

Grand Polonaise in D, Opus 16

Theobald Boehm

transcribed by Richard Heffler*

Theobald Boehm is best known today for his contributions to the mechanical development of the modern flute, increasing the power of its tone and intonation accuracy. A virtuoso flautist at the Bavarian court, Boehm composed his own pieces to showcase his artistry and technical capability. His elegant Grand Polonaise is just such a showcase, requiring quick, intricate passagework as well as singing lyricism.

The polonaise form originated as a Polish folk dance in triple meter. Baroque composers, including Johann Sebastian Bach, sometimes included the polonaise in dance suites, but it was another virtuoso performer-composer and a contemporary of Boehm, Frédéric Chopin, who popularized the polonaise for romantic music in the nineteenth century, producing seventeen of them. Interestingly, Chopin finished his famous Grande Polonaise for piano and orchestra in 1831, the same year that Boehm composed this Grand Polonaise for flute.