

An Exploration of Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing

The Romantic period in music (c. 1820-1900) was a time of great innovation and change in musical style and performance practices. Pianists in this era sought to create expressive and emotionally charged performances that showcased their technical virtuosity and musical sensitivity.

Rubato

One of the most characteristic performance practices in Romantic piano playing is rubato. Rubato is a controlled and expressive deviation from the strict tempo of a piece. Performers will slightly slow down or speed up the tempo at certain points to emphasize important melodic lines or to create a sense of tension and release.



Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing by Alyce Benevides

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Pedaling

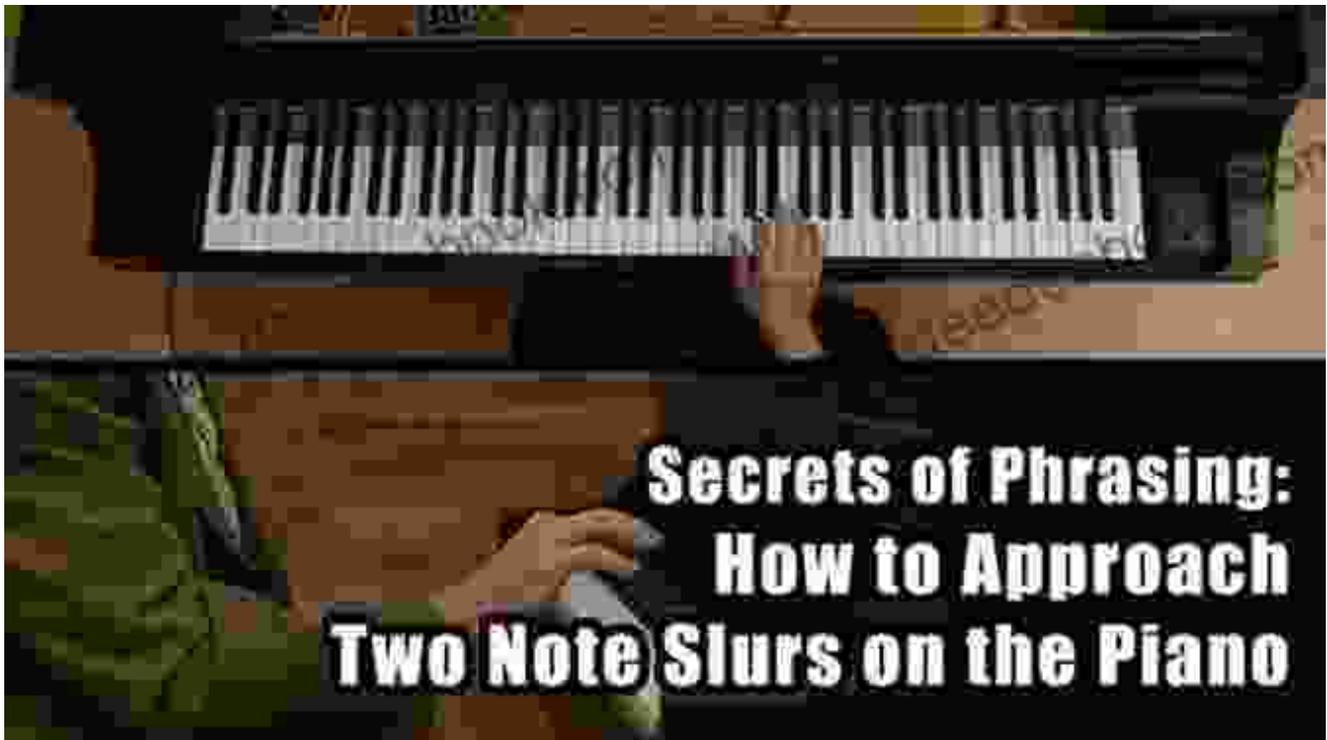
Pedaling is another essential element of Romantic piano performance. Pianists use the pedals to sustain notes, create a sense of atmosphere, and add depth and resonance to the sound. The damper pedal is the most commonly used pedal, and it allows the pianist to sustain notes even after the keys have been released. The sostenuto pedal sustains only the notes that are depressed when the pedal is pressed, and the una corda pedal shifts the action of the keyboard so that the hammers strike only one or two strings instead of three.



Pedaling in piano playing

Phrasing

Phrasing is the way in which a pianist groups notes into musical units. Romantic pianists often used long, sweeping phrases that flowed seamlessly from one to the next. They also used a variety of articulation techniques, such as legato, staccato, and portato, to create a sense of shape and contour in their phrasing.



Ornaments

Ornaments are embellishments that pianists add to a piece of music to make it more expressive or technically challenging. Common ornaments in Romantic piano music include trills, turns, grace notes, and arpeggios. Pianists often improvised their own ornaments, and these embellishments could vary significantly from performer to performer.



Ornaments in piano playing

Musical Style

The overall musical style of Romantic piano playing is characterized by its expressiveness, emotional intensity, and technical virtuosity. Romantic pianists aimed to create performances that were both musically and

technically stunning. They often used a wide range of dynamics, from soft and delicate to loud and thunderous, to create a sense of drama and excitement. They also paid close attention to the details of the music, such as the articulation of notes, the use of pedaling, and the phrasing of melodies.



Interpretation

Interpretation is the process of bringing a piece of music to life through performance. There is no one "correct" interpretation of a piece of music, and each pianist will bring their own unique perspective to the work.

Romantic pianists were particularly concerned with the emotional content of

the music, and they often sought to find ways to express the composer's intentions through their performances.



Interpretation in piano playing

The performance practices of Romantic piano playing are a fascinating and complex subject. The techniques and approaches used by pianists in this era were designed to create expressive and emotionally charged performances that showcased their technical virtuosity and musical sensitivity. By understanding these performance practices, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the music of the Romantic period and the pianists who brought it to life.

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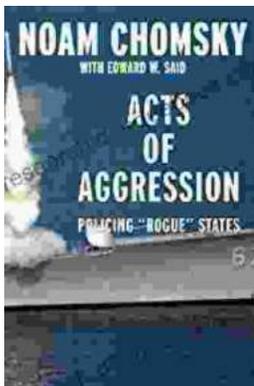
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