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## Introduction

THE VARIETY OF SUPPOSEDLY obvious descriptors of national piano schools used in colloquial language has not yet been studied in order to create a theoretical framework for distinguishing and describing them. Sofia Lourenco (2010, p. 6) identifies distinctive national piano schools of interpretation heard while analysing various recordings, in areas such as phrasing, tempi, approach to rubato and aesthetics. An analysis of descriptors and definitions used in dictionary sources (“Oxford Music Online,” 2015) and piano-related encyclopaedia (Hinson, 2004) does not result in a closer definition of what constitutes a national piano school, either in general or in particular. At the same time, a growing body of opinions of piano professionals suggests that national piano schools are either currently in the process of unification (Berman, 2004, minutes 16-17) or are already completely extinct (Schonberg, 1987, pp. 463-465). This current study attempts to define more closely the phenomenon of national piano schools, exploring the most recent perceptions of pianists and piano pedagogues.

‘National piano school(s)’ is a colloquial term rather than a dictionary definition term. Subsequently, determining its point of origin is a challenge. Using the phrase for key word searches of hard copy published texts and online publications returned only scant results. Nevertheless, the term ‘national piano school(s)’ is present in the topic-related literature, for example, ‘French Pianism’ (Timbrell, 1999b), a recording study entitled *Tendencies of piano interpretation in the twentieth century: Concept and different types of “piano interpretation schools”* (Lourenco, 2007), and ‘The Russian Piano School’ (Barnes, 2007). The phenomenon studied here is also discussed amongst piano professionals and seems to be found in their perception of a variety of past and present