the subdominant coming first and the dominant key serving as harbinger of the end?

PRELUDE NO. 24

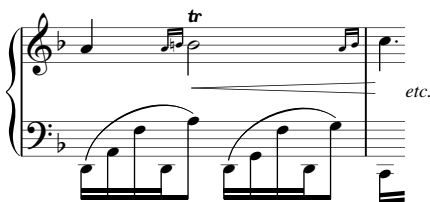
I have made the point frequently in these notes that the *Preludes* seem to have been conceived as an organic whole. This last prelude offers further evidence to support this. Many elements of finality can be found in it. Some have been seen sporadically in earlier preludes, some once or twice, and others not at all. Each is a harbinger of the end of a long adventure, and together they provide the closure that every good storyteller knows is essential to the final chapter. For example, in the tempo marking, *Allegro appassionato*, Chopin includes for the first time explicitly an element that is present implicitly throughout the *Preludes*: passion. How does the *ostinato* accompaniment illustrate and support this culmination of passion? It encompasses very wide intervals, among the widest in all of piano literature for an *allegro*. This figure contributes to a sense of unleashed wildness, as if forces inchoate throughout the *Preludes* are hatching at last. Scales of almost intoxicating rapidity illuminate the landscape like bolts of lightning, always ascending, until the final scale, this time chromatic, in thirds, and finally descending. These elements, and others, contribute to the unmistakable sense that Chopin is providing closure not only for this prelude, but also for the entire cycle. I've implied this before, but I believe it is important enough to state clearly: the performer must keep organic unity in mind when performing Op. 28 in its entirety. Otherwise, the listener may not make the unconscious connections that in part determine success or failure in the performance of a long, multi-movement work.

M. 1: Use the stemmed quarter note in the left-hand figure as a kind of pivot to anchor the hand and help with accuracy. Although Chopin does not notate the quarter stems after m. 9, I believe he intends them to be assumed for the second 16th note in every instance of the left-hand figure. For most hands it will not be possible to hold the note with the finger in all cases, but do so when you can.

M. 7: I recommend playing these grace notes before the beat. Although Chopin notates them here as eighths and later as 16ths, I do not believe he intends them to be played more slowly here.

M. 10: Note well the counter-intuitive rhythm here. (Your editor missed this before making his recording.) Chopin originally notated this rhythm as follows:

Prelude No. 24: m. 10



We have re-notated it for rhythmic clarity.

M. 14, and similar measures: I do not believe it is necessary to squeeze this run into the tight space defined by a strict adherence to the tempo, but come as close as you can.

Pedaling Possibilities

I recommend fractional changes to render Chopin's long pedal markings more tolerable on modern pianos.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-18 (1-2, 3-6, 7-10, 11-14, 15-18); 19-38! (19-20, 21-24, 25-28, 29-32, 33-36, 37-38); 39-42; 43-50; 51-64! (51-52, 53! 54! 55-56, 57-58, 59-60, 61-64); 65-77 (65-68, 69-72, 73-77)

For Further Exploration

What elements of finality can you find in this prelude, beyond those mentioned above?

PRELUDE IN C-SHARP MINOR, OP. 45

For this music lover, it is a great misfortune of historical timing that recording technology had not yet been invented during what might be called the "Golden Age of Improvisation." What would we not give to hear Bach improvise a fugue on the organ, Mozart a concerto cadenza, Beethoven a fantasy or set of variations. And Chopin was certainly their equal in this largely lost art. According to pianist and scholar Jonathan Bellman, quoted in a *New York Times* article (May, 2002), artist Eugene Delacroix called Chopin's written works "but pale distillations of his improvisations." It is almost impossible to imagine that works as beloved as Chopin's could be deemed "pale distillations" compared to improvisations. Sadly, we have no recordings of such improvisations, but we have hints.

We have a few written out cadenzas of Mozart. We have Beethoven's *Fantasy in G minor, Op. 77*, which is probably the closest he came to writing out a pure improvisation. And we have this prelude by Chopin. For mostly intuitive reasons, I would place it among his more improvisational works. We can, however, point to a few factors: The modulations strike me as even more spontaneous and searching than is usual for Chopin; the flowing eighth-note figuration is vintage Chopin in its expressive originality and yet seems simple enough to have survived largely intact from initial conception to mature completion; the cadenza, while difficult to play, involves a pattern that is also surprisingly simple for all its aural richness. Finally, the inconsistency of the ornamental details and finger pedal indications, while making life a bit difficult for editors, points to the likelihood that Chopin himself approached such details more spontaneously here than was normal even for him, and almost certainly he never played them exactly

the same way twice. The performer should keep this improvisational quality in mind, perhaps making improvisation itself a part of the preparation to perform this prelude.

As there is no extant autograph copy of this prelude, I have based this version on a close study of the Henle, Paderewski and especially the Ekier editions, which in turn are based on the original French and German editions. I follow the French more closely than the German, though where there is an important variant in the German edition I describe it in these notes. However, many of the details of this prelude (the rolled chords, the presence or absence of grace notes before rolled chords, and the extra stemming of eighth notes) are inconsistent from edition to edition. Writing specifically about the grace notes, Paderewski suggests a healthy freedom from excessive concern over the question of authenticity in every detail: "Over such details Chopin always exercised great freedom." In the absence of a manuscript for this prelude, I concur, and recommend a degree of spontaneity in keeping with the improvised spirit of the piece.

M. 2: The grace note is missing from the original German edition, but Ekier reports that there was a space where it belonged, suggesting that it was inadvertently left off. I recommend an expressive *appoggiatura*, played on the beat.

M. 5: I have chosen to represent the pedaling as it appears in the original French edition, according to Ekier. The original German edition consistently gives the pedal in this figure only for the duration of the measure, not the approximate measure and a half as we have it.

M. 9: Paderewski reports that the original French edition did not have the grace note at the beginning of this measure.

M. 12: Chopin did not always make explicit the finger pedal with the extra stem on this third eighth of the beat, as he did in the first—and some other—instances of this figure. I believe he intended the finger pedal for all instances of this motive, and so I have added stems. Ekier and Henle differ on the question of which of these stems is original. For Ekier they are included only in brackets in mm. 12, 26, 42, 70, and 74. Henle adds no such bracketed stems, and only includes the extra stem in mm. 8, 50, and 88. In any case, Chopin probably was not consistent himself in notating such details.

M. 13: Chopin did not consistently notate the roll of chords such as this one, but I believe he intended the roll throughout.

M. 16: It is possible that the oddly placed accent in this measure was intended as a small hairpin *diminuendo*.

M. 18: The original German edition has the second A3 (the A below middle C) tied across the barline.

MM. 27-63: Chopin did not change key signatures here. I have removed the sharps for ease of reading, following Paderewski's example.

MM. 67, 71: The German edition gives the rhythm as shown in the following example. I have followed the French edition.

Prelude in C-sharp Minor, Opus 45

m. 67, beats 1-2 m. 71, beats 1-2



M. 79: The German edition places an *f* in this measure at the height of the hairpin *crescendo*. This *f* seems excessive to me, and so I have followed the French edition, in which the *f* does not appear.

Cadenza: The German edition offers a "*dim.*" over the eight final eighth-note chords of the cadenza.

M. 82: Chopin neglected to specify a release point for this pedal mark. I have followed the pedal length seen most often in the French edition, spanning a measure and a half.

M. 87: Note Chopin's signature love of the Neapolitan in root position.

Pedaling Possibilities

I recommend use of the pedal to assist in *legato*. For example, in the opening measures, in m. 34, and in mm. 56-58 the *legato* will be richer with pedal, and this richness is very much in keeping with the sustained expressiveness of the melodic line. The performer must be careful not to allow the damper pedal's assistance to replace the finger pedal Chopin calls for, however. The cadenza may be lightly pedaled, following the shifting harmonies.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-4, 5-8, 9-12, 13-18! 19-22, 23-26, 27-30, 31-34, 35-38, 39-42, 43-46, 47-50, 51-54, 55-58, 59-62, 63-66, 67-70, 71-74, 75-79, 80, 81-84, 85-88, 89-92!

For Further Exploration

Why do you suppose I place no exclamation point at the five-bar phrase that leads to the cadenza, but put one at the four-bar phrase that ends the piece? The single measure 80 is of course the cadenza. Why does this single-measure event not deserve an exclamation point? How does Chopin mitigate the potential monotony of the preponderant four-bar phrases in this prelude?

PRELUDE IN A-FLAT MAJOR (*Presto con leggerezza*)

This work is usually included in collections of Chopin's preludes. As it is most certainly a jewel in miniature, whatever its intended genre (Chopin gave it no title, and it is often referred to simply by its tempo marking), I feel it is at home here. It is almost always placed last in a recording of the complete *Preludes* (as it is in my recording), though it was composed before any of the *Preludes*. It was first published in 1818, and points to an intriguing question: Might other such works, perhaps tossed by Chopin as a gift to a friend, still await discovery? Tad Szulc writes, in his biography of Chopin, *Chopin in Paris* (1998), that Mendelssohn once asked Chopin to compose a one-page work for his wife, who was very fond of Chopin's music. Chopin did so, but the piece was never published and is presumed lost. Let us hope it is not lost forever.

Note the shifting patterns in the left hand: Compare the initial pattern with the return at m. 17; note the new pattern and the resulting melodic bass line at m. 25. Note that Chopin highlights this bass line with quarter stems on the beat.

Notice the rare and magically counter-intuitive joining of *smorzando* with *accelerando* at the end of this prelude. Chopin generally preferred the more impetuous (and usually short-lived) *stretto* to the full-fledged *accelerando*. In fact, there is not a single other *accelerando* in all of the other 25 preludes. Therefore, be sure not to apologize for this one. Commit to it fully, and you will communicate it with conviction. Notice also the joining of *legatissimo* with the *leggerezza* of the tempo marking. This too is rare, as *leggiere* frequently implies an articulation like "prancing" lightly on the surface of the keys, *non-legato* (though not quite *staccato*).

Pedaling Possibilities

Chopin aims his initial pedal markings at the harmonic movement (one change per measure) that continues almost without interruption in this work. (Chopin gave the marking for two measures only, with the clear but unstated intention "simile." The *sempre con pedale* of the final line is also Chopin's.) Very slight fractional changes may be necessary in the final measures of uniformly tonic harmony, depending on the piano and the performance space. Such changes would allow the final harmony to sparkle as the dynamic diminishes; unchanged pedaling in a very live hall would inundate and dull the sound.

Possible Phrase Structure

1-4, 5-8, 9-12 (9! 10! 11-12); 13-16 (13! 14! 15-16); 17-20, 21-24 (21-22, 23-24); 25-32 (25-28, 29-32); 33-41 (33-36, 37-41)

For Further Exploration

Can you find all the instances of mode mixture in this prelude? Refer back to the note for Prelude No. 5 if you

need a hint. Why do we not consider the G^b and A^b of mm. 22 and 23, respectively, to be examples of mode mixture? Does Chopin offer the listener an illustration of the phenomenon of juxtaposition with respect to mode mixture in this work, as we saw him do with the Neapolitan chord in Prelude No. 12?

Appendix

Responses to my questions "For Further Exploration" follow. It is important to have your score open to the prelude referenced in each of the responses so that you can see firsthand the concepts and discoveries that are discussed.

PRELUDE NO. 1

Notice how Chopin delights in moving back and forth between ascending and descending seconds in this prelude. Once a pattern or principle such as this is discerned, it leads to further questions, such as, "To what extent does the principle (or pattern) inform the entire work? Does the composer break the pattern or depart from the principle? If so, where and how?" In this case, is the interval between the two primary melodic pitches within each measure ever anything other than a second?

Chopin does not depart from the intra-measure melodic interval of a second until the cadential mm. 29-34. Even there, the inner voices in mm. 29-32 imply stepwise motion.

The consistency of the melodic interval throughout this prelude calls forth Chopin's creativity on other levels. For example, the second four-bar phrase segment forms a loose mirror image of the first. Are there any other mirror images?

MM. 17-20 and 21-24 also form a loose mirror image. Paradoxically, as the piece calms toward closure, Chopin quickens the mirror imaging: MM. 25-26 and 27-28 each form a two-bar mirror image.

The movement from sextuplet rhythm with an opening sixteenth rest to quintuplet rhythm filling the bar in mm. 18-20 is clearly designed to support, with the stretto, the rise in tension toward the climactic m. 21. One question worth pondering is why Chopin returns to quintuplet rhythm sporadically thereafter, with no particular pattern.

In mm. 25-26 he uses the quintuplet rhythm to distinguish the first of the two mirror images, returning to normal rhythm for the second. The pitches themselves remain the

same through the two images. The quintuplet rhythm in m. 23, however, is a total mystery.

There is always one consonant tone (or chord tone) and one dissonant tone in the melodic second featured in every measure of this prelude up to m. 29. In which measures does Chopin begin this melodic second with the chord tone, and in which does he begin with the dissonant tone? Do any interesting patterns emerge?

Most of the time the dissonant note is the first of the two in each pair, but notice something fascinating: The consonant note comes first in mm. 1-3, then the dissonant note comes first in m. 4. In the “mirror image” over the next four measures, exactly the opposite is true. The dissonant note comes first in mm. 5-7, the consonant note first in m. 8. Was Chopin conscious of this as he composed, or was it more likely an unconscious expression of his melodic genius? We’ll never know.

PRELUDE NO. 2

One of the more useful questions we can ask of a musical moment is: “What is occurring here for the first time?” When in doubt about what is interesting or beautiful at any moment in a work, try asking that question. Ask that of m. 17 in this prelude. Then ask the same of m. 19, then m. 20. With a little practice, we can find something new about virtually every measure. Every such “event,” or novelty, contributes to the story the music tells, and the more conscious we are of these musical events, the more vivid and alive the story.

In m. 17, the left-hand accompaniment figure disappears hauntingly for the first time. In m. 19 Chopin gives the first of several dramatic grand pauses to be found in the *Preludes*. In m. 20 Chopin, the master storyteller, offers—for the first time—only a fragment of the opening theme, as the story winds down. What other first-time events can you find in this prelude?

There are two instances of syncopation in the melodic line in this prelude. Can you find them both? Are they alike or different from each other?

In m. 8, the theme enters on beat three rather than the downbeat, and the first note is shortened to accommodate the unchanged phrase length. But in m. 14, the elongation of the phrase allows the theme to enter in a way that feels “early”: the first melodic note occurs on the second beat of the measure and is held through most of the following measure.

PRELUDE NO. 3

Why do you think Chopin changes the F# in the left-hand figuration in mm. 18-21 to F# in m. 22? Identify the right-hand chord in that measure.

Chopin modulates briefly to the subdominant key of C major in mm. 16-21; hence the F#. In m. 22 he heads back to the tonic key of G major, with its attendant leading tone of F#, but note how subtle and smooth is the return, with such a fleeting hint in the accompaniment. The following example outlines the harmonic motion from mm. 21 through 26:

Prelude No. 3: Reduction of harmonic motion from m. 21 through m. 26

The image shows a musical score for the right and left hands of Chopin's Prelude No. 3, measures 21 through 26. The right hand contains chords, and the left hand contains single notes. The chords are labeled as follows: IV, IV⁷, ii_{6/5}, V_{4/3}, and I. The notation is in G major (one sharp).

The right-hand chord in m. 22 is now a subdominant seventh (C7) resolving to Chopin’s favorite chord, the beautiful supertonic seventh, here in first inversion, or ii_{6/5}, which in turn leads to a gorgeous suspension over the dominant.

Why do I think the supertonic seventh is Chopin’s favorite chord? Look at how he opens the *Nocturne*, Op. 62, No. 1; how the piano enters in the second *Concerto*; how he opens the first *Scherzo*, Op. 20; how he lingers for so long on the same harmony in the middle of the *Mazurka*, Op. 59, No. 2; among many other examples. But maybe I think that is his favorite because it’s also my favorite chord. What do you think is Chopin’s favorite chord?

The five-bar phrase in this prelude is rare in Chopin, and here, in mm. 7-11, it is delightfully piquant. What is it about this prelude that may have brought forth this pesky, “uneven” phrase? Which measure, if any, feels to you like an extra one?

Certainly this is an example of a question for which there is no “right” answer. Such questions often require highly creative, even fanciful, thinking. For example, we might proceed as follows: What adjectives would you use to describe the emotional territory of this prelude? I might use such descriptive words as “sunny,” “alert,” “optimistic,” “cheerful,” among other possibilities. This is the first of the *Preludes* to explore such emotional territory. Can you see how the five-bar phrase elbows its way confidently into the phrase structure, like a bright child who refuses to be ignored, and thus supports the perky mood?

To my ears, the extra measure occurs from beat two of m. 10 through the downbeat of m. 11. Try leaving out that measure a few times to experience the phrase as if it contained the usual four measures; then reintroduce it. How does the extra measure affect the phrase?

PRELUDE NO. 4

See the print edition of the *Preludes* for a full discussion of this prelude.

PRELUDE NO. 5

What harmonies can result when the sixth degree of a major scale is lowered? What can happen to the subdominant harmony? To the leading-tone seventh chord?

The lowered sixth degree of a major scale is the most common form of “mode mixture,” sometimes called simply “mixture,” and it results in the minor subdominant and a fully diminished leading-tone seventh chord. (In this case we are not referring, by “modes,” to the church modes, such as Dorian or Phrygian, but simply to the major mode and the minor mode.) In mode mixture the composer adds a little “minor seasoning” for a kind of musical *chiaroscuro*. Can you find any other preludes with mode mixture? Consider, for example, Prelude No. 19, and see if you can find not just the mode mixture, but also the way in which Chopin uses it similarly to the way he uses it in Prelude No. 5. Chopin loved mode mixture so much that you may find it easier to find preludes in which he uses it than those in which he doesn't.

PRELUDE NO. 6

Can you find an extended phrase in the key of the Neapolitan in this prelude? Is the triad itself used in first inversion? Does the phrase lead to the dominant?

The Neapolitan triad in B minor is C major. The phrase that occurs in mm. 11-14 is in C major, and the C major triad occurs in both root position and first inversion. The phrase does lead to the dominant, albeit very smoothly through a brief subdominant and VII diminished 7.

In Prelude No. 4 we saw the raised seventh (i.e. the leading-tone) followed closely and expressively by the lowered seventh. Can you find a similar expressive device in this prelude? How does this instance differ from the earlier example?

The expressive occurrence of the raised seventh followed closely by the lowered seventh can be found in mm. 21-22. I believe this poignant juxtaposition is the inspiration for the accent on the final beat of m. 22. In Prelude No. 4, the raised and lowered seventh occur melodically, and the two notes in question are a diminished octave apart. (See the performance note for Prelude No. 4 in the G. Schirmer printed score.) In Prelude No. 6, the raised and lowered seventh occur as the upper voice of the accompanying chords, and are a half step apart.

PRELUDE NO. 7

This prelude offers an opportunity to develop an important aspect of musical insight: the capacity to see something new in comparable phrases. The performer who remains conscious of these nuances throughout the piece will communicate them to the listener, who will be aware of them as elements of an unfolding story. In each of the eight phrase segments, determine what is happening for the first time.

Often there are several new elements or events in a given phrase or phrase segment, and composers frequently use simultaneous innovations to highlight a musical moment's importance. Here are some examples of new events in each of the phrase segments 2-8 of Prelude No. 7. These are by no means exhaustive; see if you can find further examples.

In segment 2 Chopin includes a second voice in the right hand. The resulting thirds impart an Italianate flavor to the prelude, and this prelude, which is also a *mazurka*, begins to feel like a miniature *barcarolle* as well.

Prelude No. 7: mm. 2-4

In segment 3 Chopin ties a note to the repeated chords for the first time, adding a delicious 9th to the dominant harmony, and also changes the right-hand harmonic interval from thirds to sixths. This movement from thirds to sixths also adds to the *barcarolle* feel.

Prelude No. 7: mm. 4-6

(from 3rds to 6ths)
etc.

In segment 4 Chopin repeats the *anacrusis* (or pickup) on the downbeat for the first time. The effect of this repetition is unexpectedly tender.

Prelude No. 7: mm. 6-8

The pick-up and the downbeat are the same notes in the R.H.
etc.

In segment 5 he ties the pickup to the downbeat, to which he adds a third voice for an even richer texture. The resulting chord is also a *barcarolle* favorite, a version of V13.

Prelude No. 7: mm. 8-10

Chopin adds a third voice on the downbeat.
etc.

Notice that all segments thus far include repeated chords. In segment 6 Chopin finally changes the chord on the second downbeat of the segment, i.e. the last of the three chords.

Prelude No. 7: mm. 10-12

There is a change in the repeated chords for the first time (on the downbeat of m. 12).
etc.

This is the most expressive event thus far. It is also the first departure from tonic and dominant harmony. Here Chopin brings together several innovations to heighten the significance of this special moment.

In segment 7 Chopin takes the principle of change in the repeated chords even further: Now there is change on the second and the third chords (not just the third), and the change is in an inner voice while the upper voice remains unchanged. This is an event of great beauty, resulting in an exquisite V9 chord.

Prelude No. 7: mm. 12-14

There is a change on each of the repeated chords, but the upper voice remains the same.
etc.

In segment 8 Chopin includes the first ornament of the prelude, a single grace note. But there is another more interesting novelty. The dotted rhythm has always, until now, involved an ascending second. Here, in the final segment, the dotted rhythm finally involves a descending second. This adds to the experience of closure conveyed by this final segment.

Prelude No. 7: mm. 14-16

The grace note is new.

Did Chopin consciously fashion each of these new events and permutations for every segment? Of course, we cannot know for sure—certainly “yes” for some; probably not for all. Chopin was a master storyteller: in all likelihood his extraordinarily natural creative gift simply led him to vary the phrases spontaneously throughout the unfolding story. Notice how alive the prelude is at all times, even though the rhythm is identical in all eight segments.

PRELUDE NO. 8

In the appendix I offer my analysis of the keys Chopin settles in or briefly touches throughout this prelude. Analyze the prelude yourself before checking your analysis against mine. Some keys are touched so briefly as to seem mere suggestions, but nevertheless they contribute to the wide spectrum of colors in this prelude.

Here is my outline of the harmonic structure: F#m; C#; B; A; F#m; A; E; D; C; C^b; B^b; Cm; Dm; B^b; Gm; E^b; E^bm; C^b; E^bm; F#m; A; Bm; C#; F#m, F#, F#m. As you compare your analysis to mine, bear in mind that some of these keys are suggested only very briefly, and alternative analyses are possible. Do you notice any patterns? Which keys seem strongest and clearest to you?

Determine what very common musical element is missing from this prelude.

There is not a single rest in this entire prelude of more than 1,550 notes!

PRELUDE NO. 9

Chopin was a master of harmonic innovation and experimentation. There are two very interesting harmonic approaches to the dominant in this prelude. Can you find them both?

In m. 8 Chopin reaches the major mediant (enharmonically spelled as A^b major). This is a harmonic event that he enjoys frequently. Look for examples of it in the *Polonaise*, Op. 53, (see the very last few measures), the *Etude*, Op. 10, No. 1, (just before the “recap”) and a very interesting variant of it in Prelude No. 8 (see mm. 18-19). But notice here in Prelude No. 9 that the major mediant “melts” briefly into the minor—and therefore more “normal”—mediant of G# minor, before moving to the dominant and then home to E major. Thus, in this case Chopin takes the “edge” off of the progression from the major mediant through the dominant to the home key. But Chopin tries out a thoroughly original—and quite edgy—take on the progression at m. 11, moving directly from the lowered major mediant of G major to the dominant B major in the final cadence.

How might you attempt to tell the rhythmic story of this prelude in words? It might start out with a rhythmic disagreement between the hands. Where would it go from there?

After the initial “disagreement” between the hands, the rhythmic story might entail the gradual “convincing” of one hand by the other, with agreement being reached only at the very last V-I cadence. Take note that only in this final cadence do the hands play the 32nd notes simultaneously. This lends the final cadence an air of triumph.

PRELUDE NO. 10

Why is the last “A” of m. 6 an A#? How is that A# similar to the F# in m. 22 of Prelude No. 3?

Chopin gently indicates the motion from C# minor, whose sixth degree is A^b, to G# minor, whose second degree is A#, in that last note of m. 6. Notice how smoothly that single note foretells the change. Recall the same smooth motion from C major to G major in Prelude No. 3, borne subtly by the change from F^b to F#, so easily missed in that babbling left-hand figure.

PRELUDE NO. 11

Can you find any hemiolas among the preludes not written in 6/8 time? Why are hemiolas more likely in 6/8 and in 3/4 time than in other time signatures? Which prelude, not written in either of these time signatures, might—with a little imagination—be seen to consist of nothing but hemiolas?

Which prelude can be seen as one long string of hemiolas? Let’s search together: first, look for motion in triplets or groups of three. (This is why hemiolas occur most often in 3/4 or 6/8 time. Groups of three abound.) Then find examples within the triplets or groups of three in which the composer implies (or boldly asserts) groupings in *two*. This is the “hemiola experience”: the ear is pulled toward a feeling in two while still aware of a framework in three. The composer can do this with the note values, accents or intervallic direction, among other possibilities. (How does Chopin do it in Prelude No. 11?)

Have you found the prelude in which Chopin does this throughout? Prelude No. 14. Although the meter is 2/2, the rhythm is consistently organized into four groups of triplet eighth notes per bar. However, the intervallic direction in these triplets is always paired in two’s. This is not quite the normal hemiola experience, since we are never aware of motion in three in the usual sense, but it is an intriguing case nonetheless. See the note for Prelude No. 14.

Find the brief suggestion of a hemiola in Prelude No. 6, and the chordal hemiola motive in the left hand of Prelude No. 12. A very lovely example of a hemiola occurs in Prelude No. 19, and a very brief one near the end of Prelude No. 18. There is a subtle and extremely beautiful hemiola in Prelude No. 13. Can you find others?

Sometimes the hands even appear to “disagree,” one hand seeming to pull the ear toward the hemiola “paired” feeling while the other remains firmly in groupings of three. For example, consider m. 6 in Prelude No. 11: The left hand plays a hemiola while the right hand does not. Note that when Chopin returns to the analogous point in the final phrase, the “hemiola hand,” i.e. the left, appears to have

surrendered to the persuasion of the right: neither hand plays a hemiola.

PRELUDE NO. 12

In this prelude as in others, Chopin has either “misspelled” an augmented sixth chord, or opted for the more easily read version. Can you find the chord? (We have retained Chopin’s spelling in this case as we have elsewhere throughout the edition.)

The augmented sixth chord occurs in m. 12. Chopin “should” have spelled the chord with an E \sharp , which leads to the F \sharp of the next harmony. Perhaps he felt the F \natural was easier to read. (See similar note for *Prelude No. 4*.)

Can you find Chopin’s beautiful use of the Neapolitan in this prelude? Occasionally I play a phrase that uses the Neapolitan and substitute the normal, un-flatted supertonic to see how that would sound. Then I play it as written, with the Neapolitan. This highlights the Neapolitan’s darker, more intense expressiveness. In this case, Chopin does that for us. The phrase occurs twice, first with the normal supertonic, then with the Neapolitan. Find the two phrases.

The two phrases that highlight the Neapolitan are those in mm. 65-73. Notice how the normal supertonic occurs fleetingly as the third beat of m. 67, whereas Chopin lingers a bit over the Neapolitan in the next phrase.

Note that chords built on the supertonic occur most often in first inversion. This is true whether or not the Neapolitan is involved, and whether we are in the minor or major mode. But there are exceptions. Which of the chords built here on the supertonic occurs in a position other than first inversion?

PRELUDE NO. 13

Do certain genres inspire certain time signatures for Chopin? How many of the Preludes are in compound time? How about the Etudes? Is there a genre in which all of the works are in compound time? What might this suggest? Why are there no Mazurkas, Waltzes or Polonaises in compound time?

Five of the 24 preludes in *Op. 28* are in compound time. Interestingly, of the 24 *Etudes*, *Opp. 10* and 25, it is also five that are in compound time. Chopin would seem to prefer compound time in these meter-neutral genres about 20 percent of the time. The *Nocturnes* are more frequently in compound time. But consider the *Ballades*. All four are in compound time the vast majority of the time, as are the *Barcarolle* and the *Berceuse*. Compound time lends itself to the lilting, rocking rhythm associated with the *Barcarolle* (a boat song) or with the rocking of a cradle, as in the *Berceuse*. It is interesting to note how frequently that rhythmic mode,

and the mood it suggests, finds their way into Chopin’s *Ballades*, his poetic narratives. The stylized dances Chopin preferred, the *Waltzes*, *Mazurkas* and *Polonaises*, are in 3/4—i.e. simple triple time by their very natures.

Sometimes the composer has a choice of compound or simple time signatures in a given work. Preludes Nos. 1 and 14 are examples, and in both cases Chopin chose simple time: 2/8 over 6/16 in the first, and 2/2 over 12/8 in the 14th. (Had he chosen compound time for *Prelude No. 14*, he might have implied motion in two rather than four by assigning the perpetual motion the value of 16th notes rather than eighths, for a signature of 12/16.) It is interesting to observe Chopin’s preferences.

PRELUDE NO. 14

To my knowledge, this piece is unique for at least two reasons. Can you determine what they are? Let your imagination play with this admittedly broad question a bit before consulting my thoughts in the appendix. There are hints of both reasons in my comments above.

Consider that both hands play the same pitch class at all times in this piece. (Again, “pitch class” refers to notes of the same letter name.) In the sonata movement to which I have compared this prelude, the hands play the same pitch class up to, but not including, the very last chord. In this prelude, the hands play the same pitch class throughout. I know of no other work like it in this respect.

Less obviously: Can you find a single, consecutive half or whole step in this piece? There are a few augmented seconds, but no major or minor seconds. Again, I know of no other such work. Of course, any composer can set out to write a work that sports a unique attribute. The challenge for the composer is to write a piece that “works” both because of its uniqueness *and* entirely independently of it. This is why originality or uniqueness for its own sake is no virtue.

PRELUDE NO. 15

Chopin seems to have set himself a compositional challenge, in the form of a limit, in this prelude. What is that challenge? Put another way, he adopted the musical equivalent of a poet’s rhyme scheme. What is that scheme?

With the repetition of the A \flat /G \sharp through much of this prelude, Chopin limits the amount of harmonic creativity available to him. Considering how richly varied he usually prefers his harmonic palette, we may marvel at the embrace of limitation here, and the enormously satisfying result. This embrace is not unlike the decision of a poet to utilize a rhyme scheme, and thus limit the words at his

disposal. Of course, Chopin does depart occasionally from his “rhyme” scheme (as poets often do as well), and also repeats pitches other than A^b/G^\sharp in this prelude. Look closely at the repeated pitches throughout the prelude. Does he ever repeat a pitch other than the fifth degree of the key of the moment? (Consider, for example, the brief excursion into A^b minor on the first page. How is the repetition of the A^b in these measures different from the repetition of the same pitch while in the key of D^b ?)

PRELUDE NO. 16

Can you find other works in which Chopin (or any composer, for that matter) uses the Neapolitan chord in root position? Find examples of the Neapolitan in your favorite works and experiment with rewriting them: explore the sound of different inversions both of the Neapolitan and the subsequent dominant harmony. Pay particular attention to the bass line and any resulting tritones. There is an example of such a tritone among the Preludes themselves. Look carefully at Prelude No. 20.

Look closely at the *Polonaise*, Op. 44, the *Fantasy*, Op. 49, and the exposition of the first movement of the *Sonata No. 3*, Op. 58, to get you started. Never underestimate the enormous pleasure of making connections between separate works. Happy hunting!

There is an extraordinarily stark use of the Neapolitan in root position in Prelude No. 20. Highlight the bass line and note the stunning tritone.

PRELUDE NO. 17

Consider the V-IV deceptive cadence noted above, common to two of Chopin's works in A^b major. Do certain keys lead some composers to think in certain specific ways? Consider Beethoven's works in C minor and Bach's works in D major. Can you see some consistencies among them? What is it about the keys themselves that might stimulate similar modes of musical thought? Can you think of further examples among Chopin's and other composers' works?

Note the very beautiful V-IV deceptive cadence in the third *Ballade*, which occurs at mm. 139-140:

Chopin, *Ballade No. 3 in A^b , Opus 47*: mm. 139-140

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major, Opus 47, measures 139-140. The score is written for piano and features a V-IV deceptive cadence. The bass line is marked with V7 and IV6. The treble clef part includes a crescendo and a trill marked '8va'. The score ends with 'etc.'.

It is almost a cliché that C minor is Beethoven's “tragic” key, but that does not explain the phenomenon away. Reconsider it: why should C minor call forth a certain mode of expression for Beethoven? Consider, for example, the *Piano Sonatas Op. 10, No. 1*, *Op. 13* (“Pathétique”), the *Trio Op. 1, No. 3* for piano, violin, and cello, and, of course, the *Fifth Symphony*. D major seems to be a key conducive to “joyful praise” for Bach. Consider the *D-Major Fugue* from Book 1 of *The Well Tempered Clavier*, the *Prelude and Fugue in D* from Book 2, and the fourth *Partita*. The *Magnificat* is also in the key of D.

What are the keys that set relatively consistent moods for Chopin? Clearly he loves the black keys; for him, the C major scale was the hardest of them all, and the one he taught his students last. For my ears, A^b major seems for Chopin to be a key of peace, happiness and contentment: Consider the *Etude*, Op. 25, No. 1 (the “Aeolian Harp”); the third *Ballade* (perhaps the happiest piece he ever wrote); and the *Waltzes*, Op. 34, No. 1, Op. 42, and Op. 64, No. 3, the *Fantasy*, Op. 49 (which moves from a funereal darkness in F minor to a sublime light in A^b), the *Polonaise-Fantasy*, and of course this prelude, the last page of which is, for me, deeply comforting music. There are many other examples of this “contentment in A^b major” in Chopin's works.

He composed much of his greatest music in a “radiant” mode in keys with many sharps or flats. Pieces such as the *Barcarolle* (F# major); the “Black Key” *Etude* (G^b major); the second and third *Impromptus* (Have you noticed they are in the same key, enharmonically spelled? F# and G^b major, respectively); the *Berceuse* (D^b major); the F# major *Prelude* (my personal favorite)—all seem to radiate a brilliant light and to reach for higher states of being and awareness, at least to this listener. What keys connote consistent experiences for you in Chopin's and other composers' works? Remember, there are no right or wrong answers to this inquiry.

PRELUDE NO. 18

Consider the final V-I cadence. In the context of this prelude, Chopin manages to imbue even this simple, standard progression with a sense of dread. How does he do it? Look carefully for other suggestions of musical “violence” in the prelude. How, for example, does Chopin refute most descriptions of his own public performances in this prelude?

In the final cadence, the V chord, without the leading tone, i.e. the third of the chord, is starkly austere. I find this extraordinarily ominous in the context of this prelude. Yet Chopin leaves out the leading tone in the final cadence in another prelude, with completely different effect. This is an illustration of the power of context to give meaning. Can you find the prelude?

Reports of Chopin’s performances paint a picture of a pianist with a rich variety of tonal colors—but a dynamic range centered on the softer end of the spectrum. Yet his dynamic markings certainly refute that picture. Still, a marking of triple *forte*, *fff*, is relatively rare for Chopin. This is the first occurrence of triple *forte* in the *Preludes*, but not the only one. Can you find the other?

PRELUDE NO. 19

Occasionally it can be quite stimulating to adopt a quasi-scientific stance as we examine the inner workings of a piece. My teacher Leon Fleisher encouraged his students to peer into the “DNA” of a work. Try using the performance note discussion of the rare simultaneous doubling of the second eighth of some beats in this prelude as a springboard to such an inquiry. For example, consider the first occurrence of this doubling in the prelude. Can you find it? It is a function of the voice leading, and this voice leading itself is quite fascinating, resembling something like the paradox of an M. C. Escher print.

The first occurrence in this prelude of the simultaneous doubling of the second eighth of a beat occurs in m. 43, beat two. Here the left- and right-hand thumbs’ ascending and descending lines, respectively, cause the convergence of voices upon the pitch class D. The paradox in the voice leading consists in the manner in which the diminished-seventh chords dovetail perfectly, although the right hand descends in half steps and the left hand ascends in whole steps. (Hence the analogy with the M. C. Escher print.) This dovetailing arises from the fact that there are really only three substantively different diminished-seventh chords in our tonal system. Can you figure out why? What other quasi-scientific observations can you make about the *Preludes* and other works you play?

PRELUDE NO. 20

As Thomas Higgins points out in his “Notes Toward a Performance” of the Preludes, Chopin rather humorously adds a note in the manuscript implying that it was on the advice of a certain “Monsieur xxx who is often right” that he repeats the second phrase. How does this repetition leave the piece with an unusual structure?

If Chopin’s original impulse had been to state the second phrase only a single time it would have left the prelude entirely “square,” with two four-bar phrases consisting solely of measures of identical four-beat rhythm (plus the final measure with a single chord). With the repetition of the second phrase Chopin introduces a deeply satisfying “curve,” a third four-bar phrase without a fourth. Try playing the prelude without repeating the second phrase. Note how fleeting the effect is when the lovely second phrase occurs only once.

PRELUDE NO. 21

I encourage the pianist to take up a thorough exploration of song literature, with particular attention to the enormous variety to be found in the accompanying material. (My favorites are the songs of Schumann, Schubert and Fauré.) The greater your familiarity with the richness and variety of song accompaniments among the masters, the deeper will be your appreciation for the genius of this prelude of Chopin.

I find the accompanimental material in Preludes Nos. 3, 4, 13, 23 and 24 particularly interesting. You can find inspired accompaniments in many of Chopin’s works. Not a single nocturne is without creative accompaniment. Also consider the second *Impromptu*; it begins with a song, the accompaniment of which is similar in some ways to that of this prelude. Explore the creative accompaniments in the *Etudes Op. 10, Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9 and 12*. From *Op. 25* consider *Nos. 1, 5, 6 and 7*. Even the accompaniments in the *mazurkas* have a surprising amount of variety for stylized dances. (See also the note for Prelude No. 4.)

In the song literature, explore the great cycles of Schubert (e.g., *Die Schöne Mullerin*, *Winterreise* and *Schwanengesang*) and Schumann (e.g., the two *Liederkreis*, *Dichterliebe*, *Myrthen* and *Frauenliebe und Leben*). Among the many individual songs of Schubert worth mining for rich accompaniments are “Erlkönig,” “Auf dem Wasser zu Singen” and “Gretchen am Spinnrade.” Liszt transcribed these and many other Schubert songs. Mendelssohn’s *Songs without Words* are, of course, a treasure of creative accompaniments. Among Fauré’s songs I find “Les Berceaux,” “Mandoline” and “Tristesse” to be most interestingly accompanied. Finally, we must not discount Chopin’s songs altogether. Signs of his genius are present in many of them. Consider the richness and virtuosity of the “Narzeczonej” accompaniment. Happy exploring!

Consider the augmented sixth chord in m. 32. We have noted this chord in Preludes Nos. 4, 12 and 18, among others. Compare those instances to m. 32 of this prelude. How is the augmented sixth chord here different from the previous examples?

Notice that this augmented sixth is not identical enharmonically to a dominant seventh. The D^b is replaced by a C. This is a French augmented sixth, rather than the somewhat more frequently encountered (at least in Chopin's works) German augmented sixth. It is the German sixth chord that is identical enharmonically to a V7 chord.

Augmented-sixth chords in the key of B^b major

The image shows two musical staves side-by-side. The left staff is labeled 'German Aug. 6th' and shows a chord with notes Bb, D, F, and Ab. The right staff is labeled 'French Aug. 6th' and shows a chord with notes Bb, C, F, and Ab.

The German augmented-sixth chord in B^b major sounds identical to the V7 chord in the key of C^b major:

The image shows two musical staves side-by-side. The left staff is labeled 'Bb: German Aug. 6th' and shows a chord with notes Bb, D, F, and Ab. The right staff is labeled 'Cb: V7' and shows a chord with notes Bb, D, F, and Ab.

Experiment with the different "flavors" these two augmented-sixth chords possess. This is not the only French augmented sixth to be found in the *Preludes*. Look for one in Prelude No. 2. In Prelude No. 17, Chopin juxtaposes quite beautifully the two types of augmented-sixth chords within the same progression:

Prelude No. 17: mm. 24-26

The image shows musical notation for Preludes Nos. 4 and 12. The top staff is labeled 'dim.' and has an annotation 'These two chords are French Aug. 6ths' pointing to two chords. The bottom staff has an annotation 'These two chords are German Aug. 6ths' pointing to two chords. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of two flats, and various chord symbols and notes.

This juxtaposition affords an easy comparison of the two distinctive flavors of these chords. See the notes for Preludes Nos. 4 and 12.

PRELUDE NO. 22

Use mm. 17-23 to develop your eye for innovation. Chopin here offers a very unusual example of a favored device of his that we have seen frequently throughout the *Preludes*. Can you determine the device? What makes its use here innovative?

MM. 17-22 appear at a glance to be centered on the key of D^b major, until we realize that the G in these measures is always natural rather than flat. With G^{\natural} the key is not D^b , but A^b major. This is easy to miss because the A^b chord itself makes only brief appearances in the phrase. What significance does A^b major carry in the key of G minor? Yes, this is an extraordinary occurrence of the Neapolitan key of A^b , revolving—with striking effect—around its subdominant, D^b .

PRELUDE NO. 23

Search for examples of the brief use of the subdominant key as the harbinger of the end of a piece in works of Chopin and other composers. Pay particular attention to the works of Bach. Can you find a short keyboard work of Bach in which he reverses the appearance of dominant and subdominant keys, with a subtle modulation to the subdominant coming first and the dominant key serving as harbinger of the end?

Once you are alert for the occurrence of the subdominant key as harbinger of the end of a work, you will find examples of it everywhere. It may be an exaggeration to say that hardly a Bach *Invention*, *Sinfonia* or *Prelude and Fugue* fails to touch the subdominant in some fashion in the last few measures—but not by much. Enjoy researching this lovely phenomenon.

You may have heard the expression “The exception proves the rule.” We might say that J. S. Bach’s D major Gavotte II from the *English Suite in D Minor* falls into that category. It is the only piece I’ve found in which a composer appears to set out almost ostentatiously to reverse the expected order of modulation. Instead of the usual early modulation to the dominant, Bach places the tender, subtle motion to the subdominant first and repeats it frequently throughout the piece, then very briefly “kisses” the dominant key (with his startling use of V/V - V in the last three measures) as the harbinger of the end. The effect is extremely odd but riveting. The following example shows the first and last phrases of this Gavotte. Perhaps you can find other such pieces.

J.S. Bach, “Gavotte II” from the *English Suite VI in D Minor*:
mm. 1-4 and mm. 21-25

The musical score consists of four systems of music. The first system (mm. 1-4) shows a modulation from D major to G major (V7/IV) and then to B major (IV). The second system (mm. 21-25) shows a modulation from D major to G major (V/V) and then to D major (I). The score includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) leading to the final cadence.

PRELUDE NO. 24

What elements of finality can you find in this prelude, beyond those mentioned above?

Here are a few further examples of closure: *fff*, the second only of the entire *Preludes*, marks the final dynamic, and one of the more astonishing endings of the piano repertoire awaits the listener. The final, cascading arpeggio descends to the lowest singly played note of the cycle, the lowest D on the piano. For added emphasis it is played not once—not twice—but three times in succession. In his notes to the earlier Schirmer edition of the *Preludes* edited by Mikuli, James Huneker called this tolling of a netherworld’s bell “the final clangor of overthrown reason.”

Make a practice of looking for elements of closure in the final movement—or final piece—of all multi-movement works you play.

PRELUDE IN C-SHARP MINOR, OP. 45

Why do you suppose I place no exclamation point at the five-bar phrase that leads to the cadenza, but put one at the four-bar phrase that ends the piece? The single measure 80 is of course the cadenza. Why does this single-bar event not deserve an exclamation point? How does Chopin mitigate the potential monotony of the preponderant four-bar phrases in this prelude?

You may have noticed that, for Chopin, phrases often “elide” such that the downbeat of the measure immediately following a phrase both begins a new phrase and provides closure for the previous phrase. Had we wanted to offer a more precise schema for Chopin’s phrase structure, it might have looked something like this: *Phrase 1*: m. 1 through m. 5, beat one; *Phrase 2*: m. 5 through m. 9, beat one; etc. I feel this kind of cumbersome detail is best left to the student, if the student finds it interesting and helpful. The result of this elision, however, is that very often the final phrase of a work appears to be of uneven length because it requires the extra measure to come to closure. It has been my practice not to highlight such falsely irregular phrases with an exclamation point in my “Possible Phrase Structure” schematizations.

The five-bar phrase that precedes the cadenza is such a falsely irregular phrase: The fifth measure simply brings the four-bar phrase to closure before the cadenza begins. The final phrase, therefore, is really the irregular one, because it amounts to a three-bar phrase, plus one for closure.

The *cadenza* consists of 16 groups of four eighths, preserving the somewhat “square” geometry of the phrase lengths. Chopin alleviates the potential monotony of this geometry with an unusual degree of harmonic inventiveness and creativity throughout the prelude.

**PRELUDE IN A-FLAT MAJOR
(PRESTO CON LEGGIEREZZA)**

Can you find all the instances of mode mixture in this prelude? Refer back to the note for Prelude No. 5 if you need a hint. Why do we not consider the G^b and A^b of mm. 22 and 23, respectively, to be examples of mode mixture? Does Chopin offer the listener an illustration of the phenomenon of juxtaposition with respect to mode mixture in this work, as we saw him do with the Neapolitan chord in Prelude No. 12?

Mode mixture occurs in this work for the first time, fleetingly, in m. 16 with the F^b, the typical lowered sixth degree of mode mixture, here in A^b major. We see it again with the B^{bb} of m. 25 in the key of D^b major. There are several more lovely examples. Can you find them?

We do not consider the G^b and A^b of mm. 22 and 23 to be examples of mode mixture because these measures move toward B^b minor and C minor, respectively, and the flat sixth degree is to be expected; there is no mixing of modes here.

The juxtaposition of similar motives, first without mode mixture and then with mixture, occurs in mm. 33-36. MM. 33-34 is solidly in major; modes are mixed in mm. 35-36.

Suggested Reading:

Hutcheson, Ernest. *The Literature of the Piano: A Guide for Amateur and Student*, rev. Rudolph Ganz. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966.

I spent many rewarding hours with this book in my teenage years. Returning to it as an adult, I see how much of my current thinking has sprouted from seeds planted by Mr. Hutcheson and Mr. Ganz (no relation), about the *Preludes* and other repertoire as well. Though a bit outdated now, it is well worth mining for its many riches.

Samson, Jim (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Samson, Jim. *The Music of Chopin*. Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1985.

Jim Samson may well be the leading Chopin scholar of our day. His work has been a primary inspiration in my efforts to go beyond a surface understanding of Chopin's music.

Samson, Jim. *Chopin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. First American Edition Pub. in New York: Schirmer Books, a division of Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1997.

This is a scholarly yet immensely readable biography.

Rosen, Charles. *The Romantic Generation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Charles Rosen's writings were the first to reveal to me the great pleasures and challenges of the inquiring musical mind. His encyclopedic knowledge and gentle erudition are a treasure for all serious music lovers. I also recommend his classic works, *The Classical Style* and *Sonata Forms*.

Eigeldinger, Jean-Jacques. *Chopin: pianist and teacher as seen by his pupils*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

This book is a must-own gold mine for Chopin-lovers.

Higgins, Thomas (ed.). *The Norton Critical Score of the Chopin Preludes, Op. 28*. New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1973.

This small volume holds a wealth of material about the *Preludes*, including Dr. Higgins' excellent "Notes Toward a Performance." Having read his notes after very nearly completing my own, I was struck by the common ground, although perhaps it should come as no surprise that two pianists inquiring independently into performance issues with each prelude might come upon some similar insights. This edition reprints the Henle Urtext score.

Chopin, Frederic. *Chopin's Letters*, collected by Henryk Opienski; trans. with a preface and editorial notes by E. L. Voynich. New York: Knopf, 1931; repub. by Dover, 1988.

Familiarity with Chopin's letters is necessary for any serious Chopin study. He emerges in all his multi-dimensionality: at times sincere, at others quite calculating; at times quite likable, even admirable, at others not. Though little light is shed directly on the nature of his art, a great deal is illuminated indirectly.

Schumann, Robert. *Schumann on Music: A Selection from the Writings*, trans. and ed. by Henry Pleasants. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965.

Schumann was an unusually astute judge of musical value: he was among the first to understand the true greatness of Chopin and Brahms. His contemporary observations of Chopin's more daring essays make fascinating reading.

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I thank you all.

—Brian Ganz