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The Ballades of Frederic Chopin

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THE BALLADES OF FREDERIC CHOPIN

by

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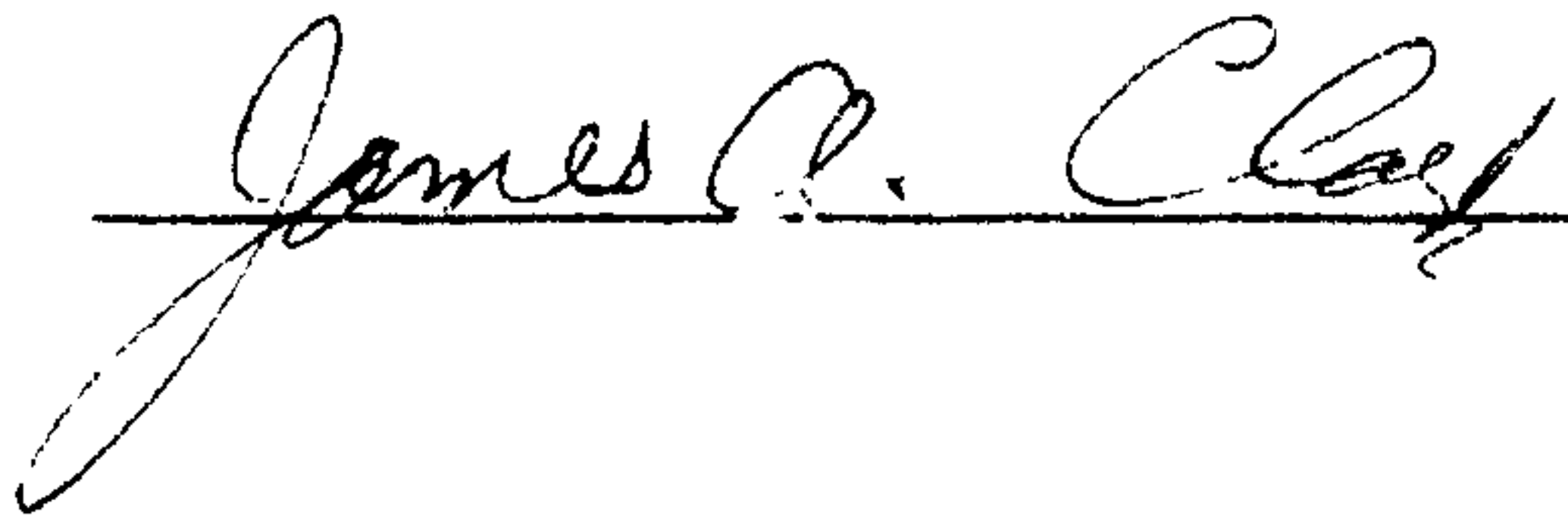
This Thesis submitted by Janell E. Brakel in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota is hereby approved by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done.

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This Thesis meets the standards for appearance and conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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Dean of the Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

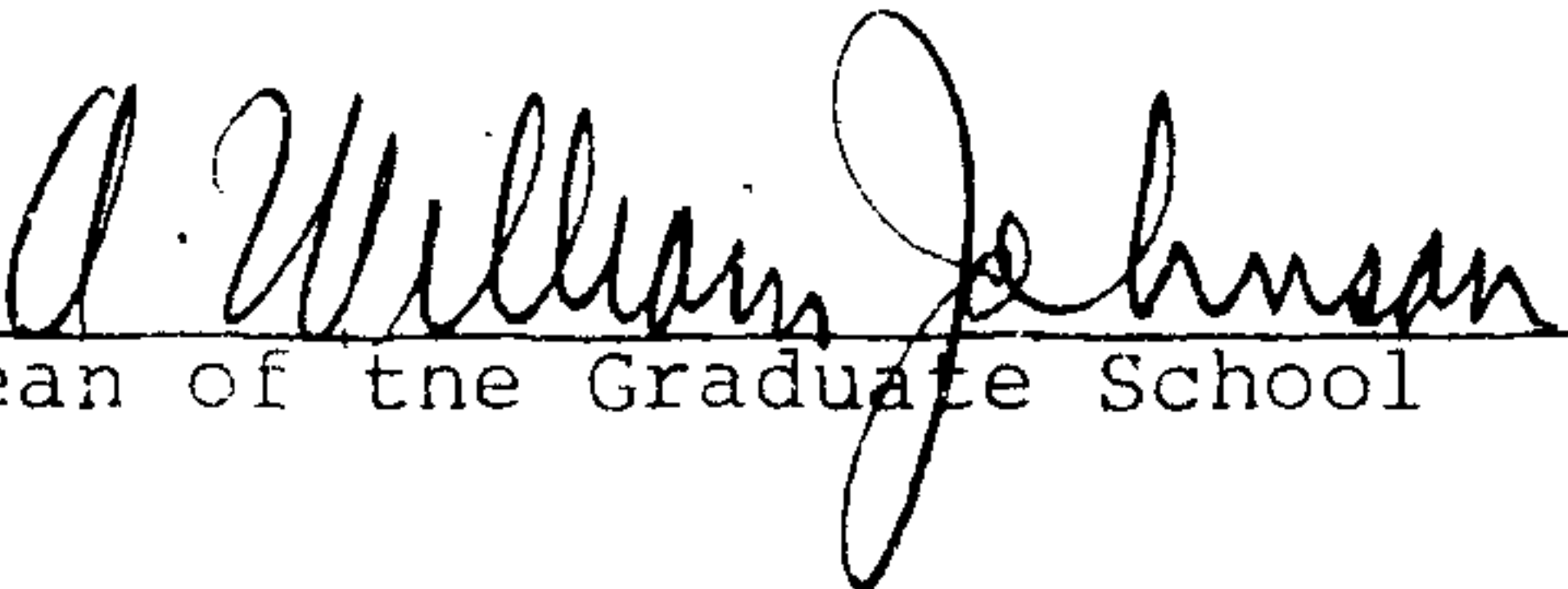The four Ballades of Chopin occupy a unique position within his output and in the repertory of keyboard music. Although Chopin was not the only composer to utilize the form, he is credited as being the first to adapt the ballade to the piano. His efforts resulted in the creation of a unique type of single-movement piano piece characterized by an inherent narrative quality.

Several individuals and events were influential in shaping the musical personality of Chopin. Adalbert Zywny and Joseph Elsner provided piano and theory instruction in Chopin's youth. The virtuosity of **Hummel, Paganini,** and Field affected Chopin as a **composer and as a performer.** Italian opera also exerted an influence upon his compositional style. Influential events include the **struggles of** Poland, the Romantic Movement, **and Chopin's battle against** tuberculosis.

Chopin's musical style is characterized by elaborate ornamentation of melodys, use of rapid figuration, and chromatic harmonies. An overview of Chopin's music demonstrates his individuality in the treatment of both small and large-scale works.

A popular genre of the Romantic Period was that of the character piece. The character pieces, subjective in

nature, ranged in length from short pieces to more extended works. Chopin revitalized existing forms through his innovative compositional devices, creating both small-scale and large-scale character pieces.

The <u>Ballades</u> occupy a unique position within Chopin's output due to their inherent narrative quality. The <u>Ballades</u> contain the drama and suspense of the literary ballad without the presence of an actual story.

Several writers have suggested a direct association of the Chopin <u>Ballades</u> with the literary ballads of Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. Due to the fact that there is no documented evidence to support the existence of a direct literary association, it is probable that Chopin chose to emulate features of narrative style rather than content of the literary ballad.

Features of narrative style common to the Chopin <u>Ballades</u> and the literary ballad of the time include the following: suggestion of the presence of an unidentified narrator, present tense, suspenseful unfolding of the narrative, incremental repetition, characters in conflict, and a tragic or dramatic ending. A discussion of each of the Chopin <u>Ballades</u> in terms of structure and narrative style demonstrates specific compositional features which Chopin used to create drama and suspense comparable to that of the literary ballad. The structure of each Ballade is analyzed in terms of Chopin's use of

passage-work and treatment of individual themes. A comparison and contrast of compositional and narrative techniques utilized within the four _Ballades_ attempts to explain their divergence of form.

CHAPTER I

INFLUENCES SHAPING THE MUSICAL PERSONALITY OF CHOPIN

> Bach is like an astronomer who, with the help of ciphers, finds the most wonderful stars. . . . Beethoven embraced the universe with the power of his spirit. . . . I do not climb so high. A long time ago I decided that my universe will be the heart and soul of man.[1]
>
> —Chopin

Such were the words written by Chopin as he described his musical aspirations in a letter to his confidante, Delphine Potacka. The goal expressed by Chopin, although seemingly poetic and idealistic, is as a prophecy fulfilled when considered in terms of his lifelong contribution as a pianist and composer.

As a pianist, he produced breathtaking effects with his pure, singing tone, fine legato, and carefully moulded phrasing. Hedley states that "when Chopin vanished from the scene, nothing of his art as a pianist was left; there remained only a legend of his personal, elusive style of playing."[2]

Although as a composer Chopin devoted himself mainly to the piano, this narrowing of interest resulted in a

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[1] Abraham Chasins, Speaking of Pianists . . . (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953), p. 220.

[2] Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 118.

specialization of output rather than a limitation. As he
discovered a fresh approach to composition, existing forms
were altered and improved. Innovative compositional de-
vices such as melodic ornamentation, rapid figuration,
and use of chromatic harmony became stylistic features of
his works. Hutcheson writes:

> Chopin's greatest distinction, the quality in
> which he outpointed all others, lay undoubtedly
> in the astonishing originality and appropriateness
> of his writing for the piano. His every phrase,
> technical pattern, and ornament sound inevitably
> proper to the chosen medium.[3]

Gillespie praises Chopin as a prominent composer
"universally idolized in his own country and ours, who
holds the enviable position of being the one whose music
is most frequently performed."[4] Gillespie characterizes
the music of Chopin as "subjective and tinged with
melancholy," as an "expression of the search for the un-
attainable," and as a representative of a new keyboard
style that "fits ideally into nineteenth-century Roman-
ticism."[5]

Although the reputation of Chopin as a highly-
regarded pianist and composer is presently well-established,
such was not the case during his own lifetime. Championed

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[3] Ernest Hutcheson, The Literature of the Piano (New
York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1964), p. 212.

[4] John Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music
(Belmont, CA: Wadworth Publishing Co. Inc., 1965), p. 220.

[5] Ibid., p. 220.

by many as the "poet of the piano," and the "darling of
the aristocracy," he was also sharply criticized by those
contemporaries who wished to denigrate him. He was
labeled as a "sick room talent" by John Field, as a person
who was "dying all his life" by Hector Berlioz, and as one
comparable to "a nervous society lady" by Mily Balakirev.[6]

The above paragraph suggests an image of a frail,
sickly Chopin as opposed to an image of the composer as
a dynamic innovator. Other contrasting images arise in
response to consideration of the following questions:
How was it possible for a composer with such sensitivity
to so fervently express the feelings of an entire race?
How could Chopin the patriot, the spokesman for the Polish
people, have such universal appeal? Finally, how was it
possible for Chopin, the composer who hated Romanticism,
to become the most popular Romanticist? The biographical
section which follows will attempt to answer these ques-
tions, and will discuss a number of individuals and events
that may have influenced the musical personality of Chopin.

Frederick Francois Chopin was born in Zelazowa Wola,
near Warsaw, on February 22, 1810. He was the second
child of four born to Nicholas and Justyna Chopin, who were
of French and Polish descent respectively. The Chopin
household provided a rich environment and close contact
with the social and artistic life of Warsaw. As a result

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[6]Ibid., p. 220.

of this upbringing, Frederic cultivated superior manners and fashionable taste.

Frederic showed an interest in the piano at an early age. His development was precocious, but not considered unusual among the great musicians.[7] By the age of five years, he had learned everything that his sister Louise (Ludwika) could teach him. His parents recognized his talent, and sought a teacher who would start the child on the right path. Their choice was that of Adalbert Zywny.

Adalbert Zywny (1756-1842) became the first and only piano teacher that Chopin was to have. Zywny, born in Bohemia, was originally a violinist and never more than an accomplished amateur on the piano. A fervent admirer of J. S. Bach, Zywny introduced Chopin to the then known keyboard works of that composer as well as those of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. The admiration of Bach was instilled in Chopin, and for the rest of his life, Bach came second only to Mozart in his affections.[8]

Little credit is awarded Zywny for the instruction given Chopin from 1816-1822. Zywny was a very poor theory instructor, and regarding the progress of Chopin as a pianist, Hedley writes:

> As far as the virtuousity which he (Chopin)
> soon acquired, that can be set down only to his

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[7] Harold C. Schonberg, The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 137.

[8] Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 10.

amazing natural predisposition, not to Zywny's modest example and instruction.[9]

Joseph Elsner (1769-1854) became the second and only other major music instructor that Chopin was to have. Born in Silesia and trained in Austria and Germany, Elsner came to Warsaw in 1821 as director of the newly-founded Warsaw Conservatory. He became a well-known conductor, a first-rate teacher of composition, and an able composer of opera, ballet, symphony, sonata, mass, cantata, and chamber music.

After six years of piano lessons and three years at the Warsaw Lyceum, Chopin became acquainted with the man who, as Wierzynski writes, "was to introduce him into the very heart of music."[10] The year was 1826, and for the next three years, Elsner served as Chopin's mentor. As Chopin was now more interested in composition than piano playing, Elsner was the ideal person to guide his career.

Hedley believes that the greatest merit of Elsner "lies in the fact that he made no attempt to force Chopin to conform."[11] Elsner was farsighted enough to allow Chopin a certain amount of freedom in the expression of his novel ideas. Gerig documents this further as he quotes

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[9] Ibid., p. 10.

[10] Casimir Wierzynski, The Life and Death of Chopin (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1949), p. 63.

[11] Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 16.

a passage on Elsner taken from the Neue Zeitschrift for Musik (1841). Elsner was described as:

> . . . a teacher who does not endeavor, as other professors too often do, to turn out all his pupils from the same mold as that in which he was cast himself. This was not Elsner's way. At a time when everybody in Warsaw thought Chopin was going astray in bad, antimusical ways, the skillful Elsner had already clearly understood what a germ of poetry there was in the pale young dreamer; he had felt long before that he had before him the founder of a new school of piano music.[12]

Early in 1829, Warsaw was visited by two of the greatest virtuosos of the time: the pianist Hummel and the violinist Paganini. Although Chopin was greatly impressed by the playing of Paganini, it was Hummel who influenced him more lastingly.

Johan Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837), once a pupil of Mozart, was known for his elegant style of playing, his poetic improvisations, and also for his talent as a composer of piano, church, and chamber music. He published a School of the Piano (1828) which presented a practical method of fingering. Weinstock suggests that the method may have influenced Chopin in his choice of fingering. Weinstock regards Chopin's figurations and simpler harmonic motions as those of a composer who "could scarcely have composed exactly that way if he had remained unacquainted with Hummel's music."[13]

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[12]Reginald R. Gerig, Famous Pianists & Their Technique (Washington-New York: Robert B. Luce, Inc., 1974), p. 147.

[13]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 32.

Kentner recognizes Hummel as a "stepping-stone to Chopin" after comparing Hummel's A Minor Concerto with the E Minor Concerto of Chopin. He cites the abundance of passage work, dramatic recitative-like passages, double thirds, and decorated singing episodes in both pieces as evidence of Hummel's influence on Chopin.[14]

As a fashionable composer of the salons, the playing of Hummel was characterized by ornamentation, improvisation, and occasional chromaticism. Mellers writes that the melodies written by Hummel were often too weak to bear the complexity of his texture and ornamentation. Mellers believes the historical significance of Hummel to involve his treatment of the keyboard and his intermittent concern with harmonic surprise rather than the intrinsic value of his compositions.[15]

Niccolo Paganini (1782-1840) presented a series of ten concerts in Warsaw from May to July of 1829. As Chopin was completing his Conservatory training during the same year, the extraordinary virtuousity of Paganini had a decided effect upon him. The impressive display of technique suggested to Chopin the possibility of applying the same principles to the piano. The first of his

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[14]Louis Kentner, Piano (New York: Schirmer Books, A Division of MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976). p. 138.

[15]Wilfrid Mellers, Man & His Music (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 3.

Etudes date from this time. Also, his Souvenir de Paganini, a set of piano variations, was written after hearing Paganini's version of Le Carnaval de Venise. Chopin soon abandoned the idea of bringing technical display to the keyboard. His dream was shared and later fulfilled by Franz Liszt, who was affected by Paganini to a much greater degree than was Chopin.[16]

One day after the departure of Paganini from Warsaw, Chopin completed and passed his final exams at the Conservatory. His formal education now finished, Chopin planned a journey to Vienna to determine his chances of earning a living through his piano playing. While in Vienna, Chopin was encouraged to perform, and presented two public recitals. The following is an excerpt of a concert review written by Adolph Bauerle in the Wiener Theaterzeitung:

> It would seem that this young man does not try to dazzle and astonish his listeners, although his execution conquers difficulties the overcoming of which cannot fail to be striking even here, in the homeland of the pianoforte virtuoso.[17]

The Viennese public considered Chopin a musician of outstanding talent, displaying originality in performance and composition. His debut in Vienna a success, Chopin returned to Warsaw to prepare for a second trip abroad. Alternately bored with Warsaw and wishing to stay, Chopin's

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[16] Casimir Wierzynski, The Life and Death of Chopin (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1949), p. 31.

[17] Ibid., p. 91.

indecision caused him to spend several months in Warsaw before leaving for the last time. He left his homeland in November of 1830 for a second trip to Vienna.

The reception given Chopin in Vienna during his second visit was vastly different from the warm regard shown him on his first tour. The Chopin of 1829 had been an amateur who performed for nothing. He was now viewed as a competitor for fame and wealth. As a result, no one offered assistance in matters of concert arranging; any such arrangements would have to be made entirely on his own.[18]

To further complicate matters, trouble was again brewing in Poland. Russian power was accumulating, and it appeared to be just a matter of time before the next partition of Poland. As Austria had shared in the spoils of the last partition, the Austrians felt under no obligation to aid the Poles; even the Poles living in Vienna were regarded unfavorably.

The sadness and disappointment experienced by Chopin in Vienna caused him to leave the city in July of 1831. He traveled to Paris via Munich and Stuttgart. While in Stuttgart (September, 1831), Chopin heard news of the Russian occupation of Warsaw. The national calamity dealt

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[18] Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 37.

a terrible blow to Chopin; it was a shock from which he never recovered. Murdoch writes of Chopin's reaction as follows:

> He was destined to become Poland's greatest ambassador in the truest sense. No politician or statesman, no diplomat, no courier could better carry the message of hope and defiance from a wiped-out nation, a trampled people not even allowed to speak their own language in their own country. . . . His [Chopin's] music was even more national than the words of his countrymen, and has remained the avenue through which the love and sympathy of the outside world have poured for Poland's misery. No wonder that the Polish peoples honor Chopin as their greatest son.[19]

Chopin arrived in Paris in the early fall of 1831 and found the city a center of political, intellectual, and artistic activity. His circle of friends came to include literary persons such as Victor Hugo, Balzac, Lamartine, and George Sand; painters such as Delacroix, Ingres, and Delaroche; and musicians such as Berlioz, Liszt, Rossini, Bellini, Kalkbrenner, and Mendelssohn.

Paris had become a haven for Polish emigrants who wished to escape Russian control. The people of Paris, unlike the citizens of Vienna, were sympathetic to the Polish cause. Although Chopin felt comfortable in the French capital, thoughts of Poland still haunted him. Hedley writes:

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[19]William Murdoch, Chopin: His Life (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), p. 108.

Poland, the real, visible Poland of his child-
hood and youth was now far away; but in Chopin's
heart and mind, she was destined to be trans-
figured, by a subtle and stealthy process, into
a strange dream country that would haunt his imag-
ination forever and cause to rise within him
those exquisite musical shapes, full of tender-
ness and passionate regret, which, as the years
passed, came to be the living symbol of Poland for
millions who knew nothing of the reality for which
the symbol stood.[20]

During his first few days in Paris, Chopin met Ros-

sini, Cherubini, Baillot, and Kalkbrenner. William Kalk-

brenner (1788-1849), then the most renowned pianoforte

teacher in Europe, was the musician who initially impressed

Chopin to the greatest extent. Chopin expressed his ad-

miration for Kalkbrenner in a letter written to a child-

hood friend, dated December 12, 1831:

> You would not believe how curious I was about
> Herz, Liszt, Miller, etc.--They are all zero beside
> Kalkbrenner. If Paganini is perfection, Kalk-
> brenner is his equal, but in quite another style.
> It is hard to describe to you his calm, his en-
> chanting touch, his incomparable evenness, and the
> mastery that is displayed in every note; he is a
> giant walking over Herz and Czerny and all,--and
> over me.[21]

The impression made upon Chopin by Kalkbrenner was

so great that he approached him for piano lessons. After

hearing Chopin play, Kalkbrenner replied that he had

talent, but lacked schooling. Kalkbrenner suggested that

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[20] Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 42.

[21] William Murdoch, Chopin: His Life (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1935), p. 111.

Chopin study with him for a period of three years in order
to insure that his talent was channeled in the right direc-
tion.

Anxious to become a pupil of Kalkbrenner, yet having
no desire to be a carbon copy of the man, Chopin turned to
his former teacher, Joseph Elsner, for advice. Elsner ex-
pressed anger over Kalkbrenner's suggested three-year pro-
gram, and advised Chopin to follow his own genius; to seek
fame as a composer rather than as a pianist.

Following the advice of Elsner, Chopin allowed the
matter to drop. Despite the fact that Chopin refused to
spend three years under the leadership of Kalkbrenner, the
two men maintained a friendly, personal relationship as
colleagues. Chopin had realized that an apprenticeship
with Kalkbrenner would involve a serious conflict of in-
terests. Kalkbrenner was anxious for Chopin to become
his pupil mainly for the advertising and personal fame
that such a relationship would bring. Kalkbrenner was not
thinking of the welfare of Chopin; he was thinking only
of himself.

Murdoch praises Kalkbrenner's method for independent
training of the fingers and attributes the even playing
of Kalkbrenner to that method. Kalkbrenner had invented
an apparatus consisting of a wooden bar placed parallel
to the keyboard upon which the forearm rested. The de-
vice allowed for a relaxed wrist and firmness of the

fingers while the forearm remained relatively quiet. While Chopin never used the device invented by Kalkbrenner, he was undoubtedly influenced by the beauty and evenness of Kalkbrenner's playing and sought to achieve the same results through methods of his own devising. Although Murdoch praises Kalkbrenner's method, he believes that Chopin made a wise decision in rejecting the assistance of Kalkbrenner. He believes that such a relationship could only come to a bad end, for "Kalkbrenner was all theory while Chopin was poetry and natural expression."[22]

The significance of the arrival of Chopin in Paris cannot be overemphasized. Hedley writes: If ever an artist appeared at the right moment in history, it was Chopin."[23] The talent of Chopin had a tremendous influence on the Parisians, while the events and environment of the city had a reciprocal effect upon him. Paris was now the musical center of Europe, and consequently became the home of some of the world's greatest musicians. Leading individuals in literature and painting were also located in Paris. Chopin quickly became acclimated, and absorbed himself in the rich intellectual and cultural atmosphere of the city.

Surrounded by representatives from each of the artistic disciplines, Chopin soon learned of the mode of

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[22]William Murdoch, Chopin: His Life (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 116.

[23]Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 47.

thinking currently held in common by artists in the city.
The new attitude of Romanticism emphasized individualism,
subjectivity, emotionalism, and nostalgic feeling. Clas-
sical views of impersonality, limitation, and restraint
were exchanged in favor of this new mode of thinking.

The Romantic Movement in literature began shortly
after 1800 in response to an attitude of longing for some-
thing nonexistent; an attitude of unrestrained subjectivism
and emotionalism. This movement inspired a similar attitude
toward music. Music was regarded as "the immediate ex-
pression of the human soul with all its emotions of joy
and sorrow. It is the expression of those feelings which
cannot be satisfied."[24]

Murdoch writes of Berlioz and Liszt as early pro-
ponents of the Romantic Movement in music. Both men were
acquainted with many of the literary giants of the time
and were caught up in the current intellectual upheaval.
It was only natural for the two men to be inspired by the
urge for freedom and originality.[25]

Hedley writes that when Chopin entered the musical
scene in Paris,

> . . . there were few among the more thoughtful ro-
> mantics who did not feel that here was the artist
> they had been waiting for; one who was bringing into

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[24]Willi Apel, Masters of the Keyboard (Cambridge,
MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 230.

[25]William Murdoch, Chopin: His Life (New York:
The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 121.

the realm of music the new thoughts, new emotions and modes of expression which could satisfy their longing for a new world of sentiment and colour.[26]

Chopin's contribution to Romanticism and the effect of the Romantic Movement upon him will be viewed more closely in conjunction with the discussion of his musical style.

A turning point in the life and career of Chopin occurred in May of 1832. He had just presented his second recital in Paris, and again heard complaints regarding the small, thin tone which he drew from the piano. The concert-going public had grown accustomed to the pounding of the piano virtuosos; namely, Liszt and Thalberg. Although generally impressed by Chopin's playing, audiences found his delicate tone hard to accept. Lonely, depressed, and without money, Chopin had thoughts of leaving Paris for either London or America. Prince Valentin Radziwill, one of Chopin's Polish friends, heard of his plans and persuaded Chopin to accompany him to a soiree at the home of one of the Rothschilds. Upon their arrival, Chopin performed for a crowd consisting of many of the most fashionable and wealthy persons in Paris. Chopin's elegant manners and refined style of playing made a very favorable impression upon his listeners. Their reception was very enthusiastic. As a result, Chopin's success as

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[26]Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 46.

a pianist in the aristocratic salons of Paris was now assured.[27] Chopin was more than willing to exchange the huge audiences of the concert hall for the small group of charming ladies who attended the salons. He had found the ideal setting for the performance of his works, as his style of playing naturally lent itself to the more confined area of the salons rather than the concert hall. Murdoch writes:

> The glamour of the platform and the acclamations of the multitudes meant nothing to him. He was much happier, more natural, more in control of his thoughts and emotions when playing alone or to a few beloved friends.[28]

To add to his success, he was in great demand as a piano instructor for the children of aristocratic families. As a result, Chopin was among the fashionable elite and financially secure for the next several years.

John Field (1782-1837), renowned piano virtuoso and composer, presented two concerts in Paris at the end of 1832. A former pupil of Clementi, Field possessed a delicate style of playing and a talent for composition that Chopin admired greatly. Field is also credited with the invention of the nocturne. Although the form had existed in the eighteenth century as an instrumental serenade in several movements, Field adapted the form for the piano.

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[27] William Murdoch, Chopin: His Life (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 139.

[28] Ibid., p. 162.

Field's nocturnes were single-movement pieces with flowing

melodies and graceful arpeggio accompaniments.[29]

The nocturnes of Field inspired Chopin to experiment

with the same form. Chopin altered and improved the form,

surpassing the nocturnes of Field. Matthews writes of

the influence of Field upon Chopin as evidenced in the

keyboard layout of the nocturne. Common features include

the flowing left hand accompaniment contrasted with the

singing melodic line of the right hand, and the balanced

ternary structure.[30]

Schonberg regards Field as a more significant inno-

vator than the "flashy Kalkbrenner" or the "arch-

classicist Hummel." He credits Field with the development

of a piano style that foreshadows Chopin:

> It is clear that Field anticipated Chopin in
> many directions. His series of eighteen nocturnes
> with their arpeggiated left hand figurations and
> Bellini-like melodies, directly inspired the
> Chopin nocturnes. As a pianist, Field, again like
> Chopin, featured tone and delicate dynamics. There
> is no doubt that Field anticipated Chopin's type
> of fingering, which changes on a single key to
> achieve a perfect legato.[31]

Another influence upon the music of Chopin was that

of Italian opera. Opera had always fascinated Chopin, and

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[29]Kathleen Dale, Nineteenth-Century Piano Music (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), p. 143.

[30]Denis Matthews, ed., Keyboard Music (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 213.

[31]Harold C. Schonberg, The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), p. 103.

while in Paris, he probably heard more of it than of any
other form of music. Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835) was
rapidly overtaking Rossini as the most popular operatic
composer in Europe.[32]   Chopin and Bellini met in 1833 and
rapidly became friends.   Both men were fervent admirers
of Mozart and shared a common philosophy: they agreed
that poetry and lyricism were the soul of music.   Conse-
quently, each favored lyrical beauty over grandiose ef-
fects.   Their compositions often included similar melodic
curve of themes and a common style of flowing eighth-note
accompaniment.

Murdoch writes of the mutual influence of Bellini
and Chopin as follows:

> Many sections of the nocturnes could have been
> written for a Rubini by Bellini; and one can pick
> many instances in the arias which sound as pianistic
> as any Chopin phrase of the same kind.   The love
> that Chopin had for Italian opera in general unmis-
> takably influenced his melodies, and Bellini ap-
> proached him in style more nearly than any other
> of the Italian composers.   We find this cantilena
> style chiefly in Chopin's middle period, the
> earlier works being more showy and brilliant, the
> later grander and more reflective.[33]

Hedley writes that Chopin and Bellini had much in
common as men and musicians, but that Chopin is not in-
debted to Bellini for the elements in his style.   The
elements in Chopin's style that he is supposed to owe to

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[32]William Murdoch, Chopin: His Life (New York:
The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 166.

[33]William Murdoch, Chopin: His Life (New York:
The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 167.

the Italian--the curve of his melody, luscious thirds and
sixths, and the fioriture were already being exploited by
Chopin long before he had heard a note of Bellini's
music,--or even heard his name. Hedley further states
that a comparison between the dates and places of the pro-
duction of Bellini's works, the times when Chopin could
have become acquainted with them, and the chronology of
the works in which Bellini's influence is said to be dis-
coverable, soon establishes the fact that "although
Chopin's debt to Italian opera was enormous, he owed
nothing to Bellini specifically.[34]

Critics are sharply divided on the issue of the ex-
tent of Bellini's influence on the Italian qualities of
some of Chopin's melodies. Weinstock believes that it is
more reasonable to suppose that Bellini and Chopin were
both influenced by earlier Italian music, especially that
of Rossini.[35]

1833-1835 was a very productive time for Chopin.
He taught lessons, met the Schumanns in Leipzig, appeared
in a public performance with Liszt, and completed several
compositions. The last fourteen years of Chopin's life
(1835-1849) were dramatically affected by two major events:

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[34]Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons,
Ltd., 1974), p. 59.

[35]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 81.

his relationship with George Sand, and his battle against tuberculosis.

Chopin's first admission of his disease occurs in a letter to his friend Titus, dated December 25, 1831. The illness did not return until the harsh winter of 1835-36, at which time his ailment was diagnosed as influenza. Weinstock states that the vague terminology used masked the seriousness of the situation. The "influenza" was probably a preliminary assault of the tuberculosis that would later claim his life.[36] The disease did not make a total invalid of him, except for a very short period, until nearly the end.

It was during the winter of 1936-37 that Chopin first met George Sand. Murdoch describes her as the woman who altered Chopin's whole life and his conception of it, and who was more responsible than anyone for the dejection and mental turmoil he suffered during the last two years of his life.[37] Aurore Dupin, a writer with the pen name George Sand, was born July 1, 1804. She married Casimer Dudevant in 1822. Their children included a son, Maurice, and a daughter, Solange. Sand has been described as a trouser-wearing, cigar-smoking, intelligent, somewhat masculine, demanding woman.

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[36]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 87.

[37]William Murdoch, Chopin: His Life (New York: The
ıllım Co., 1935), p. 190.

After a broken marriage and several affairs, Sand confided to Liszt her desire to meet the much-talked-about composer and pianist Chopin. Liszt granted her request by suggesting to Chopin that he invite several guests to his home to hear his latest compositions. Chopin and Liszt would play, Nourrit would sing, and Madame Sand would be one of the guests. Chopin agreed, and the fateful Chopin-Sand meeting took place in December of 1836. Wierzynski writes of the effect upon Sand as follows:

> Chopin, a sad, reserved man, who said not a word about love, took hold of her thoughts. . . . When he opened the piano, it seemed that he raised the lid under which his true life was asleep. He ran over the keys with his fingers not only in order to play, but also to live, and when he closed the piano, it was as though he had removed himself from the world again. His art listened only to his own conscience, and he lived only to be loyal to his art. George Sand had never before met with such artistic asceticism, and she was amazed at the fact that this Parisian dandy was capable of it.[38]

Murdoch writes that the Chopin-Sand relationship began as a result of Chopin's growing reliance on the friendship of Sand. They had met at a time when Chopin's lack of decision about his life and the frailty of his health made him an easy prey. "Chopin was exactly the type for which her soul was yearning--the ready-made prey for this odd mixture of vulture and vampire."[39]

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[38] Casimir Wierzynski, The Life and Death of Chopin (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1949), p. 255.

[39] William Murdoch, Chopin: His Life (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 210.

The spring of 1838 found Chopin afflicted with another spell of his illness. Chopin, accompanied by George Sand, traveled to Majorca in hopes of improving Chopin's health in the pleasant island climate. His health did improve for a time, but a period of nearly constant rain and dampness caused him to become seriously ill. Three local physicians were summoned and agreed upon a diagnosis of tuberculosis. The Majorcan people, having a dread fear of the disease, forced Sand and Chopin from their home to a cell at the Monastery of Valldemosa. The cell became a quiet retreat for Sand's literary efforts and Chopin's composing. Although Chopin's health did not improve a great deal, he was still able to compose. After receiving a Pleyel piano from Paris, Chopin put finishing touches on the twenty-four Preludes and the Ballade in F Major. He also composed the Mazurka in E Minor, op. 41, no. 2. Weinstock writes of this period in Chopin's life as follows:

> There is little doubt that most of the music he composed from 1838 on is fuller, firmer, more richly designed, more beautiful than most of what he had composed earlier. I see no reason for questioning that his love affair with George Sand played a real part in this deepening and widening of his art. I do not wish to over-stress the causal connection, but it existed, and their meeting is more than a useful and memorable signpost. It was a Chopin physically damaged, but mentally at the portal into his finest period as a creative artist. His illness, too, especially as

it almost certainly was already tuberculosis, may have driven him to deeper searching within himself.[40]

Chopin and Madame Sand left Majorca in February of 1839. After spending a short time in Spain, they settled at Sand's chateau at Nohant. They remained at Nohant until 1841, with the exception of a few brief visits to Paris. Although Chopin's illness had now reduced his weight to less than one hundred pounds, he did not lose the desire to compose. Murdoch writes:

> However delicate in body Chopin may have been in the period between June 1, 1839 and the end of 1841, there can be no question as to his mental power and the fertility of his inspiration. . . . His brain was in a wonderful state of stimulation and his capacity to work prodigous. No one with a saddened heart, a hopeless outlook could have achieved so much. His was a nature that never knew exhilaration, that thrived on imaginary worries; but during this time he must have had sufficient contentment to be able to concentrate upon his work and so think himself happy.[41]

The next few years were relatively uneventful: Chopin presented two concerts in 1841 and 1842, and was visited by his sister Louise in 1844. Hedley writes of the period 1839-1845 as a time when Chopin was completely exempt from material worries. His daily life was organized for him, leaving him free to compose. George Sand looked after his health with amazing devotion; her respect for Chopin bordered on reverence.[42]

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[40]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969). p. 109.

[41]William Murdoch, Chopin: His Life (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 279.

[42]Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 87.

By 1845, Chopin began to feel out of place in the
home of George Sand. The feelings of alienation were
caused by Sand's son Maurice, who resented the presence of
Chopin in the household. Tension accumulated and finally
erupted into a violent quarrel in June of 1846. As George
took the side of her son, Chopin left Nohant for Paris.
Relations between Sand and Chopin remained strained from
that day on. The final break in the relationship occurred
in 1847 as the result of a family misunderstanding; a
simple lack of communication led to the termination of the
eight-year alliance. Masking his true feelings, Chopin
wrote the following in a letter to his sister Louise:

> She will believe that she is fair; and will
> call me an enemy for having taken the side of her
> son-in-law. . . . A strange creature, for all her
> intellect! . . . I am not sorry that I helped her
> through the eight most difficult years of her
> life. . . . Someday when Mme. S. considers the
> matter, she can have only kind memories of me in
> her soul.[43]

The break with Sand left Chopin desolate and without
hope; he composed only three pieces during the last two
years of his life. He presented his final Paris concert
at the Pleyel Salon in February of 1848. Also, upon the
request of former pupil Jane Stirling, Chopin agreed to
present concerts in England and Scotland. He returned to
Paris in November of 1848 in very poor physical condition.

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[43]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man & His Music
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 140.

An article on Chopin written by Berlioz in the _Journal des Debats_ (1849) tells of the last days of Chopin:

> His feebleness and suffering had become so great that he could no longer play the piano or compose; even the least conversation fatigued him to an alarming degree. He tried as a rule to make himself understood as much as possible by signs. This was the isolation misunderstood by many people and attributed by some to a disdainful pride, by others to black moods--both equally foreign to the nature of this charming and excellent artist.[44]

Chopin's sister Louise arrived in Paris in August of 1849 to find him thin, yellow in color, and unable to walk without assistance. His last days filled with suffering, Chopin died on October 17, 1849.

Conclusions

While it is easy to form conjectures when determining the formative influences acting upon an individual, it is far more difficult to prove their existence and the extent of their effect. To what extent can the musical personality of Chopin be attributed to influential persons and events? Was Chopin a product of his environment or his own genius? Schonberg writes in support of genius as follows:

> . . . up to his arrival in Paris, he had been exposed to very few of the new concepts sweeping Europe. From John Field he had absorbed a few things, and also from Hummel. But his style and harmonic structure, his way of treating the instrument, his use of functional ornamentation, his

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[44] William Murdoch, _Chopin: His Life_ (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 379.

amazing harmonies and modulations, the piquancy of
his rubato, his use of folk elements in the ma-
zurkas and polonaises--all these he had developed
on his own by the time he was twenty-one. He was
one of the fantastic geniuses in history.[45]

It is the belief of this writer that although Chopin
was a genius, his environment provided a greater nurturing
influence than Schonberg is willing to concede. Had
Chopin been born in another place and time, and never
heard the outstanding musicians of the day, his creative
output may have been vastly different. It may be more
reasonable to assume that the genius of Chopin was alter-
nately nurtured and hampered by a number of individuals
and life events. Those good and bad influences, some of
great import while others may be nearly inconsequential,
may be summarized as follows:

The first nurturing of the genius of Chopin was pro-
vided by the support of his parents and the rich artistic
environment of Warsaw. Zywny, although a poor theory in-
structor and a somewhat mediocre piano instructor, intro-
duced Chopin to the works of the masters, especially Bach
and Mozart. Elsner gave him a strong background in theory
and composition. The virtuosity of Hummel, Paganini,
Kalkbrenner, and Field affected Chopin as a performer
and composer; Italian opera influenced his compositional

[45]Harold C. Schonberg, The Great Pianists from
Mozart to the Present (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963),
p. 138.

style. Influential events include the struggles of Poland, the Romantic Movement, his relationship with George Sand, and his battle against tuberculosis.

"Sick room talent" vs. "Poet of the piano"

Hedley refutes the assumption that Chopin's illness in later life was attributable to weakness and frailty possessed since childhood. He concedes that although Chopin was not physically strong as a child or as an adult, he more than made up for the weakness by nimbleness and quick-wittedness. Chopin had not been ill since birth; the tuberculosis which caused his death at the age of 39 did not present itself until Chopin was past the age of 20.[46]

Chopin has been described as a slight, refined-looking man, not much over a hundred pounds in weight, with a prominent nose, a pale complexion, and beautiful hands. "He was a snob and a social butterfly to whom moving in the best circles meant everything."[47]

Holcman describes the physical weakness of Chopin, and writes of Chopin's compensation for that weakness in the following passage:

> Chopin made up for his physical and technical deficiencies by his perfect mastery of the dynamic range extending between mezzo forte and pianissimo. . . . While Chopin's range was narrower than that

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[46]Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 8.

[47]Harold C. Schonberg, The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), p. 134.

of a normally-developed pianist, which extends from pianissimo to fortissimo, it was no less differentiated. A well-known critic praised his playing, stressing the fact that he was capable of producing 'one hundred gradations between piano and pianissimo.'[48]

Chopin's dynamic control suggests artistry rather than frailty. Although Chopin suffered from tuberculosis during the last eleven years of his life, he was still able to compose and perform. This writer would therefore conclude that John Field's description of Chopin as a "sick room talent," and Berlioz's comment that Chopin was "dying all his life," are unjustifiable and unduly harsh.

Artistic Sensitivity vs. Patriotic Feeling

Fifteen years before the arrival of Nicholas Chopin in Warsaw, Poland suffered its First Partition. Disunity in the upper and lower nobility invited foreign interference; therefore, the country was divided among Russia, Prussia, and Austria. When Nicholas arrived in 1787, Poland was then an independent state. The Poles adopted a reformed constitution which abolished election of the king, and granted extensive rights to the middle class. Unwilling to recognize the peaceful revolution of the Poles, the Prussian king and Russian Tsarina caused the Second Partition of Poland in 1793. This in turn caused

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[48] Jan Holcman, The Legacy of Chopin (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1954), p. 2.

a Polish uprising against Russian troops in Warsaw. Although Nicholas had only lived in the country for five years, he adopted the Polish cause as his own and served in the Warsaw militia. Wierzynski writes of Nicholas Chopin's devotion to the Polish cause as follows:

> This Frenchman had been given a taste of Polish unhappiness, had known the bitterness of a just but hopeless struggle. Men nurtured on such food are stubborn. Once they have embraced an idea, they cling to it through thick and thin; the more defeats they suffer, the stronger their devotion to it.[49]

Wierzynski writes that as a young boy, Frederic would listen to his father's friends reminisce about the recent past of Poland. Their recollections painted an image of Poland's past suffering:

> Poland's martyrdom was one of his first experiences; it became an inseparable part of his view of the world. He reacted to the events with the sensitivity of an artist, and locked his experiences within himself like intimate secrets.[50]

Chopin As Polish Patriot vs. His Universal Appeal

Weinstock writes of the universal appeal of Chopin as follows:

> Despite his patriotism, Chopin was no artistic nationalist, and in quantity and manner his music is as much Western as Slavic, as much French, Italian, and Austro-German as it is Polish. This

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[49]Casimir Wierzynski, The Life and Death of Chopin (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1949), p. 8.

[50]Ibid., p. 59.

is not to deny the patent Polishness of his ma-
zurkas and polonaises, or the Polish turns and us-
ages that crop up elsewhere in his compositions.[51]

Porte writes of the nationalism exhibited in the ma-

zurkas and polonaises of Chopin:

> Chopin is only Polish in racial fibres. As an
> artist, a musician and a poet, he reflects his
> Paris and the salons of the nineteenth century;
> and yet he is no Frenchman. We must look around
> Poland for explanation of the peculiar tinge of
> his music. It is reflected in the Slavs; perhaps
> Rimsky-Korsakov, although superficially far-
> removed from Chopin, may be speaking in an allied
> tongue in the acquired Orientalism of his music.
> . . . The Nocturnes are neither Polish nor French;
> they are Chopin.[51]

Although Chopin championed the Polish cause and was

haunted by thoughts of Poland until his death, he did not

concern himself with the Polish cause exclusively. The

universality of his music lies in his distinctive style

based on harmonic innovation.

The Man Who Hated Romanticism vs. The
Most Popular Romanticist

Schonberg writes:

> Good taste meant very much to him. It cer-
> tainly meant more to him than the Romantic Move-
> ment that was sweeping Europe. That he avoided
> as much as he could. He even disliked the word
> "romanticism."[53]

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[51] Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man & His Music
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 176.

[52] John F. Porte, Chopin: The Composer and His Music
(London: William Reeves Bookseller Ltd., 1935), p. 111.

[53] Harold C. Schonberg, The Great Pianists from Mozart
to the Present (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), p. 135.

Delacroix was probably the closest friend of Chopin, yet Chopin did not understand or even like the paintings of Delacroix. Chopin felt the same way about many of his contemporaries; he liked them, but not their music. He hated the scores of Berlioz, considered Liszt's music "vapid and empty," ignored the work of Mendelssohn, and felt disturbed by the music of Beethoven. The only composers who meant anything to him were Bach, Mozart, and Bellini.

> Chopin was a romantic who hated romanticism. That is the paradox. It was Chopin who, of all the early romantics, has turned out the most popular; virtually everything he composed has remained in the repertoire.[54]

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[54]Ibid., p. 135.

CHAPTER II

CHOPIN'S COMPOSITIONAL STYLE:
AN OVERVIEW OF HIS PIANO MUSIC

Romanticism and the Character Piece

The philosophy which bound many musicians of the
nineteenth century was that of Romanticism. The Romantic
Period in its narrowest limits is thought to include music
written between 1828 and 1880, while a broader definition
includes 1789-1914. Longyear describes the Romantic phi-
losophy as a repudiation of the classical emphasis on dis-
cipline, moderation, and adaptation. It stressed striving
rather than achieving, and emotional rather than rational
expression.[1] Although the movement was strongest in Ger-
many, it was also influential in France, Russia, and
England. Poland, Spain, Italy, and Bohemia were also af-
fected, although to a lesser extent.

Because the Romantic Movement was active in differ-
ent places at different times, it is difficult to trace
its exact pattern of events. The term "Romanticism"
eludes precise definition by virtue of the same reason.
Longyear therefore describes the Romantic Movement in

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[1]Rey M. Longyear, Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in
Music (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 2.

music as the reflection of external themes common to Romanticism in general. The themes include individualism, intensity of feeling, escape into nature or an indefinite past, nationalism, and alliance of the arts.[2]

These common themes were expressed in small-scale works which Kirby describes as "character pieces."[3] The small compositions, usually in ternary form and subjective in nature, came to replace the sonata as the typical genre of the period. Although the Classical Sonata was retained and modified, the character piece became the most important vehicle of expression for Romantic composers of the piano. Mason writes of the Classical Sonata as follows:

> The sonata, as utilized and extended by Beethoven, had reached a degree of perfection beyond which it could not for the moment go. The Romantic impulse toward novelty of Beethoven's successors had to satisfy itself, therefore, in some other way than by heightening abstract aesthetic beauty or general expressiveness. Until new technical resources could be developed, the limit was reached in those directions.[4]

Although descriptive compositions existed as early as the late sixteenth century, the form did not attract the attention of leading composers until the early

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[2]Ibid., p. 3.

[3]F. E. Kirby, A Short History of Keyboard Music (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 230.

[4]Daniel Mason, The Romantic Composers (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 6.

nineteenth century. Bohemian composers Tomasek (1774-1850) and Vorisek (1791-1825) provided early character pieces which were called "eclogues," "dithyrambs," and "impromptus." Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, and other Romantic composers followed with such titles as "albumblatt," "nocturne," "humoresque," "intermezzo," "caprice," or "lyric piece."[5]

Nineteenth-Century Compositional Trends

Melody

Melodies of the Romantic Period are characterized by long melodic lines constructed from motives or phrases. The use of wide leaps for expressive purposes is also common. In contrast, Classical themes tend to be concise, with skips and leaps balanced by opposite stepwise motion. While melodies of the Classical Period are symmetrical and contain stanzaic construction equivalent to poetry, Longyear states that "non-stanzaic melodies are one of the harbingers of musical Romanticism."[6]

Melodies either borrowed directly from folk tunes or inspired by folk tunes became associated with Romantic musical nationalism. The melodies usually consisted of irregular phrases and alterations of the major or minor

[5]F. E. Kirby, A Short History of Keyboard Music (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 231.

[6]Rey M. Longyear, Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 22.

scales. As such melodies were difficult to develop, they were subjected to variation and ornamentation.

Rhythm

Longyear lists freedom and flexibility as chief elements separating Classic and Romantic treatments or rhythm. The Romantic Period witnessed what Longyear describes as "the liberation of musical macrorhythm from its underlying metric structure."[7] He credits Beethoven as the first to overcome the 'tyranny of the bar-line' with his use of syncopations, rhythmic counterpoint, and unprecedented cross-accents as early as 1800.[8]

The tradition continued throughout the century as composers utilized cross-rhythms. One type used was that of duplets against triplets. Although the feature is characteristic of the music of Brahms, it is also found in the music of Berlioz, Chopin, and Liszt. A second type of cross-rhythm is that of irregularly-grouped notes in the right hand against a steady beat in the left hand. This type is considered typical of the style of Hummel and Chopin.

Harmony

Longyear writes of nineteenth-century harmony as follows:

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[7]Ibid., p. 25.

[8]Ibid., p. 25.

The chief difference between Classic and Romantic composers is that the former used dissonant chords relatively infrequently, and then in a functional manner, usually to enhance or intensify the progression of a dominant to a tonic, or as a pivot in modulation, but Romantic composers frequently used the same chords in a coloristic sense and progressively elevated the milder dissonant chords, usually dominant or diminished sevenths, to the level of consonances.[9]

General stylistic features of the period include chromatic or enharmonic alteration of chords, delayed resolution of non-harmonic tones, ard fast harmonic rhythm. Tonality was expanded by the use of freer modulation, dramatic key shifts, and the increased importance of mediant key relationships. Blume writes of the increased use of remote keys, attributing the trend to the Romantic need for the unusual and the fabulous.[10]

The section which follows will provide an overview of the collective piano works of Chopin. Structural characteristics and general stylistic features will be examined in order to determine salient features of the compositional style of Chopin. This information will demonstrate the unique contribution of Chopin to the Romantic Movement, and will provide useful background information for a study of the Ballades.

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[9]Rey M. Longyear, Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973, p. 27.

[10]Friedrich Blume, Classic and Romantic Music: A Comprehensive Survey (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1970), p. 137.

An Overview of Chopin's Piano Music

Character Pieces: Preludes, Nocturnes, Impromptus

Preludes

The twenty-four preludes of Op. 28 were composed from 1836-1839.   Each prelude, built on a single musical idea, has a dual function as both an independent work and as part of the total cyclic organization.   Crocker refers to the preludes as "fragments" that continue as long as it interests the composer, "then break off, having touched briefly on some musical idea whose full exposition would require symphonic dimensions."[11]

A feature held in common with Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier is the utilization of all the major and minor keys. The set begins with a piece in C major, is followed by the relative minor, and progresses through the 24 keys in a pattern of rising fifths.   Each of the two volumes of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier begins with a prelude and fugue in C major, is followed by the parallel minor, and progresses in chromatically rising sequence until all 24 keys have been utilized.

Kentner states that although the Chopin preludes and Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier are similar in the utilization of keys, they differ in purpose:

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[11]Richard L. Crocker, A History of Musical Style (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 451.

Bach, by arranging his preludes and fugues in chromatically-rising sequence, wished to prove the practical usefulness of a particular method of keyboard tuning, while Chopin had no such theoretical aims. With him, one prelude in each key was simply a charming conceit, with perhaps a slight underlying admonition to pianists to learn to think in all tonalities.[12]

The 24 preludes of Op. 28 are improvisatory and diverse in character. While some of the preludes suggest happiness and others depict sadness, most are symmetrical in design, regardless of mood. Andrew Gide writes of the preludes as follows:

Each of them is a prelude to a meditation. . . . Each of them creates a particular atmosphere, establishes an emotional setting, then fades out as a bird alights. Not all are of equal importance. Some are charming, others terrifying. None are indifferent.[13]

The preludes vary in length from the twelve measures of Op. 28, no. 9 to the ninety measures of Op. 28, no. 17. Some are lyrical (Op. 28, nos. 7, 13, and 20), others are nocturne-like (Op. 28, nos. 11, 15, and 21), while still others are dramatic in nature (Op. 28, nos. 8, 9, 16, 18, and 24). Nos. 3, 5, 11, and 23 are study-like, centering around a particular pianistic problem.

A specific stylistic feature is the use of melody within figuration. With the use of the damper pedal, such

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[12]Louis Kentner, Piano (New York): Schirmer Books, A Div. of Macmillan Pub. Co., Inc., 1976), p. 148.

[13]Andre Gide, Notes On Chopin, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1949), p. 33.

figurations could build up great resonance, causing a vibrant sound ideally suited to these character pieces.[14] The preludes which utilize melody within figuration are nos. 1, 5, 8, 10, and 14. Figuration in the bass contrasted with right hand melody is characteristic of nos. 3 and 24.

Other stylistic features include the widespread accompaniments in nos. 2 and 19, the arpeggios in no. 10, decorative passage-work in nos. 3 and 16, and the pedal point and ornamentation of no. 15. Highly chromatic works are nos. 4 and 17.

The A-flat major Prelude (without opus number) and the C-sharp minor Prelude (Op. 45) are thought to be pretty, but inferior to those of Op. 28.[15]

Nocturnes

Gillespie defines the nocturne as "a short elegy of great lyric intensity," and considers the nocturnes to be the most introspective and genuinely subjective of all Chopin's works.[16] Chopin published 18 nocturnes in eight opus numbers during his lifetime. The first nocturne

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[14]Richard L. Crocker, A History of Musical Style (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 448.

[15]Adam Harasowski, "An Overview of Chopin's Piano Music," The Piano Quarterly 113 (Spring 1981): 30.

[16]John Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1950), p. 225.

(Op. 72, no. 1), composed in 1827, was not published until 1855. The nineteen nocturnes were composed between 1827 and 1846.

Although the nocturne (night piece) was commonly utilized in the 18th century as an instrumental form with several movements, it was John Field who adapted the form for the keyboard. Field published more than 20 nocturnes between 1815 and 1834. The pieces were in three-part form with lyrical melodies, often embellished, and accompanied by broken chord figuration in the bass. The melody was often presented in parallel thirds and sixths, or embellished with grace notes, coloratura runs, and fioriture.

Although Chopin took the title and general character of the piece from Field, the nocturnes of Chopin are more artistic and sensitive, surpassing those of Field. The nocturnes of Field tend to be monotonous, keeping the same expressive mood throughout the piece. Chopin's nocturnes are strongly diversified by changes in figuration, key, time signature, or tempo within a piece.[17]

The most prominent stylistic features of the 19 Chopin nocturnes include widespread accompaniments and extensive use of melodic ornamentation. While all of the nocturnes have a similar style of accompaniment, the

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[17]Kathleen Dale, Nineteenth-Century Piano Music (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), p. 145.

earlier pieces (Opp. 9, 15, 27, and 32) contain a higher
degree of ornamentation than those which follow. The
early pieces abound in coloratura runs, trills, grace
notes, mordents, and turns. Other features include melo-
dies built on thirds and sixths (Op. 27, no. 2; Op. 37,
no. 2), use of unresolved sevenths (Op. 9, no. 2), and use
of side-slipped diminished sevenths (Op. 27, no. 2; Op. 37,
no. 2).

Impromptus

Matthews refers to the impromptus as colorful im-
provisations combining the "drama of the nocturnes and the
felicity of the waltzes."[18] Chopin composed four impromp-
tus, including the Fantaisie-Impromptu in C-sharp minor
(Op. 66). The impromptus, more elaborate and technically
demanding than the nocturnes, were composed between 1835
and 1842.

No. 1 in A-flat major (Op. 29) is in three-part form,
and is characterized by its triplet figuration. A "whir-
ring effect" is achieved through use of d natural in the
treble clef against c and e-flat in the bass clef.[19]
No. 2 in F-sharp major (Op. 36) is asymmetrical with a
nocturne-like beginning. Stylistic features include

[18]Denis Matthews, ed., Keyboard Music (New York:
Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 225.

[19]James Huneker, Chopin: The Man & His Music (New
York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Inc., 1900), p. 238.

coloratura runs, triplet figuration, and melodic organ
point. No. 3 in G-flat major (Op. 51) is difficult; con-
sequently, it is performed less often than the others.
Features include cantabile left hand melody and interludes
of double notes. The Fantaisie-Impromptu in C-sharp minor
features cross-rhythms (four groups of sixteenths against
two sextuplets of eighths).

Jonson writes that the leading features of the im-
promptus are "spontaneity and untrammelled development."
They do not possess the introspective quality of the noc-
turnes, are not narrative like the ballades, have no kin-
ship with national dance forms, do not have the technical
purpose of the etudes, nor the personal relation to the
scherzi. "They are and could be nothing but impromptus."[20]

Study Pieces: The Etudes

Chopin composed 24 etudes in two sets of 12, compris-
ing Op. 10 and Op. 25, and the Trois Nouvelles Etudes.
The studies are based on three-part form and constructed
around a specific technical problem. Although etudes
had previously been written by Moscheles and Cramer, the
etudes of Chopin differ with their harmonic elaboration
and exploitation of the sound capabilities of the grand
piano. The Chopin etudes combine musicianship with

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[20]E. Ashton Jonson, Handbook to Chopin's Works
(London: William Reeves Bookseller, Ltd., 1908), p.
184.

technique to create what Kirby describes as "virtuoso character pieces."[21]

Melodic features include melody within figuration (Op. 25, nos. 1 and 6), melody against figuration (Op. 10, no. 12), and melody in doubled thirds and sixths (Op. 10, no. 7; Op. 25, nos. 6 and 8). Cantabile style is featured in Op. 10, nos. 3, 6, and 11; and in Op. 25, nos. 1, 5, and 7. Rhythmic devices include cross-rhythms (Op. 25, nos. 1 and 2), accents (Op. 10, nos. 3 and 10; Op. 25, no. 3), and syncopation (Op. 25, no. 4; Trois Nouvelles Etudes nos. i and iii).

Harmonic features include widespread bass accompaniments (Op. 10, no. 9; Op. 25, no. 1), arpeggiated accompaniments (Op. 10, nos. 1 and 11), and contrapuntal writing (Op. 25, no. 3). Of special interest is the use of pedal effects (Op. 25, no. 1) and extensive chromaticism. Chromatic passage-writing is used in Op. 10, nos. 2, 4, 8, and 12; and Op. 25, no. 11.

Stylized Dance Forms: Mazurkas, Polonaises, Waltzes

Mazurkas

Chopin received his inspiration for the mazurkas from the oberek, a Polish dance form. The oberek includes three types of dances, all in triple time: the kujawiak

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[21]F. E. Kirby, A Short History of Keyboard Music (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 286.

(slow and serious), the mazur (faster), and the obertas (fastest).[22] Typical features of the dance include use of the minor mode, embellishment, dotted rhythms, syncopations, and irregular accents. Although Chopin did not use actual folk melodies, he borrowed the basic features of dance forms and enriched them with counterpoint, suspensions, and chromaticism. The result is a highly stylized dance with the qualities of a character piece.[23]

The mazurkas are diverse in character as well as form. Some are short pieces in simple ternary form, while others are longer and more complex. They are each comprised of three or four sections which are repeated and alternated in various combinations. The mazurkas are highly ornamented with acciaccature and trills.

Specific features include the contrapuntal writing of Op. 24, no. 4 and Op. 50, no. 3; extensive chromaticism of Op. 59, no. 3; and the use of drone bass (Op. 6, nos. 2 and 3; Op. 7, nos. 2 and 4; Op. 41, no. 2, and Op. 68, no. 2). Modal passages are found in the following: Op. 7, no. 5 (Mixolydian); Op. 41, no. 1 (Phrygian); and Op. 24, no. 2, Op. 41, no. 4, Op. 58, no. 2 (Lydian).

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[22]F. E. Kirby, A Short History of Keyboard Music (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 293.

[23]Ibid., p. 295.

Polonaises

The polonaises were inspired by the national dance form of the same name. Chopin retained the title and basic features of the form, but greatly altered its significance. Although the title "polonaise" had been used by J. S. Bach, J. C. Bach, Weber and others, Chopin revitalized the noble, ceremonial quality of the polonaise to become a vehicle for the expression of patriotic feeling. The large-scale, brilliant works were designed to portray the past glories, hopes, and despair of the Polish people.[24]

In contrast to the small, intimate mazurkas, the polonaises are designed for the concert hall. Seven of the polonaises (including the Polonaise Fantaisie) were published during Chopin's lifetime, while eight were published posthumously. The earlier polonaises (Op. 71) contain the polonaise proper in rounded binary form, a trio section in a closely-related key, and a da capo repeat. The form was expanded in later works (Opp. 26, 40, 44, and 53) to include the polonaise proper and several subsections.

Expanded range of the keyboard, i.e., high register melody and low register accompaniment, and use of strongly-contrasting subject matter are features of Op. 26, no. 2

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[24] John Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1965), p. 227.

("Revolt") and Op. 40, no. 1 ("Military"). Op. 44 is a stylized concert piece comprised of a prelude, introduction, polonaise proper, and several episodes. A mazurka occurs in the middle, followed by restatement of the introduction and polonaise proper. Of harmonic interest are the severe modulations of Op. 44, and the chains of chromatically descending diminished seventh chords in Op. 26, no. 1, and in Op. 71, nos. 1 and 2.

The Polonaise-Fantaisie (Op. 61) is considered the epitome of Chopin's dance-inspired music.[25] It is a large ternary form with introduction and coda, and is based on thematic development rather than repetition of whole sections. Symphonic in nature, the piece abounds with figuration, arpeggios, and trills. It is a complicated work with extensive transitional passages and many changes of key.

Waltzes

Chopin stylized the waltz in a manner entirely different from that of the mazurkas and polonaises. Written for the aristocratic salons of Paris, the waltzes are designed to charm, nothing more.[26] Kentner writes of the waltzes as follows:

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[25]Kathleen Dale, Nineteenth-Century Piano Music (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), p. 264.

[26]John Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1965), p. 230.

Schubert's and the Strauss brothers' waltzes
were essentially dance music, and Chopin's were
drawing room music in waltz rhythm, highly
stylized, in which sparkling piano writing and
piquant harmony are the main points of interest.[27]

Chopin published eight waltzes during his lifetime,
while eleven were published posthumously. Although there
is no set form in the waltzes, the general pattern is that
of waltz proper, several contrasting waltzes, and a
restatement of the waltz proper. Some of the waltzes have
a da capo repeat, while others include an alteration of
the waltz proper upon its reappearance. Op. 69, no. 1 is
in rondo form, while Op. 64, no. 2 is a combination of
rondo and ternary forms.

The first published waltz is the <u>Grande Valse Brilli-</u>
<u>ante</u> in E-flat major (Op. 18). Written in 1831, the waltz
established Chopin's fame in the salons of Paris.[28] Sever-
al of the waltzes are characterized by brilliance and
rhythmic verve, while others are subdued and nocturne-
like. Those pieces resembling nocturnes are Op. 34, no. 2;
Op. 64, no. 2; and Op. 69, no. 2. Brilliance is achieved
through figuration in Op. 18; Op. 34, no. 1; and Op. 64,
no. 2. Op. 34, no. 3 ("Cat Waltz") is characterized by
what Huneker terms the "perpetuum mobile" quality.[29]

[28] Adam Harasowski, "An Overview of Chopin's Piano
Music," <u>The Piano Quarterly</u> 113 (Spring, 1981): 30.

[29] James Huneker, <u>Chopin: The Man & His Music</u>
(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Inc., 1900), p. 242.

Brilliant passage-work is a feature of Op. 64, no. 2, while Op. 42 is characterized by triple against duple rhythm.

Large Forms: Scherzos and Sonatas

Scherzos

The Chopin scherzos are an outgrowth of the scherzos found within a typical sonata movement. Chopin was the first to establish the scherzo as an independent composition, creating what Kentner describes as "the very antithesis of what was understood in pre-Chopin days by 'scherzo.'"[30] Under Chopin, the scherzo was not a witty, light-hearted composition; the title was given to pieces of a pessimistic, sombre, almost savage nature. With reference to Beethoven's use of the form, Kentner writes that "even Beethoven's scherzi seem friendly and petty compared to Chopin's bitter sarcasms."[31]

The Chopin scherzos are four in number, composed between 1831 and 1842. The organization shared by the four is that of scherzo proper, a contrasting trio, and repeat of the scherzo proper. Within the scherzo proper, several themes are stated, and then the section is repeated. The

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[30]Louis Kentner, Piano (New York: Schirmer Books, A Div. of Macmillan Pub. Co., Inc., 1976), p. 158.

[31]Ibid., p. 158.

repetitive scheme and use of contrasting trio resemble the scherzos within a sonata movement, but the Chopin scherzos are on a larger scale than would occur in a sonata.

The Scherzo in B minor (Op. 20) is considered the finest of the four. The dramatic scherzo proper is sharply contrasted by the lyrical trio theme which is a simple setting of a Polish folk song. The Scherzo in B-flat minor (Op. 31) is the best-known and most popular. Chopin cleverly bridges the gap between the distantly-related keys of the scherzo proper and trio by enharmonic spelling in the new key. The scherzo ends on a D-flat, while the trio opens with an enharmonic C-sharp in the key of A major. The Scherzo in C-sharp minor (Op. 39) is characterized by its brilliant coda and two statements of the trio. The Scherzo in E major (Op. 54) is of a more gentle nature than the others. Although seldom performed, it contains elegant passage-work and an ethereal quality.

Sonatas

The three piano sonatas represent Chopin's contribution to established sonata form. In basic organization, the Chopin sonatas follow the traditional pattern of an Allegro first movement in sonata form, a scherzo, a slow third movement, and a finale. The key relationships between the movements are also traditional. Crocker describes the sonatas as "a series of episodes set into

Beethoven's framework." He believes that the sonatas
achieve greatness through the strong character of separate
episodes rather than through structural integrity.[32]

The C-minor Sonata (Op. 41), composed in 1828, is
considered a student attempt; consequently, it is seldom
performed. The piece is sparse in subject matter and in-
determinate in key relationships. By way of contrast,
the B-flat minor Sonata (Op. 35) and the B minor Sonata
(Op. 58) both have a clear outline of thematic material
with definite key changes. The works are characterized by
figuration, dissonant suspensions, and elaborate virtuoso
material comprised of staccato repeated notes and chro-
matic runs.

Chopin's most unconventional treatment of the form
involves the irregular recapitulations in the first move-
ments of the B-flat minor Sonata and the B minor Sonata,
and the unusual finale of the B-flat minor Sonata. Chopin
reverses the traditional concept of the recapitulation
in sonata form by presenting the subordinate theme before
the principal theme. The finale of the B-flat minor
Sonata is a small, etude-like movement rather than the
traditional rondo or large-scale sonata movement. Only

[32]Richard L. Crocker, A History of Musical Style
(New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 444.

25 measures in length, it features intense chromaticism to the point of atonality.[33]

Miscellaneous Works

The Fantaisie in F minor (Op. 49), composed in 1841, is considered the greatest of Chopin's miscellaneous pieces and one of his most inspired works.[34] Improvisatory and march-like passages are repeated in several different keys, closing in A-flat major. The Barcarolle in F-sharp major (Op. 60), composed in 1846, is an adaptation of Venetian boat songs. Easy harmonies and Italian melodic contours are featured. The Berceuse in D-flat major (Op. 57), composed in 1843, contains arabesques above a rocking ostinato figure in the bass. Considered much less successful are the Tarantella in A-flat major (Op. 43), and the Bolero in A minor (Op. 19).

Summary of Stylistic Features

Melody

Mellers lists Polish folk music and Italian bel canto as the two main sources of Chopin's melodies.[35] Dance-inspired melodies include those of the mazurkas, polonaises,

[33]Denis Matthews, ed., Keyboard Music (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 226.

[34]Ernest Hutcheson, ed., The Literature of the Piano (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1964), p. 243.

[35]Wilfrid Mellers, Man & His Music: Romanticism and the 20th Century (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 6.

and waltzes. Chopin took the basic features of the dance

forms and enriched them with his harmonies to create

stylized character pieces. Under Chopin, the polonaise

came to express national feeling, while the waltz became

glittering salon music.

Other of Chopin's melodies are v cal in nature, simi-

lar to the bel canto style of contemporary Italian opera.

Abraham writes that Chopin's melody is not an imitation,

but a stylization of Italian bel canto.[36] In the same

fashion as bel canto, most of Chopin's melodies we con-

structed in 8-bar periods. Although this structure is the

basic foundation used by Chopin, he often utilizes phrase-

overlapping, phrase extension, or phrase contraction.[37]

While chromaticism is of great importance to Chopin's

music, his melody is predominantly diatonic. Chromatic

elements within his melodies are usually purely decorative

and comprised of passing tones or parts of ornaments.[38]

An ornamental feature often used by Chopin consists of a

cadenza-like chromatic passage which briefly interrupts

the melodic flow. Found mainly in the nocturnes, the orna-

ment is similar to the vocal coloratura runs in Italian

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[36]Gerald Abraham, Chopin's Musical Style (London:
Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 64.

[37]Ibid., p. 62.

[38]Ibid., p. 68.

opera. Although modeled after the ornamentation of opera,
it is not a mere imitation. Chopin stylized the feature
so that while it may be unsuitable for the singer, it is
in character with the .ature of the piano.[39]

The ornamental grace notes and triplets characteris-
tic of national dance forms are used in Chopin's styliza-
tions of those forms as well as in several of his other
works. Trills, acciaccature, turns, and mordents are used
throughout his works. Melody within figuration and mel-
odic organ point are other ornamental features.

Harmony

Although Chopin is a distinctive melodist, it is his
use of harmonic innovation, particularly chromaticism,
that characterizes his works. Abraham writes that Chopin,
as the forerunner of Liszt, Wagner, and the modern atona-
lists, was "the first composer to seriously undermine the
solid system of diatonic tonalism created by the Vien-
nese Classical masters."[40]

Chopin's harmony, like his melody, is fundamentally
diatonic. Typical chords used by Chopin include ordinary
diatonic triads and inversions, Neapolitan sixths, the
minor form of the subdominant triad in the major mode,

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[39] Ibid., p. 66.

[40] Gerald Abraham, Chopin's Musical Style (London:
Oxford University Press, 1939), p. viii.

dominant sevenths and ninths, diminished sevenths, and chords of the augmented sixth (German and French form).[41]

Chopin's harmony features free modulation and liberal treatment of dissonance. Basic chords are overlaid with suspensions, passing tones, and appoggiaturas to the point of disguising the actual chord. Unresolved appoggiaturas and passing tones often have the effect of displays of color. Harmonic splashes of color are also achieved by the side-slipping of dominant or diminished sevenths. One of Chopin's favorite modulatory points is an unresolved dominant seventh chord in third inversion, followed by runs and scale passages.[42]

Crocker writes that Chopin's talent for creating unique and original pianistic figuration was unsurpassed in the 1800's.[43] His figurations make harmonies more intense by concentrating on the individual chord. The improved piano allowed the use of pedal effects to give more resonance to figurations.

Also related to the improvements made upon the piano is Chopin's use of extended harmonies. Improved sonority

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[41]Ibid., p. 78.

[42]Rey M. Longyear, Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 147.

[43]Richard L. Crocker, A History of Musical Style (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 448.

allowed for dispersions of the triad and seventh chords.

As a result, Chopin used chords of the ninth, eleventh,

and thirteenth more freely than his predecessors.

CHAPTER III

THE CHOPIN BALLADES: STRUCTURE AND NARRATIVE STYLE

The term "ballade" or "ballad" has had several conno-
tations in past centuries. It has been used in reference
to a literary form, a vocal form, and also Chopin's instru-
mental form. In current writings, the term "ballad" usu-
ally refers to the literary form, while "ballade" refers
to the musical form.

The first mention of the ballade as a musical form
dates back to the 11th century with the Troubadours in
southern France. At that time, "ballade" meant poetry
set to music and combined with dance; however, by the 13th
century, the dance connotation was lost, and "ballade"
then referred to a stylized vocal piece.

The literary ballad of the 16th century was defined
as "any simple tale told in simple verse."[1] By the late
18th and early 19th centuries, German poets such as
Goethe and Schiller expanded the form and brought the
literary ballad to its highest point. F. E. Kirby
describes the expanded form as a popular genre of the time

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[1]Willi Apel, The Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cam-
bridge: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 67.

which involved legends or historical events of the distant past. The narrative typically included violence and the supernatural, had a tragic conclusion, and was told in simple verse arranged in a large number of short strophes.[2]

The vocal ballades of the 19th century came to represent a special class of art song. The vocal ballades of Carl Loewe and Franz Schubert were characterized by a narrative, descriptive quality as opposed to the more characteristic lyric quality of the art song. As the ballades were tied to a literary framework and did not represent individual experiences of either the poet or the composer, the ballade composers strove toward objectivity and predominance of narrative tone.

It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the term "ballade" was used in reference to a purely instrumental composition. Chopin is credited with being the first composer to adapt the form to the piano, composing four ballades between 1831 and 1842. He combined elements from existing forms such as sonata, rondo, and variation to create a unique type of single-movement piano piece. Although Chopin did not devise a set form for the genre, a feature held in common by the four ballades is a narrative quality comparable to that of the literary ballad.

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[2]F. E. Kirby, A Short History of Keyboard Music (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 277.

The ballades are characterized by changes of mood and suspenseful unfolding of themes, with the most dramatic effects displayed within the codas of each piece. The narrative style of the ballades offers the drama and suspense of the literary ballad without an actual story being present.

It is difficult to determine what may have motivated Chopin to compose his ballades. He rarely mentioned his work in his letters, and then only in reference to a performance or publication problem.[3] Alan Walker writes: "He had an almost pathological dislike of talking about the way he composed. He rarely missed an opportunity of keeping quiet about it."[4] Despite the lack of documented evidence, the inspiration for the Chopin Ballades has been a subject of great interest to writers, biographers, and historians. This interest has led to much speculation and a wide range of opinions regarding the subject.

Kathleen Dale regards the creation of the form as "an outcome of his (Chopin's) need to evolve a structural framework withi' which to develop musical ideas that transcend the bounds of orthodox form."[5] F. E. Kirby

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[3]David Witten, "Ballads and Ballades," The Piano Quarterly 113 (Spring 1981): 33.

[4]Alan Walker, ed., Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1966), p. 249.

[5]Kathleen Dale, Nineteenth Century Piano Music (New York: De Capo Press, 1972), p. 156.

accounts for the narrative quality of the ballades as he writes, "It is simply that he (Chopin) envisioned a musical form that he saw as corresponding to the literary form of the ballad . . . a kind of character piece that would be regarded as, in some way, the equivalent of the sonata."[6] Gerald Abraham describes the creation of the ballades as "an experiment in a new and individual form . . . a hybrid form, half lyrical and akin to the short pieces, half epic and related to the principle of sonata form."[7]

Writers such as Louis Ehlert, E. Ashton Jonson, and Alfred Cortot have viewed the Chopin Ballades as directly inspired by ballads of Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855). David Witten, in an article entitled, "Ballads and Ballades," attributes the cause for this direct link to a casual comment made by Robert Schumann in an 1841 review of new music by Chopin. The review includes a recollection of a visit by Chopin in Leipzig five years earlier, at which time Chopin performed his F Major Ballade for Schumann. Schumann wrote of the incident as follows:

> I recollect very well that when Chopin played the Ballade here, it ended in F major; now it closes in A minor. At that time, he also mentioned that certain poems of Mickiewicz had suggested his

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[6]F. E. Kirby, A Short History of Keyboard Music (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 278.

[7]Gerald Abraham, Chopin's Musical Style (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 52-53.

Ballades to him. On the other hand, a poet might easily be inspired to find words to his music; it stirs one profoundly.[8]

Aside from this fact, there is no evidence that any specific ballad was meant to be associated with any specific ballade. Yet, biographers and historians have proceeded to match the G Minor Ballade with Mickiewicz' "Konrad Wallenrod," the F Major Ballade with "The Switez," the A-Flat Major Ballade with "Ondine," and the F Minor Ballade with "The Three Budrys."[9]

Alan Rawsthorne refutes the idea of direct inspiration for the Chopin Ballades as follows:

> To link the names of poet and musician was obvious, but to pin down the ballade to a definite story is gratuitous and misleading; for in suggesting extra-musical connotations, the attention is distracted from the purely musical scheme which is . . . compelling in itself and completely satisfying. If Chopin had wanted to hang his piece onto a literary framework, there was nothing on earth to stop him from doing so and acknowledging the fact in a title.[10]

When Chopin mentioned that certain works of Mickiewicz had suggested his Ballades to him, he may have been referring to features of narrative style rather than actual narrative content. David Witten supports this statement as he writes of the literary ballad as utilized by

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[8]David Witten, "Ballads and Ballades," The Piano Quarterly 113 (Spring 1981): 33.

[9]James Huneker, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), pp. 277-285.

[10]Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos" in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967), p. 49.

Mickiewicz. Witten maintains that the literary ballad was refined and personalized by Mickiewicz, with features of narrative style rather than specific content possibly emulated by Chopin.

The ballads of Mickiewicz are characterized by a suspenseful unfolding of the narrative through the presence of an unidentified narrator. The narrator keeps the story in present tense, and arouses the curiosity of the reader through the use of rhetorical questions and withholding of information. The tale typically involves the supernatural, violence, and characters in conflict, unfolding with ever-increasing suspense until its tragic and dramatic conclusion. An excerpt from "This I Love," a ballad written by Mickiewicz and published in 1822, demonstrates his typical narrative style:

> Close by an old church, in it owls and bats,
> Beside it, the mouldy frame of a bell-tower,
> And behind the bell-tower a raspberry plot,
> And in the plot there are tombs.[11]

David Witten, author of the article in which the above stanza was reprinted, writes that the tale increases in suspense as the narrator tells of the ghost of a young girl condemned to haunt the cemetery. It is not until the last stanza that the reason for her condemnation is revealed. Although Witten does not divulge the reason

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[11]Adam Mickiewicz as quoted by David Witten, "Ballads and Ballades," The Piano Quarterly 113 (Spring 1981): 34.

for the girl's condemnation, his information is useful in comparing similar narrative techniques used by Chopin within his _Ballades_.

Premiere Ballade in G Minor, Op. 23

The G Minor Ballade represents Chopin's first experi-
ment in the creation of his unique type of single-movement
piano piece. He began writing the Ballade during his
second visit to Vienna in 1831, completed it in 1835 while
in Paris, and offered it for publication in 1836. The
piece was dedicated to the Hanoverian ambassador to France,
Baron von Stockhausen.

Arthur Hedley believes that Chopin began his prelimi-
nary sketches for the Ballade in May of 1831 as an expres-
sion of his reaction toward the November, 1830 revolt in
Warsaw. Hedley writes as follows:

> . . . But often he (Chopin) was devoured by
> regrets and anxieties, and his pleasures were
> poisoned by the thought of what was happening in
> Poland. The knowledge that the flower of Polish
> youth was perishing on the battlefield made him
> realize all the more keenly that he too was a Pole,
> and the emotion which the memories of his coun-
> try's heroic past aroused in him found expression
> in the Scherzo in B Minor and the Ballade in G
> Minor, both of which were conceived at this peri-
> od.[12]

Based on the proximity in time of the 1830 revolt
and the date of Chopin's beginning sketches for the
Ballade, Hedley may be correct in assuming a causal link.
Yet, if the Ballade was inspired as an expression of
patriotic feeling, Chopin's logic in choosing a new form
over that of the polonaise becomes a point of interest.

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[12]Arthur Hedley, Chopin (London: J. M. Dent and
Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 40.

It does not appear that Chopin intended to replace the polonaise with his newly-created form. Had this been his intent, we would expect a phasing out of the form after 1831. Yet, the polonaise form which he began using in 1817 was utilized and improved upon throughout his lifetime, culminating in the Polonaise-Fantaisie of 1845. The fact that two of the Polonaises were composed within the same time period as the G Minor Ballade suggests that Chopin intended for the Ballade to express something different than that which was expressed by the Polonaises. Although it is possible to attribute the initial inspiration of the G Minor Ballade to the expression of patriotic feeling, the narrative quality inherent to the Ballades (and present to a lesser degree in the Polonaises) leads to the assumption that Chopin envisioned something more in the creation of his Ballades.

The remainder of this chapter will involve a discussion of each of the Ballades with regard to narrative quality, prefaced by a paraphrase of the particular ballad of Mickiewicz with which it has been associated. The major emphasis will be upon techniques of narrative style as demonstrated through compositional features and overall structure of each piece:

"Konrad Wallenrod"

The prose ballad which was the source of inspiration of this composition is the last episode

of the fourth part of "Konrad Wallenrod," a historical legend taken from the chronicles of Lithuania and Prussia (1828). In this episode Wallenrod, coming out from a banquet, elated with drink, speaks warmly of an exploit in which the Moors took vengeance on their oppressors, the Spaniards, by infecting them with the plague, leprosy, and the most ghastly diseases. . . . To the stupefaction and horror of his fellow-guests, Wallenrod gives it to be understood that he, the Pole, could also, if he would, breathe death upon his adversaries in a similar fatal embrace.[13]

Of the four Ballades, the G Minor Ballade remains closest to traditional sonata form with regard to two main themes, a development section, a recapitulation, and a coda.[14] The superficiality of the above comparison becomes apparent as the individuality of Chopin is revealed through his use of two complementary themes which are transformed and intensified through repetition. Separated by passage-work that provides contrasting moods, the themes are juxtaposed gradually and irreversibly, leading toward an irregular recapitulation and a dramatic coda based largely on new material.

Introduction

The seven-measure introduction which begins the G Minor Ballade immediately establishes the narrative tone pervading the entire piece. The forceful opening statement,

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[13]Laurent Ceillier in Frederic Chopin, Chopin Ballads, ed. Alfred Cortot (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1929), Preface.

[14]Kathleen Dale, Nineteenth-Century Piano Music (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), p. 156.

dynamic shading, expressive pauses, and accented disson-
ances suggest an imitation of qualities found in human
speech. The opening phrase provides a sense of foreboding
through the use of widespread ascending eighth-notes
doubled in the left hand one octave below. Marked "pesante"
and relaxing only slightly at its end, the weight of the
first phrase suggests a bold statement of great importance.
A brief pause occurs before the less forceful second
phrase. Shorter in length and marked "piano," it main-
tains the tension of the first phrase through what appears
to be almost a whisper in comparison. Dotted rhythms
and triplet eighths provide a sense of agitation before
the termination of the phrase and a longer expressive
pause. The final measure of the introduction contains
a dissonant chord, the top note of which is held over the
bar line and disappears just before the entrance of the
main theme. As a narrative technique, such writing sug-
gests a final questioning statement--a trailing-off of
the voice in anticipation of the narrative which is to
follow.

The final chord of the introduction, illustrated in
Example 1 below, has been the subject of much contro-
versy. Several editors have replaced the E-flat with
another D in order to remove the dissonance created by
the D, G, E-flat, and B-flat spelling of the chord.
Weinstock maintains that the original Chopin manuscript

has the E-flat; therefore, the creation of dissonance apparently was intentional.[15]

Example 1.   G Minor Ballade, Op. 23 (Measures 6-7)

First Theme

Following the Neapolitan tonality of the introduction, the key of G minor is established with the appearance of the first theme at the "moderato" marking in measure 8. Haunting in nature, the theme is comprised of arpeggio fragments written mainly in eighth and dotted half notes over an insistent two-note accompaniment figure in the bass and inner voices.   The double-stemmed eighth notes found at the beginning of each phrase serve a harmonic as well as a melodic function.   In measure 8, illustrated in Example 2, the double-stemmed notes become part of a chord of the dominant thirteenth which progresses to tonic in the following measure.   The tension and relaxation

[15]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 210.

created within each short phrase of the theme is comparable
to the crisp, poignant dialogue of the literary ballad.

The narrative technique of suspenseful unfolding is
also present within the first theme of the Ballade. Writ-
ten in 6-4 meter and marked "moderato," the narrative
slowly pushes forward, only to be held back by the persis-
tent two-note accompaniment figure. Witten maintains that
Chopin's use of slow, compound duple meter (6-4 or 6-8 in
each of the Ballades) "was appropriate for the impersonal,
narrative quality used in story-telling."[16]
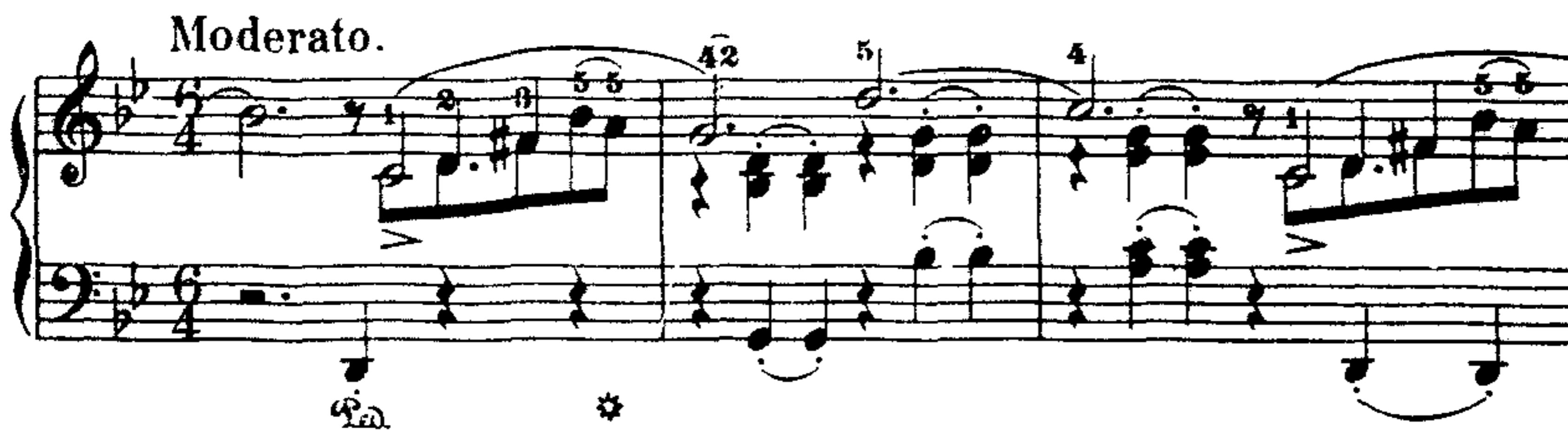
Example 2. (Measures 8-10)

The first theme is followed by a lengthy transition-
al section consisting of passage-work. There is a cadenza-
like passage, a tributary theme which is intensified upon
repetition, and a "piu mosso" section, all of which pro-
vide changing moods and a sense of ever-increasing agita-
tion.

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[16]David Witten, "Ballads and Ballades," The Piano
Quarterly 113 (Spring 1981): 35.

The agitation reaches its highest level within the "piu mosso" section as widespread arpeggiated figures occurring in both single and double eighth notes in the right hand are combined with single notes, octaves, and accented chords in the bass. The results is a pianistic display which utilizes the extended range of the keyboard.

This figuration leads to an arpeggiated tonic chord which occurs above a "horn-like" motive in the bass.[17] The repeat of the four-measure phrase, now marked "calando" and "smorzando," leads to a termination of the arpeggiated figure, with only the horn-like motive to prepare for the second theme.

The F major chords of the horn-like transition, occurring three measures before the second theme, appear to function as dominant preparation for a second theme in the relative major. When the tonality of E-flat major is established within the opening measure of the second theme, it becomes apparent that the passage serves as the supertonic, rather than the dominant of the new key.[18] The transitional passage is illustrated in Example 3 on the following page.

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[17] Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos," in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1967), p. 47.

[18] Ibid., p. 47.

Example 3. (Measures 64-67)

As a narrative technique, the above passage provides
a sense of calm after the agitated passage-work. It sug-
gests both reflection upon what has transpired, and a
foreshadowing of that which is to follow. In this manner,
the ambiguous passage serves to push the narrative forward
while providing a smooth transition between contrasting
themes.

Second Theme

The lyrical second theme in E-flat major begins at
the "meno mosso" in measure 68. Accompanied by a series
of broken chord figures written in quarter notes, the ex-
pansive melody remains somewhat subdued as a result of
its "sotto voce" marking. Although the two main themes
are contrasting in key, Rawsthorne suggests that the
second theme is "a complement to the first, a restatement
in the major mode, and in a more consolatory mood."[19]

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[19]Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos"
in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician,
ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1967),
p. 47.

The second theme suggests a sense of cautious optimism as
opposed to the haunting, almost pessimistic quality of
the first theme. "Both themes consist basically of a domi-
nant thirteenth resolving upon the tonic, and both proceed
melodically from the mediant to the key note."[20] The
opening of the second theme is illustrated in Example 4
below:

Example 4. (Measures 68-70)

The second theme is followed by a closing theme, also
in E-flat major, which is motivically related to the first
theme.[21] A four-measure transition leads to a return of
the first theme in A minor.

Quasi-Development

The section which follows is described as a "quasi-
development" due to the fact that "it consists of variation

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[20]Ibid., p. 47.

[21]Douglass M. Green, Form in Tonal Music (New York:
Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1965), p. 296.

and improvisation rather than true development."[22] The themes (or "characters" in a narrative sense) are not changed a great deal in terms of content. Instead, each theme is transformed through variation and repetition.

The return of the first theme in A minor begins the quasi-development section at measure 94. The first phrase of the theme is fully stated, complete with its accompanying dominant pedal point. The phrase is then extended and intensified through the use of full chords, a "forte" marking, and a chromatic rise in pitch leading directly to a restatement of the second theme.

Kathleen Dale views the return of the first theme as a narrative technique in which themes are reintroduced as if to recall to the listener's memory the salient points of the tale.[23] The intensification of the theme may also be regarded as incremental repetition. Mickiewicz utilized this device through the use of one-line refrains that would return with ever-increasing urgency.[24] Furthermore, by causing the intensified first theme to lead directly into the second, Chopin creates a direct juxtaposition of themes previously separated by passage-work.

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[22]Gerald Abraham, Chopin's Musical Style (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 55.

[23]Kathleen Dale, Nineteenth-Century Piano Music (New York: Da Capa Press, 1972), p. 155.

[24]David Witten, "Ballads and Ballades," The Piano Quarterly 113 (Spring 1981): 35.

The restatement of the second theme occurs at measure 106 in the key of A major. Now written in full chords and octave figuration, the second theme is transformed, creating a fortissimo statement that is heroic in quality:

Example 5.   (Measures 106-108)

The theme is extended through passage-work comprised of the same chordal accompaniment and the addition of chromatically-ascending octaves in the right hand. The climax of the section is reached in measure 124 at the "fortississimo" marking, followed by a descending arpeggiated figure and a sudden lull. Agitated passage-work centered around the dominant of E-flat minor gradually ascends from the lower register of the keyboard and resolves to E-flat major in measure 138.

A "scherzando" section, described by Huneker as "a waltz-like theme with a butterfly existence," provides a short section of passage-work that is more melodic in

character than the preceding passage-work.[25] The waltz-like
theme is extended as it travels through various keys. Agi-
tation is increased as chromatically-ascending figures are
followed by wide leaps, leading to a dramatic high point
within measure 154.

Ascending and descending figures in F-sharp minor lead
to a return of E-flat major in measure 158. An ascending
scale-like passage rises from its "piano" marking to yet
another "fortissimo," and descends from the extreme upper
register of the keyboard to the extreme lower register in
highly dramatic fashion to merge with the recapitulation
of the second theme.

Recapitulation

The recapitulation of the two main themes (measure 166)
may be regarded as highly irregular when compared to the
nature of the recapitulation within traditional sonata
form. Rather than restating the first and second themes
in the tonic key, Chopin presents the second theme in its
original key, followed by a return of the first theme in
tonic.

The third appearance of the second theme provides yet
another variation and transformation. Accompanied by
eighth notes in broken chord patterns, the melodic line
is enhanced through ornamentation. The result is a

[25]James Huneker, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New
York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1900), p. 277.

confident restatement which is less aggressive than the
first restatement in A major, and richer in quality than
the original theme. The turn-like figure which enhances
the melody also creates a cross-rhythm (five against six)
as illustrated in Example 6 below:

Example 6.   (Measures 170-171)

This theme is followed by a restatement of the closing
theme which first appeared at measure 82. Originally
marked "pianissimo," the theme now returns with slight
variation and a "con forza" marking. It is followed by
a transitional passage, also based on previous material,
which leads directly to a return of the first theme.

The recapitulation of the first theme occurs at
measure 194 in the key of G minor. The theme appears in
a drastically shortened version, again accompanied by its
insistent dominant pedal point. The theme is again in-
tensified, preparing for what would appear to be yet
another return of the second theme. Instead, the theme

leads to an "appassionata" section which then merges with the coda at measure 208.

Coda

As in the literary ballad, the most dramatic effects have been saved until the end of the work, displayed in the bravura passage-work of the coda. The coda is unrelated to previous material with the exception of a brief passage near the end in which the eighth note motive from the first theme is stated.

Marked "presto con fuoco," the passage-work of the coda is comprised of alternated single notes and chords in widespread figuration, followed by extended scale passages. The scale passages first occur in the right hand alone, and are then doubled by the left hand. Double octaves marked "fortississimo" and "accelerando" lead to two final G minor chords. "The downward swooping octaves bring the piece to an appropriately violent end."[26]

Summary

The G Minor Ballade is characterized by the juxtaposition of two broad themes which are each repeated three times and transformed through variation. The introduction of the Ballade suggests the presence of an unidentified narrator, and immediately sets the narrative tone which characterizes the entire piece.

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[26]Kathleen Dale, Nineteenth-Century Piano Music (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), p. 156.

Initially separated by passage-work of contrasting moods, the themes appear to be complementary in nature. In their second appearance, the intensified ending of the first theme in direct juxtaposition with the transformed second theme again suggests complementary themes.

Passage-work follows, providing contrasting moods and a suspenseful unfolding of the narrative until a point of conflict is reached within the recapitulation. Conflict occurs due to the fact that the entire second theme has been transformed with each repetition, while only the ending of the first theme has been altered. Therefore, the juxtaposition of the themes within the recapitulation, the transformed second theme leading directly into the unaltered portion of the first theme, provides a sharp contrast and a turning point within the narrative.

Ironically, the passage-work which holds the narrative together also contributes to the conflict of the themes. The passage-work pushes the narrative forward with such dramatic intensity that it is impossible to return to the beginning of the narrative. The themes have been juxtaposed irreversibly within the recapitulation, leaving only the first theme and a tragic ending as exemplified in the coda.

The overall form of the G Minor Ballade may be summarized as follows:

A   (First theme in G minor)

B   (Second theme in E-flat major)

Quasi-Development (Return of the first theme in A minor;
                         return of the second theme in A major;
                         passage-work in various keys, including
                         a "scherzando" section in E-flat major)

B   (Recapitulation of the second theme in E-flat major)

A   (Recapitulation of the first theme in G minor)

Ccda (New material in G minor)

Deuxieme Ballade in F Major, Op. 38

"The Switez" (or the Lake of the Willis)

This lake, smooth as a sheet of ice, in which
by night the stars gaze upon their own images, is
situated upon the site of a town formerly besieged
by Russian hordes.   In order that they might es-
cape the shame which threatened to befall them,
Heaven granted that the earth should swallow up
the young Polish maidens, rather than that they
should be delivered into the hands of the con-
querors.
Transformed into strange mysterious flowers,
thenceforward they have adorned the shores of the
Lake. Woe be unto him who touches them![27]

The Second Ballade appears in at least two different
versions between 1836 and 1839. When Chopin played the F
Major Ballade for Schumann in 1836, it ended in F major
rather than A minor, and did not contain the contrasting
episodes of the final published version.[28] The work is
mentioned in Chopin's letters from Majorca (1838), leading
to the assumption that Chopin probably revised and altered
the work over a period of years before deciding upon the
version which we have today.[29] Dedicated to Robert Schu-
mann, the work was published in 1840.

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[27]Laurent Ceillier in Frederic Chopin, Chopin Ballads,
ed. Alfred Cortot (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1929),
Preface.

[28]David Witten, "Ballads and Ballades," The Piano
Quarterly 113 (Spring 1981): 33.

[29]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 103.

The Ballade is characterized by the juxtaposition of two violently contrasting themes. Each theme appears twice, and is transformed upon its second appearance due to both the effect of passage-work and their juxtaposition. A fiery coda, largely based on new material, drives the intensity of the piece to its highest point, ending with a brief passage that lends a sense of irony to the entire piece.

Andantino

The "sotto voce" opening of the piece, a succession of three reiterated octave C's, prepares for the entrance of the main theme in both a rhythmic and a narrative sense. The repeated tones serve to establish the lilting rhythm of the first theme, while providing a brief introduction to the narrative which follows.

The first theme may be described as song-like in quality with a barcarolle lilt.[30] The F major theme consists of two 4-measure phrases which are stated twice in succession. This is followed by new material in A minor and C major, with a repetition of the second half of the main theme occurring in C major. The final measures of the section contain a series of cadences in F major, llowed by a slowly arpeggiated F major chord. A brief

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[30]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 244.

expressive pause separates the F major section and the second theme. The opening phrase of the first theme is illustrated below:
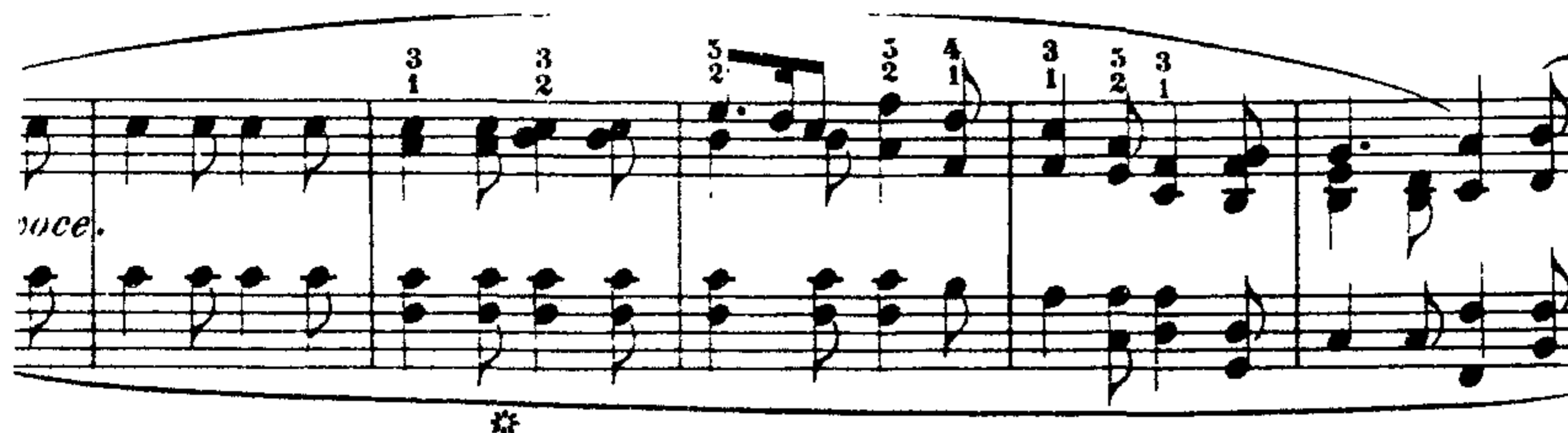
Example 7. F Major Ballade, Op. 38 (Measures 3-6)

Presto con fucco

The direct juxtaposition of the first and second themes, a song-like melody versus a volcano, is analogous to characters in conflict within the literary ballad.[31] The violently contrasting second theme appears in the key of A minor at measure 46. The principle motive, an ascending figure written in octaves in the left hand, is combined with descending arpeggiated figuration in the right hand. This contrary motion is followed by an ascending sixteenth note figuration occurring in both hands. The opening measures of the second theme are illustrated on the following page:

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[31]Kathleen Dale, Nineteenth-Century Piano Music (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972).

Presto con fuoco.

Example 8.   (Measures 46-47)

The principle motive is extended, followed by a restatement
of the material in G minor.

A second motive, based on the rhythmic pattern of the
first theme, is introduced in measure 62. The tension
created by the second theme is relaxed slightly at this
point only to return to a "fortissimo" marking seven mea-
sures later. The passage consists of chromatically-ascend-
ing chords in the right hand with scale-like figures in the
bass. The scale-like figures are centered around the domi-
ants of D minor, F minor, and A-flat minor respectively,
leading to E-flat major in measure 70.

A transitional passage follows, consisting of descend-
ing chords in the treble and scale-like figures centered
around a pedal point E-flat in the bass. The scale-like
figures are switched to the right hand in measure 78, ac-
companied by chromatically-descending thirds in the bass.
After the long diminuendo of the entire transitional

passage, F major is established with the return of the first theme in measure 82.

Tempo I

The first theme returns with an exact repetition of measures 2-8, followed by a sudden pause. The theme resumes in A minor with an exact repetition of measures 34-40. Due to the violent second theme and agitation of the passage-work which has immediately preceded the return of the first theme, it is impossible for the first theme to return in its original form. Alfred Cortot writes of this return as follows:

> Following the squalls which have rudely swept from end to end of the keyboard, the first theme now takes on a different character--though without any change of notes--from that which it wore during its exposition. There lies one of the secrets of Chopin's art, that of making use of the reflection of one episode upon another, in such a way that he is able to alter the poetic significance of the one while faithfully reproducing the original text.[32]

The section which begins at measure 95 is characterized by development of motives taken from the first theme. A new, though related, melodic idea enters in D-flat major at measure 98 where it is treated in stretto-like manner over a pedal point A-flat.[33] This passage is illustrated in Example 9:

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[32]Alfred Cortot in Frederic Chopin, Chopin Ballads ed. Alfred Cortot (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1929), p. 26.

[33]Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos," in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967), p. 52.

Example 9.   (Measures 97-100)

The material is restated in G-flat major, followed by
a "stretto piu mosso" which makes use of the dotted rhythm
of the first theme. The development increases in intensity
until the "sforzando" marking in measure 114, immediately
followed by a "piano" statement of the main theme in E
major written in the tenor voice. The theme is next stated
in C major in the bass, followed by another "stretto piu
mosso" which modulates to G minor before merging with the
"Presto con fuoco."

Presto con fuoco

The juxtaposition of the two main themes at this
point provides a less violent contrast than that of their
juxtaposition. The development of the first theme has
caused it to be transformed, resulting in a theme which
is complementary to the nature of the second theme.
Niecks writes of this second juxtaposition as follows:

> The [first] entrance of the presto surprises,
> and seems out of keeping with what precedes; but
> what we hear after the tempo primo--the develop-
> ment of those simple strains--justifies the pres-
> ence of the presto.[34]

The second theme appears with only slight variation in D minor at measure 140. It is followed by a restatement in A minor, and a four-measure extension built on a motive from the first theme. The motive is written in octaves in the bass and appears to foreshadow a return of the first theme.[35] Instead, four descending trills lead directly to the largely unrelated material of the coda.

Agitato (Coda)

The coda consists of bravura passage-work in the form of rapid double note figuration in the treble and wide leaps in the bass. Although the key of A minor is established at the key change in measure 168, the chromaticism of the passage-work creates a sense of tonal ambiguity.

A harmonic sequence beginning in measure 184 leads to a climax in measure 188, and is followed by a motive from the second theme which is clearly stated in A minor. Triads alternating with single notes rise chromatically with ever-increasing excitement until the coda comes to a complete stop on an inconclusive chord in measure 196.

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[34] Frederic Niecks as quoted by James Huneker, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), p. 281

[35] Gerald Abraham, Chopin's Musical Style (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 56.

The inconclusive chord is the French form of the augmented sixth, a chord rarely used by Chopin:[36]

Example 10.   (Measure 196)

The Ballade then ends in A minor with "one of Chopin's most magical touches--a whispered reminder of the very opening and a slow full close that 'vibrates in the memory.'"[37]

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The overall form of the F Major Ballade may be summarized as follows:

A   "Andantino"   (First theme in F major)

B   "Presto con fuoco"   (Second theme in A minor)

A   "Tempo I"   (Return of the first theme in F major, followed by polyphonic development of motivically-related material and of the theme itself)

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[36]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 245.

[37]Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos" in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967), p. 52.

B   "Presto con fuoco"   (Return of the second theme in D
                           and A minor)

Coda   "Agitato"   (New material in A minor, a return of a
                   motive from the second theme; the piece
                   ends in A minor with a brief return of
                   the first theme)

The F Major Ballade is characterized by the juxta-
position of two violently contrasting themes. The first
juxtaposition of the themes demonstrates this violent
contrast as a pastoral theme in F major is immediately
followed by a stormy second theme in A minor.

A transitional section, characterized by a long
diminuendo and descending chord figures, leads to a return
of the first theme in F major. Development of motives
from the first theme causes a transformation of that
theme. The transformed version matches the intensity of
the second theme, causing a less violent contrast when
they are juxtaposed for the section time.

The final measures of the second "Presto" contain
bass octaves which foreshadow a return of the first theme.
Instead, four trilled notes lead to a coda consisting of
bravura passage-work. Unrelated to preceding material
with the exception of a brief motive from the second
theme, the coda pushes forward with ever-increasing in-
tensity before coming to a full stop on an inconclusive
chord.

The Ballade, characterized by a slipping in and out
of A minor, now concludes in A minor with a brief return

of the first theme. Haunting in nature, the brief return suggests an unexpected, tragic ending comparable to that of the literary ballad.

Troisieme Ballade in A-Flat Major, Op. 47

"Ondine"   (The Drowning)

Beside the lake, the youth swears eternal fidelity to the maiden whose form he has scarcely discerned. While she, having her doubts about the man's constancy, flees despite the lover's protests, only to reappear in the enchanting guise of a water-fairy. Scarcely has she tempted the youth, than he succumbs to her magic spell. As a punishment, he is now swept down into the watery abyss and condemned to pursue the elusive nymph with everlasting cries, and never to attain her.[38]

The Third Ballade was written during the period 1840-1841, at which time Chopin was living with George Sand in Paris and Nohant. Exempt from material worries, and therefore free to compose, it was a time of reasonable happiness for Chopin. This happiness is possibly reflected in the A-Flat Major Ballade, considered to be the most light-hearted of the four Ballades.[39] Dedicated to one of Chopin's favorite pupils, Mlle. Pauline de Noailles, the Ballade was published in 1841.

The A-Flat Major Ballade is characterized by the interaction of three themes, all based on motives found within the first two measures of the piece. The Ballade

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[38]Laurent Ceillier in Frederic Chopin, Chopin Ballads, ed. Alfred Cortot (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1929), Preface.

[39]Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos" in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967), p. 53.

combines elements of sonata form with thematic metamorphosis, resulting in an overall form of ABCB--Development--AC.[40]

First Theme (A)

The lyric first theme, charming and elegant in nature, appears without introduction in the key of A-flat major. The 6-note fragment of a rising scale in the first measure, and the 2-note rhythmic figure at the end of the second measure provide the thematic framework upon which the entire Ballade is constructed.[41] The first two measures of the Ballade are illustrated in Example 11 below:

Example 11. A Flat Major Ballade, Op. 47 (Measures 1-2)

The melody of the first theme begins in the soprano, switches to the tenor and bass voices respectively, and

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[40]Gerald Abraham, Chopin's Musical Style (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 108.

[41]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 157.

reaches its cadence point with the melody once again in the soprano. This 8-measure opening statement is followed by a light development of the 2-note falling second motive, passing from A-flat to B-flat to C major.

A brief transition leads back to A-flat major and an exact repetition of the first five measures of the piece. The theme is extended by sequence, cadencing on a C major chord which is held for two and one-sixth measures. The held chord creates a brief pause in the narrative, while the "one-sixth provides the rhythmic key to the F major second theme which follows.[42]

Second Theme (B)

Built on the 2-note motive of the first theme, the second theme is characterized by accents which are placed on the third and sixth beats of each measure. A "lurching" effect is achieved through the presence of chords on the off-beats, and single notes on the strong beats.[43] The beginning of the second theme is illustrated in Example 12 on the following page:

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[42]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 255.

[43]Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos" in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967), p. 55.

Example 12.   (Measures 54-46)

The second strain of the theme appears in F minor at measure 64. This section builds to a dramatic climax, followed by transitional material and a return of the first strain in F major. The resulting ternary structure of the second theme complements the ternary structure of the first theme.

In a narrative sense, what has transpired thus far is an introduction to the two main characters of the story. Although the characters will return later in the narrative, the brief description of each is allowed to suffice for the moment, and the narrative proceeds in an alternate direction. A third character, or perhaps an event, is presented in the form of a third theme occurring at measure 116.

Third Theme (C)

The third theme, written in A-flat major, is comprised of sixteenth note scale and arpeggio figuration in

the right hand, with an inversion of the 2-note motive occurring in the bass. The theme is extended by passage-work, leading to a brief section which makes use of a 4-note descending motive taken from the second theme. The section closes in A-flat major, followed by a restatement of the second theme.

Return of the Second Theme (B)

The second theme appears in the key of A-flat major, again preceded by its falling octave motive. The restatement of the theme contains a sudden modulation to C-sharp minor, the key in which the development section begins.

Development

The development section has been described as "one of the most powerful that Chopin ever composed."[44] It begins with material taken from the second strain of the second theme, which occurs over a sixteenth note figuration in the bass.

This passage is followed by material taken from the first strain of the second theme. The motive is stated in the left hand, with the falling octave motive presented in sixteenth note figuration in the treble. The result of the figuration is a series of 96 G-sharps which serve as an inverted pedal point.

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[44]Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos" in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967), p. 55.

The second strain of the second theme appears again in measure 173, this time varied and strengthened through figuration. The passage leads to a climax in measure 179, followed by yet another appearance of the falling octave motive which occurs as a pedal point in the bass.

The final measures of the development contain brief motives from the first strain of the second theme which are twice answered by the rising scale motive of the first theme. The rising scale theme, after several restrained appearances in the center of the keyboard, finally soars in octaves toward the climax of the entire piece, which occurs at measure 213.[45]

Return of the First Theme (A)

The first theme returns with a triumphant "fortissimo" statement in A-flat major. This transformed version is comprised of a melody which occurs in octaves overlaid with rich harmonies. The theme is extended, and accelerates toward the "piu mosso" coda which ends the piece.

Coda (C)

The arpeggiated figures of the third theme return at the coda in measure 231. Four accented chords bring the Ballade to a triumphant close in A-flat major.

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[45]Kathleen Dale, <u>Nineteenth-Century Piano Music</u> (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), p. 157.

Summary

The overall form of the A-Flat Major Ballade may be summarized as follows:

A (First theme in A-flat major; motives include a rising-scale figure and a descending second; ternary structure)

B (Second theme in F major; built on the 2-note motive of the first theme; ternary structure)

C (Third theme in A-flat major; consists of arpeggiated figuration above an inversion of the 2-note motive in the bass)

B (Return of the first strain of the second theme in A-flat major; modulates to C-sharp minor)

Development (Consists mainly of motives from the first and second strains of the second theme. These motives are later answered by motives from the first theme; begins in C-sharp minor and progresses to A-flat major)

A (Return of the first theme in A-flat major; the theme is transformed upon its reappearance).

C (Return of the third theme in A-flat major; the return serves as a coda which ends the piece).

The A-Flat Major Ballade consists of three themes which are based on common motives. Rather than a juxtaposition of contrasting themes as found in the first two Ballades, the Third Ballade is characterized by an interaction of the three themes.

In terms of narrative style, the first broad section of the piece may be regarded as a description of the three "characters" or events involved in the story. The first two "characters" are described at length, while the third is mentioned only briefly. The first strain of the

second theme is repeated, serving to refresh the memory of the listener, and to stress the importance of the theme.

In the Development section, motives from the second theme are enhanced and developed until that theme is completely transformed. Alternating with brief motives of the first theme, the second theme merges with the transformed first theme. The theme is extended, and leads directly to the motivically-related third theme, which has also been transformed due to its "piu mosso" marking.

The final appearance of the three themes creates a completely different effect than that of their first appearance. Initially posed as three individual themes, the transformation of the three themes causes them to lose their individuality. The motives introduced at the beginning of the piece have been developed to such a great degree that when the three themes are again stated, the effect is that of a final triumphant statement.

Quatrieme Ballade in F Minor, Op. 52

"The Three Budrys"

The Three Budrys--or the three brothers--are
sent away by their father to far distant lands
in search of priceless treasures. Autumn passes,
then winter.
The father thinks that his sons have perished
at war. . . .
Amidst whirling snowstorms, each one manages
to return; but one and all bring back but a single
trophy from their odyssey--a bride.[46]

The Fourth Ballade was written at Nohant in the sum-

mer of 1842. Dedicated to Mme. la Baronne Charlotte de

Rothschild, the work was published in 1843. The F Minor

Ballade has been described as the most elaborate and ir-

regular in form of the four Ballades, combining elements

of sonata form with rondo and variation.[47]

Introduction

A seven-measure introduction written in the dominant

tonality serves to establish the narrative tone of the

piece. Three repeated octave G's dissolve into sixteenth

note figuration before cadencing on the dominant just be-

fore the entrance of the main theme. The opening of the

Ballade is illustrated in Example 13 on the following page:

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[46]Laurent Ceillier in Frederic Chopin, Chopin Ballads,
ed. Alfred Cortot (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1929),
Preface.

[47]F. E. Kirby, A Short History of Keyboard Music
(New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 278.

Example 13.   F Minor Ballade, Op. 52   (Measures 1-2)

First Theme

The haunting, almost mournful first theme appears in F minor at measure 8.   Preceded by three "hesitant"[48] notes, the theme unfolds over a widespread accompaniment figure as illustrated below:

Example 14.   (Measures 8-9)

The theme consists of three phrases, with the second and third phrase stated in B-flat minor.   The section is

[48]Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos" in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967), p. 56.

immediately repeated with slight embellishment occurring in the melodic line.

The statement of the first theme is followed by a brief passage written in the Neapolitan tonality. Comprised of a flowing octave melody beneath simple chords in the treble, the passage leads to a counterstatement of the first theme in measure 46. The counterstatement travels through several keys, with the melodic fragment distributed among the soprano, alto, and bass voices.

The main theme returns in F minor at measure 58, enriched in texture by "added inner lines and dissonances."[49] The theme builds to a climax in measure 65, followed by a transitional passage which leads to the second theme in B-flat major.

Second Theme

The entrance of the second theme is delayed by four measures of "quick modulations--a characteristically wayward proceeding which happily does not take the shine out of the theme proper when it arrives."[50] The second theme begins at measure 84 in B-flat major:

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[49]William S. Newman, Understanding Music (New York: Harper & Row Publishing Co., 1961), p. 183.

[50]Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos" in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967), p. 57.

Example 15.   (Measures 84-86)

The 8-bar theme, chordal in nature, is repeated and fol-
lowed by a transitional passage which begins at measure
100.

The lengthy transition begins with new material com-
prised of passage-work written in G minor, F minor, and D-
flat major. Motives from the first theme are developed in
A-flat major in measure 120, followed by a reappearance of
the introduction in A major.

The restatement of the introduction concludes on a
held A major chord which dissolves into a cadenza-like
figure. The cadenza pauses on a single note A which leads
directly to the three hesitant notes of the first theme.

Return of the First Theme

The first theme returns in D minor at measure 135.
Returning for the third time, the time appears in yet
another version. The melody is re-established and re-
developed first by canonic imitation, and then by elaborate

ornamentation.[51] The canonic imitation which occurs in

three voices is illustrated in Example 16 below:

Example 16.   (Measures 135-137)

The embellishment of the melody at measure 52 con-

sists of rapid scale-like passages which create a cross-

rhythm with the sixteenth note accompaniment. The scale-

like passages occur in groups of 6, 7, 8, or 10 sixteenth

notes against groups of six-sixteenth notes in the bass.

The F minor theme is extended by figuration, leading to

a return of the second theme in D-flat major at measure

159.

Return of the Second Theme

The second theme, originally chordal in nature, has

been transformed upon its reappearance. The figuration

which preceded its return now accompanies the melody with

scale-like figures. The melody occurs within figuration

[51]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 265.

and chords at measure 175. Alan Rawsthorne writes of the
return of the second theme as follows:

> . . . Though its characteristic tender qual-
> ity never quite deserts it, the theme manages to
> achieve a strength and grandeur that one would
> not have suspected, as it builds to a great cli-
> max, finishing with a decisive cadence in the
> dominant, C, and a fermata.[52]

The decisive cadence, marked "fortississimo" and
followed by an expressive pause, is then followed by five
long-held C major chords marked "pianissimo." Another
brief pause occurs before the start of the coda in F minor
at measure 211.

Coda

The coda consists of rapid passage-work written in
figuration, double notes, octaves, and sweeping runs. It
is based on motives which have occurred previously, with
special emphasis upon the first theme. Weinstock writes
of the coda as follows:

> . . . Chopin then erupts into the most aston-
> ishing of his passionate codas, which here is
> nothing less than an entirely new incarnation of
> his principal melody. Everything latent in, or
> established as possible by what has gone before
> is here flung, under pressure, but with unyielding
> control, at the listener.[53]

The driving intensity of the coda leads to four final chords
and a dramatic close in F minor.

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[52]Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos"
in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician,
ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967),
p. 58.

[53]Herbert Weinstock, Chopin: The Man and His Music
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 265.

Summary

The overall form of the F Minor Ballade may be summarized as follows:

Introduction (Occurs in the dominant of F minor)

A (First theme in F minor)

A (Counterstatement of the first theme)

A (Enhanced version of the first theme in F minor)

B (Second theme in B-flat major)
   Development (lengthy transitional section consisting
   of new material in G minor, F minor, and D-flat major;
   motives from the first theme are developed in A-flat;
   reappearances of the introduction in A major)

A (Return of the first theme in D minor, and later in
   tonic. The theme is varied and transformed through
   canonic imitation and melodic ornamentation).

B (Return of the second theme in D-flat major; the theme
   is transformed upon its second appearance; it is de-
   veloped further, and leads to the climax of the section).

Coda (Passage-work in F minor; material is based on previ-
   ous motives).

The F Minor Ballade is characterized by the juxta-position of two contrasting themes which are varied and transformed through repetition.   As in the A-Flat Major Ballade, the themes strive toward a common goal. This is evidenced by the appearance of both themes within the coda.

The first theme is comparable to a rondo refrain. It is stated three times at the beginning of the piece, followed by another appearance after the second statement of the second theme. The first theme is varied upon

each appearance through the use of richer harmonies, canonic imitation, and melodic embellishment.

While the first theme is gradually transformed through variation, the second theme is transformed by development and passage-work. The transitional section which follows the first statement of the theme, and the transformed appearance of the first theme, serve to heighten the drama of the work. A transformed second theme therefore complements this intensity. The transformed second theme is developed still further, leading to a climax and the start of the coda. Utilizing motives from previous material, the coda pushes forward until its dramatic F minor conclusion.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST:

STRUCTURE AND NARRATIVE STYLE OF THE FOUR BALLADES

Narrative Style

The common narrative quality of the four Ballades, notwithstanding their divergence of form, merits the inclusion of each within the genre "Ballades." Techniques of narrative style utilized by Michiewicz and other ballad writers of the time may also be found in the __Ballades__ of Chopin. Those techniques, present to a greater or lesser degree in each of the Ballades, include the following:

1. Suggestion of the presence of an unidentified narrator
2. Use of present tense
3. Suspenseful unfolding of the narrative
4. Incremental repetition
5. Characters in conflict (juxtaposition of themes)
6. A tragic or dramatic ending

Unidentified Narrator

This device is demonstrated most clearly within the introductions of the __G Minor__ and __F Minor Ballades__. The introduction of the __G Minor Ballade__, declamatory in nature, immediately captures the attention of the listener, and creates a sense of anticipation toward that which is to follow.

The introduction of the F Minor Ballade creates a poetic atmosphere which prepares for the haunting main theme. By first creating a sense of peace and contentment, the introduction gives the appearance of the haunting and mournful first theme an added poignancy.

Use of Present Tense

Although there is no musical equivalent of the present tense, the 6-4 meter of the G Minor Ballade, and the 6-8 meter of the other three, allows for a slow, steady presentation of the material. All are in compound duple time, "which something in the nature of music seems to render inseparable from the idea of narration."[1]

Suspenseful Unfolding of the Narrative

In each of the four Ballades, Chopin uses agitated passage-work, incremental repetition, and juxtaposition of themes to create a suspenseful unfolding of the piece from its beginning measures to its conclusion. Examples of suspenseful unfolding may also be found within themes and short passages of the Ballades. This effect is achieved in a variety of ways, one method using repetition to delay the forward movement of a theme.

In the first theme of the G Minor Ballade, an insistent 2-note accompaniment figure restrains the theme.

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[1] E. Ashton Jonson, Handbook to Chopin's Works (London: William Reeves Bookseller, Ltd., 1908), p. 143.

Also within the G Minor Ballade, the "horn-like" motive which occurs before the second theme serves to delay the narrative momentarily before merging with the second theme.

The reiterated octave C's which appear at the beginning of the F Major Ballade create this same suspenseful unfolding. The octave C's serve to arouse the curiosity of the listener, and also delay the beginning of the main theme.

Chopin also uses silence to create suspense. In the F Major Ballade, the main theme returns in its original form, and then suddenly breaks off before continuing in A minor. In the F Minor Ballade, an expressive pause occurs after the "fortississimo" climax of the piece, and is followed by sustained "pianissimo" chords.

Incremental Repetition

Incremental repetition of themes is one of the main devices which Chopin uses to create drama and suspense within the Ballades. All themes are affected by their repetition, differing only in degree of transformation. Themes are varied, intensified, or completely transformed, altering their nature to such a great degree that it is impossible for them to be regarded in the same manner.

In the G Minor Ballade, the first theme is repeated three times, with the ending of the theme intensified

upon each repetition. The second theme is also repeated
three times, appearing totally transformed upon its first
and second repetition.

The first theme of the F Major Ballade is transformed
through polyphonic development and intensification, while
the second theme is repeated with only slight variation.
In the A-Flat Major Ballade, all three themes are developed
and transformed, merging in the coda.

The first theme of the F Minor Ballade is gradually
varied and transformed through canonic imitation and mel-
odic embellishment, while the second theme is transformed
more abruptly.

Juxtaposition of Themes

The importance of juxtaposition of themes within the
Ballades is dependent upon the incremental repetition of
those same themes. Also of great importance is the use
of passage-work, which either increases or decreases the
dramatic tension of the work. Therefore, the degree of
transformation of a theme, and the nature of preceding
passage work are the determining factors in either a com-
plementary or contrasting juxtaposition of themes.

It is in the first two Ballades that the juxtaposi-
tion of contrasting themes is the most apparent, and of
the most importance. In the G Minor Ballade, the two main
themes appear to be complementary in nature upon their
first and second appearance. A point of conflict is

reached within the recapitulation when the transformed second theme is directly juxtaposed with the unaltered portion of the first theme. The themes have been juxtaposed irreversibly, leaving the first theme and a coda largely based on unrelated material.

In the F Major Ballade, the first juxtaposition of the two themes is one of violent contrast. However, by their second juxtaposition, the themes are more complementary in nature, due to the transformation of the first theme.

The themes of the A-Flat Major Ballade are characterized by their interaction rather than conflict. Based on common motives, all three themes are transformed and merge within the final section of the piece. In like manner, the two themes of the F Minor Ballade, although contrasting in their first appearance, are later transformed, with both themes appearing in the coda.

Dramatic or Tragic Ending (Coda)

The coda section of each of the four Ballades are characterized by a pianistic display of bravura passagework. As in the literary ballad, the most dramatic effects have been saved until the end of the work.

The codas of the G Minor Ballade and the F Major Ballade are largely based on unrelated material. Of special interest is the coda of the latter, in which an unexpected, brief return of the main theme suggests a

tragic ending. The A-Flat Major Ballade is characterized by a coda based on the third theme of the piece, while the coda of the F Minor Ballade is based on motives occurring previously in the work.

Structure

Alan Rawsthorne writes of the structure of the four Ballades as follows:

> We find in these Ballades not the invention of a new 'form,' but patterns of behavior which are viable for these pieces alone, and where the emergence of 'form' is as creative an act as the texture of the music itself.[2]

These "patterns of behavior" result in a divergence of form among the four Ballades. Although three of the Ballades bear a relation to sonata form in a greater or lesser degree, each of the four Ballades "is entirely individual in design and expressive character."[3]

The F Major Ballade is set apart from the other three both in terms of structure and also that of expressive character. It is the most straightforward of the four, cast in a structure of ABAB plus a coda. The piece also contains the most violent contrasts of the four Ballades, presenting problems of structural unity. Chopin surmounts this difficulty through the use of intervening passage-work

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[2] Alan Rawsthorne, "Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos" in Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967), p. 45.

[3] Kathleen Dale, Nineteenth-Century Piano Music (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), p. 156.

which serves to intensify the first theme. The result of this intervention is that of less violent contrast when the themes are juxtaposed for the second time.

Gerald Abraham considers the ABAB + Coda form of the F Major Ballade to be a modification of the form of the First Ballade:

> Imagine, then, that instead of the coda, heralded and rounded off by fragments of the first subject, Chopin had here simply written out the first subject in full and in F major; we should have a form almost exactly like that of the G Minor Ballade. And it seems to me highly probable that this or something like it was the original form of the piece that Schumann heard.[4]

The G Minor Ballade is considered to be the most strongly influenced by sonata form in terms of two themes which stand in mutual relationship as first and second subjects, a development section, a recapitulation, and a coda.[5] As previously stated, the recapitulation is highly irregular, with the second theme stated in its original key, followed by the first theme in tonic. Elaborate passage-work connects the two themes, giving the piece a sense of unity.

Kathleen Dale suggests a parallel between the structure of the G Minor Ballade and that of the F Minor Ballade:

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[4]Gerald Abraham, Chopin's Musical Style (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 56-57.

[5]Kathleen Dale, Nineteenth-Century Piano Music (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), p. 156.

> Both works are based chiefly on two contrasted subjects, and in both, the first subject is made up of short fragments many times repeated, while the second comprises a melody whose wide intervals and swaying rhythm endow it with an unforgettable, ear-haunting quality.[6]

Although similarities do exist, the F Minor Ballade is more highly organized in structure than the G Minor Ballade. The F Minor Ballade combines elements of sonata form with rondo and variation, resulting in a different treatment of the first theme than that which is found in the First Ballade.

In the G Minor Ballade, the first theme is intensified upon each repetition, while in the F Minor Ballade, the first theme is treated as a rondo refrain. The theme is varied upon each repetition, and is finally transformed through the use of canonic imitation and melodic embellishment.

The A-Flat Major Ballade is characterized by a close concentration of thematic material. While the other three Ballades are based on the interaction of contrasting themes, the A-Flat Major Ballade is based on three motivically-related themes and their interaction. A continuous development and transformation of the three themes causes them to seemingly join forces and merge together at the end of the piece.

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[6]Kathleen Dale, _Nineteenth-Century Piano Music_ (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972).

A structural feature common to the four Ballades is that of the coda. David Witten maintains that these "Ballade endings" are not codas in the usual sense of the word. While the term "coda" usually refers to material added to the main body of the work, the "Ballade endings" are still very much a part of the work.[7] Witten describes the "Ballade endings" as follows:

> In these endings, Chopin concludes the musical discourse, and unleashes the tremendous energy that has built up in the course of the piece. No verbal description of those final moments could be more accurate than that found in Friedman's definition of the folk ballad:
>
> . . . at last the final and revelatory substitution bursts the pattern, achieving a climax and with it a release of powerful tensions.[8]

The use of the coda or "Ballade ending" within each of the Ballades also contributes to their individuality in expressive character. The gloomy nature of the G Minor Ballade is intensified through the violent coda which ends the piece. The ironic twist provided by the brief return of the main theme as found in the coda of the F Major Ballade, suggests a tragic ending. The conclusion of the A-Flat Major Ballade suggests a final triumphant statement. In like manner, the coda of the F Minor Ballade pushes forward with ever-increasing intensity until its final dramatic close.

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[7] David Witten, "Ballads and Ballades," The Piano Quarterly 113 (Spring 1981): 37.

[8] Ibid., p. 37.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Chopin composed almost exclusively for the piano, devoting all of his creative energy toward that medium. He discovered a fresh approach to composition, utilizing such devices as melodic ornamentation, rapid figuration, and chromatic harmony. Through these innovative devices, existing forms were altered and improved.

The character piece came to replace the sonata as the vehicle of expression for composers of the Romantic Period. These small-scale works, subjective in nature, expressed the individualism and emotionalism so characteristic of the period. Chopin's small-scale character pieces include the Preludes, Nocturnes, Impromptus, Etudes, Waltzes, and Mazurkas. Although each of these forms had existed previously, Chopin revitalized each form through the use of his innovative compositional techniques.

Chopin's Polonaises, Scherzos, and Ballades are large-scale works characterized by the same subjectivity and emotionalism as character pieces of shorter length. Chopin revitalized the polonaise form to create a stylized dance that expressed patriotic feeling. He altered the form of the scherzo, giving it an existence

independent from the sonata. In the _Ballades_, Chopin created a unique type of single-movement piano piece characterized by an inherent narrative quality.

The uniqueness of the _Ballades_, in fact, the very essence of the piano Ballade as Chopin's creation, is the unfolding of a narrative that is actually nonexistent. The _Ballades_ contain the drama and suspense of the literary ballad without an actual story being present.

Several writers have matched the _Ballades_ with Ballads of Mickiewicz, thereby attaching a specific program to each of the Ballades. Yet, there is no documented evidence to support the existence of any direct literary association. Although Chopin was familiar with the literary ballads of the time, and was a personal acquaintance of Adam Mickiewicz, it is the belief of this writer that his intent was simply to capture the emotion and drama of the literary ballad rather than provide a musical translation of a specific text. The fact that narrative techniques common to the literary ballad may be found in the Chopin Ballades leads to the assumption that this similarity was intentional.

Narrative techniques common to the literary ballad and the Chopin _Ballades_ include the following: suggestion of the presence of an unidentified narrator, present tense, suspenseful unfolding, incremental repetition, juxtaposition of themes, and a dramatic or tragic ending. Through

the use of narrative techniques within a musical framework, it is then possible to capture the emotion of a narrative without following a specific program.

Chopin did not devise a set structure for his Ballades, as is evidenced by their divergence of form. Although the Ballades are based on elements of existing forms such as sonata, rondo, and variation, the form of each Ballade is determined by its features of narrative style rather than adherence to a set form.

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