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FRYDERYK CHOPIN AND CAMILLE PLEYEL:  
AN ENGLISH INTERLUDE – JULY 1837

Chopin's brief visit to England in July 1837 tends to be overshadowed by his eight-month sojourn in the British Isles in 1848, and is generally given short shrift by his biographers. Yet it was important for the development of his professional career. In London he met his English publisher Christian Wessel and signed contracts for the publication of his Studies, Op. 25, the Scherzo in B flat minor, Op. 31, and the Two Nocturnes, Op. 32 – all of which appeared in England before Wessel's rival publishers in Paris (Maurice Schlesinger) and Leipzig (Breitkopf & Härtel) were able to issue them. Chopin also met the piano manufacturer J. S. Broadwood and played on one of his latest models. This was a useful contact, for it was Broadwood who provided pianos for Chopin's public concerts in Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh during his tour of Britain in the spring and summer of 1848.

Chopin's travelling companion was Camille Pleyel, who had recently cast off his wife, the concert pianist Marie Moke, for her serial infidelities. During this visit to London, Pleyel met a young Englishwoman named Emma Osborn, twenty-eight years his junior, and took her back to Paris with him, where she became his common-law wife. After Pleyel's death, Emma became known as 'Pleyel's widow', a sobriquet which is engraved on her tombstone in Père-Lachaise Cemetery.