“Creating Tone”: The Relationship Between Beethoven’s Piano Sonority and Evolving Instrument Designs, 1800-1810

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Graduate Department of Music
University of Toronto

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Abstract

The concept of “creating tone” indicates the relationship that Beethoven wanted with his main instrument, the fortepiano, and symbolizes his desire for expression when performing on the instrument. The story of Beethoven’s evolving pianistic writing unfolds in tandem with his changing instrument preferences; there is a constant feedback loop between innovations in piano construction and his piano music. This study investigates how Beethoven “created” his own tone when faced with the new Erard and Streicher instrument models in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

The first chapter outlines the context of Beethoven’s involvement with contemporary instruments up to the early nineteenth century. His progressive tendencies in relation to the Stein vs. Walter actions and his interest in the English school of playing demonstrate this perspective. His eventual purchase of an Erard instrument in 1803 is an example of his desire to be on the forefront of instrument building developments in his time.
The influence of Beethoven’s Erard piano on his pianistic output is assessed in chapter two by examining several compositions written during this period that reflect characteristics of French pianism and instrument building. Many of Beethoven’s pianistic innovations can be understood in the context of this new model. Pianistic devices include the use of register as a compositional dimension; vocal melodic style; textural innovations to enhance the *Harmonie* of the instrument, such as the *tremolo* effect; and the use of multiple, colourful pedals.

The link between Beethoven and the instruments of the Streicher firm is the subject of the third chapter. The resultant merging of Viennese, English, and French features in piano construction led to the creation of an instrument that was reported as fully “orchestral” in sonority. Pianistic devices of this period include the return to a rapid “Viennese” touch; sustained lyricism; and, in concerto writing, scoring for the piano as an equal to the orchestra. Many of the musical elements that we embrace as characteristically Beethovenian may have their origin in these organologically-inspired pianistic effects.
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Introduction

On 19 November 1796, Beethoven wrote the following in a letter to Andreas Streicher, the husband of Nannette Streicher of the firm Geschwister Stein:

I received your fortepiano the day before yesterday. It is really marvelous, anybody else would like to have it for his own, and I – you may laugh, but I would have to lie if I didn’t tell you that it is too good for me, and why? – because it deprives me of the freedom to create my own tone [emphasis added]. Besides, this shall not hinder you from making all your fortepianos in the same way; there will not be many others found with the same idiosyncrasies…¹

Voiced early in the context of Beethoven’s pianistic output, “creating tone” is an intriguing concept, for it indicates the relationship that Beethoven wanted with his main instrument, the fortepiano, as well as symbolizing his desire for expression thereupon.

Beethoven composed his music amidst a thriving culture of piano development, where instrumental innovations developed alongside compositional innovations. How did Beethoven continue to “create” his own tone in relation to changing instrument models in the first decade of the nineteenth century? The story of Beethoven’s evolving pianistic writing unfolds in tandem with his changing instrument preferences; there is a constant feedback loop between innovations in piano construction and his piano music that “represented and reflected” these changes.² What do we know about the pianos with which Beethoven was familiar at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century? How does his musical style evolve to reflect the changing reality of his contemporary instruments? Beethoven lived and composed his music during a time of great innovation

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¹ Ludwig van Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, November 19, 1796, quoted in Tilman Skowroneck, Beethoven the Pianist (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 74.
² Edwin Good, Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos: A Technological History from Cristofori to the Modern Concert Grand (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 91.
and flux in piano designs. The question of how he “created tone” changes at every stage of Beethoven’s career according to the instrument on which he was playing; it is central to the interpretation of Beethoven’s piano works at any stage of his life. It can, therefore, be applied to Beethoven’s music throughout his career. In this study, I investigate how Beethoven “created” his own tone when faced with the new Erard and Streicher instrument models in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Beethoven’s evolving kaleidoscope of piano sonority correlates to instrument developments in his time. I explore the reciprocal relationship between Beethoven’s instruments, used as tools and springboards for creative expression, and his piano writing.

This dissertation synthesizes recent organological and musicological research to create a context to re-examine Beethoven's works for piano that reflect contemporary technological developments in piano manufacturing. This methodology grew from examining details in Beethoven’s music from the perspective of newly designed pianos contemporary with Beethoven. I seek to re-visit this repertoire from the context of historical instruments in performing Beethoven’s music. I look at these works from a performer’s perspective; understanding how this music sounded in the context of these instruments informs our knowledge of Beethoven’s individual stylistic elements, their genesis and evolution.

Research into Beethoven’s instrument preferences often begins by reading his much-quoted letters about tone, sonority, and piano preferences; there are numerous references to instruments and instrument builders in Beethoven’s letters. This study synthesizes two main categories of research: early and recent musicological sources stand next to organological research that corroborates oft-quoted Beethoven letters and
contemporary reports.

The discovery that Beethoven purchased his Erard piano in 1803, as opposed to receiving it as a gift, is a spectacular new finding in the research of Beethoven’s instrument preferences.³ It begs a re-examination of Beethoven’s works in light of the importance of the Erard piano in Beethoven’s output. The research on Beethoven’s instrument preferences can, therefore, be further divided into the sources that have been published before this discovery and the research that takes this piece of information into account. Performance practice research from contemporary sources regarding Beethoven’s instrument preferences has been made by Newman (1970, 1985, 1988), Good (2001), Rose (2005), Restle (2007), and Skowroneck (2010). Based on these research contributions, Beethoven’s instrument preferences may be divided into three periods: his early life and Vienna until 1802, the middle period instrumental aesthetics of Erard and Streicher, and the late period, coinciding with the gift of the Broadwood piano in 1817.

Earlier research conducted by William Newman on Beethoven’s instrument preferences shifted the attention and emphasis away from the three extant Beethoven instruments, the Erard (1803), the Broadwood (1817), and the Graf (1825). Based on his findings, he concluded that Beethoven’s pianistic preferences remained with Viennese instruments.⁴ This view has prevailed until the recent discovery of the receipt for Beethoven’s purchase of the Erard piano. Edwin Good’s chapter, “Beethoven and the

³ The discovery was made by the pianist, Alain Roudier. See Maria Rose, “Beethoven and his ‘French Piano’: Proof of Purchase,” Musique, Images, Instruments 7 (2005): 110-22.
Growing Grand,” treats the Erard piano with some detail, describing it as an example of English manufacture; I have used his study of the ranges of Beethoven’s compositions as the springboard for my own investigations into repertoire that demands the newer piano designs. Conny Restle has calculated that, according to our current knowledge, Beethoven owned at least nine instruments from the time he moved to Vienna until his death. Her article provides ample detail about the circumstances leading up to the arrival of Beethoven’s Erard, but it neglects to mention that the instrument was purchased by Beethoven. The most plentiful and recent research by Tilman Skowroneck, culminating in his book *Beethoven the Pianist* (2010), investigates Beethoven’s pianistic career until his last public performances and the description of a new Streicher piano in 1809. I have used his list of Beethoven’s works that he claims were directly influenced by the presence of the Erard as a starting point to explore how Beethoven’s writing changed due to the influence of his French instrument and elements of the French school of pianism.

The research of Maria Rose illuminates the emergence of a unique and characteristic Classical French school of piano making and pianism. Her dissertation, “*L’Art de Bien Chanter*: French Pianos and their music before 1820” (2006) provides a thorough background in French taste in music through research into its contemporary music and instruments; however, in her dissertation she does not examine Beethoven’s music in the context of French musical characteristics.

When it comes to Beethoven’s instrument preferences through the evolving piano designs of the first decade of the nineteenth century, Beethoven’s correspondence with

5 Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos*, 93-113.
Andreas and Nannette Streicher yields rich information about his pianistic preferences and his changing attitude to the Streicher firm instruments. These eight letters, specifically dealing with Beethoven’s instrument and playing preferences, span a period of more than twenty years. The first letter to Andreas Streicher that discusses a piano dates from November, 1796. A letter to Nannette Streicher from 1817, asking to borrow an instrument, relates his stated preference for their instruments “since 1809”, an allusion to their changing pianos. This communication demonstrates the amazing variety in piano designs that Beethoven witnessed during his life, as well as his changing preferences in pianos.

Finally, two recent pieces of scholarship necessitate a re-examination of Beethoven’s instrument preferences in regard to his middle period repertoire; they have been seminal in shaping this study. The first article, written by Maria Rose, entitled “Beethoven’s ‘French Piano’: Proof of Purchase” (2005), details the surprising discovery made by the pianist Alain Roudier that Beethoven purchased his Erard piano. The article also mentions the influence of Louis Adam’s Sonata in C major, Op. 8 No. 2, on Beethoven’s “Waldstein” Sonata, Op. 53, the first composition that was composed after he received his Erard piano. Rose does not analyze any other works of Beethoven’s in her article. This inspired me to re-investigate the works composed using this instrument alongside the Classical French school of pianism with which Beethoven had a demonstrated fascination. The second piece of scholarship is the chapter written by Michael Latcham in Das Wiener Klavier bis 1850 entitled “The development of the Streicher firm of piano builders under the leadership of Nannette Streicher, 1792 to 1823” (2007). This chapter examines in great detail the forty surviving instruments by the
Streicher firm and reveals the early existence, by 1808 and 1809, of six and six-and-a-half octave instruments made by the firm. This vital source of information sheds light on the Beethoven repertoire that uses an expanded range in this early stage in the development of these “second generation” Viennese instruments. This fact motivated me to investigate how other stylistic elements of his music evolved in relation to these instruments. It is the goal of this study to foreground Beethoven’s prolific and seminal contribution to the piano literature, between 1800 and 1810, by using contemporary instruments as tools to investigate his music.
Chapter 1

“It deprives me of the freedom to create my own tone”:

Beethoven’s Instrument Preferences and Organology up to the Early Nineteenth Century

Beethoven’s letter, written in November 1796, where he communicates his desire to “create his own tone” is intriguing when explored in the context of contemporary piano building in Europe. Beethoven composed his music amidst a thriving, innovative instrument building culture. His instrument and playing preferences unfold in the context of contemporary instrument developments; throughout his lifetime, he was at the cusp of keyboard and playing innovations. As such, a study of his influences must always include a range of competing instrumental designs. This study commences by outlining the instruments and playing schools with which Beethoven would have been familiar in the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century.

What did Beethoven mean by his desire to “create his own tone”? In this chapter, Beethoven’s instrument and playing preferences, discussed in his letters, will be the point of departure to construct a picture of contemporary instrument innovations and corresponding playing styles in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Beethoven’s desire to “create his own tone” unfolds in the context of these contextual elements. This chapter seeks to begin a discussion about Beethoven’s instrumental preferences to foreground his musical and aesthetic approach to playing the instrument.

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7 See page 1 for a quotation of Beethoven’s 19 November 1796 letter.
Beethoven’s Early Instruments

By the time Beethoven wrote his famous letter in 1796 about “creating tone”, he had been familiar with the Stein instruments for almost a decade. Johann Andreas Stein’s pianos may have first reached Bonn between 1783 and 1787. Beethoven visited Stein’s shop in Augsburg in 1787 and the following year, in 1788, Count Waldstein may have given Beethoven a Stein fortepiano as a gift. Evidence of Beethoven’s preference for the Stein instruments in his early years comes from Carl Junker in 1791:

I heard also one of the greatest Klavier players, the dear, good Bethofen, some compositions by whom appeared in the Speier Blumenlese in 1783, written in his eleventh year. True, he did not perform in public, probably the instrument was not to his mind. It was a Flügel by Späth and in Bonn he is accustomed only to play upon one by Stein.

In his Bonn years, Beethoven would have been familiar with the Stein instruments that were double-strung, with a keyboard compass of five octaves, and using no back check. It is likely that this is the fortepiano design that Beethoven encountered and used during his residence in Bonn.

From the earliest reports, Beethoven’s playing and compositions espoused a wide dynamic range and expressivity. An account from 1783 about the musical life in Bonn contains the earliest printed mention of Beethoven: “[He] plays the Clavier very skillfully and with power…” In his “Kurfürsten” Sonatas WoO 47, composed in the same year, Beethoven was already using the dynamic indications pp, ff, cres. and f as an accent as

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9 Ibid., 162.
well as an indication for a full range of sound. These dynamic markings may indicate that Beethoven intended this music for the wider dynamic range of the clavichord equally as for the “new” fortepiano. Regardless of his early instrument preferences, in his earliest published repertoire, Beethoven already calls for an extended dynamic and emotional range.

What is the context of Beethoven’s rejection of the Stein instrument in 1796? Although Beethoven uses flattering language in the 1796 letter to Andreas Streicher, he ultimately refuses the instrument. This is presumably an instrument that was loaned to Beethoven from the firm of Nannette Streicher and her brother, Matthäus Andreas Stein; their instruments exactly followed the example of their recently deceased father, Johann Andreas Stein. Beethoven’s letter demonstrates his wish to have an instrument that allows him the freedom to “create his own tone.” We can dissect this statement by looking at the two piano building traditions in Vienna at this time with which Beethoven would have been familiar.

**German and Viennese Piano Actions**

The *Prellmechanik* action dominated the piano manufacturing tradition in Vienna between 1790-1830; however, there were two versions of the action that were widely used, and they existed side by side for approximately 20 years. Michael Latcham categorizes these versions as the German and Viennese actions, most famously used by the Stein/Streicher and Walter builders respectively. He states that Anton Walter

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11 Ibid., 27.
12 After the death of Johann Andreas Stein (1728-1792), the firm was named “Frère et Soeur Stein” from 1794 until 1802. Thereafter, until 1823, the firm was renamed as “Nannette Streicher née Stein.”
produced the Viennese action as early as 1785 while the Stein/Streicher firm manufactured fortepianos with the German action until the early nineteenth century, in 1805.14

There is little doubt that Johann Andreas Stein invented the Prellmechanik with an escapement mechanism.15 In a Prellzungenmechanik, a “prell” action with the escapement lever, the hammers are mounted on the key levers and the escapement hoppers are mounted on the key frame. The hoppers enable the hammers to return to rest position or to a hammer check before the player releases a finger from the key.16

Example 1.1 A drawing of Stein’s German action by Andreas Streicher in the Kurze Bemerkungen über das Spielen, Stimmen und Erhalten der Fortepiano: welche von Nannette Streicher, geborne Stein in Wien, verfertiget werden, 1801.17 a is the balance pin, b is the space for the damper, c is the key plate, d marks the wooden kapsel, f indicates the vertical escapement hopper, g is the hammer, i is the return spring for the escapement hopper.

In the Stein mechanism, the kapseln, the forks in which the hammers pivot, were made of wood and the escapement hoppers were vertical. Significantly, there was no

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13 Anton Walter (1752-1826) was one of the most famous Viennese instrument makers during the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century.
15 Ibid., 10.
16 Ibid., 10.
17 de Silva, Preethi, ed. and trans., The Fortepiano Writings of Streicher, Dieudonné, and the Schiedmayers: Two Manuals and a Notebook, Translated from the Original German, with Commentary (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 88.
hammer check, a device that prevents the hammers from bouncing up and hitting the strings again after striking the strings loudly. Latcham surmises that the lack of a hammer check indicates that Stein did not expect his instruments to be played with such force that the hammers would bounce.\textsuperscript{18} Latcham contrasts the Stein philosophy of sound with Walter’s innovations. He concludes, “Stein’s ingenuity…and the invention of his piano action in particular place him at the end of the eighteenth-century tradition of keyboard instrument making…characterized by an exploration of different timbres and by an interest in dynamic shading, often with the emphasis on soft playing.”\textsuperscript{19}

We find support for the preceding theory of instrument building, and consequently keyboard playing, in Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld’s \textit{Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag}, also written in 1796. Schönfeld describes Nannette Streicher’s fortepiano playing:

Streicher, Madame, his [Andreas Streicher’s] wife, a daughter of the famous instrument maker Stein in Augsburg. She is, as an amateur, a very skillful fortepianist, who has such a complete command of this instrument that it must serve all the feelings of her heart. Under her fingers, tones increase in volume and become more mellow to each degree she desires and virtually vanish until they become inaudible. One who wants to acquaint himself about all characteristics of a good fortepiano must hear her.\textsuperscript{20}

In this account, Nannette Streicher is described as an accomplished fortepianist and, significantly, her playing is praised as a means to get acquainted with a “good fortepiano.” In a later reference from the journal article, Schönfeld, a connoisseur, describes the pianos of Nannette Streicher in more detail:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Latcham, \textit{The Stringing, Scaling and Pitch of Hammerflügel}, Vol. 1, 10.
\item Ibid., 10.
\item Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld, \textit{Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag} 1796 (Munich: Katzbichler, 1976), 60; trans. in de Silva, \textit{The Fortepiano Writings of Streicher, Dieudonné, and the Schiedmayers}, 24-25.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The third great Meister [the first two mentioned are Anton Walter and Johann Schanz], or, rather, Meisterinn, is Madame Streicher at the Red Rose on the Landstrasse. She is the daughter of the famous instrument maker Stein of Augsburg, who has achieved the greatest renown among all in Germany… This is the short history of an artist, who, once she becomes known, can earn great fame among us. Her instruments don’t have the power of those by Walter, but in evenness of tone, clarity, resonance, charm, and delicacy, they are unsurpassable. The tones are not harsh, but melting [schmelzend], the action requires a light touch, flexible finger pressure, and a feeling [fühlbares] heart. The lowest price of these instruments is 66 ducats.21

It is noteworthy that, in describing the characteristics of the instrument, Schönfeld once again uses vocabulary that seems to describe a playing style, particularly of “charm” and “delicacy.” Thus, in the earlier Prellmechanik action, the Stein instrument and a soft, sensitive playing style are linked.

The division between at least two competing instrument designs and playing styles is further delineated later on in the Schönfeld document. Accordingly, Schönfeld provides the following summary about “Walter-type” and “Streicher-type” pianists:

Since we now have two makers of original instruments, we divide our fortepianos into two classes: the Walter-type and the Streicher-type. Similarly, we have, through careful observation, two classes among our greatest pianists. One of these loves a full feast for the ears, that is, a powerful noise; such a one, therefore, plays very fully, extraordinarily fast, and practices the most tricky runs and fastest octaves. This requires power and muscular strength [Nervenstärke]; to render it, one is not sufficiently in control to maintain a certain moderation and needs, therefore, a fortepiano in which the sound will not falter abruptly [under such force]. To virtuosi of this type, we recommend a Walter-instrument. Another class of fortepianists is in search of food for the soul and loves not only clear, but also delicate, playing, full of feeling. These couldn’t choose a better instrument than a Streicher or so-called Stein. Those virtuosi between these two categories will also not be at a loss to find instruments for every taste and price.22

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21 Ibid., 25.
22 Ibid., 26.
In comparison with the manufacture of the Stein instruments, the Viennese action demonstrates significant differences in construction. There are three main differences in the Viennese action used by Anton Walter. The *kapseln* are made of brass, the escapement hoppers lean forward, and there are hammer checks, either by a continuous rail or in individual hammer checks for each hammer. This more sturdy design enabled the nineteenth-century development of heavier hammers.

Example 1.2 A drawing of Walter’s Viennese action, taken from Latcham. D indicates the damper, W the wrestplank, H is the hammer, E indicates the escapement hopper, S is the return spring for the escapement hopper, C is the hammer back check, K is the key, R is the ramp at the end of the key on which the action rests.

Thus, in contrast to the Stein/Streicher version of the *Prellmechanik*, Latcham concludes that Walter’s action “prepared the way for the nineteenth-century developments…. characterized by a search for a single ideal timbre and a demand for ever more volume.” In regards to the use of a back check, Latcham concludes, “the presence of a check enables the player to use a far wider dynamic range than is available

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23 Hammer checks stop the hammer as it falls back after escapement has occurred to prevent the hammer from bouncing.
25 Ibid., 12.
26 Ibid., 10.
on a piano without a check. A check also gives the player more control over the action.”

How can we measure this information about instruments and playing styles against Beethoven’s proposed playing preferences? Latcham believes that “Beethoven obviously did not like the Streicher piano, probably because the sound was too weak” and also that he “belong[ed] to von Schönfeld’s class of musicians who loved a feast for the ears and would need a piano by Walter, not to the class that liked quiet and sensitive playing and would need a piano by Streicher.” However, Skowroneck does not automatically put Beethoven in this position, citing descriptions of Beethoven’s ease of playing and his *legato* style to demonstrate his affinity for Stein-Streicher ideals in general, in addition to his exploration for a unique sound.

Presumably, Beethoven was already very familiar with the Walter instruments and he may already have established a preference for these instruments by the earlier letter to Streicher, from 1796. The Walter instrument, with its increased tonal range and control over the touch, fostered a greater range of musical and aesthetic expressivity. Thus, there may be a synchronicity between Beethoven wanting to “create” his own tone and the progressive Walter design instrument. In light of Latcham’s statement that the Walter action paved the way for the nineteenth century, Beethoven’s pronouncement in 1796 about “creating his own tone” may be almost prophetic in anticipating the developments of keyboard builders in the nineteenth century.

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28 Michael Latcham, “The development of the Streicher firm of piano builders under the leadership of Nannette Streicher, 1792 to 1823,” in *Das Wiener Klavier bis 1850*, ed. Beatrix Darmstädter, Rudolf Hopfner, and Alfons Huber (Tutzing: Schneider, 2007), 53.
Beethoven on Fortepiano Tone

In his penchant for legato playing, Beethoven once again inspired the pianistic culture in Vienna. In the second letter from the year 1796, Beethoven holds forth about tone production and playing with a legato touch. He compliments the apparent similarity in musical taste between himself and Andreas Streicher:

Most Excellent Streicher!

...Your little pupil, dear St[reicher], apart from the fact that when playing my Adagio she drew a few tears from my eyes, has really astonished me. I congratulate you on being so fortunate as to be able to display through such a talent your own understanding of music; and, moreover, I am delighted that this dear little girl, who is so talented, has you for her teacher. I assure you in all sincerity, dear St[reicher], that this was the first time it gave me pleasure to hear my trio performed; and truly this experience will make me decide to compose more for the pianoforte than I have done hitherto. Even if only a few people understand me, I shall be satisfied. There is no doubt that so far as the manner of playing...is concerned, the pianoforte is still the least studied and developed of all instruments; often one thinks that one is merely listening to a harp. And I am delighted, my dear fellow, that you are one of the few who realize and perceive that, provided one can feel the music, one can also make the pianoforte sing. I hope that the time will come when the harp and the pianoforte will be treated as two entirely different instruments.  

Beethoven compliments Andreas Streicher once again for his musical taste, which he recognizes as very similar to his own. It seems that he purposely compliments him to strategically put forward his own purpose; therefore, Beethoven is complimenting himself in this letter and trying to persuade Andreas Streicher, through his teaching, to continue to circulate and endorse his music as well as his musical aesthetic.

Accordingly, Andreas Streicher’s pamphlet written in 1801 that was handed out with the sale of all the firm’s instruments makes the same claim to legato playing as Beethoven did in his letter of 1796:

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It is a pity that, even though so many play the Fortepiano, so few try to treat it according to its true nature. Nothing is more common than to hear this resourceful instrument ill-treated in such a way that it can often make no better effect than a tinkling harp or a miserable Hackbrett [hammered dulcimer].

Streicher learned his lesson from Beethoven; the idea of comparing the poor use of the piano with the manner of playing a harp may have persisted with him. Through Andreas Streicher, and the distribution of the pamphlet, Beethoven was able to influence the evolution of Viennese musical taste.

A great admirer of C.P.E. Bach, it is likely that Beethoven inherited this cantabile tradition, engendered on the clavichord. Skowroneck maintains “with some probability” that Beethoven’s early training was on the clavichord. In 1772, in his autobiographical sketch that was added to Charles Burney’s travel reports, C.P.E. Bach praised the clavichord for its quality of cantabile:

My main study, especially in the last years, has been to play the clavichord, and compose for it, as cantabile as possible despite its insufficient length of tone. This is not easy, if one [either] doesn’t want it to sound empty, or if the noble simplicity of the melody is not to be spoiled by too much noise.

There may be a direct link between Beethoven’s early study and his later characteristic legato touch in his playing and compositions.

In addition to evidence from his music, Beethoven’s affinity for the legato style is clear from his teaching; that Beethoven taught particularly how to play legato is also attested to by a reminiscence of Carl Czerny. Czerny recollects: “[Beethoven made] me

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31 Skowroneck, *Beethoven the Pianist*, 74.
32 Skowroneck, “Keyboard instruments of the young Beethoven,” 158.
particularly aware of the Legato, of which he had such an unrivalled command, and which all other pianists at that time considered unfeasible at the pianoforte.”

Jumping from 1791 to 1839, Czerny’s description of Beethoven as a pianist in his *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School* further illustrates his singular playing style:

[a pianist] who enriched the Piano-forte by new and bold passages..... particularly remarkable for the strict Legato of the full chords, and which therefore formed a new kind of melody; – and by many effects not before thought of. His execution did not possess the pure and brilliant elegance of many other Pianists; but on the other hand it was energetic, profound, noble, and particularly in the Adagio, highly feeling and romantic.

Thus, Beethoven’s letter from 1796 on fortepiano tone expressed a deeply held belief and an enduring stylistic characteristic. Presumably, he was in search of an instrument with the sustaining power to achieve a satisfactory *legato*.

Despite the friendship between Andreas Streicher and Beethoven and the apparent similarity in their thinking with regards to *legato* playing, the Stein piano did not change design until the middle of the first decade of the nineteenth century. The preceding two letters demonstrate the familiar friendship with Andreas Streicher, cemented in business as a pianoforte dealer and as a teacher and promoter of Beethoven’s works; however, they also demonstrate Beethoven’s feelings towards contemporary pianos. By the late eighteenth century, Beethoven was already moving towards a more progressive instrument and playing ideal.

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Conservative vs. Progressive Trends in Piano Marketing: Streicher vs. Clementi

The historical figures of Andreas Streicher and Muzio Clementi represent the dichotomy between the Viennese and English instruments, as well as the ensuing differences in the two schools of playing. In the Kurze Bemerkungen über das Spielen, Stimmen und Erhalten der Fortepiano: welche von Nannette Streicher, geborne Stein in Wien, verfertiget werden,\textsuperscript{35} a pamphlet written by Andreas Streicher in 1801 and distributed with the sale of all of the Streicher instruments, and the Introduction to the Art of playing on the Piano Forte, the pedagogical manual written by Muzio Clementi, also in 1801, two divergent instrument and playing ideals emerge.

Both the Streicher and Clementi manuals espouse playing styles that, upon closer examination, are closely linked to their respective instrument making traditions. Clementi’s pedagogical manual is better known; because of his reputation as a composer, it may have been dissociated from its practical use, as a manual that coincides with the sale of an English piano. But this manual may be much more practical and linked with an English type of instrument than we might have realized. At the same time, Streicher’s pamphlet is more than just a maintenance manual. It deserves attention also from an artistic point of view as a messenger of Viennese playing ideals. It is on the basis of this double rectification that I propose to compare the two manuals.

As opposed to Beethoven’s comment that the instrument must allow the performer the freedom to “create his own tone”, Andreas Streicher’s recommendations never leave the mechanical capabilities of the instrument out of the equation. In the

\textsuperscript{35} Andreas Streicher, Kurze Bemerkungen über das Spielen, Stimmen, und Erhalten der Fortepiano: welche von Nannette Streicher, geborne Stein in Wien, verfertiget werden (Vienna: Alberti, 1801). I have used the de Silva translation for this pamphlet.
Kurze Bemerkungen, Streicher’s recommendations for keyboard playing correspond to the capabilities of the instruments; the design and capacity of the Stein instruments imply a parallel playing style. To illustrate his opinion, in the manual Streicher compares two prevailing playing styles, including a caricature of a “keyboard strangler”, his version of a “virtuoso”:

A performer with the reputation, ‘he played extraordinarily, you had never heard such a thing,’ takes his place (or rather, throws himself) at the fortepiano. Already the first chords are played so loudly that one asks oneself whether the player was deaf, or thought his listeners were. Through the movement of his body, his arms, and his hands, he appears to want to make us realize how difficult the work is that he has undertaken. He flies into a fiery passion and treats his instrument as if he were one seeking vengeance, has his arch-enemy in his hands, and with horrible delight will torture him slowly to death.36

Streicher ridicules the histrionic gestures of the “virtuoso” and he devalues the fiery, violent temperament of this type of performer because he ill-treats his instrument. He contrasts this with an embodiment of a “true musician”:

Let us imagine a true musician, who is just ready to play the fortepiano in public or in a gathering of people. With an air conveying that he himself takes delight in music, he takes his seat at his instrument; through his demeanour he immediately gives the impression that he knows what comprises good performance.

He runs his hands over the keyboard, and already the first notes flow out of his fingers so easily, so robustly, and so pleasantly, and yet are so naturally beautiful that no one thinks of the artistry that produces them.

The posture of the arms and the hands, and even the motion of the fingers, are extremely calm during continuous playing. No movement reveals either effort or strain. Under his hands, the keyboard is like a soft pliable mass out of which he can produce whatever tones he wishes. Like the beautiful line of a painter, all nuances of increasing and decreasing tone are blended into one another.

36 de Silva, The Fortepiano Writings of Streicher, Dieudonné, and the Schiedmayers, 63.
He plays with all the fire of a manly artist, and his tone always remains beautiful since he tries to produce his forte and fortissimo more through full-voiced chords than through single notes. His loud chords never turn into piercing shrieks, which are appropriate only in symphonies or theater scenes. Likewise sparingly, he avoids producing them [the chords] by pounding or hacking on the keys, but rather by means of a quick thrust [of the hand]. However, should the greatest volume be required, he will obtain this through the bass rather than the treble, for then he causes neither too much harm to the instrument nor pain to the listeners’ ears.\textsuperscript{37}

Streicher’s “true musician” is one whose notes “flow” out of his fingers without any effort. He argues for a more calm, understated, and subtle form of musical expression. But does he favour this playing style because of the inherent weakness in the tone and durability of his pianos?

Significantly, Streicher does not mention a wide dynamic range as a priority in an instrument. On the contrary, he recommends that the player use other means to create the impression of more or less sound: “in fortissimo, by raising the dampers [the player] tricks us into believing we are hearing an organ or the fullness of an entire orchestra. Now in pianissimo, he conveys by the same means, the most gentle tone of the harmonica.”\textsuperscript{38} This is still an early conception of the use of the damper pedal as a dynamic agent. Instead of creating tone by a wide dynamic range, Streicher recommends changes in timbre for tonal variety. On the subject of tone, Streicher praises an instrument “that produced all degrees of loudness and softness of tone, even in the finest nuances.” He states that “the tones of a fortepiano…should as much as possible resemble

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 55-57.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 57.
the best wind instruments." Thus, the Viennese virtue of clarity is echoed in the instrument capabilities.

Another dominant feature of the German/Viennese fortepiano is the flexibility of tone and lightness of touch. For Streicher, criticisms about the inexpressiveness of fortepianos are limited only to such fortepianos “that have little flexibility in tone, where the keyboard’s touch is very stiff, and in which the action does not support the movement of the fingers.”

The pamphlet expresses that the ideal keyboard is made such that “the player didn’t think of anything mechanical, and on which you could with the greatest of ease produce everything – play a fast staccato, sing, and allow the tone to simply fade away.” When these conditions are met, Streicher asks: “Wouldn’t the highest standards of art then be met?”

Streicher’s remarks about pianoforte playing seem to correspond with the above-mentioned description by Schönfeld of the “Streicher-type” pianos. At this time, the pianos of Anton Walter were capable of a wider range in the soft as well as the loud dynamics. Furthermore, Streicher’s playing recommendations seem reactionary when taking into account the contemporary music that was being composed at this time not only by Beethoven, but by the composers of the English Classical school, headed by Clementi. Contrary to the musical demands of some contemporary pianists and compositions, Streicher used practical instrument realities and turned them into aesthetic

39 Ibid., 53.
40 For a discussion regarding the link between the philosophical virtue of clarity and the tonal qualities of Viennese instruments, see Bart van Oort, “The English Classical piano style and its influence on Haydn and Beethoven” (D.M.A. diss., Cornell University, 1993), 33-35.
41 de Silva, The Fortepiano Writings of Streicher, Dieudonné, and the Schiedmayers, 41.
42 Ibid., 41.
43 See p. 12 regarding “Walter-type” and “Streicher-type” pianos and pianists.
requirements. In contrast, in his admonition to “create his own tone”, Beethoven was refusing to fit into that mould; his playing style was not dictated by the wear of the instruments. Streicher and Clementi both advertise an aesthetic that agrees with their instruments. Streicher’s conservative stance contrasts greatly with the progressive stance of Clementi, whose energies propelled taste forward with his powerful instruments.

Muzio Clementi influenced the musical market as a producer and marketer of music; performances; instruments; instruction; and, consequently, musical opinion. Parakilas proclaims he was “more thoroughly and deeply involved than any other single person in revolutionizing the musical culture of Europe around the piano.” Clementi published his virtuoso works for the mass market and engineered an immense progress in manual dexterity.\(^4^4\) In 1798, Clementi invested in a partnership with John Longman to manufacture pianos and publish music, mostly for piano. Thus, Clementi exploited different aspects of the music industry that were mutually complementary such as concert life and domestic music making; piano manufacturing and piano instruction; music publishing, musical journalism and the musical canon.\(^4^5\) Parakilas points out that Beethoven followed Clementi’s lead with his first set of Sonatas, Opus 2, by publishing virtuosic piano sonatas for the mass market.\(^4^6\)

At this point, as a counterpoise to the discussion about Viennese instruments, it may be beneficial to summarize the mechanics of sound and construction of English pianos. The English pianos demonstrate a continuation of the earlier Cristofori action.\(^4^7\)

\(^4^4\) James Parakilas, ed., *Piano Roles: Three Hundred Years of Life with the Piano* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 77.
\(^4^5\) Ibid., 82-83.
\(^4^6\) Ibid., 81.
\(^4^7\) Bartolomeo Cristofori invented the ‘gravicembalo col piano e forte’ in c. 1700.
These pianos featured a *Stossmechanik* with an escapement action. In an English piano, the hammer points away from the player and it is attached to a rail rather than to each individual key. A jack pushes up the rear of the hammer and it escapes under a wooden block; the hammer is caught by a check. Also, the key dip is deeper and it gives the effect of a heavier action.\(^{48}\) The English *Stossmechanik* action can be seen in the following diagram:

Example 1.3 The action of an English grand piano by Broadwood, 1799.\(^{49}\)

The English pianos also had many differing features that affected the sound of the instruments. For instance, as Broadwood’s instruments developed, the hammers were still made of thin, flat blades of wood, but they were covered with many layers of leather, sheep or goatskin for the inner layers. The outer layer was covered with a softer, oil-tanned deerskin. Christopher Clarke maintains that hammers of this type are “capable of a much wider dynamic range...their larger mass gives a tone with more fundamental and the many layers of covering ensure that the sound does not become shrill with hard


playing.” This change to adapt to an instrument capable of a louder sound is also reflected in the stringing; these pianos had triple stringing throughout and longer scaling from at least 1787. The earliest extant Broadwood grand, from 1787, is triple-strung throughout.\textsuperscript{50}

John Broadwood took advice from two scientists about his piano construction.\textsuperscript{51} One of the modifications was the divided bridge. The bridge transmits the vibrations of the strings to the soundboard. This meant that there were two bridges, one in the bass for the brass strings and another for the iron strings, which allowed for an equalization of tension and created an equalization of tone. Since about the same stress level was maintained at the changeover from iron to brass, the change in tone colour was minimized.\textsuperscript{52} It also altered the balance between the treble and bass.\textsuperscript{53}

Significantly, the English dampers were much less efficient than the Viennese dampers at quelling the after-ring of sound; as the strings got heavier, the damping was still less efficient. In addition, the after-ring was longer in the bass because the dampers were the same size for the treble and bass registers. This particular sound effect was desirable.\textsuperscript{54} For instance, when Kalkbrenner played on a Viennese instrument, he was so

\textsuperscript{51}John Broadwood (1732-1812) was the preeminent English piano manufacturer of square pianos and grands during the latter decades of the eighteenth century through the nineteenth century. Broadwood sought advice from two scientists, Tiberius Cavallo and Edward Gray, regarding the design of his pianos. See John Koster, “The divided bridge, due tension, and rational striking point in early English grand pianos,” \textit{Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society} 23 (1997): 5-55.
\textsuperscript{52}Clarke, “The English Piano,” 249.
\textsuperscript{53}van Oort claims the bass notes in English pianos are very much inferior to the treble, van Oort, “The English Classical piano style,” 41-42.
\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., 29-30.
dissatisfied that he inserted a piece of cork underneath the damper rail in the top two octaves to mitigate the dryness of damped notes in that register.\textsuperscript{55}

In striking point ratios\textsuperscript{56}, from the first decade of the nineteenth century, English pianos show a much greater degree of uniformity from the bass to the treble registers. This resulted in a fuller tone, but “more bland and overall neutral.”\textsuperscript{57} The piano tone was also more full because the soundboards were much thicker. They were very close in structure to a modern soundboard.\textsuperscript{58} In comparison to the Viennese pianos, the English pianos featured a full, singing quality of tone. Clementi wrote about the piano tone in 1803 as “…excellent but not what is called clear, sharp or silver, but thick and sweet.”\textsuperscript{59}

Notwithstanding these substantial differences in construction between Viennese/German and English instruments, Clementi’s \textit{Introduction to the Art of playing on the Piano Forte} may seem to be only a technical manual that instructs the musical beginner. The manual includes a wide variety of exercises, including scales, fingering passages, and exercises for thirds and sixths and it makes no mention of instrument details. However, the exercises themselves may point to the kind of playing that characterized the English school, and ultimately, the instrument that Clementi was marketing.

In comparing the adaptability and accessibility of these exercises to musicians entrenched in the German/Viennese tradition, we can analyze Mozart’s reaction to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[55] Ibid., 36-37.
\item[56] A striking point is the point whereby a hammer strikes the string. It is measured by the percentage of the sounding length of the string. Ibid., 45.
\item[57] Ibid., 45.
\item[58] Ibid., 46.
\end{footnotes}
Clementi’s sonatas. Mozart had already disparaged Clementi as a musician to his father with these words: “Clementi plays well, so far as execution with the right hand goes. His greatest strength lies in passages in thirds. Apart from this, he has not a kreuzer’s worth of taste or feeling – in short he is simply a *mechanicus*. In a subsequent letter, Mozart gives advice to his sister about the worth of these exercises:

> Well, I have a few words to say to my sister about Clementi’s sonatas. Everyone who either hears them or plays them must feel that as compositions they are worthless. They contain no remarkable or striking passages except those in sixths or octaves. And I implore my sister not to practice those passages too much, so that she may not spoil her quiet, even touch and that her hand may not lose its natural lightness, flexibility, and smooth rapidity. For after all what is to be gained by it? Supposing that you do play sixths and octaves with the utmost velocity (which no one can accomplish, not even Clementi) you only produce an atrocious chopping effect and nothing else whatever.  

Mozart mentions a “quiet, even touch” and the “natural lightness, flexibility and smooth rapidity” of the technique of a keyboardist. This echoes Streicher’s admonition that a pianist’s demeanour at the keyboard should betray no effort or strain; Streicher goes one step further in describing that the keyboard itself should be constructed as a “soft pliable mass” where all tones are “blended into one another.” In contrast, in Clementi’s manual, it is as though these exercises serve to build strength and endurance, sculpting dazzling keyboard displays with the superlative effort of the hands. Indeed, it seems that Clementi’s manual instructs the musical amateur to play in the musical style to interpret his music, with all its keyboard dexterity and grandness of tone conception. Thus, the

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“atrocious chopping effect” in Mozart’s ears may be exactly what pianists of the English school would characterize as brilliance and virtuosity.

Clementi was the main exponent of the English school of pianism and also a piano manufacturer; his musical instruction implies the construction of the English pianos. Accordingly, Clementi’s manual abounds in digital exercises. In the following exercises for thirds, Clementi specifies *legato* as well as detached fingerings, utilizing the same two fingers in succession.

Example 1.4 Exercises for thirds in Muzio Clementi’s *Introduction to the Art of playing on the Piano Forte*.

Although Mozart disparages the Clementi sonatas for their “atrocious chopping effect”, Erin Helyard points out that the majority of articulation marks in the early Clementi
sonatas, to which Mozart may have been referring, were indications for legato playing. Nevertheless, Mozart seems to allude to a physicality necessary in the playing of these passages that demands a more full-handed approach as opposed to a fingers-only technique.

Contrary to the German taste for clarity in the preference for detached articulations, Clementi teaches that a note must be held for its full value. In addition, the player should choose legato when there is no articulation written into the music:

When the composer leaves the LEGATO, and STACCATO to the performer’s taste; the best rule is, to adhere chiefly to the LEGATO; reserving the STACCATO to give spirit occasionally to certain passages, and to set off the HIGHER BEAUTIES of the legato.

Van Oort maintains that the basic touch of the English piano school was legato. This complements the thicker and more resonant sound of the instruments. For example, the slurs written into scores are often much longer than their Viennese counterparts; there is a general lack of many small slurs in the writing of the composers of the English school. Instead, composers wrote piano music with long, cantabile melodies.

Kalkbrenner commented that the pedals of English pianos were also a great help to “catch the inherent dryness of the tone.” Since the pianos had a higher string tension, there were fewer overtones. Also, Moscheles recounts a concert where he played on a

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64 van Oort, “The English Classical piano style,” 61.
66 Ibid., 47-48.
Broadwood and a Leschen: “I tried…in my Fantasia to show the value of the broad, full, though somewhat muffled tone of the Broadwood piano; but in vain. My Vienna public remained loyal to their countryman – the clear, ringing tones of the Graf [sic] were more pleasing to their ears…”

In short, the music of the English School and the shrewd marketing of Clementi revolutionized international taste in piano designs. His pianos were the ideal instruments for this playing aesthetic and he educated the taste thereby of an entire generation.

To summarize, in Clementi’s pedagogical manual, he not only instructs musical amateurs, he sells a unified keyboard and playing ideal. Consequently, even though there is no mention of instruments or instruction about playing style in the Clementi manual, most exercises point to the accumulation of digital technique and brilliance. The playing style presupposes an English instrument with its characteristic durability; its round, singing tone; and its ample use of the foot pedal. Thus, both the Streicher and Clementi manuals imply a playing style that reflects instruments. As Streicher’s *Kurze Bemerkungen*, Clementi’s manual also serves as marketing material for his respective instrument and playing style.

Beethoven may also have been seeking a synthesis between his piano compositions and his instruments. Through his progressive instrument choices, he was seeking to unite his compositional style with the most innovative instrument models and playing schools in his time. We know that Beethoven’s musical library contained nearly

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all of Clementi’s sonatas. In addition, Beethoven subsequently approved of Czerny teaching his nephew, Carl, with the Clementi sonatas. During the early years of the nineteenth century, Beethoven was introduced to foreign pianists, such as Muzio Clementi and Daniel Steibelt, and foreign instruments, such as Haydn’s Erard piano. Alexander Ringer concludes that Beethoven’s “progressive tendencies” impelled him to search for creative models elsewhere, namely in republican France and protodemocratic England. He consistently chose the most progressive instrument models and trends. We can see this by his eventual decision to purchase a French piano from Sébastien Erard in Paris.

**Beethoven and the Purchase of his French Piano**

Notwithstanding his close relations with various Viennese instrument builders, in the early years of the nineteenth century Beethoven was ready to purchase a foreign instrument. In November 1802, there is a letter from Beethoven demonstrating his change of attitude regarding Anton Walter and his instruments:

> Well, my dear Z[meskall], you may give Walter, if you like, a strong dose of my affair. For, in the first place, he deserves it in any case; and, what is more, since the time when people began to think that my relations with Walter were strained, the whole tribe of pianoforte manufacturers have been swarming around me in their anxiety to serve me – and all for nothing. Each of them wants to make me a pianoforte exactly as I should like it. For instance, Reicha has been earnestly requested by the maker of his pianoforte to persuade me to let him make me one; and he is one of the more reliable ones, at whose firm I have already seen some good instruments – So you may give Walter to understand that, although I can have pianofortes for nothing from all the others, I will pay him 30 ducats, but not more than 30 ducats, and on condition that the wood is

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mahogany. Furthermore, I insist that it shall have the tension with one string – if he won’t agree to these conditions, then make it quite plain to him that I shall choose one of the others to whom I will give my order and whom I shall take later on to Haydn to let the latter see his instrument…

In this quotation, Beethoven has clearly quarreled with Walter over the negotiation of a new instrument. In 1802, Beethoven again wanted to purchase an instrument and he had very specific wishes regarding its specifications. He was obviously angered that his negotiations with Walter were not concluding to his satisfaction. This letter is also curious in light of Czerny’s statement that Beethoven already owned a Walter instrument by this time.

Beethoven was conducting these negotiations with Walter under the shadow of a new instrument that had arrived in Vienna. In 1801, the firm of Sébastien Erard in Paris sent Haydn a chic, highly decorative piano as a gift; its presence in Vienna evidently caused a stir with musicians and instrument builders alike. Significantly, Beethoven demands instrumental details, such as mahogany wood and the una corda pedal that probably originate from seeing Haydn’s Erard instrument.

There are many points of significance in this letter. Beethoven still esteems Walter above all other Viennese builders, and possibly he believes that he can build an instrument at least equal to Haydn’s Erard, some features of which he asks for in this letter, such as the mahogany wood and the una corda. It is likely that Beethoven was

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71 Czerny recounts that Beethoven had a Walter instrument in his apartment on his first visit to him when he was about 10 years old (approximately in 1801). See Czerny, *On the Proper Performance*, 5.
trying to convince Walter to make an instrument with the same features as Haydn’s Erard for a fraction of the price.

Beethoven eventually ordered an Erard piano from Paris in 1803. Despite this reality, Beethoven scholarship before this discovery has discounted the influence of the Erard piano in Beethoven’s output because, among other reasons, it was assumed that the instrument was sent to him as a gift. This assumption may have been Beethoven’s own fabrication. In 1803, Griesinger reported to Breitkopf & Härtel:

The brothers Erard of Paris have made a present of a mahogany piano to Beethoven (like they did earlier to Haydn). He is so enchanted with it that he regards all the pianos made here as rubbish [Quark] by comparison. Because you are heavily involved in instrument dealing it will [not] be uninteresting for you to hear that Beethoven had already criticized the local instruments before. He said that they were wooden and that they get one into the habit of a small, weak touch. Beethoven being Beethoven might be right, but how many players are there like him? The keyboard of the Parisian piano is, even by Beethoven’s admission, not as supple and elastic as on the Viennese pianos. But that is a trifle to a master like Beethoven.

How does Beethoven’s letter add to the discussion about his evolving instrument preferences? Beethoven most likely valued the range of dynamics, particularly the strength of sound, in Walter’s instruments, but he also especially requested an instrument with the una corda pedal. Therefore, Beethoven wanted a range of dynamics, but also nuances of colour in the soft registers. Latcham asks, “if [Beethoven] had been critical of the ‘local’ instruments, why should he have wanted a piano by Walter, one of the local makers?” Beethoven already knew about Haydn’s piano by Erard that he received in

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1801, and from the beginning he mentions that the keyboard was not as supple and elastic as in the Viennese pianos.\textsuperscript{75} Latcham concludes that, like Haydn, Beethoven wanted above all to be honoured with the gift of an instrument:

> Although Beethoven may genuinely have preferred the louder piano by Érard to those of the local Viennese makers, more personal matters appear to have coloured his opinion. These matters probably included his annoyance with Walter...[and] an ambition to be on a footing with Haydn. Beethoven’s expressed liking of his Érard piano certainly wore off quickly, perhaps even within a year; it was not long before he had local makers (including Matthäus Andreas Stein) make significant alterations to the keyboard and the action.\textsuperscript{76}

It is possible that when Beethoven didn’t succeed in persuading an instrument maker to oblige him with an instrument, he chose to order a foreign instrument.

Despite his eventual purchase of the Erard piano, at the time of the 1802 letter, Beethoven still seems open to the possibility of a Viennese instrument, albeit with features that he observed in Haydn’s Erard piano. Perhaps the overall cost dissuaded him from ordering an Erard, or, as Latcham argues, Beethoven was loath to order an instrument that Haydn had received as a gift. The letter ends with one more negotiating tactic, possibly the most grievous blow to Walter in Beethoven’s mind: he threatens to take another Viennese builder to see and to be able to study Haydn’s Erard instrument. Beethoven writes, “...if [Walter] won’t agree to these conditions, then make it quite plain to him that I shall choose one of the others to whom I will give my order and whom I shall take later on to Haydn to let the latter see his instrument...”\textsuperscript{77} This appears to demonstrate that, despite all of the practical obstacles, Beethoven did think the Erard was

\textsuperscript{75} Latcham, “The development of the Streicher firm,” 54.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{77} Ludwig van Beethoven to Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz, November, 1802, in Anderson, \textit{The Letters of Beethoven}, Vol. 1, 82.
superior to all Viennese instruments at this time. Consequently, he wished to ally his playing and compositions with that instrument.

The significance of this chapter has been to demonstrate Beethoven’s progressive tendencies in relation to contemporary trends in instrument building from the end of the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. In his early rejection of the Stein instrument and his admiration for the English school, Beethoven demonstrates his progressive instrument and playing style for this time in Vienna. Examined from this perspective, his interest and eventual purchase of the Erard piano is not surprising. It is the purpose of the next chapter to ask what the Erard piano may bring to the discussion of Beethoven’s style. The chapter will investigate the differences between the Erard and English pianos and the influence of the French school of pianism on Beethoven’s post-Erard repertoire for piano.
Chapter 2

_Le son continu: The Evolution of Beethoven’s Piano Writing_

After the Purchase of the Erard Piano

In his _Erinnerungen_, Czerny recounts that in 1802 Beethoven declared: “I am not satisfied with the works I have written so far. From now on I am taking a new direction.”\(^{78}\) In his subsequent chamber and orchestral music, Beethoven fulfills his prophecy, composing, among other works, the “Kreutzer” Sonata and the “Eroica” Symphony in 1803, launching his so-called heroic style in this period. Simultaneously, the timing of his resolution coincides with his decision to purchase a foreign-made grand piano from Sébastien Erard in Paris. How this French instrument intersects with and possibly affects changes in Beethoven’s musical style during this period is the subject of this chapter.

The spectacular discovery that Beethoven purchased his Erard piano, rather than receiving it as a gift, as traditionally viewed in Beethoven scholarship, demands a re-interpretation of the significance of the French tradition of piano making and the French school of pianism in Beethoven’s output.\(^{79}\) This recent finding necessitates a more nuanced interpretation of Beethoven’s instrument preferences and compositional influences during this period, including the influence of the French school of piano building and pianism in Beethoven’s output in the early nineteenth century.

Historically, piano designs from this period have been described in terms of two competing schools, the Viennese/German and the English. Thus, writing in 1828, Johann

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\(^{78}\) Czerny, _On the Proper Performance_, 13.

Nepomuk Hummel described the main differences between the German and English pianos:

The German piano may be played upon with ease by the weakest hand. It allows the performer to impart to his execution every possible degree of light and shade, speaks clearly and promptly, has a round, flute-like tone, which, in a large room, contrasts well with the accompanying orchestra, and does not impede rapidity of execution by requiring too great an effort…The English piano also has much to offer. Among other things, it must be praised for its durability and fullness of tone. Nevertheless this instrument does not admit of the same facility of execution as the German. The touch is much heavier, the keys sink much deeper, and consequently, the return of the hammer on the repetition of a note cannot take place so quickly….As a counterpoise of this, however, through the fullness of tone in the English Piano-Forte, the melody receives a peculiar charm and harmonious sweetness.\textsuperscript{80}

There was a clear demarcation between the ease of execution and clarity of expression inherent in the German piano and the durability and sweetness of tone of the English instruments. Friedrich Kalkbrenner’s observations expand this view to describe two different schools of pianism:

The instruments of Vienna and London have produced two different schools. The Viennese pianists are especially distinguished for the precision, clearness and rapidity of their execution; the instruments fabricated in that city are extremely easy to play….In Germany the use of the pedals is scarcely known. English pianos possess rounder sounds and a somewhat heavier touch. The players of that country have adopted a larger style and that beautiful way of singing that distinguishes them; and it is indispensable to use the large pedal in order to conceal the inherent dryness of the piano. Dussek, Field and J.B. Cramer, the chiefs of that school which was founded by Clementi, use the pedal when harmonies do not change. Dussek above all was responsible for that, for he used the pedal almost constantly when he played in public.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{80} Johann Nepomuk Hummel, \textit{A complete theoretical and practical course of instructions on the art of playing the pianoforte: Commencing with the simplest elementary principles, and including every information requisite to the most finished style of performance}, Part III (London: Boosey, [1829]), 64-65.

Once again we can see that two different instrument models, manufactured in the Viennese/German and the English traditions respectively, produced correspondingly disparate schools of pianism.

This bilateral distinction between German and English pianos and schools of pianism is an oversimplification that has persisted in scholarship about the history of the piano. It does not take into account the cross-pollination between the English and French schools as well as the influence of German musicians that were living in Paris. From the correspondence of contemporary musicians and publishers, such as Andreas Streicher and Breitkopf & Härtel, all the way through to recent scholarship, there has been a lack of attention to the differences in construction, sound and characteristics of the English and French pianos and pianism. Decades ago Alexander Ringer intriguingly observed, “It was Beethoven who produced the first….synthesis of stylistic-aesthetic elements associated with revolutionary Paris as well as the Vienna-London axis.”82 Additionally, Maria Rose argues that Beethoven’s decision to purchase the Erard came at a “crucial, complex stage in Beethoven’s development as a composer…he seriously intended to move to Paris and was highly receptive to musical and political developments taking place in France.”83 Despite recent research on Viennese and London influences in Beethoven’s music undertaken by Newman, Rosenblum, Restle, Skowroneck and others, greater consideration of how a contemporary French instrument may have inspired Beethoven’s middle-period piano music is worthy of further assessment.

By what means did Beethoven’s style evolve to create a new keyboard sonority while using his French Erard piano? Tilman Skowroneck has examined the impact of the Erard piano on certain piano works by Beethoven. He identifies the Waldstein Sonata, Op. 53, as “one of a very few of Beethoven’s works that draw on the resources of this particular type of piano in a positive and direct way.” He also mentions other works that exploit the expanded register of the Erard in ways that recall Beethoven’s late piano compositions. He classifies the “Appassionata” Sonata, Op. 57; Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58; the Sonata for Piano and Cello in A major, Op. 69; and the “Ghost” Trio, Op. 70 No. 1, as examples of Beethoven’s subsequent works that are written in the style formulated in the “Waldstein” sonata.

Building on this foundation, this chapter synthesizes current research about the sound characteristics of Beethoven’s Erard piano and illuminates the unique characteristics of the French school of pianism. Using these elements as criteria, I re-examine Beethoven’s post-Erard writing for technical and stylistic components of the French school of pianism. Many examples of Beethoven’s innovations in his piano writing can be understood in the context of this new model. It is my contention that the Erard piano functioned as a catalyst and springboard for a new sound and keyboard texture, shedding new light on the significance of Beethoven’s Erard piano in his keyboard output in the early part of the nineteenth century.

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Skowroneck, *Beethoven the Pianist*, 103.
The Classical French Piano

The Erard firm manufactured grand pianos with an “English action” from ca. 1795-1796 and called them “pianoforte[s] en forme de clavecin.” In many ways, they were modeled on contemporary Broadwood and Stodart instruments. Like the contemporary English instruments, they were triple-strung throughout, but they had more foot pedals than the English instruments. The French instruments typically included four pedals, demonstrating the “French love of the tympanon and the tangent piano.” These pedals were the una corda, forte (damping mechanism), céleste (in which tongues of leather are inserted between the hammer and strings), and jeu de luth (equivalent of the English buff or harp stop, with which a soft leather strip is pressed against the end of the strings to partially damp them). Christopher Clarke describes the French jeu céleste as “giving an effect of silky softness to the sound quite different to the sibilant quality given by the woolen cloth for the equivalent pianozug in most Viennese pianos.” These pianos also included a knee pedal for the jeu de bassoon (bassoon stop), in which a roll of fine paper was brought to bear against the bass strings to create a buzzing effect.

In the historical literature, the English and French pianos have largely been seen as part of one tradition, despite certain tangible differences in construction and sound between the Erard and Broadwood pianos. It took the insight and experience of Clarke, an historical keyboard builder working in France, to flesh out this simplified picture in significant ways, calling attention to the crucial distinctions between French and English

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87 Ibid., 102.
instruments at this time. Thus, Clarke points to the idiomatic soundboards of Erard pianos, which in the treble were less than half as thick as Broadwood’s. Furthermore, Erard’s scaling was slightly longer than Broadwood’s except for in the low bass register. The strings in the treble and middle registers of the Erard were slightly thinner, and there were also significant differences in interior construction and soundboard ribbing between the pianos. All of these features have an influence on the tone. Erard utilized a lighter inner construction. There may also have been significant differences in the damping mechanisms between the English and French pianos; English pianos often created a substantial after-ring of sound, meaning that the sonorous tone died away more gradually, but Michael Latcham maintains that the 1808 Erard in the Gemeentemuseum collection in the Hague is very efficient at damping.  

For the grand pianos that Erard constructed from 1796 onward, the French builder adapted and developed his own version of the English grand action. As Maria Rose explains, the escapement mechanism on the early Erard is somewhat altered from the English action. Based on her performative research, Rose maintains that the touch feels much lighter on the Erard pianos of this type than on contemporary English ones. Furthermore, their elegant cases, reflective of French taste in contemporary furniture design and the decorative arts, appear more delicate and their woodwork is often stunning.

Erard describes the tonal aesthetics reflective of French musical taste in his description of this modified version of the English action:

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89 Rose, “*L’Art de Bien Chanter,*” 135.
In England a completely different action has been adopted….but all the great masters such as Dussek, Steibelt, Woelfl and Adam agree that ours, which is the perfected version of the English action, is infinitely superior because of the precision of the touch, and the pure harmony which results for that reason. This instrument has until now the greatest success, proven by the fact that all the artists who want to be heard in public or private concerts have benefited from our instruments.\(^9^0\)

Rose describes this French taste in piano sound as a “more focused, well-defined tone, with more brilliance and distinctness.”\(^9^1\) While Erard may have exaggerated his claim that “all the great masters” prefer his instruments, he nevertheless acknowledged that the French action he developed, improved upon and “perfected” the English original.

Rather than developing from and improving upon English innovations, Clarke maintains that the French school of piano making differed substantially from the English from the very beginning. Despite similarities with the English models, at least until 1822, the Erard instruments had many unique features; for instance, the hammers were smaller, with firmer cores, and their striking points were nearer the ends of the strings. As Clarke concludes, “while there are undeniable English antecedents to the classical French school, it had its own particular identity and artistic aims right from the start.”\(^9^2\)

In regards to sound, Clarke deduces that Erard’s instruments were designed to be “more reactive dynamically and tonally” than those of Broadwood. Erard also maintained several varied mutation pedals from 1791 into the 1820s while Broadwood kept to damper and keyboard shifts in the grand pianos. Clarke describes the sound of the Erard pianos of the time as “incisive with highly-coloured registers further coloured by the mutation pedals.” He believes that this complements their “rapid and direct action

\(^9^0\) Ibid., 138.  
\(^9^1\) Ibid., 138.  
\(^9^2\) Clarke, “Erard and Broadwood in the Classical era,” 99.
and the fairly efficient damping to produce an effect of iridescent clarity.” In contrast, the sound of Broadwood pianos “display power and breadth of effect, already moving away from changes in colour between registers across the compass and at different dynamic levels. The dampers are left deliberately inefficient, blurring and augmenting the tone.”

Thus, there is a growing body of knowledge that distinguishes the tonal effects between English and French pianos, demonstrating the differences between the clear and colourful French instruments and the powerful and sonorous English instruments.

The research cited above from Clarke’s 2009 article resulted from preliminary research undertaken before he re-constructed an exact copy of Beethoven’s 1803 Erard piano. After the completion of the replica of Beethoven’s Erard piano for the Musée de la musique in Paris, he refined his initial observations, concluding:

One of the things that struck me during the construction of the facsimile was the closeness of its design to that of late French harpsichords. This impression was furthered by seeing how Erard, just as had Taskin before him, conceived his piano action in terms of extreme lightness….The hammerheads and shanks are made of extremely thin pencil cedar, a particularly light and elastic wood (but also a very fragile one), [and] the dampers are also very light….Once our instrument was playing, the link with the harpsichord became even more apparent; the overall tonal architecture of the Erard is remarkably close to that of the late French harpsichord.

This observation underscores the divergent aims between the French and English instruments even further. For instance, compared to a Viennese piano of the time, the Erard stringing is not heavier and the hammers are, if anything, lighter. Clarke maintains, “only the different timbres and touch-sensations produced by his [Erard’s] grand pianos serve to differentiate them from Viennese grand pianos, on the one hand, and his own square pianos, on the other. I began to understand that

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93 Ibid., 117.
94 Clarke, Open letter to players who intend to play on the Erard instrument, 2.
Erard’s piano-forte en forme de clavecin was much closer than I’d expected to the idea of a “clavecin expressif” (such as Taskin’s, with either plucking or striking actions). Its power is not much greater than that of a harpsichord, even though, thanks to its English action, it can be pushed to a *sforsando* if the occasion arises. The skin-side-out covering of the hammers gives added articulation to the sound when played quietly, almost like the *ictus* of a harpsichord quill; when played with more force, the inner layers of the hammer come into play and the sound is not shrill until the instrument is pushed to its limits.\(^{95}\)

In summary, according to Clarke, the main difference between French and English instruments of the time was “Erard’s manifest choice of lightness and clarity of speech, in the face of the English makers’ proto-Romantic quest for power and breadth.”\(^{96}\)

**Beethoven’s Erard**

How might this generalized description of Erard instruments outlined above relate to the composer’s personal instrument? A comparison of these basic descriptors with Beethoven’s actual instrument, housed in the Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum in Linz, Austria, reveals many points of similarity.

As expected, Beethoven’s Erard piano has leather-covered hammers. Likewise, there are four pedals: from left to right, lute, damper, *céleste* or moderator, and the *una corda*. The instrument has a range of 5.5 octaves (FF-c\(^4\)) and is triple-strung throughout, without wound strings. It is fitted with the English type of arched iron gap-stretchers between the pin block and the belly rail. From FF-g\(^#\) the strings are in brass; from a-c\(^4\) the strings are made of iron.\(^{97}\) Consequently, the instrument is an example of the named “English grand action” model, but it displays strong roots in the French keyboard-building tradition.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., 2.
\(^{96}\) Ibid., 2
\(^{97}\) For a more detailed description of Beethoven’s Erard piano, see Good, p. 95-97.
Example 2.1 Beethoven’s Erard piano. Photo taken from Good.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{98} Edwin Good, \textit{Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos}, 95.
The Musical Characteristics of the French School

In contemporary French musical aesthetics, a tangible link exists between the sonic ideals of the French school and contemporary instrument-building technology. For example, in his 1768 *Dictionnaire*, Rousseau observes that the main musical expression is always derived from the *chant* in both vocal and instrumental music. The French defined expressivity as imitating a vocal melody; instrumental music was only expressive to the extent that it could imitate the voice. Therefore, the French preference for melodic simplicity was a musical demonstration of Enlightenment ideals.

In contrast to compositions exhibiting the expressivity of a vocal melody, articulation is rarely indicated in French repertoire, nor is it discussed in contemporary teaching methods. The French ideal of a pure, unarticulated singing melody juxtaposes with the Viennese notion of expressivity in speech-like articulations and varied inflections. In his *Méthode de piano-forte*, published in 1804, Louis Adam, for instance, recommends *legato* playing as the only way one can imitate the voice. The transparency of an unadorned melody was combined with accompanimental textures to increase the *Harmonie*, the full, grand sound of the instrument. Together, these two musical elements combined to create the French sound ideal.

To illustrate these two French sound priorities -- long singing melodic lines and an accompanimental texture that enhances the *Harmonie* of the instrument -- is an

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100 Rose, “*L’Art de Bien Chanter*,” 23-24.
101 Ibid., 162.
102 Ibid., 33.
104 Rose, “*L’Art de Bien Chanter*,” 153.
example from Beethoven’s Sonata for Piano and Cello in A major, Op. 69. In Example 2.2, the cello melody is accompanied by a fluttering sixteenth-note figure, creating a shimmering resonance and an overall texture of transparency and brilliance.

Example 2.2 Sonata for Piano and Cello in A major, Op. 69, 1st movement, (mm. 208-216).

Similarly, in Ex. 2.3, taken from the third movement of the same sonata, the rippling accompaniment adds energy and élan to the theme. In this movement, the rapid-fire undulation ends only with the close of the movement.
An important characteristic of French music is the textural quality of sustained sound. The use of keyboard instruments in France before 1785 included the prevalence of accompanied keyboard sonatas where the accompanying strings were used to sustain sounds. Basso continuo parts consisted of bass string instruments alone as early as c. 1770, resulting in accompaniments of a more sustained character. French music of the period features overlapping legato particularly in accompanimental figures. Techniques
used to create the illusion of sustained tones in melodies were repeating notes, tremolos, arpeggios, and trills.\(^{105}\)

Hybrid instruments were popular in France, such as the *piano organisé* that added pedaled organ pipes to pianos. Erard modified this by inventing an instrument that could sustain and vary dynamic levels at all times; he made such an instrument for Marie Antoinette in c. 1790. In 1800, John Isaac Hawkins of Philadelphia invented a mechanism that enabled piano-hammers to strike a string in quick succession, producing the effect of continuous sound. Eighteen more patents were granted for such a mechanism; Erard received a patent for the action of this type of instrument, called a *piano à son continu*, in 1812.\(^{106}\) The mechanism has the same effect as the quick repetitions of the famous *tremolos* by Adam and Steibelt.\(^{107}\) Fast-repeating notes became a favourite piano technique in France.\(^{108}\) The *son continu* was “more than a virtuosic trick…if executed correctly with the use of the pedal…it created a continuous tone, which could be modified dynamically.”\(^{109}\) English pianos had *Harmonie*, but no clarity in the upper register nor the ability to “shine” with trills and *son continu* effects.\(^{110}\) Thus, the brilliant tone of the French piano became one of its most distinct features.\(^{111}\)

The multiple, colourful pedals on French pianos persisted into the nineteenth century. Rose concludes that the pedal was regarded as “a device which provided different timbres, as it had been on the tangent piano, with the added novelty of

\(^{105}\) Ibid., 36-37.
\(^{106}\) Ibid., 157-159.
\(^{107}\) Ibid., 158.
\(^{108}\) Ibid., 33.
\(^{109}\) Ibid., 413.
\(^{110}\) Ibid., 411.
\(^{111}\) Ibid., 163.
sustaining bass notes." Finally, composers such as Boïeldieu and Dussek wrote piano music that closely resembled their music written for harp. Erard was as prolific and successful in the building of harps as pianos. Composers purposely scored for the undamped sound of that instrument.

The music that Mozart composed during his second journey to Paris (between September 3, 1777 and January 17, 1779) demonstrates his absorption of French musical characteristics and instrumentation. Indeed, the following musical examples may serve as a link to Beethoven’s stylistic innovations. Mozart composed music with novel instrumentations dating from his French sojourn, works such as his Flute Concerti, KV 313 and KV 314, and his Concerto for Flute and Harp, KV 299. In addition, his Piano Sonata in A Minor, KV 310, can be interpreted as a “catalogue of musical taste in Paris at the time.” It may have been composed on a contemporary French square piano and it has some features that work very convincingly on that type of instrument. The textures of the accompaniments are striking in this sonata compared to Mozart’s other piano works. As seen in Example 2.4, Mozart accompanies the opening dotted rhythm in the right hand with strident repeated chords. The continuous repetition creates an unceasing rhythmic drive combined with a thicker texture of sound.

Example 2.4 Mozart Sonata in A minor, KV 310, 1st movement, (mm. 1-4).

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112 Ibid., 408.
113 Ibid., 69.
This characteristic drive and sonority bears some resemblance to the opening of Beethoven’s “Waldstein” Sonata, Op. 53. The relentless rhythmic energy speaks to the larger scale of the instrument. The mode of expression, its motoric writing, and the thicker texture all herald a new form of expression.


A second example from Mozart’s A minor sonata, composed in Paris in 1778, this one from the second movement, employs an accompanimental texture that creates a continuous texture of reverberation. On an English or French square piano this right-hand repeated note figure would create a fuller resonance than on a contemporary Viennese instrument.

Example 2.6 Mozart Sonata in A minor, KV 310, 2nd movement, (mm. 42-46).

Finally, in the rondo finale of KV 310 the driving energy is interrupted by an episode in the tonic major key. The repeated A drone in the left hand along with the
simple harmonies in this section create a music-box quality. Mozart has written a special
timbre that would sound well using the damper stop along with other mutations such as
the lute or céleste.

Example 2.7 Mozart Sonata in A minor, KV 310, 3rd movement, (mm. 143-158).

Skowroneck further identifies the following works, written after the arrival of
Beethoven’s Erard, to have a French influence: the Sonata in C major, “Waldstein”, Op. 53; the Andante favori, WoO 57; the Concerto for Violin, Cello and Piano in C major, Op. 56; the Sonata in F minor, “Appassionata”, Op. 57; the Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58; the Sonata in A Major for Piano and Cello, Op. 69; and the Trio in D major, Op. 70 No. 1.114 How do Skowroneck’s proposed connections reveal themselves in
Beethoven’s musical scores? The following characteristics of French pianos and
pianism show synchronicity with Beethoven’s compositions, demonstrating a French
influence in his music of this period.

114 Skowroneck, Beethoven the Pianist, 103, 104, 113, 114.
Register as a Compositional Dimension

The Erard’s compass and sonority encouraged Beethoven to exploit register as an “essential compositional dimension.”\(^{115}\) This becomes a characteristic of many major piano works written after the “Waldstein” sonata. Compared to the writing in the earlier “Viennese” sonatas, Beethoven exploits the expanded register by moving the voices far apart, leaving the middle register empty. This may have been caused by Beethoven’s reaction to the different sonority, especially the stronger bass register, of his Erard.\(^{116}\)

In the forceful opening of the Trio in D major, “Ghost”, Op. 70 No. 1, Beethoven has written the theme in four unison lines. The piano lines dominate the musical texture, engulfing the string instruments in between their two outer voices. The unison melodies in the piano part are written four octaves apart, with the violin and cello parts as the inner two lines. Thus the visual effect of this registration portrays the power and dominance of the pianist. In performance, the arms spread out during the fortissimo unison passage command attention; Beethoven utilizes almost the entire compass of the keyboard to portray this dramatic opening statement.


Example 2.8 Trio in D major, “Ghost”, Op. 70 No. 1, 1st movement, (mm. 1-5).

Beethoven writes striking and dramatic passages in his post-Erard works where the hands play at the upper and lower limits of the range. In Ex. 2.9 from the second movement of the “Ghost” Trio, Op. 70 No. 1, for instance, Beethoven once again stretches the hands out almost as far as possible, again using almost the entire range of the keyboard. He writes in these extreme registers at an expressive climax in the second movement. Here Beethoven utilizes the expanded range as a dramatic agent to increase the expressive possibilities in his piano writing.
Example 2.9 Trio in D major, “Ghost”, Op. 70 No. 1, 2nd movement, (mm. 90-91).

The Erard piano also featured a stronger, more singing sound in the high register.

In the following example from the third movement of the Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58, composed in 1805-1806, Beethoven exploits this by writing a sustained melody in the uppermost octave of the piano. There are no similar passages in his earlier concertos where he writes an expressive melody in the uppermost register. The long pedal marking and the long D in the bass strings also help to sustain the melody.
In the recapitulation in the first movement of the same concerto, Beethoven writes a celestial piano accompaniment to the melody in the orchestral strings. After the forceful re-entry of the theme in full chords, the piano part adorns the gentle B major theme in the orchestra with a shimmering pianissimo accompaniment. The right hand climbs to b\textsuperscript{3} and both hands play above the muted orchestral strings. In this example, the piano provides a halo for the melody; the musical horizon is crowned with a starry sky. This evocative passage is one example of how Beethoven exploited the sonority of the Erard. As in the earlier discussion, in this instance, the clarity and iridescence of this register may have influenced Beethoven’s colourful writing.

In the final measures of the first movement of the concerto, Beethoven once again evokes this special registration. The right hand plays almost exclusively in the topmost octave of the piano while the left hand accompaniment hovers above middle C. From m. 356, the right hand echoes the melody once more in a higher octave while the orchestra provides a sustained string doubling to the incandescent voicing of the piano part. Beethoven also indicates a long pedal to sustain the low bass G. This registration, along with the *staccato* markings, is reminiscent of the bell-like effect in Steibelt’s 6me *Pot pourri*.

Example 2.12 Steibelt, 6me *Pot Pourri*.

Milchmeyer’s tutor, entitled *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen* and published in Dresden in 1797, uses this example above to explain the novel tonal effect:
“firstly, you can imitate little bells... when the right hand plays detached notes, mezzo forte in a fairly high register, while the left provides an accompaniment in the middle of the keyboard, legato and pianissimo.” The invocation of ‘little bells’ here is interesting, as it suggests the ‘music-box-like quality’ capable of emanating from the Erard under the hand of a skilled pianist acquainted with the French stylistic aesthetic. The treatise also suggests how widespread the French style of pianism had circulated by the end of the century, and how widely understood it was as a phenomenon. A special registration in the French school of pianism, these shimmering and iridescent passages exploit the sound characteristics of the French Erard piano. They would sound more effective on the Erard piano than if Beethoven had ordered a contemporary English instrument. Thus, we must look to the characteristics of the Erard piano to understand the new qualities of these works.


\[\text{Example 2.13 Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58, 1st movement, (mm. 352-359), First Edition, Bureau des Arts et d’Industrie, 592.}\]

117 Johann Peter Milchmeyer, Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen (Dresden: Meinhold, 1797), 59; trans. in Rowland, A History of Pianoforte Pedalling, 163.
**Vocal Melody**

The vocal ideal, as expounded by Rousseau in the mid-eighteenth century, was also enabled by Erard instruments. In the Classical era, French musical consumers were exposed to and able to access a huge amount of vocal music in the form of arias, *Romances* and songs in the musical market place.\(^{118}\) The use of the piano in this genre as an accompaniment instrument finally separated it from the harpsichord.

In the vocal slow movement of Beethoven’s Sonata in G major, Op. 31 No. 1, Beethoven employs many techniques to give the impression of a sustained melody. With the first note of the melody, ornamented with a trill, Beethoven endeavours to create a crescendo on the long note, as imitating a vocal *vibrato* on the tonic note. In performance, the pianist can vary the speed of the trill, creating the effect of a crescendo by accelerating towards the end of the measure. For players aware of the vocal aesthetics of the period, this little device suggests the instrumental counterpart of a singing voice, suggesting the cross-over of genres evident in contemporary musical spheres.

Example 2.14 Sonata in G major, Op. 31 No. 1, 2\(^{nd}\) movement, (mm. 1-3), First Edition, Nägeli, 5.

Another vocal-like feature is found in the piano right hand of the Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 5 in F major, Op. 24. Initially, Beethoven states the melody in simple, unadorned fashion. But upon its return, Beethoven fills the sound of the long melody

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\(^{118}\) Rose, *“L’Art de Bien Chanter,”* 182.
note by using repetition. Example 2.15 shows the first appearance of the unadorned melody.

Example 2.15 Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 5 in F major, Op. 24, 2\textsuperscript{nd} movement, (mm. 1-4).

In a repeating section, Beethoven varies the melody by the use of fast repetition on the melody note to sustain the sound and create melodic direction. In this example, the repeated notes create a sustained melody.

Example 2.16 Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 5 in F major, Op. 24, 2\textsuperscript{nd} movement, (mm. 24-30).

Beethoven also uses repeated notes to sustain the melodic line and create a crescendo in the first movement of the Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58. The left hand plays accompanying broken chords while the right hand melody soars in a suspended \textit{cantilena} in the high register. Once again, Beethoven employs a “French” device of repeated notes to embellish his melodic skeleton and create motion and direction in the musical line.

In summary, the above examples demonstrate Beethoven’s penchant for vocal melody during this period and how he uniquely uses ornamental figures such as trills and repeated notes to fill in the musical texture.

**Harmonie**

The innate sonority of Beethoven’s Erard piano would add a welcome resonance to certain textures in Beethoven’s music. Accordingly, Skowroneck describes the “gentle wash-like quality” of the opening of Beethoven’s Concerto No. 4: 119

Example 2.18 Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58, 1st movement, (mm. 1-5), First Edition, Bureau des Arts et d’Industrie, 592.

The following examples demonstrate how Beethoven exploits the natural resonance of the Erard to create continuous, sustained sound.

In the scherzo movement of the Sonata for Piano and Cello in A major, Op. 69, Beethoven writes a subdued, rumbling trill figure in the bass of the trio section to

accompany the sustained melody, sweetly scored in thirds and sixths. On an Erard piano these notes would lack clarity and instead would create a continuous sonority.

Independent of the pedals, the increased resonance of the Erard piano lends a slightly undamped quality to these passages.

Example 2.19 Sonata for Piano and Cello in A major, Op. 69, 2nd movement, (mm. 124-138).

Beethoven encountered Steibelt’s *tremolando* technique as early as May, 1800 at a concert in Vienna in the home of Count Moritz von Fries. Ferdinand Ries recounts the meeting of Beethoven and Steibelt: “[Steibelt] played a quintet of his own composition, improvised, and produced a great effect with his *tremolandos*, which were something quite new then.”120 The *tremolando* effect, made famous by Steibelt and Adam, demonstrates the French ideal of *son continu*. The perpetual resonance of this writing on the piano creates a wall of sonic texture. This technique also allows for a crescendo and

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diminuendo within the texture without interrupting the steady sound. Playing the rapidly repeating notes without causing accents or pauses relies on the use of the damper pedal.

The aural effect of this pianistic technique was described in contemporary literature. Adam described this effect in his *Méthode de piano-forte* in 1804:

*Tremendo* must be made with such speed that the sounds present nothing more than a continuity of sound to the ear. To succeed in executing it, the fingers should barely leave the keys, and, with a small quivering motion, they make the strings vibrate without interruption of the sound, particularly in the *diminuendo* and *pianissimo*, where the sounds must die away in such a manner that no movement of the keys is heard anymore.\(^{121}\)

Thus, the chief effect, performed by efficient finger execution and the use of the damper pedal, creates a prolonged continuity of sound.

An extended *tremolando* texture is evident in the first movement of Steibelt’s “Grande Sonate”, Op. 27. Steibelt indicates using the pedal that lifts the dampers throughout this section and to execute this effect by hardly pressing down the keys:

\(^{121}\) Adam, *Méthode de piano du Conservatoire*, 220; trans. in Rose, “*L’Art de Bien Chanter*,” 154-55.
Many years later, the pianist Charles Chaulieu described how Steibelt and Adam performed this technique:

[Steibelt] had in his manner of making *tremolos* something that was thrilling, and when he combined it with a broad, noble melody, brought out loudly by the right hand, or by the left hand crossing over, one could hardly believe that one single person was capable of producing such an effect. These *tremolos*, in which one never heard any action-noise, and which produced truly connected sounds, I have never heard executed well after him except by Mr. L. Adam.\textsuperscript{122}

The skillful use of the pedals is essential to this technique. In a similar excerpt, the second movement of Adam’s Sonata in C major, Op. 8 No. 2, the performer is instructed to press the two “middle” pedals down simultaneously. On French instruments, these pedals were the damper and the *jeu céleste*. In this sonata, Adam alternates between the use of these pedals together in the piano passages and the use of the sustaining pedal alone in the forte passages.¹²³

Example 2.21 Adam, Sonata in C major, Op. 8 No. 2, 2nd movement, (mm. 50-51).

During the decades spanning the turn of the nineteenth century, the craze for sonic effects became extremely popular. Chaulieu describes this ‘youthful enthusiasm’:

It was also at this time that the *tremolo* was born; the use of the pedals was pushed to extremes and, while one believed to have found a pedal imitating the harp, another proudly believed to have imitated the bassoon. This stupidity was then carried to its peak by the drum, bells, etc., etc.; finally, the craze became such that our children would hardly believe it.¹²⁴

Despite its eventual overuse, the *tremolando* texture became a famous aural effect that originated in the French school of pianism. Steibelt and Adam were famous for this striking and unique pianistic texture. The following examples will demonstrate how Beethoven absorbed this pianistic effect into his own compositions.

Beethoven uses repetitive, motoric figures throughout his works, including rapid, dry tremolando-like figures. He used this pianistic device to create drama before, as in the first movement of his Sonata in C minor, “Pathétique”, Op. 13. There is also a striking tremolando-like passage in the first movement of Beethoven’s Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 7; this has been referred to as one of his earlier “anglophile” sonatas.\(^{125}\)


Notwithstanding this earlier use of repeated-note, motoric figures, the notation for *tremolando* effects along with the use of the damper pedal in Beethoven’s writing dates

\(^{125}\) Skowroneck, *Beethoven the Pianist*, 104.
from after his meeting with Steibelt. In Beethoven’s Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 26, there is a tremolando in the third movement, entitled *Marcia Funebre sulla morte d’un eroe*. Composed in 1800-1801, this sonata is an early example of Beethoven using the tremolando texture and pairing it with the sustained sound of the lifted dampers.


Moreover, in the “Appassionata” Sonata in F minor, Op. 57, we can distinguish between English and French influences within Beethoven’s varied musical texture. The first movement of the Sonata demonstrates many features of the English Classical Style. In the following fortissimo passage, the powerful, crashing chords are reinforced by the low register and rocket to the upper stratosphere of the keyboard, exploiting the resonance of the entire soundboard.

In characteristic English style, the following lyrical passage is written in octave melodies accompanied by a low, thick bass filling in the harmony. This writing relies on the sustained use of the damper pedal.


In the second movement of the sonata, Beethoven states the theme with hymn-like chords written in four-voice texture in the lower range of the keyboard. This writing demonstrates the chordal legato for which Beethoven was known. In variation three of the second movement, the register in which Beethoven places both hands, as well as the shimmering left-hand figuration creating the Harmonie in the upper half of the keyboard, recalls the French school.

Finally, in the \textit{Largo assai ed espressivo} of the Trio in D major, Op. 70 No. 1, composed in 1808, Beethoven has written almost the whole piano part as an extended \textit{tremolando}. With small breaks of only a few bars, the entire movement consists of a haunting, sustained resonance. Beethoven notates dynamic swells within this unbroken texture; his writing for this constant reverberation takes full advantage of the \textit{Harmonie} of the instrument.
Example 2.27 Trio in D major, “Ghost”, Op. 70 No. 1, 2\textsuperscript{nd} movement, (mm. 18-45).
The Pedals of the French School

The treatises of Milchmeyer (1797), Adam (1804) and Steibelt (1809) are the first to focus primarily on pianoforte performance and to provide instruction about the use of the pedals. Milchmeyer’s tutor was published in Dresden, but, significantly, his study and technique developed in France. Since there were relatively few grand pianos in France at the time, Milchmeyer composed examples designed for square pianos, which was the standard instrument for the amateur market:

As far as the mutations of the piano are concerned, we cannot praise instrument makers sufficiently for their unstinting efforts in recent years to introduce a large number of mutations into the instrument. But they have seldom been used sufficiently by players and thus resemble a fine collection of books that no one ever reads.¹²⁶

Milchmeyer gives credit to the introduction of the pedals to Daniel Steibelt’s arrival in Paris: “composers and teachers ignored them, and regarded them as unnecessary, until finally the great talent of Herr Steibelt…developed all these mutations carefully, demonstrated the effect of each one and defined its function.”¹²⁷ In his own 1809 treatise, Steibelt discusses the use of the pedals as follows:

A sure art of striking the keys and bending the fingers, a truly characteristic use of the registers [Züge] (mutations of tone by means of the pedal), otherwise little used and of which I was the first to demonstrate the advantages, give the instrument a quite different expression...I will show how this important addition to the instrument serves to bring out the colours better and to give light and shade to the performance, and that their use is subject to the rules of good taste.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Ibid., 35.
Louis Adam also mentions general resistance to the widespread use of the pedals:

> We know that some people, by a blind attachment to the old rules, by a proper but badly understood affection, forbid their use and call it charlatanism. We will be of their opinion when they make this objection against those performers who only use the pedals to dazzle the ignorant in music, or to disguise the mediocrity of their talent; but those who only use them appropriately to enhance and sustain the sounds of a beautiful melody and fine harmony assuredly merit the approval of true connoisseurs.\(^{129}\)

Hence, in the early treatises of Milchmeyer, Steibelt and Adam, the pedals were praised when someone who possessed “good taste” used them to bring out different colours in the musical texture, to give “light and shade” to a performance and to “enhance and sustain” the melody and harmony within the musical composition.

In his study on pedaling, David Rowland further outlines three factors that were important initially for the introduction of tone-modifying devices: the ability to imitate other instruments, overcoming the dryness of tone inherent in early pianos, and the potential for novelty or particular effects at strategic moments. From Milchmeyer to Adam’s treatises, we witness a development in the uses of the pedal; Milchmeyer describes the stops as a means to imitate other instruments, whereas Adam’s comments suggest that the pedals were designed to increase the melodic instead of the imitative capabilities of the instrument. It is important to note that, in contrast to Milchmeyer, both Adam and Steibelt assume the use of the French grand piano, with the standard four-pedal arrangement, with Steibelt devoting almost equal space to discussing each pedal in

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his treatise. The varieties of effects that both Adam and Steibelt advocate are linked to the multiple pedaling possibilities available on the Erard.

With the damper pedal in particular, composers could increase the range and variety of their accompaniment figures. For instance, an accompaniment could consist of a sustained bass note or octave followed by an extra middle register. Or, a composer could introduce broken arpeggiated figurations extending beyond the span of one octave, as Steibelt does in his 6<sup>me</sup> Pot Pourri, (Ex. 2.28). Here the textures in the left hand span almost three octaves.

Example 2.28 Steibelt, 6<sup>me</sup> Pot Pourri.

In his tutor, Steibelt also includes examples that illustrate the aural discrepancy between what is written on the page and the sustained effect that the damper pedal creates. In the following examples, the pedal sustains the low bass notes, creating a

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131 Steibelt, in particular, is listed in the Erard register as an agent for the sale of at least 10 pianos. See Rose, “Beethoven and his ‘French Piano’: Proof of Purchase,” 116.
quasi-polyphonic texture that allows the upper accompaniment figure to move freely above a sustained bass.

Example 2.29 Accompaniment figurations from Steibelt’s *Méthode de piano*.

Beethoven’s post-Erard music abounds in examples of extended pedal techniques. For instance, extended accompaniment techniques of this nature make up almost the entire development section of the first movement of Beethoven’s Sonata for Piano and Cello in A major, Op. 69. Beginning in m. 107, the left hand of the piano part is written in an arpeggiated figuration that exceeds an octave; this figuration clearly relies on the continuous use of the damper pedal. Presumably, Beethoven would have wanted the damper pedal down for the entire duration of the same harmony in the bass.
Example 2.30 Sonata for Piano and Cello in A major, Op. 69, 1st movement, (mm. 102-110).

The subsequent fortissimo passage in the piano and cello is a dramatic tremolo figure simultaneously played in both instruments. This melts away into the arpeggiated texture, this time in C-sharp minor, recalled from the earlier development section.
Example 2.31 Sonata for Piano and Cello in A major, Op. 69, 1\textsuperscript{st} movement, (mm. 129-136).

The various pedals of the Classical French piano created a multitude of colour possibilities. Clarke states, “these mutation stops, far from being anecdotal, are a valuable and integral part of the design of the French Classical piano, from the late 1780’s until the late 1820’s.”\textsuperscript{134} The number of pedals on the French instruments facilitated many simultaneous combinations and at times composers notated for them with wide variety. For example, in the last movement of Boïeldieu’s \textit{Premier Concerto}, the variation below bears the instruction ‘Grande Pédale pour toute la variation. Sourdine aux accords seulement’, translated as ‘Sustaining pedal for the whole variation. Sourdine for the chords only’. Rowland speculates that ‘sourdine’ most likely refers to the \textit{luth} or \textit{céleste} pedals typically found on the contemporary French grand pianos rather than the \textit{una corda} pedal of the English pianos.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{134} Clarke, Open letter, 3.
\textsuperscript{135} Rowland, \textit{A History of Pianoforte Pedalling}, 61-62.
Another characteristic composition of the French school of pianism utilizing multiple pedals is Steibelt’s 6th *Pot Pourri*. Published in 1793, it marked the beginning of the Parisian fashion for the pedal.\(^{136}\) This piece is a rondo-structure. Each time the opening theme occurs, Steibelt indicates the use of the sustaining and the lute pedals concurrently, which was to become a popular technique found in many rondo-structure pieces at the time.\(^{137}\) The damper pedal is here employed with the colourful lute pedal, creating a subdued, yet iridescent effect.

This use of dual pedal effects may find an important parallel with the rondo movement of Beethoven’s “Waldstein” Sonata, Op. 53, where in each return of the theme, Beethoven indicates the use of the damper pedal with a *pianissimo* dynamic. This

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\(^{136}\) Ibid., 53.

\(^{137}\) Ibid., 56.
pianissimo indication may refer to the use of another tone-modifying pedal in addition to the damper pedal, such as the una corda or other pedals. Here, the pianissimo dynamic along with the raised damper pedal and the registration in the higher half of the keyboard creates an airy, ethereal timbre associated with the French style of keyboard playing.

Throughout the finale of the “Waldstein” Sonata, in fact, Beethoven includes copious pedal markings. In the third movement, Beethoven uses the pedal as a continuous presence, an ever-present cushion of sound. Indeed, as Rowland observes, Beethoven’s pedaling has “much more in common with the Paris and London schools.”¹³⁸ And in the words of Maria Rose, “never before did the pedal play such an essential role in Beethoven’s piano works; throughout the [third] movement it is indicated with great precision.”¹³⁹ The pervasive use of the damper pedal in the “Waldstein” sonata, notated with the signs “ped” and “O” throughout, is evidence of the fashion for the pedal most notably found outside the Habsburg capital. Thus, in this finale, Beethoven achieves a completely new sound in the Viennese sphere, one characteristic of French pianism and the Erard piano.

In contrast to the finale of the “Waldstein”, the beginning of the sonata suggests another kind of pedal technique. Here Beethoven indicates that both the treble and bass dampers should be raised, possibly because of the prevalence of split damper pedals at the time. Furthermore, it is important to observe that Beethoven indicates the una corda in his Concerto in G major, Op. 58, after which there are no more indications for the soft pedal until his last five sonatas.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 78.
A comparison of Beethoven’s Sonata in C major, “Waldstein”, Op. 53, with the Sonata in C major, Op. 8 No. 2, by Louis Adam is also instructive. Beethoven began working on the “Waldstein” Sonata after the Erard piano arrived; the sketches for this sonata and the Andante favori, WoO57, all date from between 2 November 1803 and 4 January 1804 and Beethoven’s Erard piano had arrived in Vienna by 22 October 1803.\textsuperscript{140} Maria Rose points out the similarity between the Beethoven and Adam sonatas. The following discussion is indebted to her.\textsuperscript{141}

To begin with, the keys of both sonatas are identical, cast in the openly resonant key of C major. The opening movements are also of similar length. Adam’s first movement has a length of 303 measures, while Beethoven’s is 302 measures. Beethoven originally intended the movement to be two-thirds its final length, but he ultimately lengthened it in his final version. Significantly, no other sonata by Beethoven has a first movement of such proportion.\textsuperscript{142}

Likewise, the third movement of the sonata begins at a \textit{pianissimo} dynamic level; in the opening of his third movement, Adam indicated the concurrent use of the damper pedal and the \textit{céleste} pedal. As in the “Waldstein” sonata, Adam’s sonata begins with a simple melody in 2/4 with a flowing, undulating accompaniment to be played with raised dampers. This writing also alternates with virtuoso passages.\textsuperscript{143} Furthermore, as in the Beethoven sonata, the “soft, shimmering” effect of the Adam first theme returns and is repeated \textit{forte} without the \textit{céleste} pedal.

\textsuperscript{141} See discussion in Rose, “Beethoven and his ‘French piano’: Proof of Purchase,” 120-122.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 121.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 121.

Czerny once made the following comment about Beethoven’s pedaling:

“Beethoven, in particular, employed [the pedal] in the performance of his pianoforte works much more frequently than we find it indicated in those compositions.”\textsuperscript{144}

Although Beethoven was probably familiar with English and French music and took great interest in their respective practices, it is important to note that, despite textural writing that recalls similar pieces, there is not one indication in his music for “mutations” other than the damper pedal and the \textit{una corda}. There could be many reasons for excluding these markings, particularly in the compositions discussed above that Beethoven may have composed with his newly acquired Erard. The French instruments that offered these pedals were rare in Austria and Germany, as well as in England, so it may not have been practical to include these markings in published works that were meant to be accessible to a widespread market. Also, as Rose and Solomon argue, due to the political atmosphere

\textsuperscript{144} Czerny, \textit{On the Proper Performance}, 12.
of the Napoleonic era, it may not have been wise for Beethoven to ally himself so clearly with a French instrument or school of playing.\textsuperscript{145}

If Beethoven ordered a French instrument from Sébastien Erard after having some acquaintance with music coming out of France, or experience with Haydn’s instrument, and if he displayed such a marked fascination with the French school of pianism, what caused him to lose interest in his Erard piano so quickly? After building the Erard replica, Clarke outlined some of its shortcomings, noting that the overall volume of the Erard piano wasn’t much louder than a contemporary Walter instrument. In addition, Clarke mentions that the damping, although better than on an English instrument, is still too slow to avoid muddying the repeated bass chords in the “Waldstein” Sonata, Op. 53. However, the presence in Vienna of this treasured foreign instrument owned by Beethoven did much to create a stir. Clarke points to the influence of the Erard pianos in Vienna on the Viennese builders. For example, the various mutation stops, as well as the eventual standard mechanism of the divided bridge incorporated into later Viennese-built instruments, may stem from the fashionable French instruments in the Habsburg capital at the time.\textsuperscript{146}

Beethoven’s interest in his Erard piano may have been short-lived, but it played a pivotal role in his compositional development. His keyboard writing in the early years of the nineteenth century reveals knowledge of the French school of pianism and absorption of new techniques. He fervently believed in the Republican ideals of freedom and equality and for a time he was caught up in the Revolutionary fervor. Purchasing a


\textsuperscript{146} Christopher Clarke, e-mail message to author, October 19, 2012.
French instrument was yet another way to become familiar with fashionable French ideals while exploring liberating possibilities in sound. With the Erard piano, Beethoven finally had daily access to an instrument that was not Viennese, one that was capable of a more resonant sound and a grander style of playing. Accordingly, Beethoven adopts many French musical stylistics, including: characteristics of vocal melody; accompaniments that display a shimmering, grand sound; and a new registration that utilizes the expanded top register of the Erard piano. Furthermore, his piano writing adopts the quality of sustained sound associated with the *tremolando* texture and the French aesthetic of *son continu*. He absorbed these qualities and created a “new direction” in his post-Erard works. The next chapter will investigate how Beethoven’s piano writing continues to evolve in conjunction with the innovations in the “second-generation” Viennese instruments produced by the Streicher firm.
Chapter 3

The Streicher Firm and the Emergence of the Orchestral Piano

Despite the burst of creative output that accompanies Beethoven’s purchase of the Erard piano in 1803, he seems to have lost interest in this piano rather quickly. Beethoven sent the piano to be repaired already before 1805, demonstrating his dissatisfaction with the instrument, specifically its touch. Recent organological research about the pianos built by the Streicher firm confirms the centrality and innovation of these instruments in early-nineteenth century Vienna. Accordingly, Michael Latcham has identified three extant instruments by Nannette Streicher, constructed with six-and-a-half octaves and incorporating many new developments, which date from 1807-1809.\textsuperscript{147} Beethoven’s loss of interest in his French Erard piano, as well the new compositional directions that he undertakes during these years, may be understood in light of these new developments in keyboard construction.

There is a gulf of time, between the dissatisfaction and eventual abandonment of his Erard instrument and the arrival of his Broadwood piano, where nothing is known for certain about what piano Beethoven used to compose. The most convincing evidence points to the probability that Beethoven was aware of and used various contemporary Streicher instruments. Consequently, Skowroneck argues that part of the reason for Beethoven’s disenchantment with the Erard piano may have been that it had become outdated.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{147} Latcham, “The development of the Streicher Firm,” 61-62.
\textsuperscript{148} Skowroneck, \textit{Beethoven the Pianist}, 101.
Although Beethoven lost interest in the Erard, the musical innovations that he created while using the instrument continued. I would like to underscore the continuity and consolidation of musical style that can be seen in the persisting innovations influenced by the French school in his subsequent works. Moreover, the merging of Viennese, French, and English elements in Beethoven’s writing of this period creates an increased virtuosity and a grand, orchestral style. How Beethoven’s piano writing continued to evolve in reaction to the merging of Viennese, English, and French influences in the second half of the first decade of the nineteenth century, epitomized in the new design Streicher instruments, is the subject of this chapter.

A report about Streicher’s instruments in contemporary Viennese life demonstrates the association of the newly designed instruments with a full, orchestral sonority. In his *Vertraute Briefe*, Johann Friedrich Reichardt describes a house concert that took place on 7 February 1809 at the home of Nikolaus Zmeskall. Dorothea von Ertmann, a celebrated pupil of Beethoven’s, played a Beethoven fantasy on a Streicher piano:

It was a beautiful Streicher Fortepiano, today brought to life as if it were a whole orchestra. Streicher has abandoned the soft, overly responsive and bouncing rolling of the other Viennese instruments, and – upon Beethoven’s advice and request – has given his instruments more resistance and elasticity, this in order to enable the virtuoso who performs with strength and meaning to have more control over the instrument’s sustaining and carrying [capability], and for the subtle emphases and diminuendos.\(^{149}\)

\(^{149}\) Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *Briefe, die Musik betreffend*, ed. Grita Herre und Walther Siegmund-Schultze (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, 1976), 287; trans., in Skowroneck, *Beethoven the Pianist*, 93. This quotation has been slightly altered. I have inserted the word [capability] rather than using [power].
The quotation alludes to a newly designed instrument capable of a wide dynamic range and more virtuosic effects. How did the Streicher firm create pianos that were capable of achieving a fully “orchestral” sonority? By elucidating Beethoven’s increasing orchestral writing for the piano during this period, I would like to demonstrate the synchronicity between Beethoven’s writing and the contemporary developments in fortepiano construction, especially the Streicher instruments.

It is in the context of Beethoven’s letters, his acquaintance with the English Classical style, the correspondence of Andreas Streicher and Breitkopf & Härtel, and these contemporary instruments that this chapter will examine the changing sonority in the composer’s piano writing, guiding as well as reflecting contemporary technological developments in piano construction. I outline the evolution of musical features in Beethoven’s middle to late period writing that led to Beethoven’s conception of the “orchestral piano.” Using the organological evidence about the new Streicher instruments, I further demonstrate how these elements allowed Beethoven to create this tonal impression. It is my contention that elements of his style progressed partly as a response to the new design pianos, of which he had a demonstrated admiration.

**Orchestral Writing in Beethoven: The Influence of the English Classical Style**

In comparison to their Viennese contemporaries, composers of piano music in the English Classical Style scored much of their piano writing for an increasingly orchestral sonority. Due in a large part to the qualities of contemporary English instruments, the music of Muzio Clementi, Johann Ladislaus Dussek, Johann Baptist Cramer and John Field created a distinct style. For example, in Vienna, during his first continental tour
between 1780-1783, Clementi stated that the ideal piano style was “to imitate with the sound of the piano, the legato style and grandness of the organ and the orchestra.”

Due to the unique qualities of the English instruments, the composers of the English school created a tradition of composing for the piano in an “orchestral style.” Bart van Oort argues that these English style elements could not have originated on the Viennese piano. Thus, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, “virtuosity and grand style” were heralded by the English school. In assessing the music of the English school in relation to the contemporary English fortepianos, van Oort states, “the fullness of tone and the heavier feel of the touch of the English piano lent the style an orchestral grandness.” He argues, “the thicker tone and long after-ring of the English piano gave rise to a full, sometimes chordal style.” In the writing of chords, he observes, “large chords were likely to sound thin in the Viennese treble. Before 1800 (with a number of exceptions in the early sonatas by Beethoven) one therefore only rarely finds treble chords in Viennese, but regularly in English works.” Van Oort also maintains that the use of low bass notes, often in the form of octaves, arose from the need to counteract, initially, the apparently inadequate bass sonority. Often the low bass was used in combination with the high treble in order to create a sense of orchestral colour and depth in the score. Moreover, in summarizing Clementi’s style, van Oort references the

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152 Ibid., 123.
153 Ibid., 109.
154 Ibid., 110.
155 Ibid., 111.
“ample use of the keyboard extremes resulting from the desire for greater brilliance in the treble and greater sonority in the bass.”\textsuperscript{156}

How did the innovations of the orchestral English style further transfer to Beethoven’s music when he came into contact with “English-inspired”\textsuperscript{157} Viennese instruments? The influence of the English and French schools of piano building is palpable and significant in the piano building evolution of the Streicher firm. A review in the \textit{Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung} of 19 May 1807 assessed the impression of an “English-inspired” instrument, manufactured by Breitkopf & Härtel, played by Dussek:

\begin{quote}

The instrument found the deserved applause of all the listeners, especially because of its beautiful singing tone and because of the great advantage that its tone could be modified more sensitively than one is used to hearing, even with the products of the most acclaimed German masters.\textsuperscript{158}
\end{quote}

The reviewer honed in on the singing quality of the sound of the instrument, a quality important to both the English and French schools of pianism. Additionally, van Oort observes that this type of piano was the first in which the Viennese and London aesthetics merged.\textsuperscript{159}

Beethoven’s piano writing demonstrates orchestral qualities even in his early works. Van Oort has identified orchestral writing such as orchestral scoring, wide arpeggiated chords, and brilliant arpeggios. Moreover, he states, “keyboard techniques like successions of large chords, full textures, ample use of the damper register and of the keyboard extremes, and third and octave runs, may in large measure have resulted from

\begin{footnotes}
\item[156] Ibid., 53.
\item[157] Ibid., 50.
\item[159] van Oort, “The English Classical piano style,” 50-51.
\end{footnotes}
[Beethoven’s] knowledge of the English Classical Style.” Van Oort also mentions that, already in his pre-1800 works, Beethoven’s use of “the extreme high and low registers (occasionally at the same time), low octaves, large chords and frequent fortissimo indications, often combined with pedal for sound build-ups lends his music a grandiosity, unequalled by his contemporaries.” How might an “anglicized” instrument further expand the possibilities and influence Beethoven’s pianistic writing? I would like to reference these stylistic features and show how Beethoven was able to further expand and enrich his piano texture in reaction to the new instruments. With the new fortepiano design available to him in Vienna, Beethoven can finally take the English Classical Style and expand its range of options.

It is important to note that these technical, pianistic elements of the English school overlap somewhat with the elements of the French school. Moreover, as van Oort suggests, Beethoven has composed with some of these elements in his early writing, formulated on a Viennese piano. However, as the Streicher firm instruments eventually became “hybrid” models, incorporating elements of Viennese, English, and French instrument designs, so the pianistic language became more sophisticated, a complex-woven kaleidoscope of influences capable of producing a broad range of sounds and textures.

Beethoven’s music has always been linked to his particular instrument. In the case of Beethoven and the pianos of Nannette Streicher in particular, we can follow a story of mutual influence between composer and piano builder. In his compositions the

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160 Ibid., 184.
161 Ibid., 185.
composer was responding to the instruments while locally inspiring renewed creativity on the part of the piano manufacturer.

**Beethoven and the Pianos of Nannette Streicher: The Case for a Streicher Piano**

How far were the changes in the pianos of Nannette Streicher initiated in response to Beethoven’s instrument preferences? Considering the close relationship that Beethoven had with the Streichers this question has been a central one in the historiography of Beethoven’s instrument preferences. Accordingly, Latcham concludes about Nannette and Andreas Streicher’s relationship to Beethoven: “Beethoven counted Nannette and Andreas Streicher as two of his especially good friends and there can be little doubt that they would have been influenced by his opinions and choices.”

Moreover, through their friendship with Beethoven, the Streichers became acquainted with the Erard piano. They also helped put Beethoven’s Broadwood piano, delivered to him in 1818, into order when it arrived at the composer’s home in Vienna. The Streichers maintained a close friendship with Beethoven for mostly the entire time that he lived in Vienna; however, the picture of Beethoven as a “piano reformer” who single-handedly spearheaded the changes in instrument designs has now given way to a more nuanced perspective. While knowledge of Beethoven’s preferences must have exerted some influence on the instruments of the Streicher firm, he was not the only factor in the decision to modify their fortepiano designs in the nineteenth century. Despite demonstrated synchronicities in taste between Beethoven and Andreas Streicher about tone and touch, the pressures of Breitkopf & Härtel as well as the presence of foreign instruments and competition in Vienna all created pressure to modify the Streicher

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Nevertheless, the development in the instruments of the Streicher firm parallels specific changes in Beethoven’s piano writing. There can be little doubt that these contemporaneous transformations were mutually influential and symptomatic of a general trend in pianistic and keyboard writing development.

In the contemporary correspondence of connoisseurs and professional musicians, including both Beethoven and Czerny, there are references to the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century as a moment of great growth in piano designs. Consequently, this period may be aptly described as a watershed moment in many musicians’ minds about piano development.

Beethoven himself endorses the Streicher instruments and mentions the year 1809 as a moment of change in the firm’s designs. The following quotation is from Beethoven’s letter to Nannette Streicher on 7 July 1817 where he acknowledges that he preferred their instruments “from 1809”:

Now a big request to Streicher, ask him in my name if he would be so kind as to orientate one of your pianos more towards my weakened hearing. I need one as loud as it can possibly be. Already for a long time I had the intention of buying one for myself, but at the moment it is very difficult for me. Perhaps it is nevertheless possible for me somewhat later… Perhaps you do not know that although I have not always had one of your pianos, I have always specially preferred them since 1809 – only Streicher is capable of delivering me such a Piano as I require it […]\textsuperscript{164}

As a point of comparison, the new organological research by Latcham substantiates Beethoven’s opinion about the Streicher instruments. By examining the extant pianos of the Streicher firm, Latcham has identified a rapid and substantial

development from a somewhat reactionary piano in the early years of the nineteenth century to “some of the largest and most powerful [pianos] in Vienna if not in Europe.”

His research mirrors Beethoven’s claim about the timing of developments in the Streicher instruments.

Moreover, the correspondence between Beethoven and Andreas Streicher demonstrates their frequent communication and the reality that Beethoven possibly borrowed and tried out several Streicher instruments during these years, perhaps at his request or at the request of the builder. The next letters to survive written to Andreas Streicher mentioning his instruments date from 1810. Presumably, Beethoven was borrowing an instrument for a time, and he asks Streicher to ensure that his instruments do not wear out so quickly. Beethoven also mentions that he has heard other people complain of this:

Here, dear Streicher, are the letters which I am letting you see so as to avoid any further formalities – But I do ask you to ensure that the instruments do not wear out so quickly – You have seen your instrument which I have here and you must admit that it is very worn out; and I frequently hear the same opinion expressed by other people –

From this correspondence, we can see that Beethoven had an instrument in his possession at this time. He seems very familiar with both the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary Streicher instruments. Furthermore, in July 1810, there are two more letters from Beethoven to Andreas Streicher about “having chosen” an instrument:

I can’t help it, the pianoforte beside the door near your entrance is constantly ringing in my ears – I feel sure that I shall be thanked for

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166 Ludwig van Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, May 6, 1810, in Anderson The Letters of Beethoven, Vol. 1, 271.
having chosen this one – So do send it. If you think that it may be even heavier than you suppose, why, we can easily get over that difficulty.\footnote{Ludwig van Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, shortly before July, 1810, in Anderson \textit{The Letters of Beethoven}, Vol. 1, 281.}

July 27, 1810
Here is my name to stick on… Charge to me the full cost of delivery – Today everything here is in confusion.\footnote{Ludwig van Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, July 27, 1810, in Anderson \textit{The Letters of Beethoven}, Vol. 1, 281.}

Once again, these letters show that Beethoven is at least familiar with the new Streicher instruments; Beethoven may be choosing instruments for others or himself.

The next two letters deal specifically with Beethoven again borrowing a Streicher instrument. In the first letter, from 18 September 1810, Beethoven also references his Erard instrument as “useless” and seems to indicate that he wants to get rid of it:

As I shall be back in Vienna by the beginning of October, let me know whether I may again have a piano from you – My French piano is no longer of much use; in fact it is quite useless. Perhaps you can advise me where we can find a home for it.\footnote{Ludwig van Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, September 18, 1810, in Anderson \textit{The Letters of Beethoven}, Vol. 1, 292.}

Middle of November, 1810
You promised to let me have a piano by the end of October; and now we are already half through November and as yet I haven’t received one – My motto is either to play on a good instrument or not at all – as for my French piano, which is certainly quite useless now, I still have misgivings about selling it, for it is really a souvenir such as no one here has so far honoured me with – …..In regard to the remover, if any further damage was done to the instrument perhaps while in my possession, which is quite possible in view of the state of my household at that time, then let me know this frankly, for I am perfectly willing, of course, to compensate you for the loss.

All good wishes, if you send me a p\{ianoforte\};
If not, then all bad wishes.\footnote{Ludwig van Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, November, 1810, in Anderson \textit{The Letters of Beethoven}, Vol. 1, 300.}
There are several conclusions that can be made from the previous quotations. It is possible that Beethoven never owned a Streicher instrument permanently, but from all of this correspondence it seems very likely that he borrowed Streicher instruments for extended periods from some time after his Erard instrument became “useless” through to almost the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century, with the delivery of the Broadwood piano.

Beethoven’s observations are mostly positive; he uses the most flattering language when declaring that he has always specially preferred the Streicher instruments. Perhaps he speaks so positively in the preceding letter from 1817 where he declares that he “specially prefers” the Streicher instruments because he asks for a favour. Nevertheless, I believe the most important point in the letter is the date of 1809. This coincides with the remodeling of the Streicher firm’s instruments, of which we have ample organological confirmation, and Beethoven seems to be endorsing this new design.

A recounting from Czerny about meeting Andreas Streicher corroborates this view of the Streicher instruments:

In 1807 I met Andreas Streicher, a former piano teacher, who had begun to manufacture pianofortes; by devoting much thought to it, and by imitating English instruments, he was able to give his own a fuller tone and a firmer mechanism than older pianofortes had had.\cite{Czerny}

The reminiscences of Czerny and Beethoven both demonstrate a synchronicity in the timing of the evolution of the Streicher instruments. Czerny recounts events from the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century while Beethoven specifically states that from 1809, he always preferred Streicher’s pianos. Both seem to imply that the Streicher firm

\cite{Czerny} Czerny, On the Proper Performance, 6.
were pioneers in this respect in Vienna. Once again, this corroborates with the Latcham research about the early six-and-a-half octave instruments.

In a reminiscence from the generation after Beethoven, Czerny again refers to the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century as a pivotal time in Viennese piano development. He patronizes the earlier pianos of Beethoven’s time: “…as [Beethoven’s] playing as well as his compositions were ahead of his time, the extremely weak and imperfect fortepianos of that time (until about 1810) could often not yet support his gigantic performance.”\(^\text{172}\) This quotation is perhaps more an example of Czerny’s opinions about piano manufacturing than Beethoven’s; however, it also alludes to a metamorphosis in piano designs at this time and once again recalls Beethoven’s letter where he declared that he preferred Streicher’s instruments “from 1809.” The timing of Beethoven’s observation exactly coincides with Czerny’s about the state of pianos. Thus, this seems to have been a pivotal moment in many musicians’ minds about piano manufacturing. This was the moment that the Viennese designs merged with English and French influences to create a hybrid Viennese design incorporating power and singing tone with lightness of attack and execution. To analyze this transformation in fortepiano design and manufacturing, let us retrace the steps that the Streicher firm undertook that led to the Streicher piano model that Beethoven endorses.

**The Streicher Firm and the Correspondence with Breitkopf & Härtel: A Juxtaposition with Recent Organology**

In the correspondence between Andreas Streicher and Breitkopf & Härtel, we can analyze step-by-step the changes in fortepiano design and taste through the evolution of

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\(^\text{172}\) Ibid., 16.
the Streicher instruments.\textsuperscript{173} Lütge’s article is an account of the approximately 60-letter correspondence between Streicher and Breitkopf & Härtel; the article was written before the correspondence was partially destroyed during WWII. This oft-cited correspondence receives justification when juxtaposed with recent organological evidence. Along with this documentary account, the analysis of Michael Latcham of the extant Streicher instruments demonstrates their gradual transformation. In the following analysis, the specifics of the extant Streicher models add further details to the evolving story of the instruments.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the pianos of the Streicher firm underwent a series of extensive changes in sound and construction. By the second half of the first decade (ca. 1805 onwards), the firm made among the loudest and most impressive pianos in Europe. What prompted the changes to the Streicher firm pianos? How did the Streicher pianos, so conservative in the early years of the nineteenth century, become leaders in fortepiano design and manufacture?

The timing of the negotiation between the Streicher firm and Breitkopf & Härtel and the consequent instrument evolution is very important in the history of Viennese piano construction. At a time parallel to Beethoven, the Streicher firm combined the Viennese touch with the tone and durability of the English and French instruments to create a hybrid piano that was more agile and versatile. Beethoven may not have directly caused the changes in piano manufacture, but they happened parallel to his keyboard developments, and it is my contention that the transformation in pianos and Beethoven’s stylistic evolution were mutually influential.

From October 1802, Breitkopf & Härtel was the sole agent in Saxony for the Streicher instruments. In 1804, Breitkopf’s dealer in Vienna, Georg August Griesinger, wrote to Streicher urging him to alter his designs. The following quotations are excerpts from the negotiation between Andreas Streicher and Breitkopf & Härtel about making changes to the Streicher instruments in reaction to the contemporary innovations of the English and French instruments that were becoming more popular.

The following letter, written by Griesinger, was addressed to Andreas Streicher in December, 1804. Here he observes the growing market pressure among amateur players for stronger instruments:

There are many Liebhaber, especially those who often play with a louder and fuller tone than your instruments possess, either in concert or otherwise with a powerful accompaniment. They therefore keep to English, French, Schanz-Müller’sche instruments and to the other German masters. To these belong for example all the piano players of the Clementi and Dussek schools and most especially the Russians and the northern Germans.”

Griesinger mentions the Liebhaber in this letter to convince Andreas Streicher of the market pressure for more powerful instruments. To strengthen his argument, Griesinger also uses the example of Clementi, a famous touring pianist from the English school, to bolster his request:

Mr. Clementi, who currently has toured through Germany and Russia, etc., has underscored this taste even more. He stayed two months with us and chose to use from our stock during that time the loudest instrument with the heaviest touch…

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175 de Silva, The Fortepiano Writings of Streicher, Dieudonné, and the Schiedmayers, 19.
This correspondence sparked the beginning of a series of alterations in the Streicher design pianos, culminating in the “orchestral piano.”

To demonstrate the initial changes made by the Streicher firm, we can turn to organological research. In Latcham’s article documenting the surviving instruments of the Streicher firm, he describes an 1805 piano in detail. Entitled “1805: The beginnings of change” this section examines the alterations that the Streicher firm made for their instruments to create a louder tone.

The innovations that the Streicher firm made included fitting the instruments with eleven narrow soundboard ribs instead of seven or eight, making the soundboard stiffer and capable of producing more sound with heavier hammers.\(^{176}\) Already in the 1805 instrument that Latcham analyzes, the hammers are indeed taller and broader. Additionally, the hammers are covered with five layers of leather in the bass, instead of one thin layer, and the larger and more cushioned striking surface would have given a rounder and more malleable tone. The *Kapseln* are made of brass instead of wood, probably giving a quicker response, and there are individual hammer checks for each hammer (instead of none at all) that probably enabled a wider dynamic range.\(^{177}\) This instrument features triple stringing from a# upwards. It also has a *Schaldeckel*, a second soundboard covering the area of the soundboard and the strings.\(^{178}\) Additionally, there were two metal overhead gap spacers that were “probably the result of English and

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\(^{176}\) Latcham, “The development of the Streicher Firm,” 59-60.

\(^{177}\) See discussion about German vs. Viennese fortepiano actions in Chapter 1, pp. 13-14. The Streicher firm made the change from wooden to brass *Kapseln* much later than other contemporary Viennese builders, such as Anton Walter.

\(^{178}\) Latcham surmises that the first *Schaldeckel* known in Vienna may have been the one in Beethoven’s 1803 piano by Erard or perhaps, the one in the piano given to Haydn in 1801. Latcham, “The development of the Streicher Firm,” 60.
French influence.”  

Finally, “the escapement hoppers are provided with individual regulation screws. These allow for the adjustment of the escapement hoppers forwards or backwards to make each individual hammer escape higher or lower.”

In summary, this instrument was the first of many successful experiments to augment the tone and create more resonant and durable instruments.

The Streicher firm conceded to the market pressures and eventually transformed their designs towards instruments that were louder. Nevertheless, Andreas Streicher was at pains to retain the lightness and flexibility of tone that were characteristic of the Viennese instruments. His answer from a letter in 1805 demonstrates his sound priorities:

…”my newer instruments are not inferior to any others in the strength of the sound or as far as inner or outer solidity is concerned. It would be easy for us to make them louder still but the flexibility of the tone would then suffer.”

Despite the considerable changes that the Streicher firm was willing to incorporate in their instruments, in his letters, Andreas Streicher was adamant about retaining the “Viennese” touch. The Streicher firm took considerable pains to preserve the flexibility of tone, lightness of touch, and soft dynamic shadings for which their instruments were known.

Significantly, this negotiation between sound and touch parallels Beethoven’s odyssey with his Erard. As he originally coveted the louder sound and rounder tone of the instrument, he became dissatisfied with it and ultimately tried to alter its touch. As in

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179 Ibíd., 60.
180 Ibíd., 60.
the Kurze Bemerkungen über das Spielen, Stimmen und Erhalten der Fortepiano welche von Nannette Streicher, geborne Stein in Wien, verfertiget werden, once again, Andreas Streicher uses Beethoven as an authority to defend his piano designs. He stresses the synchronicity between the Streicher instruments and Beethoven’s keyboard preferences. In a subsequent letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, Andreas Streicher refers to Beethoven to defend his own views against augmenting the sound of the instrument at the expense of the light, flexible touch:

There is one remark in your letter with which I cannot concur, namely [that regarding] the heavier action and deeper [key] fall of pianos such as Clementi demands. I can assure you from twofold experience that a pianist can become accustomed much sooner to a poor tone, dragging, sticking of the keys, and all kinds of [other] evils than to the heavy action and even less to deep fall of the keys….it is also certain that then the fortepiano surely will not be the universal instrument any longer, whereby at least nine-tenths of the keyboard amateurs will have to give up their playing. Beethoven certainly is a strong pianist [kräftiger Spieler], yet up to now he still is not able properly to manage his fortepiano received from Erard in Paris, and has already had it changed twice without making it the least bit better, since the construction of the same does not allow a different mechanism. 182

Thus, Streicher details that Beethoven himself, a “kräftiger Spieler” has been unable to manage the instrument and has had it sent back twice, due to the perceived defects in touch.

We can turn to organology once more to corroborate Beethoven’s alleged preferences of touch. The work of the organologist, Alfons Huber, corroborates this history, as his investigations on the Erard reveal attempts to alter the action on two separate occasions. There is evidence that alterations were made to reduce the key dip

and the weight of the keys. Notably, this corresponds with Andreas Streicher’s information that he related to Griesinger.\(^{183}\)

Skowroneck outlines Huber’s breakdown of changes made to the Erard: “it is obvious that whoever made these changes did so in an attempt to give the Erard the equivalent of a Viennese key dip.”\(^{184}\) He concludes:

…despite Streicher’s description of Beethoven as a “strong player”, the technical circumstances give evidence of the fact that these alterations did *not* have the objective of making the Erard action heavier; the contrary is evident. If the initial modification had the objective of reducing the key dip according to the Viennese ideal, all the subsequent changes can be interpreted as efforts to *regain* a controllable touch, which had become heavier as a result of the first operation. This conclusion is vital for understanding Beethoven’s technical approach. The notion that he, at this time, was longing for instruments with a heavier touch cannot be maintained.\(^{185}\)

Thus, Beethoven clearly became dissatisfied with the touch of the Erard instrument. As Streicher details in his correspondence, this information makes the most likely case that Beethoven himself preferred the touch of the Viennese instruments.

In 1806, Andreas Streicher triumphantly comments on his new instrument model. In a conciliatory manner, he compliments the tone of the English and French pianos, while feeling confident that his own new instruments surpass them. Writing to Härtel in March of that year, he notes:

You say you are anxious about my opinion of the English and French pianos and I may say right away that I have absolutely and always preferred the tone of those instruments above all others. But the construction of the keyboard is so opposed to the build of the hand that I can hardly think of anything more inappropriate; the whole action is as little durable as it is fitting for a true performance. The future will

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\(^{184}\) Skowroneck, *Beethoven the Pianist*, 92.

\(^{185}\) Ibid., 93.
persuade you that I am certainly not being partial [...] I have sought to
unite this tone with the action to which we are accustomed, and if I may
trust the opinions of the best piano players and amateurs here, I have
succeeded tolerably. 186

The recent organological research once again confirms the historical discourse.

The previously discussed 1805 Streicher instrument (no. 673) demonstrates the
considerable pains to which the Streichers went to change the sound; however, that
instrument has neither an una corda or a moderator. A fundamental part of the design,
the layout of the keyboard, had to be altered radically in order to incorporate this
device. 187 This adjustment was added to instruments in subsequent years.

Analysis of the extant Streicher instruments from 1807 and 1808 demonstrates the
innovations of the new design Streicher instruments. The only Streicher design piano
that survives from 1807 (no. 733) 188 is an impressive and innovative six-and-a-half
octave piano, with a range from CC-f, veneered in mahogany and decorated with ormolu
mounts. It must be a close match to the new instrument that Andreas Streicher boasts
about in his preceding letter. This is the oldest surviving instrument to have the bassoon
stop, the moderator, and the una corda. Both pedals and knee levers are present for
raising the dampers, for the bassoon stop and for the moderator. There is also a knee
lever for the una corda. This is the last known Streicher instrument to use knee levers. 189

The stringing is heavier in the 1807 piano, especially in the treble register; the
total tension of the strings in this piano would be about double than that of an 1802-1804
period Stein piano. Additionally, for the first time the bridge is divided. The triple

186 Lütge, “Andreas und Nannette Streicher,” 66; trans. in Latcham, “The development of
the Streicher Firm,” 60.
187 Ibid., 61.
188 Ibid., see the Tables on pp. 67-70.
189 Ibid., 61.
stringing is extended down to D, leaving only fifteen notes with two strings each. In the earlier of the two surviving pianos from 1808 (no. 763), the triple-stringing is extended downward three semitones, leaving only one octave of the piano with bichord stringing.\(^{190}\)

As far as is known, the Streicher firm produced pianos of six octaves, FF to f\(^4\), as well as six-and-a-half octaves, CC to f\(^4\), in the period between 1807 and 1823. Latcham concludes that “the 1807 and 1808 instruments already include all of the major innovations made in the pianos by the Streicher firm between 1796 and 1820, at least in relation to those features which have to do directly with the production of the sound.” Thus, the important innovations found in the 1807 piano must have made Streicher’s instruments amongst the largest and most powerful instruments in Vienna if not in Europe.\(^{191}\)

In summary, the Streicher firm, due to a diverse range of market pressures as well as artistic reasons, combined the full sound of the English and French instruments with the coveted Viennese flexibility and lightness of touch, as well as extending the range of their instruments. An investigation of Beethoven’s music helps demonstrate a synchronicity between the new fortepiano design in Vienna and his piano writing.

The goal of the chapter thus far has been to elucidate the newest design in Viennese circles – the Streicher instrument – and to demonstrate its central place in contemporary Viennese piano culture. The correspondence between Beethoven and Andreas and Nannette Streicher shows that Beethoven was aware of the Streicher

\(^{190}\) Ibid., 62.
\(^{191}\) Ibid., 62.
instruments and appreciated them. Indeed, the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century may be aptly termed as a watershed moment in the history of piano construction according to the contemporary opinions of amateurs as well as professional musicians, including both Beethoven and Czerny. Recent organological research also confirms this historiographical viewpoint.

The following section will demonstrate examples of Beethoven’s musical evolution during this period that mirror contemporary developments in fortepiano construction. Several prominent works in Beethoven’s output display enduring stylistic elements, the combination of which meld together to create an “orchestral” sonority. Based on their musical elements, their keyboard range (these pieces mostly employ the 6-octave range), and their chronology, being composed in the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century to the first years of the next decade, these include: the 32 Variations in C minor, WoO 80; Sonata in F-sharp major, Op. 78; Sonata in E-flat major, “Les Adieux”, Op. 81a; the Choral Fantasy in C major, Op. 80; Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, “Emperor”, Op. 73; and the Trio in B-flat major, “Archduke”, Op. 97. These pieces, dating from the years 1806-1811, form the core of the following overview of lyrical and orchestral keyboard writing.

**Light Viennese Touch**

In Beethoven’s works written after his disillusionment with the Erard piano, we can see a return to rapid finger work that suggests the touch of the Viennese instruments. The light action and shallow key dip of the Viennese instruments reflects Andreas Streicher’s insistence on a touch that would appeal to professionals as well as keyboard amateurs. Evidenced in Beethoven’s writing, Skowroneck and Newman maintain that
this is also a manifestation of Beethoven’s return to a preference for Viennese instruments. This writing could be a tangible sign of the instrument that Beethoven used, or at least had in mind, when he composed certain works that demand a rapid finger action and a correspondingly quick individual key response.

After many decades of building the German Stein action, the Streicher firm incorporated the use of a backcheck in their instruments in 1805, presumably giving their instruments more dynamic range as well as more control of individual notes in rapid passagework. In the 32 Variations in C minor, WoO 80, composed in 1806, the first and second variations are almost a study in rapid finger technique, necessitating a piano with a rapid response for repeated-note figurations. Accordingly, Skowroneck calls attention to the first variation as “evidence of Beethoven’s lack of interest in the Erard.”

Example 3.1 32 Variations in C minor, WoO 80, (mm. 8-24), First Edition, Bureau des Arts et d’Industrie, 545.

Skowroneck also cites the Sonata in F-sharp major, Op. 78, written in 1809, as an example of Beethoven’s return to rapid finger work in his piano writing. The fastidious

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second movement of this sonata suggests the availability of a responsive instrument with the light Viennese action.

Example 3.2 Sonata in F-sharp major, Op. 78, 2\textsuperscript{nd} movement, (mm. 57-62), First Edition, Breitkopf und Härtel, 1567.

In the Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 81a, composed in 1809-1810, the characteristically difficult passages of the first movement of the sonata are noteworthy. The fast succession of three-note chords in the right hand (Ex. 3.3) play much more easily on an instrument with the typical light action and shallow key dip of the Viennese instruments.


Additionally, Newman writes, “one would need only to recall the light, rapid finger work required in the finale of Op. 81a and the second movement of Op. 106 to guess that Beethoven still had the Viennese pianos in mind late in his life.”\textsuperscript{194} Example 3.4 exemplifies this compositional aspect in “Les Adieux.” Solo piano works with

\textsuperscript{194} Newman, \textit{Beethoven On Beethoven}, 63.
passagework like this imply that Beethoven had access to instruments that could inspire and realize these features.


**Sustained Lyricism**

We have already seen Beethoven’s inclination for sustained sound in his early use of legato in his full chords.\(^{195}\) This penchant for the *legato* style persisted in his writing throughout his lifetime. Indeed, as Lockwood comments, “melodic invention and melodic integrity, which run through his work like a spinal column, remain essential right to the end and, if anything, grow in significance.”\(^{196}\) For instance, in a quotation from this period, when Reichardt heard Beethoven as a soloist in his Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 58, in 1808, he wrote of the middle movement: “[in] the Adagio, a masterpiece of lovely drawn-out melody, [Beethoven] truly sang on his instrument with deep, melancholy feeling that moved me to the core.”\(^{197}\) This steady use of *legato* textures

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\(^{195}\) See discussion of Czerny’s quotations in Chapter 1, pp. 16-17.


reflects his lifelong requirement for a piano that could fulfill these wishes.

The legato style and sustained lyricism of Beethoven’s writing in this period heralds the intense lyricism of his late piano writing. The scoring for the fortepiano in equal parts with string instruments, with long slurs, denotes Beethoven’s affinity for the string quartet medium, but it also reveals the increased sustaining qualities of the contemporary instruments.

Although the composition was begun quite early, Beethoven’s “Archduke” Trio in B-flat major, Op. 97, has been analyzed as an early example of Beethoven’s late style. Czerny mentions the “Archduke” Trio in his memoirs: “[it] appears to have been composed at long intervals. As early as 1807 his friends were talking about a big Trio in B flat that he was working on.” The “Archduke” Trio effectively demonstrates Beethoven’s mature lyricism. The opening of the trio features an extended lyricism and an overall sustained texture in the strings that is matched in the writing for piano. For instance, the first theme itself begs the continuous use of the sustaining pedal. The legato octaves written above a sustained, repeated broken-chord bass require the pedal for a true legato.

Czerny’s comments about the “Archduke” Trio, Op. 97, relay additional performance and expressive indications. The opening theme in the first edition is slurred thus:


However, Czerny’s commentary on the performance of Beethoven’s works in *The Complete Theoretical and Practical Pianoforte School, Op. 500* adds additional slurs to this sustained theme. He indicates this by notating a long legato slur above the theme:

Example 3.6 Trio in B-flat major, “Archduke”, Op. 97, 1st movement, (mm. 1-8), from Czerny’s *Complete Theoretical and Practical Pianoforte School, Op. 500*.

The elided slurs in the treble and bass registers of the second line also enhance the psychological effect of the theme; although the right hand exhibits short slur indications, the left hand begins a two-bar directional momentum that is the chief expressive element of the theme. In this opening the shorter slur indications take second place to the slowly-unfolding continuity of the melodic line. Beethoven anticipates the long, sweeping lines characteristic of music in later generations in this Trio.
A further example of Beethoven’s evolving lyricism in piano writing is in the second movement of the Piano Concerto No. 5, Op. 73, dating from 1809-1811. Nicknamed “Emperor”, this concerto demonstrates once again Beethoven’s use of the sustaining pedal to create a continuous resonance and, ultimately, a long, drawn-out melody. Due to the damper pedal, Beethoven can sustain a cascading melody above two-measure long harmonies. It is noteworthy that Beethoven marks the pedal to be depressed for the entire length of each harmony; here the effect of the long melody relies heavily on the use of the damper pedal.

Example 3.7 Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, “Emperor”, Op. 73, 2\textsuperscript{nd} movement, (mm. 15-22), First Edition, Klavierstimme, Breitkopf und Härtel, 1613.

In contrast to the previous examples from the French school of pianism, where the accompaniments enhanced the brilliant \textit{Harmonie} of the French instruments, the accompanimental figures in Beethoven’s music in this period often demonstrate a changing sonorous aesthetic in keeping with the greater sustaining power of the contemporary instruments. In the “Archduke” Trio, the piano accompanimental figure to the main theme consists of a gentle undulation of broken chord textures. This repeated chordal accompaniment is not unlike a \textit{tremolo} texture, but since it is played at a slower pace, every note is heard in the texture. The ability to sustain a pedaled texture without
rapid-fire *tremolo* notes speaks to the sustaining qualities of the contemporary instruments. An earlier model piano would likely not have the ability to create a sustained cushion of sound at such a measured pace.

Example 3.8 Trio in B-flat major, “Archduke”, Op. 97, 1\(^{st}\) movement, (mm. 13-23).

In contrast to the iridescent accompaniments to highlight the *Harmonie* in the French-inspired textures, these quieter and more measured accompaniments speak to the sustaining qualities of these instruments and the extended lyricism that they permitted thereby. The following example also could look like a *tremolo* texture, if the pace were more brilliant. The successful sustaining power of these kinds of figures relies on the respective changes to the instruments.
Example 3.9 Trio in B-flat major, “Archduke”, Op. 97, 2nd movement, (mm. 239-254).

Finally, Beethoven’s lyricism in the “Archduke” Trio extends his pianistic legato writing to parallel the writing in the strings. In this trio, Beethoven scores for an extended legato with the strings and piano playing the same material. This kind of heavily slurred melody is written parallel to the strings; Beethoven uses the same writing for both the strings and piano. This passage highlights Beethoven’s desire for an instrument that could achieve a string-like legato along with the increased sustaining qualities of the newly designed instruments.

**Orchestral Sonority**

As the Streicher firm, along with other Viennese builders at the time, were incorporating and amalgamating elements from English and French piano building traditions, so did Beethoven’s music employ a wide palette of tonal and registral possibilities. The music of this period features innovations such as Beethoven’s use of the full 6-octave range of the instrument; extended pedal techniques; a thickly-scored fullness of sonority; and, in concerto writing, a dramatic handling of the piano part as an equal to the orchestra.

Beethoven had a demonstrated admiration for composers of the English school and he incorporated some pianistic elements into his own early writing. His musical library contained all of the Clementi sonatas, characteristic examples of the English
Classical piano style. As van Oort states, Beethoven’s music displayed aspects of English influence from early on: “Beethoven’s style shows elements of the English style. Techniques include the adoption of a legato basic touch, extensive use of the damper register, superior virtuosity, and a grand, orchestral scoring.” These characteristics were evident in Beethoven’s music before this time, but it is a question of degree. With an instrument at his disposal that could anticipate these effects, he was able to further expand his sonorous range.

Allied to the creation of orchestral sound on the keyboard was an expanded keyboard range. Beethoven employs an increase in range in his works during this period, extending from the 5.5-octave range of his Erard piano (FF-c⁴) to a full Viennese 6-octave range (FF-f⁴). In many cases, he uses the expanded range to increase the virtuosity possible on the instrument. This heightened virtuosity is visible in many ways. For example, the highest and lowest notes of the 6-octave range are often reached during virtuosic sections such as cascades of broken octaves or extended passagework. Mostly, Beethoven doesn’t have to leave out lower octave notes with this new range and he can write scales driving upwards to the topmost note of the keyboard. These extremes of register are usually reached at climax points in pieces.

A clear example of Beethoven exploiting the technical possibilities of the new range is in his Choral Fantasy in C minor, Op. 80. Composed in late 1808 for the Akademie Concert of 22 December that included the premieres of the 5th and 6th symphonies as well as the Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 58, the piece was first published in

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200 van Oort, “The English Classical piano style,” 188.
201 The Viennese 6-octave range extended from FF-f⁴ and it is distinguished from the English 6-octave range, from CC-c⁴.
July, 1811. The full six-octave range is demonstrated in this written-out cadenza in the Finale movement:

Example 3.11 Choral Fantasy in C minor, Op. 80, Finale movement, (m. 375).

Beethoven takes full advantage of the psychological effect of grandeur and consummate virtuosity by scoring this cadenza-like arpeggio utilizing the lowermost to the uppermost notes of the piano range. He uses writing that speeds up the keyboard in a sweeping diminished seventh arpeggio, encompassing the full range of the instrument. This performance effect of playing a flourish that includes the entire range of the keyboard can only truly be achieved using an instrument with this 6-octave range. These flourishes are common in the concerto writing of these years where Beethoven celebrates the expanded range for virtuosic effect.

The height of virtuosity is achieved by using the expanded range in the introduction to the Choral Fantasy. In the following climax of the introduction (Example 3.12), Beethoven composes a phenomenal buildup of energy and sound. The sforzandi markings punctuate the flying right-hand octaves while the left hand dives down to the lowest depths of the keyboard. The repeated alternating octaves in the right hand create a sonorous wall, as the left hand passage that descends lower with each 4-note figuration
creates a buildup of sound and intention, leading finally to the low FF and FF# octaves, the lowest notes of the Viennese 6-octave instrument. Once again using the expanded register to increase the virtuosic capabilities, Beethoven exploits almost the entire range of the keyboard to create this all-encompassing sonority.


The overall expressive intention of this passage is one of grandeur and magnificence. In this improvised introduction to his Fantasy for chorus and orchestra, Beethoven has combined the use of range, the damper pedal and the brilliant passagework to create a grand, orchestral style. With these examples, we can see how
Beethoven exploits the increased 6-octave range to create an orchestral sonority.

Beethoven uses extended pedal techniques to achieve an orchestral sonority in his piano writing of this period. William Newman has outlined several uses for Beethoven’s scoring for the pedals, including “sustaining the bass, improving the legato, creating a collective or composite sound, implementing dynamic contrasts, interconnecting sections or movements, blurring the sound through harmonic clashes, and even contributing to the thematic structure.”

How Beethoven combines sustained bass notes with novel textures above to create a unique, composite sonority is worthy of further discussion.

The “Emperor” Concerto in E-flat major, Op. 73, demonstrates some similar pedal and sonorous effects that Beethoven first used in his Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 58. In the exposition of the concerto, Beethoven once again imitates bells by writing staccato notes in the uppermost register of the treble range while the left hand plays low bass notes to ring through the upper texture. The continuous wash of pedal is necessary to create a shimmering yet transparent tonal effect.


Beethoven’s works from this period often demonstrate a continuation of extended pedal techniques as in the earlier Erard works, but with thicker chordal textures to create a denser resonance. In the “Archduke” Trio, there are many examples of writing that

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203 See the discussion in Chapter 2, pp. 56-57.
demand the use of the sustaining pedal as a continuous presence in the musical texture. For instance, in the following example from the third movement, Beethoven notates a bass octave to be held for the entire harmony. The difference in this writing from the “Erard” works discussed earlier is in how Beethoven fills in the rest of the harmony for the duration of the bar. It is notable that Beethoven has scored for both hands to fill in the harmonic texture to accompany the melody in the violin and cello. This creates a fuller and thicker resonance contrasting with the transparent brilliance that Beethoven often scored for in the French-inspired music.


In the Choral Fantasy, Beethoven once again uses pedal techniques that, amplifying the resonance of the piano, endeavour to compete with and equal the sound of an orchestra. In the opening measures of the piece, Beethoven notates *fortissimo* bass
octaves and answering right and left hand full chords that are to be sustained by the pedal while he fills in the chordal rainbow of sound above these punctuated blasts.


The damper pedal is an indispensable tool to create the buildup of resonance to sustain these grand pianistic gestures. In this next example, taken from the piano introduction of the Choral Fantasy, Beethoven has notated particularly long pedal markings. He scores for a wide range within the texture and thick, repeated five-note chords to build up the sound. He also writes a swarm of notes under the same pedal.
In the concerto writing during this period, the culmination of Beethoven’s writing for piano and orchestra during his lifetime, Beethoven envisions an instrument that can be an equal partner with the orchestra. This was an ambitious proposition for the time. In the *Complete Theoretical and Practical Pianoforte School*, Op. 500, published in 1846, Czerny comments about the state of the pianos in relation to the orchestra:

> With the present perfection of the Pianoforte, which, in power and fullness of tone, vies with the instruments of the orchestra, the performance of a Concerto is more easy and grateful, than at the time when Beethoven himself played….We can now therefore produce effects of which we had then no idea; and, in reference to the expression, we can now also reckon on a much more accurate accompaniment on the part of the orchestra, than was the case at that period.\(^{204}\)

Czerny’s observation alludes to an “evolution” in pianos that he witnessed during his lifetime. This manual was written as late as 1846, but Czerny made comments about the evolved “perfection” of the instrument earlier in the manual. As already stated, Czerny dates 1810 with the time of transformation in fortepiano designs, coinciding with the

\(^{204}\) Czerny, *On the Proper Performance*, 93.
developments in the design of the Streicher instruments. Thus, the notion of concerto
writing for a piano soloist that could be the equal to the orchestra begins at this time,
coinciding with piano instrumental developments.

In the opening of the “Emperor” Concerto, Op. 73, Beethoven’s immediate
cadenza passages in the piano part embellish the orchestral tutti chord. Rhetorically, this
writing immediately establishes the piano part as a strong presence, one that accents and
completes the bold effect of the orchestra. With this bold and unique piano statement,
Beethoven launches the solo piano part into an equal sphere with the full orchestra.
Commenting on the psychological role of the piano vs. the orchestra in this concerto, Robert Levin describes the acoustical reality of this writing when played with historical instruments:

[Beethoven’s] keyboard writing exploits the entirety of the six-octave range (from [FF] to $f^4$) then available, colliding characteristically against both extremes, and most assuredly challenges the hegemony of the orchestra; but it is astonishing what an acoustic struggle this entails with instruments of Beethoven’s time. In fact there is a manifest inequality of mass: the orchestra could conceivably crush the protagonist at any moment. It is this that renders Beethoven’s vision so much more thrilling, as he mocks the odds.205

In comparison to the modern piano, a historical instrument seems to struggle to match the sound of the orchestra, but contemporary musicians must have heard a manifest increase in volume of sound with these new instruments. In addition, the writing itself indicates the relationship between the piano and orchestra that Beethoven envisioned and it takes a much more commanding role in the Emperor Concerto than in his previous concerti. In this concerto writing, Beethoven exploits these characteristics to the fullest and also heralds the future due to the qualities of the contemporary instruments.

In the Piano Concerto No. 5, Czerny also gives an example of piano writing that challenges the power of the orchestra. For instance, in the following fortissimo example, Beethoven writes a forceful answer in the piano part to the repeated tutti chords in the orchestra.

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Czerny states in his playing manual, “the succeeding chords must vie in power with the orchestra; so also the octaves, which, however, subsequently decrease to pianissimo and rallentando.”

Example 3.18 Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, “Emperor”, Op. 73, 1st movement, (mm. 304-310).

This is a striking example of parallel writing between the orchestra and the piano. In this excerpt, the piano part has the dominant role, for it forcefully answers the orchestra four times with crashing chords and introduces a new eighth-note rhythmic motive – the final word in the argument. With the instrumental arrangement of this excerpt, Beethoven makes a psychological statement about the force of the newly designed pianos of his time.

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206 Czerny, On the Proper Performance, 103.
Another notable example where the piano part embellishes and seeks to sustain the resonance of a full *fortissimo* chord in the orchestra is found in the first movement of the “Emperor” Concerto. Beethoven once again writes the fullest possible A-flat major chord in the piano part, using four notes in each hand and spacing the chord in the low and middle registers of the keyboard, the registers with the most carrying power. To sustain this full resonance, Beethoven writes an indication for the damper pedal to be held down and then fills in the sound amply with broken chords that climb the height of the keyboard and octaves that descend to the depths. This piano passagework is a majestic and virtuosic embellishment of sound that sufficiently answers the sustained chordal mass played in the full orchestra.


These previous examples highlight the thickness of sonority and virtuosic embellishment with which Beethoven now exploits the entire range of colour on the piano. These “orchestral” sonorities combine all elements in the pianistic range, utilizing the damper pedal to create a low pedal point and filling in the entire range above the bass note.
In summary, the preceding examples demonstrate how, in certain writing from this period, Beethoven scored for his conception of an “orchestral piano.” He utilized effects of the newer instruments such as a greater keyboard and dynamic range, rapid-repeating touch, and extended pedal techniques to create his grand, orchestral sonority. In the concerto writing, Beethoven also places these moments at key points in pieces that assert the pianist’s powerful role, such as the introduction to the Choral Fantasy and the opening of the “Emperor” Concerto. These pianistic effects create such a buildup of sonority that their overall impression seeks to equal the power and musical breadth of an orchestra.

This chapter highlights the continued evolution of Beethoven’s piano writing in the years where he was aware of the new developments in contemporary Viennese piano construction, most notably in the Streicher firm. The first half of the chapter discussed the relationship between Beethoven and the instruments of the Streicher firm. An instrument-building firm of whom the owners were Beethoven’s close friends, the mutual development of instruments and musical style cannot be wholly coincidental. The second half of the chapter discussed the evolution in Beethoven’s piano writing, demonstrating his knowledge of new instruments that led to his writing in an increasingly “orchestral” sonority. Beethoven’s writing demonstrates a return to the light Viennese touch. In addition, in the sustained lyricism, the full use of the greater range, the extended pedal techniques, and fullness of sonority, Beethoven demonstrates a consolidation of French-inspired textures and a progression to a more thick-textured, virtuosic, orchestral conception.
Chapter 4

Synthesis: Aural and Textural Diversity in Beethoven’s Late Repertoire

In this dissertation, I have argued that Beethoven’s compositional method was a symbiotic relationship between instrument and composer. In “creating his own tone,” the instrument Beethoven used and his corresponding playing style were closely linked.

The first chapter outlined the context of Beethoven’s involvement with contemporary instruments up to the early nineteenth century. His progressive tendencies in relation to the Stein vs. Walter actions, and his interest in the English school of playing demonstrate this perspective. Beethoven’s eventual purchase of the Erard instrument is an example of his desire to be on the forefront of instrument building developments in his time.

In the second chapter, I assessed the extent of the influence of Beethoven’s Erard piano on his pianistic output by examining his works during this period through the lens of characteristics of the French school. Many new musical devices and musical textures in Beethoven’s music at this time originate in the French school.

The third chapter discussed how the merging of Viennese, English and French keyboard influences led to Beethoven’s writing for an “orchestral” sonority. Beethoven’s late style can be analyzed partly as an amalgam of these national styles.

How performers can conceptualize and interpret this textural diversity is the subject of this final chapter. As the following analysis shows, Beethoven’s Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 110, is an ideal case study for understanding the multi-national derivation of Beethoven’s keyboard language.
Viennese, English, and French Elements in Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 110

I have maintained that the French musical school is an independent musical factor in Beethoven’s style. Accordingly, even in the later repertoire, Beethoven’s style can be analyzed as an amalgam of the divergent Viennese, English, and French keyboard playing styles and instrument-building traditions.

Beethoven’s late style has been analyzed for its introverted transcendentalism. Lockwood describes the “philosophical depth” of the works in Beethoven’s late style and describes a quality that is “far bigger than its medium and encompassing a world in itself.”207 At the same time, in Beethoven’s late style “he was working toward a higher level of musical integration that would nevertheless remain organically connected to his earlier methods of composition.”208 Notwithstanding these unique aesthetic features in Beethoven’s writing, I would once again like to foreground the role of contemporary playing schools and instruments in analyzing Beethoven’s late piano music.

Beethoven’s Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 110, demonstrates diverse national influences. The initial page demonstrates a versatile range of textural diversity and articulation markings that seem to portray different stylistic influences. This sonata has been analyzed as a juxtaposition of string quartet writing and sustained harmonic and pianistic figuration.209 This textual diversity in the pianistic writing may be a reflection of different schools of pianism merging into one characteristic Beethovenian style.

208 Ibid., 348.
The opening statement of the theme features shorter slurs and four-part writing. The range and division of the four parts suggest a string quartet texture. Along with the short slurs, this scoring for piano is thoroughly “Viennese.” The opening theme demands clarity of rhythmic expression in its rhetorical frame. There are many short-range articulation and dynamic markings to highlight each nuance of musical speech.


The rhetorical opening statement functions almost as an introduction to the subsequent expansive and lyrical theme (Example 4.2). This simple, song-like utterance features a soaring horizon-like melody. Beethoven notates long slurs that last the entire bar throughout the theme. There is also an extended crescendo leading up to a sf marking at the zenith of the phrase, ending with a diminuendo resolution. The first time that Beethoven used this range of the piano for a sweeping, singing melody was after he purchased his Erard piano. The simplicity of this phrase as well as the texture and range of the accompaniment recall the ideals of the French school.
In measure 12, Beethoven writes a more virtuosic texture, a cascading arpeggio.

The wedges denote rhythmic punctuation:


Played on an English instrument, there would be a natural cushion of resonance to the sound; even played dry, this passage would sound pedaled. The wedges serve the same purpose, albeit during this later time, as a counter-resonance notation used in the English
school. Through these diverse thematic motifs in the opening page of the Sonata, we can see the versatility of Beethoven’s textural writing.

The aforementioned musical devices merge to create an integrated, diverse musical texture in the later parts of the Sonata. In the following thematic transformation of the main theme, Beethoven accompanies the initial rhetorical melody with a rippling, bubbling version of the counter-resonance notation used in the first page.


Finally, in the triumphant finale of the Sonata, we may see the lasting influence of the tremolando texture in Beethoven’s piano writing. Beethoven has composed an extended sixteenth-note figure to accompany the final statement of the fugue theme,

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210 Counter-resonance notation is the careful notation of short notes to counteract the inherent after-ring of an English piano. See van Oort, “The English Classical piano style,” 86-87.
however this figure is more complex than some *tremolo* figures that are written solely as an aural effect, as it includes voice-leading within the musical texture (Example 4.5).


This sixteenth-note figure begins in the right hand and then transfers to the left as the fugue subject likewise shifts from the left to right hands. The shimmering accompaniment of this passage against the fugal octaves recalls the accompaniments of the French school. Moreover, the overall effect of this passage, lasting 38 measures, resembles the aural sumptuousness of an extended *tremolo* texture.

The significance and lasting effect of the French school to Beethoven’s output and stylistic development is apparent. Lockwood describes this sonata ending: “the subject finds its way back to A-flat major and launches into a coda that synthesizes all earlier complexities…”211 In terms of synthesizing elements of disparate playing schools, this sonata is a compendium of diverse textures and influences. Thus, many of the musical elements typically understood as characteristically Beethovenian appear to have their origin in these organologically-inspired pianistic effects. How can we, as performers, realize these disparate sound worlds in our interpretation of late Beethoven piano writing? The next section will examine the realization of these diverse textural influences in performance on historical instruments.

**Recordings of Beethoven’s Late Repertoire on Historical Instruments**

What are the performance implications of interpreting the textural diversity, spawned at least partly from the creative climate in instrumental design, of Beethoven’s late repertoire? Throughout his lifetime Beethoven used and witnessed a remarkable variety of instruments, both foreign and domestic. The foreign instruments that Beethoven owned, the Erard (1803) and the Broadwood (1817), were used at seminal moments in his pianistic output. They represent and engender their own respective playing styles and Beethoven’s music changed considerably at the time that he was using these instruments.

The current body of recorded literature of Beethoven’s late repertoire for the most part does not reflect this aural and textural diversity. Earlier musicological research has supported the performance of Beethoven’s music principally on Viennese instruments. For example, William Newman’s research concluded that Beethoven’s pianistic preferences throughout his life remained with Viennese instruments.\(^{212}\)

Thus, an overwhelming majority of these recordings capture performances on Viennese instruments: performance of late Beethoven using a Viennese instrument has become the standard. This growing body of recordings features original instruments as well as replicas built by modern-day instrument builders. A survey of prominent recordings using historical instruments in the performance of Beethoven’s late repertoire demonstrates this trend.

Example 4.7 Table of prominent recordings of Beethoven’s late repertoire using historical instruments.

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<td>Tom Beghin</td>
<td>Op. 111</td>
<td>Johann Fritz (1825)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malcolm Bilson</td>
<td>Opp. *101, **109</td>
<td>*Gottlieb Hafner (1835)</td>
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<td>**Johann Fritz (1825)</td>
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<td>Penelope Crawford</td>
<td>Opp. 109, 110, 111</td>
<td>Conrad Graf (1835)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jörg Demus</td>
<td>Opp. 109, 110*, 111</td>
<td>Conrad Graf (1825)</td>
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<td>Fortepiano at the Beethoven-Haus, Bonn</td>
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<td>*Conrad Graf (ca. 1826)</td>
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<td>Fortepiano at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenneth Drake</td>
<td>Opp. 109*, 110*, 111**</td>
<td>*Broadwood (ca. 1850)</td>
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<td>**Broadwood (1816)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Komen</td>
<td>Opp. 109, 110, 111</td>
<td>Conrad Graf (1830)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexei Lubimov</td>
<td>Opp. 109, 110, 111</td>
<td>Alois Graff (1828)</td>
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<td>Elly Ney</td>
<td>Op. 111</td>
<td>Conrad Graf (1825)</td>
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<td>Fortepiano at the Beethoven-Haus, Bonn</td>
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<tr>
<td>András Schiff</td>
<td>Opp. 119, 126</td>
<td>Broadwood (1817)</td>
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<td>Beethoven’s restored Broadwood instrument</td>
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<td>Peter Serkin</td>
<td>Opp. 90, 101, 106, 109, 110, 111</td>
<td>Conrad Graf (1820)</td>
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<td>Melvyn Tan</td>
<td>Opp. 119, 126</td>
<td>Broadwood (1817)</td>
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<td>Beethoven’s restored Broadwood instrument</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andrew Willis</td>
<td>Op. 106</td>
<td>Gottlieb Hafner (1835)</td>
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The only recordings I found of the late Beethoven repertoire played on instruments that are not Viennese have been made by Malcolm Binns, Kenneth Drake, András Schiff and Melvyn Tan. Schiff and Tan utilized Beethoven’s restored Broadwood piano (1817) to record some late repertoire, including the Bagatelles, Opp. 119 and 126; neither of these performers have recorded any of the late sonatas using an English instrument. Kenneth Drake’s recordings of the late sonatas use a restored Broadwood instrument that approximates Beethoven’s Broadwood piano. Finally, in the recording of the late sonatas by Binns, using instruments from the Colt Clavier Collection from Bethersden, Kent, Binns utilizes an Erard Frères (1818), two Broadwood instruments (1814 and 1819) and two Viennese instruments, a Haschka (1825) and Graf (1835). This was the only recording I found that approached the late sonatas from the perspective of a range of instrumental designs.

The performance implications of this research are intriguing. Musicological research continues to grapple with the field of Beethoven’s instrument preferences. The recent research of Maria Rose and Tilman Skowroneck have illuminated the more seminal role that Beethoven’s Erard instrument played in Beethoven’s output. Is there room for historically informed performances of Beethoven’s piano output, including his late repertoire, using English or French, as well as Viennese instruments? This may be an exciting direction for future Beethoven recordings on historical instruments.

Building on the research undertaken in this dissertation, I advocate an approach to Beethoven interpretation on the piano that reflects the multiplicity of instrument models and playing styles that Beethoven witnessed throughout his life. There were three

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distinct national styles of instrument building during Beethoven’s lifetime: the French, English, and Viennese. With the Erard piano and the Broadwood, along with various Viennese instruments that Beethoven owned and borrowed throughout his life, Beethoven was well aware of the most current trends and designs in instrument building. This study has highlighted how the French Erard and the hybrid Streicher model may have inspired the continued development in Beethoven’s pianistic language. Based on the climate of competing and changing instrument designs, which enriched Beethoven’s playing and compositional style, there is historical and aesthetic justification for interpreting these works on contemporary English or French instruments as well as Viennese.

In his prolific output and versatility, it is as if Beethoven created a new keyboard language for each new instrumental innovation that he experienced during his life. There are unmistakable parallels between changes in his piano writing and contemporary keyboard developments. Beethoven’s evolution of sonority in the first decade of the nineteenth century includes an amalgamation of Viennese, English, and French stylistic influences in the absorption of the instrumental designs of the Erard and Streicher firms. In the context of this extremely versatile and changeable musical climate, we can analyze and comprehend the remarkable shift in his middle-period writing.

At this seminal stage in Beethoven’s output, with the cross-pollination of musical schools and instruments, keyboard designs and playing schools merged to create the late style of writing. In Beethoven, we can track this transformation by documenting the instruments that he used throughout his lifetime: his early instruments, including the harpsichord, clavichord and organ; the early Stein instruments, through to the Viennese
Walter design; the influx of foreign-made influences including the Erard, the newly-designed Streicher, and the English Broadwood; as well as the Graf that Beethoven used during the latest years of his life. These instruments are just a sample of the numerous instruments and builders with which Beethoven was familiar. Listed in this manner, one can appreciate the complexity of creativity that Beethoven witnessed during his lifetime. These keyboard developments were created parallel to his compositional innovations. Beethoven was at the centre of a burgeoning, competitive, and thriving pianistic culture and his astounding contribution to the piano literature must be partly a result of this creative climate in piano manufacturing. Each new instrument yields new possibilities. The richness of possibilities combined most notably in the middle period, post-Erard repertoire.
Appendix

Excerpts from Beethoven’s Letters to Andreas Streicher, Nannette Streicher and Nikolaus Zmeskall Concerning Instruments

1) Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, 19 November 1796

I received your fortepiano the day before yesterday. It is really marvelous, anybody else would like to have it for his own, and I – you may laugh, but I would have to lie if I didn’t tell you that it is too good for me, and why? – because it deprives me of the freedom to create my own tone. Besides, this shall not hinder you from making all your fortepianos in the same way; there will not be many others found with the same idiosyncrasies…

2) Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, 1796

Most Excellent Streicher!

...Your little pupil, dear St[reicher], apart from the fact that when playing my Adagio she drew a few tears from my eyes, has really astonished me. I congratulate you on being so fortunate as to be able to display through such a talent your own understanding of music; and, moreover, I am delighted that this dear little girl, who is so talented, has you for her teacher. I assure you in all sincerity, dear St[reicher], that this was the first time it gave me pleasure to hear my trio performed; and truly this experience will make me decide to compose more for the pianoforte than I have done hitherto. Even if only a few people understand me, I shall be satisfied. There is no doubt that so far as the manner of playing it is concerned, the pianoforte is still the least studied and developed of all instruments; often one thinks that one is merely listening to a harp. And I am delighted, my dear fellow, that you are one of the few who realize and

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215 Ludwig van Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, November 19, 1796, quoted in Skowroneck, Beethoven the Pianist, 74.
perceive that, provided one can feel the music, one can also make the pianoforte sing. I hope that the time will come when the harp and the pianoforte will be treated as two entirely different instruments.\footnote{217 Ludwig van Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, 1796, in Anderson, \textit{The Letters of Beethoven}, Vol. 1, 25-26.}

Bester Streicher!

…ihre kleine Schülerin lieber St. hat mich zudem, daß sie mir bey dem Spiele meines \textit{adagios} ein Par Zähren aus den Augen Gelockt, in verwundrung gesezt. ich wünsche ihnen Glück, daß sie so glücklich sind, ihre Einsichten bey so einem Talent zeigen zu können, so wie ich mich freue, daß die kleine liebe bey ihrem Talent sie zum Meister bekommen hat. auffrichtig lieber St. ich habe mich zum erstenmale getraut, mein \textit{terzett} spielen zu hören, und wahrlich es wird mich bestimmen mehr für’s Klawier zu schreiben als bisher, wenn mich auch nur einige verstehen, so bin ich zufrieden. es ist gewiß, die Art das \textit{Klawier} zu spielen, ist noch die unkultiwirteste von allen Instrumenten bisher, man glaubt oft nur eine Harfe zu hören, und ich freue mich lieber, daß sie von den wenigen sind, die einsehen und fühlen, daß man auf dem Klawier auch singen könne, sobald man nur fühlten kan[n], ich hoffe die Zeit wird kommen, wo die Harfe und das Klawier zwei ganz verschiedene Instrumente seyn werden.\footnote{218 Ludwig van Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, 1796, in Brandenburg, \textit{Beethoven Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe}, Vol. 1, 32.}

3) \quad \textit{Beethoven to Nikolaus Zmeskall, November, 1802}

Well, my dear \textit{Z[meskall]}, you may give Walter, if you like, a strong dose of my affair. For, in the first place, he deserves it in any case; and, what is more, since the time when people began to think that my relations with Walter were strained, the whole tribe of pianoforte manufacturers have been swarming around me in their anxiety to serve me – and all for nothing. Each of them wants to make me a pianoforte exactly as I should like it. For instance, Reicha has been earnestly requested by the maker of his pianoforte to persuade me to let him make me one; and he is one of the more reliable ones, at whose firm I have already seen some good instruments – So you may give Walter to understand that, although I can have pianofortes for nothing from all the others, I will pay him 30 ducats, but not more than 30 ducats, and on condition that the wood is mahogany. Furthermore, I insist that it shall have the \textit{tension with one string} – If he won’t agree to these conditions, then make it quite plain to him that I shall...
choose one of the others to whom I will give my order and whom I shall take later on to Haydn to let the latter see his instrument…


4) Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, 6 May 1810

Here, dear Streicher, are the letters which I am letting you see so as to avoid any further formalities – But I do ask you to ensure that the instruments do not wear out so quickly – You have seen your instrument which I have here and you must admit that it is very worn out; and I frequently hear the same opinion expressed by other people – You know that my sole object is to promote the production of good instruments. That is all. Otherwise I am absolutely impartial. Hence you must not be annoyed at hearing the truth from your most devoted servant and friend

Beethoven

hier lieber Streicher die Briefe, die ich ihnen, um alle weitere Umständlichkeiten zu vermeiden, mittheile – sehn sie nur, daß sich die Instrumente nicht so geschwind <ab>ausspielen – sie haben das was ich von ihnen dahabe, gesehen, und müßen doch sagen, daß es sehr ausgespielt ist, ich höre dies auch öfter von andern – sie wissen, daß es mir nur zuthun ist, um gute Instrumente Emporkommen zu machen, anders kann ich keine

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220 Ludwig van Beethoven to Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovetz, November, 1802, in Brandenburg, Beethoven Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 1, 137.
I can’t help it, the pianoforte beside the door near your entrance is constantly ringing in my ears – I feel sure that I shall be thanked for having chosen this one – So do send it. If you think that it may be even heavier than you suppose, why, we can easily get over that difficulty.


Here is my name to stick on…Charge to me the full cost of delivery – Today everything here is in confusion.

Hier mein Name zum aufkleben –...Rechnen sie mir alles an was das tragen kostet – heute ist alles in verwirrung bey mir.

As I shall be back in Vienna by the beginning of October, let me know whether I may again have a piano from you – My French piano is no longer of much use; in fact it is quite useless. Perhaps you can advise me where we can find a home for it.

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Beethoven to Andreas Streicher, middle of November, 1810

You promised to let me have a piano by the end of October; and now we are already half through November and as yet I haven’t received one – My motto is either to play on a good instrument or not at all – as for my French piano, which is certainly quite useless now, I still have misgivings about selling it, for it is really a souvenir such as no one here has so far honoured me with – ….In regard to the remover, if any further damage was done to the instrument perhaps while in my possession, which is quite possible in view of the state of my household at that time, then let me know this frankly, for I am perfectly willing, of course, to compensate you for the loss.

All good wishes, if you send me a piano;
If not, then all bad wishes –

Bis Ende 8ber versprachen sie mir ein Piano, und nun ist schon halber November und ich habe noch keins. – Es ist mein Wahlspruch entweder auf einem guten Instrument spielen oder gar nicht – was das französische, welches wirklich jetzt unbrauchbar ist, so trage noch Bedenken, es, als ein eigentliches Andenken, wie mich hier noch niemand eines solchen gewürdigt hat, zu verkaufen – hier wegen dem Träger sollte vielleicht noch sonst, wie es bey meiner damaligen Haushaltung leicht möglich war, etwas seyn beschädigt worden am Instrument so sagen sie es mir aufrichtig, indem ich gleich erbötig bin, ihnen diesen schaden, wie sichs von selbst versteht, zu ersezen –

leben sie wohl wenn sie ein Piano schicken und übel, wenn nicht –

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9) Beethoven to Nannette Streicher, 7 July 1817

…Now a big request to Streicher, ask him in my name if he would be so kind as to orientate one of your pianos more towards my weakened hearing. I need one as loud as it can possibly be. Already for a long time I had the intention of buying one for myself, but at the moment it is very difficult for me. Perhaps it is nevertheless possible for me somewhat later. Only until then I would like to loan one from you. I certainly do not want it for nothing. I am prepared to pay, in advance in Convention Currency, what one gives you for one for 6 months. Perhaps you do not know that although I have not always had one of your pianos, I have always specially preferred them since 1809 – only Streicher is capable of delivering me such a Piano as I require it…

…Nun eine große Bitte an Streicher, bitten sie ihn in meinem Namen, daß er die Gefälligkeit hat, mir eines ihrer Piano mehr nach meinem geschwächten Gehör zu richten, so stark als es nur immer möglich ist, brauch ichs, ich hatte schon lange den Vorsatz, mir eins zu kaufen, allein in dem Augenblick fällt es mir sehr schwer, vielleicht ist es mir jedoch etwas später eher möglich, nur bis dahin wünschte ich eins von ihnen geliehen zu haben, ich will es durchaus nicht umsonst, ich bin bereit, ihnen das, was man ihnen für eins gibt, aus 6 Monate in Konvenz-Münze voraus zu bezahlen. vielleicht wissen Sie nicht, daß ich, obschon ich nicht immer ein Piano von ihnen gehabt, ich die ihrigen doch immer besonders vorgezogen seit 1809 – Streicher allein wäre im Stande mir ein solches Piano für mich zu schicken, wie ichs bedarf…

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Discography


