
The Interaction between Adam Bernard Mickiewicz and Frédéric François Chopin and G Minor Ballad

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the great composer F. Chopin who has an important place in piano literature is going to be discussed from a different perspective. Polish poet A. Mickiewicz is stated in many of the sources as a source of inspiration for Chopin while writing his ballades. To present A. Mickiewicz and the effect of this friendship on the composer's works are going to be discussed on the basis of his common points with F. Chopin.

When the life of A. Mickiewicz is analyzed, an interesting point is that the poet spent his last year of his life in Istanbul and there is still a museum with his name in this city. The relationship of Mickiewicz who is a fan of the Turkish with Chopin becomes more interesting within this context.

KEYWORDS: *Mickiewicz, Chopin, Ballad, Konrad Wallenrod*

1. THE CONCEPT OF BALLAD

(Ballade in French, ballad in English and ballata in Italian) Ballade is the name of short dance songs sung by South Italian people in 12th century as well as being a kind of music and literature existed in different forms in the West, especially in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Greece, Russia and America since ancient Greece.¹

*The songs which were sung by troubadours who are bards of West in Provençe language are accepted as the first examples of ballades. These are folk songs with aabN (N= Chorus) quartet rhymed verses where striking and impressive short stories are told. (These are like ditties and sagas in Traditional Turkish minstrel literature). In F. J. Child's collation called 1882-98 *English and Scottish Popular Ballad* consisting of 305 ballads and the oldest of which dates back to 1300, there are translations of ballads of European countries, especially of Denmark. Ballads called "broadsides" printed on king size papers (folio sheet) in England in 16th century are the oldest printed examples of this kind of poems. In the second half of 18th century, the examples of ballads started to occur in Germany. Four poets were known as the masters of this genre: Bürger, Schiller, Goethe, Uhland. Later on, Laforgue, Apollinaire and Aragon in France created modern ballad examples which were stronger lyrically rather than narrative.*

The evolution of romantic ballad cannot be separated from ballads with music, especially in Germany.

Ballad which was an important kind of folk music in 18th century, became widespread in Germany in 19th century as the translations or similar of English ballads.

J. R. Zumsteeg, Schubert, Loewe, Schumann, Brahms and Wolf composed most outstanding examples of ballads created by mono tone and accompanied by piano. Some compositions created just for instrument through the middle of 19th century were also called *ballad*. The compositions of Chopin, Liszt and Brahms can be regarded as the examples of these.ⁱⁱ



Frédéric François Chopin (1810-1849) <http://www.geocities.com/vienna/2217/pies.htm>

2. BALLAD AS A MODEL OF EXPRESSION ACCORDING TO F. CHOPIN

Which were the ballads known or not known by Chopin? The answer to this according to Parakilas can be given just by being based on possibilities. The correspondences of Chopin and other biographical sources, materials do not inform about which *ballads* he read or listened. However, it is for sure that he knew the *ballads* of Mickiewicz.

Nothing but the publication of *Balady i romanse* (Mickiewicz's poetry book) in Chopin's youth period left an important and a great literal impression. Other Polish poets, contemporaries of Chopin also wrote *ballads*; however, he did not enjoy them that much. It is known that he read the ballads of other foreign poets such as Bürger, Goethe, Schiller, Uhland, Heine, Hugo and Scott.

The second question is which ballads he knew as songs. He listened Polish folk ballads in Poland and analyzed their melodies when he was young. Chopin met Polish composers, who performed literal *ballads* accompanied by piano, including (his teacher J.Elsner, 1789-1831) and famous pianist Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831). He also knew the complex arrangements of literal *ballads* composed by German composers such as Schubert, Loewe. For him, his imitation of the structure of general verse and stanza of *ballads* in the musical sentences of his *ballads* created a path for the listeners to connote the special effects created by the narration in a song.

Four *ballads* written by Chopin between the years 1836-1843 could be an example of his new creation period. As Christiane Engelbrecht tried to explain that the *ballads* of Chopin can not be associated with instrumental romance.ⁱⁱⁱ This is because the romances are based on vocal form and song form. On the contrary, instrumental *ballads* of Chopin are based more on literal *ballads*. According to Goethe's description; the relationship between the three main –

lyric, epic and dramatic – elements of the art of poetry is characteristically distinctive. The examples of lyrical elements are Op. 23-1. *ballade*, 2nd theme; 47-3. *ballade*, measures 136-143; 52-4. *ballade*, 157th measure and introduction measures 2-7; the examples of epic elements are 52-4. *ballade*, 157th measure and introduction measures 2-7; calm beginning of Op. 23-1. *ballade* (due to folk melodies, waltz accompaniment in the same form, continuing rhythm and repetitions, naive manner is observed). Lastly the examples that include technique, radiance, virtuosity and dynamism are Op. 23-1. *ballade*, 208-264 coda measures, measures 44-64, 160-165th; sudden contrasts of Op. 38-2. *ballade*; pathetic manner in the beginning of Op. 52-4. *ballade*.^{iv}



Adam Bernard Mickiewicz (1798-1855) <http://www.mickiewicz.art.pl/start.html>

3. A. MICKIEWICZ

“Homeland Poet” of Poland Adam Bernard Mickiewicz was born in Novogrodek on 24th December 1798. Mickiewicz who was born few years later than his country’s break down by neighbour countries started to write about the emotions of citizens who were hard done and suppressed at a very young age. He developed audiences who were deprived of independence, he was a defender of Polish citizens under occupation with his poems that were dedicated to freedom and were read secretly. When he was studying in Vilno university, he attended students’ organizations. His restless life which started in his younger ages had continued till his death.

His poetry book called *Balady i romanse* creates the basis of Polish Romanticism. He was arrested and exiled to Russia due to secret organization activities. This exile affected the rest of poet’s life and art deeply. After he had left Russia, he escaped to Germany, then France. Victor Lausen, Minister of National Education of that time in Paris, had established Slav Literature Platform in university and he assigned the poet to teach this lesson. While teaching in Paris, Mickiewicz was occupied with being organized of Polish people there and with this purpose he went to Switzerland and Rome. Crimean war started in 1853.

The poet came to Istanbul to strengthen Polish army forces in Ottoman ranks in 1855. In those days cholera was all around. Mickiewicz died on 26th November 1855 due to a microbe he got from his visit to patients with cholera. The last words of him to his fellow friend Polish İskender Paşa before he died were: “If I had known that I would die from cholera in Istanbul, I would have come here again. Because it was my duty. I prefer to be a secretary of Turkish troop rather than to be a public secretary of a science academy in France.”^v

As he stated while he was dying, his last duty in France was “being a public secretary of science academy”. Mickiewicz’s house in Istanbul with no 29 on the corner of Tatlı Badem Sokak in Beyoğlu became a museum today.



A. Mickiewicz Müze Evi, Beyoğlu, Istanbul

<http://www.ibb.gov.tr/IBB/Popup/tr-TR/PrinterFriendlyHaberler.aspx?CultureId=tr-TR&HaberId=21382>

Internal organs of the poet were buried on the basement of this building. After a magnificent funeral, his corpse was sent to France. His grave in Paris was opened in 1890 and the residuals of his bones were taken to Poland and buried in the Church of Vavel Royal Palace. Selected Works:

- Oda do młodości*, 1820
- Poezje I. Balady i romanse*, 1822
- Poezje II*, 1823
- Dziady*, 1823-32 (complete version was published in 1901)
- Sonety krymskie*, 1826
- Sonety odeskie*, 1826
- Konrad Wallenrod*, 1827-trans-suom.
- Farys*, 1828
- Krytykach i recenzentach Warszawskich*, 1828
- Ksiege Narodu Polskiego i Pielgrzymstwa Polskiego*, 1832
- Pan Tadeusz*, 1834
- Les slaves*, 1849
- Les confédérés de Bar*, 1867 (1836’da yazılmış)
- Jacques Jasinski, ou Les deux Polognes*, 1867 (written in 1836)

- Poems*, 1944 (Editör: G.R. Noyes)
-*Dziela*, 1949-55 (16 Cilt)
-*Poezijos rinktine. Poezje wybrane.* (Seçilmiş Şiirler), 1998
-*A Treasury of Love Poems by Adam Mickiewicz*, 1998 (Editor: Krystyna Olszer)

4. F. CHOPIN AND A. MICKIEWICZ

It can be said that the friendship between two Polish patriot Chopin and Mickiewicz, who lived in the same years, became stronger during the years when Chopin lived in Paris. Chopin and Mickiewicz frequently met in Chopin's house in Paris and talked about art. The most significant common point of these two "poets" who had also similarities in their lives was the intensity of their national feelings and the homesickness they experienced. The traces of these feelings are seen in their works.

It is seen that Chopin was inspired by four poems of Mickiewicz for the *ballads* he composed between the years 1835-1842 (the first draft is known as in 1830). According to R. Schumann, it is possible to think that being affected of Chopin by his poems has a significant part in the creation process of Chopin.^{vi}

It is also seen in the preface of Cortot editions that Chopin was inspired by the four poems of Mickiewicz and these poems were basic source for him to compose his *ballads*. Since there is no documentary preciseness, these relations established between the poems of Mickiewicz and the *ballads* of Chopin became a subject of debate for 19th century music critics. However, when we analyze Chopin's life, we can see that he was a vigorous advocate of Polish literature and he directed George Sand to Polish literature. He translated the poems of Mickiewicz to him and George Sand wrote essays related to Mickiewicz. Chopin and George Sand also attended the Slav literature and Polish poets lessons of Mickiewicz taught in College de France in 1840. It is seen that Chopin who had always followed the new publishing in Poland gave the order of two books to his friend Fontana in a letter he wrote. One of them was of Mickiewicz's. Through these clues, the idea that Chopin was inspired from Mickiewicz's poems gets stronger.

5. G MINOR BALLAD AND "KONRAD WALLENROD"

Although Chopin created the draft of his first *ballad* in 1830, its publication was in 1835. According to some sources this date was in 1836. It was so sad for Chopin that he was in Wien during the occupation of Poland. It is thought that the first draft of *G Minor Ballade* coincided with these years (1830). The idea that there would be something happening in his country and he was not able to anything from far away always existed in his mind. Undoubtedly, these feelings he experienced were reflected especially in his compositions created in the period when he was in Wien.

In addition to this, Chopin was experiencing half-hopeful, half-sad love with Maria Wodzinska. He was in loneliness and the only thing that he could attach was his art.

Ballade starts with an introduction where two hands play together. This deep emotional sentence in the introduction reflects the Slav style in Chopin's soul. This sensuality in the end of eighth measure becomes more distinctive with contrasting sounds. André Gide admired this sound contradiction:

“This is a fascinating, brave behavior. All of a sudden, a single note changes the whole scenery just like the magic wand of the wizard!”

Longing style of first theme turns into a high theme after a short *agitato* tempo. Then, the first theme appears again in a slower form. The breathless pursue of themes after short silences reflect the inner conflicts of the composer. *Ballad* ends with a “*presto con fuoco*”.^{vii} Although not yet proved that Chopin composed this *ballad* by getting inspired by Polish poet Mickiewicz’s famous work called “*Konrad Wallenrod*”, it is a popular opinion. Konrad Wallenrod is a historical long type of poem addressing Lithuania and Prussia period. It takes place in 14th century. The main character of the work finds himself in a system of contrasting values. He discovers that he has his origins in Teuton and Lithuania and it is something very prosperous. In this way, he defeats the established system by being dragged with patriotic feeling. The traditional work “The Story of Wajdelota” was among the main elements of the poem, the poem has the traces of a vivid, enthusiastic and traditional poem. There are heroic elements based on narration in the context of it. Two long lyrical poems constitute the main part of this work.

Conrad is a typical Polish male name. It is called Konrad in English. He is a son of a Lithuanian family in the poem. He revolts against the system with the patriotic knights. He is ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of his country. Mickiewicz used the name Konrad in another theatrical work. Mickiewicz’s work called “Pan Tadeuz” published in 1834 in Paris also has the elements of “national poem”. It deals with the properties of historical novel and epic genres. Description elements are distinctive. It includes lyrical passages. It dignifies the nobility of Lithuania, it was written after the arrival of Napoleon’s army. Both irony and reality dominate the poem at the same time.

In my opinion, lyrical style which dominates the *G Minor Ballad* of Chopin resembles the heroic narration in Mickiewicz’s poem Konrad Wallenrod, especially in *meno mosso* part starting with the last beat of 67th measure. It is clearly understood why Chopin is called “the poet of music” in these measures which are full of longing and composed with intense feelings. Opposite poles we encounter in Chopin’s works and actually in his personality, appear here, as well and the *ballad* finishes with a *presto con fuoco* final.

Sometimes introvert, withdrawn and sometimes enthusiastic expression is actually Chopin himself. Deep feeling of homesickness manifests itself in *G minor ballad* as well, as it has been reflected in the works of two friends Chopin and Mickiewicz who had been homesick throughout their lives. We sometimes hear the sadness and desperation, and sometimes the rebel and screams during the occupation of the country.

CONCLUSION

Since the subject of this study, the friendship of A. Mickiewicz – F. Chopin and the effect of this friendship on the ballads of the composer cannot be proven with the documents; it is a debated subject in musical sphere. However, in my opinion when the lives of these two names are analyzed, obtained common points and similarities justifies this thesis.

Additionally, lyrical approaches, epic elements of A. Mickiewicz in his poems are seen in the works of F. Chopin, as well. Sometimes an enthusiastic, screaming expression, sometimes

84

Musical score for measures 84-87. The piece is in a minor key. Measure 84 features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a bass line. Measures 85-87 continue the melodic and bass lines with various articulations and dynamics. Measure 87 ends with a double bar line and an asterisk.

88

Musical score for measures 88-91. Measure 88 has a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a bass line. Measures 89-91 continue the melodic and bass lines. Measure 91 ends with a double bar line and an asterisk.

89

Musical score for measures 89-92. Measure 89 has a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a bass line. Measures 90-92 continue the melodic and bass lines. Measure 92 ends with a double bar line and an asterisk.

90

Musical score for measures 90-93. Measure 90 has a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a bass line. The instruction *sempre dim.* is written above the treble staff. Measures 91-93 continue the melodic and bass lines. Measure 93 ends with a double bar line and an asterisk.

92

Musical score for measures 92-95. Measure 92 has a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a bass line. The instruction *rallentando* is written above the treble staff. Measures 93-95 continue the melodic and bass lines. Measure 95 ends with a double bar line and an asterisk.

94

Musical score for measures 94-95. Measure 94 has a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a bass line. Measure 95 continues the melodic and bass lines. Measure 95 ends with a double bar line and an asterisk.

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