

MUSIC AND EXPRESSION IN PIANO PERFORMANCE:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO PERFORMANCES  
OF MOZART'S PIANO SONATA IN B-FLAT MAJOR, K281 (FIRST MOVEMENT)

A THESIS SUBMITTED  
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### Abstract

Recital preparation is an experience that all undergraduate and graduate music majors undertake. It requires technical mastery that can be accomplished with significant time and attention to detail. But the best performances have something special – an artistic flair or some fabulous expression that draws the audience in. This is exciting to hear but also difficult to quantify for teaching purposes. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the idea of musical expression: what do you have to know to be expressive? Drawing on the works of Taruskin and Meyer, I explore musical expression using the written score, but also through an analysis of two different performances of Mozart's piano sonata K 281 in order to create a richer understanding of musical expression that can be used to inform recital performances and the teaching of students.

*Key words:* musical expression, tendency, music meaning, emotion, Mozart, performance practice.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Musical expression is one of the most important aspects of music performance (Davies, 1994). Scholars have defined musical expression as consisting of dynamics, timbre, timing, and pitch. The ability to perform expressively by varying these elements distinguishes advanced musicians from lesser-skilled performers (Gabrielsson, 1988; Woody, 2003). The music played by performers and transmitted to audiences has to sound intelligible rather than focusing on elementary components of music such as pitch and rhythm.

According to the early music movement, as critiqued by Taruskin in his collection of essays *Text and Act*, performers tend to regard performance as focusing primarily on recovering the original meaning of the autograph score, thus eliminating any interpretational accretions that may have accumulated as performance conventions shifted. Followers of the early music traditions, as described by Taruskin, concentrate on the Urtext score<sup>1</sup>, which reflects an original meaning to be recovered. For instance, one may choose to play harpsichord or clavichord in performing an eighteenth-century sonata, in order to make the music correspond to the authentic sound of period instruments. Any later accretions, whether editorial or those connected to performance traditions, should therefore be purged from the music, for there is nothing that, according to this tradition, should be added into the music by the performer. (This is the ideal of “authenticity” that Taruskin critiques in “The Limits of Authenticity,” Taruskin 1995.)

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<sup>1</sup> The Urtext score edition is a work of classical music in a printed version intended to reproduce the original intention of the composer as exactly as possible, without any added or changed material. Other kinds of editions that are distinct from Urtext are facsimile and interpretive editions.

However, if every pianist must approach performance as the project of eliminating accretions, why have performers at all as live participants of the music-making tradition? If there must be only one ideal approach to interpret the score, why should we welcome a multiplicity of performative approaches, let alone performance traditions? While it is surely important for performers to refer back to historical performance to gain further understanding of past traditions, must every performance be evaluated only insofar as its ability to copy an existing blueprint? Alternatively, may we regard musical expression instead as a path to building, not copying, the performer's interpretative potential?

According to Leonard Meyer (1956), music can arouse emotion in ways that can be explained conceptually, neurologically, and aesthetically. From the perspective of listener, music is able to evoke "tendencies," which respond to music stimuli. Emotion arises when a tendency is inhibited. In other words, when the listener's (and also the performer's) pattern of expectation fulfilment is disrupted, an emotional response is enhanced. This sheds much light on the task of the performer to move the listener: performers must actively interpret the music as interacting with their expectations, as opposed to mechanically reproducing the score as if it were an Urtext. Performers must be aware of the patterns of expectations and resolutions that exist in their minds as well as in those of their listeners, and designate emotion accordingly.

A corollary question that must be asked is: how do the performers come to make these expressive choices? That is to say, if Meyer is correct, then what minimum knowledge of style is necessary in order for a coherent interpretation to arise? Conversely, how must the studio teacher determine what knowledge is lacking when the student's approach lacks expressivity?

**Statement of the problem**

Today, too many modern performers do not approach expression in this alternative way, producing interpretations that do not engage the listener's imagination sufficiently. If performers lack an understanding of the style, however, it is consequently meaningless to the listeners as well. As a pianist, then, it is important to interpret music as a process of making intelligible choices that resonate on the emotional and expressive level with the listener. We have to base expression on our musical experience and knowledge of the style of the work. We must translate this knowledge into choices concerning articulation, phrasing, pedaling, and other musical dimensions that connote emotion.

This approach to interpretation is traditionally resisted in certain parts of the Chinese musical community, where some modern performers focus more on technique rather than on communicating feeling. Such performers are used to separating expression from interpretation and overlooking both in favor of technical proficiency. My focus on expression is meant as a way of pushing back against this tradition.

**Purpose of Project**

The purpose of this project is to apply the theoretical framework extracted from Taruskin and Meyer to my analysis of the two Mozart performances, which in turn will help me formulate a more comprehensive, theory-based pedagogical philosophy. I will illustrate how these concepts may be applied to performance as I prepare my solo recital. The theoretical framework will have particular value to other teachers interested in the music expression as they think about what knowledge of style a student must possess in order to produce an emotionally and expressively charged performance.

## Guiding Questions

The project focuses on three main questions.

- What elements are present in the choices of the expressive pianist?
- What makes an interpretation expressive?
- What is the source of expressivity? Is it the score? The Pianist? The Audience? Or a combination thereof?

## Material

To answer these questions, I have chosen one sonata movement from the classical period, the first movement of Mozart's Sonata K. 281, which I will perform at my thesis recital. For my thesis project, I will examine two recordings of this work by two pianists from different historical traditions: Vladimir Horowitz and Mitsuko Uchida. Vladimir Horowitz was born in Kiev in 1903. Throughout his career, he championed Romantic repertoire and became known for his incredible virtuosity. By the end of his illustrious career, Horowitz was widely regarded as one of the greatest pianists of the twentieth century. Mitsuko Uchida, born in December 1948, is a naturalized British citizen. She has mastered a vast quantity of Western classical repertoire and has won numerous awards and honors. She is particularly well-known for her interpretations of Mozart's music,

The earlier recording of Vladimir Horowitz was released in 1995, on the album *Mozart: Piano Sonata, K.281, K.333, K.485, K540. DG Deutsche Grammophon, 445517*. The recording of Mitsuko Uchida was released in 1988, on the album *Mozart: the Piano Sonatas, 2001 Universal International Music B.V. B000VIUDCQ*. Both recordings were selected from a Youtube archival recording, which is widely available through this free

service site. The exact internet information is available in the references section.

### **Summary**

My project will focus on:

- The concept of musical meaning and on definitions of musical expression. These topics clarify the process whereby music affects both performers and listeners alike. Meyer's theoretical apparatus examines the relationship between musical expression and arousal theory, a psychological term that attempts to explain how meaning arises out of inhibited tendencies.
- The role of the Urtext score (and, by extension, an "Urtext performance") in the performer's understanding of his or her approach to the work.
- The incorporation of theoretical concepts such as expression and interpretations into daily practice and performance, which in turn influence piano pedagogy.
- The two pianists' personal background and aesthetic views.

My analysis of the two performances will enumerate the pianist's most important expressive choices, connect them to the score, and postulate their understanding of the style based on the expressivity of their interpretation. I will apply my research to my own piano performance as part of my thesis recital. This information will also inform my own piano pedagogy, as an instructor of piano in the Carthage Arts Academy.

The theoretical outcomes discussed here have resulted from my independent study with Dr. Shapovalov in the Fall of 2016. We set up a meeting time and discussion weekly. With Dr. Shapovalov's direction, I explored some books, book chapters, and articles about musical expression to broaden my understanding of musical expression. The project was guided by the expert review feedback from Dr. Wael Farouk and Dr. Deborah

Masloski, two accomplished scholars and pianists. Their feedback guided the analysis and the implications for future work on this project.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

In this chapter, I will provide the basic theoretical concepts of music meaning and a definition of musical expression. The concepts clarify the process whereby music affects both performers and listeners alike. I will specifically explore Meyers' theoretical framework to examine the relationship between musical expression and arousal theory, a psychology term that attempts to explain how meaning arises out of inhibited tendencies.

The literature review also examines the role of Urtext score and by extension, an "Urtext performance" in the performer's understanding of his or her approach to the work. Additionally, I will explore the debate about "early music" and "authenticity" by Richard Taruskin.

### Music meaning and musical expression

In the early research, musical expression has been used in many different ways in literature. Literally, it refers to the systematic variations in timing, dynamics, timbre, and pitch that differentiate it from other performances of the same music (Palmer, 1997). According to Davies, expression has also been to refer to the emotional qualities of music that are perceived by listeners.

In the book *Musical meaning and Expression*, Stephen Davies discusses the two questions, what is music meaning and how does music possess it by expressivity (1994). In his work, Davies tries to find relationship between music and language, music and symbolism, and music and emotion. Davies is concerned with the nature of emotions. He argues that humans respond to music naturally by emotions or behavior related to their knowledge, culture. Humans experience music just like other any behavior - it naturally

happened. Music, according to Davis, is a communication that influences the character of understanding, and touches the affective meaning of life. Music become meaningless without expressivity. In his theory, expression evokes in us the power of music in life, and we produce it, coexist with it, and are affected by it.

### *Musical Authenticity*

Textual Criticism is a theory where the performer examines the text, and eliminates any anachronism, any errors, any addition of the text. Taruskin (1995) said that is kind of a model for a way we think about performance. “Because you see modern performers seem to guide their performance as text rather than acts, and prepare the same goal as present-day textual editors: to clear away accretions.” Modern performers tend to build and think themselves in the same way as textual editor. Taruskin said this is not a good idea, because once you remove accretions, what expressive choices are put in their place? Lots of performers don’t put anything in this place; they see nothing in the edited score and they play nothing. Early music performers generally require that we should play this way, and not add in anything including personal interpretive choices. Early music performers believe that playing a period instrument such as a harpsichord or clavichord is an interpretive choice, and that the period instrument will allow them to make the appropriate sounds for the Urtext performance.

The idea of “Authenticity is problematic. Is clearing away the accretions a necessary step and goal of performance? As editors we clear away the accretions and keep the original look. But as a performer, this is a first step but shouldn’t be a goal. The performer, I believe, is a partner and expression requires that you need to put something in. Once you remove the accretions of editor remarks, what is to take their place?

When people apply the label a performance as “authentic”, they are really not talking about the performance. They are talking about the differences between what the performer is doing with the Urtext score (Urtext score edition definition: a work of classical music is a printed version intended to reproduce the original intention of the composer as exactly as possible, without any added or changed material. Other kinds of editions distinct from Urtext are facsimile and interpretive editions. Wikipedia.) But the Urtext is not a work in and of itself - the real work is the Urtext plus interpretation. Is it possible to play music without interpretation? There will be nothing at all in the communication between music and human being. It is always a case that a performer makes choices with an Urtext based on the expressive potential of the piece and the artist. The interpretation of the performer cannot be deviated from the Urtext.

### **Richard Taruskin’s theory: Let Music Speak for Itself**

In the book *Text and Act*, Taruskin argues “let music speak for itself.” He said some scholars believed that music performances had become arbitrary and overly personal on the behalf of the composer Taruskin cited the example of Brahms, who would stay at home with the score rather than go to opera to listen. The score was the only and best interpretation. Stravinsky as a composer is an example of this primacy of the score. Stravinsky documented his performances in the score because he didn’t want to create different objects. Milton Babbitt was similar, preferring an electric piano to document the performance of the score. These composers seem to view the performing artist as an unnecessary role, as a necessary conduit between the composer and audience. But without the “middle man”, is the music still expressive and alive?

Taruskin believed that if a performer did not have the urge to participate in the music and contribute to it, he shouldn't have become a performer in the first place. Taruskin pointed that "music can never under any circumstances but electronic speak for itself. In the case of notated music there is always the middle men, even if it is only ourselves as we contemplate to write the symbols" (p58).

"Let music speak for itself" is an inspired idea to think about music itself. Instead of drawing on lots of personal thoughts and editor's additions, Taruskin assumed "letting music speak for itself" was to get more and more close to the composer's intention using the text but requiring the vehicle of the performing artist. But does the best interpretation really exist? We are living in a modern period and it is hard to find the original intention of a long-gone composer. For example, if I was performing the Beethoven ninth symphony back in 1925, should I go back in time, to take an original recording – is that a good ideal for a performance in 2016? Can I make the music sound the same as that first example? Taruskin would say it is important for us to know what the performance sounds like and it would be really nice to have that recording. But should every performance today try to sound like that performance? I believe that should not be our goal every single time. Taruskin argued that if we are guided by only the composer's intention on the page, that is a fallacy. He believed that the initial performance is a roadmap to the accurate expressive performance.

### **Early Music Movement and Authentic Performance**

According to the early music movement, as critiqued by Taruskin (1995) in his collection of essays *Text and Act*, performers tend to regard performance as focusing primarily on recovering the original meaning of the autograph score, thus eliminating any

interpretational accretions that may have accumulated as performance conventions shifted. Followers of the early music traditions, as described by Taruskin, concentrate on the Urtext score, which reflects an original meaning to be recovered. For instance, one may choose to play harpsichord or clavichord in performing an eighteenth-century sonata, in order to make the music correspond to the authentic sound of period instruments. Any later accretions, whether editorial or those connected to performance traditions, should therefore be purged from the music, for there is nothing that, according to this tradition, should be added into the music by the performer. This is the ideal of “authenticity” that Taruskin critiques in “The Limits of Authenticity” (Taruskin 1995).

What is authentic performance? Taruskin argued it is very problematic. More and more musicians and scholars think highly of the Urtext score - the version closest to the original score of composers without overly decorated and recreated versions from editors. According to Taruskin, in the 1980s, the early music movement prized the “Urtext” only. But if there are no dynamics, no articulations, no staccatos on the score, can we play it? If we follow the rules, we absolutely cannot.

But Taruskin argued that an Urtext performance principal would be just playing the notes. They are big choices that performers have to make. The early music movement people said you can have to use the score context, but Taruskin pointed out that performers cannot produce a boring performance; they have to make choices.

If every pianist must approach performance as the project of eliminating accretions, why have performers at all as live participants of the music-making tradition? If there must be only one ideal approach to interpret the score, why should we welcome a multiplicity of performative approaches, let alone performance traditions? While it is

surely important for performers to refer back to historical performance to gain further understanding of past traditions, must every performance be evaluated only insofar as its ability to copy an existing blueprint? Alternatively, may we regard musical expression instead as a path to building, not copying, the performer's interpretative potential?

### **Music Expression**

Performers have to make choices to interpret music. The questions become "how do we know which expression" or "which choice of interpretation or expression do we want?" As Taruskin described, early music performance tradition offers nothing there. There are a few articulation choices, very few dynamic choices, no phrasing. Generally, interpretation is not in the edition of score - it is always a part of musical experience. The question for the performer then becomes "how do we know which choices interpretations of expression that we really want? Which expressions are good? Which expressions are bad?" I believe that good expressive choices always stimulate the imagination. But who holds judgment to balance between the score or composer and performer?

Clearly, the score has some authority, or rather the way we read the score must be taken into account., There must be some preferences, some rules. I believe that this is a space between the score and the performer – the balance of the performance practice that is informed by the Urtext and historical knowledge but consists of the interpretive choices of the performer in a balance.

### **Leonard Meyer's Theory**

According to Leonard Meyer (1956), music can arouse emotion in ways that can be explained conceptually, neurologically, and aesthetically. From the perspective of the

listener, music is able to evoke “tendencies,” which respond to music stimuli. Emotion arises when a tendency is inhibited. In other words, when the listener’s (and also the performer’s) pattern of expectation fulfillment is disrupted, an emotional response is enhanced.

### **Emotion and tendency**

In the book *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Meyer analyzes largely the process of how we listen to music and how this arouses emotions. Meyer says that with tendency we respond to music in a different way. When we hear music we have a tendency to act in this way or another way. Music may arouse in us a certain emotion; while our physical tendency is the different, we recognize a similar emotional response to music.,

### **Emotional Designation**

Differentiated behavior is not an automatic or a necessary concomitant of affective experiences. Meyer pointed out the purpose of emotional differentiated behavior is communication. People want to share their emotional life with others. Let’s imagine when people listen or watch spooky music or movie. They tend to behave in different ways - they may shake, hide their face behind their hands, or scream. Their behavior is not only a physiological reaction. They communicate and express their emotion to others through their behaviors.

The Designative behavior is largely influenced by custom and tradition. “it varies from culture to culture and among different groups within a single culture” (Meyer, 1956, p. 21). For example, if someone is yelling, it might not make any sense to us other than making a noise. But if this person is from a South Africa primitive tribe, their people might understand, it to mean: “I am hungry”. It becomes a communication between them.

So, the same stimuli caused different designations through communication because of the differing cultural background.

Above all, Meyer made a conclusion that: “people understand and made appropriate responses to designative behavior as a total behavior, not just to some features of it, whether natural or otherwise. As a total pattern designative behavior is a cultural phenomenon, not a natural one” (Meyer, 1956, p. 22). “Music which attempts to designate emotional states depends for its effect upon the learning of conventional signs and symbols” (Meyer, 1956, p. 22).

Meyer examined why different listeners have different reactions to the same music. His point is that we have differentiated behavior. It is likely that it is highly individual and conscious and under our control. He believed that when we don’t think about our actions, we tend to like react in a similar way.

Music is such a conscious activity that when we listen to it, we think about it. Our response to music when we are aware of it is frequently “Do I like this music?” Meyer supposed that people don’t think about a response to music, and may have listened to music their entire life without thinking about it consciously. He believed that these people would have a similar response to music.

How we respond to music? We have tendency to respond to stimuli. “The relationship must first of all be such that the stimulus produces a tendency in the organism to think or act in a particular way” (Meyer, 1956, p. 24). When the tendency is inhibited or stopped, like when someone wants to express or react but it stopped, this may result emotion. Meyer gave an example,

“[if] a habitual smoker wants a cigarette and, reaching into his pocket, finds one,

there will be no affective response. If the tendency is satisfied without delay, no emotional response will take place. If, however, the man finds no cigarette in his pocket, discovers that there are none in the house, and then remembers that the stores are closed and he cannot purchase any, he will very likely begin to respond in an emotional way. He will feel restless, excited, then irritated, and finally angry” (Meyer, 1956, p. 13).

Meyer gave the answer: “The emotion or affect is aroused when a tendency to respond is arrested or inhibited” (Meyer, 1956, p. 14) This gives a central psychological theory of emotions.

People experience variety of emotional states every day—love, fear, anger, jealousy and the like. How we respond to music is similar to how we respond to experiences in general life. If we react music in a different way as how we react to everything else, we won’t have a way of knowing how to theorize about it. It is hard to study music emotion. But Meyer said there is no difference in responding to music as we respond to our life. We can observe how we react to stimulus in life, and it is the same thing in music.

Meyer also talked about “Patterns” as several kinds of things that are repeated and reacted to in our mind. A pattern reaction is a repeated reaction to things that we hear. If we expect to have a pattern reaction, it is important for our musical expectations. For example, when we hear certain chords, people have similar pattern to response to it. Based on your culture, you might have a happy feeling with a major chord or a feeling of suspense in a minor chord. if we want to formulate theory in expression, if it is possible, we need patterns, so we are able to describe our behavioral response to it. Otherwise any behavior is unique, and it is hard to theorize about it.

### **Tendency and Expectation in Music**

About “tendency”, MacCury used this term: an “instinct” “is a pattern reaction that operates, or tends to operate, when active, in an automatic way” (Meyer, 1956, p.24) (The tendency could be natural and studied. It will form a habit since “a mechanism of action, physiological ingrained, which operated spontaneously and automatically” (p24).

Let’s explore the beginning theme of Beethoven’s ninth symphony. The recognizable theme appears many times in the music, and the resolution pattern is formed unconsciously. When the theme plays again at recapitulation, the listener has already created an expectation about the chord resolution. The consequent chord is expected to arrive at a particular time. “The more automatic behavior becomes, the less conscious it is” (Meyer, 1956, p.24).

Meyer used the term tendency to describe pattern reaction in music that cannot be controlled, because people cannot control over tendency just like we cannot control instinct. Although the response cannot be control, we can describe them. They are predictable; if there is pattern, the listener can predict the tendency he or she has, the response follows a previously ordered context. The listener is going to respond in some way, and have a tendency. If we now block a tendency, some people may become uncomfortable, and jump or shiver. No matter how the listener reacts, it is a part of an emotional response to the expected patterns in the music.

According to Meyer, conscious and self-conscious are often thought of and referred to as “expectation” (Meyer, 1956, p.25). Let’s take the same example of the smoker looking for a cigarette in his pocket. He may never become aware of his expectations. But his behavior shows he has a habitual expectation of desiring of cigarette.

“If tendencies are pattern reactions that are expectation in the broad sense, including unconscious as well as conscious anticipations, then it is not difficult to see how music is able to evoke tendencies. For it has been generally acknowledged that music arouses expectation, some conscious and other unconscious, which may or may not be directly and immediately satisfied” (Meyer, 1956, p.24).

The consequence is that within the style, there are expectations to arrive at a time. Whether it is early or late should follow the original patterns in a particular style. The expectations for arrival of a chord for Mozart would not be the same as Prokofiev. “The pattern is clearly conditioned by the specificity of the original expectation” (Meyer, 1956, p.26).

A listener may expect some changes and the completion of a musical fragment after a melodic fragment has been repeated several times. “Because we believed the composer is not so illogical as to repeat the figure indefinitely and because we look forward to the completion of incomplete figure” (p. 26). So we expect changes. Especially when we listen to Mozart’s music, there are several repeating sequences, like the dialog between different voicing. Our expectations tell us to make it different rather than just repeating it – to make some interpretive choices based on emotional expectations.

Our expectation for music are determined by our knowledge of style. Style produces expectations. If we have listened to many symphonies before Beethoven, we may recognize that Beethoven has done something different. If Beethoven is the first symphony that you have heard, you might say “okay, this is what I hear, nothing special and different.” I believe that this is why young musicians often don’t make any choices in interpretation. They don’t know the many examples, and therefore have less “patterns” in

mind when exploring the emotional expectations. Patterns have less effect on them.

Having less experience with a musical form also might impact the experience of the unexpected, or the surprise in music. If you were given a moment where something you expected is different, you have a musical surprise. "Surprise is most intense where no special expectation is active, where, because there has no inhibition of a tendency, continuity is expected." The patterns that we experience culturally help build that expectation of continuity.

Meyer generalized that listeners attempt to respond in a three different ways to a style of music. First, they might trust the patterns and keep listening to what is going on next. This might result in a sense of built up expectations an element of surprise. Second, the audience might reject music that they do not like because it does not conform to their cultural patterns or expectations. Or, they might think that a composer made a choice and somehow informed their emotional response. Most people have some mix of these feelings.

Meyer says that expectation is not always automatic. Expectation involves a higher order mental activity. The theory that the same stimulus can cause different tendencies depends on the context. For example, the same chord in a sixteenth century piece elicits a different response in a nineteenth century piece. The context could be a style. The same music progression which evokes an expectation could be the beginning of a piece and also could be the end of another. "Expectation is a product of habitual responses developed in connection with particular musical styles and of the modes of human perception, cognition, and response-the psychological laws of mental life" (p.30).

## **Meaning and Music**

The expectation theory played a very important role for Meyer, and expectation is relevant to knowledge of style. Meyer points out that a stimulus may indicate events or consequences. He calls this form of meaning “designative”, and later “embodied”. He argues that patterns can designate what is about to happen. “From this point of view, what a musical stimulus or a series of stimuli indicate and point to are not extra musical concepts and objects but other musical events which are about to happen. One musical event has meaning because it points to and make us expect another musical event” (Meyer, 1956, p.35).

In his theory, music has meaning because it produces expectation. “A present stimulus leads us to expect a more or less definite consequent musical event, [and] that stimulus has meaning” (p.35). If the music cannot evoke expectation, it is meaningless to listeners. The role of the performer is to evoke expectation and to designate what will happen in a way that arouses expectation. “Expectation is largely a product of stylistic experience, music in a style with which we are totally unfamiliar is meaningless” (p.35).

According to Meyer’s arousal theory. Evoking an expectation of listeners is really important. This is key theory of Meyer philosophy. As a performer, we have to be aware of the way that we communicating music to listeners. We need to do something beyond what is on the score in order to arouse the expectation of the audience in the moment of performance – a communication between the composer, the score, the performer, and the audience.

## **Conclusion**

Taruskin’s and Meyer’s theories shed much light on the task of the performer to

move the listener: performers must actively interpret the music as interacting with their expectations, as opposed to mechanically reproducing the score as if it were an Urtext. Performers must be aware of the patterns of expectations and resolutions that exist in their minds as well as in those of their listeners, and designate emotion accordingly.

After reading these theory, we must think about how the performers come to make these expressive choices. The knowledge of style is necessary for a performer and a teacher in order for a coherent interpretation to arise.

## Chapter 3

### Criteria

The purpose of this project is to apply the theoretical framework extracted from theoretical writings of Taruskin and Meyer to my analysis of two Mozart performances. This will in turn will help me formulate a more comprehensive, theory-based pedagogical philosophy to performance in general, and the performance of my thesis recital specifically. In this chapter, I will design criteria that will be used to develop the project according to my guiding questions. The guiding question focus on

- What elements are present in the choices of the expressive pianist?
- What makes an interpretation expressive?
- What is the source of expressivity? Is that the score? Pianist? Listeners or a combination thereof? A panel of expert reviewers was established to evaluate the design and analysis.

### Design

The music chosen was selected from the Classical time period. This is a popular time period for music performance and study. It is also a time period where the piano was very central. Additionally, I am choosing a time when the instrument was very similar to the instrument that we now play. For my thesis project, I will examine two recordings of a Mozart sonata performed by two pianists from different historical traditions: Vladimir Horowitz and Mitsuko Uchida.

Vladimir Horowitz was born in Kiev in 1903. Throughout his career, he championed Romantic repertoire and became known for his incredible virtuosity. By the end of his illustrious career, Horowitz was widely regarded as one of the greatest pianists of the

twentieth century. Mitsuko Uchida, born in December 1948, is a naturalized British citizen. She has mastered a vast quantity of Western classical repertoire and has won numerous awards and honors. She is particularly well-known for her interpretations of Mozart's music.

These two pianists are from different time periods, and very different cultural backgrounds and experiences. They have very different understandings of style. I was very interested in how they interpret the same music piece, using the same Urtext score. I was interested in how the music was expressed. What did they do what was not "in the score?" How are their interpretations similar and different? What expectations does this set up for the listener, and how does that inform my own performance? Using Taruskin and Meyers theories, I will describe what I think, feel and imagine – my first impression as a listener.

### **Theoretical and research foundation**

1. Two interpretations can be differently expressive while relying on the same score.

The expressive content is not only in the score; if that were the case, there would be only one way for an interpretation to be expressive.

2. Neither interpretation is more authentic than the other. It is not advisable to talk about "authentic" interpretation when evaluating performances, such as Horowitz and Uchida. When comparing them, there is not one that is more authentic than another. However, they are using different choices.

3. The score is not the final, only source for expressive choices that the pianist makes.

The pianist has to interpret the score by making expressive choices beyond what is in the score.

4. As we listen Horowitz and Uchida's interpretation, tendency and expectation are evident in each of these expressive performances. An expressive performance is one that elicits an emotional response from the listener. We are emotionally affected by the interpretation – by the expression. We are affected because each interpretation does unexpected things; they make strong choices. For some people, the same performance can be very expressive and for others it won't be as expressive. The listener may not have the same emotional reaction if they don't have any tendencies or patterned responses. Therefore, the source of the expressive choices is not the score. The source is also the listener. If I am conditioned and know what to expect in Mozart, I will be more affected by choices that exploit those tendencies.

## Chapter 4

### Project

The propose of this project was to apply a theoretical framework based on Richard Taruskin and Leonard Meyer to analysis of two different performances of Mozart's Sonata No. 3 in Bb Major (K281), first movement. The performers are Vladimir Horowitz, one of the greatest pianists of the twentieth century, and Mitsuko Uchida, well-known for her interpretation of Mozart's music. This chapter will present the comparative analysis, including score excerpts from the Wiener Urtext edition (uploaded from International Stiftung Mozarteum, Online Publications, 2006).

#### Exposition Analysis

The tempo mark is Allegro, which is commonly understood to be around 110 to 132 MM. Horowitz played it much faster, like 154, Allegrissimo. For me, the first impression is that Horowitz played pretty fast and skillful. It sounds really playful, and dazzling. However, to be honest, if beginner use this tempo it may make audiences concentrate more on the running notes instead of the elegant melody. Uchida's tempo at 132 is much slower than Horowitz, and closer to what is commonly understood as Allegro. The changes in tempo create two different moods.

Allegro

tr

f

Entstanden in München, Anfang 1775



The first phrase includes two measures, In Horowitz's recording the last note D is really surprising, and very short. In this Urtext edition, the D is marked by a stroke instead of staccato. The dynamic at the beginning is forte, but is most likely an addition by an editor. In the Horowitz recording, he performed the beginning at a soft, piano, dynamic but at measure 5 of the repeat, he played it loud or forte. This is opposite what the musical score indicates. This personal interpretation may have been to draw audience attention.

The first ornaments are played full of firmness and decisiveness and Horowitz released gradually, like a rush into the key. It sounds playful and is lots of fun to hear! Compared to Horowitz's beginning, Uchida seems to be more blended and subtle, a soothing and moderate tempo along with a long ornament. In her first phrase, Uchida gives more emphasis to the musical round shape. Uchida also stretches the timing. This to shows different performers interpreting the timing in a different way.

From the beginning, the differences of interpretation obviously emerged, two pianists jumped out of the music context, incorporate individuality and distinct character. This continued in the second phrase measure 3 and 4. Horowitz made a *rallentando* that is not shown on the music. I like it because it gives audiences a feeling of the phrase ending. Measure 5, 6 is a repeat of this motivation.

When the music goes to measure 8, there is a new theme, the continuous repeating

interval in the background sets off the melody. Horowitz played energetic but soft, using a lot of fingertips to make it sound jumpy or restless. I was excited to hear the vitality that Horowitz brought out, because according the Urtext, Mozart did not notate musical dynamic, direction, and articulation. The first three notes are slurred, but Horowitz played non-legato, he made a crescendo then settled down.

“According to Leopold Mozart’s violin treaties and other contemporaneous, treaties, slurs not only prescribe legato playing, but also are to be understood as decrescendos, with the last note normally lighter.” (Wiener Urtext Edition)

Both of two pianist shape the phrases with appropriate intonation to attract audience.

There is still much debate and question about the notation of dots and strokes given by Mozart. “The execution of dots taught today - a short, light articulation - is but one meaning of the stroke. The later can also denote a weightier articulation akin to the later

accent sigh (>), which does not appear in Mozart's manuscripts" (Wiener Urtext Edition). In Horowitz's interpretation, measure 12 is played with strokes like staccato and really light, until the forte appears. However, Uchida add more weight on the strokes, and the bass hand stands out more than the right hands melody. By measure 13, she made it quiet as the dynamic piano. It is clear that these two performers arranged and presented articulations based on how they understood musical background knowledge and their personal philosophy, as well as aesthetics.

These three sequences made by declining scale with dot after three slurred notes is very typical of Mozartian style. With either tempo, it is hard to hear clearly the exact articulation changing. Uchida's playing is more precise. Horowitz employed some pedal to make the sound more articulated and smooth. The second repeat sequence is softer than the first one, like a reflection, followed by the forte appearing in both parts and extending more than one measure until it arrives on the dominant chord. Even the left hand octaves at forte were played gently by Horowitz. He seems to use wrist with one motion instead of four motions, which some believe might be too heavy for Mozart music. After an inflection at measure 15 and 16, the last phrase ended with firmness and termination.

The image displays a musical score for two systems, measures 15 through 18. The first system (measures 15-16) features a treble clef with a descending scale in the right hand, marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The bass clef part consists of chords and octaves. The second system (measures 17-18) shows a continuation of the right-hand melody with a forte (f) dynamic, while the bass clef part plays octaves. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

At measure 17, the music goes to the dominant V which is F major, and has a relaxing, cantabile sound. The dynamic there is piano, and the first C in treble is marked differently than the following four C pitches. Horowitz took three times when he got to the C at measures 18, 20, and 22 reaches to D. This makes so different an expectation, to let the listener think about where the music is going to. Especially the last D appearance is a surprise, with the first two are arriving on C, but the last one disturbing the expectation. Horowitz made big use of agogic accents by interpreting the length of these equal notes differently, creating a tendency of expectation. Based on Meyer theory, when the expectation is fulfilled or stopped, an emotional response is enhanced. Horowitz succeeded in creating an emotional response by interacting with the audience's expectation of tempo. The audience has listened twice to the same repeated spot, and in their mind, it is forming a pattern. When new material arrives, their tendency is stopped, and the desire is unfulfilled. The audience is craving tempo stability just as the smoker desired a cigarette. Horowitz receives an emotional response – a yearning for the tempo to stabilize.

Similarly, a rubato expression is approached by Uchida, at the same measure 22. She takes a little bit of time when she lands on D, but her tempo is not dramatic and flexible like Horowitz. Instead, Uchida keeps a steady tempo, in keeping with the cultural context of an 18<sup>th</sup> century Mozartian interpretation. My impressions of both performances is positive. Horowitz's flexibility and approach to dynamics is full of richness. Uchida's subtlety has a purity that has an elegance that is very touching.

There are a few rests at the end of the phrase, which are important not just for the keeping of metric time, but are important as part of the stylistic approach to Mozart.

Many young pianists play notes longer than their given value, and make the rest too short to the point that it might even disappear. This can sound awkward and sluggish. The music seems to lack a vividness and spirit. To avoid this, it is better to raise the wrist or arm when finishing one phrase. This enables the performer to take enough rest value while also creating a mellow and full sound.

As the pianists approach measure 22,



we find the fastest pattern comprised of four groups of thirty-second notes. It is also one of the most exciting parts of the piece. The forte dynamic mark is written on the score, and the pattern echoes alternately in both hands. In the recording, Horowitz takes much more time with these echo patterns than Uchida. Horowitz actually plays the section opposite the stated dynamics by, starting at a soft, piano dynamic and then making a crescendo. This brings the melody notes out of the texture on the strong beats. The result is an emphasis on the chromatic melody creating a tension. The left hand playing the declining passage has a strong beat to bring the melody out. Horowitz shaped the phrase toward the chromatic notes, while making the others notes shorter like staccato.

However, in Uchida's recording, every notes seems equal. Rather than shortening certain notes and elongating the chromatic notes like Horowitz, Uchida shaped the whole phrase with a building crescendo. It is only the last passage that ends with the G that she made a softer and more transparent sound for expressive effect.

As a listener, different interpretations inspire a different feeling. The detached style which Horowitz utilized is more playful. It seems vivid and also risky. Uchida brought a smooth and elegant conversational style to the antiphonal nature of the right and left hand. This seems like a conversation and creates a contrast that is dramatic and fun.,

After the intensity of these running thirty-second notes, a new form comes right on the end of chromatic passage at G. In Horowitz's interpretation, his G is so soft and gentle, it can barely be heard. The effect is crystallizing and so special. He is almost lavish about his expression. This mist dissatisfies conservative critics, but it has an intensely emotional appeal that is hard to debate.

At measure 27,

The image displays a musical score for two staves, likely piano and right hand. The top staff begins at measure 25, marked with a 'tr' (trill) above a note. The bottom staff features a continuous, rhythmic accompaniment of thirty-second notes. The score concludes at measure 30, with a 'simile' marking below the bottom staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

the beautiful melody comes out, and his left hand is full of energy and light. There are

two patterns in one group of thirty-second notes. The note value is too short to think of as staccato. The melody is happy, playful. Two-note slurs endow the character of the melody with vitality and color. When the melody runs the second time at measure 31, it tends to be softer and evokes a different sound.



Horowitz's interpretation employs rubato at the end of phrase before the resolution to the dominant chord. At the measure 33, Horowitz stretches the melody while taking time and building a crescendo. There is a purely romantic feeling when he lands on the D and F. Uchida portrays this section with verve and incisiveness. The slur is notated in every grouping in measure 33 for the left hand. Both Horowitz and Uchida approached this section with non-legato to appropriately match the lively right hand.



In the last seven measures, there is big contrast between the phrases. A descending arpeggio rushing to the E flat, stands out in Horowitz's interpretation with a firm accent.

He makes a dramatic contrast of dynamics, shifting sharply from forte to piano. This is a matter of personal choice, as Mozart did not write any dynamics here.

Unlike Horowitz, Uchida elongates the eighth notes of the left hand on measure 34. The two interpretation inspire a totally different emotional response. Horowitz's dramatic picture seems to be a dialogue between the firm forte and light piano. The result is a spiritual, almost vocal sound.

One of the most striking things that Horowitz did was to stress accents on the weak beats instead of strong beats. This gives a propulsion of moving forward; the syncopation almost serves as an anticipation, an accent that should have been on the strong beat but comes early on the previous weak beat. Moving into the last E minor chord, Horowitz slows down the tempo. Taking time here delays the audience's arrival at the end. The ending is not too direct and mechanical. On the contrary, the audience almost can breathe with the music, and enjoy the comfortable feeling of arrival. Everything silently comes down when last chord is resolved.

### **Development Analysis**

After a neat and clean transition is presented by both pianists, the melody transitions to the dominant key of F.

At measure 48

There is triplet group alternated by two hands, like a dialogue between a man and woman. Uchida and Horowitz both play this non-legato and more fully articulated.

This little ending at measure 54.

Horowitz stretches the longer notes of the chord, possibly using the pedal and at a dynamic that can barely be heard. When the music goes to measure 57, there is a marked differentiation in each pianists' interpretative style. Horowitz uses more pedal here than other sections. For example, at measure 59 the first note of left hand is emphasized and sustained for a long time. The same with measure 62, where the slurred notes increasingly build the mood. Horowitz approaches the pedal to create the climax with dramatic contrast.

In Uchida's recording, she also utilizes pedal in this section. But in contrast, she uses a small amount and seems to use it to affect a more period instrument sound. Her use of the pedal makes the notes sounds more rounded, like a pearl. According to Wiener's Urtext Edition Notes on interpretation,

"Mozart never explicitly called for use of the pedal (raising of damper), though it was available to him (activated by hand and knee levers): certain doubled stemmed left-hand passage seems to call for the pedal... The lighter, clearer sound of Mozart's piano makes a more sparing use of pedal possible than is customary on today's instruments." (Wiener Urtext Edition, 2004, p. XX)

The changes in the modern day piano make the use of the pedal for a lighter, clearer and rounded sound necessitate the use of the pedal, though it might not have been necessary on the period instruments of Mozart's time. This seems to point to the reasoning behind the consistent use of pedal by Horowitz and Uchida.

At measures 65 to 69, Mozart brings the movement to a new high before it enters into the recapitulation. This climax displays the two different personalities of the pianists. For the recapitulation, the musical expression seems similar in both pianists as their performance of the exposition.

Horowitz's tempo is flexible, especially at measures 63 and 64. He adds a slight stretching of the beginning note instead of playing them right on tempo, giving a lush and romantic style. Bouncy soft chords were presents at end of measure 67. And while the notation is for a loud, forte dynamic, Horowitz plays it softly – something that has become a signature in his performance of this piece.

### Conclusion

Horowitz's romantic, flexible, and dynamically dramatic performance captures one of Mozart's characteristics - spontaneity. Horowitz creates this impression in listeners through a lighter reading of the score, and immense personal interpretation through use of rubato, kaleidoscopic articulation, dynamic contrast and dramatic almost operatic voicings. He really gave Mozart's work character and life.

In Uchida's version her cadences embodied naturalness and poise. Her neat touch and precise interpretation of dynamics reflect the grace and refinement of the Classical

Period and Mozart's music. Her nuanced precision, adjusting dynamics and tension in the touch of every note creates a flow that left me spellbound. Uchida uses the small changes to create a big picture, seemingly asserting that "Less is More". She played the Mozart for authenticity with a touching honesty rather than a flare for drama. These elements and choices make interpretation expressive.

The expressive choices of each performer is clear. Each added their own personal decisions to the performance. Horowitz's Mozart is firmer, more decisive, and dramatic. Uchida's Mozart is smoother, more restrained, it is obvious that Horowitz bring many of his own ideas to the score, including making choices that are contradicted by the score. He chooses to emphasize different things in the score as well. Uchida also brings in her own external ideas, but tends to be much more informed by the score and by her understanding of the instrument of the day and their expressive possibilities.

My personal feeling is that these differences are influenced by the background of the pianists. Horowitz comes from different time, when pianists felt more free to be decisive and aggressive. He also spent most of his career to exploring the great romantic repertoire. When Horowitz returns to play Mozart and Scarlatti later in life, we see the influence of these romantic tendencies and the flair for pianistic drama in his interpretation.

Uchida also comes from a performance tradition, but her performance tradition does not favor decisiveness or aggressiveness. She would be smoother in interpretation. Her study happened at a time when more careful attention to the score was being paid by editors, and more critical editions were available. The result of these different cultural and educational backgrounds is that different choices are employed by the pianists.

Based on Meyer's theory, the two pianist's interpretations produce a kind of emotional response because they did unexpected things. They did something surprising. They exploited the audience's emotions, relying on tendency and emotional designation to produce a powerful interpretation that evokes an emotional response. In order for these performances to be recognized as expressive, the listener has to be aware of what is expected or what is not expected according to Meyer. Pianists can make expressive choices that are not in the score, but these expressive choices are not going to be recognized by the listeners unless the listener is aware they are unusual. If listeners are not aware, if they don't know the score, or conventions of the style, then they are not going to receive the interpretation as expressive.

The source of expression is not only the score; the pianist has to make choices to interpret the score and listeners have to recognize these choices, in order to be affected, in order for expression to be communicated.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this project was to apply the theoretical framework extracted from the reading of Taruskin (1995) and Meyer (1956) for the purpose of developing a framework for analyzing expression in music performance. The Taruskin and Meyer framework was applied to an analysis of two different performances of Mozart's Sonata K281, in order to help me formulate a more comprehensive, theory-based pedagogical philosophy. This theoretical framework will have particular value to other teachers interested in music expression. This discussion presents the conclusion of the project, recommendations, and the strengths and limitations of the study.

### **Conclusion**

After completing this analysis, I learned the importance of making expressive choices and the impact that the artist choices have on the experience of the audience. Through the exploration of Taruskin and Meyer as theoretical frameworks, I developed an understanding of the role of the artist in collaboration with the text. I began to think about making choices as I interpret the music rather than only focusing on the meaning that can be found in the written score. Listening to different interpretations of pianists and accumulating knowledge of the music and composer's background helped me understand and recognize expression in the performances of others, and to improve my own interpretations based on my more refined understanding of musical aesthetics.

As a teacher, I believe that it is important for students to interpret the score based on their own personal choices that are informed by a strong understanding of the history and context of the piece. I will encourage them to express their own thoughts, and have them

make expressive choices, not only playing the notes. This is the limitation of the Chinese piano learning system. Most of the Chinese students are taught technique and musical expression separately. Teachers in China concentrate on giving very precise directions to students, so that students only copy what is in the score. Sometimes it is good to follow the score, but it is also necessary to explore a fresh way to interpret the score and look beyond any accretions to the score. I believe that the American model provides more individualized and personal expression, but that it can sometimes lack the precision of the Chinese system. My personal feeling: it is good to have the two systems combined. I believe students need to think about phrasing, the characters they want to create, while gaining more knowledge of the composer. But it is also important to listen to different recordings to get different expressive thoughts of the music.

### **Strength and Limitations of this Project**

My project has addressed many huge topics like music expression, tendency, emotion, and music meaning. The strength is that it is grounded in important research of Taruskin and Meyer, and those theories of aesthetics are applied to an analysis of two performances of Mozart's K 281 Piano Sonata. This sonata is a standard in the music performance canon, and is frequently performed by students.

This project is limited in that it focuses on a single sonata, and the analysis is based on the qualitative impressions of the author. Future projects exploring expression might include sample guiding questions for the listeners to compare for inter-rater reliability. The analysis was limited to analyzing two performances. Additional recordings should be explored as part of a comparative exploration of musical expression and the role of the

performer in making expressive choices. This project was limited to analyzing a single musical composition. Future exploration of other musical works should be explored to better understand tendency theories in musical expression.

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