

The Art of Pedaling - Advanced Use of Pedal in Different Styles of Music, and How It Relates to Technique, Dynamics and Articulation.

2017 MTNA Conference in Baltimore – lecture by Dr. Kirill Gliadkovsky, Concert and Recording Artist, Music Department Chair / Keyboard Studies Director at Saddleback College (Mission Viejo, CA).

Legato: Romantic main type of articulation. Staccato is used as an effect, color. **Staccato:** Baroque main type of articulation. Legato is used as an effect, color. Classical Style – equal use of staccato and legato in mid-period, with staccato prevailing in early Classical period, legato – in the late Classical.

Rests, chord releases: Romantic period – rests or releases could be done by hands, while pedaled through (Chopin, Debussy, Ravel). The notes and pedal could also end at the same time. Baroque, Classical – hands and pedal lifted off together precisely. Pedal should not hold notes if hands are off the keys (very few exceptions).

Articulation markings (slurs, staccato/non-legato markings, accents): REQUIRED to be performed accurately in both Romantic and Baroque styles. A common mistake is to connect notes of one slur to the next. As a rule, this should NOT happen, neither by fingers, nor by pedal, unless you feel strongly about joining two slurs/phrases in one unified structure. This exception occasionally could be done in large-scale Romantic works to unify the form (even movements could be connected that way). But there are less than a dozen examples. **Slurs** can mean 3 things – to play legato, to phrase a passage in one breath (legato or detached), or it can mean string bowing (a group of notes played by using one bow). Romantics sometimes used longer slurs to indicate phrasing (it came from vocal music), but Baroque composers – only used slurs for legato effects. Classical composers (Mozart especially) at times used slurs to indicate violin bowing in piano music, because of their own extensive background as violinists. Be able to recognize true articulation slurs (shorter), phrasing slurs (longer kind, often 4 -16 mm long) in Romantic music, as well as bowing slurs (less separation needed between them) in Mozart.

Pedaling: Romantic - Pedal could be indicated by composers or not, BUT pedal is the rule. PEDAL WITH THE HARMONY CHANGES! Non-pedal passages are used for color/effect. Baroque - pedal did not exist, and was NEVER indicated. However, it could be used tastefully for both color and to connect notes when running out of fingers. If pedal is used for color (i.e. in *Prelude in C* from WTK I by Bach), it must be used consistently, in the same manner throughout the piece. If used to connect notes in difficult fingering situations (Bach's fugues from WTK), it should NOT be used for color in the same piece. Classical – only Beethoven and Clementi indicated pedal on rare occasions (for special effects – i.e. *Tempest*, *Moonlight* sonata). But pedal was certainly used for melodic sections, on longer notes in fast sections, trills, on Alberti basses and other forms of broken chords.

Pedaling amounts: All styles (if used for color) - the rule of thumb - change pedal with harmony changes. Clarity dictates how long the pedal should be. Clarity depends on acoustics and different types of pianos. PEDAL CAN NOT BE WRITTEN IN STONE! PIANISTS HAVE TO LISTEN CAREFULLY THROUGHOUT THEIR PERFORMANCE TO MAKE SURE IT IS CLEAR!

Types of Pedaling: **Early** (Romantic, to open up the strings before important chords or at the very beginning of a piece – i.e. Chopin Ballade No. 1), **Straight** (on the beat - Romantic, Baroque - to help the rhythm, sudden color effects, i.e. in any type of dance music), **Late** (Romantic, slow Baroque mvts. - to help sustain the sound, create overlapping effect)

Pedal and slurs/staccato markings: pedal could be used for notes connected by a slur, or changed, depending on the harmony. It should be off at the end of the slur (if there is one) in all Baroque, Classical and many Romantic compositions of vocal nature. Only Light or no Pedal in **staccato**!!

Pedal and rhythm/accents: Straight Pedal should be used right on/in sync with any strong and distinctive rhythms (i.e. dance-inspired rhythms, syncopations, long notes in dotted rhythms, trills), to help bring them out. Straight pedal should be used with regular or agogic accents in all styles. Examples: 2 note sigh motives (pedal-off), rhythmic accompaniments in left hand (Gavotte - pedal-off, pedal-off; waltz, mazurka - pedal on 1-2, off on 3).

Fancy Pedaling (Romantic Style Only): there are notable exceptions to the above clarity rule, when we want a special effect, a powerful crescendo or simply longer phrases. **Pedal and Crescendo:** one pedal is often used for long passages to help create continuous and powerful crescendos (Chopin *Ab Polonaise*, middle section, Liszt *Funerailles* - the octaves, Chopin Etude op.10 No. 4, last page, Grieg Concerto - Cadenza). **Pedal and large-scale structure:** pedal can help build longer lines, especially in piano concertos (i.e. by Rachmaninoff, Brahms, Ravel), as pianists have to compete with orchestras for volume and sustaining quality. It is also advisable not to change pedal too cleanly at all times, when performing in a large hall, as slightly mixing harmonies, using partial pedal changes (half, quarter pedals) helps decaying piano sound. **Special effects:** there are compositions, especially late Romantic and Impressionistic (i.e. *Scarbo*, *Jeux d'eau* by Ravel, some preludes by Debussy, Liszt's *Legends*), when mixing harmonies create a very **rich sonority, unusual color, misterioso** (Beethoven's *Tempest*), depict a scene from nature (especially various **water and whirlwind effects** in music), imitate **bells** (Rachmaninoff C # Minor prelude, recapitulation, *Liszt Les Cloches de Genève*) or produce a very **dark tone** (Chopin's *Funeral March* from Sonata No. 2, Ravel *La Valse* piano transcription). Pedal could be used to mix together harmonies to create **organ playing effect** (Bach-Busoni transcriptions), **harmonica, celesta, xylophone or music box effects, string ensemble effect** (often used in chamber music, especially in chordal textures).

Half-pedal, quarter pedal, pedal mist and flutter pedal: Romantic, Impressionistic music - it is used often, often in pieces of virtuosic character with many scales, other fast-moving notes and chromaticism. Also, in nocturnes, lyrical pieces (Schumann Posthumous Symphonic Etudes, Brahms Intermezzos) Baroque, Classical - should not be used at all.

Sudden Drops of Pedal – could create very powerful contrasting effects (i.e. Bach-Busoni Chaconne, D Major section)

Middle (Sostenuto) Pedal: Romantic music - used for long pedal points (i.e. Liszt, Busoni - organ transcriptions, Chaconne, Debussy - solo piano music, such as *Sunken Cathedral*) Baroque, Classical - should be avoided.

Quasi-Pedal Effects: left hand holds extra harmony notes creating a pedal effect (Baroque – often used – especially French, but also Romantic – i.e. 1st page of Chopin's *Ballade No. 1*). Classical style – rarely used. One exception – Mozart's D Minor Fantasy opening.

Half and Quarter-Left Pedaling – could create many more colors on a well - regulated piano! Ask your technician to adjust left pedal in a such way, that the hammers won't touch the 3d string by their corners (piano tech high class/ fashion). Avoid it, that you can be in charge of the sound YOU want. Many examples exist in Romantic and impressionist styles, when these composers want slight gradations of p or fluctuations between pp and ppp.

Pedal and Technique – correct pedal helps technique tremendously. It is like converting your regular car engine into a turbo-charged one. Passages suddenly come out with the right effect, dynamics, clarity and speed, accents and rhythms are much easier to emphasize, phrases are natural and don't strain fingers, more availability of colors means less stress for fingers to make them in the absence of pedals. Pedal plays the same function as oil in a mechanism. **"Pedal is the soul of the piano"** – Anton Rubinstein

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