

ANALYSIS OF CHOPIN'S MAZURKAS AND  
ITS INFLUENCE ON POLISH CULTURAL NATIONALISM

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## ABSTRACT

The innovative character of Chopin Mazurkas is forever linked with Polish culture. This thesis examines how the unmistakable sound of the Mazurka captures the Polish sound more than any other work written by the composer and how it contributes to Polish cultural nationalism during the Polish diaspora of the nineteenth-century.

In this study, the author presents a brief examination on Chopin's traditional interpretation of his mazurkas as well as isolating the characteristics of Polish interpretation that sets the Mazurka performance apart from the non-traditional style. A research case is made when contrasting the current concept of the classical execution of the mazurka to the traditional Polish playing technique.

This study is composed of two main sections. The first section includes an analysis of Chopin's letters and his remarks regarding the proper interpretation of the Mazurka. In addition, this first section includes archival information obtained from the Polish Institute of Culture. The second section includes a score analysis of Chopin's mazurkas and a series of recordings made by the author of this study with the purpose of eliminating the rhythmic ambiguity of the mazurka and distinguishing it from the non-traditional interpretation.

The results will show that, in the areas analyzed in this thesis, Chopin's strong patriotic feelings are inscribed on his music. This thesis presents evidence that Chopin's mazurkas were instinctively created out of émigré feelings for Poland and destined to display the sensitivity of the song of the Polish peasant.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the nineteenth-century, Poland was divided by the nations of Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Consequently, facing the risk of cultural annihilation, diplomats and revolutionary leaders tried to restore Poland's lost independence by preserving their history, music, and religion. For nineteenth century Polish listeners, Frederic Chopin's mazurkas became a symbol of their national struggle. The Polish people, whether at home or abroad, have never abandoned their beloved son as Chopin's represents a symbol of Polish identity. "Each child in Poland knows who Chopin is, and they might not even know kings, Polish kings, and the other politicians, but they know, 100 percent, who Frederic Chopin was" (Konkie 2010).

Chopin's mazurkas are deeply rooted in Polish folk traditions. Chopin's mazurkas helped to uplift the nationalistic spirit of the Polish Émigré during a time with uncertain political status. Chopin's mazurkas reflect rhythmical ideas that depict Polish countryside images. The emotion that characterizes the traditional performance of the mazurka attests to the Polish nationalistic spirit. Among his many other compositions, the mazurkas seems to capture more accurately the song and dance of Poland.

When talking about the emotions in Chopin's music, one is bound to remember the ones which were born out of the émigré's feelings for Poland and its faith and which are reflected not only on the national style of the Mazurkas and Polonaises, but reach much deeper, too. The strong patriotic feeling expressed by Chopin's in his letters and notes are emblazoned on his music. To recognize and share them is, however, a matter of intuition and sensitivity on the part of the pianist and the listener (Zielinski 1999, 117).

The purpose of this research is to identify the traditional elements that make the mazurka one of the greatest expressions of Polish culture. It is my goal, through this research, to achieve a better understanding of the traditional characteristics of the mazurka through the perspective of

Polish local traditions. It is also my desire to analyze the musical structure of the Mazurka and examine how this style of traditional music influenced Polish nationalism during the Polish diaspora of the nineteenth-century.

### Need for the Study

Several articles have been written about the main factors that contributed to the spread of Polish musical characteristics through Europe during the nineteenth-century (Gobarty 1997, Goldberg 2004, Zamoisky, 2010). Other articles investigate the musical structure of the mazurka as a new style of music influenced by Polish music outside of the home land. These sources deal categorically with the form and structure of the mazurka (Goldberg 2004, Liszt 2010), and even though these sources explore some of Frederic Chopin's nationalistic views, their emphasis is not to provide an analysis of how Chopin expressed his nationalistic feelings through the interpretation of his mazurkas.

The performance of Chopin's mazurkas is a subject that remains to be studied and analyzed. The articles described above offer little help in describing how to perform the mazurka from the Polish people's perspective. This study offers a cultural perspective on how to perform these short pieces in the way the hands of the composer intended them. Reexamining the traditional performance of the mazurka should be of interest not only to music scholars but also to other musicians who are curious about the music and traditions of Poland.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine from the Polish people's perspective the performance characteristics of Chopin's mazurkas and how these characteristics compare to a more traditional performance of the mazurka. The author's also desires to influence other

musicians to gain a better understanding of how to perform the mazurka in the traditional Polish manner. Additionally, this study examine how Chopin's artistry and Polish traditional art form was introduced to the nobility of the world thus advancing the cause of Polish nationalism throughout Europe during the nineteenth-century.

### Research Questions

This study will answer the following research question: What are the distinct elements of the traditional Mazurka that make this genre the maximum expression of Polish nationalism? Sub-questions included: What particular tendencies motivated Polish artists to promote their art forms among nineteenth century aristocratic society? What are some of the traditional features in Chopin's compositions that can provide more knowledge about Chopin's feelings for Poland's autonomy? What main factors allowed the traditional characteristics of the mazurka to spread in Europe? Was Chopin a revolutionary in the true sense of the word? What other musical elements of the mazurka allowed this style of music to influence Polish music outside of the home land? What events during Chopin's formative years contributed to the development of his nationalistic views as a Polish citizen? My goal in answering this research questions is to establish the difference between the traditional performance of the mazurka and the non-traditional performance of the mazurka. I will attempt to provide the answers to these questions through archival research and score analysis of Chopin mazurkas.

### Polish Rhythms

Most features of Chopin's mazurkas derive from the *mazur*, *oberec*, and *kujawiak*. Chopin's mazurkas combine musical characteristics from all three of these Polish traditional styles. One common characteristic of all three styles of mazurkas is triple meter. The traditional



mazurka receives a third beat accent that resembles the stamping of the foot used by peasants in the yearly dance festivals. Two short notes at the beginning and two long notes at the end of the phrase also characterize the mazurka. Two hypotheses are put forth regarding the proper interpretation of what are called “Polish Rhythms.” The first hypothesis indicates that the accentuation of the mazurka changed over time due to the inflections of the Polish language. According to this hypothesis, during the 15<sup>th</sup> century there was a modification from the last to the penultimate syllable of the Polish language. “According to some researchers, their emergence has much to do with the change in accentuation in the Polish language, namely the transition from initial to paroxytonic stress that took place at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century” (Dahlig-Turek 2010, 27). The second hypothesis stipulates that the longer and weaker beats of the phrase corresponds to a natural descent in the Polish language. Ewa Turek read the following statement at the third International Chopin Congress: “In their opinion, Polish rhythms emerged first in the Western regions as a result of overlapping full beat constructions of bars, motives and phrases and the descent rhythm in bars resulting from the descent (initial) stress in the language.” (Dahlig-Turek 2010, 27).

According to this research, the difference between the two Polish rhythm hypotheses resides with the meaning of “stress in the language.”<sup>1</sup> From that standpoint, the traditional mazurka is younger than the other traditional Polish rhythms. “For the former researchers, the mazurka rhythms are a little bit younger and closely bound to the Polish language while, for the latter their emergence would be earlier, *albeit* not necessarily Polish.” (Dahlig-Turek 2004, 26-27).<sup>2</sup> The origin of the mazurka can be traced back to the year 1540. The musical structure of “*veschel schq polska*” is somewhat

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<sup>1</sup> Term used for a word with stress on the penultimate syllable.

<sup>2</sup> *Albeit* is rather slowly.

different from the traditional mazurka known in Poland today. *Veschel Polska* attributed to Mikolaj z Krakowa is a traditional song that contains four vocal parts.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, songs in 4/4 were changed to 3/4 in oral traditions to conform to the general requirements of the Polish rhythm. This transitional change in meter gave rise to folk family dances in Poland. This Polish folk tradition survived over the centuries and eventually became the Polish idiom in art music. “This idiom was first noticed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by German musicians, was then exploited in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in so-called “*Polnische Tänze*” (Dahlig-Turek 2004, 26-27).<sup>4</sup>

### The Slavonic World

Frederic Chopin’s involvement with Polish national folk music is still an inconclusive topic of research. One possible source of information regarding Chopin’s views about Polish folk music comes from his own letters. In a letter written to his family during August of 1829 he said,

We saw Prague at lightning speed, but not in vain. Hauke was pleased to have news of Pan Skarbek. We had to write our names in his book, which is devoted to those who visit the Prague Museum and particularly in connection with him. Brodzinski, Morawski, etc. - are already there. So each of us had to think of something to say; one in verse, the other in prose. Swejkowski wrote a long speech. What was a musician to do here? Luckily Maciejowski hit on the idea of writing a four verse mazurka, so I added the music and inscribed myself together with my poet, as originally as possible. Hauke was pleased; it was a *mazur* for him celebrating his services to the Slavonic world (H. Opienski 1931, 59).

The content of his letter clearly indicates that Frederic Chopin was fully aware of the significance and proper interpretation of the traditional mazurka. Several key phrases within this letter attest of Chopin’s exposure to Polish national music. Chopin’s letter indicates that his friend asked him to compose a four-verse mazurka. This type of mazurka is the oldest form

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<sup>3</sup> These traditional dances were not called mazurkas originally. The term mazurka is used by music scholars in a “post factum” manner. In 1829, Chopin indicated that he inscribe himself by writing four verse mazurka.

<sup>4</sup> German for Polish Dances.

known in Poland and is characterized by the insertion of a four verse mazurka. Chopin also indicated that Hauke was delighted with the piece and that he considered it to be a *mazur*. The statement made by Hauke in this letter clearly indicates that Chopin was not only familiar with the *mazur* but that he knew how to compose one.<sup>5</sup> Hauke was a famous Polish scholar and curator of the Prague National Museum and was well-known for his knowledge of Polish folk traditions.<sup>6</sup> Chopin's description of Hauke's reaction to the performance of the mazurka clearly suggests that Chopin had contact with Polish national music during his formative years. Nevertheless, there is also a possibility that Chopin learned about the mazurka as he participated in school recitals, weddings, and most probably from his own teacher Józef Elsner (Dahlig 2007, 105). Chopin demonstrated that knowledge by incorporating the traditional elements of the mazurka in the example mentioned above and it seems to be probable that he was introduced to the mazurka through the singing of his Polish mother at home.

Ethnomusicologists such as Piotr Dahlig have studied Chopin's connection to Polish folk music based on his early life. Dahlig indicates that during Chopin's formative years he was exposed to Polish traditional music through the singing of his Polish mother and by servants who migrated to the city from the countryside. Chopin also gave preference to Polish compatriots when teaching music. "In taking pupils he always gave preference to his compatriots and trained many of his countrywomen who have more or less acquired his style and manner" (Karasowski 1879, 243). To what extent Chopin's mazurkas contain folk elements is still an ambiguous subject. Nevertheless, Chopin himself considered the meter of his mazurka an authentic element

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<sup>5</sup> The *mazur*, originating from the *Mazowsze* region near Warsaw is probably the oldest Polish folk mazurka.

<sup>6</sup> Frederic Chopin description of Hauke in August of 1829.

of Polish national music. A pianist by the name of Halle offers a vivid account of Chopin's perception of meter.

Halle the pianist, once asserted that he proved Chopin to be playing a four-four instead of three-four measure in a mazurka. Chopin laughingly admitted that it was a national trait. Halle was bewildered when he first heard Chopin play, for he did not believe such music could be represented by musical sign (Huneker 1908, 345).

This statement suggests that Halle the pianist was trained according to the Western standard of execution. Halle performance of the same mazurka would have most likely been a classical performance. On the other hand, Halle noticed a difference in execution as he observed Chopin perform his own mazurka. (1) Halle noticed that the meter had four beats and not three; (2) Halle did not believe that the music could be written down. Halle was stunned with the possibilities for expressing national traits by such means and music. If Chopin's new creations were perceived as classical music, the reaction of his fellow musicians was to accept it as such. Yet, the performance of this piece by Chopin contained elements that were not common in Western classical tradition.

To find similarities between Chopin's mazurkas and traditional Polish music is important for the establishment of a national intent and proficiency in Chopin's compositions. The extreme use of tempo *rubato* in combination with the accentuation of the second or third beat speaks to Chopin's participation in social dances and observation of authentic folk music. The task of isolating folk elements in Chopin's mazurkas provides a good way to examine whether his mazurkas remain close to the traditional form. In 1852, just three years after Chopin's death, Franz Liszt published an essay entitled F. Chopin. This essay is one of the first documents establishing a connection between the traditional Polish mazurka and Chopin's mazurkas.

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 a harmonic chiaroscuro as novel as the subjects it supported. All 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 goes on (Liszt 1963, 63).

Liszt clearly felt that Chopin's mazurkas contained the poetic element that makes the mazurka a national idiom. In this statement, Liszt describes Chopin's intentions to preserve the musical elements of the mazurka. Finally, Liszt mentions that all of the musical elements included in Chopin's mazurkas will support the structure and promote the dance of the mazurka. Based on this quotation, Franz Liszt obviously considered that Chopin was a "connoisseur" of Polish national music and at the same time Liszt observed that Chopin's mazurkas were laid out with a traditional foundation. On the other hand, scholars like Barbara Milewski argue that Chopin's mazurkas were not drawn from authentic traditional mazurkas but rather a new style of mazurka that doesn't conform to the folk elements of Poland. Milewski stated,

The national style of Chopin's mazurkas was shaped not by unmediated, authentic folk music naively absorbed by Chopin from direct contact with the rural peasantry. But rather by the stylized "folk dances" and "folk mazurkas" inserted into the Polish operettas, ballets, and "folk mazurkas" adapted to parlor piano. Against conventional interpretation, I argue that Chopin's mazurkas are indeed national works without a "pure folk" content (Milewski 2002, 9-10).

The content of the traditional mazurka will be addressed in detail within chapter four of this thesis. Chopin evidently had ample opportunities to observe Polish national music in his youth. Edgar Kelly indicated that,

The mazurka, on the other hand, was a form that was virtually unknown outside of Poland. It originated as a peasant dance in the province where Chopin was born, *Mazovia*. As a youth, Chopin frequently visited the Polish countryside and took great pains to write down the folk songs that he heard there (Kelly 1969, 69).

Chopin was clearly interested in learning the traditional elements of the mazurka as he traveled to the countryside and explored the Polish character of these pieces. Utilizing techniques often found in Polish country settings but atypical in the Western classical tradition, Chopin demonstrated to have the knowledge and the intent to compose traditional mazurkas. As stated by Kelly, it is evident that Chopin learned about the mazurka as he traveled to the countryside during the early years of his life in Poland. I will argue that Chopin's connection with Polish traditional music was nourished by the influence of a Polish mother and his participation in social and cultural activities. Liszt statements clearly support the claim that Chopin's desire was to promote the dance of the *mazur* while living in exile. Preserving the traditional flavor of the mazurka continued to occupy Chopin's interest until his death in October of 1849.

#### Limitations of the Study

Polish folk music is an old tradition that contains unusual harmonies, repetition, and chromaticism. Chopin incorporated common folk music into his mazurkas. Unfortunately, most of the available research perceives these pieces as classical compositions and not rooted in Polish cultural traditions. Available research focuses in technical interpretation rather than the traditional folk components of these pieces. Due to my personal interest in establishing a connection between the traditional elements of the Polish mazurka and Chopin's mazurkas, I have limited my research to examining the typical characteristics of the traditional mazurka found in Chopin's compositions. My hope is to establish a link between these musical pieces and the spread of Polish cultural nationalism to spread over Europe during the middle part of the nineteenth-century. Because of my limited focus, other researchers will need to take up the goal of studying the various aspects of the traditional interpretation of the mazurka.

My inability to consult with other researchers to validate my opinions about the subject is another limitation of this study. Although Chopin's own letters can help substantiate most of my conclusions, I was not able to verify my assumptions with local researchers such as Polish ethnomusicologist Ewa Dahlig-Turek.<sup>7</sup> As a result, these conclusions are necessarily open to more investigation and scrutiny and should be viewed as provisional until further research is done.

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<sup>7</sup> Professor Dahlig-Turek is the president of the Polish National Committee of the International Council for Traditional music of Poland.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although attention to Frederic Chopin's involvement in Polish nationalism has gained moderate attention since 1849, this part of Chopin's life as a Polish composer has not received much consideration. Of even greater interest is whether Chopin's mazurkas promoted the cause of Polish nationalism among the different social classes in Western Europe during the middle part of the nineteenth century. This concern has given rise to the topic of "Chopin mazurkas and their influence on Polish nationalism."

To demonstrate that Chopin's mazurkas promoted Polish nationalism in Western Europe, his compositions must be shown to have increased tolerance for and understanding of Polish nationalism among the French aristocracy. The primary purpose of this review is to use the selected evidence to establish that Chopin's mazurkas did influence the French aristocracy's perception of Poland as a nation of émigrés.

One aspect that becomes apparent in the process of this review is that Chopin, according to several accounts, was not an active revolutionary. This facet of Chopin's private life presents several problems that need to be resolved. The first of these problems is whether ample evidence to establish that Chopin actively engaged in activities within the nineteenth century nationalistic movement. Second is the question, can a composer exert political influence through music and at the same time represent a nation?

The scope of this literature review is limited. In this chapter I will concentrate on some of the traditional features of the compositions that can provide more knowledge about Chopin's feelings for Poland's autonomy. Moreover, although this review covers a limited number of the mazurkas and considers them the utmost expression of Chopin's devotion for Poland, constraints and limited access to important information exists. Finally, even though significant historical



information abounds, most of Chopin's journals were burned after his death per his request leaving important firsthand information missing. Fortunately, examples of Chopin's surviving letters and letters written to him by his friends and family are available and have been included in this review. Perhaps at a future time the research community might readdress the importance of the lost documents.

### Chopin the Polish Nationalist and True Artist

The first step in understanding Chopin's views on Polish nationalism is to uncover Chopin's role as a nationalist and true artist of Poland. The second step is to determine the personal and political reasons why Chopin pledged his art to his native Poland. A common reason for becoming a nationalist during dangerous times is to understand the need to achieve sovereignty. Chopin saw himself as a patriot, but for him this vague term did not embrace any activist role. "His sympathies lay with the cause of Polish sovereignty" (Eisler 2004, 31). Another reason to claim total sovereignty from oppressors was the need to demonstrate the nationalist fervor by proving that a province in Poland was capable of producing a true artist. Poland obviously needed Chopin as much as the exiled Chopin needed his native Poland. "Mr. Chopin's works unquestionably bear the stamp of a genius. Among them is said to be a concerto in F minor, and it is hoped that he will not delay any longer in confirming our conviction that Poland too can produce great talent" (Eisler 2004, 32). Poland undoubtedly looked forward to achieving international social and cultural recognition through Frederic Chopin's works.

When Chopin arrived in Paris at the age of twenty one his etudes Op. 12 were already written. Etude Op. 12 No. 12 (the revolutionary) clearly expresses the composer's desire for Poland to be free from political and military occupations. This trend of expressing nationalistic feelings through music permeates Chopin's life until his last mazurka was written in 1848 almost

a year before his death. Determining whether Chopin was a revolutionary in the true sense of the word is an essential part of this research.

### Chopin's Mazurkas

In 1831 Paris social conditions were extremely harsh. Inequality was part of the political and social fabric of Western Europe during the middle part of the nineteenth century. As an artist and composer, Chopin's obligation was to both his art and his beloved country. Prior to Chopin's exile to Paris, Poland experienced a series of successive petitions of



Figure 2. "Photo taken by Aguste Bisson, circa 1849. Image is in the public domain."

sovereignty to the congress of Vienna. Unfortunately, after the 1831 Russian invasion of Poland, the long awaited autonomy became just an illusion. During this critical time in history, Czar Alexander of Russia became king of Poland. Under this new ruler Poland lost all hope of achieving these sovereignty that Chopin dreamed of before his self-imposed exile to Paris.

Poland had 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 old school friends, were of plots and meetings, conspiracy and revolution (Eisler 2004, 31).

While traveling from Vienna to Paris, Chopin was informed that the uprising had been crushed. As he arrived in Paris during September of 1831, Chopin feared for the safety of his family and friends. During this difficult time, Chopin dedicated the Scherzo No. 1 in B minor to his friend Thomas Albrecht.<sup>8</sup> Because of war and the uprising event of 1831, Chopin's style of

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Albrecht persuaded Chopin not to return to Poland and pursue a musical career in Vienna.

composition changed from a bright tone to a darker one.<sup>9</sup> After the uprising, Chopin will never return to Poland again.

Among all of his compositions no other genre speaks more to Polish nationalism than the mazurka. Nevertheless, Chopin performed his mazurkas frequently among the nobility of Paris. As a result, Chopin was able to speak for a nation in social and political demise. Nevertheless, in his artistic role he was never considered to be a revolutionary in public. He would often speak about Polish nationalism and Polish unjustifiable oppression in private with his closest friends, but he allowed his mazurkas to speak about Polish nationalism in public. In Paris Chopin was supported by a handful of associates including his intermittent friendship with Franz Liszt and his well-documented relationship with George Sand. Liszt's ability to move within every circle in the well-established Paris aristocracy served as a foundation for Chopin to build upon. Moreover, Chopin's relationship with George Sand also provided access to a world that allowed him to speak about Polish nationalism through the performance of his compositions.

In addition, credit for his success in establishing Polish identity in Europe should be given to his musical compositions. Throughout his life, Chopin gave only thirty public performances including a performance of the E Minor concerto and the Fantasia on Polish Airs at the National Theatre in Warsaw. "For once, the final mazurka called for a terrific applause" (Cone 1974, 174). These recitals were full of cultural ethnic content and patriotic meaning. This recital became the main instrument to increase tolerance and understanding of Polish culture in Paris and abroad. Chopin's determination to complete his full cycle of mazurkas became a lifelong endeavor. Chopin wrote a total of fifty one mazurkas varying in emotional content,

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<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that Chopin incorporated a Polish Christmas carol into the middle section of Scherzo No. 1 Op. 20. This curious fact may attest to the possibility that Chopin learned similar folk tunes at home.

technical difficulty and length. These mazurkas are still a living example of Polish true nationalism and folklore.

An additional goal of this review is to establish a connection between Chopin's mazurkas and Poland's traditional mazurka. This topic has been a major cause of debate within the academic community. According to Milewski, Chopin never had a direct connection to Polish folk music. Therefore, Chopin's mazurkas are not a clear representation of the traditional Polish mazurka. This hypothesis is called "The Myth of the Folk" (Milewski 1999, 114). Barbara Milewski argues that Chopin's mazurkas are national works but not rooted in authentic Polish-folk musical traditions.

### The Folk Mazurka

The form and structure of the traditional mazurka consist of two or three parts of six or eight measures. Chopin's mazurkas are all written in a 3/4 time. The melody of the traditional mazurka is based on a Lydian mode. These subtle changes in tone are recognizable by an increase fourth. The melody of the traditional mazurka also utilizes the Phrygian mode. These changes in tone are detectable by a lowered second. The original folk mazurka is an amalgamation of three popular dances: The slow tempo *Kujawiak*, followed by the moderate tempo *mazur*, and finally the faster *obereck* also called the "*obertas*".

These dances are performed in a succession or in what is known to be an "*okragly*".<sup>10</sup> "In the province of *kujawi*, the dance would usually start as a walking dance (*chodzony*), a polonaise-like, slow strut, with the rhythm accentuated by feet-stomping, which is never done in the polonaise" (Gobbarty 2008, 2). This slow strut dance opens the door for the second part of the dance which is the *kujawiak*. The *kujawiak* is slower than the *chodzony* and the tempo would

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<sup>10</sup> "*Okragly*" refers to a one unit dance or group dance.

gradually accelerate to transition into the *mazur*. “At this point, the dancers, men and women, place their hands on each other’s hips and spin-once clockwise and once counter-clockwise” (Gobbarty 2008, 2). The spinning action turns into the whirl known as the folk mazurka dance. The *mazur* would allow a minimum of four to a maximum of twelve couple dancers. During this part of the dance the performers would stamp their feet on the ground heavily. Interestingly, the mazur dance can be performed out of sequence as well. The traditional order of the dance will be as follows: *kujawiak*, *oberek*, and *mazur*. Nevertheless, it is also permitted to perform the *mazur* dance in the following manner: *oberek*, *kujawiak*, and *mazur*.

#### Little Poland and the Parisians

Another defining aspect on this review is the exile of the Polish community and how the Parisian community received them. In many parts of Europe, refugees were seen as carriers of the cholera epidemic. Social and economic conditions were harsh. In Paris, little Poland provided a temporary relief for those grieving for the mother-land; yet, this reprieve was permeated with high crime and disease. Soon enough, this reality became part of Chopin’s world.

In light of these social issues, Polish nationalism continued to be an important aspect of nineteenth century social demographics. To Chopin’s benefit, exiles from Warsaw were accepted within the inner circle of the Polish aristocrat society if they were nobility or were part of artistic Polish society. Patriotic Poles escaping from the Russian regime were also accepted as heroes among the aristocratic Parisian society. Chopin was received as a gifted genius. Chopin was fully aware of the social poverty and crime among his fellow Poles in Paris but he belonged to a privilege group of nobles and aristocrats. In his own words Chopin indicated how privileged he

was, “I have been introduced all around the highest circles” (Eisler 2004, 44).<sup>11</sup> In light of the information contained in this letter Chopin appeared to pursue an affiliation with Polish government officials that belonged to the Polish nationalistic movement in Paris. Chopin described by title the kind of officials he was acquainted with, “I hobnob with ambassadors, princesses, and ministers” (Eisler 2004, 44). Most of these aristocrats were Polish by birth and sympathized with the Polish nationalistic movement.<sup>12</sup> During this time of his life, Chopin continued to work on his mazurkas and performing them in private and within this privilege group of nobles.

However, an important distinction to make is that Chopin became a nationalist in his own right. To redefine his ideals one will have to understand how he deferred from his exile Poles who were Liberal. “Chopin was a Carlist and a royalist” (Eisler 2004, 48).<sup>13</sup> Chopin’s desire for a change was not based on popular politics. His reasons were personal and confidential. This revelation may help answer one important question regarding Chopin’s private views about Poland’s future. The bourgeoisie Polish community in France was bound to a cause of service to freedom and not to serve a king. They wanted to establish a democratic republic. The 1831 incitement of the masses in Poland brought minority groups together with different agendas, but its main goal was to liberate the oppressed people of Poland.<sup>14</sup> If Chopin were a royalist, his views about freedom would have contradicted the views of the majority of the exiled who were anticipating freedom from Russian rule.

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<sup>11</sup> Chopin wrote this letter a week after he arrived in Paris. The letter clearly indicates that he met high-ranking Polish government officials like Prince Adam Czartoryski head of the Polish nationalist movement.

<sup>12</sup> At this point, Chopin was deeply concerned with the welfare of his family in Poland. The Russians had closed the lycee where Nicholas Chopin worked as a teacher, and he could no longer provide for his family.

<sup>13</sup> The absolute Spanish ruler Don Carlos. Don Carlos became the successor of Ferdinand VII. They were pressing for a revival of the inquisition.

<sup>14</sup> The Poles and the Italians.

Interestingly, at this point Chopin no longer wanted to go back to Poland. How can a nationalist artist refuse to return home?<sup>15</sup> According to his letters, Chopin desired to know more about the fate of his father and his mother. “Father! Mother! Where are you? Corpses?” (Opiensky 1933, 150). “His friend Titus left him to go home to fight for Poland” (Humiston 1922, 11). In spite of his friend’s decision, Chopin decided to stay in Vienna. According to historical sources, the only exiles that were allowed to return were those who had not been revolutionaries or activists. Other primary sources clearly show that Chopin refused the Czar’s general amnesty granted to Polish exiles.<sup>16</sup> Many of Chopin’s friends could not resist going back to Poland during this time of political reconciliation. If Chopin resisted the Russian occupation during his early years in Warsaw, he played a moderate role as an activist before the great emigration of 1831. A statement by a fellow musician and German composer Robert Schuman supports this position. “If the mighty autocrat of the north knew what a dangerous enemy threatened him in Chopin’s works in the simple tunes of his mazurkas, he would forbid this music. Chopin’s works are cannons buried in flowers” (Schumann 1835, 12). The autocrat of the north that Schumann refers to is the Czar of Russia, and the dangerous enemy that is mentioned in this quote is Chopin and his mazurkas.

Chopin could have participated in moderate activism against the Russian occupation before his exile to Paris and could have been one of the reasons why he declined the opportunity to return to Poland. The evidence for this conclusion is ambiguous. Nevertheless, Robert Schumann was considered an important composer and personal friend of Chopin. His statement suggests some kind of political dispute and animosity between Chopin and the Czar of Russia.

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<sup>15</sup> In 1833 the Czar granted amnesty to Polish exiles.

<sup>16</sup> Chopin might have been an activist in Poland during his college years and before the great emigration of 1831.

One of the main goals of this review is to examine whether Chopin's mazurkas exerted political influence within the European establishment of the time. Schumann's statement provides ample evidence for the kind of influence that Chopin's mazurkas exerted on the political scene.

Schumann saw Chopin's music as a threat to the Czar and the Russian occupation and that the Czar would have forbidden it had he known its true influence. Schumann obviously understood that the Russian occupation aimed to eradicate the cultural traditions of the Polish people, and he proposes a solution to this problem by offering Chopin's works to fight against human suppression. Schumann depicts a national composer resisting the Russian occupation with his music from exile.

As a national composer Chopin clearly loved his country. Nevertheless, Chopin's notion of Polish self-determination was limited to a sovereign nation that is capable of proving to the world that Poland too can produce great talent. A talent so great that it is capable of resisting the worst of all evils, the evil of human suppression and discrimination. Chopin's nationalistic views were achieved through his mazurkas. Chopin represented Poland during a difficult period of time. Chopin elevated the mazurka from just a peasant dance to a national sound in ethnic traditional music. William Von Lenz, a student of Chopin's, said of the mazurkas, "Chopin represented Poland. He incarnated Poland, he put Poland to music" (Mikuli 1987, 6). Chopin put Poland to music not by imitating the original tune of the song of the Polish peasant, but by utilizing something culturally relevant instead. People can listen to Chopin's mazurkas and immediately recognize that they are the national sound of Poland.



### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

I initiate this study with the assumption that the performance characteristics of the traditional mazurka can be isolated thus establishing a connection with Chopin's mazurkas. In order to accomplish this task I will perform a score analysis and utilize primary sources of information including Chopin's personal letters. Most of the analysis on the musical scores will cover the initial period of his mazurkas. These compositions will include the first set of mazurkas Opus 6 and Opus 68 respectively. The first task is to identify the general characteristics of the traditional mazurka by contrasting Chopin's first compositions of this genre. A second ramification of this first task is based on the premise that if Chopin made notes or sketches of the traditional mazurkas when he traveled to *Mazovia*, some of the fundamental musical elements should be present in his first set of mazurkas.

This first assumption leads to a second assumption. Although Chopin received Western classical training during those years, the music he heard in Poland during his formative years would clearly be a prevalent influence on the majority of the Mazurkas he wrote during his exile in France. This second assumption is built upon the premise that Chopin's mazurkas, practically unknown in Western Europe at the time, served as a tool to re-energize Polish cultural nationalism in Europe during a time of political uncertainty.

The following chapter will explain the methodology I plan to employ in my research design that will scrutinize the different characteristics of the traditional music of Poland. It will also show how I plan to examine how Polish traditional characteristics can be found within Frederic Chopin's mazurkas.

The four purposes of this chapter are to (1) describe the research methodology of this study, (2) explain the data collection process, (3) describe the procedure used in score selection and score analysis, and (4) provide an explanation of the procedures used in the selection of primary and secondary sources of information.

### Research Methodology

A content analysis of text will be used for this study. An analytic method of categories will be developed as a research plan to collect data from a specific time period. The term analytic method of categories is frequently applied to a research methodology intended to collect data from repeated observations, or the development of analytic categories (Schensul 1999, 128).

The content analysis approach is used to identify the intentions or focus of an individual or group of people. Within the different types of content analysis, I selected the conceptual analysis approach. The conceptual analysis approach determines the presence or frequency of concepts associated with the subject of interest. The goal of the conceptual analysis is to quantify how many times the topic of interest is mentioned in a particular text (Writing @ CSU 2013, 1).

The first step in describing my research methodology is to determine the level of analysis that is required. In this study, I intend to trace a set of words or phrases that are associated with Chopin's feelings about the *mazur* and Polish traditional art and nationalism.

The second stage of this process is to identify how many concepts I will include for classification. These concepts will be drawn primarily from Chopin's own correspondence. To help explain why the conceptual analysis is a good match for the type of data that I intend to analyze, the following discussion of each step will be beneficial.

## Code for Existence or for Frequency

The third stage of my research method is to code the material for frequency and not for existence. The purpose of this research method is to measure how many times “*mazur*” appears in Chopin’s correspondence. To know that this word appeared over one-hundred times in his letters compared to only twenty references or other forms of non-traditional compositions might provide an analytical interpretation that Chopin was interested in the proliferation of this topic. On the other hand, when searching for existence the same word would be counted only once. This existence only method of investigation would create certain limitations to this research. Proving the existence of the word “*mazur*” on the text will not demonstrate how interested Chopin was about the folklore of Poland. As a result, I have developed several categories to quantify other words with similar meaning in Chopin’s correspondence.

## Coding Methodology

Using a conceptual analysis method on this research has some distinct advantages. The methodology for this study utilizes an open margin of generalization for coding the chosen concepts. For instance, searching for the word “nationalism” within the text could be an easy task, but if the word “nationalism” appears as “patriotism” the research model needs to identify the meaning of the two words as the same. This aspect of the research model is not related to the proper spelling of the word but to the meaning of the word. Furthermore, I decided not to include a separate category of the concept called “The Great Polish Migration” as this concept is considered to be one of the defining forces of Polish nationalism in Europe. Therefore, concepts related to the defining forces of Polish nationalism are also grouped under the same category (Dabrowski 2007, 117).

## Data Collection

In an effort to properly understand the traditional execution of the mazurka I will collect data from various sources. One primary source already located comes from the library of Wellesley College. This book, an early edition of Chopin's personal letters, was published in 1931 and represents the first English translation. Prior to 1931, a complete collection of Chopin's letters had not appeared in the English language. This book represents a milestone in describing the character of the mazurka traditional dance. In the preface of the book, E. L. Voynich says,

We see here the conflicting influences of Bach and of Italian opera; of Polish folk-song and of pianistic virtuosity; his tragic devotion to George Sand his utter inability to understand her; the crystalline of his artistic instinct, and the imperfect thinking of which enabled him, after living for years among the French intellectuals, to retain almost unmodified the provincial prejudices of his youth" (H. Opienski 1931, 4).

Chopin's letters are a primary source of information shedding light about the composer's views on Polish nationalism, traditional music, and many other biographical details. These personal letters are of vital importance to this research. In these letters, Chopin describes his deep love for Poland and how he included the traditional elements of the mazurka into his compositions. These letters will provide a solid foundation for this research as they will become the primary source of data for the extraction of words that are related to the traditional elements of the mazurka and Polish patriotism.

## Score Analysis

Another selection criterion is related to the collection of Chopin mazurkas used this in study. In order to properly provide an analysis of Chopin's mazurkas, I decided to select the first set of Mazurkas Op. 6 written by the composer in 1825. Frederic Chopin was only fifteen years old when he started composing mazurkas. The criteria for this study simply argue that utilizing

structure analysis on Chopin's mazurkas is not sufficient to adequately identify Polish traditional characteristics. Consequently, I developed a research plan that incorporates several tracks of a commercially produced CD entitled "Chopin Mazurkas from Poland." I recorded this CD in 2010 and decided to select several tracks of this CD to use as one of the sources of my data for this thesis. I proposed a research design that would compare the first set of mazurkas composed by Frederic Chopin with the last group of Mazurkas in an effort to determine if the same traditional characteristics are present in both groups.

The second part of this score analysis involves the set of mazurkas written at the end of Chopin's life. These are the Op. 68 No. 3 and No. 4 respectively. This analysis is designed to trace the traditional characteristics of Chopin's mazurkas as seen in both groups, the Opus 6 and Opus 68. This analysis will combine visual observations of the score and also use audio recording technology. The analysis will focus on isolating changes in *rubato*, tempo markings, the use of chromatic scales, and the "*con forza*" markings placed at the end of the first phrase of the mazurka. In line with this analytic method, I intend to use a discretization methodology. This method involves breaking the piece down into smaller segments in order to examine it.

#### Analytical Tools

In addition to the score analysis, I will be utilizing a computer program to analyze the collected data from Chopin's letters. ANTHROPAC'S is a computer program that utilizes a virtual memory to process large blocks of database. This software is capable of storing large amounts of database but will access only a small segment of the data when needed. This program will discount the irrelevant material in the text. In the next step I will develop a set of rules that will allow for an individualized coding process. Developing this set of rules or codes will allow this for consistent results throughout the analysis process. This program will be used to

determine Chopin's interests in proliferating the *mazur* and cultural nationalism by tracing the frequency of these identified words throughout this letters.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Description

This chapter considers if the mazurkas Opus 6 and Opus 68 composed by Frederic Chopin exhibit the same traditional characteristics of the *mazur*, *oberek*, and *kujawiak*. Besides the author's hypotheses, there are three different theories claiming that Chopin based his mazurkas on Polish folklore. The first of these theories proposed by Schimmerling argues that Chopin's mazurkas contain elements from all three different styles of traditional mazurkas. According to this hypothesis, Chopin's mazurkas are composed of the pure *mazur* section plus sections of an *oberek* and a *kujawiak* (Schimmelring 1951). Schimmelring argues that for the most part, Chopin's mazurkas are composed of the traditional *mazur* in combination with small fragments of the *oberek* and the *kujawiak*.

The second theory proposed by Lichtentritt argues that Chopin's mazurkas represent only one type of mazurka and not three. This hypothesis suggests that Chopin's mazurka represents only one of the three types of mazurkas (Witkowska 2000, 208). This assumption argues that Chopin's mazurkas are composed of one particular style of traditional mazurkas and it rules out the possibility of having more than one combination of musical elements in them.

The third theory contends that Chopin's mazurkas are not based in real Polish works. This assumption contends that Chopin did not produced authentic mazurkas but that he produced just a representation of these works. Arthur Hedley stated that Chopin's mazurkas represent an imitation of the original works.

Arthur Hedley rightly observed that Chopin's mazurkas contained certain beauties which the composer reserved for these intimate tone- poems along. The mazurka, a Polish national dance in triple meter, frequently with a strong accent on the second, or even more particularly on the third beat, was first introduced to the real of art music by

Chopin. In the great number of works in this form which he left us; Chopin explored the musical possibilities of the mazurka. As a child Chopin heard the mazurkas played on the on the folk-instruments of his native Poland, and these sounds provided a lasting stimulus to his fertile musical imagination (Palmer 1997, 2).

Hedley argues that Chopin's mazurkas are not entirely traditional but just a mirror image based on recollections of his memories of his childhood. Hedley refers to that assumption as a "stimulus." If this argument is correct, then Chopin's mazurkas do not contain any of the traditional elements mentioned in chapter one of this thesis. These different theories are a reflection of how divided the music community is regarding the origin of Chopin's mazurkas. The findings on this research suggest that for the Poles living in exile these mazurkas became a symbol of their beloved homeland. "It is pleasing to the Polish people when reflecting on such magnificent talent, nay even genius, to remember that in the greater part of his compositions as well as in his performance the spirit of the nation was evident" (McKay 1999, 4).

### Folk Elements

Are Chopin's mazurkas different than the traditional mazurkas? The answer to this question can be found in the musical characteristics that would have reminded Chopin of the folk elements of the mazurka during his formative years. The following outline illustrates the itemization of traditional musical characteristics of the mazurka: (Aron 2001, 11)

- I. The use of rhythm fulfills more than one purpose in the traditional mazurka.
  - A. The accentuation falls on the second and/or third beat of most measures.
  - B. The presence of Triplets.
  - C. Cross patterns generally at the beginning of the piece.
- II. Melody.
  - A. There is an inclination to use modal inflections.



- B. ( Lydian) These subtle changes in tone are recognizable by an increase fourth.
  - C. (Phrygian) These changes in tone are detectable by a lowered second.
  - D. Repetition of the melody. This applies to the motives as well.
  - E. Ornamentation. In this case the inverted mordant.
  - F. Ending on the second beat of the measure.
- III. Harmony.
- A. Drone effect throughout the whole song with harmonic effect.
  - B. Pedal points or sustained tone in the bass.

The traditional characteristics listed above are just a limited representation of the elements that Chopin included in his mazurkas. The description mentioned above is not intended to depict all of the different traits included in the traditional mazurka. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Chopin's application of these musical qualities is subject to variation over the course of his life.

#### Mazurka Op. 6 No. 1 (1825)

Mazurka Op. 6 No. 1 in F sharp minor utilizes tempo *rubato* when repeating the main theme on bars ten and twelve of the composition. This mazurka, shown in figure 3.4 contains the traditional element known as tempo *rubato*.<sup>17</sup> The opening bar introduces the main motif of the mazurka in F sharp. Chopin incorporated a tempo *rubato* on bar number ten as it repeats the main theme for a second time. This tempo *rubato* is not intended to be secluded within bar number 10 exclusively but to be extended to the following two bars as well. This is considered a national Polish trait as Chopin himself pointed out to Halle the pianist when he said, "Chopin

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<sup>17</sup> To listen to Chopin's mazurka Op. 6 No. 1 click on the following link: <http://youtu.be/7B5Nw1KyRFw>

laughingly admitted that it was a national trait” (Huneker 1908, 345). Chopin spoke as a nationalist by indicating that his liberal use of tempo indications was considered a national trait.<sup>18</sup> “The practice of *rubato* existed in Polish folk music for centuries prior to the birth of Chopin; although it had not necessarily been applied in exactly the same ways that Chopin used it” (MacKay 1999).

Furthermore, this mazurka contains most of the traditional elements of the *mazur* and *kujawiak* including the accentuation on the third beat, the presence of triplets, and the repetition of the melody. The melodic *rubato* and the rocking motion of this piece is also a traditional characteristic of the *kujawiak*. “The *kujawiak* is slower and more lyrical than the *mazur*; it is a turning couple dance. The *kujawiak* often written in a minor mode differs from the *mazur* or *oberek* not only because of its lyrical, more romantic quality, but also by virtue of the *rubato* tempo and *ritardando* endings” (Kijanowska 2011, 7).

#### Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2 (1825)

The other traditional aspect of execution of the mazurka is the weakening of the accent on the third beat. This effect can be achieved by striking the key and the pedal on the first beat of the measure at the same time. To decrease the overall strength of the last beat on the measure the pedal should be released in the same fashion. Chopin incorporated this syncopated rhythm that is a common characteristic of the Polish mazurka particularly in the second and third beat. This accentuation relates to the traditional danced mazurka and the foot stomping of the festivals. Chopin applied this accent in mazurka Op. 6 No. 2 alternating from the second to the third beat as seen in figure five of this thesis. This accentuation is consistent with the same characteristics observed in the *oberek*.

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<sup>18</sup> Halle’s account of Chopin’s use of tempo *rubato* is described in chapter one of this thesis.

The *oberek* is characterized by a spirited tempo and an ardent display of dance steps. Referring to the *oberek* Chopin wrote, “They started with leaps, waltz and *oberek*” (Chopin 1988, 10). Chopin’s account to his parents about a peasant dance he saw clearly indicates that he was captivated by the characteristics of these traditional dances and decided to combine the general characteristics of the *mazur*, *oberek*, and *kujawiak* into his compositions.

The third aspect of execution of the traditional mazurka is chromaticism. This element of the traditional mazurka can make listeners feel very atypical when compared to Western classical music. To this end, I recorded Chopin’s mazurka Op. 6 No. 2 paying particular attention to the execution of the second motif which contains chromatic passages combining major and minor sonorities. Chopin’s mazurka Op. 6 No. 2 is a good example of Polish chromaticism.

The second subject of this mazurka includes complete participation of diatonic and chromatic scales. “The principal theme, returning a couple of times, although slightly altered form, has the rhythm of a *mazur*, though a lyrical, almost melancholy, character. Only in the cadence does it show its power and vigor. Hot on its heels comes an unquestionable *mazur*; swaggering and surly, but of the peasant, rather than gentrified, variety, as the Lydian key of the melody brokens (Tomaszewski 2010).

Furthermore, there is an accentuated drone effect throughout the mazurka creating a harmonic effect in the bass line.<sup>19</sup> This mazurka has a two- part section on bar 18 with the second part displaying the basic chromatic transitions between C sharp minor, D natural, and G sharp major. Chopin does returns to the home key and transitions to C sharp minor. The chromatic element that is not uncommon in Polish folk music becomes an integral part in Chopin’s mazurkas. Speaking about Chopin’s chromatic elements Cory McKay said, “In search of ear

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<sup>19</sup> To listen to Chopin’s mazurka Op. 68 No. 2 click on the following link:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31CG4ZvVCuw&feature=share&list=UUz2uMqXqwPWWBt1u81ODRQQ>

splitting dissonances, tortured transition, piercing modulations, disgusting dislocations of the melody and rhythms, he is unremitting and, we would say, inexhaustible” (McKay 1999, 4).

It seems to be an impossible task to isolate all of the traditional elements found in Chopin’s mazurkas. This study is limited to identify just a few of those traditional elements common in Polish folk music. Besides the technical elements found on Chopin’s mazurkas there are other valuable sources of information aimed to shed light on this controversial subject. Contemporary critics and fellow musicians of Frederic Chopin communicated openly regarding the purpose of his mazurkas. This statement comes from a Polish newspaper.

The land that has given him life by its songs has influenced the character of his music. This is evident in the works of this artist where the sound of many of his melodies seems to be a joyful echo of our native harmony. The simple mazurka becomes transformed at his touch while it still preserves its own peculiar flavor and accent. To capture the charming simplicity of such native refrains as Chopin does with his exquisite playing and brilliant composition, one has to have certain sensitivity to the music of our fields and woodlands and the songs of the Polish peasants. It is pleasing to the Polish people when reflecting on such magnificent talent, nay even genius, to remember that in the greater part of his compositions as well as in his performance the spirit of the nation was evident (Todd 2004, 246).

Chopin’s friends and fellow composers expressed their views about the Polish elements contained in his compositions during his exile in Paris. French composer Hector Berlioz said, “Chopin melodies, all impregnated with Polish elements, have something to naively untamed about them that charms them and captivates by its very strangeness” (Todd 2004, 248). A French critic wrote the following statement in a Parisian newspaper, “M. Chopin has acquired a quite special reputation for the spiritual and profoundly artistic manner in which he handles the national music of Poland, a genre of music that still remains very little known to us” (Todd 2004, 248).

It is evident that these pieces were unknown in Europe during the middle part of the nineteenth-century and therefore, it profoundly impacted people's perception of the Polish culture during that time. It is thus demonstrated, to a limited extent, that Chopin contemporaries saw his music as influenced by most elements of the traditional mazurka and therefore, advancing Polish cultural nationalism through Western Europe.

### The Posthumous Mazurkas

The initial purpose of this study is to identify the performance characteristics of Chopin's mazurkas and how these characteristics compare to the traditional performance of the mazurka from the Polish people's perspectives. To that end, I selected the first set of mazurkas written by the composer in 1825 and discussed them at the beginning of this chapter. For the second part of this analysis I selected two of the mazurkas written during the last part of Chopin's life in order to determine if the same traditional characteristics are still present in his compositions. I selected mazurka Op. 68 No. 3, and Mazurka Op. 68 No. 4 for this part of the analysis. These mazurkas were not published until 1855 by Chopin's friend Julian Fontana.<sup>20</sup> According to the chronological records the mazurka Opus 68 No. 4 is the last composition Chopin wrote before his death in October of 1849.

### Mazurka Op. 68 No. 3

Chopin's mazurka Op. 68 No. 3 exhibits the typical characteristics of the faster *oberek*. This mazurka displays the tempo characteristics of the *oberek* but at the same time it reveals the distinctive accentuation of the *mazur*. The *mazur* is known for displaying irregular accents that can fall on any note. The second theme on this mazurka maintains the same tempo while the

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<sup>20</sup> Julian Fontana selected 23 unpublished pieces and grouped them into eight posthumous numbers. These pieces were published in 1855. Included in these works was the last set of mazurkas Op. 67 and Op. 68 respectively.

accents are placed on the first, second, and even the third weak beat. It should be observed that the frequent leap in the melody is one of the major characteristic of the traditional *mazur*.

Mazurka Op. 68 No. 3 embodies the national character of the *mazur*.<sup>21</sup> One main source of corroboration regarding Chopin's views concerning the nature of his own mazurkas emanates from Polish pianist Raoul Koczalski. "The mazurkas, which both the peasants of the land and the city-dwellers in saloons like to dance, differ from those that are not being dance at all. We have; in fact, in Poland mazurkas do *sluchu* (for listening) and *do tanca* (for dancing). One actually calls the dancing-mazurka *Mazur*. The rhythm is the same in both, but the tempo is different" (Koczalski 1936, 12). Chopin's mazurkas include the *sluchu* and the *do tanca*.

A peculiar finding on this report is that Chopin's mazurkas sporadically combine elements of all three major traditional mazurkas. At times a particular mazurka will contained only elements belonging to one tradition like mazurka Op. 68 No. 3 and the *mazur*, and other times Chopin's mazurkas will combine more than one national trait into their musical structure. The general character of Chopin mazurkas is not a technical or interpretative problem. Chopin's mazurkas need to be interpreted within the sentiment of the Polish culture and way of life.

#### Mazurka Op. 68 No. 4 (1848)

The mazurka Op. 68 No 4 in F minor is known as the last composition written by Chopin. The manuscript for this mazurka was discovered among Chopin's lost notes and other documents by Jane Stirling.<sup>22</sup> The opening bars of this last mazurka are very nostalgic. This mazurka embodies the national Polish character of the *kujawiak*. This mazurka is slower and lyrical in

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<sup>21</sup> To listen to Chopin's mazurka Op. 68 No. 3 click on the following link: [http://youtu.be/3lo7\\_53rYBQ](http://youtu.be/3lo7_53rYBQ)

<sup>22</sup> Jane Stirling became the sole proprietor of Chopin's notes and manuscripts. Most of Stirling notes included hand-written comments by Chopin. These collections of notes were used by musicologist E. Ganche to produce a reliable edition of Chopin's compositions.

character and it follows the slower tempo and the lyrical *ritardando* endings of the traditional *kujawiak*. A distinctive characteristic of the *kujawiak* is the presence of augmented chromaticism throughout the piece. The augmented chromaticism increases the tension to allow the “*con anima*” section to take place in a major relative key.<sup>23</sup> The romantic quality of the *kujawiak* is present throughout this mazurka reminding us that the *kujawiak* is a turning couple dance. Aesthetically, this mazurka is a *do sluchu* (for listening). Nevertheless, this mazurka contains most of the elements of the traditional *kujawiak*. This last mazurka establishes a direct connection with the first set of mazurkas composed by Chopin in 1825 as it demonstrates that there was no significant deviation in style for over a period of time of twenty three years.

#### Final Analysis

The goal of this section is to quantify the presence of concepts associated with Chopin’s perspective about Polish nationalism and Polish traditional art. Chopin’s letters throw light on the so called “the public affairs of Poland” (Opiensky 1931, vi). Chopin’s love for Poland is manifested in his letters to his family, friends, and collaborators. “His love for his native land, for its speech, its proverbs, its humor, its songs, its folkways, is beyond question. Nor can any serious reader doubt the sincerity of his sympathy with its desperate struggle against alien oppression” (Opiensky 1931, vi). The content analysis performed on this section is limited to the information contained in Chopin’s letters extending from 1825 to 1849. The frequency analysis provided the following results.

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<sup>23</sup> To listen to Chopin’s mazurka Op. 68 No. 4 click on the following link: <http://youtu.be/wommFTMfz1s>

Chopin's Letters 1825 – 1848  
Collected and Edited by Henryk Opieski (1931)

Date	Statement	Page
<b>September, 1825</b>	"Has a splendid Mazurka. As Warsaw has not danced."	8
<b>November, 1828</b>	"The biographer of our hero."	44
<b>December, 1828</b>	"The Introduction of the rondo a la <i>Krakowiak</i> is original."	47
<b>August , 1828</b>	"Take a Polish Theme, I chose <i>chimiel</i> ."	54
<b>August, 1829</b>	"As me learned all that in Warsaw."	57
<b>August, 1829</b>	"Writing a four verse mazurka, so I added the music. It was a <i>mazur</i> ."	60
<b>April, 1830</b>	"As for the mazurkas on my themes, the commercial love of gain has conquered."	84
<b>April, 1830</b>	"Tomorrow is the Russian Easter, but I shall not go."	84
<b>November, 1829</b>	"I had to dance the <i>mazur</i> ."	94
<b>April, 1830</b>	"The official bulletin declared that the Poles should be as proud of me as the Germans are of Mozart."	94
<b>September, 1830</b>	"I danced the mazurka."	106
<b>October, 1830</b>	"This time the last mazurka elicited a big applause."	113
<b>November, 1830</b>	"I am just back from a Polish dinner; that is, were only Poles were present."	117
<b>December, 1830</b>	"In the Italian restaurant I heard: "The good God made a mistake when He created the Poles. So don't wonder if I can't express my opinion."	130
<b>January, 1831</b>	"As an artist I am still on the cradle, but as a Pole I have begun my third decade."	136



<b>May, 1831</b>	“After that, try to defend Polish music, express any opinion about it, and you will be taken for crazy.”	142
<b>July, 1831</b>	“My piano has heard only <i>mazury</i> .”	147
<b>September, 1831</b>	“Moscow rules the world! How many more Russian crimes?”	149
<b>September, 1831</b>	“I heal the wounds of the present, reminding you of the past, the days when there were no Russians.”	149
<b>September, 1831</b>	“Let the heaviest chastisement fall on France that would not come to help us.”	149
<b>1831</b>	“You know how I have longed to feel our national music, and to some extent have succeeded in feeling it.”	166
<b>December, 1831</b>	I am gay on the outside, especially among my own folk. I count Poles my own.”	166
<b>1832</b>	“I love the Carlists, I can’t endure the Philipists, myself I am revolutionist; Also I care nothing for money, only for friendship, for which I beg and prey you.”	169
<b>1832</b>	“Kalkbrener has used my mazurka.”	169
<b>1832-1841</b>	Chopin’ lost letters.	N/A
<b>1841</b>	“What you tell me about Poland seems to me ludicrous; May God granted, but I don’t think so.”	234
<b>1845</b>	“He went to the coronation by imagination, and I am a real blind <i>Mazur</i> .”	234
<b>April, 1848</b>	Czatoryski has gone first, but God knows how all will turn out, so that there may be Poland again.”	349
<b>August, 1848</b>	“Like our willow threes, do you remember?”	367

<b>October, 1848</b>	“I came to life a little under their Polish spirit; it gave me strength to play at in Glasgow.”	385
<b>November, 1848</b>	“And have been out only on the 16 <sup>th</sup> to play for my compatriots.”	350
<b>July, 1848</b>	“Your Great-G-G- grandchildren will travel, in a few hundred years, from a free Poland to a regenerated France, or to something else in France’s place.”	359
<b>July, 1848</b>	“Madame Viardot Sang me my mazurkas among other things, it was very beautiful.”	359
<b>September, 1849</b>	“As this cough will choke me, I implore you to have my body opened, so that I may not be buried alive.”	420
	Frederik Chopin died in Paris in October 17, 1849	

Figure 7. Frequency Valuation Table 1  
Source: The Author

Research Findings

The main goal of this conceptual analysis report is to determine the presence of the concepts associated with Chopin’s feelings about the mazurka, Polish national music, and Polish nationalism. The concepts contained on this part of the analysis were drawn primarily from Chopin’s owns correspondence excluding the period of the lost letters from 1832 to 1841. The results of the frequency analysis demonstrate that Frederik Chopin was interested in the proliferation of Polish nationalism and the traditional elements of the mazurka during and before “The Great Polish Migration.”



Figure 8. Frequency valuation Table 2  
Source: The Author

The preceding table illustrates Chopin’s interest in proliferating the *mazur* and Polish nationalism during the three main periods of his life. The first period is known as the “Poland period.” The “Poland period” covers the correspondence written before Chopin’s migration to France from 1825 to 1830. The second period is known as the “exile period.” This period covers the letters that were written by Chopin from 1831 to 1848. The last period is known as the “England period.” This last period cover the letters written by Chopin in England during the last two years of his life from 1848 to 1849.

The conceptual analysis approach used in this study provided valuable results. The results obtained from the frequency table estimator indicate that Chopin was interested in the proliferation of Polish nationalism and Polish traditional art during his early years. During the initial period in Poland, the conceptual analysis approach determined the presence of 87.5 % concepts related to the *mazur*, Polish nationalism, and Polish traditional art. This knowledge is valuable to this research as it demonstrate how interested Chopin was about the folklore of Poland and Polish nationalism even before his exile to France.

The second category of the conceptual analysis report covers the period of Chopin's exile to France. During this period in France Chopin wrote most of his mazurkas and expressed his sympathies with the cause of Polish sovereignty. "His sympathies lay with the cause of Polish sovereignty" (Eisler 2004, 31). According to the frequency analysis report, there are 68.7 % of concepts associated with mazurka and Polish nationalism within his correspondence. During this middle period Chopin speaks as a mature Pole and clearly states his opinion about the Political affairs of Poland. "I love the Carlists, I can't endure the Philipsts, myself I am a revolutionist; Also I care nothing for money, only for friendship, for which I beg and pray you" (Opiensky 1931, 169). This quote from Chopin's own pen is central to this investigation. This statement was written in 1832 and Chopin was only twenty years old. It is evident that Chopin was a revolutionist and according to his own words, "As an artist I am still on the cradle, but as a Pole I have begun my third decade" (Opiensky 1931, 136). As a Pole, Chopin considered himself qualified to express his opinion about Polish autonomy.

During the last period of his life Chopin continued to express his opinions about Polish nationalism by performing among his compatriots. While living in England he wrote, "And have been out only on the 16<sup>th</sup> to play for my compatriots" (Opiensky 1931, 350). While suffering with the last-stages of consumption Chopin managed to attend a Polish gathering and play for his countrymen in 1848. It is a possibility that Chopin played his mazurkas during that meeting for his Polish compatriots. The frequency analysis report shows a presence of 43.7 % of concepts associated with Polish nationalism. One particular finding on this report is that Chopin wrote less during the last year of his life due to deteriorating health. Nevertheless, during this last period Chopin's comments about Poland's freedom and his mazurkas are very specific. "Your Great-G-G- grandchildren will travel, in a few hundred years, from a free Poland to a regenerated France,

or to something else in France's place" (Opiensky 1931, 359). In a letter written in 1848 to his friend Julian Fontana Chopin said, "Czartoryski has gone first, but God knows how all will turn out, so that there may be Poland again" (Opiensky 1931, 349). It is remarkable to see that the mazurka occupies the central theme in Chopin's last letter written on July of 1848, "Madame Viardot sang me my mazurkas among other things, it was very beautiful." It is also remarkable that Chopin's last composition was a mazurka.

## CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“The simple mazurka becomes transformed at his touch while it still preserves its own peculiar flavor and accent” (Todd 2004, 246). Based on the results of this research there is ample evidence that Chopin’s mazurkas are deeply rooted in Polish folk traditions. This is evident by the folk elements described in chapter four of this thesis. The findings of this research suggest that Chopin incorporated various folk elements into his mazurkas. The traditional elements of the *mazur*, *oberek*, and *kujawiak* are present in Chopin’s early mazurkas as well as in the latter group of mazurkas. As the research shows, it is impossible to completely describe all of the different traits of the traditional mazurka. Despite this issue, the score analysis performed in chapter four of this thesis identified over eleven traditional elements present within Chopin’s mazurkas. These traditional elements are broken down into three major categories: rhythm, melody, and harmony. After performing the score analysis it became evident that Chopin’s mazurkas Op. 6 number one and two, and Chopin’s mazurkas Op. 68 number three and four contained the musical characteristics of the traditional mazurka as discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

Special attention should be given to Chopin’s mazurka Op. 68 Number four better known as the last mazurka. This mazurka written in 1848 follows the *kujawiak* style. Chopin’s last style of composing mazurkas “still preserves its own peculiar flavor and accent” (Todd 2004, 246). A unique finding on this study is that Chopin’s mazurkas periodically combine elements of all three major traditional mazurkas into their musical structure. At times a particular mazurka will contained traditional elements belonging to one particular style of mazurka. Furthermore, obtaining information from a French critic of the time was an essential part of the investigation “M. Chopin has acquired a quite special reputation for the spiritual and profoundly artistic manner in which he handles the national music of Poland, a genre of music that still remains very

little known to us” (Todd 2004, 248). Chopin’s mazurkas were little known in Europe during the middle part of the nineteenth century. It is evident that the national media of Paris considered the national music of Poland for the first time through Chopin’s mazurkas. Therefore, this knowledge profoundly impacted people’s perception of the Polish culture during the middle part of the nineteenth century. It is thus demonstrated, through this study, that Chopin’s music was influenced by most elements of the traditional mazurka and therefore, it became instrumental in advancing Polish cultural nationalism through Western Europe.

### Recommendations

In the process of seeking to understand how Chopin’s mazurkas influenced Polish nationalism I encountered a nationalistic artist willing to armed himself with talent and the determination to conquer Europe. This study represents just a preamble of a topic that deserves more consideration. In the future it would be beneficial to examine how Chopin’s mazurkas increased tolerance and acceptance of ethnic music in Western society. This concept of introducing ethnic music to Western culture was followed by Franz Liszt with his Hungarian rhapsodies and by Bela Bartok and the rural music of Hungary.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, this study brings to light other cultural issues that are still subject of further investigation. For instance, the need to preserve traditional forms of dance and music seems to be a universal phenomenon. While these subjects are still open to further investigation I consider that this thesis have created a positive correlation between Western and non-Western musical traditions. Finally, this research will be made available to those music scholars and other musicians who are curious about the music and traditions of Poland.

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<sup>24</sup> Bartok collected traditional music from different countries of Eastern Europe.

## Conclusions

The magnitude of Chopin's contact to the traditional mazurka from Poland may never be acknowledged with certitude. Nevertheless, based on the information contained in his correspondence it is evident that he was interested in the proliferation of the so called "song and dance from Poland." Chopin yearned to feel this music as he became an artist in exile. "You know how I have longed to feel our national music, and to some extent have succeeded in feeling it" (Opiensky 1933, 166). To some extent Chopin was able to be successful in introducing the mazurka outside of Poland during difficult political times. Chopin declared to be a revolutionist and continued to foresee a free and sovereign Poland until the end of his life. "Your Great-G-G-grandchildren will travel, in a few hundred years, from a free Poland to a regenerated France, or to something else in France's place." (Opiensky 1933, 359)

As a patriot artist, Chopin received stimulus to write the peasant dance of the mazurkas to affirm ties with a disrupted country. After Chopin, the essence of nationalism changed in Europe. New forms of nationalism sought to exalt the composer and not the mother country. Chopin offered more than his art to exalt his beloved Poland. Ludwika Jedrzejewicz, Chopin's sister, quoted his brother as requesting Dr. Cruveilhier to remove his heart and avoid being buried alive.<sup>25</sup> Per Chopin's request, doctor Cruveilhier performed an autopsy and remove the heart. Chopin's sister Ludwika indicates the real reason behind Chopin's request. "Honoring Chopin's request, his heart was sent to Warsaw" (Eisler 2004, 201).<sup>26</sup> Chopin's heart was returned to Poland where he always wanted to be. As a true national artist Chopin offered his heart and soul

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<sup>25</sup> Frederik Chopin's elder sister.

<sup>26</sup> Chopin's heart is located at the Church of the Holy Cross in Warsaw, Poland.



to the Polish people and to the world. Chopin represented Poland through the simple tunes of his mazurkas.

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