

Chopin's Nocture Style in the Romantic Period: A Case Study of Nocture op.9 no.1

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Abstract

Nocturne had a great development in the Romantic period of the 19th century. Chopin, as a typical representative of the Romantic period, pushed the development of nocturne to a new climax. His works have a very high artistic value and are a precious artistic heritage for future generations. Chopin has made great contributions to the development of romantic music. Therefore, Chopin's works have left a lot of places worth exploring and studying, which has had a profound influence on the development of Western music. This paper will be based on the general situation of romantic music, starting from Chopin's life and creation process, through the analysis of Chopin's "Nocturnica Op.9 No.1" piano works as the theme of detailed discussion, from the music melody style, touch keys, pedal use and music emotional expression, to grasp the style of the work and processing. The performance skills in the works and rich artistic expression show. By understanding the musical style and artistic characteristics of the Romantic period, we can further grasp the style and treatment of Chopin's works, and apply his performance personality to Chopin's other music works, so as to improve the level of performers' playing skills, restore the musical emotional expression that the composer wants to convey to the audience, and improve the performance of music.

Keywords

emotional communication; work processing; the art of performance; Nocturnes by Chopin

1. Introduction

Chopin (Fryderyk Franciszek, 1810-1849) is the most representative composer of the Romantic period in the 19th century. His piano works are rich in number and cover a wide range of genres, and there are few peers in the Romantic period. Compared with the creation of music in the classical period, the dramatic and melodic singing theme reflected in Chopin's music works further expands the freedom of the structure of the music, while taking into account the special treatment of details, making the structure of the music show the characteristics of ambiguity, creatively expanding the artistic connotation of the genre of nocturne. It is precisely this unique musical treatment that makes Chopin's musical works a representative of the romantic style.

The original nocturne is the piano music genre pioneered by the composer Field from Ireland. Its melody is beautiful like a song, the accompaniment is often presented with arpeggios, and the speed is mainly slow and medium speed. Chopin is his successor, but unlike Chopin, Chopin deepened and enriched the piano genre of nocturne on its original basis, expanded the scale and expression of works, and innovated into a new piano solo genre with its unique artistic tension.

It is Chopin's cantal-like melody, advanced harmonic use, and unique grace notes that enrich the harmonic color of music and bring the audience a refreshing and direct resonance to the heart. Therefore, in the field of piano music creation, Chopin has formed his own musical style and melancholy atmosphere. These works all show Chopin's fine creative techniques, and have a profound influence on later composers and the development of modern piano art.

Chopin was the innovator of romantic music. He used classical bottles to brew romantic wine. His nocturnes have a strong emotional appeal. Many of his works show his deep loyalty and love for the motherland, his deep feelings for the Polish nation and his strong sense of belonging, which contain profound personal emotions and social content.

2. The Musical Summary of the Romantic Period

2.1 A Brief Introduction to Chopin's Life

Frederic Francois Chopin (1810-1849) was a Polish composer and pianist of the Romantic period. Chopin's exceptional artistic talent was evident from a young age. He began learning music at the age of six, attempted his own creation at the age of seven, and composed Polonaise, performing it at the age of eight. Known as the "second Mozart" in Warsaw, he became renowned before the age of 20 and is one of the most influential and beloved piano composers in history. He is one of the most significant figures in the history of Polish music and a representative of 19th-century romantic music in Europe.

The music of the Romantic period emerged along with romantic literature after the French Revolution in the 19th century. Amid the dark social reality, the Beethoven ideal was lost. Composers of this period urgently sought new social ideals to carry and support, developed new artistic themes, and expressed their emotional hues. At the same time, the status of musicians in the Romantic period underwent substantial changes. Firstly, composers received support from the middle-class audience, broke free from their dependence on the court and the church, and gradually became independent and liberated musicians, among whom Chopin was a representative figure of the Romantic period. The music of the Romantic period endeavors to fully unleash the creativity and imagination of the artist. It was a period where intuition surpassed reason, imagination exceeded form, and the heart dominated the mind.

Most of Chopin's works were piano music, and his works embodied the spirit of nationalism, encompassing a series of musical styles, such as nocturnes, improvisations, preludes, ballads, scherzos, études, etc. Chopin imparted new ideas and emotional connotations to them and delved deeply into this, significantly enhancing the artistic expression of the piano, earning him the title of the "piano poet". Chopin created the illusion that the piano was singing. Before Chopin, no one could make the piano sound so beautifully. "Born in Warsaw, the soul belongs to Poland, and the talent belongs to the world." Chopin became the symbol of Poland and the country's calling card.

2.2 Chopin's Style of Music

Chopin's compositions are extensive and encompass a wide range of genres. However, in contrast to other composers, he appears to devote all his energy to the composition of piano music. His music incorporates the Polish national spirit, possesses a personalized musical language, and his creative domains and works are diverse. Chopin's life-long creation can be summarized as a process of constantly absorbing and inheriting the essence of European classical music while daring to break through tradition and strive for innovation. A series of musical themes such as preludes, études, and music have been endowed with new connotations, thoughts, and emotions, featuring delicate texture, unique charm of melody, and rich color of harmony language. With typical poetic, tender romantic nature and folk characteristics, it exerts a profound influence on the development of later Western music.

Chopin's musical style exhibits the following artistic characteristics:

1. Predominantly tonal music, with frequent utilization of chromatic harmony, evolving towards polytonality and atonality;

2. The audacious employment of dissonant intervals in the works intensifies the color change on the basis of functional harmony, and the seventh and ninth chords, which are relatively scarce in classical music, frequently emerge;
3. Significantly enhance the lyricism in melody and focus on the expression of personal emotions;
4. Attach importance to the portrayal of poetic images in the orchestration to achieve a vivid sound effect;
5. In terms of intensity, prefer to employ a substantial intensity shift.

The music melody of Chopin's works is beautiful and fluent. He incorporates some national music language and elements of Poland into his personal creative music thinking, creates based on the characteristics of singing, and has a strong singing quality. Simultaneously, he also elaborates on the melody in detail and adopts special creative techniques such as semitone and grace note, as well as variations in aspects such as rhythm, harmony, and tone. This makes the music language anthropomorphized, visualized, and concretized, and fully expresses the rich thoughts and feelings of the individual's heart through music. At the same time, this is also the specific characteristic of music in the Romantic period.

3. The Creative Characteristics of Chopin's Nocturnes

3.1 The Birth of Chopin's Nocturnes

Nocturne is a kind of music, created by the Irish musician Field, has a dream-like elegant melody, so this music form is called “nocturne”. This is Chopin's creation of the most distinctive style of a genre, but also his music creation of the most wonderful group of treasures, his nocturne mainly romantic style, a total of 21; Nocturns are varied in form and colorful, as picturesque as poetry, and people seem to be drunk and crazy. Chopin's nocturnas were far superior to Felder's, and he built up Felder's form, blowing into the atmosphere of drama, passion, and making it stronger.

Chopin fully demonstrated his talent in melody creation and his ability to grasp emotions in nocturnes. Chopin filled nocturnes with a strong personal style, and also had a strong “Chopin” atmosphere in terms of harmonic configuration and modal layout. He added a large number of narrative language, and on the basis of these narrative language to give decorative splendour, this is Chopin's works can endure, can shine in the music world, but also Chopin's “Nocturne” and the key difference from the predecessors “Nocturne”. Chopin's nocturne opened up a new world of romanticism and had a profound influence on the later music creation.

3.2 Musical Form Analysis of Nocturne, Op.9 No.1

Nocturne Op.9 No.1, also known as Nocturne in b Flat Minor, is the first nocturne composed by Chopin and is typical of the double trilogy style.

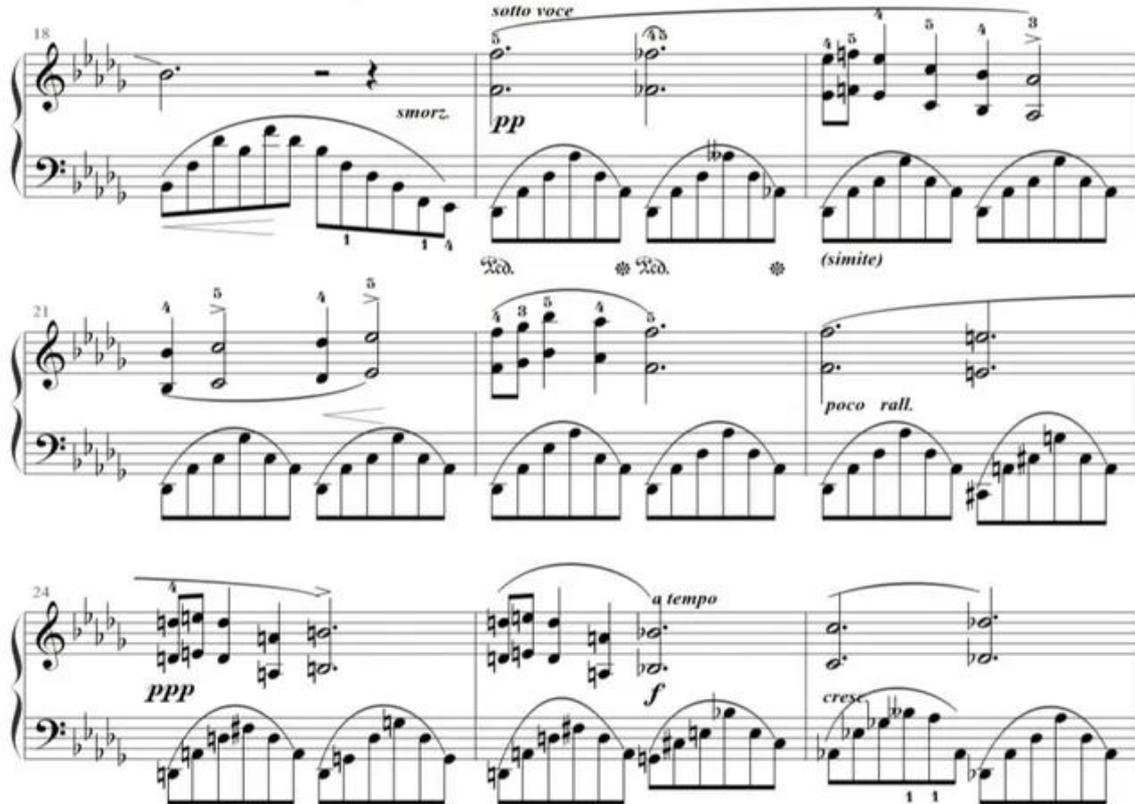
The whole piece is Larghetto, the first: 1-18 bars are complex, and the main key is B-flat minor. In the major chord of b flat minor, light and delicate grace notes are constantly added to increase the tone color, the melody is softer and hazy, the rhythm is more free, the left hand has a large span in the range, and the right hand is more melodic(Zhang, 2019).

The middle section: 19-70 bars, which are basically composed of one material; The melody in single D-flat major is played in continuous octaves, and the melody in the left hand part is still in the same direction as the melody in the first part, which is composed of large-span arpeggios. The accompaniment texture of harmonic arpeggios in the left hand part is also the key throughout the whole piece. *Sotto Voce* means “in a low voice”, which fully gives the listener a strong emotional surround, and is also the part of the whole song that can give people the most enchanting sense (Zhang, 2019) .

Figure 1: Example of the structure of the first nocturne in b flat minor



Figure 2: Arpeggiated accompaniment texture throughout the piece



The reproducing part (bars 71-80) and the coda (bars 81-85), which are played gently and with reduced intensity, are also the parts of the main melody reproduction. After adding interlude variations, the music is brought to a climax, and the melody theme of the first part is presented by reducing and reproducing techniques. Finally, the main chord of B-flat major ends repeatedly, as if day becomes night, and gradually returns to calm (Yi, 2003 & Zhang, 2019).

The harmonic layout of the whole nocturne is relatively clear, starting from b flat minor to its relative major -- D major; The key of D Major, which is acoustically pure, transparent and bright, and is known as a gorgeous tone, reaches its climax, and finally returns to b flat minor through the reduction of the first theme melody part. By exploiting its relationship with the tonic major and minor, the minor chord is transformed into a major chord, beginning to emphasize the major chord of B flat major and ending in its key.

Figure 3: The music reaches its climax and then returns to the main chord

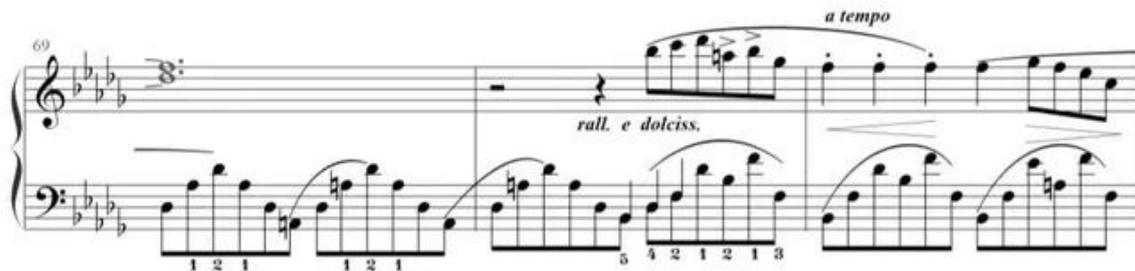
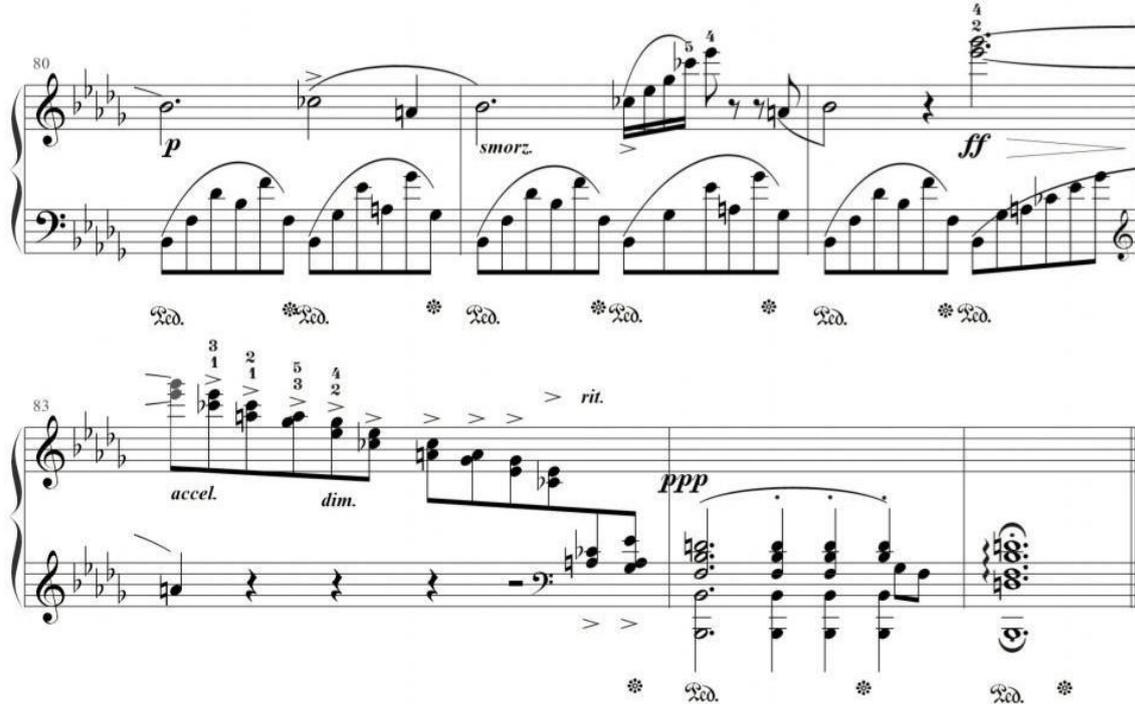


Figure 4: The music reaches its climax and then returns to the main chord



4. Performance Analysis of Nocturne, Op.9 No.1

4.1 The Theme of Singing and Control of Timbre

In Chopin's nocturne, melody and singing are the most typical stylistic characteristics. The unique melodic lines in Chopin's works show their singability through the use of frequent changes and a large amount of free speed, thereby outlining and expressing the vividness and contrast of rhythm in the long melody direction. As one of the most obvious stylistic features of Chopin's nocturne, Nocturne Op.9 No.1 emphasizes and grasps that the melody always maintains the singing quality in the variation, and expresses its characteristics through the melody playing of the right hand in the work.

The harmonic texture, melody and grace note in nocturne all show typical personal style. Therefore, in terms of timbres control, it is important to note that the melodic accompaniment of the left hand is always a flow of broken chords, which is lyrical, dreamy, and dramatic, while the right hand develops through several conjunctures to form beautiful acoustics and excellent, expressive, and content synthesized melodies (Du, 2022) .

Figure 5: Maintenance of lyrical melodic variations

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked 'Larghetto' with a tempo of quarter note = 116. The right-hand part has a melody with fingerings 2, 4, 1, 3, 2, 3. The left-hand part has an accompaniment with fingerings 5, 3, 1, 2, 1, 3 and a 'simile' instruction. The second system continues the melody with fingerings 1, 3, 1, 5, 1, 3, 4, 3, 5. The left-hand part has an accompaniment with fingerings 4, 3, 4. The score includes dynamic markings like 'p espress.' and '11'.

4.2 Touch Technique

Nocturne, Op.9 No.1, is Chopin's first published nocturne and one of his saddest. In the performance of this work, more is to create a sad, quiet atmosphere. When playing the melody of this song, it is necessary to ensure that the sound is delicate and soft, without stress and tone head, that is, in the phrases of the right hand singing theme, the fingers need to be close to the keys, and the finger surface is “dragged” from inside to outside. At this time, the piano can be thought of as a plucked musical instrument for playing, so as to make the sounds connected together more coherent and smooth. To produce a beautiful, soft sound. What makes the melody of the right hand more varied and coherent is the addition of the 11 and 22 consonants. When playing the three non-connected “F” notes in the first bar, it is necessary to pay attention to the delicate changes in sound and the physical feeling. When playing the three non-connected “F” notes in the first bar, it is necessary to cooperate with the regular accompaniment texture of the left hand and interweave them together. Just use your wrist to drive your fingers.

Left hand open arpeggios accompany the work throughout. When playing, pay attention to playing with open flat fingertips. On the piano, you can take the form of a lone line to make the wrist drive the finger movement, and the pinky touch surface should be large, so that you can maintain the accuracy of the finger, and at the same time, you can make the timbre more soft, and it must be smooth (Du, 2022&Song, 2024) .

Figure 6: Play the left hand melody like a picking instrument



4.3 Pedal Use

The pedal is a part of the piano technique, and the pedal of this nocturne needs to run through the whole work, so the use of the pedal is also the key to fully express the emotion in the composer's work, and it is the use of the pedal that makes the work more romantic. In Nocturn Op.9.No.1, the use of pedals mainly lies in the harmonic melody of the left hand, which basically needs to be relaxed before changing chords. However, it is worth mentioning that the creation background of this work is the Romantic period, so the emotional color of music plays a crucial role, so there are certain requirements for the resonance effect of harmony, the rendering and setting off of atmosphere. In different works, the use of pedals is different, and the sound effect is completely different. The music is alive, which requires me to use a lot of pedals when dealing with this genre of works, so as to show the delicate, vivid and three-dimensional timbre of nocturns and the romantic, lyrical and melodious style. At the same time, the role of pedals links the relationship between sounds more closely. The acoustics are more spiritual and will make the expression of emotions more natural and convincing.

Chopin was a pioneer in the use of pedals; he knew when to push it down and when to lift it up. In the performance of this work, there is also a certain degree of attention to the intensity of the pedal, which should not be too rigid. Before the performance of this work, you can gently step on the pedal to indicate the main melody of the right hand part naturally. Moreover, in this nocturno, there are many arpeggiated rhythm patterns and large spans, so it is necessary to change the pedal frequently and avoid using long pedals. Otherwise, the timbre will become confused and cloudy, and the roar of the piano will cover the melody of the right hand (An, 2013) .

Figure 7: Tap the pedal to bring out the right hand theme

The image displays a musical score for Chopin's Nocturne Op. 9 No. 1. The score is written for piano and is in 6/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Larghetto' with a quarter note equal to 116 beats. The key signature is B-flat major. The score is divided into three systems. The first system begins with a piano dynamic (*p*) and an expressive marking (*espress.*). The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and fingerings (2, 4, 1, 3, 2, 3, 2, 4, 5). The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with slurs and fingerings (5, 3, 1, 2, 1, 3, 3, 1, 2, 1, 3). The second system continues the melodic and harmonic development, with a dynamic marking of *sfz.* and a 'simile' instruction. The third system concludes the passage with a *smorz.* (ritardando) marking. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

4.4 Expression of Emotion

The emotional expression in Chopin's nocturns is the exquisite point of the whole piece. The intensity marks in Chopin's nocturns have a strong sense of musical presence, which not only highlights the vein of the development of the music theme, the direction of music development and the emotional expression, but also fully expresses the emotional change process of the author's inner world when creating the work, making the melody lines of the music works more abundant, more vivid and interesting and full of spirituality.

Chopin is a master of the leading city of romantic music, his achievements in the field of piano are immortal and can not be erased, he is a well-deserved heavyweight master. In most of Chopin's nocturne works, the speed marks are mainly *adagio* or *andante*. Through the control of speed and rhythm, the sound effect presented by Chopin gives the audience full romance and fantasy. In this work, the experience of immersing people into the night and being in a romantic situation comes from the right hand turning from the high register to the downward, and the intensity changes from weak to strong, with a romantic and melancholy theme melody, which makes the listeners full of emotion and emotion. In the middle of the work, the music began to deviate from the key of D major and D flat major, the dissociation of tonality, the continuous alternations between different modes of melody, and the full use of dissonant chords to enhance the lyricism of the music. On the basis of the lyricism of Felder's nocturna, Chopin incorporated the flavor of drama, which is why Nocturna Op.9 No.1 can be so special: it has a dreamy and elegant musical style, but also integrates the dramatic lyrical characteristics, so that the music can naturally express its inner emotions and emotional delicate changes between the melody. This work expresses not only Chopin's inner gentle and delicate emotions, in the impetuous era with showy skills and powerful style characteristics as the theme of the background, it shows the effect is delicate and implicit, calm and smooth (Song, 2024).

Figure 8: It presents a romantic and melancholy theme

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Nocturne Op. 9 No. 1, measures 18 through 24. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems. The first system (measures 18-20) includes markings for *smorz.*, *pp*, and *sotto voce*. The second system (measures 21-23) includes *poco rall.*. The third system (measures 24) includes *PPP*, *a tempo*, *f*, and *cresc.*. The score features arpeggiated chords in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand with various fingerings and articulation marks.

5. Conclusion

“Nocturne Op.9 No.1” the musical melody is beautiful, the mood is with a bright and contemplative sadness. Chopin's works can always convey a romantic mood to us. His rich ideological connotation and emotional revelation of true feelings make Chopin's musical language always move people with the most powerful emotional appeal, so that the beautiful melody is retained in people's hearts, which is unforgettable, and also let us understand the creative characteristics of this “piano poet” in his early works.

Through the brief introduction of Chopin's life and music style, this paper tries to feel the charm of Chopin's nocturne. This kind of music is mutually promoted and integrated with the romantic music produced by nocturia at that time. This kind of true feelings of expressing one's inner world in a real and delicate way can impress people most. Therefore, nocturia, a genre of works, was conceived, developed and grew under the creation and influence of Chopin.

Through the performance analysis of the works, we have a deeper understanding of how Chopin applied nocturna, a unique style of piano performance, and added his own thinking and unique insight into the emotions of inner things, so that the scale of nocturna continues to expand and the artistic expression becomes rich, so that nocturna not only shows the quiet nature, but also shows the quiet and dreamlike beauty. And how we should deal with the work and express the emotion in place through playing skills, so that the work can be presented with quality. Chopin not only added a lot of processing in the creation, but also integrated many elements of national Polish folk music in the works, which touched him, expressed the deep patriotic feelings in his heart, and improved the overall artistic level of nocturna.

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Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment

Not Applicable.

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