Cécile Chaminade – Élégie

What does the title mean?

Élégie means elegy. In music, an elegy is a piece associated with mourning and usually has a sorrowful or melancholy character. This piece is No. 7 from Album des enfants Op. 126, published in 1907.

What keys are in this piece?

The main key is D minor.

Introduction, bar 1: D minor
A, bars 2–13: D minor
B, bars 14–21: D minor
A, bars 22–29: D minor

The piece remains principally in D minor, but other keys are briefly tonicised. G minor is tonicised in bars 6–8. C major is tonicised in bar 14. Bars 16–17 suggest A major before returning to D minor.

What is the form of the piece?

Ternary form with a one-bar introduction: Introduction – A – B – A

Introduction: bar 1
A: bars 2–13
B: bars 14–21
A: bars 22–29

The A section contains two themes. The first appears in bars 2–5 and the second in bars 6–13. The B section provides contrasting material before the A section returns at bar 22 with some variation.

What period does this piece come from?

The late Romantic period. Cécile Chaminade lived from 1857–1944. Although Élégie was published in 1907, its musical style is Romantic.

Explain the style

Romantic style - melody has long phrases, melody very important. Harmonic shifts chromatically or to unrelated keys. Accent of dissonance. Homophonic texture (melody in foreground). Epic or small pieces, character pieces typical. Piano development influenced music greatly, many piano pieces written at this time.

Romantic style (from ‘About Music’) - expansive singing melodies; wide ranging melodies, varied with chromatic inflections; rhythmic diversity and elsaticity; tempo rubato; increasing chromaticism; expanded concepts of tonality; homophony, turning to increased polyphony in later years of era; genres included symphonic poems, art songs, solo piano works; expansion of forms and interest in continuous as well as miniature programmatic forms; mainly secular works for paying audiences (not sacred for church); wide

ranging dynamics for expressive purposes; new instruments; increased virtuosity with more direction from composers in scores; expression concerned with individual emotion, mood, atmosphere; interest in the bizarre and macabre.

Musical terminology in the score

Andante sostenuto – at a moderately slow walking pace, sustained

♩. = ca 84–92 – approximately 84–92 dotted-crotchet beats per minute

ben cantando – in a singing manner

pp – pianissimo – very soft

p – piano – soft

mp – mezzo piano – moderately soft

mf – mezzo forte – moderately loud

f – forte – loud

dolce – sweetly

dolcissimo – very sweetly

poco riten. – gradually become a little slower

a tempo – return to the original tempo

accent (>) – emphasise the note

crescendo hairpin – gradually become louder

diminuendo hairpin – gradually become softer