

Chopin

Mazurkas ~ Volume III

MAZURKA In C Minor, Opus 56, No. 3
In A Minor, Opus 59, No. 1
In C Major, Opus 56, No. 2
In A Flat Major, Opus 59, No. 2
In C Major, Opus 68, No. 1 (Posth.)
In F Sharp Minor, Opus 59, No. 3
In G Major, Opus 67, No. 1 (Posth.)
In A Minor, Opus 68, No. 2 (Posth.)
In A Minor (Posth.) (Dedicated to Emile Gaillard)
In B Minor, Opus 30, No. 2
In G Minor, Opus 67, No. 2 (Posth.)
In C Major, Opus 67, No. 3 (Posth.)
In G Sharp Minor, Opus 33, No. 1
In A Minor, Opus 67, No. 4 (Posth.)
In F Major, Opus 68, No. 3 (Posth.)
In A Minor ("Notre Temps")

Played by
ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN
Pianist



Musical Masterpiece Series

M-691

(17295-17298)

Frédéric Chopin

(1810-1849)

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN, "the boldest and proudest poetic spirit of the time" (Schumann) was born in Zelazowa Wola, Poland, on February 22, 1810. His father, a Frenchman, who came to Poland seeking work, joined with Kosciusko in the unsuccessful Polish war for liberation against Russia, and rose to the rank of Captain in the revolutionary army. Subsequently he met and married a Polish girl in the service of the Countess Skarbek in whose household he was employed as a French tutor. Thereafter, he received an appointment to Warsaw as a Professor of French.

Chopin was the only son of four children. His musical instruction began at the early age of four. He manifested such considerable talent for the piano, that by the time he was eight years old he was already being hailed as another Mozart. Whatever systematic instruction he received on the instrument was given him by one Adalbert Zywny, a musician of whom Niecks speaks very highly in his biography of Chopin. It is evident, however, that this training was either lacking in thoroughness, or else Chopin decided he knew better, for in later years his unorthodox fingering was a source of continual wonder and concern to all the stuffy pedants of the pianistic world.

His training in harmony and counterpoint he received from Elsner, the head of the Warsaw Conservatoire, an exceptionally intelligent and broad-minded musician, as is evident from the fact that he instilled in Chopin a profound love for Bach (Chopin in later years could at any time play the forty-eight preludes and fugues from memory) and for the remainder, was content, in defiance of all academic traditions of restriction to rule and accepted routine, to permit his pupil to take his own way in whatever direction his fertile creative genius led him.

In 1830, Chopin left Warsaw for a concert tour to Vienna. The unsuccessful revolt of the Poles against the Russian tyranny which broke out in his absence affected him deeply. With the close of the rebellion Chopin went to Paris where he was received with open arms as much for his Polish origin as for his incredible piano playing. Frenchmen have never forgotten their own great Revolution, and enthusiasm for the struggles of other nations against injustice and oppression has never been lacking. Cries of "Long Live the Poles" were heard everywhere in Paris, and the current theatrical successes dealt enthusiastically with the Polish struggle for liberation.

A more detailed chronicle of Chopin's life is hardly possible in this place. His music gradually made its way in the world, his fame both as a composer and pianist spreading everywhere. His affair with George Sand, the famous woman novelist, has provided material for endless gossip, and rarely has Chopin had a biographer who did not feel duty bound to deliver a solemn opinion on the pros and cons of this famous affair. The 1848 revolution in France caused Chopin to beat a hasty retreat to England. He returned the following year to France where he died.

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Many of Chopin's biographers have put in a serious claim for regarding him, despite his Polish origin, as a French composer. True enough, a large part of his life was spent in France, and his music has a delicacy and refinement traditionally characteristic of what is known as the French "temperament." Yet Polish influences are too strong both in his music and in his life, for the claim ever to be definitive. It needs a volume of Mazurkas such as are recorded here, to remind us that his music is based in large part upon typical Polish dance forms, *i. e.*, the Polonaise, the Mazurka, the

Krakowiak, etc., however idealized they may appear in his music. His formative years were conditioned by the Polish struggle for liberation. In this he was a true Romantic, for in all quarters, where the cause of Nationalism entered into the arts, it was the Romantics (revolutionaries in their own field) who undertook to advance it. This was especially true in Poland, for it will be remembered that Romanticism first took strong hold in that country after the Congress of Vienna (1814) had constituted the "kingdom" of Poland. True enough, the "kingdom" was shorn of its border territories and still subject to Russian rule, but concessions in the form of a Polish Viceroy and recognition of Polish as an official language were made. This, though it naturally failed to satisfy the "patriotic party," served as an incentive to a school of literary Romantics who turned to the traditions of their country, the forgotten grandeur of Poland as the chief theme for their artistic endeavors. This atmosphere of militant nationalism pervaded politics and art during the formative period of Chopin's life. It unquestionably made upon him a very deep impression and his loyalty to the liberation struggles of his people was never in question.

It is, of course, quite possible to overstate Chopin's indebtedness to Polish folk music in the attempt to make out a case against those who would consider his music French rather than Polish. There are decided limitations to this indebtedness taking into consideration the general run of his music. "It is emphatically true" as Niecks writes "that this same folk music was to him a potent inspirer and trainer. Generally speaking, however, Chopin has more of the spirit than of the form of Polish folk-music." The Mazurkas are, however, a special case in point, a case in which the influence of the folk-idiom is demonstrably more than a casual one. "The only two classes of his compositions" writes Niecks "where we find something also of the form [of folk music] are his mazurkas and polonaises; and, what is noteworthy, more in the former, the dance of the people, than in the latter, the dance of the aristocracy. In Chopin's Mazurkas we meet not only with many of the most characteristic rhythms, but also with many equally characteristic melodic and harmonic traits of this chief of all the Polish dances."

Forty-one of Chopin's Mazurkas were published during his lifetime in eleven volumes. In order to keep the chronology straight so that the interested reader may locate the Mazurkas in this, as well as in the foregoing volumes, the following list gives the date of publication first, then the opus number, and, in parentheses, the number of Mazurkas included in the opus.

Dec. 1832	Op. 6 (4)	Dec. 1837	Op. 30 (4)	Nov. 1841	Op. 50 (3)
	Op. 7 (5)	Oct. 1838	Op. 33 (4)	Aug. 1844	Op. 56 (3)
May 1834	Op. 17 (4)	Dec. 1840	Op. 41 (4)	Apr. 1846	Op. 59 (3)
Nov. 1835	Op. 24 (4)			Sept. 1847	Op. 63 (3)

Two sets, four apiece, were published posthumously by Fontana as Op. 67 and Op. 68. There are, in addition, several other Mazurkas without opus numbers attributed to Chopin, so that all told, the Mazurkas number fifty-six. The dates of the compositions of the Mazurkas contained in Op. 67 and Op. 68 are as follows:

Op. 67 No. 1 (1835)	No. 2 (1849)	No. 3 (1835)	No. 4 (1846)
Op. 68 No. 1 (1830)	No. 2 (1827)	No. 3 (1830)	No. 4 (1849)

Of the miscellaneous Mazurkas without opus number, one, in F sharp minor, has been proven to be a composition by Charles Mayer. There is a Mazurka in G major and one in B flat major (1825), one in D major (1829-1830), one in C major (1833) and two in A minor. The two in A minor are included in the present volume. Of one of the two, nothing is known beyond its dedication "to my friend Emile Gaillard." The other, *Notre Temps*, first made its appearance as No. 2 of a Schott's Söhne publication by that name. "I learned," writes Niecks, "that *Notre Temps* was the general

Few of Chopin's biographers and commentators have been able to resist the temptation of saddling these Mazurkas with a cumbersome literary program. Since Chopin, who was almost invariably content to let his music speak for itself, supplied no story or text to go with the music, the literary interpretations have, as a matter of course, varied widely with the interpreter. It is scarcely necessary to discuss the reasons for not including any of the interpretations. The reader need only be reminded of the Mazurka, Op. 33, No. 4, which to one Polish poet (Zelinski) represented a domestic brawl between a drunken peasant and his much abused wife, and to another (Ujejeski) the romantic story of a lover who believes his beloved unfaithful and drowns himself. The listener need not bother with literary connotations. He will find meaning and significance enough in Arthur Rubinstein's superb musical interpretations.