

# A Case Study of Human Resource Development: F. Chopin, the Poet of Piano

Jin-Young Kim<sup>1)</sup>, Young-jun Lee<sup>2)</sup>

## Abstract

Chopin is one of the greatest composers and pianists in history. Such a great man may well be pride of his mother country. Warsaw of Poland has tried to utilize local resources regarding Chopin in many ways. For example, in 2010, as the city of Warsaw acknowledged the importance of Chopin as a means of promoting the city image, the city connected Chopin with its cultural history by mapping a trail of “Chopin’s Benches” around the city where he spent the early years of his life. This study aims to understand how effectively the place can be connected with local cultural resources by looking through the places regarding Chopin, dotted around the city. On a perspective of economic revitalization, this study also tries to focus on a sense of place in order to develop local cultural contents and apply them to the local community.

Keywords : Frédéric Chopin, Warsaw, Poland, Zelazowa Wola, Chopin’s Bench, Park Lazienkowski, Chopin Museum, Chopin Family Parlor

## 1. Introduction

There are many cultural resources that can be used to revive local economy such as cultural heritage, beautiful environment whether it is man-made or not, even stories embedded in local legends. As culture has diverged to a wide variety of localities, some minor cultures or even marginal cultures are being brought to light. That is, it is time for resources which have not been searched to have an opportunity to emerge as novel attractions. In this context, Warsaw in Poland is definitely the city which has become a new star among the European cities which had boasted their classy traditions and renowned cultural resources. Chopin, so-called the ‘Poet of Piano’ is indeed particularly Polish pride among the numerous cultural resources. As a Polish-born composer, Chopin nurtured his talent and was inspired growing up in Poland. Many places, particularly in Warsaw, traced back his footsteps.

---

Received (November 11, 2014), Review Request(November 12 2014), Review Result(November 27, 2014)

Accepted(December 19, 2014), Published(February 28, 2015)

<sup>1</sup>130-791 Dept. Global Cultural Contents, HanKuk Univ. of Foreign Studies, 107 Imun-ro, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul, Korea  
email: staci21@naver.com

<sup>2</sup>(Corresponding Author) 139-743 Dept. Facility Maintenance Engineering, Seoul National University of Technology, 232 Gongneung-ro, Nowon-gu, Seoul, Korea  
email: shakeslee@hanmail.net

This great composer provides dramatic stories that touched not only his own people but also humankind who are able to appreciate the beauty of art. Chopin revived in the 21st century again. With his extraordinary memoir and artistic accomplishment, the people who trace his life may feel the same inspiration that he might have felt years ago. The locality having its own identity and pride becomes a means of enforcing the ties of the community, and furthermore, revitalizing local economy. Many countries aim to create, develop and utilize their own cultural properties. It is not overstated that Korea, which has a long history of undergoing uniformity in terms of socio-ethnicity in the past; even in the modern times, it suffered from 35 years of Japanese colonial period and over 30 years of dictatorship, is more likely to lack of local identity and local culture. However, from the early 1990s, Korea instituted the system of the local government, which endows locality with identity for its own sake. Since then, diverse local cultures have mushroomed all over the nation, yet some cultural events and programs are overlapped, insufficiently supported, or poorly promoted. In spite of such trials and errors, particularly the rural communities continue to make desperate efforts to develop local resources. It is because the hardships in the rural communities that consist of a large portion of farming area are more preordained in this limitless and competitive era. The pressure of opening market has been mounting, leading the rural community to fall in despair as well. According, this study will find ways to utilize local resources including human resources. By introducing the case of Warsaw, Poland, it will also suggest that a man, with his or her high value, should be a proper means of local revitalization. The Chopin-related contents in Warsaw, which developed along the streets for tourists to feel a sense of history and culture while wandering about from the places to places, have been chosen because Korea's recent trends are focused on creating cultural trails.

## **2. Historical Backgrounds**

### **2.1 History of Poland**

Poland was originally founded in the late 4th century by the Slavs in the wake of invasion of the Huns. The Slavs avoided their invaders and migrated to the west, undergoing the historical fetters. However, Poland has grown as a country with strong identity, proud culture, and tradition, overcoming the difficulties. This country was ruled and divided by Austria, Germany and Russia from 1795 to 1918 for 123 years. Even in the modern times, Poland could not seem to get away from foreign powers. Under the Nazis, its refugee government was established in Paris, France in 1939; after the World War II, as one of the satellite states of the Soviet Union, Poland continued to be invaded or interrupted by foreign influence. Such a series of calamities has given Polish strong national identity. Because of their patriotism and solidarity, the renowned Warsaw Uprising was possible in 1944. Since then Poland had fought against communism with democratic

waves which had swept around Eastern Europe; one of the fighters for democracy was L. Walesa, who became a Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 1983. Poland has turned out many of the great names in human history such as Pope John Paul II, Nobel Science Prize laureate M. Curie, H. Sienkiewicz, writer of *Quo Vadis* as well as F. Chopin so-called the Poet of Piano[1]. Warsaw, the Capital of Poland, is the largest city with beautiful scenery and a long history; it is also the center of Polish politics and economy with population of about 2 million people. Its history goes back to the 10th century when villages and castles were formed. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Zygmunt III first designated Warsaw as the capital city and began to develop. In 1807, B. Napoleon made it a capital of Warsaw Dukedom. From 1815, it became a capital of the Russian Poland, leading its politics, industries, and culture. Even though 80% of the city was destroyed during the world war, later it was fully restored. Warsaw is a major transportation point that connects Moscow, Berlin, Paris, Vienne, and Sophia.

## **2.2 History of Poland**

Frédéric Chopin was born on March, 1 in 1810 in Zelazowa Wola, a small village near Warsaw, in what was then the Duchy of Warsaw. His father was a French teacher and his mother was a talented pianist. At the age of 6, he started playing the piano, and already earned a reputation at 8. As a child prodigy, he learned composition theory and techniques at 12 from an instructor at Warsaw's Institute of Music. Since then Chopin had not had any official lessons, but he only concentrated on composition on his own. As the year of 1825 came, his first music piece, 'Rondo' was presented. In 1828, he had a chance to visit Berlin. After coming back home, the experience in Berlin gave him much inspiration that his music career became even more active. He gave his first recital in Vienne in 1829, and over the next few years he performed in Poland and through much of German and Austria as well as in Paris. Feeling limited by Warsaw's cultural provincialism and uncomfortable with the publicity surrounding his performances there, he settled in Paris in 1832 and established himself as an exorbitantly paid piano teacher. In Paris he composed extensively, but had fewer performances mainly to private salons. In 1838 he began an affair with French novelist George Sand. The couple, along with Sand's children, spent a harsh winter in Majorca, where Chopin's health deteriorated and he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Chopin settled in with Sand in France, composing steadily although his increasing perfectionism slowed his output. By the mid-1840s, though, his health and romantic situation both had come to an end. Their love story ended in 1847. Chopin then made an extended visit to the British Isles, but returned to Paris to die in 1849[2].

Assuming his nickname, the Poet of Piano, it is not overstated that Chopin did not compose anything but piano pieces. In the field of piano music, Chopin is considered wearing an everlasting crown. Leading the era, he left works that were composed in his own independent style. Particularly, with more than 200 piano pieces,

he used the pedals and unique techniques, having great influence on posterity.

### **3. Chopin-related Contents**

#### **3.1 Żelazowa Wola: Chopin's Birth Place**

As mentioned above, Żelazowa Wola is a small village near Warsaw with a population of fewer than 100, in which Chopin was born. He lived in this place until his family moved to Warsaw when he was 7. Żelazowa Wola is also known for its picturesque Masovian landscape, including numerous winding streams surrounded by willows and hills. Housed in an annex to the Chopins' home, surrounded by a park, is a museum devoted to the composer. After their moving out, his house was used as a stable, but in the 19th century, it was restored as a museum. It is open to the public from 9 am to 5 pm to exhibit his pictures, instrument, furniture of his and piano scores. In summer, concerts of Chopin's music pieces are performed by pianists from all over the world, who play inside the family home. In an adjacent park is a monument to the pianist, designed by Józef Gosławski.

#### **3.2 Park Łazienkowski**

Warsaw's largest park took its name Łazienki, which means 'baths' in Polish, from a bathing pavilion that used to be located here. The classic baroque style gardens were the life work of King Stanislaw August Poniatowski in the 18th century. It is said to take only 5 years to complete this park again after the 1944 bombings during the world war, since most of the structures were relatively well-preserved. a very small exhibition for modern art in an art gallery in the park.



[Fig. 1] Statue of Chopin

The 180 acres of this park runs along the Vistula escarpment, parallel to the Royal Route. One of the most beloved sights in the Park is the Pomnik Fryderyka Chopina, which refers to Chopin Memorial, a sculpture under a streaming willow tree that shows the composer in a typical romantic pose. In summer, outdoor concerts of Chopin's piano music are held here every Sunday afternoon. In addition, there is a museum in the old coach houses on the east side of the park, which contains a collection of stuffed birds and animals native to Poland. It is also a perfect place for visitors to relax or take long walks as well as appreciate its history.

### **3.3 Chopin Museum**

The Museum opened in the 1930s: in 1935, the Chopin Institute (then it was called), founded by worldwide famous representatives of culture, started to purchase and collect several valuable manuscripts from the composer's relatives. As such, the museum's exhibits make up the world's richest and most varied collection of memorabilia related to both Chopin as an individual, and his music. The collection includes manuscripts and printed copies of Chopin's works, his correspondence, autographs, notes, works of art, personal belongings owned by the composer and his piano. There are also some remarkably precious and touching exhibits on show, most notably the post-mortem face mask, and a cast of his hand.

The Museum in the renovated Ostrogski Palace is the most modern biographical museum in Europe. Multimedia exhibitions and touch screens - here the real world meets the virtual. The ticket to enter this magical world is an electronic card; by using it, one may hear commentary and information in several languages, and listen to music. This museum was specifically designed so that everyone can create their own sightseeing route and itinerary, in accordance with their personal interests.

The entire exhibition consists of 15 rooms, each one creating a separate 'mini-museum'. The visitors can thus see and experience how Chopin lived: take a stroll through Warsaw, then enjoy the twittering birds in Nohant, inhale the scent of violets - Chopin's favorite flowers, meet some ladies from his life, sense when the composer was displeased, listen to his works. Finally, enter the room of death, which is designed as a big black box[3].

### **3.4 Chopins' Parlor**

The Chopins' Parlor (Polish: Salonik Chopinów) is a branch of the Chopin Museum. It is in the south annex of the Czapski Palace at 5 Krakowskie Przedmieście in Warsaw. It is the largest room of the former Chopin family apartment where Frédéric Chopin lived with his parents and sisters until he left Poland in 1830. The family moved to the Czapski Palace from a Warsaw University building, across the street, in June 1827, just a few weeks after the death of Frédéric's youngest sister. Her death was the reason for the move, as it

was an emotionally difficult time for the family to remain in the apartment. The new apartment had two stories. The family lived in a large second-floor flat, and the garret served as a boarding house for male students. The latter was run by Frédéric's father, Nicolas Chopin. One of the former boarding-school rooms had been turned into a study for Frédéric. It contained only a desk and piano. This place is very meaningful that it was in the Czapski that Chopin composed and first played for family and friends some of his most important early works, including Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11, and Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21. On 2 November 1930 a commemorative plaque was unveiled between the windows of the annex second floor. The inscription in Polish reads:

Frédéric Chopin lived and composed in this house before he left Warsaw forever in 1830.

### **3.5 Chopin's Benches**

In commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of Chopin's birth, Warsaw opened a walking route for visitors based on the multimedia trail called 'Chopin's Benches'. This route created by Towarzystwo Projektowe guides through the historic places in the city where multimedia benches are located. Following the route and resting on the benches, the residents and tourists can discover the great composer's younger years. The sound system installed in the benches bring the tourists back to the Chopin's music by pressing just one button.

The route along 'Chopin's Benches' aids the audio guide issued by the city government, which forms together an educational walking path. Each Chopin Bench has a brief description of the particular spot and information on its historic links to the composer. To make it understandable to foreign tourists, the information is also available in English. Each of these unique pieces is equipped with a specific photo code, which allows downloading from the Internet a special Chopin application, containing, e.g. an audio guide and a set of tracks with Chopin music. Around the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music are several benches seen[4].



[Fig. 2] One of the 15 benches in Warsaw

#### **4. Human Resources and Cultural Contents**

The historical contents are akin to a warehouse of treasure called the cultural industry. The local cultures scattered through the regions themselves reflect our past, ancestors and even ourselves. Thus, it is not overstated that the legacy of history and culture has been produced through individual life over the years. Its trace has been passed down both in the tangible and intangible heritages. However, utilization of these contents used to be restricted to the related lineage, or local government which sometimes gets criticized for its mere display. Korea has not sufficiently focused on utilization of either historical or contemporary human contents so far. As seen some of the successful Korean dramas, well-made human contents can produce many high value-added contents, using OSMU. For example, festival, play, musical, exhibition, concert, urban design, publication, animation and even education can provide a very good platform. To carry out the project, it needs the premises to sorting out the related contents according to types. In addition, it is essential to comprehend all kinds of cultural contents in the region whether they are tangible or intangible including nature, buildings, stories that have been passed, and human beings of all times who have lived there. By doing so, the region is filled with cultures in the various aspects.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Local cultural development signifies far beyond economic profits or utilization of tangible resources in the community. The recent trends are extended to cultural tourism including restoring the birth place of representative person in the region or visualize a great figure of the past. This visualization or symbolization of the person is needed to develop local contents in more various dimensions. However, contents varied according to the characteristics and categories of the cultural resources are likely to lack unity. For example, each local government and organization differ their standard, and ways to provide information and so on.

In this regard, Warsaw optimizes its cultural resource to satisfy tourists who visit places to appreciate music and stories related to Chopin.

As the world's beloved composer, Chopin lived such a dramatic life that many places embrace every breath of his. Thanks to him, it is not exaggerated that Poland which used to remain a marginal state in Europe could acquire a condition to become a cultural powerhouse. The comprehensive cultural contents according to Chopin's life and works are utilized in various tourists' attractions, or even school, museums and parks, especially in Warsaw. They are very easy to access, providing visitors with carefully-made cultural trail. However, the secondary contents involved in digitalization should be considered to promote the Chopin-related contents based on experience of which the story embedded in the places. Such digitalized contents can broaden

One-Source Multi-Use of Chopin such as game, educational materials, mural, festival, and contest.

### **References**

- [1] R. Szulc, *Chopin in Paris: The Life and Times of the Romantic Composer*, New York, Da Capo Press, **(2000)**.
- [2] A. Zamoyski, *Chopin: Prince of The Romantics*, Harper Collins, **(2011)**.
- [3] <http://www.chopin.museum/en/>, July 25 **(2014)**.
- [4] <http://www.chopin.edu.pl/en/>, Jul 27 **(2014)**.