

GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE

Recital 4: November 20th, 2001

- 1) Beethoven, Ludwig Piano Trio No. 5 in D major Op. 70 No. 1
- i) Allegro Vivace con brio
 - ii) Largo assai ed espressivo
 - iii) Presto

Players

Violin: Sohyun Eastham

Cello: Anthea Scott-Mitchell

Piano: John Collyer

Concert 4

Aims of the concert

This concert is the fourth in the series. The limitations of chamber music point toward the absolute rather than the emotional or programmatic, toward the objective rather than the subjective, toward the classical rather than the Romantic spirit. Nevertheless, some great chamber music was composed in the nineteenth century. One such composition was Beethoven's Opus 70, No. 1. As discussed shortly, Beethoven wrote his music in a more subjective manner. In this sense he stood out from the other composers of his era.

Reviewing the performance

This concert was significantly more successful than the previous three. A good rapport existed between the performers and the audience. Perhaps, I had tuned my violin a little sharp at the beginning, maybe reflecting some initial nervousness. I felt the tempo that was chosen for each movement was suitable for the music. The second movement, which is the most difficult, was played at the 'just right' tempo. During the rehearsals we discussed the character of each movement and I thought that our presentation was a reflection of those discussions.

Performance notes

1. Piano Trio No. 5 in D major Op. 70 No. 1 – Ludwig Beethoven (1770-1827).

(Disc: 4 Tracks: 1-3)

Background

This trio was written in late 1808 and was dedicated to Countess Maria von Erdödy, in whose home Beethoven wrote the piece. The first performance was given in her salon during Christmas of that same year. It was published in 1809 (Berger, 1985, p. 52).

Some ten years earlier, Beethoven had passed through one of his greatest personal crises: the deafness he had feared became actual. He realised that it was progressive and probably incurable. A period of despondency followed that lasted for several years. Eventually acceptance replaced this despondency, and the result was an outpouring of feeling. His style began to have an intense, subjective manner, with personal expression becoming the goal. His musical works began to show more heightened contrasts, with greater harmonic freedom and more concentrated power (Ulrich, 1948, p. 230). An explanation of the alternating optimism and despair that characterise this work may be extracted from Beethoven's letters and other writings. After arriving at an uneasy peace with his steadily worsening deafness, Beethoven was now able to rejoice in the knowledge that he was still able to compose and find fulfilment through music, despite this tragic woe (Berger, 1985, p. 52). This piano trio is typical of this period of Beethoven's writing (Ulrich, 1948, p. 230), and while it expresses despondency over the burden he had to bear, it also communicates an indication of the purification and joy he felt because of the triumph over what he considered to be the worst of all possible physical failings (Berger, 1985, p. 53).

The Trio is a unique work (Ulrich, 1948, p. 230). It has only three movements, of which the second is magnificent and the third rather trivial. The first two movements are immensely original because Beethoven has not separated their two contrasted themes from each other very well, but has announced them almost together right from the beginning of each movement (Robertson, 1957, p. 101). There are many changes of character in the course of the work, some of them swift and sudden, others more deliberate. Nothing in the first movement, however, prepares the listener for the intensely expressive slow second movement (Hefling, 2004, p. 20).

This work was chosen because, as mentioned earlier, it was written in a more subjective manner – in Romantic style. The 'Ghost' Trio was a pioneering work which opened new forms of expressions that later Schumann and Ravel would take full advantage of.

i) Allegro Vivace con brio

Background

The first movement begins with a vigorous theme for all three instruments in bare octaves (Robertson, 1957, p. 101). In fact, it is a four bar passage consisting of a three-octave descending scale played in octaves with registral transferences at every fifth note, thus giving prominence to the interval of a descending fourth. There is an unexpected appearance of F[♯] in bar 5 signaling a change of character (Hefling, 2004, p. 20) – a smooth lyrical tune on the cello:

Allegro vivace e con brio
(a) Tutti (unison octaves)

(b)

Cello dolce etc.

Example 4-1 Bars 1-6.

There is another tune further into the movement, but it is unobtrusive and accompanied by octave scales deriving from example 4-1(a). In the development, bar 2 of (b) is combined with bar 1 of (a) (Robertson, 1957, p. 101).

With its concentration on one idea, this movement is one of the most tightly knit pieces Beethoven had written up to this time. At the very outset of the movement there are two contrasting motives, one powerful and fast, the other lyric and sustained, which provide the material out of which the entire movement is constructed. It is in essence a long development section, even though it contains contrasting harmonies and a recapitulation. Extreme changes in texture are used to achieve emotional contrasts. For example, a driving passage in unison or octaves is followed by tight contrapuntal imitations, or savage outbursts of sound interrupt brief lyric moments (Ulrich, 1948, p. 230).

Performance considerations

The edition used was by Chappell and Co. Ltd., edited by J. Adamowski and published in 1921. This is an early publication and the only edition in the university library that had the separate instrumental parts. When compared with the Breitkopf & Härtel edition⁸² there are many differences – particularly in dynamic markings. The relevant differences will be discussed.

In the case of short notes in a *rapid* tempo, a *martelé-staccato*⁸³, a thrown or springing bow-stroke must necessarily be substituted for the *martelé*:⁸⁴



Example 4-2 Bars 1-4.

Bars 23 to 26 are marked forte, while bar 27 is marked fortissimo. Since the amount of hair that is used can be an expressive device, I used a flat bow (that is, as many bow hairs as possible on the string) to produce the loud sound required for this passage⁸⁵:



Example 4-3 Bars 23-27.

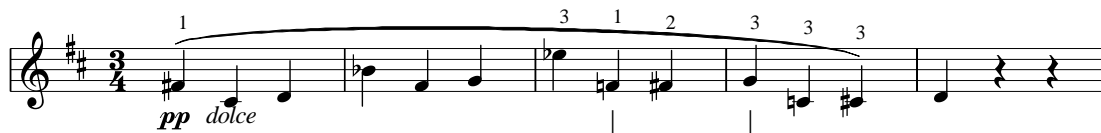
⁸² Breitkopf & Härtel was one of Beethoven's publishers. However, the edition actually consulted was published by Dover Publications, Inc., New York in 1987. On its copy write page it states that the music "is an unabridged republication of ...the collection *Ludwig van Beethoven's Werke; Vollständige kritisch durchgesehene überall berechnete Ausgabe. Mit Genehmigung aller Originalverleger*, originally published by Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, n. d. [1862-65]."

⁸³ See Flesch, 1924, p. 152 and Chapter 7.1B *Martelé*, p. 194.

⁸⁴ My edition had no indication for the dots under the notes, so I assumed they be played martelé. The original score has the word "*stacc.*" printed on the second bar.

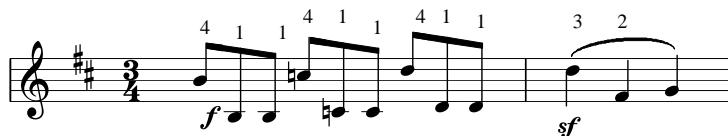
⁸⁵ See p. 173 - figure 3 and figure 4.

In bar 102-3, I used contraction fingering⁸⁶ (marked by the square bracket) to change from the second to the first position.⁸⁷



Example 4-4 Bars 100-104.

I used recurring finger patterns in bar 113 (see example 4-5) to obtain good intonation and also to avoid too many string crossings.⁸⁸ This increased the singing quality of the tone and gave a smooth effect. It also simplified the fingering making the technical passage easier to master.



Example 4-5 Bars 113-114

ii) *Largo assai ed espressivo*

Background

The beginning of the second movement is shown in example 4-6, and this is almost the sum of the thematic material (Robertson, 1957, p. 102). Like the first movement, it is constructed out of a minimum of materials, but here the effect is awe-inspiring, with its mysterious tremblings and passionate cries set opposite fragments of sublime melody, of thunderous chord progressions opposite delicate ornaments (Ulrich, 1948, p. 230).

⁸⁶ See Chapter 6.2A *Changes of position*, p. 149 (5) Changes of positions using contractions.

⁸⁷ The *pp* and *dolce* marks in bar 100 do not appear on the original score.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 6.2F *Recurring finger patterns*, p. 176.

Largo assai ed espressivo
Violin & Cello (in octaves)

Example 4-6 Bars 1-4.

Robertson (1957, p. 102) writes that “this must be one of the slowest movements ever written.” Each crotchet has a duration of about five seconds – an almost unparalleled phenomenon in music. Beethoven had to resort to hemi-demi-semiquavers even to get a moderate amount of movement into the music. However, the listener can enjoy one of his darkest movements, without being concerned about this, as Beethoven aims at Gothic gloom on the grandest possible scale. He achieved this with tremendous dramatic power, with the frequent low rumblings in the piano part helping to suggest the ghostly atmosphere.

Performance considerations

The tempo indication and fundamental character of the movement both require a tempo extended to the utmost possible degree, approximately $\text{♩} = 44$. In most cases the violin and cello players quite correctly count slow quavers, whereas pianists, entering in the second bar (see example 4-7), are misled by the semi-quaver movement of their left hand to count sixteenths. This automatically slows up the tempo; the string-players’ crotchets drag on along with leaden heaviness. The resulting effect is a movement robbed of its melodic flow that seems to be endlessly stretched out. When the violinist, for his/her part, again takes up the same theme in the original tempo, the rhythmic homogeneity is destroyed (Flesch, 1930, p. 54). I agree with Flesch’s statement and we used $\text{♩} = 44$ but made sure the pianist counted in quavers so the music did not drag on.

When the violin took over the piano melody as the original theme returned in bar 19, there was no adjustment in the tempo.⁸⁹

Largo assai ed espressivo

Violin *mp* *sotto voce*

Cello *mp* *sotto voce*

Piano *p* *sotto voce*

Example 4-7 Full score, bars 1-2.

The *f* and the *ff* (in bar 43) are not indicated on the music⁹⁰ (see example 4-8), however, we decided to increase the dynamic from this point to lend more excitement to the passage. The *ff* is indicated for only one note in bar 45 and the early build up allowed this note to stand out.

pp *cresc.* *f*

ff *pizz.* *p*

Example 4-8 Bars 39-45.

⁸⁹ The original score (1862-65) is marked *p* in bar 1 both on the violin and cello parts, whereas in my edition it is marked *mp*.

⁹⁰ The original score (1862-65) has an *ff* indicated at bar 43. Also bar 39 has a crescendo and then a decrescendo marked.

The crescendo in bar 67 (see example 4-9) indicates that the music has to “grow” through to bar 69. It is important not to let the end of the bar decrescendo before the *pp* is reached in bar 70. This *pp* should be a sudden drop in dynamics.⁹¹

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 2/4 time. The first staff contains bars 67 and 68. Bar 67 starts with a half rest followed by a quarter note G4, then a triplet of eighth notes (F4, E4, D4). Bar 68 continues with a quarter note C4, then another triplet of eighth notes (B3, A3, G3). A dashed line indicates a continuation of the music. The second staff contains bars 69 and 70. Bar 69 starts with a quarter note G4, then a triplet of eighth notes (F4, E4, D4). Bar 70 starts with a quarter note C4, then a triplet of eighth notes (B3, A3, G3). Dynamics markings include *cresc.* under the first staff, *pp* under the first note of bar 69, and *p* under the first note of bar 70. Triplet markings are present under the eighth notes in bars 67, 68, 69, and 70.

Example 4-9 Bars 67-70.

Following are the finger numbers that I used for this passage (see example 4-10).⁹² For safer and more secure intonation I played on the A string from the star (*).

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 2/4 time. The first staff contains bars 75 and 76. Bar 75 starts with a quarter note G4, then a triplet of eighth notes (F4, E4, D4). Bar 76 continues with a quarter note C4, then another triplet of eighth notes (B3, A3, G3). The second staff contains bars 75 and 76. Bar 75 starts with a quarter note G4, then a triplet of eighth notes (F4, E4, D4). Bar 76 starts with a quarter note C4, then a triplet of eighth notes (B3, A3, G3). Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 3, 4, 3, 4, 3, 4, 4. A star symbol (*) is placed above the first note of the second triplet in bar 76. Dynamics markings include *dim.* under the first staff and *p* under the first note of bar 76. Triplet markings are present under the eighth notes in bars 75 and 76.

Example 4-10 Bars 75-76.

The choice of the string on which one wishes to produce a musical phrase in accordance with the composer’s intention as well as one’s own personal feelings, closely approaches the art of registration in organ-playing. It is a question of tone colour in both cases. The only difference is the violinist only has a few of these colours to choose from. However, these may be mingled and transformed in infinite variety by means of dynamic differentiation. This suggests that it would be almost impossible to find two violinists who use the same tonal shading in rendering the same composition. Hence, in this connection, it seems even more difficult to set up any fixed rules than with regard to the *portamenti*. Yet even in this case, the seemingly impossible should not prevent us from setting down some fundamental principles not based on personal views but on musical laws. Their net will not be so finely webbed so that individual expression will

⁹¹ The original score does not have the *p* marked in bar 70.

⁹² The original score does not have the *dim.* marking.

be choked (Flesch, 1924, p. 146). At the present time, only the following one will be discussed.

The choice of strings should correspond, so far as possible, with the prescribed strength of tone. That is, in *forte* the E string should be preferred to the A, the A to the D string, and the D to the G string. However, in *piano* the A string is preferred to the E string, the D to the A string and the G to the D string.

In example 4-11, despite the *piano*, the G string is indicated. This is because the cello doubles the theme (a third lower), yet on the brightly radiant A string. The upper voice of the violin would be submerged on the faint D string (Flesch, 1924, p. 146).



Example 4-11 Bars 76-78.

iii) Presto

Background

The last movement projects a most welcome warmth and brightness after the dark despair of the Largo. The music induces a sense of relief and self-composure that one may feel after surviving a trying experience or near disaster (Berger, 1985, p. 53). It is a large piece in sonata-form and is neither concentrated nor intense. The same inner compulsion that is seen in the previous movements to make much out of little is seen here. Again the development principle moves out of its usual place and takes possession of the entire movement (Ulrich, 1948, p. 231). However, the movement flows along seamlessly and effortlessly, with no sharp contrasts to disturb the newfound serenity and calmness (Berger, 1985, p. 54).

Performance considerations

Beethoven divested ornamentation of its more trifling character; his turns, in particular, appear as indispensably necessary constituents of his melos. In his earliest works he still wrote down individual long appoggiaturas, but later mostly only short ones. He used the ♪ as a sign for the short appoggiatura (Flesch, 1930 p. 24):⁹³



Example 4-12 Bars 9-11.

I used *collé*⁹⁴ in the passage in example 4-13. This is an off-string martelé⁹⁵ which is a short single note pinched from the string, with the bow off-string between notes.

Example 4-13 Bars 73-94, collé as indicated.

The researcher tried different finger options (see example 4-14) and decided that these finger numbers would secure the best intonation.

Example 4-14 Bars 217-219.

⁹³ The original score (1862-65) has a *p* mark in bar 9.

⁹⁴ See p. 30.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 7.1B *Martelé*, p. 194.