



20²⁵₂₆
SEASON

ANDREA LUCCHESINI piano
Sunday September 21, 2025
VANCOUVER PLAYHOUSE

From the Artistic Director

Dear Friends,

We are thrilled to be opening our 46th Season with one of our favourite musicians, Italian pianist Andrea Lucchesini.

Lucchesini made his Canadian debut on this series when he was only 19 years old and could barely speak English. And what a debut that was! Today's performance marks his seventh appearance on our stage.

For this afternoon's concert he has chosen a wonderful program of Schubert, Brahms, and Chopin's 24 Preludes, Op. 28. We last heard a performance of the complete preludes in 2013 when they were played by another remarkable Italian pianist, Beatrice Rana.

I would like to thank Ann Harding for sponsoring today's performance.

We are also grateful to the Peak Group of Companies, which has returned as our Season Sponsor, and to the City of Vancouver for its support.

And we can never say thank you enough to you, our patrons, for attending VRS performances and for helping us build the organization we have become.

Have a wonderful afternoon.

Sincerely,



Leila Getz



CELLPHONES

The use of cellphones and recording devices is prohibited in the concert hall. Please take this opportunity to turn off all electronic devices.

音乐厅内禁止使用手机，禁止拍照，录音，录像。请观众关闭所有电子器材，谢谢您的合作。

Program

Andrea Lucchesini, piano

Sunday, September 21, at 3:00 pm
Vancouver Playhouse

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)
Drei Klavierstücke D 946

Allegro assai

Allegretto

Allegro

(approx. 25 minutes)

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Sechs Klavierstücke Op. 118

Intermezzo. Allegro non assai, ma appassionato

Intermezzo. Andante teneramente

Ballade. Allegro energico

Intermezzo. Allegretto un poco agitato

Romanze. Andante

Intermezzo. Andante, largo e mesto

(approx. 23 minutes)

INTERMISSION

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)
24 Preludes Op. 28

1. C major. Agitato
2. A minor. Lento
3. G major. Vivace
4. E minor. Largo
5. D major. Molto allegro
6. B minor. Lento assai
7. A major. Andantino
8. F# minor. Molto agitato
9. E major. Largo
10. C# minor. Molto allegro
11. B major. Vivace
12. G# minor. Presto
14. E-flat minor. Allegro
15. D-flat major. Sostenuto
16. B-flat minor. Presto con fuoco
17. A-flat major. Allegretto
18. F minor. Molto allegro
19. E-flat major. Vivace
20. C minor. Largo
21. B-flat major. Cantabile
22. G minor. Molto agitato
23. F major. Moderato
24. D minor. Allegro appassionato

(approx. 38 minutes)

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Andrea Lucchesini, piano

Early Life & Education: Trained under the guidance of Maria Tipo, Andrea Lucchesini garnered international recognition at a very young age when he won the “Dino Ciani” International Competition at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan.

Performances: Andrea has performed with major orchestras around the world and with some of the most celebrated conductors of our time: Claudio Abbado, Semyon Bychkov, Daniele Gatti, Riccardo Chailly, Yuri Temirkanov, Gianandrea Noseda, Dennis Russell Davies, Zubin Mehta, Gianluigi Gelmetti, Yehudi Menuhin, Giuseppe Sinopoli and Daniel Harding, amongst others. Recent engagements include

concerts with the Orchestra Mozart conducted by Daniele Gatti, concerts with the Orchestra del Maggio Musicale, conducted by Manfred Honeck, and a North American tour in Spring 2023.

Recordings: Andrea has made several recordings, the first few dating back to the 1980s, for EMI International (Liszt’s Sonata in B minor, Beethoven’s Sonata Op. 106 “Hammerklavier” and Chopin’s Sonata Op. 58). He later recorded Schoenberg’s Pierrot Lunaire and Berg’s Chamber Concerto with the Dresden Staatskapelle conducted by Giuseppe Sinopoli for the Teldec label. In 2018, the German label Audite released his latest recording, *Dialogues*, featuring the music of Scarlatti. In 2019 and 2020, Audite released three records dedicated to the late piano music of Schubert.

Did you know: Andrea is passionately dedicated to teaching, currently at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole, where he was artistic director until 2016. He also holds frequent masterclasses at important Italian and European music institutions, including the Accademia di Musica in Pinerolo and the Mozarteum in Salzburg, and has taught at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia since 2008.

Andrea serves on juries at numerous piano competitions all over the world and was named Accademico of Santa Cecilia in 2008. After serving as Artistic Director of the Roman Philharmonic Academy from 2018 to 2021, he was recently appointed Artistic Director of the Amici della Musica di Firenze starting from the 2022-2023 season.



Andrea Lucchesini appears by arrangement with Christina Daysog Concert Artists.

Program Notes

Franz Schubert Drei Klavierstücke D 946

Schubert's *Three Piano Pieces* D 946 were likely composed in 1828, the last year of the composer's life, and remained in manuscript until they appeared in a published edition in 1868. All three are structured in a rondo-like sequence of contrasting sections, and in their wide range of moods and inventive pianistic textures they represent some of Schubert's most adventurous keyboard writing.

* * *

The first of the set, marked ***Allegro assai***, opens in the gloomy key of E-flat minor with an agitated rippling of triplets and a breathless melody that evokes the famous forest ride of the horseman who "rides so late through night and wind" in the composer's *Erlkönig* ballad.



Further developments take the theme into major-mode territory (as in much of Schubert) and eventually to a brashly self-confident chordal theme with the forthright directness of a Schumann march. The slower and more deliberate middle section features moments of drama that with their dazzling runs and swirling tremolos



anticipate the improvisatory piano recitatives of Liszt.

* * *

The ***Allegretto*** second piece opens with a drone-textured lullaby in a style that Brahms would later make his own.

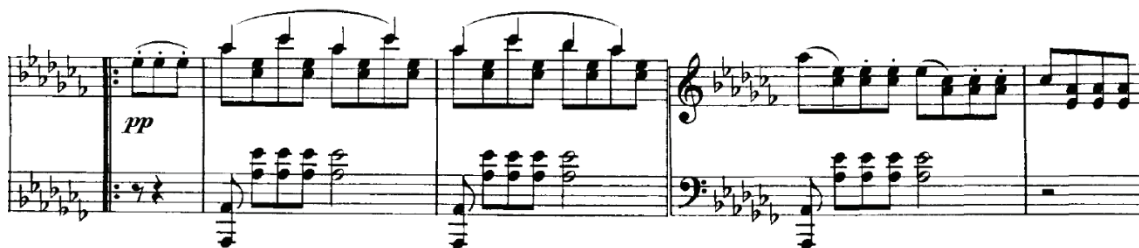


And in this regard, it is perhaps not irrelevant to mention that the editor of the 1868 edition of these pieces was none other than Johannes Brahms himself.

The first contrasting episode is conspiratorial in tone, with strange harmonic shifts and jabbing hemiola accents.



The second episode, tinted in the minor mode but with a penchant for rapturous melodic expansiveness, is Schubertian melody-making at its most magical.



* * *

The jubilant syncopations of the ***Allegro*** third piece in the set will have you cross-eyed in bewilderment wondering where the downbeat is. The exotic rhythms of Hungarian village music are obviously a point of reference here.



The contrasting middle section puts you on firmer rhythmic ground, beginning in a grave and hymn-like manner,



until it, too, starts to feel a lilt in the loins that leads it back to the stomping rhythms of the village square.

Johannes Brahms Sechs Klavierstücke Op. 118

Brahms' late piano works are exquisite miniatures, modest in their formal dimensions and generally subdued in mood and dynamic range. But they offer up a wealth of intriguing piano textures set in a lavish range of tone colours. Often described as "autumnal," these works are sometimes seen as the products of a musical career approaching its close, combining the serene, often wistful outlook of old age with outbursts of a passion more remembered than spontaneous.

And yet they are anything but the lesser offerings of a composer in decline. Rather, they represent the distilled essence of his musical aesthetic, applied with the calm assurance of a master craftsman, a composer with nothing left to prove.

* * *

Brahms' *Six Piano Pieces* of 1893 are intensely concentrated works with all the classic features of his compositional style: motivic density, rippling polyrhythms, an intimate familiarity with the lowest regions of the keyboard and, above all, an ability to create musical textures of heartbreaking lyrical intensity richly marbled with imitative counterpoint. All but the first piece are in a clear ternary A-B-A form.

The opening *Intermezzo in A minor* arrives as if in mid-thought,



a musical thought of restless harmonic change and heavy melodic sighs riding atop a surging accompaniment that constantly threatens to overwhelm them.

The *Intermezzo in A major* sounds like a simple, quiet little nocturne, but its motivic texture is elaborately in-folded, as its opening phrase



eventually yields to a melodically upside-down version of itself. And its middle section



is woven through with canons.

The *Ballade in G minor* is the most extroverted of the set. Its heroic and vigorous opening section

Allegro energico



is contrasted with a gently undulating B section



that despite its tender lyricism can't help but dream in its own lyrical way of the opening bars.

In the *Intermezzo in F minor*, a simple repeating triplet figure echoing back and forth between the hands

Allegretto un poco agitato



gives rise to canons that play out through the whole texture. Even the poised and elegiac middle section,



with its bass notes plumbing the very bottom of the keyboard, unfolds in close canonic imitation, just as in the opening.

The *Romanze in F major* sounds vaguely archaic, as its main melody, doubled in the alto and tenor voices, drifts from time to time into the Aeolian mode.



Its middle section is a gently rocking *berceuse* elaborating melodic fantasy lines over a drone bass.



The *Intermezzo in E-flat minor* that closes the set is enigmatic. Proceeding at first in whispers over a rolling carpet of arpeggios originating deep in the bass,



it gathers forcefulness in its middle section, revealing in moments of triumphalism the steel hand buried deep within Brahms' ever-so-velvet pianistic glove.



Frédéric Chopin

24 Preludes Op. 28

Chopin began composing his **24 Preludes** in all the major and minor keys in Paris in 1836 and finished the set during the winter of 1838, during his sojourns on the island of Mallorca and in the South of France. On these journeys he was joined by his new love interest, the cross-dressing French novelist George Sand, née Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin de Francueil (1804-1876). He also carried with him his scores of Bach whose “pattern” or “figuration” preludes in the *Well-Tempered Clavier* may well have inspired the many mono-motivic preludes in continuous 16th-note motion found in Op. 28.

Of course, these aphoristically brief works — almost half of which take less than a minute to perform — were not really preludes to anything at all. The traditional prelude, after all, was meant simply to create a mood or an atmosphere.

Accordingly, Chopin expanded on this notion to compose a series of *character pieces*, each with its own vividly sketched, intensely emotional mood: some joyous, nostalgic or tenderly tuneful, others solemn, brooding or even violent. And in this regard, it would not be a stretch to believe that the melancholy tone of some of them derived from the tuberculosis that was beginning to affect the composer at this time, a health condition to which he finally succumbed in 1849.

* * *

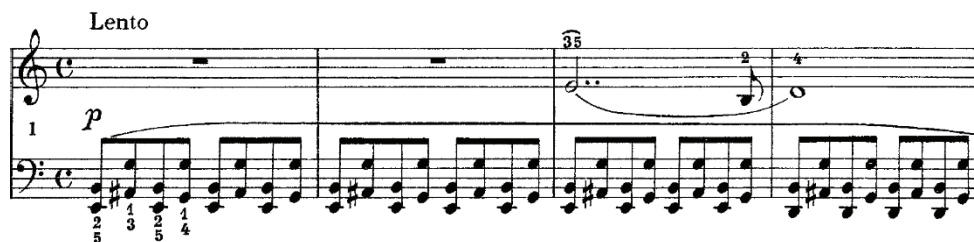
The preludes are arranged according to the circle of 5ths, with each prelude in a major key followed by one in the relative minor.

The **Prelude No. 1 in C major** offers a buoyant opening to the set

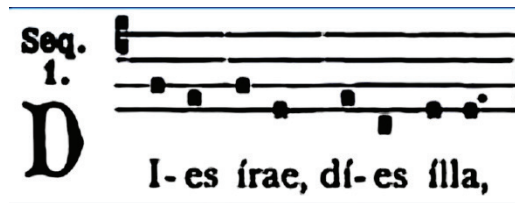


with its cresting and falling waves of yearning two-note melodic gestures, echoing between the alto and soprano voices as the texture surges and retreats like sea waves lapping at a shoreline. Its simple, repetitive chordal elaborations are an obvious tribute to the “Ave Maria” Prelude No. 1 in C major from Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I.

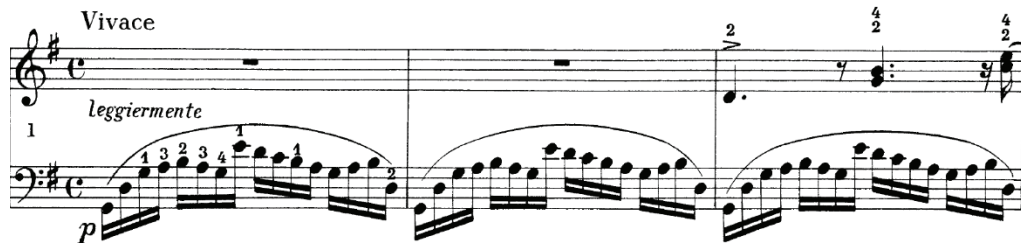
And in keeping with a frequently encountered pattern of bold contrasts between successive preludes, this is followed by what is surely one of Chopin’s most enigmatic — and arguably “ugly” — compositions, the **Prelude No. 2 in A minor**.



While many listeners might readily associate the grinding dissonances of the left-hand ostinato and static dullness of the right-hand melody with the painful experience of medieval dental surgery, others, by contrast, take a more morbid turn in hearing the accompaniment drone home the first five notes of the death-dirge *Dies irae* from the same period.

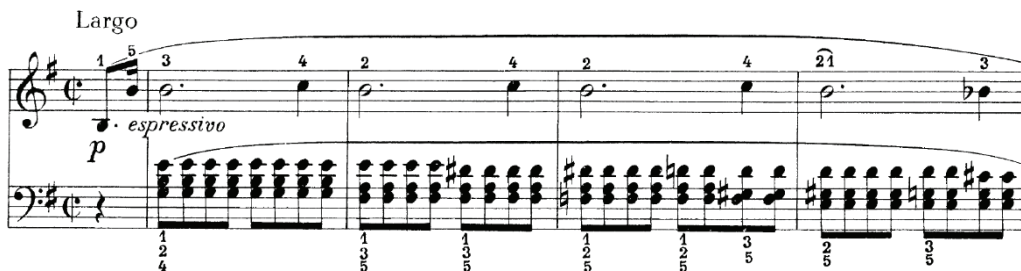


A spirit of lightness and even frivolity, however, returns in the *Prelude No. 3 in G major*, with its tireless etude-like left-hand figuration



that catches the ear so completely that it almost makes the right hand seem like an “accompaniment”.

Melancholy returns in the soulful *Prelude No. 4 in E minor*, with its lethargic right-hand melody that initially struggles, with reluctance, to move far from its first note



while the chromatic inflections of its gently pulsing left-hand accompaniment chart the shifting sands of its unusual harmonic backdrop.

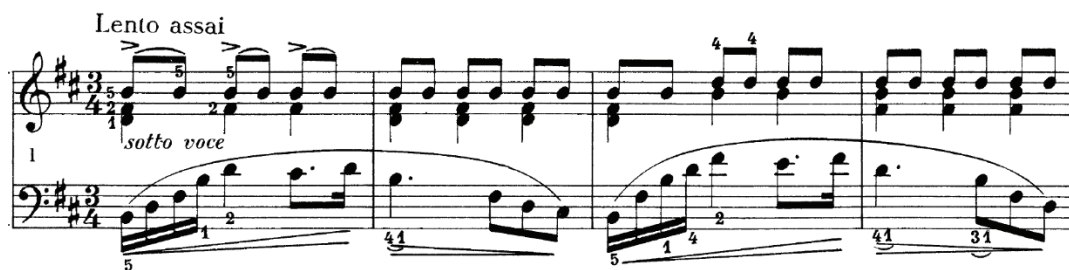
This prelude was performed at Chopin’s funeral by celebrated French organist Alfred Lefébure-Wély.

The *Prelude No. 5 in D major* is strangely ambivalent in tone due to the absence of any real sense of “melody” in the *moto perpetuo* onrush of 16th notes.

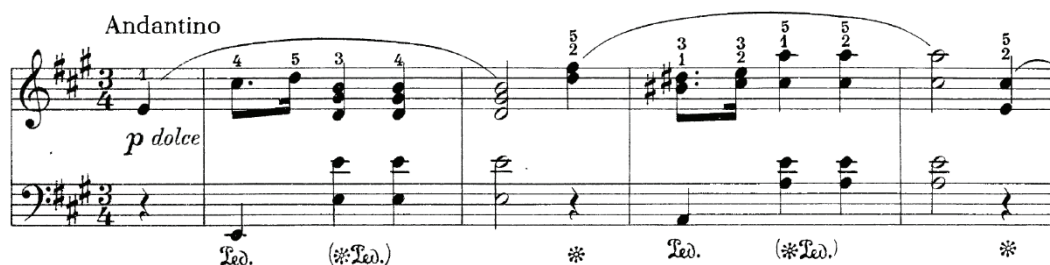


Further ambiguity resulting from the rapid alternation of B natural and B flat in the texture make this a kaleidoscopic harmonic experience for the ear.

The *Prelude No. 6 in B minor* – yet another of the Preludes performed at the composer’s funeral – is probably the best known to beginning students of the piano.

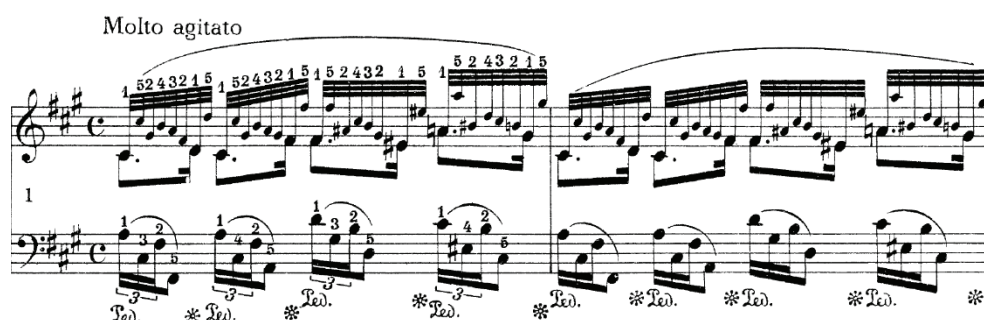


Its lonely, pleading melody in the rich baritone range amply suggests a cello in duet with the keyboard. The adorably cutesy *Prelude No. 7 in A major* is a slow mazurka



with its characteristic accented second beat of the bar reduced to a lilting pulsation.

Worry and restless anxiety dominate the florid figuration of the virtuosic *Prelude No. 8 in F# minor*



that swirls and twirls in dust-devil spirals of shimmering turbulence made ever more chaotic by descending chromatic lines and the polyrhythmic discord between left and right hands.

The majestic *Prelude No. 9 in E major* is the shortest of all the Preludes at a mere 12 bars.



Its mood is unremittingly solemn and processional, driven by a plodding but resoundingly strong bass line. Yet despite the march-like pace and proudly strutting dotted rhythms of the melody line, there is something almost tragic about this prelude that you just can't put your finger on.

Similarly brief, but entirely contrasting in mood, is the quixotic *Prelude No. 10 in C# minor*

Molto allegro

leggiero

Leg. * Leg. * Leg. * Leg. *

that flashes by in a few quick gestures like a golden butterfly speeding back and forth around a bright lamp.

The coy, occasionally hesitant melody of the *Prelude No. 11 in B major* simply bubbles over with good spirits, with mid-bar ornaments that add a chuckle to its peaceful flow.

Vivace

(p) legato

Leg. * Leg. * Leg. *

Employing harmonies of the utmost simplicity, this is Chopin at his most simply melodic.

The doggedly energetic *Prelude No. 12 in G# minor* drives grimly forward on its investigative mission, sniffing out the chromatic niches of its tonality with the determination of a bloodhound.

Presto

f cresc.

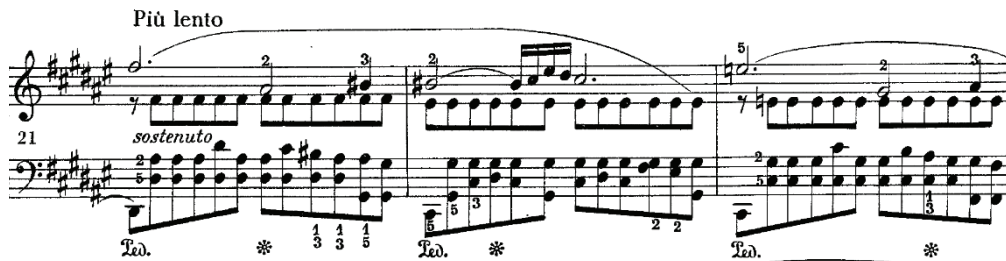
Leg. * Leg. * Leg. * Leg. *

A bloodhound on horseback, that is.

The *Prelude No. 13 in F# major* is the exact opposite.



Basking in the tonal radiance and slow pacing of its nostalgic melodies, it marks time with a constant quiet patter of 8th notes in the left hand that mask the static nature of the harmonies. As one of the larger works in the set, it unfolds in A-B-A form with a middle section



not really at odds with the mellowness of the opening.

The *Prelude No. 14 in E-flat minor*, like the analogous final movement of the composer's Sonata in B-flat minor Op. 36, is composed as a murmuring, sometimes rumbling pattern of unisons between the hands.



Dark and vaguely threatening in tone, it eschews outright tunefulness in favour of implied melody rippling out of its turbulent texture, like the menacing warnings of a mafioso.

The so-called "Raindrop" *Prelude No. 15 in D-flat major* is the longest and most often performed of the Preludes, deriving its nickname from the constant drip-drip of its ostinato patterns in the bass, starting on A flat.



But like many a Chopin nocturne, this simple, tuneful piece adopts a far more serious tone in its ominous middle section in C# minor.

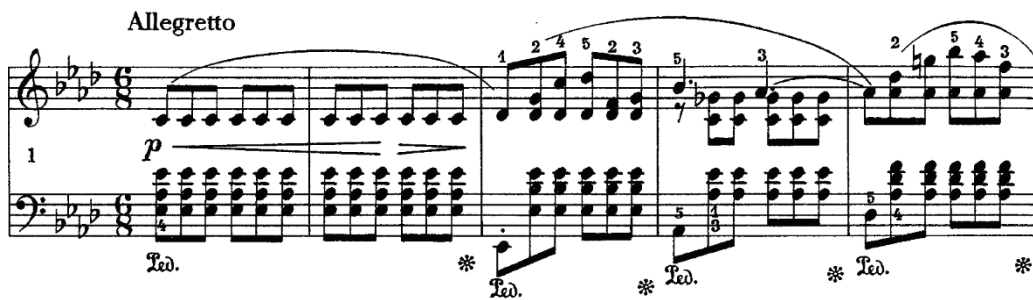


Perhaps the most virtuosic of the set is the tour de force *Prelude No. 16 in B-flat minor*



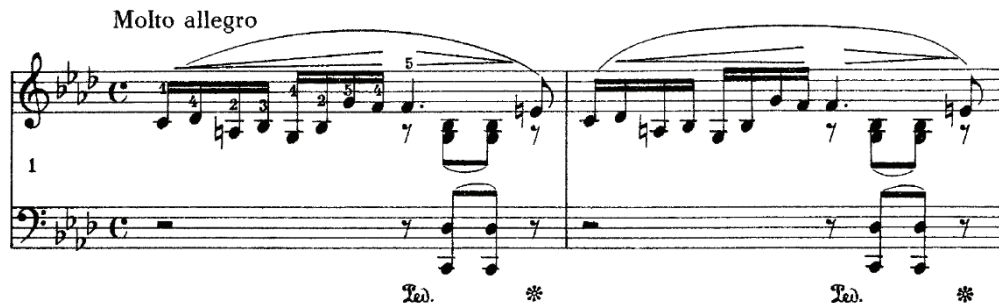
that explodes out of the starting gate with a whirlwind stream of delirious runs that never stops for a breath until its climactic ending.

What begins as a naively “inquisitive” melody in the richly padded pulsing of the *Prelude No. 17 in A-flat major*



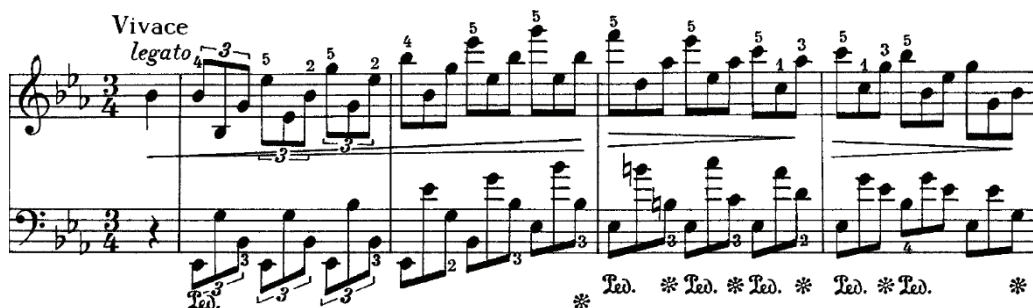
ends up glorified in the sonorous, deep-bass-inflected texture of its final section in an example of pianism in “the grand manner”.

If every family has a problem child, the “problem prelude” of this set is the stormy and combative *Prelude No. 18 in F minor*



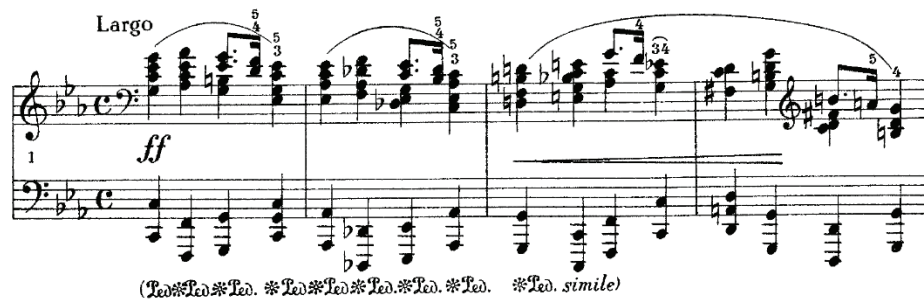
that in a series of violent outbursts vents its spleen and then stomps its foot down in a final “So there!”

The best response to such bad behaviour comes in a joyous outpouring of good feeling in the *Prelude No. 19 in E-flat major*.



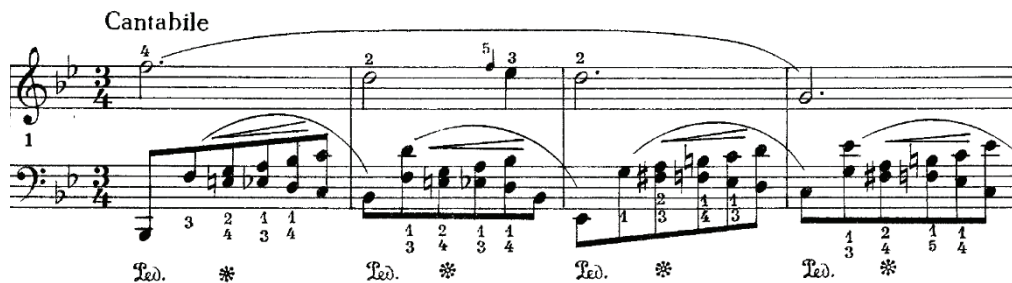
With exhilarating patterns of widely spaced arpeggios in both hands, it challenges the pianist to remain calmly exuberant while sending his eyes in opposite directions.

The third Prelude from the Op. 28 set to be performed at Chopin's funeral was the eminently funereal **Prelude No. 20 in C minor**.

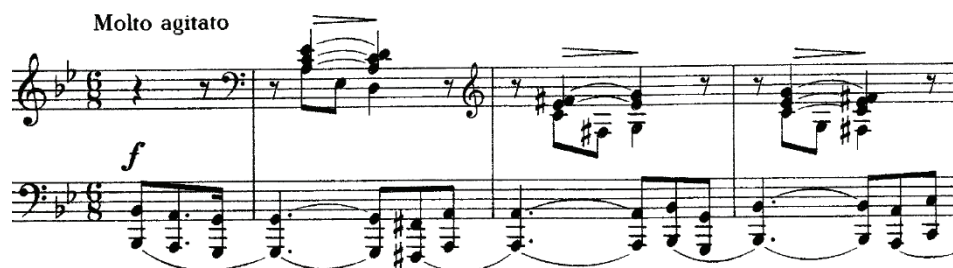


At once grave, majestic and mournful, it encapsulates a spirit of grieving combined with grim solemnity, comparable only to the funeral march from the composer's B-flat minor Sonata.

The peaceful **Prelude No. 21 in B-flat major** is yet another prelude in which the wanderings of the left-hand accompaniment capture the ear far more than the melody above it.



Equally dominated by the rhetorical force of its left-hand gestures is the turbulent **Prelude No. 22 in G minor**

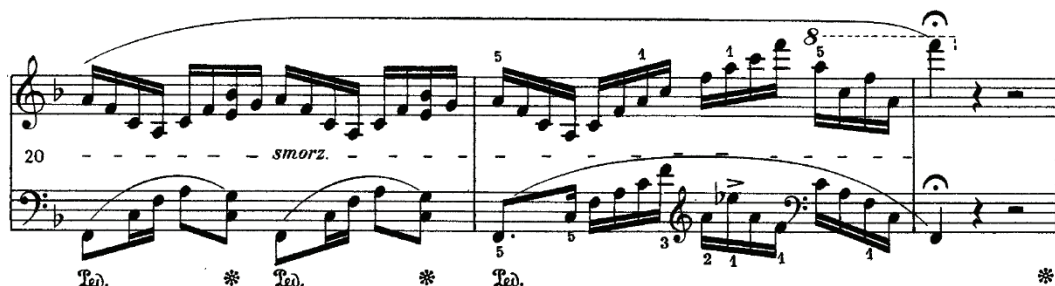


that pursues its argument with a right hand that can only weakly respond to its continual challenges.

The deliciously delicate lacework of the **Prelude No. 23 in F major**, with its thrilling trills in the underbrush of the left hand's harmonies, comes as a welcome relief to all that turmoil.

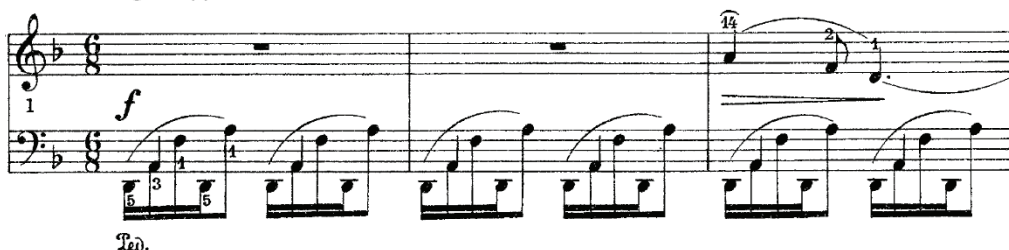


Capturing the attention of the critics since its publication is the odd transformation in the penultimate bar of the final, supposedly tonic harmony into a purposefully accented dominant 7th chord of exhilarating colouristic effect.



The Op. 28 set ends with the grimly defiant *Prelude No. 24 in D minor*,

Allegro appassionato



a snarling tantrum of a prelude that with its shrieking, keyboard-spanning runs and horrific cascades of double 3rds descending like avenging demons from the upper registers outshines in rhetorical force and emotional impact even the “Revolutionary” Etude in C minor Op. 10 No. 12.

The depth of despair it lays bare to the ear is nowhere better expressed than in its final notes, described by critics as “the final three nails in the coffin.”



Program notes by
Donald G. Gíslason, 2025

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There are many ways to support the VRS including making a philanthropic gift, sponsoring a concert and/or including us in your estate plans. If you would like more information, please contact us at 604.602.0363.

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