

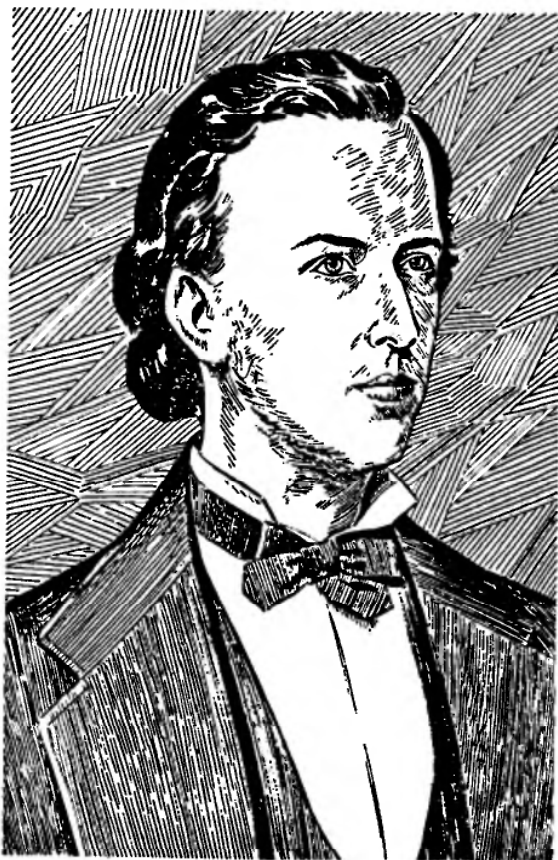
# B E R C E U S E

(CRADLE SONG)

Op. 57

By

FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN



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REVISED EDITION WITH FINGERING, PHRASING, PEDAL-  
ING, GENERAL INFORMATION, AND INSTRUCTIVE  
ANNOTATIONS ON FORM AND STRUCTURE,  
AND INTERPRETATION

By **LEOPOLD GODOWSKY**

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND GLOSSARY

By **LEWIS G. THOMAS**

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## BERCEUSE

Biographical Sketch—Frédéric François Chopin

*Born at Zelazowa-Wola, near Warsaw, February 22, 1809  
Died in Paris, October 17, 1849*

**F**RÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN was of mixed Polish and French blood. His father, Nicholas, was a Frenchman from Nancy in Lorraine, and his mother, Justine Krzyzanowska, was Polish. His first music teacher was Adalbert Zwiny, a Bohemian violinist, pianist, and composer. Later he studied with Joseph Elsner, an eminent teacher of the strictly classical kind, at the Warsaw School of Music. Before he was twenty-one he had made a world-wide name for himself both as a pianist and as a composer of piano music. His style was distinctly his own; in fact, it may be said that he invented a new school of composition and also of piano technic that had a far-reaching influence on the future of both. In his early days he seemed to have been inspired by the genius of Schubert and Weber, and the methods of the Irish composer John Field attracted him. But he so quickly developed an idiom of his own that there was soon left but little trace of these early influences.

He was not a classical writer in the sense of being a "formalist." The form of his compositions was, however, always well balanced, if somewhat elastic. He clothed the old forms with new harmonies and new ornamentation, and it is for the transformation of the meaningless elaboration which had decorated the works of many of his predecessors and contemporaries into a thing of the utmost delicacy and refinement that Chopin is chiefly famous. For the subtlety of his harmonies, however, he also deserves mention; especially as he is said to have greatly influenced that mighty master of harmony, Richard Wagner, who was quick in realizing that Chopin had broken down the heavy harmonic conventions of the Teutons, and had originated a new and more satisfying mode of expression.

Chopin was one of the first to raise national folk music to the level of high art. The nationality he pictured was, of course, that of Poland—the land of his birth. But although Poland colors much of his music, it must not be supposed that he was totally subject to the national music idea. He was far too cosmopolitan in mind as well as in environment to allow nationality to localize an art that should be universal in its appeal.

After his student days Chopin settled in Paris, where he was accepted on equal terms by the leading authors and artists of the day, and where he was received into the homes of the aristocracy. The famous Hungarian pianist, Franz Liszt, was his friend. Heine admired him, and George Sand (Madam Dudevant) idealized him. Here he enjoyed triumphs and endured trials and disappointments, and here he was attacked by the scourge consumption, of which he died at the age of forty. He was buried in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, his heart being carried back to his native Poland, where it lies in the Church of the Holy Cross in Warsaw.

**General Information:** The Berceuse was probably written in the summer of 1845, at George Sand's château at Nohant. Chopin had spent his summer vacation there for eight successive seasons, and many of his most beautiful works were composed in that charming retreat. This Composition was dedicated to Mlle. Elise Gavard, and published in the same year in which it was written. Chopin was now in his thirty-fifth year; his physical condition had already become serious, and a break in his friendship with George Sand was imminent. We may judge of his depressed state of mind and body by the fact that he composed only one other work in 1845—the Sonata in B minor.

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## BERCEUSE

The  $A\flat$  in brackets is played with the thumb of the left hand.

The melodic line of meas. 15-18 lies within the double fore-graces which precede the reiterated  $A\flat$ . The melody must be brought out clearly and expressively. The following is another way of notating this passage:

The trill on  $A\flat$  in the treble of meas. 19 is to begin with the principal note, and the F below is to be taken an instant before the trill begins. The sign ( , like the sign  $\text{tr}$ , is an indication that the double notes are to be arpeggiated. The descending and ascending sequential groups in meas. 19-22 are like the shimmering colors of a diaphanous fabric billowing gently on the air. While the articulation should be clear, yet the effect as a whole is to be "veiled," and there should be but very slight dynamic shadings.

One may imagine meas. 23-26 to be the fluttering of the wings of birds, first slowly and then gradually swifter as the feathered creatures rise in flight. There is a sudden *pianissimo* in meas. 27 where the two-measure groups in the treble reach out in wide intervals both upwards and downwards, producing the illusion of sighing violins. Then comes a passage of descending thirds in meas. 31-32, like the flutes of an orchestra in a step-by-step descent.

The reiterated  $A\flat$  in the right-hand part of meas. 37 forms an inverted organ point, while the melody is given *marcato* by the thumb. But in the succeeding measures the upper voice breaks away from  $A\flat$  and etches the melody clearly, despite the myriad fine decorative lines enmeshing it. Klindworth notates meas. 43-44 as follows:

## BERCEUSE

**Form and Structure:** To a *basso ostinato*, consisting of a double organ point with alternating tonic and dominant-seventh chords, Chopin has written a lovely melody with florid, gossamer-like variations, suggesting a rainbow of melting colors over a slow-heaving sea of opaque green. In a letter to a friend, Chopin once referred to the Composition as a "set of variations."

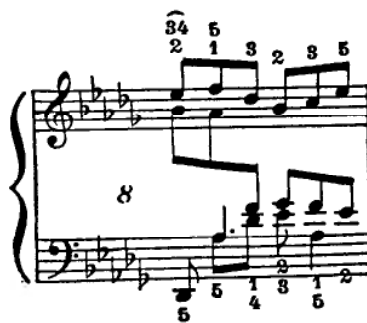
The two introductory measures set in motion the swaying figure which persists throughout the entire Composition. The Theme is announced in meas. 3-6, a simple phrase of four measures, repeated in meas. 7-10 with an added inner voice. This merges into another repetition (meas. 11-14), the last two measures of which contain syncopated sixteenth-notes. The tonal lace-work contained in these repetitions might be called, for the purpose of analysis, the "first variation."

The student might indeed mark off each group of four measures from this point, not with a view to formally numbering the variations, but in order to call attention to the different pianistic figures with which the Composition is elaborated. In meas. 55-58, C<sub>b</sub> is introduced to prepare the entrance of the sub-dominant triad in meas. 59-60. It should be observed that the figure in meas. 61-62 is formed from the melodic line, marked with upward stems, found in meas. 56-57. Thus the sense of unity is preserved throughout the passage. After two measures of the dominant seventh of D<sub>b</sub> (meas. 61-62) six measures of the tonic follow, and the work is brought to a close by an authentic cadence in meas. 69-70.

**Interpretation:** The even motion of the left-hand part demands the strictest tempo, while the right hand may indulge in a moderate degree of *tempo rubato*. Too much rhythmic freedom, however, should be avoided, for exaggerated sentimentality in interpreting Chopin cannot be too severely condemned. The following notation of the bass, given in the Klindworth edition of this work, is strongly recommended:



The brackets and the fingering in meas. 8 indicate that the last two notes of the lower treble voice should be played by the first and second fingers of the left hand. Below is given still another way of distributing the voices:



The treble of meas. 13 may also be played as follows:



## BERCEUSE

It should be noted that in meas. 45 stress is given to the *lower* voice of the treble as long as the upper voice remains D<sub>b</sub>, but the *upper* voice is accentuated when the downward chromatic descent begins. The accentuation is shown by the upward stems.

At meas. 55 the *Coda* begins. Here the alternation of tonic and dominant chords on the third and fourth beats of the measure is abandoned, and with an uninterrupted *diminuendo* this beautiful cradle song dissolves imperceptibly into the silence of the night.

### Glossary

Frédéric François Chopin	pronounced	Frā'-dā-ric Frän'-swä Shó'-pän (nasalized)	
Berceuse	"	bēr-sûz'	(A cradle song or lullaby)
<i>sempre una corda</i>	"	sēm'-prā oō'-nä kōr'-dä	(always with the soft pedal)
<i>simile</i>	"	sē'-mē-lā	(similarly; in like manner)
<i>dolcissimo</i>	"	döl-tchis'-sī-mō	(with extreme sweetness and delicacy)
<i>leggierissimo</i>	"	léd-jā-ris'-sī-mō	(very lightly)
<i>tranquillo</i>	"	trän-kwēl'-lō	(calmly; quietly)
<i>sostenuto</i>	"	sōs-tā-nōō'-tō	(sustaining the tone)
<i>lusingando</i>	"	lōō-zēn-gän'-dō	(in a soothing style)
<i>basso ostinato</i>	"	bäs'-sō ôs-tē-nä'-tō	(a single bass figure con- stantly repeated)
<i>tempo rubato</i>	"	tēm'-pō rōō-bä'-tō	(irregular tempo; "robbed time")

# BERCEUSE (Cradle Song)

Op. 57

Revised and edited by Leopold Godowsky

Frédéric François Chopin.

Andante  $\text{♩} = 40 - 46$

1 *p*  
2  
3 *p dolce*  
4  
*sempre una corda*  
*simile*  
5  
6  
7  
8  
*dolcissimo*  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15 *espr.*  
*poco*  
*sempre p*

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32 33

34 35 *dolce e tranquillo*

36 37 *p*

38 *poco cresc*



8. *leggeriss.*

43

44

45

46

*poco rit.*

47

*sostenuto*

48

49

50

51

*p*

52

53

*pp*

8  
54 *sempre pp* 55

56 57 58 *dolcissimo e lusingando*

59 60 61 *dimin.*

62 63 64 65

66 67 68 69 70