

He was an extraordinary, original composer and his vision is not like any other person, I mean he is unique. There has never been anybody like Chopin and there is never going to be. I have always said, it takes genius to understand genius. Ordinary people try to pull the genius down to their level – they don't understand the composer. There are a lot of imitators, but nobody is Chopin. I am not in agreement with most conventional ideas about Chopin.

For most people, their idea of Chopin is what I call 'Chopiniana'; you know, something atmospheric, what Chopin is vaguely about. For me, Chopin was one of the most extreme composers: what I mean is his range is enormous and his emotion and his passion is volcanic.

The *Préludes* is a good example. For instance, the stormy Bb minor, number 16. You look at the manuscript, it is so clear. Originally, he was putting a pedal on each group, but afterwards he crossed it out and made a long pedal and in one place there is obviously an intentional discord. He wanted those sounds, he wanted that violence, he wanted that terror, he wanted that so as people get frightened. His music should have that quality – not just only being beautiful.

I am his willing slave. And what is original? The most original is the original and Chopin is the most original. It is an incredible thing what he did in his writing – one doesn't have to impose anything, one just has to understand it, to decipher it. Sometimes it is puzzling, for instance in the *Préludes* number 11 in F# major, first of all he put 4/6, as normal like all editions are, and then he crossed it out and put 2/3, which is of course impossible. How do you make this into 2/3? So far it is in no edition. Chopin, he was not an idiot, it was not because he was forgetful. Because, first of all, he writes a normal one and then he crossed it out. That is very interesting because he is trying to tell you something. But in 4/6, the emphasis is on the chords – no it uses 2/3 but in 2/3 it is like a syncopated rhythm – so therefore it flows more.

The greater the genius, the more original they are. For instance, I was teaching the *Préludes* recently to some students and all of a sudden it just came out of me, the last two, you know, for instance number 23 and 24. Number 23 is incredibly Catholic, for me it is Maria, it is that typically Polish Catholic atmosphere and number 24 is Genghis Khan, it could not be further away, the wildness.

Also there is something very strange the way I feel the *Mazurkas*, I just feel it. With other Chopin music, I have to study very hard, for instance, the *Préludes*, but everybody with the *Mazurkas* has terrible problems: I have no problem. People say that I never play the same way, but that it always sounded right – sounded like a *Mazurka*.

I don't really like to talk about myself. When I look back, I must have played really poorly, my understanding was very shallow. Compare now, my understanding is very, very different. I am forever struggling with these things and I am keeping on and after a few years, taking it back, but maybe I managed to do it better now. But, I am not: I am not doing it better – I am getting older. But, even still, I am not giving up. I just want to keep digging at the truth.

*Fou Ts'ong on Chopin, 2015*



# fou ts'ong

## plays chopin

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### CHOPIN Mazurkas, Op. 56

1. No. 1 in B major (3:55)
2. No. 2 in C major (1:47)
3. No. 3 in C minor (6:19)

Recorded Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, 1 March 1994

### 4. CHOPIN Mazurkas, Op. 67, No. 4 in A minor (2:23)

### 5. CHOPIN Mazurkas, Op. 68, No. 4 in F minor (3:34)

Recorded Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, 9 June 1991

### 6. CHOPIN Mazurka in A minor, B. 134, 'Notre temps' (3:51)

### 7. CHOPIN Mazurka in A minor, B. 140, 'à Emile Gaillard' (2:27)

### 8. CHOPIN Berceuse in D-flat major, Op. 57 (4:46)

Recorded National Concert Hall, Dublin, 31 October 1992

### 9. CHOPIN Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52 (12:09)

Recorded Wigmore Hall, London, 12 March 1995

### CHOPIN Preludes, Op. 28

10. No. 1 in C major (0:51)
11. No. 2 in A minor (2:05)
12. No. 3 in G major (0:55)
13. No. 4 in E minor (1:51)
14. No. 5 in D major (0:38)
15. No. 6 in B minor (2:00)
16. No. 7 in A major (0:48)
17. No. 8 in F-sharp minor (1:58)
18. No. 9 in E major (1:26)
19. No. 10 in C-sharp minor (0:28)
20. No. 11 in B major (0:31)
21. No. 12 in G-sharp minor (1:16)

### 22. No. 13 in F-sharp major (2:42)

### 23. No. 14 in E-flat minor (0:43)

### 24. No. 15 in D-flat major 'Raindrop' (4:28)

### 25. No. 16 in B-flat minor (1:17)

### 26. No. 17 in A-flat major (3:05)

### 27. No. 18 in F minor (0:55)

### 28. No. 19 in E-flat major (1:15)

### 29. No. 20 in C minor (1:41)

### 30. No. 21 in B-flat major (1:50)

### 31. No. 22 in G minor (0:43)

### 32. No. 23 in F major (1:15)

### 33. No. 24 in D minor (2:49)

Recorded Wigmore Hall, London, 23 March 1995

Fou Ts'ong, piano

XR Remastered by  
Andrew Rose

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