

Gestural Patterns in Kujaw Folk Performing Traditions: Implications for the Performer of  
Chopin's Mazurkas

by

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BMUS, University of Victoria, 2009

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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in the School of Music

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

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One of the major problems faced by performers of Chopin's mazurkas is recapturing the elements that Chopin drew from Polish folk music. Although scholars from around 1900 exaggerated Chopin's quotation of Polish folk tunes in their mixed agendas that related 'Polishness' to Chopin, many of the rudimentary and more complex elements of Polish folk music are present in his compositions. These elements affect such issues as rhythm and meter, tempo and tempo fluctuation, repetitive motives, undulating melodies, function of I and V harmonies. During his vacations in Szafarnia in the Kujawy region of Central Poland in his late teens, Chopin absorbed aspects of Kujawy performing traditions which served as impulses for his compositions.

This study examines how certain qualities of *movement* or *gesture* experienced in Kujawy music are embedded in Chopin's mazurka style. Modern performances of Chopin's mazurkas are too often far removed from these original sources. This thesis aims to reconnect the pianist with the gestures embedded within Chopin's mazurka styles by: i) assessing the gestural nuances in *Kujawy* folk music; ii) identifying these trends as gestures and notational elements in Chopin's mazurkas; and iii) examining historical performances of Chopin's mazurkas to demonstrate the techniques that performers have utilized to capture these folk patterns and traditions. Field recordings from the Kujawy region, and historical recordings of Chopin mazurkas played mostly by Polish pianists accompany the discussion.

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## Abbreviations to Score Editions

- Ekier - Fryderyk Chopin, *Mazurki*, Edited by Jan Ekier (Krakow: PWM National Edition Series A Vol. 4, 2004).
- Schirmer- Frédéric Chopin, *The Complete Works for Piano*, vol.2 *The Mazurkas*, Edited by Carl Mikuli (New York: G. Schirmer Music, 1894). Accessed via [www.free-scores.com](http://www.free-scores.com)

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# CHAPTER I – THE PROBLEM OF PERFORMANCE IN CHOPIN’S MAZURKAS

## Introduction

Audiences and performers have struggled to make sense of the various gestural and temporal issues connected with Chopin’s largest corpus of works, the 58 published Mazurkas, since the time of their composition. Yet, these unique and deeply personal works, composed in the spirit of original Polish folk dance, fascinate artists and scholars and remain the hallmark of Chopin’s oeuvre.

No genre of Frédéric Chopin's oeuvre carries such an enduring aura of otherness than does the mazurka... the very strangeness of the genre seems to compel further investigation; obsessively, we scholars and pianists want to confront these remarkable works and their contexts over and over again.<sup>1</sup>

The struggle to comprehend the “otherness” that penetrates the very style of this music dates back to the composer’s own performances:

During one of my lessons with Chopin, Meyerbeer made his appearance. [...] I was just playing the Mazurka in C major (op.33 no.2). Meyerbeer sat down and Chopin told me to continue. ‘This is in 2/4 time,’ Meyerbeer said. Chopin contradicted him, told me to start again, and kept time by loudly tapping a pencil against the piano top [...]. ‘2/4,’ Meyerbeer repeated calmly. This was the only occasion when I saw Chopin lose his temper. [...] ‘It is in 3/4,’ he raised his voice, although it was his custom to speak softly. ‘Lend me [this theme] for the ballet in my opera,’ continued Meyerbeer ‘and I shall prove it to you.’ ‘It is in 3/4,’ reiterated Chopin almost shouting, and played himself. He performed the Mazurka several times, counting loudly and keeping time with his foot: he lost all control! To no avail. Meyerbeer insisted on 2/4. They parted in an irritated mood. [...] Chopin disappeared into his

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Kallberg, review of *Piano Mazurkas of Polish Composers: Anthology from the Collection of the National Library*, by Elżbieta Wąsowska; and *Mazurkas*, by Frédéric Chopin, ed. Désiré N’ Kaoua, *Notes* 55 (1998): 181.

study without bidding me goodbye. The whole situation lasted barely several minutes. [...] Nonetheless, it was Chopin who was right: despite the fact that the third value is swallowed in the above theme, it does not cease existing.<sup>2</sup>

This famous story, as told by Wilhelm von Lenz in 1872, was well known within Chopin's circle of acquaintances.<sup>3</sup> Lenz's account (and others in Appendix C) reveals that Chopin's own playing of certain passages of his mazurkas created the illusion for many listeners that the music seemed to have either an added beat or a missing beat, giving the impression of duple time. While scholars have since conceded that the nature of this temporal phenomenon lies in the national spirit of the dance, it remains clear in performance history that these dance and musical gestures have only partially been understood.

Few pianists have grasped a genuine sense of the temporal and rhythmic pliancy connected with the mazurka's innermost dance gestures and traditions.<sup>4</sup> Of the approximately 3,000 recorded performances of Chopin's mazurkas, few depend on other than conventional Western performance practice and expression. Most depend on an approach which might be termed a generic 'folk' or 'Chopin' style of playing. Some examples include: the Viennese waltz style adaptation and eccentric tempi of Patrick Cohen, the extensively prolonged second beat in

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<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm von Lenz, *Die grossen Pianoforte-Virtuosen unserer Zeit* (Berlin, 1872) quoted in: Fryderyk Chopin, *Mazurki*, ed. Jan Ekier, National Edition, Krakow: 2004. (See another translation of this story in Appendix A.)

<sup>3</sup> According to Chopin's pupil, the famous British conductor Sir Charles Hallé, the relationship between Meyerbeer and Chopin remained bitter to the end of Chopin's life. Other students recall similar, less heated events (see Appendix A for accounts by Sir Charles Hallé and Moscheles).

<sup>4</sup> Today amateur mazurka players are much further removed from cultural practices of ballroom dance, not to mention authentic folk music which influenced Chopin's mazurkas. For them, playing a mazurka is largely a guessing-game about which beat is to be accented and/or prolonged. Students complain about the 'unnatural' feeling in playing the mazurka genre, and desperately seek a formula or remedy that will help them approach the inherent style. In this regard, I would here like to mention that regarding the nature of *tempo rubato* in Chopin's mazurkas, some scholars have brought upon misguiding remarks on the topic. Charles Rosen's *The Romantic Generation* is one example that haphazardly addresses the topic, giving very little explanation into complexities of 'Polish' rubato, simply exacting the rhythmic stretching into a clear duple rhythm phenomenon. This formula and explanation of the duple time sensation is lacking in substance, and as a guiding tool for readers and pianists, does not serve as a reliable guide to understanding mazurka rubato a reasonable way.

the B section of op.63 no.1 played by Charles Rosen, or the three widely contrasting interpretations of the complete Mazurkas recorded by Arthur Rubinstein three times in his career (1938/39, 1952, 1965/66).<sup>5</sup>

An observable trend regarding the choice of performance tempi further raises flags over the interpretation of these works. More than a century of recording history reveals that Chopin's slower mazurkas are progressively played in slower tempi, some at nearly half their notated speed.<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Cook, who has mapped temporal and durational trends in performance history, using computer-based mapping technology, has asserted that performers are likely compensating for the challenges of 'authentic' performance practices with personal expressivity.<sup>7</sup> The result of 'personal authenticity' in these interpretations is often unconvincing and misguided because they lack the distinctive flavours of the mazurka, which are deeply rooted in the history, language, and movement of the Polish people.<sup>8</sup>

Richard Taruskin best describes the nature of 'authentic performance': "Knowing what you mean and whence comes that knowledge", and "having... a 'sentiment of being' that is independent of the values, opinions and demands of others."<sup>9</sup> This understanding of

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick Cohen, *Chopin: The Mazurkas* in two volumes, Glossa 920507, 2006; Charles Rosen, *Chopin: Mazurkas*, Globe 5028, 1990; Arthur Rubinstein, *Complete Mazurkas*, recorded 1938/1939, Naxos Historical Recordings, 9.110656-57, 2000; Rubinstein, *Mazurkas (Complete)/ Fantasy in F minor*, recorded 1952, Naxos Classical Archives, 9.80969-70; Rubinstein, *Fryderyk Chopin Complete Mazurkas*, Recorded 1965-66, RCA Red Seal, LSC-6177-B Stereo, Vinyl.

<sup>6</sup> CHARM Mazurka Project, "Mazurka Discography," CHARM, accessed June 1, 2012. <http://www.mazurka.org.uk/info/discography/>.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Cook, "Performance Analysis and Chopin's Mazurkas," *Musicae Scientiae* 11, no.2 (2007):183-207; and idem, "Squaring the Circle: Phrase Arching in Recordings of Chopin's Mazurkas," *Musica Humana* 1, no.1 (2009): 5-28.

<sup>8</sup> "Personal authenticity" is a term used by Peter Kivy to describe a mode of interpretation that opposes "historical authenticity." Kivy believes that as the performer's commitment is to their present-day listeners, the performer must present the interpretation that convinces him/herself, without waiting for a go-ahead from the composer.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Taruskin, "The Limits of Authenticity: A Discussion," *Early Music* 12 (1984): 3.

‘authenticity’ suggests the necessity for critically thinking about historical implications, and further, as a performer, being genuine to oneself and one’s observations.<sup>10</sup> Many performers of Chopin’s mazurkas have an extensive knowledge and deep connection with Chopin’s musical language. However, one intrinsic part to their knowledge and interpretation too often seems to be missing. This thesis demonstrates that without the critical examination of Polish folk music and its performance style, Chopin’s mazurkas cannot fulfill their full depth of meaning, and thus will deprive the performer of the wealth of aesthetic beauty that is embedded in these works.

This thesis proposes a particular way to examine the folk tradition in relation to Chopin’s mazurkas. Recent scholarship, notably the work of Robert Hatten and Elaine King, has increasingly asserted that style is shaped by specific and identifiable *gestural* practices.<sup>11</sup> These gestural practices can be physical movements that contain and convey information, or emotional movements that signify the interpreter’s psychological state. They can be physically embedded within the music through levels that are discrete (harmony, rhythm, meter) or more apparent (dynamics, articulation, pacing); or they may have been lost in time, once having held significant meaning within the cultural atmosphere that shaped a given style. Robert Hatten, in *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes*, says that “a competent listener will grasp the thematic and rhetorical functions of certain gestures within a given musical style.” This is assuming, however, that the listener understands some meaning behind that specific gesture being

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<sup>10</sup> Glenn Gould serves as an example of an artist who definitively has a ‘personal authenticity’ to his playing. However, his deep understanding and study of “Bach the Man,” the sounds of his time, his responses to this, and other resonating qualities that have been shaped in history, have made his personal stamps on music somehow justifiable. See “Glenn Gould Plays Bach: the Question of Instrument,” YouTube video, originally produced by CBC and Clasart Film, 1982, posted by “booksontrial,” March 31, 2013, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAcEo90qkqU&list=PLE6TY6\\_89FCsRfKGRVREI0IaMZtjwIU8U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAcEo90qkqU&list=PLE6TY6_89FCsRfKGRVREI0IaMZtjwIU8U)

<sup>11</sup> Anthony Gritten and Elaine King, ed. *Music and Gesture* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2006), xx. The word ‘gesture’ can be best described as “a movement or change in state that becomes marked as significant by an agent.”

communicated. Some of the gestural movements that help define the interchanging temporal, spatial, and physical dimensions inherent in Chopin's different mazurka styles include:

1) the experience of dancing the national *mazur*.<sup>12</sup> The embodied feeling of dancing the basic step of the *mazur* gives a strong sensation of a prolonged second beat while other choreographic features likewise produce different physical sensations also evoked in Chopin's Mazurkas.<sup>13</sup>

2) Chopin's mazurkas frequently adapt textures and sonorities which evoke the traditional spheres of Polish folk music. Use of small repeated motives, high degree of playful embellishment, and melodic contour specific to Polish folk song are several glimpses into how Chopin gesticulates movements from this rural tradition. The temporal and spatial dimensions of these folk traditions are those most often lost to pianists from Western traditions.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Eric McKee, "Dance and the Music of Chopin: The Waltz," in *The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries*, ed. Halina Goldberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 106-162. Chopin danced the *mazur* frequently at soirées in his young adulthood. McKee's essay historically and analytically traces how Chopin's deep familiarity of dancing the *mazur* was important to his musical aesthetic. Chopin writes in a letter from Vienna in 1831, "Here, waltzes are called works!... I don't pick up anything that is essentially Viennese. I don't even know how to dance a waltz properly... My piano has heard only Mazury." Quoted in Adrian Thomas, "Beyond the Dance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 153.

<sup>13</sup> One pianist who understood and captured nuances of the elegance, refinement, and lightness of watching the choreography to the *mazur* ballroom dance, was Polish pianist Moritz Rosenthal (1862-1946), specifically his interpretation of the Mazurka in b minor op.33 no.4, mm.137-151. Rosenthal likewise expresses many other attractions of the works such as the *bel canto* tradition. Moritz Rosenthal, "Mazurka in b minor op.33 no.4", *The Complete Recordings*. CD 4 Track 7. APR7503. Hyperion, 2011. Originally recorded 23 November 1935; matrix 2EA2567-1; HMV DB2773. Can also be heard on YouTube, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K\\_cwERorlc8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_cwERorlc8).

<sup>14</sup> Polish pianists Ignacy Friedmann (1882-1948) and Raul Koczalski (1884-1948), who danced the 'mazurka' in peasant circles, have left us interpretations that are unparalleled in their understanding of the genre. They capture the essence of these sounds, their temporal and vocal qualities with great success. Their interpretations create a scene of elaborate choreography with a range of dance and instrumental gesture. Allan Evans, *Ignaz Friedman: Romantic Master Pianist* (Indiana University Press: 2009); Ignaz Friedman, *Great Pianists – Ignaz Friedman: Complete Recording vol.3*. Recorded 1928-30 for Columbia, Naxos Historical Recordings, 8.110690, 2003; His playing can also be found on YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k15R92xkRK8>; Raoul Koczalski discography, <http://bn.org.pl/chopin/index.php/en/pianists/dysk/14>, Audio example on YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8tmttcYJGw>

Identifying gestural patterns within the mazurka style and unraveling their meaning within Chopin's musical aesthetic can build an environment and behavioral terrain upon which pianists can interpret these works. However, because Chopin's mazurkas draw on a multitude of different gestures that signify different meanings, it can be difficult to distinguish and unravel which is intended in each context. It is therefore helpful to understand the surrounding 'topics' that informed Chopin and the mazurka style, and from there, to explore their nature.

'Topics' (as laid out by scholars William Ratner, Kofi Agawu, and Robert Hatten) are stylistic patterns that resonate within a work (for instance, horn calls or Turkish music), which the composer will use as a creative means to deviate from general stylistic expectations of that genre. By exploring the social climate of a composer and its musical influences, and analyzing the music's connections with, and disconnections from the norms of the genre, one can extract gestural information from the topics that resonate within a given work. I adapt the idea of 'topics' to help guide the discussion among the plethora of gestures that do not signify folk realms *per se*. Though my discussion stays primarily within the folk discussion, it is at times necessary for me to point to some larger styles in his works, such as *mazur style*, *counterpoint*, or *stile brillante*.

In this thesis, then, I illustrate that the interpretation of Chopin's mazurkas can be enhanced by an understanding of multifaceted gestures and patterns of movements inherent in his mazurkas. If we are to come to a greater understanding of the nature of these works we need to look beyond conventional Western performance practices into the various styles and patterns of movements that informed Chopin's mazurkas. The folk music from the Polish region of

Kujawy, whose musical features are widely present in Chopin's mazurkas, are an invaluable source of information regarding gesture and movement in these works. During his summer vacations in Szafarnia (a village in the Kujaw region) in 1824 and 1825, Chopin participated in a harvest festival where he danced, played a traditional Kujaw bass instrument, keenly absorbed the authentic folk fiddling, and documented several Kujaw ditties.<sup>15</sup> This project is therefore a focused study of a single tradition that sheds light on these broader concepts.

The main research questions I will be addressing are: *What is the nature of the movements, gestures, and patterns in Kujaw folk music? How and where do they resonate in Chopin's work? As performers how can we utilize these patterns of gestures and movements in the interpretative process of the mazurkas?* My study will closely examine the song, fiddling, and accompaniment traditions of Kujaw folk music, how Chopin manifested them into his compositions, and to what extent various interpreters of this music have succeeded in capturing these folk qualities.

The remainder of this chapter will lay out the various methods and sources I have considered in exploring this topic. It will then review the literature dealing with semantic and cultural aspects of Chopin's mazurkas. This review will be a means to show how Polish folk music is ultimately of vital importance in studying Chopin's mazurkas, and that it has strong implications for the question of 'Polishness' in Chopin's works. The last portion of this chapter will then provide a context to the word mazurka, Polish folk music, and end by examining the narrative accounts written by Chopin during his vacations to the Kujaw region.

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<sup>15</sup> Dated 1824, his transcription is the first-ever recorded text of a Kujaw song from this region. Barbara Krzyżaniak, "History of the Song and Music Documentation of the Kujawy Region," in *Folklor Kujaw*, ed. Barbara Krzyżaniak, Aleksander Pawlak, and Jarosław Lisakowski, trans. Roderyk Lange (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1974): 35.

Chapter Two will examine the nature of gestural components in Kujaw folk singing and their implications for Chopin's mazurkas. Using a collection of field recordings and Polish research on this regional music, this chapter will investigate the gestural implications of: Slavonic melodic patterns; the sonority and timbre of Kujaw singing; temporal patterns that are intrinsic to the Polish language; and other related issues connected with Kujaw singing practices. These discussions will be supported by recordings of mostly Polish pianists who have been able to capture these Polish gestures. They will analyze what particular pianistic techniques and nuances are used for this Polish effect. I have limited this study mostly to Polish pianists in order to show their innate sense of the mazurka rhythm.<sup>16</sup> This by no means is meant to convey that only Polish pianists are capable of interpreting Chopin mazurkas. However, because the rhythm of the mazurka is highly influenced by the natural rhythm of the Polish language, it is understandable that their close familiarity with Polish culture, tradition, language, and music, is advantageous for playing a musical genre that is based on Polish dance and language.

Chapter Three will analyze the tradition of Kujaw folk fiddling and accompaniment. This chapter illustrates how fiddling and drone bass textures from these traditions are highlighted as unique gestural sonorities in Chopin's mazurkas. In the fiddling portion, I examine three particular performing trends that are significant to the spirit of Chopin's mazurkas, asserting: i) that the sequence of dances in Kujaw tradition has great implications for the tempo and character of the mazurkas; ii) that improvisation and its specific patterns and impulses carry the flavour of

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<sup>16</sup> "It is broadly true that this *rubato* is most easily grasped by pianists of eastern European origin.... Poles have a greater innate feeling for the Mazurka and Polonaise rhythms, but their way of performing these has never resulted in routine.... When misused, rubato can reduce the music to absurdity. This is more likely to arise in pianists for whom Chopin's rubato does not come naturally and for whom it has to be learned." James Methuen-Campbell, *Chopin Playing: From the Composer to the Present Day*, (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1981), 14, 125.

the mazurka and that Chopin's mazurkas can be better understood from within these regional improvisatory practices; and iii) that the practice of ornamentation and improvisation suggests fresh ways of approaching the mazurkas, reviving this nineteenth-century practice into the twenty-first century. This chapter also analyzes historical recordings to demonstrate techniques that have been used by various pianists to capture these effects.

My thesis concludes that various gestural patterns in Kujaw performance traditions resonate within Chopin's musical aesthetic. Understanding the varied nature of movement in Kujaw folk music and being able to identify these traits in Chopin's mazurkas can help to elucidate and unravel many of the complex temporal and stylistic issues surrounding Chopin's mazurkas. Observing and applying these movement patterns will allow the performer to sense these embedded gestures, their significance, and their connection with the whole musical experience of the mazurkas.

### **Methods and Source Material**

An effective way to uncover gestural movement in Kujaw music is through the analysis of audio recordings of authentic folk fiddling and singing from this region. The field recordings and activities conducted by the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISPAN) in the 1950s are the oldest archival recordings of Polish fiddle and vocal music.<sup>17</sup> They capture the traditional musical legacy of the nineteenth-century villages of Central Poland. Most of the performers on these recordings were born at the beginning of the twentieth century, and preserved a style and musical tradition that is now quickly disappearing across most of Poland. The recordings include hundreds of *Kujawiaks*, *Mazureks*, and *Obereks* from different sub-

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<sup>17</sup> The folk archival recordings of the 1930s were destroyed during World War II.

regions, as well as vocal ditties (*przyśpiewki*) that would proceed the dance. These recordings demonstrate the particular approach in metrical freedom, accentuation, and other aspects of movement that would otherwise be difficult to understand by simply reading about them.<sup>18</sup>

Choosing the best possible source and performing edition of Chopin's mazurkas is essential when advising performers. Performing editions of the mazurkas have remarkable differences, most notably in terms of repeat signs versus written out repetitions, articulation and phrasing, accentuation marks, pedalling, extra-musical markings, and even pitch. Many of these discrepancies are a result of the complexities in the methods of publishing in the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Early German editions, for instance, were published and then re-published with textual inconsistencies with the original score. Furthermore, Chopin supplied different engraver's manuscripts to his three publishers in France, England, and Germany respectively. As a composer, Chopin always found new impulses within his works. What is now known as the 'Chopin problem'<sup>20</sup> (Chopin's music differing in all the surviving sources) has been truly challenging for editors because of having to deal with multiple autographs, copyists' manuscripts, and the multiple first editions owned by different pupils. Therefore, in choosing a critical yet practical performing edition, we need to look for one which has critically observed these variants and aimed to understand them and interpret them as elements of the work itself.

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<sup>18</sup> Although I was not able to obtain copyright permission to attach audio tracks as a part to this thesis, the analyzed audio recordings can easily be tracked down. The tracks collected by ISPAN can be listened to on their website through signing-up (for free), and logging in to the ISPAN website, <https://cadis.ispan.pl>. A simple search indicating the title and track number (which are cited in the analysis) is another way of obtaining access to this fascinating music. The folk recordings that I analyze are contained within two CDs: Kujawy, Polish Radio Folk Collection, (Polskie Radio SA, PRCD 169, 2001), compact disc. Recorded 1949-1998; and "Te skrzypce pamiętają czasy Chopina..." Phonograph Collections of ISPAN, (ISPAN CD 006, 2009), compact disc. Recorded 1951-1981.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Kallberg, "Chopin in the Marketplace," in *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 161-214. This is nice survey of Chopin publishing relations.

<sup>20</sup> As quoted in Chapter 7 "The Chopin 'Problem': Simultaneous Variants and Alternate Versions" by Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries*.

A *good* edition searches for how these discrepancies serve the ultimate meaning of the music. I have chosen to work from the most recently published National Edition by Jan Ekier (2010).<sup>21</sup> The National Edition undertakes a complete study of the original manuscripts in order to show Chopin's compositions as close as possible to their original form while avoiding the errors and discrepancies in the first editions. In addition its easy-to-read layout and solid research foundation, it is also appended with source commentary and performance commentary. It includes many additional authentic variants (*ossia*) in the music as well as original performance markings, and fingerings from the composer and the editor.

My own contact with mazurka repertoire as a pianist and dancer has given me many insights into the connections between the dance and music tradition. In the summer of 2011 I travelled to Poland, where I learned to dance the mazur, polonaise, oberek, and kujawiak with a private instructor who was also well versed in stylistic nuances of the dances (military, royal, folk). I spent most of my evenings with the older generation of Poles who indulged me with their wonderful singing of Polish folk songs, many of which I later heard in archival recordings. The experience of dancing these dances has helped me embody dance gestures in my interpretation and to make sense of many interpretative concepts that would otherwise be hard to understand. I have spent the past three years at the University of Victoria assessing and performing Chopin's mazurkas, spending hours listening to different interpretations of Chopin mazurkas, and giving lectures on my observations. As a pianist, I have benefitted from my study of the movements and gestures associated with the various dances. I have learned a general knowledge of these movements is necessary to capture the 'Polishness' inherent in Chopin's Mazurkas.

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<sup>21</sup> Fryderyk Chopin, *Mazurki*, ed. Jan Ekier (Krakow: PWM National Edition, Series A Volume 4, 2004).

My methods of analysis suggests a new approach to researching the performance of the mazurkas, which can build stronger links between scholars and performers.

### **Literature Review: Folk Music, Again?**

Research to date has been within the confines of a scholarly community that has been slow to explain how a performer might deal with the temporal and stylistic issues in Chopin's mazurkas.<sup>22</sup> Explaining the 'Polishness' inherent in Chopin's mazurkas has been a continuous concern and topic for scholars of the twentieth century. For instance, many scholars have examined how the ideas of a romantic and political 'nationalism' in nineteenth-century Poland worked to develop the idea of 'Polishness' highlighted in these works.<sup>23</sup> Other trends in scholarship have considered how nostalgia and alienation was a leading factor in how Chopin mythologized his musical language under the auspices of romantic ideology.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, scholars in the field of ethnomusicology have reconnected the 'otherness' of the mazurkas back to their rural folk music origins.<sup>25</sup> Nearly a century of this scholarship has shown how the anatomy of different Polish folk musics penetrated Chopin's compositions. The pioneer of this scholarship, Helena Windakiewiczowa, is still admired for her

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<sup>22</sup> The few exceptions are Eric McKee, "Dance and the Music of Chopin: The Waltz" in *The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries* (2004), 106; and John Rink, "Authentic Chopin: History, Analysis and Intuition in Performance," in *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 214. These essays are not directed at Chopin's mazurka repertoire specifically. Eric McKee for instance, analyses how Chopin's Waltzes were directly influenced by his own dancing experiences in nineteenth-century ballrooms in Warsaw. This is the only paper I have discovered that demonstrates the relations between the physical dance tradition directly with Chopin's musical compositions. This paper has been of great interest to me, drawing connections with my own thinking of how Chopin embodied Kujaw folk dance and instrumental gestures into his compositions.

<sup>23</sup> Halina Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Halina Golderg, "Remembering that tale of grief," in *The Age of Chopin*, 54-94; Bożena Shallcross, "Chopin at Home," in *The Age of Chopin*, 13-22.

<sup>25</sup> Ewa Dahlig, "Z badań nad rytmiką polskich tańców ludowych: Mazurek, kujawiak, chodzony a 'mzurki' Chopina," *Muzyka: Kwartalnik Poświęcony Historii i Teorii Muzyki* 39 (January 1994): 105-130; Anne Swartz, "The Polish folk mazurka," *Studia musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 17 (January 1975): 249-55; Anne Swartz, "Folk dance elements in Chopin's mazurkas," *Journal Of Musicological Research* 4, no. 3-4 (1983): 417-425.

contribution to the field.<sup>26</sup> Windakiewiczowa shows very clear connections between Chopin's mazurkas and Polish folk music (collected by Oskar Kolberg) regarding melodic patterns, chromaticism, and structural forms.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, scholars dealing with Chopin's 'Polishness' have been reacting against the last century of scholarship that seemingly idolized and romanticized Chopin.<sup>27</sup> Modern scholarship attempts to tame and re-examine Chopin's true connection to the Folk, and to 'Polishness' and Nationalism, concluding that nineteenth-century Romantic thought and communist Poland both had particular agendas in regards to the 'Polish Question,' which created a lineage of biased and glorified scholarship. The aim of today's scholars has been to 're-humanize' Chopin, taking him off the god-like pedestal and allowing for more level-minded observations of his works. This revisionist impulse can most recently be observed in theses and articles that question the degree to which Chopin mazurkas were in fact influenced by Polish folk music.<sup>28</sup>

Barbara Milewski, for instance, argues that urban mazurs and the national music in Warsaw contained many of the same folk-derived elements, thereby having more of an influence on the mazurkas than did the folk, to which Chopin was only mildly exposed.<sup>29</sup> Another argument against strong folk schemata has been the quantitative research conducted by Ewa

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<sup>26</sup> Helena Windakiewiczowa, *Wzory ludowej muzyki polskiej w mazurkach Fryderyka Chopin* [Polish folk-music archetypes in Chopin's mazurkas] (Krakow: Nakladem Polskiej Umiejetnosci, 1926).

<sup>27</sup> Maja Trochimczyk "Chopin and the 'Polish Race': On National Ideologies and the Chopin Reception," *The Age of Chopin*, 278-313.

<sup>28</sup> Barbara Milewski, "Chopin's mazurkas and the myth of the folk," *19th-century music* 23 (September 1999): 113-35; Dahlig, "Z badań nad rytmiką."

<sup>29</sup> Barbara Milewski, "The mazurka and national imaginings" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2002).

Dahlig in 1994.<sup>30</sup> Her computer-based method gathered and organized the frequency of certain rhythmic patterns found in Chopin's mazurkas. Dahlig compared them to certain rhythms in folk *mazurki*, *kujawiaki*, and *chodzony*, and concluded that Chopin's works are typical of stylized mazurka dances, not the folk. Dahlig's results call into question the scientific methods used by other scholars to make claims on folk-Chopin relations. Jim Samson among others warns against attributing too much significance to folk music:

It is possible to overrate the significance of his first-hand contact with peasant music during these summers in Szafarnia. Undoubtedly the raw energy of peasant music had an input to his own music, but so too did the urbanized 'salon dances' very familiar to Chopin from his earliest years in Warsaw, and not least from his regular attendance at so called *thés dansants*.<sup>31</sup>

To summarize, modern scholarship has been re-examining nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship on Chopin and its connection to the 'Polish Question'. Their main concern is to re-evaluate scholarship that has misrepresented and iconized Chopin as a National patriot and hero in order to bring us to a clearer understanding of Chopin's true position with Poland and music. What this modern literature has clarified is that Chopin's music is distinctive from authentic folk music, and patriotic national music. And so, responding to the modern literature that respectively strives for critical approach to historical analysis of Chopin's musical language, I want to bring back to the conversation that while it is important to observe how Chopin's experience of urban Poland was part of his musical expression, this by no means should diminish the importance of folk music in regards to Chopin's mazurkas. While it is true that literature has formed its own myths and stories around Chopin in early literature, this does not mean that we

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<sup>30</sup> Dahlig, "Z badań nad rytmiką."

<sup>31</sup> Jim Samson, *Chopin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 17.

have to actually close doors on topics like folk music. Only through the direct engagement of the two (urban and folk) can we better understand the multi-dimensional meanings of his mazurkas, whose genre-specific implications rely on an engagement of these sources. I will show with my analysis of Polish pianists who have evoked the regional aspects of the Kujaw folk in their playing, that aspects in language patterns, dance movements, and cultural values intrinsically shape the style of this music, producing successful and convincing performances.

Critically and historically re-examining folk music as an influence on Chopin's mazurkas sheds light on issues brought up by revisionist scholars such as Halina Goldberg. Goldberg has addressed the community of scholars who characterize the dances that relate to Chopin's mazurkas (i.e., *mazurek*, *kujawiak*, *oberek*) from their more modern, nationalistic versions of these dances. Goldberg presents an historical chronology of the development of the Kujawiak as a national dance in the nineteenth century. She concludes that the Kujawiak did not exist as a slow and melancholic dance (as described by the majority of the Chopin mazurka literature) until well into the nineteenth century, and that scholars should be careful in categorizing Chopin's mazurkas distinctly between these three dance groups.<sup>32</sup> Goldberg's research is important, and as this study shows, the dances defined as *mazurek*, *kujawiak*, and *oberek* are in fact the closely-related dances of the folk tradition. Their closely related tempi in folk music in fact relate to Chopin's tempo marking much more effectively.

So, as this century continues to reconsider the scholarship of past centuries, we begin to understand that the quality of 'Polishness' in Chopin's mazurkas is not derived from specific traditions alone, but rather from a harmonious combination of topics, carefully crafted from

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<sup>32</sup> Halina Goldberg, "Nationalizing the *Kujawiak* and Constructions of Nostalgia in Chopin's Mazurkas," Paper presented at American Musicological Society Conference, New Orleans, LA, November 2012.

Chopin's own knowledge and experiences. As scholars reveal the dozens of factors that were significant to Chopin's mazurka output, i.e., the *thés dansants*,<sup>33</sup> Warsaw opera,<sup>34</sup> exploration of perfecting form and miniature style,<sup>35</sup> we learn that Chopin's mazurkas are neither pure folk music, nor romantic music, nor dance music, nor elegantly crafted chromatic canons, but rather all of these coexisting and intermingling. Jim Samson describes Chopin's approach to genre as "a [redefined] importation of generic fragments as 'topics,' so that we may speak of 'host' genres and 'guest' genres, allowing for a play between genres on different levels of musical meaning".<sup>36</sup> When Chopin inserts a 'guest' genre (e.g., a waltz into a mazurka, or folk textures into an evocation of the ballroom *mazur*) this is a purposeful act to bring about the multi-faceted meanings of the topic as a means to reach the Romantic ideal of 'universality' in his writing. In this exploration of the universal, Chopin's mazurkas "embrace dimensions, formal design, phraseology, and a repertory of specific gestures."<sup>37</sup> The 'specific gestures' and 'dimensions' that Samson identifies also help define the stylistic qualities and temporal movements that Chopin intended in the mazurkas. Therefore, understanding the nature of performance practice in Polish folk traditions is just as important as understanding Chopin's urban cultural tendencies, his gestures and movements, and his usage of form and chromaticism. By doing so we can engage with these different generic qualities that represent 'Polishness' and 'universality' in Chopin's writing.

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<sup>33</sup> Samson, *Chopin*, 17.

<sup>34</sup> Milewski, "The mazurka and national imaginings".

<sup>35</sup> Kallberg, "Small 'Forms': In Defense of the Prelude," in *Chopin at the Boundaries*, 135-160.

<sup>36</sup> Jim Samson, "Genre," (The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2009) <http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/genre/search#>

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

Before exploring Kujaw performing traditions and their relationship to the performance of Chopin's mazurkas, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the mazurka genre and Polish folk music. A summary of the historical development of the mazurka as a genre, and an outline of Polish folk music and its dance traditions follows.

### What is a Mazurka?

The word 'mazurka' specifically describes a Western musical genre of Polish dance music in triple time, characterized by a special rhythm now called the 'mazurka rhythm', i.e.,



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'Mazurka' dance traditions and rhythms date back as early as the fifteenth century.<sup>38</sup> The crystallization of the characteristic mazurka rhythm as a defining feature of Polish music occurred during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>39</sup> The rural dance 'mazur' or 'mazurek' has its geographical origins to the Polish region of *Mazowsze* and likely was named after the *Mazur* people.<sup>40</sup> The term 'mazurka' only appeared much later for the first time in the German music lexicon *Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst*, by Joseph Riepel in 1752.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ewa Dahlig-Turek, "On the History of the Polska," *Skifter Utgivca Av Svenskt Visarkiv* 17 (2003): 11-25.

<sup>39</sup> Found scattered in many Germanic source books such as Nuremberg lute tablature (1544), titled "Polnische Tanze", and also the Polish Tablatures of Jan of Lublin (1537-48).

<sup>40</sup> Ada Dziekanowska, *Polish Folk Dances & Songs: A Step-by-Step Guide* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1997), 509.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Riepel, *Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst: Nicht zwar nach alt-mathematischer Einbildungs-Art der Zirkel-Harmonisten, sondern durchgehends mit sichtbaren Exampeln abgefasset*, vol. 1 *De Rhythmpoeia oder Von der Taktordnung*, 2d ed., Regensburg, 1754. Referenced in Maja Trochimczyk, "Polish Dances: Mazur (Mazurka)," Polish Music Centre, updated December 2004, [http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish\\_music/dance/mazur.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/dance/mazur.html). Riepel here discussed how the mazurka rhythm, while beginning with the weak stresses directly on the downbeat, seemed at odds with the basic dance step which seemed to begin on an upbeat. He stressed, however, that this was in fact the unique style of this tradition.

The mazurka rhythm is unique to Central Poland (the lowlands).<sup>42</sup> The three dance traditions most often associated with the mazurka rhythm are the *mazur(ek)*, *oberek*, and the *kujawiak*. This short list does not include the dozens of other regional dances in which ‘mazurka’ rhythm patterns can be found, and the many folk songs that use this rhythm. The geographic dissemination of the rhythm was likely a result of commercial trading routes and urbanization in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rural isolation, however, resulted in individual performing traditions and musical characters specific to a particular village’s rituals and customs.

The dances that feature the ‘mazurka rhythm’ pattern also share particular patterns of rhythmic accentuation, phrasing patterns, form, usage of small repeating melodic and rhythmic motives. Differences can be observed in tempo, accentuation patterns, *tempo rubato* and dance-related features.

Historical research has shown that the accentuation patterns of the music developed alongside the development of the Polish language.<sup>43</sup> By the seventeenth century, the Polish language was established with natural accentuation on the penultimate syllable of a word, e.g., *JABŁ-ko*, or *gos-po-DAR-stwo*. Because Polish folk instrumentalists played dance tunes as a direct response to sung ditties (*przyśpiewki*), the instrumental accentuation patterns would capture these natural accentuations within their playing, hence the natural tendency to accent and prolong the second beat.

Among the rural dances from which the compositional genre arose, the *mazurek* (and/or its hybrid the *mazurek-obertas*) was transformed and stylized in the seventeenth century among

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<sup>42</sup> Jan Stęszewski, “Polish Folk Music” in *Polish Music* (PWN: Warsaw, 1965) 209.

<sup>43</sup> Ewa Dahlig-Turek, ‘Rytmy polskie’ w muzyce XVI-XIX wieku: *Studium morfologiczne* (Warsaw: ISPAN, 2006).

lower-class Polish nobility (*szlachta*). The more official and learned dance, the *mazur*, was popularized and introduced in the courts of Germany in the early eighteenth century.<sup>44</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, the *mazur* began to develop a distinctive ‘Polish’ national character that featured the dotted mazurka rhythm.<sup>45</sup> As the dance was further stylized by the Polish military (*ulans*) in Italy and France during the Napoleonic Wars, it grew feverishly popular in ballrooms and salons across all the major urban centers of Europe. During this time the term ‘mazurka’ was born: the Russians added the feminine ending ‘-ka’ onto this highly refined ballroom dance.<sup>46</sup> The usage of the feminized version of the word crystallized in France in the middle of the eighteenth century, largely due to its dances being of feminine gender in general. Aside from grammatical conveniences, the feminization of the term *mazur* to *mazurka* epitomizes the important development in the stylistic qualities of the dance and music at this time, becoming more refined, elegant, structured, and largely influenced by upper class cultural mannerisms.

The mazurka rhythm was retained in other forms of professional music as well, such as opera, symphony and even religious music. As orchestral music, it accompanied balls and court festivities later to be published as piano arrangements.<sup>47</sup> Mass production of ballroom mazurkas in Warsaw took place in beginning of the nineteenth century where 1270 mazurs and 168

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<sup>44</sup> Robert Cwięka, *Elegant Polish Running-Sliding Dance*, vol.2 of *Sources of the Polish Tradition* (Irvington, NJ: [no pub., 1984).

<sup>45</sup> In the latter half of the century, Poland joined alliance with Napoleon’s army in hopes of regaining its autonomy; Poland had recently been partitioned by Russia, Prussia, and Austria (1772, 1792 and 1795). The dotted mazurka rhythm – which could be characterized as a military rhythm – was tactically adapted by Polish nationalists in order to propagate the idea of ‘Polishness’.

<sup>46</sup> Dziekanowska, *Polish Folk Dances & Songs*, 513.

<sup>47</sup> Elżbieta Wąsowska, ed., *Mazurki kompozytorów polskich na fortepian: Antologia ze zbiorów Biblioteki Narodowej* vol.3 (Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1995) 18.

mazurkas were published.<sup>48</sup> Popular composers of these ballroom mazurkas included Józef Damse, Józef Krogulski, Karol Kurpiński and Maria Szymanowska. These short dances pieces now functioned as dance music for smaller salons, and as keyboard repertoire for amateur pianists.<sup>49</sup> They were characterized by their simple texture, triadic harmonies, florid melodies, typically in the major mode with occasional change to minor modes in the middle section of its typical ABA structure.

Fryderyk Chopin reformed the mazurka genre in the nineteenth century from music to accompany dance, into piano miniatures re-conceptualized as complex art pieces. He expanded the mazurka genre far beyond the confines of the simpler *Hausmusik*, artistically fusing ‘national’ ideas of ‘Polishness’, *mazur* choreographical dance features, Polish folk traditions, along with carefully crafted innovations in form, chromaticism, and phrasing. Chopin’s mazurkas are *not* any one specific dance such as the Viennese waltz, or allemande, or minuet. Rather, his mazurkas relate to *numerous* Polish dance traditions based on six centuries of development. Chopin fuses many different levels of this multi-layered history from both their national as well as regional characters.

### **General Characteristics of Central Polish Folk Dance Music**

Polish folklore is divided into approximately forty different regions, some with more isolated traditions from the rest, such as *Podhale*, *Kurpie*, and *Kaszuby*.<sup>50</sup> Other regions show

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Dziekanowska, *Polish Folk Dances & Songs*, 28.

symbiosis of musical elements and style with neighbouring or other interacting cultures, such as *Kujawy* with *Wielkopolska/Mazowsze*, and *Lubusz* with *Germany/Wielkopolska/Sląsk/Pomorze*.<sup>51</sup>

Geographically, the largest distinction between Polish folk dance music is in its use of meter. Folk music in much of the south of Poland (highlands) is mostly in duple meter, expressed in dances such as the *Krakowiak*, *Goral*, etc., Folk music in central and western Poland (lowlands), and partly in the eastern regions, is mostly in triple meter, seen in a wide range of dance including, *mazurek*, *oberek*, *owczarek*, *chodzony*, etc. (fig.1).<sup>52</sup>



**Figure 1 Geographic/Regional Distinctions in Polish Folk Meter**

The function of Polish dance music is generally ritualistic. It is featured at weddings, harvests, spring celebrations, and for specified feast days connected with the Catholic calendar. The names of these regional dances are generally attributed to either their corresponding region (i.e., “Mazurek” from *Mazowsze*, “Kujaw” from *Kujawy*, “Krakowiak” from “Krakow”), or the movements with which they are associated, (i.e., “Kaczor” meaning *male duck*, “Oberek” from

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Jan Stęszewski, “Poland – Tradition Music – 6. Musical Regions” in *Oxford Music Online* (2007-).

“*obracać się*” translated to *spin, turn*). However, the names of the dances are loosely labelled, making the study of this music somewhat confusing:

...that in some villages the Oberek is called a Mazur  
I observed at a village party that at the cry “Mazur”  
couples stood as for the Oberek, beginning the dance,  
with an ordinary forward run: a type of small running-stamping  
step. At a shout they began to do, what we understand to be, an  
Oberek.<sup>53</sup>

and

The Mazurek is related to the Kujawiak. Sometimes it is difficult  
to distinguish it from the Kujawiak. It is danced very “hoppingly”-  
as the people from Kujawy say...<sup>54</sup>

The three most prominent Polish folk dances of Central Poland are the *mazurek*, *kujawiak*, and *oberek*, which are characterized by their shared use of the mazurka rhythm. They are also closely related in tempo and character. Nineteenth-century Polish ethnographer Oskar Kolberg distinguished a difference in tempo, the slow Kujawiak ♩=120-140, the faster Kujawiak or Mazurek ♩=140-160, and the Oberek ♩=160-180.<sup>55</sup> Kolberg observed that, while the oberek could be danced to mazur music, the mazur could not be danced to that of the oberek.<sup>56</sup>

Common patterns can be seen in the foundational elements of Polish folk musics from central Poland (geographic lowlands), such as of the disseminated use of mazurka rhythm, triple meter, cadential rhythmic formulae, dance structures and types, and seasonal and celebratory

<sup>53</sup> Zofia Kwaśnicowa, *Polskie Tańce Ludowe – Mazur* (Warszawa: Wydawnicza Sport i Turystyka, 1953), 8.

<sup>54</sup> Roderyk Lange, "Tańce Kujawskie," [Dances from Cuiavia] *Literature Ludowa* 12, no.4 (1963):13.

<sup>55</sup> Krzyżaniak, "History of the Song," 35.

<sup>56</sup> Dziekanowska, *Polish Folk Dances & Songs*, 591.

traditions.<sup>57</sup> The interaction of these elements with that of shared language, shared landscape, and in general the shared forces driving their internal and external lives helped to create these distinct yet common musical traditions. As I will demonstrate, it was from these rural movement patterns that Chopin's mazurkas gain much of their internal structure, raw energy, motivic ideas, and sense of 'otherness'. And it is specifically the Polish vocal and instrumental practices that carry the most complex movements and temporal issues in Chopin mazurkas.

### **Chopin and Szafarnia**

There is strong historical documentation of Chopin's affinity for the Kujaw region. Chopin's mother, Tekla Justyna Krzyżanowska, was born and raised in Kujawy.<sup>58</sup> As a young woman she moved to Żelazowa Wola in the Mazowsze region, married Nicholas Chopin, and bore four children. Although we know of her temperament only from the few letters she wrote to Chopin, we do know she was conservative and modest, and purposefully lived for her children's well-being.<sup>59</sup> She is said to have sung Polish songs and lullabies to Chopin from a young age. Though we lack concrete evidence of what these songs may have been, it is not hard to imagine that many of the sounds and vocal patterns of Justyna's experiences were first heard and integrated from the Kujaw region. If such reasoning holds, then Chopin's early talents of musical mimicry might have integrated these patterns. Arthur Hedley's biography on Chopin describes young Chopin's natural ability to mimic shapes and movements at the piano and how this

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<sup>57</sup> Jan Stęszewski, *Oxford Music Online*.

<sup>58</sup> *Melodie ziemi Kujawskiej*, Nagrania archiwalne tradycyjnych piosenek i muzyki Kujaw ze Zbiorów Fonograficznych Instytutu Sztuki PAN, ISPAN CD 007, Liner Notes, 24.

<sup>59</sup> Arthur Hedley, *The Master Musicians: Chopin* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1947), 7.

amazed and ‘frightened’ his spectators.<sup>60</sup> Chopin’s unique versatility and talent of observing patterns of movements and bringing to them a depth of emotional expression were already highly functioning in his earliest development.

Among the accounts of Chopin’s travels across Polish regional territory, the letters describing his vacations in Kujawy in 1824 and 1825 are the most detailed accounts that show us his participation with Polish folk music.<sup>61</sup> Chopin describes his first-hand experience with rural music during his summer stays with family friends (the Dziekanowskis) on their estate in Szafarnia, a small rural village in the Kujaw region. These summer vacations in 1824 and 1825 were deeply important and cherished by Chopin, who in his later years frequently recalled and identified himself as having “a little Kujaw blood”.<sup>62</sup>

In the summer of 1824, Chopin had just finished his fourth year of secondary school (finishing with distinction) at the Warsaw Lyceum. His close classmate of several years, Domuś (Dominik) Dziekanowski, had been boarding with the Chopins. Near the end of July 1824, Dominik invited Chopin to spend the summer with his family at the Dziekanowski estate in Szafarnia, under the supervision of Domuś’ aunt, Ludwiga. Domuś and Chopin spend the summer actively, exploring Szafarnia and the surrounding terrain and amusing themselves with farm fauna, while remaining involved in household customs and playing music. Chopin often

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>61</sup> "Chopin’s Poland," The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2003-, <http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/places/poland>. Chopin visited the geographical regions of Silesia, Moravia, Galicia, and made trips in and around Kraków, Wrocław, Gniezno, Kalisz, Lublin, Dobrzyń, Toruń and other areas. His travels around Poland allowed him to see much of its diverse geography, culture and tradition.

<sup>62</sup> On a number of occasions he expressed his regional roots in words. One particular instance Chopin acknowledges himself to being ‘a real blind Mazur’. Letters of 18 July 1834 and 20 July 1845, in *Chopin’s Letters*, ed. Opienski, trans. Voyisck, (New York, 1931), 137, 147; also quoted in Thomas, “Beyond the Dance,” *Cambridge Companion*, 154.

played four-hand piano duets with Ludwiga, and also performed at musical gatherings where he gave reputable performances of his earliest renditions of the Mazurka in a-minor, op.17 no.4, which he subtitled “Żydek” or “little Jew” in response to his interest in Jewish cultural music.<sup>63</sup>

Among the various amusing letters sent to his family during his trip to Szafarnia, several of them illuminate Chopin’s direct and enthusiastic approach regarding the rural music to which he was exposed. The following story describes Chopin’s interaction with a peasant woman who was sitting on a fence and singing a ditty:

On the 29th day of this month, Mr. Pichon (Chopin himself) was passing through Nieszawa (a town near Szafarnia), when he heard a Catalani seated on a fence singing something at the top of her lungs. This interested him neatly, and he took pleasure in hearing the aria and voice, but he was not completely satisfied for he strained to hear the verses. He passed by the fence twice but to no avail, for he still understood nothing. Finally, beside himself with curiosity, he fished out of his pocket three groszy and promised them to the singer if only she would repeat the ditty. She fidgeted awhile, frowned and remonstrated, but encouraged by the three groszy, she decided on it and started singing a little mazurek, from which the editor cites only one strophe as an example with permission from his superior and censor:

'Patsajze tam za gulami, za gulami, jak to wilk tańcuje,  
a wsakżeć on nie ma żony, bo się tak frasuje... (bis)

[‘Look there beyond the knolls, the knolls, how the wolf does dance,  
but he has no wife and therefore looks askance...’] (bis)<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Letters of 19 August 1824 and 1&3 September 1824, in *Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin*, ed. Bronislaw Edward Sydow, trans. Arthur Hedley (London: William Heinemann, 1962). It should be noted that op.17 no.4 had an poor reputation in Europe after its publication and was described as ‘primitive’, ‘bleak and cheerless,’ ‘jarring notes,’ with a ‘weird character’ (quoted in Hedley, *Chopin*, 165). The September 1 letter describe the following event: Mr. Dziewanowski invited a Jewish neighbor to listen to Chopin play “Żydek”, asking him for an opinion. The remarks were positive, the neighbor saying, “should Mr Pichon (Chopin) wish to play at a Jewish wedding, he would earn himself at least ten thalers”. Chopin remarked that he then began to study Jewish music.

<sup>64</sup> Chopin pretended to be the writer of a country-newspaper he called the “Courier Szafarnia,” inspired by the leading newspaper in Warsaw “Kurier Warszawski.” He writes these letter under pen-name, Mr. Pichon. Barbara Milewski, “The mazurka and national imaginings,” 48. The translation of the ditty is from the Fryderyk Chopin Institute Website, <http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/life/calendar/year/1824> .

Dictating this rural woman's singing, Chopin keenly observed her unique folk dialect and mode of 'expression.' Chopin said the woman was singing "at the top of her lungs," or in Polish singing "z całą gębą" ("with her entire mouth/mug"). The word 'gęba' (colloquial for 'mouth') describes a more crude and obnoxious quality of expression. However, at the same time Chopin ironically likened the woman with the famous Italian opera singer, Angelica Catalani (who had rewarded Chopin with a gold watch a few years prior).<sup>65</sup> As Chopin described, this singing as an "aria" that gave him "pleasure", it not difficult to discern that Chopin enjoyed a certain quality of the more rough and unmannered folk ways, regarding this singing as something beautiful. His identification of the tune as a "mazurek" (line 11) suggests that the ditty was likely in triple time and characterized by the mazurka rhythm. His addition of '(bis)' (repeated passage) to his transcription likewise suggests his intent to illustrate the phrase structure more effectively. The phrase structure of many Kujaw folk songs is AA'AA' or AABB.

Chopin returned to Szafarnia the following year and once again recorded his interactions with the people and music of the Kujaw countryside.<sup>66</sup> Writing to his family on 26 August 1825, Chopin describes his participation in a local harvest celebration and the exciting range of events which involved the sounds of Kujaw fiddling, singing, and his own experience of playing *basy* (a Polish double bass instrument). Chopin wrote:

...the most joyful day of my entire stay in Szafarnia was the day before yesterday [August 24]...two villages had their harvest festivals. We were having dinner, eating our last course, when from afar we could hear choirs of jarring discant, now from old crones gabbling through their noses, now again from girls unmercifully squeaking a semitone higher at the top of their lungs,

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<sup>65</sup> Hedley, *Chopin*, 12.

<sup>66</sup> See Appendix B.

to the accompaniment of one fiddle – a three-stringed one at that – which answered every sung strophe in an alto voice from the back... Domusz and I got up from the table and ran outside, where the entire crowd was slowly and ever-closely approaching the house. [The female harvesters], lined up as such before the manor, they sang strophes, each of which took a dig at one of us including the following two strophes, which were directed at me:

Before the manor... is a little green bush,  
Our Varsovian is as skinny as a dog.  
On the barn there are roof ties,  
Our Varsovian is a very fast lad.

... I figured out that the second strophe was the idea of a wench whom I had chased in the field with a sheaf binder several hours earlier... [Later]... when Fryc ripped into a Dobrzyn tune on his fiddle, everyone in the courtyard started dancing. It was a beautiful night; the moon and stars shone brightly. Even so, two candles had to be brought out for the steward of the estate who was treating everyone to vodka, and also for Fryc who with only three strings fiddled better than another with four strings would have been able. The gallops, waltzes and obereks began... everyone became so high-spirited that they capered in the courtyard until they dropped... It was already almost eleven when Fryc's wife brought over a double bass even worse than the fiddle: it had only one string. Grabbing the dusty bow, I started playing the bass, scraping so forcefully that everyone gathered to see the two Fryces - one sleepily on the fiddle, the other on the single-stringed, monochord like, dusty rasping bass... (Next day) I go outside and there's Mr. Leon and Wojtek, bowing deeply, asking me to get them some strings. So I got nine threads from Mrs. Dziewanowska and gave them to them. They strung them up, but as fate would have it, they would have to dance to the accompaniment of three strings, for every time they would string a new string, a fifth interval would break of course, and another would have to be re-strung in its place.<sup>67</sup>

This experience shows Chopin's thorough and enthusiastic participation in a ritualistic folk ceremony (this can be even more deeply observed in context with the full letter, provided in appendix D). Musical explanations, such as the "jarring discant," the "fiddle... which answered

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<sup>67</sup> Milewski, "The mazurka and national imaginings," 51-53.

every sung strophe”, “oberek”, “fifth intervals”, and “one stringed monochord bass,” verify that Chopin was keenly attentive to the sounds and patterns of the music and able to identify their properties and parameters. In dancing and playing with the musicians, Chopin internalized the nature and quality of movements and patterns that characterize Kujaw music.<sup>68</sup>

These physical and image based memories would become implemented into his musical narratives not as raw and direct musical quotations or parallel sound-worlds, but as expressive ‘topics’ within his musical narratives. The accompaniment drone *basy* pattern, for instance, can be found in almost every single one of his mazurkas. Fiddling performance trends in Kujaw music are also stylized in Chopin’s melodic writing. Kujaw fiddling traditions are further related to singing and dancing customs, which together dictate the type of metrical freedom that challenges performers aiming to capture this rare element within the genre. Understanding the function and mode of playing in Kujaw music can greatly benefit pianists aiming to interpret Chopin’s works for their unique sense of ‘otherness’. Understanding each instrumental tradition individually can be an effective way to learning about this music and understanding the types of gesture that Chopin absorbed from this music. The following chapter will examine the singing tradition and its implications in performing Chopin’s mazurkas. Its very direct structural properties of verse and rhyme, its accentual properties of intonation, and its traditionally bound Slavonic melodic structure, inform peculiar stylistic aspects in Chopin’s mazurkas, which, in spite of its strong connection to Polish language, can be learned by those interested in the nuance of this accent.

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<sup>68</sup> Theory of embodiment observes body and mind are unified in the sensing and understanding the world and that knowledge includes the body knowledge such as muscle memory, habit and instinct.

## CHAPTER II – GESTURAL PATTERNS IN KUJAW FOLK SONG

Unique gestural patterns are identifiable within the performance traditions of Kujaw folk song. Chopin's mazurka style adapts accentual, timbral, rhythmic, and melodic gestures from this song tradition. I have selected six characteristics to Polish folk song that clearly demonstrate the physical and emotional movement paralleled within Chopin's mazurka style and notational markings. These are: 1) the natural intonation patterns of the Polish language and how they effect the mazurka rhythm (this basic yet most fundamental gestural movement within the language itself signifies what we may call the 'Polishness' in Chopin's mazurkas); 2) the traditional practice of *rubato* in Kujaw folk song; 3) the lack of an anacrusis to Polish folk music and its resulting impulse to the projection of the mazurka rhythm; 4) the quality of singing in the natural chest voice; 5) melodic contour and structure and its characteristic sensation; and 6) the quality of glissando as a means of expression.

I will analyze each of the six above mentioned gestural components within a series of audio recordings of Kujaw folk song (with attached transcriptions) in comparison with notated excerpts and recordings of Chopin's mazurkas. I will identify how Chopin's mazurkas demonstrate these features of Kujaw folk song and will also reveal the techniques that pianists of the twentieth century have successfully used to capture these gestural qualities. I argue that inflection and the rhythm of Polish language within Kujaw songs carry subtle but the most integral implications to the timing and agogic quality that are also stylized within Chopin's mazurkas. I would like to state here, however, that it is not necessary to be able to speak the

Polish language to aurally and physically understand its accenting and phonemic qualities. Their rhythmic sounds exist without their contextual and linguistic meaning, and can be absorbed on a purely sonic level and interpreted from their musical properties. Before examining these six gestural characteristics in Kujaw song, a context to the function of song in Kujaw dance custom is necessary to see its larger connection to the mazurka dance tradition.

### **‘Przyśpiewek’: The Impact of the Ditty on Dance Customs**

Kujaw folk dance music traditionally starts with improvised singing. In requesting a dance tune, the lead dancer stands with his partner in front of the instrumentalists and sings a short improvised or learned ditty called a *przyśpiewek*. The band is a small group of either one or two fiddlers and a drone bass player.<sup>69</sup> The dancer sings this short ditty while dancing in place. Moving his arms and stomping his feet helps indicate further accentuating and rhythmic patterns for the instrumentalists.<sup>70</sup> The vocal/phonetic patterns, bodily movements, and the energetic atmosphere guide the fiddler, who then adapts the tune and embellishes it into a dance tune. The fiddler repeats the short melody over and over, varying and embellishing it within the performance while the rest of the community dances in pairs. The quality of the musician depends on how well he adapts this *przyśpiewek* and recognises changes in tempo and rhythmical patterns of the dancers. While the dancers’ bodily movements greatly influence the musician’s adaptation and process of playing, the natural accentuations in the text of the *przyśpiewek* itself inform the melodic skeleton, the motivic content, and more subtle features that are then

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<sup>69</sup> In some customs, the dancer will drop some money into the slit of the fiddler’s instrument.

<sup>70</sup> It should be noted that it is customarily the male dancer to will request the tune and its rhythmic schemata.

transformed by the fiddler. The “Oberek: Po boru chodziła”, recorded in 1955, demonstrates a *przyspiewek* and how it is adapted by an instrumental ensemble of a fiddler and a hand drum.<sup>71</sup>

Two of Chopin’s mazurkas, op.24 no.2 and op.68 no.3 were argued by late nineteenth-century scholars and a lineage of twentieth-century scholars to have actually quoted excerpts from folk song.<sup>72</sup> Op. 68 no.3 for instance, purportedly quotes the folk song “Oj Magdalino” (fig.2&3).<sup>73</sup>



Figure 2 “Oj Magdalino”



Figure 3 Mazurka in F major, op.68 no.3 (Ekier).

However, Barbara Milewski reminds us that this folk tune (revealed by Maurice Brown in 1972) was never cited and so its origins are unclear.<sup>74</sup> Whether or not Chopin actually quoted this folk

<sup>71</sup> Marcin Gilas (violin), Adam Korczak (vocal, drum), “Oberek: Po boru chodziła” [She walked in the woods] *Early Post-War Polish Folk Music Recordings (1945-1950)*, recorded 1950, ISPAN Folk Music Collection, Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2006, CD007, track 95. Online access with sign-in: <https://cadis.ispan.pl/en/login>, search article no., “P0334B”.

<sup>72</sup> Marcelli Antoni Szulc, *Fryderyk Chopin I utwory jego muzyczne* [Fryderyk Chopin and his Musical Works], Krakow, 1873; Moritz Karasowski, *Frédéric Chopin: His Life, Letters, and Works*, (trans. Emily Hill), 2 vols., London, 1879; Arthur Hedley, *Chopin*, London, 1947; Maurice J.E. Brown, *Chopin: An Index of his Works in Chronological Order*, 2d ed., London 1972. Their history traced and challenged by Barbara Milewski, “The mazurka and national imaginings” (PhD diss., University of Princeton, 2002).

<sup>73</sup> Originally revealed in Maurice J.E. Brown, *Chopin: An Index*, 38. Transcribed here from Alexander Tamir, “Different Approaches to Interpreting Chopin’s Mazurkas” *Music in Time* (Spring 2003) 48.

<sup>74</sup> Barbara Milewski, “The mazurka and national imaginings” (PhD diss., University of Princeton, 2002). I would like to add in this vein, however, that Chopin’s Scherzo in b minor is famous for its quoting the Polish Christmas carol “Lulajże, Jezuniu”, revealing Chopin in the act of adapting traditional Polish melodies in his music”.

song, remains unclear, however, it does remain an inarguable fact that Chopin frequently uses and elaborates the very features and patterns present in from this song tradition. Simple undulating melodies, with limited ornamentation and rhythmic deviation characterize this tradition. Chopin's adaptation of the gestural and formal elements of the *przyśpiewek* tradition resonate in his works, as I will now show.<sup>75</sup> Through understanding the linguistic patterns of movements of the Polish language and how they relate to the improvised nature of Kujaw singing, interpreters can find much more room in Chopin's mazurkas to explore the freedom, direction, and musical style that Chopin's folk patterns often evoke (however directly or indirectly).

### **i. Polish Language and the Mazurka Rhythm**

Song and language are at the heart of Chopin's musical expression. Kleczynski said of Chopin:

All the theory of the style which Chopin taught to his pupils rested on this analogy between music and language, on the necessity for separating the various phrases, on the necessity for pointing and for modifying the power of the voice and its rapidity of articulation.<sup>76</sup>

Specifically, Chopin's mazurka rhythms are alive with the natural intonations of his native Polish language. Understanding the mazurka rhythm based on its Polish intonation patterns provides a solid foundation to understanding the basic pulse and character of movement of the mazurka

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<sup>75</sup> Op. 68 no.3 purportedly quotes the folk song "Oj Magdalino".

<sup>76</sup> Jan Kleczyński, *FCI*, 1880. Quoted in Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher 'as seen by his pupils'*, ed. Roy Howat, trans. Naomi Shohet, Krysia Osostowicz and Roy Howat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 42.

genre. It also helps to characterize the vivid song-like and lyrical lines within Chopin's mazurkas in a way that is more in line with traditional mazurka idioms.

Research conducted by Polish scholars Jan Stęszewski, Ludwig Bielawski, and Ewa Dahlig-Turek has closely examined the change and development of accentuation patterns in the Polish language from the sixteenth century onwards, and how this affected the development of Polish rhythms in music. From their evidence they have deduced that the development in seventeenth-century Polish to naturally stress the penultimate (second to last) syllable of a word of two or more syllables was a leading factor to the development and crystallization of the mazurka rhythm. Retained in the phonetics of the Polish language today, this means that this property of the language is infused in the mazurka rhythm, instilling in it a particular character. This character of the mazurka rhythm that has developed over many centuries is intuitively felt by Polish folk singers. While patterns of intonation within the text of a song may not always ideally fit with the naturally developed character of the rhythm, the rhythm remains the subliminal grounding force linking declamation and musical character.

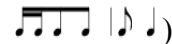
Before being able to further explore the nature of movement in this rhythm, the basic properties to Kujaw folk song structure need to be understood. Kujaw song is syllabic (one note for each syllable of the text), with very few melismas (multiple notes to a single syllable of the text). Verses have a fixed number of syllables. Common examples are 12 (6+6), 10 (5+5), 14 (8+6),<sup>77</sup> 11 (8+3).<sup>78</sup> The irregular fractions here denote an unequal versification in the poetry,

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<sup>77</sup> Jadwiga Przekwas (b.1912), "Jestem sobie Kujawionka," *Kujawy* recorded 1998 in Lubanie, Polish Radio Folk Collection, Polskie Radio SA, PRCD 169, 2001, compact disc, track 5.

<sup>78</sup> Maria Surdyk (b. 1932), "Ach, Gdzie Wum Sie Panna Młoda Podziała" *Kujawy*, recorded 1999, track 13.

e.g., *In the splendour of the evening/With the moon in your eyes* (8+6).<sup>79</sup> Common forms of stanzaic rhyme and melodic structure are AAAA, AABB, ABAB, AAAB, ABBA. These characteristics form the general make-up of a Kujaw song upon which the mazurka rhythm functions.

The mazurka rhythm is often attached to an iambic cadence (i.e.,  $\frac{3}{8}$  ) , creating a base for 6+6 syllable versification.<sup>80</sup> “Oj, Szwachy, Wy Szwachy” sung by Maria Surdyk (b.1932), demonstrates the above characteristics (fig.4).<sup>81</sup>



**Figure 4 “Oj, Szwachy, Wy Szwachy” bridal capping song**

To illuminate the nature of movement in the mazurka rhythm, one must distinguish between the types of accents that function within the sphere of musical expression. The two main categories of accents that have been distinguished by scholar Clive Brown are the *agogic* accent and the *percussive* accent.<sup>82</sup> The *agogic* accent denotes a slight emphatic lingering on a given note or syllable. Whereas the *percussive* accent is a rhythmically explosive or emphatic attack,

<sup>79</sup> Information on versification patterns from Jan Stęszewski, "Poland- Traditional Music- 4. General Characteristics," in *Oxford Music Online*, 2007-.  
[http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/22001?q=poland&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/22001?q=poland&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit)

<sup>80</sup> The term iambic cadence, derived from Greek poetic meters, represents the type of phonetic cadence of stressing the weak beat. In musical terms we general call this a feminine cadence. However, because of the textual/poetic implications of this music, using the poetry derived definition makes more sense.

<sup>81</sup> Maria Surdyk (b.1932), “Oj, Szwachy, Wy Szwachy,” *Kujawy*, recorded 1999, track 14.

<sup>82</sup> Clive Brown, *Classical & Romantic Performing Practice: 1750-1900* (Oxford University Press 1999), 50-58.

punctuating the note with sound. The *agogic* emphasis therefore deals with expression over the medium of time, whereas the *percussive* deals with expression with different gradients of sound. The Polish language is a weak-stressed language,<sup>83</sup> and the natural stress occurs as an *agogic* accent on the penultimate syllable of a word, rather than *percussive* ones used in English.

So, the mazurka rhythm is characterized with a natural agogic emphasis on the weak beat of the bar (beat two or three). This can be represented in the following exercise, which shows the relationship between the Polish language and mazurka rhythm. Recite the four-syllable Polish word for *farm*, “gospodarstwo” (gos-po-DAARST-vo). The third syllable “dar” moves into the consonant cluster (phonetic) “stv” creating a prolonged beat before hearing the last vowel, i.e., an agogic accent. Align this word with the mazurka rhythm, and see how this rhythm well suits the declamation of the word. The mazurka rhythm naturally developed to have the longer note value on the second beat of the bar instead of the first, possibly a result of the numerous types of phonetic endings of this nature. The performance practice for executing the mazurka rhythm in its developed agogic character in Kujaw folk singing is heard in the song called, “Jestem Sobie Kujawionka” (“I am a Kujawian Lass”), performed by Jadwiga Przekwas (fig.5).<sup>84</sup>

The image shows a musical score for the song "Jestem Sobie Kujawionka". It consists of two staves. The top staff is for the voice, and the bottom staff is for the piano. Both staves are in 3/8 time and G major. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Voice: Jes - tem so - bie Ku - ja - wion-ka znam wszyst-kie ob - rząd - ki.

Vo. 5: A - bom z/oj - ca Ku - ja - wion-ka, z/mat-ki Ku - ja - wion-ki. wion-ki.

The piano part features a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) leading to a double bar line.

**Figure 5 “Jestem Sobie Kujawionka” *przyśpiewek***

<sup>83</sup> Dominika Oliver and Martine Grice, “Phonetics and Phonology of lexical stress in Polish verbs” Accessed on August 28, 2013. [http://phonetik.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/uploads/tx\\_sibibtex/Oliver\\_Grice\\_ICPhS2003-1\\_01.pdf](http://phonetik.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/uploads/tx_sibibtex/Oliver_Grice_ICPhS2003-1_01.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> Jadwiga Przekwas (b.1912), “Jestem sobie Kujawionka,” *Kujawy*, recorded 1998, track 5.

Przekwas occasionally shortens the value of the first beat and adds a little time into the second beat or third beat of the bar. After the elongated beat, Przekwas surges to arrive at beat one (occasionally executed with an accent). Re-written in fig.6, this rhythm may look something like this:

—> denotes an acceleration through the bar.

**Figure 6 Rhythmic re-conceptualization of treatment in Przekwas' performance of the mazurka rhythm.**

The surge from the elongated beat through beat three to arrive hastily on beat one, is characteristic of both the mazurka rhythm and the type of *rubato* that characterizes folk music (*rubato* discussed further in next subheading).

Przekwas also presents a layer of marked accentuations. She firmly accents different beats of the bar throughout the performance, a typical practice of the *kujawiak* dance.<sup>85</sup> These accentuations do not follow the natural intonation of the text, but rather carry patterns of accents from the dance and its improvised/free character.

Therefore, the singer can:

- 1) deviate from the natural accent of his/her textual declamation to capture more rhythmic emphases of dancelike features (c# in m.1, c# in m.5)
- 2) retain the natural accentuation pattern of the text

<sup>85</sup> Roderyk Lange, Barbara Krzyżaniak, and Aleksander Pawlak, *Folklor Kujaw* (Warsaw: Centralny Ośrodek Metodyki Upowszechniania Kultury Warszawa, 1979), 34.

3) respond to the built-in musical agogic quality of the mazurka rhythm.

Layering these different patterns of accents as Przekwas does, creates different but interconnected levels of musical meaning that account for the complexity of different movements in the mazurka genre.

Regarding the agogic quality of the mazurka rhythm, interpreting these rhythms in Chopin requires an innate sense of this practice. This needs to be intuitively felt before deviating rhythmically into other ‘Polish’ practices. Polish pianist Henryk Sztompka portrays the simple naturalness of this agogic rhythm in an excerpt of the 1959 recording of Mazurka in b minor, op.30 no.2, mm.33-49 (fig.7).<sup>86</sup> Sztompka was a prizewinner in the first Frédéric Chopin International Piano Competition in 1927. His execution of this passage shows the barest but simplest treatment of the agogic qualities of the mazurka rhythm, ever so slightly prolonging the second beat and surging towards beat one, while keeping Chopin’s melodic phrasing intact. Sztompka helps to define the agogic accent on beat two with the aid of the left hand accompaniment. By detaching the second beat in the left hand, Sztompka creates durational space before arriving on beat three, followed by delicately gesturing to move directly to beat one.



Figure 7 Mazurka in b minor, op.30 no.2 mm. 37-42 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-Scores.com)

<sup>86</sup> Henryk Sztompka, “Henryk Sztompka: Mazurka in B minor, Op. 30, No. 2 (Chopin)” YouTube video, excerpt begins at 43’. From *Dziela Wszystkie* (Complete Works) Muza label (Polskie Nagrania), SX 0093 Recorded 1959. Posted by “classievinylibiz,” April 4, 2010. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FArflJ8q\\_mQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FArflJ8q_mQ)

While the mazurka rhythm is characterized by this particular agogic practice that alters the temporal spheres of the mazurka style, Kujaw dance song is executed with even greater sense of freedom, portraying a temporal and rhythmical pliancy on a different level.

## ii. Further Temporal Factors in Kujaw Folk Song

*Rubato* is one of the main defining features of Kujaw folk song, and also one that has been discussed extensively as it relates to Chopin's aesthetic.<sup>87</sup> The practice of *tempo rubato* in Chopin's mazurkas has been described primarily in letters from those who heard Chopin's playing.<sup>88</sup> Commonly quoted stories of Chopin's *rubato* describe mere impressions of the practice. Henry Chorley quotes:

In music not his own...he [Chopin] can be as staid as a metronome; while his Mazurkas lose half their characteristic wildness if played without a certain freak and licence,—impossible to imitate, but irresistible if the player at all feels the music.<sup>89</sup>

Chopin's *rubato* in the mazurka has already been mentioned in reference to Meyerbeer and Hallé, whose impressions were so extreme that they could not differentiate the intrinsic triple meter from duple time. Studies since then have clarified that Chopin's mazurkas had their own special *rubato* practice not similar to other *rubato* practice used by Chopin at the time.

Eigeldinger distinguishes these three different types of Chopin's *rubato* style:

The first type of rubato descended from the Italian Baroque tradition... and occurs principally in works with broad cantilenas.

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<sup>87</sup> David Rowland, "Chopin's *tempo rubato* in context," in *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 199-213; Kay Bedenbaugh, "Rubato in the Chopin Mazurkas," PhD Diss, Stanford University, 1986; Thomas Fielden, "Tempo Rubato," *Music & Letters* 34, no.2 (April 1953): 150-152.

<sup>88</sup> Eigeldinger, "Agogics: Rhythmic strictness and rubato," *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 49-52.

<sup>89</sup> Henry Chorley, *The Athenaeum*, no.1079 (July 1848): 660, quoted in David Rowland's "Chopin's tempo rubato in context," *Chopin Studies 2*, 210.

The second, more common type consists of fleeting changes of pace relative to the basic tempo; these agogic modifications may affect a whole section, period or phrase, slowing down or accelerating the flow depending on the direction of the music. . . . The third component of Chopinian *rubato* is derived from the mobile rhythm of the *Mazur*.<sup>90</sup>

Although it is impossible to know precisely what the ‘wildness’ *rubato* in his playing the mazurkas actually entailed, it is reasonable to presume that it derived from the temporal elasticity and practices of the mazurka tradition. While particular choreographic elements to the urban *mazur* very frequently appear as temporally-involved ‘topics’ in Chopin’s mazurkas, authentic folk *rubato* also makes distinct marks in disrupting the meter in extreme ways, and may therefore more closely respond to the ‘freak and license’ eluded to by Henry Chorley in the opening quote to this section.

Comparing Chopin’s mazurkas with temporal practices of Kujaw folk *rubato* could shed light on the style of mazurka *rubato* that has only been touched by Anglo-scholarship, mostly by referencing the historical commentary found in Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger’s *Chopin: pianist and teacher* and comparing it to other *rubato* practices from the eighteenth century. Ascertaining the nature of Kujaw folk *rubato* therefore will open new doors in expressing Chopin’s music with further verve and style.

In the following section I will ascertain how Chopin used *rubato* differently from other “conservative” composers,<sup>91</sup> revealing the connection between the *folk rubato* practice and

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<sup>90</sup> Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, quoted in Rowland, “Chopin’s *tempo rubato in context*,” 209.

<sup>91</sup> Chopin has been considered “conservative” by several scholars, seen as such as part of his approach to style and political philosophy. Rowland “Chopin’s tempo rubato,” 209, and Jim Samson “Stile Brillante,” in *The Music of Chopin* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 43-57. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, “Placing Chopin: reflections on a compositional aesthetic,” in *Chopin Studies 2*, 102-139 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Eigeldinger in particular concludes to Chopin’s conservative psychology saying “his marked individuality and futuristic tendencies could not be recognised as such by him: it was essential for Chopin – the Exile Incarnate – to

Chopin's works. To draw similarities with the concept of *rubato* as a whole, I will draw connections between Kujaw *folk rubato* and the general understanding of *rubato* that was common in performance style throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century. I will then analyze a series of recordings of Kujaw singing that demonstrate the type of *rubato* used in Kujaw practice. This will be accompanied by transcriptions of the songs that have been notated with symbols, which will aid the reader to see a visual representation of the trivial aspects of temporal deviation. This discussion will relate in many ways to the observations made by Jadwiga and Marian Sobieski in their study of Polish folk music, drawn from the Polish article "Tempo Rubato u Chopina w Polskiej Muzyce Ludowej." As a source which is not easily accessible to English-speakers, this will bring forth a piece of scholarship which is integral to the study of *tempo rubato* in Chopin.

#### The Difference between Chopin's folk *Rubato* and other *Rubato* Techniques

*Rubato* in Chopin's Mazurkas functions slightly differently than in his other genres.

Chopin indicated the term *rubato* fourteen times in his compositional career, eight of them in his mazurkas, and all of them early in his composing career.<sup>92</sup> There are several hypothesis to the abandonment of the marking. David Rowland suggests that it was due to the term not being understood by his contemporaries.<sup>93</sup> Franz Liszt proposes, "Chopin writes *tempo rubato* early in his writing, but later he ceases to insert the term, convinced that, with any intelligence, a player

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belong to his ideal artistic tradition. This ideal made him shun the present and immerse himself in the music of J.S. Bach and Mozart, which, was both a stimulus and an anchor...If Chopin arrives...at the frontiers of musical symbolism, he does so only by grounding himself in the heritage of late baroque and classical music, which he assimilates and moulds in his own image."

<sup>92</sup> Op.6, no.1, 2; Op.7 no.1, 3; Op.8 (Trio), Op.9 no.2, Op.15 no.3, Op.16, Op.21, Op. 24 no.1,2; Op.67 no.3, Posth, Polonaise in g#-, Posthumous Mazurka.

<sup>93</sup> Rowland, "Chopin's *tempo rubato*," 212.

could not fail to understand this rule of irregularity.”<sup>94</sup> My own observations on the matter, however, link Chopin’s abandonment of the term with his change of notational style as he was developing his musical language. His early style is packed with articulation marks, phrasing marks within phrasing marks, and detailed pedal markings. After op. 24, however, his notational style begins to eliminate many of the fine-tuned details such as compact phrasing, and *tempo rubato*. It has been agreed historically that Chopin’s early aesthetic was influenced by the improvisatory, bravura style of *stile brillante*.<sup>95</sup> The quality of *stile brillante* was not exclusive to melodious execution and sparkling passage work, but was equally influential on the notational details written by composers.<sup>96</sup> Virtuosity in notation was in line with the spirit of the brilliance and frequent changes of mood, tempo, and improvisational character that defined the style.

His early mazurkas show that Chopin uses the term *rubato* within rather quick tempi,  $\text{♩}=130-207$  referring to the elastic nature in the dance character.<sup>97</sup> Previous usages for this term in the early nineteenth-century by other composers, including Chopin in other genre, were designated for *cantabile* and *adagio* tempi. Seen in his lively mazurkas with a characteristic dancing melody, Chopin used the term in three different ways: 1) to denote new melodic material, thereby expressing a change in character; 2) to give the musical phrase a sense of rest from the rhythmic impulses (more similar to Italian usage of the practice); 3) and in the repetition of the same motivic fragment, to reconceptualise the rhythmic and agogic nature of the

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<sup>94</sup> Franz Liszt. *Life of Chopin*. Trans. Martha Walter Cook (New York: C.H. Ditson & Co, 1863), 69-70.

<sup>95</sup> Samson, “Stile Brillante,” 43-57.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>97</sup> Op.24 no.1, for instance, marked *Lento*, is indicated with metronome marking  $\text{♩}=108$ . In my mind, this suggests the dance character of the slow *kujawiak* or *chodzony* dance which Oskar Kolberg observed to be in the metronome range of  $\text{♩}=100-120$ .

passage.<sup>98</sup> The third of these is precisely in line with the Kujaw nature of *rubato* tradition, which in fact shares many similarities with other *rubato* practices.

### Rubato in Kujaw Folk Song

*Rubato* in Kujaw folk song in many ways functions similarly as *rubato* in Western art music. Pierfrancesco Tosi was the first to describe tasteful execution of *rubato* in *Opinioni de cantori*, 1723.<sup>99</sup> He describes *rubato* as a mode of expression where the singer shifts the rhythm slightly between notes within the bar over a steadily beating bass (accompaniment). He describes two kinds of this rhythmical shift: 1) *guadaniare per perdere* – gaining a little time for one rhythmic unit by taking away from another; 2) *perdere per ricuperare* – accounting for a little time of a note in order to give that little bit of time to another note. These kinds of meaningful shifts in the melodic rhythm cause a subtle rhythmic agitation. *Rubato* in Kujaw folk song in this sense functions the same way as *rubato* described by Tosi. However, because of its application in quick, lively music (as opposed to *cantabile* or *adagio* passages from the tradition in the West) and its interaction with melodies built upon a central axis (rather than linear melodies moving towards particular harmonic functions), the impression of taking/giving time within a bar has further, more stylistic implications.

*Rubato* in Polish folk music appears only in songs with dance character of the mazurka type (i.e. mazurka rhythm). Folk songs that feature the mazurka rhythm, but are not of dance character, are not executed with *rubato*.<sup>100</sup> Because of the improvisatory nature of the musical

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<sup>98</sup> Jadwiga and Marian Sobieski, "Tempo Rubato u Chopina w Polskiej Muzyce Ludowej" *Muzyka* 3 (1960): 34.

<sup>99</sup> Pierfrancesco Tosi, *Opinioni de 'Cantori antichi e moderni o sieno Osservazioni sopra il cantro figurato*, (Bologna, 1723) quoted in Sobieski, "Tempo Rubato u Chopina," 31.

<sup>100</sup> Lange, *Folklor Kujaw*, 35.

tradition, there are no strict way or rule in which this is executed; however, learning a sense of its characteristic movements and cultural traditions can help to emote the timing with more meaning and soul. It has been observed by Jadwiga and Marian Sobieski that *rubato* is used increasingly with the repetition of a melody or motive (extensively in fiddling practice, but likewise in vocal music),<sup>101</sup> calling to mind Chopin's usage of the term in op.7 no.1 (indicated at the third repetition of a motive in fig.8).



**Figure 8** Mazurka in B-flat major, op.7 no.1 mm. 45-49 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

The varied treatment of *rubato* which responds to the repetition of a musical motive can be analyzed in the song “Czerwone Jabłuszko, Czerwone jak Róża” (“Red apple, red like a rose”), sung by Maria Surdyk (fig.9). Maria Surdyk (b.1932) is among the most authentic folk singers of the Kujaw region whose singing preserves the dialect and performance techniques of long ago.<sup>102</sup>

Voice

Czer-wo-ne jab - lusz-ko, czer-wo-ne jak ró - za. Ko-cha-ją cię chłop-cy,

Vo.

bo jes-tesz nie du - ża.

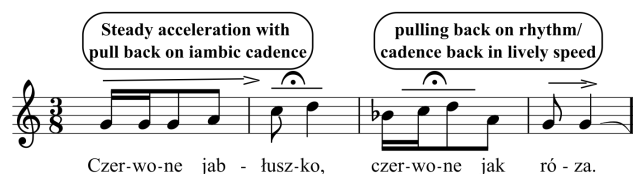
**Figure 9** “Czerwone Jabłuszko, Czerwone jak Róża” bridal capping song

Some examples of how Surdyk varies her use of *rubato* include: dotting the mazurka rhythm (giving it more distinctive rhythmic expression ‘52); clearly *not* using *rubato*, and thereby

<sup>101</sup> Sobieski, “Tempo Rubato u Chopina,” 38.

<sup>102</sup> Maria Surdyk, “Czerwone Jabłuszko, czerwone jak Róża,” *Kujawy*, recorded 1999, track 15.

showing the mazurka rhythm in its strict unadulterated form (this has an expressive quality because *rubato* is typically more prominent than not. Heard at beginning of the fifth verse, 1'30); propelling the first two bars, then slowing down in the third bar, and accelerating through the iambic ending (beginning of phrase 1,2,3); within the iambic ending, choosing either to keep the quick adjusted tempo or readjusting it to *a tempo* for beats two and three. Inspired by the Sobieskis' notational process of marking *rubato*, I likewise notate symbols to illustrate the certain temporal trends in this music.<sup>103</sup> This fragment demonstrates how Surdyk mirrors the treatment of *rubato* between antecedent and consequent part of the musical sentence (fig.10).



**Figure 10 “Czerwone Jabluszko, Czerwone jak Róża” *rubato* in mirror image**

Using similar methods to denote changes to repetitive material and to imply *rubato* techniques, Chopin applies some of the above techniques in his motivic repetition: e.g., op.59 no.1 (fig.11).



**Figure 11 Mazurka in a minor, op.59 no.1 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)**

This opening example demonstrates not only a rhythmic variant in mm.9-10 vs. 11-12 (dotted), but more generally shows Chopin writing in the form and contour of Kujaw folk song

<sup>103</sup> For example of Sobieski's transcription, see appendix C

versification (aa'bb, mazurka rhythm with iambic cadence, and undulating melody around an axis).

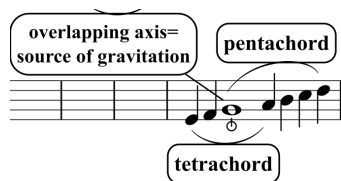
To analyze the nature of repetition and the *rubato* it implies, it can be useful to listen to a pianist who has captured this tradition in their playing. Arthur Rubinstein does a modest job of revealing the type of *rubato* associated with repetitive material in a light but effective stylization of the folk tradition.<sup>104</sup> He begins with the natural agogic treatment of the mazurka rhythm in m.1. In m.3 he propels the line and in mm.4 pulls back the tempo (similar to the way Surdyk treats the phrase). In m.9 of his repetition, Rubinstein dots the mazurka rhythm, a practice frequent within Kujaw folk *rubato*. This way of using *rubato* parallels authentic Kujaw folk use of *rubato* as used upon the repetition of motives.

Another unique feature that informs *rubato* practice in Kujaw folk traditions is the construction and motion embedded in Polish melodies. The Sobieskis have claimed that *rubato* in the singing practice of Polish folk music is dependent on the impulses of the textual content, saying that singers interact through *rubato* as a means to express an energetic melodic line, mobilizing its course to a culminating point.<sup>105</sup> My own observations, however, have determined that the idea of a *melodic* line coming to a 'culminating point' is not an accurate representation of the nature of folk melodic gestural movement. Unlike Western art music where movement of melody is strongly related to harmonic function, Polish folk melody is built upon overlapping tetra- and pentachords, which create a central axis point around which the melody undulates (fig.12).

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<sup>104</sup> "Arthur Rubinstein - Chopin Mazurka in A minor, Op. 59, No. 1" YouTube video, from The Chopin Collection, disc 4, BMG imports, 1991. Posted by "ArRubMusic" October 25, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxMRLU-nxIs>

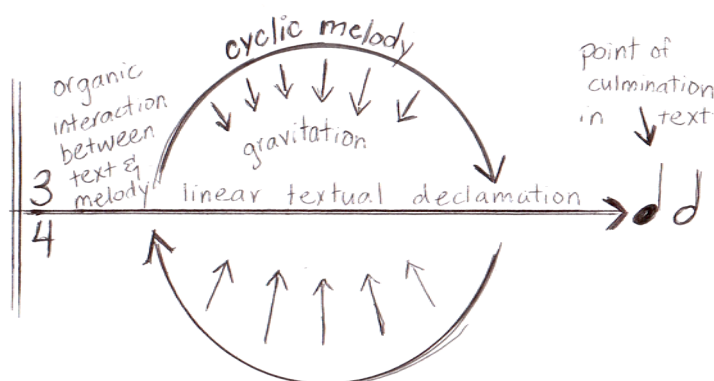
<sup>105</sup> Sobieski, "Tempo Rubato u Chopina," 38



**Figure 12 Overlapping tetra-/pentachords creating an axis**

This overlap produces the sense of two tonal centers and, as Windakiewiczowa describes, leaves tonic and dominant tendencies on a common level, equivocally balanced. Therefore, with weakened harmonic tendencies, a strong sense of linear melodic culmination does not take place. The Sobieskis' observations may be seen therefore to relate to different grounds than that of melody – that is, that *rubato* interacts with the expression of textual content, culminating towards the end of textual declamation, which is musically marked by the iambic cadence.

With this, I propose that there is another interacting level to the function of *rubato*: an interrelation between the energetic expression of the text and the gravitation of the melody towards its central axis. *Rubato* interacting between the linear textual layer and the cyclical melodic layer is represented in the following diagram (fig.13):



**Figure 13 Relationship between text and melody**

The wedding song “Skowroneczek Śpiwo, Dziń się Rozwidniwo” (“*A Skylark is Singing, the Day is Breaking*”) sung by Maria Surdyk (b.1932), aurally demonstrates how the expression of

the text interacts with the tendencies of the the central axis-bound melody (fig.14).<sup>106</sup>

Figure 14 shows two vocal parts in 3/8 time. The first part, labeled 'Voice', has the lyrics: "Sko-wro-ne - czek śpi - wo Dzień się roz - wid - ni - wo. Sto-ji Zo - sia - w/ok nie". The second part, labeled 'Vo.', has the lyrics: "Goś-ci się spoj dzi - wo." The melody is characterized by a central axis-bound structure with overlapping phrases around pitches A and B.

**Figure 14** “Skowroneczek Śpiwo, Dzień się Rozwidniwo” wedding song to greet guests

The skeleton to the melody is E-G-A-B-C-D-E comprised of a pentachord (A-E) and a tetrachord (E-B). The overlapping occurs around pitches A and B. These form an axis point. The text, on the other hand, continues in a linear, declamatory style. This results in an interplay between two different layers of movements of different natures on which *rubato* operates.

Melodic undulation around an axis point marked with long phrases is probably the most characteristic feature that makes its appearance in Chopin’s mazurkas. This can only be a response to characterizing the function of Slavonic melody, heard through a linear syllabic declamation. Take, for example, the beautiful folk vocal idiom in Mazurka in c# minor, op.30 no.4 (fig.15).

Figure 15 shows the piano accompaniment for Mazurka in c-sharp minor, op.30 no.4, measures 33-42. The score is in 3/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The score includes performance instructions such as *poco rit.*, *a tempo.*, and *sempre p*. The melody is characterized by a central axis-bound structure with overlapping phrases around pitches A and B.

**Figure 15** Mazurka in c-sharp minor, op.30 no.4 mm. 33-42 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

<sup>106</sup> Maria Surdyk, “Skowroneczek Śpiwo, Dzień się Rozwidniwo,” *Kujawy*, recorded 1999, track 12.

Characterized by the undulating pattern around E (mm.33-38), and then B (m.40-42), and structured in long four-bar phrases, Chopin shows the two elements functioning together. Performer Henryk Sztopka exemplifies thoughtful consideration of this interaction in his performance.<sup>107</sup> Sztopka clearly articulates the textual quality of the verses, i.e., the passage is not stagnant and there is a sense of linear movement. We also hear (which is generally absent in most other recordings) his careful craftsmanship in expressing the cyclical and undulating tendencies in the melody. Sztopka clearly understands that the central axis to the passage is the E (mm.33-37), and then the B (mm.40-42). This frees him to use *rubato* as an expressive tool based on these premises. Sztopka particularly enjoys the agogic quality in the mazurka rhythm. Furthermore, he gives a small emphasis to beat one, possibly indicating the start of a new textual line (suggested by the change of direction in the melodic line).

One of the components of folk *rubato* that requires special attention when observed in Chopin's mazurkas is the gesture of restarting *rubato* in every metrical bar. Nineteenth-century Polish ethnographer Oskar Kolberg observed in his field studies of Polish folk dance music that the sense of *rubato* exists within the bar. What I understand this to mean is that the sense of *rubato* (stretching or compressing the melody to free from rhythmic definition) occurs within the confines of one-bar units, as opposed to it being perceived in, for example, longer melodic phrases. Because this music functions as dance music, characteristically there is an enforcement of the metrical bar (an aid for the dancers) as opposed to gesturing over the bar line to create longer phrases (typical of other art music genres such as *lieder* or *operatic arias*). Within the gentle confines of the bar structure, performers can free themselves from other rhythmic

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<sup>107</sup> "Henryk Sztopka: Mazurka in C sharp minor, Op. 30, No. 4 (Chopin)" YouTube video, excerpt begins at 59', recorded 1959. Posted by "classievinybiz," April 4, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFdhC3N8gtQ>

constraints, coinciding with the style and general properties of *rubato* expression. Benedykt Przędzięk (b. 1929) demonstrates this effect in the *przyspiewek*, “Oj, Podkóweczki, oj Dajcie Ognia” (“Sparkle, you dancing heels”) (fig.16).<sup>108</sup>

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Voice, Vo. (Vocal), and Vo. (Vocal). The music is in 3/4 time. The lyrics are: "Oj, Pod-kó-wecz - ki, oj, daj - cie og - nia, oj bo dziew - czy - na te - go god - na a czy god - na czy nie god - na pod - kó - wecz - ki daj - cie og - nia". The score includes various rubato markings:  $\circ \rightarrow$  (quickenings of more than one note),  $\circ >$  (quickenings of one note), and  $// \circ$  (prolongations of a note). A legend at the bottom explains these markings:

- $\circ \rightarrow$  Indicates quickening of more than one note
- $\circ >$  Indicates quickening of one note
- $// \circ$  Indicates an obvious prolongation of a note
- $// \circ$  Indicates a slight prolongation of a note

Figure 16 "Oj podkóweczki, oj dajcie ognia" *przyspiewek*

This example shows the practice of reconfiguring back to tempo at the start of each bar. However, within the small spectrum of the melody and harmonic structure Przędzięk is able to express a great deal. This music comes across as provoking because of the complex treatment of time and accent within a seemingly simple musical terrain.

Folk *rubato* within one-bar structure has had dazzling effects in performances of Chopin's mazurkas. Polish pianist Ignaz Friedman (1882-1948), student of Theodor Leschetizky, has mastered an understanding of the mazurka's rhythmic pliancy as based on the folk tradition.

<sup>108</sup> Benedykt Przędzięk (b.1929), "Oj, podkóweczki dajcie ognia," *Kujawy*, recorded 1998, track 32.

He is known as the “unrivalled master” of playing the Mazurkas, “understanding the rhythmic life of these pieces...portraying a humorous and athletic Chopin... of considerable physical litness.”<sup>109</sup> The performance is Mazurka in a minor, op. 7 no.2.<sup>110</sup>

The image shows the first two systems of the musical score for Chopin's Mazurka in a minor, op. 7 no. 2. The tempo is marked 'Vivo ma non troppo' with a quarter note equal to 160. The piece is in 3/4 time and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score includes various musical markings such as slurs, accents, and dynamic changes like *cresc.*, *f stretto*, and *p*. The left hand features portato markings (staccato within a slur) and the right hand has intricate fingerings and slurs.

**Figure 17 Mazurka in a minor, op.7 no.2 (Ekier)**

Seen in fig.17, Chopin indicates many musical markings: two-bar phrases, shorter slurs, accent marks, left hand portato (staccato markings within a slur – here most likely resembling the string portamento: using the same bow stroke to articulate two repeated notes), *stretto*, and *Vivo*. The *vivo* indicates that the passage likely will require some thoughtful *rubato* practice, based on its folk characteristics (undulating melody, small melodic span). Friedmann captures the *rubato* practice right away in the first measure. In m.1 Friedmann establishes the tempo and tightens the dotted rhythm ever so slightly (a characteristic hallmark to his playing). The text reveals a short hairpin which also suggests a slight lingering here. In m.2 Friedmann quickens the half note by agitating the arrival of the left hand. In m.3 he uses the marked crescendo to give the impression

<sup>109</sup> Methuen-Campbell, *Chopin Playing*, 64-65.

<sup>110</sup> “Ignaz Friedman: 4 Chopin Mazurkas (vol. 1)” YouTube video, from the Pearl 4 CD set IF 2000. Recorded Nov 13, 1930 for Columbia. Posted by “camaysar222” November 24, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k15R92xkRK8>. Excerpt begins 1’55.

of intensity (or quickening); however, he keeps the rhythm in place until the very end of the bar where he surges into the downbeat of the m.4. In m.6 Friedmann delays the placement of the E ever so slightly. The beginning of m.7 he delays the first eighth note and jumps back into tempo while *crescendoing* the remaining eighth notes to give the impression of the marked *stretto*. Friedmann marks the last beat of m.7 with a *tenuto* to give equal emphasis to beat 3 and upcoming beat one of the next measure. In the continuation of the next repeated phrase Friedmann varies the *rubato*, demonstrating the freedom of the practice. This superb treatment of *rubato* gained Friedman an exceptional reputation as the greatest player of Chopin's mazurkas, derived from his natural understanding of the style, and supreme ability to express their versatile and pliant character within the given moment.

To conclude, Chopin's unnotated *rubato* in these dance pieces can be energized through exploring the *rubato* of the folk music which is embedded in his music. The execution of tempo rubato in Kujaw folk song is a result of textual declamation and versification, and is executed within the bar.<sup>111</sup> Marian and Jadwiga Sobieski eloquently remark on Chopin's use of *rubato*, saying (translated):

Chopin, in contact with Polish folk music and its musical performances, recognized the values of its performance as a very important element; seeing as he adapted and opened the most characteristic and striking manner of folk performance practice that is *tempo rubato*. He embraced with his compositional strengths not only the material side of Polish folklore, but the emotional value carried by folk performance practice.

In the vocal performances of the various ditties Chopin heard first-hand, his attentiveness captured the qualities and shapes that resulted from the singing. Although Chopin was able to

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<sup>111</sup> Zofia and Jan Stęszewski, "Do genezy i chronologii rytmów mazorkowych w Polsce," *Muzyka*, no.3 (1960): 8-14.

articulate certain musical folk qualities through notation, nineteenth-century style of notation did not specify the complexities of *tempo rubato* and their desired mode of execution or other related gestures that might have evoked particular dance practice and instrumental playing.<sup>112</sup> It is through the interpreters that these colourful practices can live on and provide energy to these beautiful works.

### iii. The anacrusis.

Nearly all of Chopin's mazurkas begin with an upbeat into the music, yet a characteristic feature of Kujaw folk song is that it bears no upbeat and begin directly on the beat.<sup>113</sup> The gesture that results from the lack of an anacrusis within levels of Polish rhythms and melody defines the 'Polish' qualities in the music. In that sense, what does Chopin's use of the anacrusis mean for the expression of his compositions? Does his use of the upbeat allow him to remain faithful to this Polish characteristic or does it detract from the Polish quality in the mazurka rhythm? And finally, can the performer do anything in particular to blend the two opposing ideas into a balanced means of expressing the upbeat for its narrative value with the 'Polish' quality of the characteristic nature of the mazurka rhythm?

In total, eight of Chopin's mazurkas have an introduction, and except for op.24 no.4, they all begin directly on the downbeat (op.6 no.5; op.7 no.3; op.17 no.4; op.24 no.2; op.30 no.3,4; op.56 no.2). Only ten other mazurkas begin directly on the downbeat (op.7 no.1, op.41 no.1,2,4, op.50 no.1,2, op.56 no.1, op.59 no.2, op.63 no.1,2). This sums that two-thirds of Chopin's

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<sup>112</sup> The mazurkas as a whole contain the most markings of '*rubato*' than any other corpus of his works. The *rubato* marking contains different meanings depending on the tempo, texture, or idea being evoked.

<sup>113</sup> Oxford Music Online, "Poland- Traditional Music- 4. General Characteristics," [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/22001?q=poland&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/22001?q=poland&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit)

mazurkas begin with an anacrusis or up-beat, which is most often frequently accented, e.g., op.33 no.1 (fig.18).

**Figure 18 Mazurka in g-sharp minor, op.33 no.1 (Ekier)**

This example illustrates Chopin beginning with an strong anacrusis and then establishing a strong sense of mazurka-like characteristics. The short hairpin in m.1 suggests the a temporal lingering of the dotted rhythm. Chopin contrasts the anacrusis with a well-defined mazurka rhythm in m.1. The short hairpin in m.2 supports the arrival point of the tonic harmony, and is more a deepening in the sound than a temporal event. This arrival of the tonic harmony with a suggested emphasis brings about a balance within the function of the anacrusis.

Chopin's use of the anacrusis has multifaceted meanings. For one, an accented anacrusis, may allude to the continuing motion of the urban *mazur* dance, which is characterized by a frequent marking of the third beat.<sup>114</sup> Another point serves the idea of entering into an ongoing dance. This idea of 'continuity,' then has grander meaning than a simple dance gesture – one that

<sup>114</sup> This example does not serve for this specific purpose, as it is marked both *Mesto* and *p*, which is more indicative of either the walking dance *chodzony*, or the light, but plodding steps associated with the *kujawiak*.

is more consonant with the Romantic philosophy of the ‘universal’ and ‘subliminal’ sought by artists in the nineteenth century. Antoine François Marmontel describes the effects of romanticism in Chopin’s music: “something of both dream and reality: this is the pinnacle of art, and this was Chopin’s art.”<sup>115</sup> Marmontel illuminates the common romantic search to express some universal truth that existed far beyond the grasp of human understanding. In this light, the anacrusis is a “packed” gesture, urging us into the reality of Chopin’s sound world while expressing the dreamlike impossibility of music.<sup>116</sup> To me, Chopin’s anacrusis nearly always seems to beckon a sort of tortured gesture, its single pitch seeming to evoke loneliness in exploring the expanse of the universe. Lingering in ‘non-metric’ time (the offbeat) shows the disconnection between man’s limits and universal expanse. The anacrusis can therefore lead directly into topics of the dance, or dreamily enter into more poetic themes and emotions that evoke the spirit of nineteenth-century romantic aesthetics.

Bringing this back to a practical level, Chopin’s anacrusis has acoustic and temporal effects. His accented anacrusis is indicative of an agogic accent rather than a punctuating one, having more to do about time than a punctuated sound. Seymour Bernstein has thoughtfully observed that “Chopin’s music is filled with short closing hairpins that are often confused with accents and longer hairpins... [and] denote the deepest sentiment, calling for a lingering where the hairpin begins.” If Chopin, however, does not intend his mark as a short hairpin but rather with more accentual properties, then still “the music calls for poetic inflections of some sort – louder, softer, delayed, or a combination of these things... Certain accented tones stir a deep

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<sup>115</sup> Eigeldinger, *Chopin: pianist and teacher*, 274-275.

<sup>116</sup> Lawrence Kramer, "Impossible Objects: Apparitions, Reclining Nudes, and Chopin's Prelude in a Minor," in *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 72-102.

longing.”<sup>117</sup> Seymour Bernstein therefore asserts that the anacrusis always suggests an embodiment of the passing of time.

The expressive implications of Chopin’s anacrusis can be exemplified in a variety of pianistic interpretations. Compared here are three different pianists playing the opening of op.33 no.4 (fig.19):



**Figure 19** Mazurka in b minor, op.33 no.4 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

The first is Russian pianist Vladimir de Pachmann (1848-1933). His treatment of the anacrusis and the remainder of m.1 is rhythmically even, with a gradual *accelerando*. De Pachmann uses the entirety of m.1 to suggest the struggle of the above-mentioned Romantic sentiment with time. The *accelerando* on the even static beat shows this struggle of holding to the security of measured time and its fleeting escape from human bonds. As m.2 arrives, he begins with a more dancelike character. The lack of a firmly notated downbeat within the first measure, gravitates de Pachmann to treat the anacrusis and the first measure as a steady lead-up into m.2, which he treats with the freedom that suits an improvised, dancelike character.<sup>118</sup>

Polish pianist Moritz Rosenthal (1862-1946), student of Karol Mikuli (pupil of Chopin), treats the material differently, choosing an overall slower tempo for the piece. His treatment of

<sup>117</sup> Seymour Bernstein, *Chopin: Interpreting His Notational Symbols* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2005), 56.

<sup>118</sup> “Vladimir de Pachmann (1848-1933): Chopin- Mazurka op.33 no.4,” recorded January 1916, YouTube video, from Columbia (6976) L 1102, posted by “d60944” April 10, 2008. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YZMiq-KwmM>

the anacrusis possesses more agogic quality than de Pachmann's interpretation, arriving at the first measure slightly later. In m.1 Rosenthal briefly energizes the short trill on beat two and pulls back the energy on beat three. Perhaps to show man's struggle over time as a romantic concept, Rosenthal plays in a slow retarding or equal tempo on the odd measures of the passage, and on the even measures he energizes the tempo by playing much more quickly. Rosenthal's agogic treatment of the anacrusis works with his idea of contrasting adjacent measures and establishing the fluctuation between fleeting time and stable measured time.<sup>119</sup>

Polish pianist Raoul Koczalski (1884-1948), another student of Karol Mikuli, treats the anacrusis with the most difference from the other players. Koczalski treats the upbeat to suggest the natural and folkloristic agogic treatment of the mazurka rhythm, i.e., prolonging the second beat and surging through the third beat directly to beat one. Therefore, the anacrusis is quickly followed by the left hand arrival on the downbeat. Throughout the passage, Koczalski continues this traditional mazurka rhythm practice of quickening the arrival of beat one. Koczalski also adapts a sense of improvisation which he accomplishes by altering the articulation in the left hand (audible with his lack of pedal), fluctuating the tempo in every bar, and breaking the hands slightly so that the right-hand arrives slightly after the left. The latter was a practice common to the Golden Age of pianists (1830s-1930s).<sup>120</sup> His interpretation demonstrates a different understanding of the work, one that ignores the Romantic struggle of man and time which was reflected in Rosenthal's and de Pachmann's recording. Koczalski rather focuses on the quality of dance that resonates within the texture.

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<sup>119</sup> Moritz Rosenthal, "Moriz Rosenthal (1862-1946): Chopin - Mazurka op. 33 no. 4," recorded 1935, YouTube video, posted by "d60944" February 4, 2008, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K\\_cwERorlc8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_cwERorlc8).

<sup>120</sup> Raoul Koczalski, "Raul Koczalski plays Chopin: Mazurka in B minor, Op. 33 No. 4," recorded in 1928, YouTube video, posted by "gomanriquevideo" June 6, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8tmteYJGw>.

All three pianists here interpret the gesture of the anacrusis in a passive manner. Their performances are not over-dramatize by a lot of time-taking, but instead subtly express the particular ‘topic’ in Chopin’s mazurka style they wish to capture (e.g., romantic sentiment, or the dance).

### The Mazurka Rhythm and the Downbeat

While Chopin uses the anacrusis in his mazurkas to represent Romantic aesthetics or urban ballroom dance, his defined use of the mazurka rhythm and other Polish rhythmic patterns implies his desire to retain the Polish character in the music. What, then, does this imply in terms of performing the opening gestures of his mazurkas?

The downbeat entrance into the dance is a firmly defining feature of Kujaw folk song and all of Polish music connected with the mazurka rhythm. The mazurka rhythm begins with a condensation of rhythmic units and moves into a longer rhythmic values. This type of rhythm has been labelled by Polish scholars as ‘descendental’, specifying that the longer rhythmic values are at the end of the rhythmic pattern.<sup>121</sup> Not common to Western rhythmic patterns, the mazurka rhythm and its second beat phenomenon has a tendency to be perceived as, ♪|♪. However, the mazurka rhythm in its Polish quality is felt |♪ ♪| where the first beat is still understood as the start of the metrical bar despite the stress on the second beat. This results in a specific character that has made it the musical symbol of ‘Polishness’. Misinterpreting the rhythm to the former interpretation results in completely different musical meaning, unrelated to the mazurka style or its ancestral musical traditions. The start of the rhythm on the downbeat does not necessary mean that the downbeat is stressed, unless the singer/player has embodied some choreographical

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<sup>121</sup> Ewa Dahlig-Turek, *Rytmy polskie' w muzyce XVI-XIX wieku: Studium morfologiczne* (Warsaw: ISPAN, 2006): 1.

impulses that would rhythmically accentuate this beat. The start of this rhythmic unit as a means to begin a new textual line can help emphasize the poetic structure of the verses.

The lack of an upbeat in Polish music thus results in noticing but not overwhelming the downbeat. “Ah, gdzie wum się panna młodo podziała?”, sung by Surdyk, demonstrates the clear bar-by-bar approach to expressing the Polish rhythm as it exists without an anacrusis (fig.20).

Surdyk begins with firmly emphasizing the first beat of the rhythm (dotting the rhythm), however, the consequent phrase, she does not dot the rhythm or emphasize the rhythm this way.<sup>122</sup>

**Figure 20** “Ah, gdzie wum się panna młodo podziała?” wedding song

What this implies in Chopin’s mazurka passages that evoke folk song (i.e., simple undulating melodies, with limited ornamentation and rhythmic deviation) is to avoid treating the mazurka rhythm as a gesture indicative of an anacrusis, ♪♪| (where the two eighth notes lead into the longer beats), rather treating the rhythm as a one-bar rhythmic motive. By fluctuating between a stronger sensation of the downbeat and a more general passing through the rhythm, beautiful contrasts that suit Polish gesture can occur. Using the other temporal ideas that were

<sup>122</sup> Maria Surdyk “Ah, gdzie wum się panna młodo podziała?” *Kujawy*, track 13.

previously discussed in the characterization of the mazurka creates an interpretation that freely explores these Polish gestural musical traditions.

#### **iv. Natural Chest Voice**

Kujaw folk song is sung with the natural speaking voice, resonating from the chest. This is the case in both group and solo singing, e.g., “*Prosim o konia cuganta*” (harvest song – “Give us a team horse”).<sup>123</sup> Singing in a natural chest voice solidifies the organic bond that exists between the Kujaw musicians, dancers, and singers. The community participates in the music making, understood not as *art* but as leisure and recreation. Music was a means to escape from the hardships of daily labour in the fields, and tired workers did not have the means or time to train their voices, leaving vocal participation a widely accessible practice.

These descriptions of the vocal quality and practice may seem inappropriate to apply to Chopin, who was keen on ‘well-trained singing’, often suggesting that his students take singing lessons and listen to the best singers of the day. However, his mazurkas distinctly recall rustic qualities, which call for a different approach to embodying their character. It is possible to adapt a more carefree and grounded sense to expressing the melody, indicative of an easy sort of singing that is produced by the natural chest voice, while retaining, for instance, the introspective and nostalgic quality of sound so admired in Chopin’s playing. Remembering the quality of sound of this folk singing helps release the music from too many extraneous tensions and directions. The music, therefore, needs to be expressed with a light simplicity and lyrical

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<sup>123</sup> Zespół śpiewaczy, “*Prosim o konia cuganta*” *Kujawy*, harvest song recorded 1998, track 35.

expression that is associated with this type of singing. Cecylia Stawska, b.1932, reminds us of this simple sound in “Oj, gdzie jo jade, to ja jade”.<sup>124</sup>

In terms of passages in Chopin’s works that require this carefree lyrical treatment, here are a few examples of the types of rustic and lyrical melodies.



**Figure 21** Mazurka in A-flat major, op.17 no.3 “dolce” (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

Fig.21 reveals a simple undulating melody with a repeating rhythm. The *dolce* mark further denotes a the type of connected and lyrical style of singing, rather than the more articulate sounds of fiddling.

Figure 22 shows a musical score for a Mazurka in b minor, op.30 no.2, measures 31-42, marked "(poco ritenuto)". The score is in 3/4 time and consists of two staves. The right hand features a descending contour with a repeating rhythm, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment. The tempo is marked as "poco ritenuto".

**Figure 22** Mazurka in b minor, op.30 no.2 mm. 31-42 (Ekier)

Fig.22 demonstrates the song tradition with its 2+2 parallel phrase structure. The descending contour is common to Kujaw folk song and the ornaments almost represent a glissando effect common to this region, specifically the seventh gesture in m.39, where the voice would use a portamento to arrive at the main melody note. The repetition of the phrase in mm.41 also

<sup>124</sup> Cecylia Stawska (b. 1932), “Oj, gdzie jo jade, to jo jade,” *Kujawy*, wedding couplet recorded 1998, track 29.

parallels the song structure in many Kujaw folk songs of AAAA:| . This example further serves to show Chopin adapting these folk patterns with a much more complex use of harmony. With an eight-bar harmonic progression, Chopin fuses an atmosphere of simplicity of folk idiom with the more developed use of tonal language of Western art music.



Figure 23 Mazurka in c-sharp minor, op.41 no.4, introduction (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

Fig. 23 resonates the modal aspects of folk song outlining an undulating melody around the Phrygian mode. The single melodic line and its response in m.5 also suggests the *przyśpiewek* tradition. This example also shows the cross-breed of styles that Chopin fuses. Chopin uses *Maestoso* and the dotted mazurka rhythm alongside this simple declamatory style of the folk modal melody to bring about a new depth of meaning to the music.



Figure 24 Mazurka in c-sharp minor, op.50 no.3 mm. 45-51 (Ekier)

No better example can demonstrate the use of song idiom and repetition as fig. 24. *Mezza voce* clearly suggests the quality of natural chest voice that marks the expression in folk song.

## v. Melody

While Polish *rhythms* provide the foundational sense of ‘Polishness’ in the mazurka genre, the “*melodies*, all impregnated with Polish elements, [also] have something naively

untamed about them that charm and captivate by their very strangeness.”<sup>125</sup> The melodic elements of this music are bound to the roots of Polish folk music, descending from Slavonic patterns of melodic construction, giving them a distinctive musical meaning and colour.


Kujaw melodies are built within a “narrow range, limited to tetra or pentachordal skeletons, [and] manifested by accompanying gestures and activities of circling movements and repetitions of short phrases and formulae.”<sup>126</sup> This packed sentence means that: the melodies are of narrow range (not more than a ninth); they are built on overlapping tetra-/pentachords, i.e.,



forming a ‘skeleton’ for the construction of the melody. The melody is then built on this skeleton as short, repetitive circling motives, highlighting the gesture of spinning and cycling in the dance.

The overlap of tetra- and pentachords paradoxically functions on both tonal and modal levels in Polish music. In the first sense, the skeleton can behave as a formed hepta- or octotonic

structure (modal) , i.e. as one structural unit with one tonal center.<sup>127</sup> In the second

sense, they can remain functioning on a polycentric level,  distinguishing the level of the tetra- and pentachord in melodic practice. The overlap between the two chords is the

<sup>125</sup> Hector Berlioz, *Le Rénovateur* II/345, 15 December 1833. Quoted in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 272.

<sup>126</sup> Anna Czekanowska, *Polish Folk Music: Slavonic Heritage, Polish Tradition, Contemporary Trends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25.

<sup>127</sup> Octotonic should not be confused with octatonic, a modal sequentially interchanging tones and semitones. Octotonic in this context simply suggests an eight note pattern that functions around a tonal center.

point of interest.<sup>128</sup> The appearance of the #4 scale degree, for instance (that has been pointed to in Chopin's works, e.g., op.24 no.2 mm.25-28) is not necessarily a result of the Lydian mode (characteristic of the highlands in the south of Poland and not the mazurka bound regions), but rather, is a result of layering a tetra- and pentachord.<sup>129</sup>

The wave-like contour of Polish folk melodies known as *wahadłowy* (or pendulum) is common in dance music and is strongly characterized in both the vocal and instrumental practice.<sup>130</sup> It appears in short one-bar or two-bar motives typical of the livelier *oberek* dance, or within longer four-bar melodies, characteristic of *mazureks*. The wider and more spread out the movements of the dancers, the longer the phrasing and vice versa; the closer and tighter the space, the shorter the wave of the melody. These various lengths in melodic contour therefore give varying spatial effects. The *wahadłowy* contour of the melody reinforces the circling motion of the dancers who stamp out three steps to each side of their body. The back and forth sway of the dancers results in an undulating gesture. The melody undulates around an axis point which corresponds with the centrifugal force in the spinning motion of the dancers. Spinning motion is connected with centrifugal force (a force pushing away from the center). The grasping hold to one another accompanied by their grounded balance, however, brings upon a counter force which steadies the motion. These same forces that guide dancers, are likewise captured in the music as a response to the relationship of dancer with musician and singer. More practically speaking, these types of undulating melodies are grounded in circular movements rather than linear ones. The folk *oberek*, played on the fiddle by Jan Wasiak, b.1902, demonstrates the

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 187

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>130</sup> Windakiewiczowa, *Wzory ludowej muzyki polskiej*, 6.

undulating circular motion around an axis point.<sup>131</sup> Thus, the wave-like melody should not be played linearly towards an ultimate destination point, but rather in a circular, pulsating manner.



**Figure 25 Mazurka in f-sharp minor, op.6 no.1 mm. 17-20 (Ekier)**

In this example one could misunderstand the context and play the line linearly in the direction of the *ff* C# octave (fig.25). This type of misreading ignores Chopin's notational evidence of the *ff* octave as a departure point indicated by the fresh pedal mark and stroke accent mark. It also ignores the undulating effect of the axis-bound undulation melody which circles around the C#. Embodying this mannerism of circling around an axis allows for a grounded feeling paralleled to spinning, rather than a sense of flight that results from linear movement. Arthur Rubinstein and Henryk Sztompka both capture this circular/axis bound element.<sup>132</sup> Sztompka's interpretation, although played rather slowly and slowing down even further on the second and third beats of the passage, still is able to capture the effect of these unique Polish elements.

Oskar Kolberg noticed that major ninth intervals were common in Kujaw folk song. Anna Czekanowska says that "the character of intervals displayed in shouts and dialogue are seen by

<sup>131</sup> Jan Wasiak (b.1902), "Oberek" *Te skrzypce pamiętają czasy Chopina...* recorded 1956, ISPAN Folk Music Collection, 2009, CD 006, track 21. Online access with sign-in: <https://cadis.ispan.pl/en/login>, search article no., "T2207 no.14".

<sup>132</sup> "Arthur Rubinstein - Chopin Mazurka, Op. 6 No. 1," YouTube video, posted by "ArRubMusic" uploaded on July 13, 2009, excerpt begins '46, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Blpi0k\\_Fs2E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Blpi0k_Fs2E); and Henryk Sztompka, "Henryk Sztompka: Mazurka in F sharp minor, Op. 6 No. 1 (Chopin)," issued in 1959, Muza label (Polskie Nagrania) SX0092, YouTube video, posted by "classicvinylbiz" uploaded on April 2, 2010, excerpt begins '1'01. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okasXhSe3Kg>.

dissonance".<sup>133</sup> Kujaw dancers frequently will give energetic shrieks and yelps within the dance to add to the celebratory atmosphere. Chopin also features the major ninth (a dissonant interval) in his folk-like passages.

**Figure 26** Mazurka in B-flat major, op.7 no.1 mm. 43-53 (Ekier)

For instance, the slur and growing hairpin marking this interval (mm.46-47) very much capture the type of physical thrust of energy that is required to engage one's vocal chords in such a way (fig.26).

**Figure 27** Mazurka in f-sharp minor, op.6 no.1 mm. 17-20 (Ekier)

Dissonant intervals can also signal big energetic gestures such as a foot stomp, a jump, or an acrobatic figure by the dancing pair. The interpreter should therefore present this moment as a prominent and impressive event (fig.27).

<sup>133</sup> Czekanowska, *Polish Folk Music*, 25.

Polish folk melody is characterized by many features that are derived from Slavonic patterns, marking them with a unique flavour. While being energized during performance, these melodic patterns become gestural movements. These gestural melodies are characterized by their changing emotional character, circular movements, centrifugal and gravitating forces, and signal functions to the dance itself. Concerning Chopin's music, these gestural movements are indicated via Chopin's undulating melodic contours, extramusical markings, and his use of articulated intervals. By attending to these unique features in the melody and understanding their connection to these performance traditions, the performer can enhance their interpretation to the dancelike tendencies embedded in these melodies.

#### **vi. Glissando**

Glissando is unique to Kujaw folk song performance practice. Although it is not possible to reproduce this microtonal sliding on the piano *per se*, the interpreter can observe how Chopin's notation suggests this effect. The nature of this effect as heard on the piano is captured through a subtle use of articulation and *legato* technique. Kujaw glissando occurs as either a slide into a syllable, or as a vocal drop in pitch and volume utilized at the end of phrases.

Within an undulating melody, short glissandi may be used to expressively colour a melody. During this instance, selected syllables are performed with a quick, upward slide into the note. Nearly all the attached folk song recordings display this technique. The wedding song "Oj Mój Wianku, Lawendowy", sung by Cecylia Stawska (b.1932), shows the use of this upward syllabic glissando within an undulating melody (fig. 28).<sup>134</sup> This upward glissando is used on the

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<sup>134</sup> Cecylia Stawska (b.1932), "Oj, Mój Wianku, Lawendowy" *Kujawy*, track 27.

highest notes of the melody, which aids the performer to arrive on a given note, while also providing an expressive quality to these melodic notes.

Voice

Oj, mój wian-ku la - wen - do-wy nie spa-dej - my nie spa-dej - my z/mo - jej

Vo.

gło - wy nie spa-dej - my nie spa-dej - my z/mo - jej gło - wy.

**Figure 28 “O, Mój Wianku Lawendowy” bridal capping song**

On occasion, Chopin recalls this expressive vocal practice that results from sliding the voice. In the following example, Chopin notates a grace note in m.4 suggesting this effect, and likewise in m.7 with the sixteenth note sweep into beat two (fig.29).

11.

**Figure 29 Mazurka in e minor, op.17 no.2 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)**

Another very traditional glissando effect in Kujaw folk practice is to allow the voice to drop at the end of a phrases in pitch and volume. This drooping effect is retained by Maria Surdyk’s repertoire, including “Skowroneczek Śpiwo, Dziń się Rozwidniwo” (fig.30).

Voice

Sko-wro-ne - czek śpi - wo Dziń się roz - wid - ni - wo. Sto-ji Zo - sia - w/ok nie

Vo.

Goś-ci się spoj dzi - wo.

**Figure 30 Skowroneczek Śpiwo, Dziń się Rozwidniwo**

The Chopin excerpt below (fig.31) shares many similarities with the formal elements of the folk song “Skowroneczek Śpiwo” (it should be noted, however, that the stylization of the melody and texture speak more in line with ballroom dance gesture and chorale style). Paralleled to the folk prototype, Chopin writes a four-bar undulating melody, where the peak of the wave is in m.2 and the bottom of the wave in m.4. The folk song ends with an iambic cadence, and Chopin’s cadence also resolves on the weak beat of the bar. With the soprano moving down by step from Eb-Db (m.36), this parallels where Surdyk gestures her falling glissando in her singing.

**Figure 31 Mazurka in c-sharp minor, op.63 no.3 mm. 33-43 (Ekier)**

Understanding the Eb-Db as a glissando would illuminate the function of the cadence here.

Because the drop of the voice is in pitch and volume, the Db would sound very passive.

However, this makes sense in light of the Polish folk harmony, where V and I harmonies have equal function. The rhythm at the end of m.36 would further suggest the impression of an iambic cadence ♪♪♪♪ | ♪♪.

This passage has been performed to express many different ideas. Vladimir de Pachmann, for instance, treats the Db as a choreographic feature of the urban mazur dance, strongly

accentuating the third beat.<sup>135</sup> Ukrainian pianist Yakov Zak (first place winner at the 1937 Chopin Piano Competition), treats the Db as an anacrusis into m.37 making the Eb the end of the first idea.<sup>136</sup> I have not found a recording that treats the Db as a subsequent fading away of the musical idea as it appears in Kujaw folk practice. However, this opens up a new model to understanding this type of occurrence. It is my impression that this can be done with much character and verve.

Chopin also adapts the character of the Kujaw practice of dropping the voice in pitch and volume much more liberally throughout his melodies. In op.30 no.1, for instance, he uses many upper grace notes to represent that light droop in pitch and volume that is heard in Kujaw singing. This may further represent the slightly flattened intonation that can be heard in many of these recordings (fig.32).



Figure 32 Mazurka in c minor, op.30 no.1 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

### Concluding Remarks

It needs to be reiterated that the *przyśpiewek* is not an isolated vocal tradition. The *przyśpiewek* is an interactive practice that informs and responds to dancing and instrumental traditions in complete unity. The singing of the ditty dictates the character, inflection and

<sup>135</sup> “Vladimir de Pachmann (1848-1933): Chopin- Mazurka op.63 no.3,” recorded 1927, YouTube link, posted by “d60944” uploaded on April 10, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-0H9MjnBjE>. Excerpt commences at ’42.

<sup>136</sup> Yakov Zak, “Yakov Zak plays Chopin Mazurka in C sharp minor Op. 63 No. 3,” recorded 1940, YouTube link, posted by “gillivior” uploaded on April 5, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gt3JR-CUAIA>. Excerpt commences at ’48.

rhythmic vitality that energizes the dance festivities. Inflections in the Polish language and the practice of *rubato* shape and move the rhythmic and melodic structures of the music. Dissonant intervals in folk melody signal energetic gestures from the dancers. These gestures of Kujaw folk song practice define the temporal, spatial, and stylistic dimensions of Chopin's mazurkas. While Chopin's notations capture these Slavonic qualities of the music and dance, and articulate the rhythmic vitality of distinctly "Polish" features and gestures, the temporal and stylistic nuances are not possible to attain purely from the notational system and therefore need to be sensed intuitively through an understanding of gestural movements that enlighten this unique music. By combining the various complexities of *rubato* practice in Polish rhythms with Polish melodic structural properties, and giving over to the playful freedom and naturalness that emerges from folk singing, the performer of Chopin's mazurkas can evoke the magic and strangeness that his works call for.

### **CHAPTER III – FOLK FIDDLE AND *BASY* ACCOMPANIMENT IN CHOPIN’S MAZURKAS**

The Polish fiddle is as important for Chopin’s mazurkas as is the cello in certain Chopin compositions.<sup>137</sup> The musical patterns and timbres of the fiddle are evoked on piano with specific use of articulation, accentuation, and shaping.<sup>138</sup> However, while all musicians are familiar with the sound of the fiddle and generic types of its movements, the adaptation of fiddle-like articulation and character into dancelike sections in Chopin’s mazurkas remains generic. A heightened understanding of the fiddle in Kujaw performing traditions can provide numerous connections to the temporal, semantic, and even narrative levels of Chopin’s works.

This chapter will begin by looking at Chopin’s multifaceted musical style and identifying the signals of fiddling and how selected performers have understood and interpreted these ideas. This will be followed by a detailed account of specific characteristics of Kujaw folk fiddling and how they appear and function in Chopin’s music. An investigation of the more discrete gestural implications of Kujaw fiddling on Chopin’s music will follow.<sup>139</sup> Three specific performing trends in Kujaw fiddling can be found integrated on different levels in Chopin’s mazurkas. These three are: the traditional sequence of dances, improvisation, and embellishment. An awareness of fiddling in Chopin’s mazurkas provides insight into the origin, temporal meanings, and emotional qualities of his works. The connection of these trends to Chopin’s mazurkas has

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<sup>137</sup> For instance, Prelude in b-minor, op.28 no.6 or Etude in c-sharp minor, op.25 no.7

<sup>138</sup> This is to say, even though Chopin notates articulations that evoke fiddle patterns and their mode of playing, the interpreter need to energetically shape and understand the fine grading of articulation and its connection to its derived gestures. Chopin therefore, acts as a medium between the performer and the gesture/tradition being evoked.

<sup>139</sup> Some of these gestures exist mainly as a impulse to the musical style, found embedded in Chopin’s structural patterns, and in the way he uses contrast and variants. These gestures as such have not been identifiable topics in Chopin’s works before, and therefore call for greater exploration.

significant implications for the performer, providing new means for understanding his musical aesthetic.

The last portion of this chapter will examine performing traditions of the accompanying bass. Fiddling tropes in Chopin's works are incomplete without understanding their relationship to the performance habits in the drone bass accompaniment. The practice in the accompaniment pattern controls and steers the melody in very specific ways and understanding this movement is essential to the mazurka style. Alfred Cortot positions its importance with the following story:

In his letter of Christmas, 1831, to his faithful confidant Titus, [Chopin] finds a further occasion for returning to the misdeed and lack of understanding shown by certain musicians when dealing with the music for his native land. He fiercely criticised the musical behaviours of his demoniac compatriot, Sowinski, who ... sits down at his piano "and pounds the keyboard in a most disorderly fashion" ... "he makes my ears burn" with picking out the motif of one of his Mazurkas, "the whole value of which" Chopin adds, "is, as often as not, to be found in the accompaniment."<sup>140</sup>

### **Fiddling Sonorities in Chopin's Mazurkas**

Polish fiddling is a significant element of the mazurka tradition. Chopin fuses sonorities and patterns from fiddling in different ways. Op.50 no.3, for instance, begins introspectively with a carefully crafted chromatic canon (fig.33). M. 9, however, is awakened suddenly by an

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<sup>140</sup> Alfred Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, trans. Cyril and Rena Clarke (London: Peter Nevill Ltd. 1951), 62.

energetic, undulating c-sharp minor scalar passage. The top of the scale is rhythmically altered to give the perception of an embellishment. This interruption clearly evokes improvised fiddling.

The image shows a musical score for a Mazurka in c-sharp minor, op.50 no.3 (Ekier). The score is in 3/4 time, marked 'Moderato'. It features a vocal line with 'mezza voce' and a piano accompaniment. The score is divided into three systems, with measures 34, 35, and 36 indicated. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the mode is minor. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings.

Figure 33 Mazurka in c-sharp minor, op.50 no.3 (Ekier)

At times Chopin likes to mimic the sounds and character of the rural setting in a more straightforward fashion. This usually appears as patterns of short, small-ranging repeated motives, liberally accented, upon a bed of playful embellishment and rhythmic deviation, usually combined with a drone bass accompaniment (fig.34).<sup>141</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Even though it has been criticized that Chopin's earlier mazurkas are more indicative of folk dance idioms than his later more contrapuntal conceptions, these later tone poems still feature many gestural patterns and sonorities from the fiddling tradition. For instance op.63 no.2 repeatedly highlights the grace note dissonance of the ninth interval leap and also displays long chromatic phrases of an improvised nature.

Figure 34 Mazurka in C major, op.56 no.2 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

Before the fiddle can be observed for its prominent or concealed significance, it needs to be identified in the music. Then, appropriate articulation and pedalling can shape the melody. The fiddling gesture that so obviously appears in m.9 of op.50 no.3 suggests the need for appropriate colouring. Performing the entire opening of op.50 no.3 as an energized dance tune simply does not fit the style of this passage and it ignores the topic of the canon that Chopin explores. The fiddle can, however, be remembered as the instrument declaiming the canon. This provides further connections between the canon and the liberating character in m.9.

In the end, the performer can decide whether to hear the entire opening as a fiddle tune, or as a canon standing apart from the fiddling sonorities that enter in mm.9. Polish pianist Witold Małcużyński creates the effect of the former, articulating the whole passage in ways that parallel ideas of fiddle playing.<sup>142</sup> Małcużyński begins with a careful, restrained gesture, which in effect creates a slow momentum through the phrase and an aura of stillness. M.9, the point of the entering fiddle gesture, is also played introspectively. His quality of playing allows him to control the counterpoint effectively, and also emulate the type of intimate and controlled space

<sup>142</sup> “Chopin / Witold Małcużyński, early 1960s: Mazurka in c-sharp minor, Op. 50 no.3,” issued in 1970s, as “Witold Małcużyński w Żelazowa Woli” Muza label (Polskie Nagrania), SX 0857, YouTube link, Posted by “davidhertzberg”, uploaded April 7, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDV-2sS0xXY>.

felt by a fiddler and his instrument. The pianistic nuances that Małcużyński uses to capture fiddle sonorities come from his clear articulation of the melody. His slightly detached articulation with rhythmic precision on each note resembles the sharper sounds of a fiddle's timbre. His drier use of pedal also aids in evoking rasping fiddle sonorities. This recording compared with, for instance, that of Arthur Rubinstein shows a difference in the latter's purely pianistic way of shaping the line. Małcużyński's approach is to vividly evoke the sonorities of the fiddle.<sup>143</sup>

Chopin also enjoys 'hosting' the more energetic and social activities surrounding fiddling. Op.56 no.2 (figure 34), evokes qualities of a Kujaw instrumental dance of a more extroverted and communal nature. The effect is so clearly different from the opening of the ballade-like op.50 no.3 (figure 33). The lively tempo, strongly punctuated rhythmic patterns, embellishments and accompanying drone bass are the noticeable features that produce these instrumental effects. It is therefore completely suitable for engaging in the types of colours, and agogic nuances that stylize this folk music conception.

A highly effective representation of these fiddling sonorities can be found in the 1951 recording of op.52 no.2 (fig.34) by the famous Polish harpsichordist Wanda Landowska.<sup>144</sup> Played on the harpsichord, this is Landowska's only recording of Chopin and one that completely succeeds in showing the true spirit of the Polish dance and its instrumental sonorities.

Chopin on a harpsichord? Do not be angry with me my pianist friends! And now let me tell you why I do this. The harpsichord, reservoir of sharp colors, flutes, strings, nasal oboes, bagpipes, contrabass, is the ideal instrument to render folk music...It is

<sup>143</sup> Arthur Rubinstein, "Arthur Rubinstein - Chopin Mazurka, Op. 50 No. 3," from Chopin collection vol.4, posted by "ArRubMusic" uploaded on July 13, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPp0ppCjBVU>.

<sup>144</sup> Landowska was a student of the great master of Chopin playing, Aleksander Michałowski (student of Mikuli). Wanda Landowska, "Chopin Mazurka Op 56 No 2 Landowska Rec 1951.wmv" YouTube link, posted by "Beckmesser 2" uploaded on Dec 30, 2009, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_LuxbNw89Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_LuxbNw89Y).

important to be aware of the character of the mazurka to avoid turning it into an elegant salon piece, accented like a Viennese waltz...<sup>145</sup>

What is beautifully captured by Landowska is the balance between the improvised character of the melody and the sense of restraint that must occur when a fiddler is following the movements of dancers. Landowska balances this energetic friction between spontaneity and control. Her understanding of timing and rhythmic articulation allows her to preserve the rustic sources of the music.

Chopin's use of fiddling sonorities is wide-ranging. At times he suggests a lone fiddler, at other times he evokes an accompanying and full dance portrait. In his later works, as his musical language develops, Chopin often combines these evocations with quite developed uses of counterpoint and chromatic harmony. Clearly, a familiarity with Kujaw fiddling can offer insightful pianistic advice.

### **Characteristics of Kujaw Folk Fiddling**

Understanding of how fiddling functions in its original modes of music making is essential for the performer who wishes to embody the qualities and motions inherent in fiddling practice. Until the mid-twentieth century, the fiddle was the most common instrument in Polish folk dance music.<sup>146</sup> Polish folk fiddle is played exclusively in first position—the top part of the fingerboard closest to the tuning pegs. The melody is played mostly on the E and A string (two highest sounding open strings), while the D and G strings (the lower sounding strings)

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<sup>145</sup> Wanda Landowska, *Treasury of Harpsichord Music Dances of Ancient Poland*, NAXOS 8.111055, 2005, 2005. From liner notes by Jonathan Summers.

<sup>146</sup> Industrialization and urbanization in the twentieth century caused many folk traditions to disappear. It has been difficult to preserve what has been quickly disappearing. The accordion has replaced the fiddle in urban 'folk' ensembles and there are few young village fiddlers to whom the tradition has been passed.

frequently embellish the melody via open-fifth drones, e.g., *Oberek* (from *Kujawy*) played by Jan Wiatrowski.<sup>147</sup> The melodies in folk fiddling usually stay within the range of an octave or a ninth, and cycle around the fourth scale degree of the mode employed – typical modes being Lydian, Phrygian, Aeolian, Dorian, and Mixolydian. The melody generally moves in seconds or thirds.<sup>148</sup> Larger intervals occasionally punctuate the melodic line and create both a percussive accent and an agogic accent between on both notes. The following Chopin excerpt represents these general features of folk fiddling (fig.35). This example cannot be mistaken for, for instance, its ballroom counterpart:

**Figure 35** Mazurka in f-sharp minor, op.6 no.1 mm. 41-48 (Ekier)

The *scherezando* marking in this passage makes clear that this is not in the style of a ballroom *mazur* found in other Chopin mazurkas but is instead denoting the gaiety and character of folk music.<sup>149</sup> The high register and the undulating melodic line further denote the folk fiddle

<sup>147</sup> Jan Wiatrowski “Oberek” *Kujawy*, track 3, recorded 1963. This is pointed to in Chopin’s experience at the harvest festival. The violin had only three strings on account that the fifth intervals would break while playing the drone in fifths. Trying to fit a drone bass into the texture of a fast moving melody is an aggressive activity.

<sup>148</sup> Oxford Music Online, “Poland- Traditional Music- 6. Music Regions”.

<sup>149</sup> By 1820, the date of composition, the ballroom mazur contained a refined elegance that had evolved within its political and social climate. The Enlightened ideals of charm, good taste and refined etiquette were held high amongst the *Szlachta* (lower-class nobility). Between 1796-1807 a large portion of the *Szlachta* population served as

practice. Chopin reveals a small ranging melody undulating around the axis of the fourth and fifth scale degree (B-C# under an F# drone mm.41-44, then F#-G# under an C# drone mm.45-48). The insistent G# grace note blended with the droning F# evokes the abrasive qualities of fiddling. These tonal clashes resemble the sharpened intonation common to the fiddle playing tradition. Furthermore, they resemble what classical violinists might call ‘messy’ execution, where the bow touches a neighbouring string. These qualities of fiddling are presented in *Oberek Skaryszewski* played by Józef Wesółowski (b.1877).<sup>150</sup>

Another defining characteristic in Kujaw folk fiddling which is present in this Chopin excerpt is the use of irregular accentuation. Kujaw dancers loved to “involve themselves in a rhythmic ‘tournament’. The three-beat knocked out of its strict metric regularity was tremendously fascinating, and it entirely absorbed the attention of the dancers.”<sup>151</sup> The instrumentalists balanced this irregularity with a steady pulsation of the downbeat of each bar, keeping the internal meter strictly intact. The fiddlers could also respond to the playful nature of these irregularities through reading the dancers intentions and punctuating their rhythmical dissonances with strongly accentuated open fifths. *Mazur z Zamłynia* played by Józef Bieniarz

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*Ułans* (Polish light cavalry military units) with Napoleon’s army, fighting in patriotic pursuit of national independence, which had been lost during the three partitions of Poland (1772, 1792 and 1795). The *Ulan*’s class status, discipline and training and gestural behavior greatly affected the stylization and crystallization of the urban *mazur* during this time. Quickly infiltrating into the urban public through a national wave of patriotism propagated by writers and politicians, it was not long before this refined and figured ballroom dance was the most adored and popular of ballroom dance throughout urban centre in Poland and abroad. This charming, light-footed, and flowing dance learned by Chopin from a young age, is not the playful, energetic and rustic urban mazur that dominated the Warsaw stage and social gatherings in 1790.

<sup>150</sup> Józef Wesółowski (b. 1877) “Oberek Skaryszewski,” *Te Skrzypce Pamiętają*, recorded 1952, track 26. Available online, sign in <https://cadis.ispan.pl/en/login>, article number “T0965 no.1”.

<sup>151</sup> Roderyk Lange, *Dances from Cuiavia: kinetograms and music* (Channel Islands, UK: Centre for Dance Studies Jersey, 1976), 124.

(b.1885), shows the raw extreme of these capricious accentuations.<sup>152</sup> In the above Chopin excerpt (fig. 35), Chopin places accents interchangeably on beats two and three of the passage, capturing this characteristic effect.

Another fiddling gesture is clearly represented on the downbeat of m.44 where Chopin evokes an arching movement of punctuated drone fifths. This disconnected intervallic leap reveals a typical movement of string players, where the principal bow stroke articulates the drone in the lower strings, and an ancillary movement re-connects the music back to the upper registers. This characteristic arching movement can be heard in, *Kujawiak od Sannik* played by Rytel (b.1906).<sup>153</sup>

Transforming the fiddling elements to piano, Henryk Sztompka uses striking techniques to emulate these fiddling sounds in his performance of op.6 no.1.<sup>154</sup> Broadening the space between the grace note figures and restraining the tempo, Sztompka is able to suggest the deep, thick, almost lethargic bow strokes of the rustic folk fiddle.<sup>155</sup> Giving a great deal of space between the grace note resemble the scraping strings of the fiddle. His measured execution of this passage displays the control of pulse needed in accompanying dancers. However, by not accenting the interchanging *fz* accents, he limits the tensions that folk music so enjoys.

The various characteristics of Kujaw folk fiddling to be found in Chopin's mazurkas – large punctuating intervallic leaps, undulating melodies, high registers, rhythmically complex

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<sup>152</sup> Józef Bieniarz (b.1885), “Mazur z Załynia” *Te Skrzypce Pamiętają*, recorded 1952. Available online, sign in <https://cadis.ispan.pl/en/login>, article number “T0964 nr 20”.

<sup>153</sup> Rytel (b.1906), “Kujawiak od Sannik” *Te Skrzypce Pamiętają*, recorded 1958. Available online, sign in <https://cadis.ispan.pl/en/login>, article number, “T2496 nr 11”

<sup>154</sup> “Henryk Sztompka: Mazurka in F sharp minor, Op. 6 No. 1 (Chopin)” YouTube link, posted by “classicvinylbiz” uploaded on April 2, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okasXhSe3Kg>. Excerpt commences ‘2’25.

<sup>155</sup> His playing seems to respond to the type of playing Chopin described at the harvest festival: “sleepily on the fiddle”.

accentuating patterns, and open fifths – directly signal types of physical gestures that define his musical style. These stylistic elements can further be situated in an examination of larger performing trends of Kujaw folk tradition, offering pianists fresh impulses for the performance of Chopin's mazurkas.

### **Three Kujawian Performing Trends**

Three Kujaw performing trends are directly identifiable in Chopin's notations, awaiting to be actively shaped into meaningful gestural practices. Others, such as the chain of dances, and the quality of improvisation, are more subtly notated; nevertheless, their spirit is directly embedded in the music. These performance trends play a crucial part in energizing a performance.

#### **i. Traditional Sequence of Kujaw Dances**

Varying musical material upon its repetition to show contrast is a well known both in Western practice and Polish folk practice. While Chopin's mazurkas frequently evoke the need for contrast in motivic and thematic repetition, he does not always indicate such events in the score. Even so, contrast is an important element to Chopin's musical style, shading the musical narrative and signalling new events and topics to the work. Princess Czartoryska, for instance, was taught by Chopin how to vary the material in way suitable in his mazurkas:

[Princess Czartoryska...] played several mazurkas, among others the known Mazurka in D major [op.33. no.3]. I was struck by the way in which this aged pianist interpreted the main theme. At the beginning she played in a vulgar, coarse manner, without any subtler shading. Only when the theme reappears at the end of the composition did she execute it with a soft, caressing touch, in a thoroughly delicate and sophisticated manner. I asked her why she treated the main theme of the composition in such a divergent fashion. She replied that she was taught this approach by Chopin

who wished to depict the contrast between the tavern and the salon. This is the reason why he told her to interpret the same melody so differently; at the beginning it is supposed to illustrate the vulgar atmosphere of a tavern, and at the end – the elegance of salons...<sup>156</sup>

The modern pianist can come up with many possibilities to vary the musical material. However, these sort of decisions are best made within a foundational understanding of the styles and practices that inform the music. Kujaw performing trends, such as acceleration, rhythmic variation, and change in character, are not only found in Chopin's mazurkas, but can effectively be used by the modern performer in expressing contrast of thematic or motivic repetition. How then does tempo, mood, and rhythmic variation function in the midst of a Kujaw dance ceremony?

Kujaw dance festivities begin with a processional walking dance called the *chodzony*, also called "wolny" ('the slow one'), "okrągły" ('round one'), or "polski" ('the Polish').<sup>157</sup> The dance is led by the oldest person or the leading worker of the fields, performed with an easy walking step, with flexible knees, and with small 'brushing' steps.<sup>158</sup> The music is fluent and steady, as are the movements of the dancers. As the lead dancer dictates the end of the *chodzony*, he cries "na odcib!" ('to the right!') changing the direction of the dance and signalling the start of a *kujawiak*. Kolberg observes the average tempi of the *chodzony* as 100-120, the *kujawiak* 120-140. The *kujawiak* dance begins as a slow whirling round dance, the woman grasping the

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<sup>156</sup> Aleksander Michałowski, *Jak grał Fryderyk Szopen*, in *Szopen*. "Muzyka" 1932. From Jan Ekier "about the Mazurkas".

<sup>157</sup> The *chodzony* is a precursor of the Polonaise.

<sup>158</sup> Lange, *Dances from Cuiavia*, 116.

shoulders of the man, the man holding the waist of the women.<sup>159</sup> During the slow *kujawiak*, the music begins to transform, becoming slightly faster and more elastic. Further cries for change in the direction of dance signal further changes in tempo. This usually occurs at the end of a phrase. The instrumentalists keep the same tune, modifying it only to suit the tempo changes and rhythmic alterations produced by the dancers.

Requests to change the tune during the dancing is done by singing a *przyśpiewek* to the instrumentalists. This is as a means to change the mood of the dance, the rhythmic scheme, and general shape. The dances can have a range of moods as their names reveal: “śpiący” (the sleepy), “gnuśny” (the idle), “zawadiacki” (the sturdy).

Generally the music becomes livelier, so that a slower *kujawiak* speeds up into a livelier *kujawiak*, then into a *mazurek* (more ‘jumpy’ dance but very similar to *kujawiak* in its restraining manner of movement), and finally into a relentless *oberek*, which Czekanowska has observed accelerates forward, from  $\text{♩}=174\text{-}240$ , until either the band or dancers are exhausted.<sup>160</sup>

What is seen in this description of the dance is that: 1) the tempo gradually increases throughout the whole ceremony arriving at the *oberek* dance, which itself accelerates almost to its physical limits; 2) a dancer’s requests for a change in mood brings forth new musical motives of different character; and 3) the transformation from one dance to another can retain the same melodic material, while bringing forth new rhythmic patterns.

These three practices all appear in Chopin’s mazurkas, if not directly in the notation then implicitly in the spirit of the music. Part of the first Kujaw practice on this list (accelerating

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 122. The dance is very smooth. All its movements happen linearly, from the head down. It has been said that dancers would show off their smooth movements, by balancing a glass of water on their head.

<sup>160</sup> Czekanowska, *Polish Folk Music*, 195.

through the last dance - *oberek*) can be found in Chopin's mazurkas marked with an *accelerando* near the end of the piece, e.g., op.30 no.4, op.33 no.3, or op.59 no.2. Other mazurkas that strongly suggest and suit such a practice are the ends of op.6 no.4&5, op.24 no.3, op.30 no.2. The other part of the dance practice (increasing the tempo/energy with the start of each new dance) is emphasized in Chopin's formal structure. Most of Chopin's mazurkas are in ternary form, and in many of them each section in itself is in ternary form, i.e., |A|B|A| = |aba|cdc|aba|. In the |aba| the |b| is generally more brisk than the |a| material, subtly suggesting the practice of changing dance. The |B| or |cdc| section is frequently the most energetic material of the mazurka. Examples of this quality can be found in op.17 no.4. This work shows this type of sectional contrast, where mm.37 (|b|) is more energetic than the main theme, and mm.61 (|B|) in the parallel major key, expresses simple recurring motivic material further evoking the more energetic folk ideas.

The second category (the requested change of mood, resulting in new melodic material) is found more subliminally in certain of Chopin's mazurkas. Many of his mazurkas include moments where the mazurka dance texture is disrupted with dreamlike or waltz-like interludes. This change in mood parallels the same practice found in the Kujaw tradition but with a more romantic-narrative effect, e.g., op.30 no.4 mm.64-73 (fig.36). The following Chopin excerpt is marked *con anima* at the point of emotional transition.

Figure 36 Mazurka in c-sharp minor, op.30 no.4 mm. 64-73 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

The third Kujaw practice (retaining the same melodic material in a new dance, but bringing forth new rhythmic patterns) is suggested in many of Chopin mazurkas, particularly those illustrating ballroom/urban topics. One method of applying this folk practice would be to play the first and even second statement of a repeating melody with Chopin's notated accentuation marks. As the dance progresses and the melody returns, one may then loosen the rhythmic integrity and apply folk *rubato*. A possible passage that suggests this type of treatment is op.30 no.4, mm.33-64. Op.33 no.3 (the same mazurka in which Princess Czartoryska evoked Chopin's ideas of contrast) also suits these performance practices.

There is one mazurka by Chopin which stands out for its ambiguity, and exemplifies these particular musical approaches. The short one-page mazurka in C major op.6 no.5, is a unique example of Chopin's direct reference to folk dance customs.<sup>161</sup> The work is marked *Dal segno senza Fine*, repeating a single motive of AB contrast. The quandary is to decide when and

<sup>161</sup> Op.6 no.5 is catalogued as op.7 no.5 in many Chopin editions (example Henle). According to Ekier, originally both opera were to contain four mazurkas each. Chopin added the C major mazurka into op.6 in the first French edition, and into op.7 in the first German edition. Ekier's choice to follow the order of the French edition had to do with the fact that Chopin remained in contact with his French publisher.

how the piece will end. Jan Ekier's performance commentary provides the following explanation:

It is quite obvious that this Mazurka must end at a certain moment. In concert practice it ends in different passages, usually by returning to the octave introduction after a repetition of the main movement twice or thrice. This is, however, contrary to the intention of Chopin who marked consecutive repetitions *dal segno*, and thus omitted the introduction. The editors propose to apply diminuendo in the third rendition of the main part of the mazurka and to end on bar 12 [omitting the final harmony in the left hand].<sup>162</sup>

As Ekier points out, concert pianists usually repeat the piece about two or three times while ending the piece variably. Ivan Moravec, Yakov Flier, and Arthur Rubinstein, for instance, repeat the piece twice, and end by repeating the introduction.<sup>163</sup> Vladimir Ashkenazy, William Kappell, Henryk Sztompka, and Idel Biret on the other hand, after a few repetitions of the piece, end with the last notated bar.<sup>164</sup> Although I have not yet heard a performer who follows the advice of Ekier, his interpretation gives a sensation of structural ambiguity which parallels the *senza Fine* marking.

It is clear that Chopin intended *senza Fine* to represent the ongoing ceremonious nature of the folk dance. Though his music is not created to accompany dancers, this mazurka implies a sensation of virtual continuity. This sense of timelessness or continuity is commonly projected by Chopin at the end of many other compositions indicated by *perdendosi*, *ritardando* and

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<sup>162</sup> Ekier, "Performance Commentary" *Mazurki*, National Edition, 3.

<sup>163</sup> Moravec, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CImSpDpelJA>.  
Flier, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILi2uwGOYBg>, piece begins at '18'10.  
Rubinstein, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fK8SqKsIJg>.

<sup>164</sup> Ashkenazy, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExW7CYprX2k>.  
Kappell, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LutOKLo09I>.  
Sztompka, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgA4AIdV7xg>.  
Biret, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMU6EEITLXQ>. Piece begins at '20'00.

*diminuendo*, and sometimes finishing off with a single *ff* chord. Because of the strong associations with dance tropes and little development of musical material, Mazurka in C major op.6 no.5 effectively signals the topic of timelessness in dancing.

Here are a few new performing suggestions that may well vitalize this short, repetitive work. An *accelerando* through the last repetition of the melodic phrase would give a stronger sensation of the nature of the dancing ceremony. Also, applying *rubato* throughout the repetition of the motive by keeping the internal pulsating rhythm intact but applying different rhythmical emphases to the interior of a measure and stretching various beats, would parallel the stylistic origins of the folk practice. Arthur Rubinstein's particularly convincing performance balance the rhythmic pliancy with rhythmic integrity felt naturally in its 'Polish' style.

## ii. Improvisation

The sense of improvisation is implicit in Chopin's music and needs to be understood and felt as an integral part to the style of playing his works. Highly skilled at the art of improvisation, Chopin is said to have produced more astonishing effects in his improvisations than his compositions.

The richness of his improvisation was astonishing...those people (who heard him improvising) will agree with us in saying that Chopin's most beautiful finished compositions are merely reflections and echoes of his improvisations.<sup>165</sup>

That Chopin was a brilliant improviser is most apparent in his delectable use of *fioraturas* which elaborately decorate his nocturnes and fantasies. His mazurkas, however, suggest improvisation differently than in other works. Typical of his mazurkas are subsections of cyclically repeated

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<sup>165</sup> Julian Fontana, Preface to *Oeuvres posthumes de Fréd. Chopin*, 1-2. Quoted in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 282.

motives and short repeated phrases, rich in embellishments and ornamentation. This is strongly associated with the improvised nature of Polish folk dance music. Chopin's notations relay the spirit of the tradition with a surprising amount of detail by using variants in articulation, embellishment, and rhythmic versatility, and accentual interchangeability. The nature of the practice leaves room to interpret these ideas of spontaneity further. In what way do we let our impulses guide us in playing this music?

### **The Guiding Impulses of Improvisation in Kujaw Fiddle Music**

In the act of improvisation, a musician spontaneously reacts to his/her impulses. These impulses operate at that moment under certain constraints such as style, function, learned fingering patterns and cultural patterns of behaviour. "How spontaneous, free and personal a[n] [improvisation] can be, and which are the significant features of these qualities, are only some of the questions which arise when improvisation is discussed."<sup>166</sup> Discussed below are six elements which guide the impulses of the improviser.

#### The Repeated Motive

Improvisation in Polish folk music is based on repeating, embellishing, and expanding a basic melodic figure. The motive is generally introduced by the singer/dancer and depending on the situational context of the performance, it is usually a known/popular tune for that specific moment in the event (e.g., unplaiting the bride's braid). The fiddler begins to repeat the motive, increasingly finding impulses to embellish it based on the dancer's movements and his own skills. Upon repeating the melody, ornamentation becomes one of the leading creative means for

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<sup>166</sup> Anca Giurchescu, "The Process of Improvisation in Folk Dance," *Dance Studies* 7 (1983): 21.

contrasting and energizing the music. Diversity in phrasing and articulation are also used as creative and expressive tools to show contrast.<sup>167</sup>

### Structuring the Tune

The initial melody is the primary section upon which the piece is built, and is repeated several times before a fiddler will incorporate new material. The musical structure is initially stimulated by the versification of the song, which is commonly AA'BA, or ABCC in *przyśpiewek* and wedding repertoire. The fiddler adapts the formal structure of the song, continuing to improvise contrasting sections, punctuating the end of subsequent phrases with well-defined iambic cadences. He frequently adds interludes of a single repeated pitch, signalled to by the dancers to change directions. The original tune is often brought back at the end of the improvisation.

### Learned Melodic and Rhythmic Patterns

While formal structure is a major parameter to the fiddler's creative impulses, learned melodic patterns also become engrained in the fiddler's musical impulses. Melodic skeletons and particular rhythmic patterns, which connect to a repertory of folk songs, are usually memorized by the fiddler as fingering patterns. These fingering patterns are then modified from the specific learned modal/melodic skeletons sung by the dancer. The tune often is connected with specific verbal references, e.g., 'do czepka' (to the capping), or 'za krowami' (behind the cows).<sup>168</sup> These

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<sup>167</sup> Czekanowska, *Polish Folk Music*, 185.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 183. The capping ceremony is one of the oldest and the most important of Polish wedding customs. It symbolized the bride's rite of passage from being a young woman, to a married woman. The maiden of honor removes the head garland off the bride's head. The married women in the audience cut off her long braid which she has worn throughout her life to symbolize her availability for marriage. (Nowadays, the bride's hair is instead covered with a marriage cap). Thereafter in the ceremony, the bride socializes only with the married women.

verbal references (which specify the function of the music) further signal the fiddler's associated finger patterns. Another equally common practice comes from tapping the rhythmical patterns which are associated with the particular dance, upon which the fiddler creates an intuitively felt melody.<sup>169</sup> While the initial musical phrase has qualities of being 'learned', the rest of the music is more instinctively created, contrasting or complementing the previous music with modality and rhythmic patterns.

### Melodic Structure

Fiddling melodies, like vocal melodies, are based on interlocking tetra/pentachords, forming a singular hepta- or octotonic melodic structure. The point of interest in such a melodic structure is the point of overlap between the chords. The point of overlap creates an axis point upon which the melody undulates, creating the cyclical sensation of the music. Such a melodic skeleton is typical in many Slavonic models. The point of overlap in the melodic structure is instinctively felt by the folk musicians improvising these melodies. The overlap produces a circular movement around a gravitational axis and is an important sensory element that is retained in many of Chopin's mazurkas.

The idea of a tonal center is implied by the drone element. However, the overlapping melodic structure fails to provide a true tonal center.<sup>170</sup> It is precisely this dichotomy between two overlapping modal units against the idea of a tonal center that creates the exotic quality so acclaimed in Chopin's mazurkas. Windakiewiczowa describes the function of a tonal centre in Polish folk music as the converse to Western tonal functions. She points out that in Western

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 189.

harmonic progression, the resolution of the tonic is the primary goal (i.e., I-IV-I-V-I), but in folk harmonic progressions the dominant acts as a beginning and ending harmony (i.e., V-I-IV-I-V).<sup>171</sup> This progression is retained in many of Chopin's mazurkas (e.g., op.24 no.1 mm.1-16 "open", m.63-4 "closed").

### The Dancer: Tension and Relaxation

Many of the fiddler's creative impulses depend on his relationship with the dancer. Engaging with the movements of dancers connects him to their level of emotional expression. Roderyk Lange suggests that the process of Kujaw fiddle improvisation is largely based upon the impulses given through tension and relaxation of the dancer. The Kujaw dancer enjoys offsetting the beat with their feet, stamping out para-rhythmic accents to create rhythmic tension. This tension is offset by the pair's steady whirling motion and the ease of their upper bodies. The attached YouTube video of two elders dancing the mazurek at a festival in Przysławowic demonstrates the rhythmic tensions expressed in the dancers' footwork, and the counterbalanced relaxation through the steady circling movement in their upper body.<sup>172</sup> The unique relationship between the dancer and the instrumentalist is shown along with the instrumentalist's embellishment of the repeated motive as a response to the dancer's energetic use of his body.

### Qualities Associated With 'Polishness'

Folk improvisational practices are shaped by cultural, geographical, and historical constraints. These practices were developed through a long Slavonic lineage of ritual, magic, and pagan beliefs which shaped modern folk culture. Slavonic mannerisms which crossover in many

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<sup>171</sup> Windakiewiczowa, *Wzory ludowej muzyki polskiej*, 26.

<sup>172</sup> Jan Kmita (fiddle), Piotr Sikora (handdrum), Stanisław Piejak and Barbara Kietlińska (dancers), "Mazurek od Przysławowic" YouTube link, posted by "wiersza", uploaded June 15, 2010, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U3\\_p7jfl0E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U3_p7jfl0E).

ways with Polish ones, guide the process of improvisation in Polish folk dance music. Ada

Dziekanowska describes ‘Polish’ mannerism in dancing:

Polish dances run the gamut of characteristic Polish traits: proud and dignified yet with a vivaciousness and carelessness about what tomorrow may bring; happy yet solemn; melancholic yet containing a tremendous joy of life; sentimental yet full of strange force and vitality... the man is the ‘star’ performer. The woman is his support, audience, and enhancement. The man’s dancing is individualistic and competitive and when he dances, his entire body participates... As a true Pole, he never forgets to show his partner protectiveness, gallantry, respect, and even adoration. At the same time the Polish woman acts demure and coquettish, coy, and flirtatious.<sup>173</sup>

Chopin’s mazurkas, thriving in refined mannerisms and eloquent gestures, capture these ‘Polish’ traits. For instance, Dziekanowska’s words “proud and dignified with a vivaciousness and carelessness of what tomorrow may bring” well describe for me op.7 no.3; and “sentimental yet full of strange force and vitality” are qualities I hear in op.30 no.1. This range of expressive qualities feeds the emotional impulse of improvisation. In Chopin’s music, these ‘Polish’ traits intrinsically produce a vibrant and emotional performance.

Examining the first of these six improvisational components, the repeated motive, I will now demonstrate how Chopin specifically uses articulation, accentuation and ornamentations in very similar ways to the folk tradition. I will also propose particular ways that the performer may adapt ideas of spontaneity and contrast into their playing.

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<sup>173</sup> Dziekanowska, *Polish Folk Dances & Songs*, 26-27

### Chopin's Use of Folk Improvising Techniques

As a creative means to contrast and energize a repetitive motive, folk musicians will alter the articulation, accentuations, rhythms and embellishments used in the process of improvisation.<sup>174</sup>

2162/6

Kwiatkowo pow. Aleksandrów Kujawski 26.7.1955  
Skrzypce: Kwiatkowski Władysław, ur. 1903 Jarano-  
wo pow. Aleksandrów Kuj., zam. Kwiatkowo.

**Kujawiak**

Nagranie: M. Sobieski  
Transkrypcja: J. Sobieska 9.2.1960.

Figure 37 Marian Sobieski's Transcription and Notation of a Folk Kujawiak, 1955

The following transcription by Marian Sobieski illustrates these alterations (fig.37). The structure of the passage reveals a four-bar undulating wave, in two-bar motivic repetition:

introduction | aa'aa' | bb'bb' | interlude (denoting change in dance direction) | cc'cc' | dd'dd' | closing statement |. The fiddler contrasts the two halves of the B section through a varied use of articulation. Indicated by sixteenth rests releases, the fiddler uses a shorter articulation and lighter gestures in mm.10-13, than in the subsequent repeat in mm.14-17 where he grounds the

<sup>174</sup> Czekanowska, *Polish Folk Music*, 185.

melody with smoothed legato bowing. Accentuation marks are also variably executed upon repetition. For instance, m.22, c', he accents beat one and three, while the second c', m.26 he refrains from any use of accentuation. Rhythmic variants also create subtle variety in the music, e.g., m.2 vs. m.6. These subtle variants create a music that is rich in diversity and impulse.

Chopin uses these techniques to show variability in his mazurkas. Chopin intended to capture the impulses in improvising which so clearly stylize the mazurka genre. Op.30 no.4 parallels Polish folk use of contrast in improvisation (fig.38).

op. 30 nr 4

**21** *Allegretto*

*legato* *sotto voce*

\* Tutaj i w l. 116 niektóre źródła mają arpeggio także przy tym akordzie.  
Both here and in bar 116 some sources contain an arpeggio also next to this chord.

Figure 38 Mazurka in c-sharp minor, op.30 no.4 mm. 5-27 (Ekier)

The most obvious implications of the folk improvisation in this passage are those of ornamentation. The ornament on the third beat of m.7 evoking open fifth string gesture, and the quintuplet rhythmic change in m.19 are variants of their original motives in m.5 and m.17. Another variant in this passage is found between the growing hairpin in mm.8-9, compared to the *f* marking in m.17. The former produces an implied accent on the second beat of the bar and the latter on the first. Chopin sequentially expands the richness of ornaments in m.23, m.25, and m.27. What is evident here is that Chopin explicitly makes use of ornaments and variety in accentuation to capture the spirit and impulse of folk improvisation.

The performer can highlight these improvisatory impulses through subtle shadings of pedalling and accents that are not presented in the notation. Due to the different instrument on which we perform Chopin's works today, it is obviously impractical to follow Chopin's pedal markings literally. A fully depressed pedal on Pleyel pianos of Chopin's day produced a different effect and sonority than a depressed pedal of instruments now.<sup>175</sup> Flutter pedalling or very shallow pedalling will be necessary to provide an effective character in this passage and not overwhelm the texture. I have chosen two pianists with very different conceptions of this piece. Both attempt to find the degree of spontaneity that this work calls for. Vladimir Sofronitsky plays with a variety of accentuation while frequently disregarding Chopin's suggestions.<sup>176</sup> For

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<sup>175</sup> Jim Samson, "Chopin: Past and Present," *Early Music* 29 (August 2001): 382. "Anyone who has tried playing Chopin on a Pleyel from the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (the oldest Pleyel surviving today dates, I believe, from 1828) will have felt the excitement of recovering something of the sound-world the composer had in mind. After the initial adjustment, all sorts of things begin to make sense: the weighted immediacy of the touch paradoxically makes rapid figurations easier and allows them to resonate as a delicately nuanced wash of colour, the harmonies gain a transparency which not only enhances (and surrounds) the melody but reveals inherent contrapuntal qualities, the different tonal quality of the registers adds a whole new dimension to layered or stratified textures; and, not least, Chopin's pedal indications and metronome marks (or some of them) come into their own."

<sup>176</sup> Student of Michałowski, and husband to Alexander Scriabin's daughter. "Vladimir Sofronitsky plays Chopin Mazurka in C sharp minor Op. 30 No. 4" recorded 1952, YouTube link, posted by "gullivior", uploaded on Dec 23, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzIJjoMoQMQ>.

instance in mm.5-8 Sofronitsky uses a minimal amount of pedal and highlights the individual beats with more marked articulation. In m.5 he articulates the first beat, accents the second beat, and disregards the accent mark and the legato mark on the third beat, which he alternatively marks with a light staccato articulation instead ( $\bar{>}$ ). In m.6 he lightly accents the first beat and lightly disconnects the following beats with no emphasis ( $\bar{\cdot}$ ). M.7 is treated the same as m.5 except that the third beat is given a bit more emphasis to lead into the subsequent measure ( $\bar{>}$ ). In m.8 Sofronitsky begins to build momentum of the line using a thicker pedal and crescendo and accenting  $\bar{\cdot}$  $\bar{>}$ . The differences between accent patterns leads to the complexity and sense of spontaneity that is enjoyed in Kujaw dance practice.

Pianist Witold Malcuzyński approaches this passage very differently.<sup>177</sup> He follows Chopin's dynamic, accent, and articulation marks and even pedal much more exactly. His sense of spontaneity comes from his use of *rubato* and timing. Interchangeably lengthening beat two or one creates a subtle but lovely sense of improvisation and freedom which is much called for in this passage. So then, which approach is more valid?

...the primary responsibility of a performance is to convey the music's meaning...described in terms of structure and character.... Any complex work can be interpreted in different ways, and any interpretation can be realised in a number of expressive variants....The performer seeking to understand a piece of music needs to have developed analytical skills...without these skills the performer can only respond haphazardly to the musical surface.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> “Witold Malcuzyński plays Chopin Mazurka in C sharp minor Op. 30 No. 4” YouTube video, posted by “gullivior” uploaded on July 18, 2011, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nlc\\_0BrYBPw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nlc_0BrYBPw).

<sup>178</sup> L.Henry Shaffer, “Performing the f# minor Prelude op.28 no.8,” in *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 198.

In other words, what Shaffer is describing is that the performer must engage with the composer's work, their style, and performance aesthetic in order to guide the intuitive understanding of the music. The meaning of the text can be evaluated from the level of the score (within its structure, and musical elements); and also (as I may add) within historical practices that inspire the work indirectly (such as movement and impulses directly from the folk tradition). In that way, they can create an interpretation that is both 'personally' and 'historically authentic'. Regarding these two performances, then, it is clear that both pianists have engaged in the qualities that directly stimulate the music. Though their approach is naturally different, they both succeed in capturing the spirit of the folk element of spontaneity which this music calls for.

### **iii. Embellishments**

Between 1750 and 1900 the printed score steadily gained more authority as the dogma of 'composer's intention'. As scholars in the twentieth century began to strictly approach notation and its meaning, performers also began to re-adjust their approach and in many cases lost sight of the archaic practices that actually informed the music. One such practice that was seemingly lost in the twentieth-century mainstream of performance practice was that of adding ornaments and embellishments within a performance in select repertoire of 1750-1900. This practice of 'good taste' was part of the musical aesthetic during those eras.<sup>179</sup>

In the last few decades, historically informed performances have brought back this practice with much success, making sense of composers' notations that simply could not work on modern instruments. For instance, Malcolm Bilson's interpretations of Beethoven are cherished for their unique insight into Beethoven's radical tempi and his pedal notations. With the

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<sup>179</sup> Clive Brown, "Embellishment, Ornamentation, and Improvisation," in *Classical & Romantic Performing Practice*, 415.

resurgence of period performance, we are reminded that many performance customs in history has aesthetic value to the music. What I will show now is that Chopin's mazurkas are particularly appropriate for adding embellishment, given the fact that Chopin himself was inclined to do so. Under the appropriate parameters, added ornamentation can give a boost of life and energy to modern mazurka performances and rekindle aspects of freedom and improvisation that are implicit within the Mazurka genre.

“When playing his own compositions, Chopin liked to here and there to add ornamental variants...He had a particular predilection for doing this in the Mazurkas.”<sup>180</sup> However, Chopin also allegedly criticized the way Franz Liszt embellished one of his nocturnes saying, “I beg you, my dear friend, when you do me the honor of playing my compositions, to play them as they are written or else not at all.”<sup>181</sup> There is an obvious contradiction around the question of improvisation. At times, Chopin seemed to demand a fidelity to the score. On the other hand, many sources make it clear that he approved of and even expected elaboration. Furthermore, many of the scores have considerable alternate readings in student's score (see Nocturne in E-flat major op.9 no.2 in Wiener Urtext edition, which prints these alternatives). Chopin's renowned temperament regarding his music makes it challenging to navigate the wealth of stories that reveal his perception regarding his works. The only tool to understand this contradiction is dedicated immersion in Chopin's musical language and its sources. A question worth asking, *what sort of embellishments and ornaments suit the mazurka genre?*

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<sup>180</sup> Mikuli/Koczalski. Quoted in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 52.

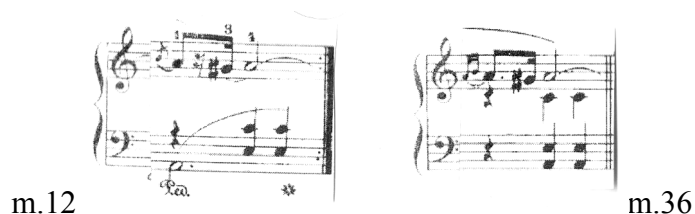
<sup>181</sup> Quoted by Theodor Presser, *Etude* 32, no.5 (1914): 339.

The raw spontaneity connected with the folk nature of this music justifies Chopin's whims of adding improvised embellishments within his playing of the mazurkas. Likewise, Chopin's incredible ability to capture the spirit and concept of folk embellishment as notated ornamentations in the score shows the functional understanding of this folk practice. Engaging ourselves with the style of improvised ornamentation in folk music can help us make sense of the quality of spontaneity infused in his works, and hopefully spur in us the means to tastefully add or alter embellishments in the music.

#### Types of Embellishments and Folk Practice

A basic understanding of the types of improvised embellishments found in folk music is fundamental for the interpreter of Chopin's mazurkas. The types of embellishments that are common in folk fiddling are:

Rhythmic *acciaccaturas*. These 'crushed' embellishments can occur from above, below, in wide leaps of sevenths, or octaves. Each note of the embellishment should be played with vigour. Both the folk tradition and Chopin frequently vary the acciaccatura upon the repetition of a motive and transform them into a rhythmic short trill (fig.39). This is also a possible alteration that a performer can use to create variety.



**Figure 39 Mazurka in a minor, op.59 no.1 m. 12 and m. 36 (Ekier)**

Other common embellishments in folk music are melodic ones, meaning they provide more musical meaning on the level of melody than on a rhythmic level. They include:

Short and long trills, short and long mordents, and appoggiaturas.<sup>182</sup>



Figure 40 Mazurka in a minor, op.59 no.1 mm. 7-8 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

The following example (fig.40) shows Chopin's use of melodic embellishment as opposed to rhythmic ornaments.

In folk playing, short trills can function rhythmically as well as melodically, although the short trill more frequently blends into the texture serving more the melodic level. Chopin usually denotes an accentuation, dynamic mark, or hairpin when he desires the short trill to have rhythmic vitality. A common placement of short trills in the melody occur on the highest note of the melody and also quite frequently on the second beat. When adding additional short trills in Chopin's music they should be reserved for sections that already display a fair amount of ornamentation of this sort, and are of folk dance character.

Mordents are rarely if ever appropriate. Chopin scholar, John Petrie Dunn asserts that Chopin rarely uses mordents, even within the contour of his melodies. "It would appear that Chopin's primary melodic bias was an ascending, followed by a descending oscillation of the melodic line. Hence his predilection for the Transient Shake [longer trills], and his total neglect

<sup>182</sup> Czekanowska, *Polish Folk Music*, 192.

of its counterpart, the Mordent.”<sup>183</sup> Dunn thus implies that it is unlikely that Chopin would have used the mordent as an embellishment in improvising, and therefore it is best avoided in artistically embellishing his works.

Another practice of improvised embellishment common in Kujaw tradition is altering the rhythm of a repeated melody by either changing a duplet into a triplet rhythm, or changing an even rhythm into a dotted rhythm representation. Chopin makes great use of this contrast throughout the mazurkas (fig.41).

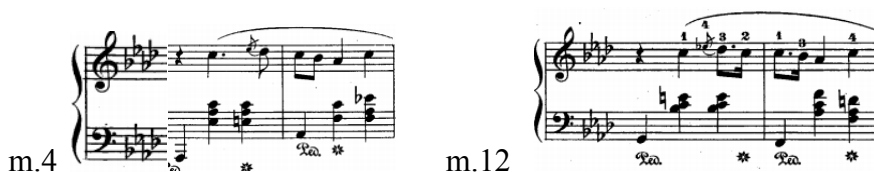


Figure 41 Mazurka in A-flat major, op.59 no.2 m. 4 and m. 12 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

Probably the most common and significant feature to improvised embellishment in the Kujaw fiddling tradition is its increased incidence of with each progressive repetition of the melody (also a signal for increasing the use of *rubato* as well). Chopin utilizes this technique in the introduction to op.6 no.2 (fig.42). He uses an increasing use of notated rhythmic alterations to embellish the melodic structure. The basic melodic motive is highlighted in mm.1-2 in the alto voice. It is thereafter met with a series of alterations including: a short trill (represented as a triplet) on beat one of m.3; in m.6 an acciaccatura on beat two, and melodically filling in the dotted quarter in m.2 with a longer trill (c#-b-c#) in m.6.

<sup>183</sup> John Petrie Dunn, *Ornamentation in the Works of Frederick Chopin*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 16.

Figure 42 Mazurka in c-sharp minor, op.6 no.2. Rhythmic variants as embellishments (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

Op.7 no.1, shows the use of variants with graphically represented ornaments (fig. 43). In m.46 Chopin notates an upper short trill, contrasting this ornament in the repetition of this motive in m.50 with a longer trill. The lengthening of the trill has significant meaning in relation to the elasticity required in performance. Chopin uses this lengthened ornament to represent the changing temporal sensations that occurs within the execution of these melodic embellishments. The rhythmic alteration in beat three between m.47 and m.51 also suggests the type of alteration used in the rural practice.

Figure 43 Mazurka in B-flat major, op.7 no.1 mm. 45-54 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)  
As a motive is repeated, this signals the sensitive performer to increase and alter embellishment.

### Temporal implications and embellishment

The relationship between ornamentation and tempo elasticity in Kujaw fiddling is particularly strong. The practice of embellishing a melody in Kujaw folk fiddling is not bound to metrical strictness, which is a tendency of embellishment in Western practice. In other words, embellishment works in union with the elastic nature of the meter. In many moments of the embellishing practice, cadential punctuations serve as the only reminder to its triple meter origins. The Kujawiak played by Czesław Michalak (b.1915) demonstrates this.<sup>184</sup> The embellished passage can be seen transcribed in fig.44.

The figure shows a musical score for two violin parts. The top staff is labeled 'Violin' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Vln.'. The music is in 3/4 time and has a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Violin part begins with a double bar line and repeat sign. The Violin II part begins at measure 9. Both parts feature various ornaments (trills, grace notes) and are marked with sections A, B, B', and B. The score includes triplets and a final double bar line with repeat dots.

**Figure 44** *Kujawiak*, performed by Czesław Michalak (b.1915) in Krubin, 1959

This Kujawiak begins with an introduction with punctuated rhythmic patterns which establish the tempo of the dance and the sense of triple meter. The entrance of A is instantly infused a high degree of tempo elasticity. Although the embellishment is guided by an underlying rhythm, this rhythm is treated so flexibly making it almost indistinguishable. Most of the embellishments therefore are not rhythmic embellishments (frequent in Western practice) of such that must fit into even metric divisions – but rather melodic ones. What this means is that

<sup>184</sup> Czesław Michalak (b.1915), “Kujawiak” *Te Skrzypce Pamiętają* recorded 1959. ISPAN Available online, sign in <https://cadis.ispan.pl/en/login>, article number “T2563 no.3”.

embellishment supersedes rhythmic integrity as a means of expression, dissolving rhythmic value on a metric level, until there is an impulse from the musician to punctuate a particular beat. Embellishment is thoughtfully placed by the musician and not rushed in its execution to provide optimum expression of this much-loved fiddling device.

While elasticity seems to dissolve the rhythmic structure, the sense of strict and equal measurement (in this situation between every two bars) is strictly felt. This means that stretching the given values of notes and expressing the embellishments must occur within this measured parameter. The performer has an acute awareness and sensation of the larger pulsation (one/two bar measurements), using embellishment as an impulsive and expressive gesture to shape and enliven the music. To be able to treat ornamentation melodically and with its elastic sense of meter, a well-trained sense of the foundational meter and rhythm is necessary to potentially deviate from the metric fetters. A critic writing of *the Athenaeum* (23 June 1848) wrote of Chopin's controlled elasticity "He [Chopin] makes frequent use of *tempo rubato*; leaning about within his bars more than any other player we recollect, but still subject to a presiding sentiment of measure such as presently habituates the ear to the liberties taken."<sup>185</sup>

Finally, regarding Chopin's notational ornaments with his use of elasticity, John Petrie Dunn suggest that a highly ornamented note often points out the climax or slowest phase of the time taking.<sup>186</sup> Other observers propose that the hairpins in Chopin's music apply to changes in tempo, clarifying that verbal indications *crescendo* and *diminuendo* are those that refer to the

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<sup>185</sup> Quoted in Jim Samson, "Chopin in Performance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 193.

<sup>186</sup> Dunn, *Ornamentation*, 21.

changes in sound.<sup>187</sup> This idea that hairpins apply to motion more so than with dynamics is an interesting implication to Chopin's works and is a topic that deserves attention.

### **ACCOMPANIMENT: *Basy* In Chopin's Mazurkas**

Kujaw folk fiddling is ultimately connected to and held together by the characteristic movement of the bass accompaniment. Plainly evident in Chopin's mazurkas, the drone bass pattern serves as our final connecting piece to better understanding folk gesture in Chopin's mazurkas. To make sense of the drone bass texture that is so prevalent in Chopin's mazurkas, a minor adjustment to the way we hear this drone texture can produce a very convincing effect, very true to the folk tradition Chopin was frequently recalling. As Chopin said about his mazurkas, "the whole value... is as often as not, to be found in the accompaniment."<sup>188</sup> The two types of drone patterns that Chopin suggests in his mazurkas are the drones produced by the Polish folk instruments *dudy* and *basy*. *Dudy* are Polish bagpipes and go by different names according to their specific geographic region. They are played with a sustained drone. *Basy* are the Polish upright bass stringed instrument with two to four strings, and are played as a rhythmic pulsating drone. Provided is a chart that shows in which mazurka Chopin suggests these two instrumental traditions.

Chopin Opus #	DUDY/ BAGPIPE	BASY/BASS			
op.6 no.1	✓		op.33 no.1		
op.6 no.2		✓	op.33 no.2		
op.6 no.3		✓	op.33 no.3		
op.6 no.4	✓		op.33 no.4		✓
op.6 no.5		✓	op.41 no.1		

<sup>187</sup> Eric Heidsieck, "Dynamics or Motion? An Interpretation of Some Musical Signs in Romantic Music." *Piano Quarterly* (Winter 1987-88): 56-58; Seymour Bernstein, *Chopin: Interpreting His Notational Symbols* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2005), 41; David Kraehenbuehl, *Rubato Revisited* (Princeton, N.J.: National Keyboard Arts Associates, 1976).

<sup>188</sup> Alfred Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, London, 1951.

op.7 no.1		✓	op.41 no.2		✓
op. 7 no.2			op.41 no.3		
op.7 no.3		✓	op.41 no.4		✓coda
op.7 no.4		✓	Dbop. 42A		
op.17 no.1		✓B section only	Dbop. 42B		
op.17 no.2			op.50 no.1		
op.17 no.3		✓	op.50 no.2		
op.17 no.4		✓B section only	op.50 no.3	✓m.41	
op.24 no.1			op.56 no.1		✓
op.24 no.2		✓	op.56 no.2		✓
op.24 no.3			op.56 no.3	✓	✓
op.24 no.4			op.59 no.1		
op.30 no.1			op.59 no.2		
op.30 no.2			op.59 no.3		✓
op.30 no.3			op.63 no.1	✓	✓
op.30 no.4		✓	op.63 no.2		
			op.63 no.3		

**Table 1 Dudy and Basy in Chopin's Mazurkas**

*Basy* are the traditional instrument for accompanying Kujaw instrumental ensembles. Therefore, I will focus solely on examining the nature, identification, and pianistic embodiment of *basy* style of playing.

*Basy* are a rhythmic drone instrument, metrically marking the beat on a single pitch or open fifths. Because of its function to accompany and follow the footwork of the dancing couples, the execution of this rhythmic drone is executed with a degree of flexibility. In his field observations, Roderyk Lange observed that Kujaw dancers could not dance to a recording of the music because “the musicians weren’t following them!” This is a helpful image to keep in mind when executing the drones in Chopin’s mazurkas – the drone not only as the ‘keeper of the beat’, setting the underlying meter and tempo, but also as the ‘observer’ of the rest of the events, responding to whims of the melodic instruments and dancers. Before we can learn how to interpret Chopin’s use of the drone bass accompaniment, it is necessary to identify the ways which Chopin emulates drone bass patterns in his mazurkas.

### Drone Patterns in Chopin's Mazurkas

Throughout the Mazurkas, Chopin notates drone patterns in different ways. The **introductions** of Chopin's earlier mazurkas and several later opus numbers, emulate the type of playing done by *basy*: op.6 no.2, op.6 no.3, op.6 no.5, op.17 no.4, op.41 no.2, op.50 no.2, op.56 no.2. Even more commonly, the appearance of *basy* patterns are present in many of the folk-like **B sections**: op.7, op.17, op.24 no.3, op.30 no.3, op. 41 no.1, op.56 no.3 mm.89-117, op.59 no.1, op.59 no.2, op.63 no.2. In the **codas** of his more introspective and longer poetic mazurkas, Chopin effectively concludes with the *basy* drone, reminiscing and remembering the past sounds so dear to his Polish identity: op.41 no.4, op.56 no.3, op.59 no.2&3, op.63 no.1.

These drone patterns either rhythmically repeat the exact same chord, or alter the harmonies but without noticeably disturbing the texture. The texture is always open, commonly in open fifths, octaves, or many times as a fifth and added octave or tenth (fig.45,46,&47). Other variations of the *basy* pattern are represented as repeating rolled chords (e.g., op.7 no.3, op.30 no.4, etc). In regards to this arpeggiation, Dunn asserts that arpeggiated chords in the left hand should be slightly anticipated, because "if played on the beat it would hamper and retard the right hand and might give rise to crude effects of harmony. But the anticipation need only be slight... The three notes must follow one another in quickest succession, otherwise they will produce a drawling, dragging effect."<sup>189</sup>



Figure 45 Op. 56 no.2, op.6 no.5, op.30 no.4 mm.5-6 (Schirmer, accessed via Free-scores.com)

<sup>189</sup> Dunn, *Ornamentation*, 13.

At times, Chopin will artfully incorporate harmonic movement in the drone bass texture, using common-tone technique (e.g., op.7 no.4, op.17 no.4). Accentuating the drone bass is also common, sometimes indicated with accents or portato articulation. More commonly, however, Chopin uses no articulation marks whatsoever, keeping the texture clean and evidently simple.

### Performing the Drone Bass

The temporal quality of the bass line accompaniment is best embodied through a careful listening to an authentic performance of a Kujaw folk ensemble.

The *Kujawiak* passed down from villager Jan Twardowski, performed by Janusz Prusinowski and accompanied by *basy* player Jacek Hałas reveals the style of playing which Chopin indicates in his drone textures.<sup>190</sup> The recording illuminates the relationship between the fiddler and the bass player, showing a strong interdependency between them. The fiddler relies on the bassist's rhythmic consistency and also his ability to follow his intentions of freedoms. he bassist relies on the fiddler's melodies to give him reason to accompany. The fiddler's response towards the bassist's style of playing is represented in his own lethargic pulling of a half-note rhythm at the beginning of each new phrase. To balance this lethargy, he then spirals away within the phrase, extravagantly embellishing the melody in the upper registers, all the while balanced by the drone bass' ultimately smooth and lethargic bowing.

A characteristic 'pulling'/'resisting' sensation evoked in *basy* practice has both practical reasons and symbolic significance. The lethargic bowing is symbolically connected to a peasant's motion of ploughing in the fields,<sup>191</sup> and further is connected to the strongly formulated

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<sup>190</sup> Janusz Prusinowski (violin) and Jacek Hałas (bass), "Kujawiak jasny od Jana Twardowskiego" *Kujawy*, recorded 1965, track 43.

<sup>191</sup> Czekanowski, *Polish Folk Music*, 21.

Polish mentality of ‘pulling’ the past and its much loved traditions into the present.<sup>192</sup> In *basy* performance practice, the bass player pulls/stretches time at the beginning of each measure, and releases the last beat of the rhythm whose released energy falls back into the repeating/pulsating rhythm. The downwards thrust of the bow is ‘laboriously’ or ‘lethargically’ pulled over beats one and two, and released with the change of direction of the bow for beat three. This produces a quality of sound which resembles a *low-(low)-high* pattern in triple time.<sup>193</sup>

This characteristic pulling gesture of the bass is represented by Chopin in his frequent use of the term *legato* under the drone bass pattern. This indicates a desire for the downwards, connected, stroking gesture from this *basy* performance tradition. The *basy* pattern requires the pianist to feel an amount of heavy lethargy, along with a pulling sensation from the keys and the palm of the hand (supporting the weight of the arm and hand as to not produce extraneous noise). The mild and grounded release of the third beat must be executed with a sense of continuity – connected to the same sphere of sound as the rest of the bass pattern. In terms of accents, this depends on whether Chopin has already notated accents. In the event of no notated accent pattern, the performer will be informed by the melody, remembering that the bass is ‘observing’ the overall happenings. Remembering that the *basy* patterns are symbolically derived from ploughing the fields; thus a sense of hard work, ‘lugging’/‘carrying’ and cyclical tasks can all help to embody this sensation.

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<sup>192</sup> Sula Benet, *Song, Dance, and Customs of Peasant Poland* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1951).

<sup>193</sup> This release and brief change in bow direction on beat three produces higher overtones that ring in the sound.

## Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explored gestural practice in instrumental playing within the Kujaw region and how Chopin's music navigates these meaningful terrains of movement. Chopin's unique and varied use of embellishment and short repeating motives of an undulating contour parallel the fiddling tradition. Furthermore, the elasticity in meter and motivic variation are similar to the sense of improvisation that lay in the spirit of genre. Performance tips have been given to guide the process to the embodiment of these traditional elements. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Folk embellishments must be executed clearly and with an easy conviction to evoke the natural practice of a fiddlers' creative impulse.
2. Interchanging accent patterns need to be approached confidently and with a sense of dignity and swagger to show the genuine nature of the Polish folk dancers' spontaneity and artful footwork.
3. Attention to occasionally mark the downbeat is necessary to serve as a reminder of the overall meter.
4. Freedom to clearly and interchangeably accentuate beats two and three must also be present.
5. Elasticity occurs within the bar (or every two bars) reinstating the tempo and pulse at the beginning of each subsequent measure(s).
6. The pull to the axis of the melody when applicable connects a musician to a deeper understanding to the nature of Slavic melodic types which are retained in Chopin's mazurkas.
7. Furthermore, the *basy* style of performance in Polish folk music is characterized by a lethargic, legato practice and 'pulling' pattern.

Although we lack concrete aural evidence of the precise phenomenon of Chopin's *rubato*, exploring, listening, and studying the various performing trends of the regional music of Kujaw is a direct place to which a performer may find these answers. Within this music lays the spirit and stylistic elements that can aid performers in communicating the motions, emotions, and topics that resonate on different levels within Chopin's mazurkas.

## CHAPTER IV – CONCLUSION

The overall context for music performance in particular, and for life in general, has altered so significantly. Chopin's playing implies a complexity that we can only dream of and an interference with the printed score that any modern day interpreter would balk at. Is it too late for us to be able to 'divine this regular irregularity' that Chopin required but did not notate?<sup>194</sup>

There is no definitive answer, nor will there ever be, to Mark Troop's question. The veil of history and the passing of time have largely left us in the dark. But does this mean we should forget any attempt to rekindle Chopin's "divine irregularity"? Samuel Johnson famously said of a philosopher with whom he had engaged in conversation: "If he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, sir, when he leaves our houses let us count our spoons."<sup>195</sup> In the same sense, simply discarding the attempt to find some measure of Chopin's un-notated irregularities because we cannot know for certain his intentions ends our conversation with the past.

There are those scholars that have sentimentalized Chopin's connections with Polish folklore, propagating this idea to build Chopin as a sort of icon of Poland.<sup>196</sup> Then, there are those revisionist scholars who currently dismiss the effort to connect the influence of folk music to Chopin, arguing that there are more direct and important influences that shaped Chopin's

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<sup>194</sup> Mark Troop, "The real authenticity of Chopin," *Musical Opinion* 120 (Winter 1997): 143.

<sup>195</sup> Randy Cohen, *The Good, the Bad & the Difference: How to Tell Right From Wrong in Everyday Situations* (Random House, 2002).

<sup>196</sup> Marcelli Antoni Szulc, *Fryderyk Chopin I utwory jego muzyczne* [Fryderyk Chopin and his Musical Works], Krakow, 1873; Moritz Karasowski, *Frédéric Chopin: His Life, Letters, and Works*, (trans. Emily Hill), 2 vols., London, 1879; Franz Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, trans. Martha Walter Cook (New York: C.H. Ditson & Co, 1863).

musical language.<sup>197</sup> It would be naïve to presume that simply due to Chopin's 'mild' exposure to folk music that we should disregard this matter altogether. Surely we can find a middle ground – recognizing the limitations inherent in attempting to understand the folk sources of Chopin's mazurkas, but looking nonetheless, working to get to know the folk traditions which inform the very spirit of Chopin's mazurka genre.

Clearly, performing trends in Kujaw folk music have much to teach us about many features and temperaments in Chopin's mazurkas, and they can aid us in unravelling some of the most pressing issues of this repertoire. Pianists have too often become dependent on generic ideas of *rubato*, style and other aspects of the music. In this vein, engaging ourselves with the sources concerning the sounds, gestures, and patterns of movements derived from the specific performing traditions that inspired Chopin's music, creates the grounds for, as Richard Taruskin describes, an "authentic performance".<sup>198</sup> Kujaw gestures are specifically embedded within Chopin's mazurkas on levels of articulation, melodic construction, texture, harmony, and meter, and are a useful tool on how to navigate this music and shape it in a way that holds both 'historic' and 'personal' meaning.

This thesis has identified several Kujaw features that affect the basic sense of the mazurka style. Language in particular has been shown to affect the temporal level of Chopin's mazurkas. The characteristic mazurka rhythm rooted in the Polish language reflects the phonetic agogic stress of the penultimate syllable. This intrinsic agogic practice whose significance lays in human speech affects the most basic level of rhythm in the mazurka genre, showing that

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<sup>197</sup> Barbara Milewski, "The mazurka and national imaginings" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2002); Halina Goldberg, "Nationalizing the *Kujawiak* and Constructions of Nostalgia in Chopin's Mazurkas," Paper presented at American Musicological Society Conference, New Orleans, LA, November 2012.

<sup>198</sup> Richard Taruskin, "The Limits of Authenticity: A Discussion," *Early Music* 12 (1984): 3.

language itself has fundamental significance to the natural sense of this music. A pianist does not need to speak Polish to sense this quality of this accent and, therefore, restoring this quality back into performance can provide an opening to derive more of the ‘Polish’ elements that are intrinsic to the mazurka style. Also, engaging in the quality of declamation of folk song can aid pianists to better understand the mazurka style. As the thesis has shown, gravitating towards a central axis point in Chopin’s undulating melodies, truly produces a convincing effect that makes sense of the dance gestures and the spinning motions that are so closely connected to the mazurka tradition.

*Rubato*, of course, is one element that cannot be analyzed directly from the score. Luckily, then, we have evidence given by students and observers of Chopin’s playing, who affirm that Chopin’s sense of *rubato* in his mazurkas was shaped specifically by Polish dance music. In that regard, examining folk *rubato* (which can now be heard first hand in Kujaw folk recordings) carries a degree of significance to the temporal dimension of Chopin’s mazurkas, which draws connections from language, dance, and instrumental movements. Polish pianists, such as Henryk Sztompka, or Ignaz Friedman, who engage in the types of folk *rubato* which I identified, show effective responses to the elasticity in meter that has historically been referred to in his works. Pianists who struggle to makes sense of the temporal nature in Chopin’s works, then, can refer and learn from the elastic nature of the folk music that inspired Chopin. The freedoms, playfulness, and very root of the genre rest in these practices. This thesis draws out many reasons and qualities to folk *rubato*, which can aid the non-Polish speaker to understand this music and its cultural implications.

Tempo issues in Chopin's mazurkas can also be guided and better understood through engagement with folk music. Sequences of dances in folk circles have been shown to shape Chopin's structural level and tempo choices. The gradual acceleration in dance sequences in Kujaw folk music in many ways parallel the way Chopin changes the pace within the formal structure of his mazurkas. In exploring the dances, one can clearly make sense of Chopin's accelerandos and other tempo markings, realizing this as a general movement that characterizes mazurka folk music.

The mazurka genre is highly defined by its rich sense of balance between spontaneity and control. Improvisation in Kujaw fiddling demonstrates this sort of spontaneous control whose character can likewise be traced directly to Chopin's notated score. Improvisation as the basis for the spirit of playing the mazurka, therefore, needs to be understood by performers, guiding the sorts of temporal freedoms and patterns that guide these practices. Furthermore, by engaging in the more spontaneous nature of these practices, mazurka performance can be revived with a colouring of added embellishments, fervently practiced by Chopin himself. Although pianists have sensed a degree of spontaneity that goes hand in hand with the mazurka genre, many have been misguided by a generic understanding of this practice. The rich Kujaw improvisatory practices, however, can guide pianists towards more sensitive use of this freedom.

Finally, the movement patterns of Kujaw drone bass playing, likely the most identifiable feature in Chopin's mazurkas that evokes the folk tradition, show the direct significance between the gesture and culture of the Kujaw people. The drone pattern and its symbolic connection to ploughing the fields has a characteristic sensation of playing. Signified by a sense of 'pulling' and 'release', this drone bass performing style can guide Chopin performers to give this seemingly

simple texture more significance. As it has been shown, this repetitive accompaniment pattern interacts with the melodic layer and informs and replies to the *rubato* practices.

Without an engagement with Kujaw music, its dance, song and instrumental gestures, a performer cannot sufficiently challenge this repertoire and the elements that inform it. The performing history of this repertoire has evolved drastically, confusing amateurs, and interpreted by professionals who have little need or access to understand the historical implications of the genre. By bringing back elements of these folk practices to performance circles and English-speaking conversation, this thesis analyzes the specific aspects that define this repertoire so that performers can access the many unique and desirable qualities that make this music Chopin's most defining compositions. This thesis brings to English readers the style and quality of Polish music that has been suppressed in the twentieth century due to geographic and linguistic restraints. It not only shows that folk music is a defining factor to Chopin's mazurka style, but more importantly, that there is still a great deal to learn and include into our performances of these mysterious works.

#### Implications for Further Research

This thesis has discussed various historical performances, mostly by Polish pianists, that have captured the pianistic and non-pianistic gestures inherent within Chopin's mazurka styles. I selected these pianists because I find their interpretations to be the most compelling in terms of colour, rhythmic life, and understanding of the smaller gestural shapes that connect with the historical mazurka style. While this approach limits the performing history to a particular geographic region, it by no means meant to suggest that non-Polish pianists cannot capture these

patterns. This study could certainly be extended to include and compare recordings across other geographical and cultural regions.

Another limit in my study was my decision not to include modern performances of the mazurkas. My own personal observations found that historical performances from the turn of the century and post war recordings had the most success in capturing the gestural and stylistic nuances which I found convincing. It would of course be very interesting to look at modern performances of the mazurkas. With period performances now becoming more part of the mainstream, it would be interesting to examine how they are informed by these sources. "The Real Chopin" series published by the Fryderyk Chopin Institute in 2011 contains for the first time Chopin's complete works on period instruments. Each album is played by an acclaimed Polish or foreign pianist. Artists such as Fou Ts'ong, Ka Ling Colleen Lee, Janusz Olejniczak, perform the mazurkas. Fou Ts'ong for instance received the Polish Radio Prize for the best performance of mazurkas in 1955. Perhaps he can all the more now capture the sonorities and movements of these works.

Studying folk as a 'topic' in this thesis is merely the beginning. In my introduction, I stated that Chopin's mazurkas encapsulate gesture within the ballroom dance tradition, as well as counterpoint traditions, and vocal traditions. A study of the gestures found within the stylized ballroom *mazur* that Chopin enthusiastically danced in his early years will have to be left for later investigation. My thesis can serve as an analytical model for future performance studies.

Of course this study has implications beyond the mazurka. The Nocturne in g- op.15 no.3, for instance, has been frequently cited for its mazurka-like style.<sup>199</sup> Eigeldinger suggests

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<sup>199</sup> Jeffrey Kallberg, "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G-," in *Chopin at the Boundaries*, 3-29.

that 'a good three-quarters [of Chopin's works]... are genres connected with Polish folk music'.

Giving careful attention to these unique gestures and their inherent meanings in current performance practice, illuminates a broader and more holistic understanding of Chopin's musical language. This addresses dual aspects of 'universality' and 'personal expression' in Chopin's mazurkas.

As an endnote, I end with a story that shows the fundamental significance of the folk on Chopin's music, reminding us that Chopin's music carries distinctive qualities that resonate from his experiences and sentiments to Poland.

One day Chopin was improvising. I was lying on the sofa; I was in ecstasy, listening to him and day-dreaming. All of a sudden his music rang out with a song which went to the heart of my soul... a well known song... a song from the homeland... beloved... from the family home... from childhood years... My heart throbbed with yearning, tears sprang to my eyes - I leapt up: 'Fryderyczyk!' I cried, 'I know that song from the cradle ... my mother used to sing it... I have it in my soul, and you just played it!' He looked round with a strange expression. His eyes shone; his fingers were moving delicately over the keys; 'You never heard this tune before!' he declared. 'But I have it here, here, in my soul!' I cried, pressing my hand to my breast. 'Oh!' - he rose and embraced me - 'you have just made me indescribably happy, there are no words for it! You never knew this song... only its spirit: the spirit of the Polish melody! And I am so happy to have been able to grasp and reveal it.'<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup>Ferdynand Dworzaczek (renowned doctor from Warsaw whom Chopin met in Paris [no date given]). Quoted by Paulina Wilkońska, *Moje wspomnienia o życiu towarzyskim w Warszawie*. [My recollections of social life in Warsaw] (Warsaw, PIW, 1959), 154. Cited from Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 284.

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## Appendix A – Students' observation on rhythm.

i.

“Once Meyerbeer arrived in Chopin’s room during my lesson. He did not announce his arrival, of course: he was a king. We were playing the Mazurka in C op.33/3 – one page of music which seems nevertheless to contain hundreds. I called it the epitaph of the Mazurka, so full does it seem of grief and sorrow – the weary flight of an eagle. Meyerbeer took a seat and I continued. ‘That is 2/4’, said Meyerbeer. I had to repeat it while Chopin, pencil in hand, beat time on the piano; his eyes were blazing. ‘2/4’, Meyerbeer calmly repeated. Only once have I ever seen Chopin lose his temper, and it was at that moment – and what a wonderful sight he was! A faint red suffused his pale cheeks. ‘It’s in 3/4’, he said in a loud voice. ‘Give me that piece as a ballet in my opera’, retorted Meyerbeer..., ‘I’ll prove it to you.’ ‘It’s in 3/4’, Chopin almost yelled, he who never normally raised his voice above a murmur. He pushed me aside and sat at the piano himself. *Three times* he played the piece, counting aloud and stamping out the beat with his foot; he was beside himself! Meyerbeer still held his own and they parted on bad terms. It pained me to have witnessed this scene. Without taking leave of me, Chopin had disappeared into his study. He was right, all the same: for though the third beat loses some of its value, submerged as it is in the flow of the melody, still it does not cease to exist.”

ii.

“A peculiar feature of Chopin’s execution was the liberty with which he treated rhythm. This freedom, however, seemed so natural that for years it did not attract my attention. One day in 1845 or 1846 I took the liberty of expressing in his presence the opinion that the majority of the Mazurkas played by him appeared to be written not in 3/4 time but in 4/4 because he prolonged the first value of the bar. Chopin opposed energetically. Finally, I asked him to play a Mazurka while I counted aloud in 3/4 time – everything matched excellently. Laughing, he explained that this peculiarity comes from the national character of the dance. It was an unusual experience to listen to Chopin playing because one had the impression of a rhythm in 3/4 time, at the same time hearing a duple rhythm. Obviously this was not a feature of every Mazurka, but pertained to many. I later understood that I was not very sensible to risk this comment, and how kindly Chopin must have

been disposed towards me, if he treated it with such a good humour. The same remark made upon another occasion by Meyerbeer (perhaps for a more perfidious purpose) became the object of a serious argument; as far as I know, Chopin never forgave Meyerbeer.”<sup>201</sup>

iii.

“Moscheles told me that his married daughter [Emily Roche], who took lessons from Chopin, had played [for Moscheles], among other things, a new Chopin Mazurka, with such a rubato that the entire piece gave the impression of being in 2/4 instead of 3/4.”

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<sup>201</sup> C.E. & M. Hallé, *Life and Letters of Sir Charles Hallé*, London 1896, quoted in: Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin vu par ses élèves*, Neuchatel 1988.

## Appendix B – Chopin’s Letters to Family from Szafarnia.

### Letter to his family (Fragment) August 24 1824

*Szafarnia Courier 202*

*Foreign News,*

*On the 20th day of this month, there was a harvest festival in Obrowa. The entire village, gathered before the manor, made merry, particularly after vodka, and the girls range in shrill semi-tonal, jarring voices:*

Before the manor ducks are covered in mud,  
Our lady is covered in gold.  
Before the manor hangs a rope,  
Our gentleman is as fast as a diver.

Before the manor hangs a snake,  
Our miss Marianne will be wed.  
Before the manor lies a cap,  
Our maid-servant is a giddy goat.

Polish Translation:

Cała wieś, zgromadzona przed dworem, szczerze się weseliła, szczególnie po wódce, dziewczki piskliwym semitoniczno-falszywym głosem znaną piosnkę wyśpiewywały:

Przed dworem kaczki w błocie  
Nasza Pani w samym złocie.  
Przed dworem wisi sznurek  
Nasz jegomość kieby nurek.  
Przed dworem wisi wąż  
asza panna Maryanna pójdzie za mąż.  
Przed dworem leży czapa  
Nasza pokojówka kieby gapa.

### Letter to his family, August 31, 1824.

*Szafarnia Courier*

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<sup>202</sup> Imagined by Chopin as a parody on the Warsaw Daily. He called his letters ‘Kurier Warszawski.’

*Thursday, 31 August 1824*

*Recollection.*

*In 1802 a mouse ate a hole through Miss Jozefa Dziewanowska's shoe.*

*National News*

*On the 28th day of this month...*

*Foreign News*

*On the 29th day of this month, Mr. Pichon (Chopin himself) was passing through Nieszawa, when he heard a Catalani seated on a fence singing something at the top of her lungs. This interested him neatly, and he took pleasure in hearing the aria and voice, but he was not completely satisfied for he strained to hear the verses. He passed by the fence twice but to no avail, for he still understood nothing. Finally, beside himself with curiosity, he fished out of his pocket three groszy and promised them to the singer if only she would repeat the ditty. She fidgeted awhile, frowned and remonstrated, but encouraged by the three groszy, she decided on it and started singing a little mazurek, from which the editor cites only one strophe as an example with permission from his superior and censor:*

'Look there beyond the knolls, the knolls, how the wolf does dance,  
but he has no wife and therefore looks askance...' (bis)

*In Radomin, on the 29th of this month, a cat became rabid. Fortunately he didn't bite anyone, but he raced and jumped around the field while he was still alive; after he was killed, he stopped and no longer raged.*

*In Dulnik a fox ate a sheep for supper. The distressed guardians of the remaining little lambs are offering the tail and ears to the one who can catch the fox, tie it up, and bring it to the family's counsel for inquisition.*

*Approved*

*Censor*

*L.D*

Polish Translation:

Wiadomości Zagraniczne Dnia 29 m. r. b. JPan P i c h o n przejeżdżając przez Nieszawę usłyszał na płocie siedzącą Catalani, która coś całą gębą śpiewała. Zajął go to mocno, a lubo usłyszał arię i głos, niekontent jednak z tego, starał się wiersze usłyszeć. Po dwakroć przechodził koło płotu, ale na próżno, bo nic nie rozumiał; aż na koniec, zdjęty ciekawością, dobył trzech groszy, obiecał je śpiewaczce, byleby mu śpiewkę powtórzyła. Długo się kręciła, krzywiła i wymawiała, lecz zachęcona trzema groszami, zdecydowała się i zaczęła śpiewać mazureczka, z którego Redaktor, za pozwoleniem zwierzchności i Cenzury, na wzór jedne tylko strofę przytacza:

Patsajze tam za gulami, za gulami, jak to wilk tańcuje,

A wsakżeć on nie ma żony, bo się tak frasuje, (bis)

**Letter to his family, August 26 1825.**

*My most beloved parents!*

*I am healthy and taking my pills, but do not have too many more left. I am also thinking about home and it pains me to know that I will have to spend this entire vacation without seeing those dearest to me. Yet I often imagine that later on I will have to leave home for much longer than a month, and so I treat this time as a prelude to the future. This is an intellectual prelude, because with my departure I must "sing" a musical one. I am told that also here in Szafarnia I will play the carillon before I take leave. I may not see Szafarnia again too soon since I do not have such hopes as I had last year. But casting these sentiments aside, with which I could cover the entire page, let us return to the day before yesterday, yesterday, and today. The most joyful day was the day before yesterday, perhaps even the most joyful day of my entire stay in Szafarnia, and it was made up of two events. The first was that Miss Ludwika returned healthy from Obrowa assisted by Mrs. Borzewska and, secondly, that on that same day, two villages had their harvest festivals. We were having dinner, eating our last course, when from afar we could hear choirs of jarring discant, now from old crones gabbling through their noses, now again from girls unmercifully squeaking a semitone higher at the top of their lungs, to the accompaniment of one fiddle - a three-stringed one at that- which answered every sung strophe in an alto voice from the back. Abandoning our company, Domusz and I got up from the table and ran outside, where the entire crowd was slowly and ever-closely approaching the house. Miss Agnieszka Guzowska and Miss Agnieszka Turowska-Bakiew, with wreaths on their heads, grandiloquently presided over the female harvesters, who were led by two married women, Mrs. Jaskowa and Mrs. Mackowa, carrying bundles of hay in their arms. Lined up as such before the manor, they sang strophes, each of which took a dig at one of us including the following two strophes which were directed at me:*

*Before the manor... is a little green bush,  
Our Varsovian is as skinny as a dog.  
On the barn there are roof ties,  
Our Varsovian is a very fast lad.*

*... I figured out that the second strophe was the idea of a wench whom I had chased in the field with a sheaf binder several hours earlier. Having sung this cantata, the two young ladies with wreaths whom I mentioned above approached the gentleman of the manor while two farm-hands, waiting for them at the entrance hall door with buckets of dirty water, greeted both Miss Agnieszkas in such a way that water dripped from their noses and a stream formed in the entrance hall. The wreaths and the bunches of hay were presented and when Fryc ripped into a Dobrzyn tune on his fiddle, everyone in the courtyard started dancing. It was a beautiful night; the moon and stars shone brightly. Even so, two candles had to be brought out for the steward of the estate who was treating everyone to vodka, and also for Fryc who with only three strings fiddled better than another with four strings would have been able. The gallops, waltzes and*

*obereks began, but in order to encourage the harm-hands who either stood silently or only skipped in place, I lead the first waltz, dancing first with Miss Tekla and at the end with Mrs. Dziewanowska. Later, everyone became so high-spirited that they capered in the courtyard until they dropped. And when I say "until they dropped" I mean just that because several couples fell when the first bare-footed girl stepped on a pebble. It was already almost eleven when Fryc's wife brought over a double-bass even worse than the fiddle: it had only one string. Grabbing the dusty bow, I started playing the bass, scraping so forcefully that everyone gathered to see the two Fryces - one sleepily one the fiddle, the other on the single-stringed, monochord like, dusty rasping bass... when, all of a sudden, Miss Ludwika shouted "raus." So I had to return home, say goodnight, and go to sleep while the whole company in turn made off from the manor to the tavern for more merry-making. Where they partied, or whether a long time, nicely or badly, I do not know since I have not asked about this yet. I was very delighted with the evening and extremely pleased by two events in particular. There was no fourth string; what to do then? Where to find one? ... I go outside and there's Mr. Leon and Wojtek, bowing deeply, asking me to get them some strings. So I got nine threads from Mrs. Dziewanowska and gave them to them. They strung them up, but as fate would have it, they would have to dance to the accompaniment of tree strings, for every time they would string a new string, a fifth interval would break of course, and another would have to be re-strung in its place. Secondly, Miss Tekla Borzewska danced with me twice; I spoke with her a great deal - as custom requires - and, because of this, I was called her love and fiancé until some other peasant set the matter straight and only then was I called by my actual name, and so the little tailor called out, "now Mr. Szope [pronounced Shopeh] with the Honorable Lady [pronounced in a peasant dialect]," when I wanted to lead a dance with Mrs. Dziewanowska.*

*I promised to send in today's letter ...*

*Your most devoted son,  
F. Chopin*

Appendix C – *Tempo Rubato* Transcriptions by Marian and Jadwiga Sobieski


2169/12

Lubraniec pow. Włocławek 27.7.1955  
Skrzypce: Latecki Tadeusz, ur. 1920  
Lubraniec, zam. Lubraniec.

## Kujawiak

\*) Niezamierzone podwyższenie intonacyjne  
 \*\*) Zawahanie intonacyjne wykonawcy

Nagranie: M. Sobieski  
 Transkrypcja: B. Linette 22.1.1959.  
 Korekta transkrypcji: J. Sobieska 6.2.1960

Znak  obrazuje przeprowadzenie przez wykonawcę *tempo rubato*; wskazuje intencję wykonawcy i kierunek rozegrania przezeń *tempo rubato*, rezygnując z ujęcia tego wewnętrznego impulsu wyrazowego w ścisły obraz wyliczeniowy. Znak wskazuje że wykonawca odebrał minimalny ułamek czasu nutcie czy nutom znajdującym się pod dłuższym ramieniem kąta, by ten sam ułamek czasu oddać nutcie czy nutom wskazanym przez umieszczone wewnątrz kąta kółeczko. Ujęcie znaku w okrągłe nawiasy oznacza, że intencja zastosowania *tempo rubato* jest w nasileniu swym minimalna, lekko wyczuwalna.

Znaki ♯ ↓ to zamierzone podwyższenie lub obniżenie danego dźwięku o ćwierć tonu. 203

<sup>203</sup> Jadwiga and Marian Sobieski, "Tempo Rubato u Chopina w Polskiej Muzyce Ludowej," *Muzyka* 3 (1960): 40.