

***Le Pianiste* (1833-1835)**

Le Pianiste, a music journal for a specific public, was published from 10 November 1833 until 20 October 1835 by Librairie J. Delacour in Meudon and Vaugirard.¹ During its first year of publication (10 November 1833-10 October 1834), the journal's title page reads: "*Le Pianiste, journal spécial, analytique et instructif* published on the 10th of each month and offering with each issue the portrait of a famous pianist."² During its second year of publication, the journal's periodicity changed: from a monthly publication appearing on the 10th of each month, it became, starting on 5 November 1834, a bi-monthly, appearing on the 5th and the 20th of each month. At this time, the title also changed: "*Le Pianiste, journal spécial pour le piano, les théâtres lyriques et les concerts* with twelve portraits of the most famous pianists of various schools." Issue number 24 (20 October 1835) announced a temporary suspension of publication, and plans to resume in January 1836. This, however, did not happen.

The pages of *Le Pianiste* are printed in a two-column format. The entire journal is 388 pages long, its dimensions are 9" x 12.1"; and each issue is roughly 16 pages. Although its publication was short-lived, "*Le Pianiste* remains of great documentary interest."³ Fétis, in fact, notes that "its articles are remarkable because of the ingenuity of their observations."⁴

No director or editor is officially mentioned, however, Charles Chaulieu⁵ is the only contributor who signed articles and he is generally considered the editor of the journal: "[Chaulieu] contributed for two years as the editor of the journal."⁶ Chaulieu studied at the Paris Conservatory with Louis Adam⁷ and Catel,⁸ and in 1835, obtained first prizes in

¹ At the time cities outside Paris.

² Clementi, Hummel, Kalkbrenner, Cramer, Bertini jeune, Steibelt, Henri Herz, Adam, Pixis, Dussek, Bach, Handel, Beethoven, Boieldieu, Moscheles, Weber, Mozart, Hérold, Field, Haydn, Liszt, Czerny, Chopin and Chaulieu—cited in their respective order of appearance.

³ Joël-Marie Fauquet (ed.), *Dictionnaire de la musique en France au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 2003): 261.

⁴ *Biographie universelle des musiciens et Bibliographie générale de la musique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: La Bibliothèque des introuvables, 2001): 764.

⁵ Charles-Martin Charles, known as Charles Chaulieu (1788-1849).

⁶ In Fauquet, op. cit.: 261.

⁷ Louis Adam (1758-1848) wrote a *Méthode, ou Principe général du doigté pour le forté-piano* and a *Méthode du piano du Conservatoire*. He is generally considered as the founder of the French piano school.

⁸ Charles Simon Catel (1773-1830). In collaboration with Méhul, Langlé and Gossec, Catel wrote *Principes élémentaires de la musique et des solfèges du Conservatoire*.

⁹ Without publishing them.

harmony and piano. Thereafter, he devoted himself essentially to pedagogy. In 1833, the journal acquired his *Cours analytique de théorie musicale. Ouvrage spécialement destiné aux personnes qui touchent le piano*, and published its nine chapters. *Le Pianiste* also referred to his other pedagogical works:⁹ *Le Journal des jeunes pianistes* (1833),¹⁰ *L'École primaire du piano* (1834) the first level of which includes *L'Ante-Méthode*, or *Alphabet du jeune pianiste* and the *Cathéchisme musical*, and the second level, *L'Indispensable* and a *Cours analytique de principes et d'harmonies avec atlas*.¹¹ Chaulieu's compositions for the piano, including sonatas and transcriptions of operatic arias, were published by H. Lemoine in Paris.

During its first year of publication, *Le Pianiste* deals exclusively with issues relating to the piano. Each issue begins with the portrait of a pianist.¹² Thereafter follow in a flexible order, "Notices" or biographical notes, "Analyses," "Chroniques," "Annonces motivées," a substantial excerpt of the *Cours analytique de théorie musicale* and "Annonces simples."

The "Notices," appearing at the beginning of the issue, did not necessarily deal with the person featured in the portrait. Certainly following the trend of publishing biographical articles which flourished from the beginning of the century, *Le Pianiste* offers several biographical notices on, for example, the Couperin dynasty,¹³ the Bach family,¹⁴ the three Scarlattis¹⁵ and Mozart.¹⁶

Thereafter frequently appear, "Analyses," consisting of in-depth studies of piano compositions, among which are Chopin's *Études*¹⁷ and J.-N. Hummel's *Grandes Études*.¹⁸ The qualities of Chopin's *Études* are commented on as follows:

The first *Étude* greatly facilitates the extension of the right hand ... The 9th does the same for the left hand. The 4th, light, fast and brilliant is an excellent exercise for both hands.¹⁹

Being pedagogical in nature, the journal's "Analyses" section on occasion contains

¹⁰ A monthly publication, the *Journal des jeunes pianistes*, edited and written by H. Lemoine, Ch. Chaulieu and other authors, was published by H. Lemoine in Paris.

¹¹ In the "Annonces simples," II, no. 14 (20 May 1835): 114.

¹² See *supra*, note 2.

¹³ *Le Pianiste* II, no. 9 (5 March 1835): 69-70.

¹⁴ *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 7 (May 1834): 106.

¹⁵ *Le Pianiste* II, no. 18 (20 July 1835): 139-40.

¹⁶ *Le Pianiste* II, no. 19 (5 August 1835): 147-50; no. 20 (20 August 1835): 155-58; and no. 21 (5 September 1835): 163-64.

¹⁷ *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 1 (November 1833): 5-8.

¹⁸ *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 3 (January 1834): 37-38.

¹⁹ *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 1 (November 1833): 6.

reviews of methods. Among these are one by F. Hunten²⁰ and Brovellio's *Leçons pratiques de musique appliquée à l'enseignement du piano*.²¹

Concert reviews are featured under the title "Chronique." During the first year of publication, they are limited to either piano concerts—the Colbert *matinées* directed by the Tilmant brothers, concerts in the salons of piano makers like Pape and Petzold, or a joint concert by the keyboard giants F. Liszt and F. Hiller—or else miscellaneous news. For example, the 1835 Conservatory competition, the program of the piano competition, the lists of jury members, of the candidates and of the first prizes winners are commented on in great detail.²² Moreover, on this occasion, the journal does not hesitate to be highly critical of the jury's decision:

The jury showed on this occasion great recklessness that is without precedence and quite unforgivable: we can only rebuke such prodigality for it harms those who really deserved the Prize, while diminishing the moral and institutional authority of the Music Conservatory.²³

In the "Chronique" section, there are also letters of pianists, of editors or of subscribers. Thus, in a letter dated 26 February 1834, the editor Aristide Farrenc mentions an error to the editorial board and rectifies it:

You express the regret that Mr. Pixis never published piano quintets ... I can see Sir, that you are not aware of ... the great quintet, Op. 99 for piano, violin, viola, cello and double-bass I published six or seven years ago.²⁴

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At the end of the journal's first year of publication, the editorial board explained the changes the journal will undergo: it will be published on the 5th and the 20th of each month. The pages with two columns will be printed "with small fonts in order to provide as much text as the two pages did before."²⁵ In addition to the changes in the format and periodicity, the journal contents also changed. The second year of publication reveals the journal's ambition to confine itself no longer to the pianistic world, but rather to cover the musical world at large. Three new sections are introduced: "Archives musicales," "Anecdotes," and "Concert Reviews."

After the portrait a new section, "Archives musicales," appears:

²⁰ *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 2 (December 1833): 20-22.

²¹ *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 3 (January 1834): 34-35.

²² "Concours du Conservatoire de musique," *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 10 (August 1834): 161-70.

²³ *Ibid.*, 166.

²⁴ *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 5 (March 1834): 74.

²⁵ Excerpt from the "Prospectus," *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 12 (October 1834): 177-78.

This section, for which *Le Pianiste* owns unpublished documents belonging only to its archives, will offer a series of articles of the greatest interest on ancient music of all times.²⁶

The journal allows its readers to profit from its important archives by publishing them in this section. Here, the articles appear in the form of letters, addressed to a lady and signed Z., which deal with music history in Egypt,²⁷ and with “the current state of music in Germany and Italy.”²⁸

Another new section, “Anecdotes,” appears quite regularly. As the title suggests this is a sometimes quite humorous section relating, for example, Beethoven’s lack of talent as a cook,²⁹ or how Mozart made great fun of a stupid audience by condescending to its poor musical taste.³⁰

Concert reviews—rather than appearing in the “Chronique” section—now appear either under the name of the theater where the performance took place: “Opéra-Comique,” “Théâtre-Italien,” etc., or under the section “Concerts.”

Concert reviews now deal with Berlioz’s works, the Société musicale, the Concerts des Champs-Élysées, and the *première* of Halévy’s *La Juive* on 23 February 1835 at the Académie royale de musique.³¹ More numerous than the first year, the “Chroniques” offer a good survey of contemporary musical life. Also, the journal’s editorial board does not refrain from expressing its opinion. For example, issue number 5 of year two opens an offensive against Berlioz “whose music is a non understandable and impossible noise.”³² Moreover if Chopin, Hiller, Steibelt and Beethoven are highly praised, Czerny is greatly criticized for his mania of producing “the greatest number of notes in a given time,”³³ thus joining what the editors refer to as “*pianistes mécaniciens*”:

For some fifteen years, there has been in Paris a monochromatic school composed of *pianistes mécaniciens* who prize the notes above the music, the letter before the meaning. This school pretends to combine the genres of Liszt and Czerny, because it bangs the keyboard like one and rushes over the keys like the other.³⁴

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Le Pianiste* II, no. 2 (20 November 1834): 9-11.

²⁸ *Le Pianiste* II, no. 6 (20 January 1835): 43-46; no. 7 (5 February 1835): 51-54; and no. 8 (20 February 1835): 61-63.

²⁹ *Le Pianiste* II, no. 5 (5 December 1834): 19-21.

³⁰ *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 23 (5 October 1835): 183-84.

³¹ *Le Pianiste* II, no. 9 (5 March 1835): 69.

³² *Le Pianiste* II, no. 5 (5 January 1835): 37.

³³ *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 2 (December 1833): 22.

³⁴ *Le Pianiste* [I], no.7 (May 1834): 107.

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During its entire publication, *Le Pianiste* was eager to keep its readers abreast of the latest published musical scores, and listed their titles in two sections: “Annonces motivées” and “Annonces simples.” The former included a few analytical notes, such as those that announced the publication of two Impromptus, Op. 90 by Schubert:

We could not recommend enough these two *opuscules* to our young subscribers, which differ in style, but are both excellent; one ... consists of a melody in the genre of those that one sang in the North, intertwined with ritornello-like choruses with charming modulations; a mournful aura prevailing over the entire piece makes it particularly fit for pianists liking intimate music; the other one is fast, light, even brilliant and is more likely to be enjoyed in the *salon*.³⁵

The “Annonces simples” offer a list of piano scores, original compositions for the piano or transcriptions of arias from lyrical works. The indication of the price of the score is followed by its difficulty of performance level. This level is established according to a scale, the *Musico-mètre* ranging from 1 “very easy” to 12, the “nec plus ultra.” Level 6 is of an “average difficulty, salon-like,” 10 is “very difficult.” On various occasions, several examples of works corresponding to these levels are given in the journal. Moreover, the last page of the 5 November 1834 issue gathers together—under the title “Musico-mètre, Échelle de proportion pour mesurer la difficulté des morceaux de piano”—the twelve levels of difficulty with their definition and with titles of works corresponding to them. It would be too lengthy to reproduce these here, but we can mention, as an indication, that, in the first article on Mozart, the difficulty level of his piano works is noted as ranging from 7 to 9.³⁶

In assessing a level of difficulty to the piano scores, *Le Pianiste* reflects the importance of piano practice in the nineteenth century:

In spite of the diversity of schools, one constant element emerges from the various methods for piano in the nineteenth century: a very strong interest in technique, the perfection of which is reached through practicing exercises. To acquire technique while playing works is inconceivable in the nineteenth century, which sees in technique, that is, mastering touch, articulation, and fingering, a purpose in itself.³⁷

Beyond pedagogy, the journal covers the improvements made to the piano by various

³⁵ *Le Pianiste* [I], no. 10 (20 March 1835): 81.

³⁶ *Le Pianiste* II, no. 19 (5 August 1835): 147.

³⁷ In Fauquet, op. cit., 967.

makers, such as the upright obliquely strung pianos by Jean Roller and Nicolas Blanchet, the wrest pins by Jean-Baptiste Cluesmann, making piano tuning easier, and also the production of “inexpensive” pianos to answer to the popularity of the instrument and the popularization of music. Piano makers like Cluesmann, Flamand and Porché fulfilled that need. This was also reflected in the publication of music at low cost,³⁸ a policy which was then not limited to piano music.³⁹ Moreover, the concern to integrate pianos into home furnishings resulted in the making of various creations, among which is the square piano by Cluesmann.

With the constant concern to widen the scope of its observations, *Le Pianiste* devotes five articles to the 1835 Salon and its various painters. In the last issue it announces the Institut Historique’s European congress, with sessions to be held at the Paris City Hall on 15 November 1835—and with the aim of establishing the difference between Celtic and Greek music, and Ambrosian and Mozarabic chant. A detailed study of the journal reveals its great wealth of information.

This RIPM publication is based upon the reprinted edition of *Le Pianiste* by Éditions Minkoff (Genève, 1992). Pagination problems appeared in the February and March 1834 issues. They have been corrected in square brackets in the catalog.

³⁸ *Le Pianiste* II, no. 6 (20 February 1835): 71-72.

³⁹ Anik Devriès. “La ‘Musique à bon marché’ en France dans les années 1830” in *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties*. Peter Bloom, ed. (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1987): 229-50.