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**FRYDERYK CHOPIN'S BALLADES:
PARTICULARITIES OF PERFORMANCE INTERPRETATION
THESIS ABSTRACT FOR DOCTORAL DEGREE IN ARTS**

**SPECIALITY 653.01 MUSICOLOGY
(PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE)**

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The defense will take place on **February 20, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.** in the meeting of the Commission for the Public Defense of the Doctoral Thesis at the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts (87 A. Mateevici St., aud. 52, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova, MD 2009)

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THESIS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Relevance and importance of the dissertation topic. "The Poet of the Piano", "creator of a new sound image" – Fryderyk Chopin was defined by the music community as a "symbol of Polishness" during his lifetime. Romantic aesthetics, deep national basis, perfection of musical form, expression, lyricism, intimacy of musical intonation, refinement and drama up to tragic musical and emotional breakdowns define the basis of F. Chopin's musical poetics.

The study of the reception of F. Chopin both in the era of romanticism and in subsequent centuries has repeatedly become the subject of scientific investigation by researchers in various countries. Works of a generalizing cultural scale are presented by Polish, English, Russian and American scientists, including: Mieczysław Tomaszewski, Jim Samson, Igor Balza, Jeffrey Kallberg and many others. A significant contribution to the global Chopiniana was made by the results of scientific research presented at *The First International Musicological Congress Devoted to the Works of Frederick Chopin* (Warszawa, 1960), the main purpose of which is to study the archives of the composer himself and his contemporaries, in-depth comprehension of preserved verbal and musical texts.

In the global musicology of the first two decades of the 21st century, the legacy of F. Chopin and its significance in the history of musical culture are studied from a variety of angles. Researchers focus on textual studies and musical semantics, expanding the boundaries of performing rendition, and involve methodological principles from related humanities and natural sciences. The study of the musical content or expressive-semantic essence (V. Kholopova's definition) of F. Chopin's music in the context of contemporary performing arts is one of the most relevant objectives of contemporary art criticism.

F. Chopin's Piano *Ballades* are deep compositions filled with multidimensional musical content. Their artistic world is distinguished by universalism: the inmost psychologism and inner lyricism are combined with a sense of objective life reality, subtlety in the conveying of distinct moods – with a prominent pattern of dramatic development, dreamy contemplation – with active potentes. *Ballades* trace the interrelationships between their musical content, compositional structure, and complex of expressive means; they embody the attributive features of romantic musical art (the convergence of various types of intonation, improvisational nature, the significant role of folklore origins, etc.).

Complex architectonics, intonational multi-dimensionality and rich imaginative semantics of *Ballades* open up broad interpretive horizons, allowing performers to create various variants of artistic reading. That is why they turn out to be a kind of "litmus test" of a pianist's performance maturity and at the same time-a unique material for identifying the specifics of national schools.

The significance of this work is determined by the steady interest of world musicology in the artistic heritage of F. Chopin. However, the Western tradition of research is more focused on the textual aspect (author's version, variants and sources), on the problems of musical semantics and historical and cultural context. At the same time, the field of comparative interpretation of Chopin's works in various national performing schools is presented fragmentary and has not received a complete, systematic implementation.

The present study is intended to fill this gap by offering a comparative analysis of the F. Chopin's *Ballades* interpretations in the Western European, Polish, Russian (Soviet) and Asian (Chinese) piano schools and considered by the author in diachronic and synchronic totality. This approach makes it possible not only to identify the evolution of performing traditions in the 20th – 21st centuries, but also to trace universal patterns and national-specific trends in artistic practice. Moreover, in the framework of the study, *Ballades* are interpreted as a single meta-text reflecting the dialogue of cultures, which expands the art history perspective in the direction of cultural studies, comparative studies and interdisciplinary research.

Thus, the relevance of the topic is determined both by the general interest of world science in Chopin's heritage, and by the need for scientific replenishment of the insufficiently-studied area of interpretative analysis, in particular, by a comparative examination of the performing traditions of *the Ballades* of F. Chopin. The novelty of the approach consists in combining cultural, hermeneutical and performing perspectives, which allows us to build a holistic view of the place and meaning of *Ballades* in the modern pianistic space and in a broader cultural context.

The purpose of the dissertation is to reveal the individualities of the musical poetics of Chopin's *Ballades* and the directions of their performance interpretation in the context of the piano traditions of the 20th – 21st centuries in different countries.

Research objectives: (1) to reveal the genre, compositional-dramatic, and musical-stylistic features of piano *Ballades* by F. A. Chopin in their connection with the genesis of the genre and the context of the romanticism aesthetics and the individual style of the composer; (2) to analyze the performance interpretations of Chopin's *Ballades* by the leading pianists of the 20th century in the context of Polish piano romanticism, and the traditions of the Russian and Western European piano schools; (3) to identify the individual aspects of performing approaches to the rendition of the musical text of these piano works by world pianists of the early 21st century; (4) to present the role and significance of *Ballades* by F. Chopin in the concert repertoire of Chinese pianists; (5) to formulate methodological recommendations for the practical development of compositions.

The scientific novelty and originality of the research consists in establishing the particularities of the poetics of *Ballades* by F. Chopin based on the totality of the results of their

musical-theoretical and performing analysis, the discovery of the piano-interpretive foundations *the Ballades* of F. Chopin, and the specifics of their interpretation in the global music and performance practice of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century. The work is intended to fill the gap existing in Russian musicology, which has not yet created a single theoretical work devoted to the comparative analysis of performing traditions in the interpretations of *the Ballades*. For the first time in the Republic of Moldova, an attempt has been made to generalize and systematize various musicological, performing and pedagogical approaches to the analysis of *Ballades* by F. Chopin.

The novelty and originality of the artistic concept consists in mastering and presenting the piano *Ballades* of F. Chopin studied in the dissertation on the basis of three concert performances, in which the author was presented as a soloist who performed *the Ballades* and some representative works of the Polish composer. The uniqueness and innovativeness of the artistic concept is also confirmed by our own long-term pedagogical practice and authentic performance interpretation of the material chosen for this dissertation research. The work complements and deepens, from the point of view of a practicing musician, a number of theoretical and methodological studies in the field of musical interpretation and performing traditions. It can serve as a starting point for further research in this field.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the study. To achieve this goal and solve the problems, a set of complementary research methods was used, including: theoretical analysis of literature, scientific inquiry to identify the features of *Piano Ballades* by F. Chopin, and the practice of mastering romantic piano traditions in the global performing practice of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century. The paper uses universal (philosophical and aesthetic) and general scientific research methods – analysis, synthesis, systemic and structural method. The historical method is the leading one in this work. An appeal to the piano performing traditions of different countries leads to the use of the method of comparative studies, which reveals differences in performing approaches and techniques of sound extraction, interpretation of the compositional and dramatic logic of the work's development; historical-geographical and theoretical-analytical methods allow us to systematize a significant amount of empirical material.

The theoretical basis of the dissertation research on the general problems of the musical genre, genre synthesis, history and theory of the ballades genre were the works of N. Begicheva, K. Dahlhaus, K. Zenkin, E. Nazaikinsky, O. Sokolova, V. Zukkerman, A. Korobova. Stylistic problems of romanticism are studied in the works of M. Lobanova, I. Balza, J. Milshtein. In Russian-language musicology, the works of M. Aranovsky, N. Vashkevich, V. Kholopova,

V. Medushevsky and A. Kudryashov are fundamental for analyzing the specifics of musical semantics.

In the context of these developments, a slightly different theoretical and methodological justification is required for the science of performing arts, which is morphologically distinguished in the aesthetic and philosophical works of Yu. Borev, M. Kagan, S. Rappoport, G. Grigorieva as an independent art form with specific features. The scientific literature also includes studies of teachers and active musicians-performers who summarize their experience and give practice-oriented recommendations related to piano technique and overcoming textual difficulties (finger notation, dynamics, pedalisation, execution manner, etc.) – works by V. Moskalenko, E. Liberman, D. Blagoy, etc.

A separate area of the theoretical basis of the dissertation consists of works and research on musical poetics and the legacy of F. Chopin: historical and biographical monographs and epistolary literature (F. Chopin, I. Belza, Yu. Kremlev, etc.). Problems of musical form, language, and author's narrative in Chopin's works are reflected in the musicological works of L. Mazel, Yu. Tyulin, and N. Kolesnikov, N. Vieru, V. Zukkerman. In addressing issues of performance and pedagogical problems in the music of F. Chopin, in working on the text of his compositions, the author of the dissertation relied on the works of N. Golubovskaya, A. Malinkovskaya, J. Milstein, G. Neuhaus, G. Tsypin, A. Goldenweiser and others.

The stylistic and genre-dramaturgical features of the romantic ballad in general, and of F. Chopin's piano *Ballads*, in particular, are reflected in the works of V. Kholopova, K. Zenkin, N. Vieru, V. Zukkerman and others.

The methodological basis of the dissertation was also the work of Chinese scientists on the dedicated to development of music education in China (Bian Meng), the formation of Chinese piano culture and the national piano school (Huang Ping, Hu Yixuan, Sun Jinan). In the modern music science of the PRC, the personality of the composer F. Chopin, his piano compositions, problems of style, aspects of the performing interpretation of F. Chopin's works by Chinese pianists are analyzed in a number of studies (Shi Yawen, Fu Lei, Fu Tsong, Zhu Yuanzhen). A separate group of sources includes interviews, memoirs, and conversations with Chinese pianists who performed Chopin's music.

The practical significance of the work is connected with the possibility of its application in the training courses *History of Performing Arts*, *Methods of Teaching Piano*, *Didactics of Teaching Special Subjects*, *History of Music*, as well as recommended material for the discipline *Special Piano*. The results of the study can be used by students who are interested in improving their practical skills in mastering Chopin's piano compositions and improving their overall musical

and performing culture. Conclusions and recommendations will be useful in preparing concert performances and studio recordings of pianists from different countries, as well as in the daily practice of teachers. All of the above will help to optimize the process of teaching piano performing arts in the higher education system, as well as promote the popularization of Chopin's piano heritage, and promote the concert activities of foreign pianists (including those from China) in the Republic of Moldova.

Introduction of scientific and practical results of the dissertation. The materials and main results of the research are reflected in the author's speeches at international and national scientific conferences, as well as in 7 articles published in specialized scientific publications of the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Belarus, and the People's Republic of China.

Main provisions of the theoretical research were also expressed in the practical part of the dissertation in the framework of three recitals held on the stage of *the Steinway Concert Hall* (Guangzhou, China) and the Guangdong Pedagogical University in Guangzhou, China, as well as in the author's extensive concert and teaching activities.

Testing of work results. The dissertation research was carried out within the framework of the Doctorate School of *Arts and Cultural Studies, Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts* and passed a consistent scientific validation: discussion at the meetings of the Scientific Guidance Commission, as well as at the meeting of the Preliminary Defense Commission with the participation of an external expert, a representative of the Academic Council (protocol of December 15, 2025), following which the work it was recommended for public defense. Confirmation of the reliability of obtained scientific results was carried out by presenting reports at national and international scientific conferences, discussing them in a professional environment, as well as subsequent publication of research materials in specialized scientific publications (*Studiul artelor și culturologie, Intertext*, etc.). These forms of validation made it possible to clarify the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study and approve its results in academic discourse.

The practical component of the dissertation research, focused on the interpretation of *Piano Ballades* by F. Chopin was reflected in three author's concert performances, which received high professional appreciation. This fact confirmed not only the artistic value of the proposed interpretative solutions, but also their methodological and practical significance, which is expressed in the expansion of the modern performing repertoire and in the actualization of the problems of interpretation of Chopin's works.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF A THEORETICAL STUDY

The **Introduction** substantiates the relevance of this research, defines its purpose and objectives, the degree of novelty and originality, theoretical and practical significance, contains information about the approbation of the research results and the structure of the work, and briefly describes the content of the dissertation.

The structure of the **First Chapter** entitled *The Genre of Ballades in Chopin's works* is determined by the subject of this study – *Four Piano Ballades* by Chopin in the aspect of performing traditions of the 20th – 21st centuries. **Section 1.1. Historical Background of the Piano Ballad Genre** presents an overview of the scientific literature devoted to the ballad genre, its etymology and genesis. On the basis of scientific conclusions and methodological principles developed in philosophical and aesthetic, literary, ethnographic, musical and theoretical studies, typological features of the ballad as a literary and musical genre, historical prerequisites for its appearance (the lyrical choral song genre in France and Italy (14th – 15th centuries), as well as the lyric-epic tradition of Anglo-Scottish folk poetry (14th – 16th centuries)) and ways of emergence of a new piano form in the European musical culture of the 19th century are revealed. *The national-historical ballad (1.1.1.)*, being the pre-foundation of *a romantic instrumental ballad (1.1.2.)*, due to its universality becomes not only a conductor of ideas of national identity, but also opens up new creative opportunities in accordance with the spirit of the time and romantic style. In the context of the musical poetics of the romantic era, the place and historical and aesthetic significance of Chopin's *Ballades* are determined in the correlation with composer's individual style.

F. Chopin's innovation, connected with the composer's search for the transformation of classical genres and the formation of new genre models, leads to *the emergence of a new instrumental genre – the piano ballad (1.1.3.)*, which has a consistently built plot-dramatic line, unity of artistic idea, figurative and semantic integrity based on the development of ballad conflict.

Section 1.2 is devoted to the analysis of *Chopin's Ballades* as a somewhat unified construct. The study of *compositional and dramatic similarities and differences (1.2.1)* between *Ballades* allows us to present them as some kind of "instrumental dramas" which are characterized by a free structure, poetic nature, symphonic principles of development and dynamization of form. All *Four Ballades* are based on an intonation-thematic symbiosis, which is a fusion of cantilena, narrative-declamation elements and dance ability. A special feature of the composition of Chopin's *Ballades* is the movement of continuous narrative, the course of time flows, which is largely facilitated by a complex of piano tools: *rubato tempo*, pedals, touch.

This section consistently presents the history of creation, features of the musical content, figurative and plot motifs and their semantic characteristics, structural and dramatic features of each ballade (1.2.2., 1.2.3., 1.2.4., 1.2.5.). The unifying idea of all Chopin's *Ballades* is characterized by the perceived "presence" of the author in musical texts, his artistic empathy, compassion to what is happening; obviously, this particular fact is decisive in the approaches to the performance interpretation of these opuses.

Section 1.3 presents **the Conclusions of Chapter 1.**

The logic of constructing **the Second chapter, the *Ballades of F. Chopin, and Piano Performance Traditions of the 20th Century*** is determined by the methodological foundation of the theory of musical performance and interpretology. In section **2.1. *Reading the Ballades of F. Chopin in the Context of Music Performance Theory***, interpretation of *Ballades* is considered by the author as the result of a multi-level dialogue of pianists from different countries and generations, which provides an opportunity to see a wide panorama of artistic meanings based on the variability of readings of the author's text, which, in turn, has a noticeable impact on the final perception of the musical work. In this context, the analysis of outstanding performing ballad readings helps to form a holistic concept of understanding the artistic text of the Polish romantic in its cross-cultural and musical-historical connections.

Performative interpretation facilitates the discovery of new facets of F. Chopin's musical world – facets that resonate with the present day – revealing its full depth. It provides an inward view of the musical text and enables the construction of its multidimensional contextual relationships. "Resonance," echo, reflection – these synonymous concepts make it possible to sense the pulse of Chopin's music within the contemporary cultural space. They illuminate the processual dimension of the life of Chopin's music in the cultural space and time, the response to his works, as well as the perception and personal attitude toward a specific opus of the composer on the part of listeners, performers, and researchers.

The obvious differences in the performance interpretations of *the Ballades* are certainly related to the specifically chosen musical editing, which often leads to some discrepancies in the agogical, dynamic, and finger notation instructions. However, in the course of the analysis in the analytical sections of the study, the author took into account this variation of editorial remarks, especially in cases where the pianist managed to approach the composer's idea in the most complete way.

Each subsequent section of chapter presents a characterization of the performance interpretations of F. Chopin's *Ballades* in the context: of Polish piano romanticism traditions (interpretations by I. Paderewski, J. Hofmann, Art. Rubinstein, K. Zimerman) – **Section 2.2. *The***

Ballades by F. Chopin and Polish Piano Romanticism; the Russian piano school of the twentieth century (interpretations by A. Goldenweiser, S. Feinberg, V. Sofronitsky, V. Horowitz L. Oborin, S. Richter, etc.), as well as a comprehensive analysis of the reading of *Ballades* by S. Neuhaus – **Section 2.3. Performing Interpretations of Chopin's Ballades and Traditions of the Russian Piano School**; interpretative concepts of Western European piano schools (A. Cortot, A. Fischer, A.B. Michelangeli, M. Pollini, M. Argerich, D. Pascal, etc.) – **Section 2.4. Interpretative Concepts of Western European Piano Schools**. In each of the sections, the author defines the peculiarities of approaches to the performance of Chopin's *Ballades* in the aspect of national piano traditions and characteristics of individual pianists from different countries.

The national style of the Polish piano school (**Section 2.2.**), reflected in the interpretations of the *Ballades* by Polish pianists is distinguished by logical clarity of concepts, balanced form, gradually unfolding and clearly constructed drama. Among the main features of Polish ballad interpretations, we can distinguish the following: creation of expressive musical-imagery series, musical-timbral personification of images, dramaturgy of contrasts that allows identifying individual semantically significant elements of the musical text, deep immersion in the semantic context of each *Ballade*, balance of rational and emotional principles (properties that are especially characteristic of interpretations of Art. Rubinstein).

One of the promising conclusions of our analysis of performing activities of Art. Rubinstein, is the idea of the cross-cultural nature of his personality: thanks to the creative and technical principles developed by him, it is possible to determine the directions of the European piano school in the approaches to the interpretation of Chopin's *Ballades* – in general they condense the achievements of the Polish piano school (a set of tools that define the concept of "national romanticism") and the Russian school (the tradition of "singing piano").

In addition, it should be noted that Polish pianists adhere to the national Chopin's style: the nobility of interpretation; emotional restraint; the dominance of the *brillante* style; the characteristic principle of sound extraction, emphasizing the instrumental beginning of the sound; following the metrical-rhythmic basis of the musical text; restraint of agogic techniques (the main characteristic features of K. Zimerman's interpretations).

In the reading of Chopin's *Ballades* by representatives of the Russian piano school of pianism (**Section 2.3.**), the distinctive features were: philosophical depth, "substantiveness" of interpretations, the aspiration to comprehend the depth of a musical work's content, its semantic meaning (A. Goldelweiser); realism, reflected in the naturalness and emotional authenticity of the performance (L. Oborin's interpretations); obvious aspirations toward the Polish national-

popular and, more broadly, Pan-Slavic "element" as the source of Chopin's world, his creative imagination (V. Sofronitsky); a particular sound "sing-song" quality, the poetic nature of the intonation, combined with heightened emotionality and pathos (S. Feinberg, S. Neuhaus); fine pedalization; avoiding mannerisms, excessive sentimentality, flaunting technical techniques and external effects.

Distinctive features of the Western European piano school (**Section 2.4.**), reflected in the interpretation of *Ballades*, are an organic combination of the classical approach to interpretation (careful reading of Chopin's texts, compliance with all author's instructions) and a pronounced individuality of interpretation (A. Cortot, A. Fischer). Among other features of this school, one should mention the understanding of the "narrative" of *Ballades* hidden in the musical text, the dramatic development of images, the logic of composition, and, in this regard, the awareness of the need to penetrate into the depth of national musical culture, the ability to reproduce the emotional and psychological characteristic of the Polish romantic tradition (D. Pascal).

In addition, the European piano tradition positions a more flexible approach to the interpretation of agogic and dynamic shades (*tempo rubato*), which allows you to create a large-scale musical canvas in combination with the finest details, in the synthesis of content and technical virtuosity, with a combination of logic of composition construction, metric-rhythmic consistency and, at the same time, a sense of particular freedom (M. Argerich, M. Pollini).

Section 2.5. Conclusions of Chapter 2 summarises the above.

The Third Chapter is *F. Chopin's Ballades in the Concepts of Pianists of the 21st Century* is an analysis of piano interpretations in the modern performing space. In the 21st century, against the background of increasingly blurring geographical and national borders, the question of whether pianists belong to different piano schools is becoming quite relevant. The main areas of professional education today are the European, Asian (Chinese) and American piano traditions; at the same time, in the context of globalization, the main criterion is to receive education within a certain cultural and national space. We emphasize that in the modern global music culture, the concept of *performing school* is expanded to the concept of *performing tradition*, which has a multi-level structure, including individual piano schools associated with the activities of outstanding teachers and performers, regional and national performing schools. A significant phenomenon of the art of the 21st century is the appearance on its "front stage" of representatives of Chinese musical culture.

In **Section 3.1. *The Ballades of F. Chopin's in the Contemporary Performance Space*** attention is focused on the modern European tradition of interpreting *the Ballades* of F. Chopin, including performances by such pianists as R. Blechacz, L. Byrny and E. Kissin, Yu. Avdeeva,

L. Geniušas, M. Paşol, L. Debargue. It also takes into account the interpretations of the Canadian and Belarusian pianists (B. Liu and A. Ponochevny), highlighting the variety of approaches and features in reading the *Ballades*. A comprehensive analysis of interpretations shows differences in the approaches of performers and is the basis for characterizing their individual style. A comparative musical and semantic analysis of the interpretations of *the Fourth Ballade* by A. Sultanov, Li Yundi, and K. Buniatishvili reveals the particularities of performing intonation, dramatic accents, and gradations of emotional nuances that emphasize the diversity of reading the musical text. In general, it should be highlighted that at the semantic level of the beginning of the 21st century, the piano tradition of performing *Ballades* retains the classical approach and follows the method of piano *belcanto*, inherent in the style of F. Chopin. The pianists demonstrate a subtle gradation of emotional nuances, relying on the context of romanticism and the poetic formula "jal".

B Section 3.2. *Modern Chinese Chopiniana in Ballades Interpretations* examines the place and significance of Chopin's repertoire in the concert and competition life of Chinese pianists and music and educational programs of the PRC. Contemporary Chinese pianists such as Lang Lang, Li Yundi and Yuja Wang demonstrate a high level of performance, which is confirmed by their success in prestigious competitions. The analysis of interpretive approaches to the texts of Chopin's *Ballades* by Chinese pianists shows that they are united by their technical and virtuoso skills, the predominance of heroic and pathetic intonation and attention to compositional integrity.

B Section 3.3. presents *The Author's Vision of the Chopin's Ballades Interpretations*. Distinguishing features of Chopin's musical texts lie in the richness of intonation and thematic material, which offers a variety of interpretive approaches. It is important to take into account the national flavor that unites Polish and European poetics. The process of interpreting Chopin's *Ballades* requires a combination of virtuosity and psycho-emotional understanding. The performer must find a balance between accurate reading of the text and emotional expressiveness, giving the composition an actual meaning and revealing its spiritual content.

For almost two centuries, performers have been trying to approach a certain "ideal interpretation" of F. Chopin. The solution should be found in the ratio of accurate reading of the musical text, recreating the style, language, understanding the wide associative field and the corresponding performance. Stylistically, it is necessary to understand the different types of recitation that dictate melodic climaxes and corresponding semantic accents. As for the level of expressiveness in *Ballades*, a balance of emotional psychology and aesthetic objectivity should be found. In this context, personal, subjective cognitive processes and unique technical qualities

of a particular pianist play an important role. In general, the current trends of modern piano art are a kind of "restoration" of musical texts by F. Chopin, clearing them of mannerism and sentimentalism, striving for performance precision, rhythmic clarity.

Section 3.4. is a summary.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The dissertation research devoted to the interpretation of Fryderyk Chopin's piano *Ballades* in the context of national performing schools revealed both the deep historical and stylistic foundations of this genre and significant transformations of performing paradigms in the socio-cultural dynamics of the 19th – 21st centuries. On the basis of structural, comparative, cultural and analytical methods, general conclusions were obtained that have both theoretical and musical, as well as performing and practical significance.

The following **main conclusions** were formulated:

1. The analysis of the ballad as an artistic phenomenon of the romantic era revealed the origins and poetics of the genre formed at the intersection of literary, folklore and musical traditions. The piano ballade as a genre embodies the characteristic features of a romantic poem-a synthetic form that combines epic narration with lyrical introspection. The origin of the genre is rooted in the national-historical ballad, which determined its semantic multi-layered and universality as an artistic carrier of the ideas of national identity and romantic imagery. The emergence of the ballade in instrumental music is due not only to the evolution of genre forms, but also to the deep processes of the romantic worldview, in which the idea of individual utterance, emotional authenticity, intonation "resonance" between the composer and the perceiving subject becomes particularly important.

2. The genre specifics of the piano *Ballades* by F. Chopin are clarified in the context of romanticism aesthetics. The Chopin's ballade is not just a new instrumental genre of the romantic era, but a unique artistic form that goes beyond the traditional genre understanding and acquires the status of an individualized artistic model with a poetic, symbolic and dramatic dimension. That is, Chopin's composition is a paradigmatic example of the genre-forming process in *Four Piano Ballades*, the composer not only synthesizes poetic and musical models, but also forms a new type of drama based on internal conflict, metaphorical imagery, and the development of end-to-end ballad tension. The structure of ballades reveals a kind of "poetic nature" (as an expression of end-to-end figurative development, internal plot content and compositional integrity), which becomes not only a stylistic indicator of the era, but also a conceptual basis for

performing interpretation. The genre appears not as an externally defined form, but as the result of intonation and dramatic formation, reflecting the worldview of the romantic subject.

3. The main aesthetic principles of national piano schools (19th – 21st centuries), which determine the specifics of interpreting Chopin's *Ballades*, have been identified and systematized. It is established that each of the schools represents not only a set of technical and stylistic techniques, but also a deep cultural and historical model of perception of a musical text:

- **the Polish school** (Art. Rubinstein, K. Zimerman, R. Blechacz, etc.) relies on the concept of noble simplicity, grace of form, timbre refinement and logical harmony, while maintaining a distance from excessive expression; a special place is occupied by Art. Rubinstein as a figure of cross-cultural synthesis, his style is fusion of the Polish school with elements of Russian sound poetry and European artistic freedom; it was Art. Rubinstein who proposed a balanced model of interpretation of the *Ballades*, in which emotionality and rigour, artistry and reverence for Chopin's text organically coexist;
- **the Russian school** (S. Feinberg, V. Sofronitsky, S. Neuhaus, L. Oborin, S. Richter) reveals the philosophical and poetic core of Chopin's *Ballades*, it is characterized by philosophical intonation thinking, poetic phrasing, the desire to reveal the deep layers of figurative content, performing "meaningfulness" becomes the leading principle of interpretation; S. Feinberg and S. Neuhaus are distinguished by special "melodiousness" and poetic phrasing, for S. Richter and L. Oborin – the monumentality of drama, for V. Sofronitsky – an appeal to Slavic mythopoetics;
- **the Western European school** (A. Cortot, A. Fischer, M. Beroff) in the interpretation of Chopin's *Ballades* throughout the 20th century demonstrates a commitment to authentic reading of the text with a pronounced individualization of the performing intonation, a synthesis of content and technical virtuosity, the logic of composition construction; comprehension of meaningful content is manifested through awareness of the need to penetrate into the depth of national Polish culture, expressive genre characteristics musical themes (D. Pascal); in the interpretations of A. Cortot, the "nerve" of French romanticism is felt, while A. Fischer offers an analytically constructed drama with a high degree of artistic self-awareness; together with a clear metric-rhythmic consistency, a sense of particular freedom is felt – the European piano tradition positions a more flexible approach to the interpretation of agogic and dynamic nuances, to *tempo rubato* (M. Argerich, M. Pollini).

4. The author traces the evolution of interpretive strategies in the context of the global music scene of the 21st century, where there is a significant expansion of the

cultural and geographical field of performing practices, characterized by the globalization of piano schools, stylistic pluralism and the growing importance of the Asian (in particular, Chinese) piano tradition.

- representatives **of the Asian tradition**, especially Chinese pianists – Yuja Wang, Li Yundi, Fu Tsung, Bruce Liu, Chao Wang, – in their interpretation *of the Ballades* often emphasise virtuosity, contrast of drama and brightness of sound; their approach can be described as "spectacular romanticism", in which the heroic-epic mode is supported by brilliant technique; at the same time remaining committed to classical models of musical thinking based on *belcanto* and the logic of dramatic architectonics.
- performers **of the European tradition** in the interpretation *of the Ballades* of F. Chopin – Yu. Avdeeva, E. Kissin, L. Geniušas, L. Debargue, M. Paşol, D. Trifonov, and J. Lisiecki represent a wide range of interpretive strategies: from rationally constructed drama to free subjective interpretations; we note the tendency to "restore" Chopin's text-the desire to get rid of late-romantic redundancy, restore metric-rhythmic rigour and sound transparency while maintaining expressiveness and artistic persuasiveness (in the interpretations of L. Garcia-Garcia, A. Ponochevny, Seung Jin Cho and others, striving for a balanced sound ideal, close to the aesthetics of Chopin himself);
- the global artistic context has led to the emergence of new models of interpretive thinking, in which tradition and individualization interact; some Chopin's *Ballades* performers – H. Grimaud, K. Buniatishvili, B. Grosvenor – demonstrate an individualistic approach that allows us to speak of a "new romantic subjectivism" in which the boundaries between the text and the interpreter become particularly mobile; a steady tendency is revealed to **shift the emphasis towards an individual interpretative model**, in which the performer strives not so much for illustrativeness or imitation of traditional reading, but rather for the independent rendition of the text; nonetheless the presence of a deep stylistic intuition and the ability for figurative-semantic synthesis remains a necessary condition for interpretive success.

5. The author of this study, who is a practicing performer and teacher, **substantiates the modern artistic significance and methodological relevance of Chopin's piano traditions** as a living and developing form of musical communication; it is demonstrated that despite the change of epochs, tastes and performing attitudes, Chopin's piano *Ballades* remains a repertoire form that can activate both cultural and historical memory, and the personal experience of the performer. The concept of interpretive "resonance" introduced in this study determines the highest degree of artistic treatment of a work: it is achieved when there is a genuine emotional and intellectual co-

presence between the performer's personality and the author's idea. It is this phenomenon that makes it possible to realize *Ballades* as works of high spiritual and aesthetic significance in the current concert-performing and pedagogical context. Interpretation of the *Ballades* requires not only technical skill, but also a deep understanding of the archetypal content, symbolic language and poetic logic. That is why the figure of the performer in this genre takes on the meaning of a co-author, forming a sounding version of the composer's idea.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To expand the analytical range of research into the piano ballade genre, focusing on the works of composers of the 20th – 21st centuries who were not included in the orbit of this study, in order to identify new stylistic trends, transformations and individual strategies of the author's interpretation of the ballad genre model in the conditions of modernism and postmodernism. Special attention should be paid to works that reflect national and cultural specifics, poly-stylistic techniques and the influence of the Chopin's ballade tradition on modern composer's thinking.

2. To enrich the methodological tools for studying piano ballades with an interdisciplinary approach that combines the efforts of musicologists-analysts, concert performers, specialists in the field of music pedagogy, psychology of perception and cultural studies. Such integration will reveal the complex nature of the phenomenon of performance interpretation as a creative process formed at the intersection of text, style, personal experience and socio-cultural context.

3. To develop the practice of comparative analysis of interpretations of piano *Ballades* by F. Chopin by contemporary pianists using a wider range of audio and video materials covering representatives of various performing schools. Such an approach will allow us to more accurately characterize the features of national traditions, individual stylistic strokes, interpretative trends, as well as assess the evolution of the performing approach in the context of globalization and the expansion of repertoire standards.

4. Integrate the results of the study into the content of academic programs in specialized disciplines (*History of Performing Arts, Methods of Teaching Piano, Didactics of Teaching Special Subjects, History of Music, Analysis of Musical Forms*) **in higher music educational institutions.** This step will help to deepen student's analytical and aesthetic perception of the romantic piano repertoire and develop their interpretative thinking skills.

5. To improve the methodological and performing recommendations related to the study and performance of *Ballades* by F. Chopin through the creation of systematic

methodological manuals that include both analytical and interpretative schemes, as well as suggestions for technical and expressive work with the text. It is advisable to pay special attention to the form shaping, expressive means and interpretation of the dramatic junctions of these compositions.

6. More actively introduce the analysis and interpretation of Chopin's *Ballades* into the educational process of secondary and higher music educational institutions as a means of improving the overall level of performing culture, pedagogical competence and artistic taste. Such classes can be used both in individual lessons, as well as in the framework of master classes, seminars and interdepartmental workshops.

7. Create an archive fund of video and audio recordings of performances of Chopin's piano *Ballades* by leading pianists of various performing schools, which will become a valuable resource for subsequent scientific research, as well as a practical tool for comparative analysis in the educational process. This archive can serve as a basis for creating electronic educational platforms aimed at developing interpretive thinking and performing reflection among students and young performers.

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PRACTICAL COMPONENT OF THE THESIS
RECITALS PROGRAMS
RECITAL NR. 1

The first concert took place on 14.10.2022 at *the Steinway Concert Hall*, Guangzhou, People's Republic of China.

Concert program:

1. L. Beethoven. *Sonata* op.27, №1;
2. F. Chopin. *Ballade* op.38, №2;
3. C. Debussy. «*L'isle joyeuse*»;
4. S. Rachmaninoff. *Suite* op.5, No. 1 for two pianos (Zhang 玥 Zhang Yue's 2nd piano part).

RECITAL NR. 2

The second concert took place on 26.03.2024 at *the Concert Hall* of the Normal University, Guangzhou, People's Republic of China.

Concert program:

1. F. Chopin. *Ballade* op.23 №1;
2. F. Chopin. *Ballade* op.38 №2;
3. F. Chopin. *Ballade* op.47 №3;
4. F. Chopin. *Ballade* op.52 №4;
5. Chen Yi. *Western China Suite* for two pianos (part of the 2nd grand piano 郑丽丽 (Dr. Li Sha)).

RECITAL NR. 3

The third concert took place on 24.01.2025 at *the Concert Hall* of the Normal University, Guangzhou, People's Republic of China.

Concert program:

1. L. Beethoven. *Sonata* op.2 №2;
2. F. Chopin. *Waltz* op.34 №2;
3. F. Chopin. *Waltz* op.34 №3;
4. J. Brahms. *Intermezzo* op.117;
5. F. Liszt. *Hungarian Rhapsody* №12. S.244/12.

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ANNOTATION

Usaciov Alexei. Fryderyk Chopin's Ballades: Particularities of Performance Interpretation. Dissertation for a Doctor of Arts Degree, specialty 653.01 – Musicology (professional doctorate), Chisinau, 2025.

Thesis structure: *Creative part*: three concert programs recorded on DVD; *Scientific research*: Introduction, 3 chapters, General conclusions and recommendations; Bibliography of 246 titles; 3 appendices; 120 pages of the main text. The results of the study are reflected in 7 publications.

Keywords: ballad, F. Chopin, performance art, performance interpretation, piano school, romanticism.

Field of study: theory and history of piano performance.

The purpose of the investigation: to identify the features of the musical poetics of F. Chopin's *Ballads* and the directions of their performing interpretation in the context of the world piano traditions of the 20th – early 21st centuries.

Research objectives: (1) to reveal the genre, compositional, dramatic and stylistic features of F. Chopin's *Ballads*, in connection with the history of the genre's genesis, the context of the aesthetics of romanticism and the composer's individual style; (2) to analyze the performing interpretations of F. Chopin's *Ballads* by leading pianists of the 20th century in the context of Polish piano romanticism and the traditions of Russian and Western European schools; (3) to identify the features of performing readings of the musical text of *Ballads* by world pianists of the early 21st century; (4) to present the role and significance of *Ballads* in concert repertoire of Chinese pianists; (5) to formulate methodological recommendations for the practical development of these compositions.

The scientific novelty and originality of the research lies in the establishment of the features of the poetics of the *Ballads* of F. Chopin based on the totality of the results of their musical-theoretical and performance analysis, revealing the piano-interpretive foundations of the *Ballads* of F. Chopin and the specifics of their readings in the world musical and performing practice of the 20th – early 21st century. The work is intended to fill the gap existing in national musicology, which has not yet produced a single theoretical work devoted to the comparative analysis of performing traditions in the interpretations of the *Ballads*. For the first time in the Republic of Moldova, an attempt has been made to generalize and systematize various musicological, performing and pedagogical approaches to the analysis of the *Ballads* of F. Chopin.

The novelty and originality of the artistic concept has been demonstrated through numerous stage performances, his own long-term teaching practice and an authentic performing interpretation of the material selected for this study. The work complements and deepens, from the point of view of a practicing musician, a number of theoretical and methodological studies in the field of musical interpretation and performing traditions. It can be a starting point for further research in a chosen field.

The practical significance of the work is related to the possibility of using its content in educational courses on the *History of Performing Arts*, *Methods of Teaching Piano*, *Didactics of Teaching Special Disciplines*, *The History of Music*, as recommended material for the discipline of *Special Piano*. The results of the research can be used by students interested in improving practical skills in the process of mastering F. Chopin's works and improving the general performing culture. The conclusions and recommendations can help optimize the process of teaching piano performing art in the higher education system, as well as promote the popularization of Chopin's piano legacy, the concert activities of world pianists (including the People's Republic of China) in the Republic of Moldova.

Implementation of scientific results. The results of the study were approved in the framework of reports at 6 scientific international and national conferences, reflected in 7 scientific articles published in the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Belarus, the People's Republic of China. The main provisions of the theoretical research were reflected in the practical part of the dissertation in the framework of three concerts held on the stage of the *Steinway Concert Hall* (Guangzhou, China) and *Guangdong Pedagogical University* in Guangzhou, China, as well as in the author's extensive concert and teaching activities.

ADNOTARE

Usaciov Alexei. Baladele lui Fryderyk Chopin: particularități ale tratării interpretative. Teză de doctor în arte, specialitatea 653.01 – Muzicologie (doctorat profesional), Chișinău, 2025.

Structura tezei: *componenta practică:* trei recitaluri înregistrate pe DVD; *componenta științifică:* introducere, 120 de pagini ale textului de bază, încadrate în trei capitole, concluzii generale și recomandări, bibliografie din 246 de titluri, trei anexe. Rezultatele cercetării sunt reflectate în 7 publicații științifice.

Cuvinte-cheie: artă interpretativă, baladă, F. Chopin, romantism, școală pianistică, tratare interpretativă.

Domeniul de studiu: teoria și istoria interpretării pianistice.

Scopul lucrării constă în determinarea particularităților poeticii muzicale a *Baladelor* lui F. Chopin și a direcțiilor tratării interpretative a acestora, în contextul tradițiilor artei pianistice universale, în secolele XX–XXI.

Obiectivele cercetării: (1) a dezvălui trăsăturile genuiste, compozițional-dramaturgice și muzical-stilistice ale *Baladelor* pentru pian ale lui F. Chopin, în contextul genezei genului, a esteticii romantismului și a stilului individual al compozitorului; (2) a analiza tratările interpretative ale *Baladelor* lui F. Chopin, propuse de pianiști consacrați ai secolului XX, în contextul romantismului pianistic polonez și al tradițiilor școlii pianistice ruse și vest-europene; (3) a releva particularitățile abordărilor interpretative ale textului muzical al *Baladelor* chopiniene, de către pianiștii de talie mondială de la începutul secolului XXI; (4) a determina rolul și importanța *Baladelor* lui F. Chopin în repertoriul de concert al pianiștilor chinezi; (5) a formula recomandări metodologice pentru însușirea practică a acestor creații pentru pian de F. Chopin.

Noutatea și originalitatea științifică constă în determinarea particularităților poetice ale *Baladelor* lui F. Chopin îmbinând rezultatele analizei muzical-teoretice și interpretative a acestora, dezvăluind fundamentele interpretative-pianistice și specificul tratărilor acestora în practica muzical-interpretativă universală, în secolul XX – începutul secolului XXI. Lucrarea contribuie la completarea unui gol în muzicologia din Republica Moldova, în care până în prezent nu a fost realizat un studiu teoretic comparativ dedicat tradițiilor de tratare interpretativă a acestor creații pentru pian ale compozitorului. Pentru prima dată în Republica Moldova este întreprinsă tentativa de a sistematiza diferite abordări muzicologice, interpretative și pedagogice privind analiza *Baladelor* lui F. Chopin.

Noutatea și originalitatea conceptului artistic este demonstrată printr-o amplă activitate scenică, bogată și îndelungată experiență pedagogică a autorului și printr-o tratare interpretativă autentică a materialului selectat pentru cercetare. Lucrarea completează și aprofundează, din perspectiva unui muzician-practician, un șir de cercetări teoretice și metodologice din domeniul artei interpretării muzicale și tradițiilor pianistice, și poate constitui un punct de plecare pentru cercetări ulterioare în domeniul dat.

Valoarea aplicativă a lucrării rezidă în posibilitatea utilizării conținutului acesteia în procesul didactic universitar la discipline precum: *Istoria artei interpretative*, *Metodica predării pianului*, *Didactica disciplinei de specialitate*, *Istoria muzicii universale*, precum și ca material recomandat pentru disciplina *Pian special*. Rezultatele obținute pot fi valorificate de către studenți și tineri interpreți interesați de perfecționarea abilităților practice în interpretarea creațiilor lui F. Chopin, precum și de dezvoltarea culturii interpretative în general. Concluziile și recomandările formulate pot contribui la optimizarea procesului de formare a competențelor interpretative în învățământul artistic superior și la promovarea patrimoniului pianistic chopinian, precum și a activității concertistice a pianiștilor din întreaga lume (inclusiv a celor din Republica Populară Chineză) în spațiul cultural al Republicii Moldova.

Implementarea rezultatelor științifice: Rezultatele cercetării au fost aprobate prin comunicări științifice prezentate la 6 conferințe internaționale și naționale și au fost publicate în 7 articole științifice apărute în Republica Moldova, Federația Rusă, Republica Belarus și Republica Populară Chineză. Principalele teze ale cercetării teoretice sunt reflectate în componenta practică a tezei, în cadrul celor trei recitaluri susținute pe scena *Steinway Concert Hall* (Guangzhou (R.P. Chineză)) și la *Universitatea Pedagogică Guangdong* din Guangzhou (R.P. Chineză), precum și în ampla activitate concertistică și pedagogică a autorului.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Усачев Алексей. Баллады Фридерика Шопена: особенности исполнительской интерпретации. Диссертация на соискание ученой степени доктора искусств по специальности 653.01 – Музыкаведение (профессиональный докторат), Кишинев, 2025.

Структура диссертации: *Творческая часть*: три концертные программы, записанные на DVD; *Научное исследование*: Введение, 3 главы, Общие выводы и рекомендации; Библиография из 246 наименований; 3 приложения; 120 страниц основного текста. Результаты исследования отражены в 7 публикациях.

Ключевые слова: баллада, исполнительская интерпретация, исполнительское искусство, романтизм, фортепианная школа, Ф. Шопен.

Область исследования: теория и история фортепианного исполнительства.

Цель работы: выявить особенности музыкальной поэтики *Баллад* Ф. Шопена и направления их исполнительской интерпретации в контексте мировых фортепианных традиций XX–XXI веков.

Задачи исследования: (1) раскрыть жанровые, композиционно-драматургические и стилевые особенности *Баллад* Ф. Шопена в их связи с генезисом жанра, с эстетикой эпохи романтизма и индивидуальным стилем композитора; (2) осуществить анализ исполнительских интерпретаций *Баллад* ведущими пианистами XX века в контексте польского фортепианного романтизма и традиций русской и западноевропейской школ; (3) выявить особенности исполнительских прочтений текста *Баллад* мировыми пианистами начала XXI века; (4) определить роль и значение *Баллад* в концертном репертуаре китайских пианистов; (5) сформулировать методические рекомендации по практическому освоению данных произведений.

Научная новизна и оригинальность исследования заключается в установлении особенностей поэтики *Баллад* Ф. Шопена на основе результатов их музыкально-теоретического и исполнительского анализа, в раскрытии фортепианно-интерпретаторских основ *Баллад* Ф. Шопена и специфики их прочтений в мировой исполнительской практике XX – начала XXI века. Работа призвана восполнить пробел, существующий в отечественном музыкознании, в котором до настоящего времени не создано ни одного теоретического труда, посвященного сравнительному анализу традиций в интерпретациях *Баллад*. Впервые в Республике Молдова предпринята попытка обобщить и систематизировать различные музыковедческие, исполнительские и педагогические подходы к прочтению *Баллад* Ф. Шопена.

Новизна и оригинальность художественной концепции продемонстрирована в рамках многочисленных сценических выступлений, многолетней педагогической практики и собственной исполнительской трактовки избранного для исследования материала. Работа дополняет и углубляет, с точки зрения практикующего музыканта, ряд теоретических и методологических исследований в области музыкальной интерпретации и исполнительских традиций. Она может стать отправной точкой для дальнейших исследований в избранной области.

Практическая значимость работы связана с возможностью применения ее контента в учебных курсах: *История исполнительского искусства*, *Методика преподавания фортепиано*, *Дидактика преподавания специальных дисциплин*, *История музыки*, в качестве рекомендованного материала для дисциплины *Специальное фортепиано*. Результаты исследования могут быть использованы студентами, заинтересованными в совершенствовании практических навыков в процессе освоения сочинений Ф. Шопена и повышении общей исполнительской культуры. Выводы и рекомендации могут способствовать оптимизации процесса обучения фортепианному исполнительскому искусству в системе высшего образования, а также содействовать популяризации фортепианного наследия Ф. Шопена, концертной деятельности мировых пианистов (в том числе, Китайской Народной Республики) в Республике Молдова.

Внедрение научных результатов. Результаты исследования были апробированы в рамках докладов на 6 научных международных и национальных конференциях, отражены в 7 научных статьях, опубликованных в Республике Молдова, Российской Федерации, Республике Беларусь, Китайской Народной Республике. Основные положения теоретического исследования нашли отражение в практической части диссертации в рамках трех концертов, состоявшихся на сцене *Концертного зала Steinway* (г. Гуанчжоу, КНР) и *Гуандунского педагогического университета* (г. Гуанчжоу, КНР), а также в широкой концертной и педагогической деятельности автора.

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MINISTERUL EDUCAȚIEI ȘI CERCETĂRII AL REPUBLICII
MOLDOVA**

**ACADEMIA DE MUZICĂ, TEATRU ȘI ARTE PLASTICE
ȘCOALA DOCTORALĂ ARTE ȘI STUDII CULTURALE**

**BALADELE LUI FRYDERYK CHOPIN:
PARTICULARITĂȚI ALE TRATĂRII INTERPRETATIVE**

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USACIOV ALEXEI

**FRYDERYK CHOPIN'S BALLADES: PARTICULARITIES
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