

## «ФОРТЕПИАНО МЕКТЕБІ»: ПАЙЫМДАУ ЖӘНЕ КРИТЕРИЙ МӘСЕЛЕСІ

**Аңдатпа:** «Фортепиано мектебі» ұғымы кең таралған және түрлі музыкалық зерттеулерінде, сондай-ақ музыкалық-педагогикалық еңбектерде жиі қолданылады. Алайда оның салыстырмалы түрде пайымдалуы көмескі, көп мағыналы болып көрінеді және көп жағдайда «мәдениет», «өнер», «дәстүр» сияқты ұғымдармен қатар қолданылады.

«Мектеп» терминінің анықтамалары тарихи, педагогикалық және мәдениеттану сияқты көптеген қырлармен байланысты. Мәселен, мектеп ұрпақтан ұрпаққа берілетін педагогикалық әдістердің, орындаушылық стильдердің және репертуар ерекшеліктерінің жиынтығы ретінде қарастырылуы мүмкін. Сондай-ақ, ол белгілі бір өңірдегі мектеп дамуының өзіндік ерекшеліктерін бейнелейтін географиялық құбылыс ретінде де сипатталуы ықтимал.

Сонымен қатар, *фортепиано мектебі* ұғымы *фортепиано мәдениеті*, *фортепиано дәстүрі*, *фортепиано өнері* ұғымдарынан ерекшеленетін өзіндік сипаттарға ие. Бұл жағдай қолданыстағы пайымдауларды жүйелеуді және әртүрлі мән-мәтінде фортепиано мектебі ұғымының нақты қандай мағынаны анықтайтын өлшемдерді бөліп көрсетуді қажет етеді.

Зерттеу барысында әртүрлі білім салаларында мектеп белгілерін қарастыратын зерттеулерге, сондай-ақ түрлі оқу орындарындағы фортепиано орындаушыларына арналған «Орындаушылық өнер тарихы» пәніне жүгініп, осы негізде *фортепиано мектебінің* критерийлерін жүйелеуге талпыныс жасадық.

**Түйінді сөздер:** фортепиано мектебі,  
фортепиано мәдениеті,  
музыка-педагогикалық зерттеулер,  
орындаушылық өнер.

**Дәйексөз үшін:**

Смайл, Жанэль. «"Фортепиано мектебі": пайымдау және критерий мәселесі.» *Eurasian Science and Arts*, т. II, № 17, 2025, 38–46 б. DOI: 10.65199/2617-6823-2025-2-3. (Ағылшынша)

IRSTI 18.41.51

UDK 78.01

DOI: 10.65199/2617-6823-2025-2-3

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## «PIANO SCHOOL»: ON THE ISSUE OF INTERPRETATIONS AND CRITERIA

**Abstract:** The concept of «piano school» is quite common and is often used in various musicological and musical pedagogical studies. However, its interpretation seems to be relatively vague, ambiguous, and is often used alongside concepts such as «culture», «art», «tradition».

The variety of definitions of the term «school» itself is associated with many aspects, for example, historical, pedagogical, cultural. Thus, a school can be considered as a set of pedagogical methods, performance styles, and repertoire features that are passed down from generation to generation. It can be considered as a geographical phenomenon that reflects the specifics of school development in a particular region, etc. At the same time, the piano school, unlike the concepts of piano culture, piano tradition, and piano art, has certain features that make it necessary to systematize existing interpretations and identify criteria that make it possible to clearly define what exactly is meant by piano school in various contexts.

In our study, we turned to studies examining the characteristics of a school from different fields of knowledge, as well as to the academic discipline «History of Performing Arts» for pianists from different educational institutions, on the basis of which we attempted to systematize the criteria of a piano school.

**Keywords:** piano school,  
piano culture,  
musical and pedagogical research,  
performing arts.

**Cite:** Smail, Zhanel. "«Piano School»: On The Issue Of Interpretations And Criteria." *Eurasian Science and Arts*, vol. II, no. 17, 2025, pp. 38–46. DOI: 10.65199/2617-6823-2025-2-3. (in English)

ГРНТИ 18.41.51  
УДК 78.01  
DOI: 10.65199/2617-6823-2025-2-3

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## «ФОРТЕПИАННАЯ ШКОЛА»: К ВОПРОСУ ТРАКТОВОК И КРИТЕРИЕВ

**Аннотация:** Понятие «фортепианная школа» достаточно распространено и часто употребляется в различных музыковедческих и музыкально-педагогических исследованиях. Однако его трактовка представляется относительно размытой, многозначной и зачастую употребляется в одном ряду с такими понятиями, как «культура», «искусство», «традиция».

Разнообразие определений самого термина «школа» связано со множеством аспектов, например, исторических, педагогических, культурологических. Так, *школа* может рассматриваться как совокупность педагогических методов, стилей исполнения и особенностей репертуара, которые передаются от поколения к поколению. Может рассматриваться как географическое явление, которое отражает специфику развития школы в том или ином регионе и т.д. В то же время, фортепианная *школа*, в отличие от понятий фортепианная *культура*, фортепианная *традиция*, фортепианное *искусство*, имеет определенные особенности, что делает необходимым систематизировать существующие трактовки и выделить критерии, позволяющие четко определить, что именно подразумевается под *фортепианной школой* в различных контекстах.

В своем исследовании мы обратились к трудам, рассматривающим признаки *школы*, из разных областей знания, а также к литературе по учебной дисциплине «История исполнительского искусства» для пианистов разных учебных заведений, на основе которых сделали попытку систематизации критериев *фортепианной школы*.

**Ключевые слова:** фортепианная школа,  
фортепианная культура,  
музыкально-педагогические исследования,  
исполнительское искусство.

### Для цитирования:

Смайл, Жанэль. «"Фортепианная школа": к вопросу трактовок и критериев». *Eurasian Science and Arts*, т. II, № 17, 2025, с. 38–46. DOI: 10.65199/2617-6823-2025-2-3. (На английском)

**Introduction.** Every field of knowledge, as well as every branch of art, possesses its own unique school. In the performing arts, particularly in piano performance, the existence of such a school appears to be an evident phenomenon and a necessary condition for preserving and transmitting traditions. We concur with the view of Valentina Kvanina, who, in examining the characteristics of a school, argues that its existence is directly related to the level of scientific development in the corresponding field of knowledge (38). This idea can likewise be extended to the art of piano performance.

The present article has been written as part of a stage in a master's research project. In the course of our work, we observed that within the study of performing arts, the concept of the "piano school" is used with great frequency. It also became evident that in many works – including those of Kazakhstani researchers Maiya Sepp, Dina Amirova, Igor Oleksenko, Nurshy Dzhuwanysheva, Olga Manzhula, and others – despite its widespread usage, the definition of this term and its criteria remain insufficiently systematized. This may be due to the fact that in the context of contemporary music education and performing arts, the piano school is perceived both as a set of performance styles and pedagogical methods, and as a cultural phenomenon shaped by multiple factors (historical, geographical, etc.).

The ambiguity and polysemy in the use of the term "school," and specifically "piano school," continue to be subjects of scholarly discussion in the works of Valentina Kvanina, Elena Volik, Anton Borodin, Grigory Kornetov, and others. While many researchers address various aspects of this term – such as its cultural, pedagogical, and historical components– insufficient attention is given to the systematization of approaches and the identification of clear criteria that would make it possible to distinguish the piano school from related concepts such as piano culture, tradition, or art. This may create challenges for its practical application in educational processes and for scholarly analysis.

This study does not constitute an exhaustive examination of the issue. Our aim here is to analyze the existing interpretations of the concept of "school," drawing on research by scholars from various disciplines, as well as materials from the course "History of Performing Arts" for pianists taught in different educational institutions, and interviews with concert pianists. On the basis of the collected data, we seek to identify and systematize the key criteria of the piano school. In our view, this work may help to clarify what is meant by the piano school in various contexts. The results of this research will contribute to further study of the phenomenon of the piano school.

**Methods.** To achieve the stated aim, various research methods were employed. In particular, the system-based method made it possible to examine the piano school as a system consisting of multiple elements. The analytical method – involving the analysis of literature and the interpretation of the collected data – played a significant role in identifying existing interpretations of the term "school," as well as in analyzing various educational programs and methodological materials related to the study of the history of performing arts. In addition, the comparative method was used to compare the collected materials and information.

**Literature Review.** Based on a combination of various factors, researchers show particular interest in the study of piano performance, specifically in the phenomenon of the piano school. As noted above, although this topic has been addressed in a considerable number of studies, none of them (particularly in the field of musical art) has aimed to generalize and formulate the criteria of the piano school.

We observed that in the works of Kazakhstani authors, when discussing the formation of the piano school in Kazakhstan, this phenomenon is interpreted inconsistently. In particular, such concepts as *piano school*, *piano culture*, *piano art*, etc., are often

examined and used within a single context and attributed synonymous meanings.

This topic is discussed even more extensively in foreign studies by authors such as A. Alekseev, K. Leimer, W. Giesecking, M. Long, A. Borodin, E. Volik, E. Romanovskaya and Yu. Rozhkova, E. Milyugina and A. Merzlikina, and others.

The most relevant work for our study is A. Borodin's *On the Structure of the Concept of the Piano School* (Borodin). In this work, the author examines the phenomenon of the "piano school" from multiple perspectives. He argues that a school is characterized not only by the presence of a teacher and the group of students gathered around him or her, but also views the school as an educational structure, as a creative educational collective. Borodin classifies the piano school into five types:

1. The first type: "the pianistic school as an educational structure," which must be led by a major musical figure (Borodin 187); a similar understanding of the school is presented by E. Romanovskaya and Yu. Rozhkova (Romanovskaya & Rozhkova 101).
2. The second type: the school as a direction that takes shape within the conditions of national culture (Borodin 188).
3. The third type: the school as a methodological system of a teacher, meaning a school characterized by an "indirect type of communication – published in printed form as an educational-methodological manual, a collection of études or exercises" (Borodin 188).
4. The fourth type: the school as an educational institution; a similar interpretation of the concept is offered by I. Kulikov (Kulikov).
5. The fifth type: "the piano school understood as a professional qualification, as the training and experience acquired. When it is said that a pianist 'has a school' or 'received a good school,' it implies that the musician possesses a certain set of necessary professional skills" (Borodin 189).

The author also proposes dividing each type into hierarchical levels: world school – national school – regional school – individual school. This idea is supported in the studies of

E. Milyugina and A. Merzlikina, who argue that a school "is realized through direct and indirect communication and ensures the generation, preservation, and dissemination of artistic ideas, as well as the development of technical means for their embodiment within the regional / national / international cultural and educational space of a given historical period" (Milyugina & Merzlikina 140).

Researchers from other academic fields have also addressed the concept of "school." For example, in his pedagogical studies, G. Kornetov interprets the phenomenon of the "school" as the transmission of social experience, as "social inheritance," and as an "integral aspect of the formation of the individual and society, of the genesis of the system of social inheritance" (66).

Examining the phenomenon of the scientific school, V. Kvanina describes a school as a kind of community whose unifying foundation "is a person possessing a unique mode of work (a mode of theoretical thinking or experimental research)" (38). Discussing the phenomenon of the "folk school," E. Volik concludes that such schools represent a phenomenon of public education, a socio-cultural form "aimed at reforming and creating a new civil society, and at raising the professional and cultural level of the population" (5).

In addition, in studying various sources, we also consulted dictionaries and encyclopedias. In the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of F. Brockhaus and I. Efron*, a school is described as a "nursery of knowledge and useful skills and as a necessary stage in the development of humankind" (624).

Thus, it can be argued that one of the primary tasks of all schools is the formation (education and upbringing) of the qualities and capacities required by individuals, which are also demanded by a particular society and change in accordance with the historical development of humanity.

To support this idea, we also examined materials from the course *History of Performing Arts* taught at the Kazakh National

University of Arts, the Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory, the North Caucasus State Institute of Arts, the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music, and other educational institutions, as well as the systems of piano schools developed by M. Long and by K. Leimer – W. Giesecking. It became evident that the authors of these programs primarily oriented their analysis toward the individual figure and geographical context.

**Discussion and Results.** As a result of the study, we propose clarifying several definitions of the term *piano school*, each of which reflects different aspects of this concept:

1. *The piano school as a methodology and system of instruction.* This definition emphasizes the pedagogical aspect. In this case, the piano school represents a set of methodological approaches and pedagogical traditions passed from teacher to student. It includes approaches to the development of technique, sight-reading skills, musical interpretation, and the formation of performance style, constituting a generalized instructional system.

2. *The piano school as a performance tradition.* According to this definition, a piano school is a specific performance style characteristic of musicians of a particular country or region. A performance tradition is shaped by national musical features, historical conditions, and cultural influences. For example, the Kazakh school is marked by contemplativeness, dynamism, and motoric clarity; the Russian school by emotional depth and richness of sound; the German school by structural precision and discipline; the French school by lightness and elegance, etc.

The uniqueness of these performance features is confirmed by statements of contemporary performers. For instance, the outstanding pianist Sergey Babayan, reflecting on the Russian school, notes: “When speaking about the truly incomparable feature of the Russian school, what comes to mind is a special nostalgic, piercing intonation most vividly expressed in the playing of Rachmaninoff,

Horowitz, and Pletnev” (Levadny 19). Such an intonational quality, serving as an expressive marker of a national school, points to the profound connection between tradition and the artistic individuality formed within it. This underscores that piano schools are not abstract constructs but real, historically established performance phenomena with recognizable traits.

3. *The piano school as a community of teachers and students.* Here, the piano school is understood as the continuity of generations of musicians united by shared pedagogical principles and traditions. It includes a circle of teachers and students who share a common approach to instruction and performance. Examples include the “Nikolaev school,” which produced Nathan Perelman, Valentina Razumovskaya, Samariy Savshinsky, Pavel Serebryakov, Vladimir Sofronitsky, and Maria Yudina; or the “Neuhaus school,” within which pianists such as Sviatoslav Richter and Emil Gilels were formed.

4. *The piano school as a cultural and historical phenomenon.* In this definition, the emphasis is placed on cultural and historical dimensions. A piano school is a phenomenon shaped in a specific historical period and cultural environment, reflecting the distinctive features of the music of its time. It develops alongside musical styles, incorporating elements of Romanticism, Classicism, Baroque, and other traditions. For instance, M. Long’s method was based on a synthesis of older national piano-teaching traditions with certain modern pedagogical trends (Alekseev 20). In her book, M. Long also notes that the technical methods she discusses can only be understood in connection with the specificity of the French piano school, with its particular strengths and weaknesses (6), thereby emphasizing the significance of cultural context.

5. *The piano school as a direction in music pedagogy.* This definition focuses on the scholarly and pedagogical approach to piano instruction, in which the school represents a distinct direction or method in music pedagogy. It includes the study of mechanisms

of piano playing, the physiological characteristics of a pianist's movements, and the analytical aspects of music interpretation. Alekseev writes that W. Gieseeking studied under K. Leimer, who developed his own method of piano instruction, later widely known as the Leimer–Gieseeking method (outlined in Leimer's book *Modern Piano Playing According to Leimer–Gieseeking*) (Alekseev 119). At the same time, I. Lysova notes that K. Leimer did not consider his methods new: "Leimer's method gave rise to practice techniques that differed significantly from those commonly used at the time. It is based on strict adherence to a number of requirements that, in his opinion, were self-evident. By arranging and systematizing these obvious truths, he found the shortest path to the full development of a student's musical talent and to achieving the highest degree of expressive performance" (Lysova 15–16).

Based on these definitions, several key criteria can be identified that help systematize the concept of the piano school and reveal its multifaceted nature.

*The first criterion – pedagogical.* A piano school should be understood as a methodology and system of instruction that includes a set of pedagogical techniques and traditions transmitted from teacher to student. This implies the existence of a clearly structured educational system covering technical training, sight-reading, musical interpretation, and teaching methods aimed at developing performance style and musical skills.

*The second criterion – performance-related.* A piano school reflects a unique performance style characteristic of a specific country or region. It is shaped by national traits and historical conditions and includes the performance techniques and stylistic norms inherent to that cultural environment.

*The third criterion – personal (individual).* A piano school is based on the close relationship between teacher and student, as well as the continuity of generations of musicians. This phenomenon presupposes the formation of a "school"

around an outstanding pedagogue who passes on his or her knowledge, skills, and experience, as well as the existence of followers who maintain and further develop these pedagogical and performance traditions.

*The fourth criterion – cultural and historical.* A piano school is linked to the cultural and historical development of musical art. It is formed within a specific cultural environment and historical period, reflecting changes in musical styles and genres and the influence of social and cultural factors on performance traditions.

This list may be expanded, for example, by introducing a scientific criterion, which would situate the school within the context of music pedagogy and scholarly research, as well as by other potential criteria.

It is important to recognize that the piano school is a complex, multifaceted, and unique phenomenon that must always be examined through the combined lens of its pedagogical, performance-related, compositional, and sociocultural dimensions.

**Conclusion.** By turning to the study of the concept of the piano school—fundamental for our future dissertation—at the very beginning of our scholarly work, we aimed to establish a foundation for examining specific piano schools in Kazakhstan. In our view, understanding the piano school as a multilayered phenomenon, the study of which relies on clearly defined criteria, will make it possible to deepen our knowledge of pedagogical and performance traditions and to recognize the role of an individual school in shaping the musical environment. A school becomes a kind of repository in which pedagogical principles, technical skills, and aesthetic ideals accumulate and are transmitted across generations, thereby enriching and advancing musical culture as a whole. The piano school as a phenomenon continues to evolve and adapt to contemporary conditions and challenges. We are confident that our research will continue and will be enriched by new discoveries, ideas, and interpretations.

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