



# CHOPIN

## Impromptus and Scherzos

Mao Fujita, Piano



## Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849): Impromptus Nos. 1–3 • Fantaisie-Impromptu, Op. 66

### Allegro de concert, Op. 46 • Scherzos Nos. 1–4

Fryderyk Chopin was born in 1810 at Żelazowa Wola, near Warsaw. His father, Nicolas Chopin, was French by birth but had moved to Poland to work as an accounting clerk, later serving as tutor to the Łączyński family and thereafter to the family of Count Skarbek, one of whose poorer relatives he married. His subsequent career led him to the Warsaw Lyceum as a respected teacher of French, and it was there that his only son, Fryderyk, godson of Count Skarbek, whose Christian name he took, passed his childhood.

Chopin showed an early talent for music. He learned the piano from his mother and later with the eccentric Adalbert Żywny, a violinist of Bohemian origin, and as fiercely Polish as Chopin's father. His later training in music was with Józef Elsner, director of the Warsaw Conservatory, at first as a private pupil and then as a student of that institution.

In the 1820s Chopin had already begun to win for himself a considerable local reputation, but Warsaw offered relatively limited opportunities. In 1830 he set out for Vienna, a city where he had aroused interest on a visit in the previous year and where he now hoped to make a more lasting impression. The time, however, was ill-suited to his purpose. Vienna was not short of pianists, and Thalberg, in particular, had out-played the rest of the field. During the months he spent there Chopin attracted little attention, and resolved to move to Paris.

The greater part of Chopin's professional career was to be spent in France, and particularly in Paris, where he established himself as a fashionable teacher and as a performer in the houses of the rich. His playing in the concert hall was of a style less likely to please than that of the more flamboyant Liszt or than the technical virtuosity of Kalkbrenner. It was in the more refined ambience of the fashionable salon that his genius as a composer and as a performer, with its intimacy, elegance and delicacy of nuance, found its place.

In 1848 political disturbances in Paris made teaching impossible, and Chopin left the city for a tour of England

and Scotland. By this time his health had deteriorated considerably. At the end of the year he returned to Paris, now too weak to play or to teach and dependent on the generosity of others for subsistence. He died there on 17 October 1849.

The greater part of Chopin's music was written for his own instrument, the piano. At first it seemed that works for piano and orchestra would be a necessary part of his stock-in-trade, but the position he found for himself in Paris enabled him to write principally for the piano alone, in a characteristic idiom that derives some inspiration from contemporary Italian opera, much from the music of Poland, and still more from his own adventurous approach to harmony and his own sheer technical ability as a player. The 'Impromptu', in title at least, was typical of its period in its suggestion of Romantic abandon and freedom. In common with much else in European music, it had its origins in Prague with the publication in 1822 of *Impromptus* by Jan Vaclav Vorišek, followed five years later by the Bohemian-born composer Marschner. Schubert's publisher in the 1820s, Tobias Haslinger, found the title commercially attractive, and thereafter the name endured, descriptive of an independent piano piece, lacking the formality of a sonata movement.

The four *Scherzos* explore a new form of piano composition. Originally a musical joke, with Beethoven the *scherzo* had come to replace the more limited minuet as the third movement of a symphony. Chopin, however, made of it an independent virtuoso form. He completed his *Scherzo No. 1* in 1832 and dedicated it to Tomas Albrecht, wine merchant and Saxon consul in Paris and a good friend, who was present at the composer's death bed in 1849. Two emphatic chords summon attention before the impetuous principal material of the piece makes its appearance, with its contrasting B major trio section, a Polish folk song transformed into a Berceuse. *Scherzo No. 2*, *Op. 31*, in B flat minor and D flat major, was written in 1837 and dedicated to a pupil, Countess Adèle von Fürstenstein. Once again the *Scherzo* opens

with a call to attention, this time ominously quiet, until the answering burst of sound, followed by a display of agility, leading to a central oasis of general A major tranquillity that is not without passing excitement. *Scherzo No. 3*, in the key of C sharp minor, belied in its opening, was written in 1839 and dedicated to Chopin's favourite pupil, Adolf Gutmann, one of the few professional pupils that he took during a teaching career largely devoted to the interests of rich amateurs. Marked *Presto con fuoco*, the *Scherzo* embarks on a series of open octaves with which and with wider intervals Gutmann would be well able to cope and includes a central D flat major passage in contrast. The last of these pieces, the *Scherzo in E major*, *Op. 54*, composed in 1842 and published with a dedication to his pupil Countess Jeanne de Caraman, after its introduction, moves into the fairy *scherzo* territory of Mendelssohn, a delicately nuanced conclusion to the series, ending with an appropriate flourish.

Chopin wrote his *Impromptu No. 1* in 1837, the year of his first liaison with George Sand, dedicating the work, as he so often did, to one of his society pupils, the Countess Caroline de Lobau. Its delicate and lively outer sections enclose a more sustained F minor passage at the heart of the work. *Impromptu No. 2* followed two years later, to be issued by Chopin's new publisher Troupenas, who had temporarily replaced Maurice Schlesinger, whom he suspected of duplicity. The left hand establishes a pattern of chordal accompaniment, before the entry of the well-known principal melody and its elaborate

embellishment. There is a lilting D major section and an F major restatement of the main theme before a passage of filigree ornament leads to a conclusion. By 1843 Chopin had returned to Schlesinger, who published his *Impromptu No. 3* in that year, with a dedication to Countess Jeanne Esterházy, née Batthyany, a member by birth and by marriage of one of the leading families of the Habsburg Empire. Following a pattern he often used, Chopin frames a more sustained central section in the relative minor key with music of a livelier turn. The *Fantaisie-Impromptu*, published posthumously in 1855, predates the other three *Impromptus* and was completed in 1835. Its intense and excited outer sections frame a central *Largo* in D flat major, in which, as so often, an arpeggio left-hand accompaniment points an upper singing melody.

The *Allegro de concert*, *Op. 46* was conceived originally as a movement of a projected piano concerto in 1831, when it seemed Chopin might still have use for such material. It was revised as a solo work and published in 1841, with a dedication to a new pupil, Friederike Müller, who noted in her diary the physical weakness of her teacher, his coughing and remedy of opium drops with sugar and his enormous patience. The *Allegro de concert* preserves something of the rhetoric expected in a concerto.

Keith Anderson

## Mao Fujita



Born in Tokyo in 1998, Mao Fujita was awarded Second Prize at the 16th International Tchaikovsky Competition in 2019. In October 2019, Fujita made his UK debut with the Mariinsky Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev, which was critically acclaimed by *The Times*. Immediately following this success, he made his debut in Seoul and Moscow. In 2017, Fujita won the 27th Concours international de piano Clara Haskil in Switzerland, also receiving the Audience Award and Modern Times and Coup de Coeur prizes. Recent highlights include Jolivet's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* with Kazuyoshi Akiyama and the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra and Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 3* with Kahchun Wong and the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in 2019, and Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1* with Oleg Caetani and the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra in 2018. Fujita's 2019–20 season includes solo recitals, chamber music and concerto performances nationwide in Japan, plus concert dates in Germany, Switzerland, the UK, Russia and Latvia among others. In 2020–21, Fujita will extensively appear over the world, across Europe, North America and Asia.

[www.maofujita.com](http://www.maofujita.com)

Chopin turned the *Scherzo* into a new form of piano composition: an independent virtuoso work which he laced with drama, Polish folk song, tranquillity and nuance. With their rhythmic lilt and filigree ornamentation the *Impromptus* are infused with Romantic freedom, while the *Allegro de concert*, Op. 46 was originally conceived as a movement for a projected piano concerto but was instead revised for solo piano.

Fryderyk  
**CHOPIN**  
(1810–1849)

- |   |  |              |
|---|--|--------------|
| ❶ | <b>Impromptu No. 1 in A flat major, Op. 29</b> (1837)      | <b>4:07</b>  |
| ❷ | <b>Impromptu No. 2 in F sharp major, Op. 36</b> (1839)     | <b>5:56</b>  |
| ❸ | <b>Impromptu No. 3 in G flat major, Op. 51</b> (1842)      | <b>5:09</b>  |
| ❹ | <b>Fantaisie-Impromptu in C sharp minor, Op. 66</b> (1835) | <b>4:58</b>  |
| ❺ | <b>Allegro de concert in A major, Op. 46</b> (1841)        | <b>12:28</b> |
| ❻ | <b>Scherzo No. 1 in B minor, Op. 20</b> (1832)             | <b>10:19</b> |
| ❼ | <b>Scherzo No. 2 in B flat minor, Op. 31</b> (1837)        | <b>10:24</b> |
| ❽ | <b>Scherzo No. 3 in C sharp minor, Op. 39</b> (1839)       | <b>7:28</b>  |
| ❾ | <b>Scherzo No. 4 in E major, Op. 54</b> (1842)             | <b>11:17</b> |

**Mao Fujita, Piano**

Recorded: 11–13 February 2019 at Wyastone Concert Hall, Wyastone Leys, Monmouth, UK  
Producer: Eleanor Walton (K&A Productions Ltd) • Engineer: Ivan Cheng (K&A Productions Ltd)

Editors: Eleanor Walton, Ivan Cheng • Booklet notes: Keith Anderson

Publishers: PWM Edition: Jan Ekier ❶–❸ ❺–❾; PWM Edition: Ignacy Jan Paderewski ❹

Cover: *Morning in the Mountains*, c. 1823, by Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840)

© 2019 & © 2020 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd • [www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)