

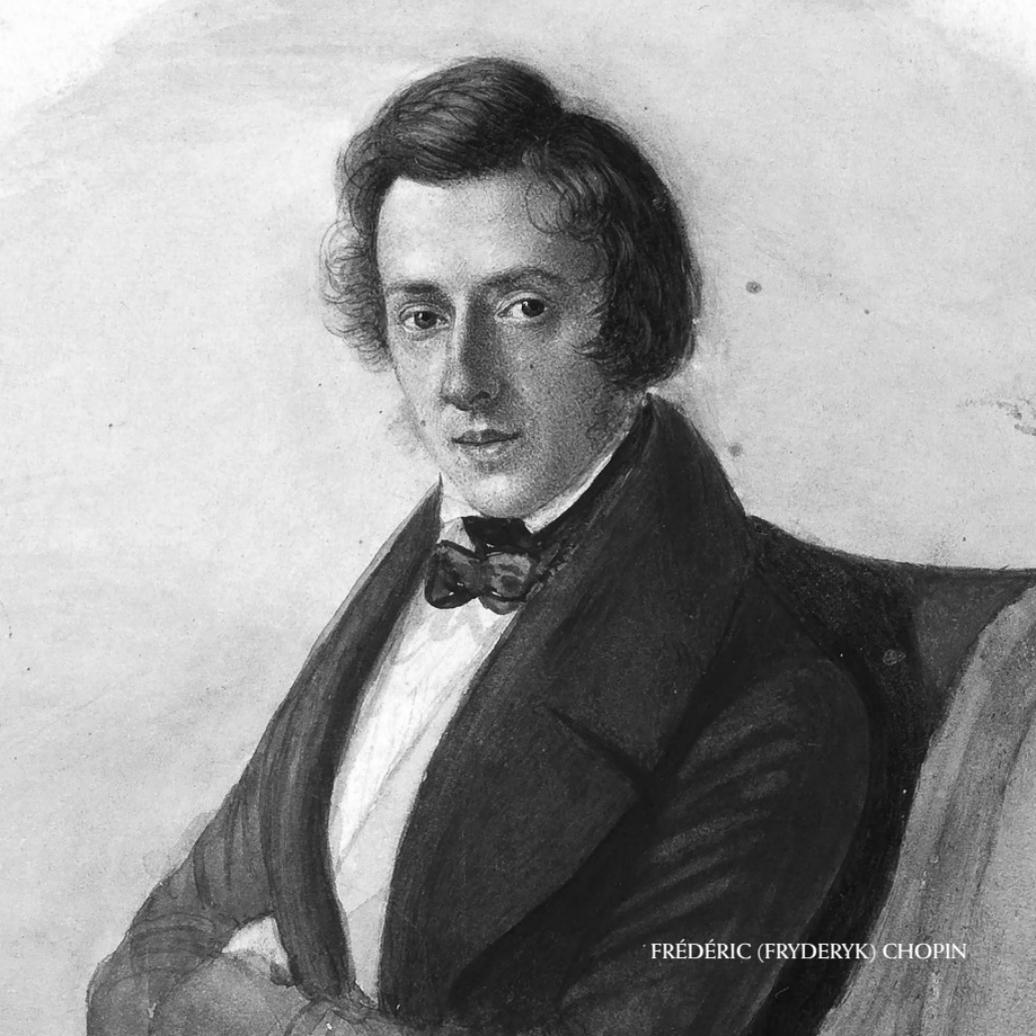


ONDINE

CHOPIN

COMPLETE MAZURKAS • VOL. 1

PETER JABLONSKI



FRÉDÉRIC (FRYDERYK) CHOPIN

FRÉDÉRIC (FRYDERYK) CHOPIN (1810–1849)

Complete Mazurkas, Vol. 1

Four Mazurkas, Op. 6 (1830–32) 8:07

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Mazurka No. 1 in F-sharp minor | 2:52 |
| 2 | Mazurka No. 2 in C-sharp minor | 2:34 |
| 3 | Mazurka No. 3 in E major | 1:50 |
| 4 | Mazurka No. 4 in E-flat minor | 0:51 |

Five Mazurkas, Op. 7 (1825?–31) 10:00

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|------|
| 5 | Mazurka No. 5 in B-flat major | 2:09 |
| 6 | Mazurka No. 6 in A minor | 3:38 |
| 7 | Mazurka No. 7 in F minor | 2:21 |
| 8 | Mazurka No. 8 in A-flat major | 1:09 |
| 9 | Mazurka No. 9 in C major | 0:43 |

Four Mazurkas, Op. 17 (1831–33) 13:29

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|------|
| 10 | Mazurka No. 10 in B-flat major | 2:22 |
| 11 | Mazurka No. 11 in E minor | 2:03 |
| 12 | Mazurka No. 12 in A-flat major | 4:47 |
| 13 | Mazurka No. 13 in A minor | 4:17 |

Four Mazurkas, Op. 24 (1833–36) 12:13

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|------|
| 14 | Mazurka No. 14 in G minor | 2:52 |
| 15 | Mazurka No. 15 in C major | 2:15 |
| 16 | Mazurka No. 16 in A-flat major | 2:15 |
| 17 | Mazurka No. 17 in B-flat minor | 4:51 |

	Four Mazurkas, Op. 30 (1836–37)	9:41
18	Mazurka No. 18 in C minor	1:44
19	Mazurka No. 19 in B minor	1:29
20	Mazurka No. 20 in D-flat major	2:45
21	Mazurka No. 21 in C-sharp minor	3:43

	Four Mazurkas, Op. 33 (1836–38)	11:25
22	Mazurka No. 22 in G-sharp minor	1:38
23	Mazurka No. 23 in D major	2:30
24	Mazurka No. 24 in C major	1:57
25	Mazurka No. 25 in B minor	5:20

	Four Mazurkas, Op. 41 (1838–39)	8:57
26	Mazurka No. 26 in E minor	2:14
27	Mazurka No. 27 in B major	1:16
28	Mazurka No. 28 in A-flat major	2:01
29	Mazurka No. 29 in C-sharp minor	3:26

PETER JABLONSKI, piano

Chopin: Complete Mazurkas, Vol. 1

The mazurka, which dates back to as early as the sixteenth century, was a Polish country dance from the plains of Mazovia, around Warsaw, danced by the people of the province, the *Mazurs*. There were three basic forms of their dance: a quick, lively *mazurek*, with distinct and varied articulation, and the most popular of the three; a fast and playful *oberek*, and a melodious, melancholy *kujawiak*. All three stem from the ancient *Polska*, a dance in triple time with strong accents (often accompanied by a tap of the heel) on the second or third beat of the bar. In performance, a pride of bearing and a certain wildness made its mood different from the more sedate waltz. From its folk origins, it spread to ballrooms across Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even reaching America in the nineteenth century. Throughout the vastness of nineteenth-century Russia, the mazurka was a very popular dance, not least in glittering ballrooms in the estates and palaces of the nobility.

It might have remained a passing dance fashion had it not been adopted by Frédéric (Fryderyk) Chopin (1810–1849), for whom it became a deeply personal, intimate statement of his feelings as an émigré Polish composer living in Paris. From some of his very first compositions to his last (Op. 68, No. 4, written a few weeks before his death), it is the only form that Chopin composed regularly throughout his life, with nocturnes coming a close second. Although Polish composers before him wrote mazurkas too, such as Maria Szymanowska, Karol Krupiński, and Józef Elsner, it is Chopin's musical genius that elevated this country dance into an art form. His mazurkas inspired various composers from Glinka and Balakirev, through Debussy and Scriabin, and is still cherished in Poland, in the works of Szymanowski, Maciejewski, Gradstein and others.

There are 55 Chopin mazurkas (there are four other works with this title, which are now believed to contain fragments probably composed by him),¹ taking into account some early

¹ Paweł Kamiński, Source Commentary on Chopin Mazurkas Op. 24, published by Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, Warsaw, 2008).

pieces, but the mazurka also appears in various guises in concerti, polonaises, rondos, songs, and other works, being thus present more than eighty times within the body of his music. Quite clearly, at a time when his native Poland was wiped from the political map, Chopin identified himself spiritually and emotionally with the form, although his creative genius subtly adapted its lilting character into his own personal style.

Chopin composed mazurkas regularly between 1829 and 1849, the year of his death. In the years between Op. 6 (1830–1832) and Op. 41 (1838–1839) Chopin went from being the young genius in his 'early' period, author of concerti and variations in a *stile brillante*, Etudes Op. 10, Nocturnes Op. 9, to the mature composer in his 'middle' period, with works such as the Ballade No. 2, 24 Preludes, Scherzo No. 3, and just about to enter into his 'last', masterly period which gave birth to the Fantasy in F minor, the Ballade No. 4, and later the Polonaise-Fantasy. By the time he finished composing the mazurkas Op. 41, he was almost universally accepted as a genius. Franz Liszt wrote a review of Chopin's recital in Paris in April 1841, saying that 'a complete silence of criticism already reigns about him, as if posterity [already had come].'²

All opuses on this recording contain four pieces, with the exception of Op. 7, which contains five pieces. Opp. 6, 7, 17 were all composed between 1830 and 1833 (although Op. 7 No. 4 might have been composed as early as 1825), so they share similarities while also showing a development of style and harmonic language. Mazurkas Op. 6 were written in Vienna during 1830, and signal arrival at a fully mature, fully formed, self-contained and stylised dance, but made very clearly for performance and listening (it is good to remember that when the mazurka was first appropriated by other composers at the time, it was still intended to be danced to). Both Op. 6 and 7 end with two very short mazurkas, like post-scripts or afterthoughts.

² Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris, 2 May 1841.

Chopin himself assembled mazurkas in opuses meant for publication, with a dramaturgical concept that emerges clearly already from Op. 17, undergoes development in Op. 24, and reaches its peak in Op. 41, often considered to be the most cohesive set of all. Chopin balances moods and tempi relationships between the pieces in each set more and more carefully.

What can be observed in Chopin's mazurka opuses are intentional close tonal and motivic relationships between the mazurkas and their contrasting moods. From Op. 17 onwards, the first mazurka sets the stage for the following pieces, with the second or third usually an ebullient, lively *oberek*, and the last mazurka becoming more complex and extended, and always in a minor key. However, it was not always the case until recently, with the order in Op. 41 differing between various editions. In some, Op. 41 No. 4 appears first, breaking the pattern of the most extended mazurka being the last in the set.

Chopin almost never used authentic folk material, but created folk-like themes of his own, because the spirit of a country dance was more important to him than a direct quotation. The only exceptions are thought to be Op. 68 Nos. 2 and 3, and Op. 24 No. 4.

Op. 24 were published simultaneously in three different editions: France in 1835, and Germany and England in 1836, although composition took place between 1833 and 1836. Op. 30 was composed between 1836 and 1837, Op. 33 between 1836 and 1838, and Op. 41 in 1838–39.

Chopin gave very clear indications in his scores, but we know from his pupils that he never played his own works in the same way twice. He told his students to put their soul into the music they were playing, to trust their own musical intuition. To him, it was important to find the essence of the work, to allow it to live and breathe, and he certainly practiced what he preached. Ignaz Moscheles remembered that 'Chopin's manner of playing *ad libitum*, a phrase which to so many signifies deficiency in time and rhythm, was with him only a charming originality of execution.'³

³ Jean Kleczynski, *How to Play Chopin. The Works of Frederic Chopin and their Proper Interpretation* (translated by Alfred Whittingham), London, 1880, p. 58.

The mazurkas demand elegance, spirit, careful attention to tempi, colours, rubato (the elusive mazurka lilt), dynamics, and pedalling. Chopin's use of the pedal was incredibly sensitive, and relatively sparse, as we know from the accounts of his students. He was very fond of *una corda*, but on his Pleyel piano it would have given him a very different colour and effect than a modern instrument gives us today.

He loved the human voice and singing, and so this quality cannot be underestimated and overlooked in his works. Many mazurkas often demand long lines that would be easier to achieve with a voice or a bow and Chopin often warned his students not to make their phrases too short, too disjointed.

In his mazurkas Chopin found a way to be at his most personal, vulnerable, and intimate. One might say that they are his musical diary. Of course, one might feel this intensity in his other works, but in the mazurkas it somehow seems to be more present, more visceral. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that in Chopin's mazurkas we can hear the musical essence of a Poland that he loved, (a kind of 'dream Poland', as he was never to return there), his longing for and 'romanticisation' of his feelings and memories, which only grew throughout his life. But he also was a truly universal composer, of whom Karol Szymanowski said: 'Chopin was an eternal example of what Polish music was capable of achieving—a symbol of Europeanised Poland, losing nothing of his national features but standing on the highest pinnacle of European culture.'⁴

Anastasia Belina & Peter Jablonski

⁴ Karol Szymanowski, *Z pism*, edited by Teresa Chylińska, Kraków, 1958, p. 185.

Peter Jablonski is an internationally acclaimed Swedish pianist. Discovered by Claudio Abbado and Vladimir Ashkenazy and signed by Decca at the age of 17, he went on to perform, collaborate, and record with over 150 of the world's leading orchestras and conductors, including the Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Mariinsky, La Scala Philharmonic, Tonhalle Zurich, Orchestre Nationale de France, NHK Tokyo, DSO Berlin, Warsaw Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Valery Gergiev, Kurt Sanderling, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Riccardo Chailly, Daniele Gatti, and Myung-Whun Chung, to name a few.

He has performed and recorded the complete piano concertos by Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and Bartók, and all piano sonatas by Prokofiev. Hailed as an 'unconventional virtuoso', during his three-decade-long career he developed a diverse repertoire that includes works by Barber, Gershwin, Szymanowski, Lutoslawski, Copland, Stenhammar, and Nielsen, with most recent additions by such Scandinavian and European composers as Valborg Aulin, Elfrida Andrée, Laura Netzel, Johanna Müller-Hermann, and Alexey Stanchinsky.

He worked with composers Witold Lutoslawski and Arvo Pärt, and had a number of works composed for, and dedicated to him, including Wojciech Kilar's First Piano Concerto, for which he won the Orpheus world premiere performance award at the Warsaw Autumn Festival. He remains a supporter of today's composers and regularly gives world premieres of new works, together with those that have been neglected by music history.

Jablonski's extensive discography includes recordings on Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, Philips, Altara and Octavia labels, and now Ondine. He has received numerous awards for his recordings, including the Edison award for best concerto recording of Shostakovich's First Piano Concerto, Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, and Lutoslawski's Paganini Rhapsody with Ashkenazy and RPO for Decca.

www.peterjablonski.com

Recordings: Malmö Palladium, Malmö, Sweden, August 3–4, 2022

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Recording Engineer: Tomas Borgström

Piano technician: Joacim Eriksson

Editing, post-production and mastering: Federico Furlanetto (HvF Studio)

Piano: Steinway D model

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Painting of the composer: Watercolour (1836) by Maria Wodzinska (1819–1896)
in National Museum in Warsaw

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