

## THE POLONAISE IN FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN'S WORKS. ANDANTE SPIANATO AND THE GRANDE POLONAISE BRILLANTE OP.22

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**SUMMARY.** The present study is focused on the musical genre of the *polonaise* and its particularities in Chopin's creation, with precise reference to *Andante Spianato* and *The Grande Polonaise Brillante, Op. 22*. Chopin's substantial contribution to the genre consists of the transformation of a gallant dance of conventional harmony into a veritable heroic chant of prodigious harmonies. Due to a proficient transformation of a folk motif, Chopin is able to introduce folklore in his major works, according to the larger trend of national awareness that required the artists' return to the folklore sources of inspiration that were able to express the national yearning for freedom. Far from the solemnity of the courteous dance, these pieces become programmatic musical poems, sprung from the most noble of emotions, the love for one's country. The nostalgic chromatics, diffused throughout Chopin's entire creation, is augmented by the call for resistance in front of the historical events (Poland's loss of political independence). The polonaises Chopin composed at maturity had a new form, transforming into veritable epic poems which depicted images of Poland's heroic past as visions impregnated by lyric pathos and pain for the country's troubled history. Although their common feature is the epic and grandiose tone, Chopin's polonaises are extremely varied and versatile, characterized by grandeur and dramatism. The work proposed for analysis – *Andante spianato in G Flat* – is based on the principles of stanzas and variation and has the structure of two stanzas of A B type, followed by a Coda. Chopin added the *coda* as an introduction (only around 1843-1835, in Paris) to *The Grande Polonaise Brillante, Op. 22* (composed in 1831). Although intensely contrasting, the two parts seem to be connected exactly by this difference. This is the process that describes the genesis of *The Grande Polonaise Brillante précédès d'un Andante Spianato Op 22*.

**Keywords:** polonaise, folklore, ornamentation, chromaticism, variation, rubato.

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### **Cultural Influences and Environment of *Andante spianato and The Grande Polonaise Brillante, Op.22***

Chopin composed his first polonaise when he was seven, and his style was much developed along his working career. As with the nocturnes, Chopin perfected an existent form, also surpassing the ones who initiated it: Michal Oginski<sup>2</sup> and Karol Kurpiński<sup>3</sup>.

No matter the genre of Chopin's compositions, there can be distinguished the national character. It is only natural that it appears poignant in genres sprung from national dances – polonaises and mazurkas.

The string of Chopin's polonaises was wrought starting with a play he composed in 1818 and dedicated to his godmother, countess Skarbek. His following polonaises were also dedicated to people dear to him (professor Zwiny, friend Kolberg), but only the last ones were present on the list of his creations (Op. 71, no 1-3). Neither *The Polonaise in C Major* for cello and piano, composed when he was 19, nor the attempt to create (at the age of 20) a polonaise with orchestral accompaniment, *Grande Polonaise Brillante in E Major, Op. 22*, preceded by an *Andante spianato in G Major* cannot be omitted from that list.

Nonetheless, Chopin composed his chefs-d'oeuvres during his refuge in Paris, when his genius instilled his music with expressive force.

Compositions inspired by old Polish dances can be encountered since the Baroque epoch, written by G. Fr. Haendel, J. S. Bach or W. Fr. Bach<sup>4</sup>, but it is uncertain if Chopin had any knowledge of them. The research in this matter mentions the link between his polonaise and those of the less known composes – Oginski, Kurpiński, Elsner – his direct forerunners and precursors. But the most relevant influence on Chopin seems to be one of W. A. Mozart's pages, *The Polonaise-Rondo* from the *Sonata in D Major KV 284/205b*.

*The Grande Polonaise in E Flat Major Op. 21* and *Polacca Brillante in E Major Op.72* by Carl Maria von Weber<sup>5</sup> had obviously contributed to the genre's evolution during Romanticism, from the perspective of harmony, brilliance, and piano style, but it is also uncertain if Chopin knew of them.

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<sup>2</sup> Oginski Michal (1765-1833) was a Polish composer, diplomate and politician.

<sup>3</sup> Kurpiński Karol (1785-1857) was a Polish composer, music director and pedagogue.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710-1784), son of J. S. Bach, was a German organist, pianist and composer.

<sup>5</sup> Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) was a German composer, pianist, music director, guitarist and critic, one of the most important personality of the Romantic School.

In Chopin's hands, the polonaise acquired some of the finesse of the piano sonata and early classical sonatina. On the other hand, the polonaises of Franciszek Lessel<sup>6</sup> and Marie Szymanowska<sup>7</sup> conferred to this dance something of the virtuous manner of composers as Johann Nepomuk Hummel<sup>8</sup>, John Field<sup>9</sup> and C. M. von Weber.

These stylistic influences on a simple dance form created a more profound Polish music, making the transition from Luminism to Romanticism. There is a general tendency in the history of music to consider the Slavic music from before and the beginning of the XIXth century as weakly connected to the Western European tradition. During those times, the Polish composers seemed to be closely familiarized with the early music of the Western Europe, especially the symphonic compositions or the camera concertos. Mozart, Haydn and even Beethoven's music were certainly known in Warsaw during Chopin's apprenticeship and there is a lot of evidence about the importance the Polish composers placed on the unicity of their creation. Still, neither the symphonic art, borrowed from the West, nor the sternness of the church cantata had a considerable influence on young Chopin. The public of Warsaw was more receptive to the "bravado" concertos, composed by virtuosos as Hummel, Field and Weber or to the miniatures written for the piano salon. It can be said that this was an international trend which could be also found in the Polish composers, Chopin included. Only in the rondos, variations and concertos can be found a truly Polish "brillante" style, but the bravery of pieces by the violinist Karol Jozef Lipinski<sup>10</sup> or the pianist and composer Franciszek Lessel had a certain influence on Chopin.

Still, neither the concerto halls, nor the chambers could compete with the opera, so beloved in Warsaw. Chopin's love for the opera was born there. Starting with 1820, the opera was dominated by the contemporary Italian style and, above all, by Gioachino Rossini. Some of the Italian composers established themselves in the Polish capital city, at least until 1831, and one of them, Carlo Evasio Soliva<sup>11</sup> played an important part in the musical circles as the director of the School of Canto and Declamation. In *Aniela*,

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<sup>6</sup> Franciszek Lessel (1780-1838) was a Polish composer.

<sup>7</sup> Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831) was a Polish composer and one of the first professional piano virtuoso of the XIXth century.

<sup>8</sup> Hummel Johann Nepomuk (1778-1837) was an Austrian piano virtuoso and composer. His music mirrors the transition from Romanticism to Classicism.

<sup>9</sup> Field John (1782-1837) was an Irish pianist, composer and professor.

<sup>10</sup> Karol Lipinski made the arrangements for some of Chopin's pieces for piano and violin, including The No. 6 Prelude in B flat, Op. 28.

<sup>11</sup> Carlo Evasio Soliva (1791-1853) was an Austrian-Italian composer of chamber music and cantatas.

the opera composed by Soliva, Chopin first saw Konstancja Gladkowska<sup>12</sup>, debuting in 1830. Starting with Maciej Kamiński<sup>13</sup>, the Polish composers brought a major contribution to the repertoire of The National Theatre, excelling in comical operas with folkloric themes, especially in the form of *Singspiel* or *Vaudeville*.

During those times, Kurpiński was a prominent figure of the Polish musical life and young Chopin intersected with his works. He improvised on a theme composed by Kurpiński and included another in *Fantasy, Op. 13*, with a Polish theme. Kurpiński was the musical conductor of two of Chopin's piano concertos in Warsaw.

Other Polish features of the music Chopin composed during his residence in Warsaw reveal a range of heterogeneous styles: Baroque church cantatas composed by Jacob Golabek, Elsner's classical symphonies and chamber music, bravado concerts and solos of Lessel and Jozef Desczynski<sup>14</sup>, Szymanowska's miniatures, Kurpiński's Italian operas, and others. Ironically, looking at this range of styles, the concept of the Polish national idiom was very popular at the beginning of the XIXth century, commented not only in Waclaw Sierakowski's<sup>15</sup> works, or Elsner, but also in the local newspapers. Out of political reasons, the Polish composers were encouraged to write music, proclaiming the Polish identity. In practice, however, the reflection of the Polish spirit did not progress too much and was only used as a preference for a subject or a modal or rhythmic introduction – a feature derived from the polonaise, mazurka and krakowiak.

The tribulations of the national spirit had a minor influence on Chopin's compositional style. Since the beginning, Chopin did not show a great interest in the symphonic, religious or chamber compositions. Even in his third year of the composition course at the Conservatoire, Chopin was allowed to follow his own inclinations while his colleagues were diligently working on the statutory cantatas. Chopin was more drawn towards the Italian opera, chamber music or the virtuosity concertos.

Some Polish influences can be found in *The Polonaise in G Minor* he presented to the countess Skarbek in 1817. The same as in the Polonaise in B-Flat Major he composed during that year; it bears the powerful influence of the music Chopin had played in his childhood. These influences include

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<sup>12</sup> Konstancja Gladkowska (1810-1889) Was a Polish soprano the young Chopin fell in love with.

<sup>13</sup> Maciej Kamiński (1734-1821) was a Polish classical composer of Slovak origin.

<sup>14</sup> Jozef Desczynski was a Polish composer from the XIXth century.

<sup>15</sup> Waclaw Sierakowski was a Polish composer from the XIXth century.

polonaises composed by Oginski, Elsner, and others. Waclaw Pozniak<sup>16</sup> exemplified similarities between the *Polonaise in B-Flat Major* and that of Oginski's, and Józef Chominski proved similar connections between the beginning of the *Polonaise in G Minor* and the *Polonaise in F Major* composed by Elsner<sup>17</sup>.

From the formal perspective, he borrows Oginsky's model, having both main sections and the trio governed by simple expositions and responses in conventional articulated periods. Technically, the compositions are not demanding, having simple composition and harmonies. It is, at the same time, obvious that the young writer was exploring, in a simple manner, the potential of his environment, making attempts with contrasting syntaxes and registers and testing a variety of accompaniment models.

Four years separate the two works composed in 1817 from the next – *The Polonaise in A-Flat Major* – which offers Chopin's earliest signature, dynamics, phrasing or tempo indications. He dedicated it to his professor, Zywny, whose mark is as obvious in both these polonaises as in that in G-Sharp Minor. They are no longer dancing pieces, but chamber music. The sophisticated *Polonaise in in G Major* is remarkable for so young a composer. The composition presents, even from its debut, a distinct progress from his three previous polonaises. Only a look on the left-hand score is enough to prove the new technique. Here, for the first time, the classical accompaniment model opened the way for configurations characteristically extended and differentiated, with indications for the hidden melody for the left-hand which Chopin would transform into his signature style.

The polonaises in A Major and G-Sharp Minor are livelier than more of the polonaises composed by most of the Chopin's compatriot predecessors. Still, the thematic construction and the nature of the passages clearly indicate more of his sources of inspiration.

Parts of the characteristic features of his writing suggest striking parallels with Hummel and Weber's music, and none of them are strangers to polonaises. In one of Hummel's most well-known pieces, printed in no less than 38 editions, was included a rondo „a la polacca”, *La Bella Capricciosa*, Op. 55, and similarities between this piece and Chopin's *Polonaise in A-Flat Major* can be traced. In the same time, there are similarities between Weber's *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 21 and Chopin's *Polonaise in G-Sharp Minor*.

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<sup>16</sup> Pozniak, Waclaw, *Neueste Forschungen über Leben und Werke Chopins' Schweizerische Musikzeitung* (Latest Research on Chopin's Life and Works, Austrian Music Newspaper), vol. CIV, pp. 224-231.

<sup>17</sup> Chominski, Józef, *Fryderyk Chopin*, Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1980, p. 38.

These similarities do not indicate the fact that Chopin used Weber and Hummel's pieces as direct sources. They serve to demonstrate the assimilation of the characteristics of the virtuoso style, gaining more and more ground in the piano literature of the beginning of the XIXth century. This polonaise is, first of all, an essay in virtuosity and ornamentation, two tightly connected notions in the piano practice from the dawn of the XIXth century, especially in his mentor's music, Hummel. Chopin already was a professional of improvisation, which had tremendous impact on his composition style.

The art of embellishment in music developed by the practice – common in those times – of improvising on well-known themes, often by gradual increase of virtuosity, presenting them in different forms. It is known that many of Chopin's dance melodies were the result of improvisation, and the melodic ornamentation from *The Polonaise in G-Sharp Minor* has something of rhapsodic character due to the apparently spontaneous course of an improvisation.

Franz Liszt highlighted the fact that the genre's progress towards a higher level is owed to Chopin, by the number and variety of his compositions, by the emotional character and the innovative harmonic techniques (successions of chords of dominant 7ths, using sonorities that are independent from tonality.)

Chopin composed nine polonaises before leaving Poland. Only later, in France, his genius reached maturity. The seven following examples are exhilarating through their splendour and innovation in piano technique.

*Polonaises Op. 26* (include two polonaises: one in C-Sharp Minor, the other in E-Flat Minor) were composed between 1834 and 1835 and were dedicated to his friend, Joseph Dessauer. The beginning of this play is a tragic and grandiose proclamation which changes rapidly, to get to a more lyrical theme. It is a work of undecided quality, which brings two main characters on the scene: a furious, frenzied *Allegro appassionato*, as well as a passionate *Meno mosso*, which, according to Huneker, "is delicate enough to touch a princess"<sup>18</sup>. The tune for the left hand creates a strange effect and can be a challenge for a piano player.

*The Polonaise in E-Flat Minor, Op. 26, No. 2*, is a masterpiece of great colour and variety. The *Maestoso* opening, suspenseful, sets the mood for the most spectacular vitality impact. This polonaise is sometimes called "the Siberian revolt". It is also considered to be one of Chopin's most realistic compositions.

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<sup>18</sup> Huneker, James, *Chopin: The Man and His Music*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1900, p. 137.

*The Polonaise Op 40, No.1* was composed in 1838 and dedicated to his friend, Julian Fontana. This composition is very popular. Having a majestic explosion of energy, *Allegro con brio* creates a mood of vibrant glory.

As of the Polonaise in C Minor, Op. 40, No. 2, Anton Rubinstein<sup>19</sup> saw in it a sombre image of Poland's fall, while The Polonaise in A Major painted a portrait of its former glory. To acquire the right tonal quality for the melody for the left hand, at an eighth, can raise a challenge for a piano interpreter, and for this reason it is seldom played.

*The Polonaise in F-Sharp Minor, op. 44*, was composed between 1840 and 1841 and dedicated to Princess Charles de Beauvau, born de Komar. According to Liszt, this polonaise is "the lugubrious hour that precedes a hurricane"<sup>20</sup>, while John Ogdon sees in it the intensity of a Goya. The tunes are very powerful and are presented as seventh intervals, while the left-hand leaps between the registers, rather frantically. The middle section is a mazurka, and it is peaceful enough, as it is distinctively introduced. This piece has little similarities with Chopin's elegant waltzes: the mode is still extemporaneous, thus, a reminiscence of the scherzos.

*The Polonaise in A-Flat Major, Op. 53, The Heroic Polonaise*, is one of Chopin's most popular work and renown in the entire world. He composed it in 1842 and dedicated it to Monsieur Auguste Leo.

*The Polonaise in A-Flat Major, Op. 61 – Polonaise Fantaisie (Fantasy Polonaise)* – was composed only four years before his death (between 1845 - 1846) and was dedicated to Madame A. Veyret. It is an eighteen pages masterpiece and one of his most beautiful creations. When properly played, this becomes an impressive array of romantic melodies, impressionist harmonies and virtuosity techniques. The interpretation of this composition is extremely subjective and so it considerably varies among modern piano players.

### **General Considerations on Andante Spianato and the *Grande Polonaise Brillante*, Op. 22**

The year of 1831 has a special significance in the chronology of Chopin's work, separating two of the three periods of creation in Chopin's componistic career: the first, considered to be from when he was seven years old until 1830-1831, the second beginning with 1831 and the third including the last years of his life. From this perspective, it can be stated that *Andante Spianato in G Major and The Grande Polonaise in E-Flat*

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<sup>19</sup> Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894) was a Russian pianist, composer and music director.

<sup>20</sup> Liszt, Franz, *The Life of Chopin*, tr. Cook, M.W., New York: Leypoldt & Holt, 1866, p. 69.

*Major* are equally the culmination of a first period of acquisitions and crystallization of his compositional style and the inauguration of his maturity style.

Chopin initially composed *Grande Polonaise*, and then added the part *Andante spianato*, as an introduction. Although the first part is dated in 1830-1831, and the complete version is dated in 1834, the number of the opus (Op.22) is kept since the first variant.

The debut of this composition is lyrical-romantic in nature, typical to Chopin. The polonaise as a genre is a miniature. In the Dictionary of Musical Terms it is defined as follows: "old Polish dance in the measure of  $\frac{3}{4}$ , similar to a walk (in a group) in rhythmic steps, not without solemnity. In Chopin's creation, where it becomes a genre by itself, the polonaise occupies a central place, and is characterized by grandeur and dramatism<sup>21</sup>.

The first audition of the composition was, of course, that featuring the piano-player composer. Chopin played this piece in public only once, on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1835, in Paris, in the Conservatoire's Concert Hall, and the success it had placed it among the most representative of his works.

As it is preceded by the two piano concertos – *No. 1, Op. 11 in E Minor* (Warsaw, 1830) and *No. 2, Op. 21 in F minor* (Warsaw, 1829) – this could be the reason for which Chopin imagined an orchestrated variant of this piece. It ends in parallel with the apparition of other numerous works, among which the twelve Studies Op 10 (composed between 1830 and 1832) and dedicated to Fr. Liszt.

The character of the introduction is that of a nocturne, and, at the same time, of a lullaby. This creates a dreamy disposition, which dissipates only when the horn party announces the *Polonaise. Spianato* means equally, without contrasts, without significant excitement or anxiety. What happens in this composition at the exposition of the Polonaise's theme was described in various ways, but always with distinct admiration. For Jan Kleczyński<sup>22</sup>, this is "a real fireworks explosion of wonderful passages and bold phrases", for Zdzisław Jachimecki<sup>23</sup> „a marvelous and shiny display of colours and sounds”, and for Tadeusz Zieliński<sup>24</sup> „a richness and grandeur of models in sounds”.

The official form of a polonaise is not easy to define, as it results from the combination of two principles: the refrain – the basic form of a Rondo, and the reprise – the basic form of a trio dance, excepting that the

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<sup>21</sup> \*\*\*, *Dicționar de termeni muzicali (Dictionary of Musical Terms)* – edited by Gheorghe Firca, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1984-2008, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> Jan Kleczyński (1837-1895) was a Polish pianist and music director.

<sup>23</sup> Zdzisław Jachimecki (1882-1953) was a Polish professor and composer.

<sup>24</sup> Tadeusz Zieliński (1859-1944) was a Polish philosopher and historian.



theme of the refrain is modified by variation and the dance trio presents a whole group of themes. In what the writing is concerned, two versions of the composition are born: the original with the subtle accompaniment of the somewhat absent orchestra, and a second version for the piano solo.

The episodic function is taken by three themes, different in character and expression. First, in E-Flat Major brings a sudden liveliness to the play, the lacy melodic ornaments and the figurations are broken by the double eights, played *forte* and *risoluto*. The second episode, in C Minor, creates the mood of a lyric *espressivo*. The third, in B-Flat Major, introduces a gentle harmony, of almost Impressionist effects. As it is proper in a composition in *brillante* stile, the play is rounded by a splendid coda.

The final result is a composition of impressive stile, of virtuosity by excellence. At the time of its publication, it received the title *Grande Polonaise Brillante, précédée d'un Andante spianato*. Chopin dedicated it to one of his aristocrat pupils, Baroness d'Este. The composition was publicly interpreted by its composer only once, in April 1835, at the Paris Conservatoire, in a charity concert for the well-known Parisian music director François-Antoine Habeneck, and had a success which placed it among Chopin's most representative works.

But, the same as with the music of his Polonaise in E-Flat Major, this was a farewell to public from the virtuoso composer, as it was his last major concert as a piano player in Paris. He left the grand concert hall, and, as a composer, his style reached the peak of maturity, where the pianistic virtuosity entered in the service of expressivity.

*Grande Polonaise Brillante precedee d'un Andante spianato, Op. 22* is a magnificent example of the genre. Interpreted with fluency, subtlety and sensibility, it confirms Jan Kleczyński's opinion: "There is no other composition engraved with more elegance, liberty and freshness"<sup>25</sup>.

### **Andante spianato – Analysis**

*Andante spianato*, an oeuvre of componistic mastery and artistic refinement, alludes to the age of the composer's youth, to the national music filled with optimism and merrymaking. The contemplative, reverie atmosphere is given here by the effect of the ornamented melody and the piano arabesque which originally combines with the continuous and monotone accompaniment of the bass.

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<sup>25</sup> Kleczynski, Jan, *Frédéric Chopin. De l'interprétation de ses oeuvres (Frédéric Chopin. On the Interpretation of his Works)*, F. Mackat, Paris, 1880, p. 127.

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The G-D fifth, which obstinately repeats in the ample arpeggios spread throughout the part for the left hand, produces original dissonances by overlapping the melody, which, in turn, creates the sensation of calm, tenderness and pastoral simplicity.

The bi-tonal melodic line presents some similarities with the Polish folklore – through the characteristic cadence of the diminished major third – with the exception of melodies formed by embroideries and small chromatic passages. The emotional tension grows when the melody is replaced, in the upper part, with arabesques of semiquavers, suggesting a delicate murmur through their equal and continuous movement. The moment very sensibly expresses the apogee of contemplation. After the central episode, which has the allure of a mazurka, the central reprise only retains the semiquavers figuration (the arabesques from the end of the exposition), discreetly accompanied by the bass arpeggios and chaperoned by a progressive *diminuendo* to *pianissimo*, until the complete disappearance of the part for the right hand.

Section **A** (bars 1 to 66) begins with a short introduction, of four bars, for the left hand, the hand which plays the accompaniment, through a development of arpeggios, which repeat a cellule of motifs, as shown in example 1 below.

**E.g. 1**



**Fr. Chopin, Andante spianato, Op. 22, bars 1 to 4**

The first section is composed of three periods, each having two-phrases, as in Table 1 below:

**Table 1**

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Av</b>
5-20	21-36	37-52

**Structure of the first section**

Thus, on the level of the first large stanza the configuration of a lied form appears, in three parts (A – B – Av). Nonetheless, the general scheme at the end of this analysis will reveal a more complex structure of this stanza.

The theme of this musical page, preceding the proper Polonaise, is remarkably melodious, beginning in G Major.

**E.g. 2**

**Fr. Chopin, *Andante spianato*, Op. 22, bars 5 to 12 (phrase I of A)**

In the second stanza, B (bars 21 to 36), one can notice a modulation chain of the motif presented previously in B, with modified intervals corresponding to the new tonalities that are touched for short durations: E Minor, D Major, D Minor, C Major, Picardy B Minor and, finally, B Major. Therefore, the ratios between tonalities are: relative minor, dominant, homonym, homonym dominant, subdominant, and relative dominant or homonym relative dominant.

It can also be easily noticed the asymmetry of phrase duration inside the second period: phrase I has only two bars, while the second has twelve bars.

**E.g. 3**

**Fr. Chopin, *Andante spianato*, Op. 22, bars 21 to 24 (phrase I of B)**

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The third stanza, - AV – brings forth the variation principle, by means of augmenting the tune with exceptional divisions, in the basic tonality, G Major.

E.g. 4

The musical score for Fr. Chopin's *Andante spianato*, Op. 22, bars 37 to 44, is presented in two systems. The first system begins with the tempo marking *a tempo*. The right hand features a melodic line with a complex sixteenth-note passage, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system includes the dynamic marking *delicatis.* and continues the melodic and accompanimental patterns.

Fr. Chopin, *Andante spianato*, Op. 22, bars 37 to 44

**The Coda** (bars 53 to 66) is characterized by phrasal asymmetry, and the evolution of the two parallel plans on semiquavers.

E.g. 5

The musical score for Fr. Chopin's *Andante spianato*, Op. 22, bars 53 to 64, is presented in three systems. The first system begins with the tempo marking *p a tempo* and the dynamic marking *pp*. The right hand features a melodic line with a complex sixteenth-note passage, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system continues the melodic and accompanimental patterns. The third system includes the dynamic markings *sempre* and *dim.*

Fr. Chopin, *Andante spianato*, Op. 22, bars 53 to 64

The middle section, B (bars 67 to 96) exposes a typical contrast for phrases juxtaposition, due to the evolution of musical material in 3/4 bar and of larger values (comparing to the semiquaver pulsation, predominant in the first articulation). From the tonal perspective, there are no modifications, the musical discourse being conducted in G Major.

E.g. 6



Fr. Chopin, *Andante spianato*, Op. 22, bars 67 to 72

Section B is composed of two periods, B B<sub>1</sub>, having the following structure:

Table 2

B (67-78)		B <sub>1</sub> (79-96)		
- two phrase group -		- three phrase group -		
phrase I (67-72)	phrase II (73-78)	phrase I (79-84)	phrase II (85-90)	phrase III (91-96)

### Structure of section B

It can still be argued that a three-pentapartite structure is possible, ABABA, if the phrases are considered as having 3 bars – as it can be seen in the general scheme and the explanations below. At the end of this part the *coda* from stanza A returns, having the same phrase structure (two-phrase period) in 3/8 bars, together with a small fragment from stanza B, as the general scheme reveals.

Below is the general scheme of this section, followed by schematic explanations:

Table 3

STANZA I (A)							
1-66							
Intro.	A	A'	Av	A''	A'''	Coda/cadence	
Intro.	A		B	Av		Coda/cadence	
4	8	8	16	8	8	14	
1-4	5-12	13-20	21-36	37-44	45-52	53-66	
Stanza II (B)						CODA	
67-96						97-114	
B		B1					
B	Bv	B'	Bv'	B''			
6	6	6	6	6	14	+	4
67-72	73-78	79-84	85-90	91-96	97-110		111-114

### General structure of the section

- The stanzas are not equally ample, but there is a different symmetry

- **(Intro. A B Av Coda)**: is another possible formal classification of A (includes: A Av<sub>1</sub>), Av (includes: Av<sub>2</sub> Av<sub>3</sub>), the themes have the indicator v (varied), and where the basic melody line is changed, it was noted with B. A similar structure can be identified in the second part of the composition. Still, the choice for the first variant reflects both the variations and the mono-thematic character better.

- The introduction: contains four bars, arpeggio, for the left hand.

- A – 8 bars: is the accompaniment in the intro. + theme for the right hand.

- A' – 8 bars: the slightly ornamented repetition of the theme (the 8 previous bars).

- Av – 16 bars: the already varied repetition of the theme transposed and enlarged. The last 2 bars represent a re-transition (as in *Scherzo No. 2*, can be identified a structure of the type **aab**).

- A'' – 8 bars: the more ornamented repetition of the theme.

- A''' – 8 bars: another more ornamented variation of the theme.

They were noted with prime (') and second (''), and so on, to underline the similarities between the sub-sections. Excepting Av, the melodic line is practically the same, but more ornamented/varied with every repetition.

- *Coda/Cadence* – 14 bars, isorhythmic final cadence, continuous contrary movement for the two hands.

- A very powerful variation character and an equally powerful monothematic character can be identified.

- Stanza II: a binary structure (as in the whole composition) can be identified.

- B: 6 bars, 3+3 identical bars;

- Bv: 6 bars, 3+3 bars; they are no longer identical, but the last 3 are the variation of the first 3;

- B': 6 bars, 3+3 identical bars. It is identical with B (67-72), with a single difference in rhythm (ornament);

- Bv': 6 bars, 3+3 bars. Bv returns, identically; only one rhythmic difference can be identified here, as well (ornament).

- B'': 6 bars, the same structure; it is a new ornamental variation and, at the end, there is no cadence on the tonic, but stay on the dominant.

- At the end of the first stanza was presented a different possibility of formal analysis. The B of that scheme has no connection with the B in the second Stanza. The notation B in the first stanza was chosen to underline the contrast and the varying character.

- In the Coda, the *Coda/Cadence* of 14 bars from bars 53-66 return identically. There is another short rhythmic succession of 4 bars (111-114), where the first two bars are from B (bars 67-68) + the last bar from B (bar 96) + the final chord on the tonic of G Major.

- As amplitude, there were not identified other symmetries:

- there are 5 subsections A – progressive variation character;

- there are 5 subsections in B as well (shorter) – alternating variation character;

- The proportion of the stanzas is reflected in the Coda, where there is an ample come-back from section A and a much shorter one from section B;

- The monothematic character is present for each stanza.

### **The Grande Polonaise Brillante – Analysis**

*The Grande Polonaise Brillante*, Op. 22, completed in 1831, in Wien, and published in 1936 is considered a jewel of the concerto repertoire of virtuosity. This part of Op. 22 is played on its own, as a pure soloist interpretation, as well as with an orchestra accompaniment, with reduced sounding resources.

*Spianato* is, in fact, a character indicator, suggesting an equal, and quiet, music<sup>26</sup>, which lacks pathos. The character of these first movements resembles considerably to that of the nocturnes. The technique of

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<sup>26</sup> Coman, Lavinia, *Frédéric Chopin*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 2009, p. 26.

ornamentation that Chopin uses was seen by some musicians<sup>27</sup> as coming from the art of the old French harpsichord players. From the technical point of view, the composition stimulates the player through multiple interpreting difficulties. The requirement for perfect execution is characteristic for all the *Polonaises* of Chopin. The core of these works expresses the essence of the Polish spirit. This particular composition contains the effigy of Chopin's style, craftily reflected both by the technical construction, as well as the melodic thinking. The problematic of Chopin's style can only be approached in the perspective of the multiple ratios born from the dichotomy between meaning and expression.

The period he spent at Warsaw was extremely productive for Chopin, as a composer, and especially as a concert writer. He confessed to his friend, Tytus Woiciechowski, in a letter: "I drafted the composition for a *Polonaise*, with orchestra, but it is merely a vague sketch, although not in the first draft"<sup>28</sup>.

A feature of *The Polonaise* is the capricious character, heavily ornamented, together with the rhythm's poignancy and variety. The tonality chosen by the composer, E-Flat Major, emanates a special expressive force and optimism. From the perspective of the melodic display, the virtuosity writing for the piano, rich, expressive and dynamic, alternates with the parts for the orchestra, which have a clear and transparent discourse, and visibly inferior in what harmony is concerned, even if it is represented by more instruments.

The form has the structure of three stanzas, the type A B A. This ternary structure, preceded by a slow introduction reminds of the structure in three parts of the classical Italian overture. The *Polonaise* begins with an orchestral introduction of sixteen bars, which sets the stage for the soloist.

From this first fragment, we see that the orchestra is not characteristic for the romantic period when the work was composed, resembling more, as density, to a classical piece.

The horns are the messengers of the rhythmic signal that is typical to a dance à la *Polonaise*, in *forte*.

E.g. 7



Fr. Chopin, *The Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 1 to 4

<sup>27</sup> Wande Landowska, cf. Lavinia Coman.

<sup>28</sup> Manea, Carmen, *La pian cu Frédéric Chopin (At the Piano with Frédéric Chopin)*, Editura Universității Naționale de Muzică, București, 2010, p. 48.



These signals are followed by a harmony created by blowing and chords instruments, which resembles the chords blocks. The chord instruments amplify the intensity by ascending melodic vawes.

E.g. 8



Fr. Chopin, *The Grande Polonaise, Op. 22, bars 8 to 13 (VI. I)*:

This growth is also obtained through the rhythmical pulsation of semiquavers.

The culminating part of this beginning is suddenly interrupted by a general pause, followed by two measures for the chord instruments, with the indication of *pizzicato* – in *pp*, the composer obtaining by these means the effect of an extremely expressive contrast.

E.g. 9



Fr. Chopin, *The Grande Polonaise, Op. 22, bars 13 to 16 (tutti)*

As for the harmonic chains used by the author, it can be said that both them and the space-time ratio are novel: throughout the first three bars of the theme, from 17 to 19, the first value of the E-Flat Major tonality is kept, while in the 20<sup>th</sup> bar it is suddenly replaced with F Minor and, later on, in the same mode, by B-Flat Major, the dominant. It is an atypical chaining:

**Table 4**

<b>Tonic</b>	<b>Supertonic</b>	<b>Dominant</b>
E flat	F	B flat
17-19	20	22

#### **Atypical chaining inside the theme**

The theme contains exactly 60 notes, each of them bearing a melodic significance<sup>29</sup>. The second section, from bar 77 to 160, is extremely rich from the variation point of view, and extraordinarily ingenious. Based on the episode from the first section, but having very distant musical reverberations, it is structured into three episodes, rather ample.

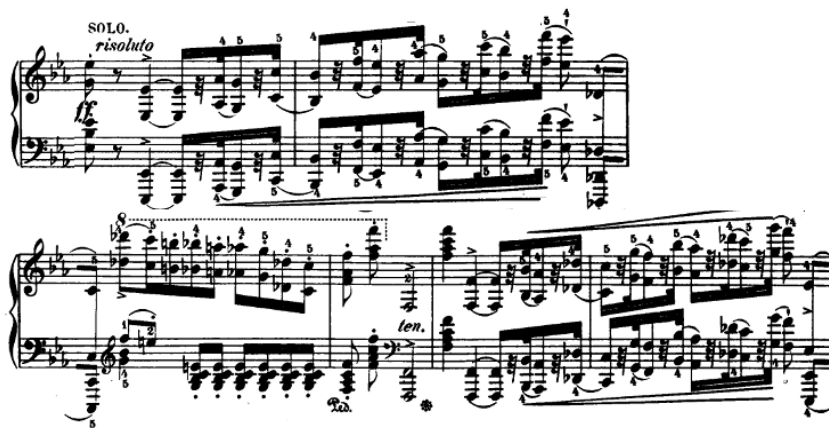
Judging from the perspective of the initially enounced structure, ABA, one could infer that the middle and the first sections would contain different thematic elements. The reason for not naming the middle section Av is the strong resemblance, at the structural level, with the pattern of a sonata, meaning **exposition (A)**, **development (B)** and **reprise (A)**. Although this is a bold assertion, it could be justified, if not necessarily by a stated intention of the composer to obtain a particular formal pattern, but by the general context of the epoch, where all the composers were searching for liberation from the strict musical forms of the Classicism. It is, of course, easily understood that, although the intention was clear at a declarative level, at the conceptual-psychologic level, the composers still had the need for order, equilibrium, and symmetry, in thought and expression.

The first episode is written in E-Flat Major, and it stands out by the virtuosity writing. The second episode is in C Minor, in the form of a cantilena of extremely profound expression.

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<sup>29</sup> Manea, Carmen, *La pian cu Frédéric Chopin (At the Piano with Frédéric Chopin)*, Editura Universității Naționale de Muzică, București, 2010, p. 93.

E.g. 10



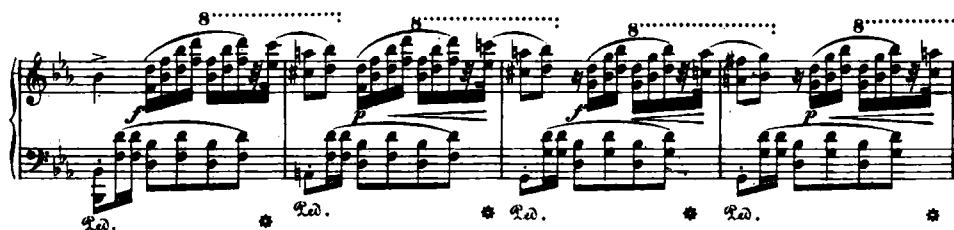
C, E-Flat, A-Flat, C

Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 77 to 82 (Piano)

Throughout this entire fragment, a very expressive modulatory course can be noticed. The national specific is fully revealed here, both by the melodic line for the right hand, which has the personality of a *kujawiak*<sup>30</sup>, and by the accompaniment for the left hand, which is a rhythmic ostinato on the traditional formula for a polonaise.

The third episode does not follow a precise melodic contour, it is written in B-Flat Major and it is very original and engaging.

E.g. 11



Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 133 to 136 (Piano)

The four musical motifs are sustained by the precise rhythm, written in parallel sixths for the right hand, combined sporadically with fifths, ascending from the median to the high register of the piano, almost suggesting the flight of the composer towards the peaks of the fantasy and aspiration.

<sup>30</sup> Kujawiak – Polish national folk dance of lyrical nature.

## E.g. 12

Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 137 to 139 (Piano)

The chromatic descent that naturally follows the ascending is delicately exposed in parallel sixths, played in staccato by the right hand, while the bass follows an original harmonic line.

The structure of this rhythmical-harmonic development is variedly repeated once more – four ascending waves, this time as a triplet:

## E.g. 13

Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 141 to 144 (Piano)

followed by the intensely chromatic descending passage, identically exposed:

## E.g. 14

Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 145 to 147 (Piano)

The reprise is clearly a dynamic one, where all the variation proceedings used in the composition seem to be homogenized. The appoggiatura, an element placed at the debut of the theme, confers to this imposing final glamour and a special distinction.

**E.g. 15**



**Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bar 161 (Piano)**

Chopin's genre is fully visible during his Parisian period in his maturity creations. He writes an introduction for his *Polonaise*, Op. 22, a distinct section for piano solo, different in style and expressivity and titles it *Andante spianato*. Exceptional as style and poetics, *Andante spianato in G Major*, bearing the agogic indication *tranquillo*, is a completion of *The Polonaise*, as the composer himself considers it. *Andante spianato* is an example of craft and originality in the treatment of musical forms and genres, revealing a romantic feature – a harmonious combination of the lyric, folklore and piano idioms, unveiling the syncretism of arts. The composer is, at the same time, a poet-musician and a Copernic of the piano<sup>31</sup>.

The ornamentation technique is present in all the genres, from *Studies* to *Nocturnes*, from mazurkas to polonaises, from preludes to sonatas. It can be stated that Chopin represents the acme of ornamentation in the Romantic era. The fluidity and the expressivity of Chopin's melody are grounded on ornamentation.

Starting from actual ornaments (appoggiatura, trill, mordent, turn/gruppetto) and amplifying them, complex ornaments are derived from, combined with the exceptional divisions, diatonic or chromatic scales. Here are a few significant examples:

<sup>31</sup> Czeslaw, Sieluzycski, *Copernicus of the piano*, *Chopin Studies*, nr. 6, 1999, p. 125.

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E.g. 16

Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 56 to 61

E.g. 17

Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 91 to 92

E.g. 18

Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 129 to 131

The image shows a musical score for Frédéric Chopin's *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 200 to 205. The score is in B-flat major and 3/4 time. It features a piano (*pp*) and *dolciss.* section in the first system, and a *leggieriss.* section in the second system. The notation includes various ornaments and rhythmic variations.

Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 200 to 205

The notation of the ornaments is with lowercase characters, but the rhythmic and melodic variations of the motifs can be considered a form of ornamentation as well, inserted in the basic melodic line. Using these techniques to enhance his musical style, Chopin obtained his specific melodicism.

Chopin's musical discourse cannot be conceived as a strictly metrical interpretation, precisely due to the *belcanto*, which is characteristic to his melodicism. The rhythmic pulse is continuously oscillating, according to the ornamentation and the inner organization of the melodic profile. The *rubato* in Chopin's music is the result of the sinuous, elastic, cursive music, specific to Romanticism.

The freedom of rhythm specific for *rubato* is obtained through the frequent introduction of exceptional divisions, combined with multiple aspects of beat combination (syncopation, articulation), with the purpose to avoid the symmetry of the rhythmic structures.

Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 17 to 24 (right hand)

The polonaises are defined on the coordinates of the triple meter, based on specific elements of rhythm. The presence of the rhythmic formula always confirms the genre classification, a fact which can be noticed in the case of *The Grande Polonaise*, where the formula is present in almost every bar, with the exception of the connective passages, which have the significance of a conclusion. This is very well exemplified by the *tutti* moments on the score, where the dactyl formula returns to shape the musical discourse as dancing again

Fr. Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, bars 217 to 22  
(see the two bars after *Tutti*.)



This rhythmically augmented formula can be also encountered in *Andante spianato*, stanza B, as it is shown in the following example:

E.g. 22



Fr. Chopin, *Andante spianato*, Op. 22, bars 67 to 69

Apart from the simplicity and clarity of writing in *Andante spianato*, *The Grand Polonaise* is remarkable through the melodic, rhythmic and thematic complexness, and the virtuosity elements are everywhere. The composition advances a different sounding perspective: the piano, Chopin's much endeared instrument, has the immense force to rule over the entire orchestral apparatus.

Chopin's profound spirit can be found in numerous ways, because the writing of this play allows for a significant liberty of expression. The dancing theme at the beginning of *The Polonaise* is one of the most famous of Chopin's creations. This is exposed many times in the composition, but never identically, as it is ornamented accordingly to the thematic underlying of the moment when it appears.

The work reminds of Chopin's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No 1*, through composition technique, structure or rhythmical flow.

Below is the general scheme of this section:

Table 5

STANZA I (A)	11-76	<b>introduction</b>	16	- orchestral introduction
		<b>A</b>	8(17-24)	- central theme
		<b>Av<sub>1</sub></b>	8(25-32)	- all are variations, more and more remote and free of the central theme
		<b>Av<sub>2</sub></b>	8(33-40)	
		<b>Av<sub>3</sub></b>	8(41-48)	
		<b>~ retransition</b>	8(47-54)	
		<b>A'</b>	8(55-62)	- the central theme variation returns. There are ornamental variations as in <i>Andante</i> , but here it is bravado writing.
<b>Av'<sub>1</sub></b>	12(63-74) +2	- commences as Av <sub>1</sub> which transforms into transition + 2 bar (75-76) of orchestral transition.		

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<b>STANZA II (B)</b>	77-160	<b>Episode I - A</b>	77-106	comprises: - <i>introduction/transition</i> .: 8 bars (78-84) - $Av_{1v}$ returns $Av_1$ of Stanza I: 8 bars. (85-92) - <i>transition</i> : 14 bars. (93-106)
		<b>Episode II - B</b>	107-132	- a very expressive cantilena in C minor which becomes the main theme of Stanza II. - structured in 8+18 bars, where, in the first 8 bars, the theme appears and then the 18 bars are varied and accompanied by an ample cadence and transition towards the last episode.
		<b>Episode III - C</b>	133-160	- is conceived according to the principle of the episode II, a new theme appears (firstly, in parallel sixths, in arpeggio) of 8 bars, than a varied repetition + 12 bars cadence/retransition towards Stanza II, where the central theme in the main tonality returns.
<b>STANZA III (Av)</b>	161-220	<b>introduction</b>	16	
		<b>A</b>	8 (161-168)	
		<b><math>Av_1</math></b>	8 (169-176)	
		<b><math>Av_2</math></b>	8 (177-184)	
		<b><math>Av_3</math></b>	8 (184-191)	
		<b>~ retransition</b>	8 (191-198)	
		<b>A'</b>	8 (199-206)	
		<b><math>Av_1'</math></b>	12 (207-218) + 2	- where the 2 bars are an orchestral transition
<b>CODA</b>	221-279			- an ample virtuosity coda

**General Scheme of the section**

- for the segments of Stanza I, the notation  $v(\text{aried}) 1 \dots 3$  was chosen to underline the similarities between segments. **ABCD $Av$ B $v$** <sub>(rhythmical flow)</sub>, could be more appropriate, but, for simplicity, the first variant was preferred.

*Andante spianato* and *Grande Polonaise, Op. 22*, composed when Chopin was only 24 years old, is important because it defines his compositional style, both from the perspective of the expressive content, as well as from that of the technical resources.

## Conclusions

Frederic Chopin's polonaises are tightly connected with the national component of his music. The most celebrated are hard to grasp without an understanding of his patriotic feelings or of the tragic situation in Poland of his lifetime. He composed this genre throughout his life (from childhood to the end), leaving behind to posterity eighteen works of the genre: sixteen polonaises for piano, one for piano and orchestra, and one for piano and cello. The composition style had changed, over time, and their ranking and importance gradually increased, evolving from the conventional salon miniatures to the expressive dancing poems.

Chopin added, over time, many interesting and amazing transformations to the ternary structures of type ABA, which, in polonaises, are sometimes preceded by an introduction and followed by a *Coda* (more or less developed). While some of these transformations were only formal (such as developed themes and bridges, or the tendency to transform the median section), others concerned the writing (for instance, the combination of the polyphonic elements). In the same time, the rich harmony was augmented (chromaticism), together with the more and more profound personal expression.

Chopin's maturity compositions are very different from his works of youth, severed from one another by the artistic equilibrium and spiritual refinement. The sentimentalism of his first polonaises, the melancholy stereotype, and the salon equilibrium gradually transformed into the profound signification of the lyrical expression, into a drama that touches the listener or even into a profound tragedy.

The form and the conventional content of the early polonaises composed by Chopin (moulded in the pattern of Michal Kleofas Oginski's folkloric polonaises), consistently evolved to the *brillante* style and virtuosity. Nonetheless, the formal and writing transformation and the rich quality of these pieces lead Chopin to a shocking expression in movement, enclosing the "hidden" structure of a sonata<sup>32</sup> – *The Polonaise-Fantaisie*.

The majestic quality of the polonaise is determined not only by the choreographic rules of this dance, but also by the weight of its expressive essence, which lead Chopin to this musical form. The historic and patriotic references, as well as the transcendent and personal allusions which abound in Chopin's last polonaises confer them a special status. In the history of the Polish culture, they are on the same level with the most beautiful

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<sup>32</sup> This refers to the "hidden" structure of a sonata, given the circumstances that the structures of this type usually consist of free stanzas, where some reminiscence of the sonata's principles can still be found.

paintings of Jan Matejko<sup>33</sup> and the greatest poems of Adam Mickiewicz, granting Chopin the reputation of a visionary national composer.

Frédéric Chopin creation charms and fascinates the large public and the professional musicians. For many, Chopin's polonaises are the standard for all the others. He took into account all the aspects of the genre – rhythm, form, melody – and added to them new ways of expression. His early polonaises crystalized the conventional meaning of the genre in a time when the form constituted a proper environment for patriotic expression. The polonaises composed at maturity bring daring elements and structures into his musical style.

It was often stated that if from Chopin's entire creation the polonaises and mazurkas would be all that was left, the glory of the great piano-poet would still continue to reverberate forever on all the pianos in the world. Although included in the category of miniature plays, the impression of grandiosity the polonaise bestows on the audience is overwhelming.

*Andante spianato* and *The Grande Polonaise in E-Flat Major, Op. 22* is an extraordinary example of Chopin's ornamentation technique, synthesising and crystalizing the principle "ornament to ornament" in the spirit of Bellini and Rossini's *belcanto*. The melodicism is underlined by the large phrasing, where the many ornamental undulations are leaning on the accompaniment of the harmonic bass.

Frédéric Chopin brought magistral artistic value to the Polish folk music, transposing, with his genius, the forms of the national Polish folk dances among the treasures of the universal music.

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<sup>33</sup> Jan Matejko (1838-1893), the best Polish painter of historical and patriotic scenes, drawn on large canvass.