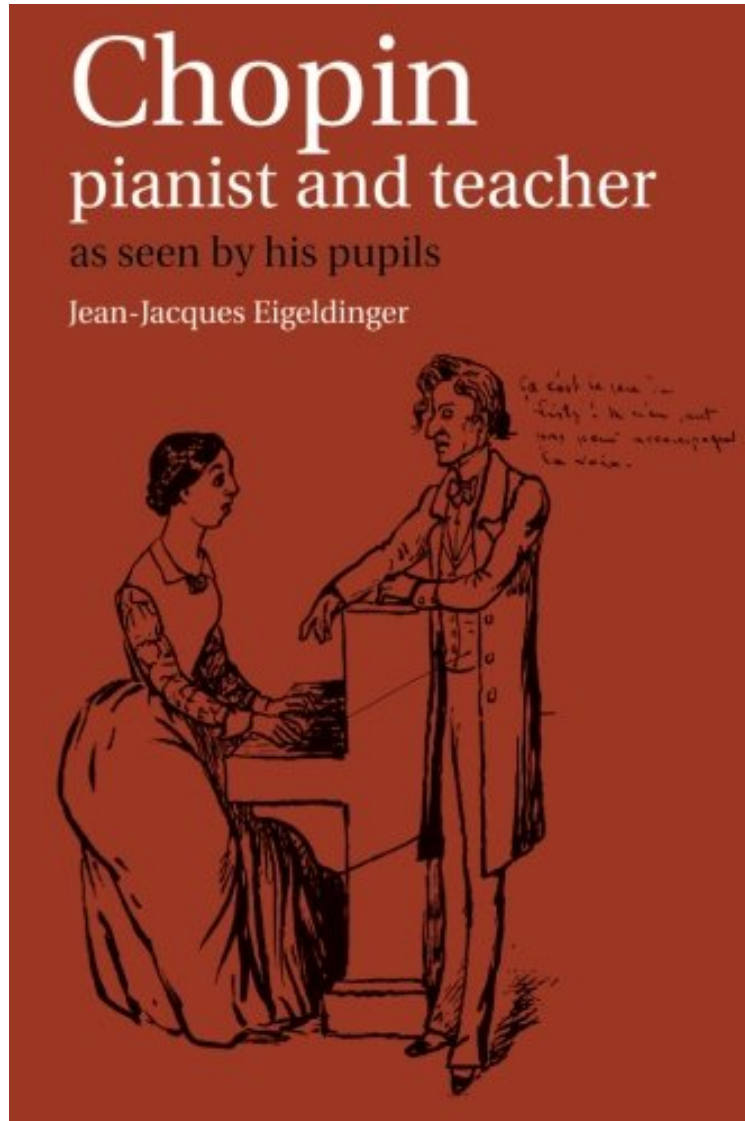


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Chopin: Pianist and Teacher: As Seen by his Pupils

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2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Worth having By Laura I love this book and refer back to it often. It gives you a rare look at how Chopin created, played and taught music. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A detailed fragment of a map for an impossible journey By Jim Fellows The first thing you might want to know

is whether the book is worth the cost, as it is priced as a textbook rather than a popular paperback. I wondered about this and took a chance. In my experience it was worth far more -- if you ever intend to play Chopin. At the very least, you are going to learn far more from Chopin in this book than you could from any single lesson with him. If you would not pay \$50 for a lesson with Chopin, then there is no need to read further. There is no doubt that this is a textbook. Even by page 55 I felt I was sitting next to a particular student in a particular lesson and could feel Chopin's presence just as if I was sitting there. (see Lenz's notes on playing Beethoven's theme from Op.26 for Chopin, just as Liszt had taught him. After compliments to Lenz and Liszt's teaching, Chopin adds: "yes, it's beautiful, only does one really always have to speak in such a declamatory way?") With 300 pages of such insights you will certainly have found your \$50 worth! If you're serious about playing Chopin you might want to know what other famous composers of his time said about the way he played his own music. Granted, that knowledge is not terribly encouraging (his playing was 'incomparable', 'like the glint of mother of pearl', no one else at the time, including his best students could often express the point of his music as it came from his own hands, that each performance of his was different: improvisational, subtle beyond most mortal techniques, metrical yet freely expressive, very confined in dynamic range yet dramatic, as delicate as a slight breeze in the most demanding passages, etc.) I suspected something like this and had been avoiding playing Chopin for that very reason, especially knowing how particular he was about the piano he played on -- and that much of what seems impossible when studying his scores would not have been impossible on a piano like his particular Pleyel -- just impossible for anyone except Chopin on a good day. Not terribly encouraging. But you will learn what preparation he considered essential, which pieces by other composers he insisted his students learn (usually Bach, Clementi, Hummel, and Field, among others such as Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert,) and a vast amount more. So, at the very least, this book will tell you everything known today that can document what Chopin said, wrote, or played within earshot of someone who wrote about it. Among these contemporary sources are the diary entries about particular pieces from any student of Chopin's who noted them. This includes notes on their scores, fingerings, sometimes in Chopin's handwriting, etc. This will not relieve you of having to decide for yourself what to make of each of these observations -- for example, did Berlioz accurately convey what you would have heard? Did Chopin's notes and comments to a particular student simply reflect a compromise to lessen that particular student's inevitable failure (as Mikuli lamented)? Here you're still on your own, but unless you have a time machine your only other choice is to not perform the music at all. Meanwhile, Eigeldinger is himself a great teacher, and he is able to synthesize and communicate what he has absorbed from a lifelong study of Chopin. Chopin was not always satisfied with his own playing and almost never with his best students' playing, so we will need all the help we can get. If you are brave enough to attempt the impossible, I suggest you take this help and try to absorb as much as you can. Note: This book is not the only source of help, but it might lead you to others. For example, when wondering about what Chopin intended with his *alla breve* "largo" in opus 28 number 4 it might be helpful to read what Czerny wrote about this (in great detail) in response to the same marking in Beethoven. (Simply enter "largo alla breve" in a search on Google books and you're in luck.) Another example would be Hans Gal's, "The Right Tempo" at hansgal.com in reference to intentions of composers in different generations; especially before and after about 1850. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Write your own rules. By W. March This is a highly informative book on Chopin's advice on the art of playing piano. Especially interesting and revealing to me is Chopin's firm belief in complete suppleness and weightlessness in the hands/wrists while playing. After working at applying this principle to my own playing I have begun to notice how much harder I have been making piano playing than it truly needs to be. My desire to improvise has also grown and I am much more attentive to playing a PHRASE as apposed to playing notes. There is much in this book that will give you a picture of just the type of man Frederic Chopin truly was. When you analyze the times and the styles of playing popular at that time it is hard not to come to the conclusion that Chopin really went against the grain of where piano playing/teaching stood then. In the compositions he left us with seems to be the very foundation of where the piano stands as an instrument still to this day. Chopin wrote his own rules as much as ANY other composer before or since and in my own opinion his music is as alive and fresh as it was back then. I highly recommend this book even if you are not planning to learn any of Chopin's works because it just might help you to realize the musician in yourself to an extent that you did not think possible before. Write your own rules.

The accounts of Chopin's pupils, acquaintances and contemporaries, together with his own writing, provide valuable insights into the musician's pianistic and stylistic practice, his teaching methods and his aesthetic beliefs. This unique collection of documents, edited and annotated by Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, reveals Chopin as teacher and interpreter of his own music. Included in this study is extensive appendix material that presents annotated scores, and personal accounts of Chopin's playing by pupils, writers, and critics.

"...truly a book about the way Chopin played the piano, and about the way he interpreted his own music...Anyone interested in Chopin will be grateful to Eigeldinger..." Charles Rosen, *The New York Times* "...really indispensable to the serious student of Chopin. Almost all those reading it will find their view of the composer made sharper and

truer than before." Nicholas Temperley, Notes