

Cambridge University Press  
0521386152 - Chopin: The Four Ballades  
Jim Samson  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

CAMBRIDGE MUSIC HANDBOOKS

Chopin: The Four Ballades

Cambridge University Press  
 0521386152 - Chopin: The Four Ballades  
 Jim Samson  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE MUSIC HANDBOOKS

GENERAL EDITOR Julian Rushton

Cambridge Music Handbooks provide accessible introductions to major musical works, written by the most informed commentators in the field.

With the concert-goer, performer and student in mind, the books present essential information on the historical and musical context, the composition, and the performance and reception history of each work, or group of works, as well as critical discussion of the music.

*Other published titles*

- Bach: *Mass in B Minor* JOHN BUTT  
 Beethoven: *Missa Solemnis* WILLIAM DRABKIN  
 Berg: *Violin Concerto* ANTHONY POPE  
 Handel: *Messiah* DONALD BURROWS  
 Haydn: *The Creation* NICHOLAS TEMPERLEY  
 Haydn: *String Quartets, Op. 50* W. DEAN SUTCLIFFE  
 Janáček: *Glagolitic Mass* PAUL WINGFIELD  
 Mahler: *Symphony No. 3* PETER FRANKLIN  
 Musorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition* MICHAEL RUSS  
 Schoenberg: *Pierrot lunaire* JONATHAN DUNSBY  
 Schubert: *Die schöne Müllerin* SUSAN YOUENS  
 Schumann: *Fantasie, Op. 17* NICHOLAS MARSTON

Cambridge University Press  
0521386152 - Chopin: The Four Ballades  
Jim Samson  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Chopin: The Four Ballades



Jim Samson

*Professor of Musicology, University of Exeter*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
**UNIVERSITY PRESS**

Cambridge University Press  
0521386152 - Chopin: The Four Ballades  
Jim Samson  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1992

First published 1992

*A cataloguing in publication record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data*

Samson, Jim.

Chopin, The Four Ballades / Jim Samson.

p. cm. – (Cambridge music handbooks)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 38461 3 – ISBN 0 521 38615 2 (pbk)

I. Chopin, Frederick 1810–47. The Four Ballades.

II. Title.

ML410.C47P6 1992

784.2'72–dc21 91–2542 CIP

ISBN 0 521 38461 3 hardback

ISBN 0 521 38615 2 paperback

Transferred to digital reprinting 2001

AH

Cambridge University Press  
0521386152 - Chopin: The Four Ballades  
Jim Samson  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

*for Sue and Lois*

## Contents

---

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
1 <i>Background</i>	1
Social history	1
Stylistic history	5
Ballade No. 1	7
Ballades Nos. 2–4	14
2 <i>Genesis and reception</i>	20
Sources	20
Editions	26
Critics	33
Pianists	38
3 <i>Form and design</i>	45
Ballade No. 1, Op. 23	45
Ballade No. 2, Op. 38	51
Ballade No. 3, Op. 47	56
Ballade No. 4, Op. 52	62
4 <i>Genre</i>	69
Theories	69
Cycles	72
Structures	76
Narratives	81

Cambridge University Press  
0521386152 - Chopin: The Four Ballades  
Jim Samson  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Contents

---

<i>Notes</i>	88
<i>Select bibliography</i>	98
<i>Index</i>	101

## Preface

---

This handbook examines the four ballades of Chopin from both historical and analytical perspectives. Chapters 1 and 2 are historical, concerned with context, origins and aftermath. Chapters 3 and 4 are analytical, concerned with formal components and functions, and with genre. There are of course meeting-points between history and analysis, even at a very basic level of investigation. Analytical tools do, after all, depend on conventional categories which emerge from history, just as historical subject-matter properly includes musical structures. But they have essentially separate areas of competence, and ask very different kinds of questions about the musical work.

As far as possible I have tried to retain some clarity about the scope and limits of these two modes of enquiry. Above all I have been anxious that the researches of the one should not be allowed to generate conclusions about the other, since such conclusions will almost certainly lack refinement. In particular analytical enquiry inclines towards a reductive view of history. It embraces contradiction in a higher synthesis, and it subordinates diversity to a quest for unity. The analytical perspective tells us above all else about today's world. Specifically it tells us what Chopin and the ballades can mean to today's world.

An historical perspective, on the other hand, will seek to explore the relationship between our world and Chopin's world, and this entails recovering something of Chopin's world, restoring to it its contemporary complexity, diversity and contradiction. It is mainly for this reason that I felt it necessary to include a substantial discussion of context in the first two parts of chapter 1. This may go some way towards countering the tendency of analytical writing first to assume that the Chopin work is a unified statement and then to gather the work, together with the rest of his output, into the fold of a notionally unified period style.



Cambridge University Press  
0521386152 - Chopin: The Four Ballades  
Jim Samson  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Acknowledgements

---

It is pleasant to record my gratitude to several people who facilitated the preparation of this book. Jeffrey Kallberg responded generously to several queries about sources; Zofia Chechlińska helped me find my way through nineteenth-century editions; Katharine Ellis shared her expertise on nineteenth-century French criticism; James Methuen-Campbell and Tim Mobbe helped with early recordings, and Rosemary Meikle with bibliographical materials. I am grateful to my colleague Nicholas Marston, who offered valuable advice and encouragement, and to the Chopin authority John Rink, who read the manuscript and commented helpfully on the general structure of the book and on numerous points of detail.