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# An improvisatory approach to nineteenth-century music

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# An Improvisatory Approach to Nineteenth-Century Music

## Proefschrift

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Dit proefschrift is geschreven als een gedeeltelijke vervulling van de vereisten voor het doctoraatsprogramma van de Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (Universiteit Leiden). De overblijvende vereiste bestaat uit een demonstratie van de onderzoeksresultaten in de vorm van een artistieke presentatie.

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de Jong, a brilliant improviser himself and musical companion since my adolescence. I cherish the memory of the long conversations with Theo Verbey, who sadly passed away in 2019. His critical mind is still missed dearly. I certainly would like to include my students as well; it would be pedantic to repeat the first sentence of Schönberg's *Harmonielehre* here, but I do feel that my conversations (verbal or musical) with them have shaped this study.

Outside the Royal Conservatoire as well, the circle of musicians who sympathised with my work is large. Precious to me are the many stimulating hours I spent at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. I would like to thank David Dolan for his generosity and friendship, and for frequently inviting me as a guest teacher. Our trio performances and recordings together with the unique John Kenny indirectly also contributed to this study. Many thanks I owe to Elisabeth von Magnus and Simon Schouten for their friendship, for inviting me at the Kunstuniversität Graz, and for opening doors that would otherwise have remained closed.

It is a commonplace to call the years of a doctoral research intense; when the topic is as broad as this one, connected in so many ways to one's profession at large, one arrives at a stage where almost everything seems to be relevant to the research topic. It is very easy to lose oneself in a mild addiction, not unpleasant for yourself but certainly less admirable to the people around you. My biggest thanks go to my wife Wilanne, who not only managed to cope with this situation, but always believed in this project and never stopped encouraging me. More and more she has become a participant, sharing her professional expertise and never getting tired to discuss newly developed ideas with me. I am also very grateful to our children Julia and Hubert, who were a wonderful sounding board and contributed by bringing in their professional backgrounds. Without those people this book would have been entirely different – if it would have existed at all.

# Media examples

This study contains a large number of audio and audio-visual materials.
They are accessible through
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/7mwxf4zg7gvkoro/AABYbyyhALkZ3BaM2nO5YPCWa?dl=0

Alternatively, they are available on
https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:227966 (Audio files chapters 1-14)
https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:227962 (App #1 [Audio files appendix, first set])
https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:227963 (App #2 [Audio files appendix, second set])

The examples are numbered as follows: [chapter number].[section number] #[reference number]. Thus the code 7.2 #3 refers to the third audio file in chapter 7, section 3. All media examples are clearly indicated in the text.

# Preliminary remark

For many years, long before the *Wiener Philharmoniker* finally decided to allow women to join their world famous ensemble in 1997, the world of classical music has been inhabited by musicians of both sexes. For this text, this frequently poses a problem concerning the gender of personal and possessive pronouns: an oboist can equally be a he or a she. Explicitly writing 'he or she' would impede the readability of the text, using the modern 'their' for a singular is grammatically incorrect and sometimes confusing, and 'she' by default only inverts the problem. In general I have tried to avoid the dilemma by using plural where possible; when the musician would most likely be a woman, for instance in the case of a coloratura singer, I of course have chosen 'she'. In other situations I have often used an inclusive 'he' or 'his', and I beg the reader to take it as a 'grammatical' gender (though this does not exist in English), and certainly not as a suggestion that we are still living in the nineteenth century.

# Part 1
# Prelude

# Chapter 1. Introduction: A lost art?

## 1.1 Rediscovering the nineteenth century

This study is like the report of an exciting journey through familiar and yet unknown territory. The music of the nineteenth century occupies such a central stage in the field called 'classical music' or Western art music that it forms its self-evident core: whereas music from before 1800 is often termed 'early music', and later repertoire can be specified as 'twentieth-century', 'contemporary' or 'modern', nineteenth-century music usually goes without epithet. Its presence is so obvious that it is beyond discussion. This situation is reflected in concert life and in the recording industry, but also in the professional training of classical musicians. Nineteenth-century repertoire forms the unquestioned centre of the training of almost any classical performer,[1] even if they decide later to specialise in earlier or more recent musical styles. Generations after generations of pianists around the world have been improving their playing with Chopin's etudes, and the violin concertos of Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius, once touchstones of extraordinary virtuosity, have become staples of the repertoire of advanced students long ago. The nineteenth century is almost too familiar.

This familiarity, however, is superficial. To be sure, it is tempting to see the nineteenth century as the period in which classical music as we know it came into being. But there are many reasons to question this assumption. For instance, it is a widely held notion that improvisation disappeared from Western art music in the nineteenth century, never to return. In his standard work *Die Improvisation in der Musik* [Improvisation in music] the Hungarian musicologist Ernst Ferand[2] writes that at this time, the 'einst blühende »Kunst der Improvisation«' [the once flowering 'art of improvisation'[3]] was only practised 'handwerksmäßig' [as a craft] by church organists.[4] However, the mere fact that Franz Liszt was still world famous for his improvisations on the concert stage during the 1840's, and that several early recordings make us witnesses of piano improvisation around 1900, suggests a much more nuanced picture. Admittedly, it was the century of *Werktreue* – but also of ad libitum cadenzas and flourishes; it witnessed the invention of the metronome that, as legend has it, never left the lid of Chopin's piano – but early recordings sometimes show a flexibility in tempo beyond the imagination of modern performers. The Dutch literary theorist Marita Mathijsen termed this period 'de gemaskerde eeuw' [the masked century]; she shows how the nineteenth century has been 'masked' by a posterity that has exaggerated certain features and stifled other ones, but moreover, it has put on a mask to itself by pretending strictness and straightness where reality was

[1] Except for players of instruments that were not in use during the nineteenth century, that is.
[2] Or Ernest Ferrand, as his name is also spelled.
[3] All translations without reference are by the author.
[4] Ferand, E.: *Die Improvisation in der Musik*. Zürich, 1938; 420.

much less consistent.[5] This certainly also applies to music. Written evidence of the teaching of improvisation at the *Conservatoire de Paris*, for example, creates the impression of a dry and rigid academicism, but recorded improvisations of organists who studied under that regime tell a very different story. There is good reason to unmask the nineteenth century also musically.

This wish has been a major motivation for this journey through the incredibly diverse landscapes of nineteenth-century music – a journey that has put a different complexion on many apparently familiar aspects. It was distantly inspired by another 'voyage of rediscovery': in the summer of 1823, two young members of wealthy Dutch regent families did not conclude their college years with the usual Grand Tour to the art treasures of Italy, but instead embarked on a journey through their own country (they will pass in review in chapter 6.3). The purpose of their tour was probably to inspect the young nation (the Netherlands had merged with Belgium and Luxemburg in 1815) and to reinforce their elite network.[6] One of them, the later writer and politician Jacob van Lennep, kept a journal which shows that during their trip of more than three months, the two travellers developed a new understanding of their country: their protestant elitist frame of reference was challenged by reality in the more remote areas where regional identities were still very strong.[7] The present study metaphorically entails a similar travel through a seemingly well-known area. It is only when one dives into various traditions of nineteenth-century music-making that one discovers that almost nothing is as it seems: despite some similarities, the differences between modern and nineteenth-century musical culture are diverse and complex.

More specifically, this study was stimulated by the popular notion, touched upon above, that improvisation would be an extinct skill in classical music. As ethnomusicologist Robin Moore wrote in 1992: 'Improvisation has disappeared from Western art music during the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'.[8] Interestingly, the idea that improvisation only flourished 'in the past' is a topos that reoccurs time and again in history. Often it is accompanied by a feeling of regret. Ferand, quoted above, definitely saw improvisation as an art that had disappeared. Ten years earlier Gerhard Wehle wrote in the introduction to his monumental *Die Kunst der Improvisation* (1925):

> So gut wie ausgestorben ist sie heute – die Kunst des Improvisierens! (...) Von Joh. Seb. Bach, Mozart, Bruckner, Liszt berichtet die Überlieferung, dass sie geniale Improvisatoren gewesen seien. Aber heute? Warum wird diese Kunst nicht mehr gepflegt?'[9]

[5] Mathijsen, M.: *De gemaskerde eeuw.* Amsterdam, 2007; 12.
[6] Mak, G. & Mathijsen, M.: *Lopen met Van Lennep.* Zwolle, 2000; 12.
[7] Mak, G. & Mathijsen, M.: op. cit., 21.
[8] Moore, R.: 'The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music: an Interpretation of Change'. *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (June,1992), 61.
[9] Wehle, G.F.: *Die Kunst der Improvisation*. Münster, 1925; X.

> [Today the art of improvising is as good as extinct! (...) Legend has it that Johann Sebastian Bach, Mozart, Bruckner, Liszt all were brilliant improvisers. But today? Why is this art no longer cultivated?]

Wehle here positions the 'art of improvising' firmly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (incidentally mentioning only musicians who became famous as composers). However, at the heart of the period Wehle seems to recall with longing, Friedrich Kalkbrenner wondered:

> Combien parmi nos meilleurs Pianistes en est-il, qui puissent faire un prélude tant soit peu satisfaisant? Et quant aux élèves on n'en voit pas un sur mille qui, dans ses improvisations, essaie de dépasser la cadence parfaite.[10]
>
> [How many of our best pianists are capable of making a prelude that is at all satisfactory? And as for the students, hardly anyone tries, in his improvisations, to exceed the perfect cadence.]

At this time Chopin and Mendelssohn (both well-known improvisers as well) had just died, Liszt was at the height of his fame and Bruckner was still an unknown teacher. And going still further back into history, a well-known anecdote about Bach from 1720 suggests that when he was improvising for the elderly Johann Adam Reincken, the latter said: 'Ich dachte, diese Kunst wäre ausgestorben; ich sehe aber, dass sie in Ihnen noch lebt.' [I was under the impression that this art was dead; I see, however, that it lives in you.]

In our time as well, the wish to 'revive' improvisation in the field of classical music is manifest. As pianist Arcadi Volodos stated in 2014:

> It is a pity that most (classical) musicians have fallen out of touch with the art of improvising. Improvising is the core of making music. If you really understand what you are playing you must be capable of improvising in that same style. Otherwise all you are doing is imitating. [11]

There are more well-known classical musicians who advocate improvisation on stage: the violinist Hilary Hahn, pianists such as Robert Levin and Gabriela Montero, to name just a few. In the organ world there was no need to 'revive' improvisation, and today, the list of names of organists who focus on improvisation in historical styles is long, though the emphasis seems to be on the Baroque and on the early-twentieth-century French post-Romantic style of Dupré and Duruflé.

Nevertheless, Moore's statement that improvisation has disappeared from Western art music during the nineteenth century – and the ensuing idea that it should be revived – is based upon assumptions that become evident when the nineteenth-century musical landscape is examined more closely. Arguing that improvisation disappeared in the nineteenth century implies that until that time, it was still present. Present in what sense exactly, one might ask? If 'music' means 'musical life',

[10] Kalkbrenner, F.: *Traité d'Harmonie du pianiste*. Leipzig, 1849. Facsimile edition Amsterdam, 1970; 1.

[11] The quote (my translation) is taken from an article in the programme guide to the Master Pianists series in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. *Brochure to Meesterpianisten Series 2014-2015*; 29.

the sentence suggests that this is a stable concept, that we can compare today's musical life with its counterpart from centuries ago, and conclude that improvisation has disappeared from it. However, this comparison is hardly possible because the meaning of the term 'musical life' itself has shifted dramatically. Even if the sentence would merely be intended to say that items indicated as 'improvisations' have disappeared from concert programmes after 1850 (which is true, apart from organ recitals), the suggestion that this was the end of a century-old tradition is incorrect, since public concerts with instrumental music were rare before 1800. It would be much more precise to say that piano improvisations as programme items briefly occurred during the early stage of development of public concerts, roughly in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Pianist and musicologist Dana Gooley's study on nineteenth-century piano improvisation, *Fantasies of Improvisation*,[12] supports this statement with a wealth of material.

## 1.2 The improvisatory

### *Defining 'improvisation'*

However, the proposition that improvisation disappeared obviously does not refer just to programme items with that name, but to the act of improvising itself. The meaning of this word has become subject of extensive debate, especially since academic interest in musical improvisation has boomed during the past decades, not only in musicology, but also in psychology, philosophy, cognitive science and other fields. As music philosopher Marcel Cobussen writes in *The Field of Musical Improvisation*, the list of monographs, journal articles, etc., 'is already far too long and diverse to be used to provide a decent overview or a reliable enumeration of core publications'.[13] In music life at large, the notion of improvisation has gained considerable popularity as well; the variety of applications, however, shows that the term can be interpreted in many ways. Conventionally, it is explained by referring to its etymology: *improvisus* (Latin) means unforeseen, unexpected. Definitions in general dictionaries and encyclopaedias typically mention the idea of 'performing music spontaneously or without preparation'. However, the expressions 'spontaneously' and 'without preparation' are both problematic. 'Spontaneous', in the sense of 'voluntary and of one's own accord', ignores the fact that to improvise, as philosopher Bruce Ellis Benson writes, 'is to rework something that already exists (that is, 'conveniently on hand'), and thus transform it into something that both has connections to what it once was but now has a new identity'.[14] Whether an improvised performance may be called 'unprepared' depends on what counts as 'preparation'; in short, in the form shown above, the definition may unnecessarily reinforce prejudices.

[12] Gooley, D.: *Fantasies of Improvisation.* New York, 2018.
[13] Cobussen, M.: *The Field of Musical Improvisation.* Leiden, 2017; 27.
[14] Benson, B.E.: *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music.* Cambridge, 2003; 45.

Grove Music Online's entry 'Improvisation' initially defines the term as 'the creation of a musical work, or the final form of a musical work, as it is being performed'. In the more specialised section on Western art music, musicologist Rob Wegman acknowledges that 'its precise definition depends on the stability and perceived identity of the 'fixed musical work', which varies widely according to musical culture and historical period'. Indeed, this historical diversification is crucial. Today, an early music specialist most likely associates the term 'improvisation' primarily with ornamentation, which is something very different from what occurred on early-nineteenth-century concert programmes; in fact, it comes conceptually relatively close to the understanding of a bebop musician, who can also be said to 'ornament' (or vary upon) given harmonic and melodic structures.

Very different again is the meaning of 'improvisation' in the rediscovery of improvised Renaissance counterpoint, initiated by among others Wegman and Peter Schubert,[15] or in the practical exploration of the eighteenth-century Italian *partimento*-tradition that has recently emanated from the work of Robert Gjerdingen and Giorgio Sanguinetti.[16] A further widening of the perspective is the field of 'free improvisation' that forms the background of the journal *Critical Studies in Improvisation / Études critiques en improvisation*,[17] focusing 'mainly on those kinds of experimental collective improvisation that are rooted in progressive black styles from bebop forward'.[18] There is a large distance between such an essentially collective and often politically charged understanding of improvisation, on the one hand, and nineteenth-century reports of which an overwhelming majority deals with solo improvisation, on the other.[19]

This diversity in the meaning of the term 'improvisation' also shows up in professional music education. Many conservatories – until recently usually bastions of the written tradition(s) of Western art music – have become interested in improvisation. Particularly noteworthy in a field that sees itself as 'classical improvisation' is the work of David Dolan at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Yehudi Menuhin School in London. More specifically focused on early music was the teaching of Rudolf Lutz at the Schola Cantorum in Basel, which resulted in a 'Forschungsgruppe Basel für Improvisation' (FBI). The variety in educational settings, however, matches the multicoloured picture sketched above. Improvisation has found diverse ways into music curricula, ranging from 'old school' improvisation classes for organists (CNSM, Paris) or pianists

[15] Cumming, J.E.: 'Renaissance Improvisation and Musicology'. *Music Theory Online*, Volume 19, Number 2 (June 2013). In this respect, the work of Markus Jans (Schola Cantorum, Basel) and Olivier Trachier (CNSM, Paris) should be mentioned as well.

[16] Gjerdingen, R.: *Music in the Galant Style*. Oxford, 2007; Sanguinetti, G.: *The Art of Partimento*. Oxford, 2012.

[17] Available at www.criticalimprov.com.

[18] Gooley, D.: op. cit., 3.

[19] Many different understandings of the term 'improvisation' came together in the first research project that was organised by the Orgelpark in Amsterdam in 2008-2011. The Orgelpark is a venue that is explicitly dedicated to the performance and study of organ music. See Fidom, H. (ed.): *Improvisation: Musicological, musical and philosophical aspects* (Orgelpark Research Reports, volume 3). Amsterdam, 2013.

(Curtis, Philadelphia) to specialised masters for 'free' improvisation, even with associated PhD-possibilities (EAMT, Tallinn), and from improvisation in early styles (Conservatorium van Amsterdam) to trans-stylistic improvisation groups that include students from diverse departments (ESMUC, Barcelona). Several institutions offer a variety of improvisation courses. The reasons for the interest of conservatory managements can be diverse. Sometimes improvisation is seen as a way for classically trained musicians to become more free, and in this way, more self-confident at auditions and concerts. Improvisation can also be applied as a pedagogical tool, or studied as an aspect of historical performance practice – and last but not least, it can be an art form in itself.[20]

A landmark in the revaluation of improvisation at a conservatory level was an EC funded 'Erasmus Intensive Programme' that the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague initiated. In 2012-2013, three large scale improvisation projects for classical music students were hosted at this institute, gathering students and teachers from twelve institutions for higher music education across Europe.[21] A follow-up of this programme was the Tallinn-based 'METRIC'-project, that ran from 2016-2018 and resulted, among other things, in an online collection of tutorials.[22] Incidentally, music education for beginners also increasingly includes improvisation, especially at the earliest stages of development.

In the field of music theory – an academic discipline in some, but not all countries – improvisation has become a topic as well. Already in 2007, the Dutch-Flemish Society for Music Theory organised its annual International Conference in Groningen around this theme,[23] followed two years later by the German *Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* (Mainz, 2009). The (American) Society for Music Theory has maintained an Interest Group on Improvisation since 2011.[24]

### *Improvisation as an aspect of music-making*

Overlooking this extremely diverse field, it is almost impossible to produce a sound and encompassing definition of the term 'improvisation'.[25] When, therefore, a conservatory writes that it has made 'improvisation' part of the study programme, or even offers a subject with that name, there is an uncomfortable essentialist touch to this. There may be valid institution-political reasons to put improvisation on the agenda in this way, but as I have shown above, the meaning of the term tends to differ considerably, depending on who is using it. Very much in line with modern attempts to

[20] For instance as presented on the website of the *Hochschule für Musik und Theater 'Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy'* in Leipzig: https://www.hmt-leipzig.de/de/home/fachrichtungen/komposition-tonsatz/improvisation

[21] Together with my colleague, music theorist and pianist Karst de Jong, I had the pleasure of being closely involved with the organisation of these projects.

[22] 'METRIC' somewhat puzzlingly stands for 'Modernizing European Higher Music Education through Improvisation'. www.metricimpro.eu

[23] The proceedings of this conference were published in: *Tijdschrift voor Muziektheorie*, vol. 13 no. 1 (2008). https://lup.be/pages/archief-tijdschrift-voor-muziektheorie-2008-volume-13

[24] https://sites.google.com/site/smtimprovisation/

[25] For a survey of the history of the term 'improvisation' and alternative terminology, see chapter 8.

'revive' improvisation on the classical concert stage, it seems that a major motivation to put this topic on the educational agenda in classical music is a sense of loss: the feeling that improvisation is something that is missing today. This is not necessarily a sign of nostalgia. Perhaps one could say that fostering 'improvisation' is the hypothetical answer of institutions to the feeling that some aspects of classical music-making are no longer satisfactory. A worldwide decline in audience involvement and, consequently, public funding surely contributes to this awareness.[26] The danger of using 'improvisation' as a catch-all term, though, is that it creates new myths (such as: 'in the past every musician was also an improviser') and false expectations (such as: 'students need improvisation to be successful on the job market'). An even bigger risk may be that improvisation will be seen as a separate activity, which will leave classical music-making as such untouched.

Nonetheless I think that it would be wise to take seriously the notion that something is not right with (much) classical music-making as it is generally taught today – or, put more neutrally: the feeling that our time asks for a different view on performing classical music.[27] 'Improvisation' may be too undefined to count as a remedy, but there seems to be a shared idea that classical music-making could (and should) be more 'improvisatory'. The difference is that the latter term is an adjective that clearly refers to an *aspect* of music-making, thus avoiding the suggestion of improvisation as an autonomous entity. The term 'improvisatory' refers to aspects of music-making that are associated with the 'unforeseen' (*improvisus*), the unplanned. In this study, this word is understood as 'unforeseen by the performer', and in that sense 'unplanned'. It does not primarily concern the listener, and therefore does not imply any 'unexpectedness' in the sense of originality. According to this view, someone may improvise clichéd music that, despite being disappointingly commonplace, nonetheless counts as 'improvisation'. What defines the improvisatory in this study is its being based on decisions that have not been planned in advance, but that are made ad hoc, in the moment.

In his nuanced account of improvisation in the context of classical music in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, the musicologist Rudolf Frisius creates room for improvisatory aspects in a performance on the basis of a score:

> Auch eine der klanglichen Realisierung vorausgehende Notation (...), in der melodisch-harmonische und rhythmische Konstellationen, eventuell auch sekundäre Merkmale eindeutig fixiert sind, [kann] Möglichkeiten der Improvisation bei der Aufführung zulassen, wenn – in Befolgung aufführungspraktischer Konventionen oder dem Notentext beigefügter Anweisungen – auf verschiedene Weise aufführbare (bei der Aufführung allein auf Grund des Notentextes nicht

[26] The Curtis Institute, for instance, explicitly mentions 'giving (...) students an additional tool for community and audience engagement'. https://www.curtis.edu/news-folder/fall-2018/curtis-announces-performance-certificate-in-improvisation/

[27] Cf. Leech-Wilkinson, D.: 'Moral judgement in response to performances of Western art music'. In: Aguilar, A. & Cole, R. & Pritchard, M. & Clarke, E. (eds.): *Remixing Music Studies: Essays in honour of Nicholas Cook.* New York, 2020; 108.

> vorhersehbare) Abweichungen vom Notentext zugelassen sind (z.B. eingefügte Diminutionen oder Kadenzen, mehrfache Wiederholungen mit im Groben vorgegebenen Abwandlungsmöglichkeiten).[28]
>
> [Even musical notation that precedes its realisation in sound, and in which melodic, harmonic and rhythmic constellations (and possibly secondary features) have been fixed unambiguously, may allow for improvisational opportunities. This occurs when, in response to conventions of performance practice or to additional indications in the score, it is permitted to deviate in various ways (that cannot be foreseen on basis of the score itself) from the musical text (e.g., inserted diminutions or cadenzas, multiple repetitions with only vaguely prescribed possibilities of modification).]

Judging by the examples he gives, Frisius seems to see the possibilities for improvisation primarily where the score is not explicit. However, his reference to the 'conventions of performance practice' has deeper implications. Frisius seems to be assuming that a score may 'unambiguously' fix parameters such as rhythm and pitch. In this study, I will question this assumption and argue that it is also those 'conventions of performance practice' that make clear that any musical notation is a simplification (→ chapter 2.3). Until well into the twentieth century, the improvisatory potentially extended to anything that was only apparently fixed in scores. An improvisatory approach by performers was not only permitted – it was often expected.

The purpose of the present study is to explore several guises of the improvisatory in nineteenth-century music-making, to research what enabled the musicians at that time to perform in that way, and to look for possibilities to embed a similar sense of 'improvisatoriness' in today's classical music practice. How exactly the improvisatory manifests itself depends on the situation, and various nineteenth-century musical subcultures can be very different in this respect. Focusing on the improvisatory, rather than fruitlessly trying to define 'improvisation', considerably broadens the scope of this project. Gooley's book *Fantasies of Improvisation*, mentioned above, discusses 'improvisations' in the sense of stage performances for piano. This brings the author to the line of thought that such improvisation gave way to 'the improvisation imaginary, where improvisatoriness, as an aesthetic effect, is mistaken for the real thing'.[29] The present study, on the other hand, inverts Gooley's argument: it is the improvisatory in a broad sense on which the focus lies, a phenomenon of which concert fantasies of early nineteenth-century pianists are an example that, indeed, seems to have flourished only for a few decades. The result is an imaginary panorama of musical styles and

[28] Frisius, R.: 'Improvisation – zur Terminologie'. In: *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Sachteil 4. Kassel, 1996; col. 539. Incidentally, for Frisius 'improvisation' implies that the 'sonic output' is unforeseen (or even unforeseeable) for both the performer and the listener (op. cit., col. 540). With respect to the latter I tend to disagree: as Daniel Gottlob Türk (→ chapter 10.1) already remarked, a listener generally cannot know whether a piece is improvised or has been sketched beforehand. When it is considered important that an audience appreciates the music being 'truly improvised', for instance during a solo improvisation recital, performers often resort to 'tricks' such as asking the audience to provide a theme.

[29] Gooley, D., op. cit., 271.

environments that will be examined in their 'regional identities', just as Van Lennep and his friend explored the different provinces of their native country.

## 1.3 Music and language

Besides the common assumption that 'improvisation' would have disappeared during a period of such central importance for classical music, this study was motivated by yet another idea which is explicitly connected with the educational context, more specifically the training of professional musicians.

In the foreword to *Die Improvisation in der Musik*, Ferand writes that the initial impetus to his book came from the acknowledgement that the 'Improvisationslehre' [theory of improvisation] could serve as a link between music theory as taught at conservatories and music academies, and the living practice of music-making: it is 'praktischer Theorieunterricht' [practical theory teaching].[30] The picture Ferand sketches of conservatory music theory is extremely dry and abstract indeed, and cannot count as an adequate description of theory teaching at institutions nowadays. Nevertheless, as music theoretical subjects pre-eminently occupy themselves with the structure of historical musical languages, there is potentially a mutual relation between music theory and the improvisatory. This means that music theory may inform and help improvisatory music-making, but also, conversely, that the dimension of the improvisatory is capable of challenging and enriching traditional music theory. Though there are several ways to articulate this relation, the approach chosen in this study mostly draws on the idea that music has many parallels with (verbal) language, and that it can in some respects even be said to function as a kind of language. Thus one might say that classical scores were written in musical languages that were at that time used actively – in compositions, in extempore creations, and in anything in between. Most classical musicians of today do not actively master the musical languages they perform; they are like actors who perform Goethe but can't themselves say anything in German. This might summarise the situation classical music has got into in the course of the twentieth century: most performers learn how to transform a score (which is a musical text) into sounding music, but most of them are unable to produce even the simplest coherent new utterances in the musical language they are performing.[31] The will to 'revive improvisation', exemplified in Volodos's pithy statement (→ section 1.1), can be interpreted as the desire to gain active command of historical musical languages again, primarily with the intention to increase the cogency of classical music-making. Supporting this endeavour with historically based material is one of the goals of this study.

[30] Ferand, E.: op. cit., VII.

[31] This idea resonates with Noam Chomsky's concept of linguistic competence (cf. Tienson, J. (1983): 'Linguistic Competence'. *Transactions of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences*, vol. XI (1983); 99-194).

It has to be admitted that the music-language parallel is not without problems, especially concerning the notion of 'meaning': if music is a language, what does it speak about? Can music refer to an extra-musical reality in the same way language does? The old nineteenth-century debate between champions of absolute and of programme music jumps to mind, followed by the twentieth-century distinction between formalism and expressionism[32] – hardly a prospect of much clarification! In the fields of psychology, neurology and philosophy as well, the comparison of music with language has been the subject of still ongoing research and debate. In music theory, the theoretical framework of linguistics formed the background of theories of tonal structure, for instance in Fred Lehrdal's and Ray Jackendoff's *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music.*[33]

For this study it is relevant that during the period under investigation, a close connection between music and language has been assumed on an intuitive level. Comparing a musical performer, notably an improviser, with an orator is a commonplace in nineteenth-century texts – which demonstrates the importance, still at that time, of musical rhetoric, an essentially language-related phenomenon. Moreover, traditional music-theoretical terminology (largely developed in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) shows many examples of musical events that are referred to in linguistic terms, such as 'phrase' or 'theme'. In short, there are ample reasons to treat nineteenth-century music as, to employ Theodor Adorno's term, *sprachähnlich* [language-like].[34]

When twentieth-century stylistic developments are considered, the language-like character of music in the nineteenth century becomes even more obvious in retrospect. One crucial shift in twentieth-century music is the emancipation of pure sound as such; I argue that this has considerably complicated the use of the linguistic metaphor in speaking about music. Nobody articulated the switch from music-as-language to music-as-sound more clearly than the composer John Cage. In a documentary film of Miroslav Sebestik from 1992, Cage said that much music to him felt like people talking to him.[35] The point he made in the interview was that he actually did not like very much the 'talking', but that he 'enjoyed the sound acting': any sound could potentially be 'music'. Cage's lucid explanation articulates a revolutionary twentieth-century change and in reverse clarifies the preceding situation: it confirms being-like-language as a very essential quality of pre-twentieth century Western art music. The present tour of nineteenth-century musical styles draws on this quality.

[32] Cf. Meyer, L.B.: *Emotion and Meaning in Music.* Chicago, 1956.

[33] Lehrdahl, F. & Jackendoff, R.: *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music.* Cambridge, MA, 1983. For a discussion of music theoretical views on the language metaphor, see Agawu, K.: *Music as Discourse.* Oxford, 2009; 15-39.

[34] Adorno, T.W.: 'Fragment über Musik und Sprache'. In: *Gesammelte Schriften, Band 16.* Frankfurt am Main, 1978; 251.

[35] https://youtu.be/2aYT1Pwp30M

Even for the improvisatory aspects of 'score-based'[36] music-making (as will be discussed in part 2) the language parallel is of importance. A nineteenth-century score is a musical text, written in a musical language. In this study, focusing on the role of the performer, interpreting a score means entering into a dialogue with it. This can only truly happen when the interpreter masters this language. Mastering a musical language implies the ability to conceive of alternatives that were not chosen (for whatever reason) by the composer. It creates a reciprocity vis-à-vis the score, and it is this very reciprocity that justifies the term 'dialogue'. A performer who really masters a musical language is able to use it actively and in the moment, to come up with something that makes sense, in short: to improvise.

### *Reviving a 'dead' language*

Continuing the language parallel, one might say that to many score-based musicians the classical musical styles have become the equivalents of 'dead' languages such as Latin and ancient Greek, which are (with very few exceptions) no longer spoken actively. Interestingly, the idea of re-establishing the active command of historical musical styles has its parallel in classical studies. In the case of Latin the almost complete absence of active use is a relatively recent situation: in the nineteenth century this language was still spoken actively in university lectures in some countries. Twentieth-century didactics, however, moved towards a grammar-based approach, in which the text is seen 'as a puzzle to be deciphered or a specimen to be dissected. The usual approach was to take a text and "parse" it.'[37] After the second World War, dissatisfaction with its results led towards a countermovement that attempted to teach classical languages as living languages: the 'Living Latin' movement.[38]

With respect to the topic of this study, this development, though relatively modest (and certainly not universally embraced), is at least enlightening and potentially inspiring. Like reading a classical text in the (by now) traditional way, score-based music-making has become a one-way process in which a musical text is deciphered and, in a way, 'parsed'. Translator Brian Powell puts it lucidly on a popularising website:

> As far as your brain is concerned, the real language is the spoken language. Your brain is designed to absorb and internalize language by hearing and speaking it – this is how you learned your native

[36] Fidom, H.: 'Listening as a Musicological Tool: Real Time Analysis.' In: *Improvisation* (Orgelpark Research Reports vol. 3, part 1). Amsterdam, 2013; §313.

[37] Powell, B.: 'How to Speak Latin: A Beginner's Guide to Living Latin'. https://www.fluentin3months.com/speak-latin/

[38] The Danish linguist Hans Ørberg published *Lingua Latina per se illustrata*, a method based upon the principle that a text should explain itself, and in the 1990's the *Accademia Vivarium novum* was founded in Rome. A well-known champion of 'living Latin' is the German philologist Wilfried Stroh who published *Latein ist tot, es lebe Latein!* (Berlin, 2007).

> language, after all. By contrast, reading and writing are an abstract, secondary representation of the spoken language. If your entire experience of a language is just as marks on a page, you will never develop the same immediate, intuitive "feel" for it that you have for your native language or other languages you've learned to fluency.[39]

In music as well, it is a well-known fact that total immersion in a musical idiom, preferably at an early age, is an important prerequisite for fluency.[40] Just as in the case of remastering the Latin language actively, such immersion cannot really take place anymore today with respect to musical styles that belong to an irretrievable past. However, this does not imply that a renewed active command is out of range, as experiences with Living Latin confirm. How this might work in music, and how music theory can be of importance, will be sketched in part 4 of this study.

Though this study was written against the background of professional music education, it is not intended as a method. Rather it means to develop a fundament for current and future attempts to regain access to the improvisatory in classical music. I will show how a historically informed understanding of improvisation may transform current performance practices in classical music, notably the nineteenth-century repertoire. Depicting 'improvisation' as a panacea may be unwise, but I will argue that an improvisatory approach to nineteenth-century music can make those practices richer, more communicative and more diverse. As I mentioned above, Ferand saw the nineteenth century as a period of decay with respect to 'the art of improvisation', and hence the scope of his work extended only to the end of the eighteenth century. This study aims to continue where Ferand stopped.

## 1.4 The *Urtext*-paradigm

What today is called 'classical music' is in this study not seen as the imaginary continuation of a centuries-old musical practice, but as an essentially modern practice of music-making which is based upon scores that were written in a more or less remote past. Thus Western 'classical music' is score-based by definition: it is a literate musical practice. It is easily forgotten that this dependence on musical texts is exceptional: most musical traditions worldwide do not make use of musical notation. Clearly, the way in which classical music works cannot be seen independently from the fact that it uses scores. How music is transmitted, how it is performed, how it is enjoyed and assessed: everything is connected with classical music being score-based. Needless to say, music theory as we know it also owes its existence to the fact that in Western art music it is possible to write down music. Due to this phenomenon, classical music has two faces: there is the music-as-it-sounds, which I will term 'music-as-event', and there is 'music-as-a-score'. Music-as-event is something that, like all music, is a temporal

[39] Powell, B.: op. cit.
[40] Cf., e.g., Berliner, P.: *Thinking in Jazz: the Infinite Art of Improvisation.* Chicago, 1994; especially chapter 1.

art: it can only be experienced on a timeline; the music-as-a-score is a musical text, something concrete on paper, a static object that can be viewed at a glance.

Since classical music is essentially score-based, the often applied term 'classical improvisation' is in fact in contradiction with itself; it will generally be avoided in this study. What it usually refers to, though, is a type of idiomatic improvisation (Derek Bailey), style-oriented improvisation or, as I prefer to call it, historically inspired improvisation;[41] it aims to apply styles ('languages') of classical compositions and will be the subject of part 3 of this study, 'Improvising without a score'.

Until well into the twentieth century, much newly written music was naturally understood as an organic continuation of a centuries-old tradition. This situation has changed in the course of the century, especially after the second World War, when 'contemporary music' became a separate sub-species, like 'early music' soon after: a niche with its own audience. The implications of this interruption of a living tradition are important. Classical music has become something that belongs to the past, a collection of utterances in a forgotten language. For more and more people, familiarity with classical music is rather based upon passive habituation than on active participation – a situation to which the free and unconditional availability of recorded music has also contributed. In other words: pronouncing Goethe's words without speaking his language has become increasingly satisfactory to many.[42] This development has led towards a type of musician that can be called score-dependent: many modern 'classical' musicians are simply unable to play or sing anything coherent that has not been written down first. To a score-dependent musician improvising is *das ganz Andere* (with an apology to theologian Karl Barth), something beyond his imagination. The same is true, by-the-way, for the modern concert audience: many listeners simply don't understand how somebody should make music that has not been composed before. It is a situation that leads to an understanding of improvisation as an isolated activity.

I argue that this increasing score-dependency has deeply changed the relation between a performer and the score. When one depends on notated music to be able to play anything at all, the musical text becomes an ultimate and unquestionable truth, and performers have no other option than to cling to it. Their task is to transform the notation into sound. (Incidentally, this task is hard enough, especially considering the extremely high and ever rising level of technical perfection that is expected.) In the eyes of a performer, there tends to be one ideal version of this transformation that every performance strives for. This ideal may very well be a personal truth, but what counts is that a

[41] Analogous to the Historically Informed Performance practice (HIP), that increasingly sees itself as 'historically inspired' as well.

[42] This is not meant to sketch a too dystopian picture, for new ways of dealing with old music do not preclude true enjoyment or an improvisatory approach. However, knowingly ignoring an important part of a musical text's meaning is artistically problematic, in my view. Similarly, one may enjoy reproduced fragments of Mondriaan's paintings as harmless decoration, but in view of the painter's high idealistic intentions, such commercial use still feels as an offense against these artworks.

musician is constantly trying to achieve one specific – and in that sense static – end result. Performances are thus seen as reproductions.[43] In the words of musicologist Ulrich Mahlert:

> Der Spieler erarbeitet, lernt und automatisiert im Üben eine bestimmte, bis ins Detail festgelegte Interpretationsversion der jeweiligen Komposition; fortan ruft er das Werk nur noch in dieser gleichermassen perfektionierten wie erstarrten Gestalt ab.[44]
>
> [The player acquires, learns and automatises by practising a specific interpretational version of the respective composition that is fixed in detail; from now on he will only retrieve the work in this as perfected as ossified form.]

Of course there will be small ad hoc adaptations to the acoustics, the instrument (especially when the player doesn't use his own), and the reactions of the audience. As Cobussen explains in *The Field of Musical Improvisation*, such factors also can be seen as 'actants', and the interplay with them as improvisation.[45] This might indeed be true in an ecological sense, when the system of a specific situation of music-making is observed by an imaginary outsider; however, focusing on the individual musician may give a different picture. The two views supplement each other: the musician can have a very definite and 'static' result in mind (which could be called an anti-improvisatory intention), and at the same time use improvising with the unique 'actants' of that very performance as a means to get to this result. 'The improvisatory' as it is explored in this study, on the other hand, depends on the attitude of the performer. If performers do not open up to it, if they don't embrace it in their music-making, it does not exist; it creates a situation in which, indeed, 'improvisation has disappeared from Western music'.

Score-dependency is connected with an interpretational modus that for many classical musicians still is the standard approach to a musical score; I call this the *Urtext*-paradigm. *Urtext* [original or primordial text] is a label that was attached (possibly for commercial reasons) mainly from the 1950's on to text-critical editions of classical music, especially by German and Austrian publishers such as *Bärenreiter*, *Henle* and *Wiener Urtext Edition*. This type of edition pretends to provide the original score 'as intended by the composer'.[46] Unlike the more reserved term 'critical edition', the word *Urtext* has the suggestion of representing the piece as it should be – an idea that presupposes strict obedience of the performer. Pianist and artistic researcher Paulo de Assis even calls *Urtext* editions 'an epistemological obstacle'.[47] This type of high quality edition of classical scores quickly became

[43] One situation in which this feeling is acute is a studio recording in which editing is involved.
[44] Introduction to Czerny, C.: *Von dem Vortrage* (facsimile reprint: U. Mahlert, ed.). Wiesbaden, 1991; IX.
[45] Cobussen, M.: op. cit., 109.
[46] For a discussion, see Boorman, S.: 'Urtext'. In: *New Grove Online* (https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28851)
[47] Cf. Assis, P. de: 'Beyond Urtext: A Dynamic Conception of Musical Editing'. In: Assis, P. de & Kanno, M. & Parra Cancino, J.: *Dynamics of Constraints.* Gent, 2009; 10.

the standard for any self-respecting performer. What I call the *Urtext*-paradigm is a musical literalism that sees the score as a musical code that has a direct relation with a specific transformation into sound: what you see is directly connected with what you hear, and the score tends to coincide with the music. I would like to emphasise that the paradigm is not associated with the editorial principles of *Urtext* editions as such; rather, it concerns the way these editions tend to be understood and handled by performers – though this seems to be incited by the suggestive label *Urtext.*

Practical editions of classical scores, as, for instance, Carl Czerny's longstanding edition for Edition Peters of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* with its many added interpretational markings and even altered notes, are today seen as distortions of the original texts. Paradoxically, it is only within the literalism of the *Urtext*-paradigm that Czerny's edition really becomes problematic. Interestingly enough, this paradigm continues to dominate many modern views on music, not only in mainstream classical music performance but also in the field of post-1950 music analysis methods, and even in the Early Music movement and 'Historically Informed Performance' (HIP). As for the latter: on the basis of research one may find that certain aspects of notation in early scores are not intended to be interpreted exactly as written – as is often the case with rhythm, for instance.[48] However, this as such leaves the idea of the score as a code untouched. Many HIP performances show the same lack of 'improvisatoriness' as more traditional classical performances.

Where Franz Liszt could still call wrong notes during a performance 'uninvited guests',[49] the *Urtext*-paradigm belongs to a musical world in which a very high level of technical perfection (perhaps unequalled in history) is the standard. It is hard to tell which is the cause of which; maybe it would be better to see both phenomena as consequences of a basic attitude that tends to take a musical text literally – from a historical perspective, too literally, as will be argued in this study.

The *Urtext*-paradigm should not be confused with 'just playing the notes'. The crux of the *Urtext*-paradigm is not that it would discourage the performers to 'do something with the notes', but that it leaves very little room for ad hoc decisions. It represents the triumph of control in music-making, minimising the space for 'the unforeseen'. This study examines the hypothesis that nineteenth-century musicians had a different mentality compared to their present-day peers, an attitude towards music-making that left more space for extempore decisions, and, much more than today, appreciated a performance as a 'reworking' (Benson) instead of a reproduction: an improvisatory approach to scores and to music-making in general. It will be argued that this attitude was (at least in part) based on the ideal of variety, as opposed to the later musical literalism of the *Urtext*-paradigm. As

[48] For instance in the genre of the French Overture *à la* Lully, where in the slow part dotted rhythms are supposed to be performed over-dotted.
[49] Walker, A.: *Franz Liszt,* vol. 3: *The final years, 1861-1886*. Ithaca (New York), 1996; 247.

mentioned above, this improvisatory aspect could manifest itself in many ways. A freely improvised cadenza or fantasy obviously had a great deal of it – though a performer could very well incorporate premeditated material at will. However, such improvisations without a score are not the exclusive focus of this study. Without neglecting their importance, we can regard them as a possible consequence of something much more fundamental: an underlying improvisatory attitude to music-making in general, be it with or without scores. It implies an invitation to today's musicians and scholars to rethink an interpretational paradigm we usually take for granted. From performers it demands being open to the unexpected, an attitude that may be unusual and even frightening – but that, on the other hand, has the potential to bring a sense of life to music-making that is nothing less than addictive. From audiences, including critics and concert organisers, it demands a different attitude of listening, being prepared to enjoy differences instead of applying the same imaginary yardstick for every performance.

## 1.5 The artistic value of historically inspired improvisation

The series of international, cross-stylistic conservatory improvisation projects mentioned in section 1.2 has acted like a pressure cooker for thinking about improvisation on an institutional level. Much more than in the case of a musicological, music theoretical or philosophical conference, the simple fact that every idea had to be put into practice immediately gave rise to interesting and sometimes passionate discussions. A teaching project that exclusively focuses on 'improvisation' takes for granted that this term refers to something concrete and well-defined. As I have shown in section 1.2, in reality people have very different ideas about what the word actually means, and as a result, stylistic differences are almost inevitably framed as 'different types of improvisation'. From there it is only a small step to comparing the assumed 'artistic value' of these types. At the instigation of Christoph Baumann (*Hochschule Luzern*), the METRIC community found an elegant way out of this mire by adding different taxonomies, namely distinguishing by objective (improvisation as an art form in itself, improvisation as a means to an end), by pitch organisation (tonal improvisation, free improvisation, *improvisation générative*), or by discipline (extra-musical, cross arts).[50] Though this does not completely solve the problem, it at least avoids sometimes fruitless discussions, especially between champions of 'free improvisation' and 'classical improvisers'. In such discussions classical music often finds itself in a defensive position. Derek Bailey's tendentious words from 1980 may serve to illustrate the tone of the debate:

> The petrifying effect of European classical music on those things it touches – jazz, many folk musics, and all popular musics have suffered grievously in their contact with it – made the prospect of finding improvisation there pretty remote. Formal, precious, self-absorbed, pompous, harbouring rigid

[50] http://metricimpro.eu/exercises/glossary/

> conventions and carefully preserved hierarchical distinctions; obsessed with its geniuses and their timeless masterpieces, shunning the accidental and the unexpected: the world of classical music provides an unlikely setting for improvisation.[51]

Though this fierce attack clearly results from the difficulty in defining 'improvisation', musicologist Roger Moseley's words from 2013 still represent an uncomfortable truth:

> The flourishing of improvisation studies over recent years has placed 'classical' music and its adherents in an unfamiliar and somewhat defensive position. For once, other musics, narratives, and disciplinary approaches are of central concern while the 'classical' and its associated values are revealed to be peripheral, abnormal, and even paradoxically ephemeral.[52]

The main objection 'classical' improvisers are faced with is the supposed lack of originality in their art. Whereas 'free improvisers' like to associate improvisation with freedom of any kind, avoiding all beaten tracks, improvising in classical styles is easily depicted as warming up what others invented long ago, and therefore as unartistic (due to its presumed lack of originality). Behind this idea is a strong focus on (and often an obsession with) 'newness' in music.

The position I take up draws on the already mentioned parallel between music and language, which has implications for the notion of 'newness'. In any language, it will always be possible to say new things, even though the speaker does not invent any new words. Likewise, one may improvise (or compose, for that matter) 'new' music in a nineteenth-century musical language. With respect to the artistic value of historically inspired improvisation, debates as mentioned above in fact show a radically modern perspective in which music (including improvised music) is enjoyed for its own sake, primarily by listening to recordings or by visiting a concert. I will show throughout this study that nineteenth-century musical culture was much more diverse than that, and that music-making occurred in various situations that have no parallels today, but that were as such natural habitats for the improvisatory. It is this broader outlook on musical culture that will gradually unfold throughout the course of this study by traversing step by step a range of nineteenth-century musical landscapes. Historically inspired improvisation has the capacity to restore the connection with the interrupted musical tradition I referred to in section 1.4: it allows historical musical languages to live on.

## 1.6 Rationale

As mentioned above, this study provides a 'panorama' of nineteenth-century styles and situations of music-making that together sketch a picture of improvisatory aspects of nineteenth-century music; it subsequently investigates possible implications for the interpretation of scores from that period,

[51] Bailey, D.: *Improvisation: its Nature and Practice in Music* (revised ed.). Boston, 1993; 19.
[52] Moseley, R.: 'Entextualization and the Improvised Past.' *Music Theory Online*, Volume 19, Number 2 (June 2013); [1].

and for the function of the improvisatory in modern (classical) music life. My perspective is in the first place that of a performer of this repertoire. Knowing *that* improvisation happened during the investigated period might in itself gratify curiosity, but crucial for a modern performer is the coupling to today's performance practice. This study was written by a musician, and, at least in part, addresses itself to professional musicians, including music theorists. Though there are many cross-references throughout the text, the chapters can generally be read separately.

***Research questions***

The underlying research was structured by means of four questions. The first two have a historical focus:

1. *To what extent and in what way did nineteenth-century music-making depend on improvisatory activity?*
2. *Is there a connection between the training of nineteenth-century musicians and the improvisatory attitude they might have had during music-making?*

The answers to these questions partly describe the 'horizon' of nineteenth-century scores: musical texts have been written with the contemporary musical conventions in mind. This affects modern musical practice ('classical music') and thus leads towards the third question:

3. *How can an improvisatory approach be incorporated in today's musical practice?*

Fundamental to this study is the idea that music can be regarded as a language, and that it is important for 'classical' musicians today to master the musical languages of the (in this case, nineteenth-century) repertoire they perform. Therefore the third question can be narrowed down:

3b. *How can nineteenth-century musical languages be actively mastered again?*

A characteristic of improvising is that it by definition *happens*: it is music-as-event. This ephemeral character makes improvisation a problematic subject for traditional music analysis. At the same time, it brings together in a novel way structural and performance-related aspects. The fourth question investigates this field:

4. *What consequences may the rise of stylistically oriented improvisation have for music theory as a teaching subject?*

How improvisation challenges music theory, and how theory might benefit from this, will be the subject of chapter 14, where I investigate how a more hands-on and creative approach to music theory may both be useful for an improviser and enriching for music theory as a conservatory subject.

***The nineteenth century***

The examined time period is the 'long' nineteenth century, roughly starting after the French Revolution and finishing with the beginning of World War I. Though this is a long period that shows a large variety of musical styles, these styles share some characteristics that make it worthwhile to consider the music of this century as a connected whole. The end of the eighteenth century serves as a watershed in many representations of Western history. The nineteenth century was the first one in which printed music became readily available to the masses and in which musical literacy became the standard, leading towards the still familiar habit to call a score a 'work'. It is a period in music history which by and large was characterised by major / minor tonality, only towards the end gradually dissolving into either neo-modality or chromaticism. It is a period heavily marked by the aesthetics of Romanticism – though this term has become so much disputed that it will mostly be avoided in this study. The Romantic genius cult, however, as well as the associated expectation that a composition be innovative, is a notion that provides an important context for this study. The nineteenth century was the age of the middle class and of the birth of modern concert life, and also of the growing idea that instrumental music is superior to vocal music. With the rise of an ideal like *Werktreue* it is also often regarded as the century in which improvisation disappeared – a claim that has kindled this research.

***Research area***

Generally, the research area of this project is the historical musical praxis from which the body of compositions has arisen that is usually indicated with the term 'Western art music'. Folk music will be discussed only insofar as it was of influence during the nineteenth century. Organ music often jumps to mind when the word improvisation is mentioned, and it certainly will play a part in this study. However, during the nineteenth century the church had already lost its central position in Western society, a shift that also moved organ music to a more peripheral area in the musical landscape. Of course, there are notable exceptions like the French organ tradition that started with Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens and César Franck, and which will be discussed in chapter 13. A special case, to conclude, is the symphonic orchestra. Though the importance of symphonic music for the nineteenth-century musical landscape is undisputed, it will hardly play a role in this study. The

reason is that especially since Richard Wagner's disciplinary reforms,[53] improvisatory freedom in the orchestra mainly rests with the conductor, and not with individual players.

Despite such restrictions, the topic of this study covers an extremely wide field. This was a conscious decision: one of the aims is to provide a survey of improvisatory aspects in nineteenth-century music-making, or at least a representative selection of it. Though this broadness inevitably means that some topics can be dealt with only superficially, it also enables cross-references that in a more specialised study would have remained unnoticed, such as the influence of bel canto on instrumental music (→ chapter 5). Indeed, the fact that this study regards the improvisatory as an inherent aspect of music-making rather than an isolated subfield of musical activity makes it inevitable that these rich connections will arise. It is my hope that the added value of such connections makes up for the loss of certain details. In order not to get bogged down in a fruitless attempt to describe an entire culture, I will make use of a conceptual filter that will be developed in chapter 2.

### *Methodology*

The research project took place at the crossroads of musicology, music theory and performance practice, which implies the inclusion of a large variety of sources. Concerning the musicological aspect, it makes extensive use of historical texts such as monographs, methods and treatises, but also of journal articles, letters, biographies, vanity documents, etc. In particular, the evaluation of methods and treatises demands from the researcher hands-on familiarity with performance practice. Such a practice-based approach is even more useful for another type of source: early recordings and editions. Examples in treatises or recordings do not transfer information in a straightforward way; instead of taking them at face value, it is important for the present-day researcher to be aware of what is *not* being told, and to know which choices were *not* made by the performer.

Another example of practice-based interpretation of sources occurs when teaching is involved. For instance, when Czerny shows examples of what one can do with a simple harmonic progression, these will be understood differently by a researcher who has personal experience in teaching young musicians. Anyone who knows how students tend to react to specific difficulties today will read Czerny on a different level of understanding; sometimes Czerny seems to take for granted what would need much more explanation today, and vice versa. This type of conclusion in turn stimulates deeper searching – a process that may very well be called a 'dialogue'.

In addition, my own practice as an improvising performer is part of the methodological tissue. The most unusual research material in this study surely consists of live recordings of myself. As a performer-researcher, I may be able to bring in elements that are not accessible to someone who does

[53] Cf. Wagner, R.: *Über das Dirigieren*. Leipzig, 1914.

not have the experience of actually participating in the recorded improvisations. Analysing them along the same lines as other recordings may bring valuable insights. Moreover, the influence of the instrument that is used for a recording can be made more concrete in this way.

Aside from musicology and performance practice, the third area involved in this research is music theory. This is actually an umbrella term for a number of study topics that are usually distinguished according to their organisation in higher music education, with traditional subdisciplines like harmony, counterpoint and analysis. In this study, I will continuously draw on music-theoretical explanations and approaches; the reason for that is that music theory has a long tradition of expressing in words what actually happens in the music that we perform or listen to. If we want to talk about music itself, we need music theory.

In several senses, this study has been distantly inspired by the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Though it by no means pretends to be a philosophically justifiable application of Gadamer's ideas to a field that he has hardly covered himself, concepts such as 'horizon' (*Horizont*), 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizontverschmelzung*), and especially 'dialogue' (*Dialog*) serve as guiding principles more than once.

***Structure***

This study is organised in four parts. The remainder of part 1 will be devoted to a concept with a long history, adapted here to music: *locus communis*; it will serve as a conceptual frame for the whole study. In parts 2 and 3, different guises of the improvisatory will be discussed, employing a taxonomy that runs from score-based to 'free'. Part 2 ('Improvising with a score') focuses on 'relative' improvisation (Ferand), understood as an improvisatory approach to score-based music-making. This part (consisting of chapter nos. 3 through 7) brings together improvised ornamentation and improvisatory timing, two examples of an improvisatory approach that within the logic of this study are seen as connected. Chapter 3 introduces a number of rhetorical features that will play a major role; chapter 4 discusses ornamentation in bel canto as inextricably linked with bel canto performance techniques, whereas in chapter 5 the influence of bel canto on instrumental music will occupy centre stage. Chapter 6 introduces a new understanding of musical tempo by way of one of the most fundamental experiences of a human being, namely walking, after which chapter 7 investigates its musical implications.

Part 3 ('Towards "Historically Inspired Improvisation": improvising without a score', chapter nos. 8 through 13) focuses on a more traditional understanding of improvisation which does not use concrete scores as a point of departure, though it makes use of historical musical languages of which scores are notated examples. The term 'historically inspired' is a flexible term: it is up to improvisers to decide to what extent they actually choose to stay with a specific historical musical language, or

rather allow for a variety of stylistic influences.[54] Appealing examples of the former are organ improvisers like Sietze de Vries and Zuzana Ferjenčíková, while a more eclectic approach can be found in the work of Olivier Latry and Thierry Escaich; in this study, however, most attention will be paid to the acquisition of the musical languages themselves. Historical terminology around the concept of improvisation will be tracked in chapter 8. Chapter 9 is about preluding, chapter 10 about improvised cadenzas. In chapter 11 the somewhat neglected area of improvised dance music will be explored, and in chapter 12 'free' improvisation, with or without compositional forms as models. Chapter 13 focuses on the famous French 'school' of organ improvisation that emerged primarily from the teaching of César Franck.

The fourth part, 'Coda', zooms in on the question of how the improvisatory aspect of music-making might be enhanced in today's field of classical music. Chapter 14 provides a summary of the whole study and subsequently proposes an extension of the role of music theory; finally, supporting historical study material is presented in the appendix.

The title of this study can be understood in two ways that together reflect its scope. 'Nineteenth-century music' can be taken as the collection of scores that were published in that period and that today serve as a basis of performances. In particular part 2 advocates an improvisatory approach to these scores, as opposed to the *Urtext*-paradigm that I postulated. Alternatively, the term may refer to the practice of music-making in the nineteenth-century. When we approach this practice in an improvisatory way, we are like a jazz musician who listens to other musicians with the intention of using elements of what he hears for his own music. In this sense an improviser can be inspired by historical musical practices. Since no living person heard the playing of Chopin, Schumann or Liszt, or the singing of Malibran, scores have become the main source of information about lost musical practices. In order to take maximum advantage of such musical texts, we need the improvisatory approach in the first sense, mentioned above. The two belong together.

[54] Obviously, their choice may be influenced by factors of all sorts: aesthetic and cultural conventions, for instance, but also the improviser's personal musical frame of reference.

# Chapter 2. Commonplacing[55]

## 2.1 Introduction: An improvisatory approach

In 2013, David Dolan, John Sloboda, Henrik Jeldtoft Jensen, Björn Crüts and Eugene Feygelson presented the results of their ground-breaking interdisciplinary research about the impacts of adopting an improvisatory approach to the performance of classical chamber music. EEG measurements were carried out both on musicians and on their audience while the same music was performed either with or without an improvisatory approach. The measurements showed considerable differences; in the words of the researchers, the data provided '*prima facie* evidence that improvised performances of the classical repertoire can heighten musical quality and audience engagement'.[56] By 'musical quality' the authors understood 'a state of heightened listening or attunement during the improvised mode, as evidenced by (...) rhythmic flexibility and [the] ability to give musical space to the other players who may have been extemporising notes or leading a rubato'.[57] It was found that 'the presence of an improvisatory state of mind in performance results in greater degrees of engaged listening (subjective feedback) and synchrony of brain activity (objective feedback) between performers and listeners'.[58]

A follow-up from 2018 with an even more interdisciplinary set-up, in part by the same researchers, led to a similar conclusion: 'In a group setting, such as a live concert, our evidence suggests that [an improvisatory] state of mind is communicable between performers and audience thus contributing to a heightened quality of shared experience.'[59] The authors conclude that 'there is a strong suggestion both from the audience responses (of "more musically convincing") and also from the critical listening of the musicians, that the improvised performances were not only more impactful, but had a higher artistic quality'.[60]

The findings of these research projects strongly support an assumption that underlies the present study as a whole: that an improvisatory approach is not just something that may be presumed in historical situations of music-making, but that matters today. When a pianist plays a (new) cadenza,

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[55] Sections 2.1-2.3 are based on an earlier essay: 'Commonplacing: on historically inspired improvisation and music theory'. In: Aydintan, M. & Edler, F. & Graybill, R. & Krämer, L. (eds.): *Gegliederte Zeit. 15. Jahreskongress der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie Berlin 2015*. Hildesheim, 2020; 500-510.

[56] Dolan, D. & Sloboda, J. & Jensen, H.J. & Crüts, B. & Feygelson, E.: 'The improvisatory approach to classical music performance: An empirical investigation into its characteristics and impact.' *Music Performance Research*, Vol. 6 (2013); 2.

[57] Dolan, D. & Sloboda, J. & Jensen, H.J. & Crüts, B. & Feygelson, E.: op. cit., 32.

[58] Dolan, D. & Sloboda, J. & Jensen, H.J. & Crüts, B. & Feygelson, E.: op. cit., 31.

[59] Dolan, D. & Jensen, H. J. & Mediano, P.A.M. & Molina-Solana, M. & Rajpal, H. & Rosas, F. & Sloboda, J.: The Improvisational State of Mind: A Multidisciplinary Study of an Improvisatory Approach to Classical Music Repertoire Performance'. *Frontiers in Psychology,* Vol. 9 (September, 2018); 1.

[60] Dolan, D. & Jensen, H. J. & Mediano, P.A.M. & Molina-Solana, M. & Rajpal, H. & Rosas, F. & Sloboda, J.: op. cit., 19.

it may be impossible for listeners to decide whether it was premeditated or actually invented 'as it is being performed' (→ chapter 1.2), as Daniel Gottlob Türk remarked in 1789;[61] however, whether the cadenza is played in an improvisatory mode or not is picked up (and appreciated) by the audience, then as well as nowadays. In the articles of Dolan and his colleagues the idea of an improvisatory approach is described in rather general terms, using qualities such as the amount of risk-taking. The present study aims to flesh out the phenomenon in the field of nineteenth-century music. At the end of chapter 1, I briefly discussed it in a dual sense, namely as an approach to scores and to music-making itself. In the present chapter I will develop a conceptual framework that provides an entry into both aspects. This framework, a musical application of the rhetorical concept *locus communis*, will be used to describe and analyse improvisatory aspects of music-making. In the next section (2.2), this concept will be explained, first in connection with improvisatory creation. In section 2.3, I subsequently turn towards the dialogue between musicians and scores and show how *loci communes* have an important role there as well.

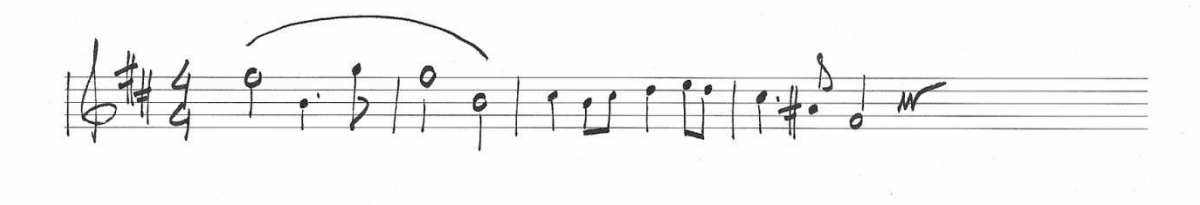
## 2.2 Loci communes

### *A student's improvisation*

An example from my own teaching practice may serve as an upbeat to the introduction of the concept 'locus communis'. The Royal Conservatoire in The Hague has been offering electives on 'classical' improvisation since over 15 years. In June 2014, a one semester improvisation course was concluded with a group session during which all students presented one or more improvisations in different combinations. This course was intended for third year Bachelor students in classical music (non-keyboard players and singers), and the programme consisted of different types of historically inspired group and duo improvisations. Since this was an introductory course, the stylistic focus remained rather open: the lessons aimed to remove mental barriers and to stir the students' musical imagination, instead of imposing style-based restrictions.

During the course, the students were trained with exercises intended to enhance their ability to both recognise and imagine concrete musical structures (melodic models, standard harmonic progressions such as cadences and well-known sequences) and to translate the imagined sounds to a musical instrument (including the voice). Shortly before the final presentation, the students were provided with a brief 'incipit', a beginning of a melody, most often in the form of an antecedent. An oboe player received the following theme, which was given the title 'Lied ohne Worte' on the assignment sheet:

[61] Türk, D.G.: *Clavierschule oder Anweisung zum Clavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende*. Leipzig, 1789; 313.



*Example 2.2.1*

The assignment was to start a 'free' improvisation with this incipit, accompanied by me as an instructor. That is about all that was agreed upon in advance: apart from the incipit, both melody and accompaniment were improvised. The session was recorded with a cell phone.

**[2.2 #1 improvised Lied ohne Worte]**

It should be noted that historical evidence of two or more musicians improvising together is extremely scarce during the period considered in this study. The point of this exam assignment therefore was not to re-enact some imagined historical practice, but to 'say something new in an old language' – at least, a first attempt in that direction. The oboe player had virtually no experience with this type of improvising before he came to the course, and this theme was new to him. Nevertheless, the music on the recording sounds more or less 'right' in terms of the 'common practice period': there are no real clashes, and the form seems to be in balance as well. On the basis of similar experiences in classroom and on stage it can be said that this type of result is not an exception. How is this actually possible? How can two players produce something in a style that is based upon classical harmony, without any prior agreement about the course of the music?

### *Guiding principles*

Indeed, to many score-dependent classical musicians a joint improvisation like the one on the recording may seem to be a matter of telepathy – or luck. This idea is based on the assumption that, when there is no score to play from, the musician has no guidelines whatsoever. This assumption, however, is not correct. As soon as an improviser (or composer) decides to express something musically, there are all sorts of factors guiding him, which together form a kind of referential framework. In other words: each musical game has its rules. In 'idiomatic' improvisation such rules are closely connected with what we call a musical style. In the aforementioned lesson a couple of hints was already made on the assignment sheet. First of all, the added title ('Lied ohne Worte') designates a genre. The implications are far-reaching (→ chapter 12): it evokes the early-nineteenth-century style of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and it suggests a certain character and texture (a gentle singing melody in moderate tempo with a clearly separate accompaniment). Even though many 'songs without words' of Mendelssohn (the name giver of the genre) are actually more diverse than that, I believe that it is still this cliché that is suggested by the title. With it come certain melodic gestures,

and even a melody that is generally built in four-bar phrases; the title also evokes a certain form (a ternary form will be likely, with the middle section in a contrasting key, usually the dominant or the relative major / minor). On a more detailed level, the given opening phrase (the incipit) can easily be seen as the first half of a classical period, implying a next phrase that opens symmetrically and then either closes in the home key or modulates. All of these factors are musical conventions that are connected with the suggested title and the character and style of the given theme.

Of course, the piano accompaniment itself was also strongly guiding the oboe player. This is because tonal harmony tends to follow specific patterns, among other things depending on, as William Caplin calls it,[62] the formal function of a passage; put (too) simply: whether one is at the beginning, the middle or the end of a section. As I mentioned above, familiarity with such patterns had been addressed in the preceding lessons. But exactly which harmonic progressions were chosen, and how they were arranged, depended on the possibilities offered by the melody of the oboe player. His melodic gestures created expectations as well, resulting in me choosing for one of the harmonic options available at a specific moment. In this way the improvisation really was an ongoing process of give and take.

A free tonal duo improvisation[63] such as the one in the example may be compared with a conversation: there is usually one person who takes the initiative, although this initiative may change continuously between the improvisers.[64] The success of the enterprise depends on an important principle: a certain level of shared musical expectation. The 'follower' should not only be able to react quickly to the initiative of the 'leader'; he should also know what his fellow might do next. For the musicians to be able to play together, even improvised music, despite being 'unforeseen' (→ chapter 1.2) and unplanned, needs a certain amount of predictability. This predictability can be found in the rules of the musical game: in factors that guide the improvisers, such as the ones described above. The reverse is also true: when the improvisers do not play according to the guiding factors, they change the rules of the game. There might be very good artistic reasons to do so, but the new game will be a different one.

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[62] Cf. Caplin, W.E.: *Classical Form.* New York, 1998.

[63] In the context of this study: tonal improvisations in which all factors (melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, formal) are decided on the spot.

[64] This metaphor should not be pushed: of course, a difference with a verbal conversation is that in music, it is more usual that individuals perform simultaneously – a situation that is usually avoided in talking. A commonplace reference is Goethe's famous description of a string quartet in a letter to Carl Friedrich Zelter from 9 November, 1829: 'Man hört vier vernünftige Leute sich untereinander unterhalten' [one hears four reasonable people talking together] (Geiger, L. (ed.): *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Zelter*, Band 3). Leipzig, 1902; 194).
In his teaching, David Dolan (→ chapter 1.2 and section 2.1) often compares this way of improvising with dancing together. Both metaphors express the subtlety of the process; just like between dancing and conversation partners, the communication between improvisers takes place through more channels than could be mentioned in the necessarily simplified account in this chapter. For instance, for the oboist to pick up a specific harmonic pattern, it is not just the chords and the way they are arranged that matter, but also the musical expression in the playing of the pianist.

The guiding principles exist on many levels, and not only in extempore creations but in composed music as well. They are musical 'commonplaces': musical conventions and inclinations (forms, phrases, patterns, textures, etc.) that are generally recognised and shared between musicians and listeners within a specific stylistic domain. Unfortunately, the word 'commonplace' (a literal sixteenth-century translation of the Latin *locus communis*, originally a term from rhetoric) gained a pejorative connotation during the Enlightenment, both in English and in many other modern languages. The Latin term remained in use alongside its translations; in German, the equivalent *Gemeinplatz* even did not occur until the eighteenth century with Christoph Martin Wieland, who used it both in a neutral and in a disapproving sense.[65] All the same, 'commonplacing', i.e. writing striking passages from books, facts, recipes, etc., in a 'commonplace-book', became extremely popular in seventeenth-century Europe, and remained so until into the twentieth century.

To avoid the hint of triviality, I here propose the original term *loci communes* (singular: *locus communis*) for these musical guiding factors.[66] Without loci communes, the oboe player and the pianist would not be able to cooperate, but more important, neither listeners nor performers would have the feeling of 'understanding' the music because there would hardly be any shared musical expectation.[67]

### *Locus communis as a rhetorical concept*

In rhetoric,[68] 'locus', 'locus communis' and 'topos' have been treated as synonyms since Renaissance.[69] Already in Antiquity, the spectrum of possible meanings was wide and confusing. In Cicero and Quintilian, the term 'locus' refers to an imaginary 'place' where an orator could find arguments for the defence of the accused (such as 'the past of the accused'). Quintilian, who explicitly rejects using the word for what would be called a 'commonplace' (in the negative sense) today, writes that specific arguments can be found at a certain 'location', just as wild animals occur in a specific habitat.[70] It is Quintilian's explanation that this study will fall back on. Humanist 'commonplace-books' as mentioned above were also based on this understanding of the term: memorable fragments, quotations, etc., were collected and classified into 'loci communes'.[71] Classical loci could occur at

[65] Coenen, H.G.: 'Locus communis'. In: Ueding, G. (ed.): *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, Band 5. Tübingen, 2001; column 409.

[66] Jean-Pierre Bartoli and Jeanne Roudet use the French equivalent 'lieu commun' in a similar way; they equally regret its pejorative meaning, and for this reason confine themselves to the more neutral term 'lieux'. Bartoli, J.-P. & Roudet, J.: *L'Essor du romantisme: La fantaisie pour clavier de Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach à Franz Liszt.* Paris, 2013; 321.

[67] Cf. Huron, D.: *Sweet Anticipation.* Cambridge (MA), 2006; especially 203-218. Huron uses the term 'schema'; however, see below for Robert Gjerdingen's more specific application of this term.

[68] The author expresses his gratitude to Casper de Jonge for his many valuable suggestions concerning rhetoric.

[69] Coenen, H.G.: op. cit., col. 398.

[70] Quintilian: *Institutio oratoria*, V.10.20-21.

[71] Coenen, H.G.: op. cit., col 407.

different levels of generality: the locus 'the past of the accused' for instance could be subdivided into 'lower level' loci like 'past actions' and 'past sayings'. The term was even used at the lowest level of concrete, explicitly formulated single arguments.[72] The adjective *communis* originally indicated a more general category of locus, as opposed to the more specific *loci proprii*.[73] In this study, I will often use 'locus' for 'locus communis', for brevity's sake.

### *Early musical applications*

The term was already employed musically in the context of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century application of classical rhetorical concepts to music. The seventeenth-century German music theorist Joachim Thuringus compared melodic formulas and their variants in polyphonic music, such as *clausulae* (cadences), with loci communes from rhetoric.[74] The composer and theorist Johann David Heinichen writes that to the 'angebohrnen guten natürlichen Fantasie' [innate, good and natural *Fantasie*] (i.e.: to somebody with a talent for musical invention), 'loci topici' (a then common but tautological term) serve as a source for 'geschickte Invention[es]' [clever musical ideas];[75] they belong to the *inventio*, the first stage of creation, both in rhetoric and in its musical counterpart, *musica poetica*.[76] Johann Mattheson also regards loci as sources of invention (*Erfindungs-Quellen*).[77] Thus a musical locus is a 'place' (or guiding principle) that gives cause for (or invites) concrete musical ideas on a more detailed level. Like Thuringus, Mattheson mentions the cadence, but also many other examples of loci. Though the strong similarity between verbal rhetoric and music that Baroque authors saw had faded by the end of the eighteenth century, several rhetorical concepts can be discerned in nineteenth-century music as well. 'Locus communis' is one of them; as in classical rhetoric, the concept can exist on many levels, several examples of which were mentioned in the discussion of the improvised piece for oboe and piano.

More recently, the Greek equivalent *topos* has become a popular term in music theory. Originally used in literary theory, it became the subject of an entire 'topic theory' in musicology, initiated by Leonard Ratner.[78] However, 'topos' is often used today in a way that connects music to an extramusical meaning (→ section 2.3). As Nicolas McKay writes, musical topoi are 'familiar, expressive, rhetorical gestures encoded in referential musical patterns'.[79] Already in the 1960's, this

[72] Coenen, H.G.: op.cit., col. 399.
[73] Ibidem.
[74] Thuringus, J.: *Opusculum bipartitum de primordiis musicis* (1624); cited in: Krones, H.: 'Musikalische Figurenlehre'. In: Ueding, G. (ed.): *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, Band 5. Tübingen, 2001; col. 1576.
[75] Heinichen, J.D.: *Der Generalbaß in der Composition.* Dresden, 1728; 30.
[76] Bartel, D.: *Handbuch der musikalischen Figurenlehre*. Laaber, 2004; 70-71.
[77] Mattheson, J.: *Der vollkommene Capellmeister.* Hamburg, 1739; 124.
[78] Ratner, L. G.: *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*. New York, 1980.
[79] Cf. McKay, N.: 'On Topics Today'. *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie*, 4. Jahrgang (2007). Hildesheim, 2009; 159-183.

way of assigning meaning to music occurred in musicology:[80] the Dutch musicologist Frits Noske writes about the aria *Se vuol ballare* from Mozart's opera *Le Nozze di Figaro*, which is written in the 'aristocratic' minuet rhythm. This aria is sung by a lower-ranking servant, which induced Noske to interpret the use of the minuet here as a 'social weapon'.[81] In contrast to the way 'topos' is used in modern musicology, the concept 'locus communis', applied to music as described above, is intrinsically musical: it describes a structural aspect of music as a language.[82]

### *Examples of loci communes in the student improvisation*

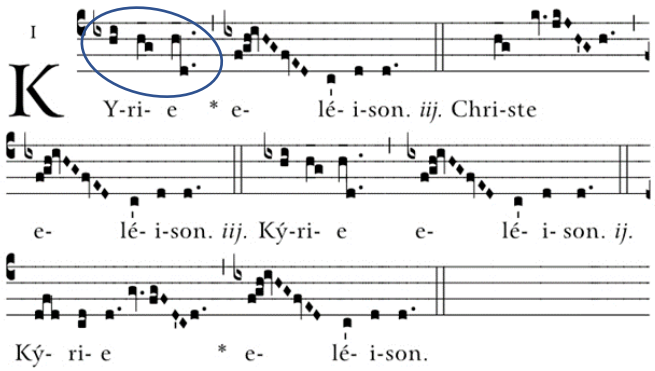
Such musical loci are too manifold to make a comprehensive enumeration. With respect to the recorded improvised *Lied ohne Worte*, loci on the levels of musical genre, texture and form were already mentioned. Also on a more detailed level, there are many harmonic and melodic formulas or clichés in this recorded piece that can be regarded as such. Though any attempt at classification may seem forced, the traditional subdivision into (a) melodic, (b) rhythmic and (c) harmonic aspects might still be helpful.

a. The *melos* of the incipit, for instance, has a melodic feature that is so common in melodies in the Dorian and minor modes that it can be called trans-stylistic. This melodic locus can be described as a gestural movement that starts on the fifth tone of the minor or Dorian mode, and drops directly to the tonic. It is a 'source of invention' that gives rise to many concrete melodic manifestations and from which this melody also springs. Its expression may be heightened by making the fifth longer, or ornamenting it with neighbour tones. The latter occurs, for instance, in the beginning of the eleventh Gregorian *Kyrie: Orbis factor*:

[80] Hermann Kretzschmar's musical hermeneutics may be seen as an earlier representative of this line of thinking. According to Kretzschmar, the task of musical hermeneutics was 'die Affekte aus den Tönen zu lösen und das Gerippe ihrer Entwicklung in Worten zu geben' [to free the affects from the tones and to render in words the framework of their development]; quoted in: Grimm H.: 'Hermann Kretzschmar: Restitution der Affektenlehre als wissenschaftliche Grundlegung musikalischer Hermeneutik'. In: Gerhard, A. (ed.): *Musikwissenschaft — eine verspätete Disziplin?*. Stuttgart, 2000; 87.

[81] Noske, F.: *The Signifier and the Signified.* The Hague, 1977; 34. Noske wrote this passage already in 1968 and did not yet use the term 'topos' as such here.

[82] A possible objection against the proposed application of the term 'locus communis' might be that in rhetoric, it is related to the meaning of a text, whereas in music it concerns a structural aspect. However, the same argument would apply to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century musical rhetoric in general. In fact it only holds when the referential quality of language is transposed to music, in other words: when musical sounds would have the option to 'mean' something in the same way language does. This is a position that is not taken in this study.




*Example 2.2.2: Kyrie XI 'Orbis factor' (beginning)*

In the incipit of the improvisation, the motif is repeated, ornamented only the second time with an incomplete upper neighbour tone. Completely unadorned it appears in the famous oboe solo from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, a conscious hint in the assignment, given the shared key and instrumentation.

*Example 2.2.3: P.I. Tchaikovsky: Oboe theme from 'Swan Lake' (beginning) [Act I, Finale]*

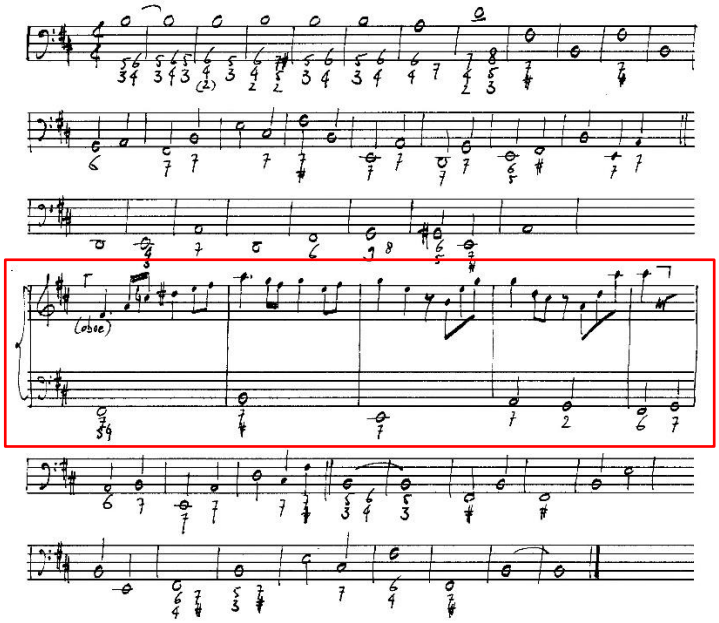
b. Mattheson gives an initial impetus to the idea of a rhythmical locus by showing how a rhythmic principle (equal quarter notes) may lead to melodic invention.[83] Clearer examples from Baroque music might be variation cycles, where each variation clearly springs from a rhythmical motivation (e.g. in Arcangelo Corelli's variations on *La Folia* in the violin sonata op. 5 no. 12). Separating out rhythmical loci might be relatively problematic in a lyrical Romantic style where rhythmic definition seems to be subordinate to the melodic flow. On the level of metre, however, the organisation of the music in regular portions of four or eight pulses, often arranged in pairs, is definitely a convention that strongly directs the musical development. For the shape of a melody, this metric locus is extremely important.

c. The importance of harmonic loci and their interaction with the melodic path was already mentioned above in the discussion of the interplay between the two musicians on the recording. Classical harmony tends to follow variants of specific formulas that, in combination with metric patterns, yield a strong sense of expectation.

Harmonic loci can be conveyed in the form of a figured bass reduction. The advantage of this rendering over conventional staff notation is that a figured bass provides the reader with essential information (as far as the harmony is concerned), while it leaves open many possible variants

[83] Mattheson, J.: op. cit., 125.

regarding voice leading. The harmony of the student improvisation with which section 2.2 started can in this way be 'described' in the form of a figured bass:




*Example 2.2.4*

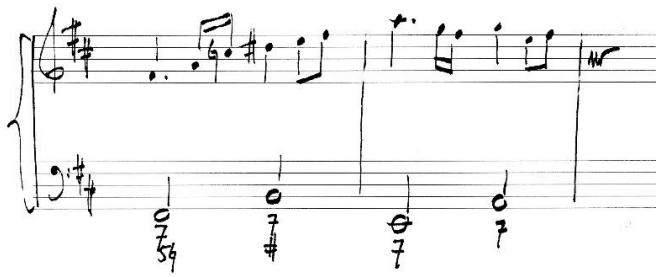
Easily recognisable in the melody of the bass line are the metric organisation in groups of four bars (eight pulses), and harmonic loci such as cadential patterns and the long pedal on b in the first six bars, a trans-stylistic opening convention in tonal music.

The red box highlights a passage (with the oboe part added) where the piano part was leading because it was based upon a strong harmonic locus. It starts with a half diminished seventh chord: in this style a harmonic tell-tale sign, that creates the expectation of a falling fifth progression[84] (the locus communis); the oboe player catches it but apparently expected a timing that is twice as fast (which would be equally possible on the basis of the harmonic rhythm before).

**[2.2 #2 Improvised Lied ohne Worte (fragment)]**

Specifically, the oboist might have expected something like this:

[84] To be specific, in this style it can only be interpreted as a second degree ($II^7$) in minor, creating the expectation of at least a II – V – I -cadence, which because of its localisation on the second degree of the contextual major key might be continued as a falling fifth-sequence until the tonic (in this case D major) is arrived at; in Roman numeral symbols: ($II^7$ – $V^7$)→ II – $V^7$ – I.



*Example 2.2.5*

The accompaniment indeed starts with the falling fifth formula, but instantly adjusting the timing would have sounded like a mistake. The oboist discovers the different timing after a few beats – resulting in a slight clash, which is, however, acceptable within the field of possible dissonances: the d# can be interpreted as an appoggiatura, just like the a in the next bar.

Admittedly, this is a reconstruction after the event that is to a certain extent speculative. One might object that the oboe player perhaps wanted to arpeggiate a diminished seventh chord in the first bar, and only too late realised that a half diminished seventh was sounding in the piano (resulting in a clash between d# and e). On the other hand, the latter interpretation would make the continuation with the relatively strong ascending passing note e a bit unusual. Then again, the oboist might just as well have been searching for tones that would fit; this would, however, not be in contradiction with the idea of loci communes producing musical expectation.

### *Musical gestures and schemata*

In the preceding section I discussed the various categories of loci that existed already in antiquity. A similar view can be found with Mattheson, and the application of the term in this study also shows different levels, ranging from very general loci to very specific ones. Moreover, the importance of loci for musical expectation was emphasised. While more general loci, such as those on the level of musical form, provoke rather abstract expectations with regard to the course a piece of music will take, the more specific ones likewise create concrete expectations concerning musical content, and therefore are more closely connected with musical expression. Formulas such as the falling fifth-sequence as analysed above have an expressive value, which seems to be located in the combination of the harmonies and the melodic power of the voices (notably when dissonances are involved). They are like intramusical gestures.[85] The shape of a phrase, a harmonic pattern, a rhythmic development: they all create a concrete sense of expectation and seem to have a 'direction' (to use a common spatial metaphor). Because of this expressive potential, which more general loci communes on the level of genre ('Lied ohne Worte') or form ('ternary form') hardly possess, if at all, it seems appropriate to distinguish musical gestures as a sub-category of loci communes.

[85] The word 'gesture' is used here as a metaphor for a musical passage, not as a bodily movement.

The interplay between melodic and harmonic elements as noted in the previous example clearly connects with an important music-theoretical topic in recent years: the rediscovery of the *partimento* tradition. In Robert Gjerdingen's influential book about *partimento*, *Music in the Galant Style*,[86] so-called *schemata* (specific harmony / voice-leading situations) play a role, comparable to the abovementioned harmonic gestures; in his book, the function of the *schemata* is compared with the figures of an ice-skater, or the standard roles in the *Commedia dell'Arte*. What makes his ideas so interesting in view of the topic in question is that also the functioning of Gjerdingen's *schemata* depends on a common ground, shared between musicians and listeners. Gjerdingen even states that the suggested *schemata* are hard to appreciate by a modern interpreter. Ironically, he is referring to a repertoire (the Italian galant music from the later eighteenth century) that many modern listeners would describe as sounding rather easy and predictable! A music-lover today tends to perceive this music in a somewhat general and undifferentiated way, not appreciating detailed intricacies because it all sounds perfectly traditional – sometimes even commonplace. In the words of Gjerdingen: 'Whereas casual observers of ice-skating competitions may see only a variety of glides, spins, and jumps, a connoisseur sees salchows, axels, lutzes, and camels.'[87] This may indeed be a problem with many loci from the past: often we are even not aware of their existence. A second point of interest is that Gjerdingen writes about schemata from the point of view of the creator of music; they are, Gjerdingen writes, elements of a galant musical etiquette, and the musician supposedly was to be judged according to his ability and inventiveness in handling them. Gjerdingen's book gave birth to a new field of music-analytical research that encompasses later music as well. However, since the relation between nineteenth-century teaching and the eighteenth-century Italian *partimento* pedagogy is under debate, Gjerdingen's schemata will be applied to nineteenth-century music with caution in this study (→ chapter 9).

Defining loci communes and consciously applying them in improvisations or compositions can be a way to acquire actively a musical language. Structural and formal loci, for instance, will play an important part in chapter 12, where the significance of musical genres will be discussed. Gestural loci represent the syntactical level of musical language, as it were, and they will occur throughout this study. In classical rhetoric, the word *schema* originally means the outward appearance of something; the Latin synonym is *figura* (→ chapter 3).[88] Gjerdingen's use of this term is appropriate for the concrete musical figures he applies it to, but it will be understood in this study as a 'locus proprius', a special case within the more generic category 'locus'. Stripped of their specific voice leading, many schemata coincide with harmonic loci communes such as the ones that are described in chapter 9.5.

[86] Gjerdingen, R.O.: *Music in the Galant Style*. New York, 2007.
[87] Gjerdingen, R.O.: op. cit., 7.
[88] Bartel, D.: op. cit., 13.

### *Loci communes and premeditation*

In the previous section I have adapted a concept from classical rhetoric that was applied musically already in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to music from the nineteenth century. I proposed 'locus communis', a term that for Mattheson belonged to the stage of *inventio*, as an appropriate term for intramusical factors that guide musical creation.

There might seem to be a contradiction between the idea of inventing music 'on the spot' on the one hand, and the fact that loci are necessarily pre-existing structures on the other hand. Doesn't the application of loci imply that also improvised music is always to a certain extent 'prepared'? I think that this is an assumption that springs from an understanding of music which, in John Cage's words, 'enjoys the sound acting' (→ chapter 1.3): an essentially modern view on music in which any sound can potentially serve as musical material. Against the background of the emancipation of pure sound and the resulting almost total (imagined) freedom, loci may indeed seem to represent previously made musical choices and decisions. However, as I emphasised in chapter 1.3, the music discussed in this study should not be seen as an enclosed subset vis-à-vis the universal sound world, a historical 'not yet' that is still awaiting future sailing into an endless sea of possibilities; rather its language-like character shows a radically different approach to what music is. Instead of joining a modernist narrative that sees music history as a development in which gradually more and more is 'allowed', it will be fruitful to acknowledge that it may better be understood as a process of change, in which things also got lost over time.

Being language-like should therefore not be seen as a limitation in any sense, and not as a manifestation of 'preparedness' either. An orator who improvises a speech cannot be said to be restricted by the language he uses, and it would be strange to claim that he did not really invent it on the spot just because the grammatical structure of the language was a given – though obviously, the speaker has to know this language, and in that sense needs to be prepared. Or, to use another metaphor: in a game of chess the players 'improvise' within the frame of the rules, but it would be foolish to suggest that the rules are premeditated and therefore make their work any easier. Even pre-existing models such as chess openings do not make the game less improvisatory; on the contrary, they allow the players to launch the game into deeper waters. Similarly, musical loci represent a frame that makes improvisation possible. Seeing them as premeditated content at best applies to 'commonplaces' in a pejorative sense; in reality loci challenge the musician because it is his task to come up 'on the spot' with music that understandably uses a musical language.

These considerations in the first place concern 'historically inspired improvisation', the subject of part 3 of this study. The question remains how loci can be relevant for musical re-creation as well,[89] notably how they may help to define an improvisatory approach to scores. It was argued in chapter 1 that such an approach is at odds with the *Urtext*-paradigm which implies a reading of scores that is immovable and literal. Apparently approaching a score in an improvisatory way means that it is being read less literally and more flexibly. On the other hand the concept of a 'dialogue' (→ chapter 1, *passim*) suggests that this does not imply a total and arbitrary freedom in working with a score. In the remainder of this chapter, I will address score interpretation specifically in order to show how also an improvisatory approach to scores can be based upon loci communes.

## 2.3 In dialogue with scores

### *The score as a prescriptive and descriptive text*

In chapter 1.4 I already argued that 'classical music' is essentially a modern musical practice. It is a popular view that performances of classical music are like time machines that connect us with the days of the composer.[90] However, regarding a performance of an early composition as repeating an event from the past is misleading. Assumed unbroken performance traditions are in reality often 'invented traditions' (Eric Hobsbawm). This study draws on the idea that a score and a performance are two different things. It is the scores themselves that possibly can be seen as a connection with the past, or even may produce what the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga called a 'historical sensation', as I argued earlier;[91] what musicians do with them is quite a different matter. Thus 'classical music' is present-day music-making on the basis of musical texts (namely scores) from the past.[92] Scores are the *raison d'être* of classical music as a present-day practice; improvisation in classical music is in the first place an aspect of our relationship with the musical texts of (mostly) dead composers. The reason why musicians may be interested in historical forms of improvisation at all is, I believe, not so much their curiosity about history; rather their interest enhances and enriches their relation with scores that keep being performed.

[89] 'Recreation' is used here as opposed to 'reproduction': a pair of concepts that (imperfectly) expresses the idea that a performance of a score can be less or more 'creative'. Unlike 'reproduction', 'recreation' contains the aspect of what Bruce Ellis Benson's calls 'reworking' (→ chapter 1.2).

[90] This idea is at least suggested by CD titles such as 'A Venetian vespers' or 'Music at the court of ...'; the phenomenon is also seen in the well-known teacher-student pedigrees that connect e.g. a modern pianist with celebrities like Chopin or Liszt. The latter hugely contributed to such development of legends by claiming that as a boy, he received the so-called 'Weihekuss' [hallowing kiss] from Beethoven.

[91] Cf. Mooiman, B.: 'Theorie en praktijk – of andersom? Een persoonlijke visie.' In: Dutch Journal of Music Theory, Vol. 14 (February 2009); 22.

[92] Cf. Taruskin, R.: *Text and Act.* New York, 1995; e.g. 12-13.

In the context of this research – nineteenth-century Western art music – a score is seen as a musical text which fixes sounding music by representing it in signs.[93] This description may seem to be problematic: which sounding music? How can sounding music be fixed on a piece of paper? In what sense can a static sign represent something that happens in time? In his book *Musicking* Christopher Small writes:

> Music is performance, and pieces, or works, of music, whether on the smallest or the grandest scale, whether written down or not, exist in order to give performers something to perform. Unperformed, only the instructions for performance exist.[94]

I argue that for the common practice era, this view of the purpose of a score is too limited. Indeed, a score may prescribe future music-making when a performer reads the score as a set of performance instructions that should be obeyed: in that sense, a score can be seen as a prescriptive text. Some notational forms are even prescriptive by nature. Tablature notation, for instance, represents an action instead of a sound: it needs the instrument as a link between sign and sound. In addition, the notation for transposing wind instruments and for *scordatura* on string instruments primarily prescribes an action (namely a finger arrangement). Generally, it is the *Urtext*-paradigm that tends to emphasise the prescriptive side of a score, even when it is not a matter of transposing instruments. For instance, it is quite normal in today's musical practice for a conductor to ask his ensemble (or a teacher his student) to start a crescendo precisely on the note under which the composer notated the word, with the motivation that this is what the composer requires. By contrast I argue that a traditional score usually not only prescribes, but also describes (and in this way represents) music: just as one may scribble down a tune that one hears somewhere,[95] so a composer may commit to paper music he imagines at a certain moment. This idea of a dual purpose of scores will be fundamental to this study. As I mentioned above, I argue that the purely prescriptive understanding of scores fits in with the *Urtext*-paradigm: the score tells the performer what to do. A descriptive understanding of a score, by contrast, does not allow for such an imperative claim. It gives the score a more autonomous quality, independent from any possible performances, and puts score and performer on an equal level, thus making possible a dialogue between the two.

### *The score as an object*

Unlike sounding or imagined music, a score is a static object. Seen in this way, the score forms a time vacuum in between two processes. The first process is the music happening in the imagination of the

[93] This does not exclude e.g. *Augenmusik*: the fact that the score represents sounding music does not prevent it from gaining a certain aesthetic autonomy itself.
[94] Small, Chr.: *Musicking*. Middletown, 1998; 218.
[95] To use a term applied by Rudolf Frisius: the score as a *Hörprotokoll* [listening protocol] (*Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Sachteil 4. Kassel, 1996; col. 539).

composer. What distinguishes composers from improvisers is the fact that they do not perform immediately the music they imagine, but rather store it: that can be in memory (for instance, when somebody thinks out a tune that he consciously fixes in his memory), but usually the storing happens in musical notation. The score comes in place of the (immediate) performance; in a way it records the imagined music, and to a composer it can serve as an extension of his memory, enabling him to review passages and to combine fragments that were not initially invented at the same time.[96] By fixing his music in a score, the composer postpones the performance – in some cases, there might never be a performance at all – and makes it possible for the music to be performed by others. For this, a transformation is needed from a process in time (the imagined music) to something that is 'timeless' (the musical notation). It is a reduction in which the time-dimension disappears – quite similar to what happens when a playwright writes a text.

The second process is that of a performer making music on basis of this score. The representation on paper of the music, as previously imagined by the composer, is translated into actual sounding music. The dimension of time, which got lost in the transformation process from imagined music to score, has to be added anew. This simple truth is the origin of endless discussions about interpretation. Regardless how precisely the composer tried to notate his music, the mere fact that the missing time component makes a score something essentially different from music-as-event will always force performers to make their own interpretation. A score is like footprints of an animal: an experienced reader can gather a lot of information from them, but interpretation will always be necessary because the footprints only describe a process; they don't duplicate it.[97]

It should not be forgotten that it is not necessary to actually make music from a score in order to return from signs on paper to music as a process in time. The same transformation already takes place when somebody reads the score and imagines the sounding music in the proper tempo, and thus makes the music sound 'in his head'. 'Du mußt es so weit bringen, daß du eine Musik auf dem Papier verstehst' [you should become able to understand a piece of music, merely on reading it], Robert Schumann wrote in his *Musikalische Haus- und Lebens-Regeln*.[98] Indeed, a score (like a text) is only timeless in its capacity as a visible collection of graphic symbols; when the collection of symbols is

[96] The Dutch improviser / composer Guus Janssen even goes so far as to claim that a composer cheats: when he has a bad day during the composition process, nobody will notice when the piece is finished.

[97] The music theorist and composer David Lewin once expressed a similar idea: 'Once the music *has been* composed, it becomes a wholly different phenomenon for the composer. It becomes a *trace* or a *record* of past activities. The record has special values and meanings for performers, listeners, and critics, but for the composer *as* composer-of-the-piece, the trace means precisely what the sight of ski tracks on the hill behind means to a downhill skier who has navigated a treacherous slope, or what a photograph of yourself on the Eiffel Tower means to you if you have just returned from your first trip to Paris. Not just the level of meaning but the *kind* of meaning is the same in all three cases: "That was me. I was there."' Lewin, D.: 'Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception.' In: Music Perception, vol. 3, no. 4 (Summer 1986); 376. Thanks to Michiel Schuijer for pointing out this text to me.

[98] Schumann, R.: *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, Band 4. Leipzig, 1854; 295.

not seen as an aesthetic object on its own, but as a representation of sounding music, the only way to grasp their meaning is by reading them, which automatically brings in time. I am stressing this because music analysis sometimes tends to ignore this by treating different spots within a musical composition as if they are simultaneous events; one could say that in reality much music analysis is score analysis, i.e., analysis of a text. In this respect, a well-known metaphor like comparing a Bruckner symphony with a timeless artefact like a cathedral is telling. The possible objection that any perception of a static object such as a score or a cathedral happens in time and therefore can be called 'performative' as well, does not hold here: music-as-event is coupled with what I called a 'timeline' (→ chapter 1.4) that is inalienable and essentially different from the much more flexible period of time one needs to observe a building or a text on paper. When I look at a painting or a building, I am free to deviate from the viewing direction the artwork may suggest to me, and to use less or more time to take it in. Similarly, I may glance criss-cross through a score, skipping pages and returning to earlier spots. In order to enjoy music-as-event, however, I am bound to the speed and the specific order in which this musical 'story' unfolds. (For a continuation of this discussion, see chapter 14.)

Small mockingly quotes an anecdote about Johannes Brahms, 'who once refused an invitation to attend a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, saying he would sooner stay home and read it'.[99] Though Small's disapproval of Brahms' attitude is understandable in respect of the point of view he defends in his book (namely that music is performance), I still think that the remarks of Schumann and Brahms make perfect sense.

### *Interpreting scores*

The essential difference between music-as-a-score and music-as-event has very interesting consequences. One of them is that the distance between the timeless score and the music as imagined at the time of composing tends to get larger in the course of time. Musicologist Robert Philip gives many examples of composers who had the opportunity to authorise different recordings of the same composition over a longer period of time, with notable differences in interpretation as a result.[100] Some composers simply forgot with the years how precisely they originally imagined their music! In his 1981 essay *Stimme und Sprache*, Gadamer described this distance between author and text in literature: 'Es liegt (...) im Wesen von Literatur, dass das Werk sich sosehr von seinem Schöpfer gelöst hat, dass der Dichter bestenfalls ein guter, nie ein privilegierter Interpret seiner selber ist.' [101] [It belongs (...) to the essence of literature that a work has freed itself from its creator to such an extent, that the author is at the most a good interpreter of himself, but never a privileged one.]

[99] Small, Chr.: op. cit., 5.
[100] Philip, R.: *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*. New Haven, 2004; especially 177 ff.
[101] Gadamer, H.G.: 'Stimme und Sprache'. In: *Gesammelte Werke*, Band 8 (Ästhetik und Poetik). Tübingen, 1993; 267 (my italics).

Nonetheless, many musicians aim to perform from a score 'according to the intentions of the composer'. It would be too easy to dismiss this ideal as naïve and superficial, as might be expected on basis of what was written above; rather, it probably shows the tendency of the performer to identify with the 'inventor' of the music he is playing. To the player or singer the music feels like their own music, and at the same time they are usually convinced that they perform according to the 'intentions of the composer', which therefore in the eyes of the performer serve as a legitimation. It is telling that most musicians tend to fully agree with what they see as the 'composer's intentions': it will be hard to find classical performers who knowingly distance themselves from (what they see as) the composer's intentions with a score because they prefer their own version! At the same time performers tend to feel (or imagine) a unique and personal relationship with the composer, and to find it hard to value different interpretations by others. It is a confusing and slightly irrational territory; also the popular self-image of a musician as a transferor of the music rather describes his psychological state than the process of music-making itself.

Though it is common in the field of 'classical' music to see the inability of a score to give a complete and encompassing description of music (Gustav Mahler: 'Das Beste in der Musik steht nicht in den Noten') as something to be regretted, on second thoughts it is a blessing. Without the necessity of continuous interpretation, there would be no classical music. The missing time dimension in a score makes it possible to keep the music alive for many generations to come. This is not at all a plea for 'do as you please' with musical scores from the past: there definitely also is something like respect for a musical work. It is precisely this combination of freedom and respect that is described by the term 'dialogue'. Being in dialogue with a score means: playing with the score, improvising with it. Once more quoting Gadamer, here writing about the art of acting and reproducing 'real speaking':

> [Auf der Theaterbühne] ist es in der Tat wahr, dass der echte Schauspieler wirklich »spricht«, obwohl ihm sein Text vorgeschrieben ist, und der schlechte Schauspieler nicht – (...) man wird nie das Gefühl ganz los, dass er das nächste Wort schon kennt, wenn er spricht. (...) Der echte Schauspieler reproduziert ein echtes Sprechen, so dass man darüber vergisst, dass es ihm vorgeschrieben ist. *Tatsächlich gehört daher die Improvisationskunst zum echten Schauspieler* (...).[102]
>
> [On the theatre stage it is indeed true that the genuine actor truly 'speaks', though his text is prescribed, and the bad actor doesn't – (...) one never quite gets rid of the feeling that he already knows the next word when he speaks. (...) The true actor reproduces real speaking, which makes you forget that it was prescribed to him. *As a matter of fact, the art of improvising therefore belongs to the true actor* (...).]

An important difference between verbal and musical texts is in the idea of meaning, which is connected to one of the most important musical debates (or rather, minefields) during the nineteenth

[102] Gadamer, H.G.: op. cit., 265 (my italics).

century. Though it is not my intention to get entangled in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century successors of this debate, the concept of meaning cannot be ignored when a score is to be seen as a partner in an imaginary dialogue, rather than as an instructor or commander. In the next section I will therefore focus on the meaning of scores. Like above, a score will be understood as having both a descriptive and a prescriptive function.

### *A music-theoretical theory of meaning*

One thing that the 'true actor' from Gadamer's text surely possesses is a firm idea about the meaning of his text. This person could not make the audience forget that he speaks a text written by somebody else if he does not understand it. He is able to speak a text as if it is his own – and maybe, to him it even feels as though it is. A similar state of identification is what a good musician strives for. When a musical performer wants to perform from a score, it has to 'mean' something to him. Philosophically, the idea of musical meaning is a much disputed one. It is not likely, however, that an 'average' performer, learning a new composition, will be helped too much by the extensive music-philosophical and theoretical debates about meaning in music that have been taking place in the past decennia. In such debates, much confusion is caused, in my view, by speaking about 'music' in general terms, as if the score, as notated by the composer, is exactly coinciding with (or at least seamlessly connected with) the 'music' as it sounds. As will be obvious by now, I think that this is an error because there is a fundamental difference between score, a composer's intentions, and performance. In this chapter, I will by contrast propose a music-theoretical approach to musical meaning (as opposed to a more philosophical approach). Starting from a musician's acute need for a feeling of understanding when confronted with a score, I intend to focus on meaning as it appears in the dialogue between the musician and the score.

This is not to deny that there are more views on musical meaning that deserve to be acknowledged. From the point of view of a listener, for instance, the focus will probably not be on the score, but on music-as-event; it is not uncommon that music-as-event arouses extra-musical associations in listeners. In this sense, it is possible to say that 'music' may refer to something extra-musical: music-as-event can be a 'signifier'. It is an understanding of musical meaning that primarily belongs to the fields of psychology and philosophy. When, for instance, Beethoven is depicting the *Erwachen heiterer Gefühle bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande* in the first movement of his Sixth Symphony, his words (added as a description above the score) are about this type of meaning. From the point of view of a musician, however – for instance, the conductor who performs Beethoven's piece from the score – there is first of all the question of what the score itself 'means' to him, or, continuing the metaphor of a dialogue, how it 'speaks' to him. I argue that, to the musician, the latter type of meaning is much more crucial: one can very well perform Beethoven's symphony without thinking of the countryside around Vienna, but without an understanding of the score the music will still

sound dead, regardless the beautiful pictures or feelings of joy the musician might imagine. This type of meaning, I argue, primarily belongs to the field of music theory.[103]

The next section focuses on the latter type of meaning in the context of an improvisatory approach. It explores the question of what exactly a score describes and prescribes, and the related question regarding the space for extempore decisions that a performer in dialogue with it may use. As I will show, this space includes aspects of musical notation that are often understood today as 'unambiguous' (→ chapter 1.2); even seemingly exact notation may contain intrinsic uncertainties.

### *The notation as such*

On the most basic level, the signs in a score indicate aspects (parameters) of sound. The traditional Western music notation can represent the pitch, the duration and – less precisely – the dynamics and tone colour. Traditionally, the parameters of pitch and duration are seen as 'structural' features of music. Other parameters, such as dynamics, tempo, tone colour, etc., are supposed to belong to the 'performance' aspect. This view became the basis of modern music analysis.[104]

As many musicians know, the precision of the notation tends to vary according to the tradition within which a score was written: the neumes of the ninth century, for example, were mnemonic signs, used as an aid to memorise existing melodies.[105] Until the development of staff notation, these signs could hardly be prescriptive, at least as far as the mentioned parameters are concerned. Or, to take a more contemporary example: a graphic score often even doesn't intend to prescribe exactly the parameters of pitch and duration. However, such variants are all beyond the scope of this research. As for the well-known staff notation, exactly the fact that it seems to be much more precise can cause pitfalls for the interpreter because it may prompt literalism. The different parameters that can be represented in this type of notation (pitch, duration and dynamics / tone colour) will here be dealt with separately.

### *a. Pitch*

Staff notation is based upon the diatonic system, which makes it unsuitable for the notation of microtones. It is not unthinkable that the development of staff notation by Guido of Arezzo allowed musical scribes to notate only approximately the pitch of the already existing (i.e., remembered) Gregorian melodies, which possibly contained microtones; if that is true, the score offered a much simplified description of the pitches of the actual music. When the same score was used later prescriptively in a different musical environment, this simplification probably tended to be forgotten

[103] One might say that Beethoven's titles are a descriptive feature of this score.

[104] Danuser, H.: *Musikalische Interpretation* (Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft, Band 11). Laaber, 1997; 4. It is a view that is not without problems because the separation of parameters itself is an abstraction: in the sounding music they cannot be isolated, for a tone with a pitch always has a duration, a loudness and a colour as well.

[105] The 'existence' of a melody that has not been notated exactly means that it is remembered by people who know it.

– with 'pure' diatonic new music as a result. The (im)possibilities of musical notation tend to influence the creating of new music as well as the recreation of already existing music.

Within the diatonic system, temperament (notably of keyboard instruments) has varied considerably through the ages. When we consider the temperament to be an essential part of the music as it sounded in the composer's imagination, this fact can make a rather large difference for later performances. For instance, if a score was notated during an era when mean tone temperament was prevalent, the prescriptive understanding of this score can cause quite different effects when the used temperament is not the same. This might be the case when the performance happens many years after the process of composing (a possibility that must have been hard to imagine for musicians living before the end of the eighteenth century). In this way, a chromatic line or a specific chord in a piece by Sweelinck or a contemporary composer can sound very different when played in equal temperament. It has to be said that one could argue about the question how crucial the temperament is for the effect that the music has on a listener. An equally possible view is to understand the score as representing some abstract imaginary music, a music that, at the moment of composition, was not imagined in every sounding detail but which needed 'materialisation' in the actual performance.[106] For singers and instruments that allow for subtle nuances of intonation, the notated pitch very often is not exactly the same as the sounding one. Even in an environment that uses equal temperament, adjustments of intonation happen constantly and almost automatically, generally speaking guided by the desire for well-tuned triads. For instance, when an arrangement of a sixteenth-century keyboard fantasia is performed by voices a cappella, it will most likely not sound in mean tone temperament! How essential, then, is the use of this temperament?

The idea that the score represents music as it actually sounded at the time of composition sometimes seems to be assumed implicitly, also in H.I.P.[107] In the light of what was written above about descriptive and prescriptive functions of a score, this is a problematic view that in fact inverts

[106] This idea resonates with the following words by Theodor Adorno: 'Der ganze Reichtum des musikalischen Gefüges, in dessen Integration seine [= Bachs] Kraft eigentlich besteht, muß von der Aufführung zur Evidenz erhoben werden, anstatt daß man der Fülle ein starres, in sich unbewegtes Einerlei entgegensetzt, den nichtigen Schein einer Einheit, die das Mannigfaltige, das sie bewältigen soll, ignoriert.' (Adorno, T.W.: *Prismen* [*Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 10.1]. Frankfurt am Main, 1977; 145.)
[The entire richness of the musical texture, the integration of which was the source of Bach's power, must be placed in prominence by the performance instead of being sacrificed to a rigid, immobile monotony, the spurious semblance of unity that ignores the multiplicity it should embody and surmount.] (Samuel and Shierry Weber, trans.; in: Adorno, T.W.: *Prisms*. Cambridge, Mass., 1981; 145.) Thanks to Marcel Cobussen for bringing this connection to my attention. An interesting variant of this view is the idea that the idea that, up to the eighteenth century, compositions (notably the ones for organ) mainly served as examples for improvised music. (Cf. Fidom, H.: 'Improvisation: the emancipation of an ancient musical skill.' In: Peeters, P. (ed.): *The Haarlem Essays*. Bonn, 2014; 357-358).

[107] It is quite possible to link this strong emphasis on the actual sound to a development in twentieth-century composition which also focused upon the sound *an sich* (e.g. Varèse, post-war serialism, Cage, electronic music) – another indication that even H.I.P. is an essentially modern practice.

the matter. The only thing that a score can try to describe is music as imagined by a composer, unless somebody instantly notates music he just heard, as happened in the nineteenth century with e.g. folk tunes. Any performance from the score, even when it happens immediately after the score has been finished, and even when the performer is the composer himself, is necessarily an interpretation. To equate such a contemporary performance with the intentions of the composer is to deny the (literally) timeless character of the score.

So far only the notation of pitches in relation with each other has been discussed. However, the actual pitch level is also an issue. Not until 1859 was concert pitch settled in France at 435 Hz for A4. It is certain that before 1800, concert pitches could differ a lot between cities. Even in 1850, a piano builder like John Broadwood still used very different pitches for concert instruments and for pianos at home.[108] Present-day performers on period instruments generally use standardised pitches like 415 Hz for (a lot of) Baroque repertoire and 430 Hz for music from the classical and early Romantic periods.[109] Though these pitches are based upon averages of the actual historical local concert pitches, the current standardisation seems to be a modern invention that is more convenient for today's musicians and instrument builders than that it is historically justifiable.

To summarise, the relationship between pitch as it sounds in practice and its representation in the score is a topic requiring much more investigation. In the past 60 years or so, a lot of attention has been paid to different temperaments and the changing of the concert pitch. An almost unknown area in classical music is the expressive use of intonation, like the blue note in jazz. We so much aim to play 'in tune' that this possibility seems to be forgotten altogether. The idea that the development of playing in tune (very much connected to the upcoming recording industry) probably also meant a certain loss of intonation as a tool of expression, should not be excluded. One famous musician who consciously applied 'expressive intonation' is Pablo Casals.[110] Other pitch-related properties of music that cannot be described properly in musical notation are the use of vibrato and the application of *portamenti*. The conclusion is justified that even in nineteenth-century scores, the notation of pitch is a simplification. The problem is that this simplification is hidden: just like in a picture with very few image pixels, or in a graph based on distant measurement points, the reader cannot see what information is being concealed.

[108] Swenson, E. E.: *The History of Musical Pitch in Tuning the Pianoforte.* http://www.mozartpiano.com/articles/pitch.php
[109] Cf. Haynes, B.: *The Story of 'A'.* Lanham, Maryland, 2002.
[110] Hind O'Malley, P.: 'Cellist Pablo Casals on expressive intonation.' In: The Strad, October 1983. https://www.thestrad.com/1434.article .

### *b. Duration*

The notation of rhythm in a musical score is usually even less precise than the notation of pitch. The complex medieval mensural notation system provided a number of different possibilities of subdivision of the pulse, of which in the now conventional music notation only one – a dual division on all levels – remains. The process of simplification, as described above in the hypothetically lost notation of quarter tones in a diatonic system, definitely also applies here: the notational system supposes a regular beat (*tactus*) that can be subdivided only in a limited number of ways. Any irregularity is hard to notate. A rhythm that is not supported by the notation is apt to disappear when scores become a primary vehicle of spreading music. Only as late as halfway through the twentieth century does one encounter more complex and additive rhythms – very much to the expense of the readability and the comprehensibility of the scores. The speed of the pulse cannot be shown in the shape of the notes and has to be described in additional text.

There are many examples in the history of Western music testifying to the lack of precision of rhythmic notation: from the *notes inégales* in French Baroque music and the preface to Frescobaldi's *Toccate* to the proper 'swing feel' in jazz music. But also on a smaller scale, a performance that would do mathematical justice to the notated rhythm in almost any score would not only sound boring, but even inhuman and dead. The largest differences between several performances of a musical score are in the interpretation of the notated duration, which can be the subject of extempore decisions. Chapter 7 discusses improvisatory timing in great detail.

One area that deserves special attention is articulation. Being derived from speech, in music the term refers to the way how two tones are connected, and especially how long a possible gap in between two tones may last. Usually articulation reduces the length of a tone to a certain degree, as shown in the shape of the note: from nothing (as in *legato*) to most of its length (*staccatissimo*). Probably the only example of articulation adding time to the note length is the 'over-legato' as it occurs in keyboard music.

Articulation can only be notated in additional signs. The amount of articulation symbols used in scores grew with the increase of precision in notation. Baroque treatises started to give explanations of the signs (e.g. telling the reader that the staccato-dot meant that the length of the respective tone should be reduced by half of its value). Most confusion is generally caused by the slur, which can have very different meanings: it can mean legato (e.g. for a wind player indicating two or more tones to be played with only one attack), but also be a prescription for the bowing on a string instrument (not always indicating legato), an indication of phrasing (mainly after 1800), or (for singers) of

different notes belonging to a single syllable of a word.[111] (In this study, articulation is primarily discussed in chapter 5.)

The preceding discussion on duration has focused only on the relative durations of tones; but since the invention of the metronome around 1820 it is also possible to determine exactly the speed of the musical pulse. As is well-known, this did not mean the end of discussions about the proper tempo: in fact, composers adding metronome marks to their music (starting with Beethoven) only increased the quarrels. Maybe it can safely be said that the metronome indications in scores describe the tempo the composers intended when they wrote down the music they heard (imagined), but that the prescriptive value is more limited.[112] Many anecdotes about composers toning down the importance of following exactly metronome marks in their scores (up to nowadays) testify to this. Besides, tempo fluctuation within a piece seems to be an intrinsic part of many styles, even though modern performances often ignore this. Early recordings, such as the recorded performances of music of Schumann and Brahms by former students of Clara Schumann, show that the tempo fluctuations within movements could be very large.[113]

To summarise, not only the notation of pitch, but also rhythmic notation can in many scores be seen as a simplification. Deviating from (or rather: bringing to life) this abstracted rhythm fits very well an improvisational approach, and will be an important topic in chapter 7.

### *c. Dynamics and tone colour*

Neither the dynamics nor the colour of the tone can be expressed in the musical notes; this information always has to be mentioned separately, often in words. This makes the indication of the dynamic level or the colour of the tone a relative matter: *sotto voce* only has a meaning in relation to the sound in other passages, and even dynamics are indicated in relation to the instrument or the room. Unlike pitch and duration, this parameter cannot be represented in absolute terms. So far no score has ever indicated the dynamic level in decibels... It is exactly the vagueness of this parameter that leaves room for improvisation. Chapters 4 and 5 will further develop this aspect.

### *Recognising loci communes*[114]

In the previous section, the focus has primarily been on what can and cannot be represented precisely in a traditional score in Western art music. So far, a basic level of meaning in a score has been

[111] The strict adherence to legato touch as a matter of principle in organ playing, as demanded by Charles-Marie Widor and many organists after him, must be seen as an exception within the field of all musical instruments and singing.
[112] Even the descriptive value is not beyond doubt, as any musician who ever tried to determine his favourite metronome speed for a specific piece can testify: the chosen metronome mark may feel less right the next day.
[113] Cf. The Pupils of Clara Schumann. Pearl Gemm CDS 99049.
[114] This section makes use of ideas that were formulated earlier in: Mooiman, B: *Sporen in het zand. Visie op het theorieonderwijs aan het Koninklijk Conservatorium te Den Haag.* Unpublished, 2003.

investigated that concerns the reading itself of the score – in other words, coupling the representation to what is directly represented, especially the pitch and length of a tone. This involves the meaning of the individual signs in the score. Musical imagination plays a vital role in this process. As a reader of a verbal text can imagine the sound of a word before he actually speaks it, so the reader of a musical text (a score) should be able to imagine the sound before performing it. Even for some accomplished musicians this is not an easy task at all. And just as it is conceivable that a reader of a verbal text knows how to pronounce the words without necessarily understanding the meaning of them, so a musician may play or sing what is written and still not know what this music wants to tell – which leads towards a second level of meaning in a score that could be termed 'syntactical'.

The traditional view on the development of scores says that notation gradually became more precise and encompassing; often Gustav Mahler's work is mentioned as a peak in this development from indicative towards explicit scores. An underlying assumption is that, once an aspect of music could be notated, the 'meaning' of its notational signs was beyond discussion. I think, however, that this is a view with an *Urtext*-paradigm bias. An improvisatory approach to a score includes more than just making use of its incompleteness. By contrast I argue that even the so-called precisely notated aspects in reality have always been simplifications – and I hope to show that nineteenth-century musicians were aware of this. The view that is defended in this study revolves around a process of appropriation that leads to a situation of 'ownership', conveyed as 'knowing the musical language' of the composition. This may very well mean that a performer occasionally deviates from explicit prescriptions in the score, but at the same time remains true to 'the idea' of the piece.

The type of meaning that matters here, the 'idea', has to do with the musical units and patterns that are formed by the isolated sounds as represented by dots on the paper. Making sense of what may come across as a disconnected multiplicity comes down to recognising the guiding principles. Attaching meaning to a score is recognising loci communes in the musical structures that are represented in the signs on the paper. The musician reads the score, imagines the sounding result, and at the same time links patterns in the notated music to loci communes which he already knows by experience, or which in another way resonate with what is familiar to him. A certain familiarity is thus crucial for an interpretational dialogue: interpretation starts with recognition. Recognition leads towards ownership: to the musician, the piece starts to feel like 'his' music. When he doesn't recognise anything, the score doesn't mean anything to him; it even becomes very hard to play and remember.[115] Moreover, a listener who is unfamiliar with a locus communis feels as though he is not

[115] Interestingly, in such cases it turns out indeed to be very hard to memorise the music, or even to be able to play it at all (when the score is complex to read) - which also shows that learning a piece for an important part means memorising it...

understanding the music (think of the many music lovers asking for courses that explain modern music to them); when a locus communis is not known by anyone it is no longer a commonplace.[116]

As was mentioned above, these loci can be so manifold that an exhausting description would be a futile enterprise. Crucial for this study is the assumption that they belong to the *inventio*, and therefore to musical creation. Whether a new piece of music is carefully designed and written down in a score, or produced on the spot: loci communes are the guiding factors that channel the musical flow. From the point of view of a performer, they work in two directions: they may guide the improviser creating new music, and conversely they can be the 'patterns' that make the score meaningful to the interpreter. They are carriers of musical meaning in the aforementioned sense because they convey musical expectation. The sense of meaning they produce provides the background against which an improvisatory approach to scores can operate; according to the style, they allow the performer to add ornamentation or apply *tempo rubato* without falling into arbitrariness. Loci enable the performer to identify with a composition.

If a locus communis is a shared structure, a common musical expression, then it must function in a specific situation of music-making – in other words, it must be shared by performers and listeners alike. This makes it part of the context of a score, or borrowing from Gadamer, it belongs to its horizon. When the distance between the reader and the score increases – in time or culturally – the horizon of the reader starts to move away from the horizon of the score. As a consequence, eventually a locus communis may no longer be recognised, as in Gjerdingen's ice-skating metaphor. Or the reverse might happen: the reader of a score thinks he recognises a locus that is common to him and his contemporaries, but would have been unthinkable within the horizon of the score (at the time of composition); this happens for instance when people discern a 'jazzy' rhythm in scores of Johann Sebastian Bach.

### *A counterexample*

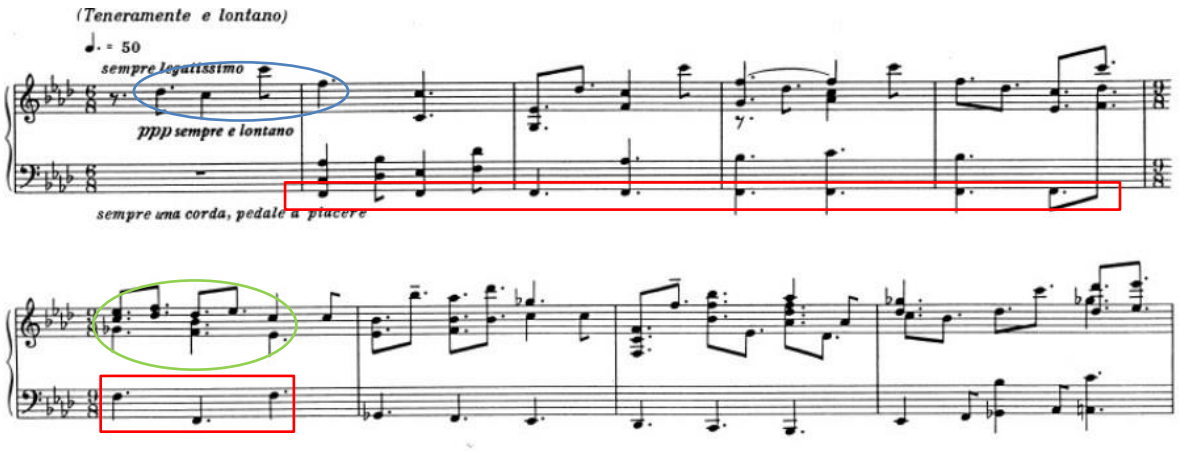
More concrete examples of loci communes in nineteenth-century music will appear throughout this study. In order to show that the notion of loci becomes much more problematic and complicated in the second half of the twentieth century, I will finish this chapter by making a comparison with a score from that period which confuses by its selective and disconnected use of loci. In 1965, Luciano Berio composed a short piano piece called 'Wasserklavier'. Its overtly classical features induce commentators to describe it in terms of a Romantic piano piece. The publisher Universal Edition for instance recommends the composition as 'the perfect encore to any piano recital':

[116] The philosopher Matthias Vogel defines the understanding of music by a listener as 'nachvollziehen' [understanding by following / participating]. Vogel, M.: 'Nachvollzug und die Erfahrung musikalischen Sinns'. In: Becker, A. & Vogel, M. (eds.): *Musikalischer Sinn: Beiträge zu einer Philosophie der Musik.* Frankfurt am Main, 2007; 327.

> But although it is tonal music, using motifs from Brahms' Op. 117 and Schubert's Op. 142, the ending remains somehow unresolved – perhaps with a question mark or leaving the impression that the music could continue ...[117]

The website of AllMusic.com quotes Seth Brodsky, to whom the piece

> almost sounds as if it could have been created by a nineteenth century composer, perhaps someone living exactly between Schubert and Brahms. Indeed, in its compound duple barcarolle rhythms (with rubato pre-installed) and melancholic, wafting minor mode, it carries an air of Chopin and the sentiment of Schumann.[118]




*Example 2.3.1: L. Berio: Wasserklavier (beginning) [Published in UE33013 "6 Encores"]*

The alleged use of motifs from Brahms' op. 117 no. 2 and Schubert's op. 142 no. 1, however, has little to do with the 'meaning of the score' as discussed in this chapter. It is true that a performer recognises some loci from tonal music in Berio's score, like the barcarolle rhythm Brodsky refers to, and of course the clear f minor tonality throughout the composition. Moreover, Berio writes almost exclusively third-based chords. Together with the requested tender touch ('teneramente'), the necessarily quite 'pedally' sound and Berio's own references to Schubert and Brahms, these loci apparently suffice to make a 'classical' impression. However, a closer look reveals that some very crucial nineteenth-century loci are missing. The texture is quite different from the usual melody-with-accompaniment that we tend to find in a 'barcarolle'. The upper voice could be interpreted as the main melody, and indeed the opening motif (blue oval) hints at a Romantic idiom, but the melody as such escapes any locus that would correspond with a barcarolle or any other similar type

[117] https://www.universaledition.com/composers-and-works/luciano-berio-54/works/wasserklavier-5768
[118] https://www.allmusic.com/composition/wasserklavier-for-1-or-2-pianos-mc0002405663

of piece. Most disorienting is the harmony. Though the chords based on thirds in a clearly tonal environment may sound vaguely familiar, functional harmony is almost absent in this composition. Yes, the piece starts with a long pedal on F in the bass (red box), just as the improvised *Lied ohne Worte* at the beginning of this chapter, but the characteristic accompanying harmonic patterns on top of it are not there. The common thread in the harmony of 'Wasserklavier' is rather located in Berio's use of parallel harmony, resulting in an utterly (neo-)modal treatment of the minor scale that is often coloured with a flat second tone (green oval, one example out of many). It is a type of harmony that has a stronger connection with Debussy than with Schubert, Chopin, Schumann or Brahms.

The result of all this is a score in which one may recognise some nineteenth-century loci, but without much of a stylistic connection. A performer who is familiar with other pieces by Berio will recognise loci that are typical for his work, like very fast grace notes and arpeggios (not in the example), but there are also passages that seem to escape any convention. I think that this piece, with all its allusions to much earlier music, nonetheless shows typical features of modernism in music: a strong emphasis on originality, of a composer's oeuvre, but also of every single composition. The mixing of disparate loci can also be seen as an early example of musical postmodernism. Often an almost compulsive urge towards originality is presented as a heritage of Romanticism. This may be true in an ideological sense, but it is a fact that within the 'Romantic' period on which this study focuses, composed music was generally still firmly rooted in a stylistic common ground (→ chapter 12). The development of avoiding any shared conventions is really something that emerged in the twentieth century, especially after World War II. When a score does not rely on self-evident loci, the performer has no other option than trying to do as precisely as possible what is written. Modernism therefore may be considered to have made a major contribution to the development of the *Urtext*-paradigm. Referring to Gadamer's image, one could say that the *Urtext*-paradigm is part of the horizon of a modernist score: it is an 'authentic' way to perform Berio, Stockhausen or Boulez. Such scores indeed may be taken prescriptively, and an improvisatory approach will be out of place here. What has happened, though, is that the same paradigm started to be applied to the approach of nineteenth-century and older scores. This study intends to show an alternative to this attitude.

# Part 2
# Improvising with scores

# Chapter 3. A rhetorical view on ornamentation

## 3.1. Introduction

In 1938 Ernst Ferand (→ chapter 1.1) published *Die Improvisation in der Musik,*[119] followed in 1956 by the annotated anthology *Die Improvisation*.[120] Ferand offers an impressive overview of improvisational practices in Western music, the scope of which reaches from the earliest music to the music around 1800. The anthology shows many scores with features that could be seen as the residue of improvisational practices, for example notated embellishments to a melody. Ferand termed this type of improvisation, which is based upon a 'bereits vorhandene mehr oder minder festgelegte Komposition' [an already existing and more or less codified composition], 'relative' improvisation (as opposed to 'absolute' improvisation which also invents the formal structure itself at the time of performance).[121] Part 2 of the present study looks at such relative improvisation, extending the term beyond Ferand: it deals with any improvisatory approach to a score. The focus will be on two major areas: ornamentation and related topics (chapters 3 through 5) and tempo (chapters 6 and 7). In chapter 2.2, I proposed a musical application of the rhetorical concept 'locus communis' to indicate principles that guide musical creation. I argued that the idea of recognising loci communes is of fundamental importance to the dialogue between performer and score (→ chapter 2.3). Throughout part 2, attention will be given to other aspects of rhetoric as well. It will be argued that a renewed attention to musical rhetoric, not in the sense of a petrified Baroque *Figurenlehre*, but as an essential aspect of nineteenth-century performance, provides us with important insight in an improvisatory approach to scores. I will show that such an approach guides the attention to something more fundamental: variety. The real antipode of the *Urtext*-paradigm is not improvisation, but a continuous search for variety in performance. The exploration of rhetoric supports variety as a both historically motivated and musically inspiring alternative to the *Urtext*-paradigm.

The present chapter discusses preliminary aspects of what might be termed 'ornamental improvisation': the practice of adding extempore embellishments, flourishes and other forms of ornamentation to an existing melody or to pre-determined chord progressions. Improvisatory ornamentation occurs within many different musical styles that lie outside the boundaries of Ferand's survey; much improvisation in jazz, for example, can be classified as such. In the nineteenth century it existed especially in bel canto and in related instrumental styles such as the so-called brilliant style. By way of introduction, this chapter examines the soil in which extempore ornamentation during the nineteenth century was rooted, and as such focuses on ornamental

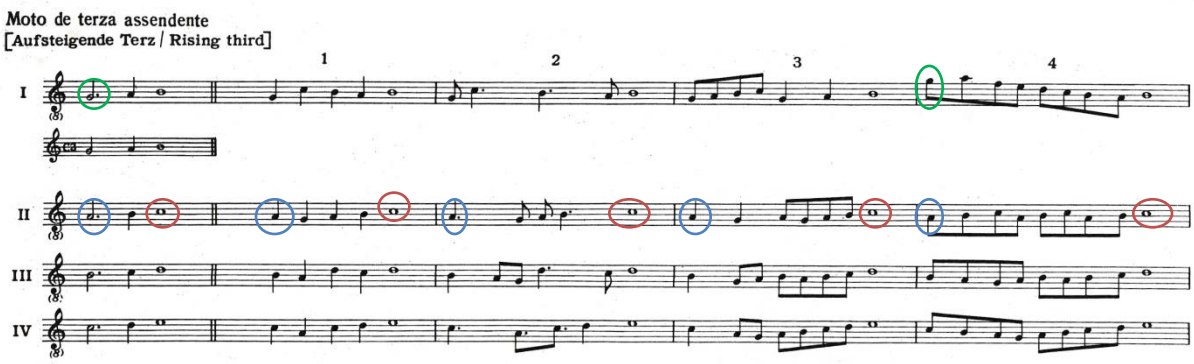
[119] Ferand, E.: *Die Improvisation in der Musik.* Zürich, 1938.
[120] Ferand, E.: *Die Improvisation in Beispielen aus neun Jahrhunderten abendländischer Musik.* Köln, 1956.
[121] Ferand, E.: op. cit., 6.

improvisation as it existed before the nineteenth century, specifically at the end of the eighteenth century. Several structural aspects of nineteenth-century ornamentation are best introduced by looking at the eighteenth-century situation.

## 3.2 Structural aspects of ornamentation before 1800

### *Anchor tones*

As Ferand shows, the idea of embellishing a melody in Western music can be traced back to Gregorian chant. Because it is neither possible nor even necessary to summarise the history of ornamentation within the context of this study, only a few developments that are relevant to the period covered by this study will be mentioned here. In Renaissance and early Baroque music, techniques of diminution (division, *passaggio*, *glosas*, *double*) were well described in treatises, which typically included many examples on basic melodic progressions. An instance can be found in Sylvestro Ganassi's well-known *Fontegara* (1535).[122] The example shows a specific basic melodic motion (three tones that ascend stepwise) at various positions in the scale, followed by different ways to ornament this fragment melodically by way of diminutions. Only the simplest diminutions are shown here; *La Fontegara* astonishes the reader with a wealth of ornamental virtuosity.




*Example 3.2.1 Diminutions according to S. Ganassi*

Such diminutions or divisions basically consisted of a rhythmical division of larger note values into smaller ones (hence the term). Melodically speaking, the important tones in the original melody served as 'anchors' for ornamental flourishes that were added to the basic structure: they more or less stayed on their proper places in the meter (see the blue and red ovals in example II above). I call these structural pitches 'anchor tones'. Sometimes the anchor tone is moved to a different octave, as in example I/4 (green ovals).[123] Diminutions are a clear example of hierarchy in tonal music: the tones

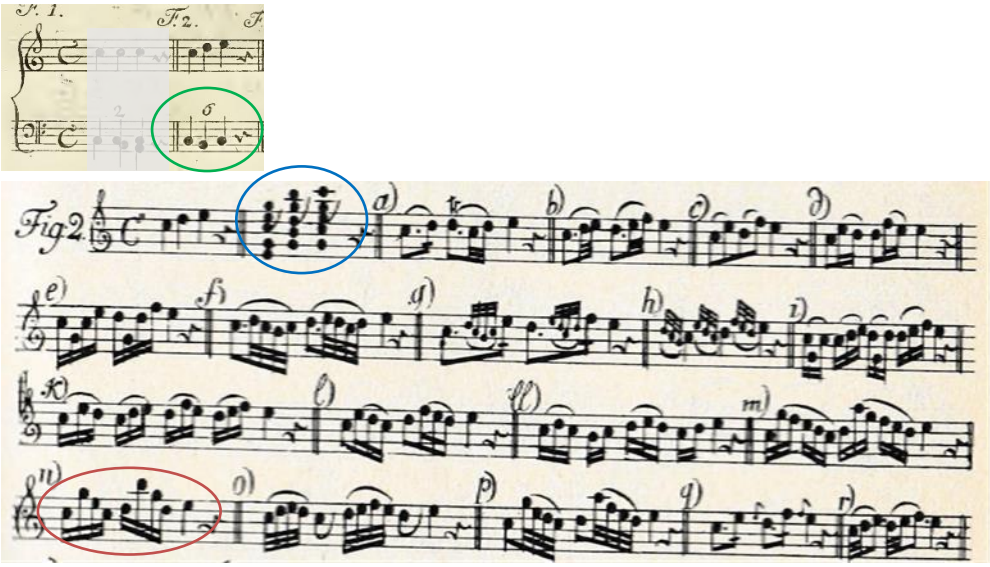
[122] Ganassi, S.: *La Fontegara* (Venice, 1535). German translation: H. Peter. Berlin, 1956; 24.

[123] Already during the sixteenth century, opinions differed in this respect: some treatises demand the diminution to start and finish with the main note, while some are less strict in that regard (cf. Boquet, P. & Rebours, G.: *50 Renaissance & Baroque Standards*. Courlay, 2007; 13).

of the original melody belong to a different, more 'fundamental' or 'structural' level than the diminution itself. Much later, Heinrich Schenker was to expand this idea to an encompassing view on the structure of musical compositions.

### *Harmonic basis*

Whereas in early diminutions such as Ganassi's the motivation seems to have been purely linear or melodic, later Baroque embellishments were clearly based upon harmony as well. The *willkürliche Manieren* [arbitrary embellishments] of the eighteenth century, for instance exemplified in Georg Philipp Telemann's *Methodische Sonaten*,[124] show many fragments of chord arpeggiations. This development from purely melodically driven figuration towards an ornamentation that is based upon both melody and supporting harmony is seen most clearly by comparing Ganassi's ornamentation with a table by Johann Joachim Quantz from 1752:[125]




*Example 3.2.2 Ornamentation according to J.J. Quantz*

The melodic basis here is similar to the example from Ganassi, but Quantz incorporates an implied harmonic background; this background is notated as a figured bass (shown separately at the top, green oval), spelled out as chords surrounding the melodic tones (blue oval) and, most importantly, shows in the embellishments consisting entirely of arpeggiations, as seen in example *n* (red oval). Not surprisingly, nineteenth-century ornamentation was also firmly rooted in harmony, as will be shown in chapter 4.

[124] Telemann, G.Ph.: *Sonate metodiche.* Hamburg, n.d. [1728]
[125] Quantz, J.J.: *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen* (Berlin, 1752). Reprint: Kassel, 1983; Tab. VIII

***Dissemination of ornamentation at the end of the eighteenth century***

Embellishments remained fashionable throughout the eighteenth century; in 1760, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach published his *Sonaten mit veränderten Reprisen*, and even in several keyboard sonatas of W.A. Mozart we find printed embellishments in the melodies of slow movements, for instance in the sonata in F major, KV 332. The ornamented recapitulation of the Adagio in this sonata is seen as a revision by Mozart himself; it only appears in the first edition, whereas the autograph still has an unornamented recapitulation, notated as a *da capo.*[126] Such examples strongly suggest that ornaments were seen as an addition to the basic structure of the score, or, conversely, that the score as composed was generally accepted as a 'blueprint', a point of departure for music-making, rather than a set of prescriptions which the performer had to obey. As late as 1802, Charles Burney wrote:

> An adagio in a song or solo is, generally, little more than an outline left to the performers abilities to colour: and the performer who is not enabled to interest an audience by the tone of his voice or instrument, and by taste and expression, should never be trusted with slow notes, in the performance of which the smallest defects are so easily discovered; and if not highly embellished, they soon excite languor and disgust in the hearers. The talent of executing an adagio well, in which performers of great powers of execution often fail, is a merit of the highest class which a musician can possess.[127]

In opera arias, extensive embellishments (especially in the *Da Capo*-sections) were expected from the singer by the audience, a practice that among connoisseurs occasionally gave rise to disapproving remarks about the vanity of singers (notably the *castrati*) who supposedly had no sense of moderation.[128]

The longstanding art of preluding by instrumentalists (playing introductory music based upon a simple harmonic progression, usually a cadence) and the related instrumental or vocal *cadenza* as it arose in the course of the eighteenth century, can be seen as amplifications of this ornamental practice. Because nineteenth-century preludes and cadenzas tend to exceed the limits of ornamental improvisation as it is discussed here, they will be treated in part 3. A last important specimen of relative improvisation before 1800 to be mentioned here is the practice of *basso continuo* playing, which in some instances could have highly ornamental features. Figured basses remained an important tool for nineteenth-century harmony training, but faded away from musical practice already towards the end of the eighteenth century, last in church music.

By the end of the nineteenth century, all of these ornamental practices had practically disappeared from Western Art Music. Heinrich Schenker had a rather strong opinion on this:

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[126] Neue Mozart Ausgabe, Serie IX, Werkgruppe 25, Band 2. Kassel, 1986; XI.

[127] Burney, C.: 'Adagio', entry in: *The new Cyclopedia, or, Universal Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences* (Abraham Rees, ed.). London, 1802.

[128] Cf. e.g. Gossett, Ph.: *Divas and Scholars.* Chicago, 2006; 300, or Marcello, B.: 'Il teatro alla moda – part I' (translated by Reinhard G. Pauly). In: *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Jul., 1948); 390.

> Unser Geschlecht hat die Kunst der Diminution, der Auskomponierung von Klängen vertan und erklärt deshalb gleich dem Fuchs in der Fabel die Traube für sauer, die es nicht erreichen kann. Nicht einmal die in Lehre und Ausführung von den Meistern uns vermachte Kunst der Diminution vermag es mehr zu verstehen, es wendet Ohr und Sinn von einem Grundgesetz ab, dem es weder schaffend noch nachschaffend gewachsen ist.[129]
>
> [Our generation has wasted the art of diminution, of the elaboration of tones, and therefore it is like the fox in the fable who declares sour the grapes he cannot reach. It is not even capable of understanding the art of diminution as it has been handed down to us by the masters in their teachings and in practice, it turns away both ear and mind from a fundamental law which it isn't equal to, neither in creation nor in recreation.]

By 1925, when Schenker wrote these words, the idea of embellishing indeed seems to have been foreign to the contemporary musical aesthetics.[130] The topic of ornamentation had already occupied Schenker in his first theoretical publication, *Ein Beitrag zu Ornamentik*,[131] and later was to form the basis of the idea of *Auskomponierung* (prolongation), a central concept in his analytical thinking. Whether or not one would like to follow Schenker in his extrapolation of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's techniques of ornamentation into an all-embracing understanding of the structure of tonal music, the disappearance of 'the art of diminution' in the course of the nineteenth century raises two questions that are preliminary to the topic of this chapter. First, one wonders what exactly the effect is of adding embellishments during a performance of a composition, and second: to what extent may we assume that ornamentation in music from before 1800 was actually extempore? The first question will be dealt with in sections 3.3 through 3.6 and the second one will be discussed in section 3.7.

## 3.3 The purpose of embellishments

An interesting question about the practice of adding embellishments to composed music, as referred to above, is not only *how* it was done, but especially *why*. What does it tell us when we know that it was usual, and therefore implied in the score, that the performer was equally 'responsible' for the musical content, that the score rather served as a starting point for a 'free' performance than as a text that demanded strict obedience? For the present chapter, the years between 1750 and 1800 are especially relevant since many nineteenth-century developments can be traced back to this period. These five decades, which were marked by one of the most ground-shaking transitions in Western music (still called the Classical period) saw the publication of a number of important treatises on

[129] Schenker, H.: 'Die Kunst der Improvisation'. In: *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik* (München 1925). Reprint: Hildesheim, 1974; 11.
[130] I argue that this included composed music, generally speaking; a discussion however would exceed the limits of this study.
[131] Schenker, H.: *Ein Beitrag zu Ornamentik*. Wien, 1904.

musical practice. Quantz's treatise was already mentioned above; one year later, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (similarly employed at the court in Berlin) wrote his famous *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (1753).[132] Leopold Mozart published his successful *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* in 1756.[133] The *Klavierschule* of Daniel Gottlob Türk dates from the revolutionary year 1789. All four treatises were generally seen as important books in their time, and are today valued as staples of eighteenth-century source texts on performance practice.

All books dedicate extensive chapters to the practice of embellishing. Traditionally, a distinction is made between smaller ornaments that can be indicated by a symbol, such as a trill, and more arbitrary or free embellishments that are left to the discretion of the performer *(wesentliche* and *willkürliche Manieren* respectively). The general picture for the second half of the eighteenth century is that arbitrary embellishments were common in elegant, *cantabile* music, especially when a passage was repeated. Their purpose seems to have been to make the music more interesting, to increase its beauty and to enhance the *Affekt* of the composed music, mainly by means of an increase of variety. Today, we might have lost somewhat our sensitivity to this need for variation. Arguing within the *Urtext*-paradigm, according to which the performer's task is to translate a score into sound as precisely and faithfully as possible (→ chapter 1.4), we tend to see it as the composer's responsibility to write music that avoids sounding boring. The flip side of the picture is that the modern respect for the score is such that most musicians seem to be very reluctant to change anything in a composition; what counts as 'good taste' today might impede adding ornamentation. In her 2001 study on improvised ornamentation in Mozart arias, Kathleen Carlton compared added embellishments in arias from *Le Nozze di Figaro* in then recent recordings, conducted by Charles Mackerras, John Eliot Gardiner, Arnold Östman and Nikolaus Harnoncourt. Despite notable differences, she concluded: 'It seems very likely that the respect accorded Mozart in the present day lends a very conservative approach to the embellishment of his work, and most present day conductors and performers are likely to err on the side of discretion.'[134] As I will show in chapter 5.2, in the case of Mozart – who became a 'classic' soon after his death – this is a trend that already started at the early nineteenth century, and even nowadays a similar comparison would probably not yield an altogether different conclusion.

Conversely, all historical sources mentioned above stress (although to different degrees) the duty of the performer to 'improve' the composition, that is, to make a performance more effective.

[132] A third treatise that was published in Berlin in the same decade is Johann Friedrich Agricola's *Anleitung zur Singkunst* (1757), which was however an extended translation of Pier Francesco Tosi's earlier *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni* (1723).

[133] The Dutch translation of the book was published in 1766; Leopold Mozart was so satisfied with this publication that he preferred it to the original (letter to Johann Lorenz Hagenauer, 16th of May, 1766).

[134] Carlton, K.M.: *Improvised Ornamentation in the Opera Arias of Mozart: A Singer's Guide* (diss.). Norman (OK), 2001 (unpublished); 125.

Obviously the performer was supposed to recognise the sense of the composition, the *Affekt* it intended to arouse in the listener, and to know how to achieve the same (or a similar) result with slightly different means, namely by varying what is in the score and adding musical material. Drawing upon the eighteenth-century line of thought that music and language have the same origin, and therefore are basically the same thing (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Gottfried Herder), one could say that to eighteenth-century authors the primary goal of a performance was to be 'persuasive', and musical persuasion was not in the first place sought in a particularly affirmative way of executing the written material (as it might be understood today) but in an ever new, enriching musical 'formulation'. In this way, a musical phrase could be varied by adding embellishments, but also by changing the order of notes, rephrasing, or even, occasionally, by simplification.

It might be not too far-fetched to postulate the existence of an 'aesthetics of variety' in pre-1800 music-making which seems to be at odds with modern outlook and taste; this study aims to demonstrate that this mindset continued in the nineteenth century. Perhaps the more dominant view in classical music today is a contrasting 'aesthetics of unity' that we all grew up with and that determines the way how we listen to a performance. The modern understanding of perfection in this respect stems from the idea of unity rather than variety. It determines almost any aspect of a performance: in chamber music one expects similar bowing and articulation in similar passages, rhythmic togetherness and precision in tempo,[135] in orchestral playing and choir performances blending tone colours constitute the modern sound ideal,[136] and regularity and evenness are the keywords to instrumental technique. The ideal interpretation of a piece is the one in which 'every note is in its place' – a view that corresponds to the *Urtext*-paradigm. It is very likely that the rise of recordings has been a major influence behind the shift from variety to unity: the mere possibility to listen more than once to a performance must have had an enormous impact on the attitude of listening and on the expectations of a listener. This topic however will be left aside here: it warrants a new research project.

## 3.4 Variety: a rhetorical approach

### *Classical rhetoric and music*

In the following sections the relation between music and Classical rhetoric will be explored relatively elaborately. My goal is to make a reasonable case for the idea that during the nineteenth century, great importance was still attached to eloquence in writing and speaking, and that a centuries-old

[135] In his study on early recordings of music for string instruments, Emlyn Stam uses the words 'neatness and tidiness'. Stam, E.: *In Search of a Lost Language: Performing in Early-Recorded Style in Viola and String Quartet Repertoires* (diss., unpublished). Leiden, 2019; 213. https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2912418/view

[136] Cf. Philip, R.: *Performing Music in the Age of Recording.* New Haven, 2004.

orientation on Classical rhetoric formed its feeding ground. Similar stylistic ideals were applied to music, generally understood as language-like (→ chapter 1.3) at that time. In the opinion of many, the term 'rhetoric' may have less favourable connotations today, but I will argue that its importance for nineteenth-century musical culture is obvious, and that there is good reason to understand ornamentation as a primarily rhetorical phenomenon.

There are several notions in section 3.3 which refer to the field of rhetoric. *Manieren* (ornaments), for instance, seems to be a translation of the Greek *tropos.* In rhetoric, the word 'tropos' indicates a change of the normal meaning of a word in figurative language;[137] *Manieren* likewise change a musical figure. A rhetorical *Affektenlehre* [theory of affects] at least dates back to Aristotle. Being persuasive was the business of an orator, and rhetoric was his instrument; as Plato puts it in his *Gorgias*, citing the Greek orator after whom this dialogue was named: 'Rhetoric is a producer of persuasion.'[138] Moreover, the idea of variety (to be explored further below) has its roots in classical rhetoric, and the Roman rhetorician Quintilian even expounds at length on improvisation (*ex tempore dicere*[139]).

Particularly in German Baroque music, a musical application of rhetoric found its expression in a highly systematised *Affektenlehre* and *Figurenlehre* [theory of affects and of figures, respectively]. According to this theory, based upon writings of René Descartes and especially the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, concrete musical patterns or qualities were supposed to influence the 'humors' (body fluids) of the listener, and consequently arouse affects.[140] For the period under investigation this theory is less relevant: with the rise of the galant style, the rather mechanical idea of particular musical qualities having concrete involuntary effects in listeners was replaced by a focus on direct emotional expression in the sounding music. Interestingly however, several Baroque authors already emphasised the close connection between music and language instead; in other words: often the purpose of theorists of Baroque musical rhetoric was not to erect a rigid prescriptive system, but to explain why music is as it is. In 1601, for example, Joachim Burmeister explicitly used pre-existing rhetorical terms to name and explain musical phenomena that were as such already familiar.[141] Thus many late-eighteenth-century texts on music still used terms and notions that probably stemmed directly from rhetoric as it was practised during classical antiquity.

[137] Krones, H.: 'Musik und Rhetorik'. In: *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band A6. Kassel, 1997; col. 826.
[138] Plato, Gorgias 453a. Translation W.R.M. Lamb; Cambridge (MA), 1967.
[139] Quintilian: *Institutio oratoria* X.7.1.
[140] Bartel, D.: *Musica Poetica.* Lincoln, 1997; 37.
[141] Bartel, D.: *Handbuch der musikalischen Figurenlehre.* Laaber, 2004; 24.

### *Eloquence in verbal and musical languages*

Of all rhetorical notions, it is notably the ideal of eloquence that has deeply influenced Western intellectual life for centuries. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, Latin remained the lingua franca of at least the clergy, albeit gradually deteriorating with respect to the grammar. Renaissance humanists such as Petrarca, Erasmus and Vossius accomplished a re-orientation on the 'golden' Latin of Cicero, and with impressive results. One of their achievements was a revaluation of the art of rhetoric, which had been of central importance in the Roman curricula. The discovery in 1416 of the complete text of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* (95 A.D.) in the monastery of Sankt Gallen caused great excitement. Quintilian's book can be seen as the result and the summit of five centuries of teaching rhetoric.[142] It was to become the most important text about rhetoric in the early modern age, and *eloquentia* the centre of the education at grammar schools.[143] As we know, Latin was the lingua franca among scientists for centuries; less attention is paid today to the wealth of poetic literature in Latin that was also produced in Western Europe at that time. In general, more books were being published in Latin than in the vernacular – a balance that in Germany changed as late as 1681.[144] Johann Joseph Fux still published his influential treatise on counterpoint, *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725), in Latin; the second part is written in the form of a dialogue, after the fashion of Cicero.

Though university lectures used to be in Latin in several countries until into the nineteenth century (at Leiden University even until 1876[145]), the importance of the language outside academia declined markedly during the eighteenth century. Fux's book was translated to German already in 1742. One might expect that, since the practical use of Latin disappeared from public life, the old ideas about rhetoric must have been at most a relic from bygone times to the generation of 1800. There are good reasons however to nuance this picture. Especially in nineteenth-century Germany, the concept of *Bildung* became highly influential. The ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt (his *Bildungsreform*) led towards an educational system in which Latin and ancient Greek played a central part, a system that was to remain intact during the nineteenth century. He was the founder of the *Gymnasium* as a school type. The number of hours that were spent on lessons in Greek and Latin is hard to believe today, but becomes slightly understandable when we consider the fact that Latin in particular was learnt actively (cf. chapter 1.3). For their final exam, students had to produce not only an essay in Latin, but also poetry in several metrical forms. Quite a few Latin scholars of today would probably have trouble with this exam... In 1835, a seventeen-year old boy presented

[142] Gerbrandy, P.: 'Inleiding'. In: Quintilian: *De opleiding tot redenaar* (trans. P. Gerbrandy). Groningen, 2011; 15.
[143] Stroh, W.: *Latein ist tot, es lebe Latein!* Berlin, 2008; 212.
[144] Stroh, W.: op. cit., 232.
[145] Vervoorn, A.J.: 'Kleine frontberichten uit een verdwenen taalstrijd.' In: *Ons Erfdeel*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1981); 457.

such an essay, well written in beautiful Latin: only the quality of his handwriting gave rise to a critical remark by his examiners. The name of this boy was Karl Marx.[146]

This period in German cultural history is termed *Neuhumanismus* [neo-humanism]. It may be true that the practical use of Latin (and Greek) had become less evident by that time; however, that doesn't alter the fact that generations of the nineteenth-century elite were imbued with the principles of classical rhetoric, which they were supposed to apply actively. Classical rhetorical thinking was part of the cultural baggage of educated Europeans also during the nineteenth century. Judging by the presence of Antiquity in seventeenth-century paintings and texts, the ancient Greek and especially Roman cultures must have felt almost contemporary to the Western Europeans of early modern times. This feeling of contemporaneity might have weakened from the later eighteenth century on due to the awakening of a historical sense.[147] But especially in the field of rhetoric the connection might have stayed close because it directly affects language. Already the Italian humanists, inspired by their studies of the classics, turned their attention towards their mother tongue, and attempts North of the Alps to raise the German language to the level of the elevated poetic Latin date already from the early seventeenth century.[148] In addition, rhetoric remained of importance to the Romantic generation. This fact may seem to be at odds with our popular image of the Romantics, but this rather shows a feature of the later view on Romanticism than of the Romantic authors themselves.[149]

The notion that the theory of rhetoric applied to music as well as to language continued into the post-Baroque period. In 1768 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose writings on music retained their influence for a long time, compared a (creative) musician with an orator, when he wrote: 'Avec les seules règles de l'Harmonie on n'est pas plus près de savoir la Composition , qu'on ne l'est d'être un Orateur avec celles de la Grammaire.'[150] [With the rules of harmony only, we are no more advanced in the knowledge of composition, than an orator with those of the Grammar.[151]] Also during the nineteenth century, 'music as a language' (*Tonsprache*) remained a familiar idea. Philosophers and authors such as Friedrich von Schlegel, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel and Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, music critics such as Eduard Hanslick and Gustav Schilling, and composers such as Beethoven and Liszt (who called music the 'twin sister of language') are just a few examples that give

[146] Stroh, W.: op. cit., 250-251.
[147] Cf. Mathijsen, M.: *Historiezucht.* Nijmegen, 2013.
[148] Ueding, G. & Steinbrink, B.: *Grundriss der Rhetorik.* Stuttgart, 1986; 98.
[149] Ueding, G. & Steinbrink, B.: op. cit., 135. For a discussion of rhetoric in nineteenth-century German, see ibidem, 134-156.
[150] Rousseau, J.-J.: *Dictionnaire de musique.* Paris, 1768; 109.
[151] Rousseau, J.-J.: *A Complete Dictionary of Music* (trans. W. Waring). London, 1779; 75.

an impression of the ubiquity of this topic.[152] In 1829, Carl Czerny worked out the parallel between an improviser and a *Redner* in his *Anleitung zum Fantasieren*:

> Sobald der Spieler sich vor einer grösseren Gesellschaft, und überhaupt vor Zuhörern zum Improvisieren hinsetzt, kann er sich mit einem Redner vergleichen, der einen Gegenstand deutlich und möglichst erschöpfend aus dem Stegreif zu entwickeln strebt. In der That passen so viele Regeln der Beredsamkeit auf das musikalische Fantasieren, dass es nicht zweckwidrig ist, den Vergleich fortzusetzen.[153]
>
> [As soon as the performer sits down before a larger gathering and generally to improvise in front of an audience, he can be compared with an orator who strives to develop a subject as clearly and exhaustively as possible on the spur of the moment. In point of fact, so many principles of oratory correspond with those of improvisation that it is not inappropriate to venture the comparison.[154]]

In England, Charles Burney seems to have been very familiar with ancient rhetorical literature, since he refers to the Greek-writing Roman rhetorician Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first century BC) in an encyclopaedia entry on *improvisatore* (→ chapter 8).[155] In nineteenth-century French, *dire un morceau de musique* [to speak a piece of music] was a common expression until World War I.[156]

So far, the focus has been on verbal rhetoric as a means of describing music. Interestingly, some writers from Antiquity also do the opposite: they use music as an example for spoken language. Dionysius of Halicarnassus for instance went so far as to write:

> The science of public oratory is, after all, a sort of musical science, differing from vocal and instrumental music in degree, not in kind. In oratory, too, the words involve melody, rhythm, variety, and appropriateness; so that, in this case also, the ear delights in the melodies, is fascinated by the rhythms, welcomes the variations, and craves always what is in keeping with the occasion. The distinction between oratory and music is simply one of degree.[157]

With respect to the improvisatory in music, two fields that are related to classical rhetoric are especially relevant. One is the area of *inventio,* in which the locus communis as a source of invention has a central role. This concept was already introduced in chapter 2.2, and will be elaborated in part 3 of this study. The other one has to do with the stage of the delivery of a speech. Different authors tend to link rhetoric terms with music in various ways, which is understandable because of the different functions of 'meaning' in music and in spoken language (→ chapter 2): often it is rather the

[152] Krones, H.: 'Musik und Rhetorik'. In: *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band A6. Kassel, 1997; col. 841-846.
[153] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* op. 200 [Wien, 1829]; facsimile reprint: Wiesbaden, 1993; 36.
[154] Czerny, C.: *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte* op. 200 (A.L. Mitchell, trans.). New York, 1983; 42.
[155] Burney, Ch.: 'Improvisatore'. In: Rees, A.: *The Cyclopædia*, vol. 18. London, 1819.
[156] Eigeldinger, J.J.: *Chopin vu par ses élèves.* Paris, 2006; 24.
[157] Dionysius of Halicarnassus: *On literary composition* (W. Rhys Roberts, trans.). London, 1910; 125-126.

underlying principle than the exact concept itself that can be applied to music. 'Tropos' for instance, mentioned above, cannot literally be translated to the language of music for precisely that reason. With respect to the categories that deal with the musical foreground, several terms were in use alongside one another. Arbitrary ornamentation (*decoratio*), discussed in chapters 3 and 4, can, according to Mattheson, be counted as a part of *elaboratio* or *elocutio*.[158] He distinguishes between *Figuren* (*figurae*), which to him seem to be musical figures that make part of a composition, and *Manieren*, arbitrary ornamentation which is added by the performer – very much in line with Quintilian.[159] With respect to *Manieren*, Mattheson is, incidentally, remarkably critical, since they 'verderben manche schöne Melodie' [spoil many a beautiful melody] by making the figures unrecognisable.[160] The aspect of *pronuntiatio*, which to Quintilian is a very important part of rhetoric,[161] is represented musically in the present study by the aspect of improvisatory performance (→ chapters 5 and 7). I will now turn to a rhetorical concept that is central to an improvisatory approach to scores: variety.

### *Varietas*

The history of the idea of variety is a long and interesting one. According to Cicero, the word *varietas* originally referred to the shifting colour of ripening grapes in autumn[162] and became used mainly in a transferred sense, which could be pejorative (changeable, uncertain), as well as positive.[163] Here one notices already the ambiguity that also surrounds the related later concepts of ornament and decoration. The positive valuation of *varietas* is reflected in proverbial expressions like *varietas delectat* [variety pleases] and *natura gaudet varietate* [nature rejoices in variety]. Connected to this is the idea of *natura ludens* [nature that plays]. *Varietas* was seen as a virtue that fosters persuasion by raising both *amplificatio* [the increase of expression] and *ornatus* [adornment].[164] In the early Christian world, variety was identified as the essential quality of God's creation.[165] In the Middle Ages, it became one of the leading principles of literary style.[166] A glimpse of the celebration of variety in nature in later times can be seen for example in the commonplace books that became popular from the fifteenth century on, and in the collections of curiosities of wealthy citizens in the seventeenth

[158] Mattheson, J.: op.cit., 235.
[159] Quintilian: op. cit., IX.1.4.
[160] Mattheson, J. : op. cit., 242.
[161] Quintilian: op. cit., III.3.3.
[162] Fitzgerald, W.: *Variety: The Life of a Roman Concept.* Chicago, 2016; 18.
[163] Fitzgerald, W.: op. cit., 19.
[164] Fekadu, S.: 'Variation'. In: Ueding, G. (ed.): *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, Band 9. Darmstadt, 2009; col. 1006-1007.
[165] Fitzgerald, W.: op. cit., 54.
[166] Fekadu, S.: op. cit., col. 1008.

and eighteenth centuries. As late as 1845, the painter J.D. Harding wrote in his *Principles and Practice of Art*:

> Variety is essential to beauty, and is so inseparable from it that there can be no beauty where there is no variety. (...) As variety is indispensable to beauty so perfect beauty requires that variety be infinite. It is this infinite variety which constitutes the perfection of Nature, and the want of it which occasions every work of Art to be imperfect.[167]

In Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, *varietas* produces *copia* (abundance) in speech – a word that comes from the same semantic field. As the classical philologist William Fitzgerald puts it:

> It is essential for an orator to be able to put it in another way (and another, and another...) so that he can be sure that in any given situation he will not dry up. But *varietas* in this sense is not just a decorative matter; it is rather the means of unfolding the dimensions of a thought and proving its worthiness (*dignitas*), for this depends on its capacity to expand. Without variety, this unfolding proves nothing about the potency of the thought or the speaker. It is mere loquacity.[168]

Several aspects from the history of *varietas* are still relevant in modern times. The advice that *varietas* be 'the means of unfolding the dimensions of a thought' for instance still seems to be an appropriate answer to complaints about the emptiness of virtuosity (both in verbal and musical languages) in much later times. Also, the idea of God as a creator of variety underwent a very interesting transformation when the task of an artist was no longer seen in imitating nature, but in becoming an almost god-like creator himself. It is often assumed that after Kant, Romanticism equipped the artist (*in casu* the musician) with characteristics that were based upon the theological dogma of the *creatio ex nihilo.*[169] On basis of what was written above, however, this picture may be nuanced: if indeed an 'aesthetics of variety' was prevalent even after Kant, if indeed the notions of *natura ludens* and variety were essential ideas in nineteenth-century culture, this would create room for a different view on the role of the nineteenth-century musician: neither a god-like genius-composer, nor a slave-performer, but a partner in dialogue with the score.

Concepts such as *varietas* and *copia* were transmitted by Renaissance humanism. Erasmus' highly influential treatise on rhetoric *De utraque verborum ac rerum copia* (1512) gives stunning examples of variety in formulation by providing several hundreds of alternatives to the same sentence.[170] Here a comparison with Ganassi's diminutions (→ section 3.2) is unavoidable. In this way *varietas* became an important notion in early modern eloquence, a notion that remained vivid until the present day.

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[167] Quoted in Fitzgerald, W.: op. cit., 38.

[168] Fitzgerald, W.: op. cit., 48.

[169] Cf. Benson, B.E.: 'In the Beginning, There Was Improvisation.' In: *Improvisation: musicological, musical and philosophical aspects* (Orgelpark Research Report 3/1). Amsterdam, 2013.

[170] Erasmus: *De Utraque verborum ac rerum copia.* ('On copia of words and ideas'); trans. D.B. King and H.D. Rix). Milwaukee, 1963; 38-42.

It shows for instance in a love for rich formulation, avoiding the repetition of words, exploiting synonyms and elegantly constructed sentences. In this connection the twentieth century witnessed a contrasting development that consciously deviated from the rich nineteenth-century eloquence, for instance in the work of Franz Kafka and other authors of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* [New Objectivity] or in the more journalistic style of Ernest Hemingway. That variety as a still existing rhetoric ideal may sometimes clash with a more modernistic aesthetics, is illustrated beautifully in Milan Kundera's essay *Les testaments trahis* (1993).[171] Kundera describes how the deliberately sparse language of Kafka gets distorted in several French translations that replace repeated words in the original text with diverse synonyms: the translator wanted to render Kafka's very personal language into 'beautiful' (= varied) French.

Already Joannes Tinctoris transferred *varietas* to music in his *Liber de Arte contrapuncti* (1477).[172] That the idea certainly played a role in renaissance performance is clearly seen in Riccardo Rogniono's introduction to the second part of his *Passaggi* (1592):

> Eccovi dunque nella Prima Parte una Raccolta delle Ricercate sopra gl'Instromenti; laquale si può dir ragioneuolmente, che sia il condimento del Suono, e l'ornamento della Musica, come che senza questa varietà di Passaggi siano rincresceuoli le repliche frequenti anco di questo come d'ogn'altra cosa all'orecchio. E percio, se talhora nel Diminuere u'occorreranno spesso l'istesse Cadenze, douranno con questa diuersità (ch'habbiamo à questo sine posta) di Diminutioni, ò altri Passaggi farsi prattichi, & anco con le loro Ricercate s'accompagnino differentemente.[173]
>
> [You see, then, in the first part [of this book (BM)] a collection of *ricercate* for instrumental use, which one can reasonably say is the seasoning of the sound and the ornament of music, such that *without this variety of* passaggi *the frequent repetitions even of this, as of every other thing, are displeasing to the ear.* Since, if sometimes in diminutions there will sometimes happen often the same cadences, you will need to become practiced in this diversity of diminutions and *passaggi*, which I have printed for this purpose, and also you may accompany yourselves differently with your *ricercate.*] (transl. Sion M. Honea, my italics.)

Even though the exact musical meaning of the term *varietas* may remain slightly unclear,[174] it seems not unreasonable to see ornamental improvisation as an important manifestation in music. Türk also mentions the term in connection with ornamentation in his *Klavierschule.* In a footnote he writes about variety:

---

[171] Kundera, M.: *Les testaments trahis.* Translation in: *Over de romankunst.* Amsterdam, 2012; 195-208.
[172] Cf. Luko, A. : 'Tinctoris on Varietas'. *Early Music History*, vol. 27 (2008); 99-136.
[173] Rogniono, R.: *Passaggi per potersi essercitare nel diminuire terminatamente.* Part 2: *Il vero modo di diminuere.* Venice, 1594; [1].
[174] Markovska, N.: *Varietas: a Stylistic Virtue* (2013). https://sotonmusic18c.wordpress.com/2013/06/14/varietas-as-a-stylistic-virtue-in-rhetoric/.

> Einheit und Mannigfaltigkeit können in einem Werke der Kunst gar wohl neben einander bestehen, und sind beide gleich nothwendig. Die Einheit erlaubt nicht, muntere und traurige Gedanken nebeneinander zu stellen; die Mannigfaltigkeit hingegen verlangt Abwechslung solcher Gedanken, die einerley Charakter haben. Einheit im Mannigfaltigen, oder das Mannigfaltige der Einheit untergeordnet, ist daher ein sehr wesentlicher Theil der Schönheit.[175]
>
> [Unity and variety are able to exist quite well next to each other in a work of art and both are equally necessary. Unity does not allow the juxtaposition of lively and sorrowful ideas; variety, on the other hand, requires the alternation of thoughts that have a similar character. Unity in variety, or variety subordinated to unity, is therefore an essential quality of beauty.[176]]

Türk's expression 'Einheit im Mannigfaltigen' echoes Horace's *concordia discors*,[177] and seems to foreshadow a classicist sense of balance – all the same with *varietas* as one of the poles! In part 2 of this study, this very notion of variety is a common thread. In order to investigate manifestations of ornamental improvisation and of relative improvisation in general, the continuation of the *varietas* concept in musical performance after 1800 will be examined; the situation during the pre-classical and Viennese classical periods serves as a springboard.

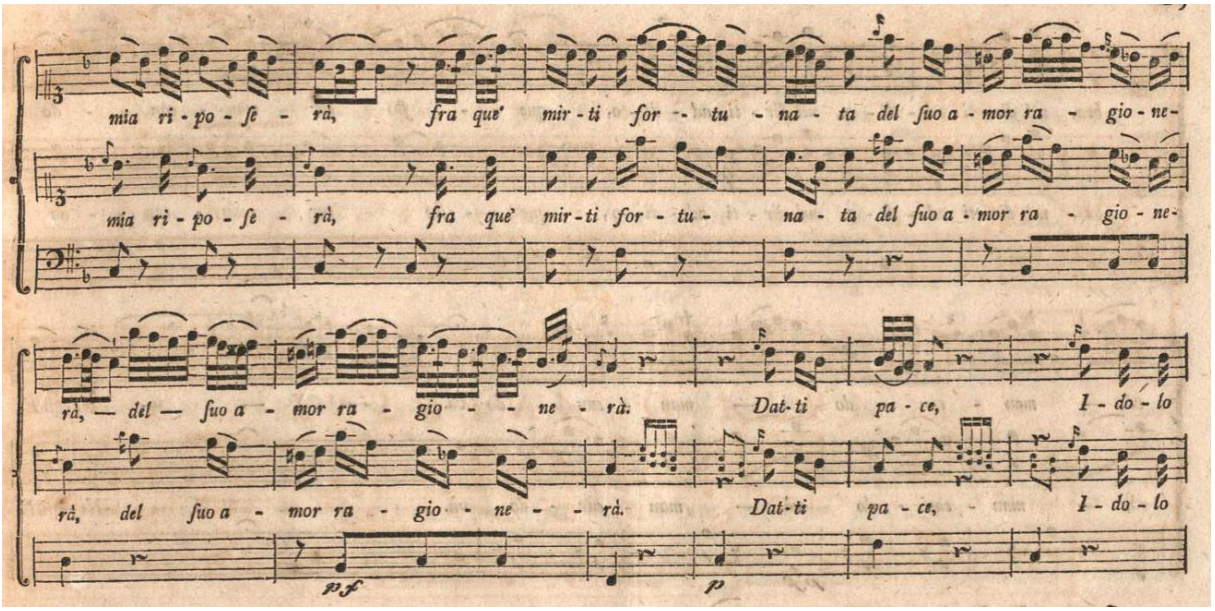
## 3.5 Ornamental *copia* in late-eighteenth-century music

Eighteenth-century treatises frequently warn the reader that the amount of *willkührliche Manieren* should not be exaggerated, though pedagogic publications of embellished music such as Johann Adam Hiller's *6 italienische Arien*[178] do show abundant ornamentation (in this particular case explicitly disapproved of by Türk). Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach stresses the requirement that the embellishment should be in accordance with the *Inhalt* (the content) of the piece;[179] other authors often use the more familiar term *Affekt.*

This advice sounds obvious enough for a modern reader: most musicians concerned with stylistic accuracy would be reluctant to spoil the *Affekt* of a tender *Adagio* with a wild cadenza. Indeed, to a modern musician, an eighteenth-century author warning his readers of any excess of embellishments might be like a confirmation of what most of us already thought. However, on a more subtle level things are less simple. What does it mean, for instance, when in an aria of Pasquale Anfossi, where the poet speaks about the soul resting in the Elysian fields, Hiller adds ornaments as in the example

[175] Türk, D,G.: op. cit., 311.
[176] Türk, D.G.: *School of Clavier Playing* (trans. R.H. Haggh). Lincoln, 1982; 498.
[177] Horace: Epistulae, I.12.19.
[178] Hiller, J.A.: *Sechs italiänische Arien verschiedener Componisten mit der Art sie zu singen und zu verändern.* Leipzig, 1778.
[179] Bach, C.Ph.E.: *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1753). Facsimile reprint: Wiesbaden, 1986; 117.

below? Many modern singers would probably think that the peaceful atmosphere is spoiled by the rather virtuosic ornamentation.

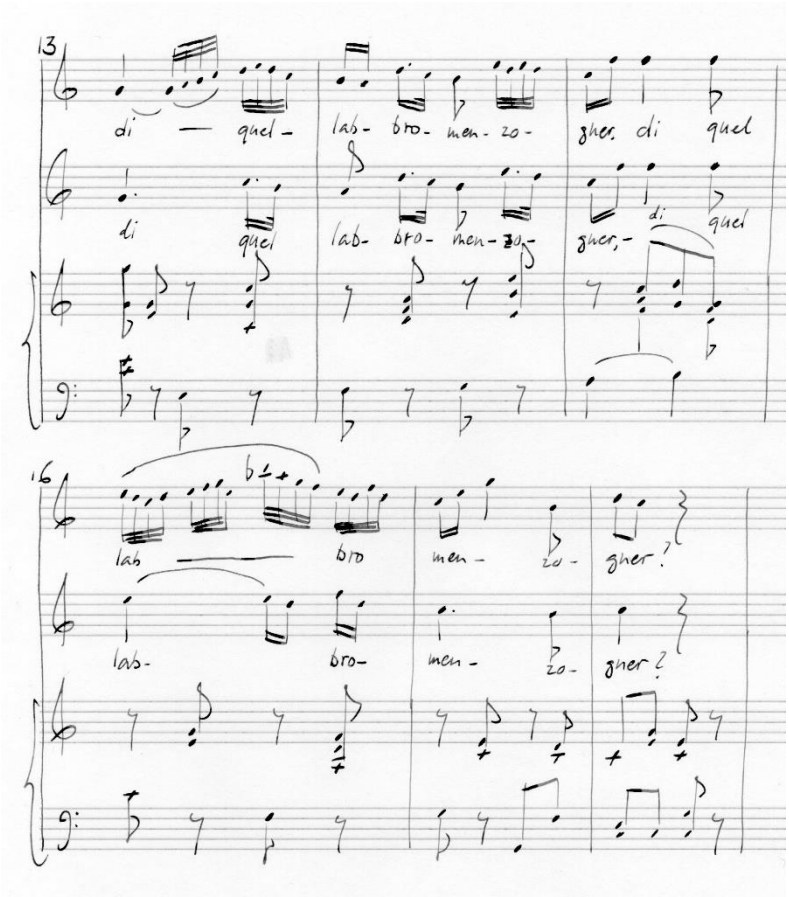



*Example 3.5.1 J.A. Hiller, 6 Arien, no. 3; the middle and lower staves show Anfossi's score, the top staff gives Hiller's suggestions for ornamentation.*

This, however, can be a pitfall. One should not rule out the idea that the degree of ornamentation in eighteenth-century music making could have been considerably higher than is often assumed today, even by many 'historically informed' performers. This includes not only the *willkürliche* [arbitrary or optional], but also the *wesentliche* [essential] embellishments. Some contemporary copies of Johann Sebastian Bach's three-part *Sinfonien* for keyboard for instance include added symbols for ornamentation to a degree that would seem very unlikely today.[180] A very interesting source is also the organ clock from the Esterhazy palace that contains a cylinder with original interpretations of short pieces of Joseph Haydn, prepared during Haydn's stay with the Esterhazy's. Here, too, the amount of little ornaments (including arpeggios on organ!) definitely exceeds the expectations of a modern listener (→ chapter 7.14). The most stunning examples of copious ornamentation however can be found in contemporary (notated) variants of opera arias that contain many *willkührliche Manieren*. Karin and Eugen Ott compiled a wealth of material in their monumental *Handbuch der Verzierungskunst.* A very interesting example is the ornamented version of *Dove sono,* the aria of the sad *contessa* in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, which was found in the performance material of the 1791 premiere of the opera in Donaueschingen. The embellishments may have been written out for amateur singers (*dilettanti*) who took part in the performance but were not skilled enough to

[180] Reproduced in the Wiener Urtext edition of the *Inventionen und Sinfonien* (U. Leisinger, ed.); Wien, 2007.

improvise the ornaments[181] (the same explanation is sometimes put forward for the many cadenzas Mozart composed for his piano concertos, see chapter 10.4). The top line provides the ornamented version:



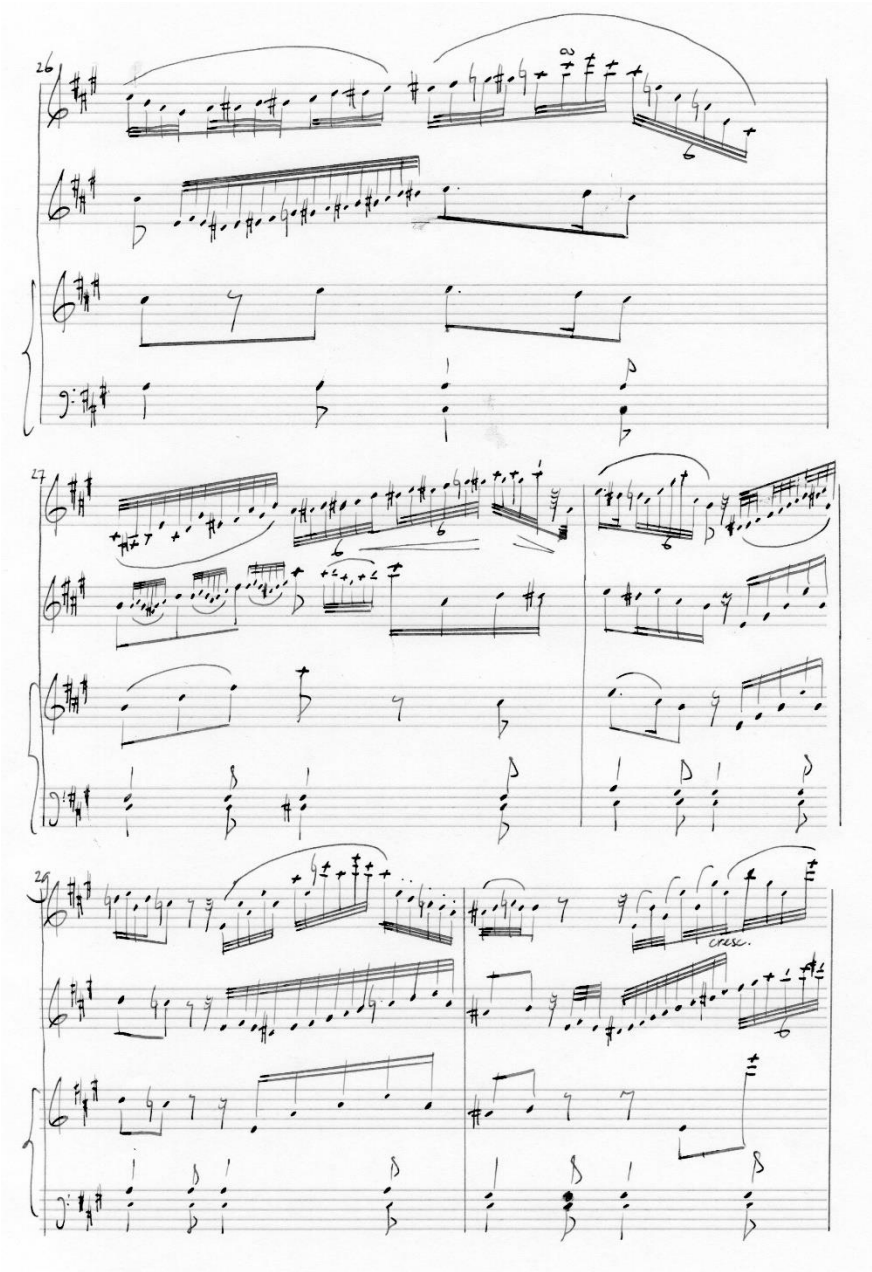

*Example 3.5.2 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Dove sono, m. 13-20. After Ott, K. and E.: Handbuch der Verzierungskunst, Vol. 3. München, 1998; 241.*

Surely this piece is often regarded as an example of Mozart's melodic pureness and simplicity, an instance of the unearthly beauty of the Apollonian Mozart, dearly loved by masses of people. There seems to be a tension between this now familiar idea and the suggested sounding reality of the performance in Donaueschingen – and this amount of ornamentation is absolutely no exception for the end of the eighteenth century! The contrast brings to mind Kathleen Carlton's conclusion regarding modern performers of Mozart – specifically, that 'most present day conductors and performers are likely to err on the side of discretion'.

Especially the slow movements in piano concertos of Mozart can strongly resemble an opera aria in disguise. In this case there is evidence that in Mozart's day a degree of ornamentation that is virtually unimaginable today (despite the efforts of Robert Levin to convince the music world that improvised ornamentation and cadenzas belong to Mozart's style) must have been in fact the norm.

[181] Ott, K. and E.: *Handbuch der Verzierungskunst in der Musik*, Vol. 3. München, 1998; 220, 221.

The Ott *Handbuch* gives a stunning example of two contemporary notated variants of the famous *Adagio* from the piano concerto in A major, KV 488. The top line gives the version of the composer / pianist Philipp Karl Hoffmann (1769-1842).




Example 3.5.3 W.A. Mozart, Adagio from Piano Concerto KV 488, m. 26-30. After Ott, K. and E.: Handbuch der Verzierungskunst, Vol. 6. München, 2000; 315.

Alfred Brendel wrote about this variant:

> The embellishments by (...) Philipp Karl Hoffmann do not even try to follow Mozart's example; they are foreign to his style and frequently overcrowded with notes to such a degree that, to get all of them in, the relatively flowing tempi of Mozart's middle movements must be pulled back to largo. The

> additions by (...) Hoffmann do make us aware that the 'gusto' of performance style could change quite quickly and drastically.[182]

This is a strong opinion that most likely will be shared by many modern lovers of this extraordinary piece. However, the second line in example 3.5.3 stems from another ornamented version that can be directly linked to Mozart! Most likely, the manuscript was owned by Mozart and written 'in an improvisatory way' by a student, possibly Barbara Ployer, for whom he wrote several piano concertos.[183] It seems unlikely that a change of 'gusto' can explain these richly ornamented versions, how little they may conform to modern taste. Perhaps it is rather our loss of 'gusto' for variety as a virtue in music making that can explain our difficulties with a historical performance tradition that itself can hardly be denied.

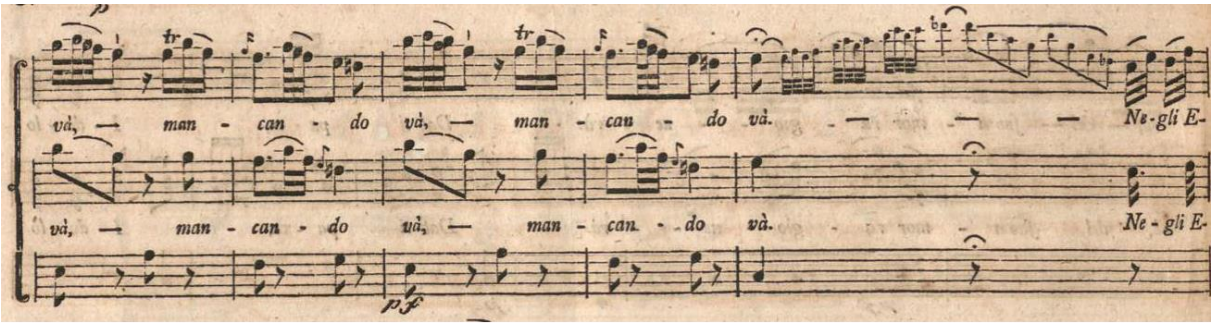
### 3.6 The rhetorical function of ornamentation

Trying to align rich ornamentation as it has been handed down from the later eighteenth century, with the *Affekt* of the passage where it occurs, might turn out to be a dead end. After all, it is questionable to what extent the Baroque *Affektenlehre* is still applicable to the galant and early classical styles. It is more fruitful to explore the relationship between extempore ornamentation and musical loci communes. On the level of a melody, the type of locus that comes to the fore is that of musical phrases, of melodic gestures. Eighteenth-century composition treatises such as Heinrich Christoph Koch's *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (1782) typically identify 'phrases' as melodic units, comparable to the fragments of a spoken sentence. Incisions in a melody (comparable to e.g. a colon in a sentence) are usually marked by different types of cadences – something that was still described in the nineteenth century by Anton Reicha in his *Traité de haute composition musicale* (1824).[184] It should be noted that this eighteenth-century use of the term 'phrase' differs from the later analytical meaning; in fact, it is more similar to the 'beat' or 'bit' in Stanislavski's theory of drama, as it will be elaborated in chapter 5.

Indeed, rich ornamentation as seen in Hiller's edition of Agossi's aria never blurs the phrase structure of the music: analysis shows that all incisions are acknowledged, and never is one obscured by ornamentation. Even when, as sometimes happens, ornamentation connects two phrases by means of a bridge, the cadence itself is not affected as the goal of the first phrase. In the example below, for instance, Hiller adds a short cadenza in the last bar; this cadenza is principally an elegant flourish of the kind that Mozart referred to as an *Eingang* (→ chapter 10). This cadenza leaves the

[182] Brendel, A.: 'A Mozart player gives himself advice.' In: *Music, Sense and Nonsense: Collected Essays and Lectures.* German edition: *Über Musik.* München, 2005; 20.
[183] Beck, H.: *Neue Mozart Ausgabe, Kritischer Bericht, Serie V, Band 7.* Kassel, 1964; g/8-g/17.
[184] Reicha, A.: *Traité de haute composition musicale* (German translation by Carl Czerny), vol. 2. Vienna, 1832; 362-370.

previous phrase (i.e. the last time 'mancando và') undisturbed; its 'function' is to connect the last tone of that phrase to the first one of the next (starting on 'Negli'; ex. 3.6.1). In doing so, I argue that Hiller's *Eingang* does not blur the incision between the two phrases; rather it does the opposite: by stopping the movement of the piece, the cadenza is *senza tempo* and in this way draws the attention of the listener to this prominent moment in the piece, namely the return to the main key and the recapitulation of the beginning.




*Example 3.6.1 J.A. Hiller, 6 Arien, no. 3.*

What happens in between the melodic incisions (i.e. within a phrase) is that the 'direction' of the melodic gestures is intensified by the ornamentation: the embellishment 'amplifies' (→ section 3.4) the effect of movement, either by making the distance (the range) bigger, or by increasing the sense of moving somewhere by speeding up the rhythm. In short, this could be an answer to the question of the purpose of ornamentation: late-eighteenth-century embellishments tend to intensify the melodic gestures by intensifying their sense of direction, and the search for variety in the ornamentation can be interpreted as a kind of musical eloquence in performance; ornaments support both *amplificatio* and *ornatus*.

### 3.7 Were embellishments improvised?

The first of the two questions that were asked at the end of section 3.2 (about the effect of ornamentation) gave rise to elaborations on the importance of rhetoric for musical performance. An answer to the second one will be formulated in this section. Did pre-1800 ornamentation indeed come into being in the moment of performing, in other words: was it 'improvised'? Today, many 'classical' musicians, especially those active in the field of early music, seem to consider ornamentation a primary instance of improvisation as such – an idea that is confirmed by the set-up of Ferand's anthology, as it was shown at the beginning of this chapter. However, historically the term 'improvising' (and related terms like *préluder* and *Fantasieren*, see chapter 8) was not used for extempore ornamentation; rather, the latter was seen as an aspect of 'performance'. To avoid jumping to conclusions however, two considerations have to be made.

a. An important aspect is the number of times that a piece was performed. It is the history of jazz music that provides an interesting experience here. Because the development of jazz largely coincided with the rise of recorded music, we have the possibility of comparing different versions of improvisations on the same tune by the same player. Analysis of performances by Louis Armstrong, for instance, shows that there are similarities between solos that he 'improvised' at different occasions across a long period in his career.[185] This process of settling (even though the solos were not notated) is just a natural thing that happens by virtue of musical and embodied memory. In fact, it would have given Armstrong a lot of trouble to *avoid* any similarities. This phenomenon matches experiences of *basso continuo*-players. A figured bass usually offers many possibilities of realisation, some of which are more to the taste of the player and according to stylistic considerations than others. When a piece is performed many times by one performer, for instance Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* that in some countries is programmed extensively every year before Easter, the harpsichordist or organist tends to fall into similar 'solutions' for specific passages. Also here, it can be difficult and even tiresome to obsessively try to be different every time.

b. Whereas the previous consideration was focusing on the number of performances, there is also the preparation for a performance and its character to take into account. Starting with the latter: during the second half of the eighteenth century, public concerts with instrumental music as we know them were rare. Chamber music and keyboard compositions, as they seem to be the focus of most treatises mentioned before, were primarily performed in more intimate settings, and enjoyed by listeners and players alike. It is mainly the solo concertos and the symphonies that were played for a larger audience. As for the preparation, it seems to be likely that compositions were much more often sight-read than nowadays. It should not be forgotten that at the time of the pre-classical period, performing composed music still equalled performing contemporary music. The stylistic competence and the virtuosity in the particular type of music a player was familiar with, must have been of a level a modern classical musician can only dream of. Nikolaus Harnoncourt describes in *Musik als Klangrede* the competence of musicians in the orchestra of Johann Strauss, who knew perfectly well how to play a waltz or a polka – and therefore had little difficulty interpreting Strauss' score.[186] This also draws attention to the importance of musical genres, a topic that will be elaborated further in chapter 12.

Summing up: given these circumstances, the question whether embellishments were improvised is typically a modern one, asked within an environment where compositions are meticulously

[185] Personal communication with jazz historian Wouter Turkenburg; see for instance Armstrong's different recordings of 'West End Blues'. Other examples are recordings of 'Body and Soul' by Coleman Hawkins (tenor saxophone) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sul_9BcgOOI vs. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfJ5UtPoMcg, or of John Coltrane (tenor sax) playing 'My Favorite Things'.

[186] Harnoncourt, N.: *Musik als Klangrede.* München, 1985; 35.

practised until the performance is as fully controlled as possible. When an eighteenth-century performance was sight-read, the embellishments naturally would be (as we call it) improvised (which certainly did not exclude the use of standardised formulas); when a piece was practiced beforehand, the ornamentation might have tended to develop in a more specific direction. As mentioned above, adding embellishments was not seen as a form of *Fantasieren*; it was seen as *Vortrag* (performance) – in rhetorical terms: embellishments don't belong to *inventio*, but to *elocutio* or *pronuntiatio*.

Therefore, the (modern) question whether embellishments in the late eighteenth century were improvised cannot be answered in general because it depended on the circumstances. The degree of the 'unforeseen', the un-premeditated, must have differed with the situation, which makes the eighteenth-century classification of ornamenting as *Vortrag* a much more sensible one. What makes our preoccupation with whether or not something can be called improvisation so difficult is that it distracts from a much more important and fundamental phenomenon: the disappearance of *varietas* as a stylistic virtue in music making. This preoccupation betrays a focus on unity in our thinking about performance because improvisation is seen as the not-planned, something that is different from 'normal' performance. As Nikolaus Harnoncourt observed, the desire of most listeners today is to hear often the pieces of music they like, 'by which we have reached a ridiculously primitive stage of reception. (...) We are like children, who want to hear the same fairy-tale again and again, because we remember specific beautiful moments that we enjoyed at the first time listening' (my translation).[187] A similar focus on sameness characterises music making itself. When we keep thinking in terms of unity only, we leave variety to the composer – and in this way unwillingly maintain the late-twentieth-century *Urtext*-paradigm. Making musical performance more improvisatory in the first place means opening up towards an aesthetics of variety. After all, isn't it ironic that many would object, with Brendel, to 'fiddling' with the beautiful *Adagio* from KV 488 exactly in a time when this music is more widely available than ever before? Isn't this indeed a 'primitive stage of reception'? In my view, the old idea that a performance should sound as if the musician is conceiving the music on the spot, even when he actually isn't, might sometimes be even more important than the question to what extent a performance is (or should be) actually improvised.

After these preliminary thoughts on ornamentation, the journey through nineteenth-century musical landscapes will really commence in the next chapter. The three central questions are: What happened? How were nineteenth-century musicians trained? How can we acquire these skills today? In chapter 4, I first turn towards early-nineteenth-century Italian opera.

[187] Harnoncourt, N.: op. cit., 30.

# Chapter 4. Improvised ornamentation in Bel canto

## 4.1 The influence of bel canto

The twentieth- or twenty-first-century perspective on pre-1800 music often shows a bias with respect to the importance that is attached to instrumental (as opposed to vocal) music. The majority of the compositions from that period which acquired canonical status in later times was written for instruments, or, like Bach's passions, contains a very substantial instrumental part. *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*, for instance, is generally seen as a paragon of Baroque counterpoint, and until quite recently even served as a pars pro toto for Baroque music in general, especially in music analytical circles: analysing Bach almost always means analysing his instrumental fugues. This view is at odds with the circumstances in musical life at Bach's time, when it was rather vocal music (read: opera) that occupied a central position. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, a process of emancipation of instrumental music had started, which however should be seen as a counterpoint to the dominance of opera, rather than as a justification of our exclusive focus on the instrumental repertoire of that time. The situation of the *Concerts spirituels* in Paris, featuring instrumental and religious music, might serve as an example here: these concerts took place only during religious holidays, when the opera was closed. Also during the nineteenth century, the importance of opera remained very high, at least in terms of audience participation. The shifting of the balance from vocal to instrumental music happened at different speeds in different nations, Germany becoming the cradle of the development of symphonic music, whereas in France and Italy opera remained dominant for a long time. In France, the *Société Nationale de Musique*, intended to promote new French music and break the hegemony of opera, was founded as late as 1871. In Italy, opera can be said to have remained the most important musical art form until the death of Giacomo Puccini in 1924. In short, there is good reason to start this study's discussion of an improvisatory approach to scores with vocal music.

The international influence of Italian opera and the bel canto style of singing has been immense, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century. North of the Alps, this musical style was in the first place represented by Gioachino Rossini, whose 'fame surpassed that of any previous composer, as did, for a long time, the popularity of his work'.[188] From 1824 to 1829, Rossini was musical director of the *Théâtre-Italien* in Paris, a city where he was to settle permanently in 1855. In those days, Paris was regarded the capital of opera. When Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy visited Italy in 1831, he complained that all great singers such as Lablache, David, Lalande and Pisaroni had left the country and were singing in Paris.[189] The highly influential Paris Conservatoire was directed by

[188] Taruskin, R.: *Oxford History of Western Music,* Vol. 3. Oxford, 2005; 13.
[189] Mendelssohn Bartholdy, F.: *Briefe einer Reise.* Zürich, 1958; 102.

Rossini's compatriot (and friend) Luigi Cherubini from 1822 to 1842. Cherubini made the Italian school of singing the 'officially sanctioned method at that venerable institution'.[190] In Germany, Rossini's popularity was enormous as well, much to the distress of Robert Schumann. However, Schumann's father-in-law, the famous piano pedagogue Friedrich Wieck, advised German composers to learn from the Italians how to write for the voice in a way that would not 'destroy' it. Wieck wrote this in an educational book with a title that seems peculiar today, but actually stands in a tradition: *Clavier und Gesang* (piano and singing).[191] Ignaz Franz Xaver Kürzinger's *Getreuer Unterricht zum Singen mit Manieren, und die Violin zu spielen* (1763, reprints until in the nineteenth century) is based upon a similar combination. Whereas modern teachers would consider such professions too disparate to combine in one tutorial (even if they would feel competent), this was less unusual in the nineteenth century. Kürzinger wrote:

> Alles, was man einem Singer saget, [soll] auch einem jeden Instrumentalisten nach seinem Art gesaget seyn.[192]
>
> [Everything that holds true for a singer, also holds true for every instrumentalist in his own way.]

Also Wieck saw bel canto as the basis of any music-making.[193] Sigismund Thalberg's *L'Art du chant appliqué au piano* (published in the same year), a collection of keyboard arrangements of vocal music with a strong emphasis on bel canto, is founded on a similar view. The fusing together of vocal and instrumental music will be further explored in chapter 5. For now, it seems reasonable to assume that the importance of vocal music was not merely a matter of audience numbers. Vocality represented an intrinsic value in music in general.

### 4.2 Bel canto performance practice as an example of an improvisatory approach

In his book *Belcanto*, Peter Berne characterises the Italian opera of the first half of the nineteenth century as a continuation of Baroque performance traditions with Romantic literary content.[194] I would like to follow here Berne's use of the term bel canto for the Italian opera tradition of the first half of the nineteenth century, as exemplified in the operas of Rossini, Bellini and the early Verdi. An important aspect of this tradition, Berne writes, is the contingent status of the musical score. In a typical early-nineteenth-century bel canto opera, the solo singer was the unquestioned centre of the performance, and at least as 'responsible' (to use a term employed by musicologist Peter Schubert) for the music as the composer. With the score, the composer delivered a skeleton – often written under enormous time pressure. Everybody, including the composer, expected the singer to take this

[190] Stark, J.: *Bel Canto: a History of Vocal Pedagogy*. Toronto, 2003; 4.
[191] Wieck, Fr.: *Clavier und Gesang*. Leipzig, 1853; 46.
[192] Kürzinger, I.F.X.: *Getreuer Unterricht zum Singen mit Manieren, und die Violin zu spielen*. Augsburg, 1763; 3.
[193] Wieck, Fr.: op. cit.; V.
[194] Berne, P.: *Belcanto. Historische Aufführungspraxis in der italienischen Oper von Rossini bis Verdi*. Worms, 2008.

score as a starting point for a unique performance, different every night. It was perfectly normal for a singer to adapt the *tessitura* of a solo part to his or her voice, to transpose an aria if needed, to change a part in order to make it more effective, and never to repeat a phrase exactly like the time before. Nobody would be surprised when a star singer would demand from the composer an alternative for an aria that was not to her liking, or when she would insert into an opera performance her favourite aria from a completely different opera or even, like Maria Malibran in Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'amore*, of her own making.[195] A definitive score did not exist. This was so in eighteenth-century Italian opera, and it continued to be during the first half of the nineteenth century. What some would denounce as mere conservatism actually constitutes an enduring and well-defined performance tradition with a corpus of interpretational habits that were not only expected from the singer by the audience, but also by the composer. One aspect of bel canto performance practice which is of particular interest here is the love for ornamentation. In this respect, too, it can be seen as a continuation of Baroque practices as described in the previous chapter. As Domenico Corri wrote:

> No one can be called a singer of merit, but he who (...) executes with a variety of graces of his own, which his skill inspires him with unpremeditatedly: knowing that a professor of eminence cannot, if he would, continually repeat an air with the self-same passages and graces.[196]

The bel canto tradition, which occupied a leading position in the early-nineteenth-century music world, seems to constitute a clear example of an improvisatory approach to scores. The present chapter aims to analyse historical evidence of this improvisatory attitude; it also discusses how singers were able to apply unpremeditated ornamentation, and how modern performers may enrich their performances in a similar way.

### 4.3 Sources of bel canto ornamentation

What we know about ornamentation practices in bel canto is mainly based upon two types of sources: singing treatises and singer's notebooks.

Many famous singers (often *castrati*) were also highly sought-after teachers, and wrote methodological works that reflected their view on the teaching of their art. Some of these books remained influential for a very long time. Pier Francesco Tosi's *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni o sieno osservazioni sopra il canto figurato* (Bologna 1723), for example, had been in use for more than a century. It appeared in many translations, sometimes with added commentary, as in Johann Friedrich Agricola's *Anleitung zur Gesangskunst* (1757). Even without explicit reference to specific

[195] Heimgartner, M.: *Maria – Cecilia Bartoli.* Liner notes to Decca 4759077 (2007); 34.

[196] Corri, D.: *The Singers Preceptor.* London, [1810]; 9. Interestingly, Corri begins his treatise with a discussion of ornamentation. The Italian Corri was a student of Nicola Porpora, and moved to Edinburgh and later London to become an opera conductor, singing master, impresario and music publisher, and in this way contributed to the international influence of bel canto.

venerable authors, singing methods often show strong similarities in structure and didactic approach, thereby exemplifying the power of tradition in bel canto. The founding of the Paris Conservatoire in 1795 had a huge influence on pedagogical standardisation, and led towards an increase in the publication of methods, which were often published by the conservatory itself.

Though these books are sometimes explicitly addressed to voice students, for example Laure Cinti-Damoreau's *Méthode de chant*,[197] they are not meant for self-tuition such as some instrumental instruction works of the time, notably Carl Czerny's *Briefe über den Unterricht auf dem Pianoforte*.[198] This is not surprising because, as it is often stressed in singing methods, the role of the tutor is crucial. It is typical for vocal training that vocal technique cannot be developed separately from the voice itself; moreover, singers cannot hear their own voice as others hear it.

It is not always clear whether singing methods are to be understood as having a prescriptive or descriptive nature. In general, any teaching-method is prescriptive, but the fact that in bel canto methods much explanation happens by way of examples (especially with respect to ornamentation) brings in a descriptive element, thus blurring the difference. Moreover, most singing methods are also an artistic and pedagogical creed of the author. In this way methodical works can, with caution, be taken as an account of an established practice.

For this research, some two dozen singing methods have been investigated, mainly from the first half of the nineteenth century and all stemming from Italian bel canto or its sphere of influence. The most comprehensive and famous one is undoubtedly *École de García: traité complet de l'art du chant*, published in two volumes in 1840 / 1847 by Manuel García Jr. Manuel Patricio Rodríguez García was the son of the famous tenor Manuel del Pópulo Vicente Rodriguez García, and the brother of Maria Malibran and Pauline Viardot: a rare concentration of vocal stardom, representing the summit of Italian bel canto. Stunning examples of ornamentation can also be found in Laure Cinti-Damoreau's *Méthode de chant* (1849). Cinti-Damoreau was a French soprano who studied in Paris and became the favourite soprano of Rossini, who wrote for her the leading female roles in all of his Parisian operas.[199] A more methodical approach to ornamentation is shown by Luigi Lablache in his *Méthode complète de chant* (1840); finally, the German composer Peter von Winter dedicated the entire fourth part of his *Vollständige Singschule* (1825) to examples of ornamentation.

These sources, and many other ones not mentioned specifically here, were either written by singers from the world of Italian bel canto (who often travelled extensively), or by foreigners whom they had taught in Paris (such as Cinti-Damoreau) or occasionally elsewhere (such as Peter von Winter, who

[197] Cinti-Damoreau, L.: *Méthode de chant, composée pour ses classes du Conservatoire.* Paris, 1849.
[198] Czerny, C.: *Briefe über den Unterricht auf dem Pianoforte, vom Anfange bis zur Ausbildung, als Anhang zu jeder Clavierschule.* Wien, [ca. 1830].
[199] Caswell, A.: 'Mme Cinti-Damoreau and the Embellishment of Italian Opera in Paris: 1820-1845'. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Autumn, 1975); 462.

had studied with Antonio Salieri). Despite the varied origins of these methods, they show many similarities, which accords with the homogeneousness of bel canto tradition; it is therefore justified to treat them as one corpus of source material. This expressly includes eighteenth-century methodological books that were still seen as normative after 1800.

It seems to have been a habit for singers to write down their own ornamentations to arias. In Benedetto Marcello's satirical pamphlet *Il teatro alla moda* (1720), the author 'recommends' that the *prima donna* asks her teacher 'to write for her all embellishments in a book especially provided for that purpose, and she will carry that book with her no matter where she goes'.[200] The still very funny text collects hyperboles by the dozen, and the pun here seems to be that the empty-headed *cantatrice* completely depends on her instructor for any decisions of artistic importance. However, such notebooks did exist, even in the nineteenth century. Laure Cinti-Damoreau wrote her variations down in a collection of notebooks that are being kept today in the Lilly Library at Indiana University (Bloomington). An anonymous example of a singer's notebook is the manuscript *Foà-Giordano 631* in the *Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino* (probably around 1835).[201] A well-known collection that is still in print is *Variazioni – Cadenze – Tradizioni*, compiled by vocal coach Luigi Ricci in the 1930's, though most examples are from a later period than the proper *belcanto*. Finally, the variants Rossini wrote himself are very interesting, for instance those for the part of Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*.[202]

## 4.4 *Changements*

### *Changing the melody*

In the second volume of the *École de García*, Manuel García discusses in great detail the *changements* or *Veränderungen* – that is, changes to the vocal line as composed, to be applied by the singer. This category includes ornamentation, but also changes with different purposes; García writes that it can be 'necessary' for various reasons to modify your part. Some of these reasons are bewildering for a modern singer. It might be, García writes, that the tessitura of a part does not match the voice of the singer, or that the style of writing does not correspond with his or her vocal possibilities, e.g. by being too declamatory or too much filled with coloraturas.[203] In such cases the singer should not hesitate to adapt the vocal line, 'raising or lowering some passages, simplifying or embellishing others, in order

[200] Marcello, B.: 'Il teatro alla moda – part I' (translated by Reinhard G. Pauly). *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Jul., 1948); 394.
[201] Moeckli, L.: 'Abbellimenti o fioriture: Further Evidence of Creative Embellishment in and beyond the Rossinian Repertoire.' In: *Beyond Notes: Improvisation in Western Music in the 18th and 19th centuries*, ed. Rudolf Rasch. Turnhout, 2011; 285.
[202] Rossini, G.: *Il barbiere di Siviglia.* Critical edition, edited by Patricia B. Brauner. Kassel, 2008; 503-508.
[203] García, M.: *École de García,* part 2. French / German edition; Mainz, n.d.; 53-54.

to suit them to the power and character of his vocal capability'.[204] Today, the situation is very different: usually, a singer is cast for a part on basis of her 'vocal capability', not the other way around. The modern practice not only reflects the change of status attached to the score, but also our deep reluctance to change anything to the notated musical text. Ironically, the basic intention of early nineteenth-century musicians was similar to ours: to touch and persuade the audience by utter artistic effectiveness. However, they took for granted that performers had developed their own styles, and that it is important to make optimal use of the vocal possibilities and characteristics of the singers – even if this meant changing the text.

### *Ornamentation as a manifestation of varietas*

From the perspective of improvisatory activity, however, it is the ornamental changes, rather than the adaptive ones, that occupy centre stage. They are a clear example of *varietas* in a musical performance (→ chapter 3.4). In his rendering of Tosi, Johann Friedrich Agricola calls *Mannigfaltigkeit* [variety] the *eigentliche[n] Endzweck* [real goal] of *Veränderungen*. (This remark supports his claim that it is even worse than a 'nauseating' abundance of ornaments when a singer uses the same ornament, 'probably learned by heart', twice.[205]) In the nineteenth century, a famous quotation comes from García, who writes:

> A musical idea, to be rendered interesting, should be varied, wholly or in part, every time it is repeated. Pieces whose beauty depends on recurrence of the theme, - as rondos, variations, polaccas, airs, and cavatinas with a second part, - are particularly adapted to receive changes. These changes should be introduced more abundantly, and with ever-heightening variety and accent; the exposition of the theme alone should be preserved in its simplicity. (...) The preceding rules are confirmed by the practice of the best composers, who never repeat a thought several times without introducing new effects, either for voice or instruments.[206]

Domenico Corri even thought that

> the repetition of words by the composer was no doubt intended for the purpose of giving the singer an opportunity for that display of ornament, which on their first utterance even common sense forbids, and it was from this consideration, that the Da-Capo in airs was first introduced, which allows the singer every latitude of ornament consistent with the rules of harmony, and the character of the composition.[207]

[204] García, M.: *École de García*. Transl.: García's New Treatise on the Art of Singing; revised edition. Boston, n.d.; 59.
[205] Agricola, J.Fr.: *Anleitung zur Singkunst*. Berlin, 1757.
[206] García, M.: García's New Treatise... Boston, n.d.; 60.
[207] Corri, D.: op. cit., 3.

The most obvious manifestation of variety was within the performance of one piece, as described above; variety was also expected in different performances by the same singer, and finally the performance styles of different singers were expected to differ from one another. As Corri writes:

> A singer, like an orator, will form to himself a peculiar distinguishing manner.[208]

Today, all types of variety mentioned here have virtually disappeared from classical music practice.[209]

It is true that during the bel canto period under consideration composers started to notate their own ornamentation in the score. However, it was not until Verdi that these embellishments were seen as a structural element of the composition; especially in Rossini and Donizetti they rather seem to be suggestions that could at will be replaced with alternatives by the singer, and that could be supplemented with additional ornamentation. Not only did singers invent their own variants, also Rossini himself suggested 'personalised' options to different singers.[210]

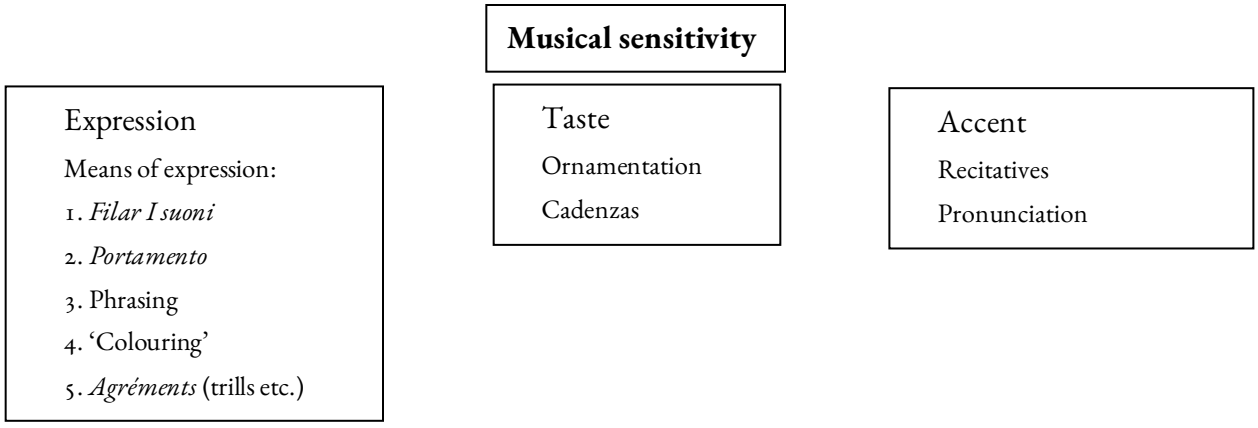
Musicological evidence of an ornamental practice in early-nineteenth-century bel canto singing is by now readily available thanks to scholars such as Austin Caswell and Laura Moeckli, though little seems to have permeated modern performances so far. One of the reasons for this might be that many singers simply don't know how to make their own *changements*, premeditated or not – an idea that is confirmed by my own experiences with singers, both students and professionals. Incidentally, a similar contradiction occurs with respect to instrumental music. After all, already in 1925 Heinrich Schenker concluded that 'our generation has wasted the art of diminution' (→ chapter 3.2), a situation he recognised both in composing and in performance. In this chapter some suggestions on how 'the art of diminution' can be regained in modern music-making will be made. However, there might be another reason for the modern reluctance to apply extensive ornamentation to bel canto repertoire. The issue of adding ornamentation is often approached separately, being something highly unusual within a classical musical world that strives for *Texttreue*. It might very well be true that most singers (and conductors!) find the insertion of ornaments into an otherwise conventional (and therefore modern) style of performance simply unconvincing[211] – and that is quite understandable. The leading performance style of today, aiming for rhythmic and melodic exactitude, striving for homogeneousness and unity, and seeking a rich and sustained sound, somehow combines badly with the lightness and even light-heartedness of *ad libitum* embellishments. In the end it is the opposition of the present-day aesthetics of unity on the one hand, and an aesthetics of variety, such as developed in the previous chapter, on the other. With regard to bel canto, it is even somewhat artificial to isolate ornamentation from all factors which together form

[208] Corri, D.: op. cit., 7.
[209] A jazz singer, however, would probably subscribe to all of them.
[210] Rossini, G.: *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (ed. Patricia B. Brauner). Kassel, 2008; 503-508.
[211] Cf. Gossett, Ph.: *Divas and Scholars*. Chicago, 2006; 291.

a complex that in nineteenth-century treatises is usually termed 'phrasing' (*Vortrag*, *phraser*, *arte di fraseggiare*; → chapter 3.6.). As I will show, the terms entailed much more than they do today because they could comprise an adaptation of or digression from the text. They more or less coincided with the area of *elocutio* in ancient rhetoric.

### *Lablache's taxonomy of musical 'elocutio' in bel canto*

The French-Italian bass singer Luigi Lablache put ornamentation in a more comprehensive framework. His *Méthode complete de chant* (1840) provides a clear overview of the elements of performance in a rationalist fashion. His organisation differs somewhat from García's, but it is clear that free ornamentation forms, so to speak, the tip of an interpretational iceberg that itself is too often neglected today. In Lablache's mapping of the terrain, the overarching term (the 'iceberg') is 'musical sensitivity' (*il sentimento musicale / le sentiment musical*).[212] It consists of three areas: (1) expression, (2) taste and (3) accent.




Lablache's taxonomy will serve as a point of departure for the discussion of the issue in section 4.5. In the *Méthode*, the section on expression occupies by far the largest number of pages (about two thirds of the book). Lablache mentions several means of expression which as such exceed the scope of this study. Since they provide ornamentation with a context though, they will be discussed briefly here, especially the 'colouring' of a melody. The section on taste in the *Méthode complète* is very short, but important for this study because it highlights the topic of ornamentation. Incidentally, it is not entirely clear whether Lablache sees ornamentation and cadenzas as subcategories of taste, or that these three aspects are meant to be on the same level. Lablache's concise treatment of the topic will be supplemented with material from other source texts. In particular, the subject 'phrase' will be of

[212] Lablache, L.: *Méthode complète de chant ou analyse raisonnée des principes d'après lesquels on doit diriger les études pour développer la voix, la rendre légère et pour former le goût.* [Paris, 1840.] Transl.: Metodo completo di canto / complete singing method. Milano, 1841 / reprint 1997; 101. The English term 'sensitivity' is taken from this edition.

fundamental importance to ornamentation as it is approached in this study, and even beyond to other forms of relative improvisation. Cadenzas will be discussed in chapter 10.2. Lablache's last section on *accent* suffers from a similar organisational lack of clarity; the topics of recitatives and pronunciation will be skipped here, but the *accent* itself is very important for an improvisational approach to scores.

## 4.5 Aspects of musical elocutio

### *a. Means of expression*

The first area of 'musical sensitivity' according to Lablache is termed 'expression'. The author quotes Rousseau's *Dictionnaire* – by then over 70 years old – for his explanation of the term expression:

> EXPRESSION: Qualité par laquelle le Musicien sent vivement & rend avec énergie toutes les idées qu'il doit rendre, & tous les sentimens qu'il doit exprimer.[213]
>
> [Expression is a quality through which the musician keenly feels and energetically renders all the ideas he must render and all the sentiments he must express.[214]]

It is important to note that expression here does not equal 'self-expression', as the term is often tacitly understood today.[215] For Rousseau it is the work, or rather the material, that requires the rendering of certain sentiments, and Lablache obviously sees it the same way. Also in this respect, the musician was like an actor. That this did not at all imply that the musician himself would remain untouched is once more clearly testified to by García:

> Expression is the great law of all art. Vain would be the efforts of an artist to excite the passions of his audience, unless he showed himself powerfully affected by the very feeling he wished to kindle; for emotion is purely sympathetic. It devolves, therefore, upon an artist to rouse and ennoble his feelings, since he can only appeal successfully to those analogous to his own. The human voice deprived of expression, is the least interesting of all instruments.[216]

Probably unconsciously, García echoes Quintilian here, who 1750 years before instructed the orator in similar terms:

[213] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictionnaire de musique*. Paris, 1768; 210.
[214] Lablache, L.: op. cit.; 101.
[215] Self-expression and freedom of expression became important notions in twentieth-century art movements such as Expressionism and COBRA, but also in the artistic education at primary and secondary schools, especially after World War II. In music, they are often connected with the idea of free improvisation, for instance on the website of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre: https://eamt.ee/en/departments/composition-and-improvisational-performing-arts/contemporary-improvisation/ .
[216] García, M.: García's New Treatise... Boston, n.d.; 67.

> Nothing but fire can burn, nothing but water can make us wet, and "nothing gives colour but what colour has." The first thing, then, is that those feelings should be strong in us which we want to be strong in the judge, and that we should ourselves be moved before we try to move others. [217]

Lablache writes that the quality of expression is something highly individual, but that it is essential to develop its means, the 'material of expression'. These means are for him: (1) to swell and diminish the intensity of the notes (*filar i suoni*); (2) to glide between pitches (*portamento*); (3) to phrase; (4) to 'colour'; (5) to perform the various ornaments of singing.

His detailed description of these elements depicts a way of singing that is altogether different from what most singers today probably grew up with. Indeed, there is evidence that around 1850, the singing style started to change to one that was more directed towards vocal strength, making more extensive use of the chest voice. The tenor Gilbert Duprez was famous for his innovative high c'', sung with the chest voice (*ut de poitrine*) – an effect that Rossini vehemently disapproved of: he compared it with 'the squawk of a capon whose throat is being cut'.[218] Rossini's ideal of vocalism might have been more in accordance with the words Alexis de Garaudé wrote in 1830:

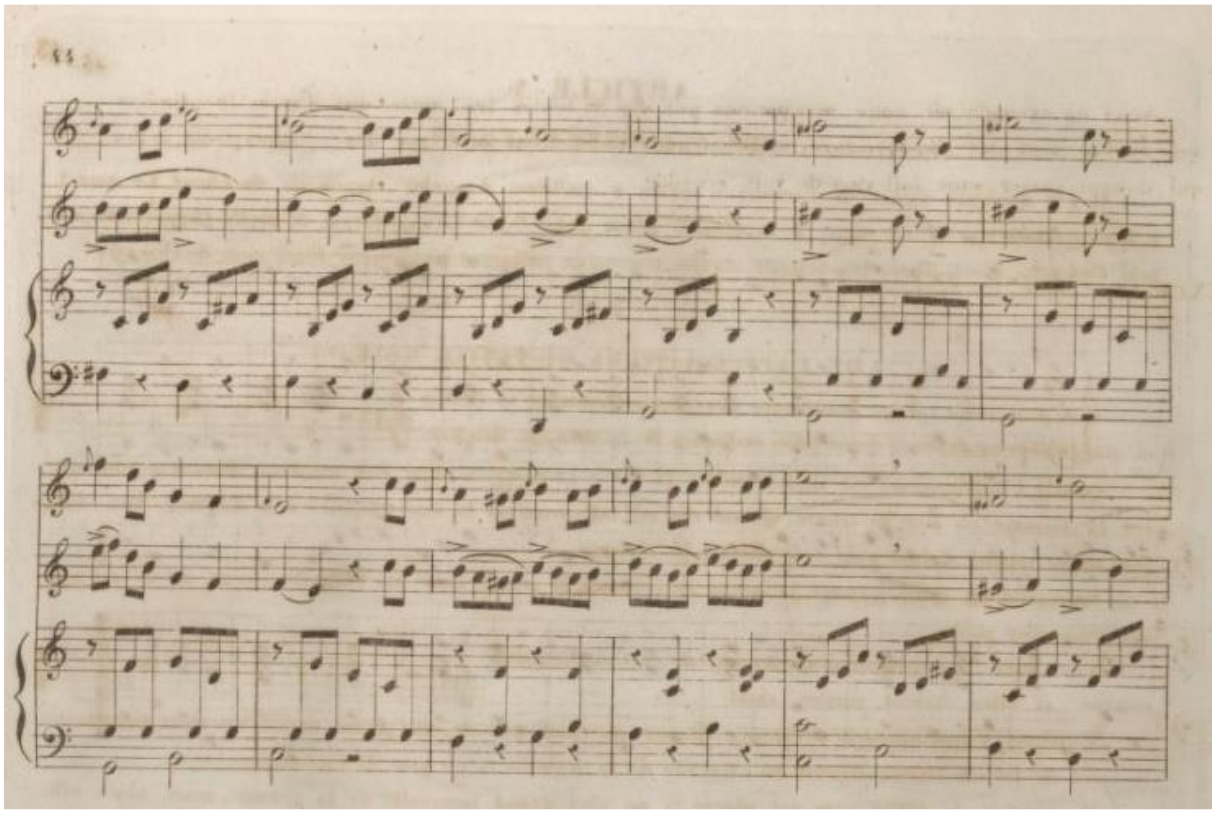
> Dans les voix de ténor, les sons de tête habilement employés ont un charme infini. [219]
>
> [With tenor voices, the falsetto register, when well used, has a wonderful charm.]

This change seems to be at the root of the modern singing style. Indeed, the habit of adding ornamentation to composed melodies is believed to have disappeared after 1850. The changing taste coincides with the stylistic development in the works of Giuseppe Verdi, with *Un ballo in maschera* (1859) serving as a kind of watershed.[220]

The bel canto singing style as it appears from descriptions in Lablache, García and other nineteenth-century methods, must have been less powerful, but much more flexible, sensitive and highly virtuosic. It is especially the stress on the necessity 'to give each phrase, each figure its appropriate colour'[221] that makes one suspect a style of singing which gave much more space to the individual quality of phrases and even words.[222] Lablache, for instance, advises the singer to stress or 'lean on' (*appoggiare*) notes on strong beats that are foreign to the accompanying harmony or to the key,[223] a rule that matches precisely what Quantz wrote in 1752 about playing dissonances generally

[217] Quintilian: *The Orator's Education*, vol. 3, VI.2.28 (D. Russell, trans.). Cambridge, MA, 2001; 59.
[218] Quoted in: Stark, J.: *Bel canto.* Toronto, 1999; 73.
[219] Garaudé, A. de: *Méthode complète de chant.* Deuxième édition: Paris, 1854; 16.
[220] Cf. Berne, op. cit., 196.
[221] Lablache, L.: op. cit., 104.
[222] Cf. García, M.: García's New Treatise... Boston, n.d.; 73.
[223] Lablache, L.: op. cit., 104.

(*überhaupt*) louder than consonances.[224] Lablache even adds dynamic markings in an exemplary score, just like Quantz:[225]



*Example 4.5.1*

Interestingly, this way of applying the accent sign is reminiscent of the instrumental music of Franz Schubert, where it often seems to indicate a gentle increase to and decrease from a local dynamic peak, rather than a sharp and sudden 'sforzato' accent. Like Schubert, Lablache also sometimes stretches the accent sign, making it more similar to an ordinary diminuendo (from which it undoubtedly derives).

Though rarely mentioned, it appears that even within ornamental passages colouring would be appreciated; witness Giovanni Battista Mancini's praise of Faustina Bordoni, who

> sustained passages of three and six notes in such a new and also difficult way, and guided them with the right proportion without languishing in ascending as well as descending, giving also those shades of coloring which are so necessary in the blending of any embellishment.[226]

[224] Quantz, J.J.: *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen*. [1752] Reprint Kassel, 1997; 227.
[225] Lablache, L.: op. cit., 44.
[226] Mancini, G.B.: *Pensieri e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato* [1774]. Transl.: *Practical reflections on the figurative art of singing*. Boston, 1912; 38. Mancini was an Italian castrato and a famous singing teacher. Empress Maria Theresia of Austria invited him to Vienna to become 'k. k. Cammer-Musicus'. The famous Bordoni was married to the composer Johann Adolf Hasse.

Lablache's 'materials of expression' concern parameters which can all be subject to an improvisatory approach to varying degrees: they are possible elements of relative improvisation (→ chapter 3.1). Since this study covers a much wider field, only one other aspect of expression will be elaborated, which as such is not mentioned by Lablache: expressive timing. It is described in great detail by García, and will be the subject of chapter 7.

The last 'means of expression' mentioned by Lablache is the performance of 'agréments': appoggiaturas and other small embellishments which form the counterpart of the *wesentliche Manieren* [essential ornaments] (→ chapter 3.3) of the eighteenth century. Though they were seen by several authors as building blocks of the more free embellishments, they were as such highly formalised and predetermined; therefore, they will not be discussed any further in this study.

Lablache's discussion of expression puts melodic embellishments into perspective. Once more I would like to stress that in bel canto, ornamentation is just one way to heighten expressivity in a performance. As Domenico Crivelli puts it in his method: it is added in order to enforce the sense of the words, and to penetrate the mind of the hearers with the sentiments of the poet[227] – in other words: to persuade. Seen thus, ornamentation is inseparable from the bel canto performing style in general.

### *b. Ornamenting with taste*

> *Un Compositeur qui ponctue & phrase bien, est un homme d'esprit: un Chanteur qui sent, marque bien ses Phrases & leur accent est un homme de goût.*[228]
>
> [*A composer who punctuates and phrases well is a clever fellow; a singer who feels and marks well his phrases and their accent is a man of taste*.[229]]

The type of improvised ornamentation this chapter focuses on is discussed by Lablache under the heading 'taste', forming the second area of musical sensitivity. Taste is a mysterious quality that is very often mentioned in early modern texts about music. In our time it may have lost its relevance as a criterion. Whoever refers to taste today easily invites suspicion on himself for nurturing elitist ideas. As the cliché goes, there is no disputing about tastes; but as Rousseau rightly remarks, this mainly concerns the individual tastes of people:

> Dans tous ces cas, chacun n'ayant que son Goût à opposer à celui d'un autre, il est évident qu'il n'en faut point disputer.[230]

---

[227] Crivelli, D.: *L'Arte del Canto* [1841]. Transl.: *Instructions and progressive exercises in the art of singing*. Boston, n.d.; 7.

[228] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictionnaire de musique.* Paris, 1768; 376.

[229] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictionnaire de musique.* Translated by William Waring: *A Complete Dictionary of music*. London, 1779; 317.

[230] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictionnaire de musique*; 235.

> [In all these cases, each having only his own taste to oppose to that of another, it is evident, that there is no dispute to be made.[231]]

However, the taste musical treatises so often refer to is something more general:

> Mais il y a aussi un Goût général sur lequel tous les gens bien organisés s'accordent; & c'est celui-ci seulement auquel on peut donner absolument le nom de Goût.[232]
>
> [But there is also a general taste, on which all organised persons agree, and it is this only, to which we can absolutely give the name of taste.[233]]

Even though it might have become a less popular concept nowadays, it is important to take the historical notion of taste seriously in order to appreciate explanations such as Lablache's. The concept of taste emerged in the seventeenth century, and at first implied a quasi-objective and social phenomenon. In this sense, taste is something that 'one must have': it cannot be learned through demonstration, nor can it be replaced by mere imitation.[234] It is something supra-personal that unites kindred spirits (and may exclude outsiders). Rousseau continues his discussion in the *Dictionnaire de musique*:

> Au reste, le Génie crée, mais le Goût choisit: & souvent un Génie trop abondant a besoin d'un Censeur sévère qui l'empêche d'abuser de ses richesses. Sans Goût on peut faire de grandes choses; mais c'est lui qui les rend intéressantes. C'est le Goût qui fait saisir au Compositeur les idées du Poète; c'est le Goût qui fait saisir à l'Exécutant les idées du Compositeur; c'est le Goût qui fournit à l'un & à l'autre tout ce qui peut orner & faire valoir leur sujet; & c'est le Goût qui donne à l'Auditeur le sentiment de toutes ces convenances.[235]
>
> [Genius creates, but taste makes the choice; and a too abundant genius is often in want of a severe censor, to prevent it from abusing its valuable riches. We can do great things without taste, but it is that alone which renders them interesting. It is taste which makes the composer catch the ideas of the poet: It is taste which makes the executant catch the ideas of the composer. It is taste, which furnishes to each whatever may adorn and augment their subject; and it is taste which gives the audience the sentiment of their agreements.[236]]

Rousseau brings together here different applications of musical taste. The composer and the performer may be mentioned in many other treatises, but Rousseau includes the listener (*l'auditeur*) as well: taste is a social phenomenon indeed. Taste, one might say, constitutes a musical culture.

---

[231] Rousseau, J.J.: *A Complete Dictionary of music*; 429.
[232] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictionnaire de musique*; 235.
[233] Rousseau, J.J.: *A Complete Dictionary of music*; 429.
[234] Gadamer, H.-G.: *Wahrheit und Methode* (gesammelte Werke 1). Tübingen, 1990; 42.
[235] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictionnaire de musique*; 236.
[236] Rousseau, J.J.: *A Complete Dictionary of music*; 429.

Characteristic is Joseph Haydn's famous approval of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's qualities as a composer, as rendered by his father Leopold Mozart in a letter to Wolfgang's sister Nannerl (16 February, 1785), in which Haydn mentions Mozart's taste in the first place:

> H: Haydn sagte mir: ich sage ihnen vor gott, als ein ehrlicher Mann, ihr Sohn ist der größte Componist, den ich von Person und den Nahmen nach kenne: er hat geschmack, und über das die größte Compositionswissenschaft.
>
> [Mr. Haydn said to me: I say to you in front of God, as an honest man: your son is the most important composer I know in person and by name. He has taste, and moreover, the most profound knowledge of composition.[237]]

At the end of the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant legitimated the superiority of genius to any aesthetics based on rules.[238] To the Romantic generation, taste had lost its generalness and became less of a social phenomenon, making space for subjectivity and allowing a more important role for genius. It is significant for the 'conservatism' of bel canto that Lablache still overtly puts taste among the essential qualities of musical sensitivity. He distinguishes between the more common taste that is guided by fashion, and a highly idealised 'true' taste which

> consists of an exquisite observance of appropriateness, of clothing oneself in the character of the piece being performed and of increasing the energy of it with analogous colors, and of correlating one's own feeling so well with that of the composer that there results a perfect whole, seemingly produced by a single mind.[239]

The 'lower' taste is interesting too because it is subject to change. Lablache writes that 'the ornaments that enchanted our parents now make us smile with pity'; therefore 'it would be superfluous to give fixed models here that may be good today but will perhaps in a short while have no value at all'.[240] That fashion could even change from place to place is shown in a remark by Ignaz Kürzinger in a chapter where he explains different ways of performing a trill:

> Wer in beyden Arten wohl bewandert ist, der wird sich um so leichter nach dem Geschmack des Ortes, da er sich befindet, richten können.[241]
>
> [Who is familiar with both ways, will all the easier be able to conform to the taste of the town where he is.]

[237] Quoted in J. Irving: *Mozart's Piano Concertos*. London, 2017; 116.
[238] Gadamer, H.-G.: op. cit., 47.
[239] Lablache, L.: op. cit., 110.
[240] Ibidem.
[241] Kürzinger, I.F.X.: *Getreuer Unterricht zum Singen mit Manieren…*. 1763, 35.

Such remarks illustrate to what extent a musical performance was an act of communication above everything else. About the use of ornaments, Lablache writes that 'in the last sixty years [it] has come to be abused'. This is a recurring complaint in texts about ornamentation. However, ornamentation

> seems to want to return within more moderate limits in our day. The composers themselves seem inclined to give to their ideas a new twist that, because there is something absolute or rigorous about it, puts a brake on the mania for adorning that has infected the more mediocre singers.[242]

As a singer, Lablache was primarily associated with Bellini, who could very well be one of the composers he is referring to in this fragment. Indeed, Bellini was known for a certain classical sternness, compared to Donizetti and Rossini.

The importance of 'true good taste' shows in two conditions that for Lablache are fundamental in ornamenting a melody:

> 1. The ornament must never distort or obscure the phrase.
>
> 2. The ornaments must always be appropriate to the character of the piece.[243]

To a modern reader, such requirements may look obvious enough. They are most likely meant by the author to prevent a 'tasteless' excess of added ornamentation, and twenty-first-century musicians will probably nod their approval (→ chapter 3.5). However, they warrant closer examination.

The second requirement, about the appropriateness of ornamentation to the character of a piece, will be familiar enough by now: it can be found in almost any contemporary explanatory text on ornamentation. Laure Cinti-Damoreau, famous for her unrestrainedly virtuosic *points d'orgue* and *traits* (cadenzas and ornamental flourishes), wrote in her *Méthode de chant* (1849):

> The *points d'orgue*, *traits* and *rentrées* specified for the embellishment of a piece must above all bear the stamp of the piece to which they are attached; (...) one must take great care not to distort the thought of the composer by using embellishments in bad taste.[244]

But, as Austin Caswell remarked in an article on Cinti-Damoreau's embellishments:

> It is hard to find evidence of this advice among her own cadenzas and variants. Upon studying them, one is struck by the similarities of structure and the stereotyped melodic technique which make any of them resemble the others.[245]

Maybe we should not be too surprised about this tension between letter and spirit. The character of the composition may be one force that directs the musical content of the embellishment, but the

[242] Lablache, L.: op. cit., 110.
[243] Ibidem.
[244] Cinti-Damoreau, L.: *Méthode de chant.* Paris, 1849; 93. Quoted in: Caswell, A.: 'Mme Cinti-Damoreau and the Embellishment of Italian Opera in Paris: 1820-1845'. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Autumn, 1975); 482.
[245] Ibidem.

urge to display sheer vocal virtuosity may be another and equally strong motivation. In the art of Cinti-Damoreau the influence of the latter must have been considerable, bringing her enormous success but sometimes also critical remarks, such as this one by (her admirer) Hector Berlioz:

> Many people might think that she has allowed herself to cover certain essentially beautiful and original pieces with ornaments, so as to alter their character and vulgarize their appearance.[246]

Also, the criticism that cadenzas for different pieces sound too similar is not confined to some bel canto singers: it could equally well apply to the collection of cadenzas (H 265) Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach wrote to his own keyboard concertos a century earlier.

Lablache's first requirement that ornaments should never distort or obscure the phrase becomes more interesting when it is recast in the affirmative: ornaments are meant to follow (and one might add, enhance) the phrase structure of a piece. In the next section I will elaborate on this fundamental concept.

### *c. Phrases*

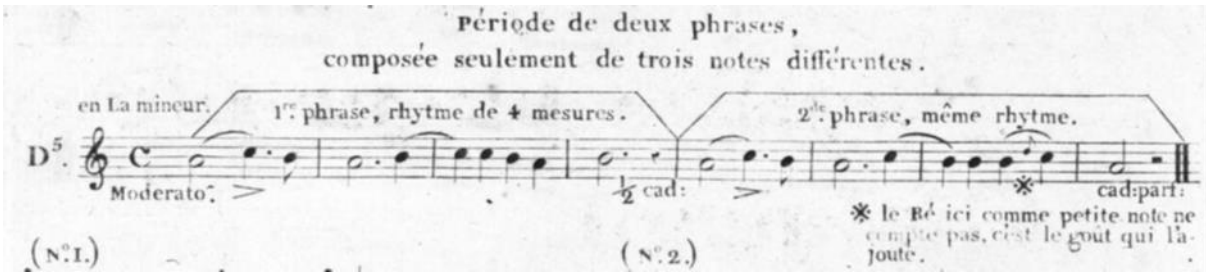
What is a phrase? According to Corri, it makes the sense and meaning of a composition understood.[247] Chapter 3 preluded on the eighteenth-century meaning of the term. Rousseau's lucid definition of a musical phrase interestingly already juxtaposes the harmonic and melodic aspects of the phenomenon:

> PHRASE: Suite de Chant ou d'Harmonie qui forme sans interruption un sens plus ou moins achevé , & qui se termine sur un repos par une Cadence plus ou moins parfaite.
>
> II y a deux espèces de Phrases musicales. En Mélodie la Phrase est constituée par le Chant, c'est-à-dire, par une suite de Sons tellement disposés, soit par rapport au Ton, soit par rapport au Mouvement, qu'ils fassent un tout bien lie, lequel aille se résoudre sur une Corde essentielle du Mode où l'on est.
>
> Dans l'Harmonie , la Phrase est une suite régulière d'Accords tous liés entr'eux par des Dissonnances exprimées ou sous-entendues; laquelle se résout fur une Cadence absolue, & selon 1'espèce de cette Cadence: selon que le sens en est plus ou moins achevé, le repos est aussi plus ou moins parfait. [248]
>
> [Continuance of an air or harmony, which forms, without interruption, a sense more or less finished, and which is terminated on a stop, by a cadence more or less perfect.
>
> There are two kinds of musical phrases. In melody the phrase is constituted by the air; that is, by a collection of sounds so disposed, whether in connection to the tone or movement, that they form the whole well united which is resolved on an essential chord[249] of the mode in which we are.

[246] Quoted in Caswell, A.: op. cit., 469.
[247] Corri, D.: op. cit., 7.
[248] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictionnaire de musique*; 370.
[249] In this case : a tone.

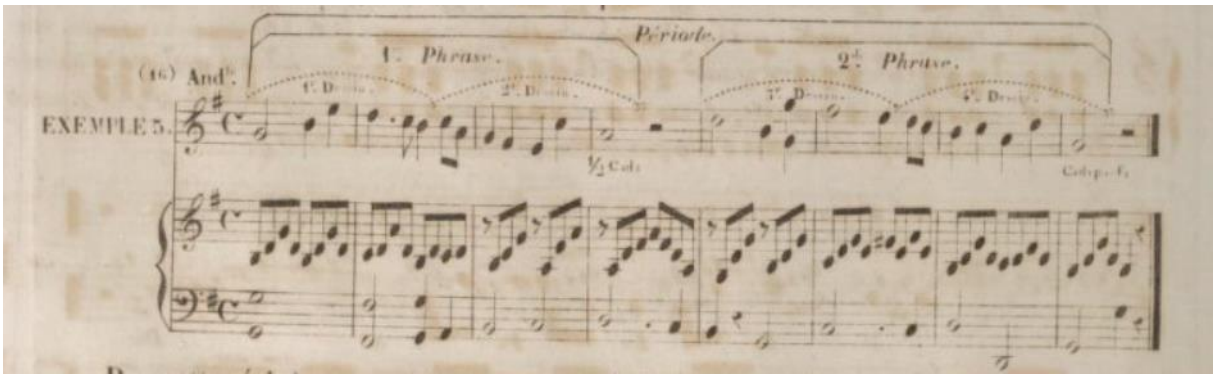
> In harmony, the phrase is a regular continuance of concords all united together by dissonances, expressed or understood, which is resolved on an absolute cadence: according as the sense is more or less finished, the stop also is more or less perfect.[250]]

For the explanation of the concept 'phrase' both Lablache and García draw from Anton Reicha's *Traité de Mélodie* (Paris, 1814). Reicha describes the form of a (classical) melody along the lines of a sentence in spoken language, with the half cadence representing a semicolon or a colon, and the perfect authentic cadence a full stop. A complete musical sentence is called a *périodе,* a shorter unit such as an antecedent or consequent is called a *phrase.* The length of a phrase is often four bars in moderate tempo, making it a unit which can be sung on one breath. In the following example two phrases combine to form a classical symmetrical period; the terms 'antecedent' and 'consequent' are not mentioned.[251]




*Example 4.5.2*

Lablache shows a similar though less thematically symmetrical example:[252]




*Example 4.5.3*

[250] Rousseau, J.J.: *A Complete Dictionary of music*; 317.
[251] Reicha, A.: *Traité de mélodie*: *abstraction faite de ses rapports avec l'harmonie; suivi d'un supplément sur l'art d'accompagner la mélodie par l'harmonie, lorsque la première doit être prédominante*. Paris 1814; Planches d'exemples, 49.
[252] Lablache, L.: *Méthode complète de chant*. Paris, 1840; 26.

The harmonic underpinning of the melodic structure is obvious, even though Reicha's book aims to focus on the melody (as the full title shows), resulting in a long list of possible melodic manifestations of various types of cadences (what Rousseau called *se résoudre sur une corde essencielle du mode où l'on est*). Harmonically a phrase finishes with a half or perfect authentic cadence, to which this *corde essencielle* of course contributes. The harmonic progressions of bel canto phrases tend to be relatively uniform, establishing a clear harmonic gesture with a strong orientation towards the cadence. The similarity of the progressions creates a sense of musical expectation regarding the course of harmony within the phrase – something that is often metaphorically described as musical direction. Thus the harmonic progression, guided by both contrapuntal and harmonic principles, is a locus communis because a similar harmonic motion occurs time and again, inviting endless melodic variants.

When such a progression is performed with (a) suitable instrument(s), this sense of direction can be expressed in dynamics and timing. The French type of reed organ, the nineteenth-century pressure harmonium as built by e.g. Alexandre, is such an instrument because it allows the player to sustain the chords and at the same time influence the dynamics by way of varying the pressure on the pedals.

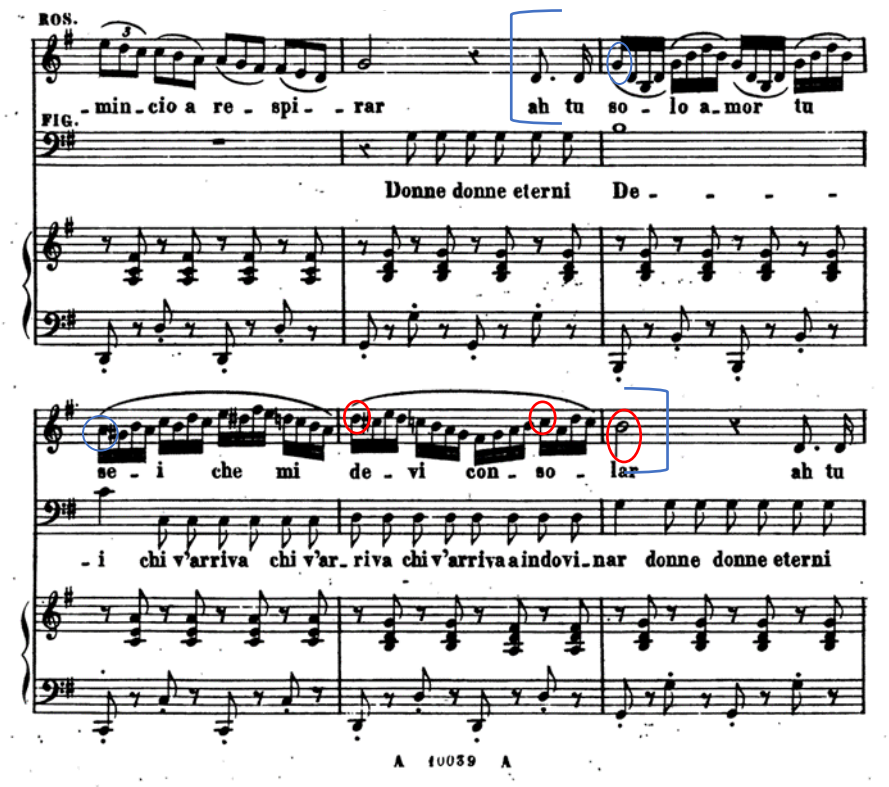
**[4.5 #1: Harmonic background of Lablache's example]**

The clear phrase structure with many four-bar groups, very often leading to some type of cadence, results in a fairly simple and predictable harmonic language in bel canto that can even be termed commonplace. It is a predictability that should not be dismissed as superficial, but that on the contrary invites the play of ornamental variety. The rich chromatic type of harmony of which the works of Wagner are an exemplar precludes the addition of ornaments.

Since bel canto ornamentation is primarily based upon the harmonic background, as will be elaborated below, it tends to enhance these gestures, to increase the sense of direction, as seen in the example from Hiller's *Italiänische Arien* described in chapter 3.5 and 3.6.

### *Phrase-based ornamentation*

Especially in faster music, the ornamented melody often was a variant of the composed one, not increasing (or even diminishing) the number of notes, rather than a version with added ornaments. García gives examples of this practice; one of them shows three *variazioni* to a passage in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Sivigla.* The original reads as follows:




*Example 4.5.4: Rossini, G.: Il Barbiere di Siviglia, act I, no. 15: Duetto (piano reduction).*

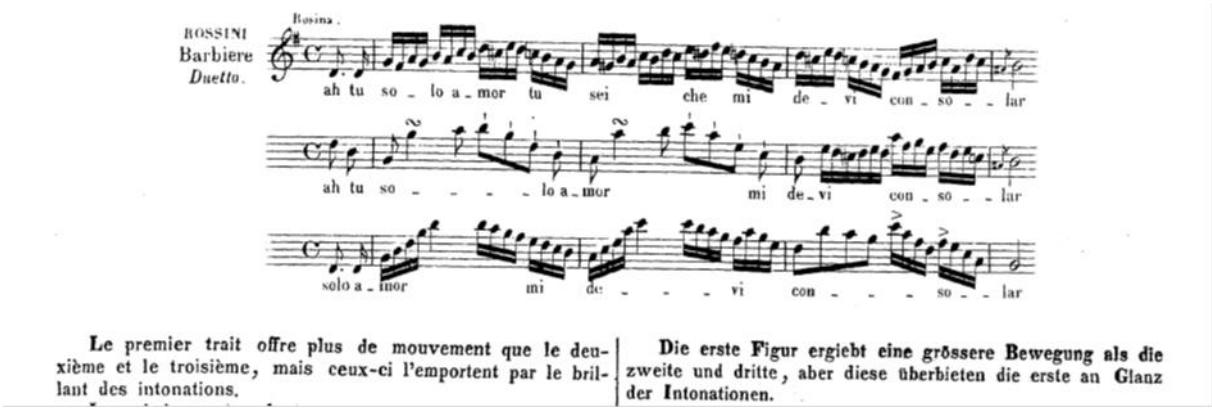
It is a four-bar phrase, harmonically consisting of a perfect authentic cadence with a crystal clear direction. A reduction of the harmony, using 'harmonic connections' in the voice leading,[253] sounds as follows:

[4.5 #2: Harmonic background example 4.5.4]

As is often the case, the melody tends to follow one of the 'background' parts of the reduction, or to switch between them. In the Rossini example, the melody starts with diminutions on the soprano part of the reduction (blue ovals), switching to the alto part in the third bar (red ovals - here turned into the top voice, a procedure termed 'register transfer' (*Höherlegung*) by Schenker). García provides three alternatives to this phrase:[254]

[253] 'Harmonic connections' is the literal translation of the German *harmonische Verbindungen.* Though the term is rather uncommon in English, the concept is useful: it refers to a type of voice-leading where the individual voices either stay on the same note (in case of a common tone) or move by the smallest interval possible, usually stepwise. It is a type of voice-leading that results in the smoothest possible parts and in a sense can be seen as the most 'basic' one.

[254] García, M.: *École de García,* part 2. French / German edition: Mainz, n.d.; 57.



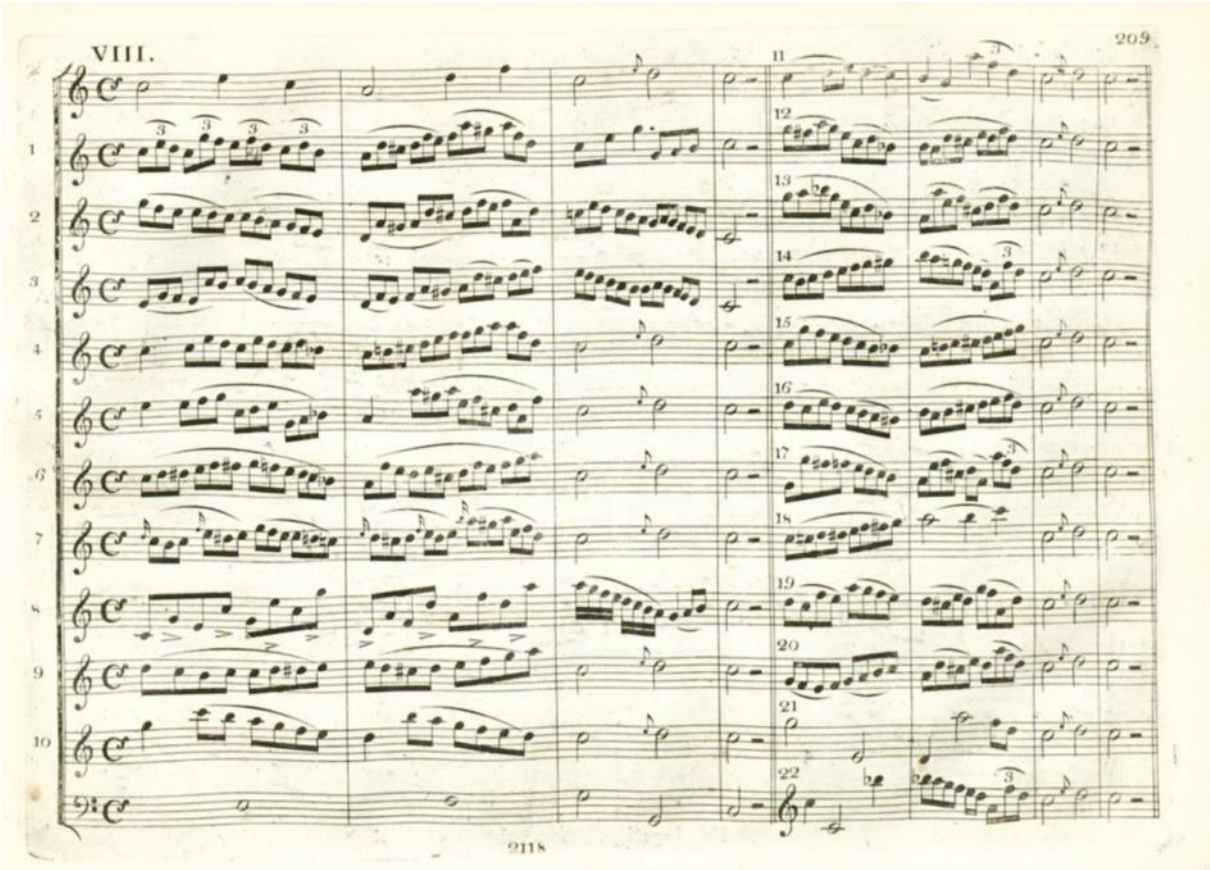

*Example 4.5.5*

The first variant does not change the number of notes or the rhythm, it just shows a different melody (in the first two bars) on the basis of the same harmony. The other two variants feature different rhythms and more leaps. In this case, we cannot speak of diminution of the original melody because there are no long tones that are ornamented by dividing them into smaller values. Interestingly, García's alternatives follow the same succession of anchor tones from the reduction as Rossini's original melody: g – a – d – c – b. Strictly speaking this would not have been necessary: there are many more inner lines that are equally possible. From an improvisational perspective however García's versions stay close to an extempore practice. They strongly suggest that the singer held on to an inner line, a 'background' melody that came from the chord progression. It is a form of diminution after all, although the melody which serves as its basis only exists by implication.

It is interesting to compare García's ornaments with other material from the first half of the century, discussed here in chronological order. A unique and not very well-known source for early-nineteenth-century vocal ornamentation is the *Vollstaendige Singschule* (ca. 1825)[255] of the once successful German opera composer, violinist and *Kapellmeister* Peter von Winter. Winter, who was a student of Abbé Vogler and Antonio Salieri, composed operas in German but was strongly influenced by the Italian style. His vocal method, published at the end of his life, consists of four parts, the last one being an incredibly elaborated enumeration of examples of ornamentation. The sheer number of variants makes one wonder what was the intention of the author: to provide the student with a supply of ornaments that could be used when needed, or to prompt the creation of new ones by the singer? Unfortunately the accompanying text does not give a decisive answer. Bearing in mind, though, that (as Winter writes himself in the introduction) German singers had to perform operas in many different styles, composed mainly by foreign composers, it could be both: the familiarity with the bel canto style of performance may in some cases have been shallow.

[255] Winter, P. von: *Vollstaendige Singschule.* Mainz, [1825].

What makes Winter's book such a unique source is its comprehensiveness, which is even more interesting because his treatise does not stem from the core of the bel canto tradition, but from its sphere of influence. Winter's approach is similar to Quantz's (→ chapter 3.2): he gives a model in the form of a treble-bass outline (*Außenstimmensatz*), followed by a large quantity of possible embellishments. The models are without exception based upon very familiar loci. The harmonic pattern discussed above, for example, appears on pages 208-211, altogether more than 50 variants in 3/4 and 4/4 times. This is one page:




*Example 4.5.6*

The basic melody shown above no. 1 is plain and not to be compared with Rossini's melody discussed above; however, its jumpy character deviates considerably from any of the stepwise voices of the harmonic chord connections. The most likely inner voice that (vaguely) permeates most of the variants is: c | d | c b | c. Remarkably, Winter ornaments the I6/4 progression (last two bars) only in a few cases. A reason for this could be that he has given variations upon precisely this progression beforehand in an earlier chapter.[256]

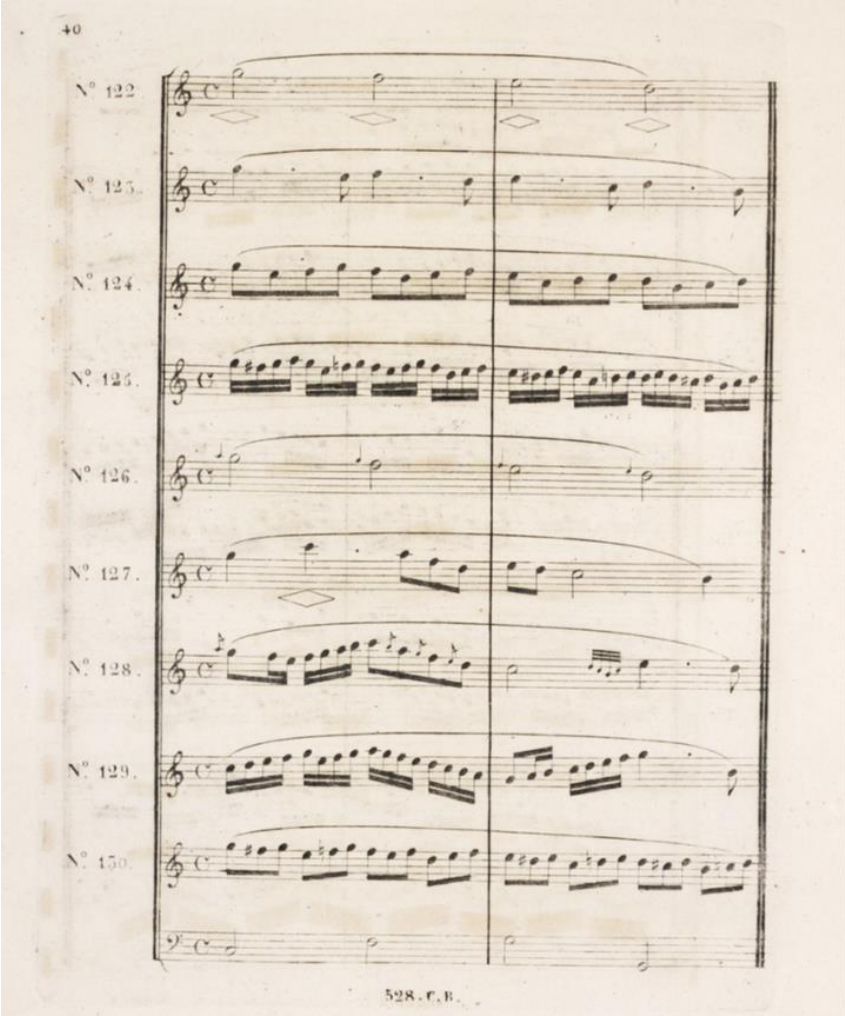
The organisation of Winter's variants is strikingly unsystematic. In fact, the collection makes a very associative or even arbitrary impression. Variant no. 24, for instance, shown below, clearly builds

[256] Winter, P. von: op. cit., 206-207.

on no. 18 in the previous example (right column), but the two are separated by variants which introduce very different material such as large jumps and a more differentiated rhythm.

*Example 4.5.7*

We are fortunate that at least one comparable collection from the heart of Italian bel canto exists: in 1835, Manuel del Pópulo García, the father of the author of the *École de García*,[257] who was also famous as a pedagogue, published his *Exercises pour la voix*, which, as the title suggests, almost completely consists of exercises. The second half of the book shows examples of variants and themes with variations. The organisation of the ornamental variants is quite comparable with Winter:[258]




*Example 4.5.8*

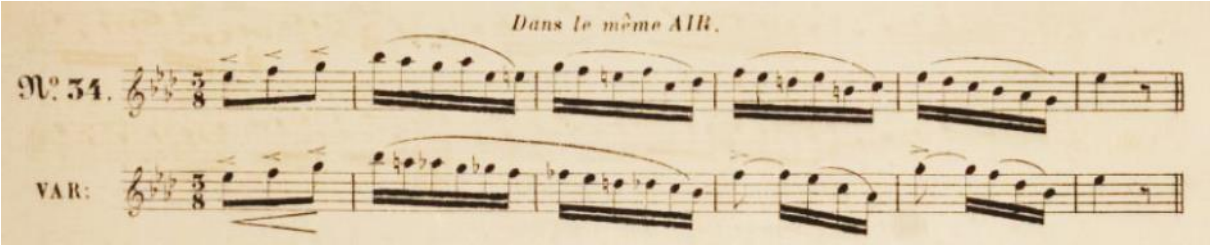
[257] To avoid confusion (father and son carry the same name), in this study the father will be indicated as 'García *père*', the son as 'García *fils*'. When just 'García' is used, the son is meant.
[258] García, M. del Pópulo: *Exercises pour la voix*. Paris, [1835]; 40.

Contrary to Winter, García *père* does explain the purpose of the exercises:

> J'ai varié de plusieurs manières les trois seules cadences connues jusquà présent en Musique, afin d'ouvrir un vaste champ et d'aider l'imagination des élèves; par ce moyen, ils pourront parvenir un jour à chanter d'inspiration, ce qu'on peut appeler sans contredit la méthode la plus plausible, (bien qu'elle soit très difficile) *surtout lorsqu'on ne dépasse pas les justes limites.* Par la même raison, j'ai varié aussi les motifs.[259]
>
> [I have varied in several ways the only three cadences known in music up to now, with the purpose of opening up a rich field and stimulating the student's imagination. In this way, they will one day be able to sing extempore; it is without doubt the most convincing (though very difficult) method, especially when one doesn't pass the limits of correctness. For the same reason I have varied the motifs as well.]

It is possible to discern a certain stylistic difference. Generally speaking, Winter's examples seem to have a less clear direction than García *père*'s material. The many unadorned third bars in Winter stop the rhythmic flow in a peculiar way, and the inner melody is often less consistent. As a result, the embellishments sometimes fail to reinforce the melodic and harmonic urge towards the cadence at the end of the phrase. The examples of García *père* look more organic and goal-oriented.

A beautiful example of an embellishment that excitingly increases the direction of the original is this variant on a phrase from Daniel Auber's *opéra comique L'Ambassadrice* in Laure Cinti-Damoreau's *Méthode de chant.*[260]




*Example 4.5.9*

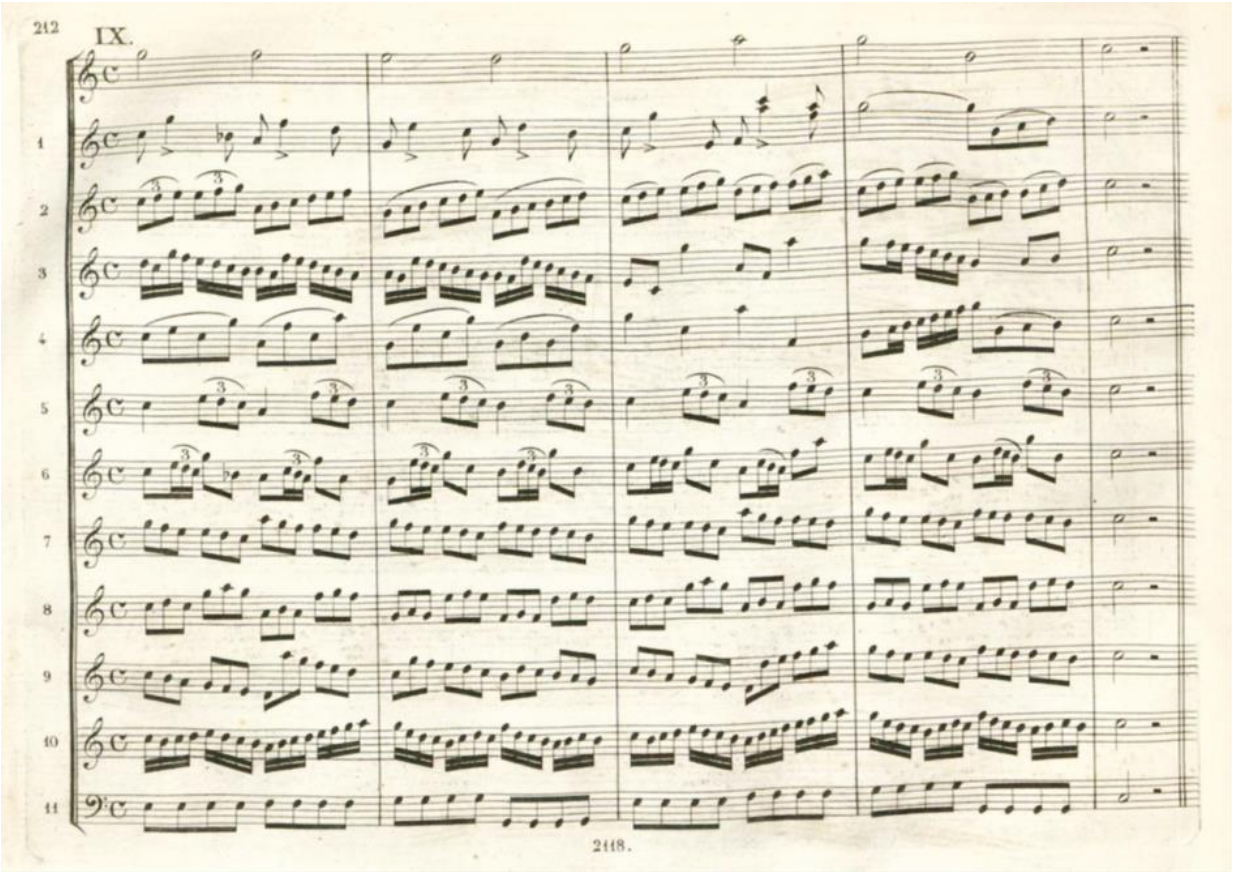
The original consists of a sequence that is, though virtuosic, musically inconspicuous. The variant contracts two bars by replacing them with a chromatic scale, thus both melodically and rhythmically creating an effect of floating over the metric structure and obscuring the harmonic progression. In the last bars the metric grip is restored vigourously with a waltz-like motif that builds up by increasingly large melodic leaps. As a result the slightly decreasing tension in the original phrase is replaced with the contrary effect in the variant.

In general, the variants and ornamentations as shown in bel canto sources and in Winter's book consist of quite straightforward material that in a conventional way circumscribes the local harmony (a background against which Cinti-Damoreau's chromatic scale comes as a surprise): we find

[259] García, M. del Pópulo: op. cit., 5.
[260] Cinti-Damoreau, L.: *Méthode de chant.* Paris, 1849; 101.

arpeggiations, unaccented and accented passing tones, suspensions and neighbour notes. Compared with the Renaissance material of Ganassi (→ chapter 3.2), they look much less diverse rhythmically. The nature of the various ornamenting patterns will be discussed in more detail in chapter 9.5.

A valuable aspect of Winter's extensive collection is that it, because of its comprehensiveness, also provides an encompassing list of melodic / harmonic patterns that apparently ought to be ornamented. García *père*'s claim that he shows variants on 'the only three cadences known in music until nowadays' seems a bit too easy in this respect. Whereas Alexis de Garaudé, for instance, contents himself with just one example of a (cadential) melodic turn[261] to be ornamented, Winter begins his catalogue of *fioritures* with a rather exhaustive line-up of melodic progressions (without bass) that bear similarities to Reicha's melodic cadential turns. Winter then proceeds with variants of the perfect authentic cadence as described above. That he had concrete and familiar situations in mind is revealed in the following example, which shows a type of peroration that concludes many Rossinian cabalettas:[262]




*Example 4.5.10*

[261] Garaudé, A. de: *Méthode complète de chant.* Paris, 1854; 267.
[262] Winter, P. von: *Vollstaendige Singschule.* Mainz, n.d. [1825]; 212.

Note the suggested internal parallel fifths in the implied two-part texture in bars 3-4 of no. 2 and in no. 7,[263] or the openly parallel octave with the bass in bars $3^{IV}$-$4^{I}$ of no. 4. In Winter's defense, though, it has to be said that Louis Spohr, who visited Italy in 1816, had already clearly expressed his irritation about the lack of *Reinheit der Harmonie* (harmonic purity) he encountered in the work of 'the newer Italian composers', for instance in 'bad' doublings or open consecutive fifths.[264] The ornaments in García *père*'s exercises are not completely free from some careless voice leading either. Apparently, the Italian demands (to which Winter conformed) were in this respect less strict than the German ones. This all concerns composed music; it goes without saying that in extempore ornamentation 'accidents' may occur that would be avoided when the music is notated.[265]

The treatment of cadences occupies the most space in Winter's book, mainly because cadences (and half-cadences) are given in several keys (the variations are new, not transposed). This suggests that the book was a collection to be chosen from, not a source of inspiration for improvisations. However, the different keys may have served different voice types, rather than different passages in vocal literature. Winter continues with cadenzas on fermatas. Because they are of a different nature from ornamentation as it has been discussed so far, fermatas (both vocal and instrumental) will be dealt with separately in chapter 10.2. The work finishes with exercises, theme and variations and *solfeggi*.

It is remarkable that Winter omits all textual correlations. In reality the text must have had a key role in the way how ornamentation was applied. The necessity 'to give each phrase, each figure its appropriate colour'[266] was already mentioned above, and primarily depends on the text. García *fils* pays attention to the possibility of 'imitating the feeling or the idea'[267] by way of ornamentation. As an example of such text illustration, he shows an ornamented version of an aria of Cimarosa as it was usually sung by his father. The exuberant *fiorituri* evoke the flying gallop mentioned in the text.

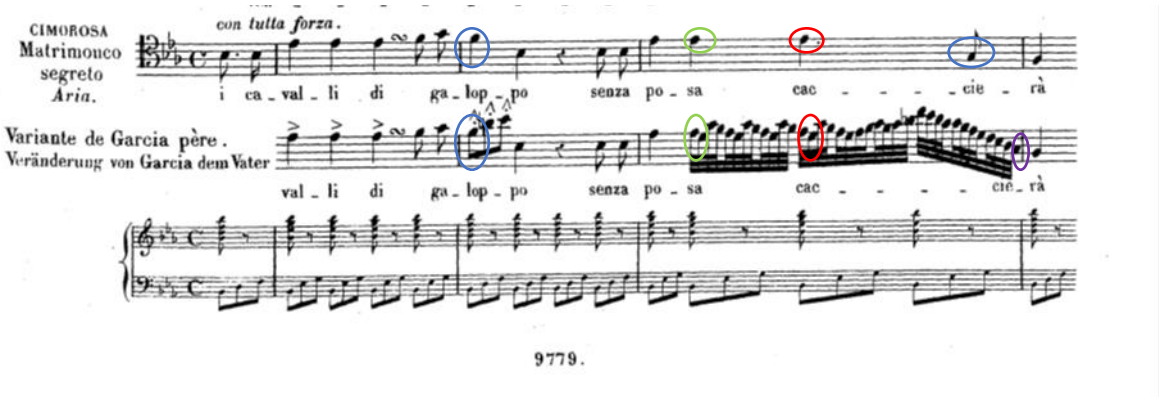
[263] All other variants avoid these fifths, most of them by harmonising the F in the bass with a IV instead of a II6.

[264] Spohr, L.: *Selbstbiographie,* erster Band. Kassel, 1860; 307.

[265] That the latter phenomenon had been familiar and accepted for centuries already is seen for instance in th *Organistenprobe* from Hamburg (1725), as rendered by Johann Mattheson (quoted in Schwenkreis, M. (ed.) *Compendium Improvisation.* Basel, 2018; 10). This text specifies the audition requirements for the job of organist at th cathedral church in Hamburg. The candidates had to improvise (*aus dem Stegreif auszuführen*) a fugue on a given theme; afterwards they were required to hand in a composed version of the same assignment within two days. The motivation for the latter was that while improvising, a performer might mistakes that he would be able to avoid while proceeding slowly (*wenn man langsam verfährt*).

[266] Lablache, L.: Metodo completo di canto / complete singing method. Milano, 1841 / reprint 1997; 104.

[267] García, M.: *École de García,* part 2. French / German edition: Mainz, n.d.; 59.




*Example 4.5.11*

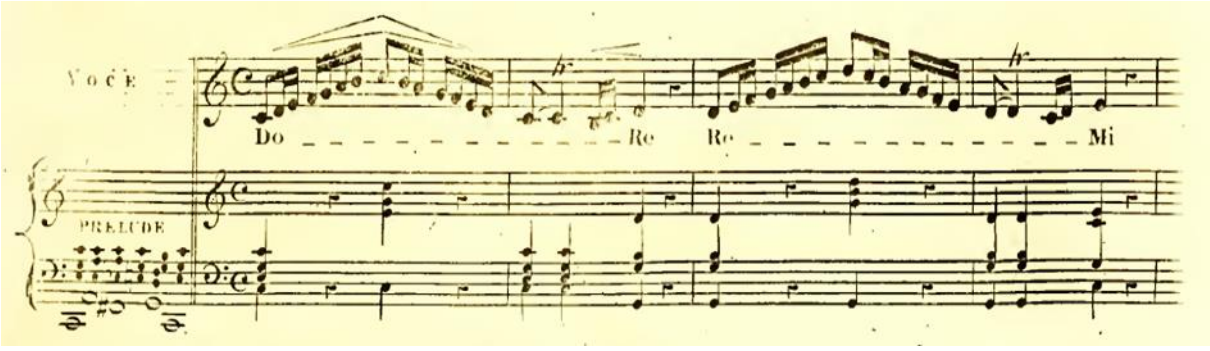
To summarise, an analysis of notated embellishments convincingly shows that in bel canto, ornamentation was always based upon the harmony, and at the same time originated in anchor tones. When the ornamentation was rather a variant of an already flourishing passage, such as in the Rossini example at the beginning of this section (ex. 4.5.4), the anchor tones were often hidden because the original melody itself was already a diminution of a simple melodic framework. In the case of 'diminutions' such as in the Cimarosa fragment above, it is clear that the ornament flows from the anchor tones (marked in the example above), which keep their places in the metre. García writes:

> Appropriate ornaments always heighten the effect, when terminating a portion of a phrase. Thus placed, they have the charm of novelty, and make no changes in essential parts of a melody, – that is, in notes which are placed on the down beats. These notes, besides containing the rhythmic accent, fulfil prominent functions in harmony; hence they should be cautiously modified by ornaments, lest the melody be entirely transformed.[268]

It seems appropriate to equal García's 'notes on the down beats' with anchor tones as mentioned above. His description is more practical than analytical: he puts a principle that stems from the earliest practices of diminution (→ chapter 3) in the form of practical advice that a singer can use straightforwardly. García's 'rule' is not completely sound: it only refers to the situation that there are harmonic tones on the downbeats (and, presumably, passing notes on the weak beats). Taken as a signpost rather than as a law, however, and interpreted in accordance with a singer's intuition, García's advice helpful for any singer familiar with bel canto. It should also not be forgotten that in eighteenth-century Italian vocal training, still based upon solmisation, the structural function of downbeats was often acknowledged; in passages of an ornamental nature, singers did not sing solfege syllables for each note individually, but rather sang the passage on the name of the first note (*traits*).[269]

[268] García, M.: García's New Treatise... Boston, n.d.; 60.
[269] Baragwanath, N.: *The Solfeggio Tradition: A Forgotten Art of Melody in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Oxford, 2020; Kindle edition, loc. 357.

The same still occurs in Corri:[270]




*Example 4.5.12*

Though early nineteenth-century methods often discard the 'old-fashioned' solmisation system[271] and adapt more modern forms with fixed note names, the acquired awareness of a hierarchy of structural and ornamental tones within a melody most likely remained untouched by this change. Finally, the quotation from García confirms the important principle that bel canto ornamentation tends to intensify the directional movements within musical phrases.

### *d. The right accent*

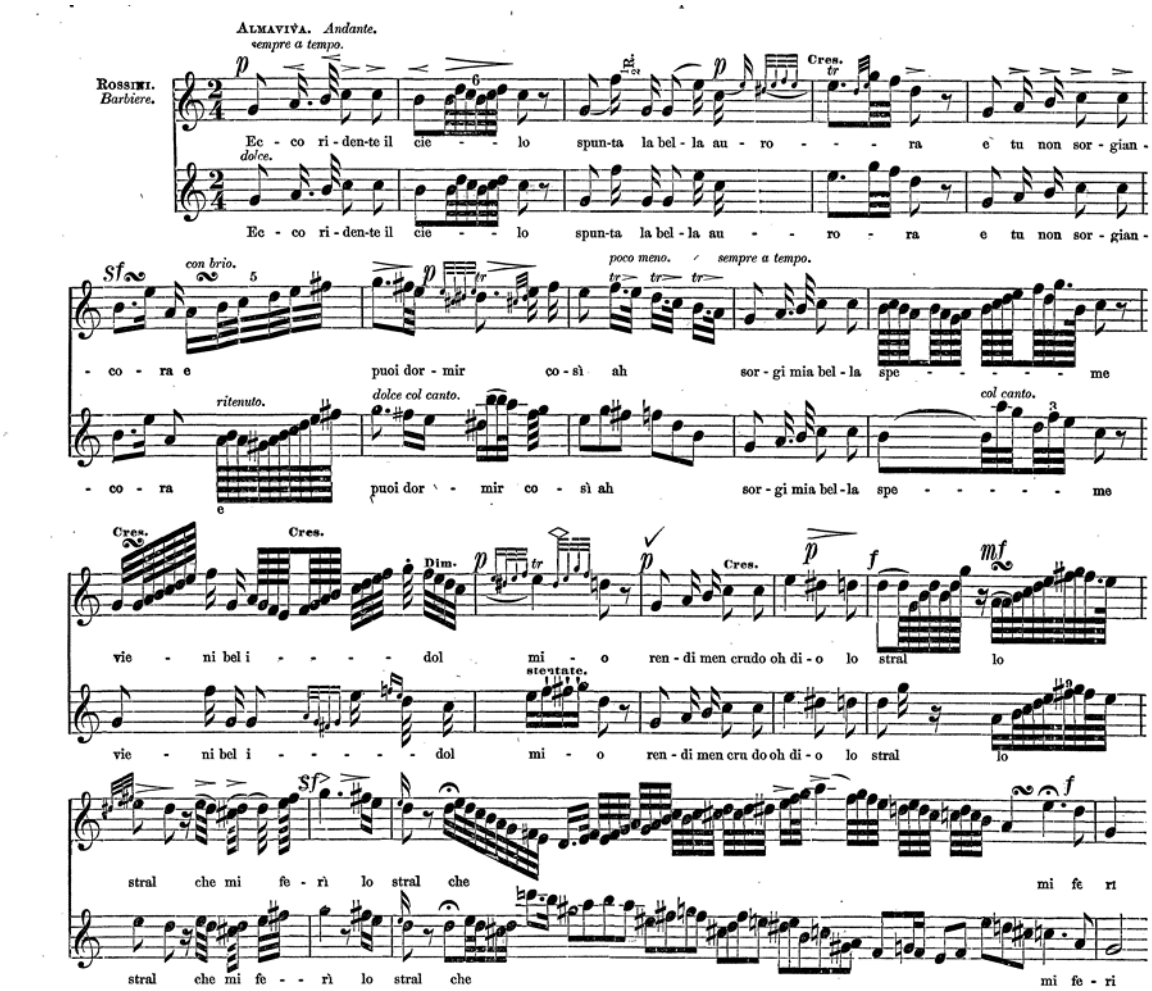
The last area of musical sensitivity according to Lablache's mapping of the terrain is called somewhat mysteriously 'accent' (*accento*). Confusion might arise because of the most common musical meaning of the word in many languages, namely the emphasis placed on a particular note or group of notes. This is not how the word is used here: Lablache refers to the more general meaning of an *accent oratoire*, an intonation that matches the sentiment or the idea of a passage, the tone of the voice, or even a way of expression. This use of the word 'accent' is more usual in Italian and French than in English and Germanic languages.[272] García uses the term *accent pathétique* that he describes as 'l'expression ajoutée à la mélodie'[273] [the expression that is added to the melody].

Lablache uses the term as a nineteenth-century successor of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *Affect.* What counts is to recognise the proper *accent* of a piece of music, its character, primarily on the basis of indications of tempo and character such as *adagio*, *agitato*, etc., in combination with the content of the text and the character of the music. Lablache warns his reader that a piece

[270] Corri, D.: op. cit.; 43. Yet another nineteenth-century example is Bernardo Mengozzi's singing method for the conservatory of Paris (Mengozzi, B.: *Gesanglehre des Conservatoriums der Musik in Paris.* Leipzig, 1804; 38).
[271] E.g. Corri (p.8) who advocates a fixed-do-system, or Benelli (p.17) who prefers letter notation.
[272] https://www.littre.org/definition/accent; http://www.etimo.it/?term=accento&find=Cerca
[273] García, M.: *École de García,* part 2. French / German edition: Mainz, n.d.; 69.

> can be sung with expression, yet with a false accent. Indeed, if in an Andante one used the expressive means appropriate for an Agitato, it would seem ridiculous and exaggerated. And if on the contrary an Agitato is sung like a simple Allegro, it will be cold and unmoving.[274]

Naïve though this may sound, what Lablache is explaining here is the importance of recognising genre-specific loci communes (→ chapter 12). It is essential to recognise the musical meaning of a score, and to choose the appropriate mode of expression. This clearly concerns all elements of 'musical sensitivity', but in the context of this study the focus has to be on ornamentation. A line-up of embellishments such as Winter's easily makes one forget about the intimate connection between ornament and 'accent'. Many authors mention the importance of such a correlation, but only a few give actual examples. One of them is García, who provides two ornamented versions of the beginning of Count Almaviva's cavatina *Ecco ridente il cielo* from the first act of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia.*



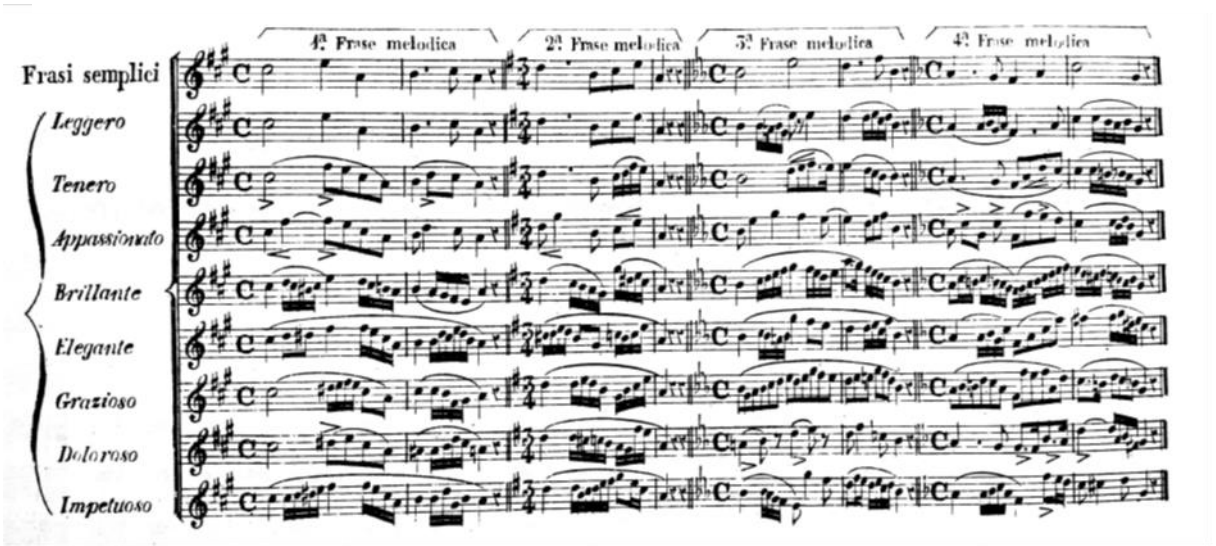

*Example 4.5.13*

[274] Lablache, L.: *Metodo completo di canto / complete singing method*. Milano, 1841 / reprint 1997; 112.

García writes:

> It will be at once perceived that the style of our last example is too languid for the character of the brilliant Count.[275]

Lablache even offers a range of various ornamentations of a phrase according to different 'accents':[276]




*Example 4.5.14*

Such examples invite the modern musician to develop a sensitivity for the expressive side of ornamentation, rather than focusing exclusively upon the technical aspects, as so easily happens.

## 4.6 Stepping-stones towards improvisatory bel canto ornamentation

### *Unpremeditated ornamentation*

The ample number of available notated variants as they were sung by famous soloists raises the question to what extent this practice can be regarded as improvisatory. Were embellishments in fact composed, i.e. written down beforehand, or were they created extempore? In general, this recalls my considerations in chapter 3.7 regarding the eighteenth-century practice. An important difference, however, is that so many singers *notated* their own variants, or that their variants were passed down (with reference) by others. The argument that variants were written down for students or amateurs who couldn't invent them on the spot (as in the case of Mozart; see chapter 3.5) might not hold here since they were primarily notated by professionals for their own use. Is it true, then, that the notated

[275] García, M.: *École de García*. Transl.; García's New Treatise on the Art of Singing; revised edition. Boston, n.d.; 59.
[276] Lablache, L.: Metodo completo di canto / complete singing method. Milano, 1841 / reprint 1997; 90.

ornaments clearly show that the habit of performing unpremeditated variants had disappeared in the earlier nineteenth century?

The evidence for the opposite comes, surprisingly, from a singer who may have notated most variants of all: Laure Cinti-Damoreau. In the introduction to her *Méthode de chant*, she explains that the repertoire she used to perform in Paris was rather limited, and that as a consequence she really felt the need to sing different *traits* to the same pieces every evening, something which was appreciated very much by her regular listeners, who rewarded every new appoggiatura to one of their favourite pieces with a warm applause. Apropos of this facility to change ornamentation on the spot, Cinti-Damoreau continues with a story about a duet in dialogue-structure she had to sing with a famous guest star one day. During the performance, the other singer unexpectedly changed all ornaments they had rehearsed before,[277] forcing Cinti-Damoreau, who had the answering part, to do likewise. She managed to improvise new ornamentations, and the performance was acclaimed more than ever. She concludes:

> Tirez de ce récit une leçon, mes chères élèves; sans l'habitude que je m'étais faite de varier tous les thèmes, de jouer, à force de travail, avec toutes les phrases musicales, j'eusse été certainement moins heureuse dans mes inspirations.[278]
>
> [Dear students, please learn one lesson from this story: when I would not have acquired this habit of varying upon all tunes, of playing (through hard work) with all musical phrases, my flashes of inspiration would definitely have been less felicitous.]

Whereas Cinti-Damoreau indicates the continuous search for variants with the beautiful word *jouer* (to play), García in a most interesting passage uses the word *improviser (cantar alla mente)*:

> Comme l'étude des ornements exige beaucoup d'exercice et qu'elle doit conduire l'artiste à improviser der variantes (*cantar alla mente*), mérite distinctif du chanteur éminent, le maître ne saurait trop exercer l'élève à varier lui-même les morceaux. Il est bon que l'élève fasse beaucoup d'exercices de ce genre et essayer plusieurs variations, plusieurs traits différents sur le même passage; de cette sorte, les observations critiques du maître porteront plus de profit. D'ailleurs, ce que l'on doit désirer, surtout chez le jeune artiste, c'est la fécondité, la correction viendra plus tard; elle sera le fruit naturel des leçons et de l'expérience. Dans le travail que nous conseillons, la correction du maître doit à la fois faire disparaître les fautes et conserver, autant que possible, les intentions du jeune auteur. La critique la plus instructive est celle qui améliore une œuvre sans la détruire.[279]
>
> [Since the study of ornaments requires much practicing and should enable the artist to improvise changes (*cantar alla mente*), a distinctive virtue of an eminent singer, the teacher cannot exercise the

[277] In duets, it was usual to agree beforehand upon the ornamentation.
[278] Cinti-Damoreau, L.: *Méthode de chant.* Paris, 1849; dedication ('À mes élèves').
[279] García, M.: *École de García,* part 2. French / German edition: Mainz, n.d.; 54.

> student enough in making his own variations. It is good when the student does many exercises like this and tries out many variants, many ornaments on the same passage; the critical remarks of the teacher will then be very useful. Especially with the young artist, one would desire productivity, correctness will follow later; it will be the natural fruit of the lessons and of experience. In the education as we advise it, the tutor's correction should make disappear the mistakes and, as much as possible, save the intentions of the young author. The most instructive critique improves a work without destroying it.]

It is telling that this passage is lacking in the revised English edition of the book: evidently an improvisatory approach to ornamentation was seen as less essential by the time of its publication (probably 1871).

Cadenzas were also supposed to be extemporised (Corri: 'Cadenzes are an extemporary Fancy';[280] William Leopold Grosse: 'a cadence is an extempore passage'[281]), but they will be treated in chapter 10. A last testimony of the naturalness of an improvisatory attitude comes from an anecdote about Manuel del Pópulo García. García *père* was teaching the young tenor Adolphe Nourrit (a friend of Frédéric Chopin), who sang an aria from Domenico Cimarosa's opera *Il matrimonio segreto*.

> Arriving at a cadenza, Nourrit executed a florid line of quite good taste. "Very good. Sing me another one."Nourrit did a second one. "Sing me another." Nourrit sang a third. "Sing me another." "I'm out of ideas," Nourrit responded. "After three cadenzas!" A real singer must be able to improvise ten – or even twenty if he so desires. For the only true singer is the one who is a true musician." [282]

### *Playing with the score: harmony*

The last sentences in the previous quotation of García *fils* betray a great pedagogue: it takes courage to let a student (who at this stage is not a beginner anymore) 'play around', trusting that the intuition and experience of the student and the efforts of the tutor will in due course lead towards the desired result. On the basis of my experience, this would also be valuable advice for a modern singer trying to learn improvising ornaments: play with the score! Don't be afraid of mistakes! The first requirement is to actually come up with something. Though this might sound simple enough, musicians know how difficult already this can be, especially for a modern classically trained musician, who is used to aspiring for the highest technical standards, while at the same time being out of touch with bel canto as a living musical language. If the modern way of striving for perfection discourages one thing, it is this very capacity to *jouer*. It requires no less than a completely different approach to music-making. Let it then be a comfort to singing students that even the great García considered this worth mentioning!

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[280] Corri, D.: op. cit., 75.
[281] Grosse, W.L.: *Grosse's Instruction in Singing*. London, n.d.; 12.
[282] Ernest Legouvé, *Soixante ans de souvenirs*. Paris, 1886. Quoted in: Radomski, J.: *Manuel García (1775-1832)*. Oxford, 2000; 266-267.

A next thing to be aware of is the crucial role of harmony. Many nineteenth-century authors stress the importance of being familiar with the principles of harmony and composition; Corri for instance writes that without knowledge of the rules of composition, 'no ornaments of cadenzes, graces, shakes, &c. &c. can be adapted, conformably to the laws of harmony and modulation.'[283] Cinti-Damoreau's cadenzas clearly show a keen sense of harmony, and García warns the 'student who has become an artist', namely when he is ready to learn about ornamentation, that 'knowledge of harmony has become indispensable'.[284] Without understanding of harmony there can be no acceptable ornaments – but what is this understanding of harmony?

Today, many musicians tend to answer that question in terms of the harmony classes they received at the conservatory. Modern harmony teaching generally has a strong analytical and reflective component, which is natural since its aim is to understand a musical language of two centuries ago. Nineteenth-century harmony pedagogy, by contrast, taught the principles of a living musical language, which made it more practice-oriented by default. The goal of classes during which 'the rules of composition' were taught was primarily to learn how to compose music according to the current expectations and taste (→ chapter 12). The question as to what extent singers were receiving such classes cannot be answered in general, but we may assume that it was only natural when a singer would play the piano at a reasonable level, and therefore had a certain practical knowledge of harmony. The singing methods contain many exercises that are supposed to be accompanied by the teacher; it is interesting that the more old-fashioned ones still rely on the tutor's capability to accompany from a figured bass, like Benelli (1814),[285] as it had been a common practice in the eighteenth century, while more and more often the accompaniments are written out in four parts – a clear indication that the practice of figured-bass-playing had become a relict in the nineteenth century. But as a vehicle of harmony teaching, the figured bass remained of importance during much of the nineteenth century. 'Understanding harmony' would in this context mean being able to realise a figured bass, to harmonise a melody, to apply correct voice leading – in writing and on the keyboard.

For a modern singer (like for any classical musician) it is absolutely advisable to be reasonably fluent on a keyboard instrument, preferably the piano. The fact remains, though, that the training of a classical musician today is generally much less focused on creating 'new' music[286] and more on performing scores. As a result, even skilled pianists today are not automatically successful in the creative sphere. The ability to come up with good-sounding harmonic progressions does not follow

[283] Corri, D.: op. cit.; 1.

[284] At least, in the original text (p. 54); the revised edition in English both dropped the matured student and weakened the necessity of harmonic knowledge, saying that 'some' knowledge is necessary.

[285] Benelli, A.: *Regole per il canto figurato / Regeln für den figurirten Gesang.* Dresden, n.d. [1814].

[286] In inverted commas because the word 'new' didn't have the modern connotation yet in the period under consideration; new music as meant here could (and can) be very commonplace without any problem. See chapter 12.2.

as a matter of course. In addition, in the modern situation of hyper-specialisation it can easily happen that someone is a great singer without ever having learnt to play the piano at all. Consequently, the attention of this singer – or any player of a melody-instrument in the same situation – tends to be directed exclusively towards the melody, not to harmony. Therefore, the question should nowadays be: how can a singer integrate the harmonic aspect of music with the melody-focused approach he naturally has? This is neither about analysing the harmonic structure of a score nor about being able to play the piano accompaniment: it is about including the harmonic parameter in the musical imagination, the 'inner hearing'.

The significance of this idea of course by far exceeds the area of vocal performance, and it will therefore be elaborated further in chapter 14. What matters here is how singers can develop sufficient familiarity with the harmony of a passage that they would like to vary upon. On basis of lessons I gave to singers from a wide scope of professional development, it can be supposed that it is helpful for a singer to actually sing these chords. In many cases, this requires a reduction of the texture of the accompaniment to its basic harmonic manifestation. Since the musical imagination of the singer has to be activated, the best way to do this is through sound: either by the singer playing the chords, or by listening to another pianist or even a recording. Starting with the (probably simplified) bass line, the chord structures can be aurally acquired as intervallic structures over the bass, and sung accordingly. The result will be an arpeggiation of the important chords as they appear above the bass (without necessarily using the term 'inversions'). Analysis in the form of describing scale degrees, inversions, harmonic functions, etc., is a useful way to conceptualise the harmonic progressions, but certainly cannot replace this crucial aural step.

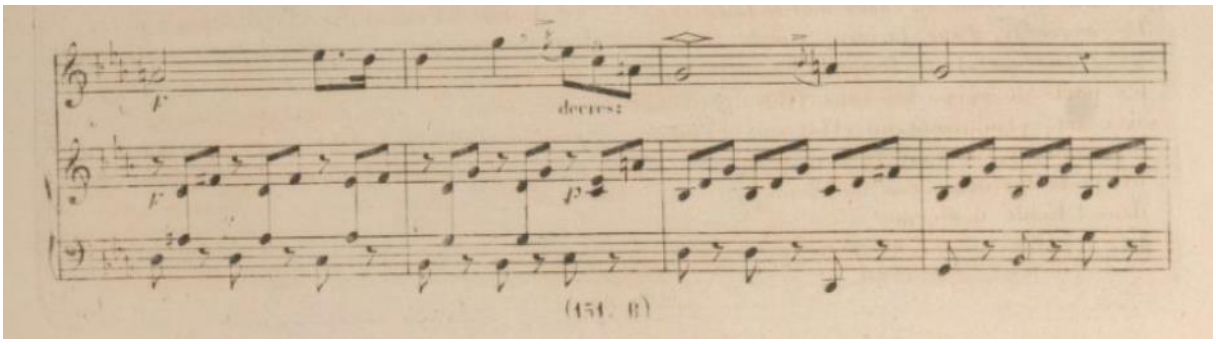
When it comes to *jouer* with a passage, the aural imagination of the harmonic component is indispensable. While the principle explained above can be applied to a variety of harmonic patterns (→ chapter 11.5), in the specific case of bel canto ornamentation the range will be much more limited. Following the ideas of Lablache, it will be good to be well aware of the phrase structure of a piece, and to select one particular phrase to 'play' with, as Cinti-Damoreau advises. The harmonic progression will most likely be a variant of a perfect authentic cadence. One could pick one of the models used by Winter or García *père*, but it might be more appealing to choose a phrase from an existing composition. García provides the reader with a list of pieces he considers 'well chosen' for the study of ornamentation:[287]

[287] García, M.: *École de García,* part 2. French / German edition: Mainz, n.d.; 56.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| CAV. | »Sovra il sen la man mi posa.« | *Sonnambula.* |
| RONDO. | »Ah non giunge uman pensiero.« | *Sonnambula.* |
| CAV. | »Una voce poco fa.« | *Barbiere.* |
| RONDO. | »Nacqui all' affanno.« | *Cenerentola* |
| RONDO. | »Tanti affetti al cor d'intorno.« | *Donna del Lago.* |
| VARIATIONS. | »Nel cor piu non mi sento.« | *La Molinara.* |
| AIR. | »Di piacer mi balza il cor.« | *Gazza ladra.* |
| AIR. | »La placida campagna.« | *La principessa in Campagna.* |
| AIR. | »Jours de mon enfance.« | *Pré-aux-Clercs.* |
| AIR. | »Dieu! que viens-je de lire?« | *Ambassadrice.* |
| AIR. | »Dès l'enfance les mêmes chaines.« | *Serment.* |
| AIR. | »Voyez-vous là-bas« | *Sirène* |
| AIR. | »Ah! je veux briser ma chaine« | *Diamants de la Couronne.* |

*Example 4.6.1*

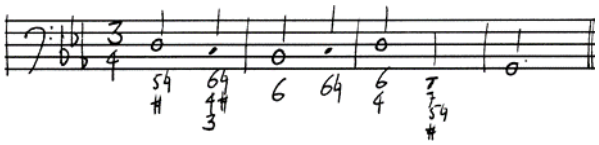
Alternatively, one could use the *Leçons* Alexis de Garaudé included in his *Méthode*, which have the explicit (and quite unique) goal of serving as *une espèce de canevas à broderies*:[288] an 'outline left to the performers abilities to colour', as Burney wrote (→ chapter 3.2), in other words: etudes for ornamenting (see appendix). This is one phrase, taken from De Garaudé's first *Leçon*; it consolidates a modulation to the key of g minor.[289]




*Example 4.6.2*

The reduced harmony in this case practically coincides with the piano accompaniment. Singing the chords in an arpeggiated form focuses on their interval structures, as was mentioned above. The traditional graphic representation of this approach to harmony is the figured bass. In my view there is nothing against reviving this no longer current notational system, even for musicians who will never play basso continuo; after all, music from the figured-bass era is a natural part of our current music culture, which was much less the case in the nineteenth century. A figured bass reduction of the example above reads:

[288] Garaudé, A. de: *Méthode complète de chant.* Paris, 1854; 268.
[289] Garaudé, A. de: op. cit., 269.



*Example 4.6.3*

For a proper and effective 'understanding' of the harmonic phrase, it will be good for the singer to explore the voice leading as well. By starting on a random tone from the first chord, the singer can sing one of the voices of the 'harmonic connections' as described in section 4.5 while the harmony sounds – in reality or in the imagination – and then proceed with the other voices. Rather than trying to apply the well-known voice leading rules (which suppose an overview of all voices, and hence are thought for a keyboard player or composer), it will be wiser to focus on the contrapuntal relation between one harmonic voice and the bass, for instance in avoiding parallel perfect consonances. (A good exercise is to play the bass and at the same time sing the harmonic voice, something that players with very modest keyboard skills can also learn.) Next the original solo melody can be reduced to its basics (i.e. stripped of composed ornamental material) and be compared with the harmonic voices.
By means of such preparatory exercises, the harmonic structure of a phrase ideally has been made part of the musical imagination of the singer, and the foundation of any improvised ornamental structure has been laid. It is true that when a singer is completely unexperienced in this, the harmonic material from this single example might be too limited for developing a skill in this field. Indeed a proper basis in ear training will facilitate much of what follows.

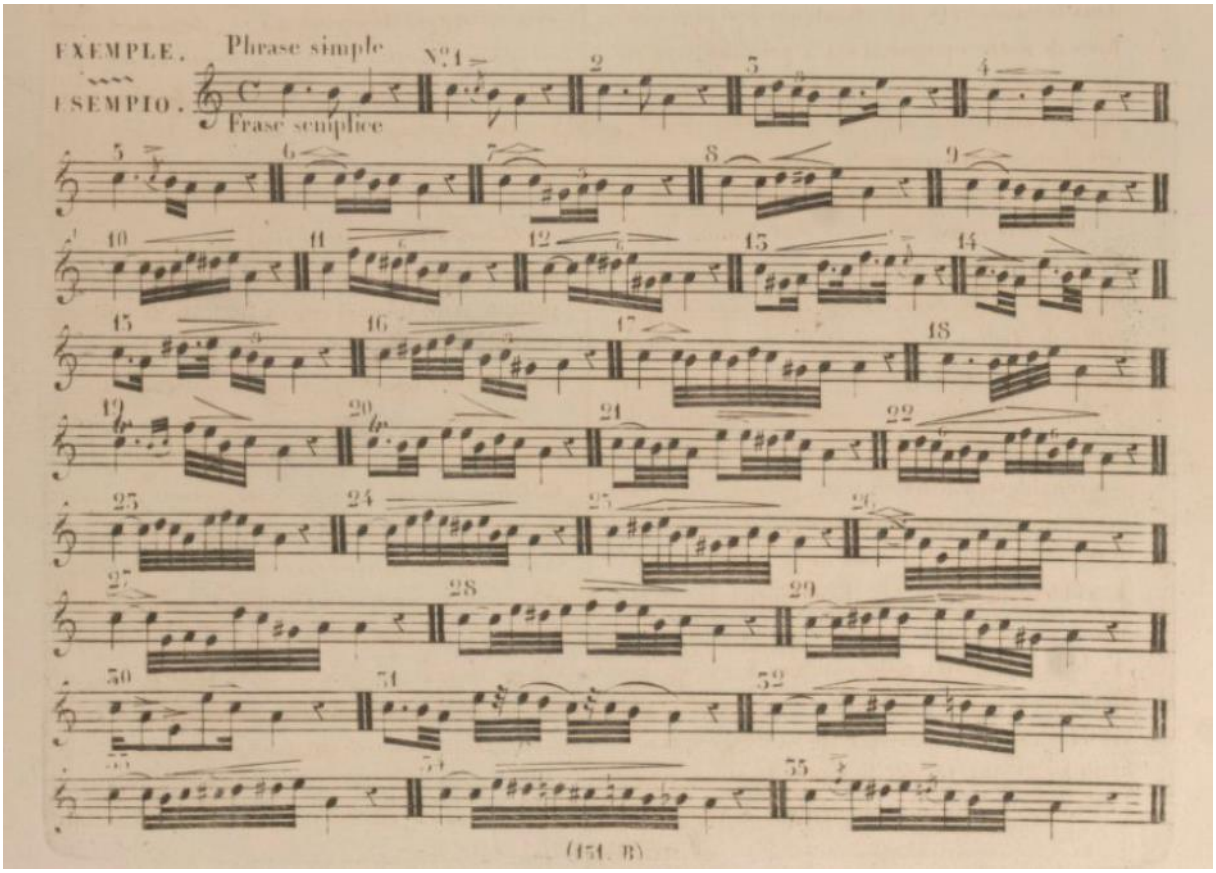
### *Playing with the score: melodic patterns*

On basis of a well-integrated harmonic understanding of the phrase, it will be good to follow García's advice and try out different melodic possibilities over the harmony. This is the moment where the question of musical style becomes more important. In this very specific instance of relative improvisation within a well-defined stylistic context, most likely both singer and audience tend to expect ornamentation that convincingly suits this context. This might sound like a truism, but when one improvises a long cadenza it might be an artistically justifiable and even interesting choice to do the opposite and aim for a stylistic clash. In the case of embellishments to a melody, however, such a clash would simply sound like a mistake. This stylistic correctness in the first place relates to the treatment of dissonances, which as it were frames and limits the melodic possibilities. It has been said that the history of Western musical styles from the pre-Classical period to around 1900 is characterised by an ever-increasing acceptance of dissonance.[290] The position of bel canto on this gliding scale is pretty much on the consonant side, by and large ruled by late-eighteenth-century

[290] Cf. e.g. Schönberg, A.: 'Gesinnung oder Erkenntnis' [1925] (in: *Stil und Gedanke*. Frankfurt, 1976), and *Harmonielehre* (Wien, 1911).

principles. This means, for instance, that unprepared accented dissonances are actually always appoggiaturas, and that the use of chromatics is restrained. Another feature the bel canto-style has in common with the classical style (as in Haydn and Mozart) is the very clear harmonic orientation towards the three primary degrees, but as a matter of course this aspect rather concerns situations in which the harmony can be determined by the performer, such as cadenzas.

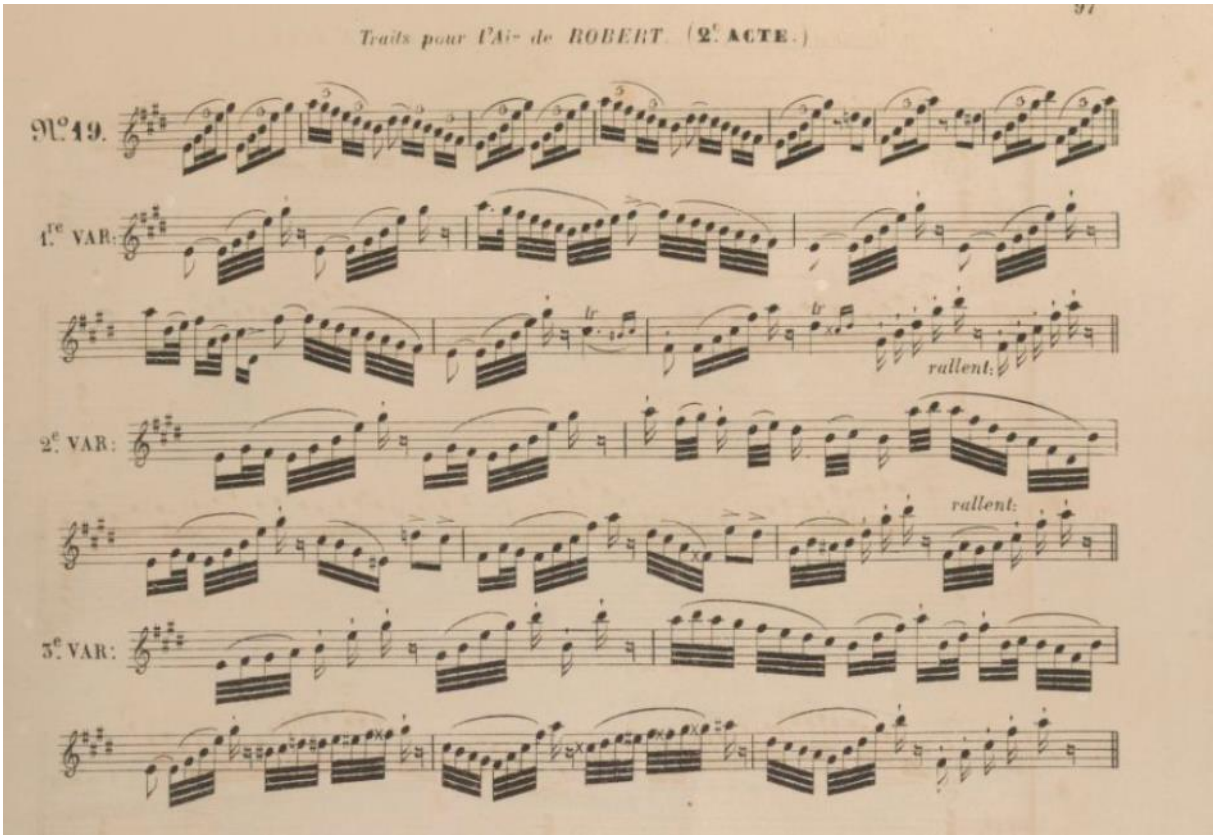
Within this frame it is very well possible to 'play' with a phrase and find all kinds of stylistically possible melodic variants, and as a stage on the way towards real *belcanto* ornamentation this is certainly an advisable thing to do. However, this is not yet what one would call 'ornamentation'. As was shown earlier, ornamentation proper often takes what I termed 'anchor tones' as its starting point. A short formula can be varied and amplified by adding ornamental flourishes 'on the weak beats', as García explained. A good example, already briefly mentioned above, is given by De Garaudé (for the full example, please see the appendix):[291]




*Example 4.6.4*

[291] Garaudé, A. de: *Méthode complète de chant.* Paris, 1854; 267.

Note that De Garaudé's use of the word 'phrase' for such a short formula is atypical, even in the context of his own work.[292] When a complete phrase (in the sense of a longer unit, usually four bars) is ornamented, it is principally a matter of joining together figures such as those shown above. The following example by Cinti-Damoreau (ex. 4.6.5), taken from Isabelle's aria in the second act of Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, shows how the firm harmonic basis enables her to increase the distances between anchor tones, with longer embellishments as a result. In the second bar of the model for instance, she only uses the high a'' as an anchor tone and not the d#'', which gives her much more freedom to come up with virtuosic variants on the B7 chord. Also note how already in the first variation she varies upon the second halves of the fifth and sixth bars by getting rid of the appoggiaturas in the original, and choosing for the harmonically important tones c#'' and d#'', supported harmonically by secondary dominants. This focus on harmony opens the passage for the inventive upward chromatic scales in variation 3.[293]




*Example 4.6.5*

Especially in fast movements the variants can develop a rhythmic continuity, as in the Rossini-example in section 4.5 (ex. 4.5.4).

[292] Garaudé, A. de: op. cit., 136.
[293] Cinti-Damoreau, L.: *Méthode de chant.* Paris, 1849; 97.

A modern reader who is confronted with notated examples of bel canto ornamentation can be baffled by the sheer virtuosity of many of them, an impression that only increases when vocal cadenzas are taken into account. It is a degree of virtuosity that many singers nowadays haven't attained and that to us seems to have almost instrumental characteristics. This is another instance that suggests a deep separation between the early-nineteenth-century way of singing and modern vocal technique. Also in this respect, a much greater flexibility seems to have existed in the nineteenth century, as opposed to a more sustained, powerful but also stiffer tone production today. One not only wonders how singers managed to sing so fast, but also how they were supposed to come up extempore with such fast passage work. The latter question arises from the experience that there is a limit to the possible speed of thinking during improvisation. Undoubtedly this is a personal limit, prone to development by training, but most improvisers will agree that being in control becomes problematic when the density of musical events crosses a critical point.

One and the same answer is proposed to both questions here. I would like to suggest that both circumstances – the unusual vocal virtuosity and the speed of the extempore passages – can be explained by taking the bel canto system of vocal training into account. Bel canto ornamentation, including cadenzas, tends to be built on a repertoire of specific melodic patterns such as scales (diatonic and chromatic), arpeggios and all sorts of little motifs around one tone. It is exactly these patterns which give the embellishments such an instrumental ring, since the same patterns occur very often in instrumental etudes and virtuosic music from this period. As for vocal music, they show most clearly in cadenzas, which have not yet been discussed. A more systematic overview of ornamental loci therefore will be given only in chapter 9.5. The point here is that these very patterns were meticulously trained in technical exercises that formed the heart of bel canto vocal training. This not only answers the question how this degree of virtuosity was attained, but also explains why it must have been very well possible to improvise such virtuosic music: the patterns were to a certain extent automatised and therefore callable. Singing fast scales as part of daily practice makes it much easier to use scale patterns in an improvised ornament than when one hardly works with such technical exercises, as seems to be predominantly the case today.

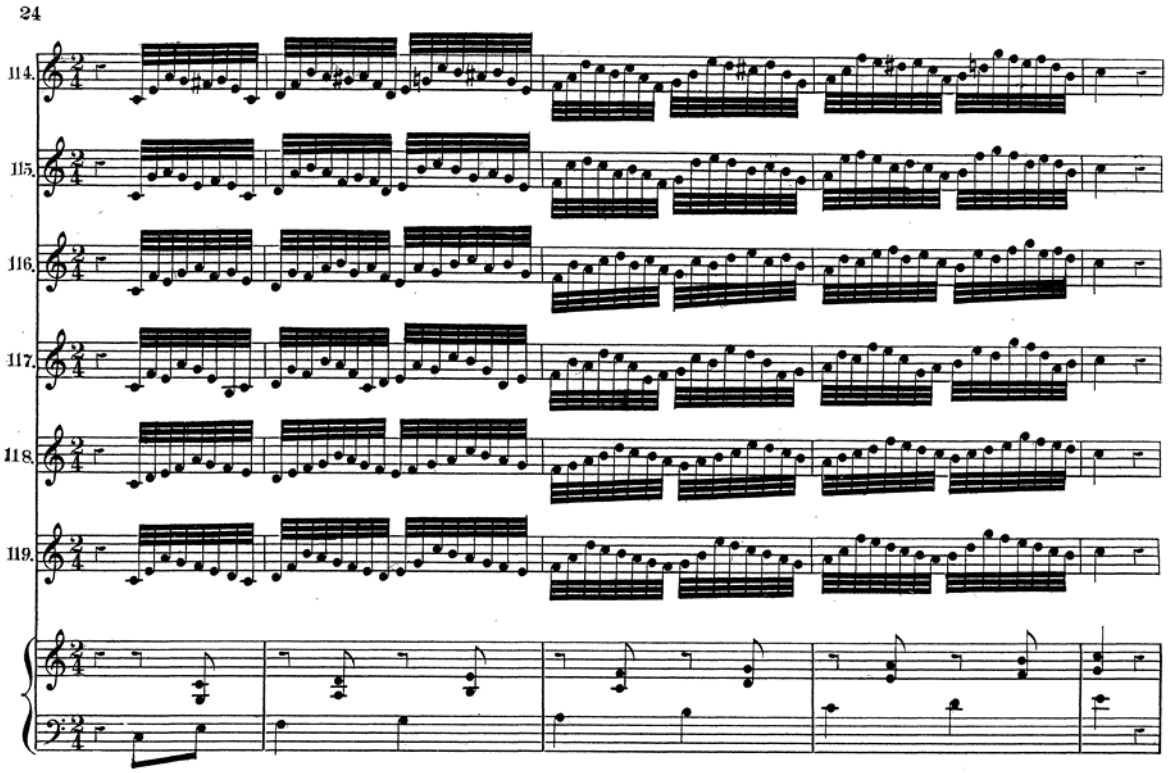
Though there are certainly differences between bel canto singing methods, the overall structure many of them have in common is based upon exercises and *solfeggi*. Basic skills are at first addressed in exercises that are invariably organised as sequences on the major or minor scale, accompanied by a piano harmonisation. The *solfeggi* are accompanied as well and serve as vocal etudes in which the material from the exercises finds a more musical application.

For the purpose of this study, the many exercises that aim to improve the agility of the voice are especially interesting. It would be incorrect to assume that all bel canto singing students had to pass through the same mould. Mancini writes:

> The pupil is mistaken when he thinks that only agility can bring success to a singer, and the teacher is wrong in his belief that a person having a heavy and raw voice, can change it with study and make it agile and paste-like.[294]

Not every singer had to become a coloratura specialist! On the other hand, the training was very much focused on technique, and agility was developed as a matter of course.

García is again the most exhaustive source for this type of vocal training. Exercises such as those shown below (ex. 4.6.6)[295] reveal a strong similarity with instrumental drills from the first half of the nineteenth century; the most famous (though rather late) example is probably Charles-Louis Hanon's *Le pianiste virtuose* (1873).



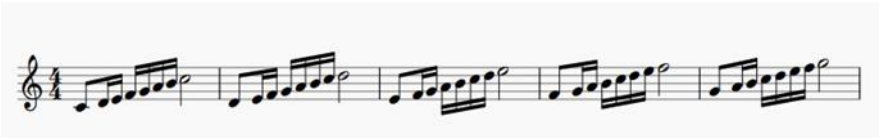

*Example 4.6.6*

By practicing similar exercises intensively, a student not only developed the agility of the voice, but at the same time became familiar with a large quantity of patterns that could be used in ornamental situations. To some this may sound a bit uncreative and disappointing, as if chunks of music are 'recorded' in memory, ready to be used in appropriate situations. I believe that this idea would be incorrect. What is being 'automatised' with such exercises is not in the first place the melodic shapes as such: after all, the exercises explore more or less any (harmonically and melodically) possible

[294] Mancini, G.B.: *Pensieri e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato* [1774]. Transl.: *Practical reflections on the figurative art of singing*. Boston, 1912; 148.
[295] García, M.: García's New Treatise... Boston, n.d.; 24.

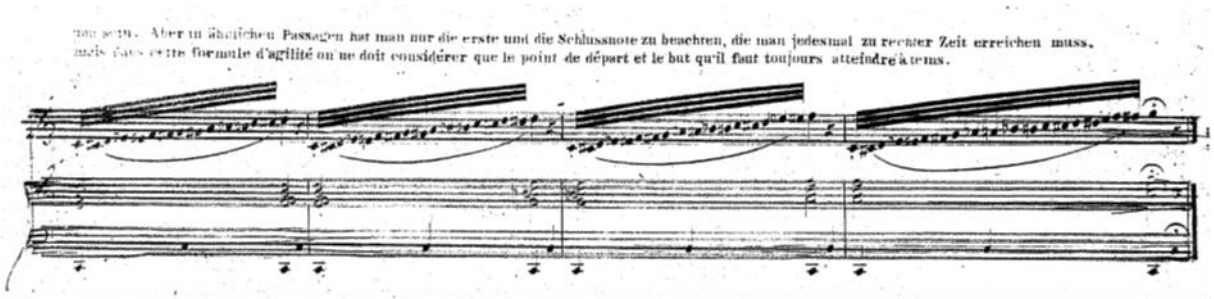
variant, so that they don't form a limitation to fantasy in this respect. Most likely, any 'spontaneous' ornament would contain melodic information that can also be found in some exercise. The importance of the exercises with regard to automatisation or internalisation is rather rhythmic by nature: it is not the ornamental melody as such the singer learns by heart, it is its rhythmic planning that he internalises.[296]

An example may clarify this. An unexperienced improviser might in the spur of the moment get the idea to use a scale as an ornament, for instance in order to connect two anchor tones at an octave's distance. Surely, the singer will be familiar with the 'tune' as such of a rising major scale. This familiarity in itself however does not yet guarantee its successful use in an ornamental situation. What is necessary is the capacity to 'plan' the application of the 'tune' of a rising scale in the specific rhythmic situation of that moment. Experiences with students show that this needs to be practised: the matter is not only at which tone to arrive, but especially when this happens. It is by exercises such as the following one that rhythmic standard solutions for this type of situations become internalised:



*Example 4.6.7*

When the ornamental structure is rhythmically indeterminate, as in what the French pianist Marguerite Long called *gammes lancées*,[297] it seems less necessary to 'plan' the rhythmic form. In the following example by Duprez[298] for instance, most performers will be inclined to focus rhythmically on the anchor tones, without consciously imagining a clear rhythmic structure for the chromatic scale in between.




*Example 4.6.8*

[296] That is, in metrically fixed situations, as they are the subject of this discussion. A free *senza tempo* cadenza puts different requirements.
[297] Long, M.: *Le piano.* Paris, 1959; 51.
[298] Duprez, G.: *L'Art du chant / Die Kunst des Gesanges.* Berlin, n.d. [1846]; 89.

In reality, however, the performance of this type of virtuosic chromatic scales demands a very thorough internalisation of the rhythmic structure. How this could work becomes clear in an exercise of Lablache:[299]

*Example 4.6.9*

By practicing slowly in this manner, the shapeless whole of a long chromatic scale gets subdivided into smaller units with the compass of a third. Performing chromatic scales as *gammes lancées* means concatenating these internalised building blocks – a process that in itself might become an automatism. Lablache's division of a rhythmically amorphous lot into groups of three or four matches the way in which classical musicians still practise: musical imagination tends to organise patterns in groups of three or four or, occasionally, five or at most six tones. It is exactly this type of organisation that also forms the basis of the countless technical exercises as in García's *École.* Consequently, the figures in the example from García's book (cited above) will be imagined by most singers as two groups of four instead of one group of eight notes.

Finally, it is interesting that García invites students to design their own exercises, namely by turning any technical problem into a sequence exercise such as the ones printed in the book. He even explains how a pattern can be modified in order to provide a smooth connection to the next degree in the sequence (another passage that is missing in the revised English translation).[300] Whereas García *fils* advised the student to write down his own exercises, his father, García *père*, is said to have invited the student to produce them on the spot, according to María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo, comtesse de Merlin, who was his student in the 1820's:

> A mesure que l'instrument de la voix se perfectionnait, García faisait exécuter jusqu'aux exercices les plus difficiles pour la rendre apte à surmonter tous les obstacles; mais il indiquait rarement un trait à ses élèves: il leur faisait un accord sur le piano, puis il leur disait: «Faites ce que vous voudrez... encore... encore un... encore.» Et souvent de recommencer dix et vingt fois. Qu'en résultait-il? Que l'élève faisait selon sa voix et selon son âme, et que, par conséquent, ses traits étaient toujours bien exécutés et gardaient un caractère d'individualité qui, tout en lui appartenant, se trouvait en harmonie avec le gout

[299] Lablache, L.: *Méthode complète de chant.* Paris, 1840; 66.
[300] García, M.: *École de García,* part 2. French / German edition: Mainz, n.d.; 82.

> du moment, dont il suivait, sans s'en douter, les inspirations. Un autre avantage de cette manière de faire le trait était que l'élève devenait maitre de l'instrument à force d'exercer ses propres inspirations, et que si, au moment de commencer un air, il se trouvait mal disposé, il pouvait substituer subitement un trait a un autre, sans crainte ni hésitation.
>
> [To the degree that the vocal instrument was progressing in perfection, García had the student execute up to the most difficult exercises in order to make the voice capable of surmounting all obstacles. But rarely did he indicate a specific trait [embellished passage] to his students. He played them a chord on the piano, and then said to them: "Do what you wish... again... another one... again." Often beginning again ten or twenty times. What was the result of this? That the student performed according to his voice and according to his soul, and that, consequently, the passages he sang were always well-executed and retained a character of individuality which, belonging completely to him, was in harmony with the taste of the moment, following those inspirations without doubting himself. Another advantage of this manner of doing the *trait* was that the student became master of the instrument by means of exercising his own inspirations, and that if, at the moment of beginning an aria, he found himself ill-disposed, he could substitute suddenly one *trait* for another, without fear or hesitation.[301]]

Sometimes the idea comes up that, in order to approach a specific historical performance style, today's musicians should be trained in the same way as the musicians of the period in question. Improvisatory bel canto ornamentation might seem to be a clear-cut instance for such an approach. To conclude this chapter, the value of this idea will briefly be examined.

### *Early techniques and modern vocal training*

In 2008, the German *Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* made an attempt to put together an overview of current views on the teaching of music theory at German *Hochschulen.*[302] The responses were very diverse, and local situations and teaching personalities turned out to be hard to compare. If this is true for a relatively well-defined area within a homogeneous category of institutions of higher music education in one country, it seems that one should be very careful about making firm pronouncements about something such as vocal teaching in general, let alone two hundred years ago. At best general tendencies can be pointed out – which however can be very significant. Modern classical vocal teaching, for example, is at least as diverse as the world of German music theory; on the other hand, the demands made by the international concert world upon a singer's competence are relatively stable. As a negative result of this, it has become quite common to complain about uniformity in modern performance.

[301] Merlin, María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo, comtesse de: *Madame Malibran*. Bruxelles, 1838; 34-35. Translation: James Radomski. Quoted in Radomski, J.: *Manuel García (1775-1832).* Oxford, 2000; 265-266.
[302] Kühn, C.: 'Musiktheorie lehren. Zu einer Umfrage an den deutschen Musikhochschulen.' *ZGMTH* 7/1 (2010).

One overwhelming characteristic of 'classical music' (i.e., the modern practice of music-making on the basis of scores from the past) is the enormous scope of repertoire that is involved. The situation Winter signaled in Germany has now expanded beyond the imagination of an early-nineteenth-century musician:

> Der italienische Opernsänger hat immer seine Gesangstücke aus derselben gefälligen Schule vorzutragen; dem Opern Compositeur wird von jedem Sänger das Tonregister vorgeschrieben, in welchem sich die Cantilene bewegen soll. (...) Der deutsche Sänger ist gewöhnlich in dem Falle in dem kurzen Zeitraume eines Monats eine Gluckische, Cherubinische, Rossinische und Mozartische Oper vortragen zu müssen. Welcher characteristische Unterschied bezeichnet nicht die Compositionen dieser Meister?[303]
>
> [The Italian opera singer always performs music from the same comfortable tradition; every singer tells the opera composer in which register the aria should be written. (...) The German singer usually has to perform within the time-span of one month operas by Gluck, Cherubini, Rossini and Mozart. How different are the characteristics of the compositions of these masters!]

His twenty-first-century counterpart can draw from a repertoire that encompasses more than ten centuries. As was mentioned in chapter 1.3, the modern musical practice we call 'classical music' has its raison d'être in musical scores, and therefore it is self-evident that the teaching of singing also usually draws on musical compositions from a variety of periods. These are often 'masterworks', or at least compositions that are still seen as valuable today, a judgment that is subject to change. It is interesting in this respect to follow the developing taste by comparing older editions of long-lasting collections for teaching purposes such as *Das Lied im Unterricht* with newer ones which show significant changes in content. With respect to bel canto, we can be sure that our idea of the repertoire (dominated by star-composers such as Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini) differs considerably from the picture that arises from the theatre programs of that time. We are cherry-picking from the ever growing body of musical compositions, creating our own classical truth. Stylistic diversity nowadays is a matter of course for stages and for musicians alike, which reflects in vocal training. No singer can survive by performing exclusively in a stylistic environment that is as focused as Laure Cinti-Damoreau's or Maria Malibran's was. As a result, many singers are only superficially familiar with the styles they perform, even much more than their German colleagues in Winter's days.

With respect to both vocal and instrumental technique, there is a strong tendency today to increase virtuosity by means of studying well-chosen repertoire, not by practicing separate dry exercises. It is not unlikely that this development goes hand in hand with a spectacular growth in scientific knowledge of human physiology over the past century, and more recently of psychological and neurological aspects of practicing and performing. In my view, this knowledge is primarily being

[303] Winter, P. von: *Vollstaendige Singschule.* Mainz, n.d. [1824]; 3.

deployed to increase efficiency and to prevent injuries. The mechanical repetition of exercises, for instance, is often seen as something mindless that should be avoided. However, this modern attitude discourages 'playing with' the score in the sense described in this study, because it tends to understand the notated music as a technical task that should be fulfilled. To be sure, the advice to apply various ways of practising is a common one. As natural trumpet player and study coach Susan Williams puts it:

> Practicing a piece or phrase in a variety of ways – even ways you would not dream of performing it – results in better learning and enhances confidence. Rather than only varying single aspects (e.g. tempo, rhythm, articulation, dynamics), it is better to vary the entire character or emotion associated with a piece. For example play a segment as if it is a lullaby, a march, with a light dancing quality, or in a sombre introspective way, etc.[304]

The techniques Williams suggests – she also advises repeating sections in a random order[305] – surely are valuable ways to avoid 'mindless repetition'. However, I argue that this is not what Cinti-Damoreau meant by 'jouer'. The purpose of exercises as mentioned by Williams is to say something different with the same notes, whereas Cinti-Damoreau asks her students to say the same thing with different notes.

Another feature of modern singing teaching is that only with very few exceptions, professional musicians receive their training at official institutions such as conservatories, *Hochschulen* or universities. The organisation of such institutions is roughly similar worldwide: there is a study program with various subjects, of which the actual singing lesson is only one; different subjects are generally being taught by different teachers; there are exams, which means that there have to be standards; standards imply at least a certain amount of agreement on the content of subjects. In short: modern professional musical training is institutionalised. No matter how important the differences between institutions, the student's education has to meet an extensive range of requirements. Where an early-nineteenth-century pedagogue could still refer to 'good taste', the role of this concept has, in a way, been taken over by the apparent objectivity of 'learning outcomes'.[306]

The situation during the first half of the nineteenth century could hardly be more different. Conservatories derive their name from the Italian *conservatori*, originally schools where orphans were educated in music: the opulent Roman Catholic church music was always in need of singers and other musicians. The first secular conservatory was founded in Paris in 1795, initially with a similar but secularised purpose: to train musicians for official celebrations. During the nineteenth century, many more were founded across Europe and the United States; however, by no means did the

[304] Williams, S.: *Quality Practice: A Musician's Guide.* Bremen, 2017; 46.
[305] Williams, S.: op. cit., 48.
[306] The insight that modern 'assessment criteria' are to a large extent arbitrary, or at least based upon choices with histories, will play an important role in chapter 7.

nineteenth-century conservatory have an exclusive claim on professionality that its modern counterpart possesses.[307] Many famous nineteenth-century composers and performers did not study at a conservatory, and many famous musicians who were also sought-after as a tutor did not teach at such an institution.

Nineteenth-century musical education must have been very diverse. Even comparing only the conservatory curricula from that time with today's would require a separate study. Many methods that play such an important role in this chapter were written for the Paris conservatory, such as those by Mengozzi, De Garaudé, García and Cinti-Damoreau – but with respect to ornamentation, they describe a world that was already in the process of decline. Thanks to Countess Merlin, we have some detailed (though anecdotal) reports about the teaching of García *père*; though it would be incorrect to generalise here, his teaching is still important for this study since he was regarded as a world class singer as well as a brilliant pedagogue in his day. Therefore his work with students may serve as a paragon of bel canto teaching. His attention was not directed to vocal technique exclusively, but to musicianship in general. García's teaching laid the foundation for his son's famous method, and he taught his two daughters who both were to become world famous singers: Pauline Viardot and Maria Malibran. Both girls were imbued with music in their childhood because their father made them sing with the family in salons, thus developing their intuitive musicianship. They studied piano from the age of five before they started to study voice seriously, with additional lessons in counterpoint, fugue and composition.

This might still sound like an ideal world to a modern singer, but the surprise comes with the actual vocal teaching. From the moment when Maria began serious study, her father exclusively allowed her to sing exercises (scales, solfeggios)![308] García must have been aware that this can be very tedious: he writes in his *Exercises pour la Voix* (dedicated to the Countess Merlin) that one of the most important qualities a singing student needs is *une grande dose de patience*.[309] This was the tradition of teaching as he knew it. Allegedly the famous Italian master Nicola Porpora had his student, the equally famous castrato Caffarelli, sing exercises for years and never leave the master's studio, until he told him one day: 'Go, my friend, you are the best singer of Italy and of the entire world'.[310] In the end García *père*'s students were allowed to learn arias, however without text! As Countess Merlin writes, one day he would judge the student to be an artist, and say to him in the best

[307] It still happens today that brilliant young talents receive their musical training outside a conservatory, but on a much smaller scale than in the nineteenth century.
[308] Radomski, J.: *Manuel García (1775 – 1832).* Oxford, 2000; 268-269.
[309] García, M. del Pópulo: *Exercises pour la voix.* Paris, n.d. [1835];10.
[310] Radomski, J.: op. cit., 270.

tradition of Porpora: 'You are a singer: out into the world, *you can go.*'[311] Needless to say, this behaviour would cause some difficulties in a modern conservatory environment…

The picture that appears from such anecdotes is a completely different relation between preparation and performance, compared with nowadays. Whereas most modern performers tend to practice to perfection the act of performing itself in all its details, the old Italian school of bel canto prepared the basis, the capacity to perform, and let the performance itself be a unique event. It is the improvisatory approach in due form! This attitude made it possible for singers to work in a musical world that demanded originality. Of course, postponing the text while learning an aria did not imply any negligence of the words; on the contrary. The musicologist James Radomski quotes George Sand, who witnessed Pauline Viardot's first performances in Paris:

> Si elle adopte un trait, si elle prononce une phrase, elle en rétablit le sens corrompu, elle en retrouve la lettre perdue.
>
> [When she takes up some line, when she pronounces a phrase, she re-establishes in it the sense that had been corrupted, she finds therein the lost letter. 312]

The most stunning example of the improvisatory approach comes from an anecdote about García *père* as a singer. García was engaged for an opera production in Naples, with Isabella Colbran (later to become the wife of Rossini) as his partner. García didn't like the opera, and refused to learn his part by heart and only recited during the rehearsals with his score in his hand – including the dress rehearsal. Colbran was of course extremely worried about the quality of the nearby performance, but García assured her that it would be all right. He asked the prompter to speak his text clearly, 'and as for the music, I'll take care of that'. At the premiere, it turned out that García had used the rehearsals to learn the harmonic background of the music, which enabled him to completely improvise his part on the provided harmony during the performance.[313]

Let us return to the question put at the beginning of this section: could a modern singer decide to completely adapt the bel canto way of vocal training? There are a few circumstances that would make this very difficult.

*a.* Training only the general capacity and leaving the performance to the stage requires something fundamental: an absolute familiarity with the musical language of the composition. The García family must have been breathing the music they performed; it was around them all the time – and the same thing goes for other singers from the same tradition. There is no way a singer nowadays can get close to this situation because bel canto operas irrevocably belong to the past.

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[311] Quoted ibidem.
[312] 'Le Théâtre-Italien et Mlle. Pauline García.' In : *Revue des deux monde* (February, 1840); 587. Quoted in: Radomski, J.: op. cit., 270.
[313] Radomski, J.: op. cit., 267-268.

*b.* Something we know very little about is the frequency and the length of nineteenth-century singing lessons. This may have varied greatly, but it is not unlikely that the contact between teacher and student in those days could be much more frequent than what is feasible nowadays within a conservatory environment. In his *L'Art de toucher le Clavecin* (1716), François Couperin advised the harpsichord teacher never to let a beginning student practice without his presence, and even to lock the instrument and to keep the key.[314] It seems plausible that an average singing lesson was more like practicing with the student than working on interpretation – if only because repertoire occupied such a small place. It is true that several important methods pay a lot of attention to interpretation, García *fils*'s method above all. These books, however, functioned within a conservatory environment, and were partly intended for 'outsiders' who did not always have this innate familiarity with the bel canto style. The approach of García *père* was already old-fashioned by then. Other aspects are the length of the period a tutor was involved with a student, and the age at which the professional training took place. Reports about this are contradictory, but generally, the age at which singers made their debuts seems to have been earlier than nowadays.

*c.* The vocal training in the heyday of bel canto was not only focusing on a very well-defined and narrow repertoire; it was also assuming a very wide range of compositional quality within these boundaries. It should not be forgotten that ornaments and variants were also supposed to improve less interesting music – music that generally is no longer being performed today. Already at that time, García *père*'s abovementioned *tour de force* would not have been accepted if the opera in case was regarded a masterpiece. If we would imitate the training method in all details, we probably should also imitate all aspects of the musical practice – including the constant production of new pieces under very high time pressure. It is clear that we can't.

On the other hand: if we would like to regain something of this improvisatory approach, if we accept that extempore ornamentation is an essential feature of performing bel canto music, we cannot ignore the methodical prerequisites as they already existed at that time. A singer who intends to make stylistically convincing ornaments needs to internalise ornamental loci: there is no other way to propel the imagination. We will never be like early nineteenth-century Italians: our horizon will never coincide with theirs. We can, however, attempt to fuse horizons, enriching modern training techniques with the essentials of bel canto teaching. How precisely this should be done in practice is not a question that can be answered here, if alone because the author lacks expertise in this area. As will be shown in chapter 5, there are many similarities with instrumental training; the issue of practising technical exercises is relevant there as well. One important difference though, worth mentioning here, is that, differently from instrumental music, the virtuosity[315] in vocal compositions

[314] Couperin, F.: *L'Art de toucher le Clavecin.* Paris, 1716 ; 7-8.
[315] In this context, 'virtuosity' refers mainly to the agility of the voice.

rarely reaches the level that is attained in some exercises – and in notated ornamentation. This means that, more than in the case of, e.g., piano music, the decision to develop vocal technique only by means of repertoire implies that the level of virtuosity will remain limited. In short, whoever only practices compositions is not likely to be able to perform the more difficult forms of ornamentation. Therefore, there is not only a musical but also a technical reason to somehow incorporate the kinds of exercises typically used in nineteenth-century bel canto training. Perhaps García's advice to create your own exercises is precisely the way to incorporate those nineteenth-century drills within a modern understanding of technical training.

There is one more way in which scale-based technical exercises can be helpful in modern music education: they are a great way to practice ear-training, especially when students think out their own patterns. Sequencing a pattern throughout the entire scale develops the musical imagination and increases the awareness of the relation with the tonic. It is a type of exercises that can easily be extrapolated to other modes than just major and minor, in this way approaching a daily practice in jazz training.

At the end of this chapter I would like to emphasise once more that adopting a historically inspired improvisatory approach to bel canto means embracing the idea of 'musical sensitivity' in all its aspects. For singers, this entails a true paradigm-shift, and especially the institutionalisation of music education is a huge barrier in this. What I hope is that the same impetus that led conservatories to put 'improvisation' on the agenda may awaken the curiosity of young singers to explore forgotten traditions in order to fertilise modern performances. Even though this chapter only offered some 'stepping stones', they hopefully can be of some value for the guidance of the development of a historically inspired vocal training. More original examples will be much needed by singers who intend to broaden their vocabulary; for a selection of these I refer to the appendix of this study.

# Chapter 5. *Clavier und Gesang*: singing on instruments

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the influence of bel canto on nineteenth-century instrumental music will be examined. I will argue that the importance of Italian opera within the context of Western music was such that its performance tradition, including extempore facets, influenced other areas of music-making. Indeed, several instrumental methods show traces of bel canto-oriented thinking: Pierre Baillot's *L'Art du violon* and Louis Drouët's *Méthode pour la flute* will be presented as examples. In addition, the music for piano most clearly shows the direct influence of bel canto. Arrangements of vocal compositions for this instrument were a popular musical genre, and many original compositions for piano refer to vocal music. Even the opposite occurred: sometimes piano music was turned into songs. I will argue that bel canto served as a reference not only for song-like piano compositions themselves, but also for the way how they were performed. 'Instrumental bel canto' was part of the horizon of many nineteenth-century scores. The importance of the piano within nineteenth-century music-making will be discussed, along with the connection between the sound of nineteenth-century pianos and the possibilities of evoking vocal music on these instruments. An important part of the chapter is devoted to Frédéric Chopin, the composer who more than anyone else referred explicitly to bel canto in his piano music. It is especially what we know about the way he performed his own music, or compositions by other composers, that offers clues for a renewed orientation on bel canto as a model for performing nineteenth-century lyrical piano music today – including extempore ornamentation. I will argue for a way of performing that can be termed 'rhetorical' in the sense described in chapter 3.

## 5.2 Bel canto as an archaism

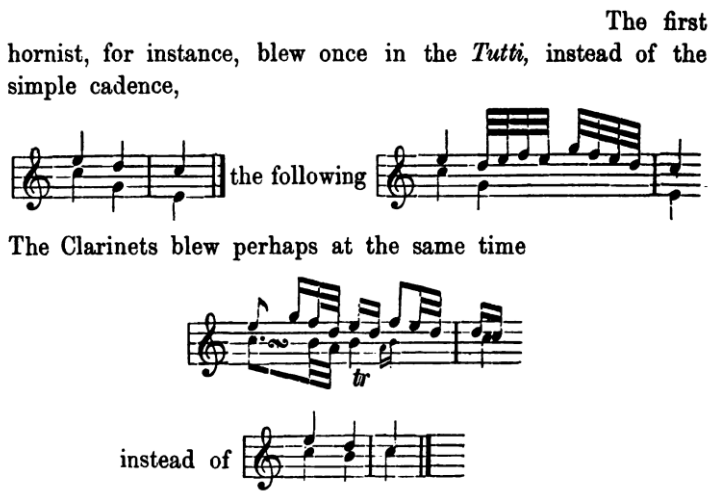
From a now traditional point of view that prioritises instrumental over vocal music (→ chapter 4.1), bel canto might be seen as a style that looks backward, instead of contributing to the tempestuous developments of nineteenth-century music. Especially within music analysis, the bel canto repertoire has largely been neglected, probably because of its alleged lack of formal and harmonic sophistication. Also its strict performance tradition, deeply rooted in (and in fact closely connected with) the eighteenth century, seems to be at odds with Romantic hyper-individuality and the associated cult of genius. As for the topic of this study, the habit of improvising ornamentation could from this point of view be seen as an anachronism in the nineteenth century, something that some 'old-fashioned' Italians were still doing while the 'real' music had been moving on already for decades.

This is a view that is at first glance supported by remarks of contemporary musicians from the north side of the Alps. The German violinist, composer and conductor Louis Spohr visited Milan,

Bologna, Florence, Venice and Rome in 1816. Especially in Rome he was very displeased with the quality of the orchestra musicians, and he complained that they were adding embellishments whenever they liked.

> Zwar verbat ich mir zu wiederholtenmalen jede Note, die nicht in den Stimmen steht; es ist ihnen aber das Verzieren so zur anderen Natur geworden, dass sie es gar nicht lassen können.[316]
>
> [I certainly forbade several times every note which did not stand in the score; but ornamentation has become so much a second nature to them, that they cannot desist from it.[317]]

It is interesting that Spohr adds notated examples of passages that bothered him the most:[318]




*Example 5.2.1*

Clearly, the Romans had chosen a classical locus for their embellishments: a cadence formula. What distressed Spohr most was the fact that the musicians were playing all kinds of different embellishments at the same time. It must be said that improvising ornamentation in orchestral parts or even in several ensemble parts simultaneously was generally disapproved of in eighteenth-century treatises. Fifteen years after Spohr, the young Felix Mendelssohn visited Rome, and apparently the old habits hadn't died by then:

[316] Spohr, L.: *Selbstbiographie*, erster Band. Kassel, 1860; 330.
[317] Spohr, L.: *Selbstbiographie.* Translation: *Louis Spohr's Autobiography*, vol. I. London, 1865; 309.
[318] Ibidem.

> Die Blasinstrumente verzieren ihre Mittelstimmen, wie wir es auf den Höfen zu hören gewohnt sind, u. kaum so schlecht.[319]
>
> [The wind instruments execute flourishes like those we are accustomed to hear in farm-yards, which are even better.]

Also in Naples, Mendelssohn criticised the 'old-fashioned ornaments' he heard in any instrumental solo.[320] To be sure, the criticism of Spohr and Mendelssohn primarily concerns the automatism and tastelessness of the improvised ornamentation they witnessed in Italy (along with the, in their eyes, bad musicianship in general), but it is also true that in these composers a new aesthetics is exemplified, that sees the role of the musical text differently and is averse to the 'arbitrariness' of extempore ornamentation. Indeed, it is unlikely that Mendelssohn wanted his own music to be ornamented at all. In 1820, Spohr watched a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in the *Théatre-Italien* in Paris, with Manuel García *père* as Don Juan and Josephine Fodor-Mainvielle as Zerlina. Though he was impressed with the level of the singers, here again he criticised the abundant ornamentation. The performance he attended must in every respect have been typical for the bel canto tradition: Spohr comments that the applause was given rather to the singers than to the composer (who in any case had been dead for almost 30 years) and that 'Signor García' had transposed his arias up to one tone higher because he didn't have 'sufficient depth of voice'. Both Fodor-Mainvielle and García apparently added ample ornamentation, much to Spohr's distress. He thinks that Zerlina's part is characterised by simplicity, which was spoiled by Fodor-Mainvielle's high-flown embellishments, and García also added extensive ornamentation where it was out of place, according to Spohr; he even took a very slow tempo to make it possible.[321] At the background of Spohr's verdict is his idea that Mozart's music should not be ornamented at all. As discussed in chapter 3, this idea is historically untenable, since there is contemporary evidence of heavily ornamented parts in Mozart's operas; what is revealed in Spohr's belief, though, is the fact that during the few decades after his death, Mozart's compositions had already developed a canonical status, along with the canonisation of their creator. Spohr mentions the *classische Vortrefflichkeit*[322] [classical excellence] of *Don Giovanni*, obviously a reason for him not to touch upon this 'sacred' score. It is an idea that would remain vivid ever since.

It is tempting to see in Spohr's and Mendelssohn's remarks a support for a modernist view on the performance of nineteenth-century music. They seem to be spokesmen for the idea that in the nineteenth century, all music should be performed as it was written, with bel canto as an anachronistic exemption. I argue, however, that this would imply the extrapolation of an essentially

[319] Mendelssohn Bartholdy, F.: *Briefe einer Reise*. Zürich, 1958; 102.
[320] Mendelssohn Bartholdy, F.: *Briefe einer Reise*; 150.
[321] Spohr, L.: *Selbstbiographie*, zweiter Band. Kassel, 1861; 125.
[322] Spohr, L.: op. cit., 124.

post-World War II view on performance (the *Urtext*-paradigm) to a performance practice of two centuries ago. Above all, it means neglecting the overwhelming importance of bel canto for musical culture in the early nineteenth century.

### 5.3 Bel canto as a reference

A contrasting view focuses on the close relationship between vocal and instrumental music as it was discussed in chapter 4.1. A 'singing tone' is a well-known ideal on many instruments, and especially on the piano, an instrument that was developed mainly during the nineteenth century, it became a downright obsession. It is a goal that today's musicians also are striving for. However, it seems that the singing tone has become a rather general quality of a musician's 'sound': we tend to speak of the beautiful tone of a cello player, or of the rich sound a pianist draws from his instrument. It will be argued in this chapter that the metaphor of a singing tone on an instrument went much further in the period under investigation: in some cases playing was actively understood as an abstract (or universal) form of singing. These cases concern what is usually called 'lyrical' music. Generalisations are always dangerous, but they can also offer a useful perspective. Here is one: music either sings or dances – or the two may be combined within one piece. It is a view that I will be happy to defend for almost any tonal music.[323] Here it is instrumental music with a singing quality that I would like to relate to vocal music. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the emancipation of instrumental music was still a relatively recent phenomenon; Rossini was unrivalled in popularity, and Italian singers had the world at their feet. It seems not far-fetched to think that pre-eminently bel canto served as an example for instrumental performance, even if sometimes subconsciously.

Friedrich Wieck's book *Clavier und Gesang* was already mentioned in chapter 4.1, but there are more instances that can support the close connection of vocal and instrumental music. A couple of years before Wieck published his book, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy founded the first conservatory in Germany at the *Gewandhaus* in Leipzig (1843). The first timetable of this school mentions several still famous names; Mendelssohn himself was teaching three different classes: *Übungen in der Composition*, *Übungen im Instrumentspiel*, and finally, more surprisingly, *Übungen im Sologesang*![324] There were also two specialised singing teachers affiliated with the young institution, that attracted a very international student population from the very beginning.

That even vocalists themselves might have considered their art something musically universal is strongly suggested by the title page of Alexis de Garaudé's *Méthode complète de chant* (1830's). Garaudé was a student of Girolamo Crescentini, and later became singing teacher at the Paris

[323] The situation in atonal music is complex: some early atonal music still shares qualities of tonal music, whereas circumstances start to change with manifestations of a new focus on the pure sound in the twentieth century. This discussion exceeds the scope of this study.

[324] *Lections-Plan* (reproduction). Collection Hochschule für Musik und Theater „Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" Leipzig.

conservatory. His method was firmly rooted in the Paris bel canto tradition: the book was based upon Honoré Langlé's *Méthode de chant du Conservatoire de musique* (1803), which on its turn rooted in the material Bernardo Mengozzi had collected.[325] The complete title of Garaudé's book reads: *Méthode complète de chant, ou Théorie pratique de cet art, mise à la portée de tous les professeurs, même instrumentistes* [Complete singing method, made available to all teachers, including intrumentalists]. It is, however, every inch a singing method; nonetheless, it obviously was considered to be of interest to non-vocalists as well.

Much more than the piano, the violin was considered an instrument of which the sound can actually resemble the human voice. Pierre Baillot's violin method *L'Art du violon*,[326] also written for the Paris conservatory, praises the instrument because of its *analogie avec la voix, analogie qui le porte à l'imiter jusques dans les accens de la parole*[327] [similarity with the voice, which it can imitate almost to the point of the expression of the words]. He also mentions the concertos of the Italian violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti, his teacher and the founding father of the nineteenth-century French school of violin playing. About Viotti's concertos Baillot writes that the *chants nobles et expressifs* (...) *semblent avoir été faits sur des paroles*[328] [noble and expressive melodies seem to have been composed on words]. This emphasis on words indicates an essential difference from a more general search for a 'beautiful tone' as we know it today. A beautiful tone can be something irrespective of the musical content, whereas the primary motivation of these and many other nineteenth-century musicians seems to have been in the singing quality of an instrumental performance on the level of musical syntax. Supposing that such an intimate connection between singing and playing indeed existed, several aspects of vocal performance art (notably bel canto) must also have been true of instrumental practice. Telling in this respect is the fact that as late as 1834, Baillot devoted an entire chapter to the art of ornamenting, in which he not only pays attention to 'essential', but also to 'arbitrary' embellishments. Baillot's book deserves a closer look.

## 5.4 Pierre Baillot

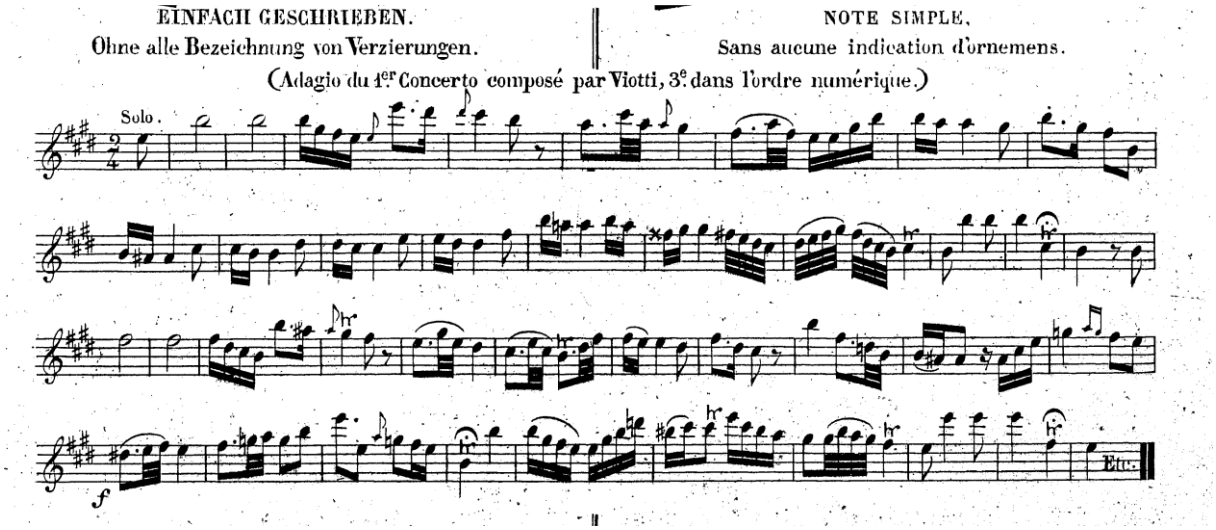
Baillot's initial remarks on ornamentation echo Rousseau:

> L'Imagination invente les ornemens, le goût s'attache à les diversifier, à les caractériser et à les placer convenablement. Il les permet, les choisit, et doit souvent les exclure, car il ne suffit pas que les ornemens soient gracieux et fleuris, il faut, sur toutes choses, qu'ils ne soient employés qu'à propos.[329]

[325] Stark, J.: *Bel Canto: a History of Vocal Pedagogy.* Toronto, 2003; 4.
[326] Baillot, P.: *L'Art du violon*. Paris, n.d. [1834].
[327] Baillot, P.: *L'Art du violon*. Mainz, n.d. [1835];161.
[328] Ibidem. This remark recalls Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny's analysis with text setting of Mozart's String Quartet KV 421, published in his *Cours complet d'harmonie et de composition* (Paris, 1803 / 1805).
[329] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 155.

> [The imagination invents the ornaments, taste aims to vary, to characterise and to apply them appropriately. It permits, chooses, and sometimes excludes, because it is not sufficient when ornaments are gracious or flowering, but above all they should be used at the proper places.]

Important in the early-nineteenth-century context is Baillot's remark that it is the difficult task of a performer to recognise whether a composition needs to be ornamented, and how.[330] He mentions early composers (*les plus anciens pour la musique de violon*) such as Corelli and Tartini, who composed their Adagios as a *canevas* [a sketch] that demanded ornamentation; the examples of ornamentation Baillot shows are by the composers themselves or from sources within their environments. Closer to Baillot's time are fragments of *Adagios* from concertos of Viotti. The need for ornamentation here is motivated on the usual grounds: to vary passages that are repeated several times, and standard cadence formulas. Baillot's ornamentation of the *Adagio* from Viotti's third *Violin concerto* is extremely rich:[331]




*Example 5.4.1*

[330] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 156.
[331] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 157-158.

158

Art wie dieses Adagio verziert werden kann. | Manière dont cet Adagio peut être orné.

56 =

Tutti. Solo.

Point d'orgue.

All.o Mod.to

Cres

Animé.

Dolcissimo.

Point d'orgue.

Allegro.

Lento.

All.o

Ritenuto.

Più allegro.

2.te Saite.
2e Corde.

Adagio.

Tutti.

*Example 5.4.2*

By contrast Baillot shows the theme of the *Andante cantabile* from Mozart's *'Dissonance' Quartet* KV 465. It is a melody that returns later in the piece with some written-out ornamentation. Here Baillot warns the reader that he should play the music as it is written, without adding anything.

*Malheur à qui voudrait y ajouter quelque chose!*[332] [woe unto those who'd like to add something to it!] One wonders whether Mozart's status as a canonic composer is of influence here, though Baillot continues to give examples of elaborate lyrical passages (*chants larges*) from concertos of Viotti, Kreutzer, Rode and himself, that according to him should not be ornamented either: *moins il s'y trouve de notes, et plus il peut y avoir de richesse dans l'accent*[333] [the less notes they contain, the richer their expression will be].

Baillot acknowledges the problem that with the spread of instrumental music, the uses of notation have become more diverse. He observes the emergence of a 'dramatic' style since the later eighteenth century, which made it necessary for composers to notate more precisely their intentions. He sees the 'abundance of signs' in (for him) modern music as useful for unexperienced players, but at the same time as a danger because it might

> éteindre le génie d'exécution qui se plait surtout à deviner, à créer à sa manière.[334]
>
> [extinguish the performing talent which enjoys to divine, to create in its own way.]

A striking description of an improvisatory state of mind! Baillot advises the reader not to neglect the study of early music, just because of its notational openness:

> Elle laissera toujours à l'imagination un vaste champ pour s'exercer.
>
> [It offers the imagination a vast area to exercise itself.]

Baillot sees ornamentation as a part of the larger complex of *Vortrag*, of musical *elocutio*, precisely like bel canto authors such as García and Lablache. Applying bel canto praxis to music-making with instruments implies embracing the manifold means of expression that singers were familiar with. Baillot takes much trouble to distinguish between *caractère* and *accent.* The character of a piece is determined by matters such as tempo, key, rhythm, the nature of its harmony, etc.; in short, it is provided by the composer. The *accent* is rendered by the performer; it is usually notated only imperfectly or even not at all. However, Baillot asks, of what use would all signs of the world be if the player would not participate with all abilities of his soul?[335] The picture that emerges here is an ideal of performance that takes the score with all its clues and expectations as a starting point, and that uses the imagination to create a personal rendering from this *canevas.* It is about playing with the score.

[332] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 159.
[333] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 160.
[334] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 162.
[335] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 190.

## 5.5 Louis Drouët

Baillot's book may be extraordinary, but it is not unique. In 1828 the French flute virtuoso Louis Drouët published his *Méthode pour la flûte*.[336] Drouët, who was often called the 'Paganini of the flute', was born in Amsterdam as the son of a French father, studied at the conservatory in Paris, became the flute teacher of king Louis Bonaparte of Holland when he was sixteen, was a close friend of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and toured extensively. An important part of his book is devoted to basic information such as finger tables, including a section on general music theory with much attention paid to chord connections and modulations. Despite the fact that Drouët does not go into details about performance in the way Baillot does, the structure of the book echoes the art of bel canto, for instance in the important position that is given to a chapter like *Pour filer les sons*, in which the *messa di voce* is described and practised. Interestingly, Drouët also pays much attention to ornamentation, initially to the *agréments* (the 'essential' ornaments) but also in a later chapter to more extensive and 'arbitrary' ornamentation: *De ce qu'on appelle Broder* [about what is called ornamenting].

The section starts a bit discouraging:

> J'écris moins un Article sur ce Sujet pour vous apprendre à faire des Broderies, que pour vous engager à broder très rarement. Ces petites misères qui se trouvent sous la rubrique: Agrémens du Chant, sont celles dont on se sert ordinairement pour broder. On se sert cependant aussi d'autres dessins Mélodiques pour orner une Mélodie très simple, qui se répète souvent, et toujours avec la même Harmonie.[337]
>
> [I write this article less in order to teach you how to make ornaments, than to advise you to ornament only very rarely. Usually, for ornamenting one makes use of these trifles that come under the heading: *Agréments* (grace notes). However, one also makes use of different melodic lines for ornamenting a melody that is very simple, and that is often repeated, always with the same harmony.]

From what follows, it seems that Drouët's main worry is that players will bring in ornamentation that conflicts with the harmony. Harmony occupies an important part of the book anyway, and already in the section on *agréments* he warns against ornaments that result in poor voice leading:

> Quand on ne sait pas bien l'Harmonie, il faut se borner à jouer la musique comme elle est écrite.[338]
>
> [When you don't know harmony well, you should limit yourself to playing the music as it is written.]

Drouët writes that one should never use ornaments in pieces of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven and other composers *à peu près de cette trempe*[339] [of a similar calibre]. 'Admittedly one can find in the

[336] Special thanks to Rien de Reede for pointing out this source to me.
[337] Drouët, L.: *Méthode pour la flute*. Paris, n.d.; 60.
[338] Drouët, L. : op. cit., 15.
[339] Drouët, L. : op. cit., 65.

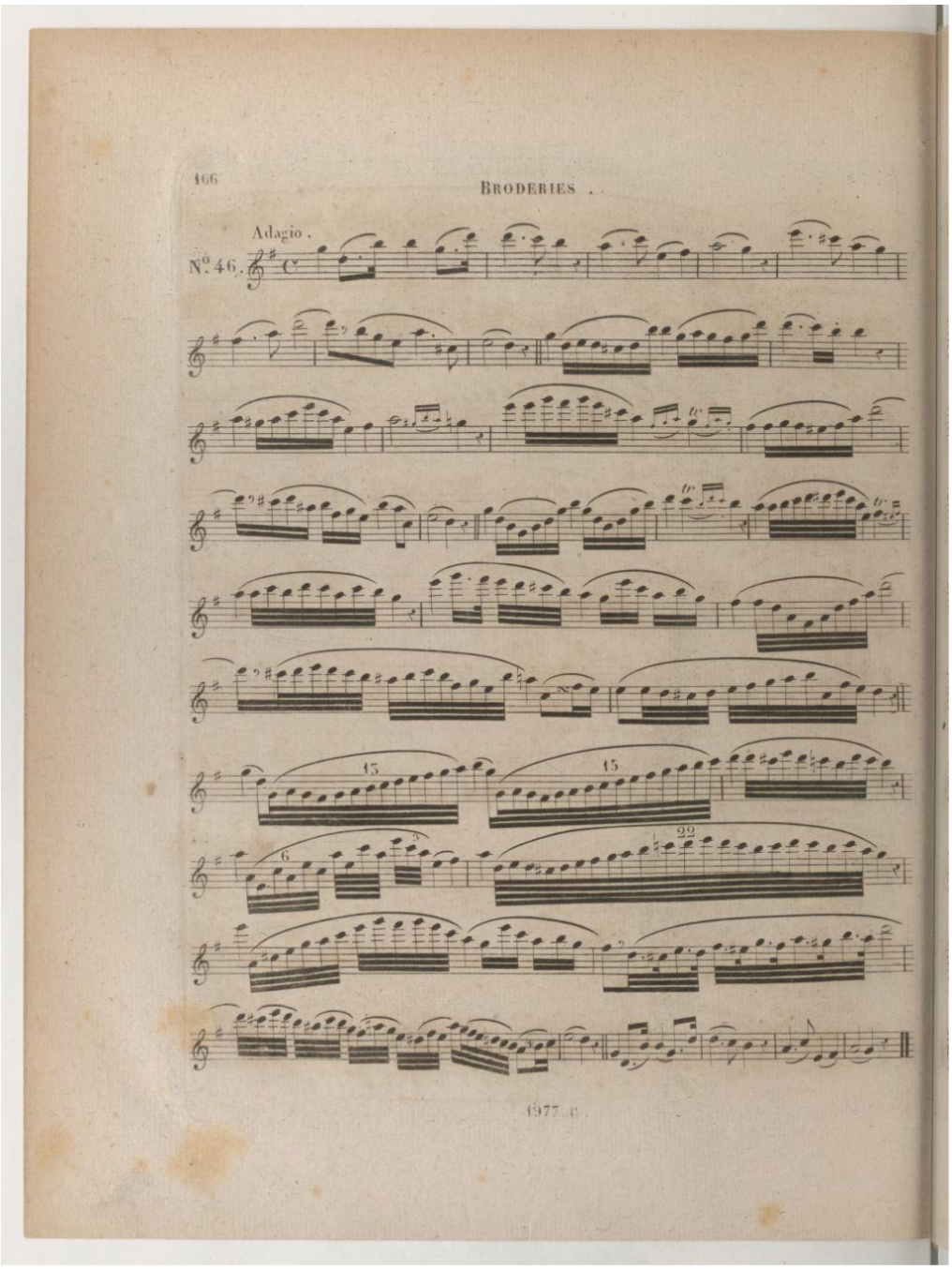
final movements of symphonies of these great masters many often repeated motifs, but they always appear in different harmonic circumstances.'[340] In other words, it is not desirable to vary the repeated motifs when the composer already has taken care of that. An underlying idea, though not explicitly mentioned by Drouët, might be that the scores of these composers were already canonic because they were felt to be on a much higher level than a lot of 'ordinary' compositions. Chapter 4.6 already touched upon the fact that it is usually such 'sacred' scores that kept being performed, while much 'ordinary' music sank into oblivion. As mentioned previously, even in bel canto one of the goals of ornamentation was to 'improve' a composition.

Drouët gives an example in the form of a simple melodic phrase that is varied in many ways; to make explicit the need to be aware of the harmony, he harmonises the fragment in ten different ways and shows how the chords influence the ornamentation.[341]

> La première opération que la pensée doive faire lorsqu'on veut broder quelques Notes, c'est de reconnaître l'Accord auquel elles appartiennent.[342]
>
> [When you'd like to ornament a few notes, the first action of the mind should be recognising the chord to which they belong.]

The second half of the *Méthode* consists of exercise pieces, one of which shows possibilities for ornamenting a short and simple melody. A harmonic background, by the way, is not made explicit in this monophonic composition (ex. 5.5.1).[343] Exactly like in bel canto ornamentation as discussed in chapter 4, the ornamentation in this etude enhances the phrase structure and the direction within a phrase; besides, all flourishes clearly spring from the anchor tones in the melody.

[340] Ibidem.
[341] For the complete set of examples (p. 60-63), see the appendix.
[342] Drouët, L. : op. cit., 62.
[343] Drouët, L. : op. cit., 166.




*Example 5.5.1*

In Wieck's book title (→ chapter 4.1), the art of singing is not united with instrumental music in general terms, but specifically with an instrument that occupied centre stage in nineteenth-century music: the piano. The remainder of this chapter will be centred on this relation.

## 5.6 The central position of the piano

The piano is more than just an instrument whose development happens to coincide with the period central to this study: it can be regarded as the very picture of nineteenth-century music, especially instrumental music. Already within the revolutionary context at the end of the eighteenth century

the piano was associated with the ascendant citizenry, as opposed to the old-fashioned harpsichord, which was seen as the instrument of nobility. To the 'Romantic generation' (Charles Rosen), the piano must have incorporated all essential musical qualities. The genius cult with its strong emphasis on the lonely artist, creating in solitude by divine inspiration, found its perfect image in the pianist who could evoke an entire musical world under his two hands; it took a wizard musician like Franz Liszt to make the final step and create the solo piano recital. To be sure, the percussive piano sound seems not very suitable to convey a sense of 'line', and in this respect objectively falls short when compared with almost any other instrument, let alone the voice (something that already Beethoven complained about); however, the expressive and textural possibilities of the piano make it particularly well-suited for 'summarising' music that would otherwise be sung or played on many different instruments. Probably it is precisely the 'abstraction' of the piano tone, lacking the continuous quality of the tones of string and wind instruments, that makes it possible for a pianist to suggest a much more elaborate kind of music, but in this case realised by a single person.[344] It is this transcending quality of the piano that made Robert Schumann hear 'veiled symphonies' in the piano sonatas of Johannes Brahms; conversely, it became usual during the nineteenth century to publish piano arrangements of symphonic works, sometimes even earlier than the score. Even Gustav Mahler still made piano roll recordings of parts of his symphonies. The piano had an important role to play during the compositional process, as well: even if music was not actually composed at the piano, the early stages of, say, a symphony consisted of sketches that usually took the form of a primitive piano score.

The role of the piano described above existed throughout the nineteenth century and continued for decades into the twentieth; its importance for the understanding of tonal music, I argue, is inestimable. Controversial though it may seem, it means that, during that period, aspects such as harmony, melody, rhythm and form were of more fundamental importance for a piece's identity than vocal or instrumental timbre. It should be added that not all nineteenth-century piano repertoire has this 'orchestral' quality: there are compositions for piano that seem to depend on the pure piano sound itself, and that therefore are hard to orchestrate (for instance the first movement of Beethoven's *Mondschein* sonata op. 27 no. 2, or a virtuosic etude like Chopin's op. 10 no. 1). In general, however, it was only during the twentieth century that sound quality became a parameter of equal (sometimes predominant) importance in composed music. The relevance of this observation

[344] The organ, which can be seen as occupying a central position in Baroque music just like the piano did in the nineteenth century, is very different in this respect. In fact it is the only traditional musical instrument that, though the 'shape' (development) of its tone is recognisable by its rigidity, does not have one characteristic tone colour; the very different colours that can be created by choosing combinations of stops are much more specific than the piano sound, quasi to the point of imitating other instruments or voices. Ironically this makes the organ less suitable to evoke e.g. a Romantic orchestra. Consequently 'organ reductions' of symphonic music are rare in the nineteenth century (unlike reductions for harmonium, which were very popular).

for the topic of this study is in the hierarchy of parameters. A passage in a piano piece may, for instance, bring to mind associations with the sound of trumpets, on the basis of a typical combination of harmony, melody, rhythm, texture and range; in other words: these parameters strongly suggest a *locus communis*, and the performing pianist will be guided by this. And although this pianist cannot possibly make his instrument sound like real trumpets, the music as performed can make the same impression, provided that the locus is familiar to the listener. The consequence is that actual sound colour is of secondary importance – not because it is not clearly conveyed in the score (which is also true), but for the intrinsic musical and stylistic reason mentioned above. In short, musical parameters in nineteenth-century tonal music show a characteristic hierarchy.

This means that some aspects of tonal music are much more open to variety during performance than other ones: they make possible an improvisatory approach to a score without losing the identity of a composition. Harmony and form are first in the hierarchy, being parameters that are unquestionably provided in the score. (Even in an ornamented bel canto aria, one does not tamper with harmony and form.) Sound characteristics, however, are left much more to the discretion of the performer. The late-twentieth-century search for the 'original' sound of early music in my view often neglects this fundamental issue and thereby reveals itself as an essentially modern practice. Even a pianist like Clara Schumann, who dedicated her long professional life to promoting and performing the work of her late husband, never seems to have thought back nostalgically to the pianos of her youth, for which these works were written. Similarly, Carl Czerny, who discusses the recent developments in piano building and pianistic technique in the supplement to his *Grosse Pianoforteschule* op. 500, clearly sees developments such as the use of heavier strings as an improvement because it lends 'force and melody' to the sound of the higher octaves that 'used to be so thin'.[345] Of course, it is not my intention to argue against the use of early instruments; I think, however, that it is important not to petrify our idea of sound; there are good inherently musical reasons not to do so, reasons that also foster an improvisatory approach to the score. Chopin's study in c-sharp minor op. 25 no. 7, for instance, clearly evokes a violoncello melody in the left hand. At the same time it has become fashionable to assume that Chopin's piano music should ideally be performed on a Pleyel piano from the 1830's or 1840's because this was the instrument Chopin himself preferred. I argue that what counts here from a nineteenth-century perspective is the suggestion of a cello, not the actual sound of a Pleyel. The improvisatory state of mind of a nineteenth-century performer, as articulated by Baillot, would enable him to get the best result from

[345] Czerny, C. : *Die Kunst des Vortrags. Supplement zur grossen Pianoforteschule op. 500*. Wien, n.d.; 5.

any instrument, making optimal use of its possibilities. The actual sound colour did not belong to – in Baillot's terms – the *caractère* of a composition, it was a matter of *accent*.[346]

The phenomenon of 'translating' instrumental (especially orchestral) music to the piano is well-known, but the possibility of evoking vocal music on this instrument often seems to suffer from a certain negligence. In the nineteenth century it was perfectly usual for pianists to be inspired by the rich performance tradition of bel canto. In this chapter, a couple of examples will be investigated, but by way of introduction to the art of singing on the piano, I will examine a forgotten composition of Stephen Heller.

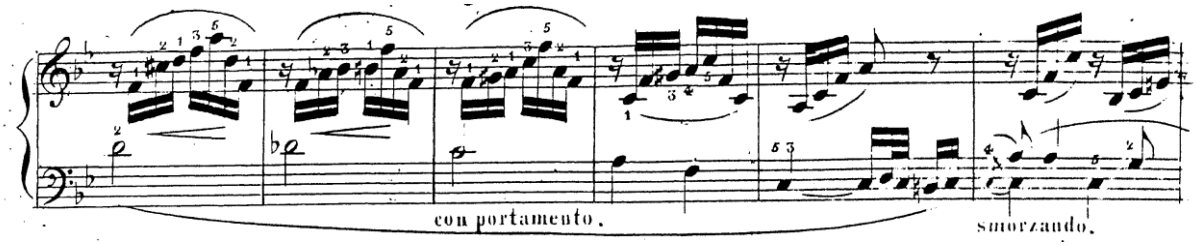
## 5.7 Singing on the piano: Stephen Heller's *L'Art de phraser*

Heller was a Hungarian pianist who studied in Vienna and spent his adult life in Paris. He was well acquainted with Berlioz, Chopin and Liszt. His work was already forgotten at the end of his life, except for three sets of studies for piano (ops. 45, 46 and 47) which are still popular in elementary piano teaching today. Heller composed mainly for the piano, in an idiom that was poetic rather than brilliant or virtuosic. In 1841 he published his opus 16, a series of pieces he referred to in letters as his *Études*, but which were published by Maurice Schlesinger in Paris as *L'Art de phraser*, and which in 1843 appeared in Berlin with Heinrich Schlesinger (the brother of Maurice) under the hybrid title *L'Art de phraser. Morceaux de salon. Études mélodiques.* At the insistence of Heinrich Schlesinger, each piece received a title,[347] which enhanced the impression of a collection of Romantic character pieces. The later German edition was entitled *Schule des Vortrags.* Though probably not Heller's own invention, this title in a telling way refers to the contemporary tradition of bel canto, in which *die Kunst des Vortrags* (*l'art de phraser*) had such an encompassing meaning. The association is strengthened by the mainly lyrical character of the pieces, some of which even carry the title *Lied.*

[346] A similar rigidity can be discerned in modern concerns about the choice of instruments for a basso continuo group, e.g. whether a recitative should be accompanied on organ or harpsichord. It is very likely that eighteenth-century musicians were much more pragmatic in this, making the most of what was available. As for piano arrangements: they even existed for organ works. The title page of Léon Boëllmann's popular *Suite gothique* for instance (original Durand edition, 1895 / 1915) mentions arrangements for piano solo, piano *à 4 mains*, two pianos and even two pianos *à 8 mains*! To be sure, such arrangements in the pre-recording era served the practical goal of facilitating the enjoyment of music outside the concert locations; nevertheless, there is a tension between the casualness with which a 'symphonic' organ piece was arranged for such a different instrument on the one hand, and the strong belief of many modern organ lovers that this music should be performed on a 'proper' French symphonic instrument (read: Cavaillé-Coll) on the other hand. This phenomenon also occurs in vocal music. In our time, it is a matter of principle for singers to perform music in the original language because it is considered of vital importance for the timbre, and therefore the identity of the piece. When a singer does not master the language of the music he performs, phonetic symbols will help. This habit is in stark contrast with the nineteenth-century practice, when singers usually performed in their own languages; compositions in less well-known languages were published with an additional translation, like Antonín Dvořák's songs which had a Czech and a German version, the latter even with rhythmical adaptations in the melody. In addition, operas were often performed in the language of the country, even until World War II.

[347] Heller, S.: *Lettres d'un musicien romantique à Paris* (ed. J.-J. Eigeldinger). Paris, 1981; 106.

One of these 'songs without words' (the genre had already been made popular by Mendelssohn at that time), number 12 in the collection, shows an instruction that is highly unusual in piano music: the left hand melody (the 'voice' part) is to be played *con portamento.*[348]




*Example 5.7.1*

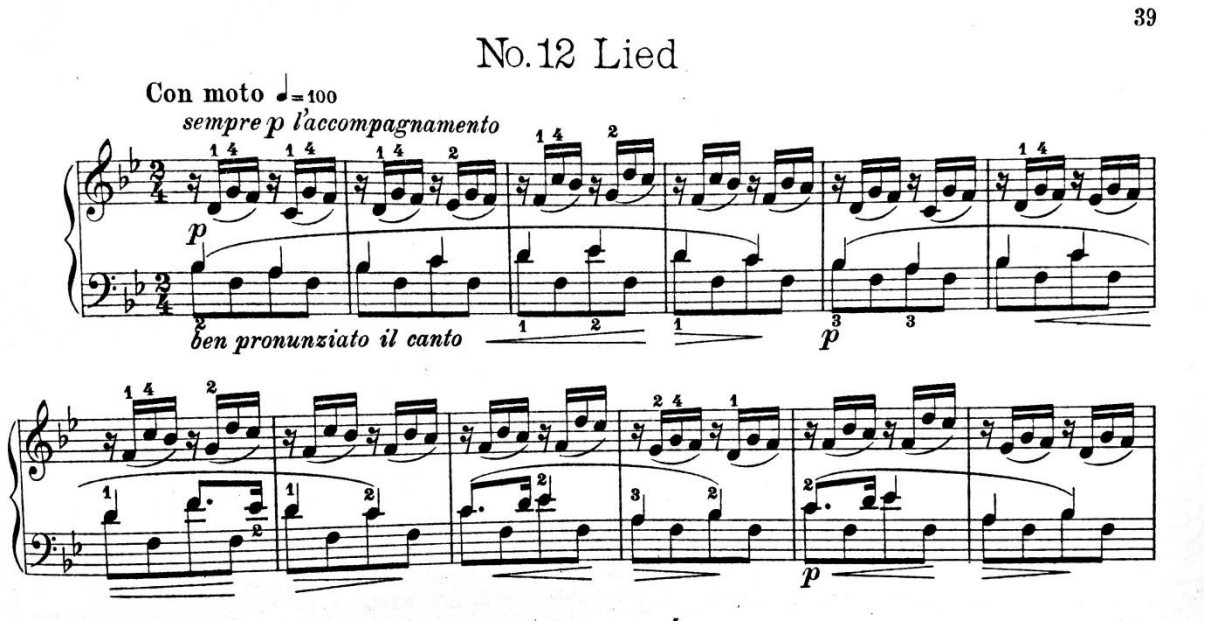
In bel canto, the *portamento* was the expressive and smooth connection of two different tones by way of a quick pitch sliding. It was an important technique that was described in all singing methods, and that probably was applied much more often than nowadays: in the post-World War II performance tradition the *portamento* was easily associated with sentimentality and bad taste. In his famous recording of Bach / Gounod's *Ave Maria,* made in 1902, 'the last castrato' Alessandro Moreschi can be heard using it throughout. Heller's *Lied* stylistically refers to the bel canto style, and the *portamento* indication is added at a very expressive moment, right before an important cadence. A *portamento* can in no way be performed on a piano; the best option for suggesting it here, at least, seems to be enhancing the melodic expression of the descending 6/4-chord by playing the left hand with a large tone and 'over-legato'.[349] What makes this passage so interesting, though, is the fact that the piano is so overtly used in what I called a 'transcending' way. Now, suggesting *portamenti* on the piano might be an extreme case, but Heller's use of the term implies that the whole complex of bel canto *Vortrag* serves as a model for playing the piano here. Again, I propose to take seriously the enormous diversity and richness of the means of expression as elaborated in methods such as García's and Lablache's – with the use of *accent*, with all colouring of the words, even with ornamentation when appropriate – and to apply it to the piano. Of course, bel canto expression to a large extent depends on words, which are absent here. What counts, though, is to play *as if* there are words. This includes searching for variety, highlighting the individual character of phrases, and also a much more subtle use of articulation than is usual in piano playing nowadays. Louis Spohr, for instance, suggests imitating on an instrument (in his case the violin) the 'separation caused by pronouncing two different syllables on one pitch' in singing, an effect he achieves by a finger change on one tone.[350] The result will be a truly rhetorical manner of playing, not in the sense of a petrified *Figurenlehre*,

[348] Heller, S.: *L'Art de phraser. Morceaux de salon. Études mélodiques.* Berlin, 1843; 36.
[349] The imitation of portamento is enhanced by the 'sliding' chromatic passing notes in the right hand arpeggios. In section 5.12 a similar effect is described in Chopin's Nocturne op. 27 no. 2.
[350] Spohr, L.: *Violinschule.* Wien, 1832; 175.

but of a musician who is like an orator, playing to his audience, which above all means exploring *varietas.*

To most modern musicians, this is an area that needs to be rediscovered. The short pieces in Heller's *L'Art de phraser* may generally be of little musical interest today, but it is exactly this quality that makes them suitable material for an exploration of the possibilities of expression, if only because the player feels the urge to vary more keenly than in generally acknowledged master works. Heller's forgotten collection can really serve as a *Schule* to us. In this way it will be possible to develop a repertoire of expressive means that forms a good basis for an improvisatory approach to lyrical piano music, especially from the first half of the nineteenth century.

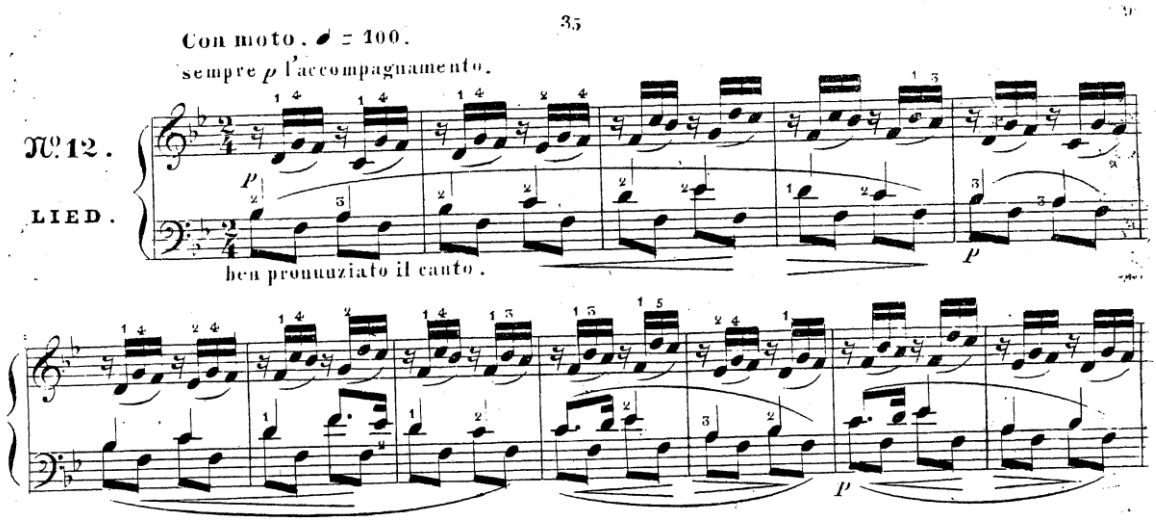
A few examples might be useful to clarify what is involved when one aims to apply bel canto *Vortrag* to the piano. In his *Lied* op. 16 no. 12, mentioned above, Heller uses phrasing slurs throughout, in a way that had become common in nineteenth-century piano music. To most modern pianists, such slurs practically equal legato slurs. At the background of this conception is the modern sound ideal that favours unity: equality in tempo and movement, evenness of tone, a sustained sound. It is an aesthetic ideal that not only matches the way singers are trained today, but that also suits the modern piano very well (more about the characteristics of pianos in the next section). The fingerings that are added in a later Schott edition by Moritz Mayer-Mahr (not dated, presumably in the 1930's) support the idea of the first melodic phrase being played as a legato line:[351]




*Example 5.7.2*

[351] Heller, S.: *Schule des Vortrags.* Mainz, n.d.; 39.

Interestingly, the 1843 edition shows a different and rather unusual fingering, in which four successive melody tones in the left hand are played with the second finger:[352]




*Example 5.7.3*

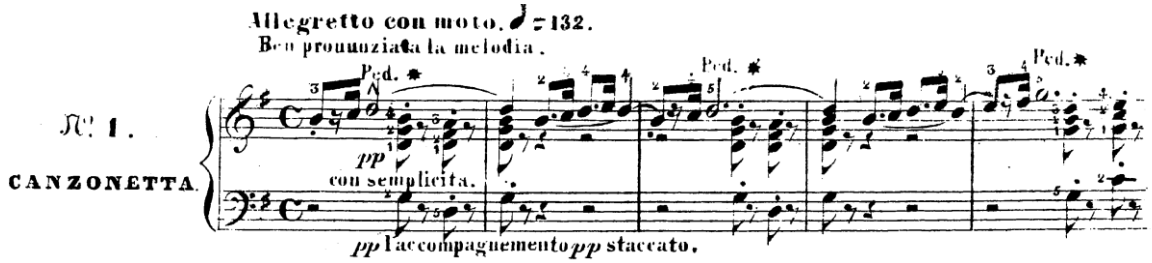
Bar 5 in the second phrase also contains an unusual fingering, which has been preserved in the later edition. By contrast, the fingering of the third phrase (bars 9-10, both editions) seems designed to ensure *legatissimo* playing. The remark *ben pronunziato il canto* literally means that the melody should be 'well pronounced'. It is easy to overlook this seemingly superfluous remark, since it is clear that the melody has to be brought out; however, the usual expression for such playing 'in relief' would actually have been *ben marcato il canto*. The term *pronunziato* rather refers to text, to the articulation of words, to 'colouring'. Fingering definitely had a lower status than the other indications in the score and was to be interpreted as advice; nevertheless, the repeated second and third fingers strongly suggest the imitation of what Spohr called the 'separation caused by pronouncing two different syllables'. Frédéric Chopin's original fingerings also make use of this phenomenon at times. It should, however, not be forgotten that a singer's textual articulations don't necessarily prevent the flow of the legato line. Similarly, playing a melodic line with one finger on the piano does not mean that this line has to sound 'choppy', as many witnesses of Chopin's playing testify: *le troisième doigt est un grand chanteur* [the third finger is a great singer], he used to say.[353] Altogether the performance indications point into the direction of a 'rhetorical' approach, without determining the way how exactly this should be done. A late-twentieth-century composer might in such a case perhaps have tried to notate the articulation as precisely as possible, for instance by using different note values for the quarter notes; in the nineteenth century this aspect was deliberately left to the discretion of the performer, as it belonged to the *accent*.

[352] Heller, S.: *L'Art de phraser. Morceaux de salon. Études mélodiques.* Berlin, 1843; 35.
[353] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: *Chopin vu par ses élèves* (nouvelle édition mise à jour). Paris, 2006; 72.

How can we explore this way of playing today? It might be a good idea to actually imagine a concrete text here. Which one exactly is not important, as long as it fits the melody well; what counts is that the imagining of concrete words will direct the articulation and colouring on the piano, and as such will contribute to the ideal of variety in the shaping of the melodic line.

**[5.7 #1: 11 different versions of this passage]**

Even more suggestive is the first piece in Heller's collection, *Canzonetta.*[354] Again the melody is to be played 'well pronounced', and this time the rhythmic shape is more marked and almost seems to evoke specific words, for instance in German: 'Komm herein!'. The basic motif (bar numbers 1-2) is repeated so often in this piece that it can be interpreted by the performer as an exercise in *varietas*. Pronouncing the same text in many different ways, each time with a different tone, is, incidentally, a well-known exercise for actors. A beautiful bel canto detail finally is the small slur from bar 2 to bar 3 that bridges the separation between phrases. Similar slurs occur in *Lied*, and are atypical for piano scores; they seem, however, to evoke the way a singer can subtly link the two motifs with a very light *portamento*, gracefully hiding the all-too-obvious structure and avoiding the tiring repetition of many equally short phrases.



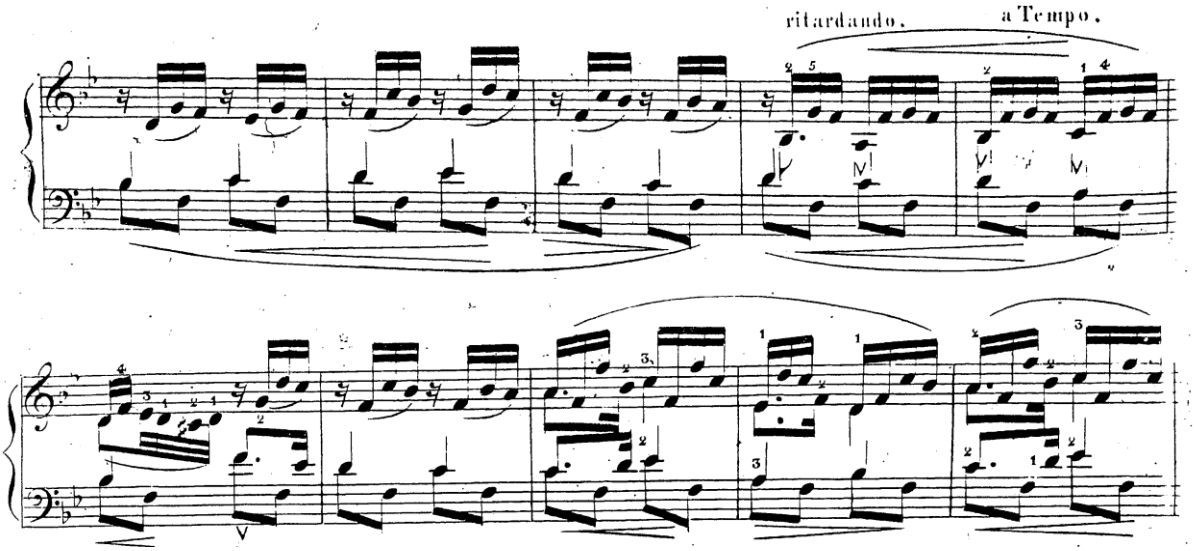

*Example 5.7.4*

**[5.7 #2: 8 versions of beginning Canzonetta]**

One issue that has not been discussed yet is the possibility of adding ornamentation. On the one hand, some of Heller's melodies present some clear opportunities for ornamentation, if only of 'essential' nature. Bar 7 of *Lied* (ex. 5.7.3), for instance, almost seems to call for a turn figure between the d and the f in the melody. On the other hand, however, the texture of the composition, often combining melody and (part of the) accompaniment in one hand, makes it technically troublesome to add even simple ornamentation, let alone extemporised free embellishments. Heller must have been aware of this, since he organises the recapitulation of the beginning in a different way: this time

[354] Heller, S.: *L'Art de phraser. Morceaux de salon. Études mélodiques.* Berlin, 1843; 3.

the melody is played in the right hand, which makes a (notated) turn possible (sixth bar of the example):[355]




*Example 5.7.5*

In general, it will be technically problematic to add embellishments to the piano pieces in *L'Art de phraser*. For practising purposes one might also turn to the vocalises that Alexis de Garaudé added to his *Méthode complète de chant* and that were discussed in chapter 2.6.2.

## 5.8 The role of the instrument

An allusion to the influence of early pianos on the extemporised aspects of articulation was already made above apropos of the proper interpretation of long slurs. Without going into too much detail, a brief discussion of this phenomenon seems appropriate.

While improvising, a performer tends to adapt to the specific instrument at hand, since one improvises *with* the instrument, and therefore naturally explores the possibilities the instrument offers. Especially organists know this very well, since the differences between organs are much more obvious than between instruments in any other category. Put the other way around, the influence of the instrument on the sounding result is an important factor, even when it is a question of relative improvisation, , because the instrument tends to invite a way of playing that suits its possibilities. Though it was argued above that being dogmatic about performing the works of a particular composer on a specific instrument it is not a good idea, it is still possible that a certain type of piano lacks possibilities that are essential for a much desired result. Being open-minded and willing to explore the different properties of instruments does not mean that anything works on any piano.

Where the modern market for concert grand pianos is dominated by a few large factories such as Steinway & Sons, Bösendorfer, Fazioli and Yamaha, with – despite the differences – highly

[355] Heller, S.: op. cit., 36-37.

standardised products, the nineteenth century still knew a variety of instruments that is hard to imagine today. During the first decades of the century, Vienna alone accommodated hundreds of piano builders. Even by the end of the century, there were still important differences among national traditions in France, Germany, England and Austria. These differences included the mechanical construction of the instrument; as late as in the early twentieth century, piano builders still used their own design for the action, whereas today there is virtually one standard type in use.

For this reason, it is very risky to generalise about the sonic characteristics of 'early' pianos, all the more so because the instrument underwent an enormous development during the nineteenth century, from the almost harpsichord-like type Mozart played on to essentially the piano as we know it today. Especially during the first decades of the nineteenth century, important innovations occurred continuously. Nevertheless, there are common threads that allow the comparison between a typical modern piano, say, a Steinway D as they have been built since the last decades of the twentieth century, and almost any nineteenth-century instrument. Two differences that are important with respect to the topic of this chapter will be highlighted: the shift of tone colour that accompanies an increase in dynamics, and the amount of resonance in the instrument. The descriptions will be largely qualitative, as it will be sufficient for the aim pursued here.

An important difference between almost all nineteenth-century pianos and modern ones is that the tone of the early instruments tends to become more full-bodied with increasing volume, whereas the sound colour on modern instruments becomes brighter, even resulting in a certain 'metallic' quality (usually associated with Steinway, but also imitated by other firms). The dynamic range on the Steinway is also larger than on any earlier instrument.

There are several possible explanations for this difference. Ever since the earliest instruments, pianos have become more and more heavy in every respect: the strings and sound board became stiffer and thicker, the frame became stronger in order to support the increased tension, and the hammers became heavier. Even between the beginning and the end of the twentieth century, there is an important difference in hammer weight. The hammer felt acts as a non-linear spring, and the more the hammer head is compressed, the stiffer it becomes. As a result, the spectrum of a forte note is richer in high frequency content.[356] By contrast, the Viennese pianos had felt hammer heads that were covered with soft leather, leading to very different tonal characteristics. A second reason for the increased brightness of the tone is in an 1873 patent of Steinway, the 'duplex scale'. This invention made use of the segments of the strings outside the 'speaking' length. These parts (at the tuning pin, and beyond the outer bridge) were normally muted, but Steinway made them sound harmonically related to the main tone, thus by resonance increasing the brightness of the tone.

[356] Öberg, F.: *Acoustical and perceptual influence of Duplex stringing.* Unpublished Master Thesis in Music Acoustics, Royal Institute of Technology. Stockholm, 2009; 10.

Another difference is the type and the amount of resonance. Very important in this respect is the influence of the thickness of the soundboard, which has continued to increase during the twentieth century. Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century pianos had thinner soundboards, which resulted in a quick response; the piano tone reached its full resonance relatively early, and also had a shorter life. A modern piano tone has a longer duration, but is also slower in its realisation. The response of early instruments invites the performer to 'speak' and to explore subtleties of articulation, whereas the slower response of modern pianos rather inspires long and even legato playing.

The amount of resonance is also an important factor. A modern piano tone, played without pedal, 'sings' less than the same tone on an early instrument. A part of the cause might be quite simply the increased efficiency of the dampening of the strings during the twentieth century. On almost all earlier pianos, the other strings resonate with the main tone to a certain extent, reinforcing the lower partials and causing a resonant and 'singing' tone. The quick response and rich resonance of earlier instruments make it attractive to play passages without using the damper pedal, and in fact make it possible to take nineteenth-century pedal indications literally. On a modern piano, one feels the urge to use the pedal as a matter of course, since a tone without pedal easily sounds dull. As a result, modern pianism to a large extent depends on pedalling – which of course has to be extremely subtle in order to avoid unwanted mixing.

How does all this affect an improvisatory approach to piano scores that evoke bel canto? The circumstances described above are of enormous influence on the shaping of the instrumental bel canto line. The difference in development of tone colour has important consequences for the dynamic shadings one applies. When the louder nuances sound fuller than the quieter ones without changing the tone colour too much (as on nineteenth-century pianos), they remain 'connected', like a singer who sustains the breath support in pianissimo passages. Soft passages sound mysterious or remote; it is the type of sound Chopin must have had in mind with the *sotto voce* indication (a bel canto term) he frequently uses. Louder passages sound expressive and full-bodied, as if the music has come closer. On a modern piano, on the other hand, playing louder automatically means changing the tone colour considerably, which endangers the suggestion of vocality. Making small scale dynamic differences within a melody works more easily on an early piano because it makes a rhetorical impression, as if words from an unknown language are being sung. In contrast, attempting the same effect on a modern piano can create the impression that the soft tones are 'dropping out' of the melody, like a singer who performs with a faulty breath support.

The pedalling is also important. No matter how subtly the player of a modern piano applies the damper pedal – that is, by depressing it only partially in all possible gradations – the almost constant use tends to unify the sound, very much comparable to the constant vibrato as it has become normal for string players (and singers!). Especially on pianos from the first decades of the nineteenth century,

the damper pedal was more like a 'stop' on an organ, a special effect that could be applied at will (some Viennese pianos had five such stops). The flip side of this is that the early damper pedals could be more 'primitive' in their functioning, hardly allowing for the subtleties of partial use that have become so important nowadays.

The tintinnabulum-like, crystal clear and perfectly balanced piano and pianissimo registers on a modern grand, the relatively slow development of its tone, and the use of pedalling described above, together facilitate smooth melodic lines as referred to in the previous section. The character is essentially legato, though the touch itself is rather non-legato for many modern performers, with the legato sound often achieved with the pedal. It is a type of playing that can be heard in many recordings of Chopin's *Nocturnes* from the last fifty years, for instance. Conversely, on a nineteenth-century piano the legato often has to be achieved by the fingers since the pedalling tends to be less continuous, and the quick response and more generous resonance of the instrument allow for a more subtle articulation.[357] This makes it easier to evoke bel canto *pronuntiatio* on the piano. Of course, a modern high quality grand piano is a very versatile instrument that allows for a wealth of nuances, so it is possible to play in a rhetoric style even on a modern Steinway. Partial use of the *una corda* pedal considerably expands the possibilities of colouring. However, it demands a lot to play in such a way, just as it is difficult for a singer who is trained to sing in a modern, force-driven way, to embrace a versatile and rhetorical bel canto style described in nineteenth-century method books. For a pianist it means working *against* the instrument to a certain extent. To be sure, in section 5.6 I argued that to nineteenth-century musicians, pianos with very different characteristics could be equally suitable for performing a specific piece of music; however, it is still true that twentieth-century piano builders moved in a direction that doesn't foster rhetorical playing.

## 5.9 Song and aria arrangements for piano

The early piano turned out to be a very suitable instrument for accompanying solo songs. Beethoven is generally seen as the first one to have composed a lied cycle (*An die ferne Geliebte* op. 98), and Schubert made the genre famous. The popularity of lieder during the nineteenth century must have been enormous: one has the impression that there is hardly any composer from that period who never wrote songs. In the nineteenth-century song culture, the large difference between musical praxis then and now is beautifully exemplified. Lieder were essentially performed in small family or salon circles, or even for one's own pleasure: they were intended primarily for domestic music-making, only

[357] An important factor here is also the regulation of the dampers: on many modern pianos the damper already touches the string when the pressed key is released about two-thirds of the way back to its position of rest; on early instruments this moment occurs much later, just before the end of the key release – a phenomenon that corresponds with the increased possibilities of repetition on modern grands. However, this is not a structural difference between early and late pianos, since it is very well possible to adjust modern dampers to make their action more 'lazy'.

secondarily for the concert stage. The same is true for much piano music; Schumann thought that many of his piano pieces were too intimate for concert use. It is very interesting that already during the first decades, it became popular to arrange existing songs for piano solo. In 1838, Franz Liszt published his first arrangements of lieder of Franz Schubert, ten years after the composer's death. The *12 Lieder von Franz Schubert* (published by Diabelli in Vienna) include many songs that are still famous, such as *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, *Der Wanderer* (the song Schubert based his *Wanderer-Fantasie* upon; the latter was to be arranged for piano and orchestra by Liszt in 1851), and *Erlkönig*, Schubert's first opus, which would immediately become famous. Liszt's transcriptions have long been criticised for being tasteless, though they have become increasingly popular with pianists in recent decades. Often Liszt's philanthropic nature is stressed, and in this line of thinking the transcriptions are explained as his effort to promote the works of lesser known composers. What matters in the context of this study, though, is the basic fact that transcriptions of vocal repertoire for the piano became popular in the nineteenth century. In the letter to Eugène de Froberville from 1842 quoted earlier, Heller writes that the German publisher Heinrich Schlesinger has asked him to write eight pieces on themes of Schubert. Eventually Heller composed only four of them, all based upon songs and published as opus numbers 33 to 36.[358] It may taint the popular image of the Romantic composer as a free spirit, only obeying his own inspirations, but publishing music was also business. In the nineteenth-century music market, a composer's income primarily depended on the number of sold copies, and the many musical amateurs were, as potential buyers, an important source of income. In the same letter Heller writes that Schlesinger also wanted to publish a four hand version of another popular composition of his, *La Chasse* op. 29, most likely with the goal of selling copies to amateurs for whom the original version was too difficult. Johannes Brahms's *Waltzes* op. 39 (1866) even appeared simultaneously in three different versions of varying difficulties.

To summarise, there is reason to see song arrangements for piano not as a disputable peculiarity of the super-virtuoso Franz Liszt, but as a popular genre in a world of blossoming and still increasing cultural participation. Playing vocal repertoire on the piano wasn't something exceptional, it was a natural thing to do.

So far the focus of this section has been on lied repertoire, which is of course often stylistically different from bel canto. Adding ornamentation to a lied would in many cases be rather out of place, but that doesn't mean that a performance could not benefit from other aspects of *l'art de phraser* as it existed at that time. Liszt's arrangements of Schubert's songs treat the accompaniments rather freely, fleshing them out in a typical Lisztian way, but keep the melodies as composed by Schubert. Significantly, Liszt adds the original texts, printed exactly synchronous with the melodies. This is

[358] Heller, S.: *Lettres d'un musicien romantique à Paris* (ed. J.-J. Eigeldinger). Paris, 1981; 105.

probably taken for granted by many players, but there is good reason to interpret it as an invitation to a rhetorical playing style. Also fascinating are Liszt's arrangements of his own songs, most famously the three *Liebesträume* which were published simultaneously in 1850 as songs and as piano pieces; in his piano transcriptions of original songs, Liszt printed the texts separately above the musical score. The reason for this difference is not clear, but a result is that the text is presented much more in its quality of a poem – followed by the musical version of this poem, a procedure that showed the way towards the symphonic poem, a genre coined by Liszt. As late as 1884, Edvard Grieg (a prolific lied composer) published piano arrangements of his own songs (opus numbers 41 and 52). Grieg prints the texts in the piano scores; his arrangements are usually faithful to the originals, with occasional changes in texture to enliven the repeats of stanzas. The famous song 'Jeg elsker dig!' op. 5 no. 3 even becomes quasi a duet between a female and a male voice. The rhetorical and rhythmically free performance of Grieg's songs will be discussed in chapter 7.

Nobody pushed the application of bel canto techniques to the piano further than Sigismond Thalberg with his *L'Art du chant appliqué au piano.* The work consists of two series of piano arrangements of vocal pieces, published as opus 70 in 1853; ten years later, two more series followed.

Thalberg was a supreme piano virtuoso and a prolific and successful composer, mainly of music for the piano; his work has passed into oblivion today. Thalberg, a son-in-law of Luigi Lablache (→ chapter 4), was almost of the same age as Liszt and was considered the latter's most important rival by contemporaries. In line with the fashion of the 1830's and 1840's, he dazzled audiences with his allegedly superb technique in large-scale fantasies on opera themes. In *L'Art du chant*, Thalberg published faithful transcriptions of vocal repertoire that apparently was popular in his day: arias as well as ensemble pieces from operas (including compositions by Mozart, Weber, Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini and others), religious music such as Stradella's *Pietà, Signore* and Mozart's *Requiem*, and two *Lieder*: Beethoven's *Adelaïde* and *Der Müller und der Bach* from Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin.* With a few exceptions, the originals are still famous today.

For the topic of this chapter, Thalberg's 'programme' is of interest, since he explicitly writes that the art of singing can be conveyed on any instrument. The introduction to the book contains some passages that are worth quoting in full.

> L'Art de bien chanter (...) est le même à quelque instrument qu'il s'applique. En effet, on ne doit faire ni concessions, ni sacrifices au mécanisme particulier de chaque instrument; c'est à l'interprète de plier ce mécanisme aux volontés de l'art. Comme le piano ne peut, *rationnellement* parlant, rendre le bel art du chant dans ce qu'il a de plus parfait, c'est-à-dire la faculté de prolonger les sons, il faut à force d'adresse et d'art détruire cette imperfection, et arriver non-seulement à produire l'illusion des sons

> *soutenus* et *prolongés*, mais encore celle des sons *enflés*. Le sentiment rend ingénieux, et le besoin d'exprimer ce que l'on éprouve sait créer des ressources qui échappent au mécanicien.[359]
>
> [The art of singing beautifully (...) remains the same on whichever instrument it is exerted. Indeed, one should make neither concessions nor sacrifices to the particular mechanism of an instrument; rather it is the task of the interpreter to bend this mechanism to suit the demands the art makes. Since the pianoforte, rationally speaking, is not capable of rendering the beautiful art of singing in its most perfect qualities, namely in the faculty of prolonging a sound, this imperfection should be corrected with artificial aids, in order not only to suggest sustained and prolonged, but even swelling tones. Feeling makes ingenious, and the need to express one's emotions will create resources which escape the mechanical player.]

The opening sentence confirms the central topic of this chapter. The following idea, namely that the performer has to force his artistic will on the instrument, recalls Beethoven's famous exclamation to the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, who complained about technical difficulties in a passage: 'Glaubt Er, dass ich an seine elende Geige denke, wenn der Geist zu mir spricht?'[360] [Do you really believe that I think about your silly fiddle when the spirit speaks to me?] It seems to contradict the role of an instrument as it was discussed in the previous section. Thalberg, however, speaks about the general characteristic of an instrument, in this case specifically the dying tone of the piano.

Thalberg then gives several remarks on performance. One of these concerns a phenomenon that is vehemently discussed nowadays, and that is generally termed 'dislocation: playing one hand after the other'.[361] In the musical climate after the Second World War it was condemned by many, who saw it as a sentimental excrescence of a degenerated romantic taste. With the growing interest in historical performance styles and the increasing availability of early recordings, however, it became clear that, historically speaking, it is playing precisely together which is the exception, not dislocation. The confusing thing is that sometimes nineteenth-century pianists warn against dislocation in their texts, but use it in their recordings all the same. Thalberg's text also shows a certain ambiguity; in fact he advises the performer not to overuse dislocation, and above all not to make it the default option. It seems, though, that he suggests a much more generous amount of dislocation than many modern pianists would consider desirable.

> Il sera indispensable d'éviter, dans l'exécution, cette manière ridicule et de mauvais goût de retarder avec exagération le *frappement* des notes de chant longtemps après celles de la basse, et de produire ainsi, d'un bout à l'autre d'un morceau, des effets de syncopes continues. Dans une mélodie lente écrite en notes de longue durée, il est d'un bon effet, surtout au premier temps de chaque mesure ou en

[359] Thalberg, S.: *L'Art du chant appliqué au piano.* Leipzig, n.d. [1853]; 1.
[360] Quoted in Indorf, G.: *Beethovens Streichquartette. Kulturgeschichtliche Aspekte und Werkinterpretation*. Freiburg i. Br., 2004; 33.
[361] Peres da Costa, N.: *Off the Record.* New York, 2012; chapter 2.

> commençant chaque période de phrase, d'attaquer le chant après la basse, mais seulement avec un retard presque imperceptible.[362]
>
> [Absolutely to be avoided during performance is that ridiculous and tasteless manner of striking the melody tones exaggeratedly long after those in the bass, thus producing the effect of continuous syncopations, from the beginning of the piece till the end. Nevertheless, in a slow melody, written in large note values, it is a beautiful effect to play the melody after the bass, especially on the first beat of every bar or at the beginning of every phrase – however only with a hardly perceptible delay.]

The final remark of the introduction echoes advice that Chopin gave to his students. There are several reports about Chopin telling his students to listen to the great singers of the 'Italian school' as often as they could; he considered this an absolute necessity for a pianist.[363] The obvious place to enjoy this performance style was the *Théâtre-Italien*, with singers such as Giulia Grisi, Maria Malibran, Giuditta Pasta, Luigi Lablache, Giovanni Battista Rubini, Antonio Tamburini, Laure Cinti-Damoreau and Adolphe Nourrit, many of whom figured in the previous chapter (→ chapter 4). Thalberg writes:

> En terminant ces observations générales, le meilleur conseil que nous puissions donner aux personnes qui s'occupent sérieusement du piano, c'est d'apprendre, d'étudier et commenter le bel art du chant. Dans ce but, on ne devra jamais perdre l'occasion d'entendre les grands artistes, quel que soit leur instrument, et surtout les grands chanteurs ; c'est dès le début et dans la première phase de son talent qu'il faut savoir s'entourer de bons modèles. Si, pour les jeunes artistes, cela peut être un encouragement, nous leur dirons que personnellement nous avons étudié le chant pendant cinq ans, sous la direction de l'un des plus célèbres professeurs de l'école d'Italie.[364]
>
> [At the end of these general observations, the best advice we can give to those who occupy themselves seriously with the piano, is to learn, to study, to work through the beautiful art of singing. Therefore one should never miss the opportunity to listen to great artists, on whichever instrument, and in particular to the great singers; for from the very beginning and the first stage of development of one's talent on, one should try to surround oneself with good models. If it can encourage young artists, we'd like to tell them that we personally studied singing for five years under the direction of one of the most famous teachers from the Italian school of singing.]

This last disclosure is remarkable, and indeed reflects the importance attached to the practice of singing itself. One wonders whether this very famous professor of the Italian school was Lablache, who by then was Thalberg's father-in-law.

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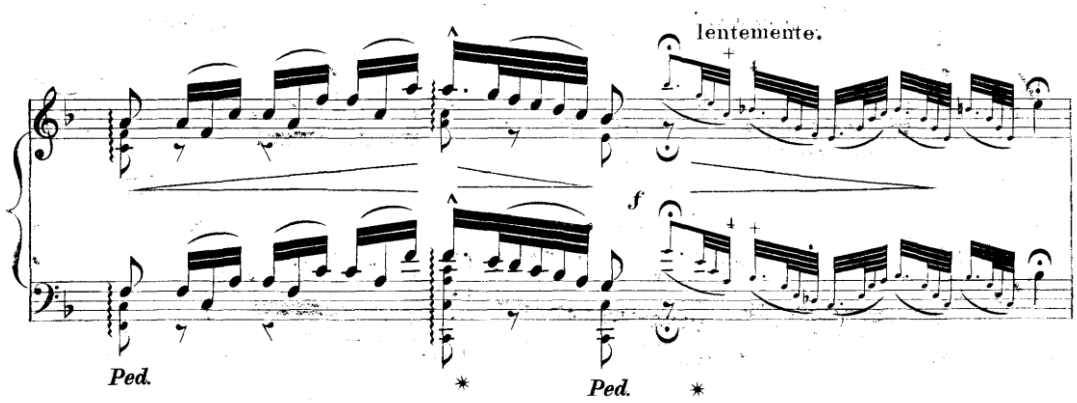
[362] Thalberg, S.: *L'Art du chant appliqué au piano.* Leipzig, n.d. [1853]; 2.
[363] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit.; 68.
[364] Thalberg, S.: op. cit., 4.

As stated above, the aria transcriptions in *L'Art du chant appliqué au piano* are fairly precise. The singing parts do not contain written out ornamentation, except for a few added cadenzas, such as this one at the end of the duet at the end of the first act of Rossini's *Zelmira*:



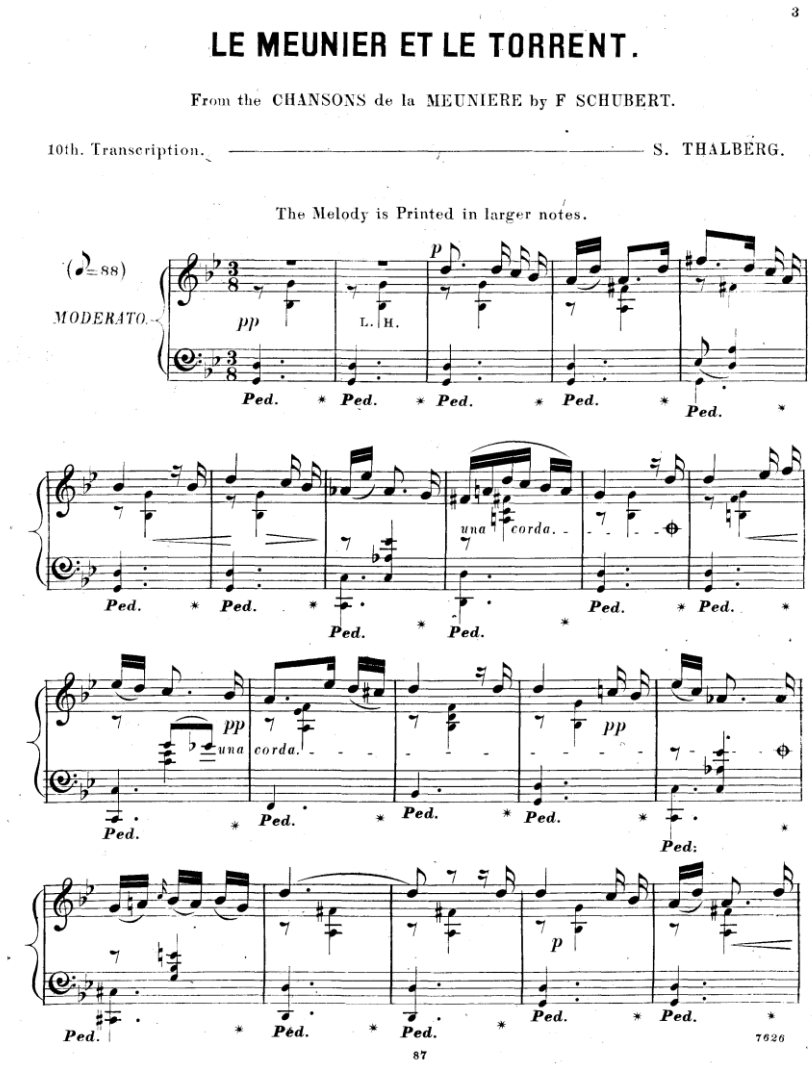

*Example 5.9.1*

Technically speaking, the same difficulty that was already noted in Heller's music applies here as well: when one hand plays more than just the melody, as it is often the case, it becomes awkward to add ornamentation in a bel canto style, let alone to do it extempore.

Thalberg never gives the original text, nor does he indicate articulation, apart from what is already in the original score. Interestingly, the beaming of the vocal original is often preserved, resulting in isolated eighth and sixteenth notes where the original had different syllables. It would, however, be speculative to deduct an idea of articulation only from this notational peculiarity, since the succession of different syllables in the original does not automatically imply an interruption in the sound.[365] What Thalberg does add, however, is some occasional indications of tempo change, and especially dynamic markings that sometimes evoke 'le bel art du chant', in particular where he applies the left pedal. Such *una corda* passages can presumably be interpreted as the instrumental equivalent of the vocal effect of *sotto voce.* The use Thalberg makes of this effect suggests a strongly text-related, rhetorical 'colouring' of the words. In *Der Müller und der Bach* (ex. 5.9.2), for instance, the next-to-last song from Schubert's *Schöne Müllerin*, the sad miller's vocal line is indicated with a soft dynamic throughout the entire song (*p* or *pp*); however, Thalberg also occasionally specifies nuances for individual words or phrases. The pianissimo within the *una corda* in the last bar of the third system, for instance, on the Neapolitan sixth chord, coincides with the text 'seine Thränen' [his tears] in the original. The full phrase reads: 'da muss in die Wolken der Vollmond gehn / damit seine Thränen die

[365] This recalls the habit in French of treating the feminine ending -e(s), which is mute in spoken language, as a separate syllable in a musical setting of the text, for instance in the last bars of Gabriel Fauré's song *Automne* op. 18 no. 3: *... a-vaient ou-bli-é-es.*

Menschen nicht sehn' [... the full moon must hide in the clouds / so that the people won't see its tears]. Highlighting expressively one word or group of words (such as 'seine Thränen' in the present case) is an outstanding example of a rhetorical style of delivering a text that easily can be experienced as old-fashioned or exaggerated today, but that evidently was a stylistic feature until into the twentieth century (→ Alexander Moissi's performance of Goethe's *Erlkönig* ballad in chapter 7.7), and that arguably underlies the colouring of text in bel canto. Interestingly Thalberg increases the effect by adding a small grace note to Schubert's melody in the first bar of the fourth system, creating the effect of a small sob. In the original edition of *Der Müller und der Bach* (Vienna, 1824), dynamic markings, slurs and other performance suggestions are absent.



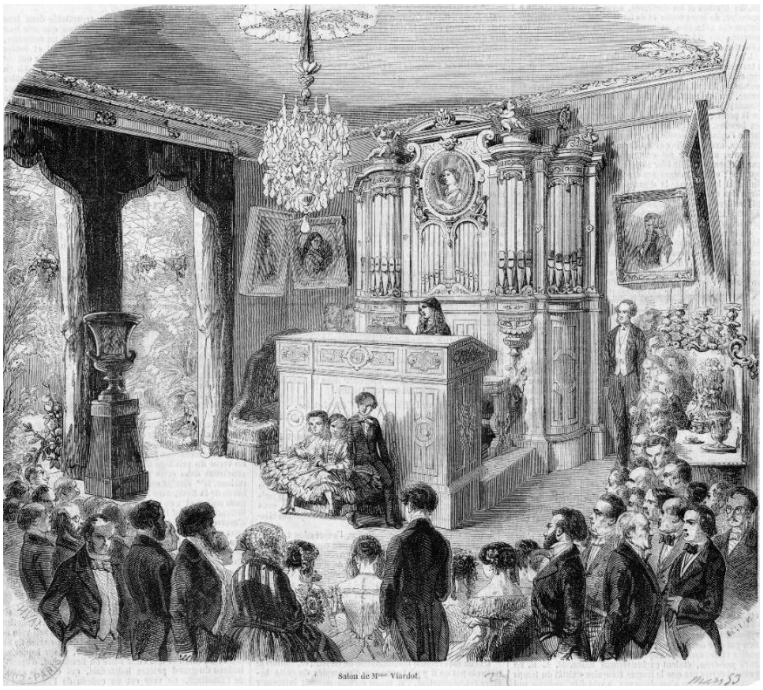

*Example 5.9.2*

## 5.10 Singing a piano piece

One highly unusual and therefore very rare kind of transcription is the exact opposite of what was described above: the arrangement of an original piano piece for voice with accompaniment. Though song-like piano compositions such as Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* were a popular genre, taking

the step of actually turning them into vocal pieces was exceptional. It is therefore all the more remarkable that a number of Chopin's mazurkas for piano were transcribed as songs by the famous mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot.

Pauline Viardot, the sister of Maria Malibran and Manuel García *fils*, was a close friend of George Sand and met Chopin during her long stays at Sand's estate Nohant, where they spent much time together studying music. Like her sister, Viardot had received a very broad musical education from the best teachers, including Reicha for composition (harmony / counterpoint) and Liszt for piano. Her first wish was to become a piano virtuoso; however, her father died when she was eleven, and on her mother's request she decided to give up the piano, a decision she would always regret.[366] Viardot was an opera star who performed worldwide, in the *Théâtre-Italien* as well as in St. Petersburg. In addition, she taught and composed, and from 1851 on, she conducted an influential musical salon at 48 Rue de Douai in Paris.[367]




*Example 5.10.1: Salon de Mme Viardot; H. Val, W. Best, 1853.[368] Pauline Viardot is playing the organ (and possibly singing to it).*

[366] Harris, R.: *The music salon of Pauline Viardot: featuring her salon opera Cendrillon* (diss.). Louisiana State University, unpublished (2005); 5.
https://web.archive.org/web/20070307112626/http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-04082005-095548/unrestricted/Harris_dis.pdf

[367] Shuster, C.: 'Six Mazurkas de Frédéric Chopin transcrites pour chant et piano par Pauline Viardot'. In: *Revue de Musicologie*, T. 75, No. 2 (1989); 274.

[368] https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8425570j.r=Salon%20de%20Pauline%20Viardot?rk=21459;2

The first arrangements of Chopin's mazurkas were made in the 1840's, with Chopin giving his advice during their meetings at Nohant.[369] Viardot seems to have written them primarily for personal use, as they were published only in the 1860's.[370] Chopin accompanied her at several occasions, and after his death she continued performing them, mainly in salons. The texts were written specifically for this project by Louis Pomey. Pauline Viardot also made transcriptions of instrumental music by other composers, for instance Brahms, whose sixth Hungarian Dance formed the basis for the duet *Les Bohémiennes.*

The first six texts of the mazurkas roughly tell the story of a love from the point of view of a young girl, starting with the *ivresse* of the first love (*Seize ans*) and finishing with *Séparation.* This group of six mazurkas was written first and published as a set. They could be seen as a frivolous counterpart of Schumann's almost contemporary cycle *Frauenliebe und Leben* (1840). The remaining six mazurkas do not have a connecting narrative.

Viardot's arrangements are very precise and faithful to the originals. Sometimes repetitions of phrases are omitted or added, and when Chopin's piece does not have an introduction, she ads one, mostly derived from another place in the composition – for instance, in *Aime-moi*, based on Chopin's op. 33 no. 2, where Chopin's coda inventively appears as an introduction. The keys are in most cases the same as in the originals, though some mazurkas (among them op. 33 no. 2) were transposed for reasons of vocal range.

The arrangements of Viardot can be understood as interpretations of Chopin's originals. Though they are compositions in their own right, they shed light on how Chopin's contemporaries might have understood his scores.[371] Just like Ernst Ferand's notated embellishments (→ chapter 3.1), the way she treats the mazurkas can be seen as the residue of an improvisational practice. Viardot's arrangements open a window on an improvisatory approach to these scores. In her study on the six mazurkas, Carolyn Shuster writes that 'their musical indications reinforce the idea that the interpretation of Chopin's music requires a spontaneous variety of expression guided by a natural musical intuition'.[372] The examples she gives to support this idea focus on the different dynamic and tempo indications at various repeats of passages in Viardot's scores, differences that are absent in Chopin's scores. It seems to me, though, that Shuster is too cautious here: from a bel canto point of view, this music invites to a wide range of expressive variety, which the indications in the score can only evoke in very general terms.

[369] Harris, R.: op. cit.,10.
[370] Shuster, C.: op. cit.; 271.
[371] For the question whether also composing can be seen as an improvisatory activity, see chapter 11.4.
[372] Shuster, C.: op. cit., 278.

An echo of a nineteenth-century bel canto way of performing this music can be heard on a recording of *Aime-moi* Rita Fornia made in 1912.[373] Fornia was an American coloratura (mezzo-)soprano who studied and performed in Europe and in America. Apart from generous tempo changes (which will be the subject of chapter 7), one can hear how she approaches the piece with a characteristic lightness and flexibility of voice, allowing her to perform all small ornamental turns in the melody with great clarity. The vocal line is clearly organised by phrases, but with a constant variety in colour, timing, and with subtle *portamenti* preventing monotonous phrasing. In his invaluable collection of testimonies of students and other people who were close to Chopin, *Chopin vu par ses élèves*, the Swiss musicologist Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger mentions an orally transmitted performing tradition of this mazurka that stems from Chopin's student, the princess Marcelina Czartoryska, and that contradicts all editions of the musical text. According to the princess, Chopin wanted this piece to express the contrast between the pub and the salon, which is why he made her play the main theme vividly and briskly the first time around, without too many nuances, while she performed it caressingly and elegantly at the recapitulation.[374] Viardot suggests a similar difference by marking the last appearance of the theme *rubato*, which Fornia interprets by a sudden slowing down of the tempo (1'47").

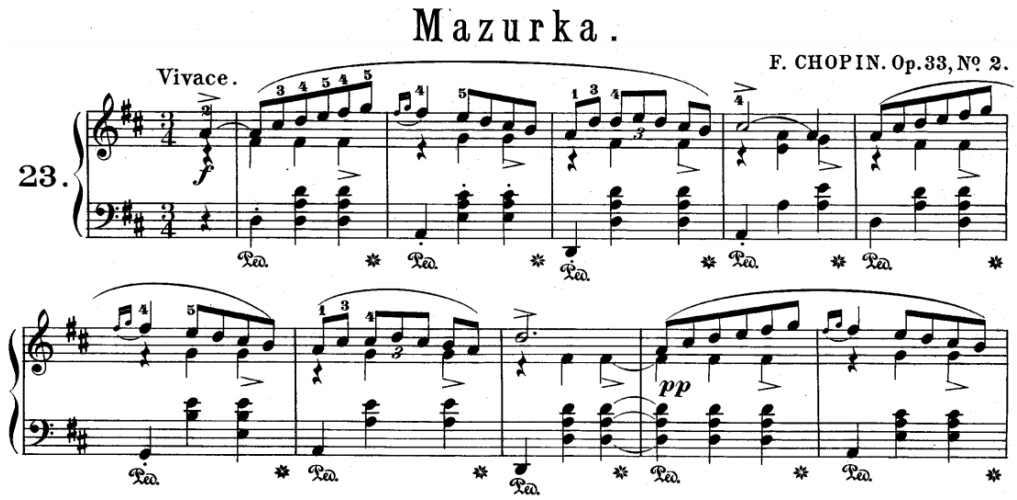
**[5.10 #1 Chopin / Viardot: *Aime-moi* (Rita Fornia, 1912)[375]]**

By comparison, I present a recording of the original mazurka made by the Polish pianist Moriz Rosenthal in 1937, at the end of his career. Rosenthal studied with Chopin's most famous pupil, Karol Mikuli, and with Franz Liszt. Mikuli took great care to transmit the ideas of Chopin about performance, which is why Rosenthal can be seen as a musical grandson of Chopin.[376] Striking features of his playing are the many subtle articulations, and a lightness that reminds one of Fornia. Both Rosenthal and Fornia have a similar way of marking the beginning of the B-part (at *Mais quoi! Des pleurs, ma belle* [0'38"] in Viardot's arrangement, in Rosenthal's recording at 0'50") by performing the first two bars in a different (languid) character, then disrupting it suddenly when the music continues. Though Rosenthal's performance is less varied in tempo and expression than Fornia's, he clearly seeks for *varietas* in the way the phrases are connected. Chopin's mazurkas are stylised versions of several different Polish folk dances, which are never reproduced in their pure form; it has to be said that this mazurka has features of the *oberek,* a fast dance that does not invite

[373] Special thanks to Wilanne Mooiman for pointing out this recording to me.
[374] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 108-109.
[375] https://youtu.be/EcVcEK2UG7k (uploaded 2016 by 'CurzonRoad').
[376] A popular type of qualification whose relevance, however, is generally limited.

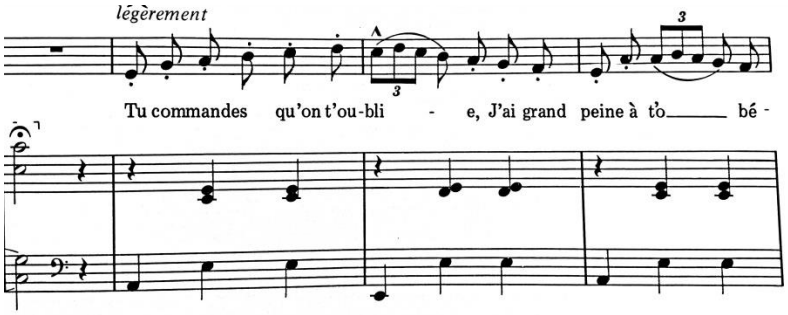
the performer to indulge in excessive rubato: it is dancing rather than singing music. In recordings of other mazurkas, for instance op. 24 no. 3,[377] Rosenthal plays much more freely.

**[5.10 #2 Chopin: Mazurka op. 33 no. 2 (Moriz Rosenthal, 1937)[378]]**




*Example 5.10.2: Chopin, F.: Mazurka op. 33 no. 2 (beginning).*[379]

Rosenthal obviously interprets Chopin's slurs as phrasing slurs, not as an indication for legato. He articulates the melody tones in the first (and similar) bars two-by-two, which reminds one of text articulation, especially when the text placing is dense like in Viardot (who incidentally adds dots instead of a slur):

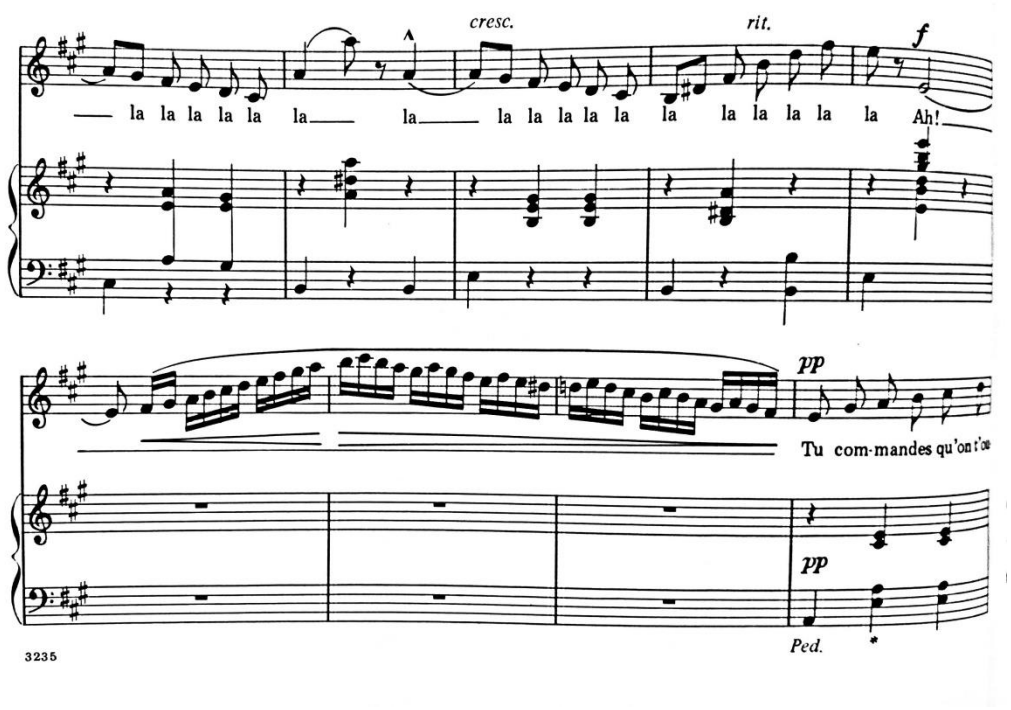



*Example 5.10.3: Chopin / Viardot: Aime-moi, bars 19-22.*[380]

[377] https://youtu.be/MStF_PeC-ko (uploaded 2011 by 'gullivior').
[378] https://youtu.be/ViwG5EhkMmM (uploaded 2008 by 'd60944').
[379] In: Chopin, F.: *Complete works for the piano* (K. Mikuli, ed.), vol. 2. New York, 1895; 58.
[380] In: Viardot, P.: *12 Mazurkas* (J. Rose, ed.). New York, n.d.; 7.

Viardot does not give Chopin's consistent accents on the third beats (indicating the 'groove' of the *oberek*), perhaps for vocal reasons. Rosenthal does play them, but in a subtle way: the third beat is neither really louder nor longer, but seems to be the 'goal' of the movement within each bar. In the melody Rosenthal plays 'in the direction of' the last note of the bar. In bar 1 the final g (piano version) thus becomes slightly longer and louder, creating the effect of a Lombardic rhythm on the last beat, very different from the first and second beats – another instance of variety within the shaping of the melodic line. It is also an example of the fact that articulation as such doesn't necessarily influence the flow of a melody.

Viardot hardly adds any written ornamentation in the mazurkas (unlike Chopin himself when he taught his own music; see the next section), with one important exception: in many cases she adds a short cadence on characteristic dominant harmonies, preparing for the return of the tonic. In such cases the chord is stretched (usually beats or bars are added), and often there is a virtuosic flourish in the voice, ranging from a chromatic downward scale across an octave to a full-blown cadenza of high virtuosity. Her setting of op. 33 no. 2 also has such a cadenza, preparing for the recapitulation:[381]




*Example 5.10.4*

Readers who are familiar with Chopin's mazurka might have trouble recognising the music in the upper system of the fragment above; this is because Viardot had to adapt the latter part of the B-section, since this in fact consists of only a skeleton of chords and rhythm, a feature very characteristic

[381] Viardot, P.: op. cit., 10.

for Chopin's piano music. Viardot preserves the exciting harmony but adds a melody that convincingly gives the compulsive repeated chords a Spanish flavour.

To summarise, Viardot's arrangements may be a historic exception, but their very existence is symptomatic of the entwining of vocal and instrumental music that existed at that time, above all in Chopin's music. Taking this connection seriously is a very promising way to get to a better understanding of a truly *cantabile* playing style, traces of which can still be heard in some of the earliest recordings. In the next section some of these recordings will be examined.

### 5.11 Songs without words

During the early nineteenth century the character piece for piano quickly became popular; this is the context in which instrumental songs began to appear. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy coined the genre *Lieder ohne Worte* [songs without words], compositions for piano solo with the structure and appearance of an accompanied song, but without vocal counterpart. The pieces, which were published in sets of six throughout his life, became immensely popular in Biedermeier Germany and abroad.

Mendelssohn's dislike of ornamentation was already mentioned in section 5.1; an over-exuberant bel canto style of playing the piano also seems not to have been to his liking, as seen in a letter from 1834 in which Mendelssohn describes an unexpected meeting with his friends Frédéric Chopin and Ferdinand Hiller in Düsseldorf. With self-mockery he compares the playing of his friends with his own:

> Beide laboriren nur etwas an der Pariser Verzweiflungssucht und Leidenschaftssucherei, und haben Tact und Ruhe und das recht Musikalische gar zu sehr aus den Augen gelassen; ich nun wieder vielleicht zu wenig, und so ergänzten wir uns und lernten, glaub' ich, alle Drei von einander, indem ich mir ein Bißchen wie ein Schulmeister, und sie sich ein Bißchen wie *miriflors* oder *incroyables* vorkamen.[382]
>
> [Both, however, rather toil in the Parisian spasmodic and impassioned style, too often losing sight of time and sobriety and of true music; I, again, do so perhaps too little, - thus we all three mutually learn something and improve each other, while I feel rather like a school-master, and they a little like *miriflors* or *incroyables* (i.e. dandies - *BM*).][383]

Chopin had moved to Paris in 1831. This is in fact one of the very few less enthusiastic reports about Chopin's playing, which generally was greatly admired. As I have shown in section 5.3, this does not mean that Mendelssohn would not have been interested in singing as a source of inspiration for any

[382] Mendelssohn Bartholdy, F.: *Briefe aus den Jahren 1830 bis 1847* (zweiter Band). Leipzig, 1863; 41.
[383] Mendelssohn Bartholdy, F.: *Mendelssohn's Letters from 1833 to 1847* (transl. Lady Wallace). London, 1863; 38.

instrumentalist.[384] The young *Leipziger Conservatorium*, founded by Mendelssohn in 1843 (→ section 5.2), published a prospectus to advertise the school and attract students. The text includes a description of the organisation of the curriculum, which appears to have been focused on educating 'complete' musicians – which included singing lessons. Among other things it reads:

> Jeder Aufgenommene hat, abgesehn davon, welchem Instrumente (Clavier, Violine, Orgel) er sich vorzugsweise widmen will, jedenfalls an dem Unterrichte im Generalbass, Clavierspiel und Gesang regelmässig Theil zu nehmen.[385]
>
> [Every accepted student, apart from the instrument (piano, violin, organ) he wishes to dedicate himself to, has to participate frequently in the classes for figured bass, piano and singing.]

It is likely that the curriculum reflected Mendelssohn's view, even though he was not a member of the 'Direction' [management board] and did not teach actively from the second semester on. (On November 25th 1843, the Mendelssohns moved to Berlin.[386]) Fifteen years later and eleven years after Mendelssohn's death, the young Edvard Grieg visited the Leipzig conservatory and still had to take the singing lessons (besides music theory and composition, piano, organ and 'Vorlesungen' [lectures]).[387] Apparently singing was considered an essential element of the training of any musician, even in 'conservative' Leipzig.

Some early recordings of pianists who represented a late-nineteenth-century performing style (i.e. who were becoming old-fashioned when they were recorded in the early decades of the twentieth century) give us an inkling of how early-nineteenth-century cantabile might have sounded, even though in most cases the instruments played were modern at that time. For this chapter I selected two recordings of Mendelssohn's *Lied ohne Worte* op. 30 no. 6, the 'Venetian gondola song' in f# minor. It is a barcarolle that actually hints at a bel canto style in its harmonic simplicity, in the parallel thirds in the middle section, and of course in the rocking barcarolle rhythm.

The first recording is by Vladimir (de) Pachmann. Pachmann, born in Odessa in 1848, studied in Vienna and became a world-famous performer of Chopin's works in particular. He recorded op. 30, no. 6 in 1912. His playing strikes the listener by the vividness with which the melodic line is shaped. Each phrase is coloured individually, with ongoing variation in timing, touch and articulation. Bar 40, for instance, is played without pedal and articulated the first time (1'16"), while in the repeat it is made part of a longer line (1'54"): it sounds as if the text is different the second time.

---

[384] Or in bel canto, for that matter, witness the concert aria *Infelice* op. 94 (on a text of Pietro Metastasio) he composed in 1834 with Maria Malibran and the violinist Charles-Auguste de Bériot in mind; this piece has many stylistic features from bel canto. http://riviste.paviauniversitypress.it/index.php/phi/article/view/04-02-into1/36

[385] Prospectus: *Das Conservatorium der Musik in Leipzig.* Leipzig, n.d. [1843]; 10-11.

[386] Sutermeister, P.: 'Lebensbild Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys'. In: Mendelssohn Bartholdy, F.: *Briefe einer Reise.* Zürich, 1958; 357.

[387] Conservatory report Edvard Grieg, 1858; Hochschule für Musik und Theater „Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" Leipzig, Bibliothek/Archiv, A, I.3, 720.

**[5.11 #1 Mendelssohn: Lied ohne Worte op. 30 no. 6 (V. de Pachmann, 1912)[388]]**

Ignaz Friedman was a Polish pianist, born in 1882, who studied with Theodor Leschetitzky. Friedman's memories of Theodor Leschetitzky recall the attitude of bel canto teachers such as Manuel García *père*, as described in chapter 4.6.4:

> He was probably the last of the great artists who knew how to unite the sovereign and the Bohemian in one and the same person. He was one of the teachers who knew, who knew positively, when the student had ceased to be a student and had become an artist. Then the man who the day before had played the part of a veritable tyrant, would show himself the day after in the role of an old colleague, ready to consult on a footing of equality with his erstwhile pupil. Though he might have thrown a volume of music at his pupil's head a few hours before, once he felt that the former had crossed the boundary line which separated him from artistic maturity, he would discuss the most delicate nuances of his art with him in the most loyal and open-hearted manner, and permit him to take all sorts of liberties. All this merely because he realized that what had been merely grape juice was turning into wine.[389]

The second recording of Mendelssohn's gondola song presented here was made by Friedman in 1930.

**[5.11 #2 Mendelssohn: Lied ohne Worte op. 30 no. 6 (I. Friedman, 1930)[390]]**

Friedman's style is very different from Pachmann's: it is much more declamatory, and he starts many phrases with a big tone, followed by a diminuendo – something that can also be heard in recordings by Sergei Rachmaninov, a contemporary of Friedman. Friedman also takes the liberty of adding notes, especially lower octaves; the last two tones are even transposed an octave down. Nevertheless, the recordings resemble each other, insomuch as they both highlight phrases by means of colouring. Friedman also plays with bar 40 by using a sotto voce effect, though only the second time instead of the first.

Notwithstanding the fact that together with the development of instruments themselves, also the playing style undoubtedly had changed greatly since Mendelssohn's days, one gets a faint idea of the possibilities that lurk when nineteenth-century vocal performance ideals are taken as a model for playing an instrument. (For the remarkable differences with modern performances concerning timing details – another aspect of the influence of vocal performance ideals – see chapter 7).

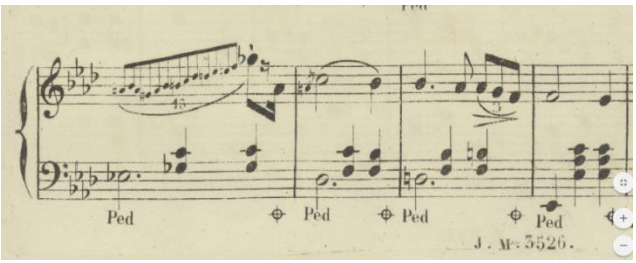
[388] https://youtu.be/E_6sWESUghU (uploaded 2012 by 'Beckmesser2')
[389] Evans, A.: 'At the piano with Ignaz Friedman.' https://web.archive.org/web/20050309170826/http://www.arbiterrecords.com/musicresourcecenter/friedtch.html
[390] https://youtu.be/XnQAMvsPCB4 (uploaded 2012 by 'kakehavata')

## 5.12 Chopin

### *Bel canto techniques on the piano*

The nineteenth-century composer of piano music whose name jumps to mind when the connection with bel canto is discussed is Chopin. Chopin's love for bel canto is well supported by numerous testimonies and was already mentioned in section 5.8. Time and again he spoke to his students about playing the piano in terms of singing: *Il vous faut chanter si vous voulez jouer du piano!*[391] [You have to sing when you want to play the piano!]. His basic approach of shaping a melodic line recalls Quantz: longer and higher notes are played louder, and dissonances and syncopations are more clearly marked; the end of a phrase 'before a comma or full stop'(!)[392] is always soft; a rising melody is to be played crescendo, a descending one decrescendo; the first beat of a bar is louder. 'These are the principles. Exceptions are always notated by the composers.'[393] Chopin's student Mikuli reported: 'He made us sing the musical phrase under our fingers with such a clarity that every note became a syllable, every bar a word, every phrase a thought. It was declamation without being bombastic, simple and sublime at the same time.'[394] The parallel between singing and playing was even extrapolated physically, when Chopin equated rising and dropping the wrist with the breathing of a singer.[395]

In addition, vocal *wesentliche* [essential] ornaments can be found in Chopin's compositions. They were hardly discussed in chapter 4, but because Chopin so strikingly translates them to the piano, thereby enhancing the impression of instrumental bel canto, a brief survey is given here. The *portamento*, for instance, an important feature of bel canto singing, occurs – according to Eigeldinger – sometimes in the form of a chromatic scale, for instance in the waltz op. 69 no. 1, bar 35:[396]

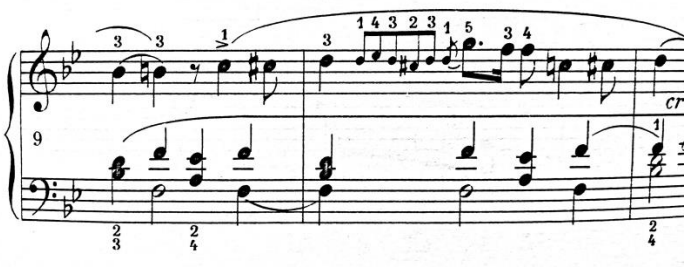



*Example 5.12.1: Chopin, F.: 2 Valses op. 69 (œuvre posthume). Paris, n.d. [1855]*

[391] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 25.
[392] Chopin's expression recalls Reicha's classification of cadences in his *Traité de Mélodie* (1814). See chapter 4.5*b*.
[393] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 65.
[394] Ibidem.
[395] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 69.
[396] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 153.

Several other ornaments can often be found in Chopin's scores, such as the *gruppetto* or turn, most often notated in detail, not with the sign ∾ .

Closely related to the *portamento* is the *cercar la nota*, in which a tone is approached from below, often from the previous tone. It is a way to ensure legato.[397] In Chopin's scores it occurs very frequently, for instance in the nocturne op. 37 no. 1 (bar 10, second beat), where it is preceded by a written-out turn:[398]

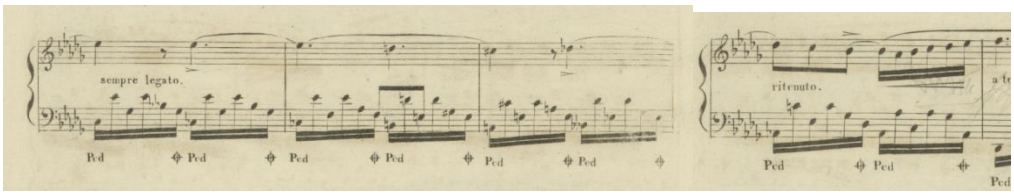


*Example 5.12.2*

The *messa di voce*, a gradual crescendo and decrescendo on one tone, was an essential ingredient of bel canto technique. Like the *portamento*, it is impossible to produce on a piano. In section 5.9 Thalberg was quoted, stating that 'this imperfection should be corrected with artificial aids, in order not only to suggest sustained and prolonged, but even swelling tones. Feeling makes ingenious, and the need to express one's emotions will create resources which escape the mechanical player.' Unfortunately he did not specify how the effect of the *messa di voce* could be imitated on a piano, but there is a moment in Chopin's nocturne op. 27 no. 2 (bars 22-24) that seems to evoke this ornament (see example 5.12.3). Under the long e-flat in the right hand, the left hand plays a remarkable harmonic progression of almost Wagnerian chromatic complexity that suggests a crescendo towards the dissonant half diminished seventh chord on the downbeat of the second bar, followed by a stepwise resolution suggesting diminuendo. The direction of the chromatic lines is intensified by the highlighted tenor voice in the second bar of the example that rhythmically blurs the chord progression in that bar. In this way Chopin suggestively creates a 'replacement'-*messa di voce* in the left hand. The effect is repeated in a condensed and weakened way on the turn from the third to the fourth bar.[399]

**[5.12 #1 Harmonic background]**

[397] Berne, P.: *Bel canto. Historische Aufführungspraxis in der italienischen Oper von Rossini bis Verdi*. Worms, 2008; 102.
[398] Chopin, F.: *Nocturnes* (Complete works, vol. VII. Ed.: I. Paderewski). Warsaw, 1949; 58.
[399] Chopin, F.: *2 Nocturnes* op. 27. Paris, n.d. [1836?]; 8.




*Example 5.12.3*

### *Fioritures*

Chopin provided his cantabile melodies with many written-out melodic flourishes, described by Liszt as 'petits groups de notes surajoutées, tombant comme des gouttelettes d'une rosée diaprée par-dessus la figure mélodique'[400] [little groups of superadded notes, falling like light drops of pearly dew upon the melodic figure[401]]. Liszt explicitly connected Chopin's *fioritures* with the 'grande école de chant italien'. Interestingly, many eye witnesses testify to Chopin's habit of improvising new ornamentation during performances of his own compositions, notably the nocturnes and mazurkas. It is important to be aware that such reports do not primarily concern large-scale public concerts. Chopin disliked playing for a large audience, and the number of public recitals he gave was limited. He performed a great deal in salons though, and also during private lessons he used to play entire pieces with great dedication. In fact, Chopin didn't see his teaching task as an inevitable burden; in the rendering of Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, Chopin's teaching is even presented as an essential part of his musicianship. Chopin is a convincing example of music 'happening' not only on stage, but also in more intimate circles and most definitely in the teaching room.

Apart from extempore ornamentation added by himself, Chopin also liked to suggest alternative *fioritures* to students who played his music; he usually scribbled such variants in the margin of the score. About the performance of ornaments, Chopin said (as reported by his student Wilhelm von Lenz):

> Es muss improvisiert erscheinen, aus der Herrschaft über das Instrument, nicht aus der Einübung, sich ergeben.[402]
>
> [It should sound as though it is improvised, and result from mastery of the instrument, not from practising.]

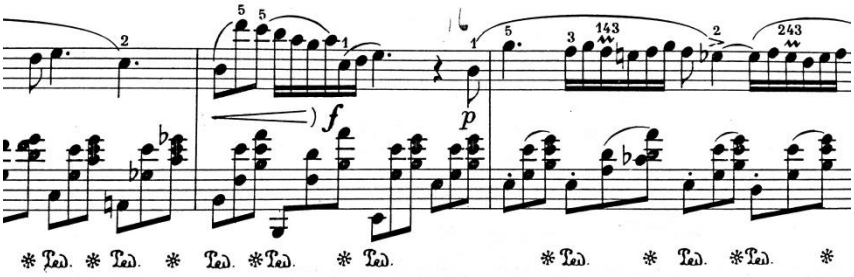
In order to attain a certain casualness, the *fioritures* were not to be played *rallentando*, but rather were to speed up towards the end. They are just fragments of the phrase, and slowing down would inappropriately give them the significance of independent ideas; they should merge with the musical

[400] Quoted in Eigeldinger, op. cit., 28.
[401] Transl. M. Walker Cook, 1863.
[402] Lenz, W. von: 'Übersichtliche Beurteilung der Pianoforte-Kompositionen von Chopin.' In: *Neue Berliner Muzikzeitung,* 26. Jahrgang, Nr. 36. Berlin, 1872; 283.

thought just like a little brook loses itself in the river.[403] This description of Chopin's view matches what was written in chapter 4.5: ornamentation follows or enhances the direction of the musical phrase.

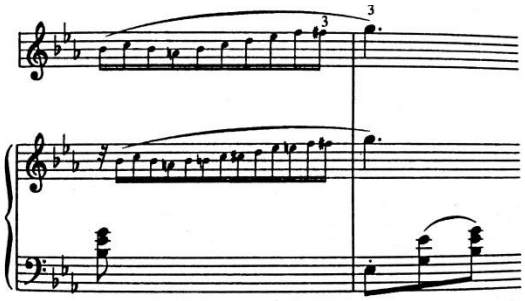
One nocturne that inspired Chopin to many variants is op. 9 no. 2 in E flat major, very popular in Chopin's days and still the most well-known nocturne. The structure is simple: a theme with three variations, twice separated by an interlude ('ritornello' in Lenz's terms), with a coda. Obviously the three variations call for increasing ornamentation; the interlude, which also occurs twice, is hardly ornamented at all the second time. This strongly suggests that the main theme resembles a vocal solo, with the 'ritornelli' taking the place of orchestral interludes. Some variants (from various sources) are reproduced here as examples of Chopin's constantly changing ornamentations, and as a source of new ideas.

*a. Bars 4-5 (end theme, beginning of first variation):*



*Example 5.12.4: Chopin, F.: Nocturne op 9 no. 2, bars 3-5.*[404]

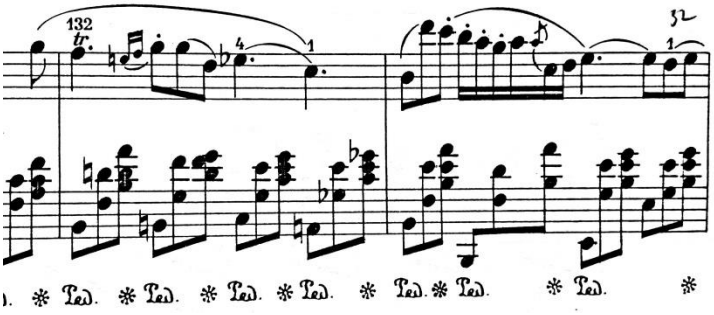
Eigeldinger gives two variants for the upbeat to bar 5, both suggesting a *portamento*, once diatonic and once chromatic:



*Example 5.12.5: Variant bars 4-5.*[405]

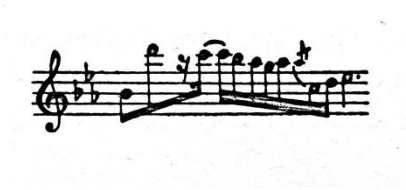
[403] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 78.
[404] Complete works, vol. VII. Ed.: I. Paderewski. Warsaw, 1949; 13.
[405] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 112.

*b. Bar 8 (end of first variation):*



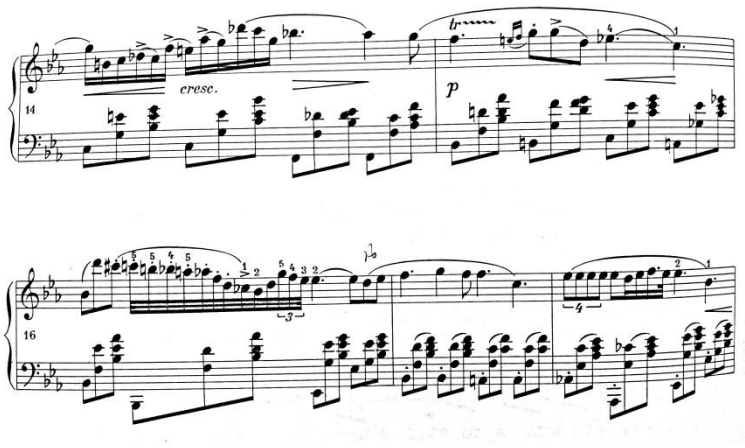
*Example 5.12.6: Chopin, F.: Nocturne op 9 no. 2, bars 7-8.*[406]

The following variant to bar 8 (example 5.12.7) can be interpreted as a written-out *tempo rubato* (a term indicating rhythmic changes in the melody above the original accompaniment; → chapter 7):



*Example 5.12.7: Variant bar 8.*[407]

*c. Bars 14-16 (end of second variation):*



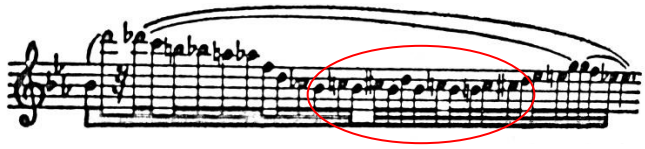

*Example 5.12.8: Chopin, F.: Nocturne op 9 no. 2, bars 14-18.*[408]

[406] Complete works, vol. VII. Ed.: I. Paderewski. Warsaw, 1949; 13.
[407] Complete works, vol. VII; 110.
[408] Complete works, vol. VII; 14.

In this variant of bar 14 (example 5.12.9), the melody that originally covered the first half of the bar has been sped up (blue oval); in this way, space is created for an inserted flourish on the high c''' (red oval), consisting of a downward arpeggio of the supporting dominant seventh chord (with added tones), after which the original melody is picked up again (green oval):

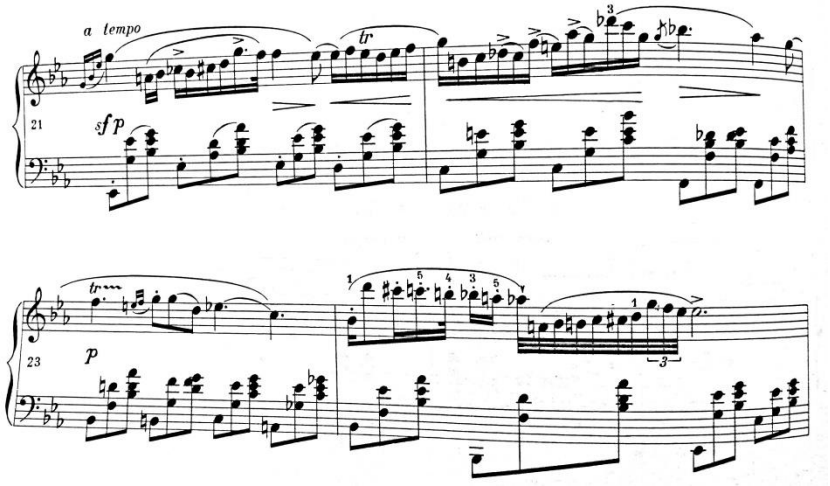
*Example 5.12.9: Variant bar 14-15.*[409]

A similar procedure occurs in this variant to bar 16 (example 5.12.10), also on a dominant seventh chord. Here again, the original is extended by the insertion of a flourish on the root of the chord, this time in the form of a chromatically filled third in a pendulum movement (red oval):



*Example 5.12.10: Variant bar 16.*[410]

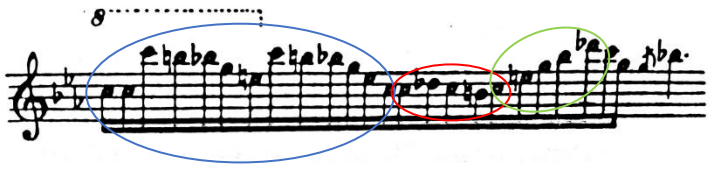
*d. Bars 22-24 (third variation)*




*Example 5.12.11: Chopin, F.: Nocturne op 9 no. 2, bars 21-24.*[411]

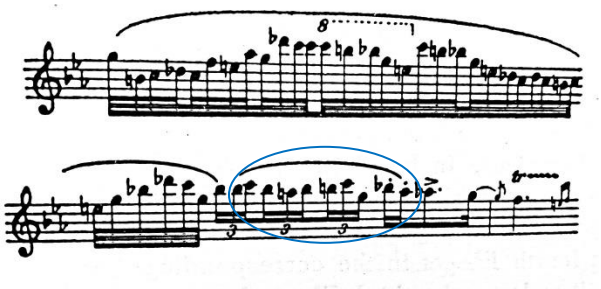
[409] Complete works, vol. VII; 110.
[410] Ibidem.
[411] Complete works, vol. VII; 14.

Compared to the variant of ex. 5.12.9, the first variant of bar 22 (supposedly starting on the sixth eighth note in the bar; see example 5.12.12) simply expands the arpeggiated chord with one more octave (blue oval), followed by a turn on the c" (red oval) and a rising arpeggio that brings us back to the original melody (green oval).



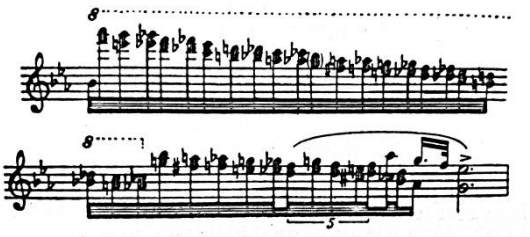
*Example 5.12.12: Variant I bar 22.*[412]

The second variant of the same spot only extends the previous one by ornamenting the appoggiatura b flat in the second half of the bar (blue oval):



*Example 5.12.13: Variant II bars 22-23.*[413]

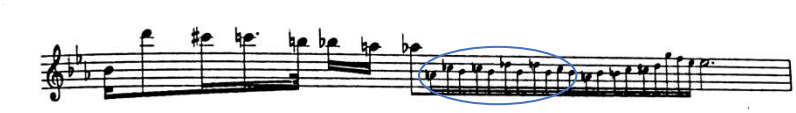
The first variant of bar 24 completely replaces the right hand in first half of the bar (on the dominant seventh chord) with a descending chromatic scale in minor thirds, concluding with a turn and a connecting formula:



*Example 5.12.14: Variant I bar 24.*[414]

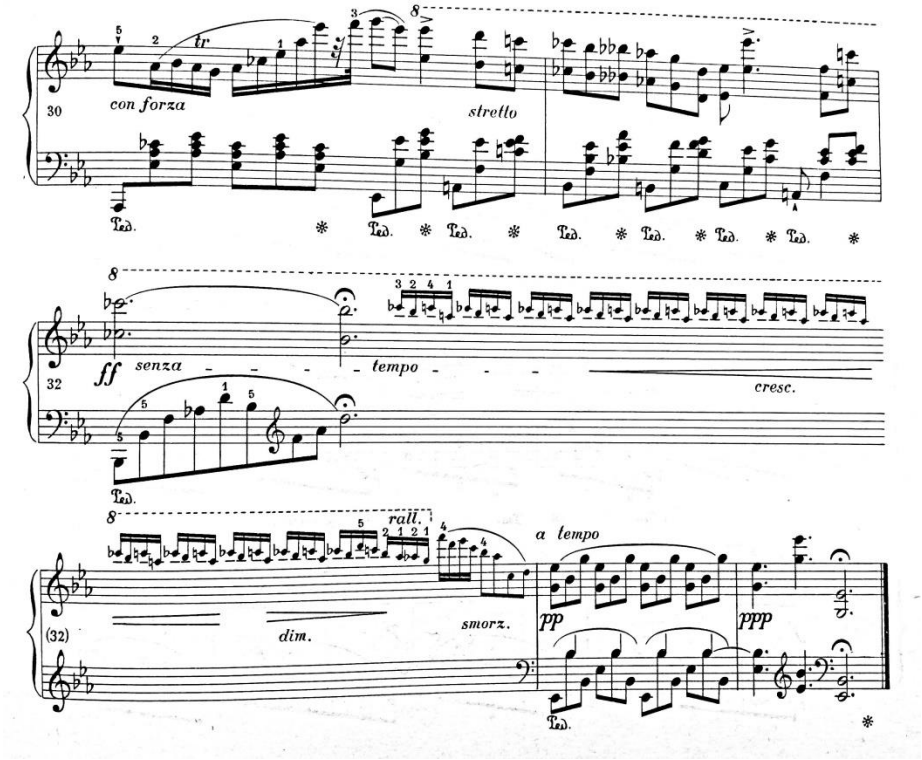
[412] Complete works, vol. VII; 110.
[413] Ibidem.
[414] Ibidem.

The other variant of bar 24 ornaments the chromatic passage leading towards the resolution of the dominant seventh chord by inserting a chromatic oscillation spanning a very limited range (blue oval):



*Example 5.12.15: Variant II bar 24.*[415]

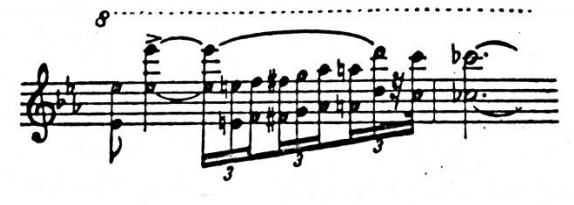
*e. The ending*




*Example 5.12.16: Chopin, F.: Nocturne op 9 no. 2, bars 30-34.*[416]

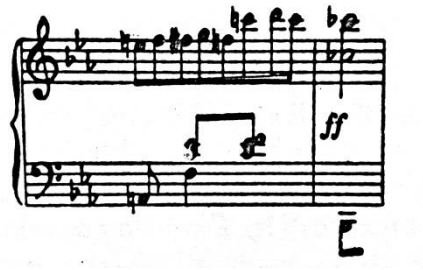
Two variants of bar 31 both ornament the simple melodic f–c interval over the F dominant seventh chord in first inversion at the end of the bar. The first one (example 5.12.17) uses a chromatic movement in octaves and an appoggiatura on a high d that resolves to c:

[415] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit.; 113.
[416] Complete works, vol. VII; 15.



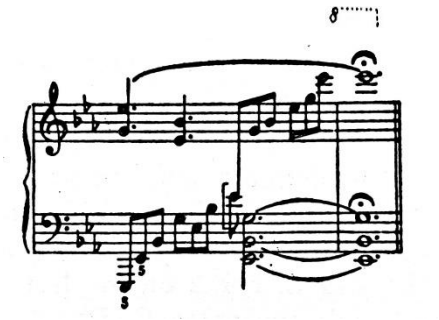
*Example 5.12.17: Variant I bars 31-32.*[417]

The other variant (example 5.12.18) does something similar (though with a smaller chromatic range) but monophonically:

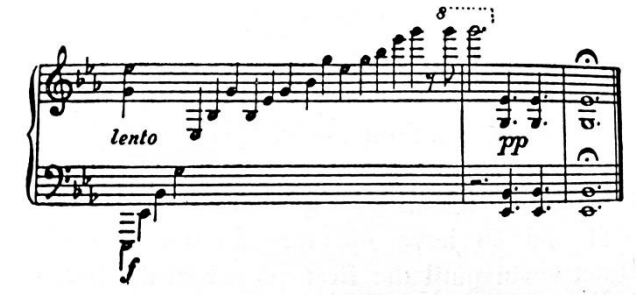



*Example 5.12.18: Variant II bars 31-32.*[418]

Two variants replace the last bar with a large arpeggio, stretching the end:



*Example 5.12.19: Variant I ending.*[419]




*Example 5.12.20: Variant II ending.*[420]

[417] Complete works, vol. VII; 110.
[418] Ibidem.
[419] Ibidem.
[420] Ibidem.

Apart from the chromatic thirds in bar 24, all the variants expand the original version by inserting a passage or by amplifying a movement. They most clearly start from anchor tones and do not leave the supporting harmony. Furthermore, though the connection with bel canto ornamentation has been stressed so far, most of the *fioritures* (apart from the *portamento* in bar 4) actually exceed the limits of what is vocally possible, whether by applying parallel thirds or by stretching the range beyond the compass of a human voice. This is because Chopin merges the language of bel canto ornamentation with the so-called *brillanter Styl* [brilliant style] he inherited from the first generation of travelling piano virtuosos, above all Johann Nepomuk Hummel. This style will be discussed in chapter 9, which deals with ornamental preludes.

***Early recordings of op. 9 no. 2***

There is a beautiful recording of this nocturne in which many of the described variants are played, made by Raoul Koczalski in 1938. Koczalski, born in Warsaw in 1885, was a child prodigy and later became a student of Karol Mikuli. He was extremely famous, especially for his Chopin performances. This performance is notable for its singing quality, including a remarkable variety of touch, even in the ornaments. This is probably as close as we can get to hearing an early nineteenth-century way of playing that took its inspiration from bel canto.

**[5.12 #2 Chopin: Nocturne op 9 no. 2 (Raoul Koczalski, 1938)[421]]**

With such a popular piece, there is a wealth of historical recordings available, from which a few are selected here to serve as a comparison. Although none of the following pianists plays the ornamentation described in this section, and though they differ in many respects, all of them can be heard to 'sing' on the piano in a way that clearly draws from the nineteenth-century bel canto style. Something else they have in common is that they all make an 'improvisatory' impression that to a large extent is caused by the timing (→ chapter 7). All recordings were made within a time span of fourteen years, starting with the first electrical recordings in the late 1920's.

The earliest one is by Sergei Rachmaninov, who emigrated to the US in 1918, where he focused on a career as a solo pianist and conductor, in order to ensure an income for himself and his family.

**[5.12 #3 Chopin: Nocturne op. 9 no. 2 (Sergei Rachmaninov, 1927)[422]]**

Alfred Cortot (1877) was a French pianist, famous for his poetic renderings of Romantic music. He studied among others with Émile Decombes, a relatively unknown student of Chopin. According to Wilhelm Lenz, Chopin said that this nocturne should stylistically be modelled after *la Pasta*,

[421] https://youtu.be/VRmek8kADWA, uploaded 2008 by 'Xqwrtz'.
[422] https://youtu.be/kj3CHx3TDzw, uploaded 2007 by 'theoshow2'.

becoming emotionally more intense with every variation of the theme.[423] Cortot really seems to follow this advice. One way in which he intensifies the expression is by arpeggiating chords even more extensively than the other pianists. This aspect will be discussed again in chapter 7 (Improvisatory timing).

**[5.12 # 4 Chopin: Nocturne op. 9 no. 2 (Alfred Cortot, 1929)[424]]**

Ignaz (Ignacy Jan) Paderewski was born in Poland in 1860. Besides having an impressive stage career, he managed to be the prime minister of Poland for ten months in 1919. Paderewski attached his name to a well-known Polish critical edition of Chopin's collected works, also quoted above. This recording from 1930 reveals how a text-critical approach does not necessarily exclude a very free treatment of the score in performance:

**[5.12 #5 Chopin: Nocturne op. 9 no. 2 (Ignaz Paderewski, 1930)[425]]**

Moriz Rosenthal, like Koczalski a student of Mikuli, was already mentioned in section 5.9:

**[5.12 #6 Chopin: Nocturne op. 9 no. 2 (Moriz Rosenthal, 1935)[426]]**

Emil von Sauer (1862), known as one of the most successful Liszt students (though he actually didn't receive many lessons and Liszt was already advanced in years by that time), was famous for his elegant and 'aristocratic' playing. His recording of op. 9 no. 2 forms an interesting contrast with the previous ones, because von Sauer's lines are much more smooth and regular – in a way, more 'modern'. Compare, for instance, bar 14 (0'33''-0'36'') in von Sauer with 0'36''-0'39'' in Koczalski, 0'38''-0'42'' in Rachmaninov, 0'36''-0'39'' in Cortot, 0'45''-0'48'' in Paderewski, and 0'35''-0'38 in Rosenthal. Sauer incorporates the passage within a longer crescendo, subordinating the detailed colouring suggested by Chopin's text, whereas all the other pianists 'dwell' on this passage.

**[5.12 #7 Chopin: Nocturne op. 9 no. 2 (Emil von Sauer, 1940)[427]]**

### *Varietas in Chopin's performances*

In other pieces as well, Chopin left *ossia* passages in his students' scores, for instance in the *Mazurka* op. 7 no. 2.[428] Sometimes a 'portamento' was in such annotations only shown with a wavy line or a

[423] Eigeldinger, op. cit., 111.
[424] https://youtu.be/o-kaDxaVBFA, upoloaded 2009 by 'Musikschule Lengerich'.
[425] https://youtu.be/FeoVTMyv9vU, uploaded 2011 by 'Ewa Chamiec. Czarmuzyki'.
[426] https://youtu.be/X77Nm1nrcG8, uploaded 2008 by 'truecrypt'.
[427] https://youtu.be/sTCokIodTrY, uploaded 2008 by 'd60944'.
[428] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 194.

similar symbol. This all strongly suggests the kind of extempore ornamentation Chopin himself liked to add when he played his own music. However, his need for variety went far beyond just ornamentation. There are several witnesses who remarked that Chopin never played his compositions twice in the same way, and apparently the differences were considerable. In the rendering of his own music, he completely followed his inspiration of that moment – and every time it is said to have sounded beautiful.[429] These differences included not only agogics, ornamentation and dynamics, but even the basic tempo.[430] With respect to the latter, it may be worth noting that Chopin's tempo indication for the etude in E major op. 10 no. 3 has not always been the *Lento ma non troppo* to be found in all editions of the piece: Chopin's autograph has *Vivace*, slowed down in an autograph fair copy to *Vivace ma non troppo*, until he changed it to *Lento ma non troppo* in the first printings.[431]

Chopin did not perform music of other composers very often, but he liked to play nocturnes by John Field. Field was famous for his *cantabile* playing, and his nocturnes foreshadow Chopin's music in that genre. Several witnesses mentioned Chopin's pleasure in performing Field's nocturnes with improvised added *fioritures*. Though he did not notate any of such variants, we may assume that he availed himself of the kinds of ornamentation mentioned in section 5.11.

Taking into account that people in general consider worth mentioning whatever strikes them as unusual, a question now arises: To what extent was Chopin's highly improvisatory approach actually exceptional at that time? Admittedly, Chopin notated variants in his students' scores, but he did not (like García *père*) urge them to come up with as many variants as they could. His habit never to play his music in the same way was seen as a striking contrast with Frédéric Kalkbrenner, a leading pianist in Paris at the time when Chopin arrived in the French capital.[432] Like Mozart, Chopin was famous for his *tempo rubato* (→ chapter 7), but the fact that it had to be explained in so many texts suggests that this was not something common. Already Liszt, who admired Chopin's work, forbade his students to alter anything to his friend's scores – which might be seen as an early sign of canonisation of the untimely deceased composer. Altogether, it appears that Chopin's art of performing was indeed seen as rather exceptional. Why, then, do I present it as an argument for the idea that what I call an 'improvisatory approach' to music-making was ubiquitous at this time? The reason is that, even though contemporaries might have heard unusual elements in his playing, they nonetheless admired it, just like Paganini's playing was admired, or Liszt's. Also, Chopin's art connected both to the past and to the very influential contemporary tradition of bel canto. There is good reason to believe that his contemporaries saw it as an ideal, which makes it relevant to us. In the meantime, it

[429] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 81.
[430] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 169.
[431] Chopin, F.: *Studies* (Complete works, vol. II. Ed.: I. Paderewski). Warsaw, 1949; 137.
[432] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit., 81.

should not be forgotten that Chopin was known for his own music; he was famous as a pianist / composer. Witnesses testify to his art, not to how one should play the piano in general. In fact, a pianist who made a living only by performing repertoire written by other composers did not yet exist at that time. Reports about Chopin performing music of colleagues are scattered. This is the context in which eye-witnesses write about his habit of performing Field with ornamentation: their reports don't tell us much about how Field's music was generally played, but they are still relevant because they tell us that what Chopin did with these pieces was considered convincing, maybe even improving the original.

The earliest-born pianist whose playing was preserved is Carl Reinecke, a German composer, conductor and pianist who was born in 1824. Reinecke studied with Mendelssohn, Schumann and Liszt, visited Paris before Chopin died, premiered several pieces of Brahms, conducted the *Gewandhaus Orchester* and taught at the Leipzig *Conservatorium* from 1860 until 1895. A pianist of a classicist nature, Reinecke became very popular as a performer of Mozart, but in 1907 (aged 83!) he also made a recording of Field's fourth nocturne in A major on a Hupfeld piano roll. Historically speaking, this is as close as we can get to Chopin's performances of Field. The piano roll was essentially a technology for reproducing piano music; it did so by means of a device that was built into (or used in combination with) a normal piano – the so-called 'reproducing piano'. The physical movements were stored as perforations on a roll of paper. The Hupfeld system did allow for fixing the exact start and duration of every tone, but not the dynamics. Therefore the result sounds a bit wooden, and it is impossible to make any judgments about Reinecke's touch. What the roll does tell us though is that, unlike Chopin, he did not add any ornamentation during this performance; but in addition, that hardly any chord is played simultaneously, an aspect that will be discussed in chapter 7.

**[5.12 #8 Field: Nocturne 4 (Carl Reinecke, 1907)[433]]**

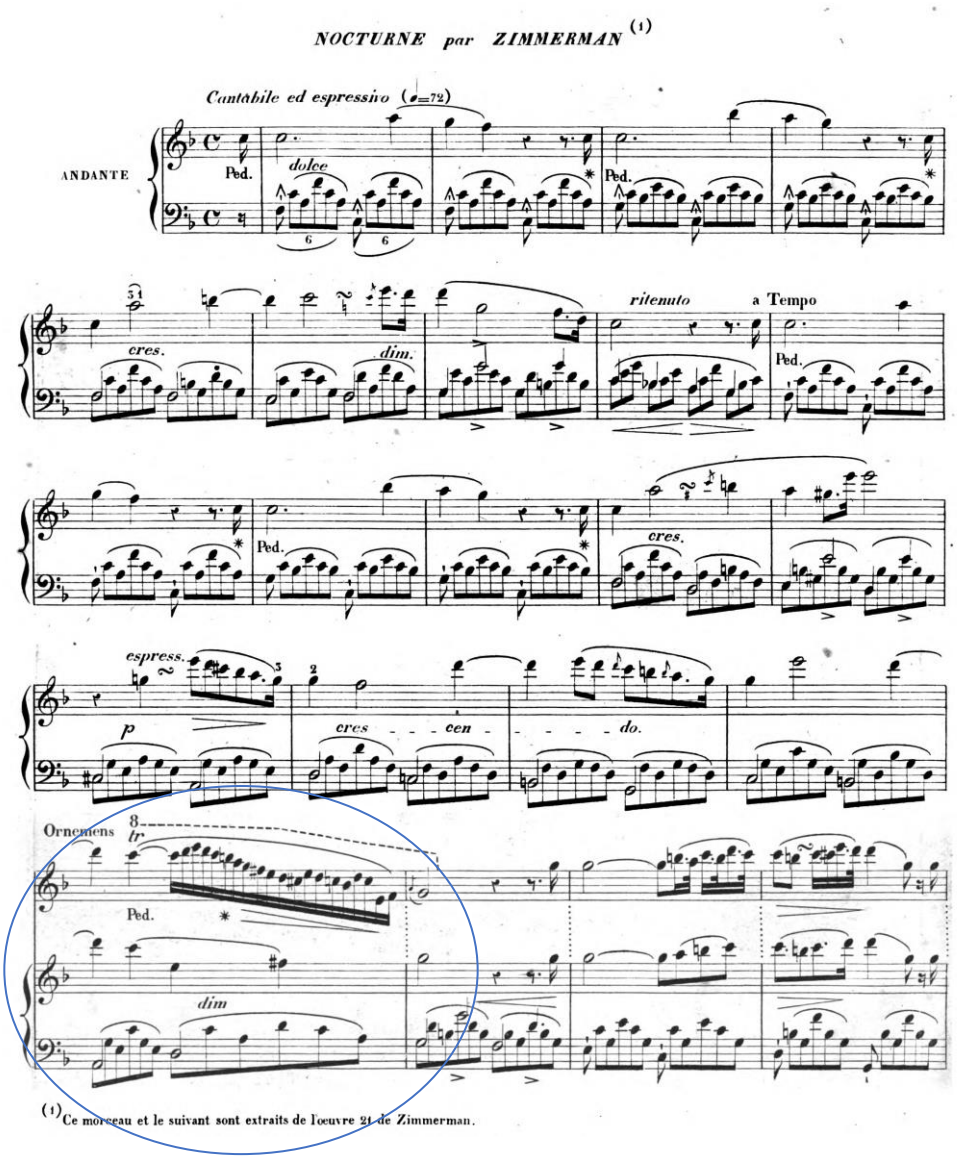
### *Ornamenting Field today*

The fact that Chopin liked to ornament Field, combined with detailed knowledge about the nature of Chopin's ornamentation, makes Field's nocturnes a valuable experimental garden for improvised ornamentation. Additional inspiration might be taken from an example in Pierre-Joseph-Guillaume Zimmerman's *Encyclopédie du pianiste compositeur*, a piano method from approximately 1840 (see example 5.12.21).[434] Zimmerman was a professor of piano at the Paris conservatory. His book contains a large number of study pieces, one of which is a nocturne in a style that recalls John Field.

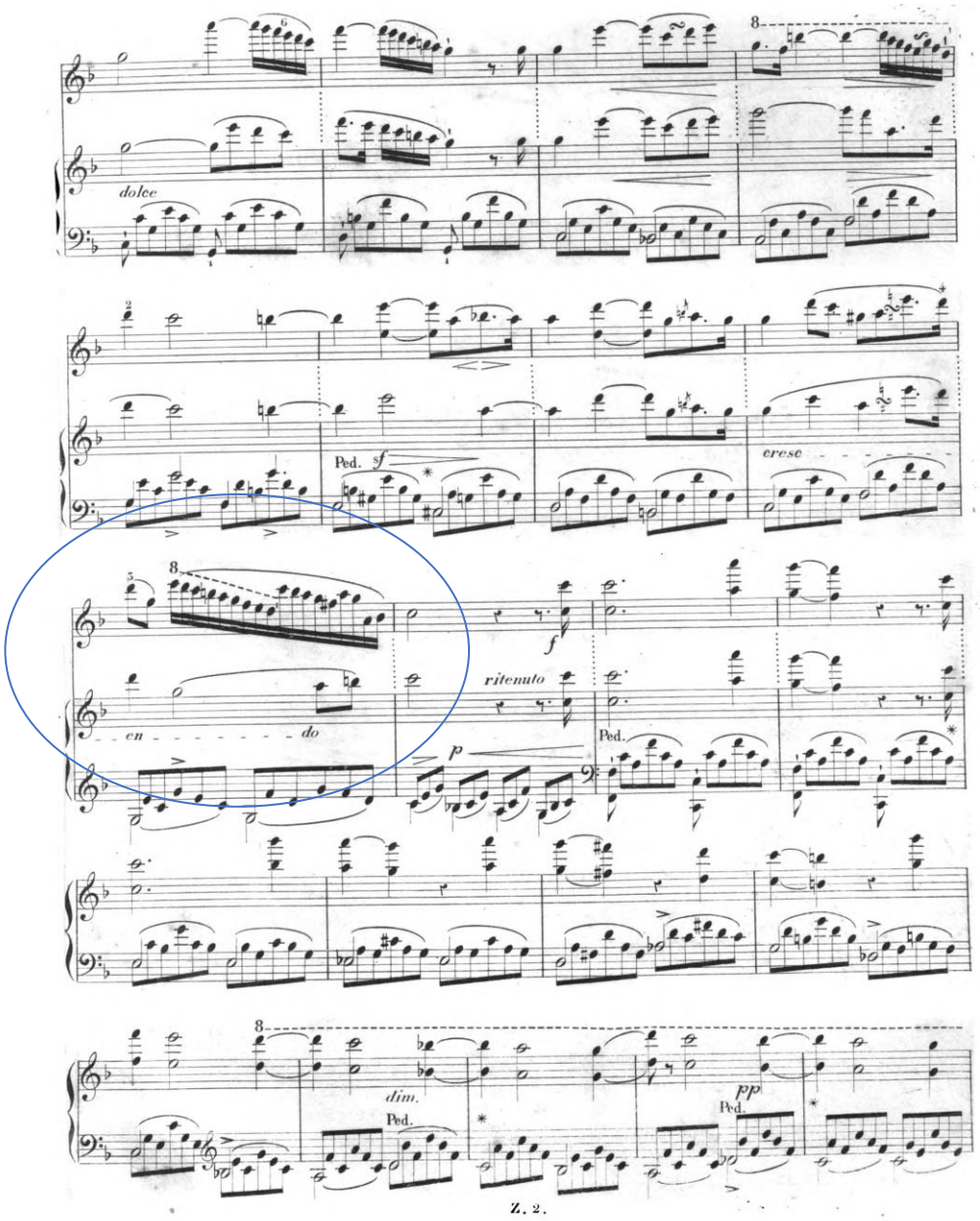
[433] https://youtu.be/xSGkcozo1OI, recorded and uploaded 2009 by Julian Dyer.

[434] Zimmerman, P.-J.-G.: *Encyclopédie du pianiste compositeur*. Paris, n.d. [ca. 1840]. Special thanks to Gerard Bouwhuis for pointing out this source to me.

Interestingly, Zimmerman suggests an ornamented version of the original melody, though he does not discuss this type of ornamentation in the text of his book. The resemblances to Chopin's manner of ornamenting are striking. It is worth quoting the piece in full since it must be one of the most appropriate existing models for ornamenting a Field nocturne. Completely in line with the norms of bel canto ornamentation, extended flourishes occur towards the end of a phrase (see the blue ovals), thus increasing the sense of direction. Usually they spring from anchor tones, sometimes replaced with a different member of the chord (red oval) – always a high note.[435]




[435] In this case, the high F extends the original II6 to an equally usual II6/5.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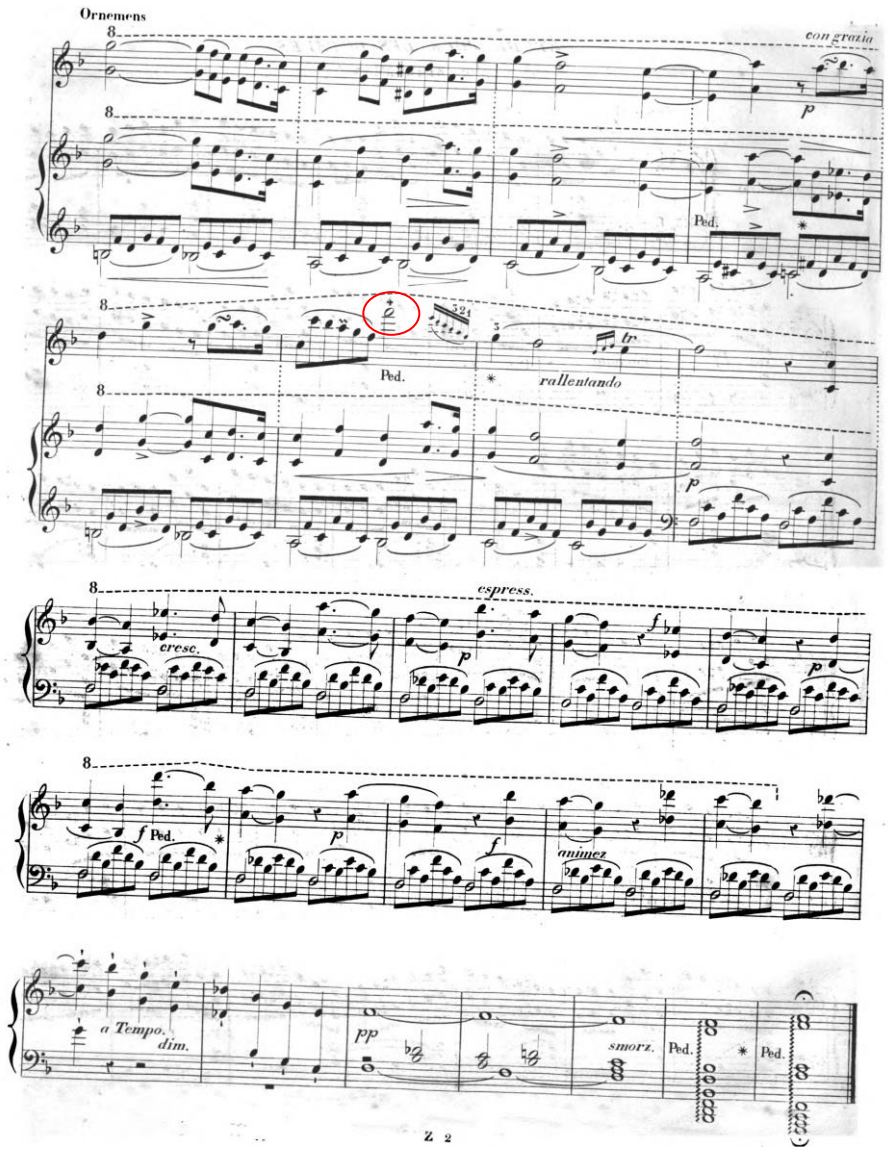
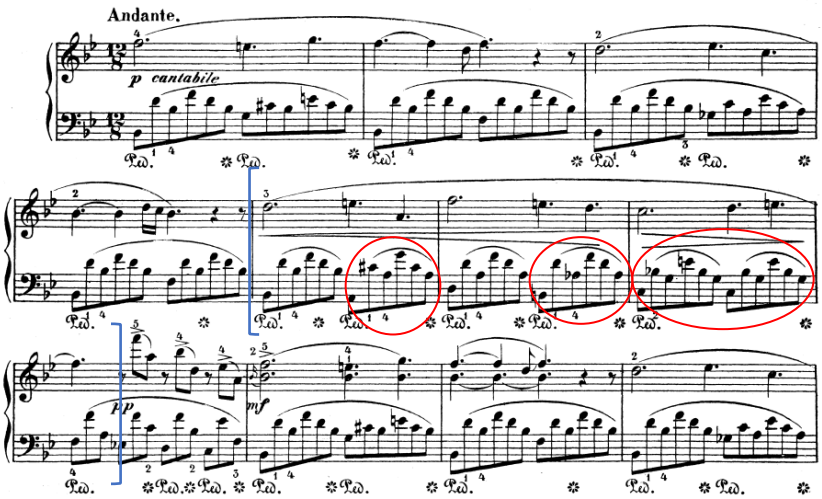



*Example 5.12.21: Zimmerman, P.-J.-G.: Nocturne from Encyclopédie du pianiste compositeur, vol. 2/2. Paris, n.d. [1840]; 70-72.*

A nocturne of Field that could serve very well as a piece to experiment with is his nocturne in B-flat major (see example 5.12.22), a work that contains an almost exact written-out repetition. Thinking along the lines of bel canto ornamentation, it is instructive to take a phrase from the composition and strive for ornamentation that enhances the sense of direction within that phrase. The phrase from bar 5-8 will serve as an example (marked blue). The most obvious places for ornamentation that 'amplify' the movement within the phrase are the dominant or diminished seventh chords (marked red), since they contain the tension of a dissonance with a very clearly expected resolution. Here are different possibilities for ornamenting this phrase:




*Example 5.12.22: Field, J.: Nocturne in B-flat major, bars 1-11.*[436]

[5.12 #9: 6 different ornamentations]

It is not really possible to discuss nineteenth-century piano music without mentioning Franz Liszt. It is to this key figure that I will turn in the concluding section of this chapter.

## 5.13 Liszt

Liszt was not only the most influential personality of the nineteenth century when it comes to piano virtuosity; he was also famous for improvising on stage. The young Liszt was notorious for changing pieces of other composers capriciously, a habit he started to regret when he had already withdrawn from the concert stage. There are also reports about Liszt by students who studied his compositions with him, varying from interpretational issues to ad hoc additions to the score. A number of such reports were collected as early as 1902 by Lina Ramann in her *Liszt-Pädagogium.*[437] Ramann was a German piano teacher and writer, and an admirer of Liszt. Between 1880 and 1894, she published his authorised biography, *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch*.

As for the topic of this chapter, Liszt's style had a less clear connection with bel canto than Chopin's, and in his music ornamentation occurs more in cadenza-like passages than in *fioritures* as is the case with Chopin. His notes in the scores of his students mostly concern extensions to cadenzas and also real variants, typically for the final bars of a piece. Both types of variants are, for instance, handed down for the third concert study *Un sospiro.*[438]

[436] Musik-Beilage zur Neuen Musikzeitung, X. (Ed. C. Reinecke). Stuttgart - Leipzig, 1889.
[437] Ramann, L.: *Liszt-Pädagogium* (Leipzig, 1902). Reprint: Wiesbaden, 1986.
[438] Ramann, L.: *Liszt-Pädagogium*, IV. Serie, Nr. 11.

Though Ramann's biography of Liszt has often been criticised, there is a genuine late-nineteenth-century atmosphere in her characterisations of Liszt's style, which lends to them a sense of authenticity. In her introduction to the *Liszt-Pädagogium*, bel canto as such is not mentioned, neither does it play a referential role in the main text. However, some key concepts of bel canto do inform her observations of a more general nature.

Regarding Liszt's arrangements of songs for the piano, she writes that in these pieces the text is latent, but 'floats as a poetic programme behind and in between the lines'[439] – very much in accordance with the discussion of these pieces in section 5.8. The piano versions are 'Neugestaltungen' [new versions] that change the vocal song into an 'Instrumentalgedicht' [instrumental poem]. Ramann writes that when Liszt himself played these arrangements, his lips could be seen moving as if he was whispering the text, especially in lyrical passages.[440] She also criticises the 'modern' habit of making a very big difference between the melody, which is played in a large 'chest voice', and the accompaniment which is effaced. According to Ramann, this was far from Liszt's principles; he mockingly called applying such an unmotivated 'Großton' [big tone]: 'groß thun' [boasting].[441]

Ramann's introduction also contains interesting remarks about the nature of performing compositions in general. She distinguishes between the style of composing (*Kompositionsstil*) and the style of performing (*Vortragsstil*) – the latter belonging to the field of 'reproducing art'.[442] The goal of her book is to clarify a style of performing that fits in with the *Kompositionsstil* of Liszt's music – very much like what authors of bel canto methods were doing, in fact. She makes explicit that 'reproducing' has a creative core, noting that a pianist often faces 'creative demands'. This sense of creativity is described as 'eine dichterisch-freie, dem jemaligen Stoff, der Situation und dem Charakter des Ganzen entnommene Gestaltung'[443] [a poetic and free realisation that is based upon the musical content, the situation and the character of the piece]. It is an attitude that favours an improvisatory approach to Liszt's scores, very much in line with what was described in bel canto, but also in instrumental methods such as Baillot's. The ideal performer strives for 'eine den architectonischen Aufbau und die psychologische Entwickelung des Stoffes nachschaffende und nachdichtende Einheit mit dem Komponisten'[444] [a unanimity with the composer by re-creating and re-poetising the architectonical structure and the psychological development of the composition]. This is an understanding of performance that differs essentially from the *Urtext*-paradigm.

[439] Ramann, L.: op. cit., nr. 14.
[440] Ibidem.
[441] Ibidem.
[442] Ramann, L.: op. cit., 3. For Ramann, 'reproducing' lacks the connotation of being 'uncreative' (cf. chapter 1.5).
[443] Ramann, L.: op. cit., 5.
[444] Ramann, L.: op. cit., 6.

Liszt is reputed to be the great innovator of piano virtuosity; apparently already at that time several pianists saw in his *Passagenwerk* an invitation to bravura and mechanical virtuosity. Ramann, however, stresses the poetic background, even of passages of technical firework. Not only at the time of Ramann, but also today, performances of Liszt in a 'macho' fashion can be heard frequently; the contrast with recordings of, e.g., Emil von Sauer, who played Liszt much more elegantly, is striking. Though virtuosic passages in Liszt by far exceed Chopin's 'bel canto' *fioritures*, one is reminded by Ramann of the spirit of bel canto singers who managed to 'colour' their ornaments, using them as a means for enhancing the melodic gestures, instead of a 'stirrup for virtuosos'.[445]

In chapter 4, the fundamental importance of the musical phrase was described. The same focus on the phrase as a unit can be found in Liszt's ideas about performing. Ramann refers to his preface to the collected symphonic poems, where Liszt introduces his concept of the *Periodischer Vortrag* [periodic execution]:

> Gleichzeitig sei mir gestattet zu bemerken, dass ich das mechanische, taktmässige, zerschnittene Auf- und Abspielen, wie es an manchen Orten noch üblich ist, möglichst beseitigt wünsche, und nur den periodischen Vortrag, mit dem Hervortreten der besonderen Accente und der Abrundung der melodischen und rhythmischen Nuancirung, als sachgemäss anerkennen kann.[446]
>
> [Also I would like to remark that I prefer to abolish the mechanical, dissecting bar-by-bar playing as it is still usual at some places; only the periodic execution, in which special accents can appear and the melodic and rhythmic nuancing is rounded off, can be acknowledged as appropriate.]

Ramann calls the principle of *periodischer Vortrag* Liszt's 'first requirement', based upon his 'poetic and free style'. It is a way of performing in which a coherent passage (like the phrase in bel canto, but probably also longer) is treated as a unit (*Zeiteinheit*), to which the single bar is subordinated, just as a beat is subordinated to a bar. Ramann writes:

> Für die Reproduktion liegt in diesem Prinzip eine vollständige Neugeburt. Die sich aus ihr ergebende Elastizität der Rhythmen löst die taktische Fesselung zur Freiheit der Bewegung und zu höherem Schwung des Ausdrucks, zu gefühlswahren Accenten und höchster Gewalt der Sprache; sie bringt die Architektur des Baues zu lebendigem Fluß und wahrt zugleich die lichte Durchsichtigkeit ihrer Einzelteile – in summa: sie führt zum großen Stil des Vortrags.[447]
>
> [For the musical reproduction this principle means a complete rebirth. The rhythmical elasticity in which it results will dissolve the metric confines, enabling freedom of movement and a higher flight of expression, emotionally sincere accents and supreme power of language. It will turn the architecture of

[445] Ramann, L.: op. cit., 5.

[446] Liszt, F.: *Symphonische Dichtungen für grosses Orchester,* Bd.3. Leipzig, n.d. [1885]; 1.

[447] Ramann, L.: op. cit., 4.

> the musical construction into a living flow, and at the same time guarantee the transparency of its elements – in short: it will lead towards a grand performance style.]

This important passage truly transcends the role the musical phrase played in bel canto, elevating it into an encompassing principle of performance. To remain in the figurative language of the time: the phrase as a guiding principle has grown up, and like an eagle spreads its wings to take to the air, ready to rule the domain of music. The aspect of rhythm and timing has been postponed in the previous chapters; Liszt's theories about performance inevitably lead towards this area, which is so important for the improvisatory aspect of music-making. Before the issue will be analysed in chapter 7, an intermezzo aims to offer a fresh (and possibly surprising) perspective on timing.

# Chapter 6. *Andante*: the tempo of a walker

## 6.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters centred around the connection between music and spoken language, an analogy that was felt strongly in the nineteenth century. I argued that not only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but also in the nineteenth, music had features that can be understood as musical manifestations of rhetoric. A pronounced need for variety in performance is an important example; such variety is typically based on non-predetermined decisions, which makes it a vehicle of an improvisatory approach. I have shown that ornamentation in bel canto and in the brilliant style can be explained through this concept, not only with respect to how and where it was applied, but also to its function.

The analogy between music and language is more than a mere metaphor: the activities of making music and speaking are interwoven on a level that is almost synesthetic. This chapter focuses on the analogy with yet another human activity that is as fundamental as speaking, namely walking. It is music's acting-in-time that makes us feel that it 'moves', and in this way connects with our own 'temporality'.[448] The anthropologist Tim Ingold sees a deep parallel between storytelling and walking (→ section 6.2). Given the similarity between a musician and an orator, the same could be said about making music. As I mentioned, aspects of nineteenth-century speech (such as a tendency towards rhetorical variety) had their parallels in music; similarly, features of musical performance may be clarified by the predominant way of moving forward at that time: walking.

As I will show, this is especially relevant for the issue of musical tempo. I will argue that the almost mathematical tempo regularity performers often strive for is a recent phenomenon, and that the nineteenth-century experience of tempo might better be seen as a musical translation of the continuous ('legato') movement that is characteristic of walking. The result is a flexible conception of tempo that as such is another manifestation of musical *varietas* and of an improvisatory approach to scores. By means of this analogy between music-making and walking, I will propose that we rethink tempo in this repertoire as immanent in the music, as opposed to the now more usual 'transcendental' conception that sees tempo as something that is imposed on the music.

## 6.2 Music moves

For many centuries, it has been common to speak about music in terms of bodily movement. Already in one of the earliest notated versions of Gregorian chant, the eleventh-century codex no. 339 from the *Stiftsbibliothek* in St. Gallen, Switzerland, we find abbreviations such as 'c' for *celeriter* (fast /

[448] Cf. Schoot, A. van der: 'Klinkt muziek zoals emoties voelen?' In: Heijerman, E. & Schoot, A. van der (eds.): *Welke taal spreekt de muziek?* Budel, 2005; 63.

faster) and 'x' for *exspectare* (wait).[449] One of the most well-known tempo indications in the Italian language from the Baroque period on was *Andante*, usually translated as 'at a walking pace' (*andare* = to go).

Apparently, there has always been a strong connection between music and movement. Dance hardly exists without music, and real dance music has the capacity to stir the listener; but even music that is more lyrical in character seems to 'move' as well. Not only is the similarity between motion and music-making reflected in countless verbal expressions about music – such as when we speak of the 'direction' a passage can have, of a transition that 'leads' towards a new key or theme, or, most obviously, of the 'speed' of a musical performance – motion and music also really share the parameter of time. The fact that music as an art form is unable to express itself in static artefacts such as sculptures or paintings makes it deeply connected with one of the key qualities of a human being, namely its capacity to move – and most fundamentally, to walk. Like music-making, walking has a performative side. As historian Joseph Amato writes in his study *On Foot*: 'A primary body language, walking always communicates something. Like waving, smiling, and greeting, walking belongs to the history of gesture'.[450] Walking, one could say, has for most of the history of mankind been an important part of the way life is experienced, the *Lebensgefühl*. In a society in which walking is normal, man has a specific relation with his environment.[451]

It is especially in this direct contact with the environment while we move that the analogy of walking and music-making applies. In his book *The Art of Wandering*, Merlin Coverley quotes Ingold, who argues that 'such fundamental activities as walking, writing, reading and drawing all display characteristics or gestures common to each of them.'[452] What unites these activities, argues Ingold, is the way in which they reflect a particular form of movement, 'breaking a path through a terrain and leaving a trace, at once in the imagination and on the ground.' Ingold calls this movement 'wayfaring', a practice which he claims is 'the fundamental mode by which living beings inhabit the earth.' As a consequence, Ingold sees human life as defined by 'the line of its own movement', a process which inscribes a trace across the landscape which can be 'read' by subsequent generations.

> To tell a story, then, is to relate, in narrative, the occurrences of the past, retracing a path through a world that others, recursively picking up the threads of past lives, can follow in the process of spinning out their own. (...) In the story as in life there is always somewhere further one can go. And in

[449] Agustoni, L.: 'Gregorianischer Choral.' In: Musch, H. (ed.): *Musik im Gottesdienst*, Band 1. Regensburg, 1983; 258.

[450] Amato, J.: *On Foot: A History of Walking* . New York, 2004; 4.

[451] 'Environment' is understood here in the strict sense of everything that surrounds our bodies: the ground under our feet, the air through which we move.

[452] Coverley, M.: *The Art of Wandering.* Kindle Edition; location 66.

> storytelling as in wayfaring, it is in the movement from place to place – or from topic to topic – that knowledge is integrated.[453]

Translated to music, this resonates with the process of transformation that for Bruce Ellis Benson is an essential quality of improvisation (→ chapter 1.5). A new musical 'story' also retraces older ones, and even in music 'there is always somewhere further one can go'.

It might be worth pondering over this analogy a bit, especially since modern society famously has become a sedentary one. As for the way how people actually move, there seems to be a gap between our times and previous centuries, a difference that might be of a deeper influence on the way we experience the world – or in this case, music – than we are aware of.

## 6.3 The predominance of going on foot

One of the many important technical innovations of the nineteenth century was the invention of photography. After 1850 the photosensitive material had been developed to a degree that allowed for exposure times that were much shorter than the many minutes which were still needed for the daguerreotype of the 1840's. As a result, it became possible to photograph street life. When we study such fascinating glimpses of everyday life from the second half of the nineteenth century, be it in the city or in the rural area, we can be struck by a very crucial difference with today: the large share of pedestrians – for instance on this picture of the bridge across the *Singel* canal near the *Paleisstraat* in Amsterdam, taken by the painter George Breitner in the early 1890's.

*Example 6.3.1: G.H. Breitner: Singelbrug bij de Paleisstraat. Amsterdam, before 1894.*[454]

[453] Ibidem. Ingoll's words recall Bruce Chatwin's description of Australian aborigines, who ritualistically 'sing the world into existence' by walking and singing on long treks across the Australian Outback (Chatwin, B.: *The Songlines.* London, 1987). Thanks to Roger Graybill for pointing out this connection to me.

[454] Veen, A. van (ed.): *G.H. Breitner, fotograaf van het Amsterdamse stadsgezicht.* Bussum, 1997; 13.

The nineteenth century was the last century in Western Europe in which walking was still normative. Of course, man has always used means of transport that would be less tiring than walking, or that would facilitate carrying heavy loads. The Netherlands, blessed with a multitude of waterways, were famous for the 'tug-boats' (*trekschuiten*), an extended and accurate system of connections by boat, that functioned from the seventeenth until the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, large cities, including Amsterdam, had a well-developed system of omnibuses, and for the long distances the mail-coach was an early form of public transport. However, 'almost everywhere in the European countryside, the foot remained the most reliable mode of transport, especially in low-lying, rocky, sandy, and steep surfaces, or when rain, snow, or powerful winds swept the landscape. Even in mid-eighteenth century France, which at the time had the best roads in Europe, travel by carriage (...) averaged only two or three miles an hour.'[455] In his 1899 novel *Resurrection*, Lev Tolstoy still describes how Nekhlyudov, sitting in his coach, has trouble keeping up with the procession of walking prisoners, because 'his horse was a bit lazy'.[456]

In the course of the nineteenth century, steam engines gradually replaced horse-power, inter alia contributing to the development – simultaneously with photography – of railway travel. The first bicycles that could be used as a real means of transport date from the late nineteenth century, and roughly the same can be said about the car. Both bicycles and proto-cars facilitated a marked increase in speed – see the ornament on the ball-head of this 1876 high-wheel velocipede (red circle):

*Example 6.3.2: Velocipede in the Velorama Museum, Nijmegen. (Picture by the author.)*

[455] Amato, J.: *On Foot: A History of Walking* . New York, 2004; 79.

[456] Tolstoy, L.N.: *Opstanding* (Transl. H. Leerink). Amsterdam, 1972; 358.

Incidentally, it should not be forgotten that the success of such machines also depended on the condition of the roads: until well into the nineteenth century, many roads were unsurfaced.

It cannot be denied that during the nineteenth century a revolution took place in transport, and consequently in the experience of distance. For the less wealthy, the results of this revolution most likely became noticeable only well into the twentieth century: the range of action of an average nineteenth-century villager might still have been limited to the place where he was living, only occasionally extended by a trip to a nearby town (a situation that still existed in the early twentieth century). On the other hand, the career of a travelling virtuoso, which Clara Schumann took up again after the illness and death of her husband, or the travels between Weimar and Rome that Franz Liszt undertook later in his life, might not have been possible without the new fast railway connections between the major European cities.

Notwithstanding the nineteenth-century developments in transporting technology the primary way to move around was still on foot. 'Western society remained essentially a walking society until the middle of the nineteenth century and the great majority did not take to riding mass transit until the opening decades of the twentieth century.'[457] When two young and wealthy Dutchmen, the later author and politician Jacob van Lennep and his friend, the lawyer Dirk van Hogendorp, made an investigating journey through the northern part of the Netherlands in 1823 (at that time a young nation), they walked most of the distance. Only sometimes, when they were very tired or when the weather was extremely bad, did they take the tug-boat – which, as a matter of fact, did not help them travel any faster. The two young men normally covered the impressive distance of 40 or 45 kilometres per day. Interestingly, walking as a way of travelling did not prevent them from enjoying a walk as a pastime: more than once, they arrived at an inn after a day's walk, had a good meal, chatted with the beautiful landlady, refreshed themselves, and spent the early evening with a stroll around the town.[458]

## 6.4 Walking for pleasure and as a source of inspiration

The stroll as a pastime is generally seen as a nineteenth-century development. Promenading and strolling had become a leisure activity of the aristocracy in the eighteenth century.[459] As Amato notes, 'Romanticism changed walking. It took it from being a lower-class necessity and an upper-class select activity, and transformed it for those with means and a certain subjectivity into an elevated vehicle for experiencing nature, the world, and the self. (...) Romanticism (...) had to validate the countryside and nature as fresh sources of human feeling, knowledge, and experience. (...) It had to entice the

[457] Amato, J.: op. cit., 149.

[458] Lennep, J. van: *De zomer van 1823* (ed. M. Mathijsen & G. Mak). Zwolle, 2010; passim.

[459] Amato, J.: op. cit., 83.

walker with the promise of elemental, sublime, and even religious experiences.'[460] Anticipated by Rousseau and Wordsworth, it was the type of the romantic *Wanderer* that developed from this ideology. Not only writers, but also many nineteenth-century composers of the 'Romantic generation' are known to have been inspired musically by their frequent walks through nature: Beethoven, Schubert (who immortalized the *Wanderer* in his songs on texts by Wilhelm Müller), or Weber.[461] Towards the end of the century, faster railway connections gave rise to tourism, including the possibility of escaping the busy city and enjoying long walks in beautiful scenery. Such walking for pleasure was associated mainly with the intellectual classes,[462] including writers, philosophers (Nietzsche!), but also composers: Brahms, Wagner, Grieg, and Mahler, to name but a few.

Another archetype of a nineteenth-century stroller, but in an urban context, is the *flâneur* (coined by Charles Baudelaire, made famous by Walter Benjamin). Erik Satie might count as a musical representative of this type. Debussy also seems to have enjoyed unplanned strolls through Paris. Interestingly, around the time when strolling as a pastime became widely popular, the meaning of the musical term *andante* started to change. Though initially designating a moderately 'moving' tempo, the term seems to have developed to indicate a relatively slow tempo in the later nineteenth century; *più andante* in a Baroque context is supposed to mean 'faster', whereas it could very well mean 'slower' in Brahms or Mahler.

### 6.5 Increased discipline

One thing easily forgotten today is the (to modern eyes) chaotic impression that street life must have made until well into the nineteenth century. The Paris Frédéric Chopin lived in still had many streets without sidewalks.[463] There were no traffic signals, no shared sense of etiquette in traffic; 'walkers, as individuals and groups, were undisciplined and even unruly.'[464] Original footage of film pioneers Auguste and Louis Lumière shows how pedestrians crossed the Avenue des Champs-Élysées (1'39") or the Place de la Concorde (2'40") in Paris in the late 1890's – pictures that are still breathtaking. César Franck, who found himself injured in a collision between his cab and a (horse drawn) omnibus, was just one of the many daily victims of traffic accidents.

**[6.5 #1 Lumière, A. and L.: Paris (1896-1900); speed corrected.[465]]**

[460] Amato, J.: op. cit., 84-86.

[461] Graf, M.: *From Beethoven to Shostakovich.* New York, 1947; 303.

[462] Amato, J.: op. cit.; 103.

[463] Amato, J.: op. cit., 173.

[464] Amato, J.: op. cit., 144.

[465] https://youtu.be/NjDclfAFRB4 (uploaded 2018 by 'Guy Jones').

The early nineteenth-century city must have been not only a chaotic, but also a dirty, noisy and bad-smelling place. During the second half of the century, technical developments improved the organization of urban life: sewage systems made the streets less dirty, gas lighting made them safer at night, sidewalks regulated the traffic, and in the beginning of the twentieth century traffic laws were implemented. The result of such developments was that walkers themselves had to be disciplined as well. They were taught not to throw rubbish (and worse) on the street, not to fight or block the sidewalks, to stay at the correct side and to cross streets in the right way. Control started to make street life safer, but also took away some of its vitality and spontaneity.[466] During the twentieth century, the (voluntary) discipline of bodily movement increased further under the influence of film[467] and, later on, television and internet. As Amato argues, 'Movies taught their viewers stereotypes – even created archetypes – of how the rich and poor, the snobbish and humble, the stylish and gauche moved'.[468] Not only in the streets but also in the concert hall, movements and behaviour of both audience and musicians in post-World War II classical music life show a level of discipline that is probably unprecedented in history.[469]

## 6.6. Speed

It is clear that today, fast and affordable public transport and cars have taken the place of walking as a primary way of getting somewhere. This implies that a 'primary body language' (Amato) has become obsolete, and that an important aspect of the *Lebensgefühl* must have changed. How does this affect music-making? It is reasonable to assume that our experience of distance and speed must be completely different from that of, say, Robert Schumann. Why wouldn't this include, for instance, our experience of *musical* speed?

It is tempting to think that musicians of the nineteenth century performed their music at slower tempi that we do. This, I think, would be a mistake. In many early recordings, the tempo is by no means slower than nowadays. If there is a general tendency, it is rather the other way around: especially slow compositions tended to be played slower and slower in the course of the twentieth century. There is an apparent contradiction between this phenomenon and the fact that we are able to move much more quickly today because of our modern modes of transportation. Seen from outside, indeed, modern man can move faster. But in doing so, he is usually physically much less active than his nineteenth-century counterpart. A walker moves slowly in absolute terms, but in his

[466] Amato, J.: op. cit., 165.

[467] Amato, J.: op. cit., 193.

[468] Amato, J.: op. cit., 192.

[469] Cf. e.g. Müller, S.O.: *Das Publikum macht die Musik.* Göttingen, 2014; Cressman, D.: *Building Musical Culture in Nineteenth-Century Amsterdam.* Amsterdam, 2016.

experience he can be in an extreme rush, while a traveller in a fast train or airplane can be in perfect rest, moving at a speed beyond the imagination of nineteenth-century man. The assumption that fast cars lead to quick music is untenable.

It seems therefore necessary to explore more thoroughly what is characteristic about going on foot, compared to other means of transport. With respect to speed, the difference between then and now that matters here is not the absolute speed, but the way speed is experienced by the traveller. Characteristic of much modern travelling, it would seem, is the fact that a machine, more specifically a motor, moves us: we ourselves either relax, or handle the machine, which can be a complicated task by itself, but still disconnects us from the act of moving as such. How, then, do we experience speed? When we are being moved, we probably experience it mainly visually by relating to the world around us: when we drive a sports car that is low to the ground, we feel the speed more clearly because the road surface, rushing past, is so close to our eyes. When we are in a plane moving 900 km/h through open space, we don't even feel like we are moving at all. When we walk, it is different: apart from judging our speed by looking around, we feel it in the movements of our body. There is a direct connection between what we do and what we see. It is the way of moving in which 'our senses are by evolution ideally attuned to the environment'.[470] What has changed since the nineteenth century is that the majority of our movements happen through the agency of technique; it is not that we are incapable of acknowledging the sense of being in direct contact with our environment while moving, but it has been pushed into the background of our awareness.

Even on a bicycle, there is still this 'machine' in between us and the environment, which diminishes this sense of direct contact. A comfortable bike ride very much depends on an even road surface. The contact with the environment is partial: one still feels the wind, experiences the temperature, hears and smells everything around; only the act of moving forward has been taken over by a machine, even though it is, in this case, human powered. It is interesting that the first automobiles were generally open cars, making the experience of (usually) being driven probably not very different from a ride in a horse-drawn open coach: enjoying the fresh air, the surrounding view – and being admired… When cars became closed vehicles, much of this environmental experience was lost, as lovers of convertibles and motorcycles can testify today. Driving a modern car feels like being inside, protected from (and our senses to a high degree disconnected from) the outside world. The same goes for trains and airplanes. A telling development, in this respect, is the recent innovative idea of taking out plane windows and replacing them with screens showing a camera image, in order to make a lighter construction of the aircraft possible.[471]

[470] Brinckmann, E.: *Filosofische wandelingen*. Zeist, 2015; 7 (my translation).

[471] https://www.bbc.com/news/business-44383220

It is interesting that even for a walker, a very wide and even road actually diminishes the feeling of being in contact with the landscape. It can make a walk boring, and tiring too. The ideal footpath (from the point of view of a modern *Wanderer*, that is) is narrow and unsurfaced, and makes the walker feel as though he is a part of the landscape – which he is, in a way.

## 6.7. Improvising on foot

The absence of a machine (motor)[472] makes the activity of walking essentially different from, for instance, driving a motorcar. A prominent feature of a machine is the regularity and predictability with which it works. Not so for a walker: even though he might strive for smoothness in his movements, there will always be small irregularities that result from adaptations to the terrain. A stone on the path, a muddy spot: without thinking a walker will adjust the size, the direction, or even the speed of his steps. Even when the walker follows a prescribed route, there will be countless minor decisions taken on the spot: at which side of the road to walk, where to pause, where to make a small shortcut. To the extent that such decisions are not determined in advance, they may be called improvisatory. Surely it is theoretically possible to plan all movements on a detailed level, but that would change the focus of the walker, and thereby the character of the walk; instead of the moving-in-the-landscape, the movements themselves would become the central point of attention, as is probably what happens in sports. And, as philosopher Frédéric Gros writes, 'walking is not a sport'.[473]

A walker resembles a musician in many respects. The route is like the composition he performs, and the map is his score. Even if closely following a prescribed route, he will still improvise on a detailed level, as mentioned above. Even a freely improvised 'piece' is possible to him: he can have a general idea about where he intends to go, but decide on the spot how to get there. Maybe he will choose to take an unexpected direction at some point and compensate for it later, or in the end adapt the goal to the interesting direction his walk has taken. Even the counterpart of a free fantasy à la C.Ph.E. Bach is possible in this sense: philosopher Eric Brinckmann describes a deliberately un-predefined walk through the sand dunes of Kootwijk in The Netherlands. This historical landscape forms the largest area of wandering dunes in Europe, a terrain that is in its turn 'improvised' by the sand and the wind. Brinckmann tries to get into direct contact with the landscape, to 'repair forgotten connections', to be accessible to the unforeseen, an attitude that he, referring to the author Ernst Jünger, characterizes as *désinvolture* (casualness, laisser-aller).[474]

[472] The specification is relevant because a musical instrument might also be understood as a 'machine' in the sense that it 'transmits force or directs its application' (Oxford English Dictionary); especially the organ has 'machine-like' qualities, which obviously does not impede the player from improvising. Here, the focus is on a machine that specifically facilitates moving around.

[473] Gros, F.: *A Philosophy of Walking* (J. Howe, trans.). London, 2014; 1.

[474] Brinckmann, E.: *Filosofische wandelingen*. Zeist, 2015; 278.

Most strikingly however, the analogy of walking and performing music becomes noticeable in musical speed, usually termed 'tempo'. As I described above, the movements of a walker in his environment are to a certain extent 'improvisatory'. As a result of a long development of mechanisation, this fundamental aspect of our relation with the landscape has become weaker. In the next section I will argue that our experience of musical tempo has simultaneously become mechanised in a similar sense.

### 6.8. The tempo of a machine

With respect to tempo, post-World War II music shows two developments that seem to be the opposite of each other – but both form, in their own ways, a rupture with the tempo-experience of the previous centuries. One is the development of serial music in the 1950's; Pierre Boulez's composition *Structures* for two pianos may serve as an example. When the serial principle is applied to rhythm, the sounding result is a 'rhythmical atonality': any regularity of pulse is avoided in the music-as-it-sounds, resulting in the disappearance of a feeling of tempo by the listener, simply because there is nothing that feels like a 'beat'. The other development is the spectacular rise of pop music, which not only features, by contrast, a very clear beat, but increasingly so, a beat that has a machine-like regularity (and indeed, it often *is* produced by a machine). A third main stream in music, the 'minimal music' that emerged in America in the 1960's, also exists by virtue of a machine-like regularity in tempo, perhaps influenced by pop music. Completely different though these musical styles may be, they share one important characteristic: from the point of view of a performer, they all depend on a tempo experience that is based upon regularity. Serialism might seem to deny this regularity; however, in order to perform this music well, it is a mathematical regularity of inner pulse that is demanded from the musicians. It is striking that all three developments coincided with the popularisation of the car, and hence the decisive turn to sedentary life.

When classical musical culture is understood as a *modern* culture that makes use of scores from a more or less remote past, it would be highly unlikely for classical music-making *not* to show (at least partly) the same qualities of tempo as the new styles that developed from the 1950's on. On the contrary, chances are that even classical music-making moved imperceptibly in a direction that matched the new rigid standards of tempo. Indeed, a regular and unchanging tempo has become a quality of many recorded 'classical' performances since the 1960's, no matter whether they reflect a 'traditional' or 'historically informed' orientation.[475]

How is this connected with walking? Superficially, there is a similarity between the steps of a walker and musical pulse. The question is, however, what exactly this pulse might be? We are probably used to seeing it in metronomic terms, as a punctuation of time. For that is what a

[475] Cf. Philip, R.: Performing Music in the Age of Recording. New Haven, 2004.

metronome does: its pulses have no length, they are like mathematical points that have no dimensions. Since we are nowadays surrounded by machines of all sorts, absolute regularity has become immanent to our understanding of this punctuated tempo feeling. However, this understanding does not correspond to walking: it corresponds to marching! It is a marching army that indeed sounds like a metronome. Now, marching is an unnatural movement in the sense that it takes (a lot of) effort to walk in this way. Normal walking is very different. If one would watch a walker and try to determine exactly the speed of his steps with a metronome, this might turn out to be quite difficult. First of all, his steps might be not completely regular; but more importantly, which moment in his movement would count as the 'pulse'? Is it where his heel touches the ground, or where the toe pushes off? Walking, when it is done well – and we must suppose that people who could walk 40 kilometres on a daily basis did walk well – is not dragging the body from one step to another; rather, it is a continuous play with the balance of the body. Once a step has been made, the body is already in the process of moving to the next one. Walking, as opposed to marching, is – as ballet dancers say – a *legato* movement. It is probably this aspect that makes such a strong connection between walking and music-making before the twentieth century, since music also 'moves' in this way: it is a continuous process in time, often carried by a pulse, but not punctuated by it. Just as marching is a special and derived instance of walking, the modern punctuated tempo experience can be seen, from a nineteenth-century point of view, as an 'unnatural' development that managed to take the place of a more *legato* and improvisatory tempo. For a modern musician, walking is no longer the primary point of reference for moving-in-the-landscape, which, I argue, affects his intuitive conception of tempo.

## 6.9. Rethinking musical tempo

Not only is transportation governed by machines nowadays; in almost every aspect of daily life, technique (i.e. the use of machines) has moved in as an intermediary between us and our environment. As I argue in this chapter, the modern conception of musical tempo was deeply influenced by the machines that started to surround us, especially where our movements are concerned. We are used to a degree of regularity and discipline that must have been unknown in the nineteenth century. The fundamental connection between walking and music-making became an abstraction under late-twentieth-century circumstances. However, since walking as an activity never really disappeared, the walking tempo did not become inaccessible to us, and therefore it could be a valuable way to get closer to nineteenth-century music-making – that is, to increase our understanding of the horizons of nineteenth-century scores. The movements of a walker are '*legato*', his pulse is not a punctuation of time but a part of a continuous process, rather like a heart-beat. When we rethink musical tempo in this way, we get at a tempo that doesn't adjust to a punctuated, machine-like external standard, but that is continuous and essentially organic, to use a metaphor that

was popular in the nineteenth century. Tempo is not a motoric *imposition on* musical movement, but rather a *result of* organic and flexible musical movement.

As with the pulse of a walker, it is not always possible to tell exactly where the musical pulse starts. To a modern understanding, there can hardly be any question about that: the pulse starts when a note, written on the beat, starts. However, there are good reasons to assume that in nineteenth-century music-making the beat was often not clear, but rather blurred. One example, taken from piano playing, is the tendency to ambiguate the exact beat by arpeggios and dislocations between the hands of the pianist.[476] Another instance is the old *tempo rubato* from bel canto, in which a melody sometimes moves away from a steady accompaniment. This also existed in instrumental music; witness descriptions of contemporaries of Mozart, Chopin, and still later, the violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. Both examples will be elaborated in chapter 7.

This is not a plea for arbitrariness. A walker whose steps seem to lack direction and are completely unpredictable in speed and size looks like a drunkard. Normal walking is different: the movements of the walker are attuned to each other, the steps are organically part of the walking process, and there is always a clear direction (which, of course, doesn't exclude digressions). The same thing is true for music. Moreover, music can have, as musicians say, a direction. Rhythmically, a clear musical direction needs a flexible, yet organic tempo. An important feature of the suggested tempo conception is that the organic pulse cannot be separated from the music, but is rather an immanent feature *of* music. The contrasting 'modern' tempo conception could – with a term borrowed from theology – be called 'transcendental', because it depends on a standard that is external to the music as it sounds. The conception of immanent tempo that is advocated here was pushed into the background in the course of the twentieth century, but it might be worth reviving when nineteenth-century scores are used as a basis for music-making. The next chapter will explore this idea further.

Concretely this means more flexibility in music-making, and allowing more space for musical gestures. Fortunately, the conception of immanent tempo has never completely disappeared. Musical flow is still an important issue, and especially in recent years there has been a lot of attention to *rubato* in Romantic music, and even to dislocation in piano playing (a habit that was loathed by most musicians a generation ago). It is to be hoped that present-day performers will explore the possibilities much further, focusing on a more 'digressive' performing style – which is nothing else but 'playing with' the appropriate loci communes. The 'transcendental' tempo conception deserves its due place in music-making, but should not be generalized. After all, one doesn't march all the time!

To conclude, and as a prelude to chapter 7, I would like to mention that in my experience, it can be a true eye-opener to consciously use the walking analogy during performance. Imagining a walk while playing, as if the music forms the sound track to one's own movements through the landscape,

[476] Cf. Perez da Costa, N.: *Off the Record.* New York, 2012.

effectively may open up a synesthetic reservoir of tempo inflections. In the next chapter, such timing options will be examined from a historical perspective.

# Chapter 7. Improvisatory timing

## 7.1 Introduction

In this chapter the phenomenon of flexibility in timing will be discussed as a manifestation of an improvisatory approach to the score. In rhetorical terms, such flexibility is an expression of the varietas-idea. Following the taxonomy of Quintilian, it belongs to the part of rhetoric that deals with the actual delivery: *pronuntiatio*. In chapter 4.2, bel canto ornamentation was presented as the 'tip of an interpretational iceberg': it is part of an expressional complex that, among many other things, includes timing. Thus timing can also be seen as an instance of what Ernest Ferand called 'relative improvisation', though it should also be noted that this stretches the concept beyond his intentions. On an online platform like YouTube, many commenters on videos of early recordings use the word 'improvisation' to describe the impression such performances make on them; in many cases it is not added ornamentation or other pitch-related changes to the score that arouse the use of this word, but the variety in timing performers allow themselves. Indeed, in the article by David Dolan and others that was mentioned earlier (→ chapter 2.1), an 'improvisatory state of mind' is primarily associated with this phenomenon.

This chapter explores what I referred to in chapter 6.9 as 'immanent' tempo. It will be argued that, in order to incorporate today a conception of timing that is inspired by nineteenth-century music-making, it is not enough to describe it in terms of deviations from a mathematically strict performance of a score. Indeed, the latter would entail a conception of transcendental tempo instead of the immanent notion of tempo that was suggested in chapter 6. First I will focus on flexibility 'within' the pulse in accompanying arpeggiation patterns in songlike piano music. It is a case study that will show one important aspect of Romantic timing: the avoidance of a rigid 'micro-pulse'. The phenomenon will also be studied with respect to its implications for piano technique. Second, I will discuss more encompassing issues such as the historical *tempo rubato* and overall flexibility in timing. In addition to written sources, historical recordings will play an important part in this discussion, since they provide valuable information that no book or method can offer. Since the purpose of this study is to enrich modern performances with insights gained from nineteenth-century musical praxis, the chapter includes discussions about how a historical approach to timing can be applied to music-making.

During the past two decades, the study of early recordings has become a major field of musicological interest. Early examples are the books of Robert Philip: *Early Recordings and Musical Style* (1992) and later *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (2004).[477] From 2004-2009 the

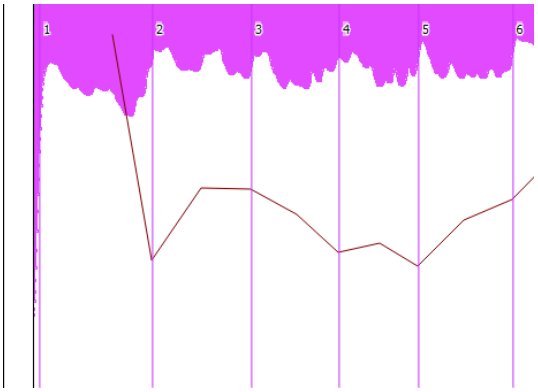
[477] Philip, R.: *Early Recordings and Musical Style*. Cambridge, 1992; *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*. New Haven, 2004.

research program of the AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM) took place. A landmark study is *Beyond the Score* (2013) by Nicholas Cook, the director of CHARM.[478] Much attention has been paid to early recordings of piano music: not only was the piano recorded in abundance from the very beginnings of the acoustical recording era, but in addition, the first decades of the twentieth century witnessed a competing storage system for performed piano music, the piano roll. In his book *Off the Record* from 2012, Neal Peres da Costa investigates the performance habits of early pianism as it comes to us in early recordings and piano rolls;[479] in 2010, Sigurd Slåttebrekk and Tony Harrison published the website 'Chasing the Butterfly' that describes their research project devoted to the recreation of the 1903 acoustical recordings of Edvard Grieg.[480] This website also provides an overview of lessons that can be learned from early piano recordings in general. In her dissertation entitled 'Romanticizing Brahms', Anna Scott closely examined recordings of Johannes Brahms's piano music by some of the last students of Clara Schumann.[481]

## 7.2 Immanent and transcendental tempo

Within the limitations of the recording technique of the earliest times, and especially of the piano roll, the most reliable information we can gather from early recordings concerns tempo and timing.[482] A modern listener can be struck by the excessive *rubato* and the structural arpeggiation and dislocation that can be heard on many early piano recordings, ways of playing that have a highly improvisatory effect. In fact, of all musical parameters that are open to on-the-spot decisions by the performer of scored music, it is the timing that most clearly can evoke the association with improvisation in the minds of listeners. In most research so far, these irregularities in timing are described in terms of deviations from an absolutely regular, hypothetical tempo that serves as a reference. A typical diagram of Sonic Visualiser, computer software that was developed by CHARM, shows tempo deviations in a graph, for instance a duration diagram. In the diagram shown below, the horizontal axis represents the playing time, and the vertical axis the amount of time needed for one beat in the score (the duration). The black curve thus gives an indication of the tempo fluctuations, with a rising curve showing a slowing down on the recording. The black graph is projected on a pink diagram, showing the dynamics as a waveform and the corresponding bar lines in the score, both as a function of time. In an absolutely regular performance, the curve would be a straight horizontal line, and the distances between the 'bar lines' would be equal.

[478] Cook, N.: *Beyond the Score.* Oxford, 2013.
[479] Peres da Costa, N.: *Off the Record.* New York, 2012.
[480] www.chasingthebutterfly.no
[481] Scott, A.: *Romanticizing Brahms* (diss., unpublished). Leiden, 2014 (http://hdl.handle.net/1887/29987)
[482] As for piano rolls, not every system could record the precise tempo.




*Example 7.2.1: Sonic Visualiser duration diagram of Eugen d'Albert's performance of Schubert's Impromptu op. 90 no. 3 (beginning).*[483]

This is a sensible way to describe tempo fluctuations objectively. At the same time, however, this procedure draws the recording from the past into our present horizon; today, a completely regular tempo is not just a mathematical construct, but a reflection of how many musicians actually tend to think about musical tempo. It is an example of 'colonising the past'[484] that recalls the way how the medieval church modes were often described after their 'rediscovery' in the nineteenth century, namely in terms of the then current major / minor tonality. The modes were described as if they are variants of the major or minor scales, and were characterised by their deviations from the 'ordinary' scales, resulting in expressions such as the 'dorian sixth' or the 'lydian fourth'. No doubt such characterisations were (and still are) useful for practice, but as a matter of fact they are anachronistic and therefore they certainly influence our view of the historical modes themselves. Likewise, describing early tempo and dislocation in terms of a modern tempo conception might reveal only a partial truth. It assumes what I called a 'transcendental' tempo: tempo as an extra-musical standard that can be measured and that can serve as a point of reference.

When one aims to copy a performance as precisely as possible, as Slåttebrekk and Harrison did, this application of a modern tempo conception might be the best thing to do; however, when the goal is to explore the improvisatory approach to the score in early recordings, with the intention of enriching music-making, it is worth trying to understand the early performances from within. This involves searching for what I have called an 'immanent' tempo conception.

The opposition of transcendental and immanent tempo recalls the distinction between *temps* [time] and *durée* [duration] in the work of the French philosopher and Nobel Prize winner Henri Bergson, in which *temps* is associated with mathematical time, often imagined spatially, whereas

[483] Accompanying online resources to Cook, N.: op cit., media file 03.01.
[484] Cf. Fidom, H.: *Muziek als installatiekunst* (Orgelpark Research Reports, volume 2). Third edition: Amsterdam, 2020; §43.

*durée* connects with the intuitive experience of time. It is not unlikely that a general sensitivity to an 'old' and a 'new' conception of time / tempo was in the air at the beginning of the twentieth century. Bergson was almost a cult figure whose fame by far outreached the academic world. His lectures attracted a large and diverse audience that included, in the words of the Dutch writer and chronicler of his time Frans Erens, 'zeer veel meisjes van vijftien à zestien jaar, burgerjuffrouwen, die concierges leken, eerzame burgers, die mij winkelbedienden of caféhouders toeschenen' [many fifteen or sixteen years old girls, middle class Misses who looked like wardens, respectable citizens who could be shop-assistants or café owners].[485] Erens suggests that such people probably didn't understand Bergson's ideas, but it is tempting to suspect that these appealed to many who felt uncomfortable with the relentlessness of modern times and the loss of *durée*. The fact that the experience of time is a theme in three ground-shaking novels which were published within a few years (Proust's series *À la recherche du temps perdu,* finished in 1922, Joyce's *Ulysses*, also published in 1922, and Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* from 1924) can hardly be a coincidence.

Slåttebrekk and Harrison pose the question why so little knowledge about early recorded performances like Grieg's permeates modern playing, and presume that the strangeness of the early performance style might be an obstacle here.[486] Perhaps a part of the answer can also be found in the fact that the notion of transcendental tempo leads to a description of the 'outside' of the music, like chords being arpeggiated, hands not playing together, tempo being highly flexible, etc., without supporting these descriptions with respect to their musical motivations. In fact, we are facing here a situation that is similar to the reluctance of modern singers to add ornamentation in bel canto. Describing the differences with a typical modern performance is one thing, but to put this knowledge into practice is quite another. In bel canto ornamentation, as in extempore timing, a musician cannot do without the inner musical motivations. A discussion of these motivations will be incomparably more speculative than a Sonic Visualiser graph, but it seems to be inevitable.

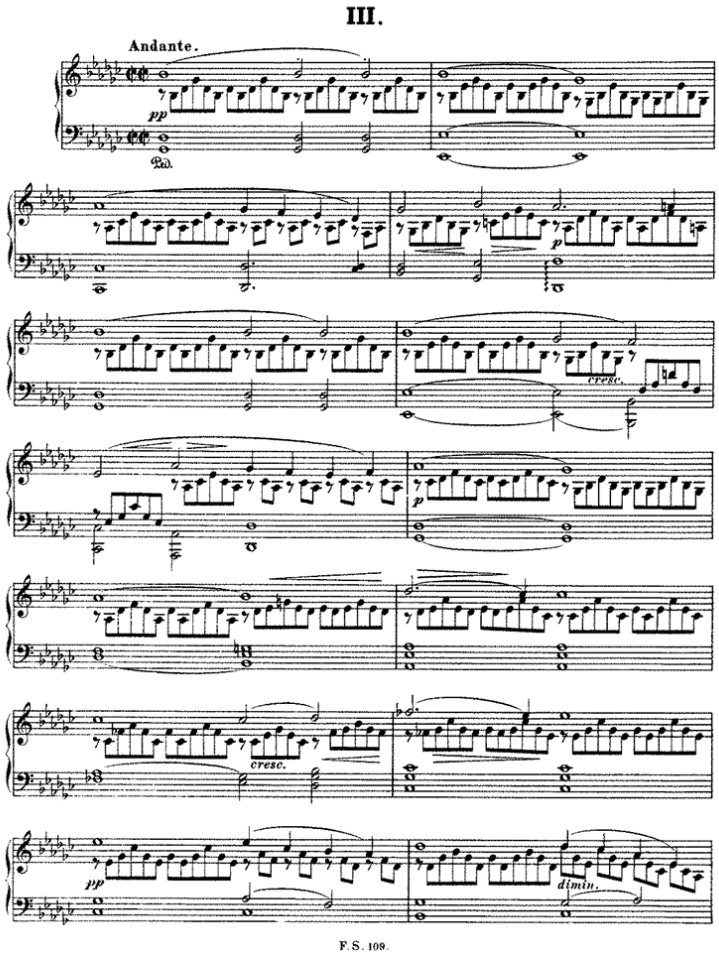
## 7.3 Timing in accompanying arpeggiations in Schubert's *Impromptu* op. 90 no. 3

In the third chapter of his book *Beyond the Score*, Cook analyses several recorded performances of Schubert's *Impromptu* op. 90 no. 3, some of them piano rolls. One of the most startling ones is by Liszt's star pupil Eugen d'Albert: the graph quoted in example 7.2.1 is based upon this recording. Cook's analysis focuses on tempo fluctuations and their connection with phrasing.[487] In this section, I will interpret the fluctuations as the manifestations of an immanent tempo by focusing on what

[485] Erens, F.: *Vertelling en mijmering.* Roermond, 1922; 124. (Thanks to Klaas Trapman for pointing out this description to me.)
[486] http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=207
[487] Cook, N.: op. cit., chapter 3.

makes d'Albert's tempo flexibility possible – that is, by focusing on what happens within the pulse, notably the accompanying patterns.

In order to create a graph like the one mentioned above, the researcher synchronises the score-based information and the visual representation of the acoustical signal by tapping the pulse on the computer keyboard while listening to the recording.[488] This method has a few consequences that are adverse to the goal that is pursued in this chapter. First, in the case of dislocation or arpeggation it might be problematic to indicate the exact beginning of a beat. Second, the result of this procedure is discontinuous: even apart from the first objection, it only gives information about the time distances between isolated points. The continuity suggested by the curve in the graph is in fact hypothetical.




*Example 7.3.1: F. Schubert, Impromptu op. 90 no. 3 (beginning)*

**[7.3 #1 Schubert: *Impromptu* op. 90 no. 3, Eugen d'Albert (1864-1932); piano roll 1905[489]]**

[488] http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/analysing/p9_1.html
[489] Dal Segno 022 [2008]. Quoted in: Cook, N.: op. cit.

The recording that formed the basis of the graph mentioned above is a transfer by Dal Segno Records of a piano roll that d'Albert made for Welte-Mignon in 1905. Following the duration graph, one would expect that the speed of the accompanying figures in the right hand varies dramatically. Strange enough, this seems not to be the case with d'Albert. It is a matter of a distinct stratification in his playing: the melody seems to move almost independently from the accompaniment. A slowed-down play-back of this fragment shows more clearly what happens: sometimes, when there are too many accompanying notes to catch up with the accelerating melody, he simply omits one or two of them. But there is more: the accompanying patterns are metrically irregular in themselves.

**[7.3 # 2 Previous recording slowed down]**

Interestingly, a similar thing happens in an extempore piano sonata I played in February, 2013. (For a detailed analysis, → chapter 12.4). It was a spontaneous piece, built upon one single theme suggested to me by the audience: a theme from the film music for the Harry Potter movies. The entire improvisation, lasting about 25 minutes, consisted of three connected movements. At the beginning of the slow middle movement, a cantilena is played above arpeggiated chords.

**[7.4 #3 Improvised Sonata (beginning slow movement), Bert Mooiman; rec. 2013]**

At that time, I was unaware of d'Albert's modification of accompanying figures, and I certainly was not consciously imitating an early-twentieth-century performance style. In the improvisation, my focus as a player (as I remember) was clearly on the melody, the bassline and the harmony in general. The detailed execution of the accompaniment was left to half-conscious processes. Of course d'Albert did not improvise in the same sense in his Schubert performance, yet his playing of the accompaniment makes a similar impression. Nobody knows what guided d'Albert in his playing or where his focus was; what we can tell though is that *if* his intention was to play nicely regular accompanying figures, then his performance was a failure. However, there is no reason to assume that an internationally renowned former Liszt student would have been unable to play the little notes in a relatively easy piece in whatever way he liked. We can be sure that he played that way because he wanted to, that his intention was not metronomic regularity but something else. I think that this 'something else' can be found when we take the stratification in his performance seriously and analyse the functions of the different layers.

Above everything there is a clearly distinct melody: its role is to sing. Underneath is a bass line that forms a counterpoint against the melody: apart from supporting the chords it sings as well. In the middle there is the accompaniment; its role, I argue, is to express the harmony and to provide a general sense of motion. Schubert's sextuplets are primarily arpeggiating the beautiful harmonies. It is easily forgotten today that in nineteenth-century piano playing, arpeggiation must have been

perfectly normal, even when not indicated in the score. Its use was left to the discretion of the player, and its function was clearly to add expression to the chords. As late as in 1911, Ludwig Riemann called the arpeggio 'der feinste, dem Klavier ureigene Gradmesser der musikalischen Gefühlswerte' [the finest indicator of musical expression, characteristic for the piano].[490] Going back further in time, we see that numerous harpsichord and early piano treatises describe several possibilities for arpeggiating, not only with respect to the speed, but also to the direction and the number of rolls.

In the case of my improvised sonata, I referred to my detailed execution of the accompaniment as 'half-conscious'. At this point a more precise qualification may be given: there as well, the function of the accompaniment was to make the harmonies sound, to bring out the expression of the inner voices in relation to the bassline. This happens in a play with timing, sometimes delaying, sometimes anticipating an important tone. Even the order in which the accompanying tones were played was the result of tension and release within the harmonic progressions. In d'Albert's recording, the Schubert score is treated in much the same way: in the accompaniment, his focus seems to be on performing the harmonic expressive beauty of the music.

Was the way of playing of d'Albert unique in this respect? A comparison with other recordings of the same piece suggests that this is certainly not the case. In *Beyond the Score*, Cook also discusses a piano roll made by Wassily Sapellnikoff (1867-1941) that shows the same type of playing in the accompaniment, although differently from d'Albert. It is a way of playing that seems to have changed during the twentieth century: among the examples in *Beyond the Score*, Edwin Fischer and Artur Rubinstein already sound more regular and 'modern', but it is Murray Perahia's recording that definitely brings us back to our time.

**[7.3 #4 Schubert: *Impromptu* op 90 no. 3, Murray Perahia (1947); rec. 1984[491]]**

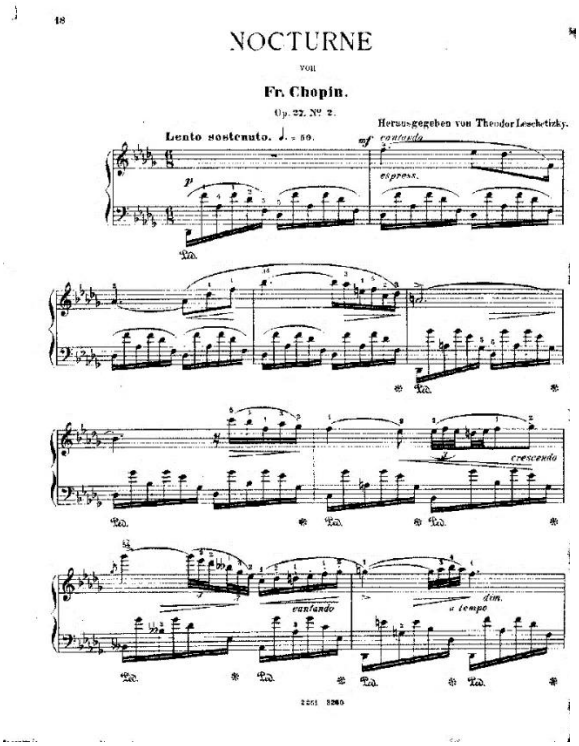
What could loosely be called the 'twentieth-century' approach can be characterised as one that prioritises rhythmic regularity in the accompaniment above giving expression to the harmony by means of timing. The sounding harmony became a result of the movement, instead of the reverse. This is not to say that 'modern' playing is inexpressive. However, as Sigurd Slåttebrekk writes: 'Of the two, (dynamics and tempo), I believe most modern performers would straight away consider dynamics, including sound production and internal voicing, as perhaps *the* most important parameter in the shaping of a musical idea or statement, and in separating important ideas from less important ones. Dynamics is the most instantly recognisable indication of some form of hierarchy of musical elements, both in terms of general dynamics and relative internal balance.'[492] The 'rhetorical'

[490] Riemann, L.: *Das Wesen des Klavierklanges...* (Leipzig, 1911; 89). Quoted in Peres da Costa, N.: *Off the Record.* Kindle edition, location 3290.
[491] Quoted in: Cook, N.: op. cit.
[492] http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=824

playing style, as Cook terms it, belongs to the 'old school' of piano playing that shows very clearly in d'Albert's approach. One could speculate about where the later love for playing accompaniments regularly, precisely as notated, came from. An important factor that is often mentioned might be the emergence of increasingly sophisticated recording technology: in a recording it becomes possible to hear exactly what is happening, often better than in a concert hall. Indeed, several reports tell us about the fear renowned pianists felt when faced with the earliest recordings. At the same time, it is also true that the disappearing tendency to play accompaniments like the one in Schubert's *Impromptu* as expressive arpeggios was roughly simultaneous with the disappearing habit of playing arpeggios even where they were not indicated: both developments are probably two sides of the same coin. The latter phenomenon will be discussed in section 7.13.

## 7.4 Other examples of expressive arpeggiation

The texture of Schubert's *Impromptu* can be called a locus communis in Romantic piano music: a *Lied* for piano solo, a lyrical melody, usually in a more or less slow tempo, above an accompaniment that consists of a bass line and arpeggiated chords in between (→ section 7.3). Not surprisingly, a similar variety of playing styles can be heard in recordings of Chopin's nocturnes, for instance in his very famous and often recorded *Nocturne* in D flat major, op. 27 no. 2. Though most listeners will naturally concentrate on the melody, focusing on the accompaniment in the following recordings makes one aware of the same type of irregularities as in d'Albert's Schubert recording:




*Example 7.4.1: F. Chopin, Nocturne op. 27 no. 2 (beginning)*

**a. [7.4 #1 Louis Diémer; rec. 1903-1904[493]]**

Louis Diémer (1843-1929) was one of the earliest pianists to record for the gramophone. At the Paris Conservatoire, he was the teacher of, among others, Alfred Cortot. Diémer premiered César Franck's *Variations symphoniques*, which was dedicated to him. Interestingly, his pupil Lazare Lévy praised Diémer for the sobriety of his style[494] – a qualification that might come unexpected today.

**b. [7.4 #2 Raoul Koczalski; rec. 1924[495]]**

As a boy, the Polish pianist Raoul Koczalski (1884-1948) studied with Chopin's former student Karol Mikuli.

**c. [7.4 #3 Vladimir de Pachmann; rec. 1916, 1925[496]]**

These two recordings by Vladimir de Pachmann (1848-1933) are very different from each other in many respects, yet they share the free timing in the left hand arpeggios.

**d. [7.4 #4 Moriz Rosenthal; rec. 1935-1936[497]]**

Like Koczalski, the young Moriz Rosenthal (1862-1946) studied with Mikuli; later he became a student of Liszt.

A more regular and 'modern' approach can be heard in the performance from 1935 by Josef Hofmann (1876-1957):

**e. [7.4 #5 Josef Hofmann; rec. 1935[498]]**

An even clearer representative example of a modern approach can be heard in this recording by Evgeny Kissin (b. 1971):

**f. [7.4 #6 Evgeny Kissin[499]]**

In the following two historical recordings of Chopin's *Nocturne* op. 55 no. 2, the left hand timing in the arpeggiations can be heard as being motivated by the harmony and the inner voice leading:

[493] https://youtu.be/E-Ix8bnCuAc (uploaded 2009 by 'd60944')
[494] Schonberg, Harold C.: *The Great Pianists* (Revised updated ed.). New York, 1987; 287.
[495] https://youtu.be/W9MY_h6Q1Os (uploaded 2015 by 'gullivior')
[496] https://youtu.be/gwSaHrU7Wk8?t=34 (uploaded 2009 by 'Beckmesser2')
[497] https://youtu.be/3ECn-oe3bOQ?t=267 (uploaded 2011 by 'Beckmesser2')
[498] https://youtu.be/8cw1YqjaR7I (uploaded 2009 by 'Beckmesser2')
[499] https://youtu.be/iAeY6osq8YE (uploaded 2011 by 'Daniel Haris')

**g. [7.4 #7 Chopin: *Nocturne* op. 55 no. 2, Alfred Cortot (1877-1962); rec. 1947[500]]**

**h. [7.4 #8 Chopin: *Nocturne* op. 55 no. 2, Ignaz Friedman (1882-1948); rec. 1936[501]]**

The same piece performed by Emil Gilels shows, despite fluctuations in tempo, a twentieth-century approach that leans upon regularity in the accompaniment:

**i. [7.4 #9 Chopin: *Nocturne* op. 55 no. 2, Emil Gilels (1916-1985); rec. 1963[502]]**

**j. [7.4 #10 Fauré: *Nocturne* 3 op. 33 no. 3, Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924); piano roll 1913[503]]**

Here Gabriel Fauré, performing his own *Troisième Nocturne* op. 33 no. 3 on piano roll, convincingly plays the accompaniment (from 1'11" on) with great rhythmic freedom, strongly making the impression that he is improvising the accompaniment.

Finally, the idea of expressive arpeggiation can also explain Ilona Eibenschütz's extraordinary performance of Brahms's *Ballade* op. 10 no. 4 (recorded 1952):

**k. [7.4 #11 Brahms: *Ballade* op. 10 no. 4, Ilona Eibenschütz (1872-1962); rec. 1952[504]]**

As a personal acquaintance of Brahms, Ilona Eibenschütz certainly had a very high regard for the composer, and her piano teacher Clara Schumann famously taught her the ideal of *Werktreue.* To a modern listener, these circumstances only make her very free treatment of Brahms's score even more astonishing. However, when we take her performance of the accompanying eighth notes not as a capricious distortion of what Brahms carefully notated as a regular movement, but instead as free downward arpeggiations of large chords, this performance makes a lot of sense (I will elaborate on this in section 7.5). It seems to evoke the poetic image of a harp player, perhaps the melancholic *Harfenspieler* from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, or the 'Vater der Liebe' in the *Harzreise im Winter*, a text Brahms later was to use for his *Altrhapsodie.*

## 7.5 Levels of musical pulse

A very important consequence of the twentieth-century change in the way of performing accompaniments is a radical shift of musical pulse. Regularity undeniably creates a sort of micro-pulse that determines the larger rhythmic entities. Of course Kissin did not consider the sixteenth

[500] https://youtu.be/FOl5lhkUems (uploaded 2010 by 'Beckmesser2')
[501] https://youtu.be/iYuXYE3MpiQ (uploaded 2009 by 'Beckmesser2')
[502] https://youtu.be/OQCZ8_u47_g (uploaded 2012 by 'Pianopera')
[503] Welte-Mignon 2775, 1913.
[504] From: Eibenschütz, I.: 'Reminiscences of Brahms'. Recording on: *Pupils of Clara Schumann*, Pearl: GEMM CDS 99049, disc 6.

note itself as a pulse in his performance of Chopin's op. 27 no. 2, but the micro-pulses of the sixteenth notes form a kind of submetrical grid or clockwork that quite strongly limits the flexibility of the large pulse – presumably the dotted quarter note.[505] The only way to avoid the micro-pulse being heard as if it were the main pulse is by playing the accompaniment with a subdued and limited dynamic range – which is precisely what Perahia does in the Schubert *Impromptu*. It is a 'smooth' way of playing that works best on a modern concert grand piano with its relatively 'lazy' and long-lasting tone, and that invites the pianist to use the right pedal almost throughout in a very subtle way in order to blend the tone qualities (→ chapter 5.8). As usual, instrumental design, playing technique and aesthetic ideal go hand in hand (which makes it so difficult to change one element). In the nineteenth-century way of playing, which – as I argue – treats such accompaniments as free arpeggiations of the harmony, the effect of a micro-pulse is almost absent. As a result, the main pulse is strongly determined by the harmonic rhythm and is given much more space to move: the regulating 'clockwork' is hardly existing at all. Consequently, the music can be faster at times, which in the case of Eibenschütz's performance is maybe the most striking impression on a modern listener. Slåttebrekk, too, mentions the more fluent performances on many early recordings.[506] As he notes, it is often much more clear in these performances what is important in the music and what is less so. The figuration in the accompaniment as performed by Eibenschütz is definitely less 'important', just like in the nineteenth-century style performances discussed earlier – or rather, the importance is in the colour of the harmony it circumscribes. As far as I know, there is no reason to assume that Brahms himself had a very different idea about his own music. It is not unlikely that by interpreting scores too literally, we became blind to an important part of their meanings.

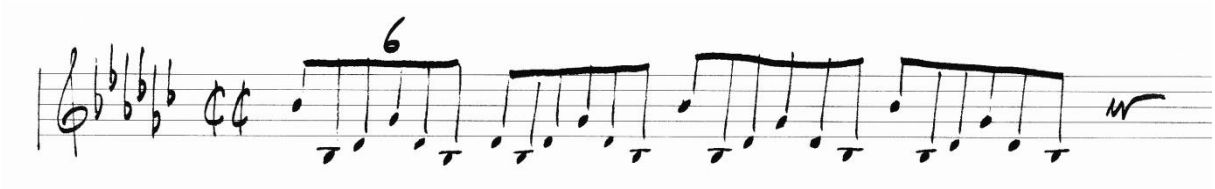
What has been discussed here on the small scale of accompanying patterns in piano music has implications for the rhythmic organisation of a performance at large. In all compositions mentioned above, the textural locus consists of three different layers: a melody, a bass line and a harmonic accompaniment. Whereas in performances that are based upon rhythmic regularity the stratification is mainly articulated through tone colour and dynamics, in the nineteenth-century style of playing we hear a rhythmic independence (to a certain degree) of the different layers. Each layer is following its own ebb and flow, which does not necessarily correspond to the other layers: I will call this a 'polyphony of layers'.[507] From section 7.7 on, the aspect of timing will be examined in a wider context. Different forms of rubato will be discussed, and after the perspective has been broadened,

[505] The Dutch piano pedagogue Robijn Tilanus uses the metaphor of squared paper in her book *Vrij spel*. Tilanus, R.: *Vrij spel: de zeven facetten van improvisatie*. Amsterdam, 2013; 107.
[506] http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=87
[507] The Dutch organist Klaas Hoek comes to a similar conclusion by a different route, namely by focusing on the aspect of sound production and the shaping of a tone. Hoek, K.: *Formgebende Verwendung von Klang und Dynamik*. Orgelpark Research Reports, Vol. 6. Amsterdam, 2021.

the issue of harmony as an expressive force will be revisited in section 7.13. In keeping with the objectives of this study, the question of how knowledge of bygone practices can be applied to modern music-making will always be present. Already the 'free' timing of accompaniments as discussed above poses difficulties in this respect, especially on a technical level. The following section will address this issue before we turn to a consideration of rubato.

## 7.6 Technical consequences in piano playing

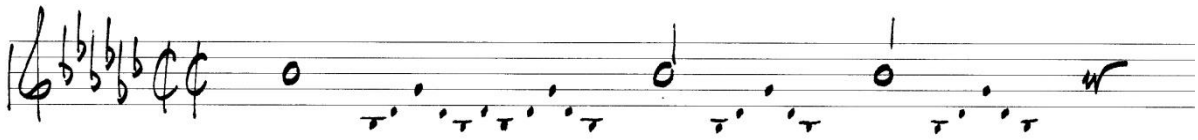
It is not at all easy for a modern pianist to adapt to a freer and, in a way, more random timing of accompaniment figures. In experimenting with this way of playing, one discovers that rhythmic regularity is in a modern performer's blood: it is an important element of professional training, making it a touchstone of critical assessment. This shows in chamber music, too: ensemble musicians are taught to adjust their parts to the short durations of the accompaniment. The larger part of the rehearsal time in chamber music is generally spent on 'being together'. For a pianist practising the type of pieces described above, regularity is also regarded as the basis of technical fluency and command. In the Schubert *Impromptu,* the technical task in the right hand is typically seen as playing the following figure in a smooth and regular way, meaning that all tones are equal in length and in strength:



*Example 7.6.1*

Many pianists most likely don't even hold the melody tones with the fifth finger, relying on the pedal for the high b flats to sing. Basically, this is the method of playing fast ornamental patterns like scales, as they became idiomatic ever since the Viennese classical period, being applied to almost all faster patterns that occur in piano music – such as this accompaniment. The 'transcendental' tempo, being an 'external' standard the music is supposed to obey, also forms a technical frame of reference. The metronome is a great help for this way of practising: playing technically well thus means meeting an objective norm.

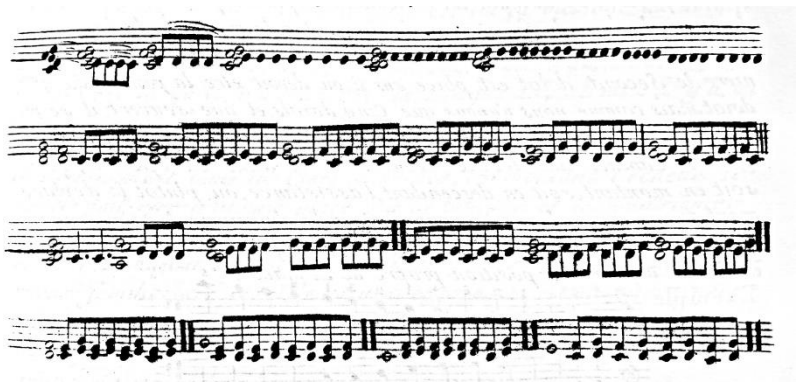
The nineteenth-century approach, as sketched above, is radically different. In this view, the different layers in the music are not just a sounding result of the keys being played according to the score; they are inherent in the musical texture, and therefore also determine the playing technique. The accompanying patterns are structurally distinct from the melody above, and consequently technically disconnected. The technical task of the right hand here is rather like:



*Example 7.6.2*

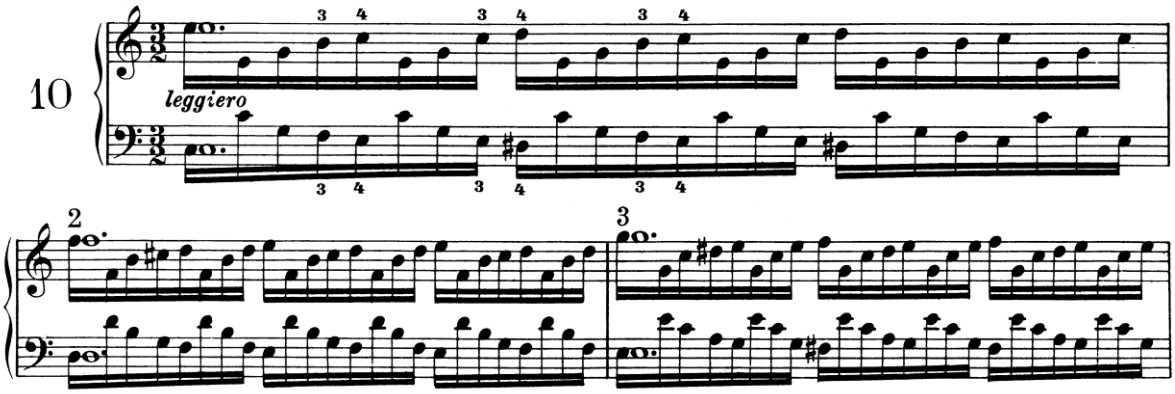
There can be true finger-legato in the melody, making the pedalling rather an additional element than the essential ingredient of the piano tone that it became more recently. This way of playing is closer to harpsichord and early pianoforte techniques, and corresponds wonderfully to the nineteenth-century instruments with their shorter but singing tone, clearer division in registers and less perfect (or dry) damping (→ chapter 5.8). The external norm of regularity is absent, or at least much more in the background. As I argued above, it is the ebb and flow of the harmony that really determines the timing here. As guiding factors, harmony and abstract metric regularity are very different standards: contrary to regularity, there is not one ideal way of performing a harmonic progression; there are many, and which one to take can be decided on the spot. The big question, especially with the modern expectation of technical perfection in mind, is: how to attain technical reliability here? How to acquire an improvisatory mindset that will allow for rhythmic differences from one performance to the next, without little accidents happening every now and again? How to prepare for a performance? It is the difference between preparing a sportive act and taking a stroll, between executing what was prepared beforehand and improvising, between reproduction and recreation.

It can be instructive to look into the many piano methods that appeared during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the particular problem in mind of combining a melody and accompanying figure in one hand. It is very interesting that from Dussek / Pleyel on, most piano methods start with finger exercises with one or more 'support' fingers that usually have to be pressed down on specific keys during the whole exercise.



*Example 7.6.3 : Dussek, L. / Pleyel, I.: Méthode pour le pianoforte. Paris, [1797]; 17.*

The goal of such exercises is usually seen as 'developing the independence of the fingers'. Physically speaking, such independence in the strict sense is an impossibility; moreover, in modern pianism this became a rather unpopular type of exercises, since they contain a risk of overstraining the hand – with Robert Schumann's ruined right hand as an archetypal spectre.[508] Indeed, overstraining can be a real danger leading to injuries, especially on later pianos with their greater key weights and depths. Still, this type of exercise stayed in use for a long time, even in environments where heavier pianos were common. Interestingly, Johannes Brahms wrote a set of virtuoso exercises that to a large degree expands on such finger exercises – and the Viennese grands that Brahms played, still featuring the Viennese action but with much larger hammers, cannot be called light pianos. Brahms's set includes 51 exercises; more than half of them explore the skill of playing a melodic line plus another line or accompanying pattern in one hand simultaneously, much more developed than in the simple traditional exercises with support fingers.




*Example 7.6.4: Brahms, J.: 51 Übungen, WoO 6. Berlin, 1893; 14.*

Why would Brahms pay so much attention to this type of exercise if they were only meant to address a traditional and slightly obsolete chapter of technical training? Isn't it more likely that he saw this as an important ingredient of piano playing in general? As Johannes Behr emphasizes in his foreword to the *Wiener Urtext* edition of the 51 exercises, Brahms as a pianist had the music in his head, not in his fingers: 'Die Finger kommen schon nach' [the fingers will follow], he once wrote.[509] Brahms's own way of practising apparently was never scholastic, but always improvisatory and in search of variations. Maybe this shows the way to a different kind of preparation for a performance: the idea that the player has the music in his head, and that the role of instrumental or vocal technique is to express the musical imagination through the instrument. Practising technique is not focused on the

[508] According to a rumour started by Friedrich Wieck (but questioned already by Clara Schumann), Schumann's injury was caused by the use of a device that meant to strengthen his fourth finger.

[509] Dietrich, A.: *Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms in Briefen besonders aus seiner Jugendzeit.* Leipzig, 1898; 38. Quoted in Brahms, J: *51 Übungen für das Pianoforte.* Wien, 2002; III.

performance of one particular composition, but on developing the ability to perform any imagined musical idea. In chapter 4.6, I already elaborated on the importance of technique in nineteenth-century bel canto training; in chapter 9.6, I will write more about the role of instrumental technique. Both cases match the picture sketched above, and reveal an attitude that is considerably different from what is usual in classical music today.

### 7.7 Tempo rubato

In a well-known and often quoted letter, W.A. Mozart mentions playing the right hand with rhythmic freedom while keeping the tempo in the left hand:

> daß ich immer *accurat* im tact bleÿbe. über das verwundern sie sich alle. Das *tempo rubato* in einem *Adagio*, daß die lincke hand nichts darum weiß, können sie gar nicht begreifen. Beÿ ihnen giebt die lincke hand nach.[510]
>
> [They all are amazed that I always stay in tempo accurately. They cannot understand the *tempo rubato* in an *adagio*, of which the left hand doesn't know. With them the left hand always yields.]

The *tempo rubato* Mozart writes about is a form of rubato that Richard Hudson, in his comprehensive book *Stolen Time*, terms the 'earlier rubato',[511] and that Neal Peres da Costa calls 'metrical rubato'.[512] It is the phenomenon that in a melody some notes 'steal'[513] time from other notes, in the sense that they are performed longer, earlier or later than written; at the same time the accompaniment strictly keeps the tempo.[514] As a result, the vertical alignment of notes in the score is disturbed, a phenomenon that is often termed 'dislocation'. Metrical rubato (I suggest using Da Costa's term) was first described by Pier Francesco Tosi in 1723;[515] the first application of the term *tempo rubato* occurred in Johann Joachim Quantz's *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (1753).[516] It is a technique that is largely absent in classical music performance nowadays, but that remained common in 'lighter' musical genres which are derived from 'serious' classical styles. The French *chansonnière* Edith Piaf, for instance, singing in a musical idiom that stylistically draws on the music in the Parisian *music-halls* of the *Belle Époque* and on late-Romantic salon music, uses *tempo rubato* in her rendering of the waltz *Sous le ciel de Paris* (1954). She sings a rubato within two bars: at each first downbeat of a group of two bars, the melody is generally together with the

[510] Mozart, W.A.: letter from Augsburg to his father, written in between 23 and 25 October 1777. (http://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/briefe/letter.php?mid=919&cat=)
[511] Hudson, R.: *Stolen Time. The History of Tempo Rubato.* Oxford, 1994.
[512] Peres da Costa, N.: op. cit., Kindle edition loc. 3372.
[513] *Tempo rubato* means 'stolen time'.
[514] Its counterpart, termed 'later rubato' by Hudson and 'tempo modification' by Peres da Costa, will be discussed in section 7.9
[515] Hudson, R.: op.cit., 43.
[516] Hudson, R.: op.cit., 55.

accompaniment; between those downbeats, however, she extensively modifies the quarter and half notes in the score, usually lengthening melodically important tones and adapting the other ones.

**[7.7 #1 Edith Piaf (1915-1963): *Sous le ciel de Paris* (rec. 1954)[517]]**

Yves Montand's 1964 recording is much more regular:

**[7.7 #2 Yves Montand (1921-1991): *Sous le ciel de Paris* (rec. 1964)[518]]**

Another genre that derives from nineteenth-century classical music is Argentinean tango music, which is also believed to have been influenced by salon music (which in turn was based upon, among others, Chopin), brought to Buenos Aires by European immigrants. The idea that there is a distant connection between Chopin's art and tango stirs the imagination when one listens to the metrical rubato in the introduction section of Astor Piazzolla's tango *Ausencias* (1989), recorded by himself:

**[7.7 #3 Piazzolla : *Ausencias*, Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) and others[519]]**

In this fragment, Piazzolla (on bandoneon) plays a rubato that embraces larger phrases than Piaf's: at least two bars in 4/4 meter, while the bass moves on at a steady pace. (The accompanying chord arpeggiations show an irregularity that recalls d'Albert's accompaniment in the Schubert impromptu.) It gives the listener the exciting feeling of an improvisatory expression in the part of the soloist, verging on a metrical lapse.

It is obvious that the origin of the metrical rubato lies in situations where there is a clear division between solo and accompaniment, notably in bel canto, but eventually applied to instrumental music as well. Besides Tosi, there are many other authors who describe the phenomenon, including some north of the Alps. Johann Adam Hiller calls it very useful for varying the performance and for greater emphasis ('zur Abänderung des Vortrags, auch zu mehrerm Nachdrucke'[520]). According to Domenico Corri 'it is an old adage: hours (that is, a rigid observance of time) were made for slaves'. He calls the 'rhythm of time' an 'invention of modern date', which causes a melody to be 'shackled and restrained within its strict limits', so that 'the energy or pathos of singing, and the accent of words, have become as it were cramped and fettered'.[521] 'In order to 'meliorate the rigour of [the] laws [of time] in melody eminent singers have assumed a licence, of deviating from the strict time, by introducing the Tempo Rubato. (...) Composers seem to have arranged their works in such a manner

[517] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kouTi-ocsLg (uploaded 2014 by 'Rino MusicRed').
[518] https://youtu.be/LACZU05vmbk (uploaded 2013 by 'FrenchMeUp!')
[519] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIwb40AsLYQ (uploaded 2013 by 'Diego Baner')
[520] Hiller, J.A.: *Anweisung zum musikalisch-zierlichen Gesange.* Leipzig, 1780; 89.
[521] Corri, D.: *The Singers Preceptor.* London, n.d. [1810]; 6.

as to admit of this liberty, without offending the laws of harmony.'[522] The latter remark is important: the application of the metrical rubato presupposes a relatively slow harmonic rhythm, because frequent chord changes will lead towards clashes when the melody is changed rhythmically. As many authors do, Corri warns that tempo rubato is to be used 'with moderation and discretion'. At the same time, he also elaborates on the paradox that 'the acquisition of perfect time' is seen as an important prerequisite for any musician. His answer is that the application of tempo rubato is a 'refinement or finish' which is 'the most difficult to attain'. 'Before you begin the practice of the Tempo Rubato, you ought to be a proficient in the knowledge of perfect time.'[523] It is advice that is still to be taken seriously.

For Carl Maria von Weber as well, singing 'involves a certain fluctuation of the beat due to breathing and the articulation of words'.[524] Throughout the nineteenth century, metrical rubato is mentioned by numerous authors. In 1859, the German baritone Julius Stockhausen (who performed with Clara Schumann and Brahms) told his accompanist (the composer, conductor and pianist Bernhard Scholz) to remain in time even when he allowed himself small deviations, for which he would later compensate,[525] and in 1874 Théophile Lemaitre still refers to tempo rubato as a living practice in Italian singing.[526]

In his 1886 treatise *La voix et le chant*, the famous French baritone Jean-Baptiste Faure writes that tempo rubato gives the melody 'le caractère entraînant de l'improvisation'[527] [the stirring character of improvisation]. The context of this remark is a chapter on the *coloris* [colour], which for him not only consists of dynamic nuances, but also of the application of tempo rubato. According to Faure, *coloris* is necessary to keep the attention of the audience. He criticises developments in the 'école moderne' which entirely focuses on 'la partie déclamatoire et expressive du chant', ignoring the subtleties of the *coloris*. He opposes against the one-sidedness of a declamatory style of singing that indulges in being 'vrai, pathétique, puissant'[528] [sincere, emotional, powerful]. Incidentally, Faure admits that it is the predominant role of the orchestra which compels singers of his day to develop the power of their voices, rather than the sweetness.[529] It is a development he regrets:

[522] Ibidem.
[523] Ibidem.
[524] In a letter from 1824, quoted in Hudson, R.: op. cit., 85.
[525] Hudson, R.: op. cit., 86.
[526] Hudson, R.: op. cit., 87.
[527] Faure, J.: *La voix et le chant.* Paris, [1886]; 182.
[528] Faure, J.: op. cit., 181.
[529] Faure, J.: op. cit., 182.

> J'estime beaucoup l'expression et la justesse dans la déclamation; mais la musique demande encore autre chose: elle demande le charme, la variété, la grâce. Il est certaines émotions qui ne s'obtiennent, et certains sentiments qui ne s'expriment que par les effets magiques du coloris.[530]
>
> [I do think highly of expression and correctness in declamation; but music also asks for something else: it asks for charm, variety, grace. There are certain emotions that cannot be obtained, and certain feelings that cannot be expressed but by the magical effects of the colour.]

Faure's words echo what was written in chapter 4.5 about the art of colouring in the bel canto singing style of the first half of the nineteenth century; it must have been less powerful, but much more flexible, sensitive and highly virtuosic. Faure pays special attention to the application by the singer of a wide range of vocal timbres, but with respect to this chapter, it is especially interesting that he includes tempo rubato in his rendering of musical *pronuntiatio*. In his text, many strands come together: the improvisatory quality of tempo rubato, the search for variety, and the embedding of rubato in an expressional complex. It is telling that he makes an explicit connection with spoken language; he states that in singing, this multiplicity of means is what intonation is in speaking. Faure even quotes the French dramatist Ernest Legouvé, who writes about 'le coloris dans la diction';[531] though Legouvé writes about timbres here, it is obvious that *coloris* in a wide sense has an equally important function in *l'art de la parole*. It should not be forgotten that reciting a poem or other text was a popular activity throughout the nineteenth century; it was quite common to include such recitations to enliven a musical concert, especially in salons.

### *'Rubato' in declamation*

It is important to give the nineteenth-century art of reciting serious thought when it comes to a revaluation of an immanent concept of tempo, for vocal art and verbal art were seen as related areas, both governed by the same rhetorical principles. 'Rubato' might be an unusual term to apply to declamation (the term is used here for the art of speaking publicly, not for the 'modern' singing practice Faure opposed to). However, I argue that aspects of verbal *pronuntiatio* may clarify musical timing. Unfortunately, it is hard to get a clear idea of how such verbal expression actually sounded in practice on the basis of written descriptions, just as is the case with music.[532] We know that

[530] Faure, J.: op. cit., 181.

[531] Faure, J. : op. cit., 184.

[532] Nonetheless, many texts with annotations on performance were published; e.g., Joshua Steele: *Prosodia Rationalis* (1779); Gilbert Austin: *Chironomia* (1806); George Vandenhoff: annotated version of *Collin's* 'The Passions' in *The Art of Elocution* (1855); James Rush: *The Philosophy of the Human Voice* (1900); Andrew Comstock: *A system of Elocution* (1841). Cf. Wentz, J.: 'An Annotated *Livret* of Lully's *Roland* as a Source for Seventeenth-Century Declamation'. *Cambridge Opera Journal,* Vol. 25, Issue 01 (March 2013), 1-36. Also, Wentz, J.: ' 'Mechanical rules' versus 'abnormis gratia': revaluing Gilbert Austin's Chironomia as a source for historical acting techniques'. In: Forment, B. & Stalpaert, Chr. (eds.).: *Theatrical heritage: challenges and opportunities*. Leuven, 2015; 41-57. Thanks to Jed Wentz for pointing out these sources to me.

Monteverdi worked with *commedia dell'arte* actors for his operas, but we can only speculate about how this might have sounded. For the nineteenth century, however, there is recorded material available that at least gives a fascinating impression of the style of declamation at the very end of this period. Sarah Bernhardt was a French actress of Dutch descent, generally acclaimed the most famous actress of her time. In 1903, she recorded a monologue from Edmond Rostand's play *La Samaritaine* (Act 2, Scene 3):[533]

**[7.7 #4 Rostand: *La Samaritaine*, Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923); rec. 1903[534]]**

Bernhardt is almost singing her text, and the result is likely to feel very unnatural to modern listeners. Indeed one suddenly becomes aware of the distance that separates us from the performers of little more than a century ago. It is a way of reciting that, in my view, cannot be separated from the fact that she was still speaking without amplification. Already Quintilian (first century AD) calls the cultivation of the voice of an orator a typically musical skill; he mentions the practice of a musician with a *tonarion* (pitch-pipe), standing behind the back of an orator, 'whose duty was to give him the tones in which his voice was to be pitched'.[535] Bernhardt's art is a beautiful example of how a practice develops in connection with technical circumstances; the introduction of electrical amplification deeply changed the conditions, and consequently the practice itself.

Even more alien-sounding is the rendering of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's ballad *Erlkönig* by the Austrian actor Alexander Moissi (1922):[536]

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[533] Il dit encore : / « Soyez doux. Comprenez. Admettez. Souriez. / Ayez le regard bon. Ce que vous voudriez / Qu'on vous fît, que ce soit ce qu'aux autres vous faites / Voilà toute la loi, voilà tous les prophètes! / Envoyez / votre cœur souffrir dans tous les maux!...» / Enfin, que sais-je, moi! Des mots nouveaux! Des mots / Parmi lesquels un mot revient, toujours le même: / « Amour... amour... aimer!... Le ciel, c'est quand on aime.
Pour être aimés du Père, aimez votre prochain. / Donnez tout par amour. Partagez votre pain / Avec l'ami qui vient la nuit, et le demande. / Si vous vous souvenez, en faisant votre offrande, / Que votre frère a quelque chose contre vous, / Sortez, et ne venez-vous remettre à genoux / Qu'ayant, la paix conclue, embrassé votre frère... / D'ailleurs, un tel amour, c'est encor la misère. / Aimer son frère est bien, mais un païen le peut. / Si vous n'aimez que ceux qui vous aiment, c'est peu: / Aimez qui vous opprime et qui vous fait insulte! / Septante fois sept fois pardonnez! C'est mon culte / D'aimer celui qui veut décourager l'amour. / S'il vous bat, ne criez pas contre, priez pour. / S'il vous prend un manteau, donnez-lui deux tuniques. / Aimez tous les ingrats comme des fils uniques. / Aimez vos ennemis, vous serez mes amis. / Aimez beaucoup, pour qu'il vous soit beaucoup remis. / Aimez encore. Aimez toujours. Aimez quand même. / Aimez-vous bien les uns les autres. Quand on aime, / Il faut sacrifier sa vie à son amour. / Moi je vous montrerai comment on aime, un jour... / Amour! N'ayez que de l'amour dans la poitrine !... / Aimez-vous! »

Rostand, E. : *La Samaritaine*. Paris, 1901; 79.

[534] https://youtu.be/FjyB18FVGNc (uploaded 2010 by 'transformingArt')
[535] Quintilian: *Institutio oratoria* I.10.27.
[536] Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind? / Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind; / Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm, / Er fasst ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.
Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht? – / Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht? / Den Erlenkönig mit Kron' und Schweif? – / Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif. –

[7.7 #5 Goethe: *Erlkönig*, Alexander Moissi (1879-1935); rec. 1922[537]]

Both performances share aspects that were discussed above in the context of music. The 'singing' way of speaking allows the actors to stretch important words. The changes in tempo are considerable. Both seem to ignore the metrical construction of the text: especially Moissi's performance makes it impossible for a listener to reconstruct the way Goethe's poem was built. This is because both of them prioritise the 'colour' of each phrase or group of words – Moissi to an extreme degree. Incidentally, while Moissi could already take advantage of the electrical microphone for his recording, Bernhardt still was recording under primitive circumstances. The singer or actor had to sing or speak into a horn and was not allowed to move at all. Large differences in dynamics would cause a failure in the recording process; sometimes dynamics were created artificially by moving the platform on which the singer was balancing backward and forward from the horn, while everything was performed with roughly the same dynamics.[538] Therefore, Bernhardt's use of dynamics might have been more extreme on stage. Especially with Moissi, each phrase gets its appropriate timing, dynamics, voice pitch and colour. With Bernhardt, the stretching of important words even leads to the use of vibrato. Tempo, tone colour, pitch and rhythm all become inseparable aspects of one continuous expressive flow. I argue that tempo rubato in music should be understood in a similar way: not as a deviation from a hypothetic absolutely regular tempo, but as a yielding to (what the performer feels as) an inner necessity of the music.

### *Instances of metrical rubato in vocal music*

Fortunately, there is a recording on wax roll, made around 1900, that most likely preserves the voice of Jean-Baptiste Faure (whose treatise *La voix et le chant* was quoted before). The recording was made long after his retirement, when the singer was already 70 years old. Here Faure performs Alfonso's

---

„Du liebes Kind, komm, geh mit mir! / Gar schöne Spiele spiel' ich mit dir; / Manch' bunte Blumen sind an dem Strand, / Meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand."
Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörest du nicht, / Was Erlenkönig mir leise verspricht? – / Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein Kind; / In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind. –
„Willst, feiner Knabe, du mit mir gehn? / Meine Töchter sollen dich warten schön; / Meine Töchter führen den nächtlichen Reihn, / Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein."
Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort / Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort? – / Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau: / Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau. –
„Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt; / Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch' ich Gewalt." / Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt faßt er mich an! / Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan! –
Dem Vater grausets, er reitet geschwind, / Er hält in Armen das ächzende Kind, / Erreicht den Hof mit Müh und Not; / In seinen Armen das Kind war tot.

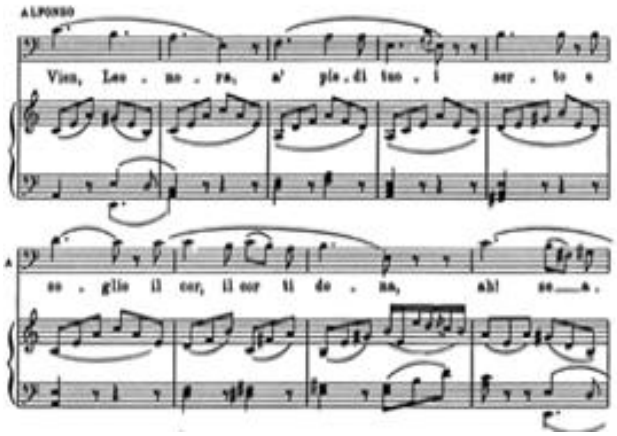
Goethe, J.W. von: *Goethes Gedichte in zeitlicher Folge* (H. Nicolai, ed.). Frankfurt am Main, 1982; 248.

[537] https://youtu.be/WhV2WwEQj7U (uploaded 2016 by 'MIP Musically Informed Performance')

[538] Peres da Costa, N.: op. cit., loc. 670.

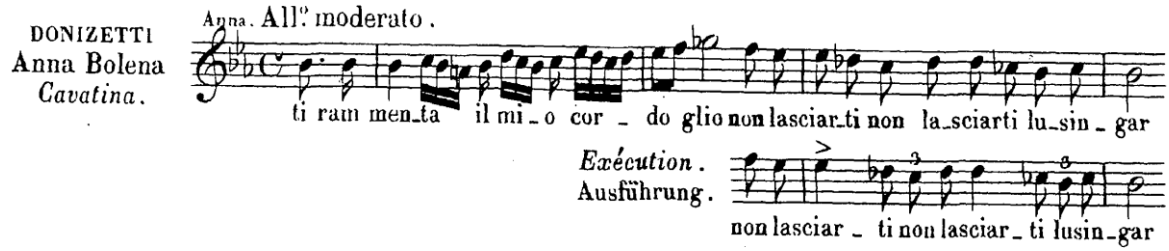
aria *Léonor! Viens* from the second act of Gaetano Donizetti's *La Favorite* (French version). In this (abridged) performance, some examples of excessive[539] rubato can be heard beginning at 1'03'' (the accompanist has no choice but to follow the singer here). For the reasons mentioned above, it is unlikely that Faure could use all dynamic nuances he advocates in his *traité* in this acoustical recording.

[7.7 #6 Donizetti: *Léonor! Viens*, Jean-Baptiste Faure (1830-1914), rec. 1900[540]]




*Example 7.7.1: Donizetti, G.: La Favorite, act 2: Léonor! Viens (piano reduction).*

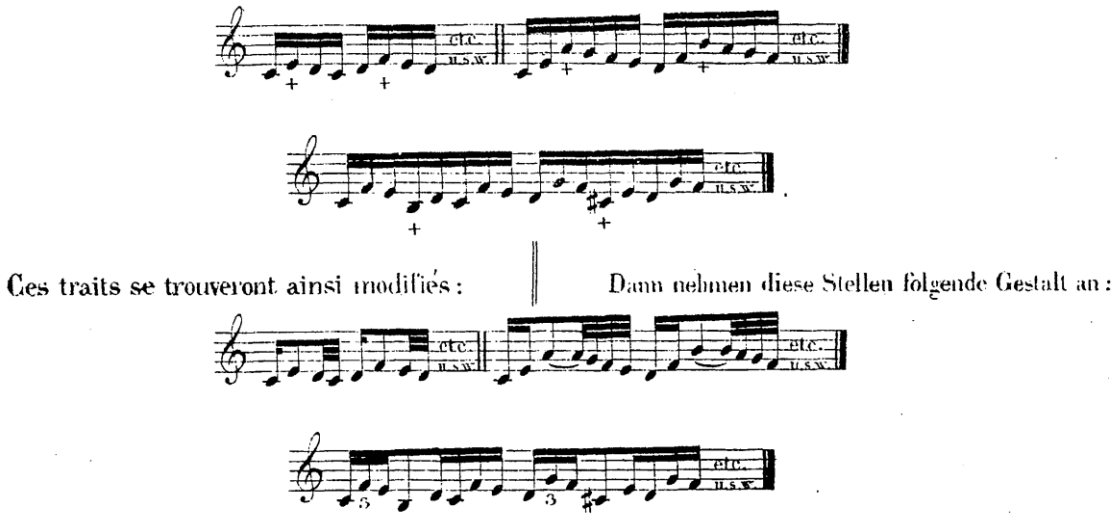
As stated above, verbal explanations don't really make clear how a verbal or musical practice actually sounded. However, there is one nineteenth-century source which attempts to show in musical notation how metrical rubato worked. Manuel García *fils* describes in his *L'Art du chant* several instances of tempo rubato. A few examples concern small-scale rubato, in which the distances between the moments where melody and accompaniment are together are relatively short, as in this fragment from *Anna Bolena* by Donizetti:[541]




*Example 7.7.2*

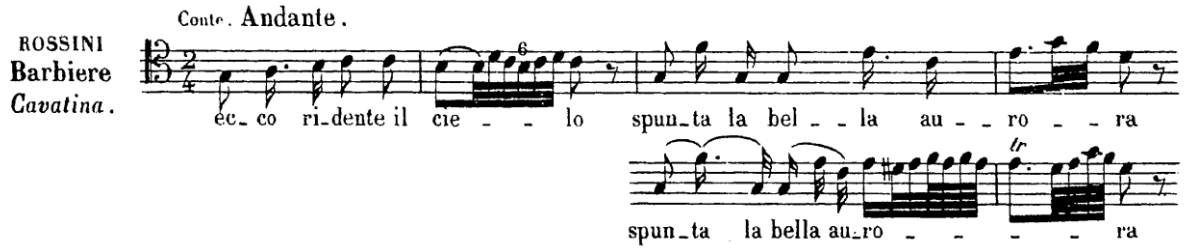
[539] 'Excessive' to modern ears, that is.
[540] https://youtu.be/63PFdrI3YKo (uploaded 2014 by 'ttrill')
[541] García, M.: *École de García,* part 2. French / German edition; Mainz, n.d.; 38.

This is related to what García calls *Temps d'arrêt* (prolongation of one tone in a group in equal notes) in the first part of his treatise, an effect that can also be applied in order to provide the voice with a support or to give clarity to the structure of the melody:[542]




*Example 7.7.3*

This small-scale tempo rubato can be compared with what Edith Piaf did in her performance of *Sous le ciel de Paris.* García mentions three reasons for the application of tempo rubato: it breaks the monotony and may aid the colouring of a phrase (i.e. it brings variety); it favours 'les élans de la passion'[543] [the bursts of passion]; and finally on a more practical level, it can make the preparation of a trill easier, like in an example from Rossini's *Barbiere*.[544]

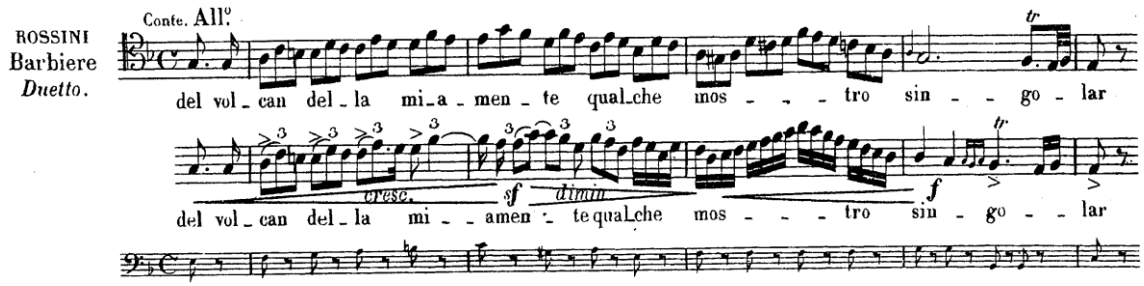



*Example 7.7.4*

Very interesting is García's attempt to notate an example of large scale tempo rubato, the rubato 'par phrase' [by phrase]. In a fragment from Rossini's *Barbiere*, he shows how his father,

[542] 'Le temps d'arrêt en donnant un appui à la voix, lui permet de rendre distinct ce qui aurait manqué de netteté, et les traits y gagnent beaucoup d'effet.' [The prolongation supports the voice on those parts of a bar which might otherwise be passed over, heightening the effect of passages.] García, M.: *École de García,* part 1. French / German edition; Mainz, n.d.; 43.
[543] García, M.: op. cit. part 2, 38.
[544] García, M.: op. cit. part 2, 40.

Manuel García *père*, used to sing this passage. It is a beautiful example of the type of rubato where only the beginning and the end of a phrase are together with the accompaniment, quite similar to the tempo rubato in Piazzolla's performance. In the third bar, the original melody is ornamented in a way that helps the performer re-establish a clear meter for the final cadence (bar 4).[545]




*Example 7.7.5*

García cautions that this type of metrical rubato can only be applied when the harmony is relatively stable (which apparently does not mean that there can be no chord changes at all, judging by the previous example). Also, it is a 'moyen difficile'[546] that requires 'an excellent perception of rhythm, and great self-possession on the part of the musician'[547] – very much along the lines of what Corri wrote. According to García, two musicians excelled in this tempo rubato by phrase. One of them was his father, the other one a violinist who perplexed the musical world with his dazzling virtuosity: Niccolò Paganini.

## 7.8 Metrical rubato in instrumental music

In this casual remark, García naturally brings together vocal and instrumental music, one more indication that the approach of chapter 5.3 ('Bel canto as a reference') is rooted in the way things were actually perceived. There are also good reasons to assume that the aspect of timing was widely transmitted from the art of bel canto to the performance practice of instrumental soloists. In his *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* Leopold Mozart writes about the art of accompanying. According to him, there are several Italian female singers or other *Einbildungsvirtuosen* [would-be virtuosos] who are unable to keep time when they perform the music they 'learnt by heart'; in such cases the accompanist must adapt by now and then 'dropping a half bar' to save them from 'public shame'. However, when the soloist is a 'true virtuoso', the accompanist should not yield, since that would spoil his *tempo rubato* and undo the effect the *Concertist* took great care to build up.[548] Aristide

[545] García, M.: op. cit. part 2, 39.
[546] Ibidem.
[547] García, M.: *École de García*. Transl.; García's New Treatise on the Art of Singing; revised edition. Boston, n.d.; 53.
[548] Mozart, L.: *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule.* Augsburg, 1757; 262-263.

Farrenc quotes García's remarks on rubato in an introductory chapter to *Le trésor des pianistes*, an instructive anthology of piano music.[549] Early nineteenth-century methods such as Spohr's and Baillot's also describe *tempo rubato.*[550] Baillot stresses that it is an effect that should not be applied too often, lest it be 'fatigant et insupportable' [tiring and unbearable].

> Le caractère du passage suffit en général pour pousser l'exécutant à l'improviser d'après l'inspiration du moment. Il ne doit, pour ainsi dire, en faire usage que malgré lui, lorsqu'entrainé par l'expression, elle l'oblige à perdre, en apparence toute mesure et à se délivrer ainsi du trouble qui l'obsède. [551]
>
> [The character of a passage generally suffices to drive the performer to improvise it according to the inspiration of the moment. He should only use it [i.e. the tempo rubato], as it were, in spite of himself, when he gets carried away by the expression, and feels compelled to seemingly lose all time and to get rid of the agitation that haunts him.]

Again, tempo rubato belongs to the *accent*, fuelled by the *caractère* of a composition (→ chapter 5.4). It is fascinating that Baillot uses the word *improviser* here to indicate the activity itself, instead of just the impression that this way of playing makes on a listener: it is exceptional that a nineteenth-century author refers to what I call an 'improvisatory approach to a score' with the term 'improvisation'. Baillot writes that tempo rubato cannot be notated precisely (a remark that is to be found in many texts on this matter). It is essentially a temporary 'disorder' to increase the expression:

> Souvent un beau désordre est un effet de l'art.[552]
>
> [A beautiful disorder is often an artistic effect.]

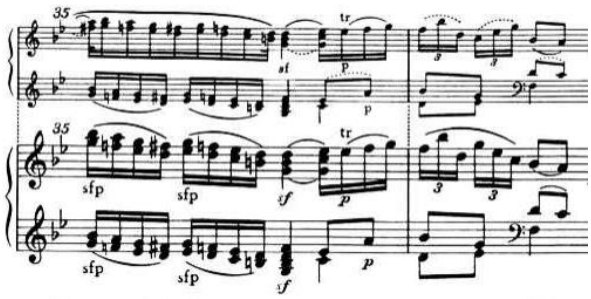
As late as at the end of the nineteenth century, the legendary violinist Eugène Ysaÿe[553] is said to have applied metrical rubato. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, the father of eurhythmics, accompanied Ysaÿe in recitals and reported about their collaboration. Ysaÿe told his pianist not to follow him meticulously in rubato passages where the piano part consisted of a simple accompaniment. '... [A]n accompaniment should always be in time. You represent order, and your duty is to counterbalance my fantasy. Do not worry, we shall always find each other (...)'.[554] Allegedly, Ysaÿe practised this technique in an original way: sitting in a train he would 'make up violin passages based on the

[549] Farrenc, A.: 'Observations générales sur l'exécution', 4. In: *Le trésor des pianistes*, vol. 1; Paris, 1861.
[550] Hudson, R.: op. cit., 100-109.
[551] Baillot, P.: *L'Art du violon*. Paris, n.d. [1834].130.
[552] Ibidem.
[553] Ysaÿe was a friend of César Franck, who will have an important role in chapter 13; Franck dedicated his famous violin sonata to Ysaÿe.
[554] According to Jan Kleczynski (see below), Paganini used to give similar instructions to the accompanying orchestra. Quoted in Philip, R.: *Performing Music in the Age of Recording.* New Haven and London, 2004; 110.

dynamic accents and cadences of the wheels, and to execute "rubato" passages, returning to the original beat each time [he] passed in front of a telegraph pole'.[555]

### *Pianists*

Mozart's description of tempo rubato on the piano, quoted at the beginning of section 7.7, refers to exactly the practice described above, but applied to the piano, with the melody (the 'solo' voice) typically executed with the right hand while the left hand plays the accompaniment. Though Mozart gives no notated examples, we may assume that his right hand rubato matched the above-mentioned descriptions. Small-scale rubato had already been mentioned in earlier books on keyboard playing. François Couperin introduced a sign to indicate the expressive delay of a tone (*suspension*[556]), an ornament that is also mentioned by Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg as an instance of 'tempo rubato'.[557] Marpurg termed it 'Tonverziehung', and in the ornamented alternatives to some slow movements of Mozart's piano sonatas it occurs in notated form.[558]




*Example 7.8.1: W.A. Mozart: Adagio from Piano Sonata in F major KV 332, bars 35-36. The upper system shows the ornamented version.*[559]

In Daniel Gottlob Türk's *Klavierschule*, too, small scale expressive anticipation or delay is presented as the primary instance of tempo rubato.[560]

Several sources report about the application of metrical rubato in the playing of well-known pianists. Both the Paris magazine *Le Pianiste* and the German / French piano virtuoso and teacher Henri Herz mention Jan Ladislav Dussek's use of rubato. Herz adds that he doesn't know why this way of playing – which he describes as a way to avoid 'monotony' – has been forgotten in his days.[561] (He wrote this in 1838.) Herz's claim that this tradition was dead was not accurate, however; Thalberg's playing (he was already famous at that time) was associated with this type of rubato.[562] It

[555] Ibidem.
[556] Hudson, R.: op. cit., 24.
[557] Hudson, R.: op. cit., 116.
[558] The extent to which Mozart's metrical rubato equates with García's rubato by phrase is hard to establish.
[559] Mozart, W.A.: *Klaviersonaten,* Band 2. Neue Mozart Ausgabe: Kassel, 1986; 38.
[560] Türk, D.G.: *Klavierschule.* Leipzig, 1789; 374.
[561] Herz, H.: *Méthode complète de piano* ; Mainz, n.d. [1838]; 33.
[562] Hudson, R.: op. cit., 128.

is likely that the latter's arrangements in *L'Art du chant* (→ chapter 5.9) presuppose metrical rubato. In *Le trésor des pianistes*, Aristide Farrenc mentions John Field (and Paganini) with respect to their use of rubato.[563] As late as 1885, Adolph Friedrich Christiani called the metrical rubato 'the more beautiful' way of rubato.[564]

Most famous, however, are the descriptions of Frédéric Chopin's rubato. According to Wilhelm von Lenz, Chopin compared the left hand with a 'Kapellmeister', steady as a clock, whereas the right hand was free to move.[565] Georges Mathias writes that Chopin also recommended this way of playing for specific passages in the music of Weber.[566] Well-known is Liszt's poetic description of the *rubato chopinesque* as a tree of which the trunk doesn't move while the branches with the leaves undulate in the wind.[567] Camille Saint-Saëns acquired an idea of Chopin's rubato as a visitor of the salon of Pauline Viardot. He writes that Viardot had a very precise memory of Chopin's playing and gave valuable indications about the interpretation of his works.[568] He calls this way of playing 'fort difficile' because it requires a 'complete independency of the two hands' – which is why, according to Saint-Saëns, many pianists corrupt it by dislocating the accompaniment instead of the melody or, even worse, constantly playing one hand after the other.[569]

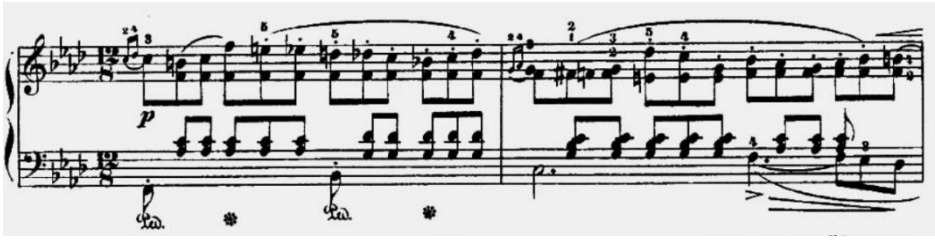
In his book *Frédéric Chopin. De l'interprétation de ses œuvres* (1880), based upon reports from the circle around Chopin, the Polish pianist (and journalist and chess master) Jan Kleczynski attempts to describe Chopin's tempo rubato.

> 1° On ne saurait donner des règles précises, car une bonne exécution du *rubato* exige une certaine intuition musicale, en un mot, un certain talent;
>
> 2° Tout *rubato* cependant a pour base l'idée suivante: chaque pensée musicale comprend des moments où la voix veut être renforcée ou baissée, des moments d'arrêt ou de hâte. Le *rubato* n'est que l'exagération de ces diverses parties de la pensée: les nuances de la voix se font plus marquées; les différences de valeur des notes, plus apparentes. Il naît ainsi dans notre âme une image de la pensée musicale plus vivante et plus poétique, mais toujours régulière et soumise à les lois.[570]
>
> [1° Precise rules can't be given, because a correct execution of rubato requires a certain musical intuition, in short: a certain talent;
>
> 2° Any rubato however is based upon the following idea: every musical thought contains moments where the voice wants to be stronger or weaker, moments of rest or of hurry. Rubato is nothing else

[563] Farrenc, A.: op. cit., 4.
[564] Hudson, R.: op. cit., 325.
[565] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: *Chopin vu par ses élèves* (nouvelle édition mise à jour). Paris, 2006; 74.
[566] Ibidem.
[567] Eigeldinger, J.-J. : op. cit., 76.
[568] Eigeldinger, J.-J. : op. cit., 241.
[569] Eigeldinger, J.-J. : op. cit., 74.
[570] Quoted in Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit.; 75.

> but the exaggeration of these different parts of the thought: the nuances of the voice are marked more clearly, and the differences of the note values are more obvious. In this way a more lively and poetic image of the musical thought is born into our soul, an image however that is always regular and according to the rules.]

The last remark probably aims to refute the idea that rubato is something capricious, an offence that in the eyes of Kleczynski is undeserved, at least in the case of Chopin. Indeed, warnings that exaggerated, tasteless or illogical rubato can ruin a performance are ubiquitous in the nineteenth century, but also before. Kleczynski repeats the principle that is so familiar from bel canto: we borrow time from the less important notes in order to give it to the main notes. As an example he mentions the f-minor section of Chopin's *Nocturne* in A-flat major, op. 32 no. 2. According to Kleczynski, the pianist should lengthen the high f in the first bar and the high d-flat in the second one, and slide over (*glisser*) the other notes.[571] Unfortunately he does not specify whether the left hand keeps the time or yields to the right hand.



*Example 7.8.2: Chopin, F.: Nocturne op. 32 no. 2, bars 27-28.*

Kleczynski's description furthermore confirms several notions that play a role in this study. Rubato escapes any precise description, and its proper application requires talent (and, as earlier writers would have termed it, taste). The claim that it cannot be learnt from a book (a remark that accompanies many descriptions of rubato, including early eighteenth-century French *inégalité*) matches experiences in present-day teaching of jazz students from all over the world, especially since many of them do not have a background of direct contact with the living tradition during their early training.

Kleczynski's remark that rubato exaggerates the parts of a musical thought is also important, since it expresses a notion that played an important role in chapter 3.6: like ornamentation, rubato amplifies a musical gesture. Though Kleczynski does not use the word *phrase* here, it is clear from other descriptions such as García's that rubato functioned within the musical phrase.

In *Off the Record*, Peres da Costa not only lines up written documentation of metrical rubato in piano playing, but also compares such sources with the earliest recordings and piano rolls. He concludes that 'the recordings reveal many features that would have been impossible to deduce from

[571] Kleczynski, J.: *Frédéric Chopin*. Paris, 1880; 77.

written texts alone'.[572] One example is the claim in many historical texts that in metrical rubato, the left hand (or the accompaniment) is to maintain the tempo strictly. Today, one tends to understand the word 'strictly' in terms of a transcendental tempo conception – that is, it must be absolutely regular. The findings of Peres da Costa, however, show that 'in the context of tempo and rhythm, it [i.e. the word 'strictly'] incorporated a certain flexibility that was still perceived as being strict'.[573] Like the speed of a walker (→ chapter 6.4), immanent musical tempo can be 'strict' though it is not absolutely regular. On a more detailed level, Peres da Costa writes, 'early recordings reveal (...) that around the turn of the twentieth century, metrical rubato and other forms of rhythmic alteration remained indispensable expressive devices in piano playing. (...) Yet few late-nineteenth-century written texts mention such practices. And those that do are generally lacking in detail. In the case of metrical rubato, the texts rarely describe more than its underlying principle.'[574]

## 7.9 Tempo modification

The 'later' rubato (Hudson), or 'tempo modification' (Peres da Costa), is the still familiar rubato in which melody and accompaniment stay synchronous. 'Nowadays (...) [it] is used in fairly subtle ways to enhance the ebb and flow of a musical phrase.'[575] Also in this respect, early recordings can sound startling to present-day listeners, since at that time (roughly before World War II), many musicians obviously tended to allow themselves much more freedom than their modern colleagues. Quite often musicians were in their writings critical of 'exaggerated' tempo flexibility, dislocation or the application of not notated arpeggios, while they allowed themselves such freedoms in their own recordings.[576] This might be explained as musicians not practising as they preach, but the phenomenon is too widespread for that. It is much more likely that the conception of tempo most modern 'classical' musicians grew up with is indeed radically different from the one of an average nineteenth-century musician, as this study argues.

Hudson's division into 'earlier' and 'later' rubato might have disadvantages because the two coexisted for a long time. Türk described the 'later' rubato in his *Klavierschule*.[577] Several witnesses have remarked that in Chopin's own performances, his rubato was such that his mazurkas could make the impression of being in a duple metre (2/4 or 4/4), rather than in the (notated) 3/4.[578] This must have been a consequence of lengthening the accented beat (often the second or the third one), most likely in the accompaniment as well as in the melody. Another interesting mention of 'later'

[572] Peres da Costa, N.: op. cit., loc. 4284.
[573] Peres da Costa, N.: op. cit., loc. 4179
[574] Peres da Costa, N.: op. cit., loc. 4289.
[575] Peres da Costa, N.: op. cit., loc. 4316.
[576] For example Reinecke in Peres da Costa, N.: op. cit., loc. 4562.
[577] Quoted in Hudson, R.: op. cit.; 142.
[578] Eigeldinger, J.-J.: op. cit.; 106, 192.

rubato is by the renowned music critic Eduard Hanslick, who writes about a performance (1855) of some Chopin mazurkas by Wilhelmine Clauss, a successful pianist. He praises her musicianship in general: every composition she performs has not merely been '«studirt» im gebräuchlichen Sinne' [practised in the usual sense], but 'vollkommen in sich aufgesogen; als ein warm und eigenthümlich Empfundenes, Selbsterlebtes gibt sie es wieder' [completely absorbed; she reproduces it as something she has felt in a warm and characteristic way, something she has lived through herself]. Hanslick contrasts her true musicianship with 'dem kühlen, reinlichen Herabspielen der meisten «Virtuosen»' [the cold, tidy and automatic playing of most 'virtuosos'], a difference that he considers immediately obvious, even to the layman.[579] However, he disapproves of her performance of Chopin: he complains that 'das leidige *Tempo rubato* (...) den (...) engen Rahmen dieser kleinen anmutigen Gebilde sprengte' [the dreadful tempo rubato went beyond the scope of these lovely small creations]. Hanslick then adds an interesting remark:

> Es ist bekannt, dass Chopin selbst diese krankhafte Unstätigkeit des Zeitmaßes in hohem Grad liebte; unsere Künstlerin hat also die Tradition für sich. Trotzdem halte ich fest daran auch in der Musik stets auf den Urtext zurückzugehen.[580]
>
> [It is well-known that Chopin himself loved this morbid unevenness of the metre very much; our artist is therefore supported by the tradition. Nevertheless I prefer to hold on to the original text, even in music.

What seems remarkable to me is not only the fact that rumours about Chopin's way of playing had apparently reached Vienna (for his mazurkas date from his years in Paris, after his 1829 debut in Vienna), or that Hanslick so clearly elevates a poetic way of performing in which the musician truly 'recreates'; in his last remark Hanslick strikingly separates the musical text (the *Werk* in nineteenth-century parlance) from the composer's own interpretation. In this case, he even thinks that the original text should prevail over Chopin's manner of performing. At first sight, Hanslick may seem to argue for *Texttreue* here; but as his earlier remark reveals, he expected a strong sense of 'ownership' on the side of the performer. It is a view that supports one of the guiding ideas in this study: that, once a composition is written down, it becomes an independent entity, a 'work' in nineteenth-century terms, that serves as a basis for any future performance. This is not the same thing as a 'code' that the performer has to crack (as in the *Urtext*-paradigm); performing a composition means recreating it – that is, creating again while performing, as if the notated musical ideas were the performer's own inventions. It is an attitude that calls for extempore decisions – and even Hanslick seems to support this improvisatory approach to music-making.

[579] Hanslick, E.: *Aus dem Concertsaal.* Wien, 1870; 83.
[580] Hanslick, E.: op. cit., 85.

## 7.10 Discussion: understanding nineteenth-century timing

The clear division into 'earlier' or 'metrical' rubato versus 'later' rubato or 'tempo modification' seems to be motivated primarily by written sources, not by the multifaceted picture that arises from early recordings. Sometimes it is not even entirely clear how to classify a phenomenon one notices in a recording; when a melody note is highlighted in performance by being played after the corresponding bass note, it can be seen as an instance of metrical rubato, but also of simple dislocation. Sometimes recordings also show a sense of rubato which seems to escape both prototypes, for instance in Rosita Renard's piano roll of Schumann's *Traumeswirren* from his *Fantasiestücke* op. 12. In the homophonic middle part (1'07''), she plays the equal quarter notes with an unevenness that seems difficult to fit in with the general understanding of rubato, and that rather resembles the old *inégale* playing as it was described in French baroque music.

**[7.10 #1 Schumann: *Traumeswirren*, Rosita Renard (1894-1949); Steinway duo Art piano roll 1918[581]]**

Conversely, not everything discussed in nineteenth-century texts is easy to find on early recordings. Several modern authors claim to hear examples of metrical rubato by phrase on specific recordings, for instance Peres da Costa when he writes about Ysaÿe, or Robert Philip about Patti.[582] I personally didn't manage to find a historical recording that really gives an example of large scale metrical rubato of the type García notated (→ section 7.7); the examples mentioned by these authors all seem to be rather limited in scope to me, never exceeding the space of one bar. I did not find an equivalent of 'Piazzolla' on early recordings. There could be several explanations for this: the metrical rubato might have been already old-fashioned when the recordings were made (though that does not fully explain the difference between the anecdote about Ysaÿe and his own recordings); the recording circumstances might have been uncomfortable, preventing the musicians from using this kind of freedom (they certainly were, but this argument would not apply to piano rolls, in any case); the fact that they were recorded perhaps made musicians change their way of playing (there are indications that some of them exaggerated personal characteristics,[583] but it is not clear why this would have led to less rubato); or, finally, the metrical rubato might typically have been something that occurred only during live performances (but this is speculative).

Since the goal of this study is not to deliver an academic description of manifestations of rubato, but to make knowledge of a forgotten practice fruitful for modern music-making, the division into two types of rubato seems to be far too schematic for present purposes. Combined with a focus on

[581] https://youtu.be/KGIKLQHaVHw (uploaded 2009 by 'Pablo Quintana')
[582] Philip, R.: op. cit.;,111.
[583] Personal conversation with musicologist Kolja Meeuwsen.

phenomena such as dislocation and (not notated) arpeggiation, this taxonomy defines a historical practice in terms of modern performance paradigms. The mere term 'dislocation' strongly suggests a deviation from a norm, namely that anything notated vertically in perfect alignment should sound precisely at the same time. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this may be very useful when one aims to copy one specific performance, as Slåttebrekk / Harrison did. However, for the purpose of this study, with its focus on improvisatory approaches to performance, this method has its limitations.

It is characteristic for the improvisatory that a next performance of a piece does not aim to repeat a previous one, whereas copying a recording naturally focuses on one specific instance. A central question in this study is how to give room to variety without being arbitrary. One composer who can serve as an example here is Edvard Grieg, who was an accomplished pianist himself and lived long enough to record some of his own music; at the same time, his work was popular and often recorded by other pianists, some of whom (like Percy Grainger and Arthur de Greef) he admired and knew well personally. Thus there is a body of early recordings available of his composition *Till Våren* [To Spring] op. 43, no. 6 from the Lyric Pieces. Grainger even recorded the piece more than once. When we compare these recordings (presented below in chronological order), there are definitely common aspects, but also many differences. All pianists apply 'techniques' as described by Peres da Costa: metrical rubato, tempo fluctuation, arpeggiations, dislocation – but the amount and the manner of application vary. Focusing on one recording would entail the risk of making something absolute that is actually in constant flux.

**[7.10 #2 Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), rec.1903[584]]**

**[7.10 #3 Rudolph Ganz (1877-1972), rec.1916[585]]**

**[7.10 #4 Percy Grainger (1882-1961), rec. 1919586]**

**[7.10 #5 Grainger, piano roll 1919[587]]**

**[7.10 # 6 Arthur de Greef (1862 – 1940), rec. 1929[588]]**

**[7.10 # 7 Grainger, rec. 1936[589]]**

[584] https://youtu.be/p8I9BtL-kyU (uploaded 2008 by 'theoshow2')
[585] https://youtu.be/zjIVsXNVi14 (uploaded 2019 by 'itapirkanmaa2')
[586] https://youtu.be/TSIRWexM-X4 (uploaded 2012 by 'StockhausenIsMyCat')
[587] https://youtu.be/e5NFORf_jlU (starting at 1'23", uploaded 2013 by 'The Player Piano Group')
[588] https://youtu.be/6bW1UFgBxtA (uploaded 2012 by 'gullivior')
[589] https://youtu.be/MVtD_4ACv6M (starting at 0'19", uploaded 2018 by 'Danny's Radio')

**[7.10 # 8 Fridtjof Backer-Gröndahl (1885-1959), rec. 1937[590]]**

While comparisons of multiple early recordings of the same work reveal a picture of variety, this is not to diminish the importance of Slåttebrekk and Harrison's project; indeed, those authors present thoughtful reflections on what can be learnt from their imitations. Anna Scott also explores this question in her dissertation about the process of copying historical recordings from the Brahms circle, focusing on the aspect of timing. She writes:

> While the preceding chapter of this volume also includes detailed written-out examples of the minutiae of De Lara and Eibenschütz's recorded performances, they too are intended as practice aids: examples of 'riffs' to be abstractly learned for the purposes of extrapolating them across many other works. While it can be difficult for modern performer-scholars to accept that these pianists' use of such effects may have been motivated by general propensities and spur-of-the-moment decisions rather than by rules or the notational features of specific works, this does seem to be one of the keys to playing as they did. [591]

It is these 'spur-of-the-moment decisions' that this study focuses on by trying to understand nineteenth-century timing 'from within', as it was formulated in section 7.2. This implies putting in brackets the modern, 'transcendental' conception of tempo, and embracing the idea of 'immanent' tempo. Rhythmic fluidity will thus not be considered to be a deviation from a mathematical standard tempo, but a result of an inner necessity of the music as felt by the performer. As for the different types of rubato, I would suggest seeing them as varieties of rubato in general, which, according to the musical circumstances, can occur mainly in one part ('metrical rubato'), all parts together ('tempo modification'), or anything in between (a variant so far unnamed). I argue that they are not to be understood as different types of rubato, but as ways in which rubato manifests itself in different performances. In the next three sections, an attempt will be made to articulate the 'inner necessity' mentioned above.

## 7.11 Shaping the line

It might be a good idea to start where most performers will start, namely with the question of how to shape a (musical) line, to borrow an expression from Robert Donnington.[592] The word 'line' here primarily refers to any melody in the musical tissue: the singing melody, usually in the upper part, but also the supporting bass line which in itself can have melodic value. 'It is by shaping the line in every part and in every dimension that we [i.e. performers] give meaning to the music.'[593] It has been shown already that the musical phrase is of fundamental importance for the shape of a melodic line.

[590] https://youtu.be/l1s3jl64FQU (uploaded 2012 by 'gullivior')
[591] Scott, A.: op. cit., 285.
[592] Donnington, R.: *Baroque Music: Style and Performance.* London, 1982; 29.
[593] Ibidem.

In bel canto, but also in its translation into instrumental music, the frequent organisation of a melody into groups of=four bars is paramount, a situation that remained valid for the whole century. Theorists such as Reicha formulated which principles make us regard a section of a melody as a phrase, and (some form of) the cadence has always been considered a natural way to finish a phrase. A cadence, however, usually does not come as a surprise that makes the listener suddenly realise that a phrase has ended; often the course of a phrase is such that the listener 'feels' that the cadence is approaching, and he may even have a clear sense of when exactly this will happen. There is a strong sense of musical expectation in a melodic phrase; it seems to have a 'direction', which makes possible the metaphor of a musical gesture. Theorising about how such expectations arise in a listener is a complicated matter,[594] far more difficult than when we try to define harmonic expectations. Several factors play a role here: the 'tendency' of the different tones of the scale, the overall melodic movement, and the rhythmic set-up, to name a few. Familiarity with melodic 'shapes' (melodic loci communes) also definitely plays a role, on a small scale but also on the level of a phrase as a whole.

### *Vocal music: following the text*

The first task of the performer is to recognise such melodic loci communes in the score; the next step is to shape the line in such a way that this musical potential comes to life. On the basis of what was discussed in the previous chapters, I argue that there is good historical reason to treat the musical text in a rhetorical way. During my work with singers, I have noticed that listening to e.g. Alexander Moissi's reciting of *Erlkönig* (discussed in section 7.7) inspired many of them (after the initial shock) to explore the expressional possibilities that lurk also in vocal phrases. They often found it liberating to follow the ebb and flow of the text more than they used to allow themselves, trained as they are to obey the regime of the 'micro-pulse', the transcendental tempo. It is fascinating to hear how the melodic shapes of the phrases can become more convincing in this way. In fact it means playing with the *accent* in all its diversity: highlighting the individual character of a phrase, enhancing its direction, expressing its emotion. This can be done in a potentially infinite number of ways and therefore invites the singer to explore *varietas*. Since any repetition would be contrary to the idea of variety, this way of performing cannot be planned in detail: the *accent* has an essentially extemporaneous quality.[595]

As for the timing as such, this indeed means making important syllables longer (but also more expressive) and rushing over the less important ones. In classes, singers are invited to play with diction and articulation, which may indeed lead towards changed musical rhythms here and there. As long as the focus remains on the direction within the phrase, the flow of the melody doesn't have to suffer.

[594] In chapter 2, footnote 67, I already referred to the work of David Huron in this field.

[595] This is not to deny that there is a very prominent role for the 'caractère' of phrases as well; this is preeminently the case in Goethe's poem *Erlkömig* with its three personages: the father, the child and the Fairy King. Highlighting those three roles has also become a tradition in the performance of Schubert's song on this text.

For a singer, this also implies an increased attention to the expressional qualities of language; my experience is that often the command of foreign languages is too basic to really get to this level, especially with students. The assumption that a singer should perform music in its original language is really a modern development; during the first decades of the twentieth century, it was still the norm that singers would perform songs in their own native languages. Thus we have historical recordings of Grieg's songs in Norwegian, Danish, German, French, Spanish, Italian and Russian![596] During the first half of the twentieth century, it was common that performances of operas and oratorios in the UK would be in English, and even in the Netherlands operas were performed in Dutch until the 1950's.[597]

It has been stressed many times in this study that not only ornamentation, but also timing are parts of an encompassing expressional complex, which makes it difficult to separate them out. The shaping of a phrase concerns many diverse but connected 'techniques': rubato, vibrato, inflections, *portamenti*, playing with the dynamics, and (when it fits the style of the composition) ornamentation. Bel canto methods offer special exercises for all of these elements separately, and it might be a good idea for a modern singer to practise in the same way. When it comes to the performance of a piece, though, everything has to be brought together, and a guiding idea becomes necessary. I believe that this is the reason why the Moissi example is so effective: rhetorical declamation serves as a good model for music-making. An example of a particularly 'rhetorical' performance is this recording of Grieg's famous song 'Jeg elsker dig' [I love you] op. 5 no. 3, made in 1904 by the Swedish baritone John Forsell, singing in Norwegian.

**[7.11 #1 Grieg The vocal music in historic interpretations, CD 1, no. 8]**

The changes in tempo may seem excessive to modern listeners, but comparison with many other recordings from the same time (it has always been one of Grieg's most popular songs) shows that they were by no means unusual. Grieg was still alive when this recording was made; moreover, the only surviving recording of his wife, the singer Nina Hagerup Grieg, performing Solveig's Song in 1889, shows similar 'liberties'. It is more than likely that Grieg himself assumed such freedom in the performance of his work.

Many modern musicians might worry that by stressing the individual character of phrases so much, and by allowing themselves so many changes in tempo, the continuity in the performance could be threatened. This is not necessarily true, as long as the concatenation of phrases results in a 'story' – in other words, when there is some sort of overarching 'logic' behind the succession of

[596] CD box: *Edvard Grieg's vocal music in historic interpretations: acoustical recordings 1888-1924*. Simax PSC 1810. Thanks to Mona Julsrud for bringing these recordings to my attention.
[597] Cf. footnote 346.

phrases. However, it is also a matter of a changed taste: many modern listeners would indeed feel that early recordings of Grieg's songs tend to 'fall apart', and Moissi's *Erlkönig* as well. This, I argue, is due to the current paradigm of unity, as opposed to the aesthetics of rhetorical variety that was still prevalent in the nineteenth century. If we consider ourselves being in dialogue with (relics of) nineteenth-century music-making, it is important to put aside our biases for a while and truly 'listen' to our partner in dialogue. We should not forget, however, that our 'horizon' will never coincide with the horizon of nineteenth-century music. Inevitably there will be elements in historical performances that we cannot get used to, and that we will never like. I can't imagine that a modern actor can be brought to copy Sarah Bernhardt in detail, and the same might apply to singers who study a performance like Forsell's. In the end, it is a merging of the horizons that should be aimed for. What should be feasible to anyone truly embarking upon this dialogue is a transformation of our approach by means of our understanding of the past. This goes deeper than simply applying a few external features of early performance styles into modern playing, like modern string players who play Bach *senza vibrato* without adapting anything else, or singers who add a few ornaments while maintaining a modern singing style. It is a relation with the past that every musician will have to develop for himself.

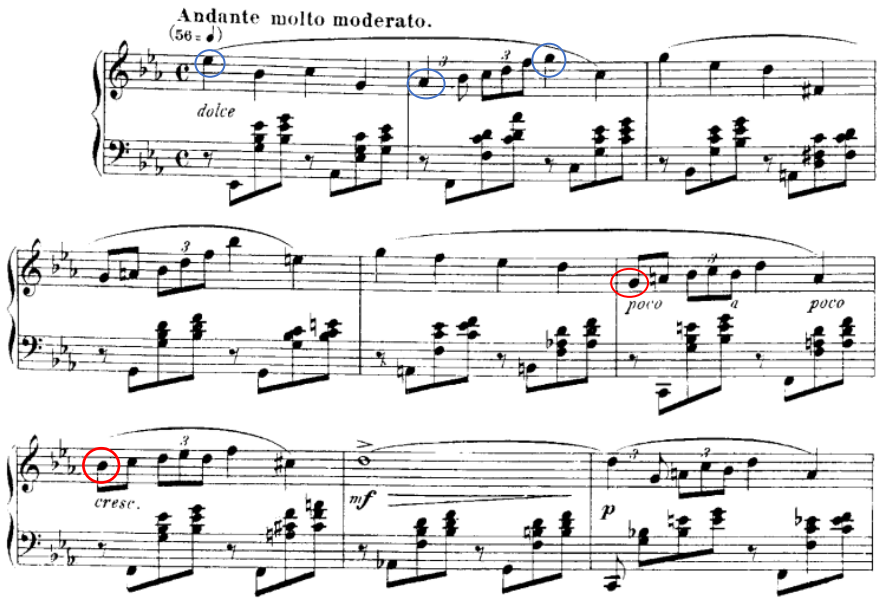
### *Declaiming instrumental melodies*

In chapter 5 I argued that vocal music can be seen as a model for instrumental music, especially for pieces that adapt stylistic features of bel canto repertoire. But also in more idiomatic instrumental styles, the connection with singing – and consequently, rhetoric – remains important. More than once, I have invited (advanced) instrumentalists to listen carefully to a live performance of a vocal composition in which the singer emphasised a rhetorical interpretation, and after that to imitate the singer's rendering in detail, 'playing' the text and translating the timing, articulation and inflections to the instrument. In my experience, such an experiment can be a real eye-opener for instrumentalists, since it may open up an expressive potential that is not normally addressed in instrumental practice. Applying this potential to purely instrumental music turns out very well indeed, resulting in an approach that may be called 'rhetorical'. A historical anecdote about Paganini suggests the kind of impact this way of playing can have: he is said to have greeted his audience by playing 'buona sera' on the violin so realistically that the audience said 'good evening' back to him.[598]

As I mentioned in chapter 5, imagining concrete text can be an option for an instrumentalist to kindle a rhetorical approach when shaping the melodic line. In many cases, however, a composed instrumental melody doesn't really invite this method because it is too complex rhythmically, too ornamented, or too lively to be imagined as a vocal line. The melody that opens Gabriel Fauré's

[598] Kawabata, M.: *Paganini: The 'Demonic' Virtuoso.* Woodbridge, 2013; 12.

fourth *Nocturne* op. 36 for piano, for instance, contains so many jumps that it does not resemble Fauré's songs; nevertheless it is a very lyrical melody. Imagining words might be not very helpful here, and yet this melody seems to sing.




*Example 7.11.1: Fauré, G.: Nocturne 4 op. 36 (beginning)*

Even without concrete words to imitate, rhetorical principles may in a more abstract sense guide the pianist. Even when there are no syllables to prompt stretching a tone, there might be musical reasons to consider some tones more important than other ones; even without text there are musical phrases with gestures that can be enhanced. Though the phrasing slurs in the score of Fauré's nocturne do not correspond with phrases in Reicha's sense (that is, by finishing with a cadence), it is the repeating rhythmic pattern that justifies interpreting the two-bar groups as musical units. The French pianist Marguerite Long, who worked closely with Fauré, recorded this composition in 1937. She seems to enhance Faure's musical syntax by focusing on the 'important' tones in the melody, which are played longer than the others (blue ovals for the first phrase, next phrases similarly). In bars 4, 6 and 7 the first notes of the gesture with triplets are as 'important' as the corresponding note in bar 2, and therefore stretched by Long – resulting in a small rhythmic change.

[7.11 #4 Fauré: *Nocturne* 4, Marguerite Long (1874 – 1966); rec. 1937[599]]

### *More examples of instrumental declamation*

In 1928 Artur Rubinstein made his first electric recordings (reluctantly at first, after having had bad experiences with acoustical recordings). He recorded Chopin's *Barcarolle* on a Blüthner piano that

[599] https://youtu.be/UAL-FojZ6z8 (uploaded 2012 by 'pianopera')

he allegedly had disliked at first, but that eventually inspired him to this very expressive recording. Like many pianists of his day, he tended to play less rubato in his later recordings. This early recording, however, exhibits many instances of agogic emphasis on expressive tones, for instance in the A-major section (4'00").

**[7.11 #5 Chopin: *Barcarolle*, Artur Rubinstein (1887-1982); rec.1928[600]]**

The effect is an undulation, not unlike what Sarah Bernhardt did with her text. A similar 'swing' in a triple meter can be heard at the beginning of Vladimir de Pachmann's recording of Liszt's third *Liebestraum* (1916).

**[7.11 #6 Liszt: *Liebestraum* 3, Vladimir de Pachmann (1848-1933); rec. 1916[601]]**

Equally striking is Claude Debussy's timing in the opening section of his piano roll recording (1913) of *Clair de Lune* from the *Suite Bergamasque.* In fact, Debussy plays the eight notes *inégales*, and in this way brings out the expressive harmonic basis of the passage (0'08"-0'32"). Also, for the contrasting idea at 0'52"-1'20", he plays the repeated chords not in the way they are usually performed today (starting under the tempo, gradually speeding up and slowing down again towards the end of the phrase), but much more fancifully, generally lengthening important tones.

**[7.11 #7 Debussy: *Clair de Lune*, Claude Debussy (1862-1918); piano roll 1913[602]]**

In these and many other early recordings, the striving for rhetorical variety in melodies extends to the timing of short durations. One gets the impression that not only in arpeggiated accompaniments (→ section 7.3) but also melodically, rigid micro-pulses were avoided throughout whenever the music had any sort of lyrical character; like in (most) walking, absolute regularity was rather an exception, something that occurred only in motoric passages – for instance, Mendelssohn's *Spinnerlied* op 67, no. 4 from the *Lieder ohne* Worte, as demonstrated here in a piano roll recording by Ignaz Paderewski (1922):

**[7.11 #8 Mendelssohn: *Spinnerlied*, Ignaz Paderewski (1860-1941); piano roll 1922[603]]**

Needless to say, regular micro-pulses are an exception in spoken language too, occurring mainly in fast tempo; in normal speech they induce a sing-song manner. On Camille Saint-Saëns's Welte-Mignon piano roll (1905) of Chopin's nocturne op. 15 no. 2, for instance, the melodic line is

[600] https://youtu.be/f5G_8JHbEck (uploaded 2009 by 'Beckmesser2')
[601] https://youtu.be/tlsfFfyb620 (uploaded 2012 by 'Beckmesser2')
[602] https://youtu.be/Yri2JNhyG4k (uploaded 2018 by 'Adagietto')
[603] https://youtu.be/tiodZ8-9-8w (uploaded 2016 by 'comensus')

constantly alive, typically showing this sense of *varietas*. Already in the first bar, the notated equal sixteenth notes are subtly modified (*inégales*, to borrow a term usually associated with Baroque music).

**[7.11 #9 Chopin: *Nocturne* op. 15 no. 2, Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921); piano roll 1905[604]]**

Saint-Saëns also does something that has become almost totally extinct today: he frequently uses anticipation by starting a phrase early (e.g. at 0'12''-0'13''). Most modern performers will be very reluctant to use this effect, and the same applies to rushing over 'less important' notes. In Marguerite Long's recording of Fauré's fourth nocturne, we can hear her speeding up the very end of each 'unit'. It is this type of flexibility that contributes to the touch of lightness we find on so many early recordings. Modern musicians, if they play rubato at all, tend to stretch and slow down only: they mainly add time, which easily gives performances an emphatic character.

A final example of *varietas* in a melodic line is Leopold Auer's recording (1920) of Tchaikovsky's *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*. Auer, who was 75 years old at the time of this recording, was almost a contemporary of Tchaikovsky.

**[7.11 #10 Tchaikovsky: *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*, Leopold Auer (1845-1930); rec. 1920[605]]**

To summarise, one could say that in nineteenth-century music-making a phrase 'hangs' like a garland from a few (textually, structurally or expressively) important notes, to which the other notes are adapted. Very often, stressing the important notes means (also) making them longer, which is just a different way of saying that the immanent tempo is stretched in these moments. To use another metaphor: it is as if one is walking through uneven terrain, spending a relatively large amount of time on steps on firm ground, and rushing over the less secure bits. Sometimes the supports are close to each other and recur at regular time intervals, like in the examples from Chopin's *Barcarolle* and Liszt's *Liebestraum*; sometimes the distance is larger.

When we, as modern musicians, want to make ourselves familiar with this way of shaping the line, we must try to forget temporarily the rigour of the micro-pulses, and focus more on the melodic shape itself. To many, this must sound ominous. Isn't this a recipe for rhythmic chaos, or an encouragement to neglect all too necessary basic musical training? It is good to remember the words of Corri and García here: tempo rubato was considered a *moyen difficile*, a 'refinement or finish'. A performer who applies rubato should think, as it were, on two levels of awareness at the same time. On one level one may yield to the emotion of the line, but simultaneously one should be aware of the

[604] https://youtu.be/5gOIOKB2k7Y (uploaded 2010 by 'romophonic')
[605] https://youtu.be/s1vVlMp2YTA (uploaded 2009 by 'pochetta1')

strict metrical framework one is playing with. Of course, this shows most clearly when we are dealing with a musical line in combination with an accompaniment (or other melodic lines). This issue has been ignored so far in this chapter, but will be addressed in section 7.12.

### *A parallel from theatre: Stanislavski*

As a last example of the importance of the phrase as a fundamental musical unit, I present Ignaz Paderewski's acoustical recording (1912) of *Aufschwung*, the second one of Schumann's *Phantasiestücke* op. 12 (3'57").

**[7.11 #11 Schumann: *Aufschwung*, Ignaz Paderewski; rec. 1912[606]]**

Some listeners might find that Paderewski separates the phrases too much, or plays with whimsical changes of tempo. However, I think that he, much more than is usual today, brings out (or yields to) the characters of the individual phrases. It is true that the tempo fluctuates dramatically, but this is a natural consequence of the dramatic changes of mood between first and second 'idea'.

I argue that Paderewski's approach may be interpreted as a musical translation of a concept coined by the Russian theatre practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski. Stanislavski used to ask his actors to segment their parts into a series of discrete 'bits'. This term was introduced in the US by Stanislavski's students; because of their strong Russian accent, they pronounced the word as 'beats', which is why the term is often spelled as such. 'Bits' are units of action, each of them with its own motivation. The concept may be understood metaphorically as well, and be applied to, e.g., the performance of a text.[607] Moissi's performance of *Erlkönig* very much sounds as if it has been divided into bits, and in fact this applies to Paderewski's *Aufschwung*, too. In drama, a bit can be characterised by a specific action or movement that has a clear sense of direction. It is especially this aspect of direction which makes the concept so useful for music. When an actor, for instance, has to kneel down and light the fire, this can be done in an endless number of ways; the goal is obvious, but the details can be decided extempore. In the case of the reciting of a text, a sense of direction can be conveyed by choosing one keyword in a phrase which serves as a centre of gravity. Translated to a musical text, Stanislavski's bits could be viewed as equivalent to musical phrases. By dividing the score into musical 'bits' and defining their motivations, it becomes possible to 'improvise' with the score without losing track of the larger 'story'. Though he may not have thought in these terms, it is easy to imagine that Paderewski did something similar: the *caractère* of each musical unit is 'recognised' by the musician and consequently established on the basis of the score. This act of recognition is important, because

[606] https://youtu.be/Y-cPrIePZO4 (uploaded 2009 by 'Beckmesser2')
[607] Thanks to Kenneth Rea for discussing this connection with me.

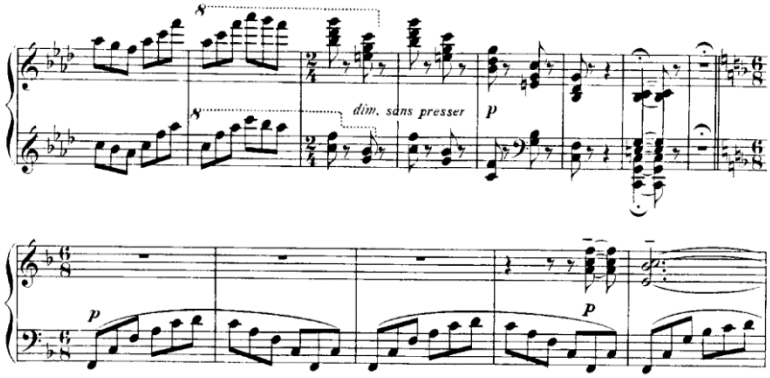
it enables the musician to 'sympathise' with the musical idea – which presupposes a common ground (→ recognising loci communes, chapter 2.3).

Stanislavski's principles were codified within a 'system' that was based on the idea that actors would use their emotional memory to identify with the feelings of the characters they are playing, over and over again. Something similar can be done by a musician: once one 'sympathises' with a musical idea, it becomes like one's own idea; how precisely this idea will take shape in performance (the *accent*) depends on many factors (whether external to the performer, or psychological in nature), and will therefore be different every time the piece is performed. It is a process that demands complete devotion to what is being expressed in the very moment. Whoever thinks ahead to the next unit during performance is like Gadamer's bad actor: as a listener one notices that he already knows what the next word will be (→ chapter 2.3). In music this sounds 'well-practised'. The musician should 'immerse' himself in the phrase, which increases the sense of being 'in the moment' – a psychological state that is often mentioned by musicians as an important quality of improvisation.

Inevitably this means that expression marks in scores cannot always be observed strictly, as countless early recordings witness. Whereas many musicians today take pride in an work ethic that makes one start a crescendo exactly with the note under which it is notated, this would be far from a nineteenth-century approach, where it was the recognition and appropriation of a musical thought that counted. Sometimes this could lead to considerable deviations from a score. In Marguerite Long's recording (1933) of Fauré's second *Impromptu* op. 31, for instance, the pianist not only plays the piece much faster than Fauré's metronome mark (she plays at a frenzied M.M. 105 or faster for the bar, whereas Fauré gives 69); at the end of the first section (as well as at the corresponding spot at the very end of the piece), Fauré writes: *sans presser* [without rushing] – precisely where Long suddenly propels the tempo exuberantly (at 0'42'')! Though her performance might deviate from some of Fauré's prescriptions here, she does seem to embrace the *caractère* of this passage: an extended dominant that serves as a musical colon.

**[7.11 #12 Fauré: *Impromptu* 2, Marguerite Long ; rec. 1933[608]]**

[608] https://youtu.be/bz7TREqNiFs (uploaded 2010 by 'Bernardo Santos Carmo')




*Example 7.11.2: Fauré, G.: Impromptu 2 op. 31, bars 63-75.*

To be sure, there are many aspects of the shaping of a line in nineteenth-century music that couldn't be addressed here. The music for piano occupied centre stage in this chapter, and techniques like *portamento* and especially vibrato, of eminent importance to singers and players of melodic instruments, were hardly discussed at all. This is because these issues would lead too far from the central topic of this study. I hope that the ideas suggested in this section will nonetheless be of some interest, also to string and wind players; it is my belief that a rhetorical approach, starting from the phrase structure, can in a natural way also shed light on such aspects that could not be dealt with in this study. Early recordings not only serve as an inspiration, but have to be regarded as a primary source of information about (late-) nineteenth-century music-making. It would be very good if a comprehensive collection of the earliest recordings,[609] including high-quality reproductions of piano rolls, would not only be readily available to musicians but also find its way into higher music education. This certainly concerns more than just the melody as such, as will be shown in the next section.

## 7.12 Polyphony of layers

So far, only the shaping of a line was considered, disregarding other musical factors. Of course, the vast majority of pieces in the period under consideration consists of more than just one melodic line, and there are many different kinds of musical texture. Along a continuum from homophonic to increasingly polyphonic, several stages may be distinguished. Very often, for instance in bel canto, we encounter a melody with a simple accompaniment that provides the supporting harmony. Second, sometimes the bass line in such an accompaniment becomes a second melodic line itself, like in the Schubert impromptu passim at the beginning of this chapter; this situation primarily occurs when the bass moves by step, implying a harmony that is not limited to simple root positions. Third, an inner voice may free itself from the harmonic background; Chopin's writing in the nocturnes

[609] Continuing the ground-breaking work of CHARM (http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/discography/disco.html)

often highlights such voices, for instance in the 'messa di voce' fragment of op. 27 no. 2, which was discussed in chapter 5.12. Especially in orchestral music, inner voices can be very expressive, see for instance many Slavonic Dances of Antonín Dvořák. In highly chromatic late-nineteenth-century harmony the number of inner voices can become such that the harmony seems to dissolve into counterpoint, as in music of (or influenced by) Wagner. And finally, 'real' polyphony in which the different voices have equal importance also exists in nineteenth-century repertoire, though much less so than in pre-Classical music and often modelled after the example of J.S. Bach. The majority of compositions, however, belong to one of the first three categories, and usually a skilled performer recognises without much difficulty in a score what is to be considered a melody and what has an accompanying role.[610] What happens when the 'shaping of the line' is applied to such diverse situations?

As stated above, modern descriptions of tempo rubato tend to distinguish between 'metrical' rubato and 'tempo flexibility' only, while focusing on the simplest kind of texture mentioned earlier – that is, a melody with a simple accompaniment. Much literature centres on piano music, and as a consequence 'techniques' like dislocation and arpeggiation receive a great deal of attention. In this section, I would like to continue on the path taken throughout this chapter by regarding the individuality of a phrase or musical unit as a point of departure. I argue that dislocation and the like are not to be seen as 'techniques', but as results of different priorities. What will happen when we do not try to imitate a nineteenth-century performance style by applying dislocation here and there, but instead embrace the idea that notes that are vertically aligned in the score do not always necessarily have to sound together? That chords do not always have to be played as one block? That the members of a string quartet can very well play a recurring theme in different ways?[611] It will involve a change of attitude that makes possible what was explored in the previous section: yielding to the individual character of a phrase or larger unit, and prioritising the notion of variety. It will enable a rhetorical performance style that does not end up with the kinds of mannerisms so many nineteenth-century authors were already warning against (among others Camille Saint-Saëns, → section 7.8), but that is truly motivated by the *caractères* of the musical ideas. The result is what I term a 'polyphony of layers': an enhanced individuality of the different layers in a musical texture. In what follows, three textural situations of increasingly complex polyphony will serve as examples of this phenomenon.

[610] Only Arnold Schönberg felt the need, because of the harmonic and melodic complexity of his orchestral scores, to introduce signs to indicate whether a line was to be regarded as a *Hauptstimme* [principal voice] or *Nebenstimme* [secondary voice] – apparently the dissolution of tonality makes it more difficult to assess the structure of a score.

[611] Philip, R.: *Performing Music in the Age of Recording.* New Haven, 2004; 112. See also Stam, E.: *In Search of a Lost Language: Performing in Early-Recorded Style in Viola and String Quartet Repertoires* (diss., unpublished). Leiden, 2019; 145-174.

*(1) An expressive melody against a neutral accompaniment.* A clear division of a melody and a simple accompaniment occurs especially often in late-eighteenth-century bel canto, where the singer-virtuoso is accompanied by an almost minimalistic orchestra part with simple harmonies and commonplace patterns – for instance in operas of Cimarosa or Paisiello. This is the repertoire García was primarily referring to when he gave his unique description of *tempo rubato*, i.e., 'metrical rubato'. In such music the harmonic rhythm is usually slow, the chords are predictable and the accompaniment has little expressive value by itself. It is the ideal situation for this type of rubato: the text is full of passion and calls for a rhetorical shaping of the melody, while the accompaniment is rather 'neutral'. There is even not much reason for the accompaniment to follow the temporal inflections of the soloist: if there are no chord changes or only subordinate ones, it makes a much stronger impression when the accompaniment moves on 'strictly', since this will allow the soloist to highlight the melody by rhythmically distinguishing it from the accompaniment. This is why Leopold Mozart recommends that the accompanist choose for this approach if the soloist is a true virtuoso. Even by way of small scale metrical rubato, a melody can be made to stand out against its accompaniment. A beautiful example from chamber music can be found in a 1935 recording of Saint-Saëns's first *Cello Sonata* by Paul Bazelaire (cello) and Isidor Philipp (piano).[612] Philipp, a student of (among others) Chopin-pupil Georges Mathias and Camille Saint-Saëns, subtly shifts the melody in the second movement against the accompaniment by the cello, increasing the distance when the expression is heightened. At places where the roles are swapped, Bazelaire can be heard to play less rubato, but with some anticipations.

**[7.12 #1 Saint-Saëns: Cello sonata 1, Paul Bazelaire (1886-1958) / Isidor Philipp (1863-1958); rec. 1935[613]]**

In a similar way, Alfred Cortot makes the melody stand out in his 1933 studio recording of Chopin's *Barcarolle* (0'34" – 0'42"), where the melody is delayed against the accompaniment at a moment of increased expression.

**[7.12 #2 Chopin: *Barcarolle*, Alfred Cortot; rec. 1933[614]]**

In addition, Saint-Saëns's piano roll recording of Chopin's nocturne op. 15 no. 2 (→ section 7.11) shows how he highlights the melody through small scale metrical rubato. These accompaniments are harmonically too varied to allow for large scale metrical rubato as in early bel canto, but their continuous movement, especially in Saint-Saëns's sonata, nevertheless favours a steady pace.

[612] Philip, R.: op. cit., 111.
[613] https://youtu.be/Boij7hOgvIk (uploaded 2013 by '2ndviolinist')
[614] https://youtu.be/KZNSiYX3dR0 (uploaded 2008 by 'truecript')

*(2) More complex accompaniments that follow the melody.* In the course of the nineteenth century, such harmonically rich accompaniments became the norm. In the case of piano accompaniments in vocal repertoire, my impression is that it became usual for a pianist to follow the soloist. This, at least, is the picture that arises from early recordings of Grieg songs as quoted in section 7.11, where the pianists sometimes can be heard waiting for a stretched note to be finished. Robert Philip mentions Adelina Patti's acoustical recording (1905) of 'Voi che sapete' from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* (already quoted above) and writes that the pianist 'follows her overall pace but leaves her to be free either side of each beat',[615] suggesting metrical rubato. Listening to this recording, my interpretation is rather that the pianist actually follows Patti quite closely, just like the accompanists in the Grieg songs.

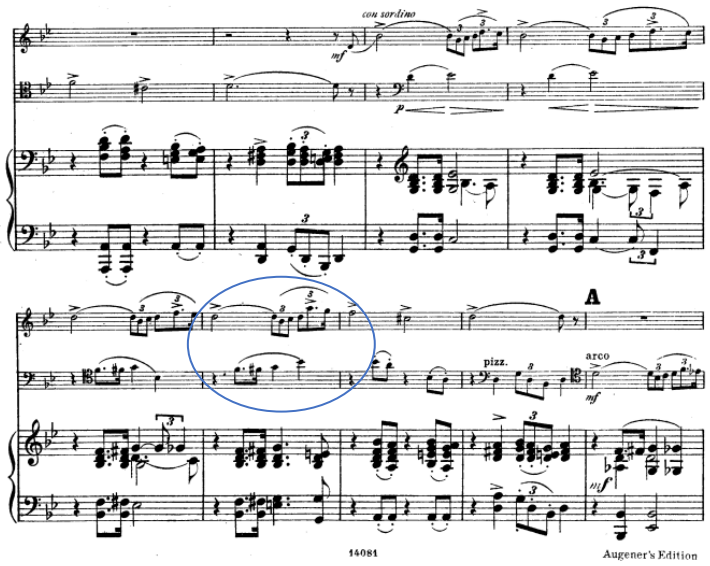
[7.12 #3 **Mozart : *Voi che sapete* (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Adelina Patti (1843-1919) ; rec. 1905**[616]]

*c. Melodic independence in secondary voices.* With respect to rubato, an interesting situation arises when a secondary melodic layer can be discerned in a score. The first example that jumps to mind is a bass line with melodic qualities. Gabriel Fauré liked to stress the importance of the bass line by exclaiming ('six times per hour', according to Marguerite Long[617]): *'À nous les basses!'* [the bass to us!]. In his fourth *Nocturne*, we come across a way of writing that is typical of Fauré: the melody tones are on the downbeats, whereas the bass notes consistently enter after an eight note rest. When played literally, this can be rather awkward because it somehow makes the bass 'too light'. On her recording of the piece (→ section 7.11), Long applies a rubato that makes the bass notes come early; in this way the bass sounds like a 'normal' bass line with anticipating melody tones. Her way of playing elevates the bass to an important second voice.

Anything considered to be a melody potentially has its own *caractère* and calls for *accent* to be added by the performer; this applies to secondary voices as well as to the main melody. As a consequence, a melodic bass line or an inner voice can have its own ebb and flow, which does not necessarily coincide with the main melody. Here it is really a matter of a 'polyphony of layers', in which the musical texture consists of several layers that, to a certain extent, have their own individuality. It is very much in line with the nineteenth-century rhetorical performance style, emphasising exactly this individuality by phrase, to express the individual characters of lines even when they sound together. This means that the timings of simultaneously sounding lines may be

[615] Philip, R.: op. cit., 112.
[616] https://youtu.be/r1fIdT3QG4E (uploaded 2012 by 'Zack216216')
[617] Long, M.: *Au piano avec Gabriel Fauré.* Paris, 1963; 103.

slightly different, resulting in musical layers sometimes being 'not together'. It is true that this form of rubato is not really mentioned separately in the literature; however, it is a logical consequence of nineteenth-century 'immanent' timing and rhetorical performance, and indeed its existence is confirmed by early recordings. In 1889, the wealthy businessman Julius Block purchased a specimen of the newly developed phonograph from Thomas Edison. Back home in Russia, Block started documenting some of the most important artists and personalities of his time on cylinder. Early recordings of chamber music are rare (because of technical limitations), but Block managed to record Anton Arensky's *Piano Trio* with the composer at the piano in 1894. In the second movement, *Elegia*, we can hear how the violin and the cello play their parts with individual rubatos; as a result, the lines are not synchronous (0'39'' – 1'29'').




*Example 7.12.1*

**[7.12 #4 Arensky: Piano trio no. 1 (3rd movement), Anton Arensky (1861-1906) & Jan Hřímalý (1844-1915) & Anatoly Brandukov (1859-1930); rec. 1894[618]]**

The violinist consistently stretches the fourth beat, and especially in the circled bar, the cellist doesn't let this disturb the urge in his phrase, and consequently plays the b-flat earlier.

Another example can be heard on a Welte-Mignon piano roll Gabriel Fauré made of his first *Barcarolle*. At 0'58'', where the main theme comes back with an accompanying layer of semi-melodic arpeggiations in the right hand, the sixteenth notes in the melody and in the accompaniment don't match because Fauré gives each layer its individual rubato.

[618] CD box: *The Dawn of Recording: The Julius Block Cylinders*. Marston 53011-2.

**[7.12 #5 Fauré: Barcarolle no. 1, Gabriel Fauré; piano roll 1913[619]]**

A special case of 'not-togetherness' occurs when a melody is performed by more than one instrument or voice and is played both with and without rubato simultaneously. As Richard Hudson explains, some eighteenth-century writers warned against such heterophony; nevertheless, this seems to have been tolerated, at least based on a comment by García.[620] One also sometimes encounters composed-out heterophony, for instance in a passage in the *Adagio* of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (bars 98-114).

## 7.13 Harmonic phrases

At the beginning of this chapter, I developed the idea that many written-out accompanying patterns in piano music can be seen as free arpeggiations of chords. At this stage, I would like to address the phenomenon of arpeggiation once more. It is a well-known feature in early recordings of piano music that chords which are notated as simultaneities are very often arpeggiated in performance. It is probably impossible to establish a general 'rule' for this, since the differences between players are large; however, it seems safe to say that up to 1914 (the end of the 'long' nineteenth century) it was common in piano playing to arpeggiate not only chords, but also octaves and other dyads. Though arpeggiation as such does not necessarily result from extempore decisions, it is relevant for the concept of immanent tempo, and it is this aspect that deserves attention here.

In the third volume of his *Vollständige theoretisch-practische Pianoforte-Schule* op. 500 (1839), Carl Czerny describes the *willkührliche Anwendung des Arpeggirens* [the discretionary application of arpeggiating].[621] He starts with the obligatory warning against excess by players who cannot strike any chord or dyad synchronised – a warning that actually makes one suspect that in the early days of the piano, habits that were inherited from harpsichord playing were ubiquitous. Czerny takes the trouble to sum up a large number of situations in which he considers arpeggiation appropriate, intending to limit overuse. Summarising his advice, it seems that unindicated arpeggios especially belonged in music that is not too fast, adding expression to 'important' chords. In his comprehensive survey of unnotated arpeggiation, Peres da Costa mentions a composition of Edward MacDowell, *Starlight* op. 55 no. 4 (1898), in which a special sign indicates chords that are *not* to be rolled; the sign is used only sparingly.[622] Here too, one sees evidence that the 'present-day obsession with synchronised chord playing'[623] is historically an exception, something that became the standard only after World War II.

[619] https://youtu.be/_sSGYomCZHc (uploaded 2015 by 'Isaure Clausse')
[620] Hudson, R.: op. cit., 74.
[621] Czerny, C.: *Vollständige theoretisch-practische Pianoforte-Schule* op. 500. Wien, n.d. [1839]; 40-42.
[622] Peres da Costa, N.: op. cit., loc. 2244.
[623] Peres da Costa, N.: op. cit., loc. 2191.

The connection with expression is beautifully demonstrated in a Hupfeld piano roll (1910) Gabriel Fauré made of his seventh *Nocturne* op. 74. During the first presentation of the theme, there is not much arpeggiation (despite an otherwise flexible timing); however, at the varied repeat of the theme (0'58''), this time intensified with a continuous and chromatic countermelody, Fauré starts to arpeggiate the chords, thus heightening the expression of the passage.

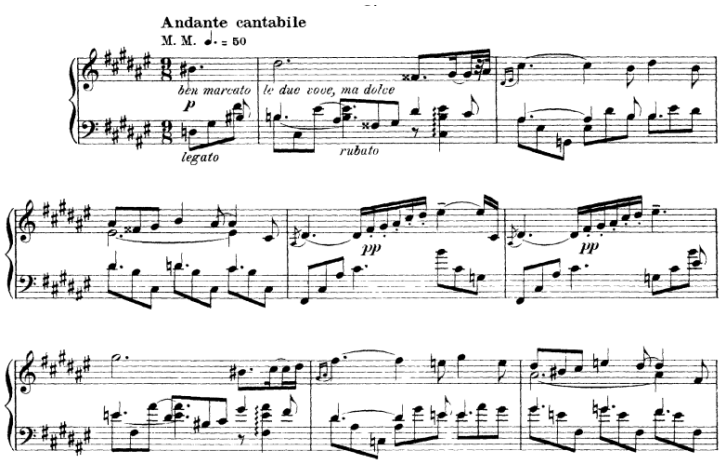
**[7.13 #1 Fauré : *Nocturne* 7, Gabriel Fauré; piano roll 1910[624]]**

An effect of arpeggiation that is of importance in connection with improvisatory timing is that it tends to blur the pulse. It 'contributes to a sense of ambiguity, softening the edges of the rhythm and texture'.[625] There is another way of expressing this point: arpeggiation creates *durée* by emphasising the length of a chord. Together with other aspects of timing discussed earlier, it enhances linearity by producing a sense of continuity that makes one forget that the piano is in reality a percussion instrument. Without arpeggiations, Claude Debussy's already mentioned rendering of his *Clair de lune* would lack its fluidity.

An expansion of the phenomenon of *durée* created by arpeggiation occurs in the music of Alexandr Scriabin. A striking example is his *Poème* op. 32 no. 1; the score itself already contains written-out rhythmic freedom, but Scriabin's highly flexible own performance on Welte-Mignon piano roll (1910) makes a listener who is not reading the score completely forget any specific pulse, creating instead a very strong sense of continuous ebb and flow, centring around the melody tones that stand out.[626]

**[7.13 #2 Scriabin: *Poème* op. 32 no. 1, Alexander Scriabin (1871-1915); piano roll 1910[627]]**

[624] https://youtu.be/jIkweLLTigs (uploaded 2014 by 'RollaArtis')
[625] Peres da Costa, N.: op. cit., loc. 2163.
[626] Cf. Klaas Hoek's notion of 'grondwaarde' [basic value]. Hoek, K.: op. cit., 84-91 and 348. Hoek opposes music-making that is oriented on 'grondwaarden', which may differ in length, against music-making that is based on an invariable pulse.
[627] https://youtu.be/bLWNE-AGq5Q (uploaded 2015 by 'Aleksandr Skrjabin')




*Example 7.13.1*

Through the use of arpeggiation, harmonic progressions become like melodies; they, too, are like musical gestures with a direction, they too have 'important' notes that can be stretched while other ones are rushed. There is every reason to speak of a 'harmonic phrase' as a counterpart of the melodic phrase. In the polyphony of layers, harmony is a factor just like the 'true' melodic voices. Nineteenth-century music-making seems to have been very attuned to the gestural force of harmony. Fanny Davies for instance, who studied with Clara Schumann, writes:

> [Robert] Schumann's manner of writing is so often in chords that one cannot lay too great stress on the importance of playing chords in a way that will convey to the hearer the significance of the harmonies therein contained. They are not padded octaves! And it will not do to force out melody or exaggerate a rhythmic scheme which must necessarily imply a neglect of the less obvious – but just as great – beauties. Take for example the little 'Nachtstück' in F [op. 23 no. 4]: what a different meaning the top notes convey when the changing middle notes get their full value![628]

I stated earlier that it is easier (or at least, less impossible) to describe and categorise harmonic patterns than melodic ones. Many theoretical approaches to harmony, from Riemann to more recent developments such as the rediscovery of the *partimento* tradition, are, at the end of the day, based on the existence of recurring harmonic progressions. From the point of view of musical rhetoric, however, this is only half of what musicians need: they have to know the ordinary, in order to assess the extraordinary. Saying that harmony is a force of utmost importance in nineteenth-century music is a commonplace; but much traditional harmonic analysis makes one overlook the importance of the word 'force'. Chords on paper can be analysed and labelled, but harmony-as-it-sounds is directly accessible to experience. Traces of nineteenth-century music-making as they come to us by means of the earliest recordings and piano rolls strongly suggest that the awareness of harmonic expression was

[628] Davies, F. & Corder, F.: 'Robert Schumann. About Schumann's Pianoforte Music (Continued).' *The Musical Times*, Vol. 51, No. 810 (Aug. 1, 1910), 493.

very much alive at that time. In chapter 14 I will discuss how a more experience-based approach might enrich harmony teaching at conservatories and other institutions of higher music education.

### 7.14 Rubato on the organ

In a letter to his father from October 17th, 1777, Mozart famously called the organ the 'king of instruments'. With this qualification he was reacting to the less flattering opinion of pianoforte builder Johann Andreas Stein, which however is often left out from the quotation. Stein thought that the organ lacked *douceur* [sweetness] and expression, and that its tone was incapable of dynamic nuances. Though there is no reason to doubt Mozart's enthusiasm, we may assume that the judgement of Stein better reflected the general opinion at the end of the eighteenth century.[629] Already at that time, the organ had lost its central position in music life and had become an instrument that was primarily associated with the church – which was no longer the place where the important musical developments took place.[630] Czerny linked the instrument to the *gebundener und fugirter Styl*[631] [polyphonic and fugal style], about which he writes elsewhere that all the notes of a chord have to be struck simultaneously.[632] It may seem that relative improvisation as it has been discussed in part 2 of this study is not applicable to organ music: references to bel canto are far removed from the stern fugal way of writing that is so idiomatic to the organ, and extempore ornamentation and tempo flexibility seem frivolities that are out of place in the hallowed environment where this instrument is at home.

Some sources sketch a different picture, though. The organ clock[633] (*Flötenuhr*) with music of Joseph Haydn, built by his friend Joseph Primitivus Niemecz for the prince of Esterházy in 1793, shows – besides remarkably fast tempi and lots of small ornaments – occasional chord arpeggiations.[634] The suggestion that a different treatment of the organ, closer to the piano, at least existed as an alternative even in the nineteenth century, is confirmed by an organ method which was published in 1858: Wilhelm Volckmar's *Orgelschule.* Volckmar was well-known as a teacher and as a travelling organ virtuoso and improviser, and was highly regarded by Spohr and by the Weimar circle

[629] Ideas such as Stein's led to the innovations in organ construction that were suggested by Georg Joseph ('Abbé') Vogler. (Fidom, H.: *Diversity in Unity: Discussions on Organ Building in Germany between 1880 and 1918* [diss.]. Dieren, 2002; 28-30.)

[630] As musicologist Hans Fidom has shown, the years around 1800 were at the turn of the twentieth century seen as a period of decline in organ construction. (Fidom, H: *Miskend, verguisd & afgedankt: Nederlandse orgels uit de vroege 20e eeuw.* Zaltbommel, 2005; 16.)

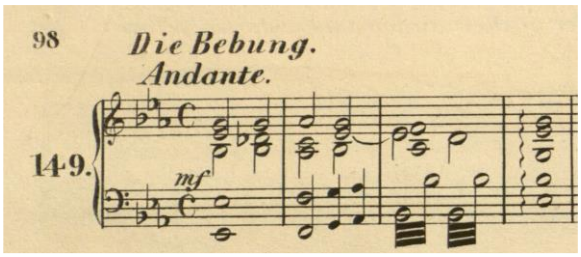
[631] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte op. 200* [Wien, 1829]; facsimile reprint: Wiesbaden, 1993; 100.

[632] Czerny, C.: *Von dem Vortrage (Vollständige theoretisch-practische Pianoforte-Schule op. 500, 3. Teil).* Wien, 1839. Facsimile reprint: Wiesbaden, 1991; 41.

[633] An organ clock is a (usually small) automatic organ, operated by a cylinder with pins.

[634] Haspels, J.J. (ed.): *Haydn herboren: 12 originele opnamen uit 1793.* Utrecht, 2004.

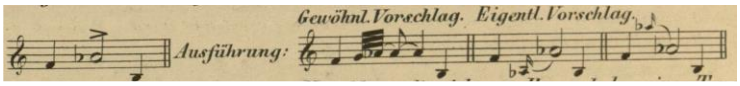
around Liszt.[635] He was influenced by Liszt's ideas on organ playing and by the innovations of organ builder Friedrich Ladegast.[636] Volckmar was the first composer to publish an organ 'symphony': his *Symphonie für die Orgel* op. 172 (1867) appeared one year before César Franck's famous *Grande Pièce Symphonique.* Unique in this work is the *Intermezzo*, which contains a lengthy passage of 3 to 4 part polyphony in the pedal, accompanied by fast arpeggios in the manuals. Volckmar's organ school contains a systematic treatment of a highly virtuosic pedal technique (including the use of toe, heel and ball); the section about polyphonic pedal also mentions the possibility of organs with two pedal boards. The first section of the book is entirely devoted to *manualiter* technique, remarkably similar to piano technique as it had been developed at that time. Fifteen years after the *Orgelschule*, Volckmar even published a *Geläufigkeits-Schule* Op. 270 for organ! It would however be a mistake to assume that Volckmar taught students to play the organ as if it were a piano. In the introduction to the book, he mentions what he sees as the two main difficulties the instrument poses to the player: the strong resistance of the keys and the stability of the organ tone. As for the latter, he seeks to overcome the characteristic rigidity and coldness [*Starrheit und Kälte*] by training the independence of the fingers and the mastering of all nuances of articulation in between *staccatissimo* and over-*legato.*[637] Volckmar mentions many techniques that are usually associated with piano playing, even arpeggios (in both directions) and octave tremolos (*Bebung*); the latter in particular is generally considered unidiomatic for organ.[638]

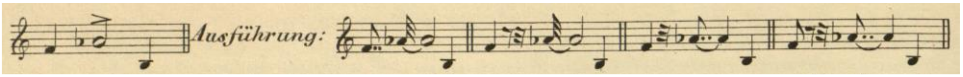



*Example 7.14.1*

Volckmar pays a lot of attention to bringing out one voice in a texture without playing it on a separate keyboard. The means he recommends are remarkably consistent with everything that has been discussed earlier; individual tones can be highlighted with *Vorschläge* and other ornaments, or by anticipation:[639]

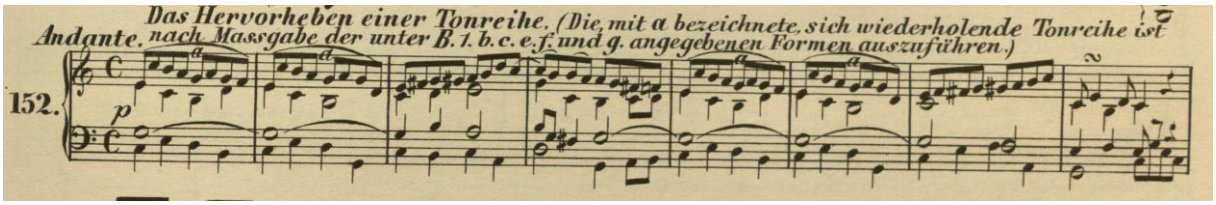
[635] Grove Music Online https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.29640
[636] Fidom, H.: op. cit., 12.
[637] Volckmar, W.: *Orgelschule* op. 50. Leipzig, 1858; III.
[638] Volckmar, W.: op. cit., 98.
[639] Volckmar, W.: op. cit., 99 and 100.



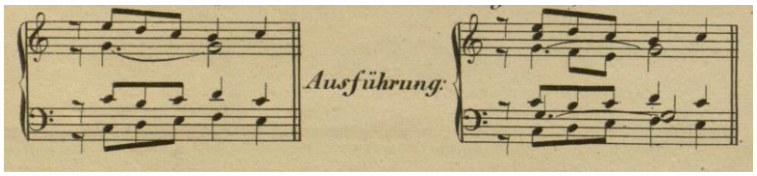

*Example 7.14.2*

A melody as a whole can be given individuality by means of a different articulation, but also by dislocation and *tempo rubato*:[640]



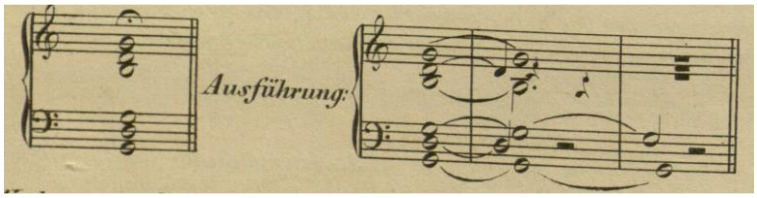

*Example 7.14.3*

Crescendo can be achieved by adding voice doublings:[641]




*Example 7.14.4*

In rooms with little reverberation, final chords are to be played 'diminuendo' in a manner that is very similar to old harpsichord techniques:[642]




*Example 7.14.5*

To summarise, Volckmar proposes a free and improvisatory approach to the score; the performer has to recognise the musical ideas and 'recreate' them on his instrument. Unfortunately there are very few early acoustical recordings of organ music available that could be evidence of this way of playing

[640] Volckmar, W.: op. cit., 103.
[641] Volckmar, W.: op. cit., 100.
[642] Volckmar, W.: op. cit., 102.

the organ. However, the M. Welte company, whose reproduction pianos were already mentioned several times in this study, developed a similar system for organs in 1911: the Welte Philharmonic Organ. Several famous organists-composers made recordings in Freiburg, including Max Reger and Marcel Dupré.[643] Interestingly, some of these organ rolls show features that were mentioned by Volckmar. The adding of voices to create the impression of a crescendo, for instance can be heard in Joseph Bonnet's recording of his *Deuxième Légende* op. 7 no. 10 (0'59" – 1'29"):

**[7.14 #1 Bonnet: *2me Légende*, Joseph Bonnet (1884-1944); organ roll ca 1911-1928]**

Eugène Gigout can be heard arpeggiating the final chords of his *Toccata* in b minor from the *10 Pièces*:

**[7.14 #2 Gigout: *Toccata*, Eugène Gigout (1844-1925)]**

In addition, Max Reger arpeggiates the chords in a particularly expressive passage in his *Canzone* op 65 no. 9; he plays this passage slower as well (1'14" – 1'37"):

**[7.14 #3 Reger: *Canzone*, Max Reger (1873-1916)]**

In his recording of the *Lamento* from the *Douze Pièces*, Bonnet expressively stretches important melodic tones (2'35" – 3'04"):

**[7.14 #4 Bonnet: *Lamento*, Eugène Bonnet]**

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that improvisatory timing occurred in practically every field of music-making throughout the entire nineteenth century. A major area that has not been investigated in this study is orchestral music. Admittedly, the symphonic orchestra is at the core of nineteenth-century musical developments; with respect to an improvisatory attitude, however, it is a complicated case, one that would form a separate field of research. The relation between the individual player, the collective, the conductor and the audience has varied considerably during the nineteenth century, and generalisations easily lead to contradictions. On the level of individual members of the orchestra, for example, it would be tempting to assume that an improvisatory attitude was not expected (especially beginning with Wagner); on the other hand, there is Leopold Stokowski, who in the twentieth century still applied 'free bowing', which implied a certain degree of differentiation within the string sections. If the orchestra is seen as the conductor's 'instrument', it is actually the conductor who may show an improvisatory attitude. The example of Willem Mengelberg might come to mind here, the conductor who performed such extensive rubato with his

[643] Examples 7.14 #1 - #4 are taken from the CD: *Die Welte-Philharmonie-Orgel im Museum für mechanische Musikinstrumente in Linz.* Intercord 860.857, 1986. The rolls were probably made around 1912.

*Concertgebouworkest.* But then, it is well-known that Mengelberg's 'freedom' actually was based on an unusually large number of rehearsals.

In part 2 of this study, improvisatory aspects of score-based music-making in a variety of situations have been examined, focusing on ornamentation and timing. A common thread has been a fundamentally rhetorical understanding of music-making, with a leading role for the *varietas* principle. Two aspects of variety have been highlighted: the application of ornamentation and flexibility in timing. With respect to the latter, an analogy between music-making and walking has been proposed to introduce a different view on musical tempo. In this way, the idea of 'playing with scores' could be framed; today, too, performances can be true 'recreations' without being arbitrary (→ chapter 2.2). However, I argue that, in order to make this possible, a performer needs a working knowledge of the musical languages concerned: an improvisatory attitude to score-based music-making presupposes the ability to extemporise in the same style. In other words: to a certain extent, a recreator has to be a creator. This aspect of nineteenth-century music-making will be the subject of part 3.

# Part 3
# Towards 'Historically Inspired Improvisation': improvising without a score

# Chapter 8. A brief history of terminology

## 8.1 Eighteenth-century definitions: Rousseau

Whereas part 2 of this study focused entirely on an improvisatory attitude to score-based music-making, part 3 deals with a more conventional understanding of the improvisatory in music: the practice of conceiving a piece (or a part of it) while it is performed. Just like part 2, it presents a panorama of nineteenth-century musical situations in which this type of improvisatory activity occurred, and subsequently investigates the implications for present-day music-making. As I wrote at the end of the previous chapter, the issue of acquiring nineteenth-century musical 'languages' is of central importance here, ultimately allowing for the option of 'historically inspired improvisation'.

In chapter 3.7 I wrote that the idea of 'improvising with a score' as it has been presented in this study only occasionally corresponds with the contemporary use of the term 'improvising'; the reference by Baillot (→ chapter 7.8) is an exception to the rule. The present chapter therefore aims to give a survey of the historical development of relevant terms, and consequently to introduce nineteenth-century views on improvisation. Concerning the terminology, most chapters of this study mainly draw on treatises and methods. To complete the picture, it will be good to widen the perspective and investigate how 'improvising' and connected terms were defined in late-eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century musical dictionaries and encyclopaedias. The many quoted fragments in this chapter together form a kind of narrative that sketches the development of ideas about extempore music-making.

First of all, the application to music of the verb 'to improvise' is not very old. An author still often referred to in nineteenth-century texts (→ chapter 4.5) is Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his *Dictionnaire de musique* (1768), Rousseau claims that he constructed the French word *improviser* from the Italian *improvisar*, which had a special meaning. He also writes:

> [Improviser:] C'est faire & chanter impromptu des Chansons, Airs & paroles, qu'on accompagne communément d'une Guitarre ou autre pareil Instrument. Il n'y a rien de plus commun en Italie, que de voir deux Masques se rencontrer, de défier, s'attaquer, se riposter ainsi par des couplets sur le même Air, avec une vivacité de Dialogue, de Chant, d'Accompagnement dont il faut avoir été témoin pour la comprendre.[644]
>
> [IMPROVISARE, Is to compose and sing a song extempore, with airs or words, accompanied commonly by a guittar, or any other such instrument. There is nothing more common in Italy

[644] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictionnaire de musique.* Paris, 1768. Facsimile reprint: Arles, 2007; 252.

> than to see two ma[s]ks meet, challenge, attack, and form alternate couplets on the same air, with a vivacity of dialogue, air, and accompaniment, which cannot be believed but by an eye witness.[645]]

This definition of improvising contains several elements that play a part in this study: the emphasis on the textual dimension, the localisation in Italy (Rousseau preferred Italian music to the French music of his time), the allusion to *Commedia dell'Arte* and of pre-existing characters (→ chapter 12). Closer to a modern idea of improvisation, however, is Rousseau's description of *Fantaisie*:

> [Fantaisie:] Pièce de Musique Instrumentale qu'on exécute en la composant. II y a cette différence du Caprice à la Fantaisie, que le Caprice est un recueil d'idées singulières & disparates que rassemble une imagination échauffée, & qu'on peut même composer à loisir; au lieu que la Fantaisie peut être une Pièce très-régulière, qui ne diffère des autres qu'en ce qu'on l'invente en l'exécutant, & qu'elle n'existe plus si-tôt qu'elle est achevée. Ainsi le Caprice est dans l'espèce & l'assortiment des idées, & la Fantaisie dans leur promptitude à se présenter. Il suit de-là qu'un Caprice peut fort bien s'écrire, mais jamais une Fantaisie; car si-tôt qu'elle est écrite ou répétée, ce n'est plus une Fantaisie, c'est une Pièce ordinaire.[646]
>
> [FANTASY. A piece of instrumental music, which is executed when composed. There is this difference betwixt the caprice and the fantasy; that the caprice is a collection of singular and droll ideas collected by a warm imagination, and which may even be composed at leisure; whereas the fantasy may be a very regular piece, which differs from the rest only that it is invented in its execution, and that it has no longer existence as soon as it finished. Wherefore, the caprice consists in the nature and assortment of
>
> ideas, and the ideas in their quickness in presenting them. It follows thence, that a caprice may be very well written, but never a fantasy; for as soon as it is written or repeated, it is no longer a fantasy, but an ordinary piece.[647]]

Rousseau here brings in another (today) heavily connotative word: composing, which he clearly juxtaposes to improvising. Hans Fidom opposes comparing improvisation with composition because they are unlike concepts: 'Composers may devote themselves solely to polishing a score for months on end; they facilitate performative art but are themselves not *real time* performative.' The background of this view is the change in function of a score, as he sees it: 'Until the early nineteenth century, scores had a practical purpose, facilitating ensemble playing and helping to retain and further develop musical ideas, and to teach oncoming talents. Only later (...) the score gradually acquired the position it still has as the embodiment of a composition's identity. One of the effects of

[645] Rousseau, J.J.: *A Complete Dictionary of Music.* Translated by William Waring: *A Complete Dictionary of music.* London, 1779; 199.
[646] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictonnaire de musique*; 215.
[647] Rousseau, J.J.: *A Complete Dictionary of Music*; 166.

this development is that, ever since, music making with and without scores has become sharply distinct.'[648]

Indeed, a composition in the form of a score is something fundamentally different from an improvisation, which is always a performance. The acts of improvising and composing, however, will be treated here as related activities, if only because this is a view that corresponds with contemporary descriptions. Also, one of the aims of this study is to make a reasonable case for the idea that the emergence of this 'sharp distinction' should be placed much later, namely in the twentieth century. To Rousseau, composing meant 'simply':

> [Composer:] Inventer de la Musique nouvelle, selon les règles de l'Art.[649]
>
> [TO COMPOSE, To invent new music, according to the rules of the art.[650]]

In the entry *Composition* Rousseau works out these 'règles de l'Art' and elaborates on the importance of correct harmony.

*Fantaisie* is a noun; in French, there is no etymologically related verb to indicate the activity of 'making a fantasy' (as there is in German, see below). The verb Rousseau uses to indicate an activity that today would be denoted as 'improvising' is *préluder*. The entry in the *Dictionnaire de musique* is too rich not to quote it in full:

> [Préluder:] C'est en général chanter ou jouer quelque trait de fantaisie irrégulier & assez court, mais passant par les Cordes essentielles du Ton, soit pour l'établir, soit pour disposer la Voix ou bien poser sa main sur un Instrument, avant de commencer une Pièce de Musique. Mais sur l'Orgue & sur le Clavecin 1'Art de *Préluder* est plus considérable. C'est composer & jouer impromptu des Pieces chargées de tout ce que la Composition a de plus savant en Dessein, en Fugue, en Imitation, en Modulation & en Harmonie. C'est sur tout en *préludant* que les grands Musiciens, exempts de cet extrême asservissement aux règles que l'œil des critiques leur impose sur le papier, font briller ces Transitions savantes qui ravissent les Auditeurs. C'est là qu'il ne suffit pas d'être bon Compositeur, ni de bien posséder son Clavier, ni d'avoir la main bonne & bien exercée, mais qu'il faut encore abonder de ce feu de génie & de cet esprit inventif qui font trouver & traiter sur le champ les sujets les plus favorables à l'Harmonie & les plus flatteurs à 1'oreille. C'est par ce grand Art de Préluder que brillent en France les excellens Organistes, tels que sont maintenant les Sieurs Calvière & Daquin, surpassés toutefois l'un & 1'autre par M. le Prince d'Ardore, Ambassadeur de Naples, lequel, pour la vivacité de 1'invention & la force de 1'exécution, efface les plus illustres Artistes, & fait à Paris 1'admiration des connoisseurs.[651]

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[648] Fidom, H.: 'Improvisation: the emancipation of an ancient musical skill.' In: Peeters, P. (ed.): *The Haarlem Essays.* Bonn, 2014; 363.
[649] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictionnaire de musique*; 109.
[650] Rousseau, J.J.: *A Complete dictionary of Music*; 74.
[651] Rousseau, J.J.: *Dictionnaire de musique*; 383.

> [TO PRELUDE. Is, in general, to sing or play some stroke of irregular fantasy, rather short, but pairing by the essential chords of the tone, either to establish or to dispose the voice, or to place the hand well on an instrument before the beginning of a piece of music. But on the organ and the harpsichord, the art of preluding is more considerable. It is to compose and play extempore pieces filled with all that composition has most ingenious, in design, in fugue, in imitation, modulation, and harmony. It is chiefly in preluding, that great musicians, exempted from that extreme slavery to rules, which the eye of the critic imposes on them on paper, makes those transitions shine which ravish the ear of the audience. It is here that it is not sufficient to be a good composer, or to possess one's key well, or even to have a good and well exercised hand: We must, moreover, abound in that fire of genius, and that inventive ingenuity, which find and execute instantly the subjects most favourable to harmony, and most flattering to the ear. It is by this grand art of preluding that excellent organists shine in France; such as the Sieurs C[al]viere and Daquin, who were still surpassed by Mons. le Prince d'Ardore, ambassador of Naples, who, for vivacity of invention, and force of execution, eclipses the most illustrious artists, and causes the admiration of connoisseurs at Paris. [652]]

Rousseau's first and more general description fits in with the idea of a *prélude* as a freely improvised introduction to a performance of a composition, as it was described by (among many others) Jacques Hotteterre in his treatise *L'Art de préluder* (1719).[653] The *préludes non mésurés* that became fashionable in French harpsichord compositions from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries seem to have been based upon this type of *prélude.* Such preludes in the strict sense will be discussed in chapter 9.

In his second definition of *préluder*, namely preluding by keyboardists, the specific idea of introducing a composition seems to have moved to the background: here *préluder* means improvising freely without the context of a specific score. Rousseau brings up an interesting paradox: on the one hand, such pieces make use of all techniques that also underlie compositions; on the other hand, the players are free from 'extreme slavery' to the rules. Probably for Rousseau the structural principles (*dessein*) of music could be applied in either a less or a more strict way. The same idea can be found already in Joannes Tinctoris' *Liber de arte contrapuncti* (1477), where we read that in improvised counterpoint (*super librum cantare*) clashes may occur that would be avoided in composed music (*res facta*), though the rules are the same in both cases.[654] Transposed to the field of this study, this idea implies that improvising in a particular musical 'language' does not necessarily mean copying all properties of a composition in the same style; one may, for instance, improvise in a sonata form, but not feel obliged to exactly mirror the exposition in the recapitulation.

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[652] Rousseau, J.J.: *A Complete Dictionary of Music*; 323.

[653] Hotteterre, J.: *L'Art de préluder sur la flûte traversière, sur la flûte-à-bec, sur haubois, et autres instruments de dessus.* Paris, 1719.

[654] Sachs, K.-J.: 'Tinctoris'. In: Sachs, K.-J. & Dahlhaus, C.: entry 'Counterpoint' in *Grove Music Online.* https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.06690

## 8.2 Eighteenth-century German sources

### *C.Ph.E. Bach*

One contemporary notion that is absent in Rousseau's explanations is the *Freye Fantasie* [free fantasy] as it was described by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach in his *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (1753/1762). Though this book (like Rousseau's *Dictionnaire*) was published before the start of the period on which my research centres, its influence reached well into the nineteenth century. When, for example, the 10-year-old Carl Czerny was accepted by Ludwig van Beethoven as his student in 1801, Beethoven advised him to study Bach's treatise.[655]

The famous last chapter of this book is entirely about the *freye Fantasie*, which Bach characterises as follows:

> Eine Fantasie nennet man frey, wenn sie keine abgemessene Tacteintheilung enthält, und in mehrere Tonarten ausweichet, als bey anderen Stücken zu geschehen pfleget, welche nach einer Tacteinteilung gesetzet sind, oder aus dem Stegreif erfunden werden.[656]
>
> [A fantasy 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.[657]]

In his *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* (1829), Czerny refers to C.Ph.E. Bach in his explanation of free fantasies, which shows the impact this text still had in the nineteenth century:

> Es gibt endlich noch eine sehr interessante Art zu preludieren, welche sich der Spieler anzueignen hat, nämlich völlig taktlos, fast recitativ-artig, theils in wirklichen, theils gebrochenen Accorden, anscheinend völlig bewusstlos, gleich dem Umherirren in unbekannten Gegenden. Diese, vorzüglich den älteren Meistern (Bach, Seb. u. Eman. &) eigenthümliche Manier lässt sehr viel Ausdruck und frappanten Harmoniewechsel zu, und kann, zu rechter Zeit angewendet und gehörig vorgetragen, sehr viel Wirkung machen. Nur darf ein solches Vorspiel nicht zu lange ausgedehnt werden, ohne einen rhythmischen Gesang einzuweben.[658]
>
> [Finally, there is another way of preludising which the performer has to assimilate, namely, completely unmeasured, almost like a recitative, with some sections in chords sounding simultaneously and others with broken chords, seemingly without a conscious plan, resembling wanderings into unknown regions. This distinctive style, especially of the older masters (Bach – Johann Sebastian, and Carl Philipp

[655] Czerny, C.: *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (Walter Kolneder, ed.). Strasbourg, 1968; 15.
[656] Bach, C.Ph.E.: *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen, zweyter Theil* (Berlin, 1762); facsimile Wiesbaden, 1986; II, 325. The expression *aus dem Stegreif* literally means 'from the stirrup', so without dismounting; hence, figuratively: without preparation, extempore.
[657] Bach, C.Ph.E.: *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (trans. W.J. Mitchell). New York, 1948; 430.
[658] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* (Wien, 1829). Facsimile: Wiesbaden, 1993; 20.

> Emanuel, etc.), leaves room for a great deal of expressiveness and striking harmonic changes, and can be extremely effective if introduced at the right time and performed properly. But this kind of prelude should not be drawn out too long without interweaving a rhythmically defined melody.[659]]

In eighteenth-century Germany, a remarkable number of musical and aesthetical dictionaries came out, which makes it possible to track how terms such as *fantasieren* (*preludieren*, *improvisieren*) were employed. A short journey through German textbooks in particular will reveal the history of such words, and will also provide beautiful vistas to the way people thought about improvisation.

### *Sulzer (Kirnberger), Wolf*

In 1771 / 1774, Johann Georg Sulzer published his *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* [General theory of fine arts]. The *Kapellmeister* and theorist Johann Philipp Kirnberger, possibly a former student of Johann Sebastian Bach, was responsible for the musical articles in this book. It is often assumed that for the articles after *Modulation*, Kirnberger was assisted by his former student Johann Abraham Peter Schulz. However, the musicologist Beverly Jerold has argued that in reality Kirnberger's share must have been quite modest, and that in addition to Schulz, other authors may have contributed to the articles on music.[660] Because of this complicated question of authorship, I will simplify matters by collectively referring to the author(s) of these texts as 'Sulzer' in the following discussion.

Before I enter into selected articles of 'Sulzer', an autobiographical sketch by Schulz (published separately from Sulzer's book) will give some background information. It provides an insight into the relation between Schulz and Kirnberger that is interesting with respect to the relation between theory and praxis. Schulz reflects on Kirnberger's strict and theoretical approach as a teacher, and on his own tendency as a student to follow his master in this:

> Nur was mir mühsam ausgearbeitet zu sein schien, zog mich an, und daher ward meine ehemals so leichte Schreibart nur mühsam und peinlich. Praktische Musik verlor allen Reiz für mich, weil Kirnberger selbst kein sonderlicher Praktiker war und auch keine Concerte besuchte. Die Orgel, ehemals mein Hauptinstrument, ward hintenangesetzt, weil ich schüchtern im Phantasiren geworden war und verbotene Fortschreitungen zu machen fürchtete. Ich hatte, mit einem Worte, durch Kirnbergers Umgang und Unterricht unstreitig an Kenntniss, Theorie und Kritik gewonnen, aber eben so viel an Genie zur praktischen Hervorbringung eigener Kunstwerke verloren.[661]

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[659] Czerny, C.: *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte op. 200* (A.L. Mitchell, trans.). New York, 1983; 23.
[660] Jerold, B.: 'Johann Philipp Kirnberger and Authorship'. *Notes* vol. 69 no. 4 (2013); 688-705.
[661] Ledebur, C.F.H.W.Ph.J., Freiherr von: *Tonkünstler-Lexicon Berlin's von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart.* Berlin, 1861; 531.

> [I was attracted solely by what seemed to have been constructed laboriously, and in this way my previously easy way of writing became laborious and painstaking. Practical music lost all attraction to me because Kirnberger was not notably a man from practice himself and didn't visit concerts either. The organ, previously my main instrument, was put on the background, because I had become timid in improvising and feared to make forbidden progressions. In one word, thanks to the contact with Kirnberger I definitely had gained a lot with regard to knowledge, theory and critical sense, but I had lost just as much with respect to my talent to produce my own art works.]

It is remarkable that already in the 1760's the possible tension between theory (understood as a prescriptive subject) and practice was articulated so clearly, and that Schulz here indirectly demonstrates the rightness of Rousseau's remark that improvisers are 'exempted from that extreme slavery to rules, which the eye of the critic imposes on them on paper'. Moreover, his remark about his organ playing suggests that for him the organ was an instrument that one primarily improvised upon.

At the entry *Fantasiren / Fantasie* in the *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*, 'Sulzer' writes:

> Wenn ein Tonkünstler ein Stük, so wie er es allmählig in Gedanken sehet, sofort auf einem Instrumente spielt; oder wenn er nicht ein schon vorhandenes Stük spielt, sondern eines, das er währendem Spielen erfindet, so sagt man, er fantasire. Also gehört zum Fantasiren eine große Fertigkeit im Satz, besonders, wenn man auf Orgeln, Clavieren oder Harfen vielstimmig fantasirt. (...) Oft fantasirt man ohne Melodie, blos der Harmonie und Modulation halber; oft aber fantasiert man so, daß das Stük den Charakter einer Arie, oder eines Duets, oder eines andern singenden Stücks, mit begleitendem Baß hat. Einige Fantasien schweifen von einer Gattung in die andere aus, bald in ordentlichem Takt, bald ohne Takt, u.s.w.[662]

> [When a musician plays a piece, as he gradually imagines it, immediately on an instrument; or when he does not play a piece that is already available, but one that he invents during playing, this is called 'improvising'. Thus improvising demands a great skill in musical setting, especially when one improvises in many voices on organs, other keyboard instruments or harps. (...) Sometimes people improvise without a melody, just because of harmony and modulation; then again one may improvise in such a way that the piece has the character of an aria, or a duet, or another vocal piece with an accompanying bass. Some improvisations move from one genre into another, this time in a proper metre, another time without a metre, etc.]

This description more or less matches Rousseau's *Fantaisie*, though the author adds the possibility of playing without a regular metre and without a clear melody, as in the *freie Fantasie* à la Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. 'Sulzer' adds:

[662] Sulzer, J.G.: *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste in einzeln, nach alphabetischer Ordnung der Kunstwörter auf einander folgenden Artikeln abgehandelt*. Leipzig, 1771; I, 368.

> Die Fantasien von großen Meistern, besonders die, welche aus einer gewissen Fülle der Empfindung und in dem Feuer der Begeisterung gespielt werden, sind oft, wie die ersten Entwürfe der Zeichner, Werke von ausnehmender Kraft und Schönheit, die bey einer gelassenen Gemüthslage nicht so könnten verfertiget werden.[663]
>
> [Improvisations by great masters, especially those which are performed from a sincere emotion and with the fire of enthusiasm, are often works of extraordinary power and beauty, just like the first sketches of painters; they could not have been produced like this when the creator was in a resigned mood.]

This passage forms a bridge to a large section about the desirability of a device which could notate extempore keyboard playing. In the twentieth century, the dream of 'Sulzer' would become true: by means of piano rolls, wax rolls and later developments, performances could be recorded, and more recently midi technique even made it possible to convert a keyboard performance directly into musical notation. Just like Rousseau, 'Sulzer' juxtaposes improvising and composing. I would argue that the fact that our generation has become used to the possibility of recording music is precisely why we are so sensitive to the fundamental difference between a score and a performance; in other words, the relation between these two has become subject to discussion. 'Sulzer' could only dream about recordings, and thus didn't have to care about a difference that must have been unproblematic to him. In addition, at Sulzer's time composed music was intended to be performed almost instantly; the idea of performing music that had been composed centuries before was foreign to his generation, as were the concomitant interpretational issues.

'Sulzer's' *Fülle der Empfindung* and *Feuer der Begeisterung* recall Rousseau's 'feu de génie & de cet esprit inventif'. At the end of the article, he advises his readers to consult Bach's *Versuch.* An extensive bibliography follows, which however does not mention Rousseau.

The entry *Präludiren* almost exclusively is about playing (not explicitly improvising) a chorale prelude on the organ, in a description that still looks perfectly familiar to a church organist today. 'Sulzer' briefly mentions preluding on the harpsichord:

> So geschieht es bisweilen auch bey Concerten, daß der, welcher auf dem Clavicembal die Hauptbegleitung führet, vorher auf seinem Instrument präludirt.[664]
>
> [It sometimes also happens at concerts that he who plays the principal accompaniment on the cembalo preludes on his instrument beforehand.]

Most likely, this *Präludiren* was 'just because of harmony and modulation', and not unlike Rousseau's first species of *préluder.*

[663] Ibidem.
[664] Sulzer, J.G.: *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste.* Leipzig, 1774; II, 924.

Georg Friedrich Wolf's *Kurzgefaßtes musikalisches Lexikon* [Concise musical dictionary] (1787) largely bases itself on Sulzer's book, however with small additions. In the entry *Fantasie*, Wolf distinguishes between *freie* and *gebundene Fantasie*; the former is without fixed metre, whereas the latter is described as

> (...) die Fantasie, in welcher eine Taktart zum Grunde liegt, wobey man sich mehr an die Gesetze der Modulation bindet, worinn mehr Einheit beobachtet wird u.s.w.[665]
>
> [... this type of fantasy which is based on a metre, in which one sticks more to the rules of modulation, pays more attention to unity, etc.]

About *präludiren* Wolf adds to 'Sulzer':

> Noch giebt es Stücke, die den Namen Präludium führen, auf die gemeinlich eine Fuge folgt, die aber keinen bestimmten Charakter haben, und selten zu Vorspielen geschickt sind. Oft sind es ganz strenge oder freiere Fugen, oft sind sie von einer Taktlosen Phantasie nur durch den Takt unterschieden, oft ist es auch ein bloßer Satz von sechs oder acht Takten, der beständig entweder in der geraden oder
>
> Gegenbewegung gehört, und womit auf eine künstliche Art modulirt wird. – Das Präludiren vieler Virtuosen, welches sie oft Viertelstunden lang vor ihren Konzerten zum Besten geben, bedarf wohl keiner Anpreisung, da es gewiß jedem geschmackvollen Zuhörer unangenehm ist.[666]
>
> [There are also pieces that are termed 'prelude', which are usually followed by a fugue, but don't have a particular character, and which are rarely suitable as preludes. Sometimes they are very strict or rather more free fugues, sometimes only their metre distinguishes them from a fantasy without metre, sometimes it is just one sentence of six or eight bars which is heard the whole time either straight or in its inversion, and with which artificial modulations are made. – The preluding to which many virtuosos often treat the audience for half an hour or more before their concerts probably doesn't need any recommendation, since it surely displeases every listener with taste.]

The last remark represents an interesting counterpoint to the story of improvisation, notably in public concerts. More than one of the nineteenth-century authors who will be discussed in section 8.3 make such critical comments, particularly with regard to improvised preludes. Until the mid-nineteenth century, such critical voices were definitely more rare.

[665] Wolf, G.F.: *Kurzgefaßtes musikalisches Lexikon*. Halle, 1792 (2nd ed.); 63.
[666] Ibidem, 147-148.

## 8.3 Nineteenth-century sources

### *Busby*

The concise *A complete dictionary of music* by the English composer Thomas Busby (1801) includes several entries that address most of the terms mentioned earlier. English is the only language that frequently uses the Latin *extempore*:

> Extempore. A term applied to a performance consisting of the unpremeditated effusions of fancy. We use this word both adjectively and adverbially: as when we speak of an extempore fugue, or say, such a performer plays extempore.[667]

About fantasias Busby writes:

> Fantasia. (Ital.) The name generally given to a species of composition, supposed to be struck off in the heat of imagination, and in which the composer is allowed to give free range to his ideas, and to disregard those restrictions by which other productions are confined. Some writers limit the application of this term to certain extemporaneous flights of fancy; and say, that the moment they are written, or repeated, they cease to be *Fantasias*. This, they add, forms the only distinction between the *Fantasia* and the *Capricio*. The *Capricio*, though wild, is the result of premeditation, committed to paper, and becomes permanent: but the *Fantasia* is an impromptu, transitive, and evanescent; exists but while it is executing, and, when finished, is no more. *Fantasias* being, however, daily written and published, it is evident in which of the above senses the word is now to be understood.[668]

'Some writers' might very well refer to Rousseau. It is striking that in the next entries (shown below), Busby talks about improvisation (in the sense Rousseau applied the term) as something in the past. As Angela Esterhammer has demonstrated, however, travelling *improvisatori* were still very popular in Northern Europe during the early decades of the nineteenth century.[669]

> Improvisare. (Ital.) To compose and sing extempore. A practice once very common with the poet-musicians of Italy.[670]

> Improvvisatori. The name given by the Italians to those poets, or poet-musicians, who are gifted with the power of reciting or singing extempore verses. A practice at one time very general in Italy, and to his abilities in which Metastasio owed his education and good fortune.[671]

To Busby, a 'prelude' has the more specific meaning of introductory music, either composed or improvised:

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[667] Busby, Th.: *A complete dictionary of music.* London, 1811; (no page numbers.)
[668] Ibidem.
[669] Esterhammer, A.: *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750 – 1850.* Cambridge, 2008.
[670] Busby, Th.: op. cit.
[671] Ibidem.

> Prelude, Preludio, or Preludium. (From the Lat.) A short introductory composition, or extempore performance, to prepare the ear for the succeeding movements.[672]

***Koch***

In the *Musikalisches Lexikon* which the German Heinrich Christoph Koch (like Kirnberger a theorist rather than a composer) published in 1802, the original meaning Rousseau assigned to *improviser*, i.e., extemporising accompanied verse, is maintained for the noun *improvisatori*:

> Improvisatori, sind eine Art Dichter, die man nur in Italien antrifft, und die über eine ihnen aufgegebene Materie, wenn sie nur einigermaßen einer poetischen Ausführung fähig ist, sogleich aus dem Stegreife 50, 60, ja wohl 100 Verse deklamieren, oder wie es am gewöhnlichsten geschieht, im Recitativstyle unter eigner Begleitung einer Guitarre absingen. Zuweilen unterhalten sich auch zwey solche Dichter über eine ihnen aufgegebene Materie wechselsweis. Die lebhafte Einbildungskraft solcher Personen ist allerdings zu bewundern, und zeigt von einem glücklichen Genie, obgleich sehr leicht einzusehen ist, daβ in Gedichten von solcher Geburt viel Schlechtes und Zusammengerafftes mit unterlaufen müsse. Ohne Zweifel waren es einige bey diesen Dichtern sich äußernde einzelne starke Züge des Genies, die verursachten daß man außerhalb Italien das Talent der Improvisatori höher schätzte, und sich von dem Werthe solcher Gedichte aus dem Stegreife einen höhern Begriff machte, als es in Italien selbst geschah.[673]
>
> [Improvisatori are a kind of poet one meets only in Italy, who recite up to a hundred extempore verses on any given topic which is in any way suited to a poetic presentation, or, what is most usual, who sing in the style of a recitative, accompanying themselves with a guitar. Sometimes also two such poets converse with each other on a subject that was given to them. Surely one has to admire the vivid imagination of such persons, which shows a fortuitous talent, though it is easy to understand that poems of such descent must also contain a hodgepodge of bad passages. Undoubtedly it was some strong features of genius that showed in these poets, which brought about a higher esteem of the talent of the *improvisatori* abroad, and a higher appreciation of such extempore poems, than in Italy itself.]

Interestingly, Koch represents the beginning of a shift in meaning in the German verb *improvisiren* as applied to a purely musical activity:

> Improvisiren. Darunter verstehet man in dem eigentlichen Fache der Musik die Geschicklichkeit eines Tonsetzers, über ein ihm noch unbekanntes Gedicht sogleich aus dem Stegreife eine Komposition zu verfertigen und solche zugleich singend unter Begleitung eines Instrumentes vorzutragen. Dieses Improvisiren, wenn es nemlich nicht ohne alle vorhergegangene Ueberlegung des Textes geschieht,

[672] Ibidem.
[673] Koch, H.C.: *Musikalisches Lexikon.* Frankfurt am Main, 1802; column 777-778.

> kann sehr oft für den Tonsetzer ein Mittel werden, die Thätigkeit seines Genies zu reitzen, oder sich in denjenigen Zustand zu versetzen, den man die Begeisterung nennet.[674]
>
> [Improvising. In the field of music, this word is understood to mean the ability of a composer to make an extempore composition on a poem that is yet unknown to him, and to perform it immediately, singing to the accompaniment of an instrument. Notably when this 'improvising' does not take place without any preceding meditation of the text, it can very often for the composer become a means to stir the activity of his talent, or to bring him to a state that is called enthusiasm.]

It should be noted that the activity of improvising is allocated to a *Tonsetzer*, a composer – who happens to be a performer as well. At the turn of the nineteenth century a performer, especially a keyboardist, usually also was a composer and vice versa. A musician who actually was to become famous with such text-based performances in the 1830's and 1840's was Carl Loewe.[675]

Koch's definition of a *Fantasie* purely focuses on the *freye Fantasie*:

> Fantasie. So nennet man das durch Töne ausgedrückte und gleichsam hingeworfene Spiel der sich ganz überlassenen Einbildungs- und Erfindungskraft des Tonkünstlers, oder ein solches Tonstück aus dem Stegreife, bey welchem sich der Spieler weder an Form noch Haupttonart, weder an Beybehaltung eines sich gleichen Zeitmaaßes, noch an Festhaltung eines bestimmten Charakters bindet, sondern seine Ideenfolge bald in genau zusammenhängenden, bald in locker an einander gereiheten melodischen Sätzen, bald auch nur in nach einander folgenden und auf mancherley Art zergliederten Akkorden, darstellet.[676]
>
> [Fantasy. This is how one calls the playing, expressed in tones and as it were jotted down, of the musician's power of imagination and invention, totally left to its own; or such a musical piece produced extempore, in which the performer doesn't limit himself to either form or main key, to either keeping strict time or sticking to a specific character; instead, he presents the flight of his imagination sometimes in very coherent, sometimes in loosely connected melodic sentences, sometimes even just in consecutive and in various ways dissected [i.e., arpeggiated] chords.]

The words *Einbildungskraft* and *Erfindungskraft* have a Kantian ring and seem to foreshadow the nineteenth-century cult of genius.

Under *präludiren* one finds both the idea of the chorale preludes as practiced by church organists and Rousseau's first species of *préluder*, namely a short warming-up or a simple introduction to the key. However, Koch applies the understanding of a prelude as a warming-up specifically to orchestral or ensemble musicians; this way of preluding must have been a common practice in eighteenth-century ensemble performances (→ chapter 9), apparently not to Koch's liking:

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[674] Ibidem.
[675] Gooley, D.: *Fantasies of Improvisation*. New York, 2018; 116.
[676] Koch, H.C.: op. cit., column 554-555.

> Präludiren, ein Vorspiel vortragen. Man braucht diesen Ausdruck, theils um das vor dem Choralgesange übliche Vorspiel auf der Orgel zu bezeichnen, theils auch, um damit jede Fantasie aus dem Stegreife zu benennen, welche die Tonkünstler oft vor dem Anfange einer Musik, oder eines besondern Tonstückes hören lassen, und wobey oft der eine aus dem es dur, der andere aus dem d dur fantasirt, und die Ohren der Zuhörer peiniget. In gut eingerichteten Orchestern wird diese Art zu präludiren keinem Tonkünstler erlaubt.[677]
>
> [Preluding, to perform a prelude. This term is applied on the one hand to the usual organ prelude before a church hymn, on the other hand also to the extempore fantasies that musicians often play before the beginning of music, or of a specific composition. Often one person plays in E-flat major, another one in D-major, torturing the ears of the listeners. In well-organised orchestras this way of preluding is not allowed to any musician.]

### *Rees (Burney)*

The articles about music in the Welsh minister Abraham Rees's *The Cyclopædia* (1809) were written by Charles Burney. There is a short entry 'Extemporaneous Playing', specifically applied to music for harpsichord, pianoforte and organ. Burney also compares composing with extemporising:

> There have been organists, whose abilities in unstudied effusions on their instruments have almost amounted to inspiration, such as Sebastian Bach, Handel, Marchand, Couperin, Kelway, Stanley, Worgan, and Keeble, several of whom played better music extempore, than they could write with meditation.[678]

Similar remarks were to be made later about nineteenth-century composers such as Ludwig van Beethoven and César Franck. With regard to improvisation, Burney writes:

> Improvisare (Ital.): to sing or play extempore.
>
> Improvisatore (Ital.): an extemporaneous singer of verses upon a given subject. A voluntary player, an organist who is able to treat in a masterly manner a given subject of fugue, extempore, is justly allowed to be a man of considerable abilities.[679]

What follows is a description of *improvisatori* in poetry, a phenomenon 'confined to the southern provinces of Europe', in which Burney inserts a translation of Rousseau's description of the *masques* – suggesting that the Italian improvising poets mixed declamation with singing, which indeed seems to have been the case.

Burney then mentions (as noted in chapter 3) Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a less well-known rhetorician and historian from the first century BC. He quotes Dionysius because of his account of

[677] Koch, H.C.: op. cit., col. 1167.
[678] Rees, A.: *The Cyclopædia*, vol. 13. London, 1819; entry: 'Extemporaneous'.
[679] Rees, A.: op. cit., vol. 18 (London, 1819); entries: 'Improvisare', 'Improvisatore'.

soldiers who supposedly extemporised verses during the mythical early years of Roman history. Burney sees this as 'a very venerable origin to the improvisatori in Italy'. More interesting with respect to this study, however, is the fact that this early nineteenth-century author mentions Dionysius at all, thus making a connection with ancient rhetoric (→ chapter 3). Burney makes no more mention of improvising organists, however.

Burney's definition of a prelude mainly consists of an exact translation of Rousseau's, in addition to a short description of composed introductions.[680] Also, his article about the Fantasia begins with a translation of Rousseau's entry of the same name in his *Dictionnaire*. Burney then remarks:

> These were the ideas of Rousseau 40 years ago, and are now the general ideas of all who bestow a thought on the subject. But in the 17th century, when instrumental music first began to be cultivated, the acceptation of the word fantasie or fancy was very different from the present (...).[681]

Following this, Burney provides a survey of the history of the fantasia as an instrumental composition. When he comes to speak about such pieces by William Byrd, Orlando Gibbons and others, Burney judges that 'contemptible as they now seem, they were the best which the first musicians of the age could then produce'.[682] Amusing as this may sound today, it shows the narrow stylistic compass of both musicians and audiences back then.

### *Häuser*

The *Musikalisches Lexikon* (1833) of the German teacher, writer and composer Johann Ernst Häuser paraphrases Wolf in the entry *Fantasie*, *Fantasiren.* To the bibliography he adds two works that had been published a few years earlier: Johann Nepumuk Hummel's *Große Pianoforte-Schule* and Carl Czerny's *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte.*[683] Czerny's *Anleitung* was already mentioned above; in the introduction to this book, the word *improvisieren* is offered as an equivalent for *fantasieren*.

> Wenn der ausübende Tonkünstler die Fähigkeit besitzt, die Ideen, welche seine Erfindungsgabe, Begeisterung, oder Laune ihm eingiebt, sogleich, im Augenblick des Entstehens, auf seinem Instrument nicht nur auszuführen, sondern so zu verbinden, dass der Zusammenhang auf den Hörer die Wirkung eines eigentlichen Tonstückes haben kann, - so nennt man dieses: *Fantasieren.* (*Improvisieren, Extemporieren.*)[684]
>
> [When the practicing musician possesses the capability not only of executing at his instrument the ideas that his inventive power, inspiration or mood have evoked in him at the instant of their conception,

[680] Rees, A.: op. cit., vol. 28 (London, 1819); entry: 'Prelude'.
[681] Rees, A.: op. cit., vol. 14 (London, 1819); entry: 'Fantasia'.
[682] Ibidem.
[683] Häuser, J.E.: *Musikalisches Lexikon.* Meissen, 1833; 144.
[684] Czerny, *Anleitung*; 3.

> but of so combining them that the coherence can have the effect on a listener of an actual composition – this is what is called: Improvising or Extemporizing.[685]]

Hummel also uses the word *Fantasieren*, the exact meaning of which he does not define; however, it seems plausible that his understanding matched Czerny's description, considering that both pianists lived in close proximity to each other.

The entry *Improvisiren* in Häuser's *Lexikon* combines Koch's texts about the same topic and about *Fantasieren*, adding the names of musicians who were famous for their improvisations at the beginning of the nineteenth century:

> Improvisiren, die Geschicklichkeit eines Tonsetzers, aus dem Stegreife irgend ein Tonstück sogleich zu schaffen und auf einem musikalischen Instrumente vorzutragen, oder auch ein vorgelesenes Gedicht sogleich singend, bei Begleitung eines Instruments, vorzutragen. Auf dem Pianoforte sind Hummel und Moscheles die größten Improvisatoren. *Paesiello* übte in früherer Zeit das Talent eines singenden Improvisatoren.[686]

> [Improvising, the skillfulness of a composer in creating and immediately performing an extempore piece on an instrument, or also in immediately singing a poem that has been read, accompanied by an instrument. On piano, Hummel and Moscheles are the greatest improvisers. In his early years Paesiello developed his talent as a singing improviser.]

Häuser's description is one of the few that actually use the word *schaffen* (to create). For Häuser, *Präludiren* refers only to the making of a liturgical prelude, again without mentioning the extempore element.

### *Schilling*

In 1835 the German lexicographer Gustav Schilling published his voluminous *Encyclopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften, oder Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst.* Already during his life Schilling was accused of plagiarism. A review of the *Encyclopädie* in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* even has the heading *Warnung*: the readers had to be warned against this book because Schilling apparently not only assembled his text from other sources, but also borrowed freely from earlier works by himself.[687] As a source of early-nineteenth-century thinking about music, however, it is still a valuable book.

His description of the *Fantasie* quotes Koch (without citation), among others. The *Fantasie* is described as 'rein improvisirte (extemporirte) musikalische Rede' [purely improvised (extemporised)

[685] Czerny, C.: *A Systematic Introduction…*; 1.
[686] Häuser, op. cit., 202.
[687] Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung vol. 40, issue 48 (28 November). Leipzig, 1838; col. 807-808.

musical speech] – another allusion to rhetoric. According to Schilling, not many musicians are able to improvise well; it takes a fully equipped and complete *Künstler* to possess this ability, and even so

> ...ist auch der ganze Künstler nicht immer, nur in seltenen Stunden im Stande, gut zu fantasiren.[688]
>
> [... even the real artist is not always, only at rare moments, capable of improvising well.]

He calls it remarkable that even brilliant improvisers seem to perform best when they are alone or playing for a small audience of *seelenverwandte Hörer* [sympathising listeners]. In addition, superb composers can be mediocre improvisers, and vice versa. He mentions Hummel and Paganini as examples of musicians who are famous improvisers but less successful as composers:

> Hummel z.B. ist anerkannt Meister in der freien Fantasie, selbst über Cramer, Kalkbrenner, Moscheles u. A. unbestrittene Triumphe feiernd; als Componist jedoch hat er sich nicht überall zu solchem Range erhoben. Eben so Paganini u.A.[689]
>
> [Hummel for instance is an acknowledged master in improvisation, triumphing undisputedly even over Cramer, Kalkbrenner, Moscheles and others; as a composer, however, he hasn't attained this rank everywhere. The same thing applies to Paganini and others.]

This is an important observation, because it contradicts the currently popular assumption that 'in the past every musician was also an improviser' (→ chapter 1.2): at that time, too, talents were distributed unevenly. Some musicians were brilliant improvisers, some were better composers. The idea that musicians of that time combined the capacities of performing, composing and improvising as a matter of course, and on an equal level, seems historically incorrect.

Schilling maintains Wolf's distinction between the *freie* and the *gebundene Fantasie*; however, he seems to apply the second term mainly to composed fantasies. The bibliography mentions only books that were already remarkably old at that time, Georg Andreas Sorge's *Anleitung zur Fantasie* 1767 being the most recent one.

The entry *improvisiren* includes traditional meanings of the word as well as newer ones. It starts paraphrasing Koch's text, and then continues:

> Dann wird das Wort auch wohl für Fantasieren, das eigentliche, sogenannte freie Fantasieren (s. Fantasie) gebraucht; und endlich für Extemporiren (s. *Stegreif*, u. *Verzierungskunst* im Gesange), dieses jedoch seltener.[690]
>
> [The word is also used for 'Fantasieren', the actual, so-called 'freie Fantasieren'; and finally also for extemporising (see 'Extempore', and 'Ornamentation' in vocal music), however more rarely.]

[688] Schilling, G.: *Encyclopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften, oder Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst*, vol. II. Stuttgart, 1840; 652 ff.
[689] Schilling, G.: op. cit., 655.
[690] Schilling, G.: op. cit., vol. III. Stuttgart, 1836; 692.

This is one of the very few sources that connect *Extemporiren* (or improvising at all) with ornamentation in singing; the entry *Stegreif*, however, doesn't exist in Schilling's book, and the entry *Verzierungskunst* does not specify extempore ornamentation. The article finishes with a short but explicit excursion on improvised variations on a given theme.

> Einen Musiker, der Gewandheit darin hat, nennt man – wie den Stegreifdichter – einen *Improvisator*. Ist derselbe, wenn auch gewöhnlich, doch nicht immer gerade der ausgezeichnetste Musiker, darf man ferner seine Kunst keineswegs *unbedingt* für ein Zeichen großer musikalischer Geschicklichkeiten und Fertigkeiten ansehen, und beruht seine Gewandtheit darin oft auch mehr auf Uebung, Selbstvertrauen, Dreistigkeit etc., als wirklich künstlerischem Berufe, so ist es doch stets ein Beweis von vielem musikalischen Talente, ja oft von Genie, und jedenfalls von einer sehr lebhaften Einbildungskraft und reger Fantasie, wenn ein Musiker fähig ist, schnell, ohne Vorbereitung, eine Melodie zu irgendeinem Texte zu erfinden, oder über ein Thema wenigstens angenehm zu variiren, wenn gleich nur selten etwas wirklich Taugliches dabei zu Stande gebracht wird, und sind die Versuche darin endlich die Zweckmäßigsten Mittel, sich in die nöthige künstleriche Begeisterung zu versetzen.[691]
>
> [A musician who is skilled in this is called an improviser (just like the extempore poet). Such a person may often, though not always, be the most excellent musician; moreover, his art should not necessarily be seen as a sign of important musical dexterities and capacities, and his skill usually is based rather upon exercise, self-confidence, daring, etc., than on a true artistic vocation. Nonetheless, it is always a proof of a great musical talent, often even of genius, anyway of a very vivid imagination and keen fantasy, when a musician is able to invent quickly and without preparation a melody to any text, or to vary at least pleasantly on a theme, though it leads only rarely to something sound. Finally, attempts in this direction are the most effective way to put oneself into the necessary state of artistic enthusiasm.]

The idea that improvising serves to transpose the musician into a state of creative enthusiasm already came up in Koch. It has been documented that Joseph Haydn used to compose in this way.[692] Gradually, improvisation seems to become a private matter, something for the inner room – however, it should not be forgotten that this supposed shift occurs simultaneously with the advent of the public concert, an important topic that will be discussed in section 8.3.

The entry *Praeludium* describes liturgical preludes in great detail (including the Roman Catholic tradition), but also mentions preludes as played by *virtuosi* on the concert stage:

> Indeß versteht man unter *Praeambulum* (...) gewöhnlich mehr jene kleineren Einleitungssätze oder Accorde, die Virtuosen bisweilen ihren Concert-Productionen in hyperartistischen Cadenzen oder dergl. (gewöhnlich die Harmonie der eigentlichen Schlußcadenz enthaltend) vorangehen lassen, um

[691] Ibidem.
[692] Griesinger, G.A.: *Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn*. Leipzig, 1810; 114.

> eines Theils vielleicht sich selbst zum Spiel anzuschicken, andern Theils Publikum und Orchester auf sich und den Anfang ihres Spiels aufmerksam zu machen.[693]
>
> ['Praeambulum', however, is generally rather understood as the short introductory pieces or chords which virtuosos sometimes play before their concert performances, in hyper-artistic cadenzas and the like (usually containing the harmony of the actual final cadence); they partly do this in order to prepare themselves for playing, partly to draw the attention of audience and orchestra to themselves and to the beginning of their playing.]

This description resonates with Rousseau's first definition of preluding in section 8.1, applied to the early-nineteenth-century virtuoso performances.

### *Bernsdorf, Schuberth, Paul*

Several German lexica from the second half of the nineteenth century give evidence of the advance of the term *improvisieren*.

Eduard Bernsdorf, a student of Adolf Bernhard Marx, published his *Neues Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst* in 1856. In the entry *Fantasie*, he repeats Koch's definition (which was, by that time, more than 50 years old). In addition to this *freie Fantasie*, he adds the possibility of a fantasy on given themes, as it was explained by Carl Czerny in his *Anleitung* (→ chapter 12).[694]

In 1865, Julius Schuberth still primarily uses the verb *fantasiren* for *nach eigener Erfindung und Empfindung spielen* [playing according to one's own invention and feeling].[695] Under *präludiren*, the improvising by orchestra musicians has given way to the habit of their modern counterparts:

> Präludiren: kurze musikalische Phrasen als Einleitung; auch wird damit das lästige Wichtigmachen eingelernter Phrasen beim Stimmen bezeichnet.[696]
>
> [Preluding: short musical phrases that serve as an introduction; it also indicates the annoying boasting with practiced phrases during tuning.]

According to Oscar Paul, however, *praeludiren* is

> ein Vorspiel machen, besonders aus dem Stegreife, soviel wie improvisiren.[697]
>
> [making an introduction, especially extempore; more or less: improvising.]

And:

> Fantasiren heißt soviel als improvisiren, aus dem Stegreif spielen.[698]

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[693] Schilling, G.: op. cit., vol. V. Stuttgart, 1837; 532-533.
[694] Bernsdorf, E.: *Neues Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst,* vol. 1. Dresden, 1856; 807.
[695] Schuberth, J.: *Kleines musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon.* Leipzig and New York, 1865[VI]; 99.
[696] Schuberth, J.: op. cit., 241.
[697] Paul, O.: *Handlexikon der Tonkunst*, vol. 2. Leipzig, 1873; 281.
[698] Paul, O.: op. cit., vol 1. Leipzig, 1873; 309.

> ['Fantasiren' more or less means improvising, playing extempore.]

*Fantasiren* and *improvisiren* now have become equivalents in German; *pr(a)eludiren* often means almost the same, but is confined to making an introduction.

### *Mendel-Reissmann*

The *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon* by Hermann Mendel and August Reissmann (the 'Mendel-Reissmann', 1877) speaks about *frei Phantasiren* as a practice from the past.

> Das freie Phantasiren war in früherer Zeit eine, von den Virtuosen öffentlich ausgeführte besondere Kunstfertigkeit.[699]
>
> [Free improvisation was in earlier times a special skill that was publicly displayed by virtuosos.]

An exception is made for organists, who have to improvise preludes and postludes during liturgy (concerts are not mentioned!), and for this often choose the stricter form of a fugue – 'wenn sie es im Stande sind' [when they are capable of it].[700] Also, pianists who accompany singers improvise preludes, but these

> ... sind von untergeordneter Bedeutung, da sie hauptsächlich nur ausgeführt werden, um den Sänger in der betreffenden Tonart heimisch zu machen.[701]
>
> [... are of lesser importance, since they are mainly only performed with the goal of making the singer feel at home in the key in question.]

Evidently, Mendel and Reissmann consider such functional preludes artistically unimportant: by then, it had become a common view that a public concert was about presenting musical works. One may conclude, however, that in 1877 piano accompanists were apparently still improvising little preludes to introduce a *Lied*!

According to Mendel and Reissmann, the practice of improvising a fantasy on given themes might have been inspired by the genius of Beethoven as an improviser, and still existed in the 1830's when the young Mendelssohn conformed to this usage; but

> Jetzt ist sie, und mit Recht[,] erloschen.[702]
>
> [Now it is extinct, and with good reason.]

Improvised cadenzas in solo concertos are a thing of the past, too – not because musicians would be unable to this, but because the cadenza has become an integral part of the composition. Mendel and Reissmann do not regret this:

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[699] Mendel, H. & Reissmann, A.: *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon,* vol. 8. Berlin, 1877; 72.
[700] Ibidem.
[701] Ibidem.
[702] Ibidem.

> Sie hat im Grunde genommen auch wenig ästhetische Berechtigung als öffentliche Kunstleistung; wie alle Improvisationen, gehört sie in die stillen Räume des Hauses. Das rein objekt- und ziellose Spiel der Phantasie hat ungemein viel Reiz für den schaffenden Künstler und es ist auch für den verständnissvollen Hörer von unendlichem Genuss es zu beobachten. Aber auf den Markt versetzt, in die Concertsäle unserer Tage, wird es nur zu leicht zur Gaukelei, im besten Falle Spielerei mit erborgten, nervenreizenden Klangeffekten.[703]
>
> [In principle, it can hardly be justified aesthetically as a public artistic performance; like all improvisations, it belongs in the quiet rooms of the house. The play of phantasy, without any object or goal, is utterly attractive to the creative artist, and enjoying it is an endless delight to a listener with understanding. Put on the market however, in the concert halls of our days, it all too easily becomes a magic trick, in the best case a fiddling with borrowed, irritating sound effects.]

The entry *Improvisatoren* brings little surprise as it follows the explanation of Koch. *Improvisiren* is defined as

> die von Begabung zeugende Fertigkeit, über ein gegebenes Thema ohne Vorbereitung frei zu Phantasieren.[704]
>
> [the skill, showing talent, to extemporise without preparation on a given theme.]

The ingredients of the definition of *improvisiren* are familiar enough: it takes an accomplished musician to be able to improvise, one has to be acquainted with all principles of composition, and the great masters such as Bach, Handel and Beethoven were much admired for their genius in this field. Nineteenth-century names are added: Johann Nepumuk Hummel, Ferdinand Hiller, Wilhelm Taubert, Carl Reinecke (all of them pianist / composers). Striking, however, is Mendel's and Reissmann's completely different appreciation of improvisation under the entry *Improvisiren*, compared with the article about *Phantasiren*:

> Uebrigens soll ein jeder Musiker im freien Phantasiren sich üben, aber mit strenger Einhaltung der Gesetze des bestimmten Ausdrucks und der logischen Entwickelung; man gewinnt dadurch bedeutend an Fertigkeit im schnellen und präcisen Gestalten der Gedanken, ausserdem, dass dadurch die Erfindung angeregt wird und mancher gute, der Verwendung und Ausbildung werthe Einfall zu Tage kommt. Daher pflegen auch viele Componisten ihre Phantasie, bevor sie an die Arbeit gehen, durch Improvisation zu beleben.[705]
>
> [Incidentally, every musician should train himself in free improvisation, but strictly adhering to the rules of distinct expression and logical development; this will considerably raise the skill of designing one's musical ideas quickly and precisely, and besides, the sense of invention will be activated and many

[703] Ibidem.
[704] Mendel, H. & Reissmann, A.: op. cit., vol. 5. Berlin, 1875; 383-384.
[705] Ibidem.

> good ideas, well worth being used and developed, will appear. This is why also many composers tend to revive their phantasy before starting with their work.]

It is tempting to explain this difference by the fact that the *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon* had, in the course of its publication (1870-1883), two different authors. After the death of Mendel (who was responsible for the first six volumes) in 1876, Reissmann continued the publication with volumes 7 through 12. The entry *improvisiren* is in volume 5, *Phantasie* (here not spelled with 'f') in volume 8.

However, the entry *präludiren* in the same eighth volume ('ein Vorspiel machen, eine Thätigkeit, welche bei den verschiedensten Gelegenheiten gefordert wird'[706] [making a prelude, an activity which is called for at many different occasions]) is much more positive about this musical practice. It describes preluding by organists who have to prepare the congregation for the character of the following hymn, but also – in great detail – preluding by accompanying pianists who not only have to make the singer feel 'at home' in the key (as it was written under *phantasiren*), but also have to introduce the audience into the mood of a song.

Whatever the reason of this inconsistency may be, apparently improvisation was not completely absent on stage during the later part of the nineteenth century; it is almost certainly the case that accompanists improvised preludes before songs on stage, and also that pianists preluded in public, as will be discussed in chapter 9.

### *Grove, Riemann, Sawyer*

The 1880 edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* has an entry 'extempore playing', which is defined similar to *Improvisiren* in Mendel-Reismann. After the definition, it provides many anecdotes about famous improvising composers – all of them already dead at the moment of publication. Indeed,

> ... the practice of publicly extemporising, if not extinct, is now very rare. (...) Even the cadence of a concerto (...) is now usually prepared beforehand.[707]

Improvisation is defined here as 'an equivalent term for Extempore Playing or Extemporising'.[708]

In Hugo Riemann's *Musik-Lexikon* (1882), *Improvisieren* has become the general term, and *Phantasieren* is associated with the *freie Phantasie.* Particularly interesting is Riemann's remark that every decent musician should be able to improvise variations on a given melody – which is not to say that this actually happened on stage at the time.

[706] Mendel, H. & Reissmann, A.: op. cit., vol. 8. Berlin, 1877; 155-157.
[707] Grove, Sir G.: *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*; vol. 1. London, 1880; 498.
[708] Grove, Sir G.: op. cit., vol. 2. London, 1880; 2.

> Improvisation (vom lat. ex improviso, »ohne Vorbereitung«), ein Vortrag aus dem Stegreif, ohne Vorbereitung, ohne vorgängige schriftliche Aufzeichnung, Name für dichterische wie für musikalische Augenblickserzeugnisse. Die meisten großen Meister der Tonkunst werden auch als Improvisatoren auf dem Klavier oder der Orgel gerühmt. Man unterscheidet I. und freie Phantasie, indem man bei ersterer ein strenges Binden an eine Form mitversteht. So gehörte es früher zu den Meisterproben eines tüchtigen Musikers, dass er eine Fuge über ein gegebenes Thema improvisieren (extemporieren) konnte, worin besonders J. S. Bach Erstaunliches leistete. Diese Art I. setzt eine intensive Konzentration der Geisteskräfte voraus, während das sog. Phantasieren ein vollständiges Freigeben der Phantasie ist und meist mehr kaleidoskopisch bunt wechselnde Stimmungsbilder ergibt. In der Mitte steht die Variierung eines gegebenen Themas, die Phantasie über eine Melodie, eine Kunst, deren jeder passable Musiker fähig sein muß. Auch brauchen manche den Namen I. jetzt gleichbedeutend mit Impromptu.[709]
>
> [Improvisation (from Latin: ex improviso, 'without preparation'), an extempore performance, unprepared, without previous written record, term for both poetic and musical products of the moment. Most great masters of music are also praised as improvisers on piano or organ. Improvisation is distinguished from free phantasy, the former implying a strict adherence to a musical form. For example, in the past it was part of a master proof of a capable musician to improvise (extemporise) a fugue on a given subject, something that especially J.S. Bach excelled in. This kind of improvisation requires intensive concentration of all powers of mind, whereas the so-called 'phantasieren' rather consists of fully releasing fantasy, usually resulting in a kaleidoscopic change of atmospheric pictures. In the middle there is the art of varying on a given theme, the fantasy on a melody, which every decent musician should be capable of. Often the term 'improvisation' is also used nowadays as an equivalent for 'impromptu'.

> Phantasieren ist soviel wie improvisieren, präludieren, extemporieren.[710]
>
> ['Phantasieren' more or less means improvising, preluding, extemporising.]

Riemann's emphasis on formal strictness in improvisation resonates with the approach Marcel Dupré takes in the second volume of his *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*, which has the appearance of a composition method.[711]

Frank Sawyer, finally, addresses his 1896 manual *Extemporization* primarily to organists as a matter of course:

[709] Riemann, H.: *Musik-Lexikon*. Leipzig, 1882; 410.
[710] Riemann, H.: op. cit., 697.
[711] Dupré, M.: *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*. Paris, 1925. Chapter 13 will discuss the late-nineteenth-century French organ school, where this strictness was ubiquitous.

> As extemporization lies chiefly within the province of the organist, this work is designed more especially for his use.[712]

His definition of 'improvisation' matches completely with Dupré's academic approach:

> Improvisation, or extemporization, is the art of creating and performing music at one and the same time. As music is the combination of well-balanced rhythmical phrases, welded together by the symmetry of form, so the mere rambling from chord to chord, without aim or design is not extemporization, since it is not music.[713]

## 8.4 Conclusion

Contemporary dictionaries and encyclopaedias are invaluable sources of information when we want to know how improvisation was looked at during the period under investigation, at least by theorists. The aspects of improvisation that were described in the 1760's by Rousseau, but also in the treatise of C.Ph.E. Bach, form a blueprint of the thinking about this topic during much of the nineteenth century, which is why their texts were quoted rather elaborately here. Even the terminology remained largely the same, though the exact meaning of words shifted. Interestingly, the often used terms *préluder* and *fantasieren* were derived from the corresponding nouns (*prélude*, *Fantasie*). Therefore, the most common historical terms for what today is called 'improvising' tend to indicate the act of producing a specific type of piece. It was understood that such pieces were usually created extempore, but this aspect is not reflected in the verbs themselves. Historical terminology focuses on the result, rather than on the process, and it certainly makes no pronouncements about twentieth- and twenty-first-century preoccupations such as originality or the degree of innovation. On the contrary, these terms emphasise the importance of musical genres and common styles; chapter 12 will elaborate on the importance that a common ground of shared expectations had until deep into the nineteenth century.

It turns out that 'improvising' (German: *improvisieren*, French: *improviser*) initially was used for the specific situation of eighteenth-century Italian street improvisation and for improvising poets, where the emphasis was on the text. Only in the course of the nineteenth century did this term acquire the more general meaning of extempore music-making. The French *préluder* could be used for any extempore piece, but was also associated specifically with improvising a prelude, especially so in its German equivalent *präludieren*, as well as in the English 'preluding'. In German, *fantasieren* ('making a fantasy') remained the most common term for improvising until the end of the nineteenth century. It was used for 'aus dem Stegreif spielen' in general, but could also refer to playing a free extempore fantasy without set meter, key or form as described by C.Ph.E. Bach. There is no English

[712] Sawyer, F.J.: *Extemporization*. London, 1896; 1.
[713] Ibidem.

or French equivalent for this verb. *Extemporaneous playing* or *extemporising* were used mainly in English; the German *extemporieren* did exist, but was not very common.

Which improvisatory notions are articulated in the examples from lexica cited in this chapter? In almost all cases, the entries describe music that is being invented during performance. A distinction is generally made between music that doesn't stick to a metre and modulates more boldly and suddenly than usually happens in compositions (*freie Fantasie*), and improvisations that follow formal structures as we know them from compositions (sometimes: *gebundene Fantasie*) . Also, the genre of the music is mentioned: the improvisation can be a prelude, a fantasy or variations on a given theme, possibly in interaction with the audience, or a free expression of the musician's imagination. With very few exceptions, the concrete examples are about keyboard players. Generally, improvising is seen as a way of creating new music, comparable with composing. Many authors stress that a good improviser needs to be familiar with compositional techniques. The opinions about the artistic value of improvising on the concert stage differ; in the second half of the nineteenth century, improvised fantasies are often mentioned as something that has with good reason disappeared from the concert stage (→ chapter 1.1).

It seems that in the nineteenth century, improvising was primarily understood as an unusual way of composing – i.e., in the moment of performance rather than at the writing table. Obviously this was not seen as something just any musician was capable of, judging from the frequent reference to prominent improvisers in dictionary entries. By contrast, the entries *Componist* and *Composition* in Gustav Schilling's *Encyclopädie* do not mention any particular composer at all![714] Maybe improvisation in the sense of *Fantasieren* was not as common as some would be inclined to think today. The claim that 'in the past, all musicians could improvise' might simply not be correct, at least when it means that they all were able to improvise music that equaled the quality that might be expected from a composition (→ chapter 1.2). Perhaps Riemann's more modest requirement that 'every decent musician should at least be able to improvise variations' was more realistic in this respect.

Especially because historical terminology with respect to improvisation focuses on the result, it cannot be disconnected from what constitutes musical life at large – a notion that, in a different form, occupied centre stage in part 2 as well. In the eighteenth century, public concerts (except for opera performances) were not numerous, but music 'happened' at many and various occasions. For many centuries, being a professional musician meant having an appointment at a court or a church; in such environments music was in many senses an 'applied art', almost always serving as a part of a larger whole – as it is still the case in liturgy today, and sometimes in theatre. In this sphere, an improvisatory approach must have been crucial for adapting to ever-changing circumstances, and therefore a

[714] Schilling, G.: op. cit., vol. II. Stuttgart, 1840; 277-280.

natural feature of music-making. With the rise of public concerts and the growth of a bourgeois audience, entertainment became an important factor, especially during the earlier decades of the nineteenth century. This was the environment in which the genre of improvised fantasies by virtuoso pianists flourished, though disapproving voices have always sounded. Compared to earlier manifestations of the improvisatory, this specific type of improvisation had an utterly short life; after 1848 it had generally disappeared.

It may seem easier to relate twenty-first-century classical music life to nineteenth-century public concerts than to the musical situation at eighteenth-century courts. However, it should not be forgotten that beneath the surface of nineteenth-century concert life a musical culture flourished that has no parallel today. Not only were salons extremely important for building musical careers,[715] but the level and the extent of music-making by (wealthy) amateurs must also have been considerable. The circle of musical friends around Johannes Brahms is a fine example of the late-nineteenth-century blending of amateur and professional music-making that formed the basis of an entire musical culture.[716] The profusion of nineteenth-century *Lieder* and piano compositions was primarily intended for the kind of informal musical setting most associated with private homes. I argue that in this respect, the difference between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries might be smaller than between the nineteenth century and our time. When Mendel-Reissmann (→ section 8.3) relegates improvised music to more private forms of musical enjoyment, this is not necessarily a sign of a 'decline of improvisation', but rather a restoration of the status quo of centuries before.

Such a shift of focus towards the private chamber exceeds by far the cosiness of Biedermeier culture. To conclude this chapter, an 'aphorism', written by the composer and music theorist Simon Sechter, may give an impression of the elevated meaning that musical inwardness could have in nineteenth-century bourgeois society. It was published in the *Allgemeine Wiener Musikzeitung* of May 27th, 1841.

> Es gibt zweierlei Kammermusiken. Eine, die man für Andere, und eine, die man für sich selbst macht. Diese letztere kann wieder in die echte und unechte Gattung eingetheilt werden, denn die unechte ist mit der Absicht begleitet, öffentlich aufzutreten. Wenn sich der Musiker in die stille Kammer zurückzieht, um dort mit leisen Tönen seine Gefühle zu beschwichtigen, oder sein Herz zur Gottheit zu erheben, das möchte die eigentlichste Kammermusik seyn. Diese allein kann frei seyn d. h. vonn der Sucht zu glänzen und von der Furcht zu mißfallen. Glücklich, wer solch ein Heiligthum hat, um sich von Zeit zu Zeit vom Treiben der Welt zu erholen, und sich des lästigen Putzes entledigen zu können, und nur dem gegenüber zu stehen, welcher unser Innerstes durchsieht, bevor wir zu ihm sprechen. Hier gelten nur wahrhaftige Gefühle, aber dafür beseligen sie auch. Kummervoll fangen deine Töne an, aber die unsichtbare Gegenwart deines Gottes füllt dein Herz mit himmlischem Troste, und die Töne, die

[715] Cf. Beci, V.: *Musikalische Salons: Blütezeit einer Frauenkultur.* Düsseldorf, 2000.
[716] Cf. Fellinger, I. (ed.): *Klänge um Brahms: Erinnerungen von Richard Fellinger.* Mürzzuschlag, 1997.

> du singst, erscheinen dir als von Ihm in dich übergegangen. Noch Keinen hat diese Gattung Kammermusik ohne Trost gelassen.[717]
>
> [There are two sorts of chamber music: one that is made for others, and one that is made for oneself. The latter can, in turn, be divided into a proper and an improper type, for the improper one is connected with the intention still to be performed in public. When the musician retires to a quiet room, in order there to calm his feelings with gentle sounds, or to elevate his heart to the Godhead: that might be the real chamber music. Only this music can be free, namely from the desire to shine and from the fear of displeasing. Lucky is he who possess such a sanctuary, where he can from time to time recover from the commotion of the world, and drop his annoying mask, and stand only opposite to him who sees through our soul before we speak to him. Only sincere feelings count here, but therefore they make us feel happy. Your first tones commence sadly, but the invisible presence of your God replenishes your heart with celestial consolation, and the tones that you sing seem to have been transmitted from Him to you. There is nobody who hasn't been consoled by this type of chamber music.]

This spirit[718] also speaks in Schubert's song 'An die Musik':

> Du holde Kunst, in wieviel grauen Stunden, / Wo mich des Lebens wilder Kreis umstrickt, / Hast du mein Herz zu warmer Lieb' entzunden, / Hast mich in eine beßre Welt entrückt! // Oft hat ein Seufzer, deiner Harf' entflossen, / Ein süßer, heiliger Akkord von dir / Den Himmel beßrer Zeiten mir erschlossen, / Du holde Kunst, ich danke dir dafür!
>
> [O blessed art, how often in dark hours, / when the savage ring of life tightens round me, / have you kindled warm love in my heart, / have transported me to a better world! // Often a sigh has escaped from your harp, / a sweet, sacred harmony of yours / has opened up the heavens to better times for me, / O blessed art, I thank you for that![719]]

Improvisatory music-making needs this dimension of inwardness, one might say. The emphasis that was laid in part 2 on nineteenth-century music as a rhetorical art, intended to persuade and move, only seemingly contradicts this idea. First of all, the central notion in Sechter's text is sincerity, which was also crucial for Quintilian and other classical rhetoricians. Secondly, part 2 focused on the performative aspects of *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio.* Weber's musical meditation, though, belongs to the area of *inventio*, the stage in the genesis of a speech where the ideas are born. It is about a musical

[717] Sechter, S.: 'Von Kammermusik'. In: *Allgemeine Wiener Musikzeitung*, Jhrg. 1841, no. 63 (27 May).

[718] In *Composing the Citizen*, Jann Pasler shows how new developments in late-nineteenth-century French art led to a situation in which music 'became a model, a window onto the nature of inner experience, intuition, and the creative process itself'. Pasler argues: 'While these new currents might appear as a return to art for art's sake, inspired by Baudelaire, led by the symbolists, and in part responding to Wagner, I see this as a reconception, an appropriation of music's utility for nonrepublican purposes.' (Pasler, J.: *Composing the Citizen: Music As Public Utility in Third Republic France.* Berkeley, 2009; 498.) Similarly, the 'inwardness' that Sechter propagates may be connected with the political and social situation in *Vormärz* Austria.

[719] Poem by Franz von Schober; translation on https://schubert.org/about/andiemusik/

state of mind, the *Phantasie*, guided by *wahrhaftige Gefühle*. It is this area of rhetoric which forms the background of part 3.

# Chapter 9. Preluding

## 9.1 Introduction

Originally a prelude was an improvised 'piece that preceded other music whose tonic, mode, or key it was designed to introduce'.[720] Preluding, or defining a key by means of improvised 'flourishes'[721] and in this way preparing for the performance of a piece of (in many cases composed) music, is an activity that always seems to have been part of Western instrumental music. Besides the improvised *preludia* (or *praeambula*) there is a long lineage of notated pieces that served as examples or models for extemporised ones. The oldest compositions in this manner are the *praeambula* for organ in the tablature of Adam Ileborgh (1448). Composed preludes developed into a musical genre with a very wide range of formal sophistication. Some of them make the impression of imitating a freely improvised flourish, but other ones are more developed and tightly organised. In the North German Baroque, the insertion of fugal sections in organ preludes eventually led towards the monumental diptychs entitled 'prelude and fugue' in the work of J.S. Bach. For other chord instruments such as harpsichord and lute as well, preludes could be notated, sometimes in a rhythmically open form such as the French *préludes non mesurés.* Besides chordal instruments, string and wind instruments were also used for preluding. For these categories, tutors and methods were published, especially from the early eighteenth century on. The advent of the piano at the end of the eighteenth century also gave rise to the publication of many instruction books that paid attention to preluding, again by way of sample compositions. Here as well the composed preludes vary wildly in scope, structure and refinement. Some preludes from the early nineteenth century (e.g. in Muzio Clementi's *Préludes et exercises* for piano) are hard to distinguish from etudes; other ones are more like carefully composed poetic miniatures, for instance Frédéric Chopin's *24 Préludes* op. 28, some of which have been and still are the subject of profound theoretical analysis. Time and again, tutors advise the reader to learn selected preludes by heart and transpose them, in order to eventually improvise similar pieces. In the second volume of his *Praktische Präludirschule*, Carl Gustav Hering even refers to Seneca's dictum 'Longum est iter per praecepta, breve et efficax per exempla' [teaching by precept is a long road, but brief and effective is the way by example]. He writes:

> Gute Beispiele, wie im Moralischen, sind für den jungen Geist wirksamer, als eine lange Reihe von Regeln, die übrigens ihren Werth behalten, und behalten mögen. Albrechtsberger, Beethoven, Clementi, Dussek usw. geben durch ihre Compositionen dem vorbereiteten und auf den Bau der

[720] Grove Music Online, entry: Prelude. https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43302

[721] Mather, B.B. & Lasocki, D.: *The Art of Preluding, 1700-1830*. New York, 1982; 6.

musikalischen Kunstwerke aufmerksam gewordenen Lernenden nun mehr Stoff zum fortgesetzten Studium, als ein bloßes Verzeichnis der Regeln, wovon er die Ausübung nicht vor sich hat. [722]

[Like in the field of morality, good examples are more effective to the young mind than a long series of rules, that, incidentally, remain valuable, and should be so. Albrechtsberger, Beethoven, Clementi, Dussek, etc., offer through their compositions more material for advanced studies to the student who is well prepared and attentive to the construction of musical works, than a mere list of rules of which he doesn't have the application in front of him.]

Preluding in the later eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, particularly on the piano, has been the subject of relatively extensive twentieth-century scholarly research. An oft-quoted study is Robert Wangermée's article 'L'Improvisation pianistique au début du XIXe siècle'.[723] A comprehensive survey of the field is offered by Jane Lohr in her PhD dissertation *Preluding on the harpsichord and pianoforte, circa 1770 to circa 1850*.[724] Valery Woodring Goertzen published an influential article entitled 'By Way of Introduction: Preluding by 18th- and Early 19th-Century Pianists'.[725] Shane Levesque's 'Functions and Performance Practice of Improvised Nineteenth-Century Piano Preludes'[726] intends to complement Goertzen's text. Another contribution on the same topic is Claudio Bacciagaluppi's 'Die Kunst des Präludierens'.[727] Preluding on the violin is discussed by Catherine Coppola in 'Didacticism and display in the capriccio and prelude for violin, 1785-1840'.[728] A more practical approach is given in the highly valuable *The Art of Preluding, 1700-1830* by Betty Bang Mather and David Lasocki[729] which is addressed to 'flutists, oboists, clarinetists and other performers.' In the area of Baroque keyboard preluding, Jean-Claude Zehnder recently published 'Das einfache Präludium – Improvisationsmodelle um 1700'.[730]

In this chapter, the focus will be on nineteenth-century preluding, which however cannot be separated from developments during the later eighteenth century, as several of the titles quoted above

[722] Hering, C.G. : *Praktische Präludirschule*, vol. 2. Leipzig, [1814]; Vorrede.

[723] Wangermée, R.: 'L'Improvisation pianistique au début du XIXe siècle.' In: *Miscellanea musicologica Floris van der Mueren.* Ghent, 1950; 227-253.

[724] Lohr, N.J.: *Preluding on the harpsichord and pianoforte, circa 1770 to circa 1850.* PhD dissertation, unpublished. The University of Iowa, 1993.

[725] Goertzen, V.W.: 'By Way of Introduction: Preluding by 18th- and Early 19th-Century Pianists.' *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Summer, 1996); 299-337.

[726] Levesque, S.: 'Functions and Performance Practice of Improvised Nineteenth-Century Piano Preludes.' *Dutch Journal of Music Theory,* Vol. 13, No. 1 (2008); 109-116.

[727] Bacciagaluppi, C.: 'Die Kunst des Präludierens'. In: Bacciagaluppi, Cl. & Brotbeck, R. & Gerhard, A. (eds.): *Zwischen schöpferischer Individualität und künstlerischer Selbstverleugnung. Zur musikalischen Aufführungspraxis im 19. Jahrhundert.* Schliengen/ Markgräflerland, 2009; 169-188.

[728] Coppola, C.: 'Didacticism and display in the capriccio and prelude for violin, 1785–1840.' In: Borio, G. & Carone, A. (eds.): *Musical Improvisation and Open Forms in the Age of Beethoven*. London, 2018; 149-160.

[729] Mather, B.B. & Lasocki, D.: *The Art of Preluding, 1700-1830.* New York, 1982.

[730] Zehnder, J.-Cl.: 'Das einfache Präludium – Improvisationsmodelle um 1700.' In: Schwenkreis, M. (red.): *Compendium Improvisation*. Basel, 2018.

suggest. The topic will be discussed from the perspective of music-making in public concerts and salons; the rich but very different topic of preluding on the organ will largely be passed over. More than the musicological articles mentioned, this chapter will focus on the questions of how students learned to improvise a prelude in those days, and how today's musicians can master this art. This investigation will start with a key figure in the musical life of the early nineteenth century: Carl Czerny.

## 9.2 Czerny's *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren*: background, content, reception

Carl Czerny's reputation as a composer primarily rests on the large number of piano etudes he published in well-known collections such as the *Schule der Geläufigkeit* op. 299 and *Die Kunst der Fingerfertigkeit* op. 740. Musically sterile though they may seem to most musicians (Stravinsky was one of the few exceptions to prove the rule), they have played a central role in a classical pianist's training until nowadays. However, the etudes only occupy a small part in his enormous output. The catalogue lists 861 published works, but on top of this a very large number of compositions remained unpublished. The published works are dominated by variations, potpourris, etc., in the 'brilliant salon-style', which was very popular at that time and therefore much in demand with the publishers. Czerny's more serious compositions hardly received attention already during his life. That does not mean that he lived a life of poverty, however: after a career as a child prodigy, he became one of Vienna's most sought after and well-paid piano pedagogues at the age of 15 years; when he turned 45, he was able to stop his intensive teaching schedule (he often taught twelve hours per day, and composed at night) and devote himself completely to composing.[731]

Czerny lived on the crossroads of the Classical and Romantic styles, and his diligence as an author makes him a valuable witness of early-nineteenth-century Viennese musical life. He was a student and later a friend of Beethoven, and thanks to his impressive energy, his writings form one of the most important and elaborate sources about the composer. Czerny is also famous as the teacher of Franz Liszt (though he regretted that Liszt left him too early: he thought that Liszt's later playing lacked finesse, and he even considered it 'in jeder Hinsicht ziemlich wüst und verworren'[732] [in every sense rather rude and muddled]). In his long list of compositions, Czerny reserved the round numbers (op. 200, 300, up until 600) for major works, often textbooks. His first large book is the *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* [A systematic introduction to improvisation on the pianoforte] op. 200, published in 1829.[733] This is a remarkable book in many senses. First of all, it is the only work of this scope solely devoted to improvisation that was written

[731] Biba, O. & Fuchs, I.: *»Mehr Respekt vor dem tüchtigen Mann«*. Kassel, 2009; 11.
[732] Czerny, C.: *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (Walter Kolneder, ed.). Strasbourg, 1968; 29.
[733] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* op. 200. Wien, [1829]; facsimile reprint: Wiesbaden, 1993.

before the twentieth century.[734] Second, it is striking that Czerny wrote his first book (a book on fugue playing and comprehensive piano and composition methods were to follow) on this very subject. And finally, this publication is even more remarkable in light of the fact that Czerny himself never gave virtuoso concerts as many of his contemporaries did.[735] After his years as a child prodigy he avoided the concert stage, focusing entirely on teaching. In short: Czerny was famous as a teacher, not as a performer. It appears that his book came as an answer to Johann Nepomuk Hummel's *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Pianoforte-Spiel* (1827).[736] Contrary to Czerny, Hummel was a world famous improviser on stage, but the few pages he spent on improvisation in his piano method had disappointed his fans. Interestingly, Hummel added a few pages (but no more than that) to the rudimentary chapter about improvisation in the second edition of his *Anweisung*, which appeared after Czerny's book (1830).

Czerny wrote about improvisation in several other works as well. The title of his opus 300 is *Die Kunst des Präludierens* (1833?); the book is conceived as a second part to the *Systematische Anleitung* and basically consists of 120 additional examples of preludes, preceded by a few harmonic cadences. The third volume of the monumental *Pianoforte-Schule* op. 500 (1839), *Von dem Vortrage* [about performance], includes one chapter about preluding and one about *Fantasieren* [improvising]. Finally, Czerny's *Briefe über den Unterricht auf dem Pianoforte* (1830?, without opus number) contains a chapter about improvisation. Czerny wrote extensively about almost every aspect of piano playing and composing, which also provides a context for his texts about improvisation. In March 1878, Johannes Brahms wrote with appreciation about Czerny's *Pianoforte-Schule* in a letter to Clara Schumann; presumably Clara Schumann had asked Brahms for instructional materials on behalf of her oldest daughter Marie, who was to assist her mother with her teaching job at Dr. Hoch's newly founded conservatory in Frankfurt.[737]

> Die grosse Pianoforteschule ist wohl der Mühe wert, durchgelesen zu werden. (...) Der Fingersatz bei Czerny ist höchst sehr zu beachten, überhaupt meine ich, man dürfe heute mehr Respekt vor dem tüchtigen Mann haben.[738]
>
> [The great *Pianoforteschule* is worth reading. (...) Czerny's fingering definitely deserves our attention, I think anyway that we should pay more respect today to this competent man.]

[734] Earlier, but more limited examples (not mentioned by Czerny) are: Georg Andreas Sorge, *Anleitung zur Fantasie* (1767); André Ernest Modeste Grétry, *Méthode simple pour apprendre à préluder en peu de temps* (1801); Carl Gottlieb Hering, *Praktische Präludirschule* (1812 / 1814).
[735] Biba, O. & Fuchs, I.: op. cit., 11.
[736] Mahlert, U.: 'Einführung' to the reprint of Czerny's *Systematische Anleitung* ... Wiesbaden, 1993; III.
[737] Schumann, E.: *Erinnerungen von Eugenie Schumann*. Stuttgart, 1927; 286. Also: Babbe, A.: *Clara Schumann und ihre SchülerInnen am Hoch'schen Konservatorium in Frankfurt a. M.* Oldenburg, 2015; 35.
[738] Schumann, C. & Brahms, J.: *Briefe aus den Jahren 1853-1896,* ed. Berthold Litzmann, vol. 2. Leipzig, 1927; 136.

Today, Czerny's books are important sources for the performance practice of the first decades of the nineteenth century. In particular, harpsichordist Dirk Börner has called the third volume of op. 500 'eine wahre Fundgrube für die romantische Aufführungspraxis' [a real treasure trove for Romantic performance practice]. He adds:

> Ich muß zugeben, daß ich ob der präzisen Anweisungen, die dort zu finden sind, als Cembalist geradezu blaß vor Neid werde und mich wundern muß, daß die Kollegen Pianisten hier nicht vermehrt zugreifen.[739]
>
> [I have to admit that I, as a harpsichordist, am downright eaten up with jealousy because of the exact instructions that can be found in this book, and that I am astonished that my fellow pianists don't take more advantage of it.]

In his *Anleitung*, Czerny successively treats the different forms of improvisation on the piano that were usual in his time. Ulrich Mahlert wrote an introduction to the 1993 facsimile reprint of the book, in which he discusses a review of Czerny's book by Gottfried Wilhelm Fink. (This review was published in 1829 in two consecutive issues of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*.) Fink proposes a different order of the chapters (which he thinks should be progressive in difficulty), but doesn't criticise the content – which suggests that he agreed with Czerny's taxonomy of piano improvisation in the early nineteenth century.[740] Chapter 1 in op. 200 deals with simple preludes, chapter 2 with more elaborate preludes with some thematic content; other chapters discuss cadenzas, fantasies on one or more subjects, variations, fugues and capriccios. Czerny's first chapter will serve as a starting point for the discussion of preludes in this study, whereas the other chapters will form a common thread throughout the remainder of part 3.

### 9.3 Ornamental preludes: function

In the first chapter of his *Anleitung*, Czerny explains the function and the set-up of simple preludes as they were supposed to be played before the performance of a larger piece. (This is the type of prelude mentioned at the beginning of the present chapter.) Because they basically consist of chords with more or less virtuosic flourishes (or only the flourishes in case of a monophonic instrument), I call such preludes 'ornamental'.

It seems that audiences at that time did not expect concerts to start abruptly out of the blue. The listeners had to be prepared and brought into the right mood by a suitable prelude; at the same time,

[739] Börner, D.: 'Carl Czerny – oder: Was würde passieren, wenn wir ihn wirklich ernst nähmen?' In: Bacciagaluppi, Cl. & Brotbeck, R. & Gerhard, A. (eds.): *Zwischen schöpferischer Individualität und künstlerischer Selbstverleugnung. Zur musikalischen Aufführungspraxis im 19. Jahrhundert.* Schliengen/
Markgräflerland, 2009; 26.
[740] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung...*; IX.

this would give the pianist the opportunity to get to know the piano,[741] or to check the condition of the instrument. Other functions of a prelude could be to let the player warm his fingers, or to arouse the attention of the audience.[742] Though preluding on the piano was described relatively often and extensively, players of solo-line instruments were also expected to improvise preludes. In 1799, Amand Vanderhagen devoted a chapter of his *Nouvelle méthode de flute* to this topic. It is interesting to read his remark that the sample preludes he shows should not be regarded as real preludes, but rather as sketches serving the students as a 'berceau' [cradle] for their own inventions – extempore, one may suppose. Vanderhagen also writes that a prelude should be played solo; like countless other authors, he detests the habit of orchestra musicians to prelude simultaneously before a piece, something 'one can hear unfortunately rather often in some orchestras where the leader isn't strict enough to forbid them'.[743]

Preluding to prepare the listeners, to check the instrument, to warm the fingers, to silence the audience: all of these aspects deserve a closer look. Starting with the musician's needs: today it would be rather strange for a pianist to come on the stage with cold fingers and not to know what to expect from the piano. Some modern authors suggest that pianos in those days were much more prone to imperfections than nowadays. This idea might be inspired by Liszt's reputation as a destroyer of pianos. However, there is no reason to assume that pianos generally were not taken care of, bearing in mind the enormous number of piano builders who were active during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Johann Peter Eckermann writes about a visiting pianist, Maria Szymanowska, who was to give a private concert in Goethe's house in Weimar on October 27th, 1823; one hour before the concert, one could hear a tuner at work on the piano[744] – just like pianists today hope that the concert organiser will have brought the piano into good shape. More likely, the pianist had no opportunity to try the piano in advance and to warm-up in a separate room. Czerny recommends such preludes especially for *Privatzirkeln*, by which he meant salons and house concerts. He writes that more elaborate preludes are out of place in public concerts, where just a few chords will suffice.[745] Such *Privatzirkeln* were social meetings for the upper class at a venue that was not naturally equipped for concerts. The concert room may have been occupied by the guests, and the soloist may have had to chat with his audience before the concert; that, at least, is what Liszt typically did.

In the short story *Een concert* (1839), the Dutch author Nicolaas Beets (whose alias was Hildebrand) describes with slight mockery a public concert in Haarlem, a provincial town. The

[741] Czerny, C.: op. cit., 5.
[742] For a comprehensive list, see Levesque, op. cit., 112.
[743] Vanderhagen, A.: *Nouvelle méthode de flute*. Paris, [1799]; 67.
[744] Eckermann, J.P.: *Gespräche mit Goethe*. Weimar, 1913; 54.
[745] Czerny, C.: *Vollständige theoretisch-practische Pianoforte-Schule* op. 500; part III: *Von dem Vortrage*. Wien, 1839; facsimile reprint: Wiesbaden, 1991; 90.

young pianist Henriette Kegge performs a solo piece in a programme that is typical for that time: the orchestra (consisting of *virtuozen en dilettanten*) performs three movements of a symphony ('of course the such-and-such one of Beethoven'), after which a virtuoso plays a solo on the French horn, followed by Miss Kegge's performance. After her solo, the orchestra performs the last movement of the symphony. Henriette does not wait her turn in some separate room backstage, but is sitting in the audience; when the moment is there, a gentleman descends from the stage to escort her to the piano.[746] As a matter of fact, public concerts usually did not yet take place in the type of building we think of as a concert hall – that is, a building especially designed for music with several halls, soloist rooms, etc. Probably Henriette didn't have a soloist room at her disposal! All the same, it is natural for any instrumentalist to 'feel' the instrument before the performance really starts – to check the tuning or the condition, as it were – but also to lower his anxiety before launching into the concert proper. A fairly recent example of a pianist trying the piano before the performance can be seen on the recording of Vladimir Horowitz's 1987 concert in Vienna – though the *Musikverein* building (raised in 1870) surely offers ample possibilities for a soloist to prepare for the concert!

**[9.3 #1 Vladimir Horowitz (1903-1989) in Vienna: improvised prelude; rec. 1987[747]]**

Arousing the attention of the listeners might have been more than necessary at a time when modern concert etiquette, demanding sacred silence during the performance, was still a long way off. Friedrich Wieck was just one of many observers who wrote, with barely hidden sarcasm, about the failing attention of chatting audiences; in *Clavier und Gesang* he says that one can stop in the middle of a piece when the listeners are talking loudly and continuously.[748] However, even an attentive audience apparently needed to be prepared. Part of this preparation was to get used to the key of the following piece.[749] A prelude was supposed to settle the tonality, or, in between pieces, to modulate from the previous tonality to the key of the next piece. Several early recordings show that this practice was still alive in the early twentieth century. In 1922, Ferruccio Busoni recorded a few pieces by Chopin; at this occasion, he connected the prelude in A major op. 28 no. 7 to the etude op. 10 no. 5 in G flat major with a simple dominant seventh chord, repeating the final motive from the prelude (at 0'56").

**[9.3 #2 Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924): modulating prelude (rec. 1922)[750]]**

[746] Beets, N.: *Camera Obscura.* Haarlem, 1871; 179.
[747] https://youtu.be/Nz26IpXtIT4 (uploaded 2012 by 'mightysmeagol')
[748] Wieck, Fr.: *Clavier und Gesang.* Leipzig, 1853; 79.
[749] Incidentally, Horowitz's prelude was not in the key of the first composition.
[750] https://youtu.be/e3O1yygAEco (uploaded 2012 by 'pianopera')

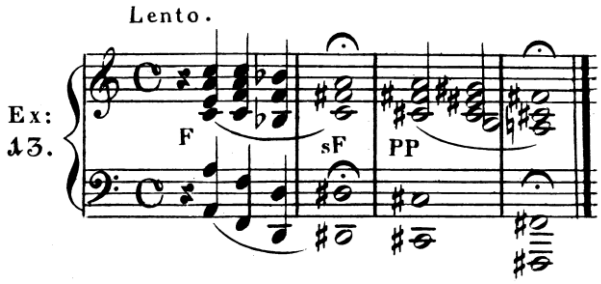
More elaborate is Josef Hofmann's modulating prelude between Chopin's Waltz in A-flat major (not on the recording) and *Andante spianato* in G major, recorded live during his Golden Jubilee Concert in 1937.

**[9.3 #3 Josef Hofmann (1876-1957): modulating prelude (rec. 1937)[751]]**

As late as 1950, Dinu Lipatti still connects Mozart's a minor sonata KV 310 with Schubert's *Impromptu* in G-flat major D 899 no. 3 on a live recording of his final recital in Besançon.

**[9.3 #4 Dinu Lipatti (1917-1959): modulating prelude (rec. 1950)[752]]**

Such modulations are not very different from examples in Czerny's first chapter, such as this one from a minor to f-sharp minor, based upon an enharmonic change in the diminished seventh chord:[753]




*Example 9.3.1*

Why was it so important to establish the key beforehand? Surely most musicians who put together a recital programme nowadays pay attention to a smooth connection of the keys of the pieces performed and try to avoid too obvious clashes, such as adjacent tonalities a tritone or minor second apart. A general experience, however, is that applauding between pieces tends to 'wash away' the old key in the audience's ears, making any difficult key relations less offensive anyway. So why bother to connect the keys with a transitional passage? Possibly in Czerny's day the issue was not so much to make the listener forget any previous key, but to bring him into the right mood for the piece to come. This might also be the reason why Czerny (like many other authors) emphasizes that the prelude should be adapted to the character of the composition it is to lead into. As Lohr notes, the entry *Fassung* in Johann Georg Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* makes the same point.[754] Sulzer writes that it is important that somebody who is going to enjoy a work of art or a performance should have the appropriate *Fassung* [state of mind, mood]. 'Wer sich in einer vergnügten Laune

[751] https://youtu.be/crG_sRwDsuo (uploaded 2011 by 'StockhausenIsMyCat')
[752] https://youtu.be/9tjstsWoQiw (uploaded 2017 by 'The Piano Files')
[753] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung...* op. 200; 10.
[754] Lohr, N.J.: op. cit., 209.

befindet, den kann man leicht zum Lachen bringen; alles, was man vor ihm sagt, hat doppelte Kraft.'[755] [Who is in a joyful mood, can easily be brought to laughter; everything you tell him has twice as much power.] Lohr writes: 'Every form of art needs some means of establishing the *Fassung* necessary for its proper reception. In music, this means is preluding; in speech, it is an introduction; in poetry it is a title.'[756]

At the beginning of this section (9.3) I suggested that starting a piece without an introduction might have been experienced as abrupt at the time. I think this is a motivation not to be overlooked. For instance, Robert Schumann wrote about his own *Sechs Concert-Etuden componirt nach Capricen von Paganini*, op. 10 (1833):

> Da sie aber, was ein gemischtes Konzertpublikum nicht gewohnt ist, meistens sehr Frisch auf die Hauptsache losgehen, so würden sie am besten durch ein freies, kurzes, angemessenes Vorspiel eingeleitet.[757]
>
> [Since they however mostly go straight for the main point, something a mixed concert audience is not used to, they'd better be introduced by a free, short and suitable prelude.]

Surely an opinion that is likely to astonish many modern music lovers!

Czerny's first chapter is dedicated to short preludes that lack any clear thematic material. They vary from just a few chords to elaborate flourishes on such chords, or freely modulating chord sequences. Czerny makes clear that this is just the first step towards improvising; even the second chapter about longer and thematic preludes, and the third one about cadenzas, don't yet belong to the category of 'real, independent improvisation' (*zum eigentlichen, selbständigen Fantasieren*[758]). The latter only starts with the fourth chapter, dealing with fantasies on one theme. Here Czerny compares the act of improvisation to rhetoric (see also chapter 3.4):

> Sobald der Spieler sich vor einer grösseren Gesellschaft, und überhaupt vor Zuhörern zum Improvisieren hinsetzt, kann er sich mit einem Redner vergleichen, der einen Gegenstand deutlich und möglichst erschöpfend aus dem Stegreif zu entwickeln strebt.[759]
>
> [A player who sits down in order to improvise in front of a small or large gathering of listeners, can be compared with an orator who aspires to develop a topic clearly and profoundly on the spur of the moment.]

[755] Sulzer, J.G.: *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste.* Leipzig, 1774; II, 216.
[756] Lohr, N.J.: op. cit.; 210. Tonality may have been an important aspect of this, because the idea that every key had its characteristic mood was prominent at that time (more than it is nowadays). Exploring this topic further would lead into the vast field of key characteristics, which lies beyond the scope of this study.
[757] Schumann, R.: *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker,* Bd. 1, Martin Kreisig (ed.). Leipzig, 1914; 213.
[758] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung…* op. 200; 35.
[759] Czerny, C.: op. cit., 36.

Like Ferand many years later, Czerny seems to distinguish between 'relative' improvisation, which functions within the context of a composition (Czerny does not mention ornamentation in this respect) on the one hand, and 'absolute' improvisation, the 'real' improvisation, in which the pianist takes on the role of a musical storyteller, on the other hand. Here Czerny's position differs from that of his contemporaries. Most authors write about preluding, which for them is the paradigm of improvisation. Augustus Frederic Kollmann, for instance, opens his *An introduction to the art of preluding and extemporizing* (1792), which focuses on short preludes and gives a few examples of more thematic ones, with an elaboration on the benefits of improvisation that perfectly matches the principles of this study (→ chapter 1.5):

> The science of music very much resembles a Language, and a Person who can only play by Notes or Memory, but not out of his own Fancy or Invention, may be compared to one who can read a Language and repeat some Parts of it, but who cannot converse in it. One principal Object therefore in the Study of Music should be to obtain the Capacity of expressing voluntary Thoughts either before and between other Pieces of regular Composition, or without Regard to any musical Piece.[760]

Though Kollmann also mentions preludes and interludes as opposed to improvisations that are 'without regard to any musical piece', his book only deals with the first category.

Carl Gottlieb Hering's *Praktische Präludirschule oder Anweisung in der Kunst, Vorspiele und Fantasien selbst zu bilden* [practical school of preluding, or guide for the art of forming introductions and fantasies] gives the impression of having a wider scope. In the introduction Hering writes:

> Der Nutzen eines solchen Lehrbuchs ist wohl unverkennbar. Es werden dadurch nicht nur musikalische Ideen in unsern jungen Musikern erweckt, hervorgerufen, geordnet, daß sie bald Schöpfer von Melodien werden, sondern es hat auch auf den Ueberblick größerer Kunstwerke einen bedeutenden Einfluß, der sie geschickt macht, die Ausführung eines Tonstücks bald zu übersehen, wodurch selbst das vom Blattspielen (prima vista) erleichtert wird.[761]
>
> [The purpose of such a manual is indisputable. Not only does it awaken, evoke and organise musical ideas in our young musicians, soon to make them creators of melodies, but to a great extent it also affects the overview of larger works of art, enabling the musicians to gain a quick view of the performance of a composition and in this way even simplifying sight reading (*a prima vista*).]

All this still holds true today. Hering's examples, however, are dominated by ornamental preludes; the few models for more elaborate improvisations in his book are, ironically, existing compositions that by far exceed the simplicity of the small exercises. For example, Hering quotes the entire *Tempest*

[760] Kollmann, A.F.: *An Introduction to the Art of Preluding and Extemporizing in Six Lessons for the Harpsichord or Harp.* London, [1792]; 2.
[761] Hering, C.G.: *Praktische Präludirschule oder Anweisung in der Kunst, Vorspiele und Fantasien selbst zu bilden*, Bd 1. Leipzig, [1812]; Vorerinnerung (pages not numbered).

sonata by Beethoven – without mentioning the composer![762] To summarise, *das freie Fantasieren* [free improvisation], which for Czerny is 'the real thing', is either absent or touched upon only superficially in most contemporary manuals. Hummel seems to have thought along the same lines as Czerny, since he devotes only a few words to 'ornamental' preludes in the last chapter of the second edition of his *Anweisung* and elaborates upon more thematic improvisations. However, his text remains too general to give a clear picture of such extemporised music.

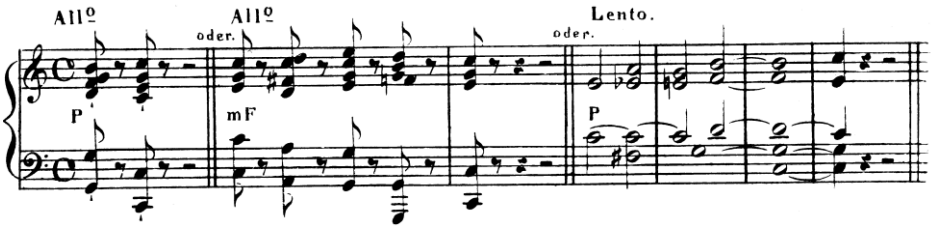
Another issue that distinguishes Hummel and Czerny from most other texts on preluding is in their didactic premises. Hummel writes that he presupposes that the student (a *Liebhaber*, incidentally) is thoroughly trained, both theoretically and practically, before he starts improvising. If not, he adds, such a player would be like somebody who can't draw and still wants to make a painting, or someone who wants to write a poem or a novel without knowing the language.[763] Similarly, Czerny insists (at least in opus 200) that an improviser needs to be a virtuoso and in full command of harmony. Conversely, most other authors present their manuals on preluding like an introductory harmony course; in the words of musicologist Thomas Meyer, preluding was seen (by them) as 'a propaedeutic to harmony and eventually even composition'.[764] This difference shows most clearly in the way the harmonic aspect of ornamental preludes is approached, which will be the subject of the next section of this chapter.

Prior to that I would like to emphasise that both views as presented here show a perspective that differs fundamentally from some twentieth- and twenty-first-century approaches to improvisation. In twentieth-century music pedagogy, improvisation became a tool to foster creativity – something that was seen as important at all levels of musical education, not only the higher ones.[765] Even in 'free improvisation' as it developed out of free jazz and other modernist music from the 1960's on, instrumental or vocal virtuosity in the traditional sense often seems to be less of a priority. In contrast, the nineteenth-century perspective, regardless the preferred didactic procedure, obviously acknowledged that music is like a language that must be mastered before one can express anything in it. For the implementation of improvisation in the professional training of modern musicians this is a highly relevant issue – if not the elephant in the room.

[762] Hering, C.G.: *Praktische Präludirschule oder Anweisung in der Kunst, Vorspiele und Fantasien selbst zu bilden*, Bd 2. Leipzig, [1812]; 35-62.
[763] Hummel, J.N.: *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Pianoforte-Spiel*, zweite Auflage. Wien, [1830]; 463.
[764] Meyer, T.: 'Über das Verfertigen von Präludien: eine Gebrauchskunst zwischen Komposition und Improvisation.' *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 160, No. 4 (1999); 24.
[765] See for instance Ritzel, F.: '«Dieser freche Blödsinn wird seit Jahren in den Schulen geduldet»: Über Improvisation in der Musikpädagogik.' In: Brinkmann, R. (ed.): *Improvisation und neue Musik*. Mainz, 1979; 66-95.

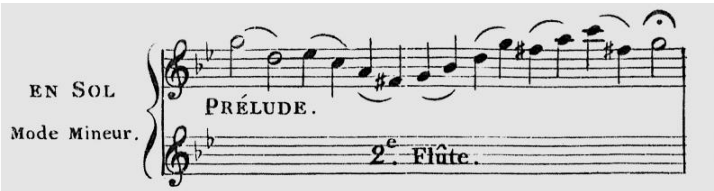
## 9.4 Ornamental preludes: harmony

Early-nineteenth-century ornamental preludes were in principle authentic cadences, with or without ornamentation. Czerny writes that just a few chords can already be sufficient as a prelude:[766]




*Example 9.4.1*

Preluding on melodic instruments followed similar patterns. Here too, it could suffice to play a harmonic cadence. For instance, Mathieu Peraut's *Méthode pour la flûte* (1800) gives the following example:[767]



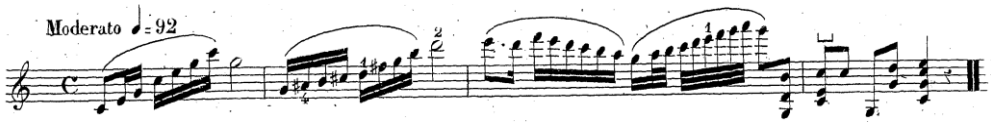

*Example 9.4.2*

Pierre Baillot's *L'Art du violon* (1834) gives extensive information on preluding on the violin. According to Baillot, 'modern' pianists do not disregard the art of improvising preludes, but of the violinists who are his contemporaries, he can only mention Rodolphe Kreutzer (the dedicatee of Beethoven's violin sonata op. 47) as being able to apply it with success; and Baillot notes that even he never improvises in public. (This supposedly means that Kreutzer improvised only at private concerts, exactly as Czerny wrote.) Baillot, who obviously thinks that violinists should prelude more often, writes that many have the talent to do so, but don't develop the required 'habitude acquise par une pratique constante' [routine acquired by continuous practising].[768]

It is interesting that Baillot, like so many contemporaries, emphasises the fundamental role of harmony, even for players of solo-line instruments. He even goes so far as to call the violin a 'harmonic instrument' in the sense that it can play the tones of a chord successively, like a harp, or

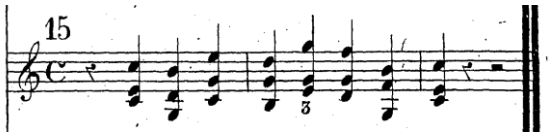
[766] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung* … op. 200; 5.
[767] Quoted in Bania, M: 'The Preluding on Melody Instruments in the 18th Century'. *The Consort*, vol. 70 (2014); 81.
[768] Baillot, P.: *L'Art du violon*. Paris, n.d. [1834]; 179.

simultaneously, like a piano.[769] The first way is illustrated in many sample preludes in the book, again based upon simple cadential harmony:[770]




*Example 9.4.3*

It is the latter way that, according to Baillot, is often neglected; for this reason he provides an ample number of harmonic preludes, usually consisting of an extended cadence (with the voice leading of course modelled according to the possibilities of the violin):[771]




*Example 9.4.4*

Valerie Woodring Goertzen emphasises the long history of improvised introductions at the start of performances, tracing it back as far as Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and summarising the phenomenon as an 'introductory gesture'.[772] That may be true, but then it is important to establish that the cadential model of ornamental preludes as presented by Czerny (and many others) actually does not 'open up': it closes.[773] Across Western tonal styles, cadences mark the end of sections. In this sense, such ornamental preludes cannot really be called introductory. This fact helps explain a remark of Baillot, who states that a prelude should always be followed by silence because 'le silence est, le plus souvent, la seul préparation qu'il convient d'employer' [in most cases, silence is the only preparation that is appropriate]. It is telling that Baillot supports his claim with two examples of famous musicians who created maximum effect by applying rhetorical silence: both of them were famous opera singers (Pierre Garat and Girolemo Crescentini). Along the same lines, Czerny writes that there should be a silence 'of approximately 20 seconds' between the prelude and the piece.[774]

The procedure of ornamental preluding is perfectly clear: the cadential progression may be dressed with flourishes and in this way be developed into a real prelude. Czerny's chapter mainly consists of examples of this idea. The nature of the flourishes will be discussed in the next section; but first, the harmony itself will be examined.

[769] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 180.
[770] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 182.
[771] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 184.
[772] Goertzen, V.W.: 'By Way of Introduction…'; 302.
[773] Cf. Caplin, W.E.: *Classical Form*. New York, 1998; 15.
[774] Czerny, C.: *Von dem Vortrage …* op. 500 III; 62.

Czerny's focus is on showing a large number of possibilities for elaborating or ornamenting an underlying harmonic progression. The harmonic pattern as such is taken for granted. Indeed, for preludes in the so-called 'brilliant style', it remains virtually unaltered:[775]

6

§. 4

Da aus jedem Accord sich die mannigfaltigsten Passagen entwickeln lassen, so kann man selbst die einfachste Modulation zu unzähligen, sowohl melodiösen, als brillanten Vorspielen ausspinnen. Jch wähle, als Beyspiel, den sehr gewöhnlichen Gang:

Lento.

Exempel. 1.

mF

P

Und nun sehe man, was hieraus gemacht werden kann:

All° Vivo.

Ex: 2.

FF

All°

Ex: 3.

P

Leggier:

8a

Cresc:

Dimin:

Smorz:

loco

*Example 9.4.5*

Other examples, however, show harmonic enrichments that are presented without any explanation:[776]

Jn gebundenen Accorden.

Andante.

legato

P. dol:

cresc:

P

dim:

PP

*Example 9.4.6*

[775] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung* ... op. 200; 6.

[776] Czerny, C.: op. cit., 7.

It is likely that many modern piano students would have difficulties turning the simple cadence above into this version, which is loaded with secondary dominants and deceptive cadences. However, it appears that even in Czerny's time, this step would be too ambitious for many. By the time he released his next magnum opus, the *Schule des Präludirens* op. 300, Czerny seems to have become aware of this problem, since he gives many more simple examples that stay closer to the original harmony. Probably to serve the very unexperienced improviser, the work opens with a page full of dominant – tonic progressions, written out in all major and minor keys. However, this is where Czerny's concern for the musically illiterate finishes; the next page gives a handful of richer cadence formulas, all of which have to be transposed by the student himself. The sample preludes that follow are of a level of difficulty that seems hard to reconcile with the utter simplicity of the first page of the book.

In the *Pianoforteschule* op. 500, Czerny is even more considerate of the beginning student. Here we read:

> Selbst der Anfänger kann und muss bereits in den ersten Monathen dazu angehalten werden, vor jedem Tonstücke ein kleines Vorspiel auszuführen, und auch hier sind die Scalenübungen das Erste und vorzüglichste Hilfsmittel.[777]
>
> [Even the beginner must already in the first months be urged to play a short prelude before every piece, and here as well, the scale exercises are the first and best tool.]

What follows is again the complete list of $V^7$ – I progressions; this time they are ordered according to the circle of fifths, whereas op. 300 showed them in chromatic order (such as the preludes and fugues in Bach's *Wohltemperiertes Klavier*). It looks as though this list was meant to give even the absolute beginner something introductory to play. It remains interesting from a modern pedagogical view that Czerny (and not only he, as will be shown) considered it necessary to write down such simple chords for students who, as can be seen from the chapter in the *Pianoforteschule*, should by then at least be capable of playing (diatonic and chromatic) scales and arpeggios. One suspects that members of the then booming group of amateur piano players were not always the creative musicians our time likes to imagine. It is possible to read Czerny's ops. 200, 300 and 500 as a gradual adaptation to the level of musicianship he was surrounded with.

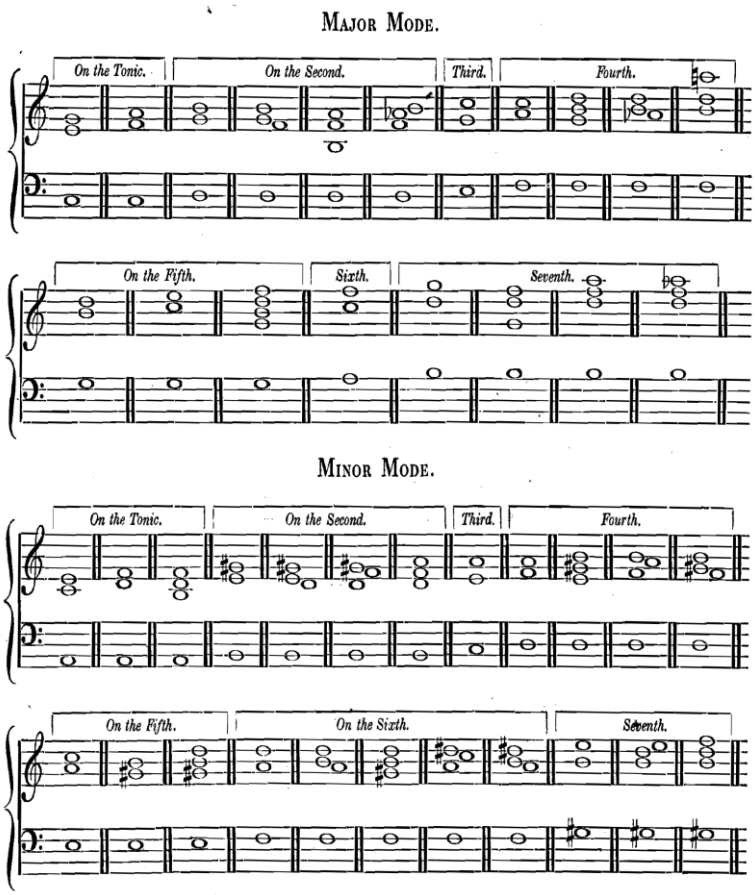
The methods that are intended for a more basic level of pianism use the ornamental prelude as a vehicle for learning elementary harmony; they are interesting sources with respect to musical training in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Many of them start with an explanation of basics such as the names of intervals or even keys on the keyboard, followed by voice leading principles. Chords are always presented as root positions or inversions, but when it comes to the actual chord choice by the student, traces of a basso continuo-oriented approach sometimes appear.

[777] Czerny, C.: *Von dem Vortrage...* op. 500 III; 84.

In *The harp preludist* by the famous French but London-based harp player Nicholas Bochsa, for instance, the different harmonic possibilities are presented as interval constellations that may be constructed over the different bass scale degrees (see ex. 9.4.7). The student, who by then has learnt these options separately, is given the following advice:

> The Pupil will copy this Diagram, placing under each chord its proper denomination. The Master will then direct him to write a Prelude; furnishing for himself the bass as well as the upper parts, and including all the harmonics at present known to him.[778]

The musicologist Claudio Bacciagaluppi divides preluding manuals from around 1800 into 'verspätete Generalbaßschulen' and 'Papegeischulen' ['delayed figured bass-schools' and 'parrot-schools'].[779] Bochsa's approach is clearly based on figured bass pedagogy, and might be considered as anachronistic, given that the book was published around 1840. On the other hand, one might see this example (less pejoratively) as evidence of the longevity of a basso continuo approach to harmony.

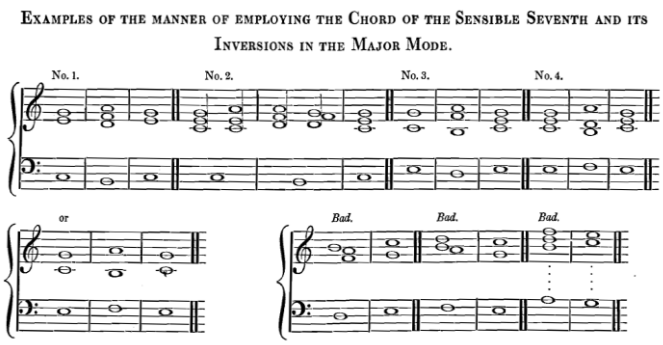



*Example 9.4.7*

[778] Bochsa, N.: *The harp preludist.* London, n.d. [1840]; 28.

[779] Bacciagaluppi, C.: 'Die Kunst des Präludierens'. In: Bacciagaluppi, Cl. & Brotbeck, R. & Gerhard, A. (eds.): op. cit., 175.

What the student actually learns in this book is how the different chords that are listed here occur in a voice leading context; when they are presented individually in the part of the book that precedes this table, they usually appear in examples consisting of two or three chords:[780]




*Example 9.4.8*

This approach gives the student tools to handle many different musical situations, thereby fostering flexibility. The flip side is that it requires familiarity with this harmonic language when creativity is desired. When an unfigured bass is provided (as is often the case in Bochsa's method), a student is able to harmonise it; when the student is improvising a prelude, however, there might be no given bass line. The tacit assumption of such pedagogy seems to be that experience with many given basses will somehow enable the student to come up with his own logical progressions. In other words: students are supposed to have become familiar with a number of harmonic loci communes. For present-day students, this can be a large problem. For them, the harmonic language of around 1800 is just one of many harmonic vocabularies between musical styles from Baroque music to pop. Students today need to be taught loci communes for this particular style.[781] This is where the category of 'parrot-schools' becomes relevant. This term refers to a large number of manuals on preluding that offer a number of musical 'ready-mades', composed building blocks that can be combined in various ways; the student is supposed to learn them by heart (and transpose them if necessary), and in this way he will be able to 'improvise' preludes. Philip Anthony Corri's *Original System of Preluding*, the fourth part of his comprehensive piano method *L'Anima di Musica*, uses this method.[782] Philip Anthony Corri, the son of Domenico Corri[783] (→ chapter 4), composed a large number of 'capos' (introductions) and 'codas' (endings), which could be combined to form an entire prelude. Corri even saved the student the trouble of transposing the fragments by writing them out in every key. In Corri's words:

[780] Bochsa, N.: op. cit., 22.
[781] Also to an experienced improviser, loci communes matter: they are a form of stylistic guidance.
[782] Corri, P.A.: *An Original Treatise upon Piano Forte Playing*. London, [1810].
[783] https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.06565

> By this means, and transposing certain preludes in different keys, the Scholar may form endless variety, and with perseverance become so habituated to passages, Arpeggios, and Modulation, that the Ear will imperceptibly guide the fingers, and direct the fancy to model preludes in various shapes.[784]

It is unlikely that an early nineteenth-century piano student needed to learn loci communes in this way, since his familiarity with this musical language may be taken for granted. Rather, I believe that books like this one must be seen as a reaction to the fast growing market of amateur pianists with a strong desire to 'play like a pro'. Several books promise the young student that the author 'shall not confuse the Pupil with its laws of avoiding octaves, fifths &c. but only give Examples for the Ear to catch' (Corri[785]), that the information will be offered 'in so new, clear, & concise a manner, as in a short time' (Bochsa[786]), or that harmony will be reduced to only two (types of) chords (André Grétry[787]). Obviously, the commercialisation of the music world is not just a phenomenon of our time.

To modern musicians, for whom early-nineteenth-century harmony has become a foreign language despite its apparent familiarity, books such as this offer valuable information. Musical building blocks are likely to be commonplace material. With respect to harmony in particular, the early piano students were provided with standard progressions that saved them 'the confusion of avoiding octaves, fifths &c.'. To us, such samples are 'loci proprii' (→ chapter 2.2) that help us defining more general loci communes.

## 9.5 Harmonic loci communes

In this section I will present a collection of harmonic loci communes for preluding that are based on the preluding manuals of Corri, Grétry, Czerny (op. 300), as well as one that has not been mentioned in detail yet: *L'Harmonie du pianiste* by Frédéric Kalkbrenner.[788] Kalkbrenner's book is remarkable because it is a compact harmony treatise in which almost every harmonic progression is not only given in its textbook form, but immediately applied to example figurations that may serve for preluding.

None of these manuals works from figured basses; the chords are always written out in full. In the case of Corri, this happens in only one position (according to the 'parrot-principle'), while Kalkbrenner often gives several possibilities and adds figures as well. Chords in open structure are discussed in none of the methods. For this study, I have decided to notate the progressions by means

[784] Corri, P.A.: op. cit., 85.
[785] Corri, P.A.: op. cit., 83.
[786] Bochsa, N.: op. cit., title page.
[787] Grétry, A.E.M.: *Méthode simple pour apprendre à préluder en peu de temps, avec toutes les ressources de l'Harmonie.* Paris, 1802; Avant-propos.
[788] Kalkbrenner, F.: *Traité d'Harmonie du pianiste.* Paris, 1849; facsimile reprint Amsterdam, 1970.

of figured bass, for reasons mentioned earlier (→ chapter 4.6). The term 'locus communis' is not used by these authors, but the idea seems to have been in their minds. For instance, Grétry finishes the *Méthode simple* with a table of all different formulas he has shown in his book, described in general terms. The application of this *tableau* as imagined by him comes very close to the concept of locus communis:

> J'ai souvent remarqué qu'en préludant ou en fuguant, l'élève, même d'une certaine force, est embarrassé sur ce qu'il va faire; c'est pourquoi je regarde le tableau suivant comme très-commode. En travaillant, l'élève l'aura sous les yeux; il en parcourra les chiffres, sans suite; et il se remémorera toutes ses ressources harmoniques, qu'il adaptera à ce qu'il exécute. On a laissé, à la fin de ce tableau, des numéros en blanc sous lesquels le maître peut écrire les marches de basse et les accords qui nous ont échappé.[789]
>
> [I have often noticed that even a gifted student who is improvising preludes or fugues can be embarrassed, not knowing what to do; therefore I consider the following table very helpful. The student can keep it under his eyes during practising; in his mind, he will run through the list, remembering all harmonic means, and adapt them to what he is playing. At the end of the table I left blank a couple of lines where the teacher can notate bass progressions and chords that have escaped my attention.]

Joseph Zimmermann comes even closer to conveying the idea of loci communes in his *Traité d'harmonie, du contrepoint et de la fugue* (1840):

> Les progressions harmoniques sont des séries d'accords *appartenant à tout le monde*, elles sont considérées comme des formules toutes faites que chacun emploie sans scrupule; elles sont d'un excellent usage pour préluder.[790]
>
> [Harmonic progressions are series of chords that *belong to everyone*, they are considered ready-made formulas that everybody uses without any objection; they are very useful for preluding.]

Zimmerman specifies a number of progressions that match the ones included in this section and will therefore not be repeated. About keyboard harmony, he remarks:

> En Italie l'application des règles de l'harmonie se fait sur le clavier; cette méthode est excellente pour conduire à préluder.[791]
>
> [In Italy they train the application of the rules of harmony at the keyboard; this is an excellent way to arrive at preluding.]

[789] Grétry, A.E.M.: op. cit., 89-90.
[790] Zimmerman, P.-J.-G.: *Encyclopédie du pianiste compositeur*, 3e partie: Supplement. Traité d'harmonie, du contrepoint et de la fugue. Paris [1840]; 18. The italics are mine.
[791] Quoted in Bacciagaluppi, C.: op. cit., 176.

Nine years later, Kalkbrenner's *Harmonie du pianiste* would do precisely that. Zimmerman's reference to 'Italy' is also interesting, since it alludes to the *partimento* tradition, which has become a popular field of theoretical and practical study since the appearance of Robert Gjerdingen's *Music in the Galant Style*[792] (→ chapter 2). Zimmerman was teaching at the Paris conservatoire, where the Italian influence was very strong (→ chapter 4). However, he only refers to the Italian *maestri* in these general terms. The other authors do not mention the connection with Italy at all – not even Corri, whose father was an Italian émigré. Kalkbrenner traces back the 'rule of the octave' (see below) to Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, one of the teachers of Beethoven.

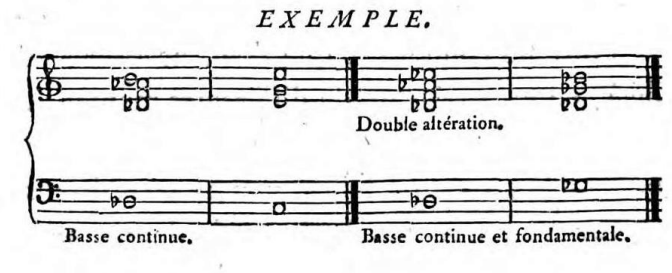
It goes without saying that no list of musical loci communes can ever be complete. The one below gives a survey of harmonical patterns as they occur in the methods mentioned above, supplemented with fragments from sample preludes in these works. Czerny hardly gives any harmonic guidance (as mentioned above), but his preludes in op. 300 in particular are harmonically rather consistent. Corri's more developed sample preludes in the second half of his book are harmonically much richer than the 'parrot' ones. In general, the harmonic patterns I discuss below were selected because of their ubiquity in many other compositions from the same period (roughly between 1795 and the1840's); in other words, I included only models that I believe to have been 'communes'. Some of the patterns Kalkbrenner shows cannot really be called common, and are therefore not on this list. (It is possible that Kalkbrenner included them mainly as voice leading exercises.) The provenance of the loci is indicated by the abbreviated names of the authors: C = Corri, G = Grétry, Cz = Czerny and K = Kalkbrenner. The patterns have been grouped and organised by their functions in a prelude: cadences, prolongations, movements from tonic to dominant, sequences, and scales. All models have been transposed to C major or a minor.

### *a. Cadences*

The first harmonic locus communis to be mentioned is of course the authentic cadence itself, usually $V^7$ – I or I – $V^7$ – I. Czerny (in op. 300) and Corri write them out in full, covering all keys. Both Grétry and Kalkbrenner confusingly list the different forms of cadences using French Rameau-based terminology, but sometimes with a different meaning. Apart from the *cadence parfaite* (V – I), they include the *cadence imparfaite* (I – V, or Rameau's *cadence irrégulière*); the *cadence irrégulière* ($V^7$ – $I^6$, or Rameau's *cadence imparfaite*, found only in Grétry); the *cadence rompue* ($V^7$ – VI); and finally (both of which are found only in Kalkbrenner), the *cadence plagale* (I – IV!) and the *cadence évitée* (V – $I^{b7}$). Please note that Kalkbrenner's definition of the plagal cadence is very unusual; I was not able to trace it back to any other author.

[792] Gjerdingen, R.: *Music in the Galant Style*. New York, 2007.

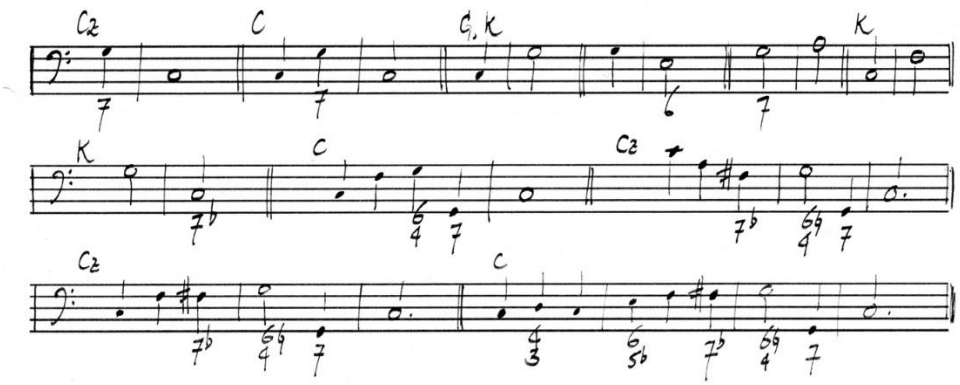
In the perfect authentic cadences, the diatonic subdominant chord is always a IV, not a II$^{6}$. In addition, Czerny very often includes the raised fourth scale degree in the bass,[793] always with a fully diminished seventh chord. Grétry also mentions the possibility of an alteration of this chord, with a diminished 3rd replacing the minor 3rd above the root.[794] This results in the German augmented sixth chord (which typically occurs in the first inversion), and Grétry discusses the potential of this chord to be interpreted enharmonically as a dominant seventh chord. Grétry has difficulty explaining the German chord and calls it an *accord de fantaisie*. He regards it as an incomplete dominant ninth chord with a flat fifth (which serves as the bass) and the root missing; this chord 'cannot be inverted'. Nevertheless, this is an interesting early mention of the enharmonic equivalence of German sixth chord and dominant seventh (where the fundamental bass is the same as the actual bass note),[795] which would be fully explored in compositions of Franz Schubert, a few decades later.




*Example 9.5.1*

Kalkbrenner also mentions this chord (*accord de quinte et sixte augmentée*), but 'for practical reasons' regards it as being in root position and consequently shows all 'inversions' with their resolutions (some of which are actually rather unusual).[796] In the variants of cadences as they appear in these treatises, the German sixth chord does not occur. Possibly it was considered too 'special' for commonplace cadences; the fact remains that it did occur in composed music, for instance in the repeated final cadence of Robert Schumann's piano piece *Traumeswirren* op. 12 no. 7 (1837): I - #IV$^{6/5}$ $_{(d.dim)}$ - I$^{6/4}$ – V$^{7}$ – I - #IV$^{6/5}$ $_{(d.dim)}$ - I$^{6/4}$ – V$^{7}$ – I.

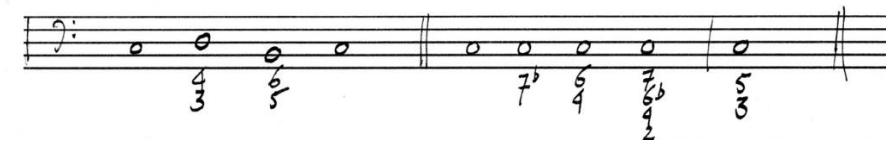
[793] Some readers might prefer to label this chord as a secondary VII to V.
[794] In German: *doppelt vermindeter Septakkord* ['double diminished seventh chord'].
[795] Grétry, A.E.M.: op. cit., 27. Grétry notates the roots of the chords (the *basse fondamentale*) on a separate staff; he asks from the student to sing the *basse fondamentale* while playing the harmonies – an idea that might still be pedagogically interesting today!
[796] Kalkbrenner, F.: op. cit., 26-27.



*Example 9.5.2*

In a prelude, chord progressions like the ones shown above may be extended by prolonging important chords – for instance, the tonic triad. Example 9.5.3 shows two tonic prolongations, the first one typical for a beginning, the second one for the end of a piece:

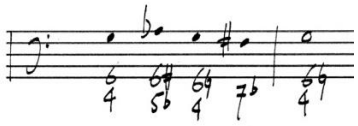
C G



*Example 9.5.3*

Also the cadential 6/4 chord is prone to prolongation (with the German sixth chord as a neighbour chord):

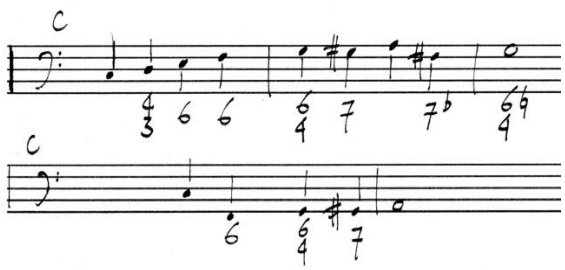
Cz



*Example 9.5.4*

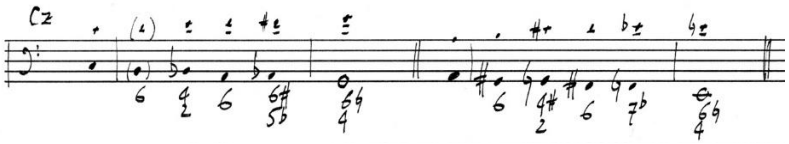
### *b. Tonic – dominant movement*

In a longer prelude, the movement from the initial tonic to the cadential 6/4 is likely to be ornamented harmonically, often with stepwise bass-progressions. The lower of the two patterns from Corri (below) can be seen as an alternative to the top one; in fact it only ornaments the I – VI progression, and usually will be followed by (#)IV – $I^{6/4}$.



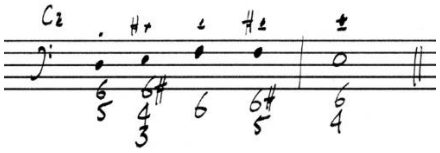
*Example 9.5.5*

Chromatic bass progressions are also characteristic. The little notes indicate the most appropriate upper voice – as a result of which the pattern acquires the character of a voice leading combination:



*Example 9.5.6*

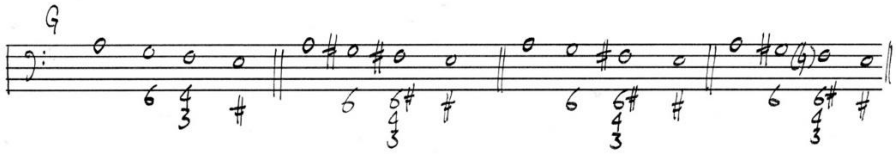
An alternative harmonisation of the latter upper voice:



*Example 9.5.7*

**[9.5 #1 Examples 9.5.6 and 9.5.7]**

In the context of his discussion of the rule of the octave in minor (see below under *d*), Grétry gives several options for the descending movement from I to V.



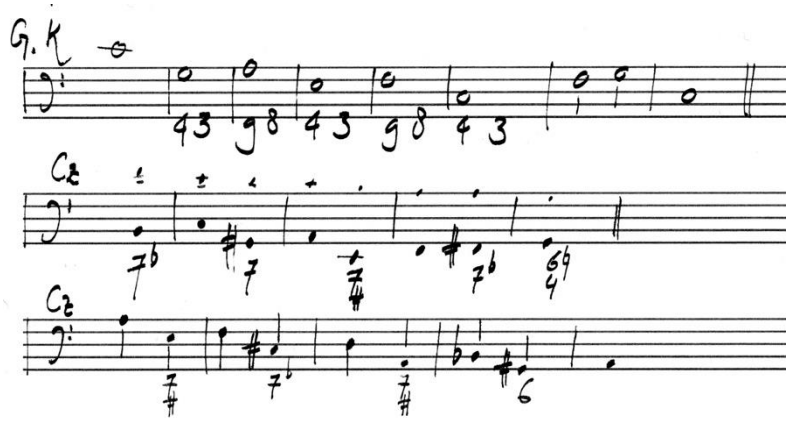
*Example 9.5.8*

### *c. Sequences*

The loci communes to be mentioned in sections *c* and *d* have old roots and many of them can also be found in eighteenth-century treatises, for instance in the chapter 'Von dem Fantasiren' in Jacob Adlung's *Anleitung zu der musikalischen Gelahrtheit* (1758). The *Romanesca* ('Pachelbel-sequence') is a very old sequential model. It appeared in written form already in the sixteenth century[797] and lost little of its importance in nineteenth-century music. Both Grétry and Kalkbrenner add the

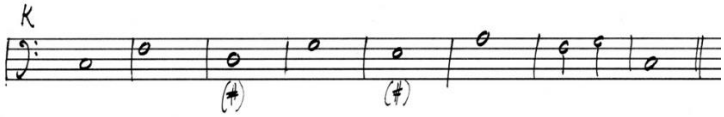
[797] Erhardt, M.: *Upon a ground*. Magdeburg, 2013; 14.

characteristic 4-3 and 9-8 suspensions. In the nineteenth century, its polyphonic origins were gradually forgotten, giving way to a harmonic interpretation. The examples from Czerny show how it is seen as a succession of deceptive cadences, basically ornamenting a falling third sequence (I – VI – IV – II) that functionally circumscribes a tonic – subdominant movement.



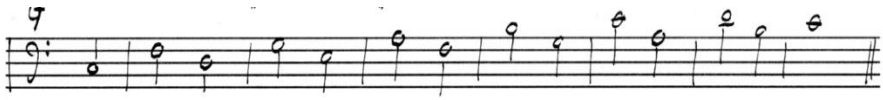
*Example 9.5.9*

Another well-known old model is the so-called *Monte* sequence. Kalkbrenner shows it in its most simple form; his textbook version contains no secondary dominants. In the versions with pianistic figurations, however, sometimes thirds are raised, resulting in a chromatic upper voice.



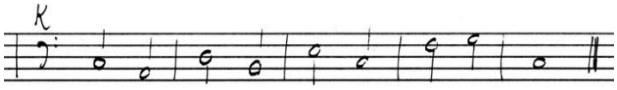
*Example 9.5.10*

Grétry's version is remarkable in that it continues the sequence further than usual, which occasionally results in diminished triads in root position, notably on the VII before the final I.



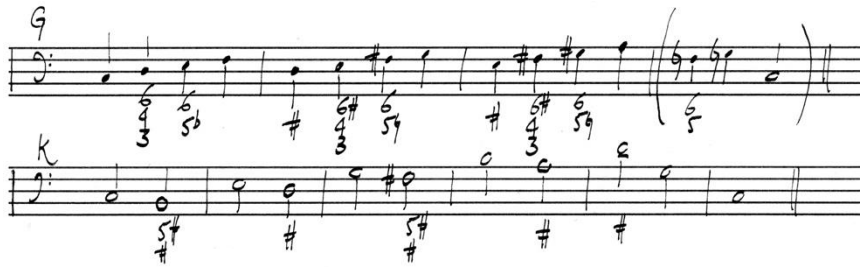
*Example 9.5.11*

Kalkbrenner also gives a version that reverses the metrical positions of the chords :



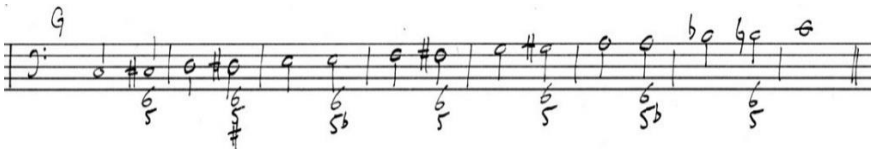
*Example 9.5.12*

Grétry furthermore mentions a harmonically ornamented version, and Kalkbrenner a modulating sequence that can be regarded as a reversed Romanesca:



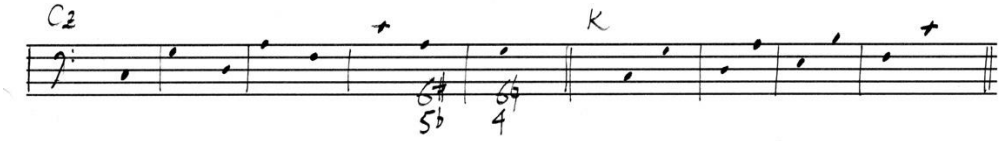
*Example 9.5.13*

Grétry uses the Monte sequence to harmonise a rising chromatic scale in the bass:



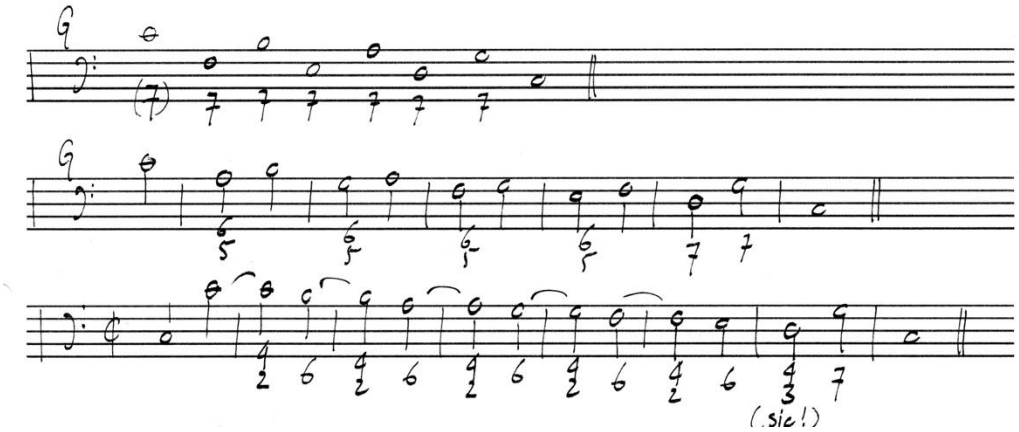
*Example 9.5.14*

Gjerdingen refers to Fedele Fenaroli (1770) for a description of a model that he terms 'Monte Romanesca' and that occurs in Czerny and in Kalkbrenner.[798] Schubert made frequent use of it:



*Example 9.5.15*

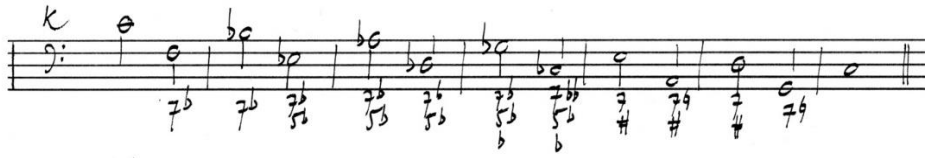
Diatonic falling fifth-sequences are mentioned in various forms:




*Example 9.5.16*

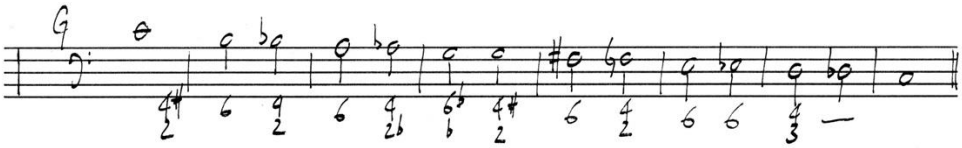
Kalkbrenner adds the chromatic version:

[798] Gjerdingen, R.: op. cit., 98.



*Example 9.5.17*

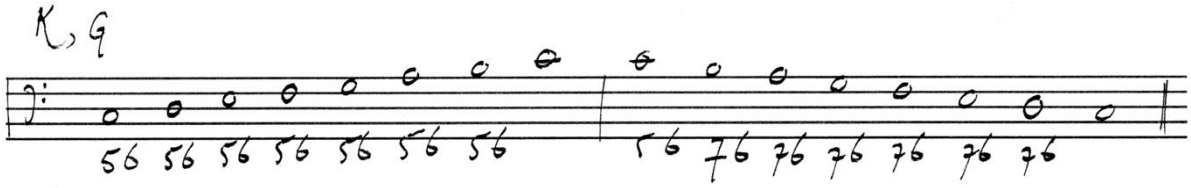
Grétry uses the chromatic falling fifth-sequence for the harmonisation of the descending chromatic scale:



*Example 9.5.18*

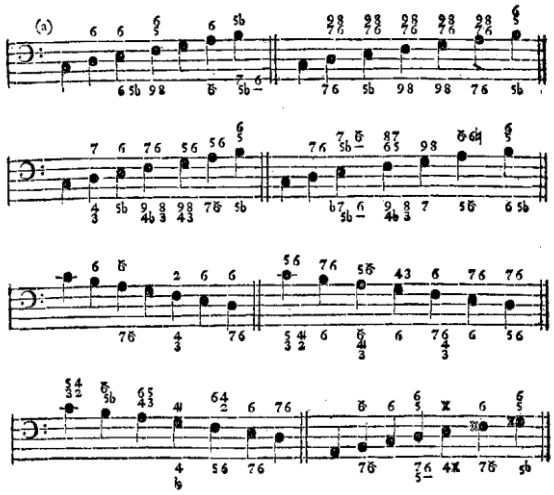
### *d. Scales*

Both Grétry and Kalkbrenner mention the following traditional harmonisation of the major scale in the bass (the rising scale with 5-6 progressions harmonically can also be seen as a Monte sequence):

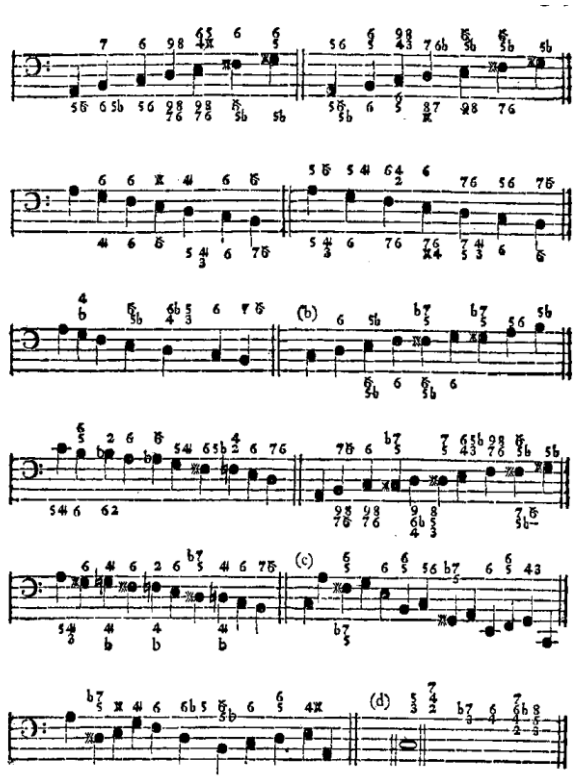


*Example 9.5.19*

The idea of basing a prelude on a harmonised scale in the bass was already elaborated by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, who gives several options in his *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen* (1762):[799]

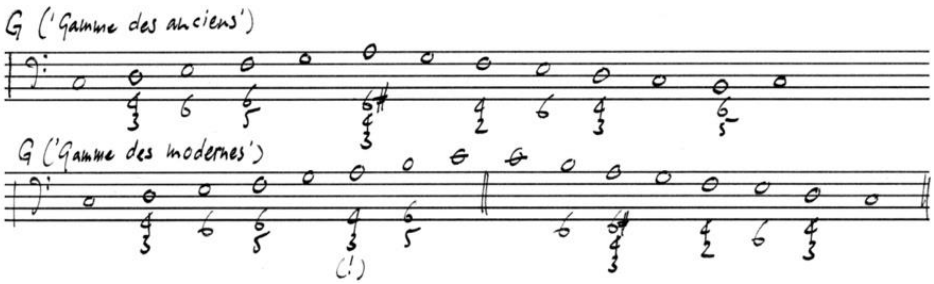


[799] Bach, C.Ph.E.: *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1762). Facsimile reprint: Wiesbaden, 1986; 328-329.



*Example 9.5.20*

When we compare Bach's harmonic richness with the *regola dell'ottava* [rule of the octave][800] that played such a prominent role in the *partimento*-tradition, it is striking to see how clearly defined and unified the Italian version was. The late-eighteenth-century preference for elegance, simplicity and 'naturalness', resulting in a very strong focus on the three principal degrees (I, IV and V), is also seen in Grétry's version of the rule of the octave. Remarkably, Grétry distinguishes between the 'scale of the elders' (*gamme des anciens* – basically a hexachord) and the *gamme des modernes* (the full scale). The latter in principle matches the Italian *regola dell'ottava* (with the exception of the ascending sixth scale degree, which is not harmonised with a secondary dominant).



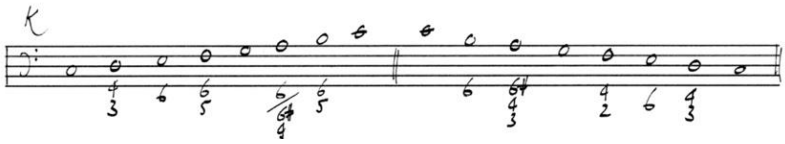

*Example 9.5.21*

Unlike Grétry, Kalkbrenner does use the term *règle de l'octave.* About the major scale, he writes:

[800] The 'rule of the octave' is a standardised harmonisation of the ascending and descending diatonic scale in the bass.

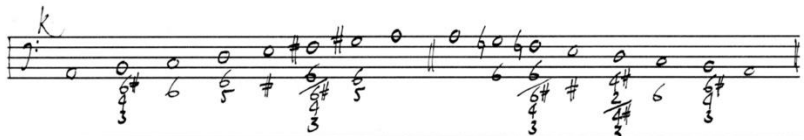
> Je n'ai jamais pu m'expliquer pourquoi la gamme du mode majeur ascendante, ne détermine pas le ton de sol, comme elle le fait en descendant. Je le préfère beaucoup.[801]
>
> [I have never been able to understand why the rising major scale doesn't move towards the key of G major, like it does when it descends. I prefer that very much.]

Both variants are included here, separated by a slash:



*Example 9.5.22*

For the minor scale as well, Kalkbrenner 'asks permission to suggest a small alteration' that would break the *fastidieuse monotonie* [dreadful monotony] of the rule of the octave 'as it has been given to us by Albrechtsberger *et les anciens*'.[802] Both versions are again separated by slashes here:



*Example 9.5.23*

Apparently the clarity of late-eighteenth-century harmony increasingly felt like a straitjacket during the course of the nineteenth century, and more and richer harmonic variants were added to the rule of the octave. At the same time, it is striking that authors of texts on preluding nevertheless keep falling back on old models such as the Rule in its original diatonic version. Also Zimmerman mentions the rule of the octave in great detail, adding the following comment:

> Il faut encore joindre aux marches que nous venons d'indiquer la règle d'octave; elle est encore plus féconde en ressources pour préluder. On la saura également par cœur et on la jouera aux 3 positions[803] dans tous les tons majeurs et mineurs.
>
> On appelle règle d'octave l'échelle diatonique dont chaque note reçoit l'accord qui lui est propre.
>
> On comprend qu'en préludant on n'est pas tenu de faire entendre cette gamme dans son intégrité en montant et en descendant, on pourra l'employer par fragment et en la variant de mille manières. Quand

[801] Kalkbrenner, F.: op. cit., 30.
[802] Kalkbrenner, F.: op. cit., 31.
[803] This is a clear distinction from 'parrot-schools' in which just one notated form was to be memorized.

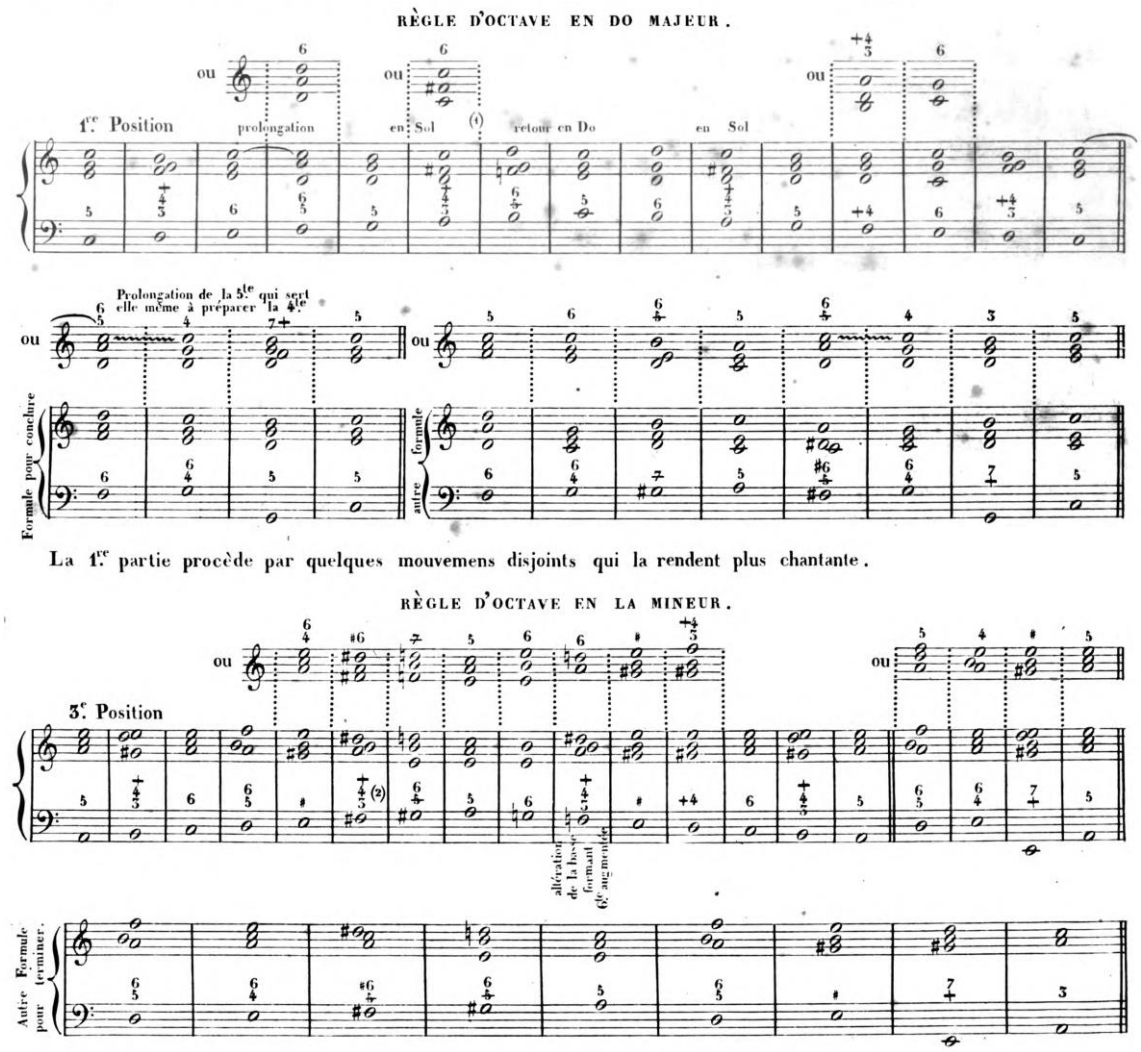
on se sera familiarisé avec la règle d'octave, les doigts auront pris une habitude instinctive, d'amener sur chaque degré de l'échelle l'accord qui convient, ce qui est un immense avantage.[804]

[To the progressions we have mentioned we should add the rule of the octave; it is even richer in resources for preluding. It has to be known by heart as well, and one should play it in three positions through all major and minor keys.

What is called the rule of the octave is a diatonic scale of which every note gets the appropriate chord.

It is clear that, when preluding, one is not obliged to play this scale in its entirety, ascending and descending; it can be used by fragments, varying it in a thousand ways. When one has become familiar with the rule of the octave, the fingers will have acquired the instinctive habit to let every degree of the scale be accompanied by the suitable chord, which is an enormous advantage.]

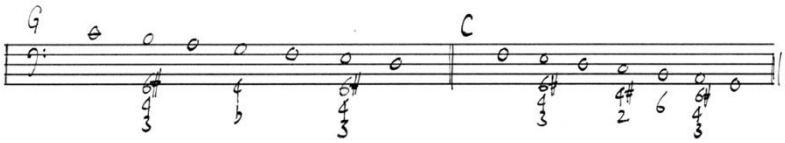
Zimmerman adds more variants, which justifies a reproduction of his overview in full:




*Example 9.5.24*

[804] Zimmerman, J.: op. cit., 19.

Finally, two alternative scale harmonisations by Grétry and Corri may serve to conclude this section:



*Example 9.5.25*

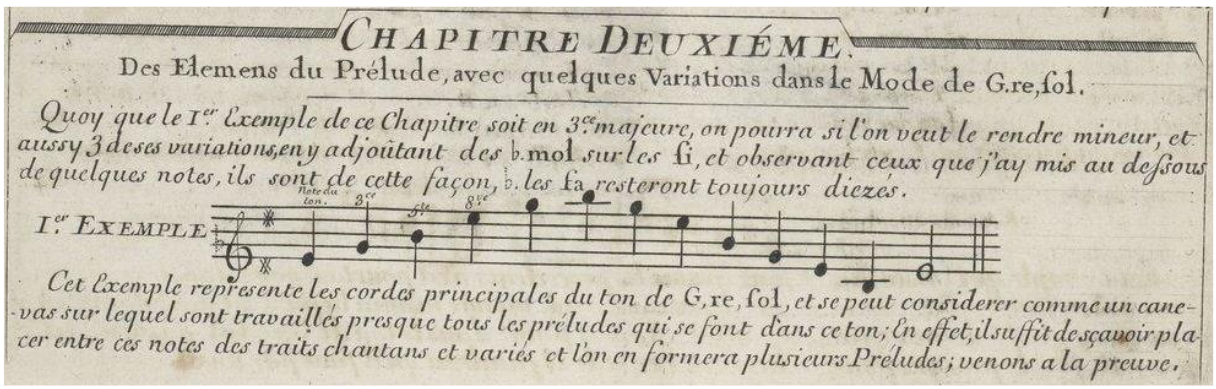
Note that Grétry's is basically a sequence of descending thirds, connected by secondary dominants.

## 9.6 Figuration

### *The brilliant style*

In the nineteenth century, an ornamental prelude was one of the few types of music entirely determined by the harmonic content. In Baroque music, variations on a ground showed a similar organisation, and the same can be said about ornamentation. The latter, however, occurs on the level of one chord or, at the most, a phrase, whereas an ornamental prelude is a complete piece. Still, the connection with ornamentation is significant, as will be shown. As soon as thematic or melodic elements come in, the balance starts to shift: no longer is the harmony the undisputed motor of the piece, since the melody will claim its place.

In this section, the focus will be on ornamental preluding on basis of harmonic loci communes as mapped out in the previous section. The basic idea of ornamenting a tonic triad had already been clearly explained in *L'Art de préluder* (1719) by Jacques Hotteterre. Hotteterre shows how a woodwind prelude is nothing more but 'playing around' the tonic triad:[805]



CHAPITRE DEUXIÉME.

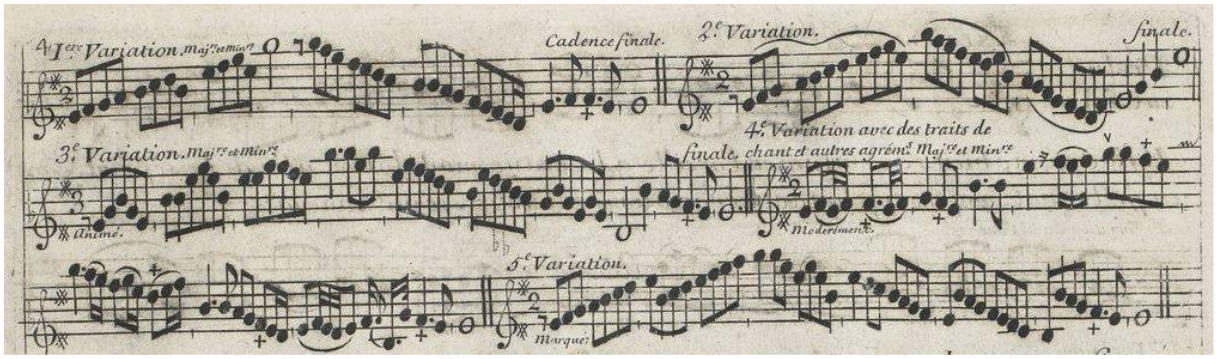
Des Elemens du Prélude, avec quelques Variations dans le Mode de G.re, ſol.

Quoy que le 1.er Exemple de ce Chapitre soit en 3.ce majeure, on pourra si l'on veut le rendre mineur, et aussy 3 de ses variations, en y adjoûtant des b. mol sur les Si, et observant ceux que j'ay mis au deſſous de quelques notes, ils sont de cette façon, b. les Fa resteront toujours diezés.

1.er EXEMPLE

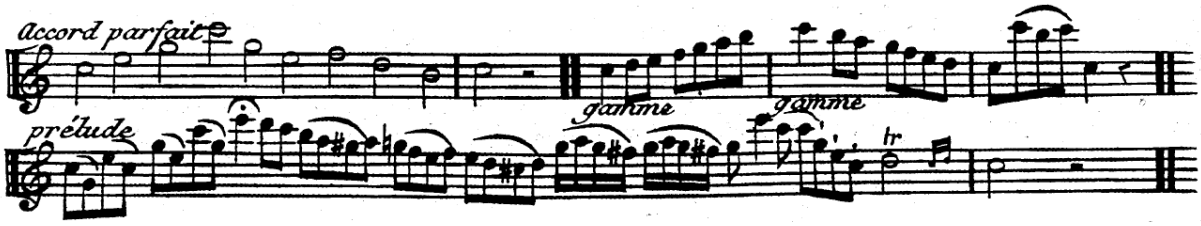
Cet Exemple represente les cordes principales du ton de G, re, ſol, et se peut considerer comme un canevas sur lequel sont travaillés presque tous les préludes qui se font dans ce ton; En effet, il suffit de sçavoir placer entre ces notes des traits chantans et variés et l'on en formera plusieurs Préludes; venons a la preuve.

[805] Hotteterre, J.: *L'Art de préluder*. Paris, 1719; 3-4.




*Example 9.6.1*

The mechanisms he shows will remain valid for nineteenth-century preludes as well: the chord serves as a 'canevas', a pattern (or, literally, a canvas) on which scales and arpeggios can be improvised. Both are guided by the chord; the arpeggios are always based on it, and the scales tend to have the members of the chord (explicitly designated by Hotteterre as the root (*note du ton*), third, fifth and octave) as their extremes or turning points. Eighty years later, the Flemish musician Armand Vanderhagen would approach the topic in a very similar way in his *Nouvelle méthode de flute*:[806]




*Example 9.6.2*

Especially in late eighteenth-century Vienna, a virtuosic and florid style developed that featured extensive passage work (often scale-based) on a relatively slow harmonic rhythm. Mozart's music is an early example of this style, and his student Johann Nepomuk Hummel,[807] among others, developed it into a style that became known as 'the brilliant style': graceful, elegant, and often virtuosic. This style was highly fashionable during the first decades of the nineteenth century, and it forms an important context for Czerny's work. Already at that time, though, it was severely criticised by many, notably 'serious' composers such as Schumann, who could write sarcastically about empty-headed virtuosity. Viewed from that perspective, it is surprising that Beethoven had considered subtitling his *Kreutzer* sonata 'in the brilliant style', a qualification he withdrew later.[808]

[806] Vanderhagen, A.: *Nouvelle méthode de flute.* Paris, [1799]; 66.

[807] That is to say: Hummel was eight years old when he was offered lessons by Mozart, and remained his student for about two years.

[808] Coppola, C.: 'Didacticism and display in the capriccio and prelude for violin, 1785-1840.' In: Borio, G. & Carone, A. (eds.): *Musical Improvisation and Open Forms in the Age of Beethoven*. London, 2018; 149.

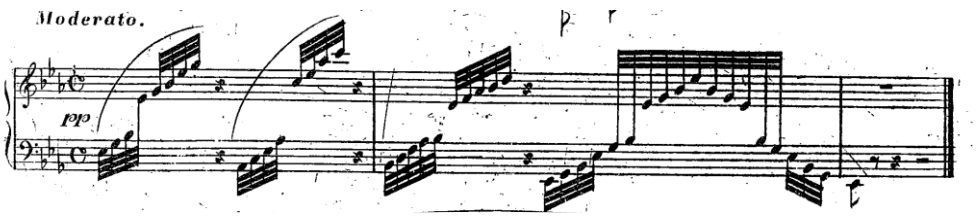
While the work of such 'serious' composers has become part of the musical canon, compositions in the brilliant style have largely fallen into oblivion. We are facing two ironies of historically informed performance practice here. The first one is that we are relatively well informed about the nature of early-nineteenth-century preluding, especially on the piano. Indeed, it should be possible to come up with more or less faithful style-imitations in this genre, were it not that few musicians today are really interested in the brilliant style. The other irony is that amid today's hyper-specialisation in music we see an idealisation of the nineteenth-century pianist-composer – not least in higher music education, where concerns about the need for a more inclusive type of musicianship are paramount. However, the qualification 'pianist-composer' applies first and foremost to the generation of virtuosos who traversed Europe in the early nineteenth century. Pianists with a solo career such as Kalkbrenner and Thalberg were supposed to perform compositions of their own making during recitals. Public concerts had a high entertainment value at that time; subtleties as found in the music of Beethoven, Schubert or Schumann were not expected from the pianist-composer, but rather virtuosic brilliancy and fantasies on famous opera tunes. In his autobiography *Aus meinem Leben* (1894),[809] Eduard Hanslick emphasises the differences between the period before the 1848 revolution (the *Vormärz*) and the second half of the nineteenth century. He depicts the *Vormärz* as a kind of cultural infancy, and he regards composer/virtuoso pianists as definitely belonging to that distant world. It is true that many of the greatest nineteenth-century composers played the piano very well – but they rarely had careers as virtuosos.

However, there are a few exceptions: virtuosos whose compositions are still important and for whose work the brilliant style is highly relevant. The music of Hummel, for example, is enjoying a certain revival; most strikingly, though, the relevance of the brilliant style is especially apparent in the work of Chopin and Liszt. Chopin in particular was indebted to the brilliant style, as can be seen in early compositions such as the *Fantasy on Polish Airs* op. 13. He managed to incorporate virtuosic brilliancy within his highly personal style with its melodic lyricism and harmonic richness. In this way, Chopin can be said to have transformed the brilliant style into something new that has never ceased to move music lovers up to the present day.

### *Figuration in ornamental preludes*

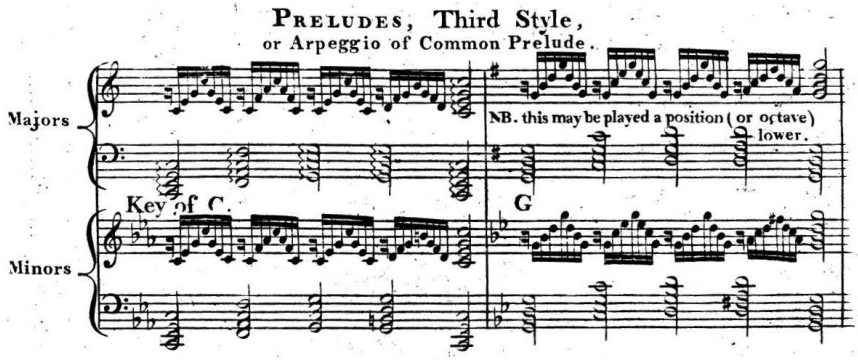
How did preluding manuals teach adding figuration to a harmonic progression? On the piano, the easiest way – and therefore the first step – was to arpeggiate the chords. Czerny gives an example:[810]

[809] Hanslick, E.: *Aus meinem Leben* (Peter Wapnewski, ed.). Kassel, 1987.
[810] Czerny, C.: *Von dem Vortrage...* op. 500 III; 90.



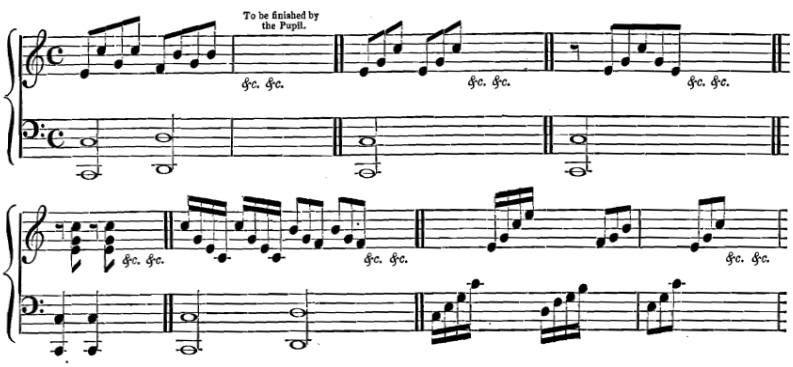

*Example 9.6.3*

Corri's first 'parrot'-preludes consist of arpeggiations as well, albeit more primitive:[811]



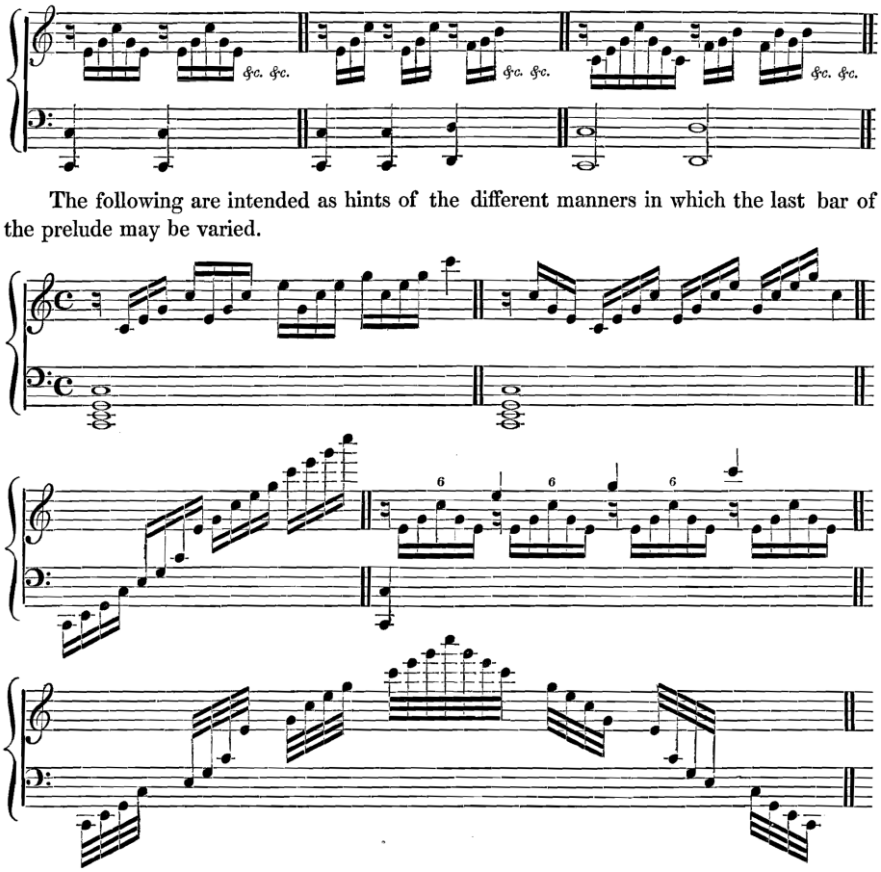

*Example 9.6.4*

Grétry pays extensive attention to harmony, but his figuration hardly ever goes beyond such arpeggiations! Bochsa's *Harp Preludist* teaches the student various ways of arpeggiation (examples 9.6.5 and 9.6.6):[812]



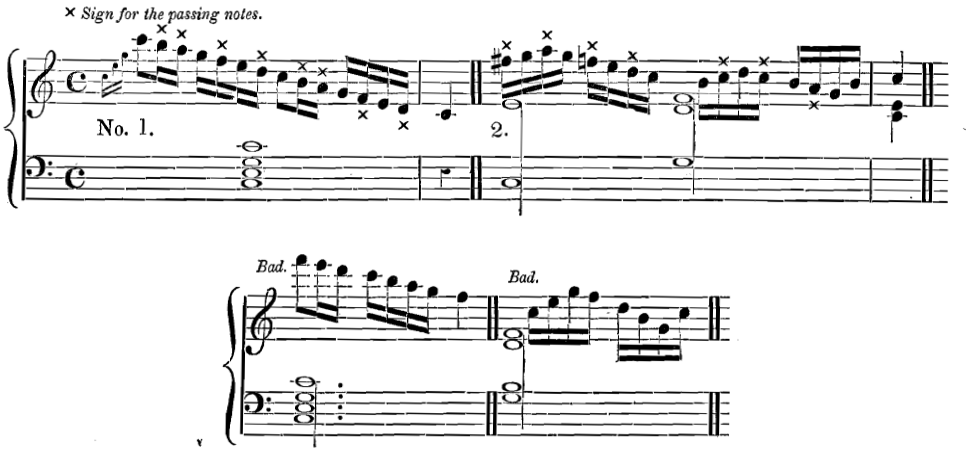

*Example 9.6.5*

[811] Corri, P.N.: op. cit., 87.
[812] Bochsa, N.: op. cit., 16-17.



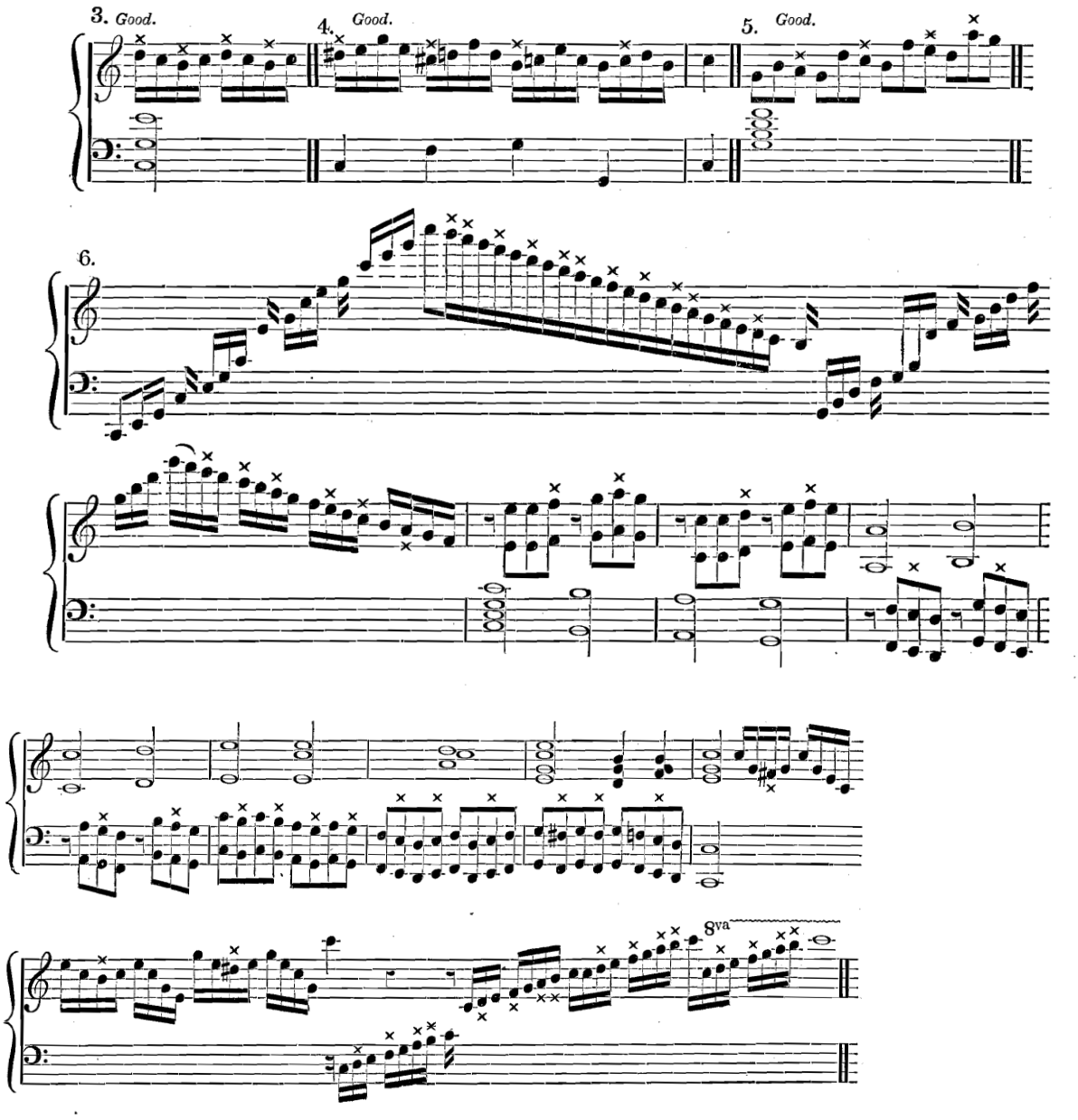

*Example 9.6.6*

Not only in his treatment of arpeggiations, but also when it comes to scale-like patterns, Bochsa is the most methodical of the authors mentioned. He explains the phenomenon of embellishing notes (using the term 'passing note' throughout) and gives examples of different situations in which such patterns might appear:[813]




*Example 9.6.7*

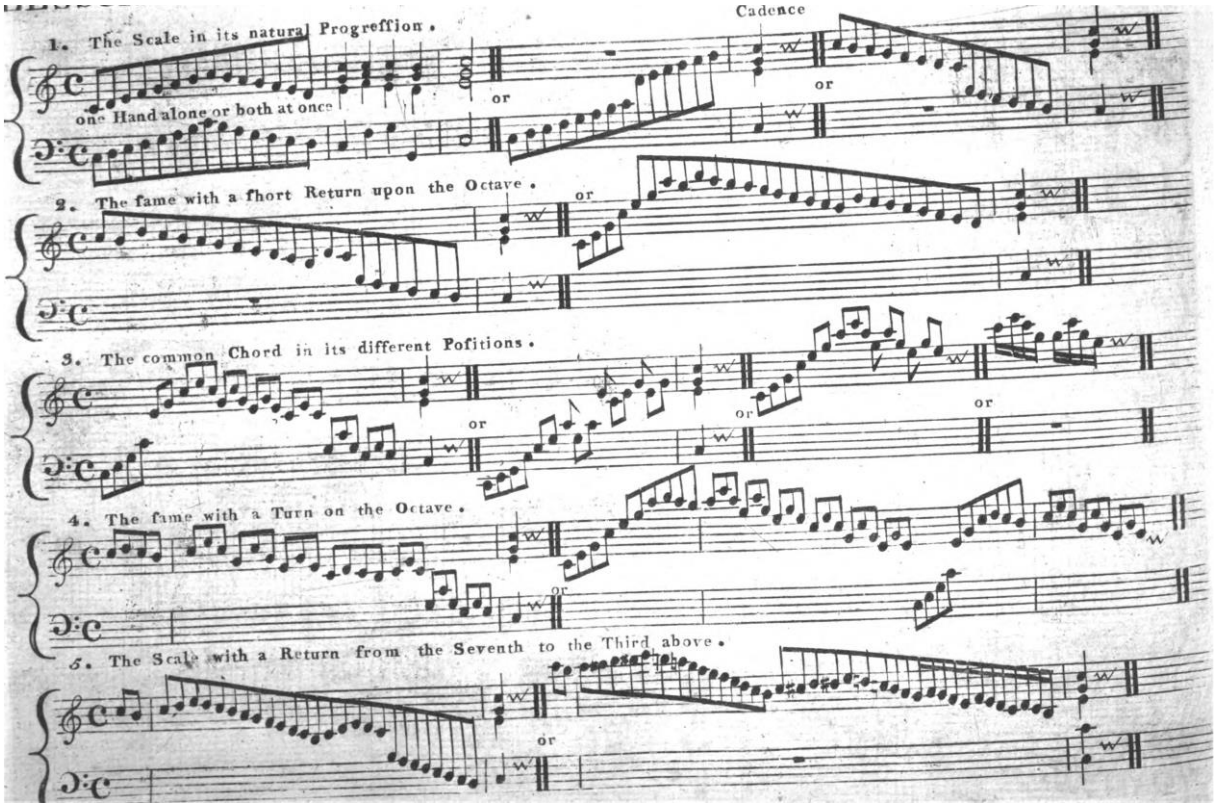
[813] Bochsa, N.: op. cit., 38.




*Example 9.6.8*

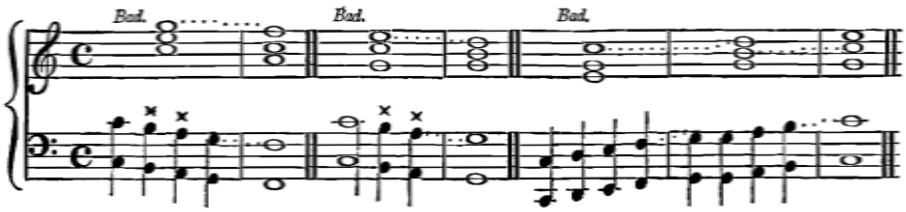
Likewise, Kollmann shows different figurations over a single chord:[814]

[814] Kollmann, A.F.: op. cit., 8.




*Example 9.6.9*

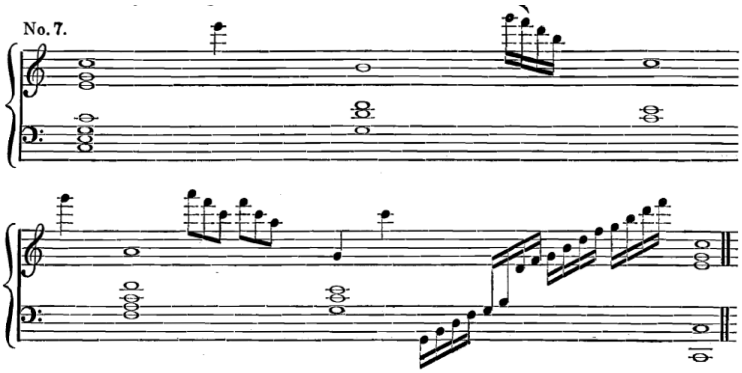
Bochsa even pays attention to parallel octaves and fifths that might occur as a result of passing notes that have been added to a chord. (The offending parallels are shown with dotted lines in his example.)[815]




*Example 9.6.10*

Then Bochsa gives a first exercise to apply all this (as he calls it) 'scientific information'[816] – an exercise that would still make a lot of sense today. He not only provides a harmonic skeleton, but also shows where the melodic line should change direction, sometimes adding an idea for figuration.[817]

[815] Bochsa, N.: op. cit., 39
[816] Bochsa, N.: op. cit., 49
[817] Bochsa, N.: op. cit., 39.




*Example 9.6.11*

A method like Bochsa's looks comprehensive enough – for a nineteenth-century student, that is. As for arpeggiations, he gives an elaborate survey; however, the scale-based patterns remain rather unspecified. Again, this might have been enough for a nineteenth-century student who could be expected to be familiar with melodic ornamental loci communes. The 'explanation' of embellishing notes, for instance, is of a kind that only has value when the student is already acquainted with similar patterns: it makes him aware of certain qualities of material that is familiar to him. A present-day musician doesn't have this internalised stock of loci communes. Nineteenth-century students probably did; the question, however, remains how and where they learned them. A part of the answer might be that they familiarised themselves intuitively with a range of patterns since this was the music they heard and played every day. As was demonstrated in section 9.5, several authors nevertheless presented a comprehensive set of harmonic loci communes, and in so doing they organised the available intuitive knowledge. Why didn't this happen with figuration?

### *The role of technique*

Before this question can be answered, ornamental loci communes have to be identified. For this research project, an attempt has been made to collect melodic models as they can be found in ornamental preludes for piano. A large number of virtuosic runs in sample preludes by Czerny, Clementi, Cramer, Herz, Hummel, Kalkbrenner, Moscheles and others were examined, and this survey revealed a common denominator of melodic conventions that, indeed, may be called ornamental loci communes. Three things became quickly obvious: (1) the ornamental loci in preludes are not different from patterns in written-out ornamentation to melodies in compositions, or in composed cadenzas; (2) basically the same ornamental loci occur in music for almost any instrument, including vocal music; (3) ornamental loci strongly resemble standard technical exercises. In response to conclusions (1) and (2), other compositions with features of the brilliant style were included in the comparison as well.

Conclusion (3) gave rise to experiments with conservatory students (pianists and other instrumentalists): if the loci communes resemble technical exercises, it should be not too difficult for

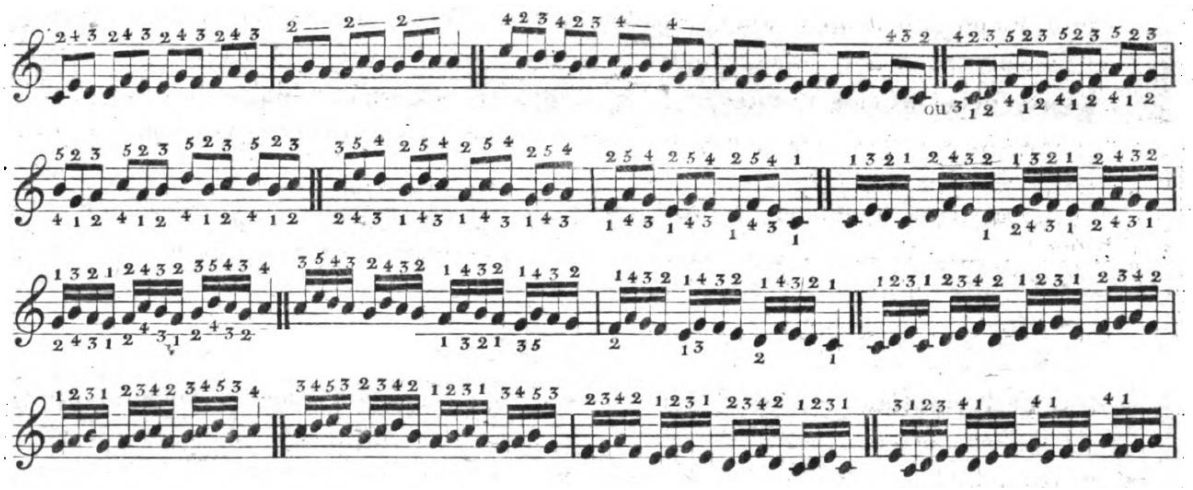
the students to improvise a short ornamental prelude on a given harmonic progression, assuming they would be familiar with their own technical exercises. After trying this out in classes and workshops at several institutes across Europe, I realised that reality is different. Many students were unable to fulfill even Czerny's most modest demands. There might be several reasons for this. First of all, I noticed that many lacked the musical drive to come up with such a prelude. This confirms what was written in the previous section: the brilliant style hardly appeals to most musicians nowadays. Improvising music that one does not like is an almost unfulfillable task. It might also be true that to many musicians, technique is something almost disconnected from music – which contributes to the negative attitude mentioned above. Another reason, though, is that in many cases the level of technical training – in the sense of a mastered body of standard exercises such as scales, arpeggios, etc. – was not sufficient to be able to adapt such material to the concrete harmonic situation of the (given) harmonic skeleton. When teaching workshops abroad and in my home institution, I have made it a habit to inquire (informally) about the practising habits of students, especially whether they practise technical exercises as a matter of course. My impression is that to many students nowadays, 'technique' is something they did when they were younger, or something they feel guilty about because they think they should practise it more often, or something their teacher leaves up to them – in short, something that is not a part of their daily practising routine.

To be sure, the situation differs according to the instrument, as does the content of what one calls 'technique': playing long tones for instance is not a technical issue on a piano but of fundamental importance to wind players, and transposing a scale means something different to a singer than it does to a violinist. Also, there are of course differences between individual musicians. In general, however, the predominant approach to practising technique in modern classical music-making seems to be that separate technical exercises are at the most seen as a kind of musical gymnastics, something that helps a musician to remain in shape and that should preferably take as little time as possible; developing technical skills for the majority almost exclusively happens by way of practising repertoire. It is an attitude that logically results from the *Urtext*-paradigm: if the performance ideal is to approach the most 'perfect' rendering of a composition as closely as possible, than this is where the focus will be.

In chapter 4 about bel canto, I showed how even well into the nineteenth century, vocal training mainly consisted of technical exercises. A similar picture arises from the history of instrumental teaching. This is obviously a huge topic that cannot be discussed sufficiently here, but a few examples from the history of (especially) piano teaching may serve to sketch a picture.

The early nineteenth century produced a large number of piano methods. It is risky to pronounce upon the ratio of the study of piano repertoire to practising technique purely on basis of published methods. Nevertheless, some interesting facts emerge when different methods are compared. Early

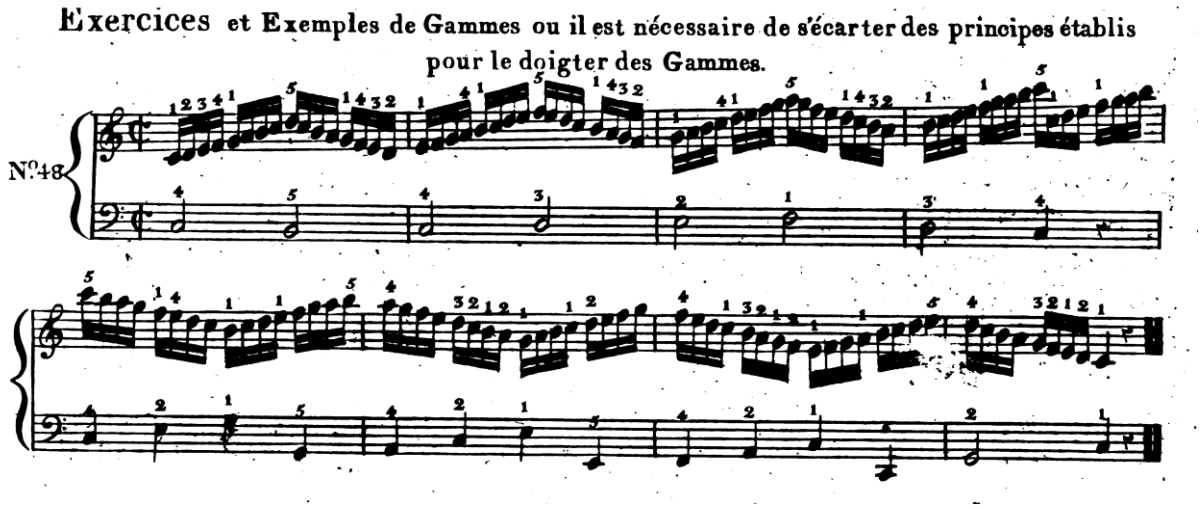
piano methods tend to pay a lot of attention to fingering; usually, they provide a large number of sample patterns with fingerings, rather than focusing on the general principles. Louis Adam's *Méthode de piano du Conservatoire* (1804) organises such passages in a way that is very similar to the vocal exercises in e.g. García's *L'Art du chant*, that is, as sequences on a diatonic scale. Exercises such as the following ones could even have been taken from García's book (ex. 9.6.12). Adam fills 15 large pages with such exercises for both hands. Similar (though shorter) lists of *Passagen* can be found in other well-known methods such as the *Méthode pour le pianoforte* of Ignaz Pleyel and Jan Ladislav Dussek (1797), Muzio Clementi's *Introduction to the Art of Playing the Pianoforte* (1801) or Johann Baptist Cramer's *Instructions for the Piano Forte* (1804).[818]



*Example 9.6.12*

As in the preluding manuals, scales and arpeggios are two fundamental categories. These basic patterns are also moulded into sequences. The following example illustrates this:[819]

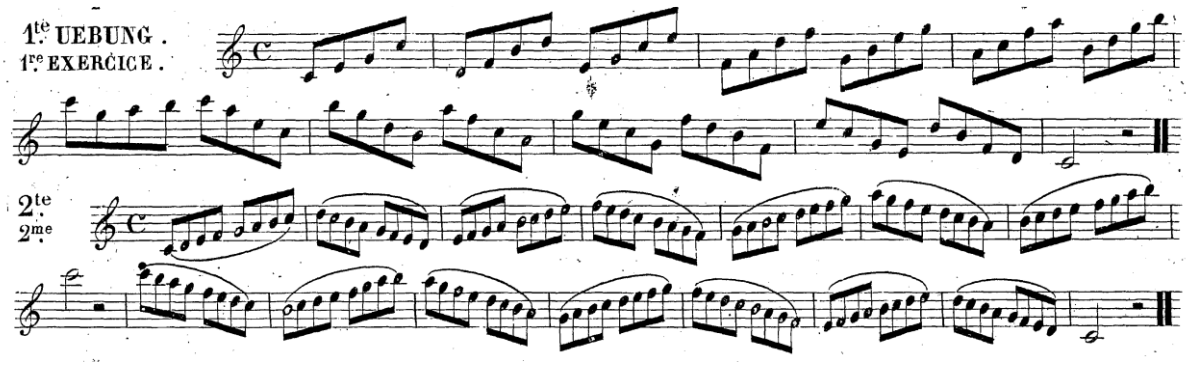
[818] Adam, L.: *Méthode de piano du Conservatoire.* Paris, 1804; 67.
[819] Adam, L.: op. cit., 29.




*Example 9.6.13*

The great value of an exercise such as this one is that the scale is not only practised from tonic to tonic, as usually happens in standard scale exercises. By starting on every tone of the scale, this exercise prepares much better for situations as they may occur in 'real life', situations that will call for adaptations in the standard fingering (precisely as Adam writes: 'ou il est nécessaire de s'écarter des principes établis pour le doigter des gammes' [in which it is necessary to deviate from the established fingering principles for scales]). Beethoven's sketchbooks also contain comparable exercises, though they are probably meant for private use.[820]

Baillot's influential violin method also uses the same approach already for elementary exercises. This fact only reinforces the impression that musical training on any instrument, including the voice, to a large extent consisted of systematically practising a repertoire of patterns; as will be shown, this repertoire perfectly matches the ornamental loci communes that can be distilled from notated ornamental structures in compositions. The following exercises by Baillot, for instance, could also be found in any piano of vocal method:[821]




*Example 9.6.14*

[820] See for instance Derry, S.R.: *Beethoven's Experimental Figurations and Exercises for Piano* (unpublished diss.). University of Manchester, 2012; 296-297.
[821] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 37.

Czerny devotes the entire second volume of his *Pianoforte-Schule* op. 500 to fingering. The book consists of an endless list of patterns, referred to by Czerny as *Passagen und Übungen* (passages and exercises). This combination of terms describes in a nutshell the view of that time: passages (ornamental musical material) could serve as exercises, and vice versa. It recalls the close connection between preludes and etudes (→ section 9.1). Czerny himself considered the passages from the second volume of the *Pianoforte-Schule* as material for preluding, as can be seen from the following remark in the chapter 'Über das Präludieren' in the third volume (following examples of preludes, based upon simple scales and arpeggios):

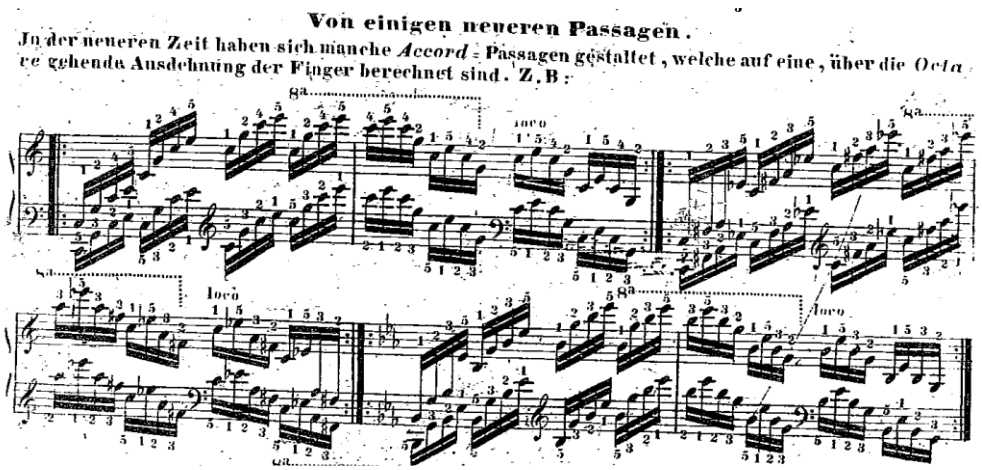
> Wenn der Schüler bereits eine bedeutende Fertigkeit erlangt hat, so kann er, anstatt diesen Scalenpassagen, andere interessantere auf dieselbe Weise benützen, wozu er im 2ten, vom Fingersatz handelnden Theile dieser Schule, in den praktischen Übungen hinreichenden Stoff findet.[822]
>
> [When the pupil has already acquired enough proficiency, he can use in the same way other ones that are more interesting, instead of these scale passages; in the second volume of this school that deals with fingering he will find adequate material.]

The idea that exercises were at the same time musical material demands from us a rethinking of the concept of a technical exercise. Technique was not something disconnected from music-making, but was rather a part of it. Passages could have real musical value and were subject to fashion and change. A telling instance of this mindset is the following remark in the second volume, under the heading 'Von einigen neueren Passagen' [About some newer passages]:

> In der neueren Zeit haben sich manche *Accord*-Passagen gestaltet, welche auf eine, über die *Octave* gehende Ausdehnung der Finger berechnet sind.[823]
>
> [More recently some chord-passages have developed that are intended for a stretch of the fingers beyond the octave.]

Czerny uses the impersonal form 'haben sich gestaltet', suggesting that the new passages were not associated with any particular composer, but rather were considered as a new fashion. Furthermore, his remark shows that there could be something new and exciting about a specific pattern. It recalls the world of the early virtuosos who could be famous for their personal 'inventions', soon to be imitated by others, like Thalberg with his 'third hand technique'.[824] The example Czerny gives was used (and possibly introduced) nine years before by Chopin: it is the pattern of his etude op. 10 no. 1.[825]

[822] Czerny, C.: *Von dem Vortrage* ... op. 500 III; 86.
[823] Czerny, C.: *Von der Fingersetzung*... op. 500 II, 89.
[824] Thalberg developed a texture in which the melody appeared in the tenor range, to be played with the thumbs of both hands alternatingly, surrounded by arpeggios in both hands; it sounded as if the pianist had three hands.
[825] Czerny, C.: *Von der Fingersetzung*... op. 500 II, 89.




*Example 9.6.15*

This, then, is an answer to the question that concluded the previous section: there was probably no need in methodical works to show the student ornamental loci communes because they already were the basic material of any training. This, incidentally, was nothing new; it is generally acknowledged that up to then, all vocal and instrumental training worked in this way, and in fact it is still like that in jazz. It is a way of training that presupposes something crucial: that the student practices his 'licks' with the intention of using them creatively. Improvisational preluding and ornamenting was a perfect vehicle for this. In the second half of the nineteenth century, both ornamental preludes and free ornamentation disappeared. A collection such as Anton Schmoll's *300 préludes* (1898), intended as an incentive to improvised preluding, may be regarded as an extremely late (and indeed stylistically old-fashioned) example; its range of ornamental patterns is, however, only a shadow of what can be found in similar books from the beginning of the century.[826] Kalkbrenner's complaint in the introduction to *L'Harmonie du pianiste* – 'Combien parmi nos meilleurs Pianistes en est-il, qui puissent faire un prélude, tant soit peu satisfaisant?'[827] [How many of our best pianists are able to produce a somewhat satisfactory prelude at all?] – might be more than just a selling point for his book; he was writing this at a moment when at least ornamental preluding had been in decline already for some time. Indeed, Kalkbrenner's examples on basic harmonic patterns, however rich they may be pianistically, have in fact already moved away from the brilliant style.

By 1850, Czerny's 'neuere Passagen' must have already been a familiar part of the pianistic vocabulary, and the brilliant style something with at most historical value. Musical style had moved on, and a growing emphasis on composed music and on the individual originality of musical works (which, in the understanding of that time, corresponded with compositions) made the ornamental flourishes from the first decades of the nineteenth century seem pale and commonplace. The direct connection between technique and musical material may have become less strong in the course of

[826] Schmoll, A.: *300 Préludes dans tous les tons majeurs et mineurs.* Paris, [1898].
[827] Kalkbrenner, F.: op. cit., 1.

the nineteenth century. However, this does not mean that an approach to technique as seen in much education today had replaced the old way of training. In her memoirs, Eugenie Schumann gives a valuable insight into the aesthetic principles of her mother, Clara Schumann. With respect to Clara's view of piano technique and its relationship to repertoire, Eugenie writes:

> Brahms sowohl als auch meine Mutter waren der Ansicht, daß man Fingerfertigkeit und vor allem einen festen Fingersatz an Übungen lernen müsse, damit man beim Studium der Stücke das Augenmerk sofort auf die musikalische Erfassung richten könne.[828]
>
> [Both Brahms and my mother were of the opinion that dexterity of the fingers, and especially a solid fingering, should be acquired through exercises, so that, when practising pieces, one could concentrate immediately on the understanding of the music.]

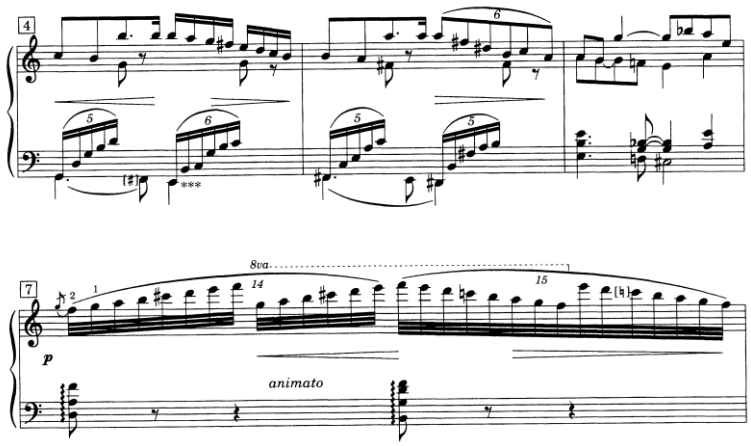
Apparently, for Clara Schumann (one of the most famous musicians of her time) virtuosity was to be developed in a general sense, so that it could be applied in the performance of compositions – or in improvising. Eugenie writes passionately about her memories of her mother's practising. Clara started the day with an hour of technical exercises, every time according to the same plan, and yet every time new, *wie aus geheimen Quellen geschöpft* [as if she drew from secret sources].

> Wie Meereswogen brausten die Tonleitern, an- und abschwellend, gebunden und abgestoßen, in Oktaven, Terzen, Sexten, Dezimen und Doppelterzen, manchmal in einer Hand allein, während die andre begleitende Akkorde spielte, dann Arpeggien aller Art, Oktaven, Triller, alles im lebhaftesten Zeitmaße ohne die geringste Unterbrechung, in herrlichen Harmonien von einer Tonart in die andre übergehend.
>
> [The scales roared like the waves of the sea, swelling and ebbing away, legato and staccato, in octaves, thirds, sixths, tenths and double thirds, sometimes in only one hand, with the other one playing accompanying chords; then all sorts of arpeggios, octaves, trills, everything in a very brisk tempo and without any pause, passing from one key into another with exquisite harmonies.]

She calls her mother's technical training *ein wunderbar vergeistigtes Kunstgebilde* [a wonderfully spiritualised piece of art], and mentions a visitor who compares her with Paganini, who was said to be able to move the listeners to tears with just a scale. The children often begged their mother to write down such a practising session, but Clara declined, saying that it was impossible for her to record this way of free improvising ('diese Art von freiem Phantasieren festzuhalten').[829] As it turns out however, she eventually gave in and wrote down several preludes, including some that provide a picture of how such a practising session might have started out.[830] The following fragment, for instance, shows a

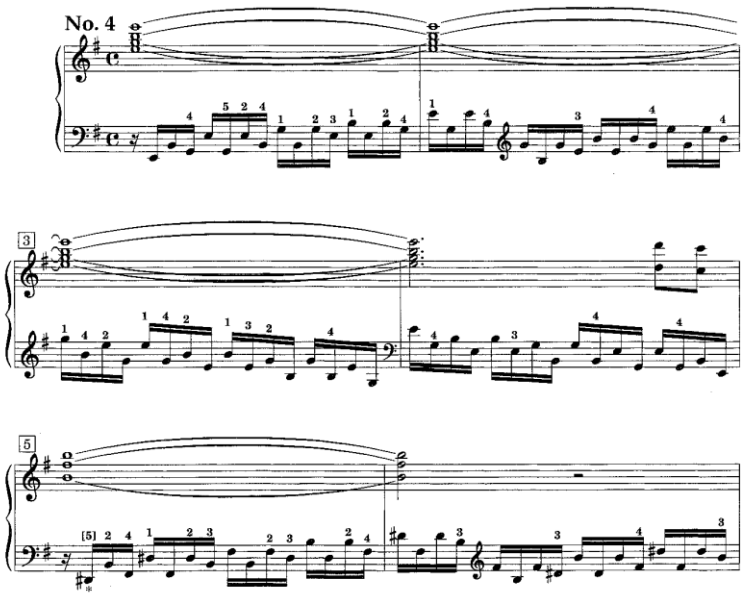
[828] Schumann, E.: *Erinnerungen*. Stuttgart, 1927; 266.
[829] Schumann, E.: op. cit., 33-34.
[830] Handwritten note by Marie Schumann, dated 1929, on the autograph; quoted in: Schumann, Cl.: *Preludes, Exercises and Fugues* (ed. by Valerie Woodring Goertzen). Bryn Mawr, 2001; [introduction]. The preludes Schumann eventually notated were not intended for publication. Thanks to Cynthie van Eijden for pointing out this edition to me.

moment where the texture changes from gentle wider arpeggios to fast *gammes lancées*, both harmonically supported by falling fifth sequences.[831] It is easy to imagine this as a 'warming-up prelude', possibly to be followed by more extensive scale exercises in both hands.




*Example 9.6.16*

An impression of her improvised chord exercises is given by seven technical preludes in the same collection. The harmonic models resemble the harmonic loci communes in chapter 1.4.2; the accompaniment can also be in the right hand, as in the following example:[832]




*Example 9.6.17*

[831] Schumann, Cl.: op. cit., 36.
[832] Schumann, Cl.: op. cit., 27.

Eugenie writes that she never heard her mother practising slowly, bar by bar. As a child, Clara had already conquered all technical difficulties, and she had grown up with the compositions of Chopin, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt, Thalberg and Henselt.

> Neu für sie waren nur die Sachen von Brahms, und auch bei diesen konnte sie immer gleich an die Gestaltung gehen, ohne sich mit Vorübungen aufhalten zu müssen. Und so tief drang sie in den Geist eines jeden Werkes ein, daß sie ihr sozusagen in Fleisch und Blut übergingen; sie lagen wie Spiegelungen auf dem Grunde ihrer Seele, und zog sie sie hervor, so erschienen sie stets wie neu geschaffen. Sie übte meist ohne Noten, und ich erinnere mich einzelner Gelegenheiten, wo sie mir, als ich während des Übens in ihr Zimmer kam, zurief, ich möge ihr das Stück, welches sie gerade spielte, heraussuchen, sie müsse etwas nachsehen.[833]
>
> [New were for her only the things of Brahms, and also there she could always immediately start with the creation, without having to linger over preparatory exercises. So deeply did she penetrate into the spirit of every work, that they as it were passed into her flesh and blood; they lay like reflections on the bottom of her soul, and when she pulled them out, they seemed to have been created newly. Usually she practised without scores, and I remember a few occasions, when I entered her room when she was practising, and she called at me, begging me to find her the piece she was just practising because she wanted to check something.]

The remarks about Clara Schumann practising without a score suggest that she applied the so-called 'mental practising', a method that dates back to Czerny student Theodor Leschetitzky, and that was propagated in the twentieth century by (among others) Walter Gieseking and Louis Kentner.[834] In mental practising, a piece of music is at first learnt by heart in great detail, just by reading the score and imagining the music, but without touching the instrument. If Eugenie's report is correct, Clara Schumann's way of learning a score must have been radically different from how many pianists today learn a new composition. It is usual nowadays that a pianist (or any musician) gets to know a piece while mastering any technical difficulties the score contains. The result is that the idea of the piece, as it takes shape in the mind of the musician, tends to be influenced by the struggle for technical mastery; studying a piece of music easily becomes striving for a predetermined sense of perfection. It takes a very high level of musicianship to be able to 'forget' about technical obstacles and to approach the score anew. Schumann, on the other hand, seems to have consciously separated technical and musical mastery. If the stories are true, she hardly needed to practise 'slowly, bar by bar': she had acquired a general ability to handle any situation, and could technically do whatever she wanted. This put her into an incomparably free position towards any composition she would perform – a freedom that was only enhanced by her mental practicing, which enabled her to truly 'improvise' with a score – or without one.

[833] Schumann, E.: op. cit., 35.
[834] Kentner, L.: *Piano.* London, 1991; 88.

Clara Schumann's approach to technique, as described by her daughter, can be characterised as a transformation of early-nineteenth-century pedagogy; the direct musical application of ornamental patterns as training material might have become less relevant to her, but what had remained was the truly musical value of practising technique. The mastery of the instrument was acquired and maintained by means of a body of 'commonplace' patterns such as scales, arpeggios and trills in endless variants; compositions did not serve as practise material but as *Vortragsstücke* (literally 'performance pieces'), with an emphasis on their rhetorical and communicative qualities. Just like an actor does not practise his language skills by means of a play he is studying, a musician did not 'misuse' (my qualification) a *Meisterwerk* for developing his technique. It is this attitude that enables a musician to internalise a compositional creation, to make it his own, and to deliver it with improvisatory freedom, 'wie neu geschaffen'. As mentioned before, it is also an attitude that makes possible *das freie Fantasieren* – precisely as Czerny demanded in his *Anleitung*.

It must be said that all this might sound fairly idealistic to modern ears. Indeed, without taking anything away from Clara Schumann's genius, her approach seems more realistic for repertoire that is still based upon a common ground of technical difficulties than for pieces that have a more individual relation with virtuosity. Can one master Scriabin's late sonatas, Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit* or Stravinsky's *Trois mouvements de Pétrouchka* in this way? I doubt it, and this may explain why modern pianism is as it is. Nevertheless, I propose to seriously consider the benefits of Schumann's approach. Already in the nineteenth century, there was a tension between the then usual way of practising and certain new pieces that did not quite fit the standard models of virtuosity – witness the initial reactions to compositions such as Beethoven's and Brahms's violin concertos, which were initially considered to be unplayable. The 'modern' approach (if the reader allows me the generalisation) might be more effective here: the said concertos are nowadays standard study material in conservatories. What we should be aware of, though, is that the 'old' way also had a tremendous advantage that we have lost: it facilitated an improvisatory approach to music-making.

A personal note may conclude this section. When I started to improvise more frequently during piano recitals, I was struck by a sudden insight with respect to pianistic virtuosity. I realised that I managed to play all kinds of fast scales, arpeggios and octaves in a technically convincing way, whereas I would certainly have spent many hours practising such passages when they had occurred in a composition I was learning. This experience seriously made me think about what we are actually doing when we are practising a piece. There is no simple answer to this question, but it surely takes a lot of time to internalise a composition, to make it our own and to arrive at the same level of 'urgency' as when we are improvising. I argue that regaining an understanding of instrumental technique like Clara Schumann's will not only enable a musician to improvise technically demanding music, but also to develop a more sovereign attitude vis-à-vis the score.

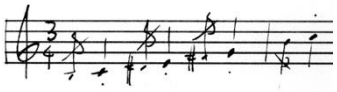
### *A dictionary of ornamental patterns*

This section discusses a 'dictionary of ornamental patterns' that can be found in its complete form in the appendix to this study. It is basically a listing of ornamental loci communes, taken from compositions in the brilliant style, including the early works of Chopin. One source of ornamental material is the scale as such; in the brilliant style, such scales could be very extended, especially on the piano with its constantly increasing range. Scales are not included in the dictionary because it focuses on a different category: small-scale patterns. The vast majority of ornamental passages in compositions in the brilliant style can be analysed as an ornamented version of a rising or descending arpeggiated triad or dominant seventh chord, which is why the list is organised according to these categories. The list is organised quantitatively; the first patterns ornament each note of the triad or dominant seventh chord with only two notes, a number that gradually increases up to six.

The purpose of the dictionary is to show patterns as loci communes, not as specific instances of concrete situations. An attempt has been made to preserve a certain generality. The chosen notation therefore does not intend to be an exact representation of the rhythm: the beams only indicate the grouping of notes. Thus the following notation:

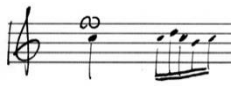
*Example 9.6.18*

may rhythmically also be interpreted as follows:



*Example 9.6.19*

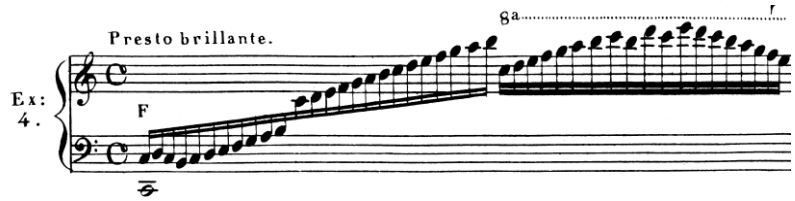
A basic way of ornamenting, prolonging, or simply marking a single tone is the turn, as such an old embellishment (*gruppetto, Doppelschlag*):



*Example 9.6.20*

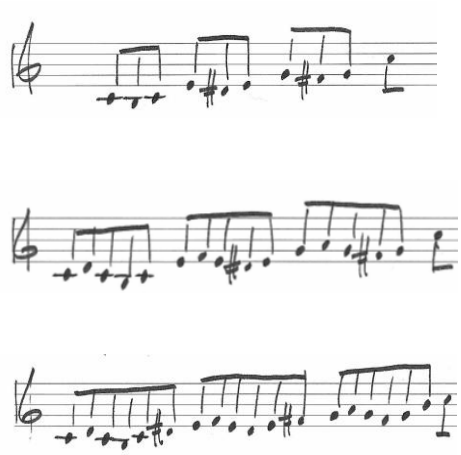
By the early nineteenth century, it had become common for the lower neighbour in the turn to be a leading tone for the main note, even when that main note is not the tonic scale degree. The upper neighbour occurs usually according to the scale (*leitereigen*). Typically, a long ascending scale passage would start with a turn on the first note:[835]

[835] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung* ... op. 200; 6.




*Example 9.6.21*

The turn often forms the basis of an ornamental pattern, be it in abridged, complete or extended form:



*Example 9.6.22*

It goes without saying that for practical use such sequences may be continued or abridged at will; all examples in the dictionary found in the Appendix are notated in C major or a minor, but may of course be transposed to any key.

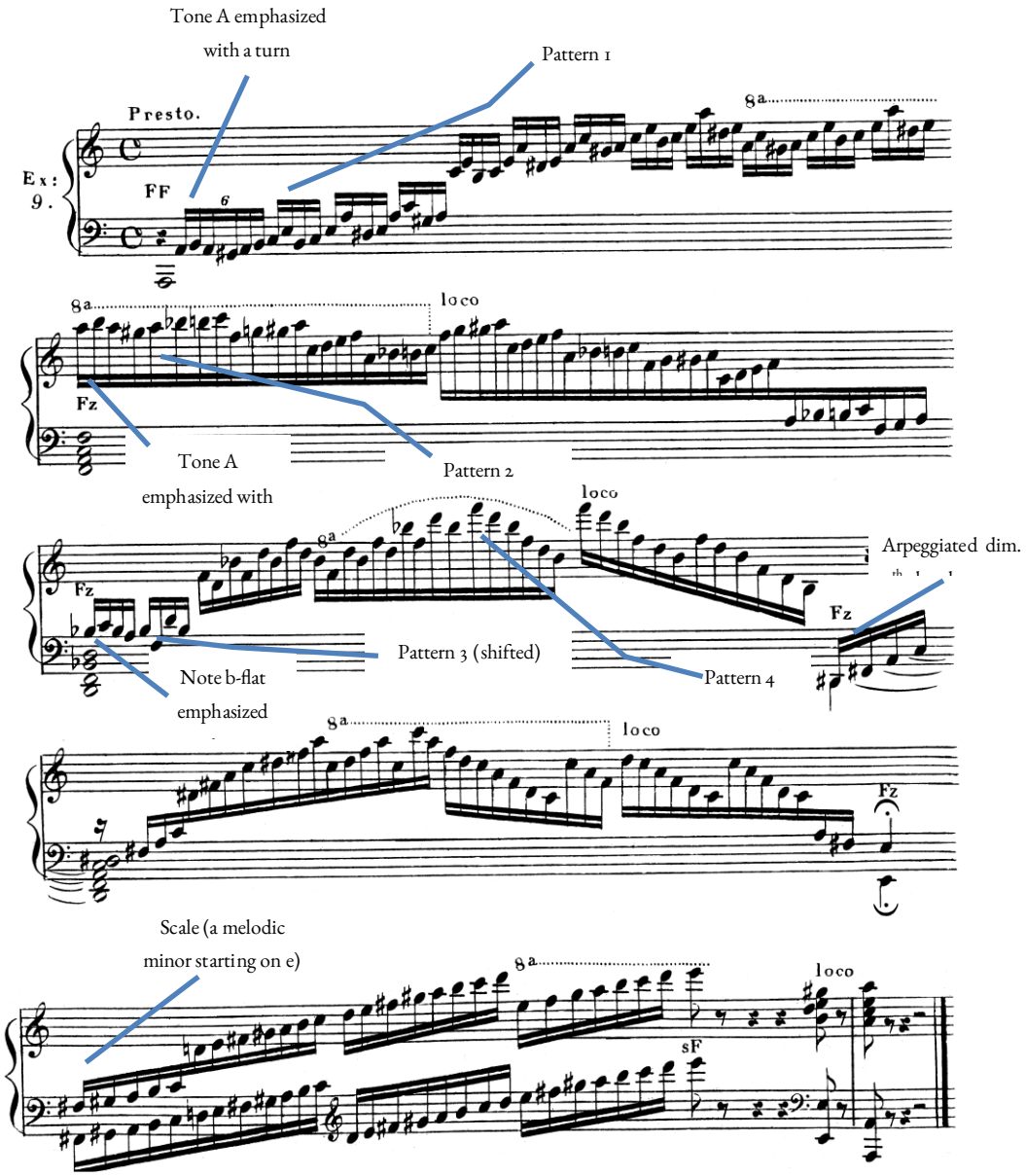
Why bother about ornamental patterns if, as was stated above, not many musicians feel attracted to the brilliant style today? The list may serve several purposes. First of all it can be of use to anyone who desires to make his own stylistically convincing ornamentation. This may be a pianist who still likes to create an ornamental prelude in the style of Czerny, but also a singer who is searching for material to ornament a Rossini aria or to use for a cadenza. Then there is also an interesting technical aspect to it. On the piano, scales and arpeggios have a standardised fingering that only has to be adapted slightly to circumstances such as starting on another tone than the root, or an unusual metrical or rhythmical situation. The patterns listed in the dictionary are different. In C major the fingering is usually obvious enough, but as soon as patterns are transposed, difficulties arise. Sequences that almost seem to 'play themselves' in C suddenly become highly problematic in D-flat. To be sure, a survey of Czerny's etudes or other compositions in the brilliant style shows that composer-pianists tended to apply patterns only in comfortable situations: if a particular pattern is awkward to play in D-flat, they would use another one in that key. In the heat of the improvisatory moment, however, it is not uncommon that one finds oneself starting a pattern in a key of which one realises too late that it is actually a difficult one. When patterns such as the ones included in the list

are being practised through all keys, one prepares for such situations – not so much by 'programming' all different fingering variants, but by training a mental fluency and a flexibility that will be of value in many practical situations. Finally, though Clara Schumann as a teacher most likely did not ask her students (including her daughters) to improvise ornamental preludes, she certainly did appreciate Czerny's fingering exercises as valuable material. She even published a collection of them in *Fingerübungen und Studien aus Carl Czernys grosser Pianoforteschule op. 500*.[836] Eugenie writes that the practice of these exercises eliminated for herself all technical difficulties in Beethoven's sonatas and concertos. Interestingly, Eugenie observes that the only thing 'modern' players might criticise in the exercises is the fact that Czerny avoids the use of the thumb on black keys, something that by the end of the nineteenth century had already become normal. 'Anderseits wird gerade dadurch der Daumen so gelenkig gemacht, daß man ihn später mit großer Leichtigkeit auch auf den schwarzen Tasten anzuwenden vermag.'[837] [On the other hand this makes the thumb so flexible, that it may later be used on black keys with great ease.] This suggests that Clara Schumann made her students initially follow Czerny's fingerings, even when they should be against the current practice; it would only make them more flexible afterwards.

### *Example prelude*

One simple ornamental prelude from Czerny's op. 200 may serve as an example for analysis.[838]

[836] Schumann, Cl. (ed.): *Fingerübungen und Studien aus Carl Czernys grosser Pianoforteschule op. 500*. Hamburg, 1880.
[837] Schumann, E.: op. cit., 266.
[838] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung …* op. 200; 8-9.




*Example 9.6.23*

The following loci communes can be identified in this passage:

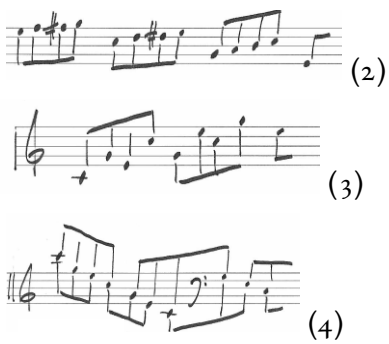
1. Harmonic: the prelude is built on a clear cadence formula:

I – VI – $II^{6}_{Neap}$ – $\#IV^{dim.7}$ - $I^{6/4}$ – $V^{7}$ – I.[839]

2. Melodic patterns as represented in the dictionary:

(1)

[839] Depending on the analytical tradition, '$\#IV^{dim.7}$' may also be labelled 'vii07/V'.




*Example 9.6.24*

3. Gestural loci communes:
- Starting with an isolated bass note, followed by an ascending run is a common opening gesture (usually in fast tempo, *forte* dynamics).
- The gesture on the $I^{6/4}$ harmony is familiar from, for instance, many of Mozart's composed keyboard cadenzas: a fermata on the low dominant tone, followed by a quick scale upward (chromatic or diatonic) that finishes abruptly in a pause.

It is clear that Czerny strives for variety in the patterns he uses. All runs have a clear direction (up or down); there is no 'wandering around', probably because that would not be in accordance with the *presto* character. The first two – relatively neutral – chords receive a flourish in one direction, while the more expressive Neapolitan sixth and the diminished seventh chord on #IV are both played with ascending and descending arpeggiations.

### *Performing an ornamental prelude*

Ornamental preludes were supposed to be performed in a (rhythmically) free manner. With respect to the performance of his composed sample preludes, Czerny writes:

> Natürlicherweise muss man (...) alles mit solcher Leichtigkeit und Ungezwungenheit vorzutragen wissen, dass die Vorspiele den Charakter des augenblicklichen Einfalls erhalten. Denn nichts stört mehr deren Wirkung, als wenn man ihnen das Eingelernte ansieht.[840]
>
> [Naturally, one must (...) know how to execute everything with such ease and lack of constraint that the preludes maintain the character of the momentary fancy. For nothing is more disturbing to the effect than the recognition that it has been drilled into the performer.[841]]

Philip Anthony Corri writes that a prelude 'is supposed to be played extempore, and to lay down rules would be as impossible as wrong, For the fancy should be unconfined (...).'[842] That the last

[840] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung* ... op. 200; 9.
[841] Czerny, C.: *A systematic introduction to improvisation on the pianoforte op. 200* ...; 11.
[842] Corri, P.A.: op. cit., 81.

remark did not imply the absence of 'rules of Counterpoint or Composition' may be obvious from the examples shown in this chapter. Music really was conceived as a language with its own grammar and syntax, and 'fancy' could inspire the improviser to express whatever he liked in this language. Or, to stay within the vocabulary of this study: music is based on loci communes; what counts artistically is what an improviser does with them.

Unfortunately, we don't know how precisely Czerny imagined this *Leichtigkeit und Ungezwungenheit.* Most likely he referred to rhythmical freedom, witness Corri:

> In the performance of Preludes, all formality or precision of time must be avoided; they must appear to be the birth of the moment, the effusion of fancy, for which reason it may be observed that the measure or time is not always mark'd at preludes.
>
> As this style of preluding ad libitum, without measure is so difficult, I have occasionally introduced Bars as guides, to shew where the Bass should be thrown in.
>
> The running passages must move without the slightest interruption, both hands acting independently from each other.[843]

When there are no bar lines in a composed prelude, such notation usually denotes passages that can be understood as bass notes or chords with fermatas, embellished with passage work (such as in cadenzas and *Eingänge*); the ending of the prelude in the previous section, for instance, actually does have a metre, even though it is indicated only rudimentarily.

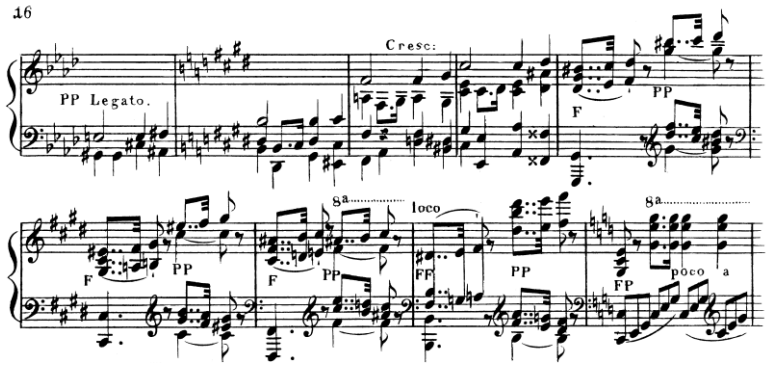
### 9.7 More extended preludes

So far, ornamental preludes of the more basic kind have been discussed relatively extensively. The reasons for this detailed attention should have become clear by now: this is the type of prelude which was described most widely; moreover, the technique of preluding returns in a wider range of musical genres, which might be why it received so much attention in early-nineteenth-century methods and instruction books. There were no essential differences between preluding on a piano and on a melodic instrument; also, ornamentation of a chord progression in a prelude used the same patterns as any other ornamentation, be it in a cadenza or in a composition (including vocal music). Finally, improvised preluding involves an approach to technique that significantly contrasts with more recent habits and views on this topic.

There is, however, no reason to neglect more elaborate forms of preluding that have existed as well. Czerny devotes the second chapter of his *Anleitung* to *Preludien längerer und mehr ausgeführter Art* [longer and more elaborate preludes], which are meant to form introductions to specific pieces. Though such preludes also contain *Passagen*, these alternate with sections of more

[843] Corri, P.A.: op. cit., 84.

melodic nature (*Gesangsstellen*). I will designate such preludes as 'thematic' because they contain thematic material, often taken from or hinting at the composition that is being introduced. Another important formal difference with ornamental preludes is that thematic preludes are clearly conceived as true introductions, finishing on a dominant chord (instead of the tonic that normally concluded ornamental preludes). The thematic material could be developed at will, as is shown in this fragment of a prelude by Czerny to his own variations on 'God save the King' op. 77 (example 9.7.1), in which the opening phrase of the anthem is put in a different metre and led through modulating imitations, while the final motif is split off and developed on its turn – very much according to what Czerny learnt from Beethoven. Czerny explains that using different metres for the prelude and the composition helps to avoid monotony:[844]

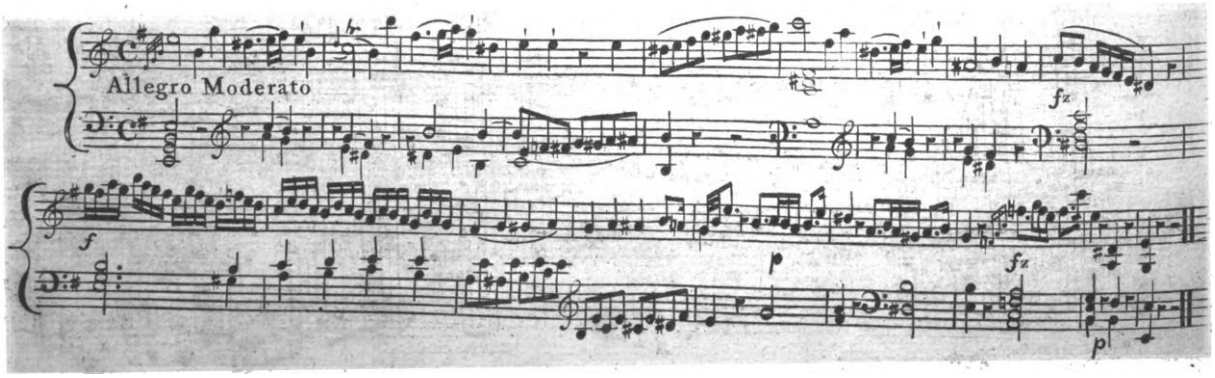



*Example 9.7.1*

Czerny explicitly writes that any well-written composed introduction can serve as a model (*Muster*) for this way of improvising. Primarily, preludes of this kind are supposed to be played when the composer had not written an introduction himself. Interestingly, Czerny states that one should not play this kind of extended prelude before 'more serious pieces' ('zu ernsteren Werken') such as Beethoven's *Appassionata* sonata op. 57. This suggests that thematic preludes were seen as most appropriate in combination with compositions in the brilliant style, especially since he mentions 'rondos or variations that start with the theme immediately'.[845] A few decades earlier, though, Kollmann had provided examples of thematic preludes to sonatas of different composers (and even a postlude to a sonata by himself), 'as short Specimens how some chief Thoughts of a musical Piece may be used with more or less Liberty for preluding in the Character of the same'.[846] Most of his preludes stay close to the beginnings of the pieces they introduce, but the prelude to Haydn's 'Sonata II. Op. LVIII' is different. Insofar as I know, this prelude is intended for the sonata Hob. XVI / 34

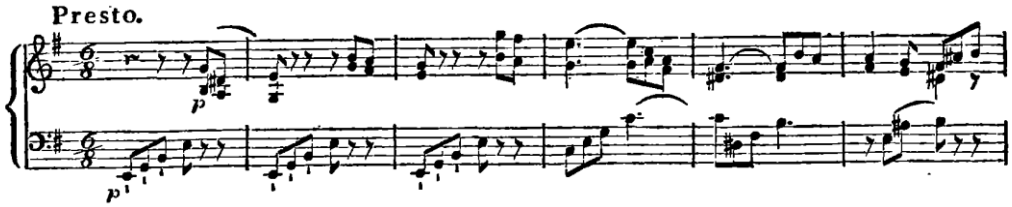
[844] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung* ... op. 200; 16-17.
[845] Czerny, C.: op. cit., 15.
[846] Kollmann, A.P.: op. cit., 17.

in e minor. Indeed, the contour of the opening idea is recognisable in Kollmann's prelude, but the metre has been changed radically:




*Example 9.7.2*

The beginning of Haydn's sonata reads as follows:

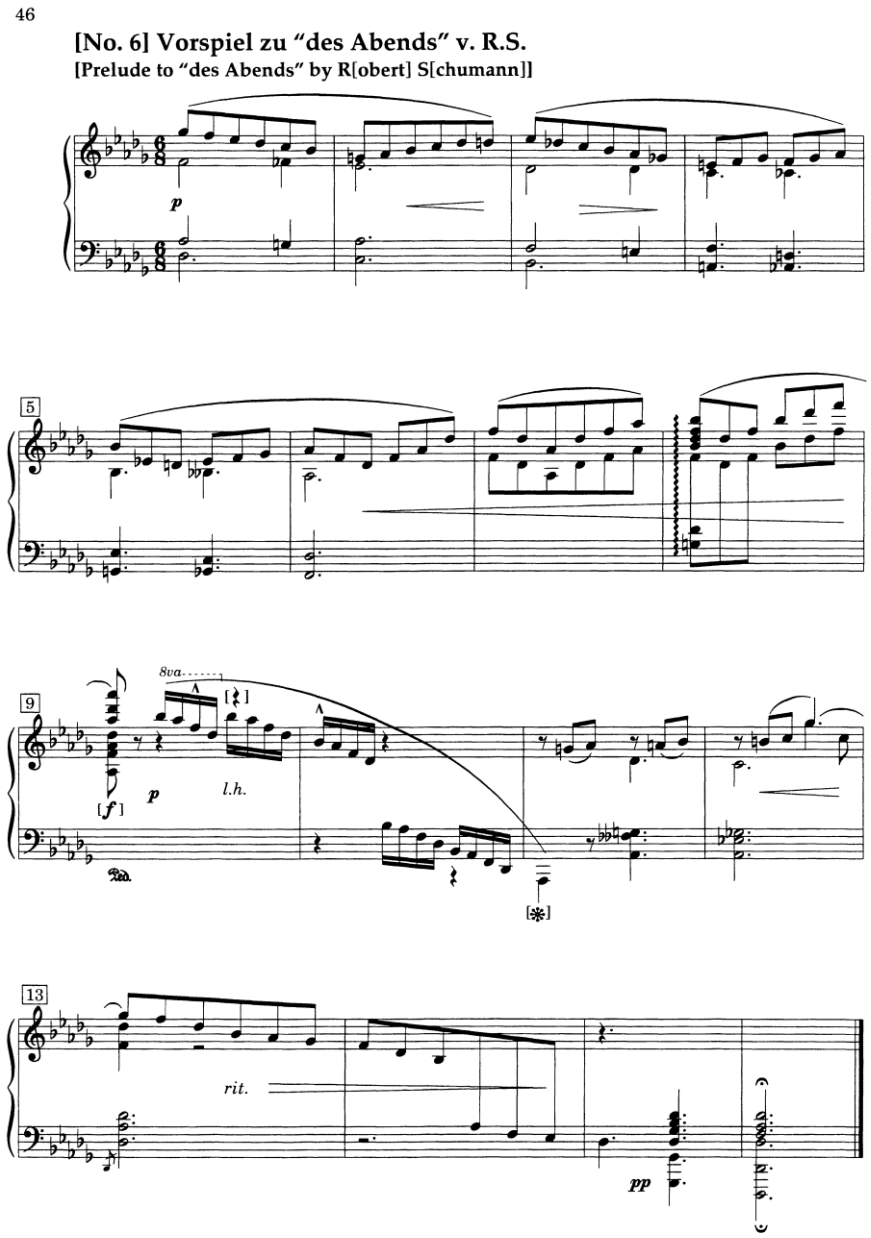



*Example 9.7.3*

There is also evidence of this type of preluding from later in the nineteenth century. Among the preludes Clara Schumann notated at her daughters' request, we find a few that are intended to introduce specific pieces by Robert Schumann. As Valerie Woodring Goertzen has shown, Clara programmed in her recitals short 'suites' consisting of a few shorter compositions that might be connected by such preludes.[847] The preludes are often supposed to have served to help the audience understand 'difficult' compositions such as Robert Schumann's. Indeed, public concerts before 1848 had a high entertainment quality that was better served with brilliant variations or fantasies on opera tunes. It is hard to believe, though, that audiences later in the century would still need to be introduced to Robert Schumann's music. In this respect, it is remarkable how much Clara 'gives away' of the composition that she means to introduce. For instance, her prelude to *Des Abends*, the first of the *Fantasiestücke* op. 12 (example 9.7.4), opens with exactly the same bitter-sweet dissonance that makes the beginning of the piece so special, but presents it in a less subdued way by displaying the underlying four-part voice leading in all its nakedness. The g-flat – f motif in the upper voice (a 4-3 suspension) returns in bars 12-13, and then reappears in the plagal cadence that concludes the

[847] Goertzen, V.W.: 'Clara Wieck Schumann's Improvisations and her 'Mosaics' of Small Forms'. In: Rasch, R. (ed.): *Beyond Notes: Improvisation in Western Music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.* Lucca, 2011; 153-162.

prelude.[848] It must be mentioned that the preludes of Clara Schumann all finish on a tonic chord (instead of the dominant, as Czerny wrote).




*Example 9.7.4*

A very touching example from more recent times is taken from the last recital Wilhelm Backhaus gave at the age of 85. During this concert he performed Beethoven's sonata op. 31 no. 3, but he collapsed after the third movement. After a short break, the old master decided not to play the final movement of the sonata, but two (technically less demanding) pieces of Schumann instead: *Des Abends* and *Warum*, both from the *Fantasiestücke* op. 12. On this live recording one can hear Backhaus preluding into *Des Abends.* The prelude is in fact a single prolonged dominant chord.

[848] Schumann, Cl.: *Preludes, Exercises and Fugues for piano* (V.W. Goertzen, ed.). Bryn Mawr, 2001; 46.

Remarkably, he not so much prepares for Schumann's composition, but rather seems to look back at the piece he had to abandon: the prelude opens with the opening motif of the first movement of Beethoven's sonata. The recital took place on the 28th of June, 1969; seven days later, Backhaus died of heart failure.

**[9.7 #1 Wilhelm Backhaus (1884-1969): prelude to *Des Abends* (R. Schumann; with announcement); rec. 1969[849]]**

In addition to his thematic preludes, Czerny gives an example of a prelude that is clearly inspired by the genre of *freye Fantasie* as described by C.Ph.E. Bach. This way of improvising will be discussed in chapter 12.3.

## 9.8 Modulation

More extended preludes are naturally harmonically more diverse than the short ornamental preludes, which are principally based upon a cadence formula. Harmonic loci communes as they were shown in section 9.5 hold for thematic preludes as well, but an important difference is that a larger form generally requires more variety with respect to the keys. Whereas the ornamental preludes often remain within one key, 'längere und mehr ausgeführte' preludes tend to modulate. Indeed, Czerny writes that the longer preludes don't have to start in the key of the piece that will follow, and that modulations can be very free.[850] Bochsa even uses the amount of modulation as a taxonomic principle, dividing preludes into pieces that don't modulate, pieces that modulate freely from any key towards the key of the composition that is prepared for, and finally preludes that are more like interludes connecting two compositions in different keys. Regarding the second category, Bochsa writes:

> At first, the harmony should move rather slowly, without being too much modulated; and afterwards the passage will gradually become more quick and brilliant, while the modulations assume a more scientific character. In the midst of a rapid flow of ideas, it will be judicious to throw in some favourite phrase of melody, taken from the piece the Pupil is about to perform, as a sort of announcement. Having fancifully sported with this strain, he will begin to wind towards the perfect close, which may consist of animated chords and sweeping passages.[851]

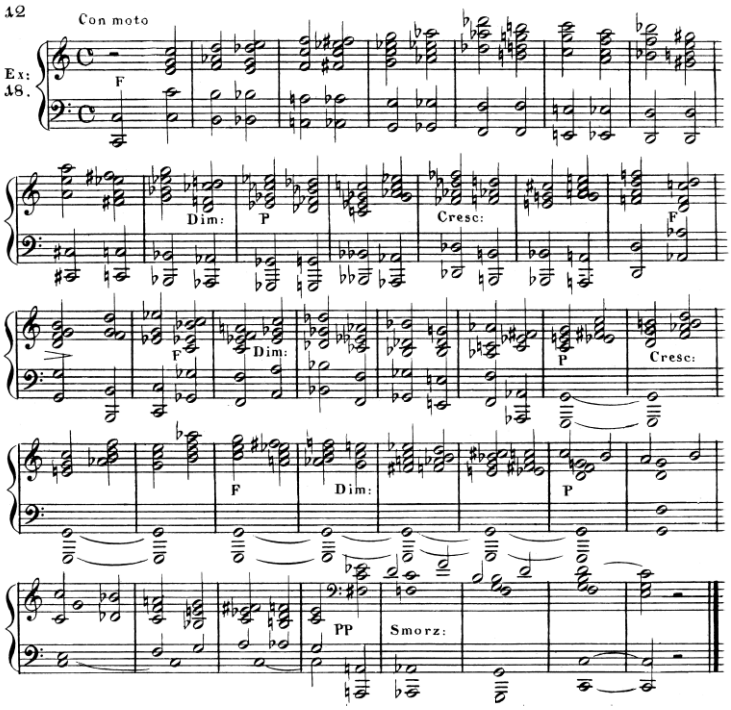
It has to be said that the term 'modulation' was used slightly differently in the nineteenth century compared with the present day. Today a proper modulation is generally seen as a change of key in

[849] https://youtu.be/G6TticNoDOA (uploaded in 2011 by 'gullivior')
[850] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung* … op. 200; 15.
[851] Bochsa, N.: op. cit., 49.

which the new key is 'firmly established' by means of 'characteristic harmonic progressions';[852] many nineteenth-century authors, however, apply the term to any hint of a different key, including temporary alterations in the scale of the main key that would today be analysed as secondary (sub)dominants. César Franck's famous motto 'modulez toujours'[853] should probably be understood in that way. Already in the first chapter of his *Anleitung*, Czerny recommends the use of frequent modulations even in short preludes (which can start and finish in different keys):

> Auch sind selbst kühne, fremdartige Modulationen in diesen Vorspielen recht gut an ihrem Platz, und wer gründliche Harmonie-Kenntnisse besitzt, kann sich hier leicht die interessantesten Wendungen erlauben.[854]
>
> [Furthermore, even daring, remote modulations are appropriate in these preludes, and whoever possesses a thorough knowledge of harmony can easily indulge in the most interesting ventures in this respect.][855]

Here is an example of such a modulatory prelude;[856] the first eight bars might already contain 'daring, remote modulations' in Czerny's eyes, but from a modern perspective these bars can be analysed in C major:




*Example 9.8.1*

[852] Oxford Music Online, entry: Modulation https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.18843

[853] Flothuis, M.: *"...exprimer l'inexprimable...": essai sur la mélodie française depuis Duparc.* Amsterdam, 1996; 17.

[854] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung...* op. 200, 9.

[855] Czerny, C.: *A systematic introduction to improvisation on the pianoforte op. 200*; 11.

[856] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung...* op. 200, 12.

In his review of Czerny's book, Gottfried Wilhelm Fink disapproves of such harmonic adventures and recommends that the performer apply them with moderation.[857] This way of preluding might at first seem out of place in Czerny's first chapter, but it should be kept in mind that these preludes are, like the ornamental ones, short and non-thematic introductions. Even so, the distance between these harmonically adventurous preludes and the simple cadences of a few pages earlier in Czerny's book is considerable. From the perspective of modern harmonic analysis, incidentally, the harmony of such preludes can as such certainly be called 'ornamental'.[858]

By the first decades of the nineteenth century equal temperament had become the predominant tuning system, enabling the keyboard player not only to play in all keys, but also to modulate by means of enharmonic changes. In the course of time, modulation tended to become a more or less independent and technical topic. In the words of Peter Rummenhöller, it has been 'hochstilisiert' [blown up] in harmony books and in the curricula of institutions of music education 'zu einer Quasi-Disziplin' [as a quasi-discipline], 'deren illegitimes Eigenleben sich vom musikalischen Satz und seiner Geschichte immer weiter entfernt hat' [whose illegitimate life of its own has moved off more and more from musical texture and its history].[859] It is a tendency that started as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century. The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* from October 12th, 1812 published a review of a new book by Heinrich Christoph Koch, well-known for his *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (1782-1793) and for his *Musikalisches Lexikon* (1802).[860] The new book, *Versuch, aus der harten und weichen Tonart jeder Tonstufe der diatonisch-chromatischen Leiter vermittels des enharmonischen Tonwechsels in die Dur- und Molltonart der übrigen Stufen auszuweichen* [Essay about modulating from all major and minor keys to any other keys by means of enharmonic changes], was published in 1812; it consisted of more than 700 modulatory formulas, without explanation. The anonymous reviewer uses many words to give a picture of musicians who might welcome such a book: a church organist who has to make sudden modulations in order to connect hymns and other liturgical music in different keys; a trained amateur pianist, who improvises but is not sure about the correctness of his modulations and becomes nervous when somebody with the appearance of a connoisseur is listening; a composer who is unsure of the correct notation of this or that turn; finally, any music lover who enjoys the beauties of harmony just like the changing colours of sunset. According to the reviewer, these readers will be disappointed by the book, not only because of flaws

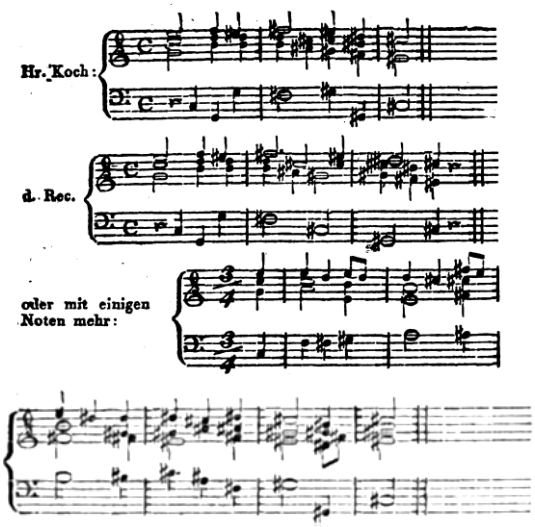
[857] Fink, G.W.: review of 'Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren op. 200'. In: *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, (2 September 1829, no. 35); column 576.

[858] An early example of such an ornamental modulating prelude is W.A. Mozart's *Modulierendes Präludium* (KV deest) from 1776 or 1777.

[859] Rummenhöller, P.: 'Harmonielehre'. In: *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Sachteil 4. Kassel / Stuttgart, 1996; col. 147.

[860] [Anonymous]: review of 'Versuch, aus der harten und weichen Tonart jeder Tonstufe der diatonisch-chromatischen Leiter vermittels des enharmonischen Tonwechsels in die Dur- und Molltonart der übrigen Stufen auszuweichen'. In: *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (14 October, 1812, no. 42); columns 679-684.

in the voice leading, but also because it shows the 'weite Kluft (...) zwischen dem Wissen und dem Thun' [wide gap between knowing and doing]. Koch's abstract modulatory formulas suffer from 'Armuth bei ängstlicher Künsteley, (...) Trockenheit, Monotonie, Steifheit'[861] [poverty along with timid artificiality, dryness, monotony, stiffness]. In the first issue of the *Intelligenzblatt* of the AMZ (January 1813), Koch replies. His defence is that every connoisseur knows that 'geistreiche Erfindung und Ausarbeitung in edlem Geschmacke' [brilliant invention and elaboration in a noble gusto] belong in real compositions, not in such harmonic formulas which aim at 'den Unterricht in einem mechanischen Theile der Kunst' [the teaching in a mechanical part of art] – by which he only reinforces the reviewer's point. The polemic continues with a reaction of the reviewer in the same issue, in which he writes that the works of Albrechtsberger, Vogler and many others could easily have convinced Koch of the opposite.[862] Besides voice leading intricacies (the reviewer is very critical about progressions of diminished to perfect fifths), his criticism mainly seems to concern the pace of the modulation, as seen in the example below (taken from his reply) in which the modulation from C major to C-sharp major according to 'Herr Koch' is contrasted with two alternatives by 'Der Recensent' (the latter one 'mit einigen Noten mehr' [with a few more notes]).[863] The first alternative exactly follows Koch's route via an enharmonic change of the dominant-seventh chord in C major into a German sixth chord in B minor; it only extends the final cadence in C-sharp, in this way allowing the new key more time to settle.



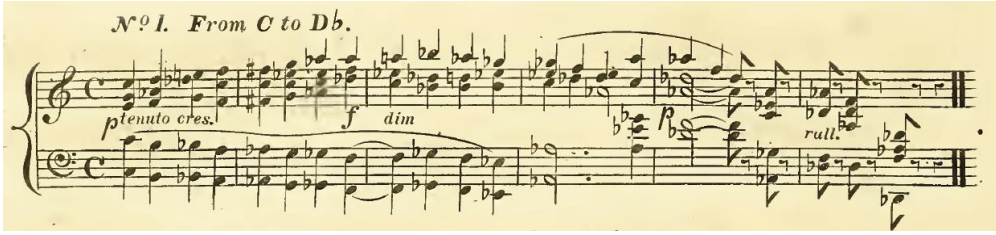

*Example 9.8.2*

[861] Ibidem, col. 682.
[862] *Intelligenzblatt zur Allgemeinen musikalischen Zeitung* (January 1813, no. 1); columns 1-9.
[863] Ibidem, col. 7.

It is worth noting that the reviewer's second example works completely differently: it is not an enharmonic modulation, but one that is essentially based upon a Monte-sequence ($E^6$ – A – $F\#^6$ – B – $G\#^6$ – C#). To a modern reader, this illustration reflects a very unsystematic mindset on the part of the reviewer. Early-nineteenth-century thinking about harmony was still heavily indebted to the practice-based approach of basso continuo. Grétry's problematic explanation of the German sixth chord (→ section 9.5*a*) clearly shows that harmonic loci communes exist prior to their theoretical explanation. A more systematic approach, initially inspired by the systems of philosophical idealism, dates mainly from the second half of the nineteenth century. One of the earlier examples of such a systematic approach is Moritz Hauptmann's discussion of modulation, which is clearly based upon the concept of what is usually termed a common or pivot chord.[864] It is this 'scientific' approach that, when applied to 'dry' formulas such as Koch's, opened the gateway to treating modulation as a 'Quasi-Disziplin deren illegitimes Eigenleben sich vom musikalischen Satz und seiner Geschichte immer weiter entfernt hat'. Less pejoratively, one could say that the way modulation is still being discussed in the training of professional musicians today is of a primarily analytical nature. Experience shows that this analytical approach is not necessarily helpful for an improviser. A player who is in the process of an improvisation and intends to move towards a specific new tone centre is too busy with the musical 'foreground' to be able to calculate which common chord could connect the new key with the previous one. If such a modulatory route would be used again and again, and in this way develop into a locus communis, this approach might be more useful; however, the number of modulatory possibilities is such that this is in general rather unlikely (maybe with the exception of a small number of very common modulations). It seems that the pivot chord as a concept is too abstract for practical application.

In this respect it is interesting to consider how early-nineteenth-century improvisation methods approach modulation, for (witness the review in the AMZ) it was acknowledged as an issue of importance. Several of them show a table with example modulations. For instance, Czerny included sixteen compact modulations from C major to all major keys (some keys are represented twice and Czerny does not distinguish between enharmonically similar keys) in *Die Kunst des Präludierens,* op. 300, followed by more elaborated modulating preludes. He does not add any analysis or explanation. This is his modulation from C to D-flat major:[865]

[864] Hauptmann, M.: *Die Natur der Harmonik und der Metrik.* Leipzig, 1853; 173-207.
[865] Czerny, C.: *Die Kunst des Präludierens* op. 300. Wien, [1833]; 44.




*Example 9.8.3*

Such a modulating progression *can* be analysed by means of pivot chords; in terms of style it resembles the second example of Koch's reviewer, but when it is stripped of the ornamental chord progressions, a simple model in the manner of Koch remains. The key moment seems to be the German sixth chord in the second bar, which resolves (via a root position) as a dominant seventh chord in D-flat. Bars 3 through 6 are nothing but an extended cadence. For reasons mentioned above, I deem it unlikely, however, that this common basic progression was what guided Czerny. The opening bars are clearly based upon a (foreground) voice leading model that was mentioned in chapter 9.5*b*. The rising chromatic line in the upper voice is loosely continued until the high b-flat in bar 3, after which a descending diatonic scale leads back towards the tonic d-flat (interrupted by an ornamental arpeggiation of the tonic triad in bar 5). On the one hand, such a clearly directed melodic motion functions as a generative framework for the musical structure of this little piece: indeed, stepwise progressions in the bass and / or upper voice can prompt harmonic inventions. As for the chord connections as such, on the other hand, several early-nineteenth-century books about preluding do formulate a guiding principle that is straightforward and practical: namely, the idea that two connected chords in a modulation should have at least one tone in common. This principle provides the improviser with a great deal of freedom: as long as at least one tone remains, the other voices can in principle move wherever they like. Without bothering about pivot chords, the player can abandon tones from the old key that he doesn't need anymore, and acquire the new tones of the key to which he wants to move, heading for the dominant seventh chord of the new key. Bochsa formulates this principle in great clarity:

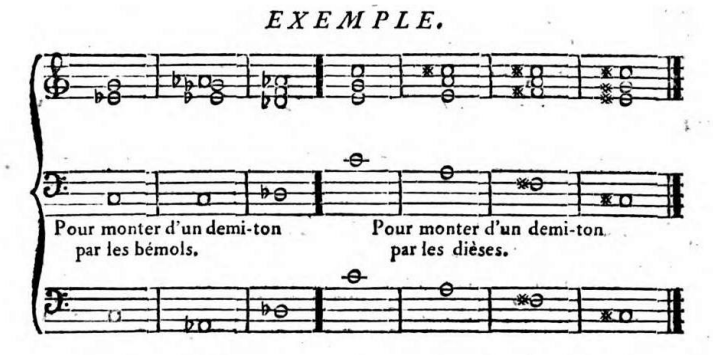
> No modulation can be perfectly agreeable, unless some note of the chord about to be relinquished is retained in the chord it is intended to adopt. This note, by forming a part of both harmonies, will promote their junction, and bind them more firmly together.[866]

The examples Bochsa shows are simple: the modulations move usually a fifth up or down. He doesn't exclude more daring modulations however, and expresses a view that would amuse theorists today:

[866] Bochsa, N.: op. cit., 29.

> There are some modulations too distant, fanciful, and unconnected, to be brought under any known rule, although they are always terminated by means of a dominant seventh.[867]

Almost 40 years earlier, Grétry had written in similar terms about modulating: 'Dans tout accord, il faut deux notes, au moins une note de l'accord qui l'a précédé'[868] [In each chord there should be two notes, or at least one note, from the previous chord]. In an example, Grétry shows that he does distinguish between enharmonically similar keys:[869]




*Example 9.8.4*

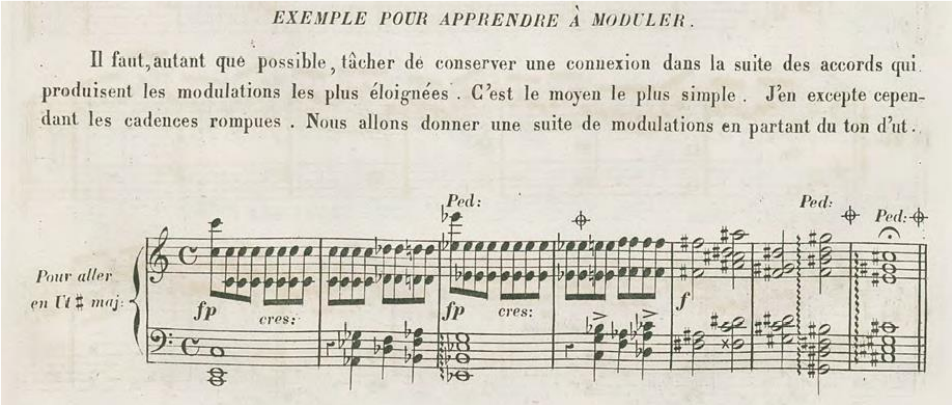
The first example again employs the German sixth chord as an enharmonic equivalent of the dominant seventh. The second one is interesting, especially for the time in which it was written: the turn from the C-major triad to the A-major chord can hardly be explained in functional terms (incidentally, it is questionable whether Koch's reviewer would have approved of approaching C-sharp major plagally through its minor subdominant, either – hardly a convincing way to establish the new key!). The C to A chord change might be interpreted as an example of a progression that is motivated by the common-tone rule only. It is Franz Schubert who would turn such chromatic mediants into a locus communis, decades later. I would like to emphasise, though, that in general a large majority of the common-tone chord connections can easily be explained in functional terms, as long as both chords are third-based.

In 1849, Kalkbrenner still referred to the common-tone principle to explain modulations:

> Il faut, autant que possible, tâcher de conserver une connexion dans la suite des accords qui produisent les modulations les plus éloignées. C'est le moyen le plus simple.[870]
>
> [If possible one should seek to save a connection within the chord progressions that produce the most remote modulations. This is the most simple way.]

[867] Bochsa, N.: op. cit., 34.
[868] Grétry, A.: op. cit., 47.
[869] Grétry, A.: op. cit., 49.
[870] Kalkbrenner, F.: op. cit., 36.

His example of a modulation from C major to C-sharp major is, again, essentially based upon the German sixth / dominant seventh equality, followed by a Monte-based structure to confirm the new key.[871]


EXEMPLE POUR APPRENDRE À MODULER.

Il faut, autant que possible, tâcher de conserver une connexion dans la suite des accords qui produisent les modulations les plus éloignées. C'est le moyen le plus simple. J'en excepte cependant les cadences rompues. Nous allons donner une suite de modulations en partant du ton d'ut.



*Example 9.8.5*

Generally such tables with common-tone modulations to all keys show a typical set-up: they are not organised by the cycle of fifths, but by the absolute distance between the point of departure (usually C major) and the goal of the modulation. For instance, Kalkbrenner's first example (shown above) modulates a semitone up, the next one modulates to c-sharp minor, the following ones a semitone down (C-flat major and minor), after which he modulates a whole tone up (D-major and minor), and so on until g-flat minor.

That this approach to modulation was not limited to chordal instruments can be seen in Louis Drouët's *Nouvelle méthode pour la flute.* Drouët dedicates a chapter to modulation in a general sense; his goal is not to teach harmony, but just to provide a few notions that are absolutely necessary when one wants to play an instrument. He gives the principles of modulation only in order to enable the student to prelude, to improvise and to make a cadenza 'ad libitum' without offending the rules of harmony.[872] Like the other authors discussed above, Drouët describes modulation in terms of arriving at the dominant of the new key by a succession of chords that always have (at least) one tone in common. He gives a list of modulations that resembles the ones mentioned above, but chooses chord positions that remain within the range of the flute. The explanations in the following example show that he is thinking enharmonically, and that he makes no distinction between the minor and major resolutions of the dominant seventh chord.[873]

[871] Ibidem.
[872] Drouët, L.: *Méthode pour la flute*. Paris, [1828]; 27.
[873] Ibidem.

*Example 9.8.6*

Drouët adds the important remark that only a few chords may suffice to establish a modulation when they are played as firm chords (*accords plaqués*); on a monodic instrument such as the flute, however, they are always played as arpeggios, and are therefore less effective. For that reason a modulation on the flute needs more time; Drouët advises the performer to stay with each new harmony for at least one bar.[874]

The difference between describing modulations in terms either of common (i.e., pivot) chords or of common tones may not seem to be very fundamental: in the end it is the same principle, namely the fact that one moves from one collection of tones to another by using as a link tones where the two collections overlap. The common-tone principle, one might say, belongs to the musical foreground, whereas the idea of a pivot chord is at a deeper level – but analytically, there is no essential difference. In the practice of improvisation, though, the difference is quite crucial. Analysis and creation are opposite processes. It is not strange that, given the decline of tonality and the rise of the *Urtext*-paradigm in Western music during the twentieth century, an analytic approach to harmony became dominant in the education of professional musicians. Improvising with harmony requires a different skill, though, one that is better developed with a methodology that focuses on the here and now of the musical foreground. The figured bass-related approach as represented in C.Ph.E. Bach's *Versuch*[875] is such a methodology, and it is not a coincidence that it remained influential until well into the nineteenth century (nor that the chapters on harmony were omitted in the 1925 edition by Walter Niemann[876]). It is not my intention to suggest that an improviser doesn't need to bother about the deeper structure of music; I do believe, however, that an improviser's awareness of the 'background' in the musical texture of tonal music tends to function through loci communes, not by means of abstract concepts.

[874] Drouët, L.: op. cit., 28.
[875] Bach, C.Ph.E.: *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1762). Facsimile reprint: Wiesbaden, 1986; 32-171.
[876] Bach, C.Ph.E.: *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen* (ed. W. Niemann). Leipzig, 1925.

## 9.9 Postlude

### *Preluding today*

Should the art of preluding be revived? Jane Lohr finishes her dissertation with the conclusion that 'composers prior to the second half of the nineteenth century conceived many of their works with the understanding that they would be preceded by an extemporaneous introduction'. She suggests that 'those who are engaged in the modern quest for authenticity have only to profit from attempts to investigate and recapture the once flourishing art'.[877] On the other hand, she also acknowledges that the cultural premises have changed dramatically since the first half of the nineteenth century. And indeed, most reasons for preluding as they are handed down to us by several authors quoted in this chapter have disappeared. An audience that also listens to chromatic and modal harmonic styles, not to mention atonality, doesn't need to be prepared for a new key. Modern classical concert etiquette is stricter than ever before, and even applauding between the movements of a composition is seen as a sign of ignorance. This means that, unlike in the nineteenth century, there is now no need to 'silence' the audience by means of improvised transitions between pieces. In more traditional classical music scenes, an audience is considered 'educated' when it is already familiar with many of the works that are performed. Moreover, preludes were primarily appreciated in musical salons – a type of concert venue that has disappeared, together with the social structure in which it functioned. At the time when extempore preluding flourished, concerts as we know them were unheard of. Outside opera and oratorio performances, public concerts for a large audience were essentially a nineteenth-century development, and (at least in the first decades) were to a large extent vehicles for entertainment. Solo recitals were exceptional. Until the advent of the age of recording, music-making in the home must have been a much more important part of musical life. Lieder were meant to be sung at home by amateurs in particular, and whoever wanted to get to know Brahms's very popular *Ein deutsches Requiem* bought the piano arrangement and played the piece with a friend, representing both orchestra and vocal parts with four hands.

The musical landscape of the nineteenth century was different from ours in so many respects that attempts to revive parts of it, for instance by re-introducing improvised preluding during a traditional piano recital, will too easily make an anachronistic impression. The deepest reason, I believe, is in the clash between the modern understanding of (in this case) a piano recital as a rendering of a collection of canonic musical works on the one hand, and the nature of extempore preluding (or of any improvisation) on the other hand. It is probably not an exaggeration to see preludes as they were described in this chapter as a form of *Gebrauchsmusik* – a term that might best be translated as 'functional music'. In our time it has gained a strongly negative connotation as 'commercialised

[877] Lohr, N.J.: op. cit., 269.

music', 'background music' or even 'audio wallpaper'. As a matter of fact, these pejorative meanings are a repercussion of the twentieth-century understanding of a concert as the 'reproduction' of a collection of masterworks, and of music history as a history of compositions. Re-interpreting 'classical' music-making as a process that is stimulated by an encounter with (in most cases) musical texts (I am happy to call these texts as such musical 'works') might remove some of the stress from this alleged contrast between the 'sacred' masterwork and the 'commonplace' prelude. My intention here is not to denigrate the importance of the score itself, but to affirm that any performance is a unique event rather than a 'reproduction' of some imaginary original. Such a perspective emphasises the aspect of situationality in a performance.[878] *Gebrauchsmusik* is by definition music that is primarily meant for a specific occasion. It still occurs in places where music is a part of a larger whole, such as in liturgy and in theatre.[879] Just as an organist in his improvisations can make the planned parts of liturgy stand out well, as if he provides a mounting for a jewel, so may extempore preludes and interludes in a concert unite the performed compositions and turn a recital into a series of connected stories, and the musician into a narrator. Whereas initially recordings attempted to bring the concert hall into the living room, classical concerts have for a long time been seeking to imitate recordings with respect to the type of perfection, and even the way of programming (e.g. by performing 'complete works' in a series of concerts). A stronger emphasis on situationality has the potential to regain the 'event-character' that concerts must have had in the nineteenth century – without making any claims about 'authenticity' at all. In a way it draws the concert into the sphere of the theatre and the church. Incidentally, it was not at all uncommon in nineteenth-century parlance to speak about non-religious music in liturgical terms: already in 1838, Clara Schumann was depicted as a 'Priesterin der neuen Kunst' [priestess of new art] who called for a 'romantisch-musikalische Wallfahrt' [Romantic and musical pilgrimage].[880]

### *Historically inspired preluding*

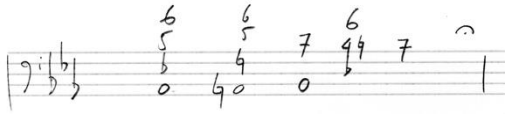
To conclude, I would like to give a few examples of 'historically inspired improvisations', preludes as I wove them into various concert performances. The first one is a prelude I played before a performance of a very little known piano composition of Julius Röntgen: *Impromptu* (1910). In order to make the 'situation' understandable, the opening applause (it was the start of a solo recital on both piano and organ in the Orgelpark in Amsterdam on November 13th, 2015) is included. The piano is a large Érard concert grand from 1899.

[878] See Fidom, H.: *Muziek als installatiekunst* (Orgelpark Research Reports, vol. 2). Amsterdam, 2012.
[879] Another example of preluding as *Gebrauchsmusik* were the radio performances ('Klassiek met Caroline') of the Dutch pianist Joop Stokkermans in the 1990's. Stokkermans provided the causeries by hostess Caroline Kaart with improvised background music, preluding into the next 'light classical' masterwork to be broadcasted.
[880] Klassen, J.: *Clara Schumann: Musik und Öffentlichkeit.* Köln, 2009; 143.

**[9.9 #1 Bert Mooiman: Röntgen Impromptu with prelude; rec. 2015]**

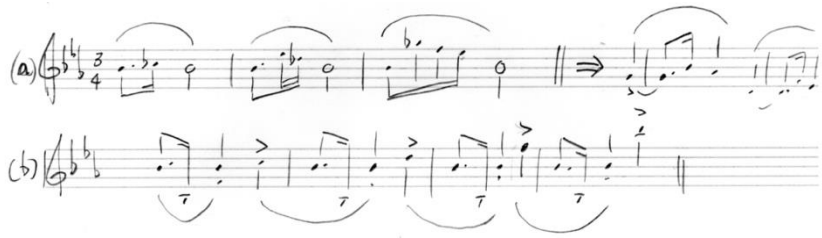
Since it is likely that nobody in the audience knew Röntgen's composition, and the prelude was not announced in the programme, it is very well possible that a majority of the listeners didn't realise that the prelude was extempore and not composed by Röntgen. It is a 'risk' that also Czerny was aware of: when the prelude begins *kräftig und bestimmt* [boldly and firmly], the listeners might think that the piece itself has already started.[881] Incidentally, this also means that Czerny assumed that most compositions were new to the audiences.

The prelude is built upon a cadential harmonic locus communis that is stylistically slightly more advanced than the ones in section 9.5, because I intended to connect with the rather chromatic harmonic language of the *Impromptu.* It starts on an accented subdominant (such as heard, for instance, in Rachmaninov's *Prélude* op. 23 no. 3) that via a passing secondary dominant moves into the dominant seventh chord; however, by lingering on the half-diminished $II^{6/5}$ and using the secondary $V^{6/5}$ as a neighbour chord, the cadential feeling is suspended. Eventually there is a long dominant prolongation, resolved by the opening of the *Impromptu* on the tonic.



*Example 9.9.1*

Both 6/5 chords are prolonged by means of extended arpeggiations; on the dominant prolongation, I 'threw in' material from the concert programme: a melodic cell from the opening melody of Röntgen's piece is freely combined with material from another piece in the same programme,[882] and the mazurka-rhythm of the *Impromptu* was prepared for (b).



*Example 9.9.2*

It is probably good to emphasise that the analysis above took shape on the basis of the recorded improvisation; the prelude was not 'planned' in any way, the analysis just makes explicit which models were applied extempore.

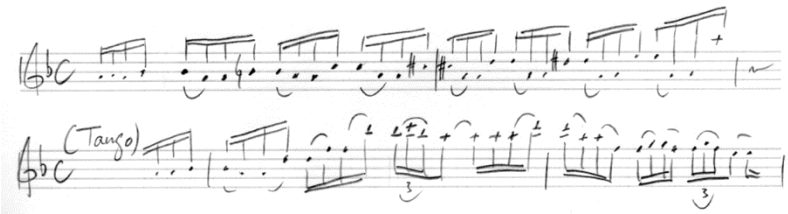
[881] Czerny, C.: *Von dem Vortrage* ... op. 500 III, 90.
[882] The *Vondelpark-suite* for organ, composed by Wijnand van Klaveren and premiered during this concert.

During a programme with salon music (piano with string quartet), two connecting preludes were added to keep the succession of many short items from becoming tiring (as well as to forestall too frequent applauding between pieces). Since the key successions were simple (from C major to G minor and from D major to D minor respectively), prolonged dominants sufficed in both cases as a harmonic frame. As for the ornamentation, the figuration was of a late-nineteenth-century type, rather inspired by Liszt than by his teacher Czerny.

The first example connects Johann Strauss's *Pizzicato Polka* with the fifth Hungarian dance of Brahms. Its double intention is to smother the applause and to prepare for the very different atmosphere of the Hungarian dance. The piano is a Pleyel from 1906.

**[9.9 #2 Bert Mooiman: Improvised connecting prelude Pizzicato Polka – Hungarian Dance; rec. 2015]**

The second prelude connects Sydney Baynes's waltz *Destiny* with the tango *El Choclo* of Ángel Villoldo. In this prelude I am 'sporting with' the opening motif of the tango's melody, chromatically enlarging the minor second a – b-flat into the fifth a – e.




*Example 9.9.3*

**[9.9 #3 Bert Mooiman: Improvised connecting prelude Destiny – El Choclo; rec. 2015]**

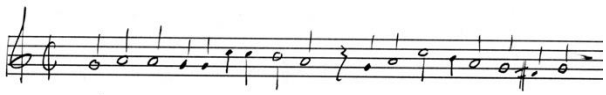
The possibility of improvising strongly thematic introductions such as Clara Schumann's – basically rounded pieces with allusions to the composition they are meant to prepare for – can be translated to later styles as well. Though liturgical preludes have not been discussed in this chapter, partly because it is such a wide field with very specific formal characteristics, such thematic preludes can serve within a liturgical setting as well, for example before the start of a service or mass. To close this chapter, I would like to show two examples that are taken from the same morning service on April 2nd, 2017, in the Nieuwe Badkapel, a Protestant church in The Hague. Their stylistic inspiration comes mainly from music of the early twentieth century.

The first one is an extended prelude that serves as introductory music when the congregation is entering the church. Its basic musical goal is to announce the key and the tune of the introit (the first hymn); at the same time, though, it also aims to prepare the churchgoers for the mood of the service. It is not to be seen as a concert piece; rather it is music that accompanies an act, namely the congregation approaching a place of worship. Usually such a prelude is of course played on the organ,

but this church also possesses a beautiful 1906 Pleyel grand piano (the same instrument of the previous examples), and on this occasion I used this instrument for the prelude.

**[9.9 #4 Bert Mooiman: Piano introduction to service; rec. 2017]**

Since the music uses an idiom from a time (roughly: the early twentieth century) that put a high value on the originality of individual composers or even pieces, it is harder to specify loci communes in the sense of anonymous patterns or models. It is possible, though, to show connections with existing compositions, and because these pieces are part of the musical canon and therefore 'common' ground, I argue that the term 'locus communis' can be extended to this material. The recorded prelude has a strongly modal character: the left hand accompaniment has a pentatonic ostinato that might recall Claude Debussy; the joining melody in the right hand extends the pentatonic mode to a mixolydian scale. By its character and register it might remind the listener of Bela Bartók, especially the opening theme from the third piano concerto, or the 'Swine-Herd's Dance' from *For Children* (vol. 1). At 2'15", contrasting harmonic structures built on parallel dominant seventh chords appear (another Debussyan trait). The rising chords at 3'38" were a conscious allusion to the image of the congregation ascending to the sanctuary; this is not only an idea that describes the beginning of any mass or service, but actually refers to a phrase (precious to many believers) from the 43rd psalm: 'Then I will go to the altar of God / To God my exceeding joy'.[883] This psalm is the introit of the Sunday at which the prelude was played. In this way a key phrase from the text finds its way into the instrumental prelude, followed at 4'08" by the appearance of the (beginning of the) psalm melody according to the Genevan psalter (1551), the hymn that will be sung by the congregation a few minutes later.



*Example 9.9.4*

Within the six-minute prelude, the hymn melody itself has only a subordinate and discrete role; however, since the listeners can be expected to be very familiar with it and to recognise it at once, it only has to be touched upon briefly to produce maximum effect. In this way the familiarity of the listeners (something I as an improviser knew of) makes possible a rhetorical game. In addition, the listeners can be expected to associate the melody with the textual phrase quoted above, which adds an extra-musical meaning to the music. It is situationality 'in optima forma': not only is the prelude tightly connected with the liturgical situation, it is also addressed to this specific group of people with their particular backgrounds. Besides the rhetorical role and despite its almost shy appearance, the

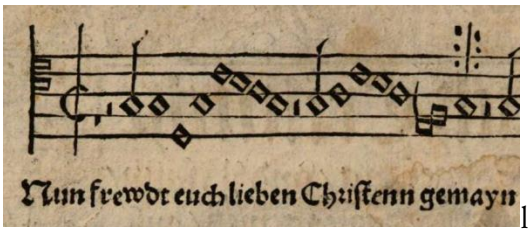
[883] Psalm 43: 4. New King James Version (1982).

first line of the hymn is the basis of much of the musical material: it provides not only the modal environment but also the fourth as a distinctive interval in the 'other' melody. This was a conscious decision of mine to the extent that the hymn melody was in my mind all the time, influencing the musical decisions. Analysis shows that the result is what Janet Schmalfeldt has called 'music in the process of becoming'.[884]

The 'sporting' with the phrase from the hymn consists of trying out various 'thickened line voicings' (harmonisations by parallel chords), at first with superimposed fourths, later with chords inspired by Maurice Ravel and Olivier Messiaen. Starting from 4'45", it alternates with the 'Bartók' melody, which is now enriched with chromatic extensions that recall Messiaen's *style oiseau*.

During the prelude, the congregation can be heard entering the church quite clearly; in fact, it is a recurring complaint among fellow organists that the people are talking through their music before the service. I think, however, that the somewhat messy situation on this recording is very similar to what Czerny and his contemporaries must have experienced when they were preluding – that, indeed, the noisiness was one of the main reasons to prelude at all.

Liturgical organ playing also provides the unique possibility, not really existing in concerts, of a type of piece that mirrors the thematic prelude, as it were: the improvised organ postlude or *sortie*, music that is played when the congregation leaves the church. It is not unusual to base an extempore postlude on the last sung hymn. After the same service, I improvised a *sortie* on the organ (Van Dam, 1926). The hymn melody it uses is from an old Lutheran chorale: *Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein* (1523):




*Example 9.9.5*

**[9.9 #5 Bert Mooiman: postludium; rec. 2017]**

The melody makes it possible to connect loosely with the opening prelude played an hour before (and discussed above), though the atmosphere is completely different. It provides the same modal environment, and highlights even a more elaborated structure of fourths. The *sortie* takes the (French) form of a *toccata* on the *tutti* of the organ. The short introduction on the reeds outlines the

[884] Schmalfeldt, J.: *In the Process of Becoming: Analytical and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music.* New York, 2011.

thematic function of the fourths and the mixolydian mode with a strong pentatonic flavour, after which an 'accompaniment' in repeated chords with alternating hands starts, referring to Marcel Dupré and Olivier Messiaen (the end of *Dieu parmi nous* from *La nativité du Seigneur*). Harmonically it mainly consists of triads in a chromatically enriched mixolydian mode. The fragmented melody of the hymn sounds in the pedals (starting at 1'03''). The toccata-patterns in the manuals are based upon motifs from the hymn melody, including the descending tetrachord C – B – A – G that is harmonised in parallel triads, thus recalling the end of Ravel's piano concerto in G major (1'25''). Musically such a postlude has features of a coda, rhetorically of a peroration. Tonally it is rather static, continuously confirming the key of G 'mixolydian' (though conventional authentic cadences are generally avoided). In order to increase the feeling of climax, two digressions are interpolated: at first a modal digression at 2'03'', and finally a rhythmical one at 3'01''. Their rhetorical function can be described as 'reculer pour mieux sauter': departing from the tonal and rhythmic uniformity to 'jump higher' in the final cadences.

Increasing the tension before the final cadence is certainly a function of another showpiece of early-nineteenth century improvisation: the solo cadenza, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

# Chapter 10. Cadenzas

## 10.1 Introduction

### *Cadenzas on the threshold to the nineteenth century*

The first association of music lovers when confronted with the idea of improvisation in classical music is often the improvised solo cadenza. Mather's and Lasocki's description of cadenzas in the eighteenth century lists some essential features:

> At the end of a piece of music or a major section of music, early singers and instrumentalists often added a fanciful, somewhat virtuosic flourish. This embellishment was intended to surprise the audience, heighten the intensity of the music, and probably also encourage an outburst of applause. During the embellishment, the movement of the accompaniment stopped. The soloist either entered on a long note or continued holding a note. The sudden interruption in the rhythmic and harmonic drive toward the resolution of the cadence and the unexpected change in timbre from full sonority to the soloist's lone note caused an excitement of anticipation in the listeners and prepared the way for the soloist's embellishment.[885]

By the end of the eighteenth century, cadenzas had generally become both longer and less numerous. In Classical and early-Romantic music they usually appear either on a dominant seventh chord or on a cadential six-four chord. The first situation typically occurs before the return of the main theme in an aria or a slow instrumental movement or rondo (where it is usually called an *Eingang* or lead-in), the latter at the end of (mostly) a movement in a solo concerto, just before the final orchestra *tutti* with the formal function of a coda. Cadenzas were usually indicated in the score by a fermata sign (the Italian term for a cadenza was *fermata*); the *Neue Mozartausgabe* reproduces Mozart's original wide arcs in these cases. Despite being an often mentioned topic, literature about cadenzas is relatively sparse, both in our time and in the early nineteenth century.

### *Were cadenzas improvised?*

Martin Edin has tried to answer the question of where in the course of a musical piece cadenzas were supposed to be added.[886] The question this study seeks to explore is to what extent cadenzas were indeed conceived during the performance ('on the spot'). Many conversations with fellow musicians have made clear to me that two assumptions are rather common nowadays: that 'in the past', cadenzas used to be improvised, and that a cadenza is supposed to use thematic material from the

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[885] Lasocki, D. / Mather, B.B.: *The Classical Woodwind Cadenza: a Workbook.* New York, 1976; 1.

[886] Edin, M.: 'Cadenza Improvisation in Nineteenth-Century Solo Piano Music According to Czerny, Liszt and Their Contemporaries'. In: *Beyond Notes: Improvisation in Western Music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (R. Rasch, ed.). Turnhout, 2011; 163.

composition within which it appears, leading it through extensive modulations. Such ideas are usually not the fruit of research, but part of the body of traditional knowledge and shared beliefs that forms the background of current classical music practice. This chapter will show that these two assumptions are based upon different stylistic sources and therefore hard to reconcile. The height of improvised solo cadenzas was in the second half of the eighteenth century;[887] these cadenzas were primarily non-thematic embellishments on the chord where the accompaniment had stopped. The idea of a cadenza as a development section, featuring unexpected modulations and incorporating themes from the composition (preferably combining them in a clever way), is rather based upon the composed cadenzas for piano by Beethoven. They were the guiding model for the many cadenzas left by the great soloists of the nineteenth century. Such cadenzas, however, had mostly been composed beforehand and were practiced before a performance.

Whereas pianists are blessed with a large number of cadenzas for piano concertos of Mozart and Beethoven that were written by these composers themselves, the players of other instruments often have to deal with cadenzas that were composed by virtuosos from the later nineteenth century – which did not prevent some of these cadenzas from gaining a canonical status. Since many such concertos are studied at conservatories with a view to playing them at future orchestra auditions, the pressure to use the well-known (though unoriginal) composed cadenzas can be high. That this practice has turned the 'fanciful flourish … intended to surprise the audience', into its absolute opposite goes without saying. The wealth of available (composed) original piano cadenzas, however, is a mixed blessing. When a great master composed a cadenza for his own concerto, one would assume that surely this must show his true intentions; who would dare to pretend to improve on the composer himself by being so bold as to play one's own creation? As a result of this line of thinking, it is indeed hard to find pianists (especially those playing modern pianos) who do *not* play, e.g., Mozart's own cadenzas when they perform his piano concertos. The refusal of (future) orchestra musicians to come up with their own cadenzas at least has a practical background; the reason why so few pianists do it, however, is purely artistic, which makes it even more problematic.[888]

The turn from the cadenza as an extempore flourish to a composed item is reflected in descriptions in musical dictionaries. To Thomas Busby, a 'cadence' is still a 'graceful extempore close'.[889] Heinrich Christoph Koch describes the cadenza as a 'Fantasie aus dem Stegreife' [extempore fantasy] in which the musician could express the sentiment (*Empfindung*) of a composition one more time in his own way. In order to avoid turning a cadenza into *wirklichen Unsinn* [real nonsense], Koch suggests that

[887] Badura Skoda, P. & Drabkin, W.: entry 'Cadenza' in: Oxford Music Online, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43023

[888] This view, however, traces back to the early nineteenth century, when especially Mozart and Beethoven already had a canonical status (→ chapter 5.2, 5.4).

[889] Busby, Th.: 'Cadence'. In: *A complete dictionary of music.* London, 1811; (no page numbers.)

a passage from the composition that best represents its sentiment be used as a theme of this fantasy. Merely showing off mechanical virtuosity is a sign of bad taste.[890] As early as 1833, Johann Ernst Häuser omits the phrase *aus dem Stegreife* and replaces it by an emphasis on the thematic content: 'Der Sänger oder Spieler entwickelt entweder einen Hauptgedanken des Tonstücks oder legt alle Hauptgedanken in ihrer Aufeinanderfolge nochmals in gedrängter Übersicht vor'[891] [the singer or player either develops a theme from the composition, or once more presents a survey of all themes in due order]. He finishes the entry with the remark (taken from Hummel, see below) that at that time cadenzas have become rare because the 'modern' concertos are different from the earlier ones ('haben eine andere Gestalt erhalten'[892]) and the technical challenges are usually more spread across the composition (in other words, the need to display virtuosity in a cadenza had disappeared). Gottfried Wilhelm Fink (in Schilling's *Encyclopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften*) also writes about the improvised cadenza as something from the past. His terminology (*Bravour-Cadenz*, *Modecadenz* [fashionable cadence]) already announces his skeptical view on empty virtuosity. According to Fink, since not all virtuosos possess a good taste and *eine schöne Verknüpfungsgabe* [the ability to combine ideas convincingly], composers have started to write down their cadenzas and sometimes to have them accompanied by some orchestral instruments.[893]

Not surprisingly, some methods, too, sometimes address the question of whether cadenzas are expected to be improvised. Daniel Gottlob Türk took a rather practical position on this issue. In his *Clavierschule* (1789), he writes that inventing such a cadenza on the spot (*während der Ausführung erfinden*) could be problematic for some musicians:

> Wer nicht hinlängliche Übung, ein vorzügliches Gedächtniß und sattsame Gegenwart des Geistes hat, dem ist vielmehr zu rathen, daß er die Kadenz aufschreibe, und sie vor sich lege. Oft wird zwar eine Kadenz während der Ausführung erst erfunden, und wenn sie geräth, verdient der Spieler desto mehr Beyfall. Allein dies Unternehmen ist zu gewagt, als daß man vor einer zahlreichen Versammlung auf ein so glückliches Ungefähr rechnen sollte. Zumal da wenigstens der größere Theil bey der Kadenz aufmerksamer ist, und in diesem kritischen Augenblicke beynahe mehr erwartet, als in dem ganzen vorhergegangenen Tonstücke. – Ich wenigstens würde lieber den sicheren Weg wählen, und die Kadenz vorher entwerfen. Ob der Spieler eben erst erfindet, oder bereits entworfen hatte, kann der Zuhörer ohnedies nicht wissen, vorausgesetzt daß die Ausführung so ist, wie sie seyn soll.[894]
>
> [Whoever does not have sufficient practice, an excellent memory, and an adequate presence of mind is rather to be advised to write out the cadenza and lay it before him. To be sure, a cadenza is often first

[890] Koch, H.C.: 'Tonschluß.' In: *Musikalisches Lexikon*. Frankfurt, 1802; col. 1575 / 1576.
[891] Häuser, J.E.: 'Cadenz'. In: *Musikalisches Lexikon*. Meissen, 1833; 69.
[892] Ibidem.
[893] Schilling, G.: *Encyclopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften, oder Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst*, vol. II. Stuttgart, 1840; 76-77.
[894] Türk, D.G.: *Clavierschule oder Anweisung zum Clavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende*. Leipzig, 1789; 313.

> invented during the performance, and if it succeeds, the player receives so much the more applause. But this enterprise is too risky and one should not count on such a happy coincidence when playing for a larger audience, particularly since at least the larger part of the audience pays more attention during the cadenza and at this critical point expects almost more than from the entire preceding part of the composition. For my part, I would rather choose the more certain way, which is to sketch the cadenza in advance. Whether the player is making up the cadenza at the moment or has already sketched it beforehand is not going to be obvious to the listener anyway, assuming that the performance is as it should be.[895]]

Türk was probably still writing about eighteenth-century 'ornamental' cadenzas here. More than 40 years later, even Pierre Baillot still simply writes that 'on peut donc faire un point d'orgue mesuré ou non mesuré, écrit ou non écrit (...)'[896] [one can make a cadenza in a metre or without one, written down or not]. Czerny, however, is rather positive about improvising large cadenzas:

> Die älteren Concerte (z.B. alle Mozartschen, die meisten Beethovenschen, etc.) haben zum Schluss des letzten Tutti eine Aushaltung, nach welcher der Spieler eine grosse Fermate zu improvisieren hat.[897]
>
> [The older concertos (for example, all of Mozart's, most of Beethoven's, etc.) have a prolonged pause towards the close of the last Tutti, after which the performer has to improvise a grand cadenza.[898]]
>
> The great improviser Johann Nepomuk Hummel, writing at the same time, pays hardly any attention to cadenzas, improvised or not; he just remarks in a footnote:
>
> Die sogenannte Schlussfermate (*Cadenza*, Tonfall) kam früher häufig in Konzerten etc., meist gegen Ende eines Stücks vor, und der Spieler suchte in ihr seine Hauptstärke zu entwickeln. Da aber die Konzerte eine andere Gestalt erhalten haben, und die Schwierigkeiten in der Komposizion selbst vertheilt sind, so gebraucht man sie selten mehr. Kommt noch zuweilen in Sonaten oder Variazionen ein solcher Haupt-Ruhepunkt vor, so giebt der Komponist selbst dem Spieler die Verzierung an.[899]
>
> [The Pause denoting that an extemporaneous embellishment was to be introduced, appeared formerly in concertos &c. generally towards the conclusion of the piece, and under favor of it [i.e., at this place in the piece], the player endeavoured to display his chief powers of execution; but as the Concerto has now received another form, and as the difficulties are distributed throughout the composition itself, they are at present but seldom introduced. When such a pause is met with in Sonatas or variations of the present day, the Composer generally supplies the player with the required embellishment.[900]]

[895] Türk, D.G.: *School of Clavier Playing* (Raymond H. Haggh, trans.). Lincoln, 1982; 301.
[896] Baillot, P.: *L'Art du violon*. Mainz, n.d. [1835]; 166.
[897] Czerny op. 200, 29.
[898] Czerny op. 200, transl. Mitchell, 34.
[899] Hummel Anweisung II, 55.
[900] Hummel, J.N.: *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte.* Weimar, 1827; 66.

All in all, the picture is not completely clear: apparently contrasting views on improvising cadenzas existed alongside each other. As concertos and arias were generally published without written cadenzas until the early decades of the nineteenth century, it is safe to assume that players and singers were expected to perform their own cadenzas, and that these were appreciated as their personal contribution to the piece. Regarding whether such cadenzas should also be improvised nowadays, the practical points of view of both Türk and Baillot still seem to be sensible advice to me: if somebody has the specific talent to perform a cadenza extempore, it is something that will be enjoyed by the audience; if not, a cadenza that is 'sketched in advance' can be as effective when it is performed 'as it should be' – that is, in an improvisatory way. It is interesting that Türk brings in the aspect of performance anxiety when he writes that improvising a cadenza might be too risky in front of a large audience. This remark suggests that for Türk, improvisation primarily belonged to the environment of small scale, less pretentious performances, as in salons. This matches with what Czerny writes about improvised preludes (→ chapter 9.3). Again, it should be emphasised that this circuit of nineteenth-century salon performances has disappeared long ago, and that both modern concert life and recording industry demand a type of perfection that is certainly no less stressful than Türk's performances for large audiences. A good solution for those inclined to improvise might be to take Türk's 'sketching' literally: it is possible to design the outline of a cadenza in advance, leaving the details to on-the-spot decisions.

What remains, though, is the expectation that a soloist would perform his own cadenza. In particular, Beethoven's own cadenzas to his first four piano concertos pose a problem for the pianist in this respect because, much more even than Mozart's cadenzas, they can be regarded as important compositions. Beethoven composed them within a short time in 1809, most likely for his patron Archduke Rudolph. He probably made no effort to get them published.[901] From a modern point of view, they simply count as very good Beethoven pieces, and many pianists wouldn't like to replace them with their own products any more than they would like to substitute other pages by Beethoven for their own inventions. The same sentiment existed already when Beethoven was still alive: in 1826, 'C.K.' (Carl August Krebs) wrote a 'Bitte an Beethoven' [plea to Beethoven] in the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, begging the famous composer to write cadenzas for his piano concertos. Obviously Krebs did not know the 1809 cadenzas, which were published as late as 1862. According to him, these concertos are played only rarely because not many performers are able to create a cadenza *die sich mit der Beethoven'schen Muse verträgt* [which harmonises with Beethoven's muse]. He even compares playing an 'ipse fecit-Kadenz' in a Beethoven concerto with wearing a silk dress with cotton patches.[902]

[901] Beethoven, L. van: *Kadenzen und Eingänge zu Klavierkonzerten* (Edited by Fr. Loesti). München, 2012; 6.
[902] C.K.: 'Bitte an Beethoven.' In: *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Issue 27 (5 July 1826); 220.

On the other hand, Czerny (who studied with Beethoven) mentions Beethoven's concertos as an example of the 'older' concertos (the fourth concerto, the last one with traditional cadenzas, was 24 years old by then) in which the soloist is supposed to improvise a cadenza. Indeed, even after the eventual publication of the Beethoven cadenzas, new ones were composed by a long list of pianists, including Ignaz Moscheles, Clara Schumann, Johannes Brahms, Eugen d'Albert and Ferruccio Busoni. Typically such cadenzas are large scale fantasies that in many cases are in no way limited to Beethoven's musical idiom.

### *Preludes and cadenzas*

One reason why the historical literature on how to produce a cadenza is sparse might be that this topic had already been dealt with in a different context. In every sense, a cadenza is like a prelude; the only small difference is in the harmonic context. Whereas a prelude originally embellished a tonic chord, a cadenza usually occurs on a dominant harmony. The *Eingang* (Mozart's term is universally used) consists of a flourish on (mostly) a dominant seventh chord; it is usually short and often leads into the connecting reprise of the principal melody in the tonic key. The final cadenza in, e.g., a concerto movement is typically placed on the cadential six-four chord and leads into a trill on its resolution in the dominant chord. This position provides both cadenza and *Eingang* with a stronger sense of direction than a prelude on the tonic. Early ornamental cadenzas, especially those for monodic instruments, usually started with a long tone from the six-four chord last played by the accompanying ensemble. When this tone happened to be scale degree ^1 (that is, the fourth above the bass), performers occasionally proceeded as though this pitch is actually the root of a I chord by beginning the cadenza with a prolongation of the tonic triad it root position. In such cases, the harmonic tension created by the six-four chord over the fermata is greatly undermined, which blurs even more the difference with an ornamental prelude.

In addition, harmonic and melodic loci communes coincide with those in preludes, although the harmonic opening gesture is naturally often a dominant prolongation such as the one shown in chapter 9.5*a*. In chapter 4.5, I have shown that typical formulas of ornamentation (such as in the methods of Winter and García *père*) tend to focus on the cadence at the end of a phrase as well. The ornamental patterns in cadenzas in the brilliant style are the same ones as in chapter 9.6. The longer thematic cadenzas also have their counterparts in more extended preludes. In short, when it comes to the construction of cadenzas, there is not much to be added to what was already discussed in chapters 4 and 9. An exception is a very detailed late-eighteenth-century source on vocal cadenzas, which will be discussed in the beginning of the next section. The remainder of this chapter focuses on analytical discussions of notated cadenzas, explanations in treatises, and recordings of improvised cadenzas.

## 10.2 Vocal cadenzas

### *Hiller*

Part 2 of this study reflected the important status of the art of singing within the Western musical landscape. With respect to cadenzas, vocal music also seems to have been the source for instrumental music. Thomas Busby's definition, which was quoted from in section 10.1, explicitly calls a cadenza a part of an 'air'.[903] It will therefore make sense to start this *tour d'horizon* with examples of vocal cadenzas.

In 1780, Johann Adam Hiller published a singing method that devotes an large chapter to cadenzas. Hiller was a composer and pedagogue based in Leipzig; he became the first *Gewandhaus-Kapellmeister* and from 1789 worked as a *Thomaskantor*. From 1771 he conducted a *Singschule*. Hiller published his singing method in two parts; the second part, *Anweisung zum musikalisch-zierlichen Gesange* [guide to singing in a musically elegant way], deals with vocal performance. In the seventh chapter, *Von den Cadenzen* [about cadenzas], Hiller explains in great detail how a cadenza should be constructed.[904] The elaborateness of this text makes it a unique source for the study of early vocal cadenzas. The reason why Hiller gives so much attention to this topic might be that preluding was (with very few exceptions) a typically instrumental phenomenon; for the explanation of cadenzas, a singing method could therefore not refer to a discussion of preluding elsewhere. Since Hiller's chapter gives such a clear explanation of the fundamentals of nineteenth-century vocal and, by implication, instrumental cadenzas, it will be discussed relatively comprehensively here.

Stylistically Hiller refers to the galant style, and the cadenzas he describes are relatively short and generally purely ornamental. The musical pauses where he suggests adding flourishes are as yet more frequent than in the Classical and Romantic styles, and the harmonic situations are more diverse. His explanation, however, can also be directly applied to Mozart and provides a very firm basis for later bel canto cadenzas as well. It is a chapter that is worth being studied by every singer who is involved with this repertoire.

Hiller starts the chapter with the usual warnings against misusing cadenzas for the sake of effect, and against tiring the audience with unimaginative boringness when the singer's mind is 'dry' (*ihr Kopf ist trocken*[905]). One of the virtues of cadenzas, however, is that they contribute to variety[906] (→ chapter 3). Hiller repeats the familiar rule that a cadenza should be sung on one breath, but immediately adds that this is not always possible in practice; it is therefore enough when the necessary breathing happens unnoticed. The idea that a cadenza should be adapted to the character (affect) of

[903] Busby, Th.: 'Cadence'. In: op. cit., (no page numbers.)
[904] Hiller, J.A.: *Anweisung zum musikalisch-zierlichen Gesange*. Leipzig, 1780; 108-128.
[905] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 110.
[906] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 111.

an aria is familiar as well; a way of attaining this goal is to use representative material from the composition. Variety is a must, both in figures and in metre. *Je mehr Unerwartetes in eine Cadenz gebracht werden kann, desto schöner ist sie*[907] [the more surprises one puts into a cadenza, the more beautiful it is]. Hiller distinguishes three sorts of cadenzas: first, cadenzas on the cadential six-four that remain in the main key and that either embellish the six-four chord or change to the dominant harmony; these are the first two types. The third type is more adventurous:

> Die dritte Art endlich ist, wenn man kurze Wendungen und Ausweichungen in entfernte Tonarten zu Hülfe nimmt. Doch muß man sich für allzufremden Tönen hüten und immer darauf sehen, daß sie als Dissonanzen gegen den Baß eine richtige Auflösung bekommen.[908]
>
> [Finally, the third type is when one makes use of short turns and moves to remote keys. However, one should look out for too strange tones and always make sure that they, as dissonances against the bass, will get their proper resolutions.]

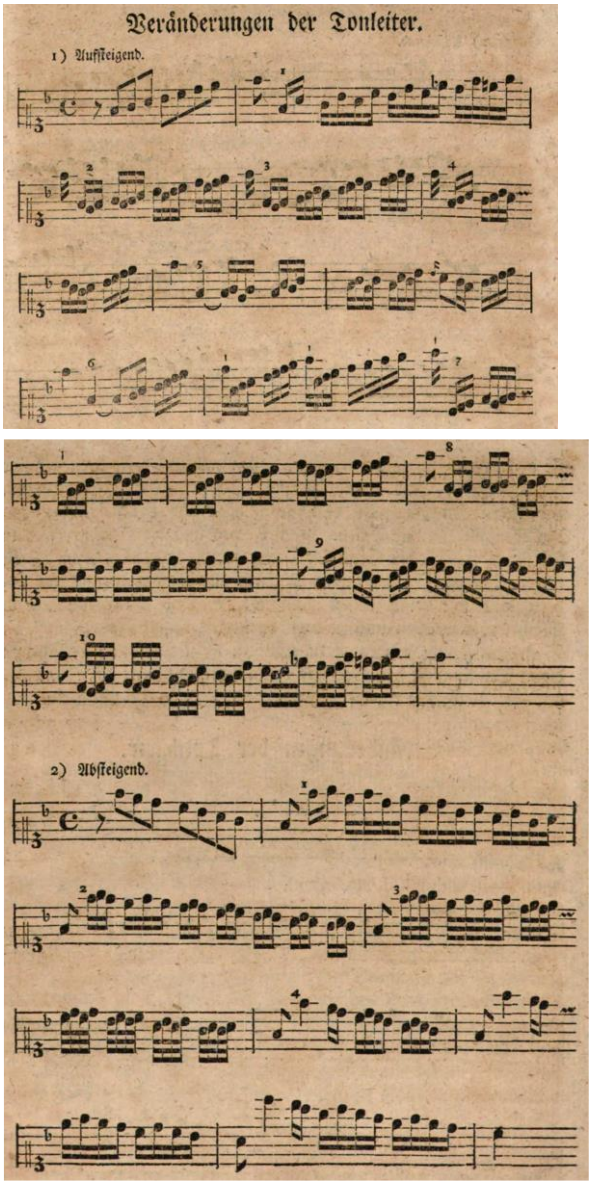
The second sentence in the quotation makes clear that Hiller is not speaking about full-fledged modulations here, but rather about alterations that function as extra leading tones to various scale degrees of the main key. It also shows that the bass tone of the chord that is embellished by the cadenza is thought to remain in force for the entire flourish, even though only 'spiritually' since it is not actually being played.

Hiller clearly juxtaposes harmony and figuration as the two main constituents of a cadenza.[909] As for the latter, he writes that one should have familiarised oneself with all kinds of *Figuren* [patterns] from which the *Passagien* [passages] can be put together. He explicitly makes the connection with ornamental patterns, along with trills and appoggiaturas.

> Der Accord und die Tonleiter sind in der That die sicherste Grundlage, auf welche gute Cadenzen gebaut werden können. Wenn man sie durch allerhand Figuren zu verändern, und mit verschiedenen wohlgewählten und gut vorgetragenen Manieren zu beleben und zu verschönern weiß, so hat man gnugsame Mittel zur Hand, Cadenzen zu erfinden.[910]
>
> [The chord and the scale are indeed the best basis to build good cadenzas on. When one manages to vary them with all kinds of patterns, and to revive and beautify them with several well-chosen and well-performed ornaments, one has at one's disposal sufficient means to invent cadenzas.]

[907] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 112.
[908] Ibidem.
[909] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 113.
[910] Ibidem.

To summarise, Hiller's approach perfectly matches the organisation of the 'dictionary of ornamental patterns' in chapter 9.6, that was derived primarily from early-nineteenth-century brilliant style ornamentation. Hiller gives a number of examples of embellished scales, both rising and falling:[911]

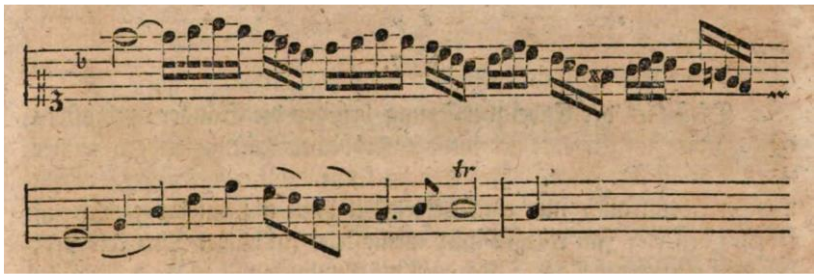



*Example 10.2.1*

Similar patterns can easily be extended to a proper cadence. Hiller usually starts with a long note from the chord on which the fermata is placed, in the following example (10.2.2) the root of the I$^{6/4}$ chord in F major. Such a long note was traditionally performed with a *messa di voce*. The falling sequence that follows would (in Hiller's terminology) probably be seen as an embellished scale downward, connecting to a rising dominant ninth-chord, after which a simple commonplace formula leads towards the final trill. This is an example of Hiller's first type of cadenza, primarily built on the

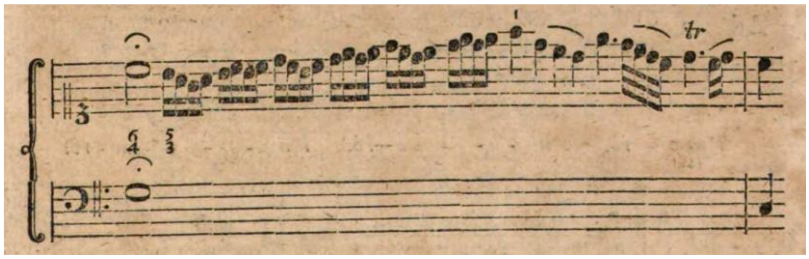
[911] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 113-114.

cadential six-four. Even so, it appears that the inclusion of a short passage on the dominant ninth (at the beginning of the second line) was considered inevitable.[912]



*Example 10.2.2*

Hiller's second type is also based on the cadential six-four but immediately moves to the dominant seventh and remains there:[913]

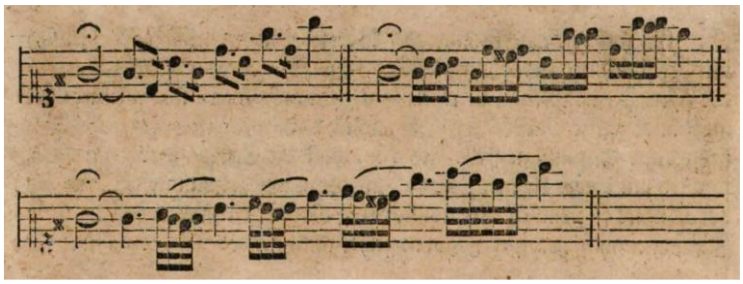


*Example 10.2.3*

Both types are not difficult for a modern singer to imitate. A point of interest is that, in the latter type, the chord change occurs at the very beginning, right after the obligatory long note. This makes it necessary to change (in this instance) to the b after the long c. It seems to be natural to separate these two tones, as if starting anew on the passage in sixteenth notes, whereas in the first example the passage evolves from the long note. Moreover, Hiller does not mention the choice of the peak tone of the flourish. Especially for a novice in this field, it is an aspect that deserves consideration. The upper and lower extremes in Hiller's examples of cadenzas are always part of the supporting harmony; the ninth of the dominant chord is used frequently, but in both cadenzas it neatly resolves into the octave.

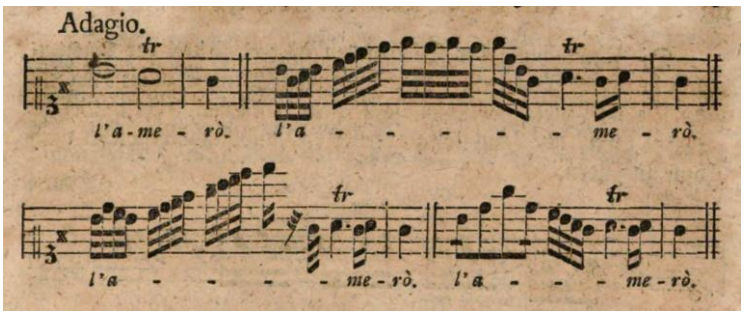
Whereas both previous cadenzas were built mainly on scales, Hiller also gives examples of ornamented triads.[914] The third flourish below uses the turn, an ornament that would become very prominent in the early nineteenth century:

[912] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 115.
[913] Ibidem.
[914] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 116.



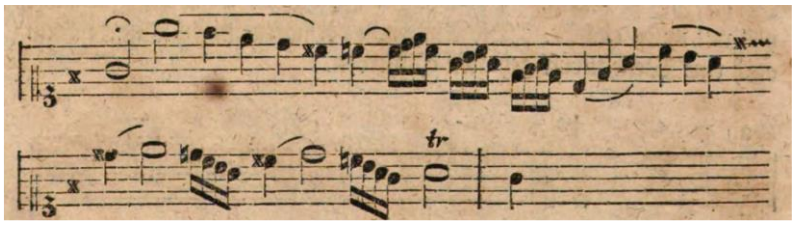
*Example 10.2.4*

Hiller explains that similar cadenzas are often performed even when the accompaniment doesn't pause, and gives examples that recall collections such as Winter's (chapter 4.5, note 64):[915]




*Example 10.2.5*

Hiller emphasises that cadenzas can also be effective without quick passage work, especially in Adagios. In general, however, the listener needs to be surprised, which preferably happens by mixing slow and fast movement in the cadenza. Even alterations and other dissonances (against the bass) can be useful in this respect, as long as they are properly resolved. The following example consists of a slow progression on the cadential six-four with a chromatic passing note that leads into a flourish on the dominant seventh. The dissonant d-sharp in the second line is resolved into the e (the ninth of the dominant chord), that in turn resolves into the octave d, preceded by a dissonant c-sharp.[916]



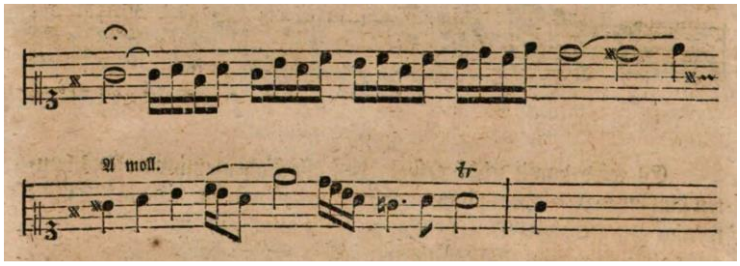

*Example 10.2.6*

[915] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 117.
[916] Ibidem.

Dissonances (or in this case, chromatic alterations) are also presented as a means to move into other keys, usually as a leading note. Hiller's commentary clearly shows that he presumes that the cadenzas he writes about are extempore:

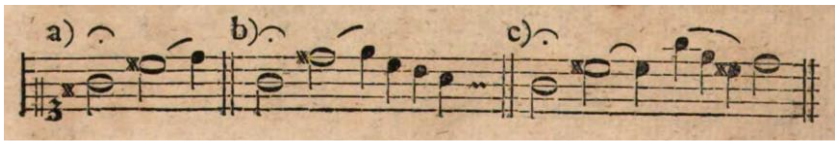
> Die Einmischung der Dissonanzen ist das Mittel zur Ausweichung in fremde Tonarten. Nur muß man sich nicht zu weit wagen, und auch nicht zu lange darinne aufhalten, weil man leicht in Gefahr gerathen kann, den Hauptton zu verliehren, und sich nicht wieder nach Hause zu finden.[917]
>
> [Introducing dissonances is the means to modulate to other keys. Only one should not venture too far away, and should not stay there too long, because of the peril of losing the main key and not finding the way home.]

These last words recall an amusing anecdote about George Frideric Handel, according to which the composer conducted a violin concerto with Matthew Dubourg as a soloist; after an unusually long cadenza by Dubourg, Handel is said to have exclaimed: "Welcome home, Mr Dubourg!"[918] A cadenza by Hiller that avoids this risk looks quite harmless indeed:[919]




*Example 10.2.7*

Jumping from the tonic to unexpected alterations contributes to a feeling of surprise. In fact, Hiller only recommends a few of such moves:[920]



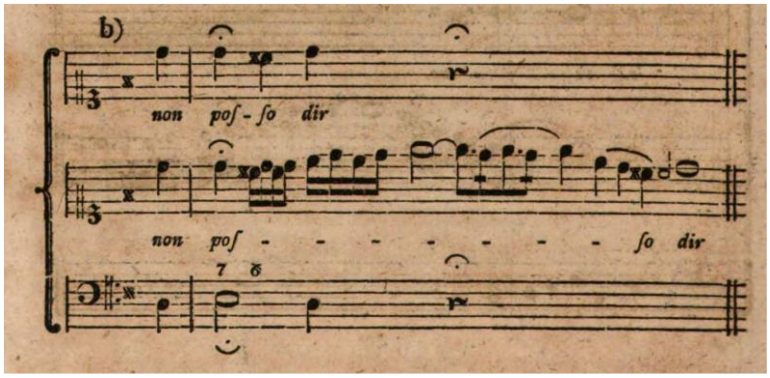

*Example 10.2.8*

He writes that leaping to the augmented fourth (example 10.2.8a) is very useful because on the one hand it leads towards the dominant key, which is closely related, and on the other hand it has the appearance of a very strange move. Example c shows how the resolution of the sharp fourth can be postponed. With respect to modern solfeggio methodology, it is worth noting that the modulations

[917] Hiller, J.A.; op. cit., 118.
[918] Sadie, J.A.: *Companion to Baroque Music*. Oxford, 1998; 310.
[919] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 118.
[920] Ibidem.

are hardly explained and are in fact approached largely intuitively. The student is supposed to remember which leaps work well, and the consequence is expected to follow naturally. Other dissonant leaps 'stiften mehr Unheil an, als sie nutzen' [cause more trouble than that they are useful], though some singers 'treiben es damit bis zur Verwegenheit' [push this to audacity].[921] In addition, leaps that are larger than an octave are given as examples of surprising moves in a cadenza. It is striking that the singer is constantly supposed to search for variety in order to surprise and, in that way, please the listener. The cadenza is expected to entertain the listener by surprises that miraculously turn out to work in the musical language at hand. Hiller's singer of cadenzas is like a musical juggler who is admired by an audience marvelling at his 'dangerous' moves.

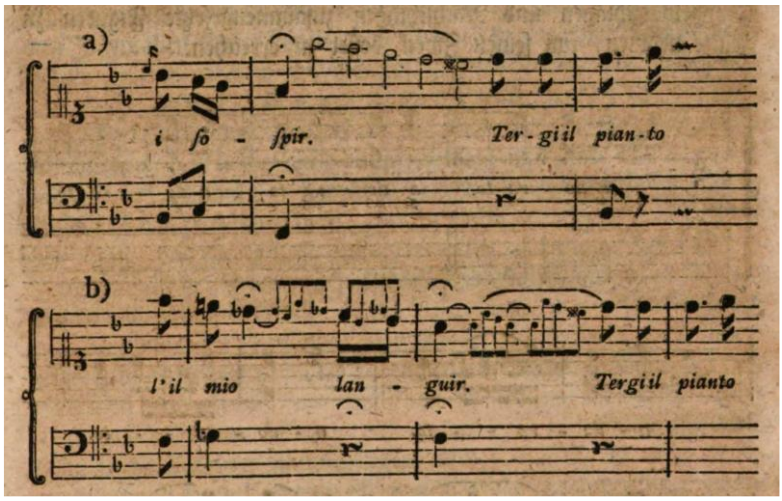
Hiller also describes shorter pauses that he calls *Fermaten*. From the context it becomes clear that these usually mark the end of a section, and most frequently occur on a tonic or dominant harmony. Hiller even mentions the fermata at the beginning of an aria,[922] something that also occurs in instrumental music from the Baroque – for instance, the first movement of Handel's organ concerto in F major op. 4 no. 4. Generally, such fermatas on the tonic had become unusual during the period under investigation. The fermatas on the dominant, however, remained very familiar. Hiller distinguishes between fermatas on a consonant chord and on a dissonance; the latter should include the resolution of the dissonance, such as in this example:[923]




*Example 10.2.9*

Mozart's *Eingänge* usually bridge the transition of the dominant harmony to the recapitulation of the main theme in the tonic (e.g., in a lied form or rondo); Hiller gives two examples of this situation, one containing only a suitable transition (a), the other adding an embellishment (b):[924]

[921] Ibidem.
[922] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 123.
[923] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 122.
[924] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 123.




*Example 10.2.10*

Hiller's sample cadenzas do not contain thematic material. In the end the aria remains the main thing, not the cadenza or *Eingang*: one cannot save a badly performed aria by the cadenza, and whoever cannot produce an elaborated cadenza may pay extra attention to the performance of the piece itself, contenting himself with a few tones from the chord plus a trill instead of a cadenza,[925] or a trill or *messa di voce* instead of an *Eingang*.[926]

> Überhaupt ist es selten ein Fehler, daß eine Cadenz kurz ist, wohl aber sehr oft, daß sie zu lang ist.[927]
>
> [Anyway, it is rarely a weakness that a cadenza is short, but very often so, that it is too long.]

Hiller also pays attention to the vowel on which a cadenza should be sung, and to *Doppelcadenzen* [cadenzas for more than one singer, or for voice and instrument]. Both topics lie outside the scope of this study – the first, because it concerns the technique of singing as such; and the second, because such cadenzas ought to be composed.

> Daß solche Cadenzen aufgeschrieben werden müssen, ist leicht zu begreifen; und wenn bisweilen Sänger so etwas aus dem Stegreife unternahmen, so konnten sie wohl keine andere Absicht haben, als den Zuhörern Sand in die Augen zu streuen, oder sich einander lächerlich zu machen.[928]
>
> [It is easy to understand that such cadenzas have to be written down; and when sometimes singers improvised something like this, they surely must have had the intention to throw dust in the eyes of the listeners, or to make fools of themselves.]

Finally Hiller notices that nothing is more difficult to describe than what the taste of the performer adds as an embellishment to the music:

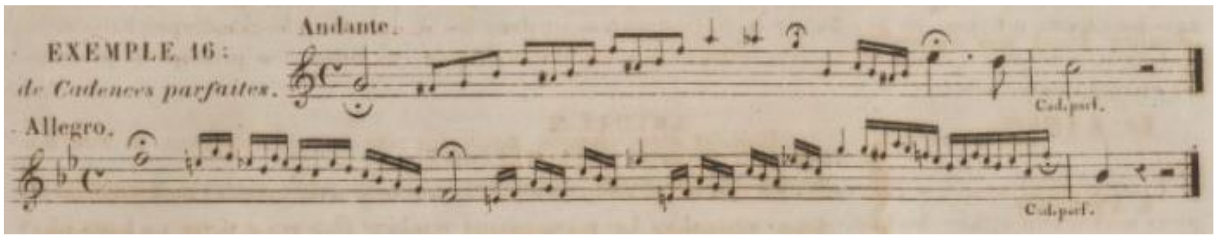
[925] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 128
[926] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 121.
[927] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 128.
[928] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 125.

> Die Sprache ist nicht reich genug, um alles mit Worten auszudrücken, was in der Empfindung öfters sehr lebhaft da ist. Die musikalischen Zeichen vermögen noch weniger, alle die Feinheiten der Manieren, den sanften Abfall vom Starken zum Schwachen, und umgekehrt, den frölichen, scherzenden, zärtlichen, klagenden Ton der Leidenschaft, dem Auge vorzustellen. Es ist darüber keine andere Belehrung möglich, als das Anhören guter Sänger, auch bisweilen guter Instrumentisten.[929]
>
> [Language is not rich enough to express in words what is often vividly present to the feeling. Musical signs are even less capable of presenting to the eye all subtleties of ornamentation, all dynamic nuances, the joyful, joking, tender, plaintive tone of passion. There is no other way of instruction in this than listening to good singers and sometimes good instrumentalists.]

These are more than just obligatory remarks: they remind us of the (largely vanished) world of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century vocal expression that was the subject of chapter 4, and of the close connection between vocal and instrumental music. In addition, Hiller expresses the idea that musical notation is always a simplification (→ chapter 2.3); his advice to listen to good singers corresponds literally to what Chopin asked from his students some 60 years later (→ chapter 5.12).

### *Bel canto cadenzas*

Some nineteenth-century bel canto methods also pay a lot of attention to cadenzas. Luigi Lablache (1840) only mentions cadenzas on the dominant, distinguishing between two situations: the perfect cadence that moves to the tonic ('cadenza') and the half cadence ('fermata'); the latter situation corresponds with the *Eingang*. Familiar notions are the idea that the character of a cadenza must be adapted to the piece, and that it is 'taste and taste alone' that determines the choice of passages. The flourish should primarily use diatonic and chromatic scales and arpeggios. Like Hiller, Lablache writes that traditionally cadenzas have to be sung on one breath, but that 'modern singers' have abandoned this principle. Finishing a cadenza of the first kind with a long trill (such as in Hiller) has become old-fashioned to Lablache. Here are two examples in a more contemporary style:[930]

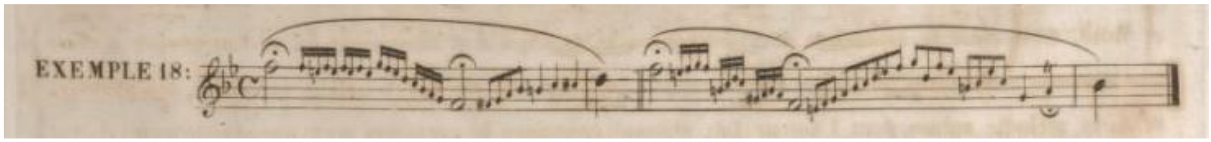



*Example 10.2.11*

[929] Hiller, J.A.: op. cit., 127-128.
[930] Lablache, L.: *Méthode complète de chant ou analyse raisonnée des principes d'après lesquels on doit diriger les études pour développer la voix, la rendre légère et pour former le goût.* Paris, [1840]; 85.

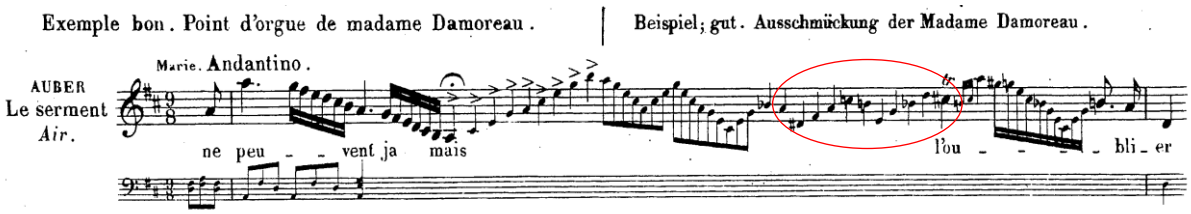
Lablache's cadenzas shown here basically use the same techniques as Hiller's. They, too, start with a long note; the flourishes are based on arpeggiations of the dominant seventh chord or on modifications of the diatonic scale; in both cases the melodic peak is the ninth over the implied bass. Like Hiller, Lablache applies what I called ornamental loci communes. However, they are closer to the examples in the 'dictionary' (→ chapter 9.6). Generally speaking, it has become more accepted to introduce leading notes for every structural tone, as can be seen clearly in the ornamented arpeggiation of the dominant ninth in the first example. Another difference with Hiller is the already mentioned omission of the final trill.

'Fermatas', the cadenzas of Lablache's second kind, can also have an extension of several notes that leads into the following phrase; for this, Lablache uses the term *conducimento*.[931]




*Example 10.2.12*

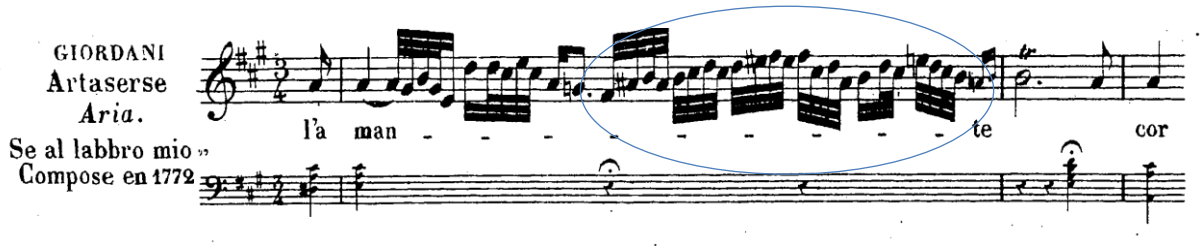
Manuel García also writes about cadenzas in his *L'Art du Chant*. Interestingly, he writes that until the eighteenth century, singers used to modulate to almost any key of their liking, while in his time this 'liberty' is only allowed to singers who combine deep knowledge with an infallible taste.[932] Even more interesting are his examples of successful and less successful modulating cadenzas. The 'good' cadenza is a highly virtuosic one by Laure Cinti-Damoreau:[933]




*Example 10.2.13*

The contrasting example, which García does not recommend imitating, is by the late-eighteenth-century singer Giuseppe Millico:[934]

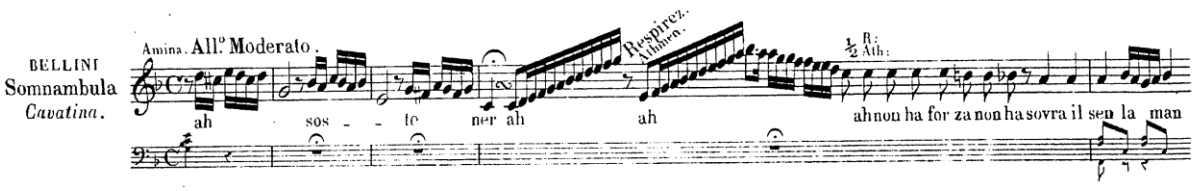
[931] Ibidem. A *conducimento* matches what Mozart terms an *Eingang*.
[932] García, M.: *École de García,* part 2. French / German edition; Mainz, n.d.; 67.
[933] Ibidem.
[934] Ibidem.




*Example 10.2.14*

García considers the latter 'trop irrégulier' [too unusual]. Since García's topic here is the amount and manner of modulations, his reasons must have had to do with harmony. An important difference between the two cadenzas is in the relation between the structural tones of the flourish and the (implied) bass tone. Millico doesn't really modulate, but the passage marked by the blue oval implies a subdominant harmony ($II^6$) and, by consequence, a D in the bass. As a result, there is a rather strong and long-lasting dissonance with the implied E in the bass. Cinti-Damoreau's cadenza is remarkably chromatic, especially in the section marked with the red oval. However, since the altered seventh chords ornament a passing melodic line A – B – C-sharp, they are at the same time dazzling and still in accordance with the implied bass tone A. That Cinti-Damoreau indeed possessed a 'deep harmonic knowledge' shows in many of her cadenzas.

García also writes in detail about the rule to sing a cadenza on one breath, as well as text placement. This discussion is particularly instructive because it makes clear what actually was considered the problem with breathing during a cadenza: it would interrupt the phrase. When the melody of a cadenza 'allowed for it', breathing was actually accepted, such as in this example:[935]

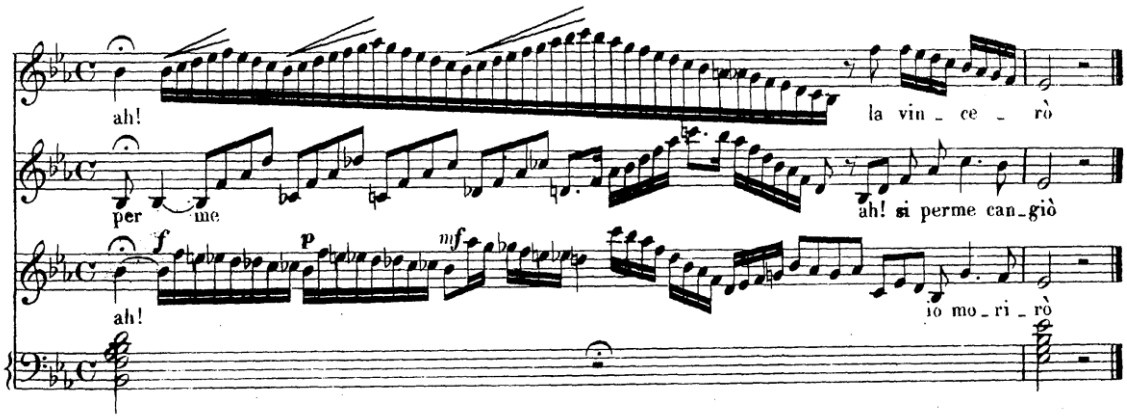



*Example 10.2.15*

García furthermore emphasises the importance of variety within a cadenza. He mentions not only choosing three or four different ornamental patterns in a longer cadenza, but also aspects of performance: the singer should take care of *une certaine inégalité entre les valeurs des notes dans les differents dessins* [a certain 'inégalité' in the lengths of the notes in the different patterns], or a distinct variety in dynamics. The application of these two means will enliven the cadenza, and avoid the impression of a vocal exercise.[936] In fact, it is part 2 of this study in a nutshell.

[935] García, M.: op. cit., 68.
[936] Ibidem.

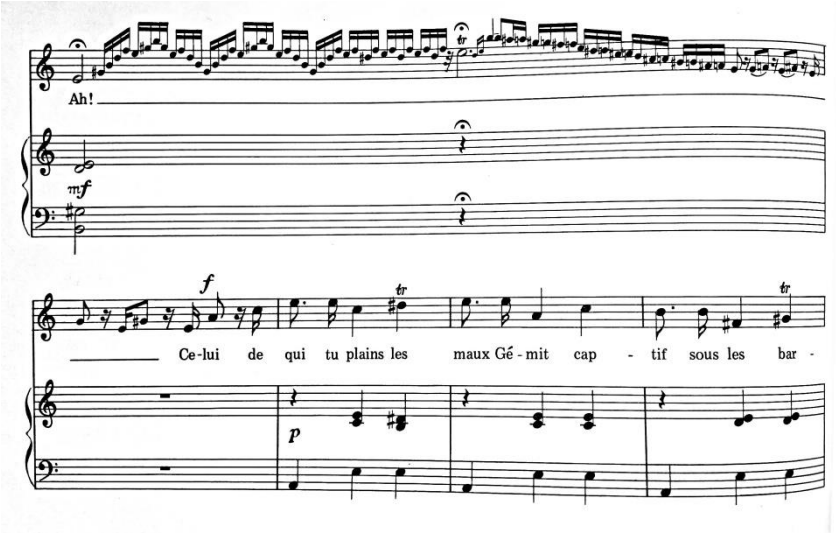
At the end of his book, García shows a large number of sample cadenzas. He includes the possibility of a fermata on the tonic at the beginning of a piece (see above), but this type of cadenza is represented only with a few examples. The vast majority are cadenzas on a dominant chord, and double cadenzas. The rich diversity of García's cadenzas makes it hard to summarise his ideas. Indeed, a singer who intends to explore this style can only be advised to study all of them. Within the harmonic and melodic framework he inherited from the eighteenth century, García has been remarkably inventive. His cadenzas show a striking virtuosity compared to those of Hiller. The following examples clearly build on the rigour of daily technical exercises as described in chapter 4 of this study.[937]




*Example 10.2.16*

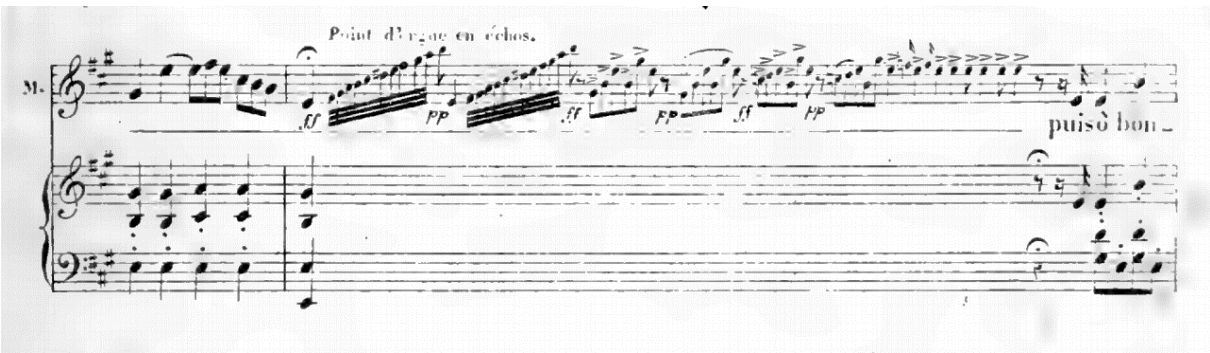
Similar vocal fireworks can be found in the cadenzas Pauline Viardot composed for her arrangements of Chopin's *Mazurkas* (→ chapter 5), such as the next one in *L'oiselet.*[938] It is a lead-in that connects elegantly with the main theme by preluding upon its opening motif.

[937] García, M.: op. cit., 109.
[938] In: Viardot, P.: *12 Mazurkas* (J. Rose, ed.). New York, n.d.; 26.




*Example 10.2.17*

An example of a relatively long vocal cadenza is Laure Cinti-Damoreau's version of the first *point d'orgue* in Marie's aria in the first act of Auber's opera *Le Serment.* The composer himself suggests the following short cadenza with echoes (example 10.2.18), which seems to evoke the joyful rural atmosphere of the aria (which announces a *fête au village* where Marie will sing and dance):[939]

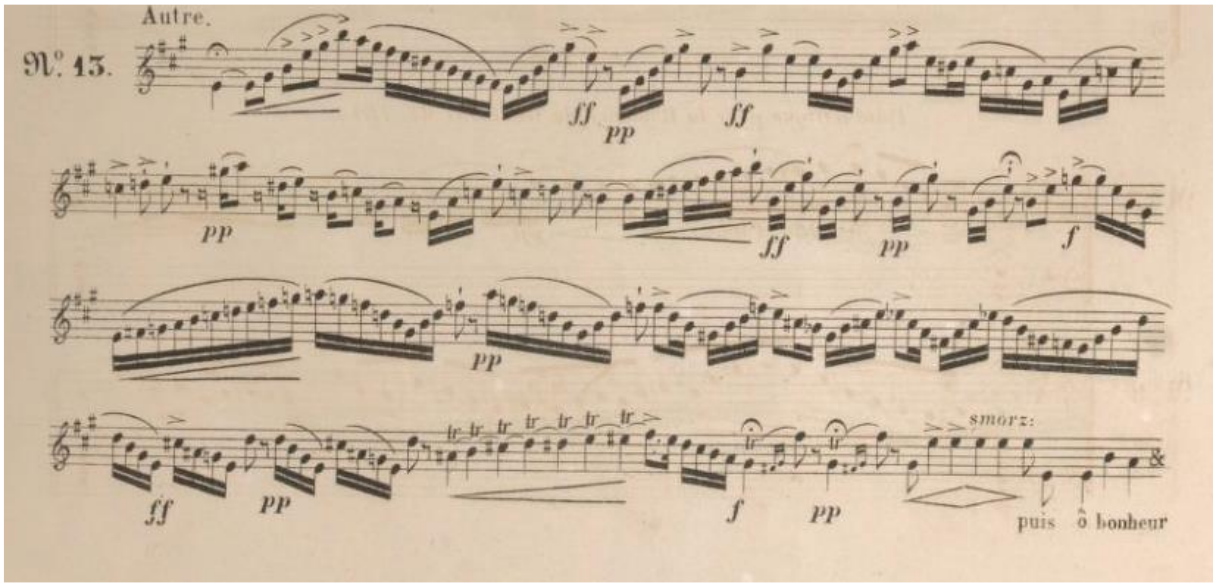



*Example 10.2.18*

This second of Cinti-Damoreau's cadenzas (example 10.2.19) expands Auber's example to about four times the length of the original. (The first one is shorter and stays much closer to the original.) All of Auber's ideas are amplified and developed, not only the yodeling echo-effect, but also the turn to A minor. This is an example of a cadenza with a real modulation: the G dominant-ninth chord in the third line evokes C major, followed by a series of chromatically descending diminished seventh chords that lead back to the dominant of the main key. Probably it is the length of this cadenza, with many interruptions as a result of the echoes, that makes the listener forget about the implied tone E in the bass, and consequently reduces the dissonant effect of the move to a relatively remote key.

[939] Auber, D.F.E.: *Le Serment* (piano score). Paris [1832 ], 67.

Needless to say, the many silences in this cadenza not only create a strong rhetorical effect, but also provide the singer with opportunities for breathing.[940]




*Example 10.2.19*

The Italian tenor Fernando de Lucia (1860-1925) made quite a few recordings between 1902 and 1922. His style of singing appears to connect with the bel canto tradition of generations before him, a manner of singing that was already very much in decline in his day. His two recordings (1904 and 1908) of *Ecco ridente in cielo* from the first act of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* allow for a close comparison. The earlier recording is with piano accompaniment, the later one with orchestra.

**[10.2 #1 Rossini: *Ecco ridente in cielo*, Fernando de Lucia (1860 – 1925); rec. 1904[941]]**

**[10.2 #2 Rossini: *Ecco ridente in cielo*, Fernande de Lucia ; rec. 1908[942]]**

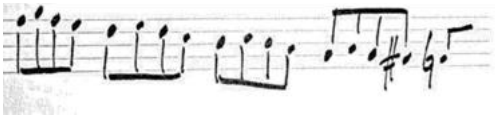
Whereas there are many similarities between the recordings with respect to the choice of ornaments, the differences are still considerable. The two performances differ a great deal in their timing, but perhaps not in the way that might be expected; De Lucia actually sings more freely on the recording with orchestral accompaniment. Even when the same ornamentation occurs on the later recording, it can sound like new because of changes in timing and colour. The high A in bar 122, for instance, a part of the ornamentation, is sung very delicately in the falsetto on the 1904 recording (1'23") whereas De Lucia uses the chest voice in 1908 (1'17"). This might be so that he can be heard over the stronger orchestra accompaniment, but not necessarily so.

[940] Cinti-Damoreau, L.: *Méthode complète de chant.* Paris, 1849; 95.
[941] https://youtu.be/cgI31ALSLQc (uploaded 2014 by 'Gianluigi Cortecci')
[942] https://youtu.be/YwEt4qyaunI (uploaded 2011 by 'belcantopera')

De Lucia inserts cadenzas in several places, not all of them indicated by Rossini, but without doubt following the tradition. Here it seems clear that his interpretation was (to a certain extent) flexible. The final cadenza in bar 189 on the 1904 recording (4'04") is by and large similar to the version Luigi Ricci later printed in his *Variazioni – Cadenze – Tradizioni* (→ chapter 4):[943]

*Example 10.2.20*

However, De Lucia sings a richer version of the downward scale by embellishing it with patterns that are familiar from the dictionary (→ chapter 9.6):



*Example 10.2.21*

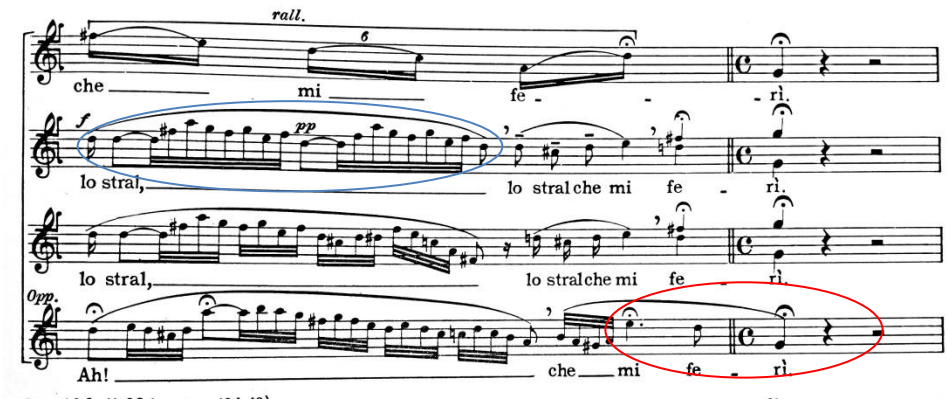
Moreover, De Lucia's dynamics on the final notes differ from Ricci's version.

On the 1908 recording, the same cadenza is sung slightly differently, with a more energetic and unadorned descending scale (3'23"). Such small differences can very well be the result of extempore decisions.

Whether the latter is also true for the more important differences in the cadenza in bar 130 (right before the *allegro*) is not certain, but at least the two recordings reveal De Lucia's flexibility in this aspect of the performance. On the 1904 recording, he sings a cadenza (2'20") that is entirely centred on the tone D. Initially, a slow upwards arpeggiation to a long high A returns stepwise to the D; next, the area below the same note is 'explored' by means of a quick flourish; the D is then held for a long time before finally resolving. The singer seems to breathe twice during this cadenza.

On the 1908 recording, De Lucia sings an altogether different cadenza, elements of which can be found in Ricci's later account of traditional cadenzas (2'02").[944] The echo-element in the beginning corresponds with the fragment in the blue oval; after a short bridge, De Lucia concludes with a passage as shown in the red oval, though he chooses to finish on the high G. Ricci only mentions his sources in a general sense ('Garcia, Rubini, Mario, Tamburini, Battistini' – all singers from the nineteenth century) but it is plausible that De Lucia drew from the same well.

[943] Ricci, L.: *Variazioni – Cadenze – Tradizioni* (vol. 2). Milano, 1993; 5.
[944] Ricci, L.: op. cit., 5.



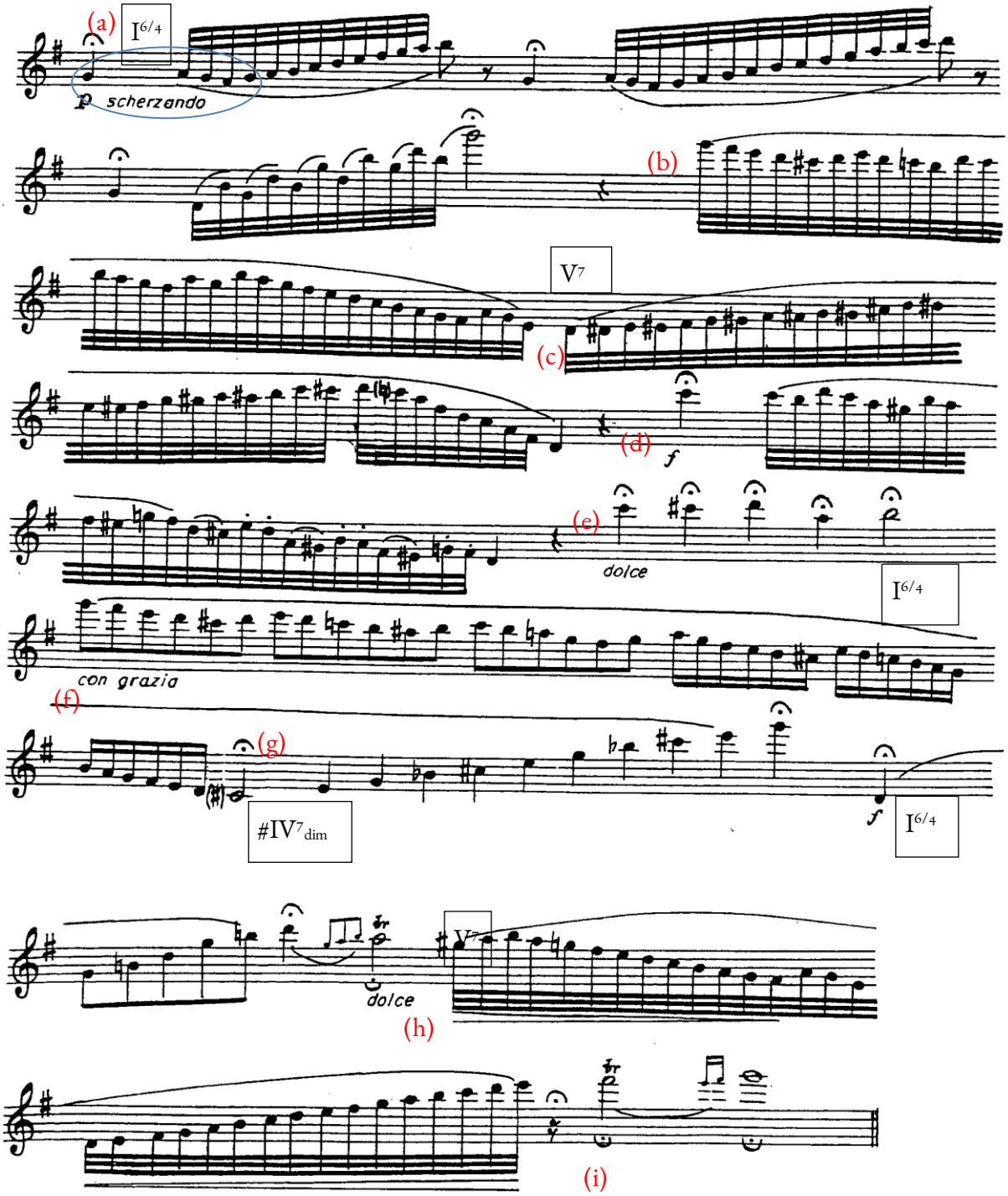

*Example 10.2.22*

Even in this (shorter) cadenza, De Lucia breathes. In general, his cadenzas and fermatas are constructed according to the principles described in early nineteenth-century methods. To what extent he improvised his cadenzas is hard to tell, but we have two of his recordings, made within a few years of each other, of a famous piece that he had been singing since the beginning of his career, and these performances reveal considerable differences. They certainly suggest an 'improvisatory' approach.

### 10.3 Cadenzas for monodic instruments

Instrumental cadenzas from the first decades of the nineteenth century tend to be longer than their Classical counterparts. Mather and Lasocki quote a relatively long cadenza for flute that was published in 1829 by Louis Drouët (→ chapter 5.5). For the discussion of monodic cadenzas in this section, Drouët's cadenza will serve as an example, along with the explanations on this topic in Pierre Baillot's violin method (→ chapter 5.4). Drouët's cadenza shares many features with vocal bravura cadenzas such as those of Cinti-Damoreau. Its outlines are traditional: it starts with a long note from the cadential six-four, long enough to ensure silence and full concentration on the soloist, and it finishes with the obligatory long trill that remained in vogue in instrumental cadenzas (unlike in vocal music). Harmonically it is situated on the cadential six-four, and therefore it most likely is thought to serve as a final cadenza in a concerto movement. The harmonic structure is extremely simple: $I^{6/4}$ – $V^{7}$ – $I^{6/4}$ - $\#IV^{7}_{dim.}$[945] – $I^{6/4}$ – $V^{7}$ – I (indicated in the score below). The cadenza makes the impression of being non-thematic. The range is large: the inclusion of the low C-sharp and the many high G's are virtuosic features.[946]

[945] Or: vii07 / V.
[946] Lasocki, D., Mather, B.B.: op. cit., 45.




*Example 10.3.1*

Like in Cinti-Damoreau's cadenza quoted earlier, Drouët makes extensive use of rhetorical silences, opening with a triple presentation of an ascending gesture, growing higher each time (a). The first two gestures are fast scales ('gammes lancées'), while the third one is an angularly broken triad. It is an opening that, by the choice of the target note of each scale, basically embellishes the ascending tonic triad. The starting tone of each scale (the root of the chord) is highlighted by a turn (blue oval). Here follows a list of other ornamental loci communes that Drouët applies, in order of appearance:

(b) The high D is linked to the low D by a descending scale-based figure, embellished with little changes of direction around structural tones of the chord.

(c) The dominant seventh chord is embellished by a chromatic scale upwards from D to D, followed by an arpeggiation downwards.

(d) The high D from the previous flourish is connected melodically with its neighbour C, followed by a descending arpeggiation with each chord tone embellished by an incomplete turn.

(e) By picking up the high C from the previous flourish again, a melodic top line emerges. Here it moves in curves from the C to the B.

(f) A downward arpeggiation of the $I^{6/4}$ with added leading tones to every chord tone, connected by short scale-like passages that suggest an increase in speed towards the non-harmonic tone C-sharp.

(g) This tone forms the starting point of an arpeggiation of the diminished seventh chord, followed by the resolution, which is also arpeggiated.

(h) The final trill seems to start without lead-in on A, continuing the truncated melody of (e), but dissolves into a scale-based flourish that ends abruptly (a feature already familiar from the seventeenth-century *stylus phantasticus*).

(i) The cadenza finishes with another trill, a sixth above the previous one.

Within the very simple harmonic frame, Drouët brings variety to the patterns (as García required from performers, → section 10.2), but also to the length of the flourishes, in the application of pauses, and in the dynamics. Towards the end a few surprises occur (the unexpected dissonant chord in (g), the abandoned final trill and the cut-off scale in (h)); an overarching sense of unity is achieved by suggesting a melodic top line that connects the different flourishes.

Incidentally, it would be incorrect to assume on the basis of this non-modulating cadenza that Drouët thought that cadenzas should never modulate. In the chapter on modulation in his *Nouvelle méthode de flute* (→ chapter 9.8) he writes:

> Dans la Musique sévère, d'Église, dans les Fugues, on n'emploie guère que les Modulations qui parcourent les tons relatifs du primitif; mais dans la Musique libre (et surtout en improvisant sur un Instrument) on peut, après avoir fait entendre un ton, passer dans tout autre que l'Imagination pourra suggérer, pourvu, qu'on arrive à ce nouveau mode par sa dominante, et qu'on parvienne à cette dominante par un enchaînement d'Accords dont l'un aura toujours en commun avec le suivant au moins une Note intégrante.[947]
>
> [In strict music, in church music, in fugues, only modulations to keys that are related to the principal key occur; but in free music (and particularly when one improvises on an instrument) one can move to any key that imagination may suggest, provided that one arrives at this new mode through its dominant,

[947] Drouët, L.: *Méthode pour la flute*. Paris, [1828]; 25.

and that one reaches this dominant by a sequence of chords of which one always shares with the next one at least one common tone.]

As we have seen in chapter 9.8, Drouët explicitly mentions cadenzas 'ad libitum' in this respect. The chapter on modulation also elaborates on the principle of common-tone modulations.[948]

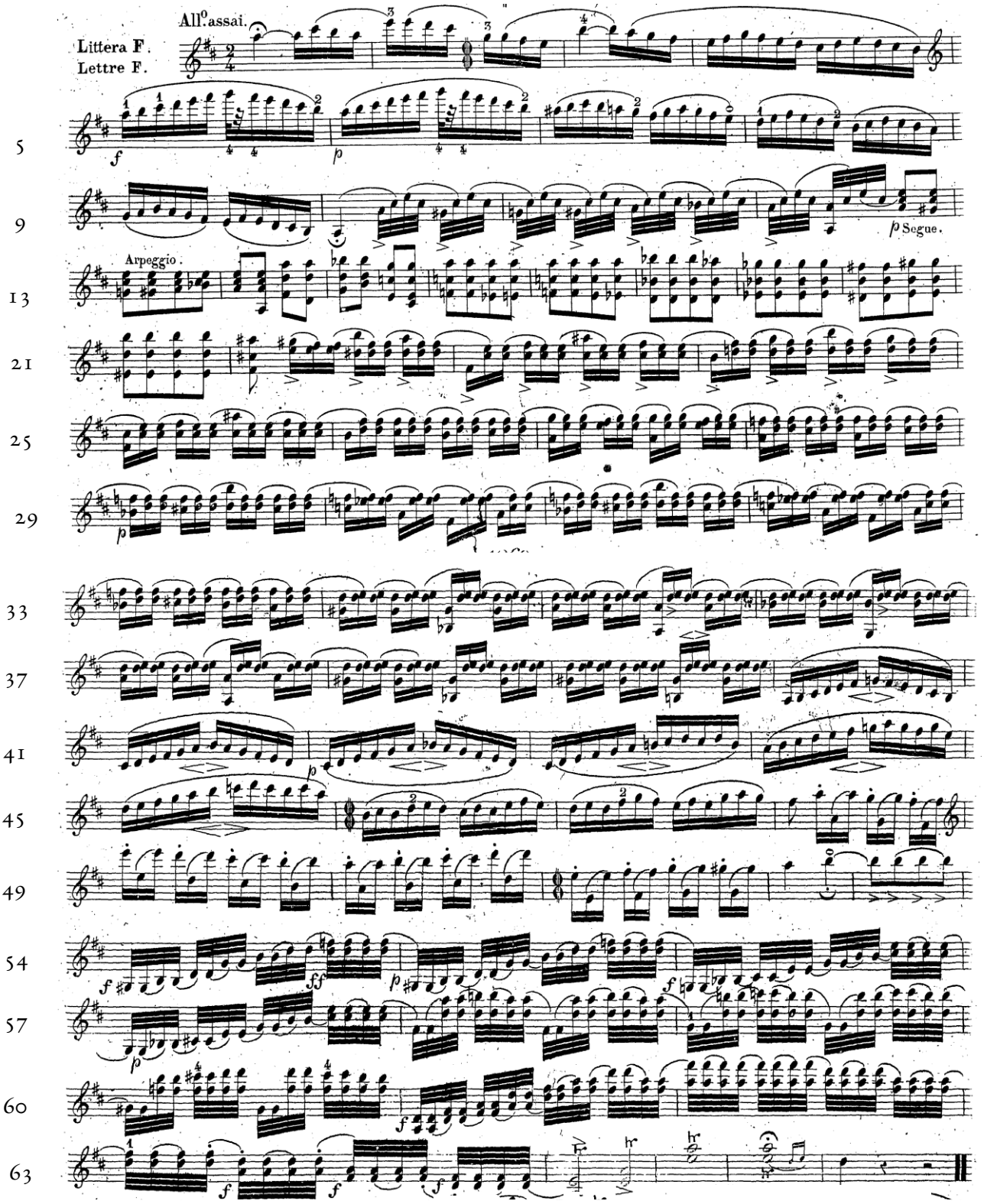
Whereas Drouët does not write in detail about preludes and cadenzas in his *méthode*, Baillot gives an extensive survey of different types of cadenza in *L'Art du violon*. Its context is a chapter about *points de repos* [pauses]: moments where the music temporarily comes to a rest, indicated by a fermata sign. Baillot takes great care to explain in which situation one should add nothing at all, when a small embellishment is allowed, and when a proper cadenza is appropriate. The main body of the chapter consists of a very large number of notated examples of all different types, although Baillot emphasises that these examples should not be taken as models because this type of ornamentation is left to the taste of the performer.[949]

Again, this is a chapter that any violinist should read; it would lead too far afield to summarise it here. To give an idea, Baillot's taxonomy of cadenzas may suffice:

1. Embellishments on the tonic;
2. Short flourishes on the dominant, leading into the final trill;
3. Cadenzas with a bass note that is held until the end;
4. Cadenzas without such a bass note and without modulation;
5. Cadenzas with accompaniment (= held bass note?) and modulation;
6. Cadenzas without accompaniment and with modulation;
7. Thematic cadenzas;
8. Thematic, mixed with *passages de fantaisie*;
9. Totally *caprice*;
10. Lead-ins.

It is remarkable that Baillot still mentions flourishes on the tonic (though he calls those on the dominant the 'proper' cadenzas), and that he assumes the possibility of holding the bass note throughout the cadenza, something that was generally seen as outdated. Continuing from the previous example by Drouët – a bravura cadenza without 'accompaniment' and without modulations – it makes sense to finish this section on monodic cadenzas with an example from Baillot's sixth category: a modulating, non-thematic cadenza. It is a long cadenza that shows a large variety of ornamental patterns. Apart from scale- and chord-based patterns from the brilliant style vocabulary, there are several loci that are idiomatic for the violin, mostly with double stops.[950]

[948] The distinction Drouët makes between 'musique sévère' and 'musique libre' has a counterpart in the training of organists at the conservatory in Paris, → chapter 13.
[949] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 166.
[950] Baillot, P.: op. cit., 174-175.




*Example 10.3.2*

Harmonically, there are well-known loci present here, such as the falling-fifth-sequence in bars 14-16, a Monte sequence in 18-22 and a 5-6 sequence in 46-47, alternating with long stretches of passage work that is based upon one or more common tones with other wandering voices, for instance in 22-39.

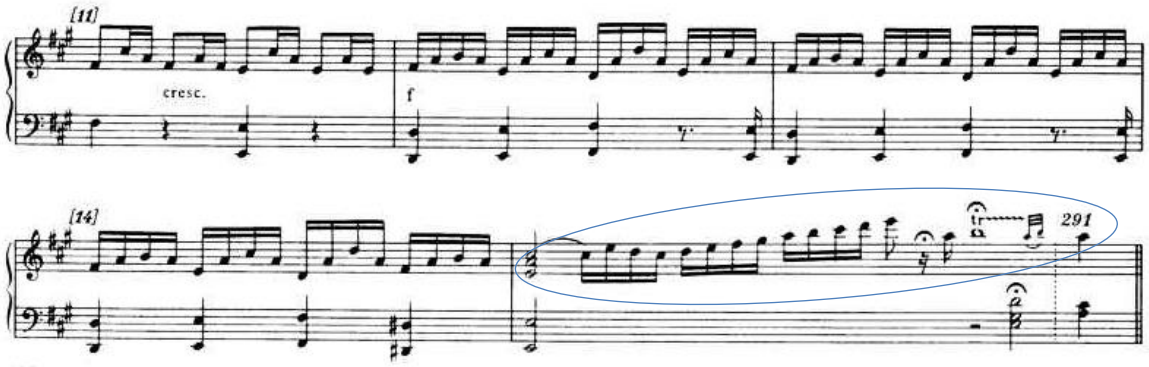
## 10.4 Piano cadenzas: Mozart's concertos

### *Mozart's original cadenzas*

The *Clavierschule* of Daniel Gottlob Türk contains a chapter about cadenzas that might be seen as a pianistic counterpart to Hiller's text (→ 10.2). Türk presents ten rules for simple cadenzas still often quoted today.[951] However, Türk's relevance for nineteenth-century cadenzas differs from Hiller's. Whereas the vocal tradition of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries was virtually unbroken, especially in bel canto, not everything Türk was writing applies to nineteenth-century music. One important reason is that Türk was primarily writing about playing the clavichord, not the piano. Stylistically his point of reference was Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, not Mozart – tempting though it may be to understand his rules as a theoretical underpinning of Mozart's cadenzas. Türk's rules will therefore largely be left aside in this section. A short discussion of Mozart's original cadenzas will serve as a reference for 'historically inspired' improvised examples.

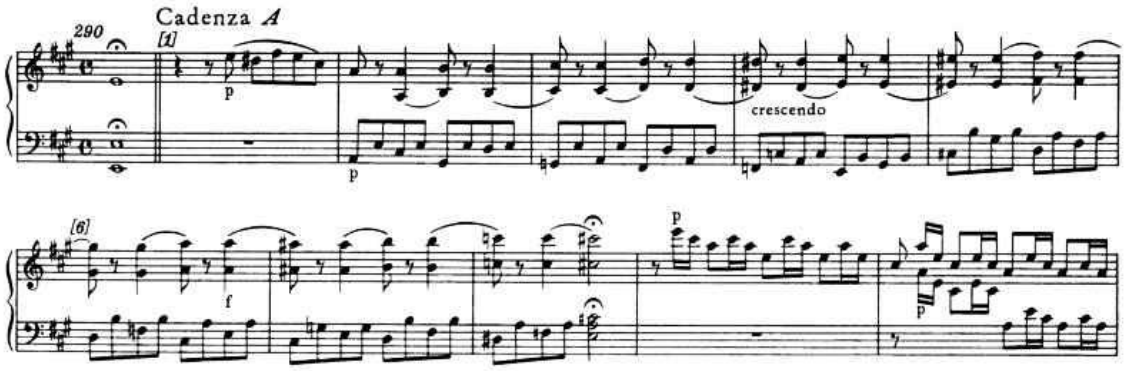
The large number of surviving original cadenzas by Mozart was already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. The cadenzas were published soon after the composer's death. Eva and Paul Badura Skoda gave an analytical overview of this remarkably homogeneous body of composed cadenzas.[952] Since Mozart's keyboard music forms the threshold to – but is not really part of – the period under investigation in this study, only a few characteristics will be described here. The Badura-Skodas point out that three parts can be identified in many of Mozart's first-movement cadenzas:[953] an often virtuosic opening, a calmer middle section, and a virtuosic final section that finishes with the familiar trill. The final part is usually non-thematic, but in the opening and middle sections a variety of thematic material from the concerto can occur. The middle section typically quotes a lyrical theme (often from the second theme group); the opening of a cadenza can also be based upon a motif from a theme or a transition. A characteristic ending is the quickly rising diatonic scale, followed by a sudden pause, after which the final trill is played; an example of this procedure is the end of the second cadenza[954] to the first movement of KV 414 in A major (blue oval):[955]

[951] Türk, D.G.: op. cit., 310-313.
[952] Badura-Skoda, E. and P.: *Mozart-Interpretation*. Wien, 1957. Transl. by L. Black: 'Interpreting Mozart on the Keyboard'. New York, 1962.
[953] Ibidem, 215-216.
[954] 'Cadenza A' in the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*: Serie V / Werkgruppe 15 / Band 3. Kassel, 1976; 32.
[955] In the discussion of Drouët's cadenza (section 10.3) the roots of this type of gesture in the *stylus phantasticus* were mentioned already.




*Example 10.4.1*

Mozart's cadenzas usually seem to avoid structural modulations: 'the opening of the cadenza always culminates with a theme in the tonic'.[956] Very common are $I^{6/4}$ prolongations by way of progressions such as in chapter 9.5 *b*. An extensive example can be found in the same cadenza (incidentally in two sections) to the first movement of KV 414; this quotation is from the cadenza's opening section, which very typically uses a motif from the first theme and turns it into a sequence:




*Example 10.4.2*

It is unclear for whom Mozart wrote the cadenzas. With respect to the relation between these composed cadenzas and improvisation, several twentieth-century authors take a position that appears to be predicated on the *Urtext*-paradigm. The Badura-Skodas, for instance, claim:

> (...) [I]t is probable that in his longer cadenzas he did not improvise, or seldom did so. This is suggested by the balance and careful working out of many of the surviving cadenzas, which make them unlikely to be improvisations.[957]

[956] Badura-Skoda, E. and P.: op. cit., 221.
[957] Badura-Skoda, E. and P.: op. cit., 215.

To an improviser, the last sentence shows a peculiar line of thought. The musicologist William Drabkin also thinks that the cadenzas Mozart composed must be what he wanted to be played when his concertos were performed:

> (...) [T]he fact that authentic cadenzas to most of Mozart's concertos were indeed written down – and published soon after his death – suggests that we must regard a cadenza in the manner of Mozart as 'composed', transmitted in a recordable form.[958]

Drabkin regards improvising a cadenza as an 'instinctive approach: we forget, for a moment, all our learned ways and just get on with the job of filling out a short time-span with appropriate music (...), without preconceptions about what should or should not be heard after the fermata on the 6/4 chord.'[959] Similarly problematic is Frederick Neumann's rejection of replacing Mozart's original cadenzas with a 'transplant that is bound to be inferior in invention, style and form'.[960]

The problem with such views is that they completely ignore the function of a cadenza as it has been articulated by numerous authors from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Basic notions such as the audience's eagerness for surprise and the personalised display of the performer's virtuosity are absent here. If Badura-Skoda, Drabkin and Neumann are right, Mozart's cadenzas must have been an absolute exception in the concerto genre, and one would expect ample confirmation of this fact in contemporary literature (as it is the case with J.S. Bach, who wrote out ornamentation in his scores much more often than usual at that time). To my knowledge, no such accounts exist about Mozart.

### *Improvised cadenzas by Robert Levin*

Somebody who eloquently acts counter to both Drabkin's ideas about improvisation and Neumann's *Urtext*-paradigmatic view is the pianist (or rather *Clavierspieler*) and musicologist Robert Levin. In his interdisciplinary study *The Improvising Mind*, Aaron Berkowitz uses Levin's improvised cadenzas in his recordings of Mozart concertos as a case study. Berkowitz specifically writes about what Derek Bailey called 'idiomatic' improvisation, in Berkowitz's words: 'the spontaneous rule-based combination of elements to create novel sequences that are appropriate for a given moment in a given context.'[961] He shows how both in late-eighteenth-century pedagogy and in Levin's praxis the musical idiom is acquired just like a verbal language. Of course, an important difference between then and now is that a contemporary of Mozart could easily pick up musical vocabulary by listening, whereas nowadays we ultimately depend on musical notation (even when

[958] Drabkin, W.: 'An interpretation of musical dreams: towards a theory of the Mozart piano concerto cadenza'. In: *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart: Essays on his Life and his Music* (ed. S. Sadie). New York, 1996; 162.
[959] Ibidem.
[960] Neumann, F.: *Ornamentation and Improvisation in Mozart.* Princeton, 1986; 258.
[961] Berkowitz, A.: *The Improvising Mind: Cognition and Creativity in the Musical Moment.* Oxford, 2010; XIX.

we listen to other musicians' renditions). Berkowitz, however, does not distinguish between music as written and music as it sounds. Thus, Mozart's composed cadenzas serve as models for Levin's improvised ones. In chapter nine of *The Improvising Mind*, Berkowitz compares Mozart's two original cadenzas for the first movement of the piano concerto in E-flat major, KV 271, with three different recorded cadenzas for the same piece Levin improvised at several occasions between 1994 and 2005.[962]

Levin's Mozart-inspired improvised cadenzas are most convincing as 'novel sequences that are appropriate for a given moment in a given context', and in my view they deny both Neumann's claim that new cadenzas are bound to be 'inferior in invention, style and form' and Drabkin's somewhat distorted rendition of improvisation. Like Mozart, Levin quotes extensively from the concerto, using both thematic and figurative material that is often extended into sequences. This already enhances the idea of the cadenza as an organic part of the concerto movement. Even with respect to harmony, Levin stays close to Mozart's composed cadenzas, though he tends to dwell longer on passing keys. On his recording of KV 456 and 459 with The Academy of Ancient Music and Christopher Hogwood,[963] both first movement cadenzas explore the subdominant region already at an early stage, more elaborately, I think, than Mozart tended to do. However, this is a type of comment that is relevant only because of the very clear frame Levin has chosen, and that will inevitably keep coming up when somebody intends to improvise or compose in a specifically chosen earlier style.

More interesting, perhaps, is a basic assumption that underlies Levin's way of improvising Mozartian cadenzas. Though he shows that it is very well possible to produce new cadenzas in the style of those that Mozart composed for his own concertos, he seems to share with the authors mentioned above the idea that these original cadenzas provide us with a model of how Mozart liked a cadenza to be. There is even the suggestion that we can know how Mozart himself used to improvise his cadenzas by studying his composed ones. I would say, however, *pace* Levin, that this is far from certain. Mozart had a strong reputation as an improviser on keyboard, as well as on the organ. From an improviser's point of view, it seems highly unlikely that, given this background, Mozart would have written his cadenzas for personal use;[964] but even when he composed them for somebody else, for instance a student, he may have done so in a style very different from that of his own improvisations. Indeed, Mozart may have kept his most brilliant and unexpected ideas to himself, either because they would be most appropriate in an improvised performance, or because he simply didn't want to give them away. If he wrote cadenzas for others, it would certainly make sense to write rather generic – and not too personal – music that would work in many different circumstances.

[962] Ibidem, 165-176.
[963] L'Oiseau-Lyre – 452 051-2 [1996].
[964] A position taken by e.g. Christoph Wolff, according to a reference in Berkowitz, 157.

Something similar occurs when a Baroque figured bass is realised for a modern edition for practical use: a player who needs such a realisation is best helped by one which is fairly generic and without too many surprises (and which can relatively easily be adapted to the needs of a specific situation), rather than by a highly individual one. Personally, I prefer to see Mozart's notated cadenzas as such a musical 'safety net'; obviously one cannot go wrong by using them as a model, but it would a pity to exclude more digressive options for that reason.

This last step may seem speculative, and indeed we will never know what Mozart played when he improvised – or his contemporaries, for that matter. However, there are a few less well-known (and in fact rarely performed) piano compositions of Mozart that cast his supposed style in a different light. A piece like the *Capriccio* in C major KV 395 (1778), for instance, is definitely much more fanciful than any of the cadenzas, or even the well-known fantasies KV 397 and 475; already in the seventh bar, a long, wandering progression starts without metre on unresolved diminished seventh chords, culminating in the key of B-flat major, which is rather unusual in the context of the main key. In addition, the *Präludium* or *Fantasie und Fuge* KV 394 (1782) show a very different and, one feels inclined to say, highly improvisatory side of Mozart. The unfinished *Fantasie* or *Sonatensatz* KV 396 (1782) and the *Sonatensatz* KV 400 (1781) may be less capricious formally, but they display a level of instrumental virtuosity that is much higher than in many more well-known works of Mozart, featuring passages in octaves and quick runs in thirds.

In 1787, Muzio Clementi published a small collection of generic preludes and cadenzas 'à la manière de' several composers of his time, some of them forgotten today: Joseph Haydn, Leopold Koželuch, Johann Franz Xaver Sterkel, Johann Baptist Vanhal, himself, and Mozart.[965] The pieces are not connected to any specific composition and give the impression of having a didactic purpose. Today, Clementi's style imitations may seem not very convincing, but it is true that the 'Mozart' cadenza contains few structural modulations. On the other hand, the other cadenzas sometimes show rather wild changes of key. The cadenza 'in the style of Haydn', for instance, touches upon C minor and A-flat major, whereas the principal key is D major. Whether Clementi based his Mozart-pastiche upon composed cadenzas or on Mozart's own playing is hard to tell; the two famously met during a competition organised by the emperor Joseph II in Vienna in December 1781, but never afterwards. Incidentally, Mozart was impressed by Clementi's virtuosity, notably his passages in thirds – is it a coincidence that his pieces mentioned above that contain similar difficulties date from the same time? Either way, they show that Mozart's style was more in a state of flux than is often acknowledged today; Clementi's book also gives an idea of the broad stylistic range of the late eighteenth century. Moreover, it is common to read in contemporary treatises that a cadenza should be in the character of the composition, but not that it is expected to be in the style of the composer! In sum, I believe

[965] Clementi, M.: *Musical characteristics* op. 19. London, [1787].

that there is ample reason to appreciate the fundamental improvisatory freedom in classical cadenzas much more than is usual in our time.

### *Three improvised cadenzas to KV 414*

One of the possibilities is to include thematic material that does not come from the concerto itself but that is relevant for other reasons. The Mexican pianist Ahmed Anzaldua, for instance, once used his improvised cadenzas for Mozart's concerto in C major KV 467 to hint at other pieces that were performed during the same concert.[966] In this way he emphasised the 'situationality' of the cadenza, making music for this very occasion and for this specific audience – very much like what happened in the liturgical prelude in the previous chapter.

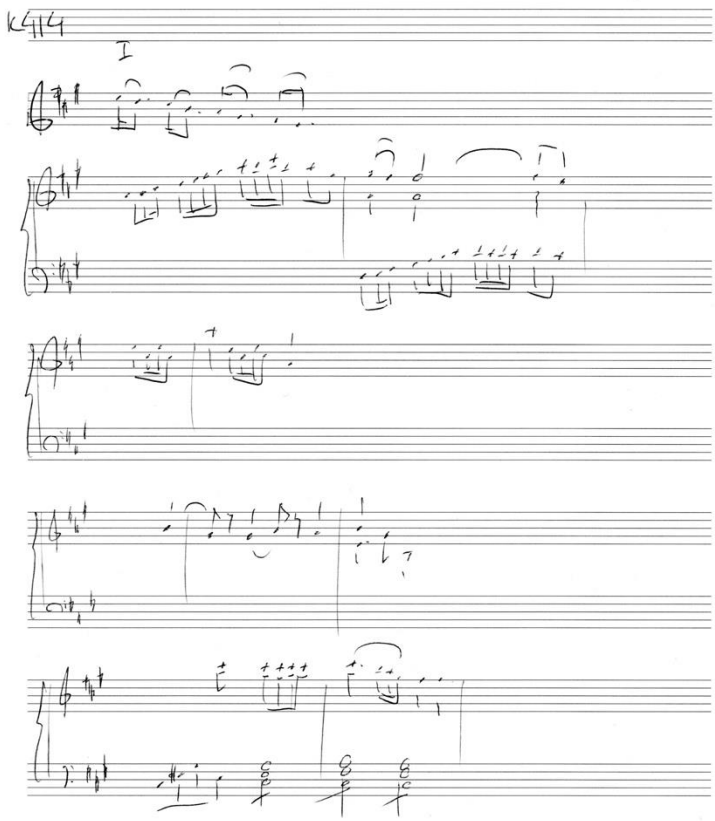
Whereas Anzaldua does not stylistically deviate very much from the idiom Levin is using, I would like to show, as a contrast, three improvised cadenzas I included in a performance of Mozart's concerto in A major, KV 414, in September, 2018. This concerto also exists in a chamber version for piano and string quartet; this is the version we played, reinforcing the bass part with an added double bass. My stylistic inspiration in the cadenzas came rather from the late-eighteenth-century London piano school (Clementi, Dussek) which was a major influence on Beethoven's keyboard style. The characteristics of the English style of piano playing cannot be separated from the instruments that formed its context, with John Broadwood as its most famous exponent. As has been discussed before (→ chapter 5.8), the instrument's possibilities influence the improvisation to a large extent. Since I played an early-twentieth-century Pleyel on this recording, technically more akin to the English instruments than to the light Viennese pianos, one could say that I was in a way invited to this style by the piano itself: dynamic contrasts, full chords and legato playing work particularly well on this instrument. It should not be forgotten that Robert Levin's cadenzas were performed on a (copy of a) Viennese pianoforte, which probably made his self-chosen stylistic 'limitations' feel very natural to him at that moment. Likewise, the vaguely Beethovenian touch (which some might criticise, with Czerny, as rather 'wüst und verworren', → chapter 9.2) in my cadenzas was certainly partly inspired by the instrument. There was no fixed harmonic or thematic plan; for every movement, I had a sheet with some pre-selected ideas from the score laid in front of me. Not all ideas were actually used during the improvisation, but the original sheets will be reproduced here.

In the following analysis of the recorded cadenzas, I will be switching between two different layers: one is a reconstruction of my train of thought during performance (insofar as this is possible), and the other is my analysis on the basis of repeated listening to the recordings. The goal of the analysis is to show how loci communes played a role in these improvisations, either by conscious application at the time of performance, or by identifying their appearance afterwards. I am aware that, from the

[966] https://youtu.be/XIH-PMg5pEQ (uploaded 2015 by 'Ahmed Fernando Anzaldua')

point of view of a music analyst, other analytical approaches might seem appropriate as well (or even more attractive). For instance, one might wonder why I do not focus more on the live experience of listeners, and why my analyses resemble traditional analysis of musical texts. It is my view, however, that any music analysis is based upon some kind of 'text'; also a recording may serve as such. In addition, this study strongly focuses on the role of the performer; the perspective of the listener is highly relevant but warrants another study. Generally, the analyses of recorded improvisations in this dissertation aim to investigate the functioning of loci communes. Insofar as these are by definition shared between musicians and listeners (→ chapter 2.2), incidentally, the latter are never wholly absent.

*a. First movement: Allegro.*




*Example 10.4.3*

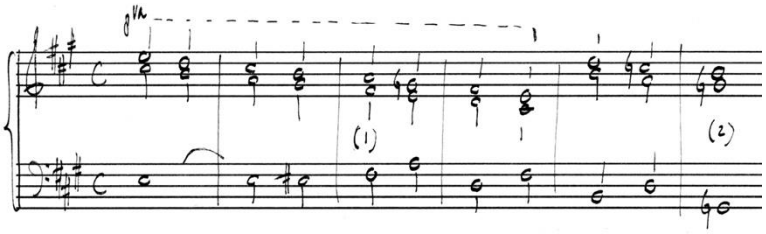
**[10.4 #1 Mozart: KV 414, cadenza 1st movement; Bert Mooiman, rec. 2018]**

The motifs were chosen on the basis of their usefulness as material for sequences and development. The first two are from the main theme: the scale in Lombardic rhythm from its second bar (bar 2), and the beginning of the extension in the piano consequent (bars 76-77, also used by Mozart in the other cadenza to this piece). The third motif is from the transitional phrase (bar 86). The fourth one is taken from the beginning of the second theme group (bar 115). The final motif is taken from the

development section, right before the beautiful sequence in F-sharp minor (bar 173). They are all characteristic in the sense of being easily recognisable and yet general enough to be developed in various ways.

The cadenza starts with figuration that continues the energy of the preceding 'orchestra' *tutti.* At 0'25", the varied figuration touches upon the high F-sharp, thereby exceeding the range of Mozart's keyboard that ran until F'''. One the one hand, this spoils the illusion of an 'authentic' cadenza; on the other hand, it feels very unnatural to stick to an imaginary boundary where the modern keyboard still has 19 more keys to go. Moreover, the keyboard compass was in a constant state of development in Mozart's day: Broadwood built pianos that ran up to the high C'''' already in 1792.[967] I will not go into the discussion whether I should have avoided 'too' high or low notes here, since in this case I did not aim for stylistic 'correctness' from the onset.

The figuration is an elaboration of two harmonic loci communes: at first a move to the VI chord (1), followed by a variant of a *Romanesca* sequence (cf. chapter 9.5*c.*) that runs all the way down to the key of G major (2). This is exactly the unusual key relationship that was referred to above with respect to the *Capriccio* in C major KV 395. Example 10.4.4 shows a harmonic reduction of this passage:

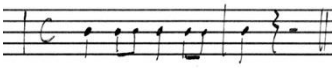



*Example 10.4.4*

G major is then tonicised with the opening motif of the development section that is played over a new accompaniment in triplets (0'34"). The use of this motif was a spontaneous decision: it was not included in the previously made selection. The new accompaniment lends it a calmer, more singing character; it modulates to E minor. The dialectics of the energetic figuration and the broadness of the melody will remain active throughout the cadenza. At 0'50" the figuration takes over again, modulating to the dominant of B minor (0'55"), that is prolonged in its turn with melodic material, this time taken from the last motif on the sheet, followed by a general pause. With the arrival of B minor, a new section starts (1'08"); the melodic material is taken from the second theme group, though in the minor mode (which gives opportunities for chromatic colouring, for instance in the dominant seventh – flat fifth chord on 1'22"). The theme is sequenced in falling fifths through E minor (1'18") to A major (1'27") where only the opening motif is retained, covered by the energetic

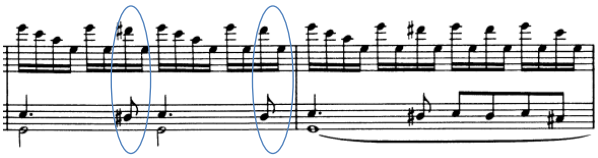
[967] Rowland, D.: 'Piano music and keyboard compass in the 1790s'. *Early Music* vol. 27 no. 2 (1999); 283.

figuration again – a process of splitting-off that is usually associated with Beethoven. The falling fifth sequence continues at a faster pace until C major, developing a frenzy that may be difficult to reconcile with Mozart. In C major (1'36"), a new rhythmic motif is brought in, whose descent seems hard to explain initially (example 10.4.5).



*Example 10.4.5*

However, it turns out to foreshadow 1'51", where a motif from Mozart's second original cadenza is unintentionally quoted (bar [23]):



*Example 10.4.6*

Since both original cadenzas have been familiar to me for a long time, the arrival at the $I^{6/4}$ must have triggered this association subconsciously; in my cadenza the neighbour chord (blue ovals) is chromatically enriched to a German sixth chord.[968]

Back to 1'36", where C major was reached: at this moment I must have decided to find the way back to the dominant of A major, apparently already associating the $I^{6/4}$ as a goal with Mozart's motif and 'preluding' on its rhythm. The route from C major to the dominant of A major is through a freely harmonised chromatic bass line, ascending from C to A and finally D – D# - E on which Mozart's motif mentioned above occurs. Over this chromatic bass line the figuration shows a 'Beethovenian' shortening, retaining only the furious arpeggio from the material that was introduced on 1'36".

The rhythmical motif mentioned above gets an obsessive touch on the $I^{6/4}$, finally resolving into the $V^7$ on 2'02" where fast downward scales run into a long low E (2'05") – as such, a Mozartian gesture.

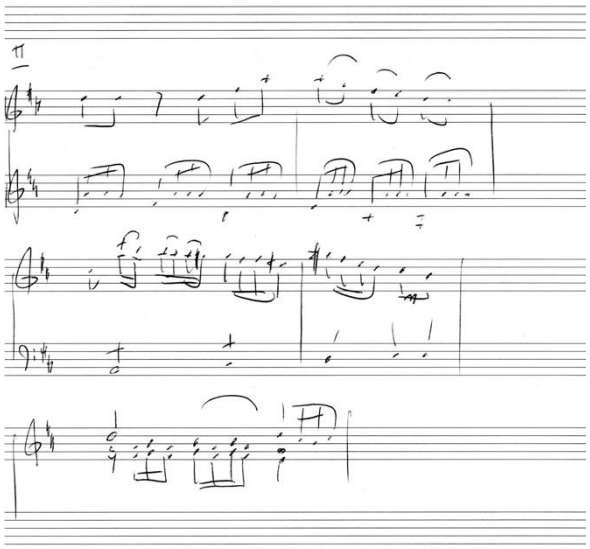
The rush to the final trill, though, shows again the influence of Beethoven. The effect of the long scale upward is maximised by developing it from a short diatonic scale that is restarted several times, getting gradually longer and faster, until it runs to the extreme of the Mozartian keyboard and down

[968] In this analysis, I have chosen for what appeared to be the most appropriate explanation. I decided not to address the question whether the idea of 'embodied knowledge' might also play a role here; this discussion is too complex and wide-ranging to be reflected in this chapter.

again, finally arriving at what should be the final trill on B' (2'20''). During the trill the left hand joins with another chromatic scale that finishes on bass note E (2'24''). What follows is a prolongation of what in Baroque cadence theory was called the *antepenultima,* the suspension before the leading tone within the dominant chord. Johannes Menke has shown how already in seventeenth-century music this chord could be expanded by way of sometimes highly dissonant bass figurations;[969] exactly the same thing happens here.

In the end, the first three of the selected motifs were not used at all, and two that were not listed *were* used. At the performance, the cadenza incited spontaneous applause after the first movement. I believe that this could be due to a certain energy that may have surprised the audience. (One also notices that the accompanying ensemble, not used to improvised cadenzas, plays the concluding *tutti* faster than the main tempo). One of the listeners told me that he had enjoyed my cadenza because he liked it for being so 'over the top'; I wonder, though, whether such a remark doesn't especially say something about the image many people have of Mozart's music: pleasant, beautiful, harmonious, well-balanced, Apollonian – isn't this idea 'plus Mozart que Mozart'?

*b. Second movement: Andante*



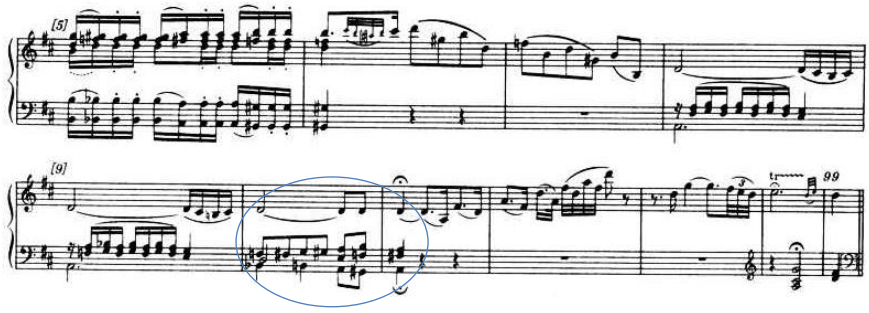
*Example 10.4.7*

**[10.4 #2 Mozart: KV 414, cadenza 2nd movement; Bert Mooiman, rec. 2018]**

For the cadenza to the slow movement, I previously selected three musical ideas: the beginning of the second theme group in the main key (as in bar 82), and two motifs from the orchestra codetta of the second theme group (the first motif as in bar 51, the second one in the main key, as in bar 103). The

[969] Menke, J.: *Kontrapunkt II: die Musik des Barock.* Laaber, 2017; 66-68.

cadenza starts with the last motif, played an octave higher and repeated in minor. The same thing happens in the piece at the beginning of the development section, where the piano repeats the orchestra motif in minor. Mozart also used this effect at the end of the first original cadenza (bars 8-9), where it is followed by a deceptive cadence that turns into a German sixth chord, which (indirectly) resolves into a $I^{6/4}$ (blue oval):[970]



*Example 10.4.8*

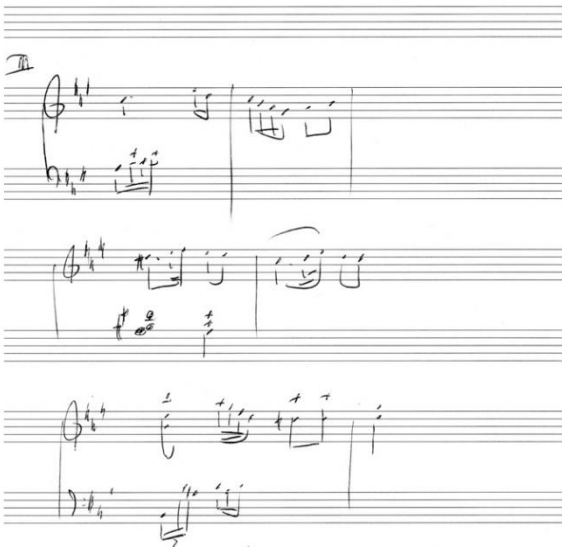
In my cadenza, the same major – minor shift occurs (0'31"), including the deceptive cadence, but without the turn to the German sixth and the eventual major. My conscious decision to stay in the minor mode for a while and strike a more melancholic note relates to an anecdote that is connected with this movement. The piano concerto was composed during the autumn of 1782. On January 1st of the same year, Johann Christian Bach had died. Johann Christian was the youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach and had made a career in London. In 1764, the eight year old Mozart visited London with his father and sister; at that occasion Bach became his mentor for five months, and Mozart was to develop a lifelong admiration for Bach.[971] As a musical tribute to his friend, Mozart quoted a theme from Bach's overture for *La calamita de' cuori* (1763) in the second movement of KV 414 (bars 1-4).

In the cadenza this story inspired me to play an expressive instrumental 'recitative' on the #IV [972] and dominant harmonies. The highly dissonant appoggiatura on 0'45" falls outside the compass of Mozart's keyboard. On 0'53" a passage starts that makes use of the second selected motif (interpreted here as a series of expressive *Seufzer*). The turn back to major is realised by repeating a chord progression ($II^{4/3}$ – $V^7$) at 1'24" – an inversion of the procedure at the beginning of the cadenza. The final part of the cadenza picks up motif 3 again (1'31"), this time on the original pitch, and turned into a sequence that is derived from what Robert Gjerdingen calls a *Monte-Romanesca* (→ 9.5*c*). After three times (and some hesitation) the sequence is varied and condensed to a harmonisation of the major scale in the bass. The concluding $\#IV^{dim.7}$ – $I^{6/4}$ - $V^7$ uses familiar material again: the

[970] *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*: Serie V / Werkgruppe 15 / Band 3. Kassel, 1976; 46.
[971] Portowitz, A.: 'The J.C. Bach – Mozart connection'. In: *Musicology Online*, Vol. 6/II (2006); http://www.biu.ac.il/hu/mu/min-ad/06-2/8_Bach-Mozart89-104.pdf.
[972] Or: viio7 / V.

downward arpeggiation of the diminished seventh chord from the original cadenza quoted above (bars 6-7, 1'53''), the typical scale followed by an abrupt pause (but this time played *leggiero*, 2'01''), and finally a very familiar way to enter the last trill, applied also by Mozart in the same cadenza on bars 13-14 (2'06''). The first previously selected idea was eventually dropped.

*c. Third movement: Rondeau (Allegretto)*



*Example 10.4.9*

**[10.4 #3 Mozart: KV 414, cadenza 3rd movement; Bert Mooiman, rec. 2018]**

The selected material for the large third movement cadenza is taken from the piano entrance (bars 21-22), the continuation of the same theme (bar 25), and the first couplet (bar 52). Both original cadenzas start with a motif from the continuation of the rondo theme (as in bar 8). In the orchestra *tutti* that leads into the cadenza Mozart develops this motif in a canonic way (on the recording: 0'05''). Both original cadenzas in their opening sections go back to this imitational treatment of the motif, and in this way continue the final *tutti*. My cadenza does the same thing, though not by referring to the imitation but instead to the very last measure of the tutti (0'20''). It is a well-known rhetorical locus communis in music: repeating the last idea, and taking this as a starting point for a new development. In the cadenza this is again done by repeating it in the minor mode (0'26''). I remember that during the improvisation I was already aware of the fact that by doing so, I repeated a procedure that had been applied already a few times in the earlier cadenzas, and that I should take care not to become too predictable. This probably was the reason why I brought in new material on this spot, material that came to me spontaneously at that moment; only when listening to the recording did I manage to recognise its origin: Cherubino's aria *Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio* from Mozart's opera *Le Nozze di Figaro.* At the end of this piece (which is very familiar to me), the lovesick Cherubino sighs that, when nobody wants to listen, he will speak out his love to himself. The short

*Adagio* interruption of this fast aria (bars 92-95) contains the short 'sighing' motif that subconsciously returned in my cadenza, enhanced by extra appoggiaturas (0'32"). In the cadenza the motif appears concurrently with a similar interruption of mode and mood.

However, I did not want to dwell in this melancholic mood for too long; at 0'43", a determined return to the *allegro* of the beginning of the cadenza takes place. It is the locus communis of the final scale upward, starting on a low dominant tone, creating the expectation of the approaching final trill. This cadenza plays with that expectation. First of all, the scale is much more chaotic than usual, gradually including chromatic passages as well. It neither ends in a sudden pause, nor in the expected final trill: it lands on a tremolo on the dominant E (0'51"), above which the third selected motif is repeated *presto* and turned into a modulating Romanesca sequence. At 1'01" the key is g minor; a Monte sequence starts with the chromatic line in the bass, ornamented with a free motif in the bass and furious arpeggios in the right hand. At 1'08" a 'Beethovenian' shortening doubles the pace, followed at 1'10" by another doubling. This passage is based upon a harmonic model that has been applied a few times in the earlier cadenzas: after the arrival of the chromatic bass line on the tonic, it jumps to the subdominant ($II^{6/5}$) to circle chromatically around the dominant, prolonging the $I^{6/4}$. At this moment (1'18") I was aware of the risk of slipping into the same path the first-movement cadenza had taken; avoiding another quotation of the rhythmical motif mentioned in section *a*, I played a sinuous diatonic scale downward to the low E (1'23"). In fact, the whole fast section from 0'43" to here turns out to have been a formal feint: the real concluding part starts here. Again, there was a risk of repeating what had been played in the first movement cadenza already, in this case the extended final scale with retakes. A similar set-up seems to happen at 1'24", but after one retake the scale is continued as a more or less normal chromatic scale, eventually culminating on the long-expected final trill. Because this cadenza doesn't connect to a triumphant orchestra *tutti*, but to the rondo theme surprisingly played by the piano solo, I copied the way Mozart finished both of his original cadenzas, namely by not resolving straight away on the tonic, but continuing the trill chromatically into the first note of the theme – logically with a decrescendo. Incidentally, the first two of the pre-selected motifs were dropped.

### *Conclusion*

One of the fascinating experiences with analysing one's own improvised music is that one may recognise large-scale structures that were not consciously planned before or during the playing. This makes clear that the course of the music is not determined by the conscious application of analytical concepts or of memorized passages, but rather that mind and body choose a bed through which the music can flow 'spontaneously' – in short, to use the term applied throughout this study: the music is based on loci communes. Knowing the specific loci of a style means being aware of the conventions of that style, and in this way it is possible to 'say' new things with a familiar vocabulary. For an

improviser (with or without a score), it is important not to feel constrained by bans and restrictions, but to be able to see a style as a source of inspiration. The language metaphor is appropriate here: saying something in a foreign language may be frustrating to a beginner, but upon attaining a certain degree of mastery, the speaker finds that the language has become a medium he can improvise with. In my cadenzas I consciously chose for another musical language than Levin's. In this case the choice of a nineteenth-century, post-Mozartian idiom can be justified historically as well, because Mozart's concertos were still performed after his death. One could say that in my improvised cadenzas, I consciously connected with the reception history of this piece. This is a path that may ultimately lead to a certain eclecticism. To be sure, I consider it artistically fully justifiable to use more recent musical idioms as well, including atonal ones. However, in the example cadenzas my intention was to remain close to (and to give my view on) the stylistic field described at the beginning of this section: the London piano school and Beethoven. In the next section the focus will be on the early-nineteenth-century style of cadenzas as represented by Czerny.

## 10.5 Cadenzas according to Czerny

Carl Czerny devotes the third chapter of his *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* to all sorts of cadenzas. The chapter appears after the two chapters on preluding, which confirms what was written in section 10.1 about the relation between preludes and cadenzas. The contradiction between Hummel and Czerny was mentioned already in that section; Hummel's view that improvising cadenzas is a thing from the past can be seen as the more 'modern' one. However, the text in the *Anleitung* clearly connects with the late-eighteenth-century practice, which, one could say, is continued with nineteenth-century means. The chapter consists of two parts: the first one deals with lead-ins, the second one with large cadenzas in concertos. In his terminology Czerny does not distinguish clearly between *Fermate* and *Cadenz*: the term *Cadenz* is also used (following Mozart) for what is usually called an *Eingang* today, and *Fermate* (also: *Schluss-Fermate*) is often (but not exclusively) used for large cadenzas.

### *a. Lead-ins*

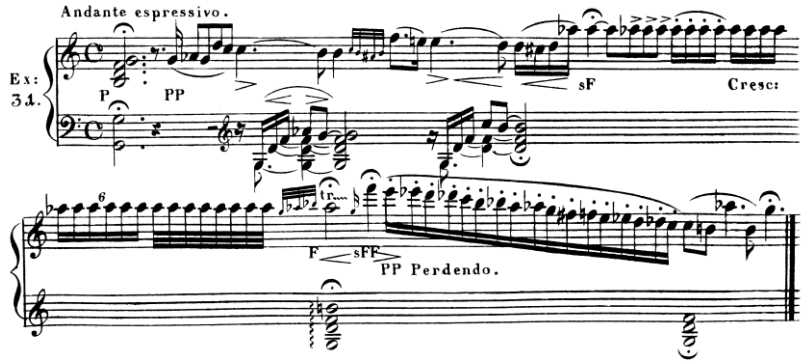
Czerny stresses that short cadenzas in the middle of a piece on a $I^{6/4}$ or $V^7$ are especially called for in 'compositions intended for a glittering, elegant or sentimental manner of playing' – that is, 'in variations, potpourris, arrangements of vocal works, or whatever products of popular taste [*des herrschenden Geschmacks*'[973]].[974] This means that he recommends such flourishes primarily for the

[973] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* op. 200 [Wien, 1829]; facsimile reprint: Wiesbaden, 1993; 22.
[974] Czerny, C.: *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte* op. 200 (A.L. Mitchell, trans.). New York, 1983; 27.

lighter genres, probably in the brilliant style. Indeed, Czerny remarks that they should not be applied to 'works of profound content and serious character' such as Beethoven's *Sturm*-sonata op 31 no. 2,[975] in which any *Zugabe* [addition] would be out of place.[976] This last wording might imply more than just an objective distinction between musical styles: in a contribution to a Beethoven biography, Czerny describes how Beethoven once gave him a dressing down when he had dared to add ornamentation during a performance of his *Quartet for Piano and Wind instruments* in E-flat major op. 16.[977]

Czerny's prescriptions for lead-ins contain nothing unfamiliar: they should match the character of the piece, they should be not too long and not *rhapsodisch* (incoherent), they should not modulate but stick to the fundamental harmony, and connect elegantly with the following idea. Czerny calls them *Verzierungen* and doesn't fail to refer to 'good taste' as a fundamental condition. An interesting addition, however, is his remark that one may extend lead-ins that have been written down by the composer, but that one feels to be too short (which is precisely what Cinti-Damoreau did, → section 10.2).

Czerny provides twelve examples to be practised or imitated in all keys. Except for one, they are all constructed on a dominant seventh chord; there are no bar lines and the left hand is mostly accompanying, while passage work in the right hand dominates. It is no wonder that many patterns from the ornamental dictionary can be found here, since the music is essentially prolongational. Some lead-ins suggest a vocal reference, such as the one in example 10.5.1,[978] which imitates a recitative – much like Beethoven did in the slow movement of his piano sonata op. 110:




*Example 10.5.1*

[975] Czerny writes: op. 29.
[976] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung...* op. 200; 22.
[977] Czerny, C.: *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (W. Kolneder, ed.). Strasbourg, 1968; 34-35.
[978] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung...* op. 200; 25.

### *b. Cadenzas*

In his description of *Concertfermaten* Czerny clearly escapes the relatively limited scope of Mozart's composed cadenzas. Cadenzas can be regarded as independent fantasies; they may be of considerable length, and the player can allow himself any conceivable modulation. 'All interesting subjects from the concerto as well as its most brilliant passages must make their appearance here, although one can tone them down or build them up, according to one's discretion.'[979] What follows is a large (over 100 bars long) cadenza for the first movement of Beethoven's first piano concerto in C major, op. 15. A few years later, Czerny published a different cadenza to the same piece.[980] Beethoven wrote three different cadenzas for this piece; one remained unfinished.

Kathryn Mosley has researched the original Beethoven piano cadenzas (not only the ones he composed in 1809 but also sketches) and their relation with cadenzas for Beethoven's concertos that were composed by others.[981] In her study, the cadenzas are primarily treated as compositions, not as 'solidified' improvisations. Mosley argues that the construction of especially the first movement cadenzas 'illustrates the composer's intention that they form an integrated extension and completion of the movements.'[982] Indeed, Beethoven's original cadenzas are strikingly tightly knit. He can be said to have amplified several characteristics of Mozart's composed cadenzas. Even more extensively than Mozart, Beethoven quotes from the concerto movement, drawing on both thematic material and passage work; in fact, there is not much non-thematic material in his cadenzas. As in Mozart, material is often developed by means of sequences, but Beethoven modulates much more daringly; one gets the impression that any key is in principle possible. All together this gives a strong sense of focus, and despite their inventiveness and capriciousness, the Beethoven cadenzas generally make a 'composed' impression in their musical purposiveness. One could even say that Beethoven's cadenzas act like extra development sections. The aspects mentioned here were imitated and even developed in newly composed cadenzas by pianist-composers such as Moscheles, Liszt and Clara Schumann.

Czerny's cadenzas fall within this category as well. Czerny's prescriptions in the *Anleitung*, quoted at the beginning of this section, match perfectly with the original cadenzas of Beethoven. Incidentally, it is unclear whether Czerny knew them, since they had not been published yet. Mosley discusses Czerny's cadenzas for op. 15 within the same compositional frame she applies to the other cadenzas. She speculates that Beethoven might have heard both cadenzas, and even that he might have sanctioned 'a version of what we today have in print'.[983] Mosley explains the difference in

[979] Czerny, C.: *A Systematic Introduction...* op. 200; 34.
[980] Czerny, C.: *Cadenzen zu Ludwig van Beethovens Concerten für das Piano-Forte* op. 315, erstes Heft. Wien, [1833]; 1-6.
[981] Mosley, K.J.: *The Cadenzas to Beethoven's Piano Concertos: Compositional Processes and Early Performance Traditions* (diss.). Goldsmiths, University of London, 2016 (unpublished).
[982] Mosley, K.J.: op. cit., 27.
[983] Mosley, K.J.: op. cit., 252.

technical difficulty between the cadenza that was printed in opus 200 and the one in opus 315 (the cadenza in the *Anleitung* is easier) by stating that the latter was intended for professionals, whereas the former was 'designed for amateurs, with a pedagogical purpose in mind'.[984] To which extent Czerny's opus 200 was intended for amateurs remains to be seen; after all, he demanded from the novice in improvisation a 'vollkommen ausgebildetes Spiel (Virtuosität)'![985] More importantly, what Mosley seems to ignore is that the two cadenzas probably served different purposes. Opus 315 may indeed be seen as a composition in its own right, just like the cadenzas by Beethoven, Moscheles, Liszt and others; all musical examples in opus 200, however (they constitute about 85% of the book), are definitely meant as a guide to the reader, notated in the absence of the possibility of a live demonstration. Czerny sometimes makes this very clear: in the chapter on short preludes, he emphasises that the example pieces should be varied upon, and should sound as if they are spontaneous inventions (→ chapter 9.6); moreover, the larger fantasies are punctuated with additional remarks about how one could extend a passage, or which other possibilities the material offers. I consider it likely that Czerny intended to show how an improvised cadenza could look like in score, and that for that reason he avoided certain technical difficulties that maybe would be more appropriate in a piece that was meant to be practised.

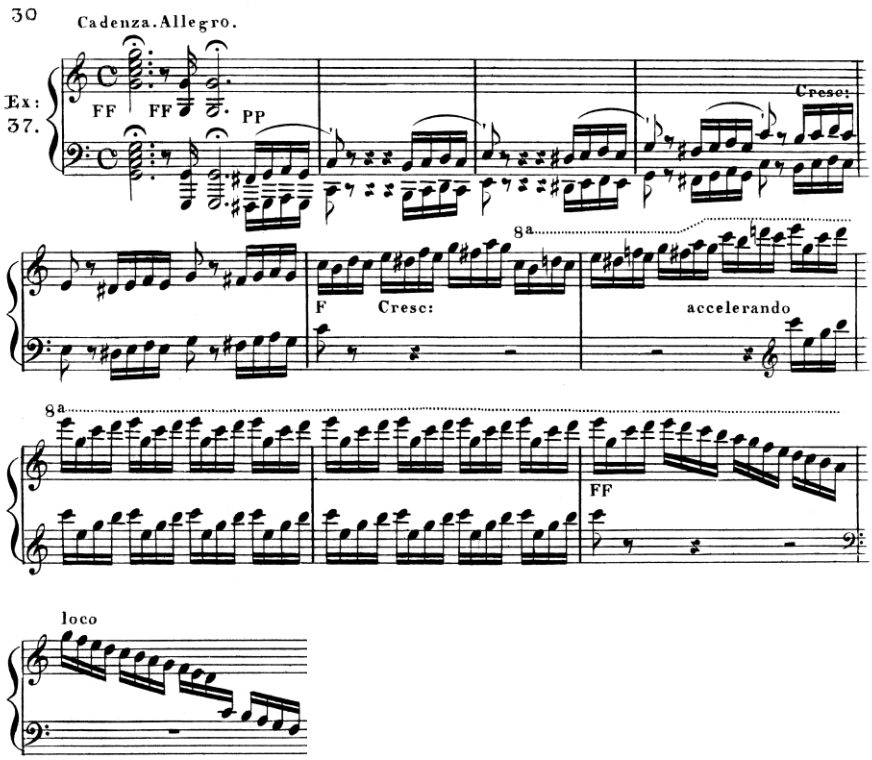
To summarise, the strong case Czerny makes out for improvising this type of cadenza seems to be rather contrary to the tendencies of his day. Gottfried Wilhelm Fink, who wrote an already mentioned review of Czerny's book in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, praised the chapter on cadenzas, but his advice to the readers reflects the ambiguity noticed before. He writes that not every player should allow himself to perform *willkührliche Cadenzen* instead of the often excellent examples that 'nowadays' can be found in the compositions themselves – this is about Czerny's first category, the lead-ins.[986] Regarding the large cadenzas, Fink writes that Czerny's cadenza in the *Anleitung* can only be of the highest interest to concert pianists. He advises them to write down their own cadenza at first, combining the most suitable lyric and virtuosic passages from the concerto (according to Czerny's recommendations) and only after that to compare their work with Czerny's example cadenza. In this way they will see *was sie selbst oder mit Hülfe eines Geübteren an der ihrigen zu verbessern haben möchten* [what they can improve in their own cadenza by themselves or with the assistance of someone more experienced].[987]

In the meantime, Czerny's intentions should be taken seriously. Even Fink does not exclude the possibility of improvising such a cadenza, even though he seems to consider it a challenge that only

[984] Mosley, K.J.: op. cit., 247.
[985] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung...* op. 200; 4.
[986] Fink, G.W.: review of 'Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren op. 200'. In: *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, (2 September 1829, no. 35); column 578.
[987] Fink, G.W.: op. cit., col. 579.

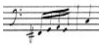
the very gifted should take up. How can one learn from Czerny's example? Clearly, it makes no sense here to learn it by heart and transpose it to other keys, like with the preludes. Czerny aims to show how *Gesangsstellen und Passagen* from the concerto can be combined, and recommends comparing the cadenza with the piece. This, then, will be necessary: to check out what exactly Czerny did with the material, to recognise and identify his models and loci communes. Such an analysis of Czerny's cadenza in the *Anleitung* is presented below. The cadenza is divided into sections, and section by section a figured bass reduction is connected to analytical remarks on the musical material. I am aware that such a descriptive analysis might reinforce the idea that, for Czerny, improvising a cadenza might have meant filling in a pre-designed structure. In what way, one might wonder, does this example cadenza differ from Czerny's 'normal' compositions? I will go into this question in the concluding remarks after the analysis.

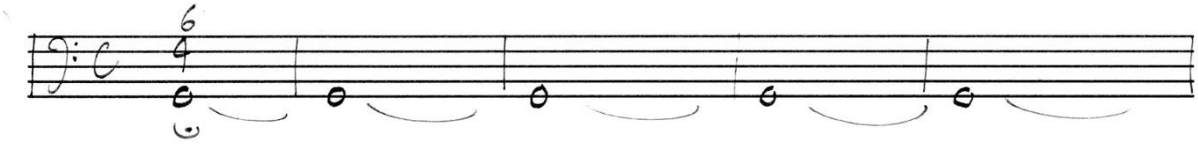
*Section A: free virtuosic $I^{6/4}$ – prolongation*



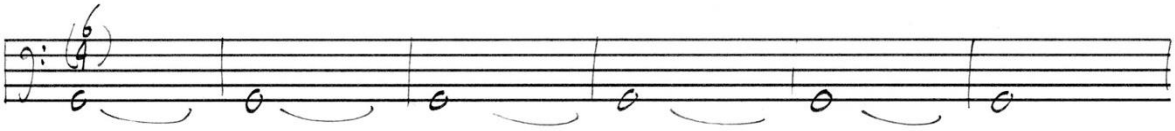
Long G octaves at beginning: reference to 18th-c. cadenzas?

Free opening section on the I6/4; 'Beethovenian' shortening of a motif that might have been taken from the opening of the second theme, but that is commonplace enough to have no thematic connection.

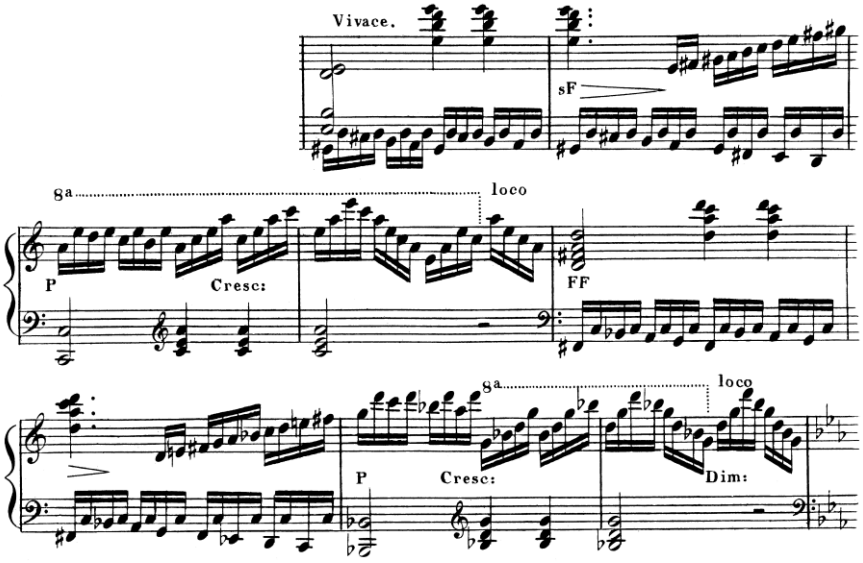




Continuation of the build-up by transformation into free ornamental material (see 'Dictionary of ornamental patterns'), followed by a scale downward.

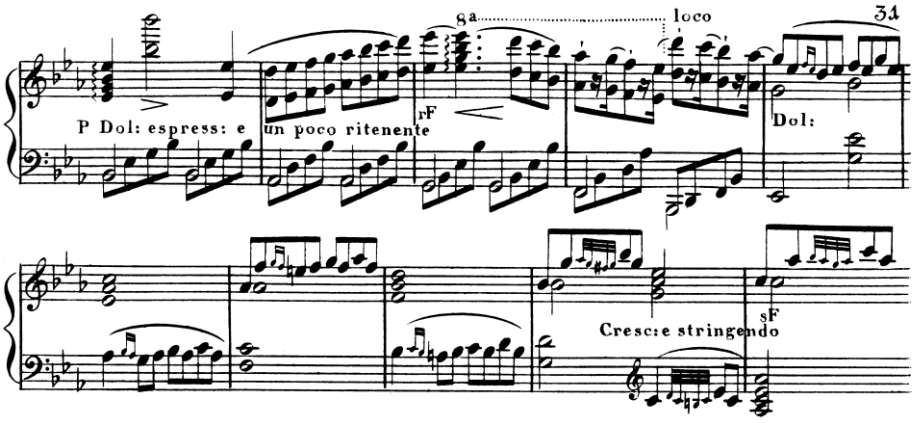


*Section B: quotation from the transition to the second theme*



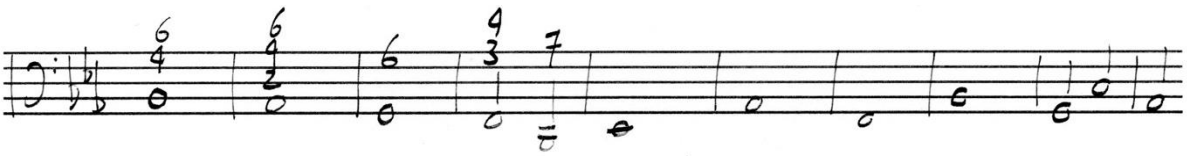

Quotation from bars 126-133 with varied dynamics, thickened texture and faster tempo. Falling fifth sequence; the last chord surprisingly minor (unlike the original), possibly thus enabling the modulation to E flat major in the next section.

*Section C: material from transition and entry of the soloist*

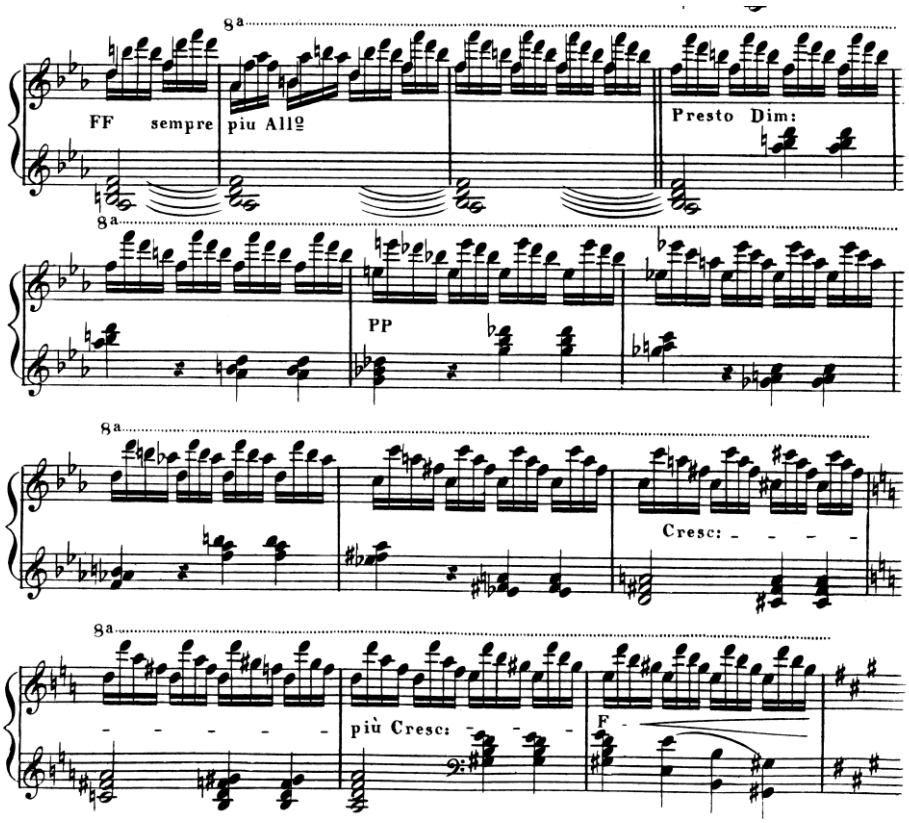



Continuation of the previous quotation by using connecting material from bars 134 – 137, however with important changes. The harmonic background is turned into an ornamented cadence in E-flat major: $I^{6/4}$ – $V^{2}$ – $I^{6}$ – $V^{4/3}$ – I (instead of the original prolongational progression in G), giving these four bars the character of a bridge. Allusions to the brilliant style. Harmonically the move from the previous section to the E-flat: $I^{6/4}$ is strange since the g minor sixth chord (in E-flat: $III^{6}$) hardly prepares for the cadence to follow. The only 'explanation' of this connection is in the common tones that make it possible to 'slide' into the 6/4 chord, though it remains a functionally weak connection.

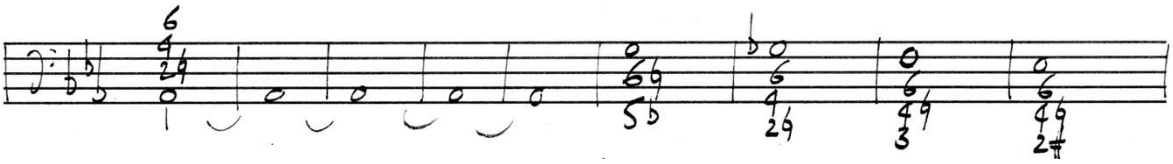
New sequence on a Monte progression, surprisingly constructed with material from the opening bars of the solo part: bars 107-110. This material is not related to the thematic material in the composition; Beethoven probably took the idea to let the soloist enter with new material (after a long orchestra introduction that presented all thematic content of the piece) from Mozart, who applied it in many piano concertos.



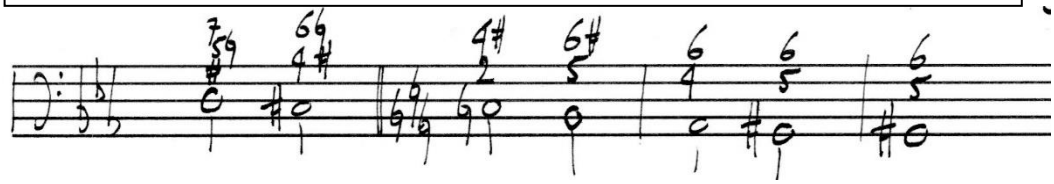
*Section D: free ornamentation on wandering harmony*




Free ornamental material. The turn from the previous section to the diminished seventh-chord is again common-tone motivated. What follows is a sequence on parallel diminished seventh-chords, descending almost chromatically. The main motif from the first theme of the piece is used for the left hand.



Continuation with the same material; wandering harmony with elements from Omnibus progressions, very much common-tone motivated.



*Section E: free ornamentation in the style of an ornamental prelude*

32

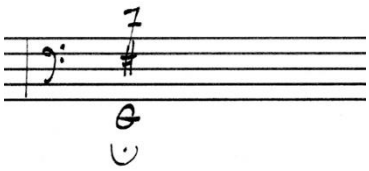
8a loco FF

8a Dim:

8a P poco a poco

8a rall. PP Ritard:

Free cadenza according to the principles of an ornamental prelude in the brilliant style, entirely built on a dominant seventh-chord and applying patterns from the 'dictionary'. This 'cadenza in a cadenza' forms a bridge between first-theme material and second-theme material; incidentally, Beethoven structured his third original cadenza to this concerto in the same way. It is unclear whether Czerny knew or heard this cadenza.



*Section F: quotation and development of the second theme*

Moderato

8a tr Cresc: sF

8a sF PP Smorz: Cresc:e stringendo

8a Molto Allg FF con fuoco Fz

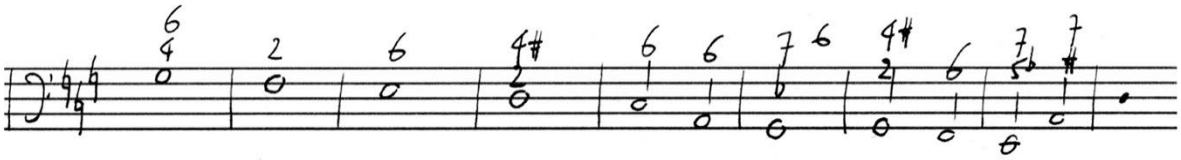
8a Fz

8a loco sF

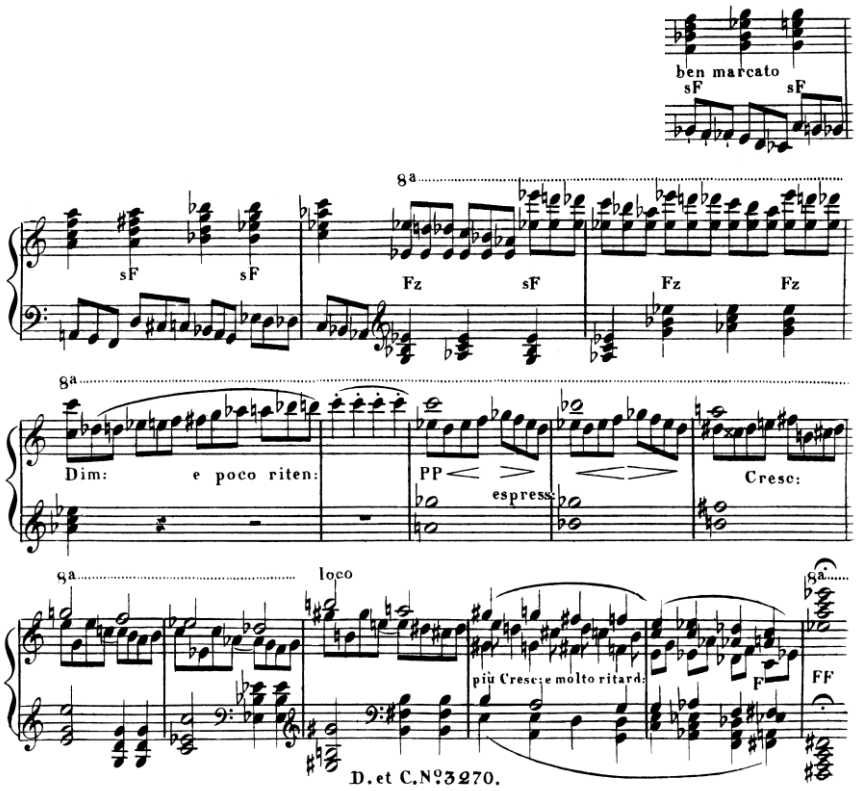
Quotation: antecedent from beginning of second theme group (bars 162-165), transposed to A major. Accompaniment texture slightly different, starting on a $I^{6/4}$ – probably in order to connect with the latent bass note E in the previous section.

The consequent is new: it gets rid of the original extension and modulates to the dominant key. Here as well, allusions to the brilliant style.

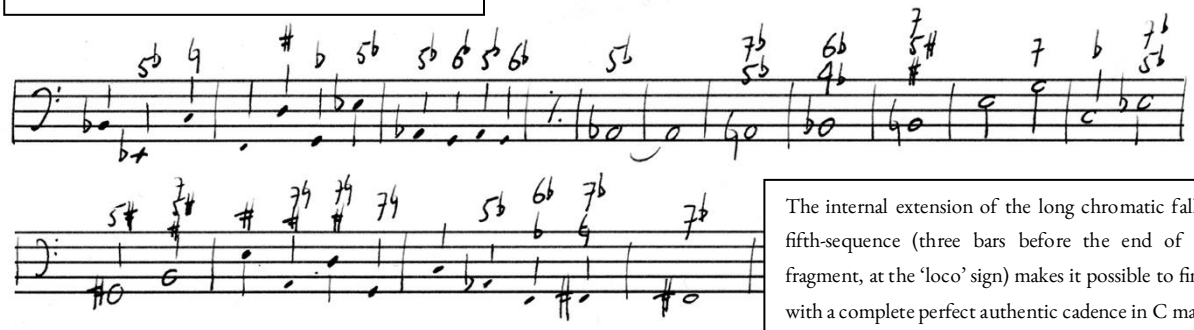
Development of the previously quoted thematic material: an altered version of the melody of 162-163 is played in the bass, and turned into a sequential model. The varied sequence is based upon the falling third model (→ chapter 9.5*c*). After two times, melody and accompaniment are inverted; the broken octaves very much recall Beethoven.



*Section G: quotation from codetta*




Abridged and transposed quotation of the codetta of the second theme group: bars 199-201, 213-224. The texture is adapted. Both the Monte and the falling fifth-sequences are slightly extended.



The internal extension of the long chromatic falling fifth-sequence (three bars before the end of this fragment, at the 'loco' sign) makes it possible to finish with a complete perfect authentic cadence in C major, including the Neapolitan sixth chord and the diminished seventh on the raised fourth degree. At this moment the cadence is interrupted by the fortissimo diminished seventh chord.

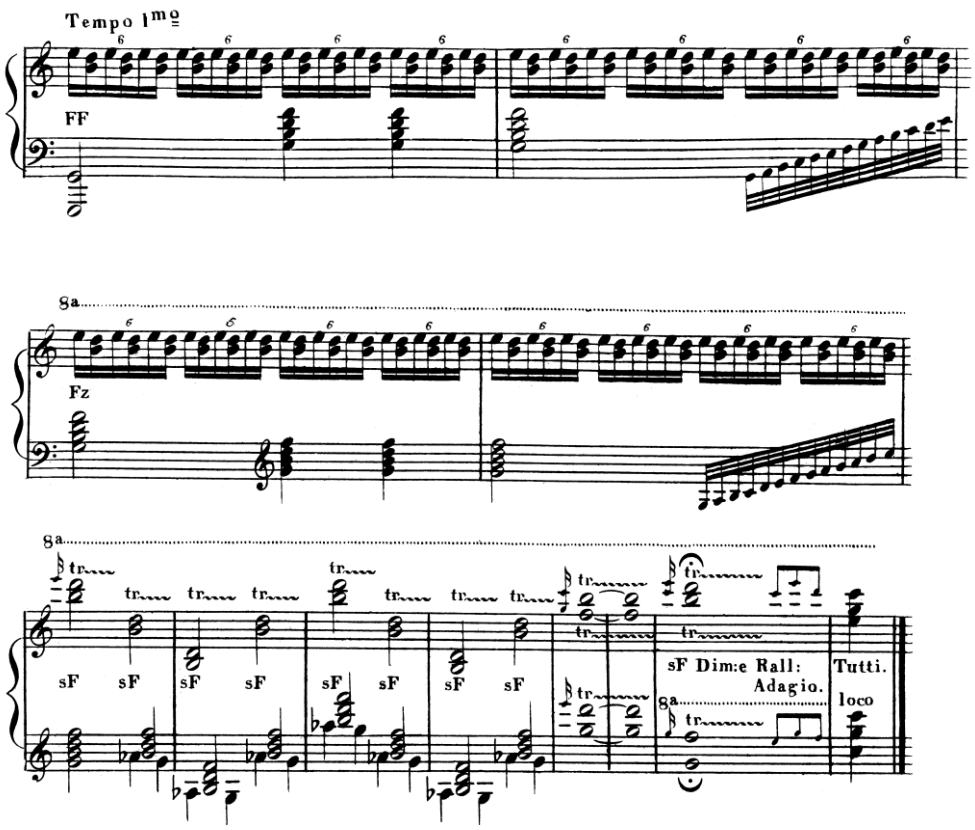
*Section H: free virtuosic cadential prolongation*

8a loco
All?
FF
Fz Presto
FF
8a
8a
sF P
Cresc:
8a
F
Cresc: sempre
8a loco
FF

The #IV$^{dim.7}$ is expanded with arpeggio figuration which increases the tension by postponing the expected I$^{6/4}$.

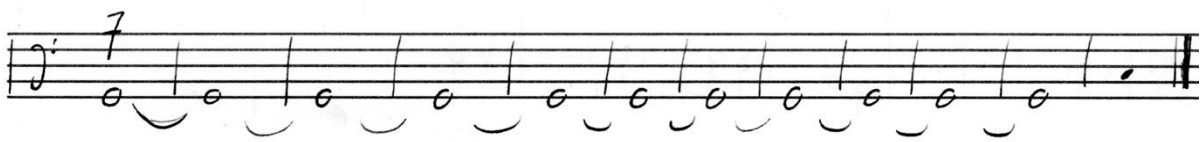
The I$^{6/4}$ is ornamented with 'dictionary' ornamentation material; the motif of the descending ornamented scale, however, is taken from the concerto, where it occurs in the codetta in bar 191. (motif n)

*Section I: free virtuosic cadential prolongation with opening motif*




The final dominant seventh-chord is loaded with single and double trills. The opening motif of the first theme returns...

... and the obsessive minor ninth-appoggiaturas might have been inspired by bar 322 etc.



More than anything else, this example cadenza seems to be a demonstration of ways of combining material from the concerto, as Czerny pointed out himself.[988] Some passages are quoted in full (section B), sometimes material from separate places is put together (section G), and sometimes a theme is continued in a different manner (section F) or really developed (also section F); quoted material can also be transformed into music with a different character (section C). An easily

[988] Czerny, C.: *Systematische Anleitung...* op. 200; 35.

recognisable and versatile motif such as the opening of the first theme can serve as a common thread through the whole cadenza. Ornamental material from the concerto can appear alongside more general virtuosic passages (section H) and the style of ornamental preludes or lead-ins can serve for introductory or connecting sections (sections A, E).

Despite Czerny's remark that the quoted passages are connected in an order that differs from the concerto,[989] the organisation of the material is actually quite straightforward: the first part of the cadenza deals with material from the first theme section (cadenza sections A – D), and after a free lead-in (section E) the second part consists of material from the second theme group (sections F – I). Nonetheless, there are certainly aspects that suggest an improvisatory approach. The harmonic structure at large seems to be rather free: the principal keys are C, E-flat, A and again C major, showing not much of a systematic plan. The small-scale harmonic progressions are based on well-known sequential models such as the Monte and falling fifth-sequences, variants of authentic cadences and progressions based on common tones (often modulatory). As I have shown, it is primarily on this level (which is also the level of the musical phrase) that loci communes guide improvised music. The connection between sections B and C, which was earlier described as harmonically weak, may well have been included by Czerny to enhance a feeling of spontaneity, since his compositions are usually harmonically conventional.

The cadenza rather makes the impression of a sampling than of a carefully designed piece – and there is no indication that Czerny had different intentions. An interesting question remains whether Czerny was describing a living practice here. Did indeed some pianists manage to improvise this type of cadenza, quoting so freely from such a wealth of material in the piece? Speaking from personal experience, I would carefully suggest that one tends to remain with a motif or theme longer when improvising, rather than arriving at such a kaleidoscopic whole. One can never tell for sure, but it seems likely that *if* a pianist intended to play a cadenza of this thematic richness, he would at least have premeditated the rough outline of it. In a letter from 1839, Franz Liszt wrote to Marie d'Agoult about a *concert spirituel* that took place the preceding evening; Liszt writes that he played Beethoven's third piano concerto op. 37 with an improvised cadenza. Whether this cadenza was anything like Czerny's example is impossible to tell, but at least in this case it is unlikely that Liszt had spent much time designing his cadenza: he writes that he had learnt the whole concerto in 24 hours...[990]

[989] Ibidem.
[990] Quoted in Mosley, K.J.: op. cit., 264.

# Chapter 11. Improvised dance music[991]

## 11.1 Introduction

One topic receives very little attention in Czerny's comprehensive survey of piano improvisation, as well as in many other accounts with a pedagogical slant: dance music.[992] An explanation might be that much dance music was strongly linked to folk music, and as such belonged to a different category. There is no reason, though, to assume that folk music was considered something unworthy of 'serious' musicians: in 1870, Eduard Hanslick wrote that 'der Character jedes Volkes sich in seinen Melodien spiegelt'[993] [the character of every people is reflected in its melodies], a statement that he underpinned with analytical elaborations. Moreover, there are countless examples of literal or style quotations from folk music in art music, especially in the nineteenth century, and the allusions of both Brahms and Liszt to (what they saw as) the Gypsy style contributed to an important part of their fame. A discussion of the relation between folk music and art music in the nineteenth century exceeds the scope of this study, but it would be an omission to leave out improvised dance music altogether. First of all, it is one of the very few examples of an unbroken tradition of improvisation in classical music; since the end of the nineteenth century, pianists have been improvising dance music for the daily training of classical ballet dancers. Secondly, there are good historical reasons to pay attention to dance music, if only because of its popularity at the time. In this chapter, I will not attempt to provide a full historical overview, but instead zoom in on an area that still raises our interest today because of the connection with Franz Schubert: early nineteenth-century Vienna.

After a brief sketch of the Biedermeier culture in which this type of music flourished, I will focus on Schubert's dance music. It is known that Schubert liked to improvise waltzes, German dances, minuets and other dance forms, but he also composed and published them. Because of this dual background, this type of music may be considered very suitable for 'historically inspired' improvisations. I will show how analysis of scores may bring useful input that makes it possible to improvise such dances today as well. Some suggestions for teaching will conclude the chapter.

## 11.2 Vienna dances

During the *Vormärz* (the period before the revolution of March 1848), Vienna was famous for the enormous popularity of dance evenings. Many travel journals from the early nineteenth century show the surprise of foreigners when they were confronted with the untamable lust for dancing of

[991] An earlier version of this chapter appeared in *Piano Bulletin*, the journal of the Dutch-Flemish branch of the European Piano Teachers Association (EPTA): 'Schuberts walsen als model voor improvisaties'. *Piano Bulletin,* Jaargang 35, no. 2 (2017); 7-19.

[992] For Czerny's text on composed dance music, see chapter 12.2.

[993] Hanslick, E.: *Geschichte des Concertwesens in Wien; zweiter Teil: Aus dem Concertsaal.* Wien, 1870; 23.

the Viennese, a need that to many seemed to verge on the obsessive. For instance, Mary Novello, who in 1829 arrived in Vienna together with her husband Vincent on the occasion of a visit to Mozart's widow, sighed that she heard waltzes everywhere, 'nothing but waltzes, eternal commonplace waltzes. Germany really appears to me at present the land of galops, waltzes and quadrilles'.[994] Many foreign diplomats who were in the city during the Congress of Vienna in 1814-1815 also were entertained with a large number of magnificent balls; the Austrian field marshal Charles-Joseph Lamoral de Ligne reacted with a famous bon mot: 'Le congrès danse beaucoup, mais il ne marche pas' [the congress dances a lot, but it doesn't move], indicating that the negotiations themselves were going off very slowly. In her book *Musical life in Biedermeier Vienna*, Alice Hanson sketches a comprehensive view of the world of the Viennese waltz, the milieu in which composers and band leaders such as Joseph Lanner and the Strauss family experienced their hours of fame, and Johann Strauss Jr. later received the unofficial honorary title of *Walzerkönig* ('king of waltz'). A nineteenth-century silhouette shows the two Strauss brothers Johann Jr. and Joseph; the little poem reads: 'The king of waltz carries his crown / with dignity and cold blood; / But his brother is not left without either / on him the dancing looks very good.[995]

Der „Walzerkönig" trägt seine Krone
Mit Würde und kühlem Blut;
Doch auch sein Bruder ist nicht ohne —
Ihm steht halt das Tanzen so gut.

*Example 11.2.1*

[994] Quoted in Hanson, A.: *Musical life in Biedermeier Vienna*. Cambridge, 1985; 162.
[995] Schließmann, H.: *Wiener Schattenbilder*. Wien, 1892; 9.

It is probably not an exaggeration to call *Vormärz* Vienna a police state. Government control was so rigid that public dance evenings had to be approved by the police beforehand. An incidental fortunate result of this, and of the fact that taxes were levied on the participating musicians (the *Musik Impost*), is that detailed records of balls are still available today. Dance evenings were not allowed during specific periods; the 'high season' was during the carnival time from Epiphany (January 6th) till midnight before Ash Wednesday. Thanks to police information, we know that there were as many as 772 balls during the 1823 season, which were visited by more than 200.000 people.[996]

### 11.3 Schubertiades

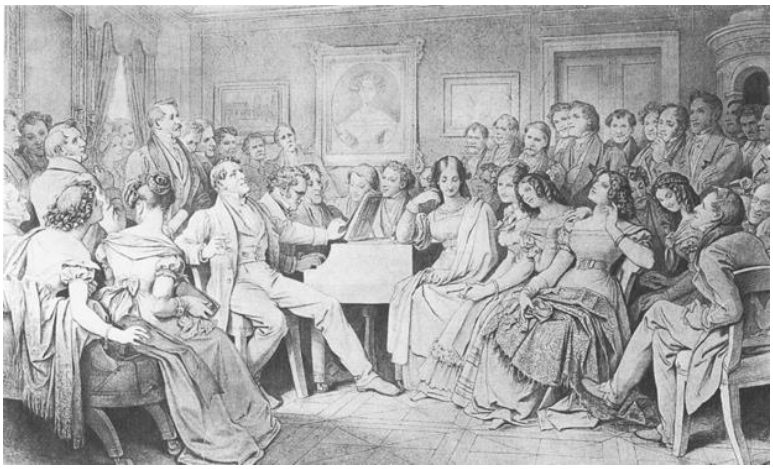
The music for large, public ball evenings in venues such as the *Redoutensaal* was performed by orchestras conducted by celebrities such as Johann Strauss Sr. However, not every ball was an event of these dimensions; in the homes of the middle-class citizens, more modest parties were organised at which dancing was an indispensable ingredient as well. Many houses, even outside Vienna, had a 'salon', a large room where the residents liked to meet with friends and acquaintances, big enough for dancing and small concerts. The restored houses of famous nineteenth-century musical couples such as Mendelssohn Bartholdy-Jeanrenaud and Schumann-Wieck in Leipzig still feature such salons, inevitably equipped with a grand piano. A picture of the salon in the former residence of Mendelssohn in Leipzig (now the *Mendelssohn-Haus*) gives an impression of the dimensions of such a room:

*Example 11.3.1*

[996] Hanson, A.: op. cit., 157.

The sales of pianos had boomed during the early nineteenth century, and the instrument had become an almost obligatory part of the bourgeois household. Dance evenings in salons therefore often made use of piano music, and as a result an urgent need for dance music for piano had arisen. Publishers jumped on that development by offering new anthologies with dance music every year, books with often beautiful titles such as *Halt's enk z'samm* [Stay close together], *Valses nobles* [Noble waltzes] or *Musikalisches Angebinde zum neuen Jahre* [Musical gift for the new year]. Many composers contributed to such collections, and one of them was Franz Schubert, who composed new dance music for similar anthologies every year from 1822 until his death. Like many colleagues, he also published series of dances outside the carnival anthologies, often loosely grouped by key. Collected in a modern edition, they make up one or two large volumes with countless small gems that are unfortunately little known. One might feel tempted to dismiss such publications as jobs on the side, purely meant to relieve his financial trouble; nevertheless there are indications that Schubert actually loved composing and performing dance music.

Still famous, for instance, are the 'Schubertiades' which were in fact gatherings of friends in a bourgeois salon, with Schubert as a key figure: his music was performed at such evenings. The common understanding today of the Schubertiades is to a large extent based upon a well-known drawing by Schubert's friend Moritz von Schwind, made four decades after Schubert's death:[997]



*Example 11.3.2*

This drawing shows Schubert at the piano with the singer Johann Vogl at his side. They are surrounded by a more than attentive crowd of friends that includes several artists, poets and musicians. The listeners look transported and the whole scene has a Parnassian touch. Surely this idealised picture has lent almost mythical proportions to the popular image of the historical Schubertiades. Most likely, however, they were rather informal meetings where especially the lighter

[997] Source: Wikicommons.

and more accessible works of Schubert were performed, such as certain songs and pieces for piano *à quatre mains.* At least as important as the musical part of the evening were the connecting meal, the drinking, the games – and the dancing! In his memoirs the actor Heinrich Anschütz writes how Schubert was once playing dance music during such an evening, which, however, took place during Lent. As dance evenings were not allowed during the period between Ash Wednesday and Easter, a passing police officer interfered and summoned the actor to cancel the party. It seems that this was much to the distress of Schubert, who exclaimed: 'Das tun's mir zu Fleiß, weil s' wissen, daß ich gar so gern Tanzmusik mach!' ['They are doing that to me, since they know that I enjoy so much making dance music!'].[998]

### 11.4 Schubert as an improviser

Eye-witness accounts inform us that the dance music that Schubert played for friends was completely or partly improvised. In order to be suitable for dancing, dance music has to fulfil several very specific conditions: a fixed metre, a strict organisation in eight-bar phrases, but also melodic characteristics and specific types of accompaniment. As any ballet pianist knows, the dancing quality of music is not so much about the time signature as such, but about a specific type of musical movement, a *Schwung*, a 'groove' (to use an anachronistic term). Often it is hardly possible to notate its rhythmical details. An example from nineteenth-century music is the Viennese waltz, which occupies centre stage at the annual New Year's concert that is broadcasted across the world from the *Musikverein* in Vienna. Normally notated in a 3/4 metre with an accompaniment in equal quarter notes, this is not the rhythm as it should be performed: actually the second beat is supposed to come slightly early, though the exact nature of this shift should preferably be communicated by experience. The correct dance timing can hardly be learnt from a textbook, an aspect it shares with other forms of subtle rhythmic nuances such as tempo rubato (→ chapter 7).

It is precisely such fixed written and unwritten preconditions that make dance music an attractive medium for improvisation. The dance rhythm and the compact, stereotypical phrase structure guide the musician's playing, as it were: they are loci communes. Not much is known about Schubert as an improviser. Most likely he was not a technically advanced pianist, witness the circumstance that he probably never or only briefly owned or rented a piano during his short life. However, we know from accounts of friends and acquaintances such as Leopold von Sonnleithner that he loved to improvise dance music during the Schubertiades. On the other hand, contemporaries write that Schubert's speed of composing was such that one may wonder whether this way of composing couldn't be seen as 'improvising on paper'. Karoline Pichler, for instance, describes Schubert's way of composing as

[998] Deutsch, O.E.: *Schubert: Die Erinnerungen seiner Freunde*. Wiesbaden, 1957; 256.

almost unconscious, and adds that he sometimes had already forgotten the music a few weeks after the act of composing.[999] With respect to his piano improvisations, it is assumed that he sometimes repeated improvised waltzes that pleased him, and that he notated them afterwards with or without changes. Now, it has been claimed many times that certain compositions originated as free improvisations that were notated afterwards, for instance Johann Sebastian Bach's Fantasy and Fugue in g minor BWV 542 for organ. Nobody can check to what extent such a claim is true; in any case, it seems unlikely that people who heard Bach improvising would have been able to remember a twelve minute piece so precisely that they were able to judge whether Bach's later composition was an exact account of the earlier improvisation. With short dance forms such as Schubert's *Ländler* and waltzes, however, the situation is different: the small scale of these pieces actually makes it possible for the improviser to get them firmly into his mind and to notate them rather accurately afterwards. This, too, is confirmed by the experience of modern ballet pianists. The daily training ('class') of dancers starts with thirty minutes of exercises at the barre, which are always performed twice: once with the left hand at the barre, once with the right hand. It is pleasant for a dancer to hear the same music both times he performs an exercise. This means that the pianist, when he is improvising, must try to repeat a piece of (usually) 32 'bars'. After some practice this turns out to be very well possible; it is even instructive for the pianist, because he is forced to be aware of what exactly he is doing during the improvisation. Schubert, too, must have repeated his music during a series of *Ländler* more than once. That, at least, may be concluded from an interesting remark by Leopold von Sonnleithner, mentioned above, who wrote about Schubert in 1857:

> Er besuchte manchmal Hausbälle in vertrauten Familienkreisen; er tanzte nie, war aber stets bereit, sich ans Klavier zu setzen, wo er stundenlang die schönsten Walzer improvisierte; jene, die ihm gefielen, wiederholte er, um sie zu behalten und in der Folge aufzuschreiben.[1000]
>
> [Sometimes he visited balls in the houses of familiar circles; he never danced, but he was always prepared to take place at the piano, where he improvised the most beautiful waltzes for hours; those which he liked he repeated in order to remember them and notate afterwards.]

To sum up, it may be said that Schubert's creativity seems to have been an interesting continuum of composing, improvising, and anything in between. One must be careful not to assume that composed music is always a residue of a former improvisation; in the case of Schubert's dance music, however, it seems justified to regard the composed waltzes as similar to his improvised ones, considering the practical requirements for producing dance music, along with eyewitness accounts

[999] Deutsch, O.E.: op. cit., 347.
[1000] Deutsch, O.E.: op. cit., 141.

of Schubert's manner of working.[1001] On basis of this information, it is a thrilling challenge to try and improvise similar short dance forms today, guided by the composed music of Schubert and his contemporaries. This objective invites a specific type of analysis that might be called practice-oriented. Music analysis, I argue, is not a goal in its own right, but a method to find answers to questions about aspects of pieces. In this case, one is looking for aspects that constitute the identity of the dance music in question: not the identity of the score of a single Schubert waltz, but the identity of a musical genre, its melodic and harmonic aspects, its rhythmic and metrical features. The type of analysis that I propose here focuses on the identification of loci communes: not of models to be filled in, or patterns to be copied, but of guiding principles that invite the performer to improvise new music in this style. In the remainder of this chapter, several aspects will be discussed: sections 11.5 through 11.7 successively investigate the different dance genres that Schubert composed, their background in folk music, and aspects of harmony in Schubert's waltzes (such as harmonic loci and phrase structures). Section 11.8 analyses a number of recorded improvisations that make use of loci as mentioned in the previous sections. Finally, section 11.9 will suggest ways to implement these findings in the (conservatory) training of musicians.

## 11.5 Dance forms in Schubert

The majority of Schubert's dances consists of pieces in 3/4 metre with titles such as *Deutsche*, *Ländler*, *Walzer* and *Menuett*. In addition, there are a couple of very short *Écossaises* (Scottish dances) in a fast 2/4. This chapter will deal with the dances in triple meter only. A culturally interesting phenomenon is that, except for the minuet, these dance types are originally folk dances from the area of present-day southern Bavaria and Austria that had become socially acceptable, a development that already had taken place in the eighteenth century.

The musical distinction between the different dance types is often unclear. A *Ländler* was a dance in a slower tempo than the later Strauss-waltz. The name possibly refers to 'dance from *Landl*' (an area in the current *Bundesland* Upper Austria), though it may also refer to 'dance from the

[1001] In *The Field of Musical* Improvisation, Marcel Cobussen writes that 'all music making, including composing and arranging, contains stages in its production process which could be called – or be interpreted as – improvisatory.' (Cobussen, M.: *The Field of Musical Improvisation*. Leiden, 2017; 81.) This statement corresponds with Bruce Ellis Benson's idea that improvising is 'reworking something that already exists' (→ chapter 1.2). In this study, however, I have put more emphasis on the simultaneity of invention and performance. In that sense, a composer who notates (in any form) a musical idea, instead of performing it, cannot be said to 'improvise'. I argue that the act of writing slows down the process to such an extent that a reflective quality enters – not to mention the option of revising or changing the original musical idea. The case of Schubert, discussed in this section, is an exception: according to eye-witnesses, he composed with an extraordinary speed and 'unconsciously', which strongly suggests that the reflective filter was absent (at times, that is: there are also compositions that show a careful planning and a staged composition process). It is in this sense that Schubert's composing sometimes may have resembled 'improvising on paper'. In addition, the fact that he may have consciously 'stored' in his memory some of his improvised waltzes, and notated them afterwards, is exceptional and should not be generalised. The relation between composing and improvising will be further discussed in chapter 12.6.

countryside'.[1002] The dancers form couples who make graceful and sometimes complex movements. A remarkable difference with an old court dance like the minuet was the fact that the two dancers had to hold onto each other most of the time, which was considered piquant by some. The *Ländler* was also known as a 'love dance', a dance for loving couples.[1003]

At the end of a series of *Ländler*, it became usual that the spinning pairs roamed the room, which was called a *Walzer* (*walzen* = to turn). Later the *Walzer* became an independent dance. It was difficult not to get dizzy during the *walzen*; apparently many young ladies fainted in the heat of the moment, which caused sharp disapproval of the waltz and eventually even led to a temporary ban – but this happened only after the death of Schubert, when dancing the waltz with the music of Strauss and Lanner had become extremely popular in the large Viennese ballrooms, and the tempo of the dance had become faster.[1004]

A nice detail in the *Ländler* as a folk dance was the *Schnadahüpfl*, a moment when the dancers started to sing (or maybe, to roar), accompanied by stamping their feet.[1005] Sometimes Schubert seems to evoke such jocular passages in his composed waltzes. It is less clear what kind of dance the *Deutsche* was. The term means 'German dance', but more specifically it seems to have indicated a dance related to the minuet, and slightly faster than a *Ländler*.

Schubert's dances were popular. Often he made copies of series of dances for friends, who enjoyed playing them. The most famous one during his life was probably the so-called *Trauer-Walzer* [Mourning waltz] D 365 no. 2, which was distributed anonymously and had sometimes even been attributed to Beethoven:[1006]

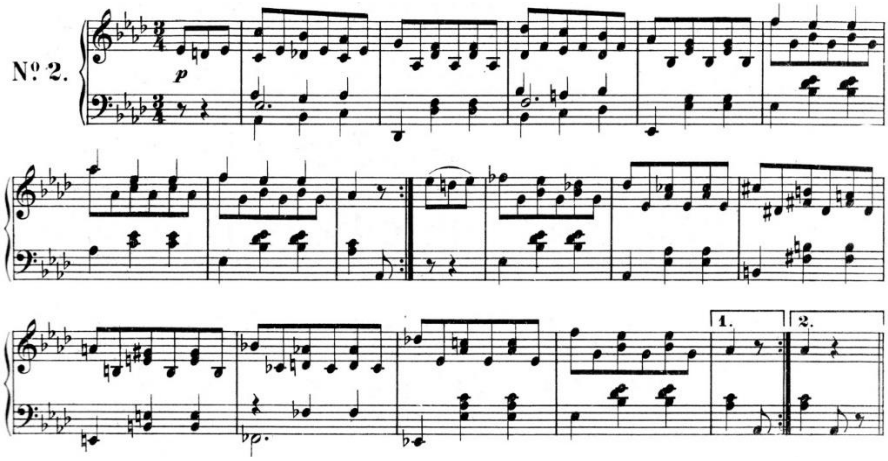
[1002] Flotzinger, R.: 'Ländler'. In: *Oesterreichisches Musiklexikon. Online-Ausgabe*. Wien, 2002 ff (https://www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik_L/Laendler.xml.

[1003] Neumeyer, D.: *Schubert, Dance, and Dancing in Vienna, 1815-1840*. 2012 / 2015; 5. https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/29532/Neumeyer_Schubert--dance_and_dancing.pdf?sequence=3.

[1004] The fact that ladies were wearing corsets may have contributed to their fainting as well.

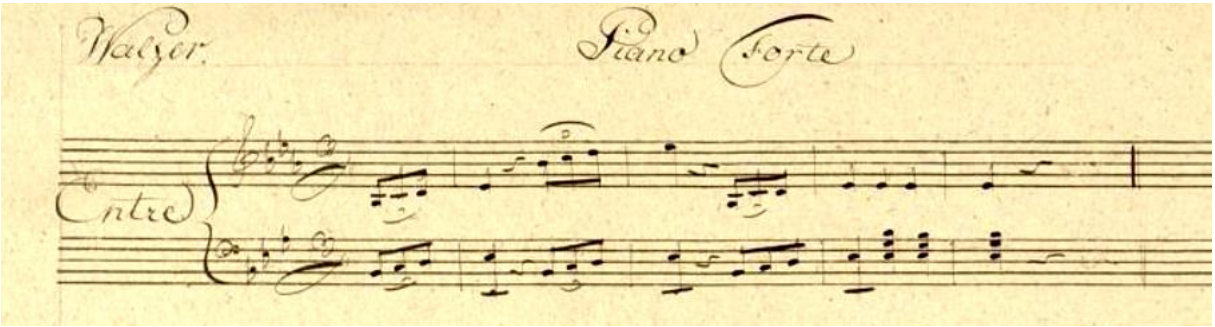
[1005] Neumeyer, D.: op. cit., 13.

[1006] *Franz Schubert's Werke*, Serie XII, Nr. 1 (J. Epstein, ed.). Leipzig, 1889.




*Example 11.5.1*

Besides his contributions to Carnival anthologies, Schubert published much dance music in collections of 12 to as many as 38, often grouped by key. The dances were performed in several combinations. Most well-known (and also seen in the minuet and trio in many sonatas and symphonies) is an ABA-structure, in which the first dance is repeated after the second one has been played. It is very possible that Schubert also adhered to this structure when he was improvising. Longer, rondo-like structures were also possible such as ABAB, ABACABA, etc.[1007] People were not always dancing to his music; sometimes they simply enjoyed it for listening, or the dancers liked it so much that they stopped dancing. It is not unlikely that short introductions were improvised to the composed dances, because dancers simply needed this for their preparation – this, too, is something that ballet pianists typically need to do. A written example of such an *Aufforderung zum Tanz* (invitation to the dance, as the title of Carl Maria von Weber's famous composition has it) can be found in a manuscript from 1826 by a certain Eggert, which shows the following *Entré* [introduction] to a group of 10 waltzes:[1008]




*Example 11.5.2*

[1007] Neumeyer, D.: op. cit., 21.
[1008] https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbihd/content/titleinfo/3909101

In order to provide Schubert's dance music with a context, it might be useful to compare it with similar compositions of contemporaries, and with the folk music that inspired it.

## 11.6 Folk music

Various collections of notated dance melodies have been handed down, mainly musical 'playbooks' of anonymous local musicians. Of course, these pieces are much simpler than dance music of composers such as Mozart, Beethoven or Schubert. However, such melodies might show the most 'pure' form of the various dance types, whereas the 'art' dances are stylised versions of the originals; these stylised dances are both melodically and harmonically much more developed, and tend to mix characteristics of the original dances anyway. Besides, there is historical evidence that Schubert's *Deutsche* and *Walzer*, for instance, were used for different dances such as the *Cotillon* as well.[1009] Interestingly, even in folk music it is not always easy to distinguish musically between the different dance types (they are usually not indicated), and some melodies show features of different dances. Obviously, it is not necessary to establish an exact musical demarcation of different dance types here, but it is useful for an aspiring improviser to formulate for each dance type discussed here a characteristic trait, borrowed from folk music – that is, a locus communis. To that end, I will make ample use of the essay *Der Deutsche* by Walter Deutsch.[1010]

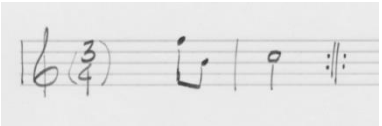
### *a. Melodic features*

A general feature is the extremely regular phrase structure within a binary form. A standard musical phrase is eight bars long; usually such a group of eight bars is repeated, followed by a second group of eight bars, which is in turn repeated. Sometimes Schubert composed a second part of double length, which is also repeated; this asymmetrical form (which can have features of a ternary form) can be found in folk music as well.[1011] There are variations on those types: sometimes Schubert writes out a varied (often modulating) repeat, omitting the repeat signs. In this chapter, the focus will be on the symmetrical form type of two repeated eight-bar sections; the *Trauer-Walzer* is a good example.

The traditional *Ländler* distinguishes itself musically by multiple arpeggiated triads in eighth notes. Some commentators see a connection with yodeling here, although this type of melody also occurred outside the Alp region. Another feature of *Ländler* melodies is the melodic cadence at the end of an eight-bar phrase: often this is a variant of the melodic turn ^4 - ^7 - ^1, which is supported

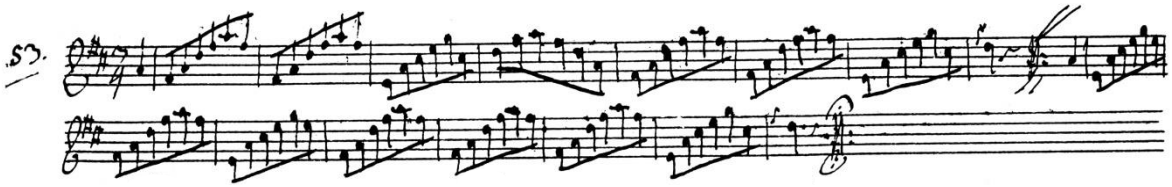
[1009] Dürr, W. & Krause, A. (eds.): *Schubert Handbuch*. Kassel, 1997; 445.
[1010] Deutsch, W.: 'Der Deutsche'. In: Schusser, E. (ed.): *Tanzmelodien aus München um 1800*. Bruckmühl, 1988; 22-46.
[1011] On the other hand Heinrich Christoph Koch writes that a minuet that is meant for dancing should always have two parts of equal length, which leads Walburga Litschauer (in her contribution to the *Schubert Handbuch*) to the assumption that asymmetric dances were meant to be enjoyed as listening music (Dürr, W. & Krause, A. (eds.): op. cit., 442).

harmonically by a $V^7$ – I cadence in which the fifth of the dominant seventh chord (or the ^2) is missing.



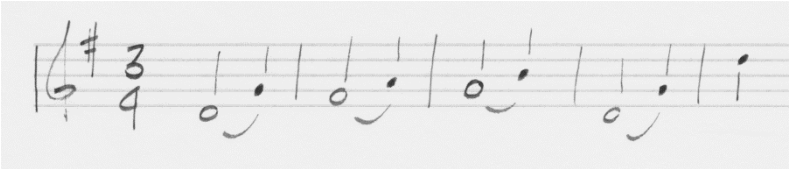
*Example 11.6.1: Melodic cadence in a* Ländler

Both features are present in the following melody from the region of Munich (ca. 1800) – incidentally called a *Deutsche* in the manuscript, which again shows the absence of a strict demarcation of names for dance types:[1012]



*Example 11.6.2*

Melodically, the *Walzer* frequently uses motifs consisting of a (strong) half note slurred to a quarter note – often in triad arpeggiations, but also stepwise. An example from folk music:[1013]



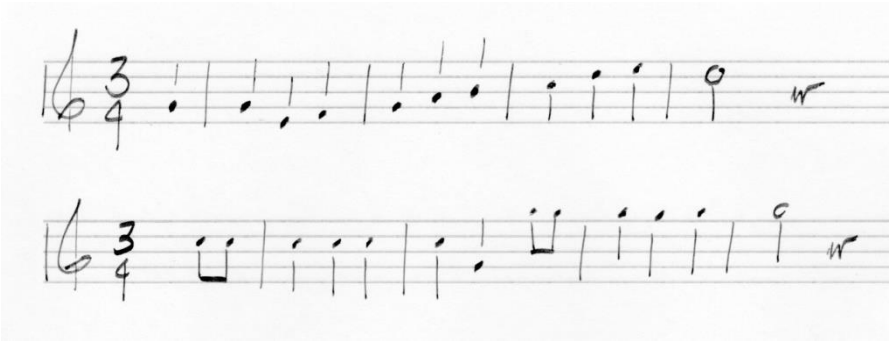
*Example 11.6.3*

The individual phrases of a waltz tend to span the full eight bars. This is an important difference with the *Deutsche*, which is melodically organised in groups of four bars (*Viertakter*). Another feature of the *Deutsche* is a melodic curve that is more varied than in a *Ländler*: the eighth note movement is less stereotypical, and it is more interspersed with quarter notes.

The minuet finally has a more stately movement that is primarily based upon quarter notes, which also goes for the bass line; the harmonic rhythm is often faster than in the three previous dances. As a result, the minuet often does not have the familiar oom-pah-pah accompaniment. Sometimes the

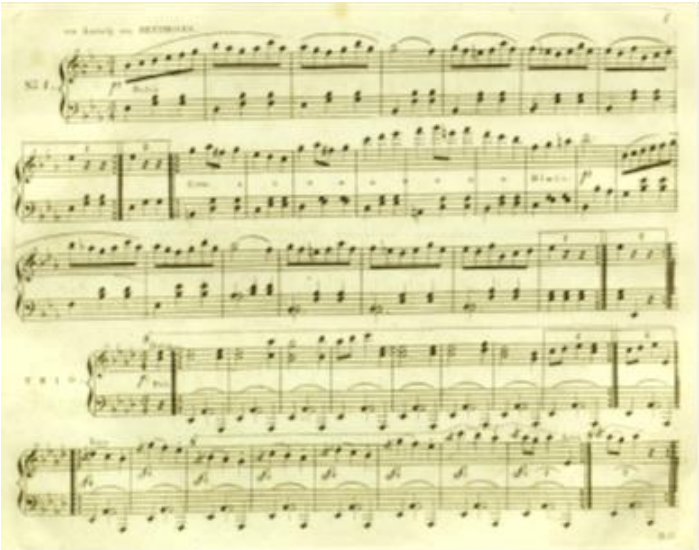
[1012] Schusser, E. (ed.): op. cit., 19.
[1013] Schusser, E. (ed.): op. cit., 31.

melody contains fanfare-like motifs. Here are two examples of minuet-type melodies from the collection of folk music from Munich quoted from before:[1014]



*Example 11.6.4*

The anthologies with dance music that were published every year contained pieces by a large variety of composers; as could be expected, most of them have been forgotten today. While browsing through such books, however, one sometimes suddenly comes across names that are still known today. The collection *Musikalisches Angebinde zum neuen Jahre* from 1824, for instance, presents forty new waltzes by just as many composers, among whom one finds Schubert, Beethoven and Czerny. Though the pieces are announced as waltzes on the front page, different types of dances are actually represented within the collection. Beethoven's composition, for instance, seems to have the character of a *Deutsche*, judging by the almost total absence of waltz rhythms and by the prevailing phrasing in *Viertakter.* The trio, on the other hand, does manifest the characteristic movement of a waltz.[1015]



*Example 11.6.5*

[1014] Schusser, E. (ed.): op. cit., 29.
[1015] Müller, C.F. (ed.): *Musikalisches Angebinde zum neuen Jahre.* Wien, [1824]; 1.

*b. Harmonic features*

The melodies in collections of folk music are usually not provided with an accompaniment. Given the extremely simple harmony these melodies are based on, this would not be necessary. Most melodies can be harmonised with just two chords: a tonic and a dominant triad. The accompaniment of the *Deutsche* quoted above in example 11.6.2, for instance, shows the following pattern:

I | I | V | I | I | I | V | I :‖: V | I | V | I | I | I | V | I :‖

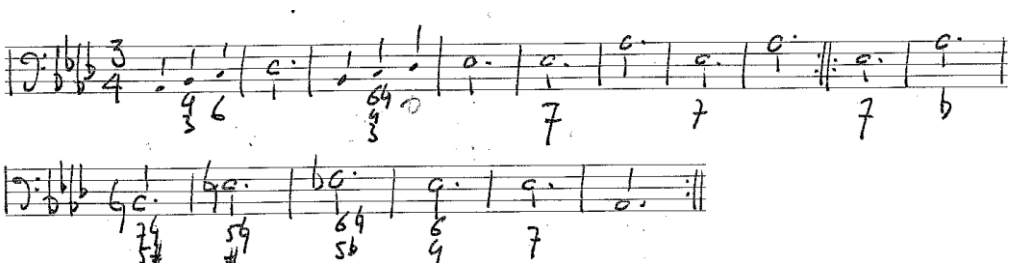
An accompanying band – e.g., double bass and guitar – could easily fill in the required accompaniment on the spot. Other folk melodies show similar simple harmonic patterns, which appear in a few variants. Not surprisingly, the composed dance music that was printed in the carnival collections is usually harmonically much richer, featuring secondary dominants and modulations as well. The stylistic similarities among the different pieces in these anthologies are considerable, possibly because the composers in the end were consciously attempting to sound 'folk-like', despite the greater harmonic variety.

The examples from folk music may provide a general orientation for determining the character of the different dance forms in Schubert, and be a source of inspiration for new melodies.

## 11.7 Harmony in Schubert's waltzes

A harmonic reduction of a Schubert waltz in the form of a figured bass provides a clear summary of the harmonic and phrase structure. Collecting a considerable number of such reductions results in what could be seen as a sampling of Schubert's harmonic language – primarily for this type of composition, but at the same time representing the harmony of Schubert'music in a nutshell.[1016] Of course, it is not possible within the limited framework of a sixteen bar dance form to make room for large scale harmonic developments such as extended sequences or distant modulations, but chromatic mediant relationships or modulations by means of the German sixth chord, both characteristic for Schubert, do occur often enough. There are also harmonic loci communes that are familiar from the Neapolitan partimento tradition as well as other sources, and that have been listed in this study in the context of methods for preluding (→ chapter 9.5). The Trauer-Walzer (example 11.5.1) shows such a sequence in the first *Achttakter*; it is a Monte sequence that has been embellished harmonically with passing harmonies in bars 1 and 3:

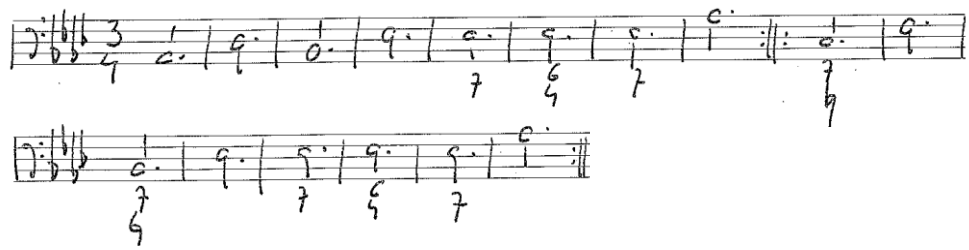
[1016] A collection of 20 waltz reductions, together with recordings, can be found in the appendix.



*Example 11.7.1*

**[11.7 #1 Harmonic reduction of D365 n. 2]**

A 'cleaner' version of the same sequence turns up in the (connecting) following waltz D 365 no. 3 in the same key:



*Example 11.7.2*

**[11.7 #2 Harmonic reduction of D365 no. 3]**

These two waltzes therefore share the harmonic opening gesture, and also the cadential progressions are practically identical. It is like starting a game of chess: a standardised opening can provoke different continuations, which makes it interesting to compare both waltzes. In both pieces the first eight-bar phrase starts and finishes on the tonic. This has implications for what follows. If the second phrase would have the same harmonic structure, starting and cadencing on the tonic as well but with a different melody, it would not sound like a logical development from the first phrase, but like the new start of something different; the rhetorical function of the second phrase would be unclear because it wouldn't follow 'logically' from the first one. To use the metaphor of an orator: it would be as if a statement were made in a sentence, after which a different topic would be broached. To the listener, the relation between the two topics will be unclear because the second one does not clearly relate to the first in any 'organic' way (another favourite nineteenth-century metaphor); for instance, it doesn't amplify, develop, explain, or even deny it.

It is precisely the terseness of the small musical dance forms that so beautifully reveals these important rhetorical principles. In order to produce a compelling continuation, one needs tonal contrast. Both D 365 nos. 2 and 3 have this contrast, in both cases in the form of a temporary minor mode. No. 2 continues in bar 9 in the parallel minor key, which clears the way for a fast and typically

Schubertian modulation to the flattened sub-mediant (with a return via the German sixth chord in bar 13). In waltz no. 3 the colour of minor is found in the sixth degree harmony in bar 10 (f minor), after which the return happens conventionally through a diatonic falling-fifth sequence.

Monte sequences occur often and in various forms, with and without inversions, diatonic and chromatic. Other frequent harmonic loci that were already listed in chapter 9.5 are: several kinds of authentic cadences (sometimes including a clearly marked seventh chord on the raised fourth degree, for instance in D365 nr 29), falling fifth sequences, the Romanesca (D783 no. 16), the 'reversed Romanesca' (D783 no. 5), the Monte-Romanesca (D969 no. 11), and the 'alternative scale harmonisation' mentioned at the end of chapter 9.5*d* (D734 no. 13).

### 11.8 Historically inspired waltzes

Also after Schubert's death, improvised or semi-improvised dance music remained a recurring element in art music. As a law student in Heidelberg, Robert Schumann loved to improvise dance music, and his acquaintance with Schubert's waltzes kindled the conception of his *Papillons* op. 2.[1017] Brahms also paid his tribute to Schubert and the Viennese dancing culture in his *Walzer* op. 39 and the *Liebeslieder-Walzer* for voices ops. 52 and 65. In his youth he toured with the violinist Eduard Hoffmann Reményi; as a duo they were very successful with their Gypsy-style melodies for which Brahms improvised his accompaniments.[1018] Later in his life, Brahms based his *Ungarische Tänze* WoO 1 upon these performances.

Thus not only the concrete historical situation of Franz Schubert improvising dance music for his friends, but also the way this music lived on in later musical styles, may still be a source of inspiration for improvisations today. In this section, I present a few recordings that exemplify this statement. They are not recordings of live performances or studio sessions; rather, they should be seen as audio snapshots I made when I had the opportunity to get to know a number of historical pianos. The Viennese provenance of these instruments invited me to improvise dance music as described in this chapter. My goal was not to deliver original, interesting, or 'correct' music; the focus was entirely on exploring the characteristics of the individual pianos. For this reason, the musical result is to a certain extent involuntary – a musical counterpart of automatic writing (*écriture automatique*), in a way. This shows in the form: not all waltzes are built according to the strict model of two repeated eight-bar phrases. It also shows in the themes that are often new, but sometimes borrowed from music I knew. What makes the recordings relevant for this study is that they show clear loci communes: the phrases themselves are usually eight bars long, the melodic and rhythmic characteristics of Viennese dance music are present, and harmonic loci as discussed earlier in this study can be recognised. As for

[1017] Tadday, U. (ed.): *Schumann Handbuch.* Stuttgart, 2006; 225.
[1018] Swafford, Jan: *Johannes Brahms: A Biography.* London, 1997; 61.

the goal itself of the recorded sessions: they are meant to demonstrate how the sound characteristics of the various pianos may serve as loci communes in that they, too, strongly invite specific musical content. The first two recordings present Viennese instruments from the early nineteenth century. Such pianos often had up to 6 pedals, controlling various 'stops' or sound effects; of these, only the damper pedal and the soft or *una corda* pedal survived later. The type of action is invariably the Viennese *Prellzungenmechanik* [German action]. The second and third recordings were made on a late-nineteenth-century successor of this type of instrument.

**[11.8 #1 Matthias Müller. Rec. 2018]**

On this recording of an instrument built by Matthias Müller around 1815-1820 (FF – c5, 6 pedals), I played three waltzes that explore some of the instrument's stops. In the first waltz, I can be heard struggling with the noisy damper pedal that only allowed for an 'off' and 'on' position, still far removed from the later subtleties in pedalling; the second waltz (0'53") is played with the combined *una corda* and moderator stops, and the last one (2'00") makes use of the drum and bells stop. Harmonically the first waltz shows ordinary cadential patterns and falling-fifth sequences; the only peculiarity is the modulation towards the third degree in the first phrase. The third waltz almost repeats this harmonic plan; the second waltz is harmonically conventional.[1019] Melodically, the waltzes stay close to the world of Schubert, as well. In the second one, the tenderness of the sound and the fast-decaying tone invite left hand arpeggiations; the extraordinary singing quality of the instrument (even with the moderator switched on) leads to rubato in the right hand melody, lengthening the expressive high notes. In the final waltz, the drum / bells combination naturally evokes some imaginary 'Schnadahüpfl'.

**[11.8 #2 Andreas Stein. Rec. 2018]**

An instrument built by Andreas Stein (CC – f4) in the 1820's already has a more 'Romantic' character, which invites the performer to play with thicker chords, octave doublings in the melody and bitter-sweet diminished seventh chords, as heard in the first waltz . The second waltz (1'10", *Ländler* type) is in the flat submediant, a common Romantic key relation. The third waltz (1'48") features the diminished seventh chord (with 4-3 suspension) on the raised fourth degree; the key relation with the previous waltz is again a movement to the flat submediant, one more major third down. The fourth waltz (2'39") is in a minor key a fifth lower from the previous key; as a result it is in the relative minor key of number 1. The last waltz (3'38") reuses the idea of repeated chords, as in

[1019] Similar harmonic plans or gestures in successive waltzes also occur in Schubert's cycles (→ section 11.5).

the last waltz of the previous set, though in a minor key that has no clear connection with the other waltzes of this set; its tonic is a whole step below that of the previous waltz.

In 2017, I enjoyed the opportunity to play the original 'J.B. Streicher & Sohn' grand piano (1880) that once belonged to Richard and Maria Fellinger, close friends of Johannes Brahms. This is the very piano that can be heard on the only existing recording (1889) of Brahms's piano playing.[1020]

*Example 11.8.1*

Today, it is part of the collection of the Brahms-Museum in Mürzzuschlag, located in an apartment that Brahms used as a summer residence.[1021] The action is similar to the much older instruments of Müller and Stein, only the instrument as a whole is bigger and heavier in all respects. The relation with the early nineteenth-century Viennese pianofortes, though, is immediately clear to a player: the action offers a similar directness and promptness of response. Its tone has a strong singing quality; it is much more powerful and long-lasting than on the early instruments, and allows for a great richness of nuances. The utterly late-Romantic character of the piano invited me to a slow and melancholic waltz with much space for colouring in the chords and in the inner voices. Its structure is a loose ABA' with coda; there are several loci that recall Brahms, for instance the important role of the subdominant (the pendulum-like I – IV – I motion in the A part, the continuation of the antecedent on II in the B-part), or the ample use of octave doublings in the melody in combination with parallel thirds or sixths.

[11.8 #3 Streicher (1), *Valse lente*. Rec. 2017]

[1020] For instance on https://youtu.be/H31q7Qrjjoo; information about the instrument on the website of its restorer, Gerd Hecher: http://www.hecherpiano.com/brahmspiano_e.html#BRAHMSFLUEGEL.

[1021] Many thanks to director Robert Fuchs for generously allowing me to play the instruments in the museum outside the opening season.

Needless to say that it was a very special and moving experience to play an instrument that Brahms touched, located in a room where he spent many happy hours. But apart from the influence of the 'genius loci', the instrument's sustained and very expressive character also fits in very well with a more extensive use of chromatics, which is what I did in the first waltz in the last and longest set:

**[11.8 #4 Streicher (2). Rec. 2017]**

For clarity's sake, the waltzes of this series will be described here one by one:

Waltz no. 1: When the many chromatic passing notes and appoggiaturas in the melody are disregarded, the harmony of the opening theme consists basically of a fragment of the rule of the octave. This harmonic locus had a long history, but as a way of opening a waltz it would have been uncommon in Schubert. Not so in Brahms, however, as seen in his waltz in D minor, op. 39 no. 8. After finishing the first phrase on the tonic, I clearly make use of contrast by a change of mode, as discussed above, in the second phrase (0'55").

In the subsequent waltzes I gradually explored the dynamic and virtuosic extremes of the instrument, sometimes adopting Brahmsian features. For instance, the use of parallel sixths can be heard throughout; it may be tempting to think that they were called forth by this instrument, but it might as well be the other way around – i.e., that the awareness of the link between this piano and Brahms put me on that track. Anyway, the rich and dark colour of the Streicher's tone makes this type of voice-leading work very well and thus invites the player to apply it. The second waltz (1'41") harmonically recalls the previous one in the rising scale in the bass, but this time in major. The repeat of the beginning (2'01") explores the effect of the *una corda* pedal.

The third waltz (2'19") makes use of (not very Brahms-like) virtuosic arpeggios.

Number 4 (2'49") borrows the opening motif from Schubert (D 790 no. 6) over a falling-fifth progression (a VI – II – V – I cadence). The hesitation between the major mode and its relative minor recalls Brahms.

In the fifth waltz (3'40") I tested the instrument's capacity for quick trills and other fast and light passages (quite un-Brahmsian). The finishing motif on 4'06" is an unconscious repetition of the end of the first waltz of this set (1'32").

In number 6 (4'09") the simple melody in parallel sixths almost has a schmaltzy flavour.

In the next waltz (number 7, 4'54") the sixths are extended to sixths-plus-thirds, again one of Brahms's favourite textures. The bold energy of this waltz was definitely inspired by some of the *Liebeslieder-Walzer*.

The cycle finishes with an epilogue (5'46"), just as Brahms did in his *Neue Liebeslieder* op. 65 ('Zum Schluß'), or Schumann in the *Papillons* ('Finale'). Also Schubert occasionally wrote a 'Coda' (D 420).

## 11.9 Teaching waltzes à la Schubert

There are several ways in which material from sections 11.5 through 11.7 can be applied pedagogically. The focus will here be on the collection of figured bass reductions that I mentioned in section 11.7. The written reductions are accompanied by recorded realisations on harmonium.[1022]

Such a collection of material is very versatile: it can be used for a large variety of courses with different learning goals. The recordings make excellent ear training exercises, for instance, and the figured basses can obviously be realised at the keyboard or even on a monodic instrument.[1023] However, when the goal is to acquire fluency in this specific musical language, it will be good to identify and internalise different loci.[1024] One advantage of studying early nineteenth-century Viennese dance music is that the stylistic framework is unusually clear, which makes it a fascinating case study. Another advantage with respect to teaching purposes is that the technical demands this type of music puts to the player are modest, quite different from improvised cadenzas or even preludes, for instance. After all, the composed dance music from the 1820's was meant to be playable by a wide range of amateur pianists. Needless to say, this doesn't preclude true musical beauty! It is important that the latter aspect be appreciated by the 'idiomatic improviser'. When the improviser does not feel the desire to make something beautiful, to 'tell a musical story', improvising on a historical model becomes a dry and technical exercise.

### *New melodies on existing basses*

A transitional stage may be to invent new melodies on the basis of the reductions of selected Schubert waltzes. Historically, the idea of creating a new piece with the bass of an existing composition has its roots in eighteenth-century pedagogy, where it was a usual way to teach music-making. Friedrich Erhard Niedt also specifically applied the principle to dance music, showing how one simple bassline

[1022] For these recordings I again used a nineteenth-century Alexandre reed organ. These instruments allow the player to 'shape' a harmonic phrase and clearly express its gestural character; another advantage is that in this way a too familiar sound colour is avoided, while at the same time this instrument belongs to the 'sound of the nineteenth century'.

[1023] Even on monodic instruments, it is possible to play harmony (as Baillot showed, → chapter 9.4). In order to internalise the harmonic course through playing or even singing, the chords may for instance be arpeggiated. When several students are working together, one of them may perform the bass line while others play or sing the harmonic voices. Such ear-training exercises allow for many useful variations and extensions, which, however, fall outside the scope of this study. Since the natural focus of these groups of musicians tends to be on melodies rather than on harmony, the skill of imagining harmony often requires some 'catching up' and is therefore an important part of ear training.

[1024] It is essential not to skip the step of familiarisation with Schubert's waltzes (and possibly with dance music of contemporaries as well); after all, a living experience with a musical language is a prerequisite when one intends to produce something in the same idiom. Experiences with students from different backgrounds show that especially those who had been exposed to this style relatively early in their lives – for instance because this type of folk music is still alive in their home regions – turned out to be very capable of coming up with convincing music. For novices it is recommended to play attentively through many of such pieces, possibly also transposing them in order to really master the scores. For monodic instruments, it is very well possible to make an *à vue*-arrangement with an ensemble, based upon the piano score; each instrument will choose a part, for instance the melody line, the bass, a middle voice, etc.

could lead to the invention of a whole suite.[1025] It implies inventing a 'good' melody on the given harmony, and turning the harmonic basis into a stylistically convincing accompaniment. It should be noted that any unaccompanied upbeat is not shown in a reduction, since it is usually unharmonised; in reality, many dances (both Schubert's and from folk music) start with an upbeat, typically two or three eight notes, or one quarter.

It is important that everything happen in real time without stopping, so that the student learns to think of musical phrases as single gestures. When there are two pianos available in the room, it can be rewarding to play with two pianists at the same time, or to make them alternate by playing different versions of a waltz.

Experience shows that students to whom this style is relatively unfamiliar, and who are also unexperienced improvisers, may come up with somewhat disorientated melodies that show little coherence. At this stage it may be a good idea to return to (other) original Schubert waltzes as reference material. Just as Fink advised the performer to make his own cadenza first and afterwards compare it with Czerny's example (→ chapter 10.5b), it will be instructive for students first to acquire experience with their own waltzes and then to compare those with good originals, because their own attempts will have sharpened their ears and eyes. One of the things that may become clear in this way is that Schubert's compositions show that he was very economical with his motivic material. It is interesting that this insight alone often already leads towards much better melodies; the same thing goes for the observation that a melody with a good singing quality generally tends to move rather stepwise than by leaps. Here the importance of a sound realisation of the figured bass, and especially of good and smooth voice leading, becomes clear. After all, the analysis of scores shows that melodies in a huge variety of tonal styles tend to be based upon one of the harmonic voices from an underlying four-part texture, or on a successive combination of such voices (cf. chapter 4.6). This is because the basic idea of the so-called harmonic chord connection coincides with that of a cantabile melody: few leaps, a flowing line, and a good counterpoint with the bass.

An extra stylistic inspiration might come from the characteristic features of original folk dances as they were mentioned above. The incredible variety of Schubert's melodies might be too diverse to be of much direct use, but simple melodic principles as they were established for the different dance types can actually be quite inspiring. The fact that some of these models (notably the *Ländler*) were characterised by frequent arpeggiations (and therefore melodic leaps), does not at all conflict with what was written about a 'good' melody above. Triad arpeggiations in a melody often represent an ornamental level of activity; put differently, even when there are only arpeggiated chords in a melody

[1025] Niedt, F.E.: *Musicalische Handleitung zur Variation des General-Basses, samt einer Anweisung, wie man aus einem schlechten General-Bass allerley Sachen, als Praeludia, Ciaconen, Allemanden, etc erfinden könne.* Hamburg, 1721 (part 2, 2nd edition by Johann Mattheson).

like in a *Ländler*, there will still be a higher-level melodic structure that conforms to the melodic principles mentioned. In the *Deutsche* from Munich, for instance (quoted above), there is a hidden upper voice a – g – c# - d that definitely represents a melodic quality.

Monodic players and singers may use the recordings as an accompaniment, ask a fellow musician to accompany them, or (in the case of singers) accompany themselves at the keyboard. Incidentally, it might seem surprising to work on this type of improvisation with singers, since the repertoire seems to be typically instrumental. In folk music, however, it is by no means unusual to sing waltzes (above the level of the *Schnadahüpfl*, too), and Brahms's beautiful vocal waltzes were already mentioned above.

### *Improvising new waltzes*

The exercises and assignments that were discussed above may be seen as preparatory to the ultimate goal: freely improvising 'Biedermeier' dance music. This final section will therefore be relatively short. By becoming familiar with a large number of loci – not only with respect to harmony, but also melodic gestures, phrase structure, and dance movement[1026] – students will eventually be able to start 'speaking' actively the language of early-nineteenth-century Viennese dance music. Especially by internalising harmonic loci, in combination with the phrase structure, they will learn how to deal with many possible harmonic 'routes' that may be used within such a small form.

Pianists may be eager to explore exciting harmonic possibilities; for non-keyboardists, the situation is less simple. As I mentioned above, it is possible to play (or at least suggest) harmony on a monodic instrument as well; however, as Drouët wrote, arpeggiated chords are less effective and therefore need more time (→ chapter 9.8). This means that, within the concise frame of a waltz, it is advisable that singers, as well as wind or string instrumentalists, not be too ambitious concerning harmonic complexity while improvising. What they can do in terms of melodic inventiveness and expression, however, may arouse the jealousy of many a keyboard player.

[1026] Not to mention aspects that have not been discussed here, for instance the application of dissonances.

# Chapter 12. Playing with genres

## 12.1 Introduction: genre as a locus

Searching the internet for 'improvisation in the style of' results in a large number of hits on YouTube. Compositions and sometimes improvisations 'à la manière de', followed by the name of some popular composer, have become a fairly common phenomenon in classical music during the twentieth century, especially in less serious settings. Musical pastiches had already appeared during the nineteenth century (e.g., in Grieg's suite *Aus Holbergs Zeit*), but the explicit reference to the style of one specific composer seems to me something that occurred especially in the twentieth century, possibly starting with Alfred Casella's collection of pastiches *À la manière de...* op. 17 and 17*b*, which included two compositions by Ravel: *À la manière de Borodine* and *À la manière de Chabrier*.[1027] The Dutch pianist Harry Holtman became popular in the 1960's with musical performances, verging on a cabaret-like style, in which the audience was invited to provide themes and names of composers whose styles he would imitate in his piano improvisations.[1028] It is a type of musical humour that flourishes when there is a shared knowledge of the classical canon – and that demands a deep practical knowledge of this repertoire on the side of the performer. At a more serious level, the Swiss pianist Jean-Jacques Hauser used to include improvisations 'à la manière de...' in his recitals, while adopting his alter ego Antonej Sergejvitch Tartarov.[1029]

It is an approach that shows the twentieth- and twenty-first-century understanding of musical style as primarily a feature of a specific composer. Quite a different view was expressed in earlier centuries, where the focus in treatises and other writings was often rather on a style in general than on a particular composer. In the seventeenth century, for instance, Christoph Bernhard distinguished between different musical styles such as the *stylus antiquus* or *ecclesiasticus*, the *stylus luxurians* and the *stylus theatralis*. Bernhard explicitly connects the use of specific musico-rhetorical 'figures' (*Figuren*) and other compositional techniques with a particular style.[1030] Even in the eighteenth century, such general styles were still distinguished, especially the church style and the theatrical style. It would be a natural thing for a Baroque composer to apply different styles according to the needs of situations; the work of Johann Sebastian Bach, who famously also combined features of different national styles, is a good example. 'Improvising in the style of Bach' therefore is in the end a claim that is very hard to fulfil.

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[1027] An exception is Clementi's collection of 'preludes and cadences' in the style of different composers (→ chapter 10.4), which, however, primarily focuses on a specific genre.
[1028] https://youtu.be/6Vc-zoDX9i4
[1029] www.tartarov.ch
[1030] Bartel, D.: *Handbuch der musikalischen Figurenlehre.* Laaber, 1985; 37-42.

During the Baroque period, another factor had become of fundamental importance: musical genre.[1031] The last chapter of Johann Joachim Quantz's *Versuch*, for instance, is entitled 'Wie ein Musikus und eine Musik zu beurtheylen sey' [how a musician and a piece of music are to be assessed]; here he outlines what is to be expected concerning various types of pieces, or in the terminology of this study, genres. In the realm of instrumental music he distinguishes, for instance, between the concerto, the overture, the symphony, the quartet and the trio. Each genre is subdivided and presented in great practical detail. The first *allegro* movement of a concerto, for example, should differ from an *adagio* movement with respect to key, form, type of melody and, of course, tempo. In a trio (Quantz writes about the Baroque trio sonata here), the opening 'theme' (Quantz doesn't use this term) should be not too long in order to avoid *Überdruß* [boredom] when it is imitated by the other voice – and so on.[1032] Just as it is the task of a carpenter to make a good piece of furniture, it is the task of a musician to make a piece of music that fulfils the expectations of both peers and audience.

It is generally acknowledged that this view did not fit in with the nineteenth-century understanding of music as an art. The cliché of the Romantic genius, creating immortal and unique art works, is still influential today, both with respect to how we tend to see the nineteenth century, and how we look at our own time. As musicologist Michael Talbot has argued, post-1800 music can be characterised as composer-centred, involving a shift of focus in which the rise of the 'work-concept' (Lydia Goehr) is to be seen as a consequence, rather than as its cause.[1033] Whereas it is assumed that a Baroque musician such as Bach saw himself as a kind of craftsman, this is surely a qualification that would have displeased many a composer from the period central to this study; even Ferand still uses the term pejoratively when he refers to nineteenth-century organ improvisation (→ chapter 1.1).

Nonetheless, I argue in this chapter that the understanding of musical genres as described by Quantz had a very long life during the nineteenth century, though the genres themselves obviously might have changed. Several examples have already played a role in this study: the song without words in chapter 2, preludes and cadenzas in chapters 9 and 10, and dance forms as discussed in chapter 11. Bel canto music (chapter 4) definitely shows genre-specific features as well, for instance in the use of cabalettas. Even within the context of the Romantic genius cult, the idea of genre as a generator of musical production may have remained of influence for a long time. In this chapter, I will show that

[1031] The term 'genre' is sometimes used in a very general way, for instance when 'chamber music' or 'opera' are called genres; in this study, the more specific meaning applies.

[1032] Quantz, J.J.: *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen.* Berlin, 1752; facsimile reprint Kassel, 1997; 275-334.

[1033] Talbot, M.: 'The Work-Concept and Composer-Centredness'. In: Talbot, M. (ed.): *The Musical work: Reality or Invention?* Liverpool, 2000; 168-186.

genres have also been a very important source of inspiration for extempore music-making, and that they may still play this role today when it comes to 'historically inspired improvisation'.

To many, the term 'genre' as applied here might have lost much of its relevance today. This is understandable in the light of the *Urtext*-paradigm. When music-making is reduced to the performance of scores, and with a score-dependent attitude, it is logical that musical genres are taken for granted. Quantz primarily wrote for creators of new music, not for performers of existing compositions! In music theory, it is rather musical form that has become the focus of attention. I argue, however, that when we look at nineteenth-century music with the eyes of an improviser, a genre-centred approach becomes much more relevant, and in addition deepens the understanding of composed music.

Genre as a concept distinguishes itself by being multifaceted. The genre 'waltz' involves much more than just the well-known oom-pah-pah rhythm; it implies characteristics concerning phrase construction, melodic shape, form and harmonic development – to mention just aspects that have been discussed in the previous chapter. To a musician who wants to make a new waltz, the genre is like a guiding principle that serves as a *Fundgrube* for musical ideas. In the terminology proposed by this study: it is a locus communis. In the previous chapters, loci on different levels have been examined: from the detailed level of ornamental patterns (→ chapter 9.6) and the higher level of dance rhythms (→ chapter 11), to the more overarching level of phrase construction (→ chapter 4.5) and harmonic structures such as cadences and sequences (→ chapter 9.5). Though these loci work on different musical parameters, they share the characteristic of acting as 'guiding principles', as sources of invention that prompt concrete musical ideas. Genre, I argue, is such a locus communis, too – but on an even higher level. The genre 'waltz' guides improvisers (or composers) in their musical choices; it creates expectations, and includes a multitude of 'lower-level' loci as mentioned above.

This is not to deny the importance of the nineteenth-century composer- or artist-centredness. However, I argue that thinking in genres may be seen as the background against which the Romantic emphasis on artistic personality flourished. It is in the dialectic of genre-centredness and composer-centredness that the Kant-based idea of genius as an artist who makes his own rules manifests itself. The nineteenth-century genius musician was also a craftsman.

In this chapter, the focus will be on musical genre as a locus, and thus on the supra-personal aspect of craftsmanship. It consists of three main parts. In sections 12.2-12.5, I will follow in detail Carl Czerny's unique account of early-nineteenth-century piano improvisation, understood as an enumeration of fashionable genres. I will compare his explanations with other texts, by Czerny himself as well as Adolf Bernhard Marx. The descriptions of genres in this section may seem unnecessarily detailed for the purpose of proving the point mentioned above. However, since this

study also aims to provide a basis for historically inspired improvisations, such a dictionary of genres may be useful to anyone who is interested in following this path. Though Czerny's own compositions have faded into oblivion, I will show how his ideas are also relevant for a composition that has always been considered a classical masterwork: Franz Schubert's *Wandererfantasie.*

In the second part (section 12.6), I will examine to what extent genre still played a role in the late nineteenth century; the focus will be on improvisations that were recorded in the early years of the recording era. The third part (section 12.6) analyses a recording of a sonata that I improvised in 2013. I will show that here, too, genre-specific loci are a valuable way to describe the course of the music.

To conclude this introduction, the focus on craftsmanship might raise the suspicion that idiomatic improvisation as described here resembles 'colouring within the lines'. However, the idea of this chapter is not to give a complete historical analysis of nineteenth-century forms of piano improvisation, but to provide historical information that can help create 'stepping stones' towards historically inspired improvisation. In that sense, the idea of applying genre-centred thinking to the nineteenth century seems worth emphasising because it forms an indispensable basis for such improvisation. But most importantly, like all loci, genre is not a limitation, but a catalyst of fantasy.

## 12.2 Czerny's fantasy on one theme

### *Czerny's Anleitung: 'genuine, fantasy-like improvisation'*

The first three chapters of Carl Czerny's *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* op. 200, dealing with various types of preludes and with cadenzas, were already discussed in chapters 9 and 10 of this study. The remainder of his book describes various forms of *das wirkliche, selbständige Fantasieren (Improvisieren)* [the genuine, full-fledged, fantasy-like improvisation]. Czerny's taxonomy is as follows:

- Improvising on a single theme (chapter 4)
- Freer improvisation on several themes (chapter 5)
- The potpourri (chapter 6)
- Variations (chapter 7)
- Improvising in the strict and fugal style (chapter 8)
- The capriccio (chapter 9).

In this section (12.2), I will discuss Czerny's chapter 4 in detail; this is the chapter that contains most definitions of genres and that will therefore be of central importance to this study. The other chapters will be discussed successively in sections 12.3 through 12.5; the fugue, however, is elaborated as an

example of genres (section 12.2), and the capriccio will be mentioned briefly at the end of section 12.6.

Upon cursory reading, Czerny mainly seems to give many written examples, leaving the modern reader only the option of performing scores instead of being inspired to improvise. In reality, however, Czerny takes much trouble to make the reader a co-creator by indicating alternative solutions in footnotes – for instance, 'Auch hier noch längere Durchführung und Modulationen, auch Gesangstellen'[1034] [here also, even lengthier development and modulatory material as well as thematic material[1035]]. In order to take advantage of Czerny's book, it will neither be a good idea to try to improvise 'in the style of' Czerny, nor even to treat the example compositions as unique pieces that should be imitated. As for the first approach, even an early-nineteenth-century musician such as Czerny still consciously applies and distinguishes between different styles, which he calls the *brillanter Stil* [brilliant style] and the *ernster Stil* [serious style]. He even mentions a *gebundener und fugirter Stil*[1036] [contrapuntal style]. It was the tragedy of Czerny's reputation as a composer that he published almost exclusively commissioned compositions in the then popular brilliant style, while many more serious pieces remained in his desk drawer; most of them were never published at all.[1037]

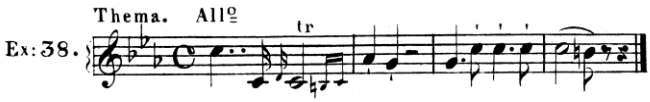
### *Improvising on a single theme: the improvisor as an orator*

In my view, an aspiring improviser will be much more successful when he acknowledges the importance of genre-specific loci in Czerny's book. The fourth chapter, 'Vom Fantasieren über ein einzelnes Thema' [Concerning improvisation on a single theme], seems to take the student's awareness of genres for granted, but mentions them nonetheless while discussing the adaptation of raw thematic material to different musical circumstances. Czerny lists a number of 'auf dem Pianoforte übliche Gattungen' [genres that are familiar for the pianoforte], and shows how a short motivic passage can be adapted to each genre. This does not contradict the idea of a locus as a *Fundgrube* for musical ideas: the motivic material is abstracted to such an extent that it functions at the most as a melodic skeleton. As I mentioned in chapter 3.4, Czerny compares the player with an orator. Just as an orator must possess a thorough knowledge of many topics, an improviser should not only know his harmony, but also be familiar with important compositions 'aller Zeiten' [from all periods], and moreover with contemporary popular tunes (especially opera arias). According to Czerny, both verbal and musical improvisation happen almost unconsciously to a certain extent, as if in a dream (today one might say in a flow); nevertheless the player has to adhere to his plan,

[1034] Czerny op. 200; 47.
[1035] Czerny op. 200, transl. Mitchell; 56.
[1036] Czerny op. 200; 100.
[1037] Cf. Biba, O.: 'Carl Czerny – Januskopf?' In: Loesch, H. von (ed.): *Carl Czerny: Komponist, Pianist, Pädagoge*. Mainz, [2009]; 1-31.

especially when he intends to develop a given theme. If not, he will lapse into a 'rhapsodische, unverständliche Trockenheit' [rhapsodic, incromprehensible tediousness] or an 'überflüssiges, breites Ausspinnen' [overabundantly broad spinning out[1038]]. Czerny's text shows that the possibilities of development reside in the existing musical genres.[1039]

An interesting question is what exactly Czerny means by the word *Thema* [theme]. From his examples, it becomes clear that the term does not refer here to a full-fledged theme, such as a first or second theme in a sonata form, or in a variation cycle. The 'theme' Czerny chooses as a point of departure is rather a fragment, in fact quite a bit like the 'incipit' from chapter 2.[1040]




*Example 12.2.1*

The idea that an improviser, virtually a musical orator, grasps such a fragment and develops it into an extended fantasia recalls a passage in Johann Peter Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe.* In January 1826, a German *improvisatore*, 'Dr. Wolff' from Hamburg, visits the elderly Goethe in Weimar. Oskar Ludwig Bernhard Wolff was the best-known German improvising poet, the first one to imitate Italian celebrities in the German language.[1041] As a theme (*Aufgabe*), Goethe gives him 'his return to Hamburg'. Goethe is impressed by Wolff's performance, but criticises what he calls his subjectivity. The theme, very general and unspecified in itself, would have given cause for many 'loci communes', for instance, connected with the character of Hamburg as a city. In Goethe's words:

> Was ist (...) Hamburg für eine ausgezeichnete, eigenartige Stadt, und welch ein reiches Feld für die speziellsten Schilderungen bot sich ihm dar, wenn er das Objekt gehörig zu ergreifen gewußt und gewagt hätte![1042]
>
> [What a remarkable, peculiar city is Hamburg! And what a rich field was offered him for the most minute description, if he had known or ventured to take hold of the subject properly![1043]]

Instead Wolff doesn't take advantage of the possibilities the theme offers (at least in Goethe's eyes), and seems to have indulged in the emotions the idea of the return aroused in him, something that could have occurred in any city: a commonplace in the negative sense, one might say. In a similar

[1038] Czerny op. 200, transl. Mitchell; 43.
[1039] Czerny op. 200; 36.
[1040] Czerny op. 200; 37.
[1041] Esterhammer, A.: *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750-1850.* Cambridge, 2008; 178.
[1042] Eckermann, J.P.: *Gespräche mit Goethe.* Weimar, 1913; 164.
[1043] Oxenford, J. (trans.): *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret* (vol. 1). London, 1850; 281.

way, Czerny's theme (in fact also an *Aufgabe*) should be adhered to because its application to several genres will 'offer rich fields' for musical ideas.

### *Czerny on form*

In the introduction to his *School of Practical Composition* op. 600 (1848),[1044] Czerny elaborates on the importance of genres ('species') and on the question of how the application of pre-existing genres relates to originality. It is a passage that also applies to improvisation and is moreover highly relevant for modern discussions about the artistic value of improvisation in historical styles; the passage is quoted in full here.

> *To compose* signifies, in a musical sense, to invent pieces, which, in respect to their ideas and the development of the same, are *new*, and consequently different from all others previously existing. A piece which possesses these properties is, therefore, *an original composition.*
>
> But, in order to become a regular musical piece, these ideas and their development must assume a determinate *form*, and the composition must therefore belong to a *species* already in existence: consequently, in *this* respect, no originality is, in general, necessary. For, if we compose a *Rondo*, for example, it must, in regard to its construction, have the same form and conduct, as all pieces of this species which have been hitherto written, otherwise it would not be a Rondo.
>
> A piece must therefore possess the three following properties, if it would aspire to the character of a composition:
>
> 1st Its ideas and figures must be original, and at the same time also beautiful and effective.
>
> 2dly It must observe all the rules of pure composition. And,
>
> 3dly It must have the regular form and construction which are stipulated by the species to which it belongs, and which, since the birth of modern music, have been established by the works of all good masters.
>
> As to originality and beauty, both these depend on the talent of the author, and on the diligence and sound sense with which he employs the same.
>
> The composer must betimes devote the most zealous assiduity to the study of the theory of music, so as to imbue himself not only with the terms but also with the spirit thereof; and that so completely until it becomes to him, as it were, second nature. Not less important, however, is the art of duly disposing his ideas, and of giving to pieces that form which answers to their object, and makes them appear clear and interesting to the hearers.

[1044] The English translation by John Bishop was published prior to the German text; the latter was considered lost for a long time, which is why the English translation is regarded as the first edition. For this reason, I will quote from the English edition. (Scheideler, U. & Wörner, F. (eds.): *Lexikon Schriften über Musik; Band 1: Musiktheorie von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart.* Kassel, 2017; 106.)

> These forms are by no means of mere arbitrary creation: they were invented, improved, and extended by degrees, and in the course of time, by distinguished geniuses; and the approbation and acknowledgement of a refined world, through several generations, have stamped them with the seal of imperishableness. They depend as much on natural laws, as those rules by which the painter must dispose his groups and figures, the architect his pillars and columns, and the poet the incidents of his narration or his drama.
>
> The extension or entire abolition of these regular limits, could only be permitted even to the greatest genius, after he had sufficiently exercised himself in the same, and become accomplished therein. But even in this case it is always a hazardous undertaking for the composer, as the present age, in the first instance, and afterwards futurity, decides whether these innovations are actually to be considered of real advantage to the art.[1045]

Czerny's text gives the impression of verbally preluding on the later nineteenth-century discipline of *Formenlehre*. In 1832, he published a translation of Anton Reicha's *Traité de haute composition musicale* (1824 / 1826) in a bilingual edition; Reicha's view on musical form, and especially Czerny's translation of crucial terms, foreshadow what would become the focus of twentieth-century controversies surrounding the topic of *Formenlehre*:

> OBSERVATIONS GENERALES SUR LES COUPES, CADRES OU DIMENSIONS MELODIQUES La coupe est le *patron* de la Mélodie et d'un morceau de Musique en général.[1046]
>
> [General observations concerning 'cuts', frames or melodic dimensions / The cut is the model of the melody and of a musical piece in general.]

> ALLGEMEINE BEMERKUNGEN ÜBER DIE RAHMEN, UMKREISE ODER MELODISCHEN AUSDEHNUNGEN Der Rahmen (Umkreis) ist die *Form* (oder so zu sagen *die Hülse*) der Melodie und eines jeden Musikstückes im allgemeinen.[1047]
>
> [General observations concerning the frames, outlines or melodic dimensions / The frame (outline) is the form (as it were the container) of the melody and of every musical piece in general.]

This sense of musical 'form' as a container that has to be filled with 'content' was to become problematic, in particular for the development of sonata-form theory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even an early-twentieth-century book like Marcel Dupré's *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue* (→ chapter 13.4 and 13.5.) seems to reinforce this idea. In defence of

[1045] Czerny, C.: *School of Practical Composition* op. 600, vol. I. London, 1848; 1-2.
[1046] Reicha, A.: *Traité de haute composition musicale* (trans. C. Czerny). Wien, 1832; 477.
[1047] Ibidem.

Czerny, however, it should be emphasised that both his translation and his own composition treatise are not meant to be music-analytical works: their focus is on explaining how to create new music. A revaluation of musical genre avoids such problems; after all, the idea of form as a container is not conveyed in the French original, where it rather seems to be seen as the 'appearance' of a piece of music. I deem it likely that this was also Czerny's intention, given the fact that in his translation he adds two equivalents to the original text, as if he is attempting a description of something for which no precise words exist. If we acknowledge that both Reicha and Czerny connect with the eighteenth-century tradition in which musical genres are loci communes or *Fundgruben* for musical ideas, Czerny's description of musical 'species' is to be seen as an invitation to musical creation, rather than as a pedantic systematism.

### *Czerny compared with Marx*

In addition, the reference to Kant in Czerny's remarks about musical species being developed and changed only by 'geniuses' reveals that this nineteenth-century text was still firmly rooted in the late eighteenth century. The almost contemporary and highly influential *Kompositionslehre* (1837-1847) of Adolf Bernhard Marx provides an interesting contrast to Czerny by giving a more modern and organicist view on musical form.[1048] A discussion of this difference would lie outside the limits of this study. However, the short section Marx dedicates to 'Die Kunst der freien Fantasie' [the art of free fantasy] is particularly interesting in relation to the topic of improvisation. He emphasises the role improvising can play in developing a mastery of the content of his book: improvisation is primarily treated as a *Kompositionsübung* [exercise in composing].

> Für Melodisirung und Rhythmisirung giebt der Lehrgang Gesetz und Anleitung. Auch die Uebung mag schriftlich beginnen. Aber zur Fortsetzung dieser Uebung, bis Geläufigkeit und ein gewisser Reichthum an Gestaltungen erlangt ist, bietet sich bei der Leichtigkeit der Aufgaben die Improvisation als günstigste Form. Mehr Aufwand, als einmalige Darstellung am Instrumente, sind die einzelnen Gestaltungen nicht werth, oder man kann sie hinterdrein besonders notiren. Nicht die einzelnen Gebilde, sondern die Kraft und Gewandtheit im Bilden sind das Werthvolle.[1049]
>
> [This method gives an introduction to and rules for building melodies and rhythms. Here as well, the first exercises may be written. But when the exercises are to be continued until the student gains fluency and a certain richness in his creations, improvisation will be the most fortunate way to deal with the easier assignments. Such creations don't deserve more effort than a one-off realisation on the instrument, or else one may notate them separately afterwards. What is valuable are not the individual creations, but rather potency and skillfulness in the act of creating.]

[1048] Marx, A.B.: *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, 4 Bände. Leipzig, 1837-1847.
[1049] Marx, A.B.: op. cit., Buch 2; 463.

Incidentally, Marx does not suggest that this should count as 'real' improvisation:

> Ist nun dies Alles "freie Fantasie"? – Keineswegs. Es sind nur Vorübungen, die der glücklichen Stunde freien Schaffens, wenn sie später schlägt, zu Statten kommen.[1050]
>
> [Now, is all this 'free improvisation'? – Not at all. These are just preliminary exercises, which may come in useful when the fortunate hour of free creation has come.]

Nevertheless, improvising occurs for him in the context of a composer-centred view on music-making. The great improvisers whom Marx mentions are also famous composers: Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. Even their 'extraordinary' achievements in the field of improvisation are presented as a means to heighten their powers of creation (*Schöpferkraft*).[1051] As I have shown in chapter 8.3, this is a topos in nineteenth-century thinking about improvisation. Besides, the fact that Marx does not aspire to teach improvisation up to this high artistic level is hardly surprising, since his pretensions in the field of composing are relatively modest:

> Endlich soll man stets eingedenk bleiben, dass es nicht der nächste Zweck der Kompositionslehre ist, Komponisten herzustellen, - das geschieht auf absonderlichen Wegen, - sondern: höhere Kunstbildung zu verbreiten. Sie wirke dann, wie und wozu sie kann.[1052]
>
> [Finally one should always remember that the first goal of this composition method is not to produce composers – this happens in peculiar ways – but to disseminate elevated *Bildung* in art. Let it then work according to its capability.]

This last remark is not without relevance for the modern debate about higher music education, either; the fact that this is very often exclusively framed as 'professional training' cannot always be reconciled with the sinuous developments – indeed *auf absonderlichen Wegen* – successful careers tend to take in real life.[1053]

The difference between Marx and Czerny concerns the presentation of the material and the level of philosophical reflection. However, Marx's approach does not contradict the fundamental importance of musical genres. Czerny's op. 600 might even have been influenced by Marx's book, as seen in the identical and somewhat peculiar example of Mozart's piano sonata *à quatre mains* KV 381 that both books give when sonata form is discussed: Czerny reduces the piece to a two-hand

[1050] Marx, A.B.: op. cit., Buch 2; 464.
[1051] Marx, A.B.: op. cit., Buch 2; 459.
[1052] Marx, A.B.: op. cit., Buch 2; 464.
[1053] Ludwig Holtmeier has shown that Marx, self-taught in the field of music, never received the thorough practical education Czerny assumed. It is not clear to which type of reader the *Kompositionslehre* is addressed, but Marx's teaching at the university of Berlin took place in the form of academic lectures that had a theoretical focus. Marx was averse to the idea that a composition could be based on models and craftsmanship: for him, it should be the product of 'artistry'. Holtmeier, L.: 'Feindliche Übernahme: Gottfried Weber, Adolf Bernhard Marx und die bürgerliche Harmonielehre des 19. Jahrhunderts'. *Musik und Ästhetik*, Jahrgang 16, Heft 63 (2012); 5-25.

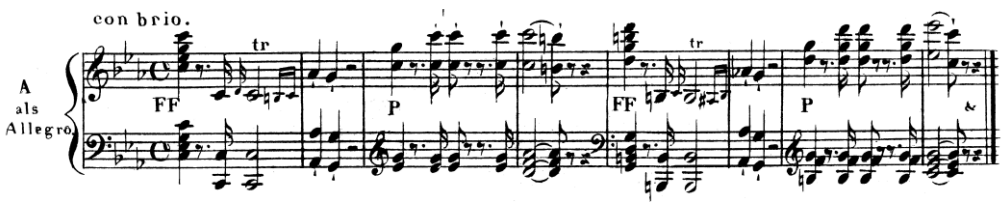
version, while Marx gives a one-staff reduction. Marx presents his example in the context of his slightly problematic distinction between sonata and sonatina form; Czerny also mentions the word sonatina in relation to this sonata, though unlike Marx, he doesn't develop this distinction.[1054] In addition, Czerny's mentioning of the piano etude as a genre was probably influenced by Marx. A notable difference between the two books is the very strong focus on form in Marx, whereas Czerny rather tends to mention many aspects of each genre. For this reason, Marx's approach was seen as formalistic by later generations (the reception of Czerny's op. 600 was very limited); I would argue, however, that the 'horizon' of his *Kompositionslehre* was characterised by the evidence of musical genres, which Marx might have taken for granted; the originality of Marx's book is in the organicist view on form, but this does not imply that contemporaries would have forgotten about genres while reading it. To later generations, this background might have been less evident.

### *Examples of genres*

Let us return to the fourth chapter of Czerny's op. 200, where the author demonstrates how the theme mentioned above can be used for music in different genres. As an exercise, still valuable today, Czerny recommends proceeding similarly with any motif the student might come across[1055] – the simpler the theme is, the more possibilities it offers. As an alternative to the theme mentioned above, he gives an extreme example that consists of only three notes: *A*, *B und C* (A, B-flat and C), and uses this combination as an opening motif.[1056] This is precisely how Robert Schumann built the theme (the term is used in the traditional sense here) of his Abegg-variations op. 1 on the letters of the surname Abegg; the piece was published in 1831.

The following discussion surveys the different genres that Czerny illustrated under the inspiration of his C-minor theme, along with the *A-B-C* theme where relevant:

a. *Allegro (ungefähr, wie das erste Stück einer Sonate)* [Allegro (more or less as the first movement of a sonata)]:

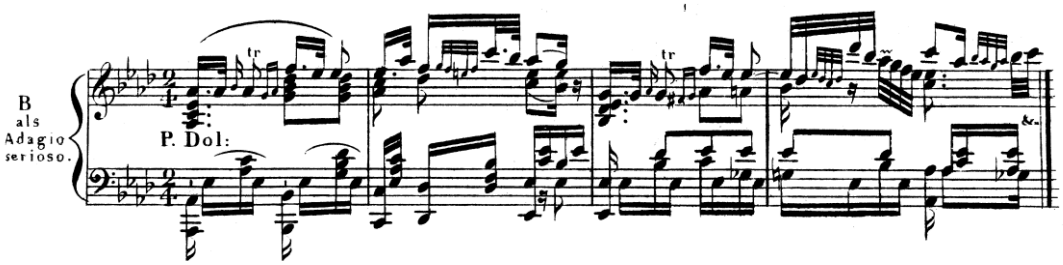



*Example 12.2.2*

[1054] Czerny op. 600 I; 37.
[1055] Czerny op. 200; 42.
[1056] Czerny op. 200; 39.

Here the theme appears virtually unaltered. Today, the sonata form is primarily understood as a more abstract formal principle that manifested itself in many guises at that time, even in slow movements. It seems, however, that Czerny had a specific kind of music in mind that he connected with this type of movement. This assumption is not directly supported by Czerny's own description of the first movement of a sonata in his *School of Practical Composition* op. 600, where he writes that the 'commencement' (i.e. the first theme) may be either 'soft and melodious' or, 'on the contrary, strongly marked'.[1057] Marx, however, who coins the term *Sonatenform* in his *Kompositionslehre*, emphasises the 'elevated form' (*höhere Form*) of the first sonata movement, which calls for a *tiefere Bedeutung* [deeper meaning] of the thematic material; this material should be suitable for remodeling and development.[1058] Czerny also starts his explanation of sonatas in his op. 600 with the qualification of the sonata as the most important form of composition.[1059] Thus it seems that the combination of a serious, elevated character and the expected presence of motivic cells in the first theme suffices to suggest a musical locus. This idea might have led to the common characterisation of the first theme as masculine, and the second theme (*Gesangsthema*) as feminine – a designation that has fallen into disuse, for understandable reasons.

b. *Adagio (im ernsthaften Styl)* [Adagio (in the serious style)]:

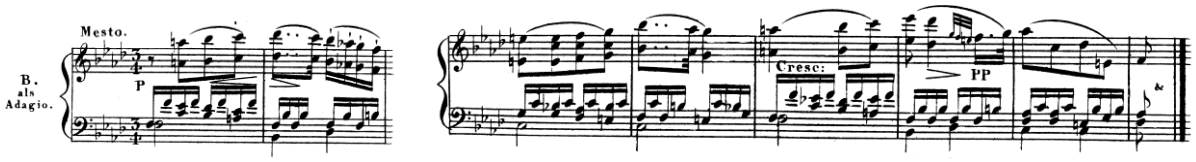



*Example 12.2.3*

The theme has already undergone considerable changes here: the example is in the major mode, and the most striking motivic difference is the omission of the characteristic octave leap at the beginning. Incidentally, the latter is the case in almost all examples that are derived from this theme.

For the '*A-B-C* theme', Czerny gives an Adagio-example as well:[1060]

[1057] Czerny, op. 600 I; 34.
[1058] Marx, A.B.: op. cit., Band 3 (1845); 214.
[1059] Czerny op. 600 I; 33.
[1060] Czerny op. 200; 39.

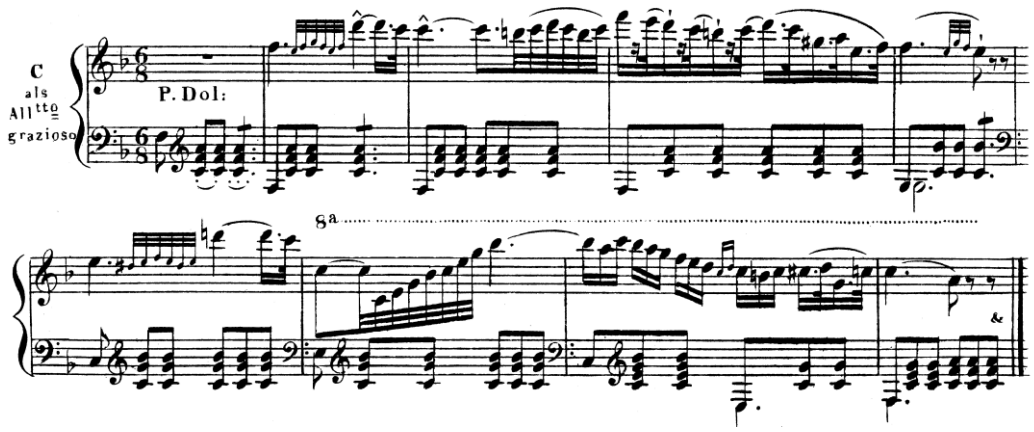



*Example 12.2.4*

Both examples are in 2/4 (the 3/4 indication in the second example is a mistake) and show a rather rich texture; chord changes often occur every eighth note, and the expressive melody is in the right hand, sometimes in octaves. In op. 600 Czerny quotes, as an example of an 'Adagio in the serious style', the *Largo* from Clementi's piano sonata op. 12 no. 2, which fits the same characteristics (except for its triple meter). He writes:

> It is no easy matter to compose a long Adagio, which shall maintain an equal degree of interest throughout. The slow [sic] usually soon becomes wearisome and fatiguing; and in order to avoid this, an adagio must either distinguish itself by its grand ideas and modulations, or by charming and expressive melodies, or else by very elegant and tasteful embellishments; and there are Adagios, which very happily combine all these properties.[1061]

c. *Allegretto grazioso (einfach, oder mit Verzierungen in der galanten Schreibart)* [Allegretto grazioso (unadorned, or with embellishments in the galant style)]:

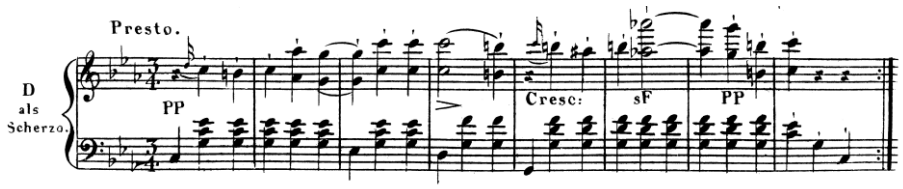



*Example 12.2.5*

The chosen 6/8 metre may exemplify for Czerny this type of elegant Allegretto. The harmonic rhythm is very slow, with up to four bars on one chord; the example only has tonic and dominant harmonies, which suggests a strong focus on primary harmonies throughout the piece. The simple structure of the accompaniment in repeated chords contributes to the impression of uncomplicated naturalness. The right hand plays a single line, and is thus free to add brilliant ornamentation at will. The texture slightly resembles that of a bel canto aria.

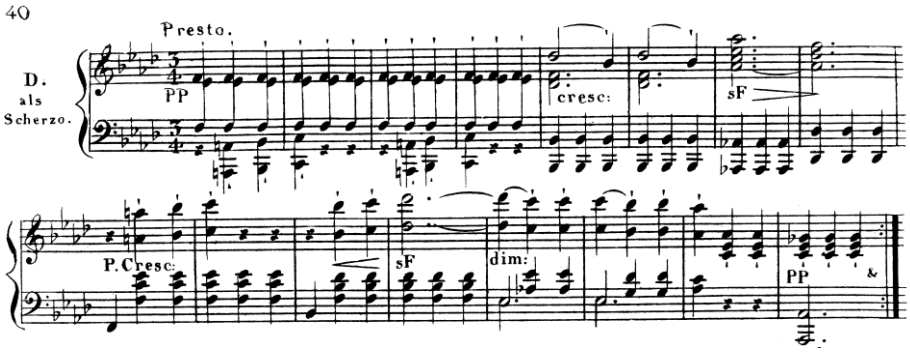
[1061] Czerny op. 600 I; 58.

d. *Scherzo Presto (à Capriccio)* [Scherzo presto (à capriccio)]:




*Example 12.2.6*

The *A-B-C* pendant goes as follows:




*Example 12.2.7*

Even more than the previous loci, this one shows the influence of Beethoven. The use of repeated staccato chords is remarkably consistent. The *à capriccio* element probably resides in the sudden differences in dynamics, and (in the second example) in unexpected modulations. The harmonic rhythm is slow.

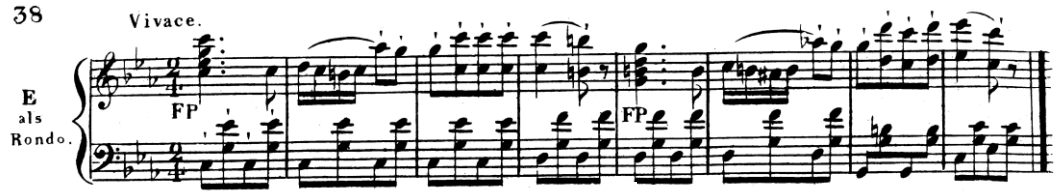
e. *Rondo vivace*:

In his *School of practical composition*, Czerny writes about the character of the Rondo genre:

> In regard to its character, the Rondo is exceedingly varied. There is the *Rondo pastorale*, *Rondo sentimentale*, *Rondo militaire*, *Rondo alla Polacca*, *Rondo di Walze*, *Rondo en Galoppe* &c. In the latter cases, the theme of the Rondo must consist of a corresponding national dance-tune, and, throughout its principal parts, remain true to the character of the same. In the chapter treating on dance music, will be found the necessary particulars concerning the peculiarities of each kind of dance.
>
> There are, moreover, Rondos founded on some nationality, as the *Rondo espagnol*, *Rondo russe* &c. In such cases, the principal subject must actually comprise national melodies answering to the title, or we must be able to impart to the ideas of our own invention, the form and peculiarity of such melodies.
>
> In grand Rondos, it is generally of good effect if a Coda in a different, and quick degree of movement be added at the end: for a lively and transporting conclusion always imparts an increased interest to compositions either of a brilliant or of a characteristic kind. For such a Coda we employ either the

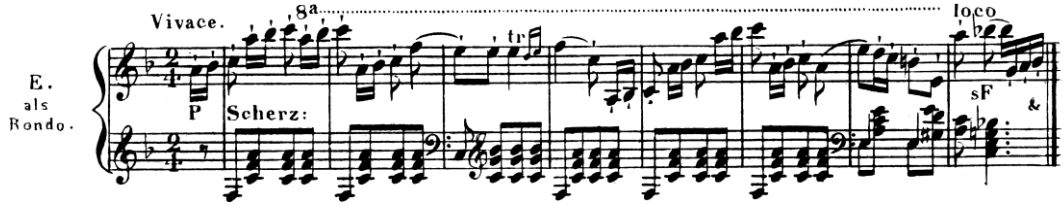
> principal subject in a quicker degree of movement, or content ourselves with brilliant figures, transient modulations, powerful chords, and the like.[1062]

Czerny introduces many sub-genres here. The 'chapter treating on dance music' will be discussed below; the remark about the 'form and peculiarity' of folk melodies that should be 'imparted to the ideas of our own invention' clearly expresses the consciousness of melodic loci that are inspiring new ideas. The Rondos in the *Anleitung* are not so varied:




*Example 12.2.8*

The *A-B-C* rondo has a similar appearance:




*Example 12.2.9*

The genre Czerny demonstrates here might be called the 'rondo brillant'; its movement resembles the *Écossaise* and its joyful and appealing melody over a harmonically simple accompaniment invites brilliant passage work. Many composed rondos such as Chopin's op. 1 or the finale of his *First Piano Concerto* op. 11 are of the same type. The last movement of Czerny's own *Piano Concerto* op. 214 is such a brilliant rondo as well.

Though Czerny does not actually mention it, the four genres a, b, d and e may together form a complete sonata according to the classical model.

f. *Polacca*:

The *polacca* (polonaise) had already occurred in Baroque dance suites and was very popular in salons. In his op. 600, Czerny writes:

> The Polonaise (*Polish dance*) resembles the Minuet, it having the same time, degree of movement, number of bars, and even similar modulations. But there are certain little figures which form its national peculiarity; and this especially happens in the *last* bar of each part, where the cadence must be so

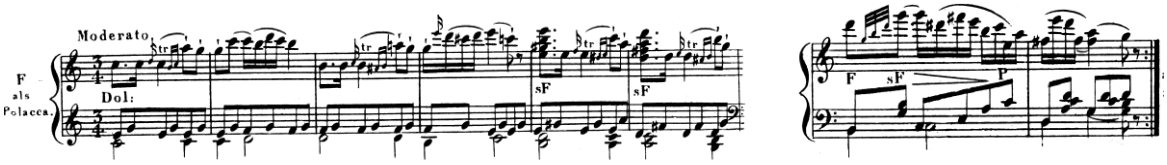
[1062] Czerny op. 600 I, 76-77.

constituted, that the first two crotchets of the bar shall occur on the dominant seventh, and the third crotched on the tonic. For example:

*Example 12.2.10*

The character of the Polonaise may be either sentimental, or heroic, and its form gives occasion to very pleasing and gentle, or piquant ideas.[1063]

In this description, Czerny does not mention the characteristic rhythm on the first beat, familiar from many nineteenth-century polonaises, especially Chopin's (dotted eighth note plus sixteenth, or eight note plus two sixteenths). The examples in the composition treatise and in the *Anleitung* indeed show an accompaniment that consists of oscillating eight notes, over which an elegant melody unfolds. The typical *Polonaise* rhythm is not present in the accompaniment, and only superficially in the melody. The general impression is one of elegance and smoothness:

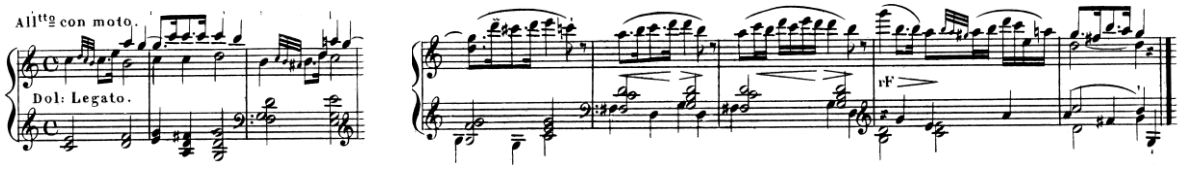



*Example 12.2.11*

This type of *Polonaise* quite strongly contrasts with the famous compositions of Chopin, who imbued the genre with a nationalistic, heroic and sometimes brusque feel.

g. *Thema zu Variationen* [Theme for variations]:

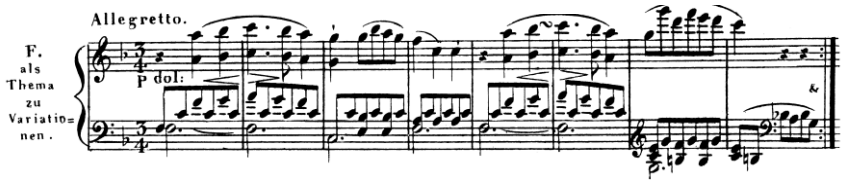
In chapter 7 of op. 200, Czerny writes that a theme (in the elaborate sense) that serves as a basis for a set of variations should be melodious, with few modulations, rhythmically simple and symmetrical in form.[1064] His example, which is based on the C-minor fragment, corresponds to the first half of such a binary form in the major mode:




*Example 12.2.12*

[1063] Czerny, op. 600 I, 104.
[1064] Czerny, op. 200, 94.

The same applies to the example with the *A-B-C* motif:




*Example 12.2.13*

h. *Als Fuga* [as a fugue]:

Czerny moulds the C-minor theme into two different fugue subjects in different metres, and proceeds similarly with the *A-B-C* motif. This concerns the so-called *gebundener und fugirter Styl* [strict and fugal style]. In chapter 8 of op. 200, Czerny discusses this type of improvising in detail, distinguishing three subspecies of the polyphonic style that culminate in the fugue.[1065] The first one, *durch viele nach einander folgende Accorde und daraus entstehende Modulationen* [through a succession of many chords and modulations generated through these], is 'reasonably attainable only on the organ'[1066] when the improvisation is to be more developed in length. Nevertheless, Czerny's illustration of this type is for the piano; it is a short polyphonic piece in 4 to 5 voices. There is no subject, and there are no imitations; moreover, the passage contains only evaded cadences. Sometimes sonorous octave doublings occur. It is hard to tell which locus communis is presented here; an example from composed literature that jumps to mind is the middle part of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Pièce d'Orgue* BWV 572. Other composed examples are not numerous, unless one thinks of Italian *Toccate per l'elevatione*, as found in Girolamo Frescobaldi's *Fiori musicali*. Possibly such compositions represented an improvisational tradition that still existed in Czerny's days.

The second subspecies is similar, but contains imitations: *Durch Imitationen, indem man irgend eine Figur in allen Stimmen, Lagen und Octaven wiederhohlt* [through imitations, in which one repeats some sort of figure in all voices, positions and octave ranges]. The example piece somewhat resembles Baroque keyboard fantasias, though the voices enter almost simultaneously. Probably because of its more lively rhythm, Czerny deems this genre suitable for both piano and organ.

Finally, the third species is the proper fugue, in which Czerny distinguishes between a free and a strict style (without explanation). The eighth chapter includes a very lively *fughetta* in 3/4, with continuous and rather dense three-part writing. It is in a brisk tempo (72 bpm for the dotted half note), with eight notes throughout and often two chords per bar. Considering the length of the subject (8 bars), improvising such a piece is certainly not an easy task! On the other hand, the episodes stand out by virtue of their harmonic uniformity: they are all based on falling-fifth sequences. This

[1065] Czerny op. 200; 100.
[1066] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 115.

virtuosic *fughetta* probably is intended to illustrate Czerny's remark that the *figurirte, laufende und scherzhafte Gattung*[1067] [figured, flowing and jovial sort] works especially well on the piano. The examples Czerny gives with respect to the C-minor fragment and the *A-B-C* motif only contain the subjects and the beginnings of the answers; it looks like Czerny intended to give both a more serious and a lighter version of a fugue theme.

In op. 600 Czerny further elaborates on the fugue. He presupposes that the reader has perfected the studies of strict composition and counterpoint, and refers to 'the works of Marpurg, Kirnberger, Albrechtsberger and particularly (...) Reicha' (cf. chapter 13.4).[1068] Here he also explains what he probably hinted at in op. 200 with his remark on a free and a strict fugue style:

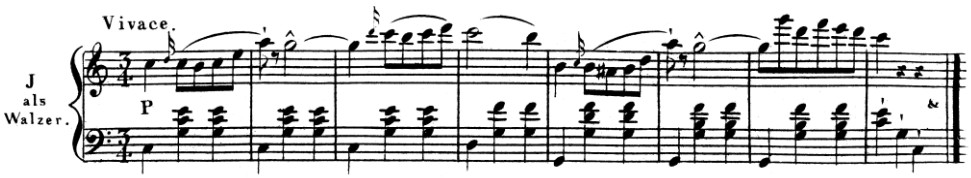
> Besides the strict fugue, there is also one of a more free kind, which approximates to the Sonata-form. The most esteemed models of this description are: Mozart's overture to Zauberflöte, and the Finale to his grand Symphony in C. Also the Finale to Beethoven's Quartett Op. 59 (No. 3, in C major), and that to his Sonata Op. 106. Hummel likewise gave a similar Finale in his Sonata in D, Op. 106.
>
> This mixed species unites the charm of beautiful melody with the spirited effects of the moving form of the fugue, in the most interesting manner: but in order to produce a successful work of this kind, we must be perfectly master of strict fugue composition.[1069]

Actually, the importance that Czerny attached to fugues may be somewhat surprising to readers today. Popular image has it that the art of Johann Sebastian Bach had fallen into oblivion after his death because it didn't match with the new galant taste; allegedly, Bach's son Johann Christian mockingly used to call his father 'die alte Perücke' [the old wig]. The iconic start of a Bach-revival was Mendelssohn's famous performance of the St. Matthew Passion (with cuts) in 1829. In reality, however, it was precisely the most hermetic part of Bach's legacy, his unrivalled art of complex counterpoint, that seems never to have been really forgotten, at least in circles of *Kenner* [connoisseurs]. In Vienna, Mozart was introduced to the fugues of the master from Thüringen by the Austrian diplomat of Dutch descent, Gottfried Freiherr van Swieten; Beethoven had already became familiar with the *Well-Tempered Clavier* as a boy. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Albrechtsberger was giving instruction in strict counterpoint to his many students. Muzio Clementi's well-known collection *Gradus ad Parnassum* not only contains the often played etudes, but also (among other types of pieces) many fugues. The fugue was quite obviously seen as an indispensable part of a pianist's repertoire at the early nineteenth century, and the many composed examples clearly are modelled after Bach's examples. The fact that Bach's keyboard fugues were written for harpsichord (or clavichord) instead of the piano seems to have been of no importance to

[1067] Czerny op. 200, 100.
[1068] Czerny op. 600 I, 118.
[1069] Czerny op. 600 I, 125.

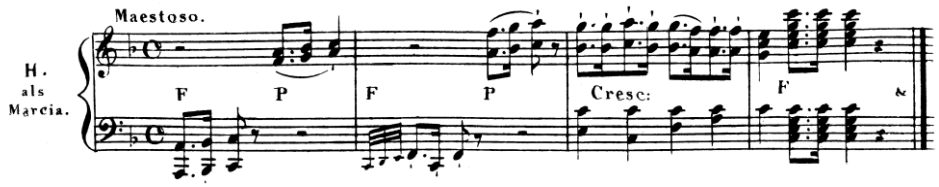
early nineteenth-century musicians. Czerny himself wrote a *Schule des Fugenspiels* op. 400, and Kalkbrenners *L'Harmonie du Pianiste* (discussed in chapter 9.5) also includes at the end a 'Fugue très simple pour en mieux faire comprendre la contexture' [very simple fugue in order to understand better its structure]. Fugues belonged to the daily bread and butter of nineteenth-century musicians, especially keyboardists.

j. *Walzer, Ecossaise, Marsch u. drgl.* [Waltz, Scottish dance, march etc.]:
Czerny's last topic could hardly contrast more with the sternness of the fugue: all sorts of dance forms and other light genres that must have been popular in the salons. His treatment of dance is very brief and superficial (→ chapter 11.1); it only consists of a short example of an innocent waltz in C-major on basis of the C-minor theme:




*Example 12.2.14*

... and a march starting with the tones A, B-flat and C:




*Example 12.2.15*

In his *School of practical composition*, however, Czerny dedicates an entire chapter to all kinds of dance forms (one of them is de *Polonaise* mentioned above).[1070] Apart from the *Polonaise*, Czerny discusses *Waltz*, *Galop*, *Minuet*, *Quadrille*, and national dances such as *Mazurka*, *Polka*, *Ecossaise*, *Bolero*, *Fandango, Tarantella* and *Siciliana*. (It seems that Czerny didn't consider the *Polonaise* a national dance.) Regarding the minuet, Czerny writes that 'as a dance, it is certainly no longer in use';[1071] indeed, Schubert published minuets only until 1816.[1072] Sometimes one has the impression that Czerny's knowledge of dance forms did not always sprout from personal experience. His discussion

[1070] Czerny op. 600 I; 100.
[1071] Czerny op. 600 I; 102.
[1072] Dürr, W. & Krause, A. (eds.): *Schubert Handbuch.* Kassel, 1997; 442.

of 'the Russian national dances', for instance, is too superficial to have been helpful to a student,[1073] and the explanation of the *Ecossaise* elicited an amusing correction by the translator John Bishop:

> The tunes designated by the term 'Ecossaise', by continental composers, bear no resemblance to Scotch dances. (...) Mr. Czerny's explanation must therefore be considered as applying only to (...) imaginary imitations of Scottish music; and as *genuine* Scotch dances are so numerous the pupil can easily provide himself with models.[1074]

Bishop then refers to Schilling's *Lexikon der Tonkunst* (→ chapter 8.3) for more information about this difference.

Czerny concludes his discussion of how to mould basic thematic material into existing musical genres with advice on how to proceed when the theme happens to consist of a complete and well-designed melody (in other words, the opposite of the three-tone example). In such a case, he suggests selecting a motif from the melody that may be developed 'according to all rules of imitation'. In this way tediousness will be avoided.[1075]

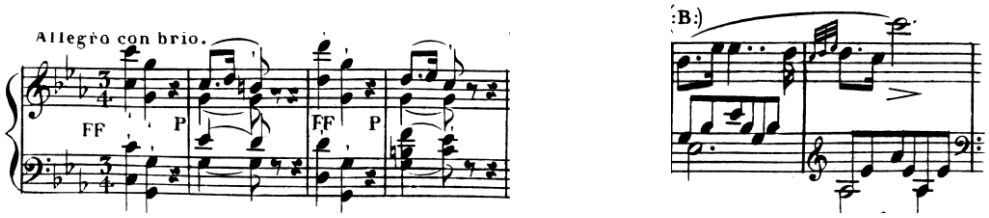
### *Fantasy on one theme*

Repeatedly Czerny advises the reader to find suitable models in composed music. For the art of developing a large piece from a simple motivic cell, for instance, he refers to the following works (and in this order):[1076] Beethoven: first movements of *Symphony V* in C minor op 67 and *Symphony VII* in A major op. 92; last movement of the piano sonata in D minor op. 31 no. 2 (Czerny writes: op. 29); *Piano Trio* in D major op 70 nr. 1; W.A. Mozart: *Symphony* in G minor KV 550, 1st movement; several string quartets and quintets; L. Cherubini: *Overture Anacreon*; J.N. Hummel: *Rondo* in E-flat major, op. 11; Beethoven: *Andante favori* in F major WoO 57. The fifth symphony is obviously still a textbook example of this phenomenon, the other ones might be more arbitrary.

Czerny's basic idea is that different genres may be combined to create one extended extempore fantasy. This may be done on the basis of one theme, but an improvisation may also be built on several themes. The first type of 'genuine' improvisation Czerny discusses is the 'fantasy on one theme'. It is slightly peculiar that this is the context in which Czerny mentions the improvisation of a sonata allegro (as in section 12.*2a*); after all, a sonata exposition generally has two themes. Czerny might have been aware of this contradiction; witness his remark that the player should find 'zum ersten Teil einen passenden Mittelgesang (...) (welcher sich häufig auch aus dem Hauptthema entwickeln, oder wenigstens mit ihm vereinigen lässt)[1077]' [a suitable subsidiary melody for the first

[1073] Czerny op. 600 I; 108.
[1074] Czerny op. 600 I; 106.
[1075] Czerny op. 200; 42.
[1076] Ibidem.
[1077] Czerny op. 200; 43.

section (a theme which may frequently evolve even from the principal theme, or at least be compatible with it)[1078]]. Such a strong relation between first and second theme in a sonata form was not normal in Czerny's time; nor do we see such a relation in the specific compositions mentioned above. It is an idea that rather recalls Joseph Haydn, who is well known for his 'mono-thematic' sonata forms. In the first sample fantasia on one theme, however, Czerny indeed writes a second theme that shares motivic content with the first theme. The beginnings of the first and second themes are shown here:[1079]




*Example 12.2.16*

Czerny briefly describes a conventional sonata exposition, to be followed by a fantasy-like development section:

> Der erste Theil dieses Allegro kann, wie in der Sonate, völlig abgeschlossen werden, wogegen man dann im 2ten Theil sich der freyesten Fantasie und Ausführung, und allen Arten von Modulationen, Imitationen &:, völlig überlassen kann, sich jedoch des Mittelgesangs auch wieder erinnern muss, und endlich in der Haupttonart schliesst.[1080]
>
> [The first section of this Allegro can have a conclusive ending, as in the sonata; by way of contrast, one can surrender fully to the freest inventiveness and fulfillment of ideas and to all sorts of modulations, imitations, etc. in the second section. However, one must also reintroduce the subsidiary melody, and conclude finally in the principal key.[1081]]

It is important to note that Czerny seems not to require that the improviser play a full recapitulation that repeats all material from the exposition. Indeed, it is very difficult, and in a way contrary to the idea of improvising, to remember in detail a relatively large stretch of music in a discontinuous form (for the exposition is separated from any recapitulation by a very extended development section). A recapitulation that mirrors the exposition in detail is to be seen as typical for composed music. Even in the academic approach of Marcel Dupré, who demands a full recapitulation, this part may differ from the exposition as long as it is similar in form.[1082] Czerny's awareness of the difficulty of

[1078] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 51.
[1079] Czerny op. 200; 44 and 46
[1080] Czerny op. 200; 43.
[1081] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 51.
[1082] Dupré, M.: *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue.* Paris, 1925; 114.

remembering long passages when improvising is evident in a remark he made about another example composition, where he writes:

> Repetitionen sind im Fantasieren nicht wohl möglich, denn selten bleibt das eben Gespielte so lange im Gedächtnisse.[1083]
>
> [Repetitions are not particularly feasible when improvising in fantasy style, for seldom is the precise material that has been played previously remembered for that length of time.[1084]]

Czerny's first example fantasy on one theme in C minor consists of a slow introduction that prepares for the central theme, followed by a (truncated) sonata allegro. A complete exposition (the relation between the two themes was discussed above) is followed without interruption by a modulating development section; however, Czerny mentions in a footnote the possibility of extending the codetta and concluding the exposition 'förmlich' [formally],[1085] in line with his earlier description. However, the development section does not use the second theme, despite his remark in the introductory text. It modulates to A-flat major, finishing on a dominant-seventh chord with a fermata. The next section of the fantasy is an *adagio* in A-flat according to the characterisation in section 12.2*b*. The melody (derived from the main theme) suggests the antecedent of a period; instead of the expected consequent, however, comes a development of the material that modulates by sequences to the dominant of A minor or major. At this point, Czerny writes that one may interpolate the 'Motiv, als Thema, mit einigen Variationen in A dur' [motif, as a theme, with some variations in A major].[1086] However, in the example fantasy these variations are omitted; instead comes the final section, a rondo in the manner of section 12.2*e*. Here as well, the usual rondo form is very truncated: in fact the theme appears only in the beginning and in the end. The overall structure of the first fantasy clearly follows the pattern of a sonata in three movements, though all themes are derived from one basic theme, and the slow and the last movements in particular are formally truncated.

In op. 600, Czerny briefly mentions the various types of fantasies he has discussed in great detail in the *Anleitung*. He regards it as typical for the *Fantasie* to exhibit the 'unconstraint, surprising variety' that results from the improvisatory 'fancy and inspiration of the moment, without preparation and even without thought'. When fantasias are composed rather than improvised, 'the composer must endeavour (...) to approximate as closely as possible to the freedom of extemporizing'. The structure Czerny suggests in op. 600 also resembles that of a sonata: introduction – *allegro* – *adagio* – variations – rondo – fugue (if desired). The difference with a sonata, Czerny writes, is that

[1083] Czerny op. 200; 55.
[1084] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 64.
[1085] Czerny op. 200; 46.
[1086] Czerny op. 200; 49.

the movements are connected, and also 'that each piece must have a more free development'. This freedom consists 'in the unrestricted use of modulation' and 'in an arbitrary interruption of the course of the ideas'. The example from op. 200, discussed above, exactly fits this picture.

### *The Wanderer Fantasy as a fantasy on one theme*

Czerny writes that it is difficult to compose such a fantasy, and that not many have been written. One such composition he mentions in both op. 200 and op. 600 is Beethoven's *Chorfantasie* op. 80, and in the *Anleitung* he also cites the finale of the *Ninth Symphony* op. 125. Interestingly, neither of these is a piano piece (except for the introduction to the choral fantasy), which reveals Czerny's strong focus on musical structure and thematic content in general. He could, however, have mentioned a piano piece that was published in Vienna in 1823 by Franz Schubert, a composer who is not mentioned a single time in the *Anleitung* – even though Czerny must have been familiar with his work.[1087] Schubert's composition in question is the *Fantasie* in C major op. 15 (D 760), also known as the *Wandererfantasie.* It was published by Diabelli who, incidentally, continued to publish Schubert's hitherto unprinted compositions after his death in 1828; Diabelli also published Czerny's *Anleitung*, and Czerny often visited Diabelli's shop on the Graben in Vienna,[1088] so it seems likely that he knew this composition. The *Wandererfantasie* is one of the most demanding piano compositions from the early nineteenth century, and as it so happens, it is a perfect composed example of a fantasy on one theme as described by Czerny.

The piece is built on a phrase taken from Schubert's own song *Der Wanderer* D 489 from 1816.[1089] The text of this passage (bars 23-30) reads: *Die Sonne dünkt mich hier so kalt / Die Blüthe welk, das Leben alt / und was sie reden leerer Schall / ich bin ein Fremdling überall* [Here the sun seems so cold / the blossom faded, life old / and men's words mere hollow noise / I am a stranger everywhere.[1090]]. It is very likely that in the fantasy, Schubert was at least as inspired by this text as by the melody itself: in the original song the slow basic tempo is sped up at this passage (*etwas geschwinder*), but in the piano piece Schubert turns the phrase into a gloomy *adagio* melody that serves as the theme for a number of variations. The *Wandererfantasie* is an example of what music theorist Janet Schmalfeldt has called 'music that turns inward': music in which a middle part or

[1087] Czerny published *Drey brilliante Fantasien über die beliebtesten Motive aus Franz Schubert's Werken* [three brilliant fantasies on the most popular motifs from Franz Schubert's works] op. 339 for piano à quatre mains in 1834; the 'popular motifs' include many still famous songs, but also the Trauerwalzer (→ chapter 11.5).
[1088] Biba, O. & Fuchs, I.: *»Mehr Respekt vor dem tüchtigen Mann«: Carl Czerny.* Kassel, 2009; 20.
[1089] In his first *brilliante Fantasie* op. 339 Czerny even quotes this song, though not the passage Schubert used for the *Wandererfantasie.*
[1090] Trans. Richard Wigmore; https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/1542.

movement serves as the 'inward source' of the composition.[1091] Indeed, the central *adagio* of the *Wandererfantasie* 'serves as the motivic matrix for all other 'movements''.[1092]

The fantasy opens with an elaborate *allegro* sonata-like exposition on a theme that extracts the rhythm of the opening motif from the song phrase, transposed to a radiant C major. The second theme is in E major and, despite the changed dynamics and character, originates from the same cell. It is a perfect illustration of Czerny's remark that the second theme may 'evolve from the principal theme'. What follows is an extended development section on the principal theme, interrupted by a contrasting melodic idea in E-flat major that can be seen as vaguely related to the song as well (its opening motif, ^#4 - ^6 - ^5, might be derived from the ornamental ^5 - ^6 - ^5 in the song). Finally, the development section picks up the opening theme again and modulates eventually to the dominant of C-sharp minor, the key of the *adagio*. It is here that the original source material of the entire piece appears for the first and only time. The *adagio* connects to a scherzo (*presto*) in A-flat major with a trio in D-flat major. The principal theme of the scherzo is a rather straightforward transformation of the opening idea of the fantasy within a new metrical and tonal environment. The scherzo itself is in a vague sonata form, with a second theme that is not connected to the main material. The trio is built on a theme that clearly derives from the melodic idea in the development section of the first movement. The expected 'da capo' of the scherzo turns out to be a truncated repeat, followed by a more developmental section that modulates to the dominant chord of the home key, C major. In this way the entire scherzo plus trio follows the pattern of the first movement of the fantasy. The last movement, finally, starts like a fugue (*allegro*) on a theme that is quite similar to the principal theme of the first *allegro.* It is a fugue 'of the more free kind': after the exposition (4 voices, with sonorous doublings) the texture opens up to form a brilliant finale, only occasionally alternating with polyphonic fragments.

In its overall structure (sonata *allegro*, *adagio* with variations, scherzo with trio, fugue – finale, all movements connected to each other) the *Wandererfantasie* precisely represents Czerny's idea of a fantasy on one theme in which all movements of a classical sonata are present, albeit in a truncated form. Incidentally, the length of the *Wandererfantasie* (usually approximately 22 minutes) is not much shorter than an average sonata. Its thematic material is all derived from one basic theme. What is special about the *Wandererfantasie* is the fact that the basic theme itself is placed at the centre of the work; all other themes are derived from it. In Czerny's examples the basic theme rather appears at the beginning of the piece, which makes sense when such a piece is improvised. As has been shown, Czerny also writes 'that each piece must have a more free development' than in a formal sonata, consisting 'in the unrestricted use of modulation' and 'in an arbitrary interruption of the course of

[1091] Schmalfeldt, J: *In the Process of Becoming.* New York, 2011; 143.
[1092] Schmalfeldt, J.: op. cit., 156.

the ideas'. Both elements are surely present in the *Wandererfantasie.* The formal 'liberties' and the many modulating passages have been mentioned above; besides, the keys of the different movements are definitely more remote than usual in a composed sonata: C and E major in the first movement, C-sharp minor in the *adagio,* A-flat and D-flat major in the scherzo, and finally C major in the fugue. The choice of keys might be less arbitrary than it seems, though; if one connects the key of the trio to the C-sharp minor of the *adagio*, the key of the scherzo itself (A-flat) could be interpreted as a dominant within a large C-sharp minor / major tonal area. The main key progression in the piece then becomes C – C-sharp – C, a transposed version of the main expressive motif in the song theme: ^5 - ^6 - ^5. Whether indeed these ideas crossed Schubert's mind as well will probably always remain an open question, but it is a fact that the turn from C to C-sharp (in between first and second movement) or vice versa (in between third and fourth movement) is extraordinary in the late-classical or early-Romantic context of this composition.

Czerny's first fantasia does show many modulations, but the main keys of the movements (C minor – C major – A-flat major – C major) are within the limits of expectation. It is followed, however, by a second fantasia that is 'more free' in some respects. Its central theme is derived from the one in the previous fantasy (it is basically its inversion). The piece consists of four connected movements: an introduction (*vivace*, without metre) in E-flat major, an *allegro moderato ed espressivo* in 4/4, likewise in E-flat major, a scherzo (*presto*, 3/4) in D minor, an *adagio con moto quasi andante* (in 4/4) in E major, and finally an *allegretto grazioso ed animato* (6/8) in E-flat major. This succession of keys is surely much less common. Together, the movements resemble the design of a classical sonata with the scherzo as a second movement, as in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. The individual movements, however, are less straightforward than in Czerny's first fantasy. The introduction resembles a free instrumental prelude rather than a formal introduction, and contains no thematic material. The allegro starts like a sonata exposition with a relatively lyrical theme, but it is interrupted before a second theme has the chance to enter. The scherzo has no trio, and in the last movement a second theme is merely suggested. As such, each movement exemplifies Czerny's idea of 'an arbitrary interruption of the course of the ideas'. The notions of a 'free development' and 'unrestricted modulation' are clearly shown in this fantasy as well. Each movement (except for the introduction) in fact starts with a 'proper' presentation of a theme (all of them variants of a period structure), which is then developed, mainly by subjecting fragments of it to modulatory sequences, interspersed with virtuosic arpeggios and other passage work. Sometimes a theme is used as a bass line, with a new idea in the upper voice. The modulations often move in unexpected directions, and there are many sudden changes of mood. To summarise, the second fantasy on one theme mainly seems to be a demonstration of development techniques. It is not easy to characterise the type of music that results;

the closest resemblance might be the set of cadenzas Beethoven composed for his own piano concertos (→ chapter 10.1).

### 12.3 Fantasies on several themes

The fifth chapter of Czerny's *Anleitung* focuses on fantasies on several subjects. Here as well, a fantasy is essentially a combination of different genres. The crucial difference with a fantasy on a single subject seems to be that, in this case, secondary musical ideas assume more independence; however, the subject that is used at the beginning of the fantasy is supposed to recur often in between contrasting ideas: it is 'die Basis auf welche alles übrige gebaut ist'[1093] [the basis on which everything else rests].

This is indeed what Czerny shows in the example fantasy in D minor in his fifth chapter. However, the opening motif is so present throughout the entire piece that the difference with the previous type (the fantasy on one theme) is only small. It starts with a *maestoso* in 4/4 on the principal motif; this opening sounds at first as though it might be a presentation of the theme in the style of a sonata allegro. However, immediately after the theme an instrumental recitative (as in Beethoven's sonata in A-flat major, op. 110) makes the energy disappear, and the opening section finishes on a dominant harmony with fermata; as a result, the *maestoso* section functions in retrospect as an introduction, especially since it is followed by an energetic *un poco vivo*, this time representing the 'true' main theme. This modulates to F major, leading to an *andante* of which the melody is derived from the principal theme, and that in this way makes the impression of a second theme as in a one theme-fantasy. The *allegro con moto* that follows contains virtuosic passage work with modulations and picks up the main theme again, and in this way works as a development section. Subsequently an *andantino sostenuto* in B-flat major brings in a really new theme for the first time. This could count as the slow movement within the sonata structure. Modulations and developments lead towards a final *allegro vivace ed affettuoso* that is again based upon the principal theme, with a vague ABA structure clearing the way for a brief contrasting idea. A coda (*più mosso*) concludes the composition.

In his discussion of the fantasy on several themes in op. 600, Czerny presents an analysis of Hummel's *Fantasie* in E-flat major, op. 18, in which he also refers to 'the rules of the Sonata'.[1094] Other comparable compositions he mentions are, for instance, Mozart's *Fantasie* in C minor KV 475 and the 'fantasy' for organ in F minor KV 608, referred to in the four-hand piano version; he also mentions Beethoven's *Sonata quasi una fantasia* in E-flat major op. 27 no. 1.[1095] Neither Mozart's nor Beethoven's pieces, however, show the permeating role of the initial motif.

[1093] Czerny op. 200; 63.
[1094] Czerny op. 600 I; 84.
[1095] Czerny op. 200; 63.

## 12.4 The potpourri

The type of fantasy that the early nineteenth-century piano virtuosos played on stage, often featuring popular opera tunes, is described by Czerny in the sixth chapter of the *Anleitung* under the title of *Potpourri.* He writes that the previously described fantasies on a single or several themes are not always suitable when one improvises for a large audience, like in a theatre (concert halls were not numerous yet).

> Bei einem sehr gemischten Publikum [will] doch der bei weitem grössere Teil nur durch angenehme, bekannte Motive unterhalten, und durch pickante und glänzende Ausführung in Athem erhalten werden.[1096]
>
> [In dealing with a largely heterogeneous public, surely the majority by far will be entertained only by pleasant, familiar tunes and will be sustained in spirit by piquant and glittering performances.[1097]]

From today's perspective, opera fantasies look like a primary manifestation of solo improvisation on the early nineteenth-century concert stage. In chapter 1.2 I argued that the modern view that classical music is something that happens essentially in public concerts or on recordings might lead one to miss an essential part of nineteenth-century musical life. To be sure, both composed and improvised opera fantasies (for piano or for other instruments) were a very popular genre in the nineteenth century, and some of them (for instance, those for piano by Liszt) are still performed nowadays as showpieces of virtuosity. Within Czerny's categories of improvisation, however, the opera fantasy or potpourri does not at all occupy centre stage: rather, it is presented as a special instance, when the pianist is dealing with a largely non-educated audience. One even gets the impression that for Czerny it is not the most interesting musical utterance; his own compositions in this genre (to which he refers) are part of his 'commercial' output, not of the serious work he was more proud of. In the *Anleitung*, Czerny seems to explain aspects that can make this type of piece musically more interesting. It is clear that these extempore fantasies are based on an awareness of the public for whom one performs (*Rücksicht auf das Publikum*[1098]), and that the pianist therefore should be familiar with all popular tunes of the moment. For this reason, Dana Gooley calls this type of solo improvisation a 'discourse of community'. As an example he mentions Hummel, who 'produced such dialogues and intertexts by making free fantasies into a meeting and reconciliation of pleasant and learned styles, with their distinct social coordinates. He also opened himself out to the audiences by adapting his playing to their listening level according to the needs of the occasion'.[1099] In this way, Gooley argues, nineteenth-century solo improvisation is not 'the epitome of Western individualism', but can

[1096] Czerny op. 200; 75
[1097] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 86.
[1098] Czerny op. 200; 75.
[1099] Gooley, D.: op. cit., 107-108.

be reconciled with 'theorizations of improvisation of the CSI school' which 'have generally taken collective, group improvisation as a default norm'.[1100] This may all be true, but Czerny emphasises that an experienced improviser may 'auch in diese Manier sehr viel Kunst, und daher auch doppeltes Interesse legen'[1101] [surely exhibit great artistry and therefore twice the interest in this style as well[1102]]. By applying the art of development, he may 'den leichtesten Produkten des herrschenden Geschmacks, den einfachsten Volksmelodien eine edlere Seite abgewinnen'[1103] [find a more noble side even in the frivolous products of popular taste and the simplest folk songs]. In other words: a good musician may use this potentially superficial genre to his own benefit, or even to the benefit of musical art.

One way of elevating the potpourri is to make use of the meaning of the texts of the quoted melodies, and in this way add a kind of 'meta-meaning':

> Gesangs-Motive, deren Worte allgemein bekannt sind, können durch sinnige Zusammenstellung einen artigen oder bedeutenden sinn bilden.[1104]
>
> [Melodies of songs, whose words are generally familiar, can be combined in a meaningful way and get a pleasant or interesting signification.]

A similar way of involving textual associations was already discussed in the context of preluding in chapter 9.8.

Czerny gives a notated example of the potpourri, as well; it is telling that the themes are not opera tunes of the day, but rather by classical masters: Bach, Händel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Cherubini and Beethoven; it is as if Czerny wants to show that the potpourri need not be built on ephemera. He stresses the importance of variation in metre and tempo in order to avoid monotony. He also recommends combining two or more themes in surprising ways, such as playing one of them as a soprano and the other one simultaneously as a bass; moreover, a theme can be played as a canon. Incidentally, Czerny warns the reader that such sophisticated effects should be applied with moderation and should sound spontaneous: 'denn meistens klingt dergleichen steif und unnatürlich'[1105] [for as a rule they sound stiff and affected[1106]]. They will have to be premeditated in most cases anyway.

Later in his opus 600, Czerny discusses the potpourri as well, and stresses here the importance of 'a refined taste, and an accurate knowledge of that kind of elegance which is the style of the day'. An

[1100] Gooley, D.: op. cit., 107. 'CSI' refers to the journal '*Critical Studies in Improvisation*', → chapter 1.2.
[1101] Czerny op. 200, 75.
[1102] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 86.
[1103] Czerny op. 200; 75.
[1104] Ibidem.
[1105] Czerny op. 200; 77.
[1106] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 90.

interesting excursion on embellishments makes clear the ephemeral character of products of the brilliant style:

> Embellishments are an object and an offspring of fashion, and grow old, as soon as better or at least others of a pleasing kind are invented. (...) In reference to this, the young composer must naturally take only the *newest* and most tasteful compositions for a model, and particularly endeavour to form his taste, by hearing the best modern and generally esteemed Operas, and good singers; for, as a matter of course, *in this respect*, the ancient authors can rarely be taken as an example. He who neglects this in his youth, will experience great difficulty, at a more advanced age, in keeping pace with the times.[1107]

One wonders whether Czerny still approved of his earlier potpourri on classical themes in op. 200 when he wrote these words, and maybe even whether he was also secretly referring to himself in his last remark.

### 12.5 Variations

The principle of embellishing a given theme connects with the last sort of improvisation to be mentioned in this survey based upon Czerny's account: the theme with variations. Both in op. 200 and in op. 600, Czerny devotes a chapter to this form, which he calls 'one of the oldest forms in the realm of composition'.[1108] He refers to Bach's *Goldberg variations* as an unsurpassed model in the art of variation, and writes that countless variation works have been composed for over a century (as we know now, Czerny could easily have doubled this estimated time span). 'Besides, the variation-form is one of the few which, in all probability, will never grow old.'[1109] Apart from the theme with variations as a musical form, Czerny sees the principle of variation as an 'indispensable resource for almost all species of compositions',[1110] because a theme that returns is usually varied. 'Auch Concerte sind meistens nur freyere Variationen des vorhergehenden Tutti'[1111] [even concertos are, for the most part, only freer variations of the preceding Tuttis[1112]] – a bold statement!

In the *Anleitung*, Czerny also emphasises the importance of acquiring dexterity in improvising variations. From a historical perspective, this is a modest position: akin to ornamentation, variation is probably one of the oldest improvisational techniques in Western music. It is not difficult, for example, to imagine Jacob van Eijk's variations for solo recorder in *Der fluyten lusthof* (1649) as the notated result of improvisations, or as written examples for an improvisational practice – especially since the composer was well-known for his open-air performances as a recorder player on the

[1107] Czerny op. 600; 88-89.
[1108] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 107.
[1109] Czerny op. 600; 21.
[1110] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 107.
[1111] Czerny op. 200; 94.
[1112] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 107.

*Janskerkhof* [the cemetery of the church of St. John] in Utrecht on summer evenings in the 1640's. Several decades earlier, Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck's reputation as an improviser was based mainly on his inexhaustible fantasy while varying on well-known tunes. As late as 1882, Hugo Riemann still wrote that 'every decent musician should be able to improvise variations on a given melody' (→ chapter 8.3).

Even today, the didactic value of improvising variations is obvious. Especially in the context of an early Baroque style, variations on a ground (*chaconne*, *passacaglia*) have become a popular first step towards 'historically inspired improvisation', in particular by instrumentalists. A very attractive aspect of this form is its flexibility in instrumentation: it can be performed on solo keyboard, including organ, but as well on (combinations of) monophonic instruments with basso continuo. A wealth of historical material is offered in *50 Renaissance & Baroque Standards* by Pascale Boquet and Gérard Rebours;[1113] Martin Erhardt's *Upon a Ground* provides a detailed methodical approach.[1114] What makes such figurative variations relatively feasible for students is the predictability of the harmony, which continuously repeats the same pattern. Following the example of eighteenth-century composed variation cycles, each variation usually is built on one musical idea, often in the form of a rhythmic motif. Once such an idea has been invented, it takes less concentration to carry it through a variation, assuming that the player knows the harmonic pattern well. In this way the player can plan the next variation while still performing the previous one – thus learning to think on several levels simultaneously, an essential capacity of an improviser.[1115] Czerny must have been familiar with this phenomenon as well, witness a footnote in another chapter in the *Anleitung*:

> Während solchen Passagen (welche geübte Finger leicht ohne besondere Aufmerksamkeit fortsetzen können) hat der Spieler nachzudenken, welche Form er nachfolgen lassen soll.[1116]
>
> [During such passages (which practiced fingers can execute easily without any particular attention), the performer has to concentrate on the type of style he should have in the following section.[1117]]

In the *Anleitung* Czerny mentions six ways of varying upon a theme, followed by the first half of a theme with 32 notated sample variations. After the uncompleted theme, Czerny writes that the

[1113] Boquet, P. & Rebours, G.: *50 Renaissance & Baroque Standards*. Courlay, 2007.
[1114] Erhardt, M.: *Upon a Ground*. Magdeburg, 2013.
[1115] In the teaching of improvisation, the importance of thinking on various levels at the same time becomes obvious already at an early stage. It reveals itself, for instance, in improvised canons (see http://metricimpro.eu/video/improvising-canons/ ). In this exercise, the 'leader' has to make up a melody, but at the same time predict how it will sound together with the canon voice, and check whether the 'follower' is still with him. When students are unable to focus on different things at the same time, it often happens that they stop the performance in order to think.
[1116] Czerny op. 200; 57.
[1117] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 66.

student can 'easily' compose the second half; likewise, each notated variation only contains the beginning, to be continued by the improvising student. In the chapter on variations in the *School of Practical Composition* op. 600, Czerny develops this description of variation techniques in a more systematic way. Even for a student today, Czerny's summary still has great instructional value:

> Numerous are the ways and forms in which a theme may be varied, but they admit of being divided into the following six principal classes:
>
> 1. In which the theme is strictly preserved in one hand, whilst a new, augmented, or even florid accompaniment is performed by the other.
>
> 2. In which the theme itself is varied by adjunctive notes, without however changing the melody.
>
> 3. Where, either in one or in both hands, passages, skips, or other figures are constructed upon the harmony of the theme; so that the leading idea of the melody is retained, yet without again giving the theme in a complete state.
>
> 4. Where, upon the foundation-harmony of the theme, another new simple or embellished melody is invented, of such a kind, that it can either be played together with the theme, or by itself, instead of it.
>
> 5. Where the theme receives other harmony, or artificial modulations, which may be combined either with the strict, canonic, or fugued style, or with imitative figures.
>
> 6. In which the *time*, the *degree of movement*, or even the *key* of the theme is changed, but in which the original melody must always be clearly distinguishable. To these may be added, lastly, the more free development of the theme in the Finale.[1118]

Each 'class' is then exemplified by a number of beginnings of variations on a (fragment of a) theme.[1119] The order of Czerny's six classes follows the logic of a development from an unaltered quotation of the original melody to more free variations in which metre, tempo, and key may be different and the theme harder to recognise. In no. 1, only the texture of the accompaniment is varied; actually this way of varying is not very common in variation cycles of Mozart or Beethoven. Rather, a remote predecessor can be found in the variation techniques of Sweelinck, who frequently placed new counterpoints against an unaltered melody. Any influence on Czerny of Sweelinck or the English virginalists, however, cannot be assumed. Possibly this was simply the easiest way of varying Czerny could imagine. No. 2 describes the kind of figurative variations common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; a type that still makes up the majority of Mozart's piano variations. No. 3 touches upon an essential point: the question of whether one varies upon the tune or the harmony. As I showed in chapter 3, Baroque embellishments started to include aspects of both. Variations on grounds and passacaglias, however, usually focus on the harmony only, except for cases where a

[1118] Czerny op. 600 I; 21.
[1119] For a reproduction of these examples, see the appendix.

preferred upper voice stands out, such as in the famous *Follia*. When the theme for variations is a tune or song instead of a bass line, the focus naturally is on the melody. The typical theme of a variation cycle, however, has a simple and easily recognisable harmonic basis (→ section 12.2*g*), which tends to be an important factor as well. In Czerny's third step, the distinguishability of the melody starts to be sacrificed, and in no. 4 it is dropped altogether, resulting in purely harmony-based variations. No. 5 again uses the original melody as a backbone for the variation, while re-harmonising it in unexpected ways. No. 6 finally describes the most free type of variations, namely the so-called character variations, which most likely were originated by Beethoven. They were to become the standard variation technique in the course of the nineteenth century. Character variations, however, also had an eighteenth-century predecessor, namely chorale suites such as Dietrich Buxtehude's variations on *Auf meinen lieben Gott* BuxWV 179, in which each variation resembles a different dance.[1120] In character variations each variation, while following the harmonic, structural and / or melodic outline of the theme, is a semi-autonomous piece with its own character, key and especially tempo, such that the variations tend to represent different musical genres. Indeed Czerny's example variations in this manner match his list of musical genres (→ section 12.2).

Despite the emphasis on piano music in this chapter, it should not be forgotten that the art of variation in the nineteenth century was not at all limited to the keyboard. The theme with variations as a genre may be typically instrumental: composed variation cycles for the voice are exceptional (Adolphe Adam's bravura variations on *Ah! Vous dirai-je Maman* for soprano, flute and orchestra are a stunning example). However, cycles for monodic instruments are numerous, especially those with piano accompaniment. Niccolò Paganini, whose spectacular virtuosity and emotional power caused a thrill throughout Europe and inspired Liszt to reach a similar level on the piano, is known often to have improvised them on stage. When he was appointed first violinist at the court of Princess Elisa Baciocchi (Napoleon's sister) in Lucca in 1805, he had to perform at two concerts per week. 'I always played an improvisation: I always wrote down a bass for the piano and on that harmonic background I improvised on a theme'.[1121] To his contemporaries, Paganini's art transcended everything they had heard before, inciting comparisons with wizardry and devilry; the format of such improvisations, however, was firmly rooted in eighteenth-century loci communes.

[1120] Rathey, M.: 'Buxtehude and the Dance of Death: the Chorale Partita Auf meinen lieben Gott (BuxWV 179) and the Ars Moriendi in the Seventeenth Century'. *Early Music History* Vol. 29 (2010), 161-188.

[1121] Quoted in Borer, Ph.: 'Paganini's Virtuosity and Improvisatory Style'. In: Rasch, R. (ed.): *Beyond Notes: Improvisation in Western Music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.* Turnhout, 2009; 202.

## 12.6 Genre in the later part of the nineteenth century

### *Genre in composed music*

It would be an exaggeration, and therefore untrue, to suggest that nineteenth-century music was as much based on traditional genres as music of the eighteenth century. The compositions of Czerny's younger contemporary Robert Schumann, for instance, definitely redefine genre-based conventions (especially his earlier work). The Romantic elevation of instrumental music, the inspiration that came from poetry and landscape, the aesthetic preference for the 'fragment', and above all, the focus on the individual composing genius: everything led towards an increasing urge for originality. The short piano piece (*Klavierstück*), a characteristic vehicle of nineteenth-century musical production, was typically published in collections and series, however without much of a common ground with respect to musical genre. Collections such as Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* op. 12 or his *Novelletten* op. 21 show a degree of variety that has no parallel in eighteenth-century music. Even Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* and Chopin's *Nocturnes* considerably differ from each other, and in Brahms's *Klavierstücke* unity in genre is hardly enhanced by subspecies such as *Capriccio*, *Intermezzo* or *Rhapsodie.*

Nevertheless, I argue that old genres remained of importance for a long time, albeit in a more hidden way. In Brahms's *Handel Variations* op. 24, a magnificent series of character variations that sometimes push the limits of the theme to the extreme, individual variations may very well correspond with genre-specific loci communes such as a *scherzo* (variation 10), or even a Hungarian *Verbunkos* (variations 13 and 14), consisting of the characteristic couple *lassú* (slow) and *friss* (fast). Variation 19 suggests a *siciliano*, but the tempo indication *leggiero e vivace* contradicts this idea – as if Brahms wants the player *not* to interpret the variation in this way. Then again, the addition *ma non troppo* casts doubt on the latter view. This contradiction shows in recordings, both old and new, of this variation: the views on tempo are relatively consistent, but the differences in articulation are considerable, and thus the character of the performances of this piece. In general the clearly defined genres of dance music remained part of nineteenth-century 'art music', and folk music even became increasingly important with the rise of nationalism. Sometimes individual creations of composers became so influential that they became genres in their own right, such as the 'Mendelssohnian' scherzo, the *chant sans paroles*, or the nocturne à la Chopin; the last two types were adapted and transformed by, among others, Fauré. Just as in pre-1800 music, it is crucial that the interpreter recognise such loci (→ chapter 2.3), that he understand the idea – which may be more difficult when the references to genres become less explicit, as in Brahms's op. 24. To summarise, genre-based thinking can be recognised even in compositions from the later part of the nineteenth century, despite the fact that the picture is less clear than for one century earlier. How does this relate to improvising?

The classical music world is blessed with a small number of recorded improvisations[1122] that date from the early years of recording. Several composer-pianists were recorded while improvising; in most cases the limited length of the wax roll forced them to play short pieces. Some of these recordings will be analysed here through the lens of loci communes on the level of genre, and sometimes also on more detailed levels. I will show that especially in such improvised pieces musical genres form a common thread.

***Recorded improvisations: Arensky***

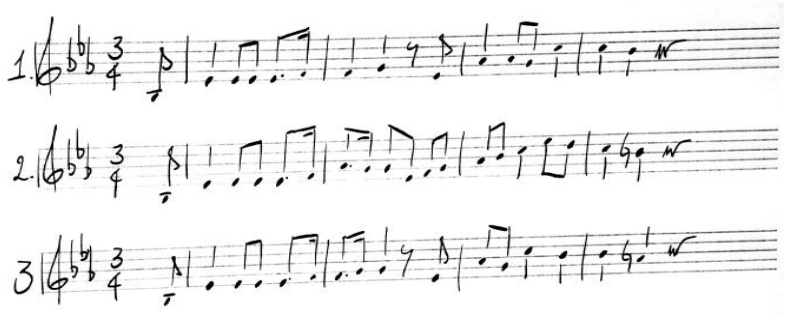
The recordings of the playing of Anton Arensky on the Julius Block cylinders were already mentioned in chapter 7.5. Arensky also recorded two piano improvisations for Block in 1892 and 1893.[1123]

**[12.6 #1 Arensky: improvisation a; rec. 1892]**

The first one (cylinder C 112, recorded on 24 November, 1892) is a slow piece in a triple meter in E-flat major. It is structured very tightly in a simple rondo-form: the piece opens with a singing melody, built as a classical period with a modulating consequent. A contrasting section has eight bars[1124] with a two-bar extension, after which the opening theme is repeated (halved in length). A second contrasting section is partly inaudible due to a damaged cylinder, but its length must have been sixteen bars. The piece finishes with another statement of the main theme, again in halved length, after which a four-bar coda concludes the music. With every repeat of the main theme, the music sounds more grand.

The melody is accompanied with chords, which gives the piece a chorale-like texture. In mood, key, tempo, and above all its opening motif there is a strong reminiscence of Mendelssohn's well-known *Notturno* in *Ein Sommernachtstraum.* This piece is so famous that it might count as a genre in its own right, as mentioned at the end of the previous section. Hitherto this analytical description of Arensky's improvisation might give the impression that we are dealing with well-planned or even composed music. There is, however, an interesting improvisational feature to it: every time the first phrase sounds (altogether three times), it is slightly different in a way that would be unlikely in a composition. One might surmise that Arensky remembered the opening 'bar' precisely, and that his memory of the rest of the phrase was more superficial; in the third phrase, for instance, the intervallic movement corresponds with the first time, but the metrical placement is different.

[1122] In this case: performances of music that had not, or not yet, been notated, and which are labelled as such.
[1123] The Dawn of Recording (MARSTON 53011-12), CD 1, track 15.
[1124] Strictly speaking, bars only exist in written music. Since there is no alternative, I also apply the term to descriptions of improvised music here.



*Example 12.6.1*

Harmonically the music follows conventional loci of cadential harmony, and the coda is based on what Gjerdingen calls a 'quiescenza', not unlike Mendelssohn.

**[12.6 #2 Arensky: improvisation b; rec. 1893]**

The second improvisation (cylinder C120) was recorded exactly one year later. It has the same rondo-form, but the genre is a Schumann-like fast waltz. The piece makes a well-structured, practised and premeditated impression, almost as if it were a composition. However, I have not been able to relate it to an existing work, either by Arensky himself or by others. It should be added that the recording happens to be unclear, leaving much to the imagination of the listener.

### *Transcriptions of recorded improvisations*

In jazz, transcriptions have become a well-proven way to study recorded improvisations. Similarly, a number of recorded improvisations by well-known classical composers have also been transcribed, often many years later. During a holiday in Tiana in 1903, Isaac Albéniz visited the wealthy industrialist Ruperto Regordosa Planas and improvised three piano pieces, which were recorded on Planas's new phonograph cylinder. These are the only existing recordings of Albéniz's playing. In 2009, they were transcribed and published by Milton Rubén Laufer.[1125] The second and third improvisations were transcribed as well and published by Agustín Manuel Martínez.[1126] In addition, Enrique Granados recorded several improvisations. During a visit to New York as a result of the premiere of his opera *Goyescas* in 1916, Granados recorded some of his piano music on Steinway Duo-Art piano rolls, including two 'improvisations'. Henry Levine and Samuel Randlett transcribed one of them in 1967, and published it as *Rêverie-Improvisation*.[1127] The other one, *Improvisation on the Jota Valenciana*, was transcribed and published together with the Albéniz-transcriptions by Agustín Martinez in 2006. In addition, Granados made an acoustic recording of an *Improvisation on*

[1125] Albéniz, I. (transcription: Milton R. Laufer): *Drei Improvisationen 1903*. München, 2009.
[1126] Martínez, A.M. (transcriptions): *Improvisaciones*. Barcelona, 2006.
[1127] Revised edition by Alicia de Larrocha in: Granados, E.: *Integral para Piano*, vol. 3 (A. de Larrocha, ed.). Barcelona, 2001.

*El Pelele* in 1912 in Barcelona, which was transcribed by Martinez as well.[1128] Edward Elgar also recorded five improvisations in London in 1929, which were transcribed and published by Iain Farrington in 2006.[1129]

The status of such scores raises interesting questions. Within the tradition of classical music, and especially under influence of the *Urtext*-paradigm, it is tempting to see them as something similar to 'normal' scores (i.e., scores written by the composers themselves). In chapter 2.3, I distinguished between the descriptive and the prescriptive function of scores. It seems to me that transcriptions of recorded improvisations are to be seen primarily as descriptive: they are a reflection of the transcriber's observation in the form of a musical text. The (especially rhythmic) discrepancies between different transcriptions of the same recording show that this can be done in many ways (not to mention the many mistakes in some transcriptions). The prescriptive aspect, however, is problematic. To be sure, if one aims to perform the transcription, there is necessarily a prescriptive side to it; but in my opinion, it should not be mistaken for a score by the composer himself. It is striking that such transcriptions are often presented as part of the composer's oeuvre: Farrington, for instance, regards the Elgar transcriptions as 'a considerable addition to [Elgar's] slender repertoire'[1130] (for the piano, that is), and De Larrocha even includes the *Rêverie-Improvisation* in her edition of Granados's complete works. By contrast, I argue that transcriptions should be taken for what they really are, namely mere transcriptions, and therefore interpretations, of recordings. In what follows, I have occasionally used published transcriptions of recorded improvisations as a reference.

### *Recorded improvisations: Albéniz*

**[12.6 #3 Albéniz: improvisation a; rec. 1903]**

The improvisations of Albéniz, although sometimes hard to decipher because of the quality of the wax cylinders,[1131] are consistent and convincing little pieces of music. All three of them are based on dance genres. The first one (cylinder no. 167) is identified by both transcribers as a Minuet – not in the strict Baroque or Classical sense, but because of its similarities with other compositions of Albéniz with that title. It is remarkably regular in its phrase structure; after a first part in D-flat major,[1132] consisting of four eight-bar phrases, follows a contrasting section consisting of a period (eight plus eight bars) in F minor. After this, the beginning is repeated, this time only with two eight-

[1128] Martinez, A.M.: op. cit.
[1129] Farrington, I. (transcriptions): *Edward Elgar: Five Piano Improvisations.* London, 2006.
[1130] Ibidem, preface.
[1131] The cylinders (with numbers 167, 168 and 169) were part of the collection of the violinist and conservatoire director Xavier Turull, who sold them to the Bibliotheca de Catalunya in 2000 [Albeniz, I.: op. cit., III].
[1132] For a discussion about the correct recorded pitch, see the preface to Albéniz, I.: op. cit., III.

bar phrases. As for the form, this is a clear example of a rounded binary. The improvisational character shows in the repeat of the beginning, which is far from precise. Just the opening bars are repeated with exactness; for the rest of the repeat, it is rather the melodic outline and the harmonic model, and of course the key, that create the impression that this section is indeed a restatement of the opening.

It is not easy to improvise during a predetermined amount of time. The length of a wax cylinder recording was two minutes at maximum, but much shorter would be a waste of material. After the rounded binary, I argue that we can hear Albéniz extending the improvisation. Suddenly the tight organisation of the sentences is gone. He does not choose to begin a new episode in another key, but continues in D-flat major. Though this is only speculation, it sounds as if he is filling in time, as though he is unsure how much is left.

**[12.6 #4 Albéniz: improvisation b; rec. 1903]**

The second improvisation, recorded on cylinder no. 168, has received from Agustín Martinez the title 'Seguidillas', a clear genre indication. Indeed, the music shows characteristic features of this Castilian dance form, such as the alternation of interludes that suggest guitar accompaniment, and free melodic verses (always in unison). The interludes, with characteristic *acciaccaturas*, are based upon the Phrygian tetrachord, another well-known locus. This improvisation, too, gives the impression of landing intentionally on a strong ending (with large syncopated chords), after which the music nevertheless continues with another verse. The interlude that follows is harmonically less focused: it starts like the type of interlude that stands on the dominant (V – II7 – V pendulum), but at the very last moment Albéniz returns to the tonic, after which a short coda (I – $II^{6/5}$ oscillation) finishes the piece with repetitive chords on the tonic that are perhaps less effective than the fake ending of 15 seconds before.

**[12.6 #5 Albéniz: improvisation c; rec. 1903]**

The third improvisation on cylinder no. 169 has a very strong Spanish local flavour, too. It is in the same key as the previous piece, F minor. The piece is kept together by a characteristic theme that returns slightly differently (except for the beginning) each time. The introduction of a contrasting idea in G-flat major suggests the beginning of a B section, but the idea is dropped and the music returns to F minor. Did Albéniz realise that he was about to run out of time? Safely back in F minor, the main theme is picked up again, but from now on it circles around chord oscillations that keep confirming the tonic until the end.

To summarise, Albéniz's improvisations are very clearly based upon loci communes from folk music, especially the second and third ones.

***Recorded improvisations: Granados, Saint-Saëns***

Unlike Albéniz, Enrique Granados also recorded improvisations on piano roll, which reduces the distortions as they often occur with old wax cylinders. The improvisation on *El Pelele* and the *Rêverie-Improvisation* form an interesting new category, because both pieces are closely connected with compositions by Granados himself.

**[12.6 #6 Granados: Improvisation on *El Pelele*; rec. 1912]**

*El Pelele* ('The Straw Man') is the title of a piano composition from 1914 which belongs to the collection entitled *Goyescas* – compositions that are inspired by the paintings of Francisco de Goya. *El Pelele* is a rather densely written and virtuosic piece. The *Improvisation on El Pelele* was actually recorded a few years earlier in Barcelona[1133] and may be seen as an earlier version of the later composition. It is technically less complex but follows roughly the same course. The essential musical ideas are all present, though often in a simpler form. Probably this was a premeditated improvisation, a not yet notated sketch of a piece that would later be reworked as *El Pelele.* It is very interesting to note how Granados has later modified the original concept (the one presented in the 'improvisation') by making the transitional passages more effective; in these passages, modulations were added and repetitions were replaced with material that showed more diversity. This recording provides a fascinating insight into the workshop of this composer.

**[12.6 #7 Granados: Rêverie-Improvisation (piano roll; rec. 1916)[1134]]**

In the *Rêverie-Improvisation* the situation is reversed. This piece was recorded in New York after Granados had recorded ten of his own works on piano rolls; the technician left the recording equipment on while Granados improvised.[1135] The recording is clearly related to a composition that was published for the first time in De Larrocha's edition of the complete works in 2001, as a part of the *Goyescas*: *Crepusculo.* The sole source for this edition is an undated manuscript that was probably written around 1910.[1136] This means that when Granados recorded his piano roll in 1916, *Crepusculo* was a finished but still unpublished composition. The improvisation may therefore be seen as a further development of ideas that had already been notated. It is extremely interesting to compare *Crepusculo* and *Rêverie. Crepusculo* has a simple ABA structure in which the A part is repeated exactly. In the *Rêverie* the initial A section largely coincides harmonically and melodically with its composed counterpart, but with many differences in timing. The middle part of *Crepusculo*, an

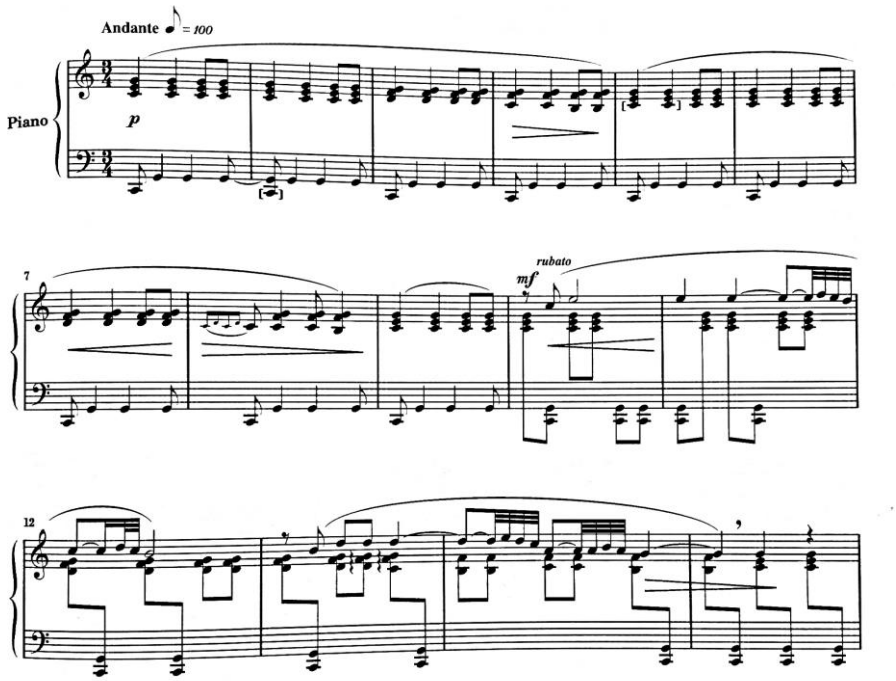
[1133] Recording for Odéon no. 68651, matrix xs 1511; issued on *The Catalan Piano Tradition*, VAI/IPA 1001, 1992.
[1134] https://youtu.be/6p4RUYmgICY (uploaded 2020 by 'Enrique Granados – Onderwerp')
[1135] Hess, C.A.: *Enrique Granados: A Bio-Bibliography.* New York, 1991; 126.
[1136] Granados, E.: *Integral para Piano*, vol. 3 (A. de Larrocha, ed.). Barcelona, 2001; 25.

*Allegro molto leggiero* evoking bird songs, is absent in the *Rêverie.* Instead there is a much longer section that initially suggests guitar music (such as in Debussy's prelude *La sérénade interrompue*), but soon goes off the rails into a frenzied fantasy with varying metres and fortissimo chord repetitions. A return to the 'guitar' music (but not repeated precisely, thus suggesting real improvisation) leads back to the recapitulation of the A section. In the improvisation, however, this repeat is not literal; again the outline is followed faithfully (suggesting that Granados had it firmly in mind), but there are new deviations in timing. Unlike *Crepusculo*, the improvisation finishes with a short coda that recalls both the guitars and the atmosphere of the beginning. It is wonderful to see how Granados must have had a reduced version of the A section in mind, and was able to play with it without getting rid of its structure. The A section of *Crepusculo* served as a true locus communis to him.

**[12.6 #8 Granados: Improvisation on the *Jota Valenciana* (piano roll; rec. 1916)[1137]]**

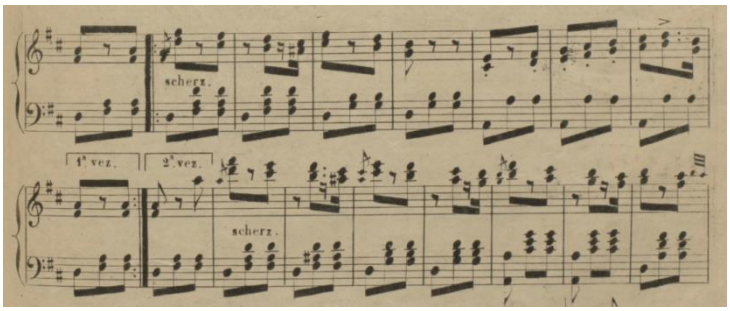
A second improvisation Granados recorded for Duo-Art in 1916 is on a roll with the title: 'Improvisation: theme of Valenciana Jota, with the influence of South Arab Music' (Duo-Art recording no. 6295). The background, and also the genre, of this piece are puzzling. A *jota* is a dance in a fast triple metre; in fact, Granados composed a *Jota Valenciana*, also referred to as *Valenciana*, as the seventh movement of his *Danzas Españolas* op. 37. This piece was described as his favourite encore.[1138] At the end of his stay in New York, Granados was invited, together with the Dutch singer Julia Culp, to perform for president Wilson at the White House. At this occasion Granados played several arrangements and original compositions, and as well 'Jota Valenciana' and 'El Pelele'.[1139] As Granados also recorded his 'Improvisation on the Jota Valenciana' during the same trip, however, one wonders which version was played at the concert in the White House, because the Spanish dance from op. 37 and the improvisation have very little in common. The improvisation is a rather slow piece, transcribed by Martinez in a 3/4 metre with M.M. 100 for the eighth note:[1140]

[1137] https://youtu.be/RDldUQKYetc (uploaded 2010 by 'Ednay Arkspay')
[1138] Hess, C.A.: *Enrique Granados: A Bio-Bibliography.* New York, 1991; 26.
[1139] Hess, C.A.: op. cit., 31.
[1140] Martínez, A.M. (transcriptions): *Improvisaciones.* Barcelona, 2006 ; 15.




*Example 12.6.2*

I suspect that this notation is slightly misleading; more in line with a jota would be to transcribe it in 3/8, still with tempo 100 for the eighth notes, with frequent hemiolas across two bars. Even notated in that way, however, the piece is still unusually slow for a jota. I argue that this piece is to be understood as a transformation of an ordinary jota, in which the tempo is slowed down and the ornamentation in the melody raises associations with 'South Arab music'. This does not yet explain, however, why it is called an improvisation on *the theme of the* Valencian jota. I deem it possible that the title refers to a piece by a now forgotten composer: José Valero. José Valero Peris (who died in 1868), an 'ardent defender of Spanish opera and Spanish music',[1141] wrote a *Jota valenciana* for piano that has some similarities with Granados's ornamented melody, especially in a sequence of descending tetrachords, starting on the ^3:[1142]




*Example 12.6.3*

[1141] Draayer, S.R.: *Art Song composers of Spain.* Lanham, 2009; 77.
[1142] Valero, J.: 'Jota valenciana'. In: *Obras escogidas de varios autores.* Madrid, [1910]; 5.

Interestingly, Valero also published a song with the title 'El Pelele' (1849).[1143] Has he been a hidden influence on Granados?

Granados was a virtuoso pianist. He studied piano privately in Paris with Charles Wilfrid de Bériot, the son of the violinist Charles-Auguste de Bériot and the mezzo- soprano Maria Malibran. De Bériot encouraged the improvisational talent of Granados, who indeed seems to have improvised frequently on stage.[1144] A review in the *Revista Musical Catalana* from 1915 informs the reader about the nature of such improvisations:

> Amb el més gran romanticism traduí el pensament chopinià compendiat en pàgines com el *Nocturn*, òp. 1, el *Vals,* òp. 64, núm. 2, La *Berceuse* i la *Polonesa-fantasie*, òp. 22.
>
> [With a grand, Romantic gesture he translated the Chopin into a compendium of the following pages: the Nocturne, op. 1, the Waltz. Op. 64 no. 2, the *Berceuse*, and the *Polonaise-Fantasy* op. 22.][1145]
>
> (NB the opus numbers of the Nocturne and of the *Polonaise-Fantaisie* are incorrect).

These words give the impression of a compilation, rather than a fantasy on several themes or even a potpourri. Finally, two recorded 'improvisations' by Camille Saint-Saëns, often presented as an *improvised cadenza for Africa op. 89*, recorded in 1904,[1146] and a *Samson et Delilah improvisation* (piano roll, 1915),[1147] are in reality compilations of fragments from these large works.

### *Recorded improvisations: Elgar*

The five improvisations Edward Elgar recorded in 1929 officially fall outside the scope of this study on basis of their recording date; however, given the essentially nineteenth-century character of Elgar's music, there is good reason to include them in this discussion.

Unlike Granados and Albéniz, Elgar was not a virtuoso pianist: he even seems to have disliked the instrument. On the other hand, he used the piano when composing, and developed musical ideas at the keyboard.[1148] Iain Farrington supposes that Elgar, who was very much aware of the potential of recorded sound, made recordings of his improvisations to stimulate progress on new work, for in the 1920's he had composed very little (possibly due to the death of his wife Alice in 1920). Elgar's recorded improvisations are therefore not to be seen as performative musical presentations, but rather as stages in a creative process with compositions as final goals.[1149]

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[1143] Draayer, S. R.: ibidem.
[1144] Hess, C.A.: op. cit., 8.
[1145] Quoted in Hess, C.A.: op. cit., 85.
[1146] https://youtu.be/rRX_d1OAci4
[1147] https://youtu.be/U82UJTu9uaE
[1148] Farrington, op. cit., preface.
[1149] Elgar's improvisations are included in the CD-box *The Elgar edition : The complete electrical recordings of Sir Edward Elgar* (EMI 0 95694 2; 2011), CD 8, tracks 9-13.

**[12.6 #9 Elgar: Five improvisations (rec. 1929)[1150]]**

Elgar's first improvisation in G major is based on a theme by somebody else: Rossini's jolly ballet music for the *Pas de trois* (no. 15) in the third act of *Guillaume Tell.* Elgar, however, does something that reminds one of Granados's jota: he literally quotes the first section of Rossini's polka-style melody, but drastically slows down the original tempo and enriches the harmonisation. As a consequence, the theme sounds like a nostalgic piece in Elgar's lighter style, such as *Salut d'amour.* With respect to a genre, it resembles a Romantic *Gavotte*, in atmosphere similar to Brahms's piano arrangement of Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Gavotte.* After the transformation of Rossini's music, Elgar continues with a very free middle part in B minor that is transcribed accurately by Iain Farrington in a 4/4 metre, but that might also be seen as a *senza tempo* passage. A bridge section modulates back to a shortened repeat of the first part, but with just a few changes – which suggests that Elgar knew this theme well.

The second improvisation in G minor (3'30") starts with a gloomy passage. If the reader allows me a small speculative digression: surely it would be in the spirit of Elgar to associate this beginning with the famous first lines of Dante's *Divina commedia*: 'Midway upon the journey of our life / I found myself within a forest dark, / For the straightforward pathway had been lost.' (translated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow). The music truly wanders and searches. Again, the transcription in 4/4 is at the same time accurate and misleading: it is as if Elgar applies metre very freely, rhythmically closer to recitation (like in Anglican chants) than to classical or Romantic musical phrases. Indeed, this suggests a way of gaining access into this music: that is, by understanding it as free musical declamation. A new, scherzo-like theme follows that makes a premeditated impression, but it soon dissolves again into the heightened declamatory style. Fragments of musical ideas emerge and disappear: this is certainly an example of an improvisatory style, but rather of a musician who improvises to himself than of an improviser who addresses an audience. Unnoticed, the music slips into a regular melody that Farrington has identified as Elgar's song *Fate's Discourtesy* from the cycle *The Fringes of the Fleet* on texts of Rudyard Kipling (1917). With a few interpolations in the manner of the beginning of this improvisation, this song forms the backbone of the remainder of it, though the music ends in a dark G minor. There is a strange contrast between the optimism of the song text and the gloomy setting in this improvisation; Farrington supposes that this might have to do with Elgar's later disillusionment with the wartime era that had produced the song.

The third improvisation in G major (7'50") seems partly very premeditated to me; at least the relatively virtuosic main theme is heard many times without changes and without any hesitation. Its harmonic structure, based on a falling fifth sequence but with a major chord on the sixth degree,

[1150] https://youtu.be/qE2A4Z4_IQE (uploaded 2017 by 'Rodders')

combined with a largely ascending melody, is also rather original. The theme always sounds in the main key, and almost always in the same register. The episodes make a more improvisatory impression; the rather searching harmony is often based on a stepwise line in the bass but lacks more than once a certain harmonic 'logic'. Elgar plays a few elegant modulations and occasionally recalls the texture in the free parts of the previous improvisation. On the whole this piece is somewhat reminiscent of Arensky's second improvisation, and actually it has a Schumannian flavour as well.

From 1913 until his death in 1934, Elgar was working on a never completed piano concerto.[1151] In 1998, the composer Robert Walker realised a performable version of the concerto on the basis of the remaining sketches. Walker used the theme and the general set-up of the fourth improvisation (11'40") for the third movement of the concerto. Whereas the sketches of the first and third movements are fragmentary, the middle movement exists at least in a coherent sketch for two pianos, which Elgar gave to the then young pianist Harriet Cohen. His fourth recorded improvisation gives a different version of this second movement, which makes it comparable with Granados's *El Pelele-* and *Rêverie-* 'improvisations'. Here as well, a composer plays with musical ideas that had not yet been formulated on paper, or not yet been published. In all cases, a musical piece – like a story – had begun to take shape, but still was in a state of flux. The main musical ideas were already relatively concrete, while the connecting material and episodes were still more open. From an analytical point of view, it is very interesting that in both *El Pelele* and in Elgar's middle movement, the tonal plan was obviously fixed at a relatively late stage; the main themes, however, were determined early in the process.

The fifth improvisation (16'20") is the only one to finish in a key that is remote from the opening key: it starts in D minor and finishes in A-flat major. It is possible that Elgar was stopped by the limited recording time. The piece gives the impression of a loosely constructed funeral march *à la* Chopin: there is even a contrasting theme in C major that strikingly resembles – at least in atmosphere – the middle section of Chopin's march in the piano sonata in B-flat minor op. 35. This theme reoccurs later in D major; it looks like Elgar remembered especially its opening bar and the generally descending scalar motion. The funeral march itself opens with a motif of a rising D-minor scale in thirds that initially gives the impression of an introduction, because after four 'bars' a new melody starts, accompanied by a oscillating accompaniment in the left hand that, again, resembles Chopin's composition. In the course of the piece, this melody disappears, and it is especially the scale motif from the 'introduction' that is developed. Elgar modulates often and extensively in this improvisation, but towards the end there appears to be a recapitulation of the beginning in D minor, after which he unexpectedly modulates to F minor. It is easy to imagine that he planned another episode here, eventually to come back to the main key again, but that he was interrupted by the recording engineers. The music turns to the relative major key and introduces a new melodic idea

[1151] For a survey of the history of the concerto, see http://www.elgar.org/3piancob.htm

that Farrington quite convincingly links to the opening theme, also in A-flat major, of Elgar's First Symphony, written more than twenty years earlier. It is possible that Elgar planned to finish the improvisation in a tender D major, and decided to choose A-flat major instead because there was no time left to modulate back from F minor. The combination of the key of A-flat and the atmosphere in the coda might have brought to his mind this earlier theme. This may be speculative reasoning, but structurally the introduction of new melodic material in the coda is highly unusual because it contradicts the concluding character of a coda, suggesting a new beginning instead.

The traditional view on piano improvisations by composers such as the ones discussed above would be that most of these are not really improvisations, but rather pre-studies for compositions. The background of this view is the idea that it is the composition that counts. However, when we acknowledge that a score and a performance are different entities, this view is too simplistic. Regardless of the connection with composed or premeditated musical material, or the particular occasion for the improvisation, every recording discussed above is still a recording of a performance. If these recordings make clear one thing, it is the absolutely continuous fluidity of musical creation, which is by definition an inextricable mix of on-the-spot decisions, more or less vague plans, and premeditated material. The role of loci communes, for instance on the level of genre, but also of harmonic patterns and melodic tendencies, is demonstrated time and again. A composition is fundamentally different from an improvisation, but the acts of improvising and composing are related. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, Czerny's approach to improvisation had lost little of its validity, even though pianists had stopped improvising fantasies on stage for many years.

### *Free fantasies*

Some passages in Elgar's improvisations, especially the second one, sound so free that they give the impression of escaping any locus communis. Especially when the metrical organisation becomes unclear, all sense of musical direction gets lost. In other words, the listener no longer knows what to expect. Metre is basically any regularity of pulse, which means that there is difference between strong and light beats. From the earliest polyphony on, this difference has been of fundamental importance for the treatment of dissonances. But in the twentieth century, this approach to dissonance treatment shifted radically with the rise of the idea of the 'emancipation' of dissonance; as a result, the expectation of a 'resolution' disappeared. Indeed this often led towards a dissolution of metre as well, for instance in serialist scores where the bar lines often no longer refer to a noticeable pulse. In the context of tonal music, vagueness or even absence of metre is primarily associated with the notion of improvisation. In nineteenth-century composed music, *senza tempo* or *senza misura* passages virtually always occur as special moments within a frame of metrical music, typically as an introduction or as a small cadenza – indeed, music that is associated with improvisation. Very often such passages avoid polyphony and harmonic development. Within the styles discussed in this study,

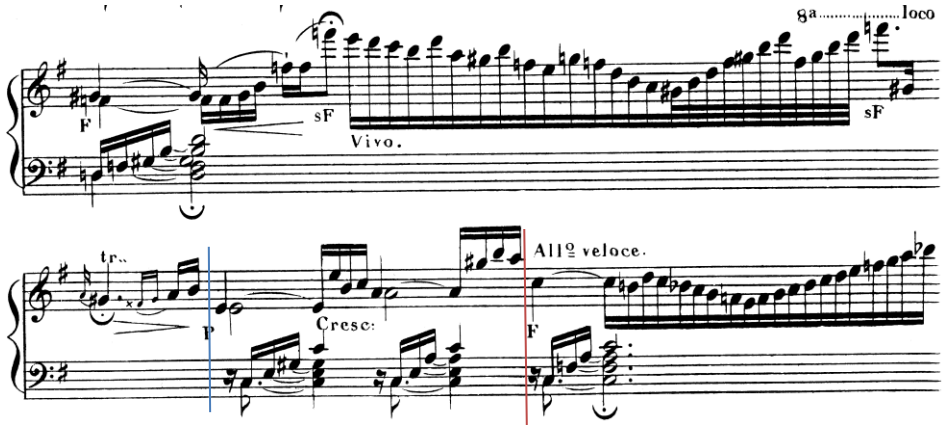
music that is free of any metre might be seen as the ultimate manifestation of the improvisatory; or to state this situation in reverse, suggesting this freedom in a score or applying it in a performance strongly suggests improvisational liberty (→ chapter 7).

Since dissonance treatment in tonal music is coupled to metre, any 'traditional' use of dissonances and consonances immediately suggests a metre. This is true of the passages in Elgar's improvisations mentioned above, but it also can be heard in a remarkably free improvisation that the German pianist Egon Petri recorded for Julius Block. It was recorded in 1923, still on wax rolls – by then already an old-fashioned technique.[1152] Especially at the beginning of his improvisation, Petri's music wanders freely and it is difficult to hear it in a fixed metre; at the same time, however, there clearly is a pulse, especially from the moment when it consists of more than just a single voice.

Is it indeed true, as I suggested at the beginning of this section, that such music escapes any locus communis? Already the fact that resolving dissonances suggest a metre implies the opposite, though it may very well be that patterns are interrupted and combined in unusual ways. Even the idea that this 'free' music does not belong to any genre is not true, since it is precisely this absence of formal conventions that defines a genre first described by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: the *freye Fantasie*.

Bach's free fantasy, as written about in his *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen* (1762), falls outside the scope of this study. However, Carl Czerny referred to it in his description of more elaborate preludes.[1153] Czerny describes this type of fantasy as 'anscheinend völlig bewusstlos, gleich dem Umherirren in unbekannten Gegenden' [seemingly unconscious, resembling wanderings into unknown regions]. He adds that it can be very expressive and effective, but that it should not be drawn out too long and that it should alternate with rhythmically more defined passages. (Incidentally, Petri does precisely that in the course of his improvisation.) Czerny's example prelude is written without bar lines, but there can be little doubt about which beats are strong and which are weak. Moreover, well-known harmonic formulas are recognisable in the music. In the following fragment, for instance, the blue line indicates an imaginary bar line that corresponds with the downbeat nature of the following suspension chord. What is slightly unusual about the locus of the cadence formula in this 'bar' is the fact that it finishes on a less stable sixth chord; indeed, Czerny uses this instability for a surprising continuation, marked by the red imaginary bar line. The surprise consists of the placement of a 6/4 chord on the same bass note (again a typical downbeat-chord), implying a cadence in F major and thus a sudden modulation to that key (which indeed takes place). In keeping with the surprising effect, it has been marked *forte*.

[1152] The Dawn of Recording, CD 1, track 28.
[1153] Czerny, op. 200; 20-21.




*Example 12.6.4*

This example from Czerny may serve to show that even in a free fantasy, seemingly without metre, there are in reality small scale harmonic and melodic loci at work, each of them momentarily suggesting a metre. Such loci, however, may be connected in unexpected ways, and the successive metres may differ. The latter is what gave the 'declamatory' effect to Elgar's free passage discussed above: the music could not easily be written in a fixed metre, but it did project the feeling of strong and weak beats, only in irregular groupings.

### *Capriccio*

Even on the level of genre, one may combine loci in unusual ways. The last chapter of Czerny's *Anleitung* treats what he calls the *Capriccio*:

> Ein willkührliches Aneinanderreihen eigener Ideen, ohne besondere Durchführung, ein launiges schnelles Abspringen von einem Motiv zum andern, ohne weiteren Zusammenhang, als den der Zufall, oder, absichtlos, der Musiksinn des Spielers giebt. Das humoristische kann und muss also darin vorherrschen.[1154]
>
> [An arbitrary linking of individual ideas without any particular development, a whimsical and swift shifting from one motive to the other without further relationship than that bestowed by chance or, unintentionally, by the musical inclination of the performer. Thus the sense of the humorous can and must prevail therein.[1155]]

Czerny's example piece indeed can be seen as an arbitrary combination of fragments that individually correspond with genres as presented above in section 12.2. He writes that the *Capriccio* in the true sense is the freest form of improvising and that composed examples are rare (many pieces with this title he regards as fantasies, as described earlier). However, there is one piece of Beethoven that he 'recommends': the *Fantasie* op. 77. This is an extraordinary composition, different from anything

[1154] Czerny op. 200; 105.
[1155] Czerny / Mitchell, 121.

else Beethoven wrote. Czerny gives G minor as its key, but actually it finishes in B major – which is already one of its 'whimsical' features. In all other respects as well, Beethoven's *Phantasy* meets Czerny's description of the *Capriccio* as a category of improvisation. It consists of fragmentary sections in the most diverse tempi, continually changing keys, without any thematic connection. Nonetheless it 'works' as a piece, which is probably because it more or less stabilises in the second half when a theme with variations in B major appears. Though this is also interspersed with contrasting ideas and virtuosic runs, B major remains the main key until the end of the piece. Beethoven even lets the theme return *adagio* in the coda.

In this chapter, emphasis has been laid on the importance of genres. This is very much in line with the role the concept of locus communis plays throughout this study, a concept of which genres are an instance. To some readers, this approach might give the impression of being too one-sided. Isn't the selection of source material too much focused on treatises that confirm views which were traditional already at the time of publication, especially in the case of Czerny? Didn't I mention the fact that compositions of, for instance, Schumann were much more innovative? It is a question that relates to the one I already raised at the end of the introduction to this chapter (section 12.1).

First of all, Schumann's innovations I referred to at the beginning of section 12.3 concerned the fixed genres as they were handed down from the eighteenth century. As noted earlier, one could argue that Schumann 'redefined' musical genres in the sense that he didn't content himself with elegant allegrettos, funeral marches and dance forms as Czerny presented them. Schumann's innovations led to the situation that was earlier illustrated with Brahms's *Handel Variations*, in which musical genres still play an important role as loci communes, but less overtly so. Schumann's *Novelletten* cannot be called a genre in its own right, but parts of individual compositions from this cycle definitely fall within the genres of a march, a song without words, a waltz, etc. In addition, there is the tendency for composers such as Schumann to create their own genres, for instance the 'im Volkston'-type of music. Emphasising the importance of musical genre does not imply that the innovative aspects of these works are to be ignored. I do believe, though, that the importance of traditional musical genres in nineteenth-century music has been neglected somewhat in recent classical music practice – a neglect that possibly coincides more or less with the decline of an improvisational approach to music-making.

Second, as I mentioned in chapter 1, locus communis as a concept has served in this study as a lens through which to look at improvisation. It creates the possibility of saying at least something about an inherently ephemeral topic, but of course it is not the only possible approach. On the other hand, within the modern landscape of discussions about improvisation, which are perhaps somewhat dominated by the CSI narrative, I do think that this aspect, strongly connected with a possibly forgotten kind of musical craftsmanship, deserves more attention than it tends to get. In the context

of nineteenth-century music, improvising demanded being well-educated in music; just as an orator had to be well-read, so an improviser had to know 'alles Gute und Grosse der Meister aller Zeiten' [every good and valuable work by the masters from all periods] and should have memorised a large stock of interesting ideas from musical literature, as Czerny wrote.[1156] Musical erudition was regarded an important quality.

Finally, it is good to stress once more that a locus communis, including musical genre, is to be thought of as a *Fundgrube* of musical ideas, not as some pattern or schedule to adhere to; it doesn't serve as a limitation of fantasy, but, on the contrary, as a source of inspiration.

## 12.7 Historically inspired improvisation: a fantasy on one theme

In this section an example of what I termed 'historically inspired improvisation' will be discussed. The question of how this recorded improvisation may be regarded stylistically will eventually be answered at the end of this section. The goal of my analysis is to show how the notion of 'locus communis' serves as a way to bring the stylistic aspect into the discussion.

At a concert as part of the second Erasmus Intensive improvisation project in 2013 (→ chapter 1.1) I improvised a sonata on a theme provided by the audience. I chose to ask for a theme immediately before my performance, and in response somebody sang the beginning of the main theme of the Harry Potter films. I repeated the theme on the piano and allowed myself about 20 seconds to think.

**[12.7 #1 Harry Potter sonata: theme]**

Before I asked for a theme, I had already told the audience that my intention was to improvise a sonata with connected movements. The inspiration for that idea came from pieces such as Liszt's sonata in B minor, Saint-Saëns's cello concerto and, especially with respect to one single theme connecting the different movements, Schubert's *Wandererfantasie*. In addition, I knew a recording of the organist Pierre Cochereau improvising an organ symphony on the theme of *Veni creator* in 1972.[1157] At that time I was not yet familiar with Czerny's ideas about fantasies on a single theme as described in this chapter (→ section 12.2). Therefore, the recording discussed here is not to be seen as an application of ideas that have been developed in this study; rather, it may serve as an example of an approach to improvisation that I have been practicing all my professional life, and that has been at the basis of the present study.

Since I did not know which mode or key to expect for the theme, I had not established the key beforehand. On the other hand I do have a certain preference for D-flat major, so had it been a theme

[1156] Czerny op. 200, 36.
[1157] CD release on Ursina Motette / CD 12611 (1999)

in major, this key would have been a likely choice; the eventual B-flat minor is obviously closely related to this key. As for the form, I like to think of such an improvisation as a walk through a city: one plans where to finish, and roughly knows how to get there; it may very well be, though, that a reason to deviate from the planned direction arises, and that one decides to follow an unforeseen street. This is not a problem, but it means that one has to compensate afterwards for the unplanned digression in order to reach the final goal. Of course, I was familiar with the structure of a sonata, and with sonata form as such. These formal principles, however, represented only rough directions to me, and guidelines for generating appropriate musical ideas. I didn't yet use the concept of loci at that time, but most certainly I found the idea of making a sonata to be more of an inspiration than a limitation. Stylistically I am quite fond of improvising in a late-Romantic idiom, and if the theme would allow for it, I intended to choose that language – which is what happened. The instrument, a Steinway D grand piano, suited this style too.

The improvisation was recorded from the audience with simple equipment.[1158] For the sake of convenience, I have split the original recording (26 minutes) into three different sections according to the movements of the piece. In this analysis, I will focus on both genre-specific loci and loci on a more detailed level (including texture, phrase structure, harmonic patterns and melodic gesture). I will particularly show loci that are based on the canonisation of specific compositions. An added value of analysing one's own recording is that one may remember one's intentions at a certain passage, and even any associations. It will be possible to reconstruct at least partly the horizon of this improvisation, which is much less the case when the analyst does not coincide with the performer.

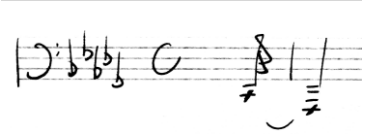
### *a. Introduction and first movement*

**[12.7 #2 Harry Potter sonata: 1st movement]**

The first movement is in a free monothematic sonata form. It starts with a slow introduction prolonging the dominant (0'00"- 1'02"). The isolated tones in the lower register are an allusion to the beginning of the Liszt sonata. During the introduction I had already in mind how to start the following 'allegro' movement: the key of B-flat minor made me think of Rachmaninov's *Second Sonata* op. 36, a piece I actually didn't remember except for the impressive beginning gesture. What I imagined or 'premeditated' of the opening of the fast movement was just this very beginning: a fast downward gesture to the low B-flat, played fortissimo, after which a tumultuous arpeggiated B-flat minor texture would provide the setting for the main theme – a rather Rachmaninov-like setting, but, as mentioned above, the precise notes of his B-flat minor sonata were unfamiliar to me. It is just this beautiful opening gesture and a familiar texture in Rachmaninov's work that served as loci to

[1158] Thanks to Jaap-Jan de Rooij for sharing the recording with me.

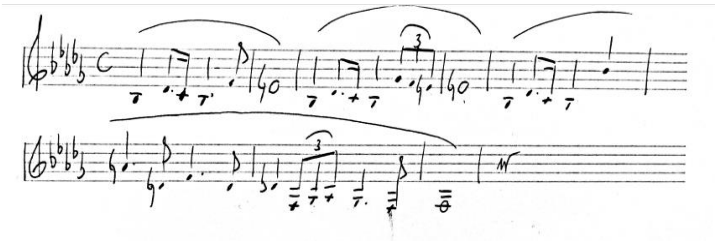
me. During the slow introduction I prepared for this opening by letting an opening motif grow from the isolated tones. Easy to remember, it returns throughout the improvisation as a motto, just like in Czerny's description of fantasies with several themes.



*Example 12.7.1*

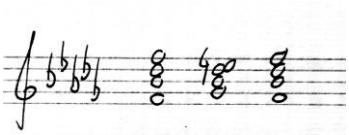
The more melodic fragments in the very low register are dropped during the course of the introduction. The leaping motif, on the other hand, is developed through the interplay of consonances and dissonances, highlighting the tritone.

At 1'03" the main theme enters, clearly in a Rachmaninov-derived locus. The original material is changed and expanded:



*Example 12.7.2*

The melody has the form of a classical period with sentence structures within the antecedent and consequent. Harmonically, the theme circles around a chord oscillation that is also easy to remember and that returns several times in the improvisation. With hindsight, it recalls Saint-Saëns's 'fishes' from the *Carnaval des animaux*.



*Example 12.7.3*

The first theme as a whole has a rounded ABA structure, and at 2'49" a deceptive cadence leads into a transition that modulates through sequences to G-flat major. I remember that I consciously decided not to use the more common D-flat major for the second theme because I wanted to enjoy that key in the slow movement, so D-flat major was 'saved' for later. At 3'29", the second theme starts.

The texture of the second theme is a familiar locus in compositions of Chopin, Liszt and Rachmaninov alike. Melodically it is equally derived from the Harry Potter motif. It has a simple repeated structure, with rather Chopinesque *fioritures* in the repeat. As a result, the 'second theme'

section is relatively short. I suppose that this is also due to the monothematic design of the exposition: with contrasting material, this section would most likely have been more developed.

At 4'24" a codetta winds up the exposition. The motif from the introduction sounds in the bass register; the harmony is a transposition of the harmonic cell of the main theme, and the passage also has a strong reminiscence of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. This last allusion was unconscious; the other two features were not unconscious, but not 'planned' either: they were the result of the idea to go back to the beginning of the piece. Motivic connections are the consequence of this idea, not the other way around. The music comes to rest on a long G-flat major chord.

At 4'41" the development section starts with an exploration of the tritone. The idea of the codetta is picked up and pushed into a Scriabin-like enlarged tonality. At 5'40" the music even becomes completely chromatic. At 5'53" the main theme enters and is developed by sequence; after the chromatic passages, this sequence must have felt very commonplace to me, which is why it soon accelerates and becomes increasingly chromatic. At 6'08" it lands on a theme-derived ostinato in E-flat minor that is combined with the opening motif in both the extreme high and low registers. At 6'27", the chromatic density increases again (with some brief reminiscences of the first movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*) until 6'40" where a quasi-recapitulation occurs with thematic material in the home key, but on a 6/4 harmony on a pedal F in the bass; the chord pendulum of the first theme develops into a new double pedal on the tritone B-flat / E as a tremolo (6'53"), combined again with the opening motif in the extreme registers. In the bass this results in an obsessive tritone on the low D-flat; from 7'07" on a very chromatic melody in the low register enters that sounds like a chromatic distortion of the cello-imitation in Chopin's etude op. 25 no. 7. At 7'40" the low D-flat resolves to a C, with a dominant-seventh harmony as a result. At 7'46" the previous ostinato motif from 6'08" joins in, and the tritone-tremolo changes into a trill. The dominant-seventh chord turns into a half-diminished sonority, which initiates a (postponed) II – V – I progression in B-flat minor, thus creating the expectation of the recapitulation. The cadence is interrupted at 8'02", where the motif of the trill (heard previously at 7'46") is picked up and expanded chromatically to multiple voices (another allusion to Scriabin), all this on a very long pedal F (sometimes latent) in the bass. At 8'30" the double trills converge on a long trill on the high F above a V7-harmony; again, this is extended by adding the opening motifs in extreme registers, but this time the bass motif resolves into an octave, obsessively repeated on the low F, thus supporting a large crescendo that finally leads to the long-expected recapitulation at 8'57". In summary, the part that really prepares for the recapitulation (from 6'08" on) occupies almost half of the length of the entire development section. The obvious model for such an increase in tension on a delayed return of the home key is Beethoven, and later Bruckner.

The recapitulation opens with roughly a repeat of the first theme as presented in the exposition, including the ABA structure – a clear example of how one remembers not the details of the musical foreground, but rather harmonic, melodic and formal loci communes. Interestingly this obviously included finishing with a deceptive cadence (9'55"). In the exposition this was the moment of the transition; in a monothematic sonata there is a small formal problem here, for the material of the second theme coincides with the first theme. If I would have chosen B-flat major for the second theme recapitulation, it might not have worked like a new theme, but rather as a modification of the first theme. Moreover, I probably didn't remember the precise form of the second theme clearly at that moment. For these reasons I chose to go with a truncated recapitulation – which in any case is a familiar strategy in Romantic sonatas, since the well-balancedness of a literal recapitulation conflicts with the archetypal sense of development in that style. The VI harmony at 9'55" is prolongated this time with thematic material, including the by now familiar chord pendulum. The music comes to rest on a conventional cadential return to the tonic, one more time postponed at 10'15" before it is finally reached at 10'24". The coda picks up the tremolo with the opening motif as at the end of the recapitulation.

In a written analysis like this the reader easily gets the impression that especially thematic and motivic connections must have been planned. This, however, was not the case; the most convincing evidence for that is the fact that most material was directly connected with a subject that was suggested only one minute before the music was played. One might say that the musical discourse was guided by the clear principle of the traditional sonata form, but that says nothing about the actual musical content. On the contrary, this example shows that what is usually called musical logic is not (necessarily) the result of a well-designed master plan. It often rather stems from a musical narrative based on the concatenation of musical ideas, just like an improvising orator who may connect with what he has said earlier without having sketched the whole structure of his speech beforehand. Chapter 14 will explore this phenomenon further.

***b. Second movement***

**[12.7 #3 Harry Potter sonata: 2nd movement]**

After a transition with a chromatic melody on the dominant harmony, a Mahlerian locus (see the introduction to the *Adagio* of his ninth symphony, a piece in the same key), an accompaniment settles the key of D-flat major at 0'37". The hesitant character, caused by the repeated interruptions, somewhat elevates it above the level of a generic accompanying texture and gives it a slightly thematic content. At 1'20" a drawn-out cantilena starts, based upon the motivic material of the Harry Potter theme. The texture is a well-known locus in Romantic piano music; harmonically and melodically there are influences of Rachmaninov, but also Mahler, for instance in the slow ornamental turn at

2'28". At 2'36" a deceptive cadence leads towards a developing passage with modulating sequences that eventually ends up in chromatic shifts as in the late work of Gabriel Fauré (2'50"), and leads back to a cadence in D-flat again, concluding the first section. At 3'17" a new idea in C-sharp minor (but also derived from the Harry Potter motif) is introduced. (The succession of the first and second sections in Fauré's *Nocturne* no. 6 in D-flat major op. 63 possibly crossed my mind here; associations are often triggered by similarities in key). At 3'29" the opening motif sounds quietly in the bass, but is not pursued. Harmonically, this passage is perhaps indebted to Fauré. Quite surprisingly, a new idea in F minor comes in at 4'02"; this idea, which is not related to the theme, consists of rapid arpeggios over a descending tetrachord. The idea of introducing fast arpeggio passage work might also be borrowed from Fauré's sixth nocturne, though in that piece it constitutes a separate section. Here it functions as a bridge that leads back to a recapitulation of the main musical idea; at 4'15" the arpeggios change into rapid scales on a prolonged dominant harmony, leading to a very extended trill on a high A-flat, still delaying the tonic resolution. Under this trill the arpeggio idea sounds again, this time in D-flat major, followed by the familiar playing with the opening motif in a dialogue between the high and low registers of the piano. At 5'08" the music that opened this movement returns, though with due alterations. The principal melody (or at least what I remembered of it) sounds in the tenor register. At 5'53" it starts to wing upward in the manner of Mahler and Richard Strauss, disappearing into the sky, as it were, *diminuendo al niente* – until at 6'29" the introduction to this movement is freely quoted, confirming once more the associations with Mahlerian loci, and finally resolving into the tonic. At 6'58" a coda wraps up the movement, quoting a variant that Liszt notated for the end of his concert-study *Harmonies du soir* – a rather extraordinary harmonisation of the descending whole tone scale in the bass.[1159] This was a conscious quotation, probably again triggered by the key. The opening motif of the sonata softly sounds during the final chords.

### *c. Third movement*

**[12.7 #4 Harry Potter sonata: 3rd movement]**

The third movement starts as a fugue, and it was my plan to develop it into a grand Romantic piano fugue as in Brahms's *Handel variations* or César Franck's *Prélude, Choral et Fugue.* The theme, of course based upon the Harry Potter subject, consists of a simple repetition of the subject of this sonata in 4/4. With hindsight I think that it was not a very successful fugue theme: the sheer repetition makes it difficult to create direction, and harmonically it is rather monotonous as well. Just one minute of thinking time would have been enough to invent a better one, but this time obviously wasn't available: the idea of making a fugue only came during the slow movement.

[1159] Ramann, L.: *Liszt-Pädagogium* (Leipzig, 1902). Facsimile reprint Wiesbaden, 1986; ch. XI, 6.

In the fugue exposition there are actually no problems; the monotony of the theme can be used to create a pensive and legato exposition, a bit like the beginnings of many Reger fugues, or maybe also some of the slow fugues of Shostakovitch. The voices enter in the order bass – tenor – alto – soprano. At 1'11" the soprano again enters with a contra-exposition of the theme in the main key. The texture becomes slightly less polyphonic. At 1'31" there is an entrance in F minor in the low bass register, over which slow chord arpeggiations try to move the music to a higher level of intensity. I remember, however, that I didn't quite see at that moment how to continue this track: at 1'49" the music starts to calm down again; the chromatic intensity disappears and gives way to more consonant simplicity. To be very honest, I remember that I quite simply felt bored with the fugue as it developed, and in a split second I decided to let it 'die' and think of an alternative. Listening to the recording, this passage indeed comes across as a draining off of all energy. Instead of trying to keep the idea of a fugue alive, I reckoned it rhetorically better to go for an extreme option. The passage from 2'00"-2'13", standing on the D-flat major sixth chord, lazily quoting the opening motif of the sonata, almost sounds like playing automatically while thinking about what to do next – which probably it was.

At 2'14" suddenly there is some real finale music: a fast duple metre with fast passage work and dotted rhythms, a locus that probably goes back to the last movement of Beethoven's *Appassionata* sonata. With hindsight I am happy with the decision I took (though I see alternative possibilities for the fugue now, of course). Because the fugue dries up so clearly, it works like an introductory feint that makes the finale only much more effective. If I had played the fast music immediately after the slow movement, it would probably have sounded rather predictable. The element of surprise just does the job of launching off to an energetic finale. Incidentally, the repetition of the theme one fifth higher at 2'25" shows that the fugue-idea still crossed my mind. Together with a restatement of the theme in b-flat at 2'41" the first section of the finale works like a paraphrase of the fugue exposition.

At 2'52" a contrasting idea starts with dense chromatic passages, but on a very stable basis of D minor. At 3'17" the theme sounds again in F minor, then turning into a dominant that resolves to a recapitulation of the finale's beginning at 3'37". The second idea in D minor briefly returns, quoting also the arpeggio idea of the slow movement, but at 4'03" the beginning theme is reaffirmed, played fortissimo and with octaves that recall French symphonic music like Berlioz or Saint-Saëns. At 4'27" a peroration starts, speeding up the tempo even further and coming to a halt at 5'00" with quotations of the opening motif from the introduction. At 5'19" the music has suddenly turned inward, prolonging the final chord with a Rachmaninov-style progression that, however, is in fact a modification of the harmonic motif of the theme of the first movement; thus the last word is given to the opening motif.

What is the style of this improvisation? Although I used loci that can be associated with a specific composer or even composition, this does not mean that I was really playing 'in the styles of' these composers (→ section 12.1). On the whole, more general loci of genre, form, and harmony define a more or less late-Romantic piano style, influenced by Lisztian virtuosity and late-nineteenth-century chromatic harmony. Sometimes the chromatic density becomes so strong that there are almost moments of atonality; even in Rachmaninov such moments are extremely scarce. They may be found in the later works of Scriabin, but then they would probably not be combined with more commonplace harmonic progressions as occur here. As an example of 'historically inspired improvisation' this can be seen as an improvised fantasy-sonata on one theme in a late-Romantic piano style.

Often when style-oriented improvisation is the subject of discussion, it is framed in terms of rules and restrictions. I would like to emphasise again that this is not necessarily correct. An orator might choose a different idiom when talking to school children, compared to when he delivers an academic paper, without feeling 'restricted by the rules' of the appropriate idioms; for me it was not different in this case. If I decided that a particular melodic or harmonic phrase would be too 'classical' for this style, I avoided it – but just because it would endanger the unity and organic quality of my 'story'. During the process of improvising there were merely positive decisions; in an ideal world it should be like that in all music-making.

# Chapter 13. Organ improvisation in Paris

## 13.1 The French school of organ improvisation

At the beginning of chapter 12.4, I mentioned a 'symphony' for organ, improvised by Pierre Cochereau. In the French late-Romantic organ tradition, the term 'symphony' usually denoted an organ sonata; its background is the so-called 'symphonic' organ type of the late nineteenth century, in France developed notably by the organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. The many nuances in dynamics and timbre such instruments could produce made it easier to create smooth changes, a quality that was associated with the sound of a symphonic orchestra. Cochereau, organist of *Notre-Dame de Paris* from 1955 until his death in 1989, was a famous twentieth-century representative of a French tradition of improvisation that originated in the nineteenth century and has lost only little of its brilliance since. Improvisation was, and still is, an indispensable feature of the French organ school that developed from the famous class of César Franck at the Paris Conservatoire, enriched by the technical rigour of the students of Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens. Names such as Charles-Marie Widor, Alexandre Guilmant, Louis Vierne, Charles Tournemire, Marcel Dupré, Jean Langlais and Maurice Duruflé are still well-known even outside the organ world, and the importance of this school for the work of Olivier Messiaen cannot be overestimated. The French tradition of improvisation is certainly not the only one in the organ world, but it is special insofar as it is relatively well integrated within the broader concert culture. The French organ school has already been the subject of countless articles and monographs; in this study the focus will be on the teaching of improvisation at the Paris Conservatoire in relation to aspects of genre and other loci communes. I will show how this teaching tradition was based upon a very limited number of genres which were treated with great formal rigour; moreover, students were supposed to apply very strict principles of voice leading. With respect to modulations, the common-tone principle was still being propagated. In addition, I will argue that notably in French music, specific stop combinations on the organ can be regarded as loci in their own right.

The organ has always been regarded the instrument par excellence for free improvisation. Several reasons for this can be mentioned. Since the Middle Ages, the organ has primarily been used in liturgy, which makes the church its natural habitat. There are many parallels between liturgy and theatre, and the function of music is one of them: it is always part of a larger whole. A liturgical event has so many aspects that are hard to predict in detail, especially with respect to the length of an act, that the ability to improvise music is often seen as a prerequisite for a church organist. Secondly, no two organs are the same. Where piano builders have usually produced models in series, every organ has its specific composition of stops (the disposition), intonation and outer appearance, all related to the space for which an instrument was built. There is no better way to make optimal use of the

possibilities of a particular organ than by improvising on it, guided by what the instrument has to offer.

Camille Saint-Saëns, who played the organ in *La Madeleine* from 1858 until 1877, described the circumstances in the France of his youth in an article in *The Musical Quarterly* from 1916:

> Formerly, improvisation was the basis of the organist's talent; his virtuosity was slight – music written for organ with obbligato pedal was beyond his powers. As a compensation we had improvisations of the highest order. (...) It is improvisation alone which permits one to employ all the resources of the large instrument, and to adapt oneself to the infinite variety of organs; only improvisation can follow the service perfectly, the pieces written for this purpose being almost always too short or too slow.[1160]

As a corollary of this situation, most French organists were hardly interested in composed music at that time (the 1840's).[1161]

Finally, an organ player has only limited control of the tone quality: he has to work with the instrument as it was built. The flip side of this is that the instrument provides a sonic frame: a specific stop may invite, or even call for, a particular kind of music. This might be for physical reasons: a very long and wide pipe, for instance, needs more time for the tone to reach its full resonance than a short one, which makes quick runs played with a 32' *Sousbasse* almost impossible to follow for a listener. The character of the sound and its concomitant associations also play a role: the fierce sound of a trumpet stop calls for a different kind of music than a tender *Bourdon.* Especially in the French Baroque, there was a tendency to indicate musical genres for organ by the names of the characteristic stops or stop combinations. The title *Basse de trompette*, for instance, implied much more than just a piece without pedals in which the principal melody was played in the left hand with a Trumpet 8' stop: it also created expectations with regard to tempo, character and construction of the piece. French organ music was based on a large number of such loci communes: *Tierce en taille* for a richly ornamented solo melody in the tenor, registered with a combination of stops including the fifth harmonic, *Plein jeu* and *Grand jeu* for two different types of plenum with corresponding types of music, etc. Even during the nineteenth century, such loci still exist: the soft reed stop *Voix humaine*, for instance, is traditionally used in combination with a *tremblant* for slow passages in chords. What may appear to be a deficit (the fact that the organist can't influence the tone) proves to be a catalyst for improvisation. In the words of Saint-Saëns: 'The organ is thought-provoking. As one touches the organ, the imagination is awakened, and the unforeseen rises from the depths of the unconscious.'[1162]

The liturgical situation in the predominantly Catholic churches in France made demands of an organist that differed from those in Lutheran and other Protestant churches. On the main organ were

[1160] Quoted in Smith, R.: *Toward an Authentic Interpretation of the Organ Works of César Franck.* New York, 1983; 5.
[1161] Ochse, O.: *Organists and Organ Playing in Nineteenth-Century France and Belgium.* Bloomington, 1994; 31.
[1162] Quoted in Ochse, O.: op. cit., 60.

played preludes, offertories and postludes, and depending on the situation, versets in alternation with the choir or (during vespers) interludes in between (Gregorian) psalms that were sung by the choir. The choir was often accompanied by a second organist from the chancel organ. The *organiste titulaire* (who played the main organ) was not responsible for accompanying congregational singing, which played no role in the Catholic service.

### 13.2 The organ class at the Conservatoire de Paris

At the Paris Conservatoire, this improvisational background translated into the organisation of the organ curriculum. Organ belonged to the department of theory and composition: organ students were supposed to have first acquired a solid basis in harmony and counterpoint. An 1848 institutional report puts it as follows:

> L'étude de cet instrument, destiné principalement à l'improvisation, se rattache essentiellement à celles de l'harmonie et de la composition, indispensables à l'organiste.
>
> [The study of this instrument, which is primarily intended for improvisation, essentially attaches itself to the studies of harmony and composition, indispensable for an organist.][1163]

There is one more reason why this organisational feature is less strange than it might appear today. Until fairly recently, organ players were trained as keyboard players in general. It should not be forgotten that until the 1920's, playing something on the organ required hiring pumpers to fill the bellows with air ('wind') by operating the levers with their feet. The organ was not an instrument one could practice for hours every day: it must have functioned as an extra specialisation. In the days of Bach, an organist was always also a harpsichordist; the pedal technique was primarily developed on a clavichord or harpsichord with a pedal board. In the nineteenth century, the piano took the place of the harpsichord as an organist's basic instrument, and the *pédalier*, a piano with a pedal board, became a popular practice instrument. Many well-known organ virtuosos and composers were in the first place very good pianists, including Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt, Saint-Saëns, and also Franck, who started his career as a piano prodigy. In his *Cours d'Improvisation* (1925 / 1937), Marcel Dupré still makes very heavy demands on the pianistic technique of the organ student. From the 1920's on, the installation of electric blowers enabled organists to practice much more freely on the large instruments in churches, which may have contributed to the modern separation between pianists (or harpsichordists) and organists. It means, however, that the organ repertoire up to

[1163] Quoted in Tandberg, S.E.: *Imagination, Form, Movement and Sound: Studies in Musical Improvisation* (diss.). Gotheburg, 2008; 76.

Messiaen was composed for players who possessed a very developed and flexible keyboard technique, and who mastered more instruments than just the organ.[1164]

During the French Revolution and the years of the Reign of Terror, the church had fallen into disgrace, and the organ with it. Many instruments were demolished, and there is a genuine hiatus in the French organ culture around 1800. From 1810 on,[1165] a revival started that would culminate with the magnificent French organ school at the end of the nineteenth century. Public secular performances would mainly occur during inaugurations of new or rebuilt instruments, either in churches or in organ builders' workshops,[1166] but even liturgical organ playing in France was occasionally strongly influenced by non-religious music.

One important consequence of the situation in Paris is that also on the level of composing, there was much less of a separation between organ repertoire and music for other instruments. Franck brought composing for the organ to a new level (at least in the context of nineteenth-century musical culture), but he was obviously much more than an organ composer. Similarly, in the oeuvres of Widor, Vierne, and many others, scores for the organ formed only a part of their compositional output (though in many cases, it is mainly their organ music that is still being performed today). This broad scope is not without importance for the 'horizons' of such organ scores, and it is one of the reasons for discussing the French tradition as an example of 'improvising without a score' in this study. The American organist Wallace Goodrich, who went to Paris in the 1890's to study with Widor, reflects as an eye-witness on this aspect:

> In no other country has the organ achieved so high a position of honor among musicians, or have so many of the greatest contemporary composers interested themselves in the organ, both as executants and as writers of organ music. I refer particularly to composers of established reputation and recognized preeminence in all forms of music: orchestral, instrumental, and choral.[1167]

The professorship for organ was reinstalled at the *Conservatoire de Paris* in 1819; the first musician to be appointed was François Benoist, the teacher of Saint-Saëns and Franck, but also of many other still famous composers who are normally not associated with the organ, such as Bizet (who received a *premier prix* in organ in 1855[1168]), Delibes, and Massenet. Benoist held the position for an impressive 53 years; in 1872 he was succeeded by Franck. After Franck's death in 1890, Widor was appointed to the post, and in 1896 Guilmant succeeded him. During most of these years, the curriculum of the organ class remained basically the same. There were three group lessons per week

[1164] In the nineteenth century, this included the harmonium; particularly in France, this instrument became very popular, both in churches and in *salons*.
[1165] Ochse, O.: op. cit., 18.
[1166] Ochse, O.: op. cit., 7.
[1167] Quoted in Ochse, O.: op. cit; 224.
[1168] Ochse, O.: op. cit., 224.

from 8-10 in the morning; typically the group consisted of about five students. Though different teachers emphasised different topics, generally far more time was spent on improvisation than on composed music. The content of the lessons corresponded with the examination requirements, which equaled the requirements for the *concours* of the conservatoire as well as for auditions for positions as an *organiste titulaire.* The typical elements were: the *à vue* harmonisation of a plainchant melody, an improvised fugue, later also an improvised piece in sonata form, and (from 1852 on) playing from memory a composed piece: initially a Bach fugue, later a 'classical piece'. Before 1852, students did not have to play any composition![1169] As mentioned above, only students with sufficient prior knowledge of harmony and counterpoint were admitted to the class, and Franck also expected them to possess the necessary technical skills for the repertoire pieces.[1170] In his memoirs, Louis Vierne describes the shock that he and other organ students felt when Widor succeeded Franck: Widor didn't assume that students would already have a sufficient technical basis, and, much more than Franck, focused on a rigourous technical training.[1171]

The organ classes took place on a rather tired and small instrument in the conservatoire, not to be compared with the richness of Franck's magnificent organ in the *Sainte-Clotilde*, Widor's in the *Saint-Sulpice*, or Guilmant's in *La Trinité*. This situation may seem surprising to us today: isn't the contact with the sound of the instrument inherent in improvisation? How could a student learn to improvise 'symphonic' music on a chamber organ? Probably there were practical reasons not to teach in the church: it was not logistically possible due to the scheduling of masses; it was too expense; or, it simply was not allowed. Another reason, however, might be the extremely academic approach to improvisation, which must have given the exercises a rather high level of abstraction. Still, some contemporary writers already criticise the lack of practical relevance of the organ course at Paris Conservatoire. In 1843, the Escudier brothers[1172] commented in *La France musicale* on the fact that the majority of the pieces to be played in liturgy were not prepared for in the organ class, and in 1845, the organist and organ builder Félix Danjou called this aspect of the official teaching almost sterile.[1173] In the next sections, the different elements of the improvisation teaching at the Paris Conservatoire will be examined briefly.

### 13.3 The chorale

What is most surprising today is not even the level of abstraction of the improvisation assignments – more about this below – but the rigidity of the system. It is striking that so many hours per week were

[1169] Tandberg, S.E.: op. cit., 74-75.
[1170] Tandberg, S.E.: op. cit., 80.
[1171] Vierne, L.: 'Souvenirs'. In: Emmanuel, M. (ed.): *In memoriam Louis Vierne.* Paris, 1939; 28-30.
[1172] Léon and Marie Escudier were well-known music critics, music publishers and journalists.
[1173] Both quoted in Ochse, O.: op. cit., 152.

spent on so few types of exercises, and especially that the curriculum remained roughly the same for at least a century. In the words of Rollin Smith, 'Franck studied under Benoist exactly what he himself later taught when he succeeded Benoist as professor of organ.'[1174] Given the enormous changes in musical styles on the opera and concert stages during the same period, this is incredible indeed.

One of Franck's first students in 1872 was Paul Wachs. Wachs did most of his studies under Benoist, and already had won his *premier prix* in 1872. Nevertheless, he dedicated to *son maître* Franck his improvisation treatise *L'Organiste improvisateur*,[1175] published in 1878. In the same year, the (second) rebuilding by Cavaillé-Coll of the old Cliquot-organ in *Saint-Merry*, where Wachs had been appointed *organiste titulaire* in 1874, was inaugurated with a concert given by, among others, Franck.[1176] *L'Organiste improvisateur* consists of two parts: in part one, the sonata and the fugue are treated, and part two discusses liturgical improvisation, including the harmonisation of cantus firmi. The introduction explains the reason behind the longstanding fixation on the sonata and the fugue as improvisational models:

> Lorsque l'on improvisera parfaitement la Sonate et la Fugue, les autres plans de morceaux, que nous aurons lieu d'enseigner dans la seconde partie de ce traité, seront faciles à improviser.[1177]
>
> [When one can improvise perfectly the sonata and the fugue, the other designs of pieces, which we will have the opportunity to explain in the second part of this treatise, will be easy to improvise.]

In other words: the improvisational models do not serve as examples of practical situations, but as two poles of improvisational technique. Indeed:

> Le plan de la Sonate et celui de la Fugue, renferment tout ce que peuvent [sic] renfermés d'autres plans.[1178]
>
> [The designs of the sonata and of the fugue contain everything that can be contained by other designs.]

The second part of his treatise exceeds the focus of the curriculum of the conservatoire in that Wachs discusses and gives examples of different types of liturgical improvisation, including the chorale. Because these short pieces are stylistically extremely conservative in comparison with contemporary music for the concert stage (including Franck's organ music!), they will not be discussed in this study. However, Wachs's treatment of the chorale will be examined briefly here, since it was an indispensable item at improvisation exams.

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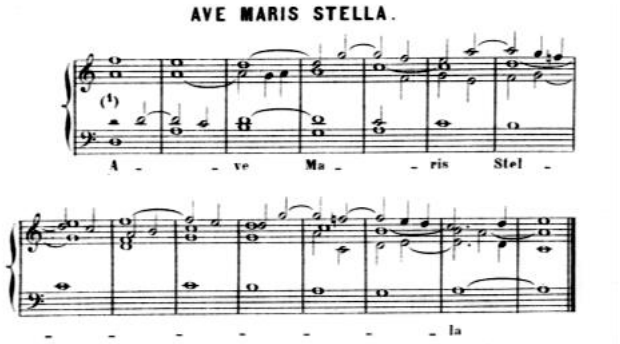
[1174] Smith, R.: *Toward...* ; 4.
[1175] Wachs, P.: *L'Organiste improvisateur: Traité d'improvisation.* Paris, 1878. For this source I have benefitted from Béatrice Piertot's article 'Treatises about Improvisation on the Organ in France from 1900 to 2009'. In: *Orgelpark Research Report no. 3*. Amsterdam, 2013; §355-356.
[1176] Smith, R.: *Toward...*; 19, 133.
[1177] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 1.
[1178] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 31.

Wachs explicitly sees improvisation as 'instantaneous composition', and writes that the reader of his book will therefore find assignments (*données*) that correspond with those in composition treatises.[1179] Likewise, the harmonisation of a plainchant melody in the bass or in the soprano corresponds with the training of strict counterpoint at the Paris Conservatoire. Almost 50 years later, Charles Koechlin published his *Précis des Règles du Contrepoint* in which exactly the same rules and approach are still taught.[1180] The method is entirely based on a *chant donné* in whole notes [cantus firmus], and the harmony is severely limited:

> Le contrepoint n'use que d'accords parfaits et accords de sixte. Les sixtes et quartes, les quintes augmentées, l'accord 5 et tous les autres accords (excepté ceux des *retards* qu'on énoncera plus loin) sont *rigoureusement interdits.* [1181]
>
> [In counterpoint, only triads in root position and first inversion are used. Sixth-four chords, augmented and diminished triads and all other chords (except for suspension chords which will be explained later) are strictly forbidden.]

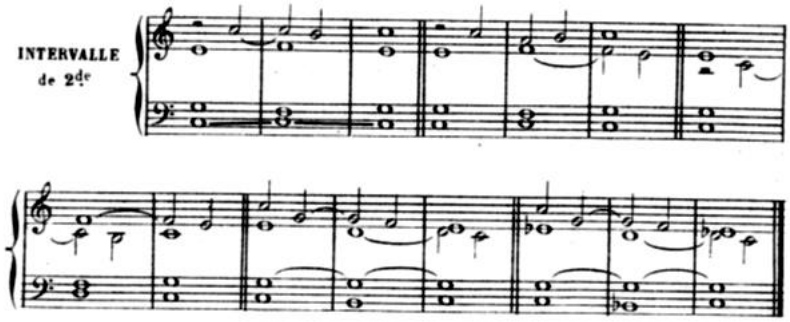
It is a stylistic universe that has broken free from any historical musical style (though it contains elements of different styles and can in this sense be called eclectic) and only exists as a theoretical construct. The type of four part harmonisations with the *chant donné* either in the upper or in the lower voice, as they were taught in the organ class, corresponded with the exercises in written counterpoint to be found in courses such as Koechlin's; the only difference was that the rules were applied less rigidly. Each tone of the cantus firmus is harmonised with one chord (often with suspension), while the other voices are ornamental according to Fuxian species counterpoint. No wonder that students were supposed to have received a thorough previous training in (written) harmony and counterpoint before they could enter into the organ class! A harmonisation of *Ave maris stella* in Wachs's treatise may serve as an example:[1182]




*Example 13.3.1*

[1179] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 1.
[1180] Koechlin, Ch.: *Précis des Règles du Contrepoint*. Paris, 1926.
[1181] Koechlin, Ch.: op. cit., 1.
[1182] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 54.

In order to be able to improvise such harmonisations, Wachs recommends that the student learn by heart a number of fixed formulas for all possible progressions in the *chant donné.* The movement of a second up or down, for instance, can be harmonised as follows:[1183]




*Example 13.3.2*

The idea is to apply such models to a complete melody.

> Nous conseillons d'écrire d'abord, d'étudier quelques pièces par cœur ensuite, et enfin, d'en improviser beaucoup. Un mois de travail consciencieux suffit pour se familiariser avec cette formule.[1184]
>
> [We advise starting by writing, then studying some pieces by heart, and finally to improvise many of them. One month of conscientious work suffices to familiarise oneself with this formula.]

Interestingly, Wachs actually does suggest that this type of accompaniment is useful in liturgy: it can be applied 'in between verses of a hymn' where it brings more unity than a contrasting theme without connection to the hymn melody.[1185] Wachs must have been referring to the situation in the Roman rite, where the organist could play free versets. Traditionally the churches in Paris followed the (Neo-Gallican) Parisian rite, in which the unaltered cantus firmus was required for specific organ versets. Possibly, this situation led to including this item in the organ class curriculum. The Parisian rite was gradually supplanted by the Roman rite from 1855 on, and the latter became mandatory throughout Paris in 1874.[1186] Wachs also mentions the possibility of playing the *chant donné* in the tenor, an option that was not required at the conservatoire but that recalls French Baroque hymn settings, for instance in Nicolas de Grigny's *Livre d'Orgue*, where the melody is often played *en taille* with the pedals (albeit in a five-part setting).

Much later, Louis Vierne wrote about this way of treating plainchant melodies:

> Rien n'était plus formulaire que ce contrepoint, rigoureux sans l'être, bourré de quintes retardées, d'accords de septième prolongée avec quintes, de marches, en un mot de tout ce qu'on interdit en

[1183] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 50.
[1184] Ibidem.
[1185] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 49.
[1186] Ochse, O.: op. cit., 127-131.

> contrepoint écrit. C'était la «tradition», et Franck n'y pouvait rien changer. En ces temps révolus, on n'hésitait pas à accompagner d'un accord chaque note des neumes, effet tout aussi artistique que s'il s'appliquait aux vocalises du «bel canto». Il a fallu attendre jusqu'à Guilmant pour voir disparaître cet errement qui fut remplacé par l'accompagnement normal du grégorien et son commentaire en paraphrase: quelle révélation et quel soulagement![1187]
>
> [Nothing was closer to formula than this counterpoint, strict without being exactly so, crammed with delayed fifths, with chords with a prolonged seventh and with fifths, with sequences – in a word, with all that is forbidden in written counterpoint. It was the 'tradition', and Franck couldn't change anything about it. In those bygone days one did not hesitate to accompany each note of the neumes with a chord, an effect about as artistic as if it were applied to the vocal runs of bel canto. We had to wait until Guilmant to watch this error disappear and being replaced with the normal accompaniment of Gregorian chant and its commentary in paraphrases: what a revelation and what a relief!]

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Gregorian chant was in a state of decline. A movement of revival and restoration came from several directions: particularly well-known is the work of André Mocquereau and Joseph Pothier in Solesmes, but Franck had already collaborated with the Jesuit Louis Lambiotte in a five-volume edition of plainchant (still rhythmicised).[1188] Another important influence came from the *École Niedermeyer*, and at the end of the century from the *Schola Cantorum*. After the replacement in the early twentieth century of the old and corrupted Medicea edition with a new edition that was based on musicological work by the monks of Solesmes, manuals for organists started to appear that did more justice to the melodic flexibility of plainchant. This was the context for Vierne's comments quoted above. Together with the revival of Gregorian chant, a renewed interest in modality arose that has been very important for late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century French music, including the work of Olivier Messiaen.[1189]

In the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, a collection of handwritten notes is catalogued under number Ms. 8707, entitled: Notes préparatoires et sujets de fugue et d'improvisation pour la classe d'orgue de César Franck au Conservatoire de Paris [preparatory notes, and fugue and improvisation themes for the organ class of César Franck at the Conservatoire de Paris]. It is a rather heterogeneous collection of rough sketches intermingled with more neatly written pages on different paper sizes. There are several sets of (sketches for) assignments for examens and concours, dated 1873 and 1874. Invariably they consist of a plainchant melody in whole notes without bar lines, a fugue theme and a theme for a sonata form. An example is this set for the concours of the 16th of June, 1874:

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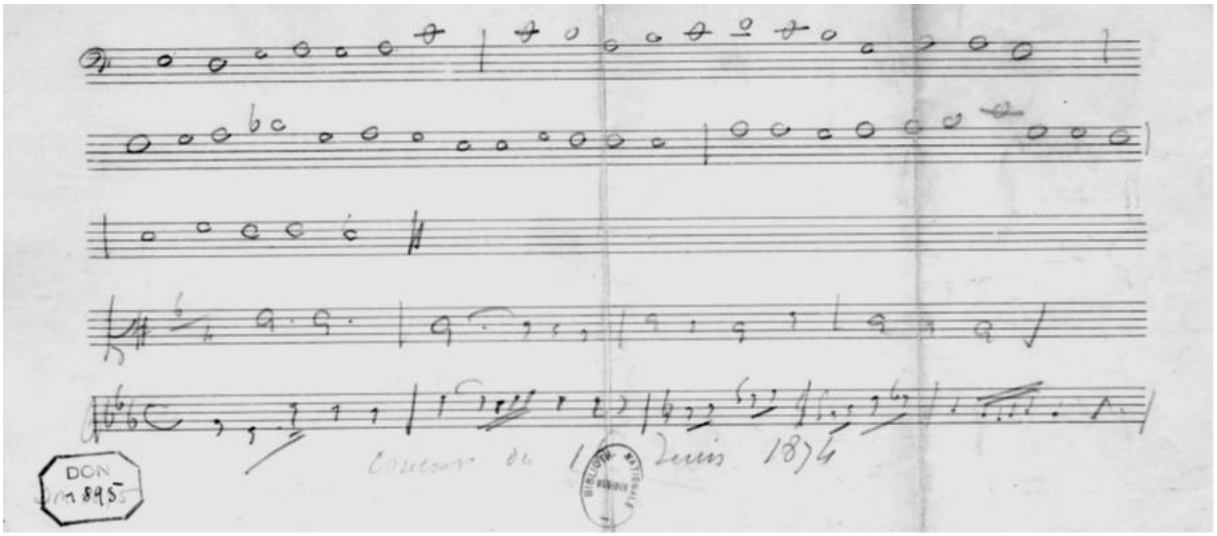
[1187] Vierne, L.: op. cit., 22.

[1188] Lambiotte, R.P., Franck, C.: *Chant grégorien, restauré par le R. P. Lambillotte de la compagnie de Jésus; accompagnements d'orgue par C. Franck.* Paris, 1857.

[1189] Cf. Mooiman, B.: 'Olivier Messiaen en de Franse harmonie'. *Tijdschrift voor Muziektheorie*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2004); 19-43.




*Example 13.3.3*

The beginning of the plainchant melody resembles the *Pange lingua* hymn. There are more melodies in the notes with a similar beginning, however all with different continuations. Possibly they are of Franck's own invention; at least that could explain the rather unusual occurrence of a B-flat in a Phrygian melody.

## 13.4 The fugue

It might be tempting to understand the obligatory improvised fugue at the *Conservatoire de Paris* as a direct connection with the longstanding tradition of improvising fugues on the organ that dates back to the seventeenth century. However, there is a great distance between Baroque traditions where composed fugues can be seen as special instances of a broader improvisational praxis, and the academic approach of the nineteenth-century French conservatoire where the situation is reversed. Just as the improvised chorale harmonisation in the previous section was rooted in strict written counterpoint, so the improvised fugue was modelled after the French academic fugue as it was taught until well into the twentieth century.

Based on the writings and teaching of François-Joseph Fétis and Luigi Cherubini, a prescriptive model of fugue had been developed that is generally called the *fugue d'école* [scholastic or school fugue]. Key texts from the very end of the nineteenth century are the treatises of Théodore Dubois and especially André Gédalge (both from 1901). As with strict counterpoint, its goal was not so much to study or even imitate historical compositions, but rather to develop a technique of writing. Cherubini regarded the fugue as the transition from the strict counterpoint to free composition, and even stated:

> Tout ce qu'un bon compositeur doit savoir peut trouver sa place dans la fugue, elle est le type de tout morceau de musique, c'est-à-dire, que tel morceau qu'on compose, pour qu'il soit bien conçu, bien

> régulier, pour que la conduite en soit bien entendue, il faut que, sans avoir précisément le caractère et les formes de la Fugue, il en ait l'esprit.[1190]
>
> [Everything a good composer should know finds its place in the fugue, it is the model of all musical compositions: even when these do not have the form and the character of a fugue, they should still all have its spirit, if they should be well-constructed and understandable.]

Indeed, the French school fugue was a mountain that every composer – and improviser – had to climb. The most striking difference with historical fugues of, for instance, Bach, is the rigid standardisation in the *fugue d'école*: where Bach was clearly highly flexible in his application of contrapuntal techniques, depending on the possibilities a fugue subject offered, the conservatoire fugue had to contain a fixed number of structural components, including one or more countersubjects, a counter-exposition, a *stretto* and a pedal point. It is interesting to compare the French approach with Czerny's treatment of the fugue. In his *School of Practical Composition* op. 600, Czerny refers to Reicha's *Traité de haute composition musicale*;[1191] in Reicha's discussion of the fugue, the countersubject is a matter of minor importance, and the counter-exposition is optional, too. In line with Reicha, Czerny's description of the fugue in his composition book is much less dogmatic than the French *fugue d'école*, let alone his example in the *Anleitung*.

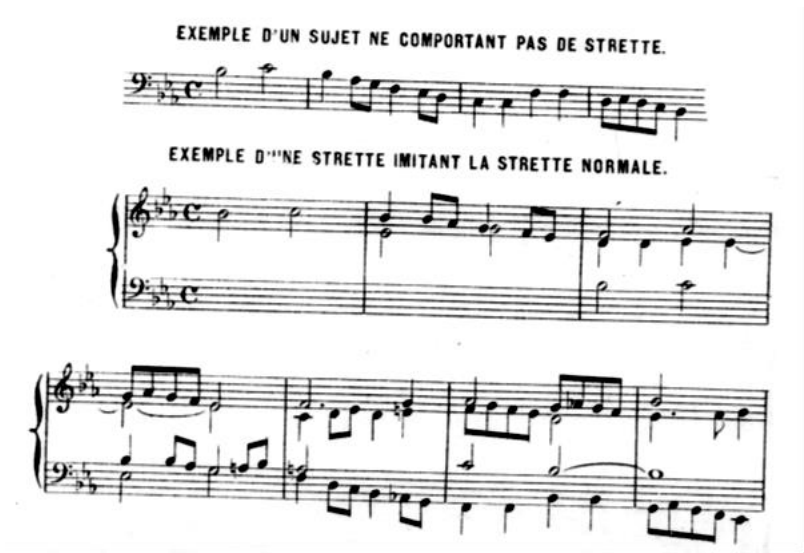
In his discussion of the improvised fugue, Paul Wachs clearly distinguishes between composed and improvised fugues; the latter do not have the same strictness ('le contrepoint rigoureux ne peut s'improviser'[1192] [strict counterpoint can't be improvised]). The difference should not be exaggerated, though: the improvised fugue still has many features of the school fugue. Four voices are the standard; for Wachs, however, a countersubject is not necessary in the improvised fugue. There can be harmonic licenses such as unisons, but the 6/4 chord is strictly forbidden, both in the *style libre* and the *style sévère*.[1193] In general the guidelines for improvising a fugue are more concerned with the impression the music makes on a listener:

> Ce ne sont pas de savants combinaisons, qu'il faut chercher dans la Fugue improvisée, mais la clarté, la limpidité mélodique des parties, une harmonie corsée et une bonne disposition de parties.[1194]
>
> [It is not ingenious combinations one should strive for in an improvised fugue, but clarity, melodic vividness in all parts, an effective harmony and a good disposition of the voices.]

In the episodes, improvised fugues do not have the complex canons, inverted imitations, etc., that one finds in written fugues; just simple imitations between two voices will do. Wachs writes that an

[1190] Cherubini, L.: *Cours de Contre-point et de Fugue* (French / German edition). Leipzig, [1835]; 100.
[1191] Czerny op. 600 ; 118.
[1192] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 17.
[1193] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 19.
[1194] Ibidem.

improvised fugue in four parts in reality only has an exposition and a stretto with that number of voices; in the rest of the piece, there can be passages in two and three voices as well – for the sake of variety![1195] For the same reason, one should take care to vary the sequences as they occur in the episodes.[1196] He adopts a practical stance with regard to the stretto, too. Though one should try to design the subject in such a way that it allows for one or more stretti, it might happen that a subject does not afford this possibility. In this case one should fake a stretto, for instance by modifying the theme as in the following example:[1197]




*Example 13.4.1*

Again, Wachs advises the student to familiarise himself with fugal procedure by writing elements such as the exposition, episodes or stretti first, and then to improvise them.[1198] It is interesting that Wachs's examples, just like Czerny's in the *Anleitung*, intend to give an impression of how an improvisation could take shape, rather than showing idealised versions.

Wachs's treatise does not necessarily reflect all details of the teaching of Franck. Vierne's memoirs suggest that the latter did ask his students to come up with countersubjects:

> Aucun membre du jury n'aurait toléré une entrée de fugue à un ton éloigné ; (...) ; il fallait donc évoluer dans cette camisole de force, et la difficulté, loin de rebuter notre Maître, excitait ses facultés imaginatives qui se donnaient libre cours dans le soin des détails. Pout la fugue, il s'attachait particulièrement à la construction des épisodes à laquelle il faisait concourir, le plus possible, l'ingénieuse marche d'un plan tonal et l'élégance d'écriture d'un contrepoint à imitations de plus en plus serrées. A chaque instant, il prenait le clavier et donnait l'exemple; et quel exemple! – Alors que le

[1195] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 20
[1196] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 22.
[1197] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 24.
[1198] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 30.

> patient avait de la peine à élaborer un contre-sujet correct, lui, dans le même temps, en avait trouvé cinq ou six: «Voyez, on peut faire cela… ou bien cela… ou encore…» Puis, du ton le plus naturel: «Allons, choisissez, et faites-moi une bonne fugue !…» Je vous laisse à penser l'ahurissement de l'élève qui souvent, très souvent, bafouillait lamentablement. Puis, on finissait par en sortir.[1199]
>
> [None of the members of the jury would have tolerated a fugal entry in a remote key ; (…) So we had to maneuver in a straitjacket, and the difficulty, far from disheartening our maître, excited his imagination, to which he gave free rein in attention to details. In fugue he attached particular importance to the construction of the episodes, while bringing together, as far as possible, the development of an ingenious tonal plan with the elegant writing of counterpoint including imitations with ever closer stretto. Every now and then he would sit down at the console and give us an example. And what an example! When a student had trouble working out one correct countersubject, he, within the same time, had found five or six. "See, you can do this… or else this… or even…" Then, in the most natural tone, as though nothing had happened, "Come now, choose one, and make a good fugue!" I leave you to imagine the confusion of the student who often – very often – made a lamentable mess of it. Eventually, one would manage to get out of it somehow.[1200]]

Vierne himself was at least as strict in his teaching; according to Maurice Duruflé, he demanded 'the counter-subject to be thought out and played just as though it were written. The episodes were to have an essentially polyphonic style, while tonal relationships had to be logical. In a word, one learned all the elements that were necessary to proceed alone'.[1201] In 1925, Marcel Dupré writes that 'the study of the masters shows that a counter-subject is not strictly obligatory' ('L'étude des Maîtres nous montre que le Contre-Sujet n'est pas absolument obligatoire').[1202] However, his point of view is that the student should make it his purpose to maintain the countersubject throughout the fugue.

At conservatory exams and *concours* an imposed theme (*theme imposé*) was the norm. Most organ teachers at the Paris Conservatoire have left collections of such fugue subjects. The ones of Franck are often taken from the music of other composers, ranging from Viennese classics such as Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, to early Romantics such as Schubert, Mendelssohn and Chopin, including opera composers such as Gluck, Rossini, Auber and Méhul. In an interview Gabriel Pierné, Franck's ex-student and successor in the *Sainte-Clotilde*, tells about the notebooks with themes which Franck always carried with him in the inner pocket of his frock-coat. One of the rectangular books, bound in black, contained fugue themes, with the subjects on one side and the answers on the other. The other notebook was bound in red, and contained themes by classical composers and by Franck

[1199] Vierne, L.: op. cit., 24.
[1200] Smith, R. : *Louis Vierne: Organist of Notre Dame Cathedral.* Hillsdale, 1999; 45.
[1201] Quoted in Smith, R.: *Louis Vierne…*; 473.
[1202] Dupré, M.: *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue.* Paris, 1925; 77.

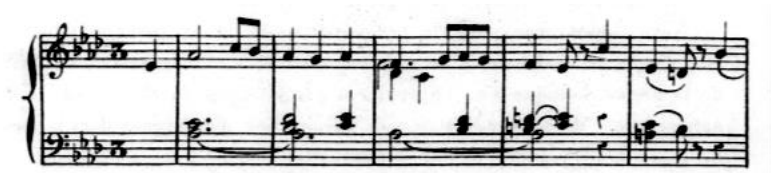
himself, intended for the sonata improvisation. During a lesson, Franck would take the books from his pocket and choose a theme for a student to develop in an improvisation.[1203]

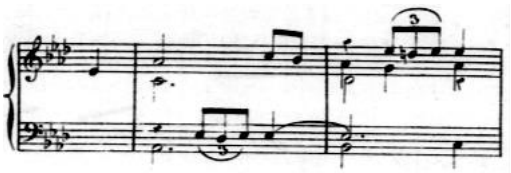
## 13.5 The sonata

The improvisation of a piece on a 'free theme' (*thème libre*), i.e., a piece in sonata form, was added to the requirements of a *premier prix* for organ in 1843.[1204] Like the previous two assignments, it was extremely academic in nature; in fact, it could be termed a 'school sonata'. Very unusual stylistically, it was a monothematic sonata form; instead of providing a contrasting second theme, the improviser was supposed to repeat the main theme in the dominant or relative major key. Wachs writes about this:

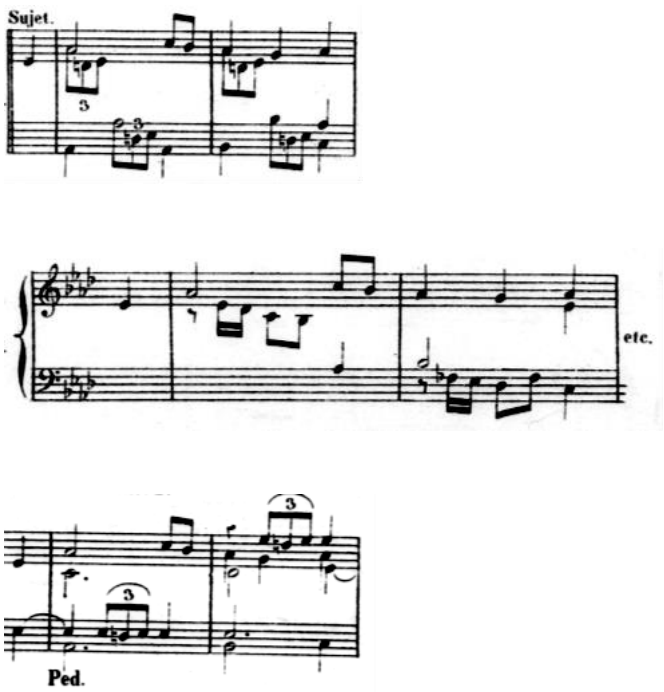
> C'est dans le but de simplifier le travail de mémoire, que nous engageons l'élève à reproduire le même sujet entendu à la tonique, à la dominante. (...) On varie l'aspect d'un sujet, soit en changeant d'harmonie, soit en ajoutant un rythme ou une formule accompagnante, soit en tronquant ce sujet, etc. etc. une [sic] note tenue suffit pour donner cette variété.[1205]
>
> [In order to simplify the act of memorisation, the student is invited to reproduce on the dominant the same subject that was heard previously on the tonic. (...) The appearance of a subject can be varied either by changing the harmony, or by adding an accompanying rhythm or formula, or by truncating the subject, etc. Already a sustained note suffices to bring this variety.]

As an example of such variation techniques, a few variants of the beginning of a theme are provided by Wachs (ex. 13.5.1 and 13.5.2). The melody of the theme itself remains untouched:[1206]



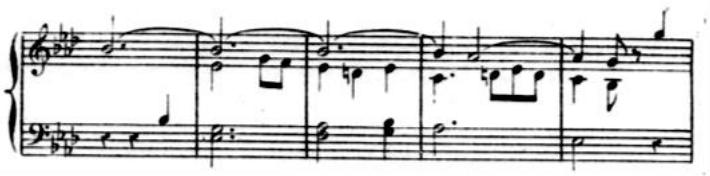


[1203] Smith, R.: *Toward...*; 159.
[1204] Smith, R.: *Playing the Organ Works of César Franck.* Stuyvesant, 1997; 3.
[1205] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 5.
[1206] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 2-8.




*Example 13.5.1*

And in the dominant key, with *note tenue*:



*Example 13.5.2*

Wachs explains the sonata assignment by dividing it into five parts (*périodes*) and working out an example of an entire piece, just like he did with the fugue. The form (in a major key) thus presents as follows:

1ère période: exposition du sujet [exposition of the subject]

2me période: modulation à la dominante (pont) [modulation to the dominant (bridge)]

3me période: sujet à la dominante [subject in the dominant key]

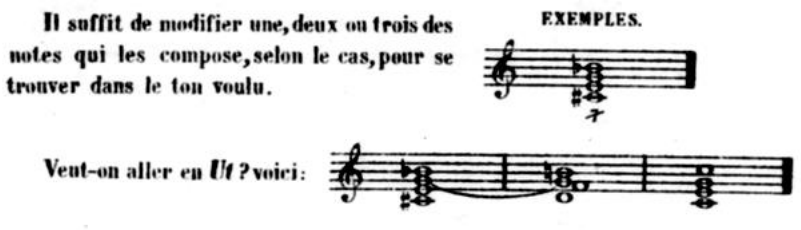
4me période: développements [developments]

5me période: rentrée du sujet au ton primitif [return of the subject in the principal key]

The terminology is different from what is usual today: 'exposition' is used here for the presentation of the theme in the tonic, the fourth period contains several 'developments' of the theme, and the *réexposition* is simply called *rentrée du sujet*; since there is no second theme and the fifth period is supposed not to modulate, the theme sounds only once. In his example sonata, Wachs adds a coda

that is, however, not mentioned as an extra period. Modulatory sections such as the bridge and the development are strongly based upon sequences, ornamented with the *formules accompagnantes.*

With respect to harmony, Wachs makes a few remarks that are worth mentioning here. Apart from sequences, he shows two other ways to modulate. The first way is by means of what he peculiarly calls *accords brisés*: chords that 'ne donnent par eux-mêmes, l'idée d'aucune tonalité' [by themselves do not give the impression of any tonality] – Schoenberg terms such chords *vagierende Akkorde.* Wachs only discusses the diminished seventh chord, and explains how it can be used for quick modulations. Though he writes at the end of the nineteenth century, his explanation is still completely based upon the principle of common-tone modulations (→ chapter 9.8):[1207]




[It is sufficient to modify one, two or three of the tones that make up the chord, depending on the circumstances, in order to get to the desired key. / Would you like to go to C major? Look here:]

*Example 13.5.3*

Another category he mentions are enharmonic modulations (though the previous example was enharmonic as well, strictly speaking). The following modulation also uses the common-tone principle:[1208]

[When we want to move to a key with sharps, we can do this:]

*Example 13.5.4*

In 1937, Marcel Dupré added to his Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue (1925) an introductory volume: Exercices préparatoires à l'improvisation libre.[1209] The two books together form the Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue. The Exercises préparatoires contain an elaborate explanation of the 'school sonata'. Though Dupré's examples are considerably more dissonant than Wachs's (despite being extremely diatonic), the general plan and the approach are strikingly similar. Dupré's

[1207] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 16.
[1208] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 17.
[1209] Dupré, M.: *Exercices préparatoires à l'improvisation libre.* Paris, 1937.

is even more strict in prescribing fixed lengths per section, resulting in a table that also mentions other technical aspects such as key, texture, and registration:[1210]

58

| Forme | Détail | Mesures | Plan en Ut maj. | Plan en La min. | Disposition vocale thématique | Registration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Exposition | Thème | 4 | Ut maj. | La min. | au Soprano | R: Fl. 8 ou Fl. 8,4 |
| id. | 1er Com.t | 4 | de La min. à Sol | d'Ut maj. à Mi min. | id. | id. |
| id. | Reprise du Thème | 4 | Ut maj. | La min. | à l'Alto | id. |
| id. | 2e Com.t | 4 ou 8 | de Fa maj. à Ut | de Ré min. à La min. | id. | id. |
| Pont | 1re Phrase | 4 | de La min. à Mi min. | de Mi min. à Si min. | Voix alternées | G: Bdon 8 ou Salic. 8 |
| id. | 2e Phrase | 4 | de Mi min. à Ré maj. | de Si min. à Sol maj. | id. | id. |
| id. | 3e Phrase | 4 | de Ré maj. à Sol maj. | de Sol maj. à Ut maj. | id. | id. |
| 2e Tonalité (Dominante ou Relatif) | Thème | 4 | Sol (Courte modulation éloignée) | Ut (Courte modulation éloignée) | au Ténor | M.D, R: Fl: 8, 4 Naz. |
| id. | Com.t concluant | 8 | Sol | Ut | id. | M.G, G: Fonds doux 8 |
| Développ.t | 1re Phrase rythmique | 8 | Sol min. | Ut min. | Voix alternées | G.R: Fonds doux 8 |
| id. | 2e Phrase rythmique | 8 | Sol♯ min. | Ut♯ min. | id. | R. Fonds doux 8 |
| id. | Phrase lyrique | 8 à 12 | La maj. | Ré maj. | Péd. en 8 pieds puis Alto puis Soprano | R. accompagnant G. Fonds *mf* 8 |
| id. | Préparation de la Rentrée | 4 | Modulant | Modulant | Harmonique | R: Gambe 8 *pp* |
| Rentrée | Fausse Rentrée du Thème | 4 | Ré♭ maj. ou Si maj. | Si♭ min. ou Sol♯ min. | Péd. en Ténor ou en Alto | R. très doux Péd: Fl. 4 solo |
| id. | Com.t (relié au Pont) | 8 | Ut maj. | La min. | id. | id. |
| Rappel du Pont | Une seule Phrase | 4 | Ré min. à Ut maj. | Ré min. à La maj. | Voix alternées | G. Bdon 8 ou Salic. 8 |
| Conclusion | Thème | 4 | Au ton principal présenté sur un autre degré. | La maj. | Soprano accompagné d'un contrepoint chromatique ou diatonique (ou Canon, s'il y a lieu). | R: voix célestes |
| id. | Com.t final | 8 | Brève modulation éloignée et Pédale de Tonique. | Brève modulation éloignée et Pédale de Tonique. | Libre | id. |

*Example 13.5.5*

At the beginning of his treatise, Wachs writes that a theme for an organ improvisation should be appropriate to the character of the instrument:

> Tous les motifs de Sonates de Beethoven et de Mozart ne se prêtent pas au style de l'Orgue ; de même que certains motifs de Mendelshon [sic], Bach, Haendel, seraient très-mal placés au Piano.[1211]
>
> [Not all motifs from sonatas of Beethoven and Mozart lend themselves to the style of the organ; similarly certain motifs of Mendelssohn, Bach and Handel would be out of place on the piano.]

It seems, however, that his maître Franck was less scrupulous: in the notes one finds material from a large diversity of pieces (with and without composer names), including a surprising number of pieces that are still evergreens today, including Friedrich Silcher's song *Die Lorelei*, Schubert's *Wohin* from

[1210] Dupré, M.: *Exercises...* ; 58.
[1211] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 2.

*Die schöne Müllerin*, many piano compositions by Chopin (for instance the *Polonaise* in c minor op. 40 no. 2,[1212] or the middle theme from the *Fantaisie-Impromptu*) but also by Beethoven (for instance the theme of the first movement of the sonata in A-flat major op. 26), Mendelssohn (the first *Lied ohne Worte*), and many others. Moreover, chamber and symphonic music is included, for instance the *Funeral March* from Beethoven's *Eroica*, Beethoven's third piano concerto, or even the *Bridal Chorus* from Wagner's *Lohengrin.* Invariably Franck notates only the beginning of a melody, often an antecedent, and usually very faithful to the original. Interestingly, it was quite normal to use traditional *Noëls* for organ versets in which no cantus firmus was required.[1213] Franck made a handwritten *Recueil de Noëls* which is today in the BnF (Ms. 8615 (1)), a set of 54 complete noel melodies without text; the left hand staves are empty.

In 1896, Guilmant became head of the organ class, with Vierne as his assistant. Vierne tells how he unsuccessfully tried to convince Guilmant of the merits of including a second subject in a sonata form improvisation:

> «Il faudrait, me répondit le maître, que le jury donnât deux sujets, et si vous saviez le mal que l'on a pour en trouver un seul bon !... On n'admettrait pas un second thème du cru du concurrent; on pourrait le croire trituré à l'avance...» - «Franck, lui dis-je, avait de cela une intuition certaine, quand à son concours il se servit dans l'improvisation libre du sujet de fugue comme repoussoir. » - «Franck était Franck et il n'en pousse pas entre les pavés», me répondit Guilmant. Nul plus que moi n'en était convaincu.[1214]
>
> ["Then the jury would have to give two subjects," replied the maître, "and if you only knew how hard it is to find one good one! They wouldn't allow a second theme of the competitor's own invention because they'd think that it had been worked out in advance." "Franck," I said, "had an infallible instinct for that; at his own competition he used the subject given for the fugue as a foil in his free improvisation." "Franck was Franck, and he isn't found on every corner," Guilmant answered. No one was more convinced of that than I.[1215]]

Vierne himself also wrote subjects for the 'free improvisation'. Fifty of them were collected and published by Jean Bouvard.[1216] Vierne's subjects, like Franck's, are usually four bars long, and often encompass only an antecedent. They have a strong modal and sometimes chromatic character. As was the case with Dupré, the 'rules' may have been as rigid as ever, but they couldn't control all aspects of the music.

[1212] I deem it likely that Chopin's polonaise has inspired Franck to his *Pièce héroïque* for organ.
[1213] Ochse, O.: op. cit., 129.
[1214] Vierne, L.: op. cit., 53.
[1215] Smith, R.: *Louis Vierne...* ; 123.
[1216] Emmanuel, M. (ed.): *In memoriam Louis Vierne*. Paris, 1939; 197-201.

## 13.6 Improvisation in practice: Vierne, Dupré; conclusion

On basis of the teaching at the *Conservatoire de Paris* one might be inclined to dismiss the nineteenth-century French school of organ improvisation as formalistic. Indeed, the difference with many modern ideas about improvisation could hardly be greater. Dupré calls improvisation (like composition) 'un phénomène essentiellement cérébral'[1217] [an essentially cerebral phenomenon]. Wachs advises the student to start improvising very slowly in order to avoid playing pointless (*inutiles*) notes and getting lost in unintended modulations.[1218] Dupré will later stress the importance of practicing slowly, too. All this points towards the idea that improvisation is a very fast process of premeditation: the goal is to develop mental routines for this and to have these executed at a high speed. There seems to be little room for the spontaneous.

On the other hand, Wachs writes at the beginning of his treatise:

> Tous les moyens que nous allons enseigner pour improviser, tels que: les formules, les marches, les modulations, etc, etc, ne sont que des jalons auxquels doivent s'aligner les élèves, jusqu'à ce qu'ils soient assez forts et assez surs de leur chemin, pour diriger eux-mêmes les élans de leur inspiration.[1219]
>
> [All improvisation techniques that will be taught in this treatise, such as formulas, sequences, modulations, etc., are but beacons that should serve as a guide to the students, until they are sure enough and certain of their way, and can lead themselves the flights of their fancy.]

In other words: the treatise offers just the beacons, and the truly creative improvisation starts only when the student has mastered the basics. Indeed, the Parisian organ class delivered first class organists with a very rich musical imagination. The recorded improvisations of Tournemire (1931), for instance, in no way make a formalistic or academic impression, and the 'symphonic' compositions of Widor and Vierne don not resemble Wachs's 'school sonata' at all.

In addition, the short improvisations that Vierne recorded in 1928 do not seem to show a clear connection with the standard curriculum of the organ class. After the introduction of the electric microphone, it became more possible to record the sound of a large organ like *Notre-Dame*'s. Vierne was invited to record improvisations; however, when he heard that the side length of a 78 rpm record was only 3 ½ minutes, he was disappointed and wondered what he could do in such a short time: 'Allons, quelques marches bien pompière [sic] et bien républicaines feront l'affaire!' [Oh, well, some pompous, Republican marches will do!][1220] Several eyewitnesses do not consider these improvisations typical of what the *maître* did during masses and concerts, which must have sounded like his composed symphonies; nevertheless, they show a remarkable perfection of form and

[1217] Dupré, M.: *Exercises...*; Préface.
[1218] Wachs, P.: op. cit., 2.
[1219] Ibidem.
[1220] Quoted in Smith, R.: *Louis Vierne...*; 513.

considerable harmonic richness, more so than, for instance, Albéniz's improvisations discussed earlier (→ chapter 12.3). These improvisations were transcribed as well, in this case by Maurice Duruflé, who published them in 1954 and gave them titles: *Marche épiscopale*, *Méditation*, *Cortège.* Considering length and character, these make an impression similar to pieces from the collection *Pièces de Fantaisie.*

### [13.6 #1 Vierne: Marche Épiscopale (rec. 1928)[1221]]

The march is, if not Republican, then certainly pompous. It is played on the full organ and has an ABA' structure. The A section is built on a cadential motif with what is usually the bass line (^4 - ^5 - ^1) as a soprano. For the B section, Vierne seems to change to the *Positif* and the *Récit* with the swell boxes closed, however still with the full registration. This part has more chromatic harmony and abundant modulations; the return to the home key for the final section is elegant and highly effective. Just as described earlier in the analyses of historical piano improvisations, here, too, the final part actually only makes the impression of repeating the A section: in reality it is different, and it is clear that Vierne focused on remembering the main motif, not a whole section. This leaves him space for some exciting re-harmonisations of the motif, after which the piece comes to a relatively conventional end. Vierne not only never sacrifices the metre; he also builds perfectly coherent phrases (usually in groups of four 'bars') and never seems to hesitate.

### [13.6 #2 Vierne: Méditation (rec. 1928)[1222]]

The *Méditation* is an *unendliche Melodie* in a triple metre on a flowing accompaniment in triplets. Its core is a four-bar subject that could very well have been one of Vierne's themes for students. It is developed in sequences and continuous modulations, though from time to time it stabilises on a structural key such as the dominant. Initially the diatonic melody with sweet dissonances recalls the atmosphere of a French Romantic *chant sans paroles*, a genre that comes close to salon music; however, Vierne's rich but elegant chromatic modulations help the piece to escape the mediocre. A soft coda with flute stops on a tonic pedal finishes the piece.

### [13.6 #3 Vierne: Cortège (rec. 1928)[1223]]

The *Cortège* is again a clearly articulated ABA form, played on the full organ. It could very well serve as a *Sortie* at the end of a mass. It is a relatively diatonic piece in the manner of a Romantic minuet such as Léon Boëllmann's *Ménuet gothique* from the *Suite gothique*, or the minuet in Edvard Grieg's

[1221] https://youtu.be/KCS4fR0OgGg (uploaded 2015 by 'Danijel Drilo')
[1222] https://youtu.be/UyxUGtVp34A (uploaded 2008 by 'a55b47')
[1223] https://youtu.be/XydZWYSdSoE (uploaded 2018 by 'Organa Reginae Caeli')

piano sonata op. 7. This improvisation is just over two minutes, which is shorter than the available time span.

It is very likely that the rigourous training in the organ class equipped those organists with a command of form, melodic coherence, harmonic richness and contrapuntal inventiveness to become the brilliant improvisers many of them were. The examples in Wachs's treatise, for instance, may be harmonically rather dull, but the few principles of modulation he teaches (→ section 13.5) are a potential goldmine for harmonic adventures. Indeed, Vierne's chromatic harmony, and also that of Franck and Fauré, has nothing of this dullness, but can nonetheless be understood on the basis of these principles. This means that the aim of the abstract training at the conservatoire was to develop technical skills that would enable the student to cope with a multitude of challenges in musical life. It is an attitude towards teaching that recalls García *père*, who almost exclusively worked on vocal technique with his students (→ chapter 4.6). Just like the early-nineteenth-century bel canto student, the late-nineteenth-century organ student was embedded in a musical environment that nourished him with musical content in the way a native speaker absorbs his language from childhood on. It was precisely because the teaching was so abstract that it guaranteed a broad applicability – provided that the student was already familiar with musical loci.

Though the situation is very different for an organ student in the twenty-first century, there may be principles in nineteenth-century teaching that are still valid today. In this respect it is interesting to have a closer look at Dupré's *Cours complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*, since it builds on nineteenth-century teaching models, even though the publication dates are relatively late. As I mentioned earlier, the second volume of the *Cours complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue* was published first (1925). This *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue* has a scope that can only be compared with Czerny's *Anleitung*. Just like Czerny, Dupré aims to combine a survey of possible forms of free improvisation with a didactic approach by presenting the different genres in a progressive order. The book opens with introductory and practical chapters on organ technique and harmony; what follows is in fact a *Formenlehre.* A chapter about *le thème* develops a theory of mode and rhythm that anticipates Messiaen, but also pays attention to harmonic and contrapuntal aspects of a subject. The chapter *Contrepoint – Choral* discusses strict counterpoint in a nutshell, and introduces Gregorian melodies as an important resource for improvisation. Dupré writes:

> Le Chant Grégorien fournit une mine mélodique d'une richesse incomparable dans laquelle l'organiste a (...) le *devoir* de puiser.[1224]
>
> [Gregorian chant yields a melodic mine of incomparable richness from which to draw is the *duty* of an organist.]

[1224] Dupré, M.: *Traité d'improvisation à l'Orgue.* Paris, 1925; 135.

The following chapters discuss successively the movements of a Baroque suite (historically not an organ genre), the *fugue d'école* (with explicit reference to Gédalge's treatise), including five-part fugues and double fugues (Dupré was famous as an improviser of fugues), variations including the passacaglia, and the four movements of an organ symphony. This last item is discussed much more 'realistically' and in line with existing compositions of this type than the 'school sonata' as treated by other authors. Interestingly, Dupré also includes in the chapter on variations the *Triptique*, a genre that had become popular in early-twentieth-century French organ music. A chapter on free forms – including the fantasy, the rhapsody and character pieces (*morceaux descriptifs*) – concludes the enumeration. A detailed chapter on liturgical playing is added as an appendix.

In his description of genres, Dupré's focus is on form as a concatenation of sections and keys. Genres as loci are taken for granted; unlike Czerny he does not give characteristic examples of, for instance, a scherzo or a *romance sans paroles.* The aspect of concatenation, however, is interesting with respect to the awareness of form from the point of view of an improviser; chapter 14 will explore this issue further.

The first volume of the *Cours complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*, the *Exercises préparatoires à l'improvisation libre*, was published twelve years later. It offers additional material to prepare for the difficulties that the *Traité* poses for the student, but with a strong focus on the improvisation of free pieces (as opposed to fugues). The preface to the first volume copies that of volume two, but an interesting passage has been inserted:

> Mais il y a en improvisation, indépendamment de l'inspiration et de l'imagination, tout un métier à apprendre, toute une discipline à inculquer aux élèves futurs organistes. Dix and d'enseignement et de préparation aux épreuves d'improvisation du Conservatoire de Paris m'ont démontré d'une façon irréfutable que l'improvisation se travaille selon les mêmes principes et les mêmes méthodes que la virtuosité d'exécution (prise dans son sens le plus élevé).
>
> C'est, en effet, fragmentairement, par la répétition patiente et sans cesse améliorée d'un même passage, que l'élève arrive à progresser en improvisation. Il doit travailler très lentement, mais rigoureusement en mesure, en s'imposant de ne pas s'arrêter et de ne pas faire attendre un temps avant d'être arrivé au terme des 4 ou 8 mesures qu'il s'est fixé d'avance. Il est nécessaire qu'il recommence chaque passage jusqu'à ce qu'il le joue sans hésitation en s'efforçant, à chaque reprise, non point de varier, mais de reconstituer, aussi fidèlement que possible, ce qu'il aura déjà improvisé d'acceptable. C'est simultanément qu'il faut chercher à acquérir la correction d' "écriture" et la correction du rythme et de l'exécution.[1225]
>
> [But, independently from inspiration and imagination, there is an entire métier to be learned in improvisation, an entire discipline to inculcate into the students who will be organists. Ten years of

[1225] Dupré, M.: *Exercices...*; 'Préface'.

> teaching and of preparation for the improvisation exams at the Paris Conservatoire have shown me irrefutably that improvisation has to be studied according to the same principles and the same methods as virtuosity in performance (taken in the most elevated sense).
>
> Indeed, it is by fragmenting, patiently repeating and continuously improving the same passage, that the student will make progress in improvisation. He has to study very slowly, but rigorously in time, forcing himself not to stop and not to wait for one beat before he arrives at the end of a group of 4 or 8 bars he planned to play. It is necessary that he recommences every passage until he can play it without hesitation, taking care not to vary at every repetition, but to reconstitute as faithfully as possible the acceptable passages that he already improvised before. One should simultaneously try to improve 'writing', rhythm and performance.]

Indeed, the *Exercices* offer abundant material to improve this kind of craftsmanship, organised in 12 *leçons* [lessons]. The book opens with harmonising major and minor scales in the soprano, tenor and bass. Next, a very large number of *chants données* in half notes has to be harmonised (without 6/4 chords), again in the same voices. After this, the rhythm becomes more diverse and the melodies are extended to antecedent / consequent combinations, both modulating and non-modulating. When a theme is answered by a completely different melody, this is termed a *commentaire.* Step by step, Dupré develops this basic material into the 'school sonata' already discussed before.

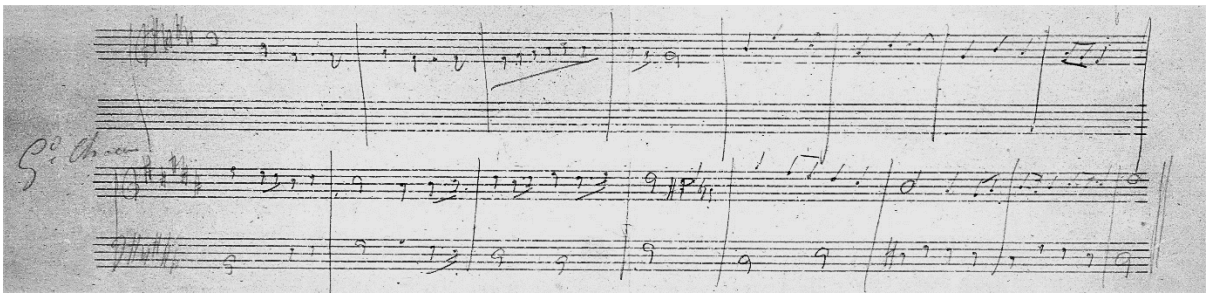
Something that seems highly relevant to me, even today, is the fundamental importance that Dupré attaches to harmonising melodies. Basses (with or without figures) to be harmonised are not included in the treatise, which is understandable since this activity was covered by another subject at the Conservatoire: *accompagnement* (more or less: keyboard harmony). Émile Durand's *Traité d'Accompagnement au piano*, for instance, almost completely consists of figured basses.[1226] Realising a figured bass primarily develops voice leading technique; realising an unfigured bass has a similar effect, though a certain degree of chord choice is added. Harmonising a soprano, on the other hand, is a different activity: there are always several options, and especially with simple melodies the choice can be bewildering. Here one must find chord progressions that 'work' with the given melody, but that are logical and consistent in themselves as well. A skillful voice leading technique is presupposed. Placing a melody in the bass or tenor poses new problems; usually a melodic bass line is rather atypical as a bass, and tenor settings bring in a contrapuntal element that many students find difficult to master. Still, assuming that melodic ideas play a major role in a tonal improvisation, fluency in the harmonisation of melodies is a prerequisite, especially for keyboard improvisers.

Dupré's demands with respect to the process of practising are controversial: his method of practising slowly and repeating the same fragment often seems not only scholastic, but even contrary to the very idea of improvisation. Here as well, though, one should not forget that his goal is to train

[1226] Durand, E.: *Traité d'Accompagnement au piano.* Paris, 1884.

aspiring improvisers, not to prepare for an improvised performance. Indeed, it is also my experience that it is in fact very instructive to try and repeat what just has been improvised before, because it increases one's awareness of what is played (or sung). In chapter 11.4 I referred to a similar experience in playing for ballet classes. The importance of memory training for an improviser can hardly be overrated, and it is by repeatedly going through the same mental steps that musical craftsmanship in particular is developed. The idea of doing this in the context of complete phrases is also a clever one, and it obviously corresponds with the fundamental function that is allotted to the musical phrase throughout this study.

To conclude this section, let us return to the 'father' of the French organ school, *le père Franck* (as he was called by his students). Franck died before any recording technique that could have captured his improvisations had been developed, and he did not publish a treatise on this topic. However, a glimpse of his way of proceeding during his own improvisations can be caught from his notes. There are several sketches of (beginnings of) original melodies, sometimes with ideas for registrations. Often the outline of an accompanying bass is sketched, but occasionally Franck adds a chord or inner voice, as if he did not want to forget this option.



*Example 13.6.1*

In the example are two fragments: the first one is the beginning of an unaccompanied melody in E major; the second one is the first eight bars of a theme in B major with the bass added. In the fourth bar Franck has written a chromatic alto part that reinforces the plagal connection between the first and second phrases. The text says *Grand Chœur* [full organ], which implies that this theme was intended for festive, march-like music – perhaps not unlike Vierne's *Marche épiscopale*.

To summarise: when the nineteenth-century improvisation training for organists at the Paris Conservatoire is regarded as a practice-oriented subject, of which the 'course objectives' had to coincide with what organists were supposed to do in liturgy and during concerts, it may seem to be very remote from most present-day ideas about improvisation. If, however, it is seen as a primarily technical training that was intended to equip the students with 'skills' that would facilitate their diverse future developments, elements of it might even prove to be useful today. A potential problem is that at that time, musical education could rely on experiential knowledge of musical loci – a

condition that has changed nowadays. A method such as Dupré's might still be valuable today, provided that the student is really familiar with the musical style that forms its context.

# Part 4
# Coda

# Chapter 14. An improvisatory approach to music theory

## 14.1 Summary and conclusions

In the first chapter, I characterised this study metaphorically as a tour around nineteenth-century musical landscapes. At the end of a physical tour, one typically returns to the point of departure; likewise, it may be expected at the end of this thesis to review the research questions raised at the beginning. Section 14.1 aims to give a condensed summary of what was discussed in the preceding chapters, focusing on the first three research questions, and to formulate answers to them. Section 14.2 will then elaborate on the fourth question.

The context of this study is nineteenth-century Western art music, both as a historical practice and as a body of compositions that are (partly) still being performed today. I argued that within this field, improvisation is not to be seen as a quasi-autonomous skill or art form, but as an aspect of music-making in general. Thus the focus of this thesis is on 'the improvisatory' in all its diversity. Its common denominator is the quality of *improvisus*, the 'unforeseen'[1227] or 'unpremeditated', whereby performers do not consciously plan ahead for certain future actions. 'Improvisatoriness' potentially pervades many aspects of music. Part 2 of this study makes a case for the idea that it can also be detected in score-bound music-making, and that nineteenth-century musicians demonstrably assumed its presence in performances. On the other hand, even improvising 'freely', i.e., without a score, was, at that time, never fully independent of already existing compositions, as part 3 shows.

The first research question, 'To what extent and in what way did nineteenth-century music-making depend on improvisatory activity?', therefore has to be answered differently depending on the situation. The study sketches out a panorama of nineteenth-century spheres of music-making and examines the improvisatory aspects in a diversity of historical situations. Its ultimate goal is to show how, based on such historical information, the current practice of classical music can be enriched. This makes also relevant the question of how nineteenth-century students were trained in this respect (research question 2), and subsequently how musicians today can incorporate an improvisatory approach in their performances (research question 3). These questions provided me with a lens for interpreting the historical material that has been collected and presented in this thesis.

### *An improvisatory approach to scores*

Part 2 of this study ('Improvising with scores') explains how a musician can adopt an improvisatory attitude even when performing from a musical score. It is argued that an influential line of thinking during the twentieth century (and beyond) has viewed classical musical performances primarily as reproductions of fixed musical 'works'. When performance is seen as reproduction, it strives for a

[1227] As I have shown in this study, this term should not be understood in an absolute sense.

specific and well-defined final result; I described this detailed and fixed idea of how the music is supposed to go as 'static'. When it is combined with the idea that a performance ought to be as the composer imagined, this approach entails a musical literalism ('Texttreue') that is still very present in professional music education and in classical performance practice. Its importance is such that it constitutes a true interpretational paradigm that I termed the *Urtext*-paradigm.

By contrast, several nineteenth-century sources give a very different picture. There are good reasons to assume that a performance of composed music was generally seen as recreation rather than reproduction. To the performer, the score served as a conversation partner rather than as an instructor; the musical text functioned as a starting point of ever new musical adventures. Charles Burney described the score of an *adagio* as 'little more than an outline left to the performer's abilities to colour' (→ chapter 3.2), and to a certain extent this can be said about many nineteenth-century scores. This means that an active and participating attitude was expected from performers, not only by the audience and peers, but also by the composers: it is a part of the score's horizon. Such an attitude can be termed 'improvisatory' to the extent it involves ad hoc decisions. To be sure, even a 'reproducing' performer has to make decisions on the spot; but what counts here is the will to 'play with' the score, which arguably was much more present in nineteenth-century music-making than in today's classical musical culture.

This attitude should not be mistaken for an air of self-importance assumed by performers, or for their ignorance of the composer's intentions. This study has proposed that musical 'rhetoric' provides a valuable lens for interpreting the act of music-making. The influence of ancient rhetoric was still very vivid in the nineteenth century, certainly in music which was generally experienced as a wordless language. Comparisons of a musical performer with an orator are countless in treatises and other texts. One of the goals of an orator is to persuade, and I argue that, in a similar way, it was a nineteenth-century performer's striving for musical persuasion that led towards an improvisatory approach to scores. An important rhetorical principle that directly translates into music-making is *varietas*. In music it applies to variety within a performance, but also between performances: never saying (playing, singing) something again in exactly the same way. It is precisely this desire for variety that can be seen as a motive behind much 'playing-with-scores' as it comes to us through nineteenth-century treatises and early recordings. One gets closer to the intention of nineteenth-century musical texts when they are understood not too literally.

However, all this could easily be misunderstood today as a plea for 'do as you please' with nineteenth-century music. That is certainly not my intention: in the very idea of a dialogue between performer and score, a sense of respect for the score as an art work is implied. After all, this is what motivates the modern musician to return time and again to compositions from an often distant past. A crucial question, therefore, is how the 'freedom' that is associated with playfulness can exist

without lapsing into arbitrariness. There is no simple answer to this question; during the nineteenth century, different musical styles and environments show different manifestations of improvisatory activity. Part 2 of this study provides a representative selection of nineteenth-century kinds of score-based music-making that facilitate improvisatory play. It focuses on what is believed to be the two most important manifestations of the improvisatory, both very much related to variety: extempore ornamentation and improvisatory timing.

***Bel canto***

The first area that is discussed is bel canto. There are several reasons to put this stylistic category in such a prominent position. First, vocal music in general was traditionally considered more important than instrumental music, and this situation only slowly changed during the nineteenth century. Second, Italian bel canto in particular enjoyed enormous international popularity, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century. It is argued that 'vocality' can be seen as a central quality of all nineteenth-century music, and that the influence of specifically bel canto performance habits can also be found in instrumental music until the 1850's. What has been written about bel canto thus applies to instrumental performance practice as well.

Nineteenth-century bel canto shows an unbroken continuation of eighteenth-century developments. One of them is the habit of adding ornamentation, preferably extempore. The goal of ornamentation was to vary: a repeated passage in a composition was supposed to sound different every time it was performed. Another function was to enhance the effect of a passage, or even to 'improve' a composition. From descriptions in several treatises, however, it can be deduced that it is wrong to imagine ornamentation as a feature that can simply be added during an otherwise literal performance. Rather, bel canto ornamentation is to be seen as embedded within an elaborate complex of interpretational habits that include many ways to shape the vocal line. The application of ornamentation presupposes the inclusion of all other means of expression. This is no easy matter for a modern singer: the singing style as it appears from bel canto treatises has changed considerably since 1850 and is very much at odds with contemporary approaches. A reorientation on this forgotten practice would require many years of study and even then, the results of such study would not be automatically usable in present-day professional circumstances.[1228]

Many examples of nineteenth-century bel canto ornamentation were notated and passed on to later generations. An analysis of such fragments reveals clues for modern performers who intend to learn this musical language. In this style, ornaments are always based on the accompanying chords,

[1228] From an instrumentalist's point of view, this may not appear to be a major problem; a player may very well develop and maintain different performance techniques next to one another, and audiences may gradually embrace a historically informed approach. Singers, however, have to choose; developing a singing technique involves developing the voice itself, and it is almost impossible to switch back and forth between the two approaches.

and they tend to elaborate the harmonic voices of a progression. Often the tones of the basic melody serve as what I call 'anchor tones'. Very important is the sense of melodic direction that is often intensified by the ornament: ornamentation enhances the effect of musical gestures. Such intensification of the way music 'speaks' to the listener also betrays a rhetorical motivation. Melodic gestures function clearly within musical phrases, which makes the phrase a key concept in this study. Ornamentation should not blur the phrase structure, though sometimes an ornament may serve as a bridge between two phrases. A remarkable feature of bel canto scores is their harmonic simplicity. The harmonic structure within a phrase is often very 'common' and predictable; it is a harmonic 'locus communis' that prompts a multitude of melodic inventions. This circumstance clearly fosters ornamentation.

Bel canto ornamentation consists of a repertoire of figurations that are often remarkably virtuosic. The fluency of nineteenth-century singers in extemporising with such material can be explained by the vocal pedagogy of that time. A large part of the training consisted of endless technical exercises with precisely such patterns. This is one more aspect of the old bel canto style that is not easy to transfer to our time: early-nineteenth-century singers could afford to focus almost exclusively on technical training, because they were 'breathing' the musical style in which they were trained. To a modern singer this naturalness has disappeared.

Notwithstanding such practical restrictions, it is still true that the bel canto performance tradition as it existed during the first half of the nineteenth century is a part of the horizon of scores from that period. Challenging though it may be, this study advocates enriching present-day performances by exploring this hidden world.

### *Instrumental music*

Several nineteenth-century methods and treatises for instruments clearly refer to aspects of this historical bel canto performance practice. Information about ornamentation in the violin school of Pierre Baillot and the flute school of Louis Drouët, for instance, closely resembles what can be found about this topic in singing methods. Even the types of patterns match: vocal and instrumental ornamentation made use of one and the same body of trans-idiomatic figures.

A remarkable and partly forgotten area is the strongly mutual influence of vocal repertoire and piano music. The piano had a key role in nineteenth-century music: many composers developed their musical ideas at this instrument, music of various instrumentations was transcribed for piano, and fluency on the keyboard was considered a must for any musician. The close connection between piano and singing is seen not only in many song arrangements for solo piano, but even in piano music that was turned into vocal pieces. More importantly, the connection with bel canto provides us with a historically informed view on original piano music, in particular the work of Chopin. The rich bel canto performance practice mentioned above has the potential to be applied to the piano and sheds

new light on aspects of ornamentation, but also on issues such as articulation. In this way, a rhetorical dimension of piano playing emerges that is closely connected with the characteristics of nineteenth-century keyboard instruments. In summary, the cross-fertilisation between bel canto and early-nineteenth-century instrumental music supports the idea of a performer 'playing with' the score, that is, being in dialogue with it. The notion of such a dialogue is reflected in Baillot's juxtaposition of *caractère* and *accent.*

### *Timing*

Another aspect of the improvisatory approach that can be linked to *varietas* is timing. Whereas free ornamentation disappeared from bel canto after 1850, and much earlier from other styles, a free and improvisatory treatment of scores with respect to timing can be discerned throughout the nineteenth century. As for the end of the century, the earliest recordings and piano rolls constitute a unique source of information about timing habits. In much recent research on this topic, timing is understood in terms of deviation from a normative, mathematically regular tempo. In this thesis such a notion is called a 'transcendental' tempo conception. This is an essentially twentieth-century idea. For earlier music a different conception is more appropriate: 'immanent' tempo. Transcendental tempo is an external norm, stable and immovable in itself, against which the performance is positioned and from which it originates. A logical consequence of that mindset is the existence of a regular 'micro-pulse' which controls, e.g., arpeggiated accompaniments in piano music. Conversely, immanent tempo exists 'within' the music: it is the result of the musical ebb and flow and therefore it is in a continuous state of flux. A crucial aspect of nineteenth-century timing is the various types of rubato. The transcendental / immanent pair of concepts makes it possible to understand rubato not as a deviation from a norm, but as an inner necessity that enhances the expression of a passage. Thus within the framework of immanent tempo, a rhetorical understanding of music manifests itself through rubato and timing in general. Whereas the normativity of transcendental tempo belongs to the *Urtext*-paradigm, immanent tempo implies an improvisatory approach because it is almost impossible to pin down – and thus to reproduce.

Therefore, what is often classified as different types of rubato such as the 'earlier' tempo rubato, the 'later' tempo flexibility, and (in the case of piano music) 'dislocation', are in fact nuances of the same phenomenon, namely a search for variety and enhancement of musical gestures, which leads towards a more outspoken individuality of phrases and other musical units. In a polyphonic or otherwise stratified texture, this may result in a 'counterpoint of layers'. A desire to emphasise the rhythmic individuality of phrases arises from a rhetorical impulse; a counterpart in modern drama appears in Stanislavski's idea of 'bits'. Though the emphasis in this study is on improvisatory timing in piano music, the principles apply to all instrumental and vocal music – even to the organ, where it might be less expected.

Embracing the idea of immanent tempo and the metrical flexibility that comes with it implies a break with today's generally accepted performance traditions. This way of thinking can meet a great deal of resistance, especially in institutionalised music education. As in the case of the reorientation of singers with regard to historical bel canto style, it affects almost all aspects of music-making – which is why the term 'paradigm shift' comes to mind.

***Why did an improvisatory approach to scores disappear?***

This study does not aim to explain how and why the present-day, non-improvisatory approach to scores has arisen, but a few possible reasons can be adduced. Quite obvious and often mentioned is the influence of developments in the recording industry. For the first time in history, a performance was no longer something that was 'gone' when it had finished, only leaving more or less vague memories; from now on, the ephemeral could be in a sense captured and fixed as a timeless object. This very notion must have had a deep influence on the understanding of what a performance is, both for performers and for audiences. There were side effects: not only did it become possible to hear 'exactly' and 'objectively' what a musician was doing, but also, performances could be listened to repeatedly – two phenomena that resulted in a new sense of 'perfection'. Moreover, the ever-increasing sound editing must have fostered the *Urtext*-paradigm. When a recording is in reality composed of (many) dozens of 'takes', it is important that all those fragments are as similar as possible – first of all with respect to tempo. For the same reason, extempore ornamentation, different every time a passage is recorded, would be a recording engineer's nightmare. Another influence could be the increasingly strong orchestral discipline. This dates back to Wagner, but – in combination with the increased expectation of perfection – it exploded in the twentieth century. An orchestral musician with an improvisatory approach to his part is often regarded as a nuisance. Institutionalised musical education has been marked by this sense of discipline, orchestral jobs being a main source of employment until very recently.

In addition, I argued that a transcendental tempo conception discourages an improvisational approach. Outside the context of classical music, this understanding of musical tempo became very prominent in jazz and especially pop music, but it emerged in contemporary styles such as minimal music and serialism as well. As I wrote in chapter 6.8, it is likely that even classical music-making was influenced by the new rigid standards of tempo; especially the fact that in terms of audience participation, pop music has been the dominant musical culture since the 1960's, has led to the ubiquity of a transcendental tempo conception.

Last but not least, an improvisatory attitude towards score-based music-making presupposes the ability to extemporise in the same style; to a certain extent, a recreator has to be a creator. But this is a territory that has become unknown to the majority of classical musicians. The third part of this

study ('Towards "Historically Inspired Improvisation": improvising without a score') broaches this subject.

***'Fantasieren'***

Part 3 investigates nineteenth-century practices of improvising without the basis of a particular score. In principle, the same research questions apply here. However, the idea of an improvisatory approach now acquires a more inclusive meaning: it is not about the approach to a score, but to music-making in general. The perspective is that of a modern performer who is curious to improvise music that is stylistically connected with nineteenth-century compositions; this correlates with the ability to master nineteenth-century musical languages in an active way. Thus the third research question ('How can an improvisatory approach be incorporated in today's musical practice?') can now be reframed as: 'How can nineteenth-century musical languages be actively mastered again?' The idea that music can be regarded as a language is fundamental to this study; if 'classical' musicians are supposed to gain a sovereign attitude that allows them to 'play with' a score, it will be necessary to be proficient in the musical languages of the (in this case, nineteenth-century) repertoire they perform.

A common thread in part 3 is Carl Czerny's *Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte*, a book that gives a comprehensive overview of manifestations of 'free' improvising in early-nineteenth-century keyboard culture. This book shows that extempore music-making occurred within a wide range of musical and social contexts, each with its own assumptions and expectations. This is matched in the terminology: the historical terms for improvising tend to indicate the act or the manner of producing a specific type of music. For instance, 'preluding' in the first place meant 'making a prelude', thus signifying a musical genre with a specific function in a particular setting. It is hard to compare the nineteenth-century diversity of situations in which live music was produced with present-day classical music culture, with its strong focus on a very disciplined concert etiquette that emerged only in the course of the twentieth century. Thus in part 3 as well, improvisation can be understood as an aspect of music-making in general, rather than as a separate activity.

Apart from improvisatory approaches to scores, this thesis describes a panorama of improvisatory genres: preludes, cadenzas, dance music, different types of fantasies, and other free pieces. Each one has been discussed along the lines of the first three research questions: what is known about these forms of improvisational activity, how were musicians trained at that time, and how can modern musicians use the answers to these questions to gain an active knowledge of musical languages? Especially for the second and third questions, the rhetorical concept of locus communis, applied to music, proves useful. Indeed, it is possible to indicate loci on different levels that serve as musical guidelines for improvisers, then and now. For instance, harmonic loci play a prominent role in both ornamental preludes and solo cadenzas. From a variety of sources it can be deduced that a repertoire of harmonic progressions and sequences has consciously been used to shape the harmonic structure

of such pieces. This treatment of harmony in nineteenth-century textbooks extends to a consideration of modulation, and the emphasis on common-tone modulation is especially interesting. In dance music, we see the emergence of loci on the level of rhythm, phrase structure and characteristic melodic features. In free pieces, genre-specific loci communes turn out to have been much more important than is usually acknowledged in present scholarship. As for the question of how students learned to apply such loci on the spot, even to the level of improvised fugues, the French organ school of César Franck and Charles-Marie Widor provides valuable insights.

All discussions in part 3, including the second research question, significantly rest on a body of practical and theoretical knowledge that is known today as 'music theory'. In the training of nineteenth-century musicians, the approach to this body was still primarily practical in nature. It entailed a familiarity with harmonic 'rules' (as assumed by Czerny, for instance), and with the principles of counterpoint that had to be mastered before students undertook their first attempts to improvise fugues. It most certainly also entailed a knowledge of the compositional technique that keyboard improvisers needed for their extempore creations. Analysis as a separate school subject hardly existed during the nineteenth century, though a book like Adolf Bernhard Marx's *Kompositionslehre* is often treated as a predecessor of analytical theory today. To a nineteenth-century music student, subjects such as harmony, counterpoint and composition must have had a direct practical relevance. By contrast, post-World War II music theory might better be characterised as reflective.[1229] If the creation of music in the nineteenth century was understood to be based on one's familiarity with compositional technique (in the broad sense, including harmony and counterpoint), why would it be different for students of historically inspired improvisation today? Thus, improvisatory activity makes demands on teachers of music theory. This leads to the last research question: 'What consequences may the rise of stylistically oriented improvisation have for music theory as a teaching subject?'

## 14.2 Music theory as a generative subject

What music theory actually is, and which areas it encompasses, has been the subject of continuous discussions for decades. The scope of topics that are presented in Thomas Christensen's representative *Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* is very wide and dates back to the ancient Greeks:[1230] music theory is a pluralistic discipline. With respect to both content and didactics, the differences between national traditions are considerable.[1231] Another topic of discussion is the

[1229] This shift from practical to reflective was the result of (among other things) the academisation of music eduation which took place with different speeds in different countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Cf. Holtmeier, L.: 'Feindliche Übernahme: Gottfried Weber, Adolf Bernhard Marx und die bürgerliche Harmonielehre des 19. Jahrhunderts'. *Musik & Ästhetik*, vol. 16, no. 63 (2012); 5-25.

[1230] Christensen, Th.: *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory.* Cambridge, 2002.

[1231] Cf. Schuijer, M.: 'Music Theorists and Societies'. *Music Theory & Analysis*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2015); 129-155.

distinction between music theory and musicology. Jan Philipp Sprick has articulated the situation in German-speaking countries. In contrast with, e.g., the United States, where music theory has developed into an autonomous academic discipline, its German counterpart is primarily allocated at *Musikhochschulen*, where the focus is on the training of musicians. In line with Ludwig Holtmeier's essay 'Nicht Kunst? Nicht Wissenschaft?',[1232] Sprick describes its position as an area between science and artistic practice.[1233] This situation has paved the way for a strong integration of academic and pedagogical / artistic aspects.[1234] The Dutch circumstances which form the immediate background of this thesis resemble the German state of affairs to some extent, not least with respect to the importance attached to artistic and academic integration. I argue that on the basis of this situation, the principles of the time-honoured discipline of music theory should match those of the relatively young field of 'artistic research'.

I have presented this study as a contribution to the field of music theory. Whereas aspects of it can be seen as belonging to specialist disciplines (music history, performance practice, organology, and the various vocal and instrumental disciplines mentioned), only a generalist area like music theory is able to serve as an umbrella to cover the whole range of topics discussed in the previous chapters. I believe that Sprick's characterisation very well fits the approach that was chosen for this study. It is precisely in the process of creating (central to improvisation) that this variety of artistic and academic aspects needs to be integrated. Creating a solo cadenza, for instance, requires musicological knowledge, instrument-specific skills and insights, and experience with harmony and voice leading to work together.

As I stated above, music theory is a pluralistic discipline, which makes it impossible to give a clear-cut and generally approved overview of what it entails. On the other hand, there are certainly common tendencies, and some of them are probably challenged by the ephemeral nature of the topic taken up in this thesis. Music theory as we know it today is, despite the deep historical roots it can boast, an integral part of the contemporary culture of Western art music. The *Urtext*-paradigm, which is especially questioned in part 2 of this study, is also present in traditional music theory with its strong focus on scores. Far from pretending to design a 'new' music theory that addresses the improvisatory as well, I would like use the rest of this chapter to at least raise a few issues in the hopes of stimulating a rethinking of music theory as a discipline. A common thread is the idea that, in addition to its reflective side, music theory might develop a generative aspect by strengthening its focus on musical practice.

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[1232] Holtmeier, L.: 'Nicht Kunst? Nicht Wissenschaft? Zur Lage der Musiktheorie'. *Musik und Ästhetik*, vol. 1, no. 1/2 (1997); 119-136.
[1233] Sprick, J.Ph.: 'Musikwissenschaft und Musiktheorie'. In: Calella, M. & Urbanek, N. (eds.): *Historische Musikwissenchaft: Grundlagen und Perspektiven*. Stuttgart, 2013; 130-146.
[1234] Sprick, J.Ph.: op. cit., 143.

### *Analysis and performance*

At the end of her dissertation on the interpretation of Brahms's piano music, Anna Scott writes:

> All too often I find myself attending lectures wherein a theorist discusses Brahms's formal, harmonic, rhythmic and melodic procedures as if it is a given that everything would have been played exactly as it appears on the score, and in the ways we expect today.[1235]

Scott's criticism brings to mind what Nicholas Cook termed a 'recognized subdiscipline within music theory': the area of 'analysis and performance'.[1236] Cook criticises (in my view with good reason) the 'prescriptive conception of the relationship between analysis and performance'[1237] in which the direction is always 'from analysis to performance'.[1238] It is a prescriptiveness that 'is characteristic of, and even perhaps definitive of, music theory as a whole'.[1239] The idea that the performance is (or should be) some kind of expression of the findings of analysis is challenged nowhere as fundamentally as in the concept of 'playing with' a score. What does it mean for analysis if we know that a piece such as a bel canto aria is supposed to be performed differently every time? What can be said analytically about a melody when we know that it was most likely never played as notated?

Cook suggests a different view: 'analysis and performance are to be seen as interlocking modes of musical knowledge' that 'should be pursued simultaneously and interactively, not in succession. (...) [A]nalysis should be seen as a means of posing articulate questions, and not (...) as a source of answers'.[1240] Incidentally, Cook was not referring to ornamentation and other forms of musical *varietas* here. It seems to me that the implications of the challenge mentioned above go even further than this: if a performance of a composition is expected to be different every time, this imposes limitations on the relevance to the performer of many traditional analytical approaches. I do not consider such approaches to be worthless in themselves; I argue, however, that much analysis should be understood as analysis of the score, not of the music as performed and heard. One may find all kinds of motivic connections in a melody Rossini notated, a clear *Urlinie* in an *adagio* such as the ones Burney was referring to, or striking polyrhythmic structures in a piano piece of Schumann or Brahms; if that is not necessarily what one hears, such findings mainly exist on paper.[1241] Cook's

[1235] Scott, A.: *Romanticizing Brahms* (diss., unpublished). Leiden, 2014; 345.
[1236] Cook, N.: 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis'. In: Cook, N., Everist, M. (eds.): *Rethinking Music.* Oxford, 1999; 239.
[1237] Cook, N.: op. cit., 240.
[1238] Cook, N.: op. cit., 239.
[1239] Cook, N.: op. cit., 241.
[1240] Cook, N.: op. cit., 248-249.
[1241] This especially concerns more advanced methods of analysis: it is not my intention to question the value of a propaedeutic level of music analysis. The phrase structure of Rossini's melody, general formal aspects of the aria, the key of a passage: such basic aspects are much less controversial.

analysis, by contrast, is a performative act; he writes: 'I would like to counterpose not so much the analyst and the performer but rather the "writing" and the "performing" musician, or, perhaps more precisely, music as writing and music as performance'.[1242] To Cook, analysis should not be understood as an 'objective representation of reality'[1243] but as a 'fundamentally metaphorical' representation of music.[1244]

Cook's juxtaposition of music as writing and music as performance recalls the distinction made in this study between music-as-a-score and music-as-event (→ chapter 1.3). A logical consequence would be to initiate a second area of analysis, namely analysis of the performance as such; indeed, Cook has done ground-breaking work in this field that has been mentioned more than once in this thesis. Now, in the article cited above, Cook was writing from an academic perspective. In light of the understanding of music theory proposed by Sprick, his point of view is not wholly unproblematic. If music theory 'lives' at conservatories and *Hochschulen* where primarily musical creators (in the broad sense, including performers) are being educated, one may be justified in asking how relevant it is to teach the kind of music analysis espoused by Cook – that is, the kind that sees itself as a 'performance in writing', or that takes the activities of performers as its research material. Cook's observation that 'the paradigm of representation, in so far as such representation is understood as more than metaphorical, brings with it that dogmatic partisanship that characterized music theory only a few years ago'[1245] may free performers from pedantic theorists; on the other hand, his suggestion to 'let a thousand theoretical flowers bloom', that 'each approach creates its own truth',[1246] might be seen by many students as an invitation to decline with thanks this part of the curriculum. Limiting the scope of analysis to the musical text as such, as I suggested, may lead to a similar reaction.

Nonetheless I believe that Cook's idea that analysis and performance 'should be pursued simultaneously and interactively, not in succession' makes a lot of sense, especially in a conservatory environment. First of all, analysis can be a well-developed and sophisticated means of reflection for a performing musician; reflecting on the score and on performances makes one conscious of any tacit assumptions and unquestioned habits, and may contribute to the profundity of a musician. But also on a more fundamental level, there is a deep truth in seeing analysis and performance as 'interlocking modes of musical knowledge'. I have argued earlier that analytical practices tend to be based on interpretational paradigms, even if they appear to prescribe interpretation. Ernst Kurth's description of Bach's counterpoint, for instance, puts a strong emphasis on what he calls the 'kinetic energy' of a

[1242] Cook, N.: op. cit., 250.
[1243] Cook, N.: op. cit., 255.
[1244] Cook, N.: op. cit., 257.
[1245] Cook, N.: op. cit., 261. Cook wrote these words in 1999.
[1246] Ibidem.

musical line. For Kurth, all tones in a melody are equally important; it is a view that is difficult to reconcile with modern 'historically informed' Bach performances, but that perfectly matches the legato style of, e.g., Albert Schweitzer on organ or Nathan Milstein and Yasha Heifetz on the violin.[1247] Another example: post-World War II Schenkerianism flourished in a musical climate that favoured long lines, rhythmic evenness and an architectonical understanding of classical compositions, for instance as exemplified by the pianist Leon Fleisher. Performances of pre-war pianists such as Paderewski and Pachmann, however, seem far removed from this theoretical approach.

Very much in line with Cook's critique of contemporary music theory, and especially its privileging of the score over performance, I argue that music analytical traditions as they developed in the course of the twentieth century should be seen as integral parts of classical music as a contemporary practice. Thus the *Urtext*-paradigm that became so prominent especially from the 1950's on not only governed the way in which performers dealt with scores, but also how music analysis developed to what it is now. Traditional methods of analysis in particular are essentially based on the idea that there is one ideal way to perform a piece, or, as Scott put it, that 'it is a given that everything would have been played exactly as it appears on the score, and in the ways we expect today'.

Which type of analysis, then, would be appropriate for a musical praxis that substitutes the *Urtext*-paradigm with a new paradigm that privileges rhetorical variety, as has been advocated in this study? How should we analyse Rossini's melody if we know that a singer will change it anyway? But even before asking this, perhaps we should ask an even more important question – that is, whether there should be any analysis at all; to some indeed the word 'analysis' itself might feel corrupted already as belonging to a praxis that one intends to leave behind. However, if this (indeed charged) term is replaced with 'reflection', or 'analytical reflection', I think that it is possible to sketch some outlines for such an analytical approach, based on findings of the present study. The concept 'locus communis' has been used throughout, and the importance of recognising loci has been highlighted with respect to score-based performances. This supposes familiarity of a musician with loci that are relevant to the piece that is performed. It seems to me that this is definitely an area of 'reflection' that deserves to be developed. I have emphasised that loci, as the term is applied in this study, should be understood as 'sources of invention'. This means that it is essential that a performer has 'practical' (experiential) knowledge of loci (the next section will pick up on this thread). At the same time, however, loci are features of a style; in other words, musical style can be partly defined in terms of

[1247] Mooiman, B.: 'Theorie en praktijk – of andersom? Een persoonlijke visie.' *Dutch Journal of Music Theory*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2009); 17-24.

loci communes.[1248] It is my conviction that the thinking through of nineteenth-century musical styles in this way is a direction that has not yet been fully explored.[1249] Thus the topic of musical genres (→ chapter 12) could be developed theoretically as well.

Impulses in this direction have already become well-established in the field of early music. Especially in the German music theory, the concept *Satzmodell* [more or less a (polyphonic) model or formula] has occupied a central position for decades, and whereas it tends to be applied mainly to music before 1800, it is certainly also relevant for the period under investigation, especially when the concept is extended in the sense of loci communes. Another influential concept (closely related to the *Satzmodell*) is the 'schema' as introduced by Robert Gjerdingen in *Music in the Galant Style* (2007). For the sake of completeness, it has to be said that galant schemata as defined by Gjerdingen are sometimes being applied by analysts to nineteenth-century music as well; in my view, however, it will especially be promising to search for loci that are specifically associated with this later repertoire. The value of *Satzmodelle* for improvisation is exemplified by Markus Schwenkreis's *Compendium Improvisation* (Basel, 2018) and by the 'worksheets' harpsichordist Patrick Ayrton has published on his website.[1250]

### *Describing the general*

It is not without reason that concepts such as 'schema' or 'Satzmodell' are so often applied to early music. They describe general tendencies, the stylistically ordinary. As I wrote with respect to genres in chapter 12, this is an approach that works particularly well for music from before 1800. During the nineteenth century, the individuality of compositions became increasingly important. As I argued in the same chapter, however, this was a gradual process, and even in nineteenth-century music, there were many stylistic features shared by composers, and this shared language deserves to be elucidated more clearly. The gradual shift from a supra-personal style to the personal styles of individual composers is an object of further study; in chapter 12, I gave several examples of canonic compositions that became loci communes in their own right. Especially in the music theory taught in the French conservatories, practical descriptions of the styles of composers form a genre in itself.[1251] Unlike the recent developments in the theory of early music, conventional music analysis generally seems to have focused on the individuality of compositions, which is understandable from a

[1248] In fact even analytical decisions on a propaedeutic level (→ footnote 1241) often are based on loci communes, for instance when the key of a passage is established.

[1249] Relatively recent contributions to classical sonata theory such as William Caplin's *Classical Form* (New York, 1998) can be interpreted as examples of this direction.

[1250] http://patrickayrton.net/pa2017/improvisations/

[1251] For instance the series *Les cahiers d'analyse musicale* of Anthony Girard. Olivier Messiaen published his *Vingt leçons d'harmonie dans le style de quelques auteurs importants de 'L'Histoire harmonique' de la musique depuis Monteverdi jusqu'à Ravel* already in 1951.

twentieth-century point of view. However, the creative aspect of the improvisatory, as understood in the nineteenth century, brings to the surface the importance of an increased awareness of the general, as exemplified especially in the loci communes. Thus not only in the field of practical musicianship, but also on a theoretical level, it will make sense to allow a more prominent role to the study of nineteenth-century musical styles.

As I wrote above, identifying loci communes can be a valuable tool for defining styles. *Satzmodelle* and schemata may serve the same purpose, as long as they are understood as loci communes, which means that they are taken as the impetus for concrete musical realisations. However, the latter is not automatically the case, as I will argue in the next section.

### *Reification*

As I wrote at the end of section 14.1, it may seem to be a natural task for music theory to help students actively master the musical languages that they have learned only passively. This is because nowadays, music theory is the only field where the structure of musical languages from the past is systematically discussed. It might be assumed that those theory subjects that focus on writing skills, such as harmony and counterpoint (and in Germanic countries *Satzlehre*), are especially useful in this respect. However, expecting that these subjects will provide a smooth entry into historically inspired improvisation would be over-optimistic. Why is this? As I have argued, music theory as traditionally taught still pretends that it can fall back on an active experiential command of classical musical languages, as was the situation during much of the nineteenth century. It is a 'chicken-and-egg' dilemma: music theory teaches (among other things) how to create music, but it basically assumes that the student already knows how to do so. I think that there is often a mismatch between what traditional music theory has to offer, and what students need. In this section, I will try to analyse this discrepancy.

In its attempts to speak about music, music theory has to make use of concepts. A musical concept is an abstraction, based upon (or rather, induced from) musical events that show a similarity. Something that is experienced in time is attributed to a class with a name, and in this way becomes an object. This already happens with single tones: on basis of a shared frequency (or its multiplication with $2^n$) musical 'events' are defined as belonging to the class of a specific tone, for instance A-flat. What characterises modern music theory is that the concept (the name) is often treated as more fundamental than the event itself. As Oscar Hammerstein put it humorously in the song *Do-Re-Mi* from the musical *The Sound of Music*: 'When you know the notes to sing, you can sing most anything' – referring to the note *names*.

Similar things happen on many levels and in many areas of music theory: a combination of tones might be identified as a 'pitch class set', a particular musical discourse seen as a 'sonata form'. In harmony classes a succession of chords may be labeled a 'perfect authentic cadence', or an individual

chord may be understood as manifesting a specific tonal function. In all cases, music-as-event is represented by a static entity: a concept. As such, there is nothing wrong with that – it is even inevitable when music is to be talked about. But as in the song from the musical, there is a risk that the concept might start to assume a life of its own. As Theodor Adorno pointed out, concepts tend to 'be taken in isolation'; the mind 'absolutizes what it, itself, makes, thereby tearing it from its context and ceasing to think of it further'.[1252] Adorno called this phenomenon *Verdinglichung*, 'reification'. A musical gesture becomes a *res*, a thing, without the temporal dimension of sounding music. Reification is necessary when we want to speak about music, and at the same time it alienates us from sounding music, from music-as-event.

The problematic side of reification in music already becomes obvious in traditional music theory teaching, but it is directly challenged when the educational goal becomes to create new music – as happens when 'improvisation' is being taught. Teaching grammar to a fluent speaker makes perfect sense, because the grammatical concepts refer to pre-theoretical knowledge of the language. Likewise, a music student who has an active command of a musical language – as might still have been the situation in the nineteenth century – has pre-theoretical knowledge of that musical language. This is fertile soil for the application of theoretical concepts. As I argued before, however, most classical musicians today no longer have this command of the musical languages of the compositions they perform. For them, the concepts that are used in the music theory classes form the beginning, instead of the end of the learning process; in fact the teachers put the cart before the horse. The task of a theory teacher should not be to explain his students what a 'fifth' is – his task should be telling the students that a combination of tones with which they are already familiar is generally *called* a fifth! When this experiential basis is not present, there is no short-cut. Experience must be the basis for concepts; otherwise, concepts will not make sense to the student.

At the risk of asking too much from the metaphor: even internalised grammatical knowledge alone doesn't inspire an orator to a good speech. A musician who improvises in a classical style is not much helped by a theoretical concept as such. Speaking from my own experience, what happens during the process of improvisation is that the concrete inner hearing of progressions and melodic ideas is what occupies the mind, not the abstracted names of concepts. Under the circumstances of a real-time musical performance, which include the metric environment, the phrasing, etc, a specific locus 'pops up' in the imagination – which is an *Erfindungsquelle*, an invitation to concrete musical realisations, the choice of which can be left to the spur of the moment. It is especially in this character of an invitation, a promise, a gesture, that music manifests itself primarily as something on a timeline rather than as a collection of concepts. *Satzmodelle* or schemata also easily become reified concepts

[1252] Quoted in Lewis, J.: *Reification and the Aesthetics of Music.* New York, 2016; 5. Thanks to Henk Borgdorff for mentioning this book to me.

that are supposed to be labelled in scores. But improvising is about music as event. Mastering a musical language above all means becoming really familiar with its constituent loci, and knowing them in many variants – not as new kinds of concepts, but as musical invitations.

### *Acquiring a musical language*

What does this entail for harmony and counterpoint classes? First, it is important to acknowledge that theoretical concepts primarily belong to the field of analysis and reflection. Their function is to make it possible to describe music. When they are based on an experiential understanding, they can be very useful, but their role in the process of creating music is limited. When harmony and counterpoint classes are understood as instrumental in the acquisition of tonal musical languages (and there is good reason to see them in this way), they should also focus on developing practical skills. To achieve this objective, it may well be advisable to connect with (or revive) historical methodologies, some of which are still present in present-day curricula (albeit sometimes in a rudimentary form). Interestingly, such historical approaches have always included the possibility of working extempore. Voice leading, for instance, may be addressed through exercises in figured bass playing and / or writing. A more contrapuntal type of voice leading can be trained through partimento-type exercises in which a complete 'piece' is represented in a bass line with or without figures. Harmonising an unfigured bass already brings in the element of chord choice and trains the student to recognise familiar patterns. Generally, working with harmonic loci communes as they have been described in this thesis is an excellent means for combining all these aspects. A Romanesca, for instance, may be used as an 'invitation' to create endless variants with respect to voice leading, chord inversions, melodic voices, metre, rhythm, texture and phrasing. With regard to singers and players of monodic instruments, it will be useful to present such a harmonic locus by auditory means, for instance in the form of a recording on which the model is played repeatedly. In the appendix, examples of such recordings will be shown.[1253] For keyboardists, a generic form of notation (a figured bass, for instance) may be appropriate, too.

Harmonising a melody poses an especially big challenge to the student with respect to chord choice, because the simpler and more diatonic a melody is, the more harmonic possibilities it offers. Developing fluency in melody harmonisation is usually a long and intensive learning process: it takes a lot of experience to see the different harmonic options a melody offers. In my experience, this skill is based on familiarity with harmonic loci. Mistakes in melody harmonisation (besides voice leading mistakes) can often be reduced to a lack of experience with harmonic loci. This happens, for instance,

[1253] In *Upon a Ground*, Martin Erhardt chooses for a similar approach by including two play-along CDs with recordings of the ostinato basses that are discussed in the text. Erhardt, M.: *Upon a Ground*. Magdeburg, 2013.

when a chord progression is not 'right', or when the choice of chords, in combination with the given melody, leads to poor voice leading.

A more traditional, concept-driven approach would in such cases perhaps draw on analytical concepts such as Riemannian harmonic functions to arrive at a good 'solution', but I argue that it is more historical and more in line with the idea of music-as-event to focus on harmonic loci. This is precisely what happened in the 'partimento-tradition', and it is satisfying that this approach has already found its way to some modern harmony books.[1254] The institution where I hold an appointment, the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague, implemented a 'practical turn' in music theory subjects in 2014. With respect to harmony, counterpoint and ear training, this entails a strong emphasis on extempore music-making in which the principal instrument of the students (in the case of singers, their voice) is involved; melodic and harmonic formulas play a key role here. Ear training is a rich and important topic that far exceeds the limits of this study. Concerning what has been discussed above, I would just like to mention that a practical approach to music theory continuously makes an appeal to the inner hearing. It seems to be a shared experience worldwide that students enter conservatories with less and less preparation in the field of ear training, and singers and players of monodic instruments with only rudimentary keyboard skills are also rather common. Of all the abilities a musician needs, a well-developed inner ear may be the most important one; for this reason alone, a practical approach to theory subjects seems to be a good idea.

It would be interesting to know whether such an improvisatory focus in theoretical subjects in fact leads towards an active command of tonal musical languages. A full-fledged investigation of this question warrants separate research, but some informal findings have emerged regarding the aforementioned curricular changes at the Royal Conservatoire. On the one hand, many students do indeed develop a noticeable musical fluency. The exercise that was shown in chapter 2.2, for instance, can serve as an indicator; it turns out that students who are several semesters into our new curriculum definitely show an increased ease in finding their way in such duo improvisations.[1255] On the other hand, there seems to remain a rift between the students' involvement with tonal language as described above and what happens in their principal subject lessons (that is, their private studio lessons). As long as no appeal to an active musical command is made in those lessons, it will remain an isolated skill. In addition, the extent to which students 'live' a particular musical language (e.g., of the nineteenth century) is of importance: real fluency in any language usually requires at least a period of

[1254] For instance: IJzerman, J.: *Harmony, Counterpoint, Partimento: A New Method inspired by Old Masters.* New York, 2018.

[1255] For another example of this exercise, → https://youtu.be/h-PfzCvYR9A (the violinist is not a student of the Royal Conservatoire). Especially the category 'Tonal / Classical' on the Metricimpro.eu website offers more exercises that are in line with the approach that was chosen in The Hague, particularly those shown by my colleague Karst de Jong and by David Dolan (GSMD, London).

total immersion. Such an immersion is most effective when it occurs at a young age. This draws attention to the importance of the training of young musicians before they enter the conservatory. In an ideal world, this would be the stage at which musicians acquire an active command of musical languages. Since today's conservatory students are the teachers of tomorrow, the best way to achieve this future seems to be by addressing this group of young professionals.

The idea of a total immersion in historical musical languages is not without problems, though. First, students sometimes tend to see their classical music studies as 'work', and prefer to enjoy very different musical styles (pop music, for instance) to relax in their leisure time. Though they are obviously free to do so, this will make it more difficult to meet the condition of total immersion in the language they want to learn. Second, much more than their nineteenth-century counterparts, today's classical musicians usually perform in a multitude of musical languages (→ chapter 4.6). To be sure, people may master multiple languages (verbal or musical), but after a particular age, most people seem to benefit from focusing on one language at a time during the learning process. Unfortunately, such an approach differs from the way in which a classical musician is usually trained; especially when the development of technique happens primarily by means of the compositions that are being studied, the technical difficulty of the study repertoire will be the main criterion for selection, rather than the stylistic field. Third, one might wonder how students should get immersed in a musical world that is no longer around them. I argue, however, that the inevitable time distance is no reason to see this as a hopeless endeavour. Experiences with 'Living Latin' show that even a 'dead' verbal language can be learnt (I will return to this at the end of the following section). What counts, I believe, is an attitude of unconditional dedication on the side of the student – but that applies to any artistic practice.

### *Concatenationism*

In the preceding paragraphs, I have outlined some ways in which music theory could become a more 'generative' subject, i.e., oriented towards musical 'making'.[1256] I have mentioned the importance of style study and, related to that, the identification of loci communes. Moreover, the question of how music theory may contribute to an active command of musical languages has been discussed. So far, I have emphasised the more general aspects of music: style, genre, musical languages at large, and indeed, I think that these areas deserve more attention than they generally receive in music theory classes. However, it cannot be denied that classical musicians nowadays spend most of their time working on individual compositions; in chapters 4 and 5, I argued for an expansion of the study time that is spent on generic technique, but even if such advice were to be followed, that would not change the central position classical scores have in the world of a musician. In part 2 of this dissertation, I

[1256] Cf. Kofi Agawu's concept of 'generative analysis'. Agawu, K.: *Music as Discourse.* New York, 2009; 122.

have stressed the importance of recognising loci communes in scores; in part 3, I have shown how the same loci function as a guidance for the improviser. As such, this still implies a focus on general aspects of music. But an individual composition, as well as an improvised performance, is more than just a collection of 'commonplaces'; even a piece from before the period of 'composer-centredness' still has an individuality, and this individuality matters to a performer.

How, then, to address this notion of individuality? Is this where we still need traditional music analysis, even though I argued that this should in many cases be seen in a more limited way, as merely an analysis of scores? I think that the way improvising has been analysed in this study might be useful in this respect. Especially in part 3, I have shown how improvisers may be guided by loci communes, not by abstractions in the form of a concepts. It is the imagination ('inner hearing') of melodic and harmonic gestures, musical 'bits' that are to some degree predictable, that drives the musical process. An improviser decides in a split second which locus to follow, and how. This is a 'local' affair: the player is not planning minutes ahead; rather, the short-term memory of what happened immediately before, and the imagination or expectation of the musical gesture that might follow, surround the present moment.

This recalls the listening experience that the philosopher Jerrold Levinson calls 'quasi-hearing' in his book *Music in the Moment.* In Levinson's words:

> No conscious effort is required to keep music that has just sounded, or is about to sound, before the mind; rather, an aural surrounding to the notes then sounding constitutes itself automatically, for a prepared listener. It is useful to have a term for this sort of vivid apprehension of a musical unit, which goes beyond what is strictly heard, but stops well short of merely intellectual contemplation of a recollected event. An appropriate term for this sort of perceptual experience, I suggest, is "quasi-hearing".[1257]

Building on ideas of the psychologist and musician Edmund Gurney, Levinson argues that a listener experiences and understands music essentially from moment to moment, as a succession of events, a view that he terms 'concatenationism'. Levinson criticises the contrasting 'architectonical' view that suggests that large-scale relations within a composition need to be conceptualised before a listener can understand the music at all. I would like to add that this equally applies to the Schenkerian notion of 'long-distance listening' (*Fernhören*).[1258]

It is very interesting that Levinson's view on musical hearing matches so well with what happens when somebody improvises music. It seems not far-fetched to equate Levinson's 'architectonicism' with the principally reified type of analysis that I called 'score analysis'. The idea of concatenationism rather focuses on music-as-event. It is in music-as-event that the experiences of a listener and an

[1257] Levinson, J.: *Music in the Moment.* Ithaca, 1997; 15.
[1258] Cf. Meyer, L.B.: *Emotion and Meaning in Music.* Chicago, 1956; 52-54.

improviser meet, and there is a deep truth in this. Shouldn't a good performer always be a listener to himself? Recalling Gadamer's 'bad actor' (→ chapter 2.3): is it not true that a bad performer gives his audience the feeling that (unlike the listener) he already knows what will come next, and how the story will end? A good performer identifies with the listener, as it were, maybe even to the point of half believing that he really does not know how the story will end.[1259] Analysing music-as-event means taking seriously the point of view of the listener – because that is what a good performer does as well.

The idea of concatenationism emphasises the role of the musical narrative, and therefore correlates with the notion of musical rhetoric. In the history of music analysis, this is not at all a new direction, though it may be a relatively underexposed one. This thesis shows an affinity to such a rhetorical approach to music analysis; a few representatives of this direction will be mentioned here. An early example of an analyst who consciously treated music as narration is Donald Francis Tovey. His *Essays in Musical Analysis* (1935) originated as programme notes, and indeed focused on the experience of the concert-going public. More recently, Mark Evan Bonds explored the language analogy in *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (1991), focusing on music from the Viennese Classical period. Kofi Agawu also takes the 'linguistic nature' of music as a vantage point in *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (2009). Generally speaking, a rhetorical understanding of music connects with the metaphor of the musician as an orator. It shows that what is usually called musical logic does not (necessarily) result from a well-designed master plan. It often rather stems from a musical narrative based on the concatenation of musical ideas, just like an improvising orator who may connect with what he has said earlier without having designed the whole structure of his speech beforehand.

The most extreme position one might adopt to avoid reification is probably to not use language at all. This is what the Austrian-British musician Hans Keller did when he developed his method of 'wordless functional analysis' in the 1950's. Keller applied his method in a series of BBC broadcasts, in which he clarified music by using music itself, showing motivic and thematic connections by actually playing them, which resulted in a kind of dialogue between the performance of a piece and Keller's 'analytical interludes'. Though Keller's analyses were in line with the motivic analysis of Rudolph Réti, rather than with the rhetorical approach mentioned above, the very concept of 'music about music' may have a potential that by far exceeds his purpose of showing motivic connections within a composition.

It is here that the parallel with the Living Latin movement (→ chapter 1.3) is especially helpful. The innovative Latin textbook of Hans Ørberg, *Lingua Latina per se illustrata*, is based upon the principle of the 'natural approach' of language teaching. In this approach, all communication takes

[1259] Obviously, the listeners may already be familiar with a piece as well; even for them, however, a gripping performance may create the illusion of a first-time experience.

place entirely in the language being learned: Ørberg's book only contains Latin text. Starting from a small core of easily recognisable words and syntactic constructions, each new word or construction is explained by its context, gradually developing into a comprehensive understanding of the language. This is a principle that can be translated to music. At my home institution, a subject with the name 'Aural Skills & Improvisation' addresses ear training and inner hearing in a practical way, namely by continuously using the student's own instrument or voice. This set-up makes it possible to have lessons in which there is very little verbal explanation, but in which communication takes place through music: by repeating what someone else has played, by varying upon it, transposing, commenting: in a ceaseless musical flow of 'music about music', students enlarge their command of a musical language. Instead of conceptualising musical sentence building, for instance, the students gain experiential and embodied knowledge of this phenomenon. An important element in these classes is playing or singing over harmonic loci such as the Romanesca or the Monte sequence. The idea is not that this approach replaces more reified forms of analysis, but that it should come prior to it: in this regard, it is quite similar to the idea of the 'natural approach' to learning a language.

***Epilogue***

In this dissertation, I have avoided the detailed description of present-day study programmes and the rigourous evaluation of results with students. In my experience, the differences between students are so huge that it is very hazardous to generalise; an assignment that tends to be too difficult for students at one institute, may cause much less problems at another school – and vice versa. A representative discussion of study programmes would therefore necessarily be an elaborate one; including it in this study would completely change its character. As I wrote in chapter 1.3, this thesis is not intended as a method either. In my view, neither students nor teachers at a conservatory level need ready-made methods; a Socratic approach to teaching is much preferred, in which the conversation between teacher and different students will be unique every time, depending on a student's background, talent and personality. Much more useful is a body of 'raw material' to work with, items that can be used for many purposes. A figured bass, for instance, may be used as an assignment for a written realisation, but it can also be realised directly at the keyboard (with or without preparation), it can be used as a transposition exercise, it may serve as a basis for a richer texture including an independent upper voice, it may be extended to a larger composition, and so forth. Selecting appropriate material, and especially finding applications that are useful for a particular student, appeals to a teacher's creativity.

When the goal is to explore facets of a musical world of almost two hundred years ago, such as in this thesis, and to apply such insights in one's musical practice, there is really no better way than to return to the original sources time and again. They will have to be read and assessed anew by every musician, since each generation will find in them what it feels attracted to. There is nothing worse

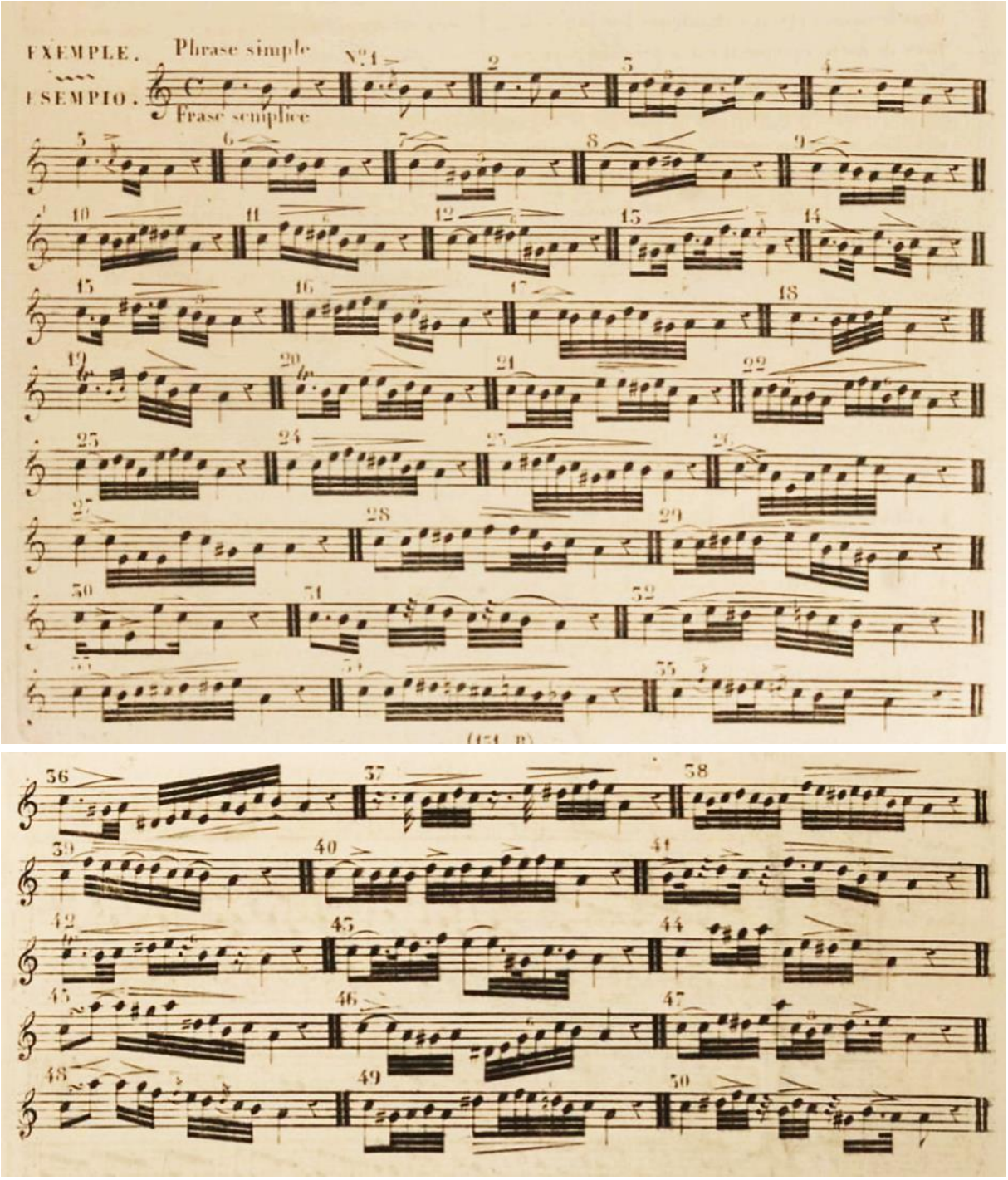
than a textbook that pretends to distill a quasi-eternal truth from historical material, thus smothering the dialogue between musician and source.

Therefore, the goal of this study has been to provide a view on the notion of 'improvisatoriness' in nineteenth-century music, to show sources, and to find ways to make them applicable today. The overarching objective is to make a case for classical music becoming more improvisatory in general. This thesis consciously restricts itself to offering a perspective, a travel guide for this vast 'familiar and yet unknown territory', as I called it in chapter 1.1. It does not presume to tell anybody what to do, but it provides 'stepping stones' that may facilitate fellow musicians' own discoveries. It is my hope that this study transmits some of my own enthusiasm for this topic, which has only grown over the period I have been working on it.

# Appendix

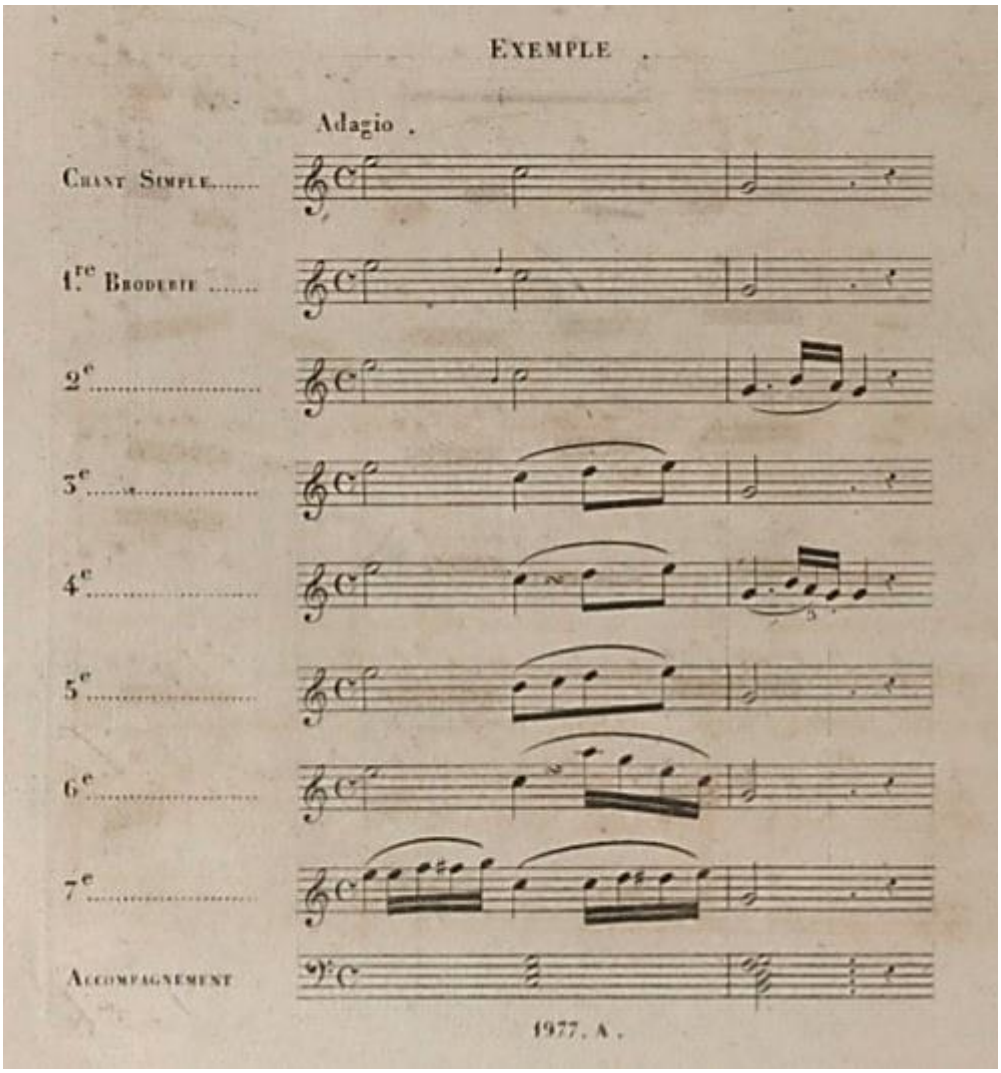
## 1. Alexis de Garaudé: Examples of ornamentation

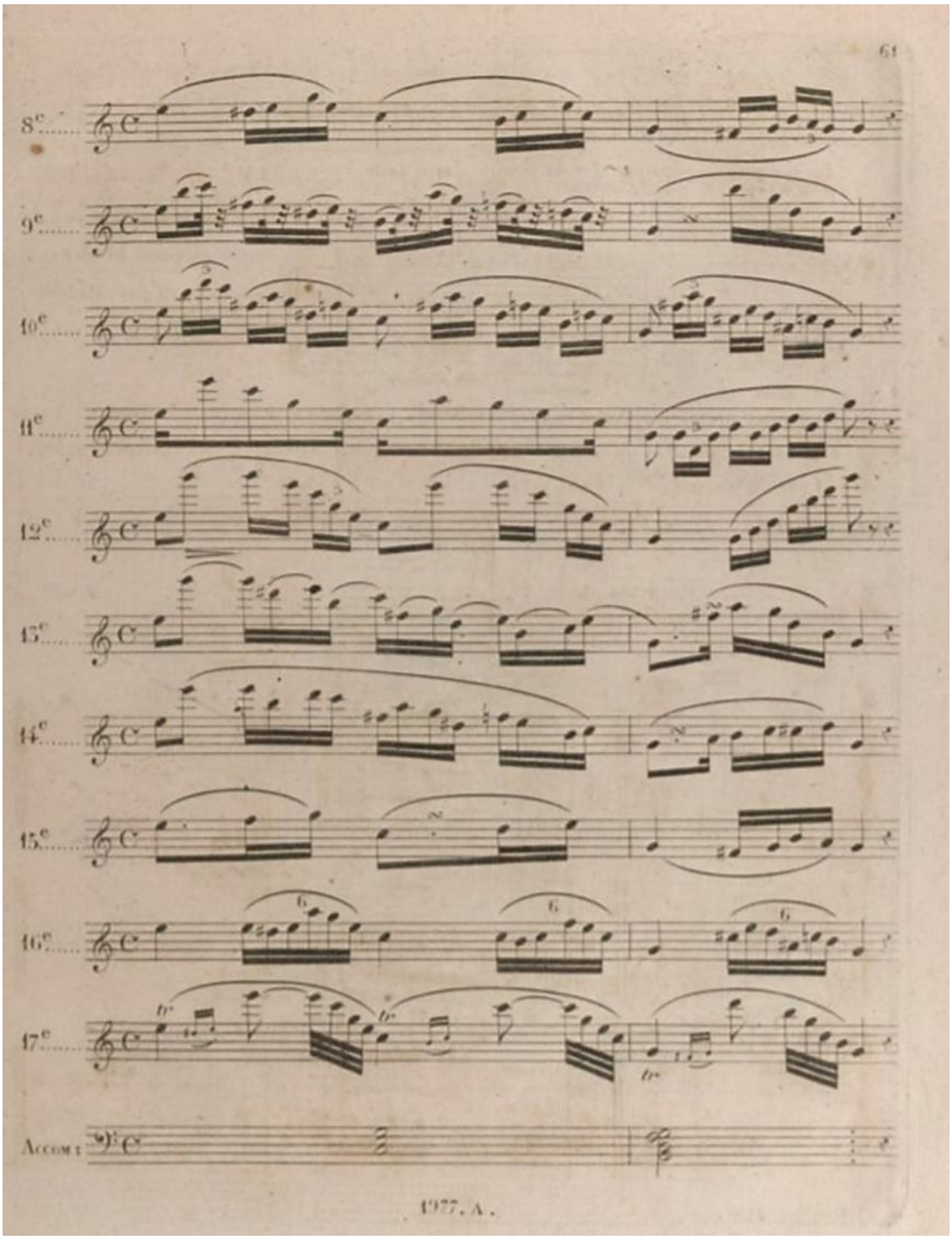
*Garaudé, A. de: Méthode complète de chant. Paris, 1854; 267-268*



## 2. Louis Drouët: examples of ornamentation

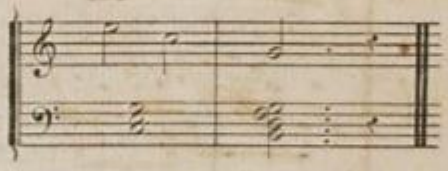
*Drouët, L.: Méthode pour la flute. Paris, n.d.; 60-63*




61
8e
9e
10e
11e
12e
13e
14e
15e
16e
17e
Accom:
1977. A.

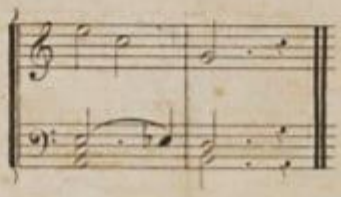
62 Mais je ne finirais pas si je voulais mettre sur ces trois Notes toutes les fadaises dont on pourrait les orner. Si l'on peut broder ces trois Notes à l'infini, on peut aussi les accompagner de mille manières.

La première opération que la pensée doive faire lorsqu'on veut broder quelques Notes, c'est de reconnaître l'Accord auquel elles appartiennent. Les trois Notes que je viens de broder sont accompagnées de cette manière.



Les deux premières Notes appartiennent à l'Accord d'Ut et la troisième à l'Accord de dominante d'Ut. Presqu'aucune des Broderies que j'ai faites ne pourraient s'appliquer à ces trois Notes si elles étaient accompagnées d'autres Accords.

Par Exemple. 1.



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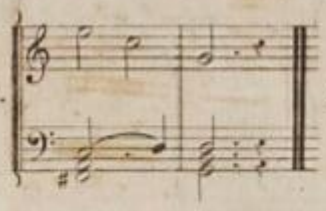

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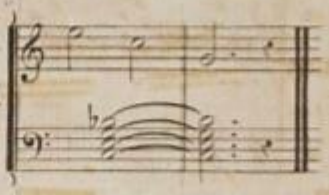

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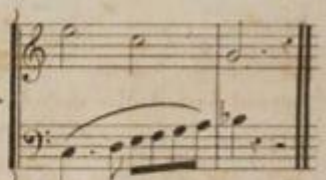

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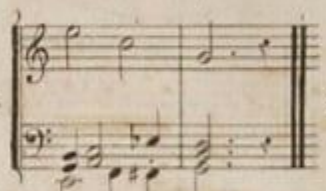

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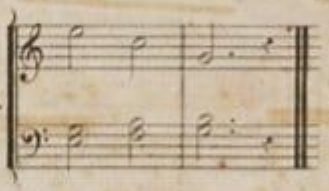

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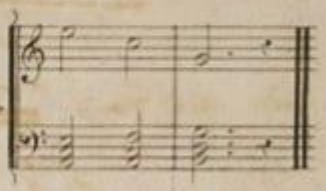

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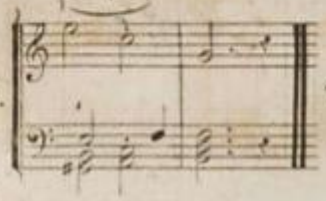

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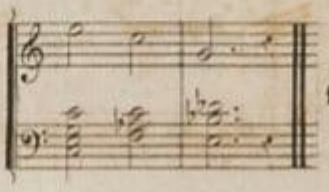

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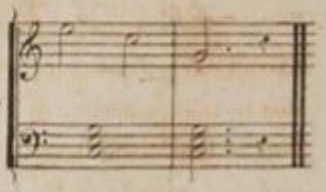


1977. A.

Les trois Notes dont il s'agit, accompagnées d'une de ces manières, demanderaient des ornemens bien différens de ceux qui leur conviennent lorsqu'elles sont des apanages de l'Accord d'Ut et de celui de dominante .

EXEMPLE .

A.

Thème .....

Broderie .....

Accompagnement avec l'Accord d'Ut et celui de dominante .

Même genre de Broderie, mais composé d'autres Notes qui sont en Harmonie avec l'Accord ci dessous nommé

B.

Thème .....

Broderie .....

Accord parfait Mineur de La avec la Quinte alterée au dernier tems de la Mesure .

MÊME OBSERVATION .

C.

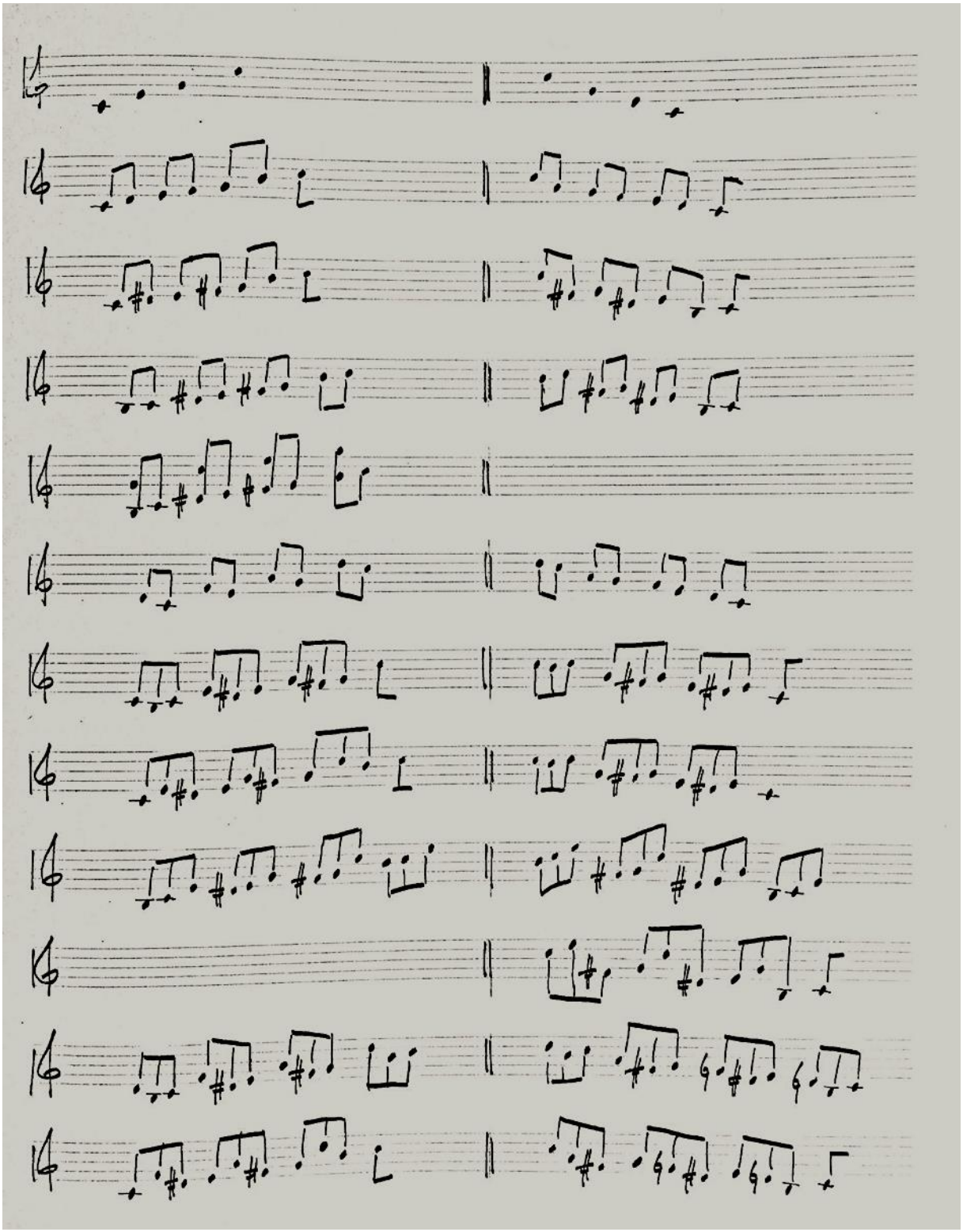
Thème .....

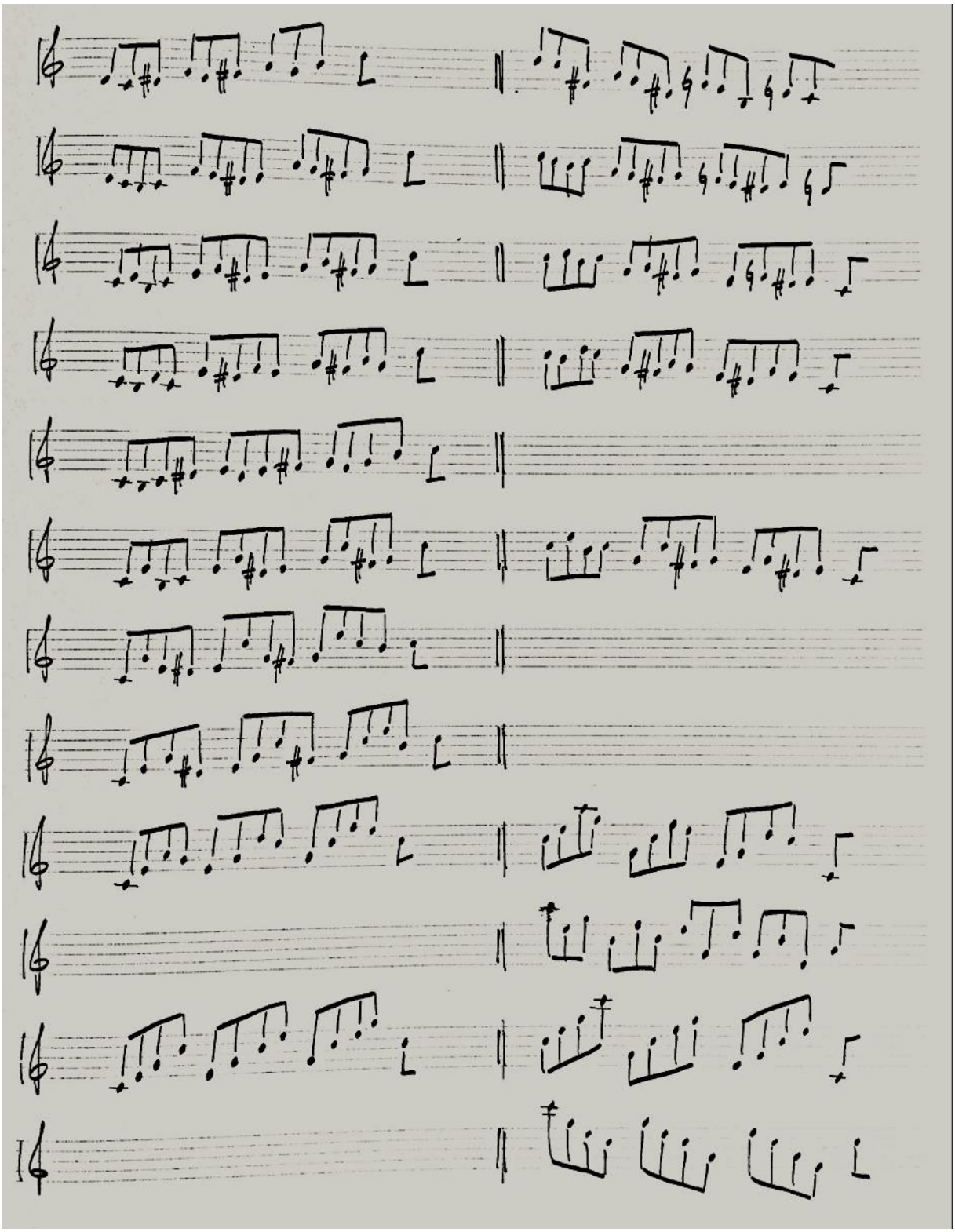
Broderie .....

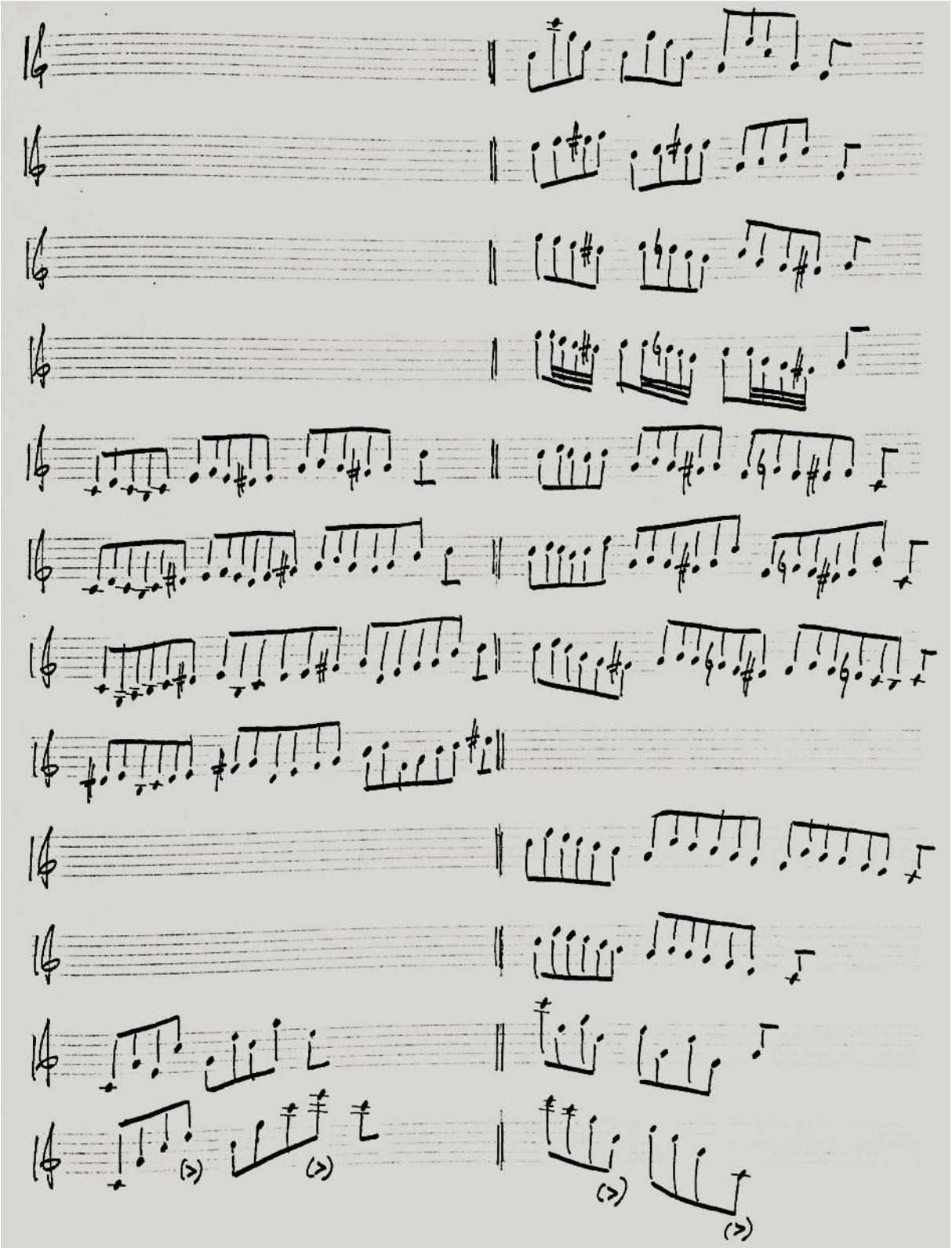
Accord de septième de sensible pendant les trois premiers tems de la mesure; sur le quatrième tems c'est l'Accord de dominante de Ré .

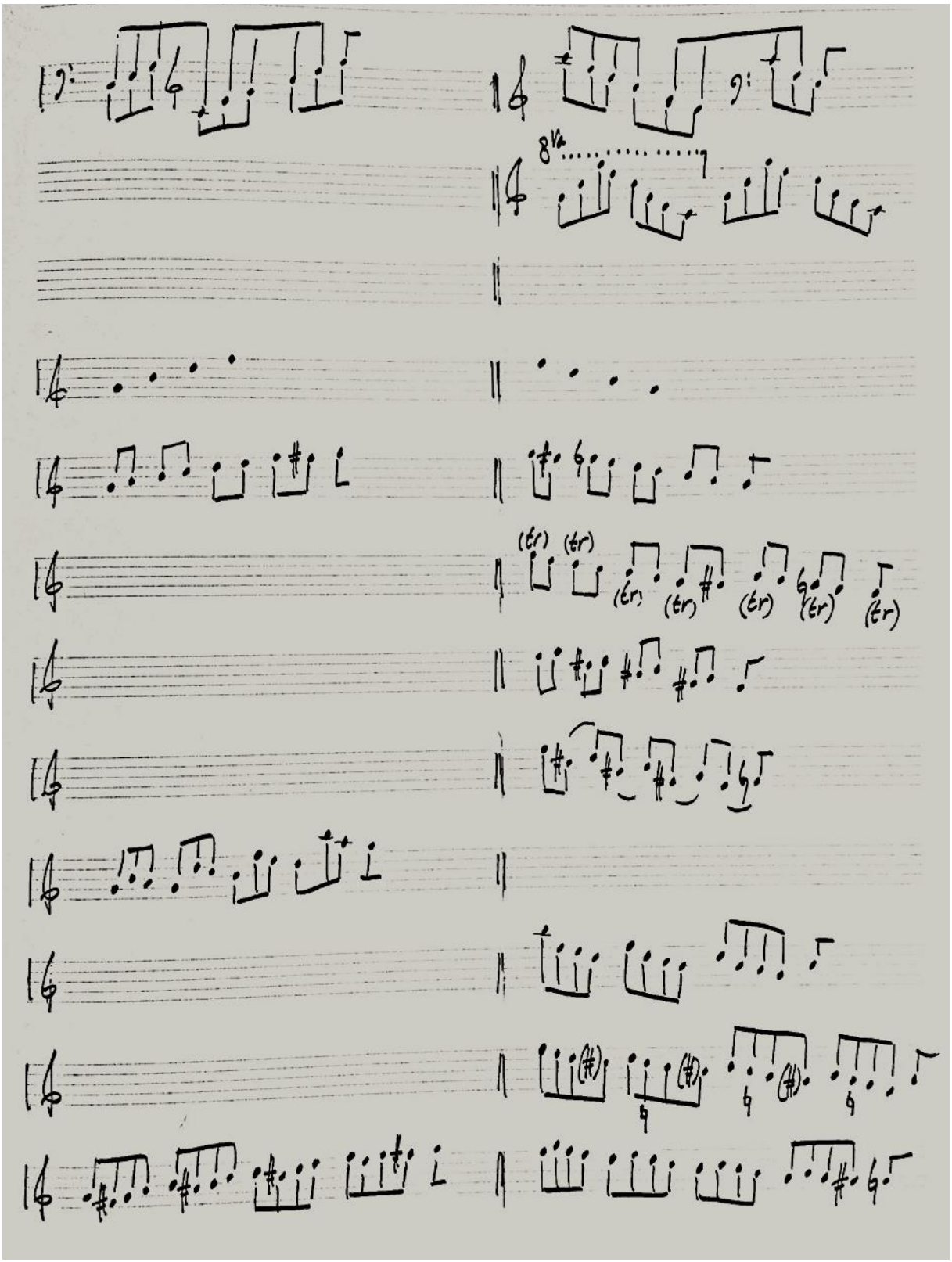
1977. A.

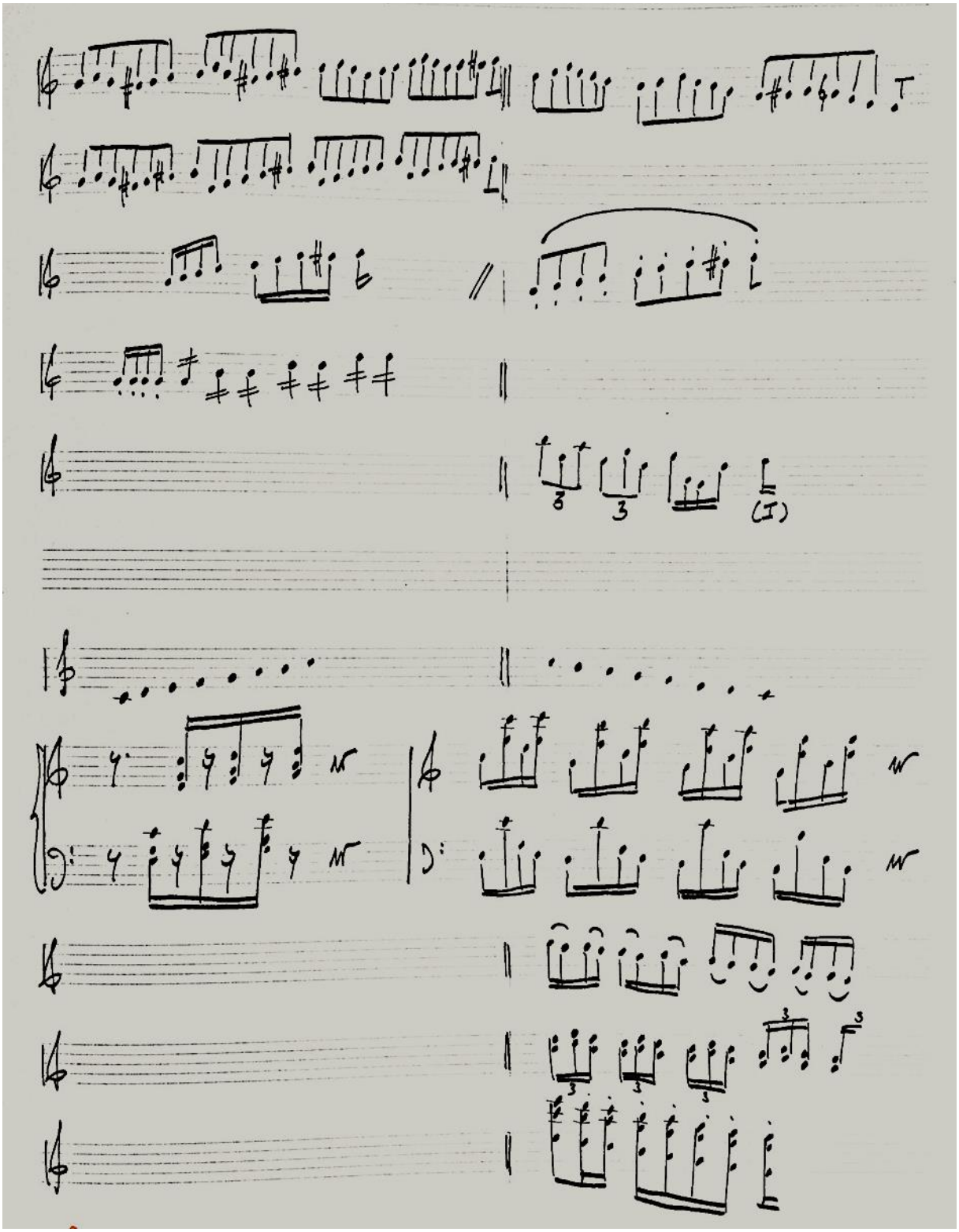
## 3. Dictionary of ornamental patterns

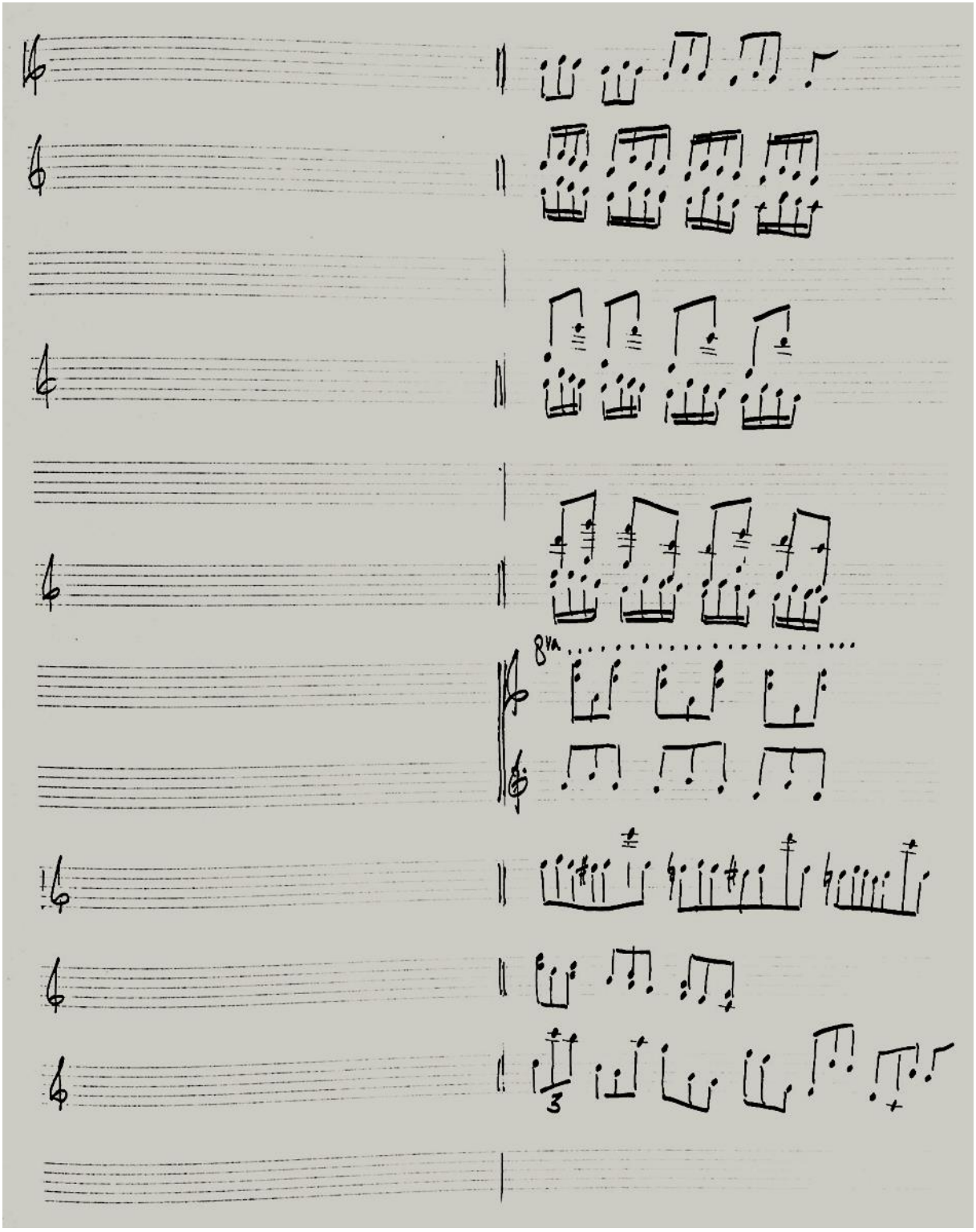


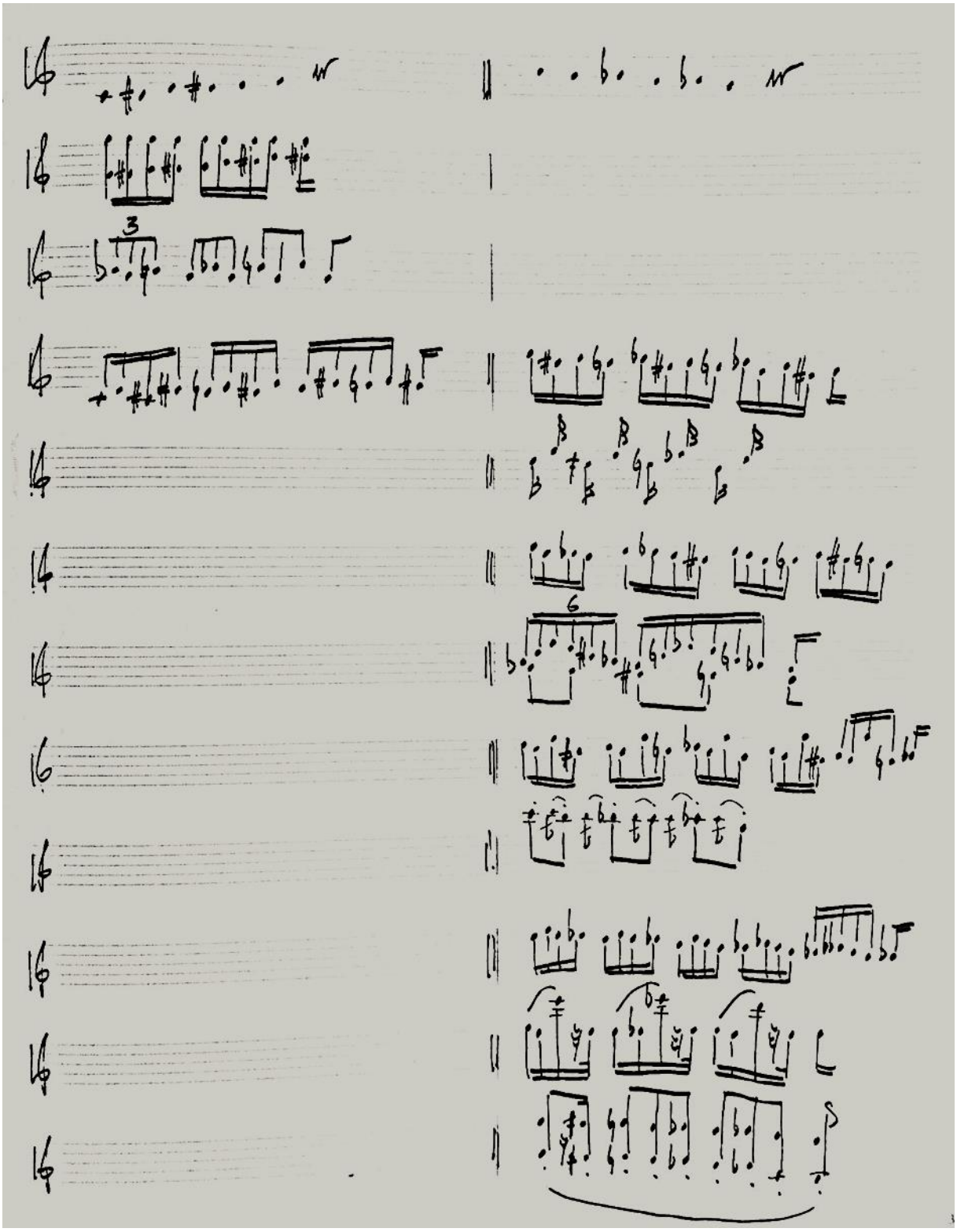


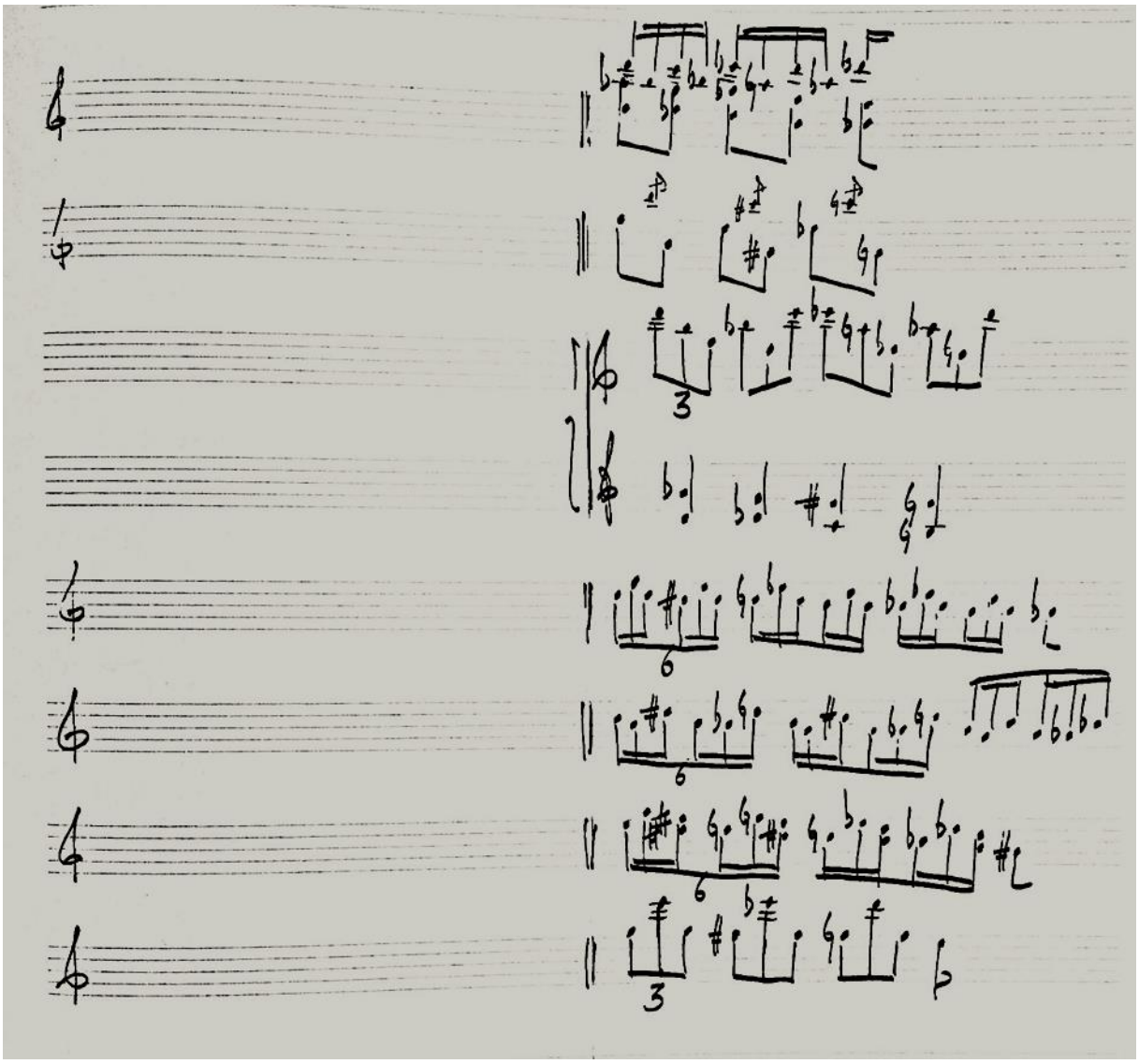



8va
(tr)



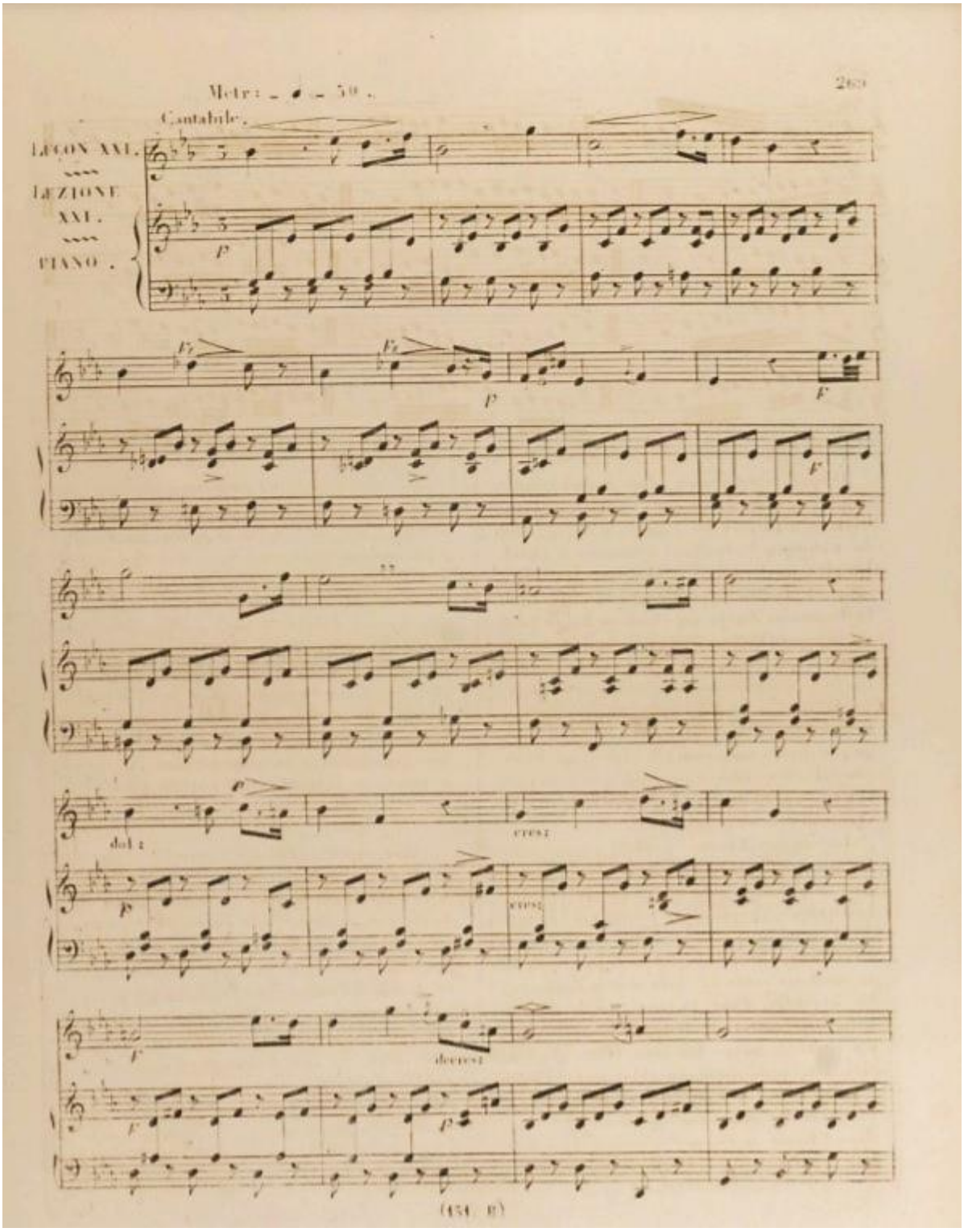

8va
3

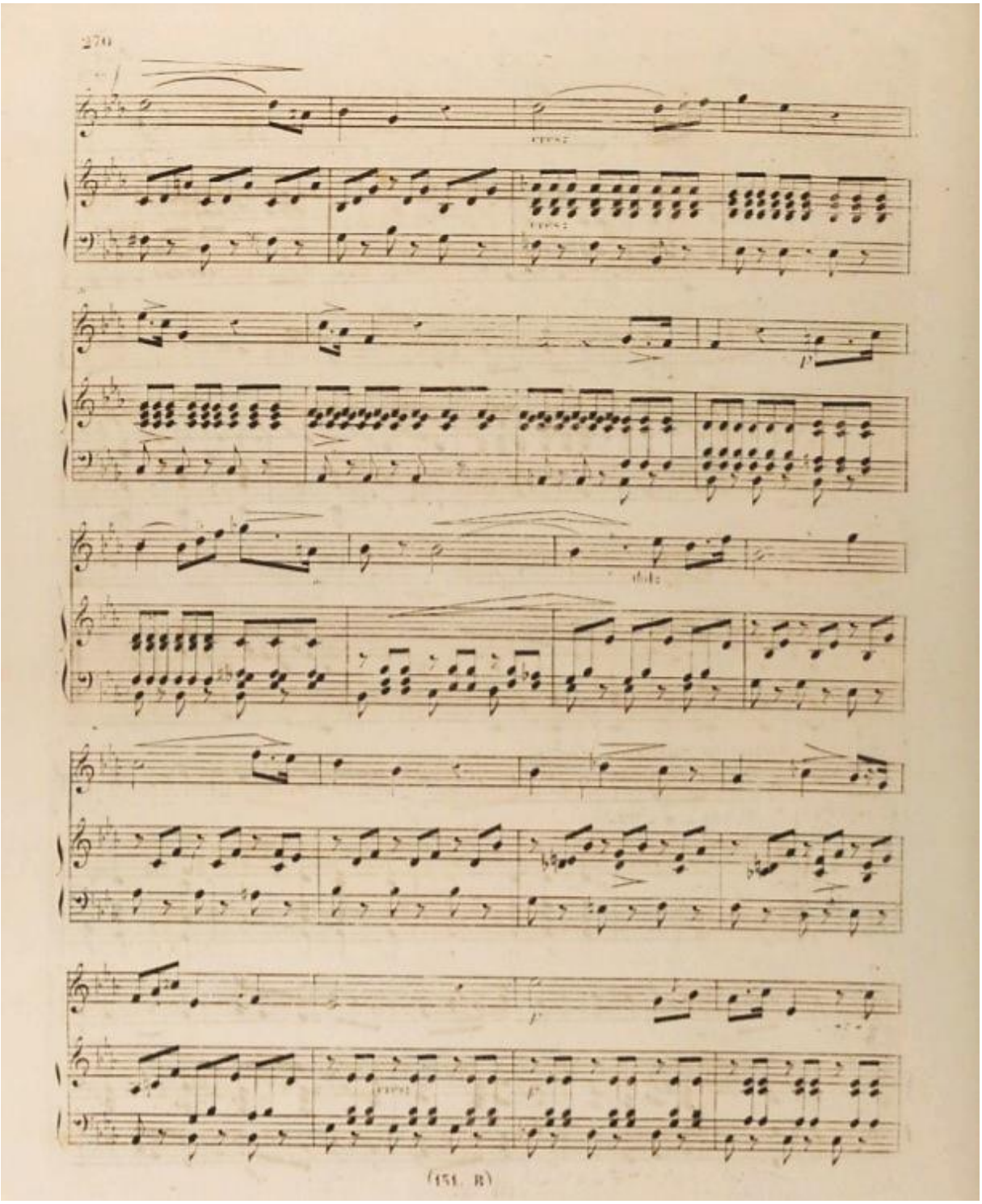


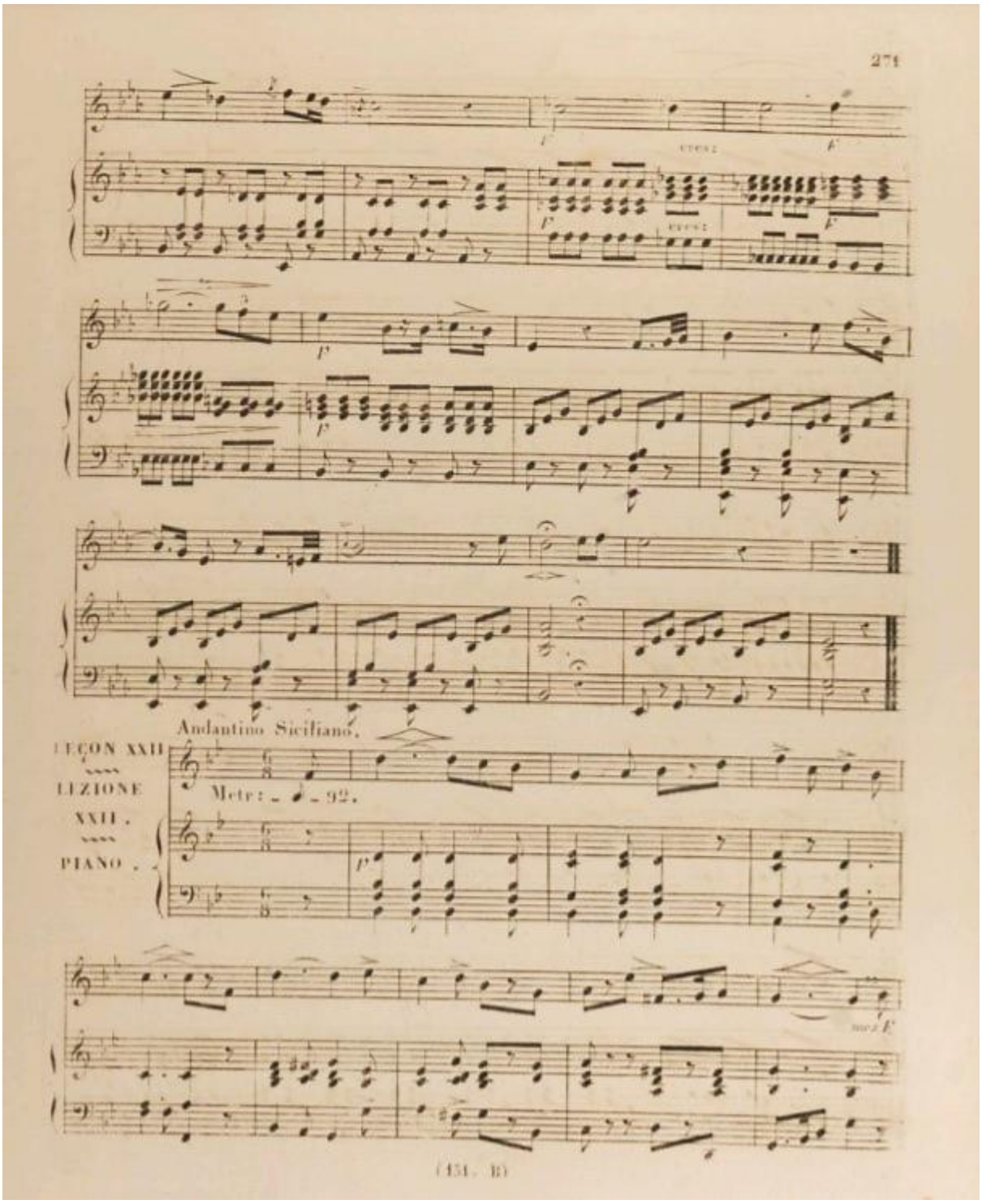


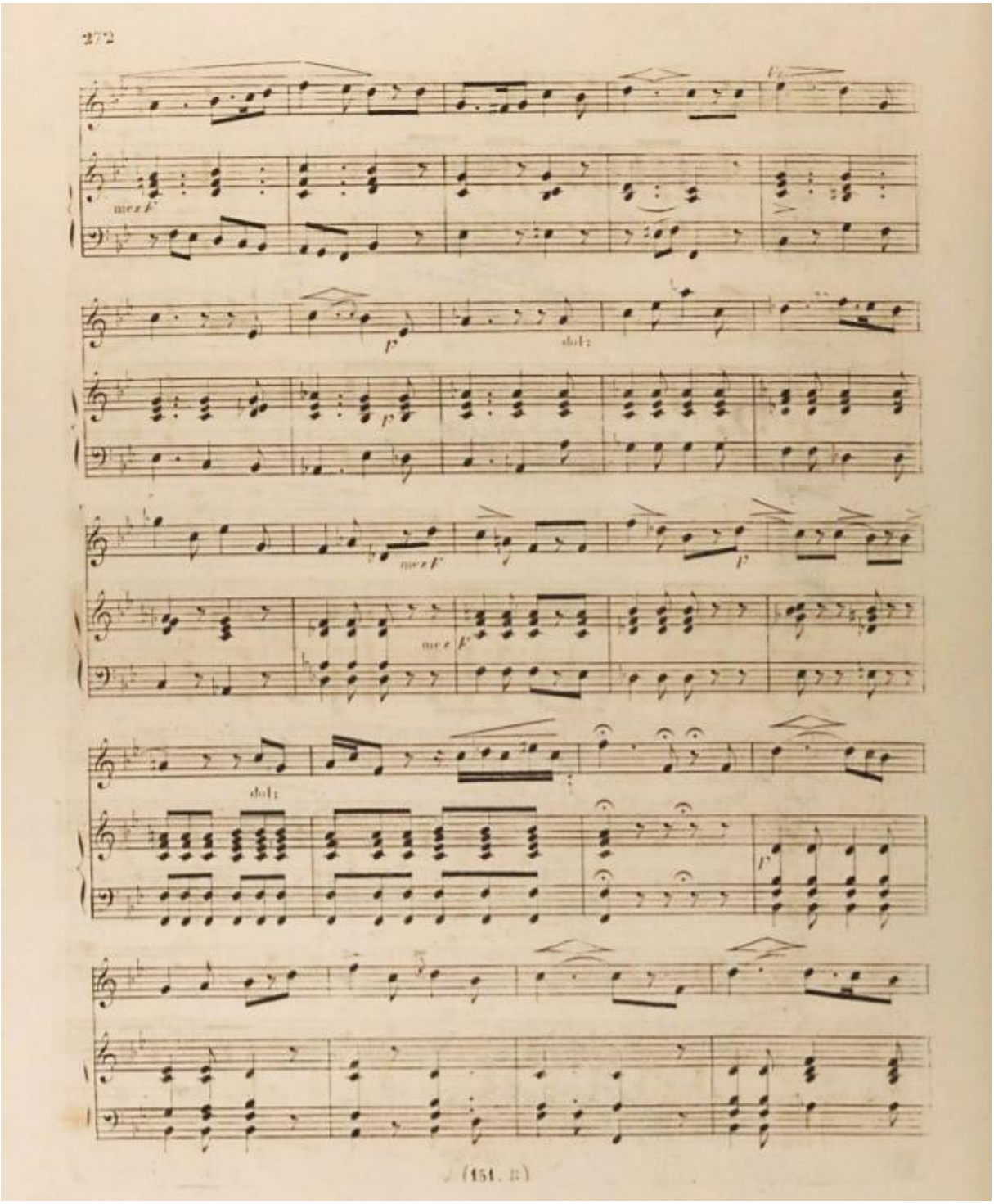
## 4. Alexis de Garaudé: Exercise pieces for ornamenting

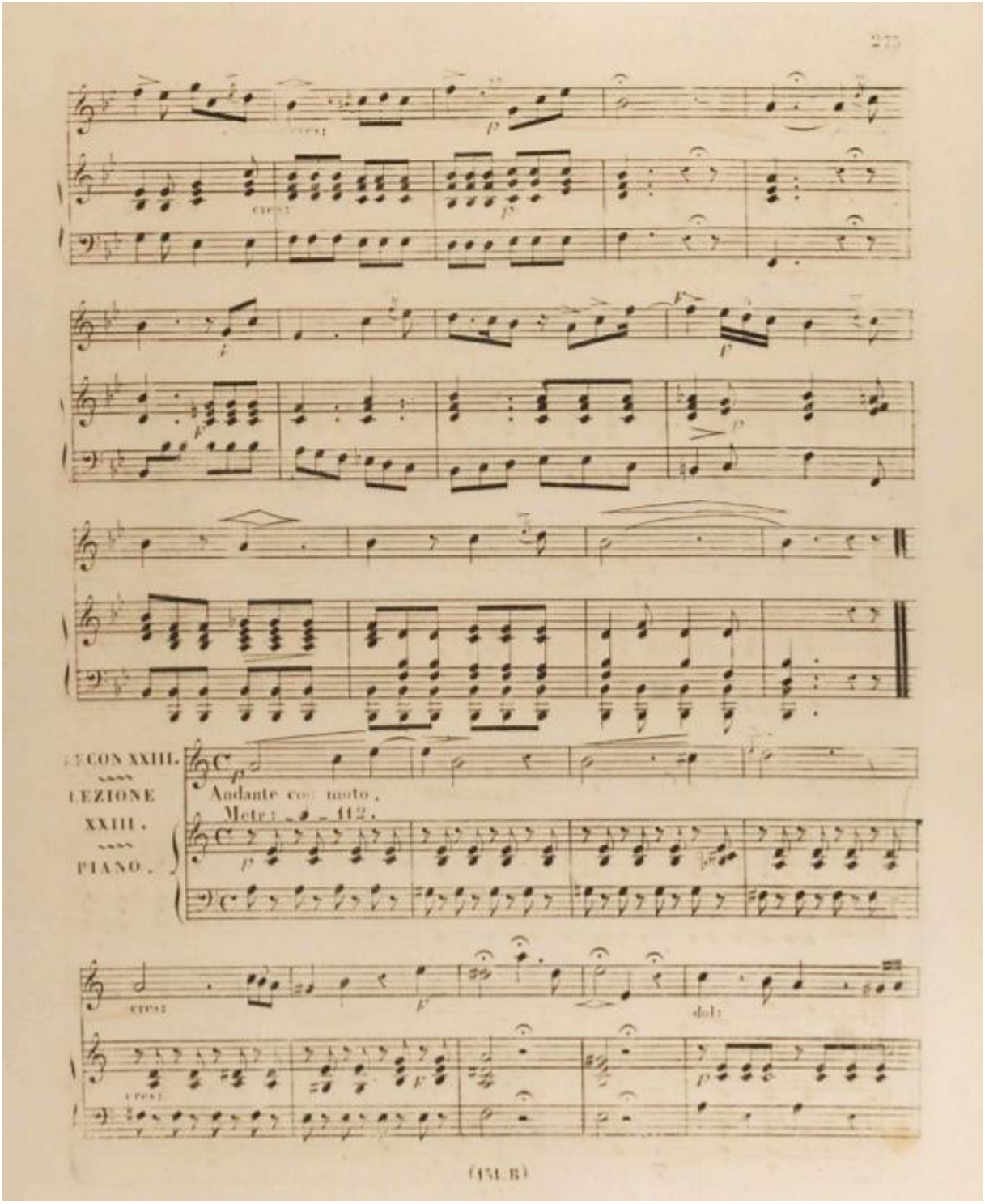
***Garaudé, A. de: Méthode complète de chant. Paris, 1854; 269-285***

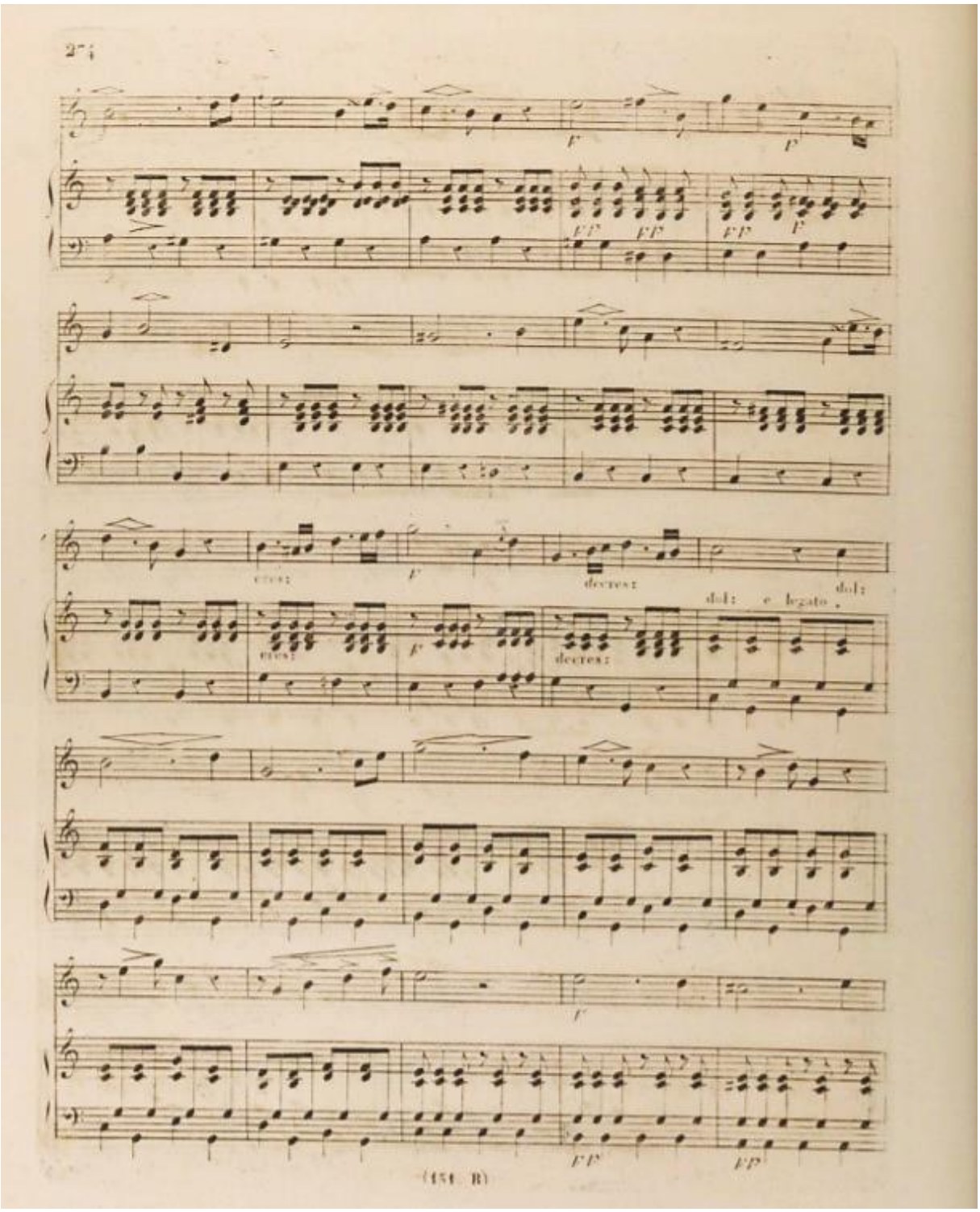


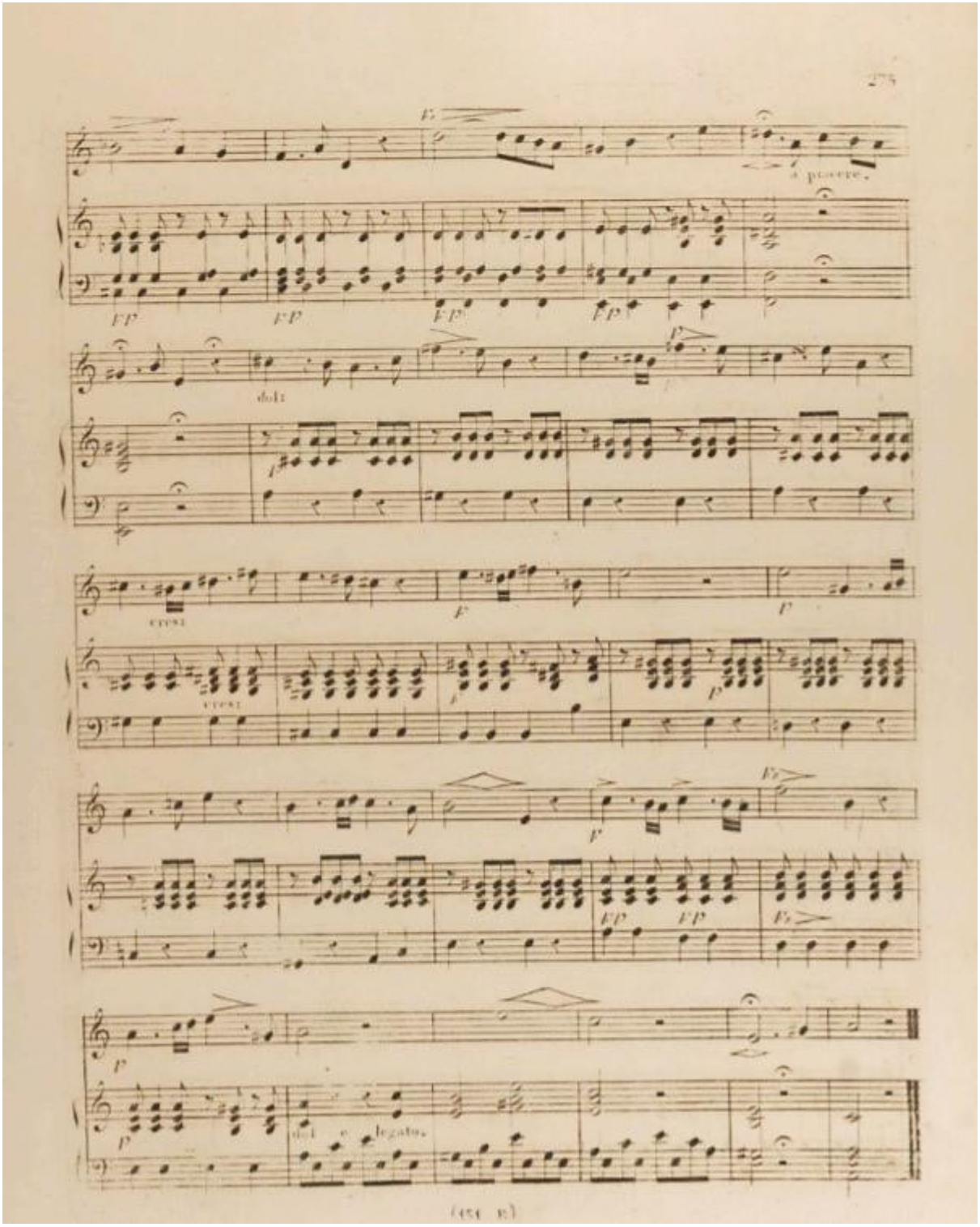



271
Andantino Siciliano.
LEÇON XXII
LIZIONE
XXII.
PIANO.
Metr: ♩ = 92.
(131. B)


272
mezzo f
f
dolce
p
mezzo f
p
mezzo f
dolce
f


CON XXIII.
LEZIONE
XXIII.
PIANO.
Andante con moto.
Metr: ♩ = 112.
cresc.
dol.


27
f
f
ff
ff
ff
f
cresc:
f
decresc:
dol:
e legato
dol:
cresc:
f
decresc:
f
ff
ff
(154 B)


a piacere.
dolce
legatos

276

LEÇON XXIV.

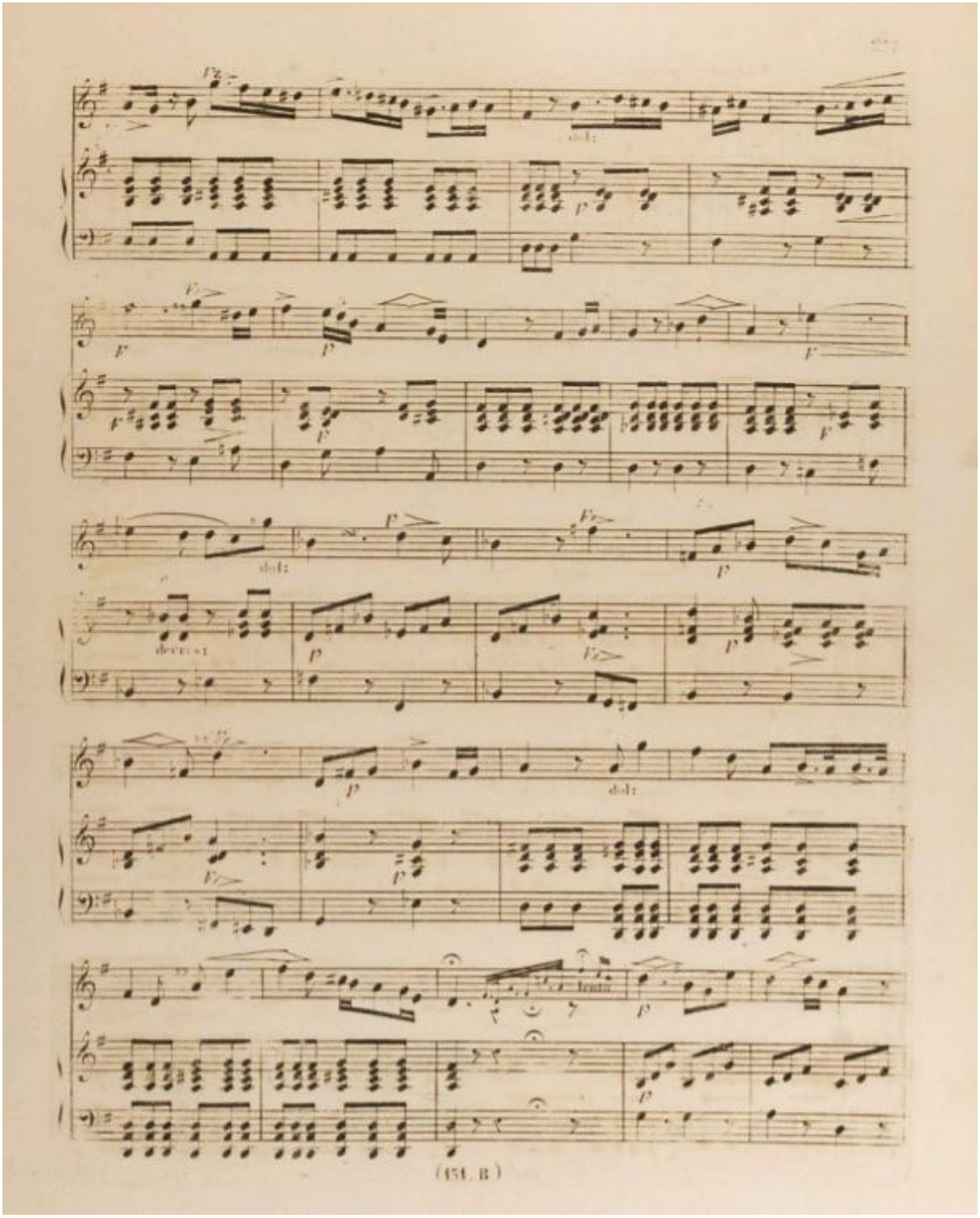
LEZIONE XXIV.

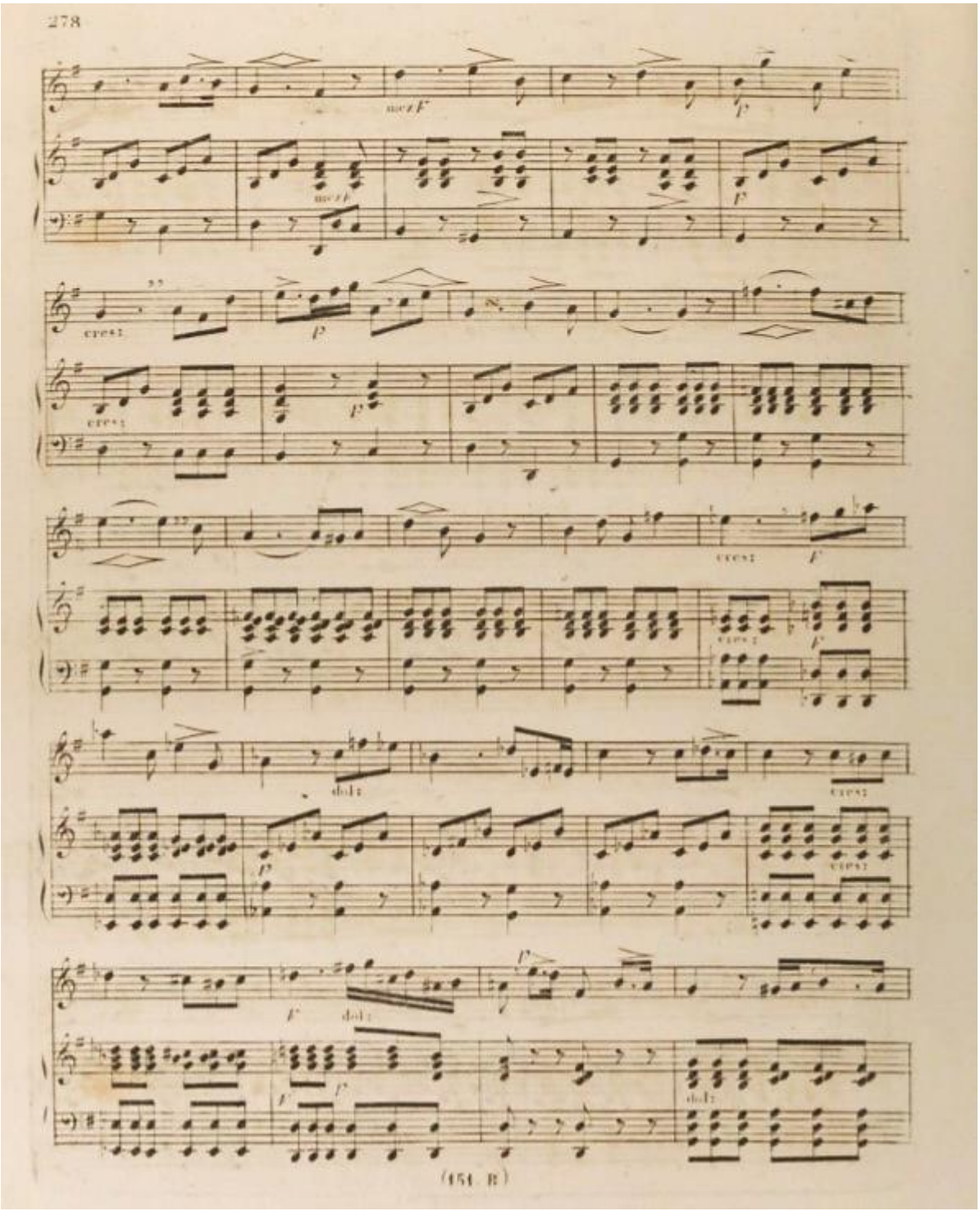
PIANO.

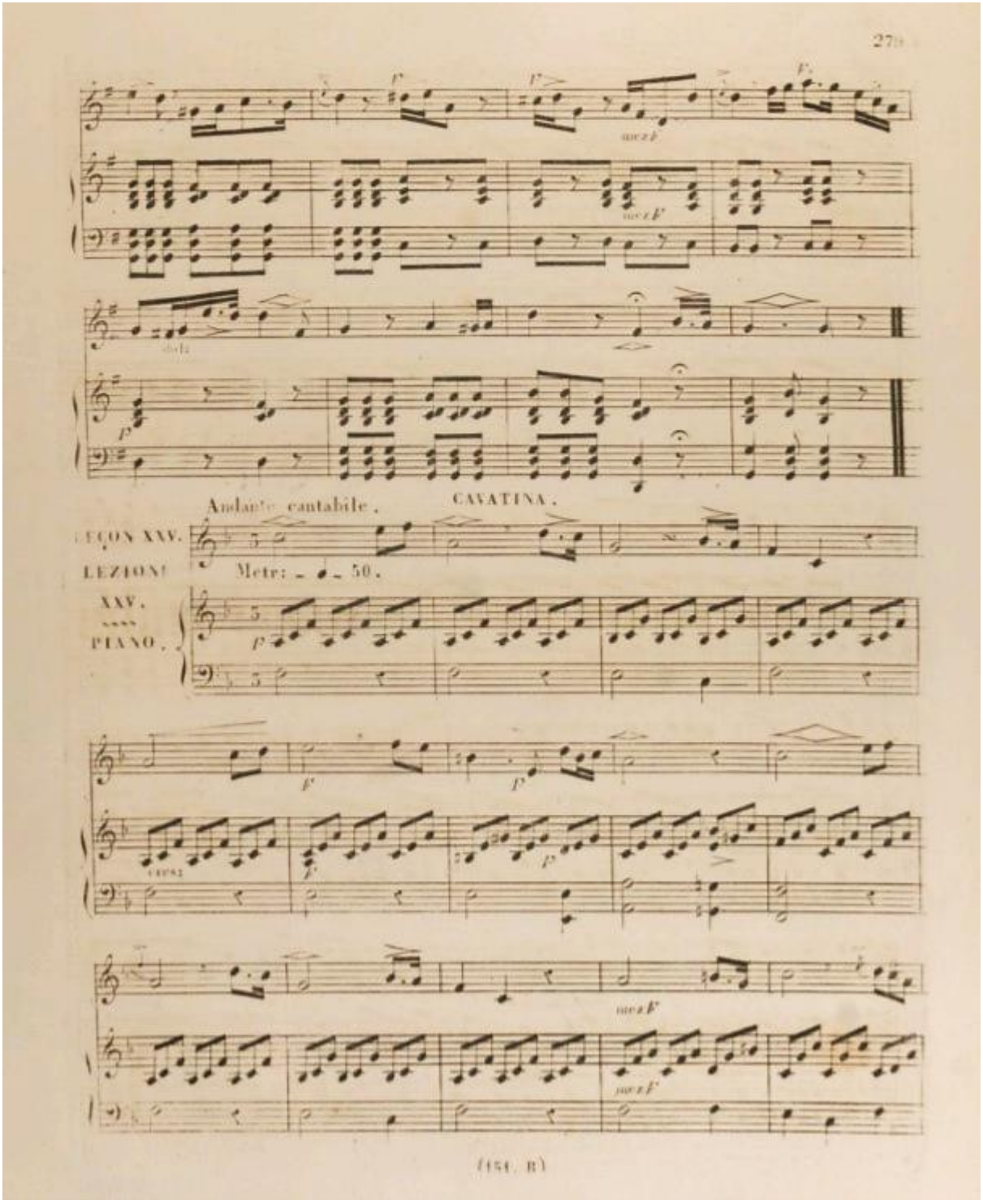
Andante grazioso.

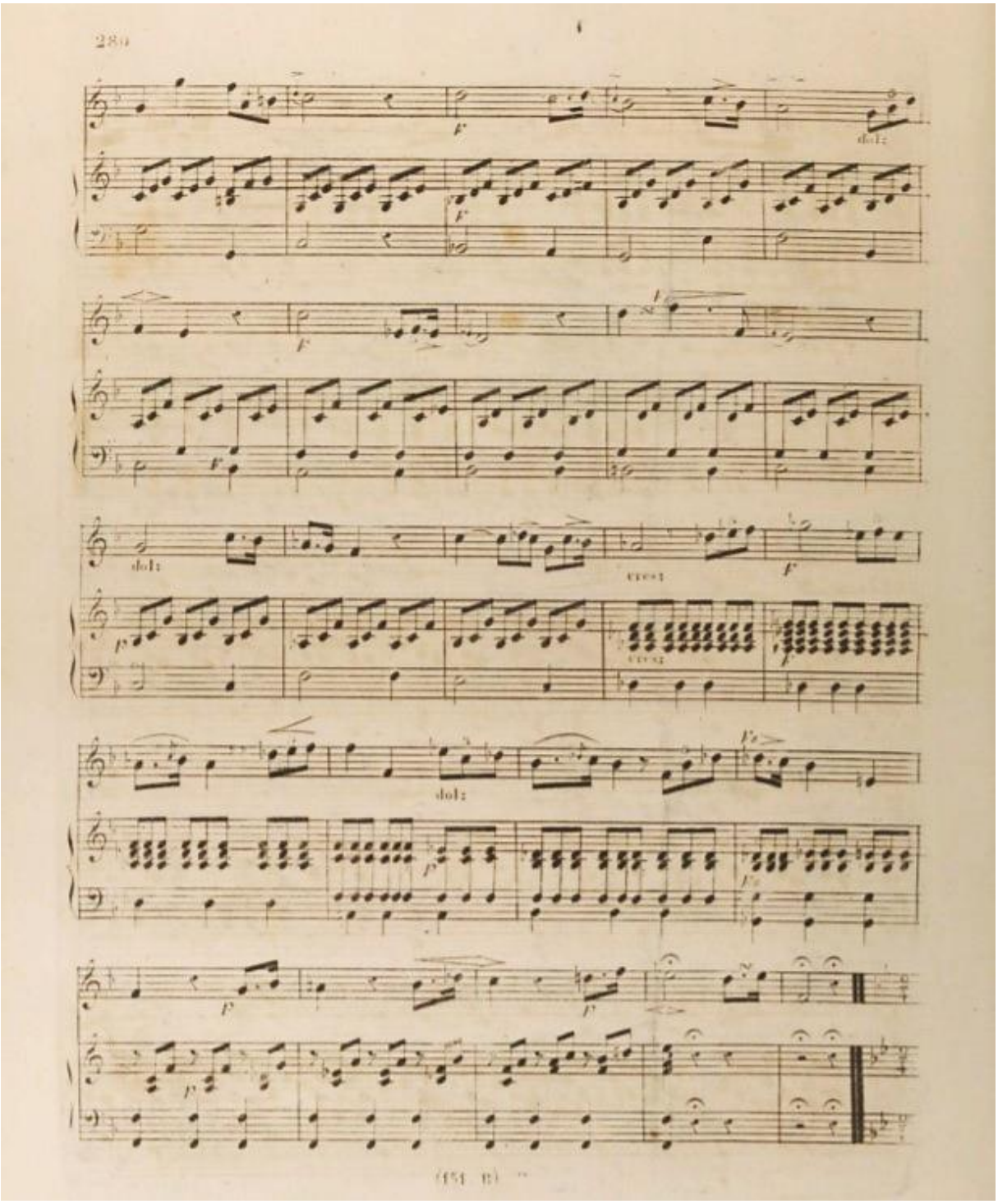
Metr: ♩ = 88.

(151. B)


dolce
dolce
dolce
lento

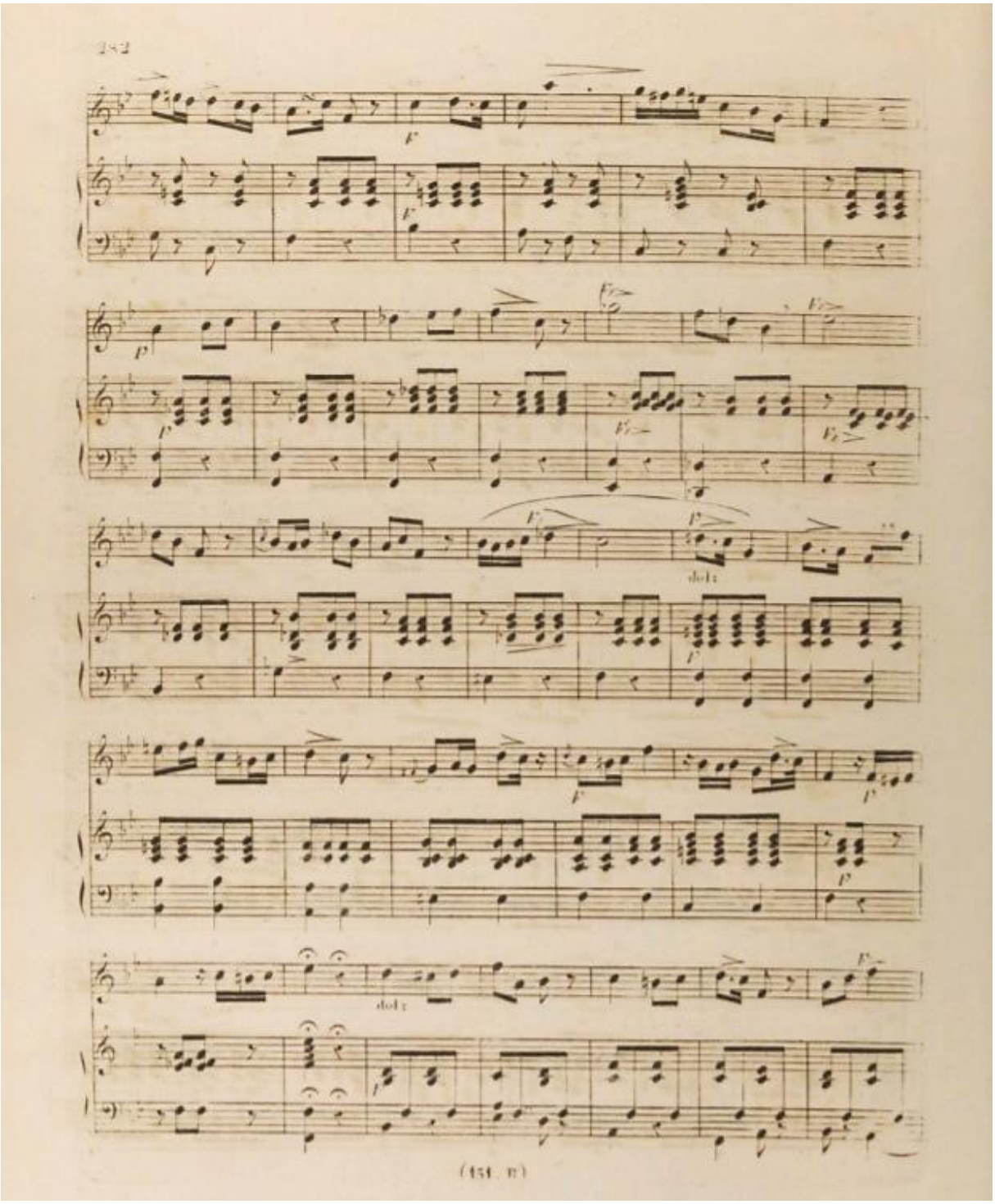

278
mezzF
mezzF
P
P
cresc
cresc
P
P
cresc
F
cresc
F
dolc
cresc
P
cresc
F
F
dolc
F
F
F
dolc
(454 B)

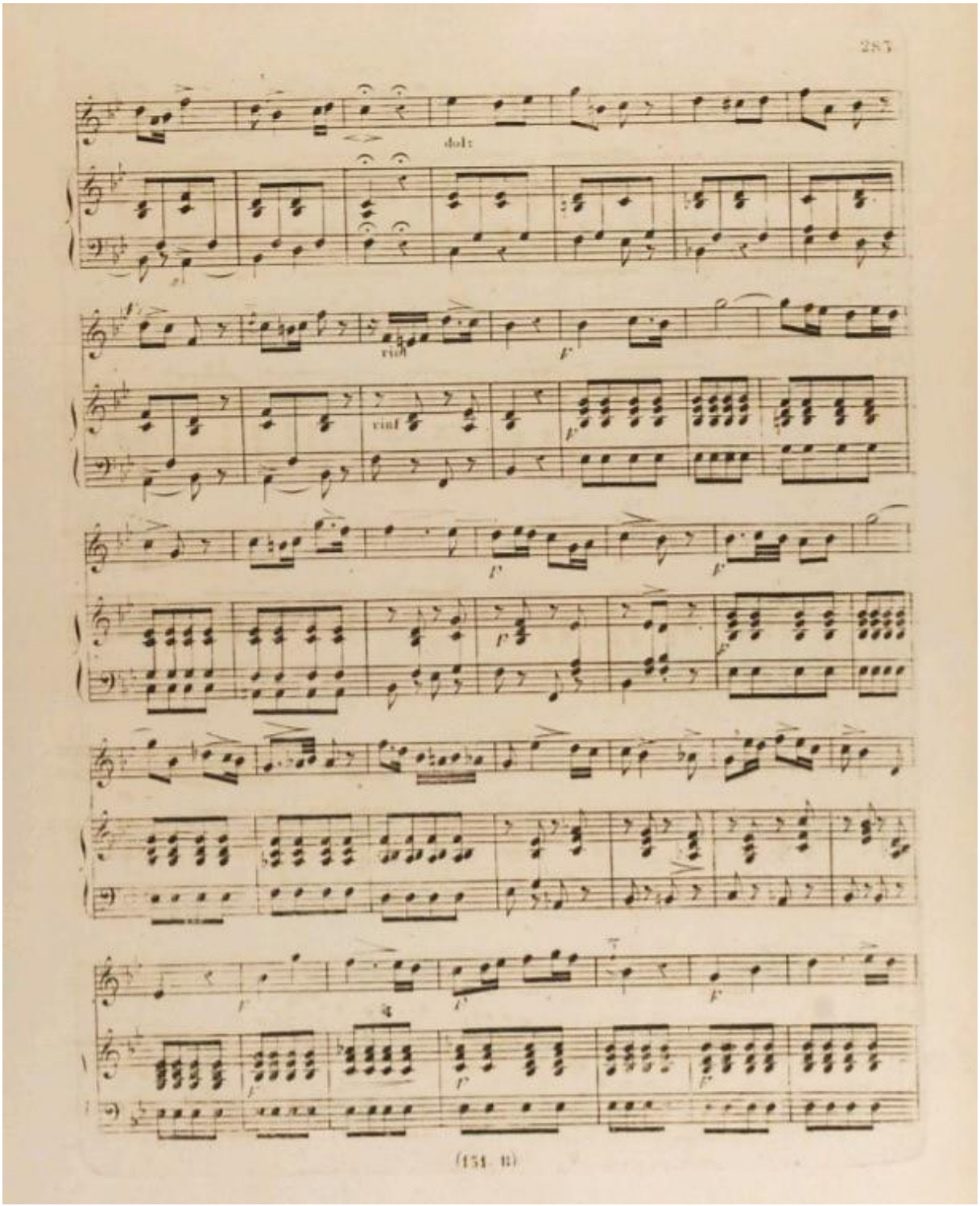

Andante cantabile.
CAVATINA.
LEZIONE XXV.
LEZIONE XXV. PIANO.
Metr: ♩ = 50.

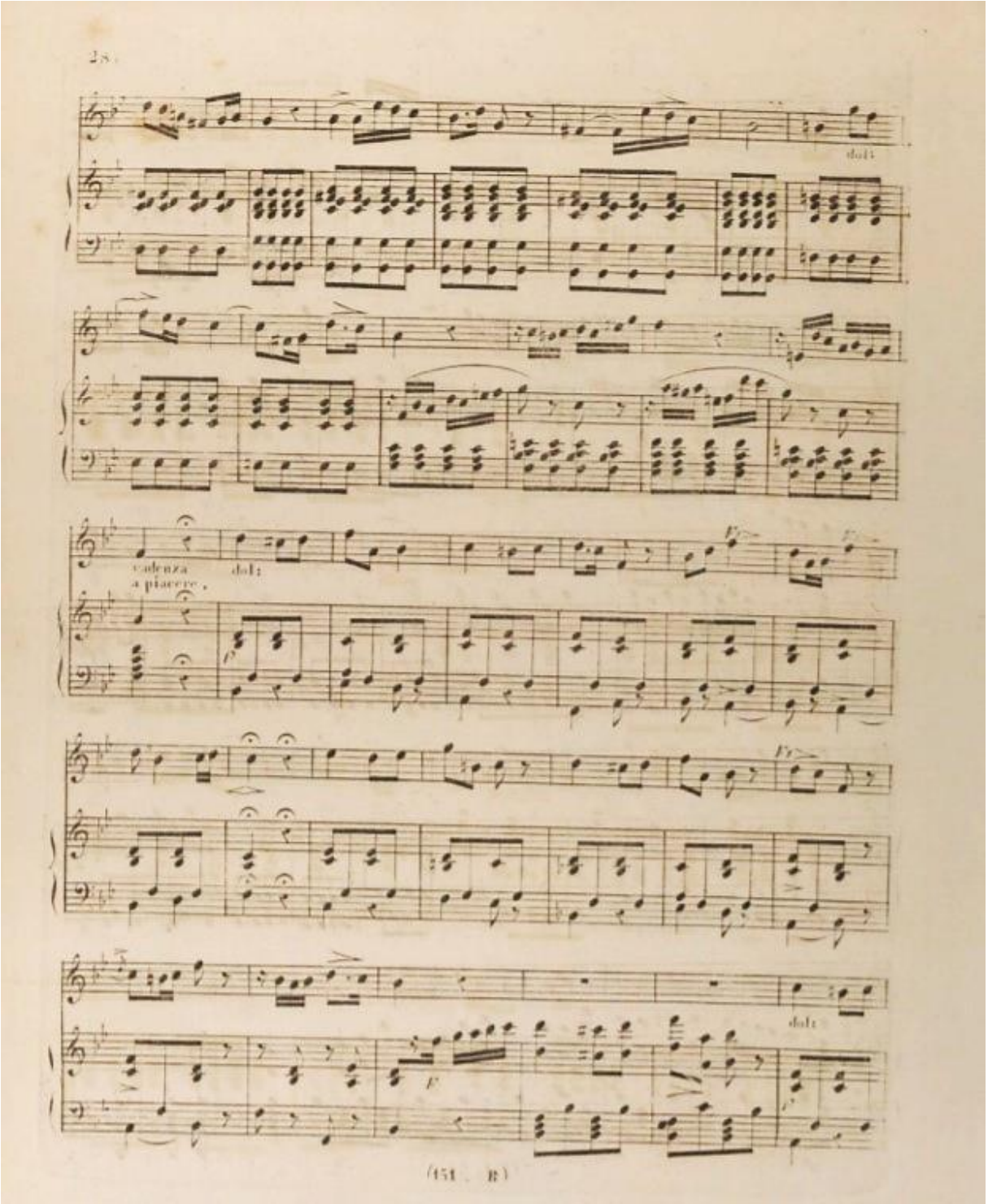

280
dol:
cresc
dol:
(151 B)

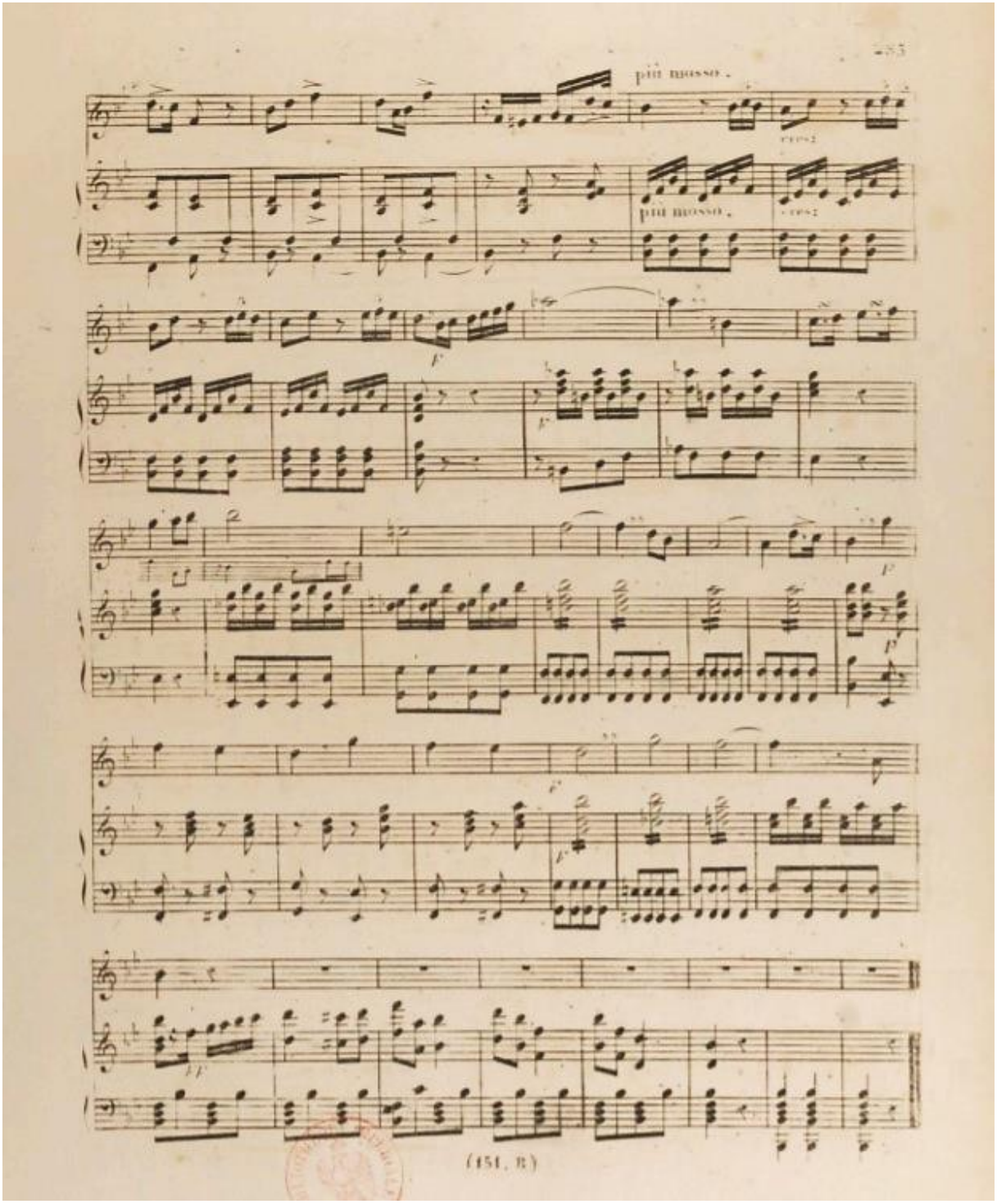
Allegretto.

Metr: - ♩ - 88.




287
dolc
rall
rall
(151 B)


28.
dolce
cadenza
a piacere.
dolce
dolce
(151 . B)


più mosso.
più mosso.
(151. B)

## 5. Harmonic reductions of Schubert dances

***Recorded realisations of the reductions:***

[App #1]

***Recorded harmonic loci:***

[App #2]

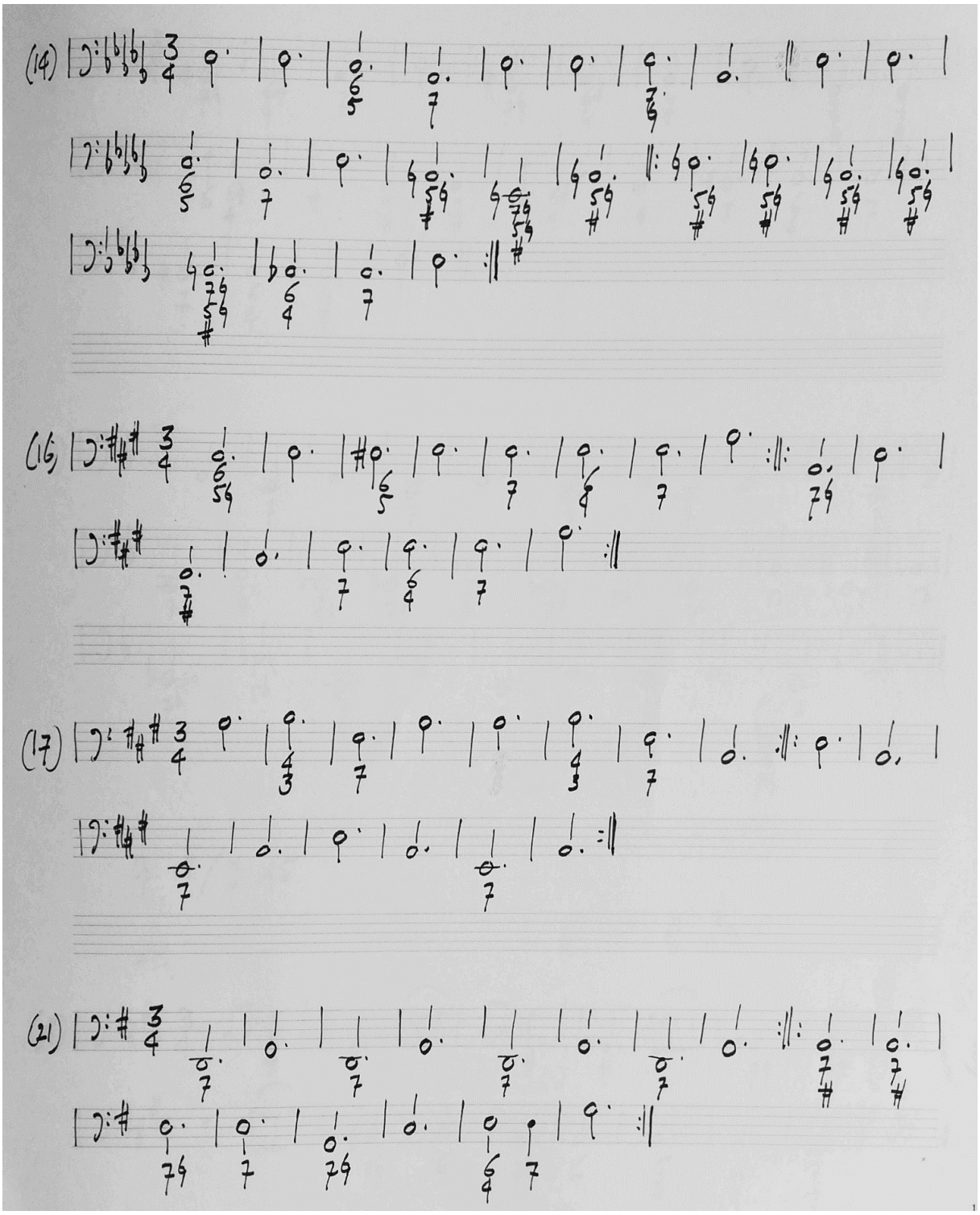
From op. 9 / D 365:

(2)

(3)

(12)

(13)


(14)
(16)
(17)
(21)

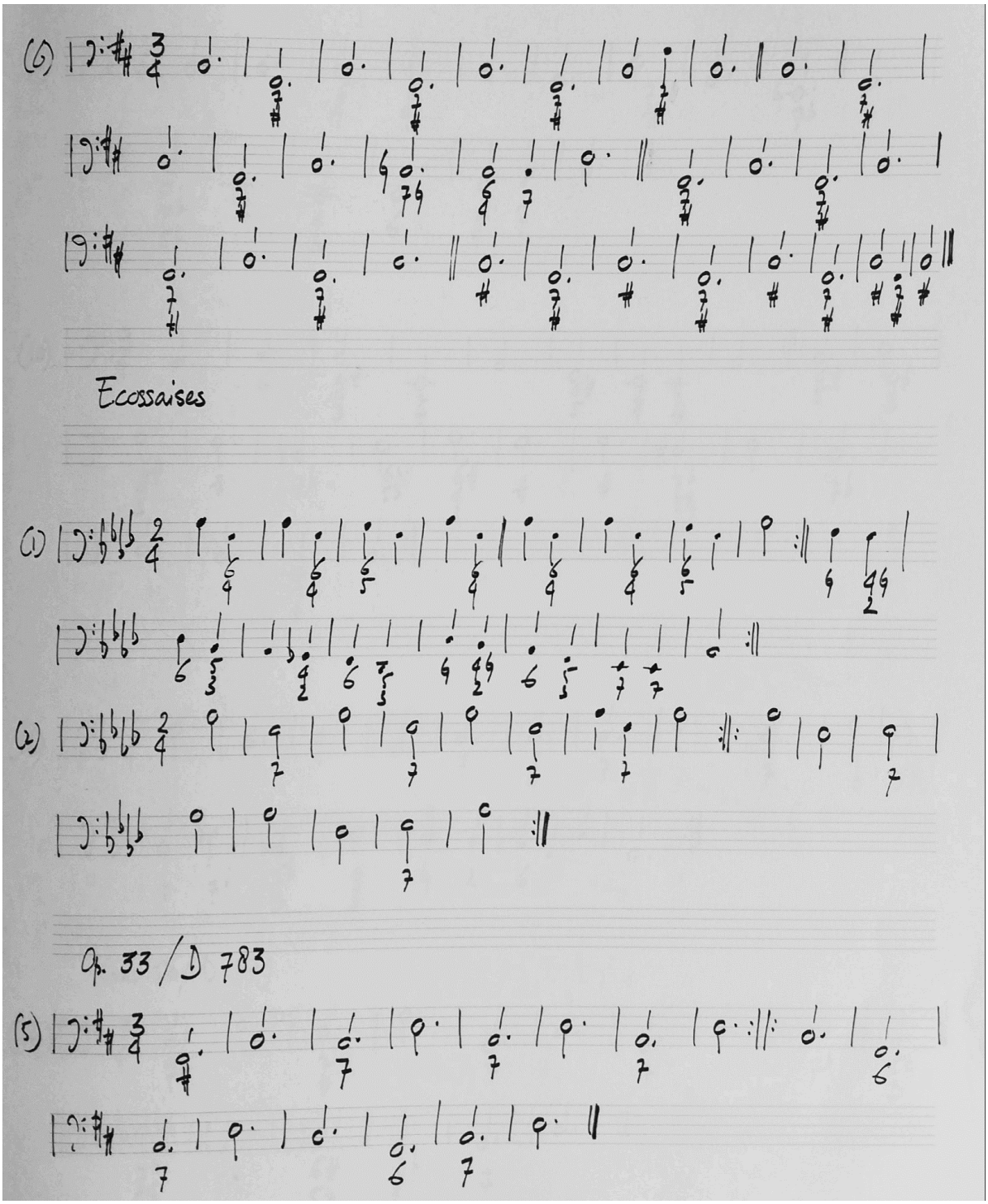
(29)

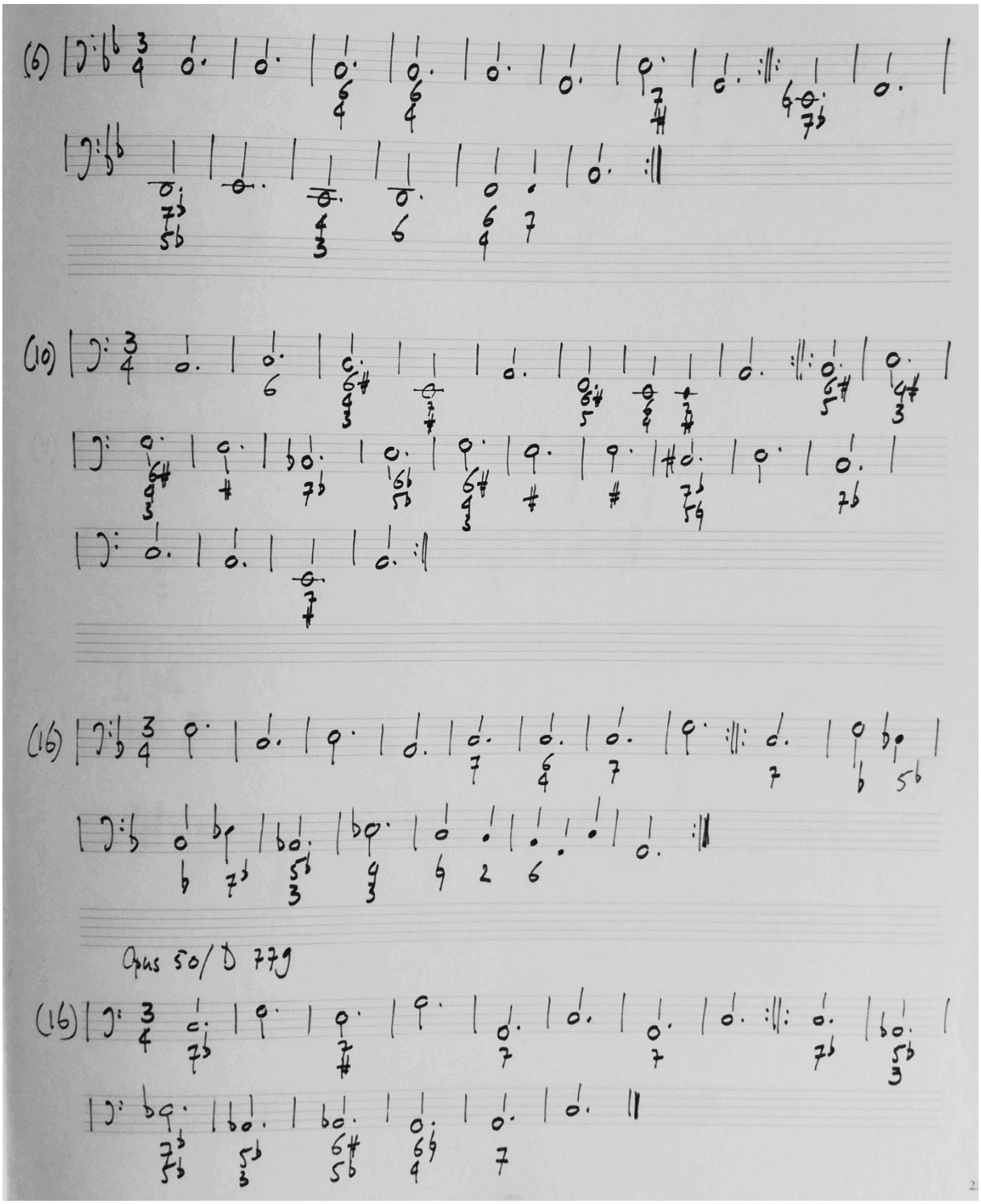
(33)

Op. 18 / D 145

(4)

19


Ecossaises
Op. 33 / D 783


(6)
(10)
(16)
Opus 50/D 779
(16)

Op. 67 / D 734

(13)

Op. 77 / D 969

(11)

D 366

(1)

D.C.

## 6. Carl Czerny: Examples of variation technique

*Czerny, C.: School of Practical Composition op. 600, vol. I. London, 1848; 22-28.*

22

Allegretto moderato.

THEME.

*p*

FIRST CLASS. Strict preservation of the melody, with a varied accompaniment.

Var. 1.

*p*

Var. 2.

*p*

Var. 3.

*p dol.*

Var. 4.

*p*

SECOND CLASS. Variations of the theme by means of adjunctive notes.

Var. 5.

*p*

8118

23

Var: 6.

Var: 7.

Var: 8.

THIRD CLASS. Passages, skips, and other figures formed on the harmony of the theme, with a retention of the leading idea of the melody.

Var: 9.

Var: 10.

Var: 11.

6118

24

Var. 12.

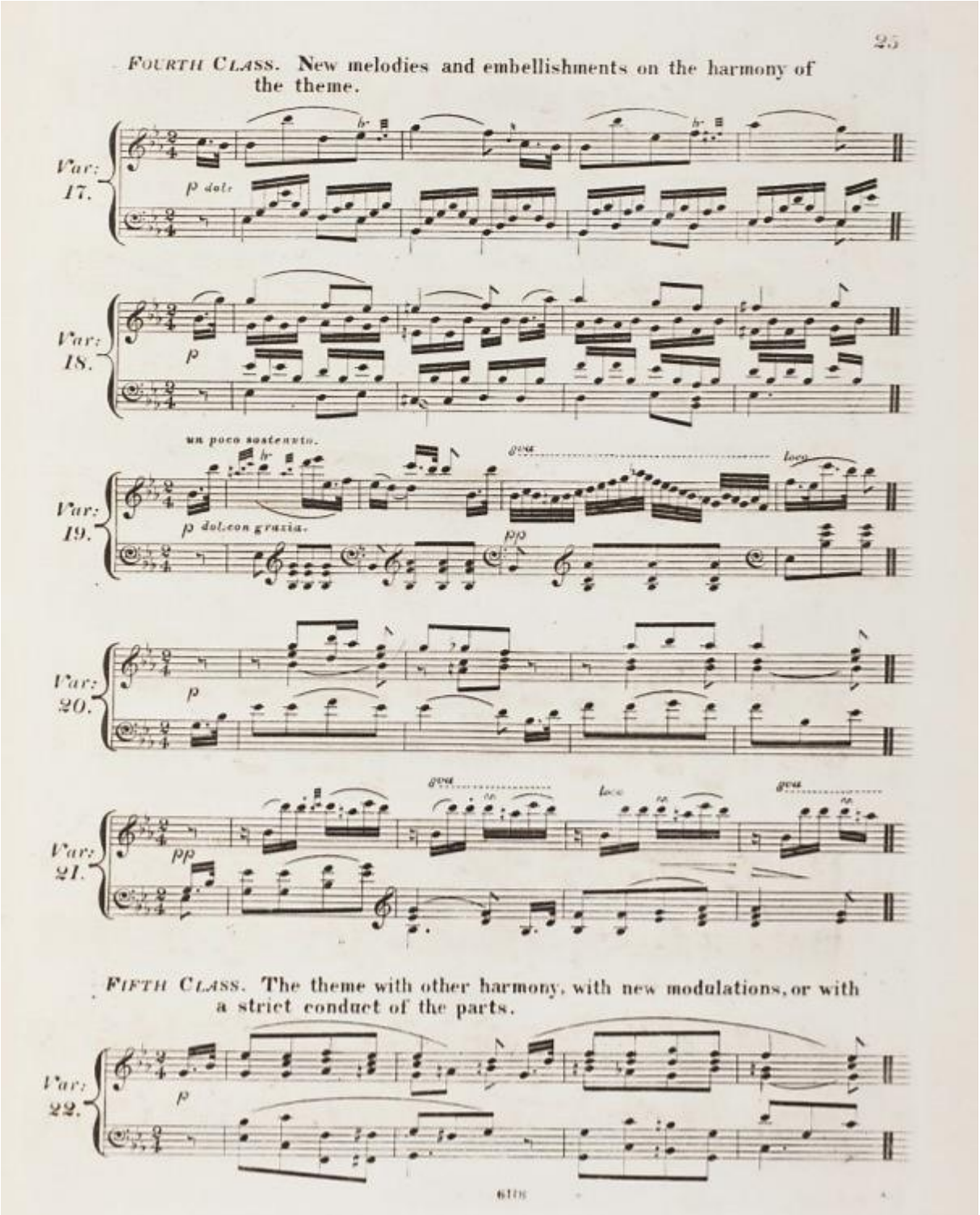
Var. 13.

pp leggiero

Var. 14.

Var. 15.

Var. 16.


25
FOURTH CLASS. New melodies and embellishments on the harmony of the theme.
Var: 17.
p dolc
Var: 18.
p
un poco sostenuto.
Var: 19.
p dol. con grazia.
pp
Var: 20.
p
Var: 21.
pp
FIFTH CLASS. The theme with other harmony, with new modulations, or with a strict conduct of the parts.
Var: 22.
p

26

Var: 23.

p legato.

Canon.

Var: 24.

f

Imitation.

Var: 25.

f

legato.

Var: 26.

p

SIXTH CLASS. Variations in other keys, times, and degrees of movement.

Adagio maestoso.

Var: 27.

p

pp

pp

Andante grazioso.

Var: 28.

dol.

27

Minore. Andante.

Var: 29.

p

Minore. Andante.

Var: 30.

p expressivo.

Tempo di Menuetto.

Var: 31.

p dol:

Tempo di Marcia.

Var: 32.

f

Tempo di Polacca.

Var: 33.

p

Allegretto.

Var: 34.

p dol.

6118

28
Allegro molto. Tempo di Galoppo.
Var: 35.
p
Allegretto vivace. Tempo di Walze.
Var: 36.
p

# References

[Anonymous]: Review of 'Versuch, aus der harten und weichen Tonart jeder Tonstufe der diatonisch-chromatischen Leiter vermittels des enharmonischen Tonwechsels in die Dur- und Molltonart der übrigen Stufen auszuweichen'. In: *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (14 October, 1812, no. 42).

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# Summary

The context of this study is nineteenth-century Western art music. It argues that within this field, improvisation is not to be seen as a quasi-autonomous skill or art form, but as an aspect of music-making in general. Thus 'the improvisatory' (considered here as the quality of the unforeseen, the unpremeditated) potentially pervades many aspects of music; it can be detected in score-based music-making as well. On the other hand, even 'historically inspired' or idiomatic improvisation is never fully independent of already existing compositions.

The study sketches out a panorama of nineteenth-century spheres of music-making and examines improvisatory aspects in a diversity of historical situations. Its goal is to show how, based on such historical information, the current performance practice of classical music can be enriched. Three questions are central: *To what extent did nineteenth-century music-making depend on improvisatory activity? Is there a connection between the training of nineteenth-century musicians and the improvisatory attitude they might have had during music-making? How can nineteenth-century musical languages be mastered actively again?* A concept from classical rhetoric functions as a common thread: *locus communis*. In the context of the creation of tonal music certain guiding principles (*loci*) have a key role on many levels: they are 'sources of invention' that represent a degree of shared expectation without defining the detailed course of the music. Knowledge of *loci* is essential for (historically inspired) improvisation, but also for the interpretation of scores because *loci* are bearers of musical meaning and make 'improvising with a score' possible.

After the introduction, part 2 of this study articulates the idea of an improvisatory approach to scores. An influential line of thinking during the twentieth century (and beyond) stresses the reproducing nature of a performance of classical music. When performance is seen as reproduction, it strives for a specific and well-defined final result. In combination with the idea that a performance should be as the composer intended, this approach entails a musical literalism that is still very present in professional music education and in classical concert life. It constitutes a true interpretational paradigm that I termed the *Urtext*-paradigm.

In the nineteenth century, a performance of composed music was generally seen as recreation rather than reproduction. To the performer, the score served as an interlocutor rather than as an instructor; the musical text functioned as a starting point of ever new musical adventures. An active and participating attitude was expected from performers, even by the composers themselves: it was a part of the score's 'horizon', as Gadamer would have it.

In the nineteenth century, music was generally experienced as a wordless language. As the influence of ancient rhetoric was still vivid, music-making was understood in a fundamentally rhetorical way. One important rhetorical principle that directly translates into music-making is *varietas*. In music it applies to variety, both within a performance and between performances: never say something again in exactly the same way. This implies an improvisatory approach to scores.

This study focuses on two aspects of variety in nineteenth-century score-based music: extempore ornamentation and improvisatory timing. An example of the former is Italian bel canto, in which ornamentation, preferably extempore, is part of a continuing eighteenth-century tradition. The goal of ornamentation is to increase the effect of a passage by variation, or even to 'improve' a composition. Bel canto ornamentation is to be seen as embedded in an elaborate complex of interpretational habits offering many ways to shape the vocal line. The application of ornamentation presupposes the inclusion of all other means of expression.

Analysis of notated fragments of bel canto ornamentation reveals clues for modern performers who intend to learn this musical language. Bel canto ornaments are always based on the accompanying chords, and they tend to be modelled around 'anchor tones'. Often ornamentation enhances musical gestures. A key concept for such gestures is the musical phrase. In bel canto, the harmonic structure within a phrase is often very 'common' and predictable: it is a harmonic 'locus communis' that prompts a multitude of melodic inventions. This circumstance fosters improvised ornamentation.

Ornamentation in bel canto, often remarkably virtuosic, made use of a repertoire of basic figurations. The fluency of nineteenth-century singers in extemporising with such material can be explained from the vocal teaching at that time. A large part of the training consisted of endless technical exercises with precisely such patterns, enabling singers to 'play with' them during performance. Challenging though it may be, this study advocates enriching modern practice by exploring the hidden world of bel canto performance.

'Vocality' can be seen as a central quality of all nineteenth-century music, and the influence of bel canto performance habits can be perceived even in instrumental music until the 1850's. Instructions for ornamentation in instrumental treatises closely resemble those found in singing methods. Even the types of patterns match: vocal and instrumental ornamentation made use of one and the same body of figures that can be considered trans-idiomatic. Thus the idea of a performer who 'plays with' the score can be made explicit for early-nineteenth-century instrumental music. This study focuses especially on the close relationship between vocal repertoire and music for piano. The connection with bel canto provides us with a historically informed view on the rhetorical dimension of original piano music, in particular the work of Chopin.

Besides ornamentation, a second aspect of an improvisatory approach to scores is timing. Indications of a free and improvisatory treatment of scores with respect to timing can be found throughout the nineteenth century. The earliest recordings and piano rolls constitute a unique source of information about timing habits at the end of the century. Today, timing is often understood in terms of deviation from a normative tempo; in this study this is called a 'transcendental' tempo conception. For earlier music a different conception is more appropriate: 'immanent' tempo. Immanent tempo exists within the music: it is the result of the musical ebb and flow and therefore it is in a continuous state of flux.

A crucial aspect of nineteenth-century timing are the various types of rubato. Within immanent tempo, rubato is not to be seen as a deviation from a norm, but as an inner necessity that enhances the expression of a passage. Rubato implies a search for variety and enhancement of musical gestures that leads towards a more outspoken individuality of phrases and other musical units, which may result in a 'counterpoint of layers' between musicians or between the hands of a pianist.

An improvisatory attitude to score-based music-making presupposes the ability to extemporise in the same style: to a certain extent, a recreator has to be a creator. The second main area explored in part 3 of this study is 'historically inspired improvisation': the extempore creation of new music that is stylistically connected with compositions from the same field. This concerns a modern performer's ability to master nineteenth-century musical languages actively. Carl Czerny's *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* shows that extempore music-making occurred in many performative contexts, each with its own assumptions and expectations. 'Locus communis' is a suitable concept for the description of such expectations. In the case of both ornamental preludes and solo cadenzas, for instance, harmonic *loci* are prominent. From a variety of sources it appears that a repertoire of harmonic progressions and sequences has consciously been used to shape the harmonic structure of such pieces. Of special interest is the treatment of modulation in nineteenth-century textbooks, most of all the emphasis on common tone modulations. In dance music *loci* on the level of rhythm, phrase structure and characteristic melodic features emerge. In free pieces genre-specific loci communes turn out to have been much more important than is usually acknowledged nowadays. The French organ school of César Franck and Charles-Marie Widor provides valuable insight into how students learned to apply such loci on the spot, even to the level of improvised fugues.

All discussions of 'the improvisatory' in this study significantly rest on a body of practical and theoretical knowledge that is known today as 'music theory'. In general, nineteenth-century

theoretical teaching was still primarily practical in nature, whereas the approach from the second half of the twentieth century on might rather be characterised as reflective. By consequence, there is a strong tendency towards reification in modern music theory. A fourth research question addresses this problem: *How can stylistically oriented improvisation be of importance for music theory?* This study argues that attention for 'the improvisatory' puts a stronger focus on the fact that music primarily unfolds in time (as opposed to the traditional 'architectonical' view on composed music). A 'practical turn' in music theory will make the subject more useful for an improviser.

Summarising, there are good historical reasons to develop a more improvisatory attitude to nineteenth-century music. This will invite musicians to feel more like co-creators of the music they perform – and in this way renew classical music from within.

# Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift gaat over de westerse 'kunstmuziek' van de negentiende eeuw. Ik betoog dat improvisatie in deze context niet moet worden gezien als een quasi-autonome kunstvorm, maar als een aspect van het musiceren in het algemeen. Volgens die opvatting kan 'het improvisatorische' (hier: het 'onvoorziene', het 'niet-van-tevoren-bedachte') op velerlei wijzen aanwezig zijn in muziek: het kan zelfs worden herkend in het musiceren op basis van een partituur. Andersom berust ook de 'historisch geïnspireerde' of idiomatische improvisatie altijd tot op zekere hoogte op reeds bestaande composities.

In dit proefschrift wordt een panorama geschetst van negentiende-eeuwse musiceervormen, en worden de improvisatorische kanten van diverse historische situaties onderzocht. Het uiteindelijke doel is om te laten zien hoe, op grond van historische gegevens, een improvisatorische benadering de huidige uitvoeringspraktijk van de klassieke muziek kan verrijken. Drie vragen staan hierbij centraal: *in hoeverre berustte het musiceren in de negentiende eeuw op improvisatorische activiteit? Wat is het verband tussen de opleiding van negentiende-eeuwse musici en de improvisatorische musiceerhouding die zij wellicht hadden? Hoe kunnen wij de negentiende-eeuwse muzikale talen weer actief leren beheersen?*

Een begrip uit de klassieke retorica vormt de rode draad: *locus communis*. Bij het creëren van tonale muziek vervullen bepaalde leidende principes (*loci*) een sleutelrol. Deze *loci* fungeren als bronnen van muzikale ideeën en verwijzen zo naar een gedeelde verwachting ten aanzien van het muzikale verloop, zonder dat zij dit in detail bepalen. Vertrouwdheid met *loci* is van essentieel belang bij 'historisch geïnspireerde improvisatie', maar ook bij het interpreteren van partituren, aangezien *loci* dragers van muzikale betekenis zijn en het mogelijk maken te 'improviseren met een partituur'.

In dit proefschrift wordt ten eerste een improvisatorische houding tegenover de partituur onderzocht. Tegenwoordig wordt een uitvoering van klassieke muziek vaak primair als een reproducerende daad gezien. Binnen deze visie richt een uitvoering zich op het bereiken van een specifiek eindresultaat. Wanneer dat wordt gekoppeld aan 'de intenties van de componist', leidt deze benadering ertoe dat de partituur in zekere zin letterlijk zal worden geïnterpreteerd. Dit idee over musiceren is nog steeds nadrukkelijk aanwezig in de opleiding van professionele musici, maar ook in het klassieke concertleven, en wordt door mij het '*Urtext*-paradigma' genoemd. In de negentiende eeuw daarentegen werd een uitvoering van gecomponeerde muziek eerder als een herschepping gezien dan als een reproductie. In de ogen van de uitvoerder fungeerde de partituur meer als een gesprekspartner dan als een instructeur: de muzikale tekst diende als het beginpunt van steeds weer

nieuwe muzikale avonturen. Zelfs componisten verwachtten van musici een participerende houding, en deze verwachting maakt dan ook deel uit van de 'horizon' (H.-G. Gadamer) van een partituur uit die tijd.

Een belangrijk aspect van de negentiende-eeuwse muziek is een fundamenteel retorische opvatting van het musiceren: muziek werd algemeen ervaren als een taal zonder woorden. Een retorisch principe dat direct kan worden toegepast op het musiceren is *varietas*. In de muziek heeft het betrekking op variatie, zowel binnen een uitvoering als tussen verschillende uitvoeringen: nooit iets tweemaal op dezelfde manier zeggen. Dit principe impliceert reeds een improvisatorische attitude ten opzichte van partituren.

Twee uitingsvormen van *varietas* in het negentiende-eeuwse musiceren op basis van partituren worden hier uitgewerkt: geïmproviseerde versieringen en een improvisatorische *timing*. Als voorbeeld van de eerste wordt het Italiaanse *belcanto* besproken. Wat betreft het gebruik om (ter plekke) versieringen toe te voegen, laat deze muziek een ononderbroken voortzetting van achttiende-eeuwse ontwikkelingen zien. Het doel van het versieren was het vergroten van het effect van een passage, of zelfs het 'verbeteren' van een compositie. De versieringen in *belcanto* stonden niet op zichzelf, maar waren ingebed in een uitgebreid complex van expressiemiddelen.

Analyse van overgeleverde *belcanto*-versieringen levert concrete aanwijzingen voor moderne musici op. Zulke versieringen zijn altijd gebaseerd op de begeleidende akkoorden, en ze worden vaak gevormd rond 'ankertonen'. Dikwijls versterkt de versiering een melodisch muzikaal gebaar. De harmonische structuur van een frase is in *belcanto*-muziek tamelijk voorspelbaar: het is een harmonische *locus* die aanleiding geeft tot een groot aantal melodische vondsten en zo uitnodigt tot het improviseren van versieringen.

*Belcanto* versieringen waren vaak zeer virtuoos, en veelal gebaseerd op een voorraad melodische basispatronen. De vaardigheid van negentiende-eeuwse zangers in het improviseren met dergelijk materiaal kan worden verklaard uit het zangonderwijs. De training van een zanger bestond voor een groot deel uit eindeloze technische oefeningen waarbij gebruik werd gemaakt van precies zulke patronen.

'Vocaliteit' kan worden beschouwd als een centrale eigenschap van negentiende-eeuwse muziek, en de invloed van de uitvoeringspraktijk van het *belcanto* kan ook in de instrumentale muziek uit de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw worden aangetoond. Zo lijken de aanwijzingen over versieringen in instrumentale methodes sterk op wat er in zangmethodes over dit onderwerp wordt geschreven. Zowel in vocale als in instrumentale versieringen werd gebruikgemaakt van dezelfde trans-idiomatische figuren. Op deze manier kan het 'spelen met' de partituur expliciet worden gemaakt voor de vroeg-negentiende-eeuwse instrumentale muziek. In dit proefschrift wordt met name

ingegaan op de nauwe verwantschap tussen vocaal repertoire en pianomuziek. De connectie met *belcanto* verschaft ons een 'historisch geïnformeerde' blik op de retorische dimensie van originele pianomuziek, in het bijzonder het werk van Chopin.

Een andere uitingsvorm van *varietas*, naast ornamentatie, is een improvisatorische benadering van timing. Gedurende de gehele negentiende eeuw kan op dit vlak een vrije en improvisatorische omgang met de noten worden aangetoond. Voor het eind van die eeuw vormen de oudste opnames en pianorollen een unieke bron van informatie. In onze tijd wordt timing vaak beschreven als de afwijking van een abstract en normatief tempo; ik noem dit een 'transcendente' tempo-opvatting. Bij oudere muziek is het tempo het gevolg van muzikale fluctuaties en daardoor voortdurend in beweging; ik noem dit 'immanent' tempo.

Een cruciaal aspect van negentiende-eeuwse timing wordt gevormd door verschillende soorten *rubato.* Binnen een immanente tempo-opvatting dient *rubato* niet te worden gezien als de afwijking van een norm, maar als een innerlijke muzikale noodzakelijkheid die de expressie van een passage vergroot. Zo toont zich ook in het verschijnsel timing een retorische muziekopvatting. Het toepassen van rubato impliceert een drang naar variatie en naar het versterken van muzikale gebaren; dit leidt tot een grotere individualiteit van frases en andere muzikale eenheden, en kan zelfs een 'lagen-contrapunt' tot gevolg hebben, waarbij samenspelende musici of de twee handen van een pianist niet altijd dezelfde timing hanteren.

Een improvisatorische houding ten opzichte van het muziek maken op basis van een partituur veronderstelt het vermogen om te improviseren in een vergelijkbare stijl: tot op zekere hoogte moet een 'herschepper' ook een 'schepper' zijn. Het tweede grote gebied dat in dit proefschrift centraal staat is dat van de 'historisch geïnspireerde improvisatie': het ter plekke creëren van nieuwe muziek die stilistisch verband houdt met composities uit een bepaalde tijd. Hier gaat het om het vermogen van een musicus om negentiende-eeuwse muzikale talen actief te beheersen. Uit Carl Czerny's *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* blijkt dat improvisatorische vormen van musiceren voorkwamen in een breed scala aan situaties, en dat iedere situatie haar eigen randvoorwaarden had.

'Locus communis' is een geschikt concept om zulke verwachtingen te beschrijven. Zo nemen zowel bij ornamentele preludes als bij solocadensen harmonische *loci* een prominente plaats in. Uit veel bronnen blijkt dat men destijds bewust gebruik maakte van een repertoire aan harmonische progressies en sequensen bij het vormgeven van de harmonische structuur van zulke stukken. De manier waarop modulatie wordt behandeld in negentiende-eeuwse boeken is in dit verband

interessant, met name waar het de nadruk op modulaties op grond van een gemeenschappelijke toon betreft.

In de dansmuziek treden *loci* op het niveau van ritme, zinsbouw en karakteristieke melodische wendingen op de voorgrond. Bij vrije stukken blijkt het belang van genre-specifieke *loci* veel groter te zijn geweest dan men zich tegenwoordig vaak realiseert. Met betrekking tot de vraag hoe studenten destijds leerden zulke *loci* ter plekke in te zetten, zelfs in geïmproviseerde fuga's, verschaft de Franse orgelschool van Franck en Widor belangrijke inzichten.

De beschouwingen over improvisatie in dit proefschrift maken gebruik van een verzameling praktische en theoretische kennis die tegenwoordig valt onder de term 'muziektheorie'. Het negentiende-eeuwse theorieonderwijs was in het algemeen nog vooral praktisch georiënteerd, terwijl de benadering in de tweede helft van de twintigste eeuw eerder 'reflectief' kan worden genoemd. Als gevolg daarvan bestaat er in de moderne muziektheorie een sterke tendens naar reïficatie. De vierde onderzoeksvraag richt zich op dit probleem: *welke rol kan 'historisch geïnspireerde' improvisatie spelen in de muziektheorie?* Ik betoog dat de aandacht voor het improvisatorische met name wijst op het feit dat muziek zich in de eerste plaats afspeelt in de tijd (in afwijking van de gangbare 'architecturale' opvatting van composities). Een praktijkgerichte wending zal de muziektheorie meer relevant maken voor een improvisator.

Er zijn goede historische gronden om een meer improvisatorische houding ten opzichte van negentiende-eeuwse muziek aan te nemen en als musicus meer het gevoel te hebben 'medeschepper' te zijn van de muziek – iets waarvan de klassieke muziek alleen maar kan profiteren.

# Biography

The Dutch pianist, organist, improviser and music theorist Bert Mooiman studied at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, The Netherlands, where he took his certificates as a solo pianist and organist cum laude. He also studied Church Music and Improvisation, and, at a later stage, Music Theory. In 2003 he finished his Music Theory studies with a prize-winning paper on the relation between the work of Olivier Messiaen and French Romantic tonal harmony. Since then he has been teaching Music Theory, Improvisation and Piano at the Royal Conservatoire, where he also works as a research supervisor.

As an organist he was a prizewinner at international competitions in Groningen and Ljubljana. In addition to his appointment as a church organist in The Hague, he was titular organist of the famous instrument in the Grote Kerk in Breda until 2011. Besides his work as a recitalist, he has been a keen *basso continuo* player throughout his career. He frequently performs with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra.

As a solo pianist and chamber music performer he focuses on the full scope of the classical repertoire; he is particularly interested in finding ways to perform early keyboard music on the piano. Until 2000 he played as a solo pianist for the HNB ballet company (Amsterdam), where he performed many piano concertos, including lesser-known pieces such as Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto and Hindemith's Kammermusik no. 2. He has a preference for historical grand pianos from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

His work as a researcher and his activities as a performer meet in his lifelong interest in improvisation. He has been involved with various international projects in the field of improvisation teaching, and has been invited as a guest teacher at various European conservatories including the GSMD (London), the National University of Music Bucharest, and the Kunstuniversität Graz. He has published about music theoretical topics in various Dutch and international journals.

**Colophon**

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