

# **Reconstructing a Nineteenth-Century Fantasy: Between Model Composition and Reimagining Improvisation**

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This file includes the abstract, keyword list, bibliography, and related material for the video essay, “Reconstructing a Nineteenth-Century Fantasy: Between Model Composition and Reimagining Improvisation” by Gilad Rabinovitch. This video-essay may be found at

<https://vimeo.com/societymusictheory/smtv116rabinovitch>

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**Abstract for**  
**Reconstructing a Nineteenth-Century Fantasy: Between Model Composition and Reimagining  
Improvisation**

by Gilad Rabinovitch, *SMT-V* 11.6

Though we tend to perceive classical music as fixed “composers’ compositions,” historical music making and learning in Europe included a great deal of improvisation. This video reports on my creative reconstruction project: a reimagining of a fantasy latent in pedagogical fragments in Carl Czerny’s ([1829] 1983) *Systematic Introduction to Improvisation*. Czerny’s treatise is uniquely generous in documenting a variety of improvised genres, ranging from serious fantasies to light variations and potpourris on popular tunes. My reconstructed fantasy takes three written-out transformations of a hypothetical audience suggestion and uses them in a multi-movement sonata-fantasia. Though my project—as [recorded](#) by pianist Bang-Shyuan Chen—is a composition, not an improvisation, it represents one of the many scholarly and musical paths towards reimagining historical practices. In addition to providing a background on improvisation in this period, I discuss two technical aspects associated with this project—motivic transformation and the large-scale organization of a sonata-fantasia.

**Short Keyword List**

Carl Czerny, historical improvisation, fantasia, model composition, sonata form

**Extensive Keyword List**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Carl Czerny, Jan Ladislav Dussek, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Frédéric (Friedrich) Kalkbrenner, Franz Schubert, Franz Liszt, fantasia, sonata form, model composition, historical improvisation, post-Classical style, Brilliant Style, improvisation in Classical music, Classical improvisation

**About the Contributors**

Gilad Rabinovitch is an Associate Professor of Music Theory at Queens College, CUNY. He has published widely on eighteenth-century schemata and the reimaging of historical improvisation in journals including *Music Theory Online*, *Music Theory Spectrum*, and the *Journal of Music Theory*. He is the recipient of an Emerging Scholar Award from the Society for Music Theory for an article on Carl Czerny and improvisation.

Taiwanese pianist Bang-Shyuan Chen has performed in prominent concert series across the U.S. and Taiwan. He has taught at Florida State University as a Graduate Teaching Assistant and at Indiana University as an Associate Instructor. Chen holds a Doctor of Music from Florida State University, a Master of Music from Indiana University, and a Bachelor of Music from the Manhattan School of Music.

### **Supplementary Materials**

[Recording](#) of the fantasy as performed by Bang-Shyuan Chen, piano.

### **Further Listening**

Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Fantasy in E-flat major, Op. 18

Franz Schubert, Fantasy in C major, D. 760, “Wanderer”

Frédéric (Friedrich) Kalkbrenner, *Grande fantaisie “Effusio musica,”* Op. 68

Franz Liszt, Piano Sonata in B minor

In addition, Kolja Lessing has commercially recorded musical examples from Czerny’s treatise Op. 200 as well as his collection of preludes, Op. 300.

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