

ABOUT FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN

Born in Poland in 1810 to a Polish mother and French father, Frédéric Chopin was an almost self-taught pianist. He began taking music lessons with a violinist but constantly improvised on the keyboard. By the age of nine he was composing and giving concerts, traveling to Austria and Bohemia to perform. While in high school he studied with Józef Elsner (1769–1854), director of the Warsaw Conservatory, and became a full-time music student there in 1826.

After graduating from the Warsaw Conservatory in 1829, Chopin traveled to Vienna. In his first concert, his brilliant performance and improvisation on a Polish folksong impressed the Viennese. After a second concert, he began a long concert tour of Germany and Italy. The enthusiastic response to Polish-style compositions encouraged Chopin to write music that combined his particular piano style with a national flavor.

In September 1831, Chopin moved to Paris, where he devoted himself to playing, composing and teaching. He became friends with Franz Liszt (1811–1886), Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), Nicolò Paganini (1782–1840), Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868), Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835) and French author George Sand (1804–1876). In Paris Chopin was a member of high social circles and was considered one of the best piano teachers. With a large income from lessons, Chopin did not have to support himself with a heavy concert schedule and rarely performed. His health began failing several years later; he gave his final concert in February 1848 and made his last public appearance in November. Chopin died of consumption in Paris in October 1849, and his funeral was attended by almost 3,000 people.

Chopin's musical style is very distinct. His melodies are mostly lyric and vocal in style rather than instrumental. Chopin's melodies are developed using harmonic changes, modulations, rhythmic transformations, chromaticism and ornamentation. Many of his melodies can be derived from various dances or songs, such as the mazurka, polonaise and waltz. More than any other composer, Chopin devoted himself to the piano; he composed no symphonies, operas or oratorios. Along with character pieces (including nocturnes, impromptus, intermezzos and ballades), he composed etudes, preludes and dances (mazurkas, polonaises and waltzes). He also wrote three sonatas and two sets of variations, as well as a group of smaller works. His only chamber music is comprised of a sonata for cello and piano and a piano trio.

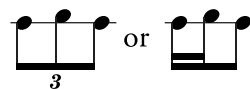


ABOUT THIS EDITION

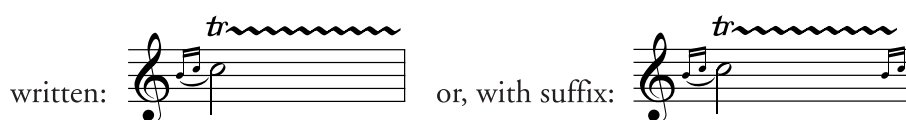
This is a practical performing edition of four Chopin *Nocturnes*. To make fewer page turns necessary, editorial suggestions for the performance of ornaments are, for the most part, presented in footnotes. Parentheses are used to identify supplementary slurs, dynamic indications, etc. Fingering is editorial unless commentary in footnotes states otherwise. Metronome markings are editorial.

According to the testimony of his own students, Chopin usually began his trills on the upper note. When the note immediately preceding the trilled note is the same as the upper note of the trill and legato is indicated, the trill may begin on the main (principal) note, to avoid a break in the legato. This is in accordance with the rules of Muzio Clementi (1752–1832), whose methods Chopin used.

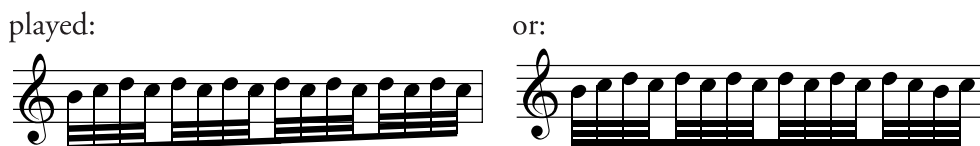
While the signs *tr* and *♯* were considered to be synonymous by C.P.E. Bach, Clementi and others, Chopin seems to have used *♯* most often to indicate the three-note *transient trill*, sometimes referred to as an *inverted mordent*.



For the *prefixed trill*, Chopin uses the following indication:



The second note of the prefix is not to be repeated, since the trill proper begins on the upper note.



When a short appoggiatura at the pitch of the main note is placed before the trill, the trill begins on the main note, on the beat. The starting note is not repeated.



Appoggiaturas, single and double, are generally played on the beat. Exceptions are anticipations of the following note, octave skips, and those written before bar lines.

Although modern pedal indications are used, they are carefully taken from the original manuscripts and first editions, in which the older system (Ped. ✱) were used. Overlapping pedal may be used at the performer's discretion.