

THE “RAINDROP” PRELUDE

Frederic Chopin
Arranged Ryan E. Ellefsen

INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor Score	1
Violin I	8
Violin II	8
Viola	5
Cello	5
String Bass	5

Chopin traveled to Spain to escape the damp Paris climate, but instead encountered persistent rain, which is reflected in this title and is heard in the repetition of the eighth notes that are passed from section to section. An intense work that features a string quartet at both the beginning and the end, as well as strong tutti sections that provide opportunities for controlled dissonances, the piece has been transposed into the key of D for greater accessibility. A great introduction to the piano literature of the Romantic Era, as well as an opportunity for deep emotional reflection for both younger and mature ensembles!



PROGRAM NOTES

Inspired by Bach's "Well Tempered Clavier," Chopin wrote a series of 24 preludes for piano, one in each key, published in 1839. Composed in large part in Spain, Chopin's preludes vary in length and demeanor. With the shortest prelude a mere twelve measures, "The 'Raindrop' Prelude in D \flat Major" is one of the longest and has become the most famous. Upon doctor's orders, Chopin had traveled to Majorca, Spain to escape the damp Paris climate, but instead encountered persistent rain. Throughout this work, the listener hears the rain as a relentless assault of eighth notes, in various ranges, instruments, and combinations around which Chopin composed the piece. His frustration with the weather is felt when the piece switches to D minor, but throughout the work, Chopin's intensity and emotion are easily transferred to a string ensemble.

NOTES TO THE CONDUCTOR

The idea for this arrangement came to me when I was sitting in my office, listening to a student practice the piece on a daily basis. After a few days, I started to hear the piece in my head as played by a string orchestra, rather than the piano. Still, there are some uniquely pianistic qualities to this work that need careful attention. The beginning should start as a true string quartet, without any doubling, and without any conducting by the director. When the rest of the ensemble enters, the lightness provided by the string quartet must be maintained. Of special note are the "quasi-cadenzas" which occur throughout the piece. They should be played as if by a piano player—not necessarily in time; freely, but not at the expense of the momentum of the work. They are brief pauses of sunlight in a cloud-filled sky. It would be best for the soloist to listen to a variety of piano performances of this work to accurately perform these challenging bridges. There are some great opportunities for the students to become comfortable with controlled dissonance in the minor section. The divisi dissonances in the violins must be equal in volume and the performers cannot shy away from this opportunity. The F \sharp in measure 55 is incredibly important because it foreshadows the eventual return to D major. Finally, if you have enough players, I found it to be a nice addition to allow half of the cellos and basses to play pizzicato in measures 28 to 43 and the other half to play those measures arco. Of course, all basses should play pizzicato from 40 to the repeat sign. Transposed to D for greater accessibility, the piece works very well for strings. I hope you enjoy this work!

The "Raindrop" Prelude

CONDUCTOR SCORE

Duration - 5:50

Sostenuto, con espressione e semplice (♩ = 60)

Frédéric Chopin

Arranged by Ryan E. Ellefsen

Violins

Viola

Cello

String Bass

1 2 3

Vlms.

Vla.

Cello

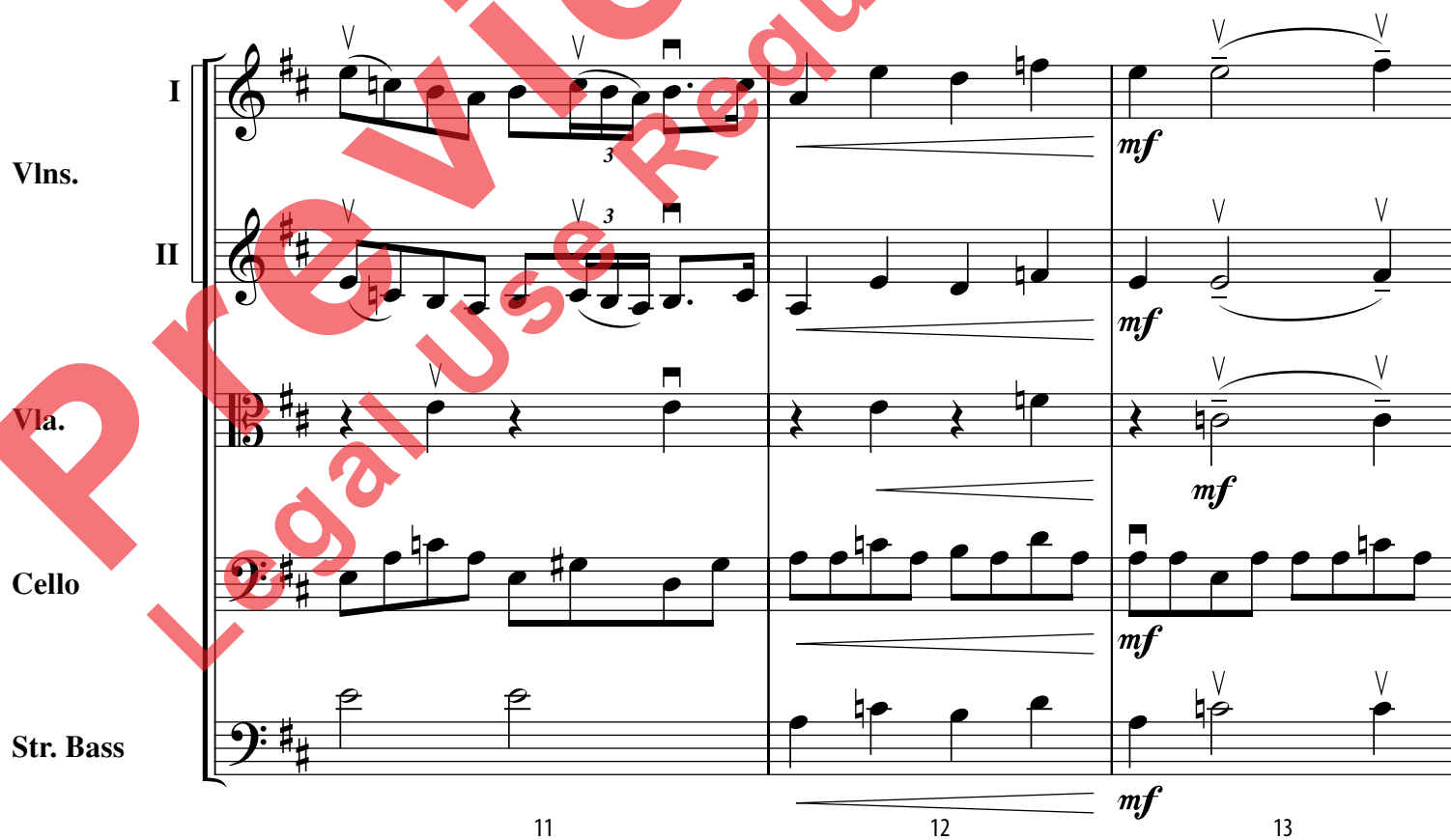
Str. Bass

4 5 6 7

Score for measures 8, 9, and 10. The instruments are Vlns. I & II, Vla., Cello, and Str. Bass. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and the dynamics are *mp* and *pp* (pianissimo). The score includes a *Tutti* marking and a box containing the number 9.



Score for measures 11, 12, and 13. The instruments are Vlns. I & II, Vla., Cello, and Str. Bass. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). The score includes a *Tutti* marking and a box containing the number 9.



Vlns.

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

33732S

Score for measures 21-23, featuring Violins (Vlns.), Viola (Vla.), Cello, and String Bass (Str. Bass).

Measure 21: Violins I and II play quarter notes. Viola plays a half note. Cello plays a continuous eighth-note pattern. String Bass is silent.

Measure 22: Violins I and II play quarter notes. Viola plays a half note. Cello continues the eighth-note pattern. String Bass is silent.

Measure 23: Violins I and II play quarter notes. Viola plays a half note. Cello continues the eighth-note pattern. String Bass is silent. A fermata is placed over the final notes of the Violins I and II staves.

Score for measures 24-27, featuring Violins (Vlns.), Viola (Vla.), Cello, and String Bass (Str. Bass).

Measure 24: Violins I and II play quarter notes. Viola plays a half note. Cello plays a continuous eighth-note pattern. String Bass is silent.

Measure 25: Violins I and II play quarter notes. Viola plays a half note. Cello continues the eighth-note pattern. String Bass is silent.

Measure 26: Violins I and II play quarter notes. Viola plays a half note. Cello continues the eighth-note pattern. String Bass is silent. The dynamic marking *mp* (mezzo-piano) is indicated for the Violins I, Violins II, and Cello parts.

Measure 27: Violins I and II play quarter notes. Viola plays a half note. Cello continues the eighth-note pattern. String Bass is silent. The dynamic marking *mp* (mezzo-piano) is indicated for the Violins I, Violins II, and Cello parts.

28

Più mosso, non troppo

Vlns.

II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

p

28

29

30

31

Vlns.

II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

*div.**p*

32

33

34

35

36

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

mf

mf

mf

mf

36 37 38 39

40

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

div.

fff

fff

fff

fff

pizz.

fff

40 41 42 43

44

Vlns. I *mf*

Vlns. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Cello *mf* arco

Str. Bass *mf*

div.

44 45 46 47

Vlns. I *mp*

Vlns. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Cello *mp*

Str. Bass *mp*

48 49 50 51

52

div.

Vlns.

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

ff

ff

ff

(V)

(V)

52 53 54 55

Vlns.

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

rit.

56 57 58 59

Tempo I
Solo

60

Vlns.
I
II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

p

Solo

p

Solo

p

Solo

p

60 61 62

Cadenza - freely

Cadenza - freely

Vlns.
I
II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

6

6

63 64 65

I
 Vlns.
 II
 Vla.
 Cello
 Str. Bass

Tutti
 mp
 Tutti
 mp
 Tutti
 mp
 Tutti
 mp

66 67 68 69

Vlns.
Vla.
Cello
Str. Bass

Musical score for measures 70-73, featuring Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The score shows a crescendo from forte (*f*) to piano (*p*) across four measures. The Cello and String Bass parts have a melodic line in measure 70, while the Violins and Viola have sustained notes. Measure 71 shows a continuation of the melodic line in the Cello and String Bass. Measure 72 shows a melodic line in the String Bass and sustained notes in the Violins and Viola. Measure 73 shows sustained notes in all parts. The score is marked with a large red "Legal Use Required" watermark.