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A tale of lovers : Chopin's Nocturne Op. 27, No. 2 as a contribution to the violist's repertory

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A TALE OF LOVERS: CHOPIN'S NOCTURNE OP. 27, NO. 2 AS A
CONTRIBUTION TO THE VIOLIST'S REPERTORY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by
Rafal Zyskowski
B.M., Louisiana State University, 2008
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Dedicated to Ms. Dorothy Harman,
my best friend ever

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As always in life, the final outcome of our work results from a contribution that was made in one way or another by a great number of people. Thus, I want to express my gratitude to at least some of them.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to present a violist with complete transcription and performer's guide of Fryderyk Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 originally written for solo piano in 1835. Chopin wrote predominately for the piano, and the *nocturnes* are some of his most sublime works that have a personal quality that likely reflect a diary of his personal feelings.

At the beginning of this document a brief overview of the composer's lifetime and analysis of the events that took place around the time of composition are provided. Later on, the characteristic genre features, the formal structure, the influences of French song, Italian opera, John Field's *nocturnes*, and the plausible meaning behind the work are described and discussed. The following chapters deal with the process of transcription, performance issues, hints on how to solve them, as well as the aspects of contribution to the dearth of Romantic viola repertory.

INTRODUCTION

Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849) wrote his piano *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 in D flat Major in 1835, while living in Paris, away from his native Poland. This *Nocturne* is a second of the pair of *nocturnes* op. 27 (the first one is in the key of c sharp minor) that was first published in Leipzig in May of 1836 by Breitkopf & Härtel.¹ The subsequent editions were produced same year by Wessel & Co. in London (May 30), and by Maurice Schlesinger in Paris (July).² Op. 27 was first time that the composer linked his *nocturnes* in tandem, as earlier he had a custom of publishing *nocturnes* in sets of triplets. Perhaps the reason for this change could be simply the enharmonic relationship between the two *nocturnes*, or their contrasting characters. The work is dedicated to the Countess Thérèse d'Apponyi, the Austrian Ambassadress in Paris, who happened to be one of Chopin's students at that time. The *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 is a paradigm of the Chopin's genre, while simultaneously the poetic quality of this work makes it the quintessence of an early Romantic era.

This document presents a complete viola transcription of *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2, and provides the violist with a guide to achieving a mature interpretation of that work. I believe in the notion of comprehensive musician, who possesses not only good command of the instrument, but thorough knowledge about the work as well. These two factors combined together may contribute greatly to higher artistry of the performance. It is not my intention to make a harmonic analysis of the piece, nor explain in detail the aspects of viola playing technique. Likewise, this dissertation is not about genesis and development of the nocturne genre, or a comprehensive

¹ Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Nocturne in D flat major op. 27, no. 2: Commentary* (Warsaw, Poland: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2007), 19.

² Ibid.

biography of the composer. Rather, my goal is to deliver a document that will be a great reference source, a type of handbook for the performer, who can find his/her own un-imposed meaning of the piece.

I divided the dissertation into five chapters with the conclusion at the end. The first chapter contains a section with a brief biography of the composer, a short overview of his works, followed by another section detailing information about events from the year of 1835. The second chapter deals with the *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2. The composition's genre, its influences, characteristic features, formal structure, and possible meaning are of my great interest. The third chapter focuses on the steps I took to make the viola transcription. The process and the issues related to transcription are described. The fourth chapter constitutes a didactic manual for the performer. Specific performance-related difficulties, technical and musical, are pointed out, as well as the suggestions on how to solve and execute them properly. The final chapter discusses the contribution aspects of my transcription to the violist's repertory.

CHAPTER ONE: THE COMPOSER

A Brief Biography

Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin was born in a small town, Żelazowa Wola, near Warsaw on February 22, 1810, to Polish mother, Justyna Krzyżanowska, and French father, Mikołaj Chopin, as one of their four children. Soon after his birth, Chopin family moved to Warsaw, where the composer spent most of his childhood, and received his musical education. Fryderyk's musical talent as a young pianist was immediately evident, leading to performances in the salons of Warsaw, where the elite gathered. Chopin witnessed a strong stratification of the society, and although he did not possess a noble title or wealth, he was never-the-less surrounded by academics, middle-class nobility (Polish *szlachta*), and aristocratic families.³ From 1816 to 1821, Chopin received his first professional piano lessons from Wojciech Żywny (1756-1842), who introduced him to the music of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. During university years, his piano and composition teacher was Józef Elsner (1769-1854), who was his last pedagogue. In spite of the education he acquired, Chopin was a self-taught pianist. He was undoubtedly a piano genius who reached his maturity very early in his life. During the Warsaw years, Chopin enjoyed hearing music in concert halls, and the National Theatre. He was an opera aficionado, and especially enjoyed the Italian opera. That passion was reflected later in his compositions, particularly in the genre of *nocturne*. At the very beginning of November 1830, Chopin went for a trip to Vienna to give a number of performances. During that month the insurrection broke out

³ Kornel Michałowski and Jim Samson, "Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek" in *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51099> (retrieved March 24, 2014).

in Poland,⁴ and the composer decided to extend his sojourn, and then leave for Paris. Sadly, he never came back to his beloved family and country. The November uprising impacted the composer greatly, creating a nationalistic trend in some of his works such as *mazurkas*, *polonaises*, or *ballades*.

After arrival in Paris on September 10, 1831, Chopin found the “City of Lights” fascinating, and full of opportunities to fulfill his talent. Paris at that time was a host to three opera houses, six concert halls, and many theatres. Chopin had a great opportunity to acquaint himself with famous artists such as Liszt, Kalkbrenner, Bellini, Baillot, Franchomme, and many others. He earned a living by giving piano lessons, composing, and playing concerts. Although he sometimes played in concert halls⁵, he preferred to perform at salons. There in the atmosphere of a parlor or living room, he felt most comfortable to allow his genius to shine. In the summer of 1835 he was able to visit his parents in Karlsbad, and his old friends in Dresden the Wodziński family.⁶ In 1838 Chopin found himself in a relationship with George Sand (1804-1876)⁷ that lasted for many years till 1847. This was a prolific period of Chopin’s life as he focused his attention mainly on composing and teaching. But, each year the composer’s health

⁴ The nation of Poland did not exist on the political map of Europe at that time. It was partitioned and taken over by Russia, Germany, and Austria in 1795. The November Insurrection of 1830 was a result of that politics, and a desperate struggle to gain back the national independence.

⁵ The first performance in Paris took place on February 26, 1832.

⁶ This event and many others from 1835 are going to be mentioned and described in detail in one of the following sections of this chapter, as I propose some of them correlate and have some relevance to the composition of *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2.

⁷ Her real name was Aurore Dupin, a much known female French novelist, who at that time had to use a male pseudonym to publish her works.

deteriorated because of his slowly developing tuberculosis that culminated from 1848-49.

Chopin died in Paris on October 17, 1849.⁸

Overview of Chopin's Oeuvre

The majority of Chopin's compositions were written for piano solo, piano with orchestra, and two pianos. Indeed, he was mainly a piano composer who wrote idiomatically for the instrument, and who did not have almost any interest in composing operas, symphonies, chamber music, or simply for other instruments. The Cello *Sonata*, Op. 65, Songs, Op. 74, and Piano Trio, Op. 8, stand out from the handful works not intended for solo piano.

Overall, Chopin composed around two hundred thirty works; at least this is the number that survived. In addition to some miscellaneous works, the main components of his *oeuvre* constitute *mazurkas*, *sonatas*, *polonaises*, *nocturnes*, *preludes*, *ballades*, *waltzes*, *etudes*, *scherzos*, and *concertos*.

The Events of 1835

By the end of 1834, twenty four-year-old Chopin reached maturity and fame in Parisian society. He continued teaching members of wealthy aristocratic families, composing, and playing concerts. But in contrast to pianists like Franz Liszt (1811-1886), Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785-1849), or Sigismond Thalberg (1812-1871) who were interested in public virtuoso concerts and took delight in the status of being a celebrity, Chopin started feeling an aversion to that kind of performance and style. And although he agreed to play four public concerts in 1835 (February

⁸ According to Chopin's will, his body was buried in Parisian cemetery, Père Lachaise, but his heart was placed in the Holy Cross Church in Warsaw.

22; March 15; April 4; April 26), he slowly began to retreat from concert hall.⁹ One of the first steps he made in that direction was in January 1835, when he resigned from the membership in the Chantierine Hall Music Society, thus eliminating the chance to play in prestigious concert series.¹⁰ Chopin preferred a more chamber-like atmosphere, where he was familiar with most of the people who listened to him. The salon became his most favorite performing venue. He treated any performance in a very personal manner as described by William Atwood:

His art was not a commodity to be bought or sold. Such an attitude made him equally loath to 'sell' himself on the concert stage. As a result his rare performances in Paris had been limited mostly to brief appearances for the sake of friends and not for his own benefit.¹¹

The result of such attitude was Chopin's stronger focus on composing. That year, in addition to *Ballade* Op. 23, No. 1, *Andante Spianato* and *Grande Polonaise Brillante*, Op. 22, and *Polonaises* Op. 26, Nos. 1 and 2, he produced many short and salon-style works: *Mazurka* Op. 24, No. 3; Op. 67, No. 1; Op. 67, No. 3; *Waltz* Op. 34, No. 1; Op. 70, No. 1; Op. 69, No. 1; *Nocturnes* Op. 27, Nos. 1 and 2.

The summer began with a July trip to Enghien-les-Bains, a spa resort, where Chopin with his friends, including famous Italian opera composer Vincenzo Bellini, had a short vacation. On August 1, Chopin became a French citizen, and the passport he received allowed him travel easily through the borders of European countries. That is why when Chopin's parents wrote him a letter with invitation to meet them in Karlsbad (nowadays Karlovy Vary in Czech Republic), he did not hesitate, and rushed to see them. They met together on August 15; it was their first time get-together since Fryderyk left Poland in 1830, and their last one during Chopin's lifetime.

⁹ William G. Atwood, *Fryderyk Chopin: Pianist from Warsaw* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 194.

¹⁰ Ibid., 91-92.

¹¹ Ibid.

After a month, Chopin set out for Paris, but on his way back he stopped by in Dresden and Leipzig. In Dresden he visited his family's friends, the Wodziński family, where he got an opportunity to meet Maria Wodzińska (1819-1896), young Polish countess. That encounter was a beginning of their love relationship that pinnacle the following summer, when Chopin proposed to her, and she accepted. Unfortunately, their relationship fell apart, leaving Chopin distressed. There were probably a few factors that contributed to such ending. First, Chopin was a man in poor health condition (tuberculosis); second, he did not possess much wealth to support his future wife; third, he was not born to noble family.¹² While having a pleasant time with Wodziński family, on September 23 his good friend Bellini passed away, nearby Paris in Puteaux.

In Leipzig Chopin spent some time with Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), Robert Schumann (1810-1856), and Clara Wieck (1819-1896). Chopin returned to Paris at the end of October.

¹² Adam Zamoyski, *Chopin: A Biography* (London: Collins, 1979), 137.

CHAPTER TWO: NOCTURNE OP. 27, NO. 2: CHOPIN'S REVERIE

The *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 is the eighth of twenty-one *nocturnes* that Chopin wrote throughout his life, and the only one in the key of D flat major. Written sometime in 1835, during the time when absolute and programmatic music prevailed, the piece stands out as a short, generically titled character piece of music. Jeremy Siepmann describes it as “an unsurpassed jewel of craftsmanship in every sense: in its uniquely delicate and seductive sonorities, in the extraordinary, *bel canto* elaborations of its melody, in its harmonic subtlety and its Classical proportions.”¹³ All these qualities contribute to sophisticated character of music that resembles a poem. If we add the fact the work has reference to love duets through the appearance of double-voice figures, characteristic of Parisian vocal nocturnes and Italian opera of 19th century, indeed, *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 may be considered as a musical love poem. This notion of poetic work seems to be even more adequate, when we evaluate the composer’s introverted personality that gave a way to be prone to and “dedicated to the one task of exploring the world he knew best—that of his own heart and imagination.”¹⁴ Chopin was the piano poet, and the *nocturnes*, aside from his *mazurkas* make up for his most sublime compositions.

¹³ Jeremy Siepmann, *Chopin: The Reluctant Romantic* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 128.

¹⁴ Alan Walker, ed., *Frédéric Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1966), 12.

Genre

There is probably no complete and satisfying definition of the Chopin's piano *nocturnes*, as many of them exhibit different features (some *nocturnes* borrow specific facets from different genres like *mazurka*, or *chorale*, have unusual formal design, different time signatures, static melodies instead of operatic lines, and many other stylistic devices). Jane Bellingham defines the genre of *nocturne* as “a 19th-century, Romantic piano piece of a slow and dreamy nature in which a graceful, highly embellished melody in the right hand is accompanied by a broken-chord pattern in the left.”¹⁵ Although this definition could be applied to *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2, it is extremely generalized, and one may conclude that *nocturne* is merely an atmospheric piece without musical depth. Another musicologist Jim Samson describes the *nocturnes* as “mood pieces, reflecting a widespread tendency in early nineteenth-century music for the work to assume the quality of a personal poetic statement.”¹⁶ The hybrid of these two definitions perhaps would be a better version, although still not final. Considering different “character and formal type” of the Chopin's *nocturnes*, as well as “their divergent stylistic provenance,” some other musicologist Mieczysław Tomaszewski classified them into five varieties:¹⁷

- 1) Elegiac - reflective
- 2) Oneiric - dreamy
- 3) Pastoral – idyllic
- 4) Contemplative - meditative

¹⁵ Jane Bellingham, “Nocturne” in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e4743> (retrieved March 24, 2014).

¹⁶ Jim Samson, *The Music of Chopin* (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 89.

¹⁷ Tomaszewski, *Nocturne in D flat major op. 27, no. 2: Commentary*, 19.

5) Pathetic - serious

Among them the most significant are the first two types. Elegiac type is typical of a reflective character, usually written in a minor key and duple meter (for example, *Nocturne* Op. 55, No. 1).¹⁸ *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2, in turn, belongs to the type of oneiric *nocturnes*, and is actually its best example (other good examples are *Nocturnes* in E flat Major, Op. 9, No. 2, and in G Major, Op. 37, No. 2).¹⁹ This type of *nocturne* is characteristic of 6/8 or 12/8 time signature, major key, and its heritage of *romance*.²⁰

Distinctive Features

Aside from the differences between the composer's *nocturnes*, they share many similar features, and *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 is a typical example of them. They contain the following features: lyrical melody, ornamentation, two-voice figures, and broken-chord accompaniment. To that list we could add Chopin's preference to structure his work in rondo or ternary form, although in the *Nocturne* being described here, the mixture of rondo and variations form was chosen.

Two main melodic lines occur in this specific *nocturne*. The first one (A) is long and well-sustained for eight measures (Figure 2-1). It is passionate and intense, yet at the same time full of poise and control. That balanced juxtaposition of contrasting qualities, a known aspect of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Chopin's compositional language, creates an expressive means to convey the music.²¹ The second melody (B) is presented as two-voiced line, which is of different character (Figure 2-2).



Figure 2-1. Melody A (mm. 2-9)



Figure 2-2. Melody B (mm. 10-17)

²¹ Walker, *Frédéric Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician*, 21.

In contrast to fluent and dreamy melody A, melody B seems to be filled with feeling of yearning and emotional burden. It lasts for eight bars as well. It is interesting to mention the fact that melodies A and B in *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 happen to be the types of melodies that belong to two categories that Chopin widely used in his all works:

The most common is the stanzaic melody, whose internal repetitions are modeled on variants of a well-established archetype, the eight-bar classical sentence. [...] The second category is a freer, non-repetitive melody, unfolding continuously in the manner of operatic arioso or even recitative, or through a process of developing variation....²²

Concluding, melody A belongs to the second category, because the singing aspect of the melody resembles operatic aria, and later is developed through two following variations in mm. 26-33 and 46-53. And melody B inheres in the first category, because of the internal structure of the melody, “with its two-bar phrase, varied repetition and four-bar liquidation.”²³

Another characteristic aspect of this *nocturne* is decoration of the melodic lines that consists of ornamentation through the use of *grace notes*, *mordents*, *trill*, *turns*, *fioritura*, and *acciaccaturas*. This process of figuration of melodies can be found throughout the entire piece, and it is another prominent aspect of Chopin’s aesthetic, whose purpose is to express the music in a richer manner.

1. *Grace note* – an ornamental note written in small type that precedes (any interval) and is adjacent to main note to be played. The duration of it is unspecified, and it does not count into the measure length (for example, mm. 12, 16, or 17 in Figure 2-2);
2. *Mordent* – an ornament that informs the player to alternate the main note with a note above (*upper mordent*) or below (*lower mordent*) in a quick manner. In *Nocturne* Op. 27,

²² Michałowski and Samson, “Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek” in *Grove Music Online*; Samson, *The Music of Chopin*, 87-89.

²³ Ibid.

No. 2 Chopin applies only *upper mordents*. They are indicated by a squiggle above the note (for example, m. 16 in Figure 2-2);

3. *Trill* – is a type of ornamenting by a rapid alternation of note to be played with an upper note (Figure 2-3). This ornament occurs only once, in m. 51, on the pitch of d flat;



Figure 2-3. The use of *trill* in m. 51

4. *Turn* – “a type of ornament in which the main note alternates with its two auxiliaries a step above and below.”²⁴ The symbol of this ornament resembles a mirrored ‘S’ letter on its side (for example, m. 7 in Figure 2-1);
5. *Fioritura* – a type of ornamental device that literally means “flowering,” a word that derives from Italian word *fiore*, and it signifies a fast run of notes (Figure 2-4);



Figure 2-4. *Fioritura* in m. 52

²⁴ “Turn” in *Grove Music Online*,
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/48838> (retrieved March 24, 2014).

6. *Acciaccatura* – a type of *grace note*. The only difference between two is the interval of major or minor second below or above the main note to be played (for example, m. 12 in Figure 2-2).

In addition to profusion of ornaments in *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2, the abundance of double-voice figures are present, mainly the intervals of thirds and sixths (for example, Figure 2-2). This harmonization of melodic lines produces mellifluous sonorities that are strongly suggestive of love duets²⁵ extremely popular in some genres of Chopin's time.²⁶ Thus, we can find two alternating textures in this particular *Nocturne*: recitative (or *arioso*) and duet (for example, Figures 2-1 and 2-2). It is interesting that the duet texture predominates in this *Nocturne*, and two other works that are *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 1 and *Etude* Op. 25, No. 7 as they were all composed same year (in 1835).²⁷ It may imply Chopin's fascination with it, and some kind of significance it could have for the composer.²⁸

In *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 the accompaniment is in the form of arpeggiated chords (Figure 2-5), and it continuously occurs from the very beginning to the end of the piece (except for the last two measures). This archetypical feature derives from the Alberti bass, a compositional device named after Domenico Alberti (ca. 1710-1746) who allegedly invented it, or at least widely applied in his works. In short, it is a figured triad, played first from the lowest note, then highest, middle, and highest again, that served as a left-hand accompaniment.

²⁵ Victor Lederer, *Chopin: A Listener's Guide to the Master of the Piano* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 2006), 54-59; Charles Fisk, "Chopin's 'Duets'-and Mine," *19th-Century Music* 35, no. 3 (Spring 2012): 198.

²⁶ I will talk in detail about the influences on Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 in the following section of this chapter.

²⁷ Fisk, "Chopin's 'Duets'-and Mine," 193.

²⁸ More about plausible meaning of duets in Chopin's work in last section of this chapter.



Figure 2-5. Broken-chord accompaniment (mm. 1-4)

Thus, the range of the notes was within a triad as either a perfect fifth or a major/minor sixth.

John Field (1782-1837), the forerunner of the genre of piano *nocturne* used a wider range of broken-chord usually up to the octave. But Chopin in his *nocturnes* goes beyond the ambitus of the octave (Figure 2-5), and his accompaniment does not merely create a harmonic foundation for the upper line in the right hand; it actually supports and interacts with it (Figure 2-6), “contributing to its aura of ardent, potentially buoyant reverie.”²⁹ And as Victor Lederer summarizes: “Chopin uses this unending, steady flow to comment on and enrich the busy melodic activity of the right hand; gorgeous as that will be, the left hand shares the stage, holding its own as a nearly equal partner.”³⁰

Influences

There are a number of composers and genres that possibly influenced Chopin’s *nocturnes*, and specifically *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2. But the most direct impact came from:

1. Piano *nocturnes* by John Field;
2. French song of the early 19th century; and
3. Italian *bel-canto* opera.

²⁹ Fisk, 198.

³⁰ Lederer, *Chopin: A Listener’s Guide to the Master of the Piano*, 58.

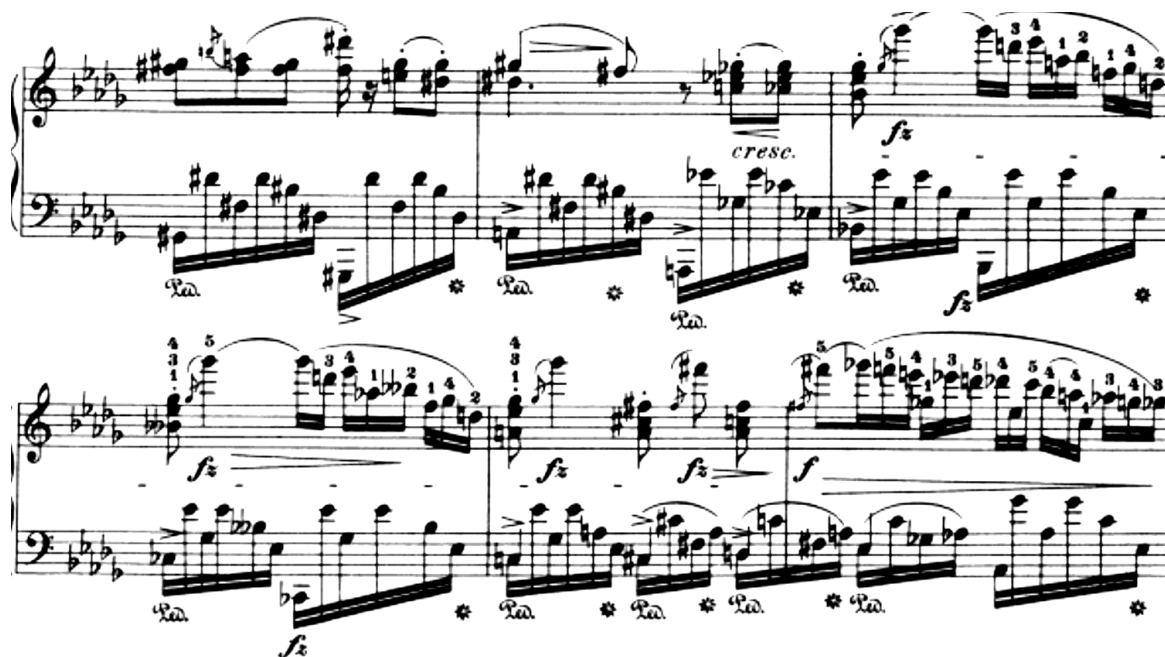


Figure 2-6. A strong harmonic support and interaction between left and right hand in mm. 40-45

It was not Chopin, but John Field, an Irish-born composer who was the pioneer of the genre of piano *nocturne*. He composed eighteen *nocturnes* during the period of 1812-1835, but interestingly, only twelve of them were published as such: the rest were labeled either as *serenades*, *romances*, or *pastorals*.³¹ That phenomenon clearly displays a lack of certainty about the concept and the properties of the genre among the publishers, and even the composer himself around 1812-the year when his first three *nocturnes* were published in St. Petersburg.³² Field's *nocturnes* are the miniatures that prioritize "expression over the virtuosity,"³³ and they aim at

³¹ Nicholas Temperley, "John Field and the First Nocturne," *Music and Letters* 56, no. 3/4 (Jul. - Oct. 1975): 337. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/734890> (retrieved July 31, 2013); Tomaszewski, 19.

³² Samson, 82-83.

³³ *Ibid.*

reflecting on “the mood of the night”³⁴ (in French, the word ‘nocturne’ means ‘pertaining to night’), through emulating the *cantilena* in the right hand, and applying, although not always, the broken-chord accompaniment in the left. But in spite of their dulcet harmonies, and sentimental atmosphere they create, Field’s nocturnes are not capable of conveying an expressive statement, as they lack intensity in their melodies, and complexity in their harmonies. Chopin’s equivalents surpass “the characteristic miniature, marked by sentimentality and drawing-room triviality, [as] it was transformed into a succinct pianistic poem, in which a highly dramatic structure conveyed a deeply lyrical content.”³⁵

An influential impetus came from the French song that was sung at Parisian salons during early 1800s. There were mainly two types: *romance* and *vocal nocturne* (sometimes called interchangeably *Parisian nocturne*). These two salon genres evoke the character and meaning of poetic texts that “usually have nocturnal settings..., and are generally about romantic love.”³⁶ The only difference between them lies in the number of voices: whereas *romance* was a solo song (Figure 2-7), *Parisian nocturne* always called for a duet, or more voices³⁷ (Figure 2-8).

The most known and prolific composers of these types of French song were:³⁸

1. Felice Blangini (1781-1841) – 174 *romances*, 170 *nocturnes*;
2. Auguste Panséron (1796-1859) – more than 500 *romances*, 200 *nocturnes*;

³⁴ Tomaszewski, 19.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ James Parakilas, “‘Nuit plus belle qu’un beau jour’: Poetry, Song, and the Voice in the Piano Nocturne,” in *The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries*, edited by Halina Goldberg, 203-223 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 206.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Parakilas, “‘Nuit plus belle qu’un beau jour’: Poetry, Song, and the Voice in the Piano Nocturne,” 205.

3. Antoine Romagnesi (1781-1850) – 200 *romances*, and many *nocturnes*.

ANDANTINO. Maelzel. $\text{♩} = 84$.

SINGSTIMME.

Quand le So_ leil sur l'horizon se
 Oh! que d'amour je promets à la
 Ton beau vi_ sa _ ge entouré de mys _

sempre legato.

PIANOFORTE.

p

lè _ _ ve, son vif é_ clat m'apporte les en_nuis, je perds a _
 fem _ _ me qui doit sou_ri _ re à mes premiersaveux, et nulle en _
 tè _ _ re n'a jamais lui_ sur ces profa_nes lieux, ton pied di _

Figure 2-7. The beginning of Auguste Panséron's *romance* "La Vierge de mes rêves"³⁹

Their works used to be very famous during Chopin's life, and he surely had an opportunity to hear many of them at Parisian salons. The songs were designated mainly for female voices, usually soprano, but in *vocal nocturne* the combination of two sopranos, or soprano with tenor, were almost equally famous.⁴⁰ There is only one text for both singers, and is sung at the same time (Figure 2-8). That synchronization of voices gives a sense of unity, "representing a single

³⁹ Auguste Panséron, "La Vierge de mes rêves" (Leipzig: Bretkopf & Härtel, 1836).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 206.

persona, or 'voice.' Sometimes that persona is of unspecified gender, as is the beloved being addressed.”⁴¹



Figure 2-8. Beginning of Felice Blangini's *vocal nocturne* "Questo cor se teme e spera"⁴²

In addition to the integrity of voices and the setting of love poem, other characteristic features are prominent such as pleasant harmonies created by parallel thirds and sixths, unembellished melodic lines, strophic text, and subordinate accompaniment (piano or harp). Overall, the French song of that time was simple of sentiment, but their poetical character and duet texture in *vocal nocturne* resemble the qualities found in *Nocturne Op. 27, No. 2*.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Felice Blangini, "Questo cor se teme e spera" from *Six Nocturnes à deux voix, Op. 8* (Paris: Melles. Erard, 1805(?)).

Although the French song and Field's *nocturnes* might have attributed to Chopin's *nocturnes*, it was perhaps the music of Italian opera that had the strongest impact. *Bel-canto*, which literally means 'beautiful singing,' was a dramatic style of Italian opera in 19th century that was characteristic of lyricism. The most known *bel-canto* composers were Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868), Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835), and Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848). Rossini's works such as *Il barbiere de Siviglia* (1816) or *La Cenerentola* (1817) were probably the first ones Chopin heard already during the Warsaw years. But even though Rossini's influence was strong, particularly in imitating the decoration of the melody and creating exalting cadenza,⁴³ it was Bellini, who produced such operatic masterpieces as *La Sonnambula* (1831), *Norma* (1831), or *I Puritani* (1835) that Chopin favored mostly.⁴⁴ Chopin admired the passionate, dignified and graceful melodic lines, as well as the love duets (Figure 2-9), which he emulated mainly in his *nocturnes*.

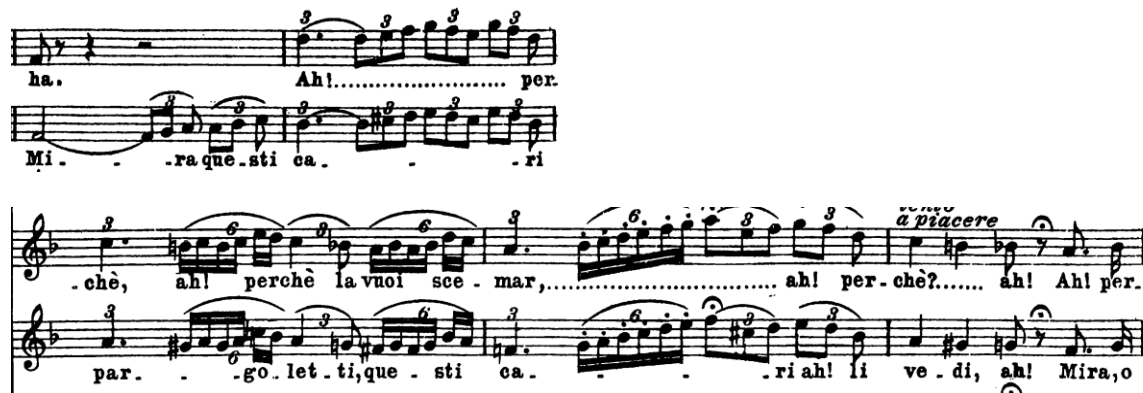


Figure 2-9. A love duet of Norma and Adalgisa "Mire, o Norma" from Bellini's *Norma*⁴⁵

⁴³ Samson, 81.

⁴⁴ Chopin and Bellini acquainted themselves in Paris in 1833, and became very good friends till Bellini's death in 1835.

⁴⁵ Vincenzo Bellini, *Norma* (Milan: G. Ricordi, 1898).

Both were ‘conservative romantics’ as they shared same aesthetic ideals “based upon their common admiration of Mozart...that is classical clarity and elegance.”⁴⁶ *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 genuinely mirrors Bellini’s characteristic qualities: lyrical melody in a sustained *cantabile* style, duet texture, intense character, and even the accompaniment as arpeggiated chords.

In addition to above-described direct influences, it is important to point out to the fact that Chopin somewhat indirectly followed always the stylistic aesthetic of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) and earlier mentioned Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). Chopin respected these two composers greatly, and he applied many of their compositional principles in his own works.⁴⁷ When it comes to Bach, it is the contrapuntal treatment of voices that stands out and is reflected in Chopin’s polyphonic textures. In *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 there are clearly sections where the stratification and interconnection of two voices take place (specifically mm. 11, 13, 15 in Figure 2-2; mm. 38-41 in Figure 2-10 and mm. 69-77 in Figure 2-11).



Figure 2-10. Polyphonic texture in mm. 38-41

⁴⁶ Walker, 39.

⁴⁷ Siepmann, *Chopin: The Reluctant Romantic*, 110.

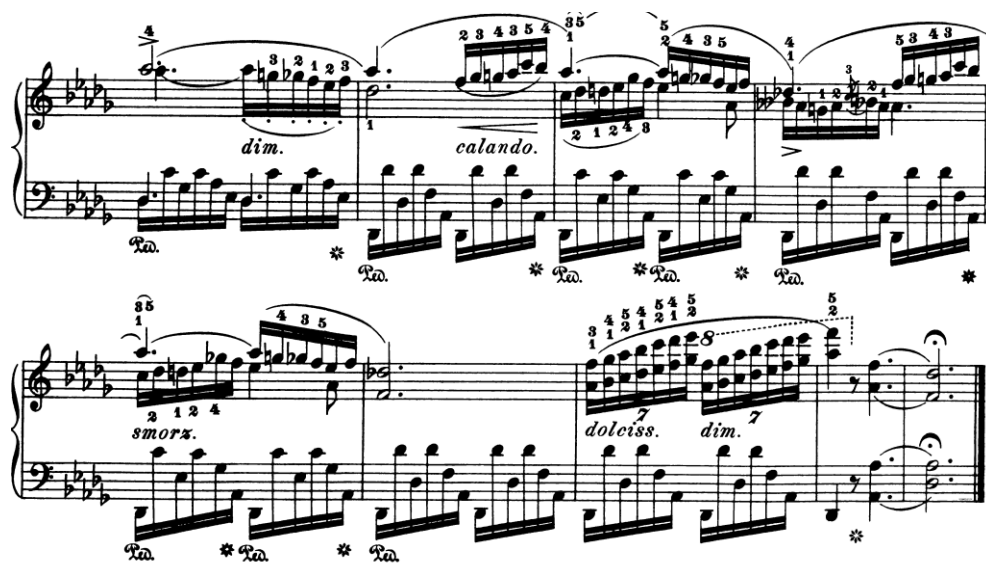


Figure 2-11. Polyphonic texture in mm. 69-77

Although Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 is a type of passionate music, the character of it feels restrained, somewhat controlled. That balance of expression is indebted to Mozart. Chopin regarded Mozart as a master of form, elegance, and harmony, and he was dedicated to develop these characteristics in his compositions. One of the most prominent Mozartian features is the use of *appoggiatura* that produces an effect of suspension by stressing the note that precedes the principal note by semitone or whole tone. In Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 probably the best example of this harmonic and melodic effect can be found in the melody at the beginning of the piece, in m. 5, where the composer decided to place pitch A which functions as a leading tone instead of going straight to the pitch B flat (Figure 2-1). Another good example of *appoggiatura* can be found in m. 18 (Figure 2-12) and m. 20 (Figure 2-13):



Figure 2-12. *Appoggiatura* in m. 18

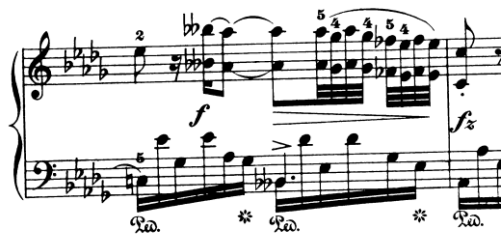


Figure 2-13. *Appoggiatura* in m. 20

Formal Structure

Chopin's approach to formal design of *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 is peculiar, because it does not strictly fit into any specific category. But this idiosyncrasy does not result from his inability to compose; on the contrary, it derives from his genius. The form he crafted follows the music contents, and serves a higher purpose of expression. Thus, it is not an ordinary design, but a work of art. Chopin was familiar with all the forms that existed in his time, and he perfected them very quickly. In his works he applied such forms, or their variants, as rondo, variations, ternary (reprise form), *sonata-allegro*, or binary form. Most of the *nocturnes* are modified types of ternary form.⁴⁸ But as some variants are easy to dissect and label (for example, *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 1 has the form of ABA with added Coda at the end), *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 seems to be a puzzling, yet intriguing example (Table 2-1):

⁴⁸ Tomaszewski, 20.

Table 2-1. The structure of *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2⁴⁹

SECTION	BARS
A	2-9
B	10-25
A	26-33
B	34-45
A	46-53
B	54-61
Coda	62-77

We can differentiate two main themes, or two different sections that are A (Figure 2-1) and B (Figure 2-2). Theme A is always repeated in the same key signature (D flat Major; in viola transcription-G Major), and is the most stable material, a type of stronghold to which theme B returns after modulations of key and figurations of its melodic line. Thus, theme B exhibits features that are typical of variations form, while theme A behaves like a refrain section in rondo form. But in rondo, the *episodes*-sections between refrains differ completely from one another, and here the material stays similar.

There are probably two best ways to denote this unusual structure. First, it is called an ““anchor-condensation”” form, where theme A becomes “a constant point of reference,” and theme B goes through the process of “gradual condensation.”⁵⁰ This form can be found in some works by Franz Schubert (1797-1828), particularly in his piano sonatas and songs.⁵¹ Second option displays a diametrically different approach, as it introduces a poetical concept of strophes. Just like in any poem, a strophe is a distinct unit that consists of a few lines; the same approach

⁴⁹ Alfred Redgrave Cripps, “Chopin as a Master of Form,” *The Musical Times* 55, no. 858 (Aug. 1914): 519. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/910651> (retrieved Jan. 20, 2014).

⁵⁰ Tomaszewski, 20.

⁵¹ Ibid.

can be applied into *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2.⁵² This idea created by Theodor Kullak (1818-1882) does not classify it as a specific form, but rather as a group of eight strophes⁵³, where the first (aka theme A), second (aka theme B), and eight (aka Coda) are of great importance.⁵⁴

Although we can argue which formal structure mentioned above is more appropriate, we should keep in mind the words of Alfred Redgrave Cripps:

We must not hope to find in Chopin examples of what theorists are pleased to regard as 'form' in the abstract, -or if we do we shall be disappointed. Theoretical writers are fond of dividing form into different categories, -the 'Sonata form,' 'Rondo form,' the 'Dance form,' and the like. For Chopin-as a composer-such divisions simply did not exist. Indeed, if we would do justice to him we shall do best to start by forgetting that there is such a thing as form, in the abstract, at all. Only then shall we be in a position to view the matter from Chopin's own standpoint; and only then, therefore, can we realize what he aimed at, and how perfectly he achieved his aim.⁵⁵

In Search of Meaning

Considering the facts from Chopin's life in 1835 and the distinctive qualities of the genres that possibly influenced him at that time, it gives an opportunity to speculate on a plausible meaning of *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2. Chopin, a reticent person,⁵⁶ found the genre of

⁵² Strophe can have a reference not only to a poem, but to the ode of ancient Greek drama as well; the ode consisted of three different parts: strophe, antistrophe, and epode. If we substitute strophe for theme A, antistrophe for theme B, and coda for epode, we end up with very interesting result. But in Greek ode the parts were not repeated-they were sung throughout. Thus, the argument that the formal design could have a reference to the ode is wrongful.

⁵³ Kullak considers bars 14-25 as a distinct section (strophe), and thus eight strophes, instead of seven.

⁵⁴ Frédéric Chopin, *Nocturnes*, ed. by Theodore Kullak (New York: G. Schirmer, 1881), 28.

⁵⁵ Cripps, "Chopin as a Master of Form," 517.

⁵⁶ Zamoyski, *Chopin: A Biography*, 11; Fisk, 202.

nocturne extremely suitable to express his personal feelings. “As with the *mazurkas*, one feels that in them [*nocturnes*] he was less concerned with pianistic considerations, and more with his most intimate thoughts and feelings.”⁵⁷ There are two distinguishing qualities of *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2: the occurrence of duets and the presence of longing feeling.⁵⁸ I propose there are at least two ways in which these attributes can be interpreted.

One of them could be Chopin’s personal tribute to opera *bel-canto* composer-Vincenzo Bellini,⁵⁹ whom he knew very well, and was fascinated with his music. It seems to reason that even more, when we take into account two later facts from Chopin’s life: at Chopin’s death bed, the composer asked one of his friends-singers to sing Bellini’s aria “Ah! Non Credea Mirarti” from *La Sonnambula*, and Chopin’s grave at Parisian Père Lachaise happens to be right next to Bellini’s.⁶⁰

The other interpretation can be described as a spontaneous expression of Chopin’s emotions he felt around that time-perhaps loneliness, homesickness, or yearning for special someone or something. It could be a person or intimate relationship he lacked. James Huneker calls it “a song of the sweet summer of two souls, for there is obvious meaning in the duality of voices,”⁶¹ a statement that clearly suggests significance of duet texture in *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2. But if this *Nocturne* is regarded as a tale of lovers, is it an account of fable, imagined love

⁵⁷ Walker, 170.

⁵⁸ Lederer, 57-59; Fisk, 193.

⁵⁹ Lederer, 57.

⁶⁰ Siepmann, 90.

⁶¹ James Huneker, *Chopin: The Man and His Music* (New York, N.Y.: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 260.

relationship, or a true record of it? The constant interplay of two voices throughout the piece implies a struggle; it “explores a problematic relationship between two ‘others,’ one of them unattainable or elusive.”⁶²

By the end of 1837, Chopin went through two disappointing love experiences. The first one comes from the period of 1829-30, when he was infatuated with Polish singer Konstancja Gładkowska (1810-1889), but unfortunately they never were in a close relationship; and second, when he loved Maria Wodzińska, the period of 1835-1837. Chopin truly had feelings for Maria, and she reciprocated them. She was the only woman Chopin proposed to during his entire lifetime. But, unfortunately, because of the reasons I described earlier in Chapter 1, the relationship fell apart. In both instances Chopin experienced unfulfilled love. Could it then be, that *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 is a somewhat reverie of one of these relationships? There is some strong evidence that Chopin wrote this particular *Nocturne* around June, 1835 that is the time still before he met Maria (they met in September 1835),⁶³ but it is not clear if he had this piece finished at that time, as he sent the manuscript to the publisher in Leipzig in December, 1835.⁶⁴ But even if the piece was not composed under direct inspiration from Maria, there is a record of interesting event that may suggest that Chopin favored *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 a lot, and it had some special meaning for him. At the beginning of October in 1835, that is right after the visit with Maria and her family, Chopin met with Schumann, Wieck, and Mendelssohn. On October 4

⁶² Fisk, 203.

⁶³ Chopin sent a letter to Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig on June, 1835, in which he suggests to put *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 together with No. 1 in tandem.

⁶⁴ Tomaszewski, 20.

Chopin played for Mendelssohn some of his *Etudes*, Op. 25, *Concerto* No. 1, and *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2.⁶⁵ It was the only *nocturne* he played.

⁶⁵ Tad Szulc, *Chopin in Paris: the Life and Times of the Romantic Composer* (New York: Scribner, c1998), 124.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PROCESS OF TRANSCRIPTION

Transcription, Arrangement, or Adaptation?

Before I proceed to describing and discussing the steps that I took to create a viola version of Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2, I would like to clear the confusion among many musicians related to peculiar meaning of three above mentioned terms. They are often used and applied interchangeably, because they actually refer to a similar process, but slight differences occur between them, thus creating a need to define the terms properly. "A transcription is essentially the adaptation of a composition for an instrument or instruments other than those for which it was originally written,"⁶⁶ while conveying meticulously the content of a work. By contrast, an arrangement is characteristic of freer approach to the original work, thus allowing "the reworking of a musical composition."⁶⁷ Lastly, an adaptation is a general term for transcription as well as arrangement.

Although my adaptation of Chopin's Piano *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 features a few modifications of the original score, I still consider it a transcription, because the substance and character of the work are preserved, and they adhere closely to the original part (no significant alterations of the score were made, except for the *fioritura* in mm. 51-52).

⁶⁶ Donald James Erb, "Instrumentation" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/289418/instrumentation/64593/Non-Western-instrumentation> (retrieved March 24, 2014).

⁶⁷ Malcolm Boyd, "Arrangement" in *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01332> (retrieved March 24, 2014).

According to Alexandre Cellier, there are three types of transcription or arrangements:⁶⁸

1. Reduction – it refers to an adaptation of a large-scale work for one, or a small group of instruments;
2. Amplification – in contrast to reduction, it is an adaptation that involves a larger group of instruments from the original part;
3. Transcription – an adaptation intended for one, or very similar group of instruments.

Although all these types may exemplify artistic approach towards adaptation, some of them are, more or less, made for merely pedagogical purposes.

Aesthetics and Ethics

Two important questions of aesthetics and ethics are raised, when it comes to the process of transcription: Is the transcription suitable for the viola? And, is it appropriate to make any changes to the original work? It is not the process itself that brings about a negative opinion about the transcription, but the quality of it. For centuries many composers of great stature were the arrangers themselves, like Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, or Johannes Brahms. Hence the concept is not a novelty, nor an undesirable procedure. The point is to produce an adaptation that conveys accurately the spirit of a transcribed work. In order to do this, it is essential to be sensitive to the substance and style of the work, and the properties of a newly designated instrument. Chopin was probably one of the most pianistic composers that ever lived: his compositions are idiomatically written for the piano. Being aware of that fact was personally a discouraging factor at first, but after deep exploration of the lyrical qualities of *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2, I came to conclusion that the viola version not only maintains the expressive character

⁶⁸ Alexandre Cellier and Fred Rothwell, “Is Transcription Permissible,” *The Musical Times* 66, no. 992 (Oct. 1925): 900. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/913419> (retrieved Jan. 20, 2014).

of the piece, but actually enhances it greatly as well. I propose that perhaps only then, the composition may exhibit the quality of the work as it was intended initially for the particular instrument. The viola fulfills this assumption through its *timbre*, a capability to play ceaseless *legato*, and applying *vibrato*. Thanks to these unique properties of the instrument, the produced tone is deeper and darker, and sustained *legato* playing of melodic lines creates intensity that is impossible to reach on piano. As Victor Lederer reminds us:

Nowhere is Chopin's obsession with vocally styled legato-tying notes together seamlessly-more apparent than in the long-spun, passionate melodies of the nocturnes. Unlike the voice (and string and wind instruments as well), the piano is an elaborate percussion mechanism incapable of true legato. A good pianist's legato is an illusion, brought about by his or her skilled deployment of fingers, hand, and wrist, and artifice in the use of the piano's sustain pedal.⁶⁹

But with the viola's ability to express a wider spectrum of tone colors and dramatic, more like operatic style of playing, the transcription of the *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 comes with the price: some alterations of the original score are necessary in order to accommodate the different aspects of the piano on viola. But in spite of these changes the ethics of the viola transcription is justifiable, as it possesses the tools to penetrate and express the musical potential of the piece.

Steps

The very first step I took was to find a reliable source of the music score. There are many editions available of Chopin's *nocturnes*, and it was quite difficult to make a right choice. After browsing and comparing many of them, I decided on four editions to consult, but only one of them to base my transcription on: I chose the piano version of Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2

⁶⁹ Lederer, 54.

edited by Carl Mikuli (1819-1897), and published by Gustav Schirmer in 1894.⁷⁰ Although the edition is old, and accessible through the public domain, I still asked the Schirmer Company for an official permission to use it. Mikuli was one of Chopin's best students, becoming later his teaching assistant, who twenty years after the composer's death produced one of the first complete and most respected Chopin editions.⁷¹ The second source I consulted was the Facsimile Edition, an official copy of the manuscript prepared and published by The Fryderyk Chopin Institute in Warsaw in 2007.⁷² I found it essential in my research to analyze Chopin's original autograph in order to check the music content and the expressive markings indicated by the composer. The other two sources,⁷³ the violin transcriptions made by Pablo Sarasate (1844-1908) and August Wilhelmj (1845-1908), were more of auxiliary help: as the violin's style and technique is very similar to viola, I found it useful and helpful to find out how they treated some issues related to the stringed instrument transcription.

The next step in the process was to choose the best tonality. Chopin wrote his *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 in D Flat Major, the key with five flats, but in the viola version I decided to transpose the original key to G Major. This diametrically different choice of the key is not

⁷⁰ The piano score is enclosed in Appendix B.

⁷¹ Jerzy Morawski, "Mikuli, Karol" in *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/18652> (retrieved March 24, 2014).

⁷² The official website of The Fryderyk Chopin Institute is www.nifc.pl.

⁷³ There are two most known violin transcriptions of Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2: first, Sarasate's edition published by Durand in Paris in 1876; second, Wilhelmj's edition from 1872-73, published by Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig. Apparently there is one more decent edition by Karol Lipiński (1790-1861), a Polish virtuoso violinist, but I was not able to get a hold of it.

arbitrary, but results from a logical and practical reasoning. There were three factors that influenced my decision:

1. Register: writing the viola version in the original key would cause tremendous difficulty in executing many passages, and create serious tone color issues, as the big part of the music would be placed in very high *tessitura*. It is not enough to merely transcribe the music note for note, and have technical ability to play it. The art of transcription relies on considering the properties of the instrument, and its idiomatic style of playing.
2. Acoustics: transposing the piano version to viola would result in the key of G Flat Major, because of moving the music a perfect fifth down. Because of the acoustical properties of the viola, I decided to move the key up by a semitone. The resulting key of G Major gives an opportunity for the violist to project the sound better by producing more resonance thanks to using more “open strings and natural harmonics.”⁷⁴
3. Practicality: it is simpler to read the music in G Major, the key with only one sharp, than in G Flat Major, the key with six flats; particularly, when we consider extensive chromaticism in many sections of the piece.

Thus, the key of G Major seems to be most appropriate for the viola version, including the piano part. It is important to point out to one more fact that is the balance between viola and piano parts. When the process of transposition takes place, we have four possible options:⁷⁵

- 1) Moving both viola and piano parts a tri-tone down;

⁷⁴ Hsiaopei Lee, *The History of Viola Transcriptions and a Comprehensive Analysis of the Transcription for the Viola and Piano of Beethoven's Violin Sonata Op. 30, No. 1* (2005), 32. Electronic Theses or Dissertations. <https://etd.ohiolink.edu> (retrieved Feb. 3, 2014); Johann Sebastian Bach, “Five Suites for Viola,” *Great Performance Edition*, ed. William Primrose (Milwaukee, Wisc.: G. Schirmer Inc., 1978), 3-4.

⁷⁵ Lee, *The History of Viola Transcriptions and a Comprehensive Analysis of the Transcription for the Viola and Piano of Beethoven's Violin Sonata Op. 30, No. 1* (2005), 62.

- 2) Moving both parts a tri-tone up;
- 3) Moving the viola part a tri-tone down, and the piano part a tri-tone up;
- 4) Moving the viola part a tri-tone up, and the piano part a tri-tone down.

The option I chose is the very first one, because there is no distinct disparity in the register of two instruments. The piano part had to be moved down together with the viola part; otherwise, it would have created a balance issue: ‘dark’ viola part verse ‘bright’ piano part.

After all the steps mentioned above, I proceeded with the process of writing the music. While I was doing it, I played through a section or a specific bar in order to make sure the music fits the viola’s range and register, and check the overall playability. The most important changes that had to be made were:

- 1) Octave displacement – in mm. 17-18, 21-22, 52, 62-70, and 75-76, the music was moved an octave down, because of the possibility of placing the pitches in too high *tessitura*. Thanks to this procedure the tone color became even more expressive, and the execution of passages became simpler.
- 2) Modification of *fioritura* and a small portion of the *cadenza* – in mm. 51-52 and m. 60, respectively, the revision of the passages of notes was necessary, as the number of the pitches was exceedingly high, and/or the pianistic treatment of it would make the performance almost impossible. For example, in m. 52, originally there are forty eight pitches written out in a figurative manner, while in viola version there are thirty five, and the entire passage made up of scale and progressions moves downward from the highest note at the beginning of the bar.

The other small alterations made in the piece include writing out some of the embellishments (for example, mm. 7, 8, 34, or 36) and transfiguration of rhythmic figures (for example, mm. 12, 16, 32, 60, or 75).

The last steps I took were notation of the articulation, dynamic, tempo markings, suggestive fingering as well as bowing, and revision of the piano part, where originally one stave is now written out into two staves (with the base note of every six-note figure in the lower stave, and the rest of the five notes in the upper).

CHAPTER FOUR: PERFORMANCE ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

Although the viola transcription of Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 is a work of short length, only 77 bars, it explores the player's technique and musicality to a high extent making it a part of repertory reserved for mature players. Hence, the work contains some difficulties that may cause a serious struggle if not approached in a correct manner. Below I present some chosen issues and suggestions that hopefully will be of great help for many players.

Double Stops

The double stops are of problematic nature in this piece, because their role is not for a merely harmonic effect, where only a few are applied, but for harmonizing entire melodic lines. This style of writing gives way to a large number of various double stops in a row, which can cause problems with intonation and excessive tension of left hand. It is essential to remember about keeping the thumb 'free,' and not to exert much pressure from the fingers on the strings.⁷⁶ When these two remarks are applied together, the problem of tension should not appear, and the intonation should be easier to control. Concluding, the flexibility and dexterity of the left hand fingers is possible only when the hand is free of stiffness. I strongly recommend a few exercises in this matter:

- 1) Play a chosen section with double stops in a slow tempo, holding down two fingers on the strings, but playing only one of them with the bow;

⁷⁶ Ivan Galamian, *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), 27.

- 2) Play the double stops with two pitches sounding together, but now pay attention to putting the fingers on the strings together. The change of the double stops has to be well connected, and produce an effect of *legato*;
- 3) After mastering the above-mentioned exercises, the following suggestion refers to the balance of two pitches. It is a common tendency among many players to emphasize dynamically one of the notes of the double stop. Play the double stop as one harmonic unit, where two voices are equally important by exerting the same amount of bow pressure on both strings;
- 4) Play a chosen passage in a faster tempo, while keeping in mind two previous suggestions. If executed successfully, increase the tempo till the designated tempo marking is reached;
- 5) Play the harmonic line as you would play a single melody. Very often when a player is troubled by a technical issue that is hard to overcome, he/she forgets about the shape of the melodic line.

Rhythm

The other challenge for a player can be the complexity of rhythm that prevails in the entire piece. In time signature of 6/8 Chopin explores a multitude of rhythmic values (for example, mm. 8, 12, 13, 32, or 38), groups of duple and triple (for example mm. 8, 11, 32, or 36), and sometimes creates compound combinations of five, six, or seven notes (mm. 51, 53, 60, or 75). One of the most prominent examples of a rhythmic variety can be found in m. 52 (Fig. 2-4), which originally consists of 48 notes, but in the viola transcription the passage is written out mostly into regular groups of mostly sixty fourth notes. Thanks to this procedure, a violist can control the fast run of notes better.

But no matter how intricate the passage or group is, a player should always bear in mind that the accompaniment is comprised of a dotted quarter note placed in left hand at the beginning of each of two beats in bar, and continuously played sixteenth notes in right hand that sometimes may give an impression of a metronome. Thus, careful listening to the piano part will certainly support and enhance the aspects of rhythmical playing.

***Fioritura* Passage**

The *fioritura* section made up of only two bars (mm. 51-52) exhibits improvisatory-like, almost virtuosic character, as the fast scale based on C Major runs upward to very high pitch F on A string, and then precipitates even faster in the form of related progressions, and arpeggios. In addition to practicing F major and G major scales, the following suggestions may be of great help:

- 1) Divide m. 52 into two segments equally, and practice them separately in a slow tempo;
- 2) Choose the fingering that fits you best. Doing so, remember about the final speed of the passage, as some fingerings may work for slow playing, but fail to give a good result in fast tempo;
- 3) Be able to execute each segment with only one bow stroke;
- 4) Connect two segments, and practice the entire passage in different tempos.

Tenths

Tenths are probably the most difficult intervals to play on the viola, because of the distance on the fingerboard between two notes. They occur in mm. 66-68, and although they are not notated as a double stop, the eight notes with preceding grace notes make it still hard to play

it in tune. When it comes to playing tenths, there are two recommended ways to execute them properly:

- 1) According to Ivan Galamian, “it is best to place the [left] hand in an intermediate position between the first and fourth fingers so that the hand can utilize its stretch in both directions, fourth finger upward and first finger downward, with no undue strain placed on either;”⁷⁷
- 2) The other way is to find the upper note first, and rotate left hand clock-wise. That way the first finger gains more space and flexibility to shift downward very quickly in order to reach the lower note.

In any case a player should approach the tenths with caution, as they stretch the muscles of left hand to high degree. Slow, careful, and intermittent practice sessions are recommended.

Expressive Markings

Chopin paid a strong attention to the tone quality, and character of his music.⁷⁸ His deep care about the nuances of music is exemplified in *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2, where an array of verbal expressive markings is specifically indicated.⁷⁹ They range from very simple signs such as *forte*, *piano*, *crescendo*, *diminuendo*, *espressivo*, *ritenuto*, to more sophisticated markings that may be unknown to many players:

- *con anima* – with spirit, slightly faster, moving forward;
- *dolce* – sweetly, tenderly; it implies a slightly softer dynamic as well;

⁷⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁸ Zamoyski, 103; Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by his Pupils*. Edited by Roy Howat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 56-57.

⁷⁹ Tomaszewski, 21.

- *dolcissimo* – very sweet;
- *smorzando* – fading away; gradually playing softer and slowing down;
- *calando* – literary meaning ‘slackening’ in Italian;
- *appassionato* – with passion, strong feeling;
- *con forza* – with energy; it does not imply aggressive force;
- *fz* – an abbreviation for *forzato* or *forzando*, denotes a strong accent on a note (synonymous to *sforzando*); in Chopin’s music *fz* is treated as an extra emphasis on a note that results in a louder volume: it does not indicate an aggressive accent;⁸⁰
- *leggierissimo* – in a very light and graceful manner;
- *con fuoco* – in a fiery, wild manner;⁸¹

⁸⁰ Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by his Pupils*, 56.

⁸¹ Mikuli substituted *con forza* for *con fuoco* in his edition of Chopin’s *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CONTRIBUTION

During the Romantic period, piano, violin, and opera voice enjoyed a prominent position on the concert stage throughout the Europe, while viola was put aside, and regarded as an instrument of second category. Such wrongful treatment of the viola led to a small amount of the repertory-the phenomenon that has its repercussions in the lack of diversity in viola literature. There was possibly a combination of factors that created such negative attitude toward the instrument. The size properties played a big role, as the large body of the instrument, very often oversized and constructed with short neck, prevented a player from flexibility and dexterity of playing.⁸² That ergonomic aspect had a tremendous impact on the quality and character of the music composed for the viola. Moreover, because of its size the instrument was (and still is) acoustically imperfect, and thus produced the sounds that were not of strong resonance.⁸³ The above-mentioned aspects contributed to players who were not capable of exploring greatly the instrument's sonorities and technique, and, in turn, that caused the composers to avoid viola as a medium for their works. William Primrose very bluntly summarizes this development of events:

Composers, I fancy, did not care to write for an instrument that was so badly served by those who played it. And players did not wish to be associated with one, at once doleful in sound and lacking in repertoire. The violins, on the other hand, and the violinists coruscated in a magnitude of brilliance and sweetness, whilst the violists dwelt in the somber shadows.⁸⁴

⁸² Henry Barrett, *The Viola: Complete Guide for Teachers and Students*, 2nd ed. (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 2.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Yehudi Menuhin and William Primrose, *Violin and Viola* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1976), 173.

The resulting dearth of Romantic viola repertory⁸⁵ is in part presented in Table 5-1:

Table 5-1. The list of chosen works for viola from Romantic period

Original work	Transcription	Composer	Year of composition
<i>Harold in Italy</i> , Op. 16		Hector Berlioz	1834
	<i>Notturmo</i> in D Major, Op. 42	Ludwig van Beethoven	1803
	<i>Adagio and Allegro</i>	Robert Schumann	1849
<i>Märchenbilder</i> , Op. 113		Robert Schumann	1851
	<i>Arpeggione</i> Sonata	Franz Schubert	1824
	<i>Ave Maria</i>	Franz Schubert	1825
	<i>Litany for All Saints Day</i>	Franz Schubert	1816
<i>Sonatas</i> No. 1 and 2, Op. 120		Johannes Brahms	1894
	<i>Sonatensatz</i> in c minor	Johannes Brahms	1853
	<i>Sonata</i> in e minor, Op.38	Johannes Brahms	1865
	<i>Kol Nidrei</i> , Op. 47	Max Bruch	1881
	<i>La Campanella</i> , Op. 7	Niccolo Paganini	1826
<i>Sonata per la Grand Viola</i> , Op. 35		Niccolo Paganini	1834
	<i>24 Caprices</i> , Op. 1	Niccolo Paganini	1817
<i>Sonata</i> in c minor		Felix Mendelssohn	1824
	<i>Sonata</i> in A Major	César Franck	1886
	<i>Elegy</i> , Op. 24	Gabriel Fauré	1880
	<i>Après un rêve</i> , Op. 7	Gabriel Fauré	1878

⁸⁵ Ibid, 186.

Table 5-1: (cont.)

Original work	Transcription	Composer	Year of composition
<i>Elegy</i> , Op. 44		Alexander Glazunov	1893
<i>Sonata</i> in d minor		Mikhail Glinka	1828
	<i>Nocturne</i> in c sharp minor, Op. posth.	Fryderyk Chopin	1830
	<i>Nocturne</i> Op. 9, No. 2	Fryderyk Chopin	1831
	<i>Valse Sentimentale</i> , Op. 51	Piotr Tchaikovsky	1882
	<i>None but the Lonely Heart</i> , Op. 6	Piotr Tchaikovsky	1869
<i>Elegy</i> , Op. 30		Henri Vieuxtemps	1854(?)
<i>Capriccio</i> , Op. posth.		Henri Vieuxtemps	1883
<i>Sonata</i> in B flat Major, Op. 36		Henri Vieuxtemps	1863

The above-shown juxtaposition of most known works for viola clearly points out to one of the aspects of the importance of transcription-its role to provide and fill in the gap in literature.⁸⁶

William Primrose says that “transcriptions have been grist to the mill of instrumentalists and composers,”⁸⁷ thus strongly implying and justifying the need for the transcriptions. In turn, English viola pioneer Lionel Tertis (1876-1975) in his book *My Viola and I* encourages firmly that when “you become a viola-player one of your most important duties is to strive to enlarge

⁸⁶ The 20th century was a renaissance for the viola music as more composers began to appreciate unique sound and technical qualities of the instrument, and many great violists who made their solo careers transcribed a slew number of compositions for viola. The most known viola transcribers from that period were William Primrose, Lionel Tertis, Milton Katims (1909-2006), Paul Doktor (1917-1989), Paul Hindemith (1895-1963), Vadim Borissovsky (1900-1972), Alan H. Arnold, and Watson Forbes (1909-1997).

⁸⁷ David Dalton, *Playing the Viola: Conversations with William Primrose* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 184.

the library of solo viola music, by fair means or foul.⁸⁸ But, of course, it is not all about the quantity, as there are more originally composed viola works available from that period that are unknown to many players and the audience.⁸⁹ Hence, it is not the addition factor that counts most, but the quality aspect that the transcribed work possesses and provides with. I propose that my viola transcription of Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 is not merely an adaptation, but a work that truly conveys the beauty and expressive potential of the music, while exploring the viola's most idiomatic features. This combination of factors makes my transcription a significant contribution to, not only viola works from Romantic period, but entire viola literature as well.

Furthermore, my viola transcription of Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 is the only one that has ever been made. To my knowledge, no other viola adaptation of this particular composition exists in official or unofficial version. That factor increases the importance of my contribution even more, as it becomes the only available work of such kind.

But Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 has a potential to contribute in two more ways. The rich and interesting harmonies with beautiful long melodies can 'speak' to a larger number of listeners who take delight in the kind of lushly Romantic music. Often this factor is almost a necessity to increase the number of the audience members, as well as their interest in the performed music. Moreover, the short length of the piece makes it flexible in terms of placing it in the program, as it may serve either as a part of the program or simply become an encore.

Finally, in addition to all mentioned factors, *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 can be a pedagogical work as it links technical and musical qualities together. Many viola works show a tendency of stylistic extremes: they are either very slow and melodic, or fast and intricate technically.

⁸⁸ Lionel Tertis, *My Viola and I: A Complete Autobiography* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 161.

⁸⁹ Barrett, *The Viola: Complete Guide for Teachers and Students*, 2nd ed., 126-206.

Chopin's viola transcription connects both, making it a great piece for an advanced student to develop better his/her artistic skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Chopin's music, although composed almost 200 years ago, still finds its place on all concert stages around the world. His music abounds in heartfelt melodies and rich harmonies that affect the ears and hearts of many listeners, but his true genius is based on the ability to convey that sophisticated music in a simple manner. That communication aspect results from Chopin's not only elegant and clear treatment of the music and form, but the emotions it contains. His *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 presents to us a symphony of feelings encapsulated in a small genre that very often, and mistakenly, is considered a mood music to create a pleasant atmosphere. In my document I strived to find the true definition and genuine qualities of *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2, and a possible meaning behind it. Chopin was a very private person, and his music, in particular his short works like *mazurkas* and *nocturnes*, became the composer's medium to channel his personal feelings. After reading about his life events I came to some plausible significance his *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2 might carry, but no final conclusion was imposed.

The information included in the document about the characteristic features, possible meaning, and performance-related issues with suggestions, may serve as a guide for a viola player who undertakes to play the composition and attempts to achieve a high artistic level of performance.

I also believe that the viola transcription genuinely expresses the character and substance of the original composition, and that it will find its place in the repertory of many violists as a highly esteemed work. As the very first viola adaptation of Chopin's *Nocturne* Op. 27, No. 2, this Romantic composition is a unique addition to the viola literature.

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APPENDIX A: COMPLETE VIOLA TRANSCRIPTION

Nocturne op. 27 no. 2

for Viola and Piano

Fr. Chopin (1810-1849)
trans. by R. Zyskowski

Lento sostenuto ($\text{♩} = 50$)

dolce

espressivo

con forza

III. **Rit.** **a Tempo**

dolce

38

41

45

diminuendo

50

52

con forza

53

con anima

56

con fuoco *appassionato*

60

sf *p dolcissimo*

65

70

calando

73

smorzando

dolcissimo

Nocturne op. 27 no. 2

for Viola and Piano

Fr. Chopin (1810-1849)
trans. by R. Zyskowski

Lento sostenuto (♩ = 50)

dolce

Lento sostenuto (♩ = 50)

espressivo

5

8

11

14

16

19

23

III.

Rit.

Rit.

con forza

(=)

The image displays a musical score for piano, spanning measures 14 to 23. The score is written for a grand piano, with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes. Measure 14 begins with a treble staff entry marked with a 'V' and a triplet of eighth notes. The bass staff has a similar triplet. Measure 16 shows a treble staff entry with a triplet of eighth notes and a 'V' marking. The bass staff continues with a triplet. Measure 19 features a treble staff entry with a triplet of eighth notes and a 'V' marking. The bass staff continues with a triplet. Measure 23 is marked with 'III.' and 'Rit.' (Ritardando). The treble staff has a triplet of eighth notes and a 'V' marking. The bass staff continues with a triplet. The score concludes with a final measure marked with 'Rit.' and a triplet of eighth notes. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, beams, and slurs.

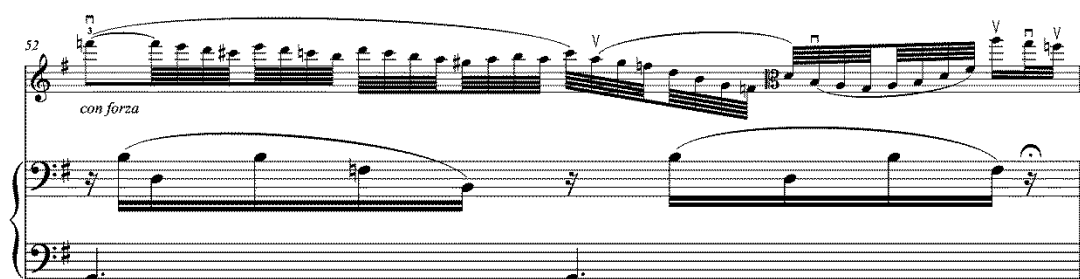
27 *a Tempo*

31

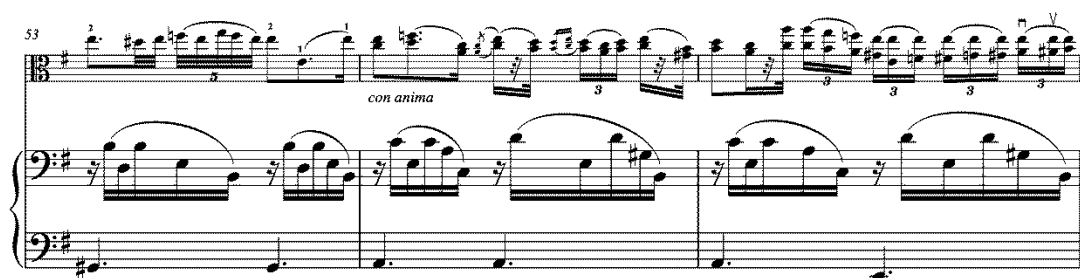
34 *dolce*

37

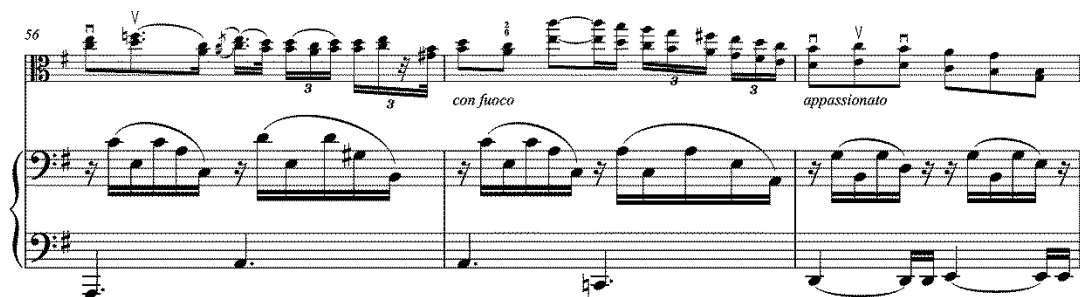
52 *con forza*



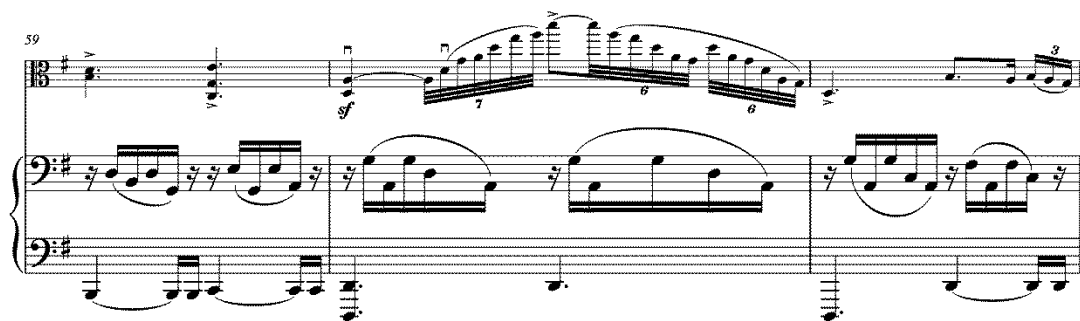
53 *con anima*



56 *con fuoco* *appassionato*



59



62 *p* *dolcissimo*

66

70 *calando*

73 *smorzando* *dolcissimo*

This musical score is for a piano piece, spanning measures 62 to 77. It is written in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo and dynamics are indicated by markings such as *p* (piano), *dolcissimo*, *calando* (ritardando), and *smorzando* (diminuendo). The score features a variety of musical notations, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and slurs. The piece concludes with a final cadence in measure 77.

APPENDIX B: ORIGINAL PIANO SCORE

37
À la Comtesse D'APPONY.
Nocturne.
F. CHOPIN. Op. 27, N^o 2.

Lento sostenuto. (♩ = 50.)

8. *p* *dolce.* *legato sempre.*

con forza.

cresc.

f

p

f

fz

pp

sempre legatissimo.

a tempo.

riten.

leggieriss.

39

dolce.

cresc.

f

f

f

f

The page contains five systems of musical notation, each consisting of a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat).

- System 1:** The treble staff begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bass staff has a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. A dynamic marking *fz* appears in the third measure. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the system.
- System 2:** The treble staff features a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bass staff continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. A dynamic marking *f* is present. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the system.
- System 3:** The treble staff has a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bass staff continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. A dynamic marking *con forza.* is present. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the system.
- System 4:** The treble staff has a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bass staff continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. A dynamic marking *con anima.* is present. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the system.
- System 5:** The treble staff has a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bass staff continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. A dynamic marking *fz con fuoco. cresc.* is present. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the system.

Throughout the piece, there are numerous fingering numbers (1-5) and slurs indicating phrasing. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

41

dolciss.

fz

p

dim.

calando.

smorz.

dolciss.

dim.

VITA

Rafal Zyskowski, a native of Poland, is a violist who came to the United States in 2004 to continue his education in music performance. He completed his Bachelor's degree at LSU in Baton Rouge, and later on graduated from Indiana University in Bloomington with Master's diploma. Currently he works on his doctorate at LSU under direction of Dr. Elias Goldstein. Apart from his university studies, Rafal holds a section position in Acadiana Symphony Orchestra in Lafayette, and serves as an acting player in Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra and a substitute teacher at Kid's Orchestra program.

Although his interest in solo, chamber music, and teaching is strong, he passionately loves orchestral music, and his dream is to one day play in a top-notch symphony orchestra.