

Programme note by Chris Darwin: Please use freely for non-commercial purposes

Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849) Impromptu No. 1 in A flat major, Op. 29 (1837)

1837 was not a good time for Chopin: his engagement to Maria Wodzińska was slowly coming to an end, and he had not yet started his affair with Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin *aka* George Sand. In the company of pianist, purveyor of pianos and impresario Camille Pleyel, who had recently separated from his wife¹, he made an almost incognito summer trip from Paris to London. Here a letter from Maria's mother ending any hope of his marriage to Maria left him in a 'dreadful state of mind'. Alone and depressed, Chopin spent the rest of the summer in Paris immersed in work, which included preparing tonight's Impromptu op.29 for publication.

Dedicated to an aristocratic lady pupil, the work's opening arabesques give little hint of his emotional upheavals: '*[it] has the brightness of sunlight playing in a fountain's spray*' wrote one reviewer. The fast tempo together with the opening turn make it difficult to hear the opening rhythm (*illustrated*) as three lots of triplets, rather than just as a spray of sunny splashes. A contrasting middle section starts with a slow rising theme (*illustrated*) which gets progressively elaborated until we are back with the playing sunlight.



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