

# FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

## Waltz in A-Flat Major Op. 69, No. 1 A GUIDE TO INTERPRETATION BY COSMO BUONO



From his early years in Poland and later, when he traveled to Vienna, Chopin was acquainted with waltzes. He composed them throughout his lifetime and 19 remain of some of the 36 he wrote. Only eight were published due to his being so extremely self-critical. These compositions tend to be short and are often a collection of a several waltzes repeated throughout the pieces. The mood may be brilliant and exuberant, elegant or even sentimental. Some are among his most popular works.

Waltzes for piano had been written by Mozart, Weber and Schubert, and they were not necessarily intended for dancing, but as short character pieces. Chopin continued this tradition and the Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 69, No. 1 is a wonderful example of the genre. It was written in September 1835, when Chopin visited the Wodzinski family in Dresden. It is often subtitled “Les Adieux” (“The Farewell”), since it was dedicated to [Maria Wodzinska](#), a love interest. The work was written and given to her before he made his departure, due to her parent’s disapproval of the relationship. It is reported that on his deathbed, Chopin requested that his publisher, Pleyel, destroy the unpublished Waltzes. Wisely, he chose not to obey the composer’s request and as a result Op.69, No. 1 is one of the waltzes that remained.

This Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 69, No. 1 is divided into three sections, or three waltzes.

### WALTZ I

The first of the three waltzes in this work is a sentimental one, and as it is marked “*con espressione*” (“with expression”). I think it should be played freely and with a good bit of rubato throughout. The right hand melodic line needs to be quite distinct so be sure to play it with a well curved finger. This will also allow you to lighten it when you want to play softer without it becoming so soft that it is not distinguishable from the accompaniment. Be sure to vary the repetition with different dynamics, color and again, rubato, so the effect is different and fresh each time. These do not have to be large changes, just something different enough to shed new light on the repeat.

### WALTZ II

The second waltz is a change in character and Chopin indicates “con anima” (“animated”), so this can have a slightly faster more waltz-like tempo. Again, vary the repetitions. It is interrupted by a return of the first waltz, but this time marked “con forza” (“with strength”), indicating that you could make another change of character here.

### WALTZ III

The third waltz is marked “dolce” (“sweetly”), and we move back to the romantic and sentimental nature of the opening. However, this time it moves to a climactic moment at measures 89 and 105. Allow the buildup to this moment to be gradual. Finally, we have a return to the lyricism of the first waltz.

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## MELODIES

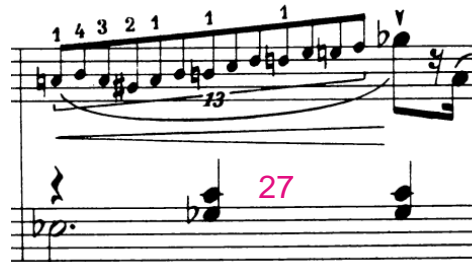
The melodies are often repeated, and Chopin is inviting the performers to use their imaginations to present them in a different light. This can be achieved through a different rubato, dynamic, and/or color. Remember, it does not have to be an enormous change. It can be subtle just as if one were telling a story and changing the inflection of their voice to give the words a slightly different significance.

## GRACE NOTES

I think the grace notes in measures 7 and 12 and all similar places should come before the beat. They are **acciaccaturas** and should be executed before the beat.



The run-in measure 27 will sound most graceful if the second beat of the left hand comes together with the B natural in the run.



The same will be true in measure 124 before the end of the piece. Chopin alters the notes of the run, but if you bring the second beat of the left hand together with the E-flat in the run it will sound quite fine. With the runs, use rubato to make them sound like a very natural part of the piece, just as a singer might do. They are not meant to be suddenly brilliant but an expressive ornamentation of the melody.

