STUDIA UBB MUSICA, LXX, Special Issue 4, 2025 (p. 29 – 43)
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)
DOI: 10.24193/subbmusica.2025.spiss4.02

THE HARPSICHORD AS AN AESTHETIC LEGACY OF BEETHOVENS EARLY PIANO SONATAS

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SUMMARY. This article highlights the significance of the harpsichord and fortepiano in Beethovens early sonatas (in particular Op. 2), composed during a period of transition between the two instruments. The fortepianos lighter mechanism and broader dynamic range enabled Beethoven to explore expressive contrasts and articulations not possible on the harpsichord. However, the harpsichords Baroque heritage remains evident in his harmonic language and ornamentation. Features such as trills, mordents, and clear vocal lines reference the harpsichord tradition, even as they are reinterpreted through the fortepianos capabilities. This duality gives the early sonatas a hybrid identity, bridging Baroque idioms and the emerging Classical style. These works serve as a link between two musical eras, with both instruments marking a language in transformation.

Keywords: Beethoven, harpsichord, pianoforte, sonata, Clasicism, authenticity

Introduction

Beethovens early piano sonatas illustrates both an instrumental and aesthetic transition from the harpsichord to the pianoforte. In the late 18th century, this transition was central to musical development, as composers like Haydn and Mozart explored the expressive capabilities of both instruments. Beethovens early sonatas, especially the Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, No. 1, demonstrate how harpsichord traditions persisted even as new musical ideals emerged.

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In Beethovens early years, the harpsichord was still widely used and known to young composers. The pianoforte, with its dynamic range and timbral variety, soon redefined musical expectations. Beethoven, as a virtuoso pianist, embraced the pianoforte to develop a more dramatic and expressive musical language.

Beethovens early sonatas, dedicated to Joseph Haydn and published in 1795, mark the formal start of his career. The Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, No. 1, is notable for its energetic character, which contrasts with the decorative style of the harpsichord. Yet, elements such as dense polyphonic textures, arpeggiated chords, and toccata-like passages reflect the influence of the older instrument. This sonata serves as a bridge between the harpsichords legacy and the expressive possibilities of the pianoforte.

This article examines how the Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, No. 1, both continues the harpsichord tradition and departs from it by embracing the pianofortes expressive range. We aim to show that the sonatas writing reflects an instrumental dialogue, where tradition and innovation coexist, creating a transitional space that shapes Beethovens later works.

1. Foundations of Harpsichord Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century

Throughout the 20th century, the interpretation of music on period instruments remained a central topic for musicologists, theorists, and practitioners. Arnold Dolmetsch (1858–1940) played a pivotal role as a restorer and performer, reviving the harpsichord, viola da gamba, and fortepiano. His 1915 publication, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries*[3], is widely regarded as the foundation of the *historically informed performance* movement, offering both technical insights and an aesthetic perspective on authenticity.

Robert Donington, especially through *The Interpretation of Early Music*[4], established a theoretical framework for performing Baroque and Classical repertoire on original instruments.

Howard Mayer Brown[5] contributed through his analysis of performance practices, while Bruce Haynes[6] highlighted the concept of historical style and the distinction between authenticity and modern sensibility.

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[3] Dolmetsch, A. (1915). *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries Revealed by Contemporary Evidence*. London: Novello.

[4] Donington, Robert. *The Interpretation of Early Music*. London: Faber & Faber, 1963.

[5] Brown, Howard Mayer. *Performance Practice: Music before 1600.* New York: Norton, 1990.

[6] Haynes, Bruce. *The End of Early Music: A Period Performers History of Music for the Twenty-First Century.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Richard Taruskin[7] questioned the notion of historical truth, arguing that all historical interpretation reflects modern perspectives. John Butt[8] suggested that *historically informed performance* should be seen as a dialogue between past and present, rather than a purely archaeological pursuit.

For the Classical and early Romantic repertoire, Charles Rosen and Lewis Lockwood have highlighted the essential role of the fortepiano in the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, noting that these compositions lose some specificity when played only on the modern piano. The literature agrees that historical instruments are not just museum pieces, but integral to the periods aesthetics and influential in shaping both interpretation and contemporary understanding of the repertoire.

1.1. Implications for the Interpretation of Beethoven

The integration of the fortepiano into modern performance practice is closely linked to Arnold Dolmetsch**,** widely recognized as the father of the movement to rediscover historical instruments. Before the twentieth century, the fortepiano was largely overlooked, overshadowed by the modern piano and seen as outdated. Dolmetsch restored its significance, viewing it not just as a historical artifact but as a vital means of authentically conveying the music of Classicism and early Romanticism.

Dolmetsch stands at the intersection of tradition and modernity. By restoring and using the fortepiano as an active instrument, he renewed the link between its original sound and modern audiences. Choosing to perform Beethoven on the fortepiano or on the harpsichord, rather than the modern piano, was both a restorative act and a clear artistic statement. This approach highlights that Beethovens works reveal their full meaning when played on the instruments for which they were written.

Dolmetsch was more than a collector or restorer. He transformed instruments from static museum pieces into practical tools for exploring interpretation. A key example is the Robert Stodart fortepiano of 1790, which he acquired in 1931 and later controversially dated to 1799. By reconstructing and repairing this piano, Dolmetsch gained hands-on experience with its mechanics, tonal qualities, and limitations—insights not available from studying scores or treatises alone. This technical understanding allowed him to appreciate the instruments unique features, such as the clarity of its bass,

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[7] Taruskin, Richard. *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

[8] Butt, John. *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

the string-like treble, and the subtle charm he saw as essential to Beethovens music.

Dolmetschs deep understanding of the fortepianos mechanics allowed him to base interpretive choices on the instruments specific characteristics. Adjustments in touch, register control, and tuning were practical responses to its construction, rather than merely artistic preferences. Unlike the modern piano, which he felt masked Beethovens detail with a heavy tone, the fortepiano offered the clarity and freshness he valued. For Dolmetsch, this was not only an interpretive choice but also a statement about musical aesthetics and history.

A key aspect of Dolmetschs approach was the ongoing exchange between restoration and performance. He adapted instruments not just for technical accuracy but to serve the repertoire, while his performances demonstrated the effectiveness of these restorations. This feedback loop between technique and artistry became a model for the twentieth-century movement to reconstruct historical instruments.

2. Fortepiano from the beginning of the 18th century

Ludwig van Beethoven stands as a pivotal figure at the transition between two instrumental eras. The 18th century was defined by the harpsichord, while the late 18th and early 19th centuries saw the emergence of the piano, which became central to Romantic music. Beethovens career paralleled this transformation, spanning the evolution from early, delicate pianofortes to more powerful instruments with metal frames and greater sound capabilities.

This overlap was more than a historical coincidence; it had significant artistic consequences. Beethoven composed with a keen awareness of each instruments strengths and limitations. Early pianos provided intimacy and a chamber-like quality but often fell short of his dramatic ambitions. These constraints became creative challenges, leading him to write music that pushed beyond the instruments capabilities and anticipated the modern pianos sound.

Beethoven, like Mozart, first learned the harpsichord, which remained common in aristocratic homes until the late 18th century. This background influenced his early compositions, evident in their clear textures, ornamentation, and phrasing. Early piano music, still closely related to the harpsichord repertoire, emphasized melodic brilliance and agility rather than strong attacks or sustained notes. As a result, many of Beethovens early sonatas can be effectively performed on the harpsichord, highlighting their transitional nature.

Beethoven was not satisfied with existing instruments and consistently pushed their expressive boundaries, prompting piano makers to innovate. While the fortepiano was initially seen as a novelty in the 1760s and 1770s, by the early 19th century it had replaced the harpsichord as the preferred instrument. Beethoven played a central role in this shift, both benefiting from and driving technical advancements. His demands for greater expressiveness influenced piano design, as shown by his correspondence with makers like *Streicher* and *Broadwood*.

The comparison with Mozart is instructive. Mozarts fortepiano writing retained the harpsichords delicacy and elegance, while Beethoven sought drama and monumentality from the piano. He expected the piano to deliver the same expressive power as the orchestra, capable of both lyrical nuance and dramatic intensity. In doing so, Beethoven transformed the piano into an instrument of universal expression.

This transformation is evident in both Beethovens sonatas and his piano concertos. Early concertos maintain classical proportions and clear textures, while later works, especially the Emperor Concerto, demand a powerful piano that can match the orchestra. This shift reflects both Beethovens artistic development and advances in piano mechanisms.

On a deeper level, Beethovens approach to the piano reflects his revolutionary spirit. Unlike Mozart and Haydn, who accepted instruments as they were, Beethoven pushed their boundaries and envisioned a new musical future. While contemporaries like Clementi and Dussek explored more virtuosic writing, Beethoven elevated the piano to the central role it would hold in 19th-century music.

2.1. Beethovens role in developing the fortepiano

The 18th century saw a major transformation in keyboard instruments. The harpsichord and clavichord dominated the early part of the century, but the fortepiano quickly rose to prominence in the latter half, driving technical innovation and new sound ideals. Piano builders focused on expanding tonal range and refining mechanics to meet the evolving demands of composers and audiences. Beethoven, central to this revolution, embraced each innovation, incorporating them into his compositions and shaping the future of piano music.

Beethovens piano works display unprecedented polyphonic complexity, dynamic range, and interpretative techniques not found in earlier repertoire. These qualities resulted from his ongoing engagement with the instruments available to him, rather than from aesthetic choices alone. Beethoven recognized the limitations of contemporary pianos, as shown in his 1796

correspondence with Andreas Streicher[9] He observed that the fortepiano was still underdeveloped and often resembled a harp in sound, lacking a distinct identity. Nevertheless, he believed that with musical sensitivity, the piano could become a truly expressive instrument. His statement that the harp and fortepiano would eventually be seen as entirely different instruments reflects both his pursuit of technical advancement and his vision for the pianos central role in music.

The variety of instruments Beethoven owned or used highlights the breadth of his musical inspiration. He had access to at least fourteen fortepianos, including eleven from Viennese makers such as Anton Walter, Conrad Graf, Johann Schanz, and the Streicher family, as well as instruments from Broadwood in England and Érard in France. This range demonstrates both his appreciation for diverse tonal and technical qualities and his prominent position within the European musical community.

Although Beethoven was close to Nanette Streicher and her family, he did not favor a single manufacturer. His choice of instrument was guided by availability and context rather than loyalty. Broadwood sent him a fortepiano to promote its brand in Vienna, while Sébastien Érard offered another, recognizing the prestige Beethoven could lend. In this way, Beethoven became an informal ambassador for leading piano makers, enhancing their reputation across Europe.

Contemporaries and students noted that Beethovens compositions consistently reflected the evolving capabilities of the piano. His use of broad dynamics, strong contrasts between registers, and greater technical demands resulted from his active engagement with the fortepiano. Streicher and Érard pianos met his needs for clarity, balance, and the strength required for energetic and dramatic passages.

2.2. Harpsichord aspects in Beethovens early sonatas

Understanding the relationship between the harpsichord and Beethovens early sonatas is key to tracing his transition from the late Baroque tradition to the rise of the fortepiano. Although innovative, Beethovens early works retain many elements of harpsichord practice, shaped by both the instruments available and prevailing musical aesthetics.

One key aspect is the keyboards range. Until 1803, Beethoven limited his piano compositions to five octaves, matching both early fortepianos and 18th-century harpsichords.

[9] Anderson, Emily. *The Letters of Beethoven.* New York: St. Martins Press Inc., 1961.

The phrase "pour le clavecin ou pianoforte" in early titles reflects genuine compatibility with both instruments, not just marketing. In the op. 2 sonatas, Beethoven often omits notes in the bass or soprano to stay within the register, a choice that also mirrors the concise texture of harpsichord music.

Another important element is Beethovens contrapuntal writing and musical structure. The opening of Sonata Op. 2 No. 1 in F minor clearly recalls the fugues of Bach, with Baroque-style thematic imitation. Beethoven builds his music from short, arpeggiated or fragmented motifs, using abrupt sequences and modulations. This modular approach reflects Baroque technique, which relies on varied figures and clear counterpoint. In slow movements, ornamentation such as suspensions and variations further evokes the expressive freedom of French harpsichordists.

Beethovens early works also reflect the harpsichords limited dynamics and expressiveness. Because the harpsichord could not produce wide dynamic contrasts, Beethoven used markings like *fp* to indicate changes in color rather than volume. While these effects are challenging to reproduce on modern pianos, they were natural on period instruments and show Beethovens focus on subtle attacks and fleeting nuances. This approach extends the harpsichords emphasis on timbral refinement over sustained sound.

Similarly, Beethovens early works use little or no pedal, reinforcing their harpsichord-like quality. Clear pedal markings appear only after 1801, so earlier pieces were written without relying on the sustaining effects typical of the Romantic piano. Terms like *senza sordini or con sordini* refer to basic fortepiano mechanisms but also echo the practice of reducing resonance, as on the harpsichord.

Aesthetically, Beethovens early sonatas continue the late Baroque tradition. Features such as the Alberti bass, variational sections, and ornamented recitative highlight an approach similar to the harpsichord, where ornamentation and improvisation were central. In slow movements, Beethoven draws on the expressive language of composers like Couperin and Rameau, using melodic inflections and register dialogues to create intimacy.

Although known as a piano innovator, Beethovens early works show a strong connection to harpsichord traditions. This is evident in his use of limited registers, dense polyphony, recitative ornamentation, and nuanced dynamics. Beethoven helped establish the piano as a modern instrument, but this progress was rooted in harpsichord techniques and aesthetics. The op. 2 sonatas represent both Beethovens individuality and a synthesis of Baroque heritage with the emerging Romantic style.

3. Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, no. 1

At the end of 1792, Beethoven, only 22, arrived in Vienna to continue his musical training under Joseph Haydn, who had just returned from England after resounding success. Their relationship was not without tension. Beethoven, aware of his own qualities and ambitions, was often impulsive and careless toward his teacher. Haydn, reserved, did not seem willing to immediately recognize his students genius. Tensions were fueled in part by Haydns recommendation that Beethoven postpone publishing some early works, a gesture the younger composer saw as a lack of confidence. However, these episodes did not permanently compromise their relationship. Even though Beethoven quickly stopped taking lessons, mutual respect remained between them[10].

The first three Piano Sonatas, Op. 2, published on 9 March 1796 and dedicated to Haydn, mark the official beginning of Beethovens cycle of 32 sonatas. Composed between 1795 and 1796, they premiered at concerts organized by Prince Lichnowsky, one of Beethovens great patrons. The importance of these sonatas lies not only in their artistic value but also in the dedication, which recognizes Haydns mastery and declares belonging to the great Viennese classical tradition.

Although considered Beethovens first sonatas, Op. 2 is not his absolute debut in this genre. During his time in Bonn, Beethoven had already composed three sonatas, dedicated to Archbishop Maximilian Friedrich, as well as an unfinished Sonata in C major and two Sonatinas in G and F major. These works were excluded from the official opus catalogue because Beethoven did not consider them worthy of inclusion among his representative creations. Thus, Op. 2 marks not only the beginning of a cycle but also an aesthetic threshold, the young composers first step toward a personal, mature language beyond the attempts of adolescence.

In conclusion, the Sonatas Op. 2 represent a key moment both in Beethovens artistic biography and in his relationship with Haydn. They mark the transition from a young, rebellious disciple to a composer who asserts his own voice, but without breaking with the Viennese classical tradition. The dedication to Haydn is not just a gesture of protocol, but also a sign of respect, recognizing the spiritual affiliation between master and pupil, even in the context of a tense relationship. Thus, these works can be seen as a bridge between the classical heritage and the innovative spirit of early Romanticism, a symbol of Beethovens maturation and his place in the history of European music.

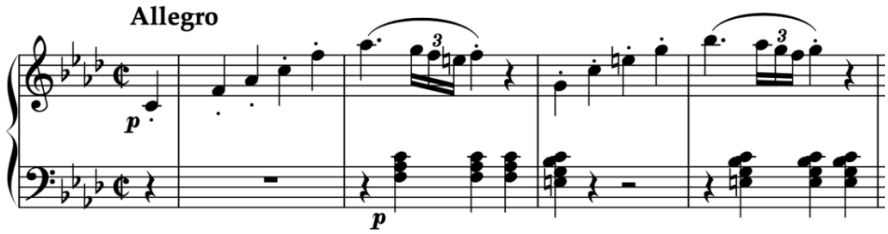
[10] Blom, Eric. *Beethovens Pianoforte Sonatas Discussed*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1968, p. 5.

3.1. 1st Movement, *Allegro*

Beethovens Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, No. 1 bridges the late Baroque and emerging classical piano styles. While Beethoven develops his distinct voice in these sonatas, the influence of the harpsichord and pianoforte era remains evident. Performing this sonata on the harpsichord requires both technical adjustments and a thoughtful reinterpretation to suit the instruments unique characteristics.

Without the pianos dynamic range, the harpsichord demands a focus on articulation and attack. The main theme, featuring an ascending arpeggio and sixteenth-note triplets, benefits from a clear, almost non legato approach to convey energy.

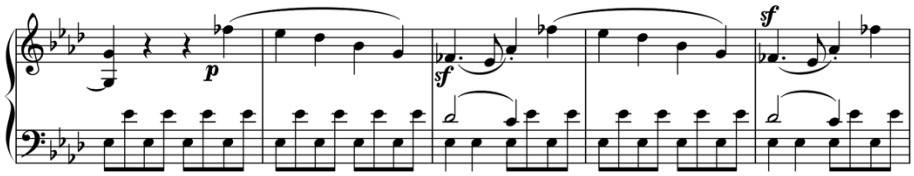
E.g. 1



L. van Beethoven, Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, no. 1, 1st mvt., mm. 1-4

In contrast, the later descending motif can be played with a lighter touch to suggest timbral variation. This balance of tension and release, achieved through touch rather than volume, is essential for an effective harpsichord interpretation.

E.g. 2



L. van Beethoven, Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, no. 1, 1st mvt., mm. 20-24

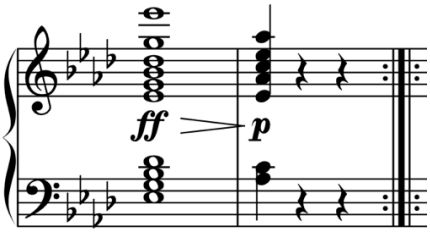
The polyphonic writing of the first part draws on Baroque techniques, visible in the way the theme appears in the dominant, analogous to Bachs fugues. On the harpsichord, these imitative-contrapuntal relationships must

be highlighted through absolute clarity of the voices. The performer is called upon to differentiate the textural layers, not through dynamic contrast, but through timbre and selective accentuation of structural notes. This separation of voices evokes the tradition of French harpsichordists, where each musical line was conceived as an autonomous discourse.

Beethovens dynamic markings, such as *fp* or *sf*, cannot be reproduced exactly on the harpsichord. Instead, performers can interpret *fp* as a strong initial attack with a quick release, creating a natural decrease in resonance. *Sf* may be conveyed by emphasizing the attack, adding slight ornamentation, or using timbral variation to highlight the passage. On the harpsichord, these dynamics translate to changes in color and texture rather than volume.

The meaning of *ff*, immediately followed by *p*, is also part of the expressive dynamic markings used by Beethoven. In fact, the intention is to emphasize the harmonic dissonance, which is immediately resolved into consonant harmony. This chord from the next musical example will be attacked all at once, not arpeggiated or broken.

E.g. 3

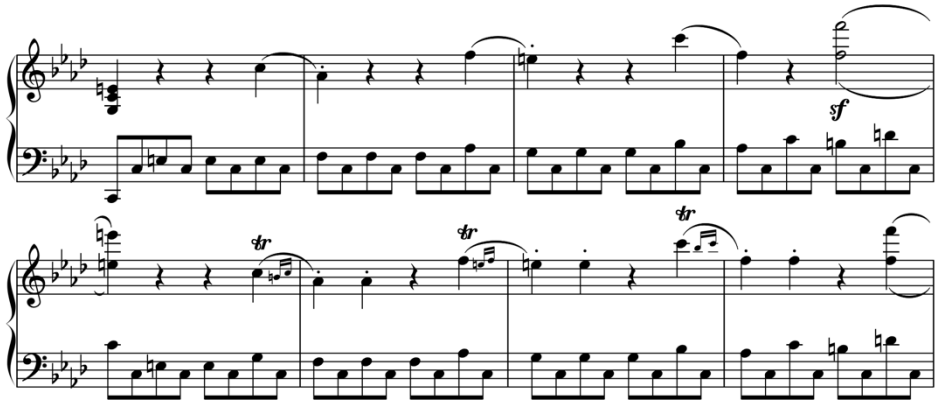


L. van Beethoven, Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, no. 1, 1st mvt., mm. 47-48

Another fundamental element is the ornamentation. In transitional and cadential sections, the performer may use mordents, short trills, and appoggiaturas, in keeping with Baroque improvisational practice. In the development section, where the discourse is fragmented and tense, ornamentation takes on the role of compensating for the lack of dynamics, intensifying the drama through rhetorical accumulations. Thus, the sonata takes on a dimension closer to the freedom of harpsichord discourse than to the linearity of a classical piano.

When the Alberti bass appears, the harpsichordist should use even, slightly detached articulation to maintain clarity without sustained sound. Subtly emphasize the structural notes to convey harmonic tension and resolution, compensating for the pianos dynamic contrasts. In the transition to the reprise, where the bass repeats C, vary the timbre of each attack to build suspense and turn the ostinato into a compelling rhetorical figure.

E.g. 4



L. van Beethoven, Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, no. 1, 1st mvt,m mm. 81-88

In the final coda, marked by an unexpected pause and a lamenting tone, the harpsichord allows for flexible phrasing and subtle rubato, highlighting syncopations and melodic sighs. Without the power of the romantic piano, Beethovens desired weeping effect can be achieved through nuanced tempo changes and a French-style rhetorical approach, drawing more from Rameau or Couperin than from 19th-century pianism.

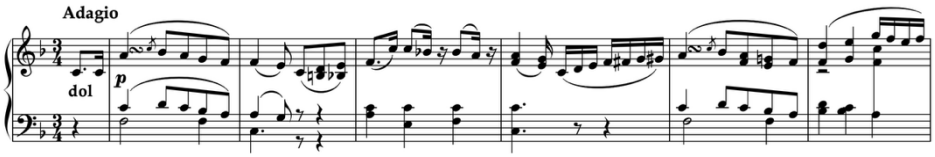
3.2. 2nd Movement , *Adagio*

The second part of Sonata Op. 2 No. 1 in F Major stands out for its melodic nobility and expressive simplicity, which mask intricate construction and rhetoric. Beethoven employs an incomplete sonata form, retaining the exposition and recapitulation while replacing the development with ornamental variations. This approach aligns the work with Baroque practices, particularly the variation and ornamentation typical of the harpsichord. As a result, performing this section on the harpsichord is both appropriate and revealing, highlighting the connection between Baroque tradition and Beethovens early style.

Theme I in F Major features a simple melodic line on repeated notes, ascending to B flat and descending to E. This style recalls vocal declamation, which the harpsichord can express through delicate articulation and phrasing similar to recitative singing. Without the pianos dynamic range, the harpsichordist conveys tension by varying the attack and adding subtle ornamentation, emphasizing the themes cantabile quality.

Selecting the appropriate manuals and registers is essential. The left hand, which typically provides the accompaniment line, can be played on the upper manual, possibly using the lute register. The right hand, which carries the expressive melodic line, should be played on the first manual.

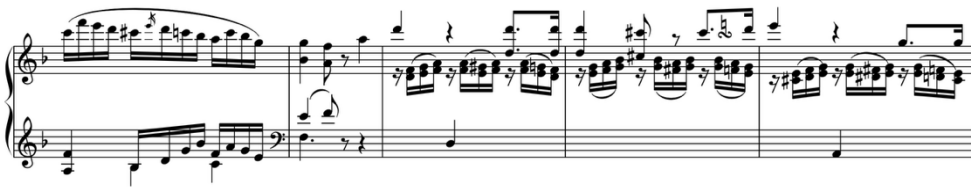
E.g. 5



L. van Beethoven, Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, no. 1, 2nd mvt, mm. 1-7

The second theme in D minor introduces a dramatic character, featuring an undulating left-hand accompaniment and an improvisational right-hand melody. The contrast with the serene nobility of the first theme is clear. On the harpsichord, where dynamic variation is limited, this contrast should be conveyed through changes in registration and articulation. The F Major theme calls for a clear, simple sound, while the D minor theme benefits from a sharper attack and more pronounced agogic tension, with subtle accents on syncopations and dissonances.

E.g. 6



L. van Beethoven, Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, no. 1, 2nd mvt, mm. 15-20

3.3. 3rd Movement, Menuetto, *Allegretto*

The third part of the Sonata in F minor, Op. 2 No. 1, follows the classical *Minuet – Trio – Minuet* form and stands out for its unusual rhythmic tension for a traditional dance. Beethoven goes beyond the gallant convention, turning the minuet into a dense movement filled with chromaticism and dramatic contrasts. The harpsichord interpretation reveals the Baroque roots of the work, where dance is no longer only a social gesture but becomes an aesthetic and expressive vehicle.

The main theme, based on a three-note motif, often emphasizes unaccented beats, creating syncopation and instability. On the harpsichord, this can be enhanced by subtly stressing the weak beats, a typical Baroque practice to generate tension.

Section b, marked by chromaticism, calls for a harsher interpretation and a more incisive attack, suggesting inner drama. At the end, the return of the initial material should be played with severe, almost austere clarity to contrast with the earlier agitation.

Written in F Major, the Trio brings a contrasting light, with a narrative and contrapuntal character. The two hands are in constant dialogue, sometimes in opposite rhythmic values, reminiscent of Baroque permutable counterpoint. On the harpsichord, the performer should highlight this dialogue through polyphonic and timbral clarity, treating the two voices as distinct characters. The climax comes as the dialogue intensifies, and the ending with a sober cadence prepares for the return of the Minuet.

The choice for registration and manuals is also very important to emphasize the dramatic changes in this movement. The initial theme, sober and tense, can be rendered in the simple 8 register to emphasize the clarity and austerity of the discourse. The more dramatic chromatic sections in part b could benefit from an 8 + 4, to intensify the brilliance and suggest extra "force" where the piano would be marked by dynamic accents. The return to the initial motif requires a return to the basic register (8), suggesting a sober recapitulation, without emphasis.

The bright contrast of the *Trio* requires a quieter register, 8, to give clarity and transparency to the contrapuntal dialogue between the hands.

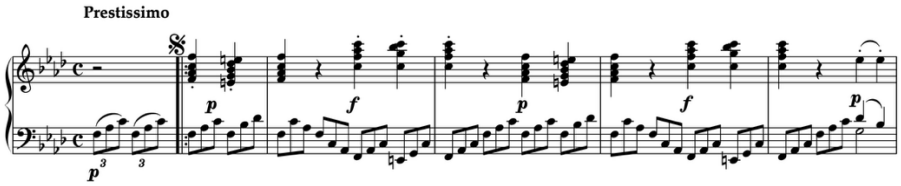
In the climax of the *Trio*, a return to the 8 + 4 doubling brings an effect of density that substitutes for the *crescendo*, which is impossible on the harpsichord.

3.4. 4th Movement, *Prestissimo*

The last movement in F minor is probably the most energetic and dynamic. This sonata-form movement is notable for its energy, drama, and contrapuntal complexity. On the harpsichord, these qualities are expressed through timbral contrasts, varied articulation, and register changes.

Theme I, based on ascending left-hand arpeggios, requires precise and energetic articulation. It is important here to use shorter or longer attacks and alternate between 8 and 8 + 4 registers to shape the character of each passage. Maintaining strict rhythmic precision in the triplet figures is crucial, to convey intensity through consistency rather than volume.

E.g. 7



L. van Beethoven, Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, no. 1, 4th mvt, mm. 1-3

Theme II in A Major introduces a contrasting, more lyrical character. On the harpsichord, use a softer attack, flexible agogics, and consider reducing the register to a single 8 to achieve delicacy and a cantabile quality. This approach creates a contrast similar to forte–piano dynamics on the piano.

Rapid manual changes are a distinctive and challenging harpsichord technique. In this context, they can be fully utilized to emphasize contrasting passages.

The recapitulation restates the main theme in F minor, maintaining its intensity. On the harpsichord, performers can distinguish the exposition from the recapitulation by varying the register, such as switching to 8 + 4, to create a heightened effect. In the final sections, where Beethoven employs rapid arpeggios and strong chords, it is more effective to highlight the harmonic structure through clear phrasing and emphasis on structural notes, rather than trying to replicate the pianos power.

The finale, characterized by rapid arpeggios and strong chords, may appear less heroic on the harpsichord than on the piano. However, with vigorous articulation, precise timing, and a broad register such as 8 + 4, the result is a focused, dramatic effect.

Conclusions

This article is part of a series of studies devoted to the issue of dual performance on the harpsichord and the piano, examining the convergences and divergences between the two instruments from both a historical and a stylistic-aesthetic perspective.

Beethovens Sonata in F minor, Op. 2 No. 1, from his early Viennese period, marks a transition between late Baroque traditions and the evolving keyboard style of the late eighteenth century. The sonata retains features well-suited to the harpsichord, including a five-octave range, clear contrapuntal textures, ornamentation, repetitive accompaniment figures, and sections with a quasi-recitative character. The early indication “pour le clavecin ou pianoforte” further confirms this dual connection.

Each of the four movements highlights these characteristics. The first movement achieves dramatic intensity through clear articulation and contrapuntal precision, using timbral differences instead of dynamic contrasts. The second movement, structured as an incomplete sonata form with ornamental variation, reflects Baroque rhetorical traditions. The Menuet and Trio transform the dance into a contrapuntal dialogue, using register choices for contrast. The final movement maintains its dramatic impact on the harpsichord through rhythmic energy, precision, and a focus on harmonic structure.

Performing this work on the harpsichord enhances its rhetorical clarity, ornamental detail, and formal balance, which are rooted in the Baroque. Op. 2 No. 1 shows that Beethovens innovations emerged from creative continuity with tradition, not from a complete break with the past.

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