



Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

pronounced "show-pan"

Frédéric Chopin has long been recognized as one of the most significant composers of the Romantic age, as well as a virtuoso pianist. He composed over 230 works, all written for the piano in some way. Most of his pieces are fairly short, and his music is characterized as "elegant" and "graceful." Nationalism is present in his composing, as he expressed his love for Poland (his home country) in his music, particularly his pride for Polish folk music. His works went on to influence other Romantic composers, as well as future composers in other periods.

Chopin's birth date is a matter of controversy; the records of the town he lived in say February 22, 1810, but Chopin always gave March 1, 1810. His father was French and his mother was Polish; he was raised in Warsaw, Poland, by a family that mingled with intellectuals and members of the middle and upper classes. This exposed Chopin to the finer things in life and to quality music. He spent 2 summers in the countryside, where he was exposed to Polish folk music, another huge influence on him as a composer.

Chopin was tutored at home until age 13, when he began taking formal lessons in music composition and piano. By age 15, he was acclaimed as the best pianist in Warsaw! At age 16, he enrolled at the Warsaw Conservatory to study music and piano. He gave his first public recital in Vienna in 1829, and over the next few years, he performed all over Germany and Austria, as well as in the city of Paris. He didn't want to be limited by the rural state of Poland, so in 1832 he moved to Paris and established himself as a highly paid piano teacher. He composed a lot while in Paris but limited his performances mainly to private salons.

In 1838, he had a romantic affair with French novelist George Sand, a female writer who used a male name to publish her work. The couple spent a harsh winter in Majorca, where Chopin's health plummeted. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Chopin eventually recovered and settled in France with his lover (Sand), though his increasing perfectionism slowed his output of compositions. By the mid-1840s, his health and romantic situation both had deteriorated. The affair ended in 1847 after Sand had portrayed their relationship in a very negative way in one of her new novels. Before he died, he requested that Mozart's "Requiem" be performed at his funeral. Chopin died in Paris in 1849.

Adapted from an article from the Classical Archives website on 10/22/14:

<http://www.classicalarchives.com/composer/2329.html#tvf=tracks&tv=about>

Fill in the following important information after reading:

1) Chopin's Birth and Death Dates:

a.

2) Chopin's Birth Place:

a.

3) Describe Chopin's education:

a.

4) Where all did Chopin live/work?

a.

5) Describe Chopin's piano skills:

a.

6) Of the 4 employment opportunities musicians had during this period, which jobs did Chopin perform?

a.

7) How many compositions did Chopin write, and what instruments did he write for?

a.

8) Name 3 other interesting facts about Chopin that you think you should know:

a.

b.

c.