

### The piano and playing techniques

- Developed in the Romantic era so it became a much more popular and important instrument
- PEDALS – both the sustain pedal (that holds notes on) and the soft pedal became more effective
- SIZE – it got bigger which meant it had a bigger dynamic range.
- HAMMERS – given a felt covering instead of leather, so the tone was made a lot softer and more rounded.
- STRINGS – were made thicker, longer and more tense – creating a fuller tone.

Ped. \*

Sustain pedal symbol. The first symbol means 'press the pedal' and the second star looking symbol means 'release the pedal'.

- The middle range of the piano is used in section A and the more sonorous bass register is exploited in the middle section.

### Type of piece

- A prelude would have been played in the home, small concert halls or in a recital room

### Style - Romantic Features

- Piano developed in the romantic period – became bigger. This meant it had a large dynamic range and had soft and sustain pedals
- Richer harmonies
- Often long, slow melodies
- Rubato – not playing strictly in time but making notes longer/shorter with the feel of the music
- Rise of the virtuoso performer
- Musical structures expanded
- Also, reduced musical structures became common (one-off shorter pieces of music, like this Prelude)
- Greater use of Instrumental Colour than in Classical Period
- More intense expression of emotion than in Classical Period

### Themes:

#### Section A



#### Section B (Left hand melody and pedal note in right hand)



# Prelude No. 15 in D flat

## major - Raindrop

### Chopin



### Structure and Tonality

- Ternary form – ABA
- Coda (ending)

Section	Key	Length
A	D flat major	27 bars
B	C# minor (tonic minor)*. Explores other keys too.	47 bars
A	D flat major	8 bars
Coda	D flat major	6 bars

\*C# is the enharmonic equivalent of D flat – the same note

- The minor key sounds much more dramatic
- Raindrop notes in section B are the G#'s
- Exploring other keys is called modulation.

### Similarities between section A and B:

Same tempo, metre (time signature), homophonic texture

### Three musical points about this piece that I like:

Justify your points and use musical vocabulary.

### Three musical points about this piece that I don't like:

Justify your points and use musical vocabulary.

### How are the elements used?

#### Structure

- Ternary form – ABA with a short coda.
- Section lengths are not equal. The longest section in the contrasting middle section. When section A returns before the coda we only hear 8 bars of the original theme.

#### Tonality and Harmony

- Keys outline the structure. Opens and ends in the major with a contrasting minor middle section.
- Raindrop notes are dominant pedals. We hear them at the start (the A flats in the left hand). Also in the right hand in the middle section
- The dominant pedal is very clear in section B – repeated quaver G#'s.
- Passes through G# minor and F# minor in section B.
- When section A returns it is slightly more chromatic

#### Timbre and texture

- Entirely homophonic, except for two monophonic bars at the start of the coda.
- In the A sections the texture consists of melody and accompaniment and is often quite thin. The melody is in the right hand with broken chords and pedal note in the left hand.
- B section texture is more chordal and generally lower in pitch. Also repeated pedal note is now in the right hand (=inverted pedal) and the melody is in the left hand.
- In the loud sections the texture is thickened by octave doubling in both hands.

#### Dynamics

- Starts quietly (marked *p*) continues all the way through section A.
- Dynamics start soft (*sotto voce* = under the voice) and gradually build in section B. Reaches *ff* (very loud). Continues to drop to *p* then crescendo (get louder).
- Return of section A is *p* (soft). Also marked *smorzando* (means dying away). The piece ends very softly – *pp*.

#### Melody & Pitch

- Opening melody starts with notes from the tonic triad (Db chord)
- Melody is in right hand in Section A, swaps to left hand in Section B

#### Tempo & Rhythm

- Slow 4/4
- Rubato is used – expressive shortening of some notes and lengthening of others. Accents used in section B
- Notes lengths augmented (made longer – e.g. crotchet become minims) making it feel slow and heavy.
- Sostenuito = sustained, Rit. (ritentuo) = getting slower

#### Practice questions:

1. How did the piano change in the Romantic period?
2. What type of piece is this?
3. Why is this piece known as the Raindrop prelude?
4. What is the structure of the Raindrop prelude?
5. What key is section A in? What key is section B in?