



Ignasi Solé Piñas <ignasicellista@gmail.com>

Playing Beethoven Faster?

4 messages

Ignasi Solé Piñas <ignasicellista@gmail.com>
To: Steven Isserlis <steven@stevenisserlis.com>

20 March 2022 at 19:41

Dear Maestro Isserlis

I hope you are doing well, I would like first to give you my condolences for the friends and colleagues you have had to say goodbye to (saw it on Facebook), I hope that you and their families are doing alright.

I have reached a breakthrough in my thesis on the performance of Beethoven's cello sonatas, and that is that on the 1st, 4th and 5th sonatas, the recordings after Du Pre (1970), they all speed up their bpm's until you in 2012, however for the 2nd and 3rd sonata, there is no identifiable change of speed throughout the years. Also, the tempos that Czerny and Moscholes gave, are incredibly fast and unplayable.

My initial theory is that the 2nd and 3rd sonata are the most lyrical in terms of phrasing as opposite as the other three.

So my question and discussion for you if you could help me is: Do you think there is any reason why cellists decided to play Beethoven faster after the 70s? And why did the lyrical sonatas remain steady in tempo, is it their age, nationality, teacher or just mere casualty?

And, why do you think Czerny and Moscholes gave indications that are humanly impossible to play for the cellist if the cellist wants to have a little bit of room for interpretation?

Ps. I really loved your Haydn in C with Philharmonia a month ago, I wanted to come and say hello and introduce myself, but I thought it inappropriate given that you were working, so I hope one day I can show my gratitude to you face to face for all of these crucial emails.

All the best,

Ignasi

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Steven Isserlis <steven@stevenisserlis.com>

28 March 2022 at 19:20

To: Ignasi Solé Piñas <ignasicellista@gmail.com>

Hello and thanks for this! First a question for you: where does Moscheles (I presume that you mean him?) write about speeds in the sonatas? I've not seen that - interesting. I'm about to play his lovely cello sonata.

Not ALL Czerny's markings are that fast. The Andante of the C major, for instance, is quite slow - I've always liked that. And I'm surprised about the G minor not getting faster - Rostropovich/Richter play the 2nd movement (to my taste) ridiculously fast, as I remember.

Anyway, I think that the answer to your question is that the study of original instruments, particularly in regard to the quicker decay of longer notes on the fortepiano, probably led to faster tempi. I'm sure you'd find the same trajectory in performances of the music of Bach and Mozart.

Good luck - and yes, I'm sure we'll meet sometime! Many thanks for your kind comments about the Haydn - such a glorious work!

Steven

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Ignasi Solé Piñas <ignasicellista@gmail.com>

28 March 2022 at 21:55

To: Steven Isserlis <steven@stevenisserlis.com>

Dear Maestro Isserlis,

Thank you so much for your reply, before I show gratitude let me kindly respond to your question. Moscheles writes about metronomes in Cello sonatas in his book "*Sonate pour le Pianoforte, composée par L. van Beethoven. / Sonates pour le Pianoforte seul, composees par Louis van Beethoven. Nouvelle édition très correcte, Hamburg (A. Cranz) c1828–1841.*" I am attaching a picture of the comparison of Metronome between Czerny (C1) and Moscheles (M1) that are extracted from Czerny's piano method, chapter IV, and the aforementioned book from Mosheles (From Noorduyn's Ph.d thesis).

Upon inspection of my database, you are correct, the Andante of the fourth sonata is the only time cellists go above Czerny (66bpm) and Moscheles (72bpm), which is interesting. I am attaching a pdf of a small visualization of some cellist's approach to the andante in the shape of a tempograph, you will see your flexibility of tempo (rubato) during this section!

Thank you again for your reply, I am drawing near to the conclusion that as you say, the changes in performance style might have been due to the tendency of changes in Historically Informed Performance, and I have had the luck to have it written directly to me by Jose Bowen, Nick Cook, Marten Noorduyn, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and you. Such a warm world music is.

I will keep an eye on your next performances, and it would be a pleasure to exchange more words with you, what I am learning thanks to you is priceless.

Have an amazing week,

All the best,

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2 attachments



Czerny and Moscheles Comparison.pdf

108K



Op. 102, No. 1 First Movement, Flexibility of Tempo (1).pdf

38K

Steven Isserlis <steven@stevenisserlis.com>

2 April 2022 at 08:29

To: Ignasi Solé Piñas <ignasicellista@gmail.com>

Thanks so much - very interesting. Moscheles seems to have been such a wonderful man...

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<Czerny and Moscheles Comparison.pdf><Op. 102, No. 1 First Movement, Flexibility of Tempo (1).pdf>