

# 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  $\frac{1}{4}$
  - B. Half Pedal  $\frac{1}{2}$
  - C. Three-Quarter Pedal  $\frac{3}{4}$
- III. **The Forte-Piano**
- IV. **The Staccato Pedal**
- V. **Chopin's Pedaling**

“...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](http://entradapiano.com) and Director of Professional Development at the Faber Piano Institute, [faberpiano.com](http://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. 2,  
2nd movement



Beethoven, Op. 26,  
3rd movement



Beethoven, Op. 31 No. 2,  
1st movement



Beethoven, Op. 57,  
1st movement



Brahms, Op. 39 No. 5



Schumann, Op. 2 No. 12



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

(Allegretto vivace)

*sf*

Tchaikovsky, Op. 23,  
2nd movement

(Andantino semplice)

*p* *sempre stacc.* *Etc.*

Beethoven, Op. 73,  
1st movement

(Allegro)

*dolce*

Brahms, Op. 15,  
1st movement

(Maestoso)

*p*

Beethoven, Op. 14 No. 1,  
1st movement

(Allegro)

*p* *cresc.* *sf* *ff*

Chopin, Op. 26 No. 2

(Maestoso) *Meno mosso*

*sottovoce*

Schubert, D. 760,  
1st movement

*Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo*

*ff*

Chopin, Op. 38

*Presto con fuoco*

*ff*

Red. \*

Beethoven, Op. 13,  
1st movement

*Grave*

*fp*

Schubert, D. 780, No. 6

(Allegretto)

*p* *fp*

Chopin, Op. 53

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Chopin's Op. 53. The first system is marked "(Maestoso)" and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. It features a complex texture with many chords and moving lines. A large curved line spans across several measures, and a "Ped." marking is placed below the bass staff. The second system continues the piece, showing further chordal complexity and a "cresc." (crescendo) marking in the upper staff. Pedal markings are indicated with asterisks and "Ped." symbols below the bass staff.

Chopin, Op. 18

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Chopin's Op. 18. The first system is marked "117" and "con anima". It consists of a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a steady accompaniment of chords. Pedal markings are shown as asterisks and "Ped." symbols below the bass staff. The second system starts at measure 122 and continues the piece with similar textures and pedal markings.

*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 *legato* 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."<sup>18</sup>).
- 2) Make extra pedal changes.
- 3) Use *non-legato* pedaling.