

Dr Alison Hood

# CHOPIN IN PARIS THE 1830s



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Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina  
Plac Piłsudskiego 9  
00-078 Warszawa  
(+48 22) 8265391, 8262475  
e-mail: [nifc@nifc.pl](mailto:nifc@nifc.pl)  
[www.chopin.nifc.pl](http://www.chopin.nifc.pl)

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ALISON HOOD

## TONAL AND RHYTHMIC HIDDEN REPETITION IN CHOPIN'S PRELUDE, OP. 28 NO. 14

The analytical approach of this paper synthesises recent extensions of Schenkerian theory that make explicit the rhythmic implications of Schenker's theory of pitch structure.

While the method may be regarded as an extension of Heinrich Schenker's analytical approach, its specific combination of four aspects distinguishes this synthesis from previous analytical approaches: attention to the rhythms created by pitch events on all structural levels; a detailed account of the musical surface; 'strict use' of analytical notation following guidelines offered by Steve Larson; and a continual concern with what have been called 'strategies' or 'premises'. This approach thus builds on the work of such authors as William Rothstein, Carl Schachter and John Rink, and, like their work, it raises interpretative questions of central interest to performers. This synthesis illuminates Chopin's compositional style, clarifies aspects of his compositional evolution, reveals 'hidden' structures and rhythmic designs, and poses questions useful to performers preparing an interpretation.

When this method is applied to selected Preludes (e.g. Op. 28 Nos. 5, 12, 14, 16, 21 and 22) a new picture of the Preludes emerges. Analysis of Preludes that are not as strongly 'closed' as some other pieces not only illuminates the role of closure and motive in those pieces, but also raises interesting questions about the implications of finding an *Ursatz* in such pieces. This method also demonstrates how each Prelude projects a different affect through the use of compositional techniques such as elision, reinterpretation, and tonal and metric ambiguity. It reveals hidden repetitions that have a durational as well as tonal aspect. Rhythmic techniques are used in all of these Preludes to highlight tonal events,

but the overall phrase structure and pace are dictated by these tonal events. In all of these pieces there is a relationship between foreground and background structure in both its rhythmic and tonal aspects. There is also an interrelationship between rhythmic and tonal structure at all levels. It could be surmised, therefore, that there is an analogy between metric and tonal processes in these Preludes.

#### PRELUDE NO. 14

This paper focuses on Chopin's E flat minor Prelude, which provides a fine example of how rhythmic and tonal structure are inextricably linked in Chopin's compositions. Analysis of Prelude No. 14 will include discussion of linear intervallic patterns, hidden repetition, displacement, grouping, rhythmic ambiguity, dynamics and form. It will conclude with a brief discussion of performance issues, also referring to Schenker's own comments on the performance of this piece.<sup>1</sup>

As can be seen from the voice-leading graph of this Prelude, the main harmonic motion is relatively simple: from the theme in the tonic to the theme in the dominant minor in bar 5 before returning to the tonic in bar 11 and moving to  $ii^{66}$  as a dominant preparation in bar 15 before the bass moves  $iv^7-V-i$  in bars 16–17. What lends this piece its sense of direction, however, is the use of linear intervallic patterns (LIPs) that lead to more stable points of arrival. Level B on the graph shows that the intervals of a fifth and a sixth are used in LIPs to reach the dominant. However, increased movement caused by the reaching-over of a seventh in bars 3 and 4 adds intensity to this motion. The notated dynamics also support this building intensity. Increased chromaticism from bar 7 takes the form of augmented sixth chords in the first half of the bar that resolve towards the end of the bar—for example, the first-inversion German sixth in bar 7 ( $A\flat, C\flat, D\sharp, F\flat$ ) resolves to first-inversion  $E\flat$  by the end of that bar. The resulting LIP is a series of sixths that concludes at the end of bar 10. Within this LIP, however, is a pattern of dissonance-resolution that subdivides these sixths into pairs. What this highlights is an expanded

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<sup>1</sup> The musical examples for this Prelude use the time signature and dynamic markings of Ekier and Henle, with pitch spellings from Paderewski and EMB. Points of difference in enharmonic spelling will be noted as they arise.

hidden repetition on a deeper level of the bass movement in the first bar of the piece. A voice-leading reduction of this section is shown in Example 1.

Example 1. Voice-leading reduction of the Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14, bars 5–10.



When the theme returns in the tonic, there follows an LIP of sixths that leads into a  $iv^7-V-i$  cadence. This is not a straightforward cadence, however, as it moves directly from  $V_4^6$  to  $i$ . This moment of closure will be discussed later. Although the surface of this piece sounds relatively complex, the underlying tonal plan is straightforward. The apparent chromatic and rhythmic complexity results from the interaction between the LIPs in this piece and the use of grouping. The following section discusses grouping and metre. A rhythmic reduction of the piece clarifies the changes in movement throughout the piece. This reduction normalises the quaver displacement throughout the piece but retains the distinction between dotted crotchet or crotchet movement—notated here as crotchets and triplet crotchets respectively.

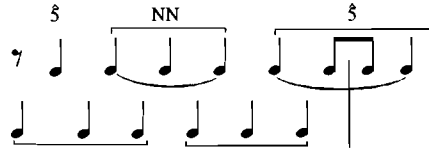
On first inspection, the rhythm of this piece could be viewed as relatively simple. Both hands are playing in unison and move in quavers throughout. The time signature is simple duple time and the piece is marked *Allegro*. Notationally, it is written in 12/8 time, with the grouping of quavers in pairs implying 6/4, resulting in a bar-preserving (or even half-bar-preserving) polymetre:

Example 2. Grouping in bar 1 of the Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14.



The bass of bar 1 may be seen as three-crotchet groups,  $E_b-G_b-E_b$ ,  $D^{\sharp}-F-D^{\sharp}$ , outlining the first and third beats of the bar. The top line moves after the bass note each time: on the second quaver at the smallest level, and in groups of three offbeat crotchets starting on the second and fourth beats of the bar, as if answering the three crotchets in the bass.

Example 3. Grouping of outer voices in bar 1 of the Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14.



Opus 28, No14: Graph D

The top voice highlights  $\hat{s}$  ( $B\flat$ ) with neighbour motion from  $C\flat$ . It then moves  $C\flat-C\sharp E\flat-D\flat$ , and, in sequence,  $E\flat-E\sharp G\flat-F$ . Looking at the rhythmic reduction, it can be seen that increased movement is caused by the change in the LIPs. Chromatic inflection in the first half of the bar results in a triplet effect, and a reaching-over of the seventh continues this in the second half of the bar, as both the fifth and seventh resolve to the sixth. Here we see an example of the co-dependency of the tonal and the rhythmic organisation in this piece. This increase in tonal and rhythmic movement shifts the harmony into the dominant minor,  $B\flat$ . A repeat of the opening begins in bar 5, with emphasis on  $\hat{s}$  ( $F$ ) with its upper-neighbour in the dominant minor key.

Example 4. Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14, bars 1–4, with grouping annotations.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> The penultimate quaver of bar 3 is notated as  $B\flat$  by Henle and Ekier, in keeping with the original. Paderewski justifies the enharmonic change thus: 'The notation at this point seems rather to demand an A, as a passing note between  $A\flat$  (the ninth note of this bar) and  $B\flat$  (the third note of the following

Example 5. Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14, bars 5–10, with grouping annotations

The movement increases again from bar 7, as the augmented sixths (German in bars 7 and 9, French in bars 8 and 10) raise the tonal tension, and the seventh again reaches over in the latter half of the bar, resulting in a duple followed by a triple pattern, as can be seen in the accompanying rhythmic reduction. In the top voice,  $F^{\sharp}$  falls through  $E^{\flat}$  to  $D^{\flat}$ . This third continues down to  $C^{\sharp}$  in the following bar. This repeats in sequence over bars 9–10 from  $E^{\flat}$  down to  $B^{\flat}$   $\hat{5}$ . This outlines on a much broader scale, and with chromatic adjustment, the neighbour motif of the opening, by emphasising the pitches  $C^{\sharp}$ – $B^{\flat}$ .

In Example 1, we saw the hidden repetition in these few bars of the bass from the opening. This small section therefore forms a hidden repetition of both voices from the opening of the piece—a fact that is very hard to hear with the added dissonance of the augmented sixths. In bars 8–9, the top voice moves  $D^{\flat}$ – $C^{\sharp}$ – $E^{\flat}$ , changing direction at the join of sequences in the bass, which is consequently highlighted. The movement of the top voice during the extended sequences in bars 7–10 blurs the dotted crotchet emphasis that arose from the alternating three-crotchet groups in both voices. This remains until the resumption of the theme and gives extra strength to the return of the tonic and to main-beat emphasis. Bar 10 loses the seventh, thus slowing the pace of movement, through which it prepares for the return of the theme and its slower voice leading.

bar). Riemann uses this notation in his edition of this Prelude'. From Paderewski, 'Commentary' in *Chopin Complete Works: Preludes*, 22nd edn (Kraków: PWM, 1981), 69.

This can be seen in the rhythmic reduction as duple motion takes over from triplet motion in the second half of bar 10.

After the opening returns in the tonic in bar 11, another LIP connects to the dominant ( $ii^{o6}$ ) preparation in bar 15. Once again, rhythmic and pitch structure combine to create a sense of building intensity. As the line ascends, added chromaticism accelerates the soprano's climb, and once again the notated dynamics support this combination of rhythmic and tonal effects. A hairpin crescendo accompanies this accelerated movement as crotchet movement replaces larger group durations of dotted minims.

Example 6. Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14, bars 11–14, with grouping annotations<sup>3</sup>

The bass descends  $A\flat-G\flat-F-E\flat$  in bar 15. The top voice has three  $C\flat$ s beginning on the second quaver of the bar.  $A\flat$  is heard once before the top voice remains on  $G\flat$  for eight crotchets in bars 15–16. The effect of bar 15 at the climax of the *crescendo* is of perceived acceleration, due to the faster movement of the bass in crotchets—strengthening the pentametre. The bass returns to half-bar movement under the eight  $G\flat$ s. In bar 17, the bass rests on a tonic pedal, over which the top voice plays  $B\flat-C\flat-D\flat$  on the second of each quaver pair—enhancing the polymetric effect and subjecting this concurrent metre to delayed accentual shifting. This stresses  $\hat{5}$  once again and intensifies the feeling of syncopation. The top voice sounds this rise of a third once more and the  $D\flat$  is repeated before descending back to  $B\flat \hat{5}$ . This provides a broadening-out and

<sup>3</sup> Paderewski and EMB modify the spellings of the original pitches in bar 14. The original notates  $E\flat$  on the fourth and sixth quavers, and  $F\flat$  on the tenth quaver of that bar. Paderewski's modifies this notation 'in accordance with the harmonic movement', Paderewski, 'Commentary', 69.



extension before the final bar, and is accompanied by a hairpin *diminuendo*. These effects can be seen more clearly in the rhythmic reduction, as triplet movement seems to predominate.

The descent in the bass in bar 15 accentuates the first of each quaver pair. The ascents in the top voice in bar 17 move on the second of each pair, thereby enhancing the syncopation. The curtailment of the last B $\flat$  in the top voice to one quaver realigns it with the bass. In the final bar, the two voices converge on the downbeat on unison E $\flat$ . The movement of the soprano voice from A $\flat$  to B $\flat$  to E $\flat$  recalls the bass of bars 16–17.

Example 7. Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14, bars 15–19, with grouping annotations

In summary, each quarter bar is emphasised by the general movement of the top and bass voices in dotted minims subdivided into crotchet triplets (shown with slurs in Example 8). On a smaller scale, the movement is in pairs of quavers, providing a 6/4 metre. The bass sounds on the first of each quaver pair while the top voice enters on each offbeat.

Example 8. Smaller-scale movement in the Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14

Therefore, dotted crotchet beats are accentuated in the interaction of larger group durations between the voices. However, the 6/4

organisation and the resultant polymetre are still audible. This 6/4 metre gradually comes to the fore towards the end, with crotchet movement accentuated on the beat in the bass in bar 15, and off the beat in bars 17–18 in the upper voice. The convergence of the two voices on the beat occurs in the final bar. The emergence of 6/4 gives the effect of acceleration and emphasis towards the end of the Prelude.

The main metric device used in this piece is the polymetric play on 2/2 versus 6/4 time and dotted crotchets versus crotchets throughout, lending shape to the Prelude, clarity to the theme each time, ambiguity to developmental sequences, and excitement and drive towards the ending. This metric play results from the use of different linear intervallic patterns throughout the piece and is thus totally interdependent with the voice leading in this piece.

The final descent of this piece is intriguing. It could be viewed as beginning from  $\hat{5}$ , as shown in the accompanying graph, with  $\hat{2}$  implied. This is not very convincing, however, due to the use of  $\hat{4}$  in place of the structural dominant. In *Free Composition*, Schenker, in reference to piece No. 32 from Clementi's *Preludes et Exercices*, notes: 'It is of little consequence that at Ex. 1 a linear progression is entirely lacking', explaining, 'Their content is just enough for preludes, which as their name implies, merely prepare for genuine compositions, that is, those founded on repetition'.<sup>4</sup> It may be possible that the fundamental structure of this piece does not include a final descent. If that is the case, the overall structure of this Prelude may be notated as shown in Example 9. Although the foreground harmony of bar 5 is B♭ minor, the bassline unfolds a sixth between B♭ and D♯ (bars 5–10), thereby prolonging B♭ major. This is shown on level B of the graph. When normalised, therefore, the major mode is notated in bar 5.

Example 9. Background structure of the Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14



<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), 118–119.

Notice that in this example, the two voices shown are emphasised in alternation as the piece unfolds (in the first dyad we get the E $\flat$  before the B $\flat$ , in the second dyad the B $\flat$  before the D $\sharp$ , and so forth). So this is, in fact, a giant hidden repetition of the main motivic movement of the work. This demonstrates Chopin's total integration of tonal issues from the foreground right back to the background basic structure.

The form and main material of this Prelude are outlined below:

Table 1. Form and thematic material in the Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14

Bars	Metre	Themes	Contents
1-4	2/2	Theme in tonic	sequences over i and III
5-10	blurred	Theme in dominant	longer sequences—faster movement extension and development
11-16	2/2 to 6/4	Theme in tonic acceleration of movement	crescendo and intensification final descent? & resolution to $\hat{1}$
17-19	6/4	'Coda'	resolution of grouping on downbeat

The Prelude is divided approximately in half by the return of the opening material in bar 11. The first part consists of four bars (2 + 2) over i and six bars (2 + 2 + 2) over V. The remaining nine bars lie over i, and are subdivided into 2 + 4 + 3 due to the final cadence onto chord i in bar 17. The subdivision of bars is thus 4 + 6 + 9. The ratio 2:3 governs the relationship between subsequent sections and reflects the duple versus triple play throughout. The subdivision of the last nine bars into 2 + 4 + 3 further reflects this duple-triple motto. In musical notation this form would be notated as shown in Example 10:

Example 10. Formal pacing of the Prelude, Op. 28 No. 14<sup>5</sup>



Here again we find that the background form, as derived from the harmonic structure and the material, reflects the surface rhythmic structure, that is, the play between duple and triple organisation. Foreground tonal and temporal issues are both reflected in the background and are interdependent from the foreground to the background level.

<sup>5</sup> These time signatures do not imply internal groupings.



Performance considerations that would affect the interpretation of this piece include dynamics, pedalling and accentuation. I have already shown how some of the notated dynamics reflect the use of dissonance and resolution. Notice also that the neighbour is played at the peak of a *crescendo* in bars 1 and 2. A *crescendo* accompanies the increase in pace in bars 3 and 4 leading into the dominant minor. A shift occurs in bar 7 as the tension–release pattern changes. The augmented sixths form the strongest dissonance in the bar and occur at the beginning of the bar. The dynamics reflect this, with the crescendo now climaxing with the bar line. A written *crescendo* at the end of bar 10 accompanies the slowing of pace into the resumption of the theme. A fascinating use of dynamics is found towards the end of the piece. A huge *crescendo–diminuendo* begins in bar 13 and peaks in bar 15. This serves to highlight the  $C\flat$  of the large hidden repetition of the neighbour motif  $B\flat-C\flat-B\flat$  over these few bars and also to emphasise the  $C\flat$  if the overall form is itself a giant hidden repetition as outlined in Example 9.

Pedalling, or slightly holding certain bass notes, achieves a result resembling the rhythmic reduction and can reflect harmonic and intervallic knowledge. Therefore, an interpretative approach such as this that incorporates voice-leading and rhythmic analysis can prove very helpful in preparing a performance.

Schenker mentioned this Prelude in *The Art of Performance*. He wrote: ‘Indications such as *pesante* (heavy) and *sostenuto* (held) refer to the overall character of a formal section but do not mean a slowing down of the tempo’.<sup>6</sup> He explained that in the case of this Prelude the indication *pesante* ‘refers to the expression of:

- $c\flat^1$  in the third quarter of m. 1;
- $e\flat^1$  in the fourth quarter of m. 3;
- $g\flat^1$  in the fourth quarter of m. 4;
- $f\flat^1$  in the first quarter of m. 7;
- $d\flat^1$  in the first quarter of m. 8’.<sup>7</sup>

All of these pitches form the strongest dissonance in that particular bar. This complements Chopin’s use of dynamics throughout and

<sup>6</sup> Heinrich Schenker, *The Art of Performance*, trans. Irene Schreier Scott, ed. Heribert Esser (Oxford University Press, 2000), 57.

<sup>7</sup> Bar numbers have been corrected. The original text has ‘ $c\flat^1$  in the fourth quarter of m. 2;  $g\flat^1$  in the fourth quarter of m. 3’.

demonstrates the potential information that can be gleaned from harmonic analysis of this piece and its applicability to performers.

It is interesting to examine various approaches to this piece by renowned pianists. Kissin, for instance, emphasises the sevenths that reach over in bars 3 and 4 by taking more time over them.<sup>8</sup> In other words, he achieves the emphasis that Schenker sought for these pitches using different means. Alfred Cortot emphasises the final cadence of the piece by slowing into bar 17 and doubling the bass an octave below—thus mirroring the final registral position of the bass in bar 19.<sup>9</sup> Argerich reinforces the offbeat melody in the final three bars in a manner that strengthens the ambiguity of the downbeat until the final note.<sup>10</sup>

The use of a combination of voice-leading analysis with rhythmic analysis has led to intriguing aspects of this piece being revealed. Through a discussion of LIPs and grouping it was found that these were interrelated and that the pace of rhythmic movement in the piece was reinforced by the density of the voice leading. Analysis of such aspects as hidden repetition and form revealed that the form of the entire piece was a hidden repetition of the initial motif. The rhythmic structure of the piece was traced to the background and the overall form of the piece was found to be a hidden repetition of the *rhythmic* foreground material. A brief discussion of performance issues highlighted the potential inherent in this kind of analysis for performers.

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<sup>8</sup> Kissin, *Chopin*, RCA Red Seal (2000).

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Cortot, *Chopin: vres pour piano*, EMI Classics CZS 7 67359 2 (1991) recorded 1942.

<sup>10</sup> Argerich, *Solo Works*, Deutsche Grammophon (1997).