



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



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



Global Piano Roll Meeting

Prelude #13

Online

14 November 2026, 21:00 (CET)

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Program

Saturday, 14 November 2026

Zoom-Link after [free registration](#)

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

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21:00 **Welcome**

21:10 Yannis Rammos (Lausanne/Bern)

A Hidden Motive, a Haptic Trace

Pachmann's Welte-Mignon recording of Chopin's Prelude Op. 28, No. 20 in C minor (WM1213) reveals intriguing variations in length, specifically in the terminal punch positions, among the tones of each chord. As the sonorities are pedaled through, these durational differences between voices do not manifest in the damper motions. And yet, on closer analysis, the longer-held keys subtly trace, in Schenkerian terms, an ascending-third middleground motive in the inner and lower voices, which dramatically resists the prelude's descending *Urlinie* and echoes its large-scale registral coupling in a compressed form. It is not inconceivable for a pianist of Pachmann's intricacy to have sensed these hidden structures aurally before responding to them kinaesthetically. More likely, however, it is his fingertips that sensed them first – and maybe last. The differences in key contact time are consistent with, and likely byproducts of, a conventional fingering of the open-hand chord successions, based on the texture's common-tone and stepwise motions. In a characteristically Chopinesque reconciliation of expressive freedom with constraint, the texture's ergonomic and topological features align with the relative parsimony of the voice leading. More strikingly, they also align with multiple layers of the prelude's musical content. The roll thus emerges as an eloquent haptic inscription. Here, the privacy of the tactile experience mirrors the concealed nature of the ascending-third motive as a primarily cognitive and aesthetic presence, rather than an overtly acoustic one

Yannis Rammos is a pianist and specialist in Schenkerian performance practice. He regularly teaches masterclasses in piano and chamber music, most recently, for example, at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, the Verbier Festival Academy, Anton Bruckner Private University, and the Conservatorium van Amsterdam. His research focuses primarily on analytical traditions of linear counterpoint, Russian theories of "intonatsiya", Soviet performance traditions, timbre theory, and poststructuralist critical theory. He is currently a postdoctoral research associate at the EPFL Digital & Cognitive Musicology Lab; previously, among other positions, he was a visiting scholar at the

Institute for Music Theory of the Sibelius Academy. He serves on the editorial board of the journal *Analitica*. He completed his doctoral studies in piano and music theory at New York University and the CUNY Graduate Center (USA); he received further artistic training in Russia with Viktor Abramov.

21:40 Severin Kolb, Lachen

An Oeuvre on the Threshold of the Age of Industrial Mass Production: Joachim Raff's Salon Music for Piano in the Mirror of the Sheet-Music and Piano-Roll Market

The figures evaluated from the sales ledgers of the pioneering publishing house C. F. Peters demonstrate that Joachim Raff's (1822–1882) salon pieces remained absolute bestsellers well into the twentieth century. Benjamin Britten, Vladimir Horowitz, and Edwin Fischer grew up with the salon pieces of the composer born on the Upper Lake Zurich; in his novel *Lust* (1886), Gabriele D'Annunzio explicitly mentions the *Cachoucha Caprice*, Op. 79, as accompanying music for a seduction scene. Countless international editions of Raff's piano works testify to their considerable popularity far beyond the German-speaking world.

It is therefore unsurprising that a number of his pieces were recorded on piano rolls – the catalogues of Welte-Mignon, Hupfeld, Ampico, Ducartist, and the Aeolian Company list such recordings. Alongside pieces that were ubiquitous on the sheet-music market, such as *La Fileuse*, Op. 157 No. 2, the *Cachoucha Caprice*, Op. 79, and the *Cavatine*, Op. 85 No. 3, one also finds works represented more rarely, as well as a complete recording of the highly virtuosic *Piano Suite No. 4*, Op. 91.

The presentation synchronizes findings from music-publishing and piano-roll research and compares them with insights gained from the collecting activities of the Joachim Raff Archive in Lachen. Although reliable data are lacking for numerous publishers, and unauthorized reprints in an era when copyright protection was only limited in scope considerably complicate an assessment of the overall situation, this approach makes it possible to formulate quantitatively substantiated theses concerning public taste and the distinctive characteristics of the various media in relation to Raff's piano music.

In conclusion, a concept is presented for adequately representing the medium of the piano roll in the archive's online portal on the basis of the underlying *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records*.

Severin Kolb studied musicology, religious studies, and hermeneutics at the universities of Zurich, Heidelberg, and Cologne, completing his M.A. in 2016. He gained professional experience through internships at the Max Reger Institute in Karlsruhe and the Bohuslav Martinů Institute in Prague. Since 2016, he has served on the board of the Joachim Raff Society. As co-founder of the Joachim Raff Archive, which opened in 2018, he has served as its academic

director ever since. In June 2023, he completed his doctorate with the dissertation *“The Wagner Question”: Joachim Raff’s Engagement with Richard Wagner in Weimar (1850–1856)*, which received the Marta Walter Prize from the Swiss Musicological Society. He is the editor or co-editor of several urtext editions of Raff’s works for Breitkopf & Härtel, as well as of the series *Raff Studies*, scheduled to begin publication in 2026 by Breitkopf & Härtel. From June 2022 to May 2025, he was a research associate on the long-term DFG project *Digital Liszt Catalogue of Sources and Works* at the Saxon State and University Library Dresden.

22:10 Aaron Chow, Toronto

Toward a 21st-Century Nickelodeon:

Josef Hofmann’s Chopin Concerto Roll and the Virtual Orchestra

The 150th anniversary of Josef Hofmann’s birth in 2026 offers a timely opportunity to re-examine and re-contextualize his 1925 piano roll of Chopin’s Piano Concerto No. 1 through the musical technologies developed a century later. This presentation explores the transfiguration of piano rolls via a modern reproducing piano (e.g., Yamaha *Disklavier*) and virtual orchestration to create the concept of a “21st-century Nickelodeon”, reimagining Hofmann’s 1925 performance within a contemporary context. While this roll was recently featured at the 3rd GPRM in Sydney alongside a live ensemble, this project pairs the roll with a virtual orchestra shaped directly around Hofmann’s playing. Using modern orchestral sample libraries (i.e. Acoustic Samples *VWinds*, Vienna *Symphonic Library Synchron Duality Strings*), contemporary mock-up techniques, and score-alignment software (Johannes Kepler University’s *Parangonar*), the orchestral accompaniment is synchronized and phrased to follow the tempo, rubato, dynamics, and articulation of Hofmann’s performance. Combining a *Disklavier* reproducing Hofmann’s roll with this virtual ensemble re-contextualizes the piano concerto roll within contemporary performance practice.

This act of transfiguration carries two primary implications. First, while reproducing pianos have long supported pre-recorded backing tracks (e.g. Yamaha’s *PianoSoft Audio*), this approach offers a new model for the piano roll community to revitalize and experience surviving concerto rolls (such as those recorded by Percy Grainger and Harold Bauer), as well as provides a precedent to adapt music rolls for the nickelodeon using modern orchestral sampling. Second, it illustrates how music information retrieval (MIR) tools can assist musicians in aligning full orchestral scores to the flexible pacing of a piano roll.

By detailing the musical and technical process behind adapting the virtual orchestra and presenting selected excerpts from the first movement, this presentation reimagines the piano roll a century after its creation, inviting

audiences to experience Hofmann's artistry through a novel electro-acoustic lens.

Aaron Chow is a pianist and Doctor of Musical Arts candidate at the University of Toronto, studying piano under Dr. Jamie Parker and conducting his dissertation research under the supervision of Dr. Kevin Komisaruk. He previously studied with Dr. John O'Connor at the Glenn Gould School and Shenandoah University. His current research bridges historical performance and music technology, focusing on player-pianos, score-following, and the technical revival of the pedal-piano repertoire, with a particular focus on the works of Robert Schumann. He is currently completing his dissertation, titled *Reviving Pedal Piano Performance through Responsive Accompaniment Systems*. An active and accomplished performer, Aaron has appeared as a soloist and chamber musician with the Koffler Chamber Orchestra, the Shenandoah University Symphony Orchestra, and the Tokai Quartet. He has earned national and international recognition for his playing, including reaching the semifinals of both the Maria Canals International Piano Competition in Barcelona and the International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition in Leipzig. Additionally, he was awarded second prize at the Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota Competition, and was a finalist in the Canadian Chopin Competition.

22:40 **News and updates from the roll community**

23:00 **End of the Meeting**