

# CHOPIN

FOUR SCHERZOS



ANTONIO POMPA-BALDI



STEINWAY & SONS

Among the large-scale works that Frederic Chopin wrote for the piano, the four Scherzos occupy a unique and fascinating place. The term scherzo—Italian for “joke”—had long been used to describe a light, playful movement, often replacing the minuet in Classical symphonies and sonatas. Yet in Chopin’s hands the genre is transformed into something far more dramatic and expansive: music of explosive energy, passionate intensity, and profound poetry.

The first three Scherzos share an unmistakable impetuous spirit. Their openings burst forth with a sense of urgency that feels almost orchestral in its sweep, immediately establishing a world of heightened emotion. The contrasts within these works are striking: stormy passages of dazzling virtuosity give way to lyrical episodes of remarkable tenderness and introspection. In this sense, Chopin creates vast emotional landscapes within relatively concise forms.

The central sections often provide moments of repose—almost like visions glimpsed through a storm. In both the Second and Third Scherzos, the luminous chorale-like episodes evoke an atmosphere of quiet contemplation, gradually building up to a noble and expansive lyricism. These moments do not diminish the dramatic tension; rather, they intensify it, framing the surrounding turbulence with a sense of poetic depth.

The Fourth Scherzo stands somewhat apart in character. Here, one senses an elegance and lightness reminiscent of Felix Mendelssohn and his celebrated fairy-like scherzos. The music sparkles with wit and buoyancy, yet it remains unmistakably Chopin-esque in its texture and pianistic imagination. The writing for the instrument retains Chopin’s uniquely fluid brilliance, while the lyrical middle section and the radiant coda reveal the composer’s unmistakable voice—warm, expressive, and deeply poetic.

Taken together, the four Scherzos represent for me the quintessential genius of Chopin. They are perfectly framed within a clear and compelling formal structure, yet within that structure the composer preserves an extraordinary freedom of invention. At their finest moments, these works seem to capture inspiration in its purest form: impetuous, passionate, and utterly original.

—Antonio Pompa-Baldi



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Born and raised in Foggia, Italy, Antonio Pompa-Baldi won the Cleveland International Piano Competition in 1999 and embarked on a multifaceted career that continues to extend across five continents. A top prize winner at the 1998 Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition of Paris, France, Antonio Pompa-Baldi also won a silver medal at the 2001 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

With a concerto repertoire including more than 60 works, Pompa-Baldi performed cycles of all the Rachmaninoff Piano Concertos, the five Beethoven Piano Concertos, and both Brahms Concertos with various orchestras. He has played recitals in most major venues over the world. Pompa-Baldi studied with the great Italian pedagogue Annamaria Pennella, whom he credits as his biggest musical influence. He also studied with another great exponent of the Neapolitan school, legendary pianist Aldo Ciccolini. Among other important mentors and musical influences, Pompa-Baldi names Paul Badura-Skoda and Jörg Demus.

Mr. Pompa-Baldi appears at the world's major concert venues including New York's Carnegie Hall, Cleveland's Severance Hall, Milan's Sala Verdi, Boston's Symphony Hall, Shanghai's Grand Theatre, and Paris' Salle Pleyel, to name a few.

He has collaborated with leading conductors including Hans Graf, Krzysztof Urbanski, James Conlon, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Theodore Kuchar, Benjamin Zander, Louis Lane, and Keith Lockhart. He has performed with ensembles and colleagues such as Takacs String Quartet, trumpeter Alison Balsom, cellist Sharon Robinson, violinists Ivan Zenaty and Ilya Kaler, and principals of the Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and Juilliard Quartet, among others.

Pompa-Baldi is a regular guest at the Lang Lang Festivals in Shenzhen and Hangzhou, China. Recent appearances also include Vienna (Austria), London (UK), Paris (France), New York (USA), Auckland (New Zealand), Jerusalem (Israel), Cape Town (South Africa), China (Beijing, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Guangzhou), as well as Poland, Germany, Mexico, Canada, Spain, and many other places around the globe.

Pompa-Baldi has recorded 35 CDs to date, for various labels including Centaur Records, Harmonia Mundi, Steinway & Sons, TwoPianists, Azica, and Brilliant Classics. Among them, the complete piano and chamber music works of Grieg, the Josef Rheinberger Piano Sonatas, the complete Hummel Piano Sonatas, and CDs dedicated to Brahms, Schumann, Liszt, Respighi,

and Rachmaninoff. For the Steinway label, Pompa-Baldi recorded songs by Francis Poulenc and Edith Piaf, arranged for solo piano, as well as a CD titled *Napoli*, which features new piano versions of famous Neapolitan songs, elaborated by Roberto Piana.

Among his latest Steinway releases are his transcription for solo piano of the Respighi B minor Violin Sonata, and Suites by Debussy, Luca Moscardi and Barber for piano duo. Recorded with his wife, pianist Emanuela Friscioni, this latest album is titled *Suite Nothings*.

Antonio Pompa-Baldi is a Steinway Artist. He is also a Steinway Recording Artist, as well as one of the most prominently featured artists in the Steinway Spirio recording catalogue.

Pompa-Baldi is Distinguished Professor of Piano and Artist-in-Residence at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he also serves as head of the Keyboard and Guitar Performance Department. His students have been prizewinners in important competitions such as Marguerite Long, Hilton Head, Isang Yun, and Gina Bachauer. He is regularly invited by the most prestigious competitions as jury member and is in high demand as a master class professor the world over.

In 2015, Pompa-Baldi founded the Todi International Music Masters Festival, where he serves as faculty and Artistic Director.

Pompa-Baldi is Vice Director for Education at the Lang Lang Art World institution in Hangzhou, China, and is on the advisory board of the Lang Lang International Music Foundation of New York.

In addition to honorary professorships at the Beijing China Conservatory, Shenyang Conservatory, and various other institutions, in 2025 he was appointed to the “International Chair in Piano” at the “F.A. Bonporti” Conservatory of Music in Riva del Garda, Italy.

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## FOUR SCHERZOS

Recorded 2025 at APB Studio, Cleveland, Ohio.

Producer: Jon Feidner

Engineer: Joshua Frey

Editors: Antonio Pompa-Baldi, Kazumi Umeda

Mixing and Mastering: Daniel Shores

Piano Technician: John Veitch

Piano: Steinway Model D #590904 (New York)

Executive Producers: Eric Feidner, Jon Feidner

Art Direction: Jackie Fugere

Design: Cover to Cover Design, Anilda Carrasquillo

Project Coordinator: Renée Oakford

# FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

## FOUR SCHERZOS

- 1 Scherzo No. 1 in B minor, Op. 20 10:45
- 2 Scherzo No. 2 in B flat minor, Op. 31 10:56
- 3 Scherzo No. 3 in C sharp minor, Op. 39 7:35
- 4 Scherzo No. 4 in E major, Op. 54 11:58

# ANTONIO POMPA-BALDI

piano



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