Practical Recommendations in Studying Ludwig van Beethoven's Sonata Op. 49 No. 2

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دراسة تحليلية للعقبات التي تواجه عازف البيانو في مقطوعة بيتهوفن سوناتا 49 رقم 2

تسونكا البكري، قسم الموسيقا، كلية الفنون الجميلة، جامعة اليرموك، اربد، الأردن.

لخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بيان آلية التعامل في العزف على آلة البيانو للمقطوعة الموسيقية سوناتا بيتهوفن 49 رقم 2، حيث نظمت هذه الدراسة بأسلوب تجريبي شامل، كما حاول الباحث التعامل تدريجيا مع كل مشكلة أو استفسار يمكن أن تأتي في صدارة العملية التدريسية للسوناتا، وذلك من وجهة نظر عازفي البيانو. وفي نفس الوقت تم النطرق لمسألة تتعلق بخصوصية أعمال بيتهوفن متبعا منهجية واحدة أساسية للعمل ولم يكن اختيار هذه السوناتا عرضيا بل كان لبيان معناها وهيكلها وأهدافها، كما يمكن استخدامها لدراسة المواد لأنها في الواقع كانت من احد المناهج الدراسية لقسم الموسيقى (تخصص العزف على آلة البيانو، مساق ف م 490) في كلية الفنون الجميلة بجامعة الير موك.

Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to help in dealing and working with Sonata Op. 49, No. 2. The article has been structured in a holistic empirical style, whereby the Researcher has tried to gradually deal with every problem or question, which could possibly come to the fore in the process of studying the sonata, from the point of view of the performer. At the same time the question regarding the specificity of Beethoven's works has been touched upon. However, the methodological purpose of the article has remained the basic one. The choice of the sonata has not been accidental; it has rather been the aftereffect of its structure and purpose, viz. to be used as study material as it actually has been in the curriculum of the Music Department (specialty piano, course 490) of the College of Fine Arts at Yarmouk University.

Introduction

Beethoven's Sonata Op. 49, No. 2 is no doubt one of the best loved and preferred sonatas for young pianists. Its exquisite beauty and melodiousness spur the creative imagination and are intoxicating. It is precisely for this reason that I have opted for making the analysis of its structure, from the point of view of the performer, relying more

on practical pianistic problems than on formal theoretical ones. I am bound to point out that when trying to theoretically consider this son ata I encounter hardships in conveying the contents of the music in plain text, but herein is the danger in giving practical pieces of advice via a theoretical approach.

It has generally been considered that the composing of the two sonatas Op. 49, Nos.1 and 2 had been subordinated to a pedagogical need Beethoven had to meet. It is probably for this reason that till today they prove to be the most convenient and suitable for the attainment of certain objectives of trainin g. This was the other reason why I opted to focus on discussing one of the two. Sonata Op. 49, No. 2 has been the preferred choice of the students at Yarmouk University, as part of their piano performance on graduation. Therefore this sonata proves to be essential in the piano playing literature, being of indubitable value in the recognizing and overcoming of a number of problems in terms of performance and theory. In line with the cognitive and empirical objective of the article, researcher shall abide by the cumulative approach in conveying practical pieces of advice, reflexively also presenting a number of comparative problems, underlying the differences in the perception of the sonata itself by various publishers, music teachers and musicians. The researcher would like to emphasize that every perception of a piece of music is an aesthetic intention, recreating from a modern point of view the music score which has reached us, misidentifying what Beethoven had produced three ages ago, so that what has remained is just directing rather than paradigmatic.

Accordingly any advices placed in the article can be taken as a practical recommendation of the researcher, as his own impression and suggestions over his experience as a musician and pedagogue, and can be taken only as advice, but not as a standard. Taking into consideration that music performance is an act of individual overview by the given text - paradigm, the researcher again wishes to underline that all practical stands are based on personal recreation of the musical text and consequence of practical advices found in different books and result of a personal approach due to a particular school and manner of executing such a musical piece.

The researcher will use as a basic material few editions of Beethoven's sonatas, which have been noted to be preferred by piano teachers. Naturally, each one of these editions shows an individual recreation of the will of the performer, proceeding from the vision of the pianist editing the music score. Each edition likewise offers a music score based on a reconstruction of various documents, music versions, original music scores, epistolary literature and printed publications which have reached the editors. The editions the present researcher has selected are famed to have precisely recreated the originals 116

with minor differences; this enables us to present each one of the problems identified along with its settlement suggested in some of the editions chosen. The editions the researcher has selected are the following:

- Beethoven Klaviersonaten Band 2, Edition Petters, Editors: Max Pauer, Carl Adolf Martinssen, Leipzig, 1927 (EP).
- Beethoven Sonata G dur, Op. 49.Nr. 2, Edition Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzuxzne, Edditor Boleslaw Woytowicz, Krakow, 1972 (EPW).
- Beethoven- Klavier- Sonaten, Band 2, Edition Peters/Urtext, Editors: Max Pauer, Carl Adolf Martissen, London 1910 (EPU).
- Beethoven Sonaten 2, Editor Universal, Editor Anton Door, Wien, 1938 (EU)
- Beethoven Sonaten Edition Muzgiz, Editor Alexander Borisovich Goldenweiser, Moscow, 1955 (EM).

The images, suffusing sonata Op. 49, No. 2, bring to the fore the realm of one of Beethoven's brightest non-dramatic piano pieces. Its power of impact does not proceed from a tragic, colossal clash of ideas, nor is it the result of dramaturgical colossi of feelings, but of the beauty, simplicity and freshness of the melodies. However, this in no way interferes with its clear and almost visual reflecting of Beethoven's creative approach as a composer, both in terms of the contents - the main elements in it as well as in the way of expression. And the basis is a psychological integrity, freedom of thinking, perfection of the form, clarity of the sound elements of the structure. According to Barry Cooper, Sonatas Op. 49 had been published in 1805 by "Bereau d'Arts et d'Industrie", Vienna. The information concerning the composing of the two sonatas points to the years 1795 and, 1798 respectively, (according to Petters) and specifies that they had been composed for the needs of training. In most of the editions the two sonatas carry the title Leichte Sonaten (Easy Sonatas), and a footnote in EM states that that name had been given to them by Beethoven himself.

The publication of the sonatas as late as 1805 has been definitely suspicious, not only because of the time span from their composing to their publication, but mostly because of the specificity of their nature and their dramaturgy, when compared with the colossal cycles surrounding them, such as Sonata Op. 31, No.1, known as Recitative. because in it for the first time Beethoven had fully used the recitative, hinting that the possibilities offered by the piano as a musical instrument no longer met his creative imagination and he had been forced to transfer its sound characteristics to the human

voice and cantabile. On the other hand, directly following Op. 49, came sonata Op. 53 Waldstein, after the name of his patron in Bon, but commonly known among pianists as L'Aurore and comparable in its depth of ideas only to Appassionata. In this way the logical explanation, borne out by the multitude of researchers of Beethoven (Solomon, Barry, Konen) is that Carl, Beethoven's brother had been selling some of his works without telling him, whenever they needed cash. Moreover, Beethoven and his family had been almost all the time short of money. This was confirmed by a letter to Karl Ferdinand Amenda (a close friend of the composer, a theologian and a musician), in which Beethoven wrote: "Luchtanovski, my most trusted friend, has from last year to date given me 600 Forints. This money and the good sales of my works enable me to live not caring for the daily bread", while with the progressing of his deafness, in the same year 1801, in a letter to Franz Gerhard Wegeler, professor of medicine, rector of the University of Bonn, the composer wrote: "Unfortunately....for three years now my hearing has been increasingly weakening... I can say that I live in desperation." Of course, the creative process cannot go on without elementary living conditions: "Musical creativity cannot do without high cost instruments, without performers, music halls, music publishers, music literature. Like every man, the artist needs a comfortable dwelling, food, clothing, rest, entertainment. Poverty restricts the creative horizon". This fully holds well for men of genius, too, like Beethoven, notwithstanding the modest way of life with no pretensions which he lived and which had been confirmed by his earliest researchers like Schindler, Solomon, and Alshwang. During that period of his life, Karl had often benefited from his works, not requesting the permission of the composer to do so.

Regardless of its easy, accessible texture and laconism, sonata Op. 49, No. 2 reveals great beauty and freshness in its emotional expression. The researcher would like to point out the beauty, manifested in the simplicity of the themes and their clear-cut structure, which does not interfere with the overall development of the artistic image. Sonata Op. 49 No. 2 is a two-movement cycle, whereby the two movements do not clash dramatically; rather, they supplement each another. In its performance, notwithstanding its seemingly technical easiness, this sonata implies the possession of quite a few qualities of the pianist like a sense of phrasing, fine rhythm, suitable singing tone, high quality legato, swift use of pedals, proper balancing of the two hands.

The first movement is in a sonata form, allegro ma non troppo, whereby the researcher would immediately like to point out that the metronome tempo in EU is given as a quarter note = 144, and in EM half note = 88 (this comes to show that the movement would be all breve). In other editions there is no indicated metronome tempo, which

automatically suggests a quarter note = 80, i.e. the tempo is lively but not hasty. Naturally, the selection of the tempo is of exceptional importance, because depending on it would be the nature of the musical piece performed.

So, the first movement starts with an unusual exposition: a chord in G major in forte, which sounds categorically confidently, and is repeated by the right hand as a broken tonic 64 chord, which flows into the theme, performed in a light, radiant, and alert mood, with transparent melodiousness in the accompanying left hand.

Cf. Example 1. (UC)

EM recommends that moving to piano start with the broken chord, whereas in all the rest of the editions the researcher discusses, piano starts only with the theme. The first theme requires a good balance between the hands, as well as an outstanding legato cantabile right hand. At the very start of the theme, in the fourth bar, a thrill appears in the right hand, which can be heard in different performances. The researcher would recommend that it be performed as 3+2 (2 is the suffix or termination), starting with the second finger. The thrill itself should be played highly legato and cantabile.

Example 2 (UC)

The researcher would like to point out that, decept ive as it might be for its simple structure, this sonata lays a dangerous trap as far as rhythm goes. At the very start of the theme there is development in triplets, flowing into crotchets, a trill continuing into eighth notes in the left hand. The researcher notes that the trill and the subsequent eights prove to be a grave test for the students' sense of rhythm. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the teacher first perform several times the beginning of the theme, so that the formula could be imprinted as a tone modality in the student's memory, after which the passage should be numerously sung and only after that the actual performance should proceed.

Starting from bar 9 is a series of pauses, splitting the line of the melody. The researcher would like to emphasize their importance because it is precisely the fine differentiation of the motives by way of correctly measured pauses that helps get to the emotional nature of the theme. Unskilled pianists fail to grasp the importance of the eighth notes rests and merge the theme into one, losing the beauty and the emotion in its development. It is likewise important to sense the length and definitiveness of the chords in bars 9&10 and 13&14 (in the left hand), which should be performed with the hand held low and the fingers fixed.

In bar12 the researcher notices the turn, which often causes rhythmical problems, and it is recommend to be performed in such a way as to stabilize the rhythm.

Example 3 (EPW)

In bar 15 an interesting, neutral transition in triplets comes to the fore, which precedes the launching of a second theme in the D major key. The transition is typical of Haydn and Mozart or the early Classicism. From the standpoint of the performer, the researcher must emphasize the importance of the homophonic structure and the need to underline the harmonious shifts in the intonation of the right hand. In EU, EM and EPW we find that the triplets in the right hand are connected by legato with the quarter note following them, which helps expressiveness and may be emphasized by the flowing rise of the right hand over the keyboard and the slight emphasis on the first one of the triplet. It is recommended that the pedal be used only on the quarter note coming on the first and third beat.

Example 4 (EPW).

The second theme comes upbeat in piano, in bar 20. It does not appear to be contrasting to the first theme. It is again bright and calm, even more lyrical, whereby here, too, the right hand is more outspoken. The researcher emphasizes the importance of the pauses in the right hand, which separate the motifs in the theme and make it lighter, illuminating the sound. Researcher here finds differences in the suggested articulation in the various editions. In my view, the best is that of EM, EP, who perceive it in closer relation and in legato.

Example 5 (EM)

The use of pedals is fairly loose, in compliance with the sonority.

A structuring of a triplet motion begins in bar 36, flowing into D major, after which comes the finale, has a lively ring with cadence triplets to a close by two chords in the Dominant. The researcher would like to point out that in EM there is an intriguing suggestion of diversified dynamism, starting back in the 36th bar. Naturally, the choice of dynamic amplitude is conformed to the sensibility, the timbre range and the capabilities of each performer. It is proper to play crescendo starting from bar 43, followed by subito piano in the quarters in bar 45. In this way bars 46 & 47 will again sound more definitively in forte, with subito piano following. The Conclusion would be in crescendo to the Finale of the last chords. It is important to sense the integrity of the passage, to

integrate it in one line by way of the long crotchet notes in the right hand, which may be emphasized by tenuto and not sharply broken off.

The development is concise, composed of thematic material close in character to the first and second theme, passing through A minor, whereby the development sticks on the dominant E minor, modulated to G major, which coincides with the recapitulation. I would like to point out that all the editions require forte in the chord in bars 53-56, followed by piano in the right hand.

The thirds, top register, bar 59, are highly interesting because they imply legato performance connected with simultaneous sonority without their being broken off. EP and EPU recommend that they be performed in varied dynamics; bars 59 and 60 forte, bars 61-62 piano. This is a bright idea and has a logical ring in the overall interpretation of the movement. The researcher recommends that the lines in eighth notes following in the left hand be acknowledged as cantabile melodious lines, which are to be taken up by bar 65 by the right hand and should flow in crescendo in the recapitulation. The development again implies scanty use of the pedals, only of the long chords, whereas in bars 59 and 61 of the first beat emphasizing the left hand.

The Recapitulation features modulation to the subdominant sphere of C major, A minor, finally setting the dominant to G major in the motion of the main key. When the sonata is being studied we come across identical problems like those in the exposition.

The conclusion -Coda staring in bar 116 has in most of the editions been rendered in forte, whereby EM recommends an original solution: a contrast between forte and piano in the triplets in the different registers. No matter which of the variant would be chosen, the sonata should end in light crescendo to forte in the two last chords, accompanied by a short, interrupted pedal. Here, too, the pauses have to be felt as an organic part of the whole and be correctly expressed and in conformity with the rhythm.

The second movement of the sonata cycle is Tempo di Menuetto and was composed in a rondo form (ABACA coda), having all the time the character and way of sounding of an old-time dance. Here, as in the first part, notwithstanding its seemingly light texture, it confronts the pianists with quite a few problems. The most essential is the one concerning the quality of the sound, the finding of a suitable timbre to give way to the lyricism of the music.

In this movement, too, there are different views concerning the fastness of the minuet. Most editions do not point out any specified tempo; this abstaining from quoting a recommended metronome fastness is probably conformed to Beethoven's manuscript and the initial edition. In EU, however, the researcher registers a suggestion for a metronome tempo of quarter note = 112, while in EM it is 120. Tamara Yankova, for her part, recommends a tempo complying with 108. In my view the tempo can be only recommendable, and such a tempo should be sought which is conformed to the performer's conception, artistic character and implications sought. Generally, the tempo of the Menuet is lively, with no excessive hastiness, reminiscent of the playfulness of a dance.

The main theme is characterized by extraordinary exquisiteness and beauty. The characteristic rhythmic dotted structure in the right hand, accompanied by the continuous wavy, monotonous movement in the left, lends a feeling of dancing and agility. The dotted notes play a significant role in determining the character of the music piece and should be performed in a sustainable rhythm without foreshortening of the long tone or of transforming the group into a dotted quaver note accompanied by a demisemiquaver (32nd) note.

The cheerful sound of the theme and the graceful in itial harmonious semi-tones in the right hand produce one of the best remembered themes in music literature. The overall atmosphere at the start of the second movement suggests a direct association with the sound of a chamber string orchestra. The variants, separating the dotted rhythm in the right hand largely contribute to this feeling. In my view, the use of the pedals should be sparse, as in the first movement, but held longer, which is to emphasize the basic melodious tones.

Example 6 (UC)

In this movement, as in the first one, what is needed is a fine balancing between the two hands: an emphatically cantabile right hand, which is to respond to the "inbreathing", between the motifs, which should not, however, break off the theme. The efforts should be aimed at its sounding softly, easily, whereby the motifs should be clearly delineated within the frameworks of the phrases.

The researcher would like to point out that in all the editions, with the exception of EM, bar 19 is shown in forte, whereas EM requires that it be piano, without looking for any excessive contrast. Starting with bars 20 and 21 is a transition passage which is suggested to be performed leggiero by EPU and EP. In my view this recommendation is not superfluous because the advent of the faster movement of sixteenth notes is often associated with a thicker sound. The thirds in the right hand are linked two by two,

accompanied by distinctive but light passages in the left hand. The eighth notes in bars 23 and 24 in the left hand should preferably be played legato, cantabile, whereas the harmonious intervals in the right hand should be well differentiated non legato. The same manner of performance is preserved in the transfer of passages between the two hands. All the editions suggest that the last two bars be performed in crescendo to forte until the advent of the second theme in D major, bar 28.

The second theme has the same beauty, freshness and melodiousness easy to remember like the first theme, but it is the bearer of a more distinct playfulness, emphatic staccato (non legato) of the quaver, following the downplaying of two semiquavers in the right hand. These three notes should be felt and performed by the right hand with a motion integrating them, ending with a soft motion from the wrist upwards. In EPW there is legato under the left hand, whereas EM indicates non troppo legato, which shows that pianists are often carried away by the beauty of the melody and forget about the even linking of the sixteenth notes in the left. For that matter the researcher would point out that the left hand should be presented in transparent, level legato. The use of pedals continues to be sparse, transparent, coming to emphasize just the crotchets.

The researcher finds a contradiction in the different editions in the characteristic dotted rhythm of the passage, following the second theme. The length of the passage – an indubitable difficulty in the correct performance of the dotted eighth notes, as well as its relative lack of expression when compared with the beautiful melodies surrounding it which are easy to remember--entails restlessness, misunderstanding of the form as well as unstable dynamics. In this case EP suggests that bars 33 and 34 be performed meno forte, 35 and 36 – piano, and 37 and 38 – pianissimo. EU and EPW call for no change in the piano continuing from earlier bars, but recommend that bars 37 and 38 be performed pianissimo. EM, in turn, suggests that bars 29 and 30 back be built in crescendo, followed by decrescendo to mezzo piano in bar 33, bars 35 and 36 piano, decrescendo to pianissimo, combined with tranquillo bars 37 and 38. In this case the performer's intuition is of determining importance for the manner whereby this passage would be performed within the framework of the entire form. Then follows the calm, cantabile first theme.

From the end of bar 67 a new episode in C major comes to the fore. It is more vigorous, more striking than the first and second theme. EP and EWP require that the melodious octaves in the left hand be performed non legato; EM goes further, suggesting staccato, ma non troppo secco, while EU leaves no notes, giving free rein to the pianist in

the interpretation. Motifs sounding like a violin swiftly squeeze in the sounding of this episode, which make it tender and bring back the initial softness. It also winds up with a gamma-like transition to the first theme. In the versions of EU and EWP this transition is felt as a down running legato line, whereas EM, EP and EPU start it legato, but bar 64, second beat passes to staccato, which the researcher could see as a reminiscence of the sense of playfulness from the preceding themes.

In the transition bar 71, the right hand should not interrupt its sounding with the entry into each new bar; the phrases should preferably flow in legato of five notes each. Later on bars 79, 80 and afterwards should also be performed in the same way. The pedal in this episode is matching its usage in the first and second themes, i.e. it should be recognized only as accompanying the first beat of the right hand in the dotted quarter, bars 68, 69 and 70, and connecting the first two eighth notes in the right hand – bars 72 and 73. The transition to the recapitulation in bar s 83, 84 and 85 is to be performed using the respectively chosen articulation: either with full legato, or separated, whereby the first five notes in the right hand should be legato, followed by staccato. It is important to use no excessive riterdando. The first theme appears for the last time in a modulation to G major, similar to the performance at the beginning.

The coda begins with bar 108; it has a quiet simple ring, without excessive dynamic amplitudes, whereby the pauses and, respectively, the rhythm have to be precisely executed. At the beginning it keeps on the rhythmical structure of the menuet, then flowing into lively motion of sixteenth notes in crescendo to forte and winding up with two chords in piano, which, as suggested by EU and EPW should be performed separated, in staccato, which the researcher construes rather as separated tenuto chords, performed in a fixed soft sound in the spirit of noble simplicity and perfection, characteristic of the entire sonata.

When performing or listening to the piano sonatas by Beethoven, we are bound to note the enormous avalanche of feelings, the scale of emotions and pictures, characteristic of his musical pieces. Sonata Op 49 No. 2 is definitely different from most of his piano sonatas. It is characterized by exquisiteness, lightness and the lack of drama. Two main groups of musical pieces have been noticed in the work of the composer, opposite one to the other. Listed in the some group have been works in which lofty human feelings predominate: heroism, pathos, tragedy, heroic exploit, enthusiasm, jubilation, virility (Third, Fifth, Ninth symphonies, Pathetic Sonata, Moon Sonata, Appassionata). The other group is associated with lyricism, tenderness, elegy, melancholy, pastoral feelings,

joyfulness, playfulness (First, Second, Fourth, Sixth symphonies, sonatas Op. 2, Op. 10, Op. 27, and the researcher would list also Op. 49 No. 2 among them).

Whenever teaches performance of Beethoven's sonatas, the researcher requires from the students to bring to mind a certain picture, provoked by the music in their imagination. This has been the result of the historical fact, which has come to us, viz. that the composer himself associated them with certain i mages. "Whenever I compose there is always a certain picture in my mind and it serves me as a model in my work", and "I SEE (capital letters by the author of the paper) how the theme runs and is lost in the chaos of impressions; I pursue it, I grasp it again, I cannot get free from it..." For the researcher of this study, unforgettable is the quotation from Georges Sand, who with her extraordinary sensitivity commented Symphony No. 6, op. 68 (which can be generalized to all of the works of the composer): "Does not Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony – more fascinating and more boundless than the best landscape painting s – reveal fairy-tale prospects to our imagination ... a whole paradise on earth, where the soul is aflame, leaving behind ever new infinite horizons; pictures in which a lightning cuts the sky, where a bird is singing, where the tempest is begotten, where the sun dries up the raindrops from the leaves of the trees, where the Merlin shakes the raindrops off its damp wings, where the injured heart revives and the oppressed breasts relax, where spirit and body reviveare immersedin magic calmness". Beethoven had clearly been endowed with extremely visual musical imagination, which had been filled with images, feelings, and pictures; this, respectively, obliges the performer to visualize the sounds and themes, to come the closest possible to the character and ideas that the composer had invested in his piece of music.

In conclusion, researcher would like to point out that while working on Sonata Op. 49 No. 2, one should enlist numerous capabilities, not only those referred to as musical, but also analytical, theoretical and constructive as well as aesthetic. This is what the researcher, using the cumulative approach, has tried to show in discussing the sonata he has chosen.

The idea of researching Sonata 49 No. 2 was inspired by the repetitive performance of it by students from the Music Department. At the same time few researches were published as pieces of practical advices, not as theoretical studies. The newest papers on the topic known by the researcher, come on the topic are Cooper, Barry (2008). Beethoven. Oxford University Press, and Morris, Edmund. (2005) Beethoven: The Universal Composer. New York, but, as usual, these articles pay attention to the main

characteristics of Beethoven as composer and person. In music literature, we rarely find articles that highlight practical advices connected with performance. This is understandable, having in mind that all suggestions over performance are strictly individual and can be treated in many different ways, which is the main specific of performance as art. The idea of presenting specific sonata and its real, live work as performance, style, interpretation of trills, ornaments, articulations, and emotional overview is in high demand, as any student or teacher can find possible ways of understanding and accordingly choose the best way of expression. To enter the inner universe of a musical piece is an initiation of high confidence in proper understanding and accordingly is not easy to do. Meanwhile such a research can help in finding the proper alternative publisher and finding corresponding manner of performance. All placed advices over emotional expressions, dynamic pedaling and interpretation over ornamentation and articulation can appear as great help for a musician, who departs to first meeting with such a musical piece. Also many of the presented suggestions easily can be transfer red to other musical works of Beethoven and appear as guides in future work with them.

Examples:

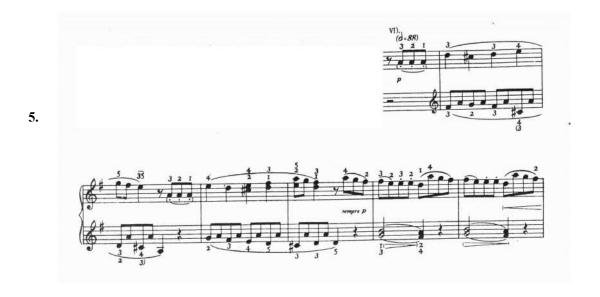






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