

Program Notes

Composed in 1893, *Sérénade grotesque* is an early piano work by Ravel that already reveals his fascination with color, irony, and characterful storytelling. The piece carries a mock-serenade quality, blending elegance with exaggeration—almost caricature-like, hence the word “grotesque.”

Ravel contrasts delicate grace with sarcastic harmonic twists, sudden accents, and rhythmic teasing. The music often feels like a masked performer switching between charm and absurdity, with Spanish guitar-like gestures, rising flourishes, and brittle dissonances.

Though rarely performed compared to Ravel’s later masterpieces, this work offers a glimpse of his emerging style—witty, theatrical, rhythmically alive, and full of hidden colors beneath a playful surface.

Chopin’s *Second Sonata* is one of the most powerful and emotionally intense works of the Romantic piano repertoire. Each movement presents a different psychological world, yet all are bound by a sense of struggle, grief, and the surreal:

1. Grave – Doppio movimento: Turbulent and urgent, built from dramatic contrasts, agitation, and storm-like momentum.

2. Scherzo: Fiery and angular, driven by rhythmic tension, interrupted by a hauntingly lyrical trio section.
3. Marche funèbre (Funeral March): One of the most famous funeral marches in music—solemn, heavy, and monumental, contrasted with a fragile, distant middle section that feels like a poetic memory fading into the air.
4. Finale: Presto: Whispered, restless, and eerie. Chopin described this movement as “wind sweeping over graves.” It ends not with triumph, but with an unsettling disappearance.

The sonata challenges traditional structure, prioritizing poetic narrative over classical form, and stands as a profound meditation on mortality, memory, and the unknown.