

Luise Adolpha Le Beau

Prelude

from: *8 Preludes*, Op. 12 (No. 7)

German composer Luise Adolpha Le Beau (1850–1927) was born in Rastatt, in the west of Baden-Württemberg. She studied composition with Josef Gabriel Rheinberger, and the piano with Hofkapellmeister William Kalliwoda and Clara Schumann. Le Beau started her career as a pianist, making her debut in 1869 in Karlsruhe, later earning her living as a teacher and critic, eventually reviewing for the Berlin-based *Allgemeine deutsche Musikzeitung*.

Le Beau performed her own compositions for Hans von Bülow, gaining his lifelong encouragement. A particularly productive period began after a move to Munich in 1874, which resulted in many of her most highly regarded works, several composition prizes, favourable reviews, and meetings with Brahms, Liszt and Hanslick.

In 1878 Le Beau founded a ‘private music theory course for daughters of the educated classes’, offering lessons aimed at preparing women for a career in music teaching. In 1910 she wrote her autobiography, *Memoirs of a composer*. Le Beau wrote orchestral, chamber, choral, opera, instrumental music and songs, as well as a considerable collection of piano music.

Performance Notes

This expressive work is the seventh *Prelude* from *8 Preludes*, Op. 12 (original: 8 Präludien). In F minor, and to be played simply (*Einfach*), the opening contains most of the musical material.

Bars 1–6 feature a single note in each hand, playing an octave apart in unison. This figuration proffers a ghostly quality, therefore aim for perfect coordination between the hands and a very soft tonal colour, with the right hand taking the lead, and playing a little deeper into the key than the left.

As the melody is repeated from the last beat of bar 8, it develops into an extended, fuller, and slightly varied version, complete with chords. These chords might require slow practice in order to grasp the ever-changing hand positions. A *legato* approach is necessary as much as possible, in order to capture the mood. Practice hands separately and consider changing fingers on one and the same note (finger substitution) for an even *legato*. The sustaining pedal can and will be used (some pedalling has been suggested in the score), but joining chords with the fingers, before adding pedal, usually offers a smoother result.

At bars 12–16 the music moves into the relative key of A♭ major for a ray of sunshine, and a bolder touch might work well here. As chords become increasingly thicker, a heavy touch for the left-hand octaves in bars 31–33 will add drama and power, and at bar 32, beat 1, a swift, but relaxed, lateral wrist movement will enable the spread of the large chord in the right hand, permitting notes to sound clearly and with a rich sonority. Chords, such as those at bars 31–34, would benefit from a richer timbre on the top note, allowing the melody to ring out. With this in mind, try to practice the top line alone, ensuring the fourth and fifth fingers are working optimally.

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Einfach $\text{♩} = 72$

The musical score is written for piano in a minor key (three flats) and 3/4 time. It consists of four systems of two staves each. The first system starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system includes a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. The third system features a forte (*f*) dynamic and a *rit.* marking. The fourth system returns to a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Slurs and accents are used throughout. A *rit.* marking with a star symbol is present at the end of the third system. The piece concludes with a final chord in the fourth system.

19 *f*

23 *mf*

27 *f*

31 *ff* *rit.*