

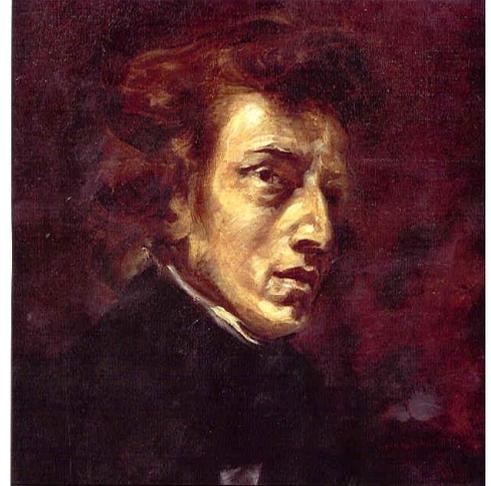
FREDERICK CHOPIN

David C F Wright, PhD

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Chopin is certainly not a great composer since he is a very limited composer. All his works involve the piano and he did not write anything for the stage, string quartets or symphonies. In fact, his orchestral writing has been universally condemned as very poor which it is.

He has often been portrayed as the delightful, dashing, handsome young man of the keyboard and as a perfect gentleman. Nothing could be further from the truth. He was an extreme dandy, a narcissist, a man with an outrageous temper, psychological problems; he was a manic depressive and had other personality disorders and an overwhelming hatred of Jews. This is recorded in many of the books written about him and also shown in some of his letters, which are also published and can be purchased.



It is always said that Wagner was anti-Semitic and hated the Jews. As I have indicated in my essay on Wagner, his real problem was with Meyerbeer because he was a Jew. In time of serious financial and other troubles, Meyerbeer was an indefatigable help to Wagner and, latterly, Wagner resented being beholden 'to this Jew'. Yes, Wagner was racist.

But Chopin was far worse. Meyerbeer heard Chopin play some of his own mazurkas but he was playing them in four time and not in three time. That is an elementary mistake and reveals a serious flaw in Chopin's playing. When Meyerbeer pointed this out, Chopin flew into one of his well-known rages and stormed out like a spoilt schoolgirl. In fact, his obvious effeminism, recorded in many academic writings about him, was another of Chopin's weaknesses. This weakness in his music is also generally accepted and puts the music at a disadvantage. His musical grammar was atrocious as seen, for example, in such works as Op 61.

He met many famous musicians including Rossini, Hummel, Auber and the most talented keyboard composer of the age, Frederich Wilhelm Kalkbrenner. And, of course, there was Meyerbeer.

As with Wagner, Chopin admired Meyerbeer at first. He attended his opera Robert le Diable in 1831 and was very impressed by it, but soon resented its composer since he was a Jew. Chopin knew that he could never write an opera or anything on a grand scale and, of course, he never did. The same can be said, in some measure of Schubert, all of whose stage works were flops at the time.

Chopin was mainly a miniaturist, apart from about 12 works, and people like Meyerbeer unintentionally diminished him. Chopin 'took' a theme from Meyerbeer's opera Robert le Diabolo and put it in his Grand Duo in E for cello and piano.

The other problems were that Chopin only had only two interests, music and pretty women, although he was also sexually drawn to men, and one in particular, as he admitted in his letters. But his shallow, illogical thinking and pride led him to absolutely hate Liszt eventually, because Liszt was a far greater composer and also a great philosopher, an intellectual, a brilliant and versatile composer and a

stunning pianist. Chopin had none of these attributes. His letters to Delphina Potocka include unfair and vitriolic attacks upon Liszt. One of Chopin's mistresses, George Sand, had dedicated one of her *Lettres d'un Voyageur* to Meyerbeer and Chopin's jealousy was roused adding fuel to his unfair hatred of the Jews.

Chopin is claimed to be the inventor of romantic piano music but he did not invent new music but rather extended salon music, music suitable for the drawing room or a reception room of a large house where pretty young women, showing a lot of cleavage, would fawn over him. His tinkly music at the top of the piano was, in fact, a means of his moving towards the pretty young things who would swoon at this young dandy at the piano. Chopin actually admitted that his playing at the top of the piano was to examine such cleavages. He admitted this himself and it is more than just hinted in his letters. Salon music such as the waltzes, nocturnes and mazurkas are somewhat inconsequential pieces.

In April 1849, he reluctantly went to the opening night of Meyerbeer's opera *La Prophete*. As expected, he said it was disgusting. Meyerbeer knew of Chopin's loathing for him and for all Jews, but six months later paid his sincere respects at Chopin's funeral. In this, Meyerbeer was a far better person than Chopin.

Nicholas Chopin was born on 15 April 1771 and came from Lorraine. He went to Warsaw in 1787-8 to pursue a career in commerce. At this time, Poland, and indeed Europe, were in the throes of turmoil and insurrection. He acquired a post with a noble family named Laczynskis in Prussian-held Warsaw. He taught languages, played both the violin and flute and taught from the writings of Voltaire.

At the age of 31, he moved to another post in Zelazowa Wola on the Skarbek estate where the Count had fled to escape his creditors. Here Chopin senior was to be the tutor to the Count's children and where he met Juanita Krzyzanowska, the housekeeper. She was 24. Nicholas was 35. They married on 2 June 1806 in the Roman Catholic church of Brochow. It was considered by some that for both the immoral the son of a wheelwright and a foreigner to marry a gentlewoman was injudicious.

In April 1807, Justina had a baby girl, Louisa, and on 22 February 1810 Frederick was born. On the baptismal certificate, Nicholas is described as a Frenchman. So is Frederick, French or Polish?

In October 1810, the Chopin family moved back to Warsaw. Napoleon's armies had driven out the occupying Austrians. Nicholas had a teaching post at the Warsaw Lyceum. Justina gave birth to two more daughters namely Isabel in July 1811 and Emily born in November 1812. To help with finances she took in student boarders.

Tsar Alexander I was declared king of Poland.

Russia, along with Austria and Prussia had been allowed to keep conquered Polish territory at the Congress of Vienna.

Frederick began piano lessons with Albert Zywny when he was a child of six. This teacher was gaunt, unkempt and reeked of tobacco and had a penchant for wearing yellow stained with tobacco. His students made fun of him constantly. Chopin was encouraged to go to bed with wooden wedges between his fingers to improve finger extensions.

Chopin was keen on improvising and Zywny noted down his efforts and Nicholas helped write them out. In 1817, Chopin had written a Polonaise in G minor dedicated to one of the young Skarbek countesses. He already had a roving eye even at eight years of age, as did the immoral Scriabin; another man noted for his lechery!

Again this is noted in biographies both of Chopin and of Scriabin.

The local press enthused about Chopin's musical gifts and the praise was out of proportion since 'acclaim is often given to really insignificant events and people' as one contemporary reviewer wrote. But things took off and Chopin was invited to play at grand functions and he adored looking at beautiful women in dazzling gowns particularly the low-cut ones.

He was called a second Mozart, an utterly ridiculous remark, and he was said to be a gifted pianist. When he was eight, he played a piano concerto by the Czech composer, Adalbert Gyrowetz. Young Frederick sat at the piano in a velvet jacket and shorts and knee high white stockings. He was already a dandy or presented as a dandy. The concerto is not technically difficult.

The Chopin family were now held in high esteem. In 1818, the Tsarina visited Warsaw and Chopin had to recite for her and play two polonaises which he had especially composed for her.

But the boy was unpredictable, moody, often morose and given to temper and violence. He met his match in bad behaviour with the Grand Duke Constantine to whom he had to play the piano to drive away ducal evil spirits. His moodiness made him a manic depressive and this is shown in some of his music and experts in this medical and mental condition have made this assessment clear. The obvious example is the *Fantasia-Polonoise Op 61*, a simply dreadful work of stops and starts, as stated by many well-known pianists and many other musicians. It reveals his mood swings, lack of form and incoherence and many have opined that it is the work of a sick mind. Liszt hated it. Even its musical grammar is wrong but few people would bother about that. One famous and revered pianist said that every printed copy of this work was the waste of a tree! Another famous pianist said that playing this work was like having a Do it yourself Caesarean! For about a hundred years critics and musicians, dismissed it but that had the effect of people coming to its rescue and some calling it a masterpiece! The work begins in 3/4 but the first bar is in 29/4 with a fermata bars 2, 7 and 8 are said to be in 3/4 but are in 20 plus over 4. Bars 10 -20 are still in four flats but full of sharps and a change of key signature is needed. The grammatical errors are legion...one chord is E sharp over C double sharp whereas it is grammatically correct as F natural over D natural. Later, Chopin does change key into E and then B. It is a dreadful piece and is positively loathed by many.

However, Chopin was at one time claimed to be a child prodigy and a celebrity.

He now took lessons from Joseph Elsner a man of greater ability than Zywny who was a composer of some 27 operas. He taught Chopin composition and counterpoint. In 1823, Frederick appeared at a concert now dressed as a man and received dazzling reviews performing a concerto by Hummel.

Chopin took to school and education like a duck to water. He was a commendable student. He was both a normal boy and adolescent. He threw snowballs, skated, played with other boys in the playground but was often very untidy with his school uniform. He loved to play pranks and he liked girls in an obsessive way !

In 1825, Chopin attended a performance of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* which he greatly admired. His sister, Louisa, composed a piano mazurka which Frederick enthused about as if it were a masterpiece which, of course, it was not. He enjoyed Weber's *Der Freischutz* and was very upset at the composer's unexpected death in London in 1826. He inveigled himself into the drawing-rooms of Warsaw society to play for the grand and influential guests. He was ill in 1826 with swollen glands which a doctor put down to catarrh whereas, knowing his life style, it was probably due to something else. And this was his final year at school. He went for a rest-cure which bored him immensely until he met a pretty Czech girl who was a waitress. Her father had been killed in a factory accident and Chopin decided to be her knight in shining armour. Other reports said that the girl was a Polish housemaid.

Back in Warsaw, a doctor prescribed Chopin laxatives. He did not return to school. He enrolled in the Conservatoire to study under Elsner.

The following year Emily was taken ill and died of consumption shortly afterwards on 10 April 1827. She was fourteen.

Chopin was composing and some of his early works have late opus numbers but that is a vast study to conduct and not applicable for this brief essay. Having enjoyed Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and he began work on an orchestral work and his Opus 2 became his *Variations on La ci darem la mano* for piano and orchestra. This was Opus 2 and yet that year he wrote a *Mazurka in A minor*, Opus 68 no. 2 and a *Nocturne in E minor*, Op. 72 no. 1.

As to his orchestration, it is woefully inadequate and that is the case each time he employed the orchestra. In the two piano concertos the orchestra have walk on parts. This is but one example of his severe limitations.

In 1828, he wrote his *Piano Sonata no. 1 in C minor*, Opus 4, which is not regarded highly by many pianists but it has a few points to commend it.

Chopin had the wanderlust and wanted to travel. He did not like Berlin or the Germans but he heard a great deal of music including operas by Spontini, Cimarosa, George Onslow and Weber. He heard the music of Handel but he spent most of his time looking at women in their distinguished outfits and sparkling jewellery. But, to him, Polish women were by far the most beautiful and where there were beautiful women there was Chopin and his lecherous pursuits. He became very jealous of Mendelssohn who was only a year older than him and, of course, Mendelssohn was a despicable Jew! Mendelssohn was, at that time, greatly admired and enjoying great acclaim.

But he was a Jew! That irritated Chopin to uncontrollable fits of rage which raised his blood pressure.

He composed a *Piano Trio in G minor*, Opus 8, a *Grand Fantasy on Polish Airs* for piano and orchestra and the *Krakowiak in F*, Opus 14 for piano and orchestra which is a dreadful piece full of runs, arpeggios and top of the piano with its constant and irritating tinklings. The occasional hint of nostalgia in these pieces may have to do with the fact that the Russians still had control of Warsaw.

After graduation, Chopin went abroad again and was impressed with Vienna. He went to concerts and wanted to meet people so that he could show off, earn money and arrange concerts. Elsner had given him letters of recommendation. He had the distinction of meeting Carl Czerny and Lachner who is sadly only remembered as being a friend of Schubert but was a far, far better composer than Schubert as some have opined. Chopin met Kreutzer who had known Beethoven. He went to the opera and saw Boieldieu's *La Dame Blanche*, Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, Mehul's *Joseph* and Meyerbeer's *Il Crociato* about which, as you might expect, he had something hateful to say.

Lacking experience of playing with an orchestra created many problems and the orchestra positively hated his orchestration of the Mozart variations and took the parts away to correct them. The orchestration of the *Krakowiak* was so bad that it ended up being in a piano solo! How can people call him a great composer?

Nonetheless, Chopin made his professional debut on 11 August 1829 in Vienna.

Opinion was divided about Chopin's playing. Many thought it too delicate and definitely effeminate and this criticism applies to some of his music. It is the dreaminess and the salon style of what is inconsequential music, much of it in three time, that links him with banal composers like Johann Strauss.

This style of salon music which was often dance music must be largely due to his obsession with women. From the age of seven, he confessed that he had been mesmerised by female sexuality. When he was fourteen, he wrote that he was in love with a young girl from the convent school and secretly tried to meet her many times with one purpose in mind. He even had a go-between, a Jewish boy, called Leibush, and Chopin paid him. That the intended romance came to nothing and Chopin blamed this failure on the Jewish boy. After all, no girl would spurn Chopin and he would not spurn any pretty girl. One girl was Countess Alexandrine de Moriolles and another was Emily Elsner daughter of his teacher. To Alex, he dedicated his Rondo a la Mazurka Opus 5 and for Emily he copied out some of his works in her own notebooks.

Chopin believed and wrote that love was certainly not made in heaven but in bed.

It has to be emphasised, since it has been rightly said, that a lot of his piano music has no depth and spends a lot of time at the top of the piano so that Chopin could look at the cleavages of pretty young women sitting in the front row, a fascination he admitted in his letters.

In 1828, Countess Pruszk found that her governess was pregnant and that she had conceived while Chopin was house guest. She accused Frederick of this, such was his reputation. Eventually, the real seducer owned up and Chopin was exonerated.

But Chopin found himself physically attracted to a fellow male, Titus Woyciechowski, who was a few years older and much taller and very manly. And Chopin loved him in every sense. Titus was athletic and Frederick was very effeminate. But Titus was a normal man and later sought the company of young ladies at court. Chopin wrote to Titus, "Give me your friend a kiss, my dearest." And, on another occasion, he wrote to Titus, "I would kiss you heartily on the lips, if you'd let me."

He would send his letters to Titus tied with pretty ribbon. Titus was painfully embarrassing and beyond the understanding of most people. It has been said that this shows Chopin's mental condition which is certainly questionable.

Chopin was also depressed on his return to Warsaw.

But, after a while, Chopin met up with Constance Gladkowska again. She was a pretty young thing with blue eyes and blond hair and a good mezzo voice. When he heard her sing, that was it. He found out all he could about her. Chopin wrote to Titus, "I have found love for the first time".

Titus was seemingly dumped.

Chopin watched Constance from afar. Perhaps he even stalked her. He desired her sexually and fantasised about her. He often repeated, "Love was not made in heaven but in bed." He went to her concerts but was deterred when Russian soldiers paid her compliments backstage.

In Vienna, there was Leopoldine Blahetka who gave Chopin some of her own compositions. Before this, he had been insulting about her playing but now she was an angel and a possible conquest. But not for long.

Chopin scholars believe that the slow movement of his Piano Concerto no 2 in F minor, Opus 21, is a portrait of a former woman he desired namely Constance. This is probably the best movement Chopin ever wrote. It is also thought that the Waltz in D flat Opus 70 number 3 was inspired by her. He also wrote that piece in 1829-30 which shows the craziness of his opus numbers.

He was invited to the country house of Prince Radziwill. Chopin jumped at the chance because there were two pretty young princesses there. Eliza asked Chopin to pose for her while she drew him and

the younger princess, Wanda, did not cease from practising Chopin's Alla Polacca for cello and piano, Opus 3, which he wrote for the family. He relished holding and guiding her hands over the keys in her practise just as Elgar had with violin practise with Isabel Fitton and others.

Chopin was working on his second piano concerto which became known as the Piano Concerto no. 1 in E minor.

But he was depressed again. He liked night life and was consequently always tired. He wrote to his family pleading with them to love him. He was still desiring Constance and yet wrote to Titus, "You are the only one I love". Titus had believed that Chopin had already dumped him.

They holidayed on Titus's farm situated almost two hundred miles from Warsaw.

On 11 October 1830, at the National Theatre, Soliva conducted the orchestra with Chopin playing his E minor piano concerto which was heard in two sections as was the custom of the day. After the allegro, Panna Wolkowa sang with the choir and, after an interval, Chopin played the last two movements of his concerto. After another interval, Constance appeared clad in virginal white with flowers in her hair and she sang the recitative and cavatine from Rossini's *The Lady of the Lake*. The concert then heard the Grand Fantasy on Polish Airs. Chopin and Constance went for a walk afterwards and they exchanged makeshift rings but that was all.

Within weeks, Chopin left the area and Constance wrote to him.

The time for change has come
And follow your destiny you must.
But wherever you are
In Poland you will be loved.

As soon as Frederick had left Warsaw in November 1830, Constance began to see a gentleman of some standing and married him. Isabel was cynical. "Constance has married money and to have a palace," she said bitchily. Chopin was fleeing from this disastrous love affair and from the uprising in Warsaw where an attempt had been made on Viceroy Constantin's life.

In Germany, Chopin had many invitations and at Dresden met someone whom he wanted to be his soul mate. In the house of the Polish Countess Komar he met her married daughter Countess Delphina Potocka who was estranged from her husband and very beautiful. Chopin was travelling with Titus at this time.

Bad tempered Chopin had a terrible altercation with a banker whom he referred to as a dog-flaying Jew. The travellers went to Prague and then on to Vienna where he visually raped all the pretty Viennese girls and ate strudel incessantly. This is stated in one of his letters.

Poland was now partitioned and insurrection broke out. Poles flocked to Vienna to escape the killings. Titus wanted to return to Poland as his land was close to the Russian border. He left, and Chopin, in utter distress, flung himself on his bed and wept. He was alone. He was homesick and he wrote to a school friend about his love for Constance. Concerts were sparse. Chopin felt unwanted.

But although his pianist skills were admired by some, Chopin was vicious about other pianists including those more skilled than he was. He was damming about the Jews. He wrote about a violinist called Herz who was to play his own work based on Polish airs. Chopin talked of the abuse of Polish music and at the hands of a Jew! And now he missed Titus! And there was Constance in someone else's bed when she should have been in his.

But Paris was the answer. It was one of the cities of culture and so in September 1831 Chopin went there. This was great. Pretty girls passed men by in the streets with seductive and flirtatious smiles. Street sellers sold the dirty books of the day such as *The Art of Making Lovers and Keeping Them*, *The Secret Love Lives of Priests* and so on. There were demonstrations against authority and, as in the days of Marie Antoinette, people stood up in the streets and read or told stories of the sexual activities of princes, princesses and other people of noble birth. There were expressions of sympathy for defeated Poland and abuse of their enemies. Chopin wrote that Paris was the city of greatest splendour and the greatest filth. But many Poles lived in Paris including Countess Delphina Potocka.

There were composers and musicians such as Ferdinand Paer, Cherubini, Hummel, Auber, Kalkbrenner and, of course, Meyerbeer the Jew.

Friedrich Wilhelm Kalkbrenner was the greatest pianist of the day and a very fine composer. After living for some years in London, he settled in Paris in 1824 where he played and taught. Those who were jealous of him called him conceited and insufferable. However there are composers who are pompous, arrogant and insufferable. Kalkbrenner's work on piano playing and technique was the standard text book of the day. When Chopin heard Kalkbrenner play he realised how brilliant he was and how sub standard he was. That is why he begged him for lessons and wrote home for the money to pay for them.

In 1832 at the Salle Pleyel, Chopin played his Piano Concerto no. 2 in F minor without an orchestra. He took on students... mainly pretty girls and young women and arrogantly said that 'the pupils of Kalkbrenner, Moscheles and Liszt now come to me.' It is this Elgarian arrogance that alienated him from decent people.

His concerts at such places as the British Embassy did not receive press reviews.

He stole John Field's concept of the nocturne and pretended it was his creation. When Chopin heard Field play he was highly critical and conceited saying that Field had a sickroom talent.

In 1832, things changed and he enjoyed a measure of success and financial stability.

His Four Mazurkas Opus 6 were dedicated to the young Countess Pauline Plater. I doubt the dedication would have been made if she were old and ugly. His sister Louisa married Joseph Kalasanty Jedrzejewicz in Brochow.

Chopin admitted that he wanted a woman permanently. There are confirmed stories of his gropings of women in their down below area and other indiscretions and advances. In fact, there are so many, that one is left with the conclusion that they must be true.

Countess Delphina was born in 1807 and had married a lecherous fellow. In six years of marriage, she had five children all of whom died. She had met Chopin in Dresden, and, in Paris, had embarked on a series of one night stands and other relationships. She was known as the greatest sinner of them all. She played the piano and was quite attractive and had large breasts. She was alluring and a good time girl and not adverse to vulgarity. She and Chopin had a torrid and sweaty affair and his letters to her are explicit. He wrote of kissing her hard in very private places and how he was glad that she adored his genitalia. He wrote that this part of his anatomy were the source of all his artistic achievements. Such is the pornographic content of these letters that some Chopin admirers dismiss them as forgeries.

Chopin was often called Fritz and he wrote to Delphina, whom he called Phindela, this verse which has been anglicised:

Loving you is my favourite occupation
Bed is better than inspiration
I long for your lovely tits
So says your faithful Fritz.

You can read this letter and his other lewd letters in the books of his letters.

Chopin was not popular with most people.. It was regularly commented that wherever he went he took melancholy with him. He played the slow movement of the F minor concerto in a concert conducted by Hector Berlioz which included one of Berlioz's finest works, Harold in Italy. Berlioz's highly competent orchestration showed up Chopin's gross inadequacy in this department. Like Benjamin Britten, Chopin was unpredictable, insincere and used and, indeed, abused people and changed his attitude to suit the occasion. Chopin lambasted Liszt as a strange fellow who covets other people's things like a cat desires cream. The pot was calling the kettle black. And yet Chopin dedicated his Study in E flat, Opus 10 no. 11 to his 'friend' Liszt.

In 1835, he stayed at a villa which he rented at Enghien joining in the fashionable ritual of taking the waters. But it was so he could be near Delphina. He became friends with Count Thun because he had daughters! The younger one, Josephine, known as Jusa, was taken with him. She devotedly copied Chopin's Waltz in A flat, Op. 34 no. 1 into her notebook. His parents visited him from Warsaw. And Countess Wodzinski came to the country with her two lively young daughters and that enthused Chopin. And the older daughter Marie was a pianist and Chopin took every opportunity to guide her hands over the keys. He had known her as a nine year old in Warsaw and now she was a stunning beauty of sixteen with flashing seductive eyes. It is thought that Chopin's Waltz in D flat Op 69 no 1 is dedicated to her.

Chopin visited Leipzig where he met up with Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann and the fifteen year old daughter of Friedrich Wieck, Clara. Chopin did not like Schumann. He wrote, "I dread Schumann's reviews as a Jew does the Cross!". He could never resist a jibe at Jews.

There is no doubt that Chopin was a very very nasty piece of work.

Schumann was a sad case. Mental illness was inherent in his family. Many of the things he did were the product of his illness and some of his music is substandard. His value judgments are also suspect. There is the famous remark which he apparently made after hearing Chopin's Opus 2 Mozart variations, "Hats off, gentlemen! A genius!"

Neither Schumann nor Chopin were a genius but Schumann did write some fine music.

Chopin went back to Paris. He was asked to look after Wodzinska's wayward son, Anthony, but his attention was concentrated on Constance yet, apparently, he was still in love with Delphina although it was widely reported that she was sleeping with everyone. She was now giving music lessons to dashing young men but I doubt if the men were primarily interested in sharps and flats.

In the summer of 1836, Chopin left for Poland. He was unwell and wanted a companion to look after him and love him. It was time to consider marriage. Marie Wodzinska was his first choice. He travelled to Marienbad where he knew the Wodzinskas were staying. They were alarmed at his state. He was coughing and the warm weather was a blight to him. Marie took advantage of his having to rest by sketching him. After a month, the Wodzinskas went home to Dresden. Chopin decided to go to Dresden as well. He asked the Countess for Marie's hand in marriage. Marie seemed flattered but social class and other considerations had to be pondered and the Countess explained that no answer could be given quickly and that she would have to consult her husband who was travelling. And

Chopin's health was a worry. It would appear that Marie did not express any real feelings. She remained formal.

The Wodzinskas were gentry. Chopin and his family were not. Nicholas lived in a rented apartment. Their social backgrounds were incompatible. Chopin was angry. Rejection he could not take and the woman he is supposed to have loved, he now rudely called his misfortune.

Marie was to marry Count Joseph Skarbek which marriage was a failure. She married again and died in 1896 at the age of 77.

Chopin visited Liszt and his mistress Marie d'Agoult in Paris. Here he met Mme Aurore Dudevant, otherwise known as George Sand, and he did not like her at first. Like Delphina, she lived a life of scandal and was the subject of much gossip. She lounged about in trousers and smoked cigars. She was no lady. She was a writer and her novel, *Lelia*, caused a tremendous stir.

I have always thought that Chopin saw Titus and in George Sand a strong masculinity tendency now in a masculine female, George Sand.

With Liszt, Marie, Heine and others, Sand visited Chopin in his Paris apartment smoking evil smelling cigars. She noticed Chopin's Pleyel piano and was interested since she played a little herself. She took to Chopin. By February 1837, Sand was saying, "Tell Chopin that I adore him and worship him."

That year he was to make his first visit to England which lasted for a few weeks. By the end of July, he was back in Paris considering going to a health resort. That year he wrote the Scherzo no. 2 in B flat minor.

Sand pursued him until Chopin gave in to her protective love. After all, he needed someone to look after him.

The relationship with Sand was traumatic. She had not told her previous lover, Lucien Mallefille, that he had been dumped and he arrived with loaded gun outside the new house of immorality threatening to kill both Sand and Chopin. Count Albert Grzymala was there to stand between the opposing factions.

From that time on, Chopin was more uneasy and even more prone to jealousy.

George had a fifteen year old son, Maurice, and a ten year old daughter, Solange. Sand also employed a maid.

Sand and Chopin visited Palma in Majorca where they later took a rented house owned by an unpleasant Jew called Gomez as Chopin called him. The heat did not suit Chopin and he became ill and the rumour went around that he had a contagious disease. He was given notice to quit for this and for other reasons and went to the monastery at Valldemosa. In their respective cells and austere conditions Chopin was still sick. Their financial decisions were absurd. They had little money and yet paid 700 francs for his Pleyel piano to be shipped over from France. Eventually, it was taken to Palma and put up for sale. In February 1839, they reached Marseilles; their sojourn in Spain had not been a success.

By now their relationship was no longer a secret. In Paris they kept separate apartments as if to put people off the scent but everyone knew what was happening. In June, Chopin first saw Nohant the country mansion that Sand had just inherited from her grandmother.

But her arrangements with Chopin were unusual. She was now into maternal life and treated Frederick as her child. While she was Chopin's active lover she saw herself more as a mother figure. Her love making with Chopin she considered exciting because it was quasi-incestuous.

When at Nohant, Chopin was said to be merely a house guest.

Chopin always had to have someone to get his teeth into, someone's reputation to damage. Benjamin Britten had this same cruelty. Chopin launched into Ignaz Moscheles the pianist and composer. Moscheles was an honest man and commented that Chopin's music was cloying and maudlin, which it sometimes is. Yet he had to temper his remarks with praise for other aspects of it. If that was all it was, it would not have upset Chopin. What did upset him was that young women liked the music of the Prague-born composer who was having female attention as a result which Chopin thought should be reserved exclusively for him.

To add to this, Sand was entertaining distinguished men such as Balzac, Heine and Delacroix. Chopin had to match this and entertained Berlioz, Franchomme the cellist and even Meyerbeer, albeit reluctantly. In 1840, Sand made her debut as a playwright.

Her maternal instincts meant that she was possessive of Maurice and Solange. She met Pauline Garcia the much younger sister of La Malibran. Maurice was smitten with her (they were about the same age). Sand called Pauline her dear daughter. Observing Maurice's sexual interest in her, George arranged the marriage of Pauline to the theatre writer, Louis Viardot. Chopin himself also fancied her.

Sand had taken to pipe smoking and was aging with her pronounced double chin. Then she took to cigarettes which were said to be more ladylike. This did nothing for Chopin's health and Paris was now fascinated with the music of Liszt.

Chopin was depressed and spitting blood more regularly. His parents were very concerned. Sand told Maurice that Chopin was her other son. It was truly an absurd situation.

Chopin, always riddled with jealousy, now believed that George Sand was no longer being faithful to him and his desires went back to Delphina but she was now romantically involved with a young playwright, Sigismund Krasinski. Towards the end of 1842, Delphina sang in Paris and it rekindled all of Chopin's passion. His Polonaise in F sharp minor Op. 44 was dedicated to her. He wrote a love letter to her saying that he longed for her as a dying man longed for the last rites and the guarantee of heaven.

It is interesting to note that Chopin never dedicated any of his work to Sand.

By early 1845, Chopin knew he was very ill and feared death. Solange now hated Pauline Viardot whom she was told by her mother was another of her children as was Chopin. When Pauline was in the house, Solange flirted with Chopin. There was another child in Sand's life, one Augustine Brault whom she wanted to adopt and more so when it was learned that the child was to inherit a fortune. Maurice and Solange were against this, as was Chopin. It would be less attention for them. The legal moves to adopt fell through. However, Maurice fancied Augustine and because of this she was tolerated in the Sand household. When mother found out about Maurice's feelings for Augustine she changed her mind about her. Chopin has commented about Maurice's conduct which angered Sand. "He is my son, not yours!" she stormed. What Maurice was doing reminded Chopin of his own admitted gropings. Chopin had a fierce temper and it began to show in frightening vehemence.

Sand was also getting fed up with nursing him although it is true to say that he nursed her often with her regular stomach complaints.

In 1846, the eighteen year old Solange announced her engagement. She had had a stormy relationship with her mother and Chopin did his best to reconcile them.

This did not help.

Another event which distressed Chopin was that both Sand and Solange were posing for a lecherous sculptor by the name of Clesinger who was preparing busts of them and enjoying being a voyeur at the same time. But I blame the women for allowing themselves to be ogled.

By the early autumn of 1847, Chopin and Sand had broken up and Sand was seeing a young journalist called Borie who shared her extreme socialist tendencies.

It is difficult to assess what influence Sand had on Chopin and what effect the behaviour of her children had on him and his relationship with their mother.

By far the most fascinating and commendable woman in Chopin's life was Jane Stirling.

Jane Wilhelmina Stirling was born in July 1804 at Kippenross House, near Dunblane in Perthshire. She was the youngest of thirteen children. Her first sister was married by the time Jane was two years old. Her mother died when Jane was only twelve and her father when she was sixteen. She passed in to the supervision of her sister, Katharine, now Mrs Erskine, who was thirteen years older than she was. Katharine had no children and was now a widow. She did not remarry and so was available to be a companion to Jane.

Jane had a clear head and was a typical Scotswoman, a very strong character. She was different as well. She attended parties and balls and, as she was exceedingly pretty, she had many proposals of marriage. Some say that she had over thirty such proposals, all of which she declined. She was particular and wished to remain single until she was certain of the right man. She remained sociable and went to the various functions but needed more than that. Kippenross House had a large library, a valuable collection of art and a Scottish harp. She was interested in all three and played the piano with clear skill.

In the second half of 1826, Katharine took her to Paris. They already had social contacts there and mixed with the French aristocracy as comfortably as they did the Scottish. Thereafter they divided their annual social life between Scotland and Paris. Jane, particularly, became fluent in the French language and was a Francophile. She was wealthy having inherited from her parents.

They met Chopin and, as Jane as very attractive, he took her on as a pupil. She admired him and he her largely because she could pay his exorbitant fees. She was six years older than he was and, latterly, he unkindly regarded her as a middle-aged spinster. In 1844, he dedicated his two Nocturnes Opus 55 to her.

Strangely, he recommended her to the cellist Franchomme. One would have thought that he wanted her to himself but Franchomme taught the cello and she had expressed a desire to learn to play that instrument.

Auguste Joseph Franchomme was born in Lille in 1808 and was four years younger than Jane. He was a cellist of distinction and wrote some works including a Cello Concerto. He died in Paris in 1884.

Whatever Jane's feelings she kept them to herself as George Sand was still reigning supreme in Chopin's life. But in 1846, Chopin's relationship with Sand was breaking up and he was living a semi-bachelor life. With Chopin's permission, Jane took on some of Chopin's secretarial and other

duties. Her social position meant that this service did Chopin and the society in which he moved a great deal of good. She may also have suffered from loneliness and a sense of a lack of fulfilment and she was glad to be wanted and of service. Perhaps, like Sand, she wanted to mother him and look after him. What is clear is that she was a benevolent patroness. She kept him for a while. She was his agent and business manager. She arranged his concerts and particularly the Salle Pleyel concert, after which he collapsed in her arms. Only Katharine knew about the full implications of these arrangements.

Jane won the hearts of Chopin's parents. His sister, Louisa, also admired her and was grateful for what she was doing for Frederick. Over Christmas 1847 Jane sent Louisa a present, the Lady's Companion intended as a New Year's gift. Chopin never talked of love for Jane.

While Chopin may have been grateful to her at first, he found her too efficient and allegedly dominant but she had the right ideas. Chopin was to forget the past with all their traumas and he needed changes. With her large family she could easily introduce Chopin to the well-to-do in London and elsewhere. It has been suggested that these introductions were her plan to get her family to meet him with a view to their approval of her possible marriage to him.

But there were other problems. Scotland would not be suitable for a consumptive.

Chopin did not consider this. He was glad to have someone to make plans for him and thus ease his anxious personality. He had been considering a move to London as Paris were no more in love with him and he had made contact with the Athenaeum Club in Pall Mall where Elgar and Sir Ivor Atkins were later to become members.

Jane made the preparations for the Salle Pleyel concert on 16 February 1848 ensuring that the heating was as Chopin would wish it and that the concert hall was aired. She arranged the flowers so that an intimate feel could be enjoyed. Chopin, dressed as immaculately as ever, but clearly ill, played Mozart's Piano Trio in E with Alard and Franchomme. Then followed his Cello Sonata and other short pieces for solo piano. He only played an excerpt from his Barcarolle because he was too weak to play the more invigorating part. He took his bow and walked unassisted to his dressing room where he again collapsed in Jane's arms, exhausted.

On 20 April 1848, Chopin sailed to England. He rested a while in Folkestone before travelling to London where Jane had booked him in at lodgings at 10 Bentinck Street near Cavendish Square. He did not like London. It was grey. After Easter, he moved to a superior apartment at 48 Dover Street, Piccadilly where he stayed until the end of July. Jane had provided him with his notepaper complete with his monogram and his favourite brand of drinking chocolate. Broadwoods sent over a piano as did Pleyels and Erards. And so his drawing room had three grand pianos. The landlord, seeing this extravagance, doubled the rent but that was no odds to Chopin as Jane paid it.

London waited to hear Chopin.

Chopin heard the major London orchestras and dismissed them most unkindly. He called their performances like their roast dinners...solid, strong and nothing else. He complained that they had no idea how to rehearse.

Nonetheless, he played for Lady Gainsborough, Lady Blessington, the Athenaeum Club and, on 15 May, before Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Prince Albert went over to talk to him and the Queen spoke to him twice. Through Jane, he was introduced to 'all the best people' (what a pompous expression that is). But he did not like their attitude to music.

His money was running out. Jane came to the rescue again. But he did not want to be beholden to her and did not ask her again. She was always at hand and Chopin was bored and tired of her. He said very unkind things about these two Scottish ladies. Yet he could not do without them. Jane insisted that he went on long rides in the country for his health and she was right, but Chopin could not take the jolting and bumping of the carriage.

He acquired a manservant called Daniel, an Irishman who spoke French who accompanied him on his outings and carried him to his rooms. There were times when Chopin was incredibly weak.

Jane, possibly to further her own desires, suggested that Chopin visit Edinburgh as the London season was coming to an end. Chopin had lost all hope for himself and become fatalistic. He did not care where he was. Everywhere was miserable to him.

Twelve miles east of Edinburgh was Calder House where Jane had arranged Chopin should stay. She had also organised Pleyels to send a piano from London. Two of her brothers in law were told to look out for Chopin since much depended on them for the success of this venture. Chopin arrived after a twelve hour journey on the train from Euston and was spitting blood. The Highland air made matters worse. The only thing that kept him going was the prospect of concerts and the income from them. A successful concert might earn him 60 guineas. The doctor at Calder House was Polish now living in Edinburgh.

The Scottish ladies decided that the family would visit a relative who lived in a castle by the sea and, of course, Chopin had to go. They drove along the cliff roads in two vehicles, the sisters in one and Daniel and Chopin in the other. The horses of Chopin's coupe were frightened by something and the reins snapped and the vehicle careered down the slope. The coachman had been thrown out. The coach crashed against a tree on the edge of the cliff.

Daniel pulled Chopin out.

The accident did not deter him from giving concerts but he kept changing his mind about details of what he was to play. He went to Manchester by train to give a concert there and was put up in the home of a German Jew, much to his disgust.

His anti-Semitism and extreme racism was decidedly evil. But another house guest was Jenny Lind. The concert was on 28 August. There were overtures by Weber, Rossini and Beethoven and sung excerpts from Italian opera. Between such items Chopin played his *Andante spianato*, the *Second Scherzo* and the *Berceuse*. He was so weak that he was carried on and off the stage. He was given good reviews but the general opinion was that he and his music were not understood. So wrote Charles Halle.

Jane Stirling, believing that Chopin's confidence was boosted and that this should continue, arranged a concert in Glasgow. She also arranged for him to stay with another widowed sister, Mrs Houston at Johnstone castle, a few miles from the city. Chopin was in a quandary as to what to play. The concert was on the afternoon on 27 September at the Merchants Hall complete with nobles and several members of the Stirling family. But the concert was badly attended. The Glasgow Herald proclaimed that Chopin and his music were hard to understand. Mrs Houston gave a grand reception to Prince and Princess Czartoryski from Vienna who were visiting London to escape political unrest and travelled to Scotland to hear Chopin. His next concert was at the Hopetoun Rooms in Edinburgh and the tickets were half a guinea. Jane purchased a hundred and distributed them as complimentary tickets. It was Chopin's last appearance in Scotland. He could not stay in Scotland living off Jane and the kind people who put him up in various castles and stately homes.

These people expected news of Chopin's engagement to Jane. But he did not propose and this was put down to his reticence. Rumours of a forthcoming marriage reached Paris and Warsaw and was the social gossip of the hour. Chopin did not want Jane. Although she had been his greatest friend and advocate, even if he did not see it that way, he was bored by her. He made all sorts of feeble excuses. He wrote to a friend, "A rich woman needs a rich husband."

It was Jane's family that broached the subject and, presumably, at her request. The debate took place in October. Chopin was nervous and tried to express the simple view that it was only friendship.

Most women would have been insulted by the rejection and turned on the one that rejected her.

Not so, Jane.

She accepted it with a loving grace that reveals the fundamental goodness of her character although some biographers have incorrectly labelled her a vampire and to add to this inanity called Sand a saint.

Chopin could not winter in Scotland and so bade farewell to that country and gave a concert in London for a Polish charity. He took lodgings at 4 St James's Place, Piccadilly and he was ill. Doctors came and went. Jane and Mrs Erskine came to his aid and tried to prepare him for the next world, bringing their Bibles with them. But they were Protestants. Nonetheless they were genuine and kind people. Chopin complained to a friend that the Scottish ladies were getting on his nerves.

His last public appearance was at London's Guildhall on 16 November, 1848, where he had to be carried. He was very ill with a sick headache and a swollen face. People left doors open or were always coming and going and Chopin found this insufferable. He played and the Poles loved it. The rest of the audience were merely polite. He was carried back to his lodgings and to his bed.

He left London on 23 November and was in Paris the following day still grumbling about Jane and Mrs Erskine who 'pestered' him so.

Jane was a marvellous friend to Chopin and she died in 1859, ten years after Chopin's death. Her involvement with Chopin will always be the matter of speculation and opinion but there is no doubt that she had his interests at heart and that her kindness was not appreciated by the ungrateful Chopin. The fact that she did not become Mrs Chopin did not cause her to become offensive. She was loyal to the end and beyond.

But to return to the final days of Chopin. Back home in Paris, Chopin was comforted by the fact that he would die among friends. Various people attended to his needs. But cholera and the dreadful heat took people out of Paris in the summer and the heat increased his decline. Even Delphina left him. Jane Stirling would have stayed with him if she had been there and was aware of the situation.

He died at two in the morning of 17 October 1849. His lavish funeral was at the Church of the Madeleine and about 3000 people attended. Jane paid for the total cost funeral and for Louisa to attend from Warsaw. She also paid for Chopin's Pleyel piano to be shipped to Louisa in Warsaw. Jane also purchased all of Chopin's effects so that they would not fall into unsympathetic hands and set up a Chopin Museum at Calder House. On her death in 1859, the museum was bequeathed to Chopin's mother. Most of these items were destroyed in Warsaw in 1861 during a Russian attack.

But Jane had kept a lock of Chopin's auburn hair which is still available to be seen today.

She loved him probably more than anyone else did and it is so unfair that she could be treated with suspicion and that Chopin treated Jane so badly.

Chopin was not a great composer by any means for reasons already given, but there are certain works that has special place in peoples' hearts and rightly so. However, too much of it is salon music monotonously in three time.

The Sonata no. 2 is a work of some merit although the Sonata no. 3 is probably more popular. The Ballade no 1 in G minor is a good piece and the four scherzi are interesting particularly the second. Some of the songs are gems and the Sonata for cello and piano is, in my opinion, his finest work.

However, some of his music is effeminate, tinkling music as some have called it, lacking depth... salon music. It may have its place but Chopin should be remembered for his better works !

The other problem is how Chopin should be played. He was lazy composer and did not put instructions in his music. Take, for example, the Second Scherzo. It is marked presto but the middle section which is in three sharps does not have a new tempo instruction and yet everyone plays it as an andante or moderato. The music here lends itself to a slower tempo but as far as Chopin's manuscript states the work is presto throughout.

One of the world's greatest pianists said, "Good pianists play great music; the rest play Chopin."

This essay is not Chopin-bashing but the truth as also set out in the many biographies written about him. It is hypocritical that when the truth about a composer is stated, it produces irrational vitriol from some who, themselves, rubbish the composers less well-known but who are often greater composers. No one should be jealous of Chopin and I am certainly not. He was an odious fellow but it is up to people to make their own judgments about his work. It is worrying that many people call the music they like great music which is not always so. And when the truth is told about a composer, the fans of that composer resort to vitriol to defend him, a very shallow and unfair attitude.

There are many Polish composers who are ignored because Chopin must have no rivals. Two of these composers, Antoni Stople and Jozef Krogulski, both died very young but in their short lives wrote a variety of works. Stople wrote a symphony, string quartets choral and voice music and a fine piano sonata as well as one for violin. Chopin did not write such music nor could he. Krogulski was a fine orchestrator and wrote two splendid piano concertos, masses and an opera. Chopin did not nor could he.

People will complain again that whatever type of person a composer is, we should only concern ourselves with his music and assess its worth and/or importance. But of equal significance is the proven fact that the music reveals the man.

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