



The Great Composer-Pianists: Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms

Dr. Rachel Franklin

Monday, March 31, 2025 - 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. ET

Popular speaker and concert pianist **Rachel Franklin** guides a unique look at the monumental keyboard talents of four great composer-pianists and how their performing virtuosity influenced the piano works we enjoy today.

With a legacy of printed compositions but no recordings, how can we get closer to the white-hot moments of creation and performance when these artists poured out their genius for fortunate and astonished listeners? How did the composers' musical imaginations and their signature performance styles influence the development of how pianos would be constructed and sound? And did their contemporary audiences even comprehend what they were hearing?

Franklin offers fascinating exploration into the creative minds—and hands—of a quartet of piano pioneers celebrated for their prowess as composers and performers. She concludes each lecture with a live performance of a work by the spotlighted composer.

British-born Franklin has been a featured speaker for organizations including the Library of Congress and NPR, exploring intersections among classical and jazz music, film scores, and the fine arts.

March 31st: Johannes Brahms, 1833-1897

“Brahms’ playing...was, indeed, stimulating to an extraordinary degree and so *apart* as to be quite unforgettable. It was not the playing of a virtuoso, though he had a large amount of virtuosity (to put it moderately) at his command. He never aimed at mere effect, but seemed to plunge into the innermost meaning of whatever music he happened to be interpreting, exhibiting all its details and expressing its very depths.”

Brahms trained intensely as a pianist and all his piano compositions demand a massive and highly-controlled technique. He was also a renowned pedagogue, and he and his muse Clara Schumann taught many students whose playing was subsequently captured by early recording, finally allowing us a tantalizing glimpse into the performing styles of the 19th century.

Brahms's works explored, media used

Scherzo in E flat minor, Op.4, 1851

- Carl Friedberg (1872-1955), recorded 1953
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaNWjlmTw6Y>

Sonata no. 3, F minor, Op. 5, 1853

- Hélène Grimaud
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeOLopzrDXs>

Piano concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op, 15, 1854-1858

- Radu Lupu/Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Finnish Radio SO (Video 1996)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79lbldvXzFc>

Hungarian Dance No. 2, arranged for violin and piano by Joseph Joachim, 1869

- Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), 1903 with unknown pianist
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6Apn0-z1jU>

Two Songs for Voice, Viola and Piano: 1. *Gestillte Sehnsucht (Longing at Rest)* 2. *Geistliches Wiegenlied (Sacred Lullaby)* Op. 91, 1884

- Marion Anderson, William Primrose, Franz Rupp
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cut38ud6KoY>

Quintet in F minor, Op. 34, 1864

- Lana Trotovek – violin, Yuka Matsumoto – violin, Tetsuomi Nagata -viola, Sebastien Hurtaud – cello, Simon Lane - piano

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7sq_Osc-hA

Violin and Piano sonata in G major, Op. 78, 1879, II. Adagio,

- Ilia Korol - violin (Cai von Stietencron, 1999), Natalia Grigorieva - fortepiano (Streicher, 1870)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgY8-W0nlvU&t=48s>

Violin and Piano sonata in G major, Op. 78

- Julia Fischer, Yulianna Avdeeva

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Ec_DnPL578

Funf Lieder, Op. 47, No. 1: *Botschaft*, 1868

- Jessye Norman, Geoffrey Parsons

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMVuNYIWz2k>

Op. 79, No. 2. Rhapsody in G minor, 1879

- Jorg Demus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMsy080Tk-w>

Cello sonata No. 2, Op. 99, 1886

- Jacqueline du Pré, Daniel Barenboim

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncJ_Gc9RES4

Clarinet Sonata No. 2 in E-flat Major, Op. 120, 1894

- Anthony McGill, Gloria Chien
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LT4Gn9cuVT0>

Op. 119, No. 2. Intermezzo in E minor, 1893

- Ira Brauss, on an 1870 Streicher piano

Op. 119, No. 2. Intermezzo in E minor

- Hélène Grimaud

Op. 117, No. 1. Intermezzo in E flat, 1892

- Hélène Grimaud

Op. 118, No. 2. Intermezzo in A major, 1893

For those Smithsonian audience members who live near Frederick, MD, I will be performing Brahms' Piano Concerto no. 1 with the Frederick Symphony on Saturday April 26th.

<https://fredericksymphony.org/event/alpine-vistas/>

Please come and say hello afterwards if you are visiting!