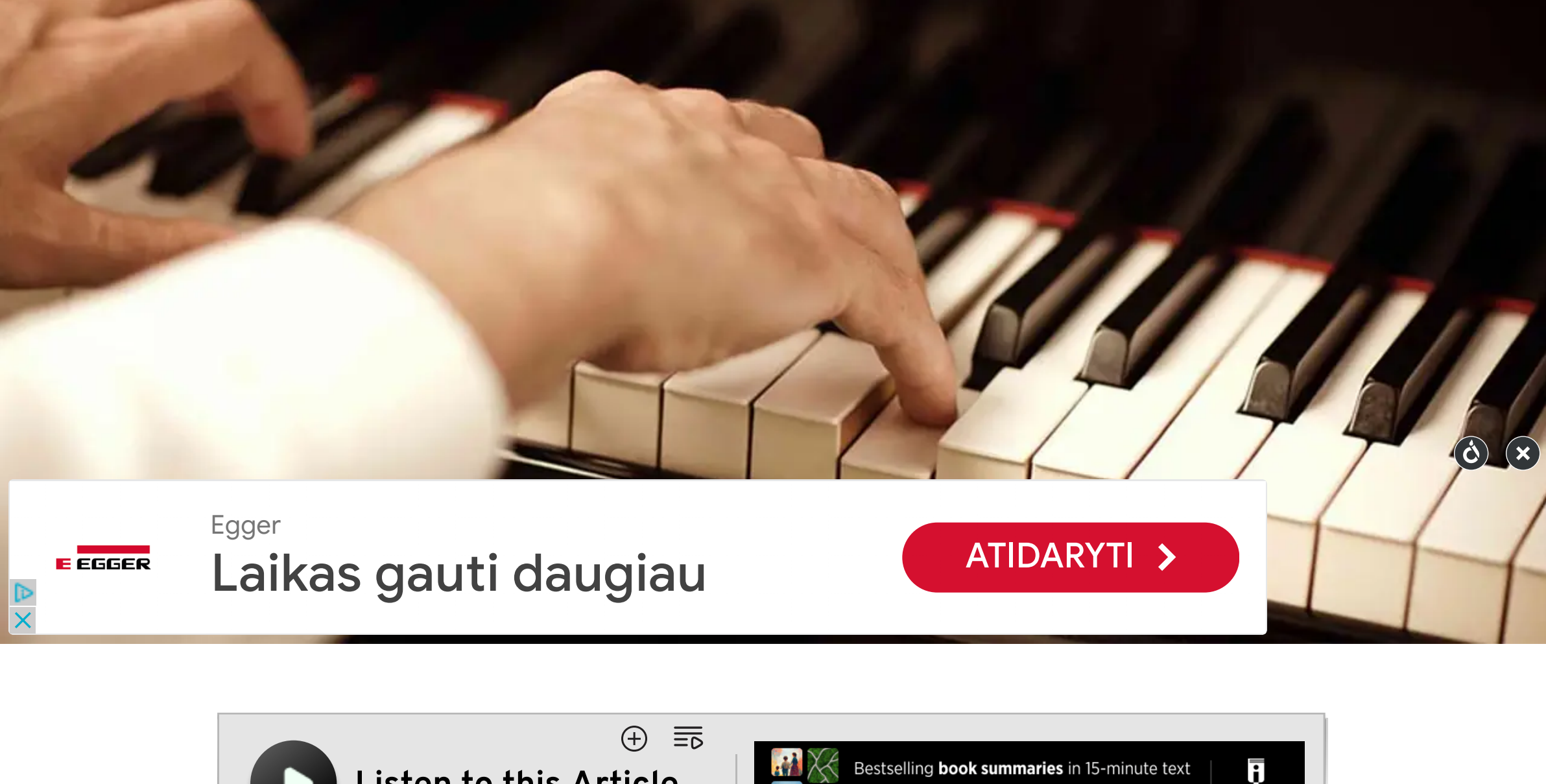
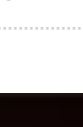


# 7 Best known classical piano pieces

BY READERS DIGEST

1ST JAN 2015 MUSIC



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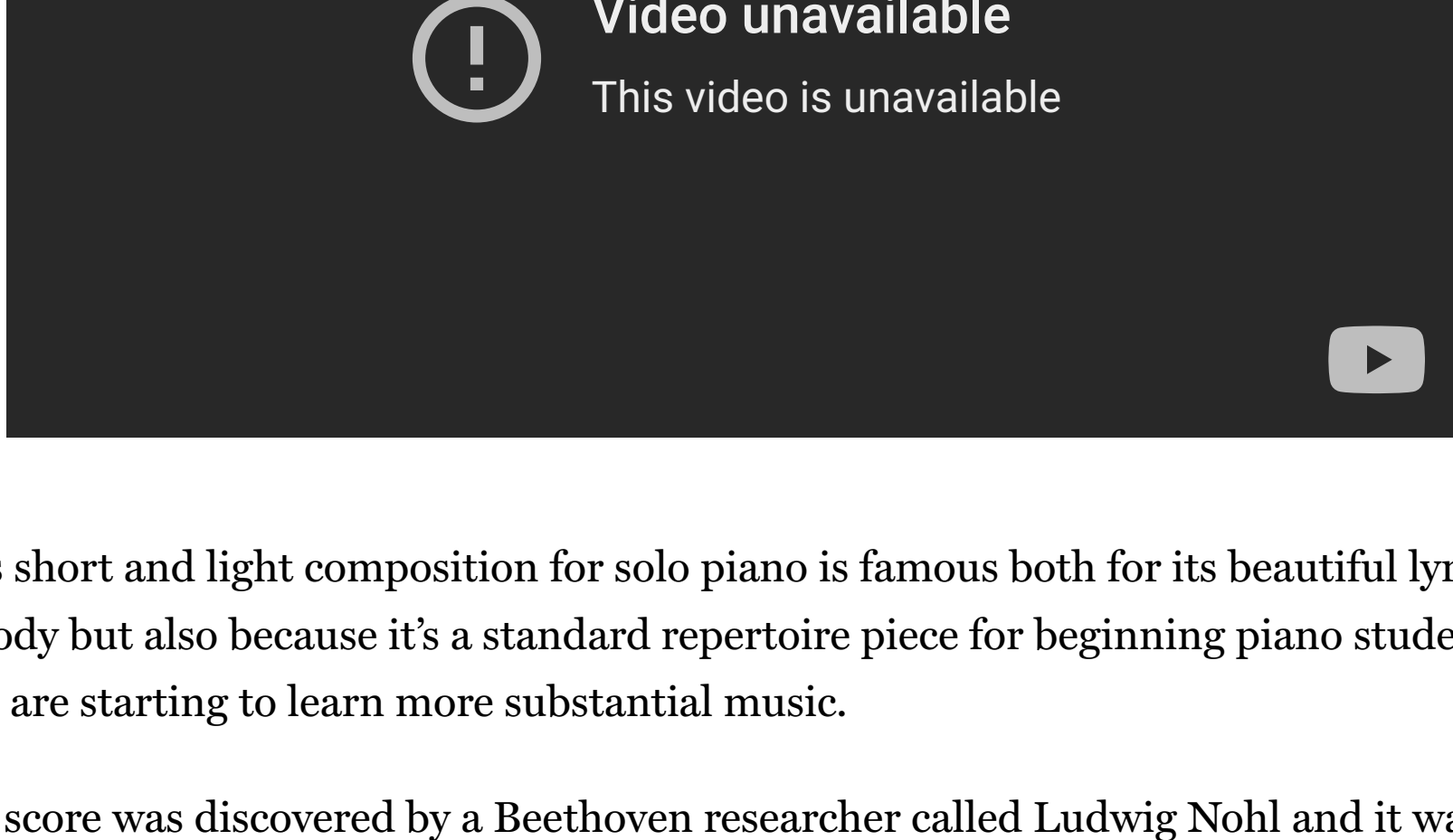
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I'll probably take you less than a few seconds to recognise each of these famous works featuring the beautiful sound of the piano. From Classical to late-Romantic, here's some of the best known piano music in the world.

It's time to put on your *favourite pair of headphones* for classical music and enjoy some of the best known piano music in the world.

## Ludwig van Beethoven's "Für Elise"



This short and light composition for solo piano is famous both for its beautiful lyrical melody but also because it's a standard repertoire piece for beginning piano students who are starting to learn more substantial music.

The score was discovered by a Beethoven researcher called Ludwig Nohl and it was published in 1867—40 years after Beethoven's death. Nohl claimed to have seen the dedication "Für Elise" on the original autograph which has been missing since, hence there's some speculation regarding the identity of the mysterious Elise, with some claiming she was Beethoven's old flame, and others that she was a soprano whom the piece was written for.

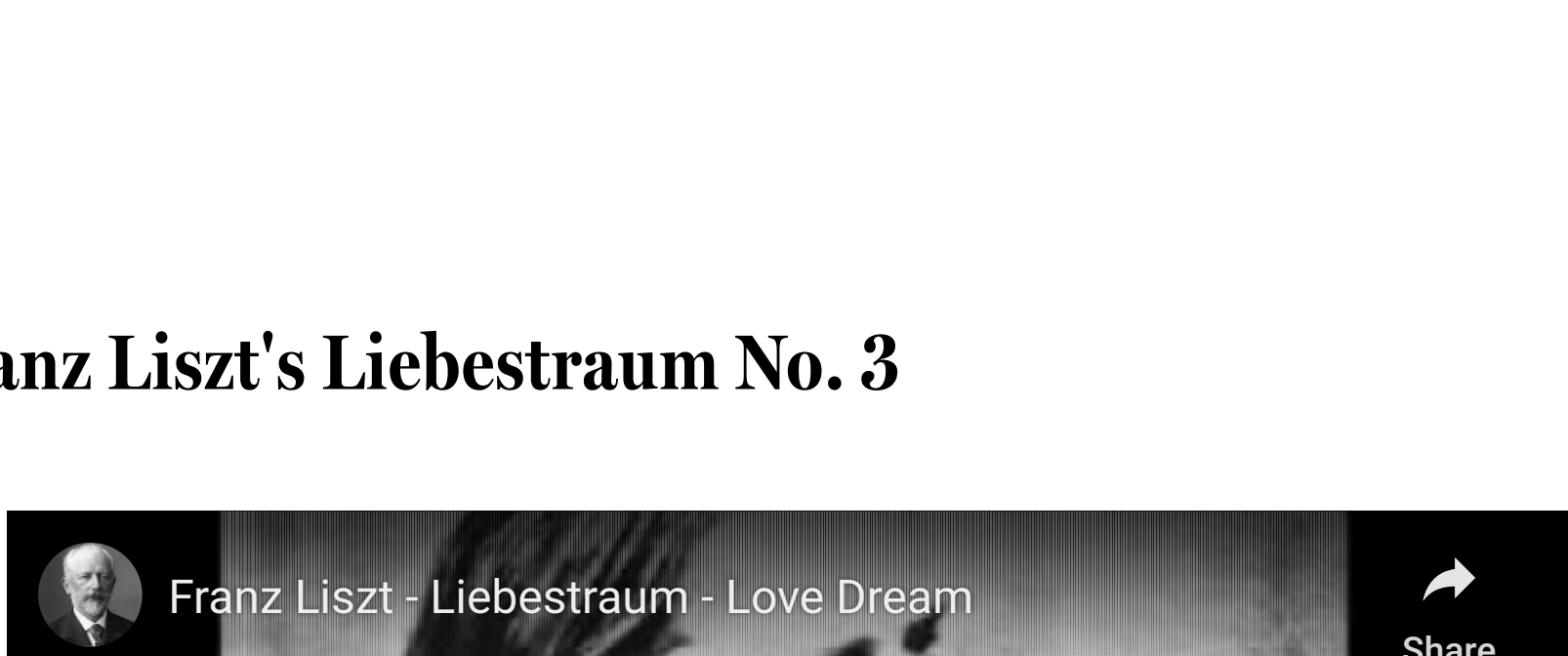
## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Turkish March"



This fast and playful little number simply screams "Mozart". One of his biggest "hits", the "Turkish March", is actually the third and final movement from his Sonata No.11 K331 for piano. Simple, short and sweet, it was inspired by the sound of Turkish Janissary bands which were very fashionable at the time.

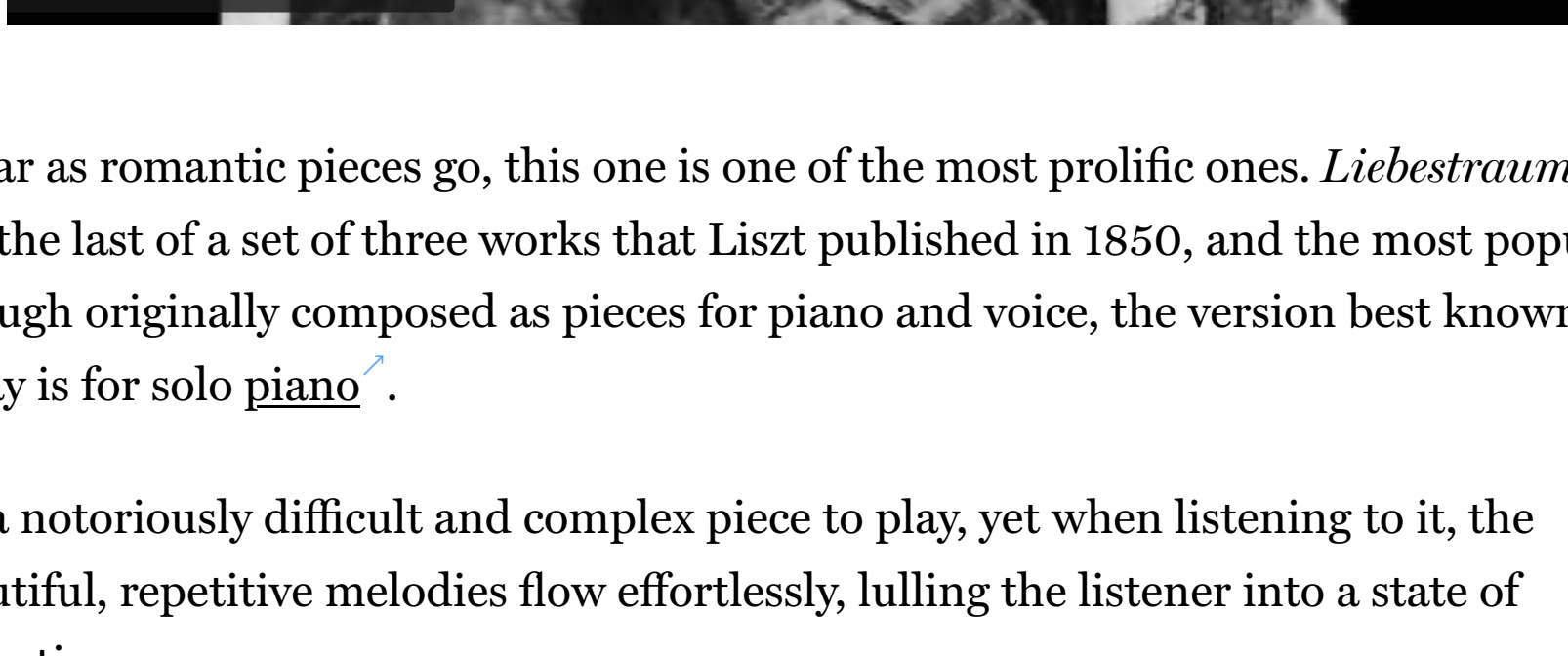
Four pages of the original score of the sonata were discovered in Budapest's National Széchényi Library in 2014, which matched the final page of the score, held in Salzburg. The first performance of the discovered score was given later that year in September.

## Franz Liszt's Liebestraum No. 3

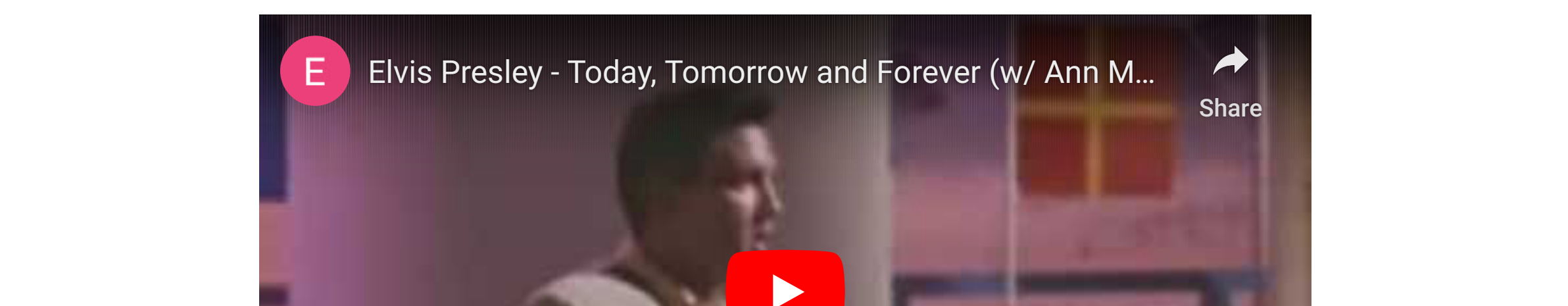


As far as romantic pieces go, this one is one of the most prolific ones. *Liebestraum No. 3* is the last of a set of three works that Liszt published in 1850, and the most popular. Though originally composed as pieces for piano and voice, the version best known today is for solo [piano](#).

It's a notoriously difficult and complex piece to play, yet when listening to it, the beautiful, repetitive melodies flow effortlessly, lulling the listener into a state of relaxation.

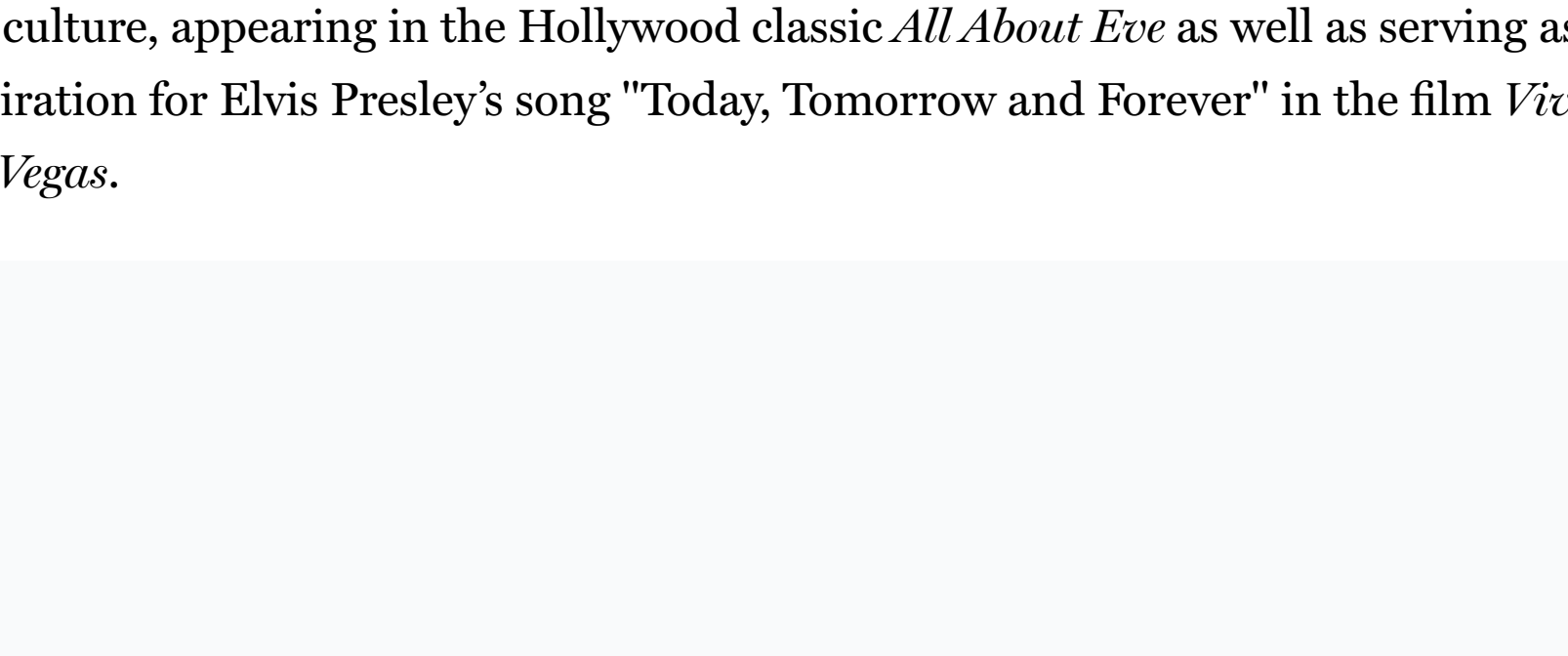


As with many of the works on this list, *Liebestraum* found its place in the world of pop culture, appearing in the Hollywood classic *All About Eve* as well as serving as the inspiration for Elvis Presley's song "Today, Tomorrow and Forever" in the film *Viva Las Vegas*.



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## Frédéric Chopin's "Minute Waltz"

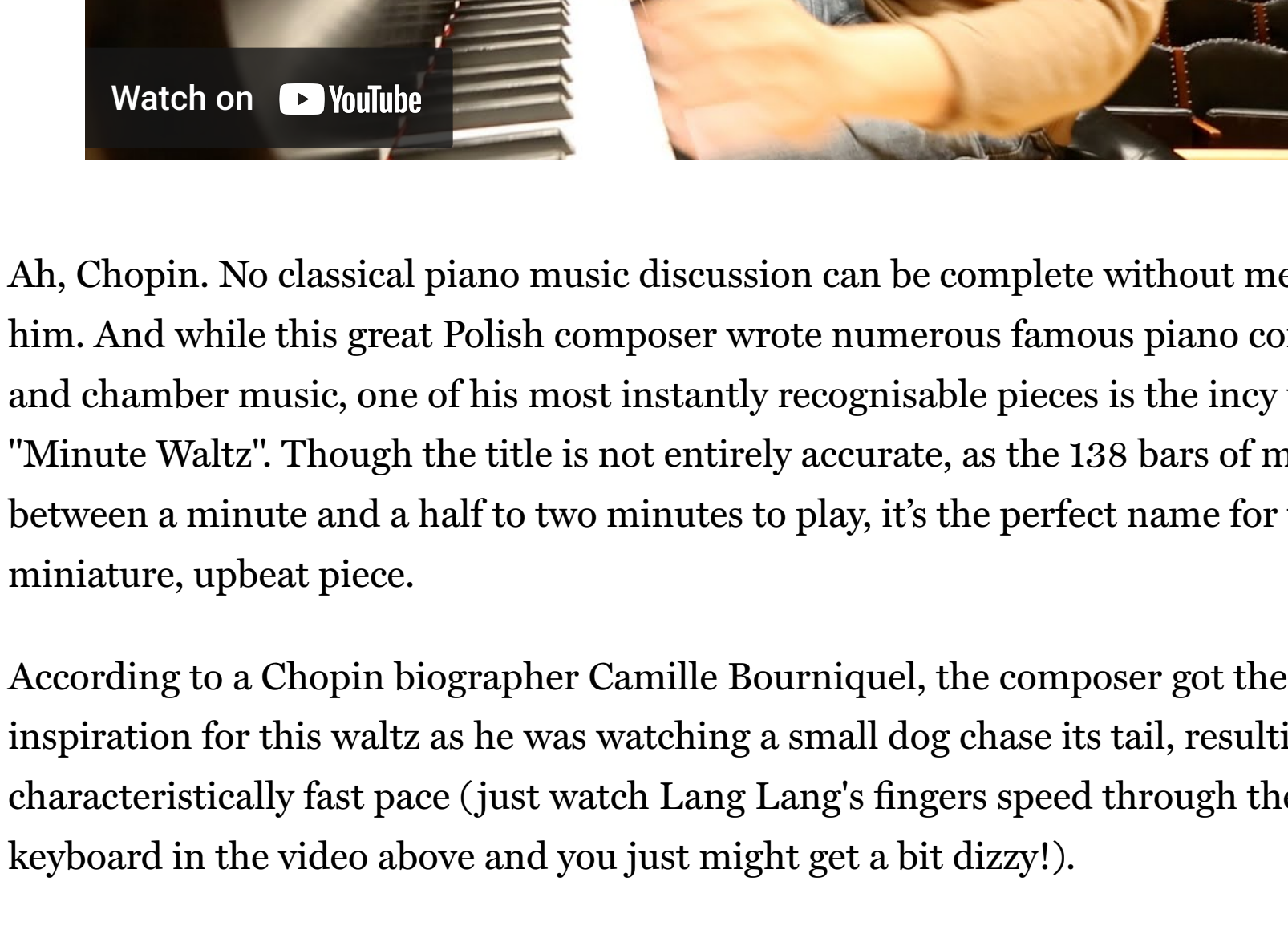


Ah, Chopin. No classical piano music discussion can be complete without mentioning him. And while this great Polish composer wrote numerous famous piano concertos and chamber music, one of his most instantly recognisable pieces is the iney wincy "Minute Waltz". Though the title is not entirely accurate, as the 138 bars of music take between a minute and a half to two minutes to play, it's the perfect name for this miniature, upbeat piece.

According to a Chopin biographer Camille Bourmiquel, the composer got the inspiration for this waltz as he was watching a small dog chase its tail, resulting in the characteristically fast pace (just watch Lang Lang's fingers speed through the keyboard in the video above and you just might get a bit dizzy!).

## Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1

Fervent and explosive, Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 is one of the best-known piano concertos in the world. The instantly recognisable, thunderous opening sets the tone for the exciting things to come: a lyrical and soulful middle movement, slowly building to the utterly gripping, electrifying finale.



Pianist Van Cliburn. Image via wikiwand



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Though it's one of the best known classical music pieces today, Tchaikovsky clearly wasn't happy with the concerto upon initial composition as he revised the work two more times, the last time being in 1888 which is the version usually performed now. It's also worth noting that Piano Concerto No. 1 became the first classical music piece to sell a million records in 1958, thanks to pianist Van Cliburn's passionate recording.

## Eric Satie's Gymnopédie No. 1

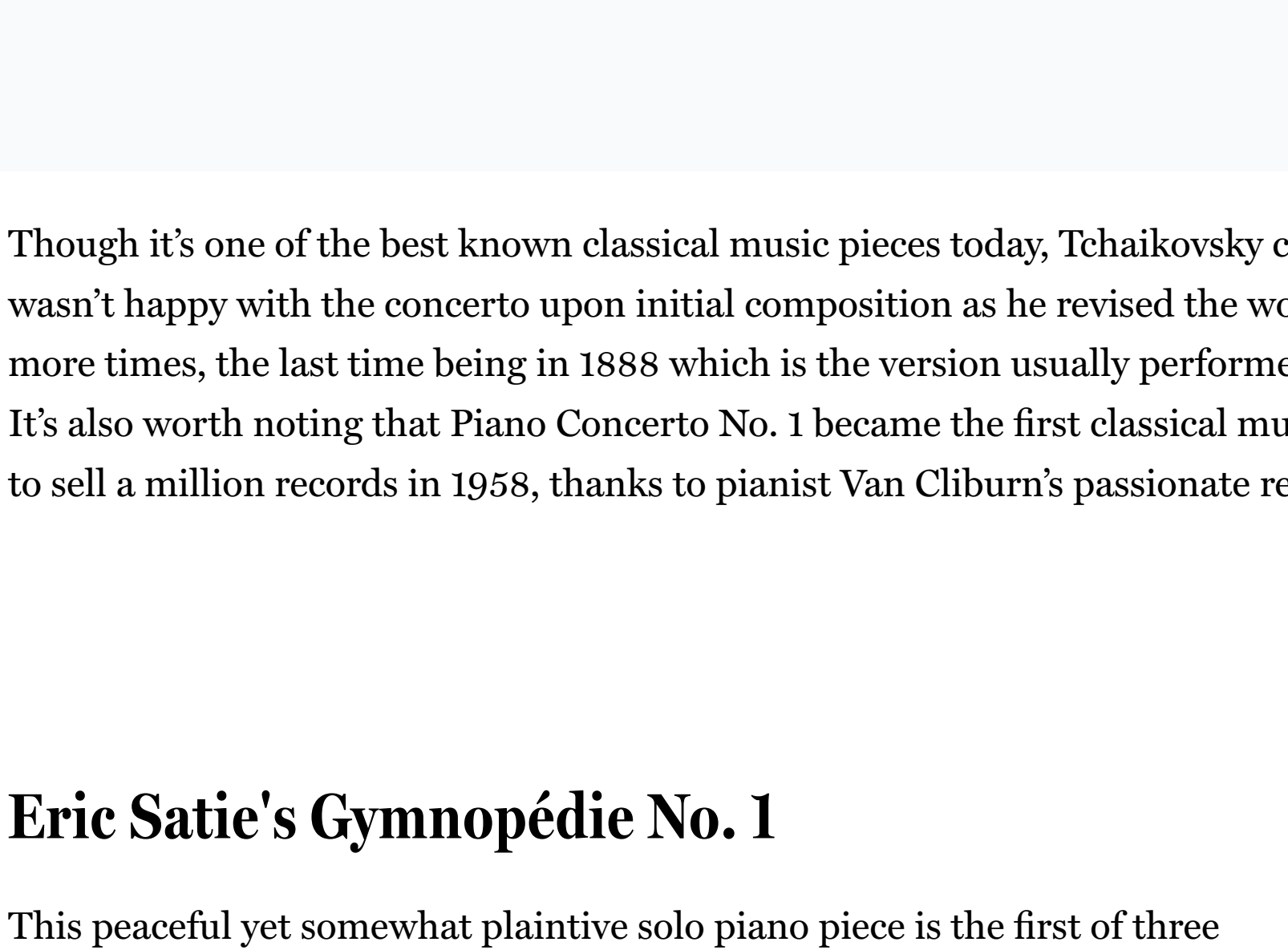
This peaceful yet somewhat plaintive solo piano piece is the first of three *Gymnopédies* written by French composer Erik Satie and will be easily recognised by any movie buff as it's made an appearance in numerous films, including Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums* and Woody Allen's *Another Woman*.

And it's easy to see why: the three short pieces are incredibly cinematic, sharing the same, peculiar and a tad unsettling atmosphere achieved by mild dissonances against the harmony and the specific performance instructions, which are to play each piece "painfully", "sadly", or "gravely". *Gymnopédies* are also often considered to be an important precursor to the similarly tranquil and impressionistic ambient music.

## Sergei Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2

If you like 'em dark and brooding, Rachmaninoff is clearly your man as his intense, emotionally loaded Piano Concerto No. 2 is sure to raise a hair or two. One of his most enduringly popular works, it's often described to be the greatest piano concerto ever written.

Rachmaninoff wrote the piece after several years of suffering from clinical depression, brought on by the disastrous reception of his Symphony No.1 in 1897 and magnified by his personal problems. His recovery was aided by a course of hypnotherapy and the composer dedicated the concerto to his physician Nikolai Dahl who helped him restore his self-confidence.



Lauren Bacall. Image via memorabltv

Lauren Bacall selected the Concerto as her second disc on BBC's *Desert Island Discs* in 1978.

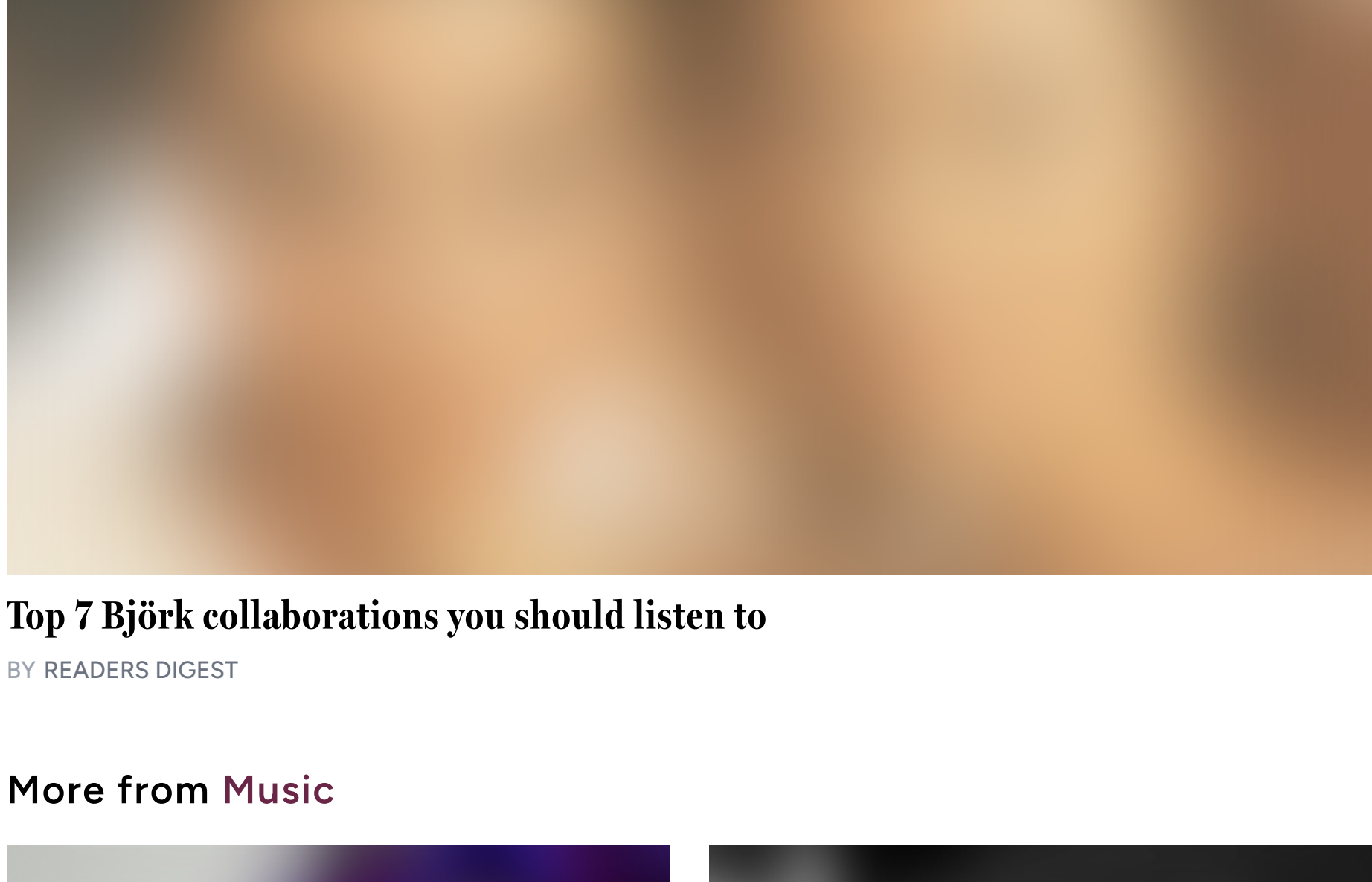
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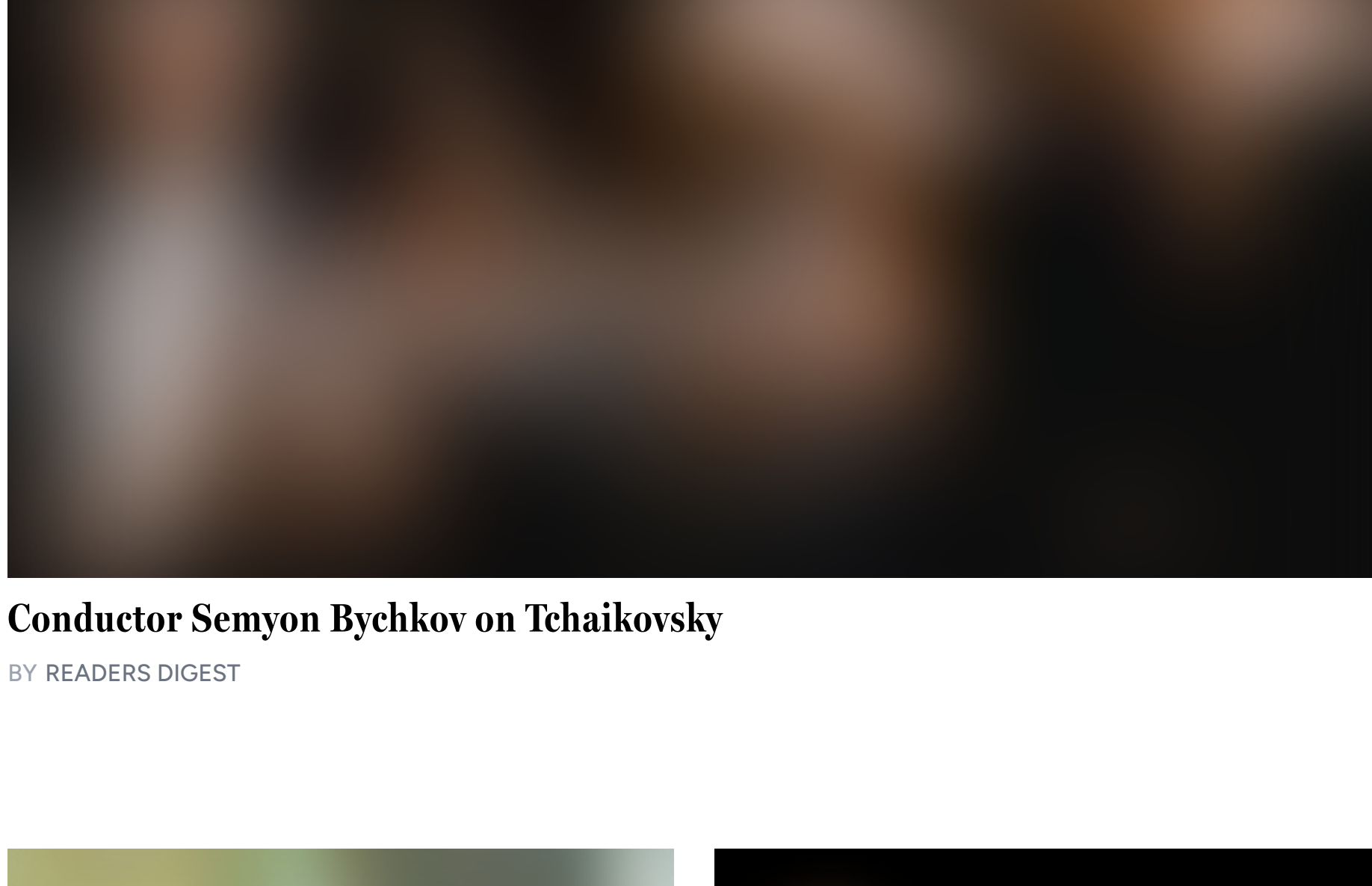
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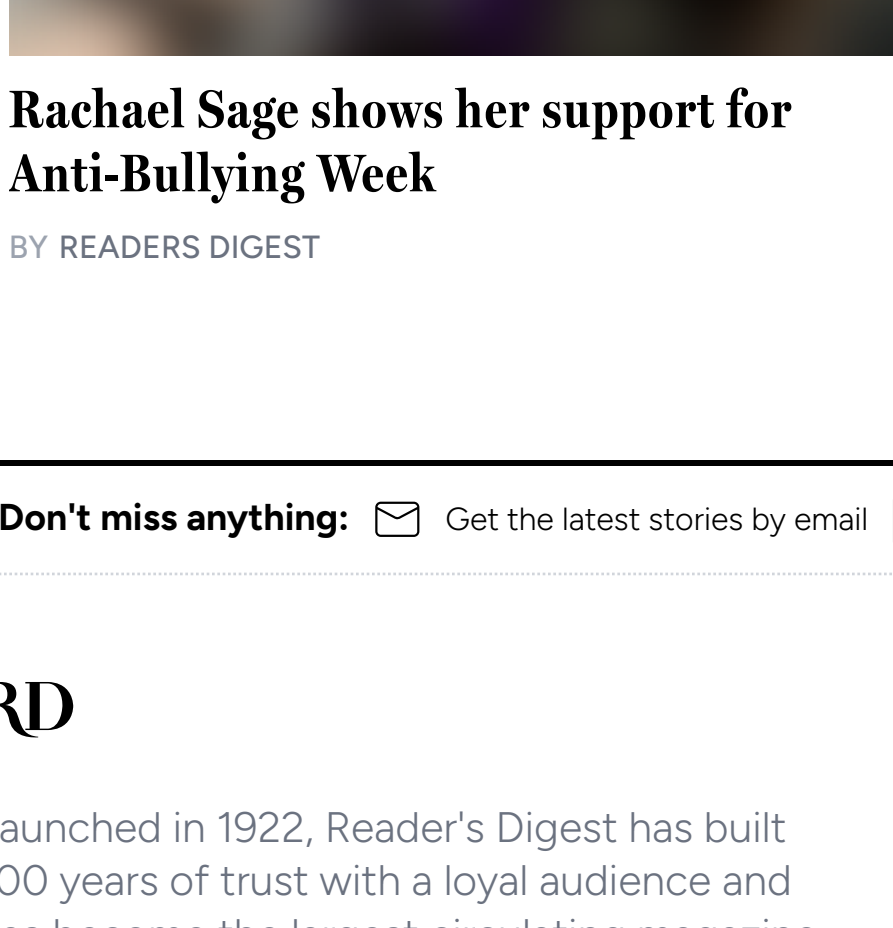
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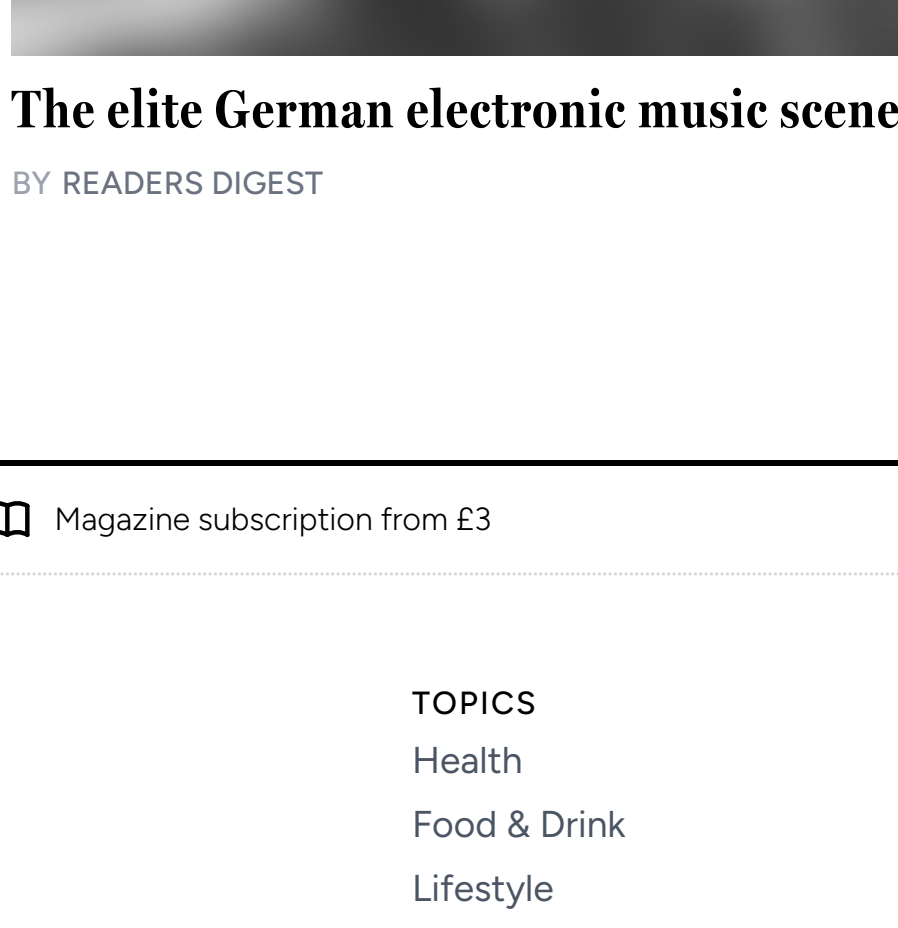
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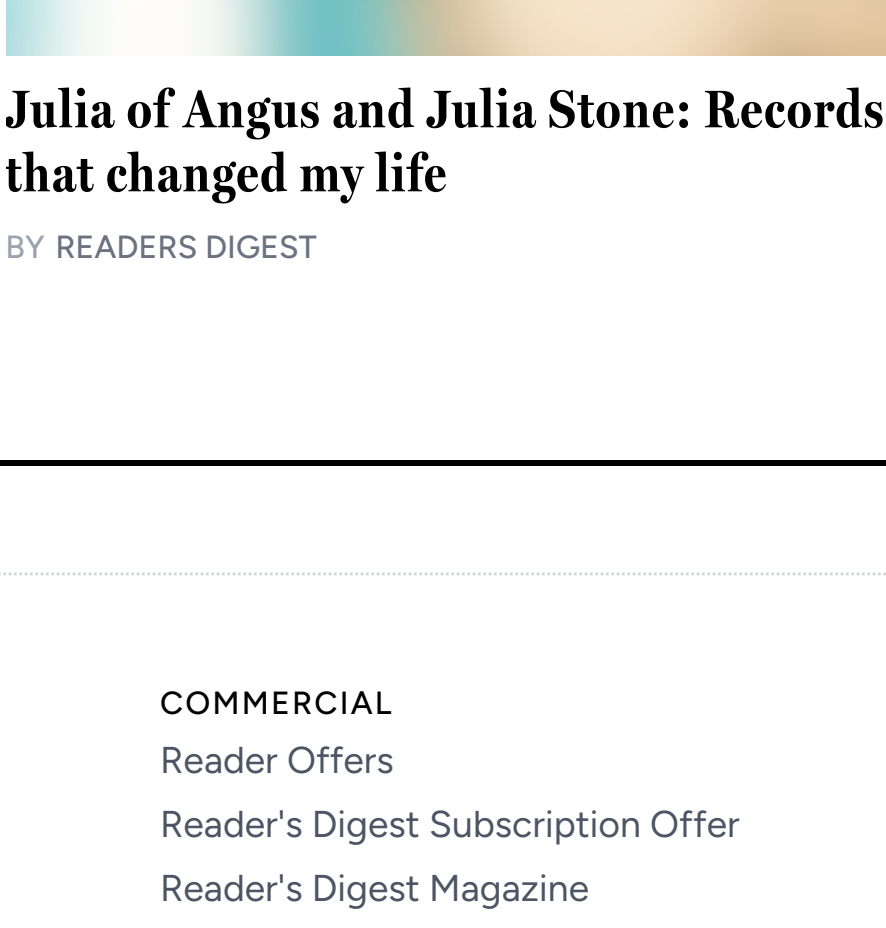
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