

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**FREDERICK CHOPIN'S LIFE AND WORKS AND IT'S INFLUENCE ON APPLIED  
PIANO TEACHING**

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By  
Pablo A. Cintron

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APPROVED BY:

Mindy Damon, Ed. D., Committee Chair

Michael Lee Harland, PhD., Committee Member

## ABSTRACT

While many aspects of Frederic Chopin piano technique have been investigated, pedagogical studies regarding his unfinished piano method are certainly lacking. This research focuses on providing first-hand information that will expand the pedagogical philosophy and widen the historical perspective of applied piano students in general. This research project will explore some of practice and historical strategies presented by the nineteenth and twentieth-century pianists in applied lessons to determine how students practice in successive lessons. Frederick Chopin's innovations on piano technique are extraordinary and influenced succeeding generations of pianists and piano composers. Furthermore, the life and the works of Frederick Chopin have made an undeniable contribution to Polish cultural traditions around the world. This study is based on a hypothesis that argues that some historical aspects of Frederick Chopin's life and piano method are extremely important for the applied music piano teacher in the twenty-first century. In this study, the writer presents an investigation on Chopin's historical life events and selected compositions that made Chopin responsible for the development of an innovative applied piano teaching technique. In addition, a qualitative analysis of Chopin's existing and selected works will be employed for this study. Lastly, by drawing a connection between Chopin's works and his unfinished piano method, this research study will provide teachers and students with a valuable reference tool when learning how to play his works in a manner that display sensitivity and understanding of the classical piano technique.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Background

For the twenty-first century piano teacher, it is imperative to consider the importance of providing adequate training to prevent students from developing bad habits during their formative years of piano studying. As stated by C. L. Hannon, “To attain this end, it sufficed to find the solution of the following problem: If all five fingers of the hand were absolutely equally well trained, they should be ready to execute anything written for the instrument, and the only question remaining would be that of fingering, which could be readily solved.”<sup>1</sup> Piano pedagogy and piano technique have developed over the last three hundred years and as a result, most piano teaching techniques have been modified and transformed. During the first part of the nineteenth-century, most piano pedagogical methodologies focused on training the fingers mechanically utilizing repetitive finger exercises to accomplish mastery of the instrument. As stated by Dubois, “Suppleness was his great object. He repeated, without ceasing, during the lesson: ‘easily, easily’ Stiffness exasperated.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, this pedagogical piano method of exclusively focusing on repetitive piano exercises may hinder the student ability to further develop freedom of expression in musical interpretation.

In sharp contrast with the nineteenth-century piano methodology, today’s piano teaching technique and practice routine has changed and advanced tremendously. One of the first initiatives taken to advance piano technique and piano pedagogy initiated with the creation of the piano etude by Johann Nepomuk Hummel during the Classical time period. In general, these etudes are short in duration and intended to target a particular technical difficulty. Regarding

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<sup>1</sup> C. L. Hanon, *The Virtuoso Pianist: In Sixty Exercises*, (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc, 1900), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Eugene Delacroix, *Journal*: no. 3 (1832): 25.

Hummel's influence on other piano teachers Schoenberg said, "It is also hard to escape the notion that Chopin was very familiar with Hummel's now-forgotten Op. 67."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the etude became a standard requirement for composers and pianists during the nineteenth century as the king of all instruments grew in popularity. For applied piano teachers in today's classroom, these piano etudes are at the core of making sure that all fingers are trained equally. The vast majority of these exercises are intended for the left hand, the fourth and the fifth fingers, and to learn how to perform trills and tremolo correctly. As stated by Chopin:

Each finger's power is determined by its shape: the thumb having the most power, being the broadest, shorter and freest; the fifth finger as the other extremity of the hand; the third and the middle as the pivot; the second, and the fourth, the weakest one, Siamese twin of the third, bound to it by a common ligament, and which people insist to separate from the third- which is impossible, and, fortunately, unnecessary.<sup>4</sup>

According to this pedagogical approach, each finger has a unique purpose in piano playing.

Furthermore, in the art of piano pedagogy the teacher bears a tremendous responsibility as the ultimate purpose of teaching the piano is to provide the necessary guidance to allow the student to develop the skills, confidence, discipline, but mostly the self-esteem needed to achieve mastery of the instrument and to stimulate the musical mind. According to recent Steinway research:

Piano practice also boosts cognitive and intellectual abilities, which is to say it makes you smarter and activates similar parts of the brain used in spatial reasoning and math. Studying the piano has also been shown to amazingly improve memory – and build good habits like focus and perseverance, diligence, and creativity. Children who had a few years of piano study under their belts could remember twenty percent more vocabulary words than their peers. And childhood musicians are better equipped later in life to retain certain information from speeches and lectures. Playing piano has been shown to increase spatial-temporal ability, which figures heavily in math, science, and engineering. Regular music practice at an early age can even make structural changes to the brain that stay with

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<sup>3</sup> Joel Sachs, *Performance and Teaching*, (London: Oxford Music Publications, 2011), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Frederic Chopin, *Frederic Chopin: Correspondence*, (Paris: Conservatoire Musique, 1953), 60.

you for the rest of your life, making your brain more efficient both while playing and in extra-musical endeavors.<sup>5</sup>

Piano pedagogy has a profound impact as an academic discipline and the formation of the teacher-student training process. As a result, piano pedagogy is the process of guiding knowledge and skills out of students. Consequently, piano pedagogy is the study of learning how to teach the piano. As stated by Crappell, “Through transformational learning, pedagogy students will learn the art of pedagogy by comparing new concepts and knowledge with their personal experiences in learning and teaching. Pedagogy teachers can help students understand, evaluate, and apply the knowledge and skills they are exploring. Transformational learning will describe how collaborations between faculties in music education and performance led to the growing popularity of piano pedagogy coursework’s in the twentieth century.”<sup>6</sup> These collaborations between the faculty or piano teachers and the student body can be viewed as the cornerstone of piano studies as it demonstrates how it can prepare young artists for careers in music teaching and a professional piano performance occupation.

Retrospectively, the most important piano etudes of the era are the well-known etudes by Carl Czerny and the piano pieces for technical advancement by Muzio Clementi. In addition to the contributions made by Czerny and Clementi, composers such as Frederic Chopin, Franz Liszt, and Claude Debussy composed piano exercises intended to gratify the audiences but also serve as an effective teaching tool.<sup>7</sup> As stated by Robert H. Stewart, “The aim is to stress the deficiencies of the established view of Clementi as a keyboard pedagogue and to stress the

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<sup>5</sup> M. Steinert, *Benefits of Playing the Piano*, (February 2022), 1.  
[https://www.steinway.com/zh\\_CN/news/features/the-benefits-of-playing-piano](https://www.steinway.com/zh_CN/news/features/the-benefits-of-playing-piano).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 210.

<sup>7</sup> Rohan H. Stewart-MacDonald, *New Perspective on the Keyboard Sonatas of Muzio Clementi* (Bologna: UT Orpheus Publications, 2006), 485.

importance of liberating him as much as possible from this ingrained perception.”<sup>8</sup> Most of the technical innovations that were introduced during the nineteenth century by these illustrious composers, had a profound effect in modern piano technique and established a foundation for the modern applied piano teaching techniques that are still in use today. Most of these piano etudes were created with the goal to increase technical piano literature for teachers and to provide technical exercises that would serve as an effective pedagogical tool.

Chopin’s etudes, life, piano teaching techniques, and overall musical contribution have received considerable attention in today’s applied piano teaching profession. This fascination with Chopin’s method of piano playing comes from his own pupils, as Mikuli is reported to once have said, “Chopin invented a completely new method of piano playing that permitted him to reduce technical exercises to a minimum.”<sup>9</sup> Consequently, it is no less important to make clear that the application of piano practice instruction has changed immensely over the last three hundred years.

In addition, at the beginning of the nineteenth-century composers and teachers like Frederick Chopin, Muzio Clementi, Carl Czerny, and Franz Liszt dedicated unlimited efforts and resources to write etudes for the piano dedicated to improving finger dexterity and further advanced applied piano technique. Undoubtedly, today’s pedagogical approach to learn such technical works has developed significantly. As a result, it is imperative to investigate the history and certain aspects of piano technique as it has progressed during the last two-hundred years and has been studied, revised, and transformed. Exploring Chopin’s works withing a pedagogical

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<sup>8</sup> Stewart-MacDonald, *New Perspective on the Keyboard Sonatas of Muzio Clementi*, 485.

<sup>9</sup> Jean- Jackes Eigendilger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 14.

mindset will help the student and the teacher to position Chopin's pedagogical philosophy into a broader historical standpoint.

Learning more about the connection between Chopin the artist and Chopin the teacher are important considerations as Chopin seldomly played his compositions in public. As indicated by one of Frederic Chopin's pupils Carl Mikuli, "While Chopin the composer is now respected and honored by all true friends of art and connoisseurs, Chopin the pianist has remained almost unknown; what is worse, an entirely false impression of him in this respect has been generally circulate."<sup>10</sup> As indicated by Mikuli, there is not a lot of information available to help applied piano teachers to understand the teaching strategies that Frederic Chopin utilized to aid their students become effective in their development of piano technique. During the eighteenth century the method that predominated among pianists, known as the "finger school method," became the main pedagogical method and remained as the only piano method of importance regardless of the evolutionary changes in piano making technology and playing techniques.

One of the main arguments of the nineteenth century and as promoted by Carl Czerny was to develop sufficient piano technique and finger dexterity before proceeding to any compositional works. In sharp contrast, Frederic Chopin developed an innovative approach and ground-breaking piano technique by age 21, as exemplified by the publication of his well-known Etudes Op. 10 for the pianoforte in 1831. As a result, these etudes will give special consideration to show that Frederic Chopin developed a complete mastery of all kinds of touch and total evenness when playing certain passages of his own works that are still extremely important for piano teachers today.

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<sup>10</sup> Carl Mikuli, *Frederic Chopin: The Mazurkas* (Ontario: Dover Publications, 1986), 4.

Musicologist Arthur Hedley stated, “As a pianist Chopin was unique in acquiring a reputation of the highest order on the basis of a minimum of public appearances – few more than thirty in the course of his lifetime.”<sup>11</sup> The fact that Frederic Chopin appeared in public concerts less than 30 times reveals one of the possible reasons why there is lack of information and misconceptions about his piano teaching methodology today.

Chopin’s technique for playing the pianoforte produces a tone comparable to the human voice when performed correctly. Chopin attempted to reproduce the effect of what is called, “*bel canto opera*,” or beautiful singing, by producing blending tones in the piano aided by the pedal in specific sections of his works. As stated by Polish musicologist Ted Szulc, “The ideal experience in pure sound would be if one could imagine the singing of Maria Malibran followed by Chopin’s rendition of his ballade no. 4 in F minor. This ballade in Charles Rosen’s opinion is one of the most moving pages of the in all nineteenth-century music. A contemporary critic called Chopin’s nocturnes ‘*bel canto* of the pianoforte.’<sup>12</sup> It is evident that Chopin piano technique included a fantastic *legato* touch and ease of movement that resembled the beautiful singing tones produced by “*bel canto*” opera singing as created by Vincenzo Bellini.

In sharp contrast, it is important to highlight that some piano students go to study music at the collegiate level without knowing how to perform these pieces correctly. This study seeks to find out what historical aspects of Chopin’s life experiences and of his works are important for the applied piano teacher prior to teaching the works of Frederic Chopin. Consequently, this line

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<sup>11</sup> Arthur Hedley, *Chopin*, (New Port Richey: Collier Publishing , 1962), 45.

<sup>12</sup> Ted Szulc, *Chopin in Paris: The Life and the Times of the Romantic Composer*, (Warsaw: Da Capo Press, 2001), 85.

of investigation will provide specific information about what piano techniques and methods of playing are needed prior to performing some of these works in public.

This information will provide the necessary guidance to teach piano performance students how to execute these works properly and avoid wrong conceptions of the interpretation of these pieces. For instance, when interpreting the Chopin piano Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23 entitled, “the Polish ballade,” the sentiments of the Polish nostalgia should be part of the interpretation. This ballade has eight notes to be played in legato style as a recurrent main theme. When teaching this ballade, the applied piano teacher should indicate that these eight notes are to be played as a unit symbolizing the heartbeat of a nation. A common inaccuracy when performing this piece is to have the tendency to separate the notes in an unwanted syncopated manner interrupting the steadiness of the pulse. When teaching students how to play this particular ballade, it is important to demonstrate how to achieve complete flexibility of the wrist, hand, and shoulders. This pianistic technique will lead to achieve total freedom of the fingers. When learning this ballade, the student main concern should be the removal of any stiffness of the hand and of the body. This ballade is a monumental work for pianists to perform and because of its significant value to piano literature a copy of the original manuscript is located at the Library of the Congress.

A similar statement can be made by modern performance standards when considering the long evolution and overall changes of today’s technical and expressive demands imposed on the piano. Regarding the Ballade in G minor, Chopin recounts a conversation with Robert Schumann as follows, “I have a new Ballade in G minor by Chopin. It seems to be the work closest to his genius. I even told that is my favorite of all of his works. After a long, reflective pause he told

me emphatically: ‘I am glad, because I too like the best, it is my dearest work.’”<sup>13</sup> When learning how to perform this ballade is important to understand that this work attest to Chopin’s feelings of loneliness and expatriation during the war years and the Polish uprising of 1831.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the vast amount of historical and chronological material detailing how applied piano methodologies and techniques can enhance effectiveness when teaching piano students how to improve the acquirement of agility, independence, strength, and evenness of the fingers, many aspects that are crucial for a fine execution are still under evaluation and investigation. This study focuses on addressing some of the piano methodologies that are necessary for proper and correct execution.

The primary research questions for this research study are:

Research Question 1: What personal experiences in Chopin’s life are important for the piano teacher to understand prior to teaching the works of Chopin?

Research Question 2: What piano techniques need to be developed prior to learning Chopin’s works?

### **Significance of the Study**

The main goal of this investigation is to attain a better understanding of how Frederic Chopin’s works and historical contributions could enhance the efficacy for applied piano teachers and for those students who do not receive the proper training. At times, teachers do not know how to properly teach the technical aspects of these compositions for the piano.

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<sup>13</sup> Nobert Mullemann, *Chopin Ballades* (Munich: G. Henle Verla, 2007), 96.

Consequently, while many aspects of Chopin's compositions have been reviewed, pedagogical research studies on this topic are clearly missing.

This study centers on finding ways to improve performance of these pieces by examining the existing Chopin historical records and first editions of his works. As stated by Alan Walker, "For a biographer, there's a lot to untangle."<sup>14</sup> Alan Walker is a brilliant biographer of Frederic Chopin and in his book entitled, "Fryderyk Chopin: A Life and Times," he presents a magisterial portrait of a composer who fascinated and puzzled contemporaries and whose music came to define the Romantic piano. This line of investigation is extremely important as Frederic Chopin was one of the leading pedagogues of the time as he utilized a method of teaching that allowed students to use the students' hands freely and paid particular attention to the creation of sound quality and colors.

In addition, the purpose of this research study is to outline some of Chopin's traditional pedagogical principles of pianism. This study outlines how Chopin's works, and his piano method can aid the applied piano teacher in dealing with technique and pedagogical concerns to improve student capability and self-confidence when playing. For instance, one of the first elements that could enhance student piano performance of these works is to integrate Chopin's approach to perform his own pieces in a very expressive, relax and supple manner.

Regarding Chopin's performance of his piano works and as observed in a private concert Robert Schumann stated, "His execution was more like a billowing of the A flat major chord . . . by means of the pedal; but through the harmonies were heard the sustained tones of a wondrous melody, and only in the middle of it did a tenor part once come into greater prominence amid the

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<sup>14</sup> Alan Walker, *Frederick Chopin; A Life and Times*, (The New York Times, New York: Nov. 18, 2018), 115.

chords along with that principal *cantilena*.”<sup>15</sup> As observed by Robert Schumann a second pedagogical principle that would enhance student playing when performing selected works by Frederic Chopin is the skill of separating the different tone layers and singing tone qualities when performing his music.

Robert Schumann observed that Chopin had the skill of separating layers of tones in his compositions when playing the piano and, at the same time, playing the different melodies and harmonies in such a way that they would come out clearly and distinctly. Lastly, it is also clear that Chopin usage of tempo *rubato* would have been also in line with bringing multiple tones and different voices similar to the “*bel canto opera*” or singing tone style. Consequently, this study will show how Chopin’s works and selected historical information can be utilized by applied piano teachers to teach their students how to overcome technical challenges. Regarding Chopin’s artistry and reputation as a teacher, Delacroix said, “He is the true artist among us.”<sup>16</sup> Future studies in this line of investigation can include other factors such as historical piano manufacturing details and tone production of the nineteenth century compared to the modern grand piano of the twenty-first century.

### **Hypothesis**

It is believed that students will be proficient and effective in most aspects of performing Chopin’s works after just mastering most of the technical, aural, or structural aspects of the pieces at the college music performance level. It is also assumed that as a music educator, the expectation for students is to learn these musical works by either structuralism or functionalism. Moreover, it is accepted that students should learn these musical pieces right on the spot without

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<sup>15</sup> Alan Walker, *Frederick Chopin; A Life and Times*, (The New York Times, New York: Nov. 18, 2018), 116.

<sup>16</sup> Eugene Delacroix, *Journal (1948)*: 78.

any previous preparation and as required by the existing music college syllabuses of the class. Therefore, these are the hypotheses concerning effective learning for the applied piano teacher in the classroom:

Hypothesis 1: Some personal experiences in Chopin's life that are important for the piano teacher to understand prior to teaching the works of Chopin include the Polish Uprising of 1831, political alienation, and exile in Paris, and the Great Emigration of 1830.

Hypothesis 2: The piano techniques that the student and teacher should develop prior to learning Frederic Chopin's works include, flexibility of the wrist, flexibility of the hand, and freedom of the fingers.

In addition, these working hypotheses assume that Chopin's piano works open a new era in piano pedagogy and music history. As a result, any misrepresentation or misunderstanding of the proper interpretation could be detrimental to the teacher and to the student. This hypothesis goes hand in hand with a statement made by Jeremy Nicholas, "More than any other, Chopin is responsible for the development of modern piano technique and style. His influence on succeeding generations of writers of piano music was profound and inescapable. He dreamt up an entire range of new colors, harmonies and means of expression in which he exploited every facet of the new developments in piano construction."<sup>17</sup> These hypotheses would provide the necessary elements to make an accurate representation of nuances pianissimo expressions that characterize Chopin's works as stated by the historical documents and records. Finally, these hypotheses will contribute to increase cultural, social, and ethnical understanding of how to perform these works as the student becomes aware of the meaning and the application of music within a cultural standpoint and perception.

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<sup>17</sup> Jeremy Nicholas, "Chopin: A Bicentenary Focus." *New York: Gramophone Magazine Publishers* 57, No. 2, 2010: 55.

## The Art of Piano Playing

The main goal of this study is to be able to establish how Chopin's works and piano literature can become a viable tool for piano teachers in today's classroom. This information can be valuable for applied piano teachers to help their students comprehend certain aspects of musical interpretation that can make their learning experience more meaningful and effective when performing these pieces throughout their future careers. Nevertheless, because of the specific focus of this study, other researchers will need to take upon themselves the challenge of studying the other technical and more mechanical aspects of piano playing and nineteenth-century piano performance.

To a certain extent, more scrutiny with the intent to seek advice from additional Polish historians, Chopin's biographers, or other personal documents that were burnt by request of Frederic Chopin is needed. This aspect of the investigation imposes some constraints in the effort to validate this hypothesis about this topic and continue with further examination. As a result, the conclusions contained in this research are subject to more investigation and inspection and should be considered temporary until further exploration is conducted. Moreover, another important aspect of this research is to highlight that several piano techniques coexisted during the same time and era. For instance, Carl Czerny and Frederic Chopin had opposite piano methodologies. In his piano method, Carl Czerny suggests to never pass the long fourth finger over one another. Carl Czerny stated:

The surface of the forearm, from the elbow to the knuckles of the bended fingers, must form an absolutely straight and horizontal line; and the wrists must neither be bent downwards, nor upwards, so as to resemble a ball. The preserving an exactly straight line with the knuckles and the upper surface of the hands is one of the principal requisites towards acquiring a fine style of playing.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Dean Elder, *Pianist at Play* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1982), 76.

Czerny also suggested to avoid placing the same finger on two or more consecutive keys of the piano. Carl Czerny established fundamental rules of piano playing in his piano method and those suggestions were in complete opposition when compared to Chopin's piano technique and style. For instance, when learning Chopin's Etude Op. 10 No. 1 in C major, Chopin clearly requires to play this etude with a wide motion of the hand and wrist to be able to play wide broken chords throughout the entire register of the keyboard. The general rule for learning this piano etude is to be able to pass the fourth finger over the thumb when playing the broken chords across the keyboard.

This theoretical principle will be in complete contradiction with the fundamental rules of piano playing contained in the Carl Czerny method of the middle part of the nineteenth century. Carl Czerny stated, "Changing the fingers on the same key when re-struck in a quick movement...the arm and the hand must be kept strictly at rest, and particularly (the) thumb; neither the arm (nor) the elbow must be allowed to make the least movement."<sup>19</sup> Czerny's methodology of the passing of the thumb goes in complete contradiction with Chopin's methodology as with Chopin he supports the use of the thumb moving freely when playing broken chords.

Lastly, Chopin personal references or accounts regarding the performance of his own works remain a mystery. Nevertheless, it is also true that Chopin's performances and interpretations of his works were never the same and depended on the mood or according to the moment in time and space. Finally, Chopin considered music piano performance with the same significance as a singer approaching a syllable distinction within a song. As stated by Mikuli,

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<sup>19</sup> John Comfort Fillmore, *A History of Pianoforte Music*, Ridley Prentice, ed. (London: W. Swan Sonnenschein and Co. 1885), 111.

“Each musical phrase sounded like a song, and with such clarity that each note took the meaning of a syllable, each bar that of a word, each phrase that of a thought. It was a declamation without pathos.”<sup>20</sup> This innovative approach of piano playing would revolutionize the world of piano pedagogy and change the course of music history for time immemorial.

The main goal of this research is to obtain a better understanding of how Frederic Chopin’s life and works influenced applied piano teaching techniques. It is evident that Chopin’s teaching and piano technique emphasized the production of certain tone quality and musical colors. It is evident that certain pianists are linked with the Chopin piano tradition because of their pedagogical connection with the composer. Chopin trained Carl Mikuli and George Mathias who were very actively engaged as concert pianists and well-known piano teachers. Mikuli and Mathias played an extremely important part in passing this piano tradition to the next generation of musicians.

There are other pianists such as Friedman and Paderewski that are associated with the Chopin tradition not only because of their unique interpretations and pedagogical considerations but mostly because of their ability to match Chopin’s own depiction of his playing. Chopin’s playing and teaching concepts have been passed down by some of these members of the great Polish tradition in the areas of tone, touch, tempo, and *rubato* style. Nevertheless, the controversy arises when pianists from the same country interpret Chopin’s works with different choices of tempo and the use of tempo *rubato*. Regarding Chopin’s use of tempo Mikuli said:

In keeping tempo Chopin was inflexible, and it will surprise many to learn that the metronome never left his piano. Even in his much-slandered *rubato*, one hand, the accompanying hand, always played in strict tempo, while the other-singing, either

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<sup>20</sup> Mikuli, *Frederic Chopin: The Mazurkas*, 4.

indecisively hesitating or entering ahead of the beat and moving more quickly with a certain impatient vehemence, as in passionate speech-freed the truth of the musical expression from all rhythmic bonds.<sup>21</sup>

This statement suggests that Chopin's performances of his works would have stunned observers as they were infused by harmonic nuances that are difficult to describe. As stated by Franz Liszt:

Chopin released the poetic unknown which was only suggested in the original themes of the mazurkas. He preserved the rhythm, ennobled the melody, enlarged the proportions, and infused the harmonic chiaroscuro as novellas the subjects it supported. All of this in order to paint in these productions (which he loved to hear us call easel pictures) the innumerable and so widely differing emotions that excite the heart while the dances go on.<sup>22</sup>

Based on the accounts of those that were close to Chopin, his use of tempo *rubato*, touch, and tone production was extremely sophisticated.

Tempo *rubato* is one of the most important characteristics of an authentic Chopin pianistic interpretation. Nevertheless, to eliminate the controversy or discrepancies regarding these interpretations' tempo can be utilized for comparison between pianists and at the same time, evaluate the choice of tempo *rubato* among leading pianists. Nevertheless, Chopin's pedagogical concepts such as *rubato*, hand displacement, the lengthening or shortening of the musical phrases, are at the core of the great Polish Chopin traditional style of piano playing. In summary, the controversial aspect of tempo *rubato* among pianists of the Great Polish traditions, becomes more complicated as pianist are required to interpret Chopin's expressive markings and metronome tempo markings as indicated by the composer.

These tempo markings were added later by Frederic Chopin but removed by the composer in 1836 to provide more autonomy to the desires of performers. In speaking about

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<sup>21</sup> Mikuli, *Frederic Chopin: The Mazurkas*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Franz Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, (New York: Leypoldt & Holt, 1863), 17.

Chopin's tempo markings, Morski said, "After 1836, Chopin discarded these indications in order to give greater freedom to the individual sensitivities of the performers."<sup>23</sup> This remark made by Morski provides a solution to the problem of Chopin's tempo markings. The problem of tempo markings in Chopin's Etudes Op. 10 is still a source of controversy and one of the reasons why there are multiple interpretations with different metronome markings among most pianists today. One important consideration to make is that during the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pianos were made with a lighter action and much different compared to the heavier regulated action of the modern piano.

In addition, accounts of Chopin's teaching disclose that Chopin the teacher was extremely strict when teaching rhythmic theoretical principles to his students. In relation to teaching rhythm, it is said that Chopin was almost impossible to satisfy when performing the waltz Op. 64, No. 2 in C sharp minor. Moreover, it is also said that when Chopin performed this waltz, "he would use tempo *rubato* throughout the piece recurrently."<sup>24</sup> In speaking about Chopin's tempo *rubato* Franz Liszt said, "The wind plays in the leaves, stirs up among them and the trees remain the same. That is the Chopinesque *rubato*."<sup>25</sup> In this quote Liszt provides specific information that coincides with Carl Mikuli's description of observing Chopin keeping strict tempo beat with the accompanying left hand and applying tempo *rubato* with the right hand. Chopin's main purpose for tempo *rubato* is to emphasize a high point of expression and at the same time to create a specific mood at the beginning of the composition.

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<sup>23</sup> K. Morski, *Interpretation of the Works of Chopin: A comparative Analysis of Different Styles of Performance*, (Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyca Chopina, 2004), 65.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 72.

<sup>25</sup> Franz Liszt, *Chopin*, (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 17.

## Chapter Summary

Frederic Chopin created a new pedagogical method to teach and learn the piano. Chopin helped his students to find a more natural way to use suppleness and body relaxation to resolve technical issues and difficulties. To assist his students, achieve a higher level of expression, Chopin insisted on using the natural shape of the hand and fingers to learn how to play the C major scale and the B major scale and the five-finger position on the keyboard. Chopin insisted on teaching pedagogical principles that would help students to learn playing the piano without tension and fatigue.

Chopin constantly utilized pedagogical principles that would emphasize tone quality and allowed students to employ a *legato* technique that simulated the singing expressive line melodies similar to “*bel canto opera*” or beautiful singing. This technique would aid students to produce blending tones in the piano that in combination with the use of the pedal in specific sections of his works would create the *legato* touch when playing. This new method of piano playing would create a new sense of direction and allowed pianists to foreshadow a revolutionary course of piano technique that is still applicable to the twenty-first century pianist.

As stated by Jeremy Nicholas, “More than any other, Chopin is responsible for the development of modern piano technique and style. His influence on succeeding generations of writers of piano music was profound and inescapable. He dreamt up an entire range of new colors, harmonies and means of expression in which he exploited every facet of the new developments in piano construction.”<sup>26</sup> Finally, tempo *rubato* is one of the most important characteristics of an authentic Chopin pianistic interpretation. Nevertheless, to eliminate the

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<sup>26</sup> Nicholas, “Chopin: A Bicentenary Focus,” 55.

controversy or discrepancies regarding these interpretations' tempo can be utilized for comparison between pianists and at the same time, evaluate the choice of tempo *rubato* among leading pianists. Chopin's pedagogical concepts such as *rubato*, hand displacement, the lengthening or shortening of the musical phrases, are at the core of the great Polish Chopin traditional style of piano playing. In summary, the controversial aspect of tempo *rubato* among pianist of the Great Polish traditions, becomes more complicated as pianist are required to interpret Chopin's expressive markings and metronome tempo markings as indicated by the composer.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

For music educators, it is important to understand that most Romantic piano pedagogy is based on learning how to communicate musical content in the same manner that human beings utilize spoken language in their daily life. As stated by Natalie Sarrazin:

A music education, or any other type of education method, is a teaching approach that has: 1) an identifiable underlying philosophy or set of principles; 2) a unified body of pedagogy unique to it with a body of well-defined practice; 3) goals and objectives worthy of pursuit; and 4) integrity (i.e., its reason for existence must not be commercial).<sup>27</sup>

Communicating musical content to express thoughts and messages through sound is at the core of piano methodology. As stated by Jean-Jacques Eigendilger and Ron Howat, "Through the specific medium of organized sounds it seeks to express a world of thoughts, feelings, and sensations."<sup>28</sup> This aspect of music performance is indispensable for the performer in order to convey feelings and sensations when bringing music to life before an audience. Furthermore, the task of deciphering nineteenth-century piano methods including Frederic Chopin's piano technique is not an easy one.

Nevertheless, teacher performers like Clementi, Kalkbrenner, Hummel, and Czerny, Liszt, and Chopin laid out the foundation for what is considered to be piano pedagogy and according to the old-century tradition of pianists. In today's classroom, piano pedagogy is much more than teaching the piano as it aims to help students to become teachers themselves. During the twentieth century the number of educational institutions offering degrees in piano pedagogy

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<sup>27</sup> Natalie Sarrazin, *Music, and the Child*, (SUNY Press, 2016), 25.

<sup>28</sup> Eigendilger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 14.

had increased significantly. Nevertheless, in today's modern classroom, piano teachers continue to work hard in defining the particular set of knowledge and skills that are required in order to reinforce this knowledge to their students. Regarding the future of piano pedagogy, renown scholar Richard Chronister said:

We believe that our biggest problem is generated by the fact that piano pedagogy as a discipline has grown up too fast and has not yet formed its character and personality. It is besieged by the kind of confusion and consternation that always accompanies growth. Piano pedagogy is definitely at a disadvantage when compared to the centuries-old traditions of the performance teachers. But even so, it is already old-fashioned to expect the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary for successful teaching to be acquired through a weekly piano lesson with the right performance teacher.<sup>29</sup>

It is evident that despite the growth in pedagogical training and popularity there is still a need for specialized training in today's classroom. Nevertheless, in Western societies, and despite the growth in popularity, performers may earn more recognition than teachers do.

Indisputably, Frederic Chopin's pedagogical method opened a new period in piano instruction and technique. Through his contributions, piano technical developments became part of history in the making. Regarding this important aspect of Chopin's contribution to pianism, Leon Escudier wrote, "One may say that Chopin is the creator of a school of piano and a school of composition. In truth, nothing equals the lightness, the sweetness with which the composer preludes on the piano; moreover, nothing may be compared to his works full of originality, distinction, and grace."<sup>30</sup> This particular description provides ample knowledge of not only a great pianist but also a great composer. According to eyewitness accounts, Chopin pianism was unique and effortless, but the quality of his compositions was also a perfect fit for the aristocracy of the time. As soon as Frederic Chopin arrived in Paris in 1831, he would utilize his own

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<sup>29</sup> Courtney Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, (Oxford University Press, 2019), 14.

<sup>30</sup> Jim Samson, *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 24.

compositions to teach many of his pupils how to overcome most technical challenges. Chopin stated:

People have tried out all kinds of methods of learning how to play the piano, methods that are tedious and useless and have nothing to do with the study of this instrument. It's like learning, for example, to walk on one's hands in order to go for a stroll. Eventually one is no longer able to walk properly on one's feet, and not very well on one's hands either. It does not teach us how to play the music itself – and the type of difficulty we are practicing is not the difficulty encountered in good music, the music of great masters. It is an abstract difficulty, a new genre of acrobatics.<sup>31</sup>

Chopin's approach to piano pedagogy was based on the level of difficulty as encountered in the music of the great masters. Nevertheless, Chopin considered this level of piano difficulty as an abstract subject and difficult to illustrate. As a result, Chopin provided a new solution to this problem by introducing his new method of acrobatics of the fingers.

### **Piano Technique, Fingering, and Dynamics**

It is apparent that Chopin and Liszt did not conform or perpetuated the preceding classical style of piano playing. For instance, Franz Liszt also suggested that each finger movement should be linked to the arm. Regarding Liszt piano pedagogical method Alan Davison stated, "To account for the paucity of references to technique in his later years Liszt's approach to piano playing has sometimes been characterized as 'Intuitive,' thus removing the necessity to ponder other explanations for the lack of material."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Frederic Chopin based his piano method mostly on achieving a well-developed and independent fingering technique. At the beginning of his piano method entitled, *Projet de méthode*, Frederic Chopin said, "Everything is a matter of knowing good fingering. We need no less to use the rest of the hand, the wrist, the

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<sup>31</sup> Eigendilger, "Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Alan Davison, "Franz Liszt and the Development of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Pianism: A Reading of the Evidence," *The Musical Times* 147, no. 1896 (2006): 33-43.

forearm, and the upper arm.”<sup>33</sup> According to Liszt and Chopin, the fingers, the wrist, the forearm, and the upper arm are part of one unit and should remain connected without interruption. On a different occasion Frederic Chopin stated, “One needs only to study a certain position of the hand in relation to the keys to obtain with ease the most beautiful quality of sound, to know how to play short notes and long notes, and to attain unlimited dexterity.”<sup>34</sup> This set of instructions summarizes Chopin’s basic concept and foundation for his *Projet de méthode*.

Moreover, the nineteenth-century piano pedagogy focused on developing a piano technique that would avoid stiff posture and aimed to attain total relaxation. As stated by Carl Czerny, “Liszt was a natural who played according to feeling, and reviews of his concerts especially praise the brilliance, strength, and precision in his playing. At least one also mentions his ability to keep absolute tempo and relaxation.”<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, it is attributed to Chopin the common use of the word “*facilísimo*,” or “extremely,” easy when correcting pupils how to play difficult chromatic passages. In 1853 composer Hector Berlioz said, “Chopin has created a kind of chromatic embroidery, whose effect is so strange and piquant as to be impossible to describe. Virtually nobody but Chopin himself can play this music and give it this unusual turn.”<sup>36</sup> Pertaining to this same piano technique the German composer and conductor Ferdinand Hiller said, “What in the hands of others was elegant embellishments, in his hands became a colorful wreath of flowers.”<sup>37</sup> It is evident that the Chopin touch is full of different shades of

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<sup>33</sup> Eigendilger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 14.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>35</sup> Maria Eckhart, Review of a concert in Marseilles on 11 April 1826, reprinted in *Eckhart, Maria: Liszt a Marseille*, in: *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, (24 1982), 165.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 272.

<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Bellman, “Chopin, and His Imitators: Notated Emulations of the True Style of Performance,” *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 24, no. 2 (2000): 149, <https://doi.org/10.2307/746839>

colors and nuances, with a very pronounced *legato*, and a *cantabile* or songlike tone quality when playing. Friederike Müller, one of Chopin's pupils said:

His playing was always noble and beautiful; his tones sang, whether in full *forte* or softest piano. He took infinite pains to teach his pupils this *legato*, *cantabile* style of playing. His most severe criticism was 'He – or she – does not know how to join two notes together.' He also demanded the strictest adherence to rhythm. He hated all lingering and dragging, misplaced *rubatos*, as well as exaggerated *ritardandos*... and it is precisely in this respect that people make such terrible errors in playing his works.<sup>38</sup>

As stated by Chopin, one of the most challenging aspects of piano playing is to develop a fingering technique that is in total control of *staccato* and full *legato* touch when playing. This important objective can be accomplished by connecting one key bed to next in a gliding fashion as the pupil is engaging retroactive muscles that are pulling the arm up and serve as arm stabilizers. Nevertheless, nineteenth century piano pedagogical methods like the new school of piano forte promoted by Franz Liszt were based in teaching new and brilliant sounds produced by the performer to make them succeed in implementing them in the larger concert halls. On the other hand, Chopin's piano pedagogy demonstrated these key elements of piano performance in the smaller concert salon.

Contrary to this piano methodology, Frederic Chopin stated the following to one of his students, "Concerts are never real music, you have to give up the idea of hearing in them all of the most beautiful things of art."<sup>39</sup> According to Chopin, the piano performer is still capable to achieve great results and communicate the language of real music better and more effectively even in the smaller and more intimate concert salon.

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<sup>38</sup> Eigendilger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 149.

Liszt's piano pedagogical principles were completely opposite to that of Chopin as there are multiple accounts of Liszt style of playing portraits him torturing pianos and breaking strings in the middle of a concert. The new school of piano forte create in the latter part of the nineteenth-century focused on achieving tremendous speed and achieving bravura passages and *fortissimo* octaves. Alan Davison stated, "Another important Liszt innovation was a pliable hand shape and flexible position. Boissier records that Liszt did not keep his hands 'in a rounded position' nor were they 'all together flat,' but rather his fingers were 'so flexible as to poses no fixed position.'"<sup>40</sup> This statement clearly indicates that Liszt instructed his students to play with a wrist motion or falling from the wrist and rebounding back as the fingers touched the keys. Finally, Liszt's Russian tour on 8<sup>th</sup> of April of 1842, initiated the widespread of a new school of piano pedagogy that is still a predominant force in Europe. This piano revolution kindled the fire of imagination of piano makers like Erard, Pleyel, and Broadwood from London, England to continue the with the process of optimization and improve the overall piano quality and sound.

### **Stylistic Piano Considerations**

Chopin argued that the ultimate end of piano playing was not merely to obtain technical skill but to attain total finger dexterity. Regarding the importance of piano technique Chopin stated:

Those who are studying the art of touch, I submit some very practical considerations which, in my experience, have proved to be of real value. Many futile methods have been tried to teach pupils to play the piano, methods which have no bearing on the study of the instrument. They are analogous to teaching someone to walk on his hands in order that they may go for a stroll.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Davison, "Franz Liszt and the Development of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Pianism: A Reading of the Evidence," 33.

<sup>41</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, 39.

Chopin believed that, because of these ineffective methods, the art of piano playing was deprived of proper guidance and tutelage. Chopin refers in this passage to the lack of proper hand and arm side movement which is necessary to achieve a proper stroll when playing. Chopin refers to this technical issue as one of the main difficulties confronted by most of the existing piano methods of the day. In Chopin's own terms, he refers to this aspect of interpretation as the acrobatics of the piano.

The analogous teaching Chopin is referring to in this citation comes as a result of overlooking how to produce music in the real value or full worth. According to Chopin, the difficulties outlined by these methods have no relation with the intentions and interpretation of the great composers of the past. Regarding this important matter, Chopin stated:

As a result of this, people have forgotten how to walk properly and know extraordinarily little about walking on their hands either. They are unable to play music in the real sense, and the difficulties they practice have nothing to do with the works of the great masters. These difficulties are theoretical—a new kind of acrobatics. I am not dealing with ingenious theories, however valuable they may be, but go straight to the root of the matter.<sup>42</sup>

The root of the matter in Chopin's piano method is to utilize the body's proper physiognomy to the artist's advantage when playing the piano. In turn, this new physiological practice or technique will allow for a more natural interpretation and sound quality. Learning how to walk with their hands over the keyboard is at the core of Chopin's piano method. Chopin's method focuses on training finger individuality contrary to the other methods of the time period that mostly concentrated in achieving finger dexterity by means of a strict regimen of daily restricting exercises.

Regarding this important aspect of acquiring adequate piano technique, Chopin said:

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<sup>42</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, 39.

For a long time, we have been acting against nature by training our fingers to be all equal and powerful. As each finger is differently formed, it is better not to attempt to destroy the charm of each one's touch but on the contrary to develop it. Each finger's power is determined by its shape. The thumb having the most power, being the broadest, shortest, and freest; the fifth finger as the other extremity of the hand; the third as the middle and the pivot; then the second.<sup>43</sup>

This particular reference provides crucial information to the applied piano teacher and student. It is evident that Chopin understood the physiognomy of the fingers and as a result, he developed a finger technique that is based on those physiological and biological elements of the hand rather than going against nature.

### **The Last Concert (1848)**

There are several eyewitness accounts of Frederic Chopin performing in public. One of these accounts took place during Chopin's last concert in England. In 1848, Frederic Chopin arrived in London with the intent to give a series of concerts starting with the concert venue at Edinburg, England. The Broadwood piano manufacturer from London agreed to provide Chopin with the opportunity to select at least three pianos for his upcoming concerts. As part of the agreement, Broadwood company agreed to provide a piano technician to assist Chopin with piano tuning services for all the performing recital halls of the concert tour. As Chopin visited the Broadwood showroom for the selection of the pianos, he met a young piano technician named Alfred Hipkins. Alfred Hipkins observed Chopin practicing and indicated that, "Chopin performed with his elbows close to his side, with hands always in contact with the keyboard, and changed his fingers on the keys as often as an organist."<sup>44</sup> This first-hand account provides exceptional and valuable information about Chopin's physiognomics or body position when

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<sup>43</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, 34.

<sup>44</sup> Edith J. Hipkins, *How Chopin Played: From Contemporary Impressions Collected from the Diaries and Notebooks of the Late A.J. Hipkins*, (United Kingdom: Dent and Sons. 1934), 4.

playing the piano. It is evident that Chopin's constant fingering substitution produced a beautiful legato touch when playing the piano. Moreover, Hipkins also observed that Chopin played with the elbows close to his body and fingers that were in constant contact with the keys of the piano.

Regarding this natural position at the piano, Chopin indicated, "Elbows leveled with the white keys and the hand turned neither to the left or to the right."<sup>45</sup> This aspect of piano performance is crucial for the pupil as according to Chopin instructions the elbows, hands, and fingers are part of one synchronized unit. If Hipkins's observations are correct, it is reasonable to sustain the assumption that the key for proper piano execution lies in the utilization of correct fingering and arm posture over the keyboard. Chopin provided clear instructions to his students to take advantage of the natural position of the hand over the keyboard.

Chopin argued that the long fingers of the hand would rest naturally over the black keys and at the same time, he indicated to his students that the shorter fingers would rest naturally over the white keys. Chopin said, "The resultant movement will be found to follow the natural formation of the hand. The hand should remain supple and the wrist and forearm round themselves into a curve making for ease of movement that would be unobtainable if the fingers were outstretched."<sup>46</sup> Chopin insisted on using the natural position of the hand and avoiding unnatural exercises that would destroy the physiology of the body and of the human arm. Chopin generally played in a horizontal fashion and not vertical in relation to the keyboard. Lastly, it is important to point out that Chopin played with finger touch technique and not with the weight of the arms.

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<sup>45</sup> Arthur Hedley, *Chopin* (New Port Richey: Collier Publishing , 1962), 85.

<sup>46</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, 65.

### Frederic Chopin's Contribution to Piano Pedagogy

Frederic Chopin's contribution to piano pedagogics is incalculable. Chopin's major contribution to piano pedagogics is based on finding the best fingering possible for the hand. Moreover, Chopin's method is not merely searching for the best fingering, technically speaking, but the fingering that is mostly comfortable to the pupil's hand. As stated by Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, "So it was precisely by breaking many Classical rules that Chopin opened new horizons with his revolutionary way of fingering."<sup>47</sup> Based on available illustrations, it is clear that Chopin played with the elbows close to his body and with the fingers close to the keyboard as described by Hipkins.

Daguerreotypes was one of the earliest forms of photography during the middle part of the nineteenth century. There are three known main daguerreotypes images of Frederic Chopin. However, none of these images display Chopin playing at his piano from a profile perspective. This aspect of analysis makes it harder for researchers to demonstrate Chopin posture and position of the hands and arms when playing the piano. In 1838, Jakob Gotzenberger made a real-life pencil and charcoal sketch of Frederic Chopin. This sketch is one of the few known images of Chopin playing at the piano. This pencil sketch demonstrate that Frederic Chopin clearly played with his arms close to the body, arms and hands in alignment, and fingers in close contact with the keys as stated by Hipkins. It is evident that artists spend hours in formulating and preparing sketches and paintings. In this case, Gotzenberger spent considerable time in observing Chopin at the piano judging by the number of details depicted in the drawing.

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<sup>47</sup> Eigendilger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 19.

Chopin's piano teaching career began as he arrived in Paris in 1831 and continue to grow in popularity until the very end of his life. Frederick Chopin made an important contribution to piano pedagogy by encouraging his students to use the right fingering for every distinct passage of music. As stated by Eigeldinger:

Those of Chopin's fingerings that have come down to us are an indispensable guide to understanding his technical advances and originality. Everything is a matter of knowing good fingering, he wrote, as we have already seen; he always adopted 'the easiest fingering, although it might be against the rules, that came to him,' after having seen and heard Chopin play.<sup>48</sup>

It is evident that Frederick Chopin created specific rules that piano teachers can utilize to help students improve execution and overall performance.

Moreover, piano pedagogy represented much more than just a source of income for Frederick Chopin. In a letter written to his parents, dated June 8, 1847, Chopin stated, "You would not believe how charming my kind pupils are."<sup>49</sup> As a piano teacher, Chopin displayed support, respect, and appreciation for his pupils." As a piano educationalist, Chopin work hard to develop a relationship of trust with his students. For the modern piano teacher, this teaching philosophy should become the golden rule of piano pedagogy. Perhaps, one of his most important contributions to piano pedagogy comes from a description of one Fredrick Chopin's students named Carl Mikuli. Mikuli stated:

Far from regarding his work as a teacher, which his position as an artist and his social connections in Paris rendered difficult of avoidance, as a burdensome task, Chopin daily devoted the entire energies to it for several hours. And with genuine delight. True, his demands on the talent and industry of the pupil were very great. There were often the ("stormy lessons"), as they were called in school parlance, and many a fair eye wet with tears departed from the high altar of *Cite D Orleans, rue St. Lazare*, yet without the slightest resentment on that score against the dearly beloved master. For this same severity, so little prone to easy satisfaction, this feverish vehemence with which the

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<sup>48</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Arthur Hedley, *Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin*, (n.p: Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2018), 299.

master strove to raise his discipline to his own plane, this insistence on the repetition of a passage until it was understood, was a guaranty that he had the pupil's progress at heart. He would glow with a sacred zeal for art; every word from his lips was stimulating and inspiring.<sup>50</sup>

According to this account, it is apparent that Chopin the teacher, had the student progress at heart. Nevertheless, as a piano pedagogist, he believed in establishing grand expectations and a strict discipline motivating the student to move to the next level of pianism. This pedagogical advice is still applicable to piano pedagogy practices of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. An essential aspect of piano pedagogy centers around giving words of encouragement and inspiration to pupils in order to avoid disappointment.

#### Teaching Applied Piano Pedagogy

Integrating all aspects of musical training in the classroom can become a challenge for music piano teachers. The first step in modern piano pedagogy should be focused to identify any existing musical or technical problem. As described in the section above, learning latest music like the E minor piano concerto can become troublesome unless there is a logical process for piano lessons that can target apparent problems and develop a plan to help the student. As stated by Crappell, "Despite years of practice, teachers may find it difficult to systematically evaluate performance and plan lesson activities at the same time."<sup>51</sup> It is evident that finding out what is the most significant performance problem is at the core of developing an effective piano technique.

Furthermore, the same study reveals, that sometimes, teachers are not able to identify or diagnose the plausible causes or fail in the attempt to find a solution to the problem. As a result,

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<sup>50</sup> Oscar Bie, *A History of the Pianoforte and Piano forte Players*, Trans. E.E. Kellett and E.W. Naylor, (New York, NY: Dutton and Company, 1899), 19.

<sup>51</sup> Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, 14.

the piano students continue to exhibit the same technical or musical problems throughout their music careers. For instance, in theoretical analysis, elements such as timbre, texture, tempo, meter, and dynamics are challenging concepts when teaching all of them at once. For a piano teacher, it is imperative to be able to provide a diagnosis of what musical or technical element is affecting the student. This process is particularly challenging for piano teachers as most of the times rhythm, tempo, meter, phrasing, and dynamics, tone quality is encompassing in itself and complicated to teach within an hours' time in the applied piano classroom.

Consequently, developing training sequences and planning strategies that are customized to the student's needs will become a valuable tool in the process of student development and piano pedagogy. Another important theory to improve training sequences and the further development of customized planning strategies for the student is the breaking down of these music theoretical elements into more manageable pedagogical approach. For instance, instead of teaching multiple musical concepts at once the music teacher can break these concepts down by categories or needs. As stated by Crappell:

The conjoined nature of the individual aspects of music creates a problem for piano teachers. To illustrate, imagine a teacher trying to help a student who cannot keep a steady pulse. The teacher has the student practice with a metronome in hopes that this will solve the problem. The student then practices diligently for a week this way, but at the next lesson, the teacher notices a new problem. The student's performance is now stiff and "metronomic" rather than rhythmically expressive.<sup>52</sup>

This method of learning is by far extremely effective. Nevertheless, when the teacher accomplished the task of teaching this difficult musical concept, he is now confronted with a different learning obstacle. When comparing this piano methodology with Chopin's piano method approach, it is easily observed that he always demanded students to keep metronome

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<sup>52</sup> Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, 165.

marls without compromising the artistic expression. In speaking about Chopin's tempo adherence, Muller stated:

His playing was always noble and beautiful; his tones sang, whether in full *forte* or softest piano. He took infinite pains to teach his pupils this *legato, cantabile* style of playing. His most severe criticism was 'He – or she – does not know how to join two notes together.' He also demanded the strictest adherence to rhythm. He hated all lingering and dragging, misplaced *rubatos*, as well as exaggerated *ritardandos*... and it is precisely in this respect that people make such terrible errors in playing his works.<sup>53</sup>

The piano teacher should train the pupil to play in strict tempo adherence without losing the *legato* and *cantabile* style of playing.

#### Cognitive Learning Theory and Piano Pedagogy

American psychologist Jerome Bruner introduced a highly effective learning method. Bruner argued that there is a method within educational psychology that offers a viable solution to contribute to cognitive learning theory. He states, "The basic themes that give forms to life and literature are as simple as they are powerful. To be in command of this basic ideas, to use them effectively, requires a continual deepening of one's understanding of them that come from learning to use them in progressively more complex forms."<sup>54</sup> As stated by Bruner, it takes a continual deepening of knowledge to achieve proficiency and total understanding of a subject related to life or literature including the performing arts. This educational psychology methodology became extremely important for music educators including James Mursell and Carl Orff. Both of these well-known music educators encouraged music students to start learning music by singing and playing actual musical instruments. These activities would deepen the

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<sup>53</sup> Eigendilger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 14.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 185.

musical experience of students rather than making music learning more complicated by learning the components of music first.

Another theoretical learning method is called the Bloom's proficiency learning theory. This theoretical learning method proposed by Benjamin Bloom simply states that the learning process should followed an undeviating linear sequence. As stated by Crappell, "In Bloom's strategy of 'mastery learning,' students must achieve mastery of one task before moving on to the next. In music education, Gordon uses a similar approach in the design of his music learning theory, which includes a liners sequence of activities."<sup>55</sup> Having a clear understanding of these two theoretical learning methods would empower music teachers to text these two theoretical learning methods with the purpose of exploring what works best for their applied piano students.

#### Applied Piano Lesson Design

During a piano lesson, there is a lot of information that the piano teacher can uncover. Generally, diagnosing problems during a piano lesson can provide valuable information for the student to solve. This method of learning would provide an ongoing source of information to the student as it aims to assess improvement over time while the applied piano teacher continues to observe and evaluate. Maintaining a well-structured applied piano lesson plan will promote constant communication and an opportunity for the applied piano teacher to demonstrate playing passages for the student and make the necessary corrections. As stated by Crappell, "With so many demands on their attention, teachers must follow practice procedures to remain efficient and effective."<sup>56</sup> Following a regular steady practice process would allow students to adapt to a regular routine and become more effective with their practice time.

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<sup>55</sup> Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, 14.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

In one particular study, piano teachers were asked to make observations about students' performances and conduct an evaluation based on three specific questions. Regarding this particular study, Bruner indicated:

Many participants answered all three questions within the response of the first question. They find it difficult to talk exclusively about the performance problem. Sometimes, teachers never managed to identify musical issues. Instead, they diagnosed only possible causes and solutions. These responses indicated a lack of clarity in diagnosing and solving student performance problems.<sup>57</sup>

The set of questions were prepared with the purpose to find out not just the root of the problem but to find a solution. The first question of this study sought to identify the main problem. The second question was prepared to determine the main cause of the problem. The third question was device to prepare a seek for viable solutions to the main problem. These questions are a valuable resource and a great starting point. Nevertheless, these questions can lead to a wide array of opportunities and lack the specificity for students to organize their work.

#### Sequential Piano Lesson Planning

To avoid feeling overwhelmed by the vast number of options when teaching, the applied piano teacher may address one specific problem every at a time. During this critical learning process, the applied piano teacher can take advantage of introducing latest ideas to improve student understanding of the composer's intentions of a specific work or piece. This type of training will enhance the student perception of dynamics, articulation, working on sight-reading, and technique. Moreover, teaching students how to identify and understand the musical character of a musical composition could be accomplished by the creation of an emotion-word list that can be utilized when convenient. In speaking about this particular learning model Robert S. Hatten said:

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<sup>57</sup> Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 84.

Students can identify the character of a piece, section, or phrase with an adjective or description to add focus to lesson activities. To help them in the process, teachers can create an emotion-word list, or search for list online, and have students chose the word that matches the musical mood. Teachers can also use visual models, like “The Box of Musical Moods and Characters” to help pinpoint and define feelings without words.<sup>58</sup>

Examples like the one listed above can provide a new and unique pedagogical opportunity to stimulate creativity and promote life-long love for learning.

The ultimate goal of piano pedagogy is to guide the student to comprehend sequential learning and how it applies to every performance they make. As stated by Crappell, “Pedagogy teachers should guide toward an understanding of how each performance aspect relates to the others within the model and explain the reason they are listed in this order. This will help them plan effective lessons segments and adapt to a variety of lesson circumstances.”<sup>59</sup> As previously stated, the main focus for the applied piano teacher is to identify the cause of the problem and systematically classify the main cause of the problem. By following this lesson plan, piano teachers can find the solution to the student problems in a progressive manner.

#### Pedagogical Teaching Tools and Piano Repertoire

There is a vast selection of piano methods available for teachers to utilize in their lessons. Nevertheless, piano students may benefit from obtaining a historical perspective of the evolution of these methods and learning how these methods differ from the existing methods of today. Historically speaking, most piano methods of today are derived from the Carl Czerny, who was a pupil of Beethoven. This historical fact is important for the student to know as this piano method was the first method to include a finger numbering system and some exercises as well.

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<sup>58</sup> Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1981), 176.

<sup>59</sup> Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, 14.

Moreover, this knowledge will help the student to distinguish between piano historical methods that are considered to be genuine and strictly academic. Further, it will introduce the pupil to compare and contrast these older methods with the new school of piano playing of today.

Among the possible pedagogical teaching tools available for the applied piano teacher are methods containing specific material for individual instruction with an age range of young beginners up to teenagers, group instruction with an average age range from adults and college non-music majors. As stated by Crappell, “These books include group piano methods for average-age and adult beginners and those designed for college music majors. Pedagogy students could also observe a group class of non-keyboard music majors or non-music majors to see how the teachers adapt those methods for use in the university setting.”<sup>60</sup> By following this trial-and-error method the pedagogy teacher can compare these traditional group classes with those students that are not seeking a final music degree. Non-music major students can benefit greatly of curricular general music classes within their college elective course requirement process.

Pedagogy students and veteran piano teachers generally relies on a standard piano repertoire to instruct their students. A general repertoire prepared by piano teachers may include works of Bach, Mozart, Schumann, and Chopin. Piano standard repertoire should include works representing several historical periods including but not limited to Baroque, classical, Romantic, and contemporary selections. New piano teachers may not have a lot of experience in the selection of methods created by piano performer/teachers like Chopin and Liszt as the focus of today’s college curricula is directed toward performing standard works only. Regarding standard repertoire selection Crappell said, “The pedagogical repertoire is music generally written by piano teachers who has a specific pedagogical function in mind, while the standard repertoire is

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<sup>60</sup> Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, 62.

the music written by composers such as Beethoven, Brahms, Batok, and Barber.”<sup>61</sup> This type of repertoire may be appealing to younger pedagogy piano students as these musical styles emphasize the aesthetic components of Western Classical music.

Historically speaking, teacher performers like Frederick Chopin suggested to piano students limited works by Hummel, Beethoven, and John Field to build their piano repertoire. Nevertheless, it is documented that Chopin preferred the works of Johann Sebastian Bach as included in his 24 preludes for the keyboard. Chopin extensively used Bach’s *clavier* preludes as a mean of practicing when preparing for a salon concert. As stated by Chopin to one of his pupils, “Play Bach for me.”<sup>62</sup> According to Mikuli, Chopin also recommended works by Mozart, Scarlatti, Weber, Mendelssohn, and Moscheles to his students. In addition, Chopin highly recommended works such as Clementi’s *Gradus ad Parnassum*, and Cramer’s *Etudes* for improving technical ability and finger dexterity. Through the study of these technical exercises pedagogy piano students can label pieces by level of difficulty and use them as additional resource material to target student technical needs.

### Pedagogical Piano Skill Training

The first step in providing adequate piano pedagogical training is by providing in-class performance observations. These observations can improve the perception of the student as the idea behind the observation is to have the student observe the teacher as well. As stated by Crappell, “Just as piano students learn to play artistically by hearing and watching accomplished performers on stage, pedagogy students need to observe the master teachers engaged in their

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<sup>61</sup> Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, 74.

<sup>62</sup> Frederic Chopin, *Chopin Correspondence*, 60.

craft.”<sup>63</sup> By observing experienced piano teachers, the pedagogy student will feel the confidence to teach and guide students of their own. Moreover, pedagogy students can practice with other piano students as they conduct role play scenarios in the classroom as well. These mock-lessons will prepare the future piano teacher to adapt their teaching to various types of skills levels and will be prepared for several types of pedagogical challenges and situations.

Furthermore, these activities will benefit the piano pedagogy student greatly as most learning in a theoretical setting can be accomplished by observing technical processes and imitating behaviors. Pedagogical training can also occur as the piano teacher assigns piano pedagogy students to observe group lessons in an educational setting other than their own. As stated by Crappell, “Since piano performance is a physical skill, observations of classes and lessons of other skills that require physical training, such as dance, theater, or sports, can reveal useful coaching strategies.”<sup>64</sup> Understanding that there are distinct levels of expertise within the performing arts, there is an inherent need to customize coaching strategies based on the objectives and expectations of the class.

Pedagogy students should seek for additional training experiences within their own community. These practicum opportunities will facilitate job related experience and at the same time it will stimulate the pedagogy student to select which teaching practices and training experiences suit their particular needs. The ideal scenario for the pedagogy student will be that the pedagogy teacher will give this opportunity as part of the coursework. As stated by Crappell, “The procedures for scheduling observations will depend upon the preferences of the teacher

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<sup>63</sup> Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, 74.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 74.

who will be observed, but pedagogy teachers must outline clear guidelines for how pedagogy students will contact teachers and schedule their observations.”<sup>65</sup> The pedagogy teacher should provide the guidelines to allow the pedagogy student to observe other teachers teaching and for the student to observe professional pianists performing as well.

### Chapter Review

Frederic Chopin made a significant contribution to piano pedagogy by introducing his set of piano Etudes Op. 10 and Op. 25 into the piano literature. It is evident that Frederick Chopin was capable to achieve command over many other technical difficulties through many of his other compositions. Eigeldinger provided an overview of some of Chopin’s technical and pedagogical contributions in his book entitled, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*. Furthermore, Eigeldinger indicated that most of Chopin’s piano etudes were design to overcome one particular technical challenge. Consequently, Chopin introduced a new and revolutionary fingering technique. For instance, to allow the thumb to move freely, Chopin composed Etude Op. 10 no. 5, known as the black key etude.

This etude aims to achieve complete independence of the thumb and introduces a more practical fingering technique for the pianist. As a piano teacher, Chopin work hard to develop a relationship of trust with his students and offer words of encouragement in order for pupils to achieve their full potential. Further, Etude Op. 10 no. 2 focuses on developing fingers 3, 4, and 5 when crossing over in chromatic passages.<sup>66</sup> This etude requires a *legatissimo* touch throughout the entire piece. This particular etude is a classic example of Chopin’s technical contribution to

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<sup>65</sup> Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, 54.

<sup>66</sup> Eigeldinger, “*Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*,” 19.

pianism and of his innovative method to teach dynamics and how to overcome technical difficulties to his pupils. Additionally, notable examples of how to teach the singing *legato* lines in chromatic passages can be found in his *berceuse* Op. 57, the well-known Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2, and Prelude Op. 28 No. 15. These compositions can be utilized to teach students how to learn these pieces through their own perception and disposition rather than through imitation.

The Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor Op. 11 was composed during a difficult event in Chopin's life and as such it should be interpreted with a high sense of expression and emotion. When applying these pedagogical principles into the modern classroom, the applied piano teacher should take into consideration these specific life events into the piano lesson and demonstrate by performing selected passages of Chopin's works if necessary. Instructions were provided to applied piano teachers to develop sequential piano lessons and employ additional teaching tool materials. The pedagogy piano teacher should provide guidelines to allow the pedagogy student to observe other piano teachers teaching and for the piano student to observe professional pianists performing in the concert hall as well.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This chapter will explain the methodology that has been selected for this study. In order to achieve this task, an analysis of primary sources of information that includes Frederic Chopin's personal documents and other piano methods was taken into consideration. In addition, a score analysis of Chopin's music ranging from different periods of his life were evaluated. Moreover, the main task of this research study is to review and isolate the main technical aspects of Chopin's piano method. Furthermore, this chapter explains and review the selected methodology as the purpose of the research design is to scrutinize Frederic Chopin's piano method from a technical and pedagogical point of view.

### Research Design

A qualitative analysis of Chopin's existing works was used for this study. In addition, an examination of the existing literature was conducted. As stated by Creswell, "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem."<sup>67</sup>

### Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study were:

Hypothesis 1: Some personal experiences in Chopin's life that are important for the piano teacher to understand prior to teaching the works of Chopin include the Polish Uprising of 1831, political alienation, and exile in Paris, and the Great Emigration of 1830.

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<sup>67</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach*, (India: Sage Publications, 2014), 4.

Hypothesis 2: The piano techniques that the student and teacher should develop prior to learning Frederic Chopin's works include, flexibility of the wrist, flexibility of the hand, and freedom of the fingers.

### **Methodology**

This qualitative study examined the existing literature and analyzed several of the nineteenth-century piano instruction methods including Chopin's incomplete teaching project and some of his compositions are presented. In addition, only the original and first editions of these works are presented for analysis.

This methodology utilizes a conceptual approach to determine the manifestation of certain concepts or theories associated with the topic under investigation. Hoslti indicated, "That it is any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages. . . . These inferences are about sender(s) of message, the message itself, or the audience of message."<sup>68</sup> This methodology is design to use a conceptual approach to determine the manifestation of certain concepts or theories associated with the topic under investigation. As stated by Shank, this type of method defines qualitative research as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning."<sup>69</sup> Converting the collected data and content analysis into meaningful information for the applied piano teacher and enhance the quality of music education.

The available research focuses on technical interpretations without the consideration of a research plan that can provide more detailed information about piano technical innovations. As

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<sup>68</sup> Gardner Lindzey and E. Aronson, ed, *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Random House Inc, 1968), 20.

<sup>69</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, 38.

<sup>70</sup> Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1952), 58.

stated by Berelson, “Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data. Using a content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts.”<sup>70</sup> Using a content analysis on this research plan provides a solid foundation to determine how the basic characteristics of certain musical instruction methods, musical styles, and main pedagogical concepts can help teachers succeed in the classroom. Because of the limited focus of this study, other researchers may consider taking up the goal of studying the various aspects of piano technique during the nineteenth century.

### **Procedure**

This research study examined the research hypothesis by scrutinizing Chopin’s work, score analysis, and examination of literature pertaining to applied piano pedagogy. In addition, a second implication was studied as in 1883, a student of Clara Schumann named Natalie Janotha, published a manuscript containing fragmented works of Frederic Chopin. Regarding this manuscript, George Sand and Franz Liszt stated, “the manuscript contained nothing more than some oddly disconnected phrases about the elementary teaching of music, strung together in the most haphazard fashion.”<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, Chopin’s scholar Alfred Cortot indicated, “People are likely to be misled by this document.”<sup>72</sup> This document probably escaped the composer’s last wish to be destroyed by fire together with the unpublished or less worthy compositions. This manuscript contains valuable information and will be part of this line of investigation.

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<sup>71</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, 38.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

The first step in defining this research methodology was to be able to describe Chopin teaching methodology as illustrated by his own method and as seen by his students. In order to achieve this goal, a thorough examination of his unfinished piano method was conducted. For this part of the study a closer look at the correspondence from Chopin and his pupils as they took piano lessons with him will be taken into consideration. In addition, a closer look will be taken at the manuscript found in 1883 and subsequently purchased by Cortot in 1936.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, this part of this research study will also scrutinize Chopin's *Projet de méthode* as it includes all of the technical components that he considered essential to teach in his piano lessons.

The second phase of this study includes a music score analysis with the intention to exemplify Chopin's piano technique and illustrate his approach to common technical difficulties. All of these hypotheses were presented and evaluated by Chopin's own documents, writings, correspondence, and samples of his compositions with the intent to reconstruct Chopin's piano method and bring it back to life. This ultimate goal is at the center of this research investigation. This study analyzed all of the compiled information and music score samples to be able to produce a limited but clear depiction of what Chopin's applied piano method and what the general piano techniques would have been during the middle part of the nineteenth century.

### **Content Analysis**

The analytical process focused on Chopin's piano technique instructions as found in the original manuscript of his *Projet de méthode*. Moreover, the content assessment of the information was taken from a book published in French in 2013, containing the first editions and original copies of Chopin's *Projet de méthode* that includes Chopin's set of instructions and exercises. This book contains valuable information as it describes Chopin's instructions for his

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<sup>73</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, 38.

pianos students to become proficient from a technical standpoint. As stated by Eideldinger, “While Liszt was still following the avenues of pianistic virtuosity, Chopin’s transcendent perspicacity and maturity had already placed him foremost among modern pianist pedagogues.”

<sup>74</sup> The main purpose of this part of the investigation was to uncover Chopin’s role as one of the most important pianist-pedagogues of the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, Chopin’s interactions and correspondence with his pupil’s sheds light in the pursuit of reconstructing Chopin’s teaching approach and piano techniques. Consequently, the ultimate goal during this part of the investigation was to find contextual meaning to Chopin’s method of teaching, as the main concern is not to determine if Chopin was right or wrong in his teaching approach. Nevertheless, the main objective was to analyze Chopin’s notes and letters with the purpose to uncover if Chopin’s piano methodology was effective when instructing students from diverse backgrounds.

### **Score Analysis**

In order to provide a valuable score analysis of Chopin’s music, it was necessary to evaluate the same compositions that Chopin utilized to teach his pupils. In addition, to properly analyze these pieces from a pedagogical point of view, it was necessary to know and analyze some of the compositions that were performed by Chopin’s pupils as well. By searching for occurrences and similarities when performance within the first generation of Chopin’s his pupils one can provide an analytical interpretation of Chopin’s piano technique and style. Moreover, an important aspect of this study was to include a sufficient number of compositions that are known to be part of Chopin’s standard repertoire as reported by some of the surviving concert programs of the time. Some of these concert programs did not survive, and several Chopin’s scholars have

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<sup>74</sup> Eigendilger, “*Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 19.

taken the liberty to reconstruct them to a limited degree. For instance, when conducting a score analysis on Chopin's waltz Op. 64, No. 1, it became evident that the first four bars are to be played very fluidly. As stated by Eigeldinger, "A great lady who was present at Chopin's last concert in Paris (1848), when he played among other works his valse in D flat (Op 64, No 1), wished to know Chopin's secret for making his scales so fluid, Mme Dubois, who related the incident to me, added that the expression was felicitous, for this had never been equaled."<sup>75</sup> After careful consideration and observation, Chopin would constrict the first five measures of this waltz into almost two bars. This effect would be similar to unrolling a ball of yarn and only picking up the tempo after the fifth bar or after the introduction.

Among those concert programs that survived is the one taken from Chopin's last concert of 1848 in Edinburg, England. According to the program, "Mr. Chopin was to perform a broad selection of works for the English audience. Among some of the pieces to be performed was the andante and Impromptu, some of the Etudes, a Nocturne and the Berceuse, the Grande Valse Brillante, a Prelude, a Ballade, some Mazurkas and Waltzes."<sup>76</sup> With this firsthand information that circulated in the Edinburg newspaper of the time it is possible to develop a research plan that considers Chopin's standard repertoire and perhaps the repertoire he utilized to instruct his students. Moreover, it was also possible to gather sufficient data in order to evaluate his performance style as the Edinburg newspaper provided a review of his performance that day and during Chopin's last concert.

The second part of the score analysis section focused on how Chopin performed these pieces, and the particular description and reception of his last concert is provided in this research

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<sup>75</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Alan Walker, *Frederick Chopin; A Life and Times*, (New York, NY: Picador, 2018), 116.

design. This methodology was design to evaluate the eyewitness accounts and editors as information is extracted and compared to the personal accounts of those who knew him best. This information was analyzed for coding with the intent to provide identification of performance style. This tool included the firsthand accounts of observable witnesses and those accounts of newspaper editors that observed Chopin performances with the intent to search a frequency indicator. For instance, this method sought to identify for performance or style indicators in tempo *rubato*, tempo, *legato* usage, *legato* in chromatic passages, dynamics and so forth. This method analyzed the collected information in order to formulate a general description of factors that are an integral part of Chopin piano technique and style.

#### Chapter Review

The score analysis as described in this chapter, and the frequency distribution were implemented to analyze the data on Chopin's firsthand accounts of his performances and private appearances. This analytical tool was capable of processing copious amounts of data and search for those verifiable characteristics that are frequent and or similar. This analytical tool searched for those variables that are present on those occasions that Chopin performed and was followed by a performance review or witness account information. Information that is not relevant to performance style and its general characteristics was discarded. Furthermore, a set of guidelines was be provided to illustrate how the frequency distribution process operates. These guidelines provided a point of reference for the reader to understand the results. This last research methodology provided the light and knowledge needed to properly understand Chopin's technical aspects of piano playing and of his pedagogical approach to achieve mastery of the instrument.

Finally, Chopin's interactions and correspondence with his pupil's provided additional information in the pursue of reconstructing Chopin's teaching approach and piano techniques. The ultimate goal during this part of the investigation was to find contextual meaning to Chopin's method of teaching. The main concern was not to determine if Chopin was right or wrong in his piano teaching approach but to analyze Chopin's notes, music scores, and letters to uncover if Chopin's piano methodology was effective when instructing students deriving from diverse backgrounds. This methodology sought to identify performance musical style indicators such as tempo *rubato*, *legato* usage, *legato* in chromatic passages, dynamics and so forth. This method analyzed the collected information in order to formulate a general description of the factors that are an integral part of Chopin piano method, technique, and style.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Description

This chapter describes the hypotheses proposed in Chapter one that seeks to explain (a) the essential elements of Chopin's piano technique that are important for the applied piano teacher as these techniques will enhance student performance and (b) Frederic Chopin's life experiences and philosophies can be beneficial for piano teachers as they attempt to teach amateur students to comprehend how to interpret Chopin's music. The second theory seeks to reconstruct parts of Frederic Chopin's piano method as this method contains the techniques that will help students improve their interpretation of Chopin's works. The second theory will pursue to evaluate Chopin's recommendations to his pupils or as seen by his students. To achieve this primarily goal, this chapter evaluated and scrutinized Chopin's *Projet de méthode*. The findings were presented in accordance with the data that have been uncovered and collected.

### Results

A qualitative research approach was applied to explain how Chopin's method for teaching the piano promotes independence and individuality of the fingers. In order to access this valuable information, the creation of several analytical categories was presented. Hypothesis number one focused on how Chopin's methodology sought to help the student learn the right position of the hand in relation to the keyboard and to avoid any strenuous or uncomfortable position of the hand. As stated by Kleczynski, "Chopin recommended, with this object, that the fingers should fall freely and lightly, and that the hand should hand should be suspended in the air; he objected to rapid movements at too early a stage of the pupil's progress and wished that they should learn to execute all passages *fortissimo* and *pianissimo*."<sup>77</sup> Theory number two

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<sup>77</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 19.

focused on the other existing piano methods and technological advances as proposed by Carl Czerny, Muzio Clementi, and other composers such as Franz Liszt, and Claude Debussy.

Hypothesis 1: Some personal experiences in Chopin's life that are important for the piano teacher to understand prior to teaching the works of Chopin include the Polish Uprising of 1831, political alienation, and exile in Paris, and the Great Emigration of 1830. While traveling from Vienna to Paris, Chopin learned that the uprising of 1831 against the Russian army had been crushed. During this challenging historical time, Frederick Chopin composed the Scherzo No. 1 in B minor. Due to this historical event, Chopin's compositional style was transformed from a bright tone quality to a darker tone quality. When teaching students how to play the Scherzo No. 1, the applied piano teacher should emphasize the historical fact that this Scherzo was written during the November uprising event of 1831. Consequently, the applied piano teacher should guide the piano students to take into consideration to create a mood of suspense, uncertainty, and chaos when learning this piece.

This Scherzo was written and dedicated to Chopin's friend Thomas Albrecht who was instrumental in convincing Chopin to stay in Paris permanently. The middle theme of this composition is based on a Polish Christmas carol. It is extremely important for the applied piano teacher to guide the student to understand the change of dynamics and touch when interpreting this middle section of this Scherzo. This middle section should be played *piano* and with a very delicate touch from the wrist. Chopin included the indications of *sotto voce* and *ben legato*.

#### Personal Life Experiences (The Uprising of 1831)

Primary sources of information clearly indicate that in 1831 the social and political conditions of Poland and Paris were severe. The same political conditions in Western Europe

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during the middle part of the nineteenth century. As an artist, composer, and piano teacher, Frederick Chopin was deeply impacted by the historical events taking place in Western Europe during this time period. As stated by Benita Eisler:

Poland has become a police state. Universities were closed, books, and plays censored, the Russian troops were in insolent evidence everywhere, while, less visibly, agents of the Czar's secret police spied on every aspect of citizen activity, with particular scrutiny of student radicals and other subversives. By 1829, talks in the cafes, much of it involving Chopin's friends, were of plots and meetings, conspiracy, and revolution.<sup>78</sup>

This period of time corresponds to the time of the emergence of the Etudes Op. 10. This set of etudes was completed and published in Paris, France. Nevertheless, these etudes are a clear indication of how these historical events affected Chopin's world view and how it affected his music. Etude Op. 12 No. 12 clearly states the composer's desire to resist political tyranny and military oppression. This particular etude was composed during the time of the uprising of 1831 and during the time of the Russian occupation. In a letter to his friend Tytus Woyciechowski Chopin said, "I have composed a few exercises; I will show you and touch you soon."<sup>79</sup>

When teaching this etude, the applied piano teacher should emphasize the use of dynamics. In the opening bars of this etude, the main theme should be played with long and loud descending runs on a C minor dominant chord. Furthermore, in order to capture the feelings of desperation and anguish that are necessary to execute this work correctly, the applied piano teacher should also emphasize the transitions into the main appassionato melody. This technique will enable the right hand to play the octaves ascending *forte*. This technique of playing will enhance the expressive capacity of the student to capture the feelings of anguish as manifested by Chopin's original intentions. In a letter to his family Chopin indicated, "All this has caused me a lot of

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<sup>78</sup> Benita Eisler, *Chopin's Funeral*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books Press, 2004), 18.

<sup>79</sup> Chopin, *Frederic Chopin: Correspondence*, 84.

pain. Who could have foreseen it!”<sup>80</sup> The applied piano teacher should take into consideration Chopin’s correspondence to illustrate these expressive qualities if necessary when teaching this monumental work for the piano.

For piano teachers, this event in Chopin’s life is central to the proper interpretation of the works composed during this time period. During the uprising of 1831, Chopin decided to stay in Vienna and avoid returning back to his family in Poland. During this period of time, Chopin composes his four Mazurkas Op. 6, and five Mazurkas Op. 7. During this time, the *Belvedere* was assaulted by army cadets and Duke Constantine flees the city. These feelings perpetuated a somber tone quality in Chopin’s music as he expressed his state of mind in a letter to his family, “A grave lies behind me, another lies beneath me; the only thing missing is a grave above my head.”<sup>81</sup> A deeper and more subdued tone level of expression permeated Chopin’s composition after the traumatic events of 1831. This deeper sound quality is manifested in Chopin’s piano concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 11, written in 1830 during this turbulent event in Chopin’s life.

#### Chopin’s Life Experiences (The E Minor Piano Concerto)

Chopin’s life event of 1831 is reflected of the E Minor Piano Concerto No. 1 as his thoughts were surrounded with the destruction of Poland and the death of family and friends. As Chopin stated in one of his letters, “A gloomy harmony arose within me-I felt my isolation more than ever.”<sup>82</sup> These circumstances affected Chopin’s manner of composing and performing this concerto. Chopin gave a concert in the Resource Hall on November 8, and according to critics, he performed the Romance and the Rondo of the E minor concert and was asked to performed them as an encore a second time. As stated by Alan Walker:

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<sup>80</sup> Chopin, *Frederic Chopin: Correspondence*, 84.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

Chopin we recall, had left Warsaw in the company of Tytus on November 2, more than three weeks before the uprising began. Their route had taken them through Wroclaw, Dresden, and Prague. They spent four days in Wroclaw, where, at the insistence of the kapellmeister Joseph Schnabel (an old friend of Elsner's), Chopin gave a concert in the "Resource" Hall on November 8 and played the Romance and the Rondo from his E minor concerto. This happened by chance, for Chopin had no plans to give concerts. Schnabel had issued a friendly invitation to Chopin to attend a morning rehearsal he was conducting with an amateur pianist who was preparing to Moscheles E-flat piano concerto that evening. During a break in the rehearsal Schnabel turned to Chopin and asked him if he would like to try out the piano. Chopin had not practice for a couple of weeks, but not wishing to seem discourteous he sat down at the instrument and dashed off a couple of his "La ci darem" variations. That was sufficient incentive for the official soloist to take fright, leaving Schnabel with no alternative but to invite Chopin to take his place. The German orchestral players were struck by Chopin's unusual technique. "*Was fur ein leichtes Spiel hat er!*" (What a light touch he has!). As for the audience, they were especially pleased with his encore, an improvisation on themes from Auber's *La Muette de Portici*. Otherwise, this concert is today almost forgotten and produced no income for the pianist.<sup>83</sup>

This quote contains especially valuable information for the applied piano teacher. The accounts of first-hand observers like the orchestra members and the audience present at the concert that night praised Chopin for having an unusual technique and light touch when performing the E Minor Piano Concerto No. 1 in conjunction with the encore he played. Understanding Chopin performed this concerto without receiving any income and without any previous preparation, attest to the fact that as an artist, Chopin was totally committed to advance the cause of piano technique and improve the current pedagogical system of the time. For the applied piano teacher, this information will provide valuable information regarding the proper use of the weight of the arm and fingers when performing the E minor piano concerto No. 1. There is an absolute need to maintain the arms, wrists, and fingers free of tension and rigidity of the muscles. This unusual technique of keeping the whole body in a total state of relaxation would allow for a fine

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<sup>83</sup> Walker, *Frederick Chopin; A Life and Times*, 125.

execution and would also permit the production of great textures and colors. The first concerto contains three movements:

The first movement is marked *Allegro Maestoso*, and it follows the sonata form but in a very peculiar manner. The first movement follows very uncommon modulations. In the opening of the first theme, it modulates to the equivalent major. Chopin does not follow the expected (I) to (III) sequence movement. Nevertheless, as the theme repeats in the recapitulation the expected movement for I to III finally takes place. This (I) to (III) sequence movement produces an incredibly unique and distinct effect on the first movement of the concerto. This first movement contains three themes. The fascinating aspect is that these three themes are introduced by the orchestra prior to the participation of the piano. The piano plays the first theme on bar 139 for the first time followed by the second theme on bar 155. The third theme in E major comes in bar 222 as the piano and the orchestra play the theme simultaneously multiple times.

The *Romanze* or second movement of the piano concerto does not conform to the sonata form. This second movement follows the basic classical model of transitioning from (I) to (V) on the main theme. The main theme modulates from the tonal key to the dominant fifth. This main theme returns again, but this time it modulates to the mediant (III). In a letter to his friend Tytus regarding the form and analysis of this piano concerto Chopin said, "It is not meant to create a powerful effect, it is rather a Romance, calm and melancholy, giving the impression of someone looking gently towards a spot that calls to mind a thousand happy memories. It is a kind of reverie in the moonlight on a beautiful spring evening."<sup>84</sup> Consequently, it is important to highlight these abstract elements to the piano student when learning the proper mood and atmosphere of this movement prior to performing this piece in public.

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<sup>84</sup> Chopin, *Frederic Chopin: Correspondence*, 70.

For the applied piano teacher, it is important to understand that this piano concerto represents Chopin's last work and last public performance in Poland. This personal event in Chopin's life together with the feeling of the Great Emigration or exile reflected on this E minor Piano Concerto. The E minor key reflects melancholia and sadness as Chopin left family and friends behind to never return to his mother land again. For the applied piano teacher, understanding the feelings of expatriation are at the core of finding a proper interpretation of this monumental work. This concerto contains great bravura passages and multiple sentimental themes.

For the applied piano teacher is necessary to understand the state of mind of a composer whose departure from Poland will marked the beginning of an exile that will last until the very end of his life. This E minor piano concerto contains sentimental themes based on Chopin's life experiences as he was growing up in Poland. In a letter to his friend Tytus and speaking about the inspiration behind this piano concerto, Chopin's said, "Here you doubtless observe my tendency to do wrong against my will. As something has involuntarily crept into my head through my eyes, I love to indulge it, even though, it may be all wrong."<sup>85</sup> In this letter, Chopin is referring to his love for the well-known Polish soprano Konstanja Gladowska, who was the inspiration behind the Romance or second movement from this piano concerto. These personal experiences were crucial for Chopin's culmination and publication of this E Minor Piano Concerto and extremely important for the applied piano teacher to understand prior to performing this work in public.

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<sup>85</sup> Chopin, *Frederic Chopin: Correspondence*, 70.

### Experiencing Alienation and Exile (The Ballade in G Minor Op. 23)

For the applied piano teacher, it is necessary to understand that Chopin's ballades made an important contribution in the process of establishing a Polish cultural identity as many Poles including Frederick Chopin lived in exile. This personal life experience as a Polish Émigré had a tremendous impact on Chopin's compositional style and structure. Thus, it is important to examine the significance of the ballade Op. 23 in G Minor within the context of the Polish diaspora living in Paris during the middle part of the nineteenth-century before performing this work in public.

Consequently, the first step in learning how to perform this monumental work correctly is to be able to understand that this ballade made a significant contribution among the Polish community of exiles living in Paris during this critical time in history. This work helped to uplift the national spirit of the Polish Émigré during the 1830s as they lived in Paris. As a result, learning about the feelings of exile and expatriation should be taken into consideration when learning how to perform this work correctly. The Chopin ballade in G Minor Op. 23 exerted social and cultural influence among the Polish community in Paris during the 1830s and captivated the hearts of a dispersed the nation.

The ballade in G Minor Op. 23 appeared for the first in printed form in 1836. It was published with the title "*Ballade ohne Worte.*" This innovation by Chopin suggested a new form or style of composition based on the feelings of expatriation and exile of the Polish people. This unique musical concept had not been presented before by any other composer particularly for instrumental music during the first half of the nineteenth-century. Only in a narrative form, had these ballads grabbed the attention of the general public making poets such as Goethe and Schiller, to adopt the ballade to provide the musical setting to these poems and narrative works.

For the applied piano teacher is important to understand that this ballade Op.23 in G Minor exerted a patriotic influence improving the perception of Polish cultural identity across Europe and understanding as a nation of Émigré. Moreover, the applied piano teacher will benefit in learning some of the cultural and historical elements of how Chopin's ballade in G Minor provided the community of Polish exiles with a better sense of who they were during this time of exodus in Paris. Regarding this exodus, Parakilas stated, "The self-image of exiled Poles, according to Maria Janion and Maria Żmigrodzka, was that of orphanage, pilgrimage, imprisonment, uprootedness, and homelessness. For Berger, this self-understanding was highly relevant to Chopin's listeners, nationalist Poles, and cosmopolitan Parisians alike."<sup>86</sup> It is evident that Chopin's listeners and admirers were able to connect with their native Poland through his compositions but particularly with the ballade.

Further, it is important to highlight that there is abounding evidence of Chopin's ballads already making a significant contribution to the sentiments of the Polish nationalist movement in Europe during the 1830s even though that the future and destiny of Poland was unsympathetic to the rest of Europe. As stated by Parakilas, "In this context, the ballade as a medium was likely to be quite attractive to him precisely because it had nationalist significance for nearly every European nation. A piano ballade could derive inspiration from Polish tradition and still appeal to the international public ignorant of that tradition by evoking the ballad as Europeans generally knew it."<sup>87</sup> When learning how to perform this monumental ballade, the piano student should take into consideration the patriotic nature and nationalistic character of the piece.

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<sup>86</sup> James Parakilas, *Ballads Without Words: Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballad*, (Cleckheaton, UK: Amadeus Press, 1992), 172.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 172.

The first step in acquiring the proper character of interpretation of this work is by understanding that Chopin was attempting to use the ballade as a medium to connect with the sentiment of the Polish immigration as he was a Polish *Émigré* and writing music that was inspired by his knowledge of the available literature, letters, and periodicals of the time.

Regarding Chopin's ballade Robert Schumann wrote:

We must direct attention to the ballade as a most remarkable work. Chopin has already written one composition of the same name—one of his wildest and most original compositions; the new one is different, as a work of art inferior to the first, but equally fantastic and inventive. Its impassioned episodes seem to have been inserted afterwards. I recollect very well that when Chopin played the ballade here, it ended in F major; now it closes in A minor. At that time, he also mentioned that certain poems of Mickiewicz had suggested his ballade to him. On the other hand, a poet might easily be inspired to find words to his music; it stirs one profoundly.<sup>88</sup>

This statement was made by Schumann in 1841 and approximately two years after Chopin had finished his second ballade. Schumann's comment indicates an elevated level of memory and attention to detail. Schumann clearly point out that Chopin himself performed the ballade for him and that it ended in F major. Nevertheless, some time after Chopin changed the ballade to end in A minor. This alternative ending in A minor was published as Chopin was still alive and received his approval. As evident by the original autograph, Chopin rejected the first version for a simpler ending. It is also evident that Robert Schumann possessed a prominent level of detail regarding his meeting with Chopin. As indicated by Schumann, Frederic Chopin performed the ballade and that it had a different ending. In this statement, Schumann indicated that he had a clear recollection of the performance of this piece and of the original ending of the ballade.

Moreover, Schumann provided clues as to the source of inspiration for the ballade. He indicated that Chopin was inspired by certain poems of Adam Mickiewicz. Schumann elaborates

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<sup>88</sup> Robert Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, (New York, NY: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1841), 43.

even more as he suggests that poetry can have a deeper effect when combined with the appropriate music. For the applied piano teacher, this information is vital as according to Schumann, music combined with poetry has the power to “stirs one profoundly.”<sup>89</sup> These feelings are synonymous of life events that are necessary to understand when preparing to perform this piece. The piano student should be guided to understand the proper phrasing of this piece as Schumann stated above that it is unclear if Chopin’s intention was to transmit a deeper power and feeling when combining words with music. Schumann’s ability to provide accurate and precise information regarding this meeting with Chopin is undisputable. For the pianist, it is important to know that it is impossible to determine if at this point, Chopin felt that music alone was not sufficient to express certain patriotic feelings. These are important considerations when preparing to perform this monumental work in public.

The period of time that corresponds to Chopin’s exile in Paris contains valuable information that could enhance the conjoined nature of teaching the individual aspects of music. These aspects of music education can become problematic if not supplemented by the proper teaching of skills and practices. Identifying the character of a piece is crucial during this part of the learning process. In addition, when learning this ballade, it is important to consider that the student may need the necessary advice to properly understand the feelings and character of the composition. This is the case of the Chopin’s E Minor Piano Concerto. As Chopin arrived in Paris, he immediately met with the well-known piano virtuoso Friederich Kalkbrenner. This first encounter with a piano teacher of this magnitude provided Chopin with valuable feedback. While

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<sup>89</sup> Robert Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, (New York, NY: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1841), 43.

already in Paris, Chopin had an opportunity to hear Kalkbrenner during this encounter as he declared, “Herz Liszt, Hiller, and the rest are nobodies compared with Kalkbrenner. It is impossible to describe his calm, his enchanting touch, his incomparable evenness, and mastery, which he reveals in every note.”<sup>90</sup> In turn, Kalkbrenner asked Chopin to play something for him. Chopin performed the E Minor Piano Concerto for him. After listening to Chopin, Kalkbrenner provided valuable advice to Chopin as he indicated that his style of touch was similar to the touch of Field’s and the technique of Cramer. As stated by Alan Walker, “Thereafter the two musicians met almost daily, and their friendship blossomed.”<sup>91</sup> Consequently, when considering how to perform Chopin’s E Minor Piano Concerto, the applied piano teacher may advise the student to refer to examine some of J. B. Cramer’s 60 exercises technical development and also refer the student to examine some of John Field’s Nocturnes for mastering *legato* touch. The admiration Chopin displayed to Kalkbrenner is evidenced by dedicating the E Minor Piano Concerto to him.

For the contemporary piano teacher, it is important to understand that the concept of the Great Emigration of 1830 had a tremendous effect on Frederick Chopin’s compositions and performance of most of his works. This concept exerted a tremendous force into the creative powers that influenced Frederic Chopin to look for parallels with the narrative works and the existing Polish literature of the 1830s. The generation of Poles living in Poland during the 1830s confronted a total downfall of government and a significant destruction of Polish culture and disruption of their way of life. According to Lewis Namier, the total number of Poles leaving the

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<sup>90</sup> Chopin, *Frederic Chopin: Correspondence*, 80.

<sup>91</sup> Walker, *Frederick Chopin; A Life and Times*, 125.

homeland during that period is estimated at around 10,000 people.<sup>90</sup> Among those Polish artists leaving Poland was pianist and teacher Frederick Chopin.

The concept of the Great Emigration of 1830 was significant during this period of time simply due to the need of finding cultural and national harmony in a foreign land. This Great Exodus was going to have a lasting effect on Polish romantic literature and music as it became an emigration of artists, writers, and scientists. Moreover, the Great Emigration became more than just an exercise to pursue freedom as it became a cultural revolution of artists and intellectuals in a new and adopted homeland. This new ideology of artists like Frederic Chopin and writers inspired them to compose and write masterpieces from exile. As hard as this Great Emigration ideal was to those who belonged to the educated classes of Poland, it is no less true that it provided a catalyst for artists to create works of lasting and enduring appeal like in the case of Frederick Chopin's works and compositions.

Nevertheless, when learning how to interpret Chopin's works for the piano, it is necessary to understand that the crude reality is that most of these artists and intellectuals felt alone and separated from their homeland without the possibility of return. However, artists and intellectuals like Frederick Chopin contemplated the possibility that someday they could return home to their deeply sophisticated culture back in Poland. The great mass of the Polish emigration was opposed to frittering away forces and awaited the time for direct action in the very heart of Europe. Polish in exile developed a creed, by no means free of exaltation and of illusions, yet based on premises which were sound though postulating things not easy of realization. Further, if Chopin was devoted to the study of Polish culture and music, then there should not be any speculation within the research community that learning more about these

events will help applied piano teachers and students to perform these works with a better understanding of what they represent.

### Pedagogy of the Ballades

To achieve a proper interpretation of Chopin's ballades it is necessary to correlate that there is a presence of melancholy among Chopin's letters when he refers to his birthplace reflected on these unique compositions. This same feeling of *tristese* for the homeland is also characteristic of other Chopin's compatriots going through exile while in Paris. Some of these feelings of *nostalgia* many times represented in the Polish literature. Among certain selections of Polish literature like in the case of Mickiewicz *Ballady*, there are many personal life experiences similar to those experimented by Chopin before and after the great fall of 1830. The word pilgrimage became the main theme as Polish exiles felt the need to identify with the reality of living in abroad, hoping their exile will end one day. According to Liszt, Chopin thought of this concept constantly and saw himself as a pilgrim. Liszt stated, "I am only passing through."<sup>92</sup> The passing through Western Europe was extended until the very end of his life.

Chopin composed a new genre or style of that is among the finest and unique pieces of music of the nineteen-century piano repertoire, the ballades. The importance of the ballade Op. 23 in G Minor written between 1831 to 1835 is manifested as it was referred to by Mallefille as the "Polish Ballade."<sup>93</sup> Moreover, the ballade in F Major Op. 38, composed between 1836 to 1839, was referred to by Chopin's music publisher Probst, as the "Pilgrims Ballade."<sup>94</sup> The word pilgrimage was at the center of the conversations among prominent exile Romantic artists like

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<sup>92</sup> Franz Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications Inc, 1863), 48.

<sup>93</sup> Carl Kalkbrenner, "Chopin in the Marketplace: Aspects of the International Music Publishing Industry in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Notes* 39, no.3 (1983), 812. <https://doi.org/10.2307/940141>.

Mickiewicz and Chopin. Describing a conversation between Chopin and a poet by the name of Heine, Franz Liszt stated:

Assembled around the piano in the lighted area were several figures of brilliant renown: Heine, saddest of humorists, listening with the interest of a compatriot to the tales that Chopin told him, tales about the mysterious land that also haunted his airy fancy since he had explored its most delightful parts. By mere suggestion of word and tone he and Chopin understood each other, and the musician answered with surprising phrases the questions that the poet softly asked about those unknown regions. [Heine] would ask “if the roses there still glowed with so proud a flame? If the trees, there still sang so harmoniously in the moonlight?” Chopin would reply, and both, after talking long and intimately of the charms of that aerial country, would fall silent in the throes of nostalgia. This affected Heine so when he compared himself to that Dutch captain of the *phantom ship*, with his crew eternally tossed on the chilling waves and “vainly sighing ‘Amsterdam! Amsterdam! When shall we again see Amsterdam!’<sup>95</sup>

This account made by Liszt, clearly indicates that Chopin and Heine were sitting around the piano already establishing a connection between poetry, and music. If Chopin was looking for a nationalistic source of inspiration to create a new and groundbreaking form of music, he probably found some of the necessary musical qualities in Polish poems and poetry. These patriotic feelings and expressive content on Chopin’s ballades and other works for the piano like in the case of the Mazurkas are important considerations for the applied piano teacher to understand when teaching how to perform these towering works for the piano.

#### Chopin’s Pedagogical Approach

Chopin’s piano pedagogy was based on teaching his students to achieve the right type of tone and sound production. Many of Chopin’s life experiences including the fact that he was a self-taught pianist contributed to the development of his piano method over the course of his life. Chopin generally gave three lessons a week lasting 45 minutes each. Chopin was not a supporter

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<sup>95</sup> Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, 48.

of extended daily practice at the piano. Regarding Chopin's practice sections a student of Chopin by the name of Madane Dubois stated, "One day he heard me that I practice six hours a day. He became quite angry and forbade me to practice more than three hours a day."<sup>96</sup> Chopin's piano pedagogy prompted the student not to work on piano technique for too long. A different Chopin student stated, "He always advised the pupil not to work for too long at a stretch and to intermit between hours of work by reading a good book, by looking at masterpieces of art, or by taking an invigorating walk."<sup>97</sup> These holistic pedagogical practices are extremely futuristic as Chopin incorporated modern treatments such as the psychology of mind for performers and the ergonomics of body, fingers, and arms for piano students.

The contemporary piano teacher could benefit tremendously from implementing these pedagogical, ergonomic, and psychological techniques with students in the modern classroom setting. Avoiding extended and strenuous piano practice sections could provide mental and physical relief to piano students. The modern piano repertoire and technical demands imposes heavy demands on the student body and mind. The piano teacher can incorporate these techniques during the phase of planning a lesson plan that targets these technical difficulties and necessities systematically.

### Piano Lesson Planning

The first step in the planning phase is to conduct an interview and skill assessment with the prospective piano student. During this stage of the process the piano teacher and student work together in creating a suitable plan of action for the first and subsequent applied piano lessons. This practical approach would allow the applied piano teacher and student to work on a

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<sup>96</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, 49.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

long-term plan to increase the skill level to the desired student goal objective. Planning one lesson at a time first would allow the applied piano teacher to continue assessing the needs of the student and will provide additional information that could be used for developing a longer plan of action. As stated by Crappell, “Once the piano teacher has identified a piano student whom the intern will teach, and they have conducted an interview with the student and parent, the pedagogy teacher and intern should collaborate to create a plan for the piano student’s first lesson.”<sup>98</sup> This collaboration will permit the applied piano teacher to incorporate holistic techniques such as reducing the length of the piano lessons, breaking the entire length of the lessons into more manageable sessions, and finally, helping the piano student understand the ergonomics and psychology of practicing the piano for extended periods of time.

#### Lesson Teaching Preparation

The second part of the process after putting a plan in place is to proceed with the actual applied piano lesson preparation. In Chopin’s case, he met with his students one to three times a week for no more than 45 minutes each. Further, there is ample evidence that Frederick Chopin was an excellent piano pedagogy teacher. Regarding Chopin’s ability to prepare students professionally Clara Wieck’s describes in detail one of Chopin’s most advanced pupils George Mathias, “He has received an excellent education, has wonderfully flexible fingers, plays all of Chopin’s, and there is nothing he cannot do. In fact, he outshines all of the keyboard strummers around here. Remarkably, he has never work more than one hour per day.”<sup>99</sup> Chopin’s piano lesson preparations are exemplified by the overall success of his pupil Geroge Mathias.

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<sup>98</sup> Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, 18.

<sup>99</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, 54.

Based on Clara Weick's observational assessment, it is evident that Mathias achieved a skilled level of piano proficiency comparable to the standards required by the Conservatory of Paris. It is apparent that Frederick Chopin's piano lessons were designed based on student's needs. As a result, within Chopin lesson planning design, the student will work on their needs weekly and progressively without any fatigue of the body, mind, and of the senses. A contemporary piano student by the name of Marmontel said about Mathias, "Under his agile and firm fingers, the most arduous passages retain their transparent clarity; one never senses fatigue or is aware of the difficulties to overcome. The expression, controlled by the principles of style and good taste, is never exaggerated."<sup>100</sup> For the applied piano teacher, the ideal goal will be to prepare a lesson plan that would allow the piano student to achieve this same level of piano proficiency without the extraneous fatigue of muscles and fingers but still be able to achieve a proper level of control and clarity when playing. These pedagogical practices in combination with the relaxation of the hand and fingers can improve piano technical ability and at the same time reduce the risk of injury.

Chopin's pedagogy of teaching applied music for the piano is manifested by the connection he established between music and the spoken language. As a pedagogical tool, Chopin integrated metaphors of language in his applied piano lessons. In Chopin's unfinished piano method, he wrote:

The art that manifests itself through sound is called music.  
 The art of expressing one's thoughts through sounds.  
 The art of handling sounds.  
 Thought expressed through sounds.

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<sup>100</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, 49.

The expression of our perceptions through sounds.  
 The expression of thought through sounds.  
 The manifestation of our feelings through sounds.  
 The indefinite language of men in sound.  
 The indefinite language music.  
 Word is born of sound.  
 Word: a certain modification of sound.  
 We use sound to make music just as we use words to make a language.<sup>101</sup>

Based on this proclamation, it is evident that Chopin's pedagogy was founded on musical practice. This pedagogical practice was based on advising students to listen to great *bel canto* singers of the time with the purpose to find good examples of sound quality and tone production techniques.

These pedagogical concepts can be incorporated into the lesson plan as the pedagogy teacher meets with the student to discuss the lesson content and provide the necessary feedback. The material selected during this part of the process is vital as the feedback provided by the pedagogy teacher has an enormous effect on student ability to reach their full potential. As stated by Crappell, "This procedure requires a significant commitment of time and energy, but the feedback that the pedagogy teacher offers at this point in the teacher-training process has the greatest potential to make an impact on the level of pedagogy students' future teaching proficiency."<sup>102</sup> Placing the student progress at heart should be the driving force when preparing the applied piano lesson plan.

As stated above, Chopin's applied piano lesson plan still offers great advantages to modern piano pedagogy. In evaluation the content and philosophy of Chopin's applied piano lesson plan, it would be safe to say that it did not follow the conventional piano methodology of

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<sup>101</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, 49.

<sup>102</sup> Crappell, *Piano Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, 55.

finger and other technical exercises. Further, it has been established that Chopin's piano lesson preparation was completely opposed to the other piano methods as proposed by Thalberg and Liszt. Regarding Chopin's piano philosophy Mikuli stated, "In complete opposition to Chopin, Liszt maintains that that the fingers should be strengthened by working on an instrument with heavy, resistant touch, continually repeating the required exercises until one is completely exhausted and incapable of going on. Chopin wanted absolutely nothing to do with such a gymnastic treatment of the piano."<sup>103</sup> This statement clearly suggests that Chopin's applied piano lessons contained minimal finger exercises and focused more on developing the natural position of the hand. Chopin's piano lessons focused on providing the student with the knowledge and specific tools needed to play the piano. Chopin's piano methodology is simple but practical.

#### Chopin Applied Piano Lesson Plan

Certain experiences in the life of Frederick Chopin contributed to the development of his piano style and methodology. Chopin's father became a French teacher at the Warsaw Lyceum and was also a violinist and flutist. Chopin's mother was an accomplished pianist and probably Chopin's first applied piano teacher during the Warsaw years. As stated by Zamoyski, "Chopin may have had some piano instruction from his mother, but his first professional music tutor, from 1816 to 1821, was the Czech pianist Wojciech Zywny."<sup>104</sup> As Chopin received instruction from his mother and professor Zywny, it is quite evident that his musical compositional style developed. These first tutors did not interfere with Chopin's unique fingering approach at the keyboard, sound quality production, and compositional style.

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<sup>103</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, 149.

<sup>104</sup> Jim Samson, *Chopin*, (United States: Oxford University Press, 2001), 74.

Furthermore, Chopin's life experiences while he was living in Poland from 1823 to 1826 are a clear indication of additional musical training at the Warsaw Lyceum that would prepare him for his role as a teacher in Paris. Professor Jozef Elsner who was a music professor at the Warsaw Lyceum immediately recognized Chopin's unique compositional style and discouraged Chopin from taking lesson with Kalkbrenner as he arrived in Paris. As stated by Alan Walker:

Kalkbrenner then made his storied proposition that Chopin should become his pupil for a period of three years, during which time he would acquire a "solid foundation," ought not to appear in public, but emerged as a finished artist.' He consulted Elsner, who was strongly opposed to the idea. They have recognized genius in Fryderyk," he wrote, "and are already scared that he will outstrip them, so they want to keep their hands on him for three years in order to hold back something which nature herself might push forward."<sup>105</sup>

Chopin rejected this offer from Kalkbrenner as he had already achieved mastery of his piano technique and already introduced of an innovative piano pedagogical method.

Chopin's applied piano curriculum and lesson plan comprises material that he encountered throughout his life. According to Mukuli's account, Chopin's curriculum included Clementi's preludes and exercises to help the student develop even scales and arpeggios. Clementi's works will be used in combination with *Gradus ad Parnassum*. *Gradus ad Parnassum* provided the student with the necessary theoretical knowledge of counterpoint. In addition, to develop a solid piano technique, Chopin introduced his students to the Moscheles' etudes but focused on those etudes that were mostly musical in content. From the Clementi etudes, Chopin emphasized the etude in A-flat major, and from the Moscheles' etudes he recommended the etude in A-flat major Op. 70, no. 9. As stated by Eigeldinger, "Marie Roubaud, who had 18 lessons with him in 1847-1848, studied the A-flat major sonatas of

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<sup>105</sup> Walker, *Frederick Chopin; A Life and Times*, 145.

Beethoven (op. 26) and Weber (no.2) with Chopin.”<sup>106</sup> Chopin only used his own etudes with his most advanced students.

As part of his piano pedagogy curriculum, Chopin used Bach preludes for teaching and practicing. Chopin routinely utilized the *Well-Tempered Clavier* for composing ideas and for his own daily practice. The *Well-Tempered Clavier* was the only printed music that Chopin took with him to the Island of Majorca and became the main source of inspiration for composing the well-known Preludes, Op. 28. As stated by Camille Dubois, “Always practice Bach this will be your best means of progress.”<sup>107</sup> Chopin love and devotion for the music of Johann Sebastian Bach remained with him until the very end of his life. Utilizing Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier* in the modern classroom might provide the best means of progress for the applied piano student in today’s classroom.

Chopin’s applied piano methodology is based on the proper position on the hands and the elbows leveled to the keyboard. In Chopin’s unfinished sketch he indicates that all music is based on steps or skips. In other words, music is based on either scales or arpeggios. Chopin’s friend Jan Kleczynski stated, “For all rapid passages in general the hands must be slightly turned, the right hand to the right, and the left hand to the left; and the elbows should remain close to the body, except in the highest and lowest octaves.”<sup>108</sup> This technical principle is of extreme importance to the applied piano student for rapid passages, as it goes in accord with Chopin’s recommendation that the wrist should be supple at all times. This practical and technical advice

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<sup>106</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, 149.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 149

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 149.

could be of extreme importance for the applied piano student to obtain prior to embarking in the repertoire as described above.

Chopin's own life experiences as a self-taught pianist, led him to discover the proper physiology of the hand and fingers in relation to the keyboard. According to Chopin, the finger initiates everything. Carl Mikuli, a Polish pianist and one of Chopin's successful students stated, "According to Chopin, evenness in scales and arpeggios depended not merely on equal strengthening of all fingers by means of five finger exercises, and on entire freedom of the thumb when passing under and over, but above all on a constant sideways movement of the hands. No one will notice the inequality of a sound in an amazingly fast scale, as long as the notes are played in equal time. The arm is the slave of the hand."<sup>109</sup> Modern pianists like Earl Wild agree with Chopin's applied piano methodology. Earl Wild's pupil David Korevaar stated, "Perhaps Chopin most important idea, one which was taught to me by Earl Wild many years ago, is that the second finger is the center of the hand."<sup>110</sup> The principle of the second finger as the center of the hand can be exemplified in Chopin's etude Op. 25, no. 3, and etude Op. 10, no. 3.

Finally, it is extremely important for the applied piano teacher to teach the piano student appropriate fingering from the start. When learning these works that are chromatic in nature it is imperative to learn the right fingering for every passage. This concept of piano pedagogy will ensure the proper execution of rapid passages and stimulate muscle memory. of using the right fingering when learning these piano compositions. As stated by Eigeldinger, "Chopin also made a point of advocating the right fingering for every passage."<sup>111</sup> A good example of utilizing the

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<sup>109</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, 150.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 200.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, 149.

appropriate fingering can be found in the B-flat minor scherzo. Within this magnificent composition, there are passages and patterns that are unplayable unless the proper fingering, placement of the hand, and pivot finger is in place.

Hypothesis 2: The piano techniques that the student and teacher should develop prior to learning Frederic Chopin's works include, flexibility of the wrist, flexibility of the hand, and freedom of the fingers. An analysis of Chopin's piano teaching manuscript indicates what techniques should be developed prior to performing Chopin's compositions. First, the elbow should be leveled with the white keys of the piano. In addition, the position of the hand should be neither too far in nor too far out of the white keys as well. According to Chopin's method, the hand should adapt to the shape of the keyboard. As stated by Cortot, "No admiration can be too great for the genius that who was responsible for so cleverly adapting the construction of the keyboard to the to the shape of the hand."<sup>112</sup> According to this technical principle, the longer fingers intended for the black notes and the shorter fingers intended for the white keys. As suggested by Cortot, "Could anything be more ingenious?"<sup>113</sup> This piano method allows for a natural position of the fingers and the hand allowing the pianist to pass the thumb under the curvature of the hand.

### Chopin's Innovative Fingering

The first level on Chopin's teaching method is to learn the five-finger exercise. Chopin insisted on having his students to practice the five-finger position. For Chopin, this was the natural position of the hand. Chopin provided an opportunity for the student to rest the fingers

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<sup>113</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, 60.

freely over the E major chord starting from E and falling naturally on the adjacent black keys. Chopin emphasized the need to practice this five-finger exercise in *legato* and *staccato* touch as well. Chopin also alternated instruction by asking his students to practice this exercise with heavy *staccato* and heavy *legato* style as well. Moreover, in Chopin's *Projet de méthode*, he would commence instructing his students scales with as many as black keys possible. Contrary to the other methods of the time, Chopin will begin teaching his students the B major scale. Chopin reiterated that the proximity of the longer fingers to the black keys would encourage students to find and learn the natural position of the hand. As stated by Chopin, "Start with the B major scale and work through them one by one to C major, moving back one finger at a time."<sup>114</sup> Chopin encouraged students to start practicing the scales slowly at first, and then, faster over time.

The second set of exercises Chopin recommended to his students is how to study the passing of the thumb when playing arpeggios. Chopin accomplished the teaching of this challenging task by having the student play the chords of the diminished seventh in arpeggios. Chopin requested his students to repeat this exercise four times each with the right hand and to repeat this same exercise four times but with the left hand. In the same manner, Chopin also requested his students to practice this exercise of diminished seventh arpeggios with both hands and in contrary motion. Chopin recommended his students to begin by playing the diminished seventh arpeggios in C, proceeding to D, E, F, G, A, and ending in B. All of these techniques are necessary to obtain prior to interpreting Chopin's works for the piano.

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<sup>114</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, 40.

### Scales and Arpeggios

In Chopin's piano method, scales and arpeggios should be played evenly. Nevertheless, there is one major distinction in Chopin's approach to achieve total evenness of the fingers. For Chopin, the key to achieve evenness when playing the scales is not based on how strong the fingers are, but it depends on training all fingers to perform naturally in relation to the keyboard by means of the five-finger exercise described above. This aspect of technique in combination with the so-called walking over the keyboard will provide the freedom to obtain a smooth *legato* or achieve a beautiful *glissando*. As indicated in chapter two, Chopin's acrobatics, or sideways movement of the hands with the arms hanging loose and in a relaxed manner, would allow the student to obtain the natural form of the hand and play scales and arpeggios evenly and smoothly. This sideways hand movement technique is necessary for the proper execution of Chopin's etude Op. 10, No. 1 in C major.

### Phrasing and Articulation

As stated by Chopin in one of the pages of the original manuscript, "The unfettered language of man (that is to say the language by which he gives expression to his innermost soul) is sound."<sup>115</sup> For Chopin, music is language. However, Chopin describes a type of language that transcends the physical bounds and departs into a metaphysical dimension. Chopin's teaching abilities were influenced greatly by many of his life experiences. One of the greatest challenges for Chopin was finding a practical manner to convey his life teachings to his pupils as he was constrained by his physical illness and the pressures of living in exile and away from his motherland of Poland.

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<sup>115</sup> Eigeldinger, "Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils, 19.

At the core of Chopin's beliefs, was the undeniable fact that music is the language of the spirit. As stated by Alfred Cortot:

With this saying we can see that Chopin's ideas on teaching, especially those dealing with the limitations of instrumental technique, in a clearer light than that given to them by those people who have attempted to identify his system. For we can deduce from it that, for Chopin, playing an instrument well was not an end, in itself, but rather a means to an end, a means to be kept as flexible and sensitive as possible to permit of the transmission of those qualities in which music plays the part of a mysterious messenger.<sup>116</sup>

This pedagogical concept bears a direct message to all of those who are in the profession of teaching, creating, and composing music. Music as a discipline transcends playing an instrument. Playing an instrument like the piano is an external expression of a deep internal human emotion. According to Chopin, playing the piano is just a technical process, but music expression and creation should be the most important consideration of all. This core principle would allow the present-day piano student to comprehend what Chopin called, "The beautiful things of art,"<sup>117</sup> Chopin's extreme emotional strength and life experiences are reflected in his music.

This fact is exemplified in one of his letters addressed to his friend Fontana, Chopin says, "I am in the middle of writing a sonata in B flat minor in which the funeral march you know comes."<sup>118</sup> This particular march is an iconic piece. This march clearly represents the emotions that allowed Frederic Chopin to believe that music is much more than theoretical science but the expression of internal emotions of the human soul. This march is a classic example of the Romantic ideal as stated by the German Frederich Schlegel, "Literature depicting emotional

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<sup>116</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 40.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

matter in an imaginative form.”<sup>119</sup> Frederic Chopin created his own world as demonstrated by the third movement of this well-known Sonata in B flat minor. This third movement of the Sonata in B flat minor together with the etude Op. 10, No. 12 might be linked to one of the most traumatic life experiences that Frederic Chopin encountered in 1831 like the invasion of Poland by the Czar of Russia and his subsequent exile to Paris, France.

#### Applied Piano Pedagogy and Repertoire

Chopin’s waltz Op. 69, No. 1 provides a notable example of Frederick Chopin’s pedagogical style. In teaching this waltz, Chopin paid particular attention to the articulation. Chopin’s method clearly indicates that when learning this piece, there is a need to understand how each phrase relates to the other. Pedagogically speaking, articulation in music is learned in the same manner than when learning a spoken language. As in any human language, it is necessary to articulate or separate certain phrases when performing as or there is a need to stop in certain passages. This concept of articulation is at the center of the interpretation of this well-known Chopin’s waltz. In the case of this Chopin’s waltz, there is a phrase division taking place in every two measures. This is evident by the rest symbol on every second and fifth measure. For the performer, there is a need to separate these phrases as they convey different musical meaning. In this waltz, there should be a dot or separation at the end of the eight-measure indicating the termination of a musical thought. Regarding phrasing, Chopin had several guidelines and he persisted in the need for musical punctuation and within a pedagogical standpoint, “Chopin insisted above all on the importance of correct phrasing. Wrong phrasing would provoke the apt analogy that it seemed to him as if someone were reciting a laboriously

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<sup>119</sup> Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch, *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (Chicago: NTC Publishing Group, 1997), 25.

memorized speech in an unfamiliar language, nor merely failing to observe the right quantity of syllables, but perhaps even making full stops in the middle of the work.”<sup>120</sup> It is evident that most of Chopin’s theory focused on teaching his pupils to understand the relation between human language and musical phrasing. After reviewing Chopin’s incomplete method, it is evident that in music creation, there is a need to separate musical expression. Taking as an example the Waltz in A flat Op. 6, No. 1, the phrasing is divided into segments of two measures with a concluding note that is generally weaker when compared to the previous note. Eigeldinger stated:

From these general rules Chopin arrived at the following conclusion, to which he attached much importance: do not play by too short phrases; that is to say, do not keep continually suspending the movement and lowering the tone on too short members of the thought; that is again to say, do not spread the thought too much, by slackening’s of the movement- this fatigues the attention of the listener who is following its development.<sup>121</sup>

A peculiar finding on this report is that Chopin recommended his students to ground their musicianship upon the same rules which guide professional singers and vocalists.

#### Innovative Fingering Considerations

Another important pedagogical consideration that is relevant to this report is exemplified by the well-known Nocturne Op. 9, No 2. Chopin encourage his pupils to be practical and use the same finger if necessary to play bordering notes. That is to say, playing adjacent black and white keys with the same finger. Generally, with the fifth finger. This technique will allow for a smoother legato and a flowing tone typical to the Chopin *cantabile* style of playing. This technique can be observed in measures four and twenty-six of the Nocturne Op. 9, No. 2. This piano technique is revolutionary as it aims to achieve a *legato* and *cantabile* touch similar to the *bel canto* opera. As stated by Kleczynski, “Chopin’s advice was, that this theory {of musical

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<sup>120</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 43.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 40.

declamation} should be grounded upon the rules which guide vocalists, and that it should be perfected by hearing good singers.”<sup>122</sup> These piano techniques are necessary for the applied piano teacher to understand prior to learning this Chopin’s waltz. This well-founded counsel and advise is still effective and applicable for the aspiring pianists and teachers of the twenty-first century.

#### Chopin Educational Legacy

Moreover, understanding that Chopin had 150 documented students, it is apparent that his lessons were more in demand than those lessons offered by Franz Liszt and Friedrich Kalkbrenner. As stated by Eigeldinger, “How many pupils did Chopin Have? This is difficult to assess with any degree of precision. If anyone who received his advice at some time is to qualify as a pupil, then the number of identified pupils to date is about 150.”<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, in an article on this same subject, Bronarski provides a list of 150 documented names identified as Chopin’s students. This figure will account for 65% of the pedagogical piano student. It is important to highlight that these students were not particularly trained to performed at the concert stage, On the other hand, many aspiring musicians of the day would it found beneficial to make such a claim. As stated by Karasowski Chopin once said, “I never gave him lessons; but if it’s of any use to him to pass as my pupil, then let him be.”<sup>124</sup> As an applied piano teacher, Chopin’s main interest was to advance the cause of piano pedagogy and at the same time, support students to progress in the art of piano playing.

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<sup>122</sup> Jean Kleczynski, *Chopin’s Greater Works: (preludes, Ballads, Nocturnes, Polonaises, Mazurkas.) How They Should be Understood*, (United Kingdom: Willaim Reeves, 1896), 188.

<sup>123</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 7.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

In sharp contrast, Franz Liszt is reported to have a list of 45 documented piano students. Many of them achieved a high recognition status within the concert arena during the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. This figure will account for 29% of the student body as described in the pedagogical piano student chart listed above. In sharp contrast, Kalkbrenner is reported to have 9 documented piano pupils that were able to reach the concert stage. This figure accounts for only 6% of the student body as described by the pedagogical piano student chart listed above. These assumptions and statistics are presented within a comparative framework, and they should be considered provisional until further conclusions and additional research is conducted. Finally, it is evident that a whole generation of pianists and students have benefited greatly from these three applied piano pedagogical traditions.

#### Chapter Summary

A qualitative research approach was applied to explain Chopin's method for teaching the piano. A primary investigation demonstrated how Chopin's methodology is aimed to help the student learn the right position of the hand in relation to the keyboard. In addition, it is evident that Chopin's life experiences influenced greatly his style of composing music. As a result, this hypothesis clearly indicates that it is important for teachers and students to consider Chopin's life experiences before performing these works in public as he was constrained by his physical illness and the pressures of living in exile and away from his mother land of Poland.

In addition, the second line of investigation demonstrates that within Chopin's technique, the elbow should be leveled with the white keys of the piano. According to his method, the position of the hand should be neither too far in nor too far out of the white keys as well. For Chopin, the hand should adapt to the shape of the keyboard. The third theory also demonstrated

that Chopin would commence instructing his students scales with as many as black keys possible. Contrary to the other methods of the time, Chopin will begin teaching his students the B major scale and Chopin encouraged students to start practicing the scales slowly at first, and then, faster over time.

In conclusion, in an article on this same subject Bronarski provides a list of 150 documented names identified as Chopin's students. This figure will account for 65% of the pedagogical piano student. It is important to highlight that these students were not particularly trained to performed at the concert stage, On the other hand, many aspiring musicians of the day would it found beneficial to make such a claim. As stated by Karasowski Chopin once said, "I never gave him lessons; but if it's of any use to him to pass as my pupil, then let him be."<sup>125</sup> It is evident that as an applied piano teacher, Chopin's main interest was to advance the cause of piano pedagogy and at the same time support music students to progress in the art of piano playing.

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<sup>125</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 7.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Introduction

This chapter will present a brief summary of the study, purpose, and findings. The findings are discussed and connected to the research questions. This chapter also describes the limitations of this study and proposes recommendations for future research. Finally, Chapter five closes with the inferences that this study may have for piano teachers, students, and performers.

### Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how Frederic Chopin's works and historical contributions could enhance technical efficacy for applied piano teachers and for those students who have not receive the proper educational training. Secondly, the purpose of this study was to examine how piano teachers may benefit from learning the technical and historical aspects of these compositions for the piano. The results indicated that the essential elements of Chopin's piano technique as included in his *Projet de méthode* are important for the applied piano teacher as these techniques will enhance student performance and knowledge of these works.

The results indicated that Chopin's piano teaching manuscript would first, suggests that the elbow should be leveled with the white keys of the piano. Moreover, the findings also indicated that the position of the hand should be neither too far in nor too far out of the white keys as well. Additionally, the results indicated that according to Chopin's method, the hand should adapt to the shape of the keyboard. This result is consistent with what is stated by Cortot, "No admiration can be too great for the genius that who was responsible for so cleverly adapting the construction of the keyboard to the to the shape of the hand."<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, the results also indicated that according to this pedagogical principle, the longer fingers intended for the black

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<sup>126</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, 40.

notes and the shorter fingers intended for the white keys. These findings also supported what has been suggested by Cortot, “Could anything be more ingenious?”<sup>127</sup> These research findings concluded that this piano methodology allows for a natural position of the fingers and the hand allowing the pianist to pass the thumb under the curvature of the hand.

The findings also demonstrated that in Chopin’s *Projet de méthode*, he would commence instructing his students scales with as many as black keys possible. Contrary to the other methods of the time, Chopin began teaching his students the B major scale. The results suggested that Chopin reiterated that the proximity of the longer fingers to the black keys would encourage students to find and learn the natural position of the hand. These results are consistent with what was stated by Chopin, “Start with the B major scale and work through them one by one to C major, moving back one finger at a time.”<sup>128</sup> The findings indicated that Chopin encouraged students to start practicing the scales slowly at first, and then, faster over time.

Furthermore, the results indicated that Chopin recommended to his students how to study the passing of the thumb when playing arpeggios. Chopin accomplished the teaching of this challenging task by having the student play the chords of the diminished seventh in arpeggios. Chopin requested his students to repeat this exercise four times each with the right hand and to repeat this same exercise four times but with the left hand. Furthermore, the results indicated that Chopin also requested his students to practice this exercise of diminished seventh arpeggios with both hands and in contrary motion. Finally, the results also indicated that Chopin recommended his students to begin by playing the diminished seventh arpeggios in C, proceeding to D, E, F, G, A, and ending in B.

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<sup>127</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, 40.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

These findings were consistent with Chopin's approach to achieve total evenness of the fingers. The results showed that for Chopin, the key to achieve evenness when playing the scales is not based on how strong the fingers are, but it depends on training all fingers to perform naturally in relation to the keyboard by means of the five-finger exercise described above. This study demonstrated that this aspect of technique in combination with the so-called walking over the keyboard will provide the freedom to obtain a smooth *legato* or achieve a beautiful *glissando*.

This study also explored Chopin's concept of articulation in music as he believed that it is learned in the same manner than when learning a spoken language. This concept of articulation is at the center of the interpretation of this well-known Chopin's waltz Op. 69, No. 1. This waltz was used to demonstrate that there is a phrase division taking place in every two measures. This is evident by the rest symbol on every second and fifth measure. The results suggested that for the performer, there is a need to separate these phrases. The results also suggested that in this waltz, there should be a dot or separation at the end of the eight-measure indicating the termination of a musical thought. The results of this study also demonstrated that Chopin recommended his students to avoid fragmenting musical ideas in order to allow listeners to encounter a longer musical breath and not just a brief thematic fragmental experience. These findings are consistent with Chopin's own statement in one of the pages of the original manuscript, "The unfettered language of man (that is to say the language by which he gives expression to his innermost soul) is sound."<sup>129</sup> This study demonstrated that music is a language as it conveys a message.

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<sup>129</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as seen by his Pupils*, 25.

Finally, this study concluded that certain historical life experiences affected Chopin's style of compositions and general works. These results are consistent with the fact that learning about these historical aspects of Chopin's works will be of extreme importance to the applied piano teacher prior to teaching the works of Chopin. These findings were consistent with the fact that the Great Fall of Poland in 1830 had a profound impact on Chopin's works for the piano. Furthermore, the results indicated that while traveling from Vienna to Paris, Chopin learned that the uprising of 1831 against the Russian army had been crushed. During this challenging historical time, Frederick Chopin composed the Scherzo No. 1 in B minor. This study demonstrated that due to this historical and deeply personal event, Chopin's compositional style was transformed from a bright tone quality to a darker tone quality. This research study recognized that when teaching students how to play the Scherzo No. 1, the applied piano teacher should emphasize the fact that this Scherzo was written during the November uprising event of 1831. Further, the applied piano teacher should guide the piano students to take these elements into consideration as this work requires a mood of suspense, uncertainty, and chaos.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are inevitable in any research case study, which was the situation for this particular research study. Because of a limited focus in establishing a connection between Frederick Chopin's life and works and its influence on piano pedagogy, other aspects of piano pedagogy and piano methodologies were not evaluated. Furthermore, available research within piano pedagogy focuses more upon technical interpretation and not upon historical implications. This aspect of the investigation suggests an unavoidable limitation to this research study. Furthermore, the inherent inability to consult with other researchers and musicologists to validate the hypothesis is another limitation of this study. Although Chopin's letters, manuscripts, and

other primary sources of information exists to help substantiate these hypotheses, there was an inability to verify these assumptions with experts in Polish traditional music and piano pedagogy such as musicologists Ewa Dahlig-Turek and Frederick Chopin's biographer Alan Walker. Finally, these conclusions are open to more investigation and examination and should be considered provisional until further research is conducted.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

This study provided an opportunity to examine the effects of nineteenth-century piano pedagogy and its influence on the modern piano teacher. This area of investigation is limited and requires more investigation, research, and evaluation. This study just represents an introduction or preface of an area of investigation that deserves more attention and consideration by the research community. In pursuing this key area of study, researchers are encouraged to consider multiple ways to study piano pedagogical principles from a music educational perspective. Researching this topic from a technical point of view will not foster student progress in some of the less technical areas of piano performance and piano pedagogy.

As a result, there is a need for additional research that takes into consideration the emotional preparation and non-tangible aspects of piano pedagogy. This type of analysis would be helpful in determining the importance of teaching and incorporating some of the historical aspects of musical compositions to piano students. A final recommendation is proposed as a research study should be conducted with the purpose of utilizing historical instruments in order to recreate the authentic sound of the nineteenth century. This type of research study will yield valuable information as music learning could be enhanced by means of historical sound reproduction and historical piano performance.

## Conclusion

The magnitude of Frederick Chopin's works and its influence on applied piano pedagogy should not be underestimated. Based on the information reviewed on this study, there is ample evidence to suggest that Chopin was committed to piano pedagogy and as a result, attempted to write a new and revolutionary piano teaching method of his own. According to the primary and secondary sources of information, there is abundant evidence to suggest that Frederick Chopin placed the student interest and progress at heart. To some extent, Frederick Chopin was able to influence many of his colleagues and change the course of piano pedagogy for time immemorial. Chopin the pedagogue corrected his students and guided them to utilize a new model of fingering and carefully pointed out any incorrect method of positioning the hands over the keyboard.

As an artist and teacher, Chopin paved the way for the piano pedagogy of the twenty-first century. Chopin laid out the foundation for modern piano pedagogues and to teach emphasizing the correct position the hand and fingers according to the natural position of the hand. Furthermore, his innovations in fingerings, use of the pedals, and general manner to approach the keyboard are still part of the teaching methodologies employed in today's music classroom. For those who love and are committed to piano pedagogy, Chopin's ideas and suggestion will provide a source of guidance and direction. These suggestions and ideas will open up new opportunities for teaching and of guiding students to achieve new possibilities and multiple levels of musical expression.

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