

Frederick Chopin.

While preparing this sketch of Chopin, I opened a memoir from the pen of his great brother artist, Franz Liszt, and finding it so full and so sympathetic an exposition of his life and work I have very freely borrowed from it. To be understood and to enjoy cordial sympathy are blessings so precious and so rare, that I have, in several instances, used Liszt's own chosen words in preference to attempting to recast the thought. Frederic Chopin, the most original, imaginative and delicately spiritual of recent pianists, and composer for the piano, was born in Warsaw in the year 1810. His mother was a Pole and his father was a Frenchman. Although an exile from the land of his birth, he nevertheless became a great exponent of its national life and character, and his genius

adorns and gives increased lustre
to the name of Poland. His child-
hood, and indeed his subsequent
life, offers nothing especially re-
markable. He was not one of
those bold natures who whirl
the challenge our admiration by
determined struggle and brilliant
achievement, hold us aloof by
their greatness and awe us by their
strength. But if few are great
all even the most favored child
of fortune knows something of
the side of life in which are
found tears, disappointed hopes,
unrequited loves and ideals un-
realized. He lost his father, and the
heart goes out to that life which
was a continued strain of sweet
sadness. From childhood he was
frailly built and the anxious care
of friends was directed above all
to his health. He grew up among
patrons of domestic virtues and
religious observances, and had the
example of simplicity, activity,
frugal and refined culture before
his eyes. In his ninth year

he received² instruction in music, and soon after he was placed under the charge of a passionate worshipper of Sebastian Bach, by the name of Ginna, who for many years conducted the musical studies of the boy in the good old thorough manner. His parents lived in limited circumstances, and indulged thought of building hopes upon a brilliant virtuosity in their son, but kept him to the earnest study of music, so that he might become a competent teacher. Prince Anton Radzivil, who composed music for brother Faust, early recognized a remarkable talent in the boy and provided for his entire education. His musical ability and the force of influential friends procured for him a place in the select and brilliant circles of the higher society in ^{which} Warsaw was at that time so rich.

Soft, full of feeling, fine in every
sense, the features of Chopin's face
had in his 16th year an ideal beauty
of which it might have been
said, that it belonged to no de-
termined age or sex. But this
first period of his youth falls
his attachment to a young maiden
who all her life thought of him
with loving devotion. The storm
which bore him far away from
his home severed this first love
and robbed the exile of a fond
and faithful wife as well as of
his fatherland. Never in his
after years was there for him
the bliss of such a tie as he
dreamed of then. It is beloved
kept his memory sacred and
clung with filial affection
to his parents. Nor would Chopin's
father permit that the picture
of his Fredric which she had
drawn in their days of hope to
be replaced by another, however
more artistically perfect. Chopin
visited Germany several times
to study music and to hear
the great artists - but he never
stayed long. In the year 1830

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he had just left Warsaw again
with a similar purpose, when
the revolution of the 29th of Nov. broke
out. He was compelled to remain
in Vienna where he performed
in some concerts. He left Vienna
with the purpose of going to London
but desiring to stop some time in
Paris, he had his passport marked to
England by way of Paris. It was
many years and after many changes
that he at last carried out his plan of
going to London. Shortly after his ar-
rival in Paris he gave several concerts
and won immediate and warm
recognition. Chopin did not allow
himself to be dazzled nor intoxicated
by his triumphs. He bore them off with-
out pride, but at the same time with-
out false modesty. There were a
great many of Chopin's distinguished
countrymen in Paris at this time
and their society, sympathy and
encouragement he enjoyed. He

continued by this means a sort
of musical correspondence with
his fatherland; they brought him
new songs and poems to Paris and
furnished with his melodies these
flew home again and quickly
became generally loved without
anybody's knowing who the composer
was. But evidently Chopin is a
true poet who by his compositions,
has but an individual expression
to the poetic sense, the poetic way of
feeling, of a people of a given period.
His music does not fit either of
the two frames, which are distinguished
by the names of German and Italian
music - But that national coloring
was with him by no means a thing
purposely sought. Perhaps he would
himself have wondered had you
called him a national composer.
As with the genuine national poet,
so in his music the peculiar spirit
permeated the creation without fore-
thought and without the conscious-
ness of the creator. Thoroughly subject-
ive, Chopin has breathed into all
his true creations me and the

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same life, his own inmost and
most individual life, so that
in all a unity of character pre-
vails, an exclusive mode of feeling.
He could not be classed with
the classic nor the romantic
school. While he went beyond
the restrictions of the former, he
avoided the extremes of the latter.
Every thing immoderate and rude
repulsed him; every thing that ap-
proached the style of the new
French mel drama was mortifying
to him. If he was partial to the
romantic yet he hated all insane
excess and shudder-exciting effects.
As great an admiration as he cherished
for Beethoven yet certain portions
of his works appeared to him too
rough even; the passion in them
burned too sickly, the rage too impetu-
ous and thundering. In some of
the melodies of Franz Schubert he
recognized the full charm; but

unwillingly he listened to those
whose outlines to his ear at least
were so sharp. Among the composers
of the former period he valued
and played hummel most,
and Mozart was to him the
ideal type of musical poetry
since he more seldom than
all others condescended to overstep
the bounds which separate the
excellent from the common.
And yet his abhorrence of the com-
mon place and his fine nature
found even in Don Juan that
immortal masterpiece, passages
whose presence he lamented.
His reverence for Mozart was
not thinly lessened, but as it were
addened. He could go so far as
to forget what he did not like,
but to become reconciled was to
him impossible. The compositions
of Chopin are nearly all short.
Believing as did Edgar A. Poe that
high-strung passion can not be
prolonged, he embodied his thoughts
in the shorter forms and has
in only a few instances attempted
long and extended compositions.

The opera and symphony he
 never attempted. It would seem
 a paradox to say his music is
 at once irresistibly sad and yet
 that most of his compositions
 are in the form of the Polish national
 dances. But a ^{militant} Poland ^{and}
 of such a peculiar ^{cast} is the Polish
 character that even its dances are
 the source of sadness. ^{In all of} Chopin's mazurkas,
 mazurkas, Polonaises, are bracingly
 and pathetically interwoven the national
 air of Poland. His études, ballads,
 impromptus and nocturnes are full
 of unexpected and unheard-of subtle-
 ties of harmony. His style of playing
 was as individual as his composing.
 It was the opposite of bravura
 which Liszt and Thalberg developed
 with such fine effect. But we must
 hasten to close this sketch and can
 not dwell longer upon Chopin's distinc-
 tive characteristics as an artist. There
 is no school of music known as the Chopin

school because he did not attempt to write anything for educational purposes until the latter years of his life and then his rapidly declining health forbade his finishing this work and all the manuscripts of this effort have been destroyed. The most meagre notice of Chopin's life would be scarcely possible without some mention of that great intellectual giantess whom Liszt pronounces the most intellectual of women, Madame Dudevant better known as Geo. Sand. Liszt says Chopin shrank at first & have a certain shrinking from this lady who was so prominent above all others and like a Delphic priestess uttered so much which other might not utter. He avoided her postponed meeting her. George Sand never not suspected not the sylph like fear. She approached him and her look soon dissipated the prejudice which he till then had obstinately cherished against literary women.

In the year 1836 began his intimacy with this celebrated novelist. In 1837 he became such an invalid as to be obliged to travel to the south to escape the severe winter air.

Madame Poudrant would not permit him to go alone as his health depended so largely upon careful nursing. They selected the island of Majorca for their place of abode. There she chased away the shadows of death that seemed hovering over him and during the whole time never for a moment left the man who loved her until death and with a fervor that did not lose its strength when its joy was departed. His health became better and continued so for several years. This time with her and remained unbroken until 1847. In the beginning of the spring of '47 his health declined from day to day. In April he grew better and desired to execute his purpose of going to England, to which country he had sailed in youth, when life and its prospects seemed bright. Before leaving for London he gave me more concert. In this concert his select and long-

tried public in Paris heard him
for the last time. In London he
was received with extraordinary
cordiality. This scattered his gloomy
humor and he threw himself
into society without regard for
his health more than he had
ever done. He then went to
Edinburg but the atmosphere there
was particularly injurious and
he returned to London much
enfeebled. He played once more
in a concert for the Poles. It was
the last love token that he sent to
his fatherland, the last look
the last longing sigh. Upon his
return to Paris he found that
his physician who alone as he
believed could save his life
was dead. He was greatly
discouraged and gradually
gave up his work. His health
continued to decline until the
19th Oct 1849, when the fatal
hour was reached and he
breathed forth his soul.