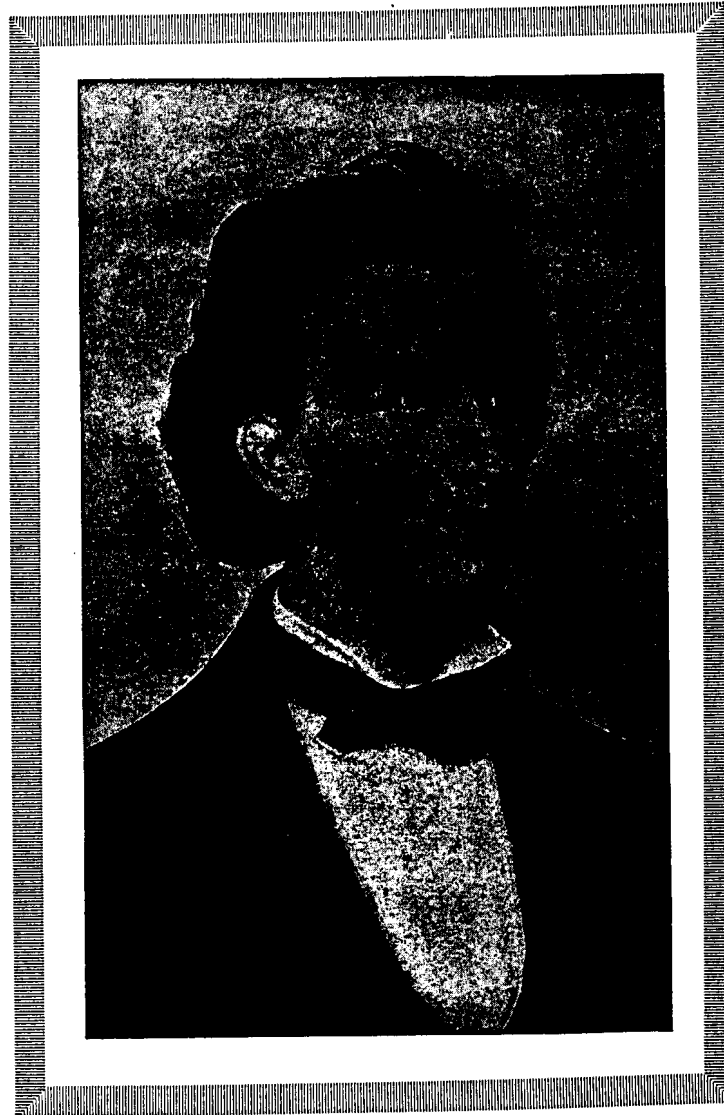


IMPROMPTU IN F-SHARP

Op. 36

By

FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN



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IMPROMPTU IN F-SHARP

Biographical Sketch—Frédéric François Chopin

Born at Zelazowa-Wola, near Warsaw, February 22, 1809

Died in Paris, October 17, 1849

FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN was of mixed Polish and French blood. His father, Nicholas, was a Frenchman from Nancy in Lorraine, and his mother, Justine Krzyzanowska, was Polish. His first music teacher was Adalbert Zwiny, a Bohemian violinist, pianist, and composer. Later, he studied with Joseph Elsner, an eminent teacher of the strictly classical kind, at the Warsaw School of Music. Before he was twenty-one he had made a world-wide name for himself both as a pianist and as a composer of piano music. His style was distinctly his own; in fact, it may be said that he invented a new school of composition and also of piano technic that had a far-reaching influence on the future of both. In his early days he seemed to have been inspired by the genius of Schubert and Weber, and the methods of the Irish composer John Field attracted him. But he so quickly developed an idiom of his own that there was soon left but little trace of these early influences.

He was not a classical writer in the sense of being a "formalist." The form of his compositions was, however, always well balanced, if somewhat elastic. He clothed the old forms with new harmonies and new ornamentation, and it is for the transformation of the meaningless elaboration which had decorated the works of many of his predecessors and contemporaries into a thing of the utmost delicacy and refinement that Chopin is chiefly famous. For the subtlety of his harmonies, however, he also deserves mention, especially as he is said to have greatly influenced that mighty master of harmony, Richard Wagner, who was quick in realizing that Chopin had broken down the heavy harmonic conventions of the Teutons, and had originated a new and more satisfying mode of expression.

Chopin was one of the first to raise national folk music to the level of high art. The nationality he pictured was, of course, that of Poland—the land of his birth. But although Poland colors much of his music, it must not be supposed that he was totally subject to the national music idea. He was far too cosmopolitan in mind as well as in environment to allow nationality to localize an art that should be universal in its appeal.

After his student days Chopin settled in Paris, where he was accepted on equal terms by the leading authors and artists of the day, and where he was received into the homes of the aristocracy. The famous Hungarian pianist, Franz Liszt, was his friend. Heine admired him, and George Sand (Madam Dudevant) idealized him. Here he enjoyed triumphs and endured trials and disappointments, and here he was attacked by the scourge consumption, of which he died at the age of forty. He was buried in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, his heart being carried back to his native Poland, where it lies in the Church of the Holy Cross in Warsaw.

General Information: The word "Impromptu" is used to describe a composition which gives the impression of being performed "extempore"; that is, of being a spontaneous offering of the performer.

Of the four Impromptus written by Chopin this, No. II, is generally considered the most beautiful. Whatever it may lack in symmetry of form it certainly gains in intensity of expression. Chopin himself favored this Composition, for he frequently played it in the intimate circle of his friends. It was published in May, 1840.

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IMPROMPTU IN F-SHARP

Form and Structure: The selection of the title "Impromptu" justifies the inference that the form employed is somewhat free or irregular. Such a composition is always difficult to analyze. Some might expect to find a total abandonment of symmetry in a work of this class, but the man of genius frequently delights in forming creations in which "art conceals art." Careful study will sometimes reveal new applications of the familiar principles of musical structure, even in works that seem at first sight to be formless. In the present instance the melodic outline is so clear that the listener scarcely thinks of formal irregularities, except perhaps in one place—where a portion of the Main Theme occurs in a very remote key. (Compare meas. 7-18 with meas. 61-72.)

There is more than one way of regarding the structure of this Impromptu*, but the simplest of all is to treat it as a Two-Part Song-Form with a rudimentary Trio and an extended *Coda*. Throughout the Main Theme groups of six measures—instead of groups of four measures—predominate.

Part I; meas. 1-29. In the Introductory measures (1-6) the harmonic outline is indicated, and a melodic idea is also given. From meas. 7-12 is the fore-phrase, and from meas. 13-18 the after-phrase. Chopin later contracts this fore-phrase to four measures instead of six (in meas. 73-76).

Part II; meas. 30-38. This Part is more regularly constructed, the fore-phrase (meas. 30-34) and the after-phrase (meas. 34-38) each consisting of four measures. Both Phrases begin on the second beat of the measure (in meas. 30 and 34 respectively), the Period virtually ending with the first beat of meas. 38.

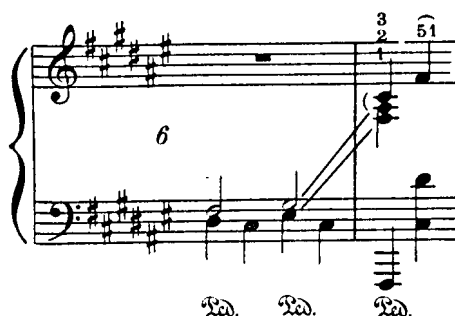
Trio; meas. 39-60. Meas. 39-46 form a regularly constructed Period with fore-phrase and after-phrase. The fore-phrase is repeated in meas. 47-50, but the after-phrase (meas. 51-54) tends towards the sub-dominant. The Phrase that follows (meas. 55-60) is curiously extended by means of an unusual modulation, which serves to bring this rudimentary Trio to a conclusion, and also to introduce the reprise of the Main Theme—this time in the key of F.

Return to the Main Theme (Part I); meas. 61-81. There is a six-measure fore-phrase, following which the after-phrase leads (through A minor) back to the original key, F# (meas. 67-72). The melody at meas. 73 becomes more ornate, and the Phrases are reduced from six measures to four. The Period closes at meas. 80, which measure is cleverly made to end like meas. 78. Meas. 81 is practically a repetition of meas. 79.

Coda; meas. 82-100. Before the recurrence of Part II a *Coda* is interpolated. This *Coda* is of such importance that it seems almost like a second Trio. It is obviously intended to emphasize the original key (F#) and to bring about a satisfactory conclusion—the function of every *Coda*. After the first six measures are repeated (meas. 88-93) the four-measure grouping is adopted. Meas. 94-95 are repeated in meas. 96-97. Observe that the harmonic motive in the latter half of meas. 98 is twice repeated in meas. 99.

Return to the Main Theme (Part II); meas. 101-109. The recurrence of Part II now takes place, and the Composition comes to a conclusion with a simple tonic chord in meas. 110.

Interpretation: The upper voice of the Introductory motive (meas. 1-6) is clearly melodic, and should be made to stand out somewhat. These first six measures are filled with the sound of bells, but the chimes are slightly submerged in the next six measures by the entrance, in the treble, of a tender melody. At meas. 7 the editor makes the following alteration:



*See "Chopin the Composer," by Edgar Stillman Kelley, pp. 77-78.

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A similar voice-leading is employed in meas. 12-13, and a change made in the time-values of the notes in the bass part of meas. 14, thus:

The ornamental passage in meas. 17 should not be played too quickly, and the last three notes should be quite slow and expressive. The following is an appropriate grouping of the notes:

The second system of the musical score, labeled '17' at the beginning, continues the melody. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes) and rests. Above the staff, there are fingerings (1-4) and a measure rest symbol '20'. The melody concludes with a final note on a whole note.

The following voice-leading is suggested in meas. 19:

Also some slight additions to the harmonization in meas. 27-29:

[illegible]

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The D major section, beginning with meas. 39, should be played in strict time and with sharply defined rhythm. It is martial and dignified in character. An *mp* or even a *p* may be preferred at this point instead of the *mf* indicated, thus allowing latitude for the dynamic development to *ff* at meas. 51. For the skipping octaves in the bass, the hands should be held close to the keyboard, and a quick gliding movement should be made in order to prepare for each succeeding octave. The larger the skips the quicker must be the movement.

The curious modulation in meas. 59-60, preceding the vague F major section, shows the composer working towards the key of F# major—the key of the Main Theme—and making an adventurous excursion through the keys of F major and A minor before finally reaching it at meas. 73.

Observe the following distribution of the parts between the hands in meas. 58-62 and 67-68:

58 *più dim.* *rall.*
 59 *p* *sostenuto*
 60 *più p*
 61 *pp* *a tempo*
 62
una corda *una corda **

67 *rall.*
 68 *rall.*
una corda *una corda **

The grouping of the notes in meas. 71 should be as follows:

71 *leggiere* *senza pedale*

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Below is given a different version of meas. 78-81 as regards the phrasing and the sustained notes:

In contrast to the forceful interpretation of meas. 82-87, the repetition of these charming scale passages in meas. 88-93 should be soft and smooth, with hardly any damper pedal. Some players prefer to omit the *crescendos* and *diminuendos* which are here indicated, thus producing an even dynamic degree.

Beginning with meas. 98 the pedal may be held throughout the two succeeding measures, if an octave F# is played in the bass instead of the F#-C# given. Thus:

The editor finds it more in harmony with the prevailing mood if the Composition is made to end *mf* or *mp*, rather than *ff* as marked. He also adds the third to the final chord (R. H.), as follows:

Impromptu in F Sharp

Op. 36

Revised and edited by Leopold Godowsky

FREDERIC FRANCOIS CHOPIN

Allegretto ($\text{♩} = 100 - 108$)'

[illegible]

25 26 27 28 *più p* *pp tranquillo* 29

leggiere

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. (Red.) Red. (Red.) Red. (Red.)

poco più sostenuto (♩ = 76)

30 *p>* 31 32

(Red.) * Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

33 *più p* 34 35

Red. Red. Red. (* Red.) * Red. Red.

36 37 38

rall. *più riten.*

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. * Red. Red. * Red. Red.

a tempo (♩ = 108-120)

39 *mf* 40 41 42

(Ped.) Ped. (Ped.) Ped. (Ped.) Ped. (Ped.) Ped. (Ped.) Ped. (Ped.) Ped. (Ped.) Ped. (Ped.)

43 44 45 46 *cresc.*

Ped. (Ped.) Ped. Ped. (Ped.) Ped. Ped. Ped. (Ped.) Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

47 *f* 48 49 50

Ped. Ped. Ped.

51 *ff* 52 53

Ped. Ped. Ped.

54 *ff* 55 56 *sostenuto*

57 58 *rall.* *più dimin* *p* 59 *più p* 60 *una corda*

a tempo ($\text{♩} = 100-108$)

61 *pp* *legatiss.* (Ped.) 62 (Ped.) 63 (Ped.)

64 *più p* 65 66

67 68 *rall.* 69

(Klindworth)

Ossia:

70 3

71 24

72 cresc.

leggiero

3 2 5 1 5 1 4 1 5 1 4 1 3 2 5 1 5 1 4 1 5 1 4 1 3 2 5 4 1 2 5 1 1 5 1

ped. ped. ped. (*)

Ossia:

(Klindworth)

73 24/33 41

74 3

75 5

tre corde sempre legatissimo

1 5 1 3 1 5 1 4 1 3 2 5 1 5 1 3 1 5 1 3 1 5 5 1 2 3 1 2 5 1 2 3 1 2 5 1 2 3 1 2

ped. (ped. ped.) ped. ped.

76 1

77 54

78 5

ped. ped. ped. ped. ped. ped.

79 4

80 5

81 5

sempre cresc.

rall.

ped. ped. ped. ped. (ped.) ped. ped. ped.

leggiere (♩ = 88-100)

82 *f*

83

84

85 *cresc.*

86

Handwritten musical score for "The Rose Tree". The score is written on two staves, Treble and Bass, in the key of D major (indicated by two sharps). The tempo is marked "Allegretto". The piece consists of 86 measures. The Treble staff features a complex melody with many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes, often with multiple stems per measure. The Bass staff provides a simple accompaniment, primarily using quarter and eighth notes. The score is divided into four measures, each labeled with a handwritten "Ped." (pedal) at the bottom. A dashed box encloses the first measure of the Treble staff, and a solid box encloses the second measure. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

[illegible]

89

Handwritten musical score for 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written on two staves, treble and bass clef, in G major (one sharp). The melody is in the treble staff, and the bass line is in the bass staff. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets. The bass line consists of quarter and eighth notes. The score is numbered 89 in the top left corner. There are two decorative symbols at the bottom: a stylized 'S' and a star-like symbol.

90

54

5

4

Red.

3

2

8

4

94 *f*

Handwritten musical notation for measures 94 and 95. The treble staff contains a melodic line with various fingerings (1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 3, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 3, 5, 4). The bass staff contains a supporting line with fingerings (1, 3, 5, 2, 1, 3, 5, 2, 1, 3, 5, 2). The key signature is F# (one sharp).

95

Handwritten musical notation for measures 96 and 97. The treble staff contains a melodic line with various fingerings (1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2). The bass staff contains a supporting line with fingerings (1, 3, 5, 2, 1, 3, 5, 2, 1, 3, 5, 2). The key signature is F# (one sharp).

96

Handwritten musical notation for measures 98 and 99. The treble staff contains a melodic line with various fingerings (1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 3, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 3, 5, 4). The bass staff contains a supporting line with fingerings (1, 3, 5, 2, 1, 3, 5, 2, 1, 3, 5, 2). The key signature is F# (one sharp).

97

Handwritten musical notation for measures 100 and 101. The treble staff contains a melodic line with various fingerings (1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2; 1, 2, 5, 4; 1, 3, 4, 2). The bass staff contains a supporting line with fingerings (1, 3, 5, 2, 1, 3, 5, 2, 1, 3, 5, 2). The key signature is F# (one sharp).

98 *dimin.*

99

100 *dolce* (76) *poco più sostenuto*

102 103 104 *più p* 105

106 107 108 *rall.* *più rit.* 109 *ff* 110