

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART - PIANO SONATA NO. 18 IN D MAJOR, K.576

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was one of the most influential composers of the Classical period. He was born in Salzburg, Austria, on 27 January 1756. Mozart was a child prodigy that composed from the young age of five and performed European royalty. Although his career in his adulthood is less successful as compared to his younger years, he was still considered as one of the best composers of the 1700s. He was extremely talented and his music was admired for its "melodic beauty, its formal elegance and its richness of harmony and texture". Mozart composed over 600 works during his short lifetime, including operas, symphonies, chamber music, and piano sonatas. He passed away on 5 December 1791 in Vienna, Austria.

The **Piano Sonata No. 18 in D major, K.576**, nicknamed "The Hunt", was the last sonata composed by Mozart. Although it is composed as part of a set of six sonatas for Princess Frederica Louise of Prussia in July 1789, the set only consisted of this one sonata. Mozart also mentioned to his friend, Michael Puchberg, that the set of sonatas that he was composing for the princess were "easy". However, this sonata is known as one of the most technically demanding sonatas ever written by Mozart.

The ***Allegro*** begins with a hornlike and exuberant "hunting" subject, that is elaborated through canons. This style is sustained through the second theme, but is presented in a more sophisticated manner. After which, a sweet lyrical theme, marked *dolce*, a contrast from the heroic first and second themes, brings out the gracefulness in this movement. The exposition then ends with a *codetta* with materials derived from the beginning. The development section brings us, polyphonically, through many different keys with materials from the first theme. We arrive at the recapitulation through a spectacular chromatic passage, presenting a polyphonic chapter of alternating right- and left-hand scalar passages. The *dolce* returns, double the time it had in the exposition, before diving into the *coda*. The movement ends similarly to the exposition, but this time in the home key of D major. The ***Adagio*** in A major is likened to an opera which depicts a woman sitting in her Boudoir singing - expressive and incredibly intimate. Written in a ternary form, this movement intertwines the beautiful tender and meditative A section with a B section that is apprehensive and doubtful. The movement concludes with a charming *coda* filled with grace and comfort. This sonata concludes with ***Allegretto***, a rondo, a playful yet virtuosic movement filled with brilliant passages and arpeggios. We go on a magnificent polyphonic journey of sequences between the multiple questions and answers in this movement before we finally wrap the piece with three seemingly underwhelming D major chords. Perhaps, this serves to remind us of the simplicity of this remarkable sonata.

FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN - TWENTY FOUR PRELUDES, OP. 28

"The Poet of Piano", Frédéric François Chopin, was a Polish composer and virtuoso pianist born on 1 March 1810. He composed almost exclusively for the piano, and is considered one of the greatest musicians of the Romantic era. Chopin was a child prodigy that started giving public concerts, composing, and writing poetry by the young age of eight. This allowed him to complete his musical education and composed many of his works before leaving Poland at the age of 20. He settled in Paris, France, at the age of 21. Chopin always preferred intimate settings for his some 30 public performances in his 30 years of concertizing. His "poetic genius was based on a professional technique that was without equal in his generation.", and continues to be one of the leading musicians of the Romantic era. Unfortunately, Chopin lived a short life filled with poor health. In 1849, he passed away at a young age of 39 years old, likely due to tuberculosis.

Twenty Four Preludes, Op. 28 is a set of short piano pieces written between 1835-39, and were published in 1839. This was written during the time period where he had a brief and unhappy visit to Majorca with his lover, George Sand. With Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* being one of the most influential works of all times, Chopin, too, was influenced to write something similar. He is, after all, known as "one of the most daring harmonists since Bach." Another inspiration that Chopin had for his Op. 28 is also likely to come from Johann Nepomuk Hummel's *Twenty Four Preludes, Op. 57*, a more obscure set of preludes. Chopin's preludes are arranged in the circle of fifths, beginning with C major and concluding in D minor, unlike Bach's Preludes and Fugues. The *Twenty Four Preludes* are, as Franz Liszt describes, "poetic preludes, analogous to those of a great contemporary poet, who cradles the soul in golden dreams..." Chopin never fails to touch our hearts through the poetry of music. Chopin has never given titles to the preludes, just like his other works. It is noted that Sand named these preludes in her score. However, as these inscriptions were lost, the titles we see nowadays are solely based on Solange's, George Sand's daughter, memories. Some of the titles were also given by Chopin scholars much later. Chopin crafts every emotion and mood intricately and weaves them seamlessly into the preludes. With or without the titles, I believe that the music he had written serves as musical poems for the pianist to express, touching hearts and souls of the listeners. These preludes portray a wide range of technical and expressive demands; bringing us on a journey of emotions - from serenity to grief, rage to love.