

Frédéric Chopin

Prelude in E minor Op. 28, No. 4



This month our classical maestro **Bridget Mermikides** transcribes a wonderful piece by one of Poland's most respected and celebrated 19th century composers.

ABILITY RATING

● ● ● ● ● Moderate/Advanced

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: Bm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melody and accompaniment
TEMPO: 48bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Expression and control
CD: Tracks 13-14	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fretting hand control

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849) was an extraordinary piano virtuoso, but was also willing and able to compose works that sacrificed technical flair in favour of a simple and powerful expressive depth – and so he has been much admired over the years as not only an astonishing pianist, but also one of the great composers of the Romantic era. Despite his short life and bouts of physical and psychological ill health, Chopin left us a body of over 200 works that seems to express every aspect of human emotion, from tragic sorrow, to humour and joyful love.

This month I've arranged his devastatingly beautiful Prelude in E minor Op. 28, No. 4, which despite its short duration and simple structure (fitting on one page in most editions) manages to evoke a deep and somewhat paradoxical mix of emotions including sorrow, loss, love and consolation. A haunting melody starts on the dominant note (in this Bm arrangement an F#) slowly


“The main aim is to keep the chords as smooth and connected as possible, while maintaining sustain and full values of the notes above.”



making its descent to the tonic (B). In the first iteration of the melody its resolution is interrupted by an expressive turn (bar 12), but when the melody returns in bar 13, it makes its inevitable resolution to the B melody note, harmonised by a series of romantic and powerful chords (bars 21 to 24) and then by the final tonic Bm chord in bar 25.

Chopin's use of the piano in the piece with a right hand single note upper melody and closely voice-led left hand block chords does not really suit the guitar, so I've re-voiced the chords in a way that is both authentic to the

composition, and playable by one guitarist! The two main musical components throughout this Prelude are the repeated eighth note or quaver chords and the longer melody notes above. The musical aim is to keep the chords as legato (smooth and connected) as possible while maintaining sustain and full value of the melody notes above. This requires considerable control, strength and stamina of the fretting hand. It also requires well-organised and intelligent fretting hand fingering in order to switch smoothly from one chord to the next. This may be the most difficult technical challenge – especially if the chord shapes are unfamiliar, which may well be the case. Try following and sticking to my fretting hand finger suggestions (by the note heads) as this is intended to help you get the best musical result.

As always, patient and quality practice is the fastest route to success, so use the tab captions and enjoy the process of practicing. See you next month with another classical masterpiece, arranged just for you. 

TECHNIQUE FOCUS

Sitting posture

An important aspect of technique in classical guitar playing is adopting the correct sitting posture. The guitar is placed on the left thigh (for right handed players), which is raised by placing the foot on a footstool. The left knee should be pointing forwards and the right knee to the side so the guitar rests on the inside of the right thigh. The guitar should be positioned at angle where the neck is pointing slightly upwards, and the right forearm rests on the larger bout of the instrument. This should hold the instrument securely in place and give ease of facility for both hands.



TRACK RECORD For an expressive and unshowy performance of this masterpiece performed by an undisputable virtuoso, look no further than Chopin Preludes: Maurizio Pollini (1985, Deutsche Grammophon). For an informative and moving video presentation using this piece, I highly recommend Benjamin Zander's TED talk (searching Google for 'Zander TED Chopin' will take you right there).

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 14

[General] At bar 2 you'll need a barre across five strings. Notice that the third finger on the C# changes to a fourth finger on beat 3 so that the third finger becomes free for the G note on beat 4. A similar reorganising of the fingers occurs in the next bar where the second finger on the C switches to third finger on beat 3 to help with the finger placement on the Cm6 chord,

beat 4. Although this may sound pedantic it is worth knowing why we are using certain fingers and to be fully aware of the feeling in the hand and the amount of pressure needed per chord, as this is all part of developing a strong and useful technique.

♩ = 48

Bm/D Bm⁶/D F⁷sus4/C⁷ F⁷/C⁷ F⁷9/C⁷

F⁷7^b/5/C F⁷m7^b/5/C Cm6 B7 Bm7 Bdim7 Em7/B Em6/B Em⁶/B

Em6/B A⁷dim7 A7 A13 Am7 D7/A D⁷dim7/A

Gmaj7 Em/G F⁷sus4 F⁷ Em/G F⁷ Em/G

F⁷7^b/13 Bm/D Bm⁶/D F⁷sus4/C⁷ F⁷7^b/5/C F⁷7^b/5/C

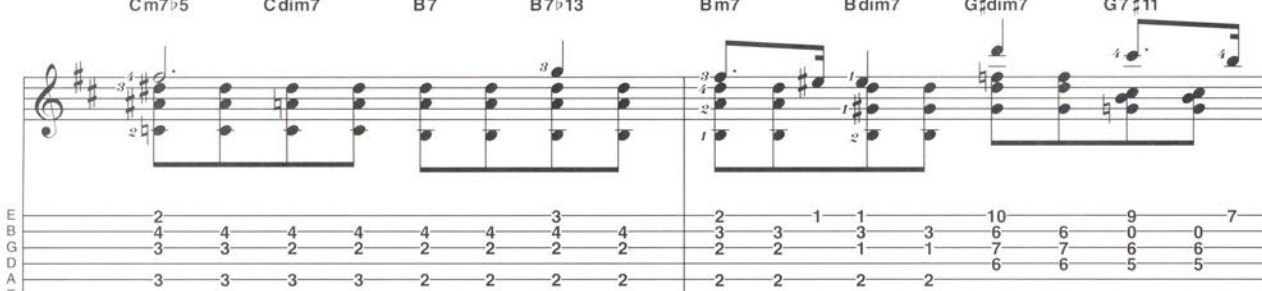
PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 14

[General] Feel free to take time musically when changing to a new chord and allow that chord to 'speak' – in other words, pause for a moment before continuing – it is fine and perfectly in keeping with the Romantic style not

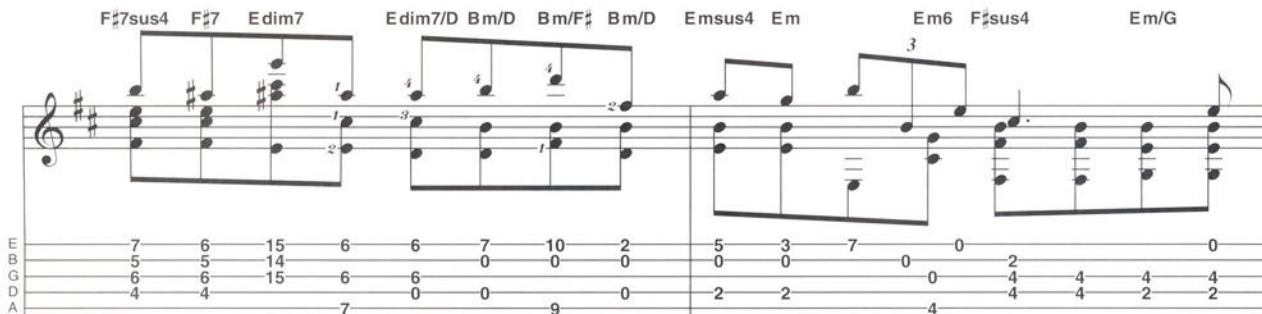
to play strictly in time. In fact to play metronomically would sound robotic and miss the whole expressive and musical point. Listen to the recording on the accompanying CD to hear how the speed of this piece ebbs and flows.

Chords: Cm7 \flat 5, Cdim7, B7, B7 \flat 13, Bm7, Bdim7, G \sharp dim7, G7 \sharp 11




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Chords: F \sharp 7sus4, F \sharp 7, Edim7, Edim7/D, Bm/D, Bm/F \sharp , Bm/D, Emsus4, Em, Em6, F \sharp sus4, Em/G



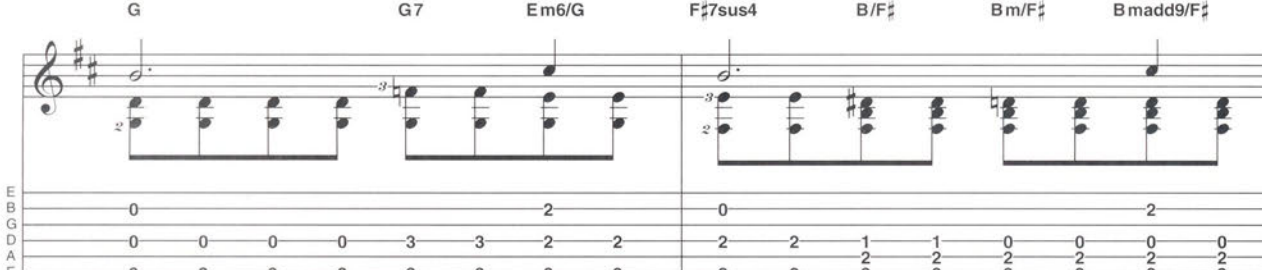
17

Chords: F \sharp sus4, Em/G, F \sharp sus4, F \sharp , F \sharp 7




19

Chords: G, G7, Em6/G, F \sharp 7sus4, B/F \sharp , Bm/F \sharp , Bmadd9/F \sharp



21

Chords: E \sharp dim7sus2, F \sharp sus4, F \sharp , Bm



23