

# DT501: History of Music

## Classical/Romantic

Dr Adrian Smith  
Field and Chopin

# John Field (1782–1837)



- Born in Dublin in 1782.
- Moved with his family to London where he was apprenticed to Muzio Clementi.
- Accompanied Clementi on a business trip to Paris and eventually to St. Petersburg where he remained.
- One of the most famous piano virtuosos of his day. Admired for the sensitivity and musicality of his playing.
- Remembered as the inventor of the Nocturne.



John Field's birthplace at Golden Lane, Dublin

# Chopin's Development of the Nocturne

- Chopin developed the nocturne on from Field in the following ways:
  - expansion of the genre's expressive range, greater use of minor keys
  - more expansive accompaniments
  - more sophisticated chromatic harmonic language
  - more focused treatment of the melodic ideas (variations on repetitions etc.), move away from predictable two- and four-bar melodic patternsEx. Nocturne in D-flat Major, Op. 27 No. 1
- Later Nocturnes
  - greater variety of accompaniment patterns particularly involving chords
  - function of middle section changes, dramatic contrast to slower outer sections
  - move beyond simple ABA or ABAB forms, greater sense of development, material often changed significantly on its return.
  - highly virtuosic cadenza-like passageworkEx. Nocturne in C minor, Op 48 No. 1

# CASTA DIVA

from "Norma"

Words by FELICE ROMANI  
Music by VINCENZO BELLINI

Andante sostenuto assai

Ca - sta - Di - va, ca - sta

*pp* *sempre legatiss.*

The first system of the musical score for 'Casta Diva'. It features a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 12/8. The tempo marking is 'Andante sostenuto assai'. The vocal line begins with a whole note rest, followed by a half note 'Ca', a dotted half note 'sta', a quarter note 'Di', a dotted half note 'va', and a quarter note 'ca' leading into the next system. The piano accompaniment consists of a continuous eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a dotted quarter-note pattern in the left hand.

Di - va, che i - nar - gen - ti que - ste -

The second system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with a half note 'Di', a dotted half note 'va', a quarter note 'che', a dotted half note 'i', a quarter note 'nar', a dotted half note 'gen', a quarter note 'ti', a dotted half note 'que', and a quarter note 'ste' leading into the next system. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern in the right hand and dotted quarter-note pattern in the left hand.

sa - cre, que - ste sa - cre, que - ste sa - cre an - ti - che pian - te, a noi

The third system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with a half note 'sa', a dotted half note 'cre', a quarter note 'que', a dotted half note 'ste', a quarter note 'sa', a dotted half note 'cre', a quarter note 'que', a dotted half note 'ste', a quarter note 'sa', a dotted half note 'cre', a quarter note 'an', a dotted half note 'ti', a quarter note 'che', a dotted half note 'pian', a quarter note 'te', a dotted half note 'a', and a quarter note 'noi'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern in the right hand and dotted quarter-note pattern in the left hand.

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# Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)



- Born in Żelazowa Wola, near Warsaw, 1 March 1810
- Leaves Poland in 1830 for Vienna and never returns to his homeland.
- After the failed November uprising by Polish nationalists he continued on to Paris and settled there.
- Developed a successful career as teacher and composer. His performances became rarer and more private as his career progressed.
- Died of tuberculosis in 1849.

# Chopin's Development of the Étude

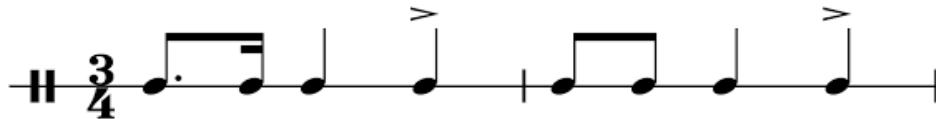
- Étude: a composition dedicated to the improvement of a musician's technique.
- Chopin composed 27 études in total
  - two sets of 12, Op. 10 (1829–32) and Op. 25 (1832–37)
  - three without opus numbers
- Chopin's major contribution was to imbue what had largely been a didactic genre with significant artistic content that far exceeded those of Czerny, Cramer, Steibelt and Clementi.
- Most are in ternary (ABA) form and address a specific technical problem. Examples:
  - Op. 10, No. 1: right-hand arpeggios
  - Op. 10, No. 3: polyphonic and legato playing
  - Op. 10, No. 12: left hand dexterity
  - Op. 25, No. 8: parallel sixths
  - Op. 25, No. 10: chromatic octaves

# Chopin's Polonaise and Mazurkas

- The Polonaise: a polish dance derived from the folk *polonez* . It often has a stately, processional or military character and features the following rhythm:



- The Mazurka: a dance derived from the folk music of the Mazovia region in Poland. It features the following rhythm:



- While the polonaise and mazurka were popular forms cultivated by composers outside Poland in the early 18th century, Chopin's works in these genres greatly exceed anything composed previously in terms of technical complexity and formal sophistication.
- They were also commercially successful and gave Chopin a certain 'exotic' aura.





# The Preludes

- Before Chopin preludes were often composed for amateur pianists who wished to give the impression of an improvised transition between pieces.
- Chopin's set of 24 comprise a complete recital program in themselves. Although most pianists today perform the entire set, Chopin preferred to perform selections of four or five preludes.
- The set covers all the major and minor keys with the order resembling a circle of fifths progression with each major key followed by its relative minor. (C major, A minor, G major, E minor, etc.)
- The character of the pieces are improvisatory and often wildly different from each other encompassing a range of innovative piano textures and moods.
- Examples played in class:
  - to demonstrate contrast nos: 5 and 6
  - in succession nos. 1—4

# Piano Sonatas

- Up until the mid-20th century it was commonplace to accuse Chopin of being unable to handle large forms. This was based on a perceived lack of development and organic unity.
- The Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor Op. 35 (1839) provoked criticism from contemporary critics who felt it lacked cohesion. This reception was captured by Schumann's ironic description: 'The idea of calling it a sonata is a caprice, if not a jest, for he has simply bound together four of his wildest children'. Schumann was being complementary!
- The Sonata is in four highly contrasting movements:
  1. Grave — Doppio Movimento
  2. Scherzo
  3. Marche Funèbre: Lento
  4. Finale: Presto
- The most unusual movement is the finale which is entirely monophonic except for the last chord.

# Ballades and Scherzos

- Chopin's scherzos and ballades demonstrate his mastery of large-scale extended forms.
- His four scherzos transformed the genre into a serious form. They make dramatic use of the principal of contrast that was already an inherent part of the genre but take it to even greater heights.
- Chopin's four ballades effectively initiated a new genre deriving its character from the narrative and expressive qualities of Romantic poetry.
- Unlike his contemporaries Chopin's ballades avoided any programmatic associations but nevertheless have a strong narrative quality.
- The ballades use a structure which is different from conventional sonata-form utilising processes based on thematic rather than tonal argument.
- Example: Chopin: Ballade in G Minor, Op. 23. The key structure is g—Eb—A—Eb—g

# Prescribed Listening

Chopin: Ballade in G Minor, Op. 23

Chopin: Nocturne in C minor, Op 48 No. 1

# Prescribed Reading

Relevant section on Chopin in chapter 25 of the *Norton History of Western Music*

Taruskin: *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 343—376

The various chapters in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* have more detailed information on the different genres of Chopin's work.

Charles Rosen's *The Romantic Generation* has three detailed chapters on Chopin's music. Difficult but rewarding reading.