



FRÉDÉRIC
CHOPIN



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(1810–1849)

A composer of the Romantic era.

Like many other composers, Frédéric began playing piano as a child. He was extremely talented. By age eight, he was performing in concerts with orchestras, and had begun to compose music for the piano. At age 15 his *Rondo for Piano* was published and he entered the Warsaw Conservatory of music. In 1829 (age 19) he moved to Vienna, Austria, where he performed as a concert pianist, and where he had access to the many music publishers located there.

He returned to Warsaw a year later, where he performed the premieres of two of his piano concertos. War in Poland in 1831 forced Chopin to move to France, where his father had been born, and he settled in Paris. He lived there for the rest of his life, although he stayed in touch with his native Poland through a community of Polish citizens who lived in Paris. Chopin gave his first concert in Paris in 1832, but French audiences, who preferred more powerful and showy performers, did not immediately accept his refined and precise style of playing.

So Chopin began performing less and composing more. He also concentrated on teaching piano. He charged large fees for lessons, but always had plenty of students. He also came to realize that he was more successful as a performer when he played in small recital rooms instead of large concert halls.

Chopin's compositions for piano became extremely popular in France, with music publishers competing for the right to publish his music for piano. He became involved with the high society of Paris and fell in love with a female author named Aurore Dudevant, whose novels were published under pen name of George Sand.

In 1838–39 Chopin spent the winter on the Mediterranean island of Majorca, where he completed his 25 preludes for piano. However, the cold and wet weather on the island, combined with some existing health problems, nearly caused his death, but he recovered upon his return to Paris. He continued composing — primarily music for the piano—throughout the rest of the 1830s and 1840s. In fact, Chopin wrote some of his finest music, including his *Sonata in B-flat minor*, between 1838 and 1841.

By the mid-1840s, Chopin was again suffering from health problems, and his long-term relationship with Aurore Dudevant was ending. In 1848 he made a brief trip to England and Scotland and gave his last concert in Paris. He died, probably of tuberculosis, in Paris in 1849.

Although he spent most of his adult life in Paris, Frédéric Chopin is considered to be the greatest of all Polish composers. He enjoyed the company of wealthy, powerful, and famous people. He was a short, slim, sensitive, and physically frail man who nevertheless lived and dressed as a fashionable member of Paris society. Chopin's compositions for piano are among the greatest ever written, and he is also recognized as one of the finest pianists of his time.

