Chopin’s Musical Elements

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By

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ABSTRACT

Frederic Chopin composed many great piano works that musicians have enjoyed and studied since the Romantic Era. These pieces continue to be performed around the world. This research focuses on specific aspects of selections of Chopin’s literature, and how those aspects can be taught to those unfamiliar with his works. The goal is to teach others to appreciate his works. The research problem investigated in this study is to determine the melodic qualities of the pianistic texture in Chopin’s solo piano works that are identifiable by theoretical analysis and public performance. The methodology used in this study will be score study and qualitative research. The hypothesis is that there are certain melodic qualities in Chopin’s piano works that can be identified, including pedal tones, embellished phrases, theme and variations, inner melodies, harmonic/overtone pedaling and opposing rhythms. These qualities were found in several of Chopin’s works and have been discovered as identifiable by theoretical analysis. Pedal tones can be found in the Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15, Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 1, and Ballade No. 3 in A major, Op. 47. Embellished phrases can be found in the Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15 and Nocturne in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1. Theme and variations can be found in the Ballade No. 3 in A major, Op. 47, Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52 and Nocturne in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1. Inner melodies can be found in the Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15 and Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 1. Harmonic/Overtone pedaling can be found in the Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15 and Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 1. Lastly, opposing melodies can be found in the Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52 and Nocturne in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1. A lecture recital will be given focusing on these pieces to show the audience these melodic qualities both visually and aurally.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Most musicians associate Frederic Chopin with his piano works. Chopin was one of the most prolific composers of the Romantic Era. J. Peter Burkholder, an American musicologist and professor, writes that Chopin “was the Romantic composer most closely identified with the piano. His solo piano music won him enormous popularity and has been central to the repertoire ever since.”¹ He composed over 200 pieces for solo piano in addition to works for orchestra and chamber groups.² Included in these pieces are multiple “miniatures” which are small forms of music. Just some of these miniatures are the nocturnes, the preludes and the ballades.

The nocturne is another name for “night piece.” A nocturne is a piano work that is filled with melancholy and is slower and more lyrical than his other works.³ John Field, who is said by music historians to be the creator of the nocturne, indirectly inspired Chopin to compose his own nocturnes. Although the two did not know each other, Field’s nocturnes seem to have made an impression on Chopin. It was during Chopin’s lifetime that the nocturne reached its popularity, although the genre has not disappeared from music history since then.⁴

Chopin’s preludes, especially Op. 28, are of great importance. Chopin’s preludes can be compared to J.S. Bach’s preludes and fugues in the Well-Tempered Clavier. Like the Well-

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² Ibid, 622
⁴ Timea Szilveszter, “Comparative Analysis of Fryderyk Chopin’s and John Field’s Nocturnes, Part I” Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai 64, no. 1 (June 20, 2019), 332
Tempered Clavier, there are twenty-four preludes by Chopin, one in each of the major and minor keys. While the Well-Tempered Clavier is organized by parallel major and minor and goes in scale order, Chopin’s preludes are organized by relative major and minor and use the keys from the circle of fifths. Burkholder writes that Chopin’s preludes are “brief mood pictures, less challenging than his etudes but like them in posing specific performance problems. They also illustrate the astounding inventiveness of his figuration.”

Another miniature of Chopin’s piano works is the ballade. Although Chopin did not create the ballad form, he was the first to create an instrumental ballade. James Parakilas describes the ballades as “stories in sound.” The most notable characteristic is the consistency of the melody throughout that tells a story. Jim Samson, a musicologist and retired professor, writes that in the early 1830s there were many stylistic changes in Chopin’s style. These changes led to extended forms such as the scherzos, the fantasies and the ballades. Samson writes that “Most important of all, Chopin gradually developed a long-range harmonic vision which enabled him to gain structural control over the materials of the brilliant style, habitually presented in highly sectionalised formal designs which alternate lyrical and figurative paragraphs.”

Because Chopin composed at the height of the Romantic Era, there are many romantic qualities in his works. These include: folk song, nationalism, lyricism and emotions. Chopin created a new category of Romanticism: the miniature. Gorea writes that “Characteristic for

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5 Burkholder, 622
7 Ibid, 56
Romanticism, due to Chopin, new miniature genres appear in instrumental music: the nocturne, the serenade, the ballad. . .a.o. Most of them intended for drawing room representations. . .”

The fact that Chopin was such a popular Romantic Era composer is ironic as he disliked anything to do with Romanticism. Harold C. Schonberg writes that “He even disliked the word ‘romanticism.’ Delacroix was perhaps his closest friend, but he did not understand, or even like, the paintings of Delacroix.” Eugene Delacroix was a French Romantic artist and one of Chopin’s close friends.

Chopin’s music required a new style of rubato. Although rubato had been used by composers such as Mozart and Beethoven, Chopin had his own style. Chopin’s rubato was characteristically Polish and sounded odd to those who were not accustomed to it. Those who knew him have said that when he was playing the mazurkas his rubato was so intense that even though the piece was in three-four it sounded like it was in four-four. Even though Chopin had a broader rubato than most others, the underlying metrical pulse never fluctuated. This was done by playing with feeling but never losing the basic meter. Schonberg writes that Chopin’s secret was “that the feeling of individual note values was always preserved, whatever the temporary rhythmic displacement; the rhythm would fluctuate but never the underlying metrical pulse.”

Chopin’s piano works tell his story: a Polish composer who emigrated to France as a young adult. Chopin moved from Poland to France at age twenty. Even though his work and performances demanded an international audience, he still had to figure out how to interest that audience in a Polish musician. Due to the Polish Insurrection and other world events, Chopin

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10 Gorea, 110
11 Ibid, 153-155
12 Ibid, 155
13 Ibid, 155
14 Parakilas, 21
had difficulty establishing himself as a musician in France. Despite the fact that he lived in France for twenty years, Chopin never published any works with French lyrics; even though he was fluent in the language.\textsuperscript{15} Chopin also disliked performing in public, and thus did most of his performing in private salons.\textsuperscript{16}

Chopin’s most prolific years were the late 1830s and early 1840s. The specific piano works highlighted in this paper and lecture recital were composed during this time period. Chopin had been in Paris for a few years and was developing his unique, musical style. World events in Europe during this time affected Chopin’s compositional style.

Frederic Chopin’s music has been popular in the Romantic genre and has influenced many musicians. If one can understand certain aspects of a piece (melodic qualities, for example), then that will lead him or her to appreciate the piece. Whether one continues to like or dislike the piece in question does not matter so much as an appreciation that has emerged from knowledge. There is research on knowledge leading to appreciation and it states that in general, when a piece is appreciated more, the way in which the listener listens and responds to the piece changes.\textsuperscript{17} This research on appreciation will be discussed further in Chapter Two: Literature Review. This research will lead the audience to better understand and appreciate Chopin’s music and it will also be educational for those who are unfamiliar with his music.

The research question of this study is: what are the melodic qualities of the pianistic texture in Chopin’s solo piano works that are identifiable by theoretical analysis and public

\textsuperscript{15} Parakilas, 22
\textsuperscript{16} Schonberg, 152
performance? These melodic qualities will be the simplest and most enjoyable to identify both aurally and visually, which is why they have been chosen for this research. The melodic qualities demonstrated in this paper and lecture recital are: pedal tones, embellished phrases, theme and variations, inner melodies, harmonic/overtone pedaling and opposing rhythms. The hypothesis for this paper and lecture recital is that there are several melodic qualities that will be identified through the theoretical analysis and public performance. These qualities will be performed, and then explained through lecture and the use of a handout.
THE LIFE OF FREDERIC CHOPIN

Frederic Chopin was both a prolific composer and musician. He wrote hundreds of piano works throughout his lifetime and thus was a great contributor to the Romantic Era. He wrote mainly for piano although he also composed some pieces for chamber groups and orchestra and piano. Several of the authors in the literature review Chopin’s life and his influences. J. Peter Burkholder writes that “Chopin was the Romantic composer most closely identified with the piano.”\(^{18}\) He learned piano at a very young age and was a prodigy as a child. Chopin was the voice of Poland during the Romantic Era.\(^{19}\) He traveled to France at age twenty and suffered from homesickness. While in France, Chopin met Franz Liszt. Liszt and Chopin were friends and colleagues, and Liszt wrote a biography on Chopin after he passed away.\(^{20}\) The literature in this first section will show in more detail the life and hardships that Chopin endured.

An interesting piece of literature is *Liszt’s Chopin* by Franz Liszt and edited by Meirion Hughes.\(^{21}\) Because Franz Liszt and Frederic Chopin were friends, readers have a personal look at who Chopin was. This book gives a fifty-page introduction written by Hughes in order to give background on the relationship between Liszt and Chopin. Franz Liszt writes on the early life of

\(^{18}\) Burkholder, 623
\(^{21}\) Ibid
Chopin. Liszt writes about the environment in which Chopin grew up: a calm and simple life. Chopin was a brilliant young musician from the start and was placed in lessons with the renowned Wojciech Zywny, who was a disciple of J.S. Bach. Liszt writes that Chopin was a serious student who had incredible talent. Liszt includes insight from George Sand, who was one of Chopin’s lovers, on Chopin’s early life. He writes about Chopin’s friendships and romantic relationships as a young man and how he came about with his music. Because Franz Liszt was a colleague and friend of Chopin’s, this biography approaches all the information on a more personal level.

Chopin’s life continues to be studied in *Chopin, Poland’s Musical Voice* by Tom Pniewski. Pniewski also explores Chopin’s early life, but does so from a less personal and simpler perspective. Pniewski writes about Chopin’s parents and their background and how Chopin’s musical greatness did not come from his parents. Pniewski also touches on Chopin’s late teen-early adult years when he was starting to travel to Paris. Chopin was devastated that while in Paris he could not come home and help his family in the Polish uprising against the Russians, so this caused him to compose such pieces as the *Scherzo in B minor, Op. 20* and the “*Revolutionary*” *Etude, Op. 10, No. 2*. Pniewski also writes about Chopin’s early life in Paris and how he became friends with others like Franz Liszt, Felix Mendelssohn and the 32-year old painter Eugene Delacroix. He also writes about his romances: Konstancja Gladkowska, Maria Wodzinska, and George Sand; all of who will be written on later in Chapter 3.

Chopin’s mid to late life is written about by Edward N. Waters in “Chopin by Liszt.” Edward Waters wrote this article on the biography that Franz Liszt wrote about Chopin. This

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22 Pniewski, “Chopin, Poland’s Musical Voice.”
portion of the article focuses on Liszt’s and Chopin’s friendship (or feud ship) with each other. Water writes that when Chopin arrived in Paris in 1831, he and Liszt quickly became friends. Throughout the rest of Chopin’s life, he and Liszt had a love-hate relationship. Waters writes that Chopin was jealous of the way that Liszt played Chopin’s own etudes. Waters also writes on the friends that Liszt introduced to Chopin, like the Countess Marie d’Agoult. He focuses here on Chopin’s and the Countess’ relationship and then the relationship between Chopin and George Sand. Edward Waters also goes on to write that he believes that Chopin and Liszt were jealous of one another, and accounts the time where Liszt wrote a critical review on one of Chopin’s concerts. After that review, it seems that Chopin never spoke to Liszt again. On October 17, 1849 Frederic Chopin died. Harold C. Schonberg also writes about Liszt and Chopin’s friendship in The Great Pianists.24 Schonberg also writes that Liszt and Chopin had a love-hate relationship. However, Schonberg writes mostly about the use of Chopin’s rubato and what other musicians and composers thought of it. Chopin’s rubato was not typical in this time and so others found it confusing. This will be discussed more in Chapter 3.

MUSICAL/EXTRAMUSICAL INFLUENCES AND THE ROMANTIC ERA

There are many experiences in Chopin’s life that influenced what kind of music he composed. This research will also briefly examine the Romantic Era as well as some mental issues Chopin struggled with in his life. In order to fully understand his music it is important to understand his mental struggles. Chopin moved to Paris in 1831 and was consistently homesick. He is also said to have suffered from a neurological condition that caused him to have

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24 Schonberg, The Great Pianists
hallucinations as well as depression. This may have helped shape the tragic music that he composed.

Chopin had many hardships in his life and was incredibly ill. Manuel Vazquez Caruncho and Francisco Branas Fernandez both write about Chopin’s possible mental/neurological problems in “The Hallucinations of Frederic Chopin.” This article was published in the Medical Humanities journal in 2011 and explores possibilities of mental issues. The authors start the article by writing about his physical health. Chopin had many respiratory issues throughout his life which suggested that he had a chronic pulmonary disease. Caruncho and Fernandez compiled letters of Chopin and George Sand. In these letters there are descriptions of symptoms that may have suggested Chopin was experiencing hallucinations. In one instance, Chopin had to leave in the middle of one of his concerts because he had experienced a hallucination during one of his pieces. A letter from George Sand mentions another time when she and Chopin were at Valldemosa monastery. She had just come back from a walk and Chopin was distressed. He explained his recent hallucinations. Caruncho and Fernandez postulate possible diagnoses for Chopin. They concluded that he probably had a neurological condition: a temporal lobe epilepsy. This may have been the cause of his hallucinations.

While Caruncho and Fernandez attribute Chopin’s hallucinations to a medical condition, Ewelina Boczkowska attributes his hallucinations to “seeing ghosts.” She writes about this in her article: “Chopin’s Ghosts.” Boczkowska believes that because Chopin was depressed and...
grieving, he was obsessed with the morbid. Chopin suffered tremendous heartache while in France: his homeland was overtaken by the Russians and he was unable to know if his family was safe. Boczkowska’s “ghosts” that she writes about are really something that “signify repressed grief.”

The grief that Chopin endured and his inability to grieve correctly could have caused his “ghosts.” Boczkowska includes many of Chopin’s letters to various people in her article where he has written about his different experiences with “ghosts.” Whichever reason caused Chopin to see ghosts, it is believed to have had an impact on the melancholic music he wrote.

Chopin’s music is the result of several musical influences. Chopin composed during the Romantic Era, so a lot of his music contains Romantic Era qualities. Ioana Luminita Gorea writes about these Romantic Era qualities in the article “Romantic Characteristics Reflected in the Works of Fryderyk Chopin.” Gorea writes about the characteristics of the Romantic Era and how those characteristics are shown in Chopin’s works. Chopin developed many of these musical elements that came to characterize the Romantic Era. Gorea writes about how Chopin “turned European music towards the roots of the folk melody.” Chopin used national elements in his works as well as created new forms and types of Romantic improvisation. His more national pieces include mazurkas and waltzes. His mazurkas are based on the folk dances and have a real nationalistic essence to them. His waltzes are divided into two categories: brilliant waltzes and noble waltzes. Chopin’s brilliant waltzes, or valses brillantes, are bright in timbre. His noble waltzes, or valses nobles, are slower and sentimental. Borea writes about Chopin’s other genres as well and how they reflect Romantic characteristics.

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27 Boczkowska, 206
28 Gorea, “Romantic Characteristics Reflected in the Works of Fryderyk Chopin”
29 Ibid, 110
Charles Rosen also writes on Chopin’s Romantic style in *The Romantic Generation*. He writes about folk music and how Chopin’s music related which will be discussed more in Chapter 3. Rosen writes about each of Chopin’s works and how they contribute to the Romantic Era. He writes that Chopin’s works contain all of the Romantic Era aspects: “melodic organization of the sonorous material, the sonorous effect produced by the combination of sounds on different levels, the construction and the specific chordic sequences (modulation).” Rosen also describes Chopin’s rubato. Rubato is a characteristic used by composers such as Mozart and Beethoven, but Chopin expounded on it and made it unique. It is possible that Chopin modeled his style of rubato after Mozart’s rubato.

Deborah Rambo Sinn writes a little bit more on Chopin’s rubato in *Playing Beyond the Notes: A Pianist’s Guide to Musical Interpretation*. This book is written to give pianists ideas as they interpret what is on the musical score. Sinn writes a whole chapter on rubato and focuses mostly on how to use rubato. Rubato is a skill that must be learned and practiced, as knowing when and where to use rubato is not always obvious. Sinn writes that every pianist has their own style of rubato.

Arthur Rubinstein, who was an incredibly skilled American-Polish classical pianist, has an autobiography in which he mentions Chopin. Rubinstein specialized in Chopin’s music before he died in 1982. In Rubinstein’s autobiography, he writes mostly about tours and performances, although he does share his view of Chopin with the reader. Rubinstein writes that

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31 Ibid, 412
32 Schonberg, 155
even though Chopin was a weak man, he was able to perform independently of his health. When an audience member heard Chopin perform, he or she would not know just by listening that Chopin was frail and weak. Rubinstein compares Chopin to Beethoven who also managed to create powerful music despite illness.

THE WORKS OF CHOPIN

There is an abundance of literature on the analysis of Chopin’s works. This research will focus on his preludes, nocturnes and ballades. In order to study the analysis of the works in this paper, it will first be important to understand more about these works. J. Peter Burkholder, who is a musicologist, writes about Chopin’s preludes in the anthology *A History of Western Music*.\(^{35}\) This anthology provides a great deal of knowledge about the history of western music. Burkholder defines a prelude and likens Chopin’s preludes to J.S. Bach’s *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. All of this will be discussed more in Chapter 3.

Roger Kamien’s *Music an Appreciation*\(^{36}\) also provides information on some of Chopin’s works. Kamien describes nocturnes and how they can be mournful. The history of the nocturne is described in “Comparative Analysis of Fryderyk Chopin’s and John Field’s Nocturnes, Part I”\(^ {37}\) by Timea Szilveszter. John Field is said to be the inventor of the nocturne and Chopin was influenced by Field’s nocturnes. John Field and Frederic Chopin did not know each other, but that did not stop Chopin from using Field’s ideas for the nocturne. This will be discussed more in Chapter 3.

\(^{35}\) Burkholder, *A History of Western Music*

\(^{36}\) Kamien, *Music an Appreciation*

\(^{37}\) Szilveszter, “Comparative Analysis of Fryderyk Chopin’s and John Field’s Nocturnes, Part I”
Chopin’s ballades were the first instrumental ballades. A ballade is a piece that tells a story. James Parakilas writes about the ballades in *Ballads Without Words: Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballade*. Parakilas starts with a background of the ballad in general, and then discusses the formation of Chopin’s ballades. Jim Samson also discusses Chopin’s ballades in *Chopin: The Four Ballades* and *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*. Samson examines both the historical and analytical perspectives on Chopin’s four ballades. Samson writes that Chopin started composing ballades almost as soon as he arrived in Paris. This is important because as Parakilas said in his book, Chopin was trying to establish his Polish style on French ground. There is more in these three sources that will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

One melodic quality in Chopin’s piano works is harmonic/overtone pedaling. Boris Berman discusses this in his book *Notes from the Pianist’s Bench*. Berman included a chapter on pedaling to teach other musicians pedaling technique. Berman explains that in order to produce the most acoustically rich sound, the pedal is necessary. This will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3.

The purpose of this research is to teach the audience to better appreciate Chopin’s works. Alessandro Arbo writes on this in “On Appreciating the Aesthetic Properties of Musical Works.” There is research on understanding leading to appreciation. This article discusses that one must know the context of the piece in order to identify and appreciate it. In the conclusion,

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38 Parakilas, *Ballads Without Words: Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballade*
40 Samson, *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*
41 Boris Berman, *Notes from the Pianist’s Bench* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000
Arbo writes that through the remarks made in the article it can be said the “the web of contextual beliefs and knowledge functions as a kind of catalyst intervening in the indirect supervenience of the aesthetic properties of a musical work.” Research is necessary in order to understand the artistic properties and melodic qualities of Chopin’s works.

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43 Arbo, 172
Chapter 3

Chopin’s Life and Works

Frederic Chopin was born in 1810 in Zelazowa-Wola in Poland. He was born into a non-musical family, so his musical talent was unexpected. While Chopin was a boy, his family was concerned about his health as he was frail and sickly. Despite his health, Chopin learned to make others happy. Franz Liszt writes in his biography on Chopin, that “It was from this time that he acquired his friendly manner, charm, and stoicism in the face of suffering, all of which stemmed from a desire to allay the anxieties he caused to others.” Chopin started to learn piano at the age of six. He began playing melodies on the piano and his mother and sister taught him all that they could. Once Chopin had outgrown their teaching, his parents hired Wojciech Zywny to continue his piano lessons. Zywny was an avid follower of J.S. Bach and taught Chopin in the style of classicism. Chopin was taught to take music seriously and practice intently with the intention of becoming a master at the piano.

At the age of thirteen, Chopin started attending the lyceum where his father taught, and he received his general education. By the time Chopin attended the Warsaw Conservatory of Music at sixteen, several of his works had already been published. He was quickly gaining reputation as a pianist, composer, and prodigy. While at the Warsaw Conservatory he studied under the director Jozef Elsner for three years. Elsner was a well-accomplished composer and

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44 Liszt, 107
conductor and had already written thirty-four operas and a number of piano chamber music pieces.\textsuperscript{46}

After Chopin graduated at age nineteen, his parents encouraged him to travel abroad so he could hear the great masterpieces of the world. However, because Warsaw was under Russian control at the time, the Russian authorities were very strict on who could travel. Thankfully, he was able to travel to Vienna and several other German cities in 1829 as short excursions. The Polish uprising against the Russians was on November 29, 1830.\textsuperscript{47} Chopin wanted to travel back to Poland and fight for his country, but his parents forbade him. Because of this, Chopin was forced to stay in Vienna. This led him to perform more concerts. Unfortunately, his previous success was no longer relevant, and the Viennese public was no longer as interested in him as they were before. This diminished popularity in addition to the news of Warsaw falling to the Russians plunged him into grief. It was these turbulent feelings that caused him to compose pieces such as the \textit{Scherzo in B minor, Op. 20} and the \textit{“Revolutionary” Etude, Op. 10, No. 12}.\textsuperscript{48}

After this, Chopin made the decision to leave Vienna. He planned to travel to London and stop in Paris on the way there, but the positive reception to his performances in Paris caused him to live there for the rest of his life.\textsuperscript{49}

Frederic Chopin lived in Paris from 1831-1849. While in Paris he had many relationships and was a highly financially successful person from his piano teaching. Although he was also composing and performing, he did not receive a lot of income from those sources. Chopin was a nervous and frail man. He disliked giving concerts in large halls but was fine giving private

\textsuperscript{46} Pniewski, 1
\textsuperscript{47} Liszt, 116
\textsuperscript{48} Pniewski, 2
\textsuperscript{49} Liszt, 116-117
concerts in smaller venues such as salons. His style of playing was very quiet and demure, so it was perfect for the type of concerts he enjoyed giving. Most of Chopin’s income came from teaching private piano students. He was able to easily acquire many students because of all the social connections he had made since arriving in Paris. He taught five or six students every day and charged them about twenty francs each. This was twice the amount that a physician of that time would charge for a house call.\(^{50}\)

Frederic Chopin had many relationships while he lived in Paris. Some of these were romantic. Chopin’s first two romances had been Konstancja Gladkowska and Maria Wodzinska. Gladkowska attended the Warsaw Conservatory with Chopin. She was a gifted singer and he fell for her right as he was leaving Poland. She ended up being married off to somebody else. Wodzinska and Chopin were acquaintances before he moved to Paris as he had attended the lyceum with her three brothers. Wodzinska’s family moved to Dresden in 1831 and Chopin visited them shortly after in 1835. He proposed to Maria, but her mother did not agree with the proposal.\(^{51}\)

One of Chopin’s first friendships in Paris was with fellow composer Franz Liszt. Waters writes that “Much has been written on the friendship of Chopin and Liszt. Older writers maintained they were bosom companions.”\(^{52}\) While many people think that Chopin and Liszt were great friends, this may have been exaggerated; Chopin and Liszt had a love-hate relationship. In 1832, Liszt first heard Chopin perform. Liszt admired Chopin’s playing at the time and the two quickly became friends.\(^{53}\) Chopin considered Liszt to be strong and masculine.

\(^{50}\) Pniewski, 2  
\(^{51}\) Waters, 173  
\(^{52}\) Ibid, 173  
\(^{53}\) Ibid, 173
Chopin envied him for this since he was so weak and frail. This doesn’t necessarily mean that Chopin envied Liszt for his power. Chopin wrote to his friend Stephen Heller the reason: “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.”

Liszt and Chopin both respected and admired each other, but there was always a hint of jealousy in their relationship. One example of the strife between them was a review that Liszt wrote on one of Chopin’s concerts. The concert was on April 26, 1841. Chopin played several preludes, mazurkas, two polonaises, the second ballade and the third scherzo. Liszt’s review concentrated more on Chopin’s position and uniqueness in art instead of the actual performance which may have caused some of Chopin’s reaction. Even though Liszt did praise Chopin in the review, Chopin was not happy. Their friendship grew apart and Liszt wrote a letter to Chopin in 1843 to which he received no reply.

There were many women in Chopin’s life. Many of them were introduced to him by Liszt. The first woman of interest was Countess Marie d’Agoult. She was friends with Liszt as early as 1833 and met Chopin through him. Marie had written a letter to Chopin when she was ill and begged him to come and visit her. She told him in her letter that “one of your nocturnes should complete my cure.”

A few weeks after this event, Marie learned that Chopin was ill and invited him to come stay with her at her summer estate to recuperate.

Possibly the most famous relationship that Chopin had was with Aurore Dudevant better known as George Sand. Chopin and Sand were involved with each other for eight years (1838-1846). Pniewski writes that this time “coincided with his most creative and productive

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54 Schonberg, 151
55 Waters, 176
56 Ibid, 173
composing, even though the affair was tempestuous.” Chopin met Sand at a literary gathering in 1836. At first, Chopin disliked Sand. Despite the initial dislike, Chopin invited her over for a gathering a few months later. This led to their friendship, and later their love affair. After George Sand and Frederic Chopin ended their relationship, he continued to give piano lessons. Even though his health was failing, he gave a concert in 1848 and toured England and Scotland. When he returned to Paris, he became too sick and weak to perform. He died on October 17, 1849.

Chopin’s music is tinged with melancholy. While this may just happen to be the style in which he wrote, perhaps there is a bigger reason behind why his music sounds so sad. Chopin experienced a lot of trauma in his transitional years from Poland to France. He left behind his friends and family during the domination of Poland by the Russians. He lived alone in France and read about the tragedy in Poland in the newspapers. He was not able to contact his family for a while and probably imagined all the awful things that could possibly have happened to his family. This trauma and loneliness in Chopin’s life coupled with his “seeing ghosts” may have been a cause for the tragic melancholic music he composed. There are several opinions about Chopin and his “ghosts.” Chopin did not actually see real ghosts, but he did have bouts where he was intensely fascinated with the morbid, coffins and graves. There are several views on what was going on in Chopin’s brain. First there is a medical view from Manuel Vazquez Caruncho. This view hypothesizes that Chopin was having real hallucinations because of a medical

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57 Pniewski, 2
58 Waters, 174
59 Pniewski, 3
60 Boczkowska, 205
problem. Second, Ewelina Boczkowska holds the view that Chopin was just grieving and not seeing actual ghosts.

Caruncho writes that Chopin had a chronic pulmonary disease that caused his early death. Because he was ill with one disease, he may have been more prone to another. Throughout Chopin’s life he struggled with nasal blockage, pulmonary infections and recurring coughing. These symptoms would frequently cause him to have to stay in bed for a period. He also had symptoms similar to depression or bipolar disorder. This could have been a cause for his melancholic music.\textsuperscript{61} During the Paris Revolution of 1848 he performed a concert in a salon. After he had performed some of his music he had to leave the room for a short time. Chopin wrote to Solange Clesinger (George Sand’s daughter) that while he was about to play one of his pieces: “I saw emerging from the half-open case of my piano those cursed creatures that had appeared to me on a lugubrious night at the Carthusian monastery.”\textsuperscript{62} This situation mentioned in the letter happened in 1838. Chopin was in Majorca, Spain with George Sand and her son. When she returned one night she came home to Chopin quite disturbed. When he saw them enter he stood up, cried out and said “ah! I knew well you were dead!”\textsuperscript{63} Chopin then told Sand that he had a dream that he thought was real where he saw himself to be dead. He had almost lulled himself to sleep playing the piano and had thought the rain outside was part of his dream. It is thought that the piece he was playing at this time was the \textit{Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15}, or the “Raindrop Prelude.” These hallucinogenic symptoms combined with his physical illness caused Caruncho to believe that Chopin may have had a temporal lobe epilepsy. Chopin’s autopsy was lost and there is no way to know for certain unfortunately. Despite this, Caruncho

\textsuperscript{61} Caruncho, 5
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid, 5
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, 6
writes that he doubts knowing another possible diagnosis would help musicians understand Chopin’s world any more than they already do, “but we do believe that knowing he had this condition could help to separate romanticized legend from reality and shed new light in order to better understand the man and his life.”

Ewelina Boczkowska agrees with many of the things Caruncho wrote about Chopin’s ghosts. However, she mentioned nothing of a neurological disease as the cause of hallucinations. She wrote that although many people think that it was phantoms that haunted Chopin, “it is not accounts of specters that one finds in the pages of Chopin’s correspondence but rather descriptions of coffins and corpses.” Chopin had a fascination with morbid things as he dealt with extreme depression and tragic loss. He did not resolve his grief correctly which may have led to what Jacques Derrida calls “the crypt.” Derrida came up with this term to describe where undigested or unresolved grief goes to live. This may stem from inability to mourn personal loss or from social estrangement. Chopin’s writings in his diary show that he was having a hard time resolving the grief he felt for his homeland and family. Boczkowska writes that “Chopin’s ghosts are worth considering beyond their personal and collective dimension for what they may contribute to our understanding of his music.” This is the point on which Boczkowska and Caruncho agree. Knowledge of Chopin’s hallucinations or ghosts will lead musicians to understand his music better.

To continue to understand Chopin’s music it is important to understand the musical era in which he was actively composing. Chopin composed during the Romantic Era. The Romantic

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64 Caruncho, 7
65 Boczkowska, 205
66 Ibid, 206
67 Ibid, 212
Ideal is: Combining music and poetry into one art form.\textsuperscript{68} Romanticism is defined by a certain set of characteristics. Chopin concentrated on the following: using lyricism to show the composer’s nature and emotions, using the nocturnal as descriptive scenery, mysteriousness, developing expression, dynamics, and the agogic.\textsuperscript{69} Chopin also influenced European music with the folk melody. From this came the mazurkas and polonaises which contain Polish nationalistic elements. Charles Rosen writes that “Chopin’s mazurkas stand apart from the rest of the considerable production inspired by folk music which reaches into all forms of Romantic music.”\textsuperscript{70} He used fragments of Polish rhythms and melodies and combined them to create the mazurkas in his own original way.\textsuperscript{71} He also took the forms that existed and created new ones by creating Romantic improvisation in scherzo, impromptus and fantasies.\textsuperscript{72} Rosen writes that Chopin’s works all contain Romantic aspects: “melodic organization of the sonorous material, the sonorous effect produced by the combination of sounds on different levels, the construction and the specific chordic sequences (modulation.)”\textsuperscript{73}

It is argued that the most characteristic Romantic Era trait that Chopin employed in his music was the use of the rubato. Although rubato had been around before, Chopin’s rubato was Polish in heritage and much broader than other composer’s rubatos.\textsuperscript{74} Wilhelm Von Lenz was one of Chopin’s students and writes about an instance during one of his lessons. Von Lenz was playing the Mazurka in C when Giacomo Meyerbeer walked in. Meyerbeer listened to Von Lenz perform the piece and then insisted that the piece was in two-four time. Chopin, being the

\textsuperscript{68} Gorea, 115
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, 109
\textsuperscript{70} Rosen, 412
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, 412
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, 110
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, 110
\textsuperscript{74} Schonberg, 154
composer of the piece, argued back and said it was three-four time. The way the rubato was used made it sound such that the mazurka was in two-four time when it was actually in three-four.\textsuperscript{75} Charles Halle wrote something similar about a different experience. Halle was listening to Chopin perform in either 1845 or 1846. He was performing a mazurka and it sounded to Halle like the piece was written in four-four and not in three-four. Halle confronted Chopin about this to which Chopin just laughed and “explained that it was the national character of the dance which created the oddity.”\textsuperscript{76} Charles Salaman recalls in 1848 that even though he had heard much of Chopin’s rubato he remembers that Chopin was still somehow incredibly precise in the rhythm and timing. Liszt describes Chopin’s rubato as “a tempo agitated, broken, interrupted, a movement flexible, yet at the same time abrupt and languishing.”\textsuperscript{77} Chopin had a way of using rubato without slowing the piece down. Schonberg writes that his secret was “that the feeling of individual note values was always preserved, whatever the temporary rhythmic displacement; the rhythm would fluctuate but never the underlying metrical pulse,”\textsuperscript{78} or: “vary as much as is necessary, but never lose the basic meter.”\textsuperscript{79} It is also possible that Chopin used a type of rubato similar to Mozart’s. Rosen writes that “In this form, the melody note in the right hand is delayed until after the note in the bass.”\textsuperscript{80} Rubato is tricky for performers to master without it sounding like bad timing. Learning when and where to have rubato in a piece is a skill that must be learned and practiced. Deborah Rambo Sinn writes that “rubato is probably the most intimate of all

\textsuperscript{75} Schonberg, 153  
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, 154  
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 155  
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 155  
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, 155  
\textsuperscript{80} Rosen, 413
individual expressions and its use and breadth define a performer.” Every performer, just like Chopin, has his or her own unique way of expressing rubato.

Analysis

Next will be an analysis of Chopin’s music. This paper focuses on specific preludes, nocturnes and ballades. A brief description of each will be given followed by the musical analysis of melodic qualities in these pieces.

Chopin’s preludes are short pieces; most notable among them are the twenty-four preludes in Op. 28. Chopin’s Op. 28 is similar to Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier* also has twenty-four preludes and fugues – one for each major and minor key. Bach starts his preludes and fugues in C major, and then goes through parallel major and minor in scale order (C major, C minor, D major, D minor, etc.) Chopin’s preludes are different in that the twenty-four of them are organized by relative major and minor. There is still a prelude for each major and minor key, but they start in C major and go around the circle of fifths (C major, A minor, G major, E minor, etc.)

Chopin’s nocturnes will also be discussed. Roger Kamien writes that “a nocturne, or night piece, is a slow, lyrical, intimate composition for piano. Like much of Chopin’s music, this nocturne is tinged with melancholy.” Rubato can be seen in many of Chopin’s nocturnes which helps exude emotion more readily. In a nocturne there is usually a beautiful, soaring melody over a sonorous accompaniment. The nocturne was “invented” by John Field. Chopin was an admirer of Field’s compositions and took the idea of nocturne from him. Timea Szilvester writes that “the

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81 Sinn, 70 and 86.
82 Burkholder, 622
83 Kamien, 225
subdued elegance of his musical language had a profound effect on the representatives of the romantic era, especially on Fryderyk Chopin. . . an admirer of Field’s compositions and performing art.”

Several other composers followed suit and composed nocturnes of their own.

Chopin wrote four ballades. In order to understand Chopin’s ballades, the reader must understand where the ballades come from. Ballades had been around for a time already, Chopin was not the inventor of the ballade. In 1932, Gordon Gerould defined a ballad as: “a ballad is a folk-song that tells a story with stress on the crucial situation, tells it by letting the action unfold itself in event and speech, and tells it objectively with little comment or intrusion of personal bias.” Simply put – a ballade is a story in music. Before Chopin, there had only been ballades with words – the words which would tell the story. But Chopin composed the first ballades without words. In both his ballades and his scherzi, Chopin drew from both classical and post-classical tradition while remaining independent of both. Burkholder writes that Chopin’s ballades “capture the charm and fire of Polish narrative ballads, combining these qualities with constantly fresh turns in harmony and form.”

Frederic Chopin exhibits similar melodic qualities throughout some of his more well-known works. These melodic qualities are: pedal tones, embellished phrases, theme and variations, inner melodies, harmonic/overtone pedaling and opposing rhythms. While this paper is organized by melodic quality, the lecture recital accompanying it will be organized by piece. The pieces will be performed and in between each piece a lecture/explanation about the melodic

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84 Szilvester, 332
85 Parakilas, 20
Gordon Gerould was a philologist and professor at Princeton University. He wrote the book The Ballad of Tradition.
86 Samson, 1
87 Burkholder, 626
qualities in each piece will be given. Examples will be played on the piano to demonstrate each characteristic to the audience aurally, and a handout will provide visual evidence to the audience.

The first melodic quality is pedal tones. Pedal tones are a type of non-chord tone, which means it is not part of the chord that is sounding. Typically pedal tones are located in the bass of a piece, so the pedal tones in this piece are more like ostinatos. *Chopin’s Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15* exemplifies pedal tones throughout the piece. Throughout ninety percent of the piece either an A-flat 3 (in the key of D-flat major) or its enharmonic G-sharp 3 (in the key of C-sharp Minor) is sounding. Figure one shows measures 24-31 of this piece.

*Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15*

Figure 1: mm 24-31

In measures 24-27, the A-flat is shown in the left hand as a constant under the chord changes in the right hand. As the key changes in measure 28, the A-flat is now written as a G-sharp and is in
the right hand. The G-sharp is in the right hand until the piece changes back to the original key.

Measures 74-77 are shown in Figure 2 with measure 75 being the critical measure.

Figure 2: mm 74-77

\[\text{Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 1}\]

Another example of pedal tones can be seen in Chopin’s *Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 1*. The pedal tones in the nocturne are not as evident as they are in the prelude, but if the listener knows how to listen, then he or she will be able to identify it. The pedal tones are shown right from the beginning. Figure 3 shows measures 1-7. In measures 1 and 2 the key is introduced with a left-hand cascade in C-sharp minor. Through the next seven measures it can be seen that C-sharp remains in the left hand. One of the only exceptions is from measure 6 into 7. The left hand follows the chord changes and leaves C-sharp when changing to a B seventh chord and resolving to E major. Because the C-sharp had already been so heavily included until that point, the chord change in measure 6 sounds very dramatic.

Another place to note in this piece is at the very end. Figure 4 shows measures 94-98. At this point, the key has changed to C-sharp major. Even with chords changing every quarter note, the C-sharp is still played four times each measure.
Figure 3: mm 1-7

Figure 4: mm 94-98
**Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major, Op. 47**

Pedal tones also appear in Chopin’s *Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major, Op. 47*. A pedal tone can be found featured in the coda. Figure 5 shows measures 184-186 and 194-196 respectively.

**Figure 5: mm 184-186 and 194-196**

In measures 184-186, left hand octave b’s are shown as the theme is played again in the right hand. This happens again in measures 194-196 with left hand octave c. This pedal tone provides a stable base under the right hand chromatically altered theme.

Embellished phrases are another characteristic emphasized in this piece. Embellished phrases are self-explanatory: it is an embellishment on a previously stated or played phrase. The first example of embellished phrases is in the D-flat Prelude. The examples show measures 3-5, 22-24 and 78-80 respectively in Figure 6:
The three times in the piece that this embellishment appears, it always leads back into the main theme. An important thing to notice is that the embellishment is different every time.

*Nocturne in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1*

Embellished phrases can also be found in the *Nocturne in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1*. The embellishment occurs near the end of the piece, in the second variation. These embellishments appear in the form of chromatic scales and cascades. Figure 7 shows measures 32-37.
The embellishments are shown in the right hand and are easily identified by trill markings and chromaticism.

The next melodic quality studied in these pieces is theme and variations. While this may seem similar to embellished phrases, the difference with theme and variations is that there first needs to be a theme established. The first place this is seen is *Ballade No. 3*. In this ballade, there are several themes that are introduced. While there are also several transitionary themes, there are three main themes that will be focused on here. The first main theme is shown in Figure 8.

This theme starts at the beginning of the piece and returns two times throughout the piece. The first time that this theme returns is in measure 37. The theme is the same for the first four measures, but upon comparing the last half of the theme with variation, some differences can be seen. Figure 9 compares the second halves of these two themes.
Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major, Op. 47

Figure 8: mm 1-8

Figure 9: mm 5-8 and 41-47
In this variation, the second half of the theme is elongated and goes through several chord changes before it finally resolves to A-flat major. The theme does not return again until the end of the piece, right before the coda. The last variation on the first theme is shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: mm 213-221

The melody is preserved on top while notes have been added throughout to fill out the chord. This makes this variation sound full as it leads into the coda.

The second theme is introduced in measure 52 and is shown in Figure 11. While the second theme begins in measure 54, it is introduced by two measures of graceful octave leaps. This happens before every time this theme returns. The introduction also comes back later with a variation of its own. This theme returns three times throughout the piece. The first return comes back in measure 105. The only difference between the previous theme and when it returns in
measure 105 is the left hand during the second half of the theme. The second half of this variation is shown in Figure 12.

Figure 11: mm 52-62

Figure 12: mm 109-112
The left hand changes slightly in this variation, which will be important to note later. The next time this theme returns it has modulated to the key of A-flat. This is shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: mm 144-156

![Sheet Music](image)

Everything other than the key is the same — except the second half of the theme’s left hand is emulating the second time the theme appears instead of the first. This could also be called a modulation of the theme instead of a variation. The last time this theme appears is during a longer developmental section leading up to the coda. The first six measures of this variation are shown in Figure 14. The theme is in the right hand while the left hand is establishing the keys with repeated octaves. The melody is a little bit different as some accidentals have been added to fit in with the harmony. This continues as the phrase repeats itself and works its way up a chromatic scale until it reaches E-flat as the bass. Figure 15 shows the destination of this developmental section.

The last variation of this theme can be seen in measures 166-169 (Figure 16). This motive is a variation on the octave leaps that appeared earlier at the beginning of this theme.
Figure 14: mm 184-192

Figure 15: mm 205-208
The last theme that appears in this piece is introduced in measure 65. This theme is shown in Figure 17.

This theme reappears with variations in measure 82 which is shown in Figure 18. This variation has octaves in the right hand while the left hand follows almost the same pattern as before. The main difference between the third theme and its first variation is the broadness that the first variation brings to this theme. This theme appears two more times near the piece, both after they have modulated to C-sharp minor. The second variation is shown in Figure 19.
Figure 18: mm 82-88

Figure 19: mm 157-164
The left hand in this variation brings a turbulence with the moving chromatic sixteenth notes and the right hand holds the main melody. After a brief transition, the third variation appears and is shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: mm 173-183
The left hand is very similar to the main theme and first variation, while the right hand holds the melody in cascading octaves.

*Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52*

Another piece where theme and variations is quite prominent is in *Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52*. There are three main themes along with a few motifs that Chopin uses throughout the piece. The piece starts off with a simple theme that does not appear again until halfway through the piece. This theme is shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21: mm 1-7
It could be argued that since this short melody only appears twice that it is not really a theme. However, because it introduces the entire work and does indeed return it will be categorized as an introductory theme here. The theme is very simple and reappears again in measure 129 in the key of A major. This is shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22: mm 129-133

This variation is different than the theme earlier because it is elongated at the end of the theme.

The second theme in this piece goes on for almost an entire page. Because of this, the example will just show the main part of the theme which is the first four measures. This is shown in Figure 23. During the main theme this melody repeats itself several times centered on different notes. Despite the length of the theme, it should still be categorized as one theme instead of theme and variation. It is also good to pay attention to the sixteenth note motif in the second half of measure 10 as it will appear later in the piece.
The first variation occurs right after the second theme ends. It is shown in Figure 24.

Not much is different about this variation except for the part of the theme that has been embellished (measure 24.) Figure 25 shows the next variation on this theme. A lot has been added to this theme: the timbre is much thicker and inner voices have been added. The tricky part of this variation is bringing out the melody in the right hand. Even though the melody is on the top of the right hand, all the notes in the middle take the performer’s entire concentration. The next variation is shown in Figure 26.
Chopin uses a different approach with this variation and hearkens back to the fugue-like counterpoint of Bach’s compositions. The entire example is shown to show the reader the full effect of this counterpoint style. The texture is denser than before as is typical with counterpoint and the melody is easily heard throughout. The last time the theme comes back is shown in Figure 27. Figure 27 covers two sections of the theme as it is important to see both.

Chopin has added a very graceful left hand while intensely embellishing the right hand. The melody is very hard to find at first glance, but stands out when listening to a performance.

The third theme in the fourth ballade is simpler and only reappears once. It is shown for the first time in Figure 28. This is another longer theme, so the second half is not shown in this paper. The second half of the theme is very similar to the first half. The variation is shown in Figure 29. The variation lasts for a total of two pages, but the essence of it is captured in the first three or four measures. While the original theme is in the key of B-flat Major, the variation is in the key of D-flat Major.
More chromatics are added later in the variation as the piece is getting ready to transition to the first part of the coda.

The last thing to note in the fourth ballade is the primary melodic motif that is inserted in several parts of the piece. It is part of the second theme, but it doesn’t always reappear as part of an entire variation. The motive is shown in Figure 30. Figure 31 shows three of the places that this motif reappears.
Figure 27: mm 152-153 and mm 156-158

Figure 28: mm 80-87
This motif appears all throughout the piece. It is little details like this that makes this piece so brilliant.

**Nocturne in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1**

The last piece that exemplifies theme and variations is the *Nocturne in E minor*. This piece is less complicated than other works discussed in this paper. The first theme is shown in Figure 32.
This theme reappears three times throughout the piece. The first variation is shown in Figure 33. The theme is varied by octaves being added to the melody and a few rhythmic changes. Figure 34 shows the next variation.
In this variation, the melody is varied by embellishments being added. The last variation is shown in Figure 35.
Again, Chopin adds an octave to the melody for variety. He makes this variation more intense by intensifying the rhythm at the end of the variation more than earlier in the piece.

The second theme in this piece first appears about halfway through the piece. It is shown in Figure 36.

This theme is more graceful at the beginning and returns louder in the second half. (Not shown in this example.) The theme is in the key of B major. When the theme reappears later, it is in the key of E major. This can be seen in Figure 37.
Other than the key change in this variation, there is not much difference between this and the second theme.

Inner melodies are the next melodic quality discussed in this paper. Inner melodies that appear in the middle of the voicing of a piece that are intended to be brought out. There are two great examples in these works. One of these examples is in the *Prelude in D-flat major*, and the other is in the *Nocturne in C-sharp minor*. Figure 38 shows the inner melodies in the prelude.

*Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15*

Figure 28: mm 28-30 and 36-38
The first line is where the melody is introduced while the second line shows the inner melodies. The inner melody notes are in the right hand with the stems facing down.

Figure 39 shows the inner melodies in the nocturne.

Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 1

Figure 39: mm 19-26

These inner melodies are also easily seen because they are written stem down. The main theme is played on top, but the inner melody is meant to be brought out.

The next melodic quality discussed is harmonic/overtone pedaling. One thing that Chopin really brought to the forefront of the Romantic Era was using the damper pedal to emphasize harmonic series. There are certain notes on the piano that when struck with the pedal held down
will cause other notes of that same chord or “harmonic series” to faintly sound. This causes a full sound even when there are only two notes sounding. Berman writes that because of this, “The pianist who is interested in producing an acoustically rich sound (that is, rich in overtones) must resort to help from the pedal.”\textsuperscript{88} Chopin uses this to his advantage in his compositions by purposefully writing notes in his pieces that are spaced a certain distance apart so as to produce a fuller sound with the pedal and to cause the upper notes to sing.\textsuperscript{89} Rosen provides an example in \textit{The Romantic Generation} of one of Chopin’s compositions: \textit{Nocturne in E-flat major, Op. 9, No. 2}. Figure 40 shows this example.

\textit{Nocturne in E-flat major, Op. 9, No. 2}

Figure 40: mm 1-4

The spacing and overtones of this piece cause the right hand to sing and the left hand not to be lost. Rosen writes that “The G in the right hand sings because of the E flat four octaves below it, and the two quavers that follow the low E flat continue to reinforce the vibrations of both the E flat and the G, bass and melody.”\textsuperscript{90}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[88] Berman, 97
\item[89] Rosen, 22
\item[90] Ibid, 21-22
\end{footnotes}
There are several examples in other works within this paper and lecture recital that show this as well. The first piece is the *Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15*. This is shown in Figure 41.

*Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15*

Figure 41: mm 1-4

The beginning of the piece starts out very thin in texture, but when played, sounds sonorously full because of the overtones that are sounding as a result of the spacing of the notes. Like in the *E-flat Nocturne*, the top notes project while the accompaniment is sustained. This can also be seen in *Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 1*, shown in Figure 42.

*Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 1*

Figure 42: mm 1-2
Even though the piece starts out quietly and only the left hand textures are sounding, the pedal and overtones make it very easy to crescendo in the middle of the phrase.

Last but not least are opposing rhythms. The most prominent pieces that opposing rhythms are shown in are Ballade No. 4 and Nocturne in E minor. There are two places in the Ballade No. 4 that need to be mentioned. Both of these places have a 9 against 6 with 9 in the right hand and 6 in the left. The first place is shown in Figure 43.

*Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52*

Figure 43: mm 156-159

In this theme, the left hand is playing even sextuplet figures while the right hand is playing even triplet-sixteenth note rhythms. The trick for the performer is to play the left hand evenly while the right hand plays almost freely. The temptation is to play this very metronomically to make sure all of the notes are played where they are supposed to, but when the performer has mastered that they need to move on and play the hands almost “separate.” The result is synergistic. The second area of interest is shown in Figure 44.
This rhythm is almost exactly the same as the first example shown, but the difference lies in the accents placed on some of the notes. The stem up notes add a melody of four sixteenth notes over a triplet figuration. This is hard for the performer to master but it sounds incredibly cohesive once it is mastered.

The second piece is the Nocturne in E minor. There are three examples shown in this paper as the opposing rhythms are sprinkled throughout the entire piece. Figure 45 shows the first example.

Nocturne in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1

This is part of the first theme: the melody has the eighth notes in the right hand while the triplets are sounding in the left hand, causing opposing rhythms. Figure 46 shows a later example.
This section has more opposing rhythms than earlier because the melody in this section is made up of mostly eighth notes. The eighth notes continue on past this example and eventually lead into the second theme. Figure 47 shows the last example in this piece.

Figure 46: 14-15

![Figure 46: 14-15](image)

Figure 47: mm 53-54

![Figure 47: mm 53-54](image)

This is the end of the first variation on the second theme. The right hand has eighth notes which will be especially tricky to play in this part of the piece as the performer is starting to slow down to the finish of the piece.
Conclusion

Frederic Chopin was a great composer of the Romantic Era. He suffered physically and mentally throughout his life which contributed to the melancholy that his music depicts. He was physically ill with a chronic disease that led to his early death, and also suffered depression and grief because of Russian control of his home nation. He was a skilled composer for piano and preferred to perform in private spaces. He developed his own miniatures and was a champion of his own rubato. Chopin’s rubato was more expressively foundational in his compositions than that of his Romantic contemporaries; nonetheless the composer still managed to keep everything to the correct beat/tempo.

The pianistic-melodic qualities shown in Chopin’s music are: pedal tones, embellished phrases, theme and variations, inner melodies, harmonic/overtone pedaling and opposing rhythms. Pedal tones, which are considered a non-chord tone and/or an ostinato, can be found holding the Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15, Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 1 and Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major, Op 47 together throughout. Embellished phrases contain ornaments on specific melodies or phrases and can be found in the Prelude in D-flat major and the Nocturne in E minor. Theme and variations involves a theme being stated early on, and then repeated later in the piece with different changes. This can be found in Ballade No. 3, Ballade No. 4 and Nocturne in E minor. Harmonic/Overtone Pedaling is used when certain notes in the harmonic series are played with the damper pedal being held down. This causes those notes to ring more sonorously. This melodic quality can be found in the Prelude in D-flat major and Nocturne in C-sharp minor. Last, opposing rhythms occur when two clashing rhythms are played at the same time (triplets against eighth notes, for example.) Opposing rhythms can be found in the Ballade No. 4 and the Nocturne in E minor. All these pieces remain as hallmarks of fine
pianism to this day. The goal in researching and demonstrating these characteristics is to help others understand more about Chopin’s music. The main goal is that those who learn and understand more about Chopin’s music will be able to appreciate him and his works more. It is in the performing and studying of Chopin’s works that his legacy lives on.
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Appendix

Chopin and his musical elements

Who was Frederic Chopin?

- Early Romantic Era composer
- Lived from 1810-1849
- Born in Poland, but emigrated to France in 1830
- Underwent a lot of suffering/grief because of events happening back at home
- Made friends with other composers such as Franz Liszt and Felix Mendelssohn

What did he write?

- Mostly piano works, but also some chamber group and piano/orchestra compositions
- Many different genres: preludes, nocturnes, ballades, mazurkas, scherzo, impromptus, polonaises, etudes are just a few of these.
- Highlighted in this program: preludes, nocturnes and ballades.
- Prelude: shorter pieces, typically under five minutes with some as short as one. Preludes had become stylized which meant it was now its own form instead of a prelude to something else. Chopin wrote 27 preludes, 24 of which are a set.
- Nocturne: slow, lyrical piece. The meaning of nocturne is “night piece.” Typically more mournful.
- Ballade: Longer more epic piece that tells a story. First instrumental ballades were created by Chopin.
Purpose of the study:

- To teach the audience more about Chopin’s melodic textures from his piano works.
- Research question: What are the melodic qualities of the pianistic texture in Chopin’s piano works that are identifiable by theoretical analysis and public performance?
- Melodic qualities researched are:
  - Pedal Tones
  - Embellished Phrases
  - Theme and Variations
  - Inner Melodies
  - Harmonic/Overtone Pedaling
  - Opposing Rhythms
Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15

Melodic Qualities emphasized: Pedal Tones, Embellished Phrases, Inner Melodies and Harmonic/Overtone Pedaling.

Pedal Tones: type of non-chord tone, usually in the bass of left hand. While the nature of pedal tone is in this piece, it is not confined to the bass like a pedal tone usually is. The pedal tones in this piece is an A-flat/G-sharp sounding throughout the entire piece, almost like raindrops.

Example 1

Embellished Phrases: Embellishment/ornamentation on a simple phrase to make it more interesting. Can be seen in this piece as an ornamentation on a simple phrase to stretch the beat a little longer.
Example 2c mentions *smorzando*. This means “gradually dying away.”

Inner Melodies: Melodies in the inner voices that are meant to be brought out/heard. This is typically a more advanced piano technique. This is shown in this piece with stems down.
Harmonic/Overtone Pedaling: Damper pedal is used to emphasize certain notes that are spaced a certain distance apart. This emphasis will cause other notes to faintly sound, causing a fuller sound. This can be seen with the D-flat in the bass and the F in the melody at the beginning of this piece.
Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 1

Melodic Qualities emphasized: Pedal Tones, Inner Melodies and Harmonic/Overtone Pedaling.

Pedal Tones: Can be seen as a C-sharp throughout the piece, always in the left hand/bass.

Example 5

Inner Melodies: Can be seen as notes in the right hand with stems down. Melody is meant to be brought out.
Harmonic/Overtone Pedaling: Can be seen at the beginning of the piece. The pedal is held down through the first few measures causing the notes to produce a rich sound. Even though it starts at *pianissimo* the texture is full.
Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major, Op. 47

Melodic Qualities emphasized: Pedal Tones and Theme and Variations

Pedal Tones: The pedal tones in this piece are shown in example 8. The pedal tones are ostinato-like and seen in the left hand as a frequently repeated note.

Example 8a

Example 8b

Theme and Variations: A theme is introduced, and when it returns it is “varied.” A good example is Johann Palchelbel’s Canon in D. There are three themes emphasized in this piece and several variations to each of them.
Example 9: First Theme

Example 10: Variation
Example 11: Second Theme

Example 12: Modulation on Theme
Example 13: Variation on Theme

Example 14: Third Theme

Example 15: Variation
Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52

Melodic Qualities emphasized: Theme and Variations and Opposing Rhythms.

Theme and Variations: seen throughout the piece. There is an introductory theme, a main theme and a secondary theme. Each of these has variations along with it.

Example 16: Introductory Theme
Example 17: Introductory Theme variation

Example 18: Main Theme
Example 19: Main Theme variation

Example 20: Contrapuntal Variation
Example 21: Secondary Theme

Example 22: Secondary Theme variation
Opposing Rhythms: When two clashing rhythms are played at the same time. Usually one in the left hand and one in the right hand. Can be seen near the end of this piece, one rhythm is being played in the left hand and a clashing one is being played in the right hand.

Example 23:
Nocturne in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1

Melodic Qualities emphasized: Embellished Phrases, Theme and Variations and Opposing Rhythms

Embellished Phrases: Can be seen during a variation of the main theme. The chromaticism and quick notes point to an embellished phrase.

Example 24: Embellished Phrases

Theme and Variations: One main theme emphasized in this piece. It is introduced at the beginning of the theme and returns three times.
Opposing Rhythms: The left hand plays triplets throughout the entire piece. Every time the right hand has eighth notes in the melody, opposing rhythms are present.