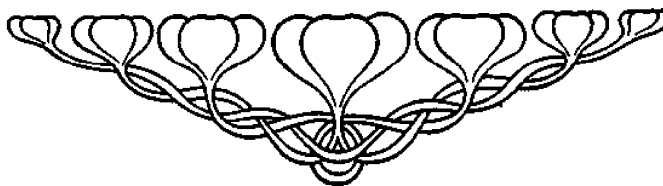


# FANTASIE-IMPROMPTU

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By

**FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN**



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**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND GLOSSARY**

**FINGERING, PHRASING, PEDALING, GENERAL INFORMATION, AND INSTRUCTIVE ANNOTATIONS ON FORM AND STRUCTURE, INTERPRETATION, AND METHOD OF STUDY**

**By LEOPOLD GODOWSKY**

# PROGRESSIVE SERIES COMPOSITIONS

Catalog Number 1109

## FANTASIE-IMPROMPTU

Biographical Sketch—Frédéric François Chopin

*Born at Zelazowa-Wola, near Warsaw, February 22, 1810*

*Died in Paris, France, October 17, 1849*

**F**RÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN was without doubt one of the most individual geniuses the world has known. The derivation of his art is not easy to discover. That he was influenced by Schubert, Weber, and John Field, is apparent, yet after his first youthful attempts in composition he so quickly developed an idiom of his own that soon there was left little trace of those early influences.

The classicists considered of first importance the *form*—the plastic—while the romanticists sought for *expression* through the medium of color, of light and shadow. Weber strove towards this latter ideal; Schubert accomplished much; but it remained for Chopin to break the bonds and daringly combine line and color in the presentation of forms new in content, if often conventional in name.

He wreathed tone-garlands about the fragile trellis-work of his melody; with vine-like scale passages and intertwined chord-chains he deftly decorated the open spaces; and his harmonies were as varied as the many-hued wild flowers on a meadow in spring.

Richard Wagner—that mighty maker of music dramas—was not slow to learn that Chopin possessed an entirely new manner of musical utterance, and had completely broken down the heavy harmonic conventions of the Teutons. Wagner's development of chromatic harmonization was inspired by Chopin; the employment of surprising and sudden changes to distant keys, far-flung arpeggio figures, the new mode of shifting from major to minor—these ideas all originated with the Polish genius.

Chopin was the first to raise national folk music to the estate of highest art. His music had its roots in the soil but it flowered freely, wafting an aroma of tender blossoms upon the air. One never feels that he was wedded to the national music idea, for he was too much of a cosmopolitan by habit of mind as well as by environment.

Chopin's father was a Frenchman from Nancy in Lorraine; his mother, Justine Krzyzanowska was Polish. Thus there was blended the animated, brilliant temperament of the Gaul with the melancholy of Slavic ancestors. It was but natural that Chopin should drift back to the country of his father's birth. In his first troubled days he contemplated migrating from Paris to London or even to New York, but the smooth life of the French capital suited him so well that even his affection for his beloved Warsaw was not strong enough to take him back to Poland.

Adalbert Zwiny, a Bohemian violinist, was his first teacher, and Chopin progressed with such ease that when eight years of age he was able to play a concerto by Gyrowetz at a charity concert in Warsaw. A little over a year later he began the study of composition under Joseph Elsner, a severe master who believed in a classical education and sound musicianship. Already the creative impulse was evident. In his eleventh year he wrote a *Polonaise in G♯ Minor*; in his thirteenth year a set of *Variations* and a *Rondo*, and in 1825 three *Mazurkas* and his *C Minor Rondo*, Op. 1. So the fledgling began to flutter the wings which were soon to make high and gorgeous flights.

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On the 27th of May, 1825, Chopin played publicly, in Warsaw, performing the F Minor Concerto of Moscheles with such brilliancy that he received an ovation. He was commanded to play before Alexander I of Russia when that monarch was on a visit to Warsaw, and was rewarded with a beautiful diamond ring. In the summer of the following year he journeyed with his mother and sister to Bad Reinerz where he gave a concert for the benefit of poor widows. There was later a visit to Princess Radziwill at her castle. Returning to Warsaw he played to the famous singer Catalani who was so charmed that she presented him with a gold watch. From these events of his youthful career we discover how Chopin's gifts impressed persons of talent and birth wherever he appeared.

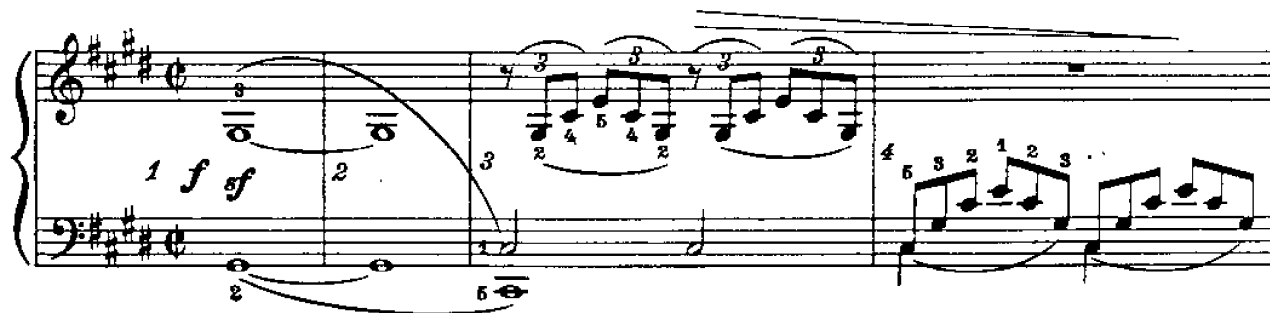
Returning from a trip to Berlin which he had made with a friend of the family, he heard Paganini and Hummel in Warsaw. Having viewed Spontini, Zelter, and Mendelssohn from a discreet distance in the Prussian capital, he now had an opportunity to study at close range the master violinist and one of the famous pianists of the period. The illustrious Italian violinist appealed greatly to Chopin, while Hummel's technical facility made so great an impression on him that he modeled many of his early compositions along lines embodying Hummel's principles. In the summer of 1829, two concerts were arranged in Vienna, and the Viennese public received Chopin with singular enthusiasm considering that the concert season was over and that he was entirely unknown. At this time he conceived an affection for Constance Gladkowska, a singer who inspired him to write a large number of the seventeen *Chants Polonais* (Polish Songs) and the *F Minor Concerto*.

After giving a series of concerts in Warsaw he again visited Vienna during the summer of 1831. Journeying by easy stages from Vienna to Paris, he arrived in the latter city in October of that year. There followed a short period of stress, but this was soon forgotten in the artistic and social successes which came to him. He was received in the homes of the aristocracy, and accepted on equal terms by the leading authors and artists of the metropolis. The famous Hungarian pianist, Franz Liszt, was his friend. Heine admired him, and George Sand (Madame Dudevant) idealized him—for a time. Perhaps she should not have put him into one of her novels quite so realistically, and yet did not Chopin write very intimate things into his *Preludes* and *Nocturnes*? Chopin's affections were sincere, and there can be no doubt that George Sand's defection shortened his life, for consumption was slowly demoralizing his frail constitution, and it needed only depression and disappointment to break his spirit. His life continued its quiet course—lessons and composing—with a very few semi-private concerts. A visit to England and Scotland in the spring and summer of 1848 did not improve his weak condition.

When he returned to Paris he found that he could neither compose nor teach. He was without money and a very ill man, so he sent for his sister who came from Warsaw to nurse him. His pupils came forward with material assistance, and his friends tried to cheer him, but for him life held nothing more, and slowly the flame of his spirit flickered out. The composer Meyerbeer directed Mozart's *Requiem* at the funeral, and Chopin was buried in the Cemetery of Père la Chaise in Paris. His heart was carried back to his native Poland, where it lies in the Church of the Holy Cross in Warsaw. Thus lived and died one of the greatest and most original tone-poets of the 19th century.

**General Information:** The C# Minor Improptu was composed about 1834, and published in 1855, six years after Chopin's death. The title "Fantaisie" was added by the publisher. The rhythms in the treble and bass of the first section are cleverly contrasted, while the right hand part serves as an excellent study for mechanical facility and endurance.

**Method of Study:** The G♯ octave (mm. 1 and 2) can be more conveniently and effectively given by dividing it between the hands, as follows:



The sustained bass-notes are to be held when possible, the damper pedal being used when the fifth finger of the left hand cannot hold them. For this reason preparatory study should include left-hand stretching exercises.

The rhythmic idea of the composition is shown in m. 5—four sixteenth-notes in the right hand against a triplet group in the left. The approximate rhythmic division of the groups is here given:



Individual finger articulation should receive careful attention, and the wrist must be supple and move with perfect freedom as it leads the hand through the labyrinth of winding passages.

In the D $\flat$  Section, at m. 60, will be found a group of seven notes in the treble against six in the bass. As this rhythmic problem may prove difficult, the following solution is suggested:



Clindworth, in his edition, gives for m. 72 (similar to m. 60) the following variant in the treble:

The following is a broad analysis of the form and the tonal structure of this composition. This, together with harmonic analysis at the keyboard, will enable the student to understand and appreciate many of the fine points which are too often overlooked. Furthermore it will enable him to interpret the thought of the composer more faithfully. And finally it will give him a logical method of memorizing the composition.

#### Form and Structure:

Three-Part Song-form (in C# Minor), with Trio (in D $\flat$ ); also in Three-Part Song-form, and Coda.

Section I mm. 1—4: Introduction.

Part 1 mm. 5—12: Main Theme, in C# minor.

Part 2 mm. 13—24: Second Theme, in E (the relative major).

Part 3 mm. 25—41: (first beat): Return to the Main Theme, with elaboration.

Section II mm. 41—42: Interlude; introduction to the Trio.

Part 1 mm. 43—58: Main Theme of Trio, in D $\flat$ .

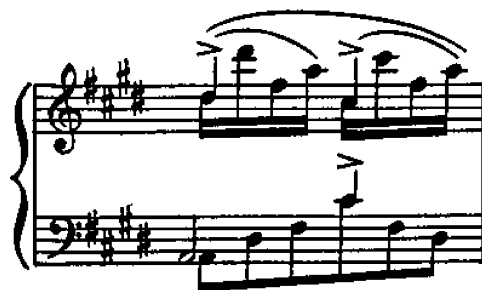
Part 2 mm. 59—70: Second Theme of Trio, in A $\flat$  (the dominant), with return to the last eight measures of Main Theme.

Part 3 mm. 71—83: (first beat): Repetition.

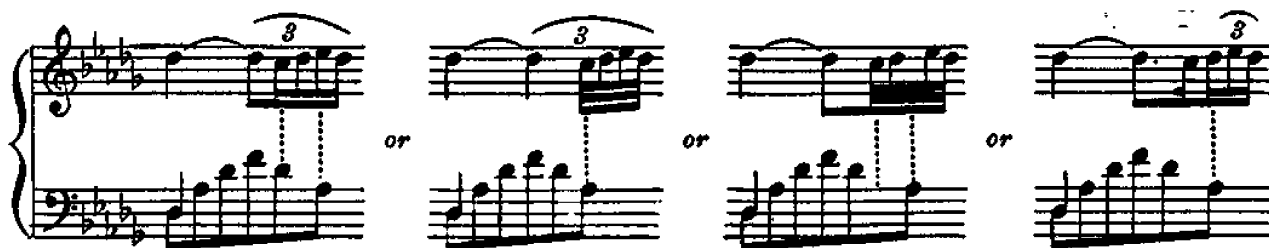
Section III mm. 83—118: Repetition of Section I, in C# minor.

mm. 119—138: Coda.

**Interpretation:** The G# octave rings out like a challenge. The sinuous figure starting at m. 5 is to be interpreted with subtle dynamic shading, the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* marks given in the music being followed carefully. The higher a passage rises, the greater should be the dynamic increase, while the notes lying in the middle register of the instrument should receive proportionately less tone. Beginning with m. 13 the thumb of the right hand has the task of accenting and holding the quarter-notes, thus marking the melody clearly. The syncopated melody will be noted in mm. 17—24. The last half of m. 19 may be interpreted as follows, thus adding variety by omitting the syncopation for one-half measure:



The melody in the  $D\flat$  Section, m. 43, must be treated very carefully, otherwise (by its very character) it will become too sentimental—even banal. It should be played softly in a singing manner, but with no exaggeration in the matter of tempo. The first half of m. 49 may be interpreted in any one of the following ways:



Rhythmic divisions like the above are often made in similar instances.

On the return of the Main Theme at m. 83 the student should begin slowly, and gradually increase the speed until the tempo of the opening Section—*allegro agitato*—is reached. This will cause the two contrasted sections to be welded together in a satisfactory manner. The student should notice also that the Main Theme is to be given *pianissimo* on its return.

The *Coda*, m. 119 to the close, is interesting both dynamically and rhythmically. The syncopation caused by the accents on the weak parts of the beats (R. H.) give zest to the melody. From m. 129 the melody in the bass is an augmentation of the first tones of the theme of the Trio. In some editions the  $C\sharp$  in the bass of m. 129 is omitted, only the melody note  $G\sharp$  being given. If the  $C\sharp$  is played it should be held for at least two measures.

# Fantaisie - Impromptu

(Posthumous)

Op. 66.

Revised and edited by Leopold Godowsky

FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN

**Allegro agitato**  $\text{♩} = 84$

1 *f* 2 *m.f.* 3 4 5 *m.f.* 4 5 *p* 5 6 7 8 9 10 *cresc.* 11 12 *dimin.* 13 *f* 14 15 16

1100-11

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17 *p*

18 *cresc.*

19 *f*

20 *dimin.*

21

22

23 *pp*

24 *riten.*

25 *p*

26

27

*a tempo*



28 *Ped.* (Ped.) 29 *cresc.* 30 -1

31 *Ped.* 32 *sempre cresc.* 33 -1

34 *Ped.* 35 *ff* 36 \*

37 *ff* 38 *ff* 39 *riten.*

40 *Ped.* 41 *Largo* *pesante* 42 *dim.*

Moderato cantabile

43 *sotto voce*

44 (rit.)

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

Ossia: (Klindworth)

52

53

54

55

56

57

58 *f* 59 *f* 60 *f*

61 *dimin.* 62 *pp rall.* 63 *a tempo*

64 65 66 *f*

67 68 69

70 *sf* 71 *f* 72 *sf*



87 *rit.* *rit.* 88 *rit.* *rit.*

89 *cresc.* 90 *dimin.*

91 *f* 92

93 94

95 *p* 96 *cresc.*

97 *f* *dimin.* 98

99 100 (Ped.)

101 *pp* 102 *riten.*

*a tempo* 103 *p* 104

105 106 (Ped.)

107 *cresc.* 108

*rit.* *rit.* *rit.* *rit.*

109 *sempre cresc.* 110

*rit.* *rit.* *rit.* *rit.*

111 112

*rit.* *rit.* *rit.* *rit.*

113 *f* 114

*rit.* \* *rit.* \*

115 *ff* 116

*rit.* (*rit.* *rit.* *rit.* *rit.*)

117 118

119 120

121 122

123 124

125 *poco a poco* di - mi - nu - en -

126



127 - do *p* 128

129 *pp* *il canto marcato* 130 *poco a poco piu tranquillo*

131 132

133 134

135 136 *riten.* 137 *ppp* 138