

TOWARDS A PERSONAL INTERPRETATION OF BEETHOVEN'S PIANO SONATA
IN E MAJOR, OP.109

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses some of the intersections between the activities of an instinctive performing artist with those of a traditional musicologist. This is in line with a growing worldwide trend which views the examination of the process of preparation leading towards a performance as a form of research. The first chapter of this study reviews some of the literature on the approach I have adopted in preparing a performance of one of the great piano sonatas from Beethoven's late period of composition, the Sonata in E major, Op.109. This work forms the centrepiece of the final examination recital presented as part of the requirements for the PhD degree in performance. The performance itself will thus be the culmination of the investigations presented in this study. Each of the central chapters of this study contains an analysis of various aspects of form and style in the Sonata, but the main focus is an analysis of the recorded performances of the work by eight eminent pianists. The interpretive issues raised by the various analyses are discussed, and the conclusions distilled into a preferred personal interpretation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: FIRST MOVEMENT	27
CHAPTER THREE: SECOND MOVEMENT	50
CHAPTER FOUR: THIRD MOVEMENT	68
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	91
Bibliography	110
Discography	117

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.

It is to be expected, in the case of a highly regarded, and much discussed composer such as Beethoven, that many scholarly articles and books have been penned over the years which concern themselves with various aspects of his *oeuvre*. However, it is easy to observe that very few of these studies are written from the point of view of the interpretive performer; mostly they are concerned with discussing or analyzing the actual music itself, and offer no explicit insights into matters of interpretation, or the realization of a performance. In recent years however, a small but growing number of studies of musical performance have emerged, which set out to describe in scholarly fashion, the process which performers undertake when they prepare a work for performance. With the score taken for granted as the foundation upon which a great performer can build a compelling realization, a unique reading which reveals much of his or her individual style and voice can result. The process which the artist has to go through to prepare a work of difficulty and stature is in itself an analytical one, requiring much attention to infinitesimal detail, although this truth has not been fully recognized in musicological circles until comparatively recently.

For many years it would seem as if the interpretative performer and the musicologist occupied different worlds. Performers often gave little credence to academic writings about the works they were performing, but rather relied on an instinctive approach, assisted by often vaguely remembered ideas about how a composer such as Mozart should be played. A possible reason for this is that performers spend such a great deal of their time perfecting the technical aspects of a work, in addition to trying to find ways to express their own individuality in performance, that perhaps they lose sight of other plausible but less instinctive ways of arriving at a meaningful interpretation. In today's performance arena it is fair to say that a performer is expected to be informed on aspects of authenticity and other pertinent information which all goes into the melting pot of analysis towards a cohesive interpretation. In addition to being considered widely read, a performer also needs to listen to a variety of performances, both live and recorded, over many years, so that their characteristics can take shape in his or her mind and contribute to the decisions made later as an interpreter when coming of age and starting to take on the great compositions for their chosen instrument.

The act of performance in public, and its hypnotic effect on an audience have not interested scholars until comparatively recently, but several attempts have now been made to lift the veil of mystery by those who have set out to reveal the preparation process in detail, coupled with the psychology of a listener's reaction. This is a very ephemeral concept, if one understands that a musical work is not a material art like a painting, and so it is difficult to ascertain whether or not any performance conforms wholly to the composer's original intentions. This leads to the question as to the actual role of the interpreter and the validity of what he or she does, if one recalls that the printed score is nothing more than notes on a page until it is brought to life. We have tantalizingly little idea how Beethoven would have played his own works, or indeed what early nineteenth-century performances may have sounded like. We have some contemporary reports of performances, but they are not really satisfactory in providing us with real evidence or allowing us to hear the actual style of playing adopted by the composer/performer. We only have the printed score, but this is open to many contrasting but nevertheless valid readings. Bearing this in mind, that the interpretation of the original musical work is not easily defined, one is tempted to wonder whether endless theorizing about it is beneficial. This last deduction would be characteristic of instinctive performers who are often not willing to look beyond the actual printed notes of the score in order to find deeper layers of significance which could help them in challenging deeply entrenched ideas on the road to a fresh interpretation. It is a desire to progress beyond the superficially instinctive approach which has prompted me to commence the present study.

Most Beethoven scholars and performers would agree that the Sonata in E major, Op.109 is one of his most interesting and original works for solo piano. Indeed, his last five sonatas represent the very pinnacle of pianistic composition, and thus it is natural that any performer aspires to tackle these works. Op.109 has always interested me due to its revolutionary free style of composition, at a time when the strict rules of sonata form were being adhered to slavishly by many lesser composers. It is this unorthodox compositional style which allows many differing interpretative approaches, and which has always invited comment. This is why I have selected it for this particular study. I have been concerned with the piano works of Beethoven since the beginning of my performing career in 1982. The Concerto No. 2 was chosen by my teacher Isabella Stengel to be performed at my debut with the KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic, and since then I have performed all the concerti except No. 5, many of the sonatas, and almost all the chamber works. I first performed Op.109 in 1987 but have not had

an opportunity to repeat the performance again in the intervening years. It has been most rewarding discovering it afresh, and using an academic framework provided by the selected scholarly works, rather than a purely instinctive approach, in preparing the activities towards the present study.

My Introduction to this thesis will consist chiefly of a description of the work of some of the chief protagonists in the study of performance, and their various philosophies. These ideas will then be applied movement by movement to the Sonata, Op. 109, combined with a structural analysis of the music in the following three chapters. A large part of each of these chapters will consist of the inclusion of a discussion of the interpretations of the work by eight eminent pianists who committed their readings to disc between 1934 and 1999, thus giving an idea not only of the range of individual differences between performers, but also of the change of emphasis of the style of interpretation over a period of some sixty years. These investigations will demonstrate the wide variety of possibilities of performance that do exist, and the distillation into a preferred personal interpretation which will hopefully be evident in my performance, will be the culmination of this study.

As noted above, the academic approach to performance as research is fairly new but is increasing steadily, with a growing body of scholars who are investigating it. Julian Hellaby is a performer who, in his book *Reading Musical Interpretation* (2009), has created a significant model for the understanding of a performance from a listener's point of view, but also a framework that a performer can use to arrive at a more multi-layered interpretation of the work being performed. More importantly, this framework can also be used to give the listener or fellow interpreter a way of describing and comparing recorded performances, and it is this aspect which pertains particularly to the study which I am undertaking. He poses interesting challenges in the book, asking how it is possible for a performance to be true to the wishes of a composer of many centuries ago (Hellaby 2009: 7-8), and suggests that while we have the text which should be relied on, that there are many other facets which come into play to create the kind of performance which exerts a compelling effect on its audience. He says that traditionally the score has been of paramount importance in an artist's consideration towards an interpretation, but that nowadays the performance is apt to be assessed on its own terms as it is now appreciated that a performance results in the 'imposition' of an artist's will

on the original score. In the field of traditional scholarly research, the voice of the performer as academician has not been heard. Theorists have taken it upon themselves to speak about performers in their work, perhaps because many performers feel not entirely capable of academic writing or the delivery of academic papers at conferences, being somewhat disadvantaged in this area compared to scholars and theorists, or perhaps because they have no real interest in this field, preferring to concentrate rather on their concertizing activities.

Part of the growing research in this field has been an attempt to demystify the art of performance, which has not seriously been tackled as a research subject before. Hellaby refers to several earlier studies, for example Small (1998), Goehr (1992), Stein (1962) and Berry (1989), and poses the question whether these studies are prompted by a desire to understand the effect of the performance, or whether the focus is on the less immediately useful activity of theorizing about the art of performance. Music is not a material art, so it is difficult to define exactly, as is our desire to know whether a chosen performance conforms to the wishes of a long dead composer. How can an audience be certain that they are hearing a pristine version of a work without several layers of a performer's will? The audience needs to trust the integrity of the performer, who has spent many months or years in the study of the music he or she performs. In relation to this, Hellaby refers often to a concept of *Texttreue* as being the foundation of a performer's investigations (2009: 5-6). This is a German term which translates as fidelity to the text. *Texttreue* is admirable in a performance, but by itself it is not enough in that it omits the more spiritual or metaphysical side to the performance which is defined with difficulty. Listeners will need to be score readers if they are to assess and ascertain for themselves whether *Texttreue* is a characteristic of the performer. Most audience members will not have such abilities and so will place their trust in the integrity of the performer. Generally, they also will not be particularly concerned about the performer's fidelity to the score. Their reaction will often be prompted by purely emotional markers such as the response to the brilliance of the performer's technique, for example. The performance that they are listening to will be one possible permutation of a whole range of other performances or recordings of the same work which have taken place since its composition. This proves that even after applying *Texttreue* there are so many different ways of playing the same piece; an idea which I intend to pursue in the main body of this study, with the comparison of eight eminent and trustworthy interpretations of the same work.

Apart from textual fidelity, the analytical approach is another method that can be applied to the score by the performer towards an interpretation (Hellaby 2009: 6). I am referring here to the brand of analysis which implies an emphasis on the purely textual elements of a composition which can be useful, but if too rigidly applied it can result in a certain sterility and lack of freedom, much like the mechanical observance of all the markings in the text. It can also be problematic in that if the listener's and performer's ideas are vastly different, the listener will have the tendency to condemn the whole interpretation. The average listener and concertgoer certainly will not be interested in analyzing a performance or reading the score- I am referring to the educated listener here. So, for this approach to work, the delineation of formal analysis needs to be clearly applied by the performer, coupled with a hopefully less dogmatic response by listeners and reviewers. One of the interpretations of the Sonata, Op.109 that I will discuss later has a negative impression on myself the listener. I find that the interpretative choices he makes on the music raises questions but am willing to admit that it would be wrong to condemn the entire performance outright. The subjective aspect of performance and a listener's response is a marked feature of the art of performing.

If performers spend much of their lives from an early age questioning and refining their interpretations, then we can expect a high degree of integrity from such artists. They will be true to their convictions and the vision they have for each piece being prepared for public performance. These convictions and also the historical or stylistic research which has been done, will be allied to the personality which the artist already possesses, to create an interpretation which is unique. By way of vivid illustration of this, I would like to cite the example of a 1986 occurrence, when I remember witnessing a set of three performances at the Unisa International Piano Competition in Pretoria. All three performers played Schumann's *Kreisleriana* consecutively, as this was a popular choice for the extended third round of the competition. Despite the obvious *Texttreue* which was in evidence throughout all three performances, the personalities of the performers resulted in completely different readings, with varying degrees of expressivity, as well as vastly different *tempi* and articulation etc. Because these were all artists of great integrity, all the interpretations were valid and appreciated by the audience. "It is evident that personality is an absolute essential for any real interpretation. When Anton Rubinstein plays us the *Sonata appassionata* by Beethoven, he gives us not merely Beethoven, but also himself, and so gives us Beethoven absolutely---Beethoven reinterpreted through a rich artistic nature, and made vivid and

wonderful to us by a new and intense personality” (Oscar Wilde, quoted in Hellaby 2009: 13).

Hellaby suggests that apart from an interpretation resulting from the artistic decisions made by a performer, there are other factors such as genre, compositional and notational style of the composer as well as the performance traditions and style of the era, which all go towards contributing to the overall conception of the artist. He discusses what he calls an Empirical Approach (Hellaby 2009: 22-24), being the possibility of arriving at an interpretation based on experience, rather than the excessive theorizing, which he feels has clouded our study of musical works during the first half of the twentieth century. He expresses the hope that this new trend of performance-based research may help in moving away from what he calls a “resistance to empiricism due to excessive theorizing” (Hellaby 2009: 23). Continuing in this vein, he remarks that if too much attention is paid to rigid forms of *Texttreue*, the less scope is left open for individuality in the interpretation. To illustrate this, he comments on the extreme Bach readings of the pianist Glenn Gould, which sometimes depart markedly from the printed score, but which nevertheless remain compelling for an audience (Hellaby 2009: 27, 73-74).

One of the most interesting aspects of Hellaby’s approach is his assertion that performers have much more at their disposal to draw upon than the mere printed page. He argues for example that the term *Allegro* has many different nuances, depending on the qualifying term which follows, such as *maestoso* or *con brio*, but that no educated performer would ever assume that it should imply a slow performance. However it may have the dotted rhythm of, for example a *siciliano*, and in that case the spirit of that dance form would guide the performer towards selecting an appropriate *tempo* (Hellaby 2009: 28). In addition there is a large number of what he calls ‘informants’ which can be drawn upon towards enhancing various aspects of his performance (Hellaby 2009: 29-48). They can also be used to characterize performances, and their use in the analysis of recordings will be discussed further below. The informants can be set out as follows:

1. ERA OR STYLE.

The changing fashions of musical performance which have occurred throughout musical history but those of the last 100 years which are more appropriate to our own era, can all be studied and if valid, applied to one's own performance. Nowadays it is self-evident that a performer's training will have included a lot of time spent increasing one's awareness of stylistic considerations and their application to a given era of musical history. While there may be certain limited differences in understanding of this, a fair degree of uniform stylistic approach to interpretation can reasonably be expected. The consideration of the performing style of any given era is a vast subject, particularly in the field of Baroque music, where the traditional lack of *tempo* indications, amongst other considerations, is apt to create a wider variety of interpretative questions which have resulted in such markedly differing ways of playing this music in the last thirty years. The Romantic excesses indulged by such conductors as Karl Richter and Otto Klemperer in the 1960s and 70s, were rejected by the advancing period instrument movement in the 1980s, and the fashion is changing yet again at present with a resurgence of interest in the earlier recordings. The performer needs to know the basic elements of the performing styles of the 18th to 20th centuries, and also needs to study the recordings of a wide variety of earlier and contemporary artists in order to assist him in reaching an informed decision, which may be a compromise between historical and contemporary approaches.

2. AUTHORSHIP.

In all the great composers' works, many idiosyncrasies of composition may be observed, and recognized as their signature of authorship, in much the same way as a painter's techniques make their works unmistakable, or the characteristic turns of phrase of an author such as Charles Dickens rapidly identify his work to the initiated. These may be oft-used harmonic or rhythmic patterns, or certain left hand figurations, preferred structural formations of composition, typical timbres which denote authorship, etc. Recognizing these compositional traits can inform the performer towards a more authentic interpretation. Such elements comprise a unique compositional identity which may carry its own interpretive implications. The performer's idea of a "Beethoven style" may influence certain interpretive decisions, entirely different from those of a "Liszt style." Hellaby then goes on to explain that the mere mention of a composer's name will evoke certain ideas in our minds which can influence our approach to performing these works. The name Liszt conjures up imaginings of octaves and

other fiendish figurations, implying an approach based on the style of the 19th-century Romantic virtuoso.

3. TRADITION.

This is one of the most important ways that a performer can discover information pertinent to his or her decisions when arriving at an interpretation. Often years of tradition have changed the way we play certain pieces, partly because a style of performance becomes established and influences subsequent performers, and partly due to the connotations they might have assumed over the years. Two examples spring readily to mind; firstly that of the “Moonlight” sonata by Beethoven. The composer may or may not have imagined nocturnal landscapes when composing the first movement of his Op.27 no. 1, but the image is seared into our imaginations after years of the nickname being applied to it. This has coloured many interpretations of the movement, which may have assumed an entirely different character and a faster *tempo* had not that particular sobriquet been attached to it. Similarly, the Nimrod variation from Elgar’s *Enigma Variations* is now generally played much slower than its composer envisaged. We know this from an early recorded performance made in 1924 which is entirely of a different character than is customary today. Elgar could not have anticipated the use of his Nimrod variation for solemn and dignified ceremonial occasions, which has resulted in a far more spacious reading than he originally would have envisaged. The Victorian tradition of performance presented works such as Handel’s *Messiah* with huge orchestral and choral forces. This tradition was the norm until the 1980s; and was only eclipsed by the historically informed “original instrument” performance movement, which regarded the Victorian tradition as inappropriate for works emanating from the Baroque era.

4. GENRE.

The very name of the type of work may also have certain associations for the performer. The very mention of the word ‘symphony’ might evoke the names of composers such as Haydn, Mahler or Bruckner who were renowned for their works in this genre. If he or she is a pianist, they will doubtless think differently about the various compositional genres featuring their instrument. If approaching an intermezzo, prelude or impromptu they will certainly accept that the interpretative and technical challenges of those pieces will be considerably less demanding than if a larger scale work such as a concerto or sonata were to be undertaken. It stands to reason that approaching a shorter piece such as a Schubert impromptu will require a smaller-scaled effort than will preparing a performance of Prokofiev’s Concerto no. 3, and these associations will be formed in their minds before even sitting down at the piano to

commence this study. What would ultimately be more important though would be considering the characteristics peculiar to the particular genre that is being prepared, a process that will be necessary during the work on the selected piece. For example, if preparing a rhapsody, the artist will doubtless be inclined to focus on the musical freedom inherent in this type of composition, as opposed to a more formal approach featuring balance and order which one normally associates with a sonata, or other works of a more structured nature. The connotations implied by the very genre will therefore lead the interpreter to approach the works differently, and thereby arrive at an appropriate interpretation.

5. TOPIC.

In relation to this informant, Hellaby argues that an interpretation can be influenced by certain extra-musical aspects which may be present in the spirit of the music selected for performance. Here he refers frequently to the earlier study of Leonard Ratner, who was a pioneer in revealing this concept of topics in Baroque music. He quotes Ratner: "From its contact with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt and the life of the lower classes, music in the early 18th century developed a thesaurus of characteristic figures, which formed a rich legacy for classic composers. Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavour. They are designated here as *topics* – subjects for musical discourse" (Hellaby 2009: 36). So this era could perhaps be seen to have given birth to the idea of extra-musical influences on musical composition which were drawn on by composers, and feature in their works. The most obvious example is the Baroque suite, which is comprised of many contemporary dance forms which were in use across all levels of society. The characteristics of these dances may be found having influenced composers right up to the 19th century, and could be drawn upon if it occurs to the performer that the piece of music that he is performing possesses some of these characteristics. So even if a piece does not feature the word *Gigue* in its title, it may still contain the connotations of one, and so therefore the interpretation will be informed accordingly.

6. TOPICAL MODE.

Here, performance qualifiers which appeal to the response of the imagination, (*maestoso*, *dolce*, *con fuoco*) and the emotions (*espressivo*, *con passione*), rather than instructing the performer with regards to more cerebral aspects of *tempo* or articulation or pedalling, are of concern. Use of this informant relies on the imagination rather than applying objective facts to be effective. Many topics can be hidden and not immediately obvious. This would appear

to be more prevalent in the case of so-called absolute music, or music without a definite programme such as a Beethoven piano sonata. Nevertheless the spirit of the music can supply performers with imagined topics which they can then use to inform their interpretations. Proposed examples of these pertaining to Op.109 will be discussed in the relevant chapters.

7. CHARACTERIZER.

Here the imagination is also called on to enlarge on the music's idiosyncrasies of character in order to inform an interpretation. Distinctive musical features such as unique use of harmonic devices, rhythmical features, etc. which give a passage of music its individual character can be called on to play an important role. The performer will search beyond the characteristics of the music in order to come up with a result which is informed by them. This informant is difficult to define because it relies on an individual's timing and placement of them within his performance of a work, the act of which becomes the characterizer. The artist's imagination is therefore most important here in the final realization, although of course many hours of analytical thought have gone into the process. Schopenhauer sees the imagination as "extending the intellectual horizon both in quality and quantity beyond the objects which present themselves" (Hellaby 2009: 40).

8. TEMPO.

Of all the informants this is perhaps the most important of all, because different *tempi* can completely change the character of the work and an inappropriate *tempo* can even undermine the integrity of the original composition, and can leave an audience unmoved. Often a *tempo* indication can be very vague or otherwise open to interpretation, as we will see clearly with regard to Op. 109. Just as an example, the first movement is marked *vivace* but also has a different character more in keeping with its lyrical nature. The artist will need to reconcile both elements in his performance. His stylistic intuition also comes into play here in making his selection, which goes a long way to explain why many pianists play the same music at vastly different *tempi* despite the same marking in the score.

9. DURATION MANIPULATOR.

Even though the player may have decided on a *tempo*, it is unlikely to be metronomic through the movement. Apart from the *tempo*, other devices written into the composition such as *ritardandi* and *rubato* started to appear in post-Baroque music. *Rubato* is an expressive device occurring in music chiefly of the Romantic era. It is seldom indicated in the score and yet it is traditionally applied to highlight certain expressive sections of a composition, and

thereby create more interest for the listener. Beethoven's pupil Czerny wrote: "we must consider it as a rule always to play each piece of music.... in the time prescribed by the author, and first fixed upon by the player. But... there occurs in almost every line, some notes or passages where a small and often imperceptible relaxation of the movement is necessary, to embellish the expression, and to increase the interest" (Hellaby 2009: 43). Chopin used a free *rubato* in the right hand passages of his works, usually with the left hand remaining regular and not deviating from the composed rhythm. Performers can use these techniques to add layers of their own expression to an interpretation, in order to produce a result often conspicuously different from that of their peers.

10. SONIC MODERATOR.

The composer's instructions such as *forte* or *staccato* have become, as a result of such repeated use over the centuries in the language of piano playing, aspects which performers can aspire to perfect, and which audiences can learn to recognize as intrinsically valuable components of a performance. The dynamics of a composition can also be used by the performer to achieve effects which can engross the listener, and indeed, even where not specifically marked, he will have to undergo the decision making process towards achieving delineated dynamics and articulation. An audience member may exclaim: "Hasn't he got the most wonderful *fortissimo*?" This powerful sound may excite a listener, or his *staccato* playing may suggest extra-musical activities such as dancing, or fairies, to the listener. The ability of the performer to elicit such reactions from a listener implies that he or she is in possession of a solid technique, able to turn technical feats into expressions with connotations. The performer's physical attributes also come into play in these considerations: a large sound may be the product of a large physique or a large hand, which may be more proficient at mastering large chordal *fortissimos* rather than delicate ethereal Chopinesque evocations.

Hellaby also refers to an earlier book edited by John Rink entitled *Musical Performance, A Guide to Understanding* (2002). Rink's own article in the book, "Analysis and (or) performance", is an important discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of analysis, a concept which is not generally popular amongst performers. Whenever the term 'analysis' is applied to musical performance, it risk eliciting confusion at best, or controversy at worst. One school of thought holds that everything presented by the artist is actually instinctive and

intuitive, and as Hellaby has remarked, subject to the personal convictions of the performer. As worthy as this approach may be, many great performers will concede that it is not possible to achieve a deeper understanding of the great composers unless some kind of intellectual analysis, coupled with theoretically informed knowledge is applied. This process of evaluation and decision-making can be said to be an analytical one.

Since 1985 there has been an increasing body of literature emerging which deals with the analytical versus the intuitive approach. Rink mentions certain studies undertaken to illustrate the various ways that different personalities will reach decisions about interpretation. He mentions that usually the intuitive performer comes off second-best in such an exercise, because the analyst is usually able to articulate more authoritatively, and usually would have the upper hand in any kind of dialogue. Despite this, the intuitive school has a following, claiming that there is no single ideal that can be dictated by analytical forays into the music. It is the communication of the art which is paramount. The reverse is claimed by the pro-analysis camp, who claim that flawed interpretations will follow unless performers are schooled in the art of formal analysis (Rink 2002: 35). He thus proposes that all performers are continually occupied with a process of analysis, but of a different kind than that which can be found in normal scholarly analyses (Rink 2002: 36). He describes this as “an integral part of the performing process.” He says that instead of imposing an independent procedure on the score, the performer is involved with how to project and communicate the “shape” of the music as opposed to the analytical structure. He or she will also bring to bear a considerable wealth of experience and practical knowledge on the choice of interpretation. The intuition that many writers reject, need not be some haphazard approach lacking form or discipline, but relying on many informants (echoes of Hellaby again) which will result in a thorough, well thought out interpretation. Rink has thus coined the term ‘informed intuition’ to help explain this less rigorous approach (Rink 2002: 36).

Another useful article in the same collection, is one by Stefan Reid entitled “Preparing for performance” (Reid 2002: 102). This sets out to explain the process which an artist must undertake on the road towards conceiving an interpretation. Performers communicate to their audiences using the parameters which together create expression, namely timing, articulation, timbre and phrasing, amongst others. All performers have a difficult task in negotiating the

need to respect the score, and the desire to express their own creative ideas and insights. Every player will have his or her own ideas of aesthetics, and it is therefore a highly subjective procedure, with the protagonists being resistant to recommendations that are prescriptive. If one does some investigation into the development of the technical aspects of performance, one finds that the instructions are much more unvarying and less contentious than any similar writings on the art of interpretation. This author, Stefan Reid, advocates listening frequently to the performance of others as a means of developing one's interpretative skill (Reid 2002: 106). He argues that this is more beneficial than any instruction. Expressive techniques are passed on from one generation to another through listening, which explains why the greatest musicians are passionate about hearing the performances of other interpreters. If one is an instrumentalist, he argues, there can be no greater teacher of expression than listening to performances by great singers. He quotes the Hungarian pianist Gyorgy Sandor: "We can learn much from listening to, and watching good singers, who breathe and phrase music with more freedom and spontaneity than any instrumentalist." This echoes a statement made 200 years earlier by C.P.E. Bach who proposed that instrumentalists should sing melodies because "this way of learning is of far greater value than the reading of voluminous tomes or listening to learned discourses" (Reid 2002: 107).

This had exceptional resonance for myself as a developing artist, because my teacher advised me to listen to the recordings of Maria Callas, which instigated a lifelong interest in the art of singing and in vocal repertoire, later developing into one of the chief areas of activity of my career, that of the accompanist. This also contributed incalculably to the creation of a *cantabile* tone when interpreting a sustained line in a piano composition. This process of listening to a wide range of music over many years will doubtless enrich what Rink describes as "informed intuition" mentioned above. Reid also focuses on this aspect of subconscious immersion in the repertoire through listening, which permeates into the artist's working methods, which in turn evolve over many years (Reid 2002: 109). It would be fair to say that I have learned an inestimable amount from listening to recordings during the course of my career, and such observances have no doubt contributed in many ways to the distillation of my interpretations. It is no coincidence that the largest proportion of this study is given over to the description of recorded performances. The two most important studies in the field of

'recordings as evidence' are those by Hellaby, and an article by Peter Johnson, also in the book edited by Rink, entitled "The legacy of recordings."

Recordings have become such a large part of our daily lives that we have become used to accepting them in lieu of a live performance. The fact that the physical presence of the artist is lacking does not seem to worry us; and we become spoiled by listening to note perfect performances which are very difficult to replicate live. What the recording is so effective in doing is to capture the voice of the great artist with all its idiosyncrasies, and present that to us in perpetuity. That explains why recording companies for the most part market their recordings by way of the artist, not the works performed. Recordings give fuel to the mystique of the artist, because there is no transformation such as that which occurs at the end of a performance, when artists stand up from their instruments, and their humanity is restored as they take their applause. When we listen to a recording, the artist remains magisterial and mysterious (Johnson 2002: 197).

Peter Johnson remarks how little musicological study has been done of recordings until fairly recently, and he addresses his chapter to the practicing performer who will benefit most from the study of recordings as evidence (Johnson 2002: 198). He feels it necessary that performers should understand a brief history of technology, as this will most often influence what we hear on a recording. So from 1900 to 1925 the prevailing technology was the acoustically recorded shellac disc, which was superseded by the electrically recorded shellac which lasted until 1954. The first vinyl LP appeared in 1950 and was soon replaced by the stereophonic vinyl which lasted from 1958 to 1985. The modern digital age commenced in the early 1980s with the development of the compact disc. Interestingly it is a reliable generalization that the earlier the recording, the more distortion will be present, but the less intentional manipulation will have been effected, because this was not possible. Editing could not be achieved on the earliest recordings. Only by the 1930s when tape began to be used for the masters could it be spliced and edited. Since 1960, techniques have improved so much that it is almost guaranteed that no recording nowadays results from a single performance (Rink 2002: 199-200). Even renowned pianists have been known to record difficult works in small sections, as Maurizio Pollini famously did when he recorded Chopin's octave *Étude* in B minor (Mitchell 2000: 365).

Recordings are important as a document of the changing performance practices throughout the 20th century. In recordings made by early pianists up until 1925, what is illuminating is to observe the mostly improvisatory manner of the playing, with a confidence which seems not to be overly concerned with our contemporary desire for fidelity to the score. The comparison of recordings is a relatively recent study, but it is an excellent way of arriving at conclusions related to the impact that a certain recording has over a listener, and why one recording can be pronounced more moving, or magical than others. If possible, it is hugely beneficial to compare more than one recording of the same work played/conducted by the composer.

Johnson cites the example of the Elgar Violin concerto, conducted twice by the composer (Rink 2002: 208). The earlier recording from 1916 features the English violinist Marie Hall, and although the work is abridged and sound quality poor, the violin playing is fascinating. The pathos and sense of loss which is typical of Elgar is captured more vividly here than in a later recording from 1932, with the young Yehudi Menuhin. Menuhin adopts a more modern, virtuosic approach, which loses some of the poignancy of the earlier recording. The composer was delighted with Menuhin's approach, which shows that his view of the work must have changed in the intervening 20 years, alongside the development of the more modern style of playing. A violinist preparing the work today may find it interesting to listen to the 1916 recording which will reveal to him that the virtuosic approach is not the only way of playing it. Hellaby, in his "Tradition" informant (Hellaby 2009: 33-34), describes much the same thing; the passage of time often gives rise to certain traditions in the performance of a work, some good and others bad, and a performer needs to sift through these to arrive at a fresh interpretation.

"Hindemith once claimed that every performance is a corruption of the work, but recordings demonstrate the importance of the performer's voice as a complement to the composer's. It is through the performer's persona- and perhaps the producer's as well—that 'the work itself' comes alive and acquires particular musical meanings. Each recording is a unique artistic creation achieved by a synthesis of composition, performance and particular recording methods. Little wonder, then, that recorded music has played such a central role in our musical culture over the last hundred years" (Johnson 2002: 209).

Hellaby pays tribute to Johnson's earlier article and stresses the importance of using recordings as documents for later study (Hellaby 2002: 53-54), as they represent the preservation of an event as a permanent artwork. This preserved artifact then enables others to study it at close scrutiny. He advocates listening to the recording many times over while making copious notes with regards to the *tempo*, *rubato*, pedalling, articulation, dynamics, and any other observations which occur to one. He then recommends the use of comparative graphs and what he calls an "interpretative tower," which enables him to compare various recordings of Bach's *Toccata* in D major, BWV 912 with infinitesimal attention to detail (Hellaby 2002: 48-51). The graphs illustrate the various degrees to which performances adhere to his 'informants' described above. He goes on to a selected section of the *toccata* by way of an example, which clearly has an extemporized quality to it, and this section he entitles the 'instrumental recitative,' following this by detailed descriptions of how each of his selected pianists perform it. Most interestingly, he describes the use of descriptive or emotive language in academic writing, which has traditionally been viewed with suspicion, but since a study by Patrik Justin (2002) (Hellaby 2002: 16) has advocated the use of a dedicated vocabulary in publications which deal with the emotional connotations of music, this has become more widely accepted. Terms such as 'happiness,' 'anger,' 'fear,' are immediately understandable to any reader without any analytical explanation, and so are now being adopted more frequently in writings concerning performance. I have attempted to follow Hellaby's detailed approach in my own description of eight recorded performances of Op.109.

The question of authenticity is generally on the mind of every thinking performer, and being faithful to the wishes of the composer generally takes up a lot of his or her time in preparing for a performance. The *Texttreue* of Hellaby, requires the performer to sit for many hours pondering over the composer's markings, questioning, and arriving at compromises. Perhaps no change has influenced our thinking as performers quite as much as the historical or period performance movement which gained momentum in the 1980s. An important collection of essays discussing these issues is *Authenticity and Early Music*, by Nicholas Kenyon (1988). The rapid rise of scholarship in the area of pre-classical music led to an increasing number of ensembles specializing in performance 'on original instruments.' Treatises of the period such as the *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen*, by C.P.E. Bach were consulted to ensure that contemporary playing styles were adhered to. Early practitioners of this style of

performance included David Munrow who did much to popularize the hitherto completely unknown forms of medieval music (Kenyon 1988: 3). Up until the 1970s this music had languished, known only to a handful of scholars and students, but in the hands of Munrow it became extremely popular. This was due to the charisma of the performer which is a vital aspect of performance according to Hellaby (2002: 13). The rapid development of scholarship mentioned above ensured that his performances were quickly outmoded, but the average audience member would not have been able to discern this anyway. If one listens to the *Sederunt principes* of Perotin performed by Munrow and then 20 years later by groups such as Sequentia or the Hilliard Ensemble, one can see how fashions changed very rapidly. The later performances use only six singers as opposed to a whole choir in the Munrow version, and it has also been discovered that in organum the long, held tenor notes were not meant to be held so uncompromisingly as was done in earlier interpretations.

In Baroque music the change of fashion in interpretation has been no less rapid. In 1974 Karl Richter recorded perhaps his most indulgent reading of the *St. Matthew Passion*. Using a choir of Mahlerian proportions, he chose *tempi* that were so slow that the opening chorus is conducted in 12 for example. In less than ten years Nikolaus Harnoncourt released the first Bach recording featuring boy sopranos (Kenyon 1988: 4), and John Eliot Gardiner recorded a *Passion* that could not be more different to the Richter, with faster *tempi*, smaller orchestra, and players using no *vibrato*. It was clear from the outset that it was deemed essential by these ensembles to sweep aside and ignore our inheritance of 19th-century performance fashions, and hark back to how music really was played in the 18th century or earlier. The movement became known as the authentic approach to performance of this music, as if it were incorrect to conceive performing it any other way. Recording labels lost no time in promoting this idea and so works by later composers such as Beethoven, Brahms and Berlioz have been subjected to performance on original instruments (Kenyon 1988: 11).

It could however be argued that the movement has its flaws. Is it really possible to create exactly the same conditions for performance as those that existed 300 years ago? To actually record a performance is in itself inauthentic. A recording sounds exactly the same each time one plays it, and this seems at odds with the idea of recreating a performance each time, which was the *modus operandi* for hundreds of years. In addition, if one observes closely the

leaders or conductors of the various ensembles, they will all be seen to be in possession of great charisma, and detractors of the movement have argued that it is the charisma and not the doubtful scholarly tenets of the style of performance which won over audiences to this new way of playing. Other listeners, myself included, would agree with the following quote by Paul Henry Lang in *High Fidelity* magazine: “All this music making by the book is a bit pitiful Harnoncourt’s own musicology is altogether romantic in its effusiveness and lack of realism. All right, his strings carefully avoid all modern appurtenances: they have flat bridges and gut strings, they use light bows and so forth ... but they also sound flat and have no guts” (quoted in Kenyon 1988: 5). Nevertheless, the energy of these and similar performances, must have made the interpretations of Richter and Klemperer sound lifeless. To return to Hellaby’s idea of a performer possessing conviction, all these performers were seen at the time to breathe new life into what had become a jaded, archaic way of presenting these works.

Frans Brüggen, the eminent recorder specialist, and one of the chief protagonists of the early music movement, has remarked that only 30 to 40% of his style can be attributed to historical scholarship and information (Kenyon 1988: 6). He insists that his popularity is due rather to his charisma as a performer, and effective communication to an audience. This is echoed in a quote by Richard Taruskin: “If one strives only to be authentic, the result will never be convincing. If one is convincing, what is offered will leave an authentic impression” (Kenyon 1988: 5). Despite these assertions by Brüggen and other practitioners, record companies, sensitive to the rapidly changing trends of performance, were quick to promote the idea that a recording on original instruments had a seal of authenticity, implying that other performances did not. Wild claims were made such as asserting that this way was the way that the 18th-century composer would have heard his own music. This last claim certainly provoked a storm of ridicule from standard practitioners such as Raymond Leppard, who was outraged by the arrogance of these claims, and who retorted by saying that it was outlandish to assert that this was the only possible way to perform 18th-century music (Kenyon 1988 : 8).

Another point made by the detractors of the movement is that the whole context of performance has changed. While it may be possible to recreate instruments and playing styles, it is not possible to recreate the conditions in which works were originally heard.

Contemporaries of great composers sometimes had little or no understanding of this music, so that “original” performances may have been less than ideal. Mozart was accused of writing “too many notes” by the Emperor Joseph II (Kenyon 1988: 22), to say nothing of the fact that contemporary audiences must have been completely perplexed by the unique but difficult sound world of Beethoven’s last quartets. It clearly is not feasible to recreate all the performance conditions of a distant age.

Before the birth of the early music movement, perhaps too many liberties were taken by performers. The pianist Jorge Bolet was asked how he could change passages in Chopin with a clear conscience (Kenyon 1988: 15). He replied saying that he had lived with the work a lot longer than Chopin had, and so he felt he had more knowledge of what worked and what was practical in performance. He was therefore implicitly subscribing to Hellaby’s idea of interpreters following their own convictions with regard to the score. So it needs to be stressed that even if a performer does as little as possible while performing a work, he or she still makes artistic decisions which need to be followed through. My own view is that as interpreters we reserve the right to make these decisions as long as we have conviction and integrity. While pondering authenticity in our performances we should be guided not by rigid and unbending scholarship, which may illustrate the way things were done 200 years ago, but does not take our present age into account. We are 21st-century musicians, and we should attempt a dialogue and reconciliation between musical elements of past and present, so that our interpretations may be less self-conscious and more natural.

It is easy to forget that it is not just in our age that the concept of old music has aroused interest. As early as the 1500s there existed an appreciation for the songs of the troubadours from the 12th century. Traces of the texts, at least, can be found in the 19th-century music dramas of Wagner, and the *Carmina Burana* of Carl Orff. The sacred polyphony that was being composed in the 16th century by Victoria, Morales, Tallis etc., was being sung in churches right up until the 19th century. However the way of performing this old music was quite different from the late 20th- century early music movement. Bach had no qualms when performing Palestrina to adding instruments or organ accompaniment to the ethereal polyphony in a move that would doubtless be frowned upon today (Kenyon 1988: 34). Musicians of the past it seems did not possess our fastidious attitude in recreating the actual

sound of the music. Perhaps due to the many centuries that lie between us and the music, we feel that recreating the sound somehow brings us closer to the era and the authentic meaning of the music. However the passage of time and the accumulation of tradition has irrevocably changed the original meaning experienced by the composer or the first audiences, so that we can now only guess at what this intention was. The failing of the early music movement is that it only accepts that there is a single uncompromising truth, never considering the possibility that this authentic ideal does not exist. “The authenticity of a performance is to be understood in terms of the sources of the performance; and these lie within the person who is performing” (Kenyon 1988: 116). So the performer could be described as ‘communing’ with the music performed. This is more important than mere fidelity to the original which in itself does not constitute authenticity, nor does it measure the overall value of a performance.

In deciding the instrument on which to perform the Beethoven sonata Op. 109, one might begin by mentioning the first great exponent of playing keyboard music on historic instruments, the Polish harpsichordist, Wanda Landowska (Kenyon 1988: 38-39). Peculiarly, she started life as a pianist, but then became irresistibly drawn to music which sounded better when played on a harpsichord. She then decided it was necessary to study treatises and learn to play the actual instruments themselves. In the light of changes in interpretative fashion in the intervening years, it is obvious that her choice of instruments was in itself not authentic. She preferred playing on large instruments with a 16 foot stop which she preferred to the “underpowered” instruments to be found in museums. She would not have cared a whit about such trifles, because she regarded her interpretations as ‘recreations’, and, much like Jorge Bolet, she felt she had the right to adapt works because she lived with them for longer than the composer. She based her interpretations on the spirit of the music, and elements of its character, in the same way as does a conventional performer on the modern piano, Daniel Barenboim, who regards the spirit of the music as being more important than the instruments that it is performed upon.

The renowned fortepianist Malcolm Bilson certainly would not agree with these assertions. In an article in *Haaretz* entitled “Why pianos from Mozart’s era are better than ours” (2017), he claims not to be concerned with authenticity, but rather the aesthetics of the era in question. Bilson claims that purely from a technical point of view, the early instruments are more

appropriate for performance of 18th- century music. He mentions the separated notes at the first piano entry of Mozart's D minor concerto, K.V.466, and says that a modern piano makes them sound like a hiccup, because of the greater distance that the hammers have to travel on a modern instrument, with the resulting gaps between notes. He argues that they are more effective and stylistically correct on a fortepiano. Articulation is also easier on a fortepiano and this is more important in Mozart and Beethoven than dynamic nuance, which is superior on a modern instrument, he says. Ronald Brautigam, the esteemed Dutch pianist, states on the *Talk Classical* blog that he envisages performance of the series of Beethoven sonatas as requiring three completely different fortepianos. For his recordings on the BIS label he uses a 1795 Walther five octave instrument for the early sonatas Op. 2, 7 and 10. Then the middle period sonatas up until Op.53 are played on an 1805 instrument also by Walther, but larger, with six octaves. The late works are given on an 1817 Graf instrument with an iron frame. (Brautigam 2012).

Jonathan Richmond in an article entitled "In pursuit of Beethoven's own sound" in *The Christian Science Monitor* (1989), goes into more detail about the action of the fortepiano saying how after the note has sounded sharply, it dies away far more rapidly than a modern piano, thus allowing clarity to be enhanced far more than on a modern piano. What both Richmond and Bilson fail to explain is that no matter how clear the articulation is, the overall sound is much smaller than on a modern instrument, and so all the advantages of articulation would be lost unless heard in the smallest of venues. It needs to be recognized that Beethoven was continually pushing the bounds of possibility in his performances and compositions, and inspiring builders to constantly make improvements and adjustments to their instruments.

The majority of modern pianists are not interested in performing on fortepianos, and indeed often regard the idea as a whole with suspicion. One of the most vocal has been Emanuel Ax who has remarked, "Like it or not, my generation was brought up to think of the piano as a singing instrument, and it is much easier to sing on a Steinway" (*Christian Science Monitor* 1989). Whether we have inherited our desire to make a *cantabile* sound on the instrument from our 19th century predecessors or not, and indeed to place more importance on it as a vehicle of expression than mere articulation, it is nigh impossible to undo the old thought patterns of many performers, myself included. Ax continues: "I'm a complete enthusiast of

the period instrument groups. I would love to play with them on my piano. I'm hoping that we will see that Beethoven is an even greater figure than we imagined, because we will be able to see more sides of him. We'll be able to see that he meant something specific to his contemporaries, and that he also means something specific to us" (*Christian Science Monitor* 1989).

I would now like to introduce my selection of eight recordings, the scrutiny of which will form the backbone of this study. I wished to include recordings both historical and more modern, and also include pianists of many differing nationalities. I also felt it important to include at least two interpretations that did not generally appeal to my ideas of appropriate interpretation, forcing me to find aspects about them which challenged preconceived ideas I may have had regarding the interpretation of Beethoven. The artists chosen are as follows, listed in order of the dates of their recordings, beginning with the earliest:

1. ARTUR SCHNABEL (1882-1951). Austrian pianist. Op. 109 recorded between 1932 and 1935.

Schnabel was known for the seriousness of his interpretations, and became one of the 20th century's most respected pianists, particularly in the Austro-German Classical and early Romantic repertoire. His best known set of recordings is undoubtedly that of the complete sonatas of Beethoven, which he recorded between 1932 and 1935. This was the first complete set of recordings of these works ever committed to disc. He was praised at the time for intense beauty of sound and for illuminating the texture, so that all voices were distinctly audible, while other critics admitted that the melody suffered due to his over emphasis of inner voices (Glock 2001:548). The later recordings of the last six Beethoven sonatas were credited with visionary qualities which transcended the limitations of the instrument (Glock 2008:548). It is noteworthy that the youthful Schnabel, as a result of his theory studies with Brahms' assistant Eusebius Mandyczewski, got to know the ageing composer. He is therefore regarded as the inheritor of the great Austro-German school of pianism. Such was his association with the Beethoven sonatas that the critic Harold Schonberg described him as "the man who invented Beethoven" (Glock 2001:548).

2. WILHELM KEMPF (1895-1991). German pianist. Op. 109 recorded 1965.

Kempff, during a long life, went through many transformations as an artist. His father was an organist at the St. Nicolai Church at Potsdam, and so he learned the organ together with the improvisational skills that invariably accompany such study. This allowed him to improvise and create transcriptions on the piano throughout his life. One of his most memorable discs is that of his transcriptions of Bach chorale preludes and other well-known Baroque and classical pieces such as *Dance of the blessed spirits* from Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*. More importantly, his ability to improvise allowed him to create his own cadenzas on the spot during concerto performances, a skill that has not been common in the twentieth century. His American debut occurred relatively late in his career, in 1964. His recorded discography is most impressive, consisting of most works of the Austro-German school, but those which have been universally acclaimed are his complete recordings of the sonatas of Schubert. It is not an exaggeration to say that these recordings contributed vastly to the appreciation of these hitherto neglected works, when they were first released in the 1950s and 1960s (Philip 2001:472). In his later years he became a sought after teacher, conducting regular masterclasses for young pianists from his home in Positano.

3. STEPHEN KOVACEVICH (1940-). American pianist. Op.109 recorded 1970.

Kovacevich was born in San Pedro, California in 1940 to a Croatian father and an American mother. When his mother remarried, he changed his name to Stephen Bishop, under which he performed during his early career. The existence of a singer also named Stephen Bishop persuaded him to change his name to Kovacevich to avoid confusion. He made his debut at the age of eleven, and moved to London in 1959 to study with the great British pianist, Myra Hess. His Wigmore Hall debut recital in 1961 featured an acclaimed performance of Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* (Morrison 2001: 846). He is renowned for his performances of a wide ranging and eclectic repertoire. Not only does he perform Beethoven and Brahms frequently, but also tackles 20th- century works such as the Sonata by Alban Berg, and the piano concertos of Bartok. His series of recordings of the Beethoven and Schubert sonatas begun in the 1990s were acclaimed for their power and insight, winning a Gramophone award (Morrison 2001:846). Married briefly to the Argentinian virtuoso Martha Argerich, they gave many performances of duo repertoire.

4. SVIATOSLAV RICHTER (1915-1997). Russian pianist. Op.109 recorded 1972.

Richter was a pianist known for “the depth of his interpretations, his virtuoso technique and his vast repertoire” (Fanning 2001: 343). Richter spent his formative teen years working with singers and serving as repetiteur for the Odessa Opera. This is unusual among highly talented solo pianists, but he remarked that he learned many things from this early training with singers. He subsequently won a place in the studio of renowned pianist Heinrich Neuhaus at the Moscow conservatoire. Emil Gilels was one of his fellow students. Neuhaus later remarked that Richter had been the student that he had always dreamed of having, and also that he had taught him nothing. The pianist was expelled from the conservatoire three times due to his refusal to study compulsory subjects, but was always reinstated at the insistence of Neuhaus (Fanning 2001:343). Richter’s London debut was panned by famous critic Neville Cardus who wondered why he had been invited to play in the UK, since London had plenty second rate pianists of its own (Fanning 2001:343). His opinion changed dramatically after a performance of both Liszt concertos the following year. Richter refused to play from memory towards the end of his life, insisting on a completely darkened auditorium with the exception of a single lamp on the piano. He also became increasingly isolated and embittered in his personal life.

5. MAURIZIO POLLINI (1942-). Italian pianist. Op.109 recorded 1976.

Pollini is perhaps, together with Arturo Benedetti-Michelangeli, regarded as the greatest Italian pianist of the 20th century (Fanning 2001:43). He created a sensation at the age of eighteen when he was awarded first prize at the International Chopin competition in Warsaw in 1960. Artur Rubinstein, who chaired the jury remarked that “that boy can play the piano better than any of us” (Fanning 2001:43). He has always been interested in contemporary works since his youth, and has had many composers dedicate works to him, perhaps most notably those of his compatriot, Luigi Nono. Together with Nono and the renowned Italian conductor, Claudio Abbado, Pollini was a left-wing political activist during his 20s and 30s. He has remained a favourite artist of the German record label, *Deutsche Grammophon*, who recently released a comprehensive boxset of his recordings. His playing has been praised for its fascinating intensity, technical finesse and his understanding of larger architectural forms (Fanning 2001:43).

6. EMIL GILELS (1916-1985). Russian pianist. Op.109 recorded 1986.

Gilels was studying at the Odessa conservatoire when Artur Rubinstein visited in 1932. The two pianists met and remained firm friends for the rest of their lives. In 1935, Gilels went to Moscow to study with Heinrich Neuhaus, and remained with him for three years. Between 1937 and 1945 he won several international competitions, and then returned to the Moscow conservatoire to become Neuhaus' assistant for a time. His first appearance outside Russia was his participation in the Eugene Ysäye competition in Brussels in 1938, at which he was awarded first prize. The great composer and pianist Sergei Rachmaninov became acquainted with Gilels' performances over the radio, and subsequently sent him a medal and diploma, naming him as his pianistic successor. Other composers such as Prokofiev wrote works expressly for Gilels, which he premiered. He, together with the violinist David Oistrakh, was the first Soviet artist allowed to give performances in the West. He made his long overdue United States debut in 1955 with the Philadelphia orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. His recordings developed from early impulsiveness to a greater concentration, sensitivity and inner expression (Morrison 2001: 858).

7. ALFRED BRENDEL (1931-). Austrian pianist. Op. 109 recorded 1995.

Brendel is unusual among pianists for being a highly regarded scholar in addition to his pianistic activities. Born in Moravia in 1931, he is of German, Italian and Slavonic descent. He studied with the great German pianist Edwin Fischer from the age of sixteen. Winning the Busoni competition in 1949, he went on to make recordings for Vox records which led to his international fame. It was his first recording of the complete Beethoven sonatas made in the early 1950s which established his reputation as a champion of the Austro-Germanic pianistic tradition (Plaistow 2001: 315). He has made three complete recordings of the Beethoven sonatas, and four complete sets of the concertos. The last was made in 2016 under the baton of Simon Rattle. He has written many books about music including *Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts*, a collection of essays published in 1976, and *Music Sounded Out* published in 1990. Critics have acclaimed these writings, saying that he brings the same intellectual power and sensitivity to them as is found in his playing (Plaistow 2001:315). Notwithstanding the fact that Beethoven has occupied a central position in his career, he later expanded his repertoire to include many works of Liszt and even Schoenberg. He is only the third pianist to have been given honorary membership of the Vienna Philharmonic, and has also been honoured by the Berlin Philharmonic

8. OLLI MUSTONEN (1967-) Finnish pianist. Op.109 recorded 1999.

Mustonen studied piano with Ralf Gothoni, and composition with Einojuhani Rautavaara from 1975, winning competitions which enabled him to make his debut at Carnegie Hall in 1987. His debut album, of the Preludes and Fugues of Shostakovich, won him both Gramophone and Edison awards. His activities also extend to conducting and composing: he is the co-founder and director of the Helsinki Festival Orchestra, and his compositional style is described as containing contrapuntal influences and ideas from 17th and 18th century music. He has written several works for piano and strings including a *Fantasia* and *Toccata*. As a performer he has been drawn primarily to the works of Russian and Eastern European composers from the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries such as Balakirev and Janacek, but also including the sonatas of Beethoven. He has been described as eccentric to watch, but intelligent and possessing an understanding of the compositional process, and informing his interpretations with fresh approaches (Duchen 2001:557).

CHAPTER 2: FIRST MOVEMENT.

There is a new flexibility employed by Beethoven in his last three piano sonatas, Opp.109-111. All of these works contain features not used before by the composer in any of his piano works. Perhaps most noticeably, all three finales are far weightier in construction than the earlier movements of these works and are large-scale movements in theme and variation form. In the case of Op.109, the effect relies upon the contrasting character of the variations, while in Op.111 this contrast is less defined and can rather be seen as an accumulating *crescendo* achieving finality at the end of this movement. These extended variation finales had not been used by Beethoven before Op.109.

Listening to the set of eight recordings of Op.109 in an attempt to find areas of interpretive interest which would bear comparison, it became very obvious that of all three movements, the one which offers the most opportunities for discussion is the opening *Vivace*. This movement, due to its unorthodox structure which is characterized by a tendency towards extemporization, allows the interpreter more scope, and results in a wider variety of interpretations. This extemporized feel is partly due to the employment of a freer form, which contrasts *vivace* and *adagio* sections markedly. It is doubtful that the form of the first movement could actually be described as traditional sonata form, but it is true that the music after bar 16 does resemble a traditional treatment of a development section, with its many modulations and use of sequential passages to increase momentum before the restatement of the first theme in bar 48. The terseness of both the 'exposition' and 'development' sections however are rare in Beethoven's works, and this contributes markedly to the many challenges as to its interpretation. This new freedom is typical of Beethoven's late style; his earlier works were conceived in a more traditional manner (Blom 1938: 224).

The contrast between the two sections could not be more pronounced, due to an opening passage which starts off resembling an innocent diatonic chorale like theme, but written in a pianistic broken figuration divided between the hands (Tovey 1931: 243). The *Vivace* is qualified as being '*non troppo*' and it produces an unhurried effect. It is so simple pianistically that it could be thought of as a kind of *étude* or study, given its alternating

semiquaver movement, but such an approach in performance loses its quasi-chorale emotive content. What is most arresting is the composer's ability to establish the theme and tonic, and to proceed to the dominant by modulating, all in the space of a mere seven seconds. It has asserted itself in total within the first eight bars. It could be argued that no later composer was able to achieve such terseness in the exposition of a sonata form, or in this case a quasi-sonata form after Beethoven (Rosen 2002: 230). Harmonically these 8 bars start in E major, then proceed to the dominant and then on to F sharp major at the end of bar 8, from whence arises the diminished chord with F sharp at its root. This then leads to the first inversion of a G sharp minor chord which becomes the dominant of the relative minor, C sharp. We remain in this key all too briefly, before setting out in the direction of the home key in bar 11 and then F sharp minor in the next bar, D sharp (E flat) major in the next, and then firmly en route to the tonic again by way of the first inversion of the dominant B major in bar 14.

The appearance of the diminished chord at the beginning of the *adagio* is always unexpected and creates a dramatic effect. It is these dramatic changes in harmony which are perhaps the most interesting feature of the whole movement. Particularly in the *adagio* section, the harmonic turns that are taken are many and unexpected, as illustrated above, and they lead back to a restatement of the original *vivace* theme, but this time with a decided air of urgency. This time the original *figuration* is exchanged between the hands, the left hand starting out more prominent, but being taken over by the right by way of a modulation to G sharp minor in bar 22. This progresses through the building of several melodic sequences going through keys as remote as D sharp and F sharp major, to the restatement of theme 1 in a more triumphant manner than has been hitherto heard. Like the opening, the 'recapitulation' is extremely short, and once again the diminished chord and subsequent *adagio* follows, although on second hearing it is perhaps less arresting than the effect it created before. Bars 63 to 65 differ from the first *adagio* in the type of figuration used: no triplets as in the first hearing, and a progression towards the home key of E major, rather than the dominant heard before. The coda which starts in bar 75 is very moving. Movement comes to a halt in that bar, and we are introduced to a chordal passage which we have not heard before in B major which then proceeds through characteristic harmonic shifts to the final statement of the theme in bar 85. By reducing the dynamic to *pianissimo*, and using notes in a lower register than heard before (for example bar 89), Beethoven prepares the unique ending of this movement which

moves into the higher register of the instrument with an effortless lightness. The final chord is startling in its stillness (Blom 1938: 226-227).

In terms of interpretation, this movement is particularly challenging in ways that are not immediately evidenced by the above analysis, but which become clear on listening or attempting to play the music. The various short sections are so disparate in mood and construction as to result in difficulty in conjecturing what Beethoven had in mind when he conceived them (Blom 1938: 224). As an interpreter, one is then faced with decisions that need to be made, which will hopefully result in a reading which will be intelligible to an audience. One way of looking at the movement would be not to suppress the differences between the sections and smooth them over in an effort to create an approachable unified performance, but rather to allow the fragments to exist independently, even emphasizing their differences. It is clear in this movement that Beethoven has drawn on many aspects of the keyboard traditions of the past. The *adagio*, for instance, owes a debt to the extemporized toccata of the Baroque era. The left hand passages of the *vivace* section are reminiscent of the keyboard figurations used by Classical composers such as Haydn and Mozart. One can deduce that Beethoven is demonstrating here that it is possible to create a movement out of totally contrasting material, and the fragments do seem to come together in spirit to form a unified whole most remarkably.

Julian Hellaby's book, as mentioned in my Introduction, proposes using a variety of 'informants,' as a means of arriving at an informed and academically sound interpretation of a work (Hellaby 2009: 30-48). Some of these are derived from historical performance traditions and compositional idiosyncrasies of the composer, coupled with textual fidelity, others are influenced by the many extra-musical factors which have been a source of inspiration to composers for centuries. Even if a performer chooses not to be overly concerned with formal analysis of the score, the informants can be applied with imagination to contribute fruitfully to the overall interpretation.

The "Authorship" informant proposed by Hellaby can be found in many places in the first movement of Op. 109 (Hellaby 2009: 32). What he means by this concept is that the many

characteristic features which make up a composer's style and authenticate his authorship can be discovered in the score. He implies more than this, however. Everything which is traditionally associated with the composer can be called on here. Rhythmic patterns and harmonies idiosyncratic to Beethoven are frequent in this movement, for example the characteristic spacing of his chords with open fourths and fifths, such as can be found in bars 11, 13, 21, 22, 42. These note groupings give his chords an unmistakable sound. Beethoven was first among composers to provide us with such detailed dynamic and other performance instructions. Almost every bar of this sonata has some kind of instruction, be it pertaining to dynamics, tempi or attitude, which goes a long way to aiding the interpreter. Later 19th-century composers were to follow suit. Perhaps most noticeable are the sudden shifts between loud and soft dynamics in this movement. Between bar 9 and 13 he moves between *forte* and *piano* no less than seven times. Thirty years previously the works of Mozart would not have contained such a wide-ranging dynamic palette.

Hellaby's "Genre" and "Tradition" informants can be dealt with together here, since they are related (Hellaby 2009: 34-35). As explained more fully in the introduction, he proposes that the first of these is a way of arriving at an interpretation based on the type of work one is interpreting. If it is a small-scale work such as an Impromptu, the performer will have a different response than if the work being prepared is a sonata. The monumentality of the piano sonata and its associated traditions would suggest different options, and performers will decide on a way to deal with this, approaching the work in a grander manner than when interpreting a small-scale work. The "Tradition" informant suggests that through time layers of tradition have often dictated the way that a particular work should be played. This is often far removed from the original intentions of the composer. The artist will need to sift through all these traditions, and make informed decisions about which are appropriate to retain in his or her interpretation.

In keeping with Hellaby's insistence that a performer's imagination is as vital a part of an interpretation as is study and fidelity to the printed score, and indeed that the one cannot exist without the other, it could be argued that the *adagio* sections of the first movement could be described as having a "topic." By this he means that the music can be related to an extra-musical characteristic, such as a march or a dance, and that such attributes can then have an

influence on the final interpretation. In the first movement of Op.109 it occurs to me that the free nature of this section can be likened to a recitative found not in instrumental music, but vocal, and particularly in opera. This is a device which opera composers use to render dialogue into music, and also as a way of informing the audience of plot developments which could not be possible in the more melismatic and reflective nature of an aria. Two styles of recitative developed in the early 17th century with the rise of Florentine and Venetian opera. *Recitativo secco* or “dry” recitative was the simpler of the two, and involved accompaniment on a single keyboard or plucked continuo instrument such as a theorbo or chitarrone. Here the composer simply revealed the plot, or allowed the characters to engage in conversations which enabled the audience to gain insight into their psychological reaction to the situation. The *adagio* section of the first movement is closest to the *recitativo accompagnato*, reserved for the more dramatic moments in the story, and brought to full mastery in the late operas of Mozart. He often used this style to demonstrate the anxiety or torment of his characters. The recitative which leads into Donna Anna’s aria *Non mi dir bell’idol mio* from *Don Giovanni*, comes to mind. Beethoven certainly would have known this opera, and it can be argued that with some imagination, the sentiments expressed in the recitative preceding the aria and the *adagio* section of the first movement can be seen to be related. The tragic loss of Donna Anna’s father makes it very difficult for her to proceed with other aspects of her life, for example the devoted attentions of her lover Don Ottavio, without hesitation or trepidation. This hesitation seems to be integral to the mood of the first 2 bars of the *adagio*, with their long held diminished chords, and rapidly changing dynamics. The drama is heightened with the expansion of range and sound in bar 11 leading to the F sharp minor explosion at the beginning of bar 12. The distraught mindset of Anna at the beginning of her recitative gradually calms to a mood of sustained lyricism at the beginning of the aria. In much the same way, bars 14 and 15 of the first movement see the drama of the preceding bars give way to the lyricism of the opening theme which reappears at the end of bar 15.

In the same way that Hellaby applies a topic which he calls the “gigue-fugue” to Bach’s Toccata and Fugue in D major, BWV 912 (Hellaby 2009 : 63-88), by which he means that the fugue has the spirit and intention of the dance-like gigue, so the second section of the first movement of Op. 109 might be called the “recitative-adagio.” An interpreter approaching the passage with this in mind will be influenced into creating a freer rendition, which will give a wider scope for expressivity. He or she will then be able to bring out more of the poignant

moments in this passage, for example in bars 11 and 14. The lyrical nature of these two bars in particular are good examples of the nature of vocal music being imitated and adapted for the piano. To return briefly to the opera, the recitative cited above features alternated passages of abrupt diminished and other chords, together with music of a much calmer quality, which eventually becomes the main theme of the aria, *Non mi dir*. This reflects the character's rapidly changing states of mind, and finds a certain kinship with the rapidly shifting moods of the first movement of Op.109. In addition, if one plays the opening theme in chords, rather than the broken figurations as written, one hears a definite similarity between this and the theme of the aria. The spirit of the music seems certainly similar.

Looking at the development section in terms of possible "informants," Hellaby's "sonic moderator" assumes particular significance (Hellaby 2009: 45). This refers to the various dynamics and other instructions related to sound which a composer uses, and which a listener can acquaint himself with and recognize after several hearings. To the artist, these interpretative features act as informants to the decision making process. In pondering how to execute these markings, he or she will at some point need to reach decisions. Perhaps the most important feature required to bring the development section off in performance, is the application of a finely judged *crescendo* starting in bar 27 and growing in strength and intensity until the restatement of the theme in bar 48 is reached. As will be seen later in the discussion of the recordings, some pianists ignore this almost completely, much to the detriment of the reappearance of the theme. In addition, the *sforzando* markings which occur in every bar after bar 33 would seem to imply a growing need for urgency and drama. These sonic elements can therefore be seen to have informed the interpretation.

Speaking now more generally about the first movement, one could apply the informant entitled "Personal Authenticity" (Hellaby 2009: 13). This is perhaps the informant that would be recognized by the widest cross-section of performing musicians. It takes for granted that musicians will have an informed background concerning appropriate stylistic values, as well as being aware of the *Texttreue* mentioned in the introduction, and that they will be true to their own artistic vision so as to stamp their signature on the interpretation. As mentioned before, there is plenty of scope to do that here. The interpreter can therefore follow all the indications in the score, but still find numerous places where he could perhaps linger over

certain notes longer than other performers, or use a different sound so as to obtain the most expression. If he does this, he will be echoing Rink's suggestion that an interpretation is chiefly the artists' thought process towards decision making (Rink 2002: 36). The way that certain sections of music are written is more conducive to a variety of interpretations, as can be seen clearly in this movement, as opposed to the next which is more metronomic, and so does not offer too many opportunities for variety of approach. This, combined with a multitude of artists all being true to their visions of personal authenticity, results in so many differing interpretations of the same piece.

1. ARTUR SCHNABEL.

Schnabel's interpretation of Op.109 begins with the opening *vivace* section being taken rather fast and with a marked emphasis on the melody notes in the right hand of bars 1 to 4, leaving the left hand rather inaudible. He clearly has decided that it is the right hand melody which is most important, and which needs to be emphasized. Interestingly, he stresses the second of each group of semiquavers as part of the melody, even though they are not indicated as such in the score. This has the effect of a longer phrase with all notes played equally. There is no *ritardando* at all in the *crescendo* run up to bar 9; often pianists tend to slow down before the diminished chord. He has decided to proceed straight into the diminished chord for maximum drama rather than postponing it by inserting a *ritardando*. One could deduce that he is not attempting to highlight the beginning of the *adagio* as a different fragment, but is proceeding between the fragments without a break. This is certainly the effect that is created.

The arpeggiated chord in bar 9 is played very fast and not expressively, and he then slows down on the first group of semiquavers in the left hand in bar 9 and 10. He possibly feels that the *arpeggio* should be treated in the spirit of the more animated *vivace*. The last semiquaver of bar 10 is also slowed down which leads to an expressive *piano* cadence in bar 11. The contrast between *piano* and *forte* in bars 9 and 10 is minimal, despite clear markings for the execution of such dynamics by the composer. Schnabel may have decided here that such abrupt dynamic shifts disturb the overall line, and so he has smoothed over the contrasts. The resulting effect created is of a smooth overall texture with no interruptions or any notes demanding more of our attention than others. In these same bars he does not execute the

mezzo staccati as printed; something he will also not do in the later repeat of the same passage in bars 58 and 59. The result is the same as the earlier passage- an even *legato* texture.

In bar 11 one might expect more *crescendo* than provided, due to the build-up of tension at the end of the bar, with an ascending scale leading to a *forte* chord at the beginning of the following bar. He performs this passage with detachment. In bar 12 the demisemiquavers are played in quite a measured fashion—often the tendency is to accelerate, which he does not do. This results in a somewhat metronomic character, rather than the overall sense of *schwung* generally adopted in this bar by others. In the middle of bar 13 he provides an effective *diminuendo* and *piano* on the last beat. In bar 15 he omits the *sforzando* marked in the left hand. Bar 15 is also characterized by a very long and spun out *ritardando* at the end of the bar. This has the reverse effect of other readings such as Richter's, where there is scarcely any slowing down, in an attempt to link the two passages. In the development section he underplays the dramatic increase in tension starting with the *crescendo* in bar 21. He perhaps sees this as similar in mood to the calm opening, rather than a new idea. The repeated *sforzando* markings which occur from bar 33 and which are needed in order to heighten the excitement are not observed. In bar 48 he plays accents on the left hand thumb of the descending passage. He makes another unmarked *ritardando* in bars 56 and 57 which is not in proportion to the preceding phrase. These are the last two bars before the return of the *adagio*, and it may be that he may be wanting to emphasize the return of this important moment. In bar 61 he slows down the *arpeggios* so that they become much freer than marked. In terms of the idea of a topic proposed earlier, entitled “recitative *adagio*” this could be seen as appropriate, as the freer approach of a recitative could be imitated here as well as its companion section later in the movement.

The last note in bar 62, marked *sf.* is not observed. The following three bars are played very freely, with many liberties taken with regards to *tempo*, but the effect is pleasing, because this approach seems to fit well with the free, quasi-extemporized construction of the movement. Bar 65 is slowest of all and provides an appropriately meditative atmosphere in order to welcome the last return of the theme in bar 66. This is played simply and without any affectation, and has a powerful effect after all the rapid development that has occurred in the

preceding two pages. In bar 75 he respects the *crescendo* asked for here but then makes an *accelerando*, rather rushing through the contemplative chorale-like passage. Bar 87 to the end is played extremely lightly and with little dynamic variety, although the composer has marked a long *crescendo* starting in bar 93.

2. WILHELM KEMPF.

Kempff's *tempo* chosen to open Op.109 is quite considerably faster than many other pianists, and he also does not attempt to accentuate all the semiquavers, but rather presents a gentle rumbling effect, with similar sound employed by both hands at the beginning of the movement. This is a contrast to Schnabel, who favours the right hand. The *arpeggio* at the beginning of the *adagio* is played the fastest that I have ever heard, but it does allow the top A to ring out without encumbrance. He also makes very little difference between the *p.* and *f.* markings in bar 9, and he actually accelerates through the second half of the bar to arrive at the downbeat of bar 10. He also does not execute the marked *mezzo staccato*. The *p.* at the beginning of bar 11 is observed, but in the course of the *crescendo* running up to bar 12 he does not increase the volume much higher than *mezzo forte*. The F sharp in the left hand is played extremely softly, which produces an effect of less majesty than that employed by other interpreters. The *p.* at the end of the bar is not observed, and he does not present a real *f.* at the beginning of bar 13. One could speculate that by all this dynamic restraint, he wishes to present the opening theme in bars 1 to 8 and the 'recitative-*adagio*' as a single unifying structure. In the second half of the bar he makes a marked *diminuendo* so that the *arpeggios* become indistinct.

Bar 14 is faster than usual, with little attempt to increase the expressivity of the passage, but on the contrary, rushed through. A possible reason is that he has decided that bars 14 and 15 should be treated coolly rather than expressively, and that he has chosen to play this as a sequential passage, leading without any emphases into the so called development section on the following page. This is unusual because these two bars are often treated idiosyncratically by many artists, highlighting various areas of expression. Despite this, bar 15 is very effective, and retains some expressivity with a beautiful descending scale, and finely judged *rit.* at the end of the bar. The development is characterised by an increase in *tempo*, which

actually becomes much faster than the original *Vivace*. Despite this increase, this section is not necessarily any more exciting than the opening. A long spun out *crescendo* at a slower *tempo* may have a more powerful effect. The recapitulation rather runs out of steam; he actually makes a *diminuendo* in bar 47 which is marked the opposite. Although he observes the dynamics in bar 52, his progression into the next *adagio* could not be described as emotive. This section is played in an almost matter-of-fact fashion, not executing any of the dynamics, and in a general *mezzo forte*. Even the very loud passage in bar 62 is underpowered. This seems to be an attempt to smooth over the harsh edges of the writing, in order to make it more listenable, but I would not, of course be able to determine that without interviewing the artist. It certainly has a less majestic or monumental effect than other readings of the same passage.

It is of course not easy to pinpoint any performer's intention merely by listening to the interpretation, but it is possible to comment on its effect. It is curious however that he chooses to play these passages in this manner. What is especially noticeable is the lack of sonority and support from the left hand in chord progressions such as the end of bars 61 and 62. The descending passage in thirds is played effectively, but he does not offer a hint of a *ritardando* at the end of bar 65, which many other pianists tend to overdo. This comes as quite a surprise considering his extensive *ritardando* in the parallel passage earlier in bar 15. The theme therefore arrives a lot earlier than expected. The next passage is played with due deference to the notes that Beethoven has highlighted as important, with the accompanying semiquavers being so relegated to the background as to be almost inaudible.

The 'chorale' starting at bar 75 is played peremptorily, with none of the expression decided upon by some of the other pianists, except perhaps in its closing bars. A possible reason could be that he wishes to adhere strictly to the *tempo* that he has adopted earlier in the movement. This could be considered the result of a 'classical' rather than a 'romantic' approach, with a consequent desire to unify the elements rather than to contrast them, which would be typical of the former. The movement ends in the same style.

3. STEPHEN KOVACEVICH.

He opens the first movement in a moderate *tempo*, and he plays in a very thoughtful manner. A choice of slower *tempo* definitely produces a meditative air. He makes a slight pause after the downbeat of bar 4, just to make an effective ending to the first phrase. He then makes a convincing *crescendo* leading into the first *adagio*. He takes a great deal of time over playing the first *arpeggio*, especially emphasising the top note. This is very effective, as that chord is always very arresting, occurring as it does so unexpectedly soon after the opening of the work, and his emphasis therefore contributes to this effect. He also hesitates before commencing with the left hand, so as to let the chord hang in space for a second as it were. This is very beautiful. He observes the *f* and *p* markings in bar 9 and 10 to the note, not making a *crescendo* at all as other pianists are wont to do. At the end of bar 10 he makes a barely perceptible *luftpause* before the opening of bar 11, which produces a quite ravishing effect as a result of the sudden softer dynamic at the beginning of bar 11.

The quintuplet, sextuplet and subsequent demisemiquavers in bars 11 and 12 are played very deliberately and not at all rushed like at least two other pianists in this series of investigations. . He respects all the dynamics minutely, even making a pronounced *diminuendo* in bar 13, more so than other artists. Bars 14 and 15 are played with a spiritual profundity which characterises Beethoven's last style period, but which is too often glossed over by some interpreters. Nothing is rushed; even the descending triplet figurations in bar 14 are held back and this produces an almost breathless reaction from the listener, due to the suspense created. He respects the composer's desire for a long *ritardando* at the end of bar 15 leading into the development.

Bar 16 onwards is imbued with a rustling quality in a very soft dynamic. This lyrical approach, held back as much as possible, makes the ensuing build-up of tension that much more exciting. The *crescendo* is slow and gradual, as marked. He makes the most of the *sf.* markings in bar 33, but without the tone quality ever becoming ugly as has been heard often by this writer. The opening theme, repeated to form the opening of the recapitulation, is predictably triumphant. Interestingly, he does not really respect the *p.* marking in bar 52, but

continues in a *forte* dynamic until the end of bar 57, which actually makes sense, as it gives the entire phrase some cohesion.

The next *adagio* is played much like the first, with the characteristic pause each time before the left hand comes in. Such a minute ‘fermata’ seems to increase the tension of the phrase, as well as its expression. In bar 60 the *crescendo* is suitably abrupt so as to produce quite a startling effect; a possible reason for this could be that of both *adagio* sections, the second one is the more dramatic as evidenced by the fuller, more robust chords in bars 60 to 62. As in the previous corresponding passage, the *arpeggios* in the following two bars are played in a very measured manner which certainly increases their expressivity.

Bar 62 is characterised by a marked employment of diverse dynamics: it starts triumphantly in *fortissimo* with a C Major *arpeggio* which then decreases to a *p.* on its descent, and then on the way up again the dynamics become more expressive, as he pauses on the chords in first inversion, the effect of which is very startling. Bar 63 to 65 are played with the same care as the parallel passage in the exposition, and he brings all the movement to a halt at the end of bar 65 with a *rit.* expressing great stillness at the end of bar 65. The rest of the movement is played very simply with no slowing down or other affectations which are usually imposed in the “chorale” section. All the dynamics are here, even tiny ones such as those in bar 97. He does not hold the last chord on unduly; one has the sense of the second movement continuing *attacca* as it is marked.

Of all the performances studied, this is the one which could be said to come the closest to my particular sense of an appealing interpretive approach to this work. The style adopted by this artist could be said to be ‘Romantic’, that is to say, on the surface it does appear to be more expressive than other renditions, due perhaps to more measured *tempi*, and his conviction in applying more expressive devices such as fractionally longer *ritardandi* or more protracted *fermatas* used at selected moments for the most effect. His approach could also be described as possessing simplicity, which possibly results from the overall characteristic of unhurriedness. Added to this is a conscious effort to employ the most beautiful sound possible, which runs throughout his interpretation.

4. SVIATOSLAV RICHTER.

Richter starts the first movement with much more emphasis on the right hand than one is used to, with the possible exception of Schnabel. The left hand is not given the same emphasis, so we are able to hear the melody in a far more pronounced manner than usual. Almost alone amongst all the interpretations I have listened to, he does not slow down before the *Adagio*. This does sound rather rushed and perhaps would benefit from a more spacious approach, but this is purely a matter of taste. The *arpeggio* is given in quite a matter of fact manner, and he does not make a real distinction between the *forte* and *piano* of that same bar. It is precisely the dynamic contrast which Kovacevich employs here which is so magical. Richter does not quite achieve the same effect. The *crescendo* in bar 11 is barely perceptible, with the result that the next bar results in a *subito forte*, and perhaps slightly too loud in the left hand. The next *forte* in bar 13 is surely too loud and is not in proportion to the *crescendo* which should have preceded it. He is possibly intent on highlighting the drama at the beginning of the bar, hence the extreme dynamic.

Bars 14 and 15 are played rather fast, and therefore do not approach the expressiveness of Kovacevich. He also rushes the descending scale and the triplets rather too much for my taste, as does Kempff, but like him it could be argued that he is moving on towards the next 'development' section here, rather than using expressivity which might deflect attention from the architecture of the music. The low B in the bass in bar 15 is possibly too loud, although it is marked with an accent, and then he slows down perhaps too much at the end of that bar, so that the semiquavers become almost crotchets in value. Again this is purely a matter of taste; it is after all an extended *ritardando*. The beginning of the development in bar 16 is very unusual in that he highlights the left hand notes marked with upward stems. He is alone among the eight pianists to do this, and it is very effective. So here he could be said to be responding to a particular element in the text, and interpreting it appropriately. He plays the right hand very softly here.

In bar 21 the right hand takes over with a particularly beautiful sound. In my opinion the left hand could have been given a more supporting role; it is too much in the background, but he certainly builds up the tension sufficiently. The *sf.* markings are respected, but not overbearingly so. In bar 42 he reduces the dynamic which then allows him to make a convincing *crescendo* up to bar 48 which is really the beginning of the recapitulation. Unlike Kovacevich he respects the *p.* marking in bar 52, and then repeats his earlier attention to bringing out the melody notes in the left hand. Like the previous occasion it is very effective, because we are drawn in to hear the by now familiar material played in the cello- register of the piano. He slows down this time in bars 56 and 57 to prepare for the next *Adagio* which on this occasion is played much slower than the first one. He is possibly using a slower *tempo* as this will be the last time we hear this music, and he wishes to be more deliberate here. This attention to lyricism is short lived however; he makes a sudden *accelerando* on the quintuplet in bar 60, and then rushes through the rest of the *adagio* with the exception of slowing down dramatically in the ascending figures in bar 65. These are slow to begin with at the start of the bar, but become even slower with the imposition of a quite literal *ritardando*.

The final passage starting in bar 66 is played with minimal pedal, making it rather dry. Possibly he is aiming for a contrast with the warmer chorale like passage which will follow this in bar 75. The two hands are slightly at odds with one another and quite uneven. The chorale is played without any affectation, and observing the silence demanded by the rests. The remainder of the movement is very hushed with the exception of the *crescendo* starting in bar 92. The last chord is held on much longer than written, making the pause between movements longer than usual. He is obviously persuaded that the lack of a double barline does not mean that the next movement should follow *attacca*.

5. MAURIZIO POLLINI.

He starts the sonata extremely simply, with both hands receiving the same attention in terms of sound. The *tempo* is fairly measured. He makes a pronounced *crescendo* leading up to bar 9, and the *arpeggio* that announces its beginning is played much simpler than many other pianists, and without too much dramatic affectation. Interestingly, he clearly is of the belief that the drama favoured by many other interpreters is not mandatory here. The *p.* marking in

bar 9 could perhaps have been adhered to more strictly; it is not a real *piano*, but is certainly lyrical. The second half of bar 11 is held back in terms of drama, and the *crescendo* leading to bar 12 is played quite sedately. This is a consistent decision to emphasise the lyricism rather than the drama in this movement. As in bar 9, he reduces the contrast between loud and soft at the end of bar 12, and also in bar 13.

The *arpeggios* in bar 13 are not played in an overtly virtuosic fashion like many of his colleagues; they are fairly reticent. One may question his decision of increasing the dynamic at the beginning of bar 14; it is rather too loud to produce the desired *cantabile* in the upper register of the instrument. The ensuing triplets are not rushed as is often the case, but held back, which gives a good sense of rounding off the ‘exposition’, before continuing with the development. The development proceeds with too loud a dynamic in my opinion, with the result that he has nowhere to go with the long *crescendo* that is to follow; indeed, he hardly makes a *crescendo* at all, so that the effect of the triumphant repeat of the theme in bar 48 is lost. A reason for this could be suggested by his attention to precise execution of the *sforzando* markings, which take the place of the *crescendo* in generating his own particular brand of drama.

The next *adagio* is also played at only one dynamic level; none of the marked dynamics are meaningfully observed, except the very loud ones. Here he could be thinking of the spirit of the recitative section the same way as he does the *vivace*, hence his desire to concentrate on the dynamics and other elements which unify them. Bar 63 is delivered *forte* instead of the marked *piano*. In bar 65 he slows the rhythm down so much, so the sextuplets become unrecognizable, but since this the end of a very important section it would seem appropriate. The next *tempo 1* is played like the first, quite simply, but in a *mezzo forte* dynamic rather than *piano*. The same goes for the ‘chorale’ section at bar 75; it is rather too loud to produce the intimacy which we have heard highlighted by the other pianists. . He decides not to make any *diminuendo* in bar 84 and 85 as marked. This lack of dynamic variety produces a blandness which could be seen to be appropriate as it allows the progression of the music without excessive emotional distractions. He makes an effective *crescendo* from bar 92 which makes the conclusion of the movement satisfying.

6. EMIL GILELS.

He starts the first movement in an idiosyncratically slow *tempo*, with the first note being held marginally longer to give it more melodic effect. Pedalling is kept to a minimum, almost none being used here at the beginning, so the hands are held in perfect balance and matched in sound. One could perhaps label this kind of playing as ‘square’—he never moves on in the *tempo*, but rather keeps it almost metronomic in character. Only on the last two notes of bar 8 does he hesitate rather markedly before the onset of the *Adagio*. He plays the initial *arpeggio* quite normally; not fast like Schnabel; and instead of keeping the left hand *forte* for the first two beats as marked, he introduces a *diminuendo* which he repeats in the parallel passage in the next bar.

He observes the *crescendo* at the end of bar 10, but then does not return to a sufficient *piano* dynamic at the beginning of bar 11. Nonetheless his *crescendo* in the second half of the bar is impressive, and the beginning of bar 12 is very convincing, due to his use of these contrasting dynamics. Bar 12 is a model of dynamic control, progressing from loud to extremely soft at the end of the bar. The effect we experience is a vivid contrast between the soft dynamic at the end of bar 12 and the shocking *forte* which crashes in at the beginning of bar 13. This is played quite freely: he does not attempt to respect the exact written note values, but plays it in the style of a baroque fantasia in an improvisatory manner. This could be seen to tie in with a proposed idea of the ‘recitative-*adagio*’ for this section. The *piano* at the end of the bar is once again ravishing, as is the beginning of the next bar: it is Gilels at his most expressive.

The triplets in bar 14 are played completely in *tempo*, nothing like the free approach in the previous bar. He is clearly wanting to move forward here towards the imminent ‘development.’ He makes very judicious use of the pedal in bar 15, with the result that the descending scale is crystal clear. He does however indulge in a pronounced *ritardando* at the end of the bar leading into the *tempo primo* which starts very simply. This is understandable given the importance of the end of this section which he wishes to bring out. The ensuing development section is played in an astonishing manner which makes one wonder why he plays it this way. The long *crescendo* from bar 21 to 48 is not regarded, with the consequent lack of drama which accompanies it, in a section which could be considered forward driving

in its composition towards the exposition, and it needs that huge *crescendo* for its full effect. Perhaps he has decided on a uniformly lyrical approach for the first movement, leaving all the drama to the second. In any event, the customary excitement of this passage is compromised here. He also uses as little pedal as possible, which makes the texture sound very dry, and uses his fingers only to create the required lyricism.

Numerous other pianists including several in this series of recordings are not averse to moving on slightly in the *tempo* so as to create more drama. It makes the return of the theme in its extrovert guise in bar 48 that much more thrilling. Now in the recapitulation, the next *adagio* is played identically to the parallel passage in the exposition, with the same dynamics as he did before. The chord on the last quaver of bar 60 is played exactly in *tempo*, with no slowing down as some pianists are wont to do. Strangely he does not adopt the free approach to the *arpeggios* in bar 61 and 62 that he did in the parallel passage in the exposition; these are now played perfectly in *tempo*. Even the descending figuration in thirds in bar 63 and 64 are precisely in *tempo*, although he makes the last triplet of bar 64 very expressive, especially in the left hand. A possible theory might be that he was exaggerating the elements in the earlier passage to bring them out since that was the first time we had heard the section. Interestingly, he holds the pedal down the whole of bar 65 right up until the *tempo primo*; whereas it is commonly released on the B which denotes the beginning of the 2/4 time signature at the end of that bar.

The next few bars up until bar 74 are played with great delicacy and expression. He respects the rests faithfully in bars 75 to 77, but then imposes a severe *rit.* to the rest of the passage up to bar 85. From bar 86 the left hand lacks the clarity it had through all the previous repetitions of the theme; it is as if he is striving here to create a more deeply felt ending. He suddenly uses more pedal than before, in keeping with this change of mood. However, he does respect the rest nicely before the final chord, and holds the said chord on rather long before the start of the *Prestissimo*. The effect is to create a pause between the two movements which is surely not the composer's intention; the lack of a double bar line seems to indicate that Beethoven wants the silence to be shattered *subito* by the intrusion of the second movement.

7. ALFRED BRENDEL.

He opens the first movement with a very stately and measured *tempo* which is arguably too slow for the marked *Vivace*. He keeps the *tempo* absolutely regular, without any slowing down, right up until the *Adagio* in bar 9. The first *arpeggio* is played without any expressive inflections, and also very fast. By way of compensation, he holds it for a fraction longer than written, which has the effect of drawing the listener in. He does not decrease the dynamic markedly in bar 9 as required, nor does he observe the difference between *legato* and *mezzo staccato* in the same bar, but this does not disturb. I especially miss the variations in dynamic which are so effective at the end of bar 10 into bar 11; the *piano* could have been far more pronounced.

The demisemiquavers in the next two bars are satisfying because of their smooth execution, but then he does not execute the octaves *piano* at the end of bar 12 and 13. This reduces the expressivity of the passage. He does not rush through these two bars as is often the case. What is very pleasing is a sudden drop to a very soft dynamic at the beginning of the descending triplet passage in bar 14, but he then rushes downwards, creating a different sound world from that employed at the beginning of the bar. A more heightened sense of tonal evenness has been employed by other artists here. The beginning of the development is played in a unique way. More than any other pianist I have heard, he brings the left hand out very noticeably from bars 16 to 20. That is exactly what Beethoven intended, by providing extra stems to highlight this, but pianists are usually more tempted to focus on the right hand here.

The big *crescendo* starting in bar 27 could have been started more softly, but nonetheless his build-up of tension here is very impressive. He keeps the dynamic right up until the *p*. marked in bar 52. After this bar he increases the dynamic again as marked, and then makes quite a lengthy *rit.* into the next *Adagio*. The *tempo* of this *Adagio* is considerably slower than the first one; I am not sure whether this is deliberate or not. He also does not attempt the usual drama created by other pianists in bars 60 and 61; his approach here is quite reticent, especially in the *ff.* of bar 62. He also reduces the sound by not matching the hands on the expressive chords in bars 61 and 62. This is most noticeable on the last chord of bar 62,

where the right hand is much louder than the left, resulting in a thinner harmony. Many pianists prefer to match the hands in passages like this.

In the descending passage in thirds from bar 63 he does not rush like he did in the similar passage in the exposition, indeed bar 65 is played in a held back manner, with an extended *rit.* at the end of that bar. The next passage is a miracle of simple expression; in a very measured *tempo* with the melodic content divided equally between the hands, it is very beautifully played, emphasising its simplicity. The “chorale” starting in bar 75 is especially autumnal in feeling; it really captures the essence of late Beethoven in its few bars. The rest of the movement is played in an almost faltering manner which really brings home the fragility of the ageing composer in the most poignant way. The last chord is held for a very long time to allow the sound to dissipate. Several of the other artists including Mustonen and Gilels also hold the last chord on in such a way, despite the lack of a double bar, so the idea of moving *attacca* into the second movement is not universal.

8. OLLI MUSTONEN.

Of all the eight recordings of the sonata, this is the one which I find the least appealing in terms of interpretative decisions and also the overall characteristics of the rendition. Olli Mustonen is undeniably a pianist with an impressive pedigree and a brilliant technique, but I find that his interpretation of Op.109 departs significantly from an existing and familiar performance tradition, sufficiently so to provoke a marked response from this listener. This response is not generally positive, but nonetheless interesting. I would never consider playing the work in this manner, nor would attending a live performance of his approach elicit a positive response on the whole, but it would prompt questions, and it is for this reason that I have included it in this survey of recordings of Op. 109.

This recording is an illustration of the diversity of interpretations of this work which exist, and shows that even if this artist’s ideas do not appeal to one, they have a certain validity and should be granted a hearing because they are a product of what Hellaby refers to as his “Personal authenticity” informant. That is to say, if an artist has a certain standing, we must

assume that the interpretive choices he makes are a result of integrity, and are carefully thought through.

From the outset this pianist chooses to do everything differently to previous interpreters of the work; prompting various reactions and questions. His *tempi* are generally extreme- either very fast or very slow, and usually unpredictably so, so that one gets the feeling of hearing a completely new work, and makes one wonder whether the layers of expression that we have become used to expecting over the years, may not have been the original intention of the composer. The interesting thing is that Mustonen cannot be accused of departing from the score-he is faithful to the markings generally, but the way he approaches non- textual elements such as sound and 'expression' is what makes his recording so vastly different to others. I had a similar impression when listening to recordings of Rachmaninov perform his own piano works including the *Preludes*, which he plays in an almost prosaic style, nothing like the impassioned readings we are accustomed to nowadays. It is certainly an acquired taste, because even in the moderate first movement of Op.109, the opportunities for expression which have traditionally presented themselves to more conservative artists seem to be glossed over here.

One gets the impression that he is trying to imitate the sound and attack of an original fortepiano of Beethoven's time, which must, admittedly, have sounded completely different to the instruments of the present day. He is persuaded that everything should be played in a light and detached manner, even in the most dramatic of passages, and he clearly believes that some of the music is actually humorous, given his predilection for *staccato* notes which are used for comic effect, most notably in the second movement. He opens the first movement in a very slow *tempo* and makes an unusual swelling of sound in the first 4 bars. From bar 5 he erupts an extended *crescendo* which leads into the *adagio* after a slight pull up in the last beat of bar 8. Now after a fairly slow *vivace tempo*, he now employs an *adagio* tempo that is faster than that employed by other interpreters and consequently reduced in expression.

The first *arpeggio* is played fast and with less emotive quality than we are used to. A less contentious point would be that he does respect the *subito piano* on the second beat of the first bar of the *adagio*, and the same in the next bar. In bar 11 he makes a hesitation on the first note of the sextuplet which is not marked. In bar 12 he reduces the sound convincingly as marked at the bottom of the *arpeggio*, but then gets faster towards the top, allowing no time for expression on the last two notes of the bar. Bar 14 is particularly noteworthy—the hands are not matched in sound, and the left is completely obscured by the right in the ascending *arpeggios*. I have never heard it played this way before. The next two bars are also played very fast, and with emphasis on virtuosity. The development harks back to the original slow *tempo* of the beginning of the movement, and he uses a more traditional approach here. He uses a convincing sound on the melody notes in the right hand, and makes a really effective *crescendo* starting at bar 21.

He makes a convincing *subito piano* at the beginning of bar 42 which is a very good idea, and practical, because it is a long *crescendo* and needs to start at a reduced dynamic. The beginning of the recapitulation is played triumphantly, with real conviction in this *forte* version of the theme, and he keeps the dynamic right up until the marked *piano* in bar 52. The *adagio* is played as it was the first time; rather too fast and not focused on any real intensity. By way of contrast the final repeat of the theme is beautifully played, with real pathos. He observes all the dynamics and rests right until the end. Unfortunately the last chord is held rather too long, and this gives an impression that there is a break between the movements which should not be the case, but several other artists also treat it this way.

I would now like to present a short comparative overview of certain passages in the first movement, and how they are played by some or all of the pianists, in an attempt to highlight the most interesting differences in interpretative approach. As I have stated previously, the opening movement is by far the most structurally peculiar of the three, and remains a very rare example of the first movement of a sonata which is not in sonata form. It appears to me to be a freely extemporized recitative, with alternate sections of more rhythmic material. It is in the two recitative-like sections marked *adagio espressivo* that many of the interpretive idiosyncrasies of the eight pianists can be observed.

The opening nine bars of *Vivace* are interestingly taken at various tempi. The slowest of the pianists is Gilels, with Mustonen a close second. These two pianists clearly view this passage as part of the ensuing *adagio* and not as a contrast to it. All the other performers adopt a more flowing *tempo* for the *Vivace* which provides more of a contrast when the recitative starts. I think the effect required is to emphasize a sudden shift of intention here. Bars 9 to 15 consist of the opening statement of the *adagio*, and Kovacevich offers the first interesting approach; he pauses after the opening arpeggiated chord and then proceeds with an extremely slow *tempo*. He is the only pianist to make such a marked fermata on the first chord; he also does it the second time the *adagio* returns, so surely it is no coincidence. He also takes the demi-semiquaver runs in bar 12 to 15 much slower and more deliberately than the others, and makes a pronounced *ritardando* at the end of bar 15.

Other noteworthy approaches are Richter's *accelerando* into the opening bar of the *adagio*, (bar 11); his *vivace* gets faster. He also takes the marked *sforzandi* very seriously, sometimes with surprising effects as in bar 15 when the left hand B octaves border on the aggressive. This is a different way of approaching this passage, but if one sees it as being a spacious, toccata-like virtuoso extemporization, then such a way of playing it could be appreciated. Gilels also offers a very slow *adagio*, with perhaps a less idiosyncratic approach than Richter, who speeds up so noticeably into the *adagio*, but in my opinion it is Brendel who is most convincing in this passage. His tempi are beautifully proportioned, and there are no excessive harsh notes or over-extended *ritardandi*.

Moving on to bars 20 -57 there are several interesting ideas evident. Perhaps the hardest to understand is that of Schnabel, who simply ignores the marked *crescendo* in bar 27, and proceeds in a *piano* dynamic with marginal accents as marked, thus completely underplaying the excitement and majesty of this passage. The long *crescendo* marked over 27 bars is not executed. It is as if he does not wish to enlarge on the intimate sound world that he created at the beginning of the movement, and desires to keep the building of tension to a minimum. Another version hard to understand is that of Brendel, who makes a huge *accelerando* starting at bar 20, which becomes extremely fast around bar 40. At such a speed the re-statement of the original *Vivace* theme bears no relation to his original fairly steady *tempo*. There is of course no reason that it should, except if we consider that bar to be the beginning

of the so-called ‘recapitulation,’ and then it would be traditional to adopt the same *tempo* for both. This increase in speed is most unusual amongst the eight interpretations. A possible reason could be that he is wanting to build up the tension of the passage which is to follow. Most other pianists use either the *sforzando* markings or a long *crescendo* as a means of increasing the tension, but here Brendel uses a marked increase in *tempo*.

Gilels is the exact opposite: he plays this passage very slowly and does not generate any excitement. He also does not *crescendo* much from around bar 26. The effect thus created is of a very thoughtful nature, and it could be argued that this is valid, if a more classical approach has been decided upon. Kempff treats this passage in a similar way, without much increase in volume or intensity, but I tend to think that a performance of this passage does need to be faithful to the two markings of *crescendo* in bars 27 and 41, as well as the numerous *sf.* markings. Certainly in this passage I think it is important that the concept of “Texttreue” which I explained in the introduction as fidelity to the text, is prioritized here.

The next *adagio* bar 58 to the end of the movement generally repeats any idiosyncrasies offered earlier in the movement, but also some new ones. Brendel plays the *arpeggio* on the downbeat of the first chord very fast, and offers more sound in the left hand chords in bar 60 than Kempff, who idiosyncratically emphasizes the right hand at the expense of the left in chords bar 60 -63. Bars 60-61 are also played very differently; Kovacevich adopts a very stately and deliberate approach, with many *rits.* and pauses at the ends of bars 61 and 62, whereas Schnabel plays this passage much faster without observing any of the contrasting dynamics. It is also interesting to see the variety of *ritardandi* offered in bar 65 by the pianists. Brendel, Kempff, Kovacevich and Gilels do not slow down much at all, whereas the others make far more marked decreases in tempo. Schnabel is by far the most noticeable; he comes to a pronounced halt at the end of bar 65. He has clearly decided to end this section by delineating it with such a marked *rallentando*, rather than linking it with the next passage. Such is the wide variety of readings of the first movement.

CHAPTER 2: SECOND MOVEMENT.

After the first movement ends in a mood of resigned contemplation, the following *prestissimo* in E minor shatters the peace. Written in a terse sonata form in 6/8 time, there is no trace of the traditional scherzo form employed so often in movements of this kind. The conciseness and dramatic nature of the movement makes it the perfect precursor to the free set of variations which follow. Contributing to the terseness of the movement's construction is the composer's use of two contrasting themes of equal importance superimposed upon one another and divided between the hands (Blom 1938: 226). The descending bass notes at the opening are marked *ben marcato* as if to indicate their importance, and it is this theme that is used as melodic material later in the movement, not in the aggressive dynamic encountered here, but rather in a contrasting lyrical *piano* section. The contrasting thematic material played by both hands should receive the same attention with regards to the level of sound up until the end of bar 8. It is the necessity of bringing out both motives which constitute one of the chief challenges of the movement. One only has to look at bar 112 to see that the composer asks for the first theme to be played by the left hand, while the right is occupied with octaves much in the same way as at the very beginning of the movement.

These thematic inversions are extremely awkward technically to bring out convincingly. Indeed, as a whole, this movement could be said to be more technically demanding than the first. Many kinds of technical difficulties abound here. The left hand figurations throughout, cannot be regarded as pianistic in conception. The rapid shift in hand positions, together with the necessity of often having to hold down the first notes of each bar makes it difficult to execute these consistently smoothly. These accompaniments function as dominant pedal points; the first one occurring in bar 9 which is a sequence of tonic and dominant harmony shifting over a dominant bass, with the rhythmic figures of the first 2 bars being repeated almost exactly. This extended pedal point on B is a typical Beethovenian device with which he increases tension, often in a *piano* dynamic, as here. Repeated swells in dynamic contribute to the increasing impetus, as seen in bars 10, 15 and 19. Bar 24 brings us back to the tonic of E minor, which concludes the "A" section of the movement.

Bar 25 sees the start of what could be called a transition section (Tovey 1931: 248). This is a new four-bar theme which is unharmonized and is stated in bare octaves. Harmony is only added in bar 30, and the passage continues thus for another four bars before returning to a similar pedal point sequence as that heard in bar 9. However, this time it is scored much more richly, with quasi contrapuntal inner parts, which aid the left hand pedal points in creating a vastly dramatic passage. Eric Blom writes: “Soon the metrical pattern becomes slightly distorted by syncopation, as though dishevelled by the whirlwind pace of the music, and presently, with a sudden *piano* comes a scattering of the musical material, all but a little fluttering motif detaching itself over an *arpeggio* bass” (Blom 1938: 227). He refers here to the use of answering motifs in bar 51 and 53 over a brilliant group of triplets in the left hand which leads to a cadential passage of percussive chords in bar 65 marking the end of the so-called exposition in the dominant minor.

Now begins in bar 70 the slow version of the theme which we heard played *fortissimo* by the left hand at the beginning of the first movement--- here it is transformed into a *pianissimo* melody played at half *tempo* by the right hand, with rumbling octave *tremolandi* in the left hand (Tovey 1931:249). This is a fairly short development section; only taking us up to bar 104, and like the exposition it is concluded by a definite cadence in bars 102 to 104. Unlike the so called ‘development’ section of the first movement which relies on forward movement and increasing tension for its effect, this development is actually calmer than the neighbouring exposition and recapitulation, and is in effect a chorale like passage which comes to a total halt with the *fermata* over a chord in bar 96. The whole development section is remarkably devoid of the relentless triplet movement which we encountered in the exposition. The composer makes use of starkly scored chordal harmony with constant dynamic markings of *pianissimo* and *sul una corda; sempre piu piano* etc. which creates a hushed mysterious section that makes the return of the first theme in the recapitulation even more shocking.

Tovey says: “Angrily ignoring the previous mention of B minor, the home tonic crashes in with the main theme” (Tovey 1931:250). Beethoven marks *tutte le corde* over this repetition at bar 105, which is exactly as we heard it before except at bar 112 he transfers the theme to the left hand for the first time and gives the right hand a similar version of the left hand

melody heard earlier. The recapitulation is fairly standard and almost identical to the exposition in content. Only an eight bar coda starting at bar 170 is different; this is an emphatic and dramatic way to end the movement. Here the composer employs chords much like he did in the development section, but here they are more thickly scored, with the hands further apart and the implication that a huge crescendo is required between bar 170 and 175. These thickly scored chords present technical difficulties which can be added to those encountered slightly earlier, although not as fiercely demanding. Bar 158 to 165, surely the dramatic climax of the movement, is a mirror passage which we heard earlier in the movement in a different key. At first glance it looks as if Beethoven has written a simple B major scale, played first by the right hand and then the left. However it is not quite a B major scale; he adds chromatic notes which increase the awkwardness of its successful execution, and certainly make it harder to achieve the same degree of brilliance were it a normal B major scale. The extra notes in the left hand make it extremely risky in performance, which one can hear in the Richter recording—there are moments of unease in these sections in his recording.

Hellaby's *Tempo* informant is likely to be a significant factor influencing the performer in this movement (Hellaby 2009: 40). It is marked *prestissimo* meaning 'as fast as possible', but needs clarification in terms of the character of the music itself. This indication would be inappropriate if applied rigidly to the calmer middle section, so a compromise needs to be sought that will cater for the drama and forward thrust of the outer sections, while allowing for some respite in the more lyrical section. This, therefore, is an example of how vague a *tempo* indication can be; much like the *vivace* indication in the first movement, the spirit of the music needs another approach, and a performer's intuition is needed in order to find compromises. The obvious lyricism implied in the first movement seems to be at odds with its *tempo* indication, as is bar 25 onwards in the second movement. Unfortunately neither of these movements has any qualifiers which would aid interpretation, for example *Allegro con brio* or in the case of the *finale* of Op.109, *Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung*, or its Italian equivalent indicated underneath; *Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo*. Here imagination needs to once again be drawn on in order to find a way to convey the *vivace* of the first movement in a *tempo* not too fast so as to disturb the overall tranquillity; or also not too fast in the *prestissimo* movement so that the stark mystery of the middle section is not glossed over. It follows that considerations of *tempo* are amongst the most important

decisions a performer will have to make. If he selects the wrong *tempo* then the integrity of the original expression may suffer as a result.

Blom's remarks quoted above prompted thoughts about arriving at a topic for this movement. The intensity and aggression displayed here would seem to suggest a scene of great drama, and the following is proposed as a possible interpretation. The younger Franz Schubert also lived in Vienna and was profoundly impressed by the great Beethoven, even though he would have been too young to hear him perform his own concertos and sonatas before his onset of deafness in 1802 (Reid 2013). We have much evidence which attests to the younger man's admiration of him, although he did not set out to slavishly imitate him, and indeed blamed him disapprovingly in 1816 for the onset of what he called "bizarrerie" in music - that is to say the combination of tragic and comic elements in one work which he regarded as dangerous (Reid 2013). He was only nineteen when he made the accusation, and it may have been influenced by his conservative teacher Salieri, but at the time Schubert believed that tragedy and comedy should be separated. This criticism was a rare one however, and Schubert remarked to his friend Josef von Spaun: "Secretly I still wish to make something of myself, but who can do anything now after Beethoven?" (Reid 2013). Surely, attending the grand concert at the Viennese Akademie on 7 May 1824, at which the ninth symphony was premiered, must have considerably depressed the younger composer. He need not have worried. Beethoven, an ardent reader of newspapers and journals, could not have been unaware of the young Schubert's growing reputation.

The conversation books which contain dialogue between him and his friends after the onset of his total deafness, contain many references to Schubert, including news of his latest works, and on one occasion Beethoven referred to him as truly possessing the "divine spark." The only works which Beethoven had the opportunity to scrutinize first hand were Schubert's songs, since his symphonies and chamber works were not published until after both the composer's deaths. Perhaps the most famous song of Schubert even today is his *Erlkönig*, which he wrote in the short space of an hour or two during a thunderstorm in 1815, his eighteenth year. He had been the author of many songs since 1811, in those early years often turning to texts of a more bardic nature like those of Goethe and also his contemporary

Schiller. These early works are very different in character from the more lyrical songs which Schubert was to write later after 1817. They are small-scale operas for voice and piano.

These dramatic ballads which drew their inspiration often from medieval legend, inevitably had tragic endings which were ideal fodder for the imaginations of early Romantic poets and composers, and the fashion for them persisted for many years. By the time of the composition of *Erlkönig* in 1815, he was writing ballads in a much more concise and economic manner, and he never surpassed the drama and terseness of his Op. 1. The great ballad of Goethe so captured the young man's attention that he penned the song in a single session. It is worthwhile to quote the English translation of the poem in order to get an idea of the topic which could relate to the second movement of Op. 109.

“Who rides so late through the night and wind? It is the father with his child.

He holds the child tightly clasped, secure and warm in his arms.

‘My son, why do you hide your face in fear?’ ‘Father, do you not see the Erl King?’

The Erl King with crown and cape?’ ‘My son, it is a streak of fog.’

‘You lovely child, come and go with me, I will play games with you;

Many beautiful flowers are on the beach, my mother has many a golden robe.’

‘My father, my father, do you not hear what the Erl King is promising me?’

“Be calm, my child, it is only the wind rustling through the dry leaves.’

‘You beautiful boy, will you go with me? My daughters will wait upon you,

Lead the nightly dance, and rock and dance and sing you to sleep.’

‘My father, my father, do you not see the Erl King's daughters in that gloomy place?’

‘My son I see exactly; the old grey willows are shimmering.’

‘I love you, your beautiful form entices me, and if you aren't willing I will use force.’

‘My father, my father, he has seized me now, the Erl King has done me harm!’

The father is horrified; he rides swiftly on, holding the moaning child in his arms.

He reaches the farm with great strain and difficulty; in his arms the child lay dead.”

The poem has been set to music many times. Beethoven attempted it, but famously abandoned his efforts. A sketch of his ideas was preserved though, and published in 1897 with an editor’s idea of completion. The most famous setting is the one by Schubert, but one by Carl Loewe written in 1818 is also very fine. Schubert revised his version three times before publishing it in 1821 as his Op. 1. The four characters in the song are all sung by a single vocalist who traditionally varies the timbre or colouration of his voice to suggest each of the characters. A fifth character is the horse, and the piano is asked to portray this character. Schubert writes triplet octaves which create drama and urgency, and also allow us to imagine the pounding hooves of a galloping horse. The octaves are played by the right hand, and a repeated melodic motif of short duration is played by the left.

It is precisely this use of relentless triplets in the song that prompted me to think of a similar spirit of unrest which exists in the *Prestissimo* movement of Op.109. The forward propelling rhythm so similar to that found in the song, can certainly be observed in many readings of the second movement, and I intend to bear it in mind when selecting the *tempo* and spirit of my own interpretation. Although this movement is written in 6/8 time, the quaver movement is exactly the same as that in the 4/4 time of *Erlkönig*, even though that is only marked *Allegro*. The oft recurring four bar motif at the beginning of the Beethoven is similar in spirit to the oft repeated short motif at the beginning of the song. That motif is played by the pianist’s left hand, as is the important motif at the beginning of the *prestissimo* which then undergoes several guises and changes of character later in the movement, as does the first motif in the song. These various similarities of spirit and character, not to mention construction, would seem to suggest a topic title of “Erl King *prestissimo*” for the second movement. We do not know for certain if Beethoven ever encountered it, but it is probable, given that it was published in 1821; and it was towards the end of his life that a selection of the younger man’s songs was presented to him. He was highly impressed, unlike Goethe, who failed to answer any of Schubert’s letters, or attend any performances of the work.

Having proposed the characteristics of the Schubert song as a topic for the second movement of the sonata, I will now look at each of the eight recordings, and describe the various interpretations of the great pianists.

1. ARTUR SCHNABEL.

One needs to remember that fidelity to the text was not regarded as a top priority during the era of Schnabel's recordings, and some of his interpretive decisions can seem surprising today. In the aftermath of the interpretative methods brought to light by the period instrument movement which started in the 1960s, we are today more conscious of attempting to recreate the composer's wishes. Schnabel and his contemporaries were much freer in their approaches, and sometimes adopted ways of playing that some would find outmoded today. However if we bear in mind Hellaby's recommendation that a desirable interpretation requires more than just *Texttreue* but relies on the personal authenticity and imagination of the artist, then we can view Schnabel as a compelling interpreter.

The *tempo* adopted for the second movement is extremely fast, so that it is difficult to hear the last quavers of each bar of the opening theme which are important melody notes. He clearly has decided to observe the *tempo* indication very literally. The left hand is also disproportionately loud, but this could be as a result of his desire to highlight the contrasting theme which will later be transformed and played with different character by the right hand. It certainly has the effect of sounding louder than the right hand theme. The effective rumbling tension in a soft dynamic of bars 9 to 24 is not observed, that whole passage rather being played in a loud dynamic. This results in a very exciting passage, even if too loud. The dynamic contrast is of necessity lessened at this point.

Many of Beethoven's most intense moments are achieved in softer dynamics, and this is surely one of them. Schnabel could possibly have decided however that such a rapid shift in dynamic would have disturbed his idea of architectural unity and therefore he uses dynamics that are related in order to highlight this unity. The fast *tempo* does not help in providing rhythmic clarity which would have been easier to achieve in a slower *tempo*—a lot of the

clarity becomes indistinct, especially in the left hand. He slows the *tempo* down abruptly in bars 25 to 32, but this is quite effective and seems appropriate, although of course there is no request for this from the composer. This results in a much needed respite after the preceding drama. The spirit of this section seems to ask for it, as these eight bars are far more lyrical in nature than the opening three lines of the movement.

The left hand is scarcely audible from bar 33 onwards, due to this passage being played very lightly. This fast, light way of playing results from the choice of an extremely fast *tempo* but is also a characteristic of Schnabel's technique. He has a light way of playing whenever fast *tempi* are called for. This method can also be observed in many other renowned pianists, most notably Martha Argerich. The choice of an instrument with a very light action could also be a factor. The effect is the creation of a passage of great virtuosity and excitement.

He accelerates through dotted rhythm in bar 35 onwards, not varying from the mood created at the opening of the movement, but clearly creating a unified whole of all the disparate fragments of material. Surprisingly, he makes an abrupt *rit.* in bars 47 and 48 which gives the effect of coming to a halt. He does this again in bars 51 to 53. Of all the eight pianists he is the only one to insert such a *rallentando* here. Here it could be argued that he wishes to emphasise the sudden loud chord in bar 55. The beginning of this bar is often played *forte* as here, but it is actually marked *crescendo*. Instead of this marked *crescendo* he opts for a *subito piano* which brings the *forte* in bar 57 forward two bars. The left hand is not clear in bar 61 and 62 which is a pity, as it is an answering phrase to one just played by the right hand. He also does not execute the resolution of the trill in the right hand in bar 63. There is a wrong note in bar 65, but such slips were common in recordings at that time.

He slows down the *tempo* completely at bar 70 with a very effective *diminuendo* in bar 69, being alone among the pianists to do that. Today such license would surely be frowned upon, but the result is very atmospheric and draws the listener in wondering what will occur next. He captures the mysterious atmosphere of this section very well but it does get slower and slower, and he also does not bring the left hand out in bar 83, rather focusing on the right, which is seldom heard, as this 'cello' melody is the one usually focused on by pianists. The

recapitulation also harks back to his original fast *tempo* so as to make parts of the melody inaudible. At this speed it is not really possible to devote sufficient attention to each of the melody notes. In bar 112 the melody played by the left hand cannot be heard, and between bars 137 to 143 there are several wrong notes as also noted above in bar 65. This is also a notable aspect of early recordings which differs strongly from today's norms. Wrong notes are unheard of in the recordings of today, whereas the primitive editing techniques of yesteryear, together with eminent interpreters being concerned with other aspects of musicianship other than the purely technical, has resulted in many recordings containing the odd slip, or sometimes even more noticeable technical problems.

In keeping with his desire to announce a new section as he did at the beginning of the movement, he slows down markedly in bar 149 like the parallel passage in the exposition, which is a feature not adopted by other interpreters, as it would appear to halt the excitement. While this remains surprising, it has an interesting effect in preparing the listener for the intensity of the relentless triplet scales which are to follow. It remains fascinating that he should conceive a new idea from bar 150 however. His marked *accelerando* from bar 170 to the end is an example of a choice which would not generally be popular today, as it seems to be an attempt to generate excitement which could be judged unnecessary. However, he has generally decided to perform this movement in a uniform *virtuoso* style, given the fast *tempi* selected, so this *accelerando* certainly is faithful to the adopted interpretative decision. He proceeds in a very rushed manner to the end.

2. WILHELM KEMPF.

The *Prestissimo* is opened in quite a steady *tempo* which surprises one early on by his ending the first phrase with an out of place *staccato* chord which is not marked. Kempff does this often at the ends of phrases and this could be considered a trademark of his. It does result in a rather clipped experience of the phrase. He also tends to speed through the last two quavers of each bar in the right hand, with the result that one cannot hear the theme fully. Examples of this are many from bar 10 onwards. A lot of the time this can be attributed to the necessity of holding other notes down at the same time by the right hand, which makes it difficult to

execute the notes played by the fourth and fifth fingers clearly. The idiosyncratic *staccato* makes another appearance at the end of bar 24.

Dynamically speaking, he does not execute the little swells of sound that Beethoven requests in bars 11, 15 and 19. At speed it is possible that these would not be noticeable. The overall sound could be regarded as too light if one judges it in the light of the topic which we have chosen, and the result is an almost Mozartian effect. This is somewhat surprising, if we remember that Kempff was considered the great German romantic pianist of the early 20th century. This effect could just be a result of his particular technique though, and not as a result of a conscious decision to execute it this way. As seen most noticeably previously in the Schnabel recording, many pianists possess a kind of technique which results in a light and delicate overall effect in fast passage work.

The more lyrical passage around bar 25 where more weight of sound is needed to sing out that phrase is also compromised. This continues into the next passage, depriving it of much of its drama which could have been achieved by employing more dynamic contrast and a weightier approach. He chooses to articulate every note; most noticeably in the scale passages starting in bar 57; and this quasi-Baroque manner of execution I have not come across before. It does seem rather out of place in the context of a composition of the early 19th-century played on a modern instrument, but that is exactly how a player of a fortepiano of the composer's day would play it, so perhaps Kempff was aware of such instruments long before the "period instrument" movement began.

A matter of fact style is adopted in the mysterious passage from bar 70. He does not attempt to make it more expressive like other artists, but plays strictly in metronomic *a tempo*. This has a far more matter-of-fact effect than the more mysterious reading of Schnabel's for instance. Perhaps he seeks to unify the sections. The recapitulation starting in bar 105 again is characterised by his light approach and staccato chords. At bar 120 he does attempt to make a more *legato* effect this time, and it certainly is more expressive than the previous occurrence of this motif. He also reverts to the Mozartian approach after bar 145, which compromises the drama. There are some effective *piano* moments from bar 152 though,

which are very successful in creating dynamic contrast. The rest of the movement is characterised by a *staccato* approach to the chords, and he uses a pronounced *ritardando* to conclude the movement. This is in total contrast with the unexpected *accelerando* of Schnabel.

3. STEPHEN KOVACEVICH.

The *Prestissimo* begins in a very deliberate *tempo*; not too fast, and with a well- judged balance of sound between the hands. Balancing the sound between the hands rather than favouring one hand, has the result of enriching the overall texture considerably. It is played very intensely, but with all the melody notes in the right hand clearly audible. Bar 9 begins very softly, and perhaps a shade less brilliantly than other performers, but he emphasises the expressivity of the music rather than just the brilliance. Bar 25 to 32 is held back slightly and played more inwardly; this prepares the listener for the intensities which follow in bar 33. In this passage he respects the composer's phrasing, and plays the right hand octaves *legato*, building up the tension until he releases it again in the *piano* of bar 43.

This bar and those which follow are all played with a restless but hushed sound quality which is of course ended by the huge *crescendo* starting in bar 55. The following scale passages are brilliantly played, and he plays the cadence in bar 65 with a certain deliberate attack. The *p.* passage starting in bar 70 is played relentlessly in *tempo*; here he does not try to bring out the expressivity; he keeps it in *tempo* and allows its expressive nature to manifest itself. Not for a second does he slow down, even at the end of the section in bar 104. This produces a metronomic but consistently exciting effect. The recapitulation is even more intense than the exposition, especially with the theme being played by the left hand in bar 112, and reminds one of the great climactic passage in Schubert's *Erlkönig*. In bar 123 he introduces a tiny expressive pause just before the *a tempo* in bar 124. Even though not marked, it does make sense to include it just before the *a tempo* starts up again.

The next passage is played much like the first, and the off-beats in each alternate bar from bar 144 are not played as accents as they often are by other pianists. Bar 156 is played as

marked as a *crescendo* and not as a *subito forte* as is so often the case. The *staccato* octaves in bar 166 and 167 are not played too sharply as heard elsewhere, but are given more weight. This increases the tension and leaves the listener in no doubt of their dramatic nature, which may not be the case if played more *staccato*. Similarly, the soft chords which follow in bar 168 are also more expressive. He makes a very convincing *crescendo* from bar 170 to the end.

4. SVIATOSLAV RICHTER.

The *Prestissimo* is not too fast but the opening theme is overpowered slightly by the over loud left hand. This secondary theme will be explored later in the movement, but here we have it emphasized emphatically right at the beginning. The *tempo* starting in bar 9 is actually slower than the beginning, and he highlights its elegiac quality rather than playing it in the usually more extrovert manner. It certainly is less virtuosic in approach than Schnabel or Mustonen. The next few lines are characteristically held back, thus changing the interpretation completely. He does not make much of the *sempre piu crescendo*, and consequently the passage seems to lack impetus or forward movement. We have seen this approach before, most noticeably in the Kempff recording, and to a lesser extent in the Schnabel, where an attempt to link the dynamic of the passage to the opening has been made.

There are some technical problems, most obviously in the left hand scale starting in bar 61. This is strange for such an esteemed pianist, but as mentioned above, these left hand figurations are very awkward, and remain a consistent technical problem throughout the movement. The overall slower *tempo* means that the *misterioso* quality of the passage starting in bar 70 is preserved. Bar 83 onwards is characterised by a slightly slower *tempo*, in which he brings out the various melodies alternately between the hands. He slows down markedly from bar 97 to the end of that section.

The fermata in bar 96 together with the *pp* dynamic has doubtless prompted him to arrive at this reading of the passage. The recapitulation is held back as in the beginning and then from bar 120 even more so. I have never heard this passage played so slowly. He is trying to make

a marked contrast between the lyrical and faster sections, and since this is the last time we will hear the slow version of the theme, he gives it extra emphasis. He picks up speed from bar 128. The next passage is also characterised by a sense of awkwardness we feel; we get the impression that he is having technical difficulties and this is most surprising. The truth is that it is difficult technically, particularly the left hand, which is by no means pianistic in conception, and combines awkward leaps such as those in bar 140-141, with other types of figures which are not logical, and never become easy even after many hours of practice. Awkwardness is thus written into this music.

Most noticeably like Schnabel, he speeds up in the last eight bars of the movement. These two older masters are alone among the eight pianists to do this, so one could surmise that it was fashionable among interpreters of their generation. In both cases the impression created is one of a sudden *accelerando* towards the end, in a *tempo* that has not been used before in the movement.

5. MAURIZIO POLLINI.

The second movement starts in a *tempo* which is not too fast and with everything audible, particularly the left hand. However, he makes the decision to disregard the marked dynamics as he did often in the first movement. Bar 9 onwards is quite loud; in fact there is no vestige of a real *piano* for the rest of the page, even at bar 25, where one might have expected more of a dynamic contrast. This could be a desire on his part to unify the sections which other interpreters have chosen to differentiate in approach. He makes a *ritardando* from bar 29 to 32 which is arguably ineffective because it stops the flow of ideas. This leads into the next restless section, also delivered in a louder dynamic than asked for. The problem with such unvarying dynamics is that the sense of excitement which should be a feature of the movement, is compromised.

Technically this movement is brilliantly played. Pollini makes light work of the left hand scales which seem to plague many pianists. The middle section starting in bar 70 is more convincing than the beginning of the movement. Here he creates a real *piano* sound, which

seems wholly to be the right atmosphere for this section. He slows down around bar 93, doubtless with the intention of preparing the way for a most dramatic recapitulation. In bar 115 he makes time to bring out the left hand melody, and slows down slightly so that this can be heard to best effect.

This section is played somewhat slower than others, with the result that a decided majestic atmosphere is created. Due to the softer dynamics not being observed as fastidiously as before, the result is that the entire page tends to sound unvarying in character and dynamics. He makes a slight technical error in the left hand in bar 165, but the octaves in the next bar are not played too short, and he does not rush towards the end of the movement like many others. The last three chords are given a fraction of time between each, and this contributes towards a feeling of finality.

6. EMIL GILELS.

The *tempo* he chooses for the second movement is much slower than that of Schnabel and others, and as a result he scores a great deal more clarity. Everything is very clear, and the left hand is especially treated with care so that we do not lose our focus on it. Bar 9 begins with a very convincing *piano* which emphasises the section's restlessness through its incessant quaver movement. Unlike Schnabel, all these quavers are audible, surely as a result of the overall *tempo* being considerably slower. The right hand melody notes are especially clear. The *tempo* slows down at bar 25 and even slower from bar 30 to 32. While this *rit.* is not marked it is effective, and prepares us for the tensions in the next passage.

He is restrained in the next passage: where other pianists would welcome the opportunity of virtuoso display, he keeps the reins tight and nothing disturbs the intellectual order. He interprets the passage in an elegiac way and underplays the drama by making almost no *crescendo* from bars 35 to 55, despite being clearly marked. The soft dynamic has a more serene effect than that adopted by others. The left hand is completely audible which might not be the case in a louder dynamic. He also makes the *subito forte* at the beginning of bar 55 instead of the marked *crescendo* which seems to be preferred by many pianists, myself included. The scales in both hands from bar 58 to 62 are perfectly executed and audible.

Surprisingly, he opts for a *subito piano* at the beginning of bar 68, rather than the marked *diminuendo*. He reduces the dynamics severely so that the whole passage from bar 70 to 104 becomes a mysterious, restless canvas. This has a similar effect to the mysterious section created by Schnabel.

The tremolo in the left hand is never blurred as many pianists see fit to do, and there is a minimum use of pedal. All the various colours are created primarily by the hands alone. He also makes no attempt to pointedly bring out the various melody lines; he rather relies on a simple delivery which is very effective for that reason. The rests in bar 103 to 105 are minutely observed and no slowing down before the start of the recapitulation. He does however reduce the speed from bar 120 as he did in the parallel passage in the exposition. As in the exposition, there is no build-up of drama from bar 132 onwards due to his decision not to treat the *sempre piu crescendo* as marked. He omits the marked trill in bar 164 on the second beat, and plays it as a single note, after which he plays the *staccato* octaves extremely short. It makes for a very dry end to that passage which can be thus interpreted, given the accented markings on each chord, but which reduces the sound and impact if played in such a dry manner. The movement ends on three extremely short chords played with very little pedal.

7. ALFRED BRENDEL.

The second movement keeps up this pianist's choice of measured *tempi*. It is, together with Gilels, the slowest of all the eight pianists that I have listened to. What is good about this *tempo* is that everything becomes audible, and he is able to bring out subtle gradations in dynamic such as those marked in bars 11 and 12 which I have actually not heard before with any degree of comparison. There is far more dynamic contrast in this interpretation than in many others that I have heard. The mysterious *piano* section starting in bar 25 is especially convincing in this slower *tempo*; it now has time to settle and breathe which it cannot do in much faster *tempi*. He slows down ever so slightly in bar 32 which is implied in the marking *a tempo* in bar 33.

The *p.* marking in bar 43 is not observed, with the resulting loud dynamic which lasts in this passage right up until bar 55. The very difficult passage which ensues really benefits from a slower *tempo* such as this, it remains regular and never sounds scrambled as can happen so easily. As in the previous lyrical passage, bar 70 onwards is most impressive in this rendition. The left hand is conceived as a distant rumbling, and over it the shifting harmonies are allowed to sing expressively. He makes absolutely no *rit.* from bar 100 to 105 - in the light of the slower *tempo*, it would have been inappropriate. The recapitulation of the theme at bar 105 is especially majestic, most noticeable in the left hand version of the theme. The rest of the movement is played in a similar manner to the exposition. Nothing is exaggerated, especially not the *staccati* octaves in bar 166 which many pianists play too short in my opinion. He also does not slow down, or accelerate at all at the end of the movement.

8. OLLI MUSTONEN.

The *Prestissimo* is taken incredibly fast, and with a very light touch, which could be judged to be an attempt at recreating the sound of the fortepiano. Unfortunately the light approach robs the movement of much of its drama; although this pianist obviously does not regard this as a dramatic movement; he imbues it with a sense of humour throughout. While this is not an approach that would be a natural choice for most pianists, it nonetheless remains interesting, and because of the fast *tempo* it makes for compelling listening. It could be argued that the composer adopted a humorous approach in the composition of several of his sonatas, and an example of one which springs immediately to mind is the *finale* of the E flat sonata, Op. 31 no. 3 which is also a 6/8 movement with the marking *presto con fuoco*.

The left hand figurations in this work are quite similar to those in Op.109, and this artist could well have had this movement in mind when he selected to play our *Prestissimo* in this fashion. Added to the breakneck speed and humorous elements are the employment of many mini *crescendi* which are not marked and are used possibly to create small swells of sound within the overall rustling dynamic. He also chooses not to observe phrasing markings, for example the phrase starting in bar 39 is not executed, and the right hand is played detached, and with a jaunty *staccato*. He does not play the customary *subito forte* at bar 55, but respects the *crescendo* marking.

The next passage with the scales in both hands is played without pedal in a very dry manner, with little pedal, and with very short sharp octaves in the right hand. Bar 66 onwards is very detached with no attention towards creating anything melodic out of it; the same goes for the mysterious passage starting in bar 70 where so much scope for interpretation is offered; he plays this in a very peremptory manner. Given the humorous treatment he prefers in this movement, it must be observed that a more profound rendition of this passage would not be in keeping with his choice. He does concentrate on highlighting the left hand melody in bar 83, but then quickly reverts to his earlier approach by employing extremely short *staccati* in bar 102 to 104 which call to mind a light-hearted *scherzo* of Mendelssohn.

In the recapitulation starting in bar 105 there is an idiosyncratic hesitation before the second beat of each bar, and he then rushes the final two quavers, this is especially noticeable in bar 112. In bar 120 he employs a detached humorous way of playing what others choose to interpret as a more intimate, lyrical passage. The rest of the movement is played brilliantly like the beginning and in his characteristic pedal-less manner. A new, previously unused accent is introduced on the last quaver of each bar from bar 140 onwards, followed in the next line by accents on the offbeat quavers in the bar. He does this continuously until the end of the movement: it is hard to conjecture the reason behind the choice of these accents, which are now used together with the customary brittle, short *staccato*. He accelerates the last three bars, but not as severely as Schnabel does.

From these descriptions it is clear that there are diverse ideas of interpretation in this movement, but the possible range is of necessity much narrower than in the first movement, given the strict rhythmic nature of the music. In various ways all the interpretations could be seen to capture the spirit of restlessness and danger also present in the Schubert *lied*. It could be argued that the pianists who adopt the slowest *tempi* such as Brendel and Gilels, come closer to capturing the pounding hooves so brilliantly evoked by Schubert, because the relentlessness of the rhythm is arguably lost at a faster and more brilliant *tempo*. The left hand becomes more marked and audible at a slower *tempo*, and is chiefly responsible for the necessary *marcato* quality. In addition, the awkwardness we experience when listening to parts of Richter's rendition can also be seen to be linking in to the discomfort experienced by

the child in the song. The technical difficulty will doubtless create an unavoidable effect of restlessness and disquiet, merely by being written thus.

The fastest *tempo* adopted is by Schnabel; so much so that the last two quavers of each bar lose their clarity due to being rushed, and the whole feels very rushed. It is impossible to bring out the inner voices of bar 35 onwards at that tempo. He also offers little contrast when the clearly more lyrical passages arrive, for example at bar 25. The slowest overall *tempi* are Gilels and Brendel, and Gilels especially uses a *marcato* approach with clear emphasis of the left hand rather than speed to achieve a compelling reading of this movement. However in the 2 slower passages starting in bars 25 and 125 he makes expansive *ritardandi* which makes it very difficult to keep the impetus moving forward. Mustonen leans towards Schnabel's version: very fast and tending to clip the ends of phrases and cadences short. He takes all the accents very seriously; clearly being under the impression that there is humour inherent in this music. His approach is largely humorous, and due to his use of an exaggeratedly detached way of playing, the final result sounds more akin to the pre-classical style of Scarlatti, rather than early Romantic music. Richter also adopts a slower tempo similar to Gilels, but most effective is his use of an ethereal *piano* lyricism in the two chorale like passages at bars 30 and 85 onwards. This provides an oasis of calm before the stormy passages return.

CHAPTER 4: THIRD MOVEMENT.

Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung, the finale of the sonata, is a theme and six variations. This movement is by far the longest of the three movements, and due to its complexity and expansive nature it remains the climax of the whole work's structure (Blom 1938: 228). This idea of creating finales that are larger in structure and duration than their preceding movements is not unique in the late sonatas of Beethoven, although the structure of a formal set of variations is only used in Op.109. Opp. 101, 106 and 110 all employ complex fugues in their last movements, and Op.111 has a loosely constructed set of variations which is far freer in nature than those of Op. 109. In the theme of this movement, Beethoven alternates tonic and dominant harmony in a lyrical, chorale- like statement which lasts for 32 bars, or two eight bar phrases which are repeated. In the repeats he includes enhancements to the harmony (Tovey 1931: 252). The 'walking bass' is written as a complementary melody to the right hand theme; indeed they could be played alone without the added harmony, so effective is their counterpoint. Bar 9 sees a complementary passage in the dominant coming to rest on a sustained chord in bar 14 which bears a resemblance to the famous diminished chord in the first movement; it is scored similarly as a held *arpeggio*. The theme resolves by the use of a simple cadence.

Variation 1 is very similar in mood, but while the harmonies are the same, it has a completely different effect due to the melody being placed higher up on the keyboard thus producing a more ethereal effect, contrasted by the simplified accompaniment in the left hand which here is reduced to one harmony per bar, and written in simple block chords. The hands are scored quite far apart on the keyboard, and this produces a different texture from that of the theme, which uses much closer harmony. The melody is ornamented by several dotted quavers, semiquavers and appoggiaturas which did not exist previously.

Hellaby's informant entitled "Duration manipulator" might be applied to the theme and first variation of this movement (Hellaby 2009: 43). This is essentially an expressive device which the performer calls on to maximize the expression in a particular passage. By highlighting certain elements traditionally used to emphasize expressive qualities, for example with more

ritardando and above all more *rubato*, the player can effectively alter the duration of individual notes and phrases. The theme and first variation offer plenty of scope for this. Choosing a very slow *tempo* as a few of the eight pianists do, and then pausing on individual notes as well as slowing down at the ends of phrases, results in durations that often differ markedly from performance to performance, more so than in a fairly straightforward, faster moving movement such as the *Prestissimo*. The *tempo* indication of the theme is difficult to interpret. The German indication gives no idea of the *tempo*, choosing to focus on a description of the expression needed for the execution of the movement. The Italian instruction below it reads: *Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo*. There are two ways of reading this; firstly because no comma occurs after *Andante*, the *molto* qualifier could be interpreted as applying to it, rather than to the *cantabile* which follows. This leaves the choice of *tempo* open to question; it can either be a more measured *Andante* or a faster moving one. We see a wide variety of *tempi* utilized by the eight pianists as a result of this.

Variation 2 is a marked contrast to the contemplative variation which precedes it. For the first time we experience movement after 64 bars of unchanging tranquillity, and the prevailing mood dissipates into a more ardent variation consisting of two ideas. The first consists of alternate semiquavers in a manner not unlike the beginning of the first movement, although of course much less *legato*. This gives way to a chorale-like section at bar 41 which is also similar to the ‘chorale’ in the first movement. In the first idea, all the primary notes of both bass and melody of the theme are present in the semiquaver formula. In the second idea the bar-long motive repeats and answers itself over dominant harmony in the bass. These two ideas are juxtaposed for the remainder of this variation; the next time the semiquavers appear, they are filled out with more developed harmony, most noticeable from bar 61 to the end.

Variation 3 follows abruptly without a pause and is marked *Allegro vivace*. Even though this variation is completely opposite in character to either the theme or the first two variations, featuring brilliant semiquaver display in a hitherto unused fast *tempo*, the notes of the theme can still be discerned in the first four bars, albeit in a parodied version of the first left hand phrase (Blom 1938: 228). It employs double contrapuntal material which is exchanged between the hands, and in spirit presages the excitement of the large-scale fugue which will occur in Variation 5. Quavers in the right hand change from being single notes to octaves in

bar 85 in order to increase the impetus and excitement. Also noticeable is the strong dynamic contrast he expects between *forte* and an almost *subito piano*.

Variation 4, marked a little slower than the theme relies again on answering passages exchanged between the hands (Rosen 2002: 233), material having been developed from the chorale-like second idea in the second variation (Tovey 1931: 253). After the first eight-bar phrase comes a strange passage with little melodic content; rather atmospheric *tremolandi* type chords in both hands which introduce a sense of spaciousness and warmth, and provide a restful pause before the onset of the next variation without a break.

Variation 5 is characterized by vigorous fugal texture without being a strict fugue and possesses similar relentless rhythm to variation 3. There is a marked contrast between the long held minims and the clipped quaver movement in the left hand. As previously, there is a use of contrasting dynamics for dramatic effect, most noticeably in bar 145. Repeated notes in the left hand starting in the same bar contribute to the sense of forward movement and excitement, but do not have anything to do with the original fugal idea. Again, there is no break before the final variation, but certainly an abrupt change of mood.

We are now plunged back into the sound world of the original theme; indeed the beginning of Variation 6 is almost identical to the theme except it is placed as an inner voice of the right hand with repeated notes above it. With each successive bar the momentum grows, due to the clever idea of introducing notes of half the value of the preceding ones, thus crotchets become quavers, quavers become semiquavers. Soon the thumbs of both hands are playing trills of ever-increasing dynamic strength, which crescendos to a passage with a long held trill in the bass, and a virtuoso display of demisemiquaver *arpeggios* in the right hand. The trill then gets transferred to the right hand with demisemiquavers in the left, and then gradually the mood calms down to prepare the way for the final statement of the theme in its most simple form. It is impossible to ignore the effect of enhancement that it appears to have acquired after all the transformations it has undergone. The movement ends as simply and as quietly as it began.

There are many challenges of execution which the aspiring performer of this movement will need to confront. Technically, this is surely one of the most difficult of all Beethoven's creations as will be shown, but conceptually it is also problematic, and requires rigorous decision-making which will help to produce a cohesive unity of all the many strands of ideas in this movement. To begin with, the theme and first variation can sound laboured if the chosen *tempo* is too slow, as the possibilities of dynamic variation are slight within this page. Also, given the characteristic decay of the sound the moment a note is struck, the result is that the style of writing with simple crotchet chords can sound very laboured if not given a sufficiently forward moving impetus. Pedalling is also a problem here; particularly in the left hand, one needs to use the pedal to join chords and single notes that are spaced too far apart to be joined using finger *legato*, indeed it is imperative to do this or else the effectiveness of the *legato* will be compromised. Even Wilhelm Kempff, who was a lifelong detractor of what he called 'pseudo-*legato*,' that is to say using the pedal to assist the fingers in creating a *legato* effect, rather than by relying on the fingers alone, is forced to use ample pedal here (Kraemer 1975: 4). To avoid clashing sonorities, the pedal often needs to be changed on every crotchet beat, which amounts to a lot of pedal changes, but the alternative would result in less than clean sonorities.

In Variation 2 the chief technical challenge is to execute each of the semiquavers in a slightly detached and perfectly equal manner, mostly in a soft dynamic. In bar 41 one then needs to make a complete contrast and produce a more ardent sound which I mentioned earlier. The full chords in the left hand need sonority and over them the right hand should play the melody most expressively. Likewise in bar 57. Now follows in Variation 3, a variation of extreme technical difficulty. The problem here is chiefly the writing for the left hand, which, if one studies the recommended fingering in any of the editions, one can deduce that it is writing that is not comfortable, and does not lie easily under the fingers. However, this 'unpianistic' approach of Beethoven's is typical, and many examples can be found throughout his piano works. I have had problems with the opening of this variation in performance in the past, when the left hand failed and I was obliged to re-start. It is a treacherous moment. By the time one has reached the third line it does seem to get easier and improve in facility, due possibly to the introduction of four quavers in a bar in the opposite hand to the semiquavers, as opposed to two quavers in the opening two lines. This definitely provides some help towards the more relaxed execution of the semiquavers, even if it is

purely imaginary. The last four bars of the variation sees the first introduction of octaves in the right hand, and at speed these are also markedly difficult to keep together with the left hand semiquavers.

Two other passages of fierce technical difficulty are in the fugal fifth variation from bar 133 to 136, and then the long passage containing trills in the final variation. These consecutive sixths and thirds in the right hand in bar 133 are notoriously taxing to play cleanly at speed. Even pianists of stature such as Richter seem to find the rapid hand position shifts a problem. Many editors, Schnabel especially, provide a few alternative fingerings for this passage, none of which prove to be entirely satisfactory; it remains an awkward passage. The trills in various guises which take up most of the final variation have become well known for their difficulty, and any pianist wishing to perform this sonata will be aware of the huge challenge which lies ahead of him. The problem is that Beethoven expects a single hand to play both a sustained trill and melody notes as well, which becomes almost impossible when the melody lies almost an octave away from the continuous trill. A method has to be practiced whereby the illusion of a fully sustained trill is created, but where the outer fingers of the right hand move to the melody and back to the trill quicker than the ear can discern any gap between the two elements. This is required of both hands from bars 165 to 168, but in bar 177 onwards it becomes even more difficult by the introduction of fast moving demisemiquavers in the left hand, while the right continues as before. The very unpianistic semiquavers of variation 3 are repeated here in a no less awkward fashion, but it is the right hand which is required to jump as much as a ninth while still executing a trill with the thumb and index finger, which has the major challenge here.

In thinking about possible topics for the last movement, and the characteristics of the music which could give rise to one, I chanced upon the following quote from a celebrated book on Beethoven's late style entitled *Late Beethoven* by Maynard Solomon: "The *Missa solemnis* draws from a reservoir of expressive musical topics or characteristic style-features and gestures that had accumulated over time in the genres of European music for the Catholic Church" (Solomon 2003: 198). In the chapter entitled "Intimations of the Sacred" from Solomon's book, he demonstrates the various traditional practices of sacred music composition which Beethoven uses to illuminate the text in the *Missa solemnis*. An example

would be the use of trombones on the word “judicare” in the Credo, which was often used at that place by composers to emphasize divine power (Solomon 2003: 200). Solomon continues to describe many other examples, but what he also does is to give an overview of the tendency towards religious considerations which occur more frequently in Beethoven’s late works than before. “Allusions to the sacred in his late music, however, are not necessarily limited to more or less literal, descriptive text-music analogies....His more interesting contributions to the musical symbolization of the sacred may consist in shaping musical form and rhetoric in ways suggesting an initiatory view of existence” (Solomon 2003: 201). It will be admitted that spiritual journeys of a more pantheistic nature can be discerned in earlier works such as the Symphony No. 6, “Pastorale,” and others, but by his late period, he was closer to identifying with a fairly traditional idea of a creator God, if not expressly a Christian one.

It is most telling that his title provided for the third movement *Molto adagio* of the late String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132 is as follows: “*Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit in der lydischen tonart.*” (Holy song of thanksgiving of a convalescent to the Deity, in the Lydian mode.) The name of the Deity is not specified, but the spirit of the music is so akin to so many similar chorale or hymn-like movements in Beethoven’s later works, that they become almost idiosyncratic of this compositional style-period. One finds them in the sonatas Opp. 101, 106, 109, 110 and 111, as well as all the late quartets, Opp. 127, 130, 131, 132 and 135. The religious character of these *adagios* could be described as covert due to the fact that they are instrumental compositions, but Beethoven employs religious texts in his last two great choral works, the *Missa solemnis* and Symphony No. 9, and thereby leaves us in no doubt of his religious convictions, even if tempered by the attitude of brotherly love and respect which pervades the symphony. Solomon also suggests that in Beethoven’s late works there can be found a representation of the individual as part of a deeply rooted community, and that the composer represents this individualism by fusing a variety of musical signs. For example the *tempo* of a measured walk could be the suggestion of the impassioned quest of a lone pilgrim, as opposed to a chorale or hymn-like melody, which could be emblematic of a congregation gathered together for one purpose which is to celebrate their faith. He suggests that “in late Beethoven, such implied circuitous narratives tend to convey weighty spiritual implications, for they appear to be imbued with a purposeful and moral character in the service of an exalted principle” (Solomon 2003: 201). So, a possible topic for the third

movement could be either “chorale-variations,” or “Dankgesang-variations.” Bearing the religious connotations in mind will provide the interpreter with hints on the character that needs to be captured in the last movement.

1. ARTUR SCHNABEL.

The theme of the last movement is played quite simply with the exception of a tiny *rit.* on the ornament in bar 6. He makes no *crescendo* in bar 7, and introduces a big *rit.* on the last two notes of bar 8. The sound employed by the left hand is of a different quality to the right, and is less emphasised, with the result that there is less harmonic support to the melody. There is a school of piano playing which holds fast to the belief that the melody should be emphasized over the supporting harmonies, and that is possibly what Schnabel is doing here. He pushes the *tempo* in bar 9 but then compensates by a marked *rit.* in bar 14 and even more on the final notes of the cadence of the theme. This is a characteristic use of *rubato*, which nowadays is mainly confined to works of a later compositional date than Beethoven, but which was freely used by pianists in Schnabel’s era.

In Variation 1 he chooses a *tempo* that is actually slower than that of the theme, and makes it even slower in both the first and second time bars of the variation. Given the more expressive nature of the variation, and its use of higher lying notes than the theme, Schnabel is clearly intent on making the most of the expressive qualities of this variation. Bars 26 to 28 are played very simply, but this effect is then altered by the introduction of a pronounced *crescendo* in bar 29 which could be thought of as harsh. However, it will be observed that this moment is actually the climax of the whole variation, and Schnabel is clearly wanting to bring the peak of this phrase out to full effect. He employs more and more *rit.* with each succeeding cadence, in what could be described as liberties today but which were normal interpretive devices at the time.

Variation 2 is very lightly played, and with a simple detached approach, rather than the *staccato* semiquavers we often hear. He makes an unmarked *rit.* in bar 36 which leads into the chorale-like section. He slows down at the end of trills, for example in bar 42 and 43,

and the repeat of the original material in bar 49 is faster than the beginning. This material is basically a repeat of the start of the variation, but he gives it a new colour in bar 58 by changing the chords which are traditionally played *legato* with pedal, to *mezzo-staccato*, without, which results in a much lighter effect.

Variation 3 is played extremely fast and light. He executes all the dynamics as well as all the *sf.* markings. Some of the left hand passages are not perfectly clear at this *tempo* but this could be due to the inferior recording techniques of the time.

Variation 4 is played in a very affecting, flowing manner. He brings out melody in the left hand when called for, for example in bar 101. Surprisingly, he increases the *tempo* suddenly at bar 102 and 103 which seems inappropriate, but he is moving towards the top of the phrase in bar 103, so this seems feasible. The *pp* passage starting at bar 105 is especially effective and moving. He uses the most hushed sound possible to get the best effect out of this passage. In bar 107 and 108 he takes the *sf.* markings extremely seriously; they are almost hammered out, but it does provide a very exciting *fortissimo* climax.

Variation 5 is once again very fast, so as to make the clarity of the quaver movement less audible. It is my view generally, that excitement is often lost by the choice of too fast a *tempo*, as here. Some rhythmic insecurities are evident, which is not unusual amongst many pianists given the immense technical difficulty of this passage, and he also rushes at various spots, most notably from bar 133 to 136. The repeated notes in the left hand in bar 25 onwards are not audible, which is a pity, as it is their rhythmic relentlessness which should provide this section with its excitement.

Variation 6 which proceeds *attacca* after the fugal variation, starts with a chosen *tempo* that is actually faster than his original Theme *tempo*. Interestingly, he plays the 9/8 bar (bar 157) incorrectly. He plays it as if the quaver beat in the 3/4 equals that in the 9/8, but it should be played with the crotchet beat in the 3/4 equalling crotchet in the 9/8. He pushes the tempo in bar 158 onwards; presumably to prevent the trills in both thumbs from turning into triplets.

He keeps getting faster and then employs a marked accent on the thumb which plays the first of every group of demisemiquavers from bar 17 onwards. He pauses after the third beat of bar 176, and then gets even faster than before. This makes the huge *rit.* that he employs from bar 181 very effective.

The final return of the theme is played extremely simply, and he creates the most hushed dynamics possible for his reading of the closing cadence.

2. WILHELM KEMPF.

The theme of the finale is played at a moving walking pace, which definitely seems faster than usual. The dynamics are very controlled and he makes no effort to turn the ornaments into expressive vehicles; they are played very matter-of-factly. The *cresc.* and *p.* markings in bars 7 and 8 are very slightly observed; the dynamics are basically unvarying. In the second half of the theme he highlights the E in bar 11 as a peak in the four bar phrase. This note is only a quaver, and accentuating it so has the effect of shifting the rhythmic emphasis from the natural conclusion of the phrase, which should only occur in the following bar. As in bar 5, he does not emphasize the *arpeggio* in bar 13 for any expressive effect; it is played quite simply. Variation 1 is actually slightly faster than the theme which certainly makes it easier to listen to, and certainly to play. One recalls Schnabel as playing this variation even slower than the theme. One can appreciate this more flowing *tempo*, as it is extremely difficult to sustain a slower one, and to keep one's audience interested. Unusually, he plays the second note of the quintuplet in bar 19 together with the left hand, so that the F sharp, not the E is played with the left. I have not heard this before. Interestingly in bar 28 he brings out the left hand melody, which is also an idea I have not encountered before. It makes a good counterpoint to what is going on in the right hand. Throughout the variation, all the *appoggiaturas* are played very fast. This is a contrast to other artists, myself included, who prefer to treat these for their melodic and expressive effect, and so play them a fraction slower. The last line of variation 1 is played with an extremely soft dynamic which certainly draws the listener in.

Variation 2 is played much faster than is usual among the eight pianists, and this does raise a problem in bar 9 when the chordal passage then becomes very fast. We are used to a more expressive approach to this chorale-like melody than presented here, but he may have decided on a single character for this variation, rather than two contrasting ones. He maintains his light approach in this variation throughout. Where it becomes out of character, in my view, is in bars 45 to 48, and the parallel passage bars 61 to 64. I cannot agree with his conception of this passage as *staccato*, and played with very little or no pedal. The chords lose their richness of colour and the passage becomes much reduced in expression. This surprising attitude is certainly not followed by the more emotive approach favoured by Gilels or others. He also does not follow the marked dynamics in bars 63 to 64, ending the variation loudly, by way of introduction into the fast variation which follows.

Variation 3 is played in quite a steady *tempo*, with a definite decision to highlight the quaver movement wherever it occurs, so the semiquavers are always in the background but nonetheless still audible. As observed elsewhere describing other recordings, the awkwardness of the writing is in evidence here, with even a few slips being noticeable. The semiquavers certainly do not lie easily under the hands.

The next variation is played faster than I have ever heard; it certainly produces a flowing effect between the hands, but one has to ask whether or not it is a little too fast? It is after all marked *etwas langsamer als das Thema*. As in the previous variation, all the quavers are given due prominence, especially those in the left hand. After adopting such a fast *tempo* he needs to decrease speed so as to capture the more pensive mood of the middle passage; this he does in the first bar of both the first and second time bars. As will be seen from bar 105, his original *tempo* is now too fast, so he slows the whole machine down to accommodate the more expressive middle section. He does not overemphasise the accent markings in bar 107.

In the fugal variation 5 he keeps the quaver movement extremely hushed as he did with the semiquavers in variation 3. Here the minims are accentuated too violently in my opinion, allowing nothing else to be heard. He has decided that these melody notes which form the backbone of the theme need to be emphasized. In bar 137 onwards he applies the same style

of accentuation to the rhythmical left hand repeated notes which can all be clearly heard. He makes a *ritardando* at the end of the variation, which is not marked, but which is often done thus to a greater or lesser degree, if one wants to slow everything down in preparation for the stillness required by the final variation.

The final variation when it arrives, makes its appearance rather simply, without relying on any kind of manufactured emotional appeal. Nevertheless by the third line he compels us to listen more intently, and the ever enlarging trill is very well executed. Bar 168 is very exciting, achieved primarily by a tremendous left hand trill. His habit of playing an accent on the first of each of the groups of four demisemiquavers in the right hand from bar 169 is not an approach that I would agree with. Bar 177 onwards is played in a *piano* dynamic, which is unusual. Usually the calming down after the excitement only happens much later on around bar 183, but here he applies it from bar 177. His right hand trill and added quavers is brilliantly played. The sonata ends with the last statement of the theme played here much softer than he did at the beginning of the movement. He uses an extremely hushed tone which he uses on a few other occasions in the sonata, to very powerful effect.

3. STEPHEN KOVACEVICH.

The last movement begins with the theme, here played in a *tempo* that is not too slow as is indicated by the composer in the delineation *Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo*. Kovacevich has clearly decided that the *molto* qualifier applies to *Andante* and not *cantabile*. He makes it clear that it is not an *Adagio*, and agrees that it should be treated in a more flowing manner than is often interpreted. He keeps the dynamic extremely hushed, and even more so in the bar marked *p*. In the repeat of the second half of the theme he gets considerably slower; perhaps to emphasize the growing pathos and also leading up to the expressive way he plays the *arpeggios* in bars 13 and 14. The supporting left hand harmony is always very judicious and the subtle gradations of tone colour in the harmony are minutely observed.

Variation 1 is played in a slower *tempo* than the theme which works, due to the wider range employed by it, and the more spacious use of more thickly scored chords in the left hand. The cello-like resonances in the left hand in bars 23 and 24 are fully exploited. He makes a well-planned *crescendo* in bar 28 which contributes much to the ecstatic sentiment expressed in bar 29. The next variation is played in a proportionate *tempo*, and in not a too detached manner as encountered in other interpretations. The hands have an equal distribution of sound, and he makes full use of the melodic possibilities of the left hand. The ensuing chorale section is played very touchingly and not rushed at all. He pays due attention to the inner parts in the right hand, and the trills are used for expressive effect. The richer chordal passage starting in bar 45 is especially satisfying, more so since he also respects the marked dynamics in bars 47 and 48. The rest of the variation is similarly played with the same amount of pathos. Bar 61 is especially affecting, making full use of the rich sonorities employed by both hands.

Variation 3 is brilliant but without being too fast. He takes the accents marked in bar 68 and 72 etc. very seriously. I have not heard them so pronounced before, but the resulting effect is pleasing, as it contributes to a strong rhythmical effect. He makes a good *crescendo* in each of the four bar phrases and then *piano* as marked. This has the effect of waves of sound following each other, which is very appealing. He does not slow down at all moving into Variation 4 which is played in a very convincing flowing *tempo*, which is actually slightly slower than the theme as marked. If it is taken too slowly this variation can become turgid as a result of the thickly scored arpeggios and chords, but not in this case. At this moving *tempo* it has the effect of a long spun out melody, alternated between the hands. The *sforzandi* in bar 107 are accentuated, but never offensively; always in the more lyrical context.

The fugue in Variation 5 is played fast and brilliantly, and fairly lightly. The accents are brought out and the whole is very clear and rhythmic. The *tempo* of the theme in Variation 6 is slightly faster than at the beginning of the movement, but that would seem to be justified considering all the transformations that it has gone through. The quasi-trill starting in bar 158 is played extremely softly to start with, with the melody more in the light; when the full trill explodes in bar 164 it is always treated subserviently to the melody, and is always softer, even in the *forte* dynamic. In bar 168 he makes a very effective *rit.* just before the left hand

trill begins. The next passage can only be described as apocalyptic in its scope; it makes a huge impression despite the fact that the left hand trill is actually softer than the right hand; which is not easy to accomplish. In the passage starting in bar 177 the great power present in his left hand comes to the fore: usually this passage features the right hand in the light, but here it is the left which is featured more. He does not diminish the tension once until the marked diminuendo in bar 185, which then becomes very arresting due to its postponement. The final utterance of the theme is exactly what it had been at the outset; simple and deeply felt.

4. SVIATOSLAV RICHTER.

The theme is played very simply and completely in *tempo* without any idiosyncratic distortion of the rhythm for so called musical effect. *Crescendi* are restrained, most notably in the second line where the tension is held back and kept within the range of intimacy set out at the beginning. Variation 1 is even slower than the theme, and is played with a more deliberate feel, albeit within a very hushed dynamic. All the *appoggiaturas* are not played on the beat, which is quite unusual, as they tend to sound more like slow *acciaccaturas*. In the second half of Variation 1 he has the tendency to slow down on the second half of bars 26 to 28. This is not necessary, as the *tempo* is slow enough anyway. He also slows down even more at the end of this variation.

The next variation is quite fast; in fact much faster than the theme. He makes little attempt to observe the dynamics (for example in bar 39). Nevertheless, the chorale is beautifully played, respecting the *teneramente* marking. The next chordal passage in bar 45 is however far more peremptory, and it is a passage of great richness of harmony distributed between the hands. It could have benefitted from the use of more pedal, as the lack of it produces a somewhat dry and metronomic effect. The second chorale in bar 57 is given more expressivity on the melody notes which gives it a more urgent sense than before. He achieves this by moving the *tempo* forward slightly.

Variation 3 is played without much gradation in tone, or adherence to the marked dynamics, but at the selected fast *tempo* he has decided that good rhythm and brilliance are more important. The *tempo* selected is between crotchet = 142 and 145 which is amongst the fastest of all the pianists. In addition, he does not slow down before moving into the flowing 4th variation. This is not played too slowly so it does give a sense of the flowing movement which it surely should have. When the melody occurs in the left hand it is given due care and consideration. He has the tendency to move ahead at certain times, and he also takes the accent markings in bar 75 and 76 extremely literally which does verge on a somewhat harsh sound, but on the whole this is a convincing performance of the variation. It certainly provides contrast between the much more lyrical beginning of the variation, and its robust conclusion.

The Variation 5 fugue is quite slow and held back, rarely among the eight recordings. The measured approach is good in establishing a more relentless sense of rhythm than a faster *tempo* could have done. There are some very bad wrong notes here, which, given the fact that this is not a live recording, does seem strange. It of course is a potent reminder of how difficult this music is, and how we in the early 21st century have come to expect note perfect performances on compact disc, forgetting that the reality of live performance even by esteemed artists is often very different. Richter possibly recorded the whole variation in one take; preferring to capture the immediacy and excitement of a live performance than dividing it up into takes which would have proved easier. However any remembrances of slips fade into insignificance when we listen to the way that he plays the last few bars in such a hushed dynamic so as to prepare the way for the final variation.

This starts off very calmly but he gets progressively faster until the trill in bar 165 is much faster than the beginning. This could be a way of ensuring that the trill does not merely become triplets as is so often the case. By speeding up, he ensures that the triplets are less audible, and produces an effect like a faster trill. More wrong notes in bar 168 lead to quite a convincing *forte* trill in the left hand. The right is played in quite a held back manner, and not as brilliantly as some other recordings. The trill in the left is actually played quite a bit softer than the right hand. The wrong notes in bar 177 are quite noticeable, but this bar is one of the

most challenging in the entire sonata. The trill in the right hand is executed with brilliance. The bridging passage back to the original theme is planned carefully and convincing.

5. MAURIZIO POLLINI.

The approach adopted for the theme of the last movement could perhaps be described as more ardent than adopted by many of his peers who prefer a more introverted, lyrical approach. The dynamic is also considerably louder than usual, even increasing to *forte* at times. The *crescendo* in bar 5 is quite exaggerated, although it is in keeping with the dynamic of the opening. He does observe the *piano* marking in bar 8, both times. The second half of the theme is characterized by a sound that grows more intense with every chord, with a peak reached in bar 13. So many other pianists prefer a far more hushed approach than this. The *arpeggio* in bar 13 is played much faster than usual which makes it sound rather peremptory.

The first variation is taken slightly slower than the theme, and played as if always held back. The thickly scored chords in the left hand could contribute to this, but I think the slower *tempo* is deliberate. The dynamic could not be said to be soft, like many pianists, but more expressive. Frequently, his *crescendi* are very loud to begin with and so simply remain the same all the way. This seems to be a common idiosyncrasy of this artist. Another practice which is repeated by certain other pianists, is to play the left hand a fraction before the right hand sounds, and one can hear this quite clearly in this variation. Many pianists from a generation even older than Schnabel's adopted this manner of playing, and it is even in use today by many pianists mostly of middle European or Russian descent. It would seem that this is done to emphasise melody in the right hand, but it reduces the overall texture and the entire harmonic structure of a chord, and makes for a far less rich, full sound. It is a practice most noticeable in bar 29, but perhaps other listeners will not find it quite so inappropriate.

Alone amongst all the recordings, Variation 2 is played *legato*, with all the semiquavers joined, and not detached as is far more common. I have never heard it played like this before. While it produces a much less ethereal effect, it is certainly more expressive, and thus it should be taken seriously. Bar 41 which can be described as the "chorale" is played very

expressively, although arguably it could start with a great deal more of the requested *teneramente* than it does, but he does realise the full expressive potential of this passage, unlike some other pianists who adopt a more peremptory approach. He does however pass by the various dynamic gradations around bar 51 onwards, with the result that the expressive effect could have been greater. All the trills in this variation are executed rather as slower quintuplets/sextuplets rather than genuine faster trills, but this does not disturb. Once again he is trying to maximize expression. The *piano* requested in bar 63 is not observed as the whole passage is seen as one long *crescendo*.

Variation 3 is characterized by an unclear rendition of the semiquavers in the first few bars, which become clearer at bar 73. Bearing in mind how risky this opening is, it is not easy to accomplish brilliance and clarity in the first two lines at all. The *tempo* is very fast and none of the excitement would have been lost at a slightly slower *tempo*. The dynamics are also characteristically not executed, so the whole variation played at a single dynamic level, which has been seen in other interpretations.

Variation 4 is played very slowly, without the flow between the hands that is usually evident here. He has taken the instruction at the top of the variation which calls for a *tempo* slower than the theme more literally. He has also decided against bringing any particular melody out as is usually done, but instead pursues an even texture with all elements in balance. Most noticeably, the left hand melody in bar 101 is not in evidence as it usually is. In the second time bar, the *pianissimo* is extremely well executed, as indeed is the whole passage, and the *crescendo* is especially effective starting in bar 106. He avoids hammering out the *sf.* markings in bar 107 as is so often done. The variation is brought to a thoughtful close, before he launches into the fugue of variation 5 which is taken at quite a steady *tempo*. He accents all the longer notes in the first part of the variation, with the result that some of the quaver movement is slightly overpowered. He also gets faster towards the end of the variation, as it becomes more difficult, perhaps because of tension. From bar 137 the relentless quaver rhythm of the left hand should be highlighted more as it contributes greatly to the rhythmic excitement of this passage; it is not in this interpretation, perhaps because the overall *tempo* is too fast to allow. He ends the variation in the marked *sempre piano* dynamic of the last four bars, and this is impressive.

Variation 6 starts in a very hushed manner but this soon changes, and it becomes prematurely loud in bar 158: the inner semiquavers are also loud. They should be softer than the outer-lying melody. When the real trill starts in bar 164 he increases the *tempo* so as to accommodate the trill being played as triplets. The demisemiquavers in bar 168 are played slower than expected, considering the earlier *accelerando*, but the effect is still triumphant and brilliant. Bars 177 to 184 are exceptionally convincing. He keeps the tension going right until the end, with the semiquavers superbly executed in the left hand, and the right hand trill very powerful and fast. He only starts to calm down in bar 185 and this is done extremely gradually and with a great deal of thought, so that the timing of the progression from the fast to slow tempo is minutely observed. The variation ends with the repeat of the movement's initial theme, played in similar fashion as the beginning of the movement, in a not very *piano* dynamic.

6. EMIL GILELS.

The finale starts very simply in a very slow *tempo*. He has the habit of pausing very slightly before the second beat of each bar of the theme. He makes a nice *crescendo* in bar 7 and then follows it by the required *subito piano* in bar 8. The left hand in bars 9 and 10 and underplayed somewhat, with the result that the melody is ill supported by the moving chords, mostly in first inversion. He then slows down markedly in bar 12 leading up to the F sharp minor *arpeggio* which is given special emphasis by virtue of it and the following bar being the high point of the theme musically.

Variation 1 is characterised by a typical Romantic European or Russian style of playing, where the right hand is played a millisecond after the left so as to ostensibly highlight the right hand melody more. What such a style of playing actually does is to produce a less opulent sound, in a chordal passage which so obviously should rely on the solid foundation of the left hand harmony.

Variation 2 sees the choice of a faster *tempo* which echoes the light, equal distribution of sound between the hands that he chose to start the first movement with. He makes a big *diminuendo* in bar 40 to prepare the way for the first appearance of the chorale-like passage, which is a feature of this variation. This preparation is somewhat lost because he chooses to play the chorale in a detached and unemotional manner with no pedal, producing a rather dry effect. What he certainly does is to bring out the inner voices of the chorale in the right hand, but the emotive appeal of the variation is somewhat diminished by the dry tone colour.

Variation 3 is given in a very measured *tempo*; nothing like the maniacal *tempo* of Schnabel. This has advantages in that everything is clearly audible, and the relentlessness of the slower *tempo* is very exciting, even if it does lose some brilliance in the process. The quaver lines, which contain all the melodic material are brought out nicely and make a perfect foil to the precise semiquavers. The contrasting *piano* sections are not sufficiently soft unfortunately and much needed contrast is lost. This contrast is very difficult to achieve at that very fast *tempo*. He makes a pronounced *rit.* in the last two bars before the start of the next variation. It then appears that because of the slow *tempo* of Variation 3 that the crotchet beat there now becomes the semiquaver beat in Variation 4, which is essentially problematic, as the *tempi* of the two variations should not be related, given their disparate markings.

Variation 4 is beautifully played with a lyrical tone employed throughout. Typically he holds back the *tempo* but in the case of this variation it contributes to the flowing style. He slows down on the first beat of bar 101 to prepare for the left hand statement of the melody. He slows down again at the end of bar 103. In the second time bar, bars 105 and 106 are played extremely softly; this hushed approach is very effective and makes the *crescendo* in bar 107 that much more powerful. The accents marked in three places in bar 107 are not observed, unlike Schnabel who over emphasises them. Surprisingly he replays the tied note at the beginning of bar 111, on both repeats.

Variation 5 is played in a very slow deliberate *tempo* like the other fast movements of this interpretation. It has good and bad points. It does become laborious in the second half of the

variation where the excitement is not maintained, but everything is extremely controlled and well-ordered, which contrasts with many other pianists' performances.

Variation 6 starts after a marked *rit.* in bar 152. The *tempo* seems extremely slow but it is exactly the same as that employed at the beginning of the movement. The opening of this variation is beautifully played with excellent sound quality on the inner voices which here are the same notes of the initial theme. Unlike Schnabel he correctly observes the crotchet versus dotted crotchet beat in the 9/8 bar. He slows down slightly before bar 161. The next idiosyncrasy arises in bar 164 where the marked trill is played exactly the same as the demisemiquavers which preceded it. He makes no attempt to play a true trill as required. This does make a notoriously difficult passage much easier to execute. His slower approach is most noticeable in bar 168 where he avoids the usual tendency of generating excitement by the brilliance of the passage, but plays it in a much more detached fashion. Bar 177 is played with a real trill in the right hand, not demisemiquavers. This is the most successful part of this variation, and he gradually starts calming down in bar 184 to prepare the way for a very tranquil final appearance of the theme in bar 188

7. ALFRED BRENDEL.

The theme of the last movement is played in a moving *tempo* which is much easier for the listener to appreciate than one which is too slow. Even the *arpeggios* in bars 5 and 13 do not disturb the gently flowing approach as they often do when accentuated or brought out too pointedly. He employs an especially ardent sound in the second half of the theme which is aided by the emotive harmony in the left hand. In bar 14 the *arpeggio* is not seen as part of the right hand melody, as is often the case; the melody starts with the C sharp in that bar. This is an extremely moving rendition of the theme; so often it can be played with all the correct ingredients, but still lack poignancy; not so here. This attitude continues into Variation 1, where the repeated Bs are given special emphasis with the most expressive sound possible on the instrument I think. He is not afraid to increase the volume markedly, as he does in bars 23 and 24, with great support from the left hand. Interestingly, he chooses to play the *appoggiaturas* on the beat, and even then slightly delayed on occasion. The increase in

volume in the middle of the variation and then decrease towards the end makes for a very convincing architectural shape.

Variation 2 is played very slowly, much like the rest of the sonata; and in the more common detached approach which Pollini does not adhere to. He does make the most of the many subtle gradations in tonal colour which the composer asks for in this variation. He also slows down imperceptibly in sections such as bar 45 onwards, to allow the full sonority of the chords to ring out. Interestingly he sees the transition into Variation 3 as proceeding without any sort of a break: it is almost as if the next variation is in the same *tempo*, so seamless is the progression. Variation 3 is brilliantly played, but again, much slower than other pianists. It is also played in roughly the same dynamic throughout, with not much contrast. He does not make a great effort to highlight the various melodies dispersed between the hands, but plays everything approximately at the same volume and attention to detail.

Variation 4 is played in a much more flowing *tempo* than that of Pollini, and it feels definitely more natural. The barcarolle like rhythm is allowed to progress unimpeded, and he allows us to hear all the important melodies in the variation. The left hand melody introduced in bar 101 is especially poignant. The passage starting in bar 105 is played with a haunting *pianissimo* sound, maintained right up until the end of the passage, without any of the relentless hammering at the *sforzandi* marked in bars 107 and 108.

The fugal Variation 5 is once again played in a reticent manner; many other pianists choose to treat this variation much more aggressively. Often the quaver movement is obscured because he does not accentuate it sufficiently with excessive articulation like other pianists, but the overall effect is very convincing. What is most impressive is that he always brings out the minims as part of the melody regardless of under which hand they lie, and the left hand ones are extremely difficult to bring out obviously. He calms everything down as marked from bar 148 by way of leading into the last variation. This is beautifully played, with the right sound on the inner parts so as to distinguish them from the less important outer ones. The trills are executed brilliantly, especially at bar 177 where he has no technical difficulties

with the treacherous left hand. He ends the sonata with the same degree of poignancy and pathos as he began it.

8. OLLI MUSTONEN.

The theme of the finale is played with a predictable hesitation on the second beat of each bar, combined with the idea of varying the tempo in each bar. He makes a sudden accent in bar 5 which is out of character with what has gone before. In the repeat of bar 11 he makes a sudden decision to bring out the melody line in the left hand which is actually a very attractive effect, although overall it has to be said that his left hand harmony does not support the right sufficiently in the theme and the first variation. This is played quite simply except he tends to rush the quintuplet in bar 19 on both repeats. The marked *staccato* note on the second beat of the first time bar is played thus; this I have not heard before; it lightens the mood rather too much.

Variation 2 is much faster than usually played, with his characteristic lightness of approach which gives it a humorous atmosphere. The 'chorale' starting at bar 41 is played in a completely unemotional way, which differs markedly from other recordings, and could be deemed inappropriate. He then reverts to his *staccato* approach for the rest of the variation. Variation 3 is extremely fast as is predictable, but very audible and rhythmically played. The various *sf.* markings are taken rather literally, and are played rather pungently. It would seem that some pianists decide to over emphasize these accents in the belief that it strengthens the rhythmic fabric of the variation; we have seen this before. He does not observe the *piano* markings in bar 77 and 89.

Variation 4 is actually faster, not slower than the theme as marked. He makes the decision to introduce little swellings of sound within the groups of six semiquavers that becomes idiosyncratic, within a dynamic that often becomes very loud. In the second time bar he plays *staccato* in the right hand, which seems at variance with the intended lyrical sound required. In bar 107 the *sf.* markings are taken rather too seriously and resemble Schnabel's approach. The tied note at the beginning of bar 111 is not respected.

Variation 5 is played even faster than Schnabel, and is actually much cleaner, clearer and more rhythmic. It is very exciting but reverts to his humorous approach with his characteristic light way of playing. The final variation starts very loudly, without attention to the mini phrasings marked over the melody on bar 153, rather playing them all in similar vein. He does make a difference between the trill and the preceding demisemiquavers in bar 164, and bar 168 starting with the left hand trill is extremely convincing. The demanding passage starting in bar 177 is very well executed, with a brilliant trill in the right hand, and no sign of difficulty in the left. His use of pedal is minimal however. Despite calming down, the final statement of the theme seems rather fast. In bar 196 and 197 he plays *staccati* on the downbeats, which is a direct contrast to the marked phrase over the whole of this and the following bar.

The final movement has only slight variations in interpretation between the recordings; perhaps surprisingly, but remembering that the *tempo* basically remains the same throughout, there is actually little opportunity for a great variety of interpretations of the music here. The most obvious difference could be *tempi*, but even these are far less pronounced in their differences than in the first movement. The Theme and Variation 1 fall into two interpretive camps; pianists who play them very slowly and deliberately and not in the walking pace *Andante* as marked, and those that adopt a more flowing approach. As would perhaps be expected, the Russian pianists Gilels and Richter adopt very slow *tempi* for the theme and first variation. Richter goes even slower in the first variation, while Gilels moves slightly. The Germans Brendel and Kempff both adopt a more flowing *tempo* for the theme, but Kempff goes even faster in Variation 1 whereas Brendel's *tempo* remains the same. Kovacevich also chooses to play Variation 1 slower. Variation 2 is played with varying degrees of *staccato*. Mustonen is the fastest and most clipped, predictably; he makes this variation sound manic, and misses the lyricism required at bar 41 onwards. Richter also plays this very *staccato*, but at a slower tempo, and misses nothing of the chorale like passage at bar 41. Brendel plays Variation 2 at precisely the same tempo as his first variation. This has a very satisfying effect of continuity. Several other pianists play this variation slower, and with a more detached rather than *staccato* approach. Kovacevich is most noticeable here, and I am

sure he uses more extended rather than curved fingers here, which produces a more veiled sound. He also uses pedal which is not the case with Gilels, whose *staccati* are very dry.

The *Allegro* variation 3 is also played at different *tempi*. Mustonen plays it at breakneck speed and with emphasis on accents, to jarring effect. Richter and Gilels play everything evenly and make little dynamic contrast, while Kempff plays it much slower and consequently much clearer. It would seem that if this variation is played slower then it sets up the rocking 9/8 rhythm of the next variation, while if it is too fast then Variation 4 also becomes too fast. Kovacevich, Richter, Brendel and Gilels all achieve this in the 4th variation. Mustonen and Schnabel are very fast. The latter are also similarly fast in Variation 5 which is marked *Allegro ma non troppo*, and clarity is sometimes compromised. Richter's *tempo* is actually slower, but he makes several note errors which are unusual for such a renowned pianist. He is alone among all the pianists in respecting the *sempre piano* marking in bar 148 to the end, which prepares the listener most effectively for the final variation.

It is hard to quantify reasons for why some versions of the last variation are simply more compelling than others. Almost all the pianists start very softly in manner of the opening theme, but many start the *crescendo* in bar 160 very soon. In the 9/8 bar 157, Schnabel does not play crotchet equals dotted crotchet, but distorts the rhythm into some kind of *rit.* before the restatement of the theme. It is necessary in this opening page to subdue the inner voice trills and let the melody ring out in the right hand, all within a *piano* dynamic. Then from bar 165 one can employ a genuine *forte* dynamic as the excitement builds. In bar 169 Schnabel is the only pianist to make a definite accent on the first of the group of four demisemiquavers, but apart from that there are no noteworthy differences in interpretation from here to the end of the movement. The challenges here are primarily technical rather than interpretive; how to play a trill and melody note with one hand, while negotiating some treacherous left hand demisemiquaver passages, which makes this the biggest technical challenge of the entire work.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.

After considering the recorded performances discussed in Chapters 2 to 4, the logical conclusion of this study, and indeed the main reason for undertaking it, is to set forth my own current interpretation of this work which will follow below, and will form the main focus of my conclusion. While it has been hugely interesting and instructive to compare and analyse great recordings of the work, ultimately I have regarded this study as a personal foray into arriving at my own interpretation, inspired and ‘instructed’ by earlier masters. The most satisfying way that a listener can appreciate the merits and demerits of an interpretation is to listen to a live performance of the work in question, which will be possible in my final recital for this degree. However, here my ideas are set down in words and will give an idea of the approaches I intend to adopt in my performance. What is most interesting to observe is that despite having pondered extensively on each bar of this sonata with a view to interpretative decision making, when actually seated at the piano, one does not think at that precise moment about each of the decisions one has reached earlier. I am sure the same applies during the actual performance, as I will doubtless discover when I play the work in public. So the specifics of one’s detailed thoughts on interpretation obviously remain in one’s subconscious, and are drawn on instinctively as a result of exhaustive preparation. During the actual moment of execution however, one thinks of more immediate issues such as making a good sound or preparing oneself for a technically demanding passage for instance, rather than the highly detailed ideas below.

As an experiment, I recorded my interpretation of the work twice on 10 and 11 January 2018, to see if my projected ideas of interpretation were actually carried out in the final performance, and how they differed from one day to the next. This is not a completely new idea, indeed, Hellaby uses his own recording of the Bach Toccata in D major BWV912, and compares it to other performances by Glenn Gould and Angela Hewitt (Hellaby 2009: 72-88), although in my case I will compare two recordings made by myself only. In Hellaby’s discussion, he draws parallels between his own recording with the others, and also points out their differences, in detailed discussions. He then assesses each performance according to which of the informants are used most prominently in each. I will also include similar assessments of my own performance below.

Another concept which should be mentioned, is that the ideas below reflect my personal taste in matters of interpretation, and these will obviously be judged accordingly by any listener who may or may not find them to his or her taste. Every listener is entitled to pronounce such judgements, even if he realises that the interpreter is not straying from the printed text, as I discovered in the case of Olli Mustonen, whose performance I disliked at first, until I followed it with the score, and found that for the most part he did adhere to Hellaby's concept of *Texttreue*. If that is the case why did it seem so objectionable? This example goes a long way to explain that there are so many other factors in arriving at an interpretation than the printed text, as Hellaby is at pains to emphasize frequently, but that it is ultimately dependent on the approving taste of the listener to be a success. Elements such as choice of *tempo*, dynamic levels and pedalling have a subjective element and may have different appeal to each listener. In my case the traditional approach that I habitually expected from a Beethoven performance was challenged by Mustonen's reading which pushes the boundaries of interpretation of an early 19th-century work. All the interpretations discussed in the preceding chapters could be said to result from the artists' personal visions determining their decisions. The extent to which they allow this to influence these is what results in differences which have been described above, but which is also a consideration that I will have to bear in mind while preparing this interpretation. I will now investigate my projected interpretative priorities for Op. 109, together with the realized decisions as notated down while listening to the two recordings.

FIRST MOVEMENT.

The *tempo* indication *Vivace* which opens the first movement is rather misleading, in that although it is fairly fast moving, the character is not that of a typical *Vivace*. I currently play this section at crotchet = 96 beats per minute. As mentioned in Chapter 2 there is a wide variety of *tempi* adopted by the eight pianists, Gilels being the slowest. The *tempo* adopted by Brendel and Kovacevich are closest to my own. The spirit of the music is far more lyrical than the indication would imply, and it is the pursuit of a *cantabile* and expressive sound which should be the goal here. The composer indicates the important melodic notes with opposite stems right from the start, and it is these notes which should be made the most audible by using a heavily weighted '*espressivo*' sound. This term, coined by my teacher

Isabella Stengel, is used to describe a rich and intense sound of great expressivity and warmth, which can only be achieved by utter relaxation of the muscles.

The groups of two semiquavers in the left hand are marked by *legato* phrase marks so as to create the effect of imitation of the right hand, but at speed these notes would automatically fall under the *sostenuto* pedal to create an overall flowing texture, rather than individual phrasings. I would advocate an almost imperceptible ‘*luftpause*’ after the first beat of bar 4, as a means of concluding the opening phrase before it proceeds to build in intensity.

Kovacevich does the same. After a *crescendo* starting in bar 4 there is an abrupt shift into the first *adagio espressivo*, and also a time signature change into 3/4. This is the first time that the so called ‘*recitative –adagio*’ occurs, and so the sound used should be very expressive, bearing in mind its vocal quality. My metronome mark remains roughly the same as the opening, except that crotchet now becomes semiquaver = 101 beats per minute. The first *arpeggio* of the 3/4 should be fairly impassioned, with space left for the chord to resonate before the left hand takes over with melodic material. The sound used by the left hand needs to be equally as expressive and vocal in character as the right. This chord is the start of such an abrupt shift of ideas that it requires some time to resonate without sounding too hasty. I think that the *mezzo-staccati* marked over the left hand should not be played too *staccato*; this would deprive them of their expressive character. The contrast between *forte* and *piano* in this section is marked and should be brought out with almost *subito* effect. It makes for increased drama in this section. The vocal character of this section is extended by the left hand melodic line which contributes to the effect by adding to the texture in contrary motion, and one feels that the idea of imitating two voices is being explored here. This of course changes in bar 11, when quintuplets and sextuplets take over to produce a heightened flowing effect. These are played more deliberately and slower by Kovacevich than others, and I would advocate adopting this approach. The abrupt *crescendo* in bar 11 should be given a great deal of emphasis, so that the virtuoso writing in bar 12 can come off to best effect. Even here there are great contrasts between *forte* and *piano* - these all need to be observed minutely.

The section starting in bar 14, marked ‘*espressivo*’, looks forward to the singing lines in the highest register of the piano which are such a marked feature of the theme and first variation

of the final movement. Supported by rich held chords in the left hand, this is a characteristic of Beethoven's late piano style and can be found throughout the late sonatas. As far as pedalling during the *adagio* is concerned, I think that it should be changed as often as possible so as to preserve clarity; in bars 9 and 10 I think every semiquaver should be pedalled, otherwise clashing harmonies will become noticeable. Bar 14 is especially interesting: it requires the same kind of expressive sound expected in bar 11, but the second half of the bar should be played with a far less intense, even a delicate Mozartian type of sound, evenly distributed between the hands. The delicate shimmering sound of Kovacevich should be aspired to here.

Bar 16 sees the return of the *vivace* character in a section marked Tempo 1. This can be considered as the quasi-‘development’ section of the first movement. The original theme is restated but this time it is lengthened, and by progressing through a series of remote keys such as G# minor, Beethoven achieves a grand climax at the start of the ‘recapitulation’ in bar 48. Interestingly, his use of chords is less sparse than in the exposition; the more richly scored chords contribute to an overall sense of greater warmth than before. Here I would advocate Richter's approach of emphasizing the left hand notes marked with upward stems. These are more melodically interesting than the right hand at this point. The *crescendo* beginning in bar 21 needs to be delayed somewhat as it is a long one, and should be given time to build up sufficient volume and excitement. As mentioned earlier, several pianists do not regard this marking, but deliver those bars in an even dynamic. Brendel is one approach that I would emulate here. He produces a long and exciting climax to the phrase. Starting in bar 40 we have another characteristic use of the high register seen in the first *adagio*, so that the restatement of the theme at the start of the recapitulation is two octaves higher than at the beginning of the movement. The second *adagio* starting in bar 58 is identical to the exposition except being in a different key, but it proceeds through several unexpected and abrupt modulations before the return of a final statement of the theme marked again, Tempo 1. Throughout this section, distribution of sound between the hands should always be kept in mind; while one desires an intense sound on the melodic notes in the upper right hand, one should not neglect the supporting chords and parallel harmonies in the left hand which contribute greatly to the overall texture and lyrical character of the *adagio* section. The deliberate and stately approach of Kovacevich in bar 60 to 61 is a very convincing one in my view.

The final statement of the theme in bar 66 is definitely the most touching, as it alternates the melodic material between the two hands, and includes a chorale like section at bar 76 which relies on diminished chords and suspensions for its strong emotive effect. I would subscribe to the approaches of those pianists who bring out the expressive qualities of this passage, for example Brendel, Kovacevich, Richter and Gilels, rather than several others who continue in the spirit of the previous faster moving one. I like the rests on the first beat of every bar to be given full value here, and not to be prolonged by excessive use of the pedal. The movement ends with a whispered version of the original theme, ending on a sustained E major chord with a fermata over it. The exact length of this fermata is open to interpretation, and the questions it prompts are handled differently by the pianists, Alfred Brendel holding it the longest, so that the impression of the end of the movement is created in his rendition. There is no barline but there is a pause. Beethoven clearly wishes the ensuing '*Prestissimo*' movement to begin without a break, however I am of the opinion that the stillness expressed at the conclusion of the first movement should be allowed to settle, and the final chord to dissipate somewhat, before the violent interruption of the second movement begins. I think that if the chord is held for a total of eight crotchet beats then that would be sufficient for stillness to be created, but without being too long. At 96 crotchet beats per minute that should prove acceptable.

What follows now is an examination of the two recordings done in the same way that my investigation of all the eight recordings was done, albeit possibly more critical as one is wont to be in assessing one's own performance. The first movement was played much faster on the second day than the first, and all the *fermatas*, *ritardandi*, etc. were consequently much faster on the second day. (Hellaby's "Duration manipulator" could be observed as being at work here by this marked differentiation in execution of these elements.) To be specific about the first recording, there was a small pause on the first group of semiquavers in bar 1, and the *luftpause* in bar 4 described above was in evidence, as was another on the last beat before the *arpeggio* which begins the *adagio espressivo*. The space between the first two chords of the *adagio* mentioned above as a priority was in evidence. The *piano* marked in bar 11 was not really noticeable, so the *crescendo* which begins in the second half of the bar was compromised, and too loud to make the gradual increase in volume as required. The quintuplets in the same bar were however played deliberately and slightly held back so as not to rush the build-up of tension. The *pianos* marked at the ends of bars 12 and 13 were rather

loud, so did not result in a marked contrast which should happen in the following bar. Also, surprisingly, the right hand was louder in those same places than the left, which is the opposite of my usual emphasis of the left hand harmony, but which possibly resulted from the wish to make a very expressive sound on those chords. The prioritized expressive section in bar 14 was evidenced, although the overall dynamic was rather loud. The long scale in bar 15 produced a very long *ritardando* which started earlier than marked. Bars 16-19 did not feature enough emphasis of the left hand in the way that Richter does so effectively in his recording. As I felt previously, listening to several of the recordings, the long *crescendo* beginning in bar 27 was begun too loudly and so could not grow sufficiently over the long stretch of the following twenty bars. The return of the first statement at bar 48 was perhaps given too loudly, as it is only marked *forte*. Also, there was a *ritardando* in bar 46 and 47 which is not marked, but is effective in my view. The reduction of volume in bar 52 was observed. There was a further reduction in *tempo* in bars 55 to 57 which is less effective than the one in the previous line- one would be advised to continue moving here. As far as the last section of the movement from bar 75 is concerned, the *innigkeit* mentioned above as a priority, could have been more emphasised as it sounds perhaps a shade too rushed and also too loud. The 'chorale' section of chords in bars 78 to 85 does not breathe sufficiently, one feels the progression from one chord to the next is too hasty.

The overall faster *tempo* of the second recording made on 11 January is hard to explain, but a possible reason could be that I was actively engaged in fairly stressful student problems for a few hours before the recording was made. The *luftpause* in bar 4 in this recording was far less pronounced, as was the pause before the first chord of bar 9. The *piano* at the beginning of bar 11 was actually softer than on the preceding day, and there was more hesitation at the end of bar 12 than before, although the effect of this was pleasing. The parallel passage in the next bar, bar 13 was not so *piano*, however, and this could also be said for the following bar, which needs to be much more ethereal in the higher register. The *rit.* In bar 15 was much the same as on the preceding day. Most noticeably, bars 20 to 50 were a great deal faster than the other recording, also featuring the *crescendo* which starts too soon. This came close to the virtuoso treatment of Mustonen, something which was very surprising to hear. It did sound very fast and restless, instead of stately and majestic. Then, by way of compensation, bar 58 was taken slower than on the previous day, particularly the first *arpeggio*, and the space between that and the following chord. In bars 61 and 62, the lowest notes in the respective

arpeggios was given more emphasis than on the previous day. Bar 64 to 65 were too loud for the *piano* dynamic marked, and should be softer. The last section from bar 75 was also rather restless, with rests not being given their full value, and moving a fraction too much in the phrase, rather than a more ‘settled’ approach.

To return to the informants of Hellaby with a view to applying them to my two recordings, I would assess them as follows: The “Era or Style” informant could be applied most noticeably to bars 1 to 8, 14, 65 and 90 to the end. Here the precision and lack of excess required of an interpretation of a work in late classical style could be best observed. The “Authorship” informant which highlights certain idiosyncrasies of composition could be observed in the characteristic spacings of chords in the left hand in bar 13 and 14, contrasted with the right lying high up on the keyboard later on in the same bars. The thick chords in the left hand in bars 61 and 62 are also typically Beethovenian, and were emphasized in both of my recordings. The “Tradition” informant could be observed to be the way that certain elements in the music are delivered instinctively which results possibly from many years of listening to recordings. The unmarked *rit.* in bar 8 could suffice as an example, likewise the *rit.* before the ‘recapitulation’ in bar 48. The “Tempo” informant could be seen to be applied completely differently to each of the two recordings since one was much faster than the other. The *vivace* indication was certainly captured on the second day, but then its use is not appropriate to the spirit of lyricism which is required throughout much of the movement.

SECOND MOVEMENT.

In considering my interpretation of the second movement, I think the *tempo* of the *Prestissimo* should fall within the range of dotted crotchet =158-162 beats per minute. Schnabel and Mustonen play it much faster, but my view is that it should not be played too fast that the ‘*marcato*’ effect required by the composer in the left hand is lost. Gilels on the other hand adopts a very measured *tempo* of 149 beats per minute. Having selected *Erlkönig* as an influence on my ideas towards the choice of appropriate spirit in my interpretation, I shall bear in mind the restlessness, sense of impending danger and urgency to be found in this middle movement, as well as being mindful of the pianistic excitement that can be generated here. Despite the fast *tempo* indication and resulting *virtuoso* effect, I would argue that much

of the material is actually of a more melodic nature in this movement, and so attention to a good expressive sound should take precedence over one-dimensional virtuosity.

Bars 1 to 8 should be delivered in a dramatic *fortissimo* dynamic, with the reduction to *piano* coming almost as a shock in bar 9. Beethoven's use of the recurring pedal point to generate drama is particularly telling in this movement; consider bars 9 to 24, all of which contain a pedal on B which contributes to the unsettling atmosphere. Care should be taken here to respect the small *crescendi* that he marks in bars 11, 15 and 19; the dynamic needs to revert to piano after each of these small *crescendi* so as to avoid the inevitability of one long *crescendo* which is not what is marked. In bar 25 we have the statement of a theme in bare octaves which contrasts markedly with a harmonized restatement of the same theme a few bars later. I think that both versions should be pedalled liberally, so as to create a warm sound reminiscent of the cello at this point. This should be maintained until bar 39 when the shift to octaves in the scoring would seem to suggest more of a *marcato* and indeed percussive approach. The drama should build even more from bar 43 on, aided by the use of prominent notes accentuated before the strong beats, over descending rapid *arpeggio* figures in the bass. This is a contrast to the rather more reticent account of this passage given by Gilels - I am of the view that a more *virtuoso* approach is more appropriate here. This would then lead to the exciting scale passage played first by the right hand in bar 58, and then answered by the left, that forms the climax of this first part of the second movement. These scales are very dramatic, and the sense of rushing forward that we get from Schubert's accompaniment should be recreated here.

After a brief dramatic restatement of the theme in the dominant key of B minor, the dynamic drops to a sharply contrasted piano section with a mysterious character emphasised by ominous tremolos in the left hand, and constantly shifting harmonies in the right. This section could be described as using the same material played by the left hand at the opening of the movement, but played at half the original *tempo*- the harmony remains the same. Several of the eight pianists adopt a change of intent here, and capture the mysterious atmosphere by a change of *tempo* primarily. Schnabel's changes are perhaps the most dramatic, as he slows down considerably. I do agree that the spirit needs to change here, but it should not slow down too much as there is no new indication, and also the momentum should not be lost.

Richter's approach in bar 30 and parallel passage in bar 85 is to use a sound of ethereal lyricism in two short chorale like sections which perhaps recalls the chorale at the end of the first movement, although of course it makes use of the harmonies employed in the theme of the second. Once again we have a passage of vocal character which must not be neglected. From bar 83 the melodic interest shifts between the hands: I think bars 83-5 should feature the lyrical left hand more prominently, with the right taking over on the second beat of bar 85. This entire section should be played consistently in *tempo*, with no variation except in bar 96 where the composer marks a *fermata* after a long dotted minim chord. Here one should extend the length of the chord bearing in mind the original *tempo*, so not too long, and the *pianissimo* markings of the next 8 bars should be strictly observed, with no *ritardando* in bars 103 and 104. Bar 105 should be played with the same drama as the beginning of the movement. The difference between this statement of the theme and that which opens the movement is the answering phrase beginning in bar 112 played by the left hand which is very uncomfortable technically, owing to the repeated notes which need to be heard clearly above the powerful octaves in the right hand. By the addition of octaves in the right hand, and the original theme played by the left, I think Beethoven echoes the last page of the Schubert song here, which does the same, the octaves being used to create a heightened increase in drama and tension. These eight bars are surely the most exciting in the movement and should be executed *con forza*.

The ensuing *piano* passage starting in bar 120 is paralleled in the exposition, but here it occurs in the tonic key of E minor. There are slight differences here, most notably by the addition of high placed syncopated notes in bar 145 and 147 which do not occur in the first appearance of this passage. Beethoven is heightening the tension even more by the use of these syncopated notes here. The climax of this passage are the bare octaves at bar 166 and although they are marked with the shortest kind of staccato marking that Beethoven uses, I would argue that they should not be played in too dry a manner, and should be caught in the pedal while the hands respect the kind of *staccato* asked for. Schnabel and Mustonen, do play them extremely short however. Bar 168 needs a completely contrasting mysterious *piano* dynamic, so as to make the overwhelming *crescendo* of the final bars even more dramatic.

Listening to my two recordings, it was obvious that the first day produced a much slower *tempo* than the second. It also felt awkward on the first day, because this movement is technically easier to play faster, and if too slow then the muscles remain tense and do not relax sufficiently. Several of the priorities mentioned above were realised in the performances however. The first eight bars were suitably *fortissimo*, and the sudden reduction to *piano* was noticeable in bar 9. The small *crescendi* in bars 11, 15 and 19 could have been more pronounced in both recordings. Bar 25 mentioned above as requiring liberal pedalling was realised thus. The percussive *marcato* approach called for in bar 39 was also in evidence, and the build-up of drama continued after bar 43 as suggested. Bars 83 to 85, mentioned above as requiring more left hand emphasis, achieved more of this on the second day rather than the first, when, perhaps due to the overall slower *tempo*, the left hand was less noticeable. An interesting feature which was not mentioned as a priority, but nevertheless was audible on both recordings, were the pair of high notes in the right hand in bars 145 and 147. I was not aware that I was accenting these- even though not marked as such- but such accents were noticed while listening. Because these notes are written off the beat, the accents produce an interesting syncopated effect on the rhythm at that point.

To mention the specifics of the first recording, the first eight bars were given in a loud dynamic with the left hand being audible as playing a theme of equal importance to the right. The reduction to *piano* in bar 9 was not sufficient, and the following bars demonstrated a certain clumsiness as a result of the slower *tempo*. There was a marked *rit.* in bar 24, which again was not premeditated, but done instinctively. The marked *piano* in bar 51 was not sufficiently observed, and actually sounded *mezzo-forte*. Instead of a gradual *crescendo* as marked starting in bar 55, I played a *subito forte* at the beginning of that bar, which is also featured in recordings by five of the pianists: Gilels, Brendel, Schnabel, Richter and Pollini. I have subsequently listened to two other pianists who also do this, namely Ashkenazy and Katchen, so it must have developed as a tradition over the years. It does make sense to play it like this because of the powerful left hand octave on F at the beginning of the bar, which would not be effective if played too softly. It certainly serves as an arresting introduction to the scale passage which starts three bars later. After the scales there was not a sufficient reduction in volume in bar 70, which should be immediately much softer and more mysterious. Dynamic contrast is of paramount importance here. In bars 93 to 96 the left hand emphasis mentioned above as a priority was in evidence, and suitably lyrical. The same

applied to the *piano* marked in bar 120, which needs to be much softer. The recording made on the second day, was more technically assured as a result of the faster *tempo*, and consequently more fluent. There were some dynamic levels which were too loud, notably bars 70, 132 and 170, and the *rit.* played the previous day in bar 24 was not in evidence in the second recording. The two soft passages require a still more pensive approach, but overall the spirit of the Schubert song was present in the excitement and sense of foreboding of this recording.

The Hellaby informants which could be seen to be at work in the second of my recordings could be the “Tradition” informant which could account for an unmeditated *rit.* in bar 24 and the *subito forte* in bar 55, which I have possibly adopted without realizing it, as a result of listening to many recordings. Bar 24 was played more *in tempo* on the second day, but there was still a perceptible sense of ending the phrase. The “Tempo” informant could provoke investigation as to the disparity between the two recordings- certainly the marking of *prestissimo* was realised on the second day. The external sound world of *Erlkönig* as a means of conjuring a narrative and thereby influencing the way of playing would account for the “Topic,” while the “Sonic Moderator” could be observed relating to this in the way that the extra-musical effects or overall dynamic of the movement provokes a reaction from the listener, who responds to the various elements of the performer’s technique or interpretation used to express these effects.

THIRD MOVEMENT.

The last movement is marked *Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung*, (in a singing style with deepest emotion), and it should not be started too soon after the last chords of the *Prestissimo* movement. A few moments of silence should be employed so as to give the audience time to adjust, and to understand the import of the momentous movement which is to follow. The theme in the home key of E major could not be simpler in character. It should be played within the range of crotchet = 54 -59 beats per minute. This is a fairly slow *tempo*, but on no account should it become dirge like; it needs to flow with lyrical movement and a sense of broad architecture of phrasing. Given the nature of the instrument, where the sound decays immediately after the note is struck, it seems unwise to choose too slow a *tempo*. The audience’s attention will also be challenged, given that each eight bar phrase is repeated and

will seem over long. As mentioned in the chapter devoted to this movement, the music can be seen to possess a religious or spiritual quality, and this should be borne in mind from the beginning of the movement. If the *tempo* selected is too slow, then the uplifting character of the music will be lost, and it will become too morose. I fall into the interpretative camp which advocates moving on in the *tempo* and would follow Brendel's example of a flowing speed. It becomes a great deal easier to sustain and present lyrically when moved on. The left hand should be treated with the same importance as the right, and a highly expressive sound should be used which emphasises the solid foundation of the harmony, instead of just emphasising the melody in the right hand as some pianists choose to do. In bar 5 the *arpeggio* in the right hand should be played on the beat with the bottom note played together with the left hand. This is traditionally done this way by many pianists and gives the phrase a much needed breathing space at this point. The *mezzo-staccato* marked in bar 14 should be played the same way as those in the first movement; caught in the pedal and with a more lyrical approach. All the repeats should be played here as marked (this goes for all the variations in this movement), but no *ritardandi* should be employed at the ends of phrases. The overall *tempo* is too slow to allow such *rits.* to make it even slower.

Variation 1 is very similar in character to the theme, except perhaps that the melody is placed an octave higher than the theme. It is also slightly more ornamented than the opening. These factors contribute to an overall tranquil atmosphere which is perhaps more marked than the beginning of the movement. This religious contemplation could be perceived as intensifying in this variation. Instead of the cello like moving bass of the theme which demands attention, here he writes simpler chordal accompaniment, which is surely intended to avoid distraction from the tranquillity provided by the soaring melody in the right hand. I think all the *appoggiaturas* should be played on the beat in the same way that the *arpeggios* were played in the theme. As far as the left hand chords are concerned, the pedal should be changed on every crotchet, so that the first note of the bar does not remain held in the pedal too long. This will also contribute to lightening of the texture in keeping with the ethereal quality of the variation. The *sforzando* in bar 29 should not be too pronounced for fear of sounding too harsh, but nonetheless needs to serve as a climax to the long sustained phrase which precedes it. In several places in this variation, the player should not be afraid to move forward slightly in the phrase, such as in bars 23 and 28, to avoid the perception that they lack flowing movement.

Variation 2 departs from the lyricism of the preceding sections in a way that could not be more different. There are no chords to be found up until bar 41; the composer instead writes short detached notes alternating between the hands which perhaps could be said to echo the similar arrangement between the hands at the beginning of the first movement, except in that instance the notes are not detached of course. The variation is marked *leggiermente* and then *teneramente* at bar 41 when a completely contrasting more *legato* section begins. The opening of the variation should not be played too lightly or too *staccato*, as despite the *leggiermente* marking, it has a slightly more serious character than implied. Many of the pianists do elect to play it a lot shorter than in my view, most notably Mustonen but also Richter. The appropriate term which could describe the way to play this section could be *mezzo staccato*. The notes should be exactly equal in both hands, which is not easy to achieve and requires a great deal of control. The next section *teneramente* could be perceived as very vocal in inspiration; it reminds one of a choir with answering voices, thus providing another link with the religious topic discussed in Chapter 4. The *leggiermente* becomes transformed into a much more expressive phrase in bar 45. Here the single notes of the beginning of this variation are transformed into rich chords that ensure the variation's emotive appeal. Here the contrast should be maintained between the detached sections and the more *legato* ones, with the chords in bar 45 onwards given a full sonorous treatment, enhanced by the sustaining pedal. Not all the pianists play it this way, most noticeably Kempff, whose reading results in a character similar to the original *leggiermente*, played very lightly and detached.

Variation 3 follows the preceding variation without a break; indeed it bursts forth unsuspectingly after the conclusion of Variation 2 which ends quietly with no hint at what is to follow. The *Allegro vivace* of this variation is surely one of the greatest challenges of this movement; it allows one no time to prepare, and the opening left hand passage is extremely treacherous. I have had to restart this variation in a public performance due to the left hand failing to grasp the notes due probably to tension. It is imperative to relax before one attacks the beginning of this variation. The configuration of fingering is most unpianistic and awkward. In contrast the parallel right hand passage at bar 69 is much easier technically, and lies easily under the hand. In bar 73 he expects a repetition of the opening phrase in the left hand with quavers this time in the right and in a piano dynamic, which makes it even more daunting. From bar 85 an added difficulty is the alternation of semiquavers and octaves between the hands, this alternation leading to abrupt shifting of hand position which has to be

accomplished without preparation. Because of all these difficulties, the *tempo* I will select for this variation will be a shade more measured than many of the recordings I have listened to, but will still be fast enough to capture the liveliness implied in the indication. Kempff is definitely the slowest amongst the eight recordings, and I will be leaning towards his approach if perhaps not quite as slow.

Variation 4 allows a brief respite; it is altogether far simpler technically, although it requires attention producing a lyrical sound akin to that used in the theme and Variation 1. The religious quality returns, after being absent in the ebullient third variation. His marking of '*Etwas langsamer als das Thema*' (slightly slower than the theme) is slightly misleading in assessment of the character of this variation, as it is actually far more flowing than the theme, with semiquaver passages shared between the hands in a statement and answer fashion. My *tempo* for this variation is dotted crotchet = 58 beats per minute, which is actually faster than all of the recordings except Mustonen. It is still within the range of being slower than the theme however, and captures a spirit of exultation which I think is appropriate rather than a more inward looking contemplation. The flowing character of the beginning leads to a strange passage beginning in bar 105; it bears no resemblance to the more melodic statements at the beginning of the variation, but is a sort of slow tremolo which uses modulations into remote keys to create tension. The *tempo* changes abruptly at the end of bar 113, and Variation 5 marked '*Allegro ma non troppo*' begins which is very contrapuntal in nature, and which contrasts a theme in fairly sustained minims with much more exciting and percussive *staccato* sections, which build up to an impressive climax. The most technically difficult section occurs between bars 133 and 166 where one is expected to play awkward passages of parallel sixths and thirds, as well as to play both the minims of the opening theme and accompanying *staccato* notes with both hands. The left hand has interesting figurations starting at bar 137 which need to be brought out. They are not easy to play because of the many repeated notes which contribute to the overall excitement, but the approach should be virtuosic. The end of this section is marked *piano*, perhaps to prepare for the final statement of the theme marked '*tempo primo del tema.*' None of the pianists, with the exception of Richter, execute the marked *sempre piano* marking in bar 148, he is alone among them to really effect a change of dynamic here, and I would advocate respecting this marking in this way. It is very difficult to do this, as the excitement which has been generated up to this point

seems to insist on being extended to the end of the variation, but the composer is actually trying to calm the prevailing mood down so as to lead into the last variation.

In Variation 6, although not so marked in the Schenker edition, the theme reappears for the last time in the inner texture of the right hand, with repeated pedal notes above it played by the outer fingers of the right hand. This constitutes the chief difficulty of this final section in that the theme needs always to be audible despite a variety of figurations employed which could potentially obscure it. The first two bars of the final section start out with the characteristic crotchet movement of the original theme, but this soon changes to quaver and then semiquaver movement in the accompaniment in both hands. The spirit of the opening of this variation is here closest to the *Heiliger Dankgesang* of the Op.132 quartet in its stillness and religious simplicity. The first eight bars of the variation should be given in an unvarying *piano* dynamic, with a *crescendo* only starting at the end of bar 160. Many pianists do start this *crescendo* rather too soon in my view, thus disturbing the meditative calm of the opening. The effect desired with the movement commencing in bar 156 is to create a trill of increasing intensity which reaches full flowering in both hands at bar 165. This is almost impossible to play as written because he asks for melody and trill to be played by the same hand. Practically, the marked trill usually ends up as a series of demisemiquavers rather than a pure trill, because the notes to be played by the outer fingers of the hands need to be alternated with the trill. This continues until a long held trill in the left hand begins. The idea of Kovacevich to slow down on the last three notes of bar 167 is very appealing, and makes for a grand entrance of the left hand trill. I find that one should use the first and third fingers to execute this trill, as I can obtain a faster trill this way, but my copy of the score suggests the use of the index and third fingers. It is entirely personal. This trill continues for eight bars, with various arpeggiated figurations in the right hand which explore a great deal of contrasting chromatic harmony. These figurations are characteristically Beethovenian; he uses them often, for example, in the finale of the Piano Concerto no. 4. Bar 177 onwards of this section contains arguably the most technically difficult passage in the entire sonata. The left hand virtuoso sequences recall those of Variation 3, but here the added difficulty is the long held trill between first and second fingers of the right hand, punctuated with short notes an octave or more higher, played by the same hand. From the outset it is important to work out a fingering for the left hand that is entirely comfortable and natural as possible, otherwise disaster can occur under stress during performance. After these difficulties the entire

momentum is reduced, and things calm down to prepare for a final repeat of the theme, this time exactly as it was played at the beginning of the final movement, with no ornamentation or variation in scoring. This return to the simplicity of the theme after all the turmoil and excitement contained in the preceding pages makes for a compelling effect, and brings the sonata to a pensive close. As in the beginning, I think that no affectations, gradations of *tempo* or any other distracting elements should be employed here, save perhaps a finely judged *ritardando* at the end.

Some of the highlighted priorities mentioned above were realised and noticed while listening to my two recordings. In the opening theme, the *arpeggio* in bar 5 was played on the beat, the overall *tempo* was not too slow, and there were no *rits.* at the ends of phrases. In Variation 1, all the *appoggiaturas* were played on the beat, the *sforzando* in bar 29 mentioned above was not too excessive, and the idea of moving forward within the phrase was effected in bars 23 and 28. The vocal character of bar 45 to 48 in Variation 2 was in evidence, as were the desired *mezzo staccati* at the beginning of the variation, although I felt that they were not short enough, and could have been played more lightly. Variation 3 was given in the more measured *tempo* mentioned above which certainly helps with technical issues, and also to ensure the clarity of both hands at all times. The *tempo* which I prefer for Variation 4, which is somewhat faster than any of the recordings, due to the broad phrases which in my view should be more extrovertly played, was convincing. The most pleasing aspect of my reading of Variation 5 was the left hand *staccati* which contributed to the virtuoso character of this variation. The oft-repeated minims which form thematic material in both hands throughout, were mostly audible. The end of the variation was not soft enough however, although the beginning of Variation 6 followed without a break in a suitably hushed dynamic with the inner voices clearly audible.

To describe the first recording in detail, one could begin by saying that the theme was generally played in a flowing style that was not too slow, although the second half of the variation was played slower. This was done unconsciously, and could be the result of wanting to produce a hushed atmosphere here. The next variation moved on slightly, and was given with a very lyrical sound in the right hand without losing sight of the importance of the left hand harmony. Bars 23 and 28 were moved on, which contributed to the emphasis of the high

notes in the right hand in bars 25 and 29. Variation 2 proceeded without a break in the same *tempo*, although as mentioned above, the *mezzi staccati* needed to be marginally shorter. The introduction of the sustaining pedal started in bar 41, and this was extensively used to support the rich harmonies through to bar 48. The *pp* markings in the lighter sections were not soft enough however. In Variation 3, the left hand was slightly overpowering, considering that the right hand has the thematic material, but this is an invaluable lesson for future performances, as it is not necessary to overemphasize the left as it will still be audible. The second eight-bar phrase was better, as there are more notes in the right hand to attract focus. The *piano* dynamic in bars 73 and 89 was not sufficiently reduced in volume; in fact this variation was uniformly loud, which needs to be remembered for the future. Variation 4 was actually too slow in the first recording, not therefore producing the elated feeling that a faster *tempo* provides. The important left hand themes in bars 101 to 103 were sufficiently brought out however. The very soft dynamic required in bar 105 could have been softer, as this needs to build to a monumental *crescendo* in bar 109 - this could have been better planned as the climax was not convincing. Variation 5 was taken too slowly, and sounded fairly awkward, much like the second movement had done. The difficulty with these faster sections is the tendency to choose *tempi* which do not move sufficiently, resulting in a technically compromised performance. The left hand was convincing though from bar 137, even if the dynamic from bar 148 should have been greatly reduced. The beginning of Variation 5 was given in a soft dynamic but with the inner notes in the chords fairly expressive and *cantabile*. When the semiquavers start in bar 158, they are perhaps too loud for the upper notes which should be emphasized more. This changes though in bar 161 when the important notes are now below the trill - because they fall on the stronger thumb and index finger of the right hand, they are now softer than the trill. The problem which arises in bar 165 is the difficulty of producing a real trill because of the outer-lying triplets which force an alternating triplet figure on the thumb and index finger instead of a true trill. To compensate for this one is obliged to increase the *tempo* or the trill will sound too slow. This should be avoided as it leads to problems later when it becomes impossible to maintain this faster *tempo*. It is better for the 'trills' in bar 165 to 168 to sound too slow rather than being incapable of playing the left hand figurations in bar 177 onwards accurately because the *tempo* has become too fast. Bar 169 was too loud, as it is only marked *forte*. Bars 181 to 184 showed a gradual decrease in volume which could have been more pronounced in the last bar before the return of the theme. The final statement of the theme was perhaps a shade faster than the beginning of the movement, but it settled down to a convincing stillness from bar 196.

Recording 2 made the following day was generally much faster, perhaps too much so in the extended lyrical variations. The second half of the theme as well as the first variation moved on considerably, as did the 'chorale' section of Variation 2 and the whole of Variation 4, which was much closer to my idea of an ideal *tempo* for this variation. Variation 3 was less successful however, as the faster *tempo* did not provide any assistance with technical matters, resulting in some untidy playing. It was also too heavy which could also be said for the fugue in Variation 5. The *tempo* of this variation though, was curiously slower than the previous day, but this time there were no technical problems, and it definitely did sound more convincing and less rushed at this speed. This should be borne in mind for future performances. Variation 6 was even faster, predictably than the previous day, and became even faster after bar 169, resulting in technical problems in the left hand passage from bar 177.

The informants that could be applied to my performances include "Genre" most importantly. Here the traditional and oft used genre of Theme and Variations prompts certain decisions, informed by the necessity of architectural unity between the variations, and an attempt to create a cohesive whole between often disparate material. I made a conscious effort to proceed from one variation to the next with minimal slowing down or interruptions, while also attempting to choose *tempi* that were related for the most part. The biggest challenge towards achieving this was variation 4, which I feel should go faster, but since my *tempo* still is slower than the theme as marked by Beethoven for this variation alone, I feel confident that this is acceptable. The "Topic" which I felt could influence my way of playing this movement, and which was described in Chapter 4, was uppermost in my mind throughout the slower, more religious sections of this movement, and I did keep the hymn-like string sound of the *Heiliger Dankgesang* in mind constantly, as the two movements are indubitably related in spirit.

In reaching this final stage of this study I would like to conclude by stressing several points already discussed earlier, but which remain important. As mentioned above in this chapter, making the two recordings resulted in a telling revelation concerned with the actual moment of performance, a moment which features thought processes and consequent results which can be quite different to the meticulous preparation that has gone before. This preparation,

investigated more fully in my Introduction with reference to the studies by Rink and Hellaby, can truly be described as analysis, because it involves many hours of study and decision making in infinitesimal detail, informed by a wide variety of sources and traditions, and additional layers being provided by the artist's integrity and personality. The physical result of this, the performance, will be enriched with every repetition, but the artist will realise that the work is never done, and that such analytical work will be required of us as interpreters throughout our performing careers.

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