

ANDREW RANGELL

# CHOPIN THE COMPLETE MAZURKAS



STEINWAY & SONS



CHOPIN



# CHOPIN: THE MAZURKAS

## DISC ONE

- 1 Mazurka in F sharp minor Op. 6, No. 1 2:45
- 2 Mazurka in C sharp minor Op. 6, No. 2 2:00
- 3 Mazurka in E Major Op. 6, No. 3 1:50
- 4 Mazurka in E flat minor Op. 6, No. 4 1:00
- 5 Mazurka in B flat Major Op. 7, No. 1 2:11
- 6 Mazurka in A minor Op. 7, No. 2 3:20
- 7 Mazurka in F minor Op. 7, No. 3 2:05
- 8 Mazurka in A flat Major Op. 7, No. 4 1:09
- 9 Mazurka in C Major Op. 7, No. 5 0:42
- 10 Mazurka in B flat Major Op. 17, No. 1 2:12
- 11 Mazurka in E minor Op. 17, No. 2 1:58
- 12 Mazurka in A flat Major Op. 17, No. 3 4:04
- 13 Mazurka in A minor Op. 17, No. 4 4:53
- 14 Mazurka in G minor Op. 24, No. 1 2:52
- 15 Mazurka in C major Op. 24, No. 2 2:10
- 16 Mazurka in A flat Major Op. 24, No. 3 2:24
- 17 Mazurka in B flat minor Op. 24, No. 4 5:09
- 18 Mazurka in C minor Op. 30, No. 1 1:49
- 19 Mazurka in B minor Op. 30, No. 2 1:25
- 20 Mazurka in D flat Major Op. 30, No. 3 2:28
- 21 Mazurka in C sharp minor Op. 30, No. 4 3:28
- 22 Mazurka in G sharp minor Op. 33, No. 1 1:40
- 23 Mazurka in D Major Op. 33, No. 2 2:12
- 24 Mazurka in C Major Op. 33, No. 3 1:30
- 25 Mazurka in B minor Op. 33, No. 4 4:52
- 26 Mazurka in E minor Op. 41, No. 1 2:22
- 27 Mazurka in B Major Op. 41, No. 2 1:12
- 28 Mazurka in A flat Major Op. 41, No. 3 1:49
- 29 Mazurka in C sharp minor Op. 41, No. 4 3:35
- 30 Mazurka in F minor Op. 68, No. 4 2:22

Playing Time 73:43

## DISC TWO

- 1 Mazurka in G Major Op. 50, No. 1 2:12
- 2 Mazurka in A flat Major Op. 50, No. 2 2:42
- 3 Mazurka in C sharp minor Op. 50, No. 3 5:13
- 4 Mazurka in B Major Op. 56, No. 1 4:35
- 5 Mazurka in C Major Op. 56, No. 2 1:38
- 6 Mazurka in C minor Op. 56, No. 3 6:17
- 7 Mazurka in A minor Op. 59, No. 1 4:39
- 8 Mazurka in A flat Major Op. 59, No. 2 2:36
- 9 Mazurka in F sharp minor Op. 59, No. 3 3:23
- 10 Mazurka in B Major Op. 63, No. 1 2:04
- 11 Mazurka in F minor Op. 63, No. 2 1:59
- 12 Mazurka in C sharp minor Op. 63, No. 3 2:15
- 13 Mazurka in A minor, B 134 "Notre temps" 3:01
- 14 Mazurka for Piano in A Major, B 140 "à Émile Gaillard" 2:35
- 15 Mazurka for Piano in D Major, B 71 1:26
- 16 Mazurka for Piano in B flat Major, B 73 1:21
- 17 Mazurka for Piano in G Major, B 39 1:07
- 18 Mazurka in G Major Op. 67, No. 1 1:18
- 19 Mazurka in G minor Op. 67, No. 2 2:05
- 20 Mazurka in C Major Op. 67, No. 3 1:31
- 21 Mazurka in A minor Op. 67, No. 4 3:29
- 22 Mazurka for Piano in B flat Major, B 16, No. 2 1:01
- 23 Mazurka for Piano in A flat Major, B 85 1:44
- 24 Mazurka for Piano in C Major, B 82 1:57
- 25 Mazurka in C Major Op. 68, No. 1 1:34
- 26 Mazurka in A minor Op. 68, No. 2 2:24
- 27 Mazurka in F Major Op. 68, No. 3 1:34
- 28 Mazurka in F minor Op. 68, No. 4 (revised version) 3:56

Playing Time 71:49





THE MAZURKA — whose history encompasses rustic beginnings, subsequent popularity in high European society, and permanent enshrinement in a large, utterly personal body of works by Poland's most cherished composer — originated sometime in the 17th century in Chopin's native district of Mazovia (in the Warsaw plains area). Comprising a family of forms, rather than a single type, the mazurka could (at first) be sung or danced and was constituted to express a remarkable variety of moods and shades of feeling, given many variations of its essential dance steps. In Chopin's varied output the mazurka is, as it happens, the most abundantly represented genre. Collectively, his mazurkas afford a comprehensive record of the composer's development — from the earliest teenage specimens to (it was long held) literally his dying effort. In this chosen form Chopin permitted himself intimacies and fancies, eccentricities and extravagances not encountered to the same degree in his other works. Unlike other "nationalist" composers Chopin almost never employed existing popular materials directly, and evidently was not disposed to collect, catalogue or arrange such materials. Arriving in Paris at twenty-one, Chopin would — over the next eighteen years — create a world of mazurkas in a laboratory far from his, and their, native land. He had carried within himself all the necessary equipment — a perfect grasp of their language and structure — and an instinct to explore new possibilities of drama and design.

During Chopin's lifetime, 41 of his mazurkas were published in eleven groups, each including three to five mazurkas under a single opus number.

Two mazurkas (both in A minor) were separately published without opus number. And shortly following Chopin's death, eight others – diverse in chronology but all of smaller scale – appeared as opp. 67 and 68. The Henle edition of 1975 assembles a final six (two of which date from Chopin's 16th year) bringing the total number to 57, give or take a fragment or two. These last, seldom-heard mazurkas offer a welcome and appealing bouquet.

A century ago James Huneker, essayist and aesthete, turned his colorful prose to the mazurkas of Chopin: "No compositions are so Chopinesque. Ironical, sad, sweet, joyous, morbid, sane, sour, and dreamy, they illustrate what was said of their composer: 'His heart is sad; his mind is gay.' ... Chopin took the framework of this national dance, developed it, enlarged it, hung upon it his choicest melodies, his most piquant harmonies. He breaks and varies the conventionalized rhythm in half a hundred ways, lifting to the plane of a poem the heavy-footed peasant dance." Huneker likened the mazurka to "a dancing anecdote, a story told in a charming variety of steps and gestures, intoxicating, rude, humorous, poetic, above all — melancholy!" Half a century earlier, the great Franz Liszt himself, in his "Life of Chopin" (undertaken together with the Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein) had written a glittering chapter on the mazurkas "that dance in which coquetties, vanities, fantasies, inclinations, elegies, vague emotions, passions, conquests, struggles — all meet!" Liszt here devotes many pages to an enthralled description of the mazurka as danced in Polish ballrooms. And he draws special attention to the particular quality of pain and sadness





coloring so many of Chopin's mazurkas — a morbid condition expressed by the Polish word *Zal*, which he roughly defines as a compound of “intense regret and irrevocable loss — borne with pride, resignation, even irony...” Liszt's homage to Chopin's mazurkas, by the way, exceeded mere words: the Hungarian's early duo in C sharp minor for violin and piano is an imposing and very difficult four-movement fantasy based in part on the slender Chopin Mazurka Op. 7, No. 2, in the same key.

Let us try to describe and define Chopin's mazurkas themselves. They are dances in triple meter — all are notated in three-quarter time. Dotted rhythms abound, and the pattern ♩ ♩ ♩ is so characteristic as to be a “signature” rhythmic measure. The triplet is also a defining presence, along with a proliferation of mordents and short trills, which lend a special snap and zest to the music's rhythmic life — and which are often almost interchangeable, given the improvisatory flavor of the music. Although accentuation is notoriously capricious in Chopin's mazurkas, the most prevalent and characteristic accent emphasizes the second beat of a measure; cadences fall largely on beat two, and most mazurkas conclude on it as well. The surprising accents and rhythmic dislocations in these pieces are of course linked closely with other defining elements. The melodies and sonorities of Chopin's mazurkas are strongly tintured with dissonances and chromaticism — often highlighted with ornamentation. Abrupt alternation of major and minor modes; the use of modal scale patterns; shifts of melodic register; sudden changes of texture; the use of unison or single-voice

passages; rustic drones and ostinati; a wonderful subtlety of sequences and modulations; and the strategic appearance of sophisticated contrapuntal effects — all these, in combination, figure importantly in Chopin's mazurkas.

It is not uncommon for the overall affect or mood of a mazurka to remain somewhat in doubt: a new section or even a single phrase can sometimes seem to require a change in pulse. Tempo headings can thus seem a bit contradictory, as when a mazurka with animated rhythmic figures is marked *Lento* or *Mesto* (e.g., Op. 17, No. 2; Op. 33, No. 4; Op. 24, No. 1; Op. 68 No. 2; etc.) or when a soulful melody (Op. 7, No. 2) is marked *Vivo*. For the performer, the perfect resolution is not easy to find — and the wide variety of mazurka interpretations attests to this elusiveness. Certainly the typical ambiguities and complications of expression found here require an almost perpetual modulation of tempo: the famously termed *tempo rubato*. The rhythmic freedom of Chopin's own mazurka renditions evidently perplexed at least a few distinguished (if unenlightened) listeners, including Meyerbeer and Berlioz.

Chopin's Mazurkas exhibit the many-sectioned design and rough symmetries common to many dance and rondo forms. In the smaller Mazurkas, Chopin varies the proportions by sometimes shortening or "rounding" the final reappearance of the opening material. Overall, the size and structure of these pieces vary greatly — from quite simple ABA schemes to complex





multi-sectioned events. It is in the enlarged central section of many mazurkas that a fluent and unpredictable development-by-accumulation typically unfolds. Perhaps more conspicuous, for their astonishing variety and their power to enlarge the architectural and emotional scope of many later mazurkas, are the coda sections, which often introduce harmonic and contrapuntal flights of utmost daring and sophistication.

All of Chopin's mazurkas, tiny and grandiose alike, share a common underpinning: the succession, from first to last, of four and/or eight bar phrase-units. In the seamless dovetailing of phrase upon phrase, but also in the purposeful blurring of phrase boundaries between them, there lies a magical aspect of Chopin's genius. Charles Rosen has written incisively on the expressive tensions (especially seen in the more discursive central sections) between surface irregularities of phrase and the underlying invariant framework of four or eight bar modules. This may be the most wonderful "open secret" of the mazurkas, hidden, as it were, in plain sight.

Two versions of the F minor Mazurka Op. 68, No. 4 are offered here, one concluding each disc. This haunting, almost delirious chromatic reverie was long considered Chopin's last composition, set down only weeks before his death — a chronology now in question. However, its atmosphere of dissolution and expiration is unique. The original manuscript contained various scrawled measures considered either indecipherable or as rejected

sketches. In 1965, an episode of 16-bars reconstructed from the manuscript by Jan Ekier was published, and is now considered to be integral to the whole mazurka. This additional section, a highly chromatic chorale in the major mode adds a fascinating new dimension to the piece, while enlarging it from a simple ABA form to ABACA. But does enlargement, even with distinctive material, necessarily constitute improvement? The original version,

very widely recorded and to this day regarded as the standard version, is also a perfect, if slender, work of art — a distillation of something rare and essential. The longer version poses the greater problem of sustaining full concentration — but it is a compelling challenge, one whose rewards can be judged by the listener. I hope that these two versions — similar and fundamentally different (and here given maximum separation) can afford that attentive listener a fascinating, gradual comparison.

To close, I cannot resist Huneke's summation of the mazurkas: "Within the tremulous spaces of this miniature dance is enacted the play of the human soul, the soul that voices the revolt and sorrow of a dying race, of a dying poet. They are epigrammatic, fluctuating, bizarre, and tender — these mazurkas — and precise and vertiginous; and while other composers have written in this dance form, yet to say Mazurka is to say Chopin." Amen.

— *Andrew Rangell*





## ANDREW RANGELL



One of our most eloquent interpreters of the major keyboard works of Bach and Beethoven, pianist Andrew Rangell is also acclaimed for a wide variety of recordings, which range from the music of Sweelinck, Farnaby, and Gibbons to Nielsen, Ives, Enescu, Bartók, Janáček, Schoenberg, Christian Wolff, and others. Mr.

Rangell's Bach recordings embrace the Goldberg Variations, the Partitas, the French suites, the Art of Fugue, the Well-Tempered Clavier (Bk. 1), the B minor French Overture, and smaller works. His Beethoven includes the last five sonatas, Diabelli Variations, late bagatelles, and ten earlier sonatas. A project featuring many distinctive, but lesser-known works, is currently in preparation.

Rangell made his New York debut as winner of the Malraux Award of the Concert Artists' Guild, and has since performed and lectured throughout the United States, and in Europe and Israel. He has also taught on the faculties of Dartmouth, Middlebury, and Tufts University. In the 1980s, already recognized as a distinctive recitalist and collaborative artist, Mr. Rangell gained national attention — and the award of an Avery Fisher Career Grant — for his vivid traversals of the complete Beethoven sonata-cycle in New York, Boston, Cleveland, Rochester, Denver, and other U.S. cities. A hand injury sustained in 1991 forced Mr. Rangell to gradually alter the trajectory

of his career, and eventually to place his highest priority on recording — including five previous releases on the Steinway & Sons label. In recent years he has created several DVDs for children — integrating his special talents as author, illustrator, narrator, and pianist.

Chopin: The Mazurkas

was recorded April 2000, July 2001, and October 2002 at  
Gardner Museum, Boston, MA

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Design: Cover to Cover Design, Anilda Carasquillo

Cover Painting: Yehan Wang, *City Surface: g1010* acrylic on canvas, 2012

Photo: Simone Hnilicka

This material was previously released.

