Balancing Clarity and Resonance with Artistic Pedaling

Presented by Fred Karpoff

I. Maximizing Resonance

- A. At the beginning of a piece
- B. After pauses
- C. After staccato
- D. After a sudden increase in volume
- E. When the upbeat is part of the following harmony
- F. Arpeggi and grace notes
- G. Vibrating pedal
- II. Partial Pedaling A. Quarter Pedal ¹/₄ B. Half Pedal ¹/₂
 - C. Three-Quarter Pedal 3/4
- **III.** The Forte-Piano
- IV. The Staccato Pedal
- V. Chopin's Pedaling

66 ...for me the greatest contribution of the pedal to piano playing lies in how its use can enrich the sound of the instrument by freeing overtones. Lifting the dampers allows for sympathetic vibrations of all the strings, adding resonance to the sonority."

> Boris Berman, Notes from the Pianist's Bench

…little has been written, said, or taught about the use of the pedal...while we can and should learn, by listening, which effects are preferable and whether the desired effects are realized or not, the ear alone can not teach us specific methods and means by which these effects are obtained."

Karl Ulrich Schnabel, Modern Technique of the Pedal

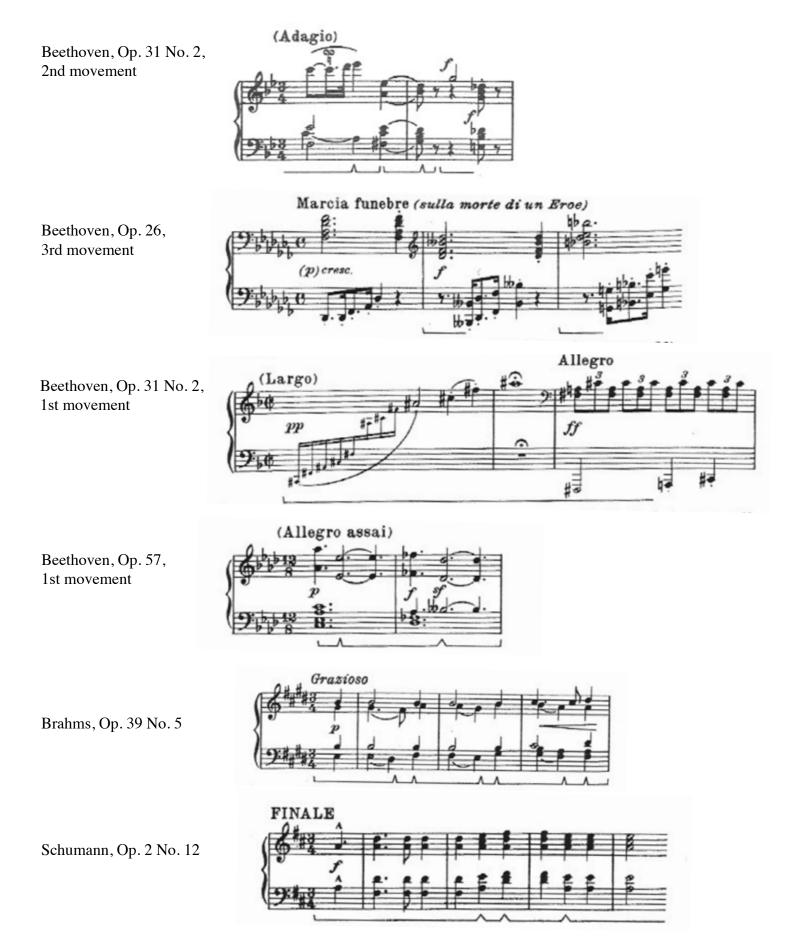


Fred Karpoff

Initially mentored by Yoheved Kaplinsky to rethink his approach to piano playing after a career-threatening injury, Fred Karpoff has continued to develop his multi-dimensional approach to piano teaching and technique through a wide range of experience. Combining elements of Tai chi, the Alexander Technique, and the Feldenkrais Method® with the work of many piano pedagogues, past and present, he now guides teachers and students toward more efficient, healthful, and expressive piano playing, as artistic producer of Entrada Piano Technique at entradapiano.com and Director of Professional Development at the Faber Piano Institute, faberpiano.com.

Fred has been fortunate to also study with Ann Schein, Robert Weirich, and Leon Fleisher, and to have had extensive coachings with Karl Ulrich Schnabel and Richard Goode. A Steinway Artist, former USIA Artistic Ambassador and current Professor of Piano at Syracuse University, he is a recipient of MTNA's Frances Clark Keyboard Pedagogy Award.

Pedaling: Musical Examples



Beethoven, Op. 31 No. 3, 2nd movement

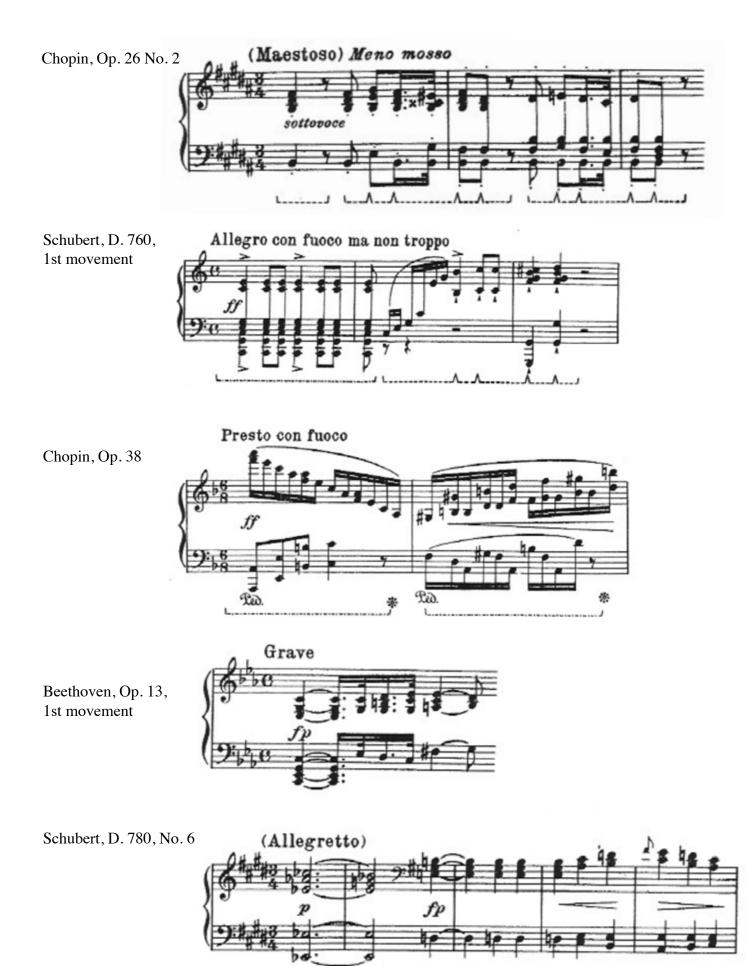


Tchaikovsky, Op. 23, 2nd movement











Chopin, Op. 53



Interpreting Chopin's Notational Markings by Seymour Bernstein, pp. 20-21 & 58, by permission

3-STAGE APPROACH

Let us now approach Chopin's pedal indications in three stages:

Stage No. 1

Pedal legate from one pedal sign to the next, even though you may think at first that the notation is exaggerated, or that Chopin or his editors have made a mistake. (No edition is perfect. For example, one occasionally finds pedal signs missing or misaligned with the tones to which they apply.)

Stage No. 2

Should the accumulation of dissonances offend your musical ear, do not blame Chopin or the modern-day piano. Rather, assume that the fault is yours. You may not be playing with the proper dynamics, or voicing properly. Always be certain that bass tones are sufficiently loud.

Stage No. 3

If, after trying the above instructions, your musical ear cannot accept the long pedal, then try one of the following:

- 1) Half-pedaling or flutter pedaling ("It was often observed that [Chopin's] foot seemed literally to vibrate as he rapidly pedaled certain passages."18).
- 2) Make extra pedal changes.
- 3) Use non-legato pedaling.