

## FRYDERYK CHOPIN



**A musical genius, a highly talented composer, virtuoso and a matchless pianist. One of the most profoundly original composers in history. Chopin has maintained worldwide renown as a leading musician of the Romantic era, however, he was not at all a traditional “Romantic” musician - most of his music defines a separate category all its own.**

*One needs only to study a certain positioning of the hand in relation to the keys to obtain with ease the most beautiful sounds, to know how to play long notes and short notes and to achieve certain unlimited dexterity. A well-formed technique, it seems to me, can control, and vary a beautiful sound quality.*

Fryderyk Chopin (Frédéric Chopin), one of the most prominent Polish composers, was born on March 1, 1810, at Żelazowa Wola. His playing was admired by listeners from his youngest years, and he also began to try his hand at composition then. Already at the age of seven, Fryderyk released his *Polonaise in G minor* and started performing in noble and aristocratic homes. He continued his musical studies in a systematic way under Józef Elsner at the Warsaw Conservatory. From 1828 he started giving concerts abroad, in Dresden, Prague, Vienna, Salzburg, Munich etc. enjoying great success. He grew up in pre-Uprising Warsaw. During the November Uprising in Poland, he was already abroad – in Vienna and Germany. When he learned about the fall of the uprising, Chopin composed his famous

Ethics in C minor, Op. 10 No. 12, known as the "Etude of the Revolution". He then settled down in Paris in 1831 becoming a star of many artistic salons, however in his mind he remained faithful to Poland. The concerts, at which he presented his compositions, made him increasingly famous so that he gained high esteem both as a pianist and composer. He formed friendships amongst the compositional elite of the time: Schumann, Liszt, Bellini, Rossini and Mendelssohn. He was also a fashionable piano teacher and many pianists, who later became outstanding virtuosi, sought lessons with him. In 1836 Chopin met George Sand, a French woman writer, who influenced his later life to a great extent. Unfortunately, from 1839 the state of Chopin's health (he suffered from consumption) deteriorated year on year. He gave his last two concerts in Paris and London in 1848. Chopin died on October 17, 1849, in Paris and he was buried at the cemetery of Pere-Lachaise. His heart is in the Holy Cross Church in Warsaw.

FRYDERYK DEMONSTRATED EXTRAORDINARY SKILLS. WHEN HE WAS GRADUATING FROM UNIVERSITY IN 1829 (AT THE AGE OF NINETEEN), JÓZEF ELSNER GAVE HIM THE FOLLOWING EVALUATION: *FRYDERYK CHOPIN – EXCEPTIONAL APTITUDE, A MUSICAL GENIUS.*

As a composer, he synthesized bold musical ideas in the domain of harmony, melody, texture and timbre with the simplicity of folk motifs and so elevated raised the piano to the status of a major instrument. His mastery of form and the melodic and harmonic wealth of his music became an unattainable model for many composers. His creative output established new ways of development for music and has been a source of inspiration for many succeeding composers.

*“MUSIC WAS HIS LANGUAGE, THE DIVINE TONGUE THROUGH WHICH HE EXPRESSED A WHOLE REALM OF SENTIMENTS THAT ONLY THE SELECT FEW CAN APPRECIATE... THE MUSE OF HIS HOMETLAND DICTATES HIS SONGS, AND THE ANGUISHED CRIES OF POLAND LEND TO HIS ART A MYSTERIOUS, INDEFINABLE POETRY WHICH, FOR ALL THOSE WHO HAVE TRULY EXPERIENCED IT, CANNOT BE COMPARED TO ANYTHING ELSE... THE PIANO ALONE WAS NOT SUFFICIENT TO REVEAL ALL THAT LIES WITHIN HIM. IN SHORT, HE IS A MOST REMARKABLE INDIVIDUAL WHO COMMANDS OUR HIGHEST DEGREE OF DEVOTION.” - FRANZ LISZT*

The International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw was initiated in 1927 and has been held every five years since 1955. It is devoted entirely to the works of Chopin and is one of the most prestigious competitions in classical music, often launching the careers of its winners overnight through major concert dates and lucrative recording contracts: <https://chopin2020.pl/en/>



## IGNACY JAN PADEREWSKI



He exemplifies the pinnacle of what a man of humble origins yet extraordinary talent, relentless work ethic, and a great gift for self-promotion could achieve in his time. He was, by turns, the epitome of the 19th-century Romantic artist and an astute 20th-century self-made man, tirelessly crossing the globe in pursuit of fame, money, adulation, and powerful allies, and channelling it all into causes he cared about – Polish independence, music, and philanthropy.

*Every new generation in its hour of dawn, filled with the dreams of youth, its thirsts, intoxications, and enthusiasms, thinks itself called upon to impel humanity towards heights unmeasured, believes itself an appointed pathfinder, a thinker of thoughts, a doer of deeds greater than any of those which came before. Every new generation desires beauty, but a beauty all its own.*

Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Polish pianist, composer, activist, polyglot, orator, politician, statesman, humanitarian, businessman, patron of art and architecture, film actor, was born on November 6, 1860, in Kuryłówka in Russian Empire. At the age of 12, he was accepted into the Warsaw Conservatory – Chopin’s alma mater – a school whose piano faculty he joined only 6 years later in 1878. Paderewski wanted to be a composer, so in 1882 and 1884 he undertook half-year courses in Berlin. He held his first concert as a composer in January 1883 in Berlin, and in 1885 - in Warsaw. In 1884, he went to Vienna to study piano with T. Leszetycki; he also taught harmony and counterpoint at the conservatory in Strasbourg. After his debut in Paris’ Salle Erard in 1888 and a shaky start in London in 1890 – the particularly savage English critics referred to him as ‘The Blacksmith of the Piano’. It wasn’t until he set his sights on America that the phenomenon of ‘Paddymania’ began in earnest. He became a regular performer in America, crossing the continent over 30 times in his 50-year performing career. America became the most important locus of his public, piano playing, composing, professional, political, and philanthropic activities that were intertwined with each other in his life. Paderewski came to public politics through the philanthropic route. By 1910, the artist was an extremely wealthy man and generously donated to numerous causes and charities. He focused on charitable, political and patriotic work, with the goal of gaining Polish independence. After the outbreak of World War I, Paderewski stood at the head of the General Committee of Assistance to War Victims in Poland. On January 16, 1919, he was appointed President of the Council of Ministers and minister of foreign affairs in Poland. June 28, 1919, together with Roman Dmowski he signed the peace treaty of Versailles on behalf of Poland. In November 1919, Paderewski resigned his post as prime minister but continued to represent Poland abroad at international conferences and at the League of Nations. In 1922 he returned triumphantly to the stage, recorded albums, and appeared in the film "Moonlight Sonata" in 1936. In 1939 he accepted Władysław Sikorski’s offer to serve on the National Council, part of the Polish government-in-exile. In September 1940 he moved to the United States, where he organized aid for his compatriots at home. He died on June 29, 1941, in New York. In 1992, Paderewski's ashes were placed in the crypt of the St John Cathedral in Warsaw.

HE PIONEERED THE FORMAT OF THE SOLO RECITAL AS MOST PUBLIC CONCERTS AT THE TIME FEATURED MULTIPLE ARTISTS IN THE INTEREST OF VARIETY. HE WAS THE FIRST TO GIVE A SOLO PERFORMANCE AT THE NEW 3,000-SEAT CARNEGIE HALL IN NEW YORK.

Paderewski took composition seriously and always included his own music in his performing repertoire. He turned to classical forms: sonatas, variations, symphonies, concertos, and Romantic ones: Fantasias, Polonaises and other Polish dances, Lieder (literary Songs), and piano miniatures in a neo-Romantic style. His biggest influence was Chopin, but in his use of orchestral colour, there are echoes of Debussy and French music in general.

PADEREWSKI WROTE THE OPERA ‘MANRU’, WHICH TO DATE HAS BEEN THE ONLY OPERA BY A POLISH COMPOSER EVER PERFORMED IN THE METROPOLITAN OPERA IN ITS 135-YEAR HISTORY.

To commemorate Ignacy Jan Paderewski, the International Paderewski Piano Competition has been organized in Bydgoszcz, Poland since 1961: <https://paderewskicompetition.pl/>

## KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI



**The mainstay of the Polish composing school in the 1960s, and the symbol of sonorism and the shift to neo-romanticism in the following decade. Krzysztof Penderecki was the creator of music that is both structurally artful and emotionally moving, with its own unique style. In the history of 20th-century music, his career stands out for his fast rise to the top, matched by none, with the possible exception of Stravinsky.**

*There is something about performing my own music, and other people's music, that gives me pleasure. I think I learn more by doing that than I ever did studying music.*

Krzysztof Penderecki was born on November 23, 1933 in Dębica. His affection for music was born when he saw his father's violin. He desired to become a virtuoso and practised Bach's sonatas after school. He studied composition privately with Franciszek Skołyszewski. Penderecki studied music at Jagiellonian University and the Academy of Music in Kraków. In 1958, he began lecturing in composition at his alma mater, and, in 1972, he became a professor there, also serving as rector until 1987. After graduating from the Academy, he began his career as a composer. In 1959, he won the first three prizes (a first and two seconds) in the Young Composers' Competition. In 1960, he composed a piece for string orchestra entitled *8'37"*, for which he received a prize from the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers in Paris. The work is now known as *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* and is played all over the world. In 1966, the premiere performance of *Passion According to St. Luke* took place. Krzysztof Penderecki thus became a leading representative of avant-garde music. However, his first opera written in 1969, *The Devils of Loudun*, was not immediately successful. Beginning in the mid-1970s, Penderecki's composition style changed, with his first violin concerto focusing on the semitone and the tritone. One of the best-known choral works of his later period, *Polish Requiem* was written in the 1980s and expanded in 1993 and 2005. The piece devoted to the victims of Polish 1970 protests (*Lacrimosa*), Cardinal Wyszyński (*Agnus Dei*), the Warsaw Uprising and

St. Maksymilian Kolbe (*Dies Irae*) and victims of the Katyń Massacre. Penderecki's work includes four operas, eight symphonies and other orchestral pieces, a variety of instrumental concertos, choral settings of mainly religious texts, as well as chamber and instrumental works. From his conducting debut, he was also a respected podium figure, leading both his works and a variety of music by other composers. Penderecki collected numerous international honours and prestigious awards, including the Prix Italia in 1967 and 1968; the Wihuri Sibelius Prize of 1983; four Grammy Awards in 1987, 1998 (twice), and 2017; the Wolf Prize in Arts in 1987; and the University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition in 1992. In 2012, Sean Michaels of *The Guardian* called him 'arguably Poland's greatest living composer'. He has inspired a number of contemporary musicians across genres, such as Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood, who composed his *48 Responses to Polymorphia* on the basis of Penderecki's own *Polymorphia*. Penderecki died after a long illness in his home in Kraków on March 29, 2020.

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI DID NOT ENJOY WRITING FILM MUSIC (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF PIECES REALIZED AT THE POLISH RADIO EXPERIMENTAL STUDIO). DIRECTORS MAKE USE OF ALREADY-WRITTEN WORKS. PENDERECKI'S MUSIC CAN BE HEARD IN, AMONG OTHER SCREEN WORKS, THE SERIALS "BLACK MIRROR" AND "TWIN PEAKS", AS WELL AS IN SUCH FILMS AS DAVID LYNCH'S "INLAND EMPIRE" AND "WILD AT HEART", STANLEY KUBRICK'S "THE SHINING", MARTIN SCORSESE'S "SHUTTER ISLAND" AND WILLIAM FRIEDKIN'S "THE EXORCIST".

Penderecki devoted his spare time to nurturing his remarkable garden in Luślawice, Poland. To combine his two greatest passions – music and flora – Adam Mickiewicz Institute in Warsaw celebrates his life, compositions and inspirations through a digital project that deals with the memory of the composer, Penderecki's Garden - a virtual interactive garden, which will grow along with his legacy: <https://www.pendereckisgarden.pl/en>

## GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ



**Despite her impressive playing and flawless technique, it was creative work that was to play the first violin in the life of Grażyna Bacewicz. Combining Classical sonata form, Baroque-type orchestration, and elements of folklore with contemporary techniques, to this day the composer remains one of the most important figures in Polish Neoclassicism.**

*I – if someone told me that I am to quit my violin career – would only be glad. [...] I travel to give concerts and compose only in passing, at night. That is not OK.*

Grażyna Bacewicz, Polish composer and violinist, was born on February 5, 1909 in Łódź into a Polish/Lithuanian family. From her early years, she studied violin, piano and composition. She studied at the Warsaw Conservatory under Kazimierz Sikorski (composition), Józef Jarzębski (violin) obtaining diplomas in 1932 and also under Józef Turczyński (piano). In addition, she started studies at the faculty of philosophy of Warsaw University but had to abandon them because of the pressure of work. She completed her studies in compositions in Paris under Nadia Boulanger and violin playing under André Tourret and Carl Flesch. At that time, she adopted the neoclassical style for her compositional language and became the first Polish woman composer to achieve national and international stature. During the war, she lived in Warsaw, continuing to compose and giving underground concerts (e.g. premiering her *Suite for Two Violins*). Until 1952 she combined compositional and performance activities which met with numerous successes on European stages where she gave recitals and concerts. For her work in both domains, she was awarded prizes and her music - highly valued by both conductors and performers - was increasingly to be found on programmes of concerts and festivals in Poland and abroad. From 1953 she devoted herself entirely to composition, which she had earlier combined with didactic work; between 1934-35 and 1945-46, she taught harmony, counterpoint and ear training and conducted the violin class at the Łódź Conservatory. From 1966 until her death, she was a composition professor at the State High School of Music in Warsaw. Recognised as an authority both in the field of composition and violin playing, she served on juries of international violin competitions, chamber music competitions and contests for composers - in Poland and abroad. Between 1955-57 and again from 1960 until her death she acted as the vice-chairman of the Polish Composers' Union. She died on January 17, 1969, in Warsaw.

IN 1943 IT WAS VERY UNUSUAL FOR WOMEN TO BE COMPOSERS. GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ NOT ONLY BROKE NEW GROUND AS A FEMALE COMPOSER IN POLAND, BUT SHE ALSO CONTINUED TO WRITE MUSIC WHILE WAR THREATENED TO DESTROY HER COUNTRY.

The music community of Bacewicz's day was extraordinarily masculinized; many people assumed that Grażyna Bacewicz was also a man. She received many letters beginning with such salutations as: 'Dear Mister Bacewicz' and 'Cher Monsieur Grażyna Bacewicz'.

AT THE END OF 1958, SHE COMPLETED HER FINAL, AND, PERHAPS, THE GREATEST NEOCLASSICAL COMPOSITION, *MUSIC FOR STRINGS, TRUMPETS AND PERCUSSION*, WHICH WAS PERFORMED AT THE WARSAW AUTUMN IN 1959. THIS PIECE RECEIVED THE FIRST PRIZE IN THE ORCHESTRAL DIVISION AND THE THIRD PRIZE OVERALL AT UNESCO'S INTERNATIONAL ROSTRUM OF COMPOSERS IN 1960.

The numerous prizes and distinctions with which she was honoured are a symbolic expression of recognition for her titanic work and artistic and compositional achievements as a consequence of which she deservedly gained a reputation as the greatest Polish woman composer - an outstanding figure of our century's music.