

**A Reader's Guide to the Chopin Preludes, by Jeffrey Kresky. Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1994.**

**Review by Harald Krebs**

The Chopin literature, for many years dominated by biographical accounts riddled with purple prose, has grown immensely in recent times, and now includes numerous scholarly book-length studies of the composer's music.<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Kresky's *Reader's Guide*, a series of brief analytical and descriptive accounts of each of Chopin's twenty-four preludes in turn, is a less "scholarly" book than other recent Chopin studies. Kresky clearly did not wish to restrict the intelligibility of his work to a small body of scholars, but intended it to be comprehensible even to readers with minimal musical education. He mentions music students at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and "academically-minded music lovers" as his expected audience (p. x); the latter term refers to lay persons who have had some college courses in music and who are able to read a score (this is a *reader's*, not merely a listener's guide). The book is indeed suitable for undergraduate students and for readers who lack extensive musical training; Kresky does not use highly technical terminology, and writes engagingly and accessibly.

This is not to say that Kresky's book has nothing to offer to trained musicians; it contains interesting analytical points and vivid descriptions that all musicians interested in Chopin—scholars as well as performers—will find valuable. Scholars, however, may be disappointed by the lack of certain elements. Matters of historical interest, for example, are barely broached;

<sup>1</sup>Jim Samson, *The Music of Chopin* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985); *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Jeffrey Kallberg, "The Chopin Sources: Variants and Versions in Later Manuscripts" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1982); John Rink, "The Evolution of Chopin's 'Structural Style' and its Relation to Improvisation" (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1989).

although he promises historical commentary in his preface (p. x), Kresky almost entirely avoids topics like the position of op. 28 within Chopin's *oeuvre*;<sup>2</sup> the history of the prelude genre and the position of Chopin's op. 28 within that history;<sup>3</sup> the manuscripts of op. 28;<sup>4</sup> and differences among various editions of the work.<sup>5</sup> Also conspicuous by their absence are references to other authors' discussions of the Preludes. None of Kresky's endnotes refer to other literature. An appendix, a few paragraphs in length, entitled "For Further Reading" mentions only the Norton score of the Preludes and Richmond Browne's symposium in *In Theory Only*, especially Charles Smith's article on the Preludes as a coherent set,<sup>6</sup> then directs readers to RILM and Music Index for additional sources. A substantial bibliography would have been useful, and citations of discussions of particular issues by other

<sup>2</sup>Kresky feels that the Preludes are very different from Chopin's other works (pp. xv–xvi), and very rarely raises points of comparison between them and other works. Other authors have demonstrated that such comparisons can be worthwhile. See, for example, Carl Schachter, "The Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4: Autograph Sources and Interpretation," *Chopin Studies* 2, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 161–82, particularly his discussion on p. 166 of the relationship between the E-minor Prelude and the Mazurka op. 41 no. 1 (which Chopin sketched on the same page).

<sup>3</sup>There are only a few sentences on this subject in Kresky's introduction (pp. xiii–xiv). A more detailed discussion is found in Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, "Twenty-four Preludes Op. 28: Genre, Structure, Significance," *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 170–73.

<sup>4</sup>Eigeldinger includes interesting statements about the manuscripts on pp. 167–69 of "Twenty-four Preludes Op. 28," as does Carl Schachter in "The Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4: Autograph Sources and Interpretation."

<sup>5</sup>A few comments on editions are scattered through Kresky's book; see, for example, p. 115. In the Preface, Kresky argues that editors' liberties with Chopin's text are much like idiosyncratic interpretations by performers; his *Guide* takes into account neither type of tampering (p. xi). Since he cites the Norton Score of the Preludes (*Chopin, Preludes, Opus 28: An Authoritative Score, Historical Background, Analysis, Views and Comments*, ed. Thomas Higgins [New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1973]), I assume this is the edition on which his readings are based.

<sup>6</sup>Charles J. Smith, "On Hearing the Chopin Preludes as a Coherent Set: A Survey of Some Possible Structural Models for Op. 28," *In Theory Only* 1/4 (July 1975): 5–16.

writers, situating Kresky's comments within a broader context, would greatly have increased the scholarly value of the book. For example, during his discussion of the status of the Preludes as a coherent entity (pp. xiv–xviii), Kresky could have cited Frederick Niecks, who regarded the Preludes as a grab-bag of otherwise unusable sketches, and Jeffrey Kallberg's more recent and more carefully reasoned view of the non-cohesiveness of the Preludes.<sup>7</sup> For opposing views, he could have pointed to the work of Lawrence Kramer and Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger.<sup>8</sup> Another discussion that could have been enriched by the citation of other authors is that of closure in the Preludes. Kresky points out (p. 6) that roughly one-half of the pieces end with imperfect cadences (i.e., with the third of the tonic triad on top rather than the root). A reference to Jeffrey Kallberg's exploration of the issue of closure in the Preludes would have been appropriate here.<sup>9</sup>

Since it was likely not Kresky's intent to write a fully documented scholarly book, I cease at this point to dwell on what the book is not, and focus instead on what it is meant to be and what it is. Kresky states his intentions clearly in the Preface: he wishes to present "criticism" of the Preludes, which he defines as a blend of analysis, informed but not overly idiosyncratic

<sup>7</sup>Frederick Niecks, *Frederick Chopin as a Man and Musician*, 2 vols. (London, 1888; rpt. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1973), II, 254–55; Jeffrey Kallberg, "Small 'Forms': In Defence of the Prelude," *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 135–44.

<sup>8</sup>Lawrence Kramer, *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 99–117; Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, "Twenty-four Preludes Op. 28: Genre, Structure, Significance," *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 180–93. Kresky's own conclusion on the overall unity of the Preludes strikes me as reasonable; he considers the Preludes "a unique musical organism, much like, say, the sense in which a society of ants or a coral formation is viewed as being simultaneously a collection of individuals and a super-organism of many smaller parts" (pp. xvii–xviii).

<sup>9</sup>Jeffrey Kallberg, "Small 'Forms': In Defence of the Prelude," *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, 139–43. Kallberg suggests that the rampant non-closure in the Preludes stems from the traditional introductory function of the genre.

opinion, and descriptive “musings.” Below, I look at his handling of each of these three ingredients.

Kresky states in his Preface (p. x) that a great deal of his analysis will concern pitch, and that domain is indeed emphasized in his discussions of the individual Preludes. Much of his commentary addresses the functions of individual chords: he assigns Roman numerals to many chords and, when harmonies are non-functional, simply labels the root and quality ( $b^{\circ 7}$ , etc.). This type of analysis, its results obvious to trained musicians and unhelpful for laypersons, occasionally results in arid stretches within Kresky’s generally lively prose. The following passage dealing with mm. 14–15 of the F-minor Prelude, no. 18, is an example (pp. 96–97): “The next sputtering turns  $A^b$  into  $A^b+$  (m. 14), which, in resolving to  $f$  in m. 15, can also be taken as  $C+$ , the augmented V. The pushy chords that follow are familiar sonorities, but oddly treated.  $A^b 7$  and  $e^{\circ 7}$  both resolve to a  $D^b$ ....” The book contains similar overly detailed and not particularly enlightening Roman-numeral analyses of the opening of the  $B^b$ -major Prelude, no. 21 (pp. 111–12), of mm. 22–30 of the  $B^b$ -minor Prelude, no. 16 (pp. 84–85), and of numerous other passages.

Some of Kresky’s chord identifications, besides making for tedious reading, are infelicitous, others actually incorrect. For instance, he interprets mm. 53–57 of the  $G^{\sharp}$ -minor Prelude, no. 12, as consisting of “alternations of  $iv$  and  $i$ ” (p. 63). The “ $i$ ” is a six-four chord, and thus not a true tonic harmony; it functions here either as a passing chord between  $iv^7$  and  $ii^4/3$ , or, from a larger-scale viewpoint, as a cadential six-four, which, originating in m. 52, is prolonged by neighboring  $iv^7$  chords and resolved in m. 64.<sup>10</sup> Kresky sometimes interprets as chord tones notes that I hear as embellishments, and thus identifies many more chords

<sup>10</sup>Another problematic analysis of a six-four chord appears in the discussion of the A-minor Prelude, no. 2. Kresky states (p. 13) that it is “difficult to connect the ending tonic to the earlier (‘cadential?’)  $a6/4$  [i.e., a  $6/4$  chord built on A]”; but why should one make such a connection? A cadential six-four is an embellishment of dominant harmony, and has no functional connection with the upcoming tonic.

in some passages than I would. In his analysis of m. 1 of the  $\text{E}\flat$ -minor Prelude, no. 14 (p. 74), he labels four chords:  $\text{i}-\text{VI}^6-\text{vii}^{\circ 7}-\text{V}^6$ ; I hear just  $\text{i}-\text{V}^6$ , the tonic being embellished by a 5-6 motion, the  $\text{V}^6$  by a 7-6 suspension. Later in the same analysis, Kresky refers to two "minor triads built on leading tones"—the A-minor triad on the third beat of m. 4, and the D-minor triad on the same beat of m. 10 (p. 75). These "triads" sound to me like incidental resultants of the embellishment of  $\text{V}^6$  of  $\text{v}$  and of  $\text{V}^6$  of  $\text{i}$ , respectively; the E within the "A minor triad" is a retardation resolving to F, and the A within the "D minor" triad is a retardation resolving to  $\text{B}\flat$ . These retardations maintain the 5-6 pattern that Chopin establishes at the outset of the prelude. In his analysis of the B-minor Prelude, no. 6, Kresky describes the final eighth-note of m. 6 and the second eighth-note of m. 7 as VI chords, and in fact as resolutions of the preceding diminished-seventh chords (p. 33). These G-major triads are surely embellishments, not resolutions, the first being a passing chord leading from one inversion of  $\text{vii}^7$  to another, the second being a neighboring chord between two statements of the same diminished seventh chord. Kresky's point that these G-major triads foreshadow later deceptive resolutions—mm. 16 and 18—is well taken, but the "notable history of the submediant" (p. 34) in the prelude becomes no less interesting if the earlier G-major harmonies are correctly labelled as embellishments. In m. 8 of the  $\text{F}\sharp$ -major Prelude, no. 13, Kresky hears a IV chord, then a iii chord (p. 67). Although the notes of those triads (B,  $\text{D}\sharp$ ,  $\text{F}\sharp$  and A $\sharp$ ,  $\text{C}\sharp$ ,  $\text{E}\sharp$ , respectively) are undeniably present, I hear them as merely embellishing the V harmony that begins in the previous measure; the V of m. 7 initiates a series of stepwise parallel sixths connecting  $\text{C}\sharp/\text{E}\sharp$  (at the end of m. 7) to  $\text{B}/\text{G}\sharp$  (at the end of m. 8), these framing sixths being components of the dominant harmony.

The above samples of Kresky's harmonic analyses indicate his tendency to adopt a surface-oriented view of harmony and a reluctance to explore non-contiguous pitch relationships. This reluctance is also evident in some of Kresky's analyses of melodic structure. He states, for example (p. 116), that in the  $\text{B}\flat$ -major

Prelude, no. 21, the final G's of mm. 45 and 47 are left hanging, and that the G's of mm. 46 and 48—he actually calls them “Gs”—“vault” directly into the tonic note. These remarks are true in the most literal sense; if, however, one delves beneath the immediate musical surface, stepwise continuations for all of these notes emerge: the Gs of mm. 45 and 47 move to the G's of the following measures (only one bass note separates the “tenor” Gs and G's), and the G's of mm. 46 and 48 move not to the tonic note but—albeit indirectly—to the dominant.

Kresky's predilection for surface-level analysis sometimes results in labellings of embellishing tones that strike me as incorrect. He states, for example, that the G# in m. 8 of the E-minor Prelude, no. 4, sounds like a neighbor to the surrounding As (p. 20). I hear the G# as the endpoint of a middleground third-progression prolonging the primary tone B, and the A of m. 8 as a passing tone within that third-progression.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Kresky interprets the melodic E in m. 17 of the G-major Prelude, no. 3, as an anticipation of the strongly supported E in m. 18 (p. 17). I hear D# as the final note of a third-progression prolonging the F that has been in effect since m. 16, and E as a passing tone within that third-progression, not as an anticipation of the coming stable E.

I must mention that I find others of Kresky's analyses of embellishing tones sensitive and interesting. For example, in his discussion of m. 24 of the B-major Prelude, no. 11, he points out the “full permutation of who's who” among the melodic pitches D#, C# and B at the end of the prelude (p. 59)—that is, the shift from D# and B as chord tones and C# as a passing tone (within vi harmony), to D# and B as embellishments and C# as a chord tone (within V harmony).

Occasionally, Kresky does venture below the surface level in his analyses of pitch structure; when he does so, he generally arrives

<sup>11</sup>Carl Schachter and Allen Forte with Steven E. Gilbert have described the A of m. 8 as a passing tone. See Schachter, “The Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4: Autograph Sources and Interpretation”, *Chopin Studies* 2, 167, and Forte and Gilbert, *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1982), 207 (also p. 98 of the Instructor's Manual).

at convincing results. He correctly refers to D, F $\sharp$  and A, the notes of the tonic triad, as the "rocks we use to step on solidly in crossing [the] turbulent [harmonic] stream" of the D-major Prelude, no. 5 (p. 28). In his comments on the E-major Prelude, no. 9, Kresky convincingly demonstrates that "the E scales and tonic chord supply the route and goals" of much of the melody (p. 49), and also points out the large-scale bass arpeggiations of the tonic triad in the central and final phrases (mm. 5–8 and 9–12). Further examples of successful sub-surface analyses are found in Kresky's discussion of the C $\sharp$ -minor Prelude, no. 10, where he mentions the expansion in mm. 1–11 of the surface-level plagal progression of mm. 1–2 (p. 53), and in a footnote to his analysis of the C-major Prelude, where he provides a quasi-Schenkerian sketch—one of the few musical examples in the volume—to demonstrate "the control the C triad exerts in shaping the bass line" (pp. 6–7).

I do not find all of Kresky's forays below the surface as successful as those mentioned above. For example, he reduces the progression of mm. 50 and 52 of the B $\flat$ -major Prelude, no. 21, to "vi–I", interpreting the bass A and treble B $\flat$  as embellishing tones (p. 116). I am not convinced by this reduction; I hear the vi triad, in spite of its metrical and durational emphasis, as subordinate to the following vii $^7$ —as an appoggiatura chord resolving to a more significant dominant function. In the B-minor Prelude, no. 6, Kresky hears the initial tonic, the prolonged Neapolitan harmony in mm. 12–14, and the final tonic as forming a large neighboring motion (p. 32–33). Whereas these three harmonies are linked, as Kresky points out, by their relative harmonic stasis (these are the most substantial harmonic prolongations in the piece) and in part by register (the Neapolitan and final tonic prolongations both use the same very low register), to hear them as creating a large-scale neighbor is to deny the importance of the cadential dominants in mm. 8 and 21; these should certainly be included in the harmonic framework of the piece.

Had he ventured below the surface more frequently and in a more thoroughgoing manner within his analyses of harmonic and melodic structure, Kresky could have arrived at many exciting

discoveries. I do not mean that Kresky should have saturated his book with Schenkerian sketches and terminology—that would clearly have made the book less accessible to the audience that he was trying to reach—but merely that he might have engaged in more *Fernhören* than he does. The book would have been even more interesting had he pursued this avenue.<sup>12</sup>

Kresky's discussions of pitch structure are not restricted to harmonic matters; he takes motivic connections, both within and between preludes, into account. He frequently makes interesting remarks about the innocuous two-note motives that Chopin develops with such consummate artistry. He points out, for example, that the initial B–C motive in the E-minor Prelude, no. 4, is reshaped into the prelude's climax at m. 17.<sup>13</sup> He draws attention to the recurring B♭/A in the D-major Prelude, no. 5, and to its transformation into A♯–A during the F♯ prolongation of mm. 13–16.<sup>14</sup> In his discussion of the G♯-minor Prelude, no. 12, he makes the interesting observation that the initial upward-striving D♯–E idea recurs and is transformed at the end: "the original opening pair of notes tries once again to push upward, only to succumb and fall back to the starting point,"

<sup>12</sup>Had Kresky, for example, applied a linear approach to the bass line of the entire first prelude, rather than just to half of it, he would have discovered that the bass line of the first phrase (mm. 1–8) is beautifully expanded by that of mm. 9–24. The relationships between mm. 1–3 and 9–10, and between mm. 5–8 and 22–24, are obvious, and the bass E of m. 4 blossoms in the second phrase into an octave ascent, resulting in a much longer second phrase (E2 to E3, mm. 12–21). The downward leap of a seventh in mm. 21–22, while it slightly disguises the connection between mm. 21–23 and the E-to-G passing motion of mm. 4–7, facilitates the perception of E3 as the endpoint of a significant rising gesture. Charles J. Smith's sketch in "*Exempli gratia*: Chopin's C Major Prelude" (*In Theory Only* 4/3 [July 1978]: 34–35) shows the expansion of the first phrase in the second (although he does not discuss it in detail).

<sup>13</sup>Kresky's discussion of this motive is not as complete as Schachter's in "The Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4: Autograph Sources and Interpretation," *Chopin Studies* 2, 169–71.

<sup>14</sup>John Rink lists all appearances of the B♭/A♯ pun in the fifth prelude in "Authentic Chopin: History, Analysis and Intuition in Performance," *Chopin Studies* 2, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 228.



so that the final passage "effectively recalls the first moment of the piece, now sapped of all drive" (p. 64).

The inter-prelude connections that Kresky mentions are clearly perceptible. He mentions that the E-D motive, which occurs frequently in the first prelude, is transferred to a higher (slower) level in the first phrase of the second prelude, then returns to the surface in the first and third measures of the third prelude. Thus far, Kresky's analysis (p. xvii) agrees with the earlier analysis of Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger. Unlike Eigeldinger, however, Kresky avoids the trap of trying to trace this connection throughout the set (which necessitates the forcible extraction of motives from contexts in which they are inaudible).<sup>15</sup>

Not all of Kresky's commentary focuses on pitch; at times, he discusses rhythmic and metrical issues in an insightful manner. He points out several examples of metrical conflict: he reveals, for instance, how in the  $\mathbb{E}\flat$ -major Prelude, no. 19, Chopin coordinates hemiolas with formal boundaries (pp. 99–100), and he comments on a similar conflict in the  $\mathbb{E}\flat$ -major Prelude, no. 21 (p. 113). In some of his analyses, however, he deals with significant and pervasive metrical conflicts only in a cursory fashion or not at all. In the discussion of the  $\mathbb{G}\sharp$ -minor Prelude, no. 12, he mentions the hemiola in mm. 18–21 (p. 62), but not that created by the interaction of harmonic rhythm and bass pattern in mm. 13–16, nor those in mm. 33–34 and 56–60. Even the final three measures could be played and heard as being tinged with duple time; the durational accent in the middle of the penultimate bar, and the two-beat duration of the final dominant harmony, in particular, suggest the duple layer of a hemiola. Kresky could have enhanced his discussion of the shimmering, ambiguous effect of the  $\mathbb{B}/\mathbb{B}\flat$  alternations in the D-major Prelude, no. 5, by pointing out a complementary ambiguity in the rhythmic domain: the persistence of four-sixteenth-note groups, which contradict the six-sixteenth-note

<sup>15</sup>Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, "Twenty-four Preludes Op. 28: Genre, Structure, Significance," *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson, 181–86. For further comment on Eigeldinger's motivic analysis, see my review of *Chopin Studies* in *Journal of Music Theory* 33/2 (Fall 1989): 437.

groups designated by the bar lines.<sup>16</sup> In his analysis of the B-minor Prelude, no. 6, Kresky could have mentioned that Chopin highlights the climactic root-position Neapolitan harmony of mm. 13–14 by associating it with a hemiola; two-beat segments, suggested by the repetition of the rising C-major arpeggiation, conflict with the established triple meter. Hemiola then pervades the remainder of the piece. As the Neapolitan resolves to dominant harmony in mm. 15–16, Chopin temporarily resolves the hemiola as well. But as the deceptive cadence at mm. 16–18 approaches, two-beat segments emerge again, now created by the durational accents on bass E in m. 16 and on bass F $\sharp$  in m. 17, and by the intervening two beats of steady sixteenth-note pulse, as well as by the harmonic changes. The same hemiola recurs just before and during the corrective authentic cadence (mm. 20–22). The dynamic accent on the enigmatic A $\flat$  of m. 22 continues the impression of a duple meter conflicting with the underlying triple meter, as does the pattern of repetition in the right hand of mm. 25–26. The allusion to hemiola in these final measures enhances the effect of weak closure that is achieved by the descent from the eighth to the fifth scale degree in mm. 22–26. Metrical conflict, in short, is more significant in the Preludes than Kresky reveals.<sup>17</sup>

Kresky rarely refers to larger-scale metrical structure. Some consideration of hypermeter, with William Rothstein's fine analyses of Chopin's works as models, would have enhanced his book.<sup>18</sup> The Preludes certainly provide fodder for such discussions. At m. 21 of the G $\sharp$ -minor Prelude, no. 12, for instance, in a striking departure from the preceding regular four-

<sup>16</sup>John Rink deals with these conflicts in "Authentic Chopin: History, Analysis and Intuition in Performance," *Chopin Studies* 2, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 226–35.

<sup>17</sup>Some analyses of metrical conflict in Chopin's music appear in my book, *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup>See William Rothstein, "Phrase Rhythm in Chopin's Nocturnes and Mazurkas," *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 115–41, and *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1989), 214–48.

bar structure, Chopin inserts a three-bar hypermeasure. Measure 21 is therefore not only climactic in the obvious dynamic sense, but also acts as the culmination of a gradual process of metrical disruption. Chopin begins the Prelude with metrical and hypermetrical "consonance," brings in subtle metrical dissonance (hemiola) in mm. 13–16 and more obvious dissonance in mm. 19–20, then disrupts meter at a deeper level in mm. 21–23.

A considerable portion of Kresky's commentary centers on broad gestural aspects of the music. In his analysis of the C-major Prelude, for instance, he eloquently traces the "wave-like motion" that characterizes the melodic line, both on surface and subliminal levels: the G–A ascents in the opening measures are small ripples, the ascents and recessions that characterize larger segments (mm. 1–8, mm. 9–24) are larger waves, and the largest manifestation of the "wave-like motion" is the "single arched span which rises and falls over the course of the piece" (p. 1). In the analysis of the E-minor Prelude, no. 4, Kresky refers to the "quality of almost reaching the tonic" that characterizes the end of the first phrase, and that motivates the melody to begin again on  $\hat{5}$  (p. 21).<sup>19</sup>

The book contains intriguing gestural, almost narrative analyses of the conclusions of some of the preludes. I have already cited Kresky's description of the ending of the G $\sharp$ -minor Prelude. His statement about the ending of the A-minor Prelude, no. 2, is equally trenchant:

The ending piously enforces an organization upon what has been purposely presented as not very well organized. It is as if a force—a kind of will—exerts itself at the end on the various, tenuously understood thoughts that are scattered behind it; it gathers them into a coherence and imposes order and rest upon them and out of them (p. 13).

<sup>19</sup>A reference to Schenker's concept of interruption would have been appropriate here; although the fourth Prelude is not a straightforward example of interruption, as Schachter has shown (in "The Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4: Autograph Sources and Interpretation," *Chopin Studies* 2, pp. 166–68), it certainly alludes to that technique.

This is an excellent description of the chorale-like cadence, so alien to the earlier portion of this most bizarre of preludes. At the end of the C $\sharp$ -minor Prelude, no. 10, Kresky hears the accented A octave (mm. 16–17) as “a musical equivalent of ‘but wait a minute’—which is then followed by an ‘Oh, never mind!’” Such comments on musical gesture and discourse, perhaps falling more into Kresky’s category of “musings” than “analysis,” are sure to be useful to performers as well as listeners—much more so than Roman-numeral analyses of chords. It is noteworthy that some of Kresky’s remarks on gesture allude to events below the musical surface, thus counteracting to some extent the overly surface-oriented character of much of his harmonic analysis.

The samples of Kresky’s “musings” cited above give some indication of his generally colorful and evocative language. There are innumerable additional examples of effective description—for instance, that of the melody at m. 16 of the A-minor Prelude, no. 2 (“the second melodic interval, which ought to be a rising minor third, is squashed into a rather sour minor second”—p. 11); and those of the harmony of this prelude as “creep[ing] onward” (p. 11) and as “struggl[ing] under the weight of surface distortions in piecemeal, splayed-out arpeggiations” (p. 10). Sometimes, to be sure, Kresky is carried away by his way with words, and chooses wordings which, though colorful, are not quite appropriate. For example, the phrase, “wander[ing] forlornly in the a-minor scale,” applied to the melody of mm. 17–21 of the A-minor Prelude, no. 2, is not quite accurate; the melody certainly sounds “forlorn”, but its motion is sequential, and thus gives less impression of “wandering” than ever before. The word “chugging,” applied to the accompaniment pattern of the E-minor Prelude, seems flippant and inconsistent with the character of the piece. The F $\sharp$  in m. 5 of the A-major Prelude, no. 7, is not, as Kresky states, “gratuitously added” (p. 39), but continues the parallel sixths established from the outset. Such minor infelicities of language, however, are outweighed by many superb characterizations of Chopin’s music.

Kresky’s promise in the Preface that his commentary will include “opinions” is fulfilled not only in the general sense that all

of a writer's statements grow out of his or her opinions, but also in the sense that Kresky shares his critical judgments of some of the Preludes. He feels, for example, that the E $\flat$ -minor Prelude, no. 14, is "made with less thoughtful attention" than others, and manifests "a certain amount of creative fatigue" (p. 73). He states that the D $\flat$ -major Prelude, no. 15, is "by no means the most profound, enjoyable, or interesting"; he finds the middle section "a little repetitious, and somewhat gross in its expression" (p. 77). To the B $\flat$ -minor Prelude, no. 16, he applies the terms "raucous" and "unadventurous" (in terms of harmony), and he refers to "noisy assertion of fairly feeble ideas" (p. 83). About the F-minor Prelude, no. 18, he states that "there can be little doubt that this is the weakest of the preludes." He supports this assertion by writing that "it barely comes across as a composition, in that its elements—themselves ill-formed—do not seem 'composed' into an arrangement of any satisfaction.... By the time the piece is over, nothing seems to have happened; the cadence just puts a stop to the noise" (p. 95). In the final D-minor Prelude, he finds "an unimaginative literalness" of repetition; he refers to the nineteen-fold reiteration of the bass pattern and to the literal transposition of the first eighteen measures in mm. 19–37 (p. 125). Kresky is, of course, entitled to his negative views of some of Chopin's pieces, but I believe that he should have thought twice about publishing them in a book. Opinions can change; one can suddenly realize that a piece within a collection that once seemed inferior to others is a wonderful piece after all. Given the quality of the mind and the imagination of the composer in question, I would hesitate to denigrate any of his serious works in such vociferous terms. Again, I feel that Kresky's way with words runs away with him in these emphatic statements of negative opinions.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>I do not agree with Kresky's negative assessment of the F-minor Prelude. It is interesting to compare Alfred Cortot's description of the piece in his *Students' Edition* of the Preludes (Paris: Maurice Senart, 1926; trans. David Ponsonby, Boston and New York: Oliver Ditson Company, n.d.). He writes that this "vehement recitative" suggests "a human sentiment, so to speak, out of control[;] but its disorder is that of genius, and its pathos so profound, because its impetuous mechanism is established by the most conscious art (p. 58)."

In spite of the flaws that I have mentioned, I find Kresky's book a welcome addition to the Chopin literature, particularly because it demonstrates that colorful characterization of musical events need not degenerate into "purple prose." Readers looking for an engaging guide to the Preludes rather than a scholarly discussion will find that Kresky's book admirably fits the bill.

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Kresky, too, finds disorder in the piece, but does not acknowledge the purposefulness, artfulness, and—given a fine performance—the chilling effect of that disorder.