

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: NATIONAL CHARACTER AS EXPRESSED IN PIANO  
LITERATURE

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In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many composers living outside of mainstream musical countries such as Germany and France attempted to establish their own musical identity. A typical way of distinguishing themselves from German, French, and Italian composers was to employ the use of folk elements from their native lands. This resulted in a vast amount of piano literature that was rich in national idioms derived from folk traditions. The repertoire reflected many different national styles and trends. Due to the many beautiful, brilliant, virtuosic, and profound ideas that composers infused into these nationalistic works, they took their rightful place in the standard piano repertoire.

Depending on the compositional background or style of the individual composers, folk elements were presented in a wide variety of ways. For example, Bartók recorded many short examples collected from the Hungarian countryside and used these melodies

to influence his compositional style. Many composers enhanced and expanded piano technique. Liszt, in his Hungarian Rhapsodies, emphasized rhythmic vitality and virtuosic technique in extracting the essence of Hungarian folk themes. Chopin and Szymanowski also made use of rhythmic figurations in their polonaises and mazurkas, often making use of double-dotted rhythms. Obviously, composers made use of nationalistic elements to add to the piano literature and to expand the technique of the piano.

This dissertation comprises three piano recitals presenting works of: Isaac Albeniz, Bela Bartók, Frédéric Chopin, Enrique Granados, Edvard Grieg, Franz Liszt, Frederic Rzewski, Alexander Scriabin, Karol Szymanowski, and Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky. The recitals were performed in the Gildenhorn Recital Hall at the University of Maryland. They were recorded in 2002-2004 and are available on line through the website of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center of the University of Maryland.

NATIONAL CHARACTER AS EXPRESSED IN PIANO LITERATURE

by

Yong Sook Park

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Bradford Gowen, Chair  
Professor Sung Won Lee  
Professor Linda Mabbs  
Professor Santiago Rodriguez  
Professor Rita Sloan

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## Introduction

At the beginning of the 19th century, instrumental music was dominated by composers from Germany and Austria. Other countries imported German and Austria music and musicians, and native musicians often imitated these German and Austria styles and as a result, did not have their own distinct musical identities in concert music. However, their composers began to feel that they should break away from the more recognized German and Austria styles in order to find a musical language identifiable with their respective nationalities. Pride in the country's language and literature also fueled this increase in nationalist sentiment. Thus, nationalist music emerged in countries outside of Germany and Austria, as an attempt to express, through music, the character of a particular people or country.

The most celebrated Russian composer of the late 19th century was Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky, whose works are notable for their inspired melodies and orchestration. His Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 23 and his *Dumka*, Op. 59 are prime examples of works that demonstrate Russian nationalism through their use of traditional folk themes.

Nationalist movements sprang up in several other countries beside Russia. The Hungarian composer Franz Liszt adopted the syncopated rhythms and ornamental melodic style of the gypsies as well as native Hungarian music in his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. At the same time Frédéric Chopin was the leading Polish nationalist composer. His mazurkas and polonaises express the spirit of Polish nationalism. After Chopin, Karol Szymanowski was one of Poland's most important composers. He was a highly individualistic composer who had strong artistic aspirations in connection with his

native land. Szymanowski developed an interest in folk and dance music of the Tatra highlands. This influence is most obvious in his *Mazurkas*, Op. 50.

In Norway, Edvard Grieg combined romantic harmonies with folk-inspired melodies. In his later works, a more impressionistic character can be noticed. Grieg liked to keep his music simple in terms of folk-influenced melodic structure of two- and four-measure phrases. All of these characteristics can be seen in *Slatter*, Op. 72, a late work and one of his most remarkable settings of folk tunes.

Spain gained musical representation through the nationalistic works of Isaac Albeniz, Manuel de Falla, and Enrique Granados. Isaac Albeniz was one of the greatest Spanish composers. He used elements of Spanish folk music in his works along with vivid imitations of instruments. Spain has a wide variety of folk dances from many parts of the country that are typically very rhythmic and exuberant. Their characteristics can be found in the works of all the Spanish composers mentioned above.

Nationalism was not confined to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century also. Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály often went to the Hungarian countryside to collect folk melodies for use in their concert music. Unlike Kodály, Bartók also became interested in other folk song traditions, including the folk music of the Romanians, Slovaks, Serbs, Croatians, Bulgarians, Turks, and North Africans. Among these, Rumanian and Arabian influences of folk melodies are displayed in his *Suite*, Op. 14.

In America, Frederic Rzewski helped to define an American musical style in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. His most representative work is *Four North American Ballads*: "Dreadful Memories", "Which Side Are You On?", "Down by the Riverside", and "Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues". Each piece is based on an American work song and the

first three pieces except “Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues” begin with a simple statement of the folk theme which is then subjected to complex development, drawing motives from the theme and twisting them into thundering virtuoso displays. The last piece by contrast begins with imitating the machinery of the cotton mill, which continues for an extended period of time before the folk melody is heard.

As each piece in this dissertation is presented, I will explore details of its nationalistic elements and its development.

## Chapter I: Albéniz (1860-1909)

Isaac Albeniz learned how to play the piano at a very early age. He went to the Conservatory in Madrid when he was only seven years old, but those years were not beneficial for him, most likely because of his young age. Instead of remaining in school, he toured South and North America accompanied and promoted by his father, and eventually he decided to study in Leipzig.

He had an international education, acquiring knowledge as he studied in Madrid, Paris and Germany, where he was influenced by Liszt. It was later on that he met Felipe Pedrell, who was to exert a pivotal influence on the still-young Albéniz in the direction of music from his home country. He therefore began to incorporate elements of traditional Spanish folk music into his compositions. Spain has a wide variety of folk dances from various parts of the country, typically very rhythmic and exuberant. In particular this is true of the typical music from Andalusia or flamenco dances from the southern region of the country, as well as of music from other corners of the Iberian peninsula such as Asturia in the north. Albéniz was inspired by its mountains and landscape, and by the Alhambra—the famous Arabic castle, which is located in the heart of Andalusia.

During the last three years of his relatively short life he worked on his masterpiece for piano solo that was heavily influenced by the impressionist style of Claude Debussy. The twelve pieces of *Iberia* are arranged into four books of three pieces each. Each number is a reminiscence of a particular locale, city, festival, or song and dance, largely concentrating on the South of Spain. However, the density of folkloric references in *Iberia* is unprecedented in his output, and though a piece may bear the title of a particular song or dance, Albéniz felt no constraint to confine himself to that genre.



The first book, consisting of *Evocación*, *El Puerto*, and *Fete-Dieu à Seville* was composed in December of 1905. *Evocación* is considered to be one of the most hauntingly reflective pieces Albéniz ever composed (Gordon, 406). There is a strong fragrance of wistful nostalgia. The movement is in modified sonata form. While the principal theme resembles a southern dance of the *fandango* type, the second theme evokes the northern *jota*. Thus, this *Evocación* seems to embrace the entire country in a sweeping musical gesture. Albéniz utilizes a syncopated ostinato figure in the bass, one of his favorite devices. The effect of the syncopation in the left hand is intensified by careful use of ties and the articulation in the right. His harmonic twists, such as A-flat with a major seventh suddenly shifting to C-sharp minor, and G major going to A-flat major with an added sixth, are arrestingly bold.

*El Puerto* sounds a completely contrasting atmosphere from *Evocación*. In fact, this was inspired by the fishing-port town of El Puerto de Santa María on the Guadalete River, a region Albéniz knew very well. It is in the style of the *zapateado*, a dance of an insistent rhythm in 6/8. Following the left hand introduction, the principal theme enters. Its accented and staccato line in the right hand contrasts with the legato arpeggios in the left hand. The overall form of the piece is similar to *Evocación*. A development section is positioned in the middle, instead of a contrasting secondary theme. In this development section, the thematic material is in the Phrygian mode, and a whole-tone transition leads back to the home key of D-flat major. In spite of the strongly enthusiastic character of this movement, the piece concludes in a subdued way, triple piano, as do the other pieces of this book.

*Fete-Dieu à Seville* is one of the most frequently performed numbers from the collection, and one of the most difficult. Unlike most of the selections in *Iberia*, it is programmatic in nature and describes the Corpus Christi Day procession in the city of Seville, during which the statue of the Virgin is carried through the streets accompanied by marching bands, singers, and penitential flagellants. The piece begins with *rataplan*, the sound of drum rolls followed by a march-like theme that grows louder and noisier as the procession continues. Toward the middle of the *Fete-Dieu à Seville*, Albeniz inserts a *saeta*, a powerful religious lament song in free rhythm sung during the procession by solo singers perched on balconies overlooking the narrow streets. Section B is dominated by a lively accompaniment in contrast to the freely expressive rhythms of the *saeta* (Clark, 226). Although the themes in sections A and B are heard simultaneously, their moods are totally contrasting. The returning march theme proceeds in a greatly elaborated fashion with a metric transformation to 3/8. The coda creates a captivating mood in Andante by a sudden dynamic change from shattering *ffff* to tranquil *pppp*. In addition, the rhythmic treatment of the melody finally gives way to a much more lyrical style. Then, the piece concludes with the sound of distant church bells.

## Chapter II: Bartók (1881-1945)

Béla Bartók was the greatest Hungarian composer of the 20th century and a superlative pianist who recorded the equivalent of a dozen long-playing albums of his own works. He was also an excellent piano teacher; however he did not have any composition students. As in the case of Szymanowski with Chopin, Bartók took the music of his fellow Hungarian, Franz Liszt, as his point of departure. He broke away from the German-Romantic tradition as he matured. With his colleague Zoltán Kodály, he toured the Hungarian countryside, recording and transcribing the native Magyar folk music that the villagers played and sang. Indeed, he was an authority on many different types of folksongs. He traveled as far away as Africa to hear them firsthand. His music makes use of this wealth of folksongs, often with modal or unusual scales, drone or bagpipe effects, dissonant sonorities, heavy chords and octaves, wide skips and irregular meters.

In 1913, Bartók provided eighteen elementary-level piano pieces for the piano method of Sandor Reschofsky, now published as *The First Term at the Piano*. They include a number of simple folksong settings and some easy original pieces. During the period 1913-21, in which he was occupied with the composition of *The Wooden Prince* and the second string quartet, Bartók produced several important works for the piano. They include the *Sonatina*, the *Romanian Folk Dances*, the *Romanian Christmas Songs*, the *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs*, and the *Suite*, Op. 14. The *Suite*, Op. 14 is essentially a set of character pieces with prominent folk elements. The jocular Allegretto is in a simple three-part form, and the following Scherzo and driving Allegro Molto

feature rapid ostinato patterns. The final Sostenuto is more lyrical and almost Impressionistic in its style.

The first movement of the *Suite* has a strong Hungarian folk flavor. For example, the typical Hungarian folk tune appears from the beginning of the piece. In the second movement, Bartók was inspired by Rumanian tunes and he applied various Rumanian melodic motives throughout the movement. The third movement, Allegro molto, was influenced by the music of the Arabs of Biskra and the surrounding area where Bartók had collected peasant music from 1913 through 1921.

One of the most prominent features of the *Suite* is its emphasis on whole-tone passages, which are fashioned as both scalar and chordal elements and by extensions on the interval of the tritone. The first movement gives the impression of being in a modified B-flat major, but alternates the tonic triad with one on E, which is a tritone away. The melodic line includes C, D, E, and F# of the whole tone scale. A few bars before the end of the piece, there is a complete whole-tone scale on C which ascends more than three octaves. With the exception of three G flats, all the notes of the last eight measures belong to one whole-tone scale. The Scherzo that constitutes the second movement is built largely upon broken augmented triads in varying relationships. For contrasting effects, the movement makes occasional use of minor seconds and major sevenths in some passages, although these are foreign to the prevailing whole-tone system. The rotating ostinato of the third movement generally spans a tritone. Its melodic line incessantly repeats a four-note figure that covers a perfect fifth. The alternating notes form tritones, with a semi-tone between each of the outer notes. Bartók relinquishes these devices in the last movement. This is a sustained and sensitive piece

that alternates iambic and trochaic rhythms. The cadence provides a sense of finality in spite of the complexity of its chordal structure.

### **Chapter III: Chopin (1810-1849)**

Frédéric Chopin was born in Poland to a French father and Polish mother, and grew up in Warsaw, taking music lessons and studying Bach and the Viennese classics. In 1829, when he had finished four years of study at the Warsaw Conservatory, he had already composed several rondos, polonaises, and mazurkas. Though his popularity increased, he decided to leave for France because of political repression in Poland. In Paris he quickly established himself as a private teacher and salon performer with practical help from Kalkbrenner and Pleyel and praise from Liszt, Fétis, and Schumann. His romantic relationship with the novelist George Sand, between 1838 and 1847, coincided with one of his most productive creative periods. As his fame grew through occasional public concerts, his best music began to be published in Paris, London, and Leipzig. The breach with Sand was followed by a rapid deterioration in his health that eventually led to his death in 1849.

No great composer devoted himself as exclusively to the piano as Chopin. His work is represented by etudes, preludes, nocturnes, waltzes, impromptus, mazurkas, polonaises, scherzos, ballades, and sonatas. Chopin is admired above all for his great originality in exploiting the piano. Most of his works have a texture of accompanied melody. From this he derived continuous variety, using a wide compass of broken chords, sustained by the pedal to support the melody.

The polonaise originated in Poland and spread through Europe from the 16th century on. Composers such as Bach and others adopted this dance and cultivated it as an instrumental genre in the 18th century. (Gordon, 298) A characteristic rhythmic figure in 3/4 suggests heroism. As Chopin matured musically, his polonaises from Opus 26 no.1

onwards gradually became more dramatic. According to Liszt, Chopin's Polonaises present the firm, heavy, and resolute tread of men bravely facing all the bitter injustice which the most cruel and relentless destiny can offer. (Bailie, 257)

The most noteworthy polonaises of Chopin are the *Grande Polonaise brillante précédée d'un Andante spianato*, Op. 22 Op. 53. However, the Polonaise Op. 44 in F-sharp minor may be the most distinguished polonaise of all. The first section of this Polonaise consists of the introduction, exposition, and development. Sixteen measures of soaring octaves in the third-related key of B-flat minor occur at two different points alternating with the principal theme making the developmental sections into a kind of rondo.

The middle section opens with a drum-roll-like motive that is repeated 57 times in succession and makes this section look almost like a graphic representation of prancing horses. Chopin inserted a mazurka in place of the traditional trio section. The principal phrase grows out of the principal theme of the first section. A peaceful mazurka tune is repeated four times in the keys of A, E, E, and B major. Each repetition is enhanced by slightly new textures in different registers. The resumption of the stormy polonaise is subtly prepared by a recollection of the introductory motif in the bass, underneath the mazurka tune. An obsessive violence creates a most original break between the lyrical middle section and the return of the tragic intensity of the first section (Walker, 97). The ending is quite unexpected. After having launched into the coda with a furious burst of staccato chords in stretto, the final unison fortissimo octaves are like an uncontrollable shout of well-earned triumph. (Bailie, 282) This is a titanic work, like a tone-poem in its

grandeur of conception. With the unexpected combination of polonaise and mazurka in this work, Chopin displays his patriotism in a heroic manner.



## Chapter IV: Granados (1867-1916)

Enrique Granados was born in 1867 in Catalonia to a Cuban father and a Galician mother. He was a composition student of the musicologist Felipe Pedrell who pointed him toward a nationalistic style. In 1901 Granados established his own school, Academia Granados, in Barcelona. He received international attention in Paris where he performed the piano suite *Goyescas* in 1914. The operatic version of his *Goyescas* was produced at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City on January 26, 1916 with great success. He was to return home immediately thereafter. At the last moment, however, he accepted an invitation to play at the White House for President Woodrow Wilson. As a result, Granados and his wife were obliged to change their travel plans and take a later ship, the British liner *Sussex*. This ship was torpedoed by a German submarine in the English Channel on March 24, 1916. Although Granados was able to climb into a lifeboat, he saw his wife struggling in the water and dove in to assist her; both drowned.

Most of Granados's output consists of piano and vocal music. His style is not as flamboyant as that of Albeniz. The reason is that he was strongly influenced by the Spanish art of the Classical and early Romantic periods.

He wrote over fifty piano works that are mostly character pieces: two impromptus, six *Escenas Romanticas*, seven *Valses Poeticos*, six *Estudios Espresivos*, six settings of popular Spanish songs, and so on. His first important success as a composer came early in 1890 with his four books of Spanish Dances, twelve dances in all. Taking his cue from Pedrell, he gave pianistic expression to the feelings and styles of Spanish musical nationalism. These dances, representative of many different folk-like characteristics of various sections of Spain, have remained among the most popular of

Granados's works. These attractive pieces are A-B-A' in form and technically accessible. The names of individual dances suggest well-known types, such as the *jota*, *zarabanda*, *villanesca*, or *majurca*.

Even though one of the notable features in the Spanish repertoire is imitating the sound of guitar on the piano, it is ironic that the most of his piano compositions have been transcribed for the classical guitar and are some of the most beautiful music in the guitar repertoire, such as the fifth of the 12 Spanish dances.

## Chapter V: Grieg (1843-1907)

Edvard Grieg was Norway's most important composer in the period of nationalistic Romanticism. His work represents the realization of a dream which Norwegian musicians and cultural patriots had nurtured for a hundred years. The idea of an art and especially of a music which fully expressed the national character reached its fullest prominence in the latter half of the 19th century, during which time a considerable body of Norwegian folk music was collected and published (Johansen, 34).

From 1858 to 1862, Grieg studied at the conservatory in Leipzig, and his earliest works clearly belong to the style of German Romanticism. But he gradually developed a more subtly chromatic harmonic language, combining it with rhythmic and melodic elements borrowed from Norwegian folk music. From the 1870s onward, Grieg's music also began to display more impressionistic features, pointing toward the development yet to come in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

After his four years in Leipzig, Grieg still felt the need for further study. This time, his destination was Copenhagen. The contacts he made in the Danish capital had the effect of sparking his national awareness, particularly through meeting his compatriot Rikard Nordraak, a composer already devoted to the nationalist cause. In 1867, with the influence of Norwegian folk music slowly beginning to inform his style, Grieg wrote the first of what ultimately became ten sets of highly varied and evocative miniatures, the *Lyric Pieces* for piano. The following year, he composed one of the central works of the romantic repertoire, the stirring Piano Concerto in A minor.

Grieg was a fine lyrical composer, whose piano works contain a wide range of emotional expression and atmospheric color. But he was also, from time to time, a

pioneer in the impressionistic uses of harmony and piano sonority. *Slatter*, Op. 72, which is a set of peasant fiddle-tunes arranged for piano, displays freedom of harmony in the treatment of dissonance without resolution. There is no question that his inspiration was from the sound of a folk instrument, the Hardanger-fiddle (Horton, 126).

Around the turn of the 20th century, the Hardinger player Knut Dahle (1834-1921) learned how to play the fiddle music from Havard Giboen (1809-1873), who was the most prominent folk musician of the time and a skilled improviser. In order to preserve the heritage of the old players, Dahle got in touch with Grieg. Grieg first thought that it was not possible to reproduce the details of Hardanger-fiddle music in notation until he saw Johan Halvorsen's transcription of Dahle's best tunes. Influenced by this, Grieg transformed folk music into classical music (Horton, 124).

In the preface of *Slatter* composed in 1902-1903, Grieg wrote that he was quite aware that the piano is incapable of reproducing all the refined ornamentations that are characteristics of the Hardanger-fiddle style. On the other hand, the piano can create rich variation by means of new harmonies for the constantly repeated themes.

The main characteristics of Grieg's music are simplicity and nationalism. His music captures the Norwegian features: the solitary and peaceful nature of the country, peasant scenes from folk culture, and the soul of the Norwegian people. His music is mostly simple, cheerful, elegant, lyrical and emotionally expressive, particularly his songs and small piano pieces. Interesting chromatic harmonies and uncomplicated rhythms are among the characteristics of his composition.

## Chapter VI: Liszt (1811-1886)

One of the greatest piano virtuosos, Franz Liszt, was born in 1811 in Hungary. He moved to Vienna in order to take piano lessons from Carl Czerny and composition lessons from Antonio Salieri. In 1823 he settled with his family in Paris and began his career as a pianist. After witnessing Paganini's phenomenal performance on the violin, Liszt turned his attention to the development of piano technique and devoted himself to assimilating Paganini's virtuosity on the keyboard. His *Etudes d'exécution transcendante*, *Paganini-Etudes*, and other etudes were created as a result of this effort. His reputation as a pianist grew quickly and in 1835 he left Paris to travel widely throughout Europe as a virtuoso performer.

Liszt settled in Weimar as the "Director of Music In-Extraordinary" in 1848. Around this time in Weimar, he began to work on his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, which became widely popular on piano recitals for generations. Between 1839 and 1847, he compiled ten books of Hungarian melodies under the title of *Magyar Rhapsodiak*, from which he borrowed melodies for the fifteen *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. He had been acquainted with Hungarian-Gypsy music since his childhood, and he heard it repeatedly whenever he returned to Hungary. Thus, a great number of melodies in the collections compiled by Liszt were not his own, but were folksongs or works by minor composers that were popularized in salons and other places. For example, the main theme of Rhapsody No. 14 is the Hungarian folk song, *Mohac's Field*.

Rhapsodies numbers 1 through 15 were composed by 1852, and four others were written about 30 years later. Although *Hungarian Rhapsody* was the title given by Liszt, Bartók was angered by Liszt's title. Bartók pointed out that the material in these pieces--

and the same is true for Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* and such works as Schubert's *Divertissement à l'hongroise* for piano duet--is not strictly Hungarian, but Gypsy. Liszt was not the only composer to use Gypsy melodies, but he was the one who coined the term "rhapsody" to signify the character of his nationalistic compositions (Bauer, 50).

The general structure of these Hungarian Rhapsodies is most frequently based on two contrary sections: a slow song-like section called "Lassan" followed by a lively dance-like one called "Friska." Occasionally, a highly ornamented section is added, usually as a cadenza. There are two distinct sections in No. 14; however, the second section does not quite fit into the generalized scheme because it is a mixture of both dance-like and meditative song-like elements. In most of Liszt's Rhapsodies, a short cadenza-like section is added, most often at the end of the second section, which usually focuses on virtuoso keyboard display, as the word cadenza implies. In No. 14, however, the cadenza-like segment is located at the end of the first section. The coda uses the inverted material of the first subject, and leads to its final state of excitement by compounding this with octaves and increased speed. Another very notable characteristic is the use of the Gypsy scale. In order to create the so-called Gypsy or Hungarian scale, a minor scale is slightly altered so that it contains two augmented seconds. This effect is achieved by raising both the fourth and seventh scale degrees by a half step. This scale is often seen in the second section of Rhapsody No. 14, particularly in the runs that help to bridge two contrasting segments. Harmonically, diatonic or modal progressions are employed, with the occasional use of altered chords.

Although Liszt considered the piano the most appropriate instrument for this music, he did transcribe six of the Rhapsodies for orchestra, and one for piano and

orchestra. *Hungarian Fantasia*, composed in 1852, is an extended version of the Hungarian Rhapsody No. 14.

## Chapter VII: Rzewski (1938 - )

A Massachusetts native, Frederic Rzewski studied music with Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, and Milton Babbitt at Harvard and Princeton Universities. He went to Italy in 1960 to study with Luigi Dallapiccola. There he met the Italian flutist Severino Gazzelloni, with whom he had the opportunity to perform a number of concerts (Gordon, 391). Eventually those concerts led Rzewski to begin his own career as a performer of new piano music. Because of his early friendship with Christian Wolff who is a composer and a performer and David Behrman who is a active composer and an artist, he became acquainted with John Cage and David Tudor who were pioneers in the performance of new music. Both Cage and Tudor strongly influenced his development in both composition and performance.

In the middle of the 1960s, Rzewski established the Musica Elettronica Viva group with Alvin Curran and Richard Teitelbaum in Rome. Musica Elettronica Viva soon became recognized for its pioneering work in live electronics and improvisation. An item of note is the fact that this group brought both classical and avant-garde jazz artists together in one place. Two such examples are Steve Lacy, a contemporary jazz saxophonist and composer and Anthony Braxton, a composer and conductor. They also developed an aesthetic of music as a spontaneous collective process. The effect of his experience with Musica Elettronica Viva can be seen in his compositions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. What he did was to combine the worlds of both written and improvised music. During the 1970s, he began to experiment further with forms as he began to treat style as a structural element. His best-known work of this period is *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!*, a 50-minute long set of piano variations.



A number of pieces for larger ensembles written between 1979 and 1981 display his ceaseless experimental desire through the use of graphic notation. Although it contains no graphic notation, his composition *Four North American Ballads* was written during this time. It was composed because of the fact that a large part the public had lost interest in serialism, and these pieces were intended to be appreciated by a larger public. Although his melodies came from folk song, Rzewski handled them in a strict classical formal structure with sophisticated techniques of Baroque counterpoint adapted to a late-twentieth century manner. His chromatic settings of the diatonic material, especially the use of half-step relationships in both vertical and linear forms is one of the most striking aspects of this set of four pieces. The last piece of the set, "Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues" is based on a mill worker's tune of the 1930s. The music contains a daring depiction of the sound created by the machines (Hinson, 612). The directions of the composer instruct the performer to play this work as "expressionless and machinelike." There is a remarkable evocation of the din of the machines throughout the piece. Rzewski presents unique, powerful, remarkable and surprising balance of folk, jazz, and classical elements in the set as a whole, and the combination of these elements becomes a uniquely American music.

## Chapter VIII: Scriabin (1872-1915)

Alexander Scriabin was born in 1872 in Moscow, Russia. In a short space of time, 30 years at the most, he wrote around a hundred works out of which 74 gave a preeminent role to the piano solo. Scriabin was a talented piano virtuoso whose sensitive touch and pedaling were the most outstanding elements of his playing. His use of sensitive pedaling and touch created extraordinary colors and mystic impressions. These features are heard throughout his piano works written in three distinct periods.

The first period brought a poetic, refined, "salon" type in which the influence of Chopin is prominent. During this time he wrote four of his ten piano sonatas, as well as etudes, preludes, among other small pieces. The second period was a transitional period, going toward searching for new sound effects that suggest glaring, radiant light. The works from this period are *Divine Poem*, Op. 43 and Preludes Op. 37, among others. The last six sonatas came from the third period of greatest stylish maturity and individuality.

At first, it may be seen that Scriabin's early works are strongly influenced by Chopin, and it is true that he loved Chopin's works and his waltzes, mazurkas, etudes, preludes and nocturnes are undoubtedly derived from Chopin's style.

Scriabin's music bridged the romantic era and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because of his cosmopolitanism, he has often been considered as apart from Russian traditions. He resented this charge by saying, "Is it possible that I am not a Russian composer merely because I do not write overtures and capriccios on Russian themes?" (Macdonald, 11).

Even though Scriabin's musical style was based on Chopin's influence at first, his music became more enigmatic and mysterious and began to show Russian sounding

qualities. The evidences of Russian nationalism in Scriabin's piano music may be discovered through observing Etude no. 1 and Piano Sonata no. 2.

The Etude, Op. 2 no. 1 is an astonishingly mature teenage composition from 1887. A study in tonal balance, pedaling and cantabile chord playing, it is typically Russian in its long-breathed, arching phrases and passionate melancholy, revealing an early affinity with Rachmaninoff. Scriabin's favorite French sixth chord can be heard often in the piece.

Scriabin's second piano sonata in G sharp minor (Opus 19, also titled *Sonata-Fantasy*) took him five years to finish. He began to compose the first movement in Genoa in 1892, but the second movement was not written until 1897 in the Crimea. The sonata was published by M. P. Belaieff in 1898. The piece is in two movements, with a style combining Chopin-like Romanticism with impressionistic touch and the emotional aspect of Russian character. The first movement *Andante* begins with echoing effects, followed by two lyrically themed sections. After a short climax, the piece modulates to E major (also C sharp minor) and lyrical sections are restated. Its mood generally moves forward with an expressive melodic line. This creates a distinctive melancholy, a scent of Russian character. The second movement *Presto*, in sharp contrast to the first movement, is very fast and intense. The first subject combines rapid melody figurations with a new bass figure having a great power and wide sweep. The second theme in E-flat minor, is noble in its expressiveness. The recapitulation develops these themes in a flamboyant manner. Finally it dies away just before two unexpected, powerful, tonic chords.

## **Chapter IX: Szymanowski (1882-1937)**

Highly influenced by his musical family, Karol Szymanowski began his music education with his father at an early age and soon moved to Warsaw for more regular studies in music. That was where he became acquainted with the Society for Performing Contemporary Polish Music. Along with violinist Paweł Kochański and pianist Artur Schnabel, Szymanowski went on tour twice during the years of 1920 and 1921, to the United States and to London. As their concerts became successful, Szymanowski began to receive increasing recognition. When he was offered the directorship of conservatories in Cairo and Warsaw in 1927, he chose Warsaw in order to re-invigorate Polish music. During the unproductive years of 1927-29, he was writing a treatise, "The Educational Role of Musical Culture in Society."

From 1930 on, he began to have great success and was appointed Rector of the Warsaw Academy of Music and made an honorary doctor of Kraków's Jagiellonian University. After all his success, Szymanowski became ill. He could not fight the physical and nervous stress, which led to a serious crisis in his health. This advanced greatly and seriously and he died shortly after a move to a sanatorium in Lausanne on March 24th, 1937.

Szymanowski is to Polish music what Bartók is to Hungarian and Sibelius to Finnish. After Chopin's death, Szymanowski was the first Polish composer to reintroduce Polish music to the world. His music is deeply inspired by national flavor. (Samson, 169). He preferred the lighthearted tunes of the Tatra region. His compositions display attractive examples of new creative approaches towards folklore, employing modernistic harmony and sonority techniques.

His Twenty Mazurkas, Op. 50, dedicated to Artur Rubinstein, were composed between 1923 and 1926. They are severe and intense in their musical language, which Szymanowski wished to be a true reflection of Polish music. Many of the works are virtuosic and rhythmically complex and use all the resources of the instrument. Though they retain the traditional rhythmic patterns, each mazurka has its own rhythmic quality. The combination of folklore and new musical language makes his music modern and romantic as well as nationalistic. These stylistic qualities are enhanced by his use of colorful and shining sounds and splendid pianistic passage.

Szymanowski employs musical phrases of different lengths such as 3-bar, 5-bar, or even 7 and 10-bar phrases. The 5-bar phrases are most frequently used in order to intentionally avoid Chopinesque symmetry that is rooted in the repetition of 4-bar phrases with the dominant melody in the right hand over harmony in the left (Wightman, 289). The most important new element in Szymanowski's mazurkas was the use of the music of the Goral people of the mountains of the Tatras region, transforming Chopin's forms whose folkloristic inspiration lay essentially in the plains of the central Mazovia region of Poland.

## Chapter X: Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

These days, Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky's music is among the most popular in the repertory, so it is difficult to imagine the composer in his younger years, trying desperately to earn a living while perfecting his art. That is, however, exactly what was happening to Tchaikovsky in 1874. At that time, he was teaching at the Moscow Conservatory and writing music criticism for a local periodical. These jobs helped provide a modest living, but Tchaikovsky was only interested in composing music. He had already taken many hours away from work to write a large body of music, but only *Romeo and Juliet* and the Symphony No. 2 had caused any positive commotion. At the end of the year, he began work on a piano concerto in the hope that it would allow him to get away from his job at the conservatory.

After he had finished his work, Tchaikovsky showed his composition to Nikolay Rubinstein, the Director of the Moscow Conservatory who was also an accomplished pianist. However, Rubinstein did not respond favorably after hearing the piece; he attacked nearly every aspect of the composition. Tchaikovsky left the classroom where he had performed his piece with anger and ignored the suggestions that the director had made. He then changed the dedication, revoking Rubinstein's name and instead dedicating it to the pianist Hans von Bülow, who was traveling across Europe and performing Tchaikovsky's music. Bülow responded happily to the dedication, and he gave his praise to the composition. Tchaikovsky was happy with the praise of Bülow, particularly after the stinging critical remarks by Rubinstein, and he was even happier when Bülow asked to premiere the concerto on his tour of America.

The concerto was first performed in Boston on October 25, 1875, and it caused such an enthusiastic stir that Bülow played it at 139 of his 172 concerts that season. This success may have perplexed Nikolay Rubinstein, but it eventually helped Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein to resolve their differences. As a result of this reconciliation, Tchaikovsky incorporated some of Rubinstein's suggestions for improvement into an 1889 revision of the concerto. For his part, Rubinstein gave his approval of the piece and even included it in his repertory. This was the beginning of Tchaikovsky's success, as over the next four years he wrote *Swan Lake*, the *Rococo Variations*, the Third and Fourth Symphonies, and the Violin Concerto. These factors combined to make him recognized as one of the greatest and most popular composers of his day.

Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 opens with an introductory theme. This is an uplifting melody in D-flat major that is performed by the violins and cellos above thunderous chords from the piano. After a brief cadenza for the soloist, the theme, which is heard only in this introduction, is presented a second time in a grander setting. After a decrescendo and a pause, the piano presents the main theme and the dark tonality of the work, B-flat minor, is finally heard. After the piano and woodwinds interact with each other, following the principal theme, we can hear the clarinet as it sings out the lyrical second theme. Then the violins respond with a smooth, complementary phrase. This complementary phrase and the snappy motion from the main theme are combined in the impassioned development section. The recapitulation returns to the themes of the exposition, but in different settings; at this point the oboe sings out the second theme. Finally, an energetic cadenza and a coda derived from the main theme bring the movement to a rousing end.

The simplicity of the second movement's three-part structure is complemented by the purity of the opening, which is a melody sung by a solo flute and accompanied by quiet plucked chords from the strings. Then the piano dramatically takes over the theme and finally passes it on to the cellos. The fast moving second theme is a rapid scherzo, based on a French song, "Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire" (One must amuse one's self by dancing and laughing). A peaceful, languid theme rounds out the first section to conclude the movement.

The first theme for the final *Allegro* is based on a Ukrainian folk song, "Viydi, viydi Ivanku," (Come, come Ivanku), and it dances up and down in brilliant syncopations. To balance the energy and vigor of the first theme, the more lyrical second theme sweeps in above the virtuosic piano line, and the piano answers in the same manner. The two themes build to a *maestoso tutti* followed by bravura fireworks all around. The movement's broad sweep is reminiscent of the far-reaching motion in the introduction of the first movement. The Ukrainian theme continues to fight the romantic melody for dominance of the movement, and after a heated confrontation, the Ukrainian theme wins, to bring the concerto to a joyful and exhilarating conclusion.

This work has proven to be a popular competition piece because it requires the performer to have a mastery of nearly every musical and pianistic technique, such as playing rapid passages in octaves, delicate and vigorous passages of arpeggiated figures, abrupt changes in mood, slow buildups of harmonic tension, wide tonal variety and emotional intensity.

Dumka, a type of Ukrainian folk music, combines a slow and melancholy section with fast and livelier one. Tchaikovsky's Op. 59 "Dumka" is a concert fantasy that is



similar to Dvorak's *Dumky Trio*. The Contrasting of mournful and vivid episodes depicts rustic Russian scenes.

Tchaikovsky said, "As to the Russian element in my works it is true that I often start to compose with the idea of using some popular song or other. Sometimes, as in the finale of our symphony, I do this without intent, quite unexpectedly. As to the Russian element in my music generally, its melodic and harmonic relation to folk music—I grew up in a quiet place and was drenched from earliest childhood with the wonderful beauty of Russian popular songs. I am therefore passionately devoted to every expression of the Russian spirit. In brief, I am a Russian through and through." (Weinstock, 180)

## Conclusion

When I heard Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto for the first time in my youth, I was so deeply moved by its majestic power that I was determined to play it some day. The majestic force in the first movement, the tenderly lyrical second movement, and the dance-driven third movement totally captured my undivided attention. Years later, I was fascinated to discover that some elements, such as the opening melody of the third movement, were from Ukraine. This discovery motivated me enormously to commit myself to studying nationalism in music.

Though the works of some composers such as Szymanowski are less often performed than better-known works in the repertoire, I find that their contribution to the musical world of nationally identifiable elements cannot go unrecognized. Employing folk melodies, rhythms, and colors with traditional Western music not only led to broadened means of expression, but also developed ways of approaching the keyboard in a new fashion as seen in Bartok's *Suite Op. 14* and Albeniz' *Iberia*.

Learning the music of various nationalists has been a beneficial experience to me, enriching me musically and intellectually. These different national flavors opened my eyes and ears to a wider range of styles, and thus deepened my musical experience. The result of the nationalist movement in music was not to split apart from western traditions, but rather this movement resulted in the enrichment of western music by opening the doors to greater possibilities of expression.

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