

Prélude en Ré^b Prelude in D^b (1911)

Lili Boulanger

edited by Jamie Crofts (2012)



SOUNDkiosk Piano Edition
SKPE 22

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Preface

The life of Lili Boulanger is far too often reduced to the two facts of, first, her immense talent as both a pianist and composer and, secondly, of her untimely death at the age of just 24.

If we get beyond these mere factoids of her history we find a composer of a rich and beautiful music. To have shown such promise at an early age is one thing, but she also found an original, personal voice.

This *Prelude in D flat*, dated Sunday 12 March 1911, was written when the composer was 20. The current edition is based on a manuscript in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris (BNF ms. 19467). With no performance directions and an ambiguous ending it is likely that the piece is unfinished. To produce this SOUNDkiosk edition of the piece I began with the assumption that the composition of the piece is finished in terms of the raw material (notes and rhythms).

The evidence for this is based purely on these few facts; that it is a fair copy, the last bar is completed with rests, it ends with a double bar line and the piece is signed and dated.

I am treating the piece as incomplete only in terms of missing performance directions. Other works by the composer were consulted in order to find something approaching authentic performance directions*. Other piano music by Lili Boulanger is rich with performance directions and dynamics to a point where I would say they are important to the success of her style and so it would be a fair assumption that they are missing from this piece.

Although I love the piece I have to concede that the composition seems awkward at times with its sudden changes of material. My objective was therefore to produce a

workable composition through the addition of appropriate dynamics and expression marks.

The sudden changes of material need careful handling to make the piece work. These contrasts in content require subtle changes of tone, speed and emphasis. The thematic material passes from treble to bass needing individual hands to be played *en dehors*. With such careful handling it is possible to group the material into longer continuous phrases, thus holding the piece together.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the piece is the ending. It seems awkward and unfinished. But if we consider the first chord of bar 32 to be the natural end to the piece we can treat the following two bars as a fading out; the remaining chords become simply a series of harmonic enhancements of this final chord. To achieve this I've added a sudden change from *ff* to *mf* and immediately into a diminuendo to *ppp*. I also play the ending without any reduction in speed.

* The compositions consulted for this edition were a series of 3 pieces for piano published by Zen-On in 1990

They are *D'un Vieux Jardin*, *D'un Jardin Clair* and *Cortège* (which also exists in a version for violin or flute and piano). All three of these pieces fade into understated double or triple *p* at the end, thus adding a little weight to my decision to fade this prelude to *ppp*.

In addition to this I took a lead from Maurice Ravel:

Bars 10 to 12 of Lili Boulanger's prelude reminded me of one section (bars 10 to 15) of a short prelude by Ravel from 1913, written as a sight reading test for the Paris Conservatoire final piano competition.** I took the initial performance indication from this Ravel prelude as it seemed perfectly apposite.

** *Prélude*, Maurice Ravel, published 1994 Peters Edition No. 7372. The dedicatee of this prelude is Jeanne Leleu, herself a very talented composer and winner of the *Prix de Rome* in 1923 with her cantata *Beatrix*.

There are two versions of the piece: The first without, the second with performance directions all of which are mine.

Jamie Crofts, editor, 2012

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Prélude en Ré^b

Lili Boulanger 1911

Piano

Piano

9

17

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Prélude en Ré^b' by Lili Boulanger, specifically measures 23 through 30. The score is written for piano in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature (C). It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. Measure 23 begins with a treble staff marked with a measure rest and a dashed line indicating an octave transposition (8^{va}). The bass staff features a complex chordal texture with triplets. Measures 24-29 continue with intricate harmonic and melodic developments, including various octave markings (8^{va}, 8^{va}-, 8^{vb}) and triplet figures. Measure 30 concludes the section with a final chord in the treble staff and a triplet in the bass staff. The score is presented in a clean, professional layout with clear notation and dynamic markings.

23

(8^{va})

8^{va}

8^{va}-

8^{vb}

3

30

8^{va}-

8^{va}-

8^{va}-

8^{va}-

8^{vb}

3

Dimanche
12 Mars 1911

Lili Boulanger

Prélude en Ré^b

Assez lent et très expressif

Lili Boulanger 1911
ed. Jamie Crofts 2012

♩ = 60 environ

Piano

mp

8^{vb}-----'

8^{vb}-----'

8^{vb}----

8^{vb}----

8^{vb}-----'

8^{vb}-----'

9

un peu plus vite

8^{va}-----'

mf

pp

cresc. peu à peu

mf

m.d. en dehors

m.g.

8^{vb}----

8^{vb}-----'

8^{vb}-----'

8^{vb}-----'

en dehors

en dehors

un peu scherz.

8^{va}-----'

17

sub. *p* (souple)

3

5

pp

mf

mf

accel. / a tempo

(8^{va})-----

23

sub. *mp*

f

p

f

molto

8^{va}

8^{va}₁

8^{vb} *ff*

30

8^{va}₁

8^{va}₁

8^{va}₁

8^{va}₁

ff sub. *mf*

ppp

8^{vb} *ff*

f

8^{vb}

Red.

*

Dimanche
12 Mars 1911

Lili Boulanger

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