Drew University

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Frédéric Chopin's Life and Work: The Scholarly Debate and the Limitations of Nineteenth-Century Nationalism

A Thesis in Music

by

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The Polish-born Frédéric Chopin is often considered in the history of Western music to be a national composer. In Chopin's own time, critics such as Robert Schumann found Polish national qualities in his work. After Chopin's death, biographers and scholars searched for individual details in his music that they viewed as possessing a sense of authentic Polish folk; scholars continue to do this today. Nineteenth-century musical nationalism and its effect on Chopin are explored in the introduction, noting how the label was often applied to music from countries outside a German universal standard as exemplified by Beethoven. Chapter 1 critically examines the works of nationally-minded Chopin scholars in order to determine the nature of the debate surrounding Chopin and Polish nationalism. Chapter 2 then discusses Chopin's life through his letters and recollections of his contemporaries, with a particular focus on his musical influences in Warsaw and Paris, as well as his artistic values. Chopin ultimately valued logic and form in music as exemplified by the counterpoint of Johann Sebastian Bach, holding the Baroque composer's music as a standard to which he compared his contemporaries. Chapter 3 then analyzes Chopin's mazurkas in this context, emphasizing structure, form and his unique chromatic language that transformed the mazurka genre. This thesis ultimately argues that Chopin's life and work should no longer be analyzed primarily through a Polish nationalist lens, as its scope is limited and glosses over Chopin's innovations as a composer by attributing them to Polish national qualities.

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Introduction: Nineteenth-Century Musical Nationalism

What is Nationalism in Music?

Nationalism in music has been a topic of intellectual discussion for centuries, on numerous fronts. Generally speaking, musical nationalism is music that is viewed as representing a specific culture or nation. However, this is an extremely broad definition that is itself subjective, considering that concepts such as nationalism and the nation itself are defined differently depending on the individual or group in question. Thus, when asking the question "what is musical nationalism," the historical contexts of the works must be considered in order to determine a definition that suits the situation. When concerning nebulous points of analysis such as nationalism in music and how to represent it, as opposed to concrete ones such as chord progressions and motivic development, the result will undoubtedly be subjective, for the best way to represent a nation through music has been debated for centuries. This naturally complicates the scholarly discourse surrounding the topic.

Richard Taruskin and Christopher Gibbs, in the *Oxford History of Western Music*, outline a definition of nationalism involving multiple elements that contextualize a musical work. When discussing the nationalist music of Czech composer Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884), they proposes the question: "What is the source of this *českost*, or 'Czechness'? Is Smetana's music Czech because he intentionally made it so, because listeners heard it as such, or for some more complex mixture involving both creation and

reception?" (Taruskin and Gibbs 2013, 704). This definition takes into account both the possible intentions of the composer when writing the work as well as the work's reception history, which makes it a useful definition to account for the subjectivity in musical nationalism.

A third factor, which may not always come into play, is a sense of "authentic" folk: a definition that is used for works that quote folk songs or use folk-like music. According to this definition, nationalist works represent the nation by virtue of their musical content. Smetana will again serve as a useful example, specifically *Vltava* (1874). This symphonic poem includes a descriptive program, describing the flow of the Vltava River and scenes familiar to Czechs that play out along the way, such as country dances (706). The program clearly demonstrates the intentions of the composer to create a nationalist work. What complicates Smetana's nationalism is the main theme he chose to represent the Vltava River, beginning in measure 39 of the piece and heard prominently in the first violins. Though it is a folk song, it is not of Czech origin, but rather a Swedish folk song. As Taruskin and Gibbs explain:

> Possibly Smetana did not remember the origins of the tune when he appropriated it as an epitome of *českost*; the fact that his memory might thus have disguised the tune as an invention is all the evidence we need to refute the notion that *českost* or any other kind of national character is an inherent property of a tune, invented or otherwise … Like all the others, *českost* is a construction in which composer and listener … must collaborate (707).

Taruskin and Gibbs, using Smetana's *Vltava* as an example, refute the idea of an "authentic" folk not just through the Swedish origin of the melody, but through the intent of the composer for the tune to represent Czechness in music. However, they make sure to note that tracing the origins of folk songs is not the ideal solution either: "There are no origins and no destinations in such histories, only stages" (707). Thus, according to Taruskin and Gibbs's terms of analyzing such works, we are only left with one option, which is to examine intent and reception.

Nationalism vs. universalism

When one first thinks of musical nationalism, the composers who may come to mind originate from countries that were oppressed or not often represented in artistic and cultural spheres: composers such as Smetana, Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881), and the subject of this thesis, Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849). Taruskin, in his article on nationalism for *Grove Music Online*, identifies these composers' countries of origin as belonging to a cultural periphery. Czech, Russian and Polish musical traditions, among others, were not usually considered as part of what was considered universal in Western classical music (Taruskin 2001). In Leon Plantinga's article "Dvořák and the Meaning of Nationalism in Music," he explains the problems with associating nationalism with the periphery:

> The first of them … is that it reinforces a distinction between "central" and "peripheral" nations and their music … [It] follows in traditions of ethnocentric musical historiography whose assumptions we may well wish to question. [...]

> The other effect of viewing nationalism as a force operative only in certain countries is that it easily lures one into the assumption that this is the central element in the music of these countries. Nationalism provides a convenient handle to grasp when one is looking for handy categories and unifying models of explanation (Plantinga 1996, 120).

Music of the early nineteenth century that people viewed as having national qualities was labeled as such for deviating from the music Plantinga identifies as "central." When something could not be explained, it was attributed to national qualities, phrased as if to praise the composer, but ultimately limiting the ways in which his or her works could be analyzed. Ultimately, the label of national music served to reinforce the status quo of Western classical music, keeping composers such as Chopin from becoming truly accepted as universal.

To determine how this aspect of nineteenth-century nationalism was formed, we must first look at how German music became a universal standard. Taruskin describes this history well in his *Grove Music Online* article on nationalism. By the eighteenth century, the music of German composers had become an eclectic mix of musical traits from other cultures. A notable example of this eclecticism can be found in the music of Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767), who combined German counterpoint with Italian, French and even Polish national styles, helping to establish the association of mixed taste with German music in the world of Western classical music (Zohn 2001). J. J. Quantz, in his treatise on flute playing (1752), reflected on this established eclecticism, declaring that the value of the German's musical taste lied in "how to select with due

discrimination from the musical tastes of various peoples what is best in each" (Taruskin 2001). In the following century, this mixed style would later be adopted as universalism, setting a standard by which other composers would undeniably be compared. People found values such as honesty and inward feeling in the German folktales by authors such as the Brothers Grimm. These values came to represent Germany, in contrast to the superficiality of the rest of society. This was eventually applied to music, according to Taruskin: "The same values of pure spirituality and inwardness were projected by German Romantics on music itself – or rather, on instrumental music, defined in opposition to aesthetically and morally depraved Italian opera" (Taruskin 2001). This was how the German standard came to dominate instrumental music. E.T.A. Hoffman's writings in particular served as a prominent driving force, setting the German Beethoven as the figurehead not just for instrumental music, but for the Romantic era as a whole:

> When we speak of music as an independent art, we should properly refer only to instrumental music which, scorning the assistance and association of another art, namely poetry, expresses that peculiar property which can be found in music only. It is the most romantic of all the arts, one might almost say the only really romantic art, for its sole object is the expression of the infinite. [...] Beethoven's music stirs the mists of fear, of horror, of terror, of grief, and awakens that endless longing which is the very essence of romanticism. He is consequently a purely romantic composer. (Hoffmann 1917, 127-28)

Notable here is how Hoffmann describes instrumental music as "the most romantic of all the arts," embodying Taruskin's statement regarding the values of inwardness or "the

infinite" supposedly inherent in Beethoven's music. The Romantic era served to complete the transformation from German eclecticism to universalism, with the shadow of Beethoven hanging over the musical culture of Romanticism as a result of such reception to his music. As Taruskin states: "Thus what began as a philosophy of diversity became, in the case of music, one of hegemony. The programme of German nationalism quickly metamorphosed, for music, into one of German universalism" (Taruskin 2001).

Chopin exporting Polish music

Chopin is widely considered to be one of the first composers to successfully export exotic folk music to a Western audience. Though some received his music negatively, viewing him and his music as alien due to his existence in the cultural periphery, many were also fascinated by his music. Many contemporary reviewers took note of Chopin's national origin when describing his performances and his compositions. Liszt serves as a significant example, with his reviews being florid and elaborate flights of fancy in their descriptions. In a review of Chopin's 1841 concert, Liszt linked the crux of Chopin's creative talent and the appeal of his music directly to his national origin and the growing appeal of national music: "Music was his language, the divine tongue through which he expressed a whole realm of sentiments that only the select few can appreciate. As with that other great poet Mickiewicz, his compatriot and friend, the muse of his homeland dictates his songs, and the anguished cries of Poland lend to his art a mysterious, identifiable poetry which, for all those who have truly experienced it, cannot be compared to anything else" (Siepmann 1995, 166-7). This quote from Liszt is

revealing for several reasons. The observation of Polish music as "identifiable" appearing in this review indicates that the musical ideas that evoked Polish music in Chopin's work were known to his audience. This is further supported by the sentiment of support for the Polish cause among the Parisian public, which unfortunately yielded no political results (Pekacz 2000, 165). The quote also labels the Polish music that Chopin wrote as unique; unique not solely because of Chopin's technique and ability but because of the foreign quality and appeal of the folk topoi.

Notably, fellow Romantic composer Robert Schumann immediately perceived a national quality in Chopin's work: "Because this nationality wanders in mourning robes, in the thoughtful artist it attracts us … If the powerful Autocrat of the North [Tsar Nicholas I] knew what a dangerous enemy threatens him in Chopin's works, he would forbid music. Chopin's works are cannons buried in flowers" (Schumann 1876, 207). While at first this quote may seem like genuine praise and acceptance, it is also, in a way, limiting. The attractive quality of Chopin's work, according to Schumann, is the national element. Rather than viewed as a part of Romanticism in general and described as universal, his music is valued based on its nationalist exoticism, given special attention because of the oppression that Poland faced at the time. Taruskin and Gibbs note that Schumann held views that would be considered ethnocentric today regarding what kind of music he considered to be universal: "Schumann thought that in order for music to realize its highest aim it had to be 'unmarked' by any defining, and therefore delimiting, national character. For him German music was unmarked. That is how one naturally tends to hear the music that surrounds one, until one is made aware of the existence of

other music" (Taruskin and Gibbs 2013, 621). Though Schumann praised Chopin's music, Chopin was still considered to be an outsider, and thus his music was only valued based on either its national qualities, or how much it tended towards the German standard. As Schumann wrote, "the further he departs from [his origin], the greater will his significance in the world of art become" (621). This is very telling of the limitations the nationalist label places on Chopin's work. This ethnocentrism from Schumann is a reflection of the German universal standard that was ever present in the reception of Romantic music.

The othering of Chopin not only targeted his music, but also his career as a composer. According to Halina Goldberg in *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, German scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were reluctant to include Chopin as part of the Romantic tradition not just because of the clash between German and French musical culture, but also because of the dismissal of the salon as "light-minded, effeminate" (Goldberg 2008, 147). It was because of Chopin's Polish identity, as well as French and Italian musical influences, that these German scholars decided to include him (148). This also shows how the German tradition was valued over others as a basis of comparison, with this bias impacting how scholars viewed Chopin's life and work. In one example given by Andreas Ballstaedt in his article, "Chopin as 'Salon Composer' in Nineteenth-Century German Criticism," Chopin as a salon composer in the French tradition is contrasted with the Germans Beethoven and Schubert, who were said to have been inspired by nature (Ballstaedt 1994, 25). According to Ballstaedt, the dismissal of the salon as a valid part of musical life has made objective Chopin

scholarship in Germany and Austria difficult: “The widespread antipathy and hostility to the salon expressed in the literature inevitably strike a hammer blow at Chopin’s music, whether deliberately or not” (34). This is telling of not only the stigmatization of the salon in German music scholarship at the time, but of national sentiments making their way into scholarly works in general. Goldberg also mentions that “the Chopin literature abroad almost invariably marginalized Polish culture as a whole” (Goldberg 2008, 148). This speaks to how Polish culture, in this context, was valued only for its contributions to nationalism rather than to Romanticism: it could be appreciated as the fascinating, exotic culture of an oppressed minority, but never as part of universal music.

It is the focus on Chopin solely through the lens of nationalism that places him in a Polish box and others him, intentionally or not. It ignores how Chopin, through his salon performances, took part in a cultural tradition that had spread through much of Europe, contributing to the musical life of Warsaw at home as well as Paris, where he eventually settled. By attributing the characteristics of Chopin’s unique compositional style to national qualities, it upholds the cultural periphery that limits the scope of understanding Chopin’s work. It is only when one looks past the limitations of nineteenth-century nationalism that Chopin’s crucial place in the history of music can be understood.

Chapter 1: Chopin's Biographical History and the Nature of the Scholarly Debate

Within Chopin's biographical history are numerous pervasive myths that have established him as a national figure, but that are based on claims made without evidence. The focus on the nationalism in Chopin's music ignores important contexts surrounding his life and work, including his influences and views on art. During Chopin's time, many saw his work as representing hope for Poland's future, and this sentiment later served as the narrative basis for his early biographies. This desire to push a narrative of Chopin as a national composer led to claims that Chopin was quoting folk music in his own compositions and thus elevating it to art music, and the use of the opinions of Chopin's contemporaries to propose that the composer had nationalist intentions behind specific works. The need for Chopin as a national figure has driven authors and scholars to assert Chopin's Polishness through musical and biographical analysis that limits the scope of understanding his music, a trend that continues to this day. This particular focus on nationalism that is a staple of Chopin scholarship glosses over his many musical and artistic influences that contributed to his unique compositional style. But more importantly, it others Chopin by using the same points of analysis that nineteenth-century critics used to contrast his style with the German universal standard.

Chopin, his contemporaries, and Polish messianism

One prominent way in which scholars argue in favor of Chopin's intent is through the opinions of his contemporaries and colleagues regarding his work. Halina Goldberg,

in her article "'Remembering that tale of grief': The Prophetic Voice in Chopin's Music," asserts that, due to the music's proximity to the political opinions of Chopin's contemporaries, such as the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz, the music conveys a messianic narrative about the future of Poland. Polish messianism, as Goldberg discusses in her article, was "the belief that the country was an innocent victim crucified by foreign powers," likening Poland itself to Jesus Christ, his sacrifice, and resurrection (Goldberg 2004, 56). She supports this relationship between Chopin's music and the composer's messianic contemporaries by quoting Marceli Antoni Szulc (1818-1898), a contemporary of Chopin who "proclaimed Chopin to be Mickiewicz's heir, the new *wieszcz* [prophet], the spiritual leader of the nation." As Szulc said of Chopin, "He translates most expressively the thoughts of the nation; his works are a holy shrine, the ark, as Mickiewicz said, in which the treasure of native music is kept" (84).

However, Szulc's comments on Chopin do not match with Mickiewicz's own views on Chopin's career choice. Though Chopin's relationship with Mickiewicz was one of respect, the two artists' ideals clashed due to the composer's preference for company in high society. Karol Berger, in his article "Chopin's Ballade Op. 23 and the Revolution of the Intellectuals," describes Chopin's opinions of Mickiewicz: "Chopin himself, much as he respected Mickiewicz, was too mondain and simply too sober a realist to be able to accept wilder aspects of the poet's messianism" (Berger 1994, 75). The two artists lived very different lives, with Chopin finding comfort in the company of Prince Adam Czartoryski's circle rather than the more radical artistic circles in which Mickiewicz participated. Chopin preferred the traditional model of patronage, with a

reliance on the aristocracy and performances in the salons to pursue his art. Jolanta T. Pekacz, in an article titled "Deconstructing a 'National Composer': Chopin and Polish Exiles in Paris, 1831-49," provides an anecdote of a meeting between Mickiewicz and Chopin that was observed by a friend of the poet's secretary, Antoine Dessus, in the memoirs of the poet's son. In this meeting, Dessus remarked that Chopin "had the manners and constrained politeness of higher society people," and that, when Chopin sat down to play, Mickiewicz reacted angrily, believing that Chopin was wasting his gifts on the aristocracy:

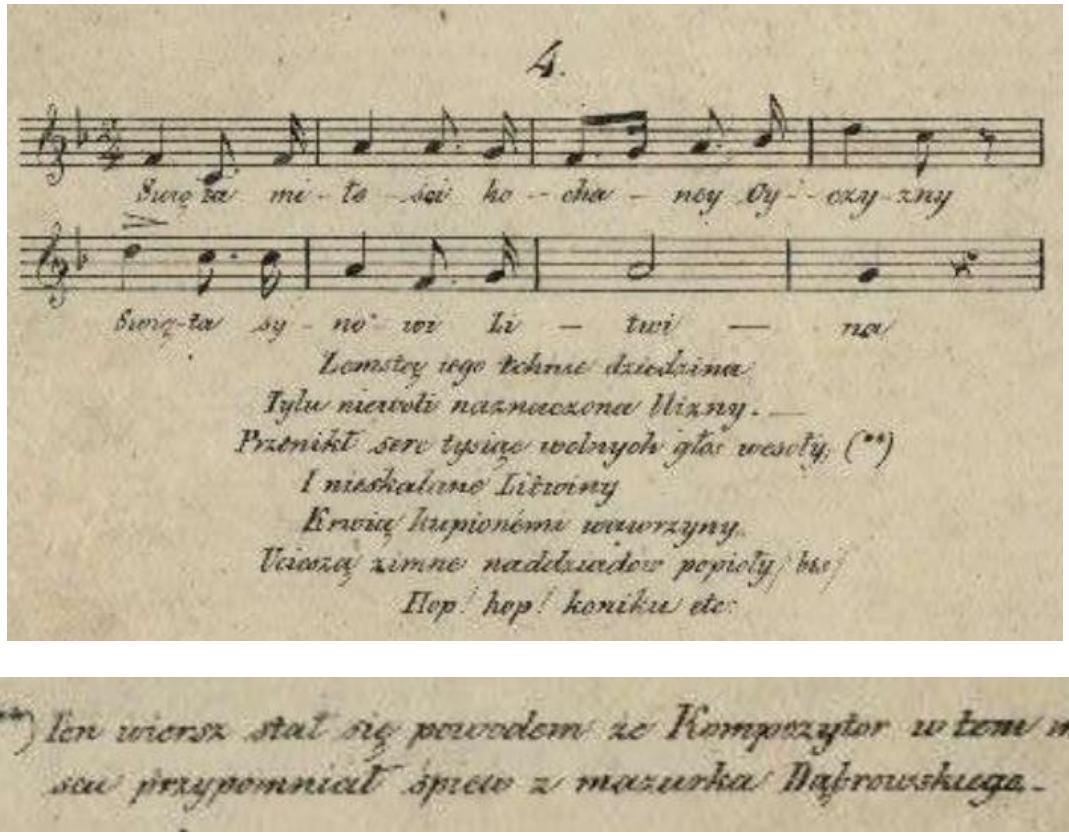
> When [Chopin] finished, your father began to reproach him with such violence, that I did not know what to do. "Why on earth, instead of developing that gift enabling you to move souls, do you flaunt yourself at the Faubourg St. Germain! You could hold the crowd in the palm of your hand, and, instead, you merely tickle aristocratic nerves!" (Pekacz 2000, 170-71)

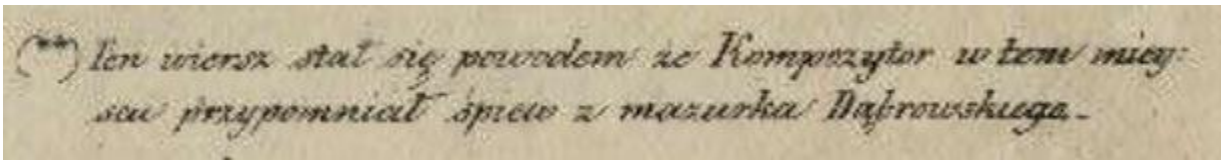
This response from Mickiewicz, himself considered a *wieszcz* in the realm of Polish romantic literature, demonstrates how Chopin's preference for the aristocratic salon put him at odds with the views of the very contemporaries Goldberg uses as proof of Chopin's nationalist intentions in his work. Though the two artists kept a cordial relationship, it was clear that Chopin was never going to be the musical representative that Mickiewicz hoped him to be.

Despite this, Goldberg also asserts that since nationalist works by Chopin's contemporaries resonate, or evoke similar topoi, with Chopin's music, this is enough to support the depiction of Chopin as a *wieszcz*. These claims are founded on associations

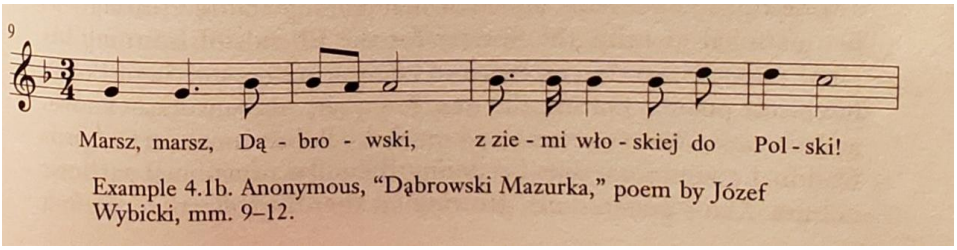
made by other scholars rather than with first-hand evidence. Prominent examples of these associations occur in Goldberg's analysis of Chopin's Fantasy op. 49 (1841). Before her analysis of the Fantasy, she introduces the reader to various Polish national songs with which Chopin would have been familiar. One example she gives is "Litwinka" (1831) by Karol Kurpiński (1785-1857). As Goldberg explains:

> In this patriotic song, composed in 1831 during the November Uprising and published before the fall of the insurrection [...] Kurpiński undeniably alluded to the refrain of [...] the "Dąbrowski Mazurka," or "Poland Has Yet Not Perished," a patriotic song from Napoleonic times etched into the heart of every Pole. In the original 1831 edition of "Litwinka" Kurpiński offered a very specific description of this musical allusion: in an annotation to the fifth line of the fourth stanza, which reads, "The joyful sound penetrated a thousand hearts," Kurpiński explained: "this line became the reason for the composer to recall the tune of the 'Dąbrowski Mazurka' in this spot" (Goldberg 2004, 65). [Example 1, Example 2]





[Example 1: Kurpiński's annotation in the original 1831 edition of "Litwinka" (Kurpiński 1831, 4)]



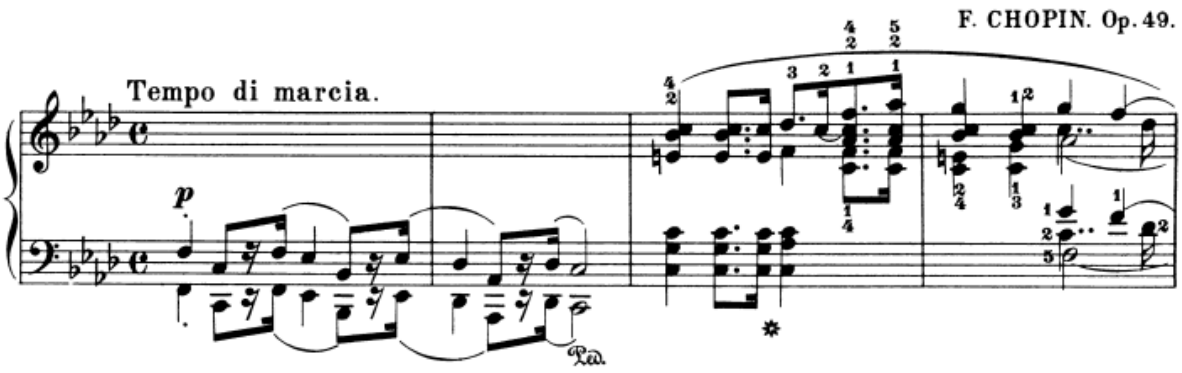
[Example 2: The measures of the "Dąbrowski Mazurka" alluded to by Kurpiński (Goldberg 2004, 65)]

What is notable from this information, as Goldberg observes, is that Kurpiński, unusually, gives his intentions through his annotation to allude to the "Dąbrowski Mazurka." The act of linking his own composition with the "Dąbrowski Mazurka" was deliberate, and we know from Kurpiński's own words.

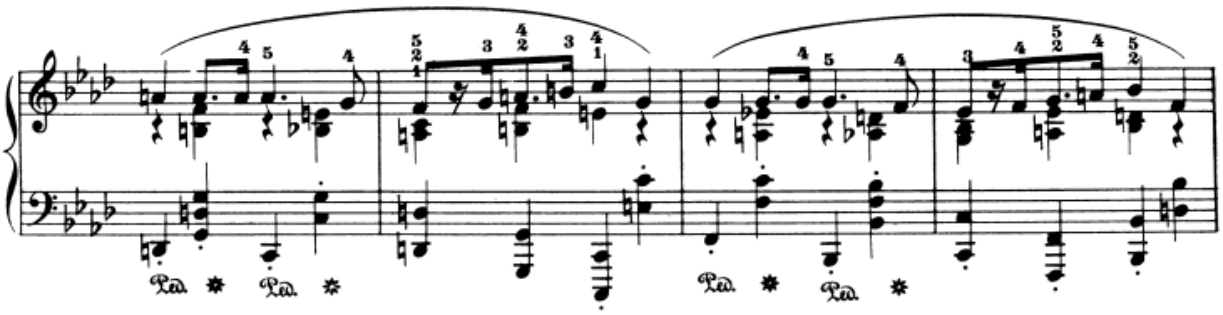
However, when Goldberg discusses the Fantasy, she does not provide evidence from Chopin's words to link his work to Polish national songs. Instead, she quotes other scholars to support her claims.

> The work opens with an unmistakable funeral march [Example 3], expressed through the modality, the tempo, and the solemn dotted rhythms. The generic classification is further underscored by the presence of the descending Phrygian tetrachord, an explicit attribute of the lament. [...] Mieczysław Tomaszewski's comprehensive study of op. 49 lists a number of other *Historical Chants* [*Śpiewy historyczne* (1816), a collection of Polish songs by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (1758-1841)] that belong to the same type and calls attention to the remarkable affinity between Chopin's opening theme and Kurpiński's "Litwinka" (Goldberg 2004, 76).

Goldberg describes how Chopin transforms Kurpiński's heroic "Litwinka," written at the height of the uprising, into a melancholy reminiscence, written after the uprising had failed. According to Goldberg, the change of key from F major to F minor gives the opening the quality of a lament. Goldberg views the F major march beginning in measure 21 [Example 4] as a "memory" rather than a quotation (77).



[Example 3: Fantasy op. 49, measures 1-4 (Chopin 1894, 75)]

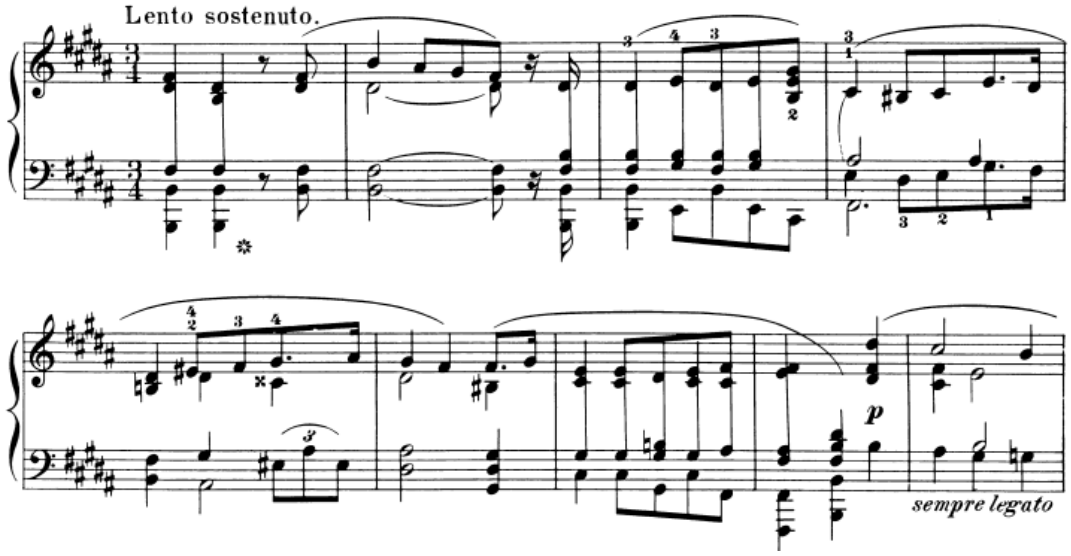


[Example 4: Fantasy op. 49, measures 21-24 (Chopin 1894, 76)]

Continuing to describe the Fantasy, Goldberg views the chorale-like *Lento sostenuto* section in B major in measures 199-206 [Example 5] as resonating "with the realm of" the hymns "O God, Thou Who Hast Graced Poland" and "Jan Albrycht" (Goldberg 2004, 77), stating that "[t]he narrative of the Fantasy ushers the listener through a network of recognizable patriotic musical topics, alluding to national death and resurrection" (78).

Through these associations, Goldberg paints Chopin as a *wieszcz*, giving hope to people that Poland would rise again, despite Chopin's career being in contrast to the role of a *wieszcz* on Mickiewicz's own terms. Goldberg aims not simply to argue that the

Fantasy's reception history provides it with a messianic meaning, but also that Chopin was aware that his audience would view his work this way: "Chopin, well aware of these musical allusions, allowed them to speak directly or as concealed suggestions" (55). However, what differentiates Goldberg's analysis of the Fantasy from Kurpiński's allusion to the "Dąbrowski Mazurka" is that Kurpiński explicitly demonstrated his intent to link his own work with another through his own words, while Goldberg does not cite any of Chopin's letters or recollections from his contemporaries to support this reading of the Fantasy. Goldberg continues to establish links between parts of the Fantasy and Polish national songs, but she relies solely on the analyses of other scholars such as Tomaszewski to do so.



[Example 5: Fantasy op. 49, measures 199-207 (Chopin 1894, 86)]

It is also notable that, in her article, Goldberg quotes Szulc several times, first in response to the Fantasy, Op. 49, as an example of how Chopin's contemporaries found

national qualities in his work: “Its themes are national, full of sweetness and lyricism, namely the [B major] melody … whose fleeting, almost unintentional recollection toward the end of the composition makes a unique impression” (Goldberg 2004, 78). As Goldberg explains, Szulc declared Chopin to be the “voice of the prophet” who would represent the nation. Goldberg continues to quote Szulc: “[Chopin] belongs exclusively to our nation; the nation should, therefore, know about him … a time will come when Chopin’s masterpieces will permeate the nation, for they are native, immaculate, and purely Polish” (84). Szulc’s opinions fit in the literary circles of Polish messianism that Goldberg discusses in this article, but do not necessarily demonstrate Chopin’s intentions in his work, nor the inherent meaning behind it. Goldberg’s final statement in her article is revealing in regards to the abstract grounds on which the national figure debate occurs:

> Chopin was never a devoted messianist, but the visions of Poland’s past glory, its suffering and death, and hopes for its resurrection surrounded and touched him. Being reserved, unwilling to commit himself to any “-isms,” and seldom expressing his most passionate thoughts in words, he would let his music speak instead. And it was through his music that he would most eloquently express, for everyone to hear, his dreams of Poland past and future … (Goldberg 2004, 86)

This quote reveals that the only grounds on which the national figure argument can be proven is on the basis of Chopin’s music and its national quality. Goldberg acknowledges that Chopin did not reveal the intentions behind his works, but still assumes that he intended to represent a messianist narrative through his work without having any evidence from Chopin himself to support it. Goldberg’s statement serves as a summary of

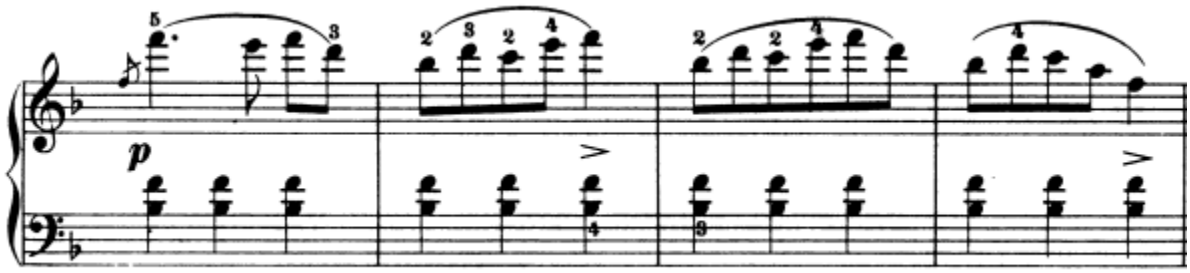
the nature of the national figure debate as a whole, in which individual analyses of Chopin's works and the search for abstract national allusions are the only methods of proving Chopin to be the nationalist people already view him to be.

Source of the myths

One prominent aspect of musical nationalism is a sense of "authentic" folk, which often involves quoting actual folk songs from one's own country, as did Bartók, or writing folk-like music with a nationalist purpose, as did Smetana. Many scholars have attempted to determine how this definition could apply to Chopin. Barbara Milewski, in her article "Chopin's Mazurkas and the Myth of the Folk," analyzes Chopin's biographical history extensively to trace the origins of what she views as myths surrounding folk-inspired interpretations of Chopin's work. She describes how, in an effort to put into words the musical content of Chopin's mazurkas, Franz Liszt, Chopin's friend, fellow pianist, and composer, evoked the image of ballroom dancing in Poland to associate with the music. (Milewski 1999, 114). Such "poetic devices" were not intended to represent the facts, but rather to assist the reader in understanding the essence of the musical work in question, and they predated the late 19th century and early 20th century's focus on verifiable facts rather than emotional associations. But what Liszt used as a Romantic evocation of Chopin's music evolved into other biographers placing the music in the context of the "authentic" folk. In 1873, Szulc, for instance, took Liszt's words not just literally, but to a much further extent, claiming that Chopin took musical ideas directly from folk sources. The idea of the folk was at the center of European

nationalism during this time, with the true heart of the nation being centered around the Polish countryside rather than the ballrooms and salons of Chopin's musical world (115).

Szulc asserted this connection about Chopin's mazurkas in his early biography of the composer, *Fryderyk Chopin i utwory jego muzyczne* [Fryderyk Chopin and his musical works] (1873), pointing out the musical elements he viewed as originating from folk music: "We namely call attention to the jarring, but nevertheless extremely characteristic, dissonant B-natural in the raised seventh harmony of the third part [of op. 24 no. 2] in F major. Compare this to the E-natural in the B-flat Trio of [the] posthumous [Mazurka] op. 68, no. 3 [Example 6]. This is taken directly from folk music" (115).



[Example 6: Measures 37-40 of Mazurka op. 68 no. 3 (Chopin 1894, 141)]

The B-natural and E-natural that Szulc discuss in his analysis are examples of Chopin's use of the sharpened fourth over an open fifth. This particular musical element imitates the same interval in the Lydian mode, which serves as a musical topos for folk music (Rosen 1999, 416). Szulc, in his claim of Chopin's use of folk sources, draws upon the role of the raised fourth as a musical element that separates Chopin's music from the German universal standard. Szulc may have viewed the raised fourth as having direct folk

origins due to Chopin's national origin, his use of the mazurka genre in a cosmopolitan musical landscape, and/or Polish music's placement as "peripheral" (outside of the German standard) as described by Taruskin (Taruskin 2001).

Later, in the twentieth century, Gerald Abraham suggested that the codified musical elements of the mazurka genre, such as sharpened fourth intervals and open fifths as pedal tones, may serve as evidence that Chopin was borrowing from folk music (Milewski 1999, 116). Though Abraham avoids making a direct claim, his suggestions ultimately come from bias rather than research into the context of the music. As Milewski observes, "Abraham offered this supposition in part because he found no element of virtuosity in Chopin's op. 68" (116). Milewski also notes here that the features of sharped fourths and open fifth drones are also used outside of mazurkas to evoke a sense of folk in general, serving as musical cues for the audience to identify a work as such (116). Zdzisław Jachimecki, a Polish musicologist, went one step further in his 1949 Chopin biography, claiming that Chopin wished to study and document Polish folk music through his work: "He knew ... the most authentic Polish folk music because he drew it straight from its source, without the aid of middlemen.... On numerous occasions, in conversations with friends or in his letters, Chopin spoke of his efforts to familiarize himself with folk music and to study thoroughly this folk music's intrinsic features" (117). Milewski explains how Jachimecki used the same arguments as Abraham when examining the music with the presence of standard folk elements serving as evidence of folk borrowing. But examining only the music without any supporting evidence from primary sources led Szulc, Abraham and Jachimecki into the territory of speculation.

These biographers made claims of folk borrowing without any sources to document Chopin's intent, such as his letters, or recollections from his contemporaries. Biographers were relying solely on his exposure to Polish rural music as described in his letters from his youth to give credence to the argument. Despite this, the claims of Chopin's music as being derived from the folk continued to pass from scholar to scholar, using personal interpretations of his music to support their beliefs.

The conversation surrounding musical nationalism began to evolve in the early 20th century, as prominent composers such as Béla Bartók, who was also an ethnomusicologist, presented their ideas of how to represent the nation through music. Bartók criticized the view of Chopin's music as derived from the folk, noting that he "probably had no opportunity of hearing the genuine peasant music at any time." This was a bold claim, as the national figure viewpoint was the consensus at the time. As Bartók wrote in a 1921 essay:

> With us in Eastern Europe, [popular art music] comes from amateurs of gentle birth who satisfy the creative impulse of their slender musical talents by the composition of more or less simple tunes. Their music is partly made up of elements of Western European art music- a jumble of commonplaces in this respect- but it also bears traces of the peasant music of their own country. This is what lends their music a certain exotic flavour by which even men like Liszt, Brahms, and Chopin felt themselves attracted. Nevertheless, the outcome of this mixture of exoticism and banality is something imperfect, inartistic, in marked contrast to the clarity of real peasant music with which it compares most

> unfavorably. At all events it is a noteworthy fact that artistic perfection can only be achieved by one of the two extremes: on the one hand by peasant folk in the mass, completely devoid of the culture of the town-dweller, on the other by creative power of an individual genius. The creative impulse of anyone who has the misfortune to be born somewhere between these two extremes leads only to barren, pointless and misshapen works. (Bartók 1993, 322).

Bartók's statement is very telling of the emphasis of the rural over the urban concerning the topic of musical nationalism. Referring to the "clarity of real peasant music," Bartók here states the grounds on which musical nationalism's effectiveness can be judged. The closer national music came to the rural ideal, the more artistic Bartók believed it to be. To Bartók, music untouched by urban cultures was pure, free and unfettered. It is also notable how Bartók sets the pure peasant music against creative genius. This may imply that genius cannot exist as part of peasant music, with genius as a concept of artistic urban culture. Bartók, in his essay, placed Chopin's music between the two extremes, believing his work to be "barren, pointless and misshapen" when it came to representing national music. Bartók believed that because Chopin was influenced by the urban musical life of Warsaw ("banality"), he could not have created genuine folk-inspired music ("exoticism"). While Chopin did hear "genuine peasant music" during his vacations to Szafarnia, Bartók's observation of Chopin's primary influences does hold weight in one respect. As will be examined in Chapter 2, Chopin's compositional style and artistic views were very much shaped by his upbringing in Warsaw and musical education under Elsner at the Warsaw Conservatory. It was from Elsner that he learned harmony and

counterpoint, and his influence continued to be present as Chopin made his career in Paris, as observed from his friends' recollections of their conversations together.

In response to Bartók's claims, scholars searched Chopin's work meticulously for the smallest shreds of musical details that would prove Bartók wrong. Even though Bartók's opinions of what constituted authentic folk music were subjective, his reputation as a composer and ethnomusicologist gave an imperative for scholars to defend the Chopin mythology. As Milewski describes, "By calling into question Chopin's direct exposure to the music of Polish peasants, and by underscoring the importance of authentic folk music in the creation of national music, Bartók threatened to undermine the folk myth that had been offered as historical truth for so many years" (Milewski 1999, 118). According to Milewski, many of the current assertions that the Mazurka op. 68, no. 3 is derived or quotes from folk music come from these reactionary biographies.

Quotation, inspiration, and intent

Chopin certainly had opportunities to hear authentic Polish folk music from rural sources, with the letters from the young Chopin during his vacations in Szafarnia suggesting as much. These letters have often been used as evidence to back up claims that Chopin intentionally quoted or took inspiration from folk music, accompanied by individual musical analysis. In one of his letters, written to his parents in Warsaw on August 26, 1825, Chopin notably uses exaggerated language to describe the music of the peasants in Szafarnia:

> The funniest was the day before yesterday, perhaps even of all the days of my stay in Szafarnia [...] the harvest festival of two villages was celebrated. We were sitting at supper, eating the last dish, when from afar we heard choirs of discordant descants, composed now of old ladies gaggling through their noses, now of girls mercilessly squealing a half-tone higher with the greatest part of their mugs, to the accompaniment of fiddlers playing on three strings, who, after each strophe was sung, echoed from behind with the alto voice (Chopin 2016, 56).

Vivid descriptive phrases such as "gaggling through their noses" and "mercilessly squealing" show that Chopin is comparing folk music to noise because he is unfamiliar with its sonorities. As Milewski explains, the language used in these letters may imply that these trips served to give Chopin a taste of a lifestyle removed from the urban artistic world of Warsaw: "Chopin's letters from Szafarnia, on which so many claims have been staked, might more strongly indicate something entirely different: that the folk and its music were a novelty for Chopin, something shocking, altogether unfamiliar, and for these reasons noteworthy" (Milewski 1999, 122). To Chopin, upon hearing it for the first time, folk music may have seemed discordant in comparison to the triadic harmonies he had been studying in Warsaw. So while it is true that Chopin heard authentic Polish folk music, the letters from Szafarnia do not serve as sufficient evidence of his music's folk inspiration, but rather as Chopin's fascination with a different musical lifestyle.

In order to further understand exactly why Chopin may have found the peasant music so different and unfamiliar, the musical contents of these dances must be examined. Roderyk Lange, in his article "On Differences between the Rural and the

Urban: Traditional Polish Peasant Dancing," examined the rural dances of Polish peasants of 45 different villages through field work. He notated both music and dance movements and compared them to the standardized urban versions of the dances in question. One of the most crucial qualities of the music for Polish peasant dances was improvisation; the notes and rhythms of the music changed from performance to performance. The music for a dance was never performed the same way twice, and Lange found variations of different dances even in a single village. This element of improvisation characterizes the dance as a tradition and act rather than a concrete form. Lange found that the dance incorporates "emotional stresses", making it incredibly expressive: "The rhythmic pattern has a pulsating character which follows the bodily processes of tension and relaxation" (Lange 1974, 45). Thus the music is closely linked to the dance and the movements of the body, and one cannot be separated from the other.

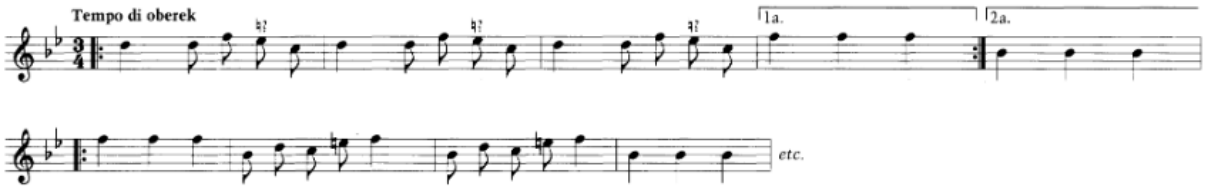
Another crucial element is the role of the dancers. The dancers guide the musicians: they give the melody to the musicians at the start, and the musicians must follow the dancers' movements. The melody will vary with subsequent repetitions, but its direction always remains at the whim of the dancers- the musicians must be attentive to any changes in tempo or rhythm. In this way, the dancers "conduct" the musicians, serving as the leaders. As an effect of this, Lange could not get the dancers to respond to music that had been recorded from an earlier session, because it did not suit what they wanted. As can be seen from Lange's observations, there is no standard method of performing these dances authentically. The dances are uniquely suited to the tight-knit rural communities from which they originated. "The peasant version is decidedly

confined to the rural situation, where there is a close interaction observed between the dancer and musician, where dance and music are still improvised. This feature gets lost in the effect of urbanization" (50).

Chopin's versions of these dances thus were based on urban models, as they have a standardized structure. The music is composed rather than improvised, and there is no dancer to influence the music's direction. According to Lange, in the early nineteenth century, the *kujawiak*, one of the rural folk dances, was adopted by urban populations to become a national dance. However, because this dance was removed from its rural context, it no longer had the same character as the original dance tradition. The music in the urban version has a steady three-count, and the dance is a lot more simplified than the original (46). The music Chopin heard in Warsaw was the urban version for the middle and upper classes, used for entertainment and far removed from its original context.

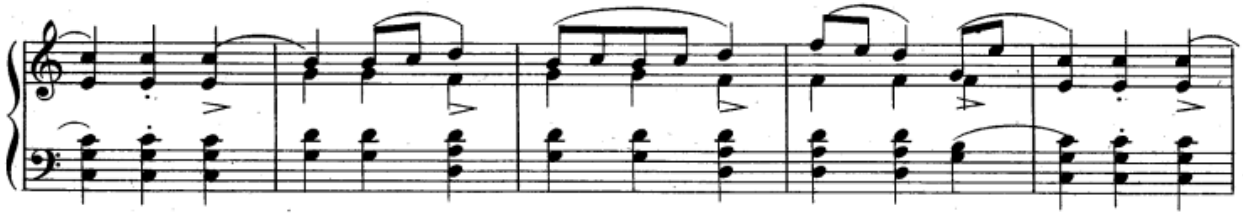
Because nationalism focuses intently on a sense of "authentic" folk, scholars attempted to find rural qualities in Chopin's more urban-styled mazurkas. An example of the level of detail scholars used in their personal analyses of Chopin's work is one of the most pervasive myths regarding Chopin and quotation, according to Milewski. In 1960, Maurice Brown, in his index of Chopin's compositions, claimed that the *Poco più vivo* section of Mazurka in F, op. 68, no. 3 quotes a Polish folk song entitled "Oj Magdalino" (Brown 1960, 38). Milewski describes this tune as one "that would serve as a floating folk trope in music-historical literature for the next thirty years" (Milewski 1999, 118). The first problem Milewski identifies with Brown's claim is that there is no source given for this tune from any collection of Polish folk songs, including those by Kolberg such as

Pieśni ludu polskiego, published in 1857. The Bb-D-C-E-F motive in op. 68 no. 3 [Example 6] that Brown identifies as taken from "Oj Magdalino" [Example 7] is only in one measure of this unsourced tune, making it unlikely that Chopin was intentionally quoting this song.



[Example 7: "Oj Magdalino," the folk source for op. 68 no. 3 according to Brown. (Milewski 1999, 119)]

However, a different mazurka, op. 24, no. 2 (1833), uses a gesture of three repeated quarter notes, referred to by Milewski as a *holupiec* gesture, to outline musical sections [Example 8] which she also observes in the songs collected in Kolberg's anthologies. We can see the *holupiec* gesture in measures 4, 5, and 8 of "Oj Magdalino" above. Milewski thus finds that the Mazurka op. 24 no. 2 is a better choice to demonstrate borrowing from "Oj Magdalino" for this reason (119).



[Example 8: Measures 16-20 of Mazurka op. 24 no. 2. (Chopin 1894, 34)]

This supposed instance of quotation by Chopin is just one example of the level of detail that scholars have focused on when making their claims in response to Bartók. The lack of a source for the folk tune, as well as the minimal resemblance between "Oj Magdalino" and op. 68 no. 3, are the primary reasons that Milewski labels the quotation trope as a myth (Milewski 1999, 119).

Regardless of the lack of evidence, however, this claim went undisputed by many subsequent biographers. Paul Hamburger reiterated this claim in his own analysis of Chopin's mazurkas in 1966, appearing as part of Alan Walker's *Frédéric Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician*: "in a few cases a definite model is found to exist, such as the folk-tune 'Oj Magdalino' which appears in the *Poco più vivo* of the youthful Mazurka in F major, op. 68, no. 3 (op. posth.), of 1829 [...] This example shows why there are so few direct references to folklore in Chopin's dances: special contexts as the above apart, he felt hemmed in by the primitive rigidity of these melodies *in their entirety*" (Hamburger 1967, 74). Milewski notes that Hamburger is offering an example of quotation that proves the music's rural origins, but is also arguing that, at the same time, the mazurkas did not really represent the peasant origins of the dance (Milewski 1999, 120). With "Oj Magdalino" serving as the sole exception to this rule, Bartók's observation of the mazurkas' artificiality, in terms of their urban influence, becomes more apparent when noting that the folk tune has no source.

The "Oj Magdalino" claim appears in more recent biographies, such as Jeremy Siepmann's 1995 *Chopin, The Reluctant Romantic*. In his analysis of Chopin's mazurkas, Siepmann states: "[Chopin] abjured, in general, the direct quotation of recognizable folk

tunes, and with very few exceptions - the *poco più vivo* of op. 68, no. 3, being one of them - his sixty-odd mazurkas are composed of entirely original material" (Siepmann 1995, 231). In Siepmann's analysis, the Mazurka op. 68, no. 3, referring undoubtedly to the "Oj Magdalino" trope described by Milewski, serves as an exception to Chopin's deliberate avoidance of quotation. It is included nonetheless because the source by Brown is a substantial one in Chopin scholarship, a catalogue of Chopin's works. Scholars such as Siepmann used the "Oj Magdalino" claim not simply to refute Bartók, but in order to describe Chopin's unique style in a way that fit the fact-and source-oriented mentality of the twentieth century. The quotation claim, though it serves as an exception for Siepmann, is included to support the argument of Chopin drawing inspiration directly from folk sources. As Milewski explains, "Ultimately, however, op. 68, no. 3, betrays something else: the regular impulse of writers and scholars to seek out a national or indigenous source for Chopin's mazurkas as a means of understanding both these works and their composer" (Milewski 1999, 121). While Romantic authors such as Liszt evoked imagery of ballroom dancers and the otherworldly to describe Chopin's music, twentieth-century biographers and scholars instead searched for proof of the music's rural origins, even though they had no concrete sources on which to base their interpretations.

While some scholars have claimed that Chopin quoted *directly* from folk sources, others have claimed instead that he simply used them as a starting point. But even this claim has its flaws, since it requires an understanding of the composer's intent that can't be objectively proven through musical analysis alone. However, this claim continues to be present in much of Chopin scholarship, even to this day. An example of a recent

biography that uses this claim can also be found in Siepmann's 1995 biography. Siepmann uses elaborate language to describe Chopin's inspiration from folk sources. His version of this claim, in the chapter on Chopin's mazurkas, reads as follows:

> Unlike Bartók, many of whose piano works consist of actual folk-song settings, arranged with a view to preserving the character and enhancing the spirit of the originals, Chopin took the authentic mazurkas and, perhaps just as importantly, the memories and visions they kindled in him as a point of departure: a source of inspiration and a spur to the imagination, out of which he could fashion a new and highly sophisticated kind of music, whose salient features were nevertheless quintessentially Polish and whose spiritual character enshrined in a supra-national art what he deeply felt to be the collective voice of his own people (Siepmann 1995, 231).

Right away, Siepmann is refuting Bartók, as is the custom. Siepmann here sets Chopin's mazurkas against the folk originals, believing Chopin's versions of the same dances to be of a higher artistic quality after the composer elevated the peasant music to art music. Siepmann also evokes a sense of nostalgia through mentioning "memories and visions," painting Chopin's vacations to Szafarnia as a youth as the inspiration behind his mazurkas. The problem with this statement, despite the fact that it seems to be a middle ground between the claims of direct quotation and Bartók's claim that Chopin did not have the opportunity to hear genuine peasant music, is that it assumes evidence of the composer's intent that we do not have.

Moreover, the claim of elevating traditional Polish music to art music contradicts Chopin's own opinions on the subject. Oskar Kolberg, a contemporary of Chopin, collected folk-song melodies from rural areas of Poland. His first anthologies included piano accompaniments, intended to make them more palatable for an urban, middle-class audience. Chopin criticized this effort, saying in a letter to his family in 1847: "[Kolberg's] travails only twist things and make the work more difficult for the genius who one day will unravel the truth. And until that time, all those beautiful things will remain with fake noses, rouged, with shortened legs, or on stilts, and they will be a laughing-stock for those who will look scornfully upon them" (Chopin 2016, 406). Chopin believed that authentic Polish folk music should not be dressed up with musical characteristics, such as piano accompaniments, that took the melodies out of their rural contexts. As a result of this criticism from Chopin and others like him, Kolberg revised his strategy for later anthologies by not including piano accompaniment. This sentiment from Chopin shows a genuine appreciation for folk music, as he believed it was beautiful without trying to transform it into the Western idea of art music. The first versions of Kolberg's anthologies must have sounded very out-of-character to Chopin, who heard such music during his vacations to Szafarnia. Returning to Siepmann's claim that Chopin intended to "fashion a new and highly sophisticated kind of music" (Siepmann 1995, 231), we can now see that Chopin's own words imply that the composer disapproved of such an approach.

Strangely enough, Siepmann, before making this statement, acknowledges Chopin's sentiment and disapproval of modifying Polish folk songs for modern tastes.

However, Siepmann makes a similar claim to Jachimecki in the process, as Milewski describes it, "as a composer with very modern sensibilities, an empirical scholar-composer diligently collecting and studying music of the folk" (Milewski 1999, 117). Siepmann references Bartók's statement directly, that Chopin was more influenced by the urban than the rural, and uses strong language in an attempt to refute Bartók's statement, 74 years later:

> The conclusion that Chopin had only the most tenuous acquaintance with the authentic mazurkas of the peasantry, however, although drawn by no less an ethnomusicological authority than Bartók, will not stand up to scrutiny. It is perfectly true that the mazurkas he heard in Warsaw had been through the urban refiner's fire, with not always happy results, but no one understood that better than Chopin himself. Hence his determination in Szafarnia to collect as many examples as possible of the real thing. By 1830, when he left Poland for good, he had become a genuine connoisseur of his country's music and was roused to displays of real anger by attempts to dress it up for popular consumption. If Bartók believed, on the basis of the mazurkas, that Chopin himself was guilty of doing precisely that, albeit at the highest artistic level, he was seriously mistaken (Siepmann 1995, 230-1).

The first thing to note is how Bartók still stands as an "ethnomusicological authority" even in 1995 when this biography was published. Though Siepmann identifies that a difference exists between rural and urban mazurka forms, he assumes that Chopin was well-versed enough in the rural mazurkas in order to adapt them ideally as an art

form (if he intended to do so). Siepmann uses as evidence Chopin's vacations in Szafarnia as a youth, similarly to the previously discussed biographers. However, the letters from Szafarnia, as discussed, do not read like those of a scholar documenting folk music as Kolberg or Bartók did. Chopin's imaginative and fanciful language describing the music, written in his letter to his family, instead reads more like Chopin wishing to tell an exciting story to send home. Another observation that can be made is that Siepmann is making his arguments on Bartók's terms, in that the rural mazurkas are the most ideal representation of Polish music in general. Siepmann admits that Chopin disliked elevating folk music to art music, but takes great care to add the modifier "for popular consumption," to separate his own view of Chopin's music from the practice of Kolberg that Chopin was against. According to Siepmann, Chopin *was* intentionally elevating folk music to art music, but in a way that was more artistically valuable and not "vulgar" as Bartók suggested. However, the line between "vulgar" and "exotic" is difficult to define objectively, as Bartók's terms are not objective to begin with. The debate on the representation of Polishness (or lack thereof) in Chopin's music is one founded entirely on abstract concepts.

The goal for the Chopin scholar who wishes to portray him as a nationalist composer has traditionally been to link these experiences with an intention by the composer himself to capture this rural music in his work. However, there are numerous challenges that get in the scholar's way. Chopin was notorious for obscuring his intentions, as Berger explains: "It would be good to know how Chopin himself understood the relationship between music and other expressive media, or … between

music and the world. However, unlike so many of his most interesting musical contemporaries, Chopin did not publicise his aesthetic views" (Berger 1994, 77). Thus, the emotional content is unknown, but is rather ascribed to Chopin's music by its listeners. According to Randall R. Dipert, "Even when we have somehow determined the high-level intentions behind a piece, we are frequently unable to express it clearly and precisely in language" (Dipert 1980, 209). Chopin himself seemed to be aware of this, which may be the reason why he did not reveal his intentions behind his works. Berger also quotes Wilhelm von Lenz, who reported Chopin as saying: "'I indicate, […] it's up to the listener to complete the picture'" (Berger 1994, 80). From Chopin's statement here, we can see that he deliberately chose not to reveal the true meaning behind his works, if such meanings existed. Taking Chopin's words into account, the claims of deliberate quotation or inspiration from folk music now emerge as speculation at best. This quote also explains how many of Chopin's more radical contemporaries were able to interpret his works as representing a narrative of Polish messianism, using Chopin's lack of a program as an opportunity to create their own.

Berger, however, is careful to remind the reader that nationalist interpretations were not explicitly intended by the composer:

> It follows that … the future-oriented revolutionary narrative that provided many European intellectuals, and in particular many Polish émigrés, of the period with a self-image and self-understanding, should not be taken as a "private programme" which Chopin actually had in mind while composing but subsequently chose to

> suppress. It should, rather, be understood as one of those contexts the composer might recognize as relevant to his work (80).

According to Berger's view, since Chopin left the meaning of his music up for interpretation, a messianic narrative is not necessarily far removed from the context of the music. Though there was no program to the Ballades, the story of hope for Poland seemed to be a commonly agreed-upon meaning among Chopin's contemporaries. It is possible to examine their interpretations in the context of Polish nationalism without claiming that Chopin intended them for his work.

The myths that established Chopin as a national figure have been spread from scholar to scholar, each using the scholars who came before them as authorities in order to give the impression that the "myth of the folk" is backed up by critical research. The myths that began from Liszt's evocation of Polish ballroom dancing in his biography of Chopin eventually turned into claims of Chopin having intentionally quoted folk music. Other scholars claimed that Chopin elevated rural Polish folk music to the level of art music, using this claim as a reason for the uniqueness of his mazurkas. Whether it is the myth of quotation, elevating folk music to art music, or using Chopin's contemporaries as proof of his intentions, these devices used to push the national composer narrative still appear in modern scholarly works. It is only recently that some scholars have taken to reexamining and deconstructing the myths surrounding Chopin's life by examining the primary sources and bringing secondary sources under closer scrutiny.

Chapter 2: Chopin's Life, Musical Influences and Artistic Views

Chopin's music is often hailed as a significant example of nationalism in music. Using the Polish dance forms of his homeland such as the mazurka and polonaise as a base, he composed with a unique sensitivity and subtlety that would capture audiences during his lifetime and well into the future. Chopin's contemporaries identified a strong national quality in his work, setting a standard by which biographers would later interpret his music. But there is certainly much more to Chopin's life and work than Polish nationalism. By examining the musical environment of Warsaw in which Chopin developed as a composer, we learn about Chopin's instruction in harmony and counterpoint under his teacher, Józef Elsner, as well as Chopin's exposure to the culture of the salon and the grandeur of the opera. Looking deeper into the musical offerings of Paris, where Chopin traveled in order to further his career, a picture of a city overflowing with art, culture and intellectual pursuits emerges. Chopin was able to adapt and thrive in this new environment, making friends who shared his artistic values and encountering music that challenged those values. Though contemporaries as well as biographers would focus intently on the nationalism they saw in Chopin's music, it was his education and upbringing in Warsaw and his participation in the vibrant musical life of Paris that served as the most significant influences to his development as a composer, the direction of his career, and his outlook on art.

Early career and influences, Warsaw's musical life

One of Chopin's main sources of musical development was his early performances in Warsaw salons. Chopin, from the very beginning of his musical career, was tied almost exclusively to the salon tradition. As a child, Chopin demonstrated enormous musical talent, and performed in both aristocratic and bourgeois salons. Salon hosts invited scholars, artists and musicians to provide a source of entertainment for themselves and their guests. This was an imported tradition, most commonly associated with French arts and culture. It was prominent in Warsaw during Chopin's upbringing, leading Warsaw to become a mirror of the other cultural centers of Europe, such as Paris and Vienna. For Chopin, the salon tradition in Warsaw allowed him to gain experience as a performer and composer, as well as expose himself to numerous musical influences. The hosts of the salons in which the young Chopin performed were very passionate about music and often had some degree of musical training. Through salon meetings, aristocrats could serve as patrons of the arts, contributing greatly to Warsaw's musical life.

Goldberg in *Music of Chopin's Warsaw* describes how Chopin was exposed to a rich library of piano music through the salon tradition. The libraries of salon hosts, according to Goldberg, give a glimpse of the piano literature at the time. This included piano sonatas by Clementi, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, as well as piano works by Johann Sebastian and Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach. "Because of the limited consumer market, the more demanding works typically were not published in Poland, but a steady flow of publications from abroad made the masterpieces of piano repertory accessible and known to Polish professionals and music lovers" (Goldberg 2008, 192). Because of

Chopin's status as a child prodigy, the aristocracy took a particular liking to him, inviting him to their salons to perform. According to Goldberg, "Once the young virtuoso grew to be known in the fashionable aristocratic world of Warsaw, featuring a performance by him during a musical soirée became chic" (157). Chopin also developed a relationship with the Russian imperial family, particularly the Grand Duke Constantine, who may have relied on Chopin's playing to calm his temper. The Chopins themselves, being a middle-class family, also hosted their own salon meetings with Nicholas Chopin's connections in academic circles (153). These meetings often heavily involved music and gave the young Chopin opportunities to perform and absorb knowledge from his father's colleagues. Though eventually Chopin's parents forbade his performances, fearing that the life of a *Wunderkind* would have a negative impact on his education and emotional development (182), these early experiences in the salon would provide the groundwork for Chopin's career as a composer and performer, as well as his lifelong association with the nobility and a traditional system of patronage.

Another important influence on Chopin was Jozef Elsner, his composition teacher at the Warsaw Conservatory. It is here where we see Chopin begin to develop as a composer. Elsner instructed Chopin in music theory and counterpoint, giving him the tools he needed to develop his own personal style. The creative freedom he was given allowed him to find his voice as a composer. Chopin's love, first and foremost, was for the piano, and it was around this instrument that his talent was centered. Chopin had no experience with large-scale compositions and little skill with orchestration and counterpoint, but he was able to truly shine through his striking chromaticism and

harmony with the piano. From Elsner, Chopin learned structure and form in music, which he used as a basis to develop his own harmonic idiom. Goldberg mentions the first movement of the C minor sonata as an example of Chopin's lack of experience: "Chopin's preoccupation with technical matters considered vital by his teacher is apparent: much of his effort goes into incorporating contrapuntal writing, establishing motivic cohesiveness, and creating a larger sense of balance" (122). These three things were important principles of Classical composition, the model that Elsner followed; thus Chopin's early works closely adhere to these balanced musical structures. But Elsner was not necessarily rigid in his approach. He encouraged his students to experiment with expression, telling them to avoid "fashionable turns of melody which today will be accepted with applause but tomorrow will be forgotten" (125). Elsner's philosophy thus valued the individuality of the composer over contemporary trends- the sentiment of Romanticism in its essence.

Elsner, being an opera composer, also is believed to have passed on his love of Mozart to Chopin. Chopin wrote his Variations on "La ci darem la mano" from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, op. 2, for piano and orchestra (1827) during his studies at the Conservatory. Goldberg describes how Chopin adapted Mozart's duet: "The normalization of Mozart's eloquent asymmetries was presumably dictated by the nature of variation form, in which their expressive power would wane through repeated use. Instead, Chopin deferred metric irregularities until the end of the piece" (130-31). Chopin recognized how irregular rhythms were the prime focus of the original duet, simplifying the melody to create a groundwork for expressive variations. This early work would help

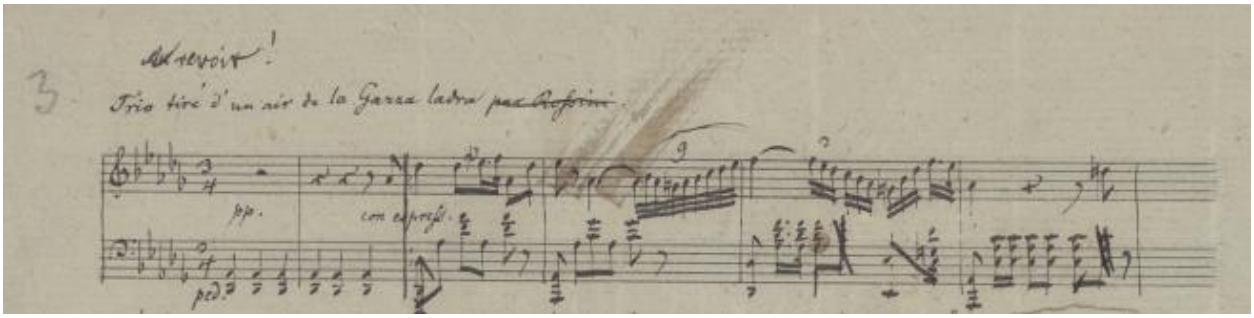
to establish Chopin as a composer. Fellow Romantic composer Robert Schumann, in his famous review in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* in 1831, responded to the work with "Hats off, gentlemen, a genius!" (Taruskin and Gibbs 2013, 620). When looking at Chopin's earliest compositional feats, we can see that Elsner was a perfect fit for Chopin as a teacher, serving as one of the dominant musical influences in Chopin's early career as a composer. To further understand the impact of Elsner, we need look no further than Chopin himself, who attested to Elsner's influence on his work in a letter to his childhood friend Tytus Woyciechowski on April 10, 1830: "if I hadn't studied with Elsner, who was able to give me self-confidence, I would certainly be capable of even less than I am today" (Chopin 2016, 151).

Elsner's influence on Chopin's musical development went beyond his education at the Conservatory. From 1799 to 1824, Elsner served as music director for the National Theater in Warsaw, at which many operas, both Polish and imported from elsewhere, were regularly performed. Knowing Elsner's love for opera, it is no surprise that he held such a position, and he used his experience as both composer and director of operas to expand Chopin's musical world. As Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger explains in his article, "Placing Chopin: Reflections on a Compositional Aesthetic": "The National Opera had strong Italianate tendencies [...] and in the socio-cultural context of 1820s Warsaw it played a crucial role in feeding Chopin's enthusiasm for Rossini" (Eigeldinger 1994, 104). Chopin attended opera performances often, both in Warsaw and abroad during his travels. Those in Chopin's support network at home, including his family, friends and mentors, hoped that he would write Polish operas, considering that the genre was

considered to be one of the grandest, most highly respected forms of musical expression at the time. According to Eigeldinger, "Elsner was, with [Maciej] Kamieński [(1734-1825)] and Kurpiński, the founder of Polish national opera, and he was concerned to introduce into high art stylized elements of folklore; he also continually exhorted his pupil to work in an operatic domain" (104). Though Chopin never came to write an opera as so many had hoped, his frequent exposure to the opera world as both a social function and an opportunity for musical inspiration served to influence the direction of his work for the piano.

Notably, the operas of Gioacchino Rossini dominated the stage of the National Theater during Chopin's time, being performed more than operas by any other composer. Rossini's operas were known for helping to popularize the *bel canto* style of singing, emphasizing flowing, beautiful singing above all else. During Chopin's early career, he frequently performed works by Rossini, whether accompanying soprano Konstancja Gładkowska whom he admired greatly or improvising and composing works based on Rossini's themes. Goldberg gives a few examples of direct influence from Rossini in Chopin's early works. In 1825, Chopin wrote in a letter to his childhood friend Jan Białobłocki that he had written a polonaise based on *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and wished to publish it. Today, the work has been lost (Goldberg 2008, 246). Another example, and perhaps the most prominent one, is his Polonaise in B-flat minor, IV, no. 5 (1826), in which he includes a quotation from the aria "Vieni fra queste braccia" from Rossini's opera, *La gazza ladra*. The work was dedicated to his friend Wilhelm Kolberg as a parting gift, and the quotation of the opera was intended to arouse memories of when the

two attended a performance. In the score itself he writes above the trio section [Figure 1]: "Au revoir! After an aria from *Gazza ladra,*" indicating the quotation (247):



[Figure 1: Chopin quotes Rossini's *La gazza ladra* in his Polonaise in B-flat minor. (Chopin 1826, 3)]

This quotation of Rossini shows not only the prevalence of his work in the musical landscape of Chopin's Warsaw, but also that he felt Rossini's theme the best choice to express his friendship with Białobłocki, demonstrating how the *bel canto* melodies of Rossini made their way into Chopin's personal expression. Chopin would continue to attend performances of Rossini's operas in Paris, impressed with its offerings, as he wrote in a letter to Tytus Woyciechowski in 1831: "I haven't written you anything about the Opera yet. I didn't hear how [Luigi] Lablache, [Giovanni Battista] Rubini and [Maria Felicia] Malibran (Garcia) sang *The Barber* [*Il barbiere di Siviglia*] last week. Nor did I hear how Rubini, [Giuditta] Pasta and Lablache sang *Othello* [*Otello*]; how Rubini, Lablache and Mme Raimbeaux sang *The Italian Girl* [*L'italiana in Algeri*]. If ever, then it is now that I have everything in Paris" (Chopin 2016, 252). From this letter we can see that even after Chopin ventured far from his homeland in search of a more

successful career as a composer, opera continued to be an ever-present influence in his musical journey.

Chopin in exile

The year 1830 was a turbulent one in European history. Insurrections were occurring across Europe, with the whole continent feeling the effects of revolutionary sentiment. It comes as no surprise that Poland, having essentially been erased from the map thanks to its partitioning by Prussia, Austria and Russia, would be affected by the flames of revolution. When Tsar Nicholas I of Russia expressed his intentions to use the Polish Army to suppress the July Revolution in Paris, the Poles revolted, refusing to take part ("November Insurrection" 2018). This revolt against the tsar marked the beginning of the November Uprising, which had a significant effect on Chopin.

Before the Uprising, Chopin had already left Warsaw for Vienna, hoping to further his musical career on the basis of the enthusiastic response he received from his concert there a year before. However, he found much difficulty after some time, as opportunities to perform or publish his work were few and far between. Chopin had to rely on monetary support from his father, and prospects looked grim. The onset of the November Uprising did not help matters, as Austria was not very welcoming to Poles. Thus, the best course of action was to continue on to Paris (Pekacz 2000, 166). Upon arriving in Stuttgart on his way to Paris, word reached Chopin of the fall of Warsaw. The city fell on September 8, 1831, prompting the tsar's limitation of personal freedoms for the Polish people. The Poles had not only been overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of the

Russian army, but also lacked strong, united leadership to carry out a revolution effectively ("November Insurrection" 2018). The news was especially devastating for Chopin, who held the hope, as so many other Poles did, that his country would one day become free. Chopin recorded his immediate response to the news in his journal, written as a frantic, emotional stream of consciousness. One entry reads:

> Stuttgart — What is happening with her [Konstancja]? — Where is she? — Poor thing! — Perhaps she is in the hands of the Muscovite! — The Muscovite pushes her — strangles — murders, kills her! — Oh, my Life, I am here alone — come to me — I'll dry your tears, I'll heal the wounds of the present [...] Do you have a mother? — And such a bad one! — I have such a good one! — But perhaps I don't have a mother at all anymore. Perhaps the Muscovite has killed her… murdered — my sisters won't surrender unconsciously — no — Father despairs, he doesn't know what to do, he has no one to help raise up Mother. — And here I stand by idly — and here I stand with empty hands — I only moan, express my pain from time to time on the piano — I despair — and what good will that do? — O God, o God! Move the earth, let it engulf the people of this age. Let the most severe torments wrack the French, who did not come to our aid. (Chopin 2016, 233-4)

This quote reveals Chopin's inner struggle in leaving behind his family and friends in Warsaw to pursue his career, especially at such a pivotal moment in Polish history. His despair in this moment comes from his helplessness, not knowing if his family is still alive, and the sadness of knowing that the city of his youth that brimmed with music and

culture had fallen. The journal entries written in Stuttgart serve as a rare example of Chopin expressing his deepest, innermost emotions: the fears are real, immediate and genuine, and the expressive language used here allows the modern reader to empathize with him. Chopin continued on to Paris, seemingly with a heavy heart, hoping to finally establish his career as a composer on a grander scale.

In Paris, there was a sizeable community of Polish émigrés who left their home for Paris after the fall of Warsaw in the November Uprising. Many people in Paris felt sympathy for the Polish cause and welcomed the émigrés. However, the "Citizen King" Louis-Philippe did not demonstrate support for the Polish cause through action. Pekacz describes the nature of France's response to the Uprising, in that Louis-Philippe "was afraid that the revolutionary ideas brought by the Polish emigrants would agitate domestic political opposition against the king, and consequently provoke social unrest" (Pekacz 2000, 165). The Polish émigrés living in Paris were also incredibly divided in their aims. One of the major conflicts was between monarchists and republicans, in deciding what kind of government Poland should have once it gained independence. Chopin's father warned him to keep his distance from the opposing political factions, and his avoidance of these debates was evident from the circles with which he chose to associate.

Much has been said about Chopin living in exile in Paris. However, Chopin's experience as a Polish émigré was much different than others'. As Pekacz notes, Chopin did not come to Paris to escape the consequences of involvement in the Warsaw Uprising, but to find success as a composer in one of Europe's cultural capitals after

setbacks in Vienna (Pekacz 2000, 166). Chopin preferred to spend time amongst the circles of Polish aristocracy, notably the Czartoryski circle, in order to perform in their salons. Chopin was able to build a successful career this way, especially considering that some of the salon hosts knew him as a child prodigy in Warsaw years before. Soon enough, Chopin was receiving numerous invitations to perform in aristocratic salons, and was very much in demand as a piano teacher as well. This earned him further connections with other artists, such as fellow pianist and composer Liszt, painter Eugène Delacroix, and author George Sand (real name Aurore Dudevant), with whom Chopin would enter into a ten-year romantic relationship. Artistic life in Paris was on a much grander scale than in Warsaw, which offered Chopin plenty of opportunities to develop as a composer and establish his signature compositional style. He would focus exclusively on the piano, giving the instrument a massive repertoire that explored its sonorific possibilities through various genres including waltzes, preludes, études, ballades, and nocturnes, but notably, mazurkas and polonaises, Polish folk dance forms derived from those in rural Polish communities. It was through evoking the sounds of his homeland that he further interested audiences, popularizing the dance forms and developing them into genres all their own.

Chopin's artistic views

The rich urban culture of Paris gave Chopin an opportunity to use his talents in order to enter into the most well-known artistic circles. Though Chopin himself did not like to widely share his artistic views, the artists with whom he associated and their

recollections of their conversations with him can inform a modern reader on Chopin's aesthetic and musical preferences. Eigeldinger gives a large list of many of Chopin's musical and artistic contacts in Paris, most notably in relation to the composer's preference for J.S. Bach, among other composers of the late Baroque and early Classical periods. Wilhelm von Lenz, a personal acquaintance of Chopin and Liszt, writes in his first-hand account of his meeting with Chopin: "For himself and himself alone, he would play nothing but Bach, whose influence was absorbed in many places into his own compositions" (Eigeldinger 1994, 120). During their meeting, Lenz had asked Chopin how he prepared for concerts, with Chopin replying: "For two weeks, I shut myself up, and play Bach. That is my preparation; I do not practice my own compositions" (Lenz 1899, 52). Chopin valued the music of Bach to the point where it was an essential part of his pedagogical method as a piano teacher. His students recalled being asked to practice Bach often, in order to "build piano technique and to develop polyphonic thinking" (Eigeldinger 1994, 120). Chopin's personal enjoyment and veneration of Bach was not limited to his own practice sessions or his teaching methods, as he shared this appreciation with his friends and acquaintances. As examples, Eigeldinger gives cellist Auguste Franchomme, one of Chopin's closest friends in Paris, who "could not ignore" Bach's cello suites; and pianist Ferdinand Hiller, who "in 1833 played an Allegro from the Concerto for three keyboards together with Chopin and Liszt" (121). We can gleam from these associations that in the conversations about music that Chopin experienced with friends and acquaintances in Paris, the music of Bach often played a large role.

George Sand serves as a significant source we can look to in order to understand how Chopin viewed music. Sand, as Chopin's romantic partner for ten years, came to be one of Chopin's "preferred partners for serious conversations on general artistic issues" (Berger 1994, 77), with the two inspiring each other throughout their relationship. As German poet Heinrich Heine observed at the time, "she endowed our much beloved Frédéric Chopin with a good deal of worldly wisdom" (Siepmann 1995, 131). Though Sand's life in Paris was often rife with scandal, serving today as a controversial figure for Chopin biographers, she writes eloquently of Chopin's musical process and the ways in which he viewed music in respect to the world around him. Sand, in one of her *impressions* or *souvenirs,* records a day spent with Delacroix and Chopin. While Chopin improvised at the piano, Sand reflects on Chopin's art, in a way that is revealing of Chopin's approach to composition: "The beauty of musical language consists in taking hold of the heart or imagination, without being condemned to pedestrian reasoning. It maintains itself in an ideal sphere where the listener who is not musically educated still delights in the vagueness, while the musician savours this great logic that presides over the masters' magnificent issue of thought" (Berger 1994, 78). Sand referring to the "great logic" of the "masters" corroborates with Chopin's expressed preference for the music of Bach, showing that Chopin greatly valued form in music. Notable here is how Sand separates the musically-inclined from the average listener; anyone can appreciate the harmonious sounds of fine music, but only those who are musically educated can appreciate the structure underneath. Sand goes on to say: "Chopin talks little and rarely of his art; but, when he does talk about it, it is with an admirable clearness and a soundness

of judgement and of intentions which would reduce to nothing plenty of heresies if he wanted to profess with open heart" (78). It is this observation that suggests Sand's writings on Chopin's artistic views are genuine, if he has trusted her enough to reveal them to her. This quote also shows how Chopin did not like revealing the intentions behind his works, leaving them up to audiences' interpretations. The detail with which Sand writes of Chopin's art shows that the two were similarly-minded in their artistic values, making for an intellectually stimulating relationship.

The friendship between Chopin and Delacroix serves as a prominent example of a relationship founded entirely on shared artistic values. According to Eigeldinger, "[t]heir mutual admiration is inseparable from their respective groundings in the art of the great masters of the past" (Eigeldinger 1994, 123). With so much in common, it was easy for the two to engage in detailed conversations about their views on art, music and culture, with Delacroix recording some of these exchanges in his journal. These journal entries help to provide a clearer picture of Chopin's views on art, considering he rarely revealed them in great detail. As Delacroix wrote in 1849:

> During the day, [Chopin] talked music with me, and that gave him new animation. I asked him what establishes logic in music. He made me feel what counterpoint and harmony are; how the fugue is like pure logic in music, and that to know the fugue deeply is to be acquainted with the element of all reason and all consistency in music. [...] art is no longer what the vulgar think it to be, that is, some sort of inspiration which comes from nowhere, which proceeds by chance, and presents

> no more than the picturesque externals of things. It is reason itself, adorned by genius, but following a necessary course and encompassed by higher laws. (124)

This journal entry from Delacroix corroborates Lenz's observations from his own meeting with Chopin, as well as Sand's comments, in that the composer valued logic, order and simplicity above all else in music, exemplified by the contrapuntal music of Bach. Their mutual appreciation for the music of the past made Chopin's conversations with Delacroix incredibly stimulating, providing him with an intellectual experience that Warsaw would not have offered him.

Delacroix's observations are also indicative of Chopin's distaste for musical modernity and the latest trends. To Chopin, the modern was vulgar, banal, and illogical. In a letter to Tytus Woyciechowski from Paris in 1831, Chopin wrote, "Everything *moderne* leaves my head" (Chopin 2016, 258). Though Chopin welcomed Paris's musical offerings, he simply could not keep up with the latest trends, and reviled the possibility of doing so. Elsner's teaching methods resonate in Chopin's words, as he encouraged the young composer not to follow the latest trends but compose melodies to be remembered by future generations. Chopin's opinions on modern musical trends put him at odds with his contemporaries, including Liszt, Hector Berlioz, and Giacomo Meyerbeer.

The relationship between Chopin and Liszt began as one of mutual respect. During a meeting in 1833, Liszt played Chopin's Etudes Op. 10, and Chopin had been fascinated, remarking in a letter: "Liszt is playing my etudes and transporting me outside of my respectable thoughts. I should like to steal from him the way to play my own etudes" (Schonberg 1998, 191). However, Chopin did not care for Liszt's theatrics and

showiness as a performer in the concert hall, nor for his compositional ideas. In a letter to Julian Fontana in 1841, Chopin writes: “as regards the themes from [Liszt’s] compositions, they will remain buried in the newspapers” (Eigeldinger 1994, 105). Chopin believed that Liszt cared more about showing off as a virtuoso concert pianist than composing works with cohesive musical ideas. To Chopin, Liszt was part of the vulgar and banal in modern musical trends. Chopin would discourage his students from following them, as Elsner had done. To one of his students who had been impressed by Liszt’s virtuosity, Chopin responded:

> Simplicity is everything. After having overcome all the difficulties, after having played immense quantities of notes and more notes, then simplicity emerges with all its charm, like art’s final seal. Whoever wants to obtain this immediately will never achieve it: you cannot begin with the end. One has to have studied a lot, tremendously, to reach this goal; it is no easy matter (105).

Liszt, who to Chopin was more focused on performing than composing, served as the antithesis of Chopin’s musical ideals. Though Chopin does not mention Liszt directly here, the target of his words is clear from the context. Chopin preferred the simplicity of musical structures such as the fugue and sonata form above all else, imparting these preferences to his students.

Another anecdote, from Chopin’s friend Joseph Nowakowski, further reveals Chopin’s distaste for Liszt’s playing, if the account is to be believed. During a salon gathering, “Liszt played one of Chopin's nocturnes, to which he took the liberty of adding some embellishments. Chopin's delicate intellectual face, which still bore the traces of

recent illness, looked disturbed; at last he could not control himself any longer ... he said, 'I beg you, my dear friend, when you do me the honour of playing my compositions, to play them as they are written or else not at all'" (Lebrecht 1992, 136-37). It is a rather humorous story, with the characters of the people in question being somewhat exaggerated for the purpose of amusement. Even if the events did not happen, it still gives insight into Chopin's dislike of Liszt's showiness, as Nowakowski certainly took note of in writing this anecdote. Despite Chopin's misgivings, he managed to keep a relatively friendly relationship with Liszt throughout his life, as they were colleagues and played in the same salon circles. But when it came to their musical lives, the two great pianists found themselves clashing more and more often as Chopin developed and established himself as a composer.

Chopin certainly made his dislike of Berlioz's music known to his friends. Berlioz's grand orchestral displays of emotion were not appealing at all to Chopin; Berlioz, too, was part of the vulgarity in modern music that Chopin despised. As Delacroix recalled of Chopin in his journal in 1860: "I believe that Chopin, who detested [Berlioz], detested even more music which is nothing without the assistance of trombones fighting against flutes and oboes, or else all playing together" (Eigeldinger 1994, 106). Solange Clésinger, George Sand's daughter, made a similar comment in an account to Marcelina Czartoryska: "I see Berlioz being admired. Chopin used to run away with his hands over his ears when he was forced to listen to that stuff" (106). Delacroix's journal entry from 1849 provides further details regarding exactly what Chopin disliked about Berlioz's music: "[Chopin] told me that the custom was to learn the harmonies before

coming to counterpoint, that is to say, the succession of the notes which leads to the harmonies. The harmonies in the music of Berlioz are laid on as a veneer; he fills in the intervals as best he can" (124). This quote suggests that Chopin saw Berlioz's compositional technique as ill-planned, valuing the music's effect rather than its harmonic structure. Eigeldinger also notes the "commitment to the ideals of [Chopin's] early education under Elsner" (124), demonstrating further the effect Elsner's teachings had on Chopin. But like with Liszt, Chopin did not let his dislike of Berlioz's grandiose style get in the way of a cordial relationship with him as a fellow composer. As Berlioz wrote to Liszt in 1836, "Richaut [*sic*] had asked me a month ago to arrange the *Francs-Juges* overture for piano duet. I did this with Chopin's advice" (106). Despite their musical styles being complete polar opposites, from Berlioz's words we can see that, at the very least, the two composers respected one another enough to consult with one another on musical ideas. Chopin's exposure to music he found strange and distasteful helped to reaffirm his own beliefs in the power of logic in music.

In examining the aspects of Chopin's life that influenced his work, the numerous ways in which the urban musical life of Warsaw contributed to his musical development paint a picture of a city brimming with art and culture both created and imported. Chopin's education under Elsner helped to lay the foundation for his artistic views: deliberate avoidance of the latest musical trends, as well as the idealization of counterpoint and form in music. Paris's artistic and intellectual offerings then greatly expanded Chopin's musical world after he left Warsaw to further his own career. This

choice gave Chopin opportunities to hear music that he otherwise would not have heard at home and also to share his music with a wider audience. The salons of Paris provided Chopin with artistic connections, enabling him to meet other artists, such as Delacroix and Sand, with whom he could engage in detailed, fulfilling intellectual conversations. The vibrant musical life of Paris was incredibly stimulating for him as he was able to adapt to this new environment, making a career out of salon performances in the houses of high society, teaching and developing his piano method, and most importantly, dedicating himself to composition. Chopin's musical world can emerge more fully for the scholar when examining the artistic environments in which he worked. Chopin's letters, recollections from his friends, and reviews of his performances ultimately serve to tell a remarkable story of a composer from a small Polish town who was able to make a significant artistic impact in one of the biggest cultural centers of Europe.

Chapter 3: Chopin's Mazurkas Beyond Nationalism

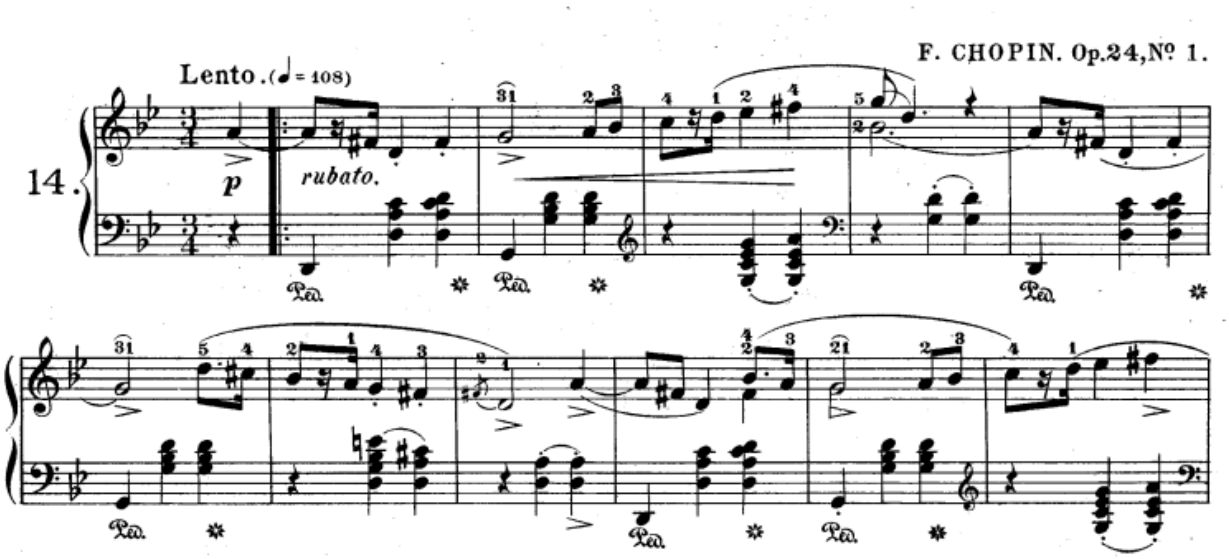
Chopin's mazurkas are often the subject of scholarly discussions about the composer's Polishness as displayed in his music. While many have speculated about the exact passages from Chopin's mazurkas that may have been inspired by folk music, these claims about his work are often unsupported by documentary evidence from Chopin himself, who refused to explain the meanings behind his works. As has been shown, there is no one way to represent nationality in music, since the quality itself is abstract and difficult to define. In order to try to analyze Chopin's music as he understood it, the context of his works must be considered alongside their harmonic and rhythmic content. The goal is not to determine a subjective meaning of the mazurkas, but to identify what may have influenced his musical choices other than a sense of Polish nationalism, as we have already seen the limitations of the nationalist lens. Chopin's use of chromaticism and modal harmony, his carefully constructed harmonic structures, and his contrapuntal technique as influenced by Bach reflect his own idealization of structure and logic in music, cultivated by his upbringing and musical education in Warsaw and the cosmopolitan musical life of Paris where he later lived and worked. His innovative chromatic language helped to transform the mazurka genre from a simple salon dance to a form rife with experimental, evocative musical ideas.

Chromaticism and modal harmony

Chopin's unique flavor of chromaticism as displayed in the mazurkas can be attributed in part to his use of the effects of modal harmony. Charles Rosen, in his book *The Romantic Generation*, notes that most examples of modal harmony in Chopin's mazurkas are in Lydian mode, a major scale with a raised fourth scale degree. Rosen explains the purpose behind this chromatic alteration: "The modal sound does not impress by its Polish individuality: a scale with a sharpened fourth seems to be common to most Western folk cultures, not just Polish, and long before Chopin it was the most ordinary way to make something sound rustic and folksy" (Rosen 1999, 416). This observation from Rosen is crucial, because, as we have seen from the scholarly debate surrounding the raised fourth in Chopin's mazurkas, scholars have attributed the source of the raised fourth to authentic Polish folk music rather than a musical topos to indicate folk-sounding music. But the use of the raised fourth is not only a cue for listeners; it also serves an important purpose harmonically. According to Nicol Viljoen, in his article "The Raised Fourth Degree of the Scale in Chopin's Mazurkas," the raised fourth serves three functions: "as an authentic Lydian or gypsy element; as a leading tone to the fifth degree of the scale, thus playing an important part in tonicisations, and as a single inflection in the form of chromatic passing and neighbouring notes" (Viljoen 2000, 70). Viljoen thus provides alternate explanations for the use of the raised fourth aside from claims of folk borrowing, explanations that can be demonstrated concretely through musical examples. Notable is his use of "gypsy element" to describe this musical feature. The name may be

derived from the Hungarian scale, sometimes referred to as the gypsy scale, which is a harmonic minor that uses the raised fourth ("Gypsy Scale" 2001).

One example that Viljoen offers as an instance of a "gypsy element" and tonicization is the opening measures of Mazurka op. 24 no. 1 (1833) [Example 1]. In this example, according to Viljoen, the C-sharp in measure 6 serves first as a passing tone in the stepwise motion that begins on D. As Viljoen refers to this usage: "The gypsy flavour is caused by the augmented second interval between C-sharp and B-flat in the descending scale passage" (Viljoen 2000, 70). As this piece is in G minor, the relationship between the raised fourth and the third scale degree matches that of the Hungarian minor scale. The C-sharp appears again in measure 7 in the left hand, this time serving as the leading tone to the dominant D. Viljoen notes that this pitch is used here to tonicize the dominant, as well as a continuation of the C-sharp from the previous measure: "In view of the harmonic content at this point (a motion from I to V via the secondary dominant of V), the C-sharp of bar 6 is also associated with this harmonic progression through its pitch class and registral connection with the leading-tone C-sharp of bar 7" (70-71). Examining the C-sharp alongside the surrounding notes, Viljoen observes that the D in the bass is used as an anticipation to the dominant chord in the following measure, obscuring the leading-tone usage of the raised fourth. "In so doing, the second C-sharp also seems to echo the modal effect of the first" (71).

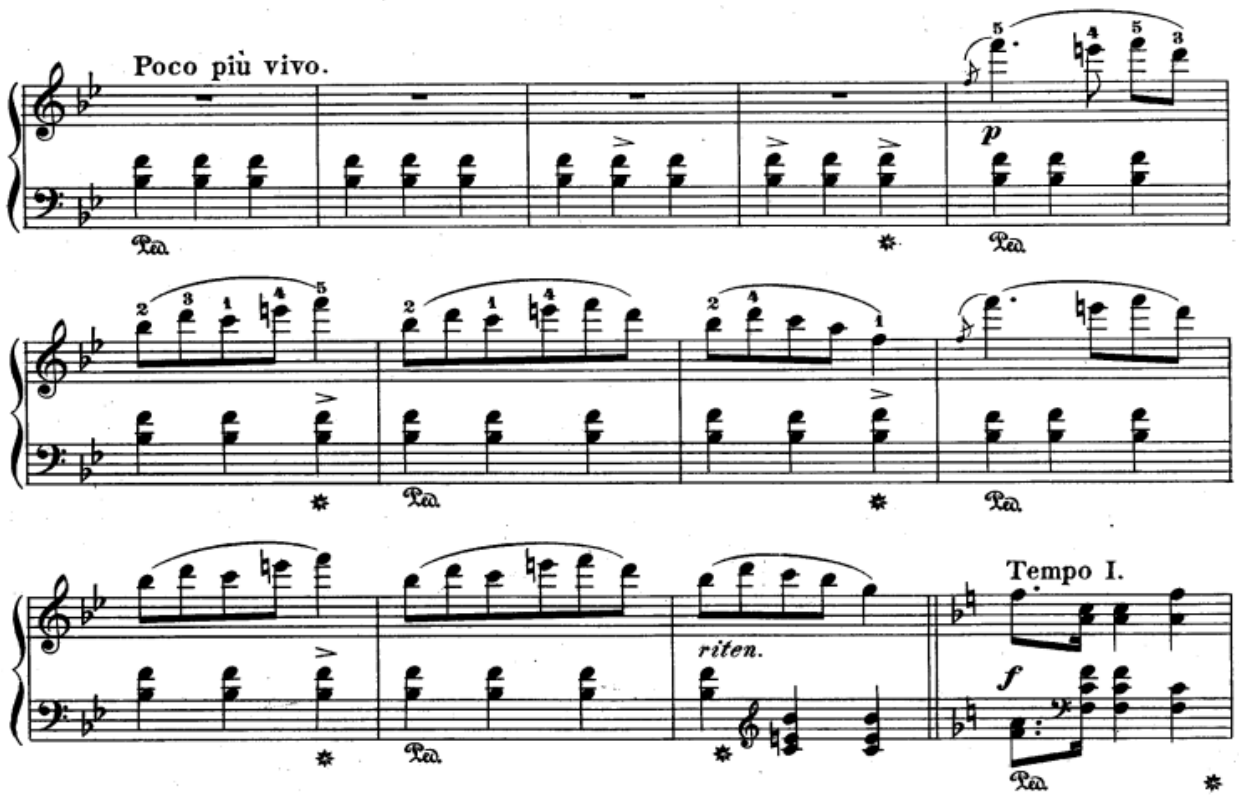


[Example 1: Measures 1-11 of Mazurka op. 24 no. 1 (Chopin 1894, 32)]

From Viljoen's analysis, we can see that while Chopin did not use the Lydian mode itself for this mazurka, the raised fourth scale degree can be used to create the effect of modality in a way that fits into the harmonic roadmap of the mazurka. The raised fourth, in this regard, is not chosen purely for its sonority, but also for its function. From Chopin's own artistic views, we can understand why he used the raised fourth in this way. He idealized logic in music, preferring the function of a chord or interval over its purely sonorific qualities. Chopin saw his own work as fundamentally different from that of his contemporaries such as Berlioz, who "[filled] in the intervals as best he can" (Eigeldinger 1994, 124). Even chromatic notes such as the raised fourth had a specific purpose in the harmonic plan of the music.

Returning to Mazurka op. 68 no. 3 (c. 1830), the mazurka that Brown suggested was quoting the unsourced Polish folk tune "Oj Magdalino," we find that this mazurka,

particularly the *Poco più vivo* section, demonstrates exceptionally well how Chopin used modal harmony as part of the tonal plan for the piece. According to Milewski, early Chopin biographer Marceli Antoni Szulc "was reacting to the sharpened fourth scale degree [...] specifically, to [...] the E-naturals in the B-flat section of op. 68, no. 3" (Milewski 1999, 115). However, Viljoen offers an alternative explanation for the E-naturals, the roles of which change based on where in the tonal plan the notes lie. Looking at the *Poco più vivo* section in a vacuum, the E natural in the right hand in measure 37 [Example 2] serves as the raised fourth tone of this passage, over the B-flat open fifth drone in the left hand. When looking at the right-hand melody by itself, the E natural serves as the leading tone to F, the melody's tonal center. But taking into account the B-flat major key signature and the left-hand drone, the E natural, according to Viljoen, "functions as an authentic Lydian element" (Viljoen 2000, 73).

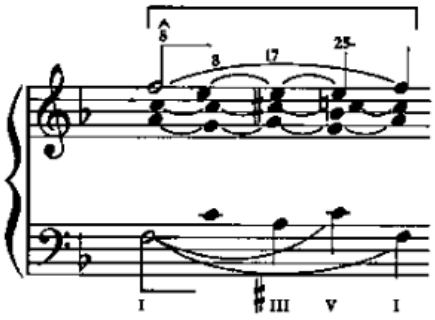


[Example 2: Measures 33-45 of op. 68 no. 3 (Chopin 1894, 141)]

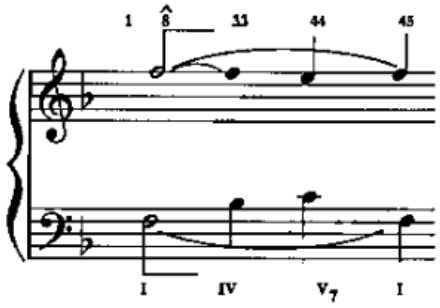
It is from this observation that we can better understand why Szulc may have viewed the E naturals as being derived from folk music; a Lydian sonority and the raised fourth in general was a common method of folk evocation. Szulc was describing Chopin's use of this musical topos as an example of folk borrowing in general, acknowledging the use of the raised fourth but without taking into account the harmonic reasons for its use. It is through Viljoen's view of the E naturals in op. 68 no. 3 that we can see Chopin's strong command of harmony, the result of his education under Elsner, and the musical evidence of his preference for logic in music.

Viljoen's analysis of this mazurka, however, does not end with the *Poco più vivo* section alone. By looking at the mazurka as a whole, the E natural becomes much more important. The F-E-F melodic structure of this section, he argues, is a microcosm of the harmonic structure of the entire mazurka (Viljoen 2000, 73). To make this argument, he provides reductions of the piece, one of measures 1-25, and another for the entire piece [Figure 1]. Each chord in the graph is marked with the measure it corresponds to, and it is from this guide that the reader is able to see a much greater role for the E natural in the piece as a defining motive.

Example 4c: Mazurka Op 68/3, underlying melodic motion, bars 1-25



Example 4d: Mazurka Op 68/3, underlying melodic motion, bars 1-45

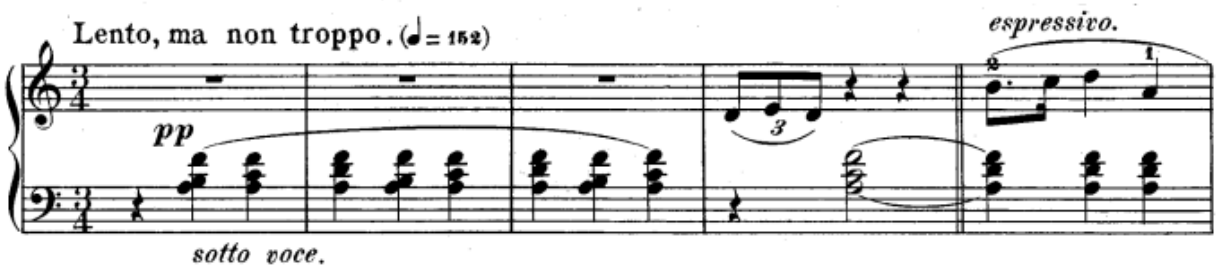


[Figure 1: Viljoen's reductions of Mazurka op. 68 no. 3 (Viljoen 2000, 75)]

From the upper musical lines in each example, we can how see the F-E-F motion serves as the harmonic framework of the mazurka. In the second example, we can see that the IV chord begins at the same time as the key change to B-flat major. It is in this key change that the E natural, which is the leading tone of the tonic F, becomes a raised fourth, creating that chromatic interval. As Viljoen explains, "From a conceptual point of view, it is also significant that, what started off as a unifying diatonic neighbour-note configuration in the main key of F major subsequently became a Lydian surface feature by means of a simple key change from the tonic F major to the subdominant B-flat major, which merely altered the melodic functions of the unchanged configuration" (Viljoen 2000, 74). The ways in which Chopin uses the raised fourth in his mazurka hide complexity behind their simple structures. The raised fourth does not simply serve as a way for Chopin to make references to the folk with which his audience would have been familiar. Viljoen's analysis through the graphs of this mazurka demonstrates that the raised fourth is much more than that; it serves as a tool for Chopin to utilize chromaticism in a way that furthers harmonic progression.

Modal harmony also serves as a way for Chopin to blur the suggestion of a tonic for the listener. Mazurka op. 17 no. 4 (1833) demonstrates effectively Chopin's use of modal harmony to obscure the tonality of the piece. From the very opening of the mazurka, Chopin has already hidden any suggestions of a tonic. Milewski, in her article "Magical Returns and the Interior Landscape of Chopin's Mazurkas," describes how Chopin obscuring the tonic creates a mystifying atmosphere. In the first four measures [Example 3], a short melodic fragment sounds between an A and F minor sixth in the left

hand. The repeated A in the bass, according to Milewski, "promises A minor but leads instead to an arrival on what seems to be a sixth chord on A in measure 4, which makes for a tonally mysterious beginning" (Milewski 2005, 77).



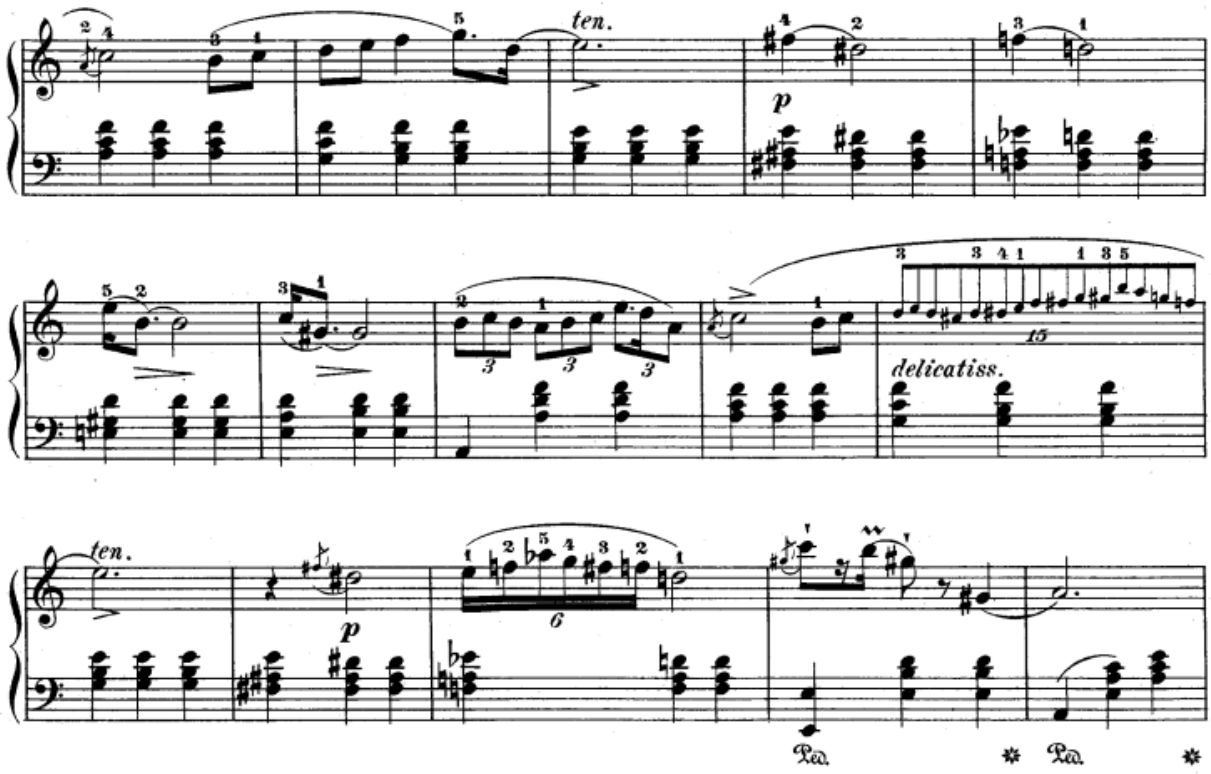
[Example 3: Measures 1-5 of op. 17 no. 4 (Chopin 1894, 28)]

When examining the harmonic roadmap of the section, the left-hand chords in measure 5 are functionally I chords because of the A in the bass. However, none of the other key tones of a root position chord, the fifth, and especially the third, are present here. The sixth chord from the introduction continues to sound, tied over from the previous measure to aid with the transition. The melody does not suggest I either, as it begins on a B; we only get a sense that this is a I chord from the A grace note and C on the downbeat of measure 6. Starting from measure 6, the top bass note descends by half-step until measure 12 when the progression ends in V, the first clear chord in the bass line. The melody repeats with embellishments added, before cadencing on an A minor chord in measure 20. Until this point, Chopin has deliberately avoided root-position tonic chords, hinting at A minor without outright stating it. This is the first time we truly hear the tonic without accidentals, making its sonority stand out from the rest of the A section.

Rosen goes into further detail on the modal aspects of this section, describing how Chopin hints at modality to give support to his chromatic musical ideas:

> The apparently "modal" harmony of opus 17, no. 4, in A minor ... is very much more individual [than op. 6]. The Lydian harmony gives an exotic color […] At the end of bar 20 [Example 4] - in fact, already at bar 12- it is clear that this is not Lydian but a solid minor. The sixth chord on A not only gives a strange plaintive character to the tonic, but also enables Chopin to accomplish the wonderful chromatic descent in bars 6 to 11 from F to D; further, the resolutions onto sixth chords in bars 9 and 10 help to transform any suggestion of modal harmony into an evocative chromatic resonance (Rosen 1999, 418).

Rosen, like Milewski, mentions the sixth chord on A as an example of how Chopin obscures the tonic. Normally, when analyzing the harmony of this chord, the F would serve as the non-chord tone, being a chromatic addition to the tonic chord. However, because of the B natural played over this chord (such as in measure 5), Rosen considers this F to be a part of the chord, as Chopin is utilizing Lydian harmony for a chromatic effect. The chromatically descending chords starting in measure 6 are part of a process, with the goal being to guide the top note of the bass chords to D, the seventh of the V7 chord in A minor. As Rosen explains, the F serves as the beginning of this descent. From these observations, it is clear that the F must be analyzed based on its function in the piece. Chopin's chromatic harmony in the mazurkas, mysterious-sounding as it may be, serves as an integral part of the framework of the music.



[Example 4: Measures 6-20 of op. 17 no. 4 (Chopin 1894, 28)]

Harmonic form

Chopin's idealization of logic and form in music is reflected in his careful treatment of musical form in his mazurkas. The varying nature of the piano mazurka's form, usually variants of binary or ternary form, gave Chopin a malleable foundation on which he could develop his harmonic ideas. Though the form varies, the mazurkas share commonalities in the placement of the musical content. The mazurka form generally introduces its main theme, the "a" theme, as part of the A section. When the theme is first heard, it is repeated and elaborated on before a contrasting theme, the "b" theme, is then introduced. This is usually in a key relative to that of the "a" theme. The B section then

follows, and often provides the most dramatic contrast in terms of sonority, harmonic structure, rhythm and texture. This section typically involves the "c" theme over an open-fifth drone in the left hand accompaniment, with one such example appearing prominently in the *Poco più vivo* section of op. 68 no. 3. This musical element of the piano mazurka is derived from the sound of the *duda*, a Polish bagpipe, which was restricted to playing such an interval while accompanying the melodic line of the traditional dance. Thus this section is not just evocative, but also imitative (Downes 2001). It was this aspect of the mazurka that made it marketable on the basis of exoticism. The A section returns at the end of the piece as part of ternary form, either played the same as it was first heard, or embellished in some way. Chopin's mazurkas often add more to the form, sometimes including a brief introduction, such as that of op. 17 no. 4; or a coda, such as the one that ends op. 50 no. 3.

Several scholars have remarked on the nature of the contrasting musical sections. Milewski, in examining the mazurka genre as it was performed in the salons of Warsaw during Chopin's time, describes one of the common threads in form: "They were most often in ternary form (or a modified version thereof) ... introduced in the major mode, and given a contrasting middle section either in the dominant or relative or parallel minor" (Milewski 1999, 131). Taruskin and Gibbs write that most of Chopin's mazurkas are written "in a ternary da capo form that could be justified in national terms but was also an accommodation to the common practice of the literate tradition, with its minuets … and trios" (Taruskin and Gibbs 2013, 626). These analyses from Milewski and Taruskin and Gibbs show how the mazurka form adapted the contrasting sections of other dance genres

in order to demonstrate a wider appeal for the average listener. It was this aspect of the mazurka, as well as the exotic appeal of its Polish origins, that made it a popular piece for the salon.

The varying material of each section of the mazurka left Chopin with much freedom in deciding which sections should be repeated. Jeffrey Kallberg, in his article "The Problem of Repetition and Return in Chopin's Mazurkas," describes the weight of this decision for Chopin:

> The problem of repetition and return in the mazurkas dogged Chopin throughout his creative career. A few general tendencies manifest themselves in the revisions; they help us begin to understand what was musically at stake. Nearly all of the corrections concerned literal or nearly literal reiterations … nearly all pertained to repeats of principal sections, either the main theme alone, or the main theme along with any secondary theme that might be attached to it … Thus the heart of the issue for Chopin seems to have been when to restate the principal theme and/or section of a mazurka (Kallberg 1988, 15).

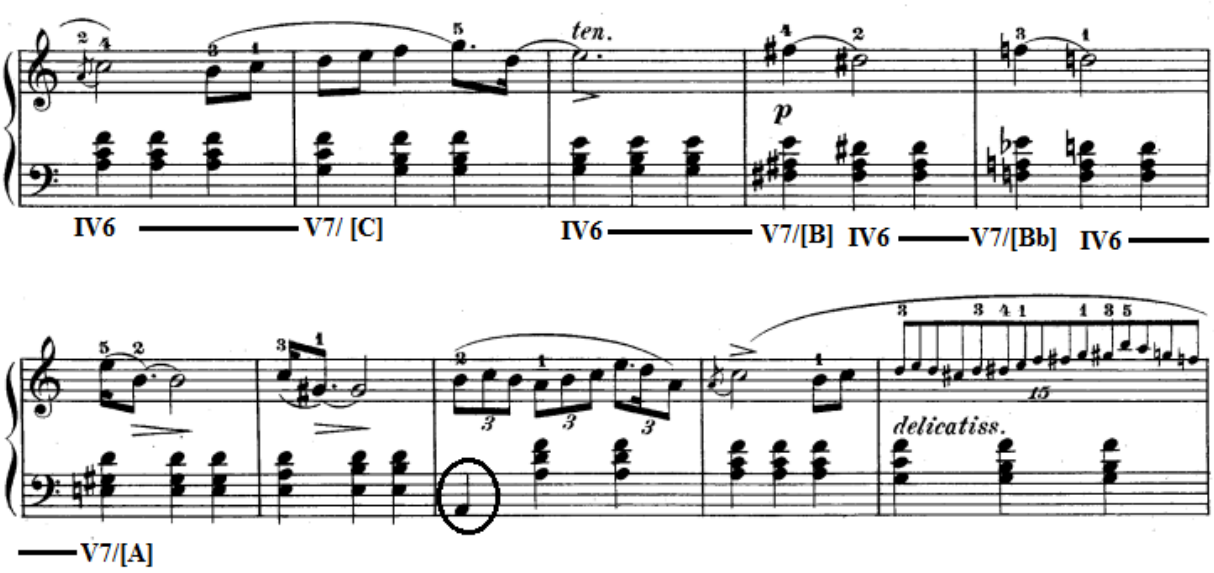
This observation from Kallberg shows how much the mazurka form relies on the impact of the main theme, or "a" theme. Its repeat or return can provide the listener with a sense of familiarity. The decision on whether or not to repeat the "a" theme could affect the overall balance of the piece: it is clear that Chopin recognized that he needed to find a middle ground between making the main theme impactful and providing enough contrast to make the piece interesting. If the main theme recurred too much, the contrasting sections, which were heard less, would be less meaningful due to the contrast being

contained in a shorter period of time. This difficult balance shows how Chopin took seriously a simple structure such as ternary form.

The ternary form of the mazurka is considered to be a small form in comparison to more complex forms such as sonata form (exemplified by Beethoven), as the former eventually evolved into the latter during the eighteenth century. However, the ways in which Chopin strategically uses chromatic harmony with ternary form as a basis help to make individual sections of the mazurkas stand out. Placing the most chromatic harmony in the "a" theme characterizes the piece through its mysterious-sounding effects, whereas using it in the "b" or "c" themes can provide contrast to a more tonally stable "a" theme.

In Joel Lester's article "Harmonic Complexity and Form in Chopin's Mazurkas," he examines the ways in which enharmonic progressions are incorporated into the structures of the mazurkas. Returning to op. 17 no. 4 [Examples 3-4], Lester describes what makes the "a" theme "tonally ambiguous," as Milewski puts it. He observes the same feature of the left-hand chords as did Milewski: the F prevents the tonic from being fully established, despite the initial melody of m. 5-6 circling the tonic. When an A-minor chord is expected, instead we hear what sounds like an F-major chord in first inversion (Lester 2000, 113). In measure 7, we hear what sounds like a G7 chord, with the listener being made to expect a resolution to the relative C major following a IV - V7 progression. However, this resolution does not occur, with only the F in the left-hand accompaniment finally descending to E, ultimately creating an E minor chord in measure 8. This IV-V7 pattern continues, with the expected key resolution descending by a half step before hearing a clear tonic A in the bass in measure 13. The pattern is used as a way

for Chopin to return to A minor from the relative C major. As Lester describes this effect: “By [measure 8] several things have become quite clear. Direct resolution of seemingly functional chords will not be a trait of this mazurka. Instead, notes resolve one or two at a time as if they were appoggiaturas, not members of functional chords. Keys are hinted at, but their fundamental progressions evaporate” (113). Lester’s description of the repeated failed resolutions helps to explain the mysterious aspect of op. 17 no. 4, as the harmony never seems to settle down until the end of the "a" theme. Lester’s harmonic analysis of this passage is shown in Figure 2 below.



[Figure 2: Lester’s analysis (114) of m. 6-15 of op. 17 no. 4 (Chopin 1894, 28)]

Lester also explains how the chromatic ideas introduced in the series of enharmonic modulations ultimately serve to provide the A section with a sense of structural unity, helping to adjust a listener to the ambiguous character of the chord progressions. Lester notes that the C in the tenor in m. 7 that resolves to B on the second

beat of the measure is a 4-3 suspension, strengthening the sound of the V7 chord of the relative major. Chopin later “brings back that 4-3 sonority- but uses it in a new way- as part of the cadential voice-leading in m. 12, thereby strengthening the dominant of A minor” (Lester 2000, 115). Lester then links this particular suspension with Chopin’s avoidance of resolving suspensions throughout the piece. According to Lester, the four-measure introduction also helps to prepare the listener for this characteristic of the A section, with a B-C-D melody in between A and F in the left-hand chords. This three-note idea then appears immediately afterward in m. 5. As Lester says of the introduction: “the preparation- while it certainly sets up some elements in this mazurka- hardly clarifies the key. Primarily, the introduction sets up the notion of appoggiatura sonorities, of incomplete resolutions of those sonorities, and of the B-C-D melodic third that begins the melody and is reflected in so many other thirds in the piece” (115). The introduction thus is shown to have a clear purpose in the structure of the piece, and does not exist solely for obscuring the tonic sonority. Lester then explains how Chopin resolves the problem of repetition and return in this particular mazurka: “Chopin knew he had a great phrase when he completed working out m. 5-12. He made it the focus of the mazurka as a whole, bringing it back no fewer than eight times [...] This phrase’s hypnotic chromaticism and evocation of distant tonal realms while it is at heart nothing more than a colorful harmonization of a descending passacaglia-bass scale is what allows so many repetitions” (116). The other themes of the piece contrast heavily with the "a" theme, with the "b" and "c" themes centering on dominant and tonic pedals respectively. These moments of

stability are brief in comparison to the "a" theme's repetitions and returns, giving the piece an overall harmonically ambiguous character.

Instead of moving directly from one functional chord to the next, Chopin extends the progression through the use of linear chromaticism. The bass note continues to be lowered by a half step until the V7 chord is reached in measure 11, resolving to A in measure 13. This type of progression can also be found in Chopin's other works and is a signature element of his compositional style, according to Kornel Michałowski and Jim Samson: "Much of the innovatory quality of Chopin's harmonic practice amounts to either the foreground chromatic elaboration of familiar diatonic progressions or an extension (and speeding up) of the chromatic symmetries commonly found in Classical development sections" (Michałowski and Samson 2001). An example of the former occurs in the neighboring tones in melodic lines, such as the triplet figures in measure 13 with an A in the bass indicating a tonic function; the linear chromatic pattern Chopin uses in m. 6-12 to get from A to E in the bass note serves as an example of the latter. Notable is how Michałowski and Samson mention the chromaticism in development sections of sonata form in relation to Chopin's style, linking this technique to the sonata form idealized in much larger works such as those by Mozart and Beethoven. A development section, characterized by harmonic instability, leaves the listener expecting the dominant chord that will eventually lead to the tonic. Chopin utilizes this same expectation to characterize the A section of this mazurka. When the dominant V7 chord is finally heard in m. 11, the function of the enharmonic modulations becomes clear to the trained listener. To an untrained listener, the dominant chord may signal a feeling of no longer

being lost; the V7 chord is the first chord that clearly sounds as part of the key of A minor, with no notes out of place. It is clear from examining the harmonic form of op. 17 no. 4 that Chopin takes great care to make sure no chromatic element is outside of the structure of the piece. Every departure from what is expected is a means to a harmonic end- one which is mesmerizing in its complexity and thought-provoking in the simplicity of its execution.

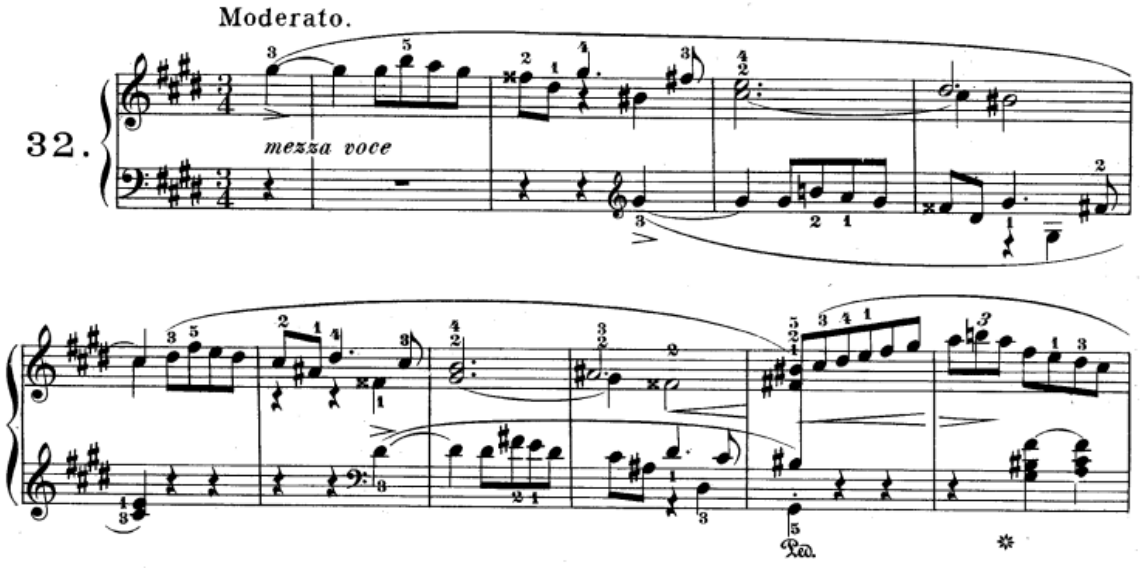
Counterpoint and inspiration from Bach

When one thinks of complexity in contrapuntal structures, Chopin is likely not the first composer that comes to mind. The fugues of Bach are considered to be the most ideal examples of counterpoint, as stated by Chopin himself in a conversation recalled by Delacroix: “to know the fugue deeply is to be acquainted with the element of all reason and all consistency in music” (Eigeldinger 1994, 124). Yet it is this admiration for Bach that may have led to Chopin experimenting with contrapuntal techniques in the mazurkas. The mazurkas have already been demonstrated to have been a vehicle for Chopin’s innovations in chromatic harmony and form; they served a similar role for Chopin’s experimentation with contrapuntal textures. Rosen describes how Chopin used counterpoint:

> The mazurkas are the most learned section of Chopin's work. Open displays of skill at classical counterpoint are rare in Chopin, but he amuses himself several times in the mazurkas after 1840 with examples of canonic imitation. Writing a strict fugue seems never to have caught Chopin's fancy sufficiently to have

> inspired a good one, but the Mazurka in C sharp Minor, op. 50, no. 3, adapts fugal technique freely to astonishing effect (Rosen 1999, 420).

It is in the mazurkas, as Rosen explains, where Chopin is at his most advanced in his technical prowess, making the genre in Chopin's hands far more than a simple salon piece. Rosen here is referring to the "a" theme of the mazurka in question [Example 5]. When looking at the score, the imitation is clear, with each entrance serving as either a subject or answer in the manner of a fugue. The hand without the melody, however, does not employ much in rhythmic contrast to the entrances of the subject, and the soprano and tenor lines are the only voices in which we hear the imitation. Another difference, as Rosen notes, is that the theme "begins like a fugue, although tonic and dominant entries do not follow each other successively but are separated" (420). We hear the tonic subject twice before the two dominant answers, rather than alternating as would normally be done in a fugue.



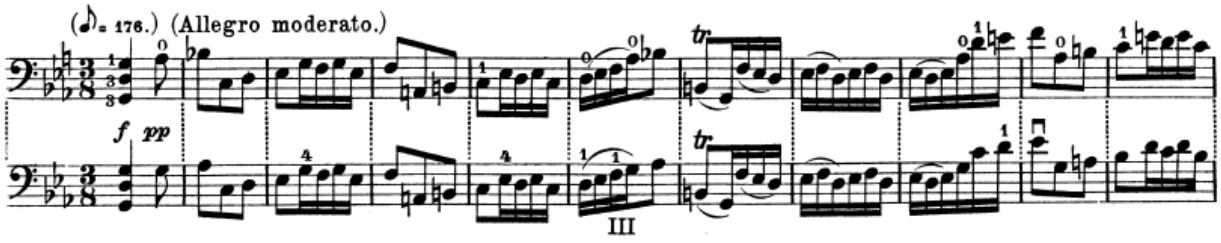
[Example 5: Measures 1-10 of Chopin's Mazurka, op. 50 no. 3 (Chopin 1894, 88).]

Carl Schachter, in his article "Counterpoint and Chromaticism in Chopin's Mazurka in C# Minor, Opus 50, Number 3," analyzes how Chopin evokes a fugue in the A section of this particular mazurka. While noting the differences between Chopin's counterpoint and fugal technique, he also discusses several striking similarities between this mazurka and Bach's contrapuntal technique. One example is in measure 5:

> The overlap in bar 5- so characteristic of Chopin's phrase rhythm- has an important bearing on how we hear the melody and creates another analogy with fugal technique. The C#-minor chord that arrives on the downbeat of bar 5 is the first structural tonic in the piece, following four bars of preparatory dominant harmony. [...] no other harmony follows it until well into the following bar. Thus, tonic harmony persists beyond the first two entrances of the mazurka subject and spills over into the first transposed entrance. This is very close to what happens in many of Bach's fugue expositions, where the beginning of the answer continues to express the tonic harmony of the subject (Schachter 2000, 124).

Schachter's observation here shows how Chopin's own unique compositional style in overlapping phrases is at the same time used to evoke a Bachian fugue. Schachter continues his analysis of the "a" theme. He notes how the subject entrances begin on G#, so thus it would be assumed that the entrances of the answer would begin on D# a fifth higher. While it seems this way at first, the phrase overlap in measure 5 with the C#-minor chord in the left hand means that the prevailing harmony is a I chord, making the D# a passing tone. The D# is not tied from the previous measure like the entrances of the

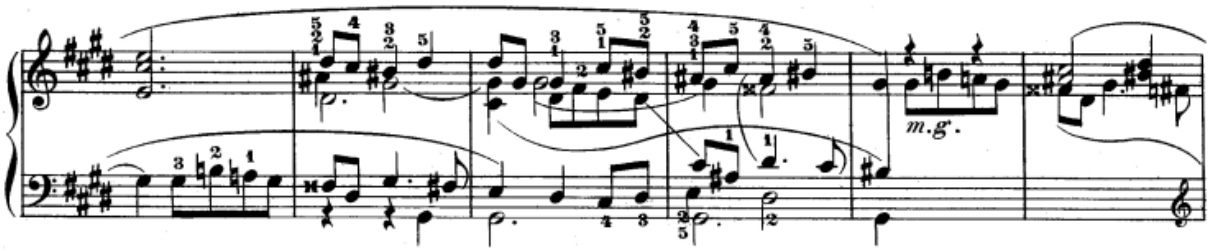
subject, removing its "rhythmic emphasis as well as harmonic support" (125). Schachter solidifies the link between Chopin and Bach by comparing the "a" theme of the mazurka to the Allegro moderato one-voice fugue in the Prelude of Bach's Cello Suite No. 5 (1717-23) [Example 6] to demonstrate "the resemblance of this procedure to fugal technique" (125). He finds several similarities to establish Bach as a basis while using the differences to show how Chopin innovated: "In both, a neighbor note in the original statement- 6 [referring to scale degrees] as upper neighbor to, 5- becomes a harmonic tone, 3, in the transposed form just before the music moves temporarily into the dominant key. And in both, the motion from 5 to 6 in the original becomes the rising third 1-2-3 in the transposition. In the Mazurka, unlike the fugue, the transposed entrance of bar 5 sets up a conflict between the domains of harmony and motivic design" (125).



[Example 6: One-voice fugue from Bach's Cello Suite No. 5 (Bach 1911, 28)]

As can be seen from Schachter's analysis, Chopin was not merely trying to imitate Bach, but instead took the Baroque composer's techniques as a basis on which to experiment with texture in his own way. This may also be why there is minimal rhythmic contrast in the non-melodic voices: while the piece is not a fugue itself, it was possible for Chopin to adapt parts of Bach's contrapuntal style without committing fully to fugal

technique. The left-hand chords in measure 10 below a fast melodic passage in the right hand interrupt the polyphony for a homophonic texture more typical of a mazurka, dispelling a possibility of interpreting the mazurka as completely fugue-like. Despite this, Chopin uses this idea six times, helping to characterize the piece with the "a" theme's flowing rhythm and mystifying quality of the overlapping phrases. Chopin also brings back the idea in another form in measures 33-34 [Example 7], this time appearing in the inner voices. As Schachter describes: "The point of imitation unfolds in the midst of a dense contrapuntal fabric of up to five real parts, creating something of a challenge to the pianist who wishes to make it heard without neglecting the expressive descant line that sings above it" (Schachter 2000, 125-6). This passage shows Chopin's counterpoint at its height, with both the imitation and the descant commanding equal attention. The thickness of the texture shows that when Chopin puts his mind to it, his contrapuntal textures, brief as they may be, can be as elegant and learned as those of Bach.

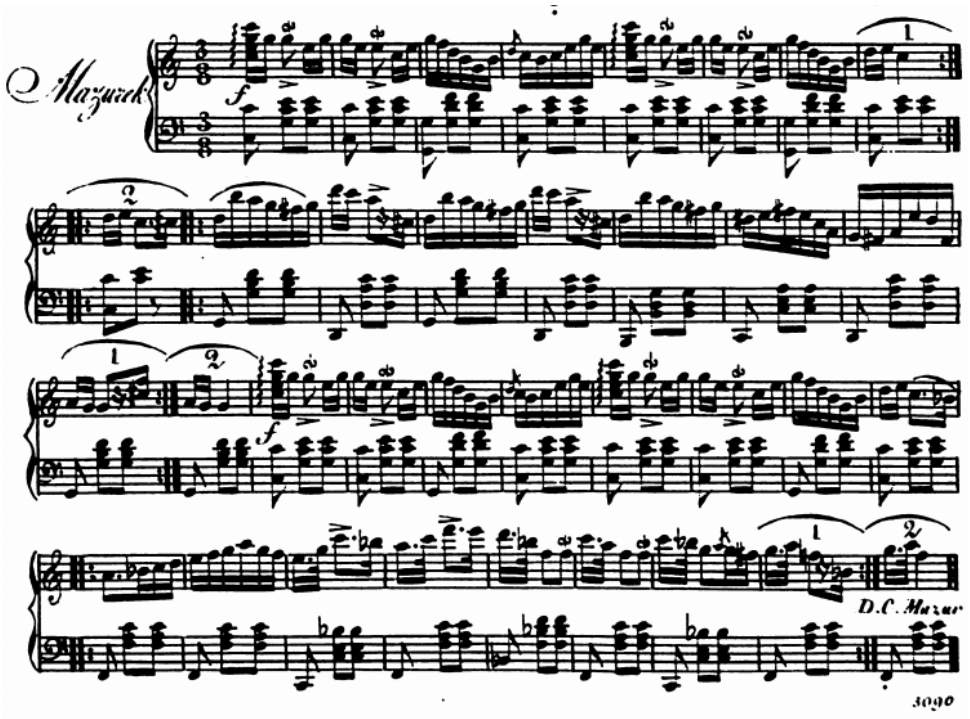


[Example 7: Measures 33-38 of op. 50, no. 3 (Chopin 1894, 89)]

Chopin as innovator

To further understand the impact of Chopin's transformation of the mazurka genre, one need only examine other mazurkas being written around the same time. Maria

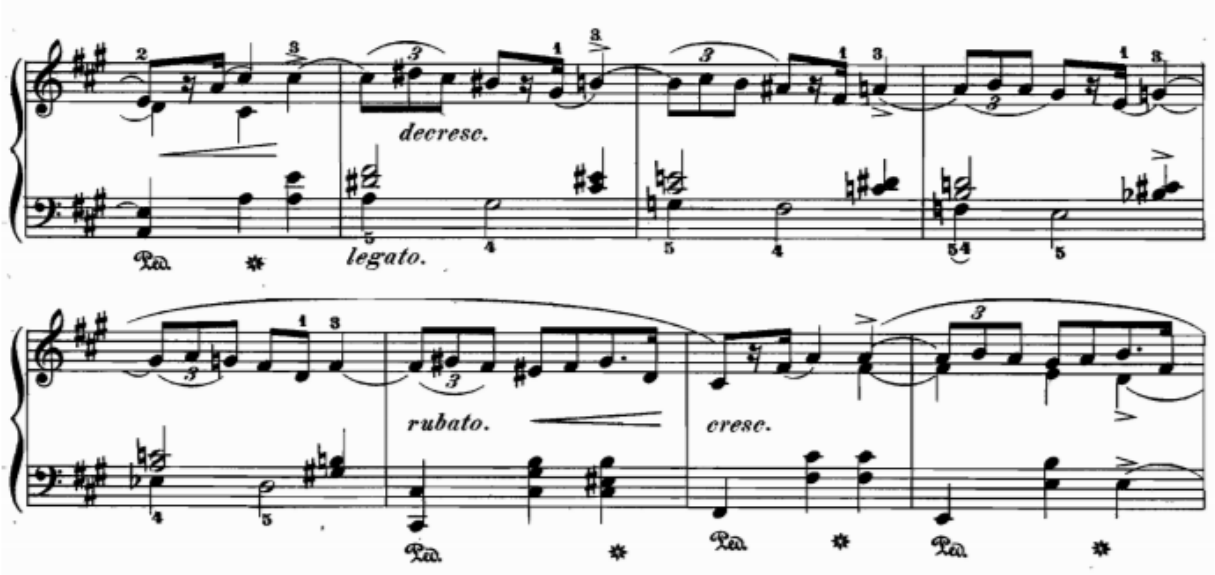
Szymanowska, a virtuoso performer as well as a composer, frequently wrote dances in the *stile brillante* to be performed in the salon, including a collection of 24 mazurkas (Chechlińska 2001). Her Mazurka from *18 Dances de Différent Genre* (1821) will serve as an example for comparison [Example 8]. As can be seen from this mazurka, the left-hand chords in the A section alternate between I and V, and are clearly identifiable as such. There are no contrapuntal textures- the left hand plays chords with a simple waltz figuration under an elaborate right-hand melody which holds most of the musical interest. The harmonic form is simple, with the "a" theme in the tonic, the "b" theme in the dominant, and the "c" theme in the subdominant before returning to the "a" theme again. Chromaticism is only used for secondary dominants, such as the V/V in measure 15, or the V/IV in measure 27. The only similarities between this mazurka and those of Chopin are the title, "Mazurka," and the basic features of the genre: triple meter, emphasis on the second beat, and ternary form.



[Example 8: Maria Szymanowska's Mazurka from *18 Dances de Différent Genre* (Szymanowska 1820, 19).]

By contrast, when looking at Chopin's Mazurka op. 6, no. 1 (1830) [Example 9] from his first published set of mazurkas nine years later, we can see already his use of linear chromaticism. The left hand descends by half step in the sequence from measures 5-8, serving as a bridge from the A-major III chord at the end of measure 4 to the V7 chord in measure 9. As Lester describes this passage: "... the A-major triad in m. 4 becomes the submediant of C# as the music moves into m. 5, with a supertonic chord interpolated on the downbeat to anchor the progression. The resulting supertonic-dominant chord pair then becomes the model for the sequences that follow" (Lester 2000, 107). The wistful sound of this mazurka, created as a result of Chopin's chromatic

language, made the genre in Chopin's hands much more than a demonstration of his own virtuosity as a performer. Unlike Szymanowska, who wrote music that would showcase her brilliance and talent as a virtuoso pianist, Chopin wrote pieces that would also demonstrate his unique compositional style. While Szymanowska gave both public and private concerts, including for royalty (Chechlińska 2001), Chopin avoided the concert hall as much as he could, preferring the intimacy of the salon.



[Example 9: Measures 4-11 of Chopin's Mazurka, op. 6 no. 1 (Chopin 1894, 3)]

Chopin's unique compositional style was what truly made him an innovator: a blend of modal harmony, linear chromaticism, logical harmonic structure, and inclination for experimentation. It is clear that the musical interest of Chopin's mazurkas cannot be said to lie solely with a sense of "authentic" Polish folk or national qualities; these descriptors only scratch the surface of the musical landscapes Chopin creates. When looking past the folk idealization, it can be seen that the only quality of Chopin's

mazurkas that he likely saw as national was the title of "Mazurka," a title which represented Polish music and culture. As Chopin said in a letter to Tytus Woyciechowski: "You know how much I wanted to feel, and I did partially come to a feeling for, our national music" (Chopin 2016, 257). But a title can only explain so much about a work; each of Chopin's mazurkas has a different character. Chopin's musical ideas in the mazurkas are wholly original, and to limit the scope of analysis of the mazurkas to finding "authentic" folk melodies or linking them to Polish nationalism does these works an incredible disservice. Charles Hallé, an acquaintance of Chopin, describes eloquently the composer playing his own works: "The marvellous charm, the poetry and originality, the perfect freedom and absolute lucidity of Chopin's playing cannot be described. It is perfection in every sense. [...] In listening to him you lost all power of analysis [...] you listened, as it were, to the improvisation of a poem, and were under the charm as long as it lasted" (Eigeldinger 2013, 271). All of these qualities that Hallé describes were a direct result of Chopin's chromatic innovations and the fluidity of his phrase rhythm, qualities for which nationalism cannot provide an answer. To use national qualities as an explanation for what made Chopin's music unique is to other him, placing him in a Polish box just as did the nationally-minded critics of the nineteenth century. By recognizing the limitations that nationalism places on Chopin's work and moving past this frame of analysis, one finds a greater appreciation not only for his music, but for his important role in the history of music as the "poet of the piano."

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