

Don't Listen to Me, I'm Just Your Partner:

Ensemble Issues in Duo Settings

by

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A Research Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved April 2015 by the  
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May 2015

## ABSTRACT

“Play less and listen more” is the prevailing wisdom whenever two musical partners are having ensemble issues that interfere with their music-making. Accompanists, coaches, and collaborative pianists across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries devote many pages to these situations and explain what to listen and look for. An overview of this literature establishes a standard canon of ensemble issues for collaborative pianists working with a single partner, whether vocal or instrumental. The overview also discusses the various solutions these authors recommend for these problems.

However, in exceptional moments of rehearsal or performance, the foregoing advice fails. After comparing several passing observations in these standard works with the author’s own experience, a paradoxical situation becomes evident: at times, what works instead of listening more is listening less. As the author describes through multiple musical examples and commentaries, ignoring one’s partner for a brief moment can benefit the duo’s ensemble and artistry.

The application of this principle is both narrow and wide-ranging and is meant to serve as a secondary course of action. It is decidedly not a replacement for the standard advice on coaching and collaborating, for such advice is successful far more often than not. However, it can be utilized when the collaborative pianist deems it the most successful and prudent solution to an ensemble situation that has remained problematic.

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my late grandfather, J.G., for your otherworldly support and generosity throughout my graduate education. This degree and whatever it yields are as much yours as my own. Thank you.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my committee—Dr. Campbell, Professor Kopta, Dr. Oldani, and Professor Ryan. In earning your collective approval, I feel I have accomplished something special.

Thank you to my wife, Kerrie, for your patience, encouragement, and hitherto-unheard-of editing skills.

Thank you to my parents and my in-laws for your amazing support.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every collaborative pianist who works with any partner on any piece of music will undoubtedly encounter troublesome passages, especially with respect to the group's ensemble: a difficult rhythm to coordinate with a violin partner, an unavoidable and awkward breath from a tenor partner to disguise. Though some of these situations occur more frequently than others, each presents a challenge to the duo's ensemble. But what exactly is meant by "ensemble"? The word itself comes unchanged from the French, meaning "together," and, for the present discussion, will imply what it long meant to musicians trained in the Western tradition: "the precision with which a group [performs]."<sup>1</sup>

Since English is itself a language of precision and nuance, there exist further refinements to this definition, often influenced by a performer's instrument or specialty. For example, the Dutch pianist and coach Coenraad V. Bos gives advice in his memoirs that all collaborative pianists and accompanists should recognize as fundamental: we must breathe with our vocal partner. Bos goes on to warn of the equally fundamental problem that arises from *not* doing so: "if the accompanist is incapable of such rapport, a certain inflexibility will inevitably mar performances and make...**perfect** *ensemble* impossible."<sup>2</sup>

Legendary English accompanist, coach, and author Gerald Moore echoes with a similar sentiment. At the end of a discussion of Ludwig van Beethoven's Violin and Piano Sonata, op. 96, in G Major, he holds that the work calls for perfect

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<sup>1</sup> *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Ensemble," by Elisabeth Cook, accessed July 2, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<sup>2</sup> Coenraad Valentyn Bos, *The Well-Tempered Accompanist*, trans. Ashley Pettis (Bryn Mawr, PA: T. Presser Company, 1949), 15. Bos italicizes "ensemble," while I emphasize "perfect."

"unanimity" between players: "the players \*must\* each feel the same way over every note of it. Their views and intentions must be identical for each phrase and nuance."<sup>3</sup>

For this discussion, however, I will focus on three other books on accompanying, coaching, and collaborating: *The Complete Collaborator: The Pianist as Partner* by Martin Katz; *The Art of Accompanying: Master Lessons from the Repertoire* by Robert Spillman; and *The Art of Accompanying and Coaching* by Kurt Adler.<sup>4</sup> I will refer to several other sources less frequently. I will discuss what "ensemble" means to each author and how each presents it pedagogically. Though neither these books alone nor my discussion of them should be regarded as exhaustive, the beginning chapter of this document will help me generate a thorough list of typical ensemble issues faced by collaborative pianists.

Chapter two comprises a discussion of these issues, but I present only the issues themselves. My thesis applies strictly to the examples given in Chapter Three, in which the given musical examples represent an instance for which the collective advice of my sources does not yield better ensemble. My assertion is that, under specific and perhaps idealized conditions, what *does* work is counterintuitive and paradoxical: the two partners should *not* listen to one another.

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<sup>3</sup> Gerald Moore, *The Unashamed Accompanist* (New York: MacMillan, 1944), 77. The stress on "must" comes from Moore.

<sup>4</sup> I cite fully these three sources to save time and space elsewhere in this document: Kurt Adler, *The Art of Accompanying and Coaching* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965); Martin Katz, *The Complete Collaborator: The Pianist as Partner* (New York, Oxford University Press), 2009; Robert Spillman, *The Art of Accompanying: Master Lessons from the Repertoire* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985).



Before proceeding, a caveat is necessary: no matter how many performers are involved or how difficult the music is, we make music in the real world. The tool I suggest—that two partners ignore one another—is not a broad, blunt instrument to use at any time. Even for the examples presented in Chapter Three, the advice only works when the partners are ignoring one another *and* playing their part correctly. However, what happens when a memory slip occurs, a string breaks, or a word is forgotten? Our responsibilities as collaborative pianists are multi-faceted, and even if a mishap occurs in a passage originally intended to incorporate my thesis, we must help our partners, and the performance, continue.

## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF AUTHORS AND SOURCES

#### **Martin Katz**

Born in Los Angeles in 1945, distinguished professor Martin Katz has built a career as a professional collaborative pianist, vocal coach, professor, and more recently, as a conductor and author. In the opening chapter of his book, he succinctly expresses his thoughts on ensemble: "perfect ensemble and good balance with one's partners are essential."<sup>5</sup> He also gives a typical problem faced by teachers and coaches: when working with a duo too concerned with perfect vertical alignment, "the first response...for singer and pianist is that no one does *anything*, no one makes a move, lest the performers risk not being **perfectly synchronized**."<sup>6</sup> From these statements, we see that Katz's primary pedagogical aim begins rather than ends with ensemble, before moving on to other issues. He identifies "both perfect ensemble and good balance with one's partners [as] essential," but then dismisses them as "only a small part of the big picture of collaboration, and perhaps the least imaginative of all our jobs."<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, for the small, unimaginative position Katz holds ensemble (and balance) to be, he immediately promises to "devote quite a bit of space to both of these subjects."<sup>8</sup>

#### **Robert Spillman**

Dr. Robert Spillman takes a different tack than Katz in his book. Rather than

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<sup>5</sup> Katz, *The Complete Collaborator*, 3. His full professional title: Artur Schnabel Collegiate Professor of Collaborative Piano at the University of Michigan.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 28. The italics are Katz's while the emphasis is mine.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

arranging his material by issue or topic, he divides his fourteen chapters by genre, repertoire, and even by composer ("Four Lieder by Brahms," "Three Twentieth-Century Instrumental Works," "Seven Italian Opera Arias"). This allows the author, a former Professor at the Eastman School of Music and the University of Colorado Boulder, to give his opinions on ensemble, pianism, artistry, and aesthetics within the context of a specific piece or idiom. As such, his conception of what constitutes precise ensemble is interspersed throughout. For example, during his discussion of "Ständchen" by Johannes Brahms, he writes that "if you and your partner are good at making the rhythm clear, the impetus of Ständchen makes coordination and ensemble relatively easy."<sup>9</sup> In his chapter on the Lieder of Robert Schumann, he asks, "What is the best way for you to be exactly with the singer? ... Subdividing? Thinking of a smooth line? Waiting for her? Leading her?"<sup>10</sup> Or while introducing the duo sonatas of Paul Hindemith: "There are many difficult stretches that will need slow practice, but the biggest hurdles you will meet are the passages in which the two instruments follow *independent rhythmic schemes*."<sup>11</sup> Through comments like these, we gain a clearer idea of how Spillman evaluates the success of an ensemble. For him, the members are not expected to simply open the score, count off, and play what is on the page. Even before a duo's first rehearsal, he stipulates much forethought and preparation from both partners: each must ask questions of one another and their respective parts, and they must research the cultural and historical context of the work.

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<sup>9</sup> Spillman, *The Art of Accompanying*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 319. The italics are mine.

## *Interlude*

Before introducing my last primary source and his thoughts on ensemble, I would like to observe that the farther the publication dates for my sources recede into the past, the more philosophical and abstract their opinions and wisdom become. For example, the afore-mentioned Coenraad V. Bos was born in 1875, and, in a section emphasizing the importance of active listening, he writes:

Every well-trained pianist is keenly aware of the value of listening. ‘Hear thyself!’ is as important an injunction as ‘Know thyself!’ But with the accompanist, the problem is more complex. Not only must he listen to himself, with his mind as well as with his inner ear, but he must be keenly alive to the tonal quality in addition to the quantity in the performance of the soloist, whether vocalist or instrumentalist. Without such [a] highly developed capacity...superlative performances [are] impossible of realization.<sup>12</sup>

Though Bos does not distinguish the physiological difference between listening with the mind rather than the inner ear, his advice is both relevant and old-fashioned; he could just as easily have written, “Listen to your tone and dynamics, and to those of your partner.”

Gerald Moore was born over twenty years after Bos, but his language is only somewhat more specific and concrete. Consider his description of a “perfect partnership”: this is a duo not only comfortable enough to “do things in performance which did not happen at rehearsal” but “[whose] plans will not be upset, only improved upon.”<sup>13</sup> Yet, he concludes, “neither partner will be taken by surprise.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bos, 15. Coenraad Bos had an amazing career, and I offer the following anecdote as an example: He not only played for the premiere of Brahms’s *Vier Ernste Gesänge* in 1895, but “Brahms himself was present for this great occasion.” Bos, 43.

<sup>13</sup> Moore, 53.

Speaking from his own experiences, Moore obviously appears to relish such moments, but he fails to describe or even list some illustrative “things.” Did he play a quiet passage even more softly than his partner expected? Did that yield an even more intimate response? Did his partner finally execute an *accelerando* the way the duo had wanted but never successfully achieved? He does not specify, and though “perfect partnership” is perhaps more appreciated by the performers than by their audience, modern readers (and pianists) would both benefit from a more precise description.

### **Kurt Adler**

The same sort of rhetoric also appears in the writing of Kurt Adler, born in 1907 in what is now the Czech Republic.<sup>15</sup> His opinions on accompanying, coaching, rehearsing, and music in general were informed by his studies throughout Central and Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and New York City, where he was Chorus Master for the Metropolitan Opera 1943–1973.<sup>16</sup> In the opening paragraph of *The Art of Accompanying and Coaching*, he writes:

The specific art of accompanying and coaching lies in the ability to deeply feel the soloist’s intentions and his artistry; to attune oneself to his artistic style; to recognize his artistic shortcomings and to make up for them by extending a helping hand to lead him, giving him a sense of artistic mastery and matching it by

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> To clarify, this is Kurt Adler, born in 1907 in Bohemia, not Kurt Herbert Adler, born in 1905 in Vienna. The latter was a conductor, and was instrumental in establishing the Merola Opera Program in San Francisco.

<sup>16</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s.v. “Adler, Kurt,” accessed June 16, 2014. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

*following him.*<sup>17</sup>

Adler's language here, in which the keyboard player is elevated to a pedestal his partner cannot reach without his aid, is fascinating, especially when compared with another of his observations on ensemble: "An accompanist must go along with the soloist, must be with him at all points—this is the first maxim that an accompanist learns."<sup>18</sup> The accompanist and soloist seem to have swapped positions on the imaginary pedestal, with the pianist now re-assigned to his more familiar, dutiful place on the bench. Adler peppers this section (titled "Teamwork," interestingly) with further directives for accompanists, who must at a moment's notice "follow, "listen," "watch," "change," "phrase," and even "sense" how their partners will or will not handle a certain performance situation.<sup>19</sup>

### **Existing Doctoral Works**

Several existing doctoral papers and documents helped me formulate my own thesis. Published in 1991, Deon Nielsen Price's *Accompanying Skills for Pianists* uses multiple short musical examples to illustrate what, for the author, is involved in achieving wonderful ensemble. She constantly uses a particular word to describe this collaborative music making, in which a partnership is capable of "*synchronizing* all parts of the texture."<sup>20</sup> In a section discussing chordal piano accompaniments ("the most difficult to synchronize with the soloist"), she advises the pianist to "listen

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<sup>17</sup> Adler, *The Art of Accompanying and Coaching*, 182. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Deon Nielsen Price, *Accompanying Skills for Pianists* (Culver City, CA: Culver Crest Publications, 1991), 3. Italics mine.

for the singer's consonants in order to *synchronize* the piano attack exactly with the vowel."<sup>21</sup> Overall, her advice is practical, useful, and fairly typical.

Another useful doctoral document is Dian Baker's "A Resource Manual for the Collaborative Pianist: Twenty Class Syllabi for Teaching Collaborative Piano Skills and an Annotated Bibliography."<sup>22</sup> The annotated bibliography in particular extended my own research with books and sources outside the standard collaborative piano references.

Additional dissertations by recent doctoral students have addressed other relevant issues for collaborative pianists, but have not focused on ensemble. Though the title is promising, Pei-Shan Lee's "The Collaborative Pianist: Balancing Roles in Partnership" focuses more on the Janus-like nature faced by many collaborative pianists, treated simultaneously as students pursuing their own education and as employees working for their schools and studios. Works by Jessica Stitt and Eun Ae Baik Kim are each primarily concerned with debunking the notion that collaborative pianists are less technically gifted or challenged than soloists. As evidenced by their own recital programs and recordings, which serve as their primary methodology, these authors show that solo pianists are not the only ones called on to play technically and artistically demanding works.

## **New Insight**

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 79. Much of Price's language reminds me of Katz's, and well it should. The two share a common pedagogical ancestor in Gwendolyn Koldofsky, who "both designed and established the world's first degree-granting program in accompanying, first offered in 1947." USC Thornton School of Music, "Throwback Thursday: Celebrating Gwendolyn Koldofsky," accessed January 1, 2015. <http://music.usc.edu/throwback-thursday-celebrating-gwendolyn-koldofsky>. Italics in the original quote are mine.

<sup>22</sup> Dian Baker, "A Resource Manual for the Collaborative Pianist: Twenty Class Syllabi for Teaching Collaborative Piano Skills and an Annotated Bibliography" (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2006).

To disagree with parts of the scholarly knowledge just discussed is perhaps expected, but to contradict it outright? I do not mean to say that my thesis disproves the entire body of literature related to accompanying, coaching, or collaborating. Far from it, for I strongly agree with (and have used) the bulk of their cumulative advice on how to play *with* singers and instrumentalists rather than *for* them. My thesis is simply a provocative exception to these established ideas.

During the course of private lessons with my professor and committee chair, Dr. Andrew Campbell, a particular conversation kept occurring. A stereotypical exchange often happened as follows:

ANDREW CAMPBELL. Brad, this passage seems to be difficult for you and Sally to get together. Can you play it by yourself?

BRAD SMITH. *<I play the passage by myself.>*

CAMPBELL. Great! Now can you play it with Sally like you just did by yourself?

SMITH. *<I play the passage with Sally like I played it by myself.>*

CAMPBELL. That's much better! What did you do differently that time?"

SMITH. I ignored Sally.<sup>23</sup>

Paradoxically, I had found collaborative success by *ignoring* my colleague, rather than focusing intently on our *combined* accuracy of tone, rhythm, and ensemble. Put another way, the duo achieved better ensemble when I played as a soloist.

It is necessary to stipulate that out of all my lessons, coachings, and rehearsals, these situations were not common. Nor does my thesis attempt to account for the mishaps and various unexpected things that can and do happen in a real-world performance. However, the reappearance of this situation throughout

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<sup>23</sup> "Sally" serves as a fictional stand-in for any of my own wonderful partners throughout my degree, chosen out of Dr. Campbell's fondness for the name in his own theoretical situations.



different stages of my degree reinforced the idea of actively ignoring. The goal of this document is to explore when this technique is more beneficial than the standard methods of collaborating. After examining a substantial portion of the existing collaborative literature, my own repertoire list, and the examples given by my primary sources, several additional musical examples, drawn from the repertoire, demonstrate this technique's usefulness. My hope is that its applicability extends to ensembles of any size that lack a conductor, not solely to collaborative pianists working with a single partner.

## CHAPTER 2

### OVERVIEW OF ENSEMBLE CHALLENGES

#### **Clarification: What It Is *Not***

To this point, I have illustrated only what ensemble *is*, but observing what it is *not* provides additional insight. Spillman writes that “[m]aking music has to do with being human,” not with being “a scorekeeper intent on being correct.”<sup>24</sup>

Collaborative pianist Deon Nielsen Price observes in her doctoral thesis that ensemble “is not the result of one player following another. [It] is the responsibility of all the performers.”<sup>25</sup>

These thoughts and observations—What is “ensemble”? What musical situations tax it the most?—must be kept in context. Collaborative pianists should not deem a performance a success solely if they and their partners shared “perfect ensemble” any more than they should for having flawless rhythm at the expense of half of the correct notes. The analogy perhaps seems too crude or too obvious, but the sentiment is a common trope of younger musicians.

Consider the following statement, made by violinist Arnold Steinhardt:

A natural by-product of ensemble difficulty is a certain tightness and stiffness. It is so hard to play together that a young [string] quartet, instinctively, will avoid any freedom or individuality that rocks the boat. Their first performances tend to be well played, synchronized, and bland.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Spillman, 38. He also warns accompanists against “merely being an attachment to a large machine with eighty-eight keys” (ibid., 43).

<sup>25</sup> Price, 23. This is especially interesting when compared with Mr. Adler; cf. Adler, 182, 239.

<sup>26</sup> Arnold Steinhardt, *Indivisible by Four: A String Quartet In Pursuit of Harmony* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000), 123. He is reminiscing about the Quartet’s first European tour in the summer of 1965. Note both his use of the word “synchronized” and the implied negative connotation.

At the time, Steinhardt was already a professional who had performed as a soloist in Carnegie Hall and under Georg Szell in the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra. As a member of the nascent Guarneri String Quartet, however, he and his companion members had been playing *together* for less than a year. His statement suggests that tight ensemble can be achieved easily when it is a group's primary (or sole) focus. It also suggests that this tendency—to be disproportionately concerned with ensemble—increases with the size of the group.

Steinhardt later recounts the experience of playing orchestral works under Pablo Casals in the 1960s and 1970s:

Casals [was] a man who regarded an orchestra as no different from a chamber group or a soloist, and therefore answerable to the basic principles of his music-making: variety, form, freedom. The result was an energy and suppleness that is rarely heard in an orchestra usually weighed down by the demands of good ensemble.<sup>27</sup>

Taken together, Steinhardt's observations reinforce my own thoughts about tight "ensemble." It is but one of the means to a musical, artistic end, not the goal itself.

### **Aggregate Ensemble Challenges**

With a working definition of "ensemble" now established, I can discuss the situations that challenge it, as presented by Katz, Spillman, and Adler. Throughout, all scenarios and musical examples are limited to two-person repertoire, either for piano and voice or piano and instrument. This is done primarily to keep the document focused and specific, rather than broad and cursory. However, with

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 140–141.

discretion many of the concepts discussed here can be extrapolated quite easily to larger ensembles.

### **Challenge: Rhythm**

Let us begin with rhythm. For *Grove Music Online*, rhythm is one of “the two primary parameters of musical structure.”<sup>28</sup> Rhythm “is concerned with the description and understanding of [a pitch's] duration and durational patternings....these durations may be more or less regular, may or may not give rise to a sense of beat or tempo, and may be more or less continuous, but as all music involves duration(s), *all music necessarily has some manner of rhythm.*”<sup>29</sup> This description is objective, but suggests the universal nature of rhythm—all musical works have it, even if they share nothing else.

For Adler, it has more to do with our perception of music and the people who perform it: “Rhythm is necessary for the esthetic enjoyment of music; without rhythm, any musical piece would be boring.”<sup>30</sup> He continues: “strong rhythmic execution energizes and enlivens music” while “weak rhythm emasculates it and makes us feel bored, unsatisfied.”<sup>31</sup>

Less than fifteen years later, Shirlee Emmons and Stanley Sonntag echo Adler’s sentiments: “Paramount here is the matter of rhythm—the backbone of all music....It is within the realm of rhythm that most atrocities and many displays of

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<sup>28</sup> *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Rhythm,” by Justin London, accessed June 19, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>. The other parameter is pitch.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Italics mine.

<sup>30</sup> Adler, 126.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

bad taste occur."<sup>32</sup>

The consensus on rhythm thus ranges from the unifying—"all music" according to *Grove*—to the pithy—"necessary" according to Adler, "paramount" according to Emmons and Sonntag—to the self-described "dour fatalism" of Spillman: "it would seem that if two people were counting at the same rate of speed they would automatically play together."<sup>33</sup>

An example helps to clarify the ensemble "difficulties" just referenced (Example 1).

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, starting at measure 55, features a vocal line in bass clef with lyrics "Et leschevaux sont fous du grand air qu'ils ont bu" and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The piano part consists of dense, rhythmic chords. The second system, starting at measure 59, features a vocal line in bass clef with lyrics "Nage ain - si dans l'es -" and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a section marked "passionato." with a dynamic of "p".

<sup>32</sup> Shirlee Emmons and Stanley Sonntag, *The Art of the Song Recital* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1979), 131.

<sup>33</sup> Adler, 126; Emmons and Sonntag, 131; Spillman, 68. Spillman's entire quote comes in a discussion of the slow movement of Beethoven's *Cello Sonata*, op. 102, no. 2: "It would seem that if two people were counting at the same rate of speed they would automatically play together, but many of us have learned in this movement to develop a dour fatalism and hope merely for a high percentage of togetherness."

63

- pa - - ce ò mon cheval ra - pi - de, A - breuven moi d'air

67

pur bai - gne - moi dans le vent, L'étri - er bat ton

71

ven - - tre, et j'ai lâ - ché la bri - - de. Mon

74

corps te touche à pei - - ne il vole en te - sui -

di

*p* *cresc. molto.*

*f* *p* *cresc. molto.* *f* *p*

*cresc. molto.* *ff* *8* *fff*

EXAMPLE 1: “Le Galop,” mm. 55–80<sup>34</sup>

In this song by Henri Duparc, the words of Sully Prudhomme’s horseman are precise, descriptive, almost imperious:<sup>35</sup>

Et les fils du désert respirent le pillage,  
Et les chevaux sont fous du grand air  
qu’ils ont bu.

And the sons of the desert are eager for plunder,  
And the horses are crazed with the air  
they have drunk!

Nage ainsi dans l’espace, ô mon cheval rapide,  
Abreuve-moi d’air pur, baigne-moi dans le vent.  
L’étrier bat ton ventre,  
et j’ai lâché la bride.  
Mon corps te touche a peine, il vole en te suivant.

Swim thus in space, O my swift mount,  
Quench my thirst with pure air; bathe me in wind;  
The stirrup strikes your belly;  
I’ve slackened the rein;  
My body scarcely touches you; it flies in your wake.

“Nage ainsi dans l’espace” marks a new strophe, with text that suggests vastness and size (“Swim thus in space;” “Bathe me in wind”). Duparc responds with multiple musical changes: an abrupt modulation from C minor to E major and a dynamic shift from *fortissimo* to *piano*. He also changes the accompaniment pattern, with the pianist’s right hand playing triplets against both a sweeping vocal line and a left-hand countermelody. The triplet pattern *should* feel like a broadening of the song’s rhythm, to highlight the text, but this is only effective if pianist and singer

<sup>34</sup> Henri Duparc, “Le Galop” (Paris: G Flaxland, [c. ~1870]), 4–6.

<sup>35</sup> Translation by Richard Stokes, *The French Song Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 142–143.

have executed the six previous measures correctly. The dotted-eighth notes and sixteenth notes (“Et les chevaux sont fous”) must be precise and accurate, especially the sixteenth note of the figure; from the author’s own experience, both performers are willing to accept the lazier rhythm of triplets here instead.

This detracts immensely from the song’s momentum, which peaks at the end of the strophe:

Mon corps te touche a peine,  
il vole en te suivant.

My body scarcely touches you,  
it flies in your wake.

The pianist bears most of the rhythmic responsibility, with a triplet figure in the right hand against a dotted-eighth–sixteenth-note figure in the left. Playing the left hand rhythm correctly, just a moment after the right, not only supports the singer executing the same rhythm, but also increases the song’s energy at this climatic moment of recapitulation.

### **Challenge: Tempo**

A work’s tempo presents another challenge to an ensemble, with a song like Schubert’s “Nacht und Traüme” demonstrating the difficulties (Example 2).



1 *Sehr langsam.*

Singstimme.

Pianoforte. *pp*

4 Heil - ge Nacht, du sin - kest

7 nie - der; nie - der wallen auch die Träu - me,

**EXAMPLE 2: “Nacht und Träume,” mm. 1–9<sup>36</sup>**

Part of the tempo difficulties stem from the piano’s introduction, which necessarily establishes the singer’s tempo. Katz’s examples and descriptions of just such a situation are thorough enough to represent the standard advice: the pianist should use “the music of one’s partner for the purpose of imprinting a tempo.”<sup>37</sup> This is especially important for this song, for, as Katz states, the “fact that an accompaniment is full of notes does not guarantee that it is the best guide for remembering a tempo.”<sup>38</sup> This is an extraordinarily taxing song to sing, and the tempo must be both stylistically appropriate and physically fair to the singer.

The pianist plays an undulating pattern of sixteenth notes in both hands, and

<sup>36</sup> Franz Schubert, *Sämtliche einstimmige Lieder und Gesänge* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1894–1895), 68–69.

<sup>37</sup> Katz, 236.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

the figure continues through the singer's entrance.<sup>39</sup> By contrast, the singer's first note is a double-dotted half note, and the singer has had four measures to prepare it. The difference between constant sixteenth notes and long sustained notes persists, and is one reason the song is so difficult.

To reiterate the difficulty: the pianist must establish the tempo for both performers while playing notes of far shorter value than the singer's. This must be done without changing the tempo, for there is no helpful *rallentando* or *ritardando* at the singer's entrance. To insert one anyways is not advised, for, as Katz warns in a discussion of "Morgen!" by Richard Strauss, "It would be a felony to change the tempo even slightly here [i.e. the singer's entrance]."<sup>40</sup>

### **Challenge: Articulation and Phrasing**

Two partners performing a duo sonata with separate ideas about articulation and phrasing will not sound as "wrong," perhaps, as the same two people playing the same work in separate tempi, but the "perfect ensemble" required by Katz applies here, as well.

The two terms can be difficult to separate; unfortunately the *Grove* article does not initially help matters. Geoffrey Chew's entry on "Articulation and phrasing" (already a point of confusion with the two lumped together) begins: "the separation of successive notes from one another, singly or in groups, by a performer, and the

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<sup>39</sup> In fact, it continues uninterrupted for the entire song, save the last measure. The difficulties in evenness and tonal control are formidable for the pianist, as well.

<sup>40</sup> Katz, 241. This is another song in which the singer must slip easily into the texture established by the piano's long introduction.

manner in which this is done.”<sup>41</sup> Luckily, he makes the distinction clear later in the entry, suggesting that it is a matter of degree:

The term “phrasing” implies a linguistic or syntactic analogy, and since the 18<sup>th</sup> century this analogy has constantly been invoked in discussing *the grouping of successive notes*, especially in melodies; the term “articulation” refers primarily to the degree in which a performer detaches *individual notes from one another* in practice.<sup>42</sup>

Kurt Adler excises the fat to say much the same thing: “Wrong phrasing is comparable to wrong punctuation in a speech that makes the whole speech cryptic or even senseless.”<sup>43</sup>

To reinforce the analogy to linguistics, compare the following two sentences:

1. King Charles walked and talked; half an hour after, his head was cut off.
2. King Charles walked and talked half an hour after his head was cut off.<sup>44</sup>

The first sentence is straightforward, with two, independent clauses connected by a semicolon. There is nothing unusual in its content. The second, however, is a single clause that suggests some sort of supernatural ability on the part of King Charles.

Why is the latter’s meaning radically different from the former? Each has an identical number of words, and those words come in identical order. The second sentence is different *solely because of its punctuation* (specifically its *lack of*

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<sup>41</sup> *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Articulation and phrasing,” by Geoffrey Chew, accessed July 2, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* Both uses of italics are mine.

<sup>43</sup> Adler, 135.

<sup>44</sup> “Articulation and phrasing,” Geoffrey Chew.

punctuation). The musical parallels are how a performer plays an individual note—articulation—and how a performer groups those notes—phrasing.

Part of what defines a composer's *style* stems from his or her unique execution of these ideas, but it is the performers who must phrase and articulate appropriately. As discussed earlier, these difficulties increase with the size of the ensemble, and thus both members of a duo must share a uniform approach to phrasing and articulation.<sup>45</sup>

In the collaborative repertoire, as in all repertoires, issues of phrasing and articulation crop up for multiple reasons: a faulty edition, a lax performer, or a hurried composer. Adler devotes several pages to the phrasing hallmarks of different eras, composers, and geographic areas. While describing the tendencies of Italian opera composers, he writes: “In notating vocal phrases, Italian composers are not much concerned with exactness. They leave the phrasing to their interpreters.”<sup>46</sup> As an example, consider the vocal line from Rodolfo's aria in Puccini's *La Bohème* (Example 3).

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<sup>45</sup> This approach is just what Moore called “unanimity.” See note 3.

<sup>46</sup> Adler, 141.

AND<sup>no</sup> AFFETTUOSO ♩ = 58

1 (sorpresa)

MIMI Ah!

(tenendo la mano di Mimi, con voce piena d'emozione)

R *dolcissimo*

(30) *pp* Che ge - li - da ma - ni - na, se la

AND<sup>no</sup> AFFETTUOSO ♩ = 58

6

R la - sci ri - scal - dar. Cer - car che gio - va? Al bu - io non si

11

R tro - va.

*m. s.*

EXAMPLE 3: Puccini, *La Bohème*, “Che gelida manina,” mm. 1–14<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Giacomo Puccini, *La Bohème* [piano-vocal score] (Milan: Ricordi, 1897), 64.

Puccini's instructions to his Rodolfo are simple: sing "*con voce piena d'emozione*" ("in a voice full of emotion"). He leaves it at that, trusting the singer to do so intelligently rather than prescribing exactly when and where to insert emotion. The same applies to the pianist playing this reduction of Puccini's full score. Phrasing indications are sparse, and the bass notes simply occur in time; this type of writing suggests that Puccini expects the pianist playing this aria to know the specific words and the entire scene as well as the singers. Such a pianist would be able to respond to the drama and play appropriately without needing numerous phrase and articulation markings.

### Challenge: Melodic Doubling

Another ensemble issue arises when pianists double their partner, either at the unison or the octave (Example 4).

The image displays a musical score for Example 4, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 70-74) features a vocal line (K) and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a Violin (Viol.) line. The second system (measures 75-79) features a vocal line (K) and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a Flute (Fl.) line and a Quartet (Quart.) line. The vocal lines contain lyrics: "de, es -". The score is numbered 70, 75, and 99.

**EXAMPLE 4: “Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen,” mm. 70–79<sup>48</sup>**

In this bravura aria, the fearsome Queen of the Night sings multiple coloratura scales, arpeggios, and repeated notes. The arpeggiated pattern begins in m. 73 in the violins and alternates back and forth between strings and soprano. Beginning in m. 77, however, Mozart has the flutes double her. In the vocal score, this doubling is preserved for the pianist. For collaborative pianists, this texture occurs in orchestral, vocal, and instrumental repertoire, and the advice from coaches and teachers varies.

Here is a sampling from several of my sources, beginning with Coenraad Bos, born in 1875:

Arrangements from operatic scores of coloratura passages frequently call upon the pianist to play in unison with the singer. This is an error in taste, [and] it is impossible to blend such a paralleling of the singer’s musical line, in the piano accompaniment.<sup>49</sup>

Katz published his book in 2009 and says the exact opposite:

If my vocal or instrumental partner were removed, leaving me with a piano solo, I doubt there would be much controversy about which line to make predominant....The voicing I would choose in a solo remains in place as I collaborate....Conductors would not hide this change of orchestration [i.e melodic doubling], and most would seek to take advantage of it. Why should music for piano accompaniment be treated any differently?<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte* [piano-vocal score] (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1893), 99.

<sup>49</sup> Bos, 111–112.

<sup>50</sup> Katz, 117–118.

Referring to a passage from “Un bel dì,” Spillman writes:

This excerpt could serve as an almost perfect exercise in homophonic accompanying. The music is full of elasticity and tension, and the phrases are rich and varied in their ebb and flow. Work toward a high level of coordination and rhythmic unity with your soprano.<sup>51</sup>

He concludes the same discussion:

In the first and last sections the voice and accompaniment are in unison; the middle section and coda are scarcely less challenging in terms of ensemble. Listen at all times to the sound, the intensity, and the flow of your partner’s voice; *try to sound every note exactly when the voice does...*[and] let your ears do the work.”<sup>52</sup>

Several points emerge from these quotes. They show that the pedagogical opinions on melodic doubling are far from unified. These differences could be explained by changes in musical taste across different decades and geographic regions.<sup>53</sup> Katz’s comment is interesting, and I agree with his opinion that the unique texture of a doubled melody deserves to be *highlighted* rather than *diminished*.<sup>54</sup> However, for all the disparity between the preceding opinions, the

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<sup>51</sup> Spillman, 229.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 231. Italics mine.

<sup>53</sup> Consider the very label of my degree—collaborative pianist. For Bos, Adler, Price, Sonntag, Spillman, and even Gerald Moore, I am simply “the accompanist.” Only in recent years have schools and teachers like Katz begun to level the playing field by using the “collaborative” term instead. For myself, I am simple—call me “the pianist.” Solo singers that sing in choirs are not listed as “accompanying sopranos” or “choral altos,” nor is the principal oboist in a symphony identified as an “orchestral oboist.”

<sup>54</sup> He acknowledges as much himself: “I fear that...I may be all alone in my convictions.” Katz, 117. However, he does qualify these convictions, and recommends *not* doubling in a work, “whether it be vocal or instrumental, if [his] partner is unable to perform a doubled passage in perfect tune with the piano, *particularly* if the doubled notes are in the same octave.” Katz, 122. The italicized word is his. The given excerpt from *Die Zauberflöte* is a perfect example, given the intonation challenges it presents to the soprano.



authors are unanimous in their advice: *“Listen!”*

## CHAPTER 3

### ACTIVELY IGNORING IN AN ENSEMBLE

Throughout their respective works, each of my primary sources makes an observation that *almost* suggests my thesis. None, however, states it outright. I will discuss those remarks in detail, and then give three musical examples that demonstrate the concept. Each example is given for a different technical reason, and each represents a situation in which the advice given in Chapter Two fails.

#### PRECEDENTS

##### **Martin Katz**

In Chapter 7, “The Bother of Balance,” Katz gives thoughts on how to accompany a partner whose part is quick, difficult, and impressive. He gives a Baroque cello sonata with a fully-realized keyboard accompaniment as an example. Most collaborative pianists find his advice familiar: when playing this sort of repertoire, we “must have the delicate, dryer sounds of a harpsichord in mind.”<sup>55</sup> We realize that composers often wrote only the continuo part, and they did not write it for a nine-foot, resonant, modern grand piano. All Katz is pointing out here is the difference in touch, dynamic, and attack required to play such a continuo part.

His next statement, however, is both more relevant and intriguing: “[When we perform this cello sonata,] I want my cellist partner to be *completely unaware* of me.”<sup>56</sup> Here is one of the master coaches and mentors of collaborative pianism advising his partner *not* to notice him! As evidence, Katz submits a cello part in

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<sup>55</sup> Katz, 145.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* Italics mine.

which the player “will doubtless use a feather-light spiccato for this very brilliant movement and astonish us with his virtuosity.”<sup>57</sup>

If I substitute Katz’s phrase “completely unaware of” with a similar one, “ignorant of,” I can justifiably paraphrase his sentence this way: “When we perform this passage, I want my cellist to ignore me.” A pianist playing loudly will cover his partner’s display of technique, and a cellist focusing unwisely on the ensemble will sound neither astonishing nor virtuosic. Both scenarios damage the success of a performance. Katz’s stated desire—to be ignored by his cellist—is the mirror image of the paradox I am describing—for the pianist to ignore his cellist. This is not Katz’s primary point, however, and he moves to another topic without elaborating further on this concept.

### **Kurt Adler**

The following is a quote from a passage on rhythm by Adler:

Igor Stravinsky, in his early revolutionary period, does not recognize rhythm as we know it, but only accents...I have known conductors who, instead of learning the immensely complicated rhythms, have shifted the bars in order to make the measures regular.<sup>58</sup>

The comparison between the preceding statement and my own thesis is somewhat metaphorical, but it hinges on a similar idea: in certain situations, doing the opposite of what usually fixes a musical difficulty can be beneficial. The conductors Adler mentions *ignored* a musical element that usually contributes to a successful, tight-knit performance: the score itself, or more specifically, the meter and measure

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<sup>57</sup> Katz, 145. “Spiccato” refers to the detached, separated sound string players achieve by bouncing the bow on a string or strings.

<sup>58</sup> Adler, 130.

lines within it! Imagine Carlos Kleiber conducting a waltz in a four-beat pattern instead of three. After only a few moments, the rehearsal or performance would derail itself.

Indeed, a conductor who altered the meter of most works would not be more successful, but Adler's quote suggests that for a specific situation—conducting a difficult Stravinsky score—certain conductors *were* successful precisely because of doing so.

Similarly, my thesis focuses on a problem—this duo is not together—that, for specific reasons, is more easily fixed by doing the opposite of the standard advice (which is listen more and play less like a soloist).

### **Robert Spillman**

As mentioned in Chapter One, I formed my thesis as a result of my weekly lessons as a doctoral student. However, Spillman references just such a situation while discussing “The Circus Band” by Charles Ives: **“Try your best not to listen to your partner in measures 39–40, because it will just confuse you.”**<sup>59</sup> Thus my idea—*not* listening to your partner—is not wholly original, but, as with Katz, Spillman does not explore the topic. I take his words as the germ of my discussion, as well as the inspiration for the title of this paper. I begin with an examination of the relevant passage of “The Circus Band” (Example 5).

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<sup>59</sup> Spillman, 273. Emphasis mine.

EXAMPLE 5: “The Circus Band,” mm. 25–40<sup>60</sup>

What makes this passage particularly difficult for an ensemble? Why does Spillman single it out as an exception to the established wisdom of collaborative pianists and teachers (including his own)? I believe it is the accumulating rhythmic complexity of the entire strain, and I introduce here several “characters” to help explain:

- The Vocal Line
- The Piano, Left Hand
- The Piano, Right Hand
- The Ensemble (*of the passage*)

The Vocal Line. The vocal line is split into two eight-measure phrases and contains much more syncopation than the steady left hand in the piano part. In a comedic bit of text-painting, the antecedent phrase (through “streaming”) divides unevenly:

<sup>60</sup> Charles Ives, *114 Songs* (Redding, Connecticut: [published by the composer, 1922]), 128–130.

“Knights advancing” could have the same rhythm as “Horses are prancing,” but Ives has the eager knights rush their entrance, leaving measure 4 empty in their wake. But in measures 37–40, the final four of the strain, the vocal line alternates between strong-beat and weak-beat rhythmic patterns: the outer measures use the strong, march-like rhythm, while the measures in the middle use a weaker, syncopated pattern.

The Left Hand. The song is in cut time, and the left hand plays a straightforward march pattern with strong emphasis on strong beats (ONE-and-TWO-and). This continues until measure 39, in which the left hand plays two octaves on the weak beats (one-AND-two-AND).

The Right Hand. The right hand adds an alto countermelody while doing a great deal of mimicking of the vocal line: it exactly doubles eight measures (mm. 25–28, 30, 33, 35, 36) and closely resembles three others (mm. 29, 32, 34). Of the remaining measures, the right hand deviates most prominently in measures 37–40, with changes in both rhythm and pitch content: instead of doubling at “That golden hair,” it echoes the voice half a measure behind. It then catches up by leaving out the pitch the voice sings on “all,” and ultimately beats the singer to the C#–D resolution sung in measure 40 on “her own.”

The Ensemble. Having introduced the three active participants—the singer and the pianist’s two hands—I can discuss why I feel Spillman suggests *not* listening to your partner for the concluding measures of this passage, and why doing so would “just

confuse you.”<sup>61</sup> The preceding phrase, “Cleopatra’s on her throne!” (mm. 33–36), establishes the pianist’s role as supportive rather than complementary, doubling the vocal line and playing simple, strong-beat rhythms to keep things manageable for the singer. The ensuing phrase disrupts this, with the piano part now imitating against a vocal line that becomes syncopated in measure 38 (on the word “hair”). It is in measure 40 that the ensemble is tested in three ways:

1. The vocal line’s melodic resolution—“her own”—is a quarter-note later than expected from the syncopated pattern it established two measures earlier.
2. The accompaniment does little—nothing, in fact—to highlight this rhythmic switch, thus increasing the chance for a rhythmic error.
3. The accent on “her” (the leading tone) instead of “own” (the tonic pitch) further disrupts the rhythm of the vocal line.

Though Spillman’s advice—“Try your best not to listen to your partner ... because it will just confuse you”—is in fact helpful for this passage, he does not examine *why*.<sup>62</sup> As suggested at the beginning of this section, I contend that both partners need to maintain the rhythmic integrity of their own part at the expense of listening for and watching one another.

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<sup>61</sup> Spillman, 273.

<sup>62</sup> As with Katz, such an examination is not Spillman’s pedagogical intention.

The music in mm. 25–40 changes multiple times, with the piano at times doubling (mm. 25–28), echoing (m. 37), or preceding (m. 38–40) the vocal line, and, coupled with the rhythmic complexities *within* each part for the same excerpt, the most effective solution, the one that enables the best ensemble, is paradoxical: the partners should ignore each other for this passage, before returning to the standard wisdom on collaborating. The following three musical examples represent other instances when the same advice yields a more convincing and artistic result.

### Challenge: Rhythm

#### Paul Hindemith, *Clarinet Sonata* (1939)

An excerpt from the second movement of this work demonstrates the idea of actively ignoring one's partner (Example 6).

16

mp

pp



11

The image shows a musical score for a clarinet and piano. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system starts at measure 16 and ends at measure 19. The second system starts at measure 20 and ends at measure 23. The piano part is written in a complex, syncopated rhythmic pattern, while the clarinet part has a more regular eighth-note pattern with accents. The score is marked with 'f' and 'ff'.

**EXAMPLE 6: *Clarinet Sonata*, Second Movement, mm. 12–23<sup>63</sup>**

The movement is in cut time, and in this passage the clarinet part maintains an analogous rhythmic feeling. In mm. 12–15, it repeats a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The first two are rhythmically identical to one another, as are the second two, themselves a variant of the first pair. Though the composer adds a few syncopated accents, the clarinet’s remaining six measures of rehearsal 16 remain firmly in two.

I contend that the piano part is the one most likely to derail the ensemble in this passage. It has its own rhythmic patterns and meter, and it pays no attention to those of its clarinet partner. I suggest that the pianist do the same.

<sup>63</sup> Paul Hindemith, *Sonate für Klarinette (B) und Piano*, 1939 (Mainz: B Schott’s Söhne, 1940), 10–11.

For the first four measures, Hindemith has simply created a hemiola, writing four measures of  $\frac{3}{4}$  for the piano without changing the time signature. If these measures were from a work for solo piano, no pianist would try to play it in cut time.<sup>64</sup> The three-beat phrase markings of the right hand reinforce the feeling, as do the accents in both hands. They are each three beats apart, creating what feels like downbeats in  $\frac{3}{4}$ . This echoes Adler's observation of conductors faced with a difficult Stravinsky score.<sup>65</sup>

If the remaining six measures of the piano part were as straightforward as the four just discussed, the ensemble for the duo would be difficult, but not enough to warrant my suggestion that the partners *ignore* one another. However, Hindemith compounds the difficulties for the pianist, and thus the ensemble, in several ways:

1. He shifts the piano's implied time signature from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$ : What had previously been a hemiola now functions more like true poly-meter.
2. Hindemith removes the phrasing and dynamic markings, leaving the piano part marked with a single *forte*, and accents over every chord except the final two. Contrast this with mm. 12–15, in which both instruments share a three-measure crescendo. Though the metric pulses for each instrument are separate for mm. 12–15, this crescendo eases that ensemble difficulty: the partners can at least hear one another getting

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<sup>64</sup> For that matter, neither would clarinetists try to play their part in  $\frac{3}{4}$ .

<sup>65</sup> Adler, 130. See note 57.

louder at the same time, if not in the same meter. Mm. 16–21 do not have any helpful instructions or markings.

3. The final three chords break the rhythmic pattern just established (see #1.). If this pattern did not change, the pianist would only need to memorize how many three-eighth-note chords play.

In my opinion, this example is difficult enough for a pianist to play with perfect and precise rhythm as a soloist. Yet all of this happens with the clarinet part that, though not as challenging as the piano's, has its own rhythmic complexities. I suggest that, for these ten measures, neither player can afford to listen to the other. Otherwise, the integrity of Hindemith's individual lines, their independent motivic structures, and the aggregate polyrhythm of the passage as whole will suffer.

Or, to paraphrase Spillman: "Don't listen to your partner or you will just get confused."

### **Challenge: Simultaneous Solo Lines**

**Frédéric Chopin, *Cello Sonata in G minor*, op. 65, IV. Allegro**

This excerpt presents a different technical challenge, one that recalls my dialogue with Dr. Campbell in which he challenged me to play more like a soloist (Example 7).

15 *a tempo.*  
*rall.* *a tempo.*

This system contains measures 15 through 20. It features a bass line at the top and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. The music is in a minor key. Measure 15 has a *rall.* marking. Measure 16 has a *a tempo.* marking. The grand staff contains complex piano accompaniment with many notes and rests. There are *Red.* markings with asterisks in measures 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20.

24

This system contains measures 24 through 28. It features a bass line at the top and a grand staff below. The music continues with complex piano accompaniment. There are *Red.* markings with asterisks in measures 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28.

28

This system contains measures 28 through 32. It features a bass line at the top and a grand staff below. The music continues with complex piano accompaniment. There are *Red.* markings with asterisks in measures 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32.

32

This system contains measures 32 through 36. It features a bass line at the top and a grand staff below. The music continues with complex piano accompaniment. There are *Red.* markings with asterisks in measures 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36.

**EXAMPLE 7: *Sonate, Fourth Movement, mm. 15–36*<sup>66</sup>**

From mm. 19–33, pianist and cellist play material I regard as two separate melodies: during my own rehearsals of this work, neither I nor my partner were confident about which part to bring out. Which was foreground? Which was background?

I *am* confident that if either part were missing and the remaining player left to play alone, neither would play with the weak, boring, and unsatisfying rhythm described by Adler.<sup>67</sup> Quite the contrary, since the work comes from Chopin, a Romantic composer whose music requires passion, lyricism, and spontaneity.

To play the overlapping phrases, cross-rhythms, out-of-phase *crescendi* and *diminuendi*, and moments of parallel harmony correctly with a partner is not impossible. To follow the cello line and listen to your partner's sound—advice given in Chapter Two—technically works. However, the result may not be at all representative of the composer. The case brings Arnold Steinhardt's observation to mind: such a performance would be “well played, synchronized, and bland.”<sup>68</sup>

I am not advising wild, reckless, or sloppy playing from either player. During rehearsals of this passage, and the work as a whole, the duo should certainly be scrupulous, even cautious, to avoid errors in phrasing, rhythm, dynamics, and ensemble. They should play this passage slowly and accurately as many times as necessary. They should study each other's part as thoroughly as their own.

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<sup>66</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Sonate pour piano et violoncelle*, op. 65 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1874), 26–27.

<sup>67</sup> See notes 30, 31.

<sup>68</sup> See note 26.

For a performance, however, I contend that the duo will enjoy more collaborative success, and the audience will enjoy their performance more, if the members are at times willing to perform with a soloist's mentality. This passage is just such a time.

### **Challenge: Canonic Activity**

**Darius Milhaud, "Dieu vous gard'," from *Quatre Chansons de Ronsard*,  
op. 223**

The final case study for my thesis comes from the very end of this four-song collection originally scored for coloratura soprano and chamber orchestra. Unlike the previous two examples, the pianist is now playing an orchestral reduction (instead of an original piano part) and functions somewhat like a conductor. Milhaud's original score is full of imitation, counter-melodies, and independent rhythms; thus a conductor's first task would be to keep the orchestra together, and *then* to insure that the soprano is able to join the texture, as if she were another member of the orchestra. Similarly, the soprano must be able to see and follow the conductor's gesture, even without eye contact or a cue.

For a duo, however, there is no conductor—or rather, the pianist assumes that duty. When the instrumental activity in Milhaud's score becomes boisterous and difficult, collaborative pianists must be able to capture all of that energy and activity. This is especially true because of the prevalence of woodwinds in the original score, for as Mr. Katz states:

[T]here is a significant difference between the mindset of the wind player and that of his string colleague. This

too affects how the pianist proceeds. Each player in a wind section is really a soloist; there are not a dozen others playing the same notes with him as would be the case with strings. This difference is crucial, because it introduces an individual ego as well as psychological pressure to everything winds do. For the imitator at the piano, when this solo mentality is combined with the penetrating finger technique described earlier, everything for winds will feel less generic, less homogenized in the hand than anything for strings. One would naturally assume this attitude for woodwind solos, but it applies to homophonic group wind passages as well. If eight or ten fingers are involved, each one feels a soloist's mentality; each one is aware of its own linear adventure, and the result is unique, quite unlike most piano music.<sup>69</sup>

In Pierre de Ronsard's poem, the speaker jubilantly welcomes the return of spring. His words burst forth, tumbling over each other to praise the birds, flowers, and insects that had been absent during the long and stormy winter:

Dieu vous gard', messagers fidèles  
 Du Printemps, gentes hirondelles,  
 Huppés, coucous, rossignolet,  
 Tourtres, et vous oiseaux sauvages  
 Qui de cent sortes de ramages  
 Animez les bois verdelets.

God shield you, faithful messengers  
 Of Spring, gentle swallows,  
 Hoopoes, cuckoos, nightingales,  
 Turtle-doves, and you wild birds,  
 Who with your hundred varied words  
 Gladden the greening woods.

Dieu vous gard', belles pâquerettes,  
 Belles roses, belles fleurettes,  
 Et vous boutons jadis connus  
 Du sang d'Ajax et de Narcisse,  
 Et vous thym, anis et mélisse,  
 Vous soyez les bien revenus.

God shield you, lovely daisies,  
 Lovely roses, lovely flowerets,  
 And you buds that once were named  
 After the blood of Ajax and Narcissus,  
 And you thyme, anise, and balm,  
 All be welcome back again.

Dieu vous gard', troupe diaprée  
 Des papillons, qui par la préé  
 Les douces herbes suçotez;  
 Et vous, nouvel essaim d'abeilles,  
 Qui les fleurs jaunes et vermeilles  
 De votre bouche baisotez.

God shield you, O spangled flight  
 Of butterflies, who flit across the meadow  
 Drinking from the sweet grasses;  
 And you, new-born swarm of bees  
 Who nibble at the yellow  
 And vermilion flowers.

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<sup>69</sup> Katz, 172.

Cent mille fois je resalue  
Votre belle et douce venue.  
Ô que j'aime cette saison  
Et ce doux caquet des rivages,  
Au prix des vents et des orages  
Qui m'enfermaient en la maison!

A hundred thousand times your sweet  
And beautiful coming I greet again.  
Oh how I love this season  
And the voices along the river bank,  
More than the winds and storms  
That confined me to my home!<sup>70</sup>

For the pianist, this is the most difficult song in the set (they are all challenging for the soprano), and there are multiple ensemble challenges throughout. However, these problematic sections can be performed with wonderful ensemble by using advice already given in this document rather than by using my thesis. Examples 8 and 9 both demonstrate this.

The accompaniment during the second stanza, for example, has a countermelody that Milhaud treats imitatively *within the accompaniment* (Example 8). The right-hand statement begins in m. 18, and the left hand follows one measure later. Contrapuntal devices like this are nothing new for pianists, and the countermelody is just that—it happens *beneath* the primary melody of the vocal line. To play this passage well, the accompanist need only remember the Chopin example and play, briefly, like a true soloist.

16

Dieu vous  
God keep

*mp*

<sup>70</sup> Translation by Richard Stokes, *The French Song Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 337–338.



19 *b*

gard', bel-les pâ-que - ret - tes, Bel-les ro - ses,  
 you in your love-ly bow - ers Pret - ty ro - ses

**EXAMPLE 8: “Dieu vous gard’,” mm. 16–20**  
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Later in the same verse, the pianist has an awkward scalar figure in each hand (mm. 20–22). For the left hand, this occurs simultaneously against a busy vocal line (“Et vous, boutons jadis connus”...) (Example 9).

**EXAMPLE 9: “Dieu vous gard’,” mm. 19–24**  
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Since the rhythm of the vocal line and the left hand are the same, the pianist’s problems are alleviated by remembering the standard coaching wisdom of Katz, Spillman, and many others: Listen to the other part more than your own.

Measures 46–49 (“O que j’aime cette saison”...), however, present a new difficulty: a canonic melody between soprano and piano (Example 10).

43 *rall.* Mouvt

nue;  
but

O que j'ai-me cet-te sai-son  
What live-ly thoughts does spring a-rouse

*p rall.* *pp*

45

Et ce doux ca-quet des ri-va  
With the sweet dis-course of the stream,

47 *8va ad libitum*

- ges Au prix des vents et des o-ra-ges  
'Tis worth the win-ter's som-bre dream

*p*

**EXAMPLE 10: "Dieu vous gard'," mm. 43-49**  
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The vocal line begins on the downbeat of m. 46 (marked “Mouv<sup>t</sup>”), one beat before the piano. Milhaud treats this melody canonically, in effect making beat two the pianist’s initial “downbeat,” a situation very similar to the Stravinsky situation referenced earlier by Adler.<sup>71</sup> This one-beat discrepancy continues through measure 47.

Pianists could be tempted to play this passage loudly in an effort to make it clear that they are *not* together with their partner. The singer, pianist, and audience would all certainly be able to hear that the piano and vocal melodies do not occur at the same time. However, Milhaud marks the beginning of this passage *pianissimo*, thus requiring the pianist’s sound to be both behind and beneath the soprano’s.

Throughout much of the rest of the song, the accompaniment’s left hand typically falls on regular beats (mm. 44–46); when there is syncopation, the accompaniment is strongly tied to the rhythm of the vocal line (mm. 31–33). In m. 46, however, Milhaud has the left hand play a syncopated pattern in between the two melodic entrances. This further compounds the ensemble difficulties. Prevailing wisdom would have the soprano singing a difficult vocal line full of difficult French and fast notes while simultaneously making sure to *not* be with either the pianist’s left or right hand. The pianist must similarly listen first to the soprano’s entrance, then begin the left-hand syncopated pattern, then begin imitating the vocal line in the right hand, while playing everything *pianissimo*.

The more effective solution for each performer is to execute this canonic section blissfully unaware of one’s partner. In a busy song full of buzzing bees, wind-blown flowers, and chattering birds, this passage is a brief moment of quiet

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<sup>71</sup> See note 57. It is also similar to the Hindemith example.

cacophony. The ensemble difficulties for the remainder of the song are negligible, and I believe the duo is well-served if both members can actively ignore one another for this small section.

## AFTERWORD

Throughout this document, a meaningful theme has emerged: the beneficial nature of an accident. Famed accompanist Gerald Moore clearly delighted in being a member of an ensemble willing to “do things in performance which did not happen at rehearsal.”<sup>72</sup> He knew that the group’s “plans [would] not be upset, only improved upon.”<sup>73</sup> Kurt Adler waxes even more philosophic, calling such an ideal performance one that has been “imbued [with] new life, new feelings that spring forth from the fusion of two personalities into one.”<sup>74</sup> Each pianist is describing a situation that is both desirable and unplanned.

Similarly, I discovered my own thesis somewhat by accident. I began simply, by researching the standard literature for collaborative pianists and comparing what I found with my own experiences as a doctoral student. The paradox I discovered—that actively ignoring my partner in very specific ensemble situations—is slight but it is also significant. Its usefulness is admittedly infrequent, but, as I have shown, the principle works when the usual advice does not.

Though any musician can take the technique and use it in his or her own rehearsals or performances, choosing *not* to listen will not solve every problem. Quite the opposite, for it is effective only in isolated moments. Thus the decision to employ my thesis also implies both a great deal of forethought and responsibility from the musicians. Regardless of how an ensemble solves its difficulties, the goal remains the same: creating genuine, honest art.

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<sup>72</sup> Moore, 53.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Adler, 240.

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APPENDIX A  
REPRINT REQUESTS

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