

An Analysis of Johann Sebastian Bach's Keyboard Partita in B-flat Major, Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata Op. 53, Chopin's Ballade in G Minor, and Voříšek's Fantasia in C, Op. 12, using historical, theoretical, and stylistic considerations

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Abstract

The purpose of this report is to analyze the works performed on the author's master's recital on March 29th, 2026. The works featured on the recital are *Keyboard Partita in B-flat Major* by Johann Sebastian Bach, *Sonata 21 "Waldstein"* by Ludwig van Beethoven, *Fantasia in C* by Jan Václav Voříšek, and *Ballade in G minor* by Fryderyk Chopin. The work approaches the analysis of each work using historical, theoretical, and stylistic considerations.

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Chapter 1 - Bach Partita No. 1 in B-Flat Major, BWV 825

Biographical Information on Johann Sebastian Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, a settlement in what is now modern-day Germany, in March of 1685 to his father Johann Ambrosius Bach and his mother Maria Elisabeth Lämmerhirt.¹ He was baptized on March 23rd in Georgenkirche, giving him the likely birthdate of March 21st.² Little is known about his early life, though it is known that he was born into a musical family. His father worked as a musician at the ducal court of Saxe-Eisenach, and his uncle, Johann Bach, was the organist of the Predigerkirche in Erfurt.³ It is likely that Johann Sebastian started learning music from his father, as it is presumed that he began teaching him to play the violin. According to his son, Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach, Johann Sebastian did not have any formal teaching from the keyboard until he went to Ohrdruf, when he was 10 years old.⁴ At just nine years old, Johann Sebastian's mother, Maria Elisabeth Lämmerhirt, passed away. His father remarried just a few months later to Barbara Margretha, before passing away in February 1695.

At just ten years of age with no living parents, Bach and his brother Jacob moved to Ohrdruf to live under the care of their elder brother, Johann Christoph, who was a church organist there. Here, Johann Sebastian began his formal keyboard training from his older brother. It is possible that Bach also started learning to compose at Ohrdruf, by teaching himself via copying

¹ Stanley Sadie, John Tyrrell, and George Grove, eds., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2. ed., repr. with minor corr (London: Macmillan, 2002), 309.

² Hans T. David, ed., *The Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, Rev., with a supplement (Norton, 1972).

³ Sadie et al., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

⁴ Ibid.

manuscripts. Johann Christoph had a book containing works by several of the most renowned keyboard composers of the time and would not allow the young Johann Sebastian to use it. Determined to use the book, Johann Sebastian supposedly copied the book by moonlight. Christoph found and confiscated the copy, though Sebastian would later recover it.⁵

In March of 1700, Bach left school at Ohrdruf to move to Lüneburg. School records state that he left for Lüneburg “on account of insufficient school funds.”⁶ Early biographers of J.S. Bach assumed that Johann Christoph died, and Sebastian fled out of desperation. However, biographers today know that Christoph died in 1721, and conclude that Sebastian left Ohrdruf due to lack of lodging available at his brother’s house.⁷ He arrived at least by April 3rd, 1700, as he is listed on the register for the Mettenchor (Matin’s choir) by then.⁸ During his stay at Lüneburg, Bach received an orthodox Lutheran education, and studied subjects such as logic, Latin, Greek, arithmetic, history, geography, and German poetry.⁹ He would also continue his development in keyboard playing further. He traveled several times to Hamburg to hear Johann Adam Reinken, who was a famous organist during Bach’s younger years, though it is uncertain if he ever met him.¹⁰

His stay at Lüneburg was short-lived. It is unknown exactly when Bach left Lüneburg, or what the circumstances of his departure were, but he was appointed organist of the New Church in Arnstadt on August 9th, 1703, at just eighteen years old.¹¹ His time at Arnstadt deepened his

⁵ Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Life, Art, and Work* (Da Capo Press, 1970), 11.

⁶ David, *The Bach Reader*, 47.

⁷ Sadie et al., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 310-311.

⁸ David, *The Bach Reader* 48.

⁹ Sadie et al., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 311.

¹⁰ Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 12.

¹¹ David, *The Bach Reader*, 49-50.

love and talent for the organ, but it was also met with disciplinary issues, and Bach eventually left Arnstadt. On June 15th, 1707, he was appointed organist at Mühlhausen, and he resigned as organist at Arnstadt two weeks later on June 29th.¹² Though his time at Mühlhausen was short, there were several important events in Bach's life and career that occurred during his time as organist at St. Blasius. It was here where he married Maria Barbara, daughter of Johann Michael Bach on October 17th, 1707.¹³ Johann Sebastian's first published work was also written during his time in Mühlhausen. It was a "Gratulatory Church Motetto" for the town council in Mühlhausen.¹⁴ The work premiered on February 4th, 1708, and is titled "Gott ist mein König."¹⁵

Later that year, Bach had the opportunity to play the organ before Wilhelm Ernst, the Duke of Weimar. Ernst offered Bach a position in his court, and on June 25, 1708, Bach wrote to the council requesting his dismissal from Mühlhausen. In his letter, Bach cited a better salary at Weimar, as well as a better culture of church music as the reason for taking the new position. He wanted to work toward the goal of "well-regulated church music," and stated that music at every other township was "often better than the harmony that is fashioned here." The council granted his dismissal, provided that he continue to help with the organ renovation project at St. Blasius.¹⁶

Bach's appointment in Weimar was a big step in his life and compositional career. He was able to receive a significant pay increase from his previous positions, which helped him as his family began to grow. Six of Bach's children were born in Weimar. His salary was also increased multiple times during his time in Weimar. In terms of Bach's compositional career,

¹² David, *The Bach Reader*, 55-56.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, 57.

¹⁵ Sadie et al., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 349.

¹⁶ David, *The Bach Reader*.

Forkel describes Weimar as a “particularly agreeable atmosphere in which to cultivate his genius.”¹⁷ Although he was initially hired as the court organist, Bach produced his own compositions. It is likely that most of Bach’s organ works were written in Weimar. The duke undoubtedly enjoyed Bach’s playing and his compositions, as he would be appointed to Concertmeister in 1714. This appointment came with the responsibility of writing and performing a new cantata each month, helping further his compositional output.¹⁸

Though Bach appeared to have been in good standing for the majority of his time at Weimar, the last few months suggest some strife between him and the duke. Bach’s attitude appears to have changed when he learned that the duke was looking to fill the newly opened role of Kapellmeister and would not consider Bach for the role.¹⁹ This may have been further ignited when Bach learned that his contemporary and friend Georg Telemann (who was also godfather to one of his children) was being considered for the role. While negotiations with Telemann fell through, Bach was already looking elsewhere for a Kapellmeister role. The duke kept refusing Bach’s request for dismissal, and documents show that duke had him imprisoned from November 6th through December 2nd, 1717, for “too stubbornly forcing the issue of his dismissal.”²⁰ After his arrest, the duke gave Bach notice of his “unfavorable discharge.”²¹

Just days after his release, Bach moved to Cöthen, where he was appointed Kapellmeister.²² Here, Bach would continue to compose music, lead music ensembles, and assist

¹⁷ Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 15-16.

¹⁸ David, *The Bach Reader*, 67.

¹⁹ Sadie et al., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 316.

²⁰ David, *The Bach Reader*, 75.

²¹ Ibid.

²² David, *The Bach Reader*, 76.

with organ playing and repair. He would also undergo significant changes in his personal life. In the summer of 1720, his wife passed away, as records show that her funeral and burial were on July 7th of that year.²³ C.P.E. Bach writes that Bach was away on an extended trip with the prince in Carlsbad, and that Bach returned to find his wife dead and already buried.²⁴ On December 3rd, 1721, Bach would remarry to Anna Magdalena. Little is known about her, other than that she was the daughter of Johann Caspar Wilcke, a court trumpeter. Before their marriage, she and Bach were godparents to a child named Hahn. In the baptism registers, she is described as a “court singer” and a “chamber musician.”²⁵

At Cöthen, Bach would continue to write church music, while also writing several of his most significant works. The Brandenburg Concertos were dedicated on March 24th, 1721, to the Margrave Christian Ludwig.²⁶ He also completed or began some of his most important didactic works as well. He wrote the *Little Clavier Book for Anna Magdalena Bach*, dated 1722.²⁷ He at least began to write the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, possibly his most important and influential work. On the title page, Bach wrote that this collection of preludes and fugues was “For the Use and Profit of the Musical Youth Desirous of Learning as well as for the Pastime of those Already Skilled in this Study.”²⁸ It is possible that only part of this collection was completed in Cöthen, as the title page is dated to 1722, while the end of the book is dated to 1732.²⁹

²³ Ibid, 78.

²⁴ Sadie et al., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 317.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ David, *The Bach Reader*, 82.

²⁷ Ibid, 84.

²⁸ Ibid , 85.

²⁹ Sadie et al., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 318.

After the death of Kuhnau, Cantor of the Thomasschule in Leipzig, several men applied to fill the position, including Bach. Among the men who applied was Telemann. One of the duties of the position was to teach Latin, which Telemann refused to do. He was still selected anyway, though declined the position after his pay was increased in Hamburg.³⁰ Two other candidates removed their names from consideration, as they were also offered higher pay elsewhere. This left Bach and two other candidates, all of whom refused to teach Latin. Councilor Platz of the Leipzig town council said of the remaining candidates, “since the best man could not be obtained, mediocre ones would have to be accepted.”³¹ Thus, Bach was appointed as Cantor in Leipzig, where he would remain for the rest of his life. He received his dismissal from Cöthen on April 13, 1723, and would be formally installed at the new post on June 1st.³²

The Cantor position at Leipzig came with many responsibilities. Forkel states that Bach had to take charge of the musical direction for four churches: St. Thomas, St. Nicolas, St. Peter, and the New Church, as well as occasionally being in charge of music at St. John’s church and University Church of St. Paul.³³ His workload also increased, as he focused on writing a new cantata every Sunday. Though it came with much responsibility, the position at Leipzig also provided Bach many benefits he had not received in his career. He received a significant pay increase and was provided an official residence in the schoolhouse.³⁴

³⁰ Ibid, 319.

³¹ David, *The Bach Reader*, 88.

³² Ibid, 93.

³³ Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 29-30.

³⁴ Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 36-37.

At Leipzig, Bach made significant steps in his career. One of his most significant works was published early in his time at Leipzig. On the Good Friday service in April 1724, Bach's St. John's Passion was first performed.³⁵ The St. John passion, as with the St. Matthew and St. Luke, is a work of Biblical text set to four-part oratorio. It was Bach's first large-scale work while in Leipzig.³⁶

During the first few years at Leipzig Bach struggled to flourish musically. The Rector at the Leipzig school, Johann Heinrich Ernesti, was over 70 years old by Bach's arrival, and the school's musical situation was poor.³⁷ In 1730, Bach wrote a detailed report on the requirements for "a well-appointed church music" to the council of Leipzig.³⁸ In this report, he details the requirements for choir and instrumental ensembles, and explains that the training required for admittance into the school (and particularly into the music programs) needed to be more rigorous. He gave detailed lists of the instrumentalists he needed, and how there were not enough town musicians to fill the positions. He ended the draft by listing every boy in the choirs and ending with this line: "Total: 17 usable, 20 not yet usable, and 17 unfit."³⁹ However, the council would not acquiesce to Bach's demands for funds and increased standards.⁴⁰ The situation at the school was bad enough that Bach considered looking for other positions.⁴¹ However, his fortunes

³⁵ David, *The Bach Reader*, 96.

³⁶ Sadie et al., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

³⁷ Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 39.

³⁸ David, *The Bach Reader*, 120.

³⁹ Ibid, 124.

⁴⁰ Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 41.

⁴¹ Ibid.

changed when Johann Mattias Gesner became Rector at the school and granted Bach's requests.⁴² Bach would not make another effort to leave Leipzig.

It was around this time that Bach began to put more of a focus on his instrumental works. His first published instrumental work was the Partita I in B flat major, published in 1726.⁴³ The six keyboard partitas are considered monumental works in keyboard literature. Partita I was published individually, as were the rest of the partitas (except for II and III, which were published together). All the Partitas were then issued together as Opus 1 in 1731.⁴⁴ These combined editions went through two different editions. They were likely very popular, as almost 50 copies of the original printed editions still exist. This began a shift in Bach's compositional output, as he continued to publish keyboard works, which were showcased at weekly concerts at the Leipzig Collegium Musicum.⁴⁵ These would include many of his instrumental works composed during his time at Cöthen, as well as new works composed in Leipzig.⁴⁶ At these concerts, audiences got to hear the familiar sacred cantatas, as well as his clavier and violin concertos, and orchestral suites.⁴⁷ Forkel writes that Bach's showcasing of instrumental and sacred works at the weekly concerts led to an increase in his favorability and popularity in Leipzig. He states that Bach at this time "took his rightful place in the musical life of the city."⁴⁸

As his popularity grew, Bach continued to be involved in major events and festivals around the city. He provided music for university celebrations, patriotic occasions, and played at

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ David, *The Bach Reader*, 105.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 105-106.

⁴⁵ Sadie et al., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 42.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

private and public events for important people in Leipzig.⁴⁹ For example, Bach played several of his works for the eleventh birthday of the electoral prince in 1733, provided the music for the celebration of the king in the following year, and played for the wedding for the princess in Leipzig.⁵⁰

Bach also would continue to publish some of his most significant works, for which he is now well-known. In 1742, he published the Goldberg Variations—a set of 30 variations for clavier.⁵¹ These variations are widely regarded as one of the best works of all keyboard literature, and performing this massive work takes well over an hour. A couple years later, in 1744, Bach published Book II of the Well-Tempered Clavier.⁵² This completed the first set, giving two books of preludes and fugues in every key (48 in total).

By the late 1730s, Bach was already famous in Leipzig. This led to him resigning from the Collegium Musicum and shifting his focus back to organ works for the last decade of his life. His production of cantatas began to slow down at this time as well.⁵³ After his health deteriorated in the last years of his life, Bach died on Friday, July 31st, 1750.⁵⁴ When he died, his estate and belongings were worth almost two years of income.⁵⁵ Despite this wealth, his wife, Anna Magdalena, and the remaining children under her care would be left with very little. Forkel even

⁴⁹ Ibid, 43.

⁵⁰ Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 43-44; David, *The Bach Reader*, 158.

⁵¹ David, *The Bach Reader*, 171.

⁵² Ibid, 172.

⁵³ Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 46.

⁵⁴ David, *The Bach Reader*, 188.

⁵⁵ Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 38.

states that she died an “alms-woman,” and that “gross neglect” from Bach could not be excused.⁵⁶

Bach’s last work, *The Art of Fugue*, was published posthumously in 1751, according to his wishes.⁵⁷ It is an unfinished work with unspecified instrumentation. It contains a collection of various fugues, the last of which is unfinished, as stated on the back of the title page.⁵⁸

Though loved and highly regarded in his own time, Johann Sebastian Bach would fall out of popularity shortly after his death. It was not until his music was rediscovered in the 1800s that he would become highly popular again. However, today he is regarded by many as the greatest composer in history, due to his massive compositional output and genius in contrapuntal writing.

Theoretical Analysis

Praeludium

The first movement of the work is a singing prelude that sets the mood of the rest of the partita. It begins with a two-measure phrase with a noticeable right-hand melody that oscillates between an ascending walking melody and repeated B-flats with trill markings over them. The left hand accompanies the phrase with simple line consisting of mostly stepwise eighth-notes or quarter notes. In measure 3, the right hand presents a counter-melody-like figure of 5 ascending 32nd notes that fall back down in response. This figure is then sequenced down twice before changing in measure 4, ascending further to a G. Here, the opening material is restated in the left hand in the dominant key. In the first seven measures, Bach gives a good demonstration of invertible counterpoint, where the right- and left-hand parts are stated, then inverted.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 48.

⁵⁷ David, *The Bach Reader*, 198.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

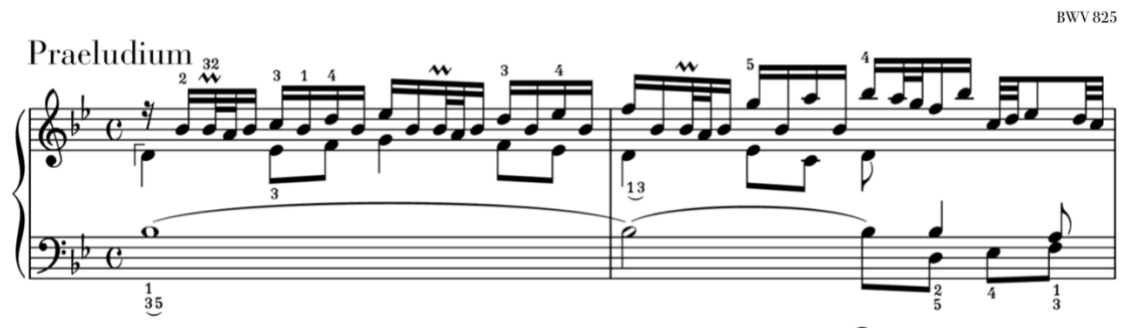


Figure 1.1. Bach Partita in B-flat Major, BWV 825, “Praeludium” mm. 1-2

There is then a development-like section, where Bach builds on the motives he introduced and takes them through several keys, including D major, G minor, and C major. In measure 17, Bach signals the end of the movement by restating the opening material in the dominant key in the left hand. It differs slightly from the statement in measures 5-6 in that the second beat of measure 18 uses E-flat instead of E natural. This brings back the tonic key of B-flat major and fully restates the opening in the right hand to wrap up the movement.

Allemande

The second movement of the partita is an allemande, which is traditionally described as a serious and grave dance.⁵⁹ However, Johann Mattheson described it as “expressing satisfaction or amusement and delighting in order and calm.”⁶⁰ This description certainly fits the B-flat Allemande best. It primarily features arpeggios, a feature Mattheson also describes as a character of the dance. It begins with a sequence of sweeping descending, then ascending, arpeggios in the right hand with minimal accompaniment in the left hand. Looking at the downbeats of each measure in the right hand, one can more easily see the sequencing used to create a climactic

⁵⁹ Neil C. Rutman, *Stories, Images, and Magic from the Piano Literature* (Torchflame Books, 2015), 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

point in the first phrase in measure 4. The sixteenth notes continue throughout and remain almost entirely uninterrupted for the rest of the movement. One interesting passage is found in measures 17 and 18. Here, Bach uses a legato notation known as *style luthé*, which is when longer note values are used to fill out the harmony.⁶¹ Here, Bach uses this notation, almost creating four separate voices. For the first two beats, the outer voices occur on the beat, as opposed to the off-beats. On beat three, this is reversed, and the inner voices sound on the beat. This difficult passage should be executed by bringing out the longer voices that sound on the beat.

The Allemande is in binary form, with repeat signs surrounding both sections. The A section ends in the dominant key of F, preparing for the B section to begin with the same opening material in this new key. The allemande does not make as much use of ornamentation as the prelude did, though there are a few noticeable trills throughout. This is probably due to the quicker tempo, which makes it more difficult to execute ornaments, and reduces the need to fill the melody with extra trills to make it more interesting.



Figure 1.2. Bach Partita in B-flat Major, BWV 825, “Allemande” mm. 1-6

⁶¹ Paul Badura-Skoda and Alfred Clayton, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 2002), 120.

Corrente

Derived from the Italian verb “correre,” meaning, “to run,” the Corrente is an Italian folk dance with running steps.⁶² Friederich Griepenkerl writes that a “rapid allegro is well suited to [the Corrente].”⁶³ This particular movement, like the allemande, features arpeggios. There is very little stepwise motion in the movement, and most of the music is disconnected. Just as with the allemande, the movement is in binary form and moves to the dominant key for the end of the A section and the beginning of the B section.

Rhythmically, the Corrente consists of continuous triplets in the right hand. On an initial look at the music, one might notice the dotted eighth and sixteenth notes in the left hand. If someone were to attempt to execute this rhythm against the right hand triplets with a modern conception of rhythmic notation, it would be quite difficult. In the baroque era, rhythmic notation was still being developed. Bach’s son Carl Philipp Emanuel writes that when triplets are accompanied with dotted patterns, the shorter note value should coincide with the triplet rhythm.⁶⁴ He then provides an example of this below, which the performer of the Corrente should follow.

⁶² Rutman, *Stories, Images, and Magic from the Piano Literature*, 6.

⁶³ Ibid, 7.

⁶⁴ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, 1st Edition (W. W. Norton, 1949), 160.

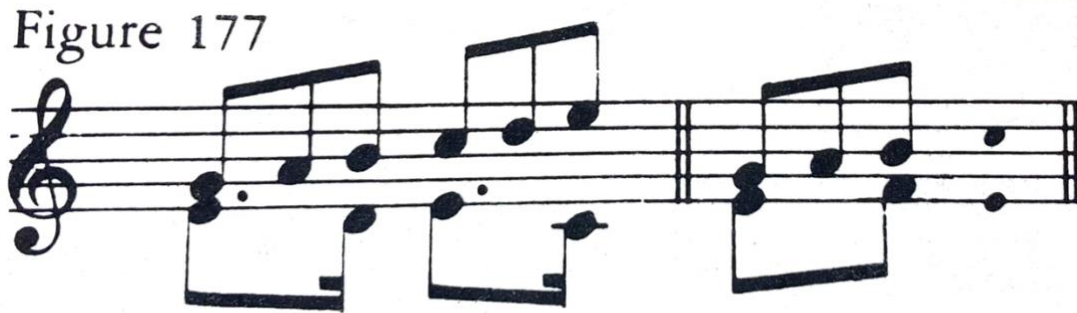


Figure 1.3. CPE Bach dotted rhythms example

Sarabande

The Sarabande offers a sharp contrast to the two movements that preceded it. Sarabandes, which are Spanish in origin, are dances that are much slower in tempo.⁶⁵ These dances are in triple meter, and often have a stronger emphasis on the second beat of each measure.⁶⁶ This is seen in the first few measures of the B-flat Sarabande, as the second beats tend to have longer note values.

⁶⁵ Rutman, *Stories, Images, and Magic from the Piano Literature*, 7.

⁶⁶ Fernando Valenti, *A Performer's Guide to the Keyboard Partitas of J.S. Bach* (Yale University Press, 1989), 13-14.



Figure 1.4. Bach Partita in B-flat Major, BWV 825, “Sarabande” mm. 1-4

Upon looking at it, one might find that the work seems much more disjointed, especially in light of the preceding Allemande and Corrente. Listeners will find this to be true when hearing performances of this movement, as soloists tend to vary in tempo and make use of rubato.

Menuets I and II

The tempo picks back up a little bit in the Menuets. This is the French spelling of the word. The traditional method of playing these menuets is to play them in an A-B-A form: playing the Menuet I with all repeats, then Menuet II with all repeats, then playing through the first again without repeats.⁶⁷ This A-B-A form is not seen again in any of the other partitas.⁶⁸

Menuet I is reminiscent of the Allemande and Corrente movements, as there is a continuous line of eighth notes in the right hand. Menuet II has a slower rhythm, using eighth notes only on a few occasions. The performer is also at liberty to use embellishments. When

⁶⁷ Ibid, 18.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

listening to different interpretations of this movement, one will hear various ornamentations and even additional notes used to transition between Menuets I and II.

Gigue

The Gigue is possibly the most famous movement in the B-flat Partita. Some editions of the B-flat Partita title this movement with the Italian “Giga,” as opposed to the French “Gigue.”⁶⁹ The Henle editions use the French word, which will be used here. The Gigue is yet another dance movement that is fast and flowing, but not furious.⁷⁰ The difficulty in this movement is the hand crossings in the left hand. Throughout the entire movement, the right hand has the accompaniment pattern of repeated ascending eighth note pairs. Meanwhile, the left hand plays the downbeat above the right hand, then plays beats two and three in the lower register, before returning to the upper register for beat 4, leading into the downbeat of the next measure.



Figure 1.5. Bach Partita in B-flat Major, BWV 825, “Gigue” mm. 1-8

⁶⁹ Ibid, 22.

⁷⁰ Rutman, *Stories, Images, and Magic from the Piano Literature*, 8.

Stylistic and Technical Considerations

Tempo

There are no tempo indications given in most editions of the Bach Keyboard Partitas, and no original tempo markings. Instead, the performer should use the dance titles and context from the music itself to deduce the best tempo for each movement. As discussed in the previous section, movements such as Allemande and Corrente are typically associated with quicker tempos, while Sarabande movements will be a little slower.

It is also a good idea to use the music itself when determining the tempo. For example, in the Corrente, the disconnected notes and lack of stepwise motion might indicate a more articulate movement, suggesting a quicker tempo. This would probably be faster than the more flowing Allemande. However, some musicians play the Allemande much faster than the Corrente. Due to the ambiguity and lack of defined tempo markings, there will be some variety to the pace at which performers take each movement. However, one should be sure to use judgment and consider the character they want the movement to convey when determining the performance tempo.

Articulation

In his book *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*, Paul Badura-Skoda claims that the biggest mistake pianists make when performing Bach is “non-existent or incorrect articulation.”⁷¹ He argues that this can often happen by playing one articulation, whether staccato or legato, throughout the entirety of a movement, citing C.P.E. Bach’s disdain toward such performances. Though certain movements can be mostly staccato or legato, one should not play

⁷¹ Badura-Skoda and Clayton, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*, 92.

in one rigid way the whole time. A good example of this can be found in the Allemande and Minuets of the B-flat partita. Though both movements are generally legato, there is a technique often employed in Bach's music known as "legatissimo," or *style luthé*. This technique involves holding certain notes of a single melodic line to bring them out.⁷² It creates an effect that there is more than one voice in a single melodic line. An example of this can be seen at the end of both sections of the Allemande. At the end of the A section, Bach uses notation to demonstrate holding the downbeats longer, while the end of the B section uses straight sixteenth notes, though the *style luthé* technique should still be used.



Figure 1.6. Bach Partita in B-flat Major, BWV 825, “Allemande” mm. 16-17, 37-38

Dynamics

Dynamics are a significant interpretive issue for music by J.S. Bach. Since the partitas were written for clavichord or harpsichord, which have far less (if any) dynamic range than the piano, there are no dynamic markings in the original scores. However, with the modern piano, the ability to control dynamics and phrasing must be exploited.

Some baroque musicians, such as François Couperin, C.P.E. Bach, and Johann Quantz, have provided some insight into how dynamics should be approached. Quantz, who lived to see the early development of the pianoforte, explains that the character of the baroque piece must be

⁷² Ibid, 120.

maintained, and extreme dynamics should be avoided, and the instruments “must not be handled with more force than their constitution permits.”⁷³

Another important feature in Bach’s works is the existence of a climax with multiple voices, creating a thick texture. This is one method baroque composers would use to control dynamics on a harpsichord or clavichord. By simply adding more notes, the volume will increase. The performer can take this as a suggestion to crescendo or diminuendo, as voices are added or removed. However, though it is a good idea to shape melodic lines, one should not change the character of a movement of baroque music. Unlike later classical or romantic music, the structure of baroque music limits the ability to create a wide dynamic contrast. While you can use phrasing to make melodies beautiful, Badura-Skoda suggests that it is “wrong to begin a Bach fugue like a purring kitten, and to end like a roaring lion.”⁷⁴

Ornamentation

As with any baroque music, the Bach B-flat partita cannot be analyzed without discussing the topic of ornamentation. The editors of the Henle edition of the keyboard partitas give a helpful table of how to perform the various ornamentations used throughout the partitas.

⁷³ Ibid, 134.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 142.

Verzierungstabelle 1 / Table of ornaments 1 / Tableau des ornements 1

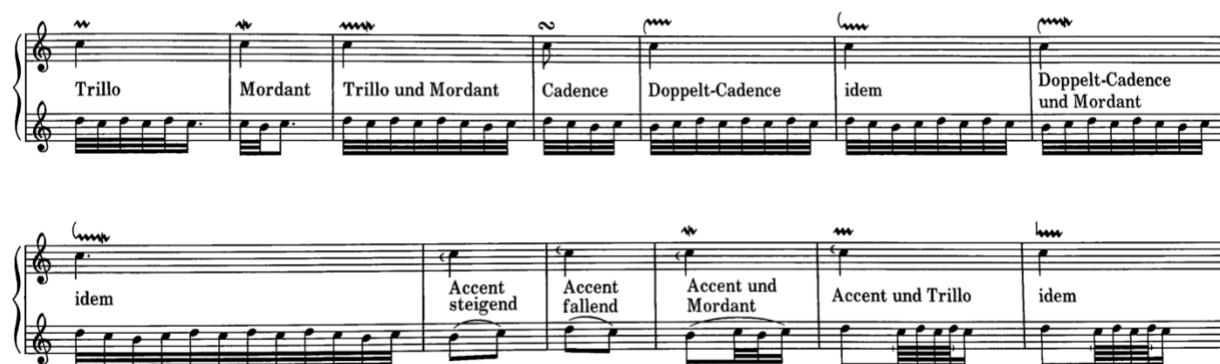


Figure 1.7. Table of ornaments

Ornaments were used frequently in the Baroque era because the harpsichord lacked a sustain pedal and could not project sound as well as the modern piano. Ornaments helped decorate melodic lines, particularly when there were longer note values. Some editions, such as the Henle edition, also mark some ornamentations in brackets to indicate that only certain later issues and manuscripts contain these additions. It is uncertain whether these additions were made by Bach himself. Therefore, some discretion is needed regarding whether it is appropriate to attempt to add ornamentation. One such area is in the Corrente, where additional trills are indicated for certain longer note values, as indicated inside the brackets.



Figure 1.8. Bach Partita in B-flat Major, BWV 825, “Corrente” mm. 5-14

Similarly, there are additional ornamentations for Menuet II. In this movement, some manuscripts contain added mordants and cadences. One might consider using these ornamentations to add more detail to the short and simple Minuet II.



Figure 1.9. Bach Partita in B-flat Major, BWV 825, “Minuet II”

Pedal

The use of pedal in works by J.S. Bach is sure to draw strong opinions from many classical pianists. Some believe that the use of the pedal should be strictly forbidden due to the fact that the harpsichord and clavichord do not have a sustain pedal. Other pianists employ the pedal for works by Bach and can make it sound beautiful. While it is probably a good idea to use the sustain pedal sparingly, there are a few situations where it might be appropriate and beneficial to use the sustain pedal. For example, in the Praeludium, there are several places, such as the passage in measure 12, that require large leaps to the bass. Some pedal here to maintain a feeling of legato and connect the low C would certainly be an acceptable use of the pedal.



Figure 1.10. Bach Partita in B-flat Major, BWV 825, “Allemande” mm. 11-12

Chapter 2 - Beethoven, Sonata in C Major, Op. 53 “Waldstein”

Biographical Information on Ludwig van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in 1770 in Bonn, Germany. He was born into a musical family. His father, Johann van Beethoven, taught Ludwig piano and violin at the young age of four years.⁷⁵ As he entered adolescence, he had several teachers who taught him music theory, composition, organ, and piano. By 1783, at the age of 13, he published his first significant compositions—piano sonatas dedicated to Elector Maximilian Friedrich (WoO47).⁷⁶

Beethoven became well-known in the musical world at a young age. After dedicating the piano sonatas to Count Ferdinand Waldstein, he received an almost prophetic letter from the Count saying that in moving to Vienna, Beethoven would “receive Mozart’s spirit from Haydn’s hands.”⁷⁷ Though there are conflicting reports, it is almost certain that he did get to meet Mozart on a trip to Vienna in 1787, and possibly even played for him. The purpose of the move to Vienna, which took place in November of 1792, was to study under the renowned Franz Joseph Haydn and to expand Beethoven’s music opportunities in the city known for music. Beethoven’s studies with Haydn only lasted for about a year, as he did not have a great relationship with Haydn. However, they remained “outwardly cordial.”⁷⁸

In Vienna, Beethoven made a name for himself as both a composer and performer. Initially, he held concerts at private estates to showcase his virtuosity, as public performances

⁷⁵ Barry Cooper, ed., *The Beethoven Compendium: A Guide to Beethoven’s Life and Music*, 1. paperback ed. with corr (Thames and Hudson, 1996), 78.

⁷⁶ Joseph Kerman et al., “Beethoven, Ludwig Van,” Oxford University Press, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40026>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

were not commonplace at the time. However, he soon held larger events, such as benefit concerts, to showcase his talent and abilities to the world. During his first decade in Vienna, Beethoven continued to make a name for himself as a musician, both through his performances and his compositions.

By the time Beethoven began to compose the “*Waldstein*” Sonata, his hearing had declined significantly. He soon began to come to terms with the fact that his hearing would not improve, despite numerous attempts to find medical assistance to restore function in his hearing. The most detailed and notorious document of Beethoven’s struggle with his progressive deafness is his undelivered letter addressed to his brothers Carl and Johann, known as the Heiligenstadt Testament. The letter is named for the small village that Beethoven temporarily moved to during the summer of 1802 on the recommendation of his doctor, who hoped that escaping the busyness of Vienna to the countryside would aid in the recovery of his ears. In this letter, he writes of coming to terms with his deafness, his thoughts of suicide, and choice to continue living. The letter begins with Beethoven describing his worsening condition to his brothers. He reveals that he has come to terms with the fact that he will not improve, calling his condition “uncurable.”⁷⁹ His frustrations with the doctors, the struggles that life with poor hearing presents, and his feeling of solitude as a result are all described. In this moving letter, he states that he was on the verge of taking his own life. Beethoven then reveals that it was art and virtue that kept him from going through with it. He felt obligated to remain living in order to produce all the music and art that was inside him. “Thanks to [virtue] and to my art, I did not end my life by suicide.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Cooper, *The Beethoven Compendium*, 170.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

The Heiligenstadt Testament is a significant turning point in Beethoven's life and career. Though it reflects his inner turmoil, depression, and struggles, the years following his stay at Heiligenstadt in 1802 were Beethoven's most productive. This period, from 1802 to around 1812 is sometimes referred to as Beethoven's "heroic" period, where he began to write some of his most well-known and influential works. These works included his third symphony, "*Eroica*," his fifth symphony, the "*Waldstein*" sonata, Op. 53, and the "*Appassionata*" sonata, Op. 57. "*Eroica*," Op. 55, is one of the most influential works of classical music. This work took the symphony in a new direction, as Beethoven used many innovations in this composition. It expanded the genre to extremes in both length and range. The work was exceptionally long for a symphony at the time and makes use of a wider dynamic range. "*Eroica*" also expanded the orchestration for the symphony, adding an additional horn player. This work was originally dedicated to the French revolutionary, Napoleon Bonaparte. Originally titled the "Bonaparte" symphony, this work was a tribute to an idealized Bonaparte and his revolutionary, or heroic character. Upon receiving word that Napoleon had declared himself emperor in 1804, Beethoven furiously erased his name from the cover of the symphony, leaving a hole that is still visible on the score.⁸¹ The work later became known simply as the "*Eroica*," or "heroic" symphony.

Composed contemporaneously with "*Eroica*" were the "*Waldstein*" and "*Appassionata*" sonatas, Op. 53 and Op. 57 respectively. These two works are some of the most important piano sonatas he composed. They are both large in scale but contrasting in style. The "*Waldstein*," which will be discussed in detail later, is very symphonic in nature, meaning that it has continuous momentum, overlapping cadences, and simple (perhaps lack of) ornamentation. On

⁸¹ Kerman et al., "Beethoven, Ludwig Van."

the other hand, “*Appassionata*” has a looser structure and is more “imaginative.”⁸² There is more space and recitative sections, giving it a soloistic quality that is more apparent than in the “*Waldstein*” sonata.

The “*Waldstein*” sonata is dedicated to Beethoven’s longtime patron and friend, Count Ferdinand Waldstein. Coming from Vienna to Bonn in 1788, Waldstein had a great impact on Beethoven’s musical career. It is likely that he had a significant influence on Beethoven’s move to Vienna to further his musical experience and opportunities. Upon arrival in Vienna, Beethoven was able to more easily connect with aristocrats in Vienna, thanks to his association with Count Waldstein. The Op. 53 sonata is the only work dedicated to Waldstein, though other works of Beethoven have associations with the Count. His unpublished work, WoO 1, was the music for Waldstein’s ballet, titled *Ritterballet*, though it was not made public that Beethoven was the composer of the music for the ballet. In addition, WoO 67 is a piano duet for four hands of 8 variations on a theme by Waldstein, who was also an experienced composer.

In 1804 and 1805, Beethoven took on another significant work: his only opera, titled “*Fidelio*.” It was first performed in November of 1805 and was met with mixed reviews. After making significant cuts to shorten the production, the opera was performed again twice in 1806 and then not again until 1814. During the composition of this opera, Beethoven was hopeful for a romantic relationship with Josephine von Brunsvik, a countess whose husband had passed away in 1804. Beethoven was Josephine’s piano teacher and eventually developed strong romantic feelings for her. He wrote 13 letters to her during a three-year period from 1804 to 1807. Unfortunately for Beethoven, Josephine, while keeping a close friendship with Beethoven, did not reciprocate any romantic interest he had for her.

⁸² Ibid.

In addition to the “*Waldstein*” and “*Appassionata*” piano sonatas, Beethoven produced many other significant projects during this time. Op. 54, Piano Sonata No. 22 in F major was published in 1804, and his fourth piano concerto in G major was published in 1806. He also published three string quartets, Op. 59, and his 4th symphony, Op. 60, in the same year. This symphony, one of his less popular ones today, is described by Robert Schumann as “a slender Greek maiden between two Norse giants,” in reference to his grand 3rd and 5th symphonies.⁸³ Dedicated to Count Franz Oppersdorf, this work, though not as significant and popular as his prior 3rd and later 5th symphonies, still revealed new techniques and Beethoven’s mastery of form.

These years of composition were perhaps the most productive of Beethoven’s career, as he composed or began composing the most expansive aforementioned projects in a relatively short amount of time. As a result, the “*Waldstein*” sonata and its contemporaneous works reflect Beethoven’s mastery of form, and his experimental style.

Theoretical Analysis

I. Allegro Con Brio

The Sonata begins with an ostinato eighth-note motive, beginning on C major and continued in the left hand for the first ten measures. At the end of the second measure, the harmony moves from the tonic to the secondary dominant on D, before resolving to the dominant in measure 4. In this first four-measure phrase, Beethoven gives two motives that will be used throughout the first movement. The first is the ascending line from the third beat of the second measure to the downbeat of the third measure. The second motive, which is used more

⁸³ Lewis Lockwood, *Beethoven’s Symphonies: An Artistic Vision*, First published as a Norton paperback (New York London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), 79.

frequently, is the dotted quarter note followed by descending sixteenths. There is then an echo motive in measure four in a higher register.

The second four-measure phrase is a sequence of the first phrase, as Beethoven moves the material down to the key of B-flat major. At the end of this phrase, we see a compositional technique that is a defining characteristic of this movement: experimentation between major and minor modes. The echo in the high register in measure 8 is changed to the minor mode. This experimentation is made more apparent at measures 12 and 13, where a descending C minor arpeggio leads to a dramatic fermata on a G. This leaves the listener in suspense, using a dramatic pause on the parallel harmony of the original tonic key, C major.

Following the fermata in measure 13, the transition to the B theme begins. The opening theme is repeated with an embellished sixteenth-note rhythm and brought to a German augmented 6th chord in measure 22. This prepares the transitional key of E minor, which eventually resolves to the parallel E major in measure 35, yet another example of Beethoven's experimentation with parallel modes.

The B theme begins in measure 35, in an unusual key area. While most Sonata form movements move to the dominant key for the second subject, Beethoven takes this movement to the mediant key E major. The theme is a lyrical choral motive, in stark contrast to the forward-driving A theme at the opening of the work. Eight measures after the initial statement of the B theme motive, the theme is restated with embellishment starting in measure 43. There are different interpretations of what exactly is the melody from this point. Is it the left-hand choral theme, or the embellished triplets in the right hand? It might be best explained that the right-hand triplets are the melody, as they are constantly moving and not an ostinato rhythm. Regardless, what is most noteworthy in the entire B theme, from measure 35 to 73, is Beethoven's use of

rhythm to create forward-driving momentum. This technique is highlighted by Michael Broyles. The chart below illustrates how Beethoven gradually shortens and modifies the rhythm. This leads to a trill followed by a big cadence in m. 73, which marks the beginning of the closing theme of the exposition.

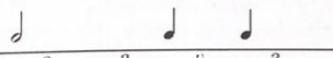
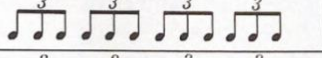
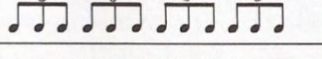
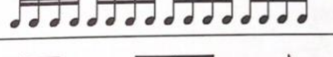
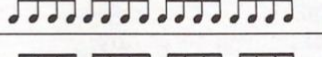
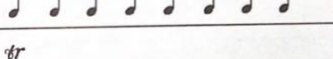
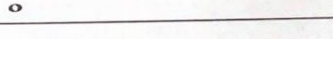
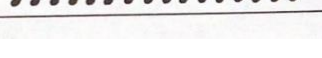
MEASURE	PRINCIPAL VOICE	ACCOMPANING VOICE
35		
41		
54		
58		
62		
66		
72		

Figure 2.1. Rhythm of Second Subject of “Waldstein” Sonata, First Mvt.

The closing theme has elements from both the choral B theme and the sixteenth notes from the transitional material in the passage at m. 35. Beethoven makes more use of parallel modes, as measures 74-77 are in E major, while measures 78-81 move to E minor. The key center then becomes unstable from measure 80 to measure 89, before landing on F major, bringing back the opening eighth note motive in the subdominant, thus marking the beginning of the development.

For approximately 20 measures, Beethoven works with the two primary motives from the opening theme in the exposition: the dotted quarter followed by falling sixteenth notes, and the echo of falling sixteenth with a grace note in the upper register. The figure below highlights the

use of these motives.

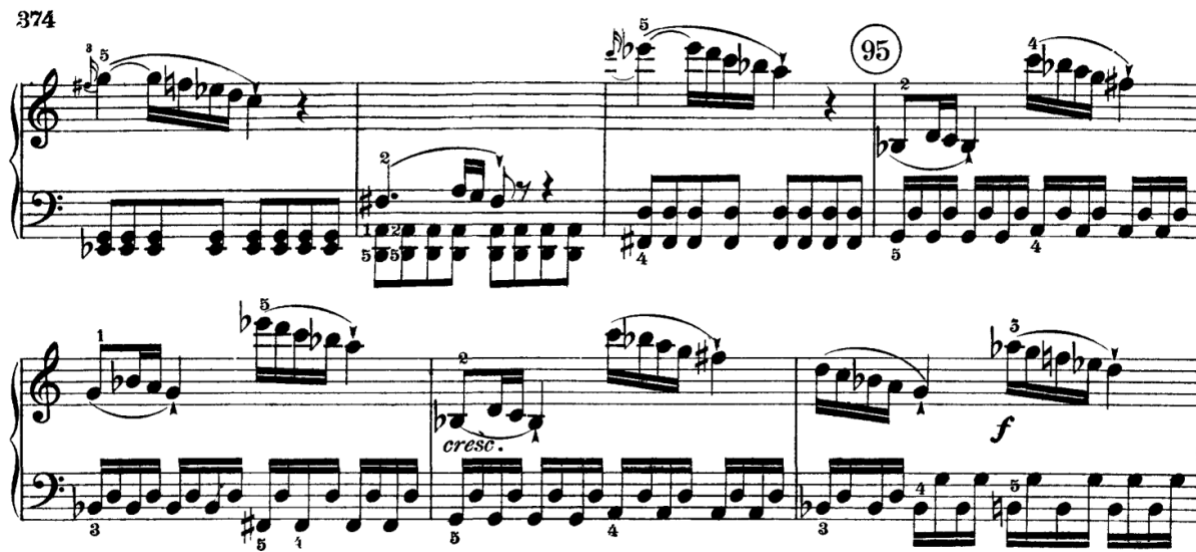


Figure 2.2. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegro Con Brio, Development, mm. 93-99

In this figure, one can see a change in the driving rhythm in measure 96. Beethoven starts using sixteenth notes, in a similar manner to the transitional material in the exposition. He uses the themes in the right hand to cycle through many different keys, including G minor, C minor, F minor, and C-flat major.

Beginning in measure 112, Beethoven continues the development by using the motives found in the B theme of the exposition. Beginning in the key of C major, the right hand uses the rhythm and melodic idea found in measure 50. Beethoven uses this idea to move through several different harmonies. After two statements of this idea, Beethoven begins to increase the harmonic rhythm—the rate at which the harmony changes. First, the harmony changes every four measures. Eventually it changes every two measures, then every measure. Eventually, he reaches a cadence on the dominant G major chord in measure 142, signaling the start of the retransition.

In a technique commonly used by Beethoven, the retransition is notably long, lasting for fourteen measures. During the retransition, there is a descending sixteenth note motive throughout, and it remains with very little change. To build anticipation, Beethoven has the right hand play ascending sixteenth-note figures. He gradually shortens the space between each right-hand motive and gradually moves the figure up the keyboard. These techniques, along with the long gradual crescendo, help build anticipation for the return of the exposition material in measure 156.

The recapitulation begins with a sudden dramatic change in dynamics to reflect the pianissimo marking that opened the movement. The A theme begins exactly as stated in the exposition until the descending arpeggio lands on an unexpected Ab, as opposed to G.



Figure 2.3. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegro Con Brio, Recapitulation, mm. 166-170

After a short interlude for dramatic effect, the transitional material resumes in measure 174. It begins as stated in the exposition, but appears slightly different in measure 181, in order to prepare the B theme for the tonic key as expected in the recapitulation. However, Beethoven does not initially go to the tonic key as expected. At first, the return of the B theme is stated in the submediant key of A major, though it does eventually move into the key of C major in measure 203.



Figure 2.4. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegro Con Brio, Recapitulation, mm. 192-203

Though it is unusual to begin the return of the B theme in a non-tonic key, there is a reasonable explanation behind Beethoven’s compositional choice here. For most sonata for works, the exposition begins in the tonic and moves to the dominant for the B theme. The recapitulation will later return the B theme in the tonic key. This means that the return of the B theme occurs in the key a perfect fourth up from its original statement. Since Beethoven introduced the B theme in this movement in the mediant key of E major, he may have wanted to keep that relationship, as the return in A major is a perfect fourth up from the original statement of the B theme.

The rest of recapitulation—the B theme and the closing theme—follow the same structure and pattern as the exposition. Following the closing theme, Beethoven makes a dramatic move to the key of D-flat major, bringing about the start of a long coda, as typical with much of his sonata form works. Just as with the development, the coda begins with the driving eighth note theme that opened the piece. In the coda, Beethoven makes use of sequenced material many times in anticipation of a dramatic ending. Measure 261 sees use of the opening

eighth note motive that ascends on the last two beats. That motive is then sequenced up in measure 265.

382

260

pp

cresc.

265

pp

Figure 2.5. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegro Con Brio, Coda, mm. 260-265

Beginning in measure 267, Beethoven returns to the eighth note motif that opens the movement, this time stated in G major. It is stated three times and eventually shifts to the call and response motif between registers, beginning a long series of sequencing and shortening of harmonic rhythm the builds to a climax in measure 276. The figure below shows the shortening of the harmonic rhythm, with the sixteenth note motif in the left hand progressively occurring in more frequent intervals of time.



Figure 2.6. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegro Con Brio, Coda, mm. 269-274

After yet another ascending pattern and climax, Beethoven uses a fermata on the dominant G chord twice, each followed by descending 32nd note scales for a dramatic preparation of one final restatement of the B theme. This time, it finally begins fully in the tonic C major for the first time in measure 284 (pictured below). Following this theme, Beethoven concludes the movement with a short, fiery finale mostly built on the material from the opening measures, ending with three fortissimo C major chords.



Figure 2.7. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegro Con Brio, Coda, mm. 281-292

II. Introduzione – Adagio Molto

The 2nd movement of the Waldstein sonata that is known today was not the first middle movement of this work that Beethoven composed. The original middle movement was removed and published as an individual work, as a friend of Beethoven's suggested that it made the sonata too long.⁸⁴ The work is now known as "Andante Favori," due to its popularity, according to Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny.⁸⁵

The middle movement of the sonata is labeled "Introduzione." As the title suggests, the movement acts as an introduction to the brilliant 3rd movement. It is very slow, given the performance direction of "Adagio molto." Rather than ending the movement and waiting with a period of silence before beginning the next movement, Beethoven instructs the performer, "Attaca subito il Rondo," which means to play the Rondo movement immediately without pause. This is an unusual performance direction, as movements typically conclude before moving to a subsequent movement. To signify the transition from the second to the third movement, Beethoven ends on a fermata with a single G pitch, signaling the return of C major, and the beginning of the final movement.

⁸⁴ R. Noscov, "BEETHOVEN'S POPULAR KEYBOARD PUBLICATIONS," *Music and Letters* 78, no. 1 (1997): 56–76, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/78.1.56>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.



Figure 2.8. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, transition from Introduzione to Rondo
III. Rondo Allegretto Moderato

The third movement begins with a continuation of the G that ended the movement. This time it is played with the left hand and helps make up the main theme of the movement. The left hand melody from measures 1 through 4 make up this theme. Both the rhythm and the melody should be considered. The rhythmic idea of two quarter notes followed by a longer note returns throughout. Melodically, this rhythm is often stated in a similar manner as the opening: one lower note, followed by two repeated higher notes.

To accompany the theme in the left hand, the right hand is playing broken chords in sixteenth notes. Sixteenth notes dominate this movement, and this subdivision lasts for the first 61 measures of the work, before returning frequently throughout the movement. For a moment, Beethoven brings back the experimentation with parallel modes that was so heavily used in the first movement. Measures 9 through 12, which state the opening motive on the dominant G harmony, are restated exactly in measures 13 through 16. However, this time he is working

briefly in the key of C minor. The work continues to alternate between these parallel modes before a transitional passage in measure 23.

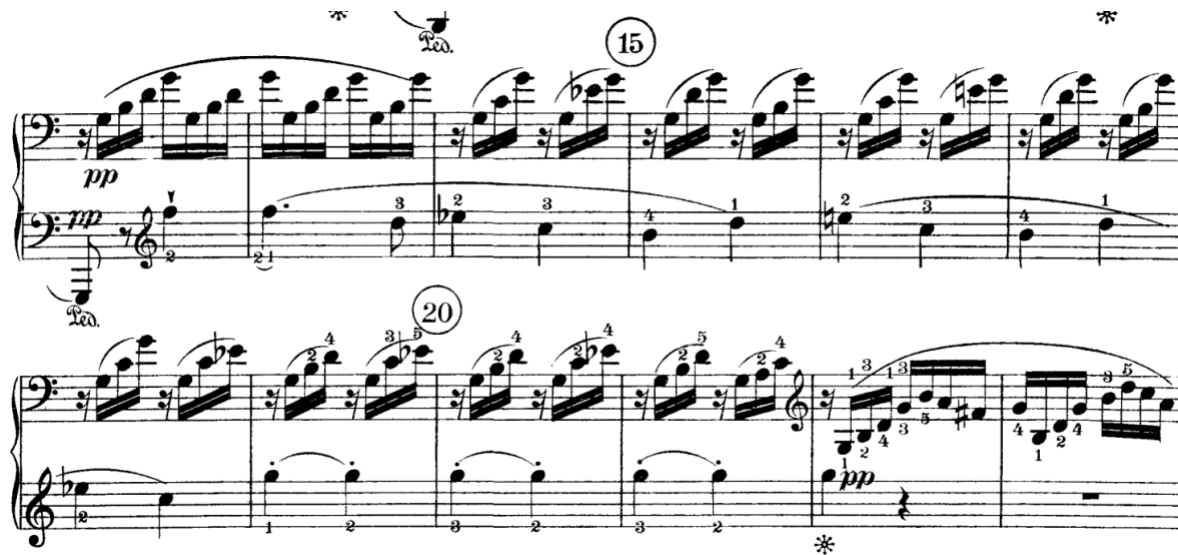


Figure 2.9. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, A Section, mm. 13-24

Throughout the A section of this movement, Beethoven restates the theme presented in the opening measures with increased orchestration. The first statement, as discussed earlier, features a single melody line with a static broken chord accompaniment. The second time this theme is stated in measure. The second time the theme is presented in measure 35, the melody is played in octaves in the right hand, though the dynamic remains pianissimo, as with the opening. The third and final statement of the opening theme in the A section contains three voices: The top melody voice, the constant trill, and a sweeping scale in the left hand. This time Beethoven states the theme with a fortissimo marking. This brilliant passage, found in measures 55-61, breaks a long period of quiet and spacious playing, beginning with the second movement. Compare the three statements of the theme below.



Figure 2.10. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, A Section, mm. 1-4



Figure 2.11. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, A Section, mm. 35-38

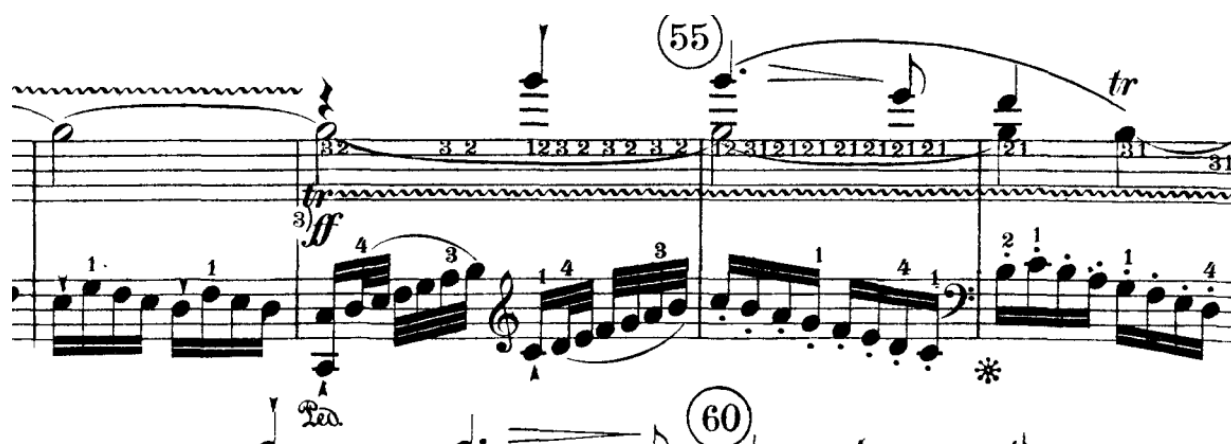


Figure 2.12. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, A Section, mm. 54-57

The last image demonstrates a very challenging technical passage of this sonata. Here, the right hand must play the melody of a trill line, sometimes spanning a full octave. Due to the speed of the trill and the thick texture of this passage, almost all performers briefly break the trill to play the melody line. They will extend hand, hit the melody note, and bring it back to continue the trill. It should go by quickly enough so that it sounds like a continuous trill with no interruptions. Beethoven's student Carl Czerny has even suggested this method, documenting his recommendation for performing this passage.⁸⁶



Figure 2.13. Czerny's notation of trill in mm. 55-61⁸⁷

After 61 measures of building upon the opening theme, Beethoven introduces contrasting material. The rhythm now consists of sixteenth note triplets. With an ostinato C in the left hand, the right hand presents a new harmonic progression that recurs throughout the movement: I, IV, I, ii, passing chord, V⁶₄, V⁷, I. This progression initially centers on a first-inversion C harmony in the right hand, before being restated in second inversion one phrase later.

Beginning in measure 70, the work modulates to A minor, the relative minor of C major. At this point, the sweet opening material is far in the past, as this passage is intense, marked with

⁸⁶ Choi, Jin Hye, "Performance Practice Issues in Beethoven's 'Waldstein' Sonata, Op. 53" (Dissertation, California State University, Long Beach, 1998) 23.

⁸⁷ Choi, Jin Hye, 23.

many sforzandos and interchange of the melody between the right and left hand. The passage comes to a climax at measure 98, and a cadence on A minor. From here, there is a short transitional passage. It is very dramatic, as it makes more use of long sustained pedal markings and sharp dynamic contrasts. As seen in the image below, it repeats a descending broken arpeggio on A minor, F major, and finally G dominant 7th, preparing for the return of the A theme in C major.

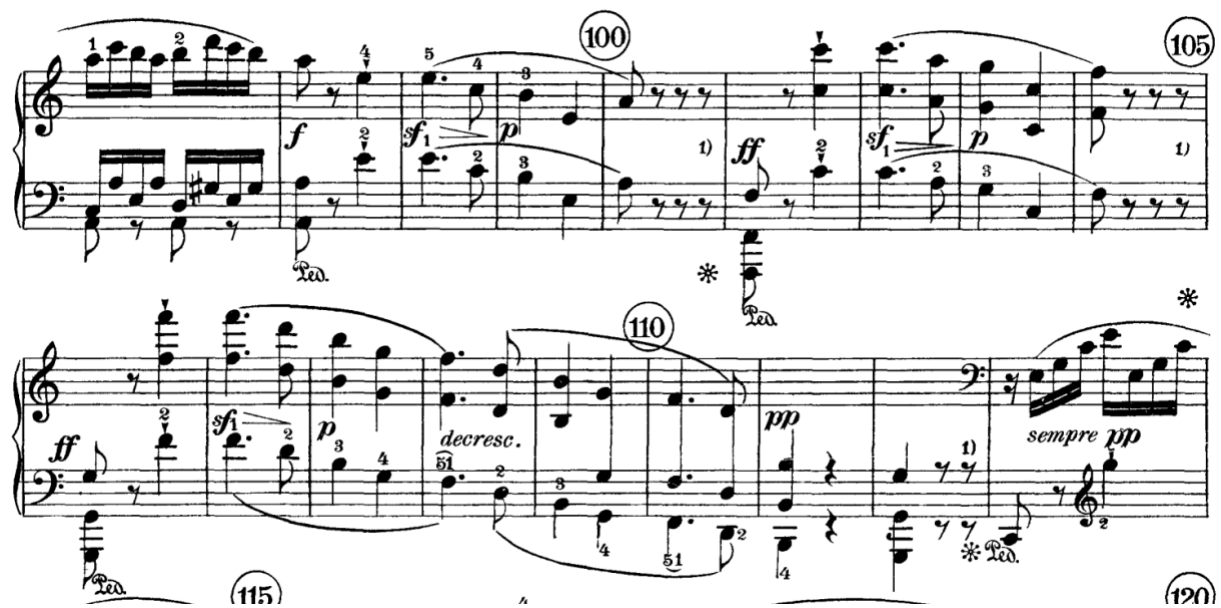


Figure 2.14. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, Retransition, mm. 97-104

Measures 114 through 174 are an exact return of the A theme. There is no differing material. Following the second triumphant trill passage, Beethoven introduces an episode in C minor. This passage, from measure 175 to measure 216, is intense and technically challenging for the performer, consisting of constant sixteenth note triplets. It is built on the theme presented in octaves in the first eight measures. The theme continues in octaves in the right hand while the triplets accompany in the left hand. The melody and accompaniment alternate many times between the hands before coming to a dramatic finish on octave C’s in measure 217.

Following the C minor episode, the development section begins. As usual with development sections in piano sonatas, Beethoven travels through many keys. It starts in A-flat major. Beethoven uses a common tone modulation to go from C minor in the previous section to A-flat major for the development. The repeated C's are common in the tonic for both keys and allow for a dramatic start to this development.



Figure 2.15. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, Development, mm. 218-226

The motive in measures 221-224 is repeated in F minor and D minor. Then, in measure 239, Beethoven starts a beautiful passage in contrast to the preceding material. It continues to alternate rhythmically between the hands, a pattern commonly used in the movement. It moves through the keys of D-flat major, E-flat minor, and F minor before returning to a C major key.

In measure 251, Beethoven returns to the original key and uses the opening themes. The left hand can be seen playing a variation of the opening theme while the right hand is playing arpeggiated major-major seventh chords. This idea moves through many keys, such as F major, B-flat major, and eventually lands on the dominant G harmony.



Figure 2.16. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, A Section, mm. 251-258

The G dominant harmony begins to be frequently used in measure 275, though it is alternated between some other harmonies, such as C minor or F# fully diminished. In measure 295, G dominant is used uninterrupted for almost 20 measures, typical of the end of a development section by Beethoven. In measure 313, Beethoven brings back a portion of the A theme, this time with a fortissimo marking instead of pianissimo.



Figure 2.17. Beethoven, "Waldstein" Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, A Section, mm. 307-315

At this point, the original key and opening material has returned. The dynamic markings differ, but the material is otherwise returned exactly as before until measure 352. At this point, Beethoven returns material from the broken chord theme first introduced in measure 62. He uses this to create a very dramatic and almost overwhelming climactic arrival of the Coda. This can be quite difficult for the performer, as it requires quick reaches of more than 1 octave, and alternates between fortissimo and piano dynamics. Eventually, there is a cadence on G major in measure 378, and several measures of fortissimo, sforzando G major chords. The noise level is then gradually reduced to piano, reaching a low G fermata, giving a dramatic pause before the start of the Coda.



Figure 2.18. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, A Section, mm. 371-402

The coda, which begins at measure 403, is marked “Prestissimo.” It is in cut time and begins with the main theme presented in a higher register in the right hand. The left hand provides an accompanying eighth-note pattern. Four measures later in measure 407, the right hand also begins to use eighth notes to elaborate on the theme presented in measure 403. The eighth note rhythm is uninterrupted until measure 427, where there is a brief break in the accompaniment pattern before the opening of the coda is restated in F major, as opposed to C major. Four measures later, a passage of quarter notes sequences the material and leads to a new musical idea in measure 441.

Here, Beethoven moves to the key of A-flat major and uses a theme reminiscent of the passage in measure 221. He repeats this figure in F minor and D-flat major. Then, he has some variations on this theme in B-flat minor, F minor, G dominant, and A-flat major once again. In measure 461, there is a suspenseful ascending fully diminished seventh arpeggio, before reaching one of the most iconic passages in this entire sonata: the octave glissando passage. In Beethoven's time, the pianos used in Vienna had a much lighter action than the modern piano.⁸⁸ Because of this, this glissando passage would have been far easier to play. However, the modern piano's heavy key action makes this passage difficult to perform. One must be able to reach an interval of a ninth and bend their thumb inwards to execute it as a glissando. Even then, due to the action on some pianos, it can still be difficult to perform the glissando well, especially at a slower tempo and softer dynamic. In [this performance](#), Bruce Liu flawlessly executes the original approach to the glissando.⁸⁹

Due to the difficulty of executing this technique on a modern piano, many have chosen to simplify this passage. One method of simplification is to divide the passage between both hands while using the pedal.⁹⁰ The figure below demonstrates how this is notated. Many soloists, such as [Daniel Barenboim](#), have elected to use this simplification.⁹¹ In doing this simplification, however, one will have to eliminate the bottom voice of the octaves for half of the descending right hand and the entirety of the ascending left hand.

⁸⁸ Choi, Jin Hye, "Performance Practice Issues in Beethoven's 'Waldstein' Sonata, Op. 53," 36.

⁸⁹ *LIU Xiaoyu Beethoven Sonata No 21 in C Major, Op 53 "Waldstein,"* directed by Bruce Liu (Arthur Rubinstein, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AU2G13qnKI8>.

⁹⁰ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Complete Piano Sonatas, Volume II*, Dover Classical Piano Music, v. 2 (Newburyport: Dover Publications, 2013), 399.

⁹¹ *Beethoven Sonata N° 21 "Waldstein" Daniel Barenboim*, directed by Daniel Barenboim (Ahmed Barod, 2012), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3l18HTo5rY>.

1) Usual simplification.



Others have chosen to play the passage as descending (or ascending in the left hand) octaves. This requires a slower tempo to execute the passage cleanly. The downside to this method is that the octaves will sound more percussive than Beethoven had probably intended. If possible, it is best to perform the octave glissandos as originally intended.

Following the octave glissando passage, Beethoven introduces another trill in the right hand. For 37 measures, the right hand maintains a constant trill, building momentum for a brilliant finale. In measure 485, Beethoven returns the original brilliant trill passage with a slight variation. This time, it is marked *pianissimo* and features triplet arpeggios in the left hand, rather than quick running C major scales.



Figure 2.19. Beethoven, "Waldstein" Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, Coda, mm. 481-494

This passage continues for a while, moving through the keys of C major, C minor, A-flat major, and F minor, before reaching a double trill leading to a climactic cadence in measure 515. Beethoven then returns the elaborated eighth-note melody found in measure 407, alternating between forte and piano phrases several times. There is one more climactic authentic cadence in measure 529, where Beethoven ends the work with 15 measures of C major chords, moving up and down the registers and alternating between pianissimo and fortissimo.



Figure 2.20. Beethoven, “Waldstein” Sonata, Allegretto Moderato, Coda, mm. 528-543

Stylistic and Technical Considerations

Tempo/Meter

The first movement is labeled “Allegro con Brio.”⁹² It is a very forward-driving movement with momentum throughout. Michael Broyles notes that this helps make the

⁹² Beethoven, 370.

movement, and the work as a whole, very symphonic in nature.⁹³ The tempo of the first movement (outside of some dramatic fermatas and a few ritardando markings) should remain consistent throughout. In particular, a performer should be careful not to let the tempo drag at the B theme, beginning in measure 35. The character and rhythmic change at this section might make it easy to subconsciously drag, so keeping a consistent tempo in mind is of utmost importance.

The Schnabel edition gives some additional tempo markings for the dramatic passage in the coda at measure 282. Here, on the first 32nd note run, Schnabel gives a “prestissimo” marking, while labeling the second “non troppo presto,” indicating it to be played slower than the first run.⁹⁴ This is usually how the passage is executed by the world’s top performers.

The middle movement is labeled “Adagio molto.”⁹⁵ The Casella edition suggests performing it at eighth note = 60, while the Schnabel edition gives eighth note = 44.⁹⁶ Since movement calls for a very slow tempo, it is best to use a tempo closer to the 44 beats per minute as suggested in the Schnabel edition. Many performers will even take this movement slower.

The arrival of the Rondo movement is labeled “Allegretto Moderato.”⁹⁷ This should let the performer know that the movement should not begin too fast. This makes sense, as to not have a too ambitious opening after the mysterious and slow Introduction. This movement

⁹³ Michael Broyles, *Beethoven: The Emergence and Evolution of Beethoven’s Heroic Style*, 1. edition (Excelsior Music Publishing Co, 1987).

⁹⁴ Ludwig van Beethoven, *32 Sonatas for the Pianoforte*, Artur Schnabel, vol. II (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1920), 487-488.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 489.

⁹⁶ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Sonatas for Pianoforte Solo, Volume II*, Alfredo Casella, II, Coleccion Didactica de Obras Maestras (Buenos Aires, Ricordi Americana, 1920); Beethoven, *32 Sonatas for the Pianoforte*, II.

⁹⁷ Beethoven, *Complete Piano Sonatas, Volume II*, 385.

features sixteenth notes constantly for a long time after the opening, so a consistent tempo is vital to maintain a flowing feel. The performer should not make excessive use of rubato.

The coda of the third movement has a different tempo and meter. It is labeled “Prestissimo” and is in cut time.⁹⁸ Schnabel and Casella both recommend very quick tempos. Schnabel recommends a tempo of whole note = 88, while Casella recommends a slightly slower (but still very quick) tempo of half note = 152-160.⁹⁹ This tempo could prove very challenging, even for the most advanced pianists. Pianist Lisa Yui suggests that the coda may not need to be performed quite that fast. She says that given the cut time marking, only a slightly faster tempo is needed to give the finale of this sonata a prestissimo feel.¹⁰⁰ A tempo closer to the range of half note = 126-144 will suffice.

Dynamics

The first movement of the sonata presents some challenges for performing the work at the given dynamics. At the very beginning of the opening movement, the dynamic is labeled as pianissimo. This is difficult to execute, given that the notes are repeated eighth-note figures with lots of energy and momentum. To accomplish this and many other dynamic markings throughout the movement, one should certainly consider the use of the soft pedal. This will become particularly useful in measure 14, where the opening is embellished with sixteenth-note rhythms.

As is typical of Beethoven’s works, there is a wide range of dynamic contrast, and very little use of mezzo-forte or mezzo-piano. Therefore, the dynamics pianissimo and fortissimo are used quite frequently. These require more attention than a simple forte or piano dynamic

⁹⁸ Ibid, 398.

⁹⁹ Beethoven, *32 Sonatas for the Pianoforte*, II; Beethoven, *Sonatas for Pianoforte Solo, Volume II*, II.

¹⁰⁰ *TIPS, TRICKS & ANALYSIS for “Waldstein” Sonata (Beethoven: Op. 53) Tutorial with Lisa Yui*, directed by Lisa Yui (LivesOfThePiano, 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MbkW6oXoEI>.

marking. Anything more, like the limited use of triple piano in measure 461 of the third movement should be extraordinarily special and followed.

Ornamentation

The “Waldstein” sonata is replete with decorative ornamentations that are vital to the execution of this work. The primary ornamental figure in the first movement is grace notes. A primary feature of the opening theme, these grace notes should be played before the beat. They should be clear, but not excessive. The second movement has very little ornamentation, save a grace note used in measures 10, 12, and 14. These will also be played before the beat, though many performers use rubato going into measures 10 and 12.

The third movement is replete with ornamentation. Trills are a primary technique used in the final movement of this sonata. As discussed in the theoretical analysis, the passage starting in measure 51 is a difficult technique to execute. The right hand must maintain a trill while playing the melody above. Due to the difficulty of this passage, many editions attempt to provide a precisely notated version of the trill in the footnotes. The Schnabel edition does this by provides the trill in written-out 32nd notes, showing exactly where the melody will coincide in the trill. However, the Casella edition correctly points out the futility in doing this:

I consider it absolutely useless to assign any precise rhythmical figure to this trill. Above all, it should be played as rapidly as possible. Moreover it will be well always to make the lower note ([the G]) of the trill coincide with each of the notes of the melody (including the two first) in order to obtain greater energy in the right hand.¹⁰¹

According to Schnabel, it will be easiest and most clear to perform the trill at the fastest speed possible. This will allow for the trill to sound even and quick, while best allowing the sweeping left hand scales to be played independently of the right hand.

¹⁰¹ Beethoven, *Sonatas for Pianoforte Solo, Volume II*, II, 194.

In the coda, there are several more trills that have different approaches by various editors and performers. One notable moment is found in the passage at measure 485. Here, the grand trill passage from the opening subject is recalled in pianissimo with an arpeggiated figure in the left hand. In the autographed manuscript, Beethoven gives two simplifications, depending on the strength of the performer: one with triplets for the trill, and the other with sextuplets.



Figure 2.21. Beethoven "Waldstein" Sonata, Simplification for trill passage at m. 485¹⁰²

One final trill passage gives performers trouble, as it requires a trill in both hands, along with a repeated-note figure above the trills. This can be found in measures 513 and 514. Most performers and editions recommend a simplification, of which there are several. The Schenker edition recommends playing the right-hand trill as eighth notes. Both the Schnabel and Casella editions provide a simplification where the trills are played between the hands. The takeaway from these suggestions is that with the business of both hands, one should feel at liberty to slow this two-handed trill down or take simplifications. The texture is so thick, and the dynamics are reaching to a crescendo, which should make any simplifications unnoticeable to the listener.

¹⁰² Beethoven, *Sonatas for Pianoforte Solo, Volume II*, II, 210.



Figure 2.22. Beethoven "Waldstein" Sonata, simplification for trill in mm. 513-514¹⁰³

Pedal

There are few original pedal indications in the first two movements. However, most performers use the pedal generously, though not excessively. Certain editions give pedal indications for passages with a thicker texture, such as the choral-like B-theme in the first movement, in measures 35 through 50. These directions are not present in Heinrich Schenker's edition.

The second movement should likely use pedal frequently. The movement, which, as mentioned before, replaced a much larger middle movement that was later published individually, is a short "Introduction" for the flowing third movement. There is much empty space, and use of pedal will help create the best atmosphere for this middle movement. The Schnabel edition recognizes this, placing detailed pedal markings throughout. The markings are frequent and occur at each harmony change. There are similar directions from Alfredo Casella as well. This suggests that there may have been no pedal markings originally from Beethoven, since this differs significantly from the long, sustained pedal given at the beginning of the Rondo movement. The Schenker edition, however, gives no pedal indications at all.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Many of the pedal markings in the work are innovative to say the least. The most notable use of the pedal is found in the third movement. Beethoven makes use of one long, uninterrupted pedal marking for the first eight measures of the movement. During the first forty measures, similar pedal markings continue, lasting up to 10 bars at a time. The pedal markings in these phrases are all Beethoven's original markings.¹⁰⁴ While these markings are consistent across editions, many editors make differing interpretations of the pedal indications. Arthur Schnabel, in his edition, suggests that the pedal markings cannot be ignored. He says, "to change the pedal in the third and fourth bar would destroy the very apparent intention of always letting the fundamental note sound, until the next fundamental note follows."¹⁰⁵ Other editors disagree, such as Heinrich Schenker. In his edition, Schenker argues that the pedal is creates an effect that is "transcendental," which the instruments of Beethoven's time favored.¹⁰⁶ The suggestion is that modern instruments would allow half pedaling at passing harmonies. Elsewhere in the third movement, there are very few discrepancies between editions. One small unique marking in the Schnabel edition puts a short pedal in measure 344 before the triplet figure in the second beat.¹⁰⁷ Other editions do not include this.

¹⁰⁴ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Sonatas for Pianoforte Solo, Volume II*, Alfredo Casella, vol. II, Coleccion Didactica de Obras Maestras (Milan: Buenos Aires, Ricordi Americana, 1920), 98.

¹⁰⁵ Ludwig van Beethoven, *32 Sonatas for the Pianoforte*, Artur Schnabel, vol. II (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1920), 492.

¹⁰⁶ Beethoven, *Complete Piano Sonatas, Volume II*, 385.

¹⁰⁷ Beethoven, *32 Sonatas for the Pianoforte*, 507.

Chapter 3 - Chopin Ballade in G minor, Op. 23

Biographical Information on Fryderyk Chopin

Fryderyk Chopin was born on March 1st, 1810, to Mikołaj Chopin and Tekla Justyna Krzyżanowska. He was born in the Polish town of Żelazowa Wola, and his family moved to Warsaw when he was just ten months old. His father, a Frenchman who moved to Poland as an adolescent, was a well-respected teacher who taught French to high schoolers. The Chopin household was “staunchly middle-class,” and Mikołaj held high academic standards.¹⁰⁸ Fryderyk was well-rounded socially, as he had connections in several groups—his boyhood friends (mostly of the middle class), professional circles, and academic organizations.

Chopin began his music education at a young age. He likely started playing piano around four years old, and he was composing by at least seven years old.¹⁰⁹ He was known in Warsaw as a gifted prodigy who would entertain patrons with performances at private salons. He would also give occasional public performances. Chopin came to find public concerts distasteful and largely avoided performing in such settings throughout his life.¹¹⁰ As a teen, he furthered his musical education by joining the “High School of Music” in Warsaw in 1826. It was during these high school years that he began composing some of his important works. In 1829 and 1830, he wrote the two piano concerti. On March 17th, 1830, he performed the F minor concerto for a crowd of 900 people.¹¹¹ He premiered the E minor concerto on October 11th of the same year. This performance helped Chopin come to realize that he did not enjoy large performances.

¹⁰⁸ Jim Samson, “Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek,” in *Oxford Music Online*, by Jim Samson (Oxford University Press, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.51099>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Shortly after the premiere of the E minor concerto, Chopin left for a trip to Europe. However, this short trip turned into an eight-month stay in Vienna due to the November Uprising against Russian rule in Warsaw. Chopin's good friend Tytus returned to Poland to participate in the uprising, but Chopin stayed behind, not realizing he would never again return to Poland. He later would speak regretfully of this trip to Europe, stating, "I curse the moment of my departure."¹¹² It was around this time that he wrote the famous C-sharp minor nocturne, which was not published until 1875, long after his death. This work is often seen as a reflection of his longing for his homeland. He also wrote his first nine mazurkas while in Vienna.

In 1831, after giving a "financially draining" concert which included the E minor concerto, Chopin left Vienna.¹¹³ He stayed in Munich for a month, then had a two-week stay in Stuttgart. Though short, his stay in Stuttgart was a dark period in his life, as he became aware of his financial dependence upon his father and learned about the failed revolution in Warsaw. Realizing that returning to Warsaw for music was not an option, Chopin moved to Paris in September of 1831.

Chopin's musical career began to flourish upon arriving in Paris. Paris had a thriving culture of music and piano, and the young composer befriended great musicians such as Franz Liszt, Hector Berlioz, and others.¹¹⁴ By 1832, he was giving frequent public concerts in salons, while still avoiding the larger concert venues. He shifted his compositional focus to smaller works, such as his nocturnes, mazurkas, and etudes, as opposed to larger works such as the concerti.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

In Paris, he also established himself as a respected piano teacher. His approach to learning and playing was unorthodox in many ways. Chopin rejected finger equalization—the idea that all fingers perform the same function. Instead, he said that each finger had its own character, and thus the performer should exploit the differences in each finger.¹¹⁵ He also used thumbs on black notes and transformed the style of piano performance with his use of the pedal. In order to create long, sustained legato that rivaled the human voice, Chopin made use of the pedal. The texture and phrasing in his works require careful use of the pedal.¹¹⁶

In April 1838, Chopin became acquainted with Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, better known by her pen name George Sand. The two quickly fell in love and started an affair, as Sand was in the process of divorcing her husband. Chopin spent the winter months of 1838 and 1839 in Majorca with Sand. Here he wrote many of his preludes, the second ballade, and the third scherzo.¹¹⁷ It was also during this time that his health first began to decline.

Chopin began to spend most of his summers composing in Nohant, while teaching in Paris during the winter months. His health worsened, as did his relationship with Sand. Their social circles did not interest each other, and Chopin did not agree with many of Sand's radical political ambitions. His personal life may have reached a low point in May 1844 when his father passed away. In the years to follow, Sand kicked Chopin out of her residence.

Chopin never financially recovered from his father's death and his failed relationship with Sand. Eventually, this led him to reluctantly return to public performances in his last few years of life. He toured in England and Scotland, giving performances to high social circles in

¹¹⁵ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Harvard University Press, 1995), 368.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 22.

¹¹⁷ Samson, "Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek."

those countries. His health reached a terminal stage by 1849, and on October 12th, he passed away—five days after he participated in his final sacrament. He died in the presence of Solange and his pupil Adolphe Gutmann, leaving behind a short yet monumentally significant career.

Theoretical Analysis

In 1836, Chopin visited his friend Robert Schumann in Leipzig. Following the meeting, Schumann wrote of his time with Chopin, saying, “I have Chopin’s new Ballade. It seems to me to be the piece that shows most genius, and I told him that I liked it most of all his works. After thinking a long time he said with great feeling, ‘I’m glad of that because it’s the one I prefer too.’”¹¹⁸ The work was one of Chopin’s most treasured compositions. Since then, it has become one of the most popular works in piano literature, loved for its beautiful melodies, virtuosic passages, and emotional storytelling.

Robert Greenberg describes a Chopin ballade as a “lengthy poem” that tells “a narrative story replete with different characters and dialogue.”¹¹⁹ This is especially true of the G minor ballade, as it is clear that Chopin is using narrative to portray various emotions throughout the work. Greenberg also describes the ballades as being inspired by sonata form, as they contain multiple contrasting themes.

The ballade in G minor begins with a very mysterious introduction. There are unaccompanied octaves on an A-flat major harmony. Though unusual in the key of G minor, this is a Neapolitan harmony, which is a major harmony on the flat II. Following an open cadence on whole notes, the key of G minor is established, where the main theme is introduced. The singing

¹¹⁸ “Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 23,” Website, LA Philharmonic, n.d., accessed March 6, 2026, <https://www.laphil.com/musicdb/pieces/1073/ballade-no-1-in-g-minor-op-23>.

¹¹⁹ *The 23 Greatest Solo Piano Works*, with Robert Greenberg et al. (The Great Courses, 2013).

theme is accompanied by repeated quarter notes in a sustaining heartbeat-like motive. In measure 33, Chopin writes an embellished melodic passage, known as a *fioritura*. These quick passages, in which Chopin fits a large number of notes in a short measure, are a staple of Chopin's style. He was inspired by a style of Italian opera known as *bel canto*, in which melodic lines such as these were frequent.¹²⁰ The decision to place this passage here also creates a dramatic and climactic conclusion to the first subject, which closes a few moments later in measure 36.

FR. CHOPIN
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Figure 3.1. Chopin, Ballade in G minor, mm. 1-14

¹²⁰ Samson, "Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek."

It is in measure 36 where a transitional passage occurs. Greenberg notes that the transitional theme can be found in the introduction, revealing Chopin's ability to foreshadow the development of a musical narrative. In this passage, which starts quietly, the performer will raise the intensity by increasing the volume and tempo, as indicated by the term "*sempre più motto.*" This virtuosic passage cadences on a dramatic G minor arpeggio before ending on open fifths of F and C. This open interval is reminiscent of a horn call, signaling the anticipation of a new event in the narrative of the ballade.



Figure 3.2. Chopin, Ballade in G minor, mm. 65-74

The ballade has now reached the second subject. Many consider this melody to be the most beautiful melody written by Chopin. The first motivic idea of the theme is written with the feeling of a duple meter and in the relative major key of B-flat. It soon modulates to the key of E-flat major, where there is some dialog between the hands (though the melody is primarily in the right hand).

Following the lyrical second subject, there is a transitional passage that momentarily shifts the emotional mood. The opening subject returns, but in a quieter dynamic in A minor. It is more mysterious and contains more dissonant harmonies. The dissonance continues with a dramatic ascending line, reaching a D-sharp fully diminished harmony that is stated multiple times. Then, an E dominant chord shifts the mood from the dissonant, mysterious passage to a beautiful, heroic one. This is certainly one of the high points in the work and one of Chopin's most recognizable passages from any of his compositions. It is a return of the second subject in the key of E major and features dramatic embellishments. Some of the more technically challenging parts in this passage are the three statements of quick ascending octaves—first on an F-sharp major scale, then on G-sharp major, and finally on G-sharp minor. At the top of the last scale, there is a tritone—E-sharp in the left hand, and B in the right hand. The performer should pay attention to the dynamics here, as it is marked triple forte—the loudest dynamic marking in the work so far. This dynamic is met with a descending G-sharp minor seventh chord, which brings the ballade into the next section—the scherzando section.

The scherzando section shifts the work into a much lighter mood and features technically demanding eighth notes in the right hand. Eventually, this passage features yet another return of the second subject. This time, it is much busier, with the left hand taking the eighth note pattern in the accompaniment. Following this, the work comes to a dramatic halt in measure 194. Here, there is a return of the transitional passage that followed the original statement of the second subject. Once again, Chopin uses dissonance and an ascending sequence to build drama to the point that it is almost overwhelming. There is then a big cadence on a suspended D dominant harmony, followed by descending sixths, setting up the coda.

The coda, labeled “Presto con fuoco,” is a portrayal of insanity, creating an extraordinary final act to this narrative of emotion. It is the quickest and most technically demanding passage of the work. It begins with G minor chords, traveling down the inversions. However, it is accompanied by dissonant notes that are slightly off the harmony—an A instead of B-flat, F-sharp instead of G, etc. Then the Neapolitan harmony that opened the work makes a return in measure 216. The motive that begins with this harmony is repeated, embellished with octaves in the left hand. Then the work ends with many differing scales, beginning with an ascending chromatic scale accompanied by left hand chords. There is then an ascending G minor scale in both hands, followed immediately by quiet G minor chords. That idea is then repeated, with the scales being played in tenths, as opposed to octaves. The work then concludes with contrary chromatic octaves, and a dramatic cadence on G minor chords in a very typical Chopin-style ending.

Stylistic and Technical Considerations

Tempo

Chopin writes several detailed tempo indications throughout the G minor ballade, from *largo* in the introduction, to *Presto con fuoco* (very fast, with fire) in the coda. Therefore, there is not much confusion for the general speed at which particular sections should be played. The bigger interpretive challenge is whether to maintain a metronomic tempo or to use tempo fluctuations. In a lecture on the ballade, Robert Greenberg stresses the importance of using rubato and a relaxation of meter.¹²¹ However, performers should be careful not to overuse rubato and tempo changes. Since the form of the ballade is a narrative, it cannot lose momentum. It is

¹²¹ *The 23 Greatest Solo Piano Works.*

acceptable to take time at the end of phrases, such as in measure 81, for example, but any stretching of the tempo must not take away from the general story that Chopin is developing in the work.

The return of the main theme before the coda, in measure 194, is marked *Meno mosso* (less quickly). Traditionally, this passage will be taken slower than its first appearance in measure 94. Once the coda arrives, the performer should attempt to play close to as fast as they are able to manage. The coda is labeled *Presto con fuoco*, and it should portray insanity and chaos as the work reaches its climactic finish. Performing this at a moderate tempo will not achieve the result of the long narrative that takes the listener through various emotions and moods. At the end of the work, Chopin makes use of *ritenuto* and *accelerando* in multiple locations. The performer can make more use of a fluctuation in the tempo but still should remain cautious not to lose the momentum as the piece reaches its end.

Articulation

As with most of Chopin's works, there will be much legato utilized throughout this work, in order to create a beautiful sound. In general, staccatos should be interpreted as a call to play lighter, not necessarily an instruction to play separated. For example, the "heartbeat" accompaniment in the first subject should not be separated, as indicated by the pedal markings. However, the performer should have a light touch, in order to prevent the motive from being played too heavily. In the same passage, and other similar passages, performers should consider note stems and accents to assist in phrasing and shaping melodic lines.

In measures 85-86, Chopin indicates some movement in the inner voices. He does this by writing note stems and accents on the D-flat and C-flat in the right hand, and the B-flat in the left hand. If the performer brings out this inner line, it creates a beautiful three note motive that

resolves on B-flat. In his recording of the G minor ballade, Evgeny Kissin brings out [this line](#) very clearly, demonstrating how beautiful the work can be if the performer takes advantage of this “hidden” line.

Dynamics

Dynamics play a key role in the performance of Chopin’s first ballade. There are multiple climactic sections marked with strong dynamic markings. Any instance of a triple forte should be carefully noted. This occurs twice—once at the conclusion of the triumphant A major section in measure 124, and again in the last few measures. Both are utilized on dissonant tritones in octaves and opposite registers of the keyboard.¹²² During the quieter, more lyrical passages, the soft pedal should also be considered. This will allow the performer to let the melody lines sing out, without using a too loud or percussive sound.

Pedal

To keep with the style of Chopin, performers should use the pedal generously. One difficulty in interpreting Chopin’s musical scores is that there are many different versions. Chopin made frequent updates and changes to his compositions, and thus many different publishers will have many different performance directions, including those for pedal.¹²³ The Paderewski edition of the ballade, one of the more highly sought-after editions, uses pedal indications that are in accordance with the original manuscripts. However, the editor’s note that one should not strictly follow the performance indications at all times. They say that the pedal is “a very delicate and entirely individual matter.”¹²⁴ This is evident when comparing various

¹²² Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 327.

¹²³ Frederic Chopin, *Chopin Complete Works: Ballades*, III, ed. Ignacy Paderewski (Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 1949), 57.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

recordings of the ballade, and performers should try to interpret the pedal markings to the best of their ability.

Chapter 4 - Vorisek, Fantasie in C Major, Op. 12

Biographical information on Jan Václav Voříšek

The early nineteenth century featured a plethora of influential and popular composers in central Europe whose works continue to dominate concert halls and history books to this day. These giant figures, such as Beethoven and Schubert, often overshadow other composers, even if they were popular during their time. Such is the case for Jan Václav Voříšek. Though an acquaintance of Beethoven and likely a friend of Schubert, Voříšek's work is known and performed little in the 21st century. As a result, this composer who had a hand in shaping piano music leading up to the romantic period and the "golden age of piano," is often left in the shadows of history.

Jan Václav Voříšek was born in Vamberk, a village in northeast Bohemia on May 11, 1791.¹²⁵ He was from a musical family as his father, Václav František Voříšek, was a schoolmaster, choirmaster, and organist of the local church in Vamberk. His brother František had a musical background, and sisters Eleonora and Anna played the piano. His father started his music education by teaching him piano and violin at a young age, as well as organ and composition as he grew older. He showed promise as a musician early in his education and toured throughout Bohemia as a child prodigy on piano.¹²⁶

In 1802, he enrolled a classical Jesuit gymnasium in Prague, where he stayed for several years before completing his classical education in 1806.¹²⁷ It was during this time that he studied

¹²⁵ Kenneth DeLong, "Voříšek, Jan Václav," in *Oxford Music Online*, by Kenneth DeLong (Oxford University Press, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.29688>.

¹²⁶ Adrienne Simpson, "A Profile of Jan Václav Voříšek," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 97 (1970): 125, JSTOR.

¹²⁷ DeLong, "Voříšek, Jan Václav."

composition with Václav Tomášek. Though short lived, his time studying under Tomášek was very influential, as he always considered himself a student of Tomášek.¹²⁸ It was Tomášek who had a great influence in Voříšek's development of the lyrical piano piece. He closely studied Tomášek's Eclogues, of which he modeled his Impromptus in form and style. Both are lyrical pieces with light and attractive melodies, and in ternary form.¹²⁹ The set of lyrical pieces by Voříšek, op. 7, are the first in history to be titled "Impromptu."¹³⁰ The development of this form was passed onto Schubert, a later acquaintance of Voříšek, who made famous the genre of the Impromptu.

By 1810, he was studying philosophy, aesthetics, and mathematics at the University of Prague. He eventually switched to studying law but did not graduate. Instead, he continued to take more of an interest in his musical career. He was beginning to gain a reputation as a pianist and even published some of his compositions. His set of twelve Rhapsodies, op. 1, were published around 1813.¹³¹ In the same year, Voříšek moved to Vienna to complete his law school studies and to find more opportunities to develop his music career. In Vienna, his reputation flourished, as he was regarded as one of the best pianists in the city, known for his improvisation and virtuosity.¹³² He attended private concerts held by well-respected musicians in the city and was able to insert himself into the circles of some of the best musicians, including Beethoven.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Simpson, "A Profile of Jan Václav Voříšek," 128; DeLong, "Voříšek, Jan Václav."

¹³⁰ Kenneth Gordon DeLong, "The Solo Piano Music of J. V. Vorisek," in *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* (Ph.D., Stanford University, 1982), 303250100, p. 123, ProQuest One Academic, <https://er.lib.k-state.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/solo-piano-music-j-v-vorisek/docview/303250100/se-2?accountid=11789>.

¹³¹ DeLong, "Voříšek, Jan Václav."

¹³² DeLong, "The Solo Piano Music of J. V. Vorisek," 166.

Kenneth DeLong describes his fame as reaching its height in the early 1820s and cites the local newspaper describing him as the “pre-eminent master of the piano.”¹³³

Voříšek would further cement his status as a well-respected musician in Vienna as he became involved in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien (“Society of Friends of Music in Vienna”), a musical society that contained some of the finest musicians in the city.¹³⁴ It was for this society that his only symphony, perhaps his most famous work, was composed. It premiered in 1823, and he was formally introduced into the society in 1825, along with Franz Schubert. This helped the two become more acquainted, and through Voříšek’s work, Schubert would be influenced and inspired to develop his famous Impromptus.

Voříšek would continue to alternate between his law studies and music, as he completed his law degree on May 4th, 1822, and was appointed clerk in the Imperial War Department.¹³⁵ This was short-lived, however, as he would leave the position to become assistant organist at the Vienna Hofkapelle.¹³⁶ Eventually, he was promoted to principal organist. It was around this time that his health started to deteriorate. He left Vienna for a brief time to recover in Graz in 1824, but never fully recovered.¹³⁷ Upon returning to Vienna, he resigned from the organist position in 1825, the same month he finished his Mass in B-flat major.¹³⁸ He died on November 19th, 1825, leaving behind a legacy that quickly faded into the shadows of music history. However, his

¹³³ DeLong, “Voříšek, Jan Václav.”

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ DeLong, “The Solo Piano Music of J. V. Vorisek,” 60.

¹³⁷ DeLong, “Voříšek, Jan Václav.”

¹³⁸ Ibid.

importance in the development of solo piano music, particularly the short character piece, cannot be overlooked.

Theoretical Analysis

When conducting an analysis of Voříšek's *Fantasia in C*, Op. 12, several questions quickly arise. The first is the question of the title, which will help indicate form and structure. According to Mike Zachary (D.M.A., American Conservatory of Music), the term "Fantasia" has been used continuously since the 16th century and thus has taken various shapes and forms.¹³⁹ The earliest keyboard fantasias were contrapuntal in nature. Seventeenth century composers, such as Sweelink, Frescobaldi, Scheidt, and Scheidemann, wrote fantasias that contained fugal elements and had countersubjects with toccata-like figuration.¹⁴⁰ Johann Sebastian Bach wrote keyboard fantasias which vary in size. The *Fantasia in A minor* is only ten bars long.¹⁴¹

Though the definition of a keyboard "fantasia" can vary depending on the time period, one of the consistent elements when used is its association with improvisation. C.P.E. Bach wrote in his *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* that "a fantasia is said to be free when it is unmeasured and moves through more keys than is customary in other pieces, which are composed or improvised in meter."¹⁴² Therefore, a fantasia will be less structured and have a looser form than other types of works. As Zachary notes, while the sonata had a rigid structure during the classical period, a fantasia is a work that has "deviated from expected

¹³⁹ Mike De Grace Zachary, "Style and Structure in Selected Viennese Keyboard Fantasias of the Early Nineteenth Century," in *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* (D.M.A., American Conservatory of Music, 1991), 303952422, p. 1, ProQuest One Academic, <https://er.lib.k-state.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/style-structure-selected-viennese-keyboard/docview/303952422/se-2?accountid=11789>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 3.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, 430.

structural norms.”¹⁴³ He cites Beethoven’s *Sonata quasi una fantasia* (the famous “Moonlight Sonata”) as an example.

Voříšek’s *Fantasia in C* is made up of two movements. The first movement is slow, marked “Andante,” and in C major. The second movement, “Allegro con brio,” is quick and virtuosic and in the parallel C minor. The first movement has a much looser structure, and definitely can be described as improvisatory, fitting the previous descriptions of a “fantasia.” DeLong describes a fantasy as a work that contains “several attractive and spontaneously generated ideas, but it need not work them out thoroughly or extensively.”¹⁴⁴ This is evident in the first movement. It has various themes and ideas, but none are extensively developed, and in a way, there is not much cohesion between sections.

I. Andante

The work opens with long, sustained C’s in both hands. If there is a motivic idea throughout the work, it is first introduced in measure two: short, chromatic movement. The melodic line is generally working its way up, and more notes are gradually added to the texture, reaching a cadence on a C major chord in measure 8. It is easy to see the improvisational nature of the work in the measures to follow, as there is an unaccompanied recitative passage in the right hand. Voříšek then introduces some polyphonic textures in measure 11, sprinkling in small moments of chromaticism, as seen in measures 12 and 13. Then, in measure 16, there are loud double sforzandos, and the passage seems to come to an abrupt end, as a new melodic idea is introduced in measure 17. The same thing happens in measure 21, where new melodic material continues to be introduced, with little relation to the previous ideas.

¹⁴³ Zachary, “Style and Structure in Selected Viennese Keyboard Fantasias of the Early Nineteenth Century,” 6.

¹⁴⁴ DeLong, “The Solo Piano Music of J. V. Vorisek,” 161.



Figure 4.1. Voříšek, Fantasia in C, "Andante," mm. 1-14

There is a shift in dynamics in measure 25, which leads into a shift in key and mood just two measures later. Now in A minor, there is a brief but beautiful passage with a continuous accompanying pattern in the left hand for the first time (simple arpeggios) while the right hand has a lyrical melody in the upper register. In this passage, there are some virtuosic ideas in the melody with descending arpeggiated 32nd notes on Eb major. A little later, in measure 37, he transitions to the dominant key of G major. One will notice that there is very little variety in this passage. The left hand has repeating G major chords with little variance for five measures; then, the pattern continues on D dominant for five more measures. While there are times where the right hand plays virtuosic scales (measures 41, 45-49), there are several measures with little change in harmony making this a difficult passage for the performer to execute well.

In measure 50, there is yet another sudden shift in style, as Voříšek introduces a highly contrapuntal section. This passage makes constant use of chromaticism through measure 66. This is followed by a lyrical passage with hand crossing in the left hand, while the right hand plays sixteenth note arpeggios, before double bars that follow measure 72.



Figure 4.2. Voříšek, Fantasia in C, "Andante," mm. 48-54

Following the double bars, much of the material is brought back. This starts in measure 77, where the same ideas from the contrapuntal passage return, though the work has now modulated to C minor. This passage begins a long buildup to the climax of the first movement. It is continuous, with no real cadences. Voříšek gradually increases the rhythmic subdivisions, beginning with sixteenth notes in measure 84. It increases to contain sixteenth notes in both hands, and eventually the rhythmic pattern of four notes against six. Then, he introduces them with a dramatic trill in the low register, added to the increase in intensity. This all builds to the climax of the movement, which can be found in measure 98. Here, Voříšek uses a repeated D-flat major harmony (the Neapolitan harmony) for two beats. It is marked triple forte, the loudest

dynamic in the work, before suddenly drawing back to a single descending melody line on eighth notes.

Following another set of double bars, Voříšek brings back the continuous eighth note accompaniment from measure 37. Then, to close the movement, he brings back the melodic arpeggios with left hand crossing, this time in the tonic key of C major.

II. Allegro con brio

While both movements of the Fantasia resemble sonata form in some way, the structure is more easily recognizable in the second movement. The opening theme consists of quick ascending eighth note patterns that work between the hands. It opens in C minor, and the key remains recognizable throughout the opening passage, though Voříšek makes frequent use of chromaticism, just as he did in the first movement.



Figure 4.3. Voříšek, Fantasia in C, "Allegro con brio," mm. 1-12

A short transition brings the work to the key of E-flat major (the relative major, as is precedent in sonata form) before a lyrical B theme is reached in measure 39. Though the dynamic is loud, the melody is marked "dolce." This should give more indication that the B theme is to be played in contrast to the fiery and intense opening. Voříšek uses a closing theme with a technically challenging hand crossing idea in measure 48. Following this, there is a descending fully diminished D arpeggio, which brings a close to the exposition.



Figure 4.4. Voříšek, Fantasia in C, "Allegro con brio," mm. 49-54

Following the repeated exposition, there is a development section in which Voříšek brings back the themes of the exposition multiple times. As expected in sonata form, the key is less stable and the themes are developed, rather than repeating exactly as they originally sounded. The opening theme is quickly reintroduced in the subdominant F minor, and the B theme shortly follows it in D-flat major. A short retransition prepares for the return of C minor by oscillating between G and F-sharp in the left hand. Then, the A theme returns in measure 92 to start the recapitulation. It is not long before the opening material takes a different path in order to prepare the B theme's return in the tonic C minor. This occurs as expected in measure 118. Voříšek brings back the closing hand crossing theme as well, before adding a short coda to close the piece. The coda consists of sweeping C minor arpeggios in both hands with the performance direction "con bravura" indicated. Then the work closes with fortissimo tonic and dominant chords.

Stylistic and Technical Considerations

A challenge that comes with performing music by Voříšek is that there is no standard for performing his works. For a composer like Chopin, there are endless recordings of his works by different soloists to listen to and compare. But since Voříšek is less well-known, there are not many recordings of his works readily available. The most notable recording is by [Artur Pizzaro](#), which has less than 3,000 views as of the writing of this report. All other recordings are by lesser-known pianists. Thus, when interpreting Voříšek at the piano, one will need to rely on their own judgment to produce the best sound when performing these works.

Tempo

One of the most important interpretive challenges to work out in the C major Fantasia is the tempo, particularly in the first movement. It is labeled “Andante,” suggesting a slower tempo, but nothing beyond that indicates how fast the first movement should be, and whether there should be tempo changes. A general principle that one should follow is that the tempo should not be slow enough that the meter is indiscernible to the listener. This is especially true in the opening of the work, which is made up mostly of quarter notes and half notes. However, one might run into problems if they take the movement too fast, as other passages in the movement use 32nd notes, a subdivision suggesting a slower tempo. There is one passage with tempo directions, as measure 59 is marked “poco meno,” and is followed in the next measure with a “tempo I” indication. This is the only direction for a tempo change, suggesting that the performer should perform at a fairly consistent tempo throughout the movement.

Articulation

There are many curious indications from Voříšek regarding articulation. One should not always read indications for articulation literally but read into what Voříšek was trying to convey.

For example, in measure 4 of the first movement, there are staccatos underneath slurs with pedal. Here, Voříšek is probably indicating that the performer should use a light touch, and that these notes should have slightly less sound than the notes that precede it.

Voříšek also gives several performance directions relating to articulation. He has several markings of “leggiero,” (“lightly”), and “dolce” (“sweetly”). These do not necessarily tie to dynamics, but are more related to the sound that the performer should make—whether they should play beautifully, with intensity, with weight, lightly, etc.

Dynamics

In the score for Op. 12, Voříšek gives detailed dynamic markings. Much of the first movement is given a soft dynamic with sforzandos and double sforzandos frequently inserted. His dynamic indications are reminiscent of Beethoven, who liked to write sudden changes in volume and create long crescendos that end with a sudden “piano” marking. Thus, the performer should not be timid and pay careful attention to bringing out the extreme dynamic range of the instrument.

One of the most intense moments of both movements occurs toward the end of the first movement. Following a long developing contrapuntal passage, Voříšek increases the rhythmic subdivisions and reaches loud, repeated D-flat major chords in both hands. Here he gives a triple forte dynamic—the only instance in the entire work.



Figure 4.5. Voříšek, Fantasia in C, "Andante," mm. 95-103

Ornamentation

The Fantasia in C uses several different ornamentations to embellish the melody, most frequently in the first movement. The first use of ornamentation is seen in measure 12, where there is a turn. The editors of the score (published by Supraphon) give instructions on how to execute this turn. Interestingly, there is another turn just six measures later that the editors instruct to execute differently. This differing instruction happens multiple times throughout the work, and it is a matter of whether the turn begins on the note on which it is labeled, or whether it should start on the note above it. There are also frequent trills throughout the work. Trills that occur on longer note values are often accompanied by crescendos and followed by grace notes.

Here, the performer should be sure to crescendo primarily on the trill and not wait until the grace notes.

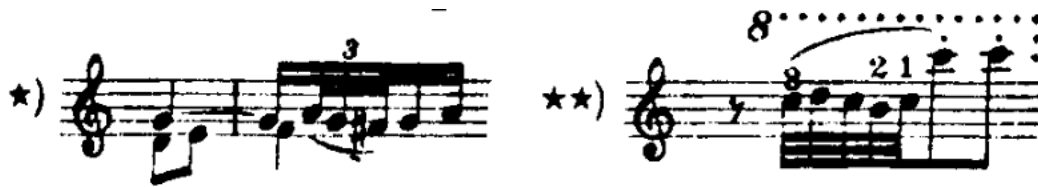


Figure 4.6. Voříšek, Fantasia in C, footnotes for execution of turns

The second movement has less ornamentation than the first. The main instances are trills on longer note values, in which the same principles of crescendo apply. There are also several instances of rolled octaves, ninths, and tenths. When situations like this occur, it is best if the performer approaches the lower note of the role as a grace note. Since the lower note stays the same while the higher note moves, playing the lower notes with a light quick touch will ensure that the moving line is brought out more clearly.



Figure 4.7. Voříšek, Fantasia in C, "Allegro con brio," mm. 28-30

Pedal

Indications for pedal are given throughout both movements. While pedal is often a highly individual matter, the indications are a good guideline for how the pedal should be used.

Sometimes Voříšek calls for clearing the pedal when it might be beneficial to keep the pedal down, creating a more sustained and blurred sound. One such spot is in the passage starting in

measure 67. Voříšek calls for a change in pedal, but it may not be necessary due to the quiet dynamic and thin texture.

The image displays a musical score for measures 67-70 of a piece by Voříšek. The score is written for piano (p) and consists of two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The first system (measures 67-68) features a fast-paced arpeggiated melody in the right hand, with fingerings 6, 6, 6 in measures 67 and 1, 2, 3, 5 in measure 68. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with notes G, F#, and E, marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The second system (measures 69-70) continues the arpeggiated melody in the right hand. The left hand accompaniment includes a 'morendo' marking in measure 69, indicating a gradual decrease in volume. The piano (p) dynamic is maintained throughout the passage.

Figure 4.8. Voříšek, Fantasia in C, "Andante," mm. 67-70

The second movement begins with fast-paced arpeggios that require precise pedaling. In the first few measures, Voříšek indicates that pedal should be used on beats one and two, but not on beats three or four. One might consider doing the opposite, where the pedal is down on beats three and four. Since the first two beats are in the lower register, pedal would prevent a clear sound. In addition, pedaling on the third and fourth beats will help bring out the main melodic beats (G and F-sharp in the first measure, for example).

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