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GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Music

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Pittsburg, Kansas

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GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL

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GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL

An Abstract of the Thesis by
Hanxue Gao

My master's thesis consists of a graduate-level piano recital and a supporting document of program notes. The repertoire for this recital includes the following works: The Prelude and Fugue in E major, BWV 878, from the Well-Tempered Clavier - Book II by Johann Sebastian Bach; Piano Sonata in F major No. 22, Op. 54, by Ludwig Van Beethoven; Etude in G-sharp minor, Op. 8, No. 9, by Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin; Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise Brillante Opus 22 by Frédéric Chopin and Three Preludes for the Piano by the young Chinese composer, Shuai Zhang. For the benefit of all pianists and others studying these pieces, there will be discussion on the biographical information and the musical style of each composer and selection. Following, an analysis of each piece and performance suggestions will be provided.

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CHAPTER I

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Biography

J.S. Bach (1685-1750) was a German composer of the Baroque period and an outstanding organist, harpsichordist and violinist. He was born on March 31, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany and died in Leipzig, Germany. He came from a family of musicians. He is considered to be one of the greatest composers in the history of western music. Bach's father, Johann Ambrosius Bach, who worked as a musician in town, was his first music teacher. He taught young Bach to play the violin. After this short-term learning period, Bach went to school to start a religious education and studied Latin when he was seven years old. This experience deeply influenced his musical style later on. At the age of ten, Bach lost his parents and his older brother, Johann Christoph, provided him with some further musical education and took him to a local school. Bach stayed with his brother until Bach turned 15. Young Bach had a very beautiful voice, nevertheless, his voice changed while he was growing up. Consequently, he gave up on singing and became a harpsichordist and violinist.

At the age of 23, Bach embarked on his first essential position as court organist and chamber musician. During 1708-1717, Bach's reputation as an organist spread and he wrote many instrumental works. In 1717, Bach was awarded a formal music position from the prince Anhalt-Cöthen. During this period, he composed dance suites, concertos for orchestra, sonatas for instruments, and keyboard music; he also produced the six *Concerti Grossi* dedicated to the margrave of Brandenburg around 1721. These concertos became one of the greatest works by Bach.

At the age of 38, Bach was instated as a cantor at St. Thomas's Church in Leipzig. He was responsible to the public as an organist. At this time many instrumental compositions were written, such as, *the Brandenburg Concertos*, *the Goldberg Variations*, *the Well-Tempered Clavier* and *The Art of Fugue*, in which he reached the height of his contrapuntal writing. Although Bach's works represent the highest musical achievement of the Baroque period, few of his works were published when he was alive. By 1740, Bach started to struggle with his eyesight. However, he still kept composing, performing and traveling. In 1749, Bach started a new composition called "The Art of Fugue," however he could not complete it. Bach earnestly sought to fix his eyesight with operations in the next few years, but eventually, he completely lost his eyesight. He died in Leipzig on July 28, 1750.

Bach's major works consisted of orchestral music including 4 suites, concertos, sacred vocal music which contains over 200 church cantatas, 4 Passions, and the Mass, solo sonatas and keyboard works which contain The Well-Tempered Clavier, The Art of Fugue, the French and English suites, and many organ compositions.

The Well-Tempered Clavier

The Well-Tempered Clavier is a collection of two sets of preludes and fugues in all 24 major and minor keys, composed for solo keyboard by Johann Sebastian Bach. It demonstrated the new system of equal temperament for tuning keyboard instruments. The rising chromatic¹ pattern continues until every key has been represented in the two books. The Well-Tempered Clavier greatly influenced subsequent composers.

Modern editions usually refer to both parts as *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I* (WTC I) and *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II* (WTC II). The collection is generally regarded as being among the most important works in the history of classical music.² The first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* was composed in the early 1720s, with Bach's autograph dated 1722. The second book

¹ The chromatic scale is a musical scale with twelve pitches, each a semitone above or below its adjacent pitches. As a result, in 12-tone equal temperament (the most common temperament in Western music), the chromatic scale covers all twelve of the available pitches. Thus, there is only one chromatic scale.

² Chris Woodstra, Gerald Brennan, and Allen Schrott, *All Music Guide to Classical Music: The Definitive Guide to Classical Music* (San Francisco, CA: Berkeley, CA: Backbeat Books, 2005), 52.

was published in 1742. Generally, the technique of the second book is more challenging than the first book.

Musically, the structure of the Well-Tempered Clavier encompasses a wide range of styles. The preludes are formally free, although many of them exhibit typical baroque melodic forms often coupled with an extended free coda.

Each fugue is marked with the number of voices, from two to five. Most are three-voiced and four-voiced fugues, and there are only two five-voiced fugues and one two-voiced fugue. The fugues employ a full range of contrapuntal devices but are generally more compact than Bach's fugues for organ.

Prelude and Fugue No. 9 in E major, BWV 878, which is in four voices was published in book II.

Prelude and Fugue No. 9 in E major, BWV 878

Prelude

This E major prelude is three-voiced and in Binary Form³. Generally, the character of this prelude is lively. The prelude is divided into two main sections by a double bar line. There are four completed periods in the prelude. More specifically, two periods in the first main section followed by two other periods in the second main section.

³ Binary Form is a musical form in two relative sections which can be briefly described as AB.

Table 1. Structure of Prelude

Measure numbers	Materials	Key
Mm. 1-8	Period I	B major
Mm. 9-24	Period II	B major
Mm. 25-32	Period III	C sharp minor
Mm. 32-54	Period IV	E major

The first period starts with a tonic pedal in the first measures, followed by a dominant pedal, and ends with a perfect authentic cadence in the dominant B major. The second period starts in the key of the tonic, and goes to F sharp minor, C sharp minor before setting up the dominant B. There is a coda which firmly establishes the key of the dominant B. This period ends with a perfect cadence in the key of B major followed by a double bar.

Period III starts in the dominant, then modulates to the relative minor key and remains there to establish the C-sharp minor tonality. It ends with a perfect authentic cadence in the key of the relative C-sharp minor.

The last period modulates from the key of C-sharp minor to the key of the dominant B, then returns to the tonic E major. The descending sequence in mm. 37-40 is playing softer gradually. The prelude ends with a perfect authentic cadence in E major. Generally speaking, all of the four themes contrast with each other, but the first theme is generally the most important one.

Fugue

The E-major fugue has a slow tempo and the subject is presented with long-held notes which recall the style of the Renaissance.⁴ The material of this fugue does not center on any specific melodic ideas but presents itself as a chain of motives.

Table 2. Analysis of Fugue

Measures	Elements	Key
Mm. 1-2	Subject in Bass	E major
Mm. 2-4	Answer in Tenor; counter-subject in bass	B major
Mm. 4-5	Subject in Alto; counter-subject in Tenor	E major
Mm. 5-7	Answer in soprano Counter-subject in Alto	B major
Mm. 7-9	Episode I	Starting in E, then modulating to B
Mm. 9-10	Answer in alto No counter-subject	E major
Mm. 9-11	Stretto I Subject in tenor	E major
Mm. 10-12	Answer in bass	E major
Mm. 11-12	Subject in soprano Counter-subject in tenor	E major
Mm. 12-16	Episode II	Touching from E through F sharp minor to C sharp minor
Mm. 16-17	Subject in alto	C sharp minor
Mm. 17-18	Stretto II Answer in soprano	E major
Mm. 19-20	Subject in bass	B major
Mm. 20-21	Stretto III	F sharp minor

⁴ David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J.S. Bach*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2006), 256.

	Answer in tenor	
Mm. 22-26	Episode III	C sharp minor
Mm. 26-27	Subject in soprano	E major
Mm. 27-28	Stretto IV Subject in alto	E major
Mm. 28-29	Subject in tenor Answer in bass	B major
Mm. 30-31	Subject in bass	B major
Mm. 30-32	Subject in alto	B major
Mm. 32-35	Episode IV	G sharp minor
Mm. 35-36	Answer in alto Varied subject in tenor	E major
Mm. 35-38	Stretto V; Subject in Tenor. Counter-subject in soprano.	E major
Mm. 36-38	Answer in bass; Counter-subject in Alto	B major
Mm. 37-39	Subject in soprano Counter-subject in tenor	E major
Mm. 39-40	Codetta	E major
Mm. 40-41	Answer in bass Counter-subject in alto	B major
Mm. 41-43	Coda	E major

Practice and Performance Suggestions

In this E-major prelude and fugue, it is especially important to clearly articulate each voice and to project the phrasing and ideas for dynamics clearly. The performer needs to analyze all the fugal elements and clearly articulate these items while shaping each voice. The most efficient way to practice would be to play every single voice individually, then two or three voices at a time in different, and hands separately. The performer would do well to make sure that each voice sounds connected and flowing.

Playing this prelude and fugue on the piano gives the performer choices for dynamics. Dynamics should be selected with consideration of the key centers employed and building an overall structure. A fugue subject need not to always be especially emphasized.⁵ Performing a fugue involves more than bringing out the entrances of the subject and allowing the other parts merely to accompany.⁶ At times, its appearance can simply blend in with the overall continuity of line. Technically speaking, the principal means of changing the fingers, such as crossing and turning, must be applied in such a manner that the tones involved in the change, flow smoothly.

⁵ Richard Troeger, *Playing Bach on the Keyboard: A Practical Guide* (Pompton Plains, N.J.: Amadeus Press, 2003), 139.

⁶ *Ibid*, 59.

CHAPTER II

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Biography

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was regarded as one of the greatest German pianists and composers in the world. He helped usher in the major transition from the Classical style period to the Romantic style period in western musical history. His compositions had an extremely profound effect on musical development. His outstanding compositions include 9 symphonies; 32 piano sonatas; 5 piano concertos; 16 string quartets; a mass; one violin concerto and a representative opera, *Fidelio*.

Beethoven was born in Bonn. At the early age of four, Beethoven began to study the harpsichord and piano with his father, Johann van Beethoven, who was his first music teacher. Beethoven's musical talents were rapidly revealed at this early age. At the age of eight, he published his first collection of compositions and gave his first recital. Thereafter, Beethoven studied composition with Christian Gottlob Neefe⁷. Beethoven went to Vienna when he was 17 years old, where he

⁷ Christian Gottlob Neefe was a German opera composer and conductor.

played for Mozart for the first time. His skillful playing techniques and unique musical style caught Mozart's attention. Mozart said: "Keep an eye on him, he will make a noise in the world someday."⁸

Beethoven moved to Vienna when he was 21 years old (and he lived here until he died). There he studied composition with Joseph Haydn and became a great pianist. Beethoven composed numerous great works during this time, such as, the *Moonlight* Sonata and the Symphony No. 5, Op. 67 in C minor. Unluckily, Beethoven suffered serious hearing problems during his lifetime. In his late 20s, his hearing began to deteriorate, and subsequently, he lost his hearing by the last decade of his life. Yet Beethoven continued to compose. He further developed his idea of the large-scale sonata form, and the large-scale symphony. Meanwhile, he used a wide range of dynamic contrasts and expanded his use of chromatic harmonies. Many of his most admired works were composed late in life. Beethoven's special musical style influenced many generations of future composers.

Three Musical Style Periods

Beethoven's works are frequently categorized into three different periods: the early phase, up to 1802; the middle period, 1802- 1815; and the late phase, 1815- 1827. His musical style of the early period kept in the tradition and structure of the classical style and was deeply influenced by Haydn and Mozart. The piano is the

⁸ Kristine Forney and Joseph Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music: An Introduction to Perceptive Listening*, Shorter Eleventh edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 174.

dominant instrument at this time and Beethoven was trying to make music more expressive.

In the middle period, Beethoven's compositions reflected his unique characteristics, including extreme dynamic contrasts, accents and longer phrases. His music included large-scale compositions which expressed the "heroic" style and struggle. Beethoven also expanded traditional classical composing principles to create larger structures. Most of his popular works came from this middle phase. In this period, Beethoven composed six symphonies, five string quartets, some piano sonatas, the opera, *Fidelio* and two piano concertos.

By the late period of his life, the deafness went worsened and Beethoven began to lose contact with other people. This period can be described as the hardest time for Beethoven due to family troubles, illness and poverty. Nevertheless, because of his perseverance and enthusiasm for music, Beethoven did not give up on composing. His compositions became more abstract and intense exhibiting his unique personal expression. He further employed chromatic harmonies and developed a skeletal language from which all nonessentials were rigidly pared away.⁹ He used counterpoint and fugal writing more frequently was influenced by J. S. Bach and F. Handel. Beethoven's death in 1820 ends his late period of composition which is known for producing some of the most ambitious works of all Beethoven's compositional periods.

⁹ Forney, *The Enjoyment of Music: An Introduction to Perceptive Listening*, 175.

Piano Sonata No. 22 in F major, Op. 54

Ludwig van Beethoven's piano sonata No. 22 in F major, Op. 54, was written in 1804, and belongs to Beethoven's second style period. This sonata, not very conventional or popular, was composed between two masterpieces (Op. 53, the Waldstein Sonata¹⁰, and Op. 55, the Eroica Symphony¹¹). This sonata has only two movements which is not common in Beethoven's sonatas. Other two-movement sonatas by Beethoven include: Sonata Op. 49, No. 1 in G minor and No. 2 in G major "Leichte Sonata"; Sonata Op. 78 in F sharp major "Für Therese"; Sonata Op. 90 in E minor; and Beethoven's final Sonata, Op. 111 in C minor.

Challenging both technically and musically, the first movement of Op. 54, marked "In tempo d'un Menuetto," has an opening subject vaguely suggestive of Scottish folksongs; the melody also has obvious links with the second subject of the "Appassionata."¹² The second movement, by contrast, is an almost crazily obsessive study in "perpetual motion" that harks back to the finale of the A-flat Sonata, Op. 26.¹³

¹⁰ The *Waldsteins* Sonata was composed by Beethoven in summer 1804. It is one of the three most famous sonatas of Beethoven's middle period.

¹¹ The Eroica Symphony is a symphony in four movements by Beethoven which was completed in 1804. The Eroica Symphony is a large-scale composition that marked the beginning of Beethoven's creative middle period.

¹² Jeremy Siepmann, *Beethoven with 2 CDs: His Life & Music* (Naperville, III: Sourcebooks MediaFusion, 2006), 28.

¹³ *Ibid*, 28.

Sonata Op. 54 reflects various musical features of Beethoven's second style period. Including: extreme and intense dynamic contrasts, dramatic *fp* markings, vivid and forceful thematic contrasts and developed use of counterpoint.

First Movement

The first movement is marked a "*In tempo d'un Menuetto*" and written in sonata rondo form with an approximate ABABA structure which is not usually used for the first movement of a sonata. The movement can be roughly divided into three big sections.

Table 3. Structure of First Movement of Sonata

Measure number	Materials	Key
Mm. 1-25	First subject	F major
Mm. 25-63	Episode with canonical character	C major
Mm. 63-71	Bridge ¹⁴	
Mm. 70-94	First subject	F major
Mm. 94-106	Episode	
Mm. 106-137	Varied first subject	F major
Mm. 137	Coda	

¹⁴ The bridge forms a passage leading to and overlapping the second entry of the first subject.

Firstly, Beethoven introduced the amiable subject¹⁵ in the very beginning of the piece. The subject (or the rondo theme A) consists of four phrases of a, a', b and b' in different registers of the piano (mm. 1-25). The character is aristocratic and this section ends with a perfect authentic cadence in the tonic. The contrasting B theme (or episode) introduces unexpected etude-like double octave passages. The following eight measures (mm. 63-70) serve as a passage leading to and overlapping the second entry of the first subject. In m. 70, theme A returns with variation and is influenced by the contrasting theme. At m. 73, there is an episode which resembles the first contrasting theme B. However, it is shorter than the first one. From m. 106, the extended and varied first subject appears in the original key. At the end of the first movement, there is a coda (m. 137) which is reminiscent of theme A with a pedal point. In this closing phrase, the harmonic dissonance gradually resolved to the tonic F chord. The use of the harmony in those measures is extremely daring and interesting.

Performance Suggestions

In the first movement, there are many slurred harmonic units requiring tension and release. The performer needs to listen to these slurred harmonic units and carefully apply the correct dynamics. The harmonic changes require harmonic coloring and resolution. Additionally, the sudden change in dynamic signs is one of the most prominent characters in Beethoven's music, especially, in the octave

¹⁵ Subject is a musical term related to a material which usually is a recognizable melody. In forms other than the fugue, this may be known as the theme.

passages, where Beethoven applies accents on the first notes of each triplet. The pianist must apply strong dynamic contrasts to express the typical musical style of Beethoven.

Second Movement

This movement was written in sonata form¹⁶ and is in F major. It consists of variations of a single motive and marked “Allegretto”. The main motive could be literally described as a non-stop 16th-note pattern.

Table 4. Structure of Second Movement of Sonata

Measure number	Materials	Key
Mm. 1-8	First subject	F major
Mm. 8-12	Connecting episode	Transition from F to C major
Mm. 13-16	Second subject	C major
Mm. 17-20	Coda	
Mm. 21-23	Modulating measures	
Mm. 24-115	Development	
Mm. 116-123	First subject	F major, ends in B flat major
Mm. 124-134	Connecting episode	

¹⁶ Sonata form is a musical structure consisting of three main sections: exposition, development, and a recapitulation. It has been used widely since the early classical period.

Mm. 135-138	Second subject	F major
Mm. 139-162	Connecting episode	
Mm. 165-191	Coda	

The movement begins with ascending sixteenth notes in the bass line in mm. 1-4, the sequence recurs in mm. 9-12. We can view this movement as a simple two-voiced contrapuntal work which demonstrates the influence of J. S. Bach upon Beethoven.

The development consists of nothing but the repetitions of the subject in different keys, connected by episodes basically formed on the first subject. Then the first subject returns at m. 115 with tonic pedal point in the original key, although considerably altered and extended. The recapitulation of the second subject returns at m. 135 in the tonic key of F major. The coda brings more exciting passages which simply refers to the first subject until the end of the movement.¹⁷

Performance Suggestions

A higher wrist technique would be helpful to use in the second movement. It is especially essential to play very legato (smoothly connected), and to relax and rotate wrists and forearms in order to avoid physical harm. Sudden dynamic changes are evident in the second movement as well. Within the passagework,

¹⁷ Music primers and educational series, analysis of form by Novello.

Beethoven applies a *sfp* on off-beat long single notes which needs to be precisely emphasized and accented.

CHAPTER III

FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN

Biography

Chopin was born on March 1st, 1810, in Zelazowa Wola, Poland, and grew up in a middle-class family. His mother introduced him to music at a very early age. By the age of 6, Chopin could play the piano very well and compose many beautiful tunes. Hence, his parents quickly recognized his talent in music and they engaged professional musician, Wojciech Żywny¹⁸, for lessons.

Chopin published his first composition at age 7 and began performing one year later. By 1818, Chopin was performing in elegant salons and writing his own compositions, including the Polonaise in G minor¹⁹. By 1826, Chopin had composed several piano pieces in various styles and his parents enrolled him in the Warsaw Conservatory of Music, where he studied for three years under Polish composer, Josef Elsner. Chopin's parents believed that their son needed to further enrich his musical experience. Consequently, they eventually sent him to Vienna

¹⁸ Wojciech Żywny was a Czech-born Polish pianist, violist, teacher and composer. He was Chopin's first professional piano teacher.

¹⁹ Published by Chopin's father.

for more professional study. In 1829, Chopin finally gave his first solo public recital in Vienna. Chopin left his home country at the age of 20 in 1830. In the next few years, Chopin performed in Poland, Germany, Austria and Paris, where he settled in 1832. At the same time, he quickly established relationships with other young composers, such as, Franz Liszt, Vincenzo Bellini and Felix Mendelssohn.

Chopin would never formally reside in his native country, Poland, again. However, he never forgot his country and he also integrated patriotic ideas into his compositions.

By the middle of the 1840s, Chopin's health was deteriorating and his relationship with George Sand²⁰ ended in 1848. These events affected Chopin and his behavior became erratic. Chopin embarked on extended travels to the British Isles, where he had an exhausting schedule and his health worsened. Chopin returned to Paris and died on October 17, 1849, at the very young age of 39.

More than any other leading composer, Chopin devoted himself to the piano, to the virtual exclusion of all other media.²¹ He composed no symphonies, operas, and oratorios, but a tremendous amount of piano character pieces. His piano works include 4 Scherzos, 4 Ballades, 21 Nocturnes, 4 Impromptus, 25 Etudes and 24

²⁰ George Sand was a French novelist and memoirist. Chopin had a long and stormy affair with her after meeting her in 1836.

²¹ Kirby, *Music for Piano: A Short History*, 180.

Preludes, 3 piano sonatas, 2 Fantasias, 2 piano concertos, Waltz sets, 58

Mazurkas, 19 Polonaises, some chamber music, and songs.

Characteristics of Chopin's Music

Beautiful and flowing melodic lines are evident throughout Chopin's works.

In my opinion, Chopin is one of the most representative composers to write beautiful melodies. Those melodies expressed the charm of Chopin. The performer of Chopin's music must pay attention to the sound and balance between melody and accompaniments at all times.

Ornamentation pervaded most of Chopin's music. Chopin expertly decorated the melodic line to make the music more varied and more interesting. These ornaments have a great expressive effect on the music, resulting in a more poetic, dreamlike musical quality.

The use of rubato to expressively shape the music is an integral part of phrasing in Chopin's music. Tempo rubato refers to employing an expressive and rhythmic freedom by slightly speeding up and then slowing down (to make up the time) within a phrase of music.²² At same time, pedaling should be applied very carefully to create the desired sound effects and outline the harmonic coloring and structure.

²² John Clifford, *The Musiclover's Handbook, Containing (1) a Pronouncing Dictionary of Musical Terms and (2) Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* (New York, The University society, 1911), <http://archive.org/details/cu31924021632256>.

Chopin's music incorporates contrapuntal lines as well as intriguing harmonic shadings. Harmonic richness and imagination contribute to the brilliant colors in his music, by use of chromatic scales, the transformation of equal tones and varied cadences.

The Waltz

Chopin's dance music represented the great international music of his generation and followed the traditional romantic style. The waltz composed by Chopin was dance music that usually short and elegant. However, not all of Chopin's waltzes were in this elegant style.

Though mostly in three-part form, Chopin did not adhere to a single formal scheme in his waltzes. Some waltzes have a martial-like introduction or a coda.²³

Waltz in C-sharp minor, Op. 64, No. 2

Chopin's Waltz in C# minor is a famous work composed in 1847, which he dedicated it to Charlotte de Rothschild²⁴. It could generally be divided into three main sections. Specifically, the overall structure is in a rondo form A B C B A B. The tempo marking *tempo giusto* is provided at the beginning of the piece, *più mosso* is marked for the last two B sections, and section C has the tempo marking *più lento*. Section A has a more deliberate feeling and is followed by the faster B

²³ Kirby, F. E. *Music for Piano: A Short History*. (Portland, Or: Amadeus Press, 2003), 195.

²⁴ Charlotte de Rothschild was a French socialite, painter, and a member of the prominent Rothschild banking family of France.

section which is characterized by running eighth notes. Section C has a general slower tempo.

Performance Suggestions

The first challenge in this Waltz is to play *legato* by using “flat” fingers on the keys to achieve an elegant sound color. The use of combinations of the damper pedal and soft pedal is the secret to play very smooth sounds with beautiful colors. In addition, Chopin often used rubato in the melodic lines. These rubato lines need to be carefully constructed. Another big challenge is the double note passages in the right hand. They first appear in mm. 3-4. It is essential to bring out the soprano line of these double notes. Furthermore, utilization of correct fingering helps to play a more convincing *legato*.

CHAPTER IV

ALEXANDER NIKOLAYEVICH SRIABIN

Biography

Alexander Scriabin was born in Moscow, Russia on January 6th, 1872. He was a distinguished Russian composer who earned the reputation of exploring a new and unique musical style and creating unusual harmonies. His father, Nikolai Scriabin, was a wealthy aristocrat, a lawyer and a great diplomat. His mother Lyubov Petrovna was a well-trained pianist who usually gave performances in St. Petersburg and Moscow, in Russia. However, Scriabin's mother contracted tuberculosis soon after Scriabin's birth and she passed away in 1873. After that, Scriabin's maiden aunt Lyubov, who was also a great pianist, became like a mother to him. This aunt greatly influenced Scriabin's piano playing.

At a very young age, Scriabin started to take piano lessons from Nikolai Zverov. In 1882, Scriabin entered the junior military academy in Moscow; his musical talent attracted the attention of his teachers and classmates. He began

taking regular piano lessons in 1883 with Georgi Conus, who himself was still a Conservatory pupil.²⁵ In his junior year at the military academy, Scriabin enrolled at the Moscow Conservatory. Scriabin started to take piano lessons with Vassily Safonov, theory classes with Tsaneyev, and took a course in free composition and fugue with Anton Arensky. He graduated from the Moscow Conservatory as a pianist in 1892.²⁶ During these years, his musical style was mostly influenced by Chopin, although, he developed his own mystical musical language as year progressed.

Scriabin's early compositions for piano were mazurkas, preludes, etudes, and nocturnes. At the end of this century, Scriabin begun to write orchestral compositions. In 1897, Scriabin married the pianist Vera Isakovich, and soon after he made a career as a teacher at the Moscow Conservatory in 1898. In 1904, Scriabin moved to Switzerland where he completely devoted his efforts to compositions. There he finished his third symphony. In the next six years, Scriabin travelled to different countries to give piano recitals, such as France, the U.S and Italy. In these years, Scriabin was deeply interested in theosophical ideas. He greatly applied these ideas into his musical compositions. Scriabin was the first pianist to utilize unique colorful lights on the screen to accompanying his performance, (such as that of "*Prometheus*").

²⁵ Boris de Schloezer and Marina Scriabine, *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic*, trans. Nicolas Slonimsky, 1st edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 35.

²⁶ Ibid, 36.

In 1909, Scriabin returned to Russia to compose and continue to work on his compositions. There he gave many recitals in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Early in 1915 Scriabin went to London where Henry Wood (an English conductor) conducted the two pieces²⁷ he had completed in the winter of 1910. Unfortunately, however, Scriabin fell ill in London. In 1915, on the morning of April 27, Scriabin died of the Septicemia.

Scriabin was well known to the public not only for his impressive musical style but also for his theosophical beliefs. He reduced the importance of the dominant-tonic progression; over time, his use of dissonance increased to the point that some of his music has been described as atonal.²⁸

General Piano Music

Scriabin's evolutionary compositions were generally divided into two distinct periods. In the first period, piano music was his main output in traditional style under the influence of Chopin. In the second period, Scriabin gradually abandoned the traditional style. Instead, new and bold textures and harmonies increasingly appeared. At this time, Scriabin wanted his philosophical ideas to be expressed in his music.

Etudes

The style of Scriabin's early etudes was greatly influenced by Chopin in the use of chromatic and expressive melodic lines, frequent modulations and ternary

²⁷ The two pieces are *Prométhée* and *Poème de l'extase*.

²⁸ Kirby, F. E. (2003). *Music for Piano: A Short History*, (Amadeus Press), 319.

form. Great technical demands are also inherent. Scriabin's later etudes (Op. 42 and Op. 65), completely changed to a new style – the mystical one.

Etude in G-sharp minor, Op. 8, No. 9

The Etude in G-sharp minor, No. 9, is a highly virtuosic piece and is the longest and most powerful composition within the Op. 8 collection. This etude can be clearly divided into three main sections: Section A (mm. 1-48), Section B (mm. 49-80), and Section A (mm. 81-103). The octave passages within the A sections enrich the fanaticism of the music. The peaceful and charming B section provides the audience with an imaginative contrast.

Table 5. Structure of Etude

Sections	Measure numbers	Key
A section	Mm. 1-48	g-sharp minor
B section including the bridge	Mm. 49-80 Bridge: Mm. 77-80	A-flat major
A section	Mm. 81-103	g-sharp minor

Performance Suggestions

This etude presents several technical difficulties. For example, there are many octave passages. Most of these octave passages require a *legato* touch, (or sometimes detached one). Some exercises to help work on the abundant octaves in the piece include playing the upper line and bottom line of the octave separately in order to make the melody clear. Practicing the octave passages with rhythmic

variations is also advised, though, under this intensive training, we must take care of our wrists and hands from injury, we can do so by integrating relaxation between these exercises.

In order to achieve *legato* octave passages, the fingering should be well selected in advance. Theoretically speaking, it is impossible for the thumb to make a smooth line. Therefore, help is needed from the wrist and damper pedal to help produce the illusion of *legato*. Various articulations and dynamic contrasts in both hands are also typical demands in the etude. Controlling these musical expressions is indispensable.

CHAPTER V

FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN

Polonaise

Polonaise is a French word which means Polish. The polonaise is a Polish dance which is usually in triple meter and is also one of the five historic national dances of Poland. The polonaises possessed typical elements of folk music that could be dated to the 16th century in Poland and it eventually became well-known as a folk dance.

Chopin wrote close to 23 Polonaises throughout his life. Unfortunately, there are at least seven polonaises lost. His most famous examples are the 'Military' Polonaise in A major, Op. 40 No. 1, and the 'Heroic' or 'Drum' Polonaise in A-flat major, Op. 53. Like much of Chopin's music, most of the pieces are written for solo piano. However, the Andante spianato et grande polonaise brillante in E-flat major Op. 22 was written for piano and orchestra, and there is a solo piano version that exists too.

While the Mazurkas of Chopin are small and intimate pieces, the polonaises are large-scale and brilliant pieces. They display simple repetitive schemes

ordinarily found in dances—especially the rounded binary form—and they have midsections called trios; and use the *da capo* for restatement of the opening section.²⁹

Andante spianato und Grande Polonaise brillante in E-flat major, Op. 22

Chopin completed his musical education in 1829 and composed his earlier works in Warsaw before leaving his home country, Poland. He then went to Vienna for more professional study as a composer and pianist. he performed two concertos in Vienna with huge success: The Krakowiak Grand Rondo de Concert Op. 14 and the Polonaise-Fantaisie Op. 61, both for piano with orchestra, which received great comments. Consequently, Chopin believed that orchestral works were the path to success for polonaise brilliant Op. 22 for piano and orchestra. The Andante spianato in G, presumably composed 1834, was added to the polonaise, which Chopin had arranged for piano solo. The combined pieces were published as Op. 22 in 1836.³⁰

In the same year on November 2nd, Chopin left Warsaw to embark on his second trip to Vienna. On November 29th, the Warsaw Uprising exploded and the rebels established a new government. Chopin was very excited about this courageous venture and he wanted to return to Warsaw to support his friends and country. However, due to his family problem, he had to stay in Vienna, where he became upset and worried about this uprising. Under such a heavy situation,

²⁹ Kirby, F. E. (2003). *Music for Piano: A Short History*, (Amadeus Press), 200.

³⁰ Ibid, 200.

Chopin, as a faithful patriot, started to compose the Grande Polonaise Brilliant which was very popular at that time. His works manifest a great sense of patriotism.

Andante spianato in G major

The Andante spianato (spianato means “even” or “smooth”), presumably was composed 1834 for piano solo. It was added to the polonaise later on. It basically served as an introduction to the polonaise, even though, Chopin performed this Andante spianato as a solo piece many times. This andante spianato has an independent structure and style. In terms of musical form, it is in binary form which includes an introduction, section A, section B and a coda. There is a four-measure broken arpeggiated introduction with left hand in G major, 6/8 meter, very quiet and smooth. These few measures seem to describe an extreme calm and smooth lake surface. Then, in section A, there are three subsections which are in ternary form, followed by a coda. In section B, the meter changes to 3/4. The structure of section B can be described as ababa which is in rondo form or ternary form as the following chart shows.

Table 6. Structure of Andante spianato

Binary Form	Section A in ternary form	Introduction	Mm. 1-4	G major
		A	Mm. 5-12	G major
		A'	Mm. 13-20	G major
		B	Mm. 21-36	Running between several keys
		A2	Mm. 37-44	G major

		A2	Mm. 45-53	G major
		Bridge	Mm. 53-66	G major
	Section B	C	Mm. 67-78	G-a-G
		C'	Mm. 79-90	G
		C2	Mm. 91-96	G
		Bridge	Mm. 97-110	G
		Coda	Mm. 111-114	G

In terms of character of the piece, the Andante spianato is quiet and lyrical.

In contrast, the Grande polonaise brillante is dramatic and glorious, demanding that the performer have very advanced technical skills and performing experience.

Grande polonaise brillante in E-flat major

This polonaise was composed in 1830-1831, originally for piano and orchestra. However, the pianists usually play it as a solo piece. The musical form is generally described as ternary form (ABA) with an introduction and coda.

Table 7. Structure of Polonaise

Ternary form	Introduction	/	Mm. 1-16	G-E-flat
	Section A in ternary form (Exposition)	a	Mm. 17-32	E-flat
		b	Mm. 32-54	E-flat
		a	Mm. 55-75	E-flat
		Bridge	Mm. 76-84	E-flat
	Section B in binary form (Development)	c	Mm. 85-106	E-flat-G
		d	Mm. 107-160	C minor

	Section A in ternary form (Recapitulation)	a	Mm. 161-220	C-E-flat
		b		
		a		
		Coda	Mm. 221-279	E-flat

In this Polonaise, Chopin broadly uses the rhythmic pattern (Figure 1) in an accompanying role. This rhythmic pattern is often heard in his polonaise compositions.

Figure 1. Rhythmic Pattern



Also of note is the fact that the polonaise has an extended coda section. In mm. 268-271, there are descending running triplets in the right hand and dotted rhythms in the left hand, which serve as a preparation for the ending. In the last few measures, the continuous triplet arpeggios drive forward bringing the entire piece to its climactic finale.

Performance Suggestions

The Grande Polonaise Brillante is generally one of the most technically demanding pieces by Chopin.³¹

The general difficulties are listed as following:

1. Fast descending double thirds, sixths, and octaves

³¹ Polonaise Op. 22 Edited by Jan Ekier Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne.

2. Quick trills with thirds
3. Quick running scales and arpeggios in both hands
4. Use of a wide range on the keyboard
5. Use of rubato in both hands
6. Use of abundant ornaments
7. The use of transferring the weight from note to next note
8. The use of “flat” fingers to control the color
9. The use of soften pedal and damper pedal

CHAPTER VI

SHUAI ZHANG

Biography

Shuai Zhang, a young composer and Ph.D., is currently an associate professor in the Department of Composition at the Central Conservatory of Music at Beijing in China and a visiting scholar at the University of Missouri. He was born into an artistic family in 1979 and started his piano studies at a very young age. In 2008, he graduated from the Central Conservatory of Music in China. Since the formation of the Crayon Box Band³², Shuai Zhang has been an active performer in concerts, and has composed various instrumental compositions, operas, and music for dance, film and television.

The masterpieces of Shuai Zhang include the symphony "New Year Painting", symphonic poems "Norwegian Forest", "Immortal Statue", "Oviator Concerto", Chinese folk music suite "Poetry Rain of Jiangnan", violin sound poem "Xun", piano music "Three Preludes", The song "Starting Spring",

³² The Crayon Box band is a musical band which Shuai Zhang organized at the Central Conservatory of Music in China.

"Looking at the Mainland", the stage play "Underwater Dreams", electronic music works "Oriental Bandari" and others.

To date, Shuai Zhang's works involve a variety of subjects and a wide range of genres. The combination of innovative ideas of Chinese and Western art and the perception of the works have a high artistic value. His musical creations can roughly be divided into the following stages:

1. High school—undergraduate. Most of the compositions created at this stage are works of study, and in some of them, he is just practicing composition.

Following his university studies, the “Three Preludes - for Piano” was born.

Although it was an early work, the use of the Chinese pentatonic scale and Western jazz style in these pieces was just right. In 2002, he won the Bronze Award of the “Golden Bell Competition” for the “Three Preludes”, the only comprehensive professional award in the Chinese music industry. “Three Preludes” was later designated as one of the required Chinese pieces to play in the 6th China Music Golden Bell Piano Competition in 2007.

2. Undergraduate—graduate student. In this stage, the masterpiece is the work, “Xun”. We could clearly hear Shuai’s innovation in this work, "Xun", which is profound, and possessing a difficult and complicated piano part. This work, also composed for the piano, once again receiving the Golden Bell Award. Throughout this stage, Zhang Shuai's creation were mainly focused on piano works.

3. Doctor—present. The works composed at this stage were mainly symphonies. Shuai's masterpiece is "New Year Pictures". In 2008, Shuai became a teacher in the Department of Composition at the Central Conservatory of Music in China. During this period, he continued to study intensively on composing techniques and served as a visiting scholar at the University of Missouri.³³

In summary, Dr. Zhang has been combining traditional Chinese music techniques with Western atonal music and has continued to research and explore this combination, forming his unique style.

General Description of the Three Preludes for Piano

In 1998, Three Preludes - for Piano, Op. 18 was composed by Shuai Zhang. He was only 18 years old at the time. It is the most important representative work of Shuai Zhang and it is also one of the outstanding and most-played contemporary piano pieces in China.

The style of the three preludes is unique and filled with a jazz-styled charm. The first and third preludes are Allegro and provide unlimited passion. The second one is slow; the composer seems to transport the audience to a mysterious dream world, which is then followed by nostalgia. Immediately following is the third Prelude-Allegro, which ends the whole work with a powerful statement. The composer states that this work reflects the youth's instigation and nervousness and also represents youthful power, melancholy.

³³ The information of his life experiences and masterpieces comes from the published composition Three Preludes for Piano by Hui Jiang.

Prelude No. 1

The theme of the first prelude is “conflict”, which is reflected in the collision between the Chinese pentatonic scale³⁴, the chromatic scale and jazz harmony.

Table 8. Structure of First Prelude

Section A	Mm. 1-28
Section B	Mm. 29-43
Section A'	Mm. 44-63

The first prelude does not contain any key signature. The first two measures (Figure 2) clearly state the main melody or we can say the main motivic material which consists of five notes and is the pentatonic scale that we previously referred to.

Figure 2. Main Motivic Material



The third and fourth measures (Figure 3) serve as the extension of the theme.

³⁴ A Chinese pentatonic scale is a musical scale with five notes (I, II, III, V, and VI) per octave, in contrast to the more familiar heptatonic scale that has seven notes per octave (such as the major scale).

Figure 3. Extensive Material



The following two measures (Figure 4) display a texture primarily made up of chromatic fourths that are ascending. The notes of the first two beats in these two measures are staccato with a syncopated rhythm followed by more notes with a legato slur. The tempo is now getting faster. There is a significant contrast of mood. We can sense a jazz musical style from this rhythm due to the tied notes and syncopation. The performer should play energetically and create a great shape.

Figure 4. Mm. 5-6



The development of the main melody with syncopation occurs from mm. 5-16 (Figure 5). More simply, the right hand plays the melody while the left hand plays the same patterns as mm. 3-4. Shuai Zhang clearly combines the elements of Chinese traditional music and Jazz music here, simultaneously emphasizing the chromatic style in this piece.

Figure 5. M. 7



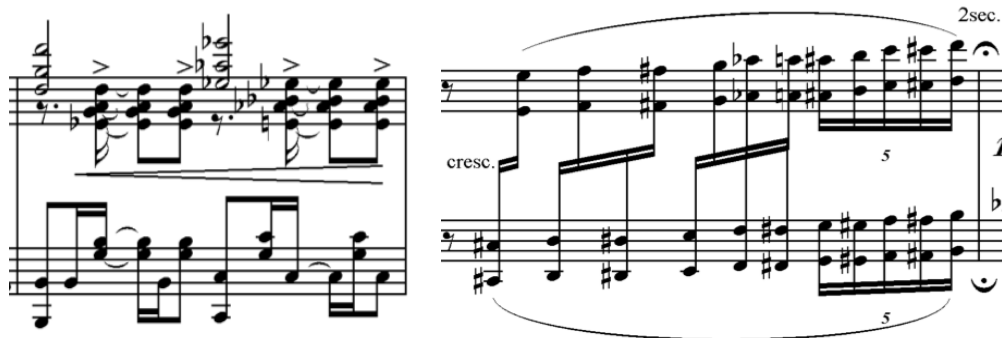
As the music continues, mm. 17-22 serve as development of the theme and mm. 21-22 have the function of a bridge. There is a crescendo to take the music to the peak in m. 22. From m. 23 (Figure 6), the second development of the theme is presented.

Figure 6. Mm. 23-24



Mm. 27 -28 (Figure 7) have the same structural function as mm. 21-22 which served as a bridge to section B and contained crescendo and chromatic ascending octaves.

Figure 7. Mm. 27-28



Following m. 28, the music suddenly stops with a two-second silence. The mood changes in section B (Figure 8). The mood of section A is magnificent, while the mood of section B is more agile. Section B starts in the same way as Section A. The single melody line which consists of five staccato notes is set in the left hand for the first four measures of section B, the melody transfers to the right hand.

Figure 8. Beginning of Section B



There are some thematic materials displayed in section B containing the ascending Chinese pentatonic scale in the right hand and descending chromatic

intervals. The contrasts between these ascending and descending materials create the perfect sound effect.

There are five measures at the end of the section B which serve as a preparation (and bridge) for the return of section A (or section A'). The recapitulation starts at m. 44 with a *ff* dynamic sign.

The most unique part of this movement is the ending section with its unusual dynamic statement. It is special that the line is ascending yet the dynamic is getting softer and softer.

Figure 9. Mm. 56-58



Finally, at the end of the music, there are chords in a jazz-style rhythm.

Prelude No. 2

The theme of the second prelude is mysterious. A combination of Chinese pentatonic scales and a variety of major and minor triads is employed.

Table 9. Structure of second prelude with a very simple ternary form³⁵

Section A	Mm. 64-79
Section B	Mm. 80-101

³⁵ Ternary form is basically a musical form where the first section (A) is repeated after the second section (B) ends. It is usually schematized as A-B-A. It sometimes called song form.

Section A'	Mm. 102-119
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In contrast to the first prelude which is atonal, the second prelude has a key signature, that of E-flat major. The tempo is in *Andante* and the mood is extremely peaceful, slow and full of mystery.

Part A has an expositional function. The composer labelled the first measure as having “a mysterious motive”. This mysterious motive is heard throughout the whole piece. This creates a big contrast between the first prelude and the second prelude.

Figure 10. Mysterious Motive



Column chords follow this motive. The performer needs to play these four measures very legato without any space in between.

Figure 11. Mm. 65-68



At m. 69, the melody which is emphasized by octaves transfers to the left hand. The mysterious motive appears again in m. 72 (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Restatement of Mysterious Motive



Section B is approached with a substantial phrase. This phrase contains the same theme of five notes, but in a varied and developed structure. With a long chord followed by free repeated notes, we arrive at the peak of section B. Shuai Zhang wrote: “repeat freely” (Figure 13) which means we can convey our own expression and emotion upon these notes. It does not mean we can play these notes casually. The performer is expected to know exactly what kind of emotion is needed here.

Figure 13. M. 99



Following free-styled notes, we arrived at the conclusion of the second prelude with the mysterious motive mentioned before. The left hand provides the bass line with the tonic note E-flat.

Figure 14. Connecting Measures to Prelude No. 3



The third prelude has a similar style with the first prelude which is full of energy and jazz effects. Nonetheless, here, the composer portrays a more emotional and energetic character with a faster tempo Allegro and a wilder mood. The prelude is in G minor. The most unique and interesting thing in the piece is its special rhythmic language which the composer highlights with accent symbols. This rhythmic language breaks traditional rhythmic pulsation which usually emphasizes the downbeat and the third beat in a 4/4 measure (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Mm. 1-2



From m. 122, the music gets softer. The theme of the third prelude is stated in mm. 122-124.

The first three measures of section B use the same rhythm and musical style as the beginning (Figure 15). However, in measures 156, the music completely changes in terms of the rhythm, key, dynamics and style. We can clearly hear the very typical Chinese musical style of the five-note pentatonic scale (the Chinese pentatonic scale) in the right hand.

Section A returns at m. 188 with a faster tempo and stronger emotion. The music ends with a forceful dissonant, syncopated chord.

Performance Suggestions

First Prelude, with syncopated rhythms and chromaticism, gives the sense of a Jazz style. Accordingly, it is essential to put the accents in the correct places to project the Jazz style. The chromatic scales need to be shaped creatively and dramatic dynamic contrasting must be heard.

The second prelude is marked *mesto misterioso*. This prelude serves as a contrasting movement among the three preludes with a free, mystery and sorrowful feeling. Undoubtedly, the timbre is the key to playing this prelude beautifully. The performer must listen for color. The passages are extremely emotional and lyrical.

Compared to the first two preludes, the last prelude is much faster, energetic, intense and passionate. Advanced technical skills are required. There are numerous accent marks to highlight. The final section is brisk with a dynamic mark *fff*, which must be produced without hesitation.

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