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Nocturnes in Great Variety: Reconsidering the Nineteenth-Century Nocturnes Through Women

Composer-Pianists

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of
Musical Arts

by

Irina Bazik

2021

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Nocturnes in Great Variety: Reconsidering the Nineteenth-Century Nocturnes Through Women

Composer- Pianists

by

Irina Bazik

Doctor of Musical Arts

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Jocelyn Ho, Chair

The nineteenth-century Nocturne is widely understood as an intimate form of salon setting, with characteristic pianistic writing of right-hand melody and left-hand accompaniment. This view of the nocturne is informed by scholarship on the genre since the beginning of the twentieth century. Although numerous composers have written nocturnes, current understandings of the genre are based largely on research surrounding Frédéric Chopin and John Field. Similarly, recordings and live performances follow the same trend, rarely showcasing works outside of the canon of these two composers, thus leaving us with an important question: how may a study of nocturnes by other

composers—specifically women composers—inform our understanding of this genre that has been idealized as a “feminine” form (Kallberg)?

My research examines eight nocturnes composed by five women: Maria Szymanowska, Leopoldine Blahetka, Louise Farrenc, Clara Wieck, and Fanny Hensel. While these works hold clear connections to compositional techniques of Field and Chopin, I argue that the eight nocturnes disrupt current understandings of the genre. The analysis of these nocturnes offers a new perspective on this form: from Szymanowska’s intriguing *Nocturne “Le Murmure”* for three hands—the only such example in the genre, to Blahetka’s virtuosic *Nocturnes op. 46*, with innovative hybrid forms—the polonaise-nocturne and the concerto-nocturne.

The unusual textures, hybrid forms, and the virtuosic demands found in these works, suggest a much greater variety in nocturne compositional style during the nineteenth century. Further, they give insight to the compositional styles and approaches of female composers and pianists in the face of gendered criticism and expectations. These nocturnes by female composers defy the ideal of the “feminine” with which nocturnes are often associated, an ideal that purports that women’s music is more intimate than public-facing concerti and symphonies, fit for private salon consumption exclusively. These nocturnes not only expand the genre, but also challenge the “intimate” style of playing with which nocturne is often associated.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter Nora Alexandra Hurwitz, whose love, innocence, curiosity, and passion are forever my greatest inspiration. Ljubavice moja, when I started this research you were a little peanut in my belly and even though it was sometimes challenging to find balance between doing work and trying to be the best mama for you, I wouldn't change it for the world! Thank you for being the most amazing daughter, for making me laugh like I never thought was possible, for all the cuddles and kisses and for inspiring me every day. This one is for you, and may it encourage you to find your passion in life and to always do whatever makes you happy, regardless of the obstacles. Mama loves you so much!

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Vita

2017-2020	Teaching Assistant UCLA, Piano Los Angeles, CA
2017-2020	Fellowship Recipient UCLA, Gluck Fellows Music Outreach Program Los Angeles, CA
2017-2020	Scholarship Recipient UCLA, Herb Alpert School of Music Los Angeles, CA
2019-2020	Teaching Associate UCLA, Piano Los Angeles, CA
2018	All-Star Soloist UCLA Philharmonia Los Angeles, CA
2006-2008	Graduate Performance Diploma Boston Conservatory of Music Boston, MA
2006-2008	Scholarship Recipient Boston Conservatory of Music Boston, MA
2003-2005	Master of Music Belgrade Music Academy Belgrade, Serbia

1999-2003
Bachelor of Music
Belgrade Music Academy
Belgrade, Serbia

1996-2005
Scholarship Recipient
Belgrade Ministry of Culture
Belgrade, Serbia

Selected awards:

2005
Winner of the “Emil Hajek” Award
Belgrade Music Academy
Belgrade, Serbia

2004
Winner of the “Olga Mihajlović” Award
Belgrade Music Academy
Belgrade, Serbia

2000
Special First Prize
International Competition “Petar Konjovic”
Belgrade, Serbia

1998
Second Prize
International Competition “Nikolai Rubinstein”
Paris, France

1997
Special First Prize
International Competition “Petar Konjović”
Belgrade, Serbia

1995
First Prize
International Competition “Città di Stresa”
First Prize

INTRODUCTION

Although Nocturne as a solo-piano form emerged over two centuries ago, our perception of it has not evolved much over time. Throughout the twentieth century, performers and scholars have largely limited themselves to nocturnes composed by Frederic Chopin and John Field. And while both of them had greatly influenced the development and popularity of this form, they certainly were not the only composers of this genre during the nineteenth century, thus leaving us with an important question: If we only research and play works by the same well-known composers, how can we truly understand the development of a particular form, and the performance practice of the time?

My thesis examines eight nocturnes: two by Maria Szymanowska, three by Leopoldine Blahetka, and one each by Fanny Hensel, Louise Farrenc, and Clara Wieck. The goal is to research how these women approached the nocturne, with a particular focus on the innovative techniques they introduced. All of them were renowned composer-pianists during the first half of the nineteenth century, yet their contribution to this genre has been overlooked in both performance and scholarly circles. The analysis of their nocturnes offers a new perspective on this form: from Szymanowska's intriguing *Nocturne* for three hands (the only such example in the genre), to Blahetka's virtuosic

Nocturnes op. 46, in which she merges different forms with the nocturne to create hybrid forms—the polonaise-nocturne and the concerto-nocturne.

This dissertation is divided into four chapters: Chapter one explores the emergence of the nocturne as a solo-piano form, with the focus on how this genre and our understanding thereof has evolved over time; Chapter two examines the current scholarship on nineteenth-century female composers, and, in doing so, clarifies how my dissertation is situated in the intersection of these existing fields of scholarship; Chapter three explores particular moments from the composers' lives that shed light on their nocturnes; and lastly, in chapter four I offer a detailed analysis of the formal structure and the harmonic language of the eight nocturnes. While the works hold clear connections to compositional techniques of Field and Chopin, I argue that each of the eight nocturnes is uniquely innovative, and, as such critically important for current understandings of the form.

CHAPTER ONE

Nocturne in the Nineteenth Century: History and Current Scholarship

Nocturne as a solo piano form appeared in the early nineteenth century, its invention often affiliated to the Irish composer John Field (1782-1837). However, the term ‘Nocturne’ has a more complex history and can be found in the music of the eighteenth century.¹ As Samson describes, both the ‘nocturne style’ and the genre title ‘nocturne’ were already present at the time Field published his first three piano nocturnes in 1812. However, it is in the 1820s that “style and genre came together in a significant and moderately consistent way, especially in piano nocturnes by composers associated with Field in some way.”² The main features of the ‘style’ Samson refers to are singing melody in the right hand, with the broken-chord accompaniment in the left-hand. Here are few examples of early nocturnes by Field, Chopin, and Szymanowska:



Figure 1.1. J. Field, *Nocturne No. 1*, mm. 1-3.

¹ Some examples include Haydn's *Notturmi* of 1790 (Hob. II/25-32) for two lire organizzate, two clarinets, two horns, two violas, and bass; Mozart's *Notturmo* in D, K286, for four lightly echoing separated ensembles of paired horns with strings, and his *Serenata Notturna*, K. 239. Prior to Field's nocturnes for solo piano, the name 'Nocturne' can be found in chamber music works, as a title for a piece that was to be performed in the evening.

² Jim Samson, *Chopin* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 99-100.

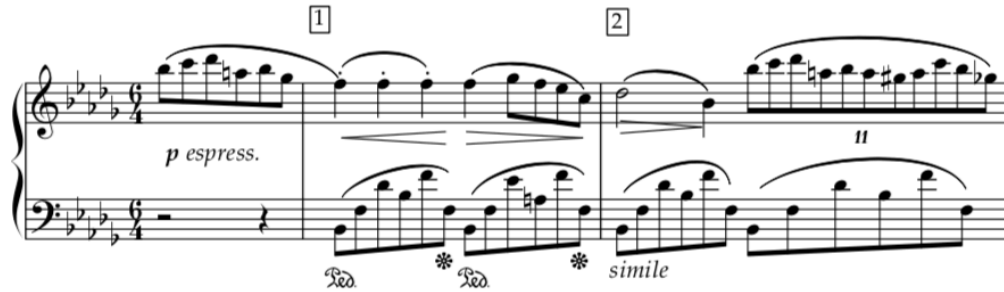


Figure 1.2. F. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 9 No. 1*, mm. 1-2.



Figure 1.3. M. Szymanowska, *Nocturne in B Flat Major*, mm.1-2.

As seen in figs. 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3, this broken-chord accompaniment style is employed by all three composers. The development of the sustain pedal greatly contributed to the nocturne style, as it made it possible to achieve a widespread accompaniment of a vocally inspired melody. As Samson states, it is these two characteristics that we recognize today as the “archetype of the style”.³

Field left a legacy of sixteen nocturnes, published between 1812-1836, which established him as the inventor of this new solo-piano form. As Rowland suggests: “Field’s role as the inventor of the genre has been largely unquestioned, and it has been assumed that Chopin simply inherited a

³ Samson, *Chopin*, 100.

well-established formula”.⁴ This assumption influenced the majority of scholarship on solo-piano nocturnes, particularly during the twentieth century. It is also affirmed historically by Franz Liszt who celebrated Field as the pioneer of the nocturne. In his essay from 1859 (first published as a preface for Liszt’s edition of Field’s six nocturnes), Liszt writes:

“Field was the first to introduce a style in no way derived from the established categories, and in which feeling and melody, freed from the trammels of coercive form, reign supreme. He opened the way for all the productions which have since appeared under the various titles of Songs Without Words, Impromptus, Ballades, etc., and to him we may trace the origin of pieces designed to portray subjective and profound emotion.”⁵

In this particularly illuminating quote, Liszt emphasizes the influence of nocturnes on the development of other nineteenth-century forms. This further implies that studying the nocturne as a form can enrich our understanding of other solo-piano works. This form has been used by numerous composers, and while there are several authors whose research surpasses the Field-Chopin connection, so far very few have examined nocturnes composed by female composers.

Current scholarship on nocturnes often examines particularly interesting, or genre-breaking characteristics of a specific piece. For example, the unexpected ending of Chopin’s *Nocturne in B Major Op. 32* has been explored by several authors, all agreeing that this piece challenged the

⁴ David Rowland, “The Nocturne: Development of a New Style,” in *Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 32.

⁵ Franz Liszt, in an edition of six of Field’s Nocturnes revised by Liszt, J. Schubart & Co., Leipzig, 1859. Translated by Theodore Baker and quoted in *Field Eighteen Nocturnes for the Piano*, G. Schirmer, New York & London, 1902.

conventional form of nocturne.⁶ Klein argues that “the final recitative contradicts not only the narrative progress of the music to that point but also the conventions of nocturnes”.⁷ Similarly, Parakilas gives particular significance to Chopin’s use of octaves, seldom found in nocturne writing, describing their effect as “making listeners question the identity, especially the generic identity, of what they are hearing”.⁸ Indeed, both Szymanowska and Blahetka extensively used octaves in their nocturnes, in some cases preceding Chopin’s Nocturne Op. 32.

In his article “The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin’s Nocturne in G Minor”, Kallberg discusses the concept of genre in nineteenth century music, stating that “composers often combined genres within a single work, as type of generic interaction that has a great tendency to promote change”.⁹ These types of hybrid forms were created with a specific purpose to expand the traditional form. This is relevant, as it indicates the importance of studying these unique hybrid nocturnes in order to understand how this genre evolved over time. As each of the eight nocturnes in my research employ two (or more) different genres, it is necessary to include them in the current discussion on this topic. As Kallberg further observes “often these hybrids are announced in the titles of the works: Sonata quasi una fantasia, Polonaise-Fantasy, Ode-Symphonie”.¹⁰ Interestingly, even composers who would give such titles to their pieces refrained from doing so with their nocturnes. While Chopin’s *Nocturne in G Minor* shares many features with a mazurka, there is no mention

⁶ James Parakilas, “Disrupting the genre: Personifications in Chopin”, *19-th Century Music* 35, no. 3 Chopin’s Subjects (Spring, 2012): 165-181, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ncm.2012.35.3.165> , Michael Klein, “Ironic Narrative, Ironic Reading”, *Journal of Musicological Research* 53, no.1 (Spring, 2009): 95-136, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40606879> , Charles Rosen. *The Romantic Generation*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 82.

⁷ Klein, “Ironic Narrative”, 135, 153.

⁸ Parakilas, “Disrupting the genre”, 172.

⁹ Jeffrey Kallberg, “The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin’s Nocturne in G Minor”, *19-the Century Music* 11, no. 3 (Spring, 1988): 245, <https://doi.org/10.2307/746322>.

¹⁰ Kallberg, “The Rhetoric of Genre”, 245.

of the mazurka in the title. Kallberg suggests that in doing this, Chopin used this piece to send a hidden message of support to Polish Romantic nationalists. In the concluding arguments Kallberg says that:

“Chopin expanded the range of expression of the genre with the composition of the Nocturne in G minor. [...] But its marginal generic status was to serve an important purpose for Chopin: the articulation of his kinship with the Polish Romantic nationalists. This was a goal very much in keeping with the intellectual and emotional leanings of a young man freshly separated from his homeland”.¹¹

If Kallberg’s assumptions are correct, then perhaps it was not uncommon for composers to express hidden messages in their nocturnes by deviating from the traditional form. It would certainly explain Blahetka’s choice to incorporate some fragments of *Chopin’s Polonaise Op. 26 No. 1* in her *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1*, as she clearly composed this piece as an homage to Chopin.

While aforementioned authors agree on the need for more extensive research on this genre, so far only a few scholars focused on composers of that are outside of the canon. Most notably, Kallberg’s article “*The Harmony of the Tea Table: Gender and Ideology in the Piano Nocturne*” brings to light nocturnes by Clara Wieck and Fanny Hensel. Besides emphasizing the importance of these works, Kallberg examines the connection between women and nocturnes in the nineteenth century. Drawing on descriptions of nocturnes from articles and critiques of the time, Kallberg recognizes the challenge in defining this genre. On one hand nocturnes were often described with

¹¹ Ibid, 257.

attributes such as ‘gentle’, ‘quiet’, or ‘sentimental’, leading to them being categorized as feminine.¹² To attest to that, Kallberg quotes Frederick Niecks, the author of the first extensive biography on Chopin in 1888:

“Among Chopin’s nocturnes some of his most popular works are to be found. Nay, the most widely prevailing idea of his character as a man and musician seems to have been derived from them. But the idea thus formed is an erroneous one; these dulcet, effeminate compositions illustrate only one side of the master’s character, and by no means the best or more interesting.”

13

However, Kallberg recognizes the opposite response, equally present in the nineteenth-century, which drew parallels between a nocturne and a love song, thus categorizing it as a piece that a man would sing to his beloved.¹⁴ These opposing views of the genre, as Kallberg himself notes, were all shaped by male critiques, which leads to an important question: how did female pianists/composers of the time respond to this? While Kallberg recognizes the importance of studying nocturnes by female composers, Clara Wieck and Fanny Hensel were certainly not the only women contributing to this genre. The five women composer-pianists’ nocturnes give us a window into their responses and attitudes towards ideologies of femininity throughout a ‘feminine’ form.

¹² In the article Kallberg offers a historical overview of the way in which music critiques connected certain attributes with femininity.

¹³ Jeffrey Kallberg, “The Harmony of the Tea Table: Gender and Ideology in the Piano Nocturne”, *Representations* 39 (Summer, 1992): 111, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928597>.

¹⁴ Kallberg, “The Harmony of the Tea Table”, 113-14.

While there is no scholarship on nocturnes by Blahetka and Farrenc, several authors (Maria Iwanejko, George Golos, Anne Swartz, Slawomir Dobrzanski) have examined other works by Szymanowska, often suggesting parallels between her and Chopin. However, these studies mostly focus on Szymanowska's etudes, mazurkas, and preludes, with only few mentions of her two nocturnes. There is a surprising lack of research on her nocturne for three hands "*Le Murmure*", the only such example in the genre.

The aforementioned musicologists have contributed significantly to recognizing Szymanowska as an important nineteenth-century musical figure. In his article "*Some Slavic Predecessors of Chopin*", Golos describes Szymanowska as "the most important personality in this group", implying that she influenced Chopin the most.¹⁵ Although there is no concrete evidence of Szymanowska's influence on Chopin (or vice versa), there are many instances of striking similarities between their pieces. These moments can also be found in their nocturnes and will be described in detail in chapter four.

In her article "*Thus Far, but No Farther: Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's Unfinished Journey*", Sarah Rotenberg stresses the importance of expanding our research outside of the canon, saying that:

¹⁵ George S. Golos, "Some Slavic Predecessors of Chopin", *The Musical Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (October 1960): 443, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/740748>.

“It is often through the music of ‘new’ figures that one begins to understand better the expressive language of the era, to hear freshly the daring and originality of that which risks predictability in our age of ritualistic repetition of the familiar.”¹⁶

While there are other composers from the era whose nocturnes have been forgotten (Carl Czerny is particularly interesting, as he composed seventeen of them), this research focuses solely on renown women who composed nocturnes. The reasons for this are manifold: women’s response to this genre is uniquely positioned given the genre itself was considered ‘feminine’, the lack of research on women composer-pianists, and the unique forms and techniques they introduced in their nocturnes. Although the lack of scholarship regarding female composers of nocturnes in the nineteenth century often presented a challenge during my research, at the same time it offered great encouragement, as I realized the necessity for introducing these nocturnes into the current scholarship. As Kallberg concludes: “To investigate women and the piano nocturne in the nineteenth century is to uncover stories of devaluation, marginalization, and sometimes outright exclusion-but also to discover intimations of individual voices questioning the patriarchal tradition.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Sarah, Rothenberg, “Thus Far, but No Farther: Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel’s Unfinished Journey”, *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 704, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/742353>.

¹⁷ Kallberg, “The Harmony of the Tea Table”, 126.

CHAPTER TWO

Nineteenth-Century Female Composers: Reception and Current Research

The past few decades have brought a growing interest in scholarship surrounding female composers/performers. Leading musicologists in the field have greatly contributed to rediscovery of composers such as Clara Wieck, Fanny Hensel, Louise Farrenc, and Maria Szymanowska.¹⁸ Bea Friedland's numerous articles on Farrenc, as well as the substantial biography published in 1980, helped restore Farrenc to musicology. Friedland also oversaw the release of a facsimile edition of Farrenc's anthology *Trésor des Pianistes*.¹⁹

With their extensive research on female performers-composers, Katharine Ellis and Freia Hoffmann illuminated the important role these women had in music history. Combined efforts of Marcia Citron, Suzanne Cusick, and Sarah Rothenberg greatly contributed to restoring Fanny Hensel as an important nineteenth century composer. However, despite the aforementioned authors, there is still a lack of gendered genre-specific study. Below I will outline Ellis' viewpoint on women as interpreters (but not creators); the historical gendering of repertoires; consequent erasure of such gendering in the early twentieth century; leading to a discussion of feminist music theory that counters such erasure.

¹⁸ The leading musicologists researching this topic are Katharine Ellis, Suzanne G. Cusick, Susan McClary, Marcia Citron, Freia Hoffmann, and Bea Friedland.

¹⁹ Vivien Schweitzer on Louise Farrenc, <https://www.exploreclassicalmusic.com/louise-farrenc/>.

Ellis argues that the early 1830s marked the beginning of crucial years in the history of women's pianism in France.²⁰ Hoffmann writes about the same trend in Germany, while Bullock suggests that female composers had an important role in the development of modern Russian musical culture".²¹ ²² Why don't we, then, analyze or perform more works by female composers? If the five women in this research were all successful performers and published composers during their lifetimes, what led to their exclusion from the canon? Perhaps Ellis offers one of the answers in saying that:

"Female Pianists in Paris made their reputations as interpreters of -or vessels for- the creative products of men. As such they reinforced a gender stereotype that called for women to renounce an individual authorial voice."²³

To attest to that, most reviews of these women as professional musicians praise their interpretation of male composer's works much more disproportionately than their own compositions. The quotes below demonstrate such praise of performance that ignore their prowess as creative composers in their own right:

²⁰ Katherine Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics", *Journal of American Musicological Society* 50, no. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 1997): 355, <https://doi.org/10.2307/831838>.

²¹ Jane Bowers, review of *Instrument und Körper: Die musizierende Frau in der bürgerlichen Kultur*, by Freia Hoffmann, *19th Century Music* 17, no. 3 (Spring, 1994): 285-293, <https://doi.org/10.2307/746571>.

²² Philip Ross Bullock, "Chapter 6," in *Women in Nineteenth Century Russia: Lives and Culture*, ed. Wendy Rosslyn, and Alessandra Tosi (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 135-36.

²³ Ellis, "Female Pianists," 359.

"In her interpretation of a Nocturne by Field she showed the highest talent. The interpretation can be best described as pure spirit and pure expression; a voice from unearthly magical lands..."²⁴

"She performed the difficult Concerto by Hummel with strength and delicacy, velocity, precision and solidity, which astonished everybody and-if he were only present-would also surely impress the Master himself."²⁵

"...her singable presentation of melodies, the correct expression at all times, and clear execution of the important"²⁶

As these reviews show, it was common practice for successful female performers to play repertoire mostly composed by men, which could explain the lack of review on these women's works. In her article "*Clara Schumann's Recitals, 1832-50*", Pamela Susskind Pettler examines Wieck's concert repertoire throughout the years. While Wieck sometimes included her own works, her repertoire predominately consisted of works by her male contemporaries: Beethoven, Chopin, Hummel, Moscheles, Mendelssohn and Schumann.²⁷ Arguably, some of these women, such as Blahetka, may have had found it necessary to perform Beethoven's music in order to be taken seriously as

²⁴ *Weimer Literary Newspaper* review of Szymanowska's performance in 1823. Teofil Syga, and Stanislaw Szenic. *Maria Szymanowska i jej czasy*. (Warszawa: PIW, 1960.), 263.

²⁵ Review of Szymanowska's performance in 1823. *Journal für Literatur, Kunst, Luxus und Mode*. November 1823/ No. 109

²⁶ Review of Blahetka's performance of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2 in 1820. "*Wiener AmZ*". 1820, Col. 230.

²⁷ Pamela Pettler Susskind, "Clara Schumann's Recitals, 1832-50," *19th Century Music* 4, no. 1 (Summer, 1980): 70-76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3519814>.

pianists. Several authors (Ellis, Citron, Kallberg) write about the issues of gendering of repertoires in the nineteenth century, particularly regarding smaller forms. They all agree in the fact that small-form pieces such as nocturnes, waltzes, romances, etc. were perceived to be more suitable for women in contrast to the masculinized forms of sonata and symphony.²⁸ As Kallberg suggests:

“Given the prevailing attitude of the time, in which affiliation with women usually led to a lesser ranking in the aesthetic hierarchy, it would have been odd if the nocturne had escaped unscathed.”²⁹

Further, amongst Chopin’s twenty nocturnes, only three of them were dedicated to a man, perhaps implying that women were the ‘target audience’ of these works. All this considered, it is ironic that nocturnes composed by women composers have been largely sidelined in nocturne studies.

Kallberg offers an insight into the overlooking of women composers. He argues that Chopin’s nocturnes have been stripped of its original gendered aesthetic, therefore ‘erasing’ the potential connection these pieces had with women. He states that:

“A shift in thinking about the genre—at least as it related to Chopin—can be detected early in the twentieth century in diverse sources, including pianists and analysts. Artur Schnabel frequently gave himself credit for steering interpretations of Chopin away from the ‘salon style’—itself an encoded reference to ‘women’s music’—of the late nineteenth century. [...] Theorists did not state

²⁸ Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 130-32. Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre*. (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 40-45.

²⁹ Kallberg, “The Harmony of the Tea Table,” 110.

their positions quite so badly, but the very fact that the likes of Heinrich Schenker and Hugo Leichtentritt devoted serious analytical attention to the nocturnes of Chopin served to ‘validate’ the genre by negating its gendered past. Analysis like Schenker’s that sought to lay bare the background structure of musical work glossed over the same sense of detail that helped link the nocturne with the feminine in the first place.”³⁰

Kallberg here asserts that ‘traditional’ analytical methods (such as Schenkerian) potentially overlooks important factors that influenced the creation of the piece or its purpose. Considering that for the most part of the twentieth century (and even in today’s time), Schenkerian analysis was taught in almost every music school in the world, it is only natural that it impacted the way in which we approach music analysis. Prevost and Francis explain:

“While male composers generally study with other men and have a long history on which to draw, women artists do not typically have this lineage. The problem is intensified by the canon of works studied in undergraduate analysis classes and analyzed in peer-reviewed music theoretical literature. Women composers are usually excluded and, as a result, their works are often perceived as being of inferior quality and not worthy of discussion. Although there are exceptions—for instance Clara Schumann—the role traditionally assigned to women composers has been that of the mediocre artist who writes for pleasure.”³¹

³⁰ Ibid, 112-13.

³¹ Roxane Prevost, and Kimberly Francis. “Teaching Silence in the Twenty-First Century: Where are the Missing Women Composers?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Censorship*, ed. Patricia Hall (Oxford Handbook Online, Nov., 2017): 2.

Besides the educational system, the major contributors in shaping the canonic repertoire are performers (as Kallberg suggested with Rubinstein). If we look at the recordings and concert programs from the leading pianists of the twentieth century (Rubinstein, Horowitz, Richter, Brendel, Cortot, Cliburn, etc.), none of them performed works by female composers.

These factors in the fields of analysis and performance contributed to our lack of knowledge and appreciation for female composers and performers of the past. More recently, feminist theorists have led an interrogation of this masculinized analytical framework by combining music theory with gender studies. This approach to music analysis offers a more socially contextualized lens through which to explore the purpose or structure of a piece. An interesting example of such approach is Suzanne Cusick's analysis of Fanny Hensel's *Trio in D minor, Op. 11*. In her article "*Feminist Theory, Music Theory, And the Mind/Body Problem*", Cusick examines the physical aspect of playing each individual part in relation to the role of the female composer at the time. Cusick suspect that:

“Hensel wrote so much of this story into the relationship among physically enacted parts (as oppose[d] to writing it into the relationship among notes and themes) because she understood the tension surrounding her role as a woman composer to as much metaphorical as it was real: it was metaphorical because the role of the composer is implicitly always gendered masculine.”³²

There are several instances in my analysis of the eight nocturnes that allow for similar speculation. For example: the unusually virtuosic sections or prolonged *fortissimo* dynamics in case of

³² Suzanne G. Cusick, “Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind and Body Problem,” *Perspectives on New Music* 32, no. 1 (Winter, 1994): 15-16, <https://doi.org/10.2307/833149>.

Blahetka, or the prolonged use of octaves in case of Szymanowska. Could all these be moments of resistance in response to the critics and audiences of the time?

The analyses in chapter four reveals that our understanding of this genre is incomplete: from countering the nocturnes as an intimate form in the case of Blahetka; innovation in textural writing in the case of Szymanowska and Blahetka; to introducing hybrid forms in case of Blahetka, Farrenc, and Wieck. They also consolidate Wieck and Hensel as exemplary composers of the nocturne, with their mastery in prolongation, ornamentation, and harmony. Lastly, the lives of these five composers encompass most of the nineteenth century: from Szymanowska, active in the first couple of decades, to Wieck who died at the end of the century in 1896. Exploring their lives and works, and in this case their nocturnes, provides not only an alternate to the patriarchal history of the nineteenth century but also enriches current understandings of the evolution of the nocturne.

Extensive research by authors mentioned in this chapter significantly contributed in reevaluating the impact of female composers and performers. However, there is still a lack of genre-specific research, particularly regarding forms that were either considered feminine (such as the nocturne), or that were mostly performed by women. By exposing specific moments from their professional lives, as well as presenting a thorough analyses of their nocturnes, the next two chapters examine how these five composers responded to the ‘feminine’ label assigned to the nocturne form.

CHAPTER 3

Life and Contemporaneous Reception of the Five Composers

This chapter explores the lives of the five composers, with particular emphases on their professional life. As all of them were renown pianists in the nineteenth century, the reviews of their performances presented in this chapter, reveal the climate in which they created as performers and composers. While I present some general biographical facts for each composer, the emphasis is on the specific moments form their lives which are relevant to their nocturnes.

Maria Szymanowska

(1789-1831)



Figure 3.1. Maria Szymanowska, lithograph by Antoni Borel after drawing by Jozef Oleszkiewicz, early nineteenth century.

Maria Agata Wolowska (later known as Maria Szymanowska) was born in Warsaw on December 14th, 1789. Her parents, Barabara and Franciszek, provided Szymanowska with excellent education with emphasis on French and Russian language, and piano. However, despite her piano studies, Szymanowska's music education, particularly regarding composition, remains somewhat a mystery. Dobrzanski argues that:

“The fact she never received formal instruction in harmony and counterpoint or writing in classical-era forms opened the door for her own imagination. By following her instincts, Szymanowska concentrated on writing piano miniatures just at a time when such forms were becoming extremely popular, and, as an accomplished virtuoso, she clearly knew how to compose music that was fashionable in her day.”³³

As Szymanowska was later celebrated as a pianist with an incredible *cantabile* touch, some suggested she studied with John Field. This belief was further fueled by the fact that Szymanowska's compositional style was similar to Field's, in particular her two nocturnes. Also, according to her daughter Helena, during their residence in Moscow, Field was a regular guest at Szymanowska's house, and they frequently performed four-hand piano music.³⁴ However, a Moscow News review published in the spring of 1822 states that:

³³ Slawomir Dobrzański, *Maria Szymanowska: Pianist and Composer* (Figuroa Press, 2006.), 146.

³⁴ Syga and Szenic, *Maria Szymanowska*, 375.

“The piano method of Madame Szymanowska is the same as Mr. Field’s method, although the artist says she never knew the famous virtuoso, never studied his method, and further assures us that she never had good piano teachers.”³⁵

Whether Szymanowska officially studied with Field remains unknown, as there is no firm evidence of her formal music education. Several prominent Polish composers and performers often visited Szymanowska’s family and it is safe to assume they offered some sort of guidance to young Maria. Amongst these artists were composers Franciszek Lesser (a former student of Haydn) and Józef Elsner who soon became Chopin’s teacher. The latter is especially important, as it provides a direct link between Szymanowska and Chopin.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, several scholars have studied the connection between the two composers, with particular emphases on Szymanowska’s *Twenty Exercises and Preludes*, or *Twenty- Five Mazurkas*, as she published those works much before Chopin. There are also instances in Szymanowska’s *Nocturne in B Flat Major* that imply a potential influence on Chopin’s nocturnes. Nonetheless, as Dobrzanski suggests:

“even if one would question the degree of influence on her younger colleague, Szymanowska’s music serves as an important element in understanding Chopin’s compositional origins.”³⁶

³⁵ Igor Belza, *Istoria Polskoy Muzykalnoy Kultury*, trans. S. Dobrzanski (Moscow: State Music Publishing Co., 1954), 16.

³⁶ Dobrzański, *Maria Szymanowska*, 146.

Soon after her performance debut in 1815, Szymanowska established herself as one of the leading professional pianists of the time. She gave concert tours across Europe multiple times between 1818 and 1827, receiving great praise for her talent. After a performance in Leipzig on October 12th, 1823, Szymanowska wrote to her parents that “the connoisseurs here say that I don’t just play, but that I actually recite music like poems”.³⁷ This successful performance led to a second concert on October 20th, for which the Weimer Literary Newspaper gave a passionate review:

“Madame Szymanowska is not interested in simple tricks which seem to be so popular now-days. Her highest art is based on tasteful expression...Her technical velocity and fantasy-filled expressiveness are combined so well that for the attentive listener...they seem to convey the enormous richness in feelings expressed by a living soul...In her interpretation of a Nocturne by Field she showed the highest talent. The interpretation can be best described as pure spirit and pure expression; a voice from unearthly magical lands...”³⁸

This review is significant as it praises Szymanowska’s interpretation of Field’s *Nocturne*, which suggests that she was familiar with these works. It is then safe to assume that this experience in some way affected her own nocturnes, particularly considering the fact that she published her first nocturne *Le Murmure* the following year (1824).

Admired not only by music critics but also her contemporaries Szymanowska often performed works by other composers, particularly aforementioned John Field, as well as Johann Nepomuk Hummel. Several reviews of her interpretation of Hummel’s *Piano Concerto No.2 in A Minor* are

³⁷ Maria Iwanejko, *Maria Szymanowska* (Kraków: PWM, 1959), 41.

³⁸ Syga and Szenic, *Maria Szymanowska*, 263.

a true testament of Szymanowska's great pianism. Szenic quotes an elaborate review of her performance at the Weimer Town Hall in 1823, published in the *Journal für Literatur, Kunst, Luxus und Mode*:³⁹

“She performed the difficult Concerto by Hummel with strength and delicacy, velocity, precision and solidity, which astonished everybody and-if he were only present-would also surely impress the Master himself...since his residence in St. Petersburg he has been a great friend of the artist... She gains insight into the spirit of a musical composition with a subtle female delicacy of feeling...In principle, she follows the composer's indication in the score, but at the same time, thanks to her own genius, she creates work of music...The depth of her spirit and the strength of her creative fantasy enrich her music with a variety of colors and nuances, from the strongest *forte* to the most charming and the lightest tones, often imitating an Aeolian harp; she has so much control over her sound as if she was a painter with his color palette. The naturalness of her playing...makes an impression that she does not just play the piano, she plays together with the piano...which lets us forget about the mechanical elements that are obviously always involved in piano playing...She feels so free on stage, creating an impression that she enjoys the concert as much as does the audience...”⁴⁰

This review is significant not only for its testimony on Szymanowska's playing, but also for opening up an important discussion on how female performers were portrayed at the time. The turn of phrase “*subtle female delicacy of feeling*” sheds light on the gendering of performance: that the norms of delicacy and gentleness are reaffirmed in a woman's performance. An even more

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Syga and Szenic, *Maria Szymanowska*, 273.

illuminating example is a critique in *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats-und Gelehrten Sachen* in regards Szymanowska's Berlin recital:

“...The Concerto by Hummel, which Madame von Szymanowska played at the beginning of the concert, requires a performer as full of strength as the composer himself; it happens often to ladies that courageous fingers do not play the right tones and sometimes, especially in the bass, instead of notes we hear playing on the wood (even on the wonderful Kisting piano).”⁴¹

The author here reveals a historically sexist, common attitude that certain repertoire was not meant to be played by women. By calling Szymanowska's fingers “courageous”, he implies that it is brave of her to attempt performing a piece that is ‘meant’ to be played by men. Further, adding to this pool of gender-based criticism, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, after hearing Szymanowska in Weimer in 1825 wrote to his mother:

“Szymanowska is so highly regarded here that they rank her above Hummel these days. I was amazed and kept quiet like a mouse. It seems to me that they have confused her pretty face with her not-so-pretty-playing.”⁴²

Mendelssohn's comment here clearly implies that Szymanowska's physical attributes helped her career; an attitude that is familiar and worn. Perhaps, as Anne Swartz suggests, Mendelssohn's sexist criticism comes as a product of jealousy since both him and Szymanowska were “rival

⁴¹ Ibid, 287.

⁴² Rudolf Elvers ed., *Felix Mendelssohn, a Life in Letters* (New York: Fromm, 1986), 29.

performers in Berlin”.⁴³ A student of Hummel, Mendelssohn highly respected his teacher and did not like frequent suggestions that Szymanowska was “the female Hummel”.⁴⁴ Hummel on the other hand, after hearing Szymanowska for the first time in 1822 allegedly said: “from now on, I will only be composing, and she will be playing.”⁴⁵

Nonetheless, Szymanowska’s performance career continued to blossom, taking her onto stages such as prestigious Philharmonic Society in London (May 10th, 1824), Hanover Square Rooms (June 19th, 1824) or the Louvre in Paris (1825).⁴⁶ Parallel to her concert career, around 1825, Szymanowska became an active piano teacher giving lectures on piano playing and technique. She was also one of the first people to introduce Warsaw with the English mechanism piano, bringing it back home from London after her tour ended in 1826.⁴⁷ Several months later, in January of 1827, Szymanowska performed two concerts in Warsaw.⁴⁸ It is quite possible that young Chopin attended one of these concerts as he wrote a letter to Jan Białobłocki dated January 8th, 1827 saying that:

“Mrs. Szymanowska gives a concert this week. It is to be on Friday, and the prices have been raised; they say the parterre is to be half a ducat, the stalls a ducat, and so on. I shall be there for sure, and will tell you about her reception and playing”.⁴⁹

⁴³ Anne Swartz, “Goethe and Szymanowska: The Years 1823-1824 in Marienbad and Weimar,” *Germano-Slavica* 4, no. 6 (1984), 323.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 323

⁴⁵ Iwanejko, *Maria Szymanowska*, 53.

⁴⁶ Syga and Szenic, *Maria Szymanowska*, 299. Iwanejko, *Maria Szymanowska*, 43. Dobrzański, *Maria Szymanowska*, 37.

⁴⁷ Dobrzański, *Maria Szymanowska*, 37-38.

⁴⁸ Iwanejko, *Maria Szymanowska*, 45.

⁴⁹ Ethel Voynich, ed., *Chopin’s Letters*. Collected by Henryk Opiński, (Dover Publications, 1988), 34.

As there is no other correspondence in which Chopin reflects on this performance, it remains a mystery whether he attended the event. In his extensive biography on Chopin (*Fryderyk Chopin: Life and Times*), Alan Walker suggests that Szymanowska potentially played an important role in Chopin's early career. During the time when Chopin seriously considered becoming a student of Kalkbrenner, Ludowika, Chopin's sister, heard that "the celebrated Polish pianist Maria Szymanowska had called Kalkbrenner 'a scoundrel' and that his real aim was to cramp Chopin's genius."⁵⁰ This quote further confirms the status ("*the celebrated Polish pianist*") Szymanowska had at the time. It is also yet another testament that Chopin was aware of her, making it safe to assume that he was familiar with her works as well.

Szymanowska spent her final years (1828-1831) in St. Petersburg where her private salon became a center for renown artists of the time. According to Belza, Szymanowska's last documented performance happened in March of 1830 at the Countess Dierzhavina's salon. Amongst other pieces, a choir performed an arrangement of her *Nocturne in A Flat Major 'Le Murmure'*.⁵¹ Szymanowska died of a cholera epidemic in 1831, leaving behind three kids, Romuald, Helena and Celina.

⁵⁰ Alan Walker, *Fryderyk Chopin: A Life and Times*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 221.

⁵¹ Walker, *Fryderyk Chopin*, 133.

Louise Farrenc

(1804-1875)



Figure 3.2. Louise Farrenc, Anonymous artist- Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1855.

Unlike Szymanowska, Louise Farrenc was born into a family with a long lineage of artists. Born Jeanne-Louise Dumont in Paris, 1804, she manifested her musical talent at a very young age and was the first one in her family to pursue career in music.⁵² Farrenc was six years old when she started lessons in music theory and piano. In her teenage years she studied with Hummel and Moscheles, but it was Antonin Reicha who influenced Farrenc to take her studies in composition and orchestration much more seriously. Farrenc studied with Reicha from 1818-1836, with a

⁵² Farrenc comes from a long line of famous sculptors whose works can still be seen around Paris today. Bea Friedland, *Louise Farrenc (1804-1875): Composer, Performer, Scholar* (UMI Research Press, 1980), 3-7.

couple of interruptions due to her marriage to Artiside Farrenc (1821) and birth of their daughter Victorine (1826).⁵³

Towards the end of her studies with Reicha, Farrenc composed one of her most substantial works for solo piano *Air Russe Varié Op. 17*. Schumann described his first encounter with this piece in the review published in the *Neue Zeitschrift* in 1836:

“Were a young composer to submit to me variations such as these by L. Farrenc, I would praise him highly for the auspicious talent and the fine training everywhere reflected in them. I soon learned the identity of the author—rather authoress—the wife of the renowned music publisher in Paris, and I am distressed because it is hardly likely that she will ever hear these encouraging lines. Small, neat, succinct studies they are, written perhaps still under the eye of the master, but so sure in outline, so logical in development—in a word, so finished—that one must fall under their charm...especially since a subtle aroma of romanticism hovers over them. As is well known, themes which lend themselves to imitation are most suited for variation, and so the composeress utilizes this for all kinds of delightful canonic games. She even manages to carry off a fugue—with inversions, diminutions, and augmentation—and all this she manages with ease and songfulness. Only in the finale would I have wished the calm bearing I had been led to expect after what came before.”⁵⁴

Schumann’s esteemed review is elucidating for several reasons: first, it gives credence to Farrenc’s talent as a composer; second, we are again reminded of the reality in which composer’s gender has to be hidden in order for their piece to be taken seriously; and lastly, it reveals the priorities of Schumann for compositional mastery—skill in counterpoint and “ease and songfulness”. These

⁵³ Bea Friedland, “Louise Farrenc (1804-1875): Composer, Performer, Scholar,” *The Musical Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (1974): 262. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/741636>

⁵⁴ *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig, 1875), I, 224-25.

particular attributes indeed characterize Farrenc's nocturne, further suggesting this piece is worthy of scholarly attention.

In 1821, Farrenc's husband Aristide founded a publishing house that successfully functioned for twenty years. Based in Paris, it quickly expanded to other printing capitals such as London, Bonn, Weimar, and Leipzig.⁵⁵ Several years later, in 1825, Aristide acquired the French rights to all forthcoming works by Hummel, a major milestone for the company, which further strengthened the relationship with the renowned composer. It was the Farrenc' who organized a farewell concert in Paris (March of 1830), where Hummel announced his retirement from the recital stage.⁵⁶ At this event, Louise Farrenc performed Hummel's *Rondeau*, for which Fétis gave a review in *La Revue Musicale*:

“... (Mme. Farrenc) has resisted the frivolous taste which has made of this instrument simply a machine where finger dexterity alone matters...(instead) she has followed the path set by Hummel, Moscheles, Kalkbrenner...”⁵⁷

Besides being a testimony of Farrenc's playing, this review celebrates her as someone who promoted 'good taste' in performance practice, following the footsteps of the great pianists of the time.

⁵⁵ Friedland, "Louise Farrenc" 262.

⁵⁶ Friedland, *Louise Farrenc*, 13.

⁵⁷ *La Revue Musicale*, (July 24, 1830), 376.

Farrenc's piano opus is incredibly rich; thirty-two out of her fifty-one numbered works are written for piano solo. Most of these were composed in 1830s, and the majority are larger works such as variations sets and four books of etudes.⁵⁸ This is interesting as other female composers (including the ones in this study) mostly composed smaller, salon type pieces for solo piano, such as waltzes, mazurkas, nocturnes, etc. Farrenc was an exception in this regard, earning her a reputation of being a 'serious' composer. Perhaps this why her nocturne has been forgotten, as these larger works held more scholarly interest.

Farrenc was actively performing and composing up until her daughter's premature death in 1859. In the years to follow, she dedicated herself mostly to teaching and studying early performance practice style. Besides her compositions, the greatest legacy Farrenc left behind is most definitely a multi volume anthology of music for keyboard, *Le Trésor des pianistes*. Farrenc died in Paris on September 15th, 1875.

⁵⁸ Friedland, *Louise Farrenc*, 99.

According to a biography written by her father, Joseph Leopold, Blahetka received her first musical education from her mother Barbara Sophia, an excellent glass harmonica player.⁶⁰ After relocating to Vienna, Blahetka took piano lessons from Joachim Hoffmann, Friedrich Kalkbrenner, and Ignaz Moscheles. There are some contradictory claims regarding one of Blahetka's teachers: in the Norton/Grove Dictionary of the Women Composers, Ledeen names Carl Czerny as one of them, which would be relevant as Carl Czerny composed seventeen nocturnes for piano⁶¹. However, this is discredited by multiple other sources that identify Joseph Czerny, rather than Carl, as her piano teacher.⁶² This is further confirmed in a letter by Blahetka's father, addressed to Beethoven's biographer Schindler, in which he emphasized the important role Beethoven played in selecting Joseph Czerny as Blahetka's teacher.⁶³ Beethoven himself worked with her, particularly focusing on improvisation. Her father reported of these exercises saying that "Beethoven indicated mere dots on the notation system, and, she had to construct figurations for both hands in various ways in all keys."⁶⁴ There are several letters from this period attesting to the friendship between Beethoven and Blahetka's father. Further, Blahetka was one of the torchbearers at Beethoven's funeral in 1827.

Blahetka started performing at a very young age. As an eight-year-old she was already well known in Viennese musical circles and soon after, she began performing in Germany, Holland, France,

⁶⁰ Freia Hoffmann, "Leopoldine Blahetka," <https://www.sophie-drinker-institut.de/blahetka-leopoldine>

⁶¹ Julie Anne Saide, and Samuel Rhian, ed., *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* (London: The Macmillan Press Limited, 1995), 65.

⁶² Carl Friedrich Weitzmann, *A History of Pianoforte-Playing and Pianoforte-Literature* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1897), 138.

⁶³ Hoffmann, "Leopoldine Blahetka," <https://www.sophie-drinker-institut.de/blahetka-leopoldine>

⁶⁴ Anna, Hubber Gertrud, *Ludwig van Beethoven. Seine Schüler und Interpreten. Von Ludvig van Beethoven* (Wien/Bad Bocklet/Zürich, Walter Krieg Verlag, 1953), 36.

and England.⁶⁵ She was only ten when *Wiener "Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung"* (Vienna General Musical Newspaper) gave a review emphasizing "wonderful skill at her age, the clarity with which she played the hardest passages, and, her tasteful presentation."⁶⁶ A year later, for her performance of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 2 in B Flat Major*, the same paper praised her "singable presentation of melodies, the correct expression at all times, and, clear execution of the important".⁶⁷ On yet another occasion, during her 1825-26 tour of Germany, Blahetka was described as a pianist with "most dignified and brilliant qualities of an extraordinary pianoforte player; an excellent pearled touch, a skill that leaves no difficulties undefeated, a soulful performance linked to the noblest taste".⁶⁸ These reviews celebrate Blahetka as a pianist of the highest caliber, with particular emphases on her "noblest taste" and "singable presentation of melodies". As these specific attributes are essential part of nocturnes, arguably Blahetka incorporated her highly praised pianistic skills into her own pieces.

Similar to Szymanowska, Blahetka often performed pieces by other composers, particularly Beethoven, which was quite unusual at the time. As a matter of fact, throughout the nineteenth century at the Paris Conservatory, women were never assigned to play Beethoven.⁶⁹ To attest to this tradition, here is a review by Maurice Bourges in "*Gazzete Musicale*" regarding a performance of Beethoven's *Fourth Piano Concerto*, played by Louise Mattmann⁷⁰:

⁶⁵ Weitzmann, *A History of Pianoforte-Playing*, 138.

⁶⁶ "*Wiener Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*," (1819.), 216.

⁶⁷ "*Wiener AmZ*," (1820.), Col. 230.

⁶⁸ "*Wiener AmZ*," (1825.), Col. 671 f.

⁶⁹ Ellis, "Female Pianists," 363.

⁷⁰ Louise Mattmann (1826-1861), a student of Kalkbrenner, particularly known for her performances of Mozart's and Beethoven's music.

“There are hardly any women capable of understanding and translating the works of the masters with such imagination, and particularly Beethoven’s Concerto, which is the equal of his finest symphonies.”⁷¹

Paradoxically, as Blahetka developed a reputation of a first-class pianist playing repertoire ‘reserved’ for men, she was criticized when her performance included works by ‘lesser’ valued composers. On one such occasion that featured her own set of variations, Blahetka received a following review by Adolf Bernhard Marx in the “*Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*”:

“One should not regard the reviewer as too solemn or hypochondric as he admits that the concert today brought him more concern than joy. Not so, because it was loosely tossed together, like so many others, or because of the bland Viennese superficialities, which one hardly wishes to tolerate in the Royal Theater, and allow in its Royal Room, when next to the busts of Sebastian Bach, Handel, Gluck, Mozart, Haydn are set Viennese duets, sung by Madame Seidler and Mr. Spitzeder; or because one goes so far away from what is right, that one no longer recognizes the real thing. As long as our concerts are left in the hands of the virtuosi, who don’t care about art as such, but only for their own interests, for so long things will not improve; and it is going to become aggravating, before this tendency descends into nothingness and then allows for a correction [...] We don’t wish to criticize her variations. She sets out to show her bravura and this is for such a young girl really of great value and merit; her double runs in both hands in their fluency, cleanness, and clarity could not be better. But nothing more than such fashionable stuff? [...] We hope to hear Miss Blahetka again. May it then happen to show that she possesses more than bravura, that she understands how to grasp an artwork in its ideas and set these forth. Then she will lift herself as a true artist above all of the poor finger heroes, and then we will be pleased

⁷¹ Ellis, “Female Pianists,” 364.

to report, not merely about her brilliance and delicate taste, but also to praise her interpretation more fully- which on the basis of these selected items is not possible.”⁷²

This review is interesting, as Marx views the virtuosic character of Blahetka’s variations as less artistically valuable. In his opinion, Blahetka was not fulfilling her potential as she was preoccupied more with ‘piano playing’ rather than the artistic substance. Ellis argues that the “emphasis on finger technique as a way of indicating emotional superficiality was a ploy reserved almost exclusively for reviews of women pianists”.⁷³ Putting Marx’s review in context with Blahetka’s nocturnes, Marx confirms the potential reason for which these pieces have been pushed aside: Blahetka’s nocturnes present technical demands more commonly seen in etudes or operatic transcriptions. The ramifications of such blatant virtuosity in the face of gendered criticism will be discussed in the next chapter.

Regardless of these gendered reviews, Blahetka continued to concertize around Europe, frequently including her own pieces. Her performance career was sadly interrupted in 1832 due to her father’s illness. After permanently relocating to Boulogne-Sur-Mer in France, Blahetka spent over forty years teaching and composing, leaving a legacy of more than seventy works. As Hoffmann suggests, Blahetka set a precedent for numerous women who sustained themselves through teaching music during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁴

⁷²Adolf Bernhard Marx, review of Leopoldine Blahetka, “*Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*,” (April 26th, 1826), 111. Translated by William Kinderman.

⁷³ Ellis, “Female Pianists,” 370.

⁷⁴ Bowers, review of Hofmann *Instrument und Körper*, 290.

Particularly relevant to the study of her nocturnes is Blahetka's relationship with Chopin, for which there is well-documented correspondence between the two. I argue that Blahetka composed her *Nocturne No. 1* as an homage to Chopin, deliberately choosing particular keys, phrases and rhythms. In chapter four I present my arguments for supporting this theory. Although he wasn't impressed with Blahetka's playing at first, Chopin admired her talent, and, he offered to perform two-piano music with her in Warsaw.⁷⁵ Perhaps Chopin's first impression was more of a response to Blahetka's criticism of his own playing. After hearing Chopin in Vienna, Blahetka thought his playing was too quiet,⁷⁶ to which Chopin responded: "she is pretty-but she bangs piano frightfully."⁷⁷

Multiple letters written after this encounter suggest that Chopin and Blahetka developed a friendship and mutual admiration that lasted for years. In a letter to Wojciechowski on September 12, 1829, Chopin writes:

"...my way of playing, which, again, delights the ladies, and especially Blahetka's daughter, who is the first pianist of Vienna [...] She gave me her own compositions with an autograph inscription, for a keepsake, when I left."⁷⁸

Although the exact year is unknown, around this time Chopin returned the amiable gesture by dedicating a piece to Blahetka, as seen in the beginning inscription:

⁷⁵ Saide and Samuel, *The Norton/Grove*, 66.

⁷⁶ Walker, *Fryderyk Chopin*, 144.

⁷⁷ Bronislaw Edward Sydow and Suzanne and Denise Chainaye, ed., *Correspondance de Frédéric Chopin*. Vol. 1 (Paris 1953-60), 107.

⁷⁸ Voynich, Ethel, ed. *Chopin's Letters*. Collected by Opiński, Henryk. (Dover Publications, 1988), p. 66.

Allegretto

À Mademoiselle Leopoldyna Blahetka

F. Chopin

Figure 3.4. F. Chopin, *Allegretto à Mademoiselle Leopoldyna Blahetka*, mm. 1-4.

Particularly intriguing is the choice of key for the *Allegretto*. Amongst more than two hundred and thirty works that we know of (some of his early childhood works have been lost), Chopin composed only four other solo piano pieces in F Sharp Major: *Nocturne Op. 15 No. 2*, *Prelude Op. 28 No. 13*, *Impromptu Op. 36*, and *Barcarolle Op. 60*. As it was common practice for composers of this era to associate music keys with specific emotions, perhaps Chopin intentionally chose a key commonly related to triumph over difficulty. Christian Schubart in his *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (1806) associates F Sharp Major with the “echo of a soul which has fiercely struggled and finally conquered”.⁷⁹ How fitting for a young female pianist who, against the odds, established herself as a “first pianist of Vienna”.⁸⁰

⁷⁹Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (Vienna: J. V. Degen, 1806), 378.

⁸⁰ Voynich, *Chopin's Letters*, 66.

Clara Wieck Schumann

(1819-1896)



Figure 3.5. Clara Wieck Schumann, 1838. Drawing by Cäcilie Brand.

Amongst women composers—pianists from the nineteenth century, Clara Wieck Schumann is undoubtedly the most famous one in modern history. Her life and work have been researched the most, although with more emphasis on her as a pianist, rather than a composer.⁸¹ This is perhaps due to her relatively small opus; she composed around thirty pieces (only fifteen for solo piano). However, her compositional output was hampered during her married life with Robert Schumann that left little time for her own development as a composer.

⁸¹ Pamela Susskind Pettler, “Clara Schumann’s Recitals, 1832-50,” *19th Century Music* 4, no. 1 (Summer, 1980). Litzman, Berthold. *Clara Schumann: An Artist’s Life*, trans. and abridged by Grace E. Hadow (London: Macmillan, 1913). Joan Chissell. *Clara Schumann: A Dedicated Spirit* (New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1983).

Born in Leipzig on September 13th, 1819, Clara Wieck was meticulously trained by her father, the famous pedagogue Friedrich Wieck. After her debut in Leipzig in 1830, Wieck's pianistic career blossomed, and her performances were praised both by the critics as well as her contemporaries. Franz Liszt praised Wieck's playing in the review for *Gazette musicale* saying that "her talent delighted me; she had perfect mastery of technique, depth and sincerity of feeling."⁸² Chopin went even further saying that Wieck is the only woman in Germany who knew how to play his works.⁸³ In a letter to Fontana, dated March 13, 1839, Chopin wrote "if you liked Clara Wieck, you were right; she plays —no one better. If you see her, greet her from me, and her Father too."⁸⁴

Wieck frequently performed works by Chopin, particularly his variations *Là ci darem la mano*, *Op. 2* as well as his etudes, polonaises and nocturnes. Susskind suggests that "The piano recital as we know it today, a sober presentation of serious artistic endeavor, had evolved — owing in no small way to the efforts of Clara Schumann."⁸⁵ It is indeed interesting to observe the gradual transformation of Wieck's repertoire and her efforts in promoting music by Schumann and Chopin. She was also the first pianist to publicly perform Beethoven's Sonata Op. 101 in Leipzig in 1843.

Despite her success as a pianist, the general climate towards female composers significantly deflated Wieck's aspirations, as she herself expressed in her diary on November 11th, 1839:

⁸² Litzman, *Clara Schumann*, 201.

⁸³ Walker, *Fryderyk Chopin*, 291.

⁸⁴ Voynich, *Chopin's Letters*, 193.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 76.

“I once thought that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not desire to compose- no one has yet been able to do it, why should I be destined for it? That would be arrogant, something with which only my father once tempted me in earlier times, but soon I changed my mind about this belief. May Robert only still create; that should always make me happy”⁸⁶

The above quote shows how societal views dictated personal convictions of women at that time. By this time, Wieck had composed more than half of her opus, including the *Notturmo*. As Reiman suggests, Wieck’s internal conflict between her societal role as a woman and her aspirations as a composer and performer created:

“positionality [that is] evocative of literary theorist Elaine Showalter’s concept of the ‘double-voiced discourse’ of writing by women, which always embodies the social, literary, and cultural heritages of both the muted and the dominant.”⁸⁷

While Reiman speculates how Wieck’s surroundings influenced the *Notturmo*, undoubtedly this piece shows progressive ideas in both form and harmony. Schumann was fascinated with *Notturmo* so much that he incorporated the opening measures into his *Novellette No. 8*, although with a revised harmonic accompaniment. While Wieck accompanies the beginning of her theme with the augmented tonic harmony in the base (fig. 3.6 mm. 3-4), Schumann uses the dominant seven chord

⁸⁶ Beatrix Borchard, *Robert Schumann und Clara Wieck: Bedingungen künstlerischer Arbeit in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Weinheim/Basel 1985.), 232.

⁸⁷ Michael Weinstein Reiman, “‘Inside’ Voices and Coupling Dynamics: An Analysis of Clara Wieck-Schumann’s *Notturmo* from *Soirées Musicales*, Op. 6 No. 2,” *Theory and Practice* 42 (2017): 3.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26477742>

(fig. 3.7 mm. 198-99 and fig. 3.8 mm. 502-4), which significantly alters the unsettling feeling of Wieck's opening:

1 2 3 4 5 6

Andante con moto.

sempre legato.

dolce.

F1

V⁷/vi

d:V⁶

V⁷

i⁶

f

Figure 3.6. C. Wieck, *Notturmo*, mm. 1-6

197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204

Einfach und gesangvoll. (♩ = 96)

Fortsetzung.

p

b

V

V₃

i

V

i

V₃/iv

iv

V₁

eV₃

i

V₁

Figure 3.7. R. Schumann, *Novellette No. 8*, mm. 197-204.

500 501 502 503 504 505 506 507

rffz

rffz

dt

V⁶

V₃

i

i

i

Figure 3.8. R. Schumann, *Novellette No. 8*, mm. 500-507

Kallberg argues that Schumann's revision of the harmony perhaps contributed to Wieck's insecurities, as she looked up to her husband.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, the inventiveness and artistic craft of this work certainly deserves more attention within the genre.

Upon marrying Robert Schumann, Wieck unfortunately stopped composing for a while. Although a known historical fact, it is worth mentioning that Schumann and Wieck had nine children, which contributed to Wieck's absence from composing. However, she somehow managed to perform continuously, even doing a couple of tours in Copenhagen (1842) and Russia (1844). After Schumann's death in 1856, in order to support the family Wieck continued with her active concert life, which included nineteen separate tours to England. Her last public performance was in 1891, although she continued to teach and perform for private gatherings right until the end of her life in 1896.

⁸⁸ Kallberg, "The Harmony of the Tea Table", 123.

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel

(1805-1847)



Figure 3.9. Fanny Hensel, 1836. Pencil drawing by Wilhelm Hensel.

Despite her immense talent, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel never achieved her dream of becoming a professional composer, at least not during her lifetime. This is quite astonishing, as her musical education was by far the most intense amongst the group. As John Thomson wrote in 1830:

“I cannot refrain from mentioning Miss Mendelssohn’s name...more particularly when I see so many ladies without one atom of genius, coming forward to the public with their musical crudities, and, because these are printed, holding up their heads as if they were finished musicians. Miss M. is a first-rate pianoforte player...She is no superficial musician; she has studied the

science deeply, and writes with freedom of a master. Her songs are distinguished by tenderness, warmth, and originality: some which I heard were exquisite. Miss M. writes, too, for a full orchestra.”⁸⁹

There are numerous testimonies confirming Thomas’ observations. In *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (MGG is the largest and most comprehensive German encyclopedic dictionary), Hensel is described as “without doubt the most significant woman composer of the nineteenth century”.⁹⁰ Unfortunately, her desire to pursue composition as a career was crushed by both her father Abraham and brother Felix, who believed that “professional work had no place in the life of a woman of their class and status.”⁹¹ In the infamous letter from July 16th, 1820, just before Hensel’s fifteenth birthday, her father wrote:

“[...] Perhaps for him [Felix] music will become a profession, while for you it will always remain but an ornament; never can and should it become the foundation of your existence and daily life.”

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Paradoxically, both Abraham and Felix admired Hensel’s talent, which perhaps made her even more confused. Despite the encouragement Hensel received from her mother, and, later from her husband Wilhelm Hensel, throughout her life she longed for her father’s and brother’s support

⁸⁹John Thomson. “Notes of a Musical Tourist”. (Harmonium, March ,1830): 99. Cited in Rothenberg, 697.

⁹⁰ Nancy B. Reich, “The Power of Class: Fanny Hensel,” in *Mendelssohn and His World*, ed. R. Larry Todd (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), 93.s

⁹¹ Nancy B. Reich, “European Composers and Musicians, ca. 1800-1890,” in *Women & Music: A History*, 2nd ed., ed. Karen Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 154.

⁹² Sebastian Hensel, *Die Familie Mendelssohn 1729-1847: Nach Briefen und Tage- buchern*. 6th ed., trans. Victoria Sirota, (Berlin: B. Behr, 1880), 97.

which never manifested.⁹³ A correspondence between Felix and Fanny, regarding her works being published, perfectly captures this lack of support and its consequences. In 1836 Hensel writes to her brother:

“I have to admit honestly that I’m rather neutral about it, and Hensel, on the one hand, is for it, and you, on the other, are against it. I would of course comply totally with the wishes of my husband in any other matter, yet on this issue alone it’s crucial to have your consent for without it I might not undertake anything of the kind.”⁹⁴

Although on multiple occasions Mendelssohn ‘allowed’ Hensel to publish her works under his name he openly revealed his feelings regarding this matter in a response to their mother written in June 1837:⁹⁵

“I cannot persuade her to publish anything, because it is against my views and convictions. We have previously spoken a great deal about it, and I still hold the same opinion. I consider publishing something serious...and believe that. One should do it only if one wants to appear as an author [i.e., composer] one’s entire life and stick to it. But that necessitates a series of works, one after the other...Fanny, as I know her, possesses neither the inclination nor calling for authorship. She is too much a woman for that, as is proper, and looks after her house and thinks neither about the public nor the musical world, unless that primary occupation is accomplished. Publishing would only disturb her in these duties, and I cannot reconcile myself to it. If she

⁹³ For those who wish to explore this subject in more depth I suggest “The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn”, collected and edited by Marcia J. Citron.

Marcia J. Citron, *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1987).

⁹⁴ Nancy B. Reich, review of *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn*, by Marcia J. Citron, *19th Century Music* 13, no. 1 (Summer, 1989): 69. <https://doi.org/10.2307/746214>

⁹⁵ Fanny’s first published works appeared under Felix’s name in 1827 in his first volume of Lieder Op. 8 (Nos. 2, 3 and 12). In 1830 another 3 pieces of hers were published in his Lieder Op. 9 (Nos. 7, 10 and 12).

decides on her own to publish, or to please Hensel, I am, as I said, ready to be helpful as much as possible, but to encourage her toward something I don't consider right is what I cannot do.”⁹⁶

It is precisely because of this attitude that Hensel rejected multiple offers from different publishers interested in publishing her works. However, despite her brother's opinion, Hensel remained closely connected to him. As mentioned earlier, it was a complex relationship, from which Mendelssohn benefited much more. Hensel was his greatest support, and he (paradoxically) relied on her criticism of his works. And despite never experiencing the same from him, Hensel continued to compose throughout her life.

The pivotal moment in her career happened during the Hensel family's journey to Italy in 1839-40. This was the first (and sadly the last) time that Hensel was away from her brother, which allowed for her to develop a psychological independence.⁹⁷

During this time, Hensel surrounded herself with artists. She was proud of the fact that they viewed her not only as a virtuoso pianist or a talented composer, but, as the bearer of German musical culture.⁹⁸ She was the one who introduced works by Bach and Beethoven to the young Charles Gounod. After one of her private performances Hensel wrote in her diary that:

⁹⁶ Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Briefe 1833 bis 1847* (rpt. Leipzig, 1865), II, 88-89, letter of 2 June 1837. Cited in Nancy B. Reich review of *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn*, by Marcia. J. Citron. *19th-Century Music* 13, no. 1 (1989): 69.

⁹⁷ Rothenberg, “*Thus Far, but No Farther*,” 702.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 703.

“Gounod declares himself quite at a loss for words to express his appreciation of my influence over him...It [German music] has startled him like a bombshell.”⁹⁹

The praise she received during this trip, not only inspired her to compose more, but gave her much needed confidence to finally publish her works. In a letter to Mendelssohn, dated July 9, 1846, Hensel announces her decision:

“Actually, I wouldn’t expect you to read this rubbish now, busy as you are, if I didn’t have to tell you something. But since I know from the start that you won’t like it, it’s a bit awkward to get under way. So laugh at me or not, as you wish: I’m afraid of my brothers at age 40 as I was afraid of my brothers at age 14-or, more aptly expressed, desirous of pleasing you and everyone I’ve loved throughout my life. And when I know in advance that it won’t be the case, I thus feel rather uncomfortable. In a word, I’m beginning to publish. I have Herr Bock’s sincere offer for my Lieder and have finally turned a receptive ear to his favorable terms...I hope I won’t disgrace all of you through my publishing, as I am no *femme libre*...I trust *you* will in no way be bothered by it, since, as you can see, I’ve proceeded completely on my own in order to spare you any possible unpleasant moment, and I hope you won’t think badly of me. If it succeeds-that is, if the pieces are well liked and I receive additional offers- I know it will be a great stimulus to me, something I’ve always needed in order to create.”¹⁰⁰

Unfortunately, several months into her new-found creative freedom, Hensel suddenly died on May 14th, 1847. Mendelssohn died six months later, soon after composing the *String Quartet in F Minor, Op. 80*, dedicated to his sister.

⁹⁹ Hensel *Die Familie Mendelssohn*, 97.

¹⁰⁰ Citron, *The Letters of Fanny Hensel*, 349-51.

Hensel's incredibly rich opus of more than four hundred and sixty pieces by far surpasses the number of works written by any other female composer in the nineteenth century.¹⁰¹ Most of her works are limited to either *Lieder* or solo piano, although she did write four cantatas, a piano trio, piano quartet and an orchestral overture. It is due to Fanny's great-granddaughter's efforts that her *Notturmo* (amongst other pieces) was published. It belongs to a group of pieces composed later in her life, around the Italy trip in 1839. As Kalberg suggests, it portrays her struggle between traditional forms and innovative ideas in this piece.¹⁰² In the next chapter I will present my analysis of this piece with particular focus on its form that expanded on Field's and Chopin's model.

¹⁰¹ Angela Mace Christian, "Hensel [née Mendelssohn (-Bartholdy), Fanny Cäcilie," *Grove Music Online* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press).

¹⁰² Kallberg, "*The Harmony of the Tea Table*," 126.

CHAPTER FOUR

Eight Nocturnes: Analysis

Maria Szymanowska

*Nocturne À Trois Mains “Le Murmure”*s

Published in 1824, *Le Murmure* stands alone in the genre as the only nineteenth century nocturne written for three hands. As Dobrzanski observes, despite its popularity during Szymanowska’s lifetime “researchers usually consider *Le Murmure* a piece of little artistic value, as it does not contain any interesting modulations or structural novelties.”¹⁰³

Indeed, *Le Murmure*’s interest does not lie in a variety of modulations. Its ingenuity is in Szymanowska’s inventiveness in altering each appearance of the theme. Here is the original theme as heard in the beginning:

¹⁰³ Dobrzański, *Maria Szymanowska*, 88.

1 Allegretto 2 3

4 5 6 7

8 9 10 11

Figure 4.1. M. Szymanowska, *Le Murmure*, mm.1-8.

This first appearance of the theme (fig. 4.1 mm.1-8) is simple in its character. The melodic line moves gradually, with the biggest leap of a 6th in m.7. Throughout the first eight measures, Szymanowska operates within one octave range. However, this placid beginning lays the foundation for drama, as heard in the next appearance in m. 26 (fig. 4.2).

The image shows a musical score for Szymanowska's *Le Murmure*, measures 25-32. The score is in 3/4 time and features a treble and bass clef. Measures 25-28 show a melodic line with sixteenth notes and chromaticism, marked 'sm'. Measures 29-32 show a more virtuosic melodic line with large leaps, marked 'sf'.

Figure 4.2. Szymanowska, *Le Murmure*, mm.25-31.

Although the harmonic language stays exactly the same, our experience of this first variation is anything but similar. The range is now twice as big, encompassing two octaves, and the melodic line takes off as florid sixteenth notes, rich in chromaticism. While the first four measures meander around the original theme's melodic contour with neighbor-note elaborations, in m.30, the melody bursts into virtuosic big leaps of fifteenths, emphasized with *sforzandi*.

The second variation of the theme happens in m.44, and it is the only time we hear this theme in a different key, a key of D Flat Major (fig. 4.3):

Figure 4.3. Szymanowska, *Le Murmure*, mm. 44-51.

This is the first time Szymanowska calls for *forte* dynamic (fig. 4.3 m. 44). The only other *forte* occurs in m. 68, which marks the beginning of the more tragic F Minor section. As seen in figure 4.3, while the original theme is clearly recognizable, Szymanowska places turns in between each note of the theme, transforming the character of the theme from inward-looking and placid to playful and extroverted. The placement of the turns on the upbeats (fig. 4.3. mm. 44-49) create rhythmic emphases on the weak beats of the measure, adding to its playfulness through a sense of syncopation. Moreover, the repetitions nature of these ornaments on every upbeat invites the player to improvise. This jesting variation of quick turns and leaps suddenly give way to a ‘dolce’ half-cadence in m. 50, intensifying the unexpected, dramatic quality of this variation.

In m. 76 (fig. 4.4) the theme returns to A Flat Major:

the same way (D natural, E Flat) thus creating a sense of steadiness. The descending lines in mm. 88 and 88 (fig. 4.5) further contribute to the overall sense of closure:

The image displays a musical score for Szymanowska's *Le Murmure*, measures 83 through 91. The score is written for a single melodic line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into three systems, each marked with a measure number in a box: 83, 84, 85; 86, 87, 88; and 89, 90, 91. A dashed line labeled '8va' spans measures 83-85 and 86-88. The melodic line features a descending eighth-note pattern in measures 83-85, a descending eighth-note pattern in measures 86-88, and a descending eighth-note pattern in measures 89-91. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand. The final measure (91) ends with a full cadence.

Figure 4.5. Szymanowska, *Le Murmure*, mm. 83-91.

Szymanowska brings the piece to a close, altering the half cadence ending of the theme to a full cadence in m. 91 (fig. 4.5).

As seen in these examples, harmonic simplicity doesn't necessarily suggest less artistic value. Perhaps it is quite opposite, as elaborating on a simple theme calls for compositional inventiveness through melodic elaboration, rhythmic instability and chromaticism. Her variations on a theme showcase Szymanowska's creativity in conjuring dramatically different affects and moods using only a simple melody and harmonic backbone as foundation. Besides the aforementioned characteristic, what differentiates this nocturne from any other in the genre is its pedagogical purpose. It is as if Szymanowska composed an exercise for practicing a nocturne, whilst keeping the artistic qualities of a performance-worthy piece.¹⁰⁴

The most obvious indication for this is Szymanowska's decision to divide the melody and the accompaniment between three hands. With this division, one person would play the melody with one hand, while the other plays the accompaniment with two hands. Interestingly, Chopin advised his students to practice nocturnes in such way. According to Wilhelm von Lenz, Chopin suggested the following regarding his *Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2*:

“He wanted the bass to be practiced by itself, divided between the two hands [...] Once the bass part is mastered-with two hands-with a full but *piano* sonority and in strict time, maintaining an absolutely steady *allegretto* movement [...] then the left hand can be trusted with the accompaniment played that way and the tenor invited to sing his part in the upper voice.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Another similar example are Chopin's etudes.

¹⁰⁵ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin Pianist and Teacher: As Seen by His Pupils* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 77.

Chopin's comparison between the right hand and a tenor calls for particular attention, as singing tone is one of the main characteristics of a nocturne. He would sometimes refer to them as etudes for producing beautiful vocal tone and the *legato*.¹⁰⁶ Szymanowska's variations of the theme present different challenges for achieving a singing tone: from a very simple line, with mostly long rhythmical values, to the more complex chromatic melodies that call for creativity with fingerings and mobility of the wrist.

Another interesting aspect of this piece is Szymanowska's deliberate choice not to use more complex polyrhythms, even though they are commonly found in nocturnes. At this point in her career Szymanowska was a highly praised pianist, making it safe to assume that she was indeed familiar with complex polyrhythm. Instead, she creates a simple polyrhythm (a hemiola) by having the right-hand pulse move in four groups of three sixteenth notes while the left hand moves in 6/8 rhythm in the two-hand accompaniment part:



Figure 4.6: Szymanowska, *Le Murmure*, mm.1-3.

This is significant as it would allow an unexperienced student to hear a simple polyrhythm (rather than having to play a complex polyrhythm) while focusing first and foremost on the quality of sound. Lastly, this division of voices transforms a solo piano piece into a song for piano and voice,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

making a full circle back to what a nocturne essentially is.¹⁰⁷ With that, all the subtleties of performing this genre (such as a singing tone, placement of breath or treatment of *rubato*) are more audible for the student.

While it is certainly possible that Szymanowska intended this to be a concert piece, I argue that the three-hand notation implies differently. Besides the arguments discussed earlier, another fact to consider is the purpose of duets at the time. During the nineteenth century, duets were quite popular amongst the pianists/pupils, with many solo-piano works (such as Chopin's nocturnes, polonaises, etc.) transcribed for four hands. This was a way for the less experienced musicians to still enjoy the popular pieces of the time. While four-hands pieces were common practice even amongst professional pianists, Szymanowska's simplified three-hand notation is a unique example where one part (in this case the melody) is significantly less involved, only employing one hand of the performer. Lastly, Dobrzanski states that this nocturne was Szymanowska's most popular opus during her lifetime, implying that it was the best-selling work of hers.¹⁰⁸ Considering that the great majority of music-scores consumers are people studying music, perhaps this is another indicator regarding the purpose of this piece.

Regardless of its purpose, this nocturne attests to Szymanowska's creativity, particularly her treatment of the melody. One can argue that Szymanowska captures the idea of depth versus superficiality by juxtaposing simple modulation versus complexity in melodic variation. Lastly,

¹⁰⁷ Szymanowska uses almost identical accompaniment in her "*Chant de la Vilia*", a song for piano and voice, composed on a poem by Adam Mickiewicz.

¹⁰⁸ Dobrzański, *Maria Szymanowska*, 88.

while it is common practice in piano education to introduce Chopin's nocturnes as a first taste for this genre, perhaps *Le Murmure* can serve as a great stepping-stone, particularly for students who never played romantic repertoire. It is simple enough in terms of technical demands, and yet, it perfectly captures all the beautiful features of an early nineteenth century nocturne.

Nocturne in B Flat Major

Contrary to *Le Murmure*, Szymanowska's second nocturne calls for a mature pianist, as it presents musical and technical challenges similar to those found in nocturnes by Field and Chopin. There are some striking similarities between this piece and Chopin's *Nocturne Op. 32 No. 2*, although there are no indications of the two composers having ever hearing each other's nocturnes. As Dobrzanski suggests "it seems in one instance that both artists independently achieved similar results when dealing with the nocturne genre."¹⁰⁹ Both of these nocturnes seem to be influenced by *Field's Nocturne No. 5 in B Flat Major*. This is interesting as they were all created about ten years apart from one another: Field composed his in 1817, Szymanowska in the late 1820s, and Chopin in 1837. Amongst the three, Szymanowska's nocturne is the most virtuosic, calling for a more advanced player.

¹⁰⁹ Slawomir Dobrzański. "Maria Szymanowska and Fryderyk Chopin: Parallelism and Influence," *Polish Music Journal* 5, no. 1, 2002.

Even at the first glance of the scores, the textural similarity of these nocturnes is obvious. Here are the opening measures of the three pieces (figs. 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9, parenthesized non-chord tones mine from here on):

Moderato

1 2

Bb I V⁷ V⁷/vi

3 4 5

vi vii⁷/ii ii⁶ ii⁴ I V⁷ I

Figure 4.7. M. Szymanowska, *Nocturne in B Flat Major*, mm.1-5.

Cantabile

1 2 3

p Nicht zu geschwind.

Bb I I¹ inharmonically soft I I vii⁴

4 5 6 7

I I V⁷/ii dV⁷ I Fvi vii⁷/V V⁷

cresc. *dim.* *

Figure 4.8. J. Field, *Nocturne No. 5 in B Flat Major*, mm.1-7.

1 Lento 2 3 Poco più mosso. 4

sempre piano e legato

Ab I IV iv I I vii²/iii I V⁷ I V⁷ I

5 6 7

I iii V iv iv₆ V⁷ I vii²/iii I V⁷

Ab-----

Figure 4.9. F. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 32 No. 2 in A Flat Major*, mm. 1-7.

Although there are differences in phrasing (Field uses two-measure phrases, whereas Szymanowska and Chopin use a more operatic four-measure phrase), the texture is identical with a single line melody in the right hand accompanied by steady groups of three in the left. Further, all three examples show resemblance in the melodic line, specifically regarding the dissonant note on the second beat in their themes. While they choose a different scale degree as the starting point for their theme, the placement of the dissonance is identical: Szymanowska creates a leap from D Flat into the leading tone A while continuing tonic harmony in the accompaniment (figure 4.7, m. 1); Field uses the sharp I dim 7 harmony enharmonically spelt to support the E natural in his melody; Chopin writes a B natural over the A Flat tonic in the bass (figure 4.9).

Textural similarities can also be found in the contrasting sections of these nocturnes. Although Chopin's B section is significantly longer, the compositional technique is the same amongst the

three composers. As a contrast to the single-line theme, they all chose a much fuller, chordal texture repeated on every eight-note beat:



Figure 4.10. Szymanowska, *Nocturne in B Flat Major*, mm. 20-22.

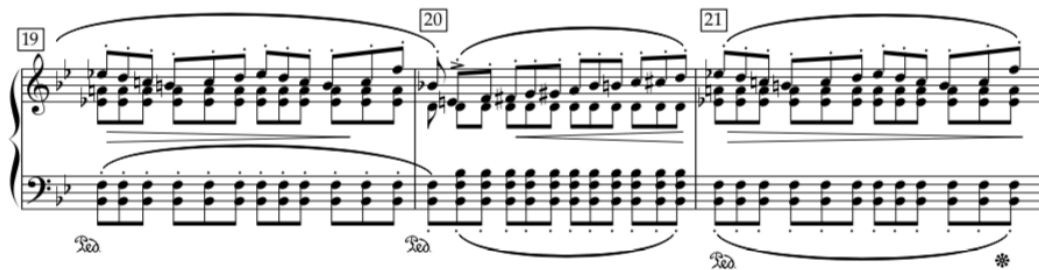


Figure 4.11. Field, *Nocturne No. 5*, mm. 19-21.



Figure 4.12. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 32 No. 2*, mm. 27-30.

Despite the evident similarities, there are unique features in Szymanowska's B section (fig. 4.10) that distinguish her nocturne from the other two. While Field and Chopin use the chordal texture throughout their sections, Szymanowska's chords are frequently interrupted by singing melodic lines in the higher register (fig. 4.10 mm. 21-22). These eruptions contribute to the overall feeling of excitement and agitation, as we are never settled in one sound for too long.

After the contrasting section, all three composers bring back the main theme. While it is common practice to alter the melody every time it appears, Chopin keeps his melody identical to the beginning of the piece (fig. 4.13):

Figure 4.13. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 32 No. 2*, mm. 51-56.

This is unorthodox for Chopin, as he usually ornaments reappearance of the same melodies in his nocturnes. More expectedly, Field introduces ornamentation in mm. 23 and 27 (figure 4.14), although the overall feeling stays the same:

Figure 4.14. Field, *Nocturne No. 5*, mm. 22-29.

Szymanowska, in contrast to Chopin and Field significantly changes the texture, making it busier and more exciting every time we hear the theme (figs. 4.15 and 4.16):

Figure 4.15. Szymanowska, *Nocturne in B Flat Major*, mm. 27-30.

Figure 4.16. Szymanowska, *Nocturne in B Flat Major*, mm. 46-49.

Fig. 4.16 is particularly interesting, as it is a rare occurrence for a main theme to be played in octaves. Amongst his twenty-one nocturnes, Chopin does this only once in *Op. 72 No. 1*, and even then, he only uses it for a portion of the theme:

Figure 4.17. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 72 No. 1*, mm. 39-41.

Field similarly in *Nocturne No. 11* uses octaves sparingly to emphasize the first two measures of the four-measure phrase (fig. 4.18 mm.75-76):

Figure 4.18. Field, *Nocturne No. 11*, mm. 73-78.

As seen in the examples above, Szymanowska is the only one who quotes the entire theme in octaves. By doing this, Szymanowska alludes to pianistic bravura and virtuosity commonly found in other genres of the time such as etudes, ballades, etc. While octaves are frequently used in piano repertoire, in this case it is greatly significant as a rare appearance in the nocturne genre. As such, it deserves to be acknowledged as an exciting moment in the development of the nineteenth century nocturne.

The octave melody (fig. 4.16 mm. 46-9) marks the culmination point in Szymanowska's nocturne and is followed by a long *coda*. While Field and Chopin write a shorter coda based on already established themes, Szymanowska introduces new virtuosic material again, this time expanding to the highest register of piano. Particularly intriguing are bell-like figurations in mm. 59-60 (4.19) that resemble Liszt's etude *La Campanella* (fig. 4.20 mm. 5-8), composed many years later in 1838:

Figure 4.19. Szymanowska, *Nocturne in B Flat Major*, mm. 57-60.

Figure 4.20. F. Liszt, *Grandes Étude de Paganini No. 3, "La Campanella"*, mm.1-8.

This compositional technique is notoriously challenging for a pianist and is not commonly seen in nocturnes. Although Field and especially Chopin used numerous different ways to decorate their melodies, surprisingly this technique cannot be found in their nocturnes. It is as if Szymanowska deliberately (but tastefully) emphasized both her creativity as a composer and her pianistic

virtuosity. This type of virtuosic, flashy pianism is more traditionally suitable in concert-hall showpieces, not in the nocturne of salon setting. Szymanowska's flamboyant writing challenges this association of nocturne with introversion and intimacy, pushing the nocturne out of its box. Nonetheless, as Dobrzanski suggests:

“Szymanowska's Nocturne in B Flat Major belongs to the composer's finest achievements and is undoubtedly one of those pre-romantic compositions that are unjustly omitted from today's piano repertoire.”¹¹⁰

Indeed, it is unjustly but also conveniently omitted as it challenges our understanding of the nocturne.

Leopoldine Blahetka

Blahetka's three nocturnes are the most unique ones in this research in how they differ from the traditional nocturne form. I will present a comparative analysis to Chopin's *Polonaise Op. 26 No. 1*, and his nocturnes, as well as the romantic concerti in order to highlight Blahetka's place as an innovator of this form.

¹¹⁰ Dobrzański, *Maria Szymanowska*, 92.

Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1 in D Flat Major

Although the exact date is unknown, Blahetka composed this piece in the late 1840s, after moving to Paris. Amongst the eight nocturnes discussed in my research, this one is by far the most technically demanding, resembling challenges often seen in ballads or etudes. The most distinguishing characteristic of this piece is the pervasive polonaise rhythm, which is quite unusual for the genre. Similar to Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantasy*, Blahetka integrates two forms, creating a Polonaise-Nocturne. Further, there are indications in the score implying that Blahetka composed this piece as an homage to her late friend Chopin, using his *Polonaise Op. 26 No. 1* as an inspiration.

The connection between these two pieces is apparent from the very beginning of the nocturne. In the first couple of measures Blahetka introduces the polonaise rhythm in the key of D flat major (fig. 4.21 mm. 1-2), which is the same key Chopin uses in the B section of his polonaise. This in itself would not be significant if there were not for striking similarities between the themes:

1 2 3 4
Moderato. (Métr. ♩ = 72)
PIANO.
legato
sf p
Db1 I V V
p dolce
5 6 7 8
cresc.
I I IV I
8va

Figure 4.21: L. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1*, mm.1-8.

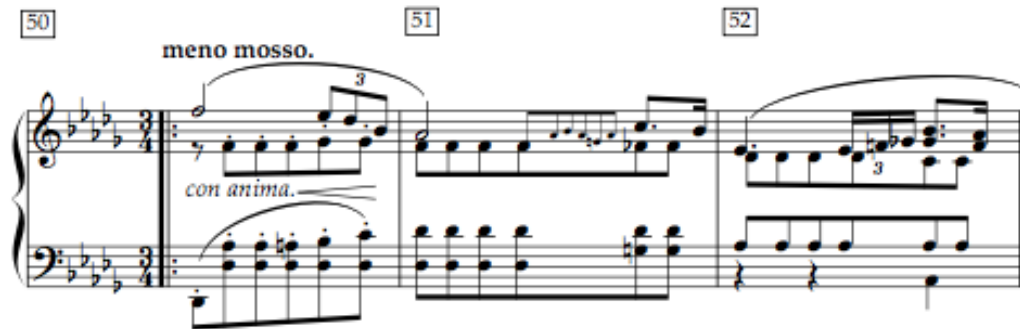


Figure 4.22. F. Chopin, *Polonaise Op. 26 No. 1*, mm. 50-52.

Although Blahetka starts the theme on the dominant with the G Flat in the melody (fig. 4.21 m. 3), once she reaches the tonic in m. 5, her melody is almost identical to the beginning of Chopin's theme:



Figure 4.23: L. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1*, mm. 5-6



Figure 4.24. F. Chopin, *Polonaise Op. 26 No. 1*, mm. 50-51.

While Blahetka slightly ornaments the melodic line, the descend contour of the melody is identical (E flat - D flat - B flat), with the same harmony in the accompaniment. Similarities continue in the following measure as well, where both rhythm and ornamentation are notably alike. From this moment on, the themes have their distinct differences, up until the culmination point in which they again share the same features:



Figure 4.25. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1*, m. 9.



Figure 4.26. Chopin, *Polonaise Op. 26 No. 1*, m. 56.

Although Blahetka writes a more complex ornamentation over the ii-7th chord, as seen in figs. 4.25 and 4.26, both composers use chromaticism to emphasize the culmination point in the theme. Another similar example happens in Blahetka's second theme where, although harmonically different, her melodic line shares the same gesture as Chopin's bass line:



Figure 4.27. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1*, m. 49.



Figure 4.28. Chopin, *Polonaise Op. 26 No. 1*, m. 70.

This specific rhythm where we hear six sixteenth notes at the end of the measure, is the core of the entire section in which Blahetka develops her second theme. It is also predominant in the b section of Chopin's polonaise, although he alternates between this pattern and sixteenth notes throughout the first two beats of the measure:

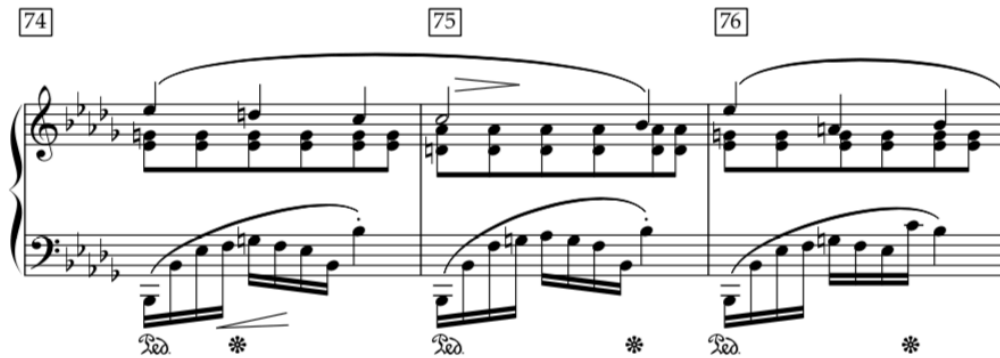


Figure 4.29. Chopin, *Polonaise Op. 26 No. 1*, mm. 74-76.

By using this pattern in the left hand, Chopin achieves an exciting buildup to the culmination point of this section, after which we find release in hearing the theme again. Blahetka also uses sixteenth notes as a rhythmic build-up device, and employs continuous sixteenth notes for the first time in m.77 in order to emphasize the peak moment of her piece (fig. 4.30):



Figure 4.30. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1*, mm. 76-78.

Particularly intriguing is the *vibrato* marking in m.76.¹¹¹ Since this is the only available score, there is no opportunity to confirm whether this is simply the editor’s marking, as it is impossible to produce vibrato on a piano. However, if it indeed is Blahetka’s marking, perhaps it serves as a metaphor for the amount of effort she expects from the pianist to produce a vibrant, passionate sound.

Another indication of Blahetka’s connection to Chopin’s polonaise is her choice of key. Chopin wrote his *Polonaise in C Sharp minor*, with the B section in D Flat major, which is enharmonically the major of the same key. Blahetka’s nocturne is exactly the same with a reversed order: D Flat major comes first and is shortly interrupted by a C Sharp minor section:



Figure 4.31. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1*, mm. 30-33.

In chapter three, in relation to Chopin’s *Allegretto* dedicated to Blahetka, I discussed the meaning of particular keys for the nineteenth century composers. According to Schubart (Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart was a German poet, organist, composer and journalist), the key of D Flat major is a “leering key, degenerating into grief and rapture.”¹¹² Since the nocturne was composed in the late 1840s, when Chopin’s health was deteriorating, perhaps Blahetka purposely

¹¹¹ *Vibrato* refers to a rapid variation of the pitch, typically found in singing or playing a string instrument.

¹¹² Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst*, 378.

chose this grieving key. Nonetheless, Chopin's polonaise most definitely inspired Blahetka to create this unique form of a nocturne-polonaise.

Besides the unusual form, what differentiates this nocturne from many others in this genre are exciting virtuosic bursts, often consisting of thirty-seconds or smaller note values, with either big jumps in one hand, or arpeggiated chords up and down the keyboard. These are wildly uncharacteristic of nocturne pianistic textures, as seen in fig. 4.32:

The image shows a musical score for Blahetka's Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1, measures 38-41. The score is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. Measures 38-39 are marked 'ff' and feature a dense texture of thirty-second notes in both hands. Measures 40-41 are marked 'marcato.' and feature a similar texture. The score includes dynamic markings like 'ff' and 'marcato.', and performance instructions like 'ped.' and asterisks indicating pedaling points.

Figure 4.32. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1*, mm. 38-41.

Figure 4.32 shows a variation of the main theme, in which Blahetka suddenly uses thirty-second notes, making it quite challenging for a performer to keep the same *Moderato* tempo marking from the beginning of the piece without sounding mechanical. This passionate section goes on for eleven measures, which is one the longest examples of continuous *ff* dynamic in a nocturne. Although Chopin has *ff* moments, only in his *Nocturne Op. 32 No.2* do they last as long as in here.

An even more pianistically challenging section happens in m. 92 (fig. 4.33). Here Blahetka starts the final expression of the theme, this time divided between the two hands:

Figure 4.33. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1*, mm. 92-95.

Amongst all the composers in this research, Blahetka is the only one who used this particular compositional technique in which the melody is divided between the two hands, while the rest of the material is arpeggiated up and down the piano. It is challenging to do, but it creates a wonderful effect, almost as if it was played with three hands. Liszt often used this virtuosic technique in his etudes (notated with an ossia staff):

Figure 4.34. F. Liszt, *Etude de Concert No. 3, "Un Sospiro"*, mm. 1-4.

Similar to Szymanowska, by incorporating such virtuosic, etude-esque writing, Blahetka departs from the traditional nocturne, instead creating an exciting showcase piece. The textures seen in figs. 4.32 and 4.33 are more commonly found in other genres, such as etudes or ballades, which further illuminates Blahetka's unique approach to the nocturne genre.

After the theme is presented for the last time, once again we are reminded of the polonaise rhythm as a final farewell (fig. 4.35 m. 99):

Figure 4.35. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 1*, mm. 98-100.

Such amalgamation of virtuosic, bravura writing, with the stately polonaise in the context of the nocturne is nothing less than ground-breaking.

As Blahetka was often praised for her technical superiority, the virtuosic moments showcase not only her compositional flair but also her pianistic skills. Amongst her three nocturnes, this one by far surpasses the others with its technical demands, and as an outlier to the nocturne genre provides a case study for reconsidering preconceived notions about nocturne pianistic writing.

Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2 in A Minor

Chopin's nocturnes are usually grouped into opuses, in which an opus contains two contrasting nocturnes (in particular, from Op. 27 and on). Blahetka uses the same model in her Op. 46, where the second nocturne is darker and melancholic in character. Further, the forms of these two nocturnes are quite different. Although *Nocturne No.1* incorporates polonaise features, in its structure it still resembles a typical nocturne where the main theme is presented multiple times, often enriched with embellishments. However, in *Nocturne No. 2* Blahetka experiments with a different concept in which the writing contains both the voices of a soloist and the orchestral accompaniment. To make a comparison, there are certain moments in the nocturne that are quite similar to *Schumann's Piano Concerto Op. 54 in A minor*, and *Chopin's Piano Concerto Op. 11 No. 1 in E Minor*. Interestingly, Chopin uses the same melodic material in the themes of his *Nocturne in C Sharp minor* and the third movement of his *Piano Concerto Op. 21 No. 2 in F minor*. The opening of the Third movement (fig. 4.36) is almost identical to the beginning of the B section of the nocturne (fig. 4.37). Only the rhythm and meter are shifted, and the melody transposed:



Figure 4.36. F. Chopin, *Piano Concerto Op. 21 No. 2*, 3rd movement, mm. 1-4.



Figure 4.37. F. Chopin, *Nocturne in C Sharp Minor, Op. posth.*, mm. 21-22.

Another example is the B1 theme of the third movement (fig. 4.38), which is almost identical to the one Chopin used in the faster C section of the nocturne (fig. 4.39). The captivating characteristics of the motif heard in the left hand in the nocturne are presented in the concerto, although this time played with both hands in unison:



Figure 4.38. Chopin, *Piano Concerto Op. 21 No. 2, 3rd movement*, mm. 147-148.

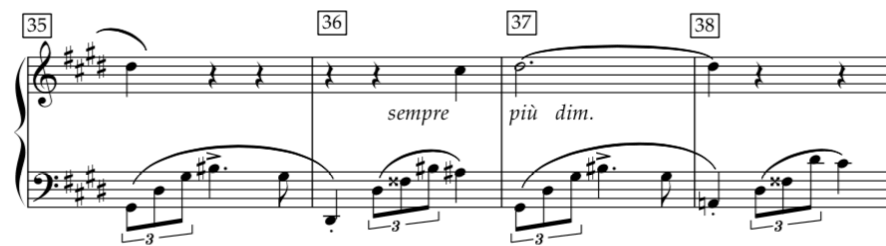


Figure 4.39. Chopin, *Nocturne in C Sharp Minor, Op. posth.*, mm. 35-38.

As seen in figs. 4.36-39, Chopin uses almost identical themes in the two pieces. Naturally, as concerto movement is a larger form, these themes are elaborated much more compared to the nocturne. If we take this example into account, perhaps Blahetka's *Nocturne No. 2* can be studied as a potential sketch for a piano concerto she never wrote.

This nocturne starts with a long introduction that is repeated in its entirety towards the end of the piece in m. 73. Compared to the other nocturnes by Field and Chopin, as well as the other women's in this study, this is by far the longest, most elaborate introduction in the genre. Although there are several examples of short introductions in nocturnes by Field and Chopin, they are never drastically different from the rest of the piece, as in the case of Blahetka's nocturne. The overall texture of her introduction is orchestral, with the continuous tremolo in the bass and harp-like arpeggios in the top voice. This really disrupts the "intimate" sound world of the nocturne:

Figure 4.40. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, mm. 1-2.

Particular attention should be paid to Blahetka’s tempo marking *Con moto*. Playing at the suggested 108 per eight-note tempo creates a sound that resembles timpani and harp. Right from the beginning Blahetka does not hesitate to demand virtuosic skills — these arpeggios (played at the assigned tempo) present a great challenge. However, it seems that Blahetka’s goal is not to emphasize pianistic chops, but rather to create a sonic experience of a full orchestra. After a whole page of the same pattern moving through different harmonies, Blahetka ends this introduction with a typical cadence where we hear a prolonged trill over the dominant chord:



Figure 4.41. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, m.7.

The moment in which this cadence resolves into the tonic (beginning of m. 8) is the same moment in which the main theme of the nocturne begins:

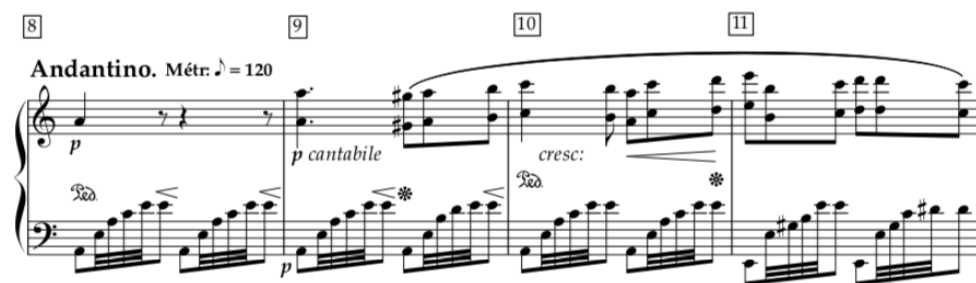


Figure 4.42. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, mm. 8-11.

After the full sound presented in the introduction, suddenly we are in a different sonic world where the emphasis is on the solo piano sound. There is such a profound sonic contrast between these two sections, unlike any other ‘introduction-main theme’ example in the genre. Even the flow of the melody, with its long line encompassing sixteen measures, could easily exist as a first theme of a concerto. Blahetka writes this theme in a *barcarolla* style, which was common for nocturnes of the time. As Angela Christian explains:

“The ‘Venetian Gondola Songs’ as a group are an example of the most direct lateral adaptation of the Nocturne style; furthermore, these works clearly draw on the genre of the ‘barcarolle’. Like the Nocturnes, the barcarolle features a rocking left-hand accompaniment and a singing right hand line that imitates the folk song genre. Thus, the transfer of the vocal medium to the keyboard in the barcarolle (since barcarolles directly evoke the singing of the gondoliers, or barcaroli) is directly analogous to the transfer of the operatic vocal medium to the keyboard in the Nocturne.”¹¹³

As seen in figure 4.42, Blahetka notates *cantabile* at the beginning of the theme, emphasizing the importance of the singing quality of sound. Written entirely in octaves, this melody stands out between the two surrounding sections, creating an illusion of a soloist in a concerto. After the theme reaches its peak in m. 23, the texture suddenly changes again, as it would in a concerto. In this transitional section Blahetka uses almost identical texture found in Chopin’s *Concerto Op. 11 No. 1* or Schumann’s *Concerto Op. 54*. After the first theme is presented, all three composers use the same approach, where the soloist, although more in a role of the accompaniment, emphasizes

¹¹³ Christian, Angela Mace. “The Nocturne, the Lied Ohne Worte, and the Development of the Character Piece in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Nineteenth-Century Programme Music: Creation, Negotiations, Reception*, ed. Jonathan Kregor (Brepols, 2018.), 333.

the melody presented in the orchestra. This is achieved by the soloist and orchestra playing specific melodic lines in unison. The next three figures show the similarities in piano parts amongst the three composers:

Figure 4.43 shows musical notation for Blahetka's Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2, measures 24-27. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of two systems. The first system (measures 24-25) features a right-hand part with a 'loco' marking and a left-hand part with 'a tempo.' The second system (measures 26-27) features a right-hand part with a 'cresc.' marking and a left-hand part with 'f' and 'p' markings.

Figure 4.43. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, mm. 24-27.

Figure 4.44 shows musical notation for Chopin's Piano Concerto Op. 11 No. 1, 1st movement, measures 179-181. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of three measures. The right-hand part features a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the left-hand part features a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The markings include 'tranquillo' and 'sfp (legatiss.)'.

Figure 4.44. F. Chopin, *Piano Concerto Op. 11 No. 1*, 1st movement, mm. 179-181.

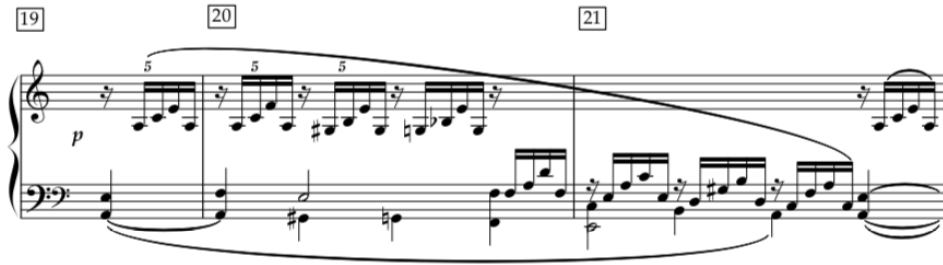


Figure 4.45. R. Schumann, *Piano Concerto Op. 54*, 1st movement, mm. 19-21.

As seen in figures above, all three composers combine a continuous movement of the smaller value notes with a similar hidden melody:



Figure 4.46. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, mm. 24-27.



Figure 4.47. F. Chopin, *Piano Concerto Op. 11 No. 1*, 1st movement, mm. 179-181.



Figure 4.48. R. Schumann, *Piano Concerto Op. 54*, 1st movement, mm. 19-21.

Chopin's and Schumann's development of their material in this section is much more complex, which is only natural as they are working with a larger form. Blahetka, although limited with a shorter form, masterfully achieves the same exciting effect in this transition, using chromaticism and continuous crescendo to reach the peak moment in m. 32:



Figure 4.49. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, mm. 32-33.

After this first culmination we are introduced to the second theme (fig. 4.50). Although the melodic line differs from the first theme, the overall character is the same. Blahetka keeps the barcarolle style, while making the melody slightly busier than before (mm. 38-41). Similar to Szymanowska, Blahetka here extensively uses octaves, which is more commonly found in piano concertos:



Figure 4.50. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, mm. 34-41.

Similar to a concerto form, after the second theme is presented, Blahetka uses the material from the exposition (in this case from the previously mentioned transitioning section in figure 4.43) as inspiration for the development section:

44 *p* *molto legato*

45 *cresc:*

46 *f* *decresc:*

47 *marcato il canto.*

Harmonic progression (measures 44-47):

44: FI, V₃/vi, vi, V₃/IV, IV, BbV₃, I, V₃/vi, gV₃

45: I, V₃/VI, VI, EbV₃, I, V₃/vi, vi, cV₃, i, V₃/VI, AbV₃

46: cVI, AbI, V₃/vi, vi, fV₃, i, V₃/VI, VI, DbV₃, I

47: V₃, I

Figure 4.51. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, mm. 44-47.

Where in the first transition Blahetka kept the harmonic language simple, modulating from A Minor to F Major, this time the harmonies are more complex with frequent modulations. The section begins in F Major and travels through three major keys with their parallel minor, following the circle of fifths: B flat Major, G Minor, E flat Major, C Minor, A flat Major, F minor, finally

reaching D flat Major in m.47. However, very soon in m. 48 there is an enharmonic modulation that leads us to F sharp Minor in m. 49. This exciting moment is marked *Con fuoco*, with the *ff* dynamic, and it serves the same purpose as an orchestral tutti prior to a *cadenza* that sets up the entry of the soloist with drama:

Figure 4.52. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, mm. 48-49.

Although the right hand plays identical material as in the earlier transitional section (figure 4.46), this time the sequence is prolonged, supporting the more elaborate melody in the bass:

Figure 4.53. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, mm. 50-53.

This section marks the most passionate moment in the entire piece, after which Blahetka presents the ‘cadenza’:



Figure 4.54. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, m. 54.

From m. 54 until m. 57, Blahetka repeats the same pattern (fig. 4.54): exciting scale runs, ranging from *pp* to *ff*, that give the soloist an opportunity to showcase their virtuosity. With these technically challenging features, the intention of this section is similar to the one of a concerto *cadenza*. However, instead of ending the piece relatively soon, as it is usually the case after a *cadenza*, Blahetka repeats the entire first theme, followed by the repetition of the entire introduction. There are no ornaments, nor any kind of changes, which is unusual for the genre. As previously mentioned, one of the most characteristic features of a nocturne are embellishments of the recurring melodic motives. In *Nocturne No. 1* Blahetka demonstrates her creativity in this regard; it would be fair to assume that this lack of any variations of the theme in *Nocturne No. 2* is a deliberate choice. Indeed, this choice is linked to the concerto form: the aforementioned concertos of Chopin and Schumann do not alter their themes either, instead repeating them note-to-note during recapitulation.

Finally, starting m.80, Blahetka writes an exciting coda with arpeggiated chords in the right hand, which is another example of an unusual texture, more commonly found in concertos, rather than nocturnes (fig 4.55, mm. 80-85):

The musical score for Blahetka's Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2, measures 79-87, is presented in four systems. The first system (measures 79-80) shows a transition from a moderate tempo to a slower one, marked 'rallent.' and 'f'. The second system (measures 81-82) features a 'loco.' section with 'pp' dynamics and 'leggeramente' and 'veloce' markings. The third system (measures 83-84) continues the 'loco.' section with 'p' dynamics and 'sempre piano.' markings. The fourth system (measures 85-87) concludes the piece with 'Fine.' and 'p' dynamics. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'il basso cantante.', 'loco.', 'sempre piano.', and 'Fine.'.

Figure 4.55. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 46 No. 2*, mm. 79-87.

As a performer of this nocturne, I was initially puzzled by Blahetka's ending of the piece. Although composers frequently used arpeggiated chords to end a nocturne, the upward motion of both hands (fig. 4.55 m. 86) evokes a feeling of wondering, rather than a conclusion. Since Blahetka never composed the piano concerto, it is impossible to know if this nocturne was indeed just the beginning of a larger work. Blahetka's unique form and orchestral textures in this nocturne are pioneering example in the genre, as this piece is unlike any of the intimate nocturnes composed by her male contemporaries.

Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4 in A Minor

Although the number of this piece suggests that Blahetka composed at least four nocturnes, only three of them are known to us. It remains a mystery whether *Nocturne No. 3* was ever composed, and, if so, why it was never published. Still, it would be eye-opening to somehow discover this piece in future research, as Blahetka's approach in *Nocturne No. 4* drastically differs from her earlier nocturnes.

Published in 1855, *Nocturne No. 4* demonstrates a perfect balance between Blahetka's innovative ideas and the typical nineteenth century nocturne form. Although she still incorporates unique orchestral textures and compositional techniques used in Op. 46, the structure of the piece is much

more traditional. Paradoxically, it is precisely the traditional form that makes this nocturne unique, as Blahetka incorporates her signature sound whilst staying within the ‘genre’.

The entire nocturne revolves around two themes that are repeated twice, ending with a coda based on the thematic material. In this way, this piece is very similar to Chopin’s *Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2*, published in 1832. Considering the aforementioned relationship between the two composers, it is a fair assumption that Blahetka must have been familiar with this piece. Given the tradition defying compositional style of her first two nocturnes, perhaps Blahetka mimicked the form of one of Chopin’s most popular nocturne as a statement, showing the public that she is most certainly ‘capable’ of composing a traditional nocturne.

The similarities between the two nocturnes are apparent from the very beginning, as their themes share an identical character:

The image shows the first two measures of Chopin's Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2. The tempo is marked 'Andante' with a quarter note equal to 132 beats per minute. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/8. The music is written for piano. The first measure is marked with a circled '1' and the second with a circled '2'. The melody in the right hand consists of a series of eighth notes, with a slur over the first two measures. The bass line features a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The dynamic marking is 'p espressivo dolce'. Below the bass line, there are asterisks and the letters 'Red' repeated, likely indicating a specific recording or edition.

Figure 4.56. F. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2*, mm. 1-2.

Figure 4.57. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4*, mm. 1-5.

As seen in figs. 4.56 and 4.57, besides the barcarolle lilt, both themes begin with a prolonged tied note (fig. 4.56 m. 1, fig. 4.57 m.1).¹¹⁴ Further, both composers place a big leap (Chopin uses an octave while Blahetka uses a sixth) in almost identical place, and they use the same type of ornament to emphasize this moment (fig. 4.56 m.2, fig. 4.57 mm. 2-3). However, although similar at first, their development of the theme soon begins to differ. After presenting the four-bar theme, Chopin repeats it once more while masterfully decorating the melody with embellishments:

Figure 4.58. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2*, mm. 5-6.

¹¹⁴ Although Chopin starts with the upbeat, I am referring to the G in m. 1, as it stands out as the starting point of the melody.

By doing this, Chopin bases the entire A section of the nocturne on the same 4 measure melody. Blahetka's approach is quite different, as she never repeats the same material during the A section of the piece. She achieves this by surprisingly modulating to B flat minor in m. 8:

Figure 4.59. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4*, mm. 6-10.

By choosing the F Major 7th chord instead of the expected tonic in m. 8, Blahetka prolongs the theme for another eight bars. After the first theme is presented, both composers introduce new material. In Chopin's case, this second theme lasts only four measures, serving more as a transition, rather than a proper B section:

Figure 4.60. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2*, mm. 9-13.

Chopin repeats this B section once again before the last appearance of the theme in m. 21.

Contrary to Chopin, Blahetka chooses much longer melodic lines in her B section. Besides their length, another difference is a more apparent character change, which Blahetka achieves by modifying the accompaniment. Here, the change to an arpeggiated left hand creates a sense of movement and excitement, which Blahetka emphasizes by writing *Più vivo*:

Figure 4.61. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4*, mm. 16-20.

Blahetka further emphasizes the different feeling by writing *Più vivo* at the beginning of the second theme (fig. 4.61 m. 16). After eight bars, Blahetka repeats the same technique used in the first section, prolonging the melodic line by modulating into F Minor:

Figure 4.62. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4*, mm. 24-27.

However, although our ears expect another eight bars, making the structure of this theme 8+8 bars, Blahetka suddenly interrupts the flow of the melody by abruptly returning into the original D Flat Major in m. 29:

Figure 4.63. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4*, mm. 28-33.

As seen in fig. 4.63, this sudden change of key in m. 29 is supported by a *subito pp* dynamic marking. The descending D Flat Major scale (especially with the *pp* marking) deceptively implies a calming end to this section. However, Blahetka surprises yet again with a sudden crescendo in mm. 34-35:

Figure 4.64. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4*, mm. 34-36.

Lastly, Blahetka ends this section with a five-measure segment, demonstrating her ability to masterfully write *fiorituras* that are equally exciting as those found in Chopin's nocturnes (fig. 4.65 mm. 37 and 40):

Figure 4.65. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4*, mm. 34-40.

After the B section, both composers present a variation of the main theme. Chopin's approach is much more traditional, as he stays within the same emotion:

Figure 4.66. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2*, mm. 13-16.

Although Chopin decorates the melody by adding ornaments and chromaticism, the overall feeling stays constant. The accompaniment is exactly the same as before, and we are still within the same *p* dynamic.

Blahetka, on the other hand, offers a completely different emotion by drastically changing the texture of the theme:

Figure 4.67. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4*, mm. 41-48.

Here, Blahetka uses virtuosic techniques seen in *Nocturnes No. 1 and 2*: crossing-over of the hands, timpani-like tremolo to evoke an orchestral sound. This texture continues throughout the next sixteen bars, presenting a culmination point of the piece, followed by a coda. Interestingly, both composers use the Minor iv chord early on in their coda (fig. 4.68 mm.62-3, fig. 4.69 mm.25-6), evoking the same emotion of heartache and despair:

Figure 4.68. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4*, mm. 61-63.

Figure 4.69. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2*, mm. 25-26.

Although Chopin frequently used this harmony in his nocturnes, this is the only example of Blahetka using this chord. Besides the harmony, another interesting characteristic of Blahetka's coda are the voice-changing trills in the right hand (fig. 4.67 mm. 62-63), resembling technique often used by Beethoven in his late sonatas. After the minor iv chord, both composers reach the final peak in the piece. For Chopin, this moment happens closer to the end (fig. 4.70 m. 32), while Blahetka takes more time to reach the final chord (fig. 4.71 mm.63-73):

32 *sf*
ff senza tempo *p* *cres.*

33 *a tempo* *pp*

34 *ppp*

Figure 4.70. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2*, mm. 32-35.

61 *Cresc.*

62

63

64 *f*

65 *Molto ritenuto*

66 *A tempo* *p*

67

68

69 *Dim.* *Rall.* *pp*

70

71 *p*

72 *Perdendosi* *Rallent.*

73 *pp*

Figure 4.71. Blahetka, *Nocturne Op. 62 No. 4*, mm. 61-80.

In conclusion, although both composers essentially used the same model for their nocturnes, the end result is quite different. Where Chopin works within the same thematic and textural range, Blahetka offers more variety in both melodic lines, harmonic modulation, and textural sound world. And although compared to her other two nocturnes, this piece is less audacious with its traditional form, it perhaps shows Blahetka's attempt to establish herself as a note-worthy composer in this genre. Blahetka's mastery in developing long melodic lines, together with her recognizable orchestral sound, makes this well-crafted nocturne an exemplary case study of innovation with established traditions.

Louise Farrenc

Nocturne Op. 49 in E Flat Major

Published between 1859-63, this nocturne belongs to Farrenc's late compositional period, and is one of her last solo piano pieces. As it is the case with some of her other piano works (Farrenc's *Thirty Etudes Op. 26* share similar features with those of Chopin) there are similarities between this piece and Chopin's *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*. However, as Friedland argues: "there is no evidence whatsoever that Mme. Farrenc either knew Chopin personally or moved in his sphere."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Friedland, *Louise Farrenc*, 112.

Interestingly, amongst all the nocturnes in the group, only Blahetka's *Nocturne No. 4*, and this one by Farrenc, can be connected to the specific nocturnes by Chopin. This is perhaps due to the fact that both of these pieces were composed after Chopin's death. As his music continued to exist through publishing and performance, it is safe to assume that Farrenc may have been exposed to it. Despite the similarities with Chopin, Farrenc's nocturne is unique as it deviates from the usual right-hand/left-hand division, where one hand plays the main melodic material while the other serves as the accompaniment. Besides this unusual feature, this piece also presents a rare example of complex polyrhythms. This rhythmic feature, although commonly found in the genre, is surprisingly absent from the majority of nocturnes in this research, and it can only be seen in nocturnes by Farrenc and Wieck.

This nocturne begins with an introduction in which Farrenc establishes the barcarolle character of the whole piece:

The image shows the first 11 measures of the nocturne. The top system (measures 1-6) is marked 'Andante' with a tempo of 56. The right hand plays a waltz-like melody, and the left hand provides a simple accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'p' and 'sf', and performance instructions like 'a piacere' and 'dolce'. Chord symbols are provided below the bass staff, including Eb, I, vii/V, V/V, and V.

Figure 4.72. L. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49 in E Flat Major*, mm. 1-11.

Farrenc's harmonic boldness a mere four bars into the piece is arresting, given that introductions were quite uncommon in the genre (Field wrote an introduction only three times, while Chopin does this in four of his nocturnes). After the continuous E Flat Major, we are surprised by the bold $vii^{\circ}7/V$, in m. 4 emphasized by a *sforzando*. For a brief moment (up until we hear the resolution into the dominant B Flat Major 7th in m. 6), our perception of the key is lost, which further makes this introduction harmonically dramatic. Both Field and Chopin offer a strong sense of harmonic stability in their introductions, mostly revolving around the I-IV-V pattern. After this startling opening, the melody of the main theme reveals a close tie to Chopin's *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, which will continue throughout the piece.

The first few measures of the theme are almost identical in contour in both nocturnes:

Figure 4.73. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 8-11.

Figure 4.74. F. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, mm. 1-6.

As seen in figures above, both composers begin their theme on the third scale degree (fig. 4.73 m. 1, fig. 4.74 m. 2), after which they descend in the exact same way. Although Chopin adds the upbeat ‘F’ before reaching the long A Flat in m.3, both composers chose the same scale degree (five) as their first resting point (Farrenc m. 9, Chopin m. 3). This is followed by the identical rise towards the highest point in the melody of scale degree six (Farrenc m.10, Chopin m. 4). Although they structure this climax differently regarding rhythm, Farrenc’s melodic contour follows that of Chopin’s. It would be difficult to explain this similarity as a mere coincidence.

The first real difference in the theme happens after this peak. Although both composers choose a dissonance to emphasize this descend, the resolution is harmonized differently. Farrenc resolves the tension by going into the dominant B Flat Major (fig. 4.75), while Chopin prolongs the melancholic feeling with the ii Minor 7th harmony (fig. 4.76, m. 6).

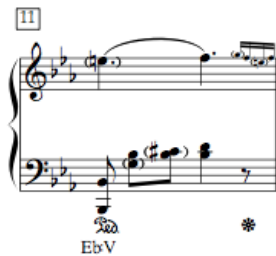


Figure 4.75. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, m. 11.

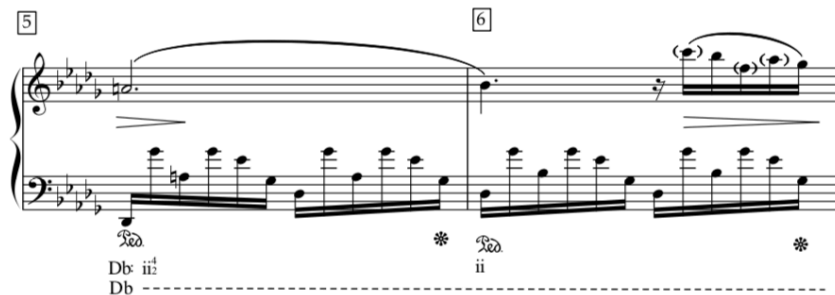


Figure 4.76: Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, mm. 5-6.

However, only few measures later the similarities are apparent yet again. Following the first eight-bar phrase, both composers choose the parallel minor as their next harmonic center:

Figure 4.77. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 16-19.

Figure 4.78. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, mm. 10-11.

Besides the harmonic similarity, the overall texture in this section doesn't change much from the previously heard theme. As seen in the examples above, the accompaniment stays identical in both

nocturnes. Even the added voice in the right hand, although more frequently seen in Chopin's nocturne, appears in the same section of Farrenc's piece:



Figure 4.79. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 22-23.

This is followed by another eight-bar transitional section, after which both composers repeat the main theme. As it is the case with previous sections, Farrenc again utilizes the same model as Chopin (fig. 4.81 mm. 19 and 21), emphasizing the emotional effect of the Neapolitan chord (fig. 4.80, mm. 24 and 28):

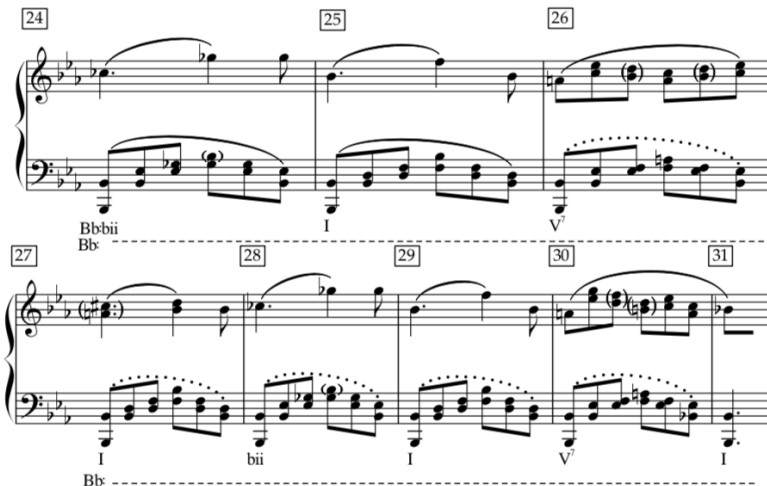


Figure 4.80. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 24-30.

Figure 4.81. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, mm. 19-21.

While it was common practice to use this particular harmony in romantic music, it is the timing of it that evokes curiosity. Is it really just a coincidence that Farrenc begins the same section of the piece not only with the same harmony, but, with the same voicing in the soprano (fig. 4.80, m. 24 begins with C flat which is the flat ii in the key of B Flat Major, while in fig. 4.81(m. 19) Chopin uses the same scale degree for his melody, beginning the triplet above the Neapolitan chord with double-flat B. Further, Farrenc makes the identical leap in the melody, moving from C Flat to G Flat in m. 24, while Chopin moves from double-flat B to F flat in m. 19, which are both identical intervals (the fifths). Perhaps all these decisions are indeed deliberate, and Farrenc is paying an homage to Chopin in a similar way Blahetka did with her *Nocturne No. 1*.

Following this transitional section, both composers repeat the main theme, adding the embellishments only at the end (fig. 4.82 mm. 37-38, fig. 4.83 mm. 32-33):

32 33 34 35 36

mf *cresc.*

37 38 39 40

dolce

Figure 4.82. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 32-40.

25 26 27 28

ritenuto *a tempo*

29 30 31

32 33 34

leggerissimo *dolce*

Figure 4.83. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, mm. 25-34.

This decision is interesting, as there are numerous examples in Chopin's nocturnes where the reappearance of the theme is decorated to a much greater extent. In this case, Chopin deliberately chooses not to alter the theme until the very end of m. 32. Farrenc copies this model despite it being uncommon for the genre, revealing yet another inevitable connection to Chopin's piece.

Following this reappearance of the theme, both composers evoke a more optimistic character by suddenly modulating to a different major key. Chopin's choice is much more extravagant as he modulates from D Flat Major into A Major, while Farrenc finds herself in the dominant B Flat Major:



Figure 4.84. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, m. 40.



Figure 4.85. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, m. 34.

This is the only section in the piece where Farrenc steps away from Chopin's model, although there are still occasional moments of resemblance. While Chopin develops this section by using already presented melodic motif from m. 10, Farrenc offers new material, displaying her compositional mastery in embellishments (fig. 4.86 m. 42):

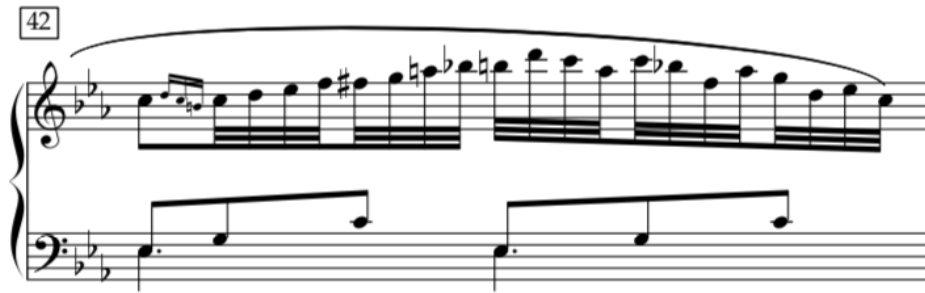


Figure 4.86. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, m. 42.

Another similar example happens in mm. 47 and 48 (fig. 4.87), where Farrenc changes the flow of the melody by suddenly incorporating triplets:



Figure 4.87. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 47-48.

Here Farrenc uses this section to experiment with different textures and compositional techniques.

In m. 50 we see a complex, multi-layered texture with a hidden melody in the left hand (fig. 4.88):

The image shows a musical score for Farrenc's Nocturne Op. 49, measures 50-54. It consists of two systems of piano music. The first system covers measures 50 and 51, and the second system covers measures 52 and 53. The music is written for piano in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The right hand features a complex, multi-layered texture with a hidden melody in the left hand. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'cresc.' and 'p'. There are also asterisks and a circled '7' in the bass staff of measure 53.

Figure 4.88. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 50-54.

Amongst the eight nocturnes, this is a rare example where the accompaniment is intertwined between the two hands. Besides the shared accompaniment, both hands play two separate melodic lines of equal importance, as the soprano line in the right hand echoes the already mentioned hidden melody played with the left hand. This type of texture is more commonly seen in *Lieder ohne Worte* (Songs without words), a nineteenth century genre made popular by Felix Mendelssohn. Below are two excerpts from Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* bearing striking textural resemblance to Farrenc:

The image shows a musical score for Felix Mendelssohn's Lieder ohne Worte Op. 85 No. 4, measures 12-15. It consists of two systems of piano music. The first system covers measures 12 and 13, and the second system covers measures 14 and 15. The music is written for piano in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The right hand features a complex, multi-layered texture with a hidden melody in the left hand. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'cresc.' and 'p'. There are also asterisks and a circled '7' in the bass staff of measure 13.

Figure 4.89. Felix Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte Op. 85 No. 4*, mm. 12-15.

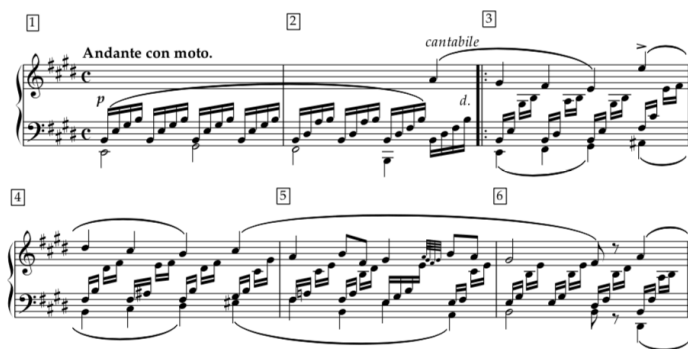


Figure 4.90. F. Mendelssohn, *Lieder ohne Worte Op. 19 No. 1*, mm. 1-6.

While both genres share the same core feature of the singing melody in the right hand, supported by arpeggiated accompaniment in the left, as Christian explains “Mendelssohn utilizes the then wildly popular three-hand technique much more than Field does”.¹¹⁶ This texture thus differentiates *Lieder ohne Worte* from a nocturne, and Farrenc’s use is a unique cross-fertilization between the two genres. Although there are instances in Chopin’s nocturnes where the right hand plays two separate voices, this material is never shared with the left hand. As busy as his texture gets, pianistically it never calls for the three-hand technique. This is significant as it makes Farrenc’s nocturne a noteworthy example of intermixture between the two genres.

Another important feature in this section is polyrhythm, which Farrenc introduces in m. 58 (fig. 4.91):



Figure 4.91. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 58-59.

¹¹⁶ Christian, “The Nocturne,” 331.

By using polyrhythms, Farrrenc creates a texture audibly similar to the previous three-hands one, making the transition between the two sections undisturbed. Further, as this is a build-up to the culmination point of the piece, this rhythm contributes to the overall feeling of anticipation and excitement.

Once Farrrenc reaches the peak in m. 65, the resemblance with Chopin's *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2* resurfaces, as both composers repeat the highest note several times before descending towards the final presentation of the main theme (fig. 4.92 mm. 65-7, fig. 4.93 mm. 42-5):

Figure 4.92. Farrrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 65-70.

Figure 4.93. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, mm. 41-46.

As seen in figures above, even the articulation is identical with accents on each repeated note. Also, both Chopin and Blahetka approach the first note of the theme in the same way, getting into it from half step above (fig. 4.92 m. 69, fig. 4.93 m. 46). Following this exciting peak is the final appearance of the main theme, which is significantly embellished in both nocturnes. While Chopin chooses extensive fiorituras in decorating the theme (fig. 4.94 mm. 51-52), Farrenc once again utilizes the features of *Lieder ohne Worte*, dividing the accompaniment between the two hands (fig. 4.95):

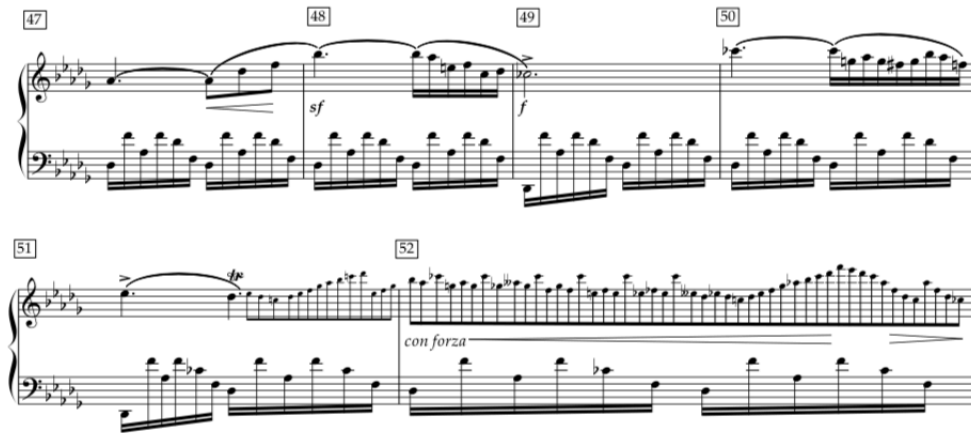


Figure 4.94. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, mm. 47-52.



Figure 4.95. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 71-77.

Particularly interesting moment happens in m. 90 (fig. 4.96), where Farrenc suddenly uses double-sixths for the descending melodic line:



Figure 4.96. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, m. 90.

Throughout the entire section, this is the only example of double intervals, which further confirms Farrenc's connection to Chopin's nocturne, as Chopin uses the exact same intervals in his descent:

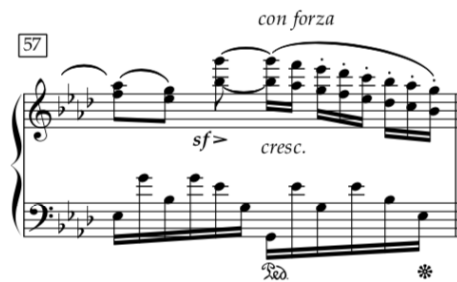


Figure 4.97. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, m. 57.

Lastly, following the final proclamation of the theme, both composers write an unusually long coda. Amongst all of Chopin's nocturnes, this type of elaborate ending can only be seen three more times in *Op. 48 No. 2*, *Op. 55 No. 1*, and *Op. 62 No. 1*. Further, there is a hidden melodic line, played with the left-hand thumb, which is the same in both nocturnes:

Figure 4.98. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 101-106.

Figure 4.99. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, mm. 62-68.

Particularly interesting is Farrenc's notation of this hidden line, as she indicates the importance of it by adding longer note values. It is as if she wants to make sure this melody is emphasized. While at first one may only notice the resemblance with Chopin's left hand, it is the melody in the top voice that Farrenc is quoting: D Flat – C – C Flat – B flat. Lastly, if Farrenc indeed composed this nocturne as an homage to Chopin, her final nod most certainly is the very ending, in which she uses the exact same voicing of the double-sixths as he does:

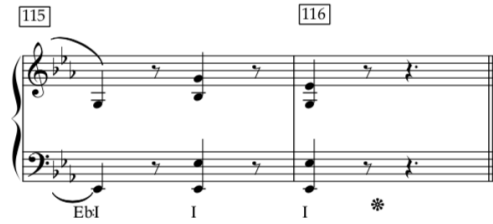


Figure 4.100. Farrenc, *Nocturne Op. 49*, mm. 115-116.

Figure 4.101. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2*, mm. 76-77.

Although there is no evidence of Chopin and Farrenc ever meeting in person, undoubtedly Farrenc must have been familiar with his music, which is apparent in her nocturne. The extent of similarities leads to a conclusion that Farrenc deliberately emphasized particular features from Chopin's nocturne as a way to celebrate the late master of the genre. However, the most significant characteristic of this piece is Farrenc's creative synergy of two genres: nocturne and *Lieder ohne Worte*. With this in mind, Farrenc's nocturne should be acknowledged as a rare hybrid-form example amongst nineteenth century nocturnes.

Fanny Hensel

Notturmo in G Minor

Although Hensel composed the *Notturmo* on October 15th, 1838, she withheld it from publication, perhaps due to her insecurities as discussed in chapter three. It is her great-granddaughter Fanny Kistner-Hensel who, in 1986, finally published a selection of previously unknown pieces, amongst which was the *Notturmo*. In the preface of this edition, Rudolph Elvers points out an important fact regarding the year in which *Notturmo* was created, noting that “by this time she [Hensel] had found her own unmistakable idiom for piano, the imaginative breadth of which can best be measured in the great g-minor Notturmo”.¹¹⁷ Of similar opinion is Jeffrey Kallberg, one of the few scholars who explored this piece. Regarding Hensel’s decision not to publish the *Notturmo*, Kallberg asks an important question: “can we imagine Chopin making the same decision with a piece of this high quality?”¹¹⁸ Kallberg here, and rightfully so, draws an equal line between Chopin and Hensel, which is a rare instance in literature, particularly regarding this genre for which Chopin is considered a master.

Contrary to other nocturnes in the group, which consist of different sections with distinct characteristics, Hensel’s *Notturmo* is built entirely upon the same motif presented in the theme. This motif consists of double-thirds moving in such direction where the second third is two steps

¹¹⁷ Rudolph Elvers. Preface for *Selected Piano Works of Fanny Hensel geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy*. (G. Henle Verlag, 1986.), VI.

¹¹⁸ Kallberg, “*The Harmony of the Tea Table*,” 126.

lower than the first, followed by a step-up motion. These first three thirds are followed by a dotted rhythm, which makes this motif very audible every time it reappears:



Figure 4.102. Fanny Hensel, *Notturmo*, m. 1

While this approach might suggest a connection to Field, as his nocturnes avoid contrasting sections (later typical for Chopin's nocturnes), Hensel's actually differs from the Fieldian model by developing the entire piece around the same motif.¹¹⁹ Regardless of the section, the melodic line in Hensel's nocturne starts with the same (or very slightly altered) motif as the beginning of the piece. Field's melodic lines in different sections of the nocturne are more distinct from one another, making it easier to recognize where a particular section ends. It is the same model that Chopin will later use in his nocturnes. However, despite the repetitiveness of the thematic material, Hensel masterfully engages the listener by delaying the dominant-tonic cadence. Instead, Hensel frequently "slides through some extraordinary chromatic byways" evoking a feeling of wandering and anticipation throughout the piece.¹²⁰ Despite Kallberg's contribution in recognizing this piece as an important work in the nocturne studies, his brief analysis does not highlight all of the innovative techniques Hensel incorporated in her nocturne. While we share the same view of the importance of this piece, my analysis dissects this nocturne in a much more elaborate way. And

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 123.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 124.

although Kallberg recognizes the similarities between this piece and the *Lieder ohne Worte*, there are other parallels that can be made, in particular with Chopin's *Ballade in G Minor*, which I highlight in my analysis.

Amongst the eight nocturnes, this one without a doubt has the most tragic character. Right from the beginning, Hensel's theme, written in double-thirds, creates an overconsuming feeling of pathos. This is unusual as most nocturnes frequently start with a single-line melody:



Figure 4.103. F. Hensel, *Notturmo*, mm. 1-5.

Besides the sorrowful melodic line, the continuous pedal tone in the accompaniment contributes to the heaviness of this theme. And while this type of arpeggiated left hand was commonly found in the genre, Hensel expands on the model by frequently adding octaves on every first (sometimes also the fourth) beat. Although Chopin used similar format in the middle section of *Nocturne Op. 27 No.1* (fig. 4.104), Hensel's *Notturmo* is a unique example where octaves are continuously featured in the accompaniment throughout the piece (figs. 4.103 and 4.105):

Figure 4.104. F. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 27 No. 1*, mm. 39-43.

Figure 4.105. F. Hensel, *Notturmo*, mm. 26-32.

Hensel abandoned this left-hand pattern only a handful of times, during which she incorporated features from the *Lieder ohne Worte* where the accompaniment is divided between the hands, ‘forcing’ the right hand to play both the top melodic line, as well as parts of the accompaniment (fig. 4.106, mm. 23-25):



Figure 4.106. F. Hensel, *Notturmo*, mm. 23-25.

As seen in figure above, the arpeggiated pattern is now divided between the two hands, a technique often found in *Lieder ohne Worte*. This is not surprising, considering that Hensel greatly contributed to developing this genre with her brother Felix Mendelssohn. And while we don't hear the continuous accompaniment in the left hand, by using this hand division Hensel keeps the momentum, creating a constant feeling of turmoil. As a matter of fact, the continuous sixteenth-note pulse is only briefly interrupted in m. 79, very close to the end of the piece:

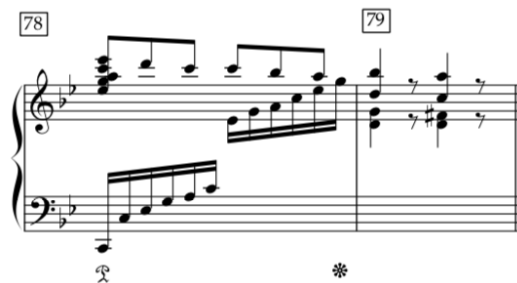


Figure 4.107. F. Hensel, *Notturmo*, mm. 78-79.

Besides this moment in m. 79, and the very ending of the nocturne, the sixteenth note continuous motion is never interrupted. Particularly interesting are transitional moments in which Hensel uses sixteenth -notes to write prolonged melodic lines in the right-hand. These moments resemble

sections of Chopin's *Ballade Op. 23 No. 1 in G Minor*, as they often announce the reappearance of the theme:

The image shows a musical score for two measures, 93 and 94, of Chopin's *Ballade Op. 23 No. 1*. Measure 93 features a treble clef staff with a melodic line starting on G4, moving up to A4, B4, C5, and then down to B4, A4, G4. The bass clef staff has a bass line starting on G3, moving up to A3, B3, C4, and then down to B3, A3, G3. The dynamic marking is *m. d.* (mezzo-forte) for the treble and *m. g.* (mezzo-giove) for the bass. Measure 94 features a treble clef staff with a melodic line starting on G4, moving up to A4, B4, C5, and then down to B4, A4, G4. The bass clef staff has a bass line starting on G3, moving up to A3, B3, C4, and then down to B3, A3, G3. The dynamic marking is *pp* (pianissimo) for both staves. The tempo marking is *a tempo.* The key signature is one flat (F major/G minor) and the time signature is 4/4. There are asterisks under the bass line in both measures.

Figure 4.108. F. Chopin, *Ballade Op. 23 No. 1*, mm. 93-94.

The image shows a musical score for two measures, 193 and 194, of Chopin's *Ballade Op. 23 No. 1*. Measure 193 features a treble clef staff with a melodic line starting on G4, moving up to A4, B4, C5, and then down to B4, A4, G4. The bass clef staff has a bass line starting on G3, moving up to A3, B3, C4, and then down to B3, A3, G3. The dynamic marking is *pp* (pianissimo). Measure 194 features a treble clef staff with a melodic line starting on G4, moving up to A4, B4, C5, and then down to B4, A4, G4. The bass clef staff has a bass line starting on G3, moving up to A3, B3, C4, and then down to B3, A3, G3. The dynamic marking is *pp sempre* (pianissimo sempre) for the treble and *sotto* (sotto) for the bass. The tempo marking is *Meno mosso.* The key signature is one flat (F major/G minor) and the time signature is 4/4.

Figure 4.109. F. Chopin, *Ballade Op. 23 No. 1*, mm. 193-94.

While in Chopin's case these transitions last for a measure or two, Hensel expands on this idea, making them significantly longer (fig. 4.110 mm. 37-44, fig. 4.111 mm. 59-63):

37 38 39 40

41 42 43

44 45 46

Figure 4.110. F. Hensel, *Notturmo*, mm. 37-46.

59 60 61

62 63 64

Figure 4.111. F. Hensel, *Notturmo*, mm. 59-64.

Although these types of transitional sections are commonly seen in the piano literature of this time, the way in which Hensel incorporates them into her *Notturmo* is unique, since we usually see similar melodic shapes being used as embellishments of the theme. As most nocturnes (particularly those composed around the same time as Hensel's *Notturmo*) consist of multiple sections with contrasting material, often there is no need for an elaborate transition. Even if the contrast between the sections is very subtle, composers use techniques other than long transitions, such as slight change of the accompaniment pattern, modulation into a different key, or new motifs in the melodic line to distinguish the beginning of a new section. As seen in fig. 4.111, Hensel writes extensive transitions, masterfully prolonging the melodic line from the previous section. By doing so, she creates an illusion of one continuous melody that never ends. It is precisely this technique, together with the delayed cadence, that enabled Hensel to deviate from the traditional structure. This is significant as it clearly shows Hensel's effort in expanding the form.

As Kallberg notices, Hensel “went beyond the Chopin model in more decidedly imposing a sense of higher- level structure, of formal return, on the processive phrases”.¹²¹ Kallberg here refers to m. 63 where Hensel suggests a reprise:

¹²¹ Kallberg, “*The Harmony of the Tea Table*,” 124.

Figure 4.112. F. Hensel, *Notturmo*, mm. 62-67.

Hensel emphasizes this moment by finally offering the first concrete dominant-tonic cadence (fig. 4.111, mm. 59-63). However, although she implies recapitulation, Hensel only briefly repeats the first few measures of the piece, after which she transitions into coda in m. 80. Particularly interesting moment happens in m. 75 (fig. 4.113), with the sudden interruption of the meter. Hensel here writes an incomplete measure with only three beats (instead of six):¹²²

Figure 4.113. F. Hensel, *Notturmo*, mm. 74-76.

¹²² According to her autograph, m. 75 is placed at the start of the new line and is followed by m. 74. Regardless of the order, it is clear that Hensel deliberately intended for an incomplete measure to appear in this section.

This change of meter is quite unusual in the genre, particularly for only one measure. While Field never did this in his nocturnes, Chopin used the same technique only in his *Nocturne Op. 15 No. 1* (published in 1833):

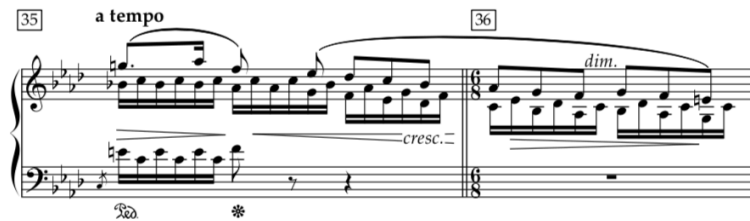


Figure 4.114. F. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 15 No. 1*, mm. 35-36.

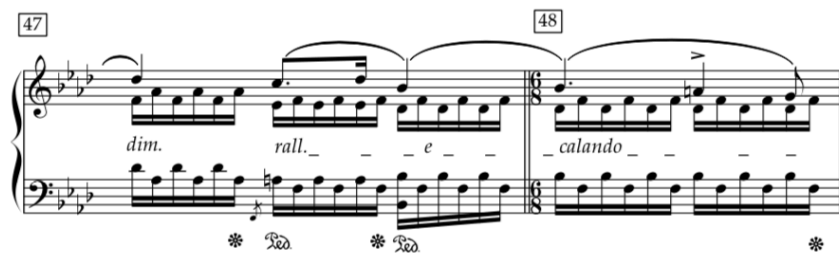


Figure 4.115. F. Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 15 No. 1*, mm. 47-48.

While changing the meter in this way might suggest an increase in momentum (as suddenly we are skipping beats), both composers use this technique to achieve quite the opposite; in both cases the incomplete measure is used to prolong the phrase, which further leads to slowing down the pace.

Similar to m. 63, in which Hensel suggest a reprise, the cadence in m. 79 (fig. 4.116) suggests the beginning of a coda:

78 79 80

g^{ii}_5 ii V^7 V^7/iv V^7/iv iv

Figure 4.116. F. Hensel, *Notturmo*, mm. 78-80.

As it was the case throughout the entire piece, Hensel builds the coda by using motifs from the theme (fig.4.117, mm.84-86), as well as fragments from previously discussed transitional moments (fig. 4.117, mm. 87-88). Despite the predominant tragic feeling of this piece, Hensel chooses G Major as the final destination, ending the *Notturmo* with a feeling of hope:

84 85 86

pp
una corda

87 88 89 90

Figure 4.117. F. Hensel, *Notturmo*, mm. 84-90.

This hopeful ending may as well be a perfect metaphor for this moment in Hensel's life, as the *Notturmo* came around the time of her liberating experience traveling far away from her brother. As discussed in chapter three, it is during this time that Hensel finally allowed herself to freely compose and publish music, without seeking approval from her family. However, despite Hensel's newfound confidence, *Notturmo* was never published. The reason behind such decision remains a mystery, although Kallberg offers a compelling interpretation:

“To view Hensel's nocturne as simply another exemplar in the great tradition of the genre is to whitewash the most essential feature of its relationship to this tradition. For her experience with the genre greatly differed from that of her male contemporaries. In the end, her challenge to it remained a personal battle; she never published the nocturne. Can we imagine Chopin making the same decision with a piece of this high quality? The message from Fanny Hensel seems to be that challenges to tradition must be confined to private musical statements, that for a woman there lurked unstated dangers in publicly confronting orthodoxy.”¹²³

Attesting to Kallberg's conclusion is Hensel's correspondence with Felix, in which she clearly recognizes the impact her gender had on her career as a composer (see chapter three). It is therefore safe for Kallberg to assume that Hensel indeed felt that it was dangerous to publicly confront tradition, which could explain why she never published this nocturne.

¹²³ Ibid, 126.

Clara Wieck

Notturmo in F Major

Wieck composed the *Notturmo* in 1835-36 as part of her set *Soirées Musicales Op. 6*. During this time, Wieck included Chopin's mazurkas, nocturne, and etudes into her repertoire, which naturally influenced her compositional language. As Kimber suggests, it is in the *Soirées Musicales* that Wieck "approached most closely the music of Chopin".¹²⁴ She further adds that "many harmonic progressions and melodic turns are reminiscent of the Polish composer's style; repetitions of melodic phrases are varied with the Chopinesque figuration".¹²⁵

Chopin's influence is also evident in the A-B-A form Wieck chose for her piece, as he introduced this model in his nocturnes. These contrasting middle sections, often evoking a feeling of agitation, were quite unorthodox at the time, as they greatly departed from the Fieldian model. Even Robert Schumann criticized this innovation as "weaker than his [Chopin's] first inventions."¹²⁶ Needless to say, by introducing the contrasting section in her *Notturmo*, Wieck directly linked herself to the innovative Chopin. Put in the context of time, this choice was quite progressive for young Wieck, particularly considering Schumann's skepticism. And while Chopin's influence is apparent, Wieck's originality with the form still shines through. Further, Wieck's notated rubato gives us an

¹²⁴ Maria Wilson Kimber. "From the Concert Hall to the Salon: The Piano Music of Clara Wieck Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel," in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, ed. By Todd, R. Larry. (New York: Routledge, 2004.), 322.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 322.

¹²⁶ Robert Schumann, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (August 10th, 1838), 56-57.

insight into the performance practice of the time perhaps much more than any other nocturne of the that period.

Right from the beginning of the piece, Wieck greatly differs from the tradition in the way she harmonizes the opening theme. Unlike other nocturnes of the time, where there is a sense of tonal stability at the beginning, Wieck alternates between F Major and its parallel D Minor to create tonal ambiguity:

1 2 3 4 5 6

Andante con moto.

sempre legato.

dolce.

F-I

V/vi
d-V⁶

V⁷

i⁶

f:-----

Figure 4.118. Clara Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 1-6.

Although the opening two measures imply a feeling of serenity, Wieck quickly disrupts this in m. 3 (fig. 4.118), by placing the dissonant augmented triad (F-A-C Sharp) as the accompaniment for the beginning of the theme. This unstable harmony will resonate throughout the piece, reoccurring in every appearance of the theme, as well as in the coda (fig. 4.119 mm. 27-28, fig. 4.120 mm. 90-91, fig. 4.121 m. 121, fig. 4.122 m.123):

Figure 4.119. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 26-29.

Figure 4.120. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 90-92.

Figure 4.121. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 121-122.

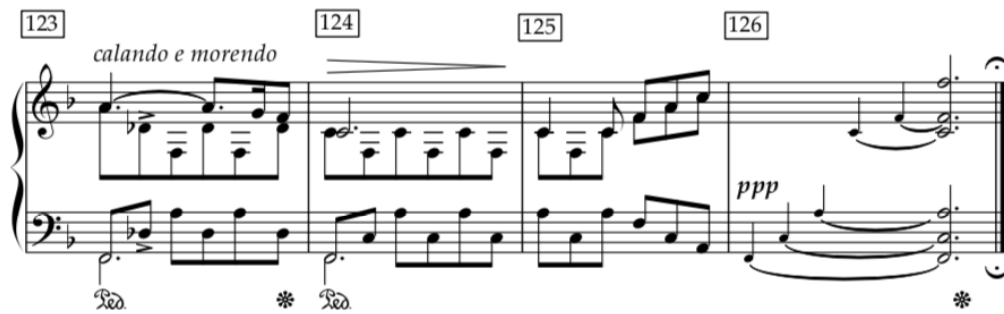
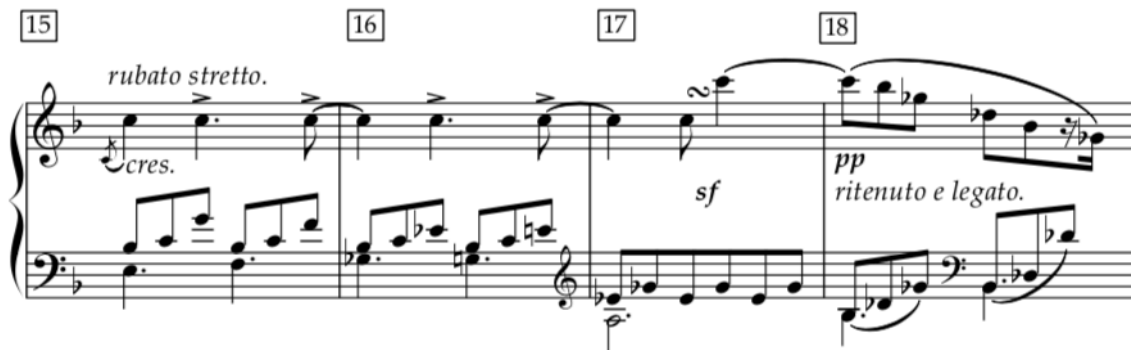


Figure 4.122. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 123-126.

Another prevailing harmonic feature of this piece is chromaticism, often used as a way to prolong the melodic line and delay the feeling of arrival. The first instance of this can be seen in mm. 15-17 (fig. 4.123), where Wieck continuously repeats the “C” in the right hand while each time moving the bass line of the accompaniment for a half step up:



Figure

4.123. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 15-18.

Interestingly, this upward chromatic direction in the accompaniment marks the first notated rubato in the piece. Wieck writes *rubato stretto* in m. 15, clearly demanding that each harmony should be played with more momentum. Amongst the eight nocturnes Chopin composed up to 1836, only twice does he notate *rubato* in the score.¹²⁷ These rubato markings are significant as they give us an indication of the rhythmically expressive performance style of the genre.

Contrary to Chopin who notates rubato only once in his two nocturnes, Wieck repeats the marking again in m. 44 (fig. 4.124):



Figure 4.124. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 44-46.

Besides this marking, Wieck frequently suggests slight changes in tempo as another way to notate rubato. Although these tempo indications are common for nineteenth-century music, Wieck appears to be using them much more liberally than any other composer of this genre. In this

¹²⁷ Chopin writes *Poco rubato sempre* in m. 26 of Op. 9 No. 2, and *Languido e rubato* in the opening of Op. 15 No. 3.

relatively short piece (compared to the length of most Chopin's nocturnes), Wieck notates changes in pace fourteen times. Even in his longest nocturnes Chopin does not exceed this number. Further, Wieck frequently incorporates these markings in the middle of a phrase (figure 4.118), which is opposite of Chopin who usually uses them at the end. One of the many examples happens in m. 78, where Wieck suggests both *animato rin f*, and *ritenuto* within the same measure:



Figure 4.125. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 78-79.

As it is the case with the examples discussed earlier, Wieck saves these markings for the moment of chromaticism in the accompaniment. Figure 4.124 shows the culmination point of section B, after which Wieck begins a gradual transition into section A. During this transition, Wieck evokes the unsettling emotion of the F-A-C Sharp triad by introducing the D-Flat as a passing tone:



Figure 4.126. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 80-83.

As D Flat serves only as a passing tone, the tonal stability is not disturbed, providing a clear sense of F Major key. However, at the very end of section B (fig. 4.127 mm.88-89), Wieck modulates into D Minor through the dominant A Major chord (figure 4.127, m. 88). Although at first there is no dissonance, the return of the main theme in the following measure once again brings the unsettling augmented triad:

Figure 4.127. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 85-94.

As this is the last proclamation of the theme, Wieck embellishes it in a particularly passionate way by adding octaves with a *ff* dynamic marking:

Figure 4.128. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 95-96.

Amongst the five composers in my research, Wieck's approach towards embellishments is the most similar to Chopin's, as it follows the same model where each appearance of the theme is ornamented in a more elaborate way than before. By using this technique both composers achieve a powerful emotional effect, saving the culmination point of the piece for the last appearance of the theme. The following figures (figs. 4.129, 4.130 and 4.131) show the development of the main theme throughout the piece. Fig. 4.129 shows the theme as it first appears. As seen in mm. 3-6 (fig. 4.129), Wieck writes a rhythmically simple melodic line consisting of dotted quarter notes. The melody gradually descends, moving for a step down in each measure:



Figure 4.129. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 1-12.

Figure 4.130 shows the first variation of the theme, starting in m. 28, in which Wieck embellishes the melody by adding sixteenth-notes coloraturas (fig. 4.130 mm. 28, 29 and 32):

Figure 4.130. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 26-35.

In fig. 4.131 we see the second variation of theme, starting in m. 91. While this time the very beginning is almost identical to the original theme (fig. 4.129), Wieck incorporates an embellishment in a form of a passionate outburst of octaves in m. 95 (fig. 4.131):

Figure 4.131. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 90-98.

The latter example is particularly interesting as Wieck writes the entire ornamentation in octaves, which cannot be seen in any of Chopin's nocturnes. While he occasionally uses octaves for a similar purpose (middle section of *Nocturne Op. 48 No. 1*), he never does that in the same context (of alteration of the main theme) as Wieck. This is yet another example of outburst of virtuosity, similar to those of Blahetka and Szymanowska, that defies the characterization of female composers-performers of that time. Similar to Blahetka, perhaps Wieck expanded on the traditional model in order to be taken seriously as a composer.

Besides ornamentation, another characteristic that distinguishes Wieck amongst the five composers is her treatment of polyrhythm. As mentioned earlier, only Farrenc and Wieck incorporated polyrhythms in their nocturnes. While Farrenc consistently stayed within the most basic 'three on two' division, Wieck offered a greater variety, using polyrhythmic figures often seen in nocturnes by Chopin. These range from eleven over four in fig. 4.132, eight against six in figs. 4.133 and 4.134, to nine against six in fig. 4.135:



Figure 4.132. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, m. 30.

Figure 4.133. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, m. 37.

Figure 4.134. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 50-52.

Figure 4.135. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, m. 54.

Following the last proclamation of the theme Wieck writes a coda in which she emphasizes the Neapolitan chord by alternating between the flat II and flat VI harmony:

113 114 115 116 117

con espress.

p *pp*

Fbvi bii V I iv

118 119 120 121 122

bii V7 I V7/vi vi⁶

F-----

Figure 4.136. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 113-122.

As seen in fig. 4.136, in m. 121 we are once again reminded of the unsettling augmented triad. It is as if Wieck is struggling to find peace until the very end, in m. 124 (fig. 4.137), where the arrival of the tonic F Major chord allows for a final sigh of relief:

123 124 125 126

calando e morendo

ppp

F F F

Figure 4.137. C. Wieck, *Notturmo in F Major Op. 6*, mm. 123-126.

The analysis of this piece reveals progressive ideas, particularly regarding harmony and form. Further, Wieck's rubato indications for performance style are significant for any performer or scholar interested in historical performance practice. As such, this piece deserves to be recognized as an important example in the genre.

CONCLUSION

Since the early twentieth century, the scholarship surrounding piano nocturnes has been predominantly defined by those composed by Chopin and Field. Similarly, recordings and live performances follow the same trend, rarely showcasing works outside of the canon. Our knowledge of this genre as an intimate form, and its characteristic pianistic writing have been consequently confined to these two Romantic figures. The unusual textures, hybrid forms, and the virtuosic demands found in the eight nocturnes suggest a much greater variety in nocturne compositional style during the nineteenth century. Moreover, these nocturnes by female composers defy the ideal of the “feminine” with which nocturnes are often associated, an ideal that purports that women’s music is more intimate than public-facing concerti and symphonies, fit for private salon consumption exclusively.

The in-depth analyses of the forgotten nocturnes by Szymanowska, Blahetka, Farrenc, Hensel, and Wieck, reveal a countering outlook to this genre. Szymanowska was the first amongst the five women to introduce the unusual moments of virtuosity in her *Nocturne in B Flat Major*. By incorporating octaves extensively, she created an unorthodox sonic experience that challenged the idealized “feminine” association of the nocturne consolidated in the nineteenth century. Her nocturne *Le Murmure* is a sole example in the genre with three-hand notation, arguably presenting a unique pedagogical study as well as the study for salon-setting performance practice. Similar to Szymanowska, Blahetka foregrounded virtuosity in her nocturnes, creating showcase pieces with

orchestral textures more suitable for a concert hall, rather than the salon. Blahetka also significantly deviated from the traditional nocturne form, instead creating her own hybrid nocturnes: the Polonaise-Nocturne and the Concerto-Nocturne. Farrenc and Hensel incorporated elements from *Lieder ohne Worte* into their nocturnes, often disrupting one of most common nocturne features: the division of the hands in which the left hand solely serves as the accompaniment. They both challenged this model by merging these two forms, each in their own unique ways. While staying within the traditional form, Wieck's *Notturmo* was in many ways ahead of its time, particularly regarding masterful embellishments and unique harmonic language. Her unusually detailed notation of *rubato* serves as an insight to the performance practice of the time.

As a performer whose conservatory training focused on nocturnes only by Chopin, my perspective of this genre and how these pieces 'should' sound have been confined. This research significantly enriched my own performance of these works, particularly regarding tempo and dynamics, as I no longer view them solely as melancholic, salon-type love-songs that do not allow for too much excitement. In that realm, the experience of playing these eight nocturnes has been liberating. In many instances, these works not only suggest but demand for more virtuosity and exhilaration not commonly associated with nocturnes. Applied to nocturnes by other composers, particularly those of Chopin that have been performed endlessly throughout the twentieth century, this knowledge offers a refreshing outlook on these works.

These eight nocturnes are not only valuable as additions to the nocturne repertoire, but they also give insight to the compositional styles and approaches of female composers and pianists in the

face of gendered criticism and expectations. The frequent bravura and almost transgressive virtuosic display of these nocturnes reveal that gendered stereotypes of women's music as meek and intimate fall apart upon serious scrutiny. And while performers are often encouraged to promote music by contemporary composers, it is equally as important to research and promote past music that has been forgotten today, despite being popular during its time. As these undervalued composers are long gone without a possibility to promote themselves, it is up to the curious minds of contemporary performers and academics to revisit their works and help promote their music. The rewards of such research are manifold, leading to deepened and new understandings of canonic composers and of established genres.

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