

My favorite type of music - instrumental

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ENJOYMENT AND APPRECIATION It is quite obvious that emotion is very important to Chopin's music. But in his music emotion is not just a big swirl of impressions. He draws out many nuances with his delicate shifts of tone. In a way it is like poetry, line by line a new feeling or passion is revealed and just about everyone can understand it. It is very pleasant to follow the small steps he takes as he carefully draws out a larger picture, a larger emotional canvas. This style marks out Chopin as a romantic composer. The Romantic Movement, which dominated a great deal of artistic expression during the 19th century, emphasized the primacy of feelings and the oneness of humans with nature. It especially taught that the authentic life is the one in which a person is true to his emotions and not shackled to traditions or the old way of living. It sought to create an aesthetic life rather than a grim and boring one.

One of my favourite pieces by Chopin is the Nocturne. This starts off slowly with a melancholic air about it. The melody is quite pretty and delicate. It seems to come from within a deep well inside the composer. The low notes played by the left hand are largely the same, maintaining a certain stability or grounding, while the melody played by the right hand darts around with a much larger range. Sometimes the notes are very high on the keyboard only to fall away like a cascading waterfall down to a lower register. Although the music starts off quite sad, it appears to turn in the middle and to end on a high happy note. The lower notes fade out and the high notes dominate. I especially like this song because it feels like some tension has been resolved. It reminds me a bit of a sunset: at first you are sad to see the day go, but as the sun sinks down and the sky turns pink, you think, " Ah, the beauty of the sunset is worth the fact that it is now night and a bit cold out."

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It is a fine song to relax to.

Another favourite piece by Chopin is the Revolutionary Etude. This is a very strong, passionate piece. One of the stories I have heard about it was that Chopin was sick when there was a revolution in France. He was unable to participate because of his health, so was forced to put all of his feeling into this music. What he felt about the revolution went into the composition. It moves along at a tremendous pace, full of gusto and energy. There is a constant shift from soft notes to hard ones, marking it as a very dynamic piece. It requires a great deal of dexterity from its performer, especially to keep the constant swarm of notes going. There is a great deal of violence in it, in the beginning in particular. Like the Nocturne, it is a short piece, but hits a large range of notes and communicates a powerful feeling to it that cannot leave a listener unmoved.

A third and final composition I truly enjoy is the Minute Waltz. This piece is a little bit like the Revolutionary Etude in its speed and range of notes and obvious sophistication. However, it lacks that other piece's violence. It is more playful and much of the Sturm und Drang of blood in the street and nationalist fervour is missing. It is very brisk and seems to be in a great rush, bouncing off the walls at a dizzying pace. In the middle, it begins to slow down a bit, before playfully speeding up again. I find this to be a cheerful, funny piece, and can easily imagine people smiling as they try to dance to it.

All three of these pieces show the great range that Chopin possessed. He could melancholic, violent, playful. This range and the romantic feelings he was able to communicate so clearly mark him as one of the great composers throughout history.

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