

Music: Chopin (1810-1849) *Sonata No. 2 in B flat minor: funeral march* (1839)
Artwork: Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Odalisque reclining on a divan* (ca. 1828)
Object Number: **PD.3-1957**
Location: currently in store



As you contemplate Delacroix's *Odalisque* remind yourself that the same hand that held the brush also shouldered Chopin's coffin in 1849 at a ceremony where the Funeral March from the 2nd Sonata in B flat minor was played in a special arrangement made for the occasion as the coffin was brought up from the crypt of the Madeleine. The service also honoured Chopin's dying request to have Mozart's requiem performed. To do this it was necessary to obtain a special dispensation from the Archbishop of Paris where it was normally forbidden for women to sing in churches. Permission was granted on condition the female soloists were concealed behind a black velvet curtain. Delacroix's *Odalisque* reclining on a divan, unashamedly flaunting a nude female in front of black drape represents the complete antithesis of this scene in the Madeleine. It was George Sand who introduced these two leading figures of the romantic movement in art and music. Delacroix produced the most celebrated portrait of Chopin, a portrait that originally included George Sand who, following the acrimonious parting, dismembered the picture whose two halves were eventually dispersed to the Louvre and Copenhagen's Ordstrupgaard Museum. Chopin and Delacroix became close friends spending many hours discussing art and music. Delacroix had shown musical talent from an early age and had a deep admiration for Chopin. Sand seemed to think the admiration was not returned, writing "Chopin does not understand Delacroix. He has esteem, affection and respect for the man, but he detests the artist.... He has much wit, tact and malice, but he understands nothing of pictures or statuary." The *Odalisque* reclining on a divan is illustrative of that fascination with the exotic that led Delacroix to make a hugely inspirational visit to Algeria in 1832 and seek permission to view a real harem. There is little wonder that Chopin's music which introduced another form of exoticism into Western culture with its Polish elements and harmonic adventurousness, appealed so strongly. The *Odalisque* also serves us with a reminder that a young and attractive woman with a teenage infatuation for Chopin was to become a central figure in Chopin's rift with George Sand. While Delacroix was teaching Chopin's son, Maurice, to paint, the prudish Chopin was teaching the piano to her teenage daughter, Solange. Later Chopin was to support Solange and her husband in their battles with her mother which eventually led to the rift between Chopin and Sand and the division of the Delacroix portrait.