

Distinguished Lecture Series in Music Theory
**“Impossible Narration in Chopin’s
Ballade in G Minor, Op. 23”**



Michael Klein

Temple University

Thursday, October 19

6:00 p.m.

Cook Recital Hall, Music Building

Free and open to the public.

Bio:

Michael Klein is a professor of Music Studies and former chair of the Department of Music Studies at Temple University. His latest book, *Music and the Crises of the Modern Subject*, was published by Indiana University Press in 2015. He is also the author of *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, and a co-editor of the collection *Music and Narrative since 1900*, both with Indiana University Press. He has published on the topics of musical narrative, subjectivity, and the music of Chopin, Liszt, Debussy and Lutosławski in a variety of journals. He holds Bachelor and Master degrees in Piano Performance from the Eastman School of Music, and Master and Doctoral degrees in Music Theory from the University at Buffalo.

Abstract:

Chopin’s first ballade has been the focus of study at least since Niecks’s biography of the Polish composer (1888). The form of the ballade has been particularly puzzling, with responses to its structure including claims that it follows no conventional paradigm to those arguing that it is loosely a sonata form. In the first part of this paper, I argue that the ballade follows sonata form (in Hepokoski/Darcy’s conception) much more closely than previously demonstrated, and that a conception of the work as a sonata form informs the narrative implications of the work. In the second part of this paper, I borrow recent work on narration (Jan Alber’s book on unnatural narratives) to argue that in an effort to construct a musical narrator in the ballade, Chopin responds (though surely unconsciously) to the problematics of the modern subject, which, in 19th-century Europe, was increasingly viewed as the product of discourse. That is: language constructs the subject, and since language includes aporias, so does the modern subject.

