

Continuity in Berwald's *Concertpiece for Bassoon*

“[M]usic should be allowed to speak for itself.... To allow music to speak for itself means that a player must understand it.... It means ... that the player needs a certain amount of scholarship and patience with seemingly pedantic details in order to realize, or at least not to controvert, the intentions of the composer...”¹ The music of Franz Berwald was unappreciated during his lifetime, and much of music history since. His *Concertpiece for Bassoon*, written in 1827, is a hidden gem of the repertoire. It has a virtuosic quality, and comes from a time period where bassoon music is somewhat scarce.

One of the “seemingly pedantic details” of this piece is how to play the cadenza measures and fermatas. These occur mostly at points of transition in the music, framing new themes and large sections. “Performance...is to a very large extent an art of transitioning... Performances tend to show the greatest variance at points of transition.... Transitions are places where meaning is both concentrated and open to performers' intervention,”² This is certainly true of the transitions in this piece. However to allow the music to speak for itself, particular care must be taken to ensure that the performers' intervention does not interfere with the continuity of the piece.

Berwald wrote six cadenza-like measures throughout the piece. Two occur in the first section of the piece, while the remaining four are in the theme and variations. These measures must be treated with care; else the continuity of the piece suffers. Each cadenza is included as an appendix to this paper. The first cadenza occurs in m. 55. While the fermatas at the end of the measure give the performer much freedom, I suggest that this is not a place to take too much time. A much freer cadenza is only 17 measures away, and the flow of the piece would be

1 Ralph Kirkpatrick, *Domenico Scarlatti* (Princeton University Press: 1953), 281-282.

2 Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford University Press: 2013), 46.

interrupted if excessive time is taken during both of these measures. Rather the performer better serves the audiences by saving the effect for the second cadenza, and taking relatively little time here. In keeping with this principle, there should be very little space between the final G, and the entrance of the orchestra in the next measure. Too much time here would similarly upstage the second cadenza and the continuity of the piece.

At measure 73, the performer is given much more opportunity to be expressive and make alterations to the tempo. Note that in the Musica Rara edition the bassoon part has a caesura at the end of the measure, while the piano reduction does not. Likewise the orchestral score does not have this caesura. The caesura in the bassoon part could influence the performer to break the continuity of the piece in several ways. The first would be to take time before m.74, delaying the resolution of the dominant seventh chord. Second would be elongate the quarter notes immediately preceding measure 74. Several performers adopt this strategy, but the piece flows much better if the quarter notes at the end of the cadenza are in tempo with measure 74. The rhythmic progression of this measure supports this approach. Note that with the exception of the first fermata, each fermata is preceded by three sixteenth notes. However the last group of sixteenth notes leads to a quarter note without a fermata. If this section was meant to slow down, then why not put another fermata on the last quarter note? Close analysis reveals that the first note has the longest duration of a whole note with a fermata tied to a sixteenth note. The next two fermatas are shorter, a quarter note tied to a sixteenth. The absence of the fermata and a tied sixteenth note on the next quarter note suggests that even less time must be taken, while slowing down the last quarter notes negates the accelerating progression of the rhythm of the preceding fermatas. A slight *accelerando* through the last quarter notes gives the piece more energy and momentum for the next theme.

As for the sixteenth notes leading into these fermatas, a similar progression may be used. The first set of sixteenth notes can be longer and take more time. The following set then can be faster, but still slower than the coming tempo. By the end of the next group of sixteenths the performer should have set the tempo for the quarter notes to follow so there is a seamless transition into the next measure.

Although not a cadenza, immediately preceding the andante section the accompaniment has a fermata over a whole note. This fermata stops on the dominant seventh chord of the key of the andante section. The Musica Rara edition has a final bar line in both the bassoon part, and the piano reduction. This significantly disrupts the continuity of this piece as a single movement concertpiece. In the orchestral score, there is merely a double bar line between the sections. The performer therefore must not wait very long before coming in after this fermata. Excessive silence distracts from the continuity, while little space solidifies the continuity of this single movement work. Additionally it makes the andante section the arrival of the progression of chords, as opposed to a new starting point.

The next series of cadenzas occur at the end of the theme and each variation. At measure 168, remember that this is the first of many cadenzas. The duration of these fermatas need to be much less than the final cadenzas. While the beaming of the eighth notes leading into measure 168 suggests an interpretation that is not completely rhythmic, the effect should not be overdone. Certainly the final eighth note needs to be in tempo as it is played with the orchestra to begin the transition into the first variation.

The cadenza at measure 189 of the first variation is a little different from the theme's cadenza. The fermata over the final sixteenth rest indicates that there is a little time before moving into the second variation. However as it is a sixteenth note rest, as opposed to a longer

rhythm, this pause is not very long. Also, there is not a fermata over the last quarter note, so the time taken in the last quarter notes should be minimal. The fermatas in this measure are all over eighth notes, as opposed to the quarter notes in the theme. This suggests that these fermatas also must not be too long. If too much time is taken, the flow and continuity of the piece decrease. Furthermore, the longer fermatas will have a greater effect and be more dramatic if they are much longer than the previous fermatas.

Measure 210 and 211 of variation two is the logical choice for the cadenza with the most liberty in this section. Firstly, it spans over two measures instead of just one, as all the other cadenzas do. The first fermata is the longest of the section, being an eighth note tied to a quarter note. The other fermatas in these measures are all quarter notes. Also, the moving voices between the fermatas have longer rhythmic duration than previous cadenzas. Instead of sixteenth notes, there are quarter notes and triplets; even quarter note triplets in the orchestral score. If too much time is taken in the other cadenzas the effect of these longer rhythms will be lost. Modifying the tempo in this cadenza however creates a dramatic effect and sets it apart from the rest of the cadenzas in the piece.

The final cadenza measure is at measure 222 before the Tempo I. As not much time has passed since the longer cadenza at measure 210 and 211, this cadenza need not take much time. There are only fermatas on the first and final notes. Similarly to the transition before the theme and variations, there is a small break before the restatement of the beginning of the piece. In addition to the fact that this is a single movement work, the dominant harmonies that transition between the sections need resolution, or the listener will begin to feel uneasy.

While these cadenza measures give the performer a good deal of opportunity to be expressive and soloistic, the continuity of the piece is best served by not treating every cadenza

as if it is the only cadenza in the piece. Treated individually it seems intuitive to take a lot of time, but examined all together this doesn't make sense. Careful planning is required to maintain the continuity and flow of this piece.

Much has been said about the time that should be taken at transitional moments in the piece, but there are other measures where the performer could choose to take time if desired. While there are many candidates, three will be presented here. The first is measure 184. After playing the F on beat two, it is tasteful to start the B flat arpeggio slowly with an *accelerando* into the downbeat of 185. This phrase also has an *ossia* measure in 186, which shows that it is permissible to alter this phrase from the previous one. The *ossia* measure changes the register at the end of the phrase, and taking a little time at the beginning can have a pleasing effect.

With the restatement of the opening theme, there is opportunity modify the tempo as well. There are no cadenzas or fermatas for the rest of the piece, and some small artistic liberties will not threaten the continuity of the piece. One such measure is to consider is measure 240. A slight *ritard* through the ascending scale before proceeding to measure 241 is interesting, and does not interrupt the flow of the piece. This phrase also has ornamentation in the next measure to add some variety to the recapitulation. Taking a little bit of time will only strengthen that idea.

Another opportunity to consider for tempo alteration is the coda section, beginning in measure 251. The performer may choose to begin the coda slowly, and accelerate beginning in measure 275 to finish off the piece, or perhaps begin the coda at a quicker tempo. Neither of these options diminishes the overall continuity of the piece, and allows the performer to make their own artistic decisions.

While some of these remarks may seem like small details, these are the types of details that can allow the music to speak for itself. Some areas of the piece invite artistic innovation in

their interpretations, but at the same time can be misinterpreted by performers and diminish the continuity of the piece. The cadenzas and fermatas of this piece are relevant examples of this. Any performer must carefully consider how their artistic choices add or detract from the overall flow and continuity of the music. This attention to detail will result in a more refined interpretation and lead to a better received performance experience.

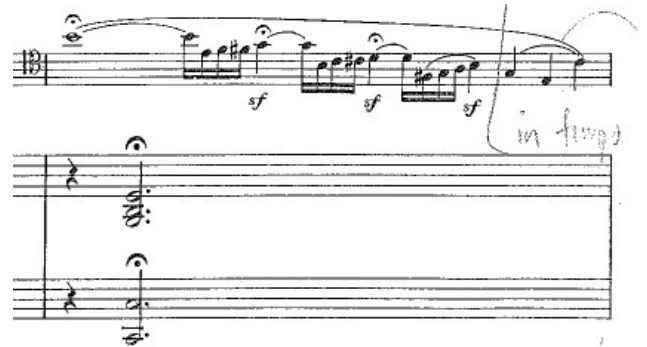
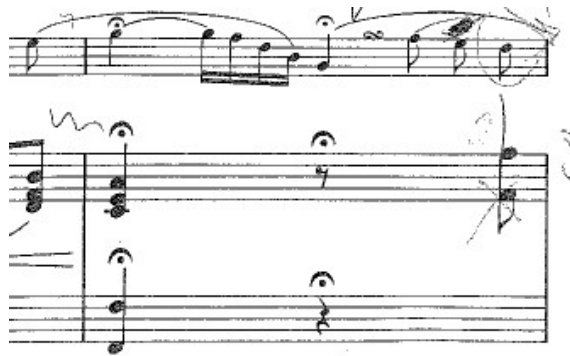
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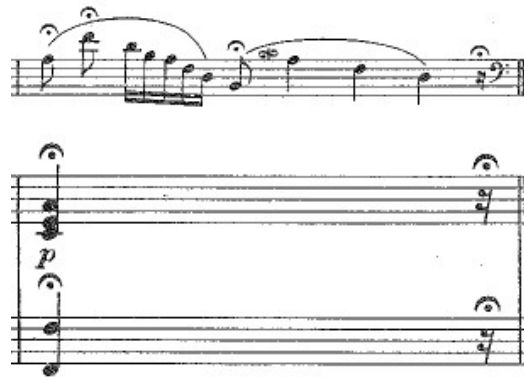
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Cadenza 1



Cadenza 2



Cadenza 3



Cadenza 5

Cadenza 4



Cadenza 6