

NEZHANOVA-CUNNINGHAM, ELENA VICTORIA, D.M.A. Performance Guide for 24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41 by Lera Auerbach (2017). Directed by Dr. Joseph DiPiazza. 84 pp.

The *24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41* by Lera Auerbach was composed in 1998 as a commissioned work for the Caramoor International Festival. In 1999 Auerbach further explored the 24 Prelude format producing two chamber works: *24 Preludes for Violin and Piano, Op. 46*; and *24 Preludes for Cello and Piano, Op. 47*. There are two additional sets of 24 Preludes in her collection, which are transcriptions of Dmitri Shostakovich's *24 Piano Preludes, Op. 34* for cello and piano (2008), and for viola and piano (2010).

The term Prelude originated in the fifteenth century for keyboard instruments, such as the organ, and for string instruments, such as the lute. It was a short piece that preceded other music, such as a fantasia or a toccata, during which the musician improvised and checked the tuning of the strings for instrumentalists and singers. In church organ music, a Prelude was also used to establish pitch and mode for liturgical service. Development of the equal temperament tuning system allowed the performer to modulate without the need to retune the instrument. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Johann Sebastian Bach composed Preludes and Fugues, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, in all twenty-four major and minor keys. Several noted composers, such as Fryderyk Chopin, Alexander Scriabin, Claude Debussy, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Dmitri Kabalevsky explored the 24 Prelude format as a unified set of pieces. The convenience of a short Prelude allowed composers to group them into sets of twenty-four contrasting pieces following either the chromatic succession of major and minor keys, the sequenced circle

of fifths progression, or as short tone-poem pieces written in unrelated keys. Auerbach's 24 Preludes follow the structure of circle of fifth pairings modeled after Chopin's *Preludes, Op. 28* and Scriabin's *24 Preludes, Op. 11*. Her Preludes are short tone-poems that feature polystylistic writing, harmonic contrasts, color, and texture.

Due to unfamiliar and complex musical language, it is often challenging to grasp the meaning of new music. Without an awareness of the composer's life and an understanding of his or her unique style, the musical meaning may become distorted or misunderstood. This is why it is beneficial when composers play and promote their music, or when performing artists with a personal connection to the composer advocate their new music through performances and recordings. In recent years, Auerbach's music has received considerable attention as she is becoming one of the most widely performed composers of her generation. As a virtuoso pianist, she continues the tradition of pianist-composers of previous centuries and performs her own solo piano works in recitals. Her music is intricately interesting, and deserves further attention in the area of research and performance. To further explore the concept of 24 Preludes as a standing work, Auerbach brings new sound, new ideas, and new compositional possibilities. This set of Preludes is an excellent addition to the solo piano repertoire and to the 24 Preludes collections of music literature.

The total performance time for Lera Auerbach's *24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41* is approximately 40 minutes. The motivic and textural connections within the Preludes give this work a sense of unity. Auerbach's own comments on the Preludes accentuate the importance of the order, which is intended to help its overall comprehension. However, it

is possible to program these Preludes as a shorter set. In 1999 she proposed a version of this work as *Suite for Piano, Op. 41a*, which is a compilation of nine Preludes from the *24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41*. She grouped these Preludes per contrasting moods, and did not present them in their original order. Whether these 24 Preludes are performed as a complete set or as a suite, Auerbach's usage of the former compositional format is original and her musical language is deeply personal.

Lera Auerbach's other two sets of original 24 Preludes composed as chamber works receive more attention from performers in recitals and recordings. When more artists are involved in the performance of new music, greater exposure will be provided. The purpose of this document is to bring attention to the *24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41* from a solo performer's perspective, to provide a performance guide, and a pedagogic analysis of selected Preludes.

PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR 24 PRELUDES FOR PIANO, OP. 41

BY LERA AUERBACH

by

Elena Victoria Nezhdanova-Cunningham

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Despite Lera Auerbach's fast-rising fame as a composer, the scholarly research of her solo piano repertoire is limited. To date, there is one dissertation, "Polystylism and Motivic Connections in Lera Auerbach's 24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41" by Meily J. Mendez.<sup>1</sup> Currently there is no known research done on her other piano works. In her theoretical thesis, Mendez researched two important aspects of *24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41*: polystylistic influences and motivic connections among individual Preludes. Her document contains valuable and exhaustive autobiographical information of Lera Auerbach based on a personal interview with the composer;<sup>2</sup> therefore, I will not concentrate on the composer's detailed biographical data that is easily accessible in Mendez's work.

Lera Auerbach (b. 1973) is a Russian-born, American female composer whose talent and creative output have brought her musical and literary fame in recent years. She is currently one of the most widely performed and highly in demand commissioned composers possessing an impressive amount of works to her name. Before the age of forty, Lera Auerbach wrote over ninety works which range from solo and chamber pieces to large scale works for orchestra including operas and ballets.

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<sup>1</sup> Meily J. Mendez, "Polystylism and Motivic Connections in Lera Auerbach's 24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41." D.M.A. Thesis, the University of Arizona, Arizona, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 26-31.

Auerbach's compositions have been performed by many solo artists such as Gidon Kremer, Leonidas Kavakos, Vadim Gluzman, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Dmitri Sitkovetsky. Her contribution to chamber music is represented by eight string quartets that have been performed by Tokyo, Jesper, Ying, Borromeo, Granados, Artemis, and RTÉ Vanbrugh ensembles, four piano trios, and three works for various instrumental combinations. Auerbach's orchestral and stage works, which include two operas, have been performed by conductors Vladimir Fedoseyev, Vladimir Spivakov, Christoph Eschenbach, Charles Dutoit, Andris Nelsons, Andras Keller, Vladimir Jurowski, among many others. Choreographers and stage directors such as John Neumeier, Goyo Montero, Aszure Barton, Terence Kohler, Sol León, Paul Lightfoot, Medhi Waleski, Christine Milietz, Reginaldo Oliveira, and John La Bouchardiere had staged her ballets and operas in major theaters on every continent.

She has been a composer-in-residence with many orchestras and music festivals such as Staatskapelle Dresden, São Paulo Symphony, New Century Chamber Orchestra, Verbier Festival, Trondheim Festival, MusikFest Bremen, and Marlboro Festival, among many others. Auerbach's long-standing collaboration with renowned choreographer John Neumeier produced three ballets: *Tatiana*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Preludes CV*.

Auerbach has received numerous awards including the Hindemith Prize, the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship, the German National Radio Prize, and the ECHO Klassik award, among others. She is currently the youngest composer on the roster of Hamburg's international music publishing company Hans Sikorski.

Lera Auerbach's prolific artistic contribution does not belong to music alone. As a writer and a poet, she received Poet of the Year award in 1996 from the International Pushkin Society in New York City, and her poetry is currently taught in Modern Literature classes at Russian universities. There are currently five published volumes of her poetry in Russian and her first book in English, *Excess of Being*, was published in 2015. As a visual artist, Auerbach's works have been presented at a solo art exhibition in 2013 in Norway.<sup>3</sup>

The *24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41* was composed in 1998 and published in 1999 as a co-commissioned work by Tom and Vivian Waldeck and Caramoor International Music Festival. Auerbach premiered the work on July 23, 1999 in New York City. The score is published by Sikorski<sup>4</sup> and its first recording, performed by the composer, can be found through catalogue number BISCD 1462.<sup>5</sup> This recording was awarded the Choc de la Musique award in 2007. There is one additional recording of this work performed by pianist Eli Kalman, catalogue number CRC 3441.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lera Auerbach, "Lera Auerbach, Full Biography." <http://www.mediaresources.leraauerbach.com/index.php/short-biography> (accessed February 8, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Lera Auerbach, *24 Preludes for Pia* Hamburg: Musikverlag Hans Sikorski GmbH & Co. KG, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Lera Auerbach, *Preludes and Dreams*. Performed and recorded by Lera Auerbach. CD. BIS, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Lera Auerbach, *Homo Ludens - Piano Music of Lera Auerbach*. Performed and recorded Eli Kalman. CD. Centaur, 2015.

Auerbach's solo piano Preludes gained attention in recent years at the Hilton Head International Piano Competition. There is also evidence of pianists Yangmingtian Zhao, Andjelika Javorina, and EunAe Lee, including young students, performing some of the Preludes in social media videos. However, to the best of my knowledge, the work is rarely performed in its entirety, and is often done by the composer herself.

Lera Auerbach is unquestionably one of the most important female composers of the 21st century. The need for this study lies in bringing attention to her contribution to the 24-prelude form and her enrichment of the contemporary solo piano repertoire. The other two sets of original 24 Preludes, *24 Preludes for Violin and Piano, Op. 46* and *24 Preludes for Violoncello and Piano, Op. 47* written as chamber works, gained wider attention from noted artists and have served as an interest for live performances and recordings. The same applies to the lack of attention in the field of research. There are currently two known dissertations dedicated to *24 Preludes for Violin and Piano, Op. 46*, "Lera Auerbach's 24 Preludes for Violin and Piano, Op. 46: Unity and Musical Narrative" by Kimberly Hain,<sup>7</sup> "A Player's Guide: Lera Auerbach's 24 Preludes for Violin and Piano, Op. 46" by Joshua Holritz.<sup>8</sup> The latter two authors are violinists.

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<sup>7</sup> Kimberly Hain, "Lera Auerbach's 24 Preludes for Violin and Piano, Op. 46: Unity and Musical Narrative." D.M.A. Thesis, the Florida State University, Florida, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Joshua Luke Holritz, "A Player's Guide: Lera Auerbach's 24 Preludes for Violin and Piano, Op. 46." D.M.A. Thesis, the University of Georgia, Georgia, 2014.

Lera Auerbach is a virtuoso concert pianist. She often performs her own chamber works with other artists. However, Auerbach's repertoire for solo piano remains infrequently performed and is less studied. To better understand Auerbach's work, it is important to note that she is also a prolific poet and a visual artist. Her creative talent shines through her literary output, artistic works, and through her music. Since Auerbach's multifaceted artistic personality is publicly known, it is important for a performer to discover her contribution to other creative areas before they begin studying her musical scores. This process will enrich and guide the imagination of a performer and help to better understand Auerbach's unique musical language. In her own words, Lera expresses some insight into her creative process (translated from Russian language by the author):

The moment of creativity is difficult to explain. The connection between inspiration and the author is similar in music as much as it is in poetry... I never know which form the inspiration will take, whether it will gain shape of sound or words... The sound does not bare the same boundaries as words do, and therefore it has an easier time touching a human heart... Without touching the heart, the miracle of creative outburst does not take place.<sup>9</sup>

Her profound thought and exciting originality as a creator are masterfully displayed in each of these *24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41*. The goal of this dissertation is to provide insights into interpretation and to address technical issues of this work. I will

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<sup>9</sup> Lera Auerbach, "Lera Auerbach - On Creativity." YouTube Web site. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJCAR8oVaEo> (accessed January 10, 2017)

select several Preludes based on their difficulty, expressive challenges, length, tempo, and character for the pedagogic analysis.

## CHAPTER II

### ANALYSIS

#### **Selection of Preludes for Pedagogic Analysis**

After close examination of the Preludes, the difficulty level can be divided into three categories: Least Demanding, Moderately Demanding, and Most Demanding. The chosen criteria for determining the difficulty of each Prelude was based on:

- ease of reading the score
- technical difficulty
- expressive difficulty
- length, tempo, and character
- overall complexity of the piece including the previous criteria

The analysis contains:

- Table 1. Description of each individual Prelude to determine which will be selected for pedagogic analysis
- brief description of difficulties in Preludes not selected for the main analysis
- Table 2. The list of Preludes selected for pedagogic analysis
- pedagogic analysis of the selected Preludes

**Table 1. Description of Each Individual Prelude to Determine the Preludes Selected for Pedagogic Analysis.**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Tempo</b>	<b>Character</b>	<b>No. of ms.</b>	<b>Specific challenge</b>	<b>Difficulty</b>
1	Moderato		20	Dynamics, balance, energy and continuation of the melodic line in the <i>ff</i> section.	Least Demanding
2	Presto		22	Rhythmic integrity, fast passages, <i>non legato</i> executed sixteenth-note patterns in the left hand in ms. 9-11, large leaps in both hands in m. 14.	Moderately Demanding
3	Moderato		4 sections	Control of the repeated notes, pacing, balance in the voicing within the three-staves structure.	Moderately Demanding
4		Appassionato -Nostalgico- Con moto, appassionato- Nostalgico	28	In <i>Nostalgico</i> , rapid repetition of melodic pitches in the right hand. In <i>Con moto</i> , <i>appassionato</i> , rapid thirty-second note passages in the left hand.	Most Demanding
5	Andantino	Sognando	25	The left-hand pattern against dissonant and rhythmically complex right hand. Evolution of the two-voice texture into a three-voice structure, use of pedal.	Moderately Demanding
6		Corale	36	Progression of the chorale-style texture from three to seven voices, suggested humming while playing.	Least Demanding
7	Andante- Allegro- Andante		17	Clarity in enunciation of the right-hand patterns in the <i>Allegro</i> section.	Moderately Demanding
8	Presto		34	Speed and clarity of the scale passages, preservation of the steady pulse challenged by ambiguous rhythmic subdivision in certain ms., endurance, instrumental virtuosity.	Most Demanding
9	Allegretto	Scherzando	23	Achieving the <i>Scherzando</i> character while observing the polyphonic writing, syncopated rhythm, articulations between the hands.	Moderately Demanding
10	Largo-poco meno mosso		14	Alignment of the fugal counterpoint in the right hand against the repetition of the musical material of the first measure in the left hand in ms. 1-6.	Least Demanding
11		Misterioso	1	No technical difficulty.	Least Demanding
12	Allegro	Brutale	24	Clearly defined rhythmic ostinato in	Most

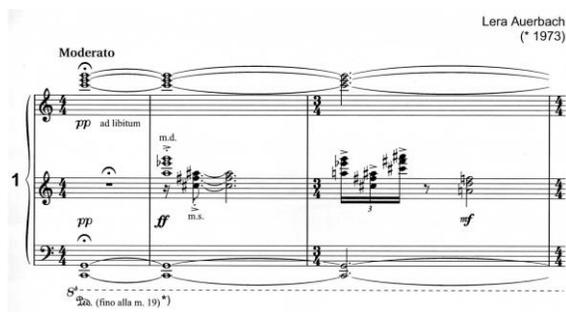
				both hands against the top melodic line, coordination of hands in the last overlapping descending passage.	Demanding
<b>13</b>	Andante		15	Attention to the rhythmic diversity of the hands.	Least Demanding
<b>14</b>	Allegretto		20	Rhythmic alignment of the repetitive pattern of the left hand against the leaping right hand, precision during the large intervallic leaps in the right hand.	Moderately Demanding
<b>15</b>	Moderato		19	Clear voicing in the three-voiced fugue counterpoint.	Moderately Demanding
<b>16</b>	Allegro ma non troppo	Tragico	43	<i>Tragico</i> character without playing the arpeggiated figures in the right hand too mechanically, sustaining the intensity. Left hand trill in ms. 34-39.	Moderately Demanding
<b>17</b>	Adagio	Tragico	14	No technical difficulty.	Least Demanding
<b>18</b>	Grave		29	Modulation of rhythmic patterns in the right hand against the left hand, the rapid repetition of melodic pitches in the right hand in ms. 14-18.	Most Demanding
<b>19</b>	Adagio	Religioso	25	Evolution of the dynamic arch through the gradual layering and dissolution of tone clusters.	Moderately Demanding
<b>20</b>		Misterioso	9	Execution of the broken octave in the right hand indicated as grace notes.	Least Demanding
<b>21</b>	Allegro moderato		19	Layering of textures, which are gradually introduced at the beginning of the Prelude, hand redistribution, intervals of the ninth.	Most Demanding
<b>22</b>	Andante		26	Layering of the right-hand ostinato with the melodic line distributed between the hands, sustaining melodic and rhythmic patterns in ms. 13-20.	Most Demanding
<b>23</b>	Allegretto-meno mosso		21	No technical difficulty. Adopting of the appropriate swing-like character in the <i>Allegretto</i> section.	Least Demanding
<b>24</b>		Grandioso	85	Rapid repetition of melodic pitches in the right hand in ms. 10-13, change of a thick chordal texture from <i>ff</i> into <i>pp</i> in ms. 1-7, and from <i>ff</i> into <i>p</i> in ms. 25-32, intervals of a ninth in the right hand in ms. 60-65, gradual increase in dynamics from <i>pp</i> to <i>fff</i> through a chordal repetition in ms. 73-81, rapid contrary motion passage in m. 82.	Most Demanding

## Least Demanding Preludes

The least demanding Preludes are numbers 1, 6, 10, 11, 13, 17, 20, and 23. These Preludes will not be included in the selection for pedagogic analysis. The issues that occur in these Preludes will be addressed in those chosen for analysis.

In Prelude 1, Auerbach uses three staves to show three different textures and colors. The groupings of thirty-second notes in measures 7 and 8 present some technical difficulty; however, the suggested note redistribution allows an easier facilitation of the groupings between hands.

**Figure 1. Prelude 1,  
Example of Three-Staves Writing.**



Musical score for Prelude 1, measures 1-4. The score is written for three staves: Treble Clef (top), Middle Clef (middle), and Bass Clef (bottom). The tempo is marked "Moderato". The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. Dynamics include *pp* ad libitum, *mf*, *ff*, and *mf*. There are markings for "m.d." and "m.s.". A performance instruction at the bottom reads "8va. (fino alla m. 19)\*". The composer is identified as "Lera Auerbach (\* 1973)".

**Figure 2. Prelude 1,  
Measures 7 and 8.**



Musical score for Prelude 1, measures 7 and 8. This is a close-up of the thirty-second note groupings. The score is written for two staves: Treble Clef (top) and Bass Clef (bottom). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. Dynamics include *ff*. There are markings for "3", "4", and "5" indicating fingerings. A performance instruction "8va. (fino alla m. 19)\*" is visible at the bottom.

**Prelude 6** is a Corale. The texture changes from consonant sonorities in the first two measures, presented *pp*, and develops through a succession of tone clusters into dissonant sonorities. After the musical climax in measure 29, the dynamic ebbs back to *p*. The progression of the chorale-style texture into dissonant tone clusters presents the difficulty of sustaining the intensity of the developing musical line. Auerbach suggests

humming indicated pitches in the score to create a “barely audible effect of adding some ‘human quality’ to the sound and intensity through the sustained notes.”<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 3. Prelude 6, Example of the Corale Writing, and Suggested Pitches to be Hummed by the Performer.**



The difficulty of **Prelude 10** is the alignment of complex rhythmic textures between the hands. Measures 3-5 present an additional challenge to the right hand where the top voice is added to the melody. This creates a new counterpoint that must be clearly enunciated. An additional challenge is to convey the *pesante* character first presented in the left hand.

**Figure 4. Prelude 10, *Pesante* Left Hand and Fugal Counterpoint of the Right Hand.**



<sup>10</sup>Lera Auerbach, *24 Preludes for Pia* Hamburg: Musikverlag Hans Sikorski GmbH & Co. KG, 2006, 16.

The motivic pattern closely resembles the eighth variation from Robert Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13*. The similarity is also reinforced by the choice of the key of C-sharp minor and the opening low C-sharp pedal point. This information is useful for a performer who is looking for interpretative ideas. In the right hand, the performer must preserve the contrasting *pesante e tenuto* characters in the two voices.

**Figure 5. Prelude 10, Motivic Pattern Resembling Variation No. 8 From Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13* and Sample of the Variation.**

The image displays two musical excerpts. The top excerpt, labeled '10', is for 'Prelude 10' in C-sharp minor, marked 'Largo' and 'ff'. It features a low C-sharp pedal point in the left hand. The right hand has a melody with a triplet of eighth notes marked 'pesante' and '3'. Pedal markings include '(Ped.)', '\* Ped.', and '\* Ped.'. A performance instruction reads 'sost. Ped. fino alla m. 5 (haltend / holding c#)'. The bottom excerpt, labeled 'ETUDE VIII.', is 'Variation No. 8' in C-sharp minor, marked 'sempre marcatisimo'. It features a low C-sharp pedal point in the left hand. The right hand has a melody with a triplet of eighth notes marked 'pesante e tenuto' and '3'. Pedal markings include 'Pedale' and 'Ped. simile'. A tempo marking '♩ = 80.' is present. The page number '11' is visible at the end of the second excerpt.



**Prelude 17** is thematically connected to Prelude 11 since it is based on the same foundation of the overtone relations. The writing does not impose any other significant technical difficulties. Later in the analysis we will see more similar types of relations between individual Preludes. This will be one of the criteria used to eliminate some of the Preludes from the analysis based on their similarities.

**Figure 8. Prelude 17.**

In **Prelude 20**, the melodic line is outlined through the broken octaves where the bottom note must be held, which presents a potential difficulty for a pianist with smaller hands. Another challenge is to preserve rhythmic consistency throughout the Prelude.

**Figure 9. Prelude 20, Example of the Repeated Rhythmic Figure.**



**Prelude 23** has no significant technical difficulty; however, the complexity of the voicing and compound meter may present a challenge.

**Figure 10. Prelude 23, Example of the Repeated Rhythmic Figure.**



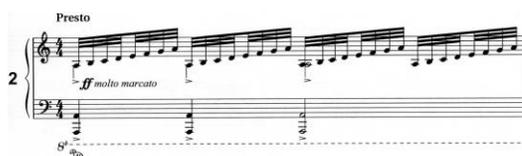
### Moderately Demanding Preludes

The moderately demanding Preludes are numbers 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 14, 15, and 19. These Preludes will not be included in the selection for pedagogic analysis. As in the case of the least demanding Preludes, the issues that occur in them will be analyzed and resolved in Preludes chosen for the analysis.

**Prelude 2** presents difficulty in preservation of the rhythmic integrity. The meter is established by the quarter note pulse in the left hand and the accented starting note in the right-hand passages. The fast scale passages in the right hand in measures 1-5, (see Figure 11), and in the left hand in measures 6-8, (see Figure 12), must be executed with clarity within the groupings in *Presto* tempo. The next challenge arises in measures 9-11 in the left hand where the sixteenth-note patterns are marked *non legato*, (see Figure 13).

In the following measures 12-14, the sixteenth-note displaced large intervallic leaps between hands create difficulty in accuracy and clarity of sound, (see Figure 14). The scale-like patterns of the middle voice in the right hand in measures 16-17 present difficulty in finger independence, (see Figure 15). Auerbach marks these patterns of the sixteenth notes staccato. The difficulty lies in holding the fifth finger during the long note values and keeping the staccato articulation light.

**Figure 11. Prelude 2, Example of the Quarter-Note Pulse.**



**Figure 12. Prelude 2, Example of the Fast Scale Passages.**



**Figure 13. Prelude 2, Non Legato in Measures 9 - 11.**



**Figure 14. Prelude 2, Large Interval Leaps in Measures 13 and 14.**



**Figure 15. Prelude 2, Ostinato in Scale-Like Patterns in Measures 17 and 18.**



**Prelude 3** is written in four expansive measures where Auerbach sets the pulse of a quarter note equals 60. This Prelude presents several interpretive difficulties for the performer. The rhythmically executed repeated quarter notes in the right hand must remain unchanged throughout against the dissonance created by the two lower parts. The main technical issue is retaining control of the repeated notes in the right hand throughout the Prelude, and complementing the balance in voicing within the three textures presented between the hands.

**Figure 16. Prelude 3, Example of the Texture and the Repeated Notes.**



In **Prelude 5** the frequently changing time signatures augment and diminish the length of the beat patterns in the left hand. The left-hand patterns must be played as *legato* as possible. The *dolce e legato* melody in the right hand is syncopated and creates

dissonance against the calm, tonally consonant left-hand patterns. The first technically difficult place arises in measure 9 where the grace note in the right-hand leaps over two octaves into bass clef, (see Figure 17). In measures 12-17, the evolution of the two-voice texture into a three-voice structure occurs, (see Figure 18). The difficulty is to keep the accented syncopated dotted quarter notes in the inner voice from disturbing the legato melodic line against the left-hand part. In this Prelude, Auerbach asks for a sensitive use of the damper pedal to achieve certain tone colors throughout the Prelude.

**Figure 17. Prelude 5, Example of the Grace Note Leap in the Right Hand.**



**Figure 18. Prelude 5, Example of the Evolution of the Two-Into Three-Voice Structure.**



In **Prelude 7**, the challenge arises in the Allegro section where the patterns in the right hand must have clarity through appropriate articulation – *non legato*. In the opening Andante section a potential challenge in achieving clarity occurs in measures 4-5, where both hands overlap in the higher register, both notated in treble clef.

**Figure 19. Prelude 7, Example of the Right-Hand Pattern.**



The challenge in **Prelude 9** lies in achieving the *Scherzando* character while observing the polyphonic writing, off-beat displacement, and articulations between the hands. Particularly important is preserving the *non legato* articulation of the walking bass in the left hand against the leaping melody in the right hand. The same challenge is then transferred to the left hand in transitional measure 7.

**Figure 20. Prelude 9, Example of the Leaping Melody and the Walking Bass.**



In **Prelude 14**, it is the rhythmic alignment of the repetitive pattern in the left hand against the leaping right hand that may present a moderate level of difficulty. In measures 5, 9, 15, and 16 the right-hand leaps are especially difficult since the intervallic span between certain notes is over several octaves.

**Figure 21. Prelude 14, Example of the Repetitive Pattern in the Left Hand.**



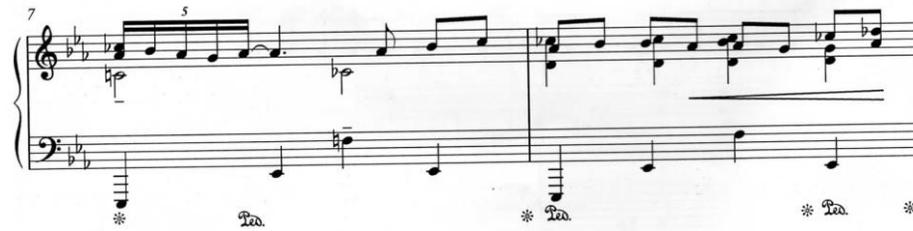
In **Prelude 15**, clear voicing in the three-voiced fugal counterpoint must be maintained. The challenge arises in the voice exchange between the hands when the third voice is introduced as an inner voice in measure 7. The use of a suitable fingering is necessary to preserve the *legato* touch throughout.

**Figure 22. Prelude 15, Example of the Three-Voiced Fugal Counterpoint.**



In **Prelude 19** the difficulty is presented in the evolution of the dynamic arch through the gradual layering and consequent dissolution of tone clusters. The multiple voice texture in the right hand is challenging, but not as difficult as in the other Preludes which present a similar challenge.

**Figure 23. Prelude 19, Example of the Gradual Layering of Clusters.**



### **Most Demanding Preludes**

The most demanding Preludes are numbers 4, 8, 12, 16, 18, 21, 22, and 24. All these Preludes contain the most significant musical material presented in the *24 Preludes for Solo Piano, Op. 41* and embody major technical difficulty. Many of them have close thematic connections with the other Preludes. Because of these criteria, the Preludes falling in the category of Most Demanding were selected for the main pedagogic analysis.

## Pedagogic Analysis of Selected Preludes

**Table 2. The List of Preludes Selected for Pedagogic Analysis.**

<i>Prelude number</i>	<i>Specific challenge</i>	<i>Thematic connection</i>	<i>Difficulty Level</i>
<b>4</b>	ms. 3-12, 22: the repeated melodic notes in the right hand. ms. 15-20: rapid toccata-like writing of the left hand against the rhythmically challenging right hand.	18, 24	Most Demanding
<b>8</b>	ms. 1-10, 27-34: emphasis on the strong beat within the measures due to the hand redistribution in scale passages. ms. 11-26: sustaining the time of the melodic line against the irregular groupings of the fast notes.	2, 10	Most Demanding
<b>12</b>	ms. 3-12: preservation of the rhythm within the motoric sixteenth-note patterns in both hands against the accented melody in the right hand. ms. 22: hand crossing and the pattern overlapping.	21, 22	Most Demanding
<b>16</b>	ms. 2-11: fingering and accuracy of the right hand. ms. 33-37: alignment of the hands; trill in the left hand.		Most Demanding
<b>18</b>	ms. 6-13: gradual layering of three-to seven- voice structure. Overlapping of multiple rhythmic patterns. ms. 14-18: repeated thirty-second note figure in the right hand similar to Prelude 4.	1, 3, 4, 5, 21, 22	Most Demanding
<b>21</b>	ms. 1-4: intervals of a ninth in the right hand. ms. 11-18: layering of textures into multiple voices, hand redistribution.	12, 18, 22, 24	Most Demanding
<b>22</b>	ms. 1-11: laying of the melodic line, which is redistributed between the hands, against the ostinato part in the right hand. ms. 12-24: multiple voicing textures.	3, 5, 12, 18, 19, 21, 23	Most Demanding
<b>24</b>	ms. 1-6, 25-30, 66-71: opening chords of the Prelude 1 with additional thick chordal texture. ms. 10-13: melodic line presented through repetitive right hand as in Prelude 4 ms. 60-65: intervals of a ninth in the right hand as in Prelude 21. ms. 82: contrary motion rapid thirty-second note passage in both hands.	1, 4, 21	Most Demanding

The eight most demanding Preludes chosen for pedagogic analysis present challenges in the following categories:

- ease of reading of the score
- technical difficulty
- expressive challenges
- thematic complexity
- length, tempo, and character
- the overall difficulty of the piece based on the previously listed criteria

#### **Prelude 4**

##### *Description*

Prelude 4 is written in A (m. 1) B (ms. 2-14) A (ms. 15-19) Transition (ms. 20-21) B (ms. 22-25) A (ms. 26-28) form. The short one-measure long A section, measure 1, contains motivic material, which defines the main character of the Prelude. It is further developed in measures 15-19 in the *Con moto* section. Then it returns in measures 26-28 as a closing statement. The B section of measures 3-14, *Nostalgico*, is introduced in the left hand by transitional measure 2 and returns in measures 22-25.

These two contrasting sections are both characterized by rapid successions of thirty-second notes. In the A section, they appear in etude-like, alternating interval patterns, while in the B section the thirty-second notes are shaping the melody with repeated, rapid thirty-second notes.

### *Pedagogic Analysis*

The A and B sections present several technical difficulties for a performer. The motivic material of the A section presented in the first measure is then developed further in measures 15-19.

**Figure 24. Prelude 4, Motivic Material of the A Section.**

The musical score for Figure 24 is divided into two systems. The first system, labeled 'Appassionato', is in 3/4 time and starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand has a whole rest, while the left hand plays a complex rhythmic pattern. The second system, labeled 'Nostalgico', is in 3/4 time and starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and 'non legato' articulation. The right hand plays a rapid, repetitive melodic line, while the left hand plays a simple Alberti bass accompaniment. The score includes performance instructions such as 'ad lib.', 'dim. e rit.', and 'Ped. (fino alla m. 7)'.

In the B section the melodic line in the right hand is written as rapid and repetitive thirty-second notes against a simple “Alberti bass” left-hand accompaniment. The impression, which this articulation suggests, is reminiscent of a domra. A domra is a mandolin-like, rounded, three or four stringed folk instrument, which is associated with Russian folk music and is a variant of a balalaika. It belongs to the same family of folk string instruments category found in Russia and Central Asia. Unlike balalaika, where the melody and the chords are usually strummed or plucked, on a domra a performer may sustain pitches of a melodic line through fast repetition of a melodic note on a single string. The Grove describes the balalaika as “a long-necked chordophone with a



These repetitive patterns in the right hand present the challenge of achieving a clear, even sound while preserving a light touch. Based on my research, I would suggest the best fingering for these passages as 2-1-3-1 with the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger always landing on the first note of the four-note groupings of the thirty-second notes and finishing on the thumb. This fingering helps to keep the arm in one position. The use of a slight rubato will allow the performer to preserve the melodic continuity through fast repetition of the notes through the larger intervals.

**Figure 28. Prelude 4, Example of Larger Intervals in Measures 8 and 9.**



As a suggestion to practice technical difficulties of the fast thirty-second note passages of the B section, a pianist may construct their own warm-up finger exercises based on the following examples: Dohnányi's *Essential Finger Exercises* exercise No. 15 and Hanon's *The Virtuoso Pianist* exercise No. 47.

Figure 29. Dohnányi's Essential Finger Exercises No. 15.

Nº 15

Figure 30. Hanon's The Virtuoso Pianist No. 47.

Notes repeated in groups of four.

Lift the fingers high and with precision throughout this exercise, without raising hand or wrist. When the first line is mastered, and not before, take up the rest of the exercise.

(M.M. ♩ = 60 to 120)

47.

The development of the motivic material of the A section, measure 1, presents a challenge for the left hand in measures 15-19. The tempo and the character, marked *con moto*, *appassionato*, are strictly dictated by the melodic material in the right hand. The left hand must be agile and clear to support the fast tempo and the tempestuous feel.

**Figure 31. Prelude 4, Example of the Development of the Motivic Material From the A Section in Measures 15 and 16.**

The image shows two staves of musical notation for measures 15 and 16. Measure 15 is marked 'Con moto, appassionato' and 'f'. The treble clef staff contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes. The bass clef staff contains a complex rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth notes. Measure 16 continues the melodic and rhythmic development. The score includes dynamic markings like 'f' and 'S<sup>o</sup> (con T.C.)' and technical markings like '3' for triplets.

To achieve this, the player should learn these passages in a slow tempo with a workable fingering. It would be prudent to practice it in etude-like manner.

### *Conclusion*

Based on the description and the analysis, Prelude 4 is categorized as difficult for its technical demands and complexity of expectations for clearly defined musical interpretation. Careful study of this Prelude will help the player with the execution of Preludes 18 and 24.

## **Prelude 8**

### *Description*

Prelude 8 is the most technically difficult of the set. The form of this Prelude is ternary: A (ms. 1-10) B (ms. 11-26) A (ms. 27-34). The player should be aware of two distinct textures of this Prelude. The texture of the A section is defined by the rapid

thirty-second note patterns equally divided between the hands. The section is then concluded with two measures of scale-like runs in rhythmically challenging subdivisions. The B section contains a clear melody marked by longer note values against the fantasia-like accompaniment divided between the hands. The A section returns in measure 27. The similar motivic materials are also found in Preludes 2 and 10.<sup>12</sup>

### *Pedagogic Analysis*

The fast tempo and turbulent nature of this Prelude create a notable technical challenge for a performer. In measures 3-4, 7-8, and 29-30, the main challenge lies in the rhythmic alignment of the left hand against the unevenly grouped runs in the right hand.

**Figure 32. Prelude 8, Example of Rhythmic Alignment of the Left Hand Against the Unevenly Grouped Runs.**



To ensure the rhythmic integrity of these two measures, the player must lead with the left hand. The suggested *ritenuto* in measures 4, 8, and 30 may be achieved by subdivision of the twenty-two-note grouping in the right hand into 6+6+5+5.

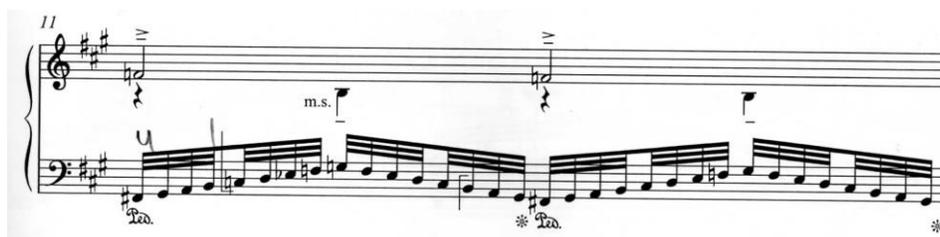
<sup>12</sup>Meily J. Mendez, “Polystylism and Motivic Connections in Lera Auerbach’s 24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41.” D.M.A. Thesis, the University of Arizona, Arizona, 2016.

**Figure 33. Prelude 8, Suggestion for Effective Grouping of the Twenty-Two-Note Grouping Run.**



The B section is the most technically difficult part of the Prelude. Both hands share the musical material presented in the top and the bottom staves. The melody and the rapid accompaniment is equally redistributed between both hands.

**Figure 34. Prelude 8, Example of the Redistribution of the Musical Material Between the Hands in the B Section.**



To execute correctly the unevenly assigned groupings in measures 13-16 of the accompaniment, it is important to construct an effective suitable fingering.

**Figure 35. Prelude 8, Example of the Fingering for the Unevenly Assigned Groupings in Measures 13-16.**

The image displays four staves of musical notation for measures 13 through 16. Each staff consists of a treble and bass clef. Handwritten annotations include:
 

- Measure 13: A red arrow points to the first measure. The treble clef has a handwritten 'm.s. (3 or 2-3 together)' above it. The bass clef has '5' and '4 3 2 1' written below it.
- Measure 14: A red arrow points to the second measure. The treble clef has a handwritten 'm.s. (3 or 2-3)' above it.
- Measure 15: The bass clef has '4 2 3 1' and '5' written below it.
- Measure 16: The bass clef has '3 2 1' written below it.

 Other markings include '10' and '9' in the bass clef, and 'm.s.' in the treble clef for measures 13, 14, and 16. Asterisks and 'Ped.' markings are also present in the bass clef of measures 13, 14, and 16.

In this section, a performer should isolate the arpeggiated figures, specifically in measures 15-18, and practice shaping these patterns in long sweeping gestures towards the strong beats. Use slightly flattened fingers and rotate the left hand towards the thumb and towards the top finger in the right hand while ascending, and vice versa on the descend. Avoid mechanic movement of individual fingers to prevent tension and to allow for the freedom of movement.

### ***Conclusion***

Due to the length of the Prelude, its fast tempo, and the demanding musical content, this Prelude is categorized as Most Demanding. It is imperative to pay close attention to two distinct characters of both sections, to clear execution of uneven groupings, and to the even redistribution of the musical material when it is shared by both hands.

### **Prelude 12**

#### ***Description***

Prelude 12 marks the second half of the 24 Preludes. The construction of this Prelude is: Introduction (ms. 1-2) A (ms. 3-6) B (ms. 7-12) Transition (ms. 13-14) C (ms.15-19) Transition (ms. 20-21) Coda (ms. 22-24). The *Allegro brutale* nature and the motoric toccata-like character of the sixteenth-note patterns presented throughout the piece create the urgent feeling of restlessness. There are no similar motivic ideas connecting this piece with other Preludes of the set.

#### ***Pedagogic Analysis***

The main challenge of this Prelude lies in the multi-layering of musical textures. In the A section, measures 3-6, it is difficult to bring out the melodic line in the top staff against the motoric patterns accentuated with the distinct rhythmic pulse presented by the accented quarter and eighth notes in the middle and the bottom staves.

**Figure 36. Prelude 12, Example of the Multi-Layering of Musical Textures in the A Section.**



In the B section, measures 7-12, the motoric character of the accompaniment changes. The challenge is to preserve the strongly accented melody in the top staff against the uneven rhythmic distribution of the new sixteenth-notes patterns between the bottom and the middle staves.

**Figure 37. Prelude 12, Uneven Distribution of the New Patterns in the B Section.**



In Prelude 12, the primary goal is to make sure that the pianist avoids tension in the forearms and applies rotation of the lower arm from the elbow. In the A section, to work out the rhythmic pulse of the accented inner voices, the performer should practice a free-fall of the thumbs on the accented notes in slow tempo. Once the evenness of sound

and the balance are achieved, the player can add the top melody. The player should also pay close attention to the time signature changes between 3/4 and 4/4. In the B section, the player should practice the evenness of the sound within the precise execution of rhythmic redistribution of the new sixteenth-note patterns.

The alignment between both hands in the Coda at measures 22 and 23, must be even to create the feeling of an uninterrupted smooth descending passage. To achieve this the player should lead each hand toward the next pattern that follows, ensuring the correct placement of thumbs and 5th fingers in both hands.

**Figure 38. Prelude 12, Coda.**



### *Conclusion*

The coordination of the hands, the clarity of the musical structure, the preservation of the strong rhythmic pulse, and the specific character associated with *Allegro brutale*, determine the high level of difficulty of this Prelude. The player is mainly challenged by the variety of ways Auerbach perpetuates the constant stream of the sixteenth-note pulse throughout the Prelude.

## Prelude 16

### *Description*

The form of Prelude 16 is Introduction (m. 1) Main Body (ms. 2-30) Coda (ms. 31-43). This Prelude bears a close resemblance to the third variation of Robert Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13*.

**Figure 39. Example of Variation No. 3  
From Schumann's Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13.**

6 (112)

Vivace.  $\text{♩} = 63$ .

**ETUDE III.**

*Pedale*

Auerbach uses the similar groupings and shape of the arpeggiated sixteenth notes in the right hand. Her use of unusually tonal and consonant harmonic progressions in this Prelude evoke homage to Schumann's piece.

**Figure 40. Prelude 16, Example of Similar Groupings and Shape  
of Arpeggiated Sixteenth Notes.**

One of the differences between the two works is Auerbach's note to the performer admonishing that the Prelude "should not sound technical,"<sup>13</sup> while Schumann's etude is designed to present a technical challenge for the right hand and to bring out the melody in the left hand. Another difference is that Schumann places the melody in the left hand (see Figure 36), allowing the right hand to remain detached and light. Auerbach disguises the melodic progression within the sixteenth-note patterns. In measures 2-11 and in measures 24-43 the left hand functions as a pedal point. Then in measures 12-21 the sixteenth-note patterns move to the left hand.

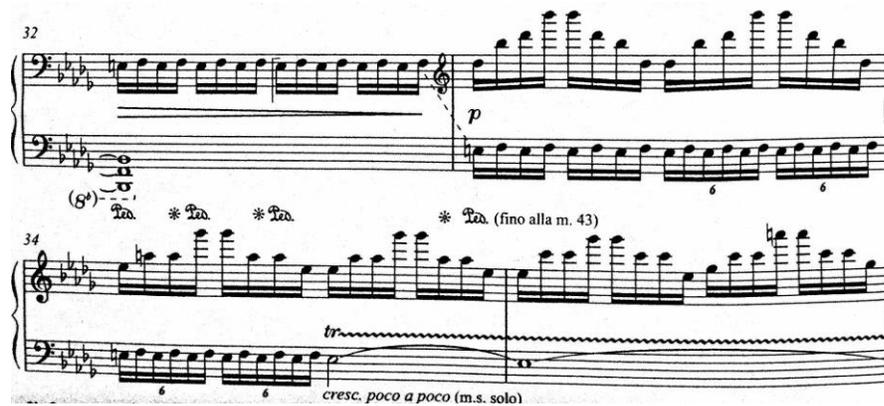
### *Pedagogic Analysis*

This Prelude presents several technical challenges. A performer should pay close attention to selecting a proper fingering to ensure fluidity of the sixteenth-note line. Since Auerbach requests that a pianist not make the Prelude sound "technical", this gives a player freedom to use a natural rubato where needed. A coordination challenge occurs between the hands in measures 33-37 where the left hand sixteenth notes turn into sextuplets and consequently into a trill against the continuous sixteenth note patterns in the right hand. The trill gradually evolves through a *crescendo* from *p* to *ff* for its duration. This is the only way a composer can notate a crescendo on one note for the piano.

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<sup>13</sup> Lera Auerbach, *24 Preludes for Pia* Hamburg: Musikverlag Hans Sikorski GmbH & Co. KG, 2006, 36.

**Figure 41. Prelude 16, Example of the Progression of the Trill in Measures 33-37.**



### *Conclusion*

In comparison with the other Most Demanding Preludes, this Prelude is perhaps not as challenging. Its main difficulty is achieving accuracy during the sixteenth-note sections, preserving the musical line, and executing the long trill precisely. Because of its easily approachable nature, this Prelude is one of the most popular ones of the set. The evidence of this can be found through a search on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

## **Prelude 18**

### *Description*

Prelude 18 is a monothematic through-composed piece that is evolving from a simple left figure into a complex composition. This Prelude presents elements of minimalistic and polyphonic writing. The underlying ostinato pattern of the left-hand is the unifying element of the piece. In the right hand, Auerbach uses rhythmic diminution

to progress from measure 6 to 14, reintroducing elements of the *Nostalgico* section of Prelude 4. In measures 19-23 she quotes measures 9-12 of Prelude 1.

### *Pedagogic Analysis*

While establishing the opening tempo, a player should be mindful of the *poco più mosso* section in measure 14. This is necessary for the preservation of the natural flow of the ostinato left-hand pattern against the rapid thirty-second notes in the right hand. Refer to Prelude 4 for practice suggestions of the repeated notes. The main challenge in measures 6-13 is the alignment between hands.

**Figure 42. Prelude 18, Measures 6-13.**

This challenge arises due to the rhythmic evolution and the layering of the musical material in the right hand. For the learning purposes, it is suggested to memorize the left-hand pattern first. A player should then practice the right hand in slow tempo to find comfort in projection of all individual voices. The goal is to voice clearly the complexity of texture in this section.

### ***Conclusion***

The complex rhythmic layering of all textures between hands, the understanding of the musical progression throughout the Prelude, and the clear execution of fast repeated thirty-second notes are the focal points of this composition. A player should be aware of the motivic musical connections with Preludes 1 and 4.

## **Prelude 21**

### ***Description***

Prelude 21 is written in three parts: A (ms. 1-4) B (ms. 5-10) C (ms. 11-19). The A section presents the first theme in a carillon-like character. The B section resembles toccata-like writing with a hidden folk-like melody in the right hand outlined by the longer note values. The C section is the combination of the two themes presented in sections A and B. The right hand, measures 11-16 of section C, combines the augmented version of the main theme from the A section against the musical material of the section B, presented in the middle staff. In the last three measures Auerbach uses the opening statement of the A section as a codetta-like ending.

### *Pedagogic Analysis*

This Prelude presents several technical and musical challenges. In the opening four measures a player must pay close attention to the intervals of a ninth, which in some cases may pose a strenuous stretch for someone with smaller hands. In such a case, a player must use Auerbach's suggestion of redistributing as many intervals between the hands as possible. In the B section measures 5-10, the difficulty is to bring out and to sustain the long melodic notes against fast staccato sixteenth notes.

**Figure 43. Prelude 21, Example of the Long Melodic Notes Against Fast Staccato Sixteenth Notes in Measures 5-10.**

The image displays two systems of musical notation for measures 5-10 of a piece. The top system, measures 5-6, is marked "Tema molto marcato". The right-hand staff features a melodic line with long notes circled in red, while the left-hand staff plays fast staccato sixteenth notes. The bottom system, measures 7-10, is marked "simile" and follows a similar pattern. Pedal markings are indicated in both hands across both systems.

To achieve clarity and finger independence it is suggested to begin with a five-finger pattern, ideally using a combination of white and black keys. Hold down one finger at the time, while the other fingers play the remaining four notes staccato at a slow tempo. This exercise may be particularly challenging when holding down the third and the fourth fingers. In this section the goal is to preserve the lightness of the sixteenth-note

articulations against the melodic line. Measures 11-19 present another challenge when the three juxtaposed themes define the musical structure of this section.

**Figure 44. Prelude 21, Example of the Three Juxtaposed Themes Defining Musical Structure of This Section in Measures 11-19.**

The image shows a musical score for measures 14 through 19 of Prelude 21. It consists of three staves: a treble clef staff at the top, a middle staff, and a bass clef staff at the bottom. The top staff contains a melodic line with notes and rests, marked with 'm.d.' (mezzo-dolce) and 'm.s.' (mezzo-sostenuto). The middle staff contains a more complex, rhythmic line with many sixteenth notes, also marked with 'm.d.' and 'm.s.'. The bottom staff contains a bass line with notes and rests, marked with 'loco' and '8va' (octave displacement). There are also some performance markings like 'v' (accents) and '\*' (trills or ornaments) scattered throughout the score.

The hand redistribution between all three parts, including the octave displacements, should be addressed individually and practiced separately. This is necessary for achieving the clarity of the three-voiced polyphonic structure.

### *Conclusion*

Prelude 21 is one of the more complex and most technically challenging Preludes of the set. The wide intervallic span, the fast toccata-like section, the hand redistributions, and multi-layered parts require a player to pay close attention to details and to develop a systematic approach to these individual issues.

## **Prelude 22**

### *Description*

Prelude 22 is written on three-staves throughout. The structure of this Prelude is: A (ms. 1-11) B (ms. 12-20) A1 (ms. 21-26). A1 is a short return of the A section material, which serves as a coda. The overall character of this Prelude is defined by the continuous presence of the sixteenth note motion. In the A section, it is achieved by the sixteenth-note displacement of the eighth-note motions between the top and the middle staves. The same applies to the return of the musical material in measures 21-24. In the B section, the sixteenth-note writing is clearly presented.

### *Pedagogic Analysis*

The challenge of this Prelude is to shape the melodic line of the middle voice against the repetitive displaced ostinato part of the top voice. In the Sikorski edition, which I am using for this analysis, it is important to notice a possible error in measures 6-9, where the middle staff is changed from bass clef to treble clef. None of the known recordings, including the one made by the composer herself, make that shift. To achieve the *piano cantabile* character of the melodic line of the A section, it is important to play the ostinato part of the top staff as *pp* as possible. The redistribution of the melody between both hands requires smooth execution. In the B section, the melody is moved to the top staff of the right hand, while the sixteenth-note accompaniment is redistributed between the bottom of the top and the middle staves.

In measures 15-20, the intervallic relationship between the bottom, middle, and the top voices of the hands is wider. This poses difficulty for a player with smaller hands.

**Figure 45. Prelude 22, Example of the Wider Span Between the Bottom, the Middle, and the Top Voices of the Hands in Measures 15-20.**

The musical score for measures 15-20 of Prelude 22 is presented in three staves. The top staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with a wide span between notes, marked *piu f*. The middle staff (bass clef) contains a repetitive sixteenth-note accompaniment, also marked *piu f*. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a simple bass line with a *Ped.* marking and asterisks. A large slur covers the top two staves across all measures.

In this section, it is important to keep the rotation from the lower arm into the top notes of the melody and redistributing the weight between the fingers in the left hand. The balance between the melody and the accompaniment must remain clear throughout this section. The repetitive sixteenth-note patterns should never be louder than the melody.

### *Conclusion*

The constant presence of the sixteenth-note movement, the complex hand redistribution, occasional wide span between the fingers, and the need to maintain the softer dynamics along with the clarity of the melodic line make this Prelude one of the challenging Preludes of the set.

## **Prelude 24**

### *Description*

The form of Prelude 24 resembles a Rondo: A (ms. 1-7) B (ms. 8-24) A (ms. 25-31) C (ms. 32-53) Transition (ms. 55-59) D (ms. 60-65) A (ms. 66-72) Coda (ms. 73-85).

The A section is built on a chordal progression using fanfare-like motivic material. In this section, Auerbach also cites the opening theme from Prelude 1. In the B section, she brings back a musical motive of the *Nostalgico* part of Prelude 4, which is further developed in a fantasia-like style. In the C section, new musical material is introduced. The main characteristic of this section is a frequent change between *più mosso* and *meno mosso*. The motivic material in the right hand in measures 32-39 resembles the sound of a music-box coinciding with the return of every *più mosso*. The D section presents the carillon-like theme from Prelude 21, followed by the final return of the A section in measure 66. The dramatic build and the climax of the Coda represents the ending of the Prelude and of the set.

### *Pedagogic Analysis*

For better understanding of this Prelude it is advised to become familiar with the previous Preludes, as several of them present significantly recognizable themes, which are cited here. Measures 8-13 of the B section present a challenge for the right hand similar to the *Nostalgico* section of Prelude 4. For practice suggestions refer to the Analysis of the Prelude 4 on page 23.

The sound of the C section resembles a music-box. Auerbach uses this effect in the sixth movement of the *Ten Dreams, Op. 45* for solo piano, written in the same year as

the Preludes. As in *Ten Dreams, Op. 45*, where Auerbach includes the effect to depict an awakening from a nightmare, it is possible that the similar expressive effect applies to section C of this Prelude.

**Figure 46. Prelude 24, The Music Box-Like Theme and *Più Mosso* and *Meno Mosso* Parts in the C Section.**

The image displays a musical score for Prelude 24, divided into three systems. The first system, starting at measure 32, is marked *più mosso* and *p*. It features a music box-like theme in the right hand and a steady pulse in the left hand. The second system, starting at measure 36, continues the theme. The third system, starting at measure 40, is marked *meno mosso* and *pp misterioso pesante*, showing a change in tempo and dynamics. The score is in 3/4 time and features a music box-like theme in the right hand and a steady pulse in the left hand.

The interpretive challenge is to create a vivid contrast between the *più mosso* and the *meno mosso* parts. See Appendix A for reference. In the *più mosso*, a player should use a light touch in the right hand and follow the shape of the two-bar phrases. In the *meno mosso* it is important to maintain a steady pulse and an even sound of the chords. Auerbach brings back the carillon-like theme from the opening of Prelude 21 in measures 60-65, as the musical material of the D section.

**Figure 47. Prelude 24, the Carillon-Like Theme in Measures 60-65.**



The execution of the intervals of the ninth in the right hand requires the same attention, as described in the analysis of the A section of Prelude 21 on page 39. The coda, measures 73-85, is comprised of repeated chords resembling chimes announcing the coming of the hour, starting from *pp*, as if from a distance, gradually increasing in volume to *fff* in measure 82. This deceptive culmination of nine “strokes” is abruptly interrupted by the fast thirty-second note passage in contrary motion in measure 82.

**Figure 48. Prelude 24, the Fast Thirty-Second Note Passage in Contrary Motion in Measure 82.**



This passage represents the final technical challenge of the Prelude. It is similar in effect to the last five measures of Mussorgsky’s “The Gnome” from his *Pictures at an Exhibition*. The theory regarding the similarity between the two passages is based on a

known fact that Auerbach programs her *24 Preludes for Piano, Op 41* and *Pictures at an Exhibition* back to back in her solo piano performances.

**Figure 49. The Last Five Measures of Mussorgsky's "The Gnome."**



The Prelude concludes with the last three remaining “strokes” in measures 84-85 completing, as one can suspect or speculate, the last strokes of the final hour.

### ***Conclusion***

When performing this Prelude, a pianist may use their own interpretation of the musical content, however they must be aware of the thematic connections with the previous Preludes. Learning this Prelude is facilitated by studying Preludes 1, 4, and 21, as they possess similar technical difficulties. These elements: the *crescendo* gradually built through repeated chords, the thirty-second note Coda passage, and the overall length, make this one of the Most Demanding Preludes.

## CHAPTER III

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this performance and pedagogic guide is to bring attention to Lera Auerbach's contribution to the 24 Prelude format and its invaluable addition to the contemporary solo piano repertoire. In this guide, I addressed technical issues within the Preludes, identified three different levels of difficulty within the set, offered a more detailed pedagogic analysis of the selected Preludes that represent the most challenging problems, and provided an insight into interpretation of this work from a pedagogic and performer's perspective.

Per my experience with the work and based on the pedagogic analysis, I concluded that the level of a pianist to perform this set of 24 Preludes must be equal to the graduate level of professional studies.

This set of Preludes is demanding for the following reasons:

- length of the work
- mental and physical endurance
- complex rhythmic layering of textures
- large intervallic spans
- bravura writing
- advanced independence of fingers
- strategic hand redistribution

- understanding of thematic connections between the individual Preludes
- understanding of the composer's nationalistic background and personal musical language

A shorter version of the Preludes is available to a pianist who does not wish to perform the entire set. After the completion of the *24 Preludes for solo piano, Op. 41*, Lera Auerbach reduced this work to a shorter *Suite for Piano, Op. 41a*. This fifteen-minute composition is a compilation of nine selected Preludes that are not organized in their original order:

1. Andantino (5 - Moderately Demanding)
2. Allegretto (14 - Moderately Demanding)
3. Presto (8 - Most Demanding)
4. Grave (18 - Most Demanding)
5. Allegro moderato (21 - Most Demanding)
6. Misterioso (20 - Least Demanding)
7. Allegro ma non troppo (16 - Most Demanding)
8. Adagio (17 - Least Demanding)
9. Grandioso (24 - Most Demanding)

For the analysis, I divided the Preludes into three categories based on the level of difficulty: Least Demanding, Moderately Demanding, and Most Demanding. This *Suite* combines all levels of difficulty, but since it is shorter in length, it is suitable for both undergraduate and graduate levels of performers.

The Least Demanding are Preludes 1, 6, 10, 11, 13, 17, 20, and 23. These Preludes present occasional technical challenges, but are easily approachable. The difficulties a player may encounter are:

- rhythmic integrity and diversity
- addition of humming of the melodic pitches during the performance
- alignment of the fugal counterpoint against the repetition of the musical material
- execution of the broken octaves indicated as grace notes

The Moderately Demanding are Preludes 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 14, 15, and 19. These Preludes present challenges in the following categories:

- complex rhythmic and polyphonic writing
- large intervallic leaps in both hands
- sophisticated voicing
- brilliant passagework
- evolution of musical textures
- clear articulation between hands
- proper use of the technique while executing the required character of the piece

The Most Demanding are Preludes 4, 8, 12, 16, 18, 21, 22, and 24. After a careful consideration, these Preludes were selected for the pedagogic and present difficulties in the following categories:

- technical demands and complexity
- length
- fast tempi

- wide intervallic span between the fingers
- rapid patterns and passages
- presence of uneven note groupings
- complex hand redistribution of the musical material
- demanding fingering
- complex rhythmic layering of multiple musical textures

It was my goal to create a pedagogic guide for *24 Preludes for Solo Piano, Op. 41* to help a performer to understand the thematic connections and to provide interpretive ideas. I also intended to bring the attention to the technical challenges within each Prelude and offered practice suggestions. I decided to divide the 24 Preludes into three categories based on the level of difficulty for the following reason: it provided a clear picture of the progressive nature of the entire set. Based on my analytical research it is my suggestion to commence learning the Preludes starting with the most demanding numbers. Those Preludes contain all technical and musical challenges a player will encounter while studying this work. After learning the Most Demanding Preludes, the remaining pieces are easier to learn.

Those Preludes that can stand alone as individual pieces can be performed separately. However, taken into consideration the strong thematic connections between the Preludes, the work is best performed in its entirety as *24 Preludes for Piano, Op. 41*, or as *Suite for Piano, Op. 41a*.

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APPENDIX A

PRELUDES SELETED FOR PEDAGOGIC ANALYSIS

Prelude 4

4 **Appassionato**

*f* *ad lib.* *dim. e rit.*

1da. (fino alla m. 7)

2 **Nostalgico**

*pp non legato* *wie im Traum / as in a dream*

4 *sempre simile*

7

10 *dolce*

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13 *accel. poco* *rit.*

15 *Con moto, appassionato*

*f*

8<sup>a</sup> \* (con Leb.)

16

(8<sup>a</sup>)

17

(8<sup>a</sup>)

18

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19 *S<sup>z</sup>*  
*ff*

20 *rit. poco*

21 *ad lib.*  
*rit.*  
*non legato*  
*dim. subito*

22 *Nostalgico*  
*p*

23

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24 *8<sup>a</sup>* *20*

25 *rit.*

26 *8<sup>a</sup>* *veloce* *p*

27 *8<sup>a</sup>*

30

Detailed description: This musical score consists of four systems of piano music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system (measures 24-25) features a treble staff with a rapid eighth-note pattern and a bass staff with a simple quarter-note accompaniment. A dashed line labeled '8<sup>a</sup>' spans the treble staff. The second system (measures 25-26) shows a treble staff with a wavy line and a few notes, and a bass staff with a simple accompaniment. A 'rit.' marking is placed above the treble staff. The third system (measures 26-27) has a treble staff with a very fast eighth-note pattern and a bass staff with a simple accompaniment. A dashed line labeled '8<sup>a</sup>' spans the treble staff, and 'veloce' and 'p' markings are present. The fourth system (measures 27-30) continues the treble staff's eighth-note pattern and ends with a double bar line. A dashed line labeled '8<sup>a</sup>' spans the treble staff. A page number '30' is centered below the fourth system.

# Prelude 8

Presto

8

*f*

Tab. \*

2

*mp*

senza Tab.

3

*f*

Tab. \*

4

Tab. \*

5

*f*

Peda \*

6

*mp*

senza Peda

7

*f*

Peda \*

8

*marcato molto*

22

Peda \*

9

*f*

Peda \*

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20 *m.s.*

Musical score for measure 20. The system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The upper staff contains a melodic line with a half note followed by a quarter note. The lower staff contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with a '7' indicating a seventh fret. The dynamic marking *mf* is at the beginning, and *m.s.* is above the first note. The system ends with an asterisk.

21

Musical score for measure 21. The system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature has three sharps. The upper staff contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The lower staff contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with a '7' indicating a seventh fret. The dynamic marking *mf* is at the beginning. The system ends with an asterisk.

22

Musical score for measure 22. The system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature has three sharps. The upper staff contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The lower staff contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with a '7' indicating a seventh fret. The dynamic marking *mf* is at the beginning. The system ends with an asterisk.

23 *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

Musical score for measure 23. The system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature has three sharps. The upper staff contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The lower staff contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with a '7' indicating a seventh fret. The dynamic marking *mf* is at the beginning, and *cresc. poco a poco* is written below the staff. The system ends with an asterisk.

24 *m.s.*

Musical score for measure 24. The system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature has three sharps. The upper staff contains a melodic line with a half note followed by a quarter note. The lower staff contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with a '7' indicating a seventh fret. The dynamic marking *mf* is at the beginning, and *m.s.* is above the first note. The system ends with an asterisk.

25

Musical notation for measures 25-26. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in the key of D major. Measure 25 features a piano (p) dynamic marking and a fermata over the first two notes of the upper staff. Measure 26 continues the melodic line in the upper staff and has a piano (p) dynamic marking. Both measures contain complex rhythmic patterns with slurs and accents.

26

Musical notation for measures 26-27. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in the key of D major. Measure 26 features a piano (p) dynamic marking and a fermata over the first two notes of the upper staff. Measure 27 continues the melodic line in the upper staff and has a piano (p) dynamic marking. Both measures contain complex rhythmic patterns with slurs and accents.

27

Musical notation for measures 27-28. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in the key of D major. Measure 27 features a piano (p) dynamic marking and a fermata over the first two notes of the upper staff. Measure 28 continues the melodic line in the upper staff and has a piano (p) dynamic marking. Both measures contain complex rhythmic patterns with slurs and accents.

28

Musical notation for measures 28-29. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in the key of D major. Measure 28 features a piano (p) dynamic marking and a fermata over the first two notes of the upper staff. Measure 29 continues the melodic line in the upper staff and has a piano (p) dynamic marking. Both measures contain complex rhythmic patterns with slurs and accents.

29

Musical notation for measures 29-30. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in the key of D major. Measure 29 features a piano (p) dynamic marking and a fermata over the first two notes of the upper staff. Measure 30 continues the melodic line in the upper staff and has a piano (p) dynamic marking. Both measures contain complex rhythmic patterns with slurs and accents.

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30

22

\*

31

*ff*

9

8<sup>a</sup>

32

9

(8<sup>a</sup>)

33

9

7

T20. \*\*)

8<sup>a</sup>

34

7

*ff*

\*

\*) In T. 33-34 maximal „Viertelpedal“, falls notwendig. / In m. 33-34 a „Quarter-Pedal“ may be used, if any at all.

# Prelude 12

**Allegro brutale**

12

*f*

8'

3

*f molto marcato*

(8)

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5

Measures 5 and 6 of a musical score. The score is written for three staves: a single bass staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass) below. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 5 features a half note chord in the top staff, followed by eighth-note patterns in the middle and bottom staves. Measure 6 continues with similar patterns. A dashed line labeled (8<sup>a</sup>) is positioned below the bottom staff.

7

Measures 7 and 8 of a musical score. The score is written for three staves: a single bass staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass) below. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 7 has a whole rest in the top staff and eighth-note chords in the middle and bottom staves. Measure 8 continues with similar patterns. A dashed line labeled (8<sup>a</sup>) is positioned below the bottom staff.

9

Measures 9 and 10 of a musical score. The score is written for three staves: a single bass staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass) below. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 9 features a half note chord in the top staff and eighth-note chords in the middle and bottom staves. Measure 10 continues with similar patterns. A dashed line labeled (8<sup>a</sup>) is positioned below the bottom staff.

11

Measures 11 and 12 of a musical score. The score is written for three staves: a single bass staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass) below. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 11 features a half note chord in the top staff and eighth-note chords in the middle and bottom staves. Measure 12 continues with similar patterns. A dashed line labeled (8<sup>a</sup>) is positioned below the bottom staff.

13

(S\*)

15

*Pia.*

18

*dim.* *p*

20

*f*

(\*)

22

(Pia.)

(S\*)

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12

mp

Ta \* Ta \* Ta \* Ta \* simile

Detailed description: This system contains measures 12 and 13. The music is in a bass clef with a key signature of three flats. Measure 12 features a piano accompaniment of eighth notes and a vocal line with a single note. Measure 13 continues the accompaniment and has a vocal line with a note marked 'simile'. The dynamic is marked 'mp'.

14

cresc. poco a poco

Detailed description: This system contains measures 14 and 15. The music is in a bass clef with a key signature of three flats. Measure 14 features a piano accompaniment of eighth notes and a vocal line with a note. Measure 15 continues the accompaniment and has a vocal line with a note. The dynamic is marked 'cresc. poco a poco'.

16

Ta \* Ta \* Ta \* Ta \*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 16 and 17. The music is in a bass clef with a key signature of three flats. Measure 16 features a piano accompaniment of eighth notes and a vocal line with a note. Measure 17 continues the accompaniment and has a vocal line with a note. The dynamic is marked 'mp'.

18

Ta \* Ta \* Ta \* Ta \*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 18 and 19. The music is in a bass clef with a key signature of three flats. Measure 18 features a piano accompaniment of eighth notes and a vocal line with a note. Measure 19 continues the accompaniment and has a vocal line with a note. The dynamic is marked 'mp'.

20

Ta \* Ta \* Ta \*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 20 and 21. The music is in a bass clef with a key signature of three flats. Measure 20 features a piano accompaniment of eighth notes and a vocal line with a note. Measure 21 continues the accompaniment and has a vocal line with a note. The dynamic is marked 'mp'.

22

f cresc.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 22 and 23. The music is in a bass clef with a key signature of three flats. Measure 22 features a piano accompaniment of eighth notes and a vocal line with a note. Measure 23 continues the accompaniment and has a vocal line with a note. The dynamic is marked 'f cresc.'.

24 *più f* *cresc. poco a poco*

26 *espr.*

28 *ff* Cluster cromatico F-A<sup>1</sup>

30 *ff pesante*

32 *p*

34 *tr* *cresc. poco a poco (m.s. solo)*

\*) Ossia: *poco rit.* in mm. 30-32, *poco meno mosso* in m. 33.  
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8<sup>a</sup>

*p sempre*

*f*

39

*tr. tragico*

*mf*

*p*

*ff*

8<sup>a</sup>

\*

Detailed description: This musical score consists of two systems. The first system (measures 38-40) features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The vocal line has a dashed line above it labeled '8<sup>a</sup>'. The piano accompaniment has a dynamic marking of 'p sempre' and a crescendo leading to a fortissimo 'f' dynamic. The second system (measures 41-42) features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The vocal line has a trill marking 'tr. tragico' and a dynamic marking of 'mf'. The piano accompaniment has a dynamic marking of 'ff' and a dynamic marking of 'p'. A dashed line below the piano accompaniment is labeled '8<sup>a</sup>'. The system ends with a double bar line and an asterisk '\*'. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4.

# Prelude 18

**Grave**

18

*legato*  
*p*

4

*p pesante e tenuto*      *cresc. poco a poco*

8

*mf*      *cresc. poco a poco*

*Tea \* Tea \* Tea \**

11

*Tea \* simile*

13

**poco più mosso \*)**

*f*

*Tea \* Tea \**

\*) Fast unmerklicher Tempowechsel. / This tempo change should be almost unnoticeable.

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*sempre simile*

15

18 *ff pesante*

21 *tr*

24 *f dim.*

27 *mf dim.* *mp dim.* *p*

Tea \* Tea \*

8<sup>va</sup> Tea \* Tea \* Tea \* Tea \*

(8<sup>va</sup>) Tea \* Tea \*

(8<sup>va</sup>)

# Prelude 21

**Allegro moderato**

21 *ff*

*S<sup>1</sup>*  
*Tra* (fino alla m.5)

3

*(S<sup>2</sup>)* \*

5 *Tema molto marcato*

*Tra* \* *Tra* \* *Tra* \*

7 *simile*

*Tra* \* *Tra* \*

9

*Tra* \* *Tra* \* *Tra* \* *Tra* \* *Tra* \*

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11

m.s.  
m.s.  
m.d. loco  
m.d. loco

13

loco

14

m.d.  
m.s.  
loco  
m.d.  
loco

15

loco

H.S. 8536



6

Musical score for measures 6-7. Treble clef, key signature of two flats, 7/4 time signature. The right hand has a melodic line with eighth notes. The left hand has a bass line with a long note in measure 6 and a half note in measure 7. Pedal markings "Ta" and "\*" are present.

8

Musical score for measures 8-9. Treble clef, key signature of two flats, 7/4 time signature. The right hand continues the melodic line. The left hand has a long note in measure 8 and a half note in measure 9. Pedal markings "Ta" and "\*" are present.

9

Musical score for measures 9-10. Treble clef, key signature of two flats, 7/4 time signature. The right hand continues the melodic line. The left hand has a long note in measure 9 and a half note in measure 10. A "dim." marking is present in measure 9. Pedal markings "Ta" and "\*" are present.

10

Musical score for measures 10-11. Treble clef, key signature of two flats, 7/4 time signature. The right hand continues the melodic line. The left hand has a long note in measure 10 and a half note in measure 11. Pedal markings "Ta" and "\*" are present.

H.S. 8536

12

*p*

*m.d.*

*m.s.*

\* Ta

13

*mf espr.*

Ta \*

Ta \*

14

*f*

*f*

Ta \*

Ta \*

Ta \*

Ta \*

16

*f*

Ta \*

Ta \*

Ta \*

Ta \*

H.S. 8536

18

*piu f*

*piu f*

Ta \* Ta \* Ta \* Ta \* Ta \*

20

*p sub dolce*

*pp*

*p sub*

*p*

rit. a tempo sempre simile (B/A)

Ta \* Ta \* Ta \* Ta \* Ta \*

22

8<sup>a</sup> Ta \* Ta \* Ta \*

24

rit.

(8<sup>a</sup>) Ta \* Ta \* Ta \*

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# Prelude 24

**Grandioso**

24

*ff*

3

3

3

4

*m.s.*

*m.s.*

*m.s.*

*m.d.*

7

*m.s.*

*pp*

(8<sup>a</sup>)

10

*P*

*sempre simile*

*ff*

\* *ff* \*

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13

*Ta* \* *Ta* \* *Ta* \*

*più p*

15

*p* *più p*

16

*mp*

17

*mp*

*m.d.*

*mp* *p*

18

*mp*

*m.d.*

*mp* *p*

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19

*Tea* \*

20

*piu p*

*S<sup>c</sup> Tea* \* *Tea* \* *Tea* \* *Tea*

22

*(S<sup>c</sup>) Tea* \* *Tea* \* *Tea* \* *Tea*

24

*rit.* *a tempo*

*pp* *ff*

*(S<sup>c</sup>) Tea* \* *Tea* \* *Tea* \* *Tea* \*

27

*Tea* \* *Tea* \*

*S<sup>c</sup> Tea* \* *Tea* \*

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(S<sup>4</sup>)  
*And.* (fino alla m. 66)

**più mosso**

(S<sup>4</sup>)

**meno mosso**

**più mosso**

(S<sup>4</sup>)

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48 **più mosso** *pp* *S<sup>a</sup>* **meno mosso**

52 **più mosso** *p* *mp* *S<sup>a</sup>*

57 *mf* *f* *ff* *S<sup>a</sup>*

62 *S<sup>a</sup>* *S<sup>a</sup>*

65 **Tempo I (ad lib.)** *m.d.* *m.s.* *S<sup>a</sup>*

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68

71

75

82

83

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