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Influence and Innovation:
Beethoven's Impact on the Sonatas for Piano and Cello by Mendelssohn and Chopin

Patrick Thomas Bellah

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document is as much a product of your ability to listen and empathize as it is my own research and scholarship.

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ABSTRACT

The bulk of the scholarship in this paper centers around Beethoven's five sonatas written for piano and cello and how he established a new normal within the genre. This is evidenced by what are arguably the two most noteworthy sonatas for the same instrumental medium, written by Mendelssohn and Chopin, following Beethoven's death. I posit that the five sonatas written by Beethoven establish a series of models upon which the latter two works by his successors are based.

Chapters two and three of this document are separated into subsections that detail the plausibility of Beethoven's influence through circumstantial evidence, musical evidence (i.e. similarities in form, articulation, and melodic distribution), and even the ways in which Chopin and Mendelssohn sought to distance themselves from their illustrious predecessor. The key findings of my research are that Mendelssohn's Sonata for Piano and Cello in D Major, Op. 58 closely resembles the same strategy of equal distribution of melody that Beethoven employs in his Op. 5 and Op. 69 sonatas, and further expands the roles assumed by the pianist and cellist. Similarly, Chopin takes after the same improvisatory spirit utilized in Beethoven's Op. 102 sonatas and uses an evolved style of conversational dialogue, which stems from Beethoven's Op. 102, No. 2.

INTRODUCTION

The history of the violoncello as a solo instrument is noticeably shorter and follows a much different chronological trajectory than its higher-voiced counterparts. While a few well-known composers during the early and late Baroque era (i.e. Domenico Gabrielli and Johann Sebastian Bach) would write for the instrument in a soloistic capacity, this was mostly only in the context of unaccompanied suites or *ricercars* rather than accompanied by a supporting ensemble or keyboard accompaniment. Exceptions arise when we advance through the chronology of Western classical music and examine the work of composers and virtuosi such as Vivaldi, Boccherini, and Romberg. Such figures provide the cello with a wealth of accompanied solo repertoire from the Baroque and early Classical eras, but it was Ludwig van Beethoven who would cement the instrument's status not only as a solo voice, but as a balanced collaborator. In this paper I will argue that, in writing his five sonatas for piano and cello (Op. 5, Op. 69, and Op. 102), Beethoven establishes a series of models that future composers of important cello sonatas would follow. I will use Felix Mendelssohn's Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-major, Op. 58 (1843), and Frédéric Chopin's Sonata for Cello in G-minor Op. 65 (1846-1847) as representative examples. Both are products of their respective creators' later output, and, as I will show, both are deeply rooted in the art of composing for piano and cello as established by Beethoven.

Before delving into the analytical depths of scores and historical performance practice, this topic warrants a foreword about a primary characteristic of Beethoven's piano and cello sonatas: melodic balance. By "melodic balance," I mean the degree to which melodic material is divided between parts. Cellists often colloquially use the word

“balanced” as a catch-all descriptor for Beethoven’s sonatas for piano and violoncello. However, the reality is that the degree to which melodic material is equally distributed can vary. I will return to this issue below.

Equal distribution of melody between keyboard and cello was not an approach that any composer had taken prior to Beethoven’s sonatas for the same medium. It was a natural occurrence that one instrument in any given cello sonata would take precedence while the other(s) played a supportive role in accompanying the principal voice. Even in his first two sonatas (op. 5), this is the norm for Beethoven. According to Robin Stowell, this texture arises not from the tradition of Baroque continuo playing, but from the accompanied sonata, in which the cello, or other bass instrument, acts as the accompanist.¹ The continuo sonata is perhaps best illustrated in this case by Vivaldi’s Cello Sonata in A-minor, RV 43 (pub. 1740) (Example 1). A glance at the first page of the score reveals the same formula used throughout the rest of the sonata between the two (or three) performers. We can see from the outset of the first movement that the solo instrument (in this instance, the cello) is given melodic material, while the continuo part provides chordal accompaniment. It is not as if the continuo part is without any motivic material, but it is usually only a quick deviation from its supportive role to join the soloist in brief moments of unison.

¹ Robin Stowell, “The Sonata.” In *The Cambridge Companion to the Cello* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press), 121.

Largo

The image shows a musical score for Vivaldi's Sonata for Cello in A-minor, RV 43. It is in 3/4 time and marked 'Largo'. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows measures 1 through 5, with a measure rest in measure 5. The second system shows measures 6 through 10. Dynamics include forte (f) and piano (p). The key signature has one flat (A-minor).

Example 1: Vivaldi Sonata for Cello in A-minor, RV 43²

Luigi Boccherini's compositional style also favors the solo cellist, but differently than Vivaldi. In terms of counterpoint and interplay between soloist and continuo, the parts are more interdependent and engaging, but still lacking in true melodic equality. A 1968 article by Eve Barsham notes the prevalence of *Alberti* bass beneath the solo cello and a maturity in how he develops thematic material, but no mention is made of equal treatment among parts.³ This is illustrated in Example 2, where it can be seen that the two parts in his Cello Sonata No. 3 in C-Major, G. 6 (c. 1768) do not share equal ownership of the melody. Boccherini's sonatas were novel for their time, but they were clearly solo works for cello rather than an equally balanced effort between the two performers, thus exhibiting a total lack of melodic equality. It is worth mentioning that the accompaniment in Boccherini's sonatas is not written for keyboard, but rather for cello obbligato. Still, it illustrates how unbalanced chamber music for cello was prior to Beethoven.

² Antonio Vivaldi, *Sonata for Cello in A-minor, RV 43*, ed. Gian Francesco Malipiero (Milan: G. Ricordi & C., 1968).

³ Barsham, Eve. "Six New Boccherini Cello Sonatas." *The Musical Times*, 105, no. 1451 (January 1964). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/950674> (Accessed May 28, 2020).



Example 2: Boccherini Cello Sonata No. 3 in C-major, G. 6⁴

Bernhard Romberg, a cello virtuoso and acquaintance of Beethoven, takes a similar approach to writing his own cello sonatas (Examples 3 and 4).⁵ Romberg delegates all melodic workload to cello 1, while cello 2 accompanies. As an acquaintance of Beethoven and one of the last composers to write for cello in this style, his opinion of Beethoven's music helps to underscore just how revolutionary the latter's music really was for its time. Upon reading through the cello part for Beethoven's first Razumovsky quartet, Romberg allegedly remarked that the music was "unplayable" and trampled the

⁴ Boccherini, Luigi. *Cello Sonata No. 3 in C Major, G. 6*, Petrucci Music Library n.d. Accessed September 26, 2020. https://ks.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/7/7e/IMSLP172757-PMLP78527-Boccherini_sonata_in_C_manuscrito.pdf.

⁵ It is important to note here that this sonata by Romberg was composed after Beethoven's sonatas for piano and cello. However, Romberg's writing still represents an older, simplified style that sets him apart from Beethoven.

manuscript underfoot.⁶ In fairness to Romberg, he was a supporter and friend of Beethoven, but this particular instance serves to illustrate how Beethoven pushed boundaries in ways that were not always received well by his contemporaries. Romberg's reaction is understandable and predictable. He, like Boccherini, was first and foremost a cellist, and writing music specifically tailored to the instrument was perhaps his highest priority.⁷ This is apparent in his Cello Sonata No. 1 in B-Flat Major, Op. 43 (pub. 1821).

2

VIOLONCELLO.

Allegro.

SONATA I.

Example 3: Romberg Cello Sonata No. 1 in B-Flat Major, Op. 43 (Cello 1)⁸

Allegro.

BASSO. 568017

B. Romberg.

SONATA I.

Example 4: Romberg Cello Sonata No. 1 in B-Flat major, Op. 43 (Cello 2)⁹

⁶ Marc D. Moskovitz and R. Larry Todd, "From Bonn to Berlin," in *Beethoven's Cello: Five Revolutionary Sonatas and Their World*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY, USA: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 4.

⁷ Also like his predecessor, Romberg's use of thumb position technique is especially noteworthy for its time and was certainly a feature of his sonatas. Such writing is intended to showcase the instrument's virtuosic capabilities and necessitated a less obtrusive accompaniment part rather than an equal partner.

⁸ Bernhard Romberg, *Sonata No. 1 in B-Flat Major, Op. 43* (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1894).

⁹ Ibid.

In his Op. 5 Sonatas for Piano and Cello, Beethoven used the cello mostly as a support system rather than a solo instrument. This is apparent in the first Op. 5 sonata (1794) (Example 5). From the outset of the *allegro*, the cello joins the left hand of the piano as accompaniment to the melody in the right hand of the piano. It parallels the repeated staccato notes in the left hand, which is a common texture in Classical-Era music. Following that, the cello rests for nearly ten measures before reentering. It would be inaccurate, however, to assume that the cellist's only role in this work is accompaniment. In m. 15 of Example 5, the cello assumes responsibility for the melody, which deviates in m. 20 from the piano's line in m. 6. This melodic evolution reinforces the notion that the cello is not merely subordinate to the piano, but crucial to thematic development. Example 6 further illustrates that Beethoven allows for melodic exchange between the two instruments.

Allegro.

Allegro.

Adulce

f

pp dulce

f f f

B.103.

Example 5: Beethoven Sonata for Pianoforte or Harpsichord and Violoncello No.1, Op. 5¹⁰

¹⁰ Ludwig Van Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 1 in F Major, Op. 102 No. 1*. (Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel, 1863).

Example 6: Beethoven Sonata for Pianoforte or Harpsichord and Violoncello No.1, Op. 5¹¹

Marc D. Moskowitz and R. Larry Todd note that “almost nowhere does one find the simplistic bass-line accompaniment so common to the continuo sonata,” and that Beethoven’s original intent was likely to strive for absolute equality between parts in the F-major sonata.¹² While this is not entirely achieved, the attempt itself separates Beethoven’s Op. 5 sonatas from its predecessors because it allows for a greater variety of uses for the cello. This is not the only similarity between Beethoven’s sonatas for piano and cello and those of his successors (i.e. Mendelssohn and Chopin), but it is one of the most significant links between works due to the cello’s expanded role.

There are two key absences from his Op. 5 sonatas that are dominant traits in his later works for this specific genre. First, there is no instance of any sort of raucous or intense chordal playing in the cello part as can be found in the development section of Beethoven’s Op. 69 sonata for piano and cello. Second, the piercing upper register of the cello is never used as it is in later works. In fact, it struggles to clear the harmonic A (A4)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Moskowitz and Todd, 29.

above middle C (C4). While the Op. 5 F-major sonata utilizes the high tenor of the instrument, it is not obtrusive. Also interesting, according to Stowell, the original title of both Op. 5 sonatas is “Sonata for Pianoforte or Harpsichord and Violoncello,” which was a title frequently bestowed upon works written by composers in the latter half of the 18th century.¹³ William S. Newman notes that including “*cembalo o forte piano*” in the title of a work that necessitated the use of a keyboard instrument was a common marketing strategy, as the pianoforte had not yet completely eclipsed the harpsichord in terms of overall sales or general prevalence.¹⁴ This applies to both of Beethoven’s Op. 5 sonatas.

The implications of this for Beethoven are twofold. The Op. 5 sonatas were most likely envisioned for piano, but to comply with what was more profitable, he might have written so as not to overpower a harpsichord, should a performer opt for that instrument in place of a pianoforte. Since the acoustic properties of the uppermost register of the cello are quite powerful, it is easy to see why he would avoid that range entirely. The *cembalo o piano forte* also precedes the “violoncello” portion of the title, indicating an equal or greater importance on the keyboard. Given the surrounding context, it is safe to assume that the cello, in this case, plays a more subservient role, whether out of necessity or preference on the part of Beethoven. Following Op. 5, No. 2, he no longer uses this title. His next venture into writing a collaborative sonata between keyboard and cello would come in 1808 with his Op. 69 sonata in A-major. By this point, the harpsichord had all but disappeared from mainstream performance in favor of the pianoforte.¹⁵

¹³ Stowell, 121.

¹⁴ William S. Newman, “A Capsule History of the Piano,” *American Music Teacher* 12, no. 6 (July-August 1963), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43536641> (Accessed May 28, 2020).

¹⁵ Newman, 14-15.

However, given the nature of his third sonata for piano and cello, it is likely that Beethoven would have singled out the latter as his preferred keyboard instrument anyway, as the dynamic vigor between the two voices necessitated a more capable collaborative partner.

The Op. 69 A-major sonata represents a dramatic shift in compositional approach (Example 7). For nearly six full measures at the beginning of the first movement, the cello plays completely unaccompanied and introduces what is to be the thematic germ for the rest of the movement. This shift is best illustrated in what happens with the piano entrance. Since the first unaccompanied phrase in the cello is an antecedent, it seems natural that it should warrant some sort of consequential response. However, this is not realized. Instead, we see the piano take over melodic duties while the cello holds a low E pedal (E2). This takeover by the piano finishes with a small cadenza which descends and concludes on another low E with a *fermata* over it. This is significant for at least two reasons. The first is that the piano cadenza's conclusion comes to rest on the dominant of the key of A-major, thereby giving no solid conclusion to the first two melodic statements by the piano or cello. The second is that the *fermata* prevents cadential motion between the concluding note of the piano cadenza and the piano's next phrase by providing a brief pause between the two notes. The next two phrases have the same structure, but in the opposite order, with the piano introducing the main theme and the cello picking up midway through it and concluding with its own cadenza. Like the piano, the cello's cadenza also concludes on the dominant, furthering the desire for harmonic closure (Example 7).

The image shows a page of musical notation for a sonata by Beethoven. It features two staves: Violoncello (Cello) and Pianoforte (Piano). The Violoncello part is written in bass clef and begins with a melodic line marked 'p dolce' and 'Allegro, ma non tanto.'. The Pianoforte part is written in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and begins with a 'p dolce' dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as 'cresc.', 'tr.', 'f', 'ad libitum', and 'f-dolce'. The music is in A major and 3/4 time.

Example 7: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Violoncello in A-major, Op. 69¹⁶

The beginning of this sonata highlights Beethoven's melodic and harmonic approach in the first movement. In the first four melodic statements, he repeatedly denies the listener harmonic closure at the end of each phrase but maintains continuity by allowing the piano to begin afresh with a new phrase after the end of its first cadenza. This sets up the next melodic exchange for the middle of the next phrase. This continuous act of melodic counterbalance gives the impression of a relay race, whereby the baton is the melody and the finish line is harmonic closure.

¹⁶ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel).

This constant trading back and forth between the cello and piano can be viewed as structural interplay, whereby the two voices trade the melody based on phrase structure. Beethoven trades the melody between the two voices in such a way that one voice rises out of the other's melodic statement to interrupt with a countermelody. In the fourth measure of Example 8, we will notice that the piano's melody is a simple descending pattern of half notes and quarter notes that outline an E-major triad. The rising scalar line in the cello begins at the same time and rises above the piano to finish out the phrase with a decorative flourish. In this way, Beethoven uses the basic components of melody and countermelody to create a new way of equally distributing melodic material. In his Op. 5 sonatas, Beethoven introduces a variety of roles for the cello (i.e. melody and accompaniment) within the same sonata, and, in his Op. 69 sonata, the same roles become even more fluid and intertwined, and often change mid-phrase. This stands in stark contrast with his predecessors, who only wrote for the cello as a melodic instrument within the context of sonatas written for keyboard and cello.

Example 8: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69 – Secondary Theme¹⁷

Johannes Brahms famously lamented, "you have no idea how it feels to hear behind you the tramp of a giant like Beethoven."¹⁸ These sentiments would be impossible to overstate, as every composer following the great bridge between the Classical and Romantic eras struggled to find their own voice in whatever genre Beethoven had touched. British cello virtuoso and musicologist, Steven Isserlis, writes of Beethoven's A-major Sonata that "every theme was perfectly conceived for both instruments," and that in writing it he "had invented a new genre."¹⁹ Today, we view op. 69 as a pivotal moment in the history of chamber writing. Likewise, its impact was felt by any who were

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jean Inaba, "My Favorite Beethoven Moment Is Hidden in a Brahms Symphony," Colorado Public Radio Classical, accessed May 28, 2020, <https://www.cpr.org/2013/12/31/my-favorite-beethoven-moment-is-hidden-in-a-brahms-symphony/>

¹⁹ Steven Isserlis, "How I Fell in Love with Ludwig." The Guardian, accessed April 7, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2007/jan/12/classicalmusicandopera>.

compelled to write for the combination of piano and cello immediately following Beethoven.

MENDELSSOHN

Felix Mendelssohn's Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 (1843) was hardly his first foray into the art of writing for this combination of instruments. The title of the second sonata itself even implies that another came before it: B-flat major Op. 45, (1838). Nearly 10 years earlier, in 1829, he had also completed a set of concert variations for cello and piano (Op. 17). Both exemplify Mendelssohn's famously Classical style of writing, but neither displays the same number of Beethovenian undertones as does Op. 58. In addition to these undertones, Mendelssohn also manages to blend a variety of other historical voices and stylistic features of the present. Thus, through his Op. 58 Sonata, Mendelssohn establishes his own progressive voice while utilizing Beethoven's Op. 69 as a template.

Plausibility of Influence

How can one be sure of Beethoven's influence as opposed to the influence of other composers writing for other instrumental mediums? After all, his use of equal melodic distribution was only novel in his sonatas for piano and cello. Regarding Mendelssohn's studies as a youth, Tomasz Rzczycki writes:

Aspects of Mendelssohn's musical education can be studied today thanks to the existence of early musical exercises from his composition study with Carl Friedrich Zelter. The book, housed in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, contains exercises on chorale harmonization, counterpoint, canon and fugue. These exercises were based on Johann Philipp Kirnberger's method, which was based on J.S. Bach's contrapuntal practices. The compositional training of the composer was rigorous and traditional, and was partly based on retrospective studies of former masters: young Felix was exposed to the music of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven. Beethoven was still

alive through Mendelssohn's adolescence, and while Mendelssohn never met Beethoven, he did come into constant contact with his music.²⁰

With this information in mind, why could it not have been the violin sonatas of Mozart or Haydn that had the greatest impacts on him? After all, Mozart's K. 547 sonata (1788) somewhat exhibits equal melodic distribution, and even bears the title of Sonata for Piano and Violin, indicating an equal importance between violinist and pianist. Moskowitz and Todd even note the beginnings of a true dialogue between violin and piano in Mozart's earlier sonatas for piano and violin.²¹ The same holds true of his later sonatas for piano and violin, as is evidenced by Examples 9 and 10. In these examples, the violin and piano parts are very similar at the beginning, with the violin only slightly deviating from the piano's melody. Later, in the recapitulation, the violin assumes the role of accompaniment to the piano. This shows that Mozart uses the violin in a variety of roles just as Beethoven would later do with the cello.

Componirt am 26. Juni 1788 in Wien.

Violino. *Andante cantabile.*

Pianoforte. *p*
legato

Example 9: Mozart Sonata for Piano and Violin, No. 43 in F major, K. 547 - Exposition²²

²⁰ Tomasz Rzeczycki, "Felix Mendelssohn's Sonata for Cello and Piano in D-Major, Op. 58, It's Place in the History of the Cello and the Influence of Beethoven" (DMA Treatise, The University of Texas at Austin, 2002), 75, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

²¹ Moskowitz and Todd, 29

²² Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Sonata for Piano and Violin, No. 43 in F major, K. 547* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1879).

W. A. M. 547.

Example 10: Mozart Sonata for Piano and Violin, No. 43 in F Major, K. 547 - Recapitulation²³

Mendelssohn's violin sonatas also cannot be overlooked, as they also exhibit equal melodic distribution. After the violin's cadenza-like introduction in his F-minor Sonata, Op. 4 (1833), the piano introduces the main theme at *allegro moderato*. The violin enters 12 measures later and repeats the same theme verbatim (Example 11). This and the previous example from Mozart show that melodic trading is not specific to Beethoven or music written for cello, but that it is a hallmark of the Classical Era of composing in general. It makes sense that some Romantic composers, like Mendelssohn, who were noteworthy for their Classical style of writing, would also choose to use such a texture. What is specific to Beethoven is total equality between piano and cello, as exemplified in the Op. 69 sonata. For this reason, it is not possible to link Mendelssohn's usage of melodic counterbalance in his Op. 58 sonata exclusively to Beethoven.

²³ Mozart Sonata for Piano and Violin, No. 43 in F Major, K. 547

However, there are elements within Mendelssohn's second sonata that are reminiscent of Beethoven's specific style of melodic distribution in his Op. 69 sonata that point to him as an influence. These will be discussed later in this chapter.

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of Mendelssohn's Sonata for Piano and Violin in F Minor, Op. 4. The score is written for piano and violin. It begins with the tempo marking 'Allegro moderato.' and a piano (p) dynamic. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the initial melodic and harmonic material. The second system includes markings for 'ritard.', 'ritore.', and 'a tempo'. The third system includes markings for 'molto ritard.', 'dolce.', and 'ritard. p'.

Example 11: Mendelssohn Sonata for Piano and Violin in F Minor, Op. 4 – First Movement²⁴

It is possible that Mendelssohn could have sourced his inspiration from several composers predating Beethoven, but what about after Beethoven? Could there have been no other composers of instrumental music, specifically of the piano and cello variety, which might have had an impact on Mendelssohn? To answer this, a brief overview of the chronology of works written for this medium between Beethoven and Mendelssohn is necessary. Beethoven's Op. 69 sonata for piano and cello was written in 1808, falling

²⁴ Felix Mendelssohn, *Sonata for Piano and Violin in F Minor, Op. 4* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1967).

within the middle period of his compositional output. Mendelssohn's Op. 58 sonata was written in 1842, which certainly puts this in the later-works category of his output. One might note that this leaves a 34-year gap between Beethoven's A-major sonata and Mendelssohn's D-major sonata. It would make sense to assume that any number of works by other composers could have made a lasting impression on Mendelssohn. Schubert's *Arpeggione* Sonata (1824) may come to mind for some. However, this connection is problematic because the sonata was written for the arpeggione and not transcribed for cello, as it is normally played today, until it was published posthumously in 1871.²⁵ Even beyond that, it wasn't popular or a standard work in a cellist's repertoire until the early 20th century when Gaspar Cassadó rediscovered and revived it.²⁶ For this reason, it is unlikely that Mendelssohn was even aware of its existence. Likewise, Brahms would have been just shy of nine years old in 1842 and did not write his first cello sonata until 1862. Perhaps one could make a case for Bernhard Romberg or Jean Louis Duport, but they were more likely of technical influence on Beethoven in his first attempts at writing a sonata for piano and cello.²⁷ This is also proven in how Beethoven's Op. 5 sonatas are "tailored to the cello's idiomatic technique."²⁸ If Mendelssohn were influenced, wittingly or unwittingly, by any composer, Beethoven would certainly bear the most immediate relevance to him while he was writing his cello sonatas.

Identifying a definitive link between Mendelssohn and any of the aforementioned composers, let alone Beethoven, is difficult, but there are pieces of circumstantial

²⁵ Leo Black, "Schubert's Ugly Duckling." *The Musical Times*, 138, no. 1857 (November 1997), accessed May 28, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1004222>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Rzeczycki, 47, 49.

²⁸ Moskowitz and Todd, 21

evidence that point to Beethoven as a strong possibility. Friedhelm Krummacher provides an interesting quote that serves as a good starting point:

After the encounter with historical forms was accomplished by their adaptation in *St. Paul*, Mendelssohn could now—as if emancipated—return in 1837 to the long-neglected instrumental genres. From this point there appeared in a continuous stream lasting until 1845 the succession of mature masterpieces...²⁹

This gives us two critical pieces of information regarding Mendelssohn's output during this time. First, after having recently completed work on *St. Paul*, a work which was heavily based upon the work of Bach, it should come as no surprise that he might also carry that influence going forward as he worked with other instrumental genres.³⁰ The second is that he was determined to compose more instrumental music between the years of 1837 and 1845, a span of time that saw both of Mendelssohn's sonatas for piano and cello composed.

Given that the short span of Mendelssohn's own life (1809-1847) coincided with the latter years of Beethoven's, it is not a surprise that the young Felix was not only keenly aware, but a great admirer of his titanic predecessor, and that he frequently studied and performed his works. He was even well acquainted with Goethe and other major intellectual figures of his day, all of whom had close ties to Beethoven and all of whom were major intellectual influences on Mendelssohn.³¹ Just prior to his death, we also know that he had recently programmed two of Beethoven's sonatas and his own cello

²⁹ Rzczycki, 78

³⁰ Todd, R. Larry. "Mendelssohn and the Contrapuntal Tradition." In *Mendelssohn, the Organ, and the Music of the Past: Constructing Historical Legacies*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 15.

³¹ Rzczycki, 75-76.

sonata (Op. 58) in the same recital. Ignaz Moscheles, a contemporary and mentor of Mendelssohn, wrote of this, saying: "...passed a most interesting afternoon and evening with Mendelssohn. He played his Cello Sonata in D-major with [August Wilhelm Julius] Rietz, and two Beethoven sonatas, Op. 102; then my Sonata Symphonique with me."³² This could signify that Mendelssohn thought the works similar enough to be programmed together or perhaps that he thought of his own sonata as different in such a way that it presented itself as the logical evolution of Beethoven's Op. 69.

Another instance in which Beethoven and Mendelssohn share similarities in their music is in how they rework themes. R. Larry Todd notes that the main theme from the first movement of Mendelssohn's Op. 58 sonata is taken from another of his unfinished piano sonatas. In the following quote, Todd argues that Mendelssohn reworks this theme into the cello sonata as an improvement:

In short, our comparison of the two themes [piano and cello] argues for the cello sonata theme as an improved reworking of the piano theme. Put another way, one would be hard pressed to imagine Mendelssohn beginning work on the piano sonata *after* the completion of the cello sonata; the initial similarity between the two themes is simply too strong. If our interpretation is correct, then the cello sonata could serve as a *terminus ante quem* for the dating of the piano sonata fragment.³³

On its own, this is an interesting Easter egg for Mendelssohn enthusiasts, but if examined in the context of Mendelssohn's studies, we again start to see Beethoven's influence, making it now significant in addition to amusing. The reworking of the main theme into the cello sonata is its own sort of revision. Given Beethoven's propensity towards constant revision and reworking of themes in a similar manner (especially in his

³² Ibid., 78.

³³ Todd, R. Larry. "The Unfinished Mendelssohn." In *Mendelssohn Essays*. (Routledge, 2013.) 172

earlier string quartets), Mendelssohn was in good company. This is especially true considering what we know about his early studies in music, when he studied various texts and sketchbooks of past masters, which included Beethoven.³⁴ Lewis Lockwood notes that even Beethoven's immortal Symphony No. 3, *Eroica* (1803-1804), has its thematic origins in Beethoven's *Fifteen Variations and Fugue in E-flat Major*, Op. 35 (1802).³⁵

Yet another possibility exists when examining Mendelssohn's familial influences, specifically regarding his brother, Paul, who was also a cellist. While little is known of his ability at the instrument, Felix thought it appropriate to write and dedicate two works for cello and piano to him, both of which are, at the very least, somewhat virtuosic. These two works are the Variations Concertante Op. 17 (1829) and the Cello Sonata No. 1 in B-flat major, Op. 45 (1838). It is conceivable that he had originally intended to dedicate the second sonata to his brother as well. A letter from Felix to Paul in 1843 reads: "Next Thursday, on Ascension Day, I will travel to Berlin, God willing, and bring you your cello sonata ..."³⁶ Even if not ultimately dedicated to him (as explained in the next paragraph), Paul was certainly of concern to Felix when writing the second sonata. The reason this is significant is because of Paul's own interests and personal property. Before passing it down to his son, Ernst von Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Paul owned a unique sketchbook of Beethoven's that was likely compiled and sorted by the composer himself. This notebook contains several blueprints for Beethoven's Sonata for Piano and Cello in C-major, Op. 102 No. 1, which, as will be discussed in later chapters, is an extension of

³⁴ William Kinderman, "Transformational Processes in Beethoven's Op. 18 Quartets," in *The String Quartets of Beethoven* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 3.

³⁵ Lockwood, Lewis. "Beethoven's Earliest Sketches for the "Eroica" Symphony." *The Musical Quarterly* 67, (October 1981). Accessed March 23, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/742074.

³⁶ Rudolf Elvers, and Ernst-Günter Heinemann, "Preface," in *Mendelssohn: Sonata for Piano and Cello in D-major, Op.58*, (Munich: Henle Verlag, 2001).

the approach he had taken when composing Op. 69.³⁷ From what is known of Felix Mendelssohn's studious and academic nature, it is not a substantial leap to surmise that he was keenly aware of the educational background and scholastic pursuits of the would-be dedicatee and original muse of Op. 58, and sought to appeal to his scholastic interests.

Why Mendelssohn might have opted to channel the spirit of Beethoven in this sonata is not entirely clear, but there are at least two plausible theories concerning his dedications for the work. Instead of his brother, Paul, he would ultimately decide to dedicate the work to Mateusz Wielhorski (1794-1866), who was a Russian-Polish count and patron of the arts. He was also an accomplished cellist in his own right and well acquainted with many well-known figures in music of the 19th century. He frequently entertained both Robert and Clara Schumann as guests and even won the high praise of Hector Berlioz regarding his ability at the cello. Wielhorski, who was Russian, was not graced with the luxury of a nearby conservatory at which he could study music; such an institution would not exist within the country until many years later. Instead, he would study at the Paris Conservatory with Luigi Cherubini and with Bernhard Romberg, who, as mentioned earlier, was a close acquaintance of Beethoven. With Russia's lack of its own conservatory, it had yet to stake out its own voice in European classical music. Wielhorski was aware of this and sought to champion new music of Russian composers, most notably that of Mikhail Glinka, who would go on to be Russia's first major composer of renown. However, Wielhorski was still a product of a major western European conservatory and, as such, gained an appreciation for composers within that same tradition of composition. Most notable among his favorite composers was

³⁷ Moskowitz and Todd, 138.

Beethoven. Whether dedicating it to Wielhorski or his brother, Paul, incorporating Beethovenian influences would have been meaningful.

Adhering to Beethoven's Established Model

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Beethoven composed his third sonata for piano and cello on the principle of equal melodic distribution, which could be seen in his first and second themes. Mendelssohn also treats both parties as total equals, with the melodic workload being equally distributed in both main parts of the exposition (Example 12). Mendelssohn begins the first movement with the cello taking command of the primary theme, which goes uninterrupted for the first 18 measures, while the piano accompanies with its eighth-note figure providing rhythmic and harmonic support. After the cello's brief unaccompanied run, their roles immediately reverse with both parties picking up the other's mantle of responsibility. The secondary theme, while shorter, maintains the same approach (Examples 13 and 14).

Op.58.

Dem Grafen Mathieu Wielhorsky zugeeignet.

Allegro assai vivace.

Violoncello.

Pianoforte.

The image shows a page of musical notation for the first movement of Mendelssohn's Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58. The score is written for Violoncello (Cello) and Pianoforte (Piano). The tempo is marked 'Allegro assai vivace'. The key signature is D major (two sharps). The time signature is 3/4. The score consists of three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a bracketed section in the cello part. The second system continues the development. The third system features a section marked 'A' in the piano part, which is also bracketed. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, dynamics (f), and articulation marks.

Example 12: Mendelssohn Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 – First Movement³⁸

³⁸ Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1878).

M. B. 46.

The image shows a musical score for a cello and piano. The top staff is the cello line, starting with a *cresc.* marking and a *p* dynamic, followed by a *sf* dynamic. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves: the right hand plays chords and the left hand plays a bass line. The key signature has two sharps (D major) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is labeled "M. B. 46." below the piano part.

3

The image shows a musical score for a cello and piano. The top staff is the cello line, starting with a *p* dynamic and a *sf* dynamic. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves: the right hand plays chords and the left hand plays a bass line. The key signature has two sharps (D major) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is labeled "3" at the top right. The piano part includes a *cresc.* marking and a *p* dynamic.

Example 13: Mendelssohn Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 – First Movement, Secondary Theme³⁹

³⁹ Ibid.

M. B. 46.

Example 14: Mendelssohn Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 – First Movement, Secondary Theme cont.⁴⁰

Tomasz Rzeczycki notes that there are some striking similarities between this opening theme and that of Beethoven's A-major sonata (compare Examples 15 and 16).⁴¹ Their initial statements are similar in contour, but they have some noticeable differences. Beethoven outlines a tonic triad in the first two measures by leaping from low A (A2) up a fifth to an E (E3). He then ascends to the upper neighbor of F-sharp (F-sharp 3) for three beats before descending back down to a C-sharp (C-sharp 3), which is the third of

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Rzeczycki, 86.

the A-major tonic. Likewise, Mendelssohn also ascends via triad to begin his sonata, but the methodology is much more direct in this instance. He opts for a first-inversion tonic triad, which ascends to a high D (D4) by the start of the second measure. While arpeggiation is not specific to Beethoven, the two openings are similar in that they both lead to the beginning of their respective second measures as focal points of the phrases. The contour of Mendelssohn's opening statement is also reminiscent of Beethoven's. Beethoven peaks at the F-sharp (F-sharp 3) in the beginning of the second measure and then immediately begins a descent to low A (A2) at the start of the fourth measure. Likewise, Mendelssohn peaks at the beginning of the second measure and immediately descends to A (A3).



Example 15: Comparison of Opening Themes - Beethoven⁴²



Example 16: Comparison of Opening Themes - Mendelssohn⁴³

The openings of the two sonatas are also similar in their inclusion of unaccompanied passages. Three measures before rehearsal mark A in Example 12, Mendelssohn writes an unaccompanied eighth-note passage that bears a resemblance—at least in terms of phrase ending—to m. 12 of Beethoven's opening (Example 7). The cello also plays the role of accompanist in the form of long, held notes in the lower register of

⁴² Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69.*

⁴³ Mendelssohn, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58.*

the cello at rehearsal mark A (Example 12). Admittedly, the accompaniment is much more active in this instance than it is in Beethoven's A-major sonata at the same point, but both serve the same function of accompanying the piano while it takes over control of the melodic material, thus melodically counterbalancing the two phrases.

It is also worth noting a textural similarity between the openings of Beethoven's first Op. 5 sonata and Mendelssohn's Op. 58. While their melodic roles begin opposite one another, the homophonic blend of melody and accompaniment figures is the same. Example 12 shows an eighth-note figure in the piano beneath the cello's melody until m. 19, where the two parties instantly switch roles. This texture is more akin to Beethoven's Op. 5 No. 1 (Example 5), than the seamless, linear transfer of melody that we see in Beethoven's Op. 69 (Example 7). Consideration of this is important in establishing plausibility of Beethoven's influence in Mendelssohn's writing for piano and cello.

The final movements of Beethoven's Op. 69 and Mendelssohn's Op. 58 also warrant some discussion about close thematic similarities. There are two that I will discuss here, but the first and perhaps most obvious is the nearly constant churning of 16th notes as a rhythmic underpinning and motivic device. Both sonatas include a remarkably similar ascending and descending scalar pattern that is alternated between both voices. As Rzewycki notes, this is another example of equal distribution of melody by Mendelssohn.⁴⁴ These passages are similar in the range that they cover and the harmonic pattern that occurs immediately following the virtuosic runs. In the fifth measure of Example 17, Beethoven keeps this alternating figure framed neatly within an octave by repeating the top two notes of the scale, D-sharp (D-sharp 5) and E (E5), before

⁴⁴ Rzewycki, 120.

descending. In Example 18, Mendelssohn takes a similar approach by seamlessly handing off the scalar run from the piano to the cello. The biggest difference in melodic contour is that Mendelssohn slightly exceeds the range of an octave with the B-flat (B-flat 3) at the top of the scale in the first two iterations shared between the piano and cello. The next two iterations push just past that to quickly touch C-natural (C4) before descending once more.

Both composers also use a similar harmonic pattern following the scalar runs. In the sixth measure of Example 17, Beethoven writes two half notes, E (E4) and B (B3), in the cello, which suggests a tonic/dominant relationship. Mendelssohn takes a similar approach in Example 18. In the fourth measure of this example, he writes two quarter notes which seem to imply a dominant harmony on the first beat and a half-diminished harmony on the third. This augments to four eighth notes two measures later, but the implied harmony stays the same over the first two beats and the last two beats just as in Beethoven's example. It is also worth mentioning that both parts evenly trade this accompanimental figure, which bolsters Rzeczycki's claim regarding Mendelssohn seeking to equally distribute the workload between parts and that it shows evidence of a study of Beethoven.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Rzeczycki, 119-120.

Example 17: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69 – Fourth Movement⁴⁶

Example 18: Mendelssohn Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 – Fourth Movement⁴⁷

The second similarity concerns the cello's four quarter notes in the first measure of Beethoven's fourth movement (Example 19). Without quoting Beethoven directly, Mendelssohn also incorporates a four-note motive later in his own finale. While it does not follow the same melodic contour initially, he reiterates it until it gives way to a

⁴⁶ Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69*.

⁴⁷ Mendelssohn, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58*.

descending sequence of quarter notes played by the cello that do follow the same melodic shape. This can be seen at the outset of Example 20 in the cello line.

Allegro vivace.
pp
Allegro vivace.
pp
cresc.
cresc.

Example 19: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69 – Fourth Movement⁴⁸

dim.
p
pp
dim.
p
dim.
leggiero scherzando

Example 20: Mendelssohn Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 – Fourth Movement⁴⁹

One final similarity between the two composers' sonatas concerns groupings of repeated *sforzando* markings. In their book, *Inside Beethoven's Quartets: History, Interpretation, Performance*, Lewis Lockwood, Ronald Cope, Joel Smirnoff, Samuel Rhodes, and Joel Krosnick mention the importance of noting the stylistic differences that exist between Mozart and Haydn's *sforzando* markings and then the cataclysmic shift between the aforementioned composers and that of Beethoven when it comes to the same dynamic marking. Joel Smirnoff remarks:

In all the coaching we do and in all the playing we do, it becomes so obvious that the *sforzando* has a different function in Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven—totally different. The Haydn *sforzando* is there to draw one's attention to a note, but it does not specify even an accent. The Mozart *sforzando* is usually an *espressivo*. And here Beethoven has shown you

⁴⁸ Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69*.

⁴⁹ Mendelssohn, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58*.

very quickly the difference between a swell and a sforzando. And he is saying, “No, my sforzando is not the sforzando of Mozart, which would be a swell, my sforzando is a *sforzando sforzando*”—and this is a sforzando that we will live with, more or less, for the rest of musical history.⁵⁰

Traditionally, most chamber players and solo pianists, especially while playing Beethoven’s music, treat a series of *sforzando* markings as an implied crescendo until the end of the sequence, with each passing *sforzando* becoming more emphatic than the last. Regardless of performance practice, this is a hallmark of Beethoven’s compositional style and one that Mendelssohn seems keen to reference early in his second sonata. In Example 21, Beethoven implies a set of hairpin dynamics through the course of his *sforzando* markings with each one marking a higher note until the *diminuendo* in the penultimate measure of the example. Mendelssohn also implies *crescendo* with his own *sforzando* markings. In Example 22, we can see him step down the distance of a third between the first two sforzando notes, which might imply a slightly less stressed second *fermata*. However, the next two note sequences are repeated almost verbatim, with the notable exception of the half step up to G (G3) in the middle of the eighth-note figure. This culminates with a high G (G4) five measures before the end of the example, which very likely implies a *crescendo* leading up to it. The following cadenza-like figure is a descending line, which could, again, be taken to imply some sort of *diminuendo* before the written *crescendo* leading into the final measure. Essentially, Mendelssohn doubles the same process that Beethoven implemented in Example 21.

⁵⁰ Lewis Lockwood, et al., “Conversation.” *Inside Beethoven’s Quartets: History, Interpretation, Performance* (Harvard University Press, 2008), 45.

Example 21: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69 – First Movement⁵¹

Example 22: Mendelssohn Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 – First Movement⁵²

Mendelssohn's Progressive Voice

It is plausible that Mendelssohn was directly influenced by Beethoven when composing Op. 58, but it would be a disservice to him to assert that his primary reason for writing the sonata was to imitate his predecessor. While it is true that he builds on what was left to him, the work as a whole is full of elements that speak to his ability as a forward-thinking composer. The question for Mendelssohn was not how to abide by the new normal that Beethoven had established, but how to incorporate his own unique voice into the new template that had been established. As with many of his greatest works, Mendelssohn sought to balance working within the formal and cultural confines of the past and present, while simultaneously looking to the future. To better understand how

⁵¹ Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69*.

⁵² Mendelssohn, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58*

Mendelssohn walks such a fine line, let us again examine the first two themes of both sonatas found in Examples 15 and 16.

While the two are similar, they have more than a few noticeable differences between them. Steven Isserlis notes that from the outset of Op. 69, it “radiates serenity, humour and joy,” but there is also an undertone of uncertainty in how the F-sharp (F-sharp 3) functions at the top of the second measure.⁵³ While unlikely, it is possible that it could imply a vi7 chord in first inversion, which would completely change the entire aesthetic of the piece and create an air of uncertainty.

By contrast, Mendelssohn leaves nothing to the imagination. The opening is unquestionably in D-major and the feeling is one of heroism and triumph. He accomplishes this in the same way that Beethoven sets a heroic tone in the outset of the “Eroica” Symphony, with triadic motion. Mendelssohn again sets himself apart in how he deals with texture. The texture of the first movement of the D-major sonata is much more homogenous, which stands in stark contrast to the open, delicate structure of the opening in the A-major sonata. Where Beethoven opts for a completely unaccompanied cello solo, Mendelssohn supplies the cello with a foundation of static eighths in the piano, which, again, adds to the drama and heroic flair by providing the triadic motive with a galloping undercurrent. The irony here is that Mendelssohn’s Op. 58 departs with Beethoven’s Op. 69 to further the catalogue of Romantic music that invokes the spirit of heroism. This was arguably started by Beethoven in his Symphony No. 3, *Eroica*. R.W.S. Mendl remarked that “The Eroica Symphony is the finest piece of idealistic character-drawing in the

⁵³ Isserlis, "How I Fell in Love with Ludwig."

whole range of musical portraiture.”⁵⁴ Mendelssohn paints a similar picture of heroism here, and he would be followed by other great German romantics who would do the same, such as Richard Strauss with his heroic tone poems, and Richard Wagner with his epic portrayal of Siegfried in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

The issue of heroism is also related to the issue of virtuosity within the two works, particularly regarding their secondary themes in their respective first movements. In Example 23, we can see linear, stepwise motion in the solo cello line. From a casual glance, it almost appears simple or even technically facile. What makes it virtuosic is the challenge that arises in creating a musical line and maintaining an accurate pitch center throughout it. One could describe it as musical tightrope walking, where one false move can completely deflate an entire phrase. Also apparent in this example is a hallmark of the classical style of composition. Simple and graceful ornamentations adorn the ends of phrases in the form of turns and call-and-response figures, such as in the second and third measure of the last line.

The image displays a musical score for Example 23, which is the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata for Piano and Cello in A major, Op. 69. The score is written for four staves. The top two staves are in bass clef, and the bottom two are in treble clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating A major. The music is characterized by a prominent, linear, and stepwise melodic line in the solo cello part, which is the focus of the example. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and ornaments, particularly in the final measures of the phrase shown.

Example 23: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello in A-major, Op. 69 - First Movement⁵⁵

⁵⁴ R. W. S. Mendl, "The 'Eroica' Symphony." *The Musical Times*, 65, no. 972 (February 1924). Accessed March 23, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/913767>.

⁵⁵ Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69*.

By contrast, Mendelssohn takes a much bolder approach in what he asks of the performers, particularly the cellist. Gone are the fluid, scalar melodies of the older generation, having been replaced by more aggressive and angular melodic gestures (Example 24). The heroic undertones become more overt in the daring leaps and dramatic position shifts that the part demands of its cellist. Mendelssohn and Beethoven both share the same idea of virtuosity that challenges a performer to simultaneously focus on phrasing and accuracy. The difference between the two is that Beethoven's sonata should sound and feel effortless, while Mendelssohn's is overtly athletic and is intended to sound that way. If the virtuosity of the A-major sonata is a tightrope walk, Mendelssohn's D-major sonata is a flying trapeze act, complete with sweeping melodies and daring leaps of fate. In this case, he is focused on showmanship.

Example 24: Mendelssohn Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 - First Movement⁵⁶

The most compelling case for Mendelssohn as a product of the Romantic-Era, at least when talking about Op. 58, exists within his third movement. This movement is the heart and soul of the entire work, and beautifully captures who Mendelssohn was as a

⁵⁶ Mendelssohn, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op 58*.

musician and a scholar. Given that he is partly responsible for the music of Johann Sebastian Bach being such a substantial and treasured part of Western classical music, it comes as no surprise that we see his influence in this work.⁵⁷ In fact, during the same period of Mendelssohn's life in which the second sonata was written, he was also director of the Gewandhaus concerts in Leipzig. This is the same city in which Bach had lived from the years of 1722-1750, the latter being the year of his death. The same city also saw the bulk of Bach's cantatas composed there. Mendelssohn was likely aware of this and sought to further the renaissance of Bach's music that he had already started by paying homage in his own work to his predecessor. Four years after the Sonata, and in the same city, he would even go on to write *Elijah*, his most famous oratorio, composed with the spirit of Bach in mind and at heart.

The beginning of the third movement is marked *sempre arpeggiando col pedale*, "always arpeggiated with the [sustain] pedal" (Example 25). Arpeggiating chords was and remains an expressive tool of any continuo harpsichordist, and it would not have been necessary to precisely notate it in Bach's time. This is likely Mendelssohn's attempt to make his nod to Bach a little more obvious by approximating the arpeggiated continuo realizations. If seen this way, it reveals Mendelssohn's inspiration behind the entire movement. On its own, the opening strongly resembles a Lutheran chorale, but the implications of the cellist's entrance suggest an even larger narrative. As can also be seen in Example 25, the cellist's line is impassioned and vocal in nature. It is even marked at the outset with the clear instruction of *appassionato ed animato*, "passionate and

⁵⁷ Celia Applegate, "The St. Matthew Passion in Concert: Protestantism, Historicism, and Sacred Music," in *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn's Revival of the "St. Matthew Passion"* (London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 178.

animated.” The passionate aspect is obvious with any knowledgeable performer at the cello, but the animated portion of the instruction could imply that the soloist is given permission to act outside the confines of rhythm to imply a more recitative-like style of playing. Upon further study, it is likely that this is what Mendelssohn was trying to achieve, and we have a few more clues that point to his intent. The first is the instruction marked in the piano score at the cellist’s entrance, *con violoncello*, “with the cello.” This is significant because in an opera, cantata, or oratorio, a continuo keyboard player would be given the marking of *colla voce*, “with voice,” at the beginning of a recitative passage to instruct them to place their accompanying chords with the soloist, who may interpret their own rhythmic freedom. This instruction was printed in Bach’s cantatas, and, given the previous Lutheran-style chorale, it is most likely that he was channeling his own fascination with Bach.

The image shows a page of musical notation for the third movement of Mendelssohn's Sonata for Piano and Cello, No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58. The score is written for piano and cello. It begins with the tempo marking 'Adagio.' and a dynamic marking of 'mf'. The piano part features a prominent arpeggiated accompaniment, with the instruction 'sempre arpeggiando con Pedale' written below it. The cello part has a more melodic line. The score includes several dynamic markings: 'mf', 'cresc.', 'dim.', 'p', and 'sf'. There are also performance instructions: 'con Violoncello' and 'sf appassionato ed animato'. The score is divided into sections A and B, with section B starting with a 'dim.' marking and ending with a 'cresc.' marking.

Example 25: Mendelssohn Sonata for Piano and Cello, No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 – Third Movement⁵⁸

There is another clue that points to this being a recitative-style movement, and it was written over a hundred years prior to Mendelssohn's Op. 58. Bach had written his famous Chromatic Fantasia & Fugue, BWV 903 (pub. 1802) which bears a striking resemblance in sound and on paper to the third movement in the D-major cello sonata. The portion of the cello sonata that most resembles Bach's work comes from the end of Bach's Fantasia, which is commonly known among scholars and performers alike as the

⁵⁸ Mendelssohn, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58*

recitative section; even Bach himself marks it this way in the score.⁵⁹ Bach employs the use of a falling, eighth-note motive placed intermittently throughout the final section of the Fantasia (Example 27). This is a common occurrence in Baroque music in general and is often referred to as a sighing motive.⁶⁰ As we saw in Example 25, Mendelssohn uses the exact same motive in a very similar manner, also placing it intermittently throughout his own recitative.

Example 26: Bach Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, BWV 903 – Recitative Section⁶¹

As I discussed earlier, Beethoven's Op. 5 sonatas introduce the possibility of the piano and cello assuming multiple roles (i.e. melody and accompaniment) within the same movement. We can see an evolution of this approach in the third movement of Mendelssohn's Op. 58 sonata in three places. The first, is the accompanied recitative shown in Examples 25 and 26. The second is the reversal of roles in the final measures of the movement, where the cello accompanies with a sustained G (G2) and the piano plays the theme from the recitative (Example 27). The third, occurs in the middle of the

⁵⁹ Joseph Kerman, et al., "Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV 903," in *Art of Fugue: Bach Fugues for Keyboard, 1715–1750* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2005), 49.

⁶⁰ Murray, Sterling E. "Music for the Church." In *The Career of an Eighteenth-Century Kapellmeister: The Life and Music of Antonio Rosetti (ca. 1750-1792)*, 321.

⁶¹ Johann Sebastian Bach, *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*, ed. Ernst Nauman (Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel), 1890

movement at rehearsal mark C, with the return of the Lutheran chorale in the piano and the cello accompanying it with a sustained G (G2) (Example 27). This is perhaps the most interesting of the three examples because, until this point, the recitative has been the sole melodic focus of the movement. While the chorale is inherently melodic, its initial presentation seems introductory to the cello's recitative, which is further validated as important melodic material by the piano's restatement of it in the final measures of the movement. However important the recitative theme might be, Mendelssohn makes it clear that the chorale is also important to the overall ethos of the movement by putting the cello in a clearly accompanimental role beneath it. Further still, the following measures show a culmination of the two musical ideas by having them intertwine and act as countermelodies to one another. In so doing, Mendelssohn expands the possibilities of melodic roles that are possible within this specific ensemble.

The image shows a page of musical notation for the third movement of Mendelssohn's Sonata for Piano and Cello, No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58. The score is in 3/4 time and marked 'Tempo I'. It consists of four systems of music. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a cello part and a piano part. The piano part is marked 'sempre una corda' and 'arpeggiando con Pedale'. The second system shows the piano part with 'tutte le corde' and 'cresc.' markings. The third system shows the piano part with 'una corda' and 'tutte le corde' markings. The fourth system shows the end of the piece with 'attacca subito' and 'pp' markings.

Example 27: Mendelssohn Sonata for Piano and Cello, No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58 – Third Movement⁶²

This movement is not simply Mendelssohn's attempt to pay homage to Bach and build upon Beethoven's idea of equal melodic distribution, and it is certainly not without its own Romantic elements and his own personal branding. Mendelssohn juxtaposes the

⁶² Mendelssohn, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 2 in D-Major, Op. 58*

two-note sighing motive with the occasional melodic leap. When performed with an overhand shift by the cellist, this polar-opposite motive sounds more like a Romantic gesture. Further still, it also has a deeper narrative that places it in a more progressive corner of the Romantic Era. Mendelssohn was well known for writing many songs, but another subcategory of songs that he wrote were simply known as *Lieder ohne Worte*, “Songs Without Words.” In fact, one of them was written specifically for cello and piano, although it exhibits a completely different style of writing from the sonata, wherein the piano acts as accompaniment throughout the entirety of the short, one-movement work. The general premise behind these songs was that they were not written for voice and would therefore contain no text. However, the third movement of the sonata in question is not only a song without words, but a recitative without words, which is highly problematic given that the main purpose of a recitative is to advance a plot or narrative. As puzzling as the idea may be, it is not without historical precedent. Beethoven famously employed the use of a recitative-like passage in the lower strings in the final movement of his Symphony No. 9 in D-Minor, Op. 125 (1822-1824), but even that instance is different in that it is repeated later by an actual vocal soloist who *does* clarify the general tone and aesthetic of the movement through sung text. With Mendelssohn’s sonata, we can only wonder about its deeper significance. This Romantic element of mystery, coupled with his incorporation of music from the past, is precisely why he was so successful as a composer, making Op. 58 a classic example of his ability to bridge rifts in time and between audiences.

CHOPIN

The number of times Frederic Chopin wrote for the piano in anything less than a soloistic capacity is limited, but there exists a cherished handful of chamber works to his name that are still celebrated and performed today. Among these chamber works are his Piano Trio in G-Minor, Op. 8 (1829), Variations for Flute and Piano in E-major, B. 9 (c. 1824-1830), and his Cello Sonata in G-minor Op. 65 (1846-1847). The latter is his only sonata for cello, and one of only four sonatas in his entire output, with the other three having been written exclusively for solo piano. This sonata also bears special significance because it is the last published work of Chopin's lifetime, and was programmed on Chopin's last public recital. In many ways, the whole work represents a stylistic apex of his compositional career, but the roots of his lone cello sonata can also be viewed as representative of the latter two cello sonatas by Ludwig van Beethoven, specifically his Sonata for Piano and Cello in C-major Op. 102, No. 1 (1815). According to Moskovitz and Todd, this particular sonata exhibits a surprising amount of spontaneity and improvisatory energy, as well as a desire to alter the standard form of individual movements and the overarching structure of the sonata as a whole.⁶³ As I will show in this chapter, Chopin's own Sonata for Piano and Cello in G-minor echoes these musical advances in his own musical language.

Plausibility of Influence

There can be no mistaking Beethoven's work for Chopin's, or vice versa. Each master had his own distinct musical voice, but these differences are even more pronounced when seen through the lens of their writing for piano. Regardless of

⁶³ Moskovitz and Todd, 131.

differences, generational or musical, Beethoven's titanic stature was impossible to overlook, and he was likely the best and latest example of writing for piano and cello from which to draw influence or inspiration. For the same reasons I discussed in the previous chapter about why Beethoven was the most likely composer that Mendelssohn would choose to emulate, he was also the most likely choice for Chopin. This is best explained from a stylistic perspective. Beethoven's five sonatas for piano and cello divide themselves neatly between his early, middle, and late periods of writing. The first two are early-period compositions, the third was written during the middle period, and the latter two are new and daring forays into the explorative style that would come to define Beethoven's late-period writing. This being the case, they are each very different works, stylistically speaking. For reference, and as we have already discussed, Mendelssohn's second sonata follows a mostly middle-period approach. By contrast, Chopin's writing exhibits some of the same characteristics that define Beethoven's final two sonatas for piano and cello. These features will be explained later in this chapter.

It is critically important to draw the plausible conclusion that Chopin was actively aware of Beethoven's work. We know that Chopin, on two occasions, traveled to Vienna, once for two weeks in 1829 and once again just prior to his relocation to Paris at the end of 1830; the latter trip would turn into an eight-month stay.⁶⁴ It would require a significant suspension of disbelief to assert that he never associated with any former acquaintances of Beethoven's or that he was never exposed to the broader worship of Beethoven's music while in residence. Similarly, Chopin's main publisher in Paris, Maurice Schlesinger, had also published versions of Beethoven's last two sonatas for

⁶⁴ Wayne C. Petty, "Chopin and the Ghost of Beethoven," *19th-Century Music* 22, no. 3 (Spring, 1999). Accessed March 25, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/746802> 282.

piano. Chopin would also later visit Schlesinger to purchase a copy of Beethoven's *Fidelio*.⁶⁵

Beyond the circumstantial likelihood of his encounters with reminders of Beethoven, we also have evidence of musical quotations that are unlikely to have come from any other source than Beethoven's piano sonatas. The most well-known case study for Beethovenian influence in Chopin's writing is in his *Fantasia Impromptu*, Op. 66 (1834-1835), which was modeled heavily on Beethoven's Op. 27 No. 1, the "Moonlight" Sonata (1801).⁶⁶ Further still, Wayne C. Petty argues in his article, *Chopin and the Ghost of Beethoven*, that Chopin's Piano Sonata in B-Flat Minor, Op. 35 (1837-1839) is a constant reference to Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 32 in C-Minor, Op. 111 (1821-1822), while also a sign of him struggling to gain artistic independence from his predecessor.⁶⁷ While these are good starting points, there is another subtle, yet telling example that involves a direct quote from Beethoven's Op. 69 sonata for Piano and Cello in Chopin's lone cello sonata (Examples 28 and 29). If not immediately obvious, this is a direct quotation from the latter half Beethoven's initial theme in Op. 69 transposed up a half step in Chopin's Largo movement. W. Dean Sutcliffe asserts that this suggests a general, if not specific, awareness of Beethoven's cello sonatas, which is key to the overarching argument regarding plausible influence of Beethoven in Chopin's cello sonata.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Ibid., 290.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 283

⁶⁷ Ibid., 283

⁶⁸ W. Dean Sutcliffe, "Chopin's Counterpoint: The Largo from the Cello Sonata, Opus 65," *The Musical Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (Spring 1999). Accessed March 25, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/742263.



Example 28: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69 – First Movement, m. 56⁶⁹



Example 29: Chopin Cello Sonata in G-minor, Op. 65 – Third Movement, m. 157⁷⁰

Chopin and Improvisation

Moskowitz and Todd argue that Beethoven’s initial theme in the first movement of his fourth sonata is improvisatory because it inspires “an improvisatory sequence of ideas” that never fully develop and seem to aimlessly “meander.”⁷¹ These gestures are contained within a series of *fermati* (Examples 30 and 31).

⁶⁹ Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 3 in A-major, Op. 69*.

⁷⁰ Frederic Chopin, *Sonata for Piano and Cello in G-minor, Op. 65* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1879).

⁷¹ Moskowitz and Todd, 134.

Sonate N^o 4. Andante. (♩ = 88.)
teneramente
 VIOLONCELLO. *p dolce cantabile*
 Componirt im August 1815.
 PIANOFORTE. Andante. (♩ = 88.)
p dolce

Example 30: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello, Op. 102 No. 1 - First Movement (mm. 1- 10)⁷²

Original-Verleger: Artaria & C^o in Wien.
 N. Simrock in Bonn. B.108. Stich und Druck von Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig.

Example 31: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello in No. 4, Op. 102 No. 1 - First Movement (mm. 11 – 20)⁷³

The initial thematic germ is softly spoken, in a thematic and dynamic sense. With the instructions of *piano* and *dolce*, it would appear to announce itself with the same

⁷² Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 4 in C-Major, Op. 102, No. 1* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1864).

⁷³ Ibid.

graceful candor of the Op. 69 A-major sonata, if not for its unconvincing resolution to the supertonic at the end of the second measure. Immediately thereafter, and for the next 23 measures, the cello and piano trade variations and false conclusions to the initial motive over the insistence of a prolonged dominant harmony. These combine to create a sense of uneasiness and volatility with no clues as to how this section will ultimately develop. Even in the final two measures of Example 31, we can see that Beethoven is falsely leading the listener into believing that the cello is preparing to launch into a full-fledged cadenza, which is implied by the dominant trill, *crescendo*, and the short, rising flurry of 64th notes. These lead to a disappointing restatement of the second half of the opening motive, which still has not reached any sort of thematic fulfillment. When the *andante* does finally near its conclusion, the end is heralded by a brief piano cadenza that prolongs the dominant even further and mimics the shape of the original motive. However, this is done only after leading the listener astray once again by making it seem as if the cello is finally about to take a new direction, as is implied by the 32nd-note runs and arpeggiations. This is interrupted by the aforementioned piano *cadenza*. It is perhaps

these features which led Beethoven to initially subtitle the work as *Freie Sonate*, “Free Sonata.”⁷⁴

Example 32: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello, Op 102 No. 1 - First Movement (mm. 21 - 25)⁷⁵

The beginning of this sonata shows a clear departure from the manner of forward progress that Beethoven employed in Op. 69. Where the A-major sonata opens very clearly with an unaltered and clearly defined theme, the opening of the Op. 102 Sonata in C-major is much more explorative as it searches for thematic fulfillment. This illustrates another shift in overall style of composition, one which shows Beethoven’s transition into his late-period writing.

A substantial portion of Chopin’s musical output is what would have been known simply as parlor music, which presented a problem in terms of his career in music

⁷⁴ Moskovitz and Todd, 143.

⁷⁵ Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 4 in C-Major, Op. 102, No. 1*.

making. He had no opera, symphony, or major liturgical work to his name as a composer.⁷⁶ While this may have prevented him from having the same stature as some of his contemporaries, he did possess a particularly keen ability to improvise at the piano, a skill which was highly revered and desirable in his day.⁷⁷ Chopin was nothing if not a crowd pleaser, and several written accounts exist that detail the extraordinary charm with which he won over his audiences during public and private performances. Of note is a quote from Julian Fontana, a close friend and colleague of Chopin's:

From his youth, the richness of [Chopin's] improvisation was astonishing. But he took good care not to parade it; and the few lucky ones who have heard him improvising for hours on end, in the most wonderful manner; never lifting a single phrase from any other composer, never even touching on any of his own works—those people will agree with us in saying that Chopin's most beautiful finished compositions are merely reflections and echoes of his improvisations.⁷⁸

This tells us two critically important things regarding Chopin and his music. First, as is evident from this quote and the next, he was highly skilled in the art of improvisation and there is a wide body of supporting evidence from first-hand witnesses to bolster this claim. Second, Chopin was first and foremost an improviser, and then a composer. His compositions reflect his improvisations. Another such quote from George Sand sheds some more light on Chopin's compositional process:

His invention [*création*] was spontaneous, miraculous. He found it without seeking it, without anticipating it. It came at his piano, sudden, complete, sublime; or it sang in his head during a walk, and he grew anxious to hear it aloud by trying it out on the instrument. And thus began the most distressing labor I have ever witnessed. It was a series of efforts, of

⁷⁶ Charles Rosen, "Frédéric Chopin, Reactionary and Revolutionary," in *Freedom and the Arts: Essays on Music and Literature, 187-92*. 7

⁷⁷ John Rink, "Chopin and Improvisation," in *Chopin and His World*, ed. Jonathan D. Bellman and Halina Goldberg (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), 249.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 250.

indecisions, of impatience to recapture certain details of the theme he had heard: what he had conceived all of a piece he then overanalyzed in trying to write it down, and his regret at not finding it in the form he had considered just right threw him into despair. He shut himself in his room for days on end, weeping, pacing, breaking his pens, repeating and altering a single bar a hundred times, notating and then cancelling it no less often, and then starting again the next day with meticulous, desperate perseverance. He would spend six weeks on a page before coming back to what he had written on the first attempt.⁷⁹

We can surmise from this that improvisatory writing is not exclusively Beethovenian, even though he was recognized as a master in that respect as well.⁸⁰ Rather, the tie-in with Beethoven comes from how Chopin approaches improvisatory phrases in the first movement of his own cello sonata (Example 33). Much like the opening to Beethoven's first Op. 102 sonata, Chopin also seems to either struggle with or reject entirely the notion that primary themes must be fully developed up front. Striking an initially different tone than that of Beethoven, Chopin introduces the thematic germ of the movement via the piano in block-chord style, and avoids developing it by allowing the chordal progression to cadence at the end of the fourth measure with a cadenza, just as Beethoven did in Op. 69 and Op. 102 No. 1. This cadenza heralds the arrival of the cello's entrance, and the same approach is also used later at the beginning of the development (Example 33).

⁷⁹ Ibid., 261.

⁸⁰ Michael R. Sitton, "Beethoven's Opus 77 Fantasy: An Improvisational Document?" *American Music Teacher*, 36. No. 6 (June-July 1987). Accessed March 26, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/43541313.

Allegro moderato.

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Cello Sonata in G-minor, Op. 65, measures 1 through 15. The score is in G minor and 3/4 time. It features two staves: Violoncello (Cello) and Pianoforte (Piano). The Violoncello part begins with a bold entrance in measure 12, marked with an asterisk. The Pianoforte part includes markings such as 'sostenuto', 'cresc.', and 'dolce'. The score shows a complex interplay between the two instruments, with the cello playing a prominent role in the later measures.

Example 33: Chopin Cello Sonata in G-minor, Op. 65 (mm. 1 – 15)⁸¹

Example 30 showed that Beethoven also cut his initial theme short without allowing it to fully develop, albeit not by way of a virtuosic piano cadenza in the way we see above. The similarities continue with the cello's bold entrance and subsequent meandering. The cello's line follows the same melodic shape for its first four measures that the piano had played previously, but it goes on to give us another phrase at m. 12. This new phrase quickly devolves into more adventurous writing in the form of virtuosic 16th-note runs for the cello. Following that, we are introduced to yet another four-bar phrase, this time lyrically sweet and completely unheard until this point. Incredibly, at the end of this phrase, we are introduced to yet another completely new theme upon returning

⁸¹ Chopin, *Sonata for Piano and Cello in G-minor*, Op. 65.

to the tonic of G-minor. This, coupled with the harmonic resolution, has the effect of making this new theme seem not only important, but perhaps as if it is even a primary theme that has only just now been discovered. We can see in the beginning of the final system in Example 34 (beginning where Example 33 ended) that Chopin even echoes this melodic shape in the piano, validating it as thematic material. Further still, Chopin also chooses to develop this theme later in the development section of the work, which can be seen in Example 35. This shows that Chopin, like Beethoven in his first Op. 102 sonata, uses improvisatory writing as a means of delaying the full realization of the theme.

The image displays a musical score for Chopin's Cello Sonata in G-minor, Op. 65, measures 16 through 39. The score is presented in two systems, each consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The first system begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic in the bass staff and a piano (*p*) dynamic in the treble staff. The second system continues with various dynamics, including *f*, *p*, and *cresc.* (crescendo). The score is heavily annotated with slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. There are also several asterisks and 'QW' symbols scattered throughout the score, likely indicating specific performance instructions or editorial markings.

Example 34: Chopin Cello Sonata in G-minor, Op. 65 (mm. 16 – 39)⁸²

⁸² Ibid.

Example 35: Chopin Cello Sonata in G-minor, Op. 65 - Development⁸³

Form

The number of themes present in what we would consider the exposition of Chopin's first movement warrants a discussion regarding similarities in form that can be found between Chopin's writing in this sonata and that of Beethoven in his fourth. The latter seems to be oscillating between two motivic devices, with the first being found in the first measure and the second being found in the second measure (Example 30). These two motives are constantly experimented with in such a way that it forms the basis for Beethoven's *andante* section. Chopin also deals primarily with two motivic devices throughout the opening to his sonata. The first is what is heard in the piano during the

⁸³ Ibid.

first two measures of the piece, and the second can be found in m. 24 at the return of the C-minor tonic (Example 34). It is worth noting that in neither sonata do any of these themes return in the recapitulation. In the case of Beethoven, this is because the exposition (similar to the first movement of his Fifth Symphony) is built mainly around one theme, with a less developed secondary theme making an appearance in m. 13. This main theme from Beethoven's C-major sonata can be described as a rising, scalar, dotted-quarter/eighth note sequence followed by a descending, scalar, dotted-eighth/sixteenth note sequence (Example 36).

vivace. (♩ = 144.)

vivace. (♩ = 144.)

f

p

cresc.

mf

R. 108.

(87)3

espressivo

cresc.

f

Example 36: Beethoven Sonata for Piano No. 4 in C-Major and Cello, Op. 102 No. 1 – Mvt. 1 (mm. 28-33)⁸⁴

Unlike Beethoven, Chopin's sonata does have a more developed secondary theme (Example 37), or at least something that could be considered a second thematic germination point from which variations and thematic augmentations are spawned and

⁸⁴ Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano No. 4 in C-Major and Cello, Op. 102 No. 1*.

repeated later in the recapitulation. This is also an interesting point of discussion in that Chopin chooses to forego repeating the first half of the two-part exposition before the medial *caesura*. This prevents the improvisatory opening from having any lasting impact in the listener's mind as the first movement comes to a close. In fact, the only recurring thematic or motivic material that repeats from the outset of the exposition is the piano cadenza followed by the ominous dotted-eighth/sixteenth in the cello, which acts as a sort of harbinger of each major section within the movement (i.e. exposition, development, recapitulation). The takeaway from this is that, while the two composers seem to have a different approach in terms of form, the ultimate effect of incorporating an improvisatory overture in the beginning of their respective sonatas is the same.



Example 37: Chopin Cello Sonata in G-minor, Op. 65 – Mvt. 1 (Secondary Theme)⁸⁵

There is one final formal similarity between the two works that should be mentioned. Movement groupings are debatable within the first sonata of Beethoven's Op. 102, given that Beethoven so radically departs from the standard-bearers of his day concerning overall sonata structure. It could be argued that the opening *andante* is its own standalone movement, or merely a preamble to the *allegro vivace*. Regardless, he does make it abundantly clear that there is a true cessation of music approximately midway through the entire work by ending the *allegro vivace* movement with a measure

⁸⁵ Chopin, *Sonata for Piano and Cello in G-Minor*, Op. 65.

of rest accompanied by a *fermata* (Example 38). This establishes a clear break between halves of the work, but as Moskowitz and Todd argue, it can also be interpreted as Beethoven trying to indicate only a brief pause between movement or sections of the work.⁸⁶ This is supported by the fact that the movements are clearly thematically related, with the original *andante* theme later returning as yet another preamble to a faster, more tempestuous section in the second half of the piece. It would make sense that closely related movements be only briefly separated as opposed to employing a full cessation.



8 (102)

Example 38: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 4 in C-Major, Op. 102 No. 1 - Mvts. 1 and 2⁸⁷

While Chopin does not incorporate cyclical themes throughout the four movements of his cello sonata, he does end the second movement in a way that is similar to Beethoven's rest with a *fermata* above it (Example 39). However, it is not the

⁸⁶ Moskowitz and Todd, 135.

⁸⁷ Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 4 in C-Major, Op. 102 No. 1*.

existence of the *fermata* itself that makes it similar to Beethoven, but how the *fermata* sets up the following harmony. Chopin's second movement is clearly situated in D-minor at the outset, but, within its final measures, we can see and hear a clear tonicization of G-minor. Without knowing the ending, one would almost expect a V-i cadence, and this is at least halfway fulfilled. The movement concludes with a *fermata* over a bar line just before the final chord, which is a V chord in the key of G-minor and is followed by two rests rather than drawing out the actual note value. This musical cliffhanger does not resolve itself within the same movement, but, if we look at Beethoven's model again, it is possible that Chopin intended for it to set up the *largo* movement that follows. This movement is in B-flat major, the relative major of G-minor (the tonic of the sonata as a whole), and begins with a held D (D4) in the cello, only a fourth up from the top note in the previous chord of the cello. This cadential motion makes it possible to transition from one movement to the next without feeling as if they are completely disconnected. This is not entirely different from other works during the same time period, but Sutcliffe argues that, due to harmonic coloration, the overall form of the third movement is obscured and therefore comes across as a sort of extended coda.⁸⁸ If taken as such, this would suggest that the third movement is not actually an independent movement, but an addendum to the second, which would imply a three-movement format as in Beethoven's Op. 102, No. 2 (1815).

⁸⁸ Sutcliffe, 132.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Chopin's Cello Sonata in G-minor, Op. 65. The first system covers the second movement, marked 'LARGO' and 'cantabile', with dynamics 'p' and 'pp'. The second system covers the third movement, marked 'LARGO' and 'dolce', with dynamics 'p dolce' and 'legato'. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, notes, rests, and various performance instructions.

Example 39: Chopin Cello Sonata in G-minor, Op. 65 - Mvts. 2 and 3⁸⁹

Conversational Dialogue

Chopin shows an inclination towards writing conversationally between the two instruments, much like Beethoven wrote in his Op. 102 sonatas for piano and cello. Unlike Beethoven's A-major Sonata, where uninterrupted eight-bar phrases traded between the two parties abound, his Op. 102 sonatas exhibit a much more compressed and conversational style.⁹⁰ This can be seen in several places throughout either of Beethoven's works and also in Chopin's lone cello sonata.

Example 42 shows that much of what Beethoven writes revolves around the rising, scalar eighth-note motive, which is then traded rapidly between piano and cello, and between the separate hands of the piano. In m. 22, the cello seems to hand off this measure-long motive to the piano, which reiterates in the following measure. In mm. 24 and 25, this closely-knit dialogue is further compressed: the two voices rhythmically

⁸⁹ Chopin, *Sonata for Piano and Cello in G-minor*, Op. 65.

⁹⁰ Moskvitz and Todd, 151-152.

overlap in their individual eighth-note statements. At the outset of m. 24, the piano begins its descent starting on F-sharp (F-sharp 5) and moving down to D (D5) before being taken over by the cello starting its descent on a B (B3) going down to an E (E3). While the top voice of the piano technically starts in a higher register than the cello, this succession of voices gives the impression of some sort of escalating musical argument, with each voice trying to outdo or one up the other. Moskowitz and Todd also note that the same style exists within the opening to Beethoven's Op. 102 No. 1.⁹¹ Stephen G. Gates, even goes as far as to declare in his treatise, *The Treatment of the Cello in Beethoven's Sonatas for Violoncello and Piano*, that the principal texture of the Op. 102 sonatas is this style of imitative polyphony.⁹²

⁹¹ Ibid., 132-133.

⁹² Gates, Stephen Geoffrey. "The Treatment of the Cello in Beethoven's Sonatas for Violoncello and Piano," (DMA Treatise: University of Texas at Austin), 117, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Example 42: Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Cello in D-Major, Op. 102, No. 2 – Finale (mm.22-50)⁹³

It is important to note that the last movement of Beethoven's Op. 102 No. 2 is in the style of an 18th-century imitative fugue, and that it is inherently conversational. It may initially appear that Chopin takes a much different approach in his conversational dialogue between instruments and that it is unrelated to Beethoven's approach. However,

⁹³ Beethoven, Sonata for Piano and Cello No. 5 in D-Major, Op. 102, No. 2.

an excerpt from Sutcliffe argues that Chopin was equally drawn to the study of 18th-century counterpoint late in life and particularly within the G-minor sonata:

Chopin's turning to counterpoint in the last part of his creative life is an event that has received regular emphasis in the literature on the composer. His recourse to counterpoint treatises by Cherubini and Kastner is matched by the reflection of this activity in the works themselves, not just in over contrapuntal textures involving various sorts of imitation, but also in a more considered approach to musical syntax. This too forms one of the established critical features of the later music, what Jim Samson calls its "continuous unfolding quality," although the link between this and the interest in explicit counterpoint is not always realized or emphasized. If the creative ethos of counterpoint involves a desire for continuity in not letting all constituent parts of a texture to rest at once, in carrying the listener (and indeed the composer) along on a wave of invention, then Chopin's increasing preference for syntactical ambiguity may be conceived as an extension of this musical ethos into other parameters of a musical style. Thus, in the context of the Great Nineteenth-Century Rhythm Problem, counterpoint is merely the more recognizable face of a constant rethinking of syntactical character.⁹⁴

Chopin's ideas and inspiration concerning counterpoint and the use of it in his own writing were inherently different from Beethoven. However, it is not a stretch to assert that both composers were preoccupied with finding their own voice in the study and implementation of it in their respective sonatas. As I noted earlier, Chopin tends to write for this combination of instruments with the same conversational vigor, albeit with a different developmental strategy. In Example 43, we can see that, at the key change, Chopin introduces a new motivic fragment. This fragment is then answered by an unrelated motive in the cello, which again responds with another closely related variation of the piano's original motive in this section. Following this is the cello's final iteration of its motive before breaking away entirely to take on a more songlike role for four measures before giving a full-throated endorsement of the piano's idea at the outset of

⁹⁴ Sutcliffe, 114.

this passage. What this shows is that Chopin's writing, while very similar to Beethoven's in how they both rapidly exchange ideas, has its own personal branding, and it is not as if Chopin reverts to an older model of composition without altering the approach; there is some musical evolution occurring.

Example 43: Chopin Cello Sonata in G-minor, Op. 65 – 1st Movement⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Chopin, *Sonata for Piano and Cello in G-minor*, Op. 65.

CONCLUSION

Influence is inescapable. Every idea, every word, and every action that we take is rooted in the past and our awareness of it. This is especially true when we consider the scope of Ludwig van Beethoven's legacy and how we treat and consume his music today. This was also the reality of Mendelssohn and Chopin. It is impossible to be an avid consumer of classical music and not be introduced to all nine of his symphonies at some point. Similarly, as a cellist, it is unheard of to not go through the rite of passage that is playing the Op. 69 sonata. Brahms' sentiments about Beethoven being an all-consuming giant rang as true then as they do now.

From my research, I conclude that there are two types of influence which affected Mendelssohn and Chopin, the first of which is a conscious desire to imitate. Two examples of this would be Mendelssohn's close motivic resemblance in the fourth movement of his second sonata to the fourth movement of Beethoven's Op. 69, or Chopin's direct quote from Beethoven's primary theme in Op. 69. More interesting, however, is the conscious effort to evolve and establish their own musical voice. Mendelssohn's most notable effort in his Op. 58 is the highly expressive recitative without words in the third movement, which never provides us with any sort of clarification with regard to subject matter or implied text. In the case of Chopin, the aforementioned use of fluid conversational dialogue in place of tightly knit, 18th-century counterpoint *à la* Beethoven is another sterling example of an attempt to distance himself from his illustrious predecessor.

The significance of this research is twofold. It is vital that we pursue and investigate all possible avenues of influence and intellectual succession between

composers. If nothing more, this leads to a greater understanding of musical possibilities. In so doing, we alter our perception of music history itself and, therefore, the way we teach it. On a more utilitarian level, the way we research and determine influence, or the possibility thereof, shapes the way we interpret the music we practice and perform. Understanding that Beethoven's revolutionary sonatas for piano and cello are likely the bedrock upon which Mendelssohn and Chopin composed their own sonatas for the same ensemble is essential in attempting to perform them in a historically informed manner. Does one interpret the first movement of Chopin's Op. 65 as a series of improvisatory gestures, or is it more thematically grounded? Is it wise to assume a *crescendo* in a series of *sforzandi* in Mendelssohn's sonata as one traditionally does in Beethoven? These questions and many more have radically altered the way I have performed Mendelssohn's Op. 58 and Chopin's Op. 65.

As with the influence from one composer to the next, so may the research of one scholar form the basis of another's. In this document, I focused on two composers following Beethoven: Felix Mendelssohn and Frederic Chopin. As I noted several times throughout the course of my writing, Op. 58 is the second of two sonatas for piano and cello by Mendelssohn. I chose this work because it is typically looked at as a more interesting and engaging example of his writing for this medium. Further study into whether the same Beethovenian undertones exist within the B-flat Major Sonata, Op. 45 would be helpful in better understanding Mendelssohn's compositional trajectory. This is important because the body of scholarly research concerning Mendelssohn is still relatively small, with scholars such as R. Larry Todd and Tomasz Rzewycki providing a significant portion of my research in this document. In the same way that Mendelssohn

and Chopin built upon the precedent set by their predecessors, so must we continue to build on the scholarship set before us.

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