

Frédéric Chopin, Interpretation and Analysis

Two Case Studies

by

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## ABSTRACT

Pursuit of an informed approach to interpreting Frédéric Chopin's music has been increasingly challenging in the twenty-first century. In the process of forming their unique voices, pianists turn to the sound recordings of some of the most notable pianistic figures in history. This document offers a detailed inspection of three revered recordings and, with the help of syntactic analysis, seeks an understanding of the extraordinary interpretational decisions of Alfred Cortot, Arthur Rubinstein and Dinu Lipatti. The examined works are Chopin's Prelude in C Major, Op. 28, No. 1, and the *Largo* of the Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58. The analysis of the Prelude compares recorded performances of Alfred Cortot (ca. 1933-1934) and Arthur Rubinstein (ca. 1946) and explains how their vastly different interpretational choices can, through an analytical process, be traced to the harmonic and melodic implications of the score. Likewise, inspection of the *Largo* focuses on Dinu Lipatti's performance (ca. 1947) and draws connections between his phrasing and critical characteristics of the movement. All three performances present exquisite examples of a style of expressive playing that seems to have fallen into disuse in the twenty-first century. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the performing style of Cortot, Rubinstein, and Lipatti, and also seeks to show connections between score analysis and interpretational decisions.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF EXAMPLES .....	iv
PITCH NOMENCLATURE.....	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
<i>Rubato</i> .....	2
Analysis and Intepretation .....	4
Alfred Cortot, Arthur Rubinstein, and Dinu Lipatti.....	7
2 PRELUDE IN C MAJOR, OP. 28 .....	10
3 SONATA IN B MINOR, OP. 58, <i>LARGO</i> .....	33
REFERENCES .....	68
APPENDIX	
A DISCOGRAPHY .....	71
B SCORE EDITIONS USED .....	73
C PERMISSION AGREEMENTS .....	75

## LIST OF EXAMPLES

Example	Page
1. Chopin, Prelude in No. 1 in C Major, mm. 1-3, Re-notated by Wallace Berry ...	12
2. Chopin, Prelude in No. 1 in C Major, Alfred Cortot and Jan Ekier Editions .....	15
3. Chopin, Prelude in No. 1 in C Major, mm. 1-9.....	16
4. Chopin, Prelude No.1 in C Major, Berry's Illustration of the Basic Shape .....	17
5. Chopin, Prelude in No. 1 in C Major, mm. 9-34.....	19
6. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Vivace</i> Closing and <i>Largo</i> Opening .....	36
7. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Largo</i> , mm. 5-13 .....	39
8. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Largo</i> , mm. 11-19.....	43
9. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Largo</i> , mm. 17-29.....	45
10. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Largo</i> , mm. 29-37.....	49
11. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Largo</i> , mm. 35-44.....	50
12. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Largo</i> , mm. 61-69.....	53
12. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Largo</i> , mm. 67-78.....	56
14. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Largo</i> , mm. 88-98.....	58
15. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Largo</i> , mm. 104-113.....	61
16. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, <i>Largo</i> , mm. 109-120.....	65

The diagram below gives examples of the lowest and highest note in each octave, giving their name in the Helmholtz system.

C, B, C B C c b c' b' c'' b'' c''' b'''  
 contra octave great octave small octave one-line octave two-line octave three-line octave

In this study: CC BB

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

How does a pianist render a convincing and informed interpretation of Frédéric Chopin's music? Seeking an answer, these two case studies involve analysis and comparison of sound recordings that belong to the "gold standard" of interpreting Chopin's music. The first work examined is Chopin's Prelude in C Major, Op. 28, No. 1, as performed by Arthur Rubinstein and Alfred Cortot, and the second one is the *Largo* from Chopin's Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58, as performed by Dinu Lipatti. To support my study of the performances by these pianists, I offer analysis of the music in relation to their interpretational choices.

The focus of my analysis of interpretation is on tempo flexibility and *rubato*. Therefore, I have consulted sources that trace the evolutionary path of *rubato*, with focus on the performance practice of *rubato* in Chopin's music. I have turned also to selections from the extensive literature on analysis of Chopin's music. Although Cortot, Rubinstein, and Lipatti sometimes seem to steer away from the minute details of the score, they never undermine the structure or the character of the musical work. Therefore, I have drawn connections between their performances and the harmonic, melodic, and structural implications of the score. Lastly, some studies available pursue the same goal as mine, comparison of interpretations supported by score analysis. Although they offer very specific information about timing and differences among pianists, these sources do not always provide clear conclusions that are useful for the young pianist or a teacher. The goal of this study is to come closer to an understanding of how score and interpretation

analysis can help young pianists in understanding and shaping Chopin's music in an informed and convincing manner.

### *Rubato*

In *Stolen Time, The History of Tempo Rubato*, Richard Hudson offers an overview of the technique of using *rubato*, from its very beginnings up to the present day. Two extensive chapters of this volume discuss the playing of Chopin and his contemporaries. These chapters convey an overview of how *rubato* evolved historically and how it became essential for the romantic-period performers and composers. Since romantic freedoms were a novelty in Chopin's era, testimonials about *rubato* in the nineteenth century provide very contrasting conclusions. Hudson reconciles them by recognizing that

...rhythmic flexibility in Chopin's playing was perceived by different listeners in quite diverse ways. Some thought his rhythm was strict. Others considered his freedom excessive and offensive. Still others thought the flexibility noticeable but justified for musical reasons. Most, however, seemed to agree that his rhythmic manner was a conspicuous element with his unique personal style of performing.<sup>1</sup>

Although we can understand very little about Chopin's playing through recollections of others, a serious pianist should become familiar with these accounts in more detail, if for no other reason than to be inspired by the wealth of information available. For that reason, I have also turned to Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger's *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by his Pupils*.<sup>2</sup> This volume is surely the most valuable source of information about Chopin's playing and teaching. It includes documented records of Chopin's friends, colleagues and students, and a first complete translation of

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Hudson, *Stolen time, History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 178-79.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by his Pupils*, trans. Naomi Shohet with Krysia Osostowicz and Roy Howat, ed. Roy Howat, 3rd Eng. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).



Chopin's unpublished essay, "Sketch for a Method."<sup>3</sup> Access to information about Chopin's teaching and aesthetics was critical for my understanding of Lipatti's playing - that is, of his musical ideas that seem to be in alignment with Chopin's. One of the rarely used quotes of Chopin summarizes what Lipatti had captured in the course of his short pianistic career:

Simplicity is everything. After having exhausted all the difficulties, after having played immense quantities of notes, and more notes, then simplicity emerges with all its charm, like art's final seal. Whoever wants to obtain this immediately will never achieve it: you can't begin with the end. One has to have studied a lot, tremendously, to reach this goal; it's no easy matter.<sup>4</sup>

David Rowland's essay, "Chopin's Tempo Rubato in Context,"<sup>5</sup> also provides an overview of the history of the performance practice of *rubato* and concludes with a discussion of Chopin's *rubato*. This essay underscores the importance of contextualizing *rubato* within the style in which it is used. Rowland classifies the types of *rubato* used in keyboard music from the eighteenth century up to Chopin. Relevant for the discussion of all three pianists in this study, Rowland discusses the origins and tradition of the non-synchronized *rubato* in which hands operate independently, that is, in which one hand plays in strict time while the other one does not. In the second chapter of his *Early Recordings and Musical Style*,<sup>6</sup> Robert Phillip examines *rubato* through comparison of different pianists' performances of the same musical works. Rather than supporting it with analysis, his discussion focuses on the application of *rubato* throughout the early

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<sup>3</sup> Eigeldiner, *Chopin, Pianist and Teacher*, 190. Parts of this essay have been published by pianist Natalia Janotha and later by Alfred Cortot. However, this is the first complete translation that faithfully follows the autograph.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick Niecks, *Frederick Chopin as a Man and Musician* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1973), quoted in Eigeldinger, *Chopin Pianist and Teacher*, 54.

<sup>5</sup> David Rowland, "Chopin's Tempo Rubato in Context," in Jim Samson and John Rink, eds., *Chopin Studies 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

recording period. His conclusions suggest that *rubato*, as applied in the early twentieth century, has “rhetorical eloquence” that modern interpretations are lacking. This opinion is the focus of this study of the pianists Cortot, Rubinstein, and Lipatti.

### *Analysis and Interpretation*

Jim Samson’s *Chopin Studies*<sup>7</sup> is the most comprehensive source of information about Chopin’s *rubato*, as well as analysis of specific works. From this volume, Edward T. Cone’s essay, “Ambiguity and Reinterpretation in Chopin,”<sup>8</sup> identifies tonal elements that are unique to Chopin’s compositional language. Additionally, Cone provides examples through which he inspects tonal and formal ambiguities in Chopin’s music, thereby helping the reader to identify phrase structures and harmonies that lend themselves to different interpretations. In *Twelve Studies in Chopin: Style, Aesthetics and Reception*,<sup>9</sup> Maciej Golab provides a detailed accounting of the evolution of Chopin’s style. His discussion of chromaticism and tonality in Chopin’s late style also can help the reader to understand and describe ambiguous passages. Another source that outlines the stylistic evolution in Chopin’s oeuvre is Gerald Abraham’s *Chopin’s Musical Style*. Although dating from 1939, Abraham’s volume is refreshing since it offers, besides data, inspiring value judgments, such as: “Despite numerous exceptions, of course, the four-bar or eight-bar phrase remains the foundation of Chopin’s melody; the regularity is essential to the charm of the irregularities as firm tempo is to the charm of tempo rubato.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jim Samson and John Rink, eds., *Chopin Studies 2*.

<sup>8</sup> Edward T. Cone, “Ambiguity and Reinterpretation of Chopin,” in Jim Samson and John Rink, eds., *Chopin Studies 2*, 140-161.

<sup>9</sup> Maciej Golab, *Twelve Studies in Chopin: Style, Aesthetics and Reception*, trans. Wojciech Bonkowski, John Comber and Maksyilian Kapelanski (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 61.

<sup>10</sup> Gerald Abraham, *Chopin’s Musical Style*, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 62. First published 1939, London: Oxford University Press.

In Samson's *Chopin Studies*, the essay "Authentic Chopin: History, Analysis and Intuition in Performance"<sup>11</sup> by John Rink, a renowned scholar and interpreter of Chopin's music, defines authenticity as the problem of the modern pianist. Through three case studies, Rink investigates harmonic and structural elements that informed his own interpretations. He provides detailed analysis but, unfortunately, does not go into the detail of his interpretations. Instead, he discusses and highlights the overall expressive potential of selected passages and structures in the Scherzo in C# Minor, Op. 39, the D-Major Prelude, Op. 28, No. 5, and the F-Minor Piano Concerto, Op. 21. Nevertheless, his approach yields insights into how analysis can "guide intuitive understanding of music that alone can inspire authentic interpretation."<sup>12</sup>

Chopin's Prelude in C-Major, Op. 28 has been a subject of multiple published studies. Wallace Berry's article "Metric Articulation in Music"<sup>13</sup> and Grosvenor W. Cooper's and Leonard B. Meyer's *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*<sup>14</sup> provide valuable insights about its harmonic structure and metric idiosyncrasies. In "Chopin's Prelude in C Major Revisited: Integrating Sound and Symbol,"<sup>15</sup> Diane J. Urista relates seven recordings of the Prelude to the analysis of the piece. She examines recordings of pianists who substantially vary in age and the traditions they come from: Grigory Sokolov (b. 1950), Alicia De Larrocha (1923-2009), Ivan Moravec (1930-2015), Louis Lortie (b.

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<sup>11</sup> John Rink, "Authentic Chopin: History, Analysis and Intuition in Performance," in Samson and Rink, eds., *Chopin Studies 2*.

<sup>12</sup> Rink, "Authentic Chopin," 244.

<sup>13</sup> Wallace Berry, "Metric Articulation in Music," *Music Theory Spectrum: The Journal of the Society for Music Theory* 7 (January 1985): 18-19.

<sup>14</sup> Grosvenor W. Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music* (University of Chicago Press, 1963), 36-37.

<sup>15</sup> Diane J. Urista, "Chopin's Prelude in C Major Revisited," *Music Theory Online* 13, no. 1 (March 2007). <http://mto.societymusictheory.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/issues/mto.07.13.1/mto.07.13.1.urista.html>

1960), Ivo Pogorelich (b. 1958), Constance Keene (1921-2005), and Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924). Relying mostly on published Schenkerian analyses, she relates each performance to either Wallace Berry's or Felix Salzer's reading. She does not argue in favor of either of the analyses or the sound recordings. The purpose of her research is a comparison that would yield different analytical and interpretational ideas. In "Expressive Timing in Expanded Phrases: an Empirical Study of Recordings Three Chopin Preludes,"<sup>16</sup> Alan Dodson measures "average tempo profiles" in thirty recordings of the Prelude and creates charts to show what are the overall tendencies of acceleration and deceleration in phrasing. The insights of his research have greater theoretical than practical value, but still offer interesting information about how the extended consequent phrase is shaped by multiple pianists.

Another article that has shed light on the issue of interpretation is Kazimierz Morski's "Interpretations of the Works of Chopin: A Comparative Analysis of Different Styles of Performance."<sup>17</sup> Morski defines critical elements of Chopin's style. He stresses the importance of the improvisational character of Chopin's music, the element of *respiro*, "vocalist's breathing," and the acoustic possibilities of Chopin's piano, all in attempt to describe the sentiment that is unique for Chopin's music. In broad strokes, he discusses the stylistic approach of about twenty major pianists of the twentieth century to, amongst other works, Chopin's Études, Op. 10, Piano Concerto in E minor, Op. 11, Piano Concerto in F minor, Op. 21, *Andante spianato*, Op. 22, and Sonata in B♭ minor, Op. 35.

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<sup>16</sup> Alan Dodson, "Expressive timing in expanded phrases: an empirical study of recordings of three Chopin preludes," *Music Performance Research* 4 (January 2011): 2-29. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=A748561&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>17</sup> Kazimierz Morski, "Interpretations of the Works of Chopin: A Comparative Analysis of Different Styles of Performance," in *Chopin in Performance: History, Theory, Practice* (Warszawa, Poland: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 2004), 164.

Finally, he acknowledges that some of the greatest pianists in history were not able, in their rendition of Chopin, “to awaken fully that particular emotion” but had tremendous success playing the music of other composers. Although the previous realization is, to a certain extent, stating the obvious, it poses a relevant question: how can one develop “the muscle” and a sense for Chopin’s sentiment? Morski concludes, like many authors who have analyzed pianism of the early and mid-twentieth century, that there is much to be learned from the great interpreters of Chopin: “...the ability to persuade, derived from such technical skills which in a particular interpretation give one the impression solely of a spontaneity and naturalness in performance.”

*Alfred Cortot, Arthur Rubinstein, and Dinu Lipatti*

Various published sources contextualize the pianism of Cortot, Rubinstein, and Lipatti. Cortot’s book, *In Search of Chopin*,<sup>18</sup> is an excellent source of information on, surprisingly, not Chopin, but on himself. Cortot not only admired Chopin, but also identified with his life and struggles. He edited and published a substantial amount of Chopin’s music, including the Preludes, Op. 28. In his commentary notes he left a brief description of each prelude and thus provided an invaluable view of his perspective when it comes to characterization of these pieces. Rubinstein did not fall behind when it came to admiration for the Polish composer. In one of his two autobiographies, *My Many Years*,<sup>19</sup> he offers a wealth of information about his points of view on the interpretation of Chopin. One of the most important sources on the celebrated interpreters of Chopin is James Methuen-Campbell’s *Chopin Playing, From the Composer to the Present Day*.

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<sup>18</sup> Alfred Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, trans. Cyril Clarke and Rena Clarke (London, New York: P. Nevill, 1951).

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Rubinstein, *My Many Years* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1980).

Through acknowledging numerous pianists, Methuen-Campbell has isolated different pianistic schools and their approaches to playing Chopin's music. His volume offers important facts about the three pianists whose playing is examined here. Like Phillip and Morski, Methuen-Campbell predicts that the future of Chopin interpretation will bring more spontaneity but also a "greater respect for the overall character."<sup>20</sup> Finally, a volume that has shed much light on the pianist whom I admire the most is *Lipatti*, by Dragos Tanaescu and Grigore Bargauanu.<sup>21</sup> This biography outlines Lipatti's career as a pianist, composer, and teacher. In addition to biographical information, Tanaescu and Bargauanu also provide quotes of Lipatti on interpretation and music in general. Out of the three pianists, Lipatti seems to have been the humblest: "How is it possible to play without departing from the work to be interpreted? What can one do to avoid being carried away and taking slight liberties which gradually, stealthily, may become unpardonable deviations?"<sup>22</sup> Quite the opposite of what he feared, his playing was often described as "classical." Nevertheless, this quote suggests that Lipatti's process was complicated and painstaking. His words are as powerful as his playing. He notes that, in his pianistic pursuit, he relies on "that power to penetrate deeply into a work which, sooner or later, is bound to yield up its own particular truth."<sup>23</sup>

Access to a vast number of different analytical readings and various stylistic approaches to Chopin is as inspiring as it is discouraging. Pianists and teachers ought to use these resources and synthesize the information they provide into applicable

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<sup>20</sup> James Methuen-Campbell, *Chopin Playing, from the Composer to the Present Day* (New York: Taplinger, 1981), 229.

<sup>21</sup> Dragos Tanaescu and Grigore Bargauanu, *Lipatti*, ed. Carola Grindea, trans. Carola Grindea and Anne Goossens (London: Kahn & Averill, 1996), 137.

<sup>22</sup> Tanaescu and Bargauanu, *Lipatti*, 137.

<sup>23</sup> Tanaescu and Bargauanu, *Lipatti* 136.

knowledge. In the mounting number of questions that a correlation of interpretation and analysis yields, the one that should not be forgotten is: how does one come to a point where the music “yields up its own particular truth?” The artistic level of the “golden age” of pianism has not been surpassed. Besides enjoying these recordings, professional musicians must study them, learn from them as much as possible, and pass their knowledge on to the upcoming generations. The two case studies are offered as a contribution to a revival of interest in the interpretational decisions of some of the most praised pianists of the twentieth century: Alfred Cortot, Arthur Rubinstein, and Dinu Lipatti. Syntactical analysis of harmony and structure are a lens through which their recordings are examined; that is, the analysis provided explains and justifies many of their fascinating pianistic decisions. On a practical level, this study is a model for identifying elements of the score that ought to inform decisions regarding tempo, dynamics, and shaping. Basing the conclusions of this study on a single recording from each pianist is limiting, as it captures only a moment in their careers. Their styles of performance and their interpretations certainly changed over time. However, because these recordings could not be heavily edited and spliced, as technology now encourages, each recording essentially preserves the nuances of a live performance.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRELUDE IN C MAJOR, OP. 28

One of the shortest in the entire collection, lasting under one minute and counting only thirty-four measures, the Prelude consists of only two phrases. These two phrases constitute an asymmetrical period structure in which the antecedent is a “regular” eight-measure phrase ending on the dominant, but the consequent is expanded to 26 measures, including a ten-measure tonic prolongation for closing. Despite this structure, the first impression made by this Prelude is one of perpetual motion, with constantly flowing arpeggios, which was undoubtedly inspired by Bach’s first Prelude, also in C Major, from the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1. Chopin energizes Bach, making the relentlessly fast rhythm and its eye-striking notation the driving force of the Prelude’s character.

In Bach’s Prelude, a slow-moving melody is clearly conveyed by the top notes of the arpeggios, and these melodic notes are only occasionally doubled in the inside voices. In Chopin’s version, in contrast, the melody is presented with slightly different rhythm in both the highest voice and in the middle (right-hand thumb) of each arpeggio. The ambiguity that arises (one of many that this piece imposes on the listener and the interpreter) is, which of the two is the leading melodic voice? The pianist can bring out either of the two voices and relegate the other to doubling. The ramifications of this decision could be considerable, as the listener might perceive the overall texture and the rhythm of the melody differently depending on which voice is emphasized.

In the article “Metric and Rhythmic Articulation in Music,” Wallace Berry recognizes both options but favors neither. Instead, he focuses on a “conflict between harmonic rhythm (accentually articulated) and metric structure in either melodic



placement.”<sup>24</sup> Berry argues that the melody is at odds with the meter, regardless of which voice the pianist chooses to emphasize. He concludes that the pianist should bring out the melodic lines and not the downbeat-defining bass notes: “The performer who accentuates the bass note as a means of metric clarification misses the point,”<sup>25</sup> which is that the Prelude’s *agitato* quality stems from the conflict between the melody’s rhythm and the underlying metric framework of the arpeggio accompaniment.

In *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, Grosvenor W. Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer offer an explanation of how the “temporal organization” is “one of the things that give this Prelude its agitated, unstable character.”<sup>26</sup> The long melodic notes are initiated on metrically weak parts of the measure: immediately after the downbeat in the middle voice, and on the weak second beat in the top voice. Despite this placement, the agogic stresses on the long notes in each measure do “force” the melody to sound “beginning-accented.”<sup>27</sup> In each measure, the accents on the long melodic notes compete with the bass note at the start, each voice trying to define a downbeat. The competition between the bass and the first melodic note (inner voice) is illustrated by Berry’s re-notation of the opening of the Prelude with the first bar line shifted forward one sixteenth note (Example 1). One could argue that the tonic as well as agogic accents in the upper melody could make the second beat of each measure also sound like a possible downbeat. In addition, this re-notation reveals a 2+2+2 grouping of sixteenths in the melody, which conflicts with the 3+3 grouping of the arpeggios. As a result, by listening only (without looking at the score), one can feel the disagreement of the bass and the melody but also follow

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<sup>24</sup> Berry, “Metric Articulation in Music,” 18-19.

<sup>25</sup> Berry “Metric Articulation in Music,” 18.

<sup>26</sup> Cooper and Meyer *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, 36-37.

<sup>27</sup> Cooper and Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, 37.

phrasing that lacks clear downbeats. No matter which melodic line a pianist chooses to emphasize, middle or highest, the unstable, agitated quality of the Prelude will be enhanced if the bass line is downplayed.

Example 1 Chopin, Prelude 1 in C Major, mm. 1-3 re-notated by Wallace Berry<sup>28</sup>



Alfred Cortot gives prominence to the middle voice while Arthur Rubinstein's interpretation favors the top voice. The rhythmic character of the Prelude overall is relatively unaffected by this difference. However, the voicing combined with the two pianists' approaches to shaping of phrases accounts for the vastly different effects of their performances. A look at the melody, phrasing, and harmonic implications of the Prelude will create a framework for evaluating Cortot's and Rubinstein's interpretations.

The way we perceive the melodic line of the Prelude is influenced by the rhythmic figuration Chopin presents it with. In *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, Cooper and Meyer note that the trochaic rhythm (long note followed by a short note) at the beginning is what leads the listener to perceive the  $g^1$  as moving up to  $a^1$  and not the other way around.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Chopin visually reinforces this upward motion with a slur over each measure.

<sup>28</sup> Berry "Metric Articulation in Music," 18.

<sup>29</sup> Cooper and Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, 37.

Diane J. Urista, in an article that explores both analysis and interpretation of the Prelude,<sup>30</sup> argues that the first two motions from  $g^1$  to  $a^1$  sound like failed attempts to attain  $c^2$ . Although the context makes clear that the  $g^1$  is the dominant tone and thus would pull upward to the tonic,  $c^2$ , the motion of  $e^2$  to  $d^2$  in m. 4 more strongly sets up  $c^2$  as a goal. The pull to  $c^2$  is made even stronger by the repetitions of  $e^2-d^2$  in mm. 5-7. However, the  $c^2$  is skipped over after the last  $e^2-d^2$  pair, which drops instead to  $b^1-a^1$ , and the melody re-starts with the  $g^1-a^1$  motive in m. 9. The expected  $c^2$  is withheld until the distant m. 29, after reiteration of  $e^2-d^2$  in mm. 24, 26, and 28. In this extremely delayed resolution, the visual prominence given the tied eighth notes on  $c^2$  in mm. 29-32 might suggest that the higher melody is the main one. Could this be what drew Rubinstein towards bringing out the highest line throughout the Prelude? In his edition of the Preludes, Cortot strongly encourages the pianist to bring out the  $c^2$  in m. 29 by placing an accent on each of its repetitions (Example 2). In order to understand their choices of both shaping and voicing one must start with the opening phrase. However, these accents might be the only editorial markings of his own that he follows in his performance.

Cortot's edition of the Preludes was published in 1926, the same year he recorded the entire Op. 28 for the first time. After 1926, he recorded the complete Preludes two more times, and throughout his career he recorded single Preludes or smaller groups from Op. 28 as well. Although the study at hand examines Cortot's 1933-1934 recording, none of his recordings agree with the very detailed and bold suggestions he made in the *Maurice Senart* publication. Example 2 below offers a side-by-side comparison of Cortot's and Jan Ekier's editions of the Prelude No. 1.

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<sup>30</sup> Urista, "Chopin's Prelude in C Major Revisited."

Scarcity of dynamic markings leaves Ekier's edition open for different interpretations. He offers no dynamic solution for the melodic climax in m. 21, nor does he indicate whether the ending of *stretto* and *crescendo* broken lines in m. 21 indicates a *diminuendo* that would prepare the *piano* in m. 25. In the closing of the piece Ekier also offers no shaping or dynamic suggestions.

As an editor, Cortot goes so far as to add some striking dynamic markings, such as substituting the *piano* from m. 25 (present in the facsimile) for an optional (in a bracket) *mezzo piano*. Surprisingly, however, he as a pianist ignores the majority of his own suggestions. He does not make a *decrescendo* (suggestive of phrase-closing) in mm. 7-8 or a *fortissimo* in m. 21, nor does he follow the *crescendo* and *decrescendo* markings he adds starting with m. 25. In his performance, he starts to slow down sooner than m. 31, where his edition suggests a *ritardando*. Although the nuances of his interpretational decisions often contradict his own editorial markings, his recording displays a deep understanding of the phrase syntax and the harmonic and melodic implications of the work. Oddly enough, it is Rubinstein's performance that is in closer agreement with Cortot's suggestions. However, it is impossible to determine whether Rubinstein had access to the Maurice Senart score. In order to understand both Cortot's and Rubinstein's choices of shaping and voicing one must start with analysis of the opening phrase.

Example 2 Chopin, Prelude 1 in C major, Alfred Cortot (left) and Jan Ekier (right) edition<sup>31</sup>

The image displays two side-by-side musical scores for Chopin's Prelude 1 in C major, Op. 28, No. 1. The left score is the Alfred Cortot edition, and the right score is the Jan Ekier edition. Both scores are written for piano and consist of two staves (treble and bass clef). The left score begins with the tempo marking 'Ardito' and the dynamic 'mf'. The right score begins with the tempo marking 'Ardito' and the dynamic 'f'. Both scores include various performance instructions such as 'Cresc.', 'stretto', 'rit.', and 'rit.'. The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'pp'. The scores are numbered 1 through 27, indicating the measure numbers.

<sup>31</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *24 Préludes Op. 28*, ed. Alfred Corot (Paris: Maurice Senart, 1926).

Frédéric Chopin, *Préludes Op. 28, 45*, ed. Jan Ekier (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).

Jan Ekier's editorial work is a result of the latest and most comprehensive study of Chopin's works. I therefore consider that this Polish National Edition most faithfully represents Chopin's manuscript and have used it for the purpose of my analysis.

Harmonically, the antecedent phrase progresses from tonic to dominant harmony (Example 3). Repeated  $g^1$ - $a^1$  motion in mm. 1-4 is that of an agitated melody that frustratingly attempts to move towards the tonic. Adding dissonance to the basic harmonic progression and contributing to the restless tone of the piece are the long appoggiaturas in mm. 5-7. In mm. 4-6, the strong pull towards the dominant harmony is intensified by the chromatically ascending bass line.

Example 3 Chopin, Prelude No.1 in C major, mm. 1-9 with chord labeling<sup>32</sup>

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Prelude No. 1 in C major, measures 1-9. The score is in 3/8 time and marked 'Agitato' and 'mf'. It features a melodic line with repeated eighth-note figures and a bass line with chromatic movement. Chord labels are provided below the staff: I (m. 1), V 6/5 (m. 2), I (m. 3), ii 6/5 (m. 5), V 6/5 of V (m. 6), and V 7 (m. 7). The score includes fingering numbers (1-5) and articulation marks (accents) above the notes.

Melodically, the phrase follows an arch shape. Wallace Berry brings out this arch shape by re-notating the phrase in a way that removes the repeated measures (Example 4). The top of the arch, the melodic peak at m. 5, is reinforced with the first harmonic change away from the tonic, to a chord of subdominant function. Berry's re-notation also reveals the 4+4 symmetry of the melody; the melodic figure of mm. 1-4 is loosely inverted in mm. 5-8.

<sup>32</sup> Chopin, *Préludes Op. 28, 45*, ed. Jan Ekier (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000). For clarity of the Roman numeral labeling, I have removed the pedal markings from the score.

Example 4 Chopin, Prelude 1 in C Major, mm. 1-8, with Berry's illustration of the basic shape<sup>33</sup>



The reiterated  $e^2-d^2$  motion in mm. 5-7 arouses expectation of  $c^2$  to complete the  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ . This expectation intensifies in its last iteration (m. 7), when the  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$  is supported with dominant harmony. However, in m. 8, the melody drops down to a  $b^1$  and the end of the first phrase is created by the slowing of the harmonic rhythm and the melodic descent. The ending of the first phrase is far less clear than the beginning of the second phrase, in m. 9, which re-starts the  $g^1-a^1$  motion as though we are to hear the first phrase again.

Cortot sets the arrival of the melodic peak in m. 5 as the focal point of the first phrase. He reaches it with a momentum accumulated through an *accelerando* (with a slight preparatory *ritardando* in m. 4) and decelerates through mm. 5-8. In *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, Robert Philip notes that it was a tradition for early twentieth-century pianists to speed up towards the melodic high point in the phrase. This approach, acceleration through an ascent and deceleration through a descent, supports a notion that, in *rubato*, all “stolen” time must be returned.<sup>34</sup> Cortot makes a *diminuendo* and a *ritardando* through the reiterated  $e^2-d^2$  motion in mm. 6-7. The *diminuendo* and *ritardando* combined set up an expectation of a peaceful resolution to  $c^2$ . However, as  $c^2$  fails to arrive in measure 8, Cortot speeds up through the phrase ending and increases the anxiety that this lack of a resolution causes. One can go as far as to claim that in his

<sup>33</sup> Berry “Metric Articulation in Music,” 20.

<sup>34</sup> Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, 39-40.

performance, the acceleration connects m. 8 more strongly to the following phrase, as though it were a big upbeat to the downbeat of m. 9 rather than a cadential measure.

Unlike Cortot, Rubinstein stresses the upper melody by slightly hesitating on the second half of each measure in mm. 1-4. With the hesitant second beat, Rubinstein interprets the slur marks more deliberately and creates more separation between the measures. In this way, he reinforces the agitated quality of the melody that is attempting to move but does so only after the third attempt. In m. 4, when the status of the  $a^1$  in the melody has changed from neighboring to passing tone, Rubinstein slightly picks up momentum. Quite the opposite of Cortot, Rubinstein makes a *crescendo* (but also stretches the tempo) through the reiterated  $e^2-d^2$  in mm. 5-7. This *crescendo* inflates the listener's expectation of  $c^2$  and makes the  $b^1$  more of a surprise. However, Rubinstein slightly expands m. 8 and thus makes the closing of the phrase somewhat clearer. A steadier tempo in the first four and a more flexible tempo in the second four measures enable the listener to more easily perceive the 4+4 subdivision of the phrase; the first four measures maintain the tonic harmony and an upward melodic motion, while the second four, with a descending melodic motion, progress to two measures of dominant harmony. Somewhat different from Cortot, in Rubinstein's performance, acceleration and compensation to follow are found only in mm. 4-8.

The consequent phrase spans twenty-six measures and owes its length to an internal expansion and a 10-measure tonic prolongation at the end (Example 5).



Example 5 Chopin, Prelude No.1 in C Major, mm. 9-34 with chord labeling<sup>35</sup>

In the course of this expansion, the arch shape of the first phrase is greatly enlarged, from the span of a sixth to that of a twelfth. The upward chromatic appoggiaturas  $c\sharp^2-d^2$  and  $d\sharp^2-e^2$  in mm. 13-14 avoid the melodic peak of the first phrase and indicate that this melody will continue to push upward to a new high. In m. 14 the melody reaches  $e^2$ , the peak of the antecedent phrase, and jumps past it to a new peak, the  $g^2$  in m. 15. In m. 16, however, the phrase backs up by two measures and repeats the  $d\sharp^2-e^2$  from m. 14; the

<sup>35</sup> Chopin, *Préludes Op. 28, 45*, ed. Jan Ekier (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).

push past e<sup>2</sup> from mm. 14-15 is repeated in mm. 16-17, initiating an upward trajectory to an even higher peak. The climb upward to the highest peak, d<sup>3</sup> in m. 21, is intensified with the shift of the upward chromatic appoggiaturas to the downbeats (mm.18-19). The facsimile of the manuscript reveals that Chopin initially continued the rhythm of mm. 1-17 into mm. 18-20.<sup>36</sup> However, he subsequently scratched out the 16th-note rests on the downbeats of mm. 18, 19, and 20 and added slurs with “5” across the top of each measure. This revision, along with the *stretto* in m. 17, reinforces the ascent and strengthens the upward push of the chromatic appoggiaturas. After the peak in m. 21, the drop in the bass line to F# in m. 22 accompanies the descent in the melody and prepares the arrival of the cadential dominant harmony, which lasts for two measures. The long rise of the phrase, mm. 9-21, is followed by a short fall, mm. 21-25.

Although the melodic arch of the consequent phrase is significantly expanded, its basic harmonic progression duplicates that of the antecedent, I – IV – V, and brings it to completion on I. Chopin has managed to sustain this progression through a single long phrase, and has given the pianist an equally challenging task to do the same. Because both phrases begin alike, the first four measures of each are on tonic harmony. Then in both, the bass moves to F, the subdominant. Wallace Berry suggests that “the antecedent and consequent phrases correspond in point of IV occurrence (m. 5 and m. 13), and that the IV is the basis for the expansion of the second phrase.”<sup>37</sup> The chord labeling presented in Figure 6 above shows that a chord of subdominant function is initially

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<sup>36</sup> Online Chopin Variorum Edition, n.d. (website), University of Cambridge, accessed April 10, 2020, <http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/>. Facsimile of the manuscript is also available in Ignaz Paderewski, ed., *Frédéric Chopin, Complete Preludes & Etudes* (New York: Dover, 1980).

<sup>37</sup> Berry, “Metric Articulation in Music,”13.

reached in m. 13 and prolonged through m. 17. This lingering on IV is the first expansion of the consequent phrase, and it coincides with the new, upward trajectory of the melody.

In his study of the recordings of this Prelude, Alan Dodson notices that all pianists recognize measure 15 with a slight tempo stretch.<sup>38</sup> This slowing takes place during the pause on IV and is compensated for with the rapid upward climb that follows. Measure 16 backs up and duplicates m. 14, but this time the bass and the main melodic notes continue upward in parallel motion in a stepwise push to the peak in m. 21. The leap to d<sup>3</sup> in the highest line stresses this melodic peak. What seems to push this phrase through this climax, as pointed out by John P. Ferry, is the fact that “m. 21 is undoubtedly the melodic climax of this prelude [and] ought not to preclude...the underlying contrapuntal voice-leading process that binds most of the expanded consequent and drives the music to the cadential six-four in m. 23.”<sup>39</sup> In m. 22 the parallel motion breaks off, indicating a return to functional harmony. In the same measure, the vii<sup>o7</sup> of V, with F# in the bass, recalls m. 6 of the antecedent. Thus, one can recognize mm. 14-21 as inserted between m. 5 and m. 6 of the antecedent. The bass motion from F to F# in mm. 5-6 is evident in the consequent, which reaches F in m. 13, then connects to F# (in the same register) in m. 22, after the insertion. After the dominant harmony in mm. 23-24, mm. 25-26 deliver the tonic harmony but delay the melodic resolution. Their repeat in mm. 27-28 slows down the pace and creates further delay of c<sup>2</sup> in the melody, which is reached in m. 29. How Cortot and Rubinstein shape mm. 9-21 affects each pianist’s approach to this resolution.

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<sup>38</sup> Dodson, “Expressive timing in expanded phrases.”

<sup>39</sup> John P. Ferry, “Performance indications and the analysis of Chopin’s music,” PhD diss., Yale University (1996), 281-287.

Cortot initiates the consequent phrase in a faster tempo and with much more agitation than the first. In his edition of the Preludes, he offers a poetic description of each Prelude. The first one, to him, is an *Attente fiévreuse de l'aimée* (feverish anticipation of the beloved).<sup>40</sup> With this imagery taken into account, one can more easily understand Cortot's choice of tempo and overall character. Both phrases in his performance are, in comparison to Rubinstein's, more "feverish" from the very onset, and both strongly gravitate towards the climactic melodic notes. The urgency with which he performs mm. 9-21 unites the opening of the phrase and the extension into an inseparable whole. Cortot makes a *crescendo* throughout mm. 9-21, rather than starting it at measure 13, where Chopin puts the marking, and with this *crescendo* he articulates the peak in m. 15 before the melody backs up and makes its second, longer ascent. Due to an already fast tempo and an *accelerando* throughout the phrase, Cortot does not drastically react to the *stretto* placed in m. 17 in both his and Ekier's edition.

In contrast, Rubinstein stands on the more poised side of Chopin's *Agitato* tempo marking. In the antecedent phrase, he starts accelerating (employing *rubato*) only after he has clearly set a steady tempo in the opening measures. Likewise, the onset of the consequent phrase in his interpretation is less driven forward and has a lingering quality. Although Chopin puts *crescendo* in the second half of m. 13 (and a broken line that carries it all the way through the peak in m. 21), Rubinstein clearly sets a more agitated mood with the upward chromatic appoggiaturas starting in m. 13, the point of departure from the antecedent phrase. Like Cortot, Rubinstein recognizes m. 15 with a slight tempo stretch. After the short-lived relaxation of tempo in m. 15, during the pause on IV, he

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<sup>40</sup> Chopin, *24 Préludes Op. 28*, ed. Corot.

significantly increases momentum in measure 17, where Chopin puts *stretto*, giving a new impulse to the rapid climb that inescapably leads to the climax in m. 21.

A problem of rhythm arises in mm. 18-20. As a result of Chopin's revision (scratching out the sixteenth-note rests on the downbeats), the rhythmic relationship of the highest voice to the sixteenth-note arpeggio in the accompaniment becomes unclear. In the commentary of the National Edition, Jan Ekier suggests that the rhythm of the figure in mm. 1-17 implies an emphasis on the second triplet and that the rhythm in mm. 18-20 shifts the emphasis to the first triplet in the measure:

The basic R.H. rhythmical figure composed of two triplets of semiquavers seems to suggest an accent on the first note of the second triplet in each bar, while a variant of the grouping (quintuplet) in bars 18-20, 23 and 25-26 would rather suggest a melodic stress on the first note of the quintuplet. The subtle, but discernible interplay between these two accents may be an important element in the expression of the entire prelude.<sup>41</sup>

Although Ekier mentions the quintuplets, he does not offer a clear solution for the alignment of 5 in the highest against 6 in the middle voice in the measures where the rests were scratched out. One can suggest that the *Agitato* tempo and the marking of *stretto* compress these measures to the point that the downbeats stand out and the rest of each measure is a blur. Even with the slightly slow tempo in Rubinstein's recording, one can hardly recognize the alignment of 5 against 6 as an issue. In common pianistic practice, and in Rubinstein's interpretation, the first part of each measure with a quintuplet is executed as 2 in the top against 3 in the middle voice, while in the second half the eighth and the sixteenth notes of the quintuplet are aligned with the first and the last notes of the triplet sixteenths in the middle voice.

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<sup>41</sup> Chopin, *Préludes Op.28, 45*, ed. Jan Ekier, 45.

Although a *diminuendo* through the descent in mm. 21-24 seems logical and is present to a certain extent in all recorded performances, in the National Edition there is no *fortissimo* in m. 21, nor a *decrecendo* in mm. 21-25, only a mark of *piano* in m. 25. In combination with the fall of the upper melody to g<sup>1</sup>, the sudden drop in dynamics in m. 25 makes the deflection from the expected melodic resolution an even bigger surprise. Thus, it might be a matter of interpretation whether the *crescendo* marked in m. 13 should continue right up to the *subito piano* in m. 25. Cortot's and Rubinstein's ways part on both execution of the 5 against 6 rhythmic issue and, although they both slow down through the cadential 6/4 in mm. 23-24, and in the preceding mm. 21-23.

A footnote in the Cortot edition instructs that the rhythm of mm. 18-20 should remain the same as in the prior measures.<sup>42</sup> Cortot is blatantly disregarding Chopin's revision of these measures in the manuscript, and he executes mm. 18-20 with the sixteenth rests intact. In performance he compensates for this departure from the score by strongly pushing forward throughout the consequent phrase. After reaching the peak in m. 21, Cortot, in agreement with Ferry's analysis, only slightly relaxes the tempo through the descent (mm. 21-25) and makes a minimal *diminuendo*, primarily in the accompanying arpeggios, not in the melody. In m. 23 Cortot places the first note of the quintuplet much closer to the downbeat, and in doing so he is more faithful to the manuscript than he was in mm. 18-20. However, consistent with the performance practice of his era, he strikes the bass just slightly before the melody note. In m. 24 he substantially slows down through the incomplete  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  melodic motion that precedes the harmonic resolution in m. 25. In his interpretation, e<sup>1</sup> in m. 24 sounds on the downbeat,

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<sup>42</sup> Chopin, *24 Préludes Op. 28*, ed. Cortot.

although the score shows that this should not be the case. Cortot's *ritardando* through m. 24, the last measure of dominant harmony, and his emphasis on e<sup>1</sup> clearly articulate m. 24 as a pivotal arrival point in the closure of the piece. With a comma between m. 24 and m. 25 in his edition, Cortot encourages the pianist to play m. 25 with a slight delay. This pause enhances the surprise of the drop in the melody where scale degree 1 is expected. In m. 8 the b<sup>1</sup>-a<sup>1</sup> fills in the drop from d<sup>2</sup> to g<sup>1</sup>, while from m. 24 to m. 25, with no preparation, the melody drops down by a perfect fifth.

Rubinstein, on the other hand, makes a deliberate and audible change with the quintuplet rhythm in mm. 18-20. Whenever the quintuplet figuration is present, Rubinstein clearly emphasizes the downbeats. Up to measure 18 he emphasized the highest voice, and so the effect of this change is significant; measures with the quintuplet rhythm are strongly driven forward and, enhanced with the *stretto* marking in mm. 17-18, reverberate with a new sense of urgency. In the descent from m. 21 to m. 23 he makes a slight *diminuendo* but, more importantly, a substantial *ritardando* through mm. 21-24, and audibly lingers on each note of the highest melodic line. Unlike Cortot, he does not push the phrase forward to m. 24. Rather, in his interpretation, the peak from m. 21 sounds with greater expressive intensity than the e<sup>1</sup> appoggiatura in m. 24.

Although m. 25 reaches the tonic harmony in what should be a cadential position, its lack of melodic resolution and its similarity to the opening measure of the Prelude combine with the sudden change of dynamic to postpone closure. Measures 26-27 repeat the melody of the previous two measures, again seeking but not reaching melodic resolution. The tonic prolongation here allows for the momentum of the phrase to subside while the melody in m. 28 yet again reiterates  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$  in search of  $\hat{1}$ . Yet, the c<sup>2</sup> in m.

29 does not deliver the desired repose. Although the  $c^1$  in each measure from 29 to 32 is shortened to an eighth note, while  $c^2$  is lengthened with ties over the bar lines, the  $c^2$  is diluted with distracting  $f^1/a^1$  double appoggiaturas. Thus, at the moment of melodic resolution, the supporting tonic harmony is weakened with a plagal inflection. The tolling repetitions of the  $c^2$  in mm. 30, 31, and 32 are also undermined by appoggiaturas, and in each measure the  $c^2$  sounds with a pure tonic triad only during the last sixteenth note. At the very end of the Prelude, the  $c^2$  disappears, and the closing arpeggio peaks on  $e^1$ , the only arrangement of the tonic triad with its third exposed. This final chord leaves the Prelude open-ended, appropriately for the opening piece of a set, and the  $e^1$  becomes a thread of connection to the Preludes that follow.

If one was to follow Ekier's suggestion, mm. 25-28 would have a specific quality: with the middle voice emphasized in mm. 25-26 and the top voice brought out in mm. 27-28, a question-and-response effect between the voices could emerge. Nevertheless, both Cortot and Rubinstein bring out the middle voice throughout mm. 25-28. Cortot rushes through this portion, perhaps as a result of pursuit of the melodic resolution in m. 29. In his recording one can clearly perceive the  $c^2$  in m. 29 as a resolution not only of m. 24, but also of m. 7, where its expectation has initially been set. He clearly brings out this melodic resolution as the focal point of the Prelude, and then slows down from there through the end, although in his edition the *ritardando* marking occurs later, in m. 31. Overall, with the same kind of *rubato* he employed in the antecedent phrase (*accelerando* through the ascent, and a *ritardando* through the descent), Cortot underpins the arch shape of the phrase. His approach to the final melodic resolution is a strong indication of his awareness of the bigger intensity curve that spans over the entire Prelude.



Starting from m. 24 up to the end of the Prelude, Rubinstein consistently brings out the lower melody. This change relaxes the sigh-like quality that the emphasis of the upper melody created thus far. With a steady tempo in mm. 25-28 he distinguishes the 2+2 grouping and arrives at m. 29 more calmly than Cortot. He brings out both the  $c^1$  and the  $c^2$  in m. 29. Unlike Cortot, upon reaching the melodic resolution in m. 29 he pushes the tempo forward and makes a *crescendo* followed by a *diminuendo* in mm. 29-34. In closing he slows down through the final three measures.

Overall, Rubinstein gives more weight to a larger number of events in the consequent phrase than does Cortot. With meticulous attention to detail, he clearly emphasizes the first appearance of the chromatic appoggiaturas, the temporary peak in m. 15, the high point of the phrase in m. 21, and the lingering descent to the dominant harmony in mm. 23-24. As a result, under the arch shape, one can, in mm. 9-24, distinguish the 4+3+5+4 phrase syntax in his performance.

In almost every aspect Cortot and Rubinstein diverge in interpreting the score of the Prelude. One explanation for this difference is that Cortot was ten years older than Rubinstein and his musical growth took place in a different environment. Although his university years in Paris put him in close proximity to several of Chopin's students, Cortot gave little credit to any pianists who spoke of themselves as being in the lineage of the Chopin school of playing.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, Cortot was exposed to a style of playing that is historically closer to Chopin's time. He was also one of the first pianists to become deeply immersed in Chopin's musical legacy. He started recording Chopin's works at a much younger age than Rubinstein (who started programming Chopin's music at a later

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<sup>43</sup> Cortot, *In Search of Chopin*, trans. Cyril Clarke and Rena Clarke, 28-30.

stage of his career). Cortot's editions of Chopin's music hold invaluable information on his insight into Chopin's musical thought. His commentary on the first Prelude reveals the key thoughts behind his interpretation: "The passionate impulse, the impatient ardor which animate this prelude are controlled by the exact punctuation of the syncopation, which, from measure to measure, leads, panting and feverish, the melodic line until the exaltation of the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> measures; culminating point of a curve, which is then reflected by a brief diminuendo during which the tone fades, but not by the pressing insistence of a rhythm that becomes like the beatings of a heart exhausted by emotion."<sup>44</sup>

In *The Musical Times*, in 1982, twenty years after Cortot's death, Roger Nichols paid an homage to Cortot, saying that his sense of musical architecture "... hardly ever falters."<sup>45</sup> Nichols also noticed that Cortot "...pursued his primary concern for architecture at the expense of detail" and that, in spite of his occasional technical inaccuracies, "...the relationship of the larger parts to the whole would be preserved."<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, Cortot's editorial markings in the score of the Prelude (and many other Chopin works) prove that he considered musical detail as much as he did the broader musical image. Yet, in his recording of the Prelude, it seems that Cortot on more than one occasion disregarded the written text. A liberal approach to the written text was common in the nineteenth century and, as his students testify, even Chopin himself would often alter details of his music after it had already been published.<sup>47</sup> By Cortot's prime time, however, pianists were strongly divided on this issue. There are at least two reasons why Cortot was successful with a more liberal approach to the music text. First, due to its

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<sup>44</sup> Chopin, *24 Préludes Op. 28*, ed. Alfred Cortot.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Nichols, "Alfred Cortot, 1877-1962," *The Musical Times* 123 (1982): 762-763.

<sup>46</sup> Nichols, "Alfred Cortot," *The Musical Times*.

<sup>47</sup> Egiöldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 53, 74, 77-9.

improvisational and spontaneous qualities, Chopin's music can successfully lend itself to alterations and modifications. Second, Cortot had the skill and the taste that made his interpretations and performances go beyond editorial markings, towards expressing the composer's ideas that notation can represent only to a certain extent. In the year of his death, 1962, Cortot gave an interview in which he stated that "... it is important that in daily practice a student of piano analyze the pattern of each phrase and the message behind it..."<sup>48</sup>

From our historical perspective, we can with assurance recognize that Cortot was one of the few pianists in history who had the genius to perceive the intangible elements of music that the notation only hints at. In an essay in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, James Methuen-Campbell observes that "Cortot retained an idiomatic and extremely graceful rubato that belonged to the nineteenth century."<sup>49</sup> Methuen-Campbell also emphasizes that the published text of music became sacrosanct only during the inter-war years, and that in the first half of the twentieth century the score presented a reference point from which pianists made their own interpretations verging on improvisations.<sup>50</sup> With the recording of the Preludes from 1933 Cortot seems to have melded the best from both the pre- and post-war worlds of pianism.

Although today we strongly associate Rubinstein with Chopin, one of the strongest pillars of his early career was the dissemination of contemporary music. His repertoire included pieces of composers whom Cortot either had no interest in or access to – Stravinsky, Szymanowsky, Medtner, and several others. His performance style was

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<sup>48</sup> Alexander Kosloff, "A Visit With Alfred Cortot," *Music Educators Journal* 48 (February 1, 1962): 142.

<sup>49</sup> Samson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, 192.

<sup>50</sup> Samson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, 192.

not, like Cortot's, deeply rooted in the nineteenth-century traditions, but shaped by his immediate musical surroundings and his exposure to a variety of musical styles.

Rubinstein's formative years took place in Berlin under the guidance of Joseph Joachim and Heinrich Barth, the senior piano professor at the Imperial and Royal Academy of Music in Berlin. Although Rubinstein discovered Chopin's music in his youth, he did not start programming it until the 1920s, when his career as an international pianist was well underway.<sup>51</sup> In his memoirs and interviews, Rubinstein recalls that Chopin's music did not enjoy the greatest respect in the Germany of his time.<sup>52</sup> Strong national pride also may be one reason Rubinstein's teachers might have favored a different repertoire. More importantly, the writings of Rubinstein, as well as of Chopin's biographers and contemporaries, testify that Chopin's music, because of its deceptive simplicity, was often placed in the hands of amateurs who lacked skill and talent. In reaction to fashionable but often distasteful performances of Chopin's music, Rubinstein's readings of Chopin reveal an "adherence to textual accuracy unusual in a pianist of his generation and an overall discipline in seeking out the thought behind the notes."<sup>53</sup> He took upon himself the task to remove excess sentimentalism and mannerism and has brought in a new kind of poise, simplicity, and nobility to Chopin's music. As Rubinstein's interviews testify, his interpretations of Chopin were (initially) not warmly welcomed, since audiences seemed to have been accustomed to a different approach to romantic music. Nevertheless, Rubinstein deliberately continued to interpret Chopin's

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<sup>51</sup> Dean Fredric Kramer, "The old school and the new school: A comparative study in the art of interpreting piano music," DMA diss., University of Texas at Austin (1992).

<sup>52</sup> Albert Goldberg, "Rubinstein: Virtuoso of the spoken word" *Los Angeles Times* (March 15, 1964).

<sup>53</sup> James Methuen-Campbell, "Chopin in Performance," in Samson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, 204.

music in a new way, and by doing so always took a considerable risk of being misunderstood. After one of his own recitals, Rubinstein remembers that his performance of Chopin “found some detractors, who found it brilliant but a little dry. Paderewski’s exaggerated sentimentalism and Alfred Cortot’s too delicate conception were still considered the true way to play the Polish master...My own conception of Chopin was always based on the conviction that he was a powerful, masculine creator, completely independent of his physical condition.”<sup>54</sup>

Although one can sense an element of competition between Rubinstein and his French colleagues, it is indisputable that Rubinstein created a new approach to interpretation of Chopin, one that left a significant mark on the generations of pianists and audiences that followed him. As Kazimierz Morski notes, “interpretation of Chopin’s works evolved along many important shifts, the ones of aesthetics, audiences, and the way we express our emotions.”<sup>55</sup> Over the course of Rubinstein’s era, one can observe a clearer separation of the composer and the performer; that is, performers no longer sought to enhance the score with means that involved freedoms of the romantics. That Rubinstein’s career extended well into the twentieth century had its own setbacks (such as technical perfectionism), but he did not succumb “...circumscribed tastes and exaggerated expectations of a listening public accustomed to ‘flawless’ recordings.”<sup>56</sup> He approached the musical score with utmost respect, but at the same time he preserved the plasticity of the romantic performance style.

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<sup>54</sup> Rubinstein, *My Many Years*, 123.

<sup>55</sup> Morski, “Interpretations of the works of Chopin” in *Chopin in Performance: History, Theory, Practice*, 153-167.

<sup>56</sup> Rink, “Authentic Chopin” in Rink and Samson, eds., *Chopin Studies 2*, 214.

Cortot and Rubinstein arrived at vastly different results with the Prelude. Their interpretations clearly demonstrate to what capacity this score can sound differently, depending on how one interprets notation and style. Although musical text, style, and expression often seem to stand in each others' way, both Rubinstein and Cortot have managed to convey all three without the expense of either. Perhaps it is because they both belonged to an era which has one foot in the tradition of improvisation and freedom, and the other in the new pursuit of simplicity, clarity, and accuracy.

## CHAPTER 3

### SONATA IN B MINOR, OP. 58, *LARGO*

Chopin's Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, leans on the Baroque principle of motivic unity. As one of the most complex and cohesive sonatas of the Romantic era, it proves that Chopin had as great a command of large forms as he did of the piano miniature. Although its web of motives is vast and intricate, the entire work is faithful to the established layout of a 19th-century sonata: Chopin's version of a sonata form for the first movement (*Allegro maestoso*), ternary form for the second (Scherzo, *Molto vivace*), ternary form for the third (*Largo*), and a sonata-rondo for the Finale (*Presto, non tanto*).

The biggest pianistic challenge associated with the *Largo* is *rubato*. This case study will yield insight into the interpretation of the *Largo* as recorded by Dinu Lipatti in 1947, in London, for Columbia Records,<sup>57</sup> and will show how specific harmonic and melodic events in the score may have influenced his interpretative decisions. Scholars and critics unanimously praise Lipatti's playing. As noted by Methuen-Campbell about Lipatti, "there was no hint of affectation in anything he did, no mannered *rubato* and no stylistic inhibitions. The playing was first and foremost classical, with a clarity of texture that was Mozartian in its purity [Mozart was one of the few composers Chopin truly idolized] and a technique that stressed directness of communication rather than hazy pastel colors."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Dinu Lipatti, *Frederic Chopin: Sonata no. 3 in B minor, op. 58. Barcarolle in F-sharp major, op. 60. Nocturne no. 8 in D-flat major, op. 27, no. 2. Mazurka no. 32 in C sharp minor, op. 5, no. 3*. Recorded 1947. Columbia, 1950.

<sup>58</sup> James Methuen-Campbell, *Chopin Playing, from the Composer to the Present Day* (New York: Taplinger, 1981), 183. (Bracketed comment is made by Methuen-Campbell)

Lipatti's life was prematurely ended; in 1950 he died at age 33, of Hodgkin's disease. However, in the course of his short career he set a standard of interpreting Chopin that most pianists today can only aspire to. Methuen-Campbell also noted that Lipatti "achieved his effects by allowing the notes to speak in their own harmony and melody; he believed that the performer was only a channel through which the composer could express himself, and that the more the performer allowed his personality to obtrude, the less faithful or successful the interpretation would be."<sup>59</sup> One therefore must wonder: What were Lipatti's guiding pianistic principles? In the biography titled simply *Lipatti*, Dragos Tenescu and Grigore Bragano provide examples of Lipatti's own words of advice regarding interpretation. In a letter to a young pianist he stresses some important factors:

1. Study of solfege, particularly the rhythmic solfege
2. Accentuation of the weak beats. (To insist and stress the strong beats is to commit one of the greatest errors in music because this is nothing else but a diving board towards the weak ones as *these* bear the real weight.)
3. The ignorance of many pianists about the immense possibilities obtained through independence of various attacks and touches in the same hand being able to produce *different timbres*. By attaining such independence the interpretation immediately stands out in unexpected relief and the playing reflects the timbral variety and plasticity of an orchestral execution.<sup>60</sup>

His approach to the *Largo* testifies that he followed these principles and had the ability to interpret the score in a way that would both enhance Chopin's musical ideas and express himself as an individual. To understand how Lipatti shaped and interpreted the *Largo*, one must first examine the music itself. The most intimate movement of the Sonata, the *Largo* is set in a ternary form (A<sup>1</sup>BA<sup>2</sup>). The A sections are inspired by the *bel canto* style

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<sup>59</sup> Methuen-Campbell, *Chopin Playing*, 183.

<sup>60</sup> Dragos Tanasescu and Grigore Bargauanu, *Lipatti*, ed. Carola Grindea, trans. Carola Grindea and Anne Goossens (London: Kahn & Averill, 1996), 138-39.



and are a testimony to Chopin's love for opera and long, *cantabile* melodies. The central and the most elaborate portion of the movement presents a different, more introverted and piano-idiomatic style. It brings the pace down with a slow-moving melody and a bass line surrounding a rippling accompaniment. The highly intimate soundscape of the B section contrasts both texturally and emotionally with the extroverted, aria-like outer sections.

The opening four measures of the third movement are an introduction, but they are also connective tissue that bonds it with the second movement. A staggering transformation from *Vivace* to *Largo* takes place during these opening measures.

Example 1 below offers a view of the closing of the second and the opening of the third movement, with Roman-numeral labeling for the latter. The unison E $\flat$  at the end of the *Vivace* is re-spelled as D $\sharp$ , and a *fortissimo* descending line, tripled in octaves, ensues: D $\sharp$  - C $\sharp$  - B - A $\sharp$  - G $\sharp$  - G $\natural$ . Prior to the arrival of the G $\natural$  (the minor sixth scale degree), this descent is interrupted with an unforeseen leap, to E in m. 2. This E foreshadows a modulation to E Major later in the movement, in m. 29, the beginning of the Trio.

Example 1 Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, closing of the *Vivace* and opening of the *Largo*<sup>61</sup>

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, titled 'Closing of the Vivace', shows a piano accompaniment with a treble clef and a bass clef. It features a series of chords and a melodic line. The second system, titled 'Opening of the Largo', shows the beginning of a new section. It includes a treble clef and a bass clef. The music is marked with dynamics like *ff* and *p*, and includes the instruction 'cantabile'. Roman numeral labels are placed below the bass line: 'B: 3, 5', 'I5 of N', 'Ger. 6 (V7 of N)', 'Vcad. 3', and 'I'. A red circle highlights a specific chord in the bass line of the second system.

The first chords of the *Largo* begin in m. 3. After the tonally-uncertain line and a long pause on E, the arrival of G $\sharp$  is surprisingly harmonized with a C-Major chord on the downbeat of m. 3, at the moment when the sustained E decays to *piano* dynamic. This C-Major chord is followed by a G<sup>7</sup> on beat 3, and what sounds like a cadential 6/4 to dominant seventh begins to tonicize C, the Neapolitan key of B Major. However, the G<sup>7</sup> chord moves as a German augmented-sixth chord when the G $\sharp$  descends to F $\sharp$  to introduce the dominant harmony of B Major. This movement from G $\sharp$  to F $\sharp$ , minor 6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> scale degrees, will resonate throughout the movement. As these abrupt harmonic shifts take place, the dynamic drops to *piano* and the double-dotted rhythms from mm. 1-2 are

<sup>61</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000). Pedal marking in m. 4 of the *Largo* has been removed for reasons of clarity of the Roman numeral labeling

replaced with single-dotted eighths and sixteenths. The new tonic key of B Major is affirmed with a perfect authentic cadence in m. 4.

Another device that creates suspense in the introduction is Chopin's manipulation of the meter. The first measure is a dotted eighth-note shy of being a full 4/4 measure. The listener might hear the initial C# and the dotted half-note E in m. 2 as downbeats in 4/4, but this meter is upset by the rhythm of m. 3. Consequently, one might conclude that Chopin intended to avoid any sense of meter throughout this introduction. With metric confusion preceding it, the beginning of the aria-like section, signaled with a *cantabile* marking in the pick-up to m. 5, sounds like an entrance of a soloist and a fresh start. With the downbeat of m. 5, the transition to the transcendent sound world of the *Largo* has been completed.

At the beginning of the introduction, Lipatti executes the double-dotted rhythm and the descending line in open octaves with high precision. By stretching beat one in m. 2, he acknowledges that the leap to E is an interruption. The C-Major chord in m. 3 sets a different tone for the opening, and thus Lipatti performs the dotted rhythms in that measure more gently. He emphasizes the surprise of the G<sup>7</sup> moving as a German sixth by slightly accenting the B: V<sup>7</sup> on the third beat of m. 3. A *ritardando* he makes throughout the rest of the introduction suggests that the agitated character of the *Vivace* has transcended to a different plane, that is, that the *bel canto* stage has been set. Although the score has no indication of a roll, Lipatti uses a common stylistic device and rolls the V<sup>7</sup> chord on the downbeat of m. 4, enhancing the expressiveness of the cadence. He clearly separates the beginning of the *cantabile* section from the introduction and thus emphasizes the real beginning of the *Largo*.

After the introduction, the A<sup>1</sup> section is a quatrain in form. It consists of four phrases that can be labeled as *a*<sup>1</sup> (mm.5-8), *a*<sup>2</sup> (mm. 9-12), *b* (mm. 13-16), and *a*<sup>3</sup> (m. 17-27). Example 2 below shows the Roman-numeral labeling for phrases *a*<sup>1</sup> and *a*<sup>2</sup>. The march-like figure in the left hand creates a solemn framework for the singing melody. Throughout this first period, the melody is strictly diatonic. However, the accompaniment is embellished with colorful chromatic chords. The first phrase ends with a half cadence in m. 8. In m. 12, the consequent phrase completes the period structure with an IAC in F# Major. In the approach to the first cadential point, the accompaniment disturbs the B-Major tonality: in mm. 7-8, G# minor is tonicized before a clear dominant of B Major is presented. In m. 11, modulation with a chromatic pivot chord unexpectedly shifts the tonality and is immediately followed by a cadence in m. 12. In same measure, the A# loses its leading-tone function and continues the melody's downward motion into the *b* phrase. The combination of the melody in the *bel canto* style with the chromaticism of the harmony calls for a subtle use of *rubato*.

Example 2 Chopin, Sonata in B minor, Op. 58, *Largo*, mm. 5-13 (*a*<sup>1</sup> and *a*<sup>2</sup> phrase), with chord labeling<sup>62</sup>

Chopin’s student and editor, Karl Mikuli, notes that in *rubato*, “the hand responsible for the accompaniment would keep strict time while the other hand, singing the melody, would free the essence of musical thoughts from all rhythmic fetters, either by lingering hesitantly or by eagerly anticipating the movement with a certain impatient vehemence akin to passionate speech.”<sup>63</sup> Indeed, Lipatti executes the accompaniment in strict time while shaping the melodic line as though a vocalist, with freedom and the utmost expression. Throughout the harmonically diatonic portions of the phrases (mm.5-7

<sup>62</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).

<sup>63</sup> Jean-Jaques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by his Pupils*, trans. Naomi Shohet with Krysia Osostowicz and Roy Howat, ed. Roy Howat, 3rd Eng. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 49.

and mm. 9-11) he sustains a consistent march-like rhythm. By doing so he establishes a norm for the figure, but also allows for the variable rates of harmonic changes to “speak for themselves.” In m. 6 he slightly lingers on the passing sixteenth-note  $d\sharp^2$  in the melody, as well as the following triplet. These elongations bring into mind Lipatti’s own statement that the “strong beats are a diving board towards the weak beats, which bear the real weight.” By lingering on the connecting (passing) tones in the melody and non-functional chords in the harmony (m. 8), Lipatti recognizes and stresses their expressive quality. By slightly expanding the tempo in m. 8 and m. 11, Lipatti also allows for the chromatic chords in the accompaniment to be heard. The *ritardandi* he makes in the approach to both cadences are consistent with the vocal style, as though giving the singer a chance to breathe, which helps to clarify the phrasing.

Phrase-defining slurs are critical for interpretative decisions in the *Largo*.

Although there is an unbroken slur from m. 5 to m. 12, a footnote in the Ekier score indicates that some editions break the slur in measure 6 and measure 8 (marked with \*\* in Example 2 above). In m. 8, some editions also suggest a break between  $f\sharp^1$  and  $d\sharp^2$ , rather than between  $c\sharp^2$  and  $f\sharp^1$ . Breaking of the slur between the  $c\sharp^2$  and the  $f\sharp^1$  would bring out the parallel relationship of the melody at the start of  $a^1$  and  $a^2$ . However, a break between the  $f\sharp^1$  and the  $d\sharp^2$ , resembling a sneak breath of a vocalist, would dovetail  $a^1$  and  $a^2$  into a single long phrase. Interpretationally, the first solution for a slur break would be a more classical approach to phrasing, and the other more romantic. As noted, Methuen-Campbell implies that Lipatti’s playing was first and foremost classical. In this case, Lipatti does take the classical approach and breaks the slur after the  $c\sharp^2$  and slightly stretches the tempo with the half cadence in m. 8. Additionally, he clearly separates the

start of  $a^2$  with a dynamically stronger return of the ascending sixth from m. 4. This decision may have been informed by the *crescendo* marking that, matching the one in m. 4, emphasizes the return of the opening melody.

Harmonic events also play a pivotal role in Lipatti's shaping. In  $a^2$ , his interpretation moves away from the written text (dynamics) and may even be described as counterintuitive. The peak in m. 11 is stressed with a *crescendo* and a *forte* marking on the third beat (the first dynamic indication in the *cantabile*). However, the harmony ventures to a secondary dominant earlier than that, on the downbeat of m. 11. One can clearly perceive that Lipatti shifts the *forte* to the first half of m. 11, the unexpected chromatic chord. In the conclusion of the  $a^2$  phrase, Lipatti shapes the fioritura as a *bel canto* style vocalist would – with a *subito piano* and relaxation of the tempo.

While continuing with the march-like rhythm and the *bel canto* melodic line, the *b* phrase brings elements of contrast. Overall, it divides into two parts in sequential relationship: mm. 13-14 are repeated down a step in mm. 15-16. Example 3 below offers a view of the harmonic layout of mm. 13-19. The rhythm of the melody is plainer and has no fioriture. Unlike in the *a* phrase, the accompaniment ventures to secondary dominants and centers around subdominant chords (ii and vi). In m. 13 and m. 15, the ascending sixth from the start of the *a* phrases (foreshadowed by the sixth in m. 2) becomes an octave leap. With the descending sixth leap in m. 14 Chopin refreshes the listener's memory of the  $G^{\sharp 1}$  to  $F^{\sharp}$  in m. 3 of the introduction. The  $g^{\sharp 1}$  from the last beat of m. 14 connects the  $g^{\sharp 1}$  on the downbeat of the previous measure with the  $f^{\sharp 1}$  at the start of m. 15. Then, in a reversal, the top line of the left hand in mm. 15-16 rises from  $F^{\sharp}$  to  $F^{\flat}$  (=  $G^{\flat}$ ) to  $G^{\sharp}$ . The harmony of m. 16 breaks the sequential relationship. The expected

chord,  $V^4_3$  on the downbeat of m. 16, is replaced with a diminished seventh chord,  $vii^{o4}_3$  of vi. This surprising substitution of a secondary chord is brought out by a rise in dynamic. Deviation from the sequence leads into the return of the opening melody in m. 17.

Lipatti's *rubato* in mm. 13-17 reflects the sequential pattern of the *b* phrase and its harmonic surprises. Proving that even the simplest dynamic markings require interpretation, Lipatti starts the *b* phrase with a sound that is better described as *mezzo forte*, rather than *piano* as the score indicates. This alteration gives an impulse to the beginning of the phrase, with the effect of starting anew. Yet, a *diminuendo* and arrival to *piano* in m. 14 indicate that Lipatti does not simply dismiss the dynamic indications of the composer. He emphasizes the sequential structure of mm. 13-16 by slightly pushing the tempo in m. 13 and m. 15 and relaxing it in m. 14 and m. 16. While bringing an element of novelty, this push-and-pull enables Lipatti to inflect the expressive quarter-note falling leaps in mm. 14 and 16. He puts a clear emphasis on  $g^{\sharp 1}$  in m. 14 and thus shows the connection between the downbeats of m. 13 and m. 15. However, the quality of the recording makes it difficult to discern whether Lipatti clearly voices the reversal — the  $F^{\sharp}$  -  $F_x$  -  $G^{\sharp}$  in the left-hand chords in mm. 15-16. More so than in m. 14, Lipatti makes a *ritardando* on the second beat of m. 16, and thus stresses the expressive quality of the unexpected harmony. At the same time, the pull in m. 16 reminds the listener of the falling fifth ( $c^{\sharp 2}$  to  $f^{\sharp 1}$ ) from m. 8.



Example 3 Chopin, Sonata in B Minor Op. 58, *Largo*, mm. 11-19 (*b* phrase), with chord labeling<sup>64</sup>

11 *f* *p*

F#: V4/2 of V  
B: V4/2 of ii ii6

14 *cresc.* *dim.*

B: V4/3 of ii ii°7 V4/2 I6 vii°4/3 of vi vi6

17 *pp*

I V7 V7 of IV

B tonic pedal

The *a*<sup>3</sup> phrase brings even more surprises to the listener and challenges to the pianist. The end of the *b* phrase, on vi<sup>6</sup>, lacks closure, and the return of the *a* melody in m. 17 is downplayed by the BB retained in the bass, which becomes a tonic pedal point. The melody's connection from g<sup>#1</sup> to f<sup>#1</sup> across the bar line (mm.16-17) launches a new countermelody in the right hand. The steady pulsation of the BB in the bass and the rocking alto line foreshadow the barcarolle-like return of the A section in m. 99. The two

<sup>64</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).

*a* phrases began alike but differed in their third measures. Likewise, the  $a^3$  phrase does something new in m. 19, harmonization of the melody's  $d\sharp^2$  with  $V^7$  of IV. This harmony opens a musical parenthesis that interrupts the return of *a* and postpones the expected B: PAC to m. 27. (The same kind of delay of closure will recur in the last measures of the B section, as well as at the very end of the movement.) If one were to replace mm. 19-20 with mm. 26-27, the  $a^1 a^2 b a^3$  form would be regular and undisturbed. However, these musical digressions, improvisatory in nature, create much of the movement's appeal, as they play with the listeners sense of expectation.

Starting with m. 19 the rhythmic ostinato of the accompaniment suddenly halts, and the *bel canto* melody begins to fragment. Example 4 (shown below) offers a view of the melodic descent and harmonic transition that will culminate with the start of the B section. The treble melody stops with the  $b^2$  on the downbeat of m. 20, and it is silent while three slow chords are introduced in the low register. In keeping with the improvisatory quality of this section, the new figure of a  $b^2$  followed by three chords is done a second time, in mm. 22-23. The *bel canto* melody during this interruption recalls the octave leaps from the *b* phrase. The  $b^2$  on the downbeat of m. 22 connects registrally to the octave drops on  $g\sharp^2$  and  $e^2$  in mm. 23-24, and the  $e^2$  in m. 24 will continue in m. 26 to the  $d\sharp^2$ ,  $c\sharp^2$ , and  $b^1$  in m. 27, the melody's step descent to the cadence. Overall, the melodic descent during the parenthesis brings the melody to the lower register, where the B (Trio) section begins.

Example 4 Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, *Largo*, mm. 17-29 ( $a^3$  phrase), with chord labeling<sup>65</sup>

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, mm. 17-29. The score is in B minor and 3/4 time. It features a piano (pp) dynamic and includes various musical notations such as slurs, ornaments, and fingering. Chord labels are provided below the staff, including B: IV, B: ii 6/5, B: i6/4 pass. IV6, B: ii6/4 of IV, B: V7 of IV, B: #vi°4/2 of IV, B: V7 of IV, B: #vi°4/2 of IV, B: V7 of V, B: V4/2 of IV, E: V, E: IV, E: 6, E: V6, and E: I.

Harmonically, in mm. 19-22, the parenthesis strongly emphasizes E Major, the subdominant of B Major, repeatedly returning to this chord. However, in mm. 23-25, the E-Major triad is turned into an E<sup>7</sup>, and the returns to this chord in m. 23 and m. 24 create a tonal misdirection. This ambiguity is abruptly ended by a firm B-Major cadential formula in mm. 26-27. Although delayed for a long time, immediately after the B: PAC, the B Major chord from the downbeat of m. 27 again becomes a V<sup>7</sup> in E Major with an

<sup>65</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).

added A $\sharp$ , as at the start of the parenthesis in m. 19. A PAC in B Major provides a strong closure while an immediate recall of E Major blurs the sectional divisions. Additionally, a steady rhythm of sextuplet eighths introduced in m. 29 further dovetails the sections, by anticipating this rhythm in the Trio. Overall, in the course of mm. 19-27, B Major is undermined only to be affirmed again, sounding fresh upon its return and recalling the gradual emergence of this tonality in the movement's introductory measures.

Careful listening to Lipatti's recording reveals that his liberties with the tempo coincide with the deviation from the form, that is, with the parenthetical insert. Lipatti executes the first four measures of the  $a^3$  phrase in strict time, but in a tempo slightly slower than in  $a^1$ . The slower tempo emphasizes the weight of the bass pedal point and allows the added alto line in mm. 17-18 to sound more clearly. As in other instances, Lipatti prepares the expected cadence point at m. 19 by slowing down prior to the downbeat. The parenthetical portion in mm. 19-27 brings harmonic and melodic ambiguity in the closing of the A section. As the tonality of B Major begins to dissolve and the melodic fragmentation begins, Lipatti's tempo becomes flexible. He speeds up by shortening the half notes and makes a *crescendo* through the three slow chords in mm. 20-21 and mm. 21-22. However, he clearly lingers with the *bel canto* melodic fragment that follows in both instances. The duality of the chords and the *bel canto* question-like figure enhances the sense of wandering. Of course, as a result of the subtle *accelerando* (achieved with the shortening of the half-notes) and the *crescendo*, Lipatti creates a peak with the  $g\sharp^2$  in m. 23, which he plays *forte*. From this peak, he makes a *decrescendo* through the descending octave leaps. When the melody begins to climb upwards to its resolution, from the downbeat of m. 25, he makes up for the previous *accelerando* with a

substantial *ritardando*, which he sustains throughout the end of the cadential formula. He sets a new, steady tempo with the sextuplets in mm. 27-28 and makes a very slight *ritardando* at the end of m. 28 as he transitions to the Trio.

A *sostenuto* marking in m. 29 indicates a character change. While addressing the *Largo* overall, Anatole Leikin notes, “The form of the slow movement is ternary, with nothing out of the ordinary except for its proportions. In the trio Chopin lapses into a nirvana that lasts almost three times as long as the first part and more than four times as long as the reprise.”<sup>66</sup> An impression of the “nirvana” is achieved by a dramatic change of texture and pace. Instead of the *bel canto* style (single melody in the top voice and chords in the accompaniment), in the B section Chopin turns to highly piano-idiomatic writing in which the melody is tightly intertwined with the accompanying arpeggios. In other words, as expressed by Maciej Golab, “No qualitative opposition between harmony and melody exists.”<sup>67</sup> In the case of the *Largo*, the B section is driven by harmonic progressions; melodic movement is present but does not assume a leading role. The augmentation of note values in the melody brings the pace down to a new, meditative plane. Furthermore, all phrase closings in the B section are ambiguous and masked in some way. As a result, anticipation of a definite phrase conclusion accumulates through the section. The peculiarities of phrase syntax and harmonic changes strongly affect the interpretation of the Trio.

Phrases of the B section are summarized in the table 1 below.

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<sup>66</sup> Anatole Leikin, “The Sonatas” in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge University Press, 1992): 181-82.

<sup>67</sup> Maciej Golab, *Twelve Studies in Chopin: Style, Aesthetics and Reception*, trans. Wojciech Bonkowski, John Comber and Maksyilian Kapelanski (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 61.

Table 1. Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, *Largo*, B section phrases

Measures	Phrase label	Starting and ending keys	Closing
29-36	c <sup>1</sup>	E Major – E Major	On E: I
37-44	d <sup>1</sup>	E Major – G# minor	On g#: I
45-52	c <sup>2</sup>	E Major – E Major	On E: I
53-68	d <sup>2</sup>	E Major – G# minor	Imperfect authentic cadence
69-78	e	G# minor – E Major	On E: V <sup>7</sup>
79-89	c <sup>3</sup>	E Major – E Major	In m. 86 dissolved on vii <sup>o7</sup>
90-98	retransition	E Major – B Major	On B: V <sup>7</sup>

Structurally, the first four phrases divide into: 8+8+8+16. The *c*<sup>1</sup> and the *c*<sup>2</sup> phrases are identical. A digressing chromatic passage in mm. 61-68 of the *d*<sup>2</sup> phrase postpones the G#-minor cadence expected in m. 61 and thus extends the *d*<sup>2</sup> phrase for an additional eight measures. Although it starts in a familiar key, the *e* phrase digresses to a new key, F minor. In m. 86, the *c*<sup>3</sup> phrase dissolves on E: vii<sup>o7</sup> and transforms into a retransition that prepares the return of the A section.

Mainly diatonic, the *c*<sup>1</sup> phrase (mm. 29-36) affirms E Major with calming plagal relationships (Example 5). The absence of an active melodic line and the slow harmonic rhythm create an impression of stillness and serenity. The melody in the top voice descends gradually from b<sup>1</sup> in m. 29 to g#, a tenth below, in m. 36. The chord progression in mm. 33-36 is weak, as it is formed by three lines of passing tones, that connect E: I in m. 33 to E: I in m. 36. Additionally, the closure of the phrase is diluted by an E pedal in mm. 33-36, which is preceded by IV-I and ends with vii<sup>o7</sup> – I formed over it. After the pedal the melodic motion continues with an eighth-note link that fills m. 36. On the downbeat of m. 37, the start of the *d*<sup>2</sup> phrase, the eighth notes halt with a new figure in a slow rhythm.

Example 5 Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, *Largo*, mm. 29-37 (*c*<sup>1</sup> phrase), with chord labeling<sup>68</sup>

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (mm. 29-31) is marked 'sostenuto'. The second system (mm. 32-34) continues the phrase. The third system (mm. 35-37) concludes the phrase. Chord labels are provided below the bass staff for each system. The first system labels are E: I, IV, I, vi. The second system labels are E: IV, I, vii°7, V<sup>7</sup> of iv. The third system labels are E: vi<sup>7</sup>, vii<sup>°7</sup>, I, V<sup>7</sup>. Fingerings and ornaments are indicated throughout the score.

Harmonically, the *d*<sup>1</sup> phrase digresses to a new tonal center, G# minor, by transposing mm. 37-38, E: V<sup>7</sup> – I, to g#: V<sup>7</sup> – i in mm. 39-40 (Example 6). Its dotted quarter-note rhythms set the phrase apart from the constant eighth-note flow in the previous phrase. The opening gesture, in m. 37, suggests a new musical direction. Later in the phrase, exact repetition of m. 41 in m. 42 further stresses the sense of a halt. Thus, as if moving with difficulty, the melody in the soprano lingers on g#<sup>1</sup> in mm. 41-42 before it ascends back to b<sup>1</sup> in m. 43. At the end of the phrase, in mm. 43-44, G# minor is affirmed with a 1-5-1 movement in the bass, while the b<sup>1</sup> sustains on top. The b<sup>1</sup> and a

<sup>68</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).

continuation of the eighth-note flow weaken the closure of  $d^2$  and melodically prepare the return of the  $c^1$  phrase.

Example 6 Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, *Largo*, mm. 35-44 ( $d^1$  phrase), with chord labeling<sup>69</sup>

Performance practice has shown that most pianists, including Lipatti, tend to pick up the tempo in the B section. Although the time signature remains unchanged, the melodic notes have substantially lengthened and thus imply a change in tempo, or even a metric modulation from the quarter-note beat to a half-note beat. Lipatti abandons a steady tempo in the closing of A, starting with m. 19, when a change of pace naturally occurs as the *bel canto* melody starts to fragment, and the march-like accompaniment

<sup>69</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).



stops. Therefore, a new tempo that he arrives to with the first appearance of the eighth note flow, in m. 27, does not sound like a tempo change, but a logical result of the musical turmoil that occurred in the measures prior. As suggested, plagal harmonies in the *c*<sup>l</sup> phrase imply a sense of calm. Lipatti conveys this calm by maintaining an uninterrupted flow of the eighth notes and by letting the melody in the left to “sing out.” Rolled chords in this phrase create an impression of freedom and are, so to speak, a written-in *rubato* that needs no enhancement. The closing of *c*<sup>l</sup> is harmonically weakened and melodically ambiguous, since the melody continues to move past the resolution (downbeat of m. 36). Thus, Lipatti also avoids a sense of finality in the closing of the phrase. He initiates a *diminuendo* and a *ritardando* one measure before the closing, in m. 35, but picks up the tempo as soon as the melodic resolution is reached on the downbeat of m. 36. The score, however, indicates a *crescendo* in the measure preceding the resolution, in m. 35. Therefore, one can suggest that Lipatti’s interpretational freedom conveys a deep understanding of the musical syntax of the phrase. He achieves a sense of closure by slowing down with the 5-4-3 motion in the melody (b – a – g<sup>#</sup>) but avoids a complete stop by immediately pressing forward from the downbeat of m. 36. His phrasing suggests that the *c*<sup>l</sup> and *d*<sup>l</sup> phrases overlap in m. 36.

Overall, Lipatti’s tempo in the digressing *d*<sup>l</sup> phrase is more flexible. The figure in a slow rhythm (m. 37) has a narrative quality, and thus Lipatti’s tempo bends, in order to accommodate the musical declamation. He slightly accelerates through the ascending arpeggios and slows down with the dotted quarter-note figures that follow. By lingering on the eighth-note chords in m. 37 and m. 39, the opening gesture and its transposition, he stresses the pauses that this speech-like rhythm imposes on the flow of the phrase.

Furthermore, a slight elongation of the eighth notes at the end of m. 41 and of m. 42 is an additional example of making the off-beats “bear the real weight.” Finally, Lipatti slows down in m. 42 and thus stresses the echo-effect that the repetition of m. 41 implies.

Overall, he again manages to achieve a balance of closure and continuation. With the return of the eighth-note flow in m. 43, Lipatti briefly returns to a forward momentum, until m. 44, where he initiates a *diminuendo* that lasts until the beginning of the  $c^2$  phrase. He interprets the *crescendo-decrescendo* marking (< >) in mm. 43-45 as a slight emphasis of the  $g\sharp^1$  to  $e^2$  leap in m. 44, but not the 1-5-1 motion in the bass (which would create an unwanted separation between the  $d^1$  and the  $c^2$  phrase). By sustaining a steady tempo in m. 43, Lipatti recognizes that the last two measures of the  $d^1$  phrase are melodically preparing the  $c^2$  phrase and blurring the boundary between the two.

After the  $c^2$  phrase (a written out repeat of the  $c^1$ ), the  $d^2$  phrase is climactic, as it eventually delivers the only strong cadence in the entire B section. In the seventh measure of  $d^2$ , instead of the 1-5-1 bass, which suggested cadential closure in  $d^1$ , mm. 44-45, the bass in mm. 59-60 remains on  $G\sharp$  while a new eighth-note ornamental figure in the tenor voice emphasizes  $d\sharp$ , the dominant tone. In m. 61, the cadence is evaded again as the bass falls to  $D\sharp$  and opens a musical parenthesis that connects with the  $DD\sharp$ , an octave lower, in m. 68 (Example 7). The chromatic movement of the bass line in mm. 61-64 disturbs the tonal center while, in the same measures, the soprano line diatonically descends from  $b^1$  to  $g\sharp^1$  and thus recalls the melodic movement of the  $c$  phrases. After this tonally uncertain sequence, in m. 65, the melody leaps down to  $e^1$  and begins to ascend while the bass line continues to descend. Enhanced with a *crescendo*, diatonic language, and the contrary motion, the end of the parenthesis in mm. 65-67 strongly re-

establishes a sense of tonality. After a prolonged period of a bass line descending by step, a leap to EE in m. 66 is a surprise. Finally, after the long delay, an IAC in m. 68 affirms G#-minor, but with an enhancement: a G#-Major arpeggio. Besides firmly establishing the tonal center, the G#-Major chord in m. 68 paves a path for a different key scheme in the *e* phrase.

Example 7 Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, *Largo*, mm. 61-69 (end of *d*<sup>2</sup> phrase), with chord labeling<sup>70</sup>

Lipatti’s tone color and pacing in the *c*<sup>2</sup> phrase, mm. 45-52, remain as peaceful as they were in *c*<sup>1</sup>. This almost exact repetition creates a reflective mood or, as Leikin puts it, “a sense of nirvana.”<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, in the *d*<sup>2</sup> phrase, Lipatti does prepare the listener

<sup>70</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).

<sup>71</sup> Anatole Leikin, “The Sonatas” in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge University Press), 182.

for the upcoming events. As a signal of a new trajectory, the parenthesis, Lipatti clearly brings out the new figure in the tenor line (m. 59). In the very last measures of the  $d^2$  phrase (m.60) he makes an extensive *ritardando* and a substantial *diminuendo*. These pacing and dynamics create a sense of “quiet before the storm.” Ekier’s edition notes that some editions have a *crescendo* symbol in mm. 61-63. Obviously following this editorial marking, Lipatti creates a long phrase that peaks with the cadential 6/4 in m. 67. After seamlessly merging into the opening measure of the parenthesis (m. 61), he generates excitement with a faster tempo and a *crescendo*, as the score indicates, throughout the gravitational pull of the stepwise descent of the bass line (mm. 61-64). He recalls the *c* phrases by making strong *tenutos* with the  $b^1$ -  $a^1$ -  $g\#^1$  descent in the soprano line. However, he downplays the bass line until the B $\#$  in m. 64. An accent on this B $\#$  highlights a pivotal point in the phrase, when a sense of tonality is reestablished as the bass turns upward toward C $\#$  and the soprano leaps to  $e^1$  (m. 65). Also emphasizing this critical juncture is a slight stretch he makes in m. 64. The contrary motion in the closing of the parenthetical insert implies an internal pull; that is, an increase of tension as the bass and the soprano move farther apart. Lipatti thus creates a feeling of pressure with another stretch in tempo, when the bass unexpectedly leaps to EE, and when G $\#$  minor comes into focus. In mm. 67-68 the score indicates a *decrescendo*, which Lipatti interprets not only as a sound level, but also a distinct color change. With the G $\#$  Major arpeggio, he brings down the dynamic level to a *piano*.

In the first eight measures, the digressing *e* phrase follows the melodic and the rhythmic patterns of the  $d^1$  phrase. The digression occurs on a tonal level. The G $\#$ -Major (A $b$ -Major) arpeggio from m. 68 gives Chopin a seamless access to a key very distant

from G# minor: F minor (Example 8). Nevertheless, although indicated with a change of key signature in m. 71, an enharmonic modulation to this key cannot be aurally perceived until mm. 71-72 repeat the figure from mm. 69-70 in the new key. Different from the previous *d* phrases, Chopin recalls the  $b\hat{6}-\hat{5}$  motion with an appoggiatura  $D_b$  in m. 76. After five measures of outlining the F-minor tonic, a transformation to E Major takes place in the last two measures of the phrase, mm. 77-78. From m. 76, the vertical fifth F-C in the bass moves outwards until the third beat of m. 78, where it reaches  $BB-f\sharp$ . After the tonal uncertainty of m. 77, the downbeat of m. 78 (also highlighted with a *crescendo*) takes on a functional role in E Major as a  $vii^{o6}$  of V. Immediately following this distinct event, the C in m. 78 forms an augmented 6<sup>th</sup> with the  $a\sharp^1$  and resolves to a  $BB$  and  $b^1$  on the third beat of m. 78, defining the E-Major dominant. Broken intervals in the left hand in m. 78 slow down the closure of the phrase and draw attention to this harmony.

Example 8 Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, *Largo*, mm. 67-78 (*e* phrase), with chord labeling<sup>72</sup>

g#: V<sup>7</sup>

g#: I  
f: III

g#: I  
f: III

f: i

f: i

f: i

f: i

f: i

g#: iv<sup>6</sup>

g#: ii<sup>6</sup>  
E: vii<sup>6</sup> of f V Aug.6 V<sup>7</sup>

As in the previous *d* phrases, in the digressing *e* phrase Lipatti presses forward with the ascending arpeggios and slows down with the speech-like dotted quarter-note figures. He does not overlook the new element in the phrase, the D<sub>b</sub> appoggiatura in m. 76, but clearly voices it, perhaps as a figure that foreshadows the upcoming transition.

<sup>72</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).

Some editions begin the *crescendo* in m. 75 or m. 76 and end it in the middle of m. 78. Obviously following these markings, Lipatti makes a *crescendo* from m. 75 and, after a slight *accelerando* through the tonally unstable m. 77, creates a peak with an accent on the downbeat of m. 78, the first chord functioning in the returning E Major key. Immediately after the downbeat of m. 78, as preparation for the  $c^3$  phrase, he makes a large *diminuendo* and a *ritardando*. In the  $V^7$  chord on the third beat of m. 78 he clearly voices  $a\sharp^1$ , the seventh of the chord. By subsequently bringing out the  $fx^1$  in the sextuplet, he highlights the melodic thread ( $a\sharp^1$ -  $fx^1$ -  $g\sharp^1$ ) that connects the  $e$  and the  $c^3$  phrases.

This  $c^3$  phrase is identical to the  $c^1$  phrase until m. 86, where it is interrupted. As the expectation of continuation has been well established with the  $c^1$  and the  $c^2$  phrases, the repetition of m. 85 is an extraordinarily effective signal. Any hope for the expected continuation falls through when in m. 87 the broken diminished-seventh chord starts to ascend. As if in a wandering or an improvisatory state, this arpeggio meanders until the third beat of m. 89. The pedal marking from m. 87 to m. 90 must be taken with caution and executed with its intended effect in mind. It is likely that, on Chopin's piano, such a long pedal was able to create a unique blurring without obscuring the melodic line. After a wash of the diminished-seventh chord sound, the dotted eighth-note octave leap, recalled from the beginning of the *bel canto* melody, resurfaces in mm. 89-90.

Overall, the retransition in mm. 90-98 recalls the musical parenthesis that occurred in mm. 19-27, the gateway that led us in, and now out, of the celestial soundscape of the B section (Example 9). The diminished chord in m. 90 and m. 92 generates greater tension than the corresponding chords in m. 20 and m. 22 had previously. Additionally, the  $E\sharp$  in the melody in m. 91, supplemented with a *crescendo*

in m. 92, prepares a new harmonic arrival point, the G#<sup>7</sup> on the downbeat of m. 93. The melodic ascent starting on the fourth beat of m. 94 is closely related to the movement's introduction. On the downbeat of m. 95, the G#<sup>7</sup> assumes the role of a German 6<sup>th</sup> chord and resolves into a C-Major chord, recalling this sonority from m. 3. The motion on the last beat of m. 95 is also surprising, since the expectation set with the introduction is tonicization of C Major followed by a C: V<sup>7</sup> which then, as a German 6<sup>th</sup> chord, resolves to a B: V<sup>7</sup>. Instead, throughout m. 96, a whole-tone descent in the bass is harmonized with non-functional chords in the ascending upper lines. B Major is established on the last beat of m. 96, with an enharmonic modulation. On the downbeat of m. 98, a widely voiced B: V<sup>7</sup> emerges from the contrary motion, recalling the downbeat of m. 4.

Example 9 Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, *Largo*, mm. 88-98 (retransition), with chord labeling<sup>73</sup>

88

93

98

E: vii<sup>°</sup><sub>4</sub>

G#<sup>7</sup>

C: Ger 6 | <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>

Ger 6

B: V<sup>2</sup><sub>of V</sub> V<sup>5</sup> ii<sup>3</sup> vii<sup>°</sup><sub>4</sub>

B: V<sup>7</sup>

cresc.

dim.

dolciss.

<sup>73</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).



Lipatti executes the return of the *c* phrase (m. 79) with the simplicity and tranquility that familiarity brings. In m. 85, opposite to the dynamic indication in the score, he makes a *diminuendo*. Nevertheless, this alteration makes m. 86 even more effective. He plays each repetition of the diminished-seventh chord slightly slower, and thus emphasizes this special moment in the overall form. As the diminished-seventh chord finally starts to ascend and a sense of flow is reestablished, Lipatti also pushes the tempo forward. He creates a slight blur with, most likely, a fluttering pedal, but retains the clarity of the meandering diminished-seventh arpeggio. With the dotted eighth-note figure on the last beat of m. 89 he releases both the pedal and the E in the bass. After a passage saturated with a diminished-seventh sonority, the lone  $d\sharp^2$  on the downbeat of m. 90 with no pedal reverberates as the end of a long path.

As in  $A^1$ , Lipatti employs greater dynamic contrasts and tempo flexibilities in the closing; that is, at the point where the formal sections of the movement meet. The daunting diminished-seventh arpeggio solidifies into diminished-seventh chords in mm. 90-92. Lipatti thus sustains a sense of restlessness by pressing forward in these measures. In advance of the *forte* marking in the score, he is at *forte* dynamic on the second beat of m. 92, the enharmonically changed  $C\sharp$  ( $B\sharp$ ). One can explain Lipatti's dynamics here by suggesting that this enharmonic change is a signal that the melody will move, after six long measures of lingering on the  $vii^{o7}$ . Overall, he creates a momentum that results in a peak on the downbeat of m. 93. Lipatti prepares this peak by bringing out the only moving upper line in m. 92 ( $a - a\sharp$ ). This voicing creates a clear connection between the  $b\sharp$  and the  $b\sharp^1$  in m. 93 and thereby recalls the octave leap  $g\sharp^1$  to  $g\sharp^2$  from m. 23.

More so than in the transition (parenthesis) at the end of the A section, Lipatti slows down through the bass descent in m. 94 and thus prepares the listener for the melodic turn upward and a new harmonic plane. He slows down significantly in m. 95 and thus clearly enunciates the transformation of the G<sup>#7</sup> into a German 6th chord. This pacing allows him to reintroduce the C-Major chord (m. 95) as a reverberation of m. 3. In the final portion of the retransition he enhances the harmonic shifts by accenting the last beat of m. 95, the surprising movement of the top two voices, and by slightly pushing the tempo through the whole-step sequence in m. 96. The enharmonic modulation in this passage conceals the exact point of return to B Major. Thus, Lipatti does not emphasize the enharmonically changed chord, but fuses the whole-step sequence with the return to functional tonality: from the peak that the distant B<sup>b</sup>-minor sonority creates on the third beat of m. 96, he clearly shapes the chords in pairs and makes an extensive *ritardando* and a *diminuendo* throughout m. 97. As an effect, one perceives three distinct sound colors, and with each a stronger gravitational pull towards the B: V<sup>7</sup> in m. 98. Again, the rolled chord on the downbeat of m. 98 creates an audible connection with the rolled chord from m. 4.

Organizationally, the A<sup>2</sup> section is a period structure: antecedent (mm. 99-102), consequent (mm. 103-113), followed by a coda (mm. 113-120). A repeated BB and the omission of the sequential *b* phrase help to ground the movement solidly in the home key for closure, while triplets in the accompaniment transform the funeral march of the opening into a consoling barcarolle. Enhancing this change of character is heavier ornamentation of the melody at the cadential point in m. 102, and in m. 104, a point of repose before the consequent phrase extends. The added tenor line's in mm. 103-105

alteration of  $f\sharp^1$  and  $g\sharp^1$  recalls the  $\hat{6}-\hat{5}$  relation that will again be insisted on in the very last measures. The digressing portion of the  $a^3$  phrase (mm. 105-113) takes a different course than it did in the  $A^1$  section (Example 10), as it remains in the home key.

Nevertheless, B Major is slightly destabilized with the bass line, which descends by step from  $c\sharp$  in m. 110 to  $F\sharp$  in m.112. On top of this descent, the new melody also continues an overall descent. On the fourth beat of m. 111, a diminished-seventh chord decorates another arrival of the C-Major sonority. As in the introduction, the enharmonically spelled  $C: V^7$  on the second beat of m. 112 moves forward as a German 6<sup>th</sup> chord in B Major. The cadential formula in m. 112-113, highlighted with a *pp*, finally reaffirms the home key with PAC.

Example 10 Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, *Largo*, mm. 104-113 (digressing portion of the consequent phrase), with chord labeling<sup>74</sup>

Chord labels for the first system (mm. 104-113):

B:  $ii_5^6$  I IV  $i_4^6$  pass.

Chord labels for the second system (mm. 109-113):

B:  $V_5^6$  of V  $V_2^4$  I<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>7</sup>  $V_2^4$  of vi  $VI^6$   $V_3^4$  of V  $V^6$   $V_3^4$

C:  $vii_5^{og}$  of V  $\begin{matrix} 8 & - & 7 \\ 6 & - & 5 \\ 4 & - & 3 \end{matrix}$   $V^7$

B: Ger 6 I cad  $V^7$  I

<sup>74</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).

Lipatti's interpretation enhances every expressive facet that the closing of the *Largo* has to offer. For one, he reserved the freedom to place the bass notes slightly before the soprano notes only for the A<sup>2</sup> section. As in the A<sup>1</sup> section, throughout the first phrase he sustains a strict rhythmic figure in the left hand while allowing the melody to "sing" on top of it. He ever so slightly elongates the sixteenth notes in the dotted eighth-note rhythms but manages to keep an uninterrupted flow of the phrase until the half cadence in m. 102. In alignment with the gentle character of a barcarolle, Lipatti just slightly inflects the added fioriture in m. 102 and m. 105, as though a vocalist, with lightness and a sense of ease. This phrasing organically knits these ornaments into the phrase and implies that simplicity in expression creates the strongest effects. In the consequent phrase, Lipatti's *rubato* in m. 104 yields a tenor line that is completely independent of the other voices. Perhaps foreshadowing the importance of these pitches in the coda, he brings out the f<sup>#1</sup> and the g<sup>#1</sup> in mm. 103-104 with greater intensity than in the A<sup>1</sup> section. In the approach to m. 105, he makes a *crescendo*, opposite to the *diminuendo* marking in score. Of course, it is quite possible that the edition that Lipatti used had no such dynamic indication. In either case, the *crescendo* that Lipatti makes in m. 104 helps the consequent phrase to extend, all the way to the cadence in m. 113. Therefore, Lipatti went beyond editorial markings and supported the structure of the phrase.

In alignment with the tonal stability of the A<sup>2</sup> section (expected in the ABA form), Lipatti's shaping in the closing of the consequent phrase resonates with peace and a sense of reconciliation. In other words, since harmonic conflict is no longer present, Lipatti's phrasing no longer suggests a sense of an internal battle. As in the prior

appearances of the *bel canto* gesture and the slow chordal answer, he pushes the tempo forward by slightly shortening the half notes in m. 106 and m. 108. However, the peak he reaches in m. 109 is not as climactic as the equivalent peaks he created in m. 23 and m. 93. In the approach to the cadence in mm. 113 and the coda, Lipatti makes a *ritardando*. A *ritardando* in approach to a cadential point, especially so close to the end of a piece, is not unusual. However, what is worth inspecting is the pace of Lipatti's *ritardando*. Without agogic accents or changing the rhythmic value of the notes, Lipatti manages to sustain a *ritardando* over the course of four long measures. This peaceful descent in the last measures of the consequent phrase, mm. 111-113, suggests that an internal conflict, reflected in the previous transitions by contrary motion and tonal instability, has finally been resolved. A slight accent he puts on the fourth beat of m. 111 suggests that Lipatti recognized the expressive value of this diminished-seventh chord and its role in re-introducing the C-Major sonority for one last time. The color Lipatti thereby creates with the downbeat of m. 112 clearly resonates as a reminder of m. 3.

In the short span of eight measures, the coda reminds the listener not only of the central portion of the movement, but also the introduction and the aria (Example 11). In mm. 113-116 the three lower voices alternate tonic and dominant harmonies while the soprano line freely floats on top. The ostinato sextuplet figure breaks in m. 117, as the bass line leaps up and descends from f $\sharp$  to an octave below in m. 118. The descending 6ths in these eighth notes, e to G $\sharp$  in m. 117 and d $\sharp$  to F $\sharp$  in m. 118, recall the rising sixth at the opening of the aria, while an alternation of the G $\flat$  and G $\sharp$  with the F $\sharp$  in m. 118 draws attention to the  $\flat\hat{6}$ - $\hat{5}$  relationship. Although the top melodic line does not resemble any of the previous melodic material, it relates to the A<sup>1</sup> section by remaining vocal in

nature. The upward appoggiatura on the downbeat of m. 117 creates a distinct dissonance with the other voices and decorates the final ascent to the peak, m. 118. Overall, the top line travels upward, from  $g^{\sharp 1}$  in m. 114 to  $e^2$  in m. 118 and falls to a  $d^{\sharp 2}$  in m. 119. The half-note  $e^2$  in m. 118 recalls the key of the middle section while the  $e^2$  to  $d^{\sharp 2}$  movement in m. 119 reverses the  $D^{\sharp}$  to  $E$  movement from m. 1 to m. 2. Lastly, this movement also recalls the start of the *bel canto* melody (mm. 4-5). After in the plagal inflection in the last two measures, the  $G^4$ - $F^{\sharp}$  is heard once again.

Example 11 Chopin, Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58, *Largo*, mm. 109-120 (coda), with chord labeling<sup>75</sup>

Lipatti's slower tempo in the closing of the movement aligns with the purpose of the coda: to prolong closure, but also to summarize the entire movement. His rhythmic

<sup>75</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonatas*, eds. Jan Ekier and Pawel Kaminski (Warsaw: National Edition, 2000).

suppleness in the melody in mm. 114-116 suggests a rhetorical, epilog-like character of this phrase. A *ritardando* and a *crescendo* enable Lipatti to highlight the final melodic and emotional peak. He arrives to the poignant dissonance on the downbeat of m. 117 with a slight *sforzando*, from where, by lingering with the movement from  $d\sharp^2$  to  $e^2$ , he painstakingly progresses towards the downbeat of m. 118. An average listener may not be able to recognize the  $e^2$  in m. 118 as a transformation of the introduction, a recalling of the aria, and a reminder of the key of the middle section, at least not on a conscious level. However, a pianist ought to recognize that all these paths cross exactly at this point. Lipatti's performance certainly suggests that the downbeat of m. 118, the  $e^2$ , is the most important arrival point in the *Largo*. He recalls the opening sixth from the beginning of the movement by bringing out the descending leaps in the bass line in m. 116 and m. 118 and inflects them as melodic gestures. Although he does not distinctly voice it, the last utterance of the  $G\sharp$ , in the penultimate chord, is clearly heard, as the  $G\sharp$  to  $F\sharp$  motion, which clearly established itself throughout the movement, appears for the last time. One must again reflect on Lipatti's masterful pacing in the closing of the movement. A *ritardando* in the approach to the coda enabled him to seamlessly set a slower tempo in the last section of the piece. Although he began a final *ritardando* four long measures before the end of the piece, he maintained a sense of unity of the phrase by slowing down evenly. He achieved an organic closure, allowing the last phrase to fade naturally.

Lipatti's hauntingly beautiful interpretation of the *Largo* radiates with musical intelligence. As seen through multiple examples, his "pianistic freedoms" always enhance the music. The manner in which he pushes a phrase forward or holds it back resonates with an understanding of the musical syntax and the place of a particular phrase or

gesture within the overall form of the movement. Furthermore, his tasteful application of *rubato*, in terms of elongation or slight displacements of the notes in the *bel canto* melodies, yields a moving, but not sentimental, performance. Surely, Lipatti was born a prodigy. However, he also meticulously studied the score, and was in constant search of perfection.

To understand and learn from Lipatti's interpretations, one must consider all aspects of his musical career. While residing in Paris, besides lessons in piano and composition, Lipatti was attending Alfred Cortot's *Cours d'Interpretation* (Interpretation Course). Although his exposure to Alfred Cortot, Nadia Boulanger, and Paul Dukas at the Paris Conservatoire had a great influence on his development, the core of his musical personality was formed under the guidance of his extraordinary teachers at the Royal Conservatory in Bucharest, in his native Romania: Florica Musicescu and Mihail Jora. Thanks to them, Lipatti "developed an acute sense of artistic responsibility which made him continuously dissatisfied with his own achievements."<sup>76</sup>

In addition to his pianistic career, Lipatti was also an accomplished and well-known composer. Therefore, even when in the role of pianist, Lipatti was able to think and understand more of Chopin's compositional intentions than most pianists can. Also, improvising on the piano was not just a part of his education, but a natural reflex from his earliest days with the instrument. With such rounded musicianship, it is no wonder that Lipatti managed to set a standard of performing Chopin that is yet to be surpassed. Finally, it is his unique personality that makes his interpretations so distinctive. While writing as a music critic, he revealed some of the core characteristics of his own

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<sup>76</sup> Tanaescu and Bargauanu, *Lipatti*, 12.



performances: “Above all we must admire the disciplined logic with which [Bohuslav] Martinu treats his interpretation, making it a live and passionate idiom, permanently new and sincere.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Tanaescu and Bargauanu, *Lipatti*, 69.

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APPENDIX A  
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I am a pianist and a Doctoral candidate in piano performance at Arizona State University. My culminating document is a research paper that inspects interpretations of F. Chopin's Prelude in C Major, no. 1, Op. 28, and the *Largo* from the Sonata in B minor, Op. 58.

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