

A PERFORMER'S GUIDE TO BEETHOVEN'S SONATA IN A-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 110

by

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Introduction

Ludwig van Beethoven's piano sonata *Op.110* has been interpreted by some as a hero's journey; others see this sonata as the triumph of light over darkness. When I perform *Op.110*, I imagine a dramatic struggle that concludes with a heroic triumph. I also hear parts of this dramatic work as an "oratorio for the piano." Beethoven's radically new approach to structure in the *Op.110* must be fully understood by the performer. The pianist must study phrasing, timing, tone color, the hierarchy of importance in a polyphonic voice texture, and many other elements that differentiate an uninteresting performance from an outstanding performance.

As a pianist, I am always seeking those moments in which sonorities produce extraordinary emotional reactions. During my research, I began to wonder whether these emotional responses were due to the exposure of both the conscious and subconscious mind to the "sublime." At the time I started this research, I was studying one of Beethoven's last piano sonatas, the *Sonata in A \flat Major, Opus 110* (From this point, I will refer to this piece simply as *Op.110*.) Beethoven's late works do not bow to convention and do not serve the mere purpose of "pleasing one's ears." Instead, Beethoven was searching for something beyond the realm of

aesthetics; he was searching for the ineffable, composing music that would transport performers and audience to the experience of the sublime.

The subsequent research is organized into four chapters. Chapter One traces the history of Beethoven's life at the time of composition (1821). This chapter explores *Op.110* not just chronologically but from a technical and stylistic standpoint. Chapter Two provides a harmonic and structural analysis of *Op.110*. In this chapter, I will discuss the innovative techniques associated with Beethoven's late style, such as the exploration of extreme registers, harmonic treatment, radical modulations to remote key areas, formal structure, and Beethoven's use of older compositional styles and structures such as fugues and fugato style. I will suggest a new way to describe the structure of the third movement, "piano music as an oratorio."

Although many scholars have discussed Beethoven's use of arioso and fugue, I believe it is not just the juxtaposition of these sections, but the way Beethoven unifies these sections that is so significant. We can almost consider the third movement as a stand-alone work, an oratorio: Introduction, recitativo, arioso, fugue (chorus), arioso, fugue (chorus), grand conclusion.

Chapter Three will discuss the performance of legendary pianists and discuss their very different interpretations. I will also make suggestions for tackling the many technical and interpretative challenges in *Op.110*. Chapter Four will discuss the author's interpretation of *Op.110*, where he will provide details about choice of tempo, tone, touch forms, pedaling, and rubato.

Chapter One

Origin And Development

Beethoven *Piano Sonata Op.110* was composed in the final years of the composer's later period (ca. 1815–1827) in which he was known throughout Europe. During the late period, Beethoven's deafness and persistent illness forced him to isolate himself from society. Other factors that drastically changed Beethoven's lifestyle and greatly influenced his later style were the socio-political and economic changes that Vienna was facing. These factors include the end of the Napoleonic wars, the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the establishment of the Council of Vienna that replaced the Holy Roman Empire. The rise of Germanic pride and the first step toward a unified Germany as a country and nation and the rise of industrialization also occurred at this time.

The origin of *Op.110* can be traced to 1820, when Beethoven received a letter from the Berlin publisher Adolph Schlesinger asking him for a new composition.

Beethoven replied, offering to write a set of three new piano sonatas for 40 ducats each but agreed to sell the set for 90 ducats after further negotiations. This set emerged later as *Opp. 109, 110, and 111*. The works were commissioned in 1820. However, Beethoven did not begin fully working on *Op.110* until the middle of

1821, around August–September.¹ Beethoven suffered a rheumatic attack in winter 1820 followed by jaundice in spring 1821, a symptom of the liver disease that eventually claimed his life.² He was also involved in a legal dispute for the guardianship custody of his nephew Karl.

Op.110 is the only solo piano sonata by Beethoven without a dedicatee. However, there is evidence that Beethoven had clear intentions to dedicate the sonata to his friend Antonie Brentano. She and her husband had been very kind and generous during the previous decade. Antonie was particularly helpful in early 1819, when she tried to arrange for Beethoven's nephew Karl to be placed at a prestigious school in Bavaria. In a letter of May 1st, 1822, Beethoven wrote to Adolph Schlesinger promising to send details about the dedication in an upcoming later. Unfortunately, he did not write again until August 31st, and by that time, it was already too late. Having failed to dedicate *Op.110*, he wanted to dedicate *Op.111* instead. But was unable to do so since he had earlier allocated the dedication to Archduke Rudolf, and Schlesinger engraved the title page accordingly. Thus, Antonie had to be content with the dedication of the English edition of *Op.111*,

¹ Barry Cooper, ed., *Beethoven: The 35 Piano Sonatas*, vol. 3 (London: The Associated Board of the Royal School of Music, 2007), 59.

² William Kinderman, *Beethoven*. 2nd Ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 246.

though she did also receive the dedication of the "*Diabelli*" Variations Op.120 – surely more than adequate compensation.³ It is essential to mention that after the completion and publication of his Sonata *Op.106 "Hammerklavier,"* Beethoven was immersed in the composition of the last three solo piano sonatas as well as two large-scale works: the *Symphony No.9 in D minor, Op.125* and the *Missa Solemnis*.

The autograph of *Op.110* is dated December 25th, Christmas day, 1821. However, further revisions and the rewriting of the third movement continued in the following year of 1822. In August 1822, Schlesinger published the sonata in Paris and Berlin, Steiner on August 23rd; an English edition was subsequently published by Clementi & Co. in July 1823. In his book *Beethoven*, Maynard Solomon comments that Beethoven no longer attempted to impart symphonic texture and colorations to his sonata style. Instead, he returned to the dimensions of the Sonatas, *Op.90*, and *Op.101*, which were now infused alternately with a variety of rigorous polyphonic textures and an etherealized improvisatory tone.⁴

Adding to this search for new color and discourse, Beethoven decided to shift the climax of the cycle of the three last sonatas to the final movement, prioritizing the

³ Cooper, *Beethoven: The 35 Piano Sonatas*, 59.

⁴ Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1977), 301.

finale instead of the traditional first movement. In the final movement of *Op.110*, a slow *arioso dolente* is combined with complex fugue; in both *Op. 109*, and *Op.111* the final movement takes the form of theme and variations. *Op.110*, like its "siblings," took a lot of time to become essential repertoire and to be accepted by the general audience. It took almost a century for these sonatas to reach the same status with the public as previous works by Beethoven since they demanded a high degree of concentration engagement from the listener. There is also the fact that the musical characteristics of Beethoven's late works were considered shocking to the early 19th-century audiences.

Beethoven often seemed to use the composition of his late piano sonatas as an experimental "workshop," where he sketches and develops ideas that later appear in works such as string quartets or symphonies. Almost every technique that is associated with Beethoven's late period can be found in *Op.110*. Examples of these techniques are the use of older forms such as variations and fugues. In *Op.110*, Beethoven composes two fugues for the last movement. He uses the extreme registers of the piano to create new sonorities; cyclic ideas, where a previous theme or idea returns to connect the entire work; improvisatory passages; and a through-composed narrative, which he achieves by blurring divisions between phrases, sections, and movements.

Chapter Two

Analysis of Op. 110

This chapter provides an analysis of *Op. 110* and suggests an alternative formal structure for its final movement.

I. Moderato Cantabile Molto Espressivo

The first movement, marked *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, is in sonata form without any repetitions of sections. The movement is written in the key of A \flat major with a time signature of 3/4. Scholars such as Alfred Brendel, Charles Rosen, and Stewart Gordon call the movement "Haydnesque." However, I do not agree with such statement. I find that, although the piece is written in sonata form, Beethoven adds certain elements that break the mold of the "traditional" sonata paradigm.

1. The two main themes in the exposition are presented in the traditional tonal relationship, the first theme in tonic A \flat and second in dominant E \flat . However, both themes are lyrical and do not follow the standard pattern of virtuoso and/or rhythmical theme versus lyrical theme.

2. The whole movement has no repetition bars that separate one section from another. By looking at each section, it appears that Beethoven intended each section to unfold and be transformed into something new.
3. In the recapitulation, the second theme, instead of staying in the tonic A \flat major, moves to E major, a key that does not exist in the universe of A \flat major.

Exposition

Mm. 1–38.

The first theme, mm. 1–11, is presented in the upper voice of the chordal progression and then develops into a right-hand singing line while the left hand supports the melody with a sixteenth-note chord accompaniment. The theme is marked *con amabilità* (with tenderness or kindness). The indication suggests a noble and lyrical sound. The writing of the section suggests string quartet writing in four voices where the top voice, the "first violin," is supported by the other instruments of the quartet.

Figure 2.1 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, first theme, mm. 1–11.

Opus 110

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

31. *p con amabilità (sanft)*

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) begins with a piano introduction marked *p con amabilità (sanft)*. It features a trill on the right hand and a bass line. The second system (measures 5-8) shows the right hand with a melodic line and the left hand with a rhythmic accompaniment. The third system (measures 9-11) includes a crescendo and a fortissimo section marked *sf*, featuring a rising melodic line and descending trills.

From mm. 12–19, a transition appears between the first and the second theme, characterized by thirty–second–note arpeggios in the right hand accompanied by block eighth–note chords in the left hand. A gradual crescendo from mm. 17–19 leads to the *subito piano* announcing the second theme in m. 20. From mm. 20–35, the second theme area follows the structural pattern of the sonata–allegro form in the traditional dominant, Eb Major. The section presents open thirds arranged as octaves in the high register, a rising line accompanied by descending trills moving to opposite extremes of the keyboard, a rising melodic line, and a chordal accompaniment.

Figure 2.2 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, second theme, mm. 20–34.

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure numbers 20, 24, 29, and 32 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. The first system (measures 20-23) features a melody in the treble clef starting with a fermata over the first two notes, marked *p molto legato* and *cresc.*. The second system (measures 24-28) includes a piano accompaniment with a trill in the bass clef, marked *p cresc.*, *sf*, and *f*. The third system (measures 29-31) shows a melody in the treble clef with a fermata over the first two notes, marked *sf* and *p*. The fourth system (measures 32-34) features a melody in the treble clef with a fermata over the first two notes, marked *cresc.*, *dim.*, *p*, and *dolce*.

An intriguing transition from the second theme to the development occurs in mm. 35–40. After three measures in E \flat major, the music follows the descending line E \flat –D \flat –C. Beethoven modulates via common tone by using C. This is the same melody as the opening but with a new harmonization.

Figure 2.3 and 2.4 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, transition to development, mm. 38–39.



Musical score for measures 35–39. The score is in E \flat major (three flats) and 3/4 time. Measure 35 is marked with a circled '35'. The music features a descending melodic line in the right hand, starting on E \flat and moving through D \flat to C. The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. A large slur covers measures 35 through 39. The word 'dimin.' is written above the right hand in measure 39.



Musical score for measures 38–39. The score is in E \flat major (three flats) and 3/4 time. Measure 38 is marked with a circled '38'. The music features a descending melodic line in the right hand, starting on E \flat and moving through D \flat to C. The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The word 'cres.' is written below the right hand in measure 39.

Development

Mm. 40–55

The development section is concise—only 16 measures long— and consists of short statements of the first theme of the exposition moving within the context of F minor, the relative minor. In Mm. 40–44, the theme is in the right hand, supported by a broken chord pattern which consists of main note on the downbeat followed by a third in the left hand.

Figure 2.5 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, development, mm. 39–45.

The image shows a musical score for the development section, measures 39-45. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 39-43, and the second system covers measures 44-45. The key signature is F minor (three flats). The tempo and mood are indicated as *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*. In measure 39, the right hand begins with a melodic line starting on a half note, and the left hand plays a broken chord pattern. A *cresc.* (crescendo) marking is present in measure 40. In measure 44, the left hand pattern changes to a rising and falling scale fragment, and a *p* (piano) marking is present. The score ends with a fermata in measure 45.

There is a motivic shift from mm. 44–54 in the left hand. Here, Beethoven changes the left-hand pattern to rising/ falling scale fragments in the bass line accompanied

by the *crescendo diminuendo* markings. The motivic ideas intertwine, forming a question–answer dialogue in m.55 and begins a transition to the recapitulation leading back to A \flat major. The development stays predominantly in the key of F minor, although it briefly tonicizes D \flat Major and B \flat Minor.

Beethoven begins the development in the relative minor but later in m. 48 goes to D \flat Major and B \flat minor. Rosen makes the comment that the whole section is built from the melody in mm. 1–2, played eight times in an overall descending sequence. The left hand is made up of two voices, tenor and bass, which alternate antiphonally in continuous sixteenth notes.⁵

Recapitulation

Mm. 56–104

The main theme reappears in m. 56 in the right hand in the tonic A \flat accompanied by thirty–second note broken chords in the left hand. This strong statement of the theme continues until m. 63, when it moves to D \flat major, the subdominant and later in m. 68 modulates to E Major.

⁵ Ibid. 301,

Figure 2.6 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, recapitulation, mm. 56–57.



The process of modulation that Beethoven uses is fascinating. He uses the $D\flat$ in m. 66 to modulate enharmonically (changing the note to C sharp) to the remote key of E major. From mm. 67–78, the music unfolds in E major until a transition in m. 78 where the music returns to the tonic. From here until m. 97, the second theme unfolds in $A\flat$. A transition to the coda begins in m. 97. Here, Beethoven expands the sixteenth-note idea of mm. 93–94, using the sixteenth notes in the right hand as a connecting bridge to the chord progression in the left hand: $A\flat$ flat, $B\flat 7$ (V/V), and $E\flat$. This leads to a chord progression in m. 101 that prepares the listener to the arrival of the coda.

Figure 2.7 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, modulation to E Major, mm. 65–67.

Coda

Mm. 105–116

The coda begins in m. 105 with the same motivic ideas of the first transition: sixteenth-note arpeggios in the right hand supported by solid chords separated by silences in the left hand. In m. 111, Beethoven reintroduces fragments of the second theme until m. 113. Thus, the first movement concludes with a fragmented statement of the first theme. Three different elements come together in mm. 114–116. We hear a concluding statement for the entire movement; the suggestion of a cyclic idea of the first theme; and an inversion that will later become the subject of the final movement.

Figure 2.8 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, coda, mm. 114–116.



II. Allegro Molto

The second movement, marked *Allegro molto*, is a scherzo and trio in ternary form with a time signature of 2/4. The scherzo is in the key of F Minor, relative minor of A \flat Major and main key of the first movement; the trio is in D \flat Major, submediant of F Minor and subdominant of A \flat Major. Barry Cooper comments that, for many years, Beethoven would always use 3/4 for any central allegro movement in minuet–and trio form in a piano sonata, whether or not it was called a scherzo.⁶ He broke this pattern in *Op. 101* with a march, and again in *Op. 110*. Although the scherzo is written as a 2/4 scherzo in F Minor, the music is humorous, lively, and sardonic. William Kinderman, Martin Cooper, A. B. Marx and Willem Ibez have all observed that Beethoven alludes to two popular songs:

⁶ Cooper, *Beethoven: The 35 Piano Sonatas*, 62.

Unser Katz hat Katzerl g'habt (“Our cat had kittens”) and *Ich bin Luderlich, du bist luderlich* (“I am dissolute, you are dissolute”). in the main section of the movement.⁷

Figure 2.9 *Unser Katz hat Katzerl g'habt* (“Our cat had kittens”).⁸

The image shows a musical score for the song "Unser Katz hat Katzerl g'habt". It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked "Munter" and is in 2/4 time. The vocal line (treble clef) has the lyrics: "Un sa Käz had Ka - z'ln g'habt drai und sex si nai - ni". The piano accompaniment (bass clef) starts with a chord of F major and has a few notes in the first measure. The second system starts at measure 5. The vocal line has the lyrics: "van's häd a - Ae - u - gerl af däs is schön das mai - ni". The piano accompaniment continues with a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

⁷ Kinderman, *Beethoven*. 246–47; Martin Cooper, *Beethoven: The Last Decade, 1817–1827* (London ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 190–91; *New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.*; Adolf Bernhard Marx, *Ludwig van Beethoven, Leben Und Schaffen*, 2 v. (Berlin: O. Janke, 1859), [//catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011544772](http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011544772), 416; Willem Ibez, “Beethoven’s Piano Sonata Opus 110 in A–Flat Major: The Mystery of the Missing Cats,” *Headwaters* 23, no. 1 (2006): 2–15.

⁸ Willem, “Beethoven’s Piano Sonata Opus 110 in A–Flat Major: The Mystery of the Missing Cats.”

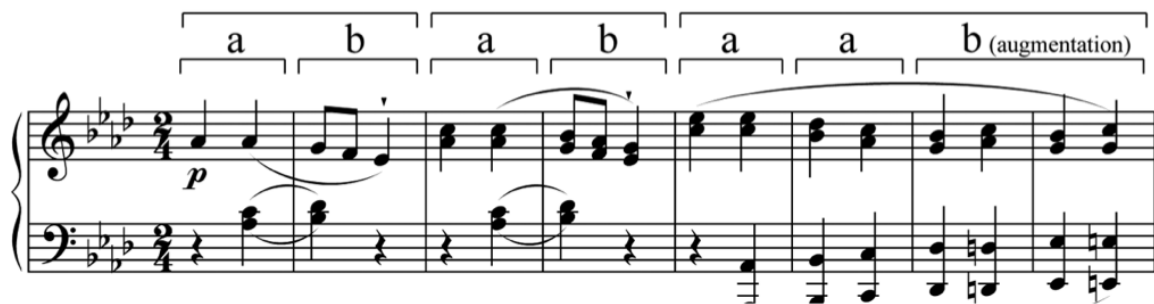
Figure 2.10 *Allegro molto*, Scherzo, mm. 1–8.



Figure 2.11 *Ich bin Luderlich, du bist luderlich* (“I am dissolute, you are dissolute”).⁹



Figure 2.12 *Allegro molto*, Scherzo, mm. 17–24.



The rhythm of the scherzo in the left hand is complex due to the displacement of downbeats, syncopations, and constant shifting between articulations. The interpretation and execution of the movement can only be effective if the player

⁹ Kinderman, *Beethoven*, 190–191.

applies hyper-measures and hyper-rhythm. In other words, instead of emphasizing the downbeat of each 2/4 measure, the performer should group the phrases in four measures each and conduct each measure as one pulse per measure. Although this will turn the section into a big "4," it will allow for the downbeats of each phrase to be the strongest and will make the syncopations clear. This adds an exquisite dance characteristic to the scherzo since it allows the phrases to flow, and the music will not sound "square."

Scherzo, A section

Mm. 1–upbeat of 41.

The scherzo starts with the interval of the major third, C/Ab, in the treble that we hear at the end of the first movement, suggesting a connection or possible segue between the first movement and the second movement. From mm. 1 to the repetition sign in 8, two phrases of four measures each are presented. The first phrase goes from F minor to C major, *piano*, suggesting a question, while the second phrase uses all the inversions of the C Major chord in *forte*. In the long phrase from mm. 9–16, Beethoven uses tied notes to syncopate the rhythm and adds *sforzandos* to the second beats in the left-hand octaves.

From mm. 17–36, the music is organized in four–bar phrases. There is a gradual ritardando in *piano* that is abruptly interrupted by a *fortissimo*. Following a two–measure rest, the atmosphere of uncertainty is dramatically resolved with a new four–bar phrase in *fortissimo*. To create this uncertainty, Beethoven combines three elements: the abrupt change from a *ritardando* to a *tempo*, the drastic dynamic change from a *piano* to a *fortissimo*, and the harmony. The ritardando leads to a C Major chord in m. 35 that, instead of resolving to the tonic of F Minor, moves to an abrupt Db chord *fortissimo*. This confuses the ear by not resolving the cadence.

Trio, B Section

Mm. 41–95

The trio section begins with the upbeat to mm. 41–95 and is in the key of Db major, the submediant of F Minor. This entire section consists of seven long phrases and a short codetta. The texture for each phrase is identical. The melody in the right hand unfolds in perpetual eighth–note motion over a bass line in the left hand that is constantly interrupted by silences. These long phrases are grouped into eight measures, with a syncopated upbeat note for the beginning of each phrase. Beethoven breaks the phrase pattern in mm. 72–75 with two main chords marked *Sforzando* in which the second chord leads to a repetition of the first phrase. The

final phrase of the section is a reprise of the penultimate phrase; however, it moves down to the lower register with a diminuendo.

A codetta mm. 92–95 closes the trio section. Beethoven uses just the first four eighth notes that begin the long phrases in the trio. The passage moves upwards through three different registers in *una corda* and requires the interchange of hands. The change of registers, the interchange of hands and the presence of a solo melody accompanied by silence, suggests an orchestral setting, rather than a pianistic one.

A fermata on the last note, D \flat , prepares the return of the A section. Three significant technical challenges in this section are the abrupt leaps to the extreme registers of the keyboard, the fast dynamic shifts between *fortissimo* and *pianissimo*, and the hand-crossings for each phrase.

A' Section

Mm. 95–143

The return section of the A starts in m. 95 and is almost identical to the main A section with the addition of a ritardando in mm. 104–107. This ritardando can be seen as a humorous device that takes the listener by surprise.

Coda

Mm. 144–158

A coda begins in m. 144 in the tonic F minor and is fifteen measures long. This coda juxtaposed chords and silence, which brings up the question: why does Beethoven use the orchestral “1” for each rest measure? My explanation for this is that Beethoven is clearly thinking of an orchestral context rather than a solo piano piece. The coda ends with rising arpeggiated F Major chord which functions as the dominant chord for the beginning of the next movement, suggesting the possibility of an *attacca* or segue in performance.

Figure: 2.13, Allegro molto, Coda, mm. 144–158.

The musical score for the Coda (mm. 144–158) is presented in a grand staff. The key signature is F minor (three flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins with a circled measure number '144' and the word 'Coda'. The first 11 measures consist of chords in the right hand, each followed by a whole rest in the right hand and a half note in the left hand. The dynamics are *f*, *sf*, *sf*, *sf*, *sf*, and *dim.*. Each rest measure is marked with a '1'. The final four measures (148–151) feature a rising arpeggiated F major chord in the right hand, with the left hand playing a descending eighth-note line. The dynamics are *p* and the tempo marking is *poco ritardando*. The piece concludes with a fermata over the final chord.

There has been some debate between scholars regarding the phrase structure of the coda. I see the coda as consisting of two main phrases – an eleven-measure phrase followed by a four-measure phrase. Even though the chord progression is constantly interrupted by rests, if we remove the rests and play the chords in a sequence a clear cadential structure can be heard. The cadence in F minor goes all the way to its dominant, creating tension and forcing the listener to wait for its

resolution to F minor. However, Beethoven surprises us and resolves with a Picardy third, turning the chord to F major instead.

III. Adagio ma non troppo – Fuga Allegro ma non troppo

This movement has been the subject of debate by many scholars concerning its form. Barry Cooper suggests that *Op. 110* has four movements, the *Adagio ma non troppo* being the third movement and the *Fuga Allegro ma non troppo* a fourth movement with a reprise of the Arioso (*Adagio ma non troppo*). Stewart Gordon considers that its structure is unique and more complex than traditional patterns,¹⁰ while scholars such as Charles Rosen and Alfred Brendel claim that it has *six* different sections. I believe the six different sections intertwine and unfold in such a way that the dramatic narrative has a beginning, climax, and an end. This structure has striking similarities with the dramatic format of the large-scale choral and orchestral works Beethoven was composing during this time— the *Missa Solemnis* and the final movement of the *Ninth Symphony*. I am convinced that Beethoven transferred the techniques of these large-scale works to this piano sonata.

Introduction

¹⁰ Gordon, *Beethoven's 32 Piano Sonatas: A Handbook for Performers*, 258.

Mm. 1–6

The first section of the third movement takes the form of an introduction, marked *Adagio ma non troppo*. The three-measure introduction begins in B \flat minor and moves to a *recitativo* in m. 4 marked *più adagio* (slower). This music leads to m. 5, where the repeated high A's in the right hand soprano are struck firmly and then delicately echoed. This seems to suggest cries of pain. Scholars such as Rosen and Gordon have stated that this passage is a reminiscence of the clavichord *hebung* technique. I challenge this statement, since I have not found any evidence where Beethoven specifically mentions his use of this clavichord technique. What is important to discuss in this measure is the unprecedented technique that Beethoven incorporates. Here, Beethoven adds a peculiar fingering (4–3) for the repeated notes. These notes rhythmically shift in tempo from slow to fast to slow, while being supported by an increase and decrease of sound. The passage starts slowly with the *una corda*, gradually gets faster while shifting to the *tutte le corde* and finally gets slower and softer with a *ritardando* and the *una corda* once again. This passage strongly suggests a vocal idiom.

Figure: 2.14, *Adagio ma non troppo*, Introduction, m. 5.

Adagio ma non troppo

Mm. 7–26

The next section is in the key of A \flat Minor and has the unusual time signature of 12/16. The *Adagio ma non troppo* is marked *Klagender Gesang* (Song of Lamentation) and *Arioso dolente* (Aria of sorrow). Beethoven uses very specific emotional language as performance and character direction in a solo piano sonata. The A \flat Minor chord is introduced note by note from top to bottom in the left hand. In the long phrases of the Song of Lamentation, a solo melody in the right hand is accompanied by a repeated chordal accompaniment in the left hand, suggesting a singer (a soprano) accompanied by an orchestra. The music evokes a profound feeling of pathos and sorrow. At the end of this section, open A \flat octaves in unison, separated by silence, create a sense of resignation, or possibly defeat.

Figure: 2.15, *Adagio ma non troppo*, mm. 33–36.



Fuga: Allegro ma non troppo

Mm. 27–113

The fugue returns to the tonic key of Ab Major and is in 6/8 time signature.

Some scholars consider this to be a separate movement, but Barry Cooper clarifies this issue:

"At the end of the previous *Arioso* there is no bar line in either autograph, and in the autograph the music actually continues on the same line without the slightest break. Unfortunately, the copyist Wenzel Rampl added a double bar in his copy and intended the start of the *Fuga*. All the later sources follow this layout, conveying the impression of an independent movement."¹¹

The three-voice fugue begins in the tonic Ab Major and opens with a subject that uses the same motivic intervals as the beginning of the *first* movement, rising fourths and a descending three-note scale segment. The subject of the fugue is:

¹¹ Cooper, *Beethoven: The 35 Piano Sonatas*, 64.

A \flat -D \flat B \flat -E \flat C-F E \flat -D \flat -C and begins in the tenor. The subject enters in the Alto in m. 30 with E \flat -A \flat F-B \flat G-B \flat A \flat -G \flat -F, a tonal answer.

Figure: 2.16, *Fuga: Allegro ma non troppo*, Subject and answer, mm. 27–37.

The image shows a musical score for a fugue. It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system starts at measure 27, marked with a circled '27'. The title 'Fuga' and tempo 'Allegro ma non troppo' are written above the staff. The first staff has a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second staff has a *sempre p* marking. The second system starts at measure 33, marked with a circled '33'. The piano (*p*) dynamic marking is present at the beginning of this system. The music is in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 6/8 time signature. The notation includes various note values, rests, and slurs.

The subject begins in the soprano in m. 36. Although the texture sometimes suggests four voices, as in mm. 45–51 and mm. 73–81, I consider this pianistic octave doubling to be a continuo line that provides support for the other voices.

Figure: 2.17, *Fuga: Allegro ma non troppo*, continuo octaves, mm. 43–52.

Figure 2.17 shows two systems of musical notation for measures 43-52. The first system (measures 43-47) features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a continuo line. The treble clef has a *trium* marking above it. The bass clef has a *cresc. .* marking above it. The second system (measures 48-52) continues the melodic and continuo lines. The bass clef has a *dimin. .* marking above it. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4.

Figure: 2.18, *Fuga: Allegro ma non troppo*, continuo octaves, mm. 73–82.

Figure 2.18 shows two systems of musical notation for measures 73-82. The first system (measures 73-77) features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a continuo line. The treble clef has a *ff* marking below it. The second system (measures 78-82) continues the melodic and continuo lines. The treble clef has a *p* marking below it. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4.

In m. 113, the fugue leads to a Eb7 chord, dominant of Ab that, instead of resolving to tonic, surprises us by modulating to G Minor. Here the Eb7 chord acts as a pivot chord, since is the VI degree chord of the new key center, G minor. This G Minor chord introduces the next section, *L'istesso tempo di Arioso*, “the same tempo as the Arioso”.

Figure 2.19 Modulation to G Minor, mm. 111–115.

The musical score for Figure 2.19 shows the modulation to G Minor in measures 111-115. The score is in G minor (two flats) and 4/6 time. It features a piano (*p*) dynamic and a crescendo-diminuendo (*cresc. - dim.*) marking. The tempo is marked *L'istesso tempo di Arioso*. The score includes a circled measure number '111' and a 'Red.' marking with an asterisk.

L'istesso tempo di Arioso
Ermattet Klagend
 Mm. 116–131

This section of the *arioso dolente* is in the key of G minor. It is important to note that the emotional and character directions by Beethoven are in both German and Italian. *Ermattet, klagend* "exhausted, mournful" and *Perdendo le forze, dolente* "losing the energy, painful." In the *Ermattet Klagend*, Beethoven changes the declamation and the rhythm of the melody. The rests break up the melody, creating the effect of sobbing. This break in the rhythmic flow gives a poignant quality to

the music. In mm. 132–136, instead of ending the statement in G minor, Beethoven surprises us with a modulation to G major by using the Picardy third instead.

Reiterated G major chords, set off the beat, gradually crescendo. The emotional effect that the passage portrays can be described as the return to life that rises from the deepest regions of darkness to the light. The passage requires a total physical involvement from the pianist since it demands increasingly greater sonority with each successive chord. An ascending G major arpeggio rises from the lowest G on the keyboard introduces the final section that suggests the return of hopefulness and light.

Figure: 2.20, *L'istesso tempo di Arioso*, G Major transition, mm. 131–136.

The musical score for Figure 2.20 consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 131 and 132. Measure 131 is marked 'una corda' and shows a piano introduction of G major chords in the bass clef. Measure 132 is marked 'cresc.' and shows more prominent G major chords. The second system covers measures 133, 134, 135, and 136. Measure 133 continues the crescendo. Measure 134 is marked 'dimin.' and features a melodic line in the right hand. Measure 135 shows the final G major chord with an ascending arpeggio in the right hand. Measure 136 ends with a final G major chord marked with an asterisk.

L'istesso tempo della Fuga poi a poi di nuovo vivente

Nach und nach wieder auflebend

poi a poi nuovo vivente

Mm. 137–167

This new section begins with Beethoven's direction *nach und nach wieder auflebend*– “gradually coming back to life”–and suggests a new beginning. Here, Beethoven composes a second fugue; this fugue is in G Major in three voices. He adds the indication *L'istesso tempo della Fuga* “the same tempo as the first fugue.” The subject of this fugue is an inversion of the original subject and begins in the alto voice. The third voice enters in the tenor line in m. 144. From m. 160 to the end of the piece, Beethoven incorporates contrapuntal devices such as augmentation, diminution, and stretto. Example of a combination of augmentation in the left hand and diminution in the right hand can be found in mm. 161–167 and for diminution and stretto in m. 169.

In m.169 Beethoven introduces a transition passage *Etwas langsamer* “somewhat slower.” This is a six–measure transition in which, by using the contrapuntal mechanism previously described, Beethoven psychologically prepares the return of the first fugue subject and the closing section.

It is important to discuss the modulation process that Beethoven uses from mm. 152–174. In m. 152, Beethoven modulates from G Major to B \flat Major by using diminution of the subject motive in the left hand. He adds an E \flat , which overlaps with the G note in the right hand to form an E \flat Major chord, subdominant of B \flat Major. Even though the music is now in B \flat Major, there is still a constant tension with G major due to the constant clash between F \sharp and F. From m. 164–174, Beethoven starts the process of returning to the original key of A \flat Major. He gradually adds the remaining flat notes (A \flat and D \flat) of the scale to complete the transition from B \flat Major to A \flat Major.

The double bar in m. 174 indicates the beginning of a new section. The *tempo primo* in mm. 172–173 and the *nach und nach wieder geschwinder*, "get faster little by little" indicate the return to the *Allegro ma non troppo* tempo of the first fugue.

Final section

Mm. 174–213

The final section begins in m. 174 with the triumphant return of the subject in the left-hand octaves in the tonic key of A \flat . The subject of the fugue is in free augmentation while the left-hand subject in diminution creates the feeling of

ecstasy. The Coda in m. 201 serves as the triumphant close of the entire piece. The hands are at the extreme registers of the piano. The final arpeggio in $A\flat$ major descends and ascends throughout the entire keyboard in ff , symbolizing the end of the journey and the triumph of light.

Figure: 2.21, Final section, mm. 174–179.

The image displays a musical score for the final section, measures 174 through 179. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system begins at measure 173, marked with a circled number '173'. The key signature is $A\flat$ major (two flats). The tempo marking 'tempo primo' is placed above the right-hand staff. The first measure of this system is marked 'più moto.' and 'wieder geschwinder' below the left-hand staff. The right-hand staff features a melodic line with eighth notes and rests, while the left-hand staff plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system begins at measure 176, marked with a circled number '176'. The right-hand staff continues with a melodic line, and the left-hand staff features a bass line with chords and single notes. Dynamic markings include f and sf in both systems. The score concludes with a fermata over the final note in measure 179.

Figure: 2.22, Coda, mm. 194–213.

The musical score for the Coda section (measures 194-213) is presented in five systems. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. Measure numbers 193, 197, 201, 205, and 209 are circled at the beginning of their respective systems. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. A double asterisk (**) is placed below the bass staff in measure 194. A first ending bracket with an 8-measure repeat sign is shown above the treble staff in measure 205. A second ending bracket with an 8-measure repeat sign is shown above the treble staff in measure 209. The piece concludes with a double bar line in measure 213.

OP. 110: A CHORAL/ORCHESTRAL CONCEPT REALIZED AS A SOLO PIANO SONATA

I believe that the final movement of the *Op.110* solo piano sonata represents Beethoven's ultimate musical conception of transferring the structure of his large-scale choral/orchestral works to the piano, thus creating a solo sonata complete with arias, choruses, orchestral accompaniment, and fugal passages. In 1822, at the same time Beethoven was composing the *Missa Solemnis*, he was also revising the third movement of *Op.110*. Thanks to Beethoven's diaries, the publisher Artaria, and Beethoven's sketches, we have discovered that Beethoven used ideas, motives, and composition techniques in works for the different media that he was composing simultaneously. I suggest that in *Op.110*, Beethoven adapted forms and techniques of the large-scale choral works he was composing, such as *Missa Solemnis* and the *Symphony No. 9*.

A good example that supports such a claim is found in William Kinderman's book *Beethoven*. While comparing the *Symphony No. 9* to other works he mentions *Op. 110* in the following statement:

The work as a whole embraces numerous transformations in character and embodies a narrative pattern unusually rich in its foreshadowings and reminiscences of themes. These qualities are, of course, typical of Beethoven's music in general. However, a work such as the Piano Sonata Op. 110 displays a somewhat analogous narrative design compressed into a much smaller dimension...The initial series of instrumental variations lacks the strength to sustain the musical development of "joy" theme and eventually breaks down, as does the first fugue of op. 110.¹²

In fact, there is a special connection between the *Recitativo* of the third movement of *Op. 110* and the baritone solo *O Freunde, nicht diese Töne! Sondern laßt uns angenehmere anstimmen, und freudenvollere* "Oh friends, no more of these sounds! Let us sing more cheerful songs, More full of joy" that leads to the "*Ode to Joy*" in the fourth movement of the *Symphony No. 9 in D Minor*. The *Recitativo* melody in the *piu adagio*, and the chordal response in the *andante* in *Op. 110* m. 4 are very similar to the first measures of the baritone recitative and the orchestral response in the *ad libitum* with the *smorzando adagio* in m. 6.

¹²Kinderman, *Beethoven*, 298–299.

Another pertinent observation that Kinderman provides is the pairing of the *Arioso dolente* with the fugue in *Op. 110*. This has no precedent in Beethoven's earlier instrumental music; its closest affinity is with the "Agnus Dei" and "Dona nobis pacem" of the *Missa Solemnis*, the movement of the Mass that occupied him contemporaneously with the sonata.¹³ I have found that such a claim is true and that indeed, the works share similarities. There are two *dolente* sections and two triumphant fugues. In *Op. 110*, the *Arioso dolente* is followed by the *fuga*; in the *Missa Solemnis*, the *Agnus dei* is paired with the *Dona nobis pacem*, which is a fugue as well.

¹³ Ibid., 248.

Figure: 2.23, *Adagio ma non troppo*, mm. 4–6

Figure 2.23 shows the piano accompaniment for the first system of *Adagio ma non troppo*, measures 4–6. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system (mm. 4–6) starts with a *Recitativo* section, followed by *più adagio* and *Andante*. The second system (mm. 7–12) is marked *Adagio* and *cantabile*, with *tutte le corde* and *dimin.* in the first half, and *una corda* in the second half. The third system (mm. 13–16) is marked *Meno adagio*, *Adagio ten.*, and *Adagio ma non troppo*. It includes dynamics like *cresc.*, *dim. smorzando*, and *p tutte le corde*.

Figure: 2.24 Symphony No. 9, *Recitativo*, fourth movement

Figure 2.24 shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for the *Recitativo* section of the fourth movement of Symphony No. 9. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. The vocal line is marked *Recitativo.* and *colla voce.* The piano accompaniment is marked *p* and *colla voce.* The lyrics are: "O Freund - - de, nicht die - se Töne! sondern lasst uns an - - - ge -".

Figure: 2.25 Symphony No. 9, *Recitativo*, fourth movement

The musical score is arranged in five staves. The first three staves are for string instruments, and the fourth and fifth are for voice. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. Dynamics markings include *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). The voice part includes the lyrics "nehmere an - stimmen, und freu - - - - - denvollere." and the instruction "ad libit." above a melodic line.

Handel's Influence

Another possible influence on this sonata is the Handelian oratorio. Beethoven stated "Handel is the greatest composer that ever lived." Edward Schulz reported on a visit that he paid to Beethoven on 28 September 1823: "I cannot describe to you with what pathos, and I am inclined to say, with what sublimity of language, Beethoven spoke of the *Messiah* of this immortal genius. Every one of us was moved when he said, 'I would uncover my head and kneel down on his tomb.'"¹⁴ Beethoven venerated Handel. By the end of his life, he had an amassed library full of Handel scores that included several copies of *Messiah*. An allusion to the *Messiah* on 27 February 1827 indicates that "Handel's scores were always in Beethoven's mind during the last weeks of his life."¹⁵

¹⁴ Alexander Wheelock Thayer, "The Life of Ludwig van Beethoven," (New York: The Beethoven Association, 1921), 381; Donald MacArdle, "Beethoven and Handel," *Music & Letters* 41, no. 1 (1960): 33–37, 34.

¹⁵ Thayer, 296.

Chapter Three

Pianists, Recordings, and Editions

Chapter Three will focus on different interpretations of *Op. 110* through the discussion of selected recordings from 1932–35, the 1980s and 1990s. This chapter will also discuss the Beethoven piano sonata editions of G. Henle Verlag, Arthur Schnabel, Heinrich Schenker and Barry Cooper. I will conclude with my own suggestions for certain sections and passages.

From the entire roster of legendary pianists and recordings, I selected four prominent pianists: Arthur Schnabel, Claudio Arrau, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Alfred Brendel. The main objective of this chapter is to discuss some of the interpretative decisions that each pianist made in regard to tempo, dynamics, the shaping of phrases, the use of silence, sonority, pedal and rubato.

Arthur Schnabel (1882–1915)

Schnabel was the first pianist to record the entire cycle of Beethoven 32 sonatas. The titanic task began in 1932 and ended in 1935, with a few retouches in 1937. Surprising, *Opus 110* was the first sonata from the entire cycle that he recorded.¹⁶ Schnabel's interpretation is full of vitality and spirituality. For purists, his interpretation could be considered questionable and radical; however, his decisions are what make his performance exquisite. His playing strives for pure artistry and seeks the inner interpretation of the message that Beethoven wishes to communicate—not just a mere realization of what is written on the page. By listening to Schnabel recordings, one can tell that Schnabel focuses more on what the music conveys rather than what is written in the page.

First movement

Spirituality overflows in this movement. The interpretation is very free, to the point where some passages feel like an improvisation. Schnabel deliberately blurs the transitional passages with the pedal, giving a distinctive sound to the transition. Throughout the entire movement, his *piano* dynamic range is very soft, forcing the listener to pay extra attention to each phrase. A good example of this is found in m.

¹⁶ David Bloesch, "Arthur Schnabel: A Discography," *Association for Recorded Sound Collections Journal*. (1–3), no. 18 (1986): 33–143.

20. Schnabel often takes time between phrases; this makes his playing sound like “musical speech”, for example, in mm 101–105. Schnabel constantly reshapes a phrase to purposely change the color and tone quality, and his characteristic acceleration of certain passages enhances the energy throughout the entire development section.

Second Movement

Even though Schnabel's tempo is faster than most other interpretations, he succeeds in capturing the Beethovenian sardonic humor. In a way, this tempo allows the scherzo to be livelier and for the syncopation to more effective. However, the trio section moves at such a fast pace that it is hard to grasp everything that is happening on one hearing. In the final three measures of the coda, Schnabel completely blurs the arpeggiated F Major chord, making the transition from the second movement to the third movement with great effect.

Third Movement

The introduction is faster than most other recordings but still maintains the profound essence and provides time for each sonority. Schnabel deliberately incorporates tempo changes to add drama. The approach to both *ariosos* is similar.

Schnabel allows the right hand to unfold and adjusts the left-hand accompaniment to follow the gesture or motion of the melody.

For the fugue, Schnabel gives almost exclusive attention to the voice that has the subject. His tempo fluctuates and he uses dynamics to contrast a three-voice passage with a four-voice passage, when the bass is doubled by the lower octave. There is a drastic change in tempo in m. 109 to create a jubilant and resolute effect. In the second arioso, from m. 178 to the end of the movement, Schnabel plays the left hand sixteenth notes in such a manner that makes it hard to grasp and distinguish the pitches, forcing the listener to focus only on the voices in the right hand.

Vladimir Ashkenazy (b. 1937)

Ashkenazy's interpretation for *Op. 110* (1970's recording) is more lyrical, poetic, less virtuosic and introspective than Schnabel's. In Ashkenazy's version, every note counts, and every note has a particular purpose.

First Movement

I consider Ashkenazy's performance of the first movement to be the ideal interpretation. His playing is very poetic, a perfect balance between the score and

his own unique interpretation. As a representative of the Russian tradition, Ashkenazy gives strong emphasis to the top voice in chord; he also uses the very combination of a ritardando and *piano* at the ends of phrases that we often hear in Rachmaninoff's recordings. Such techniques are very effective and create magical moments throughout the piece. An excellent example can be found in m. 79, where the top voices are almost otherworldly. In m. 39, Ashkenazy adds a slight ritard that leads to the development section, and in m. 56 he leads us to the recapitulation in the same way. Ashkenazy emphasizes the contrapuntal aspect of the coda, giving each voice a specific tone color—perhaps to prepare us for the fugue.

Second movement

Ashkenazy's version of the second movement is much slower and not as joyful as Schnabel's. The concept is more intellectual. Ashkenazy gives a different tempo and character to each section; the scherzo is slower and heavier, while the trio is faster and lighter. Ashkenazy adds a ritardando at the end of the Trio to separate the trio from the Scherzo. There is also a ritardando at the end of the coda. Instead of a progressive deceleration note by note, Ashkenazy chooses to apply the ritardando only in the last two notes of the passage to prepare the third movement.

Third Movement

The sonority that Ashkenazy uses is decisive and jubilant, but also has a sweet and warm component that is maintained throughout all the sections of the movement.

The introduction has a slow pace, even slower than Claudio Arrau's; however, it is full of color and dramatic contrast. The arioso sections are perhaps the most lyrical of all four recordings. In the fugue, the subject has a different color than the rest of the voices, but the upper voice is the most important.

Claudio Arrau (1903–1991)

Of all the selected recordings, Arrau's recording (1960's) can be considered the most cerebral. The interpretation tempo is slower than the others but, his playing is very poetic. Even though it is slow, Arrau's performance is compelling and brings a different perspective to the music. Arrau's version of *Op.110* is not characterized by pathos but by intellectualism and spirituality.

First movement

Arrau's introduction is more poetic and declamatory than the other recordings. He uses a combination of small ritardando, agogic accents, and placements to achieve a declamatory effect. An excellent example of this is mm. 23–24. His slow tempo makes the development powerful and full of pathos.

Second movement

The second movement is very slow, sometimes pesante, and intellectual. Arrau removes all the joy from the scherzo by purposely slowing down the movement.

Third movement

Because of the slow tempo, the introduction becomes a spiritual contemplation rather than a painful preparation for the arioso. In the arioso, the slow tempo and the dynamics that Arrau adds completely change the mood of the arioso from deep pathos to a spiritual experience.

Arrau's version of the fugue is, for me, a unique interpretation, and is much closer to my own concept of the "choral work for solo piano". In this section Arrau suggests the sonority of a choir rather than a pianistic fugue. Not one note in the fugue is taken for granted. The final section is faster than other versions and suggests an orchestra accompanying a choir. The final measures of the coda are charged with energy, a powerful, triumphant chorus accompanied by the timpani.

Alfred Brendel (b. 1931)

In comparison with the other three versions, Brendel's interpretation (1990's recording) could be considered radical due to his tempo and dynamic choices in certain sections. However, his interpretation of *Op.110* has poetic and declamatory elements as well as a profound cerebral approach.

First movement

Of all the recordings, this is the most conservative in terms of tempo. It is my belief that Brendel chose this tempo deliberately to emphasize the *cantabile* aspect of the movement; however, sometimes passages do not flow, and the music tends to sound "square." That said, the slower tempo dramatically emphasizes the emotion of the development section. The slower tempo charges the entire section with deep and painful pathos.

Second movement

I consider Brendel's performance the ideal interpretation for the second movement. The tempo is perfect. All the articulations and different moods can be easily heard. The coda is dramatic, but Brendel drastically changes the dynamic to *piano* in the *diminuendo* and uses the Schnabel technique of blurring the last two measures.

However, Brendel clears the harmony on the last measure so the final notes of the F major chord can be clearly heard.

Third movement

Brendel's approach for this movement is more pianistic than Arrau's. However, it has a slower tempo than the other recordings, and it maintains a poetic contour.

The flow in the arioso is beautiful and full of color; here, Brendel mixes pathos and spirituality. The fugue and the finale are more pianistic than Arrau's, and sometimes sound like a Bach fugue since there is an absence of pedal and an overabundance of clear finger articulation; however, the performance is still compelling.

Editions

When studying and performing Beethoven's piano sonatas, the G. Henle Verlag edition, the Heinrich Schenker edition and the editions by Arthur Schnabel and Barry Cooper, are perhaps the most popular editions on the market.

All four are excellent editions. For most purists, only the Urtext editions (Henle and Schenker) present the musical score with Beethoven's original tempo markings, articulations, dynamics, phrasing, etc. However, Schnabel offers unique

fingering suggestions, extensive nuances and interpretive suggestions for performance. In his edition, Barry Cooper includes a separate booklet full of historical commentary, an assessment of the sources such as the manuscript and the autograph, detailed notes on interpretation, and a general introduction covering performance practice.

These four editions are excellent sources; however, I suggest that the urtext editions are the best choice for music students. These editions will not overwhelm the students with commentary, allowing the students to focus on learning the music. The urtext editions will also encourage the students to develop their ability to make interpretive decisions based on Beethoven's score. The Schnabel and the Cooper editions are oriented more to professional pianists and provide a guide for ideas and different approaches to the music.

Chapter Four

The Author's Interpretation

In this chapter, the author provides details regarding the interpretation of *Op. 110*. Choices of tempo, tone, touch forms, pedaling, and rubato are discussed.

Moderato Cantabile Molto Espressivo

The first movement presents an exciting challenge in regards to tempo. Beethoven marks *moderato* and provides a time signature of 3/4. However, by analyzing the principal figures that characterize the movement and the pacing of the movement, I find it difficult to hear the quarter note as the pulse for the *moderato*.

I would argue that the *moderato* suggests an eighth-note pulse instead of the quarter-note pulse. However, subdividing for the entire movement would be excessive, although there are many passages in which the subdivision makes sense. For the tempo, I would suggest a quarter note = 56–60 (I prefer 56).

There are specific passages in the first movement that call for rubato. Examples of these are m. 3, the second theme in mm. 20–25, 76–80. The rubato gives the passages a more poetic quality.

Figure 4.1 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, first theme, m. 3.



Figure 4.2 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, first theme, mm. 20–25.



Figure 4.3 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, first theme, mm. 76–80.



A significant pedal mark that is important to discuss is the sixteenth-note transition passages. Again, the pedal needs to be well-planned and efficient. Too little pedal will turn the passage into an arpeggio exercise; too much, and the notes will be indistinguishable. My advice here is to use a half-pedal for each note in the left

hand eighth notes. This gives the passage a smooth sound and strong support to the harmony while still maintaining the crisp sound of the right-hand arpeggios.

Figure 4.4 *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, first theme, mm. 12–17.

The main contour of the melodies in the exposition mm. 5–11, and the recapitulation mm. 56–62, could be interpreted as a two–bar, two–bar, and three–bar phrase: mm. 5–6, mm. 7–8, mm. mm. 9–11; mm. 56–57, mm. 58–59, mm. 60–62. The development, mm. 40–55, moves entirely in two–bar phrases: mm. 40–41, mm. 42–43, mm. 44–45, mm. 46–47, mm. 48–49, mm. 50–51, mm. 52–53, mm. 54–55.

Figure 4.5 Phrase pattern in the exposition, mm. 5–11.

Komponiert 1821 Opus 110

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

31. *p con amabilita (sanft)* *p* *cresc.* *sf*

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 5-7) begins with a piano introduction marked *p con amabilita (sanft)*. The right hand features a melodic line with a trill on the final note, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system (measures 8-10) continues the melodic and accompanimental patterns. The third system (measures 11-13) shows a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (*sf*) section. The score is in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major, and consists of three systems.

Figure 4.6 Phrase pattern in the development, mm. 40–55.

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of five systems of staves. Each system contains two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is numbered with measure numbers in circles at the beginning of each system: 39, 43, 46, 50, and 53. The first system (measures 39-42) features a *cresc.* marking. The second system (measures 43-45) features a *p* marking. The third system (measures 46-49) continues the melodic and harmonic development. The fourth system (measures 50-52) shows further melodic movement. The fifth system (measures 53-55) concludes the phrase with a trill in the right hand. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Figure 4.7 Phrase pattern in the recapitulation, mm. 56–70.

The image displays five systems of musical notation for piano, spanning measures 56 to 70. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). Measure numbers 56, 60, 62, 66, and 68 are circled at the beginning of their respective systems. The notation includes various dynamics such as *cresc.*, *p*, *pp*, and *dimin.*, as well as articulation marks like slurs and trills. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs and dense chordal textures.

The first movement should never be played with an aggressive tone. Most of the movement fluctuates between piano and pianissimo. Beethoven also marks the entire movement *con amabilità* (with amiability or kindness), *dolce* (sweet), *espressivo* (with expression). Some *sforzandos* are present. However, the *sf* markings are always placed at the climax of a particular melody, signaling a point of culmination where an agogic accent should be expressed.

Figure 4.8 *sforzandos*, mm. 24–31.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano, covering measures 24 through 31. The first system (measures 24-28) features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *p cresc.* in measure 25, *sf* in measure 27, and *f* in measure 28. The second system (measures 29-31) continues the melodic and accompaniment lines. It includes *sf* markings in measures 29 and 30, and a *p* marking in measure 31. A fermata is placed over the final note of measure 31. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/C minor).

Allegro Molto

The scherzo should be fast and lively but also maintain the Beethovenian sardonic qualities. For this, the pianist must follow every detail of the score – the rests, tied notes, and different articulations.

For tempo markings, I suggest half-note=112–120. Schnabel and Ashkenazy separate the scherzo from the trio by playing one section faster than the other. However, I believe that both sections should be performed at the same tempo. Some pianists tend to take this movement exuberantly fast. There is a danger in this which might lead to panic at m. 41. Beethoven marks *allegro molto* and not *presto*.¹⁷

I have found that pedaling on the downbeat and releasing after the second beat for the tied phrases and no pedal for the staccatos in the trio works well.

For the trio section, I have provided my suggested fingerings. (See Fig. 4.9)

¹⁷ Cooper, *Beethoven: The 35 Piano Sonatas*, 62.

Figure: 4.9: Trio section, fingerings

The image displays six systems of musical notation for a piano trio section. Each system consists of a piano (right-hand) staff and a bass clef (left-hand) staff. The piano staves feature complex melodic lines with various dynamics such as *p*, *f*, *ff*, *sf*, and *pp*. The bass clef staves provide harmonic support with chords and bass lines. Above the piano staves, specific fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. Some systems include asterisks (*) and circled 'x' symbols. The systems are numbered 298, 301, 308, 315, 322, and 329. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor).

*) Stellung gemäß Autograph; in der Originalausgabe hier und an vergleichbaren Stellen auf Zwei.

*) Position as in autograph; in original edition here and in analogous passages on 2nd beat.

*) Position selon l'autographe; dans l'édition originale, ici et pour les passages analogues sur 2^e temps.

For the poco ritardando in the coda to be effective, play m. 156 to the first half of m. 157 *a tempo*; play the second half of m. 157 to the first half of m. 158 slower than *a tempo*; make a complete *ritardando* in the second half of m.158 and m.159. The last F note in the left hand should be held at the end.

Figure: 4.10, Allegro Molto, final four measures of the coda, mm 156–159.

The musical score for the final four measures of the coda (measures 156-159) is shown. The piece is in 3/4 time and features a piano part. The score is marked with a circled measure number 144 and the word "Coda". The dynamics are *f* (forte) for measures 156-157, *sf* (sforzando) for measures 158-159, and *dim.* (diminuendo) for the final measure. The performance instruction *p poco ritardando* (piano poco ritardando) is indicated for the final measure. The left hand part ends with a held F note.

Adagio ma non troppo – Fuga Allegro ma non troppo

As mentioned in previous chapters, I consider this movement a dramatic large-scale choral/orchestral work for the piano in which each section represents a particular section from the choral/orchestral work format.

Introduction and Recitativo

The introduction can be approached as an orchestral overture. The melody does not come from a single line but instead is formed by the top note of the chords. The sound should flow chord by chord until m. 5, where the recitativo starts. From here, special attention should be paid to the tied A's in the right hand and the following measures where the right hand has become the solo singer.

Arioso

The two *Ariosos* suggest a soloist accompanied by an orchestra.

The left-hand accompaniment needs to accommodate to the rubato of the melody in the right hand. For the second *Arioso*, it is crucial to take into consideration the silences that Beethoven writes. These are meant to interrupt the melody and to create a sobbing or breathless effect.

Figure: 4.11, *Adagio ma non troppo*, mm. 116–118.



Another passage that needs extra attention is in mm. 132–136. The rests need to be precisely counted. The pedal marking in m. 132 indicates that the pedal should be held until the end of m. 136. This passage was previously described in Chapter Two as the feeling of returning to life, where we emerge from the deepest regions of darkness to the light. To create this effect, the pianist should put the pedal down and begin *piano* in m. 132, continuously increasing the dynamic level for each chord until reaching *forte*. In m. 135, lift the pedal little by little, so the sounds become clearer and there is no pedal in m. 137.

Figure: 4.12, *Adagio ma non troppo*, mm. 131–136.

Fuga

Both fugues suggest a choral sonority. For this, each voice needs to have a specific sound. The subject must always be distinguished from the rest of the texture, and not a single note in the fugue can be taken for granted.

Finale

The closing suggests a choir and orchestra. The final measures need to be triumphant and thoroughly energizing. I would suggest making a clear distinction between the right hand and left hand since the right hand suggests the choir and the left hand suggests the orchestra.

There should be a small ritardando following the agogic accent on the last note in m. 200 since this is a major climax. From m. 201 to the end, in the coda, the left hand should use a rotation technique to keep articulating the bass notes and to keep the sound clear. The final A-flat arpeggio cannot be faster than the rest of the movement; it is a celebratory passage where all the notes should be heard.

Figure: 4.13, *Adagio ma non troppo*, mm. 197–200.



Conclusion

Over time, *Op. 110* has gained an esteemed position in the canon of the piano repertoire. As the greatest genius of all time, Beethoven never fails to mesmerize us by innovating, adapting, and translating techniques and genres to reach the final goal of transporting the listener to a sublime world of sound. There is no doubt about the immense drama and narrative aspect in *Op. 110* third movement, and it is clear that Beethoven transmute form, structure, and techniques from the choral/orchestral works such as the *Missa Solemnis* and the *Ninth Symphony* to the conception of *Op. 110*. As with many of his greatest works, Ludwig van Beethoven's piano sonata *Op.110* can be interpreted as a musical depiction of a hero's journey, with a beginning, a dramatic struggle, and a heroic triumphant conclusion.

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