

S e r g e i

R A C H M A N I N O V

P R E L U D E S

O p u s 2 3 N ° 1 0 G ♭ major



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# Sergei RACHMANINOV

1873 - 1943

## P R E L U D E S Opus 23 N° 10 G<sup>b</sup>major

The composition of 24 preludes covering all the major and minor keys is a huge challenge and Rachmaninov's contribution was spread over 20 years. As an active and successful stage artist at the piano and on the podium, time for composing was no doubt limited, unlike Debussy who completed his 24 Preludes in less than 6 months.

The ten works which comprise opus 23 were created over two years in the early 1900s whilst staying at the Hotel America in Moscow. Dedicated to his mentor and colleague Alexander Siloti, Rachmaninov believed that these works were far superior to his youthful first prelude, but audiences always clamoured for the "Bells of Moscow", much to his intense irritation.



S i l o t i & R a c h m a n i n o v

With a palette reminiscent of Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov closes the opus 23 preludes with a lyrical nocturne. Moving between solo, duet and trio, we encounter Bach-like problems of counterpoint whilst projecting long and delicate melodies, a challenge which should not be underestimated. At **44-53** the final reflective utterance over the tonic pedal point is divinely inspired.

This final prelude, sharing the same tonic as the first, is relatively brief, its brevity underlining a statement made by the composer some thirty years later, in December 1941, when he gave a pertinent interview to a music magazine named *The Etude*: “When composing, I find it of great help to have in mind a book just recently read, or a beautiful picture, or a poem. Sometimes a definite story is kept in mind, which I try to convert into sound without disclosing the source of my inspiration. I find that musical ideas come to me more easily when I have a definite non-musical subject to describe. This is particularly true in writing a shorter piece for the piano. A small piece can become as lasting a

masterpiece as a large work. The artist learns, after long experience, that it is more difficult to be simple than to be complicated.”

Given that the composer was born in 1873, an age of great artistic individuality, it is not surprising that he typically performed without wholly respecting the score. His choice of tempi is quite idiosyncratic and at **40** and **58** this edition includes some of the more effective deviations. Phrasing, dynamics and agogic markings have been sometimes modified; a zealous student will need to consult the original Russian publication by Gutheil or Robert Threlfall’s Boosey & Hawkes 1992 edition.

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metronome bracketed tempo from the original edition

**12 & 16** editorial acciaccatura

**27-28** modification of time signature

**39-41** modification of time signature

**40** logical repetition of B flat according to the composer’s recording

**44** editorial bass octave addition with sostenuto pedal

**58** dynamic according to the composer’s recording

# PRELUDE

Op 23 N° 10

*largo* [ ♩ = 50 ]

Musical notation for measures 1-4. The piece begins with a treble clef and a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand, marked *p*. The second measure continues the triplet, marked *mf*. The bass line consists of a single eighth note in the first measure, followed by a half note in the second measure, and then a half note in the third measure. The fourth measure shows a half note in the bass line.

Musical notation for measures 5-8. The right hand continues with a triplet of eighth notes, with fingerings 2, 1, 3 indicated. The bass line continues with a half note in the fifth measure, followed by a half note in the sixth measure, and then a half note in the seventh measure. The eighth measure shows a half note in the bass line.

Musical notation for measures 9-12. The right hand features a triplet of eighth notes in the ninth measure, followed by a half note in the tenth measure, and then a half note in the eleventh measure. The bass line continues with a half note in the ninth measure, followed by a half note in the tenth measure, and then a half note in the eleventh measure. The twelfth measure shows a half note in the bass line.

Musical notation for measures 13-16. The right hand continues with a half note in the thirteenth measure, followed by a half note in the fourteenth measure, and then a half note in the fifteenth measure. The bass line continues with a half note in the thirteenth measure, followed by a half note in the fourteenth measure, and then a half note in the fifteenth measure. The sixteenth measure shows a half note in the bass line.

Musical notation for measures 17-20. The right hand begins with a half note in the seventeenth measure, followed by a half note in the eighteenth measure, and then a half note in the nineteenth measure. The bass line continues with a half note in the seventeenth measure, followed by a half note in the eighteenth measure, and then a half note in the nineteenth measure. The twentieth measure shows a half note in the bass line.

*poco a poco accelerando*

*m.d.*

*pp*

*m.d.*

*poco a poco crescendo*

Musical score for measures 21-25. The piece is in a key with three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a 3/4 time signature. The music features a steady upward melodic line in the bass clef and a more complex, arpeggiated texture in the treble clef. Measure 21 starts with a piano dynamic. The tempo is marked *poco a poco crescendo*. There are fingerings of 2 and 3 indicated in the treble clef.

Musical score for measures 26-30. The key signature changes to two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). Measure 26 is marked with a piano dynamic. Measure 27 features a section marked with a large number '6' and a fermata. Measure 28 is marked *ff* (fortissimo). Measure 29 is marked *rit* (ritardando). Measure 30 ends with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic and the instruction *m.d.* (morendo). There are accents and fingerings of 2 and 3 in the treble clef, and a fermata in the bass clef.

*tempo primo*

Musical score for measures 29-32. The key signature is two flats. Measure 29 is marked *3* (triple). Measure 30 is marked *p* (piano). Measure 31 is marked *rit* (ritardando). Measure 32 ends with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic and the instruction *m.d.* (morendo). The music features a descending melodic line in the bass clef and a more complex texture in the treble clef. There are accents and fingerings of 5, 3, 4, and 3 in the bass clef.

*a tempo*

Musical score for measures 33-36. The key signature is two flats. Measure 33 is marked *3* (triple). Measure 34 is marked *2* (double). Measure 35 is marked *5* (quintuplet). Measure 36 is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). The music features a descending melodic line in the bass clef and a more complex texture in the treble clef. There are accents and fingerings of 4, 5, 2, 1, and 5 in the bass clef.

37

*f* *p*

1

40

*mf* *p*

*mf* *p*

44

*pp* *p*

Sost. Ped

\*

47

50

53

*p*

*mf*

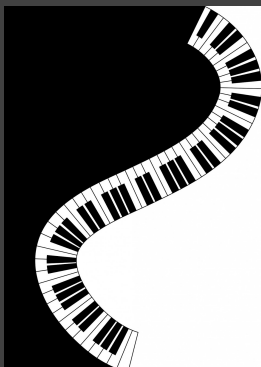
...\*

56

*rit*

*m.s.*

\* *p*



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*Opus 23 N° 10 G flat major*

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