

Abstract of the DLA Dissertation

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Development of the Genre by Chopin – from the perspective of
the nocturne-typology

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I. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Chopin, unlike so many of his contemporaries, never used programmatic-poetic titles for his compositions, he only determined the genre. In the first half of the 18th century the main principle for the genre was his function. In the second half of the century the focus shifted to the “pure music”, music without extramusical content, and two genres has risen in rank and appreciation: the symphony and the sonata. At the beginning of the 19th century this is replaced by the emergence of various small-scale works, of which initially no consistency or system can be discovered. It was Chopin who created generic stability that allowed the genres to communicate between composer and listener. His approach renewed the entire salon music with a more accurate and consistent application of the titles and general characteristics. This evolved into some kind of “generic contract”¹: the composer agrees to use some of the conventions, patterns and gestures of a genre, but he can also break this contract by not fulfilling the expectations of the listener. From this starting point I planned to portrait the creation, establishment and transformation of a particular genre.

Considering several aspects I chose the category of the nocturnes, on the one hand because it's easily delimited: Chopin composed 20 nocturnes. On the other hand this genre was present in the whole oeuvre: the first nocturne is from 1829, the last one – although is only a sketch – from 1847. So we can state, that Chopin was interested in the possibilities of the genre for a long time.

Numerous papers written on the nocturnes focused rather on Chopin's compositional style and craftsmanship, as seen in Jim Samson's book on Chopin² or in the publications of the Chopin Instytut.³ Samson's study *Chopin and genre* shares its starting point with my theses, in which he gives a similar overview of the impromptus. Jeffrey Kallberg initially based his research on the examination of primary sources,⁴ then in his later works he involves diverse scientific assets of other fields like sociology, cultural contexts, and some new perspectives like feminism. Furthermore many case-studies are also available, which discuss mainly individual works. The single study, which systematized the nocturnes was presented by Miec-

¹ Jeffrey Kallberg: „The rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor.” *19th-Century Music* 11/3 (1988. spring) 238-261. 243.

² Jim Samson: *Chopin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

³ Among others: Artur Szklener (ed.) *Analitycal perspectives on the music of Chopin*. Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 2003.; Artur Szklener (ed.): *Chopin in performance: History, Theory, Practice*. Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 2004.

⁴ Jeffrey Kallberg: *The Chopin Sources: Variants and Versions in Later Manuscripts and Printed Editions*. PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1982.

zysław Tomaszewski,⁵ but without long and elaborate definitions, merely stating the types and their main characteristics, adding their generic models. He attached several nocturnes by Chopin to every type as examples. All this considered my choice of topic seemed reasonable and suggested promising aspects.

II. SOURCES

The earlier mentioned summary of Chopin's nocturne-types by Tomaszewski served as a starting point for nocturne-typology. In his spreadsheet he evokes many musical and extra-musical generic references, especially the generic antecedents of each nocturne-type. I discussed these genre-models and their effects through the corresponding articles of the standard musical cyclopaedia *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.

I based my research on the following musical score:

Wydanie Narodowe Dzieł Fryderyka Chopina. Ed. Jan Ekier és Paweł Kamiński. Warsaw: Fundacja Wydania Narodowego Dzieł Fryderyka Chopina, 1999-2011.

I based my research on the following musical score:

Frédéric Chopin: *Nocturnes pour piano*. Ed. Gábor Csalog. Budapest: Könemann, 1994.

John Field: *17 Nocturnes und Cavatine Reviens*. Ed. Hugo Riemann. Leipzig: Steingraeber & Söhne, 1885.

Fryderyk Chopin: *Impromptus*. Ed. Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Ludwik Bronarski, Józef Turczyński. In: *Dziela wszystkie Fryderyka Chopina, Vol. IV*. Warsaw: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1949-61.

⁵ Mieczysław Tomaszewski: „La musique de Chopin dans la perspective de la méthode d'interprétation dite intégrale” In: Artur Szklener (ed.): *Analytical perspectives on the music of Chopin*. Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 2003. 57-79.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

Since my dissertation's main issue was a specific genre and its alteration, firstly I concentrated on the concept of genre itself. I focused especially on its 19th century meaning through various works concerning the theoretical aspects of the genre.

Later on I continued to explore the *nocturne's* generic antecedents starting my investigation with the 18th century instrumental nocturne-like music, the *notturmo*. I carried on with the vocal *notturmo duetto*, which emerged in the second half of the century. Then I concluded with the appearance of the piano-nocturne in the works of John Field.

The main part of my dissertation was the examination of Chopin's nocturne-compositions in a perspective as wide as possible. I examined closely the composer's stylistic periods, his relation to traditions, and contemporary critics as well. Finally I analyzed the works from various generic aspects.

In the following sections I try to unveil the relations and contexts of genres used by Chopin. After that I concentrate on formal sections of works in order to understand the structural applications of the nocturne in the large scale forms.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

I surely think that the familiarity with the nineteenth century keyboard traditions offers knowledge of utmost importance to the contemporary pianist. Chopin inevitably plays a central role in the piano repertoire, however some of his works stay out of the main attention. Hopefully my primary achievement is to draw attention to aspects which the mainstream of analysis usually does not feature.

The aim of my paper was also to highlight those ex-pianistic and in Hungary possibly slightly known genres which are closely related to the fieldian and chopinian nocturne, such as the *notturmo*, and the vocal *duetto notturno*. Furthermore, recognizing the authentic performance practices of Chopin's age, as well as the contemporary reception of his works offers the key to understand what meanings did they initially bear and what were attached to them later.

The profound analysis of Chopin's nocturne-types can give us a glimpse in his compositional workshop and way of thinking. Through the comprehension of his relation to the gener-

ic boundaries and the audiences expectations one may understand how he achieved to convey his unparalleled voice.

V. DOCUMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ANALYZED TOPIC

As a pianist I constantly benefit from this research since it altered my concepts of performance practice in a great scale. The poetic descriptions by Chopin's contemporary critics are an important source of inspiration for the performer as well. My investigation and research hopefully may help me to improve an even more intense and elaborated performance style in playing Chopin which I try to realize on the 10th September 2018 in the Old Academy of Music's Chamber Hall in Budapest where I perform the Barcarolle along with the third Piano Sonata in b minor.