

GRAND
PIANO



FRANZ XAVER
MOZART
POLONAISES

ROBERT MARKHAM

FRANZ XAVER MOZART (1791–1844)

POLONAISES

ROBERT MARKHAM, *piano*

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	SIX POLONAISES MÉLANCOLIQUES, OP. 17 (1811–14)	27:25
1	No. 1 in B minor: Tempo giusto – Trio	04:02
2	No. 2 in E minor: Andantino espressivo – Trio	05:18
3	No. 3 in C minor: Tempo di ballo – Trio	03:32
4	No. 4 in G minor: Allegretto moderato – Trio	04:43
5	No. 5 in F minor: Espressivo – Trio	05:15
6	No. 6 in D minor: [untitled] – Trio	04:25
	TWO POLONAISES, OP. 26 (1824)	09:43
7	No. 1 in D major: Polonaise de bal	04:33
8	No. 2 in C major: Polonaise élégante	05:08
	FOUR POLONAISES MÉLANCOLIQUES, OP. 22 (1815–18)	24:05
9	No. 1 in C minor: Risoluto – Trio	03:53
10	No. 2 in A minor: Andantino con moto – Trio	05:01
11	No. 3 in F minor: Allegretto moderato – Trio	05:23
12	No. 4 in G minor: Andante espressivo – Trio	09:39

TOTAL TIME: 61:19

FRANZ XAVER MOZART (1791–1844) POLONAISES

The polonaise, despite its name, was not confined to Poland in the 18th century, it grew in popularity across Europe as an instrumental dance. J.S. Bach included examples in his *Orchestral Suite No. 2* and *French Suite No. 6*, while Telemann wrote down the dance music he heard on his Polish travels and included it in individual pieces and concertos. There are scarce instances of the dance form in the output of the Mozart family, with a solitary *Polonaise in C major* for keyboard from Leopold. Wolfgang Amadeus included examples in the third movement of his *Divertimento for Wind in E flat major K. 252*, then a *Rondeau en polonaise* for the second movement of his *Piano Sonata in D major, K. 284*. Meanwhile Beethoven's only example is a piano piece published as *Op. 89* in 1815.

One composer who enthusiastically embraced the form was Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart. The youngest of six children born to Wolfgang Amadeus and his wife Constanze, Franz Xaver was born in July 1791, just over four months before his father's death. The choice of name is significant, thought to reflect his father's gratitude to Franz Xaver Süssmayr, who completed the *Requiem*, or admiration for the bass Franz Xaver Gerl – the first Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* – or both.

Franz Xaver's musical training took place with the support of Haydn, though he was not directly taught by him. Instead he took lessons in composition with Georg Joseph Vogler from 1803 to 1805, when he made his debut in Vienna, before studying with notable figures such as Albrechtsberger, Salieri and Hummel.

The *Polonaise mélancolique* was a constant in Franz Xaver Mozart's piano output from 1810 onwards, and the group of *Six Polonaises mélancoliques* published as *Op. 17* occupied him from December 1811 until March 1814. During this time he was writing sets of variations for the piano, honing his technique as Beethoven did

a decade earlier. At this time Franz Xaver was working as a piano teacher near Lemberg (now Lviv), where he moved permanently at the beginning of 1813. This gave him regular exposure to the polonaise, affording his own compositions a stamp of authenticity. While in Lemberg Franz Xaver met the singer and pianist Josephine Baroni-Cavalcabò, née Countess Castiglioni, who became his mistress. The two did not marry, but he wrote several compositions for her in the following years.

Franz Xaver Mozart wrote his *Polonaises mélancoliques* in a consistent form, with a solemn section in the minor key relocating to a brighter *Trio* section placed centrally, often retaining the pitch but expanding to the major key. His writing for keyboard is notable for its expressive right-hand melodies, with a style more in keeping with the 19th century than obviously falling under the influence of his late father. The pieces were published in even-numbered groups, arranged not in order of composition but in logical sequences of key and mood.

Repertoire listings indicate that the six pieces comprising *Op. 17* were composed in the order Nos. 3, 1, 5, 2, 6 and 4, rearranged for a satisfying and substantial cycle. The first, in B minor, has a florid right-hand part, while its brighter *Trio*, marked *legato*, unfolds with tender ease. For the second piece in E minor Franz Xaver matches an ornamented melody with chromatic harmony and fulsome inner part writing, its middle section one of bright optimism. Meanwhile the third piece shifts to C minor, a strident call to arms initially suggesting a march but retaining a restless quality that the central section in C major cannot quell. The fourth polonaise in G minor serves as a reminder that Franz Xaver Mozart met Franz Schubert on a number of occasions, the two sharing the ability to move between major and minor key in subtle but telling swings of mood. The fifth polonaise in the set anticipates the music of Chopin in its upper register passagework, F minor eventually giving way to A flat major for even more elaborate melodic writing. The sixth *Polonaise mélancolique*, in D minor, concludes the set with a flourish, its dramatic opening balanced by an exuberant right-hand part.

The *Two Polonaises, Op. 26* were published in 1824, by which time Franz Xaver was well established throughout Europe as a formidable concert pianist and composer. In this instance the omission of the word *mélancolique* allowed greater freedom of form, and the first piece, a *Polonaise de bal* in D major, enjoys a rustic mood in spite of its military-style rhythms. The second, in C major, is marked *Polonaise élégante*, with a deceptively simple thematic construction and a jaunty central section in F major.

As with the first set of *Polonaises mélancoliques*, Franz Xaver wrote *Op. 22* as time allowed, completing one per year from March 1815 to March 1818. This time the order of composition was Nos. 2, 4, 3 and 1. The set begins with a dramatic piece in C minor marked *Risolto*, which would have made a strong impact on audiences through its busy part writing and distinctive ornamentation, softened by the lilting contours of the *Trio*. These inner parts of the polonaise were however acquiring more dramatic heft, and the equivalent passage in the second *Polonaise mélancolique* in A minor blossoms through an expansive and decorative theme in the tonic major key. The third piece in F minor is intimately cast, its arpeggiated left-hand part keeping a close eye on the right-hand melody, while the final piece in G minor is an expansive construction. Marked *Andante espressivo*, its lyrical melodies give both hands a great deal of chromatic freedom. The *Trio* section is similarly intricate, finding shafts of light in the relative major key.

Ben Hogwood

ROBERT MARKHAM



Acclaimed as a performer of 'astonishing lucidity and coherence' (*Musical Opinion*) and 'true musicianship' (*International Piano*), British pianist Robert Markham was a finalist at the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. While still a teenager, he won the piano class of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition, and went on to give a highly acclaimed debut recital at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall in New York. Markham's concert activity spans three continents, and he has appeared at London's Wigmore Hall, Birmingham Symphony Hall and New York's Alice Tully Hall. He has performed at the Felicja Blumental International Music Festival in Israel, the Oficina de Música in Brazil and Three Choirs Festival in the UK. Markham

regularly appears as a concerto soloist in the UK and abroad, and has performed with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, London Mozart Players and Israel Chamber Orchestra. He regularly collaborates, as a chamber musician, with members of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Markham studied with Heather Slade-Lipkin at Chetham's School of Music and Oxana Yablonskaya at The Juilliard School, from where he holds a Doctorate. He currently serves as senior tutor in solo and collaborative piano at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire where, as a staff researcher, he has conducted research into the life and works of Franz Xaver Mozart.



Franz Xaver Mozart (1846). Lithograph by Johann Stadler (1804–1859)

FRANZ XAVER MOZART (1791–1844)

POLONAISES

Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart was the youngest of six children born to Wolfgang Amadeus and his wife Constanze. Franz Xaver's style was early Romantic, with compositions that were highly regarded by his contemporaries Schubert and Schumann. The *Polonaise mélancolique* was an ideal medium for Franz Xaver's expressive melodies, and with some pieces anticipating Chopin, the *Op. 17* collection forms a satisfying and substantial cycle. All of these works helped to establish Franz Xaver Mozart throughout Europe as a formidable concert pianist and composer.



ROBERT MARKHAM

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| 1–6 | SIX POLONAISES MÉLANCOLIQUES, OP. 17 (1811–14) | 27:25 |
| 7–8 | TWO POLONAISES, OP. 26 (1824) | 09:43 |
| 9–12 | FOUR POLONAISES MÉLANCOLIQUES, OP. 22 (1815–18) | 24:05 |

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 61:19



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