

**HARMONIC STRUCTURE AND PERFORMANCE IN  
SOME PASSAGES OF CHOPIN'S BALLADE NO. 4 IN F MINOR**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This document examines some passages in Frederic Chopin's fourth Ballade, Op. 52 and identifies its consistent disruption of the expected tonal energies of the I-V-I triangle. Examples based on Schenkerian analysis show how the dominant becomes delayed and loses its energy, revealing consistent and purposeful disruptions of continuity. Structurally important dominants, whether introductory to tonics, interruptive, or involved in perfect cadences, are treated in such a way as to lose their normal accentual and rhetorical force, whether because of rhythmic placement, length, melodic design, dynamics, or textural organization.

Another consistent feature in the Ballade is the cycle of descending major thirds, expressed as the relationship of a major chord to the one a major third below, which serves as the substitute for the motion from dominant to tonic, producing an effect of "false" resolution. Several passages are shown to illustrate how Chopin deconstructs the tonal triangle by employing an entirely different axis of motion through the augmented triad.

Performance suggestions with regard to touch, rubato, textural variety, articulation and pedalling are discussed, based on the integration of the musical analysis and the articulations of the musical score.

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## INTRODUCTION

Frederic Chopin's fourth Ballade Op. 52, written in 1842, has been the subject of numerous studies and analyses.<sup>1</sup> Some of these are analyses of the work's form, in which the authors identify key areas and thematic groupings. Among them, a number relate the Ballade to sonata form. Other scholars have applied Schenkerian analysis to the work, arguing that virtually the entire work is a path from tonic to dominant. Still others have dealt with connections between themes and overall motivic unity. Finally, several commentators have used a combination of analytical approaches to ground an interpretation of the music's presumed meaning.

What difference does it make to the performer to have these thematic and formal analyses in hand? Are all equally useful or useless? And if they are of differing value to the performer, is it because among the analytical tools at our disposal, some are more practical, in the sense of being most directly suggestive of the kinds of decisions a performer has to make? Presumably no analysis captures the total essence of a piece, even if such a thing exists. Likewise, none uniquely dictates performance strategies—one and the same analysis can support very different performances. Nevertheless, it seems likely that some analytical approaches allow for more direct translation into choices (e.g., accent this note rather than another, play a crescendo or not) than do others.

John Rink, in his article "Chopin's Ballades and the Dialectic: Analysis in Historical Perspective" studies critical responses to Chopin's Ballades and attempts to draw conclusions about how analysis has evolved. The work on the Ballades over the last century falls into four main research areas: narrative, form, motivic relationships and prolongation.

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<sup>1</sup> This literature review owes much to John Rink in his article "Chopin's Ballades and the Dialectic: Analysis in Historical Perspective," *Music Analysis*, 13/1 (1994): 99-115.

One group of analysts tries to convey the experience of the work and the narrative and programmatic implications it seems to have. Frederick Niecks describes the fourth Ballade: “the emotional keynote...is longing sadness” which is “well preserved throughout.”<sup>2</sup> James Huneker, in “Chopin: The Man and His Music,” describes the fourth Ballade in 1900: “The narrative tone is missing after the first page, a rather moody and melancholic pondering usurping its place. It is the mood of a man who examines with morbid, curious insistence the malady that is devouring his soul.”<sup>3</sup> Edward Perry’s “descriptive analyses”<sup>4</sup> of the Ballades as musical settings of the ballads by Adam Mickiewicz give the Ballades a programmatic status.

George Bernard Shaw, however, argued that a story could not be told in sonata form, because the “end of a story is not a recapitulation of the beginning, and the end of a movement in sonata form is.”<sup>5</sup> He raises the problem that large-scale repetition poses for narrative structure. However valid, this has never stopped commentators from skirting the issue and interpreting even Classical works in quasi-narrative terms (for example, in the early twentieth century, Arnold Schering<sup>6</sup>, and in recent times, Anthony Newcomb<sup>7</sup>, Fred Maus<sup>8</sup>, et al.)

Even more recently, Michael Klein offers a narrative analysis of the fourth Ballade which argues “a perspective on musical narrative as an emplotment of expressive states rather than a sequence of actors and their actions.” He discusses the “mimetic and diegetic properties of music” and suggests ways that Chopin’s Ballade signify time, “especially the past tense often

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<sup>2</sup> Frederick Niecks, *Frederick Chopin as a Man and Musician, Volume 2* (London: Novello, 1888), 270.

<sup>3</sup> James Huneker, *Chopin: The Man and His Music* (New York: Scribner, 1900), 155-6.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Perry, *Descriptive Analyses of Piano Works* (Philadelphia, Presser, 1902).

<sup>5</sup> James Parakilas, *Ballads Without Words: Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballade* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1992), 86.

<sup>6</sup> Arnold Schering, *Beethoven in neuer Deutung* [A new interpretation of Beethoven] (Leipzig, C.F. Kahnt, 1934).

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Newcomb, “The Polonaise-Fantasy and Issues of Musical Narrative,” in *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. J. Rink and J. Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 84-101.

<sup>8</sup> Fred Maus, “Narrative, Drama, and Emotion in Instrumental Music,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55/3 (Summer, 1997): 293-303.

deemed crucial to narrative forms.” His study also expands Edward T. Cone's “notion of apotheosis,” showing how “an emotionally transformed recapitulation of an interior theme...often represents a desired emotional state.” He feels that such poetics “benefits from an ecumenical outlook drawing on texts in semiotics, criticism, musicology, music theory, and narrativity.”<sup>9</sup>

A second group of analyses endeavors to reveal the structural and formal organization in the Ballade. In 1921-22, Hugo Leichtentritt, while suggesting a unity of form and the presence of “compact structures” in Chopin’s music, also demonstrates many diagrams of harmonic and phrase structure in the music, often “re-barring passages to reveal hidden metrical complexities and phrase overlappings.”<sup>10</sup>

Gerald Abraham approaches the fourth Ballade in terms of formal structure, explaining that the work “is perhaps most easily explained as a masterly deformation of sonata form.” He also explains that sequences are frequently used on a larger scale and are used more effectively as substitutes for development.<sup>11</sup>

Jim Samson describes the Ballade as being a blend of sonata form and variations and diagrams the formal structure in his book, *The Four Ballades*. He describes the four Ballades as “reinterpretations of sonata-form,” noting that compared to a classical sonata, “they highlight thematic process, using variation and transformation techniques to describe the adventures of two contrasting themes.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Klein, “Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 26/1 (2004): 23-56.

<sup>10</sup> John Rink, “Chopin’s Ballades and the Dialectic: Analysis in Historical Perspective,” *Music Analysis* 13/1 (1994): 102.

<sup>11</sup> Gerald Abraham, *Chopin’s Musical Style* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 108.

<sup>12</sup> Jim Samson, *Chopin: The Four Ballades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 67.

John Rink writes of a “reconciliatory” critical approach in the last few decades following the subjective studies of the late 1800’s and the “ostensibly more objective, structuralist ones of [the 20<sup>th</sup>] century.” He notes that more recent trends of “new musicology” show a synthesis of these two types of analysis, “where meaning and emotion are defined not simply with regard to inferred programmatic/poetic content or supposedly innate, autonomous musical logic, but in a comparatively rigorous, theoretically grounded hermeneutics linking musical phenomena to particular expressive effects.”<sup>13</sup>

The third group of analysts emphasizes motivic unity in their analyses. Motivic and thematic unity is the focus of Simon Nicholls’ diagrammatic analysis, which is based on certain principles of “musical sense.” Nicholls introduces a network of melodic, harmonic, intervallic and rhythmic ideas that recur throughout the composition.<sup>14</sup>

In his chapter entitled “The Coda Wagging the Dog: The Chopin Ballades,”<sup>15</sup> David Witten identifies factors in the fourth Ballade that he considers to be “defining characteristics of Chopin’s ‘Ballade style’”<sup>16</sup>: Chopin’s prolongation and deployment of the flattened submediant to postpone the structural dominant until the coda, and his use of the subdominant as the contrasting key area, which, along with its “built-in sense of ambiguity”<sup>17</sup> contributes to the Ballade’s harmonic tension by not implying a direct resolution back to the tonic. He also writes of a “wedge” technique used at the end of the Ballade, in which Chopin uses  $\hat{6}$  and  $\#4$  to form

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<sup>13</sup> John Rink, *Chopin’s Ballades and the Dialectic*: 100.

<sup>14</sup> Simon Nicholls, “The Thread of the Chopin Ballades,” *Music and Musicians* (1986), 16.

<sup>15</sup> David Witten, “The Coda Wagging the Dog: The Chopin Ballades,” *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music Essays in Performance and Analysis*, ed. David Witten (New York: Garland Publishing 1997), 162-186.

<sup>16</sup> David Witten (1997), 182.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

a wedge around  $\hat{5}$ , and also  $b\hat{2}$  and  $\hat{7}$  to form a wedge around  $\hat{1}$  that is fundamental to the tonal stability of the work.<sup>18</sup>

By synthesizing some of these formal and motivic accounts, the performer can derive a fairly accurate description of the work. But how does this knowledge lead to interpretation in performance? Motivic analysis may seem to have little to contribute to the performer, but some motivic analysts have believed otherwise. Alan Walker, in the chapter entitled “Chopin and Musical Structure,” writes that “musical analysis becomes a dead letter once the performance is forgotten. It is the player who makes music live; the more he knows about the way it hangs together, the more successful he will be in this task.”<sup>19</sup> He points out that when performers understand why certain themes “hang together so satisfactorily” they are then more equipped to perform it.

Walker writes:

All the contrasts in a masterpiece are foreground projections of a single background idea. Masterpieces diversify a unity. Behind the shifting, kaleidoscopic variety of a great work’s manifest music lies its latent idea, the inspired, unitive source which makes that variety meaningful. Analysis is a process of moving from the manifest to the latent level of music. It seeks to explain musical foregrounds in terms of musical backgrounds. In so far as it succeeds it is a reversal of the composing process which needs must move from the level of unity to that of diversity.<sup>20</sup>

The fourth area of research has been in the category of prolongation (Schenkerian analysis). In his article “The Path from Tonic to Dominant in the Second Movement of Schubert’s String Quartet and in Chopin’s Fourth Ballade,” Lauri Suurpaa shows how the primary structural element of the tonic is prolonged throughout the work, with motions to IV and V, delaying the

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<sup>18</sup>David Witten (1997), 182.

<sup>19</sup> Alan Walker, “Chopin and Musical Structure: An Analytical Approach,” in *Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician*, ed. Alan Walker (London: Barrie and Rockcliff, 1966), 227.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Walker (1966), 228.

structural dominant until near the end of the Ballade.<sup>21</sup> He describes this Ballade as having a “strangely unfulfilled quality [that] prevails through much of the work” and demonstrates how there is a sense of striving towards the dominant that reaches its culmination at the end of the work. He presents the Ballade as having a weak emphasis on the dominant harmony in the foreground, with an “unusual accumulation of tension” toward the emphatic dominant only before the coda.<sup>22</sup>

Suurpaa begins his analysis with an overview of the work’s formal design, which has been described by other analysts as being a combination of sonata form and variation form. He uses the term “rotation”<sup>23</sup> to describe each cycle in which the main theme is heard, a term I have borrowed to designate these “variations” of the first theme.

For further clarification, I will first identify the major sections of the Ballade (see Figure 1):

**Figure 1: F. Chopin, Ballade Op. 52: Formal Chart**

<u>Introduction</u>	mm. 1-7
<u>Exposition</u>	
<u>First theme</u>	Rotation 1 mm. 8-22
	<u>Rotation 2 (with transition)</u> mm. 23-57
	<u>Rotation 3</u> mm. 58-80
<u>Second theme</u>	mm. 80-100
<u>Development</u>	mm. 100-128

<sup>21</sup> Lauri Suurpaa, “The Path from Tonic to Dominant in the Second Movement of Schubert’s String Quartet and in Chopin’s Fourth Ballade,” *Journal of Music Theory* 44/2 (2000): 465.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 467.

<sup>23</sup> Lauri Suurpaa, on page 467, writes, “I have taken the word ‘rotation’ from James Hepokoski and use it here for designating the notion that the Ballade consists of four rotations- cycles, as it were – of which each begins with the main thematic material in the home key and ends, the last excluded, in a similar manner with a weak dominant.” Suurpaa is referring to Hepokoski’s terminology as used in his book, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

## Recapitulation

<u>Introduction</u>	mm. 129-134
<u>First theme Canon (rotation in varied form)<sup>24</sup></u>	mm. 135-151
<u>Rotation 4</u>	mm. 152-168
<u>Second theme</u>	mm. 169-210
<u>Coda</u>	mm. 211-239

Suurpaa concludes that the fleeting dominant at the end of each thematic rotation gives this Ballade its unfulfilled quality, and that the progressive lengthening of the subordinate subdominant [or pre-dominant] emphasizes this inability to attain the structural dominant.<sup>25</sup> In his view, the structural cadence is attained only at the end of the work (measure 195).

Edward Laufer presented a Schenkerian analysis of the whole of the fourth Ballade, Op. 52 at the Fourth International Schenker Symposium, in 2006. In his sketch he indicates the presence of an “antecedent phrase of the first subject” from measures 8 to 22, and a “consequent phrase” in measures 23-36. A “contrasting phrase occurs from measures 36 to 57, and at the “returning phrase” in measure 58, the Urlinie  $\hat{5}$  ( $c^2$ ) over the F is marked. During the “transition to the second subject” in measures 71-84, the Urlinie  $\hat{4}$  ( $b\flat^1$ ) over the IV is indicated in measure 81 (from m. 66), and is carried through the second subject (mm. 85-100), the “developing episode” in measures 101-128, the “return of the introduction (m. 129) and first subject (m. 135), and the first subject “parenthetical return” (m. 152), all the way to the second subject return (m. 169). The  $ab^2$  in measure 173 is identified as the Urlinie  $\hat{3}$  over  $d\flat$  which is prolonged to the beginning of the coda (measure 196), which then travels through a third descent of  $G\flat$  to F in measures 190-191. Measure 196 is where Laufer hears the Urlinie  $\hat{3}$  ( $ab^2$ ) restated over the c (I 6/4 in F minor), leading to the Urlinie  $\hat{2}$  ( $g^2$ ) in measures 202-211, resolving to the Urlinie  $\hat{1}$  ( $f^2$ )

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<sup>24</sup> There is parallelism between mm. 15-22 of Rotation 1 and mm. 146-151 of the canon.

<sup>25</sup> Lauri Suurpaa (2000): 465.

over the tonic in the coda (in measure 212, not measure 211), which he describes as a “peroration.”<sup>26</sup>

Recent publications and theses have offered interesting contributions to the study of this Ballade. William Rothstein in his article “Ambiguity in the Themes of Chopin’s First, Second and Fourth Ballades” identifies principal conflicts in meter in both themes, claiming that the themes fail to correspond to their notated meter.<sup>27</sup> Nigel Nettheim, in his article “Derivation of Chopin’s Fourth Ballade from Bach and Beethoven”<sup>28</sup> uncovers similarities of construction in both themes of the Ballade with Bach’s Prelude in B flat minor, No. 22 from the *Well-Tempered Clavier* Book I (*WTC* I/22). He also makes a connection between the Ballade and Beethoven’s Sonata in F minor, Op. 57, claiming that Chopin borrows from “Beethoven's developmental logic.”

Pianists studying the score of the fourth Ballade may find themselves led to interpretive questions of how to achieve continuity (or not) amid the seemingly “stop-and-go” slurs and phrases. The rests and stops in the melodic line, as well as the crescendos and decrescendos occurring simultaneously, pose questions that the pianist cannot simply answer by playing intuitively. How is the pianist to interpret the peculiar use of the dominant, such as in the introduction and at the end of each rotation? Another issue that continues to confound pianists today is the great discrepancy between articulations and dynamic markings between different editions. Chopin’s works were published simultaneously in three countries: France (published by Maurice Schlesinger), Germany (Breitkopf & Härtel) and England (Wessel), and within any

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<sup>26</sup> Edward Laufer, “On Chopin’s Ballades (Opp. 23, 47, 52),” paper read at the Fourth International Schenker Symposium, The Mannes College of Music, New York, N.Y., 2006.

<sup>27</sup> William Rothstein, “Ambiguity in the Themes of Chopin’s First, Second and Fourth Ballades,” *Integral* 8 (1994): 1-50.

<sup>28</sup> Nigel Nettheim, “Derivation of Chopin’s Fourth Ballade from Bach and Beethoven,” *The Music Review* 54/2 (1993): 95-111.

of these, there are numerous and conflicting articulation marks. Markings in the Urtext can be interpreted in different ways, in reference to aspects of musical structure (harmony, counterpoint, meter, contour, grouping) as well as general performance principles associated with these signs, including principles espoused by Chopin himself. All of these considerations highlight the need for an interpretive strategy, beyond turning to the Urtext, namely using music theory and analysis as a way of gaining insight into compositional intent.

After exploring a number of approaches to understanding the Ballade as a whole, involving key-schemes and form, I turned to the analytical strategy of Schenkerian analysis, which allows us to trace long-range stepwise lines that give unity and direction to each theme and to the work as a whole. Apart from its obvious rigor and coherence, the Schenkerian approach recommends itself because Schenker had close associations with many elite performers and was a performer and pedagogue himself. In fact, Schenker himself took music lessons with Chopin's student Karl Mikuli. Fundamentally, though, I chose to use Schenkerian analysis because of its hierarchical approach to analysis, one that reduces a complex surface into a simple structure and, at least in principle, assigns a role, or multiple roles, to every note. Schenkerian analysis helps us to find hidden continuity in music, particularly the continuity provided by stepwise melodic lines underlying all of the figuration found at the surface of the music. It is based on the principle that a simple melody can be elaborated through figuration and, conversely, that a melody that contains figuration can be reduced down to a simpler, underlying structure. Schenker explains the application of his theory of the *Urlinie* in the following way:

It is therefore not permissible in performance to follow the *Urlinie* slavishly and pluck it out of the diminution, just to communicate it to the listener. The diminution must mean the same thing to the performer as to the composer: as great as the advantages are that the

composer derives from the transformations of the Urlinie, they must be of exactly the same value for the performer, if only he were aware of them.<sup>29</sup>

The linear progressions (Züge) are not merely notes to be emphasized in performance; the knowledge of these progressions is a tool that gives the performer the freedom to play with direction and continuity. This type of direction is described by Felix Salzer:

This distinction between structure and prolongation became the backbone of his [Schenker's] approach. By means of this distinction we hear a work, not as a series of fragmentary and isolated phrases and sections, but as a single organic structure through whose prolongation the principle of artistic unity and variety is maintained. This way of understanding musical motion represents, I believe, the instinctive perception of the truly musical ear and can be termed "structural hearing."<sup>30</sup>

Schenker believed his approach was strongly relevant to performance, a view shared by many of his followers (including Rothstein). His writing in *Art of Performance*<sup>31</sup> describes his concept of performance on the piano. His philosophy of performance, according to Rothstein, is that "the performance of a masterwork is an objective and inevitable result of its *structure*."<sup>32</sup>

Schenkerian analysis demonstrates that there is structural unity and order both on the foreground and background levels of a work. However, the analyses tend to make the work conform to a traditional linear and harmonic progression (which they are successful at doing) while minimizing the idiosyncratic, even deviant harmonic and structural relationships in a work like this one. While Schenkerian analysis can demonstrate long-range a unity in the conventional sense (tonic, predominant, dominant, tonic), it has difficulty coping with the strangeness associated with the employment of the dominant harmony in this piece.

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<sup>29</sup> Heinrich Schenker, *The Masterwork in Music, Volume I*, ed. William Drabkin, trans. Ian Bent (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1925), 109.

<sup>30</sup> Felix Salzer, *Structural Hearing: tonal coherence in music* (Toronto, General Publishing Company, 1952), 13.

<sup>31</sup> Heinrich Schenker, *The Art of Performance*, ed. Heribert Esser, trans. Irene Schreier Scott (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>32</sup> Rothstein, William, "Heinrich Schenker as an Interpreter of Beethoven's Piano Sonatas," *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Summer (1984): 5.

Despite the abundance of writing on the fourth Ballade, to some of which I have already referred, there is a decided lack of literature on the relationship between structure and performance pertaining to this masterpiece, and thus little if any serious writing that offers practical strategies on how the performer can express complex relationships inherent in the musical structure. It is this lack that I hope to begin to address with this essay.

I begin by citing various passages of structural, harmonic and melodic interest in the Ballade, and showing possible analytical interpretation of these areas using Schenkerian analysis. By this means I hope to show unity, but also to reveal purposeful disruptions of continuity that I believe are integral to the composer's aims in this work. In particular, I will explore Chopin's ingenious manner of disrupting the normal tonal energies that drive the motion in what Schenker called "the sacred triangle"<sup>33</sup> in tonal music, namely, the motion from I to V in the bass, and the concomitant cadential return from V to I, and, as well, derived motions such as that from an anacrustic V to an initiating tonic. I will also show how, as if to compensate for, as it were, deconstructing this triangle, the music, at broad levels, pursues an entirely different axis of motion, through the augmented triad. Finally I will suggest ideas for performance in the areas of tempo rubato, dynamics, articulation and pedalling in selected passages.

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<sup>33</sup> Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 1977), 15.

## THE ROLE OF THE DOMINANT

I have always been intrigued by the yearning quality of the fourth Ballade, which I attribute to Chopin's composing against the grain of tonality as usually understood. The standard paradigm in which a dominant chord, once arrived at, generates expectancy and an accumulation of tension if it is prolonged, so that its eventual resolution demands an emphatic tonic perceived as its inevitable consequence. In contrast, the Ballade's rhetoric and phrase rhythm tend to make prolonged dominants lose energy and become diffused, and thus to sever their links with the tonics that may or may not follow them. At the same time, what Schenker called the "sacred triangle" of <I, V, I > in the bass line is disrupted by successively longer and more meandering prolongations of iv, which (in the major) is also the key of the second theme.

The introduction of the Ballade (see Figure 2) begins with a C major harmony that is prolonged for seven measures, having the sound of a localized C major key with a IV-V-I motion in the bass. There is the presence of a tonicized F, but in the context of an auxiliary cadence (IV-V-I) in C major. However, when the first rotation of first theme is heard in measure 8, it emerges that C major harmony is actually the dominant.

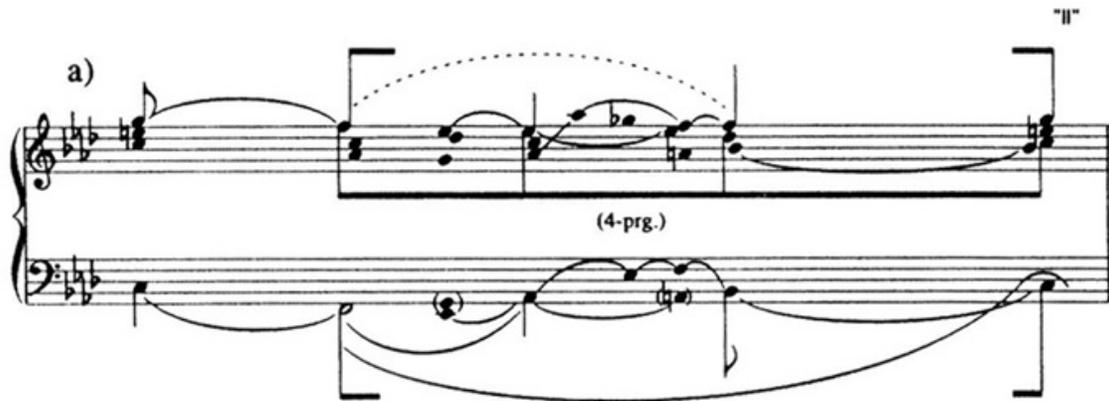
Figure 2. F. Chopin, Ballade Op. 52, mm. 1-8, Chopin Institute Edition (Paderewski)<sup>34</sup>

One could interpret this introduction as a functioning dominant in which the resolution is met in measure 8 at the start of the first rotation. Suurpaa interprets the introduction as an auxiliary cadence (V – I), and therefore the first theme is regarded as a resolution of the opening dominant. He offers a voice-leading sketch of the opening 22 measures of the work (see Figure 3) and explains that the seemingly localized C major chord “turns out to be a dominant, however, and it

<sup>34</sup> All excerpts of the Ballade are reproduced by permission of Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne SA, Kraków, Poland.

is resolved into the tonic of the main key in m. 8 when the first rotation begins. The work opens, therefore, with an auxiliary cadence V - I.”<sup>35</sup>

Figure 3. F. Chopin: Ballade Op. 52, mm. 1-22, voice leading sketch (from Example 11a, Suurpaa). Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Duke University Press.



What is not shown in the voice-leading sketch, apart from defining the role of the dominant harmony as part of the auxiliary cadence, is Chopin’s peculiar method of prolonging this harmony and the implication it has for performance. Rather than perceiving these opening seven measures as the dominant of an auxiliary cadence, which is introductory, not conclusive, we can observe through the localized IV – V - I in the bass (of C major) that Chopin may have wanted this dominant harmony to have greater structural significance. He marks a *ritenuto* from measures 6 to 7, arriving at a final fermata on the C chord on measure 7, sounding more like a cadence in C major than a cadence leading to F minor.

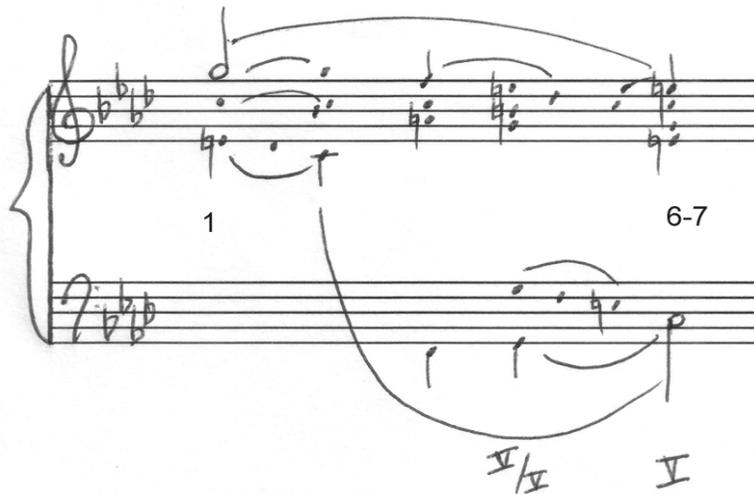
In Chopin’s treatment, this dominant, instead of maintaining harmonic tension until its resolution to its tonic, in the traditional manner, seems to die away. The rhetoric of the introduction has a different significance than that of tonicizing F minor’s dominant as an

<sup>35</sup> Lauri Suurpaa (2000): 467.

introductory function, in typical fashion (for example, in the opening of Chopin's Barcarolle, where the opening dominant clearly points towards the tonic in measure 4); rather, it serves to develop conditions that initiate the unusual possibility of a dominant "losing its energy" that we will hear through much of the rest of the piece. As a result these opening 7 measures sound like a suspension of time, as if they were in an ambiguous tonal "mode." In my view, one should not think of this dominant as a dominant, that is as charged with expectation of resolution. Rather, it is one which sounds peaceful, dreamy, and more like a memory of an ending than an anticipation of beginning. In a sense then, it is really much more like a tonic than a dominant.

A voice-leading sketch of the opening 7 measures will illustrate how Chopin diminishes the importance of the tonic resolution and in so doing so makes the dominant sound suspended in time (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Sketch of Ballade Op. 52, mm. 1-7**



The first rotation of the first theme (m. 8-22) also poses several challenges. Even though the first rotation begins in the tonic key of F minor, metrical strength on the tonic is avoided in the bass (for example, in m. 8). The right hand melody, while starting on  $c^2$  as its point of origin,

does not have a rhythmically secure point of departure. This gives it a wavering, even troubled quality, as if it is looking for the point of departure that is already in its possession, but in a not quite comfortable way. There is rhythmic ambiguity because there is no accented point of initiation to the phrase.

When the tonic is finally attained in measure 8 there is already a sense of instability as Chopin alternates the accompaniment and the melodic intervals between tonic and its diminished seventh. Then, in measures 11 to 12, there is a strongly directed motion towards III (Ab major), the first real perfect cadence of the work. This is followed by a prolongation of the III, which leads to a cadential motion to the subdominant (Bb minor) in measure 16. At this point, a sequential imitation of measures 15 to 16 leads to the dominant of Bb minor, which is prolonged by the repeating melody first heard in measures 9 to 10 over the F minor chord, a repetition that tends to obscure the function of this dominant, and to weaken one's expectation of a return to iv. There is a feeling of sounding lost or disoriented here, just as the F minor opening seems weakened by the wandering figuration. The iv does return through more or less the same progression heard leading to measure 16.

But instead of closing this first rotation of the first theme in the subdominant, Chopin returns briefly to the dominant in measure 22 (see Figure 5). Does this dominant function as part of a perfect authentic cadence, leading toward the tonic in the subsequent measure?

Figure 5. F. Chopin: Ballade Op. 52, mm.17-24, Paderewski Edition



Suurpaa chooses the first scale-degree,  $f^2$ , to be prolonged in the first rotation (mm. 8-22), describing the thematic idea as “a polyphonic melody with two lines centering on pitches  $c^2$  and  $f^2$ .” Hearing the introduction with a  $g^2$  as the main top-voice note, Suurpaa describes the  $g^2$  (in the introduction) as functioning as an upper neighbour of  $f^2$ . A linear three-note progression in the top voice  $\langle ab^2 gb^2-f^2 \rangle$  prolongs the  $f^2$  through the bass motion of I-(III)-IV. This  $f^2$  is held through prolongation of the subdominant until it moves up to the second scale degree ( $g^2$ ) at measure 22 (see back to Figure 3). He concludes that the dominant serves as an interruption, a “divider, or a back-relating dominant”<sup>36</sup> and that the background of the first rotation is that of a half cadence (I – IV - V).

Laufer reads the subdominant harmony at measure 22, prolonged from measure 16, as the intermediate goal of the phrase and seems to interpret the dominant (V7) as a “quick” return to F minor in the following measure. In effect, he hears an underlying  $\langle I, IV, I \rangle$  motion. He does not indicate an interruption at measure 22 as Suurpaa does, but it may be that he has some discomfort

<sup>36</sup> Lauri Suurpaa (2000): 469.

with Roman numerals that might imply a perfect cadence at measures 22 to 23 since he omits the symbol “I” under the tonic in measure 23.

Contrary to Laufer’s interpretation, I feel that the listener does not hear the end of the first rotation as wanting to cadence to F minor; rather, it sounds like a very local dominant that should lead back to the tonic harmony, perhaps with  $ab^1$  as the top note, and then (eventually) to a cadence, but it turns out instead to be the interrupting dominant divider (in Schenkerian terms) that leads to the next thematic rotation. In effect, I agree with Suurpaa’s assessment of the concluding dominant, but I think he misses its strangeness in that role. The structure of the first rotation is one that is atypical of traditional tonality. In a traditional context, a dividing dominant has to sound like a goal and a point of rest. For this purpose the dominant is much too short and lacks appropriate preparation, the long iv having lost its sense of channeling attention toward anything by becoming rather stable in and of itself. After such a long iv one would need a strong approach to a longer and more accented V for the latter to qualify as a harmony of interruption in the normal sense.

Here, then, the dominant lacks the required cadential stability (of a half cadence). So, recalling the introduction, the common factor seems to be that structurally important dominants, whether introductory to tonics or interruptive (half-cadential) or, as shall be seen, involved in perfect cadences, are treated in such a way as to lose their normal accentual and rhetorical force, whether because of rhythmic placement, length, melodic design, dynamics, or textural organization.

I have used principles of Schenkerian analysis to convey an understanding of structural order in this passage (see Figure 6). I chose to use the fifth scale degree ( $c^2$ ) as the Urlinie head-tone, since I hear the  $\langle f^2, e^2 \rangle$  as a reaching over, and the  $D\flat^2$  as an upper neighbor of  $c^2$ . The

stepwise motion towards  $A\flat$  major is heard as motion to an inner voice, while the  $e\flat^2$  (at m. 13) is interpreted as an arpeggiation from  $c^2$  within the  $A\flat$  major chord.

Measures 13 to 16 are similar to measures 8 to 12, but transposed up a third and resolving in the subdominant. At measure 16, the  $d\flat^2$  is heard as a long-range upper neighbor tone to the prolonged  $c^2$ . The thematic material from measures 8 to 10 is heard again at measures 18 to 20, but without the harmonic significance of returning to I; clearly it does not sound as if one is back in F minor here, but instead as a V/IV. Therefore I indicate a third descent from the  $d\flat^2$  in measure 17 to  $b\flat^1$  in measure 22 as an inner voice. The final V is heard as an interruption, with the  $c^2$  head tone implied once again. The music does reach a dominant, which has to be regarded as a divider, but which—as I have explained—lacks the kind of rhetorical emphasis, both in how it is reached and where it is reached, that is normally associated with such a harmonic function.

Figure 6: Sketch of Ballade Op. 52, mm 8-22

The image displays two systems of handwritten musical notation for the piano accompaniment of Chopin's Ballade Op. 52, measures 8 through 22. The notation is written on grand staves with treble and bass clefs. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first system covers measures 8, 11, 12, and 13. The second system covers measures 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, and 22. Roman numerals are used to denote chords: 'I' is written below measure 8, 'III' is written below measures 11 and 12, 'iv' is written below measure 16, and '= I/IV IV V ||' is written below measures 21 and 22. The notation includes various note values, slurs, and dynamic markings, with some notes in measures 11-13 and 15-18 appearing as dashed lines, suggesting they are optional or alternative phrasings.

The dominant loses its energy again after it is set up in the motion towards measure 46, in the transitional passage following the second rotation (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. F. Chopin: Ballade Op. 52, mm. 37-48, Paderewski Edition

The second rotation ends on the subdominant (B $\flat$  minor) after which the B $\flat$  is prolonged as the music, via a 5-6 exchange, progresses to G $\flat$  in measures 38 to 41 (see Figure 8). A sequential transposition of measures 38 to 41 leads to F $\flat$  (mm. 42-45), which, in progressing to a B $\flat$  dominant seventh at measure 46, acts as a Neapolitan and leads the listener to expect E $\flat$  minor, the iv of iv in F minor. Instead, the B $\flat$  dominant loses energy by not resolving to its expected E $\flat$ , but enters into a cycle of fifths. Structurally, this can be interpreted as a movement from iv in measure 36 (B $\flat$  minor) to IV in measure 46 (B $\flat$  major) which is then prolonged until the half cadence at measure 57.

Figure 8: Sketch of Ballade Op. 52, mm. 36-57

The image shows a handwritten musical score for Ballade Op. 52, measures 36-57. The score is written on two staves, treble and bass clef, with a key signature of three flats. The first system covers measures 36 to 52, and the second system covers measures 53 to 57. The notation includes various notes, rests, and ornaments, with some notes marked with 'b' for flats. The bass staff includes Roman numeral chord symbols: iv, IV<sup>7</sup>, V/IV, IV, and V. The manuscript is annotated with various lines, circles, and arrows, indicating structural and harmonic analysis.

Another passage of structural and harmonic interest is at the approach towards the second theme (see Figure 9). In measures 74 to 80, the V/IV is prolonged for the five measures by means of a dramatic dominant pedal and a hurried right hand figure that highlights the  $f^3$  at measure 76. When the expected resolution of B $\flat$  comes at the second theme (m. 80), the listener hears a surprisingly weak tonic, dynamically, texturally, and metrically, like a soft barcarolle.

The connection from the introductory dominant of B $\flat$  major to its tonic is disrupted at the expected point of arrival in measure 80, when the tonic is unexpectedly dropped a half step to A major.

Figure 9. F. Chopin: Ballade Op. 52, mm. 78-85, Paderewski Edition

In Suurpaa’s analysis of this passage (see Figure 10<sup>37</sup>), the F is prolonged in the bass (from m. 68) until measure 83, as a dominant to the B $\flat$  major chord at measure 84. Suurpaa reads the B $\flat$  major chord of measure 84 as prolonging “the situation reached earlier—the harmony is connected to the chord attained in m. 66 and the harmonic content is IV flat-natural.”<sup>38</sup> Thus his reading assigns less hierarchical importance to the B $\flat$  major arrival at measure 80. He interprets the bass movement as a series of fifths moving in stepwise motion towards the F, and understands the chromatic movement in the right hand as a subsidiary motion within an inner voice underlying a third progression in the top voice from f<sup>2</sup> to d<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> Lauri Suurpaa (2000): 470. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Duke University Press.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 471.

Figure 10. Chopin: Ballade Op. 52, mm. 58-84, voice leading sketch (from Example 13b, Suurpaa). Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Duke University Press.

Though his sketch does take the weak arrival at the tonic (B $\flat$ ) at measure 80 into consideration, I do not agree that the dominant can be said to be prolonged through measures 80-83. For one thing, the tonic at measure 84, while initiating the antecedent of the second theme, is just as understated as that at measure 80: the authentic cadence at measure 84 occurs at the end of a long slurred group, ending with a decrescendo, and is immediately followed by a D dominant seventh chord (V $_{4/3}$  of VI). I feel that Chopin eclipses a strong cadential motion here, and in so doing, makes a connection between preparatory dominant and expected tonic that creates an ambiguous “tonal force field,” similar to that which I described in the opening 7 measures. In effect, the normal energy flow of a perfect cadence is subverted here, which is in keeping with other disruptions of the <I, V, I> axis noted above.

Chopin ends the second theme of the recapitulation with a strange treatment of the dominant harmony which relates to what we have seen at the end of each rotation. The D $\flat$  major harmony is prolonged from measures 169 to 191 and then it is transformed through chromatic motion in the inner voices into an Italian 6<sup>th</sup> chord that leads to I 6/4 –V in F minor. After a series of

chords, which passes through D $\flat$  major in measure 198 and the dominant of A major in measure 199, the music abruptly ends in a three-chord V-V/V-V in F minor. The listener might have expected a buildup of tension—textural, dynamic, and rhythmic—within the dominant prolongation that follows, but what actually ensues is yet another example of the dominant losing its energy. Five pianissimo chords, which Samson describes as “a brief illusion of repose as we remain poised on a precipice of harmonic tension,”<sup>39</sup> end with a second inversion C major triad in the right hand, creating a listless, dreamy effect that diffuses the energy towards the tonic.

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<sup>39</sup> Jim Samson (1992): 192.

## THE MAJOR THIRD AXIS

The relationship of a major chord to the one a major third below, in which the resolution serves as a substitute for the motion from dominant to tonic, is used consistently enough in this work so that the cycle of descending major thirds may be termed one of its primary harmonic axes, the other one being the traditional <I, V, I> axis, a tonal axis being a system of harmony which places chords into functional relationships.

The main augmented triad cycle <A, F, Db> is like a sort of infection that first appears at the start of the second theme in a *rising* motion, that from F up to A; however, it is definitively engaged, in its *descending* form, in the development, and reaches its apotheosis with the recapitulation of the second theme. It is as if the weakness of the <I, V, I> triangle, seen already at the end of the introduction and within the first rotation, creates an opening for something else to take over.

There are two different augmented triad cycles that appear in a coherent design that suggests to me that there is an interaction between the two cycles: the primary augmented-triad axis is built on F (see Table 1), and the secondary augmented- triad built on C (see Table 2). Thus, Chopin normalizes what would be traditionally perceived as abnormal and creates a group of form-determining chords that are derived from equal division of the tonic (F) octave, and secondarily the dominant (C) octave, each into three parts.

**Table 1: Primary augmented-triad axis (built around F): <A, F, D $\flat$ >**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Progressions of harmonies (not keys)</b>
<b>Mm. 74-82</b>	F major (with seventh), indirectly to A major
<b>Mm. 107-111</b>	A minor to F minor, though sequence descending by major seconds
<b>Mm. 129- 138</b>	A major to F major (with detour back to C $\sharp$ major at m. 132)
<b>Mm. 162-169</b>	F major to D $\flat$ major
<b>Mm. 231-232</b>	F minor tonic coloured by the D $\flat$ major chord

**Table 2: Secondary augmented-triad axis (built around C): <C, A $\flat$ , E>**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Progressions of harmonies (not keys)</b>
<b>Mm. 1-13</b>	C major to A $\flat$ major
<b>Mm. 113-128</b>	A $\flat$ major to E major

It seems that the method in which dominants (in preparation and momentum) are resolved is by way of false resolutions: C major to A $\flat$  major (mm. 1-13); F major (indirectly) to A major (mm. 74-82); A $\flat$  major to E major (mm. 113- 128), the latter only momentarily a tonic but itself turning into the normal dominant of A; A major, at first a tonic but becoming a dominant to F major (mm. 135-138); and, finally and most obviously, F major, the “lost-sounding” dominant of B $\flat$  in the last thematic rotation, which finds itself as a dominant once again but resolves to D $\flat$  major (mm. 162-169).

It is useful to look at the foregoing list of peculiar major-third progressions in more detail. I have noted that the dominant C major harmony is suspended and lacks a strong impulse towards its expected F minor tonic. When the first rotation of the theme begins in measure 7, there is no

disputing that harmonically, the 3 measures (mm. 8-10) are centered on the F minor harmony. The melodic line wanders and reaches over to  $f^2-e^2$ , the melodically focal  $c^2$ , and hence the tonic harmonic function, is weakened. The single  $c^2$  that begins this section and the thin texture that follows also give it a feeling of being lost. However, in measure 12 to 13 the first perceived perfect authentic cadence is to  $A\flat$  major, and not to the F minor tonic. Therefore, the first rotation of the theme might be said to begin on III ( $A\flat$  major), and thus the piece might sound as if progressing from the opening V (which sounds like a tonic) to III. This relationship already suggests the major third cycle.

A similar relationship exists between the F dominant seventh (mm. 74-83) which moves to the weak  $B\flat$  major “tonic.” Here, Chopin has the peculiar use of the A major chord to expand this  $B\flat$  major harmony, a technique that I feel he uses to eclipse a definitive cadential movement.

A (in minor form) is also the goal of the rising sequence that ends at measure 107—this sequence being the beginning of a developmental section. This A minor chord then descends by sequence to F minor at measure 111 (through G minor) and from there to the dominant of  $D\flat$  major in measures 112 to 116. It sounds as if the development will end with an elaborate dominant preparation leading to  $D\flat$ . But a deceptive resolution in measure 128 (of  $A\flat$  major to E major, also an enharmonic major third) brings the music, instead, back to A major for a restatement of the introduction.

Just as in the introduction, where the tonicized C major sounds more like a close than a dominant wanting to resolve to its tonic, the A major harmony in measures 129 to 134 sounds tonicized and has a similar feeling of closing in A major. Chopin creates a further suspension of time and energy by adding the cadenza-like figure in measure 134, which takes away any impulse towards its expected resolution to D. The first theme returns in canon form, initiated by

the A in measure 134. The listener may expect a harmonization in D minor, corresponding to the move to F minor in the first rotation. Instead, we hear the canonic presentation of the meandering melodic line until a cadence closes the first phrase in F major. Therefore, the third relationship as a substitute for the motion between tonic and dominant occurs between the A major of the introduction to the recapitulation and the F major goal of the canon.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> rotation, we hear the opening 10 measures of the original in embellished figuration in the right hand and arpeggiation in the left hand. The F major harmony (heard in measures 15 to 16 as a repetition that weakened the expectation of resolution) is strengthened and built up from measures 162 to 168 as a strong dominant. Here is another example of a functioning dominant that carries the strong directed motion towards a resolution, but in this rotation, Chopin once again substitutes the tonic arrival of this F dominant seventh chord, down a major third, to D $\flat$  major (see Figure 11). This D $\flat$  harmony carries significant weight as it is prolonged until measure 195, the strongest secondary tonic in the work, and serves eventually as a predominant function (VI-V-I) in F minor.

Figure 11. F. Chopin: Ballade Op. 52, mm. 163-171, Paderewski Edition

163 *accel.* *cresc.*

165 *dim.*

167

169 *a tempo* *p* *leggiero*

The score consists of four systems of two staves each. The first system (measures 163-164) shows a rapid melodic ascent in the right hand with a large slur and a dotted line above it. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment. The second system (measures 165-166) continues the melodic line, which begins to decelerate and decrease in volume. The third system (measures 167-168) features a more active right hand with frequent sixteenth-note patterns. The fourth system (measures 169-171) returns to a more lyrical style with a 'leggiero' marking and a piano dynamic. The piece concludes with a final chord in the right hand.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE

There are significant discrepancies among the editions available to the pianist today, as there are at least three different Urtext editions readily available,<sup>40</sup> each of which emphasizes a different primary source. From 1834, Chopin had his works published simultaneously in three countries: France (published by Maurice Schlesinger), Germany (Breitkopf & Härtel) and England (Wessel). Chopin was in the habit of continually revising his own music; he not only sent somewhat different versions to each publisher, but also wrote many variants in the scores of his pupils.<sup>41</sup> Chopin's intentions can be thought of as a moving target, and as such we cannot expect any edition, Urtext or otherwise, to represent them in a definitive way. All of these considerations highlight the need for a second interpretive strategy, beyond turning to the Urtext, namely using music theory and analysis as a way of gaining insight into compositional intent.

In the following section on performance recommendations I will be referring to articulation and dynamic markings drawn from the Polish Music Publications edition, edited by Ignaz Paderewski.<sup>42</sup>

The introduction poses some challenges for the pianist: the right hand opens with a crescendo through the G octaves while the left hand plays a diminuendo. When the peak of the

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<sup>40</sup> These include the Paderewski and Zimmermann (Henle Urtext) editions considered in this document, as well as the Wiener Urtext, edited by Jan Ekier.

<sup>41</sup> Chopin frequently wrote performance instructions in his students' scores such as fingering, dynamics, articulation and phrasing. According to the text from the exhibit "Frederic Chopin and His Publishers" in the Department of Special Collections, The University of Chicago Library (1998), these markings were individually tailored to the needs of individual students. Other changes such as altered pitches, redistributed chords, and completely rewritten ornamental passagework, are not found in any other early sources. There continues to be ambiguity whether these handwritten annotations truly reflect Chopin's final revisions of his music or spur-of-the-moment changes that were never intended to have any permanent validity.

<sup>42</sup> The intent of the editorial committee was to establish a text "which fully reveals Chopin's thought and corresponds to his intentions as closely as possible." The edition is based primarily on the autograph manuscripts, copies approved by Chopin, and first editions. In the general introduction, the editors wrote that the manuscripts were the prime source for the textual verification. The commentaries contain all the variants and discrepancies from other editions and interpretation of Chopin's ornaments are given. The sources of all the markings (i.e. dynamics, pedaling, phrasing, and ornamentation) are also stated in the commentary. Earlier sources are all examined and major discrepancies and variants are provided in the commentary of critical notes, printed in each volume.

dynamic arch is reached at measure 2 in the right hand, the left hand is reaching its smallest point in the decrescendo. If the left hand descending eighth-notes were to have a crescendo, culminating at the F harmony on measure 2, there would be a greater sense of arrival on the tonic. Therefore, it is essential that the pianist observes this decrescendo in the left hand so as to indicate the decrease of energy of the dominant.

The second time this is heard (at measure 4), the tonic is also weakened by the fact that the right hand has a diminuendo. The new decrescendo mark at measure 5, implying a new stress on the V/V harmony, gives this a localized C major sound. It is important for the pianist to give direction to the opening introduction without adding rubato and delaying the F major harmony in measures 2 and 4, which would also stall or break up the three-measure slurs. At measure 3 the pianist also must take care to treat the E octave as a diminuendo from the previous measure, so a new stress is not heard.

Measures 4 to 7 can be played in a way that adds more emphasis to the V/V to V, as the score also indicates a new decrescendo (implying a stress) on the E octave of measure 5. Care should be taken, however, after reaching the C major harmony in measure 6, to let the inner voices fade away both dynamically and in the ritenuto to make this sound more like an ending than the anticipation of a beginning.

When the opening  $c^2$  of the first rotation begins in measure 7, the pianist must produce a tonal colour different from the close of the previous introduction. The accent present on this  $c^2$  suggests a brighter tone, with almost a sense of anticipation of its arrival at the tonic. However the following  $db^2$  and  $b^1$  should sound wavering and uncertain of where the melody is going. When the F is placed in the left hand, it arrives in the middle of the measure and not on the main beat of the measure. The pianist must play this without accent or sense of arrival on the “tonic.”

The rhythmic placements of the F minor chords in measures 8, 9, and 10 seem to be Chopin's intentional way of avoiding metrical stress on the tonic harmony; however, the motion towards the dominant of III (A $\flat$  major) in measures 11 to 12 signifies the first motion towards a tonic in this work. The four e $\flat^2$ 's in the right hand in measure 11 should grow in intensity, with the final e $\flat^2$  supported by the depth of the low E $\flat$  in the left hand.

The dominant (V/IV) at measure 18 to 20, although composed out in a manner that recalls the opening measures of this first rotation, must also be played without dynamic inflection or accentuation, so that it conveys a feeling of disorientation and of a dominant losing its energy. The pianist can also linger on the final e $^2$ -bb $^1$ -db $^2$  in measure 20 and in so doing, weaken sense of time and forward impulse. At measures 21 to 22 the pianist should play the swell towards the dominant (V/IV) which resolves to the subdominant in measure 22. This resolution is immediately followed by the dominant (V) which should be played as lightly and delicately as possible, so as to make it sound as if it should resolve to F minor in the following measure. Some rubato of the left hand figuration can be taken here to close this first rotation.

The end of the second rotation (m. 36), however, can be played with greater strength of tone as the subdominant is prolonged, through the B $\flat$  major at measure 46, until measure 57. Keeping this long-range prolongation in mind is important while performing this section, as stalling and unnecessary rubato detract from the overall direction of the music. For example, the left hand octaves from measures 37 to 46 need a forward motion towards the final B-flat octave. The left hand octaves have stop points in the score<sup>43</sup>, indicated by slurs, as the music moves sequentially through G $\flat$ , C $\flat$ , F $\flat$  and then back to the subdominant in major. These single

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<sup>43</sup> The octaves are not slurred in the Wiener Urtext (Ekier) or the Henle Urtext (Zimmermann).

stemmed octaves signify, to me, a change of colour which the pianist can achieve with sensitive pedal changes, rather than creating several points of “rest” and rubato.

Similarly, when the B $\flat$  dominant seventh is reached in measure 46, the pianist may feel an expectancy of arriving at an E $\flat$  harmony, which never occurs. In its place there is an expansion of the B $\flat$  dominant seventh through the F b5 seventh chord and the F dominant seventh chord at measures 47 and 49, where there is a voice exchange of, first of F and C $\flat$ , then of F and C-natural.

It seems to me that the point is to undo the sense at measure 46, of the B $\flat$  major chord as a dominant. This can be done by playing gestures of momentum, in measures 46 to 47 and 48 to 49 that are frustrated by not reaching a strongly accented B $\flat$  chord. As a result, the listener is unsure that the B $\flat$  chord, at measures 48 and 50, is still an important dominant. In fact, it turns out that, by measure 53, F has become the important dominant, only to be supplanted, in turn, by C at measure 57, which in turn lacks strength. Thus, all the dominants in the passage are meant to sound undermined, and the pianist must contrive to produce this effect by not arriving too strongly on any of them.

At measure 53, there is motivic repetition with the top note rising from e $\flat^2$ , to f $\flat^2$  and then to the lingering g $\flat^2$  before finally returning to the half cadence in measure 57. Again at this point, a tapering of the melodic line and rubato in the left hand chords would be appropriate to indicate this interruption of the harmonic motion.

Even though the dominant (V/IV) from measures 68 to 76 is built up through the torrential octaves in the bass as well as through rhythmic quickening of the right hand figuration, the pianist must recall how this dominant was treated in the first rotation (mm. 18-20). There, the dominant had a feeling of disorientation and losing its energy towards B $\flat$  minor. A study of the

score reveals that there are decrescendo markings in the left hand (in measures 68 and 69) in the octaves leading towards the low F octave, which to me indicates the lack of accentuation on the dominant harmony. The series of crescendos that follow from measures 72 have an anticipatory effect in relation to the arrival of the F dominant seventh harmony in measure 74. However, right after the F octave is placed in the left hand, on the downbeat of measure 74, there is a diminuendo written where one should normally expect a brilliant crescendo. The pianist should resist the natural urge to play this climbing figure in a large arch or swell. To me, the small crescendo and decrescendo in measure 74 and 75 indicate an increase of intensity of the repeated two-groups within a longer range diminuendo. Chopin continues to decrease any momentum that the dominant possesses by marking *leggiermente*, a long decrescendo in the right hand and with the *ritenuto* in measure 79, he successfully halts the cadential movement towards B $\flat$  major.

The B $\flat$  major second theme begins on the middle of the third beat of measure 80, marked as a decrescendo towards the first beat of the following measure. The pianist is faced with the question of how to interpret the decrescendo mark in each measure (from measures 80 to 82). I believe these decrescendo marks suggest a sense of resignation and loss of direction, thus contributing to the ambiguity of tonality. The music quickly shifts to A major in measure 82, which was described earlier as being part of a third relationship with the preceding F dominant seventh chord. An awareness of this relationship can affect the way the pianist plays this measure. For example, the two measures in B $\flat$  major (mm. 80-81) can be perceived as being introductory to the arrival in A major, brief as the stay of the latter may be. The pianist can place a short hesitation before the last chord of measure 82, thus isolating the A major harmony, and then resume the prolongation of the B $\flat$  major harmony.

In the development section (mm. 100-128) consecutive dominants with quick resolutions are heard in various sequential patterns, until a strong E $\flat$  major dominant seventh is reached in measure 117. The pianist should take care to maintain the sense that the A $\flat$  harmony is being prolonged here. From measures 112 to 116, the A $\flat$  harmony has an ambiguous function, first sounding like a dominant of D $\flat$ , then as a tonic. Measures 117 to 120 would seem to conform A $\flat$  in its tonic role, but once A $\flat$ <sup>4</sup> is definitively reached in the melody, at measure 21, the harmonic function of the A $\flat$  major chord reverts once again to dominant. The repeated statement of G $\flat$  in connection with predominant harmony, in measures 122 and 124, makes this abundantly clear, as does the chromatic descent in the melody in measures 125 to 128, beginning on A $\flat$ <sup>5</sup> and falling through G<sup>5</sup>, G $\flat$ <sup>5</sup> and F<sup>5</sup>, on its way to E<sup>5</sup> (= F $\flat$ <sup>5</sup>) in measure 128. All of this signals a dominant preparation, presumably for the key of D $\flat$ . While the significance of D $\flat$  is yet to be made clear, the placement of a dominant preparation makes eminent sense since it comes just before the recapitulation. Although the E $\flat$  dominant seventh in mm. 117-119 confirms the first switch of A $\flat$ 's function, from dominant to tonic, the descent of the right hand figuration and the imposition of several decrescendi in the course of these measures may be understood as countervailing factors, which diminish the sense of moving towards A $\flat$  as a (tonic) goal, thereby preparing for the reversal of function in measure 121. The pianist can show this decrease of energy not only by observing the decrescendo markings but by also clearing the texture through quick pedal changes, especially in measure 119. Only after measure 121 does it become clear that this tonic transmutes into a dominant. As this A $\flat$  flat dominant seventh gathers momentum both dynamically and texturally, the opening motive from the first rotation is developed in the left hand (mm. 121 and 123), wherein it is followed (in mm. 125-128) by a new linkage, of the repeated eighths that signal the introduction to the second motive of the principal

theme. These gestures of course intensify the sense of preparation that is appropriate in this passage. The pianist would do well to bring out these carefully composed motivic anticipations, which in any case tend to happen during static moments in the singing melodic line.

At measure 125 to 128, one hears the A $\flat$  major harmony resolved, with enharmonic changes, to an E major (- F $\flat$  major) harmony, which then becomes a dominant seventh of A major. The left hand crescendo and *ritardando* at measure 128 can be played out with more significance, and a colour change can be made to reflect the enharmonic change from a $\flat$  to g $\sharp$  (G $\sharp$  being brighter because of harmonic context, creating a greater sense of expectation). As it turns out, the E dominant seventh chord resolves towards the recapitulation of the introduction in A major (A dominant seventh chord). As in the opening 8 measures of the work, the IV-V-I motion in the bass indicates stability in the A major harmony rather than any sense of a dominant that wants to resolve. The focus must be on rhythm here, as a way of clarifying what the local tonic is (A and not D), perhaps by lingering on the A major chord and its inner voices in the end of measure 130, instead of on D major chord on the fourth beat of measure 129. The slurring of the right hand octaves indicates a melodic sweep of the descending octaves, and so the pianist should try to avoid excess expressivity or rubato on the third E octave in measure 129, which would disrupt the motion to A. In measure 132, there is an unexpected motion towards A's relative minor, F $\sharp$  minor, in measure 132, which can also be heard as a motion from an A major chord to a C $\sharp$  major chord (as discussed above). The pianist can inflect this move as a question, with rubato and more time taken at the right hand broken eleventh. In the following two measures the A major should fade away in a gentle but colourful arpeggiation that gives this section a sense of closure.

However, this is not the ending, but as the  $a^1$  in the fermata in measure 134 suggests, it is also the start of a new section, the canon. The pianist must strike this  $a^1$  with a brighter tone that anticipates something new, rather than as an ending to the previous section. The pianist can play the meandering motive in first 2 measures of the canon with a hushed tone, adding to the ambiguous tonal field by highlighting the chromatic motion of  $d^1$  to  $c\#^1$ . Then, the cadential motion to F major can be played with more warmth of sound.

In measures 162 to 168, the pianist must create a strong build up of the F dominant seventh harmony with crescendos in the upward figuration in the right hand and increasing intensity of the F's in the bass. To create a strong directed motion, the pianist can continue to prolong the intensity of the harmony by playing the F chords with a full tone and ringing pedaling at the start of each measure (measures 164 to 167). Even though a long diminuendo is written in measure 167, I feel that the dominant harmony must continue to be heard by use of half pedal over the chromatic motion in the right hand. Care must be taken to articulate the final notes of the chromatic scale clearly in the low register, so that the listener can hear the substitution of the tonic arrival with  $D\flat$ . The  $D\flat$  in measure 169 appears as the last note of the slurred group from the previous two measures, and, as the articulation seems to imply, some time can be taken after the  $D\flat$  is played, so as to allow the note to linger upon its arrival.

The final example of the unusual treatment of the dominant harmony is heard in the measures preceding the coda. Chopin interrupts the intensity and energy built up by the *stretto* of the intensifying chords by disrupting the V-I motion with the following five chords. In these pianissimo chords, the pianist must convey a sense of timelessness with no exaggeration of expression or voicing in the inner voices. The omission of the  $B\flat$  in the final C major triad (in second inversion in the right hand) only further negates the striving towards the tonic. The

pianist can achieve this sense of absolute stillness by lifting the pedal off in order to hear the purity of the triad.

## CONCLUSION

In this document I identified various areas of structural, harmonic and melodic interest in the Ballade in the major sections of this work: the introduction, the first and second rotations, the second theme, and the recapitulation of introduction, canon and second theme.

Throughout the work, Chopin disrupts the expected tonal energies of the I-V-I triangle in several ways. With various examples based on Schenkerian analysis, I presented several instances of the delayed dominant losing its energy, instead of traditionally maintaining harmonic intensity until its tonic resolution. Such consistent and purposeful disruptions of continuity I believe to be integral to Chopin's aims in this work. Structurally important dominants, whether introductory to tonics, interruptive, or strongly cadential, lose their normal accentual and rhetorical force through rhythmic placement, length, melodic design, dynamics, or textural organization.

A consistent feature in the Ballade is the cycle of descending major thirds, expressed as the relationship of a major chord to the one a major third below, which serves as the substitute for the motion from dominant to tonic, producing an effect of "false" resolution. I therefore showed how, in several passages, Chopin compensates for this deconstruction of the I-V-I tonal triangle by employing an entirely different axis of motion through the augmented triad. Two alternate axes that I identified are the primary augmented-triad axis (built around F) :  $\langle A, F, D^b \rangle$  and the secondary augmented-triad axis (built around C):  $\langle C, A^b, E \rangle$ .

In the last chapter, performance suggestions such as touch, rubato, textural variety, articulation and pedal were offered, based on the integration of the musical analysis and the articulations of the musical score.

It is my hope that pianists would not base their interpretation on intuition alone, but might seek to gain understanding of musically challenging passages through musical analysis. In the case of the fourth Ballade, harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic analysis has been shown to reveal several points of discontinuity and the presence of unconventional tonal relationships both at the musical surface and at deeper levels. Only by understanding Chopin's innovations in formal construction and their basis in his unique tonal language can the pianist develop a coherent image of the music and thereby begin to formulate possible ideas for expressivity in performance. Understanding the ways in which Chopin disrupts traditional tonal relationships and avoids the resolution of the dominant harmony not only helps to explain the mysterious and yearning quality of this important work, but also gives the pianist tools to make informed interpretative decisions.

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## **EXHIBITS**

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