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Acknowledgements

On behalf of the University of Ottawa's School of Music, it is my pleasure to present the third volume of *Intermezzo : The University of Ottawa School of Music's Undergraduate Journal*. This issue demonstrates the creativity and the in-depth knowledge of these students, and their passion for the study of music. Amongst these students, we have the winner of the 2016 University of Ottawa School of Music's Essay Competition, Aurélie Thériault Brillon, along with the winning essay. These papers also reflect the high academic standard at the University of Ottawa. Lastly, I wanted to thank Matthew Timmermans, the creator of this journal and previous Journal Manager, for his help with the continuation of the journal, and I also want to thank the Editorial Committee for their wonderful work. I hope you enjoy this issue, because it was a pleasure to put together.

Marie Bordeleau
Editor

L'évolution de la carrière d'interprète de Clara Schumann

Aurélie Thériault Brillon

Introduction

Clara Schumann (1819-1896) a eu une carrière remarquable et hors du commun compte tenu du contexte au 19e siècle. En plus d'être une pianiste extraordinaire, elle a composé de nombreuses pièces pour le piano solo, des pièces de musique de chambre et des *lieder*. Dans cette dissertation, nous nous concentrerons sur les éléments importants de la vie de Clara Schumann en tant qu'interprète et étudierons comment sa carrière a évolué entre le moment où elle a commencé à se produire en concert, à l'âge de neuf ans en 1828, jusqu'à son dernier concert, à l'âge de soixante-et-onze ans, en 1891. Plus précisément, nous discuterons du style du répertoire qu'elle jouait en fonction de la période de sa carrière et de l'impact des évènements de sa vie personnelle sur sa carrière. Ensuite, nous traiterons de l'importance de l'improvisation dans sa vie, particulièrement avec la façon dont elle a utilisé les préludes. Enfin, nous comparerons la carrière de Clara Schumann avec celle de Franz Liszt (1811-1886), reconnu comme étant l'un des plus grands

respectif en plus de tenter de comparer leur succès en tant que pianiste de concert.

1. Style de répertoire et compositeurs

Vers la fin des années 1820, à Paris, le « courant de virtuosité » fait son apparition. Le public désire être impressionné par des prestations sensationnelles d'interprètes qui sont particulièrement doués techniquement. Certains compositeurs sont plus ou mois en accord avec le concept de virtuosité, car ils trouvent que les émotions que la musique devrait transmettre sont en partie ignorées ou encore ils considèrent qu'il ne s'agit pas de musique sérieuse et profonde. Par exemple, en 1825, Mendelssohn, un des grands compositeurs de l'époque, écrit à sa sœur alors qu'il est à Paris :

« I had hoped to find this the native home of music, musicians, and musical taste, but, upon my word, it is nothing of the kind. The *salons*, though I did not expect much from them, are wearisome; people care only for the trivial, showy music, and won't put up with anything serious or solid… The people here don't know a note of *Fidelio* and look upon Bach as a mere full-bottomed wig, powdered

with nothing but learning. »[1]

Du côté du monde pianistique, le piano moderne, qui se développe au cours des années 1820, offre de nouvelles possibilités aux interprètes, qui les utilisent à leur avantage afin de démontrer leur talent et leurs capacités techniques exceptionnelles. Par exemple, le nouveau système de double-échappement du piano permet qu'une note soit répétée plus rapidement puisque la touche peut être rejouée avant qu'elle soit revenue à sa position initiale. Ce nouveau système permet donc aux interprètes d'accomplir de nouvelles prouesses techniques, ce qui est tout à fait approprié dans le cadre du mouvement de virtuosité à partir des années 1820.

C'est donc dans cette atmosphère où le public désire être impressioné, non seulement en France mais partout en Europe, que Clara Schumann commence à donner des concerts, en 1828. Ses programmes de concert à cette époque reflètent bien la virtuosité qui domine alors le monde de la musique : elle joue principalement des pièces des compositeurs Herz, Henselt et Pixis, qui étaient tous des compositeurs et pianistes actifs à l'époque, et qui composaient des pièces qui avaient comme objectif d'impressionner. Par contre, ces

compositeurs ne font pas partie de ceux que l'on étudie en profondeur aujourd'hui, puisqu'on ne les considère pas comme « classiques » ou « traditionnels ». Selon Susskind, « Clara's repertoire at this time was steeped in superficial brilliance » et « her father knew exactly what programs would draw the audiences »[2]. De plus, au début de sa carrière, Clara Schumann jouait souvent des pièces accompagnées d'un orchestre, telles que des concertos, un genre de pièces où le soliste est particulièrement mis en valeur et qui attire l'attention de l'audience grâce aux nombreux passages difficiles et rapides, qui sont particulièrement demandant pour l'interprète.

À partir de la fin des années 1830, les pièces pour le piano solo, sans accompagnement d'orchestre, ont commencé à prendre plus d'importance dans le répertoire de Clara Schumann tandis que le nombre de ses prestations avec un orchestre a commencé à diminuer. De plus, les pièces virtuoses ont commencé à disparaitre de plus en plus de ses programmes pour faire place à des pièces de compositeurs considérés plus traditionnels et sérieux. En effet, à partir de 1840, tous les programmes de concert de Clara Schumann

sont concentrés autour des compositeurs suivants : Beethoven, Chopin, Mendelssohn et Schumann. D'ailleurs, ces quatre compositeurs sont ceux dont elle a le plus souvent interprété les pièces au cours de sa carrière. Il est intéressant de noter que 1840 est l'année où Robert Schumann et Clara se sont mariés et que Robert critiquait énormément les œuvres des compositeurs de pièces virtuoses, qu'il considérait comme médiocres et vulgaires :

« For surely in no genre of our art has more bungling mediocrity been perpetrated – and it is still going on. One could scarcely imagine such wretchedness springing up on every side, such vulgarity that no longer knows any shame. Before, at least, we had good, boring German themes, but now one has to swallow the most hackneyed Italian tunes in five or six successive states of watery decomposition. »[3]

Est-ce que le mariage de Clara avec Robert a un lien avec le fait qu'elle ait cessé d'interpréter des œuvres de Pixis, Herz et Henselt? L'hypothèse est valable. R. Schumann a eu une influence importante sur le choix de répertoire de sa femme, car de nombreux exemples prouvent que Clara donne une importance particulière à

l'opinion de son mari et qu'elle apprécie et admire ses talents de compositeur. Entre autres, elle porte souvent une attention particulière à ses commentaires lorsqu'il écrit dans leur journal commun. De plus, après la mort de Robert en 1856, elle cesse de composer et consacre la majeure partie de sa vie à l'œuvre de son mari en faisant la transcription, l'édition ou en jouant ses compositions en concert.

À partir de 1840, en plus de jouer des pièces de compositeurs faisant aujourd'hui partie du « traditionalist canon », qui regroupe les compositeurs qu'on considère comme ceux qui ont le plus marqué l'histoire de la musique et dont on se souvient le plus aujourd'hui, le nombre de pièces pour le piano solo du répertoire de Clara Schumann diminue tandis qu'elle inclut de plus en plus de mélodies accompagnées et de musique de chambre dans ses programmes. Ceci peut être expliqué par les nombreux évènements de sa vie personnelle qui surviennent à partir de 1840 et jusqu'en 1856. Entre autres, son mariage en 1840, la naissance de ses huit enfants et la mort précipitée d'un de ces derniers font en sorte qu'elle a moins de temps pour pratiquer et pour apprendre des pièces

musique de chambre et d'accompagnement dans ses programmes. D'ailleurs, on remarque également qu'entre 1840 et 1854, le nombre de concerts qu'elle offre au public diminue substantiellement.

À partir du moment où Robert Schumann est interné dans un hôpital psychiatrique en 1854 et surtout après sa mort en 1856, on remarque que Clara Schumann se produit davantage en concert, et qu'elle recommence à jouer plus de pièces pour le piano solo (qui sont cependant moins variées et qu'elle a souvent jouées en concert auparavant). Ceci peut être expliqué par le fait qu'elle cesse de composer et qu'elle se consacre entièrement à l'interprétation. En effet, la mort de son mari la bouleverse énormément. Elle arrête de composer afin de dédier le reste de sa vie à l'œuvre de Robert Schumann pour la faire connaitre: elle fait des transcriptions, des arrangements et édite ses œuvres, en plus d'interpréter régulièrement ses compositions en concert. De plus, vers le milieu des années 1850, comme ses enfants sont plus vieux, elle a moins de responsabilités en tant que mère de famille donc elle a plus de temps à consacrer à sa carrière d'interprète.

Entre 1873 et 1875, Clara Schumann arrête presque complètement de donner des concerts. En effet, elle commence à avoir des blessures aux bras qui l'empêchent de pratiquer et de jouer en concert. Après des recherches effectuées sur la cause de ses blessures, les médecins ont découvert qu'il s'agissait probablement d'un problème de sur-utilisation[4]. Si on considère que son nombre de concerts moyen entre 1854 et 1875 était de 40[5] par saison (une saison est définit ici par la période s'écoulant du mois de septembre jusqu'au mois d'août de l'année suivante), un nombre qui dépasse largement la moyenne de ce qu'un soliste fait normalement, on peut comprendre que la sur-utilisation soit à l'origine de ses blessures.

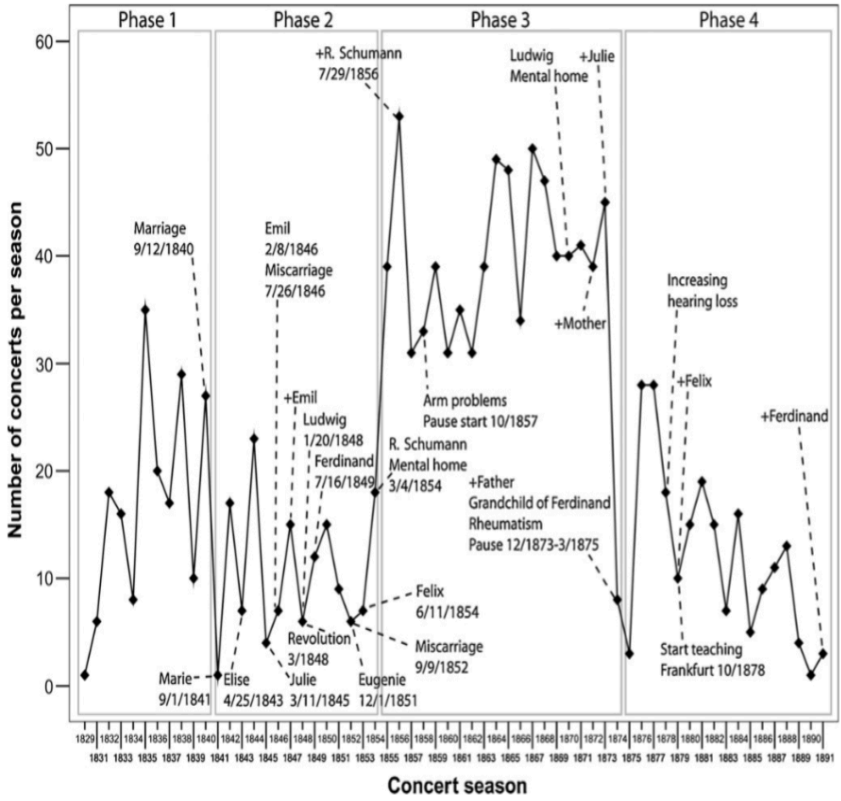
En 1875, lorsque Clara recommence à donner des concerts, elle intègre encore plus de pièces de musique de chambre dans ses programmes puisque ses blessures l'empêchent de jouer autant qu'avant. En 1878, elle devient aussi professeur au conservatoire Hoch à Francfort, jouant de moins en moins en concert et enseignant davantage afin d'avoir une autre source de revenus.

Le tableau 1 illustre que les évènements survenus au cours de sa vie ont un impact direct sur le nombre de concerts qu'elle a

donnés à chaque année. Les auteurs de ce tableau ont choisi de séparer la vie de Clara Schumann en quatre phases distinctes : la phase de l'enfant prodige (1828-1840), les années de son mariage avec Robert Schumann (1840-1854), les années où elle a produit le plus de concerts après l'internement de Robert Schumann à l'hôpital psychiatrique (1854-1875) et la dernière phase durant laquelle elle est devenue professeur au conservatoire à Francfort et où elle a diminué son nombre de concerts pour cause de blessures (1875-1891). Il est important de noter que la troisième et la quatrième phase sont séparées par une période de deux ans (1873-1875) durant laquelle Clara Schumann n'a presque pas donné de concerts puisque ses blessures aux bras l'en empêchaient. Je trouve que les quatre phases avec lesquelles ce tableau est séparé sont tout à fait logiques, puisqu'il y a des évènements majeurs, tels que mentionnés plus tôt, qui commencent et terminent chacune des phases. De plus, on remarque que le nombre de concerts par saison est semblable selon la phase. Par exemple, le nombre de concerts moyen par saison est beaucoup moins élevé lors de la deuxième (10,4) que lors de la

troisième période (36,7)[6]. On retrouve également une certaine homogénéité dans le répertoire de chacune des phases. Dans la première phase, ce sont les pièces virtuoses qui dominent. Puis, lors de son mariage, elle compose plus et s'occupe de la famille, donc les pièces de musique de chambre sont plus présentes. Ensuite, lors de la troisième phase, elle joue énormément en concert et les pièces pour le piano solo, de compositeurs plus traditionnels et moins contemporains, tels que Mendelssohn, Schumann, Beethoven et Chopin, dominent son répertoire. Enfin, lors de la dernière phase, à cause de blessures, elle diminue son nombre de concerts par saison et recommence à jouer des pièces de musique de chambre.

Tableau 1 : Impact des événements de la vie personnelle de Clara Schumann sur sa carrière



Source: Reinhard Kopiez et al., *Clara Schumann's collection of playbills.* p.57.

2. L'improvisation

L'évolution de la carrière de Clara Schumann se manifeste également à travers la façon dont elle a utilisé l'improvisation au cours des différentes périodes de sa carrière. En effet, l'improvisation au piano a joué un rôle important durant la vie de Clara Schumann et c'est ce que nous étudierons dans cette section.

Dès son plus jeune âge lorsqu'elle a commencé à prendre des cours de piano avec son père, Clara a été initiée à l'improvisation. En effet, son père lui enseignait à transposer ses premières pièces dans toutes les clés et à inventer ses propres progressions cadentielles[7], et non seulement à lire des notes sur une partition. D'ailleurs, c'est seulement lors de sa deuxième année d'études que Clara a commencé à lire la musique et à utiliser des partitions; lors de la première année, son père voulait plutôt qu'elle développe son toucher, sa production de son au piano ainsi que sa connaissance de l'harmonie et du rythme. Par la suite, l'improvisation est devenue une partie intégrante de sa formation, afin qu'elle puisse développer ses capacités créatrices et ainsi jouer ses œuvres au grand public : à l'époque, il était fondamental qu'un virtuose puisse inventer ses

propres pièces afin de démontrer ses capacités techniques et créatrices.

Lors des premiers concerts de Clara, il y avait toujours une partie où des pièces étaient improvisées. En fait, une des caractéristiques qui démarquait Clara à l'époque en tant qu'interprète était qu'elle était une jeune femme qui pouvait improviser, ce qui était très rare. D'ailleurs, son père affirmait que « Clara, as a girl, already has an advantage over all the pianists in the world, in that she can improvise »[8].

Au début de sa carrière de concertiste, comme elle jouait régulièrement des œuvres contemporaines de l'époque, qui étaient peu ou pas connues du public, Clara improvisait souvent un court prélude avant les pièces qu'elle interprétait. Ce prélude servait à mettre le public dans le contexte de l'œuvre et de lui donner un avant-goût. Par exemple, durant les années 1830, Clara jouait toujours un prélude qui incorporait des éléments de la pièce principale avant de jouer une pièce de Chopin. En effet, comme les compositions de Chopin étaient encore peu connues à l'époque, il était important de donner un indice au public sur les caractéristiques et la sonorité de l'œuvre qui allait être entendue pour la première

fois.

En ce qui concerne les œuvres de Robert Schumann, il faut savoir qu'à l'époque, sa musique était considérée comme difficile et lourde à l'oreille. Par contre, tel que mentionné, Clara Schumann intégrait régulièrement les œuvres de son mari dans ses programmes de concert et que c'est même grâce à elle que les œuvres de R. Schumann sont aussi connues aujourd'hui. Afin qu'il soit plus facile pour les auditeurs d'apprécier la musique de son mari, Clara Schumann ajoutait des préludes avant chacune des prestations.

Il est intéressant de souligner que les préludes joués en concert n'étaient pas normalement notés sur papier, mais plutôt inventés par l'interprète sur le moment, lors du concert. Par contre, pour introduire certaines pièces de son mari, Clara a noté des préludes spécifiques. Par exemple, elle a noté des préludes pour trois de ses pièces préférées écrites par Robert et qui, selon elle, étaient plus accessibles pour le public : « Des Abends », « Aufschwung » et « Schlummerlied »[9]. Dans chacun de ces préludes, le thème principal de la pièce correspondante est introduit, puis des variations à partir du matériel principal sont entendues.

Clara Schumann a noté certains des préludes qu'elle a joués au cours de sa vie, suite à la demande de ses enfants. Elle ne voulait probablement pas noter ses préludes comme des compositions puisque selon elle, il était impossible de capturer l'essence de l'improvisation libre sur papier. Elle a finalement écrit quelques préludes qu'elle a séparés en deux catégories : les exercices et les introductions, qui sont tous les deux basés sur la formation qu'elle a reçue alors qu'elle était encore enfant.

Enfin, il est important de porter une attention particulière à l'improvisation et aux préludes dans la vie de Clara, compte tenu qu'en plus d'avoir été une des interprètes pianistes les plus importantes du 19e siècle, elle a joué un rôle majeur dans l'intégration d'un répertoire sérieux pour piano dans le cadre de récitals, de concerts et au sein du public en général. Cette intégration et acceptation d'un nouveau répertoire pour piano à l'époque, et aujourd'hui considéré comme traditionnel, a clairement été facilitée par les préludes introduisant chacune des nouvelles pièces en concert. L'évolution de la façon dont elle a intégré l'improvisation au cours de sa carrière de pianiste est également fascinante : elle a

ensuite elle a commencé à improviser lors de ses concerts avant de finalement noter sur papier ses pièces improvisées, sous forme de préludes.

3. Clara Schumann et Franz Liszt

Clara Schumann et Franz Liszt sont considérés comme deux des plus grands pianistes du 19e siècle, et c'est pourquoi il est intéressant de dresser une comparaison entre ces deux grands virtuoses, qui ont eu une carrière durant la même période dans l'histoire de la musique classique. La compétition, le répertoire, les lieux de leurs tournées de concert ainsi que leur style en tant que pianiste sont les éléments que nous tenterons de mettre en lumière afin de comparer les carrières de ces deux musiciens de renom.

D'abord, il faut savoir qu'il y avait une compétition palpable entre les deux pianistes, mais qu'elle se faisait sentir davantage chez Clara Schumann que chez Liszt. En effet, cette dernière a souvent fait des commentaires désobligeants et même méprisants à l'égard de Liszt au cours de sa vie. Par exemple, "…she described Liszt's music as utterly dreadful in a diary of 1841…"[10]. Avec ce commentaire, on peut penser que Clara n'appréciait guère Liszt en tant que

compositeur, mais son opinion de Liszt en tant qu'interprète était particulièrement sévère: en 1851, après une prestation de Liszt lors d'un souper chez les Schumann, Clara a noté dans son journal « qu'il

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compositeur, mais son opinion de Liszt en tant qu'interprète était particulièrement sévère: en 1851, après une prestation de Liszt lors d'un souper chez les Schumann, Clara a noté dans son journal « qu'il jouait, comme toujours, avec une bravoure proprement diabolique. Il en imposait au piano comme un démon (je ne puis m'exprimer autrement)… mais ses compositions, elles étaient trop effrayantes! »[12]. Elle l'a aussi qualifié un jour de "briseur de piano"[13], car il avait souvent tendance à briser des cordes du piano lors de ses récitals et qu'il demandait souvent à ce qu'il y ait deux pianos sur scène, dans le cas où il briserait trop de cordes d'un des deux pianos. Par contre, il faut savoir qu'il arrivait aussi parfois à Clara de briser une corde ou deux en concert : avant que les pianos soient construits de façon plus solide dans les années 1860, il était fréquent qu'un pianiste brise des cordes lors d'un concert. Un autre commentaire de la part de Clara prouve clairement qu'elle n'appréciait pas Liszt : "one student from her Frankfurt class reported in 1894 that Liszt was Clara's only disliked composer"[14].

[12] Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt*, p.603.

On comprend qu'après tous ces commentaires acerbes à l'égard de Liszt, Clara n'a jamais voulu interpréter sa musique, même les pièces que Liszt lui a dédiées. Les compositeurs qu'on retrouve le plus souvent dans ses programmes de concert sont plutôt Schumann, Chopin, Beethoven et Mendelssohn. En ce qui concerne Liszt, il a également souvent interprété les œuvres de Beethoven en concert et « des témoins tels que Berlioz, Wagner et von Bülow attestent que lorsqu'il était hors de portée d'oreilles du grand public, ses interprétations de Beethoven d'une merveilleuse fidélité, resplendissaient de beauté »[15]. Par contre, Liszt interprétait aussi souvent des pièces de Weber, de Czerny et de Hummel, des compositeurs contemporains de l'époque qui figurent peu dans les programmes de récital de Clara.

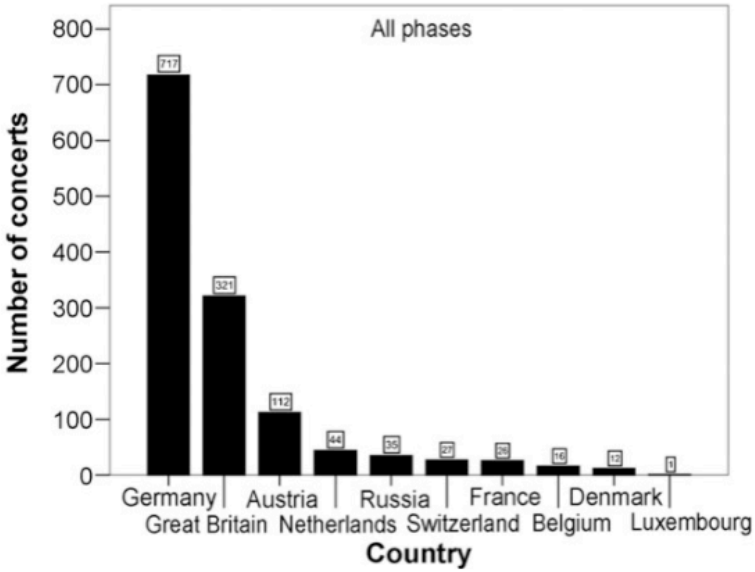
De plus, il est intéressant de noter que la « période virtuose » de Clara n'a pas eu lieu exactement en même temps que celle de Liszt. Comme nous l'avons vu, les pièces de virtuosité que Clara interprétait étaient surtout présentes lors de sa première phase de carrière, entre 1828 et 1840. Clara interprétait également davantage ses propres œuvres pendant cette période que durant les autres

phases de sa vie, afin de démontrer ses capacités techniques et créatrices. Dès ses premières années de pianiste de concert, elle a été comparée à Liszt à de nombreuses reprises, que ce soit en tant qu'interprète ou compositrice. Leur succès respectif était particulièrement médiatisé : par exemple, un article qui a paru dans le *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* en 1838 qui décrivait les qualités de plusieurs grands pianistes de l'époque "ranked the nineteen-year-old Clara Wieck's improvisation skills as second only to Liszt's."[16]

Quant à Liszt, sa période de virtuosité a eu lieu un peu plus tard que celle de Clara, entre 1839 et 1847, période que les musicologues nomment aujourd'hui « années d'exécution transcendante ». Lui aussi, comme Clara, interprétait souvent ses propres œuvres durant ces années, mais également les arrangements qu'il faisait des œuvres d'autres compositeurs. Liszt est en effet bien reconnu pour tous les arrangements et transcriptions qu'il a faits durant sa vie : il a arrangé pour le piano des pièces de musique de chambre, des pièces orchestrales ou encore des pièces écrites pour d'autres instruments (telles que des œuvres de Paganini pour le violon).

En ce qui concerne les endroits où Clara Schumann et Liszt ont voyagé pour donner des concerts, on observe que Liszt a visité beaucoup plus de villes que Clara. En effet, même si le nombre de concerts que Clara a fait est impressionnant, elle a visité peu de pays différents (une dizaine) et a concentré sa carrière principalement dans les trois pays suivants : l'Allemagne, la Grande-Bretagne et l'Autriche. Une des raisons qui peut expliquer ce fait est que Robert Schumann détestait voyager : Clara voyageait d'ailleurs souvent seule. Le tableau 2 à la page suivante illustre la distribution des concerts qu'elle a donnés par pays au cours de sa vie.

Tableau 2: Répartition des concerts de Clara Schumann par pays



Source: Reinhard Kopiez et al., *Clara Schumann's collection of playbills.* p.59.

Liszt, quant à lui, est reconnu comme un des solistes qui a le plus voyagé durant sa carrière, et particulièrement durant ses « années transcendantes », entre 1839-1847. Walker affirme même que « étant donné qu'il donnait souvent trois ou quatre concerts par semaine, on peut avancer sans risques que durant cette brève période de huit années il dut se produire bien plus de mille fois »[17]. De plus, durant ses marathons de tournées de concerts, Liszt couvrait des milliers de

kilomètres en passant par l'Europe jusqu'en Asie. Entre 1838 et 1847, en moins de dix ans de carrière, Liszt a visité plus de 200 villes et près de 25 pays différents[18], ce qui contraste de façon frappante avec Clara Schumann.

Enfin, une des caractéristiques qui différencie le jeu pianistique de Liszt par rapport à celui de Clara Schumann est que Liszt inventait souvent de nouvelles façons d'interpréter les œuvres tandis que Clara se fiait entièrement à la partition. On considère d'ailleurs que Clara fait partie du courant qui est apparu vers la deuxième moitié du 19e siècle et qu'on appelle aujourd'hui « fidélité au texte »[19]. Autrefois, on qualifiait plutôt son interprétation comme un « jeu retenu », puisqu'elle respectait rigoureusement la partition et les indications du compositeur. Liszt, quant à lui, « s'inquiétait vivement de cette nouvelle voie, qu'il considérait comme une négation de la personnalité artistique de l'interprète »[20]. On peut donc dire que Liszt avait probablement une façon plus extravagante et moins traditionnelle que celle de Clara d'interpréter des pièces.

[18] Ibid.

Conclusion

Clara Schumann fut incontestablement une pianiste marquante dans l'histoire de la musique classique qui se démarqua par l'évolution étonnante de sa carrière, que ce soit au niveau de son répertoire, de son style en tant qu'interprète ou encore du rôle que l'improvisation a joué aux cours des différentes périodes de sa vie. De plus, le fait qu'elle ait pu se mesurer à Liszt et qu'elle ait été souvent comparée à celui-ci durant sa carrière prouvent qu'elle était une pianiste de talent exceptionnel. Les caractéristiques qui différencient ces deux grands pianistes sont principalement leur style de répertoire, leur période de virtuosité et leur approche au piano. On peut toutefois affirmer qu'à la fois Liszt et Clara Schumann ont eu un impact considérable sur le récital pour piano tel qu'on le connaît aujourd'hui. En effet, ils ont été parmi les premiers pianistes à jouer des pièces de mémoire et jouer des pièces pour le piano solo pendant un concert complet.

Finalement, il serait intéressant de pousser cette recherche en utilisant une approche en étude de genre afin de découvrir si le fait que Clara Schumann était une femme a eu un impact sur sa vie en

lorsqu'elle jouait des pièces de virtuosité ? Était-elle perçue différemment des autres interprètes, qui étaient principalement des hommes ? Est-ce que le fait qu'elle était une femme a joué en sa faveur ou non durant sa carrière ? Si elle avait joué derrière un rideau, comme lors d'auditions pour un poste dans un orchestre de nos jours, la critique aurait-elle été différente ? De plus, est-ce que l'approche au piano de Clara était différente de celle d'un homme ? De quelle façon ?

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Symbolism and Spiritual Meaning in Alexander Scriabin's Piano Sonata No.3, Op.23

Christine Jakel

Perhaps what is most remarkable about Alexander Scriabin's musical language is its dramatic transformation as he aged from one of late romanticism to one that transcended tonality. Its singularity, however, lies in the symbolist and theosophical beliefs with which it is infused. Notably, his later works assumed almost ritualistic purposes, taking symbolist "mysticism" to its extreme. Divided into tree parts, this paper will attempt to derive spiritual meaning from his music. The first will focus on the biographical elements of Alexander Scriabin, which made him prone to adopting the symbolist philosophy; the second will examine in depth this ideology, which played such an important role in his late musical language. Finally, the third part will trace the spiritual meanings and symbolist plot behind Piano Sonata No.3, Op. 23 based on the findings of the first two parts as well as the writings of theosophist Helena Blavatsky, to which he was exposed during his time in Paris.

Part 1: The Man

The shaping of Scriabin's notoriously egotistical personality can be traced back to his upbringing; abandoned by his father at a young age shortly after the death of his mother, the young Scriabin was raised by his two excessively doting grandmothers and aunt, who spoiled him well into adulthood.[21] This egotism became fully fledged megalomania when, later in his life, he was exposed to the Russian "mystic" symbolism that ran rampant during the prime of his compositional career. According to Simon Morrison, the goal of the mystic symbolist was to fuse life and art, becoming subjects of their own creative works and physically living them out. He also remarks in *Russian Opera and the Symbolist Movement* that Scriabin became a prophet and martyr to this cause, continuously struggling with his role as an artist with regards to "the Cosmic Will," and even entertaining delusions of being the catalyst for the ultimate drama of the human race. This is made clear by a particular entry from the Swiss journals:

"I arouse you to life with the tender, secretive charm of my promises.

I summon you to live, hidden yearnings, disappearing in a chaos of sensations. Arise from the secret depths of the creative spirit![22]"

Other characteristics remarked upon by musicologists is his remarkably high level of intellect and obsession with detail.[23] The responsibility for this characteristic can perhaps be attributed to Nikolai Zverev, an influential mentor and piano teacher who introduced the teenage Scriabin to the manners of French and German high society as well as great literature.[24] Every musical idea the composer had was usually associated with a meaning, though that meaning was not always clear. In his later works, Scriabin would give poetic indications in French related to the spiritual or emotional intention of the music.[25] Furthermore, Hugh MacDonald performed studies about points of contact between these performance indications and the music.[26] He found that Scriabin would repeatedly

[22] Simon Morrison. "Scriabin and Theurgy." In Russian Opera and the Symbolist Movement. University of California Press, 2002. California Scholarship Online, 2012.

[23] Powell. "Skryabin, Aleksandr Nikolayevich."

[24] ibid.

[25] Susanna Garcia. “Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetype in the Late Piano

conjoin certain types of expressive language with specific musical

gestures. In *Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetype in the Late Piano Sonatas*, Susanna Garcia takes this idea even further by pinpointing specific musical gestures and attempting to determine their meaning using the indications given by the composer.

Part 2: Philosophy

Upon his graduation from the Moscow Conservatory in 1893, Scriabin embarked on a trip abroad to Finland and Latvia. Shortly after his return to Moscow, a publisher by the name of Belyaev enabled him to travel to Paris,[27] where there is evidence of him being deeply involved in symbolist social circles.[28] It is during this time that he encountered Helena Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*,[29] a theosophical written work, published in 1888, which compiled the author's studies on eastern religions, including hinduism.[30]

[27] Garcia "Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetype in the Late Piano Sonatas," 277.
[28] ibid., 275.
[29] Simon Morrison. "Scriabin and Theurgy." In Russian Opera and the Symbolist Movement. University of California Press, 2002. California Scholarship Online, 2012.

There is no doubt, however, of Scriabin's being influenced by both these schools of thought. Numerous historians claim Scriabin to be the figurehead of composition in the Russian Silver Age (from 1898 to 1917), during which one of the most potent artistic forces was symbolism. One of the beliefs which symbolist artists shared with Scriabin was that art imparted divine wisdom and could reveal hidden realities. Art was regarded as a way of seeking transformation resulting in union with the divine.[31] In *Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky also speaks of the potential for the divine in man: "Man is the microcosm. All the hierarchies of the heavens exist within him.[32]" Other entries from his Swiss journals (i.e. "I am God.") suggest that Scriabin considered himself one such enlightened being.[33,34]

Until the 1890's Scriabin had been composing in a late

Theosophical University Press Online.

[31] Garcia "Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetype in the Late Piano Sonatas," 274.

[32] "Pages from the Secret Doctrine." Last modified March 15, 2010.

[33] Lincoln M. Ballard "A Russian Mystic in the Age of Aquarius: The U.S. Revival of Alexander Scriabin in the 1960s." American Music 30, no. 2 (2012): 194-227, 197.

romantic style, with harmonies rather similar to those of Chopin.[35]

After his encounters with symbolists and Blavatsky, however, we begin to witness a shift in his musical language alongside the development of theosophical, synaesthetic and mystical theories. The idea of transcendence, both of the material world and of tonality, became paramount in his compositional style.

Antonio Artese remarks that although Scriabin retained the dynamism of tonality, he did away with its traditional uses.[36] The mystic or promethean chord (C-F#-Bb-E-A-D) became increasingly present as the basis of his melodies and harmonies[37] because to Scriabin it was a more "universal" musical language.[38] His goal became to transport listeners into a heightened state of consciousness, in other words, to attain spiritual enlightenment.[39] To this end he had planned that *Prometheus* or the poem of fire be performed with colors corresponding to his synesthetic experience being projected throughout the concert hall. The desired effect was

[35] Antonio Artese. "Vladimir Sofronitsky: A study of his work as an interpreter of Scriabin's Piano Sonata No.3 in F sharp minor op.23" (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2000)
[36] ibid., 23.
[37] ibid., 23.
[38] Ballard "A Russian Mystic in the Age of Aquarius: The U.S. Revival of

spiritual transcendence through union of the senses.[40] Other compositions were created in this mindset, namely his late piano sonatas, composed between 1903 and 1907, and his unfinished *Mysteria*, an orchestral work of apocalyptic proportions meant to be performed in a temple in the Himalayas, accompanied by colored lights and perfumes.[41]

Part 3: Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 23

Piano Sonata No. 3 Op. 23 was composed in 1898 while Scriabin's theories about theosophy and transcendence were just beginning to take shape. Although it wasn't among the sonatas composed after 1903, Garcia's concepts on specific musical gestures having meaning, apply to it in many ways. It was composed in the late romantic style, with harmonies described as "chopinian" and components of the mystic chord were starting to manifest themselves.[42] It was originally entitled "Gothic" but later renamed "États d'âme" by the composer himself and given program notes

[40] Ballard. "A Russian Mystic in the Age of Aquarius: The U.S. Revival of Alexander Scriabin in the 1960s," 197.
[41] Powell. "Skryabin, Aleksandr Nikolayevich."

because it was meant to illustrate the journey of the soul.[43]

During his time at the Moscow Conservatory, Scriabin had already started to write poems that "spiritually coexisted" with particular musical works. Therefore, presumably the musical elements within it each movement could have specific spiritual significance for both the composer and audience members. This next part will attempt to determine possible meanings for certain musical elements present in the Sonata, based on the program notes given, as well as Garcia's remarks, and concepts from the *Secret Doctrine*, throughout movements one, two, three and four.

The program indications for each movement are as follows:

• **First movement, Drammàtico:** The soul, free and wild, thrown into the whirlpool of suffering and strife.
• **Second movement, Allegretto:** Apparent, momentary and illusory respite; tired from suffering the soul wants to forget, wants to sing and flourish, in spite of everything. But the light rhythm, the fragrant harmonies are just a cover through which gleams the restless and languishing soul.
• **Third movement, Andante:** A sea of feelings, tender and sorrowful: love, sorrow, vague desires, inexplicable thoughts, illusions of a delicate dream.

Finale, Presto con fuoco: From the depth of being rises the fearsome voice of creative man whose victorious song resounds triumphantly. But too weak yet to reach the acme he plunges, temporarily defeated, into the abyss of non-being.

Figure 1: Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 23, Program Indications[44]

The first movement, entitled *Drammatico*, in F# minor and major is composed in extended sonata form.[45] Immediately noticeable about this movement is the contrast between the gravitation towards the base and the repeated upward motion of the melody.[46] Chromaticism suggests struggle, presumably to break free of the "false self." Coincidentally, Hinduism, one of the central religions in the Secret Doctrine, is devoted to seeking truth and the realization of the true self through meditation. The "false self" here could be represented by the base and the melody, the person in question seeking truth. Each time the music rises, the soul gets closer and closer to attaining spiritual enlightenment.

What's more, given the decadent quality of the first theme (created by the dense harmonic texture and dissonances throughout), one could take "suffering" here to be associated with bodily needs,

[44] Artese. "Vladimir Sofronitsky: A study of his work as an interpreter of Scriabin's Piano Sonata No.3 in F sharp minor op.23," 23, 24.
[45] ibid., 24.
[46] Aleksandr Nikolayevich Scriabin. "Sonata No. 3 in F Sharp Minor, Opus 23: For the Piano." New York: International Music, 1900.

more specifically sexual desire. Garcia speaks of the eternal feminine and eroticism as an important aspect of Scriabin's music. Two of the musical gestures she associates with this idea are: a yearning quality and intense chromaticism. Both are present in this movement. The musical indication given in the Piano Sonata No. 9, Op. 68 is *volupté douloureuse*, which could very well describe the overall atmosphere of this piece.

Given the dark imagery of the programmatic indication (see Figure 1), one can assume that sensuality here might be seen as a cause of suffering, especially considering that Scriabin composed this shortly after his affair with Natal'ya Sekerina, a girl with whom he had fallen in love, was broken off because of her parents' disapproval. Their painful friendship lasted years before he unwisely married Vera Ivanova Isakovitch in 1897 out of desperation.[47]

Scriabin then introduces polyphony with the second theme, *Cantabile*, which is in the form of a four voice chorale[48] and contrasts with the first by its calm quality and major key.[49] The high

[47] Powell. "Skryabin, Aleksandr Nikolayevich."
[48] Artese. "Vladimir Sofronitsky: A study of his work as an interpreter of Scriabin's Piano Sonata No.3 in F sharp minor op.23," 36.

register and polyphonic texture suggests voices (most likely female), which could be representative of the material world, calling to the soul to lure it in.

Following this seven bar part is a *poco scherzando* in which the first theme returns, this time in a major key. The rhythmic structure, consisting of a few short notes leading to a sustained note as well as the dotted rhythm, bears striking similarities to what Garcia calls the "fanfare motive." According to her this is typically manifested in music as one to three short notes anacrusic to a sustained note and frequently a reverse dotted rhythm.[50] It is very likely that this is a preliminary form of the "fanfare motive," especially since it was characteristic of his earlier works, in particular Sonata No. 4, Op. 30, which was composed only five years after No.3. She associates this gesture with the call of the divine.[51] In this case the significance of the "fanfare" motif is more likely associated by Scriabin with the call of the "true self" rather than the divine, considering the programmatic lingo.

[50] Garcia "Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetype in the Late Piano Sonatas,"

Throughout the movement, when the main theme returns in major keys or a more sparse harmonic texture suggests delight in one's own suffering or perhaps the perception of it through a different lens than that of struggle. Descending chromatic passages toward the end of the development evoke possible despair and the succumbing of the soul to the gravity of the "false self."

This movement, therefore, seems to be rooted in the body and pertains to suffering which arises from physical needs. In contrast, the succeeding movements, seem to deal with other aspects of human existence, which would directly correspond with Blavatsky's seven principles of humanity (see appendix A).

Just as the first movement deals with the physical body (Kama Rupa: animal soul in Blavatsky's terms), the second movement, composed in ABA form, seems to concern itself predominantly with the mind (Higher Manas, mind, intelligence). At this point in the Sonata, the soul finds itself in an alternate reality created by the mind (see Figure 1), presumably as an escape from the suffering of the first movement. What stands out in this movement, is that the left and right hand parts continuously interact with each

role, it is very likely that the left hand acts as the mind's fantasies and that the right hand represents the soul, reacting to these fantasies.

To begin, there is a very marked rhythmic motif of two sixteenth notes and an eighth note in the left hand which later turns into a dotted sixteenth note rhythm while the right hand plays a longer sustained chord followed by a dotted eighth note rhythm. The galloping feel of the left hand creates an undercurrent of unrest while the right hand's slightly offset imitation of the left hand suggests the soul's running with the mind's fantasies. The polyphonic texture creates a sense of chaos and a sort of rhythmic haze. This is perhaps what the "veil of radiant rhythms" (see Figure 1) refers to.

One can also derive meaning from Scriabin's use of dynamics in this movement. For example, there is a crescendo-decrescendo motif building up to and coming out of the highest chord in each repetition of the main rhythmic/melodic motif (see Appendix B). This could represent the short-lived gratification of the fantasies ("transient respite" is mentioned in the program), which the person in question keeps running to, despite their transient nature.

Another musical gesture spoken of by Garcia is the

through intoxicating, spinning dances was believed by symbolists to be part of the Dionysian cult ritual and that Scriabin clearly incorporates the ritual programmatically. The example she uses is Piano Sonata No.7, Op. 64, in which the composer indicates *en un vertige fulgurant avec joie débordante*. According to Garcia, this idea is represented musically by passages in square meters (such as 2/8 or 2/4) or involve straightforward blocked chords in short phrases of 2 to 4 measures.[52] Since both aspects are present in this movement, it is possible that they comprise a preliminary version of the "vertiginous dance.[53]"

The B section is in A flat major labeled *Con grazia*.[54] It contrasts drastically with the chaos of the A section by it's lyrical, serene quality. The melody is simple and luminous with sixteenth note ornamentations, no doubt musical illustrations of the "flowers" spoken of in the program. Perhaps, the soul has settled on a preferred fantasy, while earlier, others had been competing for its attention.

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[52] Garcia "Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetype in the Late Piano Sonatas," 285.
[53] Garcia "Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetype in the Late Piano Sonatas,"

The sudden reprisal of the first theme with more intensity and a louder dynamic, then jolts the soul (and the listener) awake. Seemingly, this is the point when the "vitiated and uneasy soul invariably penetrates the false veil of fragrant harmonies and radiant rhythms." The loud crashing chords which descend could symbolize the collapse in exhaustion which, according to Garcia, inevitably follows the "vertiginous dance.[55]" The final major chord could either mean the soul's ultimate victory over the mind's fantasies or even a union of the mind and soul.

This union corresponds with ideas from the *Secret Doctrine*. Blavatsky writes: "the first idea is unity" and that "there is only one being. The being is absolute.[56]" Furthermore, there are two aspects within this being: consciousness or spirit and substance or the subject of consciousness. The conflict between these two aspects (one is "positive" and one "negative[57]") despite their "unity" could be depicted in this movement, if not in the entire sonata.

The third movement, also composed in ABA form, transitions the listener (and the soul) into the emotional realm of

[55] Garcia "Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetype in the Late Piano Sonatas," 285.

human existence - Linga Sharira: the sentient soul, in Blavatsky's terms (see Appendix A). The indication given, "A sea of feelings, tender and sorrowful: love, sorrow, vague desires, inexplicable thoughts, illusions of a delicate dream.[58]" is illustrated by a floating, dreamlike quality in the music and soft dynamic which makes this movement stand out among the declamatory, solid chords and fortissimos of the previous movements.

To begin, repeated chords acting as an accompaniment in the left hand, a relatively slow tempo and major key all but lull the listener to sleep, enticing them to enter into a dreamlike state. The music is also confined to the upper-middle register of the piano. This harmonic stasis, combined with a conjunct melody in the right hand further adds to the piece's peaceful atmosphere and evokes the image of water, especially the wandering sixteenth notes in the middle section. This could also be a reflection of the nature of emotions: one feeling flowing into the next, arising and passing away.

Perhaps the most interesting part of this movement is the return of the main theme from the first movement, calling back to

[58] Artese. "Vladimir Sofronitsky: A study of his work as an interpreter of

mind the idea of "suffering." Thus the entire sonata becomes a cyclical form. This echoes the Hindu concept of "samsara," that is, the cycle of birth and rebirth, known as suffering. One can only escape the cycle by the realization of the true self, [59,60] which also seems to be the goal of this piece. This ideology is also current in the first volume of the Secret Doctrine which describes the evolution of man between the seven principles of human existence (see Appendix A) in terms of cyclical development.[61,62]

This passage may be a foreboding of what's to come in the fourth movement Presto con fuocco, which immediately follows the third without pause. Here, the outside world comes into play, adding to the internal struggle between soul and the mind, body and emotions created in the previous movements. One could equate this external world with Blavatsky's notion of the physical plane of existence (see Appendix C).

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[59] Douglas Harper. "Samsara." Dictionary.com. Online Etymology Dictionary.
[60] "Samsara." Wikipedia, last modified December 8, 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saṃsāra.
[61] "The Secret Doctrine" Wikipedia, last modified December 15, 2015,

Firstly, the left hand's rising and descending eighth and sixteenth notes in a wave-like motion depict a deluge of sensory input, while the right hand part's chromaticism and solid chords seem to react to it in a confrontational way ("The Soul struggles within their vortex of fury," see Figure 1). The overall image created is a storm without, represented by the left hand and reflected within, as shown by the right hand. With each repetition of this A section (the first three times), chromaticism intensifies, the dynamic gets louder and the harmonic texture gets denser, the "vortex" becomes stronger and more insistent with each repetition.

This is followed by a B section (*meno mosso*) in a major key which begins as a four voice chorale[63] (like the *Cantabile* theme of the first movement). This new homophonic texture suggests harmony, more specifically of the soul with itself. Presumably, it has reached a state of detachment through meditation. The eighth note melody that gradually introduces itself in this section is reminiscent of the wave motifs of the first section. Therefore, it appears that the storm is still present, but rather than being entangled in it, the soul

[63] Scriabin. "Sonata No. 3 in F Sharp Minor, Opus 23 : For the Piano."

observes it from a distance. That is, until the return of the A section at which point it gets pulled back in. This section appears three times throughout the movement. The third time the melody is played in crashing solid octaves in perfect clarity, emerging from the chaos of the A section, which are most likely the musical illustration of "the voice of the Man-God ris[ing] up from within the soul's depths." At this point in the Sonata, is seems that the soul has attained ultimate spiritual enlightenment. Finally, the right hand takes on the left hand rolling sixteenth note motive, and ends with crashing solid chords, signifying its "sink[ing] back, broken, falling into a new abyss of nothingness."

In conclusion, Sonata No. 3, Op. 23 traces the soul's journey in relation to the body, the mind, the emotions and the outside world. Each movement depicts a different stage of this journey. During the first two movements, the soul seems to be in conflict with first the body and then mind, finds transient respite through dreams in the third movement, and is finally bombarded with the fury of the outside world in the fourth movement. Real enlightenment is always just out of reach until the very end, at which point the forces of

Working with the assumption that the highly intellectual Scriabin, had a rational explanation behind each of his works and the themes within them, one can attempt to decipher meanings behind specific musical ideas in this piece. The indications given by the composer help to understand the possible imagery Scriabin intended to create, using these ideas, in each movement.

Susanna Garcia's analysis of the symbolist plot archetype in Scriabin's late piano sonata provides further insight as to the possible meaning behind certain musical gestures. In particular, the fanfare motive, the eternal feminine and the vertiginous dances.

What's more, reading pages from the *Secret Doctrine* can provide a better understanding of the philosophy behind Scriabin's compositions. Themes used from this work include, the seven principles of human existence, planes of cosmic reality, "the absolute being" and "man as microcosm."

All things considered, however, one must keep in mind, that at the time of this particular Sonata's composition, Scriabin was still in transition between the late romantic style of composing and the transcendental style apparently triggered by his encounters with

the composer's intentions may not yet have been to transport the listener to spiritual realization, like *Promethée* or *Mysteria*, he effectively represents this phenomenon through sound in Sonata No.3, Op.23.

Appendix A: Helena Blavatsky's Seven Principles of Humanity[64]

Upper Triad:

1. Atma. Pure, Universal Spirit. An emanation of the Absolute.

2. Buddhi. Spiritual Soul. The vehicle of Universal Spirit.

3. Higher Manas. Mind. Intelligence. Human, or Consciousness Soul.

Intermediate Dyad:

4. Kama Rupa. Lower Manas, or Animal Soul, the seat of animal desires and passions. Line of demarcation between the mortal and immortal elements. The agent of Will during the lifetime.

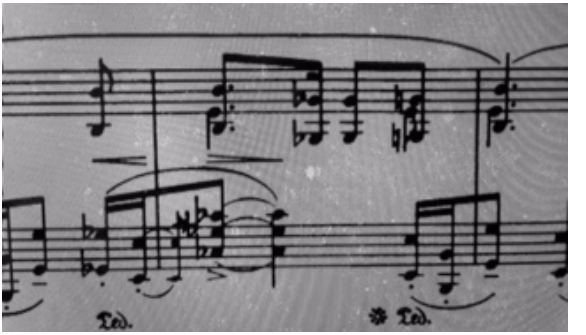
5. Linga Sharira. Astral Body (vehicle of life). Sentient soul.

Lower Dyad:

6. Prana. The Etheric Double. Life essence, vital power. Matter as Force.

7. Rupa. The Dense Body. Gross, physical matter.

Appendix B: Excerpt from Piano Sonata No.3, Op.23, II. Allegretto (dynamic markings)[65]



1. Divine (Maha-para-nirvanic) Plane
2. Monadic (Para-nirvanic) Plane
3. Spiritual (Nirvanic) Plane
4. Intuitional (Buddhic) Plane
5. Mental (Manas or Devachanic) Plane
6. Astral Plane
7. Phvsical Plane

[65] Alexander Scriabin. "Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 23." Leipzig: Edition

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Notation and Performance Practice in Beethoven: Absolute or Conditional?

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"Do we really want to talk about 'authenticity' any more?" asks Richard Taruskin in his essay, "The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past."[66] Needless to say, the subject of historically informed performance has been the focus of endless critical and scholarly discourse. In the modern sense of the term, "authentic" has been used in the Western musical world to refer to performances that use period instruments with the intention to replicate period conventions and performance practice; this approach, however, has been the source of much controversy since the 1960s. Two highly controversial notions have become increasingly prominent in the authenticity debate — "there is one ideal performance for each musical composition," and furthermore, that "the goal of the responsible performer is to renounce the delights of imagination and realize this ideal sounding as close as possible."[67] This begs the question: is there an ideal way to approach and interpret Beethoven's

[66] Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1995), 90.

piano sonatas. One of the main issues in discussing the authenticity of performance is the question of how much importance to place on the composer's original notation of the work. For the purpose of this paper, I have defined three categories of notation as articulation, tempo and ornamentation. The first of these will discuss how marks of emphasis in early piano works can be adapted and performed on the modern instrument. The subjective nature of the two remaining categories of notation, will be explored in the context of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 7 in D. For efficiency and conciseness — as ornamentation also includes mordents, turns and trills — only grace-notes will be discussed. The remainder of the paper will discuss Beethoven's own playing and possible intentions for his notations, as well as the insights of various musicologists and scholars on the topic. Through the aforementioned, it can be observed that in any given performer's interpretation of a score, often the most basic choices and the simplest local details[68], have enormous potential for affecting what is being communicated to the listener. However, rather than focusing solely on presenting an exact aural replica of the notations in the score, performers should strive for constant renewal

through the application of musical scholarship.[69] Thus, a convincing rendition of a Beethoven piano sonata is not merited by a performer's attention to the meticulous details of notation, but by applied scholarship, personal interpretation and intention.

When addressing the issue of articulation in Beethoven's piano works, it is important to consider the stark differences between the Viennese *forte piano* that Beethoven composed for and our modern instrument. The former is "capable of an especially wide range of accentuations due to quick response, and decay."[70] As it was made entirely of wood, the *forte piano* was characterized by light action, marked attacks and a wide scope of colour, simplifying the execution of interpretive subtleties between different marks of emphasis.[71] As a result, the specificity and execution of articulations captivated late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century theorists, such as Czerny and Hummel, who dedicated entire treatises

[69] Christine Logan, "Interpretation Through the Application of Music Scholarship: Reflections on Beethoven's 'Grand Sonate Pathétique' No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13, 1798-9." Paper presented at the 10th Australasian Piano Pedagogy Conference, Melbourne, Australia, July 4–8, 2011, 1.

[70] Stuart, Kathryn. "Marks of Emphasis in Beethoven Sonatas." PhD

to draw clear distinctions between articulations.[72] Changes and advances in the piano during the second half of the nineteenth century resulting in the blurring of these differentiations. On our modern instruments, due to cast-iron frames and cross-stringing, it is very difficult to differentiate between various executions of markings such as the *sforzando*, *rinforzando* and the wedge accent. Therefore, it becomes nearly impossible to qualify whether any given interpretation is adhering to Beethoven's intended articulation. It is important, however, to note that while all the theorists contribute their own valuable perspective and insight on performance conventions of the time, there was never any unanimous definition for any of these articulation markings, thus suggesting room for interpretation.[73] With this room for interpretation, however, comes the need to adapt and experiment on our modern instrument, with the aim to best replicate the effects that Beethoven specified. The *sforzando-piano*, for instance, is difficult to execute on the modern piano due to a higher volume capacity and longer decays. In fact, Malcolm Bilson has stated that "the modern piano with its rich, slowly developing tone, has no real sforzando at all as Beethoven

would have recognized it – it has only loud notes"[74]. "Speedy elimination of the resonance of the first chord by partly releasing the fingers and re-depressing the pedal" could be an approach to simulate the effect.[75] Though not always possible to replicate on the modern piano, the issue of articulation is one of importance in Beethoven's sonatas, as can be observed from the sheer abundance and specificity of his notation of marks of emphasis. Stuart's extensive research and cataloging of not only appearances, but locations and context, of Beethoven's articulations in his sonatas further support the notion that his markings offer significant clues to the nature and emotional content of his music.[76] Needless to say, notations of such importance merits attention from the performer and encourages experimentation, innovation and personal interpretation to best adapt the intended effects to the modern piano.

Certain aspects, other than articulation, of a score are often subject to different interpretations – of note, is the tempo marking, when present. Tempo choices and relationships possess a

[74] Logan, "Interpretation Through the Application of Music Scholarship,"13.

fundamental role as "a determinant of musical expression."[77] Questions regarding this aspect of performance of Beethoven's works "have long concerned conductors and performers . . . vex[ing] musicologists and theorists."[78] While Beethoven is generally very explicit and particular with metronome markings on his scores, tasteful variations in tempo are not out of question when one has examined the score and applied both musicianship and common sense. First, it is important to note the sheer improbability that a performer will begin and maintain the exact speed indicated for the entirety of the piece; thus, a metronome marking informs players of the neighbour of the speed, rather than the absolute speed.[79] Furthermore, while Beethoven meticulously chose metronome markings based on structure, formal design and compositional elements, these markings are also rooted in intended character and expressivity[80] –both of which are subjective to an extent. Though it is established that Beethoven was particular with his metronome markings, there are instances of compositions that do not have them–

[77] Levy, "Interpreting Beethoven," 36.
[78] Levy, "Interpreting Beethoven," 36.
[79] Levy, "Interpreting Beethoven," 36.
[80] Thomas Y. Levin, "Integral Interpretation: Introductory Notes to

for instance, in his string trios.[81] This further supports the notion that tempo choice is instinctual and that an informed and tasteful performer will ensure a rendition at an appropriate speed. Rather than conveying an absolute tempo, Beethoven's markings "have more to do with general notions of expressivity [and] the sturdiness of performance traditions."[82] Coupled with with "individual analytic and critical judgements about structure and shape,"[83] tempo choice can be subjective to an extent without compromising adherence to the composer's intentions.

While a performer's tempo choice is widely viewed as the most obvious – at times, the crucial – element of interpretation, it is important to also consider their choices on a smaller scale. An issue that has arisen in recent discussions of authentic performance has been ornamentation execution, especially when there is notational ambiguity and discrepancies between editions. In Andras Schiff's lecture recital on Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 7 in D, he address measures 53 to 55, where the melody of the second subject is written as a grace note leading to a quarter note. Beethoven's choice of

[81] Levin, "Integral Interpretation," 83.

notation has given rise to a general discrepancy between playing it as a short acciacatura, or as a long appoggiatura (See Appendix Figures 2-7). The inconsistency in notation between editions – quavers versus crossed quavers – certainly prevents clarification. Schiff reasons, "the notation of this theme which many pianists play, in my opinion, not right, [as] four equal semi-quavers . . . this is nonsense because Beethoven wrote a grace note . . . had he wanted four semi-quavers he would have written four semi-quavers."[84] Contrary to Schiff's perspective, there is ample evidence for the execution for a long appoggiatura in that particular context. Herscovitch, in his PhD dissertation quotes Paul Mies as suggesting that long appoggiaturas are to be found in all of Beethoven's early works, a period that includes this particular sonata, and that only short acciacaturas are to be played for later works.[85] Moreover, the long appoggiatura is recommended Czerny himself, who heard Beethoven performing his own works frequently.[86] To answer the question of why Beethoven

[84] "Andras Schiff Lecture Recital: Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 10 no. 3," [n.d.], audio clip, accessed Nov 18, 2015, the Guardian,
[85] Daniel Herscovitch,"Ornamentation in the Piano Music of Beethoven."

did not just write out "four equal semi-quavers,"[87] one must delve into performance traditions at the time the work was composed. It was conventional at the time for musicians to add ornamentations when performing a piece; according to Leopold Mozart, had the long appoggiatura been written out instead of as a grace-note, there is a threat that the performer could have added an ornament on top of that, which would have produced an absurd effect.[88] Despite this, performances utilizing short acciacaturas still exist and are regarded as both historically informed and musical.

To observe the effects of tempo and ornamentation choice in Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 7 in D, a table cataloguing the two features of interest was created based on recordings by sixteen world-renowned pianists (See Appendix Figure 1). The tempo noted in the table was the initial tempo taken by the performer up until the first fermata. As well, the execution of the grace-notes starting at measure 53 has been noted, either as short acciacatura or long appogiatura. The aim of the table is to present a sampling of possible interpretations, given the individual choices made by performers

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incorporating musical scholarship with analysis, preference and intent. First, all of the recordings examined are convincing and informed renditions, regardless of tempo or ornamentation choice. This is supported by Lawson's observation that notation can be regarded as more of a guideline, rather than the absolute rule – the source of "raw, but lifeless material" that needs to be reinvented by the performer.[89] Furthermore, the difference between the slowest tempo taken and the fastest is 34 beats per minute for each half note, with only Valentina Lisitsa's rendition classifying as Presto given Beethoven's marking. Regarding the grace-note in the second theme, like tempo choice, there was no observable consensus. While most of the performers played the long appoggiatura, four played them as short acciacaturas. In my personal experience with the piece, I personally prefer the long appoggiatura, while my professor prefers the opposite; however, backed with musicianship and scholarship, we mutually respect each other's opinions as long as the result is convincing.

[89] Colin Lawson, Review of *The Notation Is Not the Music: Reflections*

Finally, it is important to consider Beethoven himself as, perhaps, it will give us clues on how to interpret his notations – as guidelines or absolute rules. Based on various records of Beethoven's playing, writing and performance traditions at the time, there seems to be evidence that his notations are the former. By all accounts, Beethoven was known to have played in a rough and free manner, with no evidence of being constrained by the notations that he himself indicated.[90] Furthermore, there are written records in which Beethoven warns of prosaic interpretations of his works.[91] More importantly, one must remember that Beethoven composed during a time where improvisation was traditional and that "the desire to write down music as precisely as possible" culminated only "in the twentieth century" – with composers such as Stravinsky and Schoenberg.[92] This further supports the case of subjectivity and room for interpretation when discussing notation in Beethoven's keyboard works.

[90] Michael John Redshaw, "Characteristic Articulation in Beethoven's Piano Music: A Performer's Approach." PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1990, 7.

[91]

A convincing rendition of a Beethoven piano sonata is not determined by a performer's strict adherence to the meticulous details of notation, but through applied scholarship, personal interpretation and intention. This is evidenced by the subjective nature of the experimentation and innovation required to execute Beethoven's marks of emphasis on the modern piano. Moreover, various aspects in the notation of a score can be interpreted in a myriad of ways – as discussed, variations in tempo and ornament execution are unavoidable. While metronome and tempo markings are relative [93], there are several to many various approaches possible for the latter. Both cases are indicative of informed and tasteful liberties that can be taken by performers. The catalogue of 16 renditions of Beethoven's Op. 10 no. 3 played by world-renowned artists shows that the tempo and ornamentation choices can vary greatly without compromising the quality and integrity of the performance. Lastly, accounts of Beethoven's playing and teachings, as well as traditions at the time of the piece's composition, show that strict adherence to notation is secondary to musical instinct and adventure, given that the performer is historically informed and

inspired. Beethoven sonatas should not be regarded as a musical work "[that] is regarded as something like the class of performances that conform to a certain score."[28] There is a resulting "unreasonably heavy burden" placed on notation, effectively described "as the connecting bridge between the score and the performance itself."[94] This, in turn, prompts the performer to question "the amount of interpretation that is actually allowed in one's attempt to realize a composition."[95] An effective metaphor can be drawn from this notion, comparing "the composer's idea of the music and the performer's experience to two ends of an hour-glass," with "the music [being] forced to pass wrongly and degradingly through the funnel of notation."[96]

To conclude, the responsibility of the performer is not to reproduce the ever-elusive ideal sound as close a possible, but to respect framework of notation while allowing the breathing, phrasing and expressivity that brings a work to life. As Kuijken poignantly remarks, "informed performance can be captivating; all we can

[94] Bengt Edlund, "On Scores and Works of Music: Interpretation and Identity" *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996), 367.

[95]

aspire to do is fall reasonably well within the limits of probability and good taste."[97] The resulting variability in interpretation, while able to illicit infinite reactions from critics and audience members, provides depth and insight to the performance, making repeat encounters with the "'same' work not only possible, but rewarding[98] While only articulation, tempo and ornamentation were discussed briefly in this paper, there are a plenthora of others components of Classical performance – rhythm and phrasing, for example. A performer would benefit from isolating these components – reflect, study and integrate them – while maintaining a sense of challenge and adventure. Curiousity, or as Taruskin describes – "receptivity to new ideas and love of experiment"[99] – as a performer is of the essence. He encourages performers to "not be afraid to acknowledge our own presence in our work and to accept it," using the argument that "[modern performers] impose [their] esthetic on Bach no less than did Liszt, Busoni or even Stokowski."[100] One should keep this

[97] Lawson, "Review," 1.
[98] Levy, "Interpreting Beethoven," 54.
[99] Richard Taruskin, "On Letting the Music Speak for Itself: Some Reflections on Musicology and Performance" *The Journal of Musicology* 1

notion in mind when faced with the task of interpreting a score; often the most basic choices and the simplest local details[101] have enormous potential for affecting what is being communicated to the listener. However, rather than focusing solely on presenting the meticulous details of notation, performers should strive for constant renewal through the application of musical scholarship.[102] Thus, a convincing and inspired rendition of a Beethoven piano sonata is not merited by a performer's strict adherence to his notations, but by applied scholarship, personal interpretation and intention.

[101] Levy, "Interpreting Beethoven," 33.

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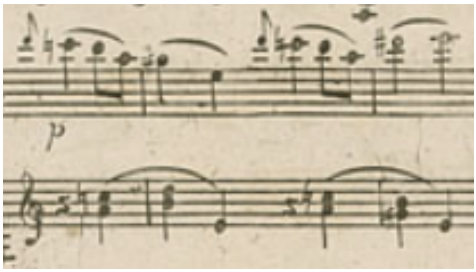
APPENDIX

Artist	Tempo	Long or sho
Martha Argerich	160	long
Claudio Arrau	160	short
Daniel Barenboim	146	long
Alfred Brendel	138	long
Emil Gilels	145	short
Richard Goode	148	long
Vladimir Horowitz	136	long
Wilhelm Kempff	140	long
rene Koblar	154	long
Valentina Lisitsa	164	long
Murray Perahia	156	long
Sviatoslav Richter	140	short
András Schiff	130	short
Artur Schnabel	155	long
Grigory Sokolov	152	long
Rebecca Yu	145	long
Eric Zuber	164	long

Figure 1. Table depicts, in alphabetical order, the tempo choice and grace-note length in 16 different recordings of Beethoven's Op. 10 no. 3 played by world-class pianists. I have included myself as I am currently studying this piece. The tempo was measured estimated as accurately as possible only based on the initial tempo taken for the first eight measure, as some of the artists' tempo would change quite significantly from section to section. The execution of the were classified as short if it was played as an acciaccatura and long, if played as an appoggiatura. Instead of footnoting the complete citation of all the recordings, the sources consulted are listed in the bibliography by artist name.



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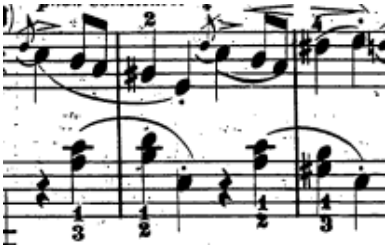

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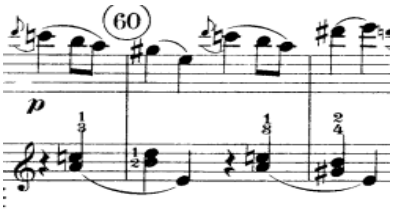

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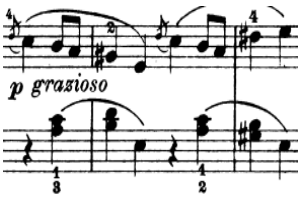

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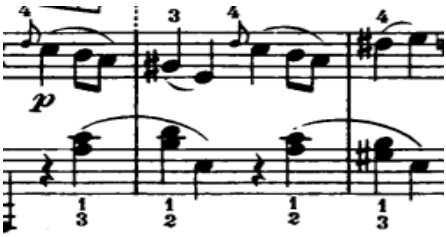

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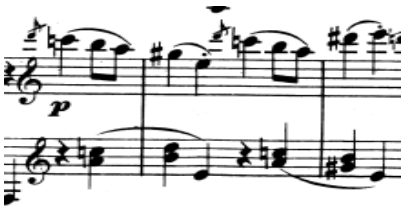

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