

Hungarian Stamps 2010

BICENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN



Frédéric François Chopin, known as the poet of the piano, was one of the greatest composers of classical music. The musician, who lived in the first half of the 19th century, was the pioneer of the use of national Romantic and folk music motifs. 2010 has been declared the year of Chopin by UNESCO and Magyar Posta is marking the occasion by releasing a celebratory stamp.

Frédéric François Chopin, originally Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin (Żelazowa Wola, 1 March 1810 – Paris, 17 October 1849), was a Polish composer and piano virtuoso. His musical talent was spotted very early, his genius as a child being compared to Mozart or Bach. At the age of seven he had already composed two polonaises. The child prodigy soon graced the salons of the noble families of the Polish capital and gave numerous charity concerts. His first music teacher between 1816-22 was the violinist Wojciech Żywny. His talent was further nurtured by the celebrated pianist and professor at the Warsaw Conservatory, Wilhelm Würfel (Václav Wefel). He attended the Warsaw Lyceum between 1823-26. In the autumn of 1826 Chopin began studying music theory and composition at the Warsaw Conservatory. He first went to Vienna in 1829, where he gave piano recitals. The following year he returned to Warsaw, where his Piano Concerto in F minor was premiered in the National Theatre. In 1831 he left Poland forever and settled in Paris. On 1 August 1835 he became a French citizen. About this time his struggle with tuberculosis, which was to dog him for the rest of his life, began.

His piano music is a unique blend of his exceptional sense of rhythm, Johann Sebastian Bach's style, and the piano technique he created himself. He brought the genre of the nocturne, invented by the Irish composer John Field which he took to a higher level of sophistication, as well as popular dance music such as the Polish mazurka and the Viennese waltz to the music salons. Chopin was the first to write ballads and scherzi as individual works. He also transformed the form of the prelude from Bach's model. Thanks to his distinctive and memorable melodies, many of his tunes became very well-known. His style and talent influenced many: Robert Schumann was a great admirer of him, and used melodies by Chopin, even naming a movement of his suite Carnival after him. Franz Liszt, with whom Chopin held several joint concerts, adapted many of his pieces for solo piano.

In the 1840s his state of health began to deteriorate rapidly. By 1849 his main works had been composed and he concentrated on mazurkas and nocturnes. Chopin died of tuberculosis on 17 October 1849. Although he was laid to rest in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, his heart and his correspondence are in the Holy Cross Church in Warsaw. (Source: hu.wikipedia)

On the special stamp there is a portrait of Frédéric François Chopin, the house where he was born and his signature. At the centre of the design of both the first day cover and the commemorative postmark is Chopin's favourite instrument, the piano. The first day cover shows a silhouette of Chopin seated at the piano and in the postmark there is a stylised design of hands playing a piano.

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Printed by Állami Nyomda

Designed by Imre Benedek

More information: belyeg@posta.huOrders: philately@posta.huwww.posta.hu