

Chopin 1810–2010

The Third International Chopin Congress

Warsaw, 25 February
to 1 March 2010

1

edited by
Irena Poniatowska
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Chopin

1810–2010

**Ideas
Interpretations
Influence**

The Third International
Chopin Congress

Warsaw, 25 February

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The Fryderyk Chopin
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Volume

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Introduction

After the Second World War, the Chopin cult in Poland flourished, in both performance and scholarly research. Before the war, three editions of the International Chopin Competition were held, inaugurated in 1927 in Warsaw, with another thirteen editions coming since the war. Chopin congresses, meanwhile, have been organised in connection with every major anniversary of the composer's birth or death: in 1960, on the 150th anniversary of his birth, in 1999, on the 150th anniversary of his death, and in 2010, on the 200th anniversary of his birth. The First International Musicological Congress devoted to the Works of Frederick Chopin, held in Warsaw on 16–22 February 1960,¹ organised by the Chopin Year Committee, the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Culture and Art and the Fryderyk Chopin Society, addressed a very wide range of topics, from 'Criticism of Chopin's style' and 'Stylistic influences', through 'Problems of performance' and the 'Editorial and bibliographical', to 'Historical' issues and 'Problems of aesthetics'. That was the first gathering on such a grand international scale inspired by the oeuvre of Chopin, and also by the Polish folk and artistic tradition in which the composer was raised, but which also reached deeper, into the very roots of musical culture in Renaissance Poland. The Congress, led by Zofia Lissa, was held at Warsaw University's Institute of Musicology. Its themes also included the impulses that Chopin took from the European tradition, including from Bach, Clementi and Scarlatti, the evolution of his style, which hitherto had been treated en bloc, and expression in his works. Further questions were the influence of Chopin's ideas on the music of his contemporaries (Schumann, Liszt) and on subsequent generations, including Czech composers, Brahms, the 'Mighty Handful' and impressionism and expressionism, and analysis of his music, including within the aesthetic-cultural context. From a methodological point of view, the dominant aspects were the description and comparison of creative approaches and a positivist type of analysis, focussing on the fundamental elements of a work, such as harmony (and chromaticism), melody and rhythm, although Schenker's method for depicting the relations between the voices in Chopin's compositions was also presented. There was a relative dearth of texts concerning music performance and publishing, since source research and methods for the analysis of

¹ *The Book of the First Musicological Congress devoted to the Works of Frederick Chopin: 16–22 II 1960*, ed. Zofia Lissa (Warsaw: PWN, 1963).

² Proceedings published in two volumes, ed. Irena Poniatowska, with Zofia Chechlińska, Wojciech Nowik, Jan Stęszewski and Mieczysław Tomaszewski (Warsaw and Cracow: Musica Iagellonica, 2003).

artistic interpretations had not yet been sufficiently developed. Characteristic of those times, meanwhile, was the large contribution of Czechoslovakian, Russian and German musicologists among the 120 delivered papers, which would not be repeated in subsequent congresses.

The Second Congress came thirty-nine years after the first. Entitled *Chopin and his Work in the Context of Culture*, it ran from 10 to 17 October 1999 at the Royal Castle in Warsaw (with a concluding Round Table at the University), organised by the Polish Chopin Academy.² The Congress's Academic Board was chaired by Irena Poniatowska.

Papers were grouped into four subject areas: 'Chopin in the entourage of persons and thoughts of the epoch'; 'Chopin's output and its musicological interpretations'; 'The work of Chopin in pianistic interpretations'; 'The resonance of Chopin's output and its social reception'.

During the congress, information was presented regarding the genealogy of the Chopin family and the procedures connected with his death, as well as new information concerning Chopin's friendship with Pauline Viardot, his pupil Georges Mathias and the composer's contacts with the artistic milieu of Paris.

The image of Chopin and his work was expanded, thanks to a variety of research perspectives, such as integral analysis from the provenance to the resonance of a single composition or a whole genre, various ways of understanding Chopin's place in the history of music, the transcendence of Chopin's aesthetics from a semiotic perspective, approaches to the Romantic idiom, questions of the form, metre and harmony of works within the context of early romanticism, and also the influence of the *style brillant* and of orientalisms (Nocturne, Op. 62 No. 1).

Issues relating to pianism and performance were enhanced with theory, new methods for the analysis of recordings, studies of the playing of the great interpreters, a phenomenological approach to fingering and the leading of melody, and the question of hidden polyphony in the performance of Chopin's works. Those issues were exemplified and didactically consolidated by three masterclasses on the subject of Chopin's notation of pedal (Dominique Merlet), the interpretation of the mazurkas (Andrzej Jasiński) and the Sonata in B flat minor (Viktor Merzhanov).

New subjects covered the resonance and reception of Chopin and his oeuvre. A polysemiotic survey of the reception of the Preludes, metaphor in French and German poetry, Chopin's resonance in Rachmaninov's Variations, French, Italian and American

music, the music of Chile and Japan, Polish modernist criticism and French letters, and information regarding unknown editions of the composer's works—all of this considerably expanded the scope of the influence of Chopin's music on European culture. The congress discovered a new Chopinophile, Henri Kowalski (1841–1916), settled in Brittany, who lauded Chopin's name throughout the world as a pianist and orator,³ both before and at the same time as Paderewski.

There was also supplementary material about Chopin societies around the world and about a Pleyel piano from *c.*1869 reconstructed in Poland (Krosno Museum, one of the first such reconstructions), on which Janusz Olejniczak gave a concert.

The congress encompassed new fields of research, as well as notional and artistic contexts to Chopin's oeuvre. It also reflected a geographic shift in interest in Chopin studies, attested by the participation of musicologists from Anglo-Saxon, Francophone and Germanophone circles, in place of the previous domination of Central and Eastern Europe.

In 2001, the Fryderyk Chopin Institute was founded, and by 2008 it had already organised eight annual conferences devoted to various subjects and aspects of Chopin's oeuvre, with all the material subsequently published. Many other publications were forthcoming, and a series of facsimile editions of autographs of Chopin's works was launched. Also the Institute's artistic and phonographic work, including a series of recordings on historical instruments and the completion, around forty years after its inception, of the Polish National Edition of the Works of Fryderyk Chopin, edited by Jan Ekier, contributed to the preparation of the thematic substance of the congress held in 2010: *The Third International Congress. Chopin 1810–2010. Ideas, Interpretations and Influence*, held at the University of Warsaw from 25 February to 1 March 2010. The steering committee was again chaired by Irena Poniatowska.

The holistic approach to Chopin studies enabled scholars on one hand to take in a multitude of issues and on the other to penetrate the meaning of the analysed phenomena, partly thanks to the use of a new methodology of research developed in the humanities. Around one hundred contributions, divided into research reports and issue-based papers/considerations, were grouped into three thematic areas: 'Chopin's personality, heritage and milieu'; 'Interpretations of Chopin's music'; 'The influence of Chopin and his music'.

The framework was similar for all three congresses: wide-ranging, open to diverse fields of study, not just the traditionally

³ In 2014, Marie-Claire Mussat published a monograph of Henri Kowalski.

musicological—historical-analytical—but also the acoustic, genealogical, instrumentological, sociological and cultural, as was particularly in evidence during the Third Congress. The plenary session already showed the dimensions of research—a new edition of Chopin’s letters, with exhaustive commentaries (volume I), a catalogue of first editions of Chopin’s works and the surprising discovery of a copy of Bach’s *Wohltemperiertes Klavier* with Chopin’s annotations for his pupil Pauline Chazaren. It is difficult to list all the achievements presented at the congress in the areas of the history of the Chopin family and its circle of friends, genre studies, harmonic and formal analysis, national musical language, the development of the performance of Chopin’s works and his multi-aspectual influence on the musical art to this very day. For the first time, a group of Spanish musicologists took part, and the number of French and American scholars increased. That illustrates the further geographic regrouping of interest in Chopin studies and in the culture of the Romantic era.

We hereby present two volumes of material from the 2010 congress, with papers in three languages—French, English and German—expressing the admiration of the world of scholarship, music and culture for Chopin’s tremendous creative force more than two hundred years after his birth.

Irena Poniatowska