

THE KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI ACADEMY OF MUSIC IN KRAKÓW

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Performance issues of playing a period instrument from the perspective of a contemporary instrumentalist based on selected works by Fryderyk Chopin performed on a replica (2018) piano by Frederick Buchholtz (ca. 1825).

Description of doctoral dissertation with a creative practice component as part of proceedings for awarding a doctorate degree in the arts of music

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ARTISTIC WORK

PROGRAMME

Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)

4 Mazurkas op. 7

no. 1 in B-flat major

no. 2 in A minor

no. 3 in F minor

no. 4 in A-flat major

3 Polonaises op. 71

no. 1 in D minor

no. 2 in B-flat major

no. 3 in F minor

Rondo in E-flat major op. 16

5 Mazurkas op. 6

no. 1 in F-sharp minor

no. 2 in C-sharp minor

no. 3 in E major

no. 4 in E-flat minor

no. 5 in C major

Scherzo in B minor op. 20

Performer:

Krzysztof Książek

Executor of the vision:

Jerzy Piotrkiewicz-Błazik

Sound engineer:

Igor Szymański

Camera operators:

Dominik Kaniewski

Marcin Nalepa

Norbert Pastuszko

Piano technician:

Karolina Kapela

This recording is a recording of a recital which took place on 29 August 2021 at 12.00 pm at Fryderyk Chopin's Birthplace in Żelazowa Wola, on a replica of Fryderyk Buchholtz's piano from ca. 1825.

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INTRODUCTION

My adventure with period pianos began in August 2015 with a performance at the Basilica of the Holy Cross during the *Chopin and His Europe* festival on an Érard instrument from 1849. It is difficult to call this moment a watershed in my consciousness, if only because of the relatively short time spent with the French craftsman's instrument. However, it undoubtedly initiated one of the wildly inspiring musical paths. It was only the invitation of the Fryderyk Chopin National Institute to inaugurate on 17 March 2018 a newly built replica of the Fryderyk Buchholtz's piano, and the recording of an album of music by Fryderyk Chopin and Karol Kurpiński on the instrument, that allowed me to fully enjoy the sound of Romantic instruments. Believing that all types of artistic activity are intertwined, I decided to investigate whether and to what extent playing a period piano can influence playing a contemporary instrument, and thus try to answer the question of what place historically informed performance can have in the education and artistic life of a pianist who has chosen contemporary pianos as his main medium. Although the basis of the thesis is a recital on a replica of the already mentioned Buchholtz instrument, a natural point of reference is the sum of experiences from playing various period instruments. Taking into account the personal relationship between Chopin and Buchholtz, the artistic work being described here consists of the following works by Chopin: *4 Mazurkas, Op. 7, 3 Polonaises, Op. 71, Rondo in E flat major, Op. 16, 5 Mazurkas, Op. 6 and Scherzo in B minor, Op. 20*. The attached recording is a recording of a recital that took place on 29 August 2021 in Żelazowa Wola.¹ The musical scores used both in the artistic work and in the examples in the description comes in its entirety from the National Edition of the Works of Fryderyk Chopin, edited by Jan Ekier. The description itself comprises two parts. In the first, the biography of Fryderyk Buchholtz and his instruments are presented against the background of the history of the development of pianos and the piano-making industry in Poland. In the second part, taking more ambiguous problems of performance, I try to give an answer, which elements of playing on historical pianos can be imitated on contemporary instruments. In this work I deliberately avoided quoting the statements of contemporary pianists concerning historical performance, as they are too subjective and say more about the artists themselves than about the studied problem.

¹ It is available in public domain at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5kWPjERGp0>.

At this point, it is worth noting that performing Chopin's music on an instrument such as the Buchholtz piano, i.e. an instrument with Viennese action from the 1820s, is an unpopular subject. On the one hand, artists involved in historically informed performance treat Chopin's works as a side topic in their activity. This has its roots in the completely different aesthetics and different treatment of narration by Romantic composers than by Classical or Baroque composers. On the other hand, pianists who reach for period instruments, but for whom the main medium is the contemporary piano, usually stop at Chopin's pianos from the Parisian period. This is probably due to the fact that the difference between contemporary instruments and French instruments made after 1830 is perceptibly much smaller than the difference between contemporary instruments and Viennese instruments made before the 1830s. In my opinion, this factor contributes significantly to the uniqueness of the presented work.

Chapter I The piano - a historical outline

1. 1 History of the piano up to about 1840

Cristofori and Silbermann

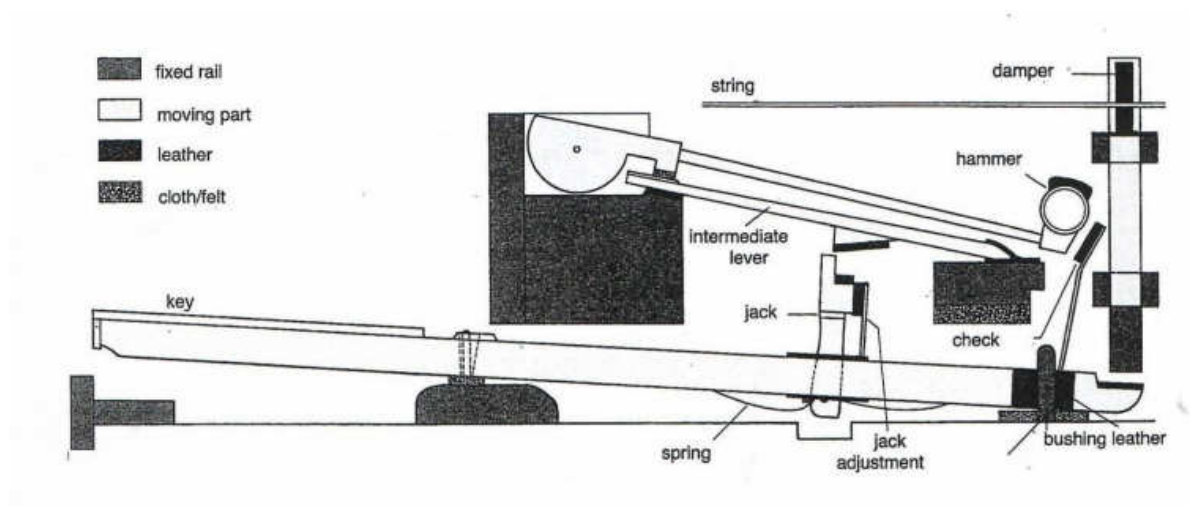
The idea to create an instrument from which the piano was later developed was to combine the advantages of the harpsichord and clavichord while eliminating their disadvantages. The harpsichord remained the most popular concert keyboard instrument until almost the end of the 18th century. It had a very loud sound, but it lacked the ability to shape the dynamics on a micro scale. All the constructors' efforts to develop the instrument - adding keyboards, more string tension or rows of jacks - increased its tone color possibilities, but did not give the possibility of a fluent change of dynamics. Terraced² dynamics became characteristic of this instrument. On the clavichord it was possible to shape both the microdynamics and the tone color. However, it was an instrument of small size and modest sound, hence it was intended mainly for home practice.

Bartolomeo Cristofori (1655-1731), a builder of instruments who from 1688 was associated with the court of Ferdinand de' Medici in Florence, was the first to combine harpsichord and clavichord. The first mention of the new instrument comes from Francesco Manucci's diary of February 1698, and in the 1700 inventory of Medicis instruments, we find a harpsichord with *piano and forte* (*gravicembalo col piano e forte* - this is how the instrument's maker called his instrument). A valuable source of knowledge about the first pianos is the account of the Italian intellectual Scipione Maffei, who in 1709 inspected Cristofori's workshop and instruments. In 1711, he described his visit to the *Giornale dei Letterati d'Italia*, and accompanied the article with a drawing of the mechanism. Three of Cristofori's instruments have survived to the present day and are held in collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (1720), the Raccola Statale di Strumenti Musicali in Rome (1722) and the Musikinstrumenten-Museum der Karl-Marx-Universität in Leipzig (1726). In addition, a piano action (ca. 1725) has been preserved in a private collection in Vancouver. It is worth noting that the mechanism of the Florentine piano maker contains 4 elements which, after modifications, can be found in contemporary pianos. These are:

² This term seems to be rather unfortunate and may suggest that harpsichord playing was flat. Nothing could be further from the truth; the impression of *de facto* impossible micro-dynamics was achieved by skilful manoeuvring of articulation and time flow in the piece in appropriate relation to the texture of a given fragment.

- intermediate lever - transmits energy between the key and the hammer and increases it at the same time;
- a jack - a protruding element of the key lever transmitting energy to the intermediate lever, allowing the latter to fall freely after it strikes the hammer;
- check - which captures the hammer energy after contact with the string by friction against the hammer head, preventing the hammer from bouncing back up to restrike the string;
- the damper system - an adaptation of harpsichord jacks; each damper was a kind of wedge covered with leather between a pair of strings, moving according to the movement of the keys;

In Cristofori's instruments each note is provided with two strings. In addition, it was possible to manually slide the keyboard sideways so that the hammer struck only one string (*una corda*).



Picture 1. Mechanism by Bartolomeo Cristofori, source: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, Macmillan Publishers Limited, London 2001, p. 657

Although the first pianos, as well as the works intended for them (Lodovico Giustini di Pistoia, *Sonate da cimbalo di piano e forte, detto volgarmente di martelletti*) were made in Italy, the new invention was quickly forgotten in that country. Germany became the new centre for the development of the recently invented instrument, and perhaps the translation and publication of the above-mentioned article by Maffei in 1725 contributed to this. One began to build pianos with copied or modified Cristofori action, as well as instruments of a new design. The Silbermann family led the way here. Gottfried Silbermann (1683-1753) from Freiburg built wing pianos with modified Cristofori action. Of his three surviving instruments (1746, 1749 and one undated), all had two hand levers. One made the sound of a piano similar

to that of a harpsichord by placing a piece of ivory where the hammer made contact with the string. The other raised all the dampers to imitate a pantalon³. Johann Sebastian Bach had contact with Gottfried Silbermann's instruments. He initially criticised the mechanism for being too heavy (sic!) and the instrument's sound not being clear enough, and it was only towards the end of his life that he approved another modified version of the new invention. Gottfried's elder brother Andreas Silbermann (1678-1734) is in turn considered the founder of Old High German action, from which *Prellmechanik* developed over time. Its roots can be found in clavichord mechanism, in which a fixed tangent is connected directly to the keyboard lever. In the old German action mentioned above, the tangent was replaced by a movable hammer, the handle of which was placed in a wooden fork. With this type of action, contrary to Cristofori mechanism and its derivatives, the hammer heads faced the keyboard. The Silbermann family is also credited with the education of many distinguished piano makers, including Johann Christian Zumpe and Johann Andreas Stein. It is worth noting that in Germany, in addition to wing pianos, vertical pianos (giraffes, pyramids) and the most popular of them all, square⁴ pianos, were also built. Still, the piano was treated as a home instrument, a substitute for the harpsichord or clavichord. All performers were first and foremost harpsichordists; playing the new invention as they did the harpsichord, they were unable to properly appreciate or accentuate the emerging innovations.

After about 1760 there was a clear division of the development of the piano into two lines, from which the English and Viennese type instruments developed.

The Viennese line of piano development

The representatives of the Viennese movement include first of all Johann Andreas Stein (1728-1792), a pupil of Johann Andreas Silbermann (son of the already mentioned Andreas Silbermann) working in Augsburg. His greatest contribution to the development of piano action was the implementation of an escapement, which allowed the hammer to move away from the string after it was struck, despite the key being pressed (the oldest action of this type date from 1773). Just how important this achievement was can be seen in the words of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in a letter to his father in 1777:

³ Pantalon - a kind of trapezoidal dulcimer, constructed by Pantaleon Hebenstreit, in which the strings, which are not dampened, are struck with hammers.

⁴ Square piano - an instrument in shape and arrangement of strings modelled on the clavichord.

This time I must start with the Stein pianos. Before I got to know his instruments, I valued Späth⁵ pianos the most, but now I give priority to Stein pianos, because they dampen sound better than the Regensburg ones. When I strike hard, I can hold my finger on the key or lift it, and the sound dies immediately after hitting it. However hard I strike the key, the sound is always the same, it does not buzz, it is neither too loud nor too quiet, and always, after each strike, it resounds unfailingly; in a word, it is always the same. [...] His instruments differ from others in that they have an escapement action, and not even one in a hundred builders cares about it. And without such a mechanism the sound buzzes and vibrates. In Stein's case, the hammers snap off the strings immediately after striking the keys, regardless of whether they are still pressed or already released.⁶

It is noteworthy that Stein's action had no back check, only a rest post. Furthermore, Stein dispensed with hand levers in his instruments. As standard, his instruments were equipped with two knee levers, each of which raised half of the dampers.

Johann Andreas Stein's children Nanette Streicher⁷ (1769-1833) and Matthäus Andreas Stein (1776-1842) continued his father's design. They initially took over their father's business, renaming it *Geschwester Stein*. In 1802 - 10 years after Nanette Stein married Andreas Streicher - the company split. Matthäus stayed in Augsburg, working under the name *Andre Stein*, Nanette started making instruments together with her husband in Vienna, under her new name. They were characterised by a softer sound, compared to other pianos of their day. Pedals appeared in place of knee⁸ levers. Their instruments made before 1818 were usually equipped with 5 pedals: *una corda*, bassoon⁹, moderator¹⁰, Turkish¹¹ pedal and sustaining. After about 1819, the Streichers customarily used four pedals (without the Turkish pedal), and from the mid 1830s they also gave up the bassoon. The family tradition was continued by Nanette and Andreas' son, Johann Baptiste Streicher (1796-1871). His contribution to the development of piano construction should be credited to the patenting of both a new type of

⁵ Incidentally also one of Stein's teachers.

⁶ Mozart Wolfgang Amadeusz, *Listy*, compiled and translated by Ireneusz Dembowski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 1991, pp. 169-170.

⁷ Born as Anna-Maria Stein.

⁸ It is impossible to give the date of the first use of pedals instead of knee levers, as well as the first builder who decided to do so. Most instruments made up to about 1804 have levers, while those made after 1810 usually have pedals. It must therefore be concluded that the transitional period is between 1805 and 1810.

⁹ As a result of the use of this pedal (register), a stiff layer of silk or parchment touched the strings in the two lowest octaves giving a more nasal, yet buzzing percussive sound.

¹⁰ Otherwise known as a *piano pedal*. When this pedal was used, a layer of cloth (usually felt) attached to a special strip would slide between the hammer and the string, significantly reducing the volume and changing the tone of the instrument.

¹¹ A pedal created to produce a percussive sound. It took various forms: hammers (striking the bells or triangle and drum or tambourine), or a combination of a rod (striking the lowest strings) and a lever ending in a paddle (striking the underside of the soundboard).

action, being a Viennese adaptation of the English system (1824), and system of iron bars¹² (1835). However, it is worth mentioning that the latter innovation lagged far behind instruments built in England and in the English style.

The biggest competitor of the Stein-Streicher family was Anton Walter (1752-1826). He used Johann Andreas Stein's action with escapement, changing the wooden fork connecting the hammer to the keyboard lever to brass. In addition, he placed three strings for each note in the upper and middle registers. The example of Walter's instruments shows the moment of transition from hand to knee levers. A piano dating from 1778 has three hand levers, two for lifting dampers and one moderator. An instrument from the early 1780s constructed for W.A. Mozart has the same three hand levers, but also (perhaps added later at the composer's request) two knee levers, lifting the dampers. Interestingly, the right lever partially overlaps the left lever. This allows the bass dampers to be raised independently of the treble dampers, but never *vice versa*. Later 18th-century Walther pianos already had two knee levers as standard - one sustaining, the other acting as a moderator.

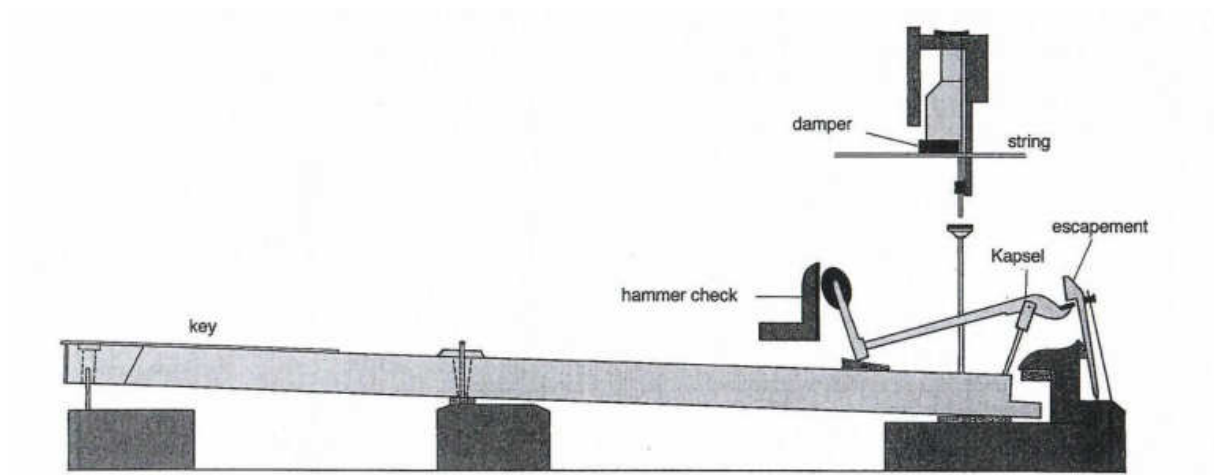
The culminating moment for the development of pianos of the Viennese type came with the work of Conrad Graf (1782-1851). In his instruments, the scale was extended (to 6 and a half octaves)¹³, the construction¹⁴ was strengthened, and wired bass strings were introduced. In terms of pedals, both the number and the types used, there is some evolution in Graf, as in the Streicher instruments. His instruments produced before 1820 had five pedals - *una corda*, bassoon, two types of moderators and a sustaining. Between 1820 and about 1835 the four-pedal arrangement (with only one moderator) predominated. Between 1835 and 1839 the bassoon was replaced by a second moderator. After 1839 the three-pedal model became established - *una corda*, moderator and sustaining. Only two of the surviving Graf instruments have a Turkish pedal. The examples shown above should be regarded as trends, from which there were of course exceptions¹⁵.

¹² They allowed the tension of the strings in the instrument to be increased.

¹³ Pianos up to the mid-18th century had a scale of 4 to 5 octaves, in the English system 5 and ½ octaves were achieved in 1791 and 6 octaves in 1794.

¹⁴ However, Graf never chose to use metal elements in his frames.

¹⁵ Such would include Beethoven's last instrument (1826) equipped with only three pedals (no bassoon), or Schumann's instrument (1839) having a four-pedal arrangement.

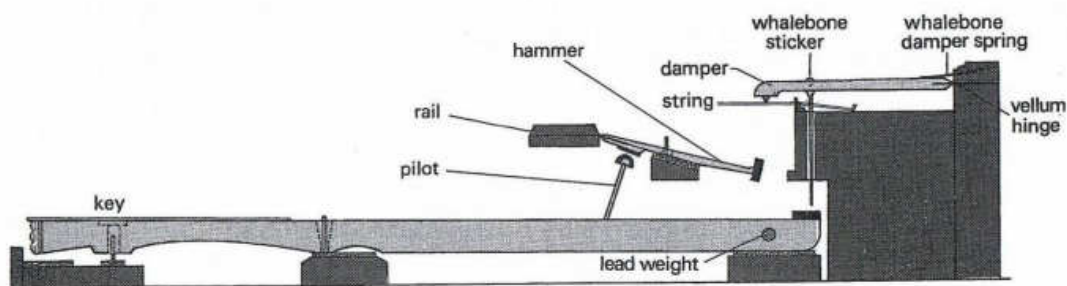


Picture 2. Viennese mechanism with escapement by Conrad Graf, source: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, red. Stanley Sadie, Macmilan Publishers Limited, London 2001, p. 673

The English line of piano development

The Seven Years' War, which lasted from 1756 to 1763, prompted a group of Saxon piano makers to emigrate to England, including one of Gottfried Silbermann's pupils, Johann Christoph Zumpe (1726-1790). He was the inventor of a popular type of square piano - with simplified Cristofori action, in which a pilot attached to the keyboard lever struck directly on the hammer. It was a relatively simple design that had no escapement or back check. The method of sound damping was also new - the keyboard lever lifted a damper attached to the instrument's case via a sticker. Initially, Zumpe's square pianos had only one hand lever used to lift the dampers. Over time, these instruments were fitted with two hand levers - one to lift the bass dampers, the other the treble dampers. From about 1769 onwards, a third hand lever was fitted as standard - the buff¹⁶.

¹⁶ A type of register that makes the sound of a piano similar to that of a lute by applying pieces of leather to the strings at either end.



Picture 3. Zumpe-style action without escapement, source: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, red. Stanley Sadie, Macmilian Publishers Limited, London 2001, p. 665

Despite its great popularity, the square piano was only a home instrument. For quite a long time, on the other hand, the winged piano remained in the shadow of the harpsichord. Americus Backers (died in 1778) contributed to its popularisation and constructional development. He equipped his instruments with two foot pedals: *una corda* and a sustaining. His mechanism was based on Cristofori's patent. However, it did not have an intermediate lever, the jack pushed directly the hammer 'having a forced escapement regulated by a set-off screw under the hammer rail'¹⁷.

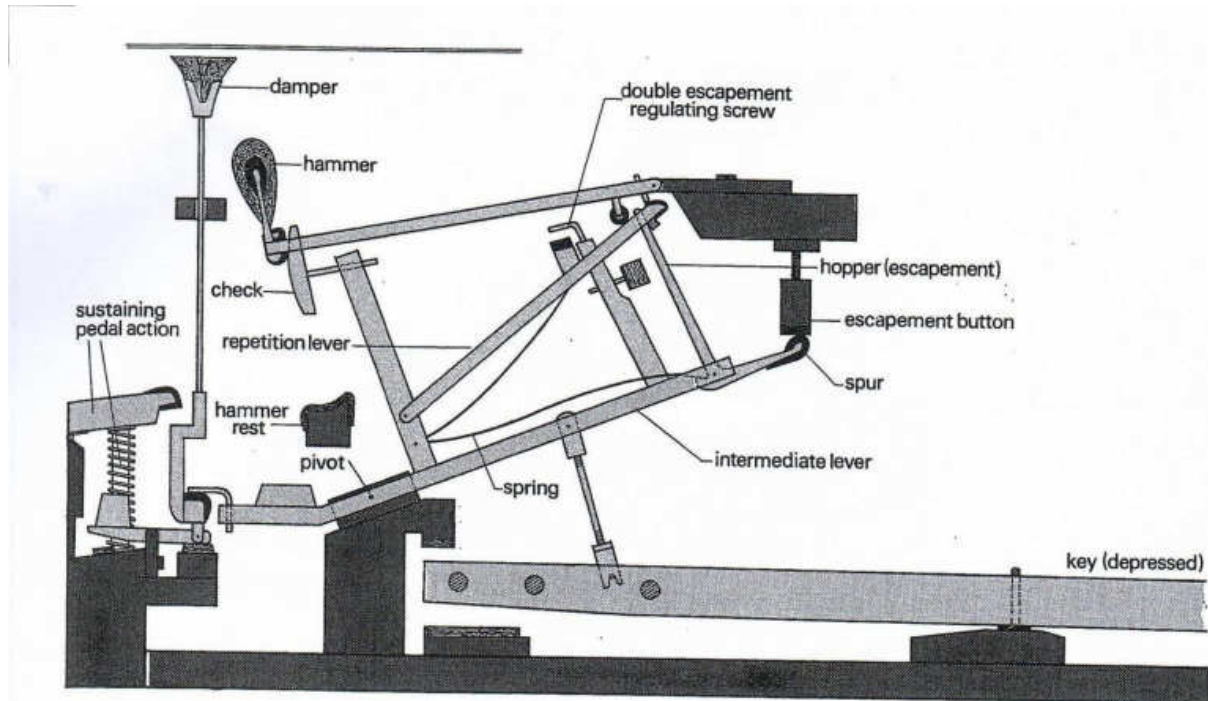
However, the Broadwood family played the most significant role in England: John (1732-1812) and his two sons James Shudi (1772-1851) and Thomas. Among their most important achievements were the determination of the new point where the hammer strikes the string, the division of the bridge into bass and treble strings, and the use of three strings for each note. In addition, they first used a metal frame bracket for the treble strings in 1808, by 1821 they were already using 3-5 such brackets, and in 1827 James patented a metal frame bracket in combination with a metal striker bar. Such a semi-metallic frame became widespread until a full cast metal frame was patented. These measures, combined with an increasingly solid body, allowed the instrument to withstand increasing string tension, consequently making the sound of the instrument more resounding. It is worth remembering that thicker and tighter strings required heavier, more thickly veneered hammers. In 1826, Henry Pape patented felt¹⁸ veneers in France, as well as the method of manufacturing them.

English manufacturing thought was transplanted to France by Sébastien Érard (1752-1831), who emigrated to London a few years before the outbreak of the Great Revolution. He

¹⁷ *Piano*, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Edwin M. Ripin and others, Macmilian Publishers Limited, London 2001, vol. 19, pp. 655-676.

¹⁸ Before this time the hammers were covered in leather.

returned to Paris in 1796 with an experience and knowledge of the craft from the English masters. Érard's greatest achievement, which we are still benefiting from today, is the patenting of a double-escapement action in 1821. His innovation was the use of a repetition lever, allowing the hammer to strike the string again without fully depressing the key.¹⁹



Picture 4. Mechanism by Sébastien Érard with double-escapement, source: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, Macmillan Publishers Limited, London 2001, p. 675

Initially, Viennese pianos were much more popular. This was due to their greater precision, simplicity of construction, which translated into a lower price and, as a result, greater availability. However, it is the descendants of English pianos that we play to this day. It is hard to see the reason for this state of affairs in the ability to increase the volume of sound inherent in English instruments, forgetting about the 19th-century industrial revolution and the increasing, still in its infancy, mechanisation of work. It is impossible not to notice that the development of Viennese pianos basically stopped with the death of Beethoven. This does not mean that the possibilities for modernising Viennese instruments were exhausted (although they were perhaps less obvious than in the case of English instruments). The centre of the pianistic world moved then to Paris - the city of Chopin and Liszt. It is undeniable that outstanding instrumentalists and composers were essential to the development of the instrument almost as much as their builders.

¹⁹ The hammer was positioned near the string after the first strike.

In the opinion of the author of this work, this review of the most important achievements in the development of piano construction will allow a better understanding of the specifics of the piano-building community on Polish soil, making it possible to show the uncommonness of the person and work of Fryderyk Buchholtz. Moreover, a better knowledge and understanding of the instrument on which music is performed seems to be an essential element in forming a conscious interpretation.

1.2 The piano in Polish lands until the outbreak of the November Uprising

General conditions for the development and characteristics of the piano industry

The social, political and economic situation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the second half of the 18th century did not favour the development of piano-building. The bourgeoisie was relatively sparse, and the nobility was too busy with the internal problems of the state to focus on music. Only the aristocracy, the magnate and royal courts created a market for instruments. Mentions of pianos can be found in the accounts of the courts of Stanisław August Poniatowski, Prince Józef Poniatowski or Hetman Kazimierz Ogiński, as well as in some monastic records. However, the most popular instruments were still the harpsichord and clavichord. The collapse of Polish statehood accelerated social changes - cultural life moved to rapidly growing and enriching cities. This significantly increased the demand for instruments, which could not be met by domestic production²⁰. It should also be remembered that the beginning of the 19th century was marked by the Napoleonic Wars, which not only complicated the international situation but also did not favour economic development. Therefore, instruments, mainly Austrian and German, were imported. Józef Elsner, asked by Érard about pianos in Warsaw around 1805, replied that they were most often imported, mainly from Vienna, 'as instrument construction and factories are still very low in our country.'²¹ Political divisions on the map of Europe severely restricted imports from such directions as France or England. The price of these instruments was also a barrier. Two examples may better illustrate this fact. The first is the situation in which the above-mentioned Elsner found himself. He bought an instrument from Érard for Princess Sapieżyna

²⁰ Benjamin Vogel estimates it at 30-50 instruments per year in the early 19th century.

²¹ J. Elsner, *Sumariusz moich utworów muzycznych*, Kraków 1957 p.123; J. Gutkowski, *Pianoforte pana Elsnera*, Kronika Zamkowa 1986 no. 3 (5) p. 8-11, quoted after B. Vogel *Fortepian polski. Budownictwo fortepianów na ziemiach polskich od poł. XVIII w. do II wojny światowej*, p. 82, Sutkowski Edition Warsaw, Warsaw 1995.

for 5000 Polish zloty. In 1806, he commissioned another instrument for a similar sum, but was unable to find a buyer for it. The average price of the best domestic instruments did not exceed 2000 Polish zloty before 1830. Finally, the piano burned down together with the composer's manor house in 1830. The second example is a description that appeared in the Warsaw press, in an article praising Antoni Leszczyński's instruments:

The first houses in Warsaw have already recognised the excellence of his instruments, and the purchase that these English pantalons have in Warsaw is a clear proof of their goodness. Admittedly, they are somewhat expensive; a hundred ducats is not something that everyone is able to calculate, but what is that in comparison with Clementi's pantalons in London, which cost 200, 250 and 300 guineas each?²²

Stabilisation favourable to development came after the Congress of Vienna. This is best illustrated by the example of the Kingdom of Poland. The Administrative Council of the Congress Kingdom introduced a number of measures to facilitate the settlement of potential workers and craftsmen, both from the countryside and from the surrounding states. Various institutions were created, such as Factory Sections, Chambers of Commerce and Crafts, and the Council for Trade and Handicrafts. Foreign craftsmen settling in the cities of the Kingdom were exempted from military service and customs duties, and from all taxes for a period of 6 years. In addition, they were entitled to building plots and building materials. Substantial funds were allocated for loans and allowances for entrepreneurs. Antoni Leszczyński received a loan of 18,000 Polish zloty in 1819, while Józef Długosz received 10,000 Polish zloty in 1834 to build a house. In addition, industrial exhibitions were organised, at which the best manufacturers were awarded medals and prizes; piano makers were always among them.

The influence of customs tariffs on the development of the piano industry is worth analysing. One of the objectives of the Vienna Treaty was to maintain the economic integrity of the Polish lands divided between the three states. A duty of 10% was imposed on Polish goods exchanged between the partitions. By 1818, the situation had changed significantly - under treaties between Russia, Austria and Prussia, protection for Polish manufacturers was reduced. Only a negotiated customs union between Russia and the Kingdom of Poland improved the situation of Polish industry. At that time, a new type of duty was introduced on goods imported into Congress Poland (the so-called consumer duty)²³. Exports were in turn

²² *Gazeta Warszawska*, 1823, no. 67, pp.888-889, quoted after: Vogel Benjamin *Warszawski Instrument Fryderyka Chopina*, w: *Fortepian Chopina*, p. 90, Fryderyk Chopin Institute, Warsaw 2018.

²³ In the case of pianos, this amounted to 75% of the value.

freed from customs duties. The next step was the announcement of a protective tariff reaching 100% of the value on the external customs borders of the Kingdom in 1823. In the following years, tariffs of almost 300% were introduced as part of the tariff war between Russia and Austria and Prussia. Naturally, these measures contributed to the development of Polish piano building, minimising the importance of imports. A certain number of instruments were exported to the Russian Empire.²⁴

Despite favourable conditions and a noticeable growth in production, pianos were still built very little in Poland. The system of production based on the master-apprentice pattern, dating back to the Middle Ages, was probably not without significance. In this respect, Polish workshops were quite backward compared to other European centres. One of the most active workshops, that of Antoni Leszczyński, produced 175 opus instruments in the years 1819-1830, which gives an annual average of 17.5 instruments. Benjamin Vogel estimates the whole production of the Congress²⁵ Kingdom at that time at around 200-250 pianos per year. By comparison, in France at the time, the Pleyel factory alone produced around 100 pianos per year.

Polish pianos - constructional features

The first Polish grand piano preserved to this day is a square instrument with tangent action of 4 1/2 octaves scale, built by Jan Skórski of Sandomierz in 1774. It combines features of the clavichord (similar construction of the case, arrangement of the keyboard, and type of mechanism), harpsichord (hammers in the form and size of harpsichord jacks, presence of a buff register) and pantalon (no dampers). As proved by Benjamin Vogel, it is the oldest surviving instrument of this type in the world, which may attest to its Polish origin²⁶. Until the 1830s, square instruments (although no longer with tangent action) were the most popular type of piano.

The first winged piano that has survived to the present day was created by Daniel Fuchs in his workshop in Krakow. It has a typically Viennese case construction, Viennese action, 2 mechanical registers - *una corda* and a sustaining, 2-3 strings for each note, bass strings without wiring. This construction is due to the fact that the piano maker was educated in Vienna and transferred the learned patterns from there. It is also true that the majority of

²⁴ In 1828, the value of exported pianos amounted to 33796 Polish zloty, i.e. 3.3% of total exports to the East.

²⁵ About twenty labels.

²⁶ See B. Vogel, *Fortepian polski...* p. 117.

instruments (regardless of their form - square, wing or upright) built at the beginning of the 19th century on Polish soil, were of Viennese origin.

The years 1815-1830 were particularly intensive for the development of piano building. Outside the Congress Kingdom, instruments of the Viennese type, modelled mainly on the pianos of Conrad Graf from the 1820s, still prevailed. Instruments with a Turkish and bassoon pedals enjoyed popularity. The situation was different in the Kingdom of Poland. Here, both Viennese and English instruments were created, both in terms of the hammer action used and the construction of the case. The disadvantage of English instruments was the higher production cost of the mechanism, which had to be reflected in the final price, hence Viennese mechanics were sometimes combined with English case construction and *vice versa*. A proof of combining piano components from different lines can be found in this advertisement:

4 Mahogany pianos with English action and 2 English pianos with Viennese action and 1 English piano made of birch wood with Viennese action are for sale at JP. Hochhauser, piano maker in Przejazd street under number 649.²⁷

The forerunner of English instruments construction in Poland was most probably, educated in England, Antoni Leszczyński (born after 1780-1830). However, for Polish music amateurs, accustomed to light Viennese instruments, the type of mechanics coming from the British Isles was too heavy:

I have no other aim in this than to encourage Leszczyński to perfect his pantalons. He should know that the public opinion has already declared itself in favour of his instruments; there is, however, one remark he could make, and that is: that his keys are a little too heavy. In England, it is customary to make strong keys, but in Poland, where (as one traveller says) the ladies do not drink porter, and for that reason do not have as much strength in their fingers as English ladies, this is a visible drawback.

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Also, Fryderyk Chopin, though succinctly, expressed himself rather unflatteringly in a letter about the instruments of this manufacturer: 'Where to move Leszczyński's wretched instruments, for I have not seen a single one that would approach in voice to your sister's pantalon, or to ours.'²⁹

²⁷ *Kurier Warszawski* 1829, no. 109, p. 460, quoted after: B. Vogel, *Fortepian polski...* p. 121

²⁸ *Gazeta Warszawska*, 1823, no. 67, pp.888-889, quoted after: B. Vogel, *Warszawski fortepian Chopina...* p. 90

²⁹ F. Chopin, *List do Tytusa Woyciechowskiego w Poturzynie*, 27 December 1828, Warsaw in: *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina vol. I. 1816-1831*, p. 259, ed. Z. Helman, Z. Skowron, H. Wróblewska-Straus, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warsaw 2009.

A breakthrough in the history of piano building in Poland came in 1826, when Maria Szymanowska brought in her instrument (most probably a Broadwood) and was granted exemption from customs duties on condition that she made the piano available to local piano makers as a model. As early as January 1827, a similar instrument was built to order by Fryderyk Buchholtz. A description of another (already with Viennese mechanics) constructed two months later can be found in the press:

There are 3 improvements to it: 1. the body inside is fixed by iron bars, by which the durability is fixed. 2) The bend of the wing in the weaker side of the treble is fixed by iron conjunctions, by which the durability of the tuning is maintained. 3. by subtracting the bottom, i.e. the hole underneath the voice has become stronger. 3 important advantages! Perhaps Mr Buchholtz took the patterns, but the honour of compiling them belongs to him without a doubt. ³⁰

It is obvious that not only Buchholtz was inspired by Szymanowska's instrument - already in March 1827 in the Warsaw press one could find such an announcement:

I have the honour to inform the Distinguished: Amateurs, that having seen the English pantalon of JP. Szymanowska, the first pianist of LV Empresses, recently imported, I have undertaken, according to the model of the most useful parts of the mechanics of that instrument, to manufacture in my factory pianos, the cases of which will be entirely in the English manner, they may have a bottom or no bottom, placing in them, according to the tastes of the purchasers, Viennese or English action. These instruments are nearing completion and are laid out with the most beautiful mahogany veneer, of which each with Viennese action will cost 60 ducats, whilst the price of an instrument with English action has not yet been established. W. Troschel. Piano maker at 546 Długa Street. ³¹

In the same year, a similar piano was built by Tomasz Max (ca. 1799-1864). Two innovations introduced by Polish piano makers are also worth mentioning. In 1826 Maksymilian Hochhauser (1783-1869) created an instrument in which 'there are four strings for each tone up to the bass, so that its voice is unequally stronger than that of other instruments of its kind, and it can serve most conveniently for concerts, as the power of the voice cannot be muffled by other instruments.'³²

This way of increasing the sound volume of the instrument was doomed to failure. The quadruple stringing required larger hammers, which necessitated the strengthening of the entire mechanism, making it much heavier. Moreover, the increased tension of the strings had

³⁰ *Kurier Warszawski*, 1827 no. 18, p. 69, no. 75 p. 302, quoted after: B. Vogel, *Fortepian polski...* p. 121

³¹ *Kurier Warszawski*, 1827, No. 69, pp. 277-278, quoted after: B. Vogel, *Fortepian polski...* p. 122

³² *Gazeta Wielkiego Księstwa Poznańskiego*, 1826 no. 17, p. 216, quoted after: B. Vogel, *Fortepian polski...* p. 123

a destructive effect on the frame of the instrument. Another invention, built in 1829 in Vilnius, came from Wilhelm Ludwig Muthreich. He offered ‘an entirely new kind of *flügelfortepian* of his own invention, on which every piece in all tones can be played without needing either to change notes or to change the fingering.’³³ But even this innovation was doomed to failure - advanced musicians did not need a special mechanism for transposition, and for amateurs the cost of such a solution was too high. The landscape of pianos built on Polish soil at the beginning of the 19th century can be supplemented by such curiosities as the melodicordion, eolipantalon³⁴, *mossochordo*³⁵ or, last but not least, bowed pianos. Although these instruments have not survived to our times, they must have been in great demand in the nineteenth century, since the young Fryderyk Chopin played the eolipantalon. This is what the press reported:

One has listened to Chopin playing on the eolipantalon the first *Allegro* of Moscheles's *Piano concerto in F minor*, with free fantasies. This instrument, made by the local master carpenter Dlugosec [Dlugosz], combines the eolimelodicon with the piano in a way that gives the pianist, who has become familiar with the structure of the instrument, an unexpectedly wide variety of expression, and under the fingers of the talented young Chopin, who distinguishes himself by the wealth of musical ideas in his free fantasies and is completely in control of the instrument, he makes a great impression.³⁶

The above short review of the most important trends and achievements in the field of piano-making on Polish territory at the beginning of the 19th century shows that the domestic industry, despite external difficulties and its small size, was not significantly lagging behind the leading European centres, meeting the expectations and financial possibilities of potential customers.

1.3 Fryderyk Buchholtz - profile of the craftsman

Fryderyk Buchholtz was born on 16 May 1792 in Hohenstein³⁷, East Prussia. His parents, Andrzej Buchholtz and Ewa, née Pohl, moved to Warsaw during Fryderyk's childhood, where Andrzej was noted as a *Schirrmeister*. After an apprenticeship with one of the capital's

³³ *Kurier Litewski*, 1829, no. 129, added, quoted after: B. Vogel, *Fortepian polski...* p. 123

³⁴ Both are an attempt to combine the piano with the harmonium.

³⁵ A combination of a stringed keyboard instrument and an organ, about which unfortunately no further information is available.

³⁶ Wilhelm Würfel, *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 1825, No. 40, 16 XI, pp. 760, 763-764, in: *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina...* pp. 633-634

³⁷ Nowadays Olsztynek.

carpenters, the young Buchholtz embarked on a journeyman's years³⁸ as an organ-maker. Around 1815 he returned to Warsaw and set up his own piano workshop at 1352 Mazowiecka (Świętokrzyska) St. Very soon he became one of the most respected and authoritative builders. This is evidenced by the fact that in 1817 he applied to the authorities³⁹ for the establishment of an organ-builders⁴⁰ assembly. The organisation was granted legal status by the Magistrate's decision only in 1819, and Friedrich Buchholtz was its senior from 1825. The esteem in which he was held by the craftsmen also translated into financial success. As early as 1825 he was able to buy the house he had rented up to that point (together with the tavern), where his workshop was situated, for 2500 Polish zloty in cash. In 1819 he married Emilia, née Bratyńska (b. 1797), with whom he had five children, among them Julian (1820-1860), Aloisius (b. 1822) and Matylda Dobrowolska (1825-1910). He died in 1837 in Warsaw and was buried in the Lutheran section of the Powązki cemetery.

Throughout his life, Fryderyk Buchholtz built winged pianos with Viennese actions, and at the customer's request, with English ones. After 1826 he also constructed instruments of the English type on the model of the piano brought by Maria Szymanowska.⁴¹ Apart from the standard: sustaining, moderator and *una corda* pedals, the piano-maker 'following the fashion, at first made pianos with Turkish pedal and bassoon. However, he soon abandoned these inappropriate additions.'⁴² It is worth noting, as Paul McNulty points out in his interview with the author,⁴³ that Buchholtz, who was to be in Vienna in 1815, did not model himself on just one builder. Despite the noticeable resemblance to the pianos of Conrad Graf, the instruments of the Warsaw manufacturer also possessed features characteristic of other piano makers of the early 19th century. These were:

- ribs modelled exactly on Anton Walter's design;
- hammers similar to those used by Johann Fritz⁴⁴, i.e. with a larger striking surface on the string, also covered with a thinner layer of leather;

³⁸ A type of vocational training involving apprenticeships under the supervision of different masters, in different cities or even countries. Apprentices usually had a booklet in which their apprenticeship was recorded. After the journeyman's years, the apprentice could be admitted to the guild master's examination.

³⁹ Together with other leading pian-makers of the time – Wenceslas Bauer (1758-1829) and Wilhelm Jansen.

⁴⁰ It brought together organ-makers as well as violin and piano - makers. The latter constituted the majority.

⁴¹ See the previous subsection of this paper.

⁴² K. W. Wójcicki, *Cmentarz powązkowski*, vol. 3, Warsaw 1858, p. 235, quoted after B. Vogel, *Fortepian polski...* p. 119.

⁴³ Transcription of the interview in the appendix to this paper.

⁴⁴ Johann Peter Fritz (died 1834 in Vienna) - a piano builder connected with Vienna. Instruments preserved to this day can be seen, among others, in The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, or the Civico Museo degli Strumenti Musicali in Milan.

- the arrangement of wood in the soundboard, at an angle to the bend of the instrument, characteristic of French makers.

In 1830 Buchholtz constructed a piano with mechanics by Johann Baptiste Streicher,⁴⁵ and later in the 1830s, together with his son Julian, an instrument with a damper lift divided into upper and lower registers. The ability to combine different influences shows great skill, knowledge, a strong inner conviction of what makes the most efficient instrument, and the individualism of the builder.

In addition to winged instruments, especially in his early phase (i.e. until 1825) Buchholtz also built giraffe pianos. He was also, together with August Fidelis Brunner (born 1797), the constructor of a melodicon⁴⁶, which was awarded a recommendation for its performance at an industrial exhibition in 1825. To this day, no more than ten of Fryderyk Buchholtz's instruments have survived in the collections of, among others, the Museum of Musical Instruments in Poznań, the National Museum in Warsaw, the Fryderyk Chopin Institute, the Hunters' Palace in Antonin, the Andrzej Szwabbe Collection in Ostromecko near Bydgoszcz, the Museum of Industrial History in Opatówek near Kalisz, the Warsaw Chamber Opera, and the Landscape Museum in Krzemieniec in the Ukraine.

1.4 Fryderyk Chopin's relationship with Fryderyk Buchholtz and his instruments

Fryderyk Chopin's relationship with Fryderyk Buchholtz is multifaceted and stems naturally from the relationship that must have developed between the best local pianist and the most esteemed local manufacturer. The young composer was a frequent visitor to Buchholtz's salon and factory. In a letter to Tytus Woyciechowski he wrote: 'In Sanniki I reworked that Rondo in C major (the last one, if you recall) for 2 pianos, today I tried it with Ernemann at Buchholtz's and it turned out quite well. We are thinking of playing it at the Resursa some day.'⁴⁷ The relations between Fryderyk Chopin and the Buchholtz family are well shown in an article that appeared in the Warsaw press after the death of Fryderyk Buchholtz's daughter, Matylda Dobrowolska:

⁴⁵ See pp. 11-12 of this work.

⁴⁶ See footnote no. 34

⁴⁷ F. Chopin, *List do Tytusa Woyciechowskiego na Poturzynie*, 9 IX 1828, Warszawa, w: *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina...* p. 234.

Matylda Dobrowolska, born in Warsaw on 14 March 1825, was the daughter of Fryderyk Buchholtz and Emilia, née Bratyńska. This was the most splendid era of the Congress Kingdom, whose capital was teeming with the pulse of a great life. Fryderyk Buchholtz was the founder and owner of Poland's first piano factory, and his home was the centre of Warsaw's artistic movement at the time. The Buchholtz salon hosted the whole of Warsaw society. In this salon, the young Chopin was seen for the first time in front of the assembled guests, when he sat down at a Buchholtz piano and caused an unprecedented enthusiasm. From then on, Chopin was a frequent guest at the Buchholtz home and always played there, warmly applauded and received with the warmest affection.⁴⁸

Apart from the undoubted social ties linking Fryderyk Chopin to the Buchholtz family, it should be remembered that the young pianist was in the opinion of researchers the owner of an instrument made by this very manufacturer⁴⁹. This is mentioned above all in the testimony of Ludwika Ciechomska, née Jędrzejewicze, Chopin's niece.⁵⁰ Fryderyk's instrument was, however, destroyed. In retaliation for an assassination attempt on General Berg during the January Uprising, the Zamoyski Palace on Krakowskie Przedmieście, where Chopin's sister, Izabella Barcińska, lived, was ransacked by Russian soldiers and the piano thrown down the stairs.⁵¹ There were rumours that the instrument survived the turmoil of 1863. In fact, Benjamin Vogel mentions⁵² that, according to Count Włodzimierz Grabowski, the instrument was to be salvaged and taken to the Grabowski estate in Żeliszew. Unfortunately, the Żeliszew palace itself did not survive the post-war nationalisation, and all its movable property was taken to Warsaw for fear of the approaching Eastern Front, and burned during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. The existence of a piano in the Żeliszew estate was confirmed by Jan Kochanowicz in his 2001 *Spotkania z zabytkami*⁵³. He visited the palace in 1943, and when asked about the piano there, received the answer that it was an instrument Chopin had rescued in 1863.

⁴⁸ J.M., *Echo z czasów Chopina [Echoes from Chopin's times]*, in: *Świat [The World]*, 1910, no. 10, p.16, quoted after: B. Vogel, *Warszawski Fortepian...* p. 93-94.

⁴⁹ We are referring here to the representative instrument of the Chopins' home, which was regarded by the family as Fryderyk's instrument. Furthermore, in the Chopins' flat in Krasiński Palace, the composer had a second instrument in his room - but this was most probably sold shortly after the composer of the *Ballade* in *G minor* left Warsaw.

⁵⁰ *Echo Muzyczne i Teatralne*, 1885, no. 82, p. 172 after B. Vogel, *Fortepiany młodego Chopina*, in: *Studia Musicologica Calisiensia, W kręgu fortepianu i muzyki fortepianowej*, ed. by Rottermund Krzysztof, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2019

⁵¹ An artistic vision of this event was presented by Cyprian Kamil Norwid at the end of his poem *Szopen's Piano*.

⁵² B. Vogel, *Fortepiany młodego Chopina...* p. 168-169.

⁵³ J. Kochanowicz, *Chopin's piano?*, in: *Spotkania z Zabytkami*, 2001, no. 3, p. 34f after: B. Vogel, *Fortepiany młodego Chopina...* p. 169

From a letter from Fryderyk Chopin to Tytus Woyciechowski, quoted earlier in this work, about 'Leszczyński's wretched instruments'⁵⁴, we know that the two friends owned pianos of the same maker. Although Woyciechowski's instrument was burnt down during the First World War, there is a well-known description of the mementoes of the composer's friend preserved by his family in the palace in Wuzyczyn: 'In addition to old mahoganies and the Buchholtz piano on which Chopin – a friend of Tytus Woyciechowski, grandfather on the distaff side of Tomasz Wyżga – was said to have played, the palace contained many antique objects and works of art.'⁵⁵

Chopin performed his *Concerto in F minor*, Op. 21 on his home instrument during a concert at the Teatr Narodowy in Warsaw on 17 March 1830. This is how the event was reported in the press:

Mr. Chopin yesterday proved to a very numerous audience that honourable opinion, which had been spread about him by experts and the first artists of our capital. A truly brilliant talent, worthy of admiration! All the praise that we read in the local journals was justly deserved. From this dead instrument without singing, and therefore without life and soul, no pianist is said to have drawn in the *Adagio* such delightful effects! This *Adagio* in the Concerto of Mr. Chopin, this original work of extraordinary musical genius, places our young virtuoso alongside the foremost artists of Europe. Truly! Far proclaims his name, who in young years so begins. The Rondo and the Potpourri are of the same art, both in composition and performance. Mr. Chopin's playing is refined, delicate; in the passages, one could only wish for more energy and power; in the salon, the execution of Mr. Chopin would make an even greater impression.⁵⁶

The general impression after this concert was that, despite the brilliant playing of the young composer, the piano did not work. At a concert repeated a week later, Chopin played a different instrument. This was also noted by the press:

Mr. Chopin's second concert was just as splendid as the first, all the seats in the theatre were occupied; the same contentment of the audience, the same best reception of our artist. Granting the wish of many experts, Mr Chopin played that evening on the Viennese piano which Hummel usually used in his concerts. It was thought that its tones, although less powerful than those of an English piano, were

⁵⁴ See p. 19.

⁵⁵ R. Aftanazy, *Dzieje rezydencji na dawnych kresach Rzeczypospolitej*, vol. VI *Województwo bełskie. Ziemia Chełmska województwa ruskiego*, 2nd edition, Wrocław 1995, p. 272 and next, quoted after: B. Vogel, *Warszawski Fortepian...* p. 85.

⁵⁶ M. Mochnacki, *Kurier Polski*, 1830, no. 103, 18 III, p. 523 (525), quoted after: *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina...*, p. 649.

nevertheless clearer; nevertheless, in view of the construction of our theatre, it is doubtful whether any piano would prove sufficiently powerful there.⁵⁷

This is how Chopin himself referred to the instruments used in a letter to Tytus Woyciechowski:

Kurpiński considered that evening the new beauties in my Concerto, and Wimen still confessed that he did not know what people were looking for in my Allegro. Ernemann was completely content, and Elsner regretted that my pantalon was muffled and that the bass passages could not be heard. That evening, while the parade-goers and those who stood in the orchestra were content, the ground floor complained about the quiet playing, and I would have liked to have been at Cinderella's to hear the debate that must have raged over my person. That is why Mochnecki in 'Kurier Polski', having praised me to the skies, and especially the Adagio, advises more energy at the end. I guessed where that energy lay and in the second concert I played not on my own, but on a Viennese instrument. Diakon, the Russian General, was so polite that he gave me his instrument, better than the Hummel's, and only then was the audience, even more numerous than at the first, satisfied.⁵⁸

Several statements can be deduced from the above sources. Chopin's home instrument was an English one, but whether it was of the English type or also with English mechanics, it is impossible to find out. Buchholtz's name is not mentioned in any press article, probably because of the esteem in which he was held. However, the fact that Fryderyk decided to use his home instrument for such an important event testifies to his exceptional attachment to it. It may probably indicate Chopin's preference for English action.⁵⁹ The fact that he used a Streicher instrument⁶⁰ at his last Warsaw concert, on 11 October 1830, lends support to this interpretation: 'Then, my majesty, the *Allegro in E minor*, which, as if from a flake, appeared on a Streicher piano.'⁶¹ Be that as it may, the composer of the *Rondo à la Krakowiak*, quite understandably for any pianist, had a special affection for his home instrument by Buchholtz. In Chopin's letters we can find one more mention of the Warsaw maker's instruments: 'Buchholtz finishes his instrument à la Streicher, it is well played, better than his Viennese, but far from the real Viennese.'⁶² In the opinion of the author of this description, these words may

⁵⁷ *Gazeta Warszawska*, 1830, no. 81, 24 III, p. 747, in: *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*...p. 657.

⁵⁸ F. Chopin, *List do Tytusa Woyciechowskiego w Poturzynie*, 27th March 1830 in: *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*..., p. 336.

⁵⁹ The composer after settling permanently in Paris stopped to have contact with instruments of Viennese mechanics. It is worth noting that no traces have survived showing that he regretted this fact.

⁶⁰ Probably with the Anglo-Viennese mechanics of J.B. Streicher.

⁶¹ F. Chopin, *List do Tytusa Woyciechowskiego w Poturzynie*, 12th October 1830, in: *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*..., p. 416.

⁶² F. Chopin, *Letter to Tytus Woyciechowski in Poturzyn*, 4 September 1830, in: *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*..., p. 391.

prove two facts, seemingly mutually exclusive. The first interpretation that comes to mind is that the composer's assessment of Buchholtz's pianos changed over time, and this was certainly influenced by his journey to Vienna in 1829 and the opportunity to play on instruments by Graf and Stein, among others. Another possible addition to this statement would be that Chopin did not value very much Buchholtz's instruments built on the Viennese model. With the current state of research and available sources, the question of whether any of these interpretations is accurate (and if so, which ones?) seems to have no solution.

In his preface to the edition of Chopin's works, Karol Mikuli⁶³ wrote: '[With Chopin] the pupil always played on an excellent concert piano and was obliged to practise only on the best (vorzüglichsten) instruments.'⁶⁴ It is not surprising that an outstanding pianist such as Fryderyk Chopin attached great importance to the instruments he chose. It is also difficult to expect that this trait developed in the composer only in Paris;⁶⁵ it must have been part of his pianistic personality already in Warsaw. Witold Lutosławski, in turn, aptly summed up how important an instrument (and thus its technical and timbral features) was for Chopin's compositional process: 'in none of the composers in the entire history of music did the mysterious union of three elements appear with such force and inseparable coherence: the hand, the keys and the feeling of music through sound.'⁶⁶

1.5 A replica (2018) of a piano by Fryderyk Buchholtz, circa 1825

The instrument on which the artistic work which is the subject of this description was recorded is a replica (2018) of a Buchholtz instrument from around 1825. The original is held in the National History Museum in Krzemieniec, Ukraine. The first mention of this instrument reached the Centre for Monuments Documentation⁶⁷ in 1999 through Sławomir Mączak of Warsaw, the son of a professor at the Krzemieniec High School. The history of the replica, however, dates back to 2010. It was then that a team from the Fryderyk Chopin Institute, comprising: Stanisław Leszczyński, Agnieszka Kłopotcka, Stefan Mielechewicz and Benjamin Vogel inspected the instrument for its suitability for a possible copy. The team

⁶³ Karol Mikuli (1821-1897) - pianist, teacher, publisher of the works of Fryderyk Chopin (1880, Leipzig) and his pupil in the years 1844-1848.

⁶⁴ K. Mikuli, *Vorwort*, p. 4, in: *Chopin's Pianoforte- Werke*, ed. K. Mikuli, Leipzig (Kistner) 1880, vols. 1-17, quoted by J. J. Eigeldinger, *Chopin w oczach swoich uczniów*, Musica Iagellonica, Kraków 2000, p. 46.

⁶⁵ This period is referred to in Mikuli's quote.

⁶⁶ W. Lutosławski, fragment of an answer to the question "What is Chopin to me?" in the survey addressed to contemporary Polish composers, in: *Polska*, 1970, no. 9, quoted after: M. Tomaszewski, *Chopin. Człowiek, Dzieło, Rezonans*, PWM, Kraków 2010, p. 144.

⁶⁷ Now the National Heritage Institute.

assessed the condition of the piano as sufficient to create a replica. Another inspection of the instrument, this time by its builder, Paul McNulty⁶⁸, together with Viviana Sofronitsky and Benjamin Vogel, was carried out in 2012. The dating of the original to about 1825 was based on the constructional features and the wax stamps preserved in the right part of the pin block. The first stamp bears the inscription: *UR MUN MIAS WAR*⁶⁹, *WYROBEK, NATIONAL*. On the second one the initial of Tsar Nicholas under the crown and an incomplete inscription: *ZAWA*⁷⁰. These stamps, introduced in 1823, certified domestic production, exempting the instrument from customs duties when trading goods between the Kingdom of Poland and the Republic of Cracow.

The case of this piano, has a bottom with a hole⁷¹, is supported on three legs in the form of columns. The keyboard cover is connected to the case lid of the instrument. The lyre, on which the three brass pedals are mounted, is supported on a crossbar connecting the front legs. The entire instrument, in decorative *Empire style*, is veneered with pyramid mahogany. The ornaments in gilded bronze add to the elegance. The keyboard is covered with ivory (diatonic keys) and dark stained wood (chromatic keys). Above it is a nameplate: under the glass in an oval frame of gilt bronze is a printed card with the inscription: *Fryderyk Buchholtz, in WARSAW*. The rich ornamentation of this instrument testifies to its intended use for a wealthy Ukrainian court.

It is a straight-stringed instrument, whose case construction as well as mechanics are of Viennese type. The scale of the instrument is F_1f^4 . The piano is strung in two-strings unison in the bass (without wiring), and three-strings in unison in the other registers. In the F_1 - C range the strings are made of brass, in Cis - f^4 are made of iron. The piano has three pedals: sustaining, *una corda* and moderator⁷². The only major change between the original and the replica is widening of the scale to C_1 . This was done in order to be able to perform F.

⁶⁸ Paul McNulty - born 1953 in Houston. His adventure with music started in guitar class, later in lute class. Due to unsatisfactory results, he left music school in favour of New England School of Stringed Keyboard Instrument Technology. Since 1995 he has settled in the Czech Republic. Author of over 220 instruments, he has created for such artists as Paul Badura-Skoda, Malcolm Bilson, Nicolas Harnoncourt, Trevor Pinnock.

⁶⁹ Urząd Muncypalny Miasta Warszawy - Municipal Office of the City of Warsaw.

⁷⁰ Warszawa - Warsaw.

⁷¹ The hole is probably a remnant of an incompetently carried out restoration.

⁷² There are two moderators in the replica. Two partially overlapping layers of felt are mounted to the strip. Depending on the moderator used, there is a single or double layer of material between the string and the hammer. This was a common practice in instruments of the time, which in this case further enriched the sound possibilities of the piano.

Chopin's *Concertos*⁷³ on the replica, but at the same time it had a beneficial effect on the instrument's resonance.



Picture 5, Instrument by Fryderyk Buchholtz in Landscape Museum in Krzemieniec, author: Wojciech Grzędziński, source: *Fortepian Chopina*, Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, Warszawa 2018

⁷³ Since the composer placed notes lower than F_1 , it should be assumed that the instrument he had at his disposal had an appropriate scale.



Picture 6, Replica of the instrument by Fryderyk Buchholtz, author: Wojciech Grzędziński, source: *Fortepian Chopina*, Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, Warszawa 2018

Chapter II Performance issues on the example of selected works by Fryderyk Chopin

According to Mieczysław Tomaszewski, during his lifetime Fryderyk Chopin gave around 30 concerts that could be called public.⁷⁴ Their small number was mainly due to the composer's psychological construction. According to an account by Ferenc Liszt, Fryderyk Chopin is supposed to have stated: 'I am not suited to public performances - the auditorium intimidates me, I suffocate in the breath of the crowds, I am paralysed by curious eyes, the sight of strange faces forces me to silence.'⁷⁵ The situation was quite different with private concerts. It was only in an intimate space - a living room, among people he knew, that the composer of *Ballade in G minor* Op. 23 felt completely at ease. This is how George Sand summed it up: 'in the world of an intimate salon, gathering around 20 people for an hour, where the guests gather around the artist [...] then and only then did he show all his talent and all his genius.'⁷⁶ In this context, it is worth noting that the pianos in use at the time corresponded much better to the relatively small spaces of the salons. All the subtleties for which Chopin's playing was so highly valued had to be lost in concert halls. It is worth remembering, however, that concert halls 200 years ago were much smaller than those of today. For example, the National Theatre in Warsaw, where Chopin premiered his piano concertos in 1830, had about 880 seats.⁷⁷ On today's scale, this would be a concert hall of average size at most. Since the 19th century, all the efforts of piano builders have been concentrated on increasing the volume of the instruments' sound - on adapting them to ever larger concert spaces. All the differences⁷⁸ between the instruments of the Romantic era and those of today will be a result of this development. If we were to try to define it in terms of performance, it would be along the lines of "playing with shade" to "playing with contrast". At home, when the listener sat almost inside the piano, all subtleties, mainly dynamic and articulation, were perfectly audible. In a concert hall, on the other hand, only a large contrast can be perceived as a noticeable difference. This does not mean that music shading should now be forgotten. On the contrary,

⁷⁴ M. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁷⁵ F. Liszt, *Chopin*, PWM, Cracow 1960, p. 73.

⁷⁶ G. Sand, *Dzieje mojej życia*, Warsaw 1968, p. 345, quoted after: M. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.* p. 140.

⁷⁷ Such an account of a Chopin concert on 17 March 1830 may be found in the Warsaw press: 'Yesterday, music lovers spent the evening in the Teatr Narodowy in a most pleasant manner. There were 880 people in attendance, which proves that our audiences are used to rewarding true talent. [...] As many people were unable to obtain boxes and chairs for yesterday's concert, a second will be given on Monday'. A. Dmuszewski, *Kurier Warszawski*, 1830, No. 175, 18 III, pp. 377-378, quoted after: *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina...* pp. 649-650.

⁷⁸ Both in construction, sound and the way the instruments are played.

it is essential for a multi-coloured performance. However, it should be borne in mind that due to the construction and sound differences of pianos, this shading on modern instruments will be more obvious, and will have more in common with colouring. Naturally, it will not resemble in its final sound the shaping on romantic instruments. The following subsections will show, taking selected aspects of performance into account, what from the historically informed performance practice and sound of Fryderyk Buchholtz's instrument can be transferred to a contemporary instrument, and to what extent this can take place.

2.1 Dynamics

General comments

It is a truism to state that period pianos are much more delicate in sound than modern instruments. This difference is due to many elements, such as the materials used in their manufacture, the size of the instruments or the string tension. This raises the question of whether performing Chopin's music should be limited to dynamic levels achievable on instruments from the composer's time. Helpful in answering this question may be the statements of Chopin and his pupils. The composer himself wrote to his family in a letter from Vienna:

However, the general opinion is that I played poorly, or rather too softly for the Germans, accustomed to smashing pianos. I expect this accusation in the daily paper, especially as the editor's daughter hits terribly the instrument. It doesn't matter, as one cannot help but have an objection, and I prefer such an objection to being told that I play too strongly.⁷⁹

It is also worth quoting at this point some of the statements made by people who heard Chopin. Eliza Peruzzi⁸⁰ wrote: 'The peculiarity of his playing was a delicacy brought to the highest degree, and his pianissimo was simply extraordinary. Every little note rang out clearly like a bell.'⁸¹ Another pupil of Chopin's, Adolf Gutmann⁸², stated: 'Chopin generally played very quietly and rarely, practically never fortissimo'.⁸³ Alfred Hipkins⁸⁴ noted: 'Chopin felt

⁷⁹ F. Chopin, *List do rodziny w Warszawie*, 12 VIII 1829, in: *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*...., p. 275.

⁸⁰ Eliza Peruzzi – a pupil of Chopin's, met him around 1836. She was often the composer's partner in works for two pianos and four hands. She performed both Chopin's *Piano Concertos* many times. At the request of Friedrich Niecks, she edited several memoirs about her teacher.

⁸¹ F. Niecks, *Frederick Chopin as a Man and Musician*, London 1902, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁸² Adolf Gutmann (1819-1882) - one of Chopin's most talented pupils, gifted by him with the dedication of the *Scherzo in C sharp minor*, Op. 39. He worked under the composer for 5 years.

⁸³ *Ibidem* p. 83.

disgusted at hearing the pounding of the piano. His forte was relative, not absolute; it was proportional to the exquisite piano and pianissimo, in a constantly undulating line of crescendo-diminuendo'.⁸⁵ Ignaz Moscheles made an interesting observation: 'His piano is like a breeze, so that it does not need a powerful forte to produce the desired contrasts'.⁸⁶ Finally, it is worth quoting Karol Mikuli, who described his master's playing as follows:

He made a strong impression through the masculine and noble energy he unleashed in the right places - an energy free from brutality, equally capable of enchanting the listener with the sweetness of his soulful playing - a sweetness free from artificial charm. All the warmth with which he permeated his performance in a very personal way never prevented the scales from maintaining their measure, self-restraint, and even a unique distinction.⁸⁷

Reading all these statements, it is worth remembering that Romantic instruments did not have in their sound capabilities a loud and massive, yet noble sound. Every attempt to achieve big dynamics on them, a volume similar to that of today, ended with the "groaning" of the instrument - a sound much shorter and sharper, and as a result uglier than when played more quietly. Analysing the above statements, one may come to the conclusion that in choosing the appropriate dynamics Chopin as a pianist was guided not only by his love of the *piano* as such, but also by a concern for the nobility of a sound above all else. In relation to contemporary instruments, it does not seem appropriate to imitate the sound in terms of the dynamics used. After all, the rooms in which music is performed today are different, and finally the natural dynamic dispositions of the instruments are different. The nobility of sound is the value closest to the composer, and it should be the main object of our concern today. To confirm the above argument we can quote the words of Aleksander Michałowski:⁸⁸

[Chopin] detested a piano sound that was too strong; he called it "the barking of a dog". But that does not mean, according to Mikuli, that today we should avoid stronger gradations and accents in Chopin's interpretation. We should remind ourselves that the piano has undergone a tremendous evolution in its

⁸⁴ Alfred James Hipkins (1826-1903) - English pianist, harpsichordist and musicologist. Associated with Broadwood, he met Chopin during his English tour and became his tuner. He heard Chopin many times in private circumstances.

⁸⁵ E.J. Hipkins, *How Chopin played. From Contemporary Impressions collected from the Diaries and Notebooks of the late A.J. Hipkins*, London 1937, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁸⁶ I. Moscheles, *Letter* (Paris, mid-October 1839), in C. Moscheles, *Aus Moscheles' Leben. Nach Briefen und Tagebüchern*, Leipzig 1872-1873, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

⁸⁷ K. Mikuli, *op. cit.*, quoted after by J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

⁸⁸ Aleksander Michałowski (1851-1938) - Polish pianist, composer, pedagogue. A pupil of Karol Mikuli, among others. From him and from Marcelina Czartoryska (also a pupil of Chopin), whom he met later, he adopted elements of the Chopin tradition. His teachers included Wanda Landowska, Henryk Neuhauss and Vladimir Sofronitsky.

construction. Once, on small and frail instruments, forte did indeed sound decidedly unpleasant. Today, it has a fullness and extraordinary juiciness of sound.⁸⁹

Piano dynamics

In a completely natural way, period instruments offer much more scope for exploring small dynamics. The *piano* is the best sounding area for them, which does not mean that it should remain the only area. After all, playing full of differences and contrasts is considered to be the most valuable. When transferring sound effects from historical pianos to modern pianos, one aspect must be taken into account. Small dynamics which today, in absolute values⁹⁰, we perceive as extreme were once the basis for artistic expression. However, this fact must not translate into their excessive use today. They would then lose their unique character, and because of their limited ability to generate tension over a longer period of time, they would make the game dull and colourless. It should be noted at this point, however, that the question of the choice of the type of *piano* on a contemporary instrument is not problematic, so it does not require an in-depth analysis.⁹¹

Dynamics forte

In the context of the statements quoted and the sonic possibilities of Buchholtz's instrument, it is worth examining a few places, most fascinating dynamically in the works that are the base for this thesis. In these works, Chopin uses the scale from *pp* to *fff*, but, it is worth emphasising, he never writes down either *mf* or *mp*. The markings *p* and *f* predominate.

The use of the marking *ff* in the *Rondo in E flat major* op. 16⁹² is particularly interesting: While in bars 35, 36, 449, 451 and 467 its understanding and execution leaves no room for doubt, in the remaining three cases it is quite different. In bar 21 the sign *ff* appears under the note g-flat³.

⁸⁹ A. Michałowski, *How did Fryderyk Szopen play? Music*, no. 7-9, 1932, p. 75, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁹⁰ These are values expressed in decibels.

⁹¹ Often referred as playing out of Chopin style with too much volume, however, the author has not encountered an instance of playing with too little volume being considered as such.

⁹² It is worth remembering that this work, although completed in 1833 (i.e. after the composer had left the area where Viennese-type instruments predominated), is somehow predestined to be performed on instruments such as Buchholtz's piano, due to the omnipresent *brillant* style.



Example 1, F. Chopin, *Rondo in E-flat major* op. 16, Wyдание Narodowe Dzieł Fryderyka Chopina⁹³, PWM, 2005, b. 20-22

On Buchholtz's instrument it is impossible for this note to reach the volume resulting from the logic of the musical course. When the composer wrote *ff*, he probably had in mind the emphasis that should be placed on this particular sound as a dramatic climax. Taking into account the instruments at our disposal today, it does not seem sensible to deliberately weaken this sound. Even more ambiguous is the *ff* in bars 449 and 451.



Example 2, F. Chopin, *Rondo in E-flat major* op. 16, b. 448-456

From a technical point of view, such a dynamic, at least in bar 449, is feasible. Its placement and the fact that it is the largest dynamic marking in the entire *coda* may suggest that it is the climax of the work, or at least its conclusion. From a dramaturgical point of view, nothing could be further from the truth. One can, of course, argue about whether there is a single

⁹³ All music score examples are based on this one edition.

central climax in this work at all, and if so, where it takes place⁹⁴. There is no doubt, however, that it does not occur in bars 448-452. So how should we understand this marking? In the author's opinion, Chopin wants to convey at least two messages in these bars. The first is that, as a rule, this fragment should be played with great dynamics. The second is an indication that the chords should be fuller than the preceding scale. This brings to mind the situation when in an orchestra the playing of the *solo* instruments (in this case, the scale) is contrasted with the sound of the *tutti* (chords). Analysing the above examples, several conclusions can be reached. First of all, dynamic markings are always relative and should be considered only in context - the same markings even within the same work may refer to a completely different decibel level. Moreover, it is worth remembering that the knowledge of the type of instrument for which the work was originally intended in this case may turn out to be a dead end (*vide* remarks to bar 21). Any decision on the intensity of dynamics on a contemporary instrument should be dictated above all by care for the dramatic coherence of the work, and an exaggerated purism in copying the sound of an instrument from 180 years ago would in fact distort its sense.

Con forza

At this point, it is worth stopping for a moment to consider the term *con forza* and reflect on its possible meanings in Chopin's music, given the specificity of pianos such as the Buchholtz. Typically, *con forza* is translated as 'with force, with energy', and in common use the term is closely associated with big dynamics. Chopin used this expressive term until around 1837. The last works in which the term appears are: *Nocturnes in C sharp minor* and *D flat major*, Op. 27, *Prelude in D minor*, Op. 28 No. 24 and *Impromptu in A flat major*, Op. 29. It is worth noting that in his works the composer gives it at least two meanings. The first and most obvious, combined with big dynamics, emphasises the expressive power of a given place and is similar in its meaning to *appassionato*⁹⁵. The following can be cited as examples:

⁹⁴ The author is of the opinion that in a field as unobvious as music, such considerations are as interesting as they do not provide ready-made solutions, and the decision about the final shape will belong to the performer anyway.

⁹⁵ Paradoxically, these two terms have the same aim - emotional intensification, introduction of an element of excitement, but they use different means to achieve it. *Con forza*, in the author's opinion, has a hint of *sostenuto*, while *appassionato* draws from *agitato*. It should be remembered, however, that the composer definitely differentiated between these two terms, as evidenced by their placement in a single bar - see *Piano Concerto in E minor*, Op. 11, 1st mov., bar 252.

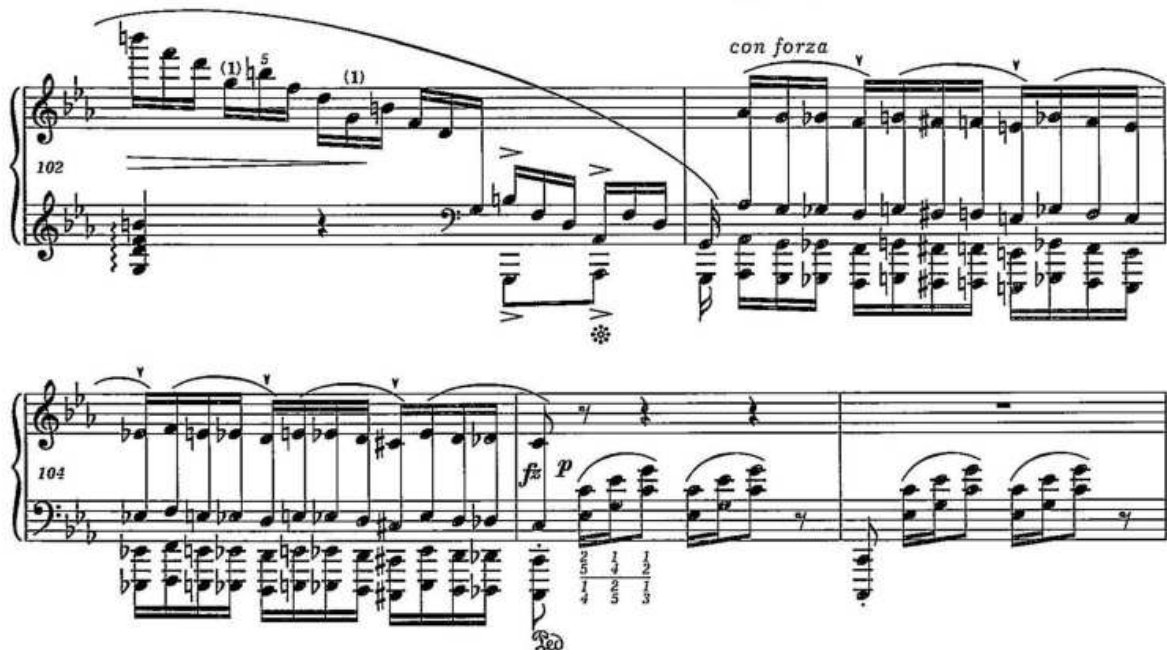


Example 3, F. Chopin, *Piano Trio in G minor* op. 8, 1st mov. *Allegro con fuoco*, b. 65-70

Example 4, F. Chopin, *Piano concerto in F minor* op. 21 (piano solo version), 1st mov. *Maestoso*, t. 254-258



Example 5, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in B-flat minor* op. 24 no. 4, b. 77-93



Example 6, F. Chopin, *Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise in E-flat major* op. 22, Polonaise, b. 102-106

In all these places, an element of performance as important as dynamics is the appropriate articulation (broader, more *portato*). In fact, it is this that will provide the appropriate explanation for the *con forza* remark.

There are also places where the task of the *con forza* term will be to force the performer to maintain the intensity of sound already achieved. These are passages which, without the term, would provoke the performer to reduce the dynamics and to lose energy. This may be illustrated by examples from works such as:



Example 7, F. Chopin, *Piano Concerto in E minor* op. 11 (piano solo version), 1st mov. *Allegro maestoso*, b. 172-178



Example 8, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in C-sharp minor* op. 26 no. 1, b. 24-34

Example 9, F. Chopin, *Ballade in G minor* op. 23, b. 179-184

The reason for such an argument is Chopin's highly unusual use of the term in the works that are the subject of this study, in the *Rondo in E flat major*, Op. 16, bar 15 and in the *Polonaise in B flat major*, Op. 71, no. 2, bar 70⁹⁶.

Example 10, F. Chopin, *Rondo in E-flat major* op. 16, b. 13-19

⁹⁶ This is the only time at all that Chopin uses the term *molto con forza*.



Example 11, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in B-flat major* op. 71 no. 2, b. 68-73

Two factors contribute to this uniqueness. On the one hand, the last recorded dynamic is small⁹⁷. On the other hand, the melody is presented in a very high register completely unsuitable for instruments such as Buchholtz. It is practically impossible to intensify the dynamics much while maintaining good proportions. There is another place in Chopin's oeuvre where *con forza* was used in similar circumstances, the *Variations in B flat major*, Op. 2, bar 29.



Example 12, F. Chopin, *Variations in B-flat major* op. 2, b. 28-32

⁹⁷ In the case of *Rondo*, there is no dynamic term for the overall sound, but it is hard to imagine achieving much dynamics already at this point.

From the above, one can draw some fascinating conclusions. Perhaps, however, articulation and rhythmic resilience were more important to Chopin in achieving the *con forza* effect than dynamics. Following this line of thought, the essence of power is not in decibels, and *con forza* can express itself just as perfectly through a shout as through a clear whisper. This is an interesting lesson that the period instrument teaches us. Thanks to it, the interpreter is given more freedom in shaping the music and may take seemingly iconoclastic decisions, although they have their justification.

2.2 Phrasing and narration

The problem of phrasing and narration is inherent in all kinds of music, but it affects Romantic music in a special way. The starting point for consideration of this subject should be the words of Fryderyk Chopin himself, contained in *Sketches for a Method of Piano Playing*. He wrote as follows: 'We use sounds to make music, just as we use words to make language. A detached sound does not make music, just as a word does not make language.'⁹⁸ A good complement to these words becomes the memory of Karol Mikuli:

Chopin attached great importance to proper phrasing. He often repeated his correct observation about incorrect phrasing, that it reminds him of someone reciting in an unknown language a speech laboriously pressed into memory, where the speaker not only disregards the natural number of syllables, but even stops in the middle of the word. The incorrectly phrasing pseudo-musician thus makes it clear that music is not his native language, but something foreign and incomprehensible. A musician such as this declamator should renounce the fact that with his performance he will have any effect on the listener.⁹⁹

Jan Kleczyński's¹⁰⁰ statement may be helpful in understanding what natural phrasing meant to Chopin:

Here are the main practical rules of expression, which Chopin often repeated to his pupils: the long note is stronger, as is the high note. Dissonance is also strong, as is syncopation. The ending of a phrase before a comma or a line is usually weak. When the melody goes up, it goes crescendo, when it goes down, decrescendo. Besides, one should pay attention to natural accents, i.e. in bar in 2 - the first one strong, the second one weak; in bar in 3 - the first one strong, the two second ones weak. The

⁹⁸ F. Chopin, *Szkice do Metody Gry Fortepianowej*, ed. Jean-Jaques Eigeldinger, Musica Iagellonica, Cracow 1995.

⁹⁹ K. Mikuli, *op. cit.*, p. 4, quoted after J. J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 67-68.

¹⁰⁰ Jan Kleczyński (1837-1895) - Polish pianist, composer and publisher of the works of Fryderyk Chopin. During his stay in Paris (1859-1866), he had the opportunity to come into contact with Chopin's acquaintances Julian Fontana, Marcelina Czartoryska and Camile Dubois.

same applies to the minor parts of the bar. These are the rules, exceptions from which authors themselves usually point out.¹⁰¹

In the author's opinion, a period instrument may be helpful in better understanding the words quoted above, for at least two reasons. Firstly, the placement of the most carrying register is different on Romantic instruments: the best-sounding range is from the half of the minor octave to the half of the double octave, with the reservation that the higher we move the shorter and more delicate the notes become. This may explain Chopin's way of shaping phrases, as well as placing and building climaxes. The following example, which is part of an artistic work, is a good example of this:



Example 13, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in C-sharp minor* op. 6 no. 2, b. 6-16

¹⁰¹ J. Kleczyński, *Chopin w cenniejszych swoich utworach. Trzy odczyty wypowiedziane w Resursie Obywatelskiej w dniach 3, 7 i 8 grudnia 1883 roku w Warszawie*, Warszawa 1886, p. 24, quoted after J. J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

Among Chopin's other works, this fact is well illustrated by the following phrase:

op. 48 nr 2

Andantino

The musical score is for Chopin's Andantino, Op. 48 No. 2. It is written for piano in G major, 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Andantino'. The score consists of 17 measures, divided into five systems. The first system starts with a piano (p) dynamic. The right hand features a melody with various ornaments and fingerings, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment with triplets and sixteenth notes. The score is divided into five systems, each with a measure number (1, 5, 9, 13, 17) at the start of the first staff. The piece concludes with a crescendo (cresc.) and a forte (f) dynamic.



Example 14, F. Chopin, *Nocturne in F-sharp minor* op. 48 no. 2, b. 1-28

This leads to a rather awkward situation on the modern piano, where the moments of climax fall on a register that is neither very beautiful, nor well-sounding.

Moreover, a period instrument provides a better opportunity to nuance the dynamics, which, being audible, need not become too engaging. If the second part of Kleczyński's remark were taken too literally on a modern piano, the resulting phrase would be caricatured. Of course, it is not true that a period instrument is necessary for good phrasing; rather, it can provide inspiration as to the shape of the melody. In the context of the instrument's possibilities, it is worth noting the problem of giving the narration a good direction. At this point it is good to refer to the statement by Jan Kleczyński:

From these general rules Chopin derived this sentence, this principle, which he most strongly recommended to his pupils, namely: that they should not play with small phrases, that is, they should not suspend their voice from too small particles of thought or unnecessarily extend that thought by slowing down the tempo, which makes it difficult to follow its development and dulls the listener's attention.¹⁰²

Although Chopin himself drew attention to the fragmentation of musical thought, in the author's opinion this problem is still much less pronounced on a period instrument than on a contemporary one. Very often the lack of continuity of the narration has its source either in giving too much emphasis to unimportant motifs or, more generally, in exaggeration, mainly

¹⁰² J. Kleczyński, *O wykonywaniu dzieł Chopina. Odczytów dwie serie*. Cracow 1960, pp. 62-64, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

on the grounds of dynamics . It sometimes seems natural to the performer to suspend or slow down the narration. In the case of a period instrument, dynamic exuberance is simply not achievable, and thus the narration becomes much simpler.

Of course, this argument is not intended to promote flat playing. The matter is more complex: on a modern instrument the possibilities of nuanced dynamics are not as far-reaching as on a historical instrument. This does not mean that they are impossible, but certainly inaudible in a larger concert hall. It does not seem possible to transfer directly the drawing of a phrase, and thus the shape of the narration, from one instrument to another. Nevertheless, the sense of time flow that accompanies a performer on a period instrument can be a reference point for building a narration on a contemporary piano.

2.3 Pedalisation¹⁰³

The special attitude of Fryderyk Chopin to the use of the pedal is widely known. In his pedagogical activities he attached great importance to correct pedalling. This fact was well summarised by Frederike Streicher: ¹⁰⁴

In the use of pedals he achieved the highest mastery; he was extremely strict (*ungemein streng*) about their abuse, and constantly used to tell his pupils: ‘One can work on the skilful use of pedals for a lifetime’.¹⁰⁵

A very beautiful description of how Chopin as a pianist used the pedals was provided by Antoine-François Marmontel¹⁰⁶:

Chopin used the pedals with wonderful feeling. He often combined them to produce a soft and volatile sound, but more often still he used them separately in brilliant passages, robust harmonies, deep basses, penetrating (*stridents*), loud (*éclatants*) chords, or he used the small pedal [*una corda*] in light murmurs (*bruissements légers*), which seemed to surround with a transparent mist the arabesques that adorn the melody and cover it like elaborate *lace*.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ This subsection will only deal with using the sustaining pedal. About using the other pedals you can read in subsection 2.4 *Colour changing pedals*

¹⁰⁴ Frederike Streicher, née Müller (1816-1895) was a pupil of Chopin's from 1839 to 1841. She abandoned her career as a pianist after 1849, after marrying the Viennese piano maker J. B. Streicher.

¹⁰⁵ F. Niecks, *Friedrich Chopin als Mensch und als Musiker*, transl. Wilhelm Langhans, Leipzig 1890, p.368, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁶ Antoine-François Marmontel (1816-1898) – French pianist, teacher of, among others: George Bizet, Isaac Albeniz and Claude Debussy. Lived in Paris close to Chopin and heard him play many times after 1832.

¹⁰⁷ A.-F. Marmontel, *Histoire du piano et de ses origines*, Paris 1885, pp. 256-257, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

Also as a composer, Chopin devoted much attention to notating pedal markings. There is a widespread belief¹⁰⁸ that the composer notated the pedal only where its use was not obvious. This is how Mieczysław Tomaszewski expressed it:

Chopin noted the pedal only in special places, above all where he expected the performer to sound unconventional. He left the remaining areas of the work to individual invention, just as his own playing was individual and unique [...].¹⁰⁹

In the author's opinion, after a thorough tracing of Chopin's pedal notation, this statement needs to be revised. To this end, several arguments should be cited. First of all, we find places in Chopin's oeuvre where pedalling is quite conventional and schematic, and yet is written over the space of even a dozen or so bars. A perfect example of this approach is a fragment of the Scherzo in B minor, Op. 20, which is part of an artistic work:

¹⁰⁸ A conviction in which the author of this work also grew up.

¹⁰⁹ M. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

Molto più lento ♩ = 108

305 sotto voce e ben legato

311

317 ritenuto poco - a - poco

323 cresc. con anima f f

329 p dim.

Example 15, F. Chopin, *Scherzo in B minor* op. 20, b. 305-334

Among the composer's other works, a similar situation can be observed in the previously quoted fragment of the Nocturne in F sharp minor, Op. 48 No. 2¹¹⁰, or in the exception from the fourth movement of the Sonata in B minor, Op. 58, presented below.

Example 16, F. Chopin, *Sonata in B minor op. 58 4th mov. Finale. Presto non tanto*, b. 28-51

¹¹⁰ See example no. 14 p. 44-45.

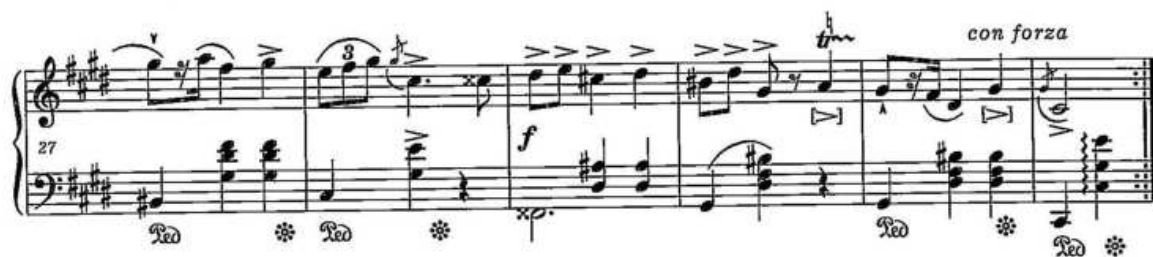
Of course, there are whole stretches of musical text where the composer does not enter any pedal. However, in this case it would be good to refer to the sound of pianos to which Chopin had access (in particular the sound of Buchholtz's instrument) and the changes that take place in it when the sustaining pedal is pressed. It should also be remembered that the difference in sound between period instruments and modern instruments is greater the older the instrument we are dealing with. Fryderyk Buchholtz's piano, despite its relatively modest sound, possesses a resonance that is stunning in its fullness. Even a single note played without the pedal is rich in harmonics, which cannot be said about contemporary instruments. On an instrument from Chopin's day, the pedal really only served to prolong the life of the played sound. It is easy to imagine a melody intoned without any pedal, yet showing all its beauty. On a modern instrument the situation is quite different. The sound without any pedal can be compared to *non-vibrato* sound on a stringed instrument. Such a raw sound has its charm and can be used, but it is difficult to imagine it becoming the basis of music, especially Romantic music.

It is also worth remembering that Chopin used the hand pedal¹¹¹ very frequently. Returning to the example of the *Nocturne in F sharp minor* presented above, it may be noted that in bars where the composer wrote down the hand pedal (bars 7-8), there is no indication of the use of a sustaining pedal. Chopin showed the same attitude in the *Mazurka in C sharp minor*, Op. 6 No. 2, in bar 29. When the motif used earlier, but this time based on an accompaniment with hand pedal, was written down, the composer abandoned the use of the sustaining pedal.



Example 17, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in C-sharp minor* op. 6 no. 2, b. 11-16

¹¹¹ By this term the author means the popular practice of holding the already played sounds, so that they resound all the time. Very often this procedure allows to clean up the pedal without compromising the harmonic filling.



Example 18, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in C-sharp minor* op. 6 no. 2, b. 27-32

This may suggest that physically holding down the pressed keys or raising all the dampers have a similar meaning for the composer. Similar phenomenon (lack of *forte pedal* in case of using harmonic pedal) can be also noticed in works that are part of the artistic work: *Polonaise in F minor* op. 71 No. 3 (bars 5-14), or *Polonaise in B major* op. 71 No. 2 (bars 9-11 and 20-22).

Example 19, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in F minor* op. 71 no. 3, b. 1-17



Example 20, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in B-flat major* op. 71 no. 2, b. 5-12

Example 21, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in B-flat major* op. 71 no. 2, b. 19-24

The last element decisively differentiating the pedalling written down by Chopin from that used today is the absence in the score of pedals shorter than two measures in a bar.¹¹² In the author's opinion this results from the lack of need for such a pedal, which has its source in the above-mentioned differences in sound between contemporary and historical instruments. A good confirmation of the above two paragraphs are the words of Jan Kleczyński:

¹¹² Of course, there are exceptions to this practice. This is the case with particularly dense textures, cf. the *Fantasy in F minor* Op. 49 bars 78-79, 82-83 and analogous.

We would only add that, despite the charming effects produced in Chopin's works by the *piano* pedal, it should not be overused, that many places gain in simplicity and do not tolerate the use of even a single pedal (examples: *Nocturne in F major*, Op. 15 [No. 1]¹¹³ first movement, middle movement in *Andante spianato*, Op. 22¹¹⁴, etc.)¹¹⁵

Andante cantabile ♩ = 69 op. 15 nr 1

The musical score is for the first movement of Chopin's Nocturne in F major, Op. 15 No. 1. It is in 3/4 time and marked 'Andante cantabile' with a tempo of ♩ = 69. The mood is 'semplice e tranquillo'. The score shows measures 1 through 20. The right hand plays a melody with slurs and ties, while the left hand provides a bass line. Pedal markings are indicated by asterisks (*) and the word 'ped'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'poco cresc. e rite' and 'dolciss.'.

Example 22, F. Chopin, *Nocturne in F major* op. 15 no. 1, b. 1-20

¹¹³ Example of hand pedal application.

¹¹⁴ Today one would use a separate pedal for each measure.

¹¹⁵ J. Kleczyński, *O wykonywaniu dzieł Chopina. Odczytów dwie serie*. Cracow 1960, quoted after: J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

Semplice

The musical score is titled "Semplice" and spans measures 67 to 96. It is written for piano in E-flat major (three flats) and 3/4 time. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ornaments, and fingerings. The left hand provides a consistent eighth-note accompaniment, while the right hand features a more complex melodic line with frequent ornaments and slurs. The score is divided into five systems, with measure numbers 67, 73, 79, 85, and 91 marking the beginning of each system. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign in measure 96.

Example 23, F. Chopin, *Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise in E-flat major op. 22, Andante spianato* b. 67-96

The examples placed in this subsection are by no means meant to suggest that the author performing an artistic work being the subject of this description resigned from using the pedal in places where it is not indicated by Chopin.¹¹⁶ They are primarily intended to draw attention to a certain problem, to give performers room for their own explorations, which may translate into a new sound quality, both on a contemporary and a period piano.

Pedalling in selected fragments of Chopin's works

In the context of pedal notation understood in this way, it is worth looking at the pedalisation in Chopin's *Mazurkas*. Where there is a pause in the standing accompaniment for the first measure in a bar, there is no notation of any pedal. This suggests a more rhythmic treatment of the accompaniment, which is supposed to imitate string or plucked instruments. This approach can be seen, among others, in Mazurka in F minor op. 7 no. 3 and Mazurka in A minor op. 7 no. 2 which are the base for this description.

Example 24, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in F minor* op. 7 no. 3, b. 7-21

¹¹⁶ This is due both to the author's habits and sometimes to the need to achieve legato articulation by means of the pedal, which results in "freeing" the hand and, consequently, in a more full and beautiful sound.

Vivo ma non troppo ♩ = 160 op. 7 nr 2

The musical score for Chopin's Mazurka in A minor, Op. 7 No. 2, is presented in three systems. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a triplet of eighth notes. The second system includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a fortissimo (*f*) section marked 'stretto'. The third system includes a 'poco rall.' (poco rallentando) and ends with a 'a tempo' marking. The score is written for piano with treble and bass staves.

Example 25, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in A minor* op. 7 no. 2, b. 1-16

Of the other Mazurkas, the following example illustrates this kind of accompaniment well:

Allegretto non tanto op. 30 nr 1

The musical score for Chopin's Mazurka in C minor, Op. 30 No. 1, is presented in three systems. The first system starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system includes a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic. The third system includes a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score is written for piano with treble and bass staves.

Example 26, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in C minor* op. 30 no.1, b. 1-14

Looking at the last example, it is worth mentioning that on instruments with narrower keys, such as Buchholtz's piano, even a pianist with an average-sized hand¹¹⁷ was able to achieve strict finger *legato* (see bars 4 and 5). On a modern piano, this is impossible for many performers, so even with the desire for very meticulous notation at this point, the use of the pedal becomes essential.

The only example where the composer proposes pedalling on this type of accompaniment are bars 89-104 in *Mazurka in C minor* op. 56 no. 3. However, taking into account the nature of the place mentioned, as well as the degree of sublimity of Chopin's pedalling proposal, it does not seem reasonable that this should affect the understanding of pedalling in the aforementioned examples.

Example 27, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in C minor* op. 56 no. 3, b. 89-108

¹¹⁷ Chopin was certainly one of these.

Similar to the examples cited above is the case where the bass accompaniment is standing, filling the entire bar with pulsation, showing similarity to folk basses. Examples include extracts from an artistic work:

Vivace $\text{♩} = 60$

The musical score is written for piano and is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Vivace' with a quarter note equal to 60 beats per minute. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The left hand provides a steady eighth-note pulse throughout. The right hand features a melodic line with various ornaments, trills, and triplets. A crescendo (*cresc.*) is indicated in the second system. The score is divided into four systems, with measures 7, 12, and 17 marked at the beginning of their respective systems. The piece concludes with a final chord in the right hand.

Example 28, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in E major* op. 6 no. 3, b. 1-22

Chopin also used this type of accompaniment in the Mazurka in A minor, op. 17 no. 4 and Mazurka in C major, op. 24 no. 2.



Example 31, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in A minor* op. 17 no. 4, b. 61-78



Example 32, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in C major* op. 24 no. 2, b. 1-22

Of course, the composer sometimes departed from his rule in order to achieve a special colour effect, as exemplified by the pedalling in the *Mazurka in B-flat major*, Op. 7 no. 1.



Example 33, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in B-flat major* op. 7 no. 1, b. 43-53

A separate phenomenon worth considering is the case of writing the pedal in repeated places. As a rule it should be assumed that in such places Chopin wrote down the pedal as meticulously. In the light of the above statement, the notation of several places should be considered.

A good example to start thinking about this subject is the notation of the pedalling of the *Scherzo in B minor*, Op. 20. In the outer sections Chopin wrote the exact use of the pedal at each repetition of each successive part. The situation is different in the middle section. After carefully annotating the text with pedal instructions in the aforementioned bars 305-336, the composer abandoned further notation of the pedal at the repetition of the same musical material. The sign of using the pedal appears again only in bar 374 at the change of musical material, although it is small. The most probable explanation for this is that the author took for granted the use of the pedal in the identical place, when its repetition occurs immediately. Furthermore, it may be that the entire middle section of the *Scherzo* fit on two autograph pages, which would make the notation even more obvious.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Unfortunately the autograph of the *Scherzo in B minor* has not survived to our times.



Example 34, F. Chopin, *Scherzo in B minor* op. 20, b. 359-376

Less obvious seems to be the notation from *Polonaise in D minor* Op.71 No.1 in bars 18-21. In the opinion of the writer of these words, both the playing with pedal four bars and the situation when repeated bars 20 and 21 are performed without pedal should be taken into consideration.¹¹⁹



Example 35, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in D minor* op. 71 no. 1, b. 18-21

¹¹⁹ The change of dynamics from *forte* to *piano* may also encourage the latter.

In this context, it is worth examining the pedalling in selected *Mazurkas*. Let us take *Mazurka in F sharp minor* Op. 6 No. 1 as an example. Chopin notates the pedal very precisely in bars 1-4. In the following bars (5-9) he abandons the pedal, which seems to be a natural consequence of using the hand pedal and *legato* remark over the voice of the left hand. The pedal mark returns in bar 9. In the following (10-16) there are no pedal markings.

The image displays a musical score for F. Chopin's *Mazurka in F-sharp minor*, Op. 6 No. 1, measures 1-19. The score is written for piano and includes a tempo marking of quarter note = 132. The key signature is F-sharp minor (three sharps). The score is divided into four systems. The first system (measures 1-4) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The second system (measures 5-9) features a decrescendo (*decresc.*) and a *legato* marking. The third system (measures 10-16) includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth system (measures 17-19) shows a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The score contains various musical notations, including triplets, slurs, and fingerings, and is marked with a hand pedal symbol in measures 1-4 and 9-10.

Example 36, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in F-sharp minor* op. 6 no. 1, b. 1-19

Such an approach to notation does not seem to be unusual; it is likely that Chopin intended the use of the pedal in bars 10-12 to be analogous to bars 2-4. The matter is complicated by subsequent displays of themes. In bars 25-40, there is no notated pedalling in the first section of the theme - it appears in the second (analogous to bars 9-12). When the theme returns for

the third time (bars 57-72), the pedal is notated as in the first demonstration, except that it is missing in bar 65 (analogous to bar 9).

Przykład 37, F. Chopin, *Mazurek fis-moll* op. 6 nr 1, t. 25-40

Przykład 38, F. Chopin, *Mazurek fis-moll* op. 6 nr 1, t. 57-72

A similar case of pedalling in successive presentations of the theme looks in *Mazurka in C sharp minor op. 6 No. 2*, *Mazurka in B flat major op. 7 no. 1*.



Example 39, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in C-sharp minor op. 6 no. 2*, b. 6-16



Example 40, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in C-sharp minor op. 6 no. 2*, b. 21-32



Example 41, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in C-sharp minor* op. 6 no. 2, b. 53-72

Vivace $\text{♩} = 50$ op. 7 nr 1

Example 42, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in B-flat major* op. 7 no. 1, b. 1-24

31 *poco rall. a tempo* *f* *p scherz.*

37

43 *pp sotto voce* *Red*

49 *rubato* *poco rall.* *a tempo* *f* *Red*

54 *cresc.* *f* *p scherz.* *Red* *ossia:*

60 *f* *Red* **** 1. 2.

Example 43, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in B-flat major* op. 7 no. 1, b. 31-64

It is worth noting that in later works of the genre, the pedal is noted with iron consistency. This kind of carelessness of notation may be somewhat surprising in the case of Chopin, a composer known for his meticulous attention to his manuscripts. The is also a significant fact

that no autograph – fair copy of the above-mentioned mazurkas, on which the first editions were based, has survived. In the author's opinion, this contradiction may be used as a field of performance freedom. When repeating the same material many times one may be tempted to treat the pedalisatation layer in a completely different way, especially when playing such an instrument as Buchholtz's piano.

The last phenomenon of pedalling worthy of notice in the works to be described here is the ending of the *Mazurka in C sharp minor* Op. 6 No. 3. Chopin abandons the moment of removing the pedal, suggesting a *laissez vibrer* effect. This is not a formula used for the first time in the history of piano music; it was used earlier, for example, by Ludwig van Beethoven at the end of his *Sonata in E major*, Op. 109. Chopin himself returned to it in the *Barcarolle in F sharp major*, Op. 60. For the author of this work, this procedure became an invitation to pass *attaca* into the following mazurka from the opus on a sustained pedal and to create, by superimposing two related harmonies, an interesting sound patch - a phenomenon from which Chopin did not escape in his other works.

Summing up the problem of pedalling, reaching for a period instrument can be of considerable importance. The author of this description proceeded from the assumption that musical notation is a flawed attempt to capture the heard musical thought. In such a case, every change of environment - acoustics, sense of time, performance manner, or the instrument itself - is of considerable importance. The use of a piano sounding as close as possible to the 19th century allows one to better understand the composer's intentions and go beyond a binary, technical notation. Consequently, it may bring the performer closer to recreating a similar sound effect on a contemporary instrument, even if it means using other means such as articulation or dynamics.

2.4 Colour changing pedals

Playing a period instrument opens up a previously unknown palette of colours for a performer accustomed to the sound of modern instruments. An essential element of this is the pedals, which alter the initial sound of the instrument.¹²⁰ Chopin was undoubtedly a master of their use, as we may ascertain from the accounts of musicians of his day. This was expressed by Antoine Marmontel, among others:

¹²⁰ More about their types can be found on p. 11 of this work.

No pianist before him used the pedals *alternately* (*alternativement*) or simultaneously, with such sensitivity and skill. In most virtuosos today, the immoderate, constant use of the pedals is a fundamental flaw; it produces a sound result which causes fatigue or irritation in delicate ears. Chopin, on the contrary, by constant use of the pedal, achieved delightful harmonies, melodic murmurs, arousing amazement and enchantment.¹²¹

According to the testimony of Madame Courty¹²²:

Chopin did not want [to use] the pedal, and yet he used it, but above all the *una corda* pedal, without indicating it to his pupils, lest he overload or exaggerate the impression (*ses effets*).¹²³

The composer himself is credited with the words addressed to his pupils: 'Please master the *diminuendo* without the aid of the pedal [*una corda*] only later it can be used.'¹²⁴

From these quotations, we can draw the following conclusion: Chopin used the *una corda* pedal willingly, but the main purpose of this was to change the colour, not the dynamics. These statements refer to the composer's Parisian period. It must have been no different in Warsaw, where instruments usually possessed more tone-changing pedals. It is worth recalling here that Buchholtz's piano had two moderators in addition to the *una corda* pedal.

Colour-changing pedals on a Buchholtz instrument

Una corda

The essence of this pedal is to move the whole mechanism to the right. What is important one can do it gradually until the hammer strikes only one string. Every, even small, shift of the mechanism has a significant influence on the tone-colour of the instrument. At the beginning it is not a dynamic change at all, but a timbral one. Only pressing the pedal to the very end causes a big volume change in relation to the initial state. When using it one has to keep in mind that moving the mechanism from the start point to the end takes a lot of time which limits making immediate changes of the sound. This pedal works better for constant shading, that is why it can be used with high frequency in almost imperceptible way. All the above mentioned qualities of the *una corda* pedal on a Buchholtz piano make a big difference to a modern instrument for two reasons. First of all, nowadays it is not possible to play on one

¹²¹ A. Marmontel, *Les Pianistes célèbres*, Paris 1882, pp. 4-5, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

¹²² Madame Courty was a pupil of Chopin's about whom little is known today. She included her reminiscences of the composer in a letter she wrote to Louis Aguettant.

¹²³ L. Aguettant, *La musique de piano des origines à Ravel*, Paris 1954, p. 196, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹²⁴ [Anonymous], *Conseils aux jeunes pianistes*, Paris 1904, p. 39, , quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

string only, the name *una corda* in relation to today's pianos is just a product of tradition. Furthermore, the contemporary pedal has a zero-one character. Even with exquisite regulation it is not possible to achieve more than two colours on it. It also happens, however, that the effect of its action is negligible, focused on dynamics and does not affect positively at all the sound of the instrument.

Moderators

As already mentioned above, the action of this pedal consists in placing a layer of felt between the string and the hammer, which changes the sound of the instrument completely. The difference in sound colour between the two moderators is not huge¹²⁵ and placing the moderator which is supposed to change the timbre more on the left side of the *forte* pedal, makes it highly impractical.¹²⁶ When it comes to using the moderator, there are several factors to consider. The first one, as in the case of *una corda pedal*, is the time needed for the mechanism to work. So naturally the use of the moderator stops the narration. Another issue is the total timbral separation achieved when this pedal is pressed, which significantly limits where the moderator is used. It is impossible to switch it off smoothly and it is not a matter of time but a drastic difference of sound. That is why this pedal is best suited for places clearly distinguished narratively from the course of the piece or in the final parts. Another important feature of the sound obtained is the reduction of its intensity, which should also be taken into consideration when choosing the right places to use this pedal. Examples, in which the moderator was used in an artistic work being the subject of this description are among other: *Mazurka in F minor* Op. 7 no. 3 bars 43-44, 47-48, 93-105, *Mazurka in A flat major* Op. 7 no. 4 bars Vol. 25-36, *Polonaise in D minor* Op. 71 no. 1 bars 38-47 at the first show, bars 56-58, *Polonaise in B flat major* op. 71 no. 2 bars 44 - 51 at the first show.

¹²⁵ For the difference between the way the two pedals work, see footnote 72, p. 28.

¹²⁶ The pedals, viewed from the left, have the following arrangement: *una corda* - moderator I - moderator II - sustaining.

— Places where the moderator was used

39

45

ten.

ff

p

f

ten.

Example 44, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in F minor* op. 7 no. 3, b. 39-50

— Places where the moderator was used

88

94

100

con forza

rubato

tr

p

pp

Example 45, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in F minor* op. 7 no. 3, b. 88-105

— Places where the moderator was used

25 **dolcissimo* *p ritenuto* *staccato*

30 *molto rall.* *pp sotto voce* *sempre legato*

35 *smorz.* *a tempo* *f* *p*

Example 46, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in A-flat major* op. 7 no. 4, b. 25-39

(TRIO) — Places where the moderator was used

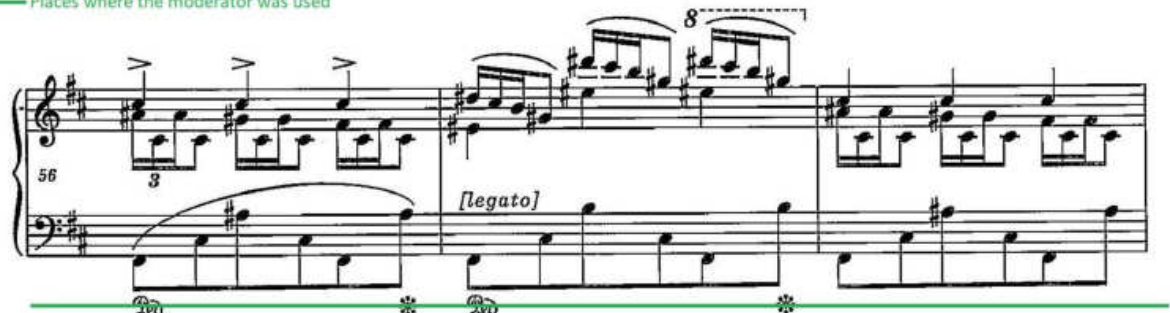
38 *pp* *delicatamente*

41 *f*

45 *f* *p*

Example 47, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in D minor* op. 71 no. 1, b. 38-47

— Places where the moderator was used



Example 48, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in D minor* op. 71 no. 1, b. 56-58

— Places where the moderator was used

Example 49, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in B-flat major* op. 71 no. 2, b. 42-51

One more colour effect worth mentioning, and possible on Buchholtz's instrument, is the combination of *una corda* and moderator pedals. This creates a sound aura unprecedented in its delicacy and colour. Due to, on the one hand, the great inconvenience in applying this manoeuvre,¹²⁷ on the other, the unique and incomparable sound, the possibilities of implementing such a solution are extremely limited. During his entire adventure with

¹²⁷ Either dispense with sustaining pedal, or press *una corda* and the moderator with one foot.

Buchholtz's instrument, the author of this text used it only once, in the *Larghetto* part of Frederic Chopin's *Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor*, Op. 21.



Example 50, F. Chopin, *Piano Concerto in F minor* op. 21, 2nd mov. *Larghetto* (piano solo version), b. 73-74

Buchholtz's piano sound is characterised by sensual beauty and subtlety, with tone-changing pedals being an integral part of it. Although its timbre is completely unique and can be an almost inexhaustible source of inspiration for performers, this is the only way to refer to it.¹²⁸ It should inspire musicians to their own explorations in the sphere of colour, especially in the multicolour of the *piano*, and not be a model to copy, which on today's instruments could sound caricatured.

2.5 Metronome markings in the works of Chopin

Between 1826 and 1836, Fryderyk Chopin wrote metronome markings into his works. This is probably the most ignored element of his compositions by performers today. There are two explanations for this. One is to doubt, without any real arguments, the authenticity of the metronome markings, the other is to refer to the different specificity of instruments from the first half of the 19th century. With a Buchholtz piano at our disposal, on which Chopin repertoire written in the above-mentioned years can be performed without any difficulty, it is worth taking another look at this issue.

Comparing Chopin's tempos with today's performance trends, the compositions can be divided into groups¹²⁹ in which:

- Chopin tempos are slower than contemporary performances - this group is by far the smallest. The most radical example of this is the *Rondo à la Mazur*, Op. 5. Also a little faster are today's performances of the *Mazurka in C major*, Op. 6 No. 5, the *Allegro vivace* part¹³⁰

¹²⁸ This is the author's approach on his artistic path.

¹²⁹ Of course, we are necessarily talking here about a certain average, which is also influenced by the perception of Chopin's tempos by the author of this work.

¹³⁰ The main part of the *Rondo* after the introduction

from *Rondo in E flat major*, Op. 16, or the third movement of the *Piano Concerto in E minor*, Op. 11. This tendency probably results from giving these works a much more virtuosic, sometimes frenetic character, sometimes at the cost of losing an element of elegance or dance character;

- Chopin's tempos are similar to those chosen by contemporary performers - this group is much larger, and includes, among others, the *Rondo in C minor*, Op. 1, *Mazurka in E major*, Op. 6 No. 3, *Mazurka in B flat major*, Op. 7 No. 1, *Mazurka in F minor*, Op. 7 No. 3, and *Nocturne in F major*, Op. 15 No. 1;

- Chopin's tempos are faster than one hears nowadays - the most numerous group, which includes, among others, most of the *Etudes*, the second movements of both the *Piano Concertos*, *Nocturne in B flat minor*, Op. 9 No. 1, *Nocturne in E flat major*, Op. 9 No. 2, *Mazurka in F sharp minor*, Op. 6 No. 1, *Mazurka in C sharp minor*, Op. 6 No. 2, *Mazurka in A minor*, Op. 7 No. 2, *Mazurka in A minor*, Op. 17 No. 4, *Scherzo in B minor*, Op. 20.

In the case of the last group, it is possible to speak additionally of two sub-groups. The first concerns works in fast tempos. In this case, the difference between Chopin's tempo and contemporary tempos is not significant. It even happens that Chopin's tempo resounds on today's stages, but is then perceived as extreme, crazy. This problem is well illustrated by the example of the outer movements of the *Scherzo in B minor*, Op. 20. Undoubtedly, in this case, the difference in tempo results from different constructional solutions between pianos: Chopin's and contemporary ones. It would be an oversimplification to blame everything on the smaller force needed to produce sound on a historical instrument. This is a very important element, but equally important seems to be the aspect of maintaining appropriate diction in small note passages. Already Chopin's contemporaries could hear well the difference between Viennese and English instruments.¹³¹ How audible this difference will be when we consider the 175 years that separate a Buchholtz piano from today's Steinway piano. Good diction on a modern instrument necessarily requires the energy to be transferred to each individual key, which in turn leads to a slower tempo. Otherwise, instead of clear, pearly passages, one hears spilling sound waves. On Buchholtz's instrument, achieving the tempo indicated by the composer, while maintaining good articulation, is not a major problem. It is obvious that the aim, both then and now, should be above all precision and clarity. It is therefore necessary to

¹³¹ Compare p. 25-26 of this work.

take into account both the pianist's performance limitations and the listener's perceptive limitations, bearing in mind that a slightly slower tempo will not fundamentally affect the character of the work.

A separate sub-group consists of works at a moderate or slow tempo. Here, the difference between tempos - today's and Chopin's - can be significant. Consequently, it changes the character of the composition. *Mazurkas* which are the subject of this description are a good example: *in F sharp minor*, Op. 6 No. 1, *C sharp minor*, Op. 6 No. 2, and *A minor*, Op. 7 No. 2.¹³² The metronome marking given by the composer suggests a relatively lively tempo. Today these works are performed at most in moderate tempos, often even slow. This is probably due to a desire to give these works depth, a more mature character. It should be noted that on a modern instrument the above-mentioned mazurkas performed at the composer's tempo would completely change their character. On the other hand, cantilena pieces, such as nocturnes would sound almost unreflective and cloying. The situation is quite different on Buchholtz's instrument. Here the faster tempo makes the music more natural. However, one must remember that the performance tradition is deeply rooted in all musicians. Suffice it to say that the author of these words, in spite of being aware of the aforementioned factors, did not choose a tempo that would fundamentally depart from contemporary trends when performing the mazurkas in question.

The described problem can be developed in yet another aspect - the loss of sentimentalism in contemporary performance. According to *Słownik języka polskiego (Dictionary of Polish Language)*, the term sentimentalism means "exaggerated sensitivity, tenderness; affection"¹³³ and "a mental and literary trend in Europe in the second half of the 18th century formed in opposition to classicism and the binding social and aesthetic rigours [...]; in literature, it was marked by subjectivity and moodiness".¹³⁴ It is worth noting that in today's perception sentimentalism has a decidedly pejorative overtone. Chopin himself wrote in the sentimental style, as Mieczysław Tomaszewski¹³⁵ notes. It would appear, however, that the composer made a clear distinction between sentimentalism, meaning style, and sentimentalism understood as tenderness. This is what Jan Kleczyński wrote about the problem:

¹³² Other works in this genre include the *Mazurka in A minor*, Op. 17 No. 4.

¹³³ *Dictionary of Polish Language*, edited by Mieczysław Szymczak, PWN, Warsaw 1981, p. 197.

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp.197-198.

¹³⁵ See M. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 689-691.

The principle of this style¹³⁶ is simplicity, avoiding affectation, and thus excessive slowing down and speeding up of the tempo. This condition, essential to all of Chopin's compositions, becomes particularly clear when studying his works (e.g. concertos), which are completely juvenile,¹³⁷ where the wealth and variety of figuration could easily reduce the composition to a cloying salon-like quality were it not for the noble simplicity of thought and execution.

Leaving aside the above-mentioned measures leading to sentimental¹³⁸ playing, it follows from the above text that even in Chopin's early works one should not aspire to cloying saloniness. It should be noted here that Buchholtz's instrument naturally limits the possibility of falling into the described mood. One might say that sentimentalism on this instrument has a certain noble quality, which was certainly close to the Chopin ideal. This is due to a number of elements: a more dull, muffled sound, an inability to treat the dynamics too exuberantly, and, finally, more equal proportions between melody and accompaniment. These allow it to maintain its seriousness and not fall into ridiculous exaltation even at smoother tempos. This is something definitely unique and not reproducible on modern pianos. However, it may become an inspiration for an attempt to create a properly understood aura of noble sentimentalism on contemporary instruments.

In conclusion, the tradition of performing Chopin's works in terms of tempo selection sometimes departs from the composer's suggestions. Without denying the activity and achievements of generations of eminent musicians, it is worth reaching for the metronome and wondering what the composer had in mind when he entered a particular marking. An instrument from the period may be helpful in better understanding Chopin's intentions. However, the conclusions drawn from this knowledge should always be filtered through one's own sensitivity, taste and preferences, and only then should one make decisions on this very important issue.

2.6 Creation and use of embellishments

The habit of adding embellishments to the text written by the composer dates back to the Baroque era, when the art of composition, improvisation and playing an instrument were inextricably linked. Chopin fitted perfectly into this paradigm, and his talent for improvisation

¹³⁶ Chopin's style

¹³⁷ J. Kleczynski, *op. cit.*, p. 60, quoted after: J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

¹³⁸ Today we should probably also add to them an overly exuberant dynamism.

was widely recognised. As Raoul Koczalski¹³⁹ wrote: ‘When Chopin performed his own compositions, he liked to introduce ornamental variants here and there. He did this, as Mikuli told me, with a marked predilection in his mazurkas.’¹⁴⁰ As Julius Seligmann¹⁴¹ described: ‘[During the Glasgow concert] Chopin encored the famous Mazurka in B flat major [Op. 7 No. 1] and played it with quite different nuances from the first time.’¹⁴² Moreover, in the lesson copies Chopin sometimes wrote variants¹⁴³ with his own hand, both adding new ornaments and changing existing ornaments. To this day, three sets of printed Chopin compositions survive in which the composer made changes. These belonged to Ludwika Jędrzejewiczowa¹⁴⁴, Jane W. Stirling¹⁴⁵ and Camilla O'Meara Dubois¹⁴⁶.

While the use of ornaments written down by the composer's hand is purely an aesthetic choice on the part of the performer, the addition of one's own embellishments may be more controversial. In the opinion of the author of this paper, this is acceptable, and in addition to the previously mentioned two other indications point to this. The first is the inclusion in the *Rondo in C major for two pianos* op. 73 in bar 103 of the remark *semplice senza ornamenti*.



Example 51, F. Chopin, *Rondo in C major for two pianos* op. 73, b. 102-106

¹³⁹ Raoul Koczalski (1885-1948)- Polish pianist, composer, pedagogue, pupil of Karol Mikuli.

¹⁴⁰ R. Koczalski, *Frédéric Chopin. Betrachtungen, Skizzen, Analysen*. Cologne 1936, p. 203, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹⁴¹ Julius Seligmann (d. 1903) - president of the Glasgow Society of Music, present at Chopin's concert in Glasgow on 27 September 1848.

¹⁴² J. C. Hadden, *Chopin*. London 1934, quoted after J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹⁴³ As Jan Ekier writes: 'The term variants (*warianty*) belonged to the Chopin vocabulary. Chopin originally gave the Berceuse op. 57 the name *Warianty*.' In: J. Ekier, *Wstęp do wydania narodowego. I. Zagadnienia edytorskie*, PWM, Kraków 1974, p. 141.

¹⁴⁴ Chopin's sister.

¹⁴⁵ Jane Wilhelmina Stirling (1804-1859), a pupil of Chopin's, discreetly supported the composer financially in the year of his death. Due to her activities in commemorating the person and work of Fryderyk Chopin, she is regarded as the first representative of chopinology.

¹⁴⁶ Camille Dubois, née O'Meara (1830-1907), a pupil of Chopin's between 1843 and 1848.

It has always been natural for composers to give hints suggesting a deviation from the accepted norms. They usually assumed knowledge of performance manners among musicians. One can therefore deduce that, according to Chopin, the absence of the above-mentioned marking may have prompted artists to embellish the fragment. Another indication comes from Wilhelm von Lenz¹⁴⁷:

I learned many secrets of piano playing from Liszt, studying with him Chopin's *Mazurkas in B flat major* and *A minor*, Op.7. In both works, he pointed out to me the important little variants, and instructed me to work out very carefully (*nam die Sache sehr streng*) especially the bass - seemingly so easy - in the *maggiore* of the *Mazurka in A minor*. What an effort he took! "Only a donkey might think that that passage is easy", he said; 'It is by those *bindings* (*Verbindungen*) that one recognises a virtuoso! Play them to Chopin like that; he'll notice and be pleased. Those silly (*dummen*) French editions throw everything away; that's how you have to lead those bows (*Bogen*) of connection in the bass! When you play him like that, he will give you a lesson'¹⁴⁸.

If Liszt allowed himself such a move (the addition of 'small variants') in relation to Chopin's works, knowing that the composer would probably hear Lenz perform his *Mazurkas*, then there could be nothing unorthodox or outside the generally accepted norms.

An important factor in creating performer's own embellishments is choosing the right place to put them. What seems obvious, the musical text over which the performer would like to write an ornament should be repeated several times, each time in the same form. First the changes should concern the dynamics, the shape of the phrase, the articulation, and only then the ideas for embellishments should appear. The shape of the ornaments themselves should be based on what Chopin himself wrote, so as not to go beyond the framework of his compositional style. Tracing the composer's work, we can distinguish at least three types of embellishments:

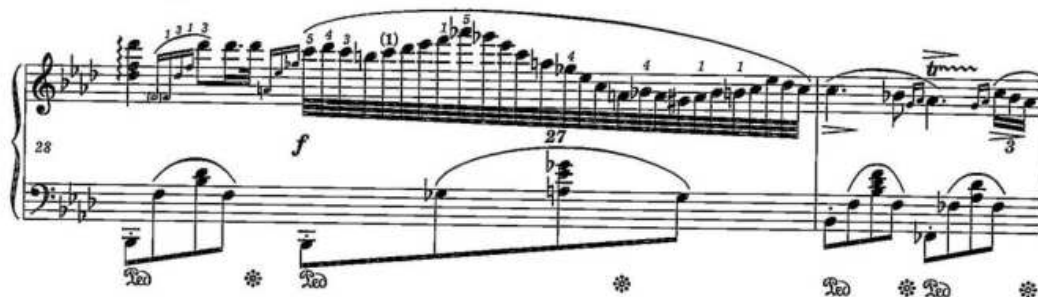
1. rich description of the existing melodic line, sometimes taking on very elaborate forms, of which perhaps the most beautiful example is the development of bar 9 of the second movement of the *Piano Concerto in F minor*, Op. 21

¹⁴⁷ Wilhelm von Lenz (1809-1883) was a pupil of Chopin's after 1842, before working with Liszt (winter 1828-1829). He described his recollections in three works, providing detailed indications of Chopin's requirements for his works.

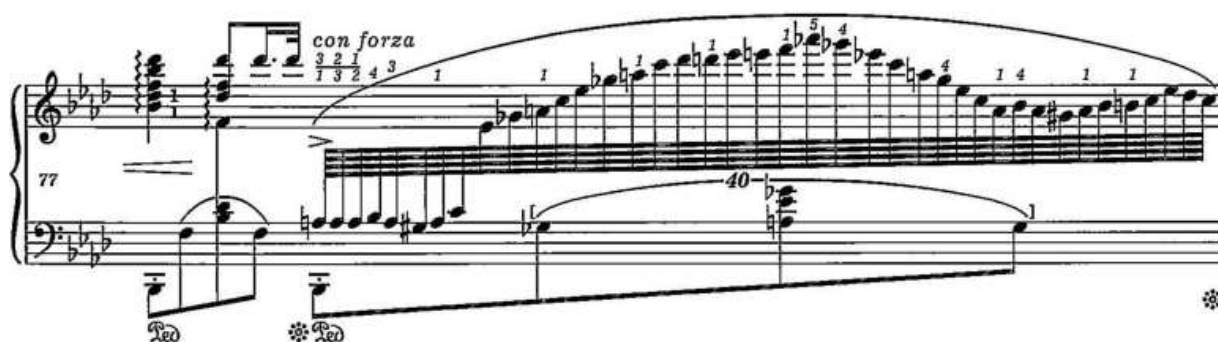
¹⁴⁸ W. Lenz, *Die grossen Pianoforte-Virtuosen unserer Zeit aus persönlicher Bekanntschaft. Liszt - Chopin - Tausig - Henselt*, in: *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*, no. 41, Berlin 1872, p. 26, quoted after: J.-J. Eigeldinger, *op. cit.*, p. 106.



Example 52, F. Chopin, *Piano Concerto in F minor* op. 21, 2nd mov. *Larghetto* (piano solo version), b. 9-11

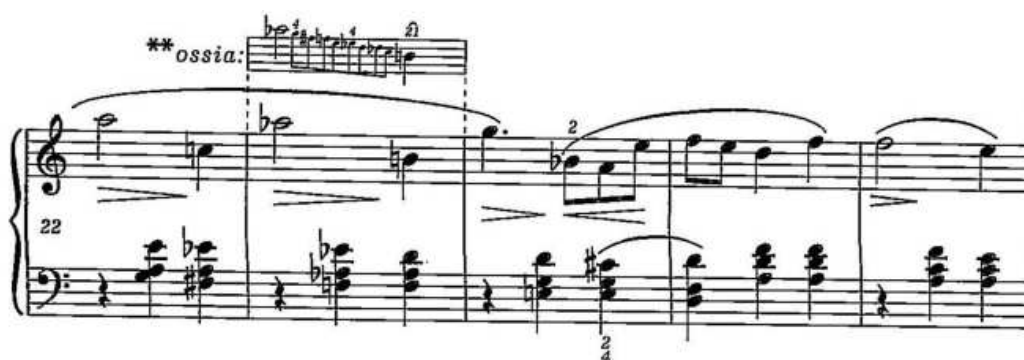


Example 53, F. Chopin, *Piano Concerto in F minor* op. 21, 2nd mov. *Larghetto* (piano solo version), b. 28-29



Example 54, F. Chopin, *Piano Concerto in F minor* op. 21, 2nd mov. *Larghetto* (piano solo version), b. 77

2. Filling in the existing pitch in the melody with a scale passage

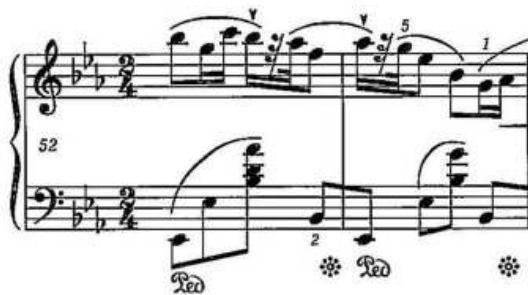


Example 55, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in A minor* op. 7 no. 2, b. 22-26

3. Subtle changes, pitch or rhythm, not fundamentally disturbing the melodic-rhythmic drawing



Example 56, F. Chopin, *Mazurka in B-flat major* op. 7 no. 1, b. 54-59



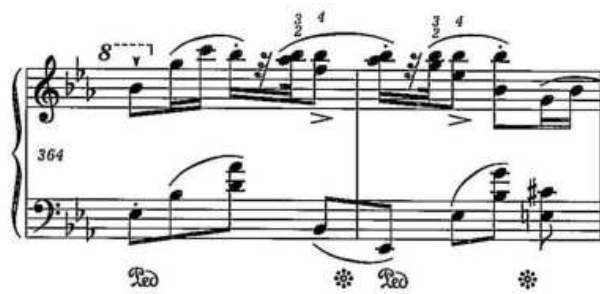
Example 57, F. Chopin, *Rondo in E-flat major* op. 16, b. 52-53



Example 58, F. Chopin, *Rondo in E-flat major* op. 16, b. 60-61



Example 59, F. Chopin, *Rondo in E-flat major* op. 16, b. 224-225



Example 60, F. Chopin, *Rondo in E-flat major* op. 16, b. 364-365

As for the range of Chopin's output where adding one's own (performer's) variants seems reasonable, it would be sensible to limit ourselves to works in the *brilliant* style and early works, mainly of a sentimental nature, in order to preserve the improvisatory character of this music. It must also be reckoned with the fact that embellishments in better-known works with a richer performance tradition may arouse greater opposition in the audience. In the artistic work that is the subject of the dissertation, the author created his variants (added above the original score in handwriting) in the following places and with the following shape:



Example 61, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in F minor* op. 71 no. 3, b. 55-58



Example 62, F. Chopin, *Polonaise in F minor* op. 71 no. 3, b. 73-75

Although the problem of variants does not arise directly from the use of a period instrument, it is closely related to historically informed performance, hence its place in this work. The extent to which embellishments can be used in contemporary performance should depend primarily on the decision of the individual musician, his skills and knowledge. It seems that as long as ornaments do not become an end in themselves, do not dominate the message of the composer, sound natural, as if written by the composer's hand, they should constitute an added value of artistic presentation, and not be a subject of heated discussions.

Conclusion

Meanwhile, it has turned out that period instruments can be played just as well as others; so now the question is why a musician chooses this or that means of sound. [...] It is, after all, obvious and natural that every musician wants to play the best possible instrument. The historical aspect - how it used to be done, how it really sounded - can of course fascinate for a while. But a musician is not someone who would make this kind of interest his or her profession; I would rather describe such a person as a historian. A musician will always try to find a suitable instrument for himself. I would therefore like to confine my further considerations to those who prefer an instrument to another for purely musical reasons; for those who do so purely out of an interest in historical facts and circumstances do not, in my opinion, qualify as musicians; at best they are researchers, but not artists.¹⁴⁹

This was Nikolaus Harnoncourt's view of historical performance 40 years ago, and it is hard not to agree with him today. As shown in this paper, the possible impact of using a period piano on contemporary performance is very limited, and may only indirectly affect a few aspects of playing. So what benefit, apart from the artist's own pleasure, can come from changing to a period instrument? It seems that the most important source of inspiration in this case will be the reference to a piano from 180 years ago. Contrary to what Harnoncourt writes next¹⁵⁰, the author of this description does not believe that instruments can be divided into better and worse in relation to performing a certain type of music on them. An attitude in which the instrument used is not valued brings the artists together and allows them to draw on the riches of their worlds¹⁵¹. According to the author, in a field such as music where all experiences influence interpretation this is of great importance. At this point one should also try to answer the question of what place performance practice on period instruments should play in piano education. In the author's opinion, it should be obligatory, just as a good concert, an interesting book or a trip to nature should be obligatory. Consequently, for some future musician, this source of inspiration may become a new musical path.

¹⁴⁹ N. Harnoncourt, *Muzyka mową dźwięków*, translated by Magdalena Czajka, Ruch muzyczny Foundation, Warsaw 1995, p. 88.

¹⁵⁰ See N. Harnoncourt, *op. cit.*, p. 89-95.

¹⁵¹ A rather unusual example to confirm these words may be a story experienced by the author of this work himself. During his participation in a master class in Radziejowice, before his lesson he found Nikolai Demidenko playing on an instrument of Érard from the 1830s, the *Piano Sonata No. 8 in B flat major*, Op. 84 by Prokofiev. The reason for this was simple curiosity on the part of the Russian pianist.

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Appendix

Author's interview with Buchholtz instrument replica builder Paul McNulty on 19.04.2021

Krzysztof Książek: Have you changed anything in Buchholtz replica compared to the original instrument? If so, what it was?

Paul McNulty: The contract came 10 years after I measured the instrument. I knew that they wanted it for the Chopin F minor Concerto, so I looked at the score and on page 3 there is a contra E flat, so I called Leszczyński¹⁵² and I said you need 5 more notes in the bottom. It was perfectly natural for many workshops in Europe to get this extra notes. Graf was doing it in 1820s. He would make six octaves and six and a half octaves at the same time. This is the only controversy. One should notice that there is a exceptional body in the base, it comes from many things but it also helps having these few extra notes in the bottom. This is a solid change but otherwise I was faithful as much as possible.

KK: Is everything in the piano in Viennese style?

PM: Everything is Viennese. Buchholtz was in Vienna in 1815 and what he learned there was among others the hammers of Fritz which are very tall. The cross-section of the hammer is mostly wood. The shape the hammer head like Fritz is round and rather fat, a lot of wood and not much leather as opposed to Graf which has a narrow, pointy hammer head with piles of leather. It's a different approach, which Buchholtz chose. What Buchholtz also chose is the exact pattern of the ribs of Anton Walter. What he did in a very interesting way was that the soundboard is angled like a French piano, 38 degrees to the spine. What this does is that the reflective quality of the wood in the soundboard is more efficient and it is also stiffer. When I made it I was worried about the sound being hard. But what it has is the Walter style ribs which are so delicate. In proportions, Buchholtz is balancing this stiffness in a knowing intelligent way. It has proportions of a very good character, but it is all Viennese. There were Bohemian builders who did the same change of angle in the soundboard. It is not against the law to change the angle. Buchholtz made his own style, he was not a copyist he was not

¹⁵² Stanisław Leszczyński - Vice-President of Chopin Institute.

slavish. He took what he liked and he made goulash out of it but it was a very intelligent combination, so he was an artist.

KK: What does the whole in the bottom of Buchholtz instrument in Krzemieniec come from?

PM: It was a terrible repair made long time before me. The ribs were coming loose from the soundboard and they wanted to go with screws and put it together. They couldn't see anything so they decide to make a whole in the bottom. However it allowed me to see the ribs and see the structure of piano.

KK: What is the temperament you use while tuning the Buchholtz piano?

PM: I play with the perfectly symmetrical Young no. 1. I slightly change it because Young no. 1 is a nice circulating temperament, you can play all the keys. But it is too dirty for Chopin, and too dirty for Schubert and late Beethoven. When you take the same instructions but you shrink it you get the same symmetry but the F sharp major is not too far from C major. It sounds almost equal but it is not and that is a big difference.