

The John Field Tradition

Piano Traditions Through Their Genealogy Trees

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Biographies

Abos, Girolamo

Maltese

Valetta, November 16, 1715 — Naples, October 1760

Of French descent, he studied at the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù in Naples under Greco, Durante and Ferrara. Subsequently, he taught there and at the San Onofrio Capuana Conservatory, and became secondo maestro at the Pietà dei Turchini Conservatory in 1754. He mainly composed operas buffas and serias.

Balakirev, Mily

Russian

Nizhniy Novgorod, January 2, 1837 — Saint Petersburg, May 29, 1910

Balakirev was a pianist, composer, conductor and teacher. He was a prominent figure in the second half of the 19th century in Russia, particularly influencing the group known as the Mighty Five, or the Balakirev's circle, formed by Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky and Cui. In 1867, Balakirev was appointed conductor of the Russian Musical Society concerts in Saint Petersburg. In the early 1870s, Balakirev began to suffer a personal crisis which led to a decline in his musical activities. In order to find solace, he became a strict follower of the Orthodox church. Subsequently, he worked as a clerk for a railway company. As a composer, he was greatly influenced by Chopin, Liszt and by Russian folk. Examples of his oeuvre are the piano concertos in F sharp minor and in E flat, and a series of nocturnes, waltzes, mazurkas, scherzos, sonatas and a *Berceuse*. Balakirev's most famous piano composition is *Islamey*, dedicated to Nikolay Rubinstein, who also premiered it.

Baroni, Antonio

Italian

Rome, 1738 — Rome, December 21, 1792

A relative of Clementi, whom he also taught, he studied in Bologna under Martini and in Naples under Abos and Fago. He produced operas in Venice, Prague, Stuttgart and Rome. Baroni was appointed Kapellmeister in Stuttgart in 1771 and maestro di capella at Saint Peter in Rome in 1777.

Berger, Ludwig

German

Berlin, April 18, 1777 — Berlin, February 16, 1839

Composer, pianist and teacher, he accompanied Muzio Clementi in his travels to Russia, and remained in Saint Petersburg for 8 years. In 1812, he fled to London

and, three years after, he moved back to Berlin. In 1817, he suffered a nervous dysfunction in his arm and was forced to abandon the concert stage. He was a late representative of the Berlin Song School. He wrote a *Piano Concerto*, 7 sonatas, etudes, variations and a number of pedagogic piano works. He directly influenced his pupil Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne worte*.

[See the [Ludwig Berger](#) Tradition]

Bernard, Matvey Ivanovich

Russian

Mitau, now Jelgava, Latvia, 1794 — Saint Petersburg, May 9, 1871

Matvey Bernard was a pianist, composer and publisher. He lived in Vilnius and Moscow, where he studied with John Field. In 1822, he moved to Saint Petersburg where he became a well-known teacher. He published a number of pedagogical volumes including *Le pianiste du jour*. His publishing company was bought by Jurgensen in 1885.

Brzezińska-Szymanowska, Filipina

Polish

Warsaw, January 1, 1800 — Warsaw, November 11, 1886

Filipina Brzezińska-Szymanowska was a composer and amateur pianist. Maria Szymanowska, her sister-in-law, influenced her playing. Brzezińska-Szymanowska composed salon piano pieces such as mazurkas, waltzes and nocturnes, as well as programmatic music.

Clementi, Muzio

Italo-English

Rome, January 23, 1752 — Evesham, Worcester, March 10, 1832

Popularly known as the “father of the pianoforte”, his influence on subsequent generations of pianists, piano composers, publishing and manufacturing firms is undisputed. Clementi counted among his students such distinguished pianists as Ludwig Berger, Carl Czerny, John Field and Frédéric Kalkbrenner. His pedagogical works *Introduction to the Art of Playing the Pianoforte* (1801) and *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1817, 1819, 1826) became of frequent use for pianists all over the world. In his teens, Clementi's talent drew the attention of an Englishman named Peter Beckford, who in his own words “bought Clementi of his father for seven years”. Clementi spent all that time near Dorset, England, immersed in studying music and practicing the harpsichord. After this period, he moved to London where he became a celebrity as composer, teacher, performer, manufacturer and publisher, and signed a contract with Beethoven to publish a few major works. He is buried at the cloisters of Westminster Abbey in London.

[See the [Muzio Clementi](#) Tradition]

Dubuque, Alexander

Russian

Moscow, March 3, 1812 — Moscow, January 8, 1898

Alexander Dubuque was a pianist, composer and teacher. He probably was of French descent. Dubuque was one of the most influential teachers in Russia, carrying John Field's piano tradition into the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly through his student Nikolay Zverev. He taught at the Moscow Conservatory between 1866 and 1872. Dubuque published a book on piano technique and *Reminiscences of Field*. He composed a handful of piano pieces such as *Album pour les enfants*, *3 études dans le style fugue opp. 95-97* and *Le rossignol d'Alabieff*.

[See the [Alexander Dubuque Tradition](#)]

Fago, Lorenzo

Italian

Naples, August 13, 1704 — Naples, April 30, 1793

Lorenzo Fago was a teacher and composer. He was born into a family of Italian musicians, active in Naples. He was secondo maestro and primo maestro at the Conservatorio della Pietà dei Turchini in Naples. His compositions are mostly for the church and cantatas.

Field, John

Irish

Dublin, July 26?, 1782, bap. 5 September — Moscow, January 23, 1837

John Field was a pianist and composer. His pianism had a tremendous influence on many pianists, and particularly had an impact on the development of the Russian school of piano playing. He was the son of a professional violinist and received his first music lessons from his grandfather, also named John Field, who was a professional organist. In 1793, his family moved to London where Field became Clementi's student. Subsequently, Field also collaborated with the Italian composer by performing on Clementi's manufactured pianos and showcasing the qualities of the instruments. Furthermore, in 1802 Field accompanied Clementi to Russia, where he was to remain for most of his life. He met Hummel and performed the duet *Sonata op. 92* with him. His lifestyle of alcohol consumption and smoking likely deteriorated his health. He contracted rectal cancer. His piano compositions exerted an important influence on the Romantic piano style. His piano output is extensive and includes 7 piano concertos, 16 nocturnes, 4 fantasies, rondos, romances, *Variations fa la la* and *Chanson russe varié*. In 1961, Cecil Hopkinson [H] introduced a catalogue of the works of John Field.

[See the [John Field Tradition](#)]

Gerke, Anton Avgustovich

Russian

Pulin, Zhitomir, now Ukraine, July 28, 1812 — Krelye, Novgorod, July 24, 1870

Anton Gerke was a pianist, teacher and composer. He was the son of the Polish violinist Avgust Herke. Gerke was acquainted with Liszt, Thalberg and Clara Schumann. He settled in Saint Petersburg in 1831 and became court pianist. He helped to create the Russian Music Society and taught at the St. Petersburg Conservatory between 1862 and 1870.

Glinka Mikhail

Russian

Novospasskoye, near Yelnya, Smolensk district, June 1, 1804 — Berlin, February 15, 1857

Mikhail Glinka was a composer. He is regarded the father of Russian music and a forerunner to the next generations of composers including Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin and Tchaikovsky. Glinka's most famous operas, *A Life for the Tsar* and *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, became milestones in music history. Glinka was born into a noble family and had a broad education as a child. From 1824 to 1828, he worked in the Board of Communications as a civil servant. Subsequently, he travelled to Italy where he stayed for three years in order to cure his health ailments. There, he met Donizetti, Bellini and Mendelssohn. He also lived for various periods of time in Berlin, Warsaw, Paris, where he met Berlioz, Auber and Hugo, and in Spain, a country which made a profound impact on him and his music. Glinka composed a number of piano pieces including sets of variations based on themes by Cherubini and Donizetti, *Cotillon*, *Nouvelles quadrilles françaises*, *Nouvelle Contredanses*, *Capriccio on Russian themes* and several mazurkas.

Kontski, Antoni de

Polish

Kraków, October 27, 1817 — Ivanichy, Novgorod, December 7, 1899

Antoni de Kontski was a pianist and composer. He studied with John Field in Moscow and also with Thalberg in Paris. He also lived in London and America and, in 1897, started a world tour through Australia, New Zealand, East Asia, Siberia and Europe, during which period he died. He composed piano concertos and over 400 salon pieces as well as the pedagogical work *L'indispensable du pianiste*.

Laskovsky, Ivan Fyodorovich

Russian

Saint Petersburg, 1799 — Saint Petersburg, 1855

Ivan Laskovsky was a Russian composer of Polish descent from his father's side. He studied piano with John Field. Balakirev admired his compositions, which include mazurkas, waltzes, nocturnes and variations. Laskovsky's works had a significant influence on subsequent generations of Russian composers.

Martini, Padre Giovanni Battista

Italian

Bologna, April 24, 1706 — Bologna, August 3, 1784

Padre Martini was one of the most influential and renowned musicians of the 18th century. Ordained a priest in 1729, he taught counterpoint to numerous pupils who became famous composers, including J.C. Bach, Mozart, Grétry and Jommelli. According to historian Charles Burney, Martini gathered a colossal library of approximately 17,000 volumes. He maintained correspondence with such prominent figures as Agricola, Locatelli, Marpurg, Metastasio, Quantz and Rameau. Martini composed a number of sonatas and concertos for the keyboard, among other works.

Mayer, Charles

German

Königsberg, now Kaliningrad, March 21, 1799 — Dresden, July 2, 1862

Charles Mayer was a pianist and composer. His father, a clarinet player, moved with his family to Saint Petersburg when Mayer was still an infant. He concertized extensively in Poland, Germany, France, Holland, Austria, Scandinavia and Russia. When Adolph von Henselt's fame skyrocketed in Russia, Mayer moved to Dresden where he remained until he died. He was a renowned teacher and, purportedly, he had over 800 students. As a composer, he produced such works as the *6 Études op. 55*, *Souvenir de Naples op. 128*, *La Dernière rose op. 169* or the *Novelletten opp. 179* and *183*. His opus numbers are about 350. Karl Klindworth falsely included Mayer's *F# minor mazurka* in his edition of Chopin's works.

Mussorgsky, Modest

Russian

Karevo, Pskov district, March 21, 1839 — Saint Petersburg, March 28, 1881

Modest Mussorgsky was a composer. He was born into a wealthy family who owned a property in the countryside, south of Saint Petersburg. Mussorgsky could improvise at the piano before he had any formal music lessons. He studied composition with Balakirev and became part of his circle known as the *Mighty Handful*, alongside with Borodin, Cui and Rimsky-Korsakov. In January 1869, Mussorgsky was appointed assistant chief of the Forestry Department of the Ministry of State Property, a position that consumed a substantial amount of his time and kept him away from composing. He maintained this job until 1878. Mussorgsky produced a handful of piano compositions such as two scherzos, *Impromptu passionné*, *Intermezzo in modo classico*, *From Memories of Childhood* and *Au village*, among others. His most outstanding and original composition was *Pictures at an Exhibition*, which was orchestrated by Ravel and Ashkenazy, among many others. Mussorgsky suffered from alcoholism during several periods of his life. His last years were spent in loneliness and poverty, leaving some of his potentially most noteworthy compositions unfinished.

Neate, Charles

English

London, March 28, 1784 — Brighton, March 30, 1877

Charles Neate was a pianist and cellist. He studied the piano with John Field, with whom he became a close friend. In Vienna, in 1815, he met Beethoven, with whom he also developed a close relationship and worked as his agent in London. Among other works, he composed piano sonatas and published *An essay on fingering* in 1855.

Passy, Ludvig Anton Edmund

Swedish

Stockholm, September 3, 1789 — Drottningholm, August 16, 1870

Ludvig Anton Edmund Passy was a pianist and composer of French descent. He studied with Luigi Piccini and later with John Field in Saint Petersburg. He worked for the Swedish court and became a famous pianist during his time. His piano works include the *Fantasy and Variations* on Swedish national melodies and the *Fantasy* on motifs from Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable*.

Rimskaya-Korsakova [née Purgol'd], Nadezhda

Russian

Saint Petersburg, October 31, 1848 — Petrograd, May 24, 1919

Nadezhda Rimskaya-Korsakova was a pianist, composer and writer. She married composer Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov. She was part of Balakirev's circle. Dargomizhsky taught her orchestral reduction. She spent the last few years of her life publishing her husband's posthumous literary and musical works. She composed some works including piano music.

Rubinstein, Anton

Russian

Vikhvatintsi, Ukraine, November 16 or 28, 1829 — Peterhof, now Petrodvoret, November 8 or 20, 1894

Pianist, conductor, composer and teacher, he was a colossus of the piano and regarded an equal to Liszt. He had a tremendous impact on Russian's musical life and education that lasts until today, establishing the pedagogical and interpretative principles of what came to be known as the Russian School of pianism. His early piano instruction came from his mother and, subsequently, Alexander Villoing taught the child prodigy and took him on an extended concert tour all over Europe, meeting Chopin, Liszt, Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer. In 1848, the Gran Duchess Yelena Pavlina took interest in the young pianist, offering him lodging quarters in one of her palaces, having him perform for the tsar's family and, years after, envisioning and planning together a revolution in the musical education in Russia. As a result, they founded the Russian Musical Society in 1859 and the Saint Petersburg Conservatory in 1862. He embarked on several extended concert tours including one in the USA with Wieniawski in which they played over 215 recitals in a period of about 8 months. His repertoire was humongous, as the seven historical recitals he gave in Europe and Russia between 1885 and 1886,

encompassing all the history of the piano literature. His piano output is extensive, including five piano concertos, four piano sonatas, *Tarantella*, *Six Preludes*, *Suite* and the famous *Melody in F op. 3 no. 1*.

[See the [Anton Rubinstein](#) Tradition]

Rubinstein, Nikolay

Russian

Moscow, June 2 or 14, 1835 — Paris, March 11 or 23, 1881

Pianist, conductor and teacher, he was the brother of Anton Rubinstein. He opened the Moscow branch of the Russian Musical Society in 1859, which later became the Moscow Conservatory, with Tchaikovsky among its teachers. He toured Russia as a child with Alexander Villoing and also studied medicine at Moscow University in order to avoid enlisting in the army. He was a superb pianist and teacher although, as did his brother, used to yell at his students. He died of consumption in a hotel in Paris. Tchaikovsky dedicated to him his *Piano Trio in A minor*.

[See the [Nikolay Rubinstein](#) Tradition]

Szymanowska [née Wołowska], Maria Agata

Polish

Warsaw, December 14, 1789 — Saint Petersburg, July 25, 1831

Maria Szymanowska was a pianist and composer. She greatly influenced Frédéric Chopin. She toured in Europe with great success performing her works as well as compositions of Hummel, Field, Klengel, Dussek, Ries and Herz, and appeared frequently with such renowned musicians as Pierre Baillot and Giuditta Pasta. She met Goethe, Hummel, Cherubini and Rossini. Szymanowska received the title of First Pianist in Saint Petersburg, and often performed in private concerts for the royalty. Her compositions include miniatures, mazurkas, marches, minuets, waltzes and exercises such as the *20 exercises et preludes*, *24 mazurkas*, *Nocturne in B flat* and *Danse polonaise*. According to the Grove Music Online, Szymanowska “was the first Polish composer to explore the setting of ballads”.

Tautmann, Elisabeth

She studied with Ludwig Berger and John Field. Her husband was the German writer and music critic Franz Brendel.

Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilych

Russian

Kamsko-Votkinsk, Vyatka province, May 7, 1840 — Saint Petersburg, Nov 6, 1893

Tchaikovsky was a composer, conductor and teacher. He was the son of a mining engineer. By the age of six, he was able to read in French and German. From 1852 to 1859, Tchaikovsky studied at the School of Jurisprudence. Upon graduation,

he worked for the Ministry of Justice. From 1862 to 1865, he attended the newly established Saint Petersburg Conservatory, studying with Anton Rubinstein. Tchaikovsky taught at the Moscow Conservatory between 1866 and 1878. In July 1877, Tchaikovsky married Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova. They separated two months after, but never divorced. During the next six years, he travelled extensively and spent long periods of time abroad. In 1888, Alexander III awarded Tchaikovsky a lifetime pension. He conducted the first performance of the *Sixth Symphony* on October 28, 1893, and died a few days after, on November 6. Besides much speculation, the cause of death has never been clarified. Tchaikovsky composed three piano concertos, a *Concert Fantasia* for piano and orchestra, and a number of solo piano works including two sonatas, *Scherzo á la russe*, three *Chant sans paroles*, *Vals caprice*, *Les saisons*, *Dumka*, *Album for the young*, *Douze morceaux*, and many more pieces such as nocturnes, impromptus, collections of morceaux, waltzes, caprices and mazurkas. Tchaikovsky's brother Modest wrote *The Life of Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky*, a crucial biography of the composer's life.

Thalberg, Sigismond

German or Austrian

Pâquis, near Geneva, January 8, 1812 — Posillipo, near Naples, April 27, 1871

Sigismond Thalberg was a pianist and composer. He was, next to Franz Liszt, the greatest virtuoso of the mid-nineteenth century in Europe. He played almost exclusively his own compositions, which were mainly fantasias based on opera themes by Rossini, Meyerbeer, Donizetti and Verdi. Although he initially went to Vienna to study for diplomatic service, he became a touring and successful pianist, travelling all over Europe, Brazil, Havana and the United States, where he lived and taught for a few years. His "three-hand effect" technique became very popular. His didactic work *L'art du chant appliqué au piano* reveals Thalberg's ability to combine the brilliance of the execution with his preoccupation with imbuing the bel canto into his playing. He married the daughter of Luigi Lablache, an opera singer. He spent the last few years of his life in a villa in Italy as a viticulturist.

[See the [Sigismond Thalberg Tradition](#)]

Villoing Alexander

Russian

Saint Petersburg, March 12, 1808 — Saint Petersburg, September 2, 1878

Alexander Villoing was the son of a French émigré. He became a professor at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. His most famous student was Anton Rubinstein, with whom he toured throughout Europe. In 1863, he published the *Klavierschule*, a method used at the Conservatory and translated into German and French. His only published work is the *Piano Concerto in C major*.

[See the [Alexander Villoing Tradition](#)]

Zaremba, Nikolay

Belarusian

Vitsebsk province, June 15, 1821 — Saint Petersburg, September 8, 1879

Nikolay Zaremba was a teacher and composer. He taught at the Saint Petersburg School of the Russian Musical Society and at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, where he succeeded Anton Rubinstein as director in 1867. He worked towards improving the music curriculum and the level of teaching at the conservatory. Zaremba was a pioneer in the use of the Russian language instead of German in music theory classes. Tchaikovsky was among his students. Zaremba wrote some piano pieces.

Zverev, Nikolai

Russian

Volokolamsk, March 25, 1833 — Moscow, October 12, 1893

Nikolai Zverev was one of the most influential teachers in pre-Soviet Russia. He came from an aristocratic family and studied mathematics and physics at the Moscow State University. After inheriting a large sum of money, he abandoned his studies and moved to Saint Petersburg to become a civil servant. Subsequently, he returned to Moscow to teach at the Conservatory upon Nikolay Rubinstein's invitation. Zverev taught many illustrious pianists including Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Siloti. He never married.

[See the [Nikolai Zverev Tradition](#)]

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