

# ONOMATOPEIA

## EPISODE: A Young Piano Man

[TAPE] [LEAH RIMAN: : Logan, what's our favorite song?](#)

[LEAH: Love...](#)

[LOGAN RIMAN: Love story](#)

[LEAH: Love story. Can you start a little bit of love story?](#)

[LEAH: Ready?](#)

[LOGAN: 1, 2, 3, go](#)

[TAPE] Logan starts playing "Love Story" on the piano. Then fades behind narration.

**MARIANA CASTRO:** Logan Riman is 17. He's a pianist from Brooklyn. He goes by the name "Logan, the piano man."

This song, the theme song of the movie Love Story, got him the chance to perform at Radio City Music Hall in 2019.

By the age of 14, he even got to play with Billy Joel, the piano man himself.

[TAPE] [Logan and Billy Joel playing "Piano Man."](#)

Impressive, right? Well, there is more. Logan also happens to be blind... and music is his way of communicating.

### ***Theme music***

I'm Mariana Castro, and this is Onomatopoeia, a podcast about the people and places of NYC. In this episode, a young piano man.

### ***Theme music fades out***

[TAPE] [Reporter talking to Logan Riman and his mom, Leah.](#)

**MC:** Logan sits at the piano. He's wearing an orange sweatshirt and blue sweatpants.

He carries a recorder in his hand. He has a whole bunch of them (four with him now, around 80 in total), and records everything he hears. He rocks back and forth in his chair – something his mom, Leah, tells me he's done all his life.

**TAPE [LEAH RIMAN]:** "Logan was born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. So he's always had like a speech impediment. It's hard to understand him, he's not always very clear."

**MC:** He was also born with microphthalmia, meaning he has no eyes – and now wears prosthetics.

**TAPE [LEAH RIMAN]:** "And we were going to doctors all the time, and his personal space was constantly invaded. And the only thing that calmed him down was music."

**[TAPE]** Logan playing the piano. Then volume lowers behind narration.

**MC:** That's how music came into his life, when he was a baby. Leah says that when he was as young as 2 years old, he began to duplicate the songs he heard. And she encouraged it.

**TAPE [LEAH RIMAN]:** "I would put out ads in the papers, trying to find a teacher who was willing to work with him maybe as early as five years old, but he wasn't mature enough, obviously. And there's a patience level that teachers also don't have, and then they're afraid to, to do anything and to push and you know, so that was hard."

**MC:** So for many years, Logan taught himself.

**TAPE [LEAH RIMAN]:** "We couldn't find anybody until we actually made it here."

**MC:** Here meaning the Filomen M. D'Agostino Greenberg Music School. It's a music school for the visually impaired on the Upper East Side, where we are now.

**[TAPE]** Music fades.

**TAPE [JUAN PABLO HORCASITAS]:** "Logan was assigned to me and I said let me hear Logan play and let me have a short interview with him."

**[TAPE]** Music begins. Lowers behind Juan Pablo interview.

**TAPE [JUAN PABLO HORCASITAS]:** "And after five minutes, I realized that this student had a very good ear, what we call in music, perfect pitch."

**[TAPE]** Music ramps up, then lowers again.

**TAPE [JUAN PABLO HORCASITAS]:** "And we started working, you know, at the beginning it was very difficult with him because he was standing up, he was touching the strings. And then he was sitting down again. After two years of teaching him, he was sitting down on the piano for a nap for a complete hour."

sometimes a complete hour and a half. So I was playing something he was reproducing what I played. So his progress has been outstanding."

**MC:** And Logan learned EVERYTHING by ear.

**TAPE**

"JPH: We could do, let's say, for example, five or six minutes long piece in about two weeks.

MC: Wow.

JPH: Yes. So he was basically remembering everything, even though he recorded some things, on the lesson, I could play a Bach minuet, for example. And at the end of the lesson, he would be playing the Bach minuet."

**MC:** Despite his success in music, life outside of it was filled with challenges.

**[TAPE]** Music fades and stops.

**TAPE [LEAH RIMAN]:** "When he was little, and he didn't have the prosthetics in and he had the cleft. And you know, people look into your stroller, and they, you know, they're expecting a baby, and then they see him and they're like, you know, and you get the reaction. So kind of to shield myself and him. I kept him turned around, and I kept the lid down and like, you know, just not to deal with people."

**TAPE [LEAH RIMAN]:** "Even on social media. In the beginning, people were so rude and nasty. The things that they said and the they made fun of his looks and.. without even knowing anything."

**MC:** But in 2019, everything changed for him. That's when the video of Logan playing with Billy Joel was picked up by the media and went viral.

**TAPE [LEAH RIMAN]:** "Kind of went from Can you stop looking at my kid to look at my kid."

***Cold cut***

**[TAPE]** LOGAN: Good afternoon, Mariana

MARIANA: Hi

LOGAN: Happy Saturday!

MARIANA: Thank you!  
Do you like playing the piano?

LOGAN: Yes

MARIANA: What are you playing now?

LOGAN: Chopin Nocturne

MARIANA: ... Can you play a little bit for me?

**[TAPE]** Logan begins playing Chopin Nocturne.

**TAPE [LEAH RIMAN]:** "I mean.. There's that famous quote that I always reference. Where words fail music speaks-- you know what I mean? That's ... That's him. You may not understand him. You may not, you know, but like when he starts playing, it's like, it's all over."

**[TAPE]** Logan continues playing.

**TAPE [LOGAN RIMAN]:** "Beautiful!"

***Pause***

***Theme music***

**MC:** This episode of Onomatopoeia- was created by me, Mariana Castro. Onomatopoeia is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Joanne Faryon is our executive producer and professor. Original theme music by Lee Feldman. Our graphic was created by Sunni Bean. Special thanks to Columbia Digital Librarian Michell Wilson.

***Theme music fades out***