

Simply Charlotte Mason presents

Music Study With the Masters

by Sonya Shafer



chopin

*“Let the young people hear good music as often as possible,
... let them study occasionally the works of a single great master
until they have received some of his teaching, and know his style.”*

—Charlotte Mason

With **Music Study with the Masters** you have everything you need to teach music appreciation successfully. Just a few minutes once a week and the simple guidance in this book will influence and enrich your children more than you can imagine.

In this book you will find

- Step-by-step instructions for doing music study with the included audio recordings.
- Listen and Learn ideas that will add to your understanding of the music.
- A Day in the Life biography of the composer that the whole family will enjoy.
- An additional longer biography for older students to read on their own.
- Extra recommended books, DVDs, and CDs that you can use to learn more about the composer and his works.

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Frederic Chopin
(1810–1849)

by Sonya Shafer

Music Study with the Masters: Chopin
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See complete track listing on the back page of this book.

Charlotte Mason on Music Study

“Let the young people hear good music as often as possible, and that *under instruction*. It is a pity we like our music, as our pictures and our poetry, mixed, so that there are few opportunities of going through, as a listener, a course of the works of a single composer. But this is to be aimed at for the young people; let them study occasionally the works of a single great master until they have received some of his teaching, and know his style” (*Vol. 5, p. 235*).

How to Use Music Study with the Masters

1. Play the music recordings often and mention the composer's name when you do. You can play them as background music during a meal, while running errands in the car, at nap time or bedtime, or while the students work on some handwork. (Try not to keep them playing all day or during noisy times when other sounds or conversation would distract.) Encourage students to describe what the various pieces make them think of, to "draw the music" with art, or to move to the music. Allow them to form their own relations with it.
2. Read the *A Day in the Life* biography to the students and ask them to narrate. Enter this composer in your Book of Centuries. You can assign the *The Story of . . .* expanded biography to older students for independent reading during the weeks you linger with this composer. Other *For Further Study* resources are listed if you would like to learn more.
3. Once every week or so, give focused listening to a particular piece. Use the Listen and Learn ideas in the back of this book to guide your listening and discussion.

As opportunity presents itself, go to a concert that features the music of this composer so students can listen to a live performance.

A Day in the Life of Chopin

from *The Private Life of the Great Composers*
by John Frederick Rowbotham, edited by Sonya Shafer

Chopin is a late riser. His first pupil of the morning is a very fashionable lady, whose great ambition is to play one of his waltzes correctly. But she is kept waiting some time while the composer gets ready and partakes of a slight breakfast, which is all his slender appetite is capable of at this early hour of the day. Since the composer is the fashionable music-master of Paris, countesses, duchesses, and even princesses contend for the privilege of being his pupils. Alone with his pupil at last, and sitting by the side of the piano, he is the most amiable of men but seems to take more interest in conversation than in the more serious question of notes and fingering. His fair pupil appears to be similarly disposed and the lesson passes pleasantly along, to the accompaniment of a good deal of chatting and as little music as can conscientiously be imparted in the short space of one hour.

The first pupil goes and is succeeded by a second, with whom the lesson proceeds in similar fashion. This young lady has a great deal to tell Chopin about the Duchess of B___'s ball last night and who were there. He listens with apparently the greatest interest, occasionally recalling her to the piece of music before her and suggesting that perhaps it would be better if she were to vary her conversation by a little playing.

This method of dealing with his pupils was in a measure forced upon Chopin, since his principal connection as a teacher of the pianoforte was with the idle Parisian upper class. They desired nothing more from his lessons than the reputation of having studied under him and were entirely disinclined to approach the music seriously or to engage in any laborious exercises to improve their playing. Occasionally, however, a pupil came to him of exceptional abilities and with a strong

ambition to shine as a pianist. With these—and they were few and far between—we have the best evidence that Chopin threw off the relaxed manner which he assumed with others and proved himself a zealous and industrious teacher. His heart was too much in the cause of pianoforte playing to refuse assistance to those who truly desired it.

At length his last pupil has left him, and he sits down to a late midday meal, after which he intends to devote the remainder of the day until the evening to pianoforte practice and perhaps to composition. It is strange to find the greatest virtuoso of Europe in his day meditating so homely an occupation as the drudgery of practice. Yet such, if we follow Chopin to his piano, we shall find he is about to engage in with as great attention and with tenfold more patience than is displayed by the humblest beginner.

On taking his place at the piano, his first act is to play over innumerable scales and exercises, which fall like the tones of flutes upon the air and gain, by the purity of his tone and touch, a tolerable, even an interesting character, which their ordinary delivery is very far from possessing. Many of these exercises are especially constructed by himself with the view to developing some beauty of his style or remedying some weakness; for unlike the majority of performers, he is well aware of his defects and does not consider it beneath him to use his best pains toward counteracting them. These preliminary exercises seem interminable. His fingers fly like lightning over the keys, at times adopting a slower movement and coquetting with the notes as if they were endeavoring to extract some strange and unearthly sweetness from them. At such times as these, Chopin bends down his head sideways and listens intently to the tone, smiling occasionally when it attains that pitch of beauty which alone can satisfy him.

After a while he ceases the exercises for another division of his practice, which, judging by the earnest way in which he [Continued in the full version of the book.]

The Story of Chopin

from *The Great Composers, or Stories of the Lives of Eminent Musicians*
by C. E. Bourne, edited by Sonya Shafer

Part 1: "Oh, mamma, everybody looked only at my collar!"

The music of Chopin, as the noblest expression of the refined romantic spirit of modern music, stands alone. True, his range was limited, and he wrote hardly anything but music in dance measures, nocturnes, preludes, and études; but it is not too much to say, that in his hands the familiar forms became changed, infused with a new life of classic beauty. His life was like his music—it might have been so much nobler and greater, and yet it was so beautiful, and full of a pathos of its own.

Though Polish life and music were from first to last such an integral part of Chopin's existence, it was only on one side, his mother's, that he could boast of Polish blood, for his father was a Frenchman. Frederic Francois Chopin was born on 1st March 1810, at Zela Zowa Wola, a little village near Warsaw.

The child very early showed his sensitiveness to music, and prevailed upon his parents to allow him to share the lessons given to his eldest sister. Many are the tales of his performances as a child, but, perhaps, the best is the one of his appearance at a public concert for the benefit of the poor, when he was not quite nine years old. He was announced to play Gyrowetz's pianoforte concerto, and, a few hours before, he was put on a chair, and there dressed with more than ordinary care, being arrayed in a new jacket, with an ornamented collar, specially ordered for the occasion. When the concert was over, and Frederic returned to his mother, who had not been present, she asked him what the public liked best. "Oh, mamma, everybody looked only at my collar!" He evidently did not think of his playing as having astonished people [Continued in the full version of the book.]

**Etude No. 12 in C Minor, Op. 10, No. 12,
“Revolutionary”**

(Disc 2, Track 10; approx. 3 minutes)

Though Chopin lived much of his life in France, he was devoted to his native country of Poland. During this time in history Russia had launched an assault on Poland, and Chopin’s heart ached at the upheaval in his homeland. This etude appeared around the same time as an event called the November Uprising in 1831, when Poles of all ages arose and tried to shake off Russia’s yoke of oppression.

Why do you suppose this piece has the nickname “Revolutionary”? What about this music reminds you of a revolution?

[The sample file includes the first 30 seconds of this piece.]

Music Study with the Masters: Chopin

Track Listing

Disc 1

Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-Flat Minor, Op. 35, “Funeral March”
(23:48)

1. I. Grave - Dopplo movimento (6:08)
2. II. Scherzo (7:00)
3. III. Marche funebre: Lento (9:10)
4. IV. Finale: Presto (1:30)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Minor, Op. 21 (31:59)

5. I. Maestoso (14:09)
6. II. Larghetto (9:24)
7. III. Allegro vivace (8:26)

Disc 2

1. Waltz No. 1 in E-Flat Major, Op. 18, “Valse brillante” (5:29)
2. Nocturne No. 2 in E-Flat Major, Op. 9, No. 2 (4:31)
3. Fantasy-Impromptu in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 66 (5:24)
4. Mazurka No. 11 in E Minor, Op. 17, No. 2 (2:28)
5. Mazurka No. 13 in A Minor, Op. 17, No. 4 (4:37)
6. Waltz No. 6 in D-Flat Major, Op. 64, No. 1, “Minute” (1:44)
7. Polonaise No. 3 in A Major, Op. 40, No. 1, “Military” (6:28)
8. Prelude No. 15 in D-Flat Major, Op. 28, No. 15, “Raindrop” (5:50)
9. Prelude No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 28, No. 4 (2:24)
10. Etude No. 12 in C Minor, Op. 10, No. 12, “Revolutionary” (3:02)
11. Mazurka No. 23 in D Major, Op. 33, No. 2 (2:30)
12. Etude No. 5 in G-Flat Major, Op. 10, No. 5, “Black Keys” (1:49)
13. Waltz in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 64, No. 2 (3:53)
14. Nocturne No. 20 in C-Sharp Minor, Op. post. (3:59)