



YORK BOWEN

24 Preludes Op. 102

SINAE LEE

PIANO



York Bowen (1884-1961)

24 Preludes Op.102 (1950)

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| 1. | No. 1 in C Major <i>Moderato appassionato</i> | 1:11 |
| 2. | No. 2 in C minor <i>Andante tranquillo</i> | 2:30 |
| 3. | No. 3 in D flat Major <i>Andante grazioso</i> | 1:56 |
| 4. | No. 4 in C sharp minor <i>Allegro con fuoco</i> | 1:07 |
| 5. | No. 5 in D Major <i>Allegro risoluto</i> | 1:52 |
| 6. | No. 6 in D minor <i>Andante con moto</i> | 3:09 |
| 7. | No. 7 in E flat Major <i>Andantino amabile</i> | 1:57 |
| 8. | No. 8 in E flat minor <i>Poco lento, serio</i> | 2:20 |
| 9. | No. 9 in E Major <i>Allegro risoluto e ritmico</i> | 1:46 |
| 10. | No. 10 in E minor <i>Moderato, a capriccio</i> | 2:13 |
| 11. | No. 11 in F Major <i>Andante con moto e grazioso</i> | 2:43 |
| 12. | No. 12 in F minor <i>Allegro con fuoco</i> | 1:43 |
| 13. | No. 13 in G flat Major <i>Andante tranquillo</i> | 2:22 |
| 14. | No. 14 in F sharp minor <i>Allegretto scherzando</i> | 1:21 |

15.	No. 15 in G Major <i>Allegretto grazioso</i>	1:51
16.	No. 16 in G minor <i>Moderato semplice</i>	2:44
17.	No. 17 in A flat Major <i>Andante molto espressivo</i>	2:06
18.	No. 18 in G sharp minor <i>Allegro con fuoco</i>	2:13
19.	No. 19 in A Major <i>Andantino con moto</i>	2:08
20.	No. 20 in A minor <i>Allegro con fuoco</i>	1:23
21.	No. 21 in B flat Major <i>Andante piacevole</i>	2:35
22.	No. 22 in B flat minor <i>Allegro molto e con fuoco</i>	1:34
23.	No. 23 in B Major <i>Andante con moto</i>	2:03
24.	No. 24 in B minor <i>Moderato serio e tragico</i>	3:56
		Total playing time 50:53

Sinae Lee, Piano

Notes on the Preludes

Born in London in 1884, York Bowen was a renowned pianist and composer. Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) praised him as the most remarkable of the young British composers and as “seelenverwandt” (like-souled) and one of his contemporaries, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (1892-1988) was a great admirer and promoter for Bowen’s music. Bowen’s musical style was deeply rooted in romanticism, despite in his surroundings, the romantic style gradually became out of fashion after the First World War. His contemporaries often referred to Bowen as “The English Rachmaninoff” as most of his prolific compositional outputs were for piano and his piano music contained as much highly emotional lyricism and challenging technical virtuosity as Rachmaninoff.

24 Preludes Op.102 was composed in 1938 and published in 1950. It was dedicated to Sorabji who described these Preludes as the finest English piano music of his time. Like Chopin’s *24 Preludes*, it has all major and minor keys. While Chopin’s Preludes were arranged in Major-relative minor, Bowen arranged them in chromatic ascendance – from C Major (No.1) start to B minor (No.24) finish. However, Bowen often shifts modulation within each Prelude and use of chromaticism takes a huge part in his compositional style. Each Prelude poses distinct characters and various technical challenges and, as a whole set, it displays a wonderful array of emotional gamut. The duration is about 50 minutes.

While working with these Preludes, I have decided to give each one a title, based on my musical perception. This helped me greatly to delve into the character which I would like to portray in this set of Preludes. These are written in brackets. However, it is not my intention to suggest one feel the same way as I do as everyone’s viewpoint could be quite different, or to be completely opposite. Therefore, I suggest you take my emotional perceptions as a reference rather than a guide.

No.1 in C Major *Moderato appassionato* (Hope)

This is the only prelude which doesn't have ternary form. Rather, it feels more improvisatory with a great sense of spontaneity. I saw this piece as the Prelude of the Preludes.

No.2 in C minor *Andante tranquillo* (Forget-me-not)

The ongoing melodic pattern of a crochet+quaver in legato sets out a pleading atmosphere.

No.3 in D flat Major *Andante grazioso* (Solace)

Although this Prelude shares the same time signature as No.2 (6/8), the accompanying material gently moves in semiquavers throughout the piece, which helps the music flow naturally and gently.

No.4 in C sharp minor *Allegro con fuoco* (Fever)

Apart from the indication (*Allegro con fuoco*), Bowen wrote *brillante, feroce* and *con fuoco* in this Prelude, which suggests a blazing passion throughout the piece. It is one of the fast and virtuosic writings in this cycle.

No.5 in D Major *Allegro risoluto* (Jubilation)

The constant octaves with rich sonority in the chords conjure up immensely proud and majestically joyous character in this Prelude. Bowen uses his first *fff* towards the end of this piece to maximise the glorious character.

No.6 in D minor *Andante con moto* (Dismality)

Perhaps, it is the most well-known Prelude out of the cycle. Bowen captures a profound sense of melancholy in this Prelude.

No.7 in E flat Major *Andantino amabile* (Embrace)

The ongoing arpeggiations envelops the rest of the texture with incredible warmth.

No.8 in E flat minor *Poco lento, serio* (Regret)

A profound lamentation in the top melodic line alongside chromatic chordal progression in the accompaniment sets out the pensive mood.

No.9 in E Major *Allegro risoluto e ritmico* (Exuberance)

A particular rhythmic motive (two semiquavers and a quaver) runs throughout this prelude, and its persistent use enhances the feeling of excitement.

No.10 in E minor *Moderato, a capriccio* (What if...?)

This pattern of the fast-running demisemiquavers and the following melodic cadence resembles to a trail of thought, questioning its existence.

No.11 in F Major *Andante con moto e grazioso* (Wander)

The key of F Major is often denied throughout this prelude, as if wandering the uncharted territory, then eventually it comes back to F Major at the end.

No.12 in F minor *Allegro con fuoco* (Furnace)

Like No.4, this piece displays burning passion with words indications such as *Con fuoco, Tempestuoso, Brillante, Furioso and Feroce*. The difference with No 4 is that chordal octaves consist of the main melodic line in this Prelude.

No.13 in G flat Major *Andante tranquillo* (Consolation)

On a bed of quietly flowing accompaniment, the subtly nuanced melody is woven into the texture. Only one *f* in the middle is also in *molto espressivo*. The tender atmosphere in this key signature reminds one of Schubert's famous Impromptus (Op.90, No.3).

No.14 in F sharp minor *Allegretto scherzando* (Firefly)

The ongoing chordal staccatos are fleeting throughout the piece, feeling almost nothing is tangible.

No.15 in G Major *Allegretto grazioso* (Candyfloss)

Long lines of phrases of perpetually moving semiquavers provide an effective accompaniment to the melodic motives. Overall, extremely delicate and light.

No.16 in G minor *Moderato semplice* (Resignation)

As the tempi indication suggests, the piece proceeds without an excessive outcry. Rather, the continuing crochet plods on without being fussed, as if one accepts one's grim fate.

No.17 in A flat Major *Andante molto espressivo* (Enchantment)

The key of A flat is denied and delayed until the end of the piece. The combination of intricate harmonic modulations with expressive melodic line makes a delightful musical journey.

No.18 in G sharp minor *Allegro con fuoco* (Orage)

This is physically the most challenging and emotionally charged one in the entire set. The fast and furious octave passages remind one of Scriabin or Rachmaninoff.

No.19 in A Major *Andantino con moto* (Reconciliation)

A calm and comforting melody flows above gently moving semiquavers. The ending is extremely delicate.

No.20 in A minor *Allegro con fuoco* (Tantrum)

The frequent use of the combination of thick and thin accents creates a real sense of rhythmic vigour and urgency.

No.21 in B flat Major *Andante piacevole* (Silver lining)

In the opening, the gentle melody on the left-hand crosses over the right-hand. The dynamic range here is *p-pp*, staying subtle and delicately sweet.

No.22 in B flat minor *Allegro molto e con fuoco* (Fret)

The last of the passionately dramatic Preludes in this cycle. The long pedal is only used at the end for exhilarating culmination, otherwise the general articulation is non-legato throughout the piece.

No.23 in B Major *Andante con moto* (Relief)

The calmly flowing semiquavers with crochet+quaver accompaniments swing one gently like a cradle.

No.24 in B minor *Moderato serioso e tragico* (Remorse)

A profound sense of lamentation and grief could be heard in this Prelude.

- Sinae Lee

Sinae Lee, Piano

"Formidably equipped" – Gramophone

"Flabbergasted" – The Herald

"Phenomenal" – The Classical Reviewer

South Korean-born pianist Sinae Lee leads a busy life as a soloist, chamber musician, lecturer and doctoral supervisor at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) in Glasgow, UK. Since her UK début with Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO), playing Brahms Piano Concerto No.1, she has also played with Korean Symphony Orchestra, St. James Orchestra, Glasgow Orchestral Society as well as RCS Orchestra and Wind Ensemble. She has frequently appeared in concerts in New York, St. Petersburg, Riga, London, Edinburgh and Glasgow as well as cities in her native Korea such as Seoul, Suwon and Busan. In Korea, she studied piano at Yewon School and Seoul Arts High School. While studying in Seoul, she won many prestigious prizes, such as the Chung-Ang Daily Newspaper competition, and the Korean Music Association for Overseas competitors. After graduating Seoul National University with Distinction, Sinae was offered a place to study at Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama (RSAMD, now RCS) with a full scholarship awarded by the Inches Carr Trust, obtaining her MMus with Distinction one year later. Her prizewinning career continued in UK where she won the London Intercollegiate Beethoven competition as well as numerous RCS Prizes including A.Ramsay-Calder Debussy Prize, Bach Prize, Governors' Recital Prize, Concerto Competition Prize, Ian D.Watt Award and the Dunbar-Geber Prize. Sinae studied piano with Hwa-Young Yi, Hyoung-Joon Chang in Korea, and Philip Jenkins in UK.

In 2006, Sinae recorded Karol Szymanowski's complete piano works on four CDs, released by Divine Art Record Company. These recordings marked the first complete CD set, including the posthumously published Prelude in C sharp minor. This marked her début recording and received highly acclaimed reviews from Gramophone (Recommended Recording), BBC Music Magazine (Benchmark Recording), MusicWeb International (Recording of the Month, November 2006), Pianist Magazine (Recommended Recording), All Music Guide (Classical Editors' Best of the Year 2007) and Res Musica. Some of the pieces from her Szymanowski CDs have been broadcasted on BBC Radio 3, Radio New Zealand and Busan KBS TV. To celebrate 10 years anniversary of her Szymanowski CDs release, Sinae gave Szymanowski concert tours in Glasgow (RCS), Dublin (Royal Irish Academy of Music) and Seoul (Seoul National University and Dongduk Womens University) between October and December 2016. In 2011, Sinae performed the complete *Années de Pèlerinage* by Liszt in the UK and Korea, celebrating the composer's 200th anniversary. A studio recording was released by Nimbus Alliance in July 2012 and received rave reviews from The Classical Reviewer (Best of 2012) and MusicWeb International (Recording of the Month, April 2014).

At times, Sinae enjoys challenging herself with some monumental repertoires such as playing Beethoven/Liszt Symphony No.9 and Ronald Stevenson Passacaglia on DSCH, but other times, she equally enjoys collaborating with other musicians such as violinist Ilya Gringolts, double bassist Knut Erik Sundquist and many others or giving premiers to numerous new works by living composers such as Marek Pasieczny, Gordon McPherson, Rory Boyle, Vera Stanojevic and Jay Capperauld. In July 2016, Sinae recorded an original composition by Jay Capperauld's 'Swan Lake' for BBC Arts documentary film. Sinae has also been the pianist for Glasgow New Music Expedition (GNME), a contemporary music ensemble led by Jessica Cottis.

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Sinae's past prize adjudications include Karol Szymanowski International Music Competition in Katowice, Poland, Olga Kern International Piano Competition (Screening Jury), Eurovision Young Musicians Semi-Finals in Festival Theatre in Edinburgh, Yamaha Music Foundation of Europe Piano Scholarships at Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM), BBC Young Musician of the Year (preliminary round) at City Hall (Glasgow), Scottish International Youth Piano Competition as well as many internal competitions at RCS.

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