

# PIANO JOURNAL

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EUROPEAN PIANO TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

## Lembit Orgse

in conversation with  
**Nadia Lasserson**

*plus*

**Murray McLachlan discusses how to prepare for piano competitions**

• **Denis Burstein discovers a previously unknown Medtner manuscript** • **Hande Dalkılıç focuses on the left-hand piano repertoire**

• **Wesley Roberts heralds 21st-century music for piano(s) and orchestra** • **Nancy Litten journeys a final time into the Piano Journal archives with issues 59 & 60**



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48TH INTERNATIONAL EPTA CONFERENCE

# TEMPO NORDICO

TIMING, NATURE AND NURTURE IN PIANO MUSIC AND EDUCATION

ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND THEATRE  
AUGUST 20–23, 2026, TALLINN, ESTONIA  
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# EDITORIAL

Helen Tabor



Piano Journal relies on the generosity and enthusiasm of all the wonderful academics, pianists and teachers for its excellent content.

If you would like to contribute an article about any area of piano teaching, interpretation or performing, or if there is a pianist you think we should interview, or you want to suggest contributors that may be interested, then please do not hesitate to email me: [editor@epta-europe.org](mailto:editor@epta-europe.org)

I am currently writing this editorial in beautiful sunshine on the border of the Charente and Dordogne and on the edge of a national park listening to Samuel Adler's Piano Concerto No. 3, one of what I know will be many new personal discoveries by Wesley Roberts' inspiring article on 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Music for Piano and Orchestra. It's going to take me some time to listen to all the music I don't know on his eclectic and fascinating list, but in a world of increasing unpredictability and insanity, turning to the voice, language and messages of music, so often one of optimism, peace, self-awareness, reconciliation and personal communication, brings a sense of perspective and hope.

Maybe there is more than an element of escapism too, but Murray McLachlan reminds us that, even in music, this is a competitive and cut-throat world where success is not just dependent on talent and inspiration but dedicated and committed hard work, in his article on International Competitions. As a performer himself, a teacher and the father of three prodigiously talented musicians, he has a unique perspective on this.

I remember once, as a student, sitting down with Hamish Milne in the café at the Royal Academy of Music in London, and having a wonderfully relaxed conversation with him about his passion and love for Medtner's music. It was a very erudite discussion and a little above my head at the time, but I always remembered it and resolved at some point to explore more of his music, something that somehow never seemed to happen. So it was with some happiness and reinvigoration of my determination to do so when I read Denis Burstein's in-depth article about the discovery of a new manuscript. His detailed thoughts and insights are drawn together in instalments across the three magazines for 2026.

Building my patio (the first and absolutely the last time I will ever do this), I damaged the tendons in my right shoulder lifting the heavy slabs up several stone steps and was unable to play for a while. I have to admit that I simply didn't practise, but Hande Dalkılıç's personal and informative article on music for the left hand does make me feel guilty that I didn't turn this injury into an opportunity.

With the excitement of the International Conference in Estonia becoming ever closer and, here in France and back in the UK, glimpses of spring and summer raising our spirits, I hope you'll find the time to take a few moments, enjoy the sun and the fascinating array of articles the magazine has to offer.

Anthony Williams



EUROPEAN PIANO TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION



THE EUROPEAN JOURNAL FOR PIANISTS AND PIANO TEACHERS

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In conversation with  
EPTA Estonia President

# “Lembit” Orgse

by Nadia Lasserson

**A**s EPTA Estonia will be hosting the next EPTA International Conference in August 2026, it seemed an appropriate time to get to know more about the country and its music in a conversation with Lembit Orgse, President of EPTA Estonia.

EPTA Estonia was founded in 1990, with Bruno Lukk as President; Peep Lassmann took over as President in 1993 and Lembit Orgse in 2016. Lembit has been heavily involved ever since and is now working (together with Estonian EPTA colleagues) around the clock preparing for the forthcoming Conference in August. I was hugely grateful to him for giving up his valuable time for this interview.

Photo: Travelling with Burney through France and Italy - concert at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tallinn, 20 March 2026

**NL: Thank you for agreeing to talk to EPTA prior to hosting the 48<sup>th</sup> International Conference. What is your background and have you always lived in Estonia?**

**LO:** I was born and grew up in Estonia. Both my parents were musicians; my mother was a pianist and my father a violinist who played and taught. Both were Professors at the Conservatoire and, at a very young age, I worked alongside them.

They never pushed me, and my piano education started as a hobby; only at the age of 13/14 did my studies become more serious.

**NL: Who was your first teacher?**

**LO:** My first teacher who inspired me to take up piano seriously was Reet Vanaselja, a student of Bruno Lukk and then my parents sent me to study at the Tallinn Special Music School. It was Professor Bruno Lukk who prepared me for the Conservatoire (now the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre) and there I studied with him for five years. I also studied in Tallinn with professor Kalle Randalu. Bruno Lukk was from the German tradition of pianism and studied at the Berlin Academy of Music under Leonid Kreutzer and Paul Hindemith from 1929 to 1933 and was also greatly influenced by Artur Schnabel, who was active at the same institution.

**NL: Where did you go after that?**

**LO:** After four years of teaching at a music school I was fortunate to be able to study with Vladimir Nilzen at St Petersburg Conservatory for two years; he was a student of Nadezhda Golubovskaya. Those were difficult times for me as I already had a family with two small boys, and so everyday life in St. Petersburg did not suit me very well.

I took the night train there and back every week to stay one night and work with my Professor. I then attended concerts and art exhibitions/museums for two days before returning home. It was an enormous challenge.

**NL: Is your wife a musician?**

**LO:** She studied composition and turned to Steiner School teaching.

**NL: ...and your sons?**

**LO:** One is a violinist with a focus on early music and teaches in the Academy, and the other studied geography and works as a management consultant in humanities and plans the development of municipalities.

**NL: What was Bruno Lukk's background?**

**LO:** Bruno Lukk was born in Russia in 1909 and moved to Estonia in 1913 with his parents who were Estonian and German. He went to study in Riga where he heard Schnabel and then went to study piano with Leonid Kreutzer (who

**“What actually motivates us as musicians – as performers – is still the desire to experience that sense of fulfilment ourselves again ... and then share it with others.”**

offered a direct line to Leschetizky) and theory with Hindemith at the Berlin Hochschule in 1929. Lukk, Kreutzer and Schnabel all left Berlin; in 1933 Kreutzer went to Tokyo, Schnabel stayed in England, and in 1935 Hindemith went to Turkey. I remember Lukk talking about this hasty escape.

**NL: Did you perform frequently or concentrate on teaching?**

**LO:** Having a young family I focused more on teaching than performing at first. I taught all levels from beginners to advanced and was Head of Keyboard at the Tallinn Georg Ots Music High School for 20 years from 1986. I joined the staff of the Estonian Academy in the 1990s as a part-time Lecturer and Piano Professor.

**NL: And what development did you follow at that time?**

**LO:** I completed my Doctoral Thesis in 2013 which was a detailed study of the Use of Thoroughbass in Bach's solo keyboard music with special reference to the French Suites. That was the year the Academy appointed me to the position of Head of Instrumental and Vocal Pedagogy studies and Historic Piano. I also now give lectures on aspects of Early Keyboard Music and Piano Didactics.





Travelling with Burney through France and Italy - concert at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tallinn, 20 March 2026

**NL:** As your family aged, your performances became more frequent?

**LO:** During my studies and afterwards, I have been active as a performer in addition to my pedagogical activities. My work as a harpsichordist – as a soloist and basso continuo player – became important. At the age of 17, I was invited to join the Estonian Radio Chamber Orchestra as a harpsichordist. This practice, together with my activities in various Baroque ensembles, lasted for decades. It has broadened my musical horizons greatly, as I have had the opportunity to participate as a continuo player in performances of many of the great vocal-instrumental works of the Baroque period by Monteverdi, Bach, Handel and others. The roots of this particular interest in Baroque music probably stem from Bruno Lukk’s teaching, which represented a repertoire and taste dominated by German music: Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Hindemith and the New Viennese School. French modernism and modern Estonian piano music were also held in high regard. In other areas of the piano repertoire, I furthered my studies with Vladimir Nilsen in St. Petersburg and, of course, I have continuously improved my skills in other fields by working as a teacher (including theoretical subjects) and researcher. In recent decades I have increasingly focused on historical piano. And the programmes include repertoire that is not often heard at traditional piano recitals – Dussek, Montgeroult, Clementi, and others. Last year, I gave a birthday celebration recital on the fortepiano “La Joyeuse” which included Bach, Beethoven, Montgeroult and Rameau.

**NL:** Have you performed any contemporary music?

**LO:** I have participated in the premieres of new works by renowned Estonian composers Ester Mägi, Peeter Vähi, Jüri Tamverk and Tõnis Kaumann. I played the harpsichord in the premieres of Ester Mägi’s Concerto for harpsichord and organ in 1985 and Peeter Vähi’s Harpsichord concerto and Concerto piccolo. Other premieres had me performing on the piano.

**NL:** Do you have a preference for performing on the harpsichord or the piano?

**LO:** It really depends on the repertoire. The charm of 17<sup>th</sup>-century keyboard music is best revealed when played on the harpsichord. The closer we get to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the more we need the capabilities of the piano to bring the music to life. But as I mentioned earlier, lately I’ve preferred to perform mainly on a historical piano – but of course with a repertoire suited to it.

**NL:** Carola Grindea always referred to a “peak performance” or being in the zone when all is going so well and you feel you are in another world while playing... have you ever experienced this? How was it, and where?

**LO:** Yes, I agree. This state of being in the zone – or, to use another term, the “flow” state – is something that deeply connects us to music (that is, it binds us to the process of creating live music). I don’t think it’s possible to be involved in this field for decades and perform on stage without accidentally experiencing that feeling. What actually motivates us as musicians – as performers – is still the desire to experience that sense of fulfilment ourselves again (through high-quality music, of course) and then share it with others. But achieving that feeling isn’t always guaranteed. ‘Tuning in’ to that feeling is a never-ending process of renewal. Sometimes I succeed better, sometimes I don’t.

**NL:** Do you plan any more solo recitals?

**LO:** I performed a new programme in March 2026: ‘Travelling with Burney through France and Italy’ to celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. This included music that Burney would have heard on his travels from London to Paris, Geneva, Venice, Bologna, Rome and Naples (the task is difficult because Burney writes mainly about vocal music experiences). Clementi was young at that time but already

well-established in England, and Rameau, Galuppi, Martini and Cimarosa were frequently heard in public.

**NL: Your programmes are certainly unusual.**

**LO:** Yes, I try to seek out areas that my colleagues don't focus on to the same extent, and I feel a certain inner connection (or affinity) with the historical periods from which the music I perform originates.

It seems quite natural that in classical music interpretation, which has a long tradition of performance and a standard repertoire, the performer also wants to offer the audience something new that is not often heard. With my knowledge and skills, I also try to do this.

**NL: And tell us more about your Doctoral Thesis.**

**LO:** It was 'The Art of Embellishment: Thoroughbass in Johann Sebastian Bach's Allemande and Courante in E flat major BWV 815' and was related to my extensive experience playing basso continuo/thoroughbass. I explored ways to apply and articulate this same experience in the performance of Bach's solo keyboard works. I also used sources that Bach was certainly familiar with (Niedt's and Heinichen's treatises, etc.) and I received strong confirmation of my experience and intuition that the most important elements of Bach's, and all Baroque music, are the bass and the chords (regardless of whether it is a solo or a larger ensemble).

Together, these also form the symbolic acronym 'Bach'. However, my work currently exists only in Estonian. I also gave a presentation on this topic at the previous EPTA conference in Tallinn in 2008.

**NL: Perhaps you could get it translated for many more pianists to learn from you?**

**LO:** Translating and publishing this work is indeed in the plans, but it remains among the tasks that haven't been done yet. I would likely also shorten and update it now, 13 years later. I still have hope.

**NL: Many pianists know little of the foundations of the Estonian School of Piano Music. Do you want to expand on this topic?**

**LO:** It's not easy to sum it up in a few sentences. Compared to other countries, Estonian Piano Music was established rather late and shows strong German influences. Although piano construction and piano music had been cultivated in Estonia since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as part of Baltic German culture. When Estonia gained independence in 1918, one of the first steps in the enlightenment process was the establishment of Estonian-language higher music schools in Tallinn and Tartu and that was the year that the Tallinn Academy (Conservatory) was founded. Prior to that there were private German Music Schools. It is strange that many Estonian musicians studied in St. Petersburg, and yet the influence was strongly Germanic. Rudolf Tobias is considered to be the founder of Estonian Piano Music in the late 19<sup>th</sup>

**“Estonia has always had a rich choral tradition with a fascinating blend of Nordic atmosphere, folk influence and modern minimalism and the piano music is equally distinctive nature-inspired and emotionally subtle.”**

and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. His music showed late Romantic influences of Brahms and Reger with rich harmonies and formal clarity. He composed character pieces, sonatas and fugal works.

**NL: Enlarge on some of the early Estonian piano composers.**

**LO:** The first Estonian professional composer of piano music was Rudolf Tobias, followed by Heino Eller, Eduard Tubin and others. Tobias and Eller received their education in St. Petersburg and Central Europe. The first Estonian piano virtuoso was Artur Lemba, who was very popular in St. Petersburg before World War I and was a young professor at the conservatory there. In the 1920s and 1930s, he was the leading piano professor at the Tallinn Conservatory. At the same time, Peeter Ramul's piano method was well known and highly regarded throughout Europe.

Although Estonian piano teaching and piano culture have mainly developed along their own path, the greatest influences have been German piano culture, the St. Petersburg Conservatory (before World War I) and, from 1940 (44) to the end of the 1980s, the main external influence came from the conservatories of Moscow and Leningrad-St. Petersburg in the east. Since 1990, it has been possible to communicate with colleagues from all over the world. The role of EPTA has also been very important here.

**NL: How would you describe the typical Estonian element in its early piano music?**

**LO:** Estonia has always had a rich choral tradition with a fascinating blend of Nordic atmosphere, folk influence and modern minimalism and the piano music is equally distinctive nature-inspired and emotionally subtle. It took several decades for a truly Estonian idiom to formulate.

But Estonians also greatly value individuality, uniqueness and distinctiveness. And although many of our composers



are connected through teacher-student relationships, each composer's piano music is very distinctive – H. Eller, E. Tubin, Arvo Pärt, Ester Mägi, Tõnu Kõrvits, to name a few.

**NL: Can you name pianists who have recorded Estonian piano music.**

**LO:** Most Estonian pianists who record have also recorded Estonian piano music. Performing new Estonian music is in our pianists' DNA. I can't name all my colleagues, but I'll mention a few from recent decades: Peep Lassmann, Kalle Randalu, Lauri Väinmaa, Ivari Ilja Mihkel Poll and Sten Lassmann. Peep Lassmann and Ivari Ilja both studied in Moscow and worked, lived and taught in Tallinn, and Ivari Ilja was a renowned accompanist and soloist who performed all over the world. He has recently released a CD of the best of Estonian piano music, "To the North". Sten Lassmann, son of Peep, has just produced a recording of the complete piano works of Heino Eller for Toccata Classics.

**NL: EPTA Estonia has a long history. How was it at the start?**

**LO:** Estonian pianists and piano teachers have always been very well organised and networked. Teaching has taken place and continues to take place mainly in educational institutions that provide systematic education – in music schools, conservatories and the Academy. As soon as the winds of freedom began to blow and contact with our western neighbours became legally possible again (after the period 1940-1990), we were ready to join the existing EPTA organisation. The preparatory work was done by Professors Peep Lassmann and Bruno Lukk as early as 1989.

Prof. Arbo Valdma, who was working in Serbia at the time and later worked for several decades as a piano professor at the Cologne University of Music, played a very important role in establishing contacts and convincing the EPTA leadership.

**NL: I believe it was well received at its start.**

**LO:** At the time of its foundation, EPTA played a very important role in Estonia. There were very few, if any, organised events in institutions after the collapse of the Soviet system, and EPTA Estonia was the first to organise masterclasses and educational courses. Bruno Lukk collaborated with Arbo Valdma and Peep Lassmann and gave EPTA Estonia a high profile establishing and restoring international contacts. Bruno Lukk was already very ill at the time and died shortly thereafter. In fact, in the early years, the organisation of EPTA on the ground was primarily the work of Prof. Peep Lassmann and Prof. Lilian Semper. (Arbo Valdma was in Europe and left Serbia/Yugoslavia to become a professor in Cologne, Germany.)



Photo of Tallinn by falco from Pixabay

## **“International EPTA’s role as a platform for establishing contacts with colleagues from other countries and introducing new developments in piano teaching remains extremely important.”**

Our role and focus within the country has changed repeatedly according to the situation. However, International EPTA’s role as a platform for establishing contacts with colleagues from other countries and introducing new developments in piano teaching remains extremely important.

**NL: EPTA Estonia is going to host the next International Conference in August of this year. How are the preparations going at this stage?**

**LO:** We have a fine team on the current EPTA Estonia Board including some young pianists. We have contacted teachers in Latvia, Finland, Sweden and many neighbouring countries in the hope that many will come. We are greatly looking forward to hosting everyone in the brand new Concert Hall that seats 300. The Conference programme is shaping up to be very exciting, with many presentations from more than 20 countries – primarily from Europe, but also from the USA, Australia and elsewhere. The Conference’s focus areas are grouped into two categories: Tempo (timing); Nature and Nurture. Both thematic groups will feature in-depth lectures in various formats, repertoire and music overviews, plenty of material for piano duos, and quite a few presentations on the piano works of Estonian composers – an area where we have much to offer the world.

We invite you to participate and listen, whether you’re from near or far. The Conference programme should offer something fresh for various groups interested in piano pedagogy and music, research enthusiasts, those interested in new music and repertoire, and conference attendees interested in piano pedagogy.

We also plan a visit to the Arvo Pärt Centre where our guests will experience a guided tour, a lecture with insight into original manuscripts, an exhibition, and a short concert of Pärt’s piano music given by the talented young pianist Täheli Liiv, local teachers and students.



Ande Kaalep

**NL: It all sounds extremely interesting and exciting.**

**LO:** The EPTA Estonia Board hopes that our beautiful historic city of Tallinn and the new Great Hall of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre – the Conference Venue – together with our inspiring guests, will provide just the right burst of inspiring energy to kick off the new season. We are looking forward to welcoming you all to Tallinn. Hurry up and register – Early Bird rates are valid until May 15.

**NL: Many pianists are determined to come to this wonderful Conference and I am sure it will be an enormous success. We are all very much looking forward to this incredible event. Thank you so much for your time.**

**LO:** I am very grateful for the invitation to this interview. Thank you!

I sincerely hope that there are many colleagues across Europe who also feel that attending the EPTA Conference in Tallinn at the end of August will provide an inspiring start to the upcoming 2026/27 piano music and teaching season. Everyone is welcome! (More details on page 4.)



# Preparing for Piano Competitions: Preparation, Perspective and the Unpredictable Journey

by Murray McLachlan

Preparing a young pianist for a major competition is one of the most complex, demanding and revealing processes in musical life. As teachers, adjudicators, performers – and, in my case, as a parent – we are constantly reminded that competitions are not simply about playing well on a particular day. They are about long-term preparation, psychological resilience, artistic identity, and, perhaps above all, character.

Over several decades of involvement in competitions from multiple perspectives, one truth has become increasingly clear: success is rarely accidental. It is almost always the result of painstaking preparation, careful repertoire choices, and a depth of experience that extends far beyond the practice room.

## Preparation: Far More Than Learning the Notes

It is tempting – especially for younger pianists – to equate preparation with note-learning. In reality, this is only the starting point. True preparation involves a level of familiarity so deep that the music becomes second nature under a wide variety of circumstances. A competition programme must be lived with, not merely learned. It should be performed repeatedly in different contexts: formal concerts, informal studio run-throughs,

**“A competition programme must be lived with, not merely learned.”**

house recitals, masterclasses and (increasingly) recording sessions. Each of these environments exposes different weaknesses and reveals new layers of understanding.

From my experience both as a teacher and as an adjudicator, the difference between those who progress and those who do not is often not talent, but depth of preparation. As one leading teacher succinctly put it to me many years back: ‘leave no weak links, leave no stone unturned.’

This level of preparation takes time – often far more time than students initially anticipate. It is not unusual for a serious international competition programme to require twelve months or more of focused work. That timeframe is not a luxury; it is a necessity. We should all remember that Ferruccio Busoni was renowned for never performing a work in public for the first time until it had been practised for at least two years beforehand.

## Repertoire: Playing to Strengths, Not Fashion

One of the most common mistakes I observe is the selection of repertoire based on perceived expectations rather than personal affinity. Competitions do not reward generic competence; they reward conviction, individuality and authority.

Repertoire must suit the pianist. This sounds obvious, yet it is frequently ignored. A programme that aligns with a performer’s natural musical instincts, physical strengths and artistic personality will almost always communicate more effectively than one chosen for its prestige or difficulty.

The temptation to ‘follow the herd’ – to play the same pieces in the same way – is strong, particularly in our era, saturated as it is beyond belief with recordings. Yet this approach often leads to homogenisation rather than distinction. True artistry lies in informed individuality, not imitation. Having said that, there are certain opuses that seem to have a ‘competition curse’ around them, at least according to some celebrated pedagogues who have been known to strongly discourage their students from ever entering competitions performing Chopin’s first Ballade, Franck’s Prelude, Chorale and Fugue or Shostakovich’s First Sonata, to mention



**Murray McLachlan (left) with Tessa Nicholson, her student Alim Beisembayev – future Leeds winner of 2021 – and conductor of the Manchester Piano Concerto Competition for Young Pianists, Stephen Threlfall**

only three works. But who knows? Certainly in the case of Shostakovich it worked very well for one pianist last year in Fort Worth during the 2025 Van Cliburn competition, so that just goes to prove that you never really can tell. In other words, if you feel crazily confident and comfortable with Chopin's first Ballade, then do not hesitate to air it in competitions. Play to your strengths and have the courage to ignore rumours and hearsay.

### **The Vital Role of Performance Experience**

No amount of practice can substitute for performance. Competitions demand not only technical security but also the ability to project under pressure, to communicate, and to recover from the unexpected.

This is why trial performances are indispensable. They allow pianists to test stamina, memory, pacing and psychological resilience in real conditions. They also expose issues that simply do not arise in the practice room.

I recall adjudicating a competition some years ago where a young pianist delivered an immaculate first round: polished, controlled, apparently unshakeable. Yet in the semi-final, a minor memory lapse triggered a visible loss of confidence, and the performance never fully

recovered. It was not a lack of ability that caused the problem, but a lack of sufficient experience in dealing with the unexpected in performance conditions. The contrast between rounds was stark and instructive.

I have seen the benefits of preparation equally clearly in the opposite direction: students who have played their programmes repeatedly in varied settings often develop a remarkable resilience. Small slips are absorbed, not magnified. The performance continues. That ability can only be acquired through experience.

I have seen the benefits of this repeatedly. In preparation for major competitions, providing opportunities for young artists to perform their programmes publicly – even just weeks before the event – can make a decisive difference. These performances act as a bridge between preparation and presentation. In a small way I was touched that before the 2021 Leeds International Piano Competition, Chetham's Summer School was able to offer Alim Beisembayev and Thomas Kelly two lunchtime recitals. Both said how grateful they were for the chance to air their Leeds repertoire less than a fortnight before the competition started – and of course they went on to succeed spectacularly, with Alim winning and Thomas reaching the concerto finals.

### **Recording: The Modern Gatekeeper**

We now live in an era where recordings are not optional; they are essential. Preliminary rounds for major competitions are frequently decided on video submissions, and these recordings must function as performances in their own right.

Recording requires a distinct skill set. It demands consistency, attention to detail, and an acute awareness of how sound and visual presentation translate through a microphone and camera. As one musician insightfully observed, a video must present everything on a proverbial silver platter.

For young pianists, learning to record effectively is now a fundamental component of competition preparation. It is not merely a technical requirement but an artistic discipline.

### **An Anecdote: Judging Without Sound**

An illuminating anecdote comes to mind from a parent of one of my students. This individual watched the final stages of a major international competition – but with the sound turned off. Remarkably, they were able to predict the results with surprising accuracy by observing body language, demeanour, stage presence and – most crucially – confidence.

This silent viewing revealed something profound: communication in performance extends far beyond sound. A performer's physical presence, sense of purpose and psychological assurance are immediately perceptible, even without a single note being heard.

For competitors, this is a powerful reminder. The jury is not only listening, they are watching. Though I am sure most jury members will categorically deny this, I am certain that it is hard to ignore, especially on a subconscious level, the whole presentation package when it comes to adjudicating on panels in international competitions.



## The Unpredictability of Competitions

Despite all the emphasis on preparation, competitions remain inherently unpredictable. This is not a flaw; it is an intrinsic characteristic of the art form.

There are countless examples of outstanding pianists who have been eliminated early in one competition, only to win major prizes in another shortly thereafter. Even the most successful competitors have experienced setbacks along the way. As one teacher candidly observed, 'anything can happen – and often does!'

I vividly remember serving on a jury where a particularly gifted pianist divided opinion dramatically. Half the panel felt the playing was visionary; the other half found it mannered and unconvincing. The discussion that followed was intense, thoughtful and ultimately inconclusive. In the end, the pianist did not progress, yet I would not be at all surprised if that same artist were to win a major competition elsewhere. Such is the nature of subjective judgment.

This unpredictability stems largely from the subjective nature of judging. Juries are composed not only of pianists but often of musicians from other disciplines, conductors, agents and promoters, each bringing different priorities and perspectives. They are frequently required to make rapid decisions under pressure, sometimes after hearing dozens of performances in a short period. In such conditions, differences of opinion are inevitable.

Understanding this reality is crucial for competitors. Results are not absolute judgments of artistic worth; they are reflections of a particular set of opinions at a particular moment in time.

### Character: The Decisive Factor

If preparation provides the foundation, character determines how a pianist responds to the competition experience.

The idea that 'character is destiny,' to quote Goethe, is particularly relevant in this context. A pianist's daily habits – how they practise, how they respond to challenges, how they manage setbacks – shapes not only their performances but also their long-term development.

Consistency, focus and resilience are essential. The ability to work patiently over extended periods, to resist last-minute panic, and to maintain a clear artistic vision distinguishes those who thrive from those who falter.

Equally important is the capacity to separate artistic growth from competitive outcomes. Competitions are part of the musical landscape, but they do not define the entirety of a musician's identity.

As one of my long-term students who has entered many competitions once insightfully remarked to me during a particularly intense period of preparation, the real competition is often with oneself.

### A Personal Perspective: Teaching, Adjudicating, Parenting

My own experiences span multiple roles within the competition world, each offering a different perspective.

As an adjudicator, I am constantly struck by how quickly one senses levels of preparation. Security, depth of understanding and clarity of intention are immediately apparent. Conversely uncertainty – however well disguised – inevitably reveals itself.

On one occasion, I recall hearing two performances of the same major work within minutes of each other. The first was technically brilliant but felt oddly detached, as though the pianist was reproducing something learned rather than communicating something lived. The second, less immaculate on the surface, had an inner conviction and narrative that immediately drew the jury in. It was a powerful reminder that competitions are not simply technical examinations, they are artistic encounters.

**“A pianist’s daily habits – how they practise, how they respond to challenges, how they manage setbacks – shapes not only their performances but also their long-term development.”**

As a teacher, the challenge lies in guiding students through the long and often arduous preparation process, balancing encouragement with realism, and ensuring that artistic integrity is never sacrificed for competitive gain.

As a parent, the experience is perhaps the most intense of all. Watching one's own children navigate competitions brings a unique combination of euphoric disbelief, anxiety and helplessness.

My daughter Rose's successes at youth national and international level, Matthew's triumph at the Bromsgrove International Young Artists Competition, and Callum's progress to the later stages of the Leeds, Santander and Van Cliburn competitions have each reinforced the same fundamental lesson: preparation and belief must go hand in hand.

I remember sitting in halls during many of these competitions, acutely aware that there was absolutely nothing more that could be done. Months of preparation had already been distilled into those few minutes on stage. It is a strangely humbling



**Eric Lu, First Prize winner at The Leeds International Piano Competition in 2018, with three Year 7 Chetham's pianists who are all going on to study at music conservatoires!**

experience for a teacher and parent alike: to realise that, at that moment, the outcome rests entirely with the performer and, to some extent, with fate.

### Case Study: Preparing for Leeds

A particularly vivid example comes from Callum's preparation for the Leeds International Piano Competition in 2024.

After celebrating the huge achievement of reaching the last, live stages as one of fewer than thirty young pianists from all over the world, selected from literally hundreds of entrants, a sense of enormity and pressure was quickly evident. The scale of the task was immense. Multiple full-recital programmes, chamber works, concertos and contemporary repertoire had to be prepared to the highest possible standard. The sheer volume of music alone would have been daunting; the level of refinement required made it formidable.

In the final months before Leeds, Callum's daily practice often extended to eight hours, with constant attention to detail, voicing, pedalling and structural coherence. Preparation was not confined to the practice room. Performances, play-throughs and discussions formed an integral part of the process.

Opportunities to perform the programmes in advance proved invaluable. These trial performances

allowed for adjustments, refinement and the development of confidence under pressure. They also provided insight into pacing and stamina – critical factors in a multi-round competition.

When the competition itself arrived, the months of preparation translated into performances of poise and maturity, culminating in a place in the semi-finals – an achievement that reflected not only talent but sustained, disciplined work.

### Competitions as Catalysts

For all their challenges, competitions can be extraordinarily valuable. They provide focus, motivation and opportunities for growth that are difficult to replicate elsewhere. They bring together musicians from diverse backgrounds, fostering connections and exchanges of ideas. They expose participants to different interpretations, different standards and different perspectives.

Most importantly, they demand a level of preparation and commitment that can accelerate artistic development. However, their value depends on how they are approached. Entered with a healthy mindset, focused on learning and growth rather than solely on results, they can be transformative.

### Final Thoughts

Preparing for a competition is, in essence, preparing for a moment of

truth. It is an opportunity to present not only a programme of music but a synthesis of months or years of work, thought and development.

The key principles remain consistent:

- Prepare thoroughly and early.
- Choose repertoire that suits you.
- Perform as often as possible before the competition.
- Develop recording skills.
- Accept the unpredictability of results.
- Cultivate resilience and self-belief.

Above all, remember that competitions are part of a larger journey. They are milestones, not destinations.

In the end, the goal is not simply to win, but to emerge as a more complete, more confident and more authentic musician.

And that, perhaps, is the most meaningful success of all.

**Murray McLachlan** has had a rich and varied career as an international performer, recording artist, writer, lecturer and teacher of standing.

Based in Manchester as Head of Keyboard at Chetham's and tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music, he is founder/artistic director of Chetham's International Summer School and Festival for Pianists and has written three technique books (Faber Music).

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation, likely a sketch for a cadenza. The paper is aged and yellowed. At the top, the word "Cadenza" is written in large, elegant cursive. Below it, several staves of music are visible, though many are crossed out with a large, bold red "X". The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and clefs. There are several tempo markings: "Largamente" (written twice), "calando" (written twice), and "animato" (circled in red). Dynamic markings include "pp" (pianissimo) and "ppp" (pianissimissimo). There are also markings for "Pedale" and "Tutti". The left margin contains some illegible handwritten notes, possibly related to performance or editing. The overall appearance is that of a working draft or a composer's sketch.

Fig. 1. Page 70 of the autograph. Sketch of the omitted variation in F major (La Cadenza), bars 1–24.

# Unknown Manuscript of the *Second Improvisation* (in the Form of Variations) for piano, Op. 47 by Nikolai Medtner



Postcard of Medtner, 1910

by Denis Burstein,  
The Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance

The focus of this article - in three parts, being published in this and the next two issues of *Piano Journal* - is a previously unknown manuscript of the *Second Improvisation (in the Form of Variations)*, Op. 47 by Nikolai Medtner (1880–1951).<sup>1</sup>

I discovered this manuscript among the papers of Hector Gratton (1900–1970), a prominent Canadian composer, conductor, pianist and music educator, whose creative output was notably influenced by both Nikolai Medtner and Alexander Scriabin. Gratton's piano teacher was Alfred La Liberté (1882–1952), a Canadian composer and pianist who actively promoted Medtner's works in Canada and was among the composer's close friends. As Medtner's widow, Anna, relates in her memoir, the composer had the habit of periodically destroying draft manuscripts and preparatory materials, which he himself called "the notes of a madman".<sup>2</sup> In this way, he reduced "the terrifying quantity of paper" that burdened him. Nevertheless, some of the drafts, even during Medtner's lifetime, found their way into the hands of La Liberté, who "almost forcibly wrested them from the composer".<sup>3</sup> It is most likely that La Liberté passed on a number of Medtner's manuscripts, including the manuscript of the *Second Improvisation*, to his student Gratton.

The manuscript comprises eighty-nine pages of handwritten musical and verbal text. It is a unique document that preserves nearly all stages of work on the composition - from initial sketches to the final fair copy. The only part of the

*Improvisation* absent from the manuscript is the *Conclusion* (the sheets containing it were possibly lost or accidentally included in other manuscripts). On the pages of the manuscript, we find sketches containing various compositional ideas and indications regarding the function of a given fragment within the whole. The manuscript also includes draft versions of all sections of the cycle with numerous accompanying sketches and, more importantly, the final fair copy of the *Second Improvisation*, detailing fingerings, tempo and dynamic markings. A distinctive feature of this manuscript, as with many of Medtner's other manuscripts, is the presence of an extensive verbal layer, the study of which allows for a factual reconstruction of the composer's creative process.

The discovery of three additional variations in the Canadian manuscript was both unexpected and of considerable scholarly interest. They are previously unknown and unpublished, with two of them fully completed and preserved in fair copies. The music of these variations is striking for its highest inspiration and compositional mastery, which allows us to speak of the discovery of genuine gems in the legacy of the remarkable composer.

Although frequently mentioned alongside Rachmaninoff and Scriabin as a foremost representative of the Moscow piano school, Medtner received scant public recognition for his intricate compositional language during his lifetime. Scholarly engagement with his life and oeuvre has also remained limited in the decades since his death in 1951.

<sup>1</sup> Nicolas Medtner. Folder containing drafts and sketches of the *Second Improvisation*, op. 47. R12190-293-1-F, MUS 18, Volume number: 34, Item ID number: 3722512. Hector Gratton Fund, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/redirect?app=fonandcol&id=3722512&lang=eng> I am grateful to Michel Brideau and the staff of Library and Archives Canada, which kindly provided me with a copy for personal use.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Medtner, "On Nikolai Karlovich Medtner," in N.K. Medtner: *Vospominaniya, Stat'i, Materiali* [Reminiscences, Articles, Materials], ed. Zarui Apetyan (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1981), 41.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

The composer left his homeland after the Russian Revolution and remained in exile for the rest of his life. Medtner's movements around the world mirror the typical passage of Russian emigrants: first Berlin, then Paris and concert tours in Europe and North America, and then, due to the spread of Nazism, a move to England. In Berlin and Paris Medtner was rather isolated; he failed to impinge on the local cultural-musical landscape and remained steadfast in his reluctance to adapt his work to the taste of the public. Only in Great Britain, in the narrow circle of his friends and admirers, did he feel genuine support and interest in his work.

Among Medtner's large-scale compositions, the sonata occupies a central place. He composed a total of eighteen sonatas (fourteen for piano, three for violin and one Sonata-Vocalise). The composer's sonata thinking is also evident in his three piano concertos and the piano quintet; several *Skazki* (Fairy Tales), which serve as finales of opus cycles, are also written in sonata form: Fairy Tale in C minor, Op. 8 No. 2; Fairy Tale in D minor, Op. 34 No. 4 ("There once lived a poor knight"); Fairy Tale in C-sharp minor, Op. 35 No. 4 ("Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!").

Medtner turned far less frequently to another large-scale form – the theme and variations. Indeed, this structural type appears in its purest manifestation only once, in Op. 55 (*Tema con variazioni* for piano in C-sharp minor, 1933). In this relatively small-scale piece (by Medtner's standards), which at times is almost neoclassical in language, more transparent in texture, and pianistically lighter than most of the composer's large forms, the genre of variations is stated in the title, and all six variations are clearly indicated in the score. The middle section of the Second Violin Sonata, Op. 44, is also written in the form of variations. In addition, variation technique plays a significant role in the first and third Piano Concertos.

Medtner also wrote two additional variation cycles, though in these the variation form appears in an extremely complex and somewhat veiled manner. Both works are titled *Improvisations*. In fact, this unusual genre designation appeared for the first time in Medtner's early miniatures *Three Fantastic Improvisations*, Op. 2 (1896–1900), but these short works were not in variation form. Notably the first of these *Fantastic Improvisations* is associated with the image of a

mermaid (Water-Nymph) – a character shared by Op. 47.

The *Improvisation* in the form of variations appeared in 1914, after the composer had reached creative maturity.<sup>4</sup> This is the piece Op. 31 No. 1 in B-flat minor, which in all editions remained simply titled *Improvisation*, without a number, although after the appearance of the subsequent large-scale piece with the same genre title, it should rightly be referred to as the *First Improvisation*.

In its scope, Op. 31 No. 1 is somewhere between a miniature and a large form. Its duration, according to the composer's indication (and his own performance), is 7 min. and 30 sec. The variation structure is not mentioned in the score, but the attentive listener will discern a form in which a theme is followed by five diverse variations and a coda, where the theme returns in its original guise. As the piece unfolds, the variations grow increasingly free.<sup>5</sup> Eleven years later came the *Second Improvisation*, Op. 47 in F-sharp minor (1925/1926), first published by Zimmermann in Leipzig in April 1928.<sup>6 7</sup>

At this point, Medtner was at the height of his compositional powers. Ten of his fourteen piano sonatas had already been written, as well as his first two violin sonatas and the single-movement Piano Concerto No. 1 (in 1922 he began and temporarily postponed his most famous Piano Concerto No. 2 in three movements, which would be completed in 1927). Also behind him were three cycles of his beloved *Forgotten Melodies*, Opp. 38, 39 and 40 (1916–1922), including two single-movement sonatas, one of them the exquisite *Sonata-Reminiscenza*. The majority of Medtner's marvellous *Fairy Tales* had already been created.

The *Second Improvisation* was immediately well received by listeners. This is confirmed in the *diary-letters* of Medtner's wife, Anna Mikhailovna. Describing the Berlin premiere of the *Second Improvisation*, which took place on October 24, 1928 in the Bachsaal, she writes: "The success was enormous – both loud and long-lasting – so that after the *Improvisation*, Op. 47, Kolya had to return to the stage over and over again... the applause lasted for nearly a quarter of an hour."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, as early as 1873 Carl Reinecke (1824–1910) composed an improvisation in the form of variations for piano four hands – *Improvvisata über eine Gavotte von Gluck*, Op. 125. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the genre of piano improvisation was also explored by Ch.-V. Alkan (3 *Improvisations dans le Style brillant*, Op. 12, 1833), J. Massenet (7 *Improvisations*, 1874), E. Grieg (*Improvisations on Two Norwegian Folk Songs*, Op. 29, 1878), and M. Reger (8 *Improvisationen*, Op. 18, 1896). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, piano improvisations were created by F. Busoni (*Improvisation über Bachs Chorallied "Wie wohl ist mir"* for two pianos, BV 271, 1916), C. Saint-Saëns (7 *Improvisations*, Op. 150, 1916–17), N. Myaskovsky (6 *Improvisations*, Op. 74, first version 1906–17), F. Bridge (3 *Improvisations for the Left Hand*, H. 134, 1918), and B. Bartók (*Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs*, Op. 20, 1920).

<sup>5</sup> This tendency is characteristic of many Romantic variation cycles, such as *Thème original et variations* for piano in F major, op. 19 no. 6 (1873) by P. Tchaikovsky, *Ballade*, op. 24 (1876) by E. Grieg, and the second movement of the Piano Concerto no. 1, op. 92 (1911) by A. Glazunov. In Glazunov's concerto, we observe a combination of monothematicism and character variation technique – a feature also significant in Medtner's work. This will be discussed below. See: Isaak Zetel', *Nikolaj Medtner – the Pianist: Creative Work, Performance, Pedagogy* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1981), 87.

<sup>6</sup> On the dating of op. 47 see: Christoph Flamm, *Der russische Komponist Nikolaj Metner: Studien und Materialien* (Berlin: Kuhn, 1995), 498.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolas Medtner: 2. *Improvisation* (in Variationenform) für Klavier, Leipzig: Zimmermann, 1926/1994. ZM 31080

Concerning a poorly organised concert in Toronto in January 1930 (due to the singer's fault), she wrote: "Kolya played the *Second Improvisation*, and since it always has great success, this time it immediately fixed everything."<sup>9</sup> There is no doubt that Op. 47 was received with the same "enormous success" during Medtner's triumphant concert tour in the Soviet Union in 1927, where the world premiere of the piece took place.<sup>10</sup>

The *Second Improvisation* is one of Medtner's most complex and monumental works. It is several times longer than both Op. 55 and *Improvisation* Op. 31 No. 1 (the latter, according to the composer himself, by a factor of four – see below the quotation from a letter to A. Goldenweiser). The variation form is indicated in the subtitle – after the title *Second Improvisation*, the clarification "in the form of variations" appears in parentheses. However, all the pieces that follow the theme are designated only by numbers and titles; the word "variation" is not applied to them.

The reason is that even the first of them, like all the subsequent ones, engages with the theme in a manner entirely unlike traditional or strict variation techniques. One must immediately forget about the theme's structure, harmonies, tonal plan or even its melodic line. The tonalities of the pieces are vivid and diverse; each is independent in character, texture and tempo. Yet the connection to the theme is not lost thanks to the finest motivic craftsmanship.

Monothematic transformations – whereby the original theme is transformed into several new ones with their own rhythms, harmonies and genres – abound in Medtner's music, especially in his large-scale works. One can say that this is his distinctive trait, brought to the extreme in Op. 47.

Medtner's sophisticated art of motivic transformation, in the context of the genre of character variations, can in my view be traced genealogically directly back to Beethoven. It is worth recalling Beethoven's own term from the *Diabelli Variations*, Op. 120 – *Veränderungen*, that is, changes or transformations. Much like in Beethoven, Medtner's themes traverse, over the course of the entire cycle, a kind of journey – through numerous vicissitudes, magical and seductive metamorphoses, and at times grotesque distortions – toward a transfiguration.

The grand composition is based on two short motivic cells from the *Theme – The Song of the Water-Nymph*. The first motive – fluid, delicately chromaticised, seemingly balancing on the boundary between minor and major due to the lowered fourth scale degree in F-sharp minor – is clearly associated

with images of an otherworldly, enchanted, fairy-tale, magical realm. In its structure and sonority, it bears significant affinity to one of Scriabin's most enigmatic and mystical works – *Prelude*, Op. 74 No. 2.

Medtner entered this motive into one of his notebooks alongside themes later used in the three cycles of *Forgotten Melodies*, Opp. 38–40, which allows us to date its origin to no later than 1918, and perhaps much earlier.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the first motive of the theme awaited its moment for at least seven years before entering the *Second Improvisation* without the slightest alteration.



Example 1. Theme: *The Song of the Water-Nymph*, bars 1–2.

The second motive – *cantabile*, diatonic, unspeakably sorrowful – lifts the theme into a realm of broader lyrical expression. Its prototype may be found in the early *Fairy Tale* in C minor, Op. 8 No. 1, bars 12–16.<sup>12</sup>



Example 2. Theme: *The Song of the Water-Nymph*, bars 8–10.

The contrasting juxtaposition of these two motives within the theme leaves a distinct imprint on the dramaturgy of the *Improvisation* as a whole. Of particular importance is the opposition of chromaticism and diatonicism, whose antagonism becomes the internal engine of the unfolding composition. The principal motivic cells undergo transformation throughout the entire *Improvisation* almost to the point of being unrecognisable – culminating in what Medtner termed a "dissolution of themes" – and are in constant interaction with one another.<sup>13</sup> The second, diatonic motive, under the influence of the first, suddenly appears in a bizarrely chromaticised and distorted form (Var. 7 and 11); conversely, the elusive, mercurial first motive emerges in a chorale-like diatonic guise, structurally merging with the second (Var. 12).

In the process of tonal-harmonic reinterpretation of the first motive, its original pitch (VII degree of the natural minor

<sup>8</sup> Anna Medtner, "Diary-letters," in *Medtner: Vospominaniya, Stat'i, Materiali*, 242.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>10</sup> February 18, 1927 in the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. See: N.K. Medtner: *Pis'ma* [Letters], ed. Zarui Apetyan (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973), 306.

<sup>11</sup> Elena Kirnosova, "The Method of Creative Work of N. K. Medtner and the Specifics of His Artistic Thinking. Based on the Manuscript Archive" (PhD diss., Moscow, State Institute for Musicology of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, 1996), 72.

<sup>12</sup> Dina Parakhina, "Notes on the *Second Improvisation*, op. 47," in *Nikolai Medtner: Unforgotten Melodies*, ed. Elena Dolinskaya (Moscow: Moskovskaya konservatoriya, 2021), 308.

<sup>13</sup> Zetel', *Nikolai Medtner – the Pianist*, 86.

scale) is transformed into a raised fourth degree, and the ascending minor third becomes an augmented second. This leads to the emergence and extensive use of the minor scale with raised fourth and seventh degrees in Var. 8–11. This sharply characterised mode marks the space of the “dark forest” in which the lyrical protagonist of the *Improvisation* finds himself.

The motivic fragments are presented episodically in retrograde (Var. 4) and in augmentation (Var. 15). At the end of Var. 10, the first motivic cell is condensed into a single dissonant chord, evoking techniques characteristic of dodecaphony.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the cycle, various modifications of the first motive engage in unpredictable contrapuntal interactions with one another; finally, in Var. 6, both principal motives are intertwined in counterpoint. The remarkable English pianist Edna Iles (1905–2003), a student and close friend of Medtner, once asked him, “How does it happen that themes conceived independently of one another come together so perfectly?” To which he replied, “That happens by itself.”<sup>15</sup>

Identifying the countless new transformations of the principal motives – submerged in the limitless flow of figuration, inner voices and contrasting polyphonic layers born of the composer’s inexhaustible imagination – becomes the listener’s main task, the successful resolution of which brings great joy. Amidst this diversity, the outlines of the ternary form, already blurred in the theme, become barely perceptible or disappear entirely in the variation-pieces.

A fundamental distinction of the *Second Improvisation* from other known variation cycles lies in its programmatic character – though of a very particular kind. The Canadian manuscript sheds light on many details concerning the history of the work’s creation. Already on the second page, immediately after the title (*Improvizazione*), the composer indicates its programmatic nature and comments on its specificity: “Each variation should be given a special title. But not in customary terms, rather in the character of pictures and phenomena of nature.”<sup>16</sup> It is striking, however, that in the manuscript of eighty-nine pages, which contains all the pieces included in the final version (except the *Conclusion*), only one of the planned nature – or image-based titles appears – “*The Storm*” (*L’Orage*) for the final variation. For the remaining pieces, only tempo markings and standard Italian and French character indications are given (*Grazioso*, *Scherzo*, *Humoresque*, *Tempestoso*, etc.). This suggests that both the idea of assigning titles and the inscription above the first line of

music may have appeared at a later stage in the compositional process.<sup>17</sup> Such a pattern is not unique in Medtner’s work: his widow Anna reports that the epigraphs from Pushkin and Shakespeare for the *Fairy Tales Op. 34 No. 4* and *Op. 35 No. 4* occurred to him only after the music had been composed.<sup>18</sup>

The music itself demanded such imaginative titles – each piece is highly individualised in character and atmosphere, often strange and vividly picturesque. Medtner’s programme-concept was realised as each piece that entered the final version (including the *Theme*) received a distinct and aptly chosen designation. The titles are exclusively Russian in tone, and some of them (*Pernaty’e* - *Winged Dancers*, *Leshy* - *The Sylvan*, *Nepogoda* - *The Storm*) are nearly untranslatable into any other language (including German, which was as native to Medtner as Russian) without losing important shades of meaning. At the same time, the first edition includes, alongside the Russian, German, French and English translations that enrich their semantic palette.

Of particular interest is the epigraph taken from Pushkin’s 1830 poem *Verses Composed at Night During Insomnia*, which Medtner prefaced to the tenth variation – published under the title *Elves*: “*Parca, jabbering, woman-fashion, / Sleeping night, without compassion, / Life, who stirs like rustling mice, / Why engage me in thy vise?*”<sup>19</sup>

Here, we are already dealing with a hidden programme that, for reasons known only to the composer, he chose not to disclose, instead inventing an imaginative, fairy-tale title. In her discussion of the hidden programme behind the *Piano Concerto No. 3 (Concerto-Ballade) Op. 60*, and its connection to Lermontov’s ballad *The Mermaid*, Anna Medtner wrote: “Nikolai Karlovich, in essence, did not want to make this connection explicit, as he feared an imposed program... The connection lies somewhere deep within, in certain shared experiences and emotions with Lermontov.”<sup>20</sup>

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The article continues in *Piano Journal* issue 139, which is scheduled for publication in August.

For a bibliography, please see <https://www.epta-europe.org/resources/PJ138-Medtner-article.pdf>. This link also gives access to the Appendix which consists of Denis Burstein’s transcription of two previously unpublished variations from the Canadian manuscript of the *Second Improvisation*:

1. the omitted variation in F major (*La Cadenza*),
  2. the omitted variation in E-flat major.
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<sup>14</sup> In the *Fairy Tale* in C major, op. 35 no. 1, an unexpected polyphonic episode emerges in bars 23–31, cutting across the solemn procession. Although it is derived from a motive presented in the introduction, it nonetheless sounds like an unexpected utterance in an alien language: juxtaposed with the preceding diatonic C major, its extreme chromaticism appears almost defiant. Upon closer examination, it proves to be essentially a twelve-tone construct. It is unlikely that Medtner – given his categorical rejection of all things *avant-garde* – was even aware of this.

<sup>15</sup> Edna Iles, “Medtner, Friend and Master,” in *Medtner: Vospominaniya, Stat’i, Materiali*, 173.

<sup>16</sup> These words are placed above the musical staff that opens the *Theme* of the *Variations* (which is fully presented on page 2 of the manuscript).

<sup>17</sup> A similar case is known in musical literature: I am referring to the origin of the programmatic titles in *Carnaval*, op. 9 by R. Schumann. See: R. Schumann, *Carnaval*. G. Henle Verlag, Munich, 2004. Preface by Ernst Herttrich, p. V.

<sup>18</sup> Anna Medtner, “On Nikolai Karlovich Medtner,” 45.

<sup>19</sup> English translation by B. Deutsch and A. Yarmolinsky (1921).

<sup>20</sup> Anna Medtner, “On Nikolai Karlovich Medtner,” 45.





**“Composers have therefore approached the left hand not as a limitation but as an autonomous domain of virtuosity and musical narration, developing a distinctive compositional language in which the entire keyboard may be effectively employed by a single hand.”**

# From One Hand to Polyphony: Performance Perspectives on the **Left-Hand** Piano Repertoire

by **Hande Dalkılıç**

In piano literature, works written for a single hand are encountered only rarely. This repertoire, which often meets with a certain distance not only from audiences but occasionally even within the piano community itself, may at first appear as an exception that lies outside the conventional understanding of piano writing. Yet the very existence of compositions conceived for only one hand on an instrument built around an 88-key keyboard and the simultaneous use of two hands represents a multilayered phenomenon that deserves careful historical and aesthetic consideration.

A survey of the literature reveals that a significant portion of the repertoire written for the left hand is closely connected to physical limitations or injuries experienced by pianist-composers. From the early stages of piano training onward, the right hand is typically entrusted with more active melodic material, while virtuosity-driven technical challenges tend to accumulate predominantly on that side. Extended and demanding practice regimes, combined at times with neurological conditions, have therefore frequently led to injuries.



One of the most frequently cited examples in this context is the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin (above). While practising Franz Liszt’s *Réminiscences de Don Juan* and Mily Balakirev’s *Islamey*, Scriabin injured his right hand and during this period composed the *Prelude and Nocturne for the left hand*, Op. 9. Being informed by physicians that he might never play the piano again caused a profound psychological rupture, one that was accompanied by a dramatic and inward transformation in his music. His *Piano Sonata in F minor*, Op. 6, completed in 1892, reflects a personal protest against divine order while portraying

the tragedy of a virtuoso confronted with fate. Although his right hand eventually recovered, this temporary disability opened the way for Scriabin to explore highly complex rhythmic structures and dense textures written exclusively for the left hand.

Alongside physical necessity, another factor contributing to the emergence of left-hand repertoire is the long-standing tendency for the left hand to remain confined primarily to harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment. In response, composers and pedagogues have sought to encourage the conscious technical and musical development of the left hand through works written specifically for it.



An important figure often discussed from this perspective is Moritz Moszkowski (above). The widely repeated claim that his *Études* for the left hand, Op. 92, were composed as a result of a specific hand injury is not clearly substantiated by primary sources. Biographical evidence indicates that from the 1880s onwards Moszkowski suffered from a neurological condition extending from the shoulder to the fingertips, which gradually limited his concert activity. However, there is no definitive documentation linking these works directly to unilateral paralysis or a clearly diagnosed neurological impairment. Rather, these études are better understood as the outcome of a pedagogical and aesthetic intention aimed at developing left-hand technique while achieving orchestral sonority and textural richness.



Photo by Bernard Fleischer Moving Images, CC BY 3.0 nl, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15859063>

Historically, the most renowned and repertoire-defining example remains Maurice Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand*, composed for the pianist Paul Wittgenstein (above), who lost his right arm during the First World War. With this work, the left-hand repertoire moved beyond the realm of necessity and emerged as an independent and powerful field of artistic expression. Wittgenstein's subsequent commissions from composers such as Prokofiev and Britten, and his authoritative performances of these works, contributed significantly to the expansion and lasting presence of the repertoire.

Beyond physical constraints, musical and acoustic considerations have also played a decisive role in the development of works for the left hand. The suitability of the left-hand thumb for carrying melodic lines, combined with the rich, dark tonal possibilities of the piano's lower register, enhances the expressive potential of the hand. Composers have therefore approached the left hand not as a limitation but as an autonomous domain of virtuosity and musical narration, developing a distinctive compositional language in which the entire keyboard may be effectively employed by a single hand. In piano writing where polyphony is traditionally constructed through the interaction of two hands, the realisation of a multilayered texture by one hand alone demands not only

technical mastery but also a high level of musical awareness and control. This approach elevates the performer's musicianship while simultaneously representing a unique expressive field actively explored by composers.

The repertoire for the left hand, shaped largely during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, emerged at the intersection of strong performer-composer identities and the aesthetic aspirations of the period. Beginning with Géza Zichy and further developed by composer-pianists such as Scriabin and Leopold Godowsky, the technical and artistic capacities of the left hand were significantly expanded. With composers including Ravel, Prokofiev and Korngold, the repertoire was further enriched through orchestral thinking and large-scale formal concepts. As a result, the left-hand repertoire transcended purely pedagogical or compensatory aims and became the bearer of a distinctive aesthetic and technical language.

This historical and aesthetic framework demonstrates that works written for the left hand possess specific performance-related requirements that extend beyond their place in the repertoire. In pieces where the left hand alone assumes melodic, harmonic and rhythmic functions, the pianist's technical approach, physical management and musical perception differ markedly from those associated with traditional two-handed writing. Without the development of appropriate technique and bodily awareness, the intensive and continuous use of the left hand may lead to overuse and an increased risk of injury. Effective and sustainable performance of the left-hand repertoire therefore depends not only on technical proficiency but on a balanced and informed interpretative approach that places the structural and functional characteristics of the left hand at its centre. For this reason, the principal challenges encountered in the performance of left-hand repertoire must be examined within a holistic understanding of pianistic practice.

## Hand Position

One of the most significant challenges in the performance of left-hand repertoire arises from uncontrolled and physically demanding movements that tend to occur reflexively, particularly during the initial stages of sight-reading. Such involuntary responses can create unnecessary tension in the hand and wrist, increasing the risk of injury over time. From the very first stages of practice, maintaining bodily awareness and monitoring physical movement are therefore of central importance. Memorising the music as early as possible, even when working initially from the score, allows the pianist to focus more directly on the keyboard, helping to avoid incorrect physical habits that may develop when attention is divided.

Hand position on the keyboard plays a decisive role in left-hand repertoire. The flexibility of the hand, its inward and outward orientations, and the shaping that occurs during upper and lower crossings affect not only musical continuity but also physical well-being. In rapid passages and extended hand-span writing, rotational and twisting movements of the hand can easily arise and, if left unchecked, may lead to injury. In this context, the choice of fingering should be regarded not merely as a technical preference but as a protective strategy aimed at preserving the hand's natural alignment. Inappropriate fingering can unconsciously force the hand into imbalanced and strained positions. Careful observation of the hand's placement on the keyboard should therefore accompany fingering decisions, with conscious choices made regarding whether technical figures and gestures are executed towards the inner or outer areas of the keyboard, or through forward and backward motion, in order to minimise twisting and maintain a natural hand position.

## Fingering

Fingering plays a decisive role in overcoming the technical challenges inherent in left-hand repertoire.

Rendering polyphonic textures with a single hand often requires moving beyond conventional fingering practices. In order to preserve hierarchical clarity between voices and ensure polyphonic transparency, unconventional fingering solutions may become unavoidable. Nevertheless, a fundamental prerequisite remains ensuring that the hand is positioned as comfortably and naturally as possible.

The literature suggests that in certain works for the left hand, specific solutions such as using two fingers on a single key to achieve stronger accents, or, in rare cases, employing a fist technique, may be considered. At the same time, fingering should not be treated as a fixed or absolute solution but as a set of choices that may evolve over time in relation to the performer's physical build, technical development and the maturation of the interpretation. Maintaining an open and critical attitude towards initial fingering decisions, and being willing to revise them when necessary, is therefore essential both for technical efficiency and for a sustainable approach to performance.

## Seating and Body Alignment

Another crucial factor is the pianist's seating position and overall body alignment. While traditional piano playing generally assumes a stable position centred at the keyboard with balanced use of both hands, this approach may prove insufficient in left-hand repertoire. In passages that frequently extend into the upper treble register, controlled lateral movement on the bench can significantly reduce physical strain and help prevent injury. It is essential to ensure that the body consistently remains aligned behind the arm and hand. In reaching positions, the flow of controlled weight from the body to the fingertips may be disrupted, a risk that must be consciously managed. Whereas two-handed playing often allows the pianist to lean or stretch more freely, left-hand performance benefits greatly from subtle shifts on the bench to the right or left, supporting both endurance and hand health.

The absence of the right hand from active participation removes the familiar system in which both hands support each other and distribute physical effort evenly. This can create a pronounced sense of imbalance or lack of grounding for the performer. Consequently, the non-playing right hand often seeks a point of support. One of the most effective solutions is to rest the right hand freely and comfortably in the lap. It is not uncommon to observe pianists performing left-hand repertoire unconsciously gripping part of the keyboard or the bench with the right hand in search of stability. Such behaviour reflects an attempt to compensate for lost balance and may even lead to involuntary tension in the non-playing hand. For this reason, consciously monitoring the state of the right hand during performance and allowing it to rest naturally in the lap contributes both to physical ease and to a visually natural stage presence.

## Pedalling

Pedal use plays a decisive role in the performance of left-hand repertoire and requires particular sensitivity. Whereas in two-handed writing the pedal often serves to support textural balance, works for the left hand demand a far more conscious and controlled approach. Pedalling decisions should be carefully shaped according to the character of the piece and the composer's musical intentions, ensuring that the left hand's multiple melodic, harmonic and rhythmic functions are supported without producing excessive blur.

In this context, it is essential to consider the function of each of the piano's three pedals individually and to apply them in accordance with the specific writing of the work. During the practice process, experimenting with different pedalling possibilities is crucial in order to achieve the healthiest results. Freeing oneself from habitual pedalling conventions associated with two-handed playing and adopting a more flexible and exploratory attitude can lead to more refined solutions. When possible, playing the work with both hands

**“In his view, playing with one hand requires a complete rethinking of finger function, a reorganisation of bodily balance and a fundamental restructuring of musical expression.”**



during practice to clarify the intended polyphonic structure may further assist in making informed and functional pedalling choices.

American pianist Leon Fleisher (above, 1963) stands as one of the most articulate voices addressing the physical and mental challenges of playing with one hand. Forced by a neurological condition affecting his right hand to devote many years to left-hand repertoire, Fleisher emphasised that producing music on an 88-key keyboard with a single hand is a far more complex process than a simple reduction in the number of available fingers might suggest. In his view, playing with one hand requires a complete rethinking of

finger function, a reorganisation of bodily balance and a fundamental restructuring of musical expression. Fleisher’s experience demonstrates that the left-hand repertoire represents not merely a technical challenge but a unique field that deepens musical awareness and interpretative insight. His perspective also underscores the necessity of approaching left-hand performance through a sustainable and health-conscious understanding of pianistic practice.

Performance of the left-hand repertoire further demands careful management of energy and endurance. As Fleisher noted, the structural relief afforded in two-handed writing, where one hand may occasionally rest, is replaced in left-hand works by continuous physical demand. Sustaining a long performance with only five fingers requires each finger to remain constantly active.

In my own concert experience, programmes in which left-hand repertoire constituted a substantial portion made the accumulation of physical and mental fatigue in a single hand particularly evident. Following approximately fifty minutes of music written exclusively for the left hand, transitioning to two-handed repertoire revealed an additional adjustment process, as the long-unused right hand needed time to reintegrate. For this reason, presenting left-hand works as a separate performance section, preferably in the first half of a concert, rather than alternating them with two-handed pieces, has proven more effective. A short interval, combined with stretching and preparatory movements, allows the right hand to re-engage more comfortably and positively influences overall performance quality.

These observations reaffirm that left-hand repertoire demands not only technical preparation but also comprehensive physical and mental planning. Far from representing a marginal or compensatory field, it constitutes a distinct domain within pianistic practice, one that challenges performers to rethink balance, sound and embodiment at the keyboard.



Piano virtuoso **Hande Dalkılıç** preserves and develops Turkish piano heritage by promoting Turkish composers with her concerts and CDs in Türkiye and around the world, and by making the first performances and recordings of the works of many Turkish composers. She also became the editor of Saygun’s op. 76 Sonata which was published by Peer Music Classical (Hamburg) in 2012.

She has recorded CDs including world premieres and works dedicated to her, by composers including Ahmet Adnan Saygun, Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Cemal Reşit Rey, Muammer Sun and Çetin İşiközlü, and pays particular attention to the works of Turkish composers during her concerts abroad. Her album ‘My Favourite Romantics’, including works of Romantic-era composers such as Chopin, Liszt and Gottschalk, was released on the KALAN label in 2020. The album ‘My Left Hand’, of left-hand repertoire, was released in August 2025 under the Gloss Musik GmbH label and is available on all digital platforms.

Hande Dalkılıç was born in Ankara, Türkiye, and studied in Bilkent University Faculty of Music and Performing Arts. She gained her Associate Professor degree in 2006 and her Professor degree in 2013 in the Hacettepe University Ankara State Conservatory, where she currently teaches at the Piano Department.

Hande is also the Turkish representative and founding president of EPTA.

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# Music for Piano(s) and Orchestra

## in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### Part 1

by Wesley Roberts

Pianists looking for a change of pace from the popular concertos by Mozart, Beethoven and the nineteenth-century masters will be amazed to learn that there have been at least 70 works for piano(s) and orchestra composed and published in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century! Fifty-nine composers from across the Americas, Europe, Turkey, Australia and Japan have turned their attention to this celebrated medium to create a treasure of new works ranging from conventional to avant-garde techniques. Of the total number written, nine are for two pianos; one for piano, four hands; and two for piano, left hand. Interestingly, two works add a second solo instrument, one being an American Indian flute and the other an accordion. Several works are collaborative with string or chamber orchestras rather than full orchestra. Indeed, there are compositions here for every musical taste in a variety of styles by composers from around the world.

By nationality, 25 composers in the United States have led the way with the most contributions. Eight composers are from England, five from Finland, three from Spain, two each from Australia, Estonia, Germany and Japan, and one each from Argentina, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland and Turkey. This article is in two parts, featuring composers from the Americas in this issue, and those from UK, Europe and elsewhere in issue 139.

Among the first Americans to write for piano and orchestra this century was **Philip Glass** (b. 1937). Glass's *Tirol Concerto* for piano and string orchestra (2000), nearly a half-hour in length, is in three movements and echoes his explorations into minimalism with brightly coloured harmonies and sudden dramatic effects. The Tyrolean melody "Maria hilf doch mir, es fleht dein Kind zu dir" forms the basis for the first movement. Triadic chords, scales and rhythmic development are principal elements in each movement. Dennis Russell Davies was soloist at the première with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra. Four years later, Glass composed his *Piano Concerto No. 2* (2004), a work inspired by the explorative expedition of Lewis and Clark across Western United States. Written in three movements, it begins with 'The Vision', and its "steamroller [effect] signifying the tremendous resolve and energy" of the explorers. The second movement, 'Sacagawea', a Shoshone Indian and companion on the journey, is orchestrated for strings, piano and Native American flute, the latter two often in duet. The work concludes with 'The Land', where Glass commented: "I wanted this final movement to reflect also the expanse of time – what the land was before the expedition and what it became after." Motoric, with motivic patterns used primarily as thematic material, it moves along briskly from start to finish. The première was given by Paul Barnes (piano) and R. Carlos Nakai (Native American flute) with the Omaha Symphony Orchestra. A decade later Glass composed his

*Philip Glass • Ellen Zwilich • Lowell Liebermann • Richard Danielpour • Melinda Wagner • Samuel Adler • Elliott Carter • Lisa Bielawa • Yehudi Wyner • George Tsontakis • Charles Wuorinen • Thomas Jefferson "T.J." Anderson • Jennifer Higdon • Michael Daugherty • Arlene Elizabeth Sierra • Steve Mackey • Gwyneth Walker • Dalit Hadass Warshaw • Frederic Rzewski • Michael Torke • Zhou Long • Bryce Dessner • John Adams • William Bolcom • Nico Muhly • Rachel Laurin • Samuel Zyman • Osvaldo Golijov • Gonzalo Grau*

*Double Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra* (2015), a work requiring 27 minutes for performance. It was written for Katia and Marielle Labèque, who gave the première with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

“The work itself follows the three-movement form in which many concertos are conceived. However, in this case the first and second movements are both fast and the slow movement is the third and last part of the Concerto. ... the relationship of the soloist to the orchestra is not the usual one, contrasting the smaller duo with the larger orchestral ensemble. Instead, the music of the soloists is shared between the two and the orchestra serves to extend the range and color of the soloists” (all quotes are by Glass).

**Ellen Zwilich**'s *Millennium Fantasy* (2000), in contrast to Glass's essays, is shorter and in two movements. Zwilich (b. 1939) used the folk song “Come all you fair and tender ladies”, which she learned from her grandmother, to form the basis for the composition. Expanding motivic development in the opening movement reveals arpeggiated motion in single notes and octaves contrasted by a lively rhythmic figure. The second movement continues these techniques and sports a spirited cadenza, later concluding with a coda that recalls earlier musical ideas. Jeffrey Biegel was soloist at the première with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. A decade later, Zwilich wrote *Shadows* (2011), a programmatic work in three movements, each marked metronomically. She describes it “as a work evoking the recollection of ancestral, religious, and cultural roots in people's constant migration” (from *Shadows* [presser.com]). It is expressive with clear melodies and thematic ideas and includes jazz techniques. Jeffrey Biegel was again soloist at the première, this time with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra as well as the remaining seven orchestras that co-commissioned the work. And, much more recent is Zwilich's *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra* (2023), premiered by pianists Christina Naughton and Michelle Naughton with the Santa Rosa Symphony.

**Lowell Liebermann** (b. 1961) looked back in time to Paganini's Caprice No. 24 to create his own setting of the famous caprice in the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Op. 72. Liebermann not only recalled the famous caprice in his *Rhapsody* but also tossed in occasional hints of Liszt's *La Campanella* while maintaining a mostly rhapsodic character filled with pyrotechnics. Composed with 24 variations, a lyric dialogue between the piano and select orchestral instruments is occasionally heard. Yet, a short-lived cadenza punctuates the overall virtuosic nature of the work and sets the stage for a rip-roaring finish. A solid octave technique is required. Stephen Hough was pianist at the première. Liebermann's *Concerto No. 3* (2006) requires 31 minutes for performance. A robust work, it too requires a solid octave technique as well as stamina for extensive chordal treatment. Idiomatic keyboard writing prevails and is bound to delight performers and audiences alike. Jeffrey Biegel was the pianist at the première. Both works by Liebermann were premiered with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

The prolific **Richard Danielpour** (b. 1956) has contributed the most over the past quarter century with four compositions for piano and orchestra. His *Piano Concerto No. 3, 'Zodiac Variations'*, for piano, left hand (2002), was written for Gary Graffman, who gave the première with the National Symphony Orchestra. In thirteen movements, twelve use the names of the zodiac signs and are based on a chaconne, which is introduced at the opening. The programmatic *Mirrors* (2009) came next and was followed by two more Concertos (2010, 2017).

*Mirrors* is a suite in five movements requiring 22 minutes for performance. The piano and the orchestra are placed in mirror relationships, the piano suggesting more privacy. Personality archetypes are used to hint at the prevailing character of each movement. Jeffrey Biegel and the Pacific Symphony gave the première. *Concerto No. 4*, subtitled 'A Hero's Journey', consists of three movements, the second a funeral procession. Colourful harmonies often appear in a virtuosic setting that require strength and fluidity. Xiayin Wang and the Vienna Chamber Orchestra gave the première. *Concerto No. 5*, subtitled 'Carnaval of the Ancients', consists of four pieces. The first three are inspired by Persian miniature stories; the last is Danielpour's imaginative depiction of three great Persian poets in paradise. Sarah Daneshpour was soloist at the première with the New Jersey Symphony. Overall, Danielpour employs tonally conceived harmonies throughout his works with colourful mixtures in the context of lyrical phrases and rhythmic energy.

In contrast to Danielpour's works, **Melinda Wagner** (b. 1957) employs five percussionists with a huge assembly of instruments in *Extremity of Sky*. It is composed in four movements, all of which are indicated parenthetically: Opening; Departure; Prayer-Chain; Varied Return. Imaginary and atmospheric effects using conventional writing techniques are heard. No true cadenza is included; however, numerous succinct solo passages occur. Emanuel Ax was pianist at the première with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

In yet another contrasting work, **Samuel Adler** (b. 1928) composed his brief *Concerto No. 3* (2003) for piano and string orchestra. In two movements – Slow and stately; Fast and energetic – it is striking and forthright, with colourful harmonies and rhythmic ingenuity.

**Elliott Carter** (1908–2012) was almost a centenarian when he wrote *Dialogues* in 2003. A short work with a duration of only 14 minutes, it is for piano and chamber orchestra. Carter described it as “a conversation between the soloist and the orchestra: responding to each other, sometimes interrupting the other, or arguing. The single varied movement is entirely derived from a small group of harmonies and rhythms” (from Composer's notes). It received its première by pianist Nicolas Hodges and the London Sinfonietta.

**Lisa Bielawa**'s *The Right Weather* for piano and chamber orchestra (2003-04) was inspired by Aleksandr Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. Using a programmatic theme, Bielawa (b. 1968)

created the work in four movements, each with different orchestral instrumentations. The first three movements – *Prologue – Roam, Wait and Beckon* – are to be performed without conductor from various locations on stage and in the house. *Start*, the final movement, was written and published independently a year earlier. It is packed with intense pyrotechnics. The four movements were conceived as separate pieces and may be performed independently, in pairs, or in entirety. Includes the tuning of some pitches to quarter tones. Andrew Armstrong was pianist at the première with the American Composers Orchestra.

**Yehudi Wyner's** Piano Concerto, subtitled 'Chiavi in Mano' (2004), takes its title from "the mantra used by automobile salesmen and realtors in Italy: Buy the house or the car and the keys are yours. But the more pertinent reason for the title is the fact that the piano writing is designed to fall 'under the hand' and no matter how difficult it may be, it remains physically comfortable and devoid of stress. In other words: 'Keys in hand'" (from Program Note). Wyner (b. 1929) composed the Concerto in one continuous movement, initially marked *Rubato improvvisando – Animato*, and followed by numerous tempo and character changes. Conventional writing with short piano solos. Robert D. Levin was soloist at the première with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

**George Tsontakis** (b. 1951) also chose to stay with a programmatic theme in his *Man of Sorrows* (2005). It was "inspired pictorially by a fifteenth-century icon of the Man of Sorrows [Jesus Christ] and Beethoven's 'Diabelli' Variations as well as the number six." Tsontakis considers the work "as a tone poem for piano and orchestra with an abstract narrative ... [as suggested] by [its] titles, only poetry and a degree of wonder" (Booklet notes, Hyperion Recordings CDA67564). In six movements, each reflecting Christ's sufferings related to the cross and/or historic musical settings of these events. The forty-minute work was first performed by pianist Stephen Hough and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra.

**Charles Wuorinen** (1938–2020) contributed two scores for piano and orchestra in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first was *Flying to Kahani* (2004-05), a short 'Concert Piece' as he subtitled it, requiring only 11 minutes for performance. It uses conventional pianistic techniques with scalar and arpeggio-like figures in a dizzy atmosphere of changing metres. *Kahani* is "the undiscovered 'second moon of earth' in Salman Rushdie's novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*" (from Wuorinen's website). It is not as difficult as it sounds. Wuorinen's second work was *Time Regained* (2008), a much longer essay requiring 27 minutes and subtitled 'Fantasy'. Inspired

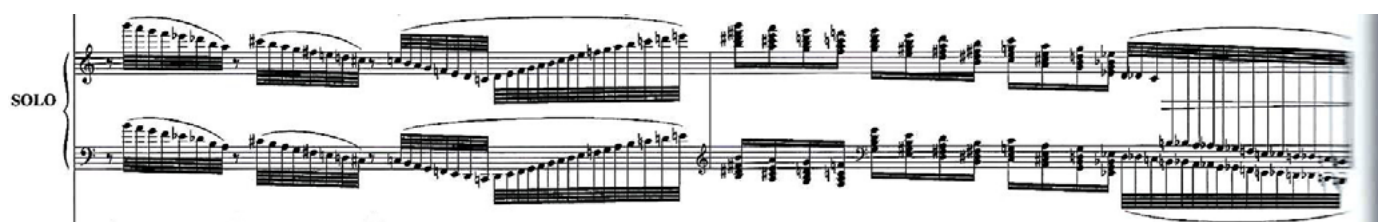
by Proust's monumental novel on lost time, Wuorinen incorporates material by Machaut, Matteo da Perugia, Du Fay and Orlando Gibbons to weave a fantasy in three parts. Diatonicism and chromaticism mark the harmonic structure while proportional rhythmic notation and elements of counterpoint interact. The composer relates that "the essence of this work: it concerns memory, music's memory of a part of its past, as well as my own memory of some of the composers and works that have been my companions and inspirations over many years" (from Program Note). An inviting work, ranging from monophony to complexity, in mostly diatonic writing. Peter Serkin was pianist at the première of both compositions.

In a different vein altogether has been **Thomas Jefferson "T. J." Anderson** (b. 1928) and his *Fragments* (2006). Subtitled 'A J. S. Bach-T. S. Monk Fantasy for Improvised Piano and Orchestra', there are no printed notes for the pianist, only the suggestion that the performer improvise incorporating elements or portions of pieces by J. S. Bach and T. S. Monk. The difficulty of the work depends on the skill of the pianist, who has free reign twice and must have a thorough knowledge of the orchestral parts when performing together. Consequently, no two performances will ever be the same. Not for the fainthearted! Donal Fox was soloist at the première with the University of Iowa Symphony Orchestra.

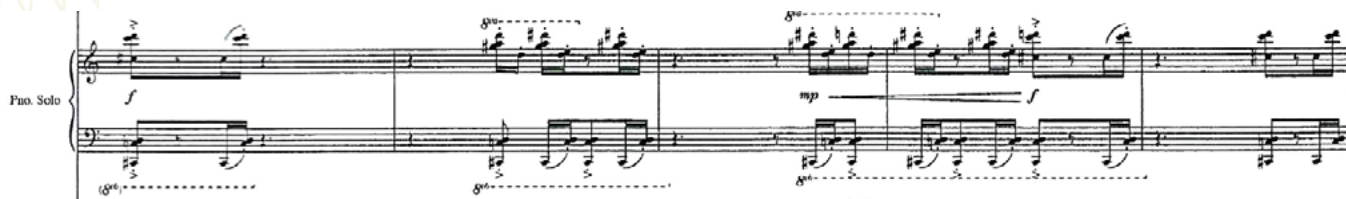
Writing the same year as Anderson, **Jennifer Higdon** (b. 1962) returned conventionally to the Piano Concerto. Cast in three metronomically marked movements, her large-scale composition requires 30 minutes for performance and plenty of stamina and endurance.

Chains of triads sometimes doubled, scalar running passages and lyricism with flowing phrases all fall into play as the work progresses. A cadenza in the first movement alternates between homophonic and imitative textures. The final movement is a fireball of motion. Finger dexterity is a must. Yuja Wang was soloist at the première with the National Symphony Orchestra. See example below.

**Michael Daugherty** (b. 1954) continued the overall trend of United States composers toward programmatic music in his *Deus ex Machina* (2007), a large three-movement work requiring 33 minutes for performance. "The title *Deus ex Machina* refers to the Latin phrase, 'god from the machine'" (from Composer's Note). It commences with a piano cadenza, influenced by the Futurist movement of the early twentieth century with the pianist playing on the strings, and continues with rapid passagework, repeated notes, octaves,



Higdon's Concerto, p. 30, bars 166-67



### Sierra's Art of War, p. 111, bars 233-37

clusters and tremolos. Inspired by trains and their boisterous sounds, the second movement imagines Abraham Lincoln's funeral train from Washington, D.C. to Springfield, Illinois (1865). Terrence Wilson was soloist at the première with the Charlotte [North Carolina] Symphony Orchestra.

**Arlene Elizabeth Sierra's** *Art of War*, subtitled 'Concerto', was written in 2010. Cast in two movements, it was inspired by Sun Tzu's book *Art of War*, an ancient Chinese book of military strategy. In the first movement, "the piano instigates conflict yet becomes subsumed, its gestures provoking the orchestra and leading to fleeting moments of repose before an uncertain conclusion." In the second movement, "the role of soloist is changed from instigator to saboteur. Its gestures chip away at a wall of sound created by the orchestra, subtly manipulating it until the orchestra follows the lead of the piano and succumbs to its persuasive power" (Composer's website). Combative with spatial and dramatic sound effects, the work uses the full range of the piano. Huw Watkins was pianist for the première. See example above.

**Steve Mackey's** *Stumble from Grace* (2011) is in five stages and is to be played continuously without pause. It was inspired by the composer's 2½-year old son as he learned to walk. The work begins without much difficulty and gradually gains more intensity and demands on the pianist. Mackey (b. 1956) employs the complete range of the piano – all on the keys – with pyrotechnics as it reaches the end. Stage three is a piano cadenza and stage five includes three fugues. Pianist Orli Shaham and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra gave the première.

*Across the Water* by **Gwyneth Walker** (b. 1947), subtitled 'Songs of the Water', is a short work of 13 minutes composed in 2012 and premiered by Evan Roider. It is in three movements, each based on songs with water themes: *Peace Like a River*; *Way, Haul Away*; *The Water is Wide*. Facile writing with flowing phrases, syncopation and marked rhythms. Gentle harmonies delineate the songs with occasional added-note chords, including the final chord with an added 2nd. No cadenza. Could be performed by an early advanced student.

**Dalit Hadass Warshaw's** *Conjuring Tristan* (2014) is based on Thomas Mann's novella *Tristan* and leitmotifs from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. It commences "Dark, desolate" in an Expressionist vein and continues with numerous expressive indications. In one broad movement, Warshaw (b. 1974) created two cadenzas to feature lyricism within rhythm substructures. The composer was piano soloist for the première with the Grand Rapids Symphony.

The American **Frederic Rzewski** (1938–2021) settled in Brussels in 1977 and composed with a special interest on

social themes and satire. His *A Dog's Life* (2014) is in three movements, each with different instrumentation. The first movement is marked 'Prelude: Endless War', and is solely for seven percussionists (any instrument, including ordinary objects or rubble). The second movement, marked '25 Scents', is for piano and orchestra. The third, marked 'Air Dogs', is for whistler, rain stick and piano. *Scents* is longer than the other two movements combined. The pianist is asked to improvise and is given the opportunity with numerous cadenzas. It is a novelty piece exploring sound itself with conventional and unconventional tools. The score is a copy of an easy-to-read handwritten manuscript. Daan Vandewalle was soloist for the première in Ghent, Belgium.



### Rzewski's A Dog's Life, p. 24

**Michael Torke** (b. 1961) took his fascination with bridges providing entry into New York City and put it into *Three Manhattan Bridges* (2015), a half-hour work in three movements. His work mimics the design and construction of these bridges by opening with a declamatory, chordal theme in the piano and proceeding through various scenarios of travel and times of the day and night. Picturesque and convincing, it concludes with a jazzy movement that glitters with pianistic pyrotechnics. Joyce Yang was soloist at the première with the Albany Symphony.

Postures by **Zhou Long** was also composed in 2014 and subtitled 'Concerto'. Zhou was born in China (1953) and became an American citizen in 1999. Written in the conventional three-movement form with programmatic titles – *Pianodance*; *Pianobells*; and *Pianodrums* – the work is designed to mimic "movements in different animal gestures in Kung Fu" (Programme notes). *Pianodance* draws on a shaman dance from Northeast China. *Pianobells* contrasts musical images: Mighty Bells and Frost Bells. *Pianodrums* reflects Peking Opera monkey behaviours. Complex rhythmic patterns coupled with frequently changing metres, clusters and thin and thick textures all combine to make an exciting work to play and hear. Andreas Haefliger was pianist at the première with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra in Singapore, and shortly thereafter at the 2014 BBC Proms in its co-commission.

**Bryce Dessner's** *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra* (2017) was written for Katia and Marielle Labèque and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Dessner (b. 1976), a composer with both classical and pop interests, writes with an "almost-constant minimalist tick somewhere underneath blurr[ing] the distinction between fast and slow. Dessner used this ambiguity to lever the music into new expressive areas, or back into old ones" (*The Telegraph*, Feb. 5, 2021).

Not to be outdone, **John Adams** (b. 1947) turned the tables with *Must the Devil Have All the Good Tunes?* Composed in 2018 and premiered by Yuja Wang with the Los Angeles Philharmonic the following year, it is in three movements played without pause. The going is rugged herein with considerable technical challenges for both pianist and orchestra. A reporter for *The Washington Post* commented, "This is a city piece: all steel girders and glass monoliths, pounding factory rhythms and fatally seductive temptations around every corner – very much the modern-day equivalent of a Lisztian Totentanz [or] ... a Prokofiev-style piano concerto, retrofitted with minimalist rhythmic cells, bebop bursts of brass and ironic commentary from a sampled, out-of-tune, honky-tonk piano... driving syncopations and a riot of orchestral color building to a satisfying finish."

**William Bolcom's** *Piano Concerto No. 2* (2019) requires a chamber orchestra and consists of four movements: *A Legend*; *Complainte*; *Nightmare-Scherzo*; *Finale: Introduction and Variations*. The piece is 28 minutes in length; Bolcom (b. 1938) employed contrasting moods and character to present in his typical manner a cornucopia of styles and technical requirements. Igor Levit was at the piano for the première with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra.

Another Two-Piano Concerto entitled *In Certain Circles* was composed in 2020 by **Nico Muhly** (b. 1981). It is cast in three movements, and a fragment from Rameau's *l'Enharmonique* is heard in the opening movement. The second movement employs a style reminiscent of a sarabande and a gigue, while the third movement contrasts colours and rhythms in a playful manner. The work received its première by Katia and Marielle Labèque and the Orchestre de Paris in 2021.

To the north, Canadian **Rachel Laurin** (1961–2023)

contributed a Concerto (2008) in conventional style with a large format of three movements requiring 36 minutes for performance. Its majestic opening immediately calls to mind the works of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian composers. The atmospheric slow movement yields to a bravura, almost frenzied last movement that tests the strength and stamina of its performers.

To the south, Mexican composer **Samuel Zyman** (b. 1956) has spent the greater part of his adult life teaching at the Juilliard School and Vanderbilt University. His *Piano Concerto No. 2* (2023) was premiered by pianist Santiago Piñeirúa with the Orquesta Sinfónica de la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León. The piece is rich in melodic and harmonic flavour, and packed with strong rhythmic emphases; numerous solo passages and a bravura cadenza capture the essence of Zyman's whirlwind 35-minute essay with dramatic and almost overwhelming detail.

Argentine composer **Oswaldo Golijov's** *La Pasión según San Marcos* (2000) became the inspiration for a new setting of its themes by **Gonzalo Grau** (b. 1972) entitled *Nazareno* for two pianos and orchestra (2009). This half-hour work in six programmatic movements mixes classical and popular Latin American flavour with ostinato patterns prominent in both pianos. A large percussion section is required, of which Grau has been one of the percussionists in performances. Golijov (b. 1960) was inspired to write his *St. Mark Passion* while recalling a picture his great-grandmother had of Rembrandt's "Jeremiah Lamenting the Fall of Jerusalem". *Nazareno* was commissioned and first performed by Katia and Marielle Labèque, who performed it with the Orchestre de Paris.

This article continues in *Piano Journal* issue 139, scheduled for publication in late August 2026.

Grateful appreciation is expressed to Sida Roberts for proofreading this article and the following music publishers for permission to print examples:

Jennifer Higdon's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*  
 © 2006 Lawdon Press Reproduced by permission.

Frederic Rzewski's *A Dog's Life*  
 © 2014 Frog Peak Music Reproduced by permission.

Arlene Elizabeth Sierra's *Art of War*  
 © 2010 Cecilian Music Reproduced by permission



**Wesley Roberts** is Professor Emeritus of Music at Campbellsville University (USA) and co-author with Maurice Hinson of reference books on piano literature. His forthcoming book, entitled *Humor, Wit, and Bowties: The Life and Times of Jacques Ibert*, is scheduled to be published later this year by Georg Olms Verlag. Roberts and his wife, Sida, live in Kentucky and grow blueberries organically.

ner • Samuel Adler • Elliott Carter • Lisa Bielawa • Yehudi Wyner • George Tsontakis •  
 erty • Arlene Elizabeth Sierra • Steve Mackey • Gwyneth Walker • Dalit Hadass Warshaw  
 Bolcom • Nico Muhly • Rachel Laurin • Samuel Zyman • Osvaldo Golijov • Gonzalo Grau

## PUBLISHED COMPOSITIONS FOR PIANO(S) AND ORCHESTRA SINCE 2000, AS FEATURED IN PART 1

COMPOSER	TITLE	YEAR	PUBLISHER
Philip Glass	Tirol Concerto	2000	Dunvagen
Lowell Liebermann	Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 72	2000	Theodore Presser
Ellen Zwilich	Millennium Fantasy	2000	Merion
Richard Danielpour	Concerto No. 3	2002	G. Schirmer/AMP
Melinda Wagner	Extremity of Sky	2002	Theodore Presser
Samuel Adler	Concerto No. 3	2003	Theodore Presser
Elliott Carter	Dialogues	2003	Hendon/Boosey & Hawkes
Lisa Bielawa	The Right Weather	2004	Genesa
Philip Glass	Concerto No. 2	2004	Dunvagen
Yehudi Wyner	Concerto	2004	Associated Music Pub.
George Tsontakis	Man of Sorrows	2005	Pocoforte
Charles Wuorinen	Flying to Kahani	2005	Peters
Thomas J. Anderson	Fragments	2006	Anderson
Jennifer Higdon	Concerto	2006	Lawdon
Lowell Liebermann	Concerto No. 3	2006	Theodore Presser
Michael Daugherty	Deus ex Machina	2007	Boosey & Hawkes
Rachel Laurin	Concerto	2008	Doberman-Yppan
Charles Wuorinen	Time Regained	2008	Peters
Richard Danielpour	Mirrors	2009	G. Schirmer/AMP
Osvaldo Golijov/Gonzalo Grau	Nazareno for 2 pianos	2009	Boosey & Hawkes
Richard Danielpour	Concerto No. 4	2010	Lean Kat Music
Arlene Elizabeth Sierra	Art of War	2010	Cecilian
Steve Mackey	Stumble to Grace	2011	Boosey & Hawkes
Ellen Zwilich	Shadows	2011	Merion
Gwyneth Walker	Across the Water	2012	Keiser
Frederic Rzewski	A Dog's Life	2014	Frog Peak Music
Dalit Hadass Warshaw	Conjuring Tristan	2014	Self-Published
Zhou Long	Postures	2014	Oxford
Philip Glass	Double Concerto for 2 pianos	2015	Dunvagen
Michael Torke	Three Manhattan Bridges	2015	Bill Holab Music
Richard Danielpour	Concerto No. 5	2017	Lean Kat Music
Bryce Dessner	Concerto for 2 pianos	2017	Chester
John Adams	Must the Devil Have All the Good Tunes?	2018	Hendon
William Bolcom	Concerto No. 2	2019	Keiser
Nico Muhly	In Certain Circles	2020	St. Rose
Ellen Zwilich	Concerto for 2 pianos	2023	Theodore Presser
Samuel Zyman	Concerto No. 2	2023	Theodore Presser



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

Continuing our fascinating retrospective history of EPTA through a review and summary of *Piano Journal*. Pianist, teacher, adjudicator, examiner, composer and educator Nancy Litten summarises and selects excerpts from issues 59–60 of our EPTA magazine.

### No. 59 (Summer 1999)

**WHO'S WHO OF PIANISTS:**  
Mitsuko Uchida talks to  
Malcolm Troup



**M.T.** You arrived in Vienna from your native Japan at the age of 12, remaining until age 23.

**M.U.** In Japan, Western music was seldom well performed. I was an extremely diligent pupil and nothing more. I was as gifted in maths as in piano playing so there was, as yet, no thought for more serious musical studies. Once in Vienna, however, I became a music student overnight, always pupil first, child second. My teacher was Richard Hauser – fascinating and intelligent, opinionated and unbending. It became

ever more clear to me that you cannot learn from a teacher because it is up to you to do your own thinking, your own experiencing.

Hauser had a fixed idea of technique which I later discarded – utterly Germanic with high goose-stepping finger movements, striking each key from above. The way I use weight is entirely predetermined by my desire for a certain quality of sound – ear-weight, you might call it, as apart from arm-weight. I love non-vibrato sound, which means limiting myself to the minimum weight required. It all boils down to the self-discovery of each pianist's unique physical resources.

**M.T.** It reminds me of Claudio Arrau who used to practise stripped to the waist in a room full of mirrors so that he could observe the play of his muscles.

**M.U.** I am not interested in such voyeurism nor in seeing myself. I don't even know what I look like while playing nor do I want to!

**M.T.** Has playing become such second nature that you can forgo the usual daily limbering-up process and plunge into whatever programme you are preparing?

**M.U.** Oh, no-no-no-no! I start and end with Bach, and after Bach there comes a Chopin étude or two. Even before the Bach I spend a minute working on physical balance, particularly of the shoulders. I have two Steinway concert grands, a Model B and a Model O and for good measure a little Bösendorfer. I always record on my own piano.

*Note from M.T:* Interviewing Mitsuko was for me rather like laying siege to an impregnable fortress; I felt more than once in the role of the suitor of Turandot, who if he failed to give the right answer (or, in my case, ask the right question) would face instant decapitation. That she had accepted her lonely lot in life was evidenced by her distaste for what pass as social graces. But the scorching flame of her unremitting self-honesty claimed a respect almost as great as the wonder inspired by the sublime 'inner-directedness' of her artistry.

**A BRIEF GUIDE TO AN ADVANCED PIANO TECHNIQUE Part 2**  
by Kendall Taylor CBE

#### Glissandos

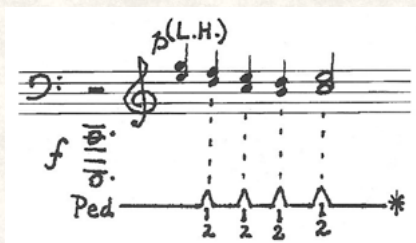
In black key glissandos, use the backs of the three middle fingers to 'spread' the friction, otherwise blisters could ensue. Double-note glissandos are rarely found, but it is advisable that the leading finger (RH fifth in rising,

thumb if falling) which alone will play on the nail, should produce most of the tone. It will be noted that octave glissandos can only be attempted if the hand is large enough for the leading finger to play in the trailing position.

**Una Corda** is a misleading term as over a century ago the use of one string only was discarded, as being too drastic a change of tone. In striking one less string than usual the tone is reduced, but more to the point is that the hammers hit the strings on a less-used (and therefore softer) part of the felt hammer-heads because of the small sideways movement of the piano action (on a grand). On most uprights the hammers are brought closer to the strings, reducing the speed at which they strike them, but unlike on a grand, there is no difference to the quality of sound.

### Pedalling

- *Legato pedalling* will lift precisely as a new sound is heard and will only be re-depressed when the ear notes that the previous sound has been fully damped i.e. well after the sounding of a new note or chord.
- In 'direct pedalling' the foot presses the pedal down as the note or chord is playing, with the object of enriching the tone. This can only be used for chords/notes which are non-legato or separated by rests.
- *Half pedalling* is often misunderstood; the movement of the foot is a full one; the difference is one of speed. The shorter strings of high-pitched notes are quickly damped but the longer, thicker strings of the bass are slower to damp. A quick lift and instant re-depressing of the pedal permits a firmly played bass note to be sustained through several quick pedal-changes, whilst upper tones are satisfactorily damped.



- *Flutter/Vibrato Pedalling* is a matter of lifting the pedal rapidly up and down (allowing the dampers to touch the strings without resting on them) causing a reduction in the build-up of tone and creating an atmospheric effect in impressionistic or more contemporary works.
- *Half-damping* creates an unusual tone quality if that point in the depressing of the pedal can be found where the dampers are just lightly touching the strings without creating any pressure. It is a somewhat unreliable effect except on the very best of pianos.

### A PROBLEM OF PERFORMANCE (in Brahms' *Ballad 'Edward'*, op. 10) by Raymond Head

We now know that the ballad is actually a setting of Herder's words. Because of the accents in the original German, the word 'Schwert' from the first line 'Dein Schwert, wie ist's von Blut so rot?' corresponds to the *acciaccatura* and shows that, to make sense, it should be struck on the first

beat of the bar, thus making it like a Scottish 'snap'. It is my view that Brahms wanted to follow 18<sup>th</sup>-century precedent as a natural outcome of his considerable musicological interests and that this is clearly indicated in the word-setting. The *acciaccatura* should therefore be struck on the beat as it always has been in the *Andantino* movement of his Op. 21 Variations.

### CD REVIEWS

**Albert Roussel and Pierre Max Dubois, Enid Katahn Papadopoulos (Gasparo Records Inc)**

Enid Katahn is among the few pianists nowadays who has devoted herself to performing and recording noteworthy French composers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century who were overshadowed by the successes of Debussy and Ravel. One cannot help but be enthralled by her musicality and sensibility.

Roussel (1869–1937) was unknowingly the godfather of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century French music. He stood in the pivotal point between the excesses of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the proliferation of 20<sup>th</sup>-century styles. Fauré and Chabrier, his contemporaries, were deeply rooted in the past, occasionally flirting with Impressionistic and Neoclassic ideas. Roussel's style was more forward-looking; it evolved and diverged from his youthful paths. Dubois (1930–1995) was born a few



years before Roussel's death and represents a different era. A pupil of Mihaud and winner of the Prix de Rome, he went on to write a number of works for pianists, including character pieces, a sonata, music for multiple pianos, four concertos, and one for two pianos and orchestra.

**Wesley Roberts**

## No. 60 (Winter 1999)

**WHO'S WHO OF PIANISTS:**  
**Einar Steen-Nøkleberg talks to  
Carola Grindea**

**C.G.** You are known throughout the piano profession as one of Norway's most outstanding pianists. Your recent twelve CDs of Grieg's entire piano music are a milestone.

**ES-N.** Probably it was his harmonic progressions, born of his folk music research, which most set him apart. We see them growing out of a descending bass line, sometimes diatonic, often chromatic, while pedal-points of various sorts underpin the chord structure. His melodic lines share the Lydian scale (with its distinctive augmented 4<sup>th</sup>) with much of our folk music.

When I was nine, my parents at last gave in to my pestering and got

a piano. I was simply ecstatic and could not tear myself away from it. I could hardly believe that it was not a beautiful dream. Every morning I would jump out of bed very early and run to the piano to make sure it was still there. I spent hours making up all sorts of tunes and listening to all the sounds I could get out of it, with pedal or without. How moved I was every time I heard some extraordinary pianissimo! Playing by ear and experimenting must have been the best way to develop my aural perception and my imagination. I knew that my life was going to be in music.

**C.G.** You somehow combine your own career as an international artist with teaching at the Oslo Music Academy, the Hanover Hochschule für Musik and the Salzburg Mozarteum.

**ES-N.** I do not believe that the teacher must necessarily show the student 'how I do this particular passage' or say what to do and when. Rather, they should develop students' understanding of what the body can and should do in relation to the instrument, and especially encourage imagination in order to broaden responses to the music being studied. I can offer a 'short cut' in this direction, helping to avoid the suffering I endured. Having started to make my name as a performer and

teacher I developed agonising pains, even when away from the piano. There can be no greater tragedy for a pianist. Such 'occupational injuries' were little understood then and doctors did not know how to treat them. Many described it as psychological. Some recommended cortisone injections, others physiotherapy, ultra-sound, or 'relaxing'. All to no avail. What I found in scientific journals was no help. Then I heard of the Alexander Technique. After a few sessions I began to improve my posture and the whole state of my body changed for the better. I felt reborn and from then on, my whole approach to performing and teaching took on new directions.

**READER'S FORUM:**  
**Wanda Jeziorska quotes  
CHRISTINE BROWN from Leeds.**

'If we expect our pupils to do well, I believe that they will fulfil our expectations. We have to provide goals which they can readily achieve so that their confidence grows. We should offer a wide variety of performance opportunities. At first a pupil may just record a piece in the lesson. The second stage may be to perform to another pupil and the third to perform at a concert in the studio. It is important that the pupil should succeed at every stage, so I always ensure that the piece is ready to be performed. Motivation comes from pleasure in achieving the goal and from the approval received for the successful performance.'

**ON SIBELIUS' 'KYLIIKKI' –  
3 LYRIC PIECES FROM THE  
KALEVALA, OP. 41  
by Heli Ignatius-Fleet**

In the autumn of 1904 Sibelius had begun work on his Third Symphony, with the Violin Concerto still not ready for its second performance. Yet this was the moment he chose to compose his most ambitious work for the piano so far. The three-movement work is his only piano composition with a name linking it to Finnish mythology. The *Kalevala* is a Finnish national epic, colourful and perilous.



The opening *Largamente-Allegro* (see right) is the most dramatic and passionate of the three, hinting at the unfolding story.

Sibelius avoided quoting actual folk songs, but the profoundly national character of his works is due to the influence of the Finnish language with its strong rhythms and its falling speech melodies. He is not often remembered as a composer for the piano, despite over 100 pieces for the instrument. There are such gems amongst them! Who could fail to respond to the Nordic starkness of his *Barcarola* from op. 24 or the shimmering beauty of the fifth *Impromptu* op. 5? The very late piano compositions, such as *Esquisses* op. 114, convey a more mystical contemplation of nature, a pianistic echo of *Tapiola*.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### FRENCH PIANISM by Charles Timbrell (Amadeus Press)

The Paris Conservatoire never pretended to offer a comprehensive musical education. Its main line is high polish in performing (or conducting or composing). Requirements in theory and music history are minimal on entry. One's formal education can cease as soon as one cops one's *premier prix*!

The roots of the keyboard style they perpetuated lay in the harpsichord masterpieces of Couperin/Rameau and the precision, delicacy and animated articulation they demanded from essentially quiet hands and knowing fingers. It was a long while before the conscious use of wrist and arm produced a larger sonority.

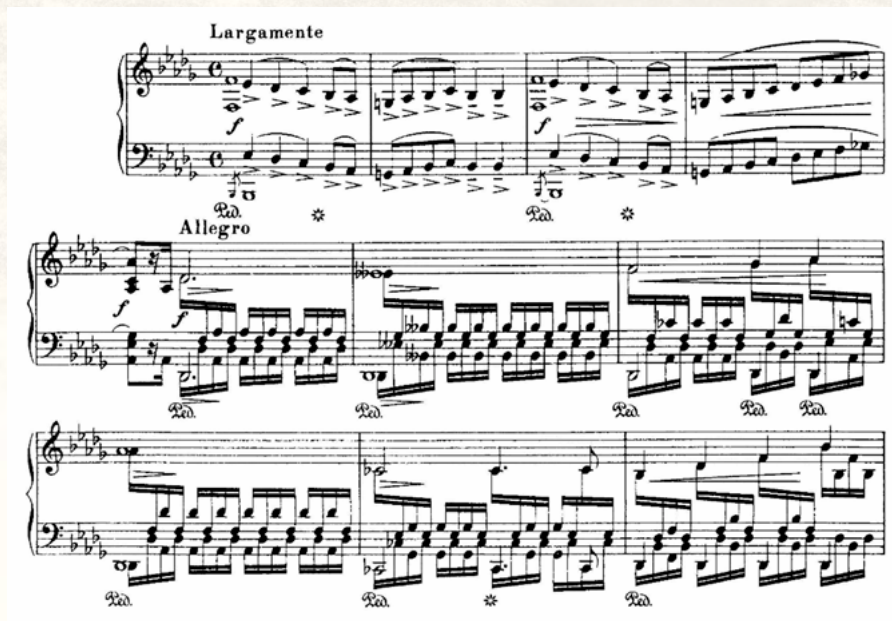
**Robert Dumm**

## MUSIC REVIEWS

### MUSIC FOR ADVANCED PLAYERS (FABER MUSIC)

#### Piano Sonata no. 2 (1997) by Carl Vine

Vine's Sonata no. 2 struck me as a respectable – at times brilliant – rehash of the post-romantic sonata along with its whole bag of tricks for



generating tension in the listeners by the sheer accumulation of what unkind critics of Rachmaninov used to call 'note-spinning'. There is no denying that this is a pastiche composition – well-crafted it is true but relying on stock devices to score its facile points. Provided one treats it for what it is – a vehicle for pianistic display rather than an aesthetic end-in-itself – it can make a useful addition to the repertoire of any professional pianist.

**M.M.**

## CD REVIEWS

### John McCabe Piano Music, performed by the composer (British Music Society BMS424CD)

The name of Haydn has long been linked with McCabe and one would assume that this association, along with his part-education in Germany, would give his music a Teutonic character. Yet he is one of the most impressionist composers the British Isles has produced – even more so than colleagues of his who have studied in France. This characteristic, added to writing of Lisztian virtuosity and Brahmsian grandeur, makes his strikingly original compositions a must for all pianists, teachers and students looking for 20<sup>th</sup>-century repertoire.

**Alberto Portugheis**

## EPTA NEWS

EPTA would like to make it known that Dominique Merlet, one of the most outstanding pianists and pedagogues of our time, has been nominated European President of all EPTA Associations. He has dominated the French piano scene for more than 30 years, hailed by the critics as a virtuoso of global stature and a poet of rare nobility.

This wonderful excerpt, the final fascinating glimpse into past editions of *Piano Journal* from 1980–2000, represents 10 years of dedicated hard work and enthusiasm from Nancy Litten.

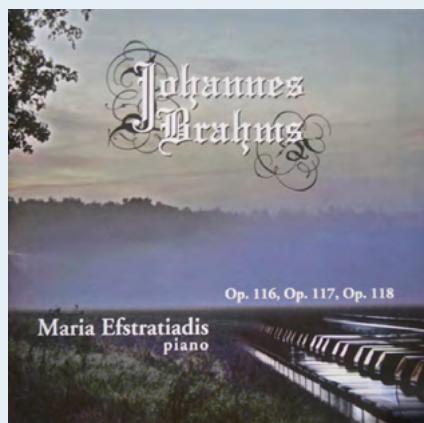
Those of us who have had the pleasure to read 'From the Archives' will know just how addictively readable they are and the insight that Nancy's selections have offered us.

I'd like to thank her on behalf of all the readers and the previous and current editor of *Piano Journal* for her invaluable contributions.

**Anthony Williams**

## CD REVIEW

Athens Music Society  
Johannes Brahms  
Op. 116, Op. 117, Op. 118  
Maria Efstratiadis, piano



It is a great pleasure to receive a CD from the President of EPTA Greece, Maria Efstratiadis. She took over from Natalia Michailidou two years ago. This particular recording appears to have been made at a live concert.

The three cycles of late piano pieces were all composed in 1892/3 after a long break in piano composition, as if Brahms were, so to speak, coming back to grass roots, and yet they are more introspective than his earlier piano pieces which tend to be more virtuosic in character.

The seven Fantasias of Op. 116 are all linked into a cyclical work rather than a collection of short character pieces. Op. 117 are character pieces which Hanslick described as 'Monologues' and Niemann labels them as 'thoroughly personal and subjective' while Brahms himself calls them 'three lullabies of my grief'. And the six pieces of Op. 118 were dedicated to Clara Schumann which she much appreciated and played. This was the penultimate of Brahms's published works.

Never having heard Maria Efstratiadis perform in public, it is a pleasure to experience her warm, heartfelt playing with nobility in the slower works with tasteful spacing and placing of notes throughout the long phrases, enhancing the musical line throughout. Op. 117 No. 1 in E $\flat$  displays poetic beauty without ever being sentimental. The final E $\flat$  minor

Intermezzo of Op. 118 brings out the heartfelt pathos. Passionate moments always depict the climaxes without ever sounding harsh. Efstratiadis always displays warmth and depth of tone with clarity of texture, fine control and a sustained legato. She plays with excellent control and authority, enabling the tension and intensity of the music to penetrate. EPTA hopes to hear her perform live in the near future.

**Nadia Lasserson**

## SHEET MUSIC REVIEWS

### BÄRENREITER URTEXT

Frederick Chopin (1810-1849)  
Sonata in B minor for Piano Op. 58  
BA 11828



Chopin's Third Piano Sonata composed in 1844 has secured its place in the main stream repertoire of many pianists. There are several editions on the market available to performers, some are Urtext and some are not, but this publication from Bärenreiter is an urtext edition. Overseen by pianist Paul Badura-Skoda and Britta Schilling-Wang, this will find favour with concert artists as well as student pianists. The extensive very informative preface includes details 'About the work', 'Notes on the Edition' and 'Notes on Interpretation and Performance Practice'. These include tempo and rubato, dynamics, ornamentation of appoggiaturas, trills and mordents, legato and cantilena plus pedalling and fingering. These notes have been contributed by Paul

Badura-Skoda and Hardy Rittner. The volume comes with an extensive critical commentary and the printed music text is beautifully clear.

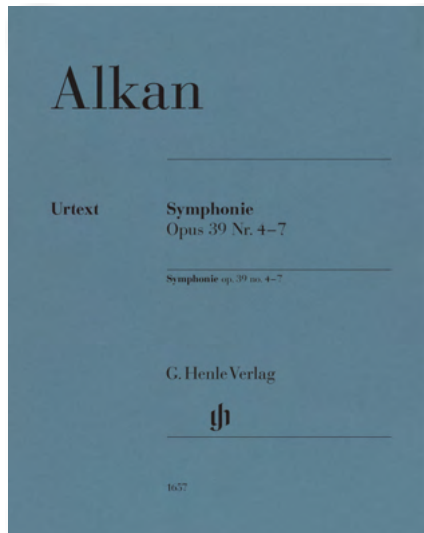
Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)  
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra  
in G Major  
2 Piano Reduction  
BA 9048



The publicity information supplied with this publication aims to 'restore the original musical text authorised by Ravel but retaining the idiosyncracies of Ravel's notation e.g. the allocation of treble and bass clef'. There is also an appendix with a list of alternative readings. Further information states, 'In the 1960s, long after Ravel's death, the musical text of the then available Durand edition of Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major underwent various changes. Although it is unknown who authorised these changes they have become established as common performance practice. A variety of sources were consulted for this new edition. The first print of the score, parts and piano reduction as well as a set of proofs used by pianist Marguerite Long to rehearse the work for the premiere served as the main sources.' 'The musical text appears in a clear, spacious layout with optimum page turns. Characteristics of Ravel's notation have been retained with regard to cautionary accidentals, stemming and distribution of the piano part between upper and lower staves.' This is a beautiful Urtext edition from Bärenreiter that serious pianists and teachers should consult.

## HENLE URTEXT

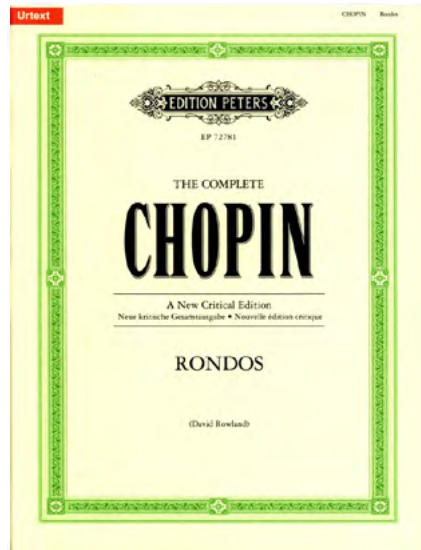
**Charles-Valentin Alkan (1813-1888)**  
**Symphonie for Solo Piano Op. 39**  
Nos. 4-7  
HN 1657



Alkan's piano compositions have not enjoyed the recognition that other composers have had, either among pianists, teachers or audiences, despite the fact that he was a virtuoso pianist himself. The *Symphonie* comprises four of the twelve etudes in minor keys Op. 39 that Alkan composed as 'The Douze Etudes dans Tous les Tons' Op. 39. It therefore becomes a long work, but the preface points out that it is not an imitation of an orchestral composition. It has become a standalone work by those pianists and publishers that have ventured into the unique, compositional world of this French composer's piano works. Henle are to be congratulated for this publication that concert pianists should explore, even if not adopted into their main stream repertoire.

**EDITION PETERS URTEXT**  
**Frederick Chopin (1810-1849)**  
**The Complete Chopin**  
**A New Critical Edition**  
**Rondos**  
EP 72781

This Urtext volume edited by David Rowland is made up of the Four Rondos composed by Chopin and includes as No. 4 the solo version of his Rondo in C Op. 73 as opposed to the two piano version that exists. The preface deals with the history of rondos in general and these compositions in particular, in addition



to a very useful section on actually performing the works. There is a comprehensive critical commentary as well as notes on editorial method and practice. These are standalone concert Rondos as opposed to finales of sonatas or simple classical rondo movements. They have not enjoyed the popularity or frequency of performances as some of Chopin's other works especially on concert hall recital programmes or with pianists themselves.

**EDITION PETERS**  
**Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)**  
**Masterpieces for Piano**  
**Essential repertoire for intermediate to advanced level pianists**  
EP 20036

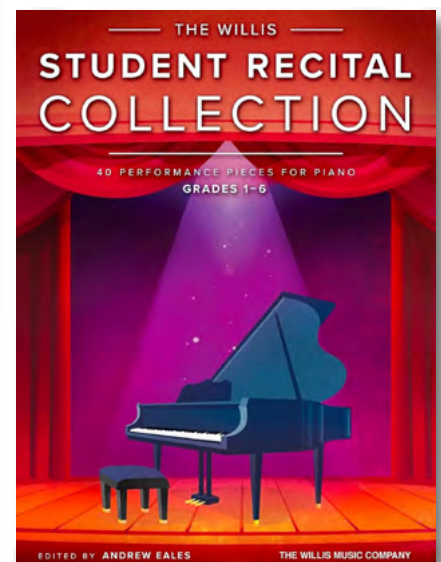


This series of five volumes published by Edition Peters of masterworks by Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Clara Schumann and Mendelssohn deserve

every success. The presentation and printing is wonderfully clear and this latest edition of Mendelssohn works contains a generous helping of Songs Without Words, along with Children's Pieces Op. 72, Fantasia on The Last Rose of Summer, the G minor Piano Sonata Op. 105, Prelude and Fugue in A flat Op. 35 No. 4, Three fantasias or Capriccios Op. 16, the well-known Rondo Capriccioso Op. 14 and the set of Variations Op. 11. A really useful volume that pianists and teachers may like in their score libraries.

**THE WILLIS MUSIC COMPANY**  
**The Willis Student Recital Collection**

**40 Performance Pieces for Piano**  
**Edited Andrew Eales**  
**ISBN 979-8-3501-4727-8**



The rear cover of this album states, 'An exclusive collection of 40 works by leading composers of educational piano music, curated and edited by Andrew Eales. This book will provide many years of rich, diverse and satisfying performance repertoire.' Included are works by such composers as John Thompson, Edna Mae Burnam, William Gillock and many more.

This volume of piano pieces ranges in technical standard from Elementary Level to Early-Mid Intermediate Level and on to Later Intermediate Level. All the pieces have descriptive titles of various moods and styles. Each technical level is preceded with and overview of the repertoire included in that level.

# Reviews continued...

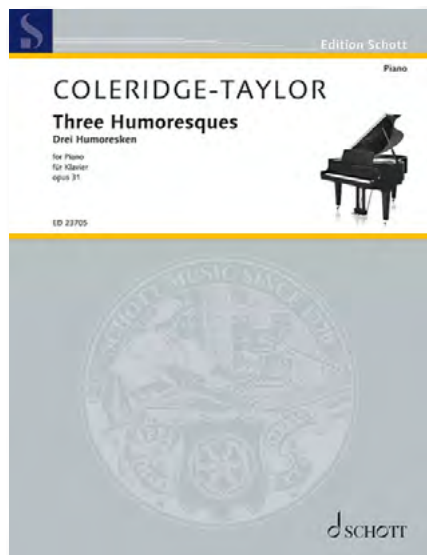
EDITION SCHOTT

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

Three Humoresques for Piano

Op. 31

ED 23705



Coleridge-Taylor is not a composer usually considered by pianists when choosing repertoire to study or learn, but these three charming Humoresques first published in 1898 will delight pianists, teachers and pupils for inclusion in pupils' concerts, competitions and festivals. They are tuneful and melodic as well as technically satisfying but the score comes without the inclusion of fingering or pedalling. Coleridge-Taylor was born in London and at age 15 was awarded a scholarship to study at London's Royal College of Music with Stanford, where he was a contemporary of Holst and Vaughan Williams. These pieces were out of print until Schott Music published them in this edition and at the same time corrected errors and inconsistencies that were in the original edition.

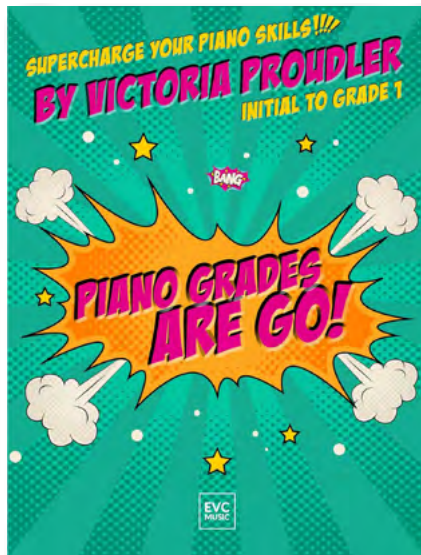
EVC MUSIC

Victoria Proudler

Piano Grades Are Go

Early to Intermediate Level

ISBN 978-1-911359-54-8



Victoria Proudler is a pianist and composer well known to EPTA members. The front cover of this volume, covering lower/intermediate level invites students to 'Supercharge Your Piano Skills'. The rear cover states, 'The Pieces are arranged in order of difficulty, complete with dynamics, articulation, fingering and phrasing and full of character in a range of enjoyable styles with catchy tunes and chord progressions.' At the beginning of the book there is a full explanation of all the technical terms used throughout. Suggested metronome speeds are included as well as pedalling indications. There are 15 pieces in the collection with descriptive titles such as Toccatina, Stakeout, Sicilian Dance, Tango Nocturno, Summer Rain, Be Bop Baroque, Etude Espagnol, Twilight Waltz, Sunshine on the Water and Turnabout Rag, each with a different technical or musical requirement such as arm movements, communicating character, cantabile, evenness, hand-crossing, playing in thirds, tone quality, rhythm, forearm rotation, communicating style, balance, tonal colour changes, stride bass and staccato. This is a book that will please teachers and pupils alike.

HAL LEONARD

Yann Tiersen (b. 1970)

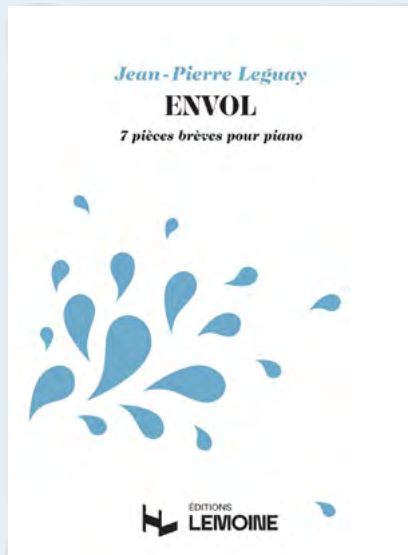
Rathlin From a Distance

ISBN 979-8-3501-4067-5



Yann Tiersen was born in Brittany, North-West France, in 1970, and the nine pieces that make up this collection were all influenced from his sailing tour in 2023 that took him through Ireland, the Faroes, the Shetlands, Scotland and Wales. Each piano piece is tied to a place he visited. Titles include Ninnog, Fastnet, Rathlin, Torshavn, Nororagota, Papa Stour, Bigton, Caledonian Canal and a bonus piece called Bethesda. They are mostly impressionistic based on calmness being at sea when travelling from Tiersen's home on Ushant Island to the Faroe Islands. They are mainly slow, calm pieces in style but with two lively pieces included.

**EDITIONS LEMOINE**  
**Jean-Pierre Leguay (b. 1939)**  
**Envol**  
**7 pièces brèves pour piano**  
**ISBN/ISMN 979-0-230997-79-9**



The publishing house of Henry Lemoine has produced two modern works of varying lengths by French composer Jean-Pierre Leguay. The are technically advanced pieces of a

virtuostic nature with a mostly atonal sound world. Metronome speeds are suggested as are some pedal indications but there is no fingering and pianists interested in learning and performing atonal music can work out the fingering needed. Both works call for a large geography of the keyboard at fast tempi.

**EDITIONS COMBRE**  
**Rudi De Bouw (b. 1970)**  
**Spring Equinox**

This charming, rhapsodic and tuneful work has calm, graceful episodes with a mixture of widespread arpeggiated chords and an extended section of flowing L.H. semiquaver figurations of melody and accompaniment giving a Nocturne-like quality to the piece and there are also some decorative cadenza like R.H. passages. The different episodes have suggested metronome speeds but no fingering or pedal indications. It is of high intermediate to advanced level of playing.

**Melvyn Cooper**



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# Spring News from the EPTA Associations

## EPTA - EUROPEAN PIANO TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

### The Parent Organisation

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Dominique Merlet

### Honorary Vice-President

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Lembit Orgse (President of EPTA Estonia)

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Lembit Orgse, Alan Paul, Susan Bettaney, Miha Haas, Penelope Roskell & John Thwaites

Website: [www.epta-europe.org](http://www.epta-europe.org)

**EPTA – the Parent Organisation** – is constantly expanding not only in Europe but also throughout the world through its **Affiliations** with the most important Piano Teachers Associations:

**MTNA** – Music Teachers National Association

**Piano Teachers National Association of Japan**, Founder: Yasuko Fukuda

**Japan Piano Teachers Association**, President: Prof Akemi Murakami

**Canadian Federation of Music Teachers Associations**, Co-ordinator: Prof Ireneus Zuk

**Latin American Piano Teachers Association (Argentine, Chile, Ecuador, Brazil)**

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Jordan Misja High School of Arts, Tirana

**29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> May 2026** EPTA Albania will organise the 29<sup>th</sup> International Festival “The Young Pianist” for young pianists aged 6–25 at the “Tonin Harapi” Concert Hall, Tirana. The Jury: Michal Tal (Israel), Francesco Monopoli (Italy) and Balder Neergaard (Denmark).

**13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> June 2026** EPTA Albania will run the 18<sup>th</sup> “National Meeting of Pianists for Culture” in the “Tonin Harapi” Concert Hall, Tirana. This event is for pianists who study and play for pleasure, with no age limit.



## EPTA ARMENIA

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**14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> October 2026**  
EPTA Austria will hold the 40<sup>th</sup> Conference in Linz, with the theme “Verspielt - vermittelt - verwandelt” - Playfully Conveys and Transforms.



## EPTA BELGIUM-Wallonie/ Bruxelles

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[www.epta-belgium.be](http://www.epta-belgium.be) for all information in French, English and Flemish.

**October/November 2026** EPTA Belgium will organise recitals for the competition winners: Iris Keijzer, Belgium - First Prize category 2 (10-14 years); Julian Zhu, Great-Britain - First Prize category 3 (14-18 years); and Mahaut Ska, Belgium, Second Prize category 3 (14-18 years).

**November 2026** EPTA Belgium will organise the traditional “Pedagogical Day”

**Autumn 2027** EPTA Belgium will run the “Rencontres Internationales des Jeunes Pianistes”.



### EPTA BULGARIA

Planning to re-organise.



### EPTA CROATIA

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**20<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> February 2026** EPTA Croatia organised the 8<sup>th</sup> Svetislav Stančić International Piano Competition in the Vatroslav Lisinski Concert Hall, Zagreb, and the competition was dedicated to Vladimir Krpan, founder of EPTA Croatia and the Stančić Competition. The jury included: Peter Donohoe (President, UK), Grigory Gruzman (Germany), Milana Chernyavska (Austria), Péter Nagy (Hungary), Konstantin Krasnitsky (Belarus/Croatia), Katarina Krpan (Croatia) and Ida Gamulin (Croatia).

The youngest competitor, Pierpaolo Buggiani (Italy), won the 1<sup>st</sup> Prize as well as the Beethoven Prize and the Croatian Radiotelevision Symphony Orchestra Award for the best performance in the Finals in the Tchaikovsky Concerto.

Two brilliant Croatian pianists, Ivan Petrovic-Poljak and Stipe Prskalo, shared the 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize and the Special Award sponsored by Loncaric Foundation. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize was not awarded.

The President of the jury, famous British pianist Peter Donohoe, gave a memorable recital during the competition in the Lisinski Concert Hall with works of Busoni, Chopin, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff.



### EPTA CYPRUS

Planning to re-organise.



### EPTA CZECH REPUBLIC

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 Phone: (+45) 41 188 288  
 Email: info@epta.dk

**1<sup>st</sup> May 2026** EPTA Denmark Annual Grade Exams will take place at the Kalundborg Music School.

**7<sup>th</sup> June 2026** EPTA Denmark Annual Grade Exams will take place in the Aarhus Music School.

**13<sup>th</sup> June 2026** EPTA Denmark Annual Grade Exams will take place in the Copenhagen Municipal Music School.

These exams are for students of all ages. [epta.dk/gradsprover](http://epta.dk/gradsprover)

**27<sup>th</sup> July-2<sup>nd</sup> August 2026** EPTA Denmark will run the "International Piano Week" at OrkesterEfterskolen, Holstebro, Denmark, with teacher training, workshops, masterclasses

and recitals. The Faculty will include Dina Yoffe, Christopher Park, Poom Prommachart, Penelope Roskell, Tove Lønskov and Jean-Baptiste Doulchet. This year is the most ambitious yet, with a larger faculty and a new teacher training programme led by Penelope Roskell.

Closing date for applications is 15<sup>th</sup> May 2026 - book early! [epta.dk/ipw](http://epta.dk/ipw)



### EPTA ESTONIA

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**29<sup>th</sup> March 2026** EPTA Estonia held a Youth Festival "Suur meistritöö" (The Grand Masterpiece) on International Piano Day at the newly-completed Arvo Pärt concert hall "Ukuaru" in Rakvere – the city where Pärt received his early musical education at the music school. More than 30 young pianists aged 12–17 will perform at the festival concert, and each will present one of their favourite "masterpieces". There will also be an audience vote, and the festival concert will conclude with a performance by Havryil Sydoryk, the winner of the Estonian Public Television competition "Klassikatäht (Classical Star) 2025".

**20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> August 2026** EPTA Estonia will organise the 48<sup>th</sup> International Conference, Tempo Nordico, in the Great Hall of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tallinn.

The Conference programme is shaping up to be very exciting. There will be presentations from more than 20 countries, with the Conference's focus areas grouped into two categories - Tempo -

# EPTA Associations continued...

timing, Nature and nurture. Both thematic groups will feature in-depth lectures in various formats, repertoire and music overviews, plenty of material for piano duos, and quite a few presentations on the piano works of Estonian composers – an area where we have much to offer the world. We invite you to participate and listen, whether you're from near or far.

The conference programme should offer something fresh for various groups interested in piano pedagogy and music – research enthusiasts, those interested in new music and repertoire, and conference attendees interested in piano pedagogy. A visit to the Arvo Pärt Centre is also planned and we hope that our beautiful (historic) Tallinn and the new Great Hall of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre – the conference venue – together with our inspiring guests, will provide just the right burst of inspiring energy to kick off the new season. Welcome to Tallinn.

Hurry up and register – Early Bird rates are valid until May 15.

[www.epta.ee](http://www.epta.ee)



## EPTA FINLAND

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## 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> February 2026 EPTA

Finland celebrated 50 years and held the XLIX Annual Conference at the Sibelius-Academy in Helsinki. There were over 200 delegates. The programme included a concert given by students from the youth department and piano pedagogy of Sibelius-Academy, "Greetings from ex presidents of EPTA Finland", Pekka Vapaavuori, Erik T Tawaststjerna, Jussi Siirala and Katarina Nummi-Kuisma; Juho Keränen presented "Improvisation tools for piano teaching"; Vanessa Cunna presented "Discovering Brazil through piano: a journey for young musicians"; Ollie Mustonen gave a recital; Laura Röntynen discussed "Ornaments and revelations: Baroque music at piano lessons"; and Minna Huotilainen presented "Music and Brains". The AGM took place and a social evening concluded the day.



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15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> May 2026 EPTA Germany will organise its spring seminar, in Schwerin, with the topic "The Piano as a Playing Field". The day will offer a diverse programme of lectures and workshops to provide participants with new inspiration for playing and teaching. There will also be a guided tour of Schwerin's beautiful old town.

## 30<sup>th</sup> October-1<sup>st</sup> November 2026

EPTA Germany will hold the annual congress in Augsburg and will focus on the theme of "Music at the Heart".



## EPTA GREECE

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Social Media *Stefanos Theodoridis*  
Rigillis & Vassileos Georgiou BD 17-19, 106 75 Athens

16<sup>th</sup> October 2025 EPTA Greece hosted a presentation of the esteemed Swiss musicologist and Chopin expert *Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger's* monumental "Chopin vu par ses élèves" translated into Greek at the Athens Conservatory. Mrs. Efstathiadi, President of EPTA Greece, introduced the book which was then presented by the translator, *Stefanos Theodoridis*, and the editor, *Constantine Carambelas-Sgourdas*, and its

important technical, musical and aesthetic implications for today's teachers, performers, students and musicologists. A rich audiovisual powerpoint presentation – including historical recordings – accompanied the event.



### EPTA HUNGARY

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### 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 EPTA

Italy held the first concert of the season in the splendid 15<sup>th</sup>-century cloister of San Giovanni Battista dei Genovesi with opera singers from the school of Maestro Hyo Soon Lee, two Rossini operas performed by Marcella Crudeli and her student Leonardo Laviola who also played some works by the renowned composer, Andrea Talmelli. Crudeli also performed the Franck Sonata with violinist Federica Di Nucci.

**21<sup>st</sup> March 2026** EPTA Italy organised the second concert with singers and the Apulian pianist Sara Palumbo, a student of the 2026 Magisterium of Piano Studies organised in collaboration with the Rotary Club of West Rome. Famous Italian actor Sandro Ghiani presented a recent publication of his life, written by his wife, Rosa Castrogiovanni.

**18<sup>th</sup> April, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2026** EPTA Italy will organise further concerts on these dates.



**2<sup>nd</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> November 2026** EPTA Italy will collaborate with the ROMA International Piano Competition and the Winners' Concert and Awards Ceremony will be held in the historic Teatro Ghione.



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Marcella Crudeli and the artists present at the 'Salotto' on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026

# EPTA Associations continued...



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& Heleen Vegter  
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**24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> October 2026** EPTA The Netherlands will hold an annual conference in Akoesticum Ede. The programme is not yet finalised. Overnight accommodation is available.



## EPTA NORWAY

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## EPTA POLAND

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## EPTA PORTUGAL

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**17<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> July 2026** EPTA Portugal will organise the Summer Piano Festival and Masterclasses in Quinta da Aldeia, Ponte de Lima, led by Luís Pipa and Katya Apekisheva. Concerts will be given by Luís Pipa with soprano Dora Rodrigues, Katya Apekisheva, Paulo and Teresa Valente Oliveira on piano and cello, and the students.



## EPTA ROMANIA

There are plans to re-organise EPTA Romania.



## EPTA RUSSIA

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## EPTA SLOVAKIA

President Ida Černecká  
Head of Keyboard and Dean of the Music Faculty at the Bratislava Academy.

EPTA Slovakia continues to organise annual events.



## EPTA SLOVENIA

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**13<sup>th</sup> May 2026** EPTA Slovenia will introduce a new mid-year event “Towards the Sky” in Ljubljana, which will focus on past and future pianos. Visitors will have the opportunity to play and discover characteristics of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Viennese piano as well as explore “Tendons”, a modern portable acoustic piano invented by Thomas Kaduk.

**20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> November 2026** EPTA Slovenia will run the 24<sup>th</sup> National Conference, “Piano Days”, in Celje. The title is ‘From First Sounds to Artistry’, a theme which is strongly pedagogical and addresses two central questions: how to empower young pianists for musical life, and how to equip young piano pedagogues with the skills needed for a successful professional career.

More at: <https://www.epta.si/24-klavirski-dnevi-celje-20-in-21-november-2026/>

EPTA Slovenia has produced the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of *Virkla*, its periodical for Pianists and Music Teachers. This year’s title is ‘Can I be Different?’, focusing on the upcoming technological innovations and its implementation into pianists’ daily life. Last year’s volume appeared in English, and this year continues as is tradition: articles written by established Slovenian and foreign experts from the field of piano pedagogy and piano performance.

<https://www.epta.si/virkla/>

EPTA Slovenia continues with *Pianissimo 2026 - Young Talents’ Concerts*. This year’s artists are Jana Coretti Kuret, Goce Zlatev, Leonard Kobal and Zala Zgonc, who all get a first concert tour around the country, a recording for national radio and an interview in *Virkla*. <https://www.epta.si/category/pianissimo/>



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**17<sup>th</sup> May 2026** EPTA Spain-Barcelona will organise the III Certamen at the Escola de Música de Gràcia.

**30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> May 2026** EPTA Spain will run the XII Certamen de Piano in Madrid at the Yehudi Menuhin Auditorium in the Facultad de Música y Artes Escénicas of the Alfonso X University.

**2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> October 2026** EPTA Spain will organise the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congreso Internacional at the Yehudi Menuhin Auditorium in the Facultad de Música y Artes Escénicas of the Alfonso X University. [www.epta-spain.com](http://www.epta-spain.com)



### EPTA SWEDEN

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[www.sppf.net](http://www.sppf.net)

**19<sup>th</sup> April 2026** EPTA Sweden will hold a student concert at the Malmö Academy of Music.

**23<sup>rd</sup> May 2026** EPTA Sweden will hold its annual meeting and student concert at Södra Latins Gymnasium in Stockholm.

**14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> June 2026** EPTA Sweden will run the International Summer Course at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm.

**18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> September 2026** EPTA Sweden will organise the National Conference at the Inggesund School of Music.



### EPTA SWITZERLAND

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EPTA Switzerland continues to run two annual meetings in different parts of the country to facilitate access for all members.

**17<sup>th</sup> May 2025** EPTA Switzerland held the spring meeting in Geneva on “The Unleashed Piano - at the intersection of styles and ways of thinking” (with a Tribute to Irène Schweizer with Maggie Nicols, voc, Pierre Favre, perc and Raphaël Sudan, piano).

**8<sup>th</sup> November 2025** EPTA Switzerland ran the autumn meeting in Zurich on the topic “Approach – compose, interpret, inspire” (with a Tribute to Tomas Dratva).

**13<sup>th</sup> June 2026** EPTA Switzerland will hold its spring event in Aarau: “Listening to art and the art of listening” (including a discussion with colleagues and former students of Tomas Dratva about idols).

**7<sup>th</sup> November 2026** EPTA Switzerland will organise the autumn event in Interlaken.

# EPTA Associations continued...



## EPTA TÜRKIYE

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**23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026** EPTA Türkiye organised an online meeting with its members, to discuss the introduction of a beginner piano method. There were several suggestions and requests with positive feedback.

**23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026** EPTA Türkiye ran an online session on the principles of beginner piano instruction in practice, given by Hande Dalkılıç to a young student.



## EPTA UKRAINE

Planning to reorganise.



## EPTA UK

Founder: Carola Grindea  
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www.epta-uk.org

**28<sup>th</sup> March 2026** EPTA UK held the Finals of the 29<sup>th</sup> Piano Competition. The Winners: Intermediate I - Emily Goh (Kathleen Underhill), Intermediate II - Chimarisa Enunwa (Michael Burke), Advanced I - Freya Simpson (Karis Stretton), Advanced II - James Tinker, 12 years and Under - Shengruo Mei (Danielle Salamon and Shen Yue), 15 years and under - Tiantian Gao (Murray McLachlan), 18 years and Under - Anton Pigott (Andrew Byrne), Over 18 years - Lincoln Poon (Murray McLachlan).

The Overall Winner 2026 was Tiantian Gao.

EPTA UK holds regular fortnightly online webinars for its members and other teachers.

**11<sup>th</sup> January 2026** Diva Music Academy: Storybooks inspired by the Trinity Piano Syllabus with Vasiliki Dimakopoulou

**25<sup>th</sup> January 2026** Teaching, Performance and General Rebelliousness with Philip Fowke

**8<sup>th</sup> February 2026** Landing the Role: Applying for Teaching Jobs and Acing the Interview with Anthony Williams and Claire Vane

**22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026** In Tune With You with Yvette French and Dr Anne Margaret Smith

**1<sup>st</sup> March 2026** Musicianship and Growth Mindset: Reflections on Music Learning Theory with Melanie Jones

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2026** Incorporating Musicianship and Enhancing Aural Understanding in the Piano Lesson Based on Edwin Gordon's Music Learning Theory with Marta Maroto

**26<sup>th</sup> April 2026** Roberta Wolff presents "Between Gigs and Grades": Navigating the Professional Challenges of Teaching (Students and Young Professionals Webinar)

**The EPTA Türkiye Board of Directors continues its work on piano beginner methods.**



**10<sup>th</sup> May 2026** Instrumental Music Education – journeys through reflection on teaching and training with Elizabeth Haddon

**7<sup>th</sup> June 2026** Setting up a Piano Teaching Business Dos and Don'ts with Andrew Higgins & Claire Vane

**5<sup>th</sup> July 2026** The WunderKeys Way: Creative Resources for Modern Piano Teachers with Andrea and Trevor Dow

**30<sup>th</sup> August 2026** EPTA UK will hold its Annual One-Day Conference at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire on the Theme "Beyond the Notes".



### EPTA CHINA ASSOCIATES

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**25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> May 2026** EPTA China Associates will organise a series of workshops for Paul Harris in Beijing, in cooperation with Faber Music UK and Southwest University Press. These will be delivered both online and in person simultaneously. The focus will be on his "Simultaneous Learning" approach.

**14<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> June 2026** EPTA China Associates will organise a short-term continuing professional development (CPD) course for piano teachers in collaboration with Trinity Laban, alongside two days of workshops at the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music, respectively.



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**6<sup>th</sup> February 2026** EPTA Israel Associates organised a pedagogy day at Givatayim Conservatory. Oded Netanel (Pedagogy mentor) presented "Pupils Whisperer" which Provides Tools to Change 'Harmful' Music Habits. Rami Bar-Niv (Pianist and Author) presented "George Gershwin - Life story and performance of his works" and debated which of his pieces are suitable for students. "From Classroom to Stage" a student concert.

**20<sup>th</sup> March 2026** EPTA Israel Associates National Conference at Givatayim has had to be postponed.

Dan Deutsch (Pianist and Repetiteur) will present "Applied Methodology for Poetic Music" - Technical means for a lyrical piano.

Dr Inbal Gutter (TA Academy Prof.) will discuss "Broken Grammar - Anomalies in the Sonatas of Scarlatti".

Dudi Patimer (Journalist, Israeli Popular Music Expert) will present "The Harmonic World of Mati Caspi".

Amit Poznansky - "Israeli Composers' Corner" - His Musical Journey and pieces for students.



### ALAPP Argentina (Association of Latin American Pianists and Pedagogues)

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 Secretary Saul Cosentino  
 Committee: Ricardo Zanón, Diana Lopszy,  
 Manuel Fraga, Gonzalez Figueroa  
 www.fundacionelsonidoyeltiempo.com

**25<sup>th</sup> February 2026** ALAPP Argentina organised a grand opening orchestral concert of the season in the Palacio Libertad - Auditorio Nacional / Sarmiento 151 CABA. Conductor Lucia Zicos, Hilda Herrera performed her own piano concerto and also the Concerto by Saul Cosentino. Other solo pianists were Daniel Goldstein, Sebastian Gangi, Diana Lopszy, Natalia Gonzalez, Nelida Sanchez and Andres Pilar. Violinist Rafael Gíntoli and singers Diana Maria and Manuela Argüello also performed.

<https://palaciolibertad.gov.ar/events/homenaje-a-hilda-herrera-y-saul-cosentino-por-More info: https://www.fundacionelsonidoyeltiempo.com/>

**March 2026** Inauguration of the new headquarters of the Fundación El Sonido y El Tiempo Internacional / ALAPP-EPTA in the prestigious Ortiz Basualdo in the centre of Buenos Aires, Argentina, with an important schedule of courses, concerts and audiovisual events (more details available in due course).

**Annual Piano Courses 2026:**  
 AL PIANO: mecánica y sonido (At the piano: mechanics & sound) in reference to the book published by El Aleph and El Sonido y El Tiempo

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