



Hochschule der Künste Bern  
Haute école des arts de Berne  
Bern Academy of the Arts



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY



# Global Piano Roll Meeting

Prelude #6

Online

11 February 2023, 21:00 (CET)

[Check for your own timezone](#)



Program

## Saturday, 11 February 2023

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Zoom-Link after [free registration](#)

21:00 (Bern, CET) [20:00 (London, GMT), 12:00 (San Francisco, PST), 07:00 (Sydney, AEDT)]

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21:00    **Welcome**

21:05    Neal Peres Da Costa (Sydney)

### **De-‘Classicising’ the Canon.**

#### **Renewing Identities and Sound Worlds in Classical Music**

The twentieth-century heralded unprecedented change in ‘classical’ music performance aesthetics as documented in sound recordings. By 1950, many unnotated expressive techniques (belonging to a long-established continuum of practice) had been all but expunged. In this ascendant modern style, the notation came to be considered sacrosanct, arguably for the first time ever. Compositions from Bach to Brahms donned identities and sound worlds that largely reflected their notation, devoid of individual artistic expression, and increasingly homogenous across performances and recordings. This text-literal ‘classicised’ style remains pervasive, even in historically informed performance (HIP), and has stultified performers and audiences alike. But innovative methods including: i) emulation/imitation of nineteenth-century-trained musicians on record; and, ii) cyclical processes in applying historical written evidence, can reignite artistic agency to help unlock the modernist sound of canonic works. This presentation will highlight a novel reading of Mozart’s Piano Concerto K. 488, recently recorded by me with the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra on period instruments. Referencing, among other significant evidence, the ear-opening 1904 piano roll by Carl Reinecke (b. 1824) – lauded as preserver of an ‘old’ Mozart tradition – of his piano solo arrangement of the K. 488 slow movement, we re-enact documented Mozartian practices of note dis-alignment, marked rhythm and tempo variation, and ornamentation. In so doing, we reimagine Mozart as unbridled, blustery, varied, and rhetorical, an alternative to the expected identities for his music of pretty, neat, tidy, and balanced. Such vivification of past musical practices can inspire renewed artistry and expressivity in the staging of classical music.

**Neal Peres Da Costa** is Associate Dean (Research) and Professor of Historical Performance at Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney. His research on early recordings as a basis in re-imagining historical performance styles is well-known.

21:40 Anna Wong (Canberra)/Grace Chan (Sydney)

### **Pianolas and Pianola Rolls. Engaging with Visitors within an Immersive and Interactive Museum Space**

This paper will examine public engagement through activating pianolas in immersive and interactive museum contexts. We will discuss two very different case studies: one where the pianola is an example of mass private domestic music (Calthorpes House museum) and the other where the pianola is a driver of mass public music (Loughborough Bell Foundry Trust museum).

#### **Case Study 1: Calthorpes House (1927), Canberra, Australia**

In this house museum, a multisensory, private domestic environment is re-created to help visitors understand Australian popular culture of the early 20th century. As a case study, we will exam how the pianola roll collection at Calthorpes House in Canberra can play a vital interpretative role. The Calthorpe family built their new house in 1927 – one of the first houses built in the new Federal Capital. Calthorpes House represents the tastes and social history of families who moved to the new Federal Capital. Music was central for the Calthorpe family and the family’s oral histories are woven around the pianola and the songs and music that the family enjoyed.

#### **Case Study 2: Loughborough Bell Foundry Trust Museum (1859), United Kingdom**

This heritage listed museum site sits alongside a functioning bell foundry (John Taylor & Co). Pianolas will be used in the newly refurbished public space to engage visitors in a global carillon culture. During the early 20th century, special carillon pianolas were jointly developed by Aeolian-Skinner and Taylors to automate carillons in the UK, USA and Australia. A large collection of 500 rolls has recently been catalogued and two pianolas at the museum site are in the process of being restored. The goal is to eventually make these precious resources accessible to the public.

We will discuss how these two museum spaces can engage visitors by showcasing their pianolas and activating their currently silent troves of pianola rolls. This necessary activation is a true multidisciplinary task, drawing on the expert technical arenas of restoration, conservation, digitisation and also harnessing ethnomusicological insights to tell the unique musical stories of these places.

**Dr Anna Wong** is Acting Director of Canberra Museum and Gallery ACT/ Director of Historic Places ACT, Australia.

**Grace Chan** is a PhD Candidate at Sydney Conservatorium, The University of Sydney, Australia.

22:15 Peter Phillips (Sydney)/Gregor Benko (Cleveland)

**Ervin Nyiregyhazi. The Man and the Pianist**

This presentation begins with two recordings of the same work made by Ervin Nyiregyhazi (1903–1987), the first made on Ampico piano roll in the 1920s, the second made in the 1970s, under the auspices of Gregor Benko. Peter Phillips will show videos of both performances, with an outline of the esteem in which Nyiregyhazi was held at the time he made the piano roll recordings. Gregor Benko was much involved in the 1970s recordings in which Nyiregyhazi recorded a number of works issued on LP. Reviews varied, in which Harold Schonberg wrote “some critics wonder if Franz Liszt had been reincarnated”. Making these recordings, as Benko will explain, was fraught with many difficulties. A common theme both presenters will make is that Nyiregyhazi remains a conundrum. A comparison of Nyiregyhazi’s roll and disc recording of the work is part of the presentation.

**Peter Phillips** was introduced to piano rolls by Denis Condon in 1976. Peter is an electronics engineer and amateur pianist, and has developed a range of equipment and technologies that bring piano roll recordings into the modern realm. He holds a PhD in musicology.

**Gregor Benko** is an American writer, lecturer, record producer, and collector-historian whose primary focus is classical piano performance documented on recordings from (or having to do with) the Romantic Era

22:50 **End of the Meeting**