

2023

A Graduate Recital in Piano

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A Graduate Recital in Piano

A Recital Abstract Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Music

Christine Compton

University of Northern Iowa

December 2023

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Abstract

Christine Compton presented a full graduate piano recital on Monday, November 6th, 2023. The recital was presented at 6:00 p.m. in Davis Hall in the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa. This recital was given in partial fulfillment of the Master of Music degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy. It consisted of works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Franz Schubert, Frédéric Chopin, and Claude Debussy. This abstract contains further discussion of performed works.

This Study by: Christine Compton

Entitled: A Graduate Recital in Piano

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirements for the

Degree of Master of Music

Date of Recital: November 6th, 2023

_____	_____
Date	Dr. Andrea Johnson, Chair, Recital Committee
_____	_____
Date	Dr. Randall Harlow, Recital Committee Member
_____	_____
Date	Dr. Vakhtang Kodanashvili, Recital Committee Member
_____	_____
Date	Dr. Robin Guy, Recital Committee Member
_____	_____
Date	Dr. Stephanie Huffman, Dean, Graduate College

French Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major BWV 815 by Johann Sebastian Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach, a German composer who lived from 1685 to 1750, is most celebrated for his musical compositions in the Baroque period (1600-1750). Bach's polyphonic and monophonic writing, four-part species counterpoint, and harmonic language ensure his piano works will remain some of the most valued performing, teaching, and studying materials. Within a grandiose catalog of over a thousand musical compositions, he composed six French Suites between 1722 and 1725. They each contain a set of dances, often in binary form.

The French Suite No. 4 in E-flat major, BWV 815, was composed around 1722. This was during Bach's time as chapel master for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. These Suites were intended for his *Clavier-Büchlein*, a book of piano works for his students to study, and are included in the notebook of keyboard music for his wife, Anna Magdalena. Bach did not choose the title "French Suites" but rather called them *Suites Pour le Clavecin*.¹ Unlike the English Suites, the French Suites do not include a prelude, but each contains the same core dances: Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, and Gigue. The French Suite No. 4 in E-flat major contains a warm and joyful mood throughout its seven movements: Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Gavotte, Air, Menuet, and Gigue.

J.S. Bach starts the French Suite by following normal characteristics in an *Allemande*. An Allemande is an unhurried, serious dance in quadruple meter. In this dance, he begins on an upbeat at a moderate tempo while introducing the key of E-flat major with broken sixteenth notes in the right hand. The melody unfolds with each arpeggio traveling upward to create figural counterpoint harmony.² Bach modulates to B-

¹John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music: A Historical Survey of Music for Harpsichord and Piano* (Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1965), 255.

²Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach; His Life, Art, and Work, Tr. from the German of Johann Nikolaus Forkel, with Notes and Appendices by Charles Sanford Terry* (England: Constable and Company Ltd., 1920), 75.

flat major in the next section and the contrapuntal lines continue to take prominence as he finishes the movement back in E-flat major.³

The *Courante* follows the *Allemande*, continuing the rapid dance motion in compound meter and binary form. It features fast-moving broken contrapuntal lines, evoking its French definition, “to run.”⁴ In triple meter, harmonious eighth notes in the right hand push the dance forward. The left hand provides support with dotted eighth notes often followed by a sixteenth note. This dance further proves a prime example of Bach’s compositional ability as Johann Nikolaus Forkel states “Bach’s harmony consists in the melodic interweaving of independent melodies, so perfect in their union that each part seems to constitute the true melody.”⁵ The voices end on a broken dominant chord of B-flat major, and then continue these ideas in the second section to end the piece in E-flat major.

Sarabande is a slow, expressive, and graceful movement, in contrast to the *Courante*’s youthful tempo. Like a traditional *Sarabande*, the dance emphasizes the second beat of each measure. This stress on the second beat lends a forward motion toward the next phrase and adds a romantic or sorrowful atmosphere to the dance. The right-hand melody mimics a vocal line that blossoms as the left-hand walks a descending E-flat major scale underneath. This assists the bass in developing into its independent melodic line as the middle and top voices interact until all three voices end together on the tonic chord.

The *Gavotte* is a moderately-paced jovial dance that became popular in France during the seventeenth century. In this fourth movement, Bach returns to duple meter and

³Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature : Music for the Piano and Its Forerunners* New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), 60.

⁴Johann Nikolaus Forkel. *Johann Sebastian Bach; His Life, Art, and Work*, 75.

⁵*Ibid.*, 75.

begins on the third beat in the pick-up measure. The Henle edition utilizes two note slur figures consistently throughout the dance. Although it is common knowledge that slurs in Bach's compositions are editorial, it is likely that his intended gestures have been observed by the editor. Regardless, it is uncertain whether Bach personally authored the slurs in this and other dances. These two-note slur markings in measures 1, 2, and 4, are placed likely with the intention that the performer should continue to follow these instructions throughout the dance.

Air, the fifth movement, is a playful variation of the Gavotte. *Air* is another word for *Aria* in reference to beautiful operatic vocal works of the day. The right hand descends the E-flat major scale in rapid sixteenth notes, followed closely by the left hand, their interaction extending across the range of the keyboard. The second section begins in B-flat major, the dominant of E-flat major, and echoes the first section's theme. In measure 16, the original theme returns and once again traverses the E-flat major scale. Both hands work together through different scales such as B-flat major, A-flat major, C minor, ending on E-flat major to finish the movement.

The *Menuet* is in duple meter, and is the sixth dance in this piano work. Similar to the Gavotte, Bach makes extensive use of two-note slurs in each measure, with both voices often replicating the other. This Menuet is not found in later editions of this suite but is a beautiful addition to the work due to the melodic exchanges between both hands in support of the dance's exciting yet elegant counterpoint.⁶ The second section stays close to the original theme as it begins in B-flat major, and soon modulates back to E-flat major.

⁶David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J.S. Bach*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10172083>, 270.

The last movement, a *Gigue*, serves as the suite's finale in true dance style. In a compound meter that suggests a lively tempo, the *Gigue* frequently serves as the final movement of Bach's French Suites.⁷ Beginning in the first measure, the right and left hand exchange melodies in playing perfect fourths, and broken chords. Gordon Stewart informs, "Imitative fugue-like entrances at the opening of the first section make the *Gigue* easy to distinguish. Often the inversion of the subject-life figure serves to open the second section."⁸ This movement concludes on a final broken E-flat major chord, providing a grand finale for Bach's youthful yet powerful addition to his piano solo catalog.

Nocturne in C Minor, Op. 48, No. 1 by Frederic Chopin

Frederic Chopin, 1810-1849, wrote the Nocturne in C Minor Op. 48, No. 1 in 1841. By 1849, the last year of his life, Chopin was a well-established composer. Both sets of etudes, as well as his *Fantaisie* in F minor, Op. 49, had been published by this time. Growing up in Poland, Chopin was considered a child prodigy from an early age. In the years between 1827 and 1846 Chopin composed his notable collection of 21 Nocturnes. The Nocturnes are considered some of his finest short pieces for the piano. The title *Nocturne* means 'music for the night,' and although Chopin did not invent this form (the term was first coined by Irish composer John Field) he expanded it through the use of bel canto style imitation and advanced chromatic tonal language.

Frederic Chopin's C Minor Nocturne Op. 48, No. 1 was published in 1842 along with No. 2 in F-sharp Minor. The Nocturne C Minor in ABA form, also known as *Ternary form*. Author John Rothgeb notes that the Nocturnes' specific structure, "is composed in three-part song form with principal sections A1 (bars 1-24), B (bars 25-48),

⁷ Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature : Music for the Piano and Its Forerunners* New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), 60.

⁸ Ibid. 60.

A2 (bars 49-72), followed by a coda (bars 72-76). Each of the principal sections is itself ternary.”⁹ The tempo begins *Lento*, as Chopin takes this Nocturne through a remarkable journey of three musical sections. The main theme is introduced in measures 1-8 and primarily is displaced from the main beats in syncopation. The use of syncopation, voice-leading, and motivic transformation is what drives this work as Chopin creates captivating harmonies that move from minor to major chords as the legato melody rises and falls across the keyboard.

The second section, measures 25-50, begins with tempo marking, *Poco piú lento*. The Nocturnes dark clouds of C minor move to a calm and peaceful C major, as a dramatic change occurs. Chopin utilizes warm extended harmonies to produce a choral sound with grand harp-like chords as both hands move simultaneously.¹⁰ As the major chords in the second section continue, in measure 39 an inner chromatic octave passage begins to interrupt the right-hand melody.

This soon leads to the immense pinnacle of the section and moves into the third and concluding section, marked *doppio movimento*. Chopin writes *agitato* at the beginning of this section, meaning agitated. In measure 50, the main theme is heard above the intense turbulence underneath as both hands carry the inner chords and bass octaves. Jeremy Siepmann describes, “The C minor, Op. 48, No. 1, is a sombre, dramatic, large-scale canvas of extraordinary intensity and drama.”¹¹ After reaching the third section's apex, the piece begins to descend towards its dramatic conclusion as the original theme appears one final time before Chopin arrives on the final C minor chords.

⁹John Rothgeb, “Chopin’s C-Minor Nocturne, Op. 48, No. 1, First Part: Voice Leading and Motivic Content,” *Theory and Practice* 5, no. 2 (1980): 26–31, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41330262>.

¹⁰John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard* (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1972), 401.

¹¹Jeremy Siepmann, et. al. *The Life and Works of Chopin*. (2002) HNH International Ltd. 36.

Ballade L. 70 by Claude Debussy

At an early age, Claude Debussy (1862-1918) showed great musical promise to his piano instructor and was admitted into the Paris Conservatory at eleven years old.¹² There, he started to experiment and develop his own musical style, as he would soon become well-known for using non-traditional scales such as the whole-tone scale, and melodic variation. Published in 1890, his piano works entitled *Reverie*, *Ballade L. 70*, *Nocturne*, and *Danse (Tarentelle styrienne)*, were compositions considered “youthful attempts” within Debussy’s early catalog in developing his uniquely expressive sound.¹³

In his *Ballade L. 70*, Claude Debussy highlights the storytelling aspect of this work with a variation form. The theme is introduced at the beginning and then is interwoven with new material almost every two stanzas. Marked *Andantino con moto (Tempo rubato)*, the *Ballade* opens with a C major seventh arpeggio. Debussy provides a subtle syncopation by covering the downbeat with an elongated note from the previous measure, suggesting metrical instability until the first *Tempo* section in measure 6.¹⁴ Exuberant colors are revealed as the left-hand flows underneath the melody with eighth notes or sixteenth notes.

In the *Animez peu à peu* section in measure 46, the bass now carries a new variation of the main melody under double triplets in the treble clef. Transporting the theme back and forth between hands, the dynamics grow from pianissimo to piano, growing towards the loudest dynamic marking of forte in measure 57. Quick legato passages carry this work forward as inner rhythms change and the primary motif

¹²Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature : Music for the Piano and Its Forerunners* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), 357.

¹³John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard* (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1972), 332.

¹⁴Elizabeth Rose, Jameson. “A Stylistic Analysis of the Piano Works of Debussy and Ravel.” University of North Texas Digital Library, August 15, 2015. <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc699677/>. 43. Accessed November 7, 2023.

continuously varies in each variation. This intensity has the opportunity to settle down as the *Molto calmato* section in measure 63 arrives.

In this next section, Debussy modulates to E major where the bass plays quintuplets against the right hand's duplets and triplets. This melody is lyrical and explores new avenues as the left hand continues to support it with legato sixteenth note sextuplets in measure 67. After reaching its peak, Debussy modulates back to F major in the *a Tempo* section, where it returns back to the piece's original tempo. The final section involves harp-like chords that, with a successful use of pedal, provide an enchanting atmosphere before ending pianissimo on an F major arpeggio.

Sonata No. 13 in A Major D. 664, Op. 120 by Franz Schubert

Composer and pianist, Franz Schubert (1797-1828) lived in Vienna, Austria. He had humble beginnings; the second youngest of five children, he attended and later aided his father in running a schoolhouse for young boys during a time of recovery from the Napoleonic campaigns.¹⁵ He had a musical family and received his foundations in music education from his father on viola. During his short life of 31 years, Franz Schubert would compose a bounteous musical catalog consisting of over 1500 musical works, including 600 art songs, German Lied, operas, string quartets, chamber music, symphonies, and various piano works. He was a contemporary of Beethoven and was also influenced by Haydn, and Mozart. Living in a transitional period within the late classical to early romantic eras, Schubert's compositions are often considered pivotal for both. Listeners can gradually detect the transition from Classical to Romantic within his piano sonatas by his use of song-like melodies, nature-influenced imagery, and his individualized sonata-form.

¹⁵Maurice J.E. Brown, *Schubert: A Critical Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1958), 7-8.

Performers of Schubert's thirteenth sonata will benefit from learning this piece as it demands technique, musicality, and overall spirit. This sonata is in the key of A major Op. 120 D. 664, a cheerful piano work that has warm themes and a sense of juvenility. It is rumored that during an eight-week break in the summer of 1819, twenty-two-year-old Franz Schubert was surrounded by beautiful mountainous landscapes in the Alpine resort of Steyr in Austria. At the end of his stay, he presented this new sonata to the pretty Josephine von Keller, a vocalist and pianist herself and the lodge owner's eldest daughter.¹⁶ With the inspirations of mountains and Josephine, it is not surprising that Schubert often incorporated vocal-like motifs and the bright wistfulness of falling in love in this three-movement sonata.

The first movement, marked *Allegro moderato*, opens with a humble yet exuberant theme in the key of A major. There is a perpetual movement of eighth notes underneath to support the right-hand melody. A consistent change between duple and triple meter is presented in the first movement and is developed throughout the sonata. The second theme is introduced in measure 21 with a simple rhythmic idea borrowed from Ludwig van Beethoven. Though there is no evidence that the two ever met, Schubert pays rhythmic homage to Beethoven's *Allegretto* in his Seventh Symphony through the motif of a quarter note followed by two eighth notes.



Schubert, Sonata in A major D. 664 Op. 120, Ed. Julius Epstein. mm 21.¹⁷

¹⁶Brian Newbould, *Schubert the Music and the Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/bios/ucal051/96049876.html>. 166.

¹⁷Schubert, Franz. "Sonata in A Major Op. 120, D.664." Edited by Julius Epstein. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1888. Plate F.S. 102, 1825.

Beethoven, Seventh Symphony in A major Op. 92, II. Allegretto, mm 75.¹⁸

Franz Schubert's interpretation of the Classical sonata-form does not strictly follow the rule of modulating to the expected dominant of the movement's tonic key. Rather, he would introduce the Development in a key closely related to the original.¹⁹ In measure 48, Schubert's decision to move to the relative major of F-sharp minor keeps the section tonally close to the tonic key of A major. After a prolonged period of pianississimo to piano dynamics in the Exposition a forte marking finally appears in measures 56-64 as slurred octaves ascend various scales such as C-sharp minor, E major, A major, and A minor. The first movement's Recapitulation restates the primary theme and ends on a perfect cadence in A major.

The second movement showcases a new pleasant atmosphere that contrasts with the surrounding movements. Marked *Andante*, a walking pace in duple meter, there is a sense of melancholy, longing, and falling in love in its thick chordal texture. In measures 1-12, Schubert appends "octave doubling of the melody"²⁰ to add harmonic color and a

https://vmirror.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/5/53/IMSLP00355-Franz_Schubert_-_Piano_Sonata_in_A,_D_664.pdf Accessed November 10, 2023.

¹⁸Ludwig van Beethoven. "Seventh Symphony in A Major Op. 92." https://vmirror.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d2/IMSLP504084-PMLP1600-Beethoven_-_Symphony_No.7_in_A_major,_Op.92.pdf Accessed November 10, 2023.

¹⁹Brian Newbould, *Schubert the Music and the Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 392-93.

²⁰Pieter Rooi. "Aspects of Schubert's Compositional Style as Displayed in Selected Piano Sonatas." Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2004. 111.

richer sound. Compared to the first and third movements, the second movement seems to be the most introspective. He conveys this by producing a “sighing” melody by playing a first inversion B minor chord descending to a D major chord in root position.

This movement modulates in measure 33 to the key of G major. This changes the entire mood from gloomy clouds to sunshine. By transitioning into triple meter, Schubert releases any tensions formed in the first section and allows the melody to stabilize in G major. It climaxes, descends and modulates back to D major. In measure 50, the primary motif returns and repeatedly moves to minor and major keys. Finally, with a perfect authentic cadence, the movement ends on the tonic in D major.

Franz Schubert gives us one final look into his eight-week holiday and admiration for Josephine von Keller in his last movement to complete this sonata. Marked *Allegro*, Schubert returns to A major and begins with a descending E major five-finger pattern to introduce the theme. While the melodic material in the first movement often traveled upward, now it makes its way downward as if Schubert is hiking down the mountains of Austria.

Lyricism in this third movement emerges through a simple, pastoral ten-measure theme. The melody travels through scales of A major, and D major, before arriving in a dance-like section in E major. The left-hand jumps from the low bass note to two proceeding thirds while the right hand carries the cheerful melody. The Development section then commences in C-sharp minor, the relative minor of E major and explores multiple scales including F-sharp major and B Major. Arpeggiated chords in measures 115 mark the transition from development to recapitulation sections, modulating to various keys such as A major and E major.

In measure 121, Schubert chooses to utilize a subdominant Recapitulation, introducing the primary theme in D major instead of A major. Instead of following the A

major to E major (tonic-dominant transition) first introduced in the Exposition, the primary theme has returned in D major therefore A major would now serve as the dominant in the second theme. Thus there is still a tonic-to-dominant relationship between the primary and secondary themes. It was common practice in the Classical era recapitulations to present all themes of the exposition in the tonic key, however Schubert often chose to disguise the tonic by introducing the primary theme in a closely related key. For this purpose, he often used the subdominant key.²¹ By Schubert starting on the subdominant, the second theme would then finish in the tonic key of A major where it belongs. This is then followed by cadential prolongation until the piece's primary theme returns and concludes on a resounding A major chord.

²¹Pieter Rooi. "Aspects of Schubert's Compositional Style as Displayed in Selected Piano Sonatas." Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2004. 53.

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presents

Christine Compton, piano
In a Graduate Recital

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the Master of Music degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy
From the Studio of Dr. Vakhtang Kodanashvili

French Suite No. 4 in E-flat major, BWV 815

Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Gavotte
Air
Menuet
Gigue

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1

Frédéric Chopin
(1810-1849)

Ballade, L. 70

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Sonata No. 13 in A major, Op. 120, D. 664

Allegro moderato
Andante
Allegro

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Davis Hall, at 6:00 P.M.

Monday, November 6, 2023