

Guillaume Lekeu's Sonata for Piano and Violin:

A Performance Guide

by

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A Research Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Music Arts

Approved April 2018 by the  
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May 2018

## ABSTRACT

This research paper examines Guillaume Lekeu's Sonata for Piano and Violin (1892) from the perspective of a collaborative pianist, providing historical background, an analysis of the work's musical structure, and performance practice insights. Each chapter offers the performer a deeper understanding of various aspects concerning the work, including an in-depth analysis of cyclical features used by Lekeu.

Lekeu was strongly influenced by his teacher, César Franck, and in particular by Franck's use of cyclic techniques, which profoundly impacted Lekeu's Sonata for Piano and Violin. The cyclic treatment, which includes cyclic themes, cyclic motives, and non-cyclic themes is discussed, enabling performers to achieve a relevant structural approach to this work. A performance guide includes practical advice for the interpretation and performance of the work, along with piano pedaling suggestions. The integration of these aspects enables a pianist to gain a better understanding and appreciation of Lekeu's Sonata for Piano and Violin.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, for their selfless support of my education.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Professor Russell Ryan, who has guided me with great insight and knowledge. I am also grateful to Dr. Andrew Campbell and Dr. Rodney Rogers for carefully reading this research paper and for offering critical ideas and suggestions.

Last but not least, I would like to give many thanks to my dearest parents, for their endless support and encouragement.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Receiving a rich performance history, the duo for piano and violin is one of the most popular chamber music forms. By the end of nineteenth century, almost all major European composers wrote for this combination, producing some of the most beloved and frequently performed classical works. Composers such as Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), Franz Schubert (1833-1897), Robert Schumann (1810-1856), César Franck (1822-1890), Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924), and Richard Strauss (1864-1949) have offered distinguished works for this instrument pairing. These duos are not only standard repertoire for professional collaborative pianists and violinists, but are also required as audition pieces for many institutions globally.

Guillaume Lekeu (1870-1894), a student of César Franck, has received little attention from modern scholars and musicians. Like his teacher Franck, Lekeu composed a sonata for piano and violin in 1892, producing a wonderful piece that is seldom heard these days. Although there are early recordings of this work, it has not become part of the standard repertoire. Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931), a master of the Franco-Belgian violin school, was the dedicatee for this work, and he gave the world premiere in 1893. Lekeu's music demonstrates the features of late Romantic music in France, particularly the Franco-Belgian school.

This research paper will place Lekeu's Sonata for Piano and Violin within a context that strengthens the understanding of the work. Intending to help musicians interpret and perform this piece, my discussion encompasses various aspects including Lekeu's background, the structure of the sonata, compositional features, and different

methods of piano pedaling. A detailed performance guide, concentrating mainly on technique for pianist will be provided based on my research and practical experience.

## CHAPTER 2: LIFE OF GUILLAUME LEKEU

Because of the country's mixed culture, the Belgian school might not be considered significant within the realm of Western classical music. The country itself, Belgium, achieved independence in 1830. It was formed by two large and distinct ethnic groups: the Flemish, who lived in the Dutch-speaking region in the north, and the Walloons, who occupied the French-speaking region in the south.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the Belgian school, must be divided into two distinct parts.

From approximately 1830 to 1880, Belgian artists adopted the fashions of their larger and more powerful neighboring countries (long after these fashions themselves had been replaced by others in their lands of origin).<sup>2</sup> However, because of cultural exchange with other neighboring countries, mostly Germany and France, Belgian composers held an interesting cultural perspective, especially during the end of the nineteenth century.

Guillaume Lekeu was born in 1870 in Heusy, Belgium, a region of Walloon. His whole family moved to France in 1879, where he started his musical life six years later. He learned violin, piano, cello and was composing prolifically by the age of fifteen.<sup>3</sup> His musical journey started after he was inspired by playing some of Beethoven's works on

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Van den Borren and Theodore Baker, "Belgian Music and French Music," *Musical Quarterly* 9/3 (July 1923): 329.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Van den Borren and Frederick H. Martens, "The General Trends in Contemporary Belgian Music," *Musical Quarterly* 7/3 (July 1921): 351.

<sup>3</sup>Jean Joseph Nicolas, "Lekeu, Guillaume," *Grove Music Online*, accessed January 22, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

the violin, while his friend accompanied on the piano. This experience inspired Lekeu to change his major from philosophy to music while he was still a student in the university.<sup>4</sup>

During his musical studies, Lekeu was greatly influenced by three mentors: Gaston Vallin, César Franck, and Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931). Vallin, a former winner of the *Prix de Rome*, gave harmony lessons to Lekeu after he enrolled in the Paris Conservatory in 1888. The young Lekeu finished harmony study in less than three months. His friends were amazed by his rapid development of study, and they believed that César Franck would be the only French master capable of teaching Lekeu. After only twenty lessons with Franck at the rate of two lessons a week, Lekeu mastered the most complicated types of counterpoint.<sup>5</sup> Franck was astounded by Lekeu's ability to learn both harmony and counterpoint within extremely short periods, as he was only a nineteen-year-old pupil with merely five years of musical studies. Lekeu wrote a letter to Louis Kéfer, the director of the conservatory at Verviers, Belgium in Nov. 19, 1889, in which he mentioned the progress of his studies: "I have finished my studies in three-part counterpoint... This kind of thing is not exactly amusing, but I feel that it gives to my musical pen an incredible fluency, and I attend to it seriously."<sup>6</sup> It was very obvious that Lekeu enjoyed learning from the masters, an experience through which he gained greater

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<sup>4</sup>Jean Joseph Nicolas, "Lekeu, Guillaume," *Grove Music Online*, accessed January 22, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Lekeu, letter to Louis Kéfer, Paris, 19 November 1889, trans. Oscar Sonneck, in *Miscellaneous Studies in the History of Music*, ed. Oscar Sonneck (New York: J. J. Little & Ives, 1921), 201.

maturity in the field of composition. In terms of musical development, Lekeu's one-year period of study with Franck was the most valuable period of his life (1889-1890). He was completely stunned by the death of Franck on Nov. 8, 1890. After Franck's death, Lekeu continued his studies with Vincent d'Indy in 1891. At the time, d'Indy was considered Franck's greatest student. In the last few years of Lekeu's life, he worked incessantly and was very productive in composing a varied body of works. The table below lists all his works published in Paris from 1891-1894.

Table 1. Works Published in Paris (Unless Otherwise Stated) from 1891- 1894<sup>7</sup>

<b>Vocal</b>
Andromède (poème lyrique et symphonique, J. Sauvenière), S, A, T, B, SATB, orch, 1891, vs (Liège, 1892)
Chant lyrique (A. de Lamartine), SATB, orch, 1891, vs, 1891 (Verviers, 1994)
Prière à la nuit (J. Rameau), inc., SATB, orch, 1891
L'âme des calices défunts (A. Silvestre), 1891, lost
Chanson de mai (J. Lekeu), 1891 (Liège, 1892)
Trois poèmes (G. Lekeu), 1892 (1894)

<b>Orchestral</b>
Adagio, str qt, str orch, 1891 (1908)
Epithalame, str qnt/str orch, 3 trbn, org, 1891
Fantaisie sur deux airs populaires angevins, 1892 (1908), arr. pf 4 hands, 1892
Introduction et adagio, tuba obbl, brass, 1892 (Huntsville, TX, 1992)
Larghetto, 1 vc, str qnt/str orch, 2 hn, bn, 1892
Poème, inc., vn, orch; Tancredi, inc

<b>Chamber Music</b>
Piano Trio, c, 1891 (1908)
sonata, G, 1892 (1894)
Piano Quartet, inc., b, 1893 (1895), 2nd mvt completed by d'Indy
Andante grazioso e cantabile molto, 2 vc

<sup>7</sup>Jean Joseph Nicolas, "Lekeu, Guillaume," *Grove Music Online*, accessed January 22, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<b>Piano</b>
Sonata, g, 1891 (1899)
Berceuse, 1892
Trois pièces, 1892 (Liège, 1892)
Adagio religioso col più grand'espressione
Andante
Andante cantabile
Berceuse et valse (pot-pourri/intermède comique)
Moderato maestoso, inc
Moderato quasi largo
Moderato sempre molto espressivo e appassionato
3 untitled pieces, D, G, g

Currently, music scholars have access to about forty works by Lekeu. These works not only demonstrate Lekeu's character, but also display his genius in creating his own refined musical language (especially evident among the works composed in his last three years). In his early twenties, it was evident that Lekeu had a promising career ahead of him. However, on January 21, 1894, the day after Lekeu turned into the age of twenty-four, he died tragically of typhoid fever. Little by little, Lekeu's works were distributed for publication, a result of d'Indy's efforts to sift through and prepare the remaining manuscripts.<sup>8</sup>

Today, Guillaume Lekeu is considered a minor composer, partially due to his relatively small body of works. Because of his extremely rapid musical development and his short professional career (1885-1894), it is not realistic to divide Lekeu's life into multiple compositional periods, as one would for other composers.

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<sup>8</sup>Oscar Sonneck, "Guillaume Lekeu" in *Miscellaneous Studies in the History of Music* (New York: J. J. Little & Ives, 1921), 203.

Guillaume Lekeu's penultimate chamber work was his Sonata for Piano and Violin. There remains a detailed document explaining how this piece was premiered by one of the best violinists at the time, Eugène Ysaÿe. Lekeu wrote a letter to his father after a concert which took place at the conservatory of Verviers on February 27, 1892, in which he stated the following:

“Ysaÿe, when introducing me to his pupils, began by bombarding me with compliments... he asked me if I had composed chamber-music. When I answered in the negative, he asked me to let him have all the chamber-music which I might write in the future. He assured me of a performance on every suitable occasion, and more particularly he asked me to start off with a Sonata for violin and pianoforte.”<sup>9</sup>

Lekeu also dedicated his Quartet for Piano, Violin, Viola, and Cello to Ysaÿe (following the Sonata for Piano and Violin), and the Quartet became his last composition. Unfortunately, Lekeu did not finish it due to his poor health. His teacher, Vincent d'Indy, completed the second movement of this quartet.<sup>10</sup>

The Sonata for Piano and Violin was premiered by Eugène Ysaÿe, but no exact date could be traced. Ysaÿe admired this work, making the following comment: “A masterwork which for breadth of ideas and melodic inspiration need not fear comparison with Franck's violin sonata.”<sup>11</sup> This is a powerful statement from the man who was the dedicatee of Franck's 1886 masterpiece, the Sonata for Violin and Piano.

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<sup>9</sup>Oscar Sonneck, “Guillaume Lekeu” in *Miscellaneous Studies in the History of Music* (New York: J. J. Little & Ives, 1921), 227.

<sup>10</sup>Jean Joseph Nicolas, “Lekeu, Guillaume,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed January 22, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<sup>11</sup>Oscar Sonneck, “Guillaume Lekeu” in *Miscellaneous Studies in the History of Music* (New York: J. J. Little & Ives, 1921), 230.



## CHAPTER 3: STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

There are three traditional movements in Lekeu's Sonata for Piano and Violin. The first and last movements of this piece are in sonata form. The second movement is in A-B-A' form. One of the most important features of this piece, cyclic form, is applied throughout the entire piece (further details concerning cyclic form are provided in Chapter 4).

### Movement 1: Très Modéré

Table 2. Formal Structure of Movement 1

#### Exposition

	Intro	Primary Theme		Transition	Secondary Theme	Transition	Secondary Theme
Measure	1-44	*45-61	61-85	85-103	*104-116	117-125	125-145
Cyclic** Theme Measure	(1) 1-8	(2) 45-61	(2) 61-85	(2-1), (2-2) 85-91, 92-101	(3) 104-116	(2-3) 117-125	(3), (3-3) 125-136, 137-145
Key	G		G- D	D, B, B $\flat$	b Aeolian	A, C, E $\flat$	e Aeolian
Tempo	très modéré		vif et passionné				

\*theme group

\*\*Indication of cyclic themes' order (with parenthesis); cyclic theme measure number (without parenthesis)

#### Development

	Secondary Theme and Primary Theme		Retransition
Measure	146-147	148-171	172-188
Cyclic Theme Measure	(3-3)	(1)(3-3) 146-158,159-166	(3-3) 172-180
Key	f $\sharp$		b $\flat$ , d $\flat$ , e, G
Tempo	vif et passionné		

## Recapitulation

	Introductory Theme and Primary Theme	Transition	Secondary Theme and Introductory Theme
Measure	188-211	212-219	220-234
Cyclic Theme Measure	(1+2) 188-211	(2-2) 212-217	(3)(1) 220-230,230-234
Key	G	F#	g Aeolian
Tempo	vif et passionné		

## Coda

	Introductory Theme and Primary Theme	Primary Theme	Secondary Theme
Measure	234-250	250-285	286-296
Cyclic Theme Measure	(1+2-1+2-2) 234-250	(2-3)(2-4)(2-1) 250-253/264-267, 268-279, 279-287	(4) 286-288
Key	G	G, Ab, E, G	G
Tempo	vif et passionné		Très modéré

The violin begins with a lyrical theme (introductory theme) on the pitch D<sub>6</sub> and ends it with the same pitch two octaves lower (this will be referred to as Cyclic Theme 1 in Chapter 4). During this eight-bar phrase, the violin's beautiful melodic line is accompanied with colorful chorale chords in the piano (Figure 1).

Figure 1. First Movement, mm. 1-8

The image shows a musical score for the first movement, measures 1-8. It consists of two staves: Violon (Violin) and Piano. The Violon staff is in G major (one sharp) and starts with a melodic line on D6. The Piano staff is in G major and features colorful chorale chords. The tempo is marked 'Très modéré.' and the piano part starts with a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic.



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The following two-measure material by the piano presents a short motive. The combination of this motive with the previous theme by the violin completes the introduction with an expanded fifteen-measure phrase (forty-four-measure introduction). This introduction plays a critical role within the sonata as a whole. Lekeu presents one-fourth of the motives within this forty-four-measure introduction.

*Vif et passionné* indicates the tempo of the exposition. This marking not only indicates a relatively quick tempo in comparison to the *Très modéré* indication of the introduction, but also forebodes the awakening and dramatic mood of the rest of the movement. The primary theme (this will be referred to as Cyclic Theme 2 in Chapter 4) is a four-phrase theme group in the piano (Figure 2). After the violin addresses the same theme once more, a nineteen-measure transition modulates the first two phrases of the primary theme.

Figure 2. First Movement, mm. 42-60

42 **ph1**  
*Vif et passionné*  
*pp* *Vif et passionné* *mp*

47 **ph2**  
*p*

51 **ph3**  
*Cresc.* *f* *mp* *f*

55 **ph4** *Rit.*  
*mp* *pp* *Cresc.* *p* *Rit.*

E. B. et C. 5029.

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In contrast, the main melody of the secondary theme (Figure 3) is presented entirely by the violin (this will be referred to as Cyclic Theme 3 in Chapter 4).

Figure 3. First Movement, mm. 104-116

The musical score for Figure 3, First Movement, mm. 104-116, is presented in four systems, each marked with a red horizontal line above the staff. The first system (mm. 104-105) is labeled "Ph1" and features a violin part with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment of sixteenth-note chords. The second system (mm. 106-107) continues the piano accompaniment. The third system (mm. 108-109) is labeled "ph2" and shows a violin part with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment of sixteenth-note chords. The fourth system (mm. 110-111) continues the piano accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as "ff tremolo" and "moins f".

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system, starting at measure 112, is labeled 'ph3'. It features a violin line with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment consisting of sixteenth-note patterns in both hands. The second system, starting at measure 114, is marked '6 mp' and 'dim.'. It shows a change in dynamics and texture, with the piano accompaniment becoming more chordal and the violin line featuring longer notes and slurs.

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The development section begins with a powerful and bright violin line in f-sharp minor, which is accompanied by an ostinato figure (m. 146). This figure is one of the primary elements of the development. It shares the same contour with the third phrase of the secondary theme. The entire development is only forty-four measures, but it is more like a developing progression of the third phrase from the secondary theme (Figure 4).

Figure 4. First Movement, m. 112, 146, 172

The image displays three excerpts from a musical score. The first excerpt, starting at measure 112, features a treble clef with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment of sixteenth-note chords. A red line underlines the first measure, labeled 'motive'. The second excerpt, starting at measure 146, shows a treble clef with a rhythmic pattern of chords, labeled 'ostinato figure', with a red line underlining the first measure. The third excerpt, starting at measure 172, includes a treble clef with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment. The treble clef part is marked 'pp agitate' and has three measures circled in red. The piano part is marked 'ppp subito' and 'a Tempo'.

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The recapitulation is also relatively short (mm.188-229). In this section, the introductory theme, the primary theme, and the secondary theme all appear in different patterns. The coda begins softly, and both the piano and the violin present their own theme until they both reach a strong, unison statement of the primary theme in measure 250. At the very end of the first movement, the violin repeats a partial statement of the secondary theme. The piano accompaniment stays in chorale style, recalling the beginning of this movement in *pp*.

### **Movement 2: Très Lent**

In the second movement, a mood of somberness is conveyed through minor tonalities and a slow tempo, *Très Lent*. This movement is in form A-B-A'.

Table 3. Formal Structure of Movement 2 (A-B-A')

Sections	Section A				Section B				Section A'	
	Intro	a	Transition	b	c	Transition	c	b	a	Coda
Measure	1-2	2-27	28-32	33-39	40-45	45-49	50-55	55-63	63-87	87-89
Meter	7/8		8/8, 4/8	8/8, 3/4, 4/8, 8/8	3/4	7/8	3/4, 8/8	8/8, 3/4, 4/8, 8/8	7/8	
Cyclic theme Measure	(3-3) 1-2		(4) 28,30	(3) 33-39				(3) 55-61		
Key	e $\flat$ , E $\flat$		b, g	b				c	E $\flat$	
Tempo	Très Lent									

The odd meter of 7/8 is the key for rhythmically setting the character for this movement. Both the A and A' sections share the meter of 7/8 (2+2+3). Unlike other simple meters, accents in 7/8 may vary depending on how the phrases are structured, especially the last three eighth notes of each measure. These three eighth-note groups could be interpreted differently in order to connect or disconnect with neighboring measures/phrases. With the 7/8 meter, the music of the second movement is calm, but still moving forward with continuous energy.

The B section (mm. 40-62) begins with a folk tune in b Aeolian in the piano, marked "Très simplement et dans le sentiment d'un chant populaire (play simply, and in the feeling of a popular song)." The paired folk tune and the secondary theme of the first movement is the most important element for the B section (Figure 5). A' section almost repeats the A section exactly.



Figure 5. Second movement, mm. 54-58

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### Movement 3: Très Animé

Table 4. Formal Structure of Movement 3

#### Exposition

	Intro	Primary Theme			Transition	Secondary Theme	Transition	Closing Theme
Measure	1-11	12-17	18-21	22-35	35-59	60-68	69-86	87-95
Cyclic theme Measure								
Key	g					B $\flat$		
Tempo	Très animé							

## Development

	Secondary Theme - Mvt. I	Primary Theme - Mvt. III	Primary Theme - Mvt. I	Introductory Theme - Mvt. III	Secondary Theme - Mvt. I	Retransition
Measure	96-99	100-111	112-126	127-154	155-167	168-177
Cyclic theme Measure	(4) 96-99		(1) 112-126		(4) 155-167	Intro
Key	G $\flat$	e $\flat$	E	e, a $\flat$ , c, a $\flat$ , e	e $\flat$ , B, G	g
Tempo	Très modéré	Très animé Très modéré		Très animé		

## Recapitulation

	Primary Theme			Transition	Secondary Theme	Transition
Measure	178-183	184-187	188-201	201-225	226-235	236-254
Cyclic theme Measure						
Key	g			g, E $\flat$ , C, a, B, A $\flat$	G	
Tempo	Très animé					

## Coda

	Primary Theme and Secondary Theme	Secondary Theme	Introductory Theme - Mvt. I			
Measure	255-271	272-289	290-297	298-305	306-315	315-323
Cyclic theme Measure	(1)+(2-1)(2-2)(2-3) 255-269+255-265	(2-3) 272-281				
Key	G, E, G		G, B $\flat$ , D $\flat$	G, B $\flat$ , D $\flat$	G	
Tempo	Très animé					Très modéré

The third movement starts in g minor. Both the violin and the piano have similar textures as the beginning of the first movement, but completely different characters, as the brief eleven-measure introduction is marked *Très animé* and *ff*. A feature of this movement is the use of long phrases, which also exists in the other movements. This is probably due to the influence of Lekeu's idol, Richard Wagner. While not attempting to slavishly imitate him, Lekeu studied Wagner's music closely. Lekeu was so impressed by

Wagner's work, that he fainted after hearing the Prelude to Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* at the Bayreuth Festival.<sup>12</sup>

The use of long phrases is also related to Lekeu's harmonic language. When a melodic or harmonic configuration creates a sense of resolution, the phrase feels complete, or at least, suggests a musical pause. According to the tables above, primary themes from the first and last movements are more than twenty measures. Besides the cyclic treatment, Lekeu also uses other methods for creating long melodies.

The process of extending phrases or motives often incorporate modulations and sequencing. In the late nineteenth century, modulation was one of the standard methods for creating dramatic climax. Lekeu uses both chromatic and coloristic harmonic progressions in order to weaken tonal foundations. Themes or motives are often combined in this piece with both the piano and the violin. Interestingly, Lekeu sometimes uses all these methods together for expanding melodies, bring back material without being redundant. Figure 6 displays one of many long melodies included in this sonata. It contains one cyclic theme and one cyclic motive that was derived from a different cyclic theme. This motive modulates twice within eight bars (mm. 30-37) and is developed at a rate two times faster in the coda section of the third movement (Figure 7). The circled pitches indicate chromatic progressions in the different voices of the piano and the violin.

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<sup>12</sup>Eric Bromberger, "A Forgotten Treasure," *Strings* 30 (August 2015): 26.

Figure 6. First Movement, mm. 29-41

The image displays a musical score for the first movement, measures 29-41. The score is written for piano and includes several annotations and markings:

- Measure 29:** Labeled "cyclic theme 1" in blue. The tempo marking is *Rit.* and the dynamic is *pp*.
- Measure 30:** Labeled "cyclic motive" in blue. The dynamic is *pp*. A blue horizontal line spans across the piano part.
- Measures 33-36:** Labeled "modulation" in blue. The dynamic is *pp*. A blue horizontal line spans across the piano part. Red circles highlight specific notes in both the treble and bass staves.
- Measure 37:** The dynamic is *f* *soutenu*. Red circles highlight notes in both staves.
- Measure 39:** The dynamic is *f*. The tempo marking is *Dim. molto*. Red circles highlight notes in both staves.
- Measures 40-41:** The dynamic is *pp*. The tempo marking is *Rit.*

Other markings include *Ped.* (pedal) and *Cresc.* (crescendo) in various measures.

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Figure 7. Third Movement, mm. 290-295

The image displays a musical score for the third movement, measures 290-295. The score is written for piano and includes a vocal line. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 290-292, and the second system covers measures 293-295. The piano part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes the instruction *Pressez un peu*. The vocal line also begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score includes markings for *Accel.* (accelerando) in red circles. Red lines are drawn under the vocal line in measures 290-292 and 293-295, and under the piano line in measures 290-292. The piano line features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 290 and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 292. The piano line also features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 293 and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 295. The piano line includes a fermata in measure 294. The piano line ends with a double bar line in measure 295.

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Both the first and third movements are relatively long due to the extensive melodies and cyclic form. Lekeu infuses late romantic harmonic language with traditional sonata form. In the coda of the third movement, Lekeu repeats both cyclic theme 1 and cyclic theme 2 in response to the beginning of this piece.

## CHAPTER 4: CYCLIC TREATMENT

Lekeu was strongly influenced by his teacher, César Franck, and in particular by Franck's use of cyclic techniques, which profoundly impacted Lekeu's Sonata for Piano and Violin. The term cyclic form refers to music in which thematic material of early movements are reintroduced in later movements.<sup>13</sup> This sharing of common thematic materials among all the movements reached its most extensive application among French composers during the middle and late nineteenth century, notably in the music of Hector Berlioz and César Franck.<sup>14</sup> Franck greatly elevated cyclic principles, and this technique was adopted by many of his students. This compositional technique has been in existence since the Baroque period, but found increasing favor among composers during the nineteenth century. The purpose of cyclic techniques is the unification of individual movements, thereby establish a tighter cohesion in a multi-movement work.

It is necessary to distinguish cyclic form from another musical term, variation, which also relates to the reoccurrence of thematic material. There are distinct boundaries between the terms cyclic form and variation, especially when considering their use in describing larger formats. In the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*, the term variation has been defined as “a form founded on repetition, and as such an outgrowth of a fundamental musical and rhetorical principle, in which a discrete theme is repeated

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<sup>13</sup>Hugh Macdonald, “Cyclic form,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed January 22, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<sup>14</sup>Wallace Berry, *Form in Music* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 194.

several or many times with various modifications.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, variations may be presented within a single movement work, but cyclic form is usually applied to two or more movements, and it rarely occurs within different sections of a large single-movement work. Throughout, the continuity of each movement becomes more and more apparent because the same theme(s) keep repeating with different patterns, often containing similar harmonic language, melodic contour, or rhythmic patterns. Original cyclic themes/motives often keep developing in various ways. Unlike variations on a theme, the developed cyclic themes/motives often reappear incomplete. Often, these incomplete elements have similarities with the original themes/motives, but most of them are used as transitional fragments or as parts of countermelodies.

Combinations of different themes may also be presented for the purpose of achieving certain acoustic effects. For instance, at the beginning of the recapitulation in the first movement, both instruments play different cyclic themes (Figure 11). The two paired themes are perfectly balanced through the register and texture of each instrument.

Moving forward, I will discuss three elements which unite this three-movement sonata: the cyclic theme (CT), cyclic motive (CM), and non-cyclic theme (NCT). Furthermore, I use the term “cyclic treatment” to indicate the combination of these three elements. In pursuit of clarity, I have included practical definitions for these three elements below:

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<sup>15</sup>Elaine Sisman, “Variations” *Grove Music Online*, accessed January 24, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

**Cyclic Theme (CT):** a theme that can be found in its complete form in more than one movement. (Each new statement of the original theme might have a slight variation; all cyclic themes are derived from the first movement.)

**Cyclic Motive (CM):** a motive derived from CT(s) or a non-cyclic part of the first movement.

**Non-Cyclic Theme (NCT):** a theme that only appears in a single movement.

The use of cyclic treatment is well presented in Lekeu's Sonata for Piano and Violin. This concept unifies all three movements with the use of cyclic themes and cyclic motives. Certain themes/motives from the first movement keep repeating in various patterns, alternating between the piano and the violin, or occurring in both voices. Therefore, it would not be difficult for audience members to recognize some elements that were based on the original themes. Boldness in harmony, beautiful and extensive *legato* phrases, and an ease through which themes were recalled were some of the first impressions I had after listening to the whole sonata.

None of the cyclic themes are restated in all three movements. Personally, I think Lekeu intended to balance occurrences of each cyclic theme throughout the different movements. Cyclic Theme 1 (Figure 8) is an eight-bar phrase, and the first phrase of the entire piece. The violin presents CT 1 while the piano accompanies with chorale chords underneath. From the beginning of the work, this theme presents a sighing character.



Figure 8. First Movement, mm. 1-8

**Cyclic Theme 1** I

*Très modéré.*

VIOLON. *p*

PIANO. *pp*

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Table 5. Cyclic Theme 1 and its Developed Variations

Movements of Cyclic Theme 1 and its developed variations	Measure numbers of the original and developed themes
Original Cyclic Theme 1	mm. 1-8 (V)*
Movement 1	mm. 30-44 (V), 148-155 (V), 188-197 (V), 234-246 (P+V)
Movement 3	mm. 112-126 (V), 255-272 (V)

\*P=Piano V=Violin

In the first restatement of CT 1 (Figure 9), the piano's accompanimental texture has changed from chorale chords to a more flowing texture, which includes broken chords and melodic motives. Even though it is quite similar harmonically, the right-hand of the piano presents a short motive while the violin continues its original melody. Part of CT 1 is repeated by the piano, beginning in measure 34. This extended fifteen-measure phrase (mm. 30-44) modulates to two different keys: measure 30 with violin in original key, measure 34 and 36 with the piano. A simple way to emphasize the main idea of a piece is to state it at the very beginning of the piece, and keep repeating it time to time, even with some small changes.

Figure 9. First Movement, mm. 29-44

The musical score for Figure 9, First Movement, mm. 29-44, is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 29 to 33, and the second system covers measures 33 to 44. The score is written for violin and piano. The piano part features a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic and a 'Rit.' (ritardando) marking in measure 29. A red horizontal line is drawn under the piano's right-hand part from measure 30 to 33. The second system starts at measure 33 with a 'pp' dynamic and a 'Cresc.' (crescendo) marking. A red horizontal line is drawn under the piano's right-hand part from measure 34 to 44. Pedal markings are present throughout the piano part.

37

*f soutenu* *sf* *pp* *Dim. molto* *Rit.*

*f* *sf* *pp* *Dim. molto* *Rit.*

42

*pp* *pp*

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The second developed occurrence of CT 1 appears at the very beginning of the development in the first movement (Figure 10). While still in 4/4 time, CT 1 is augmented and transposed to the minor mode. The violin presents this theme, supported by a pounding ostinato figure in the piano (which is derived from Cyclic Theme 3, Figure 17). This fragment becomes a common cyclic motive (Cyclic Motive 3, Figure 32) in this movement.

Figure 10. First Movement, mm. 146-160

146 CT 1 in minor, augmented

150 motive

154

158

*pp*

*p*

STR

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The recapitulation starts in measure 188. Unlike the beginning of the piece, Lekeu combines CT 1 (V) and CT 2 (P) with an expressive indication, “très joyusement” (very happily). This is the first time the two instruments play different cyclic themes together in G major. CT 2 is attached to CT 1 as soon as the recapitulation arrives. In order to balance the volume between the piano and the violin, I suggest that neither themes need to be compromised dynamically. On the contrary, the notable feature of this section is the presentation of a recapitulation through the use of a double cyclic theme (Figure 11). These two themes are derived from the introduction and primary theme of the first movement. Without losing sight of what should be restated in the recapitulation of a traditional sonata form, Lekeu displays a rich sound that is achieved when the two themes meet each other. An augmented CT 1, one-octave higher than the original theme, is presented by the violin, under a relatively faster tempo, *Vif et passionné*. Therefore, the pacing of the violin melody (mm. 188-197) has not changed much due to the augmentation. (The original CT 1 is marked *très modéré*.) Yet, the recapitulation does start with much more intention and excitement.



Figure 11. First Movement, mm.186-198

188 **CT 1**

*tr* *f* *ff* *très joyeusement*

*8va bassa* **CT 2**

189

192

196

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The final developed CT 1 of the first movement appears at the beginning of the coda. Opposite of the previous example, the voicing of CT 1 and CT 2 are switched between the piano and the violin (Figure 12). The most important feature of this section is the dynamic marking (mm. 234-250). Both instruments begin with extremely soft dynamics, *pp* (P) and *p* (V). The specific terms, *poco a poco cresc.*, *cresc ed animato*, and *cresc. sempre...* (increasing volume gradually, louder and faster, keep increasing volume...) indicate the expressiveness intended for this long phrase.

Figure 12. First Movement, mm. 234-239

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The piano contains non-stop sixteenth-notes through measures 234 to 249, alternating between the left hand (an accompaniment role) and the right hand (support for the

primary melody in the violin). These sixteenth-notes were evolved from the chorale chords of CT 1. Notice that this is the only phrase in which the piano presents CT 1 during the whole piece. The violin takes over the primary CT 1 melody after bar 243 (Figure 13).

Figure 13. First Movement, mm. 240-247

The image displays a musical score for piano, measures 240-247. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It shows the piano part with sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Performance markings include 'mp', 'f', 'cresc. ed animato', 'cresc.', and 'sempre'. The score is divided into four systems, each with a measure number (240, 242, 244, 246) at the beginning. The first system (measures 240-241) shows the piano part with sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The second system (measures 242-243) shows the piano part with sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The third system (measures 244-245) shows the piano part with sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The fourth system (measures 246-247) shows the piano part with sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The markings 'cresc. ed animato', 'cresc.', and 'sempre' are circled in red.

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In contrast to mm. 30-44 (Figure 9), the melodic line in the violin from mm. 112-126 (Figure 14) is entirely intact, although Lekeu transposes the fifteen-measure phrase into a different key, E major. The setting of this phrase is quite subtle. In the first two measures (mm.112-113), the piano repeats part of the primary theme of this movement (Figure 14; indicated with a red line). However, this is soon followed by the same accompanimental texture as measure 32 of the first movement. On one hand, the fragment of primary theme has been repeated (although not fully developed). On the other hand, the primary concept of cyclic form is successfully fused with this development section.

Figure 14. Third movement, mm. 112-126

The image displays a musical score for measures 112-126 of the third movement. It is written in E major and 3/4 time. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 112-114, and the second system covers measures 115-117. The violin part (top staff) features a melodic line with a fermata in measure 112. The piano part (bottom staff) includes a red line under the first two measures (112-113) of the right hand, indicating a repetition of the primary theme. Dynamics include *pp*, *espress*, *q*, *p*, and *pp*. There are triplets in measures 113, 114, 115, and 116.

118  
*p* *Cresc.* *f sostenuto* *Dim. molto*

122  
*pp* *Rit.* *a Tempo* *pp* *a Tempo*

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The last developed CT 1 (mm. 255-272) is the most exciting among all the variations of CT 1. Occurring within the same register as the original CT 1, the violin carries the main melody with the tempo indication, *Très animé* (very lively, animate), which is the fastest tempo of the entire piece. Additionally, in conjunction with the extreme dynamic pulsation of CT 2 in the piano, together, the themes create an incomparable power, foreshadowing the magnificent ending of this sonata. The majority of this phrase is very similar to Figure 11, as the pitches of mm. 190-197 from the first movement are the same as mm. 257-264 of the third movement. The former starts at the recapitulation, while the latter is at the beginning of the coda, back in G major.

Cyclic theme 2 alternates between the violin and the piano throughout the entire piece. It is a sixteen-measure theme group, containing four phrases (Figure 15). Due to the length of this theme group, the complete statement of CT 2 is repeated only a few

times throughout this piece. Because the four internal phrases do not have specific key relationships to each other, more often than not, they reappear in different combinations.

Table 6. Cyclic Theme 2 and its Developed Variations

Movements of Cyclic Theme 2 and its developed variations	Measure numbers of the original and developed themes
Original Cyclic Theme 2	mm. 45-61 (P)*
Movement 1	mm.187-204 (P, V), [mm. 234-241(V), 250-257 (V), 264-267, 268-279 (P, V)]
Movement 3	[mm. 254-265 (P), 272-281(V+P)]

\*P=Piano V=Violin

Figure 15. First movement, mm. 45-60

**Cyclic Theme 2**

ph1

Vif et passionné

Vif et passionné

ph2

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The first developed occurrence of CT 2 is played by the piano along with the violin on CT 1. This combination of two cyclic themes presents a bright and joyful sonority in both parts. In addition to what was previously discussed in relation to CT 1 and Figure 11, the texture of the piano is much thicker in comparison to the original CT 2 (Figure 16). Starting from the initial phrase in measure 188, Lekeu elaborates the left-hand octaves with broken chords, and he highlights the right-hand melody with octaves or chords through all three phrases. The piano consists of the right-hand melody and left-hand bass notes - the whole notes and the half notes (mm. 188-198). The dynamic direction of these phrases should be the primary consideration when approaching these chords. Therefore, in addition to supporting the melodic lines in both the violin and the top voice of the piano, the bass line is one of the pivotal elements outlining the overall musical direction.

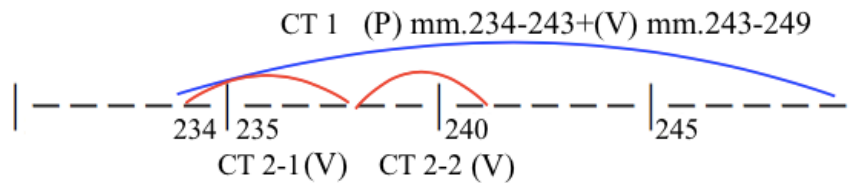
Figure 16. First Movement, mm.186-204

The image displays a musical score for the first movement, measures 186-204. The score is organized into four systems of staves. The first system (measures 186-188) includes a treble clef staff with a trill and a dynamic marking of *ff*, and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a dynamic marking of *ff* and the instruction *très joué*. A red box labeled "CT 1" is placed above the treble staff at measure 188. A red box labeled "CT 2-1" is placed below the grand staff at measure 188. The second system (measures 189-191) continues the grand staff with various musical notations. The third system (measures 192-195) features a grand staff with a red box labeled "CT 2-2" above the treble staff at measure 192 and a red box labeled "CT 2-3" above the treble staff at measure 195. The fourth system (measures 196-204) continues the grand staff with various musical notations. The score includes various musical notations such as trills, triplets, and dynamic markings.

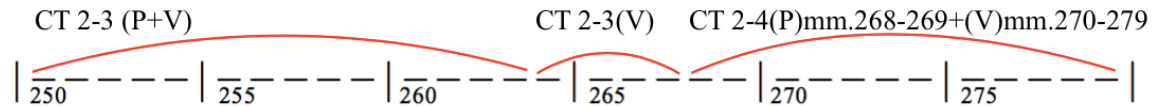
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As the analysis grid shows below (Table 7), the second developed CT 2 is extended. CT 2 is played by the violin first, while CT 1 is embedded within the piano part. From measure 241 through measure 249, both instruments gradually increase volume and tempo until the third phrase of CT 2 arrives at measure 250. All sixteenth-notes performed by the piano should remain calmly underneath the violin melody and the right-hand piano melody (if there is one).

Table 7. First Movement, mm. 234-279







P=Piano, V=Violin

The last variation of CT 2 (mm. 254-281) appears in the coda of the third movement. All the CT 2 phrases are repeated except the last one in the piano. This statement of CT 2 is also where the coda begins in the third movement (Figure 17). Lekeu doubles the piano melody in octaves (some parts of the left hand with broken chords) in order to achieve the extreme dynamic in the piano of *ff*. The combination of this variation with CT 1 in the violin emphasizes the aspect of cyclic form and also creates a wonderful reference to the beginning of the piece.

Figure 17. Third movement, mm. 254-260

The musical score for measures 254-260 is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 254-260) shows a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The upper staff contains a melodic line with a red line labeled 'CT1' above it, starting at measure 254 and ending at measure 257. The lower staff contains a bass line with a red line labeled 'CT2' below it, also starting at measure 254 and ending at measure 257. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'ff espress.' and fingering numbers like 3, 6, and 6. The second system (measures 258-260) continues the piano accompaniment with similar melodic and bass lines. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

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Cyclic theme 3 (mm. 104-114) contains three phrases in b minor. Same as CT 2, it is a theme group (Figure 18).



Figure 18. First movement, mm. 104-116

**Cyclic Theme 3**

**Ph1**

104

*ff*

*ff tremolo*

106

**ph2**

108

*moins f*

*moins f*

110

The musical score consists of four systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The first system (mm. 104-105) is marked 'Ph1' and 'ff'. The piano part features a tremolo accompaniment. The second system (mm. 106-107) continues the piano part. The third system (mm. 108-109) is marked 'ph2' and 'moins f'. The piano part continues with a tremolo accompaniment. The fourth system (mm. 110-111) continues the piano part. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics, articulation marks, and fingerings.

The image shows a musical score for measures 112 and 114. Measure 112 is marked 'ph3' and measure 114 is marked '6 mp'. The score includes piano and violin parts with various musical notations like slurs, dynamics (f, dim.), and articulation marks.

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Table 8. Cyclic Theme 3 and Its Developed

Movements of Cyclic Theme 3 and its developed variations	Measure numbers of the original and developed themes
Original Cyclic Theme 3	mm. 104-114 (V)*
Movement 1	mm. 125-143 (V)/126-145 (P), 220-230 (V)
Movement 2	mm. 33-39 (P), 55-61(V)

\*P=Piano, V=Violin

Unlike other cyclic themes, CT 3 is completely restated a few bars after the original statement. A transitional element of the first movement, the violin and the piano canon occur in e Aeolian instead of b Aeolian of the original CT 3 (Figure 19). Lekeu

uses this technique frequently within this piece. It also appears in his other works, such as the piano sonata (1891) and the piano quartet (1893).

Figure 19. First Movement, mm. 123-131



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Lekeu not only combines cyclic themes with both instruments, but also with cyclic motives. In the second developed CT 3, he uses cyclic motive 2 (CM 2, Figure 30) from CT 2 as the main element of the piano accompaniment (Figure 20). As part of the transition leading into the coda, it is audibly well connected to the coda through the use of CM 2. All cyclic themes reappear in the coda of the first movement except CT 3.

Figure 20. First Movement, mm. 220-223

220 CT 3 in g

dim.

ff

motive from CT 2

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Cyclic theme 3 is appears twice within the second movement. With different time signatures, this variation (Figure 21) is a diminution of the original CT 3 (stated within the same key). The scales in the bass create a voice that is embedded within the upper melodic line. As one of the main themes of the second movement's A section, it is different in comparison with CT 3 (from the first movement) in both tempo and dynamic.

Figure 21. Second Movement, mm. 33-39

33

pp

35

38

pp

Ped.

\* Ped.

\* Ped.

\* Ped.

\* Ped.

pp

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The second developed CT 3 is accompanied with the non-cyclic theme in the second movement (Figure 22). The NCT is the core theme (mm.40-45) of the B section. It is the first time that a cyclic theme and non-cyclic theme are paired in this sonata. This combination occurs at the climax of this movement, and returns to the A' simultaneously.

Figure 22. Second Movement, mm.55-57

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The last cyclic theme of this piece, cyclic theme 4 (Figure 23), is based on the third phrase of CT 3 (Figure 18). They both start with the same pattern. Responding to the beginning of the first movement, CT 4 and CT 1 share similar texture and character. With the accompaniment of chorale chords, CT 4 ends the first movement with the extreme dynamic of *ppp*.



Table 9. Cyclic Theme 4 and its Developed Variations

Movements of Cyclic Theme 4 and its developed variations	Measure numbers of the original and developed themes
Original Cyclic Theme 4	mm. 286-294 (V)*
Movement 3	mm. 96-99, 155-165

\*P=Piano, V=Violin

Figure 23. First Movement, mm. 286-296

**Cyclic Theme 4**

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CT 4 repeats twice in the third movement with two complete, but different, variations. The first variation begins the development of the third movement (Figure 24).

The tempo, *Très modéré*, drops dramatically in comparison with the beginning of the third movement.

Figure 24. Third Movement, mm. 96-99

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The second variation returns to *Très animé*, almost twice as fast as the previous one. The violin completes the entire theme while the left hand of the piano uses the motive from the introductory theme of the third movement (Figures 25 and 26). The theme lasts for thirteen measures, but the motive continues for another twelve measures.

Figure 25. Third Movement, mm.155-156

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Figure 26. Third Movement, mm. 1-2.



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Cyclic treatment is the most important feature of this work. Besides all the illustrations of cyclic themes above, there are more cyclic motives and non-cyclic themes of importance. Most of the cyclic motives are directly from the cyclic themes. There are two cyclic motives derived from the cyclic theme 1 (Figure 27). In addition to all the developed occurrences of CT 1, CM 1-1 is often applied in the second movement of this sonata (Figure 28). Although the time signatures are different from each other, the meters are the same.

Figure 27. First Movement, mm. 1-5



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Figure 28. Second Movement, mm. 4-14

The figure displays a musical score for the second movement, measures 4 through 14. It is presented in three systems, each with a piano (p) or grand (pp) staff and a grand (pp) staff. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp* and *p*, and performance instructions like *Rit.* (Ritardando) and *a Tempo*. Three specific melodic phrases in the piano staff are highlighted with red boxes: measures 5-6, 8-9, and 11-12. Pedal markings (*Ped. \* Ped. \**) are present in the grand staff at measures 9-10 and 12-13.

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Other than representations in the first movement, an augmented CM 1-2 reappears in the third movement, embedded within the introductory theme of the third movement (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Third Movement, mm. 127-138

127 **Très animé (1<sup>er</sup> mouvt)** Introductory Theme

**Très animé (1<sup>er</sup> mouvt)**  
*mp*  
*Agité*

130 CM 1-2

133

136 Introductory Theme  
*poco f*  
*mp*

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Cyclic Motive 2 (Figure 30) is directly derived from Cyclic Theme 2. In mm. 42-46, CM 2 repeats with the same rhythmic pattern, but in a different dynamic level and minor key (Figure 31).

Figure 30. First Movement, mm. 42-46

Musical score for Figure 30, First Movement, mm. 42-46. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat. It consists of three staves: a single treble staff at the top and a grand staff (treble and bass) below. The tempo is "Vif et passionné". The first staff has a dynamic marking of *pp*. The second staff has *pp* at the beginning and *mp* later. The third staff has *pp* at the beginning and *allegro* later. A red bracket highlights a triplet of eighth notes in the second staff, labeled "CM 2" and "Vif et passionné".

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Figure 31. First movement, mm. 220-223

Musical score for Figure 31, First movement, mm. 220-223. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat. It consists of three staves: a single treble staff at the top and a grand staff (treble and bass) below. The tempo is "très lent". The first staff has a dynamic marking of *dim.*. The second staff has *ff* at the beginning and *dim.* later. The third staff has *ff* at the beginning and *dim.* later. Red brackets highlight triplet markings in the second and third staves.

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As the only direct connection with CT 2, CM 2 is applied twice at the end of the second movement (Figure 32). The first CM 2 is a diminution based on the original one, but the actual tempo is relatively slower due to the tempo indication of this movement, *très lent*. The second CM 2 is an echo of the first, with an even slower pacing.

Figure 32. Second Movement, mm. 86-89

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As part of Cyclic Theme 3, Cyclic Motive 3 contains five notes (Figure 33). Within the development of the first movement, CM 3 appears as an ostinato in the piano (Figure 34). This pounding figure sets a strong character before the violin melody starts. On the contrary, the second movement begins with CM 3 in a much softer dynamic level and with a different meter and tempo (Figure 35).

Figure 33. First Movement, mm. 112.

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Figure 34. First Movement, mm. 146-147



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Figure 35. Second Movement, mm. 1-2



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CM 3 is also the beginning of CT 4. Although CT 4 is a complete theme, it is undeniable that the first five notes share the same rhythm and contour with CM 3 (Figure 36).

Figure 36: First Movement, mm. 286-296

CT 4

Très modéré  
*p* largement CM 3

Très modéré  
*pp* sempre

2 Ped. \* 2 Ped. \* 2 Ped. \* 2 Ped. \* 2 Ped. \* 2 Ped. \* 2 Ped. \*

pp

*p* *pp* *PPP*

Ped. *PPP*

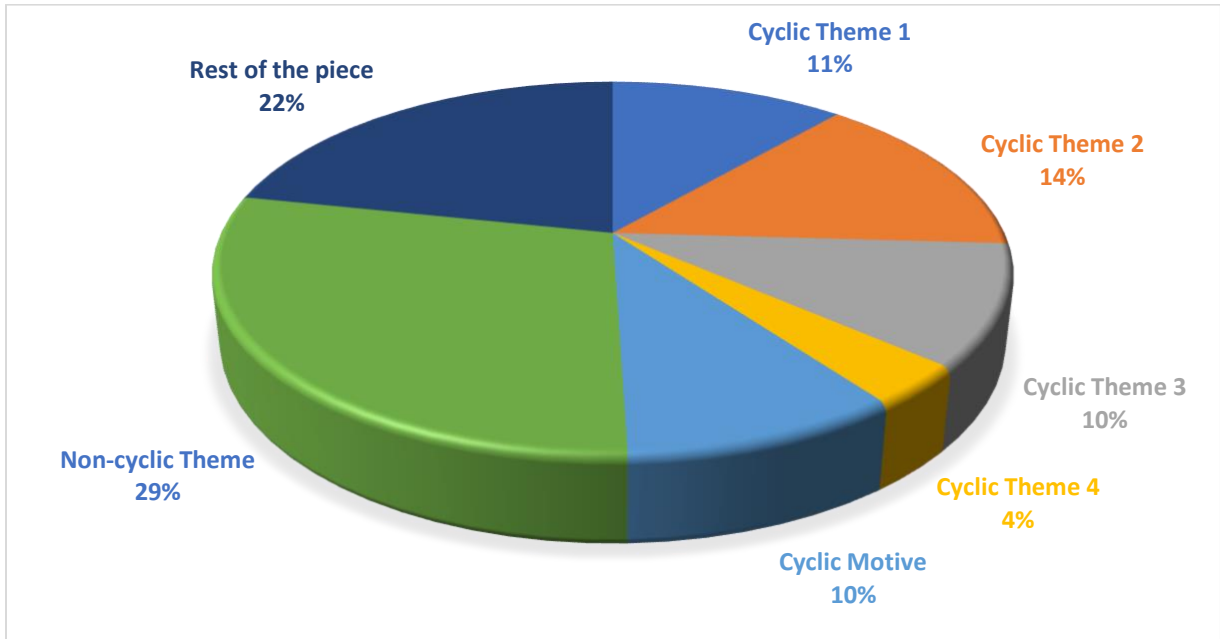
2 Ped. \*

E.B. et Cie 5029.

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Cyclic themes, cyclic motives and non-cyclic themes are major components of this sonata (Table 10). Paying attention to the differences between original themes and developed variations is a very important step for interpreting this piece. Furthermore, interpreting these themes differently according to the context would help performers understand this piece more comprehensively.

Table 10. Pie Chart of Thematic and Motivic Material.





## CHAPTER 5: PRACTICAL INTERPRETATION

### Triplet Figure

The performance of Lekeu's music demands a special, distinctive sensitivity. Expressive decisions must be based on a thorough understanding of Lekeu's specific markings and the structure of all musical elements. Subtle nuances are crucial, including the Lekeu's use of the triplet figure.

Because Lekeu uses repetitive motivic material as a primary method for delivering cyclic treatment, the triplet figure is frequently used throughout the entire three movements. The triplet figure also appears in three of the four cyclic themes. Different effects concerning the triplets are achieved in relation to their relative context and tempo.

The triplets (circled in Figure 37) are often transitional between notes with shorter value (eighth-notes/quarter-notes) and longer value (half-notes). *Trés Modéré* (very moderate) indicates the tempo of this phrase (Figure 37). Adding more notes to a group of two notes increases the intensity without changing the pacing of each big beat. Therefore, the evenness of the triplet is key to the presentation of their transitional role. The group of three notes should not be hurried, especially when occurring within a relatively slow tempo.

Figure 37. First Movement, mm. 29-36

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The triplet figure appears with a tie into the first note in Figure 38. In effect, this is quite different than the previous example. Because the first note of the triplet is muted, the evenness of these figures are more difficult to present. However, it is audibly helpful if the second note of this group could be placed slightly early. With a much faster tempo, marked *Vif et passionné* (lively with passionate), this phrase is more vivid. The last two notes of the triplet figure should also lead forward dynamically, following the direction of the phrase. The different levels of volume could be adjusted by doing *crescendo*, *diminuendo*, or even accents, depending on the shape of each phrase.

Figure 38. First Movement, mm. 42-54

The image shows a musical score for the first movement, measures 42-54. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano part with a triplet circled in red. The tempo is marked "Vif et passionné". Dynamics include *pp*, *mp*, *p*, *Cresc.*, *f*, and *mp*. The score is arranged in three systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system (measures 42-46) shows the piano part with a triplet circled in red. The second system (measures 47-50) shows the piano part with a triplet circled in red. The third system (measures 51-54) shows the piano part with two triplets circled in red.

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This triplet also appears during the recapitulation of the first movement. Under a relatively fast tempo, the triplet figures (circled in Figure 39) provide sufficient power for approaching the climax. Sequential phrases are effective methods for building emotion, and, in this case, the triplets increase the intensity without playing transition roles.

Figure 39. First Movement, mm. 214-223

The image displays a musical score for the first movement, measures 214-223. The score is written for piano and includes a right-hand treble clef and a left-hand bass clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (214, 217, and 220). The first system (measures 214-216) features a right-hand melody with a triplet circled in red in measure 214 and another in measure 216. The left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system (measures 217-219) shows the right hand with a triplet circled in red in measure 217 and another in measure 219. The left hand continues with a rhythmic pattern. The third system (measures 220-223) features the right hand with a triplet circled in red in measure 220 and another in measure 222. The left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as *cresc.* and *dim.*, and performance instructions like *Ped.* and *STT*.

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Timing is quite pivotal for interpreting triplets. Lekeu likes to use triplets, and they often appear in his other two mature piano works (the piano sonata and the piano quartet) as well.

### **Pedaling**

One's approach to pedaling is very crucial for Lekeu's Sonata for Piano and Violin. In this section, I will demonstrate the relationships between phrases and the pedals and illustrate how to manipulate pedals to achieve many different effects,

particularly the damper pedal (*tre corde*) and the soft pedal (*una corda*). The examples provided from the musical score of Lekeu's Sonata for Piano and Violin for this research project were published by Rouart & Lerolle & Cie. The pedal markings such as "*tre corde*" (three strings), "*una corda*" (one string), and "*2Ped*" (use both the damper pedal and the soft pedal) are printed throughout the entire piece.

By the time Lekeu composed the Sonata for Piano and Violin, there was almost no difference in the design of the damper pedal and the soft pedal when compared to those of the modern piano. There are three principle actions involved in the usage of the pedals - pressing, dampening, and releasing. The soft pedal and the damper pedal (or the damper pedal) are the only two to be discussed in this research paper. Detailed illustrations are listed below.

**Red line** ——indicates the usage of the damper pedal;

**Blue line** ——indicates the usage of flutter pedaling (or the half-tremolo-pedal)

**Brown line** ——indicates the usage of half pedaling

**Green line** —— indicates the usage of the soft pedal.

Two phrases (mm. 22-24 and mm. 25-28) are indicated with different pedal markings, *ped.* and *2 ped* (Figure 40). In order to achieve dynamic contrast between the two phrases, the soft pedal is used immediately after the first phrase. A tremolo-half-pedaling is suggested for a texture such as fast moving arpeggio within the same chord. Tremolo-half-pedaling requires continuously pressing and partially releasing the pedal in a fast action. This helps to keep the same sonority of this entire phrase without losing the clarity of fast moving notes. Particularly in this example, such an action provides relatively clear beats and makes it easier for the violinist to follow the different groups of notes as well.

Figure 40. First Movement, mm. 22-28

The musical score for measures 22-28 is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 22-23) shows a vocal line starting with a long note, marked *dim.* and *pp*, and a piano accompaniment with triplets and a *Ped.* marking. The second system (measures 24-26) includes a vocal line with *pp* dynamics and a piano accompaniment with *PP* dynamics and a *2 Ped.* marking. The third system (measures 27-28) features a piano accompaniment with *PP* dynamics and a *PP sempre* marking. A red asterisk is placed at the end of measure 28.

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Although there is no specific pedal mark for mm. 96-97 of the first movement (Figure 41), it is obvious the *legato* line cannot be produced without pedaling. The use of both the damper pedal and the soft pedal is suggested for producing a soft and smooth effect with

the arpeggios. The damper pedal does not need to be changed as long as it stays with the same broken-chord. In addition to pedaling support, the use of finger-legato (see marked fingerings) could be very helpful in presenting the main melody more coherently without unnecessary accents in each octave.

Figure 41. First Movement, mm. 96-97

The image shows a musical score for measures 96-97. The top staff is for the violin, and the bottom two staves are for the piano. The violin part starts with a *pp* dynamic and features a melodic line with fingerings 4, 5, 4, 5, 4. The piano accompaniment also starts with *pp* and includes arpeggiated chords and octaves. A red line is drawn below the piano part, and a green line is drawn below the violin part, indicating the damper pedal's position.

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Maintaining the resonance of a chord through the use of tremolo figures is a common compositional technique. As the accompaniment, the piano needs to stay softer than the violin melody throughout the whole phrase, even it is marked *ff*. Lekeu also indicates accents on the bass octaves, such as in measures 104, 106, and 107. These bass notes lead the changing of the chord. Half-pedal may be applied to this phrase, and should change when the harmonies of the chord alter (Figure 42). Tremolo pedaling is not quite suitable for such a case because the bass octaves can be easily lost.



Figure 42. First Movement, mm. 104-107

The image displays a musical score for measures 104 through 107. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. It features a melodic line with a slur over measures 104 and 105. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves: a right-hand staff in treble clef and a left-hand staff in bass clef. Both piano staves are marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a tremolo effect. The piano part is characterized by a dense, rhythmic ostinato figure. Pedaling diagrams are provided below the piano part, consisting of two horizontal lines (one red, one brown) with vertical tick marks indicating the timing of the damper pedal.

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In Figure 43, the accents of the pounding ostinato figure are marked very specifically. The pedaling should be based on these accents, except for the last two notes of each measure. This ostinato figure consists of five accented notes, which are derived from a cyclic motive. The goal of using the damper pedal is to keep this motive complete while creating a powerful sonority. Two options of pedaling are suggested for this motive: (1)



changing the damper pedal on each accent or (2) changing the damper pedal on the first three notes with accents, and using finger legato on the last two notes. (These techniques should be applied to every measure that includes this ostinato figure.)

The soft pedal should not be considered since the entire section (mm. 146-158) contains the same accompanimental figure. However, it may be applied during measures 157-158 in order to balance with the low register of the violin melody. Such usage of the soft pedal is also dependent on the size of the performing venues.

Figure 43. First Movement, mm. 146-147

The image shows a musical score for measures 146 and 147. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano accompaniment with a repeating ostinato figure. The figure consists of a sequence of notes: a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, an eighth note, and a quarter note. The notes are grouped into two sets of three notes, each followed by a two-note group. The first set of three notes is marked with a '3' and the second with a '2'. The piano part is marked with a forte dynamic (*ff*). Below the piano part, two options for damper pedal usage are shown with red brackets. Option 1 shows a single bracket under the first three notes of each set, indicating a pedal change after the first three notes. Option 2 shows two brackets, one under the first three notes and one under the last two notes of each set, indicating a pedal change after the first three notes and after the last two notes.

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Beginning at measure 167, the violin and piano play in unison at the extreme dynamic of *ff* (Figure 44). The damper pedal should change every half bar in order to avoid any problems with the clarity of harmonies. Additionally, the length of the depressed pedal and the duration of the violin's notes should match. In order to create dynamic contrast between the two phrases (mm. 167-171 and mm. 172-173), it is suggested that the damper pedal be released immediately after the first phrase and both pedals used for the following phrase.

Figure 44. First Movement, mm. 167- 172

The image shows a musical score for measures 167-172. The score is in G major and 2/4 time. Measures 167-170 are marked 'Pressoz' and 'ff'. Measures 171-172 are marked 'pp agité' and 'a Tempo'. The score includes a violin part and a piano part. Red brackets are placed under the piano part for measures 167-170 and 171-172. A green bracket is placed under the piano part for measure 172.

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Measures 183 to 185 should be pedaled as printed. The damper pedal could be gradually released in measure 186 (Figure 45). As the descending scale reaches the lower register in measure 187, the half-pedal needs to be applied in order to avoid the loss of richness of sound (“- - - - -” indicates releasing the damper pedal gradually). There is no need for worry regarding the balance between the two instruments, because the violin melody is a few octaves higher than the piano. The damper pedal, however, needs to be changed on the downbeat of measure 188, which is the climax of the phrase. No soft pedal needs to be applied during this phrase.

Figure 45. First movement, mm. 183-188

The image shows two systems of a piano score. The first system covers measures 183 to 185. It features a melody in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Pedal markings are shown below the bass staff: a solid line for measures 183-185, and a dashed line for measures 186-188. A red line is drawn under the first system, and a dashed red line under the second system. A vertical red line is at the end of measure 188. The second system covers measures 186 to 188. It features a more active piano texture. Pedal markings are shown below the bass staff: a dashed line for measures 186-188. A vertical red line is at the end of measure 188. Performance instructions include 'f', 'ff', 'très joyeusement', and '8va bassa'.

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The damper pedal should change every half bar from measure 208 to 210 (Figure 46). According to the score, *rit.* and *dim.* need to be executed within one bar, measure 211. This is a challenge, because octaves are played by both hands. A sudden change of the dynamics may be attained by releasing the damper pedal gradually while quickly depressing the soft pedal. In order to maintain the soft dynamic level, the una corda pedal is suggested for the next two measures (the violin's melody is in a relatively low register and the top melody of the piano may cover it).

Figure 46. First Movement, mm. 208-213



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Both pedals should be used in measures 33-34 of the second movement. Two options for using the damper pedal are suggested: 1) changing the damper pedal on every beat, but keeping the legato line of the right hand without adding accents or (2) changing the damper pedal on the notes that follow the rests. (This will enable the listener to understand more clearly the contour of the melodic line.) The same methods could also be applied during measures 38 and 39.

Figure 47. Second Movement, mm. 33-34

The image shows a musical score for measures 33 and 34. The score is in 8/8 time and features a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with a triplet in measure 34. The left hand has a bass line with triplets in measures 33 and 34. Below the score, two options for damper pedal application are shown as horizontal lines with vertical tick marks. Option 1 is a red line with tick marks at the beginning of measures 33 and 34, and at the end of measure 34. Option 2 is a red line with tick marks at the beginning of measures 33 and 34, and at the end of measure 34, with a green line underneath it.

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The damper pedal is typically applied in accordance with the chord changes. From measure 42 to 45, the bass notes rise chromatically (Figure 48). While a smooth harmonic progression may be achieved by changing the damper pedal along with the movement of the scale, the articulation of right hand is also important. The triplets need to be pedaled differently in measure 42 and measure 45. First, the damper pedal could be released on the last beat of measure 42 if the triplet is not clear enough, but the pitch A in the bass (m. 42) needs to be connected with the B-flat (m. 43) through use of finger legato. Second, the pacing of the triplet in measure 45 is slower than the previous triplet in measure 42. It is suggested that each note of this triplet be pedaled separately. Meanwhile, the soft pedal could be applied gradually if necessary.

Figure 48. Third Movement, mm. 42-45

42

44

*f*

*f*

*Dim.*

*Dim.*

5

4

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## CONCLUSION

Lekeu was distinctively of the young French school, and his music shows all the good qualities and all the faults of that school: independence of form, predominance of the idea, a gift of perhaps too refined to color, fastidiousness in style, excessive boldness in harmony.....Chiefly remarkable in his writing are inexhaustible richness of invention, the very melodic character of his inspiration, and the fiery spontaneity and the peculiar intensity of individual feeling.<sup>16</sup>

Towards the end of nineteenth century, the tendency of weakening the tonal foundation through the use of thematic transformation and highly chromatic harmonies had come to a climax. Although Lekeu did not live long enough to enjoy the success of a musical career, many of his works, especially his Sonata for Piano and Violin, show the development of an astounding musical maturity. This piece represents the typical style of late nineteenth-century French/Belgian music. Although Lekeu has his own unique musical language, elements and influences from Franck and Wagner can certainly be detected, including the usage of cyclic form and highly chromatic harmony.

The study and performance of the Sonata for Piano and Violin has proven rewarding for both pianist and violinist. There are various recordings by well-known musicians of this work, such as Arthur Grumiaux/Riccardo Castagnone, Christian Ferras/Pierre Barbizet, and Yehudi Menuhin/Hephzibah Menuhin. The majority of the recordings are from the 1930s through 1960s. Somehow, this once extremely popular piece has unfortunately, faded from the violin-piano duo repertoire over many decades.

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<sup>16</sup>Oscar Sonneck, "Guillaume Lekeu" in *Miscellaneous Studies in the History of Music* (New York: J. J. Little & Ives, 1921), 192.

Currently, the work is quite unfamiliar to musicians and contemporary audiences, and for this reason, I would highly recommend and encourage professional pianists and violinists to perform the work and introduce it to others. Personally, promoting and sharing this great piece of music has been an enjoyable and important experience during my piano studies, and I hope that future generation of musicians continue to promote this work.



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APPENDIX B

LECTURE RECITAL LINK

As part of my final project of doctoral study, a lecture recital was held on November 23, 2017. A video of this lecture recital may be accessed through the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AP0ZA5CaLE>

The recital was divided into two sections, and, due to some technical difficulties, the first half (the lecture portion) is not visually available. The second half, the performance of this entire work, was successfully recorded. It starts at 59'15'' in this video. (Pianist: Dongfang Zhang; Violinist: Aihua Zhang)