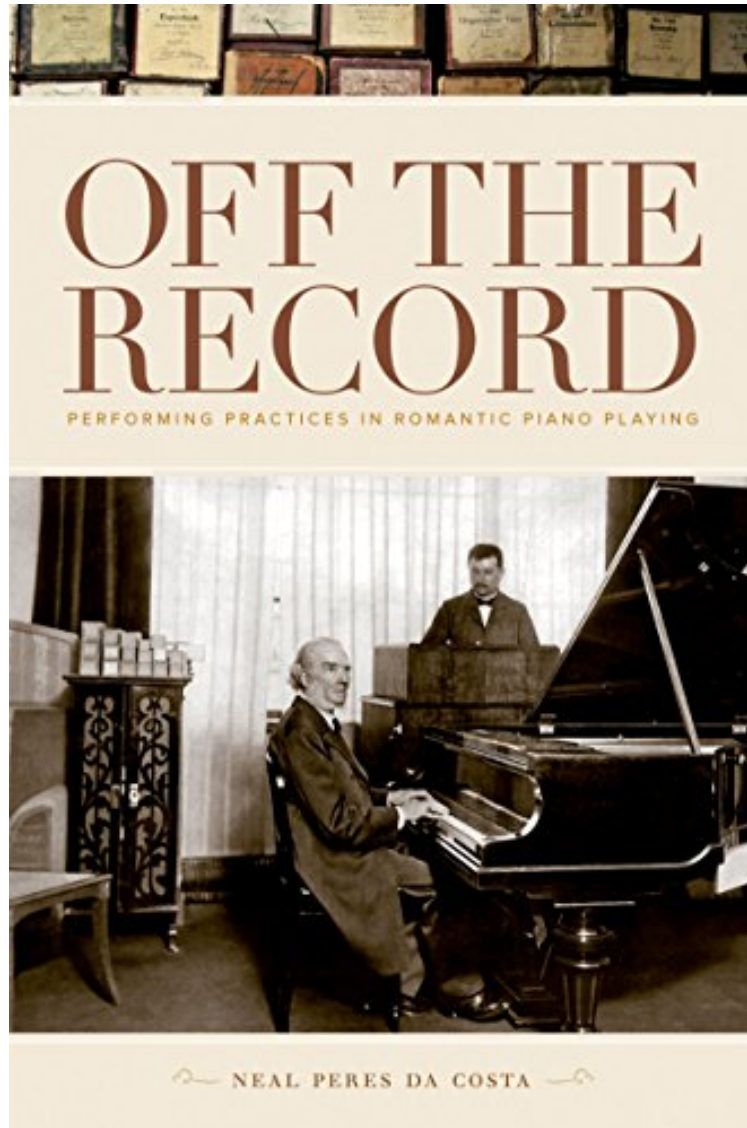


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# Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing

*Neal Peres da Costa*

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**Neal Peres da Costa : Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By D.Sayer Very useful information whether for casual reading or study. 5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Best book about romantic piano playing By Eleced This well researched book is very timely. Today's pianists have moved so far away from the romantic style of playing, that music by Chopin, Liszt and the like now sounds the same. No variations from the score are allowed. And yet, as the author points out, who's to say the score is correct. And why must today's pianists be so exacting? This

refreshing book suggests it's time to re-examine the performance practices of the 19th Century. It is ok to arpeggiate, to introduce rubato, to play the theme note ahead or behind the accompaniment. This pleases me immensely, as my main source of piano music is through piano roll recordings, where the pianists are all born in the 19th century. To have a professional musician and academic such as Perez Da Costa championing a return to some of the romantic piano playing practices is therefore exciting. When professional pianists and piano teachers read this book, perhaps at last there might be a push away from the cold, unemotional playing that is now the norm. Thank you Neal for such a wonderful book. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. "Off the Record" - The Classical Piano Book of the Century! By Habanero Baker If there ever was a book that anyone who has studied and/or played classical piano should have, this is it. Under the tutelage of the historical practice expert, Clive Brown, Dr. Neal Peres Da Costa has brought forth the very first comprehensive analysis of how the piano was played at the time the actual compositions were written. His painstaking narrative shows among other things that the music was originally played in mostly a rolled chord fashion, and not today's block chord style. Further, in order to enhance the melodic line, the soprano note was often played slightly after the corresponding bass note. His final two chapters on historical rhythmic practice show how the emphasis of performers at this time was on musicality, as opposed to the modern practice of metronomic perfection. All of these elements are illustrated in extensive recorded examples in the accompanying website to the book. Here, Dr. Peres Da Costa has assembled a list of pieces, originally recorded in the early 20th century, which have been re-recorded with beautiful clarity. Each piece is cross-referenced page by page in his book. "Off the Record" is a true historical document, which I am sure will very shortly become required reading for all who will study the piano for centuries to come.

Off the Record is a revealing exploration of piano performing practices of the high Romantic era. Author and well-known keyboard player Neal Peres Da Costa bases his investigation on a range of early sound recordings (acoustic, piano roll and electric) that capture a generation of highly-esteemed pianists trained as far back as the mid-nineteenth-century. Placing general practices of late nineteenth-century piano performance alongside evidence of the stylistic idiosyncrasies of legendary pianists such as Carl Reinecke (1824-1910), Theodor Leschetizky (1830-1915), Camille Saint-Saëns (1838-1921) and Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), he examines prevalent techniques of the time--dislocation, unnotated arpeggiation, rhythmic alteration, tempo fluctuation--and unfolds the background and lineage of significant performer/pedagogues. Throughout, Peres Da Costa demonstrates that these early recordings do not simply capture the idiosyncrasies of aging musicians as has been commonly asserted, but in fact represent a range of established expressive practices of a lost age. An extensive collection of these fascinating and sometimes rare professional recordings of the Romantic age masters are available on a companion web site, and in addition, Peres Da Costa, himself a renowned period keyboardist, illustrates points made throughout the book with his own playing. Of essential value to student and professional pianists, historical musicologists of 19th and early 20th century performance practice, and also to the general music aficionado audience, Off the Record is an indispensable resource for scholarly research, performance inspiration, and listening enjoyment.

"Engaging and thought provoking...An outstanding contribution to the discussion of how Romantic piano music might be performed...No serious teacher, performer (or critic) of the Romantic piano literature should be without this book. In questioning old assumptions and presenting a wealth of historical information, it will make you play and listen with new ears." --Limelight Magazine (Australia)"The section on unnotated arpeggiation (with its oral tradition extending back to Bach) is particularly fascinating; pianists performing Beethoven, Chopin, and Brahms may find this discussion liberating. Via audio examples on the companion website the author reveals how his research has affected his own keyboard playing...Recommended." --Choice"A very welcome and important addition to our understanding of how pianists of an earlier generation performed nineteenth century romantic piano repertoire." --ARSC Journal"[Peres da Costa] has read everything, listened to everything and marshalled it into a well-written and logically organised narrative. His range of references is highly impressive. He has provided pianophiles with some thought-provoking questions." --Gramophone"An extremely welcome addition to the bookshelves of every performing musician, teacher, musicologist and music professional...It will bring fresh inspiration and a whole new expressive palette to the interpreters of nineteenth-century works." --The Pianola Journal"Excellent." --Alex Ross, TheRestIsNoise.com"Da Costa's book is ground-breaking: 'authenticity' is only reached by taking the score with a grain of salt and diving into the spontaneous creativity of the pre-war style." --NRC Handelsblad"...engagingly accessible questioning of modern historicist practices... will undoubtedly inspire legions of pianists looking to rethink their approaches to nineteenth-century repertoires." --Context"...offers thorough and detailed research on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century piano performance practice." --19th-Century Music About the Author Neal Peres da Costa is Associate Professor and Chair of Early Music Unit, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney; he is a renowned performer of Early Music and 17th-19th century historical keyboard instruments.