

PERFORMATIVE GESTURES IN BEETHOVEN'S PIANO SONATAS

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ПЕРФОРМАТИВНИ ГЕСТОВИ У БЕТОВЕНОВИМ КЛАВИРСКИМ СОНАТАМА

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АБСТРАКТ

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the discussion of how the character of physical body movements conveys expression and affects the creation of a musical work. The primary focus of this phenomenological study is on kinesthetic gestures or body movements which pianists use in their performances in order to create the musical-poetic content in a corporeal performing form. The main discussion is concentrated on the analysis of movements that emanate from the characteristics of the piano technique, particularly of technical elements in the piano sonatas by Ludwig van Beethoven.

KEYWORDS: performative gesture, body movement, Beethoven's piano sonatas, piano technique, piano performance.

АПСТРАКТ

Сврха ове студије је да допринесе објашњењу тога како карактер физичких покрета тела преноси израз и утиче на настанак музичког дела. Примарни фокус ове феноменолошке студије је на кинестетичким гестовима или покретима тела које пијанисти користе у својим наступима, како би створили музичко-поетски садржај у корпоралном перформативном облику. Главна расправа концентрисана је на анализу покрета који произлазе

из карактеристика клавирске технике, посебно техничких елемената у клавирским сонатама Лудвига ван Бетовена.

Кључне речи: перформативни гест, телесни покрет, Бетовенове клавирске сонате, клавирска техника, клавирско извођење.

INTRODUCTION: INTERPRETING MUSIC

Musical thought, as an organized logical musical structure, is materialized through performance. Like any other form of thought, a musical structure can be written down in order to be remembered, reproduced and studied. The possibility of fixing musical expressions in written form was followed by the practice of interpreting music preserved as notated text.

There are two distinct interpretations of music that may be called *performative* and *critical* interpretation (Levinson 1993). The *critical* interpretation of a musical work is realized as (theoretical) analysis. It is roughly equivalent to the interpretation of a literary work, and it is expressed linguistically. *Performative* interpretation is a way of playing or singing the musical work, and is expressed in its performance. These two kinds of musical interpretation are related. The analysis of a musical work can refer to a critical interpretation of the performance of that work. On the other hand, the critical interpretation, as an analysis of the “musical meaning”, can refer to the “pure” factual content of the musical composition, independent of its performance. According to David Lidov, who wrote the foreword to Robert Hatten’s book on musical meaning in Beethoven, there is “a mysterious conjunction and disjunction” between these two ways of interpreting music (in Hatten 1994, ix). Lidov agrees that every critical interpretation refers to the music which cannot be conveyed in sound except in performance. However, he also claims that the main goal of a critical interpretation is to indicate the potentials of the composition as it is scored, in which case those potentials should not be disposable to the arbitrary variation by the performer (Ibid.). Why a performance can be considered an arbitrary variation of the composition’s potential by the performer is a thought-provoking question. Is there any philosophical meaning in the musical text? Or, is the core of music in the emotions and sensations it evokes in listeners?

For listeners, music has to be presented in its embodied form in order to be experienced. Although it has been possible to experience music by means of various media for a relatively long time, the primary experience is considered to be achieved through direct communication between performers and listeners during a live performance. There have been many observational studies of performers’ actions that make music embodied. At the same time, studies that explore the understanding of music from the perspective of performers, especially when it comes to the kinesthetic experience of their own motions and gestures were almost entirely absent until relatively recently (Doğantan-Dack 2011, 247). Performers have always had their

own ways of expressing their ideas and explaining the content of the work that they perform, including verbal explications. For example, when András Schiff performed the complete Beethoven's piano sonatas at Wigmore Hall (2004–2006), before each of the eight recitals in the series he gave a lecture about the works that were to be performed.² At the beginning of the first lecture he said: "It is really difficult to talk about music. Music should be played and listened to, but it's better to try to put a few ideas into words" (Helloitismetomato 2020, 0:01:32). The ideas that performers express about the works they have studied are valuable and should provoke more musicological interests. This article is conceived as a contribution to the field of music analysis which focuses on performance practice. The aspects of musical gestures related to the technical elements that constitute the performance of Beethoven's piano sonatas are explored through the prism of the performer, primarily from the perspective of the author who is an active concert pianist.³

Placing performers in the focus of musicological interest has fostered the establishment of two research perspectives. In the first perspective, the performer is the *object* of the researcher's observation. In the second, the performer is the *subject* and actor of a concrete performance situation, as a performer-researcher. By interweaving both perspectives, a unique approach to the study of music can be achieved. The insights of the performers have a specific significance for the studies of musical processes and phenomena. The research of musical phenomena through the performing process opens important methodological questions due to the existence of problems with so-called "certain" (commonplace) knowledge, which goes beyond the framework of contemporary interdisciplinary musicology and represents one of the essential questions of contemporary science. Scientific methodology is designed and established to study observable phenomena. Although the creation of music belongs to unobservable phenomena, the manifestations of musical phenomena are observable and as such are suitable for empirical studies of music through analytical observations documented from the perspective of the researcher. However, the study of the music-making process in the introspective experience of the performer implies the creation of new methodologies, conceptualizations and terminology (Dinov Vasić 2021, 48–49). This article offers a contribution to the research of this complex phenomenon; its aim is to explore a piece of music through the individual physical realization of its musical gestures.

PERFORMATIVE GESTURE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* the word *gesture* is defined as "a significant movement of limb or body; use of such movements as expression of feeling or rhetorical

2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4ZWPJlNSXM&list=PLoNBbqXltyeKMjF_uRbSnXNsGO_h3MqZC (accessed 21 January 2023).

3 In addition to the PhD thesis defended in the interdisciplinary studies of art theory and media (Dinov Vasić 2019), the author has an MA as a pianist and she is active as a performer and piano pedagogue.

device” (Fowler and Fowler 1919, 346) and it typically includes any kind of bodily movement or posture that conveys meaning or expression and transmits a message to the observer (Bremmer and Roodenburg 1991, 1). Given such a broad definition, the content of the term *gesture* in music ranges “from the use of gesture more or less equivalent to body movement, to the use of gesture in a purely metaphorical sense” (Jensenius 2007, 41).

In musicological discourse, this term always refers to an aspect of the musical sound that evokes a metaphorical sense of physicality and motion, whether it refers to the perception of the abstract sound or the perception of corporeal movement. Robert Hatten, the creator of the original theory of musical gesture as a generator of musical meaning, claims that gestures may be inferred from a musical performance even when there is no visual access to the motions of the performer, because people have sufficient aural imagination to reconstruct sounds as meaningful gestures (Hatten 2004, 94). The focus in his theory of musical gesture is on the “aural gesture”, defined as a “significant energetic shaping of sound through time”, which “entails a wide range of gestural competencies, including the interpretation of visual notation and the correlation of aural gesture with other sensory, motor, and affective realms of human experience” (Ibid., 95).

Contrary to Hatten’s concept of the aural gesture, which refers exclusively to the acoustic dimension of music, the performative gesture simultaneously communicates through audible, visual, kinetic and kinesthetic sensations. A composer who creates a piece of music imagines its sonority by knowing which instrument plays which melody. For performers, making music is inseparable from its instrumentalization. While looking at the score a performer “hears” the sounds of particular instruments. While thinking about pitch relations, pianists always imagine the keyboard in order to profile the right shape of the melody in their minds. Another important question concerns the connection between the expression of the notated melody and the physical shape of the musical instrument they play. A musical performer always wonders what (s)he can do with the instrument and how a musical piece will sound when it comes to its embodiment through the performance. Performers think of music through the prism of *performative interpretation*, which is constituted of body movements used in order to create the musical and poetic content of a musical work that they interpret. In other words, performers do not interpret the semantic meaning of musical gestures contained in a piece of music. Instead, musical performers, especially instrumentalists, read the score imagining it to be a sequence of “choreographic movements”.

The performative gesture is an essential phenomenon when it comes to the exploration of musical performance practices, such as piano playing. The performative gesture in pianism, or the pianist’s gesture, can be defined as a body movement, or kinesthetic gesture, which pianists use in their performances in order to create the musical-poetic content in a synergistic, audible and visual, performing form. In musical performance, the movement of the pianist’s hand, as the representative part of the performer’s body, and a (notated) audible musical phrase created by that movement, as a distinct type of gesture, are mutually directly dependent and conditioned. The position and motion of the pianist’s hand, as a material carrier of the musical

gesture, are conditioned by the form of the musical phrase, as a symbolic music idea, and the adequate articulation or shaping of its performative expression is directly related to the connotative field that a particular musical idea or phrase can symbolize (Dinov Vasić 2019, 4).

In music, the fundamental parameter that determines the sound of a particular note or other individual musical event is *articulation*. Articulation affects the sound timbre in the sense that “small differences in the balance of the frequencies – how many you can hear, their relationship to the fundamental pitch, and how loud they are compared to each other – create the many different musical colors” (Schmidt-Jones 2007, 72). Especially important for timbre are the harmonics at the beginning of each note. In that way, “it is actually easier to identify instruments that are playing short notes with strong articulations than it is to identify instruments playing long, smooth notes” (Ibid.). Articulation depends on what is happening at the beginning and end of each segment of notes, as well as between the notes. The “attack” – the beginning of a note – and the space in-between the notes are particularly important (Ibid., 58). In other words, articulation is how the performer shapes the sound. There are several characteristic manners of sound articulation in pianism and each of them is created by a clearly profiled performative gesture, which carries audible, visual, kinetic and kinesthetic expression. In addition, each specific articulation of sound can represent a number of connotative extra-musical meanings connected to the symbolism of a particular performative gesture. For example, *non legato*, *articolato* and *tenuto* movements can symbolically represent “breathing”, looseness, dissection or “jolting” of the sound (Schenker 2000, 20); *legato* indicates a set of connected movements, a smooth walk, swaying (Ibid., 25); *staccato* and *portato* reflect suppression, rejection, exhalation, lifting (Ibid., 31); *marcato* articulated tones are dynamic rhetorical accents; *staccatissimo* and *martellato* represent emphasized accentuation, sharpness, strikes and the like. Principally, the descriptions of particular articulations are tentatively determined. Besides depending on the technical capabilities of the instrument, articulation also depends on the style of music. For example, exactly how much space there should be between *staccato* notes in a composition depends on the speed of the performance indicated by the tempo mark, as well as the composer’s individual style. An identically notated passage is not likely to sound the same in different compositions.

The basic focus of music performance studies is the exploration of the relationship between the notation of a musical gesture and its physical performance through a specified and transparent body movement. It can be done primarily through performance, that is, the artist’s heuristic search for the adequate playing of musical notation. It can also be done through the analysis of the performative gestures of other performers, and in that case, the focus should be more on the kinesthetic experience of those movements than on their observational analysis. Just as in the experience of watching a dance, where there is a connection between the choreography, the kinesthetic sensations it puts forward and the empathetic connection that it proposes to viewers (Foster 2011), in the experience of the reception of a musical performance there is also a connection between the sensations that the performer feels and emits to the listeners with his or her body movements. Kinesthetic experience is relating

to a person's awareness of the position and movement of the parts of the body by means of sensory organs (proprioceptors) in the muscles and joints. The immediate kinesthetic experience of performing music gives a unique quality to its deeper understanding. When Dinu Lipatti says that "music must live under our fingers and under our eyes, in our hearts and our minds",⁴ he is referring to the kinesthetic experience of a pianist performing a piece of music. Note that Lipatti does not even claim that the sense of hearing is essential in the process of creating music; after all, Beethoven showed with his late works that deafness does not necessarily affect the ability to compose music.

PERFORMING BEETHOVEN'S PIANO GESTURES

In order to study the relation between the performative gesture and its notation, the first choice for analysis should be the compositions made by the hands of those who themselves were exceptionally gifted players. The composer is the first performer of his compositions, and his abilities are the key reference for composing for a certain medium. Beethoven was an extraordinary pianist, a great virtuoso, especially skilled in improvisation and expressing a specific atmosphere, mood and spirit. In the printed editions of his piano sonatas, Beethoven left detailed instructions for future performers about his ideas on how these compositions should be played. These instructions are of utmost importance to interpreters. Performing music written by the same hand that created fingering for that music is, in a way, an entry into the bodily experience of the genius that first brought the music to life. This is especially inspiring for a performer who gets to know almost every piece of music primarily through a personal heuristic search for the adequate playing of notated music. The hand has a natural instinct to adapt to the "relief" of the phrase in relation to the keyboard, and then to feel the immanent expressiveness of its physical form. Thus, for example, when we play a phrase that is dominantly positioned on black keys, as in the case of F sharp major sonata, op. 78 or A flat major sonata, op. 110, the feeling in the hand is predominantly lyrical, gentle and caressing, because the fingers are naturally stretched out and sensitized to feel the softness of the sound; while a completely different feeling occurs in the hand playing on the white keys due to the vertical position of the fingers which is especially necessary in playing fast passages and figurations.

Given his performance abilities, Beethoven improved piano technique in his piano oeuvre to a level that surpassed all previous piano literature. Technical elements are those specific aspects of musical gestures that have been insufficiently considered in academic literature. There are at least two reasons why we should be interested in these movements in general and in Beethoven's sonatas in particular. First, it is meaningful to observe the performative gestures such as movements that occur in

4 https://www.dinulipatti.com/2013/03/dinu-lipattis-final-essay-on-interpretation/fbclid=IwAR24ApRNxa9TY3AaEBR7_VZJoE5stvVKVYEbihs2XNUQyiYQ6lglBrOUoI (accessed 12 February 2023).

the process of demonstrating piano technique. Davidson and Correia (2002) proposed the qualification of performative gestures according to their identification functions. They identified technical movements as the only necessary ones, claiming that all other categories of gestures – biomechanical, cultural and expressive – could be understood as qualitative determinations of technical gestures. The second reason is that Beethoven often used exclusively technical elements such as scales, octaves, thrills, tremolos, chords, broken chords or arpeggios in his compositional process. In his sonatas, there are lines of musical text without a notable musical thematicism. One can even say that there is an impression of the prevalence of technical episodes in these works. These sequences in compositions have a character of *étude*, such as the Finale of his last piano sonata (the last variation) written as an *étude* for thrills, or the third movement of the famous *sonata quasi una fantasia* op. 27 no. 2, which is a typical example of *étude*-like thematicism, and many others examples.

The themes that are notable have fixed relations between the pitch and duration of the tones. One gets the impression that those themes could be played on another instrument without losing much of their own authentic expression. On the other hand, the technical elements played on the piano are unthinkable and even unplayable on other instruments. When we talk about “pianist technique” we mean the way a pianist plays, that is, how he or she shapes the sound. In the musicological discourse, the terms “performing technique” and “performing articulation” are often synonymous (Schmidt-Jones 2007, 58). Since the articulation and the performance technique affects the color of the tone more than its pitch and duration, and since “the human ear and brain are capable of hearing and appreciating very small variations in timbre”, a listener can hear not only the difference between a piano and some other instrument, but also the difference between two different pianos, or two different pianists, or the same pianist using different types of sound in different pieces (Ibid., 72). It could be said that the technical elements predominantly determine the tonal color and “atmosphere” of the composition in which they play such a significant role as in the case of Beethoven’s sonatas. Every technical element, even the simplest scale, in the works of a composer of a highly individual format, such as Beethoven’s, has its own performative distinctiveness in relation to the same elements used in the works of other composers. These differences are recognizable even between composers who create in the same epoch and whose individual artistic styles are remarkably close.

In Kenneth Drake’s book dedicated to Beethoven’s sonatas and the creative experience, there is a chapter indicatively titled “Technique as Touch”, in which the author writes: “The notation of Classic keyboard scores may be compared to the dots and lines and spaces in the engraving on paper currency, representing a precise calculation of pressure and duration in the fingertips that communicates musical ideas equally precisely. (...) The fingertip must know the sensuousness of sound before the ear hears it. Ultimately, playing is an integration of mind and muscles in which ‘hear tone and feel touch’ becomes ‘hear touch and feel tone’” (Drake 2000, 10).

Associating certain sounds with certain colors, smells, and bodily sensations is called *synesthesia*. It is a perceptual phenomenon, in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to involuntary experiences in another sensory or

cognitive pathway (Cytowic 2002, 6). The capacity for the analogous representation across all the senses and motor systems – intermodality – is one of the major competencies crucial to the performance and interpretation of human gesture in general (Hatten 2004, 97). While the auditory gesture (in Hatten’s terminology) is perceived exclusively by listening, the performative gesture is perceived by listening and watching the performance, which in the case of the latter phenomenon emphasizes its kinesthetic dimension. The sensation by which bodily position, weight, muscle tension, and movement are perceived – *kinesthesia* – allows the performer to understand his or her own gestures. The interpretation of performative gestures through analogous representations forms a field of connotative meanings which includes the feelings and ideas that people may connect with the expression of the gesture. Bearing this in mind, in the next section, the performative gestures in Beethoven’s piano sonatas will be interpreted through the prism of sensations created during the performance. The connotative field of each of the selected technical elements will be defined, and sensations experienced during the performance will be examined. In this way, we will try to obtain a deeper insight into the sensibility and ideas represented in the musical work.

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS IN BEETHOVEN’S PIANO SONATAS

Beethoven’s piano sonatas represent the largest part of his piano oeuvre. Although the same technical elements are found in the composer’s piano concertos and variations, their modality as well as the expressiveness are most emphasized in the sonatas. Beethoven’s sonatas contain almost all the elements of piano technique which form the gestural repertoire of a skilled pianist. No matter how uniform these elements are, each individual pianist performs them in their own, unique way, just as they would play each sonata by Beethoven differently from a sonata by another composer. The subjectivity of different pianists, as the quality based on personal characteristics, feelings, tastes and affections, is most evident in “their repertoire of tone colours, which are directly related to the movements and gestures of their performing body” (Doğantan-Dack 2011, 250). When we recognize and speak of the “sound” of a certain pianist, “we refer to his tone, among other expressive variables, rather than to his pitch production as such” (Ibid). In that sense, Beethoven certainly also had his own specific “tone” or “touch”. His distinctive manner of using different elements of piano technique as the structural material for his compositions was very authentic and extremely personal.

We will first discuss the technical element widely used in Beethoven’s piano sonatas: the passages based on scales. Musical compositions in general, and especially the compositions created in the tradition of Western tonal music, are mostly constituted of step-like moving tones or tone patterns, known in music theory as scales. A scale is widely defined as any set of ordered or arranged musical tones. The distance between two successive tones in a scale is called a scale step, and the movements of fingers playing such tonal sequences on the piano correspond to “stepping” on the keyboard. According to a similar analogy, a rapid scale passage is called a “run”. Practicing scales and arpeggios with the proper technique is very important for pianists.

It ensures easy and fluid movement without physical discomfort, quick identification of key signatures and recognition of patterns while playing pieces. Practicing scales and arpeggios can also help pianists to build finger strength and dexterity, hand flexibility, and coordination. Stronger muscles can also prevent injury. Through intense practice over time, the way of moving hands and fingers over the keyboard becomes an individual artistic feature, as a kind of personal stamp.

Schenker remarks that in compositions such as Beethoven's piano sonatas passages and scales are often misunderstood, because they are commonly played as mere finger exercises "robbed of any artistic value" (Schenker 2000, 71). In musical masterpieces, scale-like passages and fioriture form an integral part of the composition, and these technical elements share the expressiveness and character of the musical work. The great composers were "great instrumentalists who could indulge their delight in playing all the more easily by having the ability to bring together a wealth of figurations through synthesis" (Ibid., 72). Therefore, Schenker concludes that "figurations and passages in the works of older masters should be given the dignity of the most genuine and beautiful expression" (Ibid., 73).

To play an expressive musical phrase implies the creation of a constant contrast between the tension and relaxation of the sound, like the alternation of light and shadow in the syllables that construct a sentence or the tonal values of colors in a picture (Ibid., 45). Unlike those instrumentalists who come nearer to speech through breath or bow technique and possess an ability to differentiate light and shade in tone production, pianists tend to touch the keys in an undifferentiated way only because they lie there, in front of them (Ibid., 46). Pressing down the keys has no association with speech and it is thus very difficult to play the piano expressively. The technique of playing a sequence of tones on the piano is reminiscent of the personal style of walking, where the fingers carrying the hand have the same function as the legs carrying the body. However, if it is necessary to achieve dynamic shading between the tones of the scale, the pianist must mobilize all his/her expressive abilities and capacities in order to produce the illusion of tonal color on a micro level, with finger movements of varying strength and length. This requires constant attention of the mind, control by auditory perception, and deep mental tension. In the process of sensitive playing, the performer becomes aware of an authentic kinesthetic experience created by the flow of specific kinetic energy through his/her fingers, hands, arms, and body. The sensitivity is essential for the quality of performance. This is why Schenker (Ibid., 71) warns against superficial players who tend to forget that in the rhetorical tonal language of great composers an empty demonstration of fast fingers without any expression is pointless. The compositional context of every played technical element should indicate that it serves not just as a demonstration of performative artistry, but as a means of musical expression as well.

Emphasized rhetorical moments in Beethoven's sonatas are almost always given in unison. Particularly specific for Beethoven are sequences with unison motoric scale-like movements edged by extremely sharp accents (*sforzando*) that seem "ugly" and unmusical. A typical case of such a passage can be found in the first movement of his last sonata in C minor, op. 111 (bars 26 to 28). Playing a series of tonal patterns in which there is a sudden change in sound dynamics requires the performer to have supreme control over his/her own temperament, and yet to show great passion

at the same time. Otherwise, the performed music can act as a caricature, comical and grotesque. The tension embodied in the performer's self-control is one of the most important features of Beethoven's music. In the sonatas, there are also tonal sequences with extremely eruptive harmonic development, which, unnaturally, require complete restraint of the performer in expressing the dynamics of the music, yet it makes the nerves and muscles intensely anxious. It is precisely this conflict between the need to control the external manifestations of the body and the impossibility of controlling the inner anxiety of the mind that makes Beethoven's music uniquely magnificent. For example, the pianissimo passage from the first movement of the F minor sonata, op. 57 (bars 47 to 50) would never be played with the same inner tension if it were part of a piano piece written by Mozart or Schubert.

Another typical rhetorical element in Beethoven's piano sonatas is unison octaves. Octaves are one of the largest intervals regularly used in piano music. In all their variety such as "legato" octaves (typically used in scale passages or in melodies), "broken" octaves (octave tremolos), "loose wrist" octaves (composed of fast, repeated notes), or "bouncing" octaves (bravuras with loud, strong octaves that can "jump" across the keyboard), these technical elements form a significant part of the structure of all sonatas by Beethoven, from the first to the last. Playing octaves well comes with good body awareness and control of the muscles in fingers, hands, wrists, and forearms, which must be flexible in order to prevent strain and injury while maintaining great strength and control. Beethoven used plenty of octaves because he wanted a thick, saturated, orchestral sound from the piano. If he wanted to emphasize the rhetorical dimension of some melodic fragment, he used unison octaves to underline narration in single-voice themes. Such octaves can be found in the first movement of the D major sonata, op. 10 no. 3 (bars 1 to 4); in the first movement of the D minor sonata, op. 31 no. 2 (bars 87 to 92); in the third movement of the E-flat major sonata, op. 31 no. 3 (bars 23 to 25); in the first movement of the E minor sonata, op. 90 (bars 24 to 28); or in the first movement of the C minor sonata, op. 111 (bars 72 to 75). On a piano of average mechanical quality, the intonation of four (or three) notes in an octave interval played with two hands stretched between the thumbs and the upper fingers may be uneven. A melody played in unison octaves often sounds imperfect, impure and profane; in other words, it sounds more human. By creating the intonation on the piano imperfect, Beethoven made the artificial instrument sounds closer to the human voice, the most perfect musical "instrument" of all. In that way, each performer is given the opportunity to "sculpt" the music with their own hands in the same way that they can express a rhetorical thought with their own voice. An even more robust effect of imperfect sound intonation can be found in bravura sequences of broken double octaves, for example in the first movement of the C major sonata, op. 2 no. 3 (bars 85 to 88) where, due to the impossibility of perfect synchronization of the extremely fast-played tones, their rough dissonant overlaps occur.

As one of the greatest symphony composers of all time, Beethoven tended to create an orchestral sonority on the piano, by means of massive, heavy and layered sound. In that sense, the most characteristic element of texture in his piano sonatas is robust chords. Examples of such chords can be found in the first movement of the F minor sonata, op. 57 (bars 17 and 18); in the first movement of the E minor sona-

ta, op. 90 (bars 53 and 54); or in the first movement of the B-flat Major sonata, op. 106 (bars 1 to 4). For a pianist, mastering the technique of playing chords is just as important as the skill of playing scales. Unlike scales, in which the fingers constantly move while supporting the hand, when playing simultaneous chords, the fingers and hand form a posture that is moved by the hand from the elbow and upper arms across the keyboard. Different chords form specific hand postures in accordance with the shape of the keyboard. Some of the chord postures cause a pleasant feeling in the hand which holds the keys softly and elastically, while other chord postures are stiff, forced, and even painfully uncomfortable for the hand. In this sense, the shape of the chord and the posture of the hand can significantly affect the character of the performance. And Beethoven's chords are very "thick". This is the main characteristic of his style, so they should be played in the same, dense way. His chords are not as transparent as those in Mozart's piano writing or later Schubert's. Even when he writes less heavy chords, ethereally light like Mozart's, or romantically singable like Schubert's, the performance of Beethoven's chords always causes a certain, almost unpleasant tension in the hand. This tension is also not comparable to the feeling that occurs in the pianist's hand when performing the chords of Brahms or Schumann, which, in a formal and technical sense, also have great similarities to Beethoven's. Whether they are performed in their most explosive or most delicate form, Beethoven's chords always have a special inner energy that disturbs both the performer and the listener.

Besides the scale-like passages, the "broken chord" is another figure that Beethoven uses widely in his piano sonatas. It is the figure of a chord in which the notes are played successively, that is, immediately one after another. Beethoven often used this figure as a melodic motif. It appears at the very beginning of his first piano sonata, op. 2 no. 1, in the form of a stylistic figure of the so-called "Mannheim Rocket";⁵ which is a rapidly ascending or fast-growing broken chord that moves from the lowest range of the bass line to the top of the soprano line. The connotative field created around the concept of the "rocket" is endless, but Beethoven used not only the symbolic potential of this, basically simple figure in the melodic sense, but also uses its biomechanical potential in the sense of structural substance or mass, a tissue from which he further develops the "organs" of the composition.

In the context of this study, the crucial question is what kind of sensations are caused in the kinesthetic experience of the performer while playing a certain element of piano technique. The "broken chord" figurations appear countless times in all the expressive diversity that this technical element indisputably has in various compositions. Some of the most representative examples can be heard in the third movement of the F minor sonata, op. 57 (bars 353 to 358); in the first movement of the C major sonata, op. 53 (bars 27 to 30); in the first movement of the C major sonata op. 2 no. 3 (bars 97 to 108), or in the first movement of the B flat major sonata, op. 22 (bars 94 to 104). There are many sensations that can be present in the hand performing these figurations, depending on their dynamics and texture. But there is one physical sensation or perception that arises when the core composed of nearby

5 <https://www.britannica.com/art/Mannheim-rocket> (accessed 10 February 2023).

keys comes into contact with the body. This sensation emerges in the consciousness of the performer even if it is just an elementary study of the chord shape and without compositional background. It is the sense of unity composed of smaller units, which are strongly interconnected in such a way that it seems almost impossible to separate them, and yet it is possible to feel their individual definitions and limits. Playing “broken chord” figurations in Beethoven’s sonatas can generate a kinesthetic experience similar to the feeling of the hand reviving a sculpture at some inner, cellular level.

Beethoven’s musical works are not prevalently smooth. He is not so much a watercolor painter as a great sculptor. The surfaces of granite and marble can be “heard” in his music. The runs, figurations and chords, even the thrills in the sonatas, are not polished. There are plenty of accents (dynamical and rhetorical) and sudden changes of deeply contrasting elements, but in the end, all fragments are integrated into the unity and the musical work becomes one shaped piece of time, like a monument with rough surfaces and sharp edges. The genius of Beethoven’s music is reflected in the creation of tension within the apparently static form of time. He composes sections within musical pieces with endless repetitions of undeveloped sound material. Such episodes tempt the patience of all recipients of music and performers in particular. At the same time, these episodes lead to the greatest emotional pressure because “in a non-developing, constant state of tension, passions reach the highest possible pitch, and manifest themselves more vividly and convincingly than in a gradual process of change” (Tarkovsky 1989, 17).

Sustaining and even developing the inner tension within each tone is extremely important for understanding Beethoven’s music. An example from the second movement of the piano sonata in E major, op. 14 no.1, bar 62, is particularly indicative in this sense. Here Beethoven asks the performer to do something that is physically impossible to achieve on the instrument. The pianist is asked to play a crescendo on a single note in a high register in an extremely quiet dynamic environment and of relatively long duration. The only way to respond to such an irrational demand is to create the illusion of intensifying the sound by increasing the tension of thought. Such moments show that the performer is the absolute subject of the embodiment of musical thought. It could be said that by performing the structural elements of a composition, even those of a basic technical level such as scales, chords, arpeggios, trills, tremolos and other figurations, the pianist brings that work of art to life by creating its pulsation and breathing. In a way, it is the performer who makes the piece of music speak and communicate through all its artistic expressions.

For a more complete understanding of performative gestures in a musical work, it is not enough to describe the way in which gestures should be performed or the sensations that their embodiment evokes in the recipient. A more direct comprehension arises if such a gesture is physically performed. It can also be a physical simulation of the movement, not necessarily performed on the instrument. For example, when we observe the different performances of the double trills in Beethoven’s last sonata, we will notice the specific tension of the nerves with which the performer’s fingers move, as well as the way in which such trembling is reflected in the tension of his/her whole body and mind. We can understand this feeling through our own

bodily experience by placing our hand on any surface in such a way that the tips of all five fingers touch it, and then, in this hand position, we will move the pairs of fingers as quickly as possible for a long period of time. Thus arises the awareness of an authentic kinesthetic feeling, formed by the specific flow of kinetic energy through our fingers, hands, arms and body.

CONCLUSION: PERFORMING MUSIC

The goal of this phenomenological study was to examine the fundamental principles of pianism through the prism of its essential phenomenon – performative gesture. The basic premise that guided the discussion was that performative gesture is a kind of choreographic movement written in the score. In that sense, the aim of this article was to explain how the character of physical body movements conveyed expression and affected the creation of a musical work.

The analysis of movements that emanate from the characteristics of the piano technique in Beethoven's sonatas results in the basic conclusion that Beethoven's music is "more the expression of feeling than tone-painting", as is written in the full title of the composer's Sixth Symphony. For a deeper understanding of the way in which Beethoven created performative gestures in his piano sonatas, it is not enough to describe the way in which these gestures should be performed. A more direct understanding arises if such a gesture is performed, either on an instrument or through a physical simulation of the movement independent of the instrument. To understand those motions through our own bodily experience means to be aware of the authentic kinesthetic feeling, formed by the specific flow of kinetic energy through the fingers, hands, arms and body of the performer. In that way, a unique insight into many profound levels of Beethoven's creative thought is achieved. Perhaps this is what Tarasti had in mind when he wrote: "We can argue that a musical piece is in a metaphoric sense like a 'living organism', it is a kind of 'body'. (...) Then the only way to get under the skin of this 'body' is of course to perform it. Now, is there then any method by which we could study this kind of 'musical body' from in-side?" (1997, 21). The question Tarasti asked years ago is still awaiting an answer.

From the above considerations, it may be concluded that the gestures of pianists can authentically reflect inner musical expressions and the analysis of these gestures can increase human understanding of the musical phenomenon itself. In that sense, it is important to study all the modalities of performative gestures. The valuable way to get to know a musical work in all its layers is through the personal physical performance of its musical gestures. For a profound understanding of music, it is necessary to understand the kinetic energy that is found in it and that has the potential to create subjective kinesthetic sensations which can be recognized as "musical". Seen through the prism of performative gesture, the technical elements in Beethoven's piano sonatas fully re-create their function as a constructive component of a musical piece.

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Марија Динов

Перформативни гестови у Бетовеновим клавирским сонатама

(РЕЗИМЕ)

Рад представља феноменолошку студију о кинестетичким гестовима, односно телесним покретима које пијанисти користе у својим извођењима, како би креирали музичко-поетски садржај у корпореалном перформативном облику. Главна расправа концентрисана је на анализу покрета који произлазе из карактеристика технике у Бетовеновим клавирским сонатама. Студија је замишљена као допринос пољу музичке анализе фокусиране на праксу извођења.

Сврха ове студије је да објасни како карактер физичких покрета тела преноси израз и утиче на стварање музичког дела. Интерпретација перформативног геста кроз аналогне репрезентације формира поље његових конотативних значења у које су укључени осећаји и идеје које људи могу повезати с изразом тог геста. Тако се перформативни гестови у Бетовеновим клавирским сонатама тумаче кроз призму сензација насталих током извођења. Дефинисано је конотативно поље сваког од одабраних техничких елемената и описане су сензације које се доживљавају током извођења.

Резултати истраживања указују на то да је за постизање комплекснијег разумевања музике неопходно разумети њену кинетичку енергију. Ова енергија има потенцијал да створи субјективне кинестетичке сензације које се могу препознати као 'музикалне', чак и у извођењу 'немузикалних' техничких елемената. Анализа техничких елемената у Бетовеновим клавирским сонатама показује да сваки перформативни гест у потпуности рекреира своју функцију конструктивне компоненте музичког дела.