

A close-up portrait of Louis Lortie, a middle-aged man with a light beard and mustache, looking slightly to the left of the camera with a subtle smile. He is wearing a dark grey sweater. The background is dark and out of focus.

CHANDOS

LOUIS LORTIE plays
CHOPIN
with TRULS MØRK cello

VOLUME 8

Mazurkas

Rondo

Variations

Cello Sonata

Introduction and

Polonaise brillante



Watercolour by Maria Wodzińska (1819 – 1896), now in the collection of Muzeum Narodowe,
Warsaw / Heritage Images / Fine Art Images / AKG Images, London

Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin, c. 1835

Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin (1810 – 1849)

Polonaise brillante précédée d'une Introduction,

Op. 3 (1829 – 30)*

9:16

in C major • in C-Dur • en ut majeur

for Piano and Cello

Dédiée à M.^r Joseph Merk

1

Introduzione. Lento – Poco più mosso – [Cadenza] –

3:08

2

Alla Polacca. [Allegro con spirito]

6:07

3

Rondeau, Op. 1 (1825)

8:00

in C minor • in c-Moll • en ut mineur

for Piano

Dédié à Madame de Linde

Allegro – Più lento – A tempo con fuoco –

A tempo I – Più lento – A tempo [I]

	Variations brillantes, Op. 12 (1833)	7:58
	in B flat major • in B-Dur • en si bémol majeur for Piano	
	<i>sur la Ronde favorite 'Je vends des Scapulaires' de Ludovic</i> (on the favourite round 'Je vends des Scapulaires' from <i>Ludovic</i> [first performed 1833]) by Ferdinand Hérold (1791 – 1833) Dédiées à M. ^{lle} Emma Horsford	
4	Introduzione. Allegro maestoso –	1:24
5	Thème. Allegro moderato –	0:56
6	[Variation I.] ♩ = 92 –	0:52
7	[Variation II.] Scherzando –	0:56
8	[Variation III.] Lento –	1:50
9	[Variation IV.] Scherzo vivace	1:58
	 Trois Mazurkas, Op. 50 (1841 – 42)	10:23
	for Piano Dédiées à Monsieur Léon Szmitkowski	
10	1 Vivace in G major • in G-Dur • en sol majeur	2:29
11	2 Allegretto in A flat major • in As-Dur • en la bémol majeur	2:51
12	3 Moderato in C sharp minor • in cis-Moll • en ut dièse mineur	5:02

	Trois Mazurkas, Op. 56 (1843)	11:32
	for Piano	
	Dédiées à Madem. ^{lle} C. Maberly	
13	1 Allegro non tanto – Poco più mosso, leggero – Tempo I – Poco più mosso, leggero – Tempo I in B major • in H-Dur • en si majeur	4:13
14	2 Vivace in C major • in C-Dur • en ut majeur	1:54
15	3 Moderato in C minor • in c-Moll • en ut mineur	5:25
	Sonata, Op. 65 (1845 – 47)*	32:10
	in G minor • in g-Moll • en sol mineur	
	for Piano and Cello	
	Dédiée à son ami A. Franck, Professeur au Conservatoire de Paris	
16	Allegro moderato – [] – [Tempo I]	16:47
17	Scherzo [Allegro con brio] – L'istesso tempo	4:58
18	Largo	3:47
19	Finale. Allegro – Più mosso al fine	6:36
		TT 79:22

Louis Lortie piano
with
Truls Mørk cello*

Chopin: Rondo / Polonaise / Variations / Mazurkas / Cello Sonata

Introduction

This recording covers the full chronological expanse of Chopin's compositional arc. The earliest piece is a teenage composition from Warsaw that Chopin eventually christened as his 'Opus 1'; the disc also includes some works that he published just after leaving his native Poland, samples pieces from his full maturity in Paris, and culminates with the final work that he published there.

This last piece, the remarkable Sonata in G minor for Piano and Violoncello, Op. 65, reminds us that, although he is appropriately celebrated for having focused most of his compositional energies on solo works for the piano, Chopin did in fact write some chamber music. These chamber works were mostly conceived during his time in Warsaw and during his first years abroad (this was also the period in which he wrote his various compositions for piano and orchestra). Perhaps the dramatic return to chamber music in the Cello Sonata signalled a new expansiveness in his choice of compositional media (his late sketches include some hints at works using other instrumental combinations), but

the rapid deterioration of his health after completing the Sonata prevented any possibility of his following through on these ideas.

Rondo in C minor, Op. 1

The decision to add 'Opus 1' to the title of the Rondo in C minor followed its initial publication, in Warsaw in 1825, by Brzezina. The young Chopin must have been proud of his achievement in this work, which he composed while studying with Józef Elsner who encouraged his pupils to study rondos as formal models. While adhering to the conventions of the genre – organised around periodic returns of a principal theme and brilliantly virtuosic passagework – and working with a musically simple rondo theme, Chopin displayed a remarkably sophisticated control of large-scale chromatic harmony across the work as a whole. Such harmonic precociousness doubtless contributed to Elsner's later assessment of his pupil as a 'musical genius'.

Introduction and Polonaise brillante in C major, Op. 3

In November 1829, Prince Antoni Radziwiłł

invited Chopin to his estate, near Poznań. The Prince was a cellist and his daughter Wanda a fine pianist, and this conjunction of talents in his hosts motivated Chopin to compose the *Polonaise brillante* for them during his stay. He added the slow Introduction in the spring of 1830, playing the newly expanded work in Warsaw for his teacher Elsner (among others). Although he initially described the Polonaise as 'nothing but baubles, for the salon, for the ladies', he clearly thought well enough of it to want to publish it, which he succeeded in doing during his stay in Vienna in 1831. And we certainly can sense the sociable nature of the work in the effervescent Polonaise. On the other hand, the Introduction contains moments of melodic and harmonic introspection that foreshadow elements of the fully mature style that Chopin would develop after he arrived in Paris, in late 1831.

Variations brillantes in B flat major, Op. 12

In Chopin's day, as in ours, operas were expensive propositions. Publishers of operas sought to recoup their expenses in manifold ways, among them by commissioning groups of composers to write works (usually sets of variations) for various instruments (alone and in combination) based on tunes from the

operas. Intended for broader audiences than those who might be inclined to purchase a piano-vocal score of an entire opera, these arrangements would (in principle) generate significant enough sales to tip the overall balance sheet toward profitability. Such were the origins of Chopin's *Variations brillantes*, Op. 12, based on a rondo theme, 'Je vends des Scapulaires', from a now-forgotten opera, *Ludovic*, started by Ferdinand Hérold, completed by Fromental Halévy, and first performed in 1833. While the overall adherence to the pyrotechnical 'brilliant' manner of virtuosic writing would have seemed somewhat regressive (if technically sound) at a time when Chopin was elsewhere staking out a transformative personal compositional style, there are moments, especially in the *Allegro maestoso* Introduction and the *Lento* penultimate variation, when we sense Chopin's progressive inclinations peeking through the virtuosic conventions of the genre.

Three Mazurkas, Op. 50

Shortly before composing his eighth set of mazurkas (published in 1842), Chopin revisited the study of formal counterpoint, which then went on to figure prominently in the music he would compose in the short

remainder of his life. The first two mazurkas of Op. 50 (in G major and A flat major, respectively) hew to the customary rhythms and forms of Chopin's earlier mature style (though notable is the extended coda in the first work and an interestingly repetitive rhythmic pattern in the central section of the second work). But the third Mazurka, in C sharp minor, suggests a transformed compositional realm. It begins with strict imitation, a canon, a gesture that fuses elements of Bachian rigour (even going so far as to allude briefly to the D sharp minor Fugue from Book I of Bach's *Wohltemperirte Clavier*) with the exotic sound worlds that Chopin associated with his native Poland. And this Mazurka additionally astonishes by its advanced harmonies and its complex coda, one that leads ultimately back to the opening theme, now presented, as if exhausted, in a 'normal' homophonic context.

Three Mazurkas, Op. 56

The dramatic complexity heard in the last Mazurka of the Op. 50 set carries over into Chopin's next set of mazurkas, published in 1844. The first Mazurka of Op. 56 (in B major) opens with a group of wilting and destabilising sequences that lead in turn to a folk-like drone in the 'wrong' key: we are well

into the opening section before the actual home key of B becomes established. Played off against this complex theme is an almost elfin scherzo-like section that twice interrupts the more laboured workings of the principal theme. The drone-like opening of the second Mazurka, in C major, signals a kind of rustic simplicity, an expressive mood which Chopin slyly undermines by introducing a brief canon in the middle section. In the C minor third number of the set, we encounter another of Chopin's mighty and intricate concluding mazurkas, highlights of which include a profusion of themes and keys in the middle section, and an extended and chromatic coda.

Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 65

Chopin struggled mightily with the composition of the Cello Sonata, his last published work, labouring on it for a full two years, from the summer of 1845 through the autumn of 1847, before finally premièring it at his last public concert, in Paris, on 16 February 1848. At issue was not the disposition of the four movements of the Sonata: Chopin held fast to the same basic design (fast movement in sonata form; scherzo or minuet; slow movement; concluding movement in a faster tempo) for the entirety of his career. Rather, in

the Cello Sonata, Chopin wrestled with a complete reassessment of his approach to composition, reconsidering the roles of form, experimenting with style, pushing against the constraints of genre, all in pursuit of what we might retrospectively regard as his 'last style'. And his external circumstances were also poor: his always troublesome health steadily worsened, and his relationship with the novelist George Sand – a relationship that provided him emotional and physical support for nine years – began to fray and then ruptured completely by the summer of 1847. And if all of that were not enough, as Chopin finalised his plans for publication and performance of the Sonata, a wave of European political insurgencies began to be felt in Paris, full-scale revolution breaking out on 22 February – just six days after Chopin premièred the Sonata. Somehow, amid this turmoil, Chopin persevered, and the Cello Sonata rightly stands as a major compositional statement.

Given Chopin's renewed interest in formal counterpoint, it is not surprising that the Cello Sonata foregrounds the alternating interplay of the two instruments. Thus, the opening sentence of the first movement, given over to the solo piano, concludes with an elaborate cadenza-like gesture that serves

almost operatically to give way to the first solo statement by the cello. The remainder of the movement unfolds according to Chopin's typical, but idiosyncratic, version of first-movement sonata form, in which the recapitulation omits the first theme, and the expressive weight falls on the lyrical second theme. Lyricism also stands to the fore in the central portion of the second movement, a moment of *cantabile* respite in an otherwise spirited Scherzo.

Chopin invested the third movement of Op. 65 with special emotional urgency. He initially sketched it as a solo aria for the cello, putting the spotlight on the dedicatee of the work, Chopin's cellist friend Auguste Franchomme. His later decision to transform the solo aria into a consoling duet between the cello and piano not only elevated the expressive potency of the movement, it also (by virtue of its duet texture) changed the generic reference from aria to nocturne (the vocal nocturne was akin to a vocal romance, but for two or more voices). This generic reference may explain some of the later effective history of the movement. In 1847, Chopin reported to his family that Franchomme had brought him a 'notturmo' to which he had set the words 'O salutaris', the setting of which, Chopin said, 'sings well'.

Which ‘notturmo’ – the Italian name for ‘nocturne’ – Franchomme had brought was a puzzle until recently, when research in his papers uncovered a manuscript in his hand of the *Largo* from the Cello Sonata, with the words to St Thomas Aquinas’s Eucharistic hymn *O salutaris hostia* written lightly beneath the melody. While Chopin famously hated it when publishers deigned to add descriptive titles to his works, that did not mean he rejected all forms of extra-musical association, and, indeed, St Thomas Aquinas’s message of persevering through difficulties may well have resonated personally given the composer’s private circumstances.

With the concluding, restless rondo, we revisit the genre that represented an early formal achievement for the teenage Chopin. While the persistent rhythmic momentum and canonic mastery of the fourth movement of the Cello Sonata are entirely more gripping than anything heard in Chopin’s Rondo, Op. 1, its chromatic harmonies and melodies are not so terribly distant from the compositional gestures proffered by the audacious Warsaw teenager. We cannot know if Chopin, as he struggled with the composition of the Cello Sonata, reflected on his studies of rondos under Elsner’s tutelage. But that the final movement of his final published composition

might have given him cause to reflect on where his official journey as a publishing composer had begun does seem aesthetically apt.

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The French-Canadian pianist **Louis Lortie** has appeared worldwide, his performances and award-winning recordings attesting to his remarkable musical range. A student of Yvonne Hubert (a pupil of the legendary Alfred Cortot), in Montreal, the Beethoven specialist Dieter Weber, in Vienna, and the Schnabel disciple Leon Fleisher, he won First Prize in the Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition in 1984 and the same year was a prize winner at the Leeds International Piano Competition. From then on, he embarked on an international career which keeps him in demand on five continents. In the course of his four-decade-long career, he has established long-term partnerships and performed with orchestras such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre national de France, and Dresdner Philharmonie, in Europe, the Philadelphia Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, and St Louis Symphony Orchestra, in the US, and the Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa,

and Calgary symphony orchestras, in Canada. Further afield, he has collaborated with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, where he has also served as artist-in-residence, as well as the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Taiwan, and Adelaide and Sydney symphony orchestras. He enjoys regular partnerships with conductors such as Thierry Fischer, Edward Gardner, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Jaap van Zweden, Antoni Wit, and Simone Young, and performed frequently with the late Sir Andrew Davis.

As a recitalist and chamber musician, Louis Lortie has appeared at venues and festivals across Europe and North America. He is co-founder and Artistic Director of the LacMus International Music Festival, on Lake Como, and was a Master in Residence at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel, in Brussels. A decades-long relationship with Chandos Records has to date produced a catalogue of more than forty-five recordings, spanning repertoire from Mozart to Stravinsky. It includes a complete cycle of Beethoven's sonatas as well as Liszt's complete *Années de pèlerinage*. Recent projects include the complete works for piano by Chopin and a series focussed on piano works by Fauré, to which he has brought new light. As a

champion of twentieth-century music, he has built a discography that includes a highly praised recording of Lutosławski's Piano Concerto, with Edward Gardner and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Exploring the Piano Concerto by Vaughan Williams, he has recorded not only the original version, with Peter Oundjian and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, but also the version for two pianos, reworked by the composer, with his duo partner, Héléne Mercier, and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Andrew Davis. Louis Lortie and Héléne Mercier have also recorded *Le Carnaval des animaux*, with Neeme Järvi and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, and Rachmaninoff's complete works for two pianos, as well as two volumes of works for two pianos and for piano duet by Debussy.

In his compelling performances, **Truls Mørk** has established himself as one of the pre-eminent cellists of our time through playing of fierce intensity, integrity, and grace. Initially taught by his father, he continued his studies with Frans Helmerson, Heinrich Schiff, and Natalia Shakhovskaya. In his early career, he won competitions such as the International Tchaikovsky Competition, Moscow (1982), Gaspar Cassadó International

Violoncello Competition, Florence (1983), Unesco Prize at the European Radio-Union competition, Bratislava (1983), and Naumburg International Cello Competition, New York (1986). He performs with distinguished orchestras such as Orchestre de Paris, Berliner Philharmoniker, Wiener Philharmoniker, Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest, Münchner Philharmoniker, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, and, in North America, the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and Los Angeles Philharmonic, collaborating with conductors of the calibre of Gustavo Dudamel, Christoph Eschenbach, Manfred Honeck, Kent Nagano, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and David Zinman. During the 2024 / 25 season he returned to Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI di Torino, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France, and ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien. A great champion of contemporary music, with in

excess of thirty premières to his credit, he has given highly successful performances all over the world of Esa-Pekka Salonen's Cello Concerto, Victoria Borisova-Ollas's *Oh Giselle*, *Remember Me*, Rautavaara's *Towards the Horizon*, Pavel Haas's Cello Concerto, Krzysztof Penderecki's Concerto for Three Cellos, and Haflíði Hallgrímsson's Cello Concerto. His impressive discography has won him *Gramophone*, Grammy, Midem, and ECHO Klassik awards, among many other international distinctions. Particularly notable have been his recordings of Dvořák's Cello Concerto under Mariss Jansons, Britten's Cello Symphony and Elgar's Cello Concerto under Sir Simon Rattle, Myaskovsky's Cello Concerto and Prokofiev's *Sinfonia concertante* under Paavo Järvi, works by Dutilleux under Myung-Whun Chung, works by C.P.E. Bach under Bernard Labadie, Haydn's Cello Concertos under Iona Brown, Rautavaara's *Towards the Horizon* under John Storgårds, Shostakovich's Cello Concertos under Vasily Petrenko, and concertante works by Massenet and the Cello Concertos of Saint-Saëns's under Neeme Järvi (the last two on Chandos), as well as the complete cello suites by J.S. Bach and Britten and the cello sonatas by Bridge, Britten, and Debussy.

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Louis Lortie during the recording sessions

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Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin (1810–1849)

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|---------|---|-------|
| 1 - 2 | Polonaise brillante précédée d'une Introduction, Op. 3 (1829–30)*
in C major • in C-Dur • en ut majeur
for Piano and Cello | 9:16 |
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in C minor • in c-Moll • en ut mineur | 8:00 |
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TT 79:22

Louis Lortie piano
with
Truls Mørwk cello*

FAZIOLI
Jacques Samuel
PIANOS

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