

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN
AND HIS PIANO COMPOSITIONS

Wanching Liu, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2023

Dissertation directed by: Professor Larissa Dedova
School of Music

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) is regarded as one of the most influential figures in the history of music. Although he wrote almost exclusively for the piano, his unique musical language, revolutionary inventions, romantic nostalgia, and the Polish elements in his composition propelled him to the forefront of critical acclaim. Furthermore, he decisively influenced other contemporaries and successors. Robert Schumann once mentioned that people can easily tell Chopin's compositions without looking at the composer's name. Chopin's innovations and aesthetics in piano compositions are irreplaceable and transcend the barriers of time and nationality.

In this dissertation, as well as the recordings of three dissertation recitals, I would like to present the developments in Chopin's music that transformed him from a young virtuoso into one of the greatest composers in the Western music history. The repertoires include one of his

piano concertos which was completed during his Warsaw period, the miniatures published after he settled down in Paris, and the large-scale works composed at the very end of his life. I believe that the arrangement of the programs will give me a glimpse of the quintessence of Chopin's writing.

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN AND HIS PIANO COMPOSITIONS

by

Wanching Liu

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
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Advisory Committee:
Professor Larissa Dedova, Chair
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Professor Mei-Ling Ting Lee

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Acknowledgements

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
FIRST DISSERTATION RECITAL	1
SECOND DISSERTATION RECITAL	10
THIRD DISSERTATION RECITAL	19
Annotated Bibliography.....	29

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FIRST DISSERTATION RECITAL

Wanching Liu, Piano

Tuesday, November 16, 2021, 8 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall
University of Maryland
School of Music

Impromptu in A-Flat Major, Op. 29 (1837). Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Impromptu in F-sharp Major, Op. 36 (1839)

Impromptu in G-flat Major, Op. 51 (1842)

Fantaisie-Impromptu in C-sharp Minor, Op. 66 (1833-1834)

INTERMISSION

Preludes, Op. 28 (1831-1839)

Agitato
Lento
Vivace
Largo
Allegro molto
Lento assai
Andantino
Molto agitato
Largo
Allegro molto
Vivace
Presto
Lento
Allegro
Sostenuto
Presto con fuoco
Allegretto
Allegro molto
Vivace
Largo
Cantabile
Molto agitato
Moderato
Allegro appassionato

Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op. 55 No. 2 (1843)

Nocturne in C Minor, Op. 48 No. 1 (1841)

Program Notes

Impromptu in A-flat Major, Op. 29 (1837)

Impromptu in F-sharp Major, Op. 36 (1839)

Impromptu in G-flat Major, Op. 51 (1842)

Fantaisie-Impromptu in C-sharp Minor, Op. 66 (1833-1834)

Chopin's collection of the Impromptus is four enchanting and independent works with some surprising resemblances. First of all, the structure is all in ternary form: A, B, A and coda. James Parakilas mentions that "Chopin evidently loved the effect of an escape into dreaming at the heart of a ternary work."¹ In these four pieces, the outer sections all feature regular motions with stretching melodic lines, contrasting a lyrical middle section in relatively slow motion. The thematic links among these four pieces are obvious (figure 1).

Fantaisie-Impromptu, op. 66 is the earliest work of the series, and is one of the most popular pieces among his *oeuvre* today. The piece is in ternary form - two virtuosic outer sections, and a slow, lyrical middle section. However, the composer didn't give permission for the score of this piece to be published when he was alive. Only the other three impromptus were published during Chopin's lifetime.

¹ Jonathan D Bellman, and Halina Goldberg, eds., *Chopin and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 235.

p
Ped. (* Ped.) *

Allegro assai quasi Presto

legato

243

(353)

1 2 5 3
Ped * Ped * Ped * Ped *

76
Ped * Ped *

3 *Vivace*

Ped * Ped * Ped * Ped *

Figure 1 The thematic links of the four impromptus (from the top to the bottom): *Fantaisie-Impromptu*, mm. 5-6, Impromptu No. 1, mm. 1-2, Impromptu No. 2, mm. 76-77, and Impromptu No. 3, mm. 1-4.

The first section of the Impromptu in A flat major “bubbles forth and sparkles like a fountain on which the sunbeams that steal through the interstices of the overhanging foliage are playing,”² followed by a lyrical middle section. The structure of the Impromptus in F sharp major is the largest among the other three impromptus, with stronger contrast between the sections; it begins with chorale style, then turns into a military march and a lyrical singing part, and the piece ends with a florid arabesque. The Impromptu in G flat major is one of the works from his late period. Chopin had a predilection for this piece, alongside the Op. 36.³

Improvisation is one of the important elements in Chopin’s writing, and it can be demonstrated in his impromptus. According to Eigeldinger,⁴ Chopin invented two techniques involving the improvisation element. The first technique is playing two against three, each voice by a separate hand, featured in the first section of the *Fantaisie-Impromptu*. The second one is based on Liszt’s comment about Chopin - “small groups of added grace notes, falling like tiny drops of speckled dew over the melodic figure.”⁵ This feature comes with *bel canto* style, and is illustrated in the Impromptus Op. 29 and 36.

² Frederick Niecks, *Frederick Chopin as a Man and Musician* (New York: Cooper Square Publisher, Inc, 1973), 259.

³ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, trans. Naomi Shohet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 70.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

Although the impromptus are generally considered less significant and lightweight, compared to Chopin's other miniatures and larger genres, the essence of airiness, the subtleties of expression, and the peculiar beauty make these works unique and irreplaceable.

Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48 No. 1 (1841)

Nocturne in E flat major, Op. 55 No. 2 (1843)

The Nocturne is probably one of the most poetic and intimate genres that Chopin has ever composed. Chopin derived the title and concept of this small-scale lyrical form from John Field, and created twenty-one nocturnes with more distinctive originality in pianism than his predecessor. This prolific collection of the nocturnes spread from 1827 to 1846, starting when the composer was seventeen years old until three years before the composer's death.

The Nocturne Op. 48, No. 1 is undoubtedly the grandest among the collection. The structure is in ternary form. The piece begins with a slow, melancholic section with a bold modulating scheme. The opening phrase is in C minor, then a similar phrase is repeated again in the relative major, and leads to the dominant key. Before the return of the first phrase, the tonality suddenly shifts to D flat major. The middle section starts with the chorale. After adding the triplets and increasing the volume, the double octaves bring the work into a moment of triumph. After the climax, the main theme returns in *pianissimo* with restless triplet figures, and

gradually grows into one of the most brilliant and moving pages in Chopin's compositions.

Unlike the drama presented in Op. 48 No.1, the Nocturne Op. 55 No. 2 uses a different compositional approach, and brings the essence of dreamy *cantabile*. The piece begins with the falling sixth, and another sixth echoes immediately in the next bar. Without the contrast between sections, the narrative melody flows naturally from the beginning to the end of the piece, almost like it never ends. A duet and a rich accompaniment maintain the perfect balance, undulating gently between the swelling and abatement of emotions.

Preludes, Op. 28 (1831-1839)

Chopin's 24 Preludes are regarded as one of the most significant compositions in his *oeuvre*, and a wholly exceptional phenomenon in piano literature. These wonderful miniatures unfold all major and minor keys in a rising circle of fifths. Each prelude contains a certain musical idea or technique. J. S. Bach had been Chopin's favorite composer since he studied in Warsaw. Bach's legendary two sets of twenty-four preludes and fugues in all major and minor keys undoubtedly became the forerunner of his compositions.

Chopin started to draft some of the Preludes in 1831 in Paris, and intensively worked on this collection from 1838 to 1839. He, George Sand, and Sand's children Maurice and Solange, took a trip to Majorca in the fall of 1838. He

brought a copy of Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, and planned to have a wonderful life on the island and complete the rest of the Preludes.

However, the weather became terrible and the temperature dropped during the trip, and Chopin fell seriously ill. Sand later found out that Chopin was in a state of terror when she and her children came back from an adventure - "the terrible and heart-rending obsessions which had stolen over him in that hour of loneliness, sorrow, and fright."⁶ On another heavy rainy day, Chopin believed Sand and the children were dead, and imagined himself drowned in a lake. He wrote the well-known "*Raindrop*" *Prelude* Op. 28, No. 15 that evening. According to Sand, "his composition that evening was full of raindrops resonating on the tiles of the monastery."⁷ Although the trip didn't go well as the couple expected, Chopin still finished the Preludes for the commission in January 1839.

We may regard Chopin's 24 Preludes as the most perfect examples of the miniature in the Romantic period. The cycle demonstrates the distinctive contrast of emotions, melody, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, and tone colors. Eigeldinger comments, "Ignoring the legacy of his immediate predecessors, deaf to the contemporary world, the Chopin of the Preludes anchored himself in Bach so as to see himself more clearly - and, despite himself, into the future. This work is a two-faced Janus, not only within

⁶ Alan Walker, *Fryderyk Chopin: A Life and Times* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 383.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 383.

his own output, but in the development of keyboard music from Bach to the present day.”⁸

⁸ Eleanor Bailie, *Chopin: A Graded Practical Guide* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1998), 69.

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SECOND DISSERTATION RECITAL

Wanching Liu, Piano

Tuesday, February 8, 2022, 5 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall

Berceuse, Op. 57 (1844)

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Barcarolle, Op. 60 (1845-1846)

Polonaise-Fantaisie, Op. 61 (1846)

INTERMISSION

Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58 (1844)

Allegro maestoso

Scherzo: Molto vivace

Largo

Finale: Presto, non tanto

Program Notes

Berceuse, Op. 57 (1844)

The Berceuse, Op. 57, which contains only seventy bars, is one of Chopin's most delicate compositions. In 1843, Chopin and Sand met the singer Pauline Viardot and her eighteen-month-old daughter at Nohant. The intimate moments with the infant may have been Chopin's inspiration for this charming and graceful cradle song, so he changed the initial title from "Variantes" to "Berceuse".⁹

The piece begins with a four-bar theme, which develops into a series of sixteen variations, and is accompanied by a bass ostinato. The ostinato figure with a sustained tonic and dominant harmonies remains unchanged until the very end of the piece. Although the fixed bass ostinato seems too monotonous, the refined melodic lines and a succession of ornamentation in the right-hand part bring the audience into a dazzling world of ever-changing fantasy.

Barcarolle, Op. 60 (1845-1846)

The barcarolle is a traditional folk song from Venice, sung by the gondolier. The idiom inspired many nineteenth-century composers, including Chopin, and his contemporaries Felix Mendelssohn, Franz Liszt, Gioachino Rossini, and Charles Valentin Alkan. Unlike the conventional barcarolle in 6/8, Chopin changes the time signature to 12/8, so there is ample space to accommodate more motions and melodic

⁹Alan Walker, *Fryderyk Chopin: A Life and Times* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 489.

lines. Three different types of “the rocking barcarolle rhythm”¹⁰ (figure 2) featured in the work create a sense of variety.



Figure 2 The three rhythmic patterns in the Barcarolle¹¹

Like most of Chopin’s nocturnes but on a larger scale, the structure in the Barcarolle consists of three sections. The striking opening is made of a three-bar harmonic progression, and is followed by one of the barcarolle rhythms, then the lyrical boat song appears with the thirds. The middle section begins with a short two-bar bridge with another two types of barcarolle rhythms. Then the upper voice comes out and features a slower singing melody, and perfectly blends with the other two voices of the rhythmic patterns. The double trills open the recapitulation, with the rhythmic figure which has appeared in the first section. After such a grandiose final statement, the piece ends with an exquisite farewell coda.

¹⁰ Jim Samson, ed., *Chopin Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 212.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

Polonaise-Fantaisie, Op. 61 (1846)

Chopin mentioned the *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, Op. 61 for the first time in a letter to his family in Warsaw in 1845, saying that he was writing a piece but he was unsure about the name. In addition to his hesitation about the title, the compositional process for this piece had been laborious for Chopin. The eight-page drafts, which are preserved in the Chopin National Institute, Warsaw, indicate that the composer had been spending more energy sketching this piece than other compositions.

This masterpiece shows Chopin's ambition to explore the possibilities of a new hybrid genre. He mixes the concepts of two idioms - the fantasy and the polonaise to create a new form. The rhythmic pattern of the polonaise is one of the significant motifs, and he also extends the ABA ternary form which he usually uses in his polonaises to a more complicated structure. The spirit of the fantasy is obvious in the introduction.

The distinctive polonaise chords announce the opening of the piece. The sustaining pedal blends the second chord and the rising arpeggios, creating one of the most stunning pedal effects in Chopin's writing (figure 3). The ambiguous tonality scheme and the futuristic effect in this section hint at the future harmonic languages in Richard Strauss and Richard Wagner.



Figure 3 The pedal effect in the opening of the *Polonaise-Fantasia* (m. 1)

After the 22-measure introduction, the octaves on the dominant pedal with the polonaise rhythmic pattern (Figure 4) announce the late arrival of the home key, and the first authentic cadence finally occurs at measure 27 (Figure 5).



Figure 4 The Polonaise Rhythmic Pattern (mm. 22-23)



Figure 5 The First Authentic Cadence in the *Polonaise-Fantasia* (m. 24-27)

Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58 (1844)

Allegro maestoso

Scherzo: Molto vivace

Largo

Finale: Presto, non tanto

As a master of miniatures, Chopin had no fear of challenging large-scale forms. He successfully added creative concepts to the traditional framework of the sonata. In spite of his less successful Piano Sonata No. 1 in C minor, Op. 4, which was written in his youth, his Piano Sonata No. 2 in B flat minor, Op. 35 demonstrates his remarkable achievement as a composer. Five years later, another piano sonata finished with a wealth of musical thinking and intellectual depth.

There were some misunderstandings of Chopin's inventions at the time when the Sonata was published. The question of Chopin's ability to handle the sonata form in early critics was resolved by modern musicologists, including Hugo Leichtentritt and Alan Walker. The lack of unity had been one of the concerns because of the abundant thematic materials in the first movement. Eduard Hanslick, the prominent Austrian music critic, commented that Chopin "was never able to unite the fragrant flowers that he scattered by handfuls into beautiful wreaths."¹² However, Hugo Leichtentritt's analysis proves Chopin's genius by merging the two subjects together (figure 8).

¹² Alan Walker, *Fryderyk Chopin: A Life and Time* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 479.

Allegro maestoso

The image displays a musical score for piano, divided into four systems. The first system (measures 1-4) is marked *f* and includes fingering numbers 5, 4, 1, 3. The second system (measures 5-8) is marked *sostenuto* and includes fingering numbers 3, 1, 3, 1, 2, 1, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4. The third system (measures 9-12) includes fingering numbers 3, 5, 4, 2. The fourth system (measures 13-16) includes fingering numbers 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4. The analytical demonstration consists of four systems of piano accompaniment with 'Ta.' markings and asterisks below the bass line.

Figure 8 From the top to the bottom: The first subject, the second subject, and Hugo Leichtentritt's analytical demonstration.¹³

¹³ Ibid., 479.

To make the structure more tight and neat, Chopin omits the first theme in the recapitulation and leads straight into the second theme, as he had already done in his second sonata. This bold strategy also causes some arguments, since the traditional symmetric design of the sonata form is destroyed due to the omission. Alan Walker defends Chopin's "structural compression as an unconscious function of creative mastery."¹⁴ Since the materials from the first theme have been presented in the development, Walker claims that the omission of the first theme avoids repetition and creates a sense of intensity in the structure.

The second movement is a scherzo in a simple ternary form. It contains two lively and virtuosic outer parts and a middle section moving at a slower pace. The largo movement is also in ternary form, and similar to another Chopin's beloved genre - nocturne. Unlike the sonata in the Classical period, Chopin places the slow movement in the third in his three Piano Sonatas, the Cello Sonata and the Piano Trio. In the finale, the two contrasted elements are relatively simple but efficient, compared to the wealthy amount of thematic materials in the first movement. Chopin made another invention to return the primary theme outside the home key in a sonata rondo form.

¹⁴ Alan Waker, ed., *The Chopin Companion: Profiles of the Man and the Musician* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973), 243.

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THIRD DISSERTATION RECITAL

Wanching Liu, Piano

Alexei Ulitin, Collaborative Piano
Tuesday, March 14, 2023, 5 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall

Mazurkas, Op. 59 (1845)

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Mazurka in A Minor

Mazurka in A-flat Major

Mazurka in F sharp Minor

Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11 (1830)

Allegro maestoso

Romance: Larghetto

Rondo: Vivace

Program Notes

Mazurkas, Op. 59 (1845)

Mazurka in A Minor

Mazurka in A-flat Major

Mazurka in F sharp Minor

The mazurka is a Polish national dance originally from the Mazovian region (where Warsaw is located), and enjoyed a considerable vogue as a ballroom dance both in Poland and France when Chopin arrived in Paris. Chopin's mazurkas represent the composer's affection for Polishness, and his identity both as a proud Pole and his predicament as an émigré. He displays the widest possible range of emotional contrasts and intelligent composing strategies in this indigenous miniature.

The Mazurkas, op. 59 were the only works Chopin finished during his five-month stay in Nohant in the summer of 1845. Chopin made bold and charming inventions in the use of simple rondo form in these three pieces: the main theme either falsely recapitulates in a semitone lower of the home key, G-sharp Minor (No. 1, mm. 79-90), relocates in a different register of the keyboard (No. 1, mm. 123-124, and No. 2, mm. 69-72), or transforms the theme into a canon (No. 3, mm. 97-104).

Chopin's seamless and adroit modulation skills have been observed everywhere in his writing. James Huneker says that in the first mazurka "a subtle turn

takes us off the familiar road to some strange glade wherein the flowers are rare in scent and odour.”¹⁵ At the end of the opening phrase, Chopin fluently moves two semitones down in the left-hand part (A - A flat - G) to make a delicate shift from A Minor to C Major (figure 9). Another example is after the false return of the main theme in G sharp Minor (figure 10), Chopin reuses the material from measure 13 to move the key back to A Minor, and represents a final statement of the theme in the lower register (figure 11).



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

¹⁵ Alan Walker, *Fryderyk Chopin: A Life and Time* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 504.

No. 2 is written in response to a request from Felix Mendelssohn. On 3 November 1844, Mendelssohn sent a letter to Chopin asking for a small piece as a Christmas gift for his wife Cécile, mentioning that “her favorite works are those you have written”.¹⁶ Chopin delayed the request for almost a year. “Just try hard to imagine, my dear friend, that I am writing by return of post in reply to the letter which brought me your good news... If the little sheet of music is not too dog-eared and does not arrive too late, please present it from me to Mrs. Mendelssohn.”¹⁷ This “little sheet of music” is not just an elaborate miniature, but also a bold examination which presents a torrent of unexpected harmonic changes and offers a glimpse into the future of harmony (mm. 81-89, Figure 12).



Figure 12

¹⁶ Bronisław Edward Sydow, *Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin* : Abridged from Fryderyk Chopin's Correspondence, trans. and ed. by Arthur Hedley (London: Heinemann, 1962), 242.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 255.

A series of descending modulations in the second half of a Maggiore section is another brilliant arrangement in the third mazurka (Figure 13). This intensive passage unexpectedly brings the tonality back to F sharp major. At the end of the section, the composer uses the circle of fifths to shift the tonality again from F sharp major back to the home key F sharp minor (see the first line of Figure 14). After the arrival of the cadential six-four of the F sharp minor, a canon subtly announces the lead-back of the main theme (see the second line of Figure 14).



Figure 13



Figure 14

Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11 (1830)

Allegro maestoso

Romance: Larghetto

Rondo: Vivace

On 11 October 1830, Chopin made the debut of his newly completed Piano Concerto in E minor in the Warsaw National Theater before he departed to Vienna. This farewell concert was so successful that Chopin took four curtain calls, and it became his last public appearance in Warsaw. After the première, he left Poland on 2 November with ambition to earn a European reputation, and didn't know that he would never be able to come back to his home country.

Chopin continued to perform the E minor concerto in Breslau (8 November 1830, second and third movements only), Vienna (4 April and 11 June 1831), Munich (28 August 1831), Paris (26 February 1832; 30 May 1832, first movement only; 25 April 1833, second and third movements only; 14 December 1834, second movements only; 5 April 1835) and Rouen (12 March 1838). The success from the five Paris concerts from 1832 to 1835 was particularly significant. As “the brain of the world”,¹⁸ Paris was the mecca for keyboard virtuosos and composers when Chopin arrived for the first time in 1831. Incredible musicians of that time had all appeared on the Paris stage including Friedrich Kalkbrenner, Ferdinand Hiller, Mme Marie Pleyel, Ignaz Moscheles, Franz Liszt, Sigismond Thalberg, and Henri Herz.

¹⁸ William G Atwood, *The Parisian Worlds of Frédéric Chopin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 2.

Among the multitude of pianists active in Paris, Chopin's fantastic performances of his E minor concerto secured his reputation as a composer-pianist, and eventually developed his widespread fame as one of the most demanding piano teachers. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger described the importance of Chopin's Paris debut:

The consequences of this first concert for Chopin's career in Paris proved of the utmost importance: with the weight of his authority, [François-Joseph] Fétis underscored in the musical press the composer's originality and his qualities as a performer; the editors [Aristide] Farrenc and Maurice Schlesinger ... rushed to offer to engrave the works in his portfolio; the piano maker Camille Pleyel definitively attached himself to the artist ...¹⁹

Because of the popularity of public concerts, the improvement of the instrument, and the rise of an entire class of superstar pianists, the piano concerto became one of the most popular genres in concerts in the nineteenth century. In addition to the symphonic concertos from Beethoven, the virtuoso concerto flourished as the favorite work for the audience from the 1820s. The virtuoso concerto is a wonderful vehicle for soloists to display their brilliant technique. Unlike Beethoven's concertos which focus on the balance and the dialogue between orchestra and soloist, the orchestra in the virtuoso concerto serves as an accompaniment to maximize the expressive and virtuosic display of the solo part. For practical reasons, the lightweight texture of the orchestral part is also easier to transcribe for string quartet or quintet, so the concerto can be performed on any occasion with a smaller ensemble.

¹⁹ John Rink, *Chopin: The Piano Concertos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15.

As a young pianist, Chopin had performed virtuoso concertos by Kalkbrenner, Hummel, Ries, and possibly Field during his Warsaw years, and these fashionable works became his models for his compositional process of the E Minor concerto. In addition to the formulas of the form structure, the *stile brillante* he learnt from his predecessors became a signature mark in his piano concertos and later writings.

The first movement corresponds to Czerny’s design for the concerto form (Figure 15), which is also applicable to other virtuoso specimens. In Czerny’s model, the importance of the four tutti sections is reduced, and the ritornello function is diminished. The model gets rid of the textural contrast between ritornello and solo, but focuses on thematic contrast ‘between poetry and display, or, more specifically, between stable thematic statements and discursive passagework’.²⁰ The virtuosic sections also replace the function of the cadenza. However, unlike other contemporary virtuoso concertos, Chopin transforms some of the passageworks into expressive sections and diminishes their virtuosic function. These appealing sections become one of the most memorable moments for the melomaniac.

tutti / solo	T1	S1	T2	S2	T3	S3	T4
sonata form		Exposition		Development		Recapitulation	
main key	I	→ V	→		→	I	

Figure 15 Czerny’s Model of First-Movement Concerto Form²¹

²⁰ Ibid., 3.

²¹ Ibid., 2-3.

The second movement is entitled “*Romance*”. Chopin wrote a letter to his friend Tytus Woyciechowski about this slow movement stating, “It is not meant to create a powerful effect; it is rather a Romance, calm and melancholy, giving the impression of someone looking gently towards a spot which calls to mind a thousand happy memories.”²² The narrative melody flows effortlessly with dazzling embellishments, creating a timeless and dream-like wonderland.

Like the previous slow movement, the tonality stays in the relative major, E major, in the last movement. The virtuosic passages feature the popular *stile brillante* at the time. Same as the Mazurka section in his F minor concerto, The Polish folk dance Krakowiak is also illustrated in the second theme. In the return of the first theme, Chopin plays a trick to falsely restate the tonality a semitone lower to E flat major, then turn it back to E major after nine measures.

²² Ibid., 12.

Conclusion

It feels like a dream to work on three dissertation recitals on Chopin.

During the process to learn the compositions and research the composer's life, I see a sensitive child prodigy, who was so brave to build his career in a foreign country, immensely blended his talent, artistry, and creativity to amaze his contemporaries, and remain a key composer nowadays. His exclusive output for the piano not only impacts the development of piano literature, but also inspired musicians for generations. It's always fascinating to discover Chopin's influence on other composers' writing and piano literature over two hundred years. As Robert Schumann described Chopin's works as "guns buried in flowers", Chopin's music is full of poetic and passionate moments, which will surely stay with me for life.

Annotated Bibliography

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A collection reveals Chopin's life as a teacher and pianist, including valuable documents from his pupil, acquaintances, contemporaries and his own writing.

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A monumental biography of Chopin, particularly focusing on Chopin's Warsaw years with new scholarly research in recent years.