

Frédéric Chopin (1810 - 1849)
The Ballades and Mazurkas
with commentary by
Kevin von der Heydt

piano

Introduction and poem reading by Dr. James Caplinger

Mazurka in F major, Op. 68, no. 3 (1830)

Mazurka in a minor, Op. 67, no. 4 (1846)

Ballade no. 2 in F major, Op. 38 (1836-1839)

Mazurka in b minor, Op. 33, no. 4 (1838)

Ballade no. 1 in g minor, Op. 23 (1835)

~ *Intermission* ~

Mazurka in f-sharp minor, Op. 6, no. 1 (1830-1832)

Ballade no. 3 in A-flat major, Op.47 (1841)

Mazurka in c-sharp minor, Op. 50, no. 3 (1842)

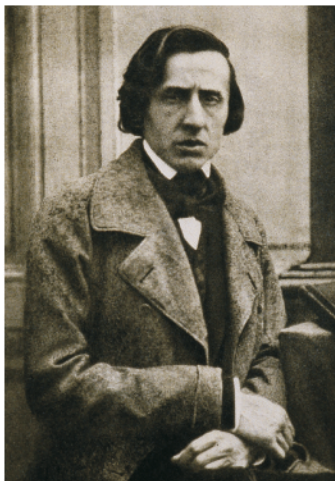
Ballade no. 4 in f minor, Op. 52 (1842)

All invited to a Reception in the Old Stone Room following the Concert

Sunday, November 19, 2017, 3:00 pm
Carnegie Hall, Lewisburg, WV

“Chopin means melancholy elegance, dreamy grace, virginal sensibilities, everything that the soul possesses that is delicate, tender, ethereal. He modulates, he sighs on that rebellious instrument and, under his fingers, the keyboard seems brushed by the wing of an angel.”

(Theophile Gautier describing Chopin’s last Parisian recital of February 1848)



Photograph of Frédéric Chopin taken the last year of his life, 1849.

Chopin’s four Ballades are among the greatest extended works for piano from the Romantic era. In writing his Ballades from 1835-1842, Chopin created a new musical genre (sometimes described as ballads without words) that was later adopted by other composers such as Brahms and Grieg. When composer, Robert Schumann, asked about the motivation for creating the Ballades, Chopin admitted to being inspired by certain poems of his countryman, Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855). As Chopin is considered to be Poland’s greatest composer, Mickiewicz has been named

Poland’s national poet and played a particularly important role in the struggle of the Polish people for liberty and social justice. As part of a large Polish émigré community in 1830’s Paris, the two artists were well acquainted with each other. Mickiewicz and many other friends of Chopin, as well as his old teacher from Warsaw, implored Chopin to write a great Polish opera. As much as Chopin loved opera, he was never tempted to write one of his own, but did compose a couple songs to Mickiewicz texts. Many people have tried to pair specific Mickiewicz poems (some labelled ballads) to Chopin’s Ballades. The audience will be able to hear Mickiewicz’s "The Nixie" and decide if it correlates to the third Ballade as some have suggested.



Adam Mickiewicz

A Mazurka is a Polish national dance, originating from Mazovia, near Warsaw. Mazurkas became quite popular in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, usually danced by four or eight couples and originally accompanied by a kind of bagpipe. Chopin's Mazurkas are artistic elaborations of this dance type and are shorter, simpler pieces than the Ballades. However, they are richly varied and filled with Chopin's Polish soul. Mazurkas are written in 3/4 time like waltzes but the emphasis is frequently on the third beat instead of the first, as in waltzes. From his earliest compositions to his last, there is not a time in Chopin's life that he did not write Mazurkas. He wrote more Mazurkas than in any other genre, with more than 50 composed. The great pianist, Vladimir Horowitz said, "There is more music in a Chopin Mazurka than a Mahler Symphony". When one speaks of Mazurkas or Ballades, Chopin's name must be invoked.



Painting of Frédéric Chopin
by E. Delacroix, 1838.

"This Chopin is an angel. His kindness, his tenderness and his patience disquiet me sometimes. I imagine that this organization is too fine, too exquisite and too perfect to exist long in our vulgar and heavy earthly life. Being sick to death at Majorca, he made music that fully smelled of paradise. But I am so used to seeing him in the heavens that it does not seem to me that his life or his death bears witness to anything for him. He does not rightly know himself on what planet he exists. He does not take any account of life as we conceive it and as we feel it."



Aurore Dudevant

(Aurore Dudevant, pen name George Sand,
Chopin's mistress of 9 years)

Kevin von der Heydt was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and started studying piano at the age of four. He is a graduate “magna cum laude” of the widely acclaimed Indiana University School of Music in Bloomington, Indiana. There he received his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in piano performance. While there, he was also a favorite accompanist for the students of the Distinguished Professor of Violin, Josef Gingold.

Following his university studies, Kevin worked in Mexico City, and the Braunschweig State Theatre in Germany as an accompanist and music coach. After a short stint as a freelance musician in New York City, he accepted a full-time position at The Greenbrier Hotel as pianist, where he worked for many years. In this position he performed a wide variety of classical pieces with violin and solo pieces, as well as various other collaborative performances with instrumentalists, singers and dancers.

Kevin has been developing a series of “Concert and Commentary” programs that focus on bringing a single composer’s life and works to a greater understanding with the audience. He has presented the complete Chopin Nocturnes in two programs, a Beethoven sonata program, and a program of Debussy’s piano works. It has been written that Kevin plays with a “most beautiful balance of heart and mind.”



*The genius of Chopin is the most profoundly
feelingful that has ever existed.
He made a single instrument speak the language of infinity.*
- Aurore Dudevant



Special Thanks to the following volunteers:
**Nancy Angiello, Keith von der Heydt, Rebecca Carroll,
David Rezits, Jim Caplinger and Samantha von der Heydt**

This is not a Carnegie Hall sponsored event.