

# Analysis of the Composition Techniques of Chopin Fantasy Polonaise in A-Flat Major

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## Abstract

During the romantic period, Chopin made great contributions to the development of piano music. While absorbing the nutrients of classicism, he had the courage to innovate, and endowed Bora News and other genres with his own personalized music language. Starting from the three aspects of the theme structure, the writing techniques and the variation principle, this paper analyzes and studies the music “fantasy Polonaise in A-flat major”, and then goes to reveal the composer’s late writing style and composition techniques.

**Keywords:** Chopin, fantasy Polonaise, mixed musical form

## 1. An Overview of the Polonaise Types of Music

Polish dance, also known as Polonaise, is a folk dance that originated in Poland in the 16th century. It has a medium-speed three beats characteristic, often with the first eight and after 16 rhythm (commonly known as the “horseshoe type” rhythm). Before Chopin, both Bach and Weber had written works in this musical form. Early Polonaise originated in the folk, and then gradually spread to the upper class, gradually evolved into pure instrumental accompaniment dance music. It was widely used in the Polish court at the time, and then spread further to Europe. After entering the 19th century, under the influence of the Polish national liberation movement, the people often endowed this music genre with new ideological connotations of patriotism. Chopin raised the genre from form to connotation to an unprecedented height. Bonez dance music is also the strongest genre of Chopin’s national consciousness and feelings.

## 2. Theme Structure of Fantasy Polonaise in A-Flat Major

### 2.1 Thematic Analysis

Section 24-25 is the core motivation of the whole song, ranging from <sup>b</sup>A major (<sup>b</sup>B) to level 3 (C), and then down to level 2 (<sup>b</sup>B), forming arc surround type motivation a (Figure 1); from level 3 (C) to main (<sup>b</sup>A) to level 6 (F), as motivation factor b (Figure 1). Sections 26-27 are the deformation of these two motive factors respectively, a’ is obtained on the basis of the previous large second degree characteristic interval by changing the rhythm (adding the small attachment point and the triple link rhythm type), and still maintains the curved surround melody form (<sup>b</sup>B-C-<sup>b</sup>B). The difference between b’ is to expand the rhythm based on the four-five degree characteristic interval, b is the ascending six degree jump of the principal (<sup>b</sup>A) to the subordinate direction six-level tone (F), and b’ is the descending four degree jump of the principal (<sup>b</sup>A) to the subordinate tone (E). These two motivational factors form the theme of the composition. From the theme of melody, rhythm, interval relationship we can feel the contrast between the two motivation factors, is given priority to with large two interval and use the long value of the motivation a factors show soothing personality characteristics, is given priority to with three six degrees interval relationship and use the short value of motivation b factors show theme

jumping, lively personality characteristics.

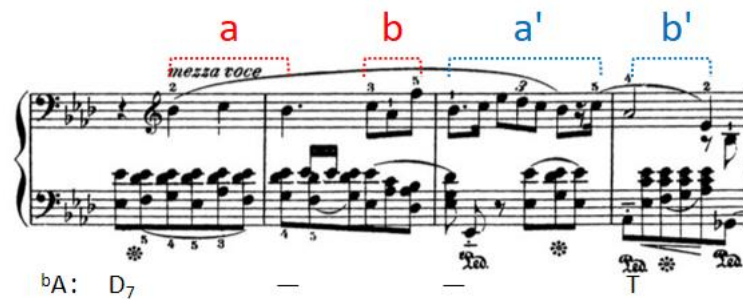


Figure 1. Theme

### 3. “A-Flat Major Fantasy Polonaise” Music Form Analysis

#### Ternary Form

introduction	first part				middle part				Reproduction		coda
	A	A	A'	B	C	D	E	E'	A	D	
23	20	23	27	21	32	34	32	28	13	14	20
$\flat a \flat e E \sharp g$	$\flat A$		C E	$\flat E \flat D \flat C$	$\flat B$	B	$\sharp g$ B	$\flat f$	$\flat A$		

Figure 2. Analysis diagrams

Overview: The overall style of this song is the complex trilogy style, and the main key is  $\flat A$  major.

Lead (1-23): the lead is in the main tone ( $\flat A$ ) with the main minor ( $\flat a$ ), contains two main factors, one is the first section on the lead to sound ( $\flat A$ -E) descending four rhythm (see Figure 3), the other is the first row row ( $\flat C$ - $\flat D$ - $\flat F$ -E), and appeared four times in a section. The former indicates the shape of the first B theme, while the latter indicates the surround shape of the first A theme first up and then down.

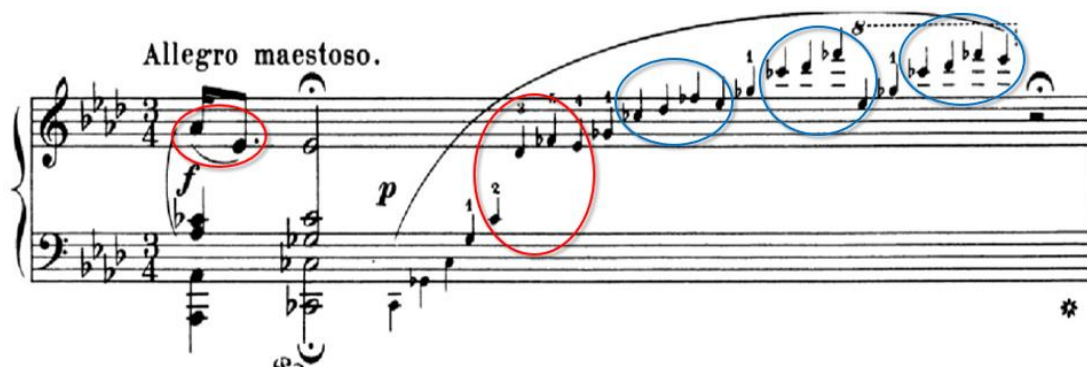


Figure 3.

First part (24-115)

Periode A (24-43)

The periode A is composed of two motivational factors of the theme. It is a quasi-parallel Periode, which is a two-sentence structure (4+16). The first phrase is the subject of the piece, the first three bars based on genus harmonic, closing ends at 27 bars main chord. The low-voice texture is made of columnar chords, and in the bar 25 appears the typical horseshoe rhythm of Polish dance (the first eight and sixteen), highlighting the rhythmic characteristics of Polish dance. The second sentence is shifted on the basis of the first sentence and transferred to  $b\flat$  minor for repetition. Different from the previous sentence, 12 sections are supplemented. The supplement part mainly uses the theme motivation  $b$  factor material, and the reflection, mold advance, diffusion and other techniques are used to develop. After section 12 supplement, the section A section opens at section 43 and ends on the main tone chord, forming an inversion with the previous sentence.

#### PeriodeA' (44-66)

The variation is repeated on the basis of the Periode A which is mainly reflected in the second section 52-55 bars of the second sentence.

#### Periode B (67-93)

The periode B is developed from the material of the theme motivation  $b$  factor. It is a quasi-parallel Periode with a non-square integral three-sentence pattern (5+8+14) structure. The first sentence starts with the six degrees of big jump ( $F-b\flat D$ ), then the reverse four degrees down to the main voice ( $b\flat A$ ), and then the second consecutive progression obviously comes from the motivation  $b$  factor (as shown in Figure 4). From the composition techniques, the first sentence began because of the big three degree interval, on the basis of six big jump and an octave jump ( $b\flat D-b\flat D$ ), and the beginning of the second sentence not to interval relationship, directly into a single ( $b\flat D-b\flat D$ ) octave jump into, the third sentence back to the interval to the single jump into, it can be seen that the three sentences in composition techniques similar and reproduction structure processing way. From the perspective of structure, these three sentences are a gradually increasing form. The second sentence is expanded on the basis of the first sentence, and the third sentence is expanded on the basis of the second sentence, giving people a feeling of wanting. In terms of tone layout, the B segment is transferred in a three-degree chord manner, with the first sentence in  $b\flat A$  major, the second sentence in C major, and the third sentence in E major. This periode in addition to the onal continuation of  $b\flat A$  major, other aspects such as harmony, texture and the mobility of the melody all contrast with the previous, harmony emphasized here is the main function, there is a continuous line in the low part, showing the stability of the B segment. The texture aspect begins to appear as a multi-part polyphonic texture in bar 68, and the horseshoe rhythm of Blonez dance music appears as jumping in the second part to achieve the fusion of fantastical elements and Blonez rhythm type.



Figure 4.

#### Reproduction of period A (94-115)

The reproduction of the periode of A section has an unfolding nature, which is embodied in the four aspects of tone, harmony, melody and texture. In tone, the reproduction of the A segment starts in the main genus direction tone  $b\flat E$  major, and goes to  $b\flat D$  major and  $b\flat$  minor in a second degree relationship in later sections 98 and 101. In harmony, the first sentence of the previous period A is stopped on the main chord and terminated, and the reproduction here has been developing in the genus harmony of various tones, bringing great power and instability to the reproduction. On the texture, the low part of the left hand has changed from the original cylindrical chord texture to the triple continuous flowing tone, from the original mighty and forthright to lyrical and free and easy. The loud part melody develops in the unfolding way of the 97 bars, with a series of scales rising and advancing rapidly, making the music begin to step on the path of "fantasy".

#### Central Region (116-215)

The middle part is a juxtaposition center composed of three different materials: C, D, and E, all of which are also developed from the variations of the theme.

#### Periode C (116-147)

Tunality to the main subordinate direction (<sup>b</sup>B). Due to the continuous development of materials, The periode C cannot be specifically divided into Phrase. This periode is a decorative variation of the theme motivation, developed by using its two major and small three major characteristic intervals, which is also easy at the beginning of the theme of Polonaise. In contrast to the first theme of A, the melody, harmony, and texture have all changed, in contrast to their character. The ups and downs of the melody is not big, basically is the second level, three, four degrees jump into the auxiliary. Harmonies enter into frequent off-tuning just after the main genus chords alternate, bringing about intense collisions and development. The texture becomes a semi-decomposed chord texture, reflecting the relatively soothing musical image of the C section.

#### Periode D (158-180)

Tunality is transferred to B major with the previous tality (<sup>b</sup>B). Is a two-sentence-style periode. The periode begins with five bars introduced in a cylindrical chord texture, so it can be seen that the periode D is the most contrasting part of the middle section, which can be regarded as the “true sense” of the middle section. The first sentence (153-167) is developed from the characteristic sound interval of the first theme motivation factor a, and the first second ascending and second descending tone is obviously derived from the theme of Polonaise. The second sentence (168-180) is developed from the theme motivation factor a1, mainly using the rhythm of the progressive and descending triple sound and developing it (from the triad to the first and eight attached points). The two sentences are both the same in the texture as in the beginning melody, which is actually the contrast between a and A 1 material. This part is composed of three vocal parts. The loud part is mainly two-tone overlapping with small three-degree interval relationship, the middle part is mainly four-degree two-tone overlapping, and the low part is the decomposed arpeggigio chord, so this section is richer, full and fuller than the first A part.

#### Periode E (181-213)

Tunonal to parallel minor in B major (<sup>#</sup>g). Due to the continuous development of the material, this periode can not be divided into specific sentences. periode E is the most fantasy and improvised periode in the song, and the music is more lyrical. The melody AGA at the beginning of the E section comes from the melody sound type (BCB) of the motivation a-factor arc in the theme, which changes from the original lower arc to the upper arc, and the small six-degree jump of section 183 comes from the theme motivation factor b, just as a bonus treatment. The difference is that the appearance of the low-part texture segmentation rhythm enhances the power of the music. Section 194 turns back to B-major, where the same-tone color transition is prepared for the first b-minor in the E'section below.

#### Periode E' (214-241)

This section mainly plays a transitional role, which can be divided into three parts: the first part (214-215) uses the introduction material to the b minor; the second part (216-231) uses the E section material to the f major; the third part (232-241) is the import before the reproduction; DVII<sub>2</sub>/D on the section 228 strong beat indicates the prepared entry.

#### Reproduction Department (242-268)

Return to the main tone (<sup>b</sup>A), comprehensive reproduction. Different from the regular trilogy, the D section of the middle part reproduces after reproducing the first A theme, and the D section also returns to the main tone (<sup>b</sup>A). Both the middle and low parts under the main melody of the A section use the three-link rhythm, changing the previous beat pattern and highlighting the rhythm characteristics of the three dance song beat. In reproducing D section, the low part changes from the link rhythm to the point rhythm of the triad. These two rhythm types come from the two most important rhythm types in the theme motivation a1 factor. The sequential rhythm of the point rhythm brings the singing of the music, while the isorhythm of the triad enhances the rhythm of the music. The reproduction part plays the role of dynamic reproduction by shifting the high pitch area, increasing the acoustic part, and thickening the texture.

#### Coda (269-288)

Continue the texture reproducing the D material to finish. Section 282 harmony to the subordinate direction (D<sub>7</sub>/S) into the supplementary termination, and the next section solves the six level tone to the subordinate, where the six level tone (<sup>b</sup>F) for the subordinate tone (<sup>b</sup>E). Chopin here not only emphasizes the termination type, but also reflects the unique romantic and harmonic color.

### 4. Variant Principle in Fantasy Polish Dance in A major

In his book, Qian Renkang's Tutorial on Music Works Analysis, he said: “This music is one of Chopin's many Polish dance plays, and it is a late work, titled “Fantasy Polish Dance”, indeed in this work, fantasy has more components than Polish dance music, which is not only reflected in the rotation and development of the theme,

the variety of speed and tonality, and the gorgeous texture. More importantly, it is also reflected in the theme of several large sections of the music. Each theme is closely related in tone, but can be free to gallop and contrast with each other, so that the whole music is flexible in structure and presents a vibrant scene." Therefore, there is a great mix in the structure of this work. The following author discusses the principle of variation from the contrast between themes.

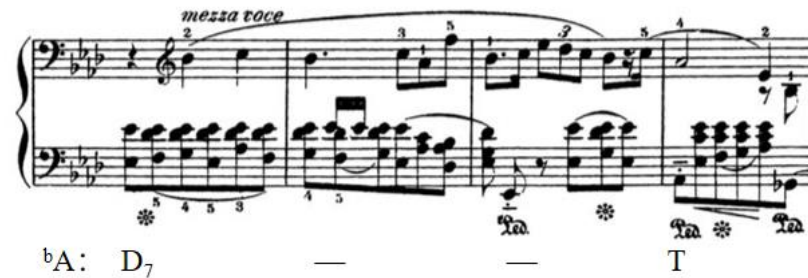


Figure 5. Theme A

Figure 6. It is developed from motivation A-A<sup>1</sup>(Strict variation)

As shown in Figure 5-6, contrast theme (A) and found, A theme reproduction with strict variation retained the basic structure of the theme, maintain the melody and harmony basic skeleton, but by changing the tone (A theme reproduction to its direction) and texture (left low part from the original column chord texture into triple flow tone, from the original bold and lyrical) make the mood of the music contrast. And the melody develops in the way of unfolding, and the music has begun to step forward to the “fantasy” road.



Figure 7.



Figure 8.

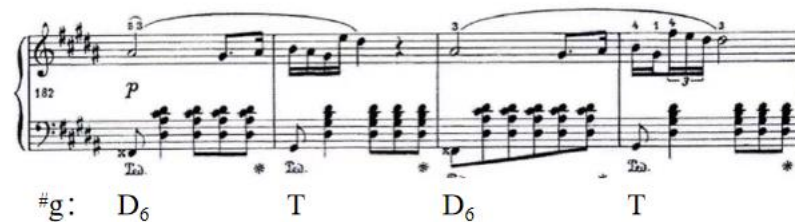


Figure 9.

As shown in Figure 7-9, comparing the A theme with the C theme in the central part will find that the melody, harmony and texture have all changed, in contrast to the previous A theme in character, so here is different from the previous, it is a character variation. But they also have a homologous relationship, and the second-degree and third-degree characteristic tones obviously come from the theme of Polonaise. The D theme is the most contrasting part of the central part. The theme is euphemistic and lingering, and the melody, harmony and texture have also changed. And the first part of the second upward and second downward tone is obviously from the theme of Polonaise. The E theme is the most fantasy and improvised paragraph in the song, and the music is more lyrical. Comparing the two themes, it is found that the AGA here in the theme E comes from the curved melody tone type (BCB) in the theme, which changes from the original lower arc to the upper arc. The appearance of the low-part texture syncopated rhythm enhances the power of the music. The latter six rising tones also remind us of the theme of Polonaise. From this we can see that as a variation it is a single-theme variation. The first strict variation retained the basic structure of the theme, maintaining the basic skeleton of the melody and harmony, but contrasted the mood and character of the music by changing the texture and tonality. The last three character variations introduced more new factors, expanded the ups and downs of music development, strengthened the contrast and relative independence between the various variations, and used more flexible and diverse variation techniques, thus increasing the contrast of music mood and character between the various variations.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of the music shows that the free development of the theme material reflects the free and free style of the late Chopin period, with the variation principle; the overall tone layout is mainly the second degree relationship ( $^bA-^bB-^bA$ ), showing the contrast of the romantic period. At the same time, the author on the work of mixing phenomenon is discussed, because the typical structure of this type is basic complex trilogy, like the sonata first movement is generally sonata, Chopin nocturne is generally a trilogy, there are some genre and conventional combination. However, due to the leading role of the fantasy factor in fantasy Polonaise in A-flat major, although the structure of the music still presents three outlines, it has been combined with other style principles in the free flowing music thinking, and finally formed a mixed style based on the complex trilogy style and the variational principles.

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