

# Poetry on the Ivories

## A course for OLLI, Spring 2019

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Class meets at the Freight & Salvage on Wednesdays from 10 am to noon

**Course description:** This class will explore the Romantic phenomenon of the miniature (or "character") piano piece—genres and forms but also social use (in the home and salon), codes, interpretations, and covert political implications. For example, today we listen to a Chopin Ballade and find it powerful and wonderful, but we don't "hear" the nationalistic message that all Polish émigrés in Paris perceived. We'll study music by Chopin, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms, and others.

**Course objectives:** to familiarize students with the phenomenon of the Romantic piano character piece, to provide students with the tools and methods to analyze this repertoire, and to explore the music's meta-message as well as social functions.

### Course schedule:

Date	Topics	Repertoire
3 April	The repertoire and the genres, definitions and examples. The character pieces: ballata, rhapsody, song without words, barcarolle, prelude, étude, nocturne, impromptus, intermezzo, etc.	Chopin: étude, waltz, Mendelssohn: <i>Lieder ohne Worte</i> , Liszt: Hungarian Rhapsody, Brahms: intermezzo
10 April	Visionary fragments, coming of romanticism, Beethoven, variations.	Beethoven: <i>Für Elisa</i> , excerpts of Diabelli variations
17 April	Early romanticism, absolute and program music. Songs for the piano (the <i>Lied ohne Worte</i> ) and not.	Schubert: "Erlkönig", Impromptus Op. 90 No. 2 and Op. 142 No. 3, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: selections from <i>Lieder ohne Worte</i>
24 April	The romantic household and the Schumanns, music criticism, the <i>Neue Zeitschrift für Musik</i> , Robert's "piano years," his sets of character pieces, madness, Clara's music. The cycle of pieces.	Clara Schumann, <i>Soirées Musicales</i> op. 6 - Robert Schumann, excerpts from <i>Carnaval</i> op. 9, <i>Phantasiestücke</i> op. 12, <i>Kinderszenen</i> op. 15, and <i>Waldszenen</i> op. 82

1 May	The sublime poet and the devilish virtuoso: Chopin and Liszt. Poland and hidden political message of music.	Chopin: <i>Berceuse</i> op. 57, and selections from Preludes Op. 28, Mazurkas, Nocturnes, Études Op. 10 and Op. 25, Waltzes Liszt: <i>Hungarian Rhapsodies</i> , and selected pieces from <i>Années de pèlerinage</i>
8 May	The late romantic generation, the return to some classical models, Johannes Brahms	Brahms: Selections from <i>Klavierstücke</i> , Rhapsodies op. 79, and <i>Intermezzi</i>

### Readings:

- "The piano since c.1825" from *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, ed. David Rowland. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 40-56.
- "Actions" from *Encyclopedia of the Piano*, ed. Robert Palmieri. New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1996, pp. 12-20.
- "Fragments" from Rosen, Charles. *The Romantic Generation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 41-115.
- "Glimpses of Chopin Composing, playing the piano" from Weiss, Piero and Richard Taruskin. *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1984, No. 106, pp. 369-371.
- Plantinga, Leon, "The Piano and the Nineteenth Century" from Todd, R. Larry, ed. *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Schirmer, 1990, pp.1-15.
- "1820s to 1870s: The Piano Calls the Tune" from Parakilas, James. *Piano roles: A New History of the Piano*. New Haven [Conn.] : Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 150-176.
- "Clara Wieck: Soirées for Piano, Opus 6" from Schumann, Robert. *Schumann on Music: A Selection from the Writings*, trans. and ed. Henry Pleasants. New York: Dover pub., 1988, pp. 122-3.
- "The 'Music of the Future' Controversy" from Weiss, Piero and Richard Taruskin. *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1984, No. 110, pp. 380-385.
- "The Concert and the Virtuoso" from Parakilas, James. *Piano roles: A New History of the Piano*. New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 184-199.
- Kallberg, Jeffrey, "Hearing Poland: Chopin and Nationalism" from Todd, R. Larry, ed. *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Schirmer, 1990, pp. 221-57.
- "Franz Liszt: Concerts in Dresden and Leipzig" from Schumann, Robert. *Schumann on Music: A Selection from the Writings*, trans. and ed. Henry Pleasants. New York: Dover pub., 1988, pp. 157-161.

- "Liszt and Brahms and Their Age" "Liszt" from Kirby, F. E. *Music for Piano: A Short History*. Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1995, pp. 205-221.
- Leppert, Richard, "Cultural Contradiction, idolatry, and the Piano Virtuoso: Franz Liszt" from Parakilas, James. *Piano roles: A New History of the Piano*. New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 200-223.
- "New Paths" from Schumann, Robert. *Schumann on Music: A Selection from the Writings*, trans. and ed. Henry Pleasants. New York: Dover pub., 1988, pp. 125-6, pp. 199-200.
- "Brahms" from Kirby, F. E. *Music for Piano: A Short History*. Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1995, pp. 227-243.