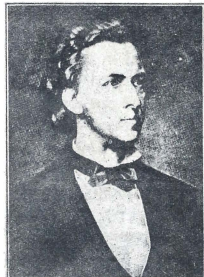


MUSIC APPRECIATION SECTION**GREAT COMPOSERS OF MUSIC**

By BERT PAUL OSBON

VIII. CHOPIN, THE POET OF THE PIANO*Frederic Chopin*

FREDERIC CHOPIN (pronounced *show - pan* with a nasal sound of *n*) was another "wonder-child" of music. Born near Warsaw, Poland, in 1810, the early years of this frail boy were tinged with

the melancholy and patriotism of his native Poland which was in vain trying to throw off the Russian yoke and regain its freedom.

His father, who had come to Poland in 1787 from eastern France, was a school-teacher; his mother was of a good Polish family. Frederic received a fair education under private teachers. He began studying the piano at a very early age. At the age of nine he appeared publicly in concerts and was pronounced a genius; at twelve he was composing pieces. When he was fifteen his first musical composition was published.

A Polish nobleman helped him in his education; his refined and gracious manners made him welcome in the homes of

the Polish nobility, where he heard the stately court-dance of Poland called the *polonaise*.

Many of his boyhood days were spent in the country, where he learned to love the songs and dances of the Polish peasants, especially the gay *mazurka*.

When Chopin was nineteen years old, a revolution broke out in Poland, and his parents sent him to Germany to study. Two years later he took up his residence in Paris, where he lived the remaining eighteen years of his life.

No people in Europe have had a more moving history than have the Poles, as the natives of Poland are called. They are a proud people who have suffered the cruel fortunes of war for many years, especially in the recent World War No. II. They have always been patriotic.

The spirit of Poland burned in Chopin. He knew the traditions of his people. Though he lived much of his short life in Paris, he never forgot his native Poland. His most masterly music is that which is fired by his Polish patriotism.

Chopin was a man of great culture, and his music expresses the inherent fineness of his nature. He was a tone-poet. During almost exactly the same years as Mendelssohn lived (see the August, 1940, issue of THE YOUNG CITIZEN), this Polish pianist and composer contributed to musical art an influence that has been very powerful and persistent.

His choice of Paris as a residence introduced him to a society especially sensitive to his artistic nature. His nation-

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ality, his high-bred, aristocratic ways, and the charm of his art speedily brought him into public notice. The most noticeable of his personal characteristics were his sentimental sensitiveness and his instinctive refinement.

Chopin early attained foremost rank as a concert virtuoso on the piano. He developed a certain style in playing: his playing was noticeable for its delicacy and beauty of tone. Through him the piano became a source of exquisite tone color.

During his short life (1810 to 1849) he made a unique contribution to the literature of the piano. His distinctive style of writing made the most of the artistic possibility of that instrument.

As a composer, Chopin had great ability in thinking of beautiful melodies, in developing the possibilities of the piano, and in giving decoration and color to his music.

His works, although almost wholly confined to compositions for the piano, have become standard everywhere in both public and private use. He was a lyric artist, usually choosing forms for his compositions that are song-like.

Chopin is called "the poet of the piano." He was truly a poet in music. His compositions are of a delicate, intimate character, more suited to the salon—*sala* in the Philippines—than in the concert hall. They have all the refined elegance of a true Parisian, but the Polish nationality is always present.

Chopin is notable among the greater

musicians from the fact that most of his compositions belong to a single field, that is, they are all written for the piano; he did not write operas or music for the orchestra. His genius was romantic, and his intense poetic feeling was ennobled by his undying patriotism.

His latter years were clouded with illness and much unhappiness. He died from tuberculosis in Paris in 1849, and was given a stately funeral in that city.

Chopin represented Poland in music in three distinct forms of musical composition: the *polonaise*, the *mazurka*, and the *ballade*. Each is a vivid record of Polish nationalism.

The *polonaise*, as previously stated in this article, is the music for a stately Polish dance or march, just as the *rigodon* is a rather stately Spanish dance introduced into the Philippines during the Spanish rule. Chopin wrote fourteen or fifteen *polonaises*. They are not intended especially to be used for dancing, but are

in concert form.

One of the most famous of these is his Military Polonaise in A major (No. 1, opus 40). This music recalls the march of Polish noblemen in the ceremonies of the government. You should ask some person who is a capable pianist to play this for you. Or you can buy a phonograph record of this music if you wish.

The *mazurka*, as also previously stated, is a gay Polish dance. It is in moderate triple time and is somewhat like the

(Please turn to page 397.)



The "little dog waltz" was suggested to Chopin by the antics of a little dog at play.

CHOPIN

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polka. The music of the *mazurka* is not as ceremonious as that of the *polonaise*. More than fifty *mazurkas*, all in concert form, were written by this composer.

A *ballade*, when written as an instrumental composition, is a sort of narrative—that is, it tells a story by means of music. Chopin wrote four of these. One of them, which you must hear either by piano or phonograph when you have an opportunity, is his *Ballade in G minor*. In this *ballade* Chopin tells in music a heroic legend of the Middle Ages in Poland. The hero of this legend is a man named Wallenrod. The story is told in epic (narrative) poetry, and Chopin gives us the same story by means of music. If you learn the theme of the poem, the music will be wonderfully clear when you hear it. The voice of a Polish bard (poet) urging the cause of Polish liberty is heard throughout the *ballade*. If you hear this music on a piano or a phonograph, try to identify the theme which represents the voice of the bard.

Another well known composition by Chopin is called the *Minute Waltz*, but the

French people call this *la valse du le petit chien*, that is, "the waltz of the little dog." According to a story, this music was suggested to Chopin by the antics of a little dog at play. An artist has sketched an imaginary picture of this scene; this sketch is reproduced on page 383. You will surely want to hear the "little dog waltz."

Chopin was a true poet, although he uses the piano instead of words for his medium of expression, and to him is rightfully given the immortal title, "Poet of the Piano."

REVIEW

1. Spell and pronounce the name of Chopin (pronounced *shooc-pan*).
2. Where and when was Chopin born? Died when?
3. Tell of Chopin's life.
4. Name three different kinds of musical compositions which Chopin wrote.
5. What name has been given to Chopin?

MY FAITHFUL DOG

(Continued from page 379)

I am sure that if it had not been for the help of my faithful dog, I would have drowned. I rewarded him with more affection than ever and kinder treatment.

HOW TO STOP HICCUPS

(Continued from page 388)

It is well for everybody to know at least several of these.

Cough or sneeze. This is the opposite of the hiccups mechanism, and will often stop it.

Sugar on the tongue. Put a small amount of sugar on the tip of a spoon and deposit it as far back on the tongue as you can. Then swallow. The dry sugar requires some effort to get down and the muscles brought into play quiet the spasm of hiccups.

Salt, vinegar, ice, and cold water. These are effective in much the same way as sugar.

Pull strongly on the tongue. When more effective measures are needed in a persistent case of hiccups, try this. It is effective.

Apply pressure to the back of the neck. This may be effective, because that is where the nerve controlling hiccups is located.

Nausea (desire to vomit) caused by tickling the back of the throat, usually gets results in stubborn cases.

When none of these remedies is effective, and it has continued for several hours, call a doctor. He may wash out your stomach and give sedatives (sleep-producing drugs).