

Classical Piano Music

Take time each week to listen to great performances. On Youtube, choose live recitals if possible. This time should be considered as a fundamental investment. A sense of each composer's style is paramount. Simply pressing the piano keys is never enough.

My Big List covers what I consider to be the core repertoire for professional musicians by composers born up until 1903. To this I have added a few pieces that I teach to my intermediate students. A hand-full of duets, woodwind or string sonatas, and piano trios are also included.

There is an enormous repertoire for pianists performing with instrumentalists and singers. The world of the pianist as associate artist is almost limitless. There are hundreds of sonatas for solo string or woodwind instruments with piano. The Art Song repertoire for accompanists is huge—600 songs by Schubert for a start.

No single performer keeps all this music in their head. Solo pianists specialise, often concentrating on Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, French or Russian music, or compositions from the past 75 years.

If you enjoy a particular composer's work then please explore more. Whether or not you ultimately perform any of this music, listening carefully to this music will open your minds to the thoughts of great genius.

Truly original music will often trigger a confused state of mind since you will have no memory of similar chord progressions, melodic shape or composing style. If your first impulse is to think "Er, um, maybe not..." then leave it for a few days then try again, maybe two or three times. It's hard to think clearly about music if you don't know what's coming next. This may well happen the first time you hear Prokofiev, Schoenberg, Berg, Bartok or Hindemith.

Some are classic recordings by virtuoso performers from the mid 20th century, others are by contemporary pianists. Some of my favourite performers (not always available on video) are:

- Bach: Andras Schiff, Angela Hewitt
- Haydn: Marc-André Hemelin, Geoffrey Lancaster
- Mozart: Mitsuko Uchida, Maria João Pires, Murray Perahia, Kristian Bezuidenhout
- Beethoven: Artur Schnabel, Wilhelm Backhaus, Friedrich Gulda, Alfred Brendel, Jonathan Biss
- Schubert & Schumann: Sviatoslav Richter, Wilhelm Kempff
- Chopin: Artur Rubinstein, Krystian Zimerman, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Maurizio Pollini, Evgeny Kissin
- Brahms: Julius Katchen, Nelson Freire, Radu Lupu
- Ravel & Debussy: Pascal Rogé, Monique Haas, Roy Howat, Gordon Fergus-Thompson
- Anything Spanish: Alicia de Larrocha, Miguel Baselga

Many celebrated pianists inject a unique personality into every note they play, immediately compelling and always fascinating. If you are studying a particular piece then I encourage you to listen to interpretations by as many professional pianists as you can while following the score.

Try audio recordings by great pianists of the 20th Century such as Clara Haskill, Vladimir Horowitz, Claudio Arrau, Myra Hess, Wilhelm Kempff, Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, Dinu Lupatti, Moura Lympany, Radu Lupu, Maurizio Pollini, Leon Fleisher, Janina Fialkowska, Murray Perahia, and Martha Argerich.

Outstanding Australian pianists include: Eileen Joyce, Roger Woodward, Miriam Hyde, Geoffrey Tozer, Leslie Howard, Stephen Hough, Michael Kieran Harvey, Piers Lane, Geoffrey Lancaster, Tamara Anna Cislowska, Larry Sitsky, David Fung, Penelope Thwaites, Amir Farid, Kathryn Selby, Simon Tedeschi, Anna Goldsworthy, Victor Sangiorgio, Gerard Willems, Stephanie McCallum, Paul Grabowsky, Kristian Bezuidenhout, Amir Farid and Jayson Gillham.

Since the year 2000 I have been impressed with Yuja Wang and Daniil Trifonov. In my opinion they are among the greatest of all living classic pianists. Listen to both of them when you can.

This list is based on my own experience of classical piano music over the past 60 years. However, there are certainly enough pianists and recordings, old and new, to warrant a second opinion.

If you have a Spotify account then try these:

<https://www.wqxr.org/story/essential-piano-recordings/>

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7vjrOj9wLdaqyOf46PqFur>

Thanks

Gregory