

## **CHOPIN: Enduring Enigma Part 2 Melinda Coffey Armstead**

### **Oct. 8, 2020 TIME LINE: In Exile - the Paris Salons 1830-37**

(Background - July 1830 - Second French Revolution, “July Revolution”, Bourbon King Charles X replaced by his cousin King Louis-Philippe, “The Citizen King”.)

**Nov. 2, 1830** - Chopin leaves Warsaw for Vienna by way of Dresden and Prague

Nov. 23 Chopin and Tytus Woyciechowski arrive Vienna

Nov. 29 - Warsaw Uprising begins, Tytus returns to Warsaw

Christmas Eve alone in Vienna, St. Stephen’s and mass at Imperial Chapel, no word from his family. Composes the **Lento con gran espressione in C# minor** for Ludwika and begins the Scherzo in B minor.

**1831** Jan. to July Chopin tries to arrange concerts, connects with musicians, goes to the opera, Prater, art galleries, composes Mazurkas Op. 6 & 7, discovers his manuscript of the “La ci darem” Variations in the Imperial Library, placed by the publisher Haslinger without his permission and without payment. Visits beer halls and hears Johann Strauss Sr. play waltzes during supper. By June he is running out of funds. June 11 concert playing E minor concerto loses money. Season is over. Cholera on the rise. Time to go.

**July 20, 1831** - Chopin leaves Vienna with documents for travel “to London via Paris”. Stops in Linz, Salzburg, Munich (concert of the E minor concerto and Fantasia on Polish Airs), Stuttgart, Strasburg and finally arrives Paris **Oct. 5, 1831**

(Background - Feb. 4, 1831 - opening shots fired of Russo-Polish War of 1831, fighting continues until Sept. 8 with the fall of Warsaw and massacre. Poland is crushed. Polish army, ministries, currency, university, courts abolished. Poland absorbed into the Russian empire and ruled by military decree. Ten thousand Poles leave the country in “The Great Emigration”, seeking sanctuary in Western Europe and even America.)

Chopin an exile in Paris - rents an apt., avoids the civil unrest and riots, meets other Polish expats; meets Liszt (21), Berlioz (29), and Mendelssohn (23), Kalkbrenner (44), Camille Pleyel.

**Feb. 26, 1832** - first concert in Paris, playing E minor Cto. and “La ci darem” Variations in a mixed program with singers and other pianists. Lost money but got noticed

April 1832 - serious Cholera outbreak

May 20 concert in aid of Cholera victims (no fee), considers leaving France

June 28 letter from his father urging him to save money for travel. The turning point comes when Prince Walenty Radziwill introduces him to Baron James de Rothschild, head of the most powerful banking family in Europe. The baroness asks him to play and Chopin charms them with his playing, compositions and his princely manners. Ladies present ask him for lessons and recommend him as a teacher. His fee is fixed at 20 francs a lesson (a very high rate) and by the end of the year he has all the pupils he can manage and is financially independent. He has a carriage, a manservant, and mixes in the highest circles. Publishes Mazurkas opp. 6-7.

**1833** - Plays with Liszt at benefit, opp. 8-12 published, friendship with Bellini; gives several private concerts; (Mendelssohn’s “Italian” Symphony composed)

**1834** - Visits Germany and renews friendship with Mendelssohn; (Berlioz’s Harold in Italy)

**1835** - Reunion with parents at Carlsbad, falls in love with Maria Wodzinska; (Bellini dies)  
**1836** - Proposes marriage to Maria; meets George Sand; opp. 21-23, 26, 27 published  
**1837** - Marriage plans collapse; visits London as “Mr. Fritz” with Camille Pleyel in July  
Etudes op. 25 and opp. 29-32 published; (Field and Hummel die)

“Flying Trapeze” school of keyboard virtuosity vs. Chopin

**Chopin as Teacher** - unconventional **fingering**: thumb on black keys, substitutions, crossings, exploit individual character of each finger vs. finger equalization. Work with nature rather than against it. Comfort, ease, suppleness essential. No “pigeon catching”, dramatic body movements or making faces. Nuance and range of tone color the goal. Natural hand position (B major scale) fits the topography of the keyboard. Singing tone and line.

**“Inside every successful Chopin interpreter is a singer trying to get out.”**

- Alan Walker, from his 2018 biography of Chopin

**NO: tremolos, glissandos, extended repeated notes, alternating octaves - “Liszt octaves”**

## **Recommended Listening at Home for Part 2 Oct. 8-15**

**“On the outside I pretend to be calm, but on returning home**

**I vent my rage on the piano.” - Chopin**

Johann Strauss I - Tivoli-Rutsch Waltzer Op. 39 (1830) Slovak Sinfonietta Žilina

Chopin - Grande Valse Brillante Op. 18 (1831)

Chopin - Scherzo in B minor Op. 20 (1831-32)

Chopin - Etudes Op. 10, dedicated to Liszt (pub. 1833) and Op. 25 (pub. 1837)

\*My favorite recording is the early one (1975) by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Chopin - Ballade in G minor Op. 23

Ballade in F major Op. 38, dedicated to Robert Schumann

Chopin - “Heroic” Polonaise in A Major Op. 53

(recommend Arthur Rubinstein or Seong-Jin Cho)

FYI: Polskie Radio Chopin - internet radio from Warsaw with all Chopin 24/7

## **JUST FOR FUN:**

Movie Recommendation - IMPROMPTU (1991) George Sand/Judy Davis, Chopin/Hugh Grant, Liszt/Julian Sand, Marie d’Agoult/Bernadette Peters, Delacroix/Mandy Patinkin)

## Biographies of Chopin I have read and can recommend:

Fryderyk Chopin by Alan Walker (2018) newest, best, most complete biography, 700 pages  
Chopin’s Funeral by Benita Eisler (2004) short, 200 pages, psychological insights by author  
Chopin - The Reluctant Romantic by Jeremy Siepmann (1995) chapters organized by musical genres, 250 pages, a good introduction