



KLARA MIN

*plays* CHOPIN  
MAZURKAS



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0 13491 34432 4

## Klara Min plays Chopin Mazurkas

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

01	Mazurka Op. 24, No. 4 in B-flat minor	4:54
02	Mazurka Op. 30, No. 3 in D-flat major	2:57
03	Mazurka Op. 30, No. 4 in C-sharp minor	3:59
04	Mazurka Op. 63, No. 2 in F minor	1:54
05	Mazurka Op. 63, No. 3 in C-sharp minor	2:05
06	Mazurka Op. 67, No. 4 in A minor	2:51
07	Mazurka Op. 50, No. 3 in C-sharp minor	5:19
08	Mazurka Op. 24, No. 1 in G minor	3:01
09	Mazurka Op. 24, No. 2 in C major	2:20
10	Mazurka Op. 56, No. 2 in C major	2:01
11	Mazurka Op. 59, No. 1 in A minor	4:17
12	Mazurka Op. 59, No. 2 in A-flat major	2:37
13	Mazurka Op. 59, No. 3 in F-sharp minor	3:50
14	Mazurka Op. 67, No. 3 in C major	1:36
15	Mazurka Op. 67, No. 2 in G minor	1:59
16	Mazurka Op. 68, No. 2 in A minor	2:44
17	Mazurka Op. 68, No. 4 in F minor	4:03

KLARA MIN, piano

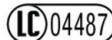


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Total Playing Time: 52:22

Klara Min, piano

Delos Executive Producer: Carol Rosenberger

Photo: Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

Producer: William Schwartz (International Performing Arts)

Engineer: Leszek Wojcik (Manager, Recording Studio, Carnegie Hall)

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Special thanks to William Schwartz.

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

As any committed fan of **Frédéric Chopin's** (1810-1849) music is probably aware, this beloved “poet of the piano” in effect created a number of distinct new “composer genres,” two of which are associated with traditional Polish dance forms: the polonaise and the mazurka. The original *mazurek* (the actual Polish name – and the associated *kujawiak* and *oberek*) are variable folk dances in three-quarter time – often at a fairly brisk tempo, with variable accents on the second or third beat: rhythmic formulas that Chopin often followed, though rather loosely and with imaginative elaboration. As in the traditional dances, they often contain a great deal of repetition, both of individual measures or groups thereof. While his mazurkas indeed pay general homage to the original folk-forms, his creations in the genre are highly stylized transformations of a far different nature. Most are written in fairly strict ternary (ABA) form, incorporating classical techniques such as counterpoint and sophisticated chromaticism that elevate the form into something far better suited to the salon or the concert stage than to dancing! Respected scholar-pianist Charles Rosen even thought of the mazurkas as Chopin’s “research-and-development lab” – where some of the composer’s boldest harmonic experiments can be found. It has been further suggested that Chopin intentionally wrote his mazurkas in such a way as to discourage their close association with the original dance-forms.

The young Chopin, barely out of his teens, became a Polish expatriate to Paris in the wake of the 1930 November Uprising of the Poles against their hated Russian rulers. Being homesick and wracked with patriotic fervor (witness his fiery “Revolutionary” Etude), it was only natural that he should gravitate to the often vague and inaccurate memories and perceptions of genuine Polish folk materials that he recalled from his childhood and early youth in Warsaw. Music scholars of the era misinterpreted an 1853 article on Chopin’s mazurkas by Franz Liszt in which he postulated that they had been directly influenced by Polish national music – and the word “national” was taken to mean “folk.” In fact, Chopin never studied or collected actual folk materials. Such mistaken musicological perceptions gave rise to the pervasive myth that the mazurkas were far more closely associated with actual folk-traditions than they actually were. It took a 1921 essay by Béla Bartók – a genuine folk-expert – to debunk this “folk” myth, even though he agreed that the mazurkas were “nationalistic” in nature.

Chopin began composing mazurkas as early as 1825, before he left Poland – and continued writing them until his early death in 1849. He is known to have written at least 69 of them, of which 58 were published (45 during his lifetime; 13 posthumously), though the serial numbering of them stops at 51. Musicologists know of at least 11 oth-

ers that remain untraced, or for which the manuscripts are privately held. The pieces heard in this survey are selected from our pianist Klara Min's personal favorites among the mazurkas – which, in turn, make up perhaps her favorite among Chopin's assorted “composer genres.” And little wonder: all other discussion aside, the mazurkas stand as perhaps Chopin's most intimate, heartfelt, emotionally varied, and deeply personal music.

The **Mazurka Op. 24, No. 4 in B-flat minor** is one of his longer examples, at nearly five minutes. A particularly charming piece, it projects a wide range of colors and emotions. The main theme is at once refined and passionate, while never quite seeming to find release. The central section is mellower by comparison, but rises to a climax before the main theme returns, gradually diminishing into a soft finish.

Much of the **Mazurka Op. 30, No. 3 in D-flat major** is spent alternating back and forth between the tonic major and minor – with the sense of contrast reinforced by widely varied dynamic markings (especially at first). Chopin begins the central subject boldly, taking it through several harmonic variants and dynamic levels before modulating briefly back into the opening theme, ending the piece gently and without a coda.

The **Mazurka Op. 30, No. 4 in C-sharp minor** is one of the dreamier examples heard here – but also one of the

most restlessly unsettled (thanks to its wealth of florid embellishments in the opening passages), with an overcast of uneasy, questioning gloom. By contrast, the middle section's subject is more lyrically linear, rising to a repeated climax that relieves much of the piece's previously unresolved tension in a sudden mood shift. The opening theme returns – now louder and more richly textured – before a substantial coda, with its descending chromatic parallel fifths, ends the piece in still-tense and tonally ambiguous fashion.

The relatively brief **Mazurka Op. 63, No. 2 in F minor** was written at one of the composer's “down” periods, when his relationship with George Sand was falling apart. Mournfully slow (*lento*) and full of poignant melancholy, the sad intensity of its lyric flow (spiced with subtle inner voices) tears at the listener's heartstrings.

The following piece, **Mazurka Op. 63, No. 3 in C-sharp minor**, is also rather short, offering an exceptionally songful opening melody that is both pensive and charming at the same time. Its bittersweet mood remains firm throughout, enhanced towards the end by delicate contrapuntal elaboration (overlapping canonic lines a single beat apart) and the resultant novel textures.

The **Mazurka Op. 67, in A minor** begins with a jaunty, yet elegant dance-tune, despite the minor key. It is offset in the central section by a more ruminative and subtle melody that still keeps the piece's dancing spirit intact.

It's full of deft flourishes and rhythmic vitality, but in the overall contexts of effortless flow and tonal warmth.

The **Mazurka Op. 50, No. 3 in C-sharp minor** is another of the longer examples, but it never fails to hold the listener's rapt attention – offering a greater profusion of themes and effects than we hear in most of the others. Here, Chopin tries a somewhat different approach, with boldly contrasting passages of cultivated, counterpoint-laced delicacy and refinement against more energetic, rustically bumptious episodes. He also blends modal and chromatic harmonies with consummate skill. The major-key shift in the central section adds further variety and interest before the original theme returns to lead this fascinating piece to its meaty final coda.

The **Mazurka Op. 24, No. 1 in G minor**, marked *lento*, opens with the composer's hallmark wistful elegance, suffused with bittersweet overtones of sad yearning. The more upbeat and optimistic central section briefly interrupts the prevailing mood of dark melancholy before the main theme returns to restore the opening passage's contemplative aura.

The **Mazurka Op. 24, No. 2 in C major** stands in clear contrast to its predecessor. Happy and carefree, it demonstrates the mazurka's folk-dance ancestry, with its rhythmic energy and sense of playfulness; we also get some piquant Lydian mode harmonies. Both the main theme and

that of the middle section are full of blithe good spirits, though the latter is of somewhat more robust character.

Like the preceding example, the short **Mazurka Op. 56, No. 2 in C major** is a colorful and exuberant dance, with happy outbursts punctuating its rustic atmosphere. While suffused with folk-like Slavic spirit, it seems to take a quick detour into Spanish flavors – calling to mind the composer's 1833 *Bolero*. You will agree that Chopin packs a great deal into this exotically bumptious miniature.

We now move on to all three of the pieces comprising Chopin's Op. 59 set of mazurkas, in proper sequence. The gently poignant **Mazurka Op. 59, No. 1 in A minor** is highly chromatic and warmly tender, with subtle contrapuntal nuances. The contrasting central section builds to joyous upward splashes of sound before the original melody returns to end the piece as softly as it began.

The second of the set, **Mazurka Op. 59, No. 2 in A-flat major**, is the grouping's shortest. It is also the happiest of the lot, exuding an air of warm contentment leavened by more poignant touches. It offers exceptional melodic variety and richness – as well as a wealth of back-and-forth exchanges between the hands, typical of the composer's musical maturity. The piece's central section offers little contrast, sustaining the prevailing mood effectively – until the opening material returns, building in the brief coda to an ingenious, upward-fluttering line that seems to flit

blithely into the heavens at the end.

The set's third and final piece, **Mazurka Op. 59, No. 3 in F-sharp minor**, is of bolder, more aristocratic nature, smacking of a polonaise (and even a waltz) in places. It employs contrapuntal effects as well as chromatic harmonies. Of particular interest are the passages in the central section featuring rich progressions of descending chromatic chords in the left hand that seem curiously, but ingeniously, independent of the eloquently singing line that floats above them.

One of the shortest, the **Mazurka Op. 67, No. 3 in C major**, exudes breezy contentment. The brief main theme is presented in single notes, then repeated in ornamented sixths. The central section, offering comparatively non-melodic figurations, seems to agreeably question the piece's pervasive good fortune, with the main theme returning to offer an affirmative answer.

The similarly brief **Mazurka Op. 67, No. 2 in G minor**, marked *Cantabile*, offers a pleasant and songful contemplation, rather like the happy confection just heard – but (thanks to the minor tonality) with just a touch of pensive musing. Straightforward and uncomplicated, the piece's rhythmic and melodic stability keeps the music on an even keel, with no unexpected deviations or disappointments.

This program's final two works are from the posthumously published Op. 68 set of four pieces, assembled from works scattered across more than 20 years. The **Mazurka Op. 68, No. 2 in A minor** is an early work (1827): the earliest example of Chopin's use of the Lydian mode in a mazurka. The opening four-measure phrase illustrates two typical characteristics of the mazurka: a modal melody, and an accent on the third beat of the triple-meter rhythm. The Lydian flavors and delicate textures make for a pervasive sense of wistful reverie – a mood that carries over into the central section's contrasting major-key theme, before the original subject returns to end the piece quickly, with no coda.

The set's final piece, **Mazurka Op. 68, No. 4 in F minor**, is also the final mazurka that Chopin wrote (in 1849). It's notable for its extreme chromatic structure, which quickly takes the piece from F minor into A major and back again. This opening phrase repeats, now embellished and shifting into a pattern of eighth notes. The pervasive chromatic treatment continues in the middle section, with recurring double-voice passages. The entire piece exudes an aura of tenderly moody resignation, ending on a repetitive pattern that sounds as if it could go on forever ...

— Lindsay Koob

## Artist Biography

Pianist **Klara Min** is an eloquent and sensitive musician, praised by Stephen Estep in the *American Record Guide* who wrote, “Min plays with the most ravishing piano tone.”

A native of South Korea, Ms. Min made her New York recital debut in 2002 at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall in which she performed the world premiere of Unsuk Chin’s Piano Etudes and the New York premiere of “Pippa’s Song” by American composer Henry Martin. The *New York Concert Review* critic wrote that Klara Min had “a lovely, nuanced tone, genuine expressiveness....excellent technique exuberance and vitality.”

Ms. Min has performed extensively throughout North America, Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, and her native South Korea, in some of the world’s most important concert venues, including Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall and Merkin Hall, New York City; Gasteig Hall, Munich; Berlin Philharmonie Hall; Laeiszhalle, Hamburg, Germany; and KBS Broadcast Hall, Seoul, South Korea. She has performed with several orchestras including the Korean Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Symphony Orchestra, Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Hamburger Kammerphilharmonie, Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, Jupiter Symphony, Manhattan Chamber Orchestra, New York Sinfonietta, American Chamber Orchestra, among others.

Having made her acclaimed debut at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York in November 2012, she makes her London debut at Wigmore Hall in April 2013. In July 2011, Ms. Min’s first solo recording, Ripples on Water, was released by Naxos, featuring solo piano works by Korean composers. *Allmusic.com* praised the recording, stating, “She makes every note count... Klara Min has done a worthy job of tackling challenging music by the leading composers of her homeland.” The *American Record Guide* review continued with, “Her dynamic control is out of this world—anyone who can make silk out of dissonance this strong is a top-notch artist in my book.” Selections from the CD have been featured on WNYC and WFMT/Chicago.

In August 2011, Ms. Min made her Chicago recital debut on the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series, broadcast live on WFMT/Chicago. For her 2011-2012 season, Ms. Min appeared in several concerts throughout the New York area, performed the Schumann Piano Concerto as guest soloist with the Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra in Alaska, and filmed a new solo recital DVD. In the 2012-2013 season she returns for performances with the Sinfonieorchester in Berlin and the Hamburger Kammerphilharmonie at Laeiszhalle in Hamburg, Germany.

In 2013, Klara Min also appears in *We are the Woman’s* project to support the United Nations’ *Every Woman Every Child* global healthcare initiative. A total of sixty women who have made great achievements throughout their lives will be enlisted to be photographed for a book and an exhibition that will be featured in major museums across the world.

Other notable performances include a 2010 solo recital at the United Nations at the invitation of the Korean Ambassador, and a 2008 performance of John Corigliano’s Piano Concerto with New York Concert Artists, for which Ms. Min is the founder and artistic director. With NYCA, she has produced annual concert series as well as given performances that have been featured in *International Piano Magazine*, *The Korea Times*, *Yamaha’s Accent Magazine* and *Time Out New York*. In 2007, Ms. Min commissioned and premiered “Capriccio for Piano and Ten Instruments” by Robert Sirota. Ms. Min’s performance of Chopin’s Piano Concerto No. 1 with the Seoul Symphony Orchestra was filmed and broadcast in South Korea on the SBS Television Network.

Competition prizes have included a Grand Prize and Schumann Award at the 2006 IBLA Grand Prize International Competition and a “Best Performance of Mozart Prize” at the Viotti-Valsesia International Piano Competition in Italy. She was also the recipient of a Samsung scholarship.