

**ANALYTICAL OBSERVATIONS AND PERFORMANCE SUGGESTIONS FOR  
SELECTED PRELUDES FROM DAVID RAKOWSKI'S PRÉLUDES BOOK I**

by

YOONSOOK SONG

(Under the Direction of Martha Thomas and Peter Jutras)

**ABSTRACT**

The piano prelude is an essential genre of the piano literature, as many composers from the Baroque to the modern era have written pieces in this form to develop the pianist's musical and technical skills. American composer, David Rakowski (1958-) sets out to write 100 piano preludes and has completed eighty preludes as of this writing.

This study provides analytical observations and performance suggestions for selected preludes from David Rakowski's *Préludes Book I* (2010) for advanced pianists. Based on in-depth analytical observations of David Rakowski's *Préludes Book I*, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7, the study examines technical challenges, including fast improvisatory passages, complicated rhythms, and large intervals and leaps, as well as musical challenges such as frequent dynamic changes, voicing, and balancing.

Furthermore, this study includes practical solutions and technical exercises to assist pianists in overcoming technical difficulties and in providing a successful performance. By introducing David Rakowski's inventive and innovative *Préludes Book I* in this study, I show advanced students and professional pianists how contemporary preludes remain exciting and valuable to learn and perform.

INDEX WORDS: Piano pedagogy, Piano repertoire, Contemporary music, Modern American music, David Rakowski, Piano preludes, Practice suggestions

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my parents, Bumeui Song and Kyungja Lee, and my brother, Kibum Song, who always support me with all of their love and warm words of encouragement. I could not do anything without my family, and they led me to complete my doctoral program successfully.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide analytical observations and performance suggestions for selected preludes, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7, from David Rakowski's *Préludes Book I*. In this study I will suggest practical teaching and performance ideas for advanced pianists, along with viable solutions for technical and musical challenges. Furthermore, I will recommend preparatory repertoire for developing students, so they may eventually be able to perform Rakowski's preludes with confidence and enthusiasm.

The prelude genre has consistently been popular in piano music, for both composers and performers, from the Baroque period to the twenty-first century. Before 1800, the instrumental prelude served as introductory music and was used to attract audience attention as the opening piece of a suite or before vocal music in churches. Such preludes often have improvisatory elements with fast scalar passages and a free formal structure. Most preludes were improvised by keyboardists, but some notated preludes were designed for educational methods, providing guidelines for students.<sup>1</sup> Johann Sebastian Bach's large sets of preludes and fugues, *The Well-Tempered Clavier Books I and II*, were completed in 1722 and 1742. They were composed "in all tones and semitones, in the major as well as the minor modes for the benefit and use of musical

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<sup>1</sup> Grove Music Online/Oxford Music Online, s.v. "Prelude," by David Ledbetter and Howard Ferguson (Oxford University Press), <https://doi-org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43302> (accessed January 28, 2019).

youth desirous of knowledge as well as those who are already advanced in this study.”<sup>2</sup>

Bach also paired each prelude with a fugue in the same key, demonstrating preludes as introductory music to fugues.

After 1800, the prelude stood as an independent musical genre for Romantic, twentieth-, and twenty-first century composers. In contrast to Bach, Chopin excluded fugues and only composed twenty-four short preludes in his Opus 28. In the early nineteenth century, it was common to play preludes with improvisation before performing larger works on the concert program. According to Leikin, Chopin’s *Préludes*, Opus 28, can be described as written-out preludes for performers who have difficulty in improvising their own; thus, he wrote twenty-four preludes to satisfy the demand for such works.<sup>3</sup> His preludes became not only educational repertoire but also concert pieces.

As followers of Bach and Chopin in the next generation, Scriabin and Rachmaninoff also composed a number of preludes. “Determined to emulate and eventually surpass the Polish master, Scriabin completed a total of ninety preludes throughout his career.”<sup>4</sup> Scriabin particularly wrote twenty-four preludes in all major and minor keys; his Opus 11 was directly influenced by Chopin in terms of the musical styles and organization of preludes. Rachmaninoff also arranged twenty-four preludes in different sets: Opuses 23 and 32 and the C-sharp minor prelude, Opus 3, No. 2. Rachmaninoff, in particular, developed his preludes by expanding the length of music and applying unique harmonic progressions, thick texture, and unified thematic ideas throughout the pieces. In terms of length, while Chopin’s preludes are relatively short—

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<sup>2</sup> Siglind Bruhn, *J. S. Bach's Well-tempered Clavier: In-depth Analysis and Interpretation, Vol. 2* (Hong Kong: Mainer International, 1993), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Anatole Leikin, *The Mystery of Chopin's Préludes* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 1-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ballard, Lincoln, Matthew Bengtson, and John Bell Young, *The Alexander Scriabin Companion: History, Performance, and Lore* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 59.

for instance, his shortest prelude, No. 9, has only twelve measures—most of Rachmaninoff's preludes are forty-one to one-hundred-fifty-five measures long, showing the natural development of a musical idea in a clear, formal structure.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it became a trend among composers to write twenty-four preludes. Impressionist composer Debussy also completed two sets of twelve preludes, but not in all twenty-four keys. Interestingly, Debussy added a descriptive title for each prelude, but placed it at the end of the work so that pianists would use their own imagination before seeing the title. After Chopin's *Préludes*, the prelude genre no longer served as preparatory music; the prelude surely stood alone within piano concert repertoire.

In the prelude, which is considered non-programmatic characteristic music,<sup>6</sup> composers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries were also able to experiment with new styles, sounds, and techniques in this concise and flexible form. Some contemporary composers, including Dmitri Shostakovich, Nikolai Kapustin, and Lera Auerbach, kept the tradition of writing twenty-four preludes as a set, but many other composers composed fewer preludes, including eight *Préludes pour piano* by Olivier Messiaen, *Three Preludes* by George Gershwin, and *Prelude for Meditation* by John Cage.

The American composer David Rakowski also inherited the tradition by exploring the prelude genre and composing a number of piano preludes in modern style. He set out to write 100 piano preludes and has completed eighty preludes as of this writing.<sup>7</sup> For this dissertation, I will concentrate solely on the selected preludes Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7 from

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<sup>5</sup> Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda, and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 175.

<sup>6</sup> Grove Music Online/Oxford Music Online, s.v. "Prelude," by David Ledbetter and Howard Ferguson (Oxford University Press) <https://doi-org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43302> (accessed January 28, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> David Rakowski, "Lists of Compositions," [http://ziodavino.blogspot.com/p/list-of-compositions\\_20.html](http://ziodavino.blogspot.com/p/list-of-compositions_20.html) (accessed April 6, 2019).

Rakowski's *Préludes Book I*, all inspired by various composers, such as Bach, Debussy, Beethoven, Scriabin and Chopin.

### **Biography**

David Rakowski was born in 1958 in St. Albans, Vermont, where he spent his childhood. In his earlier musical experiences, he played the trombone and piano in various musical groups, including community bands and rock bands. When he first listened to twentieth-century classical music—Pierre Boulez's *Le Soleil des Eaux* and Milton Babbitt's *Ensembles for Synthesizer*—on recordings his high school music teacher gave him, he was thrilled with the inventive and creative sounds of this new music.<sup>8</sup> His composition studies started at the New England Conservatory in 1980, where he studied with Robert Ceely and John Heiss. Subsequently, he completed his composition studies at Princeton University, earning his master's and doctoral degrees with the renowned twentieth century composers Milton Babbitt, Paul Lansky, and Peter Westergaard. During that time, he also studied at Tanglewood with Luciano Berio.<sup>9</sup>

A prolific composer, Rakowski has written a range of compositions, including a substantial number of small works, such as piano etudes and preludes, and large-scale works, including concertos and symphonies. The musical styles shown in his work demonstrate a clear formal structure, subtle musical details, humor, and unexpected rhythmic and melodic variations.

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<sup>8</sup> Rakowski, *Hyperblue*, by the Triple Helix. Composers Recordings, NWCR820, 1999, CD, Liner notes <http://www.newworldrecords.org/uploads/fileIH1VF.pdf> (accessed January 28, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> "The Presidents Own" United States Marine Band, "Weird, Wild Stuff: Music That Thinks Outside of the Box" <http://www.marineband.marines.mil/Portals/175/Docs/Programs/020214.pdf> (accessed January 28, 2019).

Rakowski's unique style and persistence has led him to a prestigious career, and he has received numerous awards, fellowships, and commissions from esteemed organizations, including the Prix de Rome in 1995-96, the 2004-06 Elise L. Stoecker Prize (from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center), and the Barlow Prize in 2006. Rakowski has been named as a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Music twice: in 1999 for *Persistent Memory*, a work for chamber orchestra; and in 2002 for *Ten of a Kind*, a work for clarinet section and wind ensemble, the latter commissioned by "The President's Own" U.S. Marine Band.<sup>10</sup> He has also been a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters since 2016.<sup>11</sup>

By request from two Fromm Foundation commissions and two Koussevitzky Foundation commissions, Rakowski also composed several important pieces, including Piano Etudes, *Book V*, *Hyperblue* for piano trio,<sup>12</sup> Piano Concerto, and *Sesso e Violenza* for chamber ensemble.<sup>13</sup> In addition to awards and commissions, he has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the NEA, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Tanglewood Music Center, BMI, Columbia University, the Orleans International Piano Competition (the Chevillion-Bonnaud composition prize), the International Horn Society, and various artist colonies.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rakowski, "Bios of Various Wordiness," <http://ziodavino.blogspot.com/p/bios-of-various-wordiness.html> (accessed January 28, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Brandeis University, <http://www.brandeis.edu/facultyguide/person.html?emplid=6ee236eb2da77fafef6562efbe36e87776dfb285> (accessed January 28, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Fromm Music Foundation, "David Rakowski," <https://frommfoundation.fas.harvard.edu/people/david-rakowski> (accessed January 28, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Koussevitzky Music Foundation, "Complete List of Koussevitzky Commissions," <http://www.koussevitzky.org/grantscomplete.html> (accessed January 28, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Rakowski, "Bios of Various Wordiness."

Rakowski's first composition was *Sonnet 22* (1976) for choir with soprano and alto solo, and his most recent works include the Piano Préludes Book VIII. His boundless enthusiasm for writing music and fostering young composers has led him to teach at Stanford University for a year and at Columbia University for six years. Rakowski is currently teaching at Brandeis University as the Walter W. Naumburg Professor of Composition; he also teaches at Harvard University and at the New England Conservatory in part-time positions.

Roughly 250 pieces of Rakowski's music have been published by Edition Peters, and musicians have performed these works worldwide, recording them on a variety of classical music labels, such as BMOP/sound and Bridge.<sup>15</sup>

### Compositions

Rakowski has composed an extensive array of works for orchestra, chamber ensemble, voice, and piano. Since 1976, he has been consistently writing music using a variety of creative combinations of instruments and also instruments rarely found in the Western tradition. As examples of unique instrumentation, he wrote *A Fanfare* (1978, his second composition) for twenty-four trombones and *Ten of a Kind* (2000, a symphonic work commissioned by the U.S. Marine Band) as a concerto for a clarinet section with ten different sizes of clarinets, played with a wind ensemble.<sup>16</sup> *Zyg Zag* is also composed for a distinctive ensemble: flute/piccolo, oboe, mandolin, guitar, violin, and cello. Furthermore, he wrote *AhChim AnGae* (meaning "the morning mist") for 해금

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<sup>15</sup> Rakowski, "Bios of Various Wordiness."

<sup>16</sup> "The Presidents Own," "Weird, Wild Stuff."



(HaeGeum), a Korean traditional instrument, and string trio. These compositions show Rakowski's considerable exploration and yearning for new sounds.

### *Vocal Music*

Rakowski is also interested in vocal music. For example, he has written song cycles including *The Mystery of Deep Candor* for soprano or mezzo-soprano and piano, *Three Encores* for medium-to-high voice and piano, *Violin Songs* for soprano and violin, *Georgic* (2000) for soprano and piano, *Musician* for voice, violin and piano, and others. His attention to vocal music has led him to include vocal parts in his orchestral music. His Symphony No. 1 and *Nothing But the Wind* are for orchestra and soprano soloist.

### *Concertos*

Rakowski has composed concertos for many different instruments, including cello, horn, clarinet, violin, piano, and flute. Piano Concerto No. 2 was written for Amy Briggs, an American pianist specializing in music by living composers. According to Rakowski's liner notes, when he was commissioned to write a piece for the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, he immediately thought of a large-scale piano concerto for Briggs. He described this concerto as "a gigantic and monster piano concerto."<sup>17</sup> Although Rakowski is not a professional pianist, he collaborated with Amy Briggs in order to write a more successful and pianistic concerto.

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<sup>17</sup> Rakowski, *Stolen Moments, Piano Concerto No. 2*, conducted by Gil Rose with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, BMOP/sound 1048, 2016, CD, liner note, 5.

## *Piano Etudes*

In addition to concertos, Rakowski has also shown intense interest in piano music. Although his wind ensemble and chamber compositions are occasionally performed by renowned groups of musicians, his most widely known works are his 100 piano etudes. Many of Rakowski's etudes have been recorded by Amy Briggs.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, he has written only six solo pieces for other instruments, but he composed 100 piano etudes over a span of twenty-two years, from 1988 to 2010. Due to the success of his piano etudes, Rakowski is occasionally referred to as "the piano etude guy."<sup>19</sup> In 2010, as soon as the last piano etude was completed, he began writing 100 preludes for piano. Rakowski has even stated that the writing of short pieces for solo piano was an escape from his composition of larger works.<sup>20</sup> Rakowski has particularly concentrated on writing etudes and preludes, even as he has written seven solo piano works excluding the piano etudes and preludes.

Fast and virtuosic, Rakowski's *Piano Études* comprise ten books of ten etudes each. From the first etude, "E-Machine" to the last, "Cioccolato," and similar to those of Chopin and Liszt, each etude addresses certain technical problems, such as repeated notes, trills, octaves, thirds, crossing hands, and chromatic scales. Besides these conventional techniques, Rakowski created new technical practices in these pieces, such

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<sup>18</sup> Amy Briggs has performed many of David Rakowski's piano compositions. In addition to her recordings of Rakowski's music, many of her performances of his music can be found on YouTube. One can search for her under the name of Amy Briggs and/or Amy Dissanayake.

<sup>19</sup> Frank J. Oteri, "David Rakowski: The Piano Etude Guy," New Music Box Website, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/david-rakowski-the-piano-etude-guy/> (accessed January 28, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Rakowski, *Études Vol. 4*, performed by Amy Briggs, Bridge Records Inc., 2016, CD, liner note.

as an etude for index fingers only, an etude with melody played by the nose, an etude using fists, and one for thumbs and pinkies.<sup>21</sup>

Rakowski's etudes possess interesting and creative titles, such as "Schnozzage," "What's Hairpinning," "Heavy Hitter," "BAM!" and so on. Rakowski's titles are imaginative, representing the style and characteristic of each etude clearly; from a quick glance at the title a performer might easily imagine how the piece sounds.

### *Piano Preludes*

Since 2010, Rakowski has been working on the piano preludes, and he has completed eighty as of April 2019. As with his piano etudes, each book contains ten preludes with descriptive titles. Each set of preludes is also unified by a certain theme, rather than focusing on a specific technical problem. For example, all titles from *Préludes Book I* are palindromic, such as "Prélude No. 1: Moody, My Doom", "No. 2: Never Odd or Even," or No. 3: "Too Hot to Hoot." Table 1 shows the organization of the preludes and their themes.

Table 1. Rakowski's *Préludes* Books I–X, Themes and Organization by Book.

Book	Numbers	Theme
Book I	Nos. 1–10	Palindromic Titles
Book II	Nos. 11–20	Mind the Gap
Book III	Nos. 21–30	Onomatopoeia
Book IV	Nos. 31–40	Yoga Poses

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<sup>21</sup> Rakowski, "Lists of compositions."

Book	Numbers	Theme
Book V	Nos. 41–50	Insects or Animals (translated into Italian)
Book VI	Nos. 51–60	Gibberish
Book VII	Nos. 61–70	Color
Book VIII	Nos. 71–80	Spices
Book IX (In Progress)	Nos. 81–90	Slow Cooker Recipes
Book X	Nos. 91–100	Theme not yet decided.

### Related Literature

The subject of Rakowski's 100 etudes has been examined in two doctoral dissertations by I-Chen Yeh and Florence Fang-Chu Liu. In *The Piano Etudes of David Rakowski*, Yeh divides the etudes into five categories, including "basic technique, gestures, restricted compositional techniques, extended techniques, and genres."<sup>22</sup> She also gives a brief overview of styles, difficulties, and required techniques for each etude. Florence Fang-Chu Liu's dissertation, *A Survey of David Rakowski's Piano Etudes*, divides the etudes into ten different categories organized by various pianistic techniques, and she analyzes the performance challenges of the selected etudes.<sup>23</sup> While not directly related to the preludes, these studies provide useful materials for an overall understanding of Rakowski's musical style in his piano works.

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<sup>22</sup> I-Chen Yeh, "The Piano Etudes of David Rakowski," (DMA diss., Bowling Green State University, 2010), 6-7.

<sup>23</sup> Florence Fang-Chu Liu, "A Survey of David Rakowski's Piano Etudes" (DMA diss., The City University of New York, 2011), 4-5.

Program notes for several CD recordings serve as a valuable resource for this study. Most of these CD recordings include heavily detailed explanations about Rakowski and his music and are written by the composer himself or by program annotator Hayes Biggs.

Rakowski's blog and the Brandeis University website are the primary source for his biography and list of compositions. He has two blogs<sup>24</sup> and updates his newer one frequently with new compositional ideas, recent compositions, performance videos or audio links by professional musicians, and details about his compositions.

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<sup>24</sup> Rakowski, [http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1\\_001.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1_001.htm) (accessed January 28, 2019) and Zio Davino, <http://ziodavino.blogspot.com/> (accessed January 28, 2019).

**CHAPTER 2**  
**ANALYTICAL OBSERVATIONS AND PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS**  
**FOR DAVID RAKOWSKI'S PRÉLUDES BOOK I, NOS. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7**

**Overview**

Rakowski's *Préludes Book I* includes ten short preludes. The performance of all ten pieces takes approximately thirty-three minutes, with individual preludes lasting from two to four minutes. A remarkable characteristic of *Book I* is Rakowski's palindromic titles. He enjoys making puns and palindromes, influenced by his teacher, Milton Babbitt.<sup>25</sup>

*Préludes Nos. 1–4* are written for different artists, including a writer and three pianists. For example, the first prelude "Moody, My Doom" was composed for Rick Moody, an American novelist and friend of Rakowski. The other preludes were written for the pianists Karl Larson, Tony de Mare, and Geoffrey Burleson, all specialists in contemporary music. Larson premiered *Préludes Book I* on April, 2011, at Bryan Recital Hall, Moore Musical Arts Center, Bowling Green State University, Ohio.<sup>26</sup>

While working on *Préludes Book I*, Rakowski spent most of his time at Yaddo, an artist colony located in Saratoga Springs, New York. He wrote, "All the thinking, all the hypotheticals for your piece, all the conceptual fitting together happens very fast for me

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<sup>25</sup> Rakowski, "Print and web reviews, page three," [http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1\\_011.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1_011.htm) (accessed January 28, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Rakowski, *Préludes Book I* (New York: C. F. Peters, 2010).

at Yaddo.”<sup>27</sup> At the end of each prelude, Rakowski provides information about when he composed the piece, how long it took to complete the piece, where he wrote it, and a referenced earlier work. Rakowski wasted no time in his efforts; *Préludes* Nos. 5–10, all written at Yaddo, each required only two to four days to complete.

Rakowski referenced ten different earlier works, by J. S. Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy and Scriabin, one for each prelude in Book I. The music selections quoted are from standard piano repertoire for intermediate and advanced students, including Beethoven’s *Für Elise*, Bach’s “Little” Prelude in C Minor, BWV 999, and Debussy’s “Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum,” from *Children’s Corner*. Performers might then pair the quoted music with a Rakowski prelude at the recital. Table 2 lists Rakowski’s preludes from Book I and the referenced compositions.

Table 2. Rakowski’s *Préludes* Book I.<sup>28</sup>

	Title	Year	Duration	Dedicated Artist	Referenced Music
1	Moody, My Doom	2010	2:45	Rick Moody	Bach “Little” Prelude in C Minor, BWV 999
2	Never Odd or Even	2010	3:30	Karl Larson	Debussy “Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum,” from <i>Children’s Corner</i>
3	Too Hot to Hoot	2008-2010	3:00	Tony de Mare	Beethoven <i>Für Elise</i>

<sup>27</sup> Pepper Smith, “Spotlight on Yaddo Artist Colony,” National Endowment for the Arts, last modified September 3, 2014, <https://www.arts.gov/art-works/2014/spotlight-yaddo-artist-colony> (accessed September 25, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> Rakowski, “Lude Behavior,” <http://ziodavino.blogspot.com/search?q=lude+behavior> (accessed September 25, 2017).

	Title	Year	Duration	Dedicated Artist	Referenced Music
4	Pull a Wall Up	2010	3:00	Geoffrey Burleson	Scriabin Prelude, Op. 11, No. 6 in B Minor
5	No, It is Opposition	2010	2:30		Scriabin Prelude, Op. 11, No. 15 in D-flat Major
6	In a Regal Age Ran I	2010	4:00		Bach <i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i> Book I, Prelude No. 8
7	Dr. Awkward	2010	3:00		Chopin Prélude, Op. 28, No. 20 in C Minor
8	So Many Dynamos	2010	3:00		Bach <i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i> Book I, Fugue No. 10
9	Puff Up (If I Puff Up)	2010	3:15		Bach <i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i> Book I, Prelude No. 9
10	Air an Aria	2010	3:00		Bach <i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i> Book I, Prelude No. 6

Each prelude has a different texture, technique, and musical style, formal structure, and also level of difficulty. Prelude No. 5 “No, It is Opposition” is the easiest prelude in Book I and is appropriate for late intermediate to early advanced students, while other preludes in the book will be recommended for professional pianists.

All of Rakowski’s preludes have been published by Edition Peters. Most of them were premiered by the dedicated artists and are performed occasionally by other pianists, but no CD recording is yet available.



## Prélude No. 1: “Moody, My Doom”

### Analytical Observations

The thematic idea of “Moody, My Doom” is based on Bach’s Prelude in C Minor, BWV 999, a standard piece that assists developing students in learning broken chords, alternating hands, clear articulation, and varying harmonies. The Bach prelude is built on a single motivic idea, which consists of arpeggiated chords split between both hands. Throughout the piece, the right hand plays broken chords over a left-hand pedal tone on the first beat, with the two hands alternating on the third beat. Bach employed a variety of chords in root position and inversions, including major and minor triads, diminished chords, and a major-minor seventh chord. These chords are played only as arpeggios rather than as blocked chords, which gives the piece a thin texture.



Example 1. J. S. Bach, “Little” Prelude in C Minor, BWV 999, mm. 1-3

At the beginning of the Bach prelude, a pedal-tone C in the left hand continues for seven measures on every downbeat. Later, it moves down chromatically to a D pedal tone in mm. 17-32, in order to modulate to another key. Interestingly, the prelude finishes on a G-major chord (the dominant of C minor), instead of the tonic. As this prelude has a simple motivic idea and uncomplicated harmonic structure, it is a good instructional composition and technically approachable. The motoric rhythms could cause technical

challenges for developing students, who must perform the sixteenth notes evenly with an accurate articulation and consistent harmonic shifts.

In his Prelude No. 1, “Moody, My Doom,” Rakowski quoted the broken-chord motives and alternating hands figuration, along with other musical elements from Bach’s prelude. Rakowski’s tempo marking indicates *Precise, secco*, *half note = ca. 88–96*, and the time signature begins in 13/8, although it changes frequently later in the piece. Following the rule for titles in Rakowski’s *Préludes Book I*, “Moody, My Doom” is palindromic. This prelude was written for the American novelist Rick Moody, a friend of Rakowski; thus, he chose this palindrome to fit his friend’s name. Even though the title is palindromic, the only musical palindromes appearing in the piece are small palindromic five-note patterns (see Example 2).

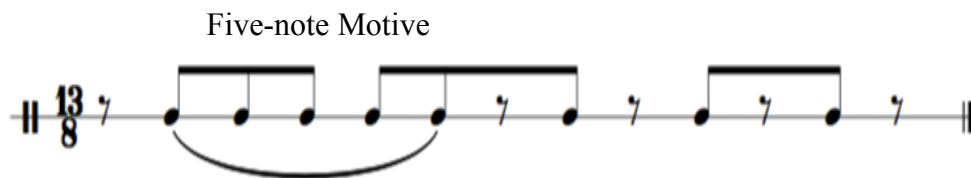


Example 2. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 1*, Palindromic five-note patterns, mm. 1-5

Rakowski’s *Prélude No. 1* consists of seventy-eight measures, divided into three main sections and a coda: A (mm. 1-28) – A<sup>1</sup> (mm. 29-58) – A<sup>2</sup> (mm. 59-74) – Coda (mm. 75-end). The A section begins with a pedal-tone C in the left hand (per Bach) with a C-

minor broken chord in the right hand. Also similar to Bach's prelude, the two hands alternate in notes after the broken-chord fragment. Although Rakowski followed the basic idea of Bach's "Little" Prelude, he also combined and expanded this with elements of modern musical styles by exploiting lower, middle, and upper registers of the keyboard, using unfamiliar harmonies, avoiding tonality, making dramatic and abrupt dynamic changes, and using frequent meter changes.

Five-note collections are the most frequently appearing motivic patterns, which also vary in every measure and appear throughout the piece with the exception of transitions in mm. 28, 46-58, and 72-74. Rakowski maintains the principal rhythmic idea of the piece, but at the same time he develops the prelude with complicated rhythmic variations, propulsive broken octaves, and a well-knit dynamic plan.



Example 3. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 1*, Principal rhythmic pattern

At the beginning of the prelude (mm. 1-9), there are only eighth notes based on the five-note rhythmic pattern (Example 3); then the first sixteenth note appears in m. 10, suddenly interrupting the two-eighth notes with a slur in the right hand. Before the first slur, I suggest that the performer play all the eighth notes in a non-legato manner following the indication "*secco*," thus making the contrasts between the non-legato and two-note slurs more apparent.

Between each section, transitional moments appear that lead to the new section. In spite of recurring five-note collections throughout the prelude, only broken octaves with two-note slurs are presented in the transitions without the five-note patterns. For example, at the end of Section A (mm. 27-28), a brief transition hastily moves into the Section A<sup>1</sup> with more sixteenth notes, a dramatic *crescendo*, and chromatically descending broken octaves.



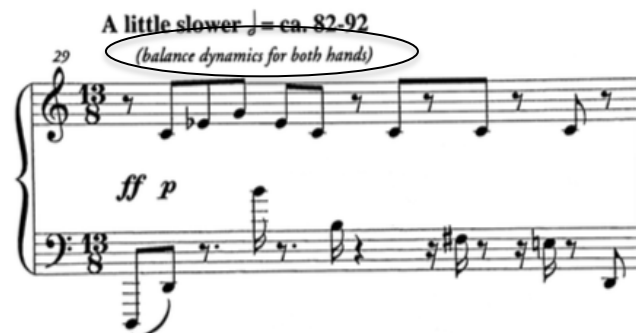
Example 4. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, “Moody, My Doom,” mm. 27-28

Rakowski expands the musical ideas by using dissimilarities between the A and A<sup>1</sup> sections. The A<sup>1</sup> section starts with a different rhythmic pattern, comprising the five-note motive and repeating eighth and sixteenth notes. The new tempo is marked “A little slower (half note = ca. 82-92),” and “Balance dynamics for both hands,” and this section has more sixteenth notes interrupting the right-hand broken chords. At the beginning of Rakowski’s prelude, right-hand pitches must be brought out where marked in the score (“Emphasize R.H. notes”), while both right and left hands include equally important materials in the A<sup>1</sup> section, again following his instructions: “Balance dynamics for both hands” (Examples 5a and 5b). These features show a perfect balance between Bach’s simple thematic material in the Baroque style, and Rakowski’s contemporary writing. The motives from Bach’s C-minor prelude are emphasized at the beginning, but

Rakowski's own rhythmic and structural ideas are later blended with material from Bach's prelude.



Example 5a. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, m. 1



Example 5b. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, m. 29

The transition to Section A<sup>2</sup> in mm. 46-58 is somewhat chaotic and meandering, due to Rakowski's irregularly moving broken-octaves and fast sixteenth notes. The initial transition idea is developed in a complicated manner; the five-note motives no longer appear as the main idea, whereas the octave and alternating-hands configuration are rather exaggerated. After the transition, the five-note motive returns in the A<sup>2</sup> section. Rakowski retained the original form of the five-note pattern in the right hand until the A<sup>1</sup>

section, but now finally divides it over the two hands for the rhythmic variation, adding the broken-octave pattern in the right hand. Toward the end of the passage, fast sixteenths move around in different patterns, and the five-note motive is suddenly taken up by the left hand in mm. 69-70.

The image displays a musical score for Example 6, Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, measures 68-71. It is written for piano in 2/4 time. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 68-69) features a right hand with a broken-octave pattern and a left hand with a five-note motive. The second system (measures 70-71) continues the patterns. Dynamic markings include 'f' (forte) and '8va' (octave up). The score is presented in a clear, professional layout with standard musical notation.

Example 6. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, Five-note motives in left hand, mm. 68-71

For the last seven bars (mm. 72-78), Rakowski suggests *non dim. al fine* or *dim. al pp al fine* as an alternative option. With the first dynamic suggestion, this prelude can finish with a strong and powerful ending by maintaining *f* all the way to the end. The Coda also emphasizes the primary motivic idea and concludes with a C-minor chord as the reminder of primary materials: the arpeggiated chords and moving broken octaves. On the other hand, the second suggestion, which is *dim. al pp al fine*, naturally creates an effect of fading out at the end of the piece. Constantly running eighth notes finally calm

down, stopping on a c minor chord. This fade-out effect may imply that there is more music to come following this first prelude of Book I.



Example 7. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, mm. 72-73

Rakowski provides no key signature, but a pitch center of C is established by the arpeggiated C-minor chord, which recurs at the beginning of every new section and at the end of the prelude. The opening three notes,  $C_2 - B_0 - C_2$ ,<sup>29</sup> in the left hand, also imply the pitch center of C. These notes repeat in the first five measures, serving as pedal tones and establishing the solid pitch center.

In contrast with this noticeable evidence of the pitch center, there are three aspects that interrupt its strong sense of a pitch centricity. First, as mentioned above, the first three notes,  $C_2 - B_0 - C_2$ , demonstrate the emphasis on C, since the  $B_0$  is considered a neighboring tone. However,  $B_0$  is on the strong beat in mm. 1-5 while both iterations of  $C_2$  are on weak beats and the last note of the piece in the left hand is also  $B_0$ . Nevertheless,

<sup>29</sup> In this document,  $C_4$  designates Middle C. Therefore, the lowest two notes on the piano are  $A_0$  and  $B_0$ . The lowest C is  $C_1$  and the highest note on the piano is  $C_8$ . In this particular example,  $C_2 - B_0 - C_2$  represents the pitches shown below.



C is clearly a pitch center in that the  $B_0$  is in a very low register, relatively unclear for audible recognition of the exact pitch, and the C-minor broken chords in the right hand predominate, returning several times throughout the prelude.

Second, a pitch from the downbeat of each section – A,  $A^1$ , and  $A^2$  – clearly exhibits a relationship between C as the pitch center and its obstacles. In the A and  $A^1$  sections, the bass notes never settle on the pitch center. Yet, Rakowski begins each section's first measure with  $B_0$  (m. 1) and  $D_1$  (m. 29), both adjacent tones to C, and finally, in the  $A^2$  section, sets the pitch center on  $C_1$  (m. 59). Thus, the prelude resists a strong sense of tonality by hovering on adjacent notes of C until the last section.

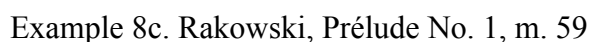


Example 8a. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, m. 1



Example 8b. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, m. 29





Musical score for "The Rose Tree" in G major, 2/4 time. The score is for piano and includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked "Allegretto". The score consists of two systems. The first system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The second system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment features a prominent bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The vocal line is a simple melody. The score ends with a double bar line.

Example 9. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 1*, “Moody, My Doom,” mm. 76-78

## Technical and Musical Challenges

Because of its technical and musical challenges, I recommend Rakowski's Prélude No. 1, "Moody, My Doom," for advanced students or professional pianists. By sight-reading the first two measures, performers will see how this prelude is challenging to learn without practice plans and strategies.

The first factor showing the prelude's difficulty is the unfamiliar and asymmetrical time signature, 13/8. It is nearly impossible to keep track of thirteen beats in a measure while playing and counting at the same time. The frequent meter changes throughout the piece also intensify the confusion, so that performers can easily lose track of where they are in counting the beats. In addition to the unusual time signature, rhythmic complexities may also cause difficulty in performing this prelude successfully. Surprisingly, the rhythm is manageable after familiarizing oneself with the repetitive rhythmic patterns.

Another challenge, easily disregarded, is maintaining a stable pulse. The leaping left hand and broken octaves can easily cause an increase in the performance speed. An unplanned acceleration eventually can undermine rhythmic accuracy entirely.

Additionally, Rakowski's prelude requires executing large intervals –between an octave and a tenth – at a relatively fast tempo, with complicated rhythmic patterns and alternating hand motives. The large leaps appear throughout the prelude, but the leaps in the A section (mm. 1-28) are the most demanding because of the successive large intervals, such as A<sub>5</sub> – A<sub>4</sub> – A<sub>3</sub> – C<sub>2</sub> – B<sub>0</sub> – C<sub>2</sub> in the left hand, and the fact that both hands are also alternating at a fast tempo.



Example 10. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, Successive large intervals, mm. 1-2

Many twentieth- and twenty-first century composers provide specific guidelines for performers, noting detailed dynamic markings meant to create the exact sounds they have envisioned. Such dynamic changes appear quite suddenly throughout Rakowski's first prelude. For example, m. 27 starts at *f*, then increases volume with a *crescendo* until *ff* (m. 29). Once Section A<sup>1</sup> begins in m. 29, Rakowski immediately cuts the sound back to *p*. In m. 31, only one sixteenth note is played at *mf*, whereas other notes maintain the *p* dynamic. They should be carefully followed to create excitement. See Example 11 for an illustration of these exacting dynamic changes.

The image displays three staves of musical notation for Rakowski's Prelude No. 1, measures 27 through 32. The first staff (measures 27-28) is in 4/4 time and features a dynamic marking of *f* circled in measure 27. The second staff (measures 29-30) is in 18/8 time and includes the instruction "A little slower ♩ = ca. 82-92 (balance dynamics for both hands)" above the staff. It shows a dynamic change from *ff* to *p* circled in measure 29. The third staff (measures 31-32) is in 4/4 time and shows dynamic markings of *mf* and *p* circled in measure 31, and *mf* and *p* circled in measure 32.

Example 11. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, Detailed dynamic indications, mm. 29-32

## Preparatory Repertoire and Practice Suggestions

### *Rhythmic Patterns*

If “Moody, My Doom” were written in a simple 4/4 meter, it would be much less challenging, but because it starts in 13/8 meter, and employs many different irregular meters, this prelude requires more preparation and technique. Pianists need to acquaint themselves with these time signatures (13/8, 7/4, 15/8, and 5/4) before attempting Rakowski’s prelude.

I recommend the short piece, No. 103, “Minor and Major,” from Béla Bartók’s *Mikrokosmos*, Book 4, to help young pianists gain experience with irregular meters. Bartók’s piece provides a simple example of frequent meter changes. The first measure begins with an uneven rhythmic division in 9/8 meter, and from there the time signatures alter frequently to 8/8, 3 x 2/8, 5/8, and 7/8 (See Example 12 below). In order to learn this exercise quickly, it would also be beneficial for students to focus on different rhythmic groups in rapid succession while practicing, such as 4 + 5 (mm. 1-4), 2 + 3 + 3 (m. 5), and 3 + 2 + 3 (m. 6). Jane Magrath excludes this particular piece from her book on piano literature, but she categorizes most of the pieces in *Mikrokosmos* Book 4 as Levels 6–7 of her ranking system.<sup>30</sup>

Practicing such diverse rhythmic subdivisions as Bartók’s can be directly adapted to Rakowski’s *Prélude* No. 1. The thirteen beats of its non-traditional time signature can be divided in various ways, from smaller to larger rhythmic units, such as 4 + 4 + 5, or 6 + 7, for managing the complicated counting more effectively.

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<sup>30</sup> Jane Magrath, *The Pianist’s Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred, 1995), 285-86.



Example 12. Bartók, No. 103, “Minor and Major,” from *Mikrokosmos* Book 4, mm. 1-13

Consider the last beat of every measure as an anacrusis that proceeds to the first two beats of the following measure. For example, the three bass notes, C<sub>2</sub> – B<sub>0</sub> – C<sub>2</sub>, can be heard as one motive fragment rather than three individual pitches. The rhythmic subdivision, 6 + 6 + 1 (See Example 13), is considered as two combined 3/4 meters, plus one eighth note as an anacrusis to the next bar. This subdivision keeps the two different groups together, the five-note motive and the alternating motion. Alternatively, for the subdivisions 4 + 4 + 5 and 4 + 4 + 4 + 1, the player should focus more on counting rather than on the motivic or rhythmic patterns. Both rhythmic subdivisions will help them to better understand the rhythmic pattern and the time signature and to keep track of the rhythm more accurately. I would recommend the rhythmic subdivision, 6 + 6 + 1, at performance tempo, since the subdivision makes the performers aware of three different

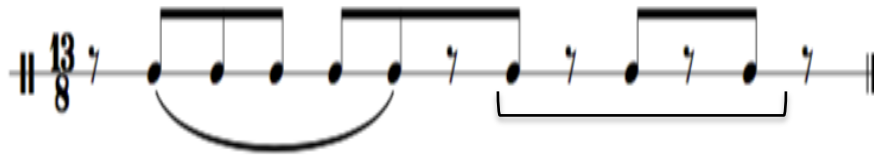
rhythmic patterns, including a three-note pattern with the interval of ninth in the left hand, a five-note motive in the right hand, and alternating eighth notes between the two hands.



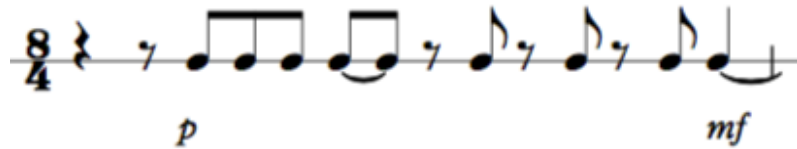
Example 13. Various rhythmic subdivisions of Rakowski's *Prélude* No. 1

Remembering the rhythmic patterns in each section will shorten the practice time. In mm. 1-9, Rakowski uses only one rhythmic pattern: five consecutive eighth notes followed by the alternation of an eighth rest and eighth note. Performers would best concentrate more on hearing this rhythmic pattern because Rakowski has already marked "Emphasize R.H. notes" above the notation. Later, Rakowski modifies the rhythm by adding a quarter note next to the last eighth note (m. 11 and mm. 14-25). Although timing between the patterns varies a little, due to the meter changes in this section, the pattern

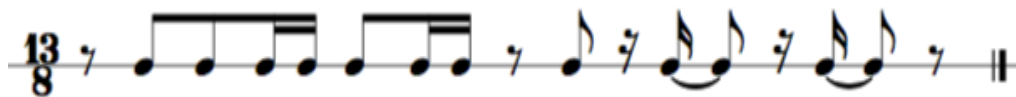
continues until almost the end of the A section (See various rhythmic patterns in Examples 14a, 14b, and 14c).



Example 14a. Rhythmic pattern in mm. 1-9



Example 14b. Rhythmic pattern in mm. 11, 14-25



Example 14c. Rhythmic pattern in mm. 29-38

In the A<sup>1</sup> section (mm. 29-58), the rhythm becomes more complicated because of the sixteenth notes that are added between the steady eighth notes. As Rakowski included the marking “Balance dynamics for both hands,” the pitches must be played as one line, rather than two different groups of notes. The rhythmic pattern for mm. 29-38 includes all of the left-hand notes as well.

### *Leaps and Large Intervals*

To avoid mistakenly striking adjacent notes, the pianist must pay great attention to the leaps and large intervals. Agility becomes an important skill to help increase accuracy. The arm must move as fast as possible, and the eyes must precede the arm movement to check the note before playing. When pianists look at the correct key beforehand, they are less likely to miss. Nevertheless, there is often little to no available time to confirm the correct key by a quick glance, so it is important to know the distance between keys and feel the topography of the keyboard.<sup>31</sup> In Kendall Taylor's book on piano technique and interpretation, he recommends the exercise below (See Example 15) to "combine lateral leaping intervals with hand-staccato and also with fore-arm-staccato."<sup>32</sup>



Example 15. Exercise for large leaps

As another preparatory repertoire to practice large leaps, pianists should study the fifth variation of Bach's Goldberg Variations. Particularly, the first eight bars of the Bach include leaps that are similar to those in the A section of Rakowski's prelude. The left hand must cross over the right hand while playing large intervals in a fast tempo in both pieces (See Example 16).

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<sup>31</sup> Kendall Taylor, *Principles of Piano Technique and Interpretation* (Sevenoaks, UK: Novello, 1981), 23.

<sup>32</sup> Kendall Taylor, 23.





Example 16. J. S. Bach, *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 5, mm. 1-8

For fluent lateral movements with leaps in Rakowski's *Prélude No. 1*, the performer must also determine fingering beforehand. Pianists have different preferences for fingering, so finding a comfortable and consistent fingering is essential to the learning process. In sections A<sup>1</sup> and A<sup>2</sup>, instead of successive leaps, the broken octaves often appear in the left hand, a technique with which most advanced pianists are familiar. However, the left-hand leaps in the A section must be practiced before playing hands together, by deciding on a comfortable fingering and feeling the distances between the notes. For three notes placed an octave apart (A<sub>5</sub> – A<sub>4</sub> – A<sub>3</sub>), I suggest the fingering 2-1-5, and for next three notes over the bar lines (C<sub>2</sub> – B<sub>0</sub> – C<sub>2</sub>) keep fingering 1-5-1 for technical agility and accuracy (See Example 17a). See Examples 17b and 17c for additional left-hand fingering suggestions in mm. 10-11 and 29-30.

1 5 1      2 1 5      1 5 1      2 1 5      1

Example 17a. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, Fingering suggestions, mm. 1-2

5 1      2 2 1 5      1 5 1      2 2 1 5      1

Example 17b. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, Fingering suggestions, mm. 10-11

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

Example 17c. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, Fingering suggestions, mm. 29-30

### *Unpredictable Motivic Patterns*

In her treatise on piano performance,<sup>33</sup> Abby Whiteside provides a few simple practice patterns for Bach's "Little" Prelude. She explains that "the Bach "Little" Prelude in c minor is a perfect vehicle for pointing up the use of simple regularity for making more complicated playing easy."<sup>34</sup> Since most of Rakowski's technical ideas were drawn from the "Little" Prelude, once the performer assimilates the physical mechanism and the process of piano practice in learning Bach's piece, this will be also applicable to Rakowski's Prélude No. 1.

Whiteside has suggested that students practice with simple patterns (See Example 18a) for Bach's "Little" Prelude. For example, instead of learning music note by note, a student might play only the blocked chords so as not to be overwhelmed in the first lesson. This practice also tactically helps the student to prepare fingers and hands in correct positions and to arpeggiate the chords easily. After this, the student would progress to playing only the right-hand broken chord on the first beat and the left hand keeping the blocked chord.<sup>35</sup> During the learning process of Rakowski's Prélude No. 1, the same practice strategies as used in the Bach can be applied as shown in Example 18b below.



Example 18a. Practice patterns for Bach's "Little" Prelude

<sup>33</sup> Abby Whiteside, *Abby Whiteside On Piano Playing: Indispensables of Piano Playing* (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1997)

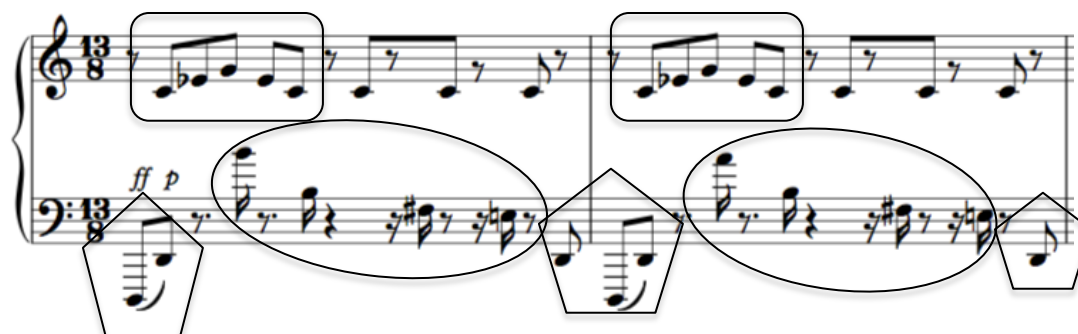
<sup>34</sup> Whiteside, 141.

<sup>35</sup> Whiteside, 141-44.



A musical score for the song "The Rose Tree" in 18/8 time. The score is written for piano (p) and features a treble and bass staff. The melody is in the treble staff, and the bass staff provides a simple accompaniment. The score is annotated with several shapes: two rectangles highlight specific melodic phrases in the treble staff, and three circles highlight specific bass line phrases. Additionally, there are three pentagons: one at the beginning of the bass line, one in the middle, and one at the end, each containing a single note. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 18/8.

Example 19a. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, Grouping patterns, mm. 1-2



Example 19b. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, Grouping patterns, mm. 29-30

Lastly, Rakowski's score is filled with a plethora of ledger lines that can impede the learning process. Pianists need to pay careful attention to the ledger lines in order to achieve accuracy.



Example 20. Rakowski, Prélude No. 1, Ledger lines, mm. 70-71

## Prélude No. 2: "Never Odd or Even"

### Analytical Observations

Rakowski's Prélude No. 2, "Never Odd or Even," was inspired by Debussy's "Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum" from *Children's Corner*, a popular teaching piece for late-intermediate students. Rakowski applied several musical features from "Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum" to his Prélude No. 2, including motivic ideas and formal and tonal structure.

Debussy's refreshing and animated character piece, "Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum," can be simply defined as having three main characteristics: two-note motives, arpeggiated chords, and tonal extension. First, the entire piece contains two-note motivic patterns. For example, the first phrase, in mm. 1-3, begins with a C pedal tone underneath various harmonic changes, with fast running sixteenth notes. The arpeggiated pitches gradually move up with two-note units, starting from the second beat of m. 1, such as E–D, F – E, G – F, and A – G, which land on every strong beat, and this pattern continues throughout the piece (See Example 21).



Example 21. Debussy, "Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum," mm. 1-3

More visible two-note units can be found for the left hand in mm. 17-20 (See Example 22). Rakowski directly adopted the musical gestures to his prelude with repeated notes and a recurring two-note motive using F and G. Based on these two-note motives, the harmony varies unceasingly with the arpeggiated chords in the right hand, but the tonal harmony is extended in the entire piece by holding the pedal tone in the left hand and continuously returning to the first theme after short transitions and key changes.

Debussy's "Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum" can be roughly divided into three sections (mm. 1-21, mm. 22-44 and mm. 45-76), but this formal structure should not be so simply

defined because the sections are closely connected through tonal harmony extensions. The opening theme returns three times, in m. 22 and 45 in the same key, and in mm. 33-44 with rhythmic augmentation in different keys, B-flat Major and A-flat Mixolydian. Whenever the opening theme comes back, it develops differently with new harmonic progressions, but never develops further; instead, it returns to the primary theme in the tonic harmony. E. Robert Schmitz, the author of *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, describes the harmonic structure of the piece in the following manner:

From a basic C Major assumption, which returns several times, and closes the composition, the harmonic scheme romps through modal sections, series of chords outlining juxtapositions nearly bitonal in their essence, a number of diatonic schemes, and successive polytonality in his approach to the orthodox cadence.<sup>36</sup>

Between the main themes, the transitional gesture that proceeds in mm. 12-21 displays bitonality by applying several dissimilar chords together in both hands. For example, while the left hand plays the A-minor<sup>7</sup> chord, the right hand plays D-minor and B-diminished chords in mm. 12-16, and then the left hand presents a two-note motive, F – G, along with a repeated note F while the right hand presents E-major and F-sharp major chords in mm. 17-18. The next two bars, mm. 19-20, have the same pattern as the previous two measures in which the left hand presents the two-note unit, E – G, along with the repeated note E. The right hand presents D-minor and F-minor chords. Rakowski put this feature of bitonality and alternating hands into his second prelude (See Example 22).

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950; 1966; repr., New York: Dover edition), 119.



Example 22. Debussy, “Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum,” Transition, mm. 12-20

“Dr. Gradus” is sometimes regarded as a technical exercise because of its rapidly running arpeggiated sixteenth notes that result in a thin texture. Nevertheless, it elucidates Debussy’s colorful rich sound and impressionistic musical style with rapid arpeggios, parallel motion, and assorted harmonies. Debussy also marked the beginning of the piece *égal et sans sécheresse*, or “equal and without dryness.” This marking clearly shows that the composer did not expect the sounds of this piece to be percussive or mechanical.<sup>37</sup>

Rakowski also followed Debussy’s impressionistic style in his *Prélude No. 2*, “Never Odd or Even,” although this is hardly noticeable without a deeper analysis. The piece begins in 4/4 with the tempo marking *Poco semplice, flexible quarter note = ca. 116-126* (See Example 23). The composer marked detailed pedal markings for more

<sup>37</sup> Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, 120.



colorful sonorities, but he also suggested that “Pedaling may differ from those given” to provide freedom for performers.



Example 23. Rakowski, Prélude No. 2, “Never Odd or Even,” mm. 1-6

Rakowski’s prelude includes three sections: A (mm. 1-18) – B (mm. 19-50) – A<sup>1</sup> (mm. 50-76) – Coda (mm. 77-end). Based on the idea of tonal extension in Debussy’s “Dr. Gradus,” the repeating C-sharp functions as both a pedal tone and a pitch center, unifying the sections. The A section begins with a quietly repeating C-sharp and continues until m. 4 with a striking dissonance on the pitch D<sub>6</sub> in the right hand; the two pitches, C-sharp<sub>6</sub> and D<sub>6</sub>, are expanded by stacking more notes around them. In the A section, only a limited range of the keyboard is used: from F<sub>5</sub> to A<sub>6</sub>. The left hand repeats only six pitches, F – G – A-flat – B-flat – C-sharp – E, and the right hand remains on a fifth from D to A. In mm. 11-15, the repeating two-note motive F – G is presented for the first time with the dynamic marking of *mf* in the left hand, drawing from Debussy’s two-

note motivic idea. This two-note motive recurs several times in the A section and then reappears at the end of the B section as a signal that the A section is returning (See Example 24). Also, when the two-note motives appears in mm. 11-15, there is the first appearance of B-natural in m. 14 as a transitional material to the B section.



The B section opens on C-natural, the only excluded pitch of the A section (Example 25). The repeated notes, which are the primary motivic gesture in the A section, are no longer present in this new section. Instead, the range is expanded by gradually and chromatically moving down in both hands, whereas the pitches in the A section stay in a range around C-sharp<sub>6</sub>. Starting from the initial pitch C<sub>6</sub> of the B section, arpeggiated pitches descend toward the two-note motive in the bass clef (F<sub>3</sub> and G<sub>3</sub>) in the transition to section A<sup>1</sup> (mm. 48-50), and the first bass clef in this prelude appears in m. 47 in the left hand.

In addition to expanding the register, Rakowski alters the rhythmic patterns in the B section. The performer's two hands alternate every eighth note in the A section, but in the B section, the right hand sustains quarter notes on each beat while the left hand plays sixteenths between strong beats, thus forming a melody with accompaniment. After the brief melody line, the echo effect follows with a *decrescendo*.

Section B also has unified dynamic plans for each phrase. It is not easy to determine the phrases due to unclear cadences, but Rakowski's dynamic markings can help performers to understand the phrase structure. Most of the phrases in the B section begin at *p* or *pp* and then gently increase in volume to *p* or *mp* with the right hand's quarter-note melody (See Example 26). The sound immediately decreases with the echo effect by alternating hands. Following this dynamic plan, the B section comprises seven phrases of varying lengths (See Table 3) and a transitional section in mm. 48-50.



Example 26. Rakowski, Prélude No. 2, Phrase structure in Section B, mm. 39-40

Table 3. Rakowski's Prélude No. 2, Phrases in Section B

Phrase	Lengths	Measure numbers
Phrase 1	3 measures	mm. 19-21
Phrase 2	5 measures	mm. 22-26
Phrase 3	5 measures	mm. 27-31
Phrase 4	4 measures	mm. 32-35
Phrase 5	3 measures	mm. 36-38
Phrase 6	1.5 measures	mm. 39-40
Phrase 7	7.5 measures	mm. 40-47

After the transition with the continuous two-note motives in mm. 48-50, the A<sup>1</sup> section begins with the repeating pitch C-sharp, which returns in the lower register of the right hand. The roles of both hands are inverted in this A<sup>1</sup> section, so that the right hand continues the repeating C-sharp with F – G motives in mm. 59-73. This section has a thicker texture than the initial A section because both hands play mostly double notes instead of single notes.

After the brief transition in mm. 75-76, the Coda (mm. 77-end) begins by bringing back material Rakowski used earlier in the prelude, including the two-note motive and running sixteenth notes between these two notes. The Coda is dramatic in that the two-note motives gradually increase in tempo; to accomplish this, Rakowski uses diminutions of rhythmic patterns and the tempo indication, *Poco a poco accel*, in mm. 77-81. The patterns also move to a higher register, from  $F_3 - G_3$  to  $F_5 - G_5$ , marked *crescendo*. The repeated notes are exaggerated by both hands playing the initial pitch C-sharp<sub>6</sub> with dramatic tempo changes as shown in Example 27 below (*presto quarter note = 136-152 e ritard*).

The musical score for Example 27, Rakowski, Prélude No. 2, mm. 81-87, is presented in three systems. The first system (mm. 81-82) is marked '(accel.)' and 'Presto J = c. 136-152 e ritard.'. It features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a bass line. The second system (mm. 83-84) is marked '(rit.)'. The third system (mm. 85-87) is marked 'Tempo primo' and 'Poco Allargando al fine'. It features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a bass line. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'pp' and 'f'.

Example 27. Rakowski, Prélude No. 2, “Never Odd or Even,” mm. 81-87

## Technical and Musical Challenges

“Never Odd or Even” is a good piece for the advanced student to experience the modern pianistic sound, based on Rakowski’s inspiration by Debussy. In the A section, performers should stay calm and steady while playing repeated notes. The left-hand notes are mostly presented quietly, with *pp*, except for the two-note motives, whereas many dynamic changes appear in the right hand. Performers should pay particular attention to the left hand so it does not follow the dynamic expressions of the right hand. The left hand should also maintain a steady pulse like a percussive instrument, since the repeated notes serve to control the beats. For a steady execution of the left hand, the right-hand notes must be highlighted with *mf* on the off beats. The right-hand notes do not always coincide with those of the left, which creates more difficulty in the learning process. Later, in the A<sup>1</sup> section, the two hands switch their roles, and the right hand repeats the C-sharp, while the left hand plays notes between the right hand’s eighth notes. By practicing these confusing rhythms and understanding the mechanism of alternating hands, pianists will successfully master the A section of the prelude.

Once the steady pulse becomes established, the performers should be aware of the tempo indications by the composer, including “flexible” at the beginning of the prelude and “freely” at the beginning of section A<sup>1</sup>. The performer is eventually required to play with rhythmic freedom by feeling the music rather than as an automatic expression, particularly in the B section, where there are romantic melodies and echo effects followed by a decaying sound. By listening sensitively to the pianistic sonorities, students will endeavor to avoid a machine-like performance.

Pedaling is another challenge for Rakowski's *Prélude No. 2*. He inserted pedal markings for only a few preludes in Book I, in which the player must provide detailed pedaling for a special sound effect. In both the A and A<sup>1</sup> sections of *Prélude No. 2*, Rakowski suggests holding the pedal through several measures for calm and ringing tones. The first pedal change occurs at m. 8 before a louder sound accumulates by holding the pedal. The pedal change must be smooth and quick to connect the sound and sustain the atmosphere. Performers must also decide whether to strictly follow the pedaling suggestions by the composer or to use their own pedaling, depending on their performance speed and interpretation of the music.

Expressing dynamics delicately and smoothly can be another difficulty for this prelude because the dynamics frequently vary and the composer also indicates detailed markings. In the A and A<sup>1</sup> sections, both hands present different dynamics, the left hand sustaining a quiet sound without the two-note motives, and the right presenting a subtle *decrescendo* from *mf* to *p*. The B section is not simple either, in that the performers need short-term dynamic plans with a short *crescendo* and *decrescendo* in each phrase, and they also should consider long-term dynamic plans for the entire section as a bridge between the A sections.

## **Practice Suggestions and Preparatory Repertoire**

### ***Steady and Accurate Rhythm with Alternating Hands***

Abby Whiteside, who emphasizes a steady pulse, insists that "You must put a rhythm in your body and keep it going."<sup>38</sup> Feeling the steady pulse is essential to achieving an impeccably accurate rhythm and consistent tempo. With the awareness of

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<sup>38</sup> Whiteside, 14.

the steady pulse, there are two main technical issues in Rakowski's "Never Odd or Even": repeated notes and alternating hands. Both technical problems demand advanced pianistic skills when the tempo is fast. However, *Prélude No. 2* is played at a moderately fast tempo, so that distinct physical movements are required in order to perform the notes evenly and quietly, particularly in Sections A and A<sup>1</sup>.

Many professional pianists suggest alternating fingerings for repeated notes, especially in fast tempos, such as constantly switching the finger on the same note, such as 3-2-1- or 1-3-2. A good example of fast repeated notes is presented in Domenico Scarlatti's *Sonata in d minor, K.141*. There are still several ongoing discussions and arguments about perfect fingerings for these repeated notes, but one can be certain that almost no one would use the same finger for the repeated notes at this speed.



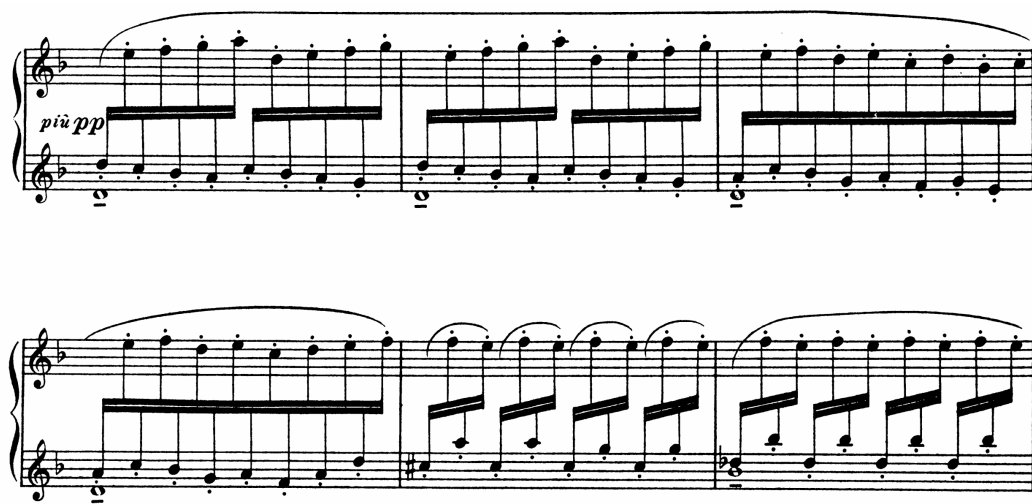
Example 28. Domenico Scarlatti, *Sonata in d minor, K. 141*, mm. 1-10

On the contrary, I suggest using one finger for a stable and calm sound, like gently but constantly falling water droplets, because the tempo of Rakowski's prelude is not as fast the Scarlatti. As finger number 3 is the most stable, use it to touch the key, and



keep the other fingers very close to support its stability. In order to play the repeated notes evenly and smoothly in a moderate tempo, the pianist should use a carefully calculated arm drop. The arm should feel very light and weightless, so as to create a soft controlled sound.

For practicing alternating hands, I recommend Debussy's "The Snow is Dancing," No. 4 from *Children's Corner* (Level 9),<sup>39</sup> as a preparatory piece. Although Rakowski was inspired by another piece from *Children's Corner*, the technical gestures he uses are more similar to "The Snow is Dancing" in terms of the gently alternating movements by both hands at *pp* volume. Also, the left hand must sustain the whole notes while playing other notes that alternate with the right hand.



Example 29. Debussy, "The Snow is Dancing" from *Children's Corner*, mm. 7-12

Once the alternating hands and repeated note technique is established, the next step will be rhythmic practice. To achieve the correct right-hand rhythm, four practice exercise steps are suggested. First, practice the left hand away from the keyboard

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<sup>39</sup> Magrath, *The Pianist's Guide*, 337.

(perhaps on the fallboard), tapping the steady beat with quarter notes while the right hand plays notes as written (on the keys). Second, practice the left hand by tapping the eighth-note rhythms while the right hand plays the notated pitches (See Examples 30a and 30b below for an illustration of the first two practice steps). Once these two exercises are mastered, the third step is to play the left hand on the piano, with only on the C-sharp for practice, and the right hand still playing its notes. The fourth step is to play both parts as written. The focus of this exercise is not only to maintain the steady beat, but also to familiarize oneself completely with the right-hand rhythm.



Example 30a. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 2*, Preparatory exercise 1, mm. 5-10



Example 30b. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 2*, Preparatory exercise 2, mm. 5-10

### *Effective Pedaling*

Rakowski's suggested pedaling is helpful in understanding his desired sound and mood for *Prélude No. 2*. However, it can be another challenge to follow his pedaling suggestions correctly because his pedaling is very delicate and subtle for a colorful but not blurry sound. The pedaling is particularly important for this prelude in order to achieve appropriate musical moments.

Rakowski's pedaling focuses on creating a colorful resonance, like most of Debussy's piano works, while at the same time producing a clearer sound without blending different pitches and harmonies. For instance, in the A section of *Prélude No. 2*, the pedal needs to be held down for the first seven bars, which repeat only three pitches, D – A – G, and then the first pedal change indicates a new phrase with a new pitch, F-sharp, in mm. 8-9. Later, in mm. 11-12, there is another pedal marking in the middle of the right-hand phrase, where the pitch moves down a half step from the oscillation between D-sharp to D-natural. This pedaling can be particularly demanding in making a smooth change while avoiding a sudden disconnection of sound. However, by concentrating more on the right-hand part, pianists are able to successfully pedal this passage.



Example 31. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 2*, Pedal indications, mm. 10-12

In the B section, the pedal tends to change depending on the left-hand harmonies, which can be easier for most pianists, but the pedal changes must be executed very carefully. In most of measures, the notes on the beats are played by the right hand, and the left only holds the tied sixteenth note. In this situation, half pedaling is strongly advised because it helps to “retain the sound of a bass with melodic material above it that may interfere clarity during the prolonged of the bass.”<sup>40</sup> Along with the half-pedal technique, an accurate and agile foot movement, when lifting up a damper pedal and putting it back quickly, will also enable an ideal sound for this prelude.

The *una corda* pedal can be also carefully considered for use in some places in Prélude No. 2. If the performer overuses the *una corda* throughout the performance, it will be hard to avoid dull and mumbling sounds, and the music will eventually lose its vitality. However, by applying the *una corda* pedal selectively, depending on the register, texture and tempo, the music can acquire excitement with correct musical effects. Although dynamic markings in this prelude primarily stay between *pp* to *mp*, I suggest beginning without the *una corda*, and instead using a careful and subtle touch to the keys to create the required sound. Later, the *una corda* is recommended in the A<sup>1</sup> section because the sound can easily be louder due to the lower register and the thicker texture with double notes in both hands.

Nonetheless, the most important tool for perfect pedaling is careful listening. Two renowned pianists, Walter Gieseking and Josef Hofmann, emphasized the significance of the pedaling with a sensitive ear. Gieseking said, “Just as one learns correct finger technique from the head and not the fingers, so learners correct pedaling from the dictates

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<sup>40</sup> Silvio Scionti, *Essays on Artistic Piano Playing and Other Topics* Vol. 1st ed. (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1998), 74.

of the ear and not the foot.”<sup>41</sup> Hofmann also noted in writing: “As the eye guides the fingers when we read music, so must the ear be the guide of the foot upon the pedal. The foot is merely the servant, the executive agent, while the ear is the guide, the judge, and the final criterion.”<sup>42</sup> As they both maintained, pedaling can be improved by carefully listening to the sound rather than simply by developing brilliant foot technique.

### ***Dynamics***

Rakowski provided not only the pedal indications but also detailed dynamic markings in “Never Odd or Even.” In order to follow the dynamic markings successfully in both the A and A<sup>1</sup> sections, the pianist might also review the rhythmic exercises suggested above (Examples 30a and 30b). The left hand taps the steady rhythm with either quarter or eighth notes, while the right hand plays the melody with dynamics. Since the left-hand part maintains *pp* (*sempre*) in the entire A section, except for the two-note pattern, F - G, while the volume is repeatedly increasing and decreasing in right-hand part, the ears must focus more on the right hand to achieve the correct dynamics, and the left hand must be steady in tempo and volume so as not to shift into the right-hand dynamics.

In both A and A<sup>1</sup> sections, the phrase starts with *mf* and fades away quickly. The imagination can be useful for making a gradual and effective *decrescendo*. Imagine water drops falling, and the left hand will keep a constant and regular “drip of tiny water drops,” while the right hand can imitate bigger water drops slowly dripping down into a stagnant pond. At the moment the “waterdrop hits the pond,” it creates audible sound and then quickly disappears. Rakowski captured this natural phenomenon in Section A.

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<sup>41</sup> Jeseeph Banowetz, *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 231.

<sup>42</sup> Josef Hofmann, *Piano Playing: With Piano Questions Answered* (New York: Dover, 1976), 41.

The B section is more romantic and impressionistic, with short quarter-note melody lines in the right hand and accompanying arpeggios in the left. Each phrase was designed in an arch shape with a minimal *crescendo* and *diminuendo*. For effective dynamics, both hands must cooperate with each other as the gradual *crescendos* and *diminuendos* must occur together in both parts.



Example 32. Rakowski, Prélude No. 2, Dynamic indications in Section B, mm. 39-40

### Prélude No. 3: “Too Hot To Hoot”

#### Analytical Observations

Rakowski’s Prélude No. 3, “Too Hot to Hoot,” can be simply defined as “Für Elise” in bebop style. This prelude is inspired by one of the most popular teaching pieces for students at the late intermediate level. Rakowski’s prelude evolved from the notion of a small motivic cell; the composer adopted two notes a half step apart from “Für Elise” and the arpeggiated accompaniment in the left hand.

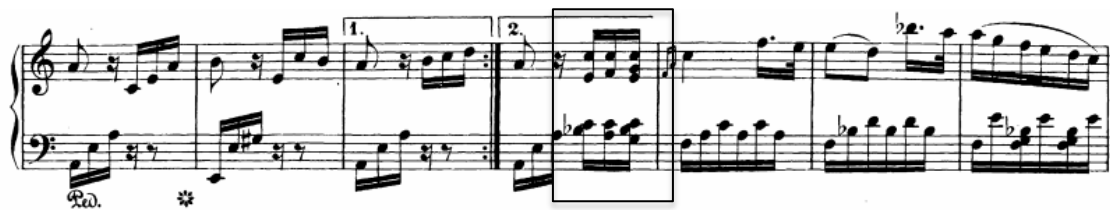
By opening his prelude with the “Für Elise” pattern in cut time (2/2) at a fast tempo, in half-step alternations repeating insistently, Rakowski clearly shows the inescapable relationship between these two pieces. In “Für Elise,” Beethoven chose a 3/8 time signature, marked *Poco moto* (a little motion); he emphasized a flowing quality and composed it in rondo form, A – B – A<sup>1</sup> – C – A<sup>2</sup>. The most famous part of the piece is in

the A section, which includes simple arpeggios in the tonic and dominant of A minor in the left hand, with lyrical melody lines in the right. A repetitively alternating motive featuring two notes a half-step apart, E – D-sharp – E – D-sharp, comprises the primary fragment of the piece.



Example 33. Beethoven, “Für Elise,” mm. 1-6

Both the B and C sections of “Für Elise” exhibit energetic moments and more difficult technical displays and clear contrasts between the sections. Musical materials in these sections include fast thirty-second notes in the B section and thicker diminished chords in the C section. There are also short transitions for smoother connections before each new section begins, such as three blocked chords, repetitive half-step alternations, and rapid arpeggios and chromatic scales.



Example 34a. Beethoven, “Für Elise,” mm. 20-25, Three blocked chords



Example 34b. Beethoven, “Für Elise,” mm. 78-81, Arpeggios and chromatic scale

Although Rakowski did not follow the use of rondo form, or use all the musical elements from Beethoven’s “Für Elise,” he proves his brilliance by blending the three main characteristics of Beethoven’s piece into his prelude. That Rakowski applied the half-step alternations is very obvious throughout the piece (See Example 35a). He also borrowed the thin texture and distribution of material in alternating hands from Beethoven’s piece. Instead of playing the melody and accompaniment part simultaneously, both hands take their respective turns each time, in both the A section of “Für Elise” and many parts in Rakowski’s *Prélude No. 3*. Lastly, Rakowski’s prelude includes the transitional materials, such as chromatic progressions and successive blocked chords (See Examples 35b and 35c) that appear in Beethoven’s piece.



Example 35a. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 3*, Half-step alternations, mm. 1-3





Example 35b. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Successive blocked chords, mm. 44-46



Example 35c. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Chromatic chord progression, mm. 112-114

Although this is a completely written-out piano prelude, it includes a seemingly improvisatory aspect with rapidly repeating two-note figures and a relatively unpredictable progression of melodic notes. In many places, the right hand performs like a solo improviser, and the left hand plays constantly changing chords with various rhythms, emulating a rhythm section in a jazz ensemble. The rhythm is complicated due to syncopations, irregular accents, and constant changes, with no regular rhythmic patterns. Rakowski also provides very detailed dynamic markings, most of them at the extreme ends of the spectrum.

Due to this freewheeling style, the prelude's pitch center is also ambiguous. The most interesting element relating to the pitch center is that it always produces conflicts

between two voices in each hand. For example, in mm.1-16, the left hand emphasizes the pitch G<sub>2</sub> by beginning with broken chords every time, and the right hand emphasizes the pitch A by generating half-step alternations on A. Later in the prelude, the pitch center varies frequently, making it difficult to determine a pitch center.



Example 36. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, mm. 8-16, Emphasis on pitch G<sub>2</sub>

Rakowski calls his “Too Hot to Hoot” “a torrid bebop solo,”<sup>43</sup> with a tempo indication of *Vivace, Boppish, half note = c. 132-144*. He originally composed this prelude as a final movement of the piano concerto, “Stolen Moments,” in 2008. The composer’s humorous indication is included at the top of the sheet music: *Stolen from the composer’s “Stolen Moments.”*

In the concerto, after the first two movements, the pianist takes a short break while other instruments perform the third movement, *Sultry*, then returns with a bebop-styled piano solo at the beginning of the last movement. In describing the bebop solo,

<sup>43</sup> Rakowski, *Stolen Moments, Piano Concerto No. 2*, conducted by Gil Rose with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, BMOP/sound 1048, 2016, CD, liner note, 8.

Hayes Biggs wrote, “Its riff of choice is based on a measured trill,”<sup>44</sup> because of the half-step alternations. The piano part is the same as Rakowski’s *Prélude No. 3* until m. 93 of the concerto, where the strings join in to play the measured trill together. A fugal section follows after the strings perform together, as traditional preludes by Bach were played before the fugue.

Later, Rakowski rearranged this impulsive and breathtaking movement in “Too Hot to Hoot,” taking the first ninety-three measures from the concerto movement and developing the motivic materials further in the remainder of the piece. Similar to the concerto, a fugal section appears starting at m. 136 (See Example 37). The subject is first introduced in the right hand (mm. 136-139), then the left hand repeats the subject a minor third lower (mm. 140-143), with a slight alternation at the end of the subject phrase. Finally, the subject is restated (mm. 153-156), this last time starting on an A. After the fugal section, the quasi-improvisatory passage returns and gradually descends to the lowest register of the keyboard, with a drastic *crescendo* in the last three measures.



Example 37. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 3*, Fugal section, mm. 136-143

<sup>44</sup> Rakowski, *Stolen Moments*, liner note, 16.

“Too Hot to Hoot” makes fascinating use of the concerto material as a piano solo work. In addition to the influence from “Für Elise,” Rakowski’s prelude illustrates the characteristics of bebop style. In *Essential Jazz*, Henry Martin and Keith Waters explain that the term bebop represents “the nervous, energetic style of the younger jazz musicians and the musical ideas that were developed in musicians’ impromptu jam sessions.”<sup>45</sup> They also provide several characteristics of the bebop style, such as “Extended chord tones,” “Running the changes,” and “Comping.”<sup>46</sup>

Reflecting these characteristics, Prélude No. 3 is improvisatory in nature. By repeating and extending a single motivic idea from beginning to end, Rakowski composed the piece as if freely wandering around the keys, almost aimlessly rather than using well-structured musical form. Martin and Keith define “Running the Changes” as “improvising by maintaining mostly up-tempo eighth-note lines that articulate the chord changes in a virtuoso manner.”<sup>47</sup> This definition also aptly describes Rakowski’s Prélude No. 3, as the entire prelude comprises successive eighth notes in broken chords or half-step alternations.

Extended chord tones, another bebop characteristic, are also presented throughout “Too Hot to Hoot.” Based on improvisatory statements, the prelude emphasizes extended dominant seventh and diminished chords, adding the ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth to the dominant seventh or diminished seventh chords. These extra chord tones produce the modern sound of the piece, but Rakowski also emphasizes tritones, major sevenths voiced at an octave above, and minor ninths, all favored intervals of bebop composers

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<sup>45</sup> Henry Martin and Keith Waters, *Essential Jazz: The First 100 Years*, 3rd ed. (Boston, USA: Schirmer, Cengage Learning, 2014), 121.

<sup>46</sup> Martin and Waters, *Essential Jazz*, 124.

<sup>47</sup> Martin and Waters, *Essential Jazz*, 124.

such as Charles Parker and Thelonious Monk. These intervals appear in some of Rakowski's chords. For instance, in the first chord in m. 46 (B-flat – G / A – E-flat – A), the bass note and top note are a major 7th plus an octave apart, B-flat up to A, and the right-hand notes create a tritone between A and E-flat. Additionally, Rakowski occasionally inserts successive extended chords, which may be inspired by Beethoven's blocked-chord transitional material between the A and B section (See m. 45 in Example 38).



Example 38. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Extended chord tones, mm. 44-47

Lastly, according to the authors of *Essential Jazz*, “Comping refers to the chordal accompaniment provided by pianists or guitarists in jazz bands. This accompaniment is often syncopated.” At the beginning of Rakowski's prelude, both hands present rapid eighth notes, playing arpeggiated, extended dominant and diminished chords. Starting in m. 17, jazz comping appears frequently with the half-step alternations in the right hand throughout the prelude.



Example 39. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Comping, mm. 32-35

## Technical and Musical Challenges

In “Too Hot to Hoot,” the large intervallic spans, even as they are arpeggiated, might be the first technical challenge for pianists with small hands. The initial four notes,  $G_2 - E\text{-flat}_3 - B\text{-flat}_3 - D_4$ , should be played rapidly as the tempo indicates *Vivace*, *half note = 132 – 144*, but the large interval of a twelfth, between  $G_2$  and  $D_4$  (See Example 40a), decreases the chances for an accurate performance. Later in the piece, the distances between notes are greater, such as the interval of a thirteenth in m. 11 ( $G_2 - F_3 - D_4 - E_4$ ) and a fourteenth in m. 16 ( $G_2 - E_3 - D\text{-flat}_4 - F_4$ ) in Example 40b. Unless the performer has an enormous hand span, these leaps will be demanding. Several different fingerings would work to play such large intervals, but pianists must decide carefully and check that fingerings also work well in the fast tempo.



Example 40a. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Large intervals in the left hand, mm. 1-2



Example 40b. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Large intervals in the left hand, mm. 16-17

Rakowski's extreme dynamic changes create both technical and musical challenges. In almost every short phrase, Rakowski marks detailed dynamic symbols with a minimal *crescendo* and *decrescendo*, particularly on the first page of the prelude. Occasionally, pianists must achieve a successful *crescendo* from *p* to *f* in only four notes. The challenge lies in how to obtain gradual but effective volume changes in a short amount of time.

Continuously shifting rhythm and sophisticated harmonies are among the other demanding factors in the piece. The jazz rhythmic patterns and harmonies of the bebop style will likely be unfamiliar to the classical musician. This prelude also contains improvisatory phrases in the bebop style and syncopated extended chords, factors that add to the challenges to this prelude. A better understanding of complicated harmonies and syncopated rhythms would be beneficial in order to perform this prelude with excitement.

## **Practice Suggestions and Preparatory Repertoire**

### ***Large Intervals***

The first step of practicing Rakowski's *Prélude No. 3* is to determine the safest and most comfortable fingerings because the widely-spaced arpeggios always imply risks. Fingerings should be considered based on those the pianist has mastered from basic scales and arpeggios. Kendall Taylor suggests two principles of fingering: "thinking in groups of notes to be played by appropriate groups of fingers and using a thumb as a linking finger when the hand position is shifted."<sup>48</sup> In order to play the arpeggiated figure,

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<sup>48</sup> Kendall Taylor, *Principles of Piano Technique and Interpretation* (Sevenoaks, UK: Novello, 1981), 41.

such as the first four notes in Example 41, I recommend LH finger numbers 5–3–2–1 because they belong to one arpeggiated group. To reach the interval of a twelfth, the distance between G<sub>2</sub> and D<sub>4</sub>, wrist rotation is necessary to play the arpeggios smoothly and more comfortably.



Example 41. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Arpeggio with large intervals, mm. 1-2

Even if performers with relatively smaller hands apply this principle to Rakowski's Prélude No. 3, they may still need some adjustment of fingerings for fluency and agility. Many pianists with smaller hands may struggle with Rakowski's large intervallic gaps because of the unreachable distance between pitches when played rapidly with one hand.

A few solutions come to mind. One solution is for the left hand to use an alternative fingering, such as 5–2–1–2, in playing the first three notes with 5–2–1 and crossing over with Finger 2 for the last note. Another solution is to redistribute notes between hands. The right hand can take over some left-hand notes in order to increase the accuracy level, maintain the rapid tempo, and reduce the amount of stretching required between the fingers. For example, the left hand might play only the first three notes with 5–2–1, and then the right hand can assist by playing the D with the thumb (See Example 42a). These suggestions including cross-over fingerings and redistribution between the



hands can be adapted to the entire piece whenever large-interval arpeggios appear in the left hand.



Example 42a. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Note distribution, mm. 1-2

Another example of large leaps appears in mm. 9-11. This example can be trickier if the pianist tries to play the successive seven notes with only the left hand because the notes stretch away from each other; this passage also includes large leaps in a fast tempo. The fingering for pianists with smaller hands is suggested in Example 42b. By redistributing the notes as shown, the large stretches are minimized in both hands.



Example 42b. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Hand distribution, mm. 9-11

By organizing the choreography of the hands, the performer will overcome technical challenges generated from the large intervals. However, pianists should also pay additional attention not to obstruct the rapid musical flow by accidentally adding

unplanned accents. To be specific, when the right hand plays the notes marked for left hand (on the lower staff), the right-hand thumb will be playing most of small portions of the arpeggio in order to reach the right hand notes faster. As the strongest finger, the thumb can easily attack the key too loudly unless the performer listens to the phrase carefully and approaches the key delicately.

### ***Rapid Dynamic Changes***

There are several *crescendos* and *decrescendos* that swell up and down quickly throughout this prelude, and these can be easily disregarded if only focusing on learning correct notes and rhythms. Matthew J. Viator, the author of *Approaching the Piano*, suggests that beginning pianists should master the *crescendo* and *decrescendo* in playing a simple C-major five-finger scale, until the dynamics can be comfortably controlled.<sup>49</sup>



Example 43. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Dynamic indications, mm. 12-15

Viator's suggestion can also be applied to the practice of dynamics. First, one should practice a small part of the piece at a time. For example, I recommend practicing with the first group of five notes, G – F – D – G-sharp – C-sharp, in mm. 12-13, to master a gradual and natural *crescendo* from *p* to *f*. To make effective dynamic changes, it will be helpful to control the speed of the attack for each note and to control how much

<sup>49</sup> Matthew J. Viator, *Approaching the Piano* (USA: Studio V, 2012), 68.

weight is put into the keys. Furthermore, Lillie H. Philipp's assertion is key to perfecting the phrasing with the dynamics: "If the fingers are not under perfect control, one will hear accents where none belong."<sup>50</sup> If the pianists hear unexpected accents, they should continue to practice until they master the five notes with a subtle and suitable *crescendo* (See Example 44a). As the next step, one can practice longer passages with half-step alternations at the end of each arpeggiated pattern in slower tempo. The half-step repetitions should disappear with a gradual *decrescendo* as shown in Example 44b below. Through this practice, Pianists should aim to crease and decrease the volume smoothly without unexpected accents.



Example 44a. Practice exercise for dynamics, Step 1



Example 44b. Practice exercise for dynamics, Step 2

<sup>50</sup> Lillie H. Philipp, *Piano Technique: Tone, Touch, Phrasing and Dynamics* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1982), 15.

In addition to Rakowski's detailed dynamic indications, understanding the overall dynamic outline is beneficial to a persuasive interpretation of his music. This prelude can be sectionalized into three parts, shown in Table 4. Each part begins quietly and establishes a deliberate *crescendo*, connected with a *decrescendo* as the smoother dynamic flows. In particular, Parts 1 and 3 include similar endings in terms of gradually moving down toward the lowest register of the keyboard with the *crescendo*, until *ff*.

Table 4. Rakowski's Prélude No. 3, Dynamic outline

Part 1				Part 2				Part 3		
m. 1	–	m. 68	-	m. 95	–	m. 116	-	m. 135 (Fugue Start)	–	end
<i>p</i>	<	<i>ff</i>	>	<i>pp</i>	<	<i>f</i>	>	<i>p</i>	<	<i>ff</i>

### ***Improvisatory Passagework With Syncopated Chords***

Two of the large challenges of “Too Hot to Hoot” are the improvisatory passagework and syncopated rhythm. Classically trained pianists unfamiliar with playing jazz may encounter a number of difficulties in learning a piece written in this style.

As a preparatory piece, I recommend Nikolai Kapustin's Sonatina, Op. 100, to accustom the pianist to notated improvisatory phrases and irregular rhythms. Kapustin composed many pieces, such as 24 Preludes and Fugues, Op. 82 and Sonatina, Op. 100, in a jazz idiom, combining this genre with traditional European genres. His piano compositions are quite challenging, but the Sonatina is relatively less demanding. This Sonatina presents improvisatory eighth-note passages and continuous riffs throughout the piece. Stylistically, Kapustin's Sonatina is analogous to Rakowski's “Too Hot to Hoot” in

that the piece includes improvisatory passagework comprising eighth notes, chordal accompaniment with irregular and syncopated rhythms, and extended chords.



Example 45. Kapustin, Sonatina, Op. 100, mm. 1-7

Analyzing the repeated chords and discovering the overall structure will help the pianists to understand and learn this music faster. For instance, mm. 54-68 sounds similar to a jazz pianist's virtuosic improvisation. However, there is also a descending pattern and recurring intervallic patterns. As this prelude emphasizes half steps, this improvisatory section is also written with successive half steps. In addition to the half steps, there are a number of set classes (016) which include diminished fifths or augmented fourth intervals (See Example 46). With this detailed information, grouping the notes by phrasing is also beneficial. Each phrase finishes on a different pitch, such as E in Phrase 1, E-flat in Phrase 2, and D-flat in Phrase 3; these pitches move down chromatically until the end of this entire section (m. 68).

Example 46. Rakowski, Prélude No. 3, Set class (016) and phrasing, mm. 56-63

### Prélude No. 5: “No, It Is Opposition”

#### Analytical Observations

Rakowski’s Prélude No. 5, “No, It Is Opposition,” is the shortest and least demanding piece in Book I. This calm and reflective prelude is only thirty-four measures long. The composer’s tempo indication, *Flowing, flexible, distant, quarter note = 54-66*, describes the musical atmosphere and, particularly, the sporadically repeating bell sound and slowly roaming double-thirds that distinguish this prelude.

The compositional ideas were drawn from Scriabin’s Prelude Op. 11, No. 15, which is also relatively less complicated than Rakowski’s other preludes in Book I;

Magrath classified the Scriabin prelude as Level 8.<sup>51</sup> Unlike the other preludes in Book I, where connections between Rakowski's prelude and their quoted repertoire are difficult to discern, *Prélude No. 5*, "No, It Is Opposition," is directly analogous to Scriabin's *Op. 11, No. 15*.

Scriabin's *Prelude, Op. 11, No. 15*, is an especially beautiful and restful piece. Simon Nicholls described the prelude as "a cloistral hush and an airborne, suspended quality created by two-part writing in the middle register introduce a song of deep peace."<sup>52</sup> The prelude opens with gently moving double-thirds in the left hand. The first two-bar phrase starts on D-flat, and the next phrase moves up to E-flat in m. 3. In mm. 5-8, the alternating thirds and sixths ascend toward G-flat and return to D-flat to finish the long phrase (D-flat – E-flat – F – G-flat – F – E-flat – D-flat).

Lento M.M. ♩ = 80-76 op. 11 Nr. 15

D-flat                      E-flat                      F

G-flat                      F                      E-flat                      D-flat

Example 47. Scriabin, *Prelude Op. 11, No. 15*, mm. 1-9

<sup>51</sup> Magrath, *The Pianist's Guide*, 494.

<sup>52</sup> Simon Nicholls, *Vingt-quatre Préludes, Op. 11*, Hyperion, 2001, [https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D\\_CDH55450](https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDH55450) (accessed January 28, 2019), CD liner notes.

After a charming and peaceful beginning, the melody emerges over the left-hand accompaniment which repeats the introduction. The Scriabin prelude comprises sequential and recurring ideas. The melody is presented on D-flat in mm. 9-10 and then repeats on E-flat in mm. 11-12. Following the melodic pattern in m. 13 is a restatement with lower pitches in m. 14. In the second half of the prelude (mm. 17-22), the right hand takes over the left hand's alternating thirds and sixths accompaniment pattern. The prelude finishes with the return of the first theme in the right hand and the final presentation of dominant and tonic chords.



Example 48. Scriabin, Prelude Op. 11, No. 15, Recurring melodic patterns, mm. 9-14

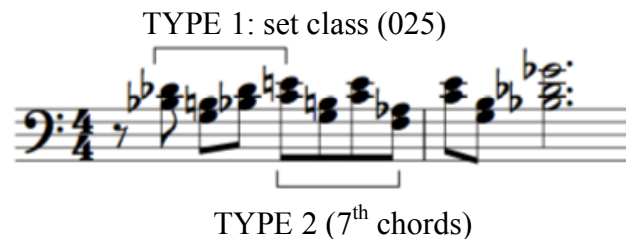
Rakowski directly applied Scriabin's double-thirds accompaniment pattern in "No, It Is Opposition." After a gentle calling from far away, with high A octaves, the double-thirds phrase answers smoothly (See Example 49). The bell-like sound of the right-hand A octaves usually repeats three times with two beats per note, although there are exceptions in mm. 18-19 and mm. 20-21. These two parts of the double-thirds and the octaves whisper softly to each other until m. 18, when the alto line joins in the right hand.



Example 49. Rakowski, Prélude No. 5, "No, It Is Opposition," mm. 1-5



Two different types of four-note motives continuously appear in this prelude (see Examples 50a, 50b and 50c). Type 1 consists of a four-note motive that comprises set class (025), or three half steps and two half steps between adjacent notes. These sets of pitches generate chromatic sound, particularly bigger chromatic gestures with successively ascending and descending four-note patterns (mm. 18-21 and mm. 25-26). In the opening section (mm. 1-17), only the left hand plays the four-note patterns, but in the second section (mm. 18-end), both hands play the patterns. Canonic progressions of the four-note motives stand out in mm. 18-21, as the four-note motives in the right hand follow motives in the left hand after one beat. Later in mm. 23-26, the canonic progression reappears with larger intervals between highest and lowest pitches and expanded dynamics.

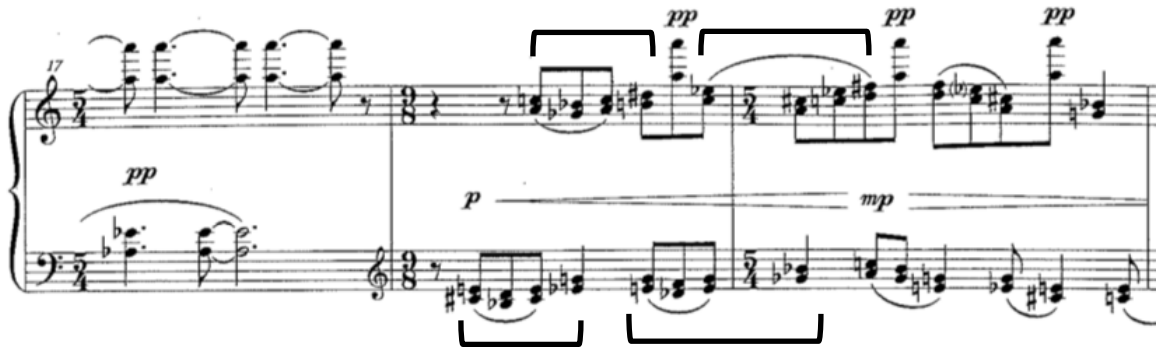


Example 50a. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 5*, “No, It Is Opposition,” mm. 5-6, left hand

The Type 2 motive also recurs frequently in the first half of *Prélude No. 5*. This motive alternates between two sets of adjacent thirds and comprises a variety of seventh chords including major seventh chords, C – E – G – B, or minor/major seventh chords, F – A-flat – C – E, as shown in Example 50a. These seventh chords are divided into two alternating units (See Examples 50a and 50d).



Example 50b. Rakowski, Prélude No. 5, Four-note motive (Type 1), mm. 12-13



Example 50c. Rakowski, Prélude No. 5, Four-note motive (Type 1), mm. 17-19



Example 50d. Rakowski, Prélude No. 5, Four-note motive (Type 2), mm. 7-9, left hand

### Technical and Musical Challenges

Rakowski's Prélude No. 5, "No, It Is Opposition," is one of the easiest preludes in Book I and is probably sight-readable by most professional pianists. Nonetheless, special care must be taken to observe the many accidentals and the sophisticated sound required

for this piece. A sensitive ear and delicate touch are also needed to keep the floating and ringing tone on the top notes. Finally, care must be taken to control the double-thirds with a smooth legato.

Additionally, the double-thirds technique has been regarded as one of the most difficult piano techniques for pianists so that it is common that many famous pianists and authors include a separate chapter about the double-third technique in their writings.<sup>53</sup> Even though the tempo is relaxed in Rakowski's prelude, playing double-thirds with a legato touch requires particular technique and precise arm movements. In the first half of the prelude, the double-thirds are manageable with full concentration on the left hand, since the right hand only plays the A octaves occasionally. However, once the canonic passage starts in m. 18, the execution becomes more complicated with many musical elements, including dynamics, compound meter, numerous accidentals, and large leaps for consistently ringing A octaves.



Example 51. Rakowski, Prélude No. 5, Canonic passages, mm. 17-19

<sup>53</sup> Abby Whiteside, *Abby Whiteside On Piano Playing: Indispensables of Piano Playing* (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1997), 96-97.

Marie Unschuld von Melasfeld and Theodor Leschetizky, *The Hand of the Pianist: A Systematic Method for the Attainment of a Sure, Brilliant Piano-technic in the Modern Style According to the Principles of Professor Th. Leschetitzky* (Leipzig, Germany: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1903), 46-47.

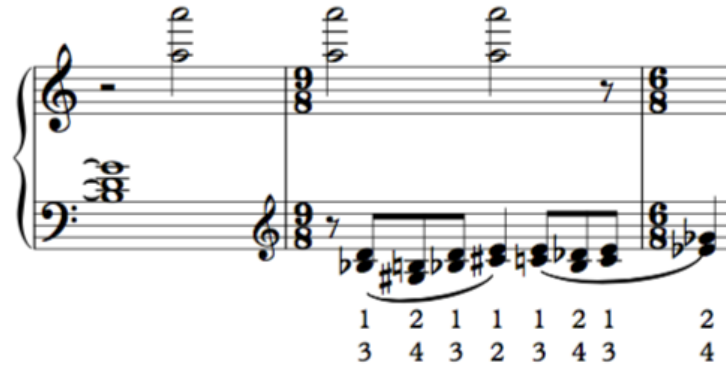
## Practice Suggestions and Preparatory Repertoire

### *Legato Double-thirds*

For a successful performance of the smooth double-thirds, choosing correct fingerings is the most significant part of the learning process because these will immediately address many of the prelude's technical demands. The double-thirds are connected with slurs, so that finger numbers should be decided carefully in order to play them with smooth transitions. The suggested fingerings in Examples 52a and 52b mostly observe the basic rules most pianists commonly acknowledge. A common approach to the fingering of consecutive thirds is to use all five fingers flexibly, rather than repeating the same finger numbers, as well as to keep the five-finger position as much as possible without crossing fingers. In particular, the five fingers can be divided into two groups, 1-2 and 3-4-5, for the oscillating double thirds (the Type 2 four-note motive) in the prelude, so that the upper thirds are played with 1-2 and the lower thirds with 3-5 or 4-5. The Type 1 four-note pattern is combined with descending and ascending double-thirds, which can twist up the fingers more easily.



Example 52a. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 5*, mm. 5-6, Fingering suggestions



Example 52b. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 5*, mm. 11-13, Fingering suggestions (Type 1)

For late intermediate students, as preparatory exercises for learning the Rakowski's *Prélude No. 5*, I recommend two short pieces to practice smooth double-thirds: Burgmüller's No. 4, "La Petite Reunion" from *Twenty-Five Easy and Progressive Studies for the Piano*, Op. 100 (Example 53), and Czerny's No. 2, *Allegro Moderato*, from *24 Studies for Left Hand*, Op. 718, Book I (Example 54). Magrath has categorized Burgmüller's piece as Level 5, noting that "it requires a relaxed wrist."<sup>54</sup> She has categorized Czerny's collection of left-hand exercises as Level 10, explaining that it is "For two hands, but the right hand generally plays only an accompaniment role."<sup>55</sup> Czerny's exercise No. 2 is good practice for gently moving double-thirds, which are demanding for students, thus also good preparation for the Rakowski's *Prélude No. 5*.

<sup>54</sup> Magrath, *The Pianist's Guide*, 132.

<sup>55</sup> Magrath, 83.



Example 53. Burgmüller, No. 4, “La Petite Reunion,” mm. 15-19



Example 54. Czerny, No. 2 from *24 Studies for Left Hand*, Op. 718, Book I, mm. 1-4

Once the student masters these pieces, Scriabin’s Op. 11, No. 15 is next as the most suitable preparatory piece; Rakowski’s prelude requires nearly the same technique. Rakowski typically applies only a few musical ideas from the quoted repertoire to his preludes so that the similarities are not clearly visible, but Rakowski’s *Prélude* No. 5 is closely akin to that of Scriabin’s Op. 11, No. 15 in terms of overall musical atmosphere and motivic materials.



Example 55. Scriabin, *Prelude* Op. 11, No. 15, mm. 9-12

### ***Maintaining a Clear Bell-like Sound***

“No, It Is Opposition” opens with three bell-like tones in A octaves, played by the right hand high on the piano, then following a measure of rest, the three octaves repeat. In order to produce a beautiful bell-like sound, the entire body, including fingers, wrists, arms, and shoulders, should be relaxed. Then, by pressing down the keys gently and slowly, while holding the damper pedal down, the instrument will make the beautifully ringing sound. If perchance the pianist plays the notes with stiff muscles, a harsh sound will result.

Rakowski’s entire Prélude No. 5 is calm and quiet. The dynamic range varies only between *pp* to *mf*, so use of the *una corda* pedal is recommended for pianists who have difficulties playing double-thirds softly and smoothly. The *una corda* can definitely be used with the opening six octaves in the RH. This will help to create a very distant, atmospheric sound. However, pianists should be cautious about using the *una corda* once the double-thirds enter in m. 5. Care must be taken not to blur the sound too much if using the *una corda* starting in m. 5.

With relaxed arm movements, retaining a good tone throughout the prelude is not challenging when there are only two main ideas, one per hand. However, starting in mm. 18, three voices appear, where Rakowski has added an inner voice in the right hand. While playing double-thirds with slurs, the right hand also has to execute large leaps and produce soft and unaccented tones with the A octaves. The difficulty is in creating the dynamics with the thirds, while also playing the A octaves at a *pp* level. These two ideas, the thirds and the A octaves, have completely different trajectories and require different technical approaches. For performing all three voices successfully, I suggest the

performer practice the bottom two voices first, without the A octave. The fingering should be determined while practicing the thirds, and also work toward making a gradual *crescendo* and *decrescendo* with the moving double-thirds. After familiarizing oneself with these two voices, the pianist can add the A octaves, controlling the arm gesture to generate a good tone.



Example 56. Rakowski, Prélude No. 5, Three-part writing, mm. 17-19

### Prélude No. 7: “Dr. Awkward”

#### Analytical Observations

Rakowski’s Prélude No. 7, “Dr. Awkward,” shows the influence of Chopin’s Prélude in C Minor, Op. 28, No. 20. Rakowski borrowed a few musical elements from Chopin’s concise prelude (only thirteen measures) and reformed and expanded them in his prelude. It is almost impossible to see, viewing only the musical score, that Rakowski’s prelude was based on this prelude; no direct musical relationship appears outright. However, the compositional way that Rakowski integrated his prelude with Chopin’s is remarkable since, in the end, he created the perfect fusion of these two works.

Chopin’s Prélude in C minor consists of three 4-bar phrases and a final chord. This prelude is entirely written in chorale style, with successive chord progressions in a



slow tempo, *Largo*. The right-hand melody includes only one motivic idea, which simply steps up and down, for example, G – A-flat – G – F – E-flat in m. 1, and E-flat – F – E-flat – D-flat – C, in m. 2. This step-wise motion repeats several times in the prelude, along with an identical rhythmic pattern.

In Chopin's prelude, the rhythmic pattern consists of two quarter notes, a dotted rhythm with dotted eighth note and sixteenth note and another quarter note in the right hand, while the left hand keeps a steady beat with quarter notes throughout. The left hand moves down chromatically, in mm. 5-6 and mm. 9-10, which increases the musical tension.

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Prélude in c minor, Op. 28, No. 20. The score is in common time (C) and features a right-hand melody with step-wise motion and a left-hand accompaniment of quarter notes. The tempo is marked 'Largo.' and the dynamics range from 'ff' (fortissimo) to 'pp' (pianissimo). The score includes fingerings and articulations.

Example 57. Chopin, Prélude in c minor, Op. 28, No. 20

Chopin's Prélude No. 20 opens at *ff* and from there makes a gradual *crescendo*, followed by the *subito p* in m. 5, which creates even more dramatic emotional expression. In the next phrase (mm. 9-13), the dynamic indicates *pp*, for a calm and quiet ending. This prelude requires highly sensitive skills to produce subtle and elaborative dynamic changes, phrasing, and voicing. Magrath described this piece as “A somber work that is

popular with pianists of all ages. The piece is a true study in tone color and pacing of *crescendo* and *diminuendo*.”<sup>56</sup>

Unlike Chopin’s intensive and subdued prelude, Rakowski’s “Dr. Awkward” is marked *Manic, quarter note = c. 120–132*. His prelude can be divided into sections A and B return alternatively, similar to the Rondo form: A (mm. 1-41) - B (mm. 42-63) - A + B (mm. 42-63) - A<sup>1</sup> (mm. 80-88) - B<sup>1</sup> (mm. 89-107). For each section, Rakowski has derived various musical materials from Chopin’s C Minor Prélude, although the texture and musical style of Rakowski’s prelude is quite different from that of the Chopin.

The A section echoes the chordal texture Chopin used in Prélude No. 20. Rakowski modeled the dynamics in “Dr. Awkward” on the dynamics found in Chopin’s prelude, maximizing the effect of *subito p* and *subito ff*. Most of the dynamic changes occur very abruptly as sudden interruptions in the statements of the phrases. The A section includes two motivic cells: Motive *a* for the *ff* and octaves, and Motive *b* for lower dynamics (*p*, *mp*, and *mf*) and chromatically moving chords. Overall, the A section is organized by motive  $(a^1 - b^1) - (a^2 - b^2) - (a^3 - b^3) - (a^4 - b^4) - (a^5 - b^5) - a^6$ . The entire A section is established with these extreme dynamics, and their alternations as two wholly different types of music are mixed together.

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<sup>56</sup> Magrath, *The Pianist’s Guide*, 140.

Manic  $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 120-132$  David Rakowski  
2010

Example 58. Rakowski, *Prélude No. 7*, mm. 1-6

Motive *a* is always presented at *ff*, the first notes in both hands B-flat in the right hand and C-sharp (or D-flat) in the left, with no exception throughout the piece. These two pitches conflict with each other, both avoiding the pitch C, the tonic of Chopin's prelude, as well as avoiding any emphasis of a single pitch center. Starting with two eighth notes in 2/8 meter in the first measure, Motive *a* expands progressively with variations of pitch and length. After five repetitions with motivic developments, the last statement of Motive *a*<sup>6</sup> (mm. 28-33) presents as a *decrescendo* proceeding to the transition to Section B.



Example 59a. Rakowski, Prélude No.7,  
Motive  $a^1$ , m. 1



Example 59b. Motive  $a^2$ , m. 4



Example 59c. Motive  $a^3$ , m. 7

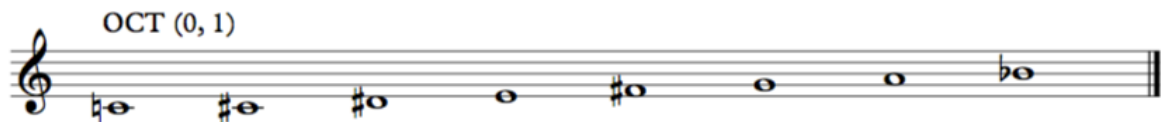


Example 59d. Motive  $a^4$ , mm. 11-13



Example 59e. Motive  $a^5$ , mm. 22-23

Furthermore, Motives  $a^1$ ,  $a^2$ ,  $a^3$  and  $a^4$  build an octatonic scale (0, 1), although a couple of outliers (B and G-sharp, in Motive  $a^4$ ) do not belong to this collection. The pitches in Motive  $a^5$  form the octatonic collection again in m. 22. Motive  $a$ 's representation of the octatonic collection appears in the many whole steps, half steps, and minor thirds used in both hands.



Example 60. Octatonic collection (0, 1)

Motive  $b$  is inserted between these Motive  $a$  cells. Unlike Motive  $a$ , Motive  $b$  starts softer, building a *crescendo* toward the next appearance of Motive  $a$ , except in mm. 8-11, which begins at *mf* and quietens to *p*. Motive  $b$  is mainly composed of thirds and fourths, which move chromatically, particularly in the inner voices.

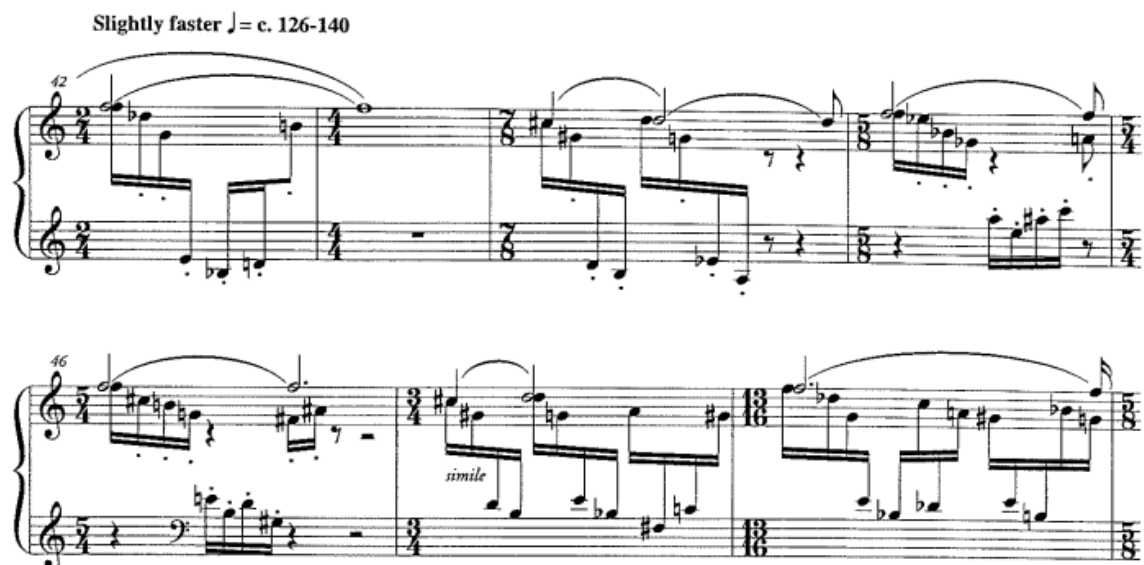


Example 61a. Rakowski, Prélude No. 7, Motive  $b'$  (Chromatic line), mm. 2-3



Example 61b. Rakowski, Prélude No. 7, Motive  $b^4$  (Chromatic line), mm. 14-15

In the transition between the A and B sections (mm. 33-41), three pitches, C-sharp – D – E, repeat several times in the soprano voice, while the inner voice moves chromatically. As soon as the B section starts in m. 42, the three-note pattern varies to C-sharp – D – F, repeating twice in mm. 44-48 (See Example 62). Unlike the A section, which has a thick texture of blocked chords, Rakowski uses a thin texture for the B section (mm. 42-79), with a long melodic line in the top voice and fragmentary musical gestures in the accompaniment-like bottom voices.



Example 62. Rakowski, Prélude No. 7, mm. 42-48

After this transition, Rakowski displays Chopin's melody in mm. 50-63. He transposes the first three measures, a part of the first phrase from Chopin's prelude, from the original key of C minor to B-flat minor. Although the melodic line is transposed to B-flat minor, no harmonic support appears in the accompaniment; rather, the melody is thoroughly blended with sporadically placed sixteenth notes. Unlike Chopin's prelude, Rakowski exploited the style of melody and accompaniment. The melody is displayed in longer note values, with slurs and ties, while the accompanimental pitches comprise sixteenth notes with staccato markings (See Example 62 and 63a). Also, the composer specifically marked dynamics, *mp* for melody and *pp* for accompaniment, in order to clearly bring out Chopin's melody. Regretfully, Rakowski leaves off in the middle of the first phrase of Chopin's music, only quoting three bars from the 4-bar phrase, then proceeds to the next section.



Example 63a. Rakowski, Prélude No. 7, mm. 49-53

F \_\_\_\_\_ Gb \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ Eb \_\_\_\_\_ Db \_\_\_\_\_

Db \_\_\_\_\_ Eb \_\_\_\_\_ Db \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_ Bb \_\_\_\_\_  
=Cb

C \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ Eb \_\_\_\_\_ C# \_\_\_\_\_  
=Db

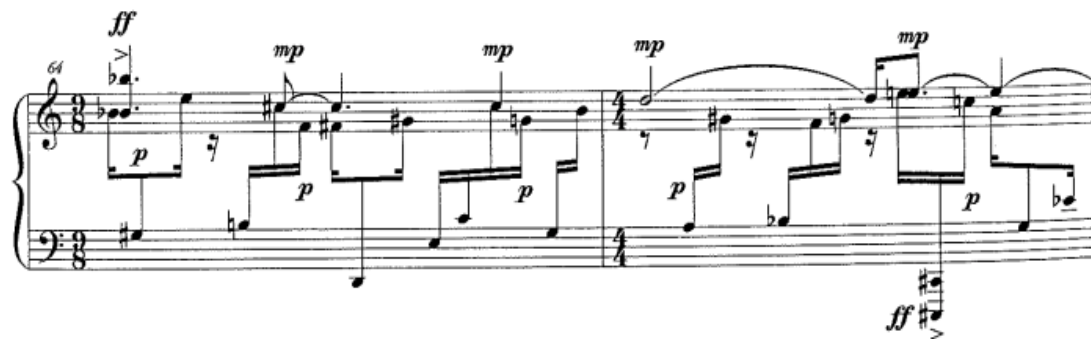
MISSING

Example 63b. Chopin's melody in Rakowski's Prélude No. 7

Minus the last fragment of Chopin's melody, Rakowski's Motive *a* from the A section joins in at m. 64. In other words, materials from Motive *a* suddenly interrupt the



B section. For example, the first note, B-flat, appears at *ff* and an accent in the right hand; then C-sharp follows in the next bar, marked *ff* with an accent in the left hand, both drawn from the A section of this prelude. The three-note pattern, C-sharp – D – E, from the transition earlier in the piece (mm. 33-41) also returns in the top voice. However, the overall musical material of the B section is maintained with the melody and fragmentary accompaniment. Except for the accented notes, the other tones are relatively quiet, marked *p*, then gradually establish a long *crescendo* until m. 79, marked *mp*, *mf* (mm. 64-78). Additionally, in this section, the emphasized pitches marked *ff* and accented, which occur in the outer voices, make up the OCT (0, 1) as they are drawn from Motive *a*.



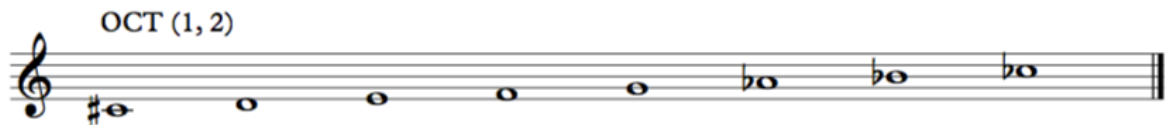
Example 64. Rakowski, Prélude No. 7, mm. 64-65

After the progressive *crescendo* for sixteen measures, the A section returns, the B-flat now in the right hand and C-sharp in the left, marked *ff*, the primary idea of Motive *a* in the A section. Most of Motive *a* consists of one or two measures, and only Motive *a*<sup>6</sup> has five measures. Motive *a* is expanded more broadly with moving octaves in both hands, mostly in half steps, whole steps, and major and minor thirds.



Example 65. Rakowski, Prélude No. 7, mm. 78-83

With the *diminuendo* at the end of the A<sup>1</sup> section, the B<sup>1</sup> section (mm. 89-end) returns at *p* and the transitional material with the three-note pattern, C-sharp – D – E, recurs until the end. In the last five measures, the octatonic collection (1, 2) is newly presented in a pointillistic style, almost in order of pitches seen in mm. 102-103. The OCT (1, 2) is established earlier in the piece (from m. 33, when the three-note pattern was generated for the first time), and repeated continuously throughout the piece, finally completed in the OCT (1, 2) at the end of the prelude (See Example 66b).



Example 66a. Octatonic collection (1, 2)



Example 66b. Rakowski, Prélude No. 7, Octatonic scale, mm. 102-107

### Technical and Musical Challenges

Rakowski constructed Prélude No. 7, “Dr. Awkward,” with contrasting ideas between sections, requiring a variety of pianistic techniques. Performers need to master appropriate techniques for each section and fully understand the music in order to acquire the proper sounds and effects.

In the A section, the most challenging musical and technical factors involve chordal texture and frequently changing dynamics at a rapid tempo. Constant double-notes in both hands, such as double-octaves of Motive *a* and double-thirds and double-fourths of Motive *b*, must be mastered for the A section. Moreover, every two or three chordal tones are grouped by slurs; thus, performers must concentrate to avoid unnecessary accents, particularly at the end of each slur. Along with the two- or three-note slurs, the rhythmic groups are also divided into unusual rhythmic divisions, almost regardless of the time signatures. Even though these rhythmic progressions have no

regular pattern, except that they are all grouped by two or three eighth notes, learning the rhythm separately will be valuable for reducing unproductive practice time. Also, during the process of learning this prelude, performers should determine which voice line from the intricate chords they will highlight throughout the piece, because producing tone-cluster-like sounds in playing several tones simultaneously is not effective in gaining more excitement and making this prelude attractive.

The main issue in the B section is the challenge of highlighting the three-note fragments and Chopin's melody in the top voice, as well as playing the other notes quietly and lightly with a staccato touch. Typically, in many pieces, the melody and accompaniment are played by different hands. Frequently, the right hand plays the melody, while the left hand plays the accompaniment. However, in this prelude, the right hand plays both the melody and the accompaniment. In order to project Chopin's melody, pianists need to put more arm weight on the long notes and less arm weight on the shorter notes. For perfect balance and voicing, adjust the arm weight quickly because the tempo is fast in the B section. The performer should also pay attention to the shifting hand positions in this fast tempo.

These required techniques for each section might not be quite as demanding for professional pianists who have already mastered them. However, combining all the techniques as a whole may be another difficulty, due to the *Manic* tempo and large leaps between Motives *a* and *b*, as well as combining materials from Sections A and B in the middle section, mm. 64-79. Detailed dynamic expressions that Rakowski indicated in the prelude will help the performer to connect each section smoothly.

## Practice Suggestions and Preparatory Repertoire

### *Two- or Three-note Slurs with Chords*

The entire A section of Prélude No. 7 is similar in chordal texture, with two or three-note slurs, to Bartók's Petite Suite, Sz. 105, No. 5 "Oroszos (Ruthenian Dance)." Bartók's piece is therefore useful as preparation. Maurice Hinson has described this short piece as "Excellent on the piano and picturesque,"<sup>57</sup> classifying it as M-D, or moderately difficult. The first half of Bartók's piece exaggerates the two-note slurs by continuously repeating the technique. When playing the two-note slurs, maintaining the drop and lift motion of the arm and wrist is important to keep a unified sound. In Bartók's piece, the opening staccato, followed by the two-note slurs requires alternating arm and wrist movements of lift – drop – lift – drop – lift.

Bartók's tempo marking is a quarter note = 112, but for this preparatory practice play the first eight bars in a quarter note = 120-132, the given tempo of Rakowski's Prélude No. 7. This way the pianist might feel the physical movements of the arm and wrist in playing the two-slur technique at a rapid tempo. Also, the performer must decide how high they will lift the wrist and drop for prompt exits and arrivals.

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<sup>57</sup> Maurice Hinson, *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*, 97.



Example 67. Bartók, *Petite Suite*, No. 5 “Oroszos (Ruthenian Dance),” mm. 1-12

In addition to the two-note slur technique required in the Rakowski, rhythmic grouping is important to increase rhythmic precision and convey the excitement of the music. For example, in Motive *b*<sup>4</sup> (mm. 14-21), the time signature varies in nearly every measure. In m. 14, the measure is written in 4/4, here not counted in straight quarters but instead grouped as 3 + 2 + 3, considering the slurs for two and three notes. The precise rhythm is significant to make the music come alive. Even Neuhaus states: “The musician’s bible begins with the words: In the beginning there was rhythm.”<sup>58</sup> By practicing two-note slurs in fast tempo and dividing the rhythmic units as shown in Example 67, one can master the A section of the Rakowski’s “Dr. Awkward,” filling it with excitement.

<sup>58</sup> Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, (London: Kahn & Averill, 1993), 53.



Example 68. Rakowski, Prélude No. 7, Rhythmic groups, mm. 14-19

### ***Voicing and Balance***

In the A and A<sup>1</sup> sections, performers have to concentrate more on the voicing of the primary melody line. Boris Berman advised that

Playing two or more notes simultaneously, we must prioritize, or voice, the dynamics between them, even when the composer is not making specific demands. Each chord must have a certain leading note, while the other tones in the chord should be voiced down.”<sup>59</sup>

Berman guides pianists in terms of what to emphasize when they play a number of notes simultaneously, and this performance suggestion also guides audiences in terms of what to listen for. As a similar example, Neuhaus also mentions voicing when playing Chopin’s Prélude in C minor, “A good pianist has a special sense—a feeling which is born in the ear and is transmitted to the hand—the “fifth-finger” sense.”<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Boris Berman, *Notes from the Pianist's Bench* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 17.

<sup>60</sup> Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, 130.

In Rakowski's *Prélude No. 7*, the performer must listen to various voices, rather than only bringing out the top voice. Example 69 shows Neuhaus's exercise from *The Art of Piano Playing* as a practice method for voicing. In this exercise, only a single tone is played at *f*; the other tones must be played *p* to exaggerate the tone the performer wants to stress more than the others. After this simple exercise, performers can decide which melodic line should be highlighted, then adjust the balance between voices by playing less important notes more quietly.



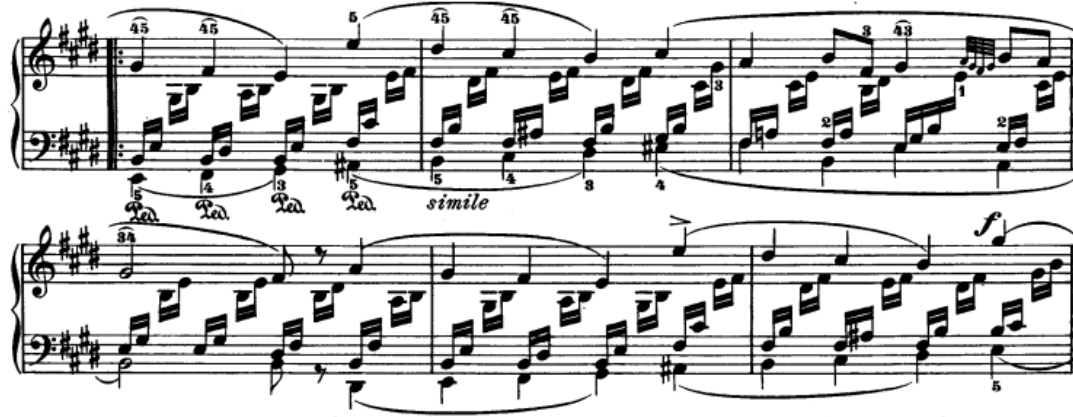
Example 69. Neuhaus, Exercise for acquiring a variety of tones<sup>61</sup>

Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte*, Op. 19, No.1 is a good preparatory piece to practice voicing and balance. The right hand plays the melody throughout, as well as playing some accompanying sixteenth notes at the same time. The physical mechanism is very similar between this piece and the B section of Rakowski's *Prélude No. 7*. The right-hand fingers 4 or 5, which play the melodic notes in most of measures, should use more weight in the keys to clearly present the melody, and the other right-hand fingers should play the keys with a lighter touch to create a softer accompanimental sound.

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<sup>61</sup> Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, 70.





For perfect balance in the B section, performers should consistently follow the melody with a sensitive ear. For example, when Chopin's C-minor tune is presented, it should be performed without a break in the middle of each phrase, concentrating closely on the melodic phrases. Because of the staccatos on the sixteenth notes, it may be hard to use pedal to connect the notes. In this situation, finger legato and finger pedal will help to achieve the perfect phrasing. As Berman suggests, "Very often the best pedaling is done not by the foot but by the so-called finger pedal, when the notes of the texture are held over by fingers to create harmonic continuity."<sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Berman, *Notes from the Pianist's Bench*, 102.

balance in voicing should not be extremely demanding if the performer listens to the melody with complete concentration and connects the notes with finger pedal.

The image shows a musical score for Rakowski's Prélude No. 7, measures 49-53. The score is in 4/8 time and features complex voicing with multiple layers of notes. Fingerings are suggested with numbers 3, 4, and 5. Dynamics include mp (mezzo-piano) and pp (pianissimo). The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 49-51) has a treble clef and a bass clef. The second system (measures 52-53) has a treble clef and a bass clef. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Example 71. Rakowski, Prélude No. 7, Fingering suggestions, mm. 49-53

### *Unifying Contrasting Motives*

Because Rakowski's Prélude No. 7, "Dr. Awkward," comprises contrasting musical ideas, such as the A and B sections, and Motives *a* and *b* in the A section, I recommend grouping similar sections and practicing them separately. For example, in the A section, one can identify all Motive *a* cells and focus solely on them. Each motive has an identical beginning so that identifying the slight differences between each motive is a quicker way to learn the music. Motive *b* cells are the same as Motive *a* in that each has a similar beginning but then expands this beginning further. After successfully learning all iterations of Motives *a* and *b*, the performer should alternate playing these two motives back and forth.

Motive *a*Motive *b*

Example 72. Rakowski, Prélude No. 7, Motive a and b, mm. 1-3

When alternating those motives, the large jumps are unavoidable, which can cause more mistakes. Neuhaus notes that, “the shortest path between two points on the keyboard is a curve.”<sup>63</sup> As soon as the first measure (Motive *a*<sup>1</sup>) is played, both arms should be placed in the correct hand position for the downbeat of m. 2 to arrive on time, as Motive *b* begins at *mp*. With these lifting-up and dropping-down arm movements, the performer must be careful not to hit adjacent notes and produce unpleasant sounds.

Neuhaus describes this physical movement interestingly:

... the hand must descend rapidly on the keyboard and rise again, as an eagle dives for his prey, seizes it and soars away; if the hand were to fall lifelessly like a stone, it would get a painful blow, and the piano would howl with pain.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, instead of soaring up high and dropping sharply, wrists must move laterally, as if gently drawing a low-placed and fluent curve.

In the B section, the primary challenges are staccatos with sixteenth notes and the melody line in the top voice. The melodic notes are linked with ties so that one finger has to hold the note while playing the staccatos. In this case, not only this musical layout but

<sup>63</sup> Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, 132.

<sup>64</sup> Neuhaus, 133.

also the fast tempo precludes lifting the whole arm for the staccatos. Instead, finger staccato is recommended, the finger-oriented movement using very limited wrist and arm gesture. In *Piano Playing With Piano Questions Answered*, Josef Hofmann noted:

The finger staccato is produced by a touch similar to the rapid repetition touch—that is, by not allowing the fingers to fall perpendicularly upon the keys, but rather let them make a motion as if you were wiping a spot off the keys with the fingertips, without the use of the arm.<sup>65</sup>

Based on Hofmann's suggestion, fingers should be maintained very close to the keys and move quietly and lightly. Rakowski used different articulations between melody and accompaniment. The melodic line is connected with ties and slurs, so the melodic notes must be held while playing the many sixteenth notes underneath. Once the performers have adapted the different approach to the keys between melodic notes and accompaniment-like sixteenth notes, they will be able to project Chopin's melody and three-note motivic fragments clearly.

Another challenge prevalent throughout this work is the presence of many sudden dynamic changes, coupled with registral changes in the form of large leaps. These difficulties are all compounded because of the fast tempo that is required by the composer. The first movement of Lowell Liebermann's *Gargoyles* is a good preparatory piece for Rakowski's *Prélude No. 7*. Like the Rakowski, the Liebermann contains many sudden dynamic and registral changes, as well as having many large leaps in a fast tempo.

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<sup>65</sup> Josef Hofmann, *Piano Playing With Piano Questions Answered* (New York: Dover, 1976), 22.



Example 73. Liebermann, 1<sup>st</sup> movement from *Gargoyles*, mm. 18-22

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **CONCLUSION**

Rakowski, a prolific composer whose massive projects include the writing of 100 piano etudes, has been steadily composing his 100 piano preludes since 2010. Every composition in his ten books of etudes and eight books of preludes is precious to the piano literature and worthwhile for both less advanced pianists and professional pianists, as a pathway to the world of modern piano repertoire and early twenty-first century piano music. Among others, his *Préludes Book I* provide excellent selections for advanced pianists since their thematic materials, based on music from the Baroque to the Romantic and Impressionistic, already relate to familiar repertoire.

Rakowski has a wonderful sense of humor for potential performers and audiences, and his *Préludes Book I* is a representative example, with all of the humorous titles being palindromes, including “Dr. Awkward” and “Never Odd or Even.” In addition to his sense of humor in titles, the humor is revealed in his music as well. As shown in the analytical observations in Chapter 2, Rakowski has a special treatment of pitch centricity. In the preludes, there are several attempts to intentionally avoid setting the strongest pitch as the pitch center. Rakowski often introduces two different pitches in both hands and has them conflict with each other continuously. Two pitches usually stay close (for example, the interval of second) to produce the conflicting sound (See Table 5).

Table 5. Rakowski's Préludes, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7, Emphasized pitches

Préludes	Left hand pitch	Right hand pitch	Interval between pitches
No. 1: Moody, My Doom	B	C	Half-step
No. 2: Never Odd or Even	C-sharp	D	Half-step
No. 3: Too Hot to Hoot	G	A	Whole-step
No. 5: No, It Is Opposition	N/A	N/A	
No. 7: Dr. Awkward	C-sharp	B-flat	Augmented 2nd

Rakowski is also a meticulous composer who provides kaleidoscopic dynamic indications and detailed pedal and articulation markings in his preludes. For articulations, he marks slurs by grouping small motivic units together, so the groupings show the articulations and rhythmic accents that the composer desires. The pedal indications are also very specific, especially in his Prélude No.2, so that performers are able to imagine the correct sonorities for the preludes. By following his dynamic indications, they will be able to create exciting and fascinating performances because his dynamics are well-organized.

Rakowski's preludes from Book I are mostly recommended for advanced students or professional pianists rather than developing students because of their technical difficulties and sophisticated sound. However, the easiest prelude in this book, Prélude No. 5 "No, It Is Opposition" is suggested for early advanced students if they prepare using the practice suggestions and preparatory repertoire in this document. Other books of Rakowski's preludes also include some relatively shorter and easier preludes, such as Prélude No. 29 "Bump" in Book III, Prélude No. 37 "Cow and Cat" in Book IV, and

Prélude No. 51 “Wayo” and No. 57 “Gnöpélledie,” both from Book VI. These can all be considered as a pedagogical repertoire for early advanced students.

Rakowski also has interests in writing pedagogical works for developing students. He composed several piano duets, including Étude-Fantasies for students age nine to sixteen, which was commissioned by the Music Teachers' Association of California, and Seven Duets for beginning to intermediate students.<sup>66</sup> For piano solo, Rakowski composed *Blue Horizon* for the New Music National Young Artist Competition in 2013. This composition is excellent for advanced students in terms of experiencing different sonorities on the piano.

Along with these piano duets and solo piano works, the Peters Edition published Rakowski’s “Easy Etudes” for young students. Regarding the set of Easy Etudes, David Rakowski mentioned “I’m not a pianist, and the vast majority of the piano etudes I’ve written are beyond my abilities. I have, however, made a point of writing one etude in each of the ten published books that is simple enough and easy enough that I can play it. This is a collection of those ten ‘easy’ etudes.”<sup>67</sup>

Table 6. Rakowski’s The Easy Études<sup>68</sup>

Book	Number	Title	Description <sup>69</sup>
Book I	Étude No. 7	Les Arbres Embués	Étude on thick sonorities and embedded lines
Book II	Étude No. 15	The Third, Man	Étude on thirds

<sup>66</sup> Rakowski, “List of Compositions”

<sup>67</sup> Edition Peters. “The Easy Études,” <https://www.edition-peters.com/product/the-easy-etudes/ep67928k> (accessed April 13, 2019).

<sup>68</sup> Edition Peters. “The Easy Études”

<sup>69</sup> Rakowski, “List of Compositions”



Book	Number	Title	Description
Book III	Étude No. 29	Roll Your Own	On rolled chords
Book IV	Étude No. 34	Chorale Fantasy	Slow étude on an embedded melody
Book V	Étude No. 48	What Half-Diminishes Ones	Chorale-étude on half-diminished seventh chords
Book VI	Étude No. 55	Eight Misbehavin'	Slow octave étude
Book VII	Étude No. 65	Rick's Mood	Chorale-étude on major triads
Book VIII	Étude No. 78	Upon Reflection	Slow mirror étude
Book IX	Étude No. 87	Berceuse	Five-finger étude for piano, toy piano, or both
Book X	Étude No. 97	Quietude	Étude on dominant seventh chords

In conclusion, Rakowski's *Préludes* Book I are not simple works to learn; rather, they are technically and musically challenging. However, it is surely worthwhile to learn and perform these preludes because these pieces are invaluable assets of piano literature. Also, it is also valuable for both professional pianists and piano pedagogues in that Rakowski wrote preludes and etudes at a variety of levels from intermediate to advanced. The author believes that this study will assist performers with their understanding of, not only the preludes from Book I, but also David Rakowski's other piano works.

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