

In the world of music,
one of the



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the world of music, one of the most prominent figures is the nineteenth-century Polish composer Frederic Chopin. Called “ The boldest and the proudest poetic spirit of the age” by his musical contemporary Robert Schumann[1], Chopin embodied the essential ideas of the romantic period with his tragedy of losing his native land and spending life in vain attempts at supporting his countrymen in their struggle for freedom.

A Slavic soul in the Western world, Chopin expressed all his pain at the loss of motherland in his lyrical music that forever won the hearts of audiences. The composer’s short but eventful life was a struggle between the outward success and recognition in the musical world and the inner contradictions and home-sickness, worsened by the deadly disease — tuberculosis. Born on March 1, 1810, in a small Polish village Zelazowa-Wola six miles away from the Polish capital, Warsaw, Chopin was the second child and the only son in the family[2]. His father, Nicholas Chopin, was a French emigrant of Polish origin and worked as an educator to the children of the Polish aristocracy[3]. His mother, Justina Kryzanowska, of poor but noble family, “ possessed of all the womanly virtues”[4]. Chopin’s highly educated and refined parents cultivated his love of music since his early childhood.

His first piano lessons were given by his mother, and at the age of six he started studying with Adalbert Zwiny[5] The young boy’s affection to piano playing was so big that by the age of twelve he already possessed enough skill to play at public concerts and even experiment in the sphere of technique and tone, “ revolutionizing the world of music and the keyboard”[6] At the age of twelve Chopin entered the Warsaw Lyceum for classical education in languages, and later on enrolled the Warsaw

Conservatory where he studied harmony and counterpoint with Joseph Elsner[7]. The latter recognized Chopin's outstanding talent as a musician and provided the young composer with the professional knowledge and skills to develop Chopin's natural talent. The young man's greatest passion was music and he would often spend nights at the piano trying out and rehearsing the compositions he had created during the daytime[8]. He drew inspiration from acquaintance with the works of such masters as Bach and Mozart, but already managed to create his own lyrical style of romantic music. Chopin's skills as a pianist also developed and found recognition among the contemporary public who acknowledged him as an unsurpassed pianist of the time.

Having finished his studies at conservatoire, Chopin set out to see the world in 1828. His first big trip was to Berlin where he enjoyed his time meeting contemporary prominent musicians and exchanging professional experience with them. He saw Spontini, Mendelsohn, and Zelter, and heard Webber's "Freischutz"[9]. His heart was bursting with ideas and hopes for success, since his improvisations on Polish melodies found a response in the audiences' hearts. In 1829 in Warsaw, Chopin met with such giants of contemporary music as Hummel and Paganini and debuted with solo concerts in Vienna[10]. The Viennese public was used to astonishing bravura virtuosity of popular pianists and found his playing too quiet and timid for big stage. Some critics dismissed Chopin as a parlor pianist whose play "pleased the ladies"[11]. But despite this, his charming play paved him the road to international recognition.

In 1831, Chopin settled in Paris never to return to Poland again. At that time the French capital was a major cultural center, a place where arts prospered and flourished. At first Chopin attempted at giving solo concerts but due to the specific intimacy of his performance, those concerts turned out to be financial failures. Therefore, to support himself and to earn his living, Chopin engaged into private piano tutoring and playing small piano pieces in salons of the French aristocracy[12].

Gradually enlarging the circle of his contacts, Chopin won the admiration of such influential musicians of the time as Schumann, Liszt, Cherubini, Bellini, Berlioz, and Meyerbeer; among his devoted friends were also the painter Delacroix, the poet Heine, and many others[13]. Despite Chopin's professional success, he never forgot his motherland and took hard the failure of Polish Revolution, expressing his anxiety and nostalgia in his nocturnes, mazurkas, studies and scherzos[14]. One of the most influential people in Chopin's life was the French feminist writer and leading literary woman of the time, George Sand. Chopin met her in 1836 and was initially averted by her defiant mannish behavior but consequently they developed a mutual affection which lasted for over a decade[15].

George Sand took the same care of Chopin as she did of her two children and tried to arrange his life so that to restore the composer's weak health. For this reason they spent winter 1838-39 on the Spanish island of Majorca, but bad weather only worsened the composer's condition. Initially caring for Chopin, George Sand gradually cooled down to him and they drifted apart being more in patient-nurse relations than actually lovers. Miserable and jaded, Chopin returned to Paris where doctors recommended that he should

lessen the intensity of his working schedule — but naturally, the composer's genius required constant activities and work on improvement of his creations[16]. The last years of his life, heavily marred by his illness, were marked by Chopin's gradual breaking with his friends and social bonds. Growing ever-suspicious and critical, he became estranged from active social life and thus his career as a private piano tutor gradually tailed[17].

In 1848, London heard Chopin play for the last time, when in a patriotic impulse the composer put all his remaining energy in a concert in aid of Polish refugees[18]. By that time Chopin was hopelessly ill, and a year after his last performance, on October 17, 1849 the great Pole died, bequeathing his heart to be taken back to his motherland[19]. Chopin's life is a story of painful survival and nostalgia for homeland against the background of outward success and public recognition. Although Chopin spent half of his life away from Poland, he never forgot his national roots, bringing them to the fore in his music. An example of this can be seen in the way Chopin revived and popularized the traditional Polish dances, polonaise and mazurka[20]. His music is a fancy union of joy and sadness that reveals the composer's inner conflict of a successful immigrant who could not help his suffering land. Perhaps, this yearning for the impossible constitutes the special charm of his masterpieces which appeal to the innermost notes of human heart.

Works Cited

Green, Janet. "Chopin, Frederic Francois." Musical Biographies.

Owen Press, 2008. 136-144. Print. Huneker, James. Chopin: The Man and His Music. Plain Label Books, 1923.

<https://assignbuster.com/in-the-world-of-music-one-of-the/>

Print. Orga, Ates. Chopin. Redwood Books, 1983. Print.

1. As quoted in Green, p. 136. . Huneker, pp. 4–5.

. Green, p. 137. .

Green, p. 137. . Huneker, p. 8. . Huneker, p. 9.

. Green, p. 138. . Green, p. 138. . Huneker, p.

12. . Huneker, p. 13. .

Huneker, p. 15. . Green, p. 139. .

Green, p. 139. . Orga, p.

54. . Green, p.

140. . Huneker, p. 44. .

Huneker, p. 46. . Orga, p. 132.

. Green, p. 142. .

Green, p. 142.