

# HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE ELEMENTARY

## CHOPIN PRÉLUDE IN A MAJOR OP 28 NO 7

The shortest of all Chopin's 24 Préludes, this precious 16-bar gem requires subtle voicing and a *dolce* tone, as **Melanie Spanswick** explains

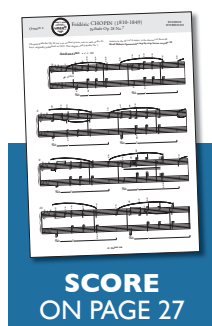
**Key** A major **Tempo** Andantino **Style** Romantic  
**Will improve your** ✓Chord voicing ✓Legato ✓Cantabile



This brief, intimate piece is the seventh of Chopin's 24 Préludes Op 28. With its lilting LH chordal pattern and poignant RH melody, it exudes a pristine ballet-like character (no surprise that the Prélude makes an appearance in Michael Fokine's ballet, *Les Sylphides*).

**Let's begin with the LH.** Whilst the chordal note patterns look fairly innocuous, each two-bar phrase consists of a 'leap' or large movement from the first-beat bass note to the second-beat chord. In order to negotiate the jumps with ease, practise them in isolation. Find suitable fingerings for the chords on beats two and three, and play the first beat with a firm fifth finger.

**Make a swift movement from the bass note to the first chord.** For practice purposes, extend the jump: try playing the bass note an octave lower than written, but make sure you keep the chords as they are, and move as quickly as possible from the bass note to the first chord, using a relaxed lateral arm motion. By extending the leap, the pattern becomes ingrained, and when returning to playing the piece as written, the distance feels a lot more manageable. Also try to give the bass note a slight 'push' or deeper touch; this can act as a 'launch' for the jump, propelling the hand up off the keyboard towards the first chord.



The RH melody line often appears as the top note of a chord. Start out by practising the melody line alone. When playing this top line, use the same fingering that you'd employ when playing the full RH part. A firm, smooth, even touch – supported by a relaxed wrist and plenty of arm weight – will make for a *cantabile* sound that should sing out above the lower notes.

**Now let's work on the RH chords.** Practise them carefully, including the melody note, ensuring perfect hand balance; for example, on beats 2 and 3 of bar 1, aim to depress the B, G# and D together, using the same hand/finger weight behind all three notes, with fingers resting on the keys as preparation before depressing them. This will allow all notes within the chord to be played precisely together. It's good to remember the slower the key depression, the softer the sound.

**Much time will be needed to work on balancing the RH chords.** In order to be able to hear the top melody line, the notes below it need to remain soft. Therefore, instead of playing all three notes with the same weight behind every key, try to simply weight the RH very slightly to the right – that is, move both the wrist and the arm to the right – supporting the third finger, but most especially, the fourth and fifth finger.

Careful phrasing will shape the melodic line. Looking at the first two-bar phrase as an example, create a crescendo and decrescendo within the phrase. Keep the upbeat light, with a deeper touch on beat 1 (C#) – which might be described as the most important beat within each phrase – and a firm touch on beat two (B), dying away on beat 3 and beat 1 of the following bar. This pattern works until bars 11-14.

### LEARNING TIP

Try singing the melody to yourself before learning the piece. This will allow you to understand where to take time to 'breathe'.

**The thick, wide-stretch chord at the start of bar 12 should have a rich tone.** That's because it is the climax of the piece. It's a wide stretch for both hands (surely the hardest part of the piece), so if you are unable to play all the notes, you could either leave the bottom RH note out (A#) or find a suitable fingering (perhaps, 23145 if you find 12345 uncomfortable). Alternatively, you might wish to slowly 'spread' the chord – that is, play one note after another like an arpeggio (ascending), quickening the movement when secure. Bar 13 works well with a gradual crescendo through to the start of bar 14, before dying away gradually towards the end. ■

See what Melanie Spanswick is up to at [www.melaniespanswick.com](http://www.melaniespanswick.com).