

Prélude en Ré<sup>b</sup>  
Prelude in D<sup>b</sup>  
(1911)

Lili Boulanger

edited by Jamie Crofts (2012)



SOUNDkiosk Piano Edition  
SKPE 22

# Prélude en Ré<sup>b</sup> Prelude in D<sup>b</sup> (1911)

## Lili Boulanger

### 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<sup>b</sup>

Lili Boulanger 1911

Piano

8vb-----  
8vb-----  
8vb-'  
8vb-'  
8vb-'  
8vb-'  
8vb-'  
8vb-'  
8va-----  
8va-----  
8vb-'  
8vb-'  
8vb-'  
8vb-'  
8vb-'  
8va-----  
8va-----  
3  
5  
5

Musical score for measures 23-30. The score is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. Measure 23 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. A dashed line above the staff indicates an octave transposition (*8<sup>va</sup>*). The right hand plays a complex, rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand plays a steady accompaniment of chords. Measure 24 continues the right-hand pattern. Measure 25 features a change in the right-hand pattern. Measure 26 has a treble clef change to a bass clef. Measure 27 has a treble clef change back to a bass clef. Measure 28 has a treble clef change to a bass clef. Measure 29 has a treble clef change to a bass clef. Measure 30 has a treble clef change to a bass clef. The score ends with a double bar line.

Musical score for measures 30-37. The score is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. Measure 30 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The right hand plays a steady accompaniment of chords. The left hand plays a steady accompaniment of chords. Measure 31 continues the right-hand pattern. Measure 32 has a treble clef change to a bass clef. Measure 33 has a treble clef change to a bass clef. Measure 34 has a treble clef change to a bass clef. Measure 35 has a treble clef change to a bass clef. Measure 36 has a treble clef change to a bass clef. Measure 37 has a treble clef change to a bass clef. The score ends with a double bar line.

Dimanche  
12 Mars 1911  
  
Lili Boulanger

# Prélude en Ré<sup>b</sup>

Lili Boulanger 1911  
ed. Jamie Crofts 2012

Assez lent et très expressif

♩ = 60 environ

Piano

mp

8vb-----

8vb-----

8vb--

8vb--

8vb-----

8vb-----

un peu plus vite

au temps

8va-----

mf

pp

cresc. peu à peu

mf

m.g.

m.d. en dehors

8vb---

8vb---

en dehors

8vb--

8vb-----

8vb---

en dehors

un peu scherz.

8va-----

sub. *p* (souple)

pp

mf

mf

accel. . . . . / a tempo

(8<sup>va</sup>)

23

sub. *mp*

*f*

*p*

*f*

*ff*

*molto*

8<sup>va</sup>

8<sup>va-1</sup>

3

30

8<sup>va-1</sup>

8<sup>va-1</sup>

8<sup>va-1</sup>

8<sup>va-1</sup>

*ff*

sub. *mf*

*ppp*

8<sup>vb</sup> *ff*

*f*

8<sup>vb</sup>

Ped.

3

Dimanche  
12 Mars 1911

Lili Boulanger

\*

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