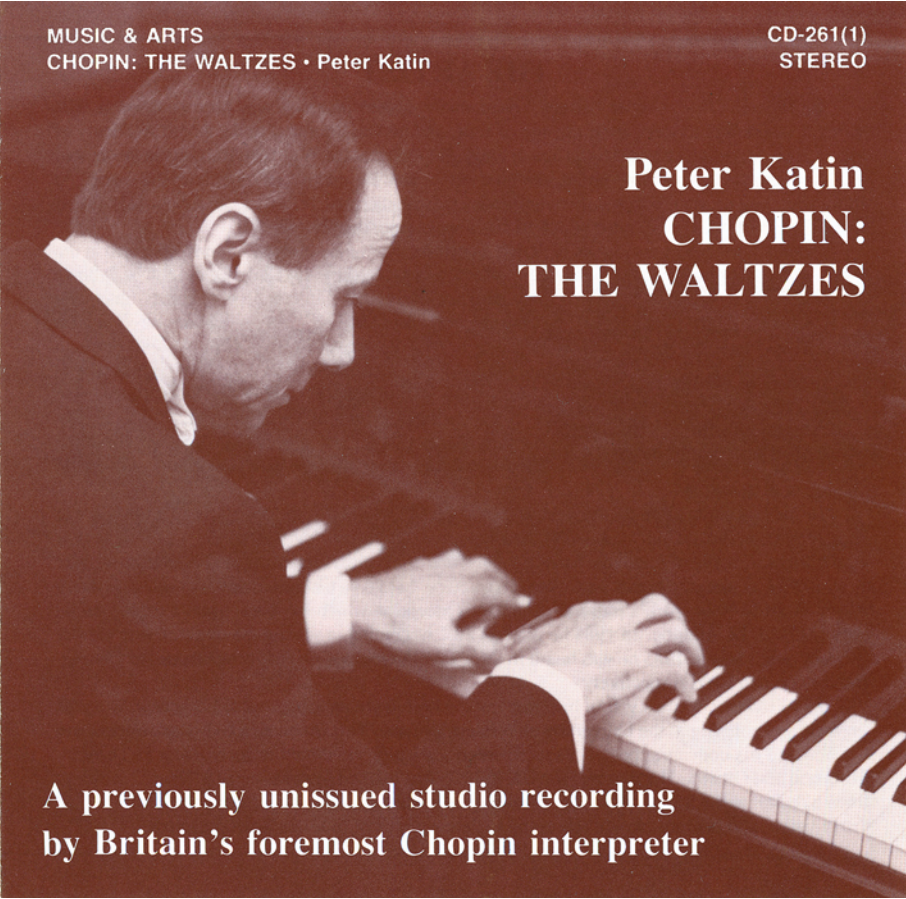


MUSIC & ARTS

CHOPIN: THE WALTZES • Peter Katin

CD-261(1)

STEREO



**Peter Katin**  
**CHOPIN:**  
**THE WALTZES**

**A previously unissued studio recording  
by Britain's foremost Chopin interpreter**

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## THE ARTIST

PETER KATIN, one of Britain's most distinguished pianists, was born in London. His musical talent was evident from the age of four, and he was admitted to the Royal Academy of Music four years before the official age of entry. His debut at the Wigmore Hall was in December 1948 and the success of this started him on a career that has taken him throughout the world. At about that time he also received invaluable advice from such artists as Claudio Arrau, Myra Hess and Clifford Curzon, advice for which he has always been deeply grateful.

Peter Katin's early successes included a performance of Beethoven's fourth concerto at the Royal Albert Hall at the age of nineteen, which was greeted by the Daily Telegraph as follows " . . . Distinguished himself. In one so young such taste and judgement were remarkable. The whole of his performance was kept within the bounds of delicacy and grace, with never a false step." Not long after this he played the same work at the Royal Festival Hall to similar critical praise in the Times, but although his reputation grew tremendously as a player of classical and chamber works, his performance of Rachmaninov's third concerto at a Henry Wood Promenade Concert in 1953 virtually tipped the balance and almost overnight he became regarded as a virtuoso. This reception brought him a recording contract with Decca as well as tours all round the world, and for some fifteen years he was regarded as one of the foremost performers of the most taxing romantic works.

In the late sixties Peter Katin restricted his list of these big works for a few years in order to concentrate on individual composers. This led to the one-composer recitals for which he is now well known, Chopin in particular having proved one of his most rewarding studies and giving him a reputation as one of Chopin's greatest interpreters. In 1983 a Chopin recital was acclaimed as a major event in New York's musical calendar, a reception which has been equally expressed on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1984 he gave an all-Liszt recital in several major cities with similar success, and early in 1985 he was heard in three London recitals playing programmes of Chopin, Beethoven and Liszt respectively.

In 1978 Peter Katin's gift of bringing out the best in young artists led to his accepting a post as Visiting Professor at the University of Western Ontario. This involved a five-year residence in Canada and his concert appearances were enthusiastically welcomed in such places as Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa. His return to the UK in 1985 was marked by the issue of a "live" recording from a recital at the Snape Maltings, so adding to an already impressive list built up over the past thirty years, and his most recent recording to date consists of fourteen Scarlatti sonatas.

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## THE PROGRAM

If the order of playing in this recording of the Waltzes appears unusual it is in fact because I decided to record them in the order of composition. There are altogether twenty and I have omitted four; two very early ones that amount to little more than exercises, one written in 1826 and now presumed lost, and one in B major written in 1848 but so far unpublished, being, I believe, in the collection owned by the late Arthur Hedley.

Apart from this there is the consideration that Chopin was apparently not interested in any works that were not published with his consent, and this is probably borne out by such early works as eight Polonaises, a handful of Mazurkas or even the C minor Sonata which, he was to realise, could not measure up in sheer musical content to later works bearing the same title. I have always tended to respect Chopin's wishes in this respect, but I do feel that a fair number of the posthumously published Waltzes have a lot more charm than he thought (he was only responsible for the publication of half the number available). Many were written as a kind of gesture for a friend or generous host, and the possibility that he parted up on occasions with the only copy could mean that others have yet to be discovered, as was probably the case with the A minor Waltz of 1843, not published until 1955.

In these pieces it would perhaps be unfair to look for any real depth of character and it is far more rewarding to observe through them Chopin's talent for taking a simple dance form and bring to it whatever "flavour" he wished. There is a basic delicacy and charm in the little E major Waltz (first on this recording) and on the other hand we have a superb display of virtuoso writing in the great A flat Waltz of Op. 42, or again, an aristocratic dignity in another of the same key, Op. 34 No. 1, and in the Op. 69 No. 1 he shows that quiet reflectiveness which was to find its full expression in the later Nocturnes or the central sections of the fourth Scherzo or the Polonaise-Fantaisie.



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In regard to the late Nocturnes, if you listen to the two last (Op. 62) you will be struck by the "meandering" quality that leaves one floating in a cloud of soothing harmonies. It is a wonder that he should have completed these two exquisitely evocative pieces when his health was the cause of such grave concern (he was to live little more than three years), but when you hear the last three Waltzes and consider that they were still later and with the calamitous break with George Sand to add to the burden, you can well be amazed that he could pen so much grace and humour at such a time. The first two of these are of course well-known, the D flat having come in for some quite inexcusable treatment springing mainly from the title "Minute Waltz" that was at some stage wished on it (I believe it was also likened to a puppy chasing its own tail!). In fact none of these titles — and stories — that have come attached to so many of Chopin's works are remotely authentic and in most cases they were inflicted without even his knowledge by certain publishers, as were dedications to doubtless charming ladies of title whom he had never met.

In this recording I have retained Chopin's own notation where the original versions are available. It is indeed strange that much of Chopin's interesting harmonic and even melodic structure should have been "simplified" by later editors; the F minor Waltz, Op. 70 No. 2, contains some delightful harmonies that Julian Fontana mysteriously thought fit to replace with rather more mundane progressions, while in the A flat, Op. 69, one hears a flattened note near the end of the theme (later removed altogether!), a left hand phrase which is missing in most published versions, and a correctly-placed series of ascending chords, made to start on the wrong beat of the bar in almost every standard edition. There are many small differences elsewhere but I quote these two Waltzes as being the sort of thing that can happen when an editor takes it upon himself to improve on the original.

Analysis of individual Waltzes is to my mind superfluous; there seems to be little to analyse, but in common with his other shorter works, simply there to be enjoyed.

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- |   |                                   |    |                                    |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| 1 | E major, Op. Posth. (2:38)        | 10 | F major, Op. 34 No. 3 (2:13)       |
| 2 | D flat, Op. 70 No. 3 (2:42)       | 11 | A flat major, Op. 42 (3:30)        |
| 3 | B minor, Op. 69 No. 2 (4:04)      | 12 | F minor, Op. 70 No. 2 (1:47)       |
| 4 | E minor, Op. Posth. (2:59)        | 13 | A minor, Op. Posth. (1:58)         |
| 5 | A minor, Op. 34 No. 2 (5:07)      | 14 | D flat major, Op. 64 No. 1 (1:40)  |
| 6 | E flat, Op. 18 (5:09)             | 15 | C sharp minor, Op. 64 No. 2 (3:40) |
| 7 | A flat major, Op. 69 No. 1 (3:14) | 16 | A flat major, Op. 64 No. 3 (2:48)  |
| 8 | G flat major, Op. 70 No. 1 (2:10) |    |                                    |
| 9 | A flat major, Op. 34 No. 1 (4:52) |    |                                    |

Total time: 50:31

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