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Performing the Piano Works of Maria Szymanowska:

Considerations of Authenticity, History, and Gender

Chenxi Wang

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Department of Music, School of Humanities,

The University of Nottingham

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, Historically Informed Performance (HIP) has become increasingly mainstream. Once confined to eighteenth-century music, it now informs approaches to nineteenth-century music and beyond, presents challenges to performers. For modern pianists, such historical considerations mean that they need to be aware of issues relating to authenticity when playing nineteenth-century repertoire. Yet what kind of authenticity should one seek? In addition, scholarly attention has focussed on only a small number of male canonical figures. But the piano in the nineteenth century was mainly played by females. Does gender make a difference? How, for instance, should a modern pianist perform works by an early nineteenth-century female pianist? Should one scour manuscripts for clues left by the composer? Should one play on a period instrument? Does one need to apply earlier techniques? Or is one supposed to lead the performance with one's own instincts and feelings? How should historical evidence inform performance? And how might a pianist demonstrate their own take on the issues through a recital?

In this performance research, I take Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831) as a case study, with the aim of helping modern pianists to make informed choices when performing her repertoire by exploring the challenges faced by the modern performer of nineteenth-century piano music. Maria Szymanowska was a Polish female pianist/composer who was well received in early nineteenth-century Europe. She was one of the few successful professional female musicians, although she is hardly known today.

The research is divided into several objectives to address the aim. The first is to

provide a context for Szymanowska's musical style through her biography and social environment, offering important insights for performances. Second, historical evidence will be uncovered about the performance traditions that she may have followed, as records of her performances are not as informative as those of her male peers. Then, accompanied by reflections on authenticity as a modern female piano performer, suggestions for the modern performance of Szymanowska's piano works will be explored through the application of my embodied learning. The final objective involves the public demonstration of the findings through two live recitals and recorded examples.

The research draws on written sources such as biographies, concert reviews, commentaries, early treatises, published scores, manuscripts, and literature on performance practice. Based on these, as a practical guide to performance, embodied learning is used to examine the application of incomplete evidence (including the examination of selected instruments and self-reflection in modern performance settings), to establish a dialogue with Szymanowska's music. Representative examples from the recital repertoire are examined in terms of posture and movement, tempo, dynamics, tempo rubato and pedalling, to obtain some valuable insights into Szymanowska's performance, while critically considering some aspects of the possible challenges in recitals and exploring solutions based on practical experience. Considerations of gender run through the study. And the findings will be applied in two live recitals.

Chapter 1. Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the context for my study by reviewing the work of other performers and researchers of Szymanowska's music, by surveying the field of embodied performance research, and by positioning my approach in relation to existing research into early nineteenth-century performance practice, specifically, where possible, in relation to female performers.

Context: The Problem of HIP

The Historically Informed Performance (HIP) movement is generally assumed to have begun with the work of Arnold Dolmetsch (1858-1940), whose interest in early European music led him to consider the importance of authenticity in performance and to undertake a series of explorations on historically appropriate instruments, as well as to apply evidence gleaned from written sources on the kinds of tempo, rhythm, ornamentation, and so on that were used in baroque music.[1] By the mid-twentieth century, this revival movement of early performance traditions had become established as an accepted way to interpret the music of the period of Bach (1685-1750) and Vivaldi (1678-1741), characterised by what now seem overly rigid approaches to rhythm (the 'sewing machine' mechanical pulse) and dynamics (terraced, into sharply differentiated blocks of loud and soft).[2]

Richard Taruskin's writings of the 1980s and 1990s began to question the claims

[1] Arnold Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries Revealed by Contemporary Evidence* (London: Novello, 1915).
[2] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975: A Comprehensive Review of Sound Recordings and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 11.

underpinning this HIP orthodoxy, to such an extent that he effectively led the debates to an impasse. His main claim was that the idealised 'authenticity' being sought was not only unachievable but also the first truly modernist style of performance, rather than a recreation of past practices.[3] This led Peter Kivy (1995) to try to clarify the competing claims being made, by defining four types of authenticity in the context of performance, namely: 'authenticity as intention', relating to the composer's authority; 'authenticity as sound', relating to period instruments or venues; 'authenticity as practice', relating to historical evidence, such as early treatises; and 'personal authenticity', reflecting the feelings of the performer.[4]

Kivy's insights both clarified the debates and further muddied the waters. An uneasy truce was made between those who adhere to the claims of HIP as historically 'true', and those who see it as a modernist ideology that seeks authority from the past. This means that for today's performers, there are multiple options regarded as equal in status. The composer's conception, early instruments, original venues, early techniques, and the performer's instincts – each of these vies for the performer's attention. Pianists in particular can no longer rely upon whatever 'tradition' is passed on to them by their teachers. They need to consider the evidence and make their own performance decisions.

Since the vigorous debates of the 1990s, scholars have struggled to forge new

[3] See, for instance, Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
[4] Peter Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

paths in the field of HIP. As a result, over the past three decades, HIP has become increasingly mainstream. Once confined to eighteenth-century music, it now informs approaches to nineteenth-century music and beyond. The field of HIP is expanding: Chopin (1810-1849), Schumann (1810-1856), even Wagner (1813-1883) present new challenges for the performer, posing questions concerning period instruments, tempo, rubato, vibrato, embellishments, and so on.

Scholars such as John Rink have developed methods to identify the most 'authentic' versions of romantic works, for example, by collating all known variants emanating from the composer and making them available. Rink (2010) provides multiple sources of authorial intention for examination and practice in the study of Chopin.[5] His critical editing of these sources allows for a reconstruction of Chopin's creative process, providing a source of reference for performers. Fortepianist and researcher Tom Beghin, by contrast, is passionate about developing interpretations of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music by performing them on period keyboards. Beghin (2022) explores, for instance, the multiple sonic effects of four pedals, as reconstructed on a replica of Beethoven's Erard piano, in Beethoven's works composed during a period of interest in all things French.[6] These performer-scholars typify the many ways in which the ideals of HIP have entered mainstream performance.

Pianists too have tried to be 'historically informed' on the modern piano:

[5] Christophe Grabowski and John Rink, eds., *Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[6] Tom Beghin, *Beethoven's French Piano: A Tale of Ambition and Frustration* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

Mitsuko Uchida (1948-), a well-known interpreter of Mozart's works, is one of them. Her discernment of the work is enhanced by delving into the composer's life and works, including examining the manuscripts to look in detail at the notated instructions.[7]

There are, however, exceptions that prove the rule. The concert pianist Lang Lang (1982-), for instance, favours a different kind of 'authenticity'. His playing is characterised by individualism. He believes that a personal connection to the music is necessary, that the music should follow the performer's heart, and that it is there to serve his projection of feelings and expression. His performance of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* demonstrates this unusual style. By playing in a much slower tempo than is common, he expresses a deep, even sometimes dark, personal vision of the work, which pays scant regard to Bach's supposed 'intentions'.[8]

In recent years, further voices have joined the discussion on HIP, with the aim of proposing more constructive ideas to promote its progress. John Butt (2018) attempts to give a definition of HIP and its positive influences through a study of keyboardist, conductor, and musicologist Gustav Leonhardt's (1928-2012) approach

[7] Mitsuko Uchida, "Pianist Mitsuko Uchida," interview by Bruce Duffie, *A Conversation with Bruce Duffie*, September 26, 1987, accessed January 3, 2023, http://www.bruceduffie.com/uchida.html; Mitsuko Uchida, "Mitsuko Uchida - The reluctant dame and her cup of joy," interview by Jessica Duchen, *The Independent*, October 01, 2010, accessed January 3, 2023, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/classical/features/mitsuko-uchida-the-reluctant-dame-and-her-cup-of-joy-2094261.html.

[8] Lang Lang, "Superstar Pianist Lang Lang Records 'Goldberg Variations,'" interview by Robin Young and Samantha Raphelson, *WBUR*, September 22, 2020, broadcast, 11:08, accessed January 6, 2023, https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2020/09/22/lang-lang-goldberg-variations. In this interview, he talks about his approach, and in particular the influence his own inner feelings have on his playing.

to performing early music. Butt encourages playing with reference to some of the historical sources, and the performance can be organized and altered in some way to suit the present through the performer's own insights.[9] Butt advances a persuasive argument to suggest that HIP, as a valid interpretation of early music, should not encourage slavish adherence to doctrines prescribed by history, but rather illuminate the music through a synthesis of scholarly authenticities with personal feeling.

In his review of a conference in Salzburg, Claudio Bacciagaluppi (2012) discusses the changes between past enthusiasm for HIP (mid to late 20th century) and the current efforts and resistance to further the cause of HIP through academic discussion. The resistance mentioned is mainly identified in the education system, conjoined with the difficulties involved in sourcing instruments, venues, and performance texts. Efforts are also being made to improve these areas.[10] Such feedback motivates initiatives to identify and resolve the problems in the performance practice field, and even to prepare for future challenges. Matthias Heyman (2021), for instance, uses Beatles tribute acts to show how the concept of historically informed performance can be applied in the context of popular music.[11]

Magnus Tessing Schneider (2023) attempts to indicate his proposals for the direction of performance practice in the present, as well as in the future, by making

[9] John Butt, "Leonhardt's Role in the Invention of Historically Informed Performance," *BACH: Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 49, no. 1 (2018): 9-12.
[10] Claudio Bacciagaluppi, "Historical Performance, Past and Present," *Early Music* 40, no. 1 (2012): 161-163.
[11] Matthias Heyman, "Recreating the Beatles: The Analogues and Historically Informed Performance," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 33, no. 2 (2021): 77-98.

statements about contemporaneity in HIP. He insists that effective research is not supposed to remain at the superficial level of absolute obedience to signs on a page. And more importantly, he rejects revivals that do not reflect emotional values.[12]

In general, these advances suggest a turn away from fixed concepts of 'right' and 'wrong' in HIP, based upon shifting notions of authenticity, and reinforce instead a trend towards a more pluralist and open community of musicians. The exploration of early music has moved away from the days of 'controlling' performance, by relying upon historical sources to justify various claims, to a more flexible approach. By taking multiple stances within these many debates, performers are able to vitalise their performances, expand their interaction with historical sources, and even make critical and personal assessments of early traditions.

But with increased choice comes new challenges for the modern pianist. It is difficult to reconcile the competing demands of HIP, mainstream traditions, and personal authenticity, even when playing nineteenth-century repertoire. What kind of authenticity should one seek? Should one scour manuscripts for clues left by the composer? Should one play on a period instrument? Does one need to apply earlier techniques? Or is one supposed to lead the performance with one's own instincts and feelings? These issues will be considered in this thesis.

[12] Magnus Tessing Schneider, "Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance," *Diogenes* 16, no. 61 (2023): 52-80.

Maria Szymanowska

In this study, I take Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831), a Polish female pianist and composer from the early nineteenth century, as a case study to explore these challenges facing the modern performer of nineteenth-century piano music. My overarching research question is thus: (1) How should modern performers approach the performance of Szymanowska's piano works today? Given the radical changes in performance practice since the early nineteenth century, what kind of 'authenticity' should I pursue as a modern performer of her works? And I also ask: (2) How might a study of Szymanowska's biography and social environment influence a modern performer? (3) How might written materials such as contemporary reviews and treatises be used to find out about the tradition of keyboard performance in her time? And what impact should such findings have on my own interpretation? An additional concern relates to gender: (4) Did Szymanowska's gender affect her playing in any way? As a female pianist, can I utilize embodied learning to determine to what extent gender impacted upon performance, and attempt to recreate Szymanowska's 'feminine' style of playing in my performance? Finally, (5) can I demonstrate the findings of my research through two live recitals and recorded examples? The quest for answers to these questions runs throughout the entire research.

The underpinning purpose of this research is thus to help modern pianists to make informed choices when performing Szymanowska's repertoire. This overall aim is divided into several objectives. They are intended to generate ideas relating to the modern performance of Szymanowska's piano works step by step, presenting

new knowledge through research that will eventually be applied in recitals.

Objective 1, as undertaken in Chapter 2, is an explanation of Szymanowska's biography and her cultural and political background. These are discussed alongside Szymanowska's career development to present the formation of her musical identity. In the process, her musical style in different social settings is examined, providing important insights for performances.

Objective 2, which is discussed in Chapter 3, concerns the keyboard performance tradition of Szymanowska's time. Given the limitations imposed upon women in music at that time, resulting in a lack of documented evidence, sources on her male peers are investigated to demonstrate the principles Szymanowska followed in terms of posture, tempo, rubato, and pedalling, thus documenting the traditions that will inform my recitals, and other aspects that require further study.

In Chapter 4, accompanied by reflections on authenticity, Objectives 3 and 4 are devoted to exploring ways of addressing specific challenges in recitals. They build on the findings of the previous two objectives and encompass (3) my own critical self-reflection as a modern female piano performer. The application of my embodied learning to the selected representative recital repertoire demonstrates multiple challenges such as posture and movement, dynamics, pedalling and, not least, (4) the issue of gendered playing style. Suggestions are provided on how to deal with them in a modern performance setting, with the answer to the question as to what extent Szymanowska's music can be recreated.

Finally, Objective 5 involves the public demonstration of the findings through two live recitals and recorded examples. As the written word is unsuitable for

conveying the subtleties of musical performance, recordings of my playing are included in this study whenever there is a need for practical demonstration.

In terms of methodology, this study is led by performance practice, along with musicology, involving: 1. Written sources (e.g., biographies, concert reviews, commentaries, early treatises, published scores, manuscripts, and literature on performance practice); 2. Embodied practice-as-research, to test the application of the incomplete evidence, including the examination of selected instruments and self-reflection in modern performance settings; 3. Considerations of gender issues; and 4. The application of the findings in two live recitals.

Maria Szymanowska, née Marianna Agata Wołowska, was generally recognized as a star at the time, as evinced by her appointment as First Imperial Russian Pianist in 1822.[13] She not only enjoyed a reputation in music salons, but even broke through the boundaries of private music performance for women. She was invited to tour many European countries and received widespread acclaim for her performances, which was also reflected in the financial income achieved by her concerts.[14] It is also worth noting that Szymanowska left a rich musical legacy for

[13] Slawomir Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," (DMA diss., University of Connecticut, 2001), 33.

[14] Anna E. Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 44-63. Kijas claims that, according to reports, Szymanowska's public concert in St. Petersburg on 18 March 1822 received a warm welcome. Not only were all the concert tickets sold, but there were cases where many audience members bought them at ten or twenty times the printed price. Kijas also mentions that Szymanowska charged 1 guinea per hour for piano lessons on her music tours, which was the equivalent of the highest lesson fee at the time, a standard that only a first-class master musician could achieve; Anne Swartz, "Music, the Economy and Society: Szymanowska's Career Path in Russia in the 1820s," *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* Vol. 23, Nos. 1-2, (2009): 112. In this article, a set of data comparisons shows that the standard of Szymanowska's income

future generations. Between 1819 and 1820, sixty-nine of her compositions were published in six books by the influential Breitkopf and Härtel company in Leipzig, reflecting the market value of her works at the time.[15] All of these observations testify to her impressive reputation and success as a female musician, confounding the gender norms of the time.

Although Szymanowska was well received in early nineteenth-century Europe as one of the few professional female musicians, she has now become a peripheral figure. The literature on her comes mainly from mid-twentieth-century Polish scholars and is written almost exclusively in Polish. The existing studies of Szymanowska mainly focus on her biography and her relationship with Chopin, Goethe and other male celebrities of the era. The reviews of her performances are not as informative as those of her male peers. Few researchers have offered advice to current pianists about the performance practices of Szymanowska's music.

Adding to the challenges facing the pianist, scholarly attention has focussed on only a small number of male canonical figures. Yet the piano in the nineteenth century was mainly played by females.

There are many important sources in the existing literature that discuss the situation of women in music in early nineteenth-century Europe. Žarko Cvejić (2015) notes that the gender norms of that time were also reflected in the field of music,

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was quite high: Her profits from a spring concert series in St Petersburg amounted to around 10,000 roubles, which was enough to keep her family living at a high standard for a whole year, at a time when a government cabinet minister was paid 50,000 roubles a year.

[15] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, 96.

and more specifically in instrumental performance.[16] Nancy B. Reich (2001) states that it was more acceptable for women to be singers than instrumentalists, as evinced by the fact that the majority of women in the performing professions were singers in the early nineteenth century.[17] The Italian singer Giuditta Pasta (1797-1865), for example, was a famous operatic diva who gave numerous public performances in England, France, Italy and other European countries.

In contrast to instruments considered to be unfeminine, such as stringed instruments,[18] the piano was labelled as feminine in the early nineteenth century. Playing the piano was considered an essential accomplishment of a good educational background for middle-class women. In general, women were allowed to demonstrate their talent only within the sphere of family or private entertainment, not as professionals.[19] This phenomenon can be found in many nineteenth-century novels, such as Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815),[20] and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871),[21] in which the experiences of the protagonists reflect the special connection between women and music in the early nineteenth century,

[16] Žarko Cvejić, "Feminine charms and honorary masculinization/de-feminization: Gender and the critical reception of the 'virtuose', 1815-1848," *New Sound-International Journal of Music* 46 (2015): 26.
[17] Nancy B Reich, "European composers and musicians, ca. 1800-1890," in *Women & Music: A History*, eds Karin Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 165.
[18] Reich, "European composers and musicians, ca. 1800-1890," 169-170.
[19] Jennifer Ronyak, "Accidental Aesthetics in the Salon: Amateurism and the Romantic Fragment in the Lied Sketches of Bettina von Arnim," in *Musical salon culture in the long nineteenth century*, eds Anja Bunzel and Natasha Loges (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), 37.
[20] Jane Austen, *Emma* (London: John Murray, 1815).
[21] George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1871).

especially in the contexts of family and marriage.[22] But still, a small number of women stood out as professional pianists, such as Barbara Ployer (1765-1811), who was a pupil of Mozart; and Marianne Martines (1744-1812), who nevertheless composed mainly for the church and played not in public but in private salons.

All the evidence indicates that women faced a varied and conflicting set of constraints in regard to the activity of music-making in the early nineteenth century, in terms of instrument, venue, marriage, and repertoire.

Yet the evidence provides little in the way of specific help to aid modern performers in deciding how to play piano works by nineteenth-century women. In contrast to male performers, many of the contemporary records of professional female performers focus on their appearance, paying little attention to professional details, such as their technique,[23] which is an issue that Szymanowska also faced. Taking Szymanowska as an example is intended to put her forward as a potential role model for today's aspiring professional female music performers. It may also provide inspiration for performing piano works by women from the nineteenth century and other periods. Her example offers a way to break out of the standard patriarchal framework that continues to inform European music history.

Existing scholarship

[22] Mary Burgan, "Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction," *Victorian Studies* 30, no. 1 (1986): 51-52.
[23] Alexander Stefaniak, "Clara Schumann and the Imagined Revelation of Musical Works," *Music and Letters* 99, no. 2 (2018): 198.

First, in analysing the formation of Szymanowska's musical identity, I am influenced by written sources on her biography, such as Stanislaw Szenic and Teofil Syga (1960),[24] Sławomir Paweł Dobrzanski (2002),[25] and Anna E. Kijas (2010).[26] Following the timeline, I extract and re-examine the information in terms of her family, education, musical activities she participated in, and her social circle. By placing Szymanowska's activities in the Polish political and cultural context and considering their correlations, I attempt to draw more refined conclusions about the music style she developed as a result.

Then, in Chapter 3, I target four aspects of Szymanowska's performance: posture, tempo, tempo rubato, and pedalling. To gain a greater understanding of the tradition Szymanowska followed, the study explores her male peers whose performances have been documented in more detail. Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) and John Field (1782-1837), among others, were generally considered to play in a similar way to Szymanowksa, which makes them suitable as referential figures.

General accounts explaining concepts from early performance are necessary and enlightening. For example, In the search for Szymanwoska's possible posture, Hummel's and Field's approaches, and the images in her own albums provide primary sources. What's more, literature and even fiction connecting early

[24] Teofil Syga and Stanisław Szenic, *Maria Szymanowska i jej czasy* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1960).
[25] Slawomir Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," (DMA diss., University of Connecticut, 2001).
[26] Anna E. Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-bibliography* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2010).

nineteenth-century women with the piano help to understand the outward state of her playing from another perspective. Clive Brown's *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (1999) provides a scholarly perspective on the different performance elements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[27] Within these sources, I make use of multiple studies on Hummel, focusing on the analysis of the tradition that Szymanowska may have shared in terms of tempo. From a musician's point of view, Richard Hudson, in *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (1994) elaborates the types and usages of tempo flexibility.[28] By reviewing Field and Hummel's approach to tempo rubato, as well as Szymanowska's concert reviews, the early type of tempo rubato she adopted can be identified, as well as its usage. In my analysis of possible pedal usage by Szymanowska, my main source is David Rowland's *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling* (1993),[29] along with sources discussing the attitudes of Hummel and Field to the pedal.

Reflections on early sources can help to pinpoint some of the challenges one might face in modern performance settings. The issue of authenticity in playing Szymanowska's music is further explored in Chapter 4. The significant differences between the modern performance context and the claims of HIP lead to a number of decisions regarding the available evidence. The literature on modern

[27] Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[28] Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
[29] David Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

performance guidance, such as Heinrich Neuhaus (1973)[30] and György Sándor (1981),[31] also provides inspiration. Benefiting from experience, my considerations on performance are brought into the recitals, an engagement that respects historical sources while also reflecting the values of the modern performer.

Critical Review of Contemporary Performers and Recordings of Szymanowska's Music

Currently, there are only a few recorded performances of Maria Szymanowska's piano music. A handful of pianists have presented Szymanowska's work to the public through video, audio, and other media. Their approaches pose a number of questions. How might differences in the body, resulting from biological sex, affect the physical aspects of playing? Are they interested in works by female composers primarily because of gender considerations or because of musical merit? Do they use modern or period keyboards? Can I compare my own style of playing with theirs? By categorising these performers into defined groups with particular allegiances and aims, in the critical discussion below I will attempt to address a series of questions. I begin by discussing feminist pianists (of whatever gender) who, following on from the aims of the "Herstory" movement that arose as part of second-wave feminism in the 1970s, seek to rediscover undervalued female figures,

[30] Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, trans by K. A. Leibovitch (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1973).
[31] György Sándor, *On Piano Playing: Motion, Sound, and Expression* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1981).

not only because of their sex but because of the intrinsic quality of their works.[32] Male-bodied pianists will also be discussed to see if their playing differs from female-bodied pianists by way of their physicality. And I will discuss the differences between performers on modern pianos and period instruments. Moreover, the performers' treatment of posture, dynamics, rubato, pedalling, and tempo will be discussed separately in depth, and will be categorised on a spectrum between mainstream and historically informed.

Rediscovering Quality Music by Marginalized Female Historical Figures

The first category I identify is pianists who were motivated in part by feminist aims in their decision to perform Szymanowska's works. Nancy Fierro (birth date not available), an American who graduated with a doctorate in piano from the University of Southern California, also studied feminist theology. She is recognised as an authority on women's music. Fierro is committed to promoting the undervalued quality of works by women composers, and she recorded one of the first ever compilations of music by women, called *Premiere*, in 1974.[33] Fierro stated in an interview that while she is aware of the growing interest in the works of women composers within the context of the Women's Movement, it is important to note that the music she chooses to perform deserves to be recognised for its intrinsic quality and value, regardless of the sex of its creators.[34] In her album *Rags*

[32] For a representative overview, see Ruth Ashby and Deborah Gore Ohrn, eds., *Herstory – Women who Changed the World* (Connecticut: Brick Tower Press, 2021).
[33] "Dr. Nancy Fierro," Los Angeles Philharmonic, accessed December 4, 2024, https://www.laphil.com/musicdb/artists/1779/dr-nancy-fierro.
[34] Néstor Castiglione, "Nancy Fierro on Early 20th Century French Music and Its Pioneering Female Composers," *Crescenta Valley Weekly*, July 27, 2017, accessed December 4, 2024,

and Riches (1993)*,* she played selected pieces by Szymanowska, including mazurkas, etudes, and nocturnes.

Fierro expressed her admiration for Szymanowska's performance skills and composition, and emphasised that the charm of *Etude No. 15* can be found in its requirement to mitigate technical challenges while maintaining a cantabile style, which is a characteristic of Szymanowska's music.[35] Fierro's performance of *Etude No. 15* typifies her approach.[36] In her playing, she is able to maintain clarity in the main melody even at a very fast tempo and with a density of notes, even though she follows the mainstream practice of adding extra pedalling beyond what is notated in the score. She basically follows the published dynamic markings, and the richness of the dynamics in her playing can be heard. Unlike the approach prevalent among most modern pianists, rather than highlighting contrasts with exaggerated differences in volume, Fierro uses a gentle touch, which conveys subtle changes in mood. Such treatment is consistent with the historical evidence, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, which suggests that the dynamic range was narrower in Szymanowska's time.

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https://www.crescentavalleyweekly.com/leisure/07/27/2017/nancy-fierro-early-20th-century-french-music-pioneering-female-composers/.

[35] Nancy Fierro, "Maria Agata Szymanowska - Étude in C major・Nancy Fierro," YouTube video, 3:18, November 15, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yr41v6YFq8Q. This is a video of Nancy Fierro performing Etude No. 15, where she points out that the challenge of this piece is the balance between melody played by the little finger of the right hand, and the accompaniment, which is accomplished by keeping the rest of the fingers at a very fast tempo.

[36] Nancy Fierro, "Etude No. 15 In C Major," track 18 on *Rags And Riches*, Dorchester DRC 1004, 1993, compact disc.

Polish-born pianist Anna Ciborowska (birth date not available), who studied at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music, has a similar passion for promoting the value of music composed by women and has initiated the project 'Musique est une femme'. Many people have been involved in the project and have generated positive feedback. In an interview about the project, Ciborowska claimed that she advocates for addressing gender injustices in history by publicizing performances of works by undervalued female composers.[37] Notably, Ciborowska has recorded a CD dedicated to Szymanowska's piano works, entitled *Maria Szymanowska - Piano Works* (2004). The disc includes Szymanowska's fantasia, caprice, two nocturnes, a selection of etudes and preludes, mazurkas and polonaises.

Ciborowska claims on her website that the melodic meanderings within Szymanowska's works are mesmerising, particularly in the preludes, and that these features were instrumental in arousing her interest in the composer from a purely artistic, rather than gender, perspective.[38] In her performance of Szymanowska's *Prelude No. 1*,[39] Ciborowska plays the notes exactly as they are presented in the score. Like Fierro, she adds extra sustaining pedal markings, which is typical of the modern pianist. However, the extensive use of sustaining pedals results in a muddy sound for the bass accompaniment, as the chords change frequently. This departs

[37] Kevin Whitlock, "A Women's Place?," *International Arts Manager*, January 27, 2022, accessed December 4, 2024, https://www.annaciborowska.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/international-arts-manager-interview-ac-jan-2021.pdf. This article is about an interview with Anna Ciborowska, documenting Ciborowska's positive attitude towards promoting the undervalued works of women composers.
[38] Anna Ciborowska, "Maria Szymanowska," *Anna Ciborowska*, accessed December 5, 2024, https://www.annaciborowska.com/.
[39] Anna Ciborowska, "Prelude No. 1 in F major," track 2 on *Maria Szymanowska - Piano Works*, Dux 0450, 2004, compact disc.

significantly from the characteristic sound heard during Szymanowska's time. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, clarity was an important consideration in Szymanowska's pedalling.

North Macedonian pianist Natasha Stojanovska (1987-) was trained at the Bienen School of Music (USA). In 2022, she released *UNCOMMON VOICES*, an album consisting entirely of musical compositions by Eastern European women, which includes Szymanowska's *Nocturne in B flat major*. Stojanovska indicated her wish to present selected works by female musicians from Eastern Europe through recorded performances, to make the public aware of these marginalized pieces as sophisticated music that deserves appreciation.[40]

In contrast to the restrained and upright posture of historical women's playing, which I will discuss later in Chapter 3, Stojanovska performs with rich body language and plays with a clear sound.[41] Unlike mainstream modern performers who follow the dynamic markings on the score exactly, she occasionally approaches them differently. She adds numerous crescendos and decrescendos. This process of enhancing the undulations inherent in the melody corresponds to the description of the piece in the liner notes of her album, which describe its rippling and lyrical

[40] "Composer, Pianist Natasha Stojanovska," Navona Records, accessed December 5, 2024, https://www.navonarecords.com/artists/natasha-stojanovska/. The release company, Navona Records, has provided the information about Stojanovska's motivation for recording *UNCOMMON VOICES* on its official website.
[41] Natash Stojanovska, "Natasha Stojanovska performing Nocturne in B flat Major by Maria Szymanowska (1789- 1831)," YouTube video, 5:08, March, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDBR9dYunuE. This is the recording preparation for UNCOMMON VOICES, presenting the posture of Stojanovska when playing the *Nocturne in B-flat major*.

effect.[42] I have misgivings about Stojanovska's application of tempo rubato. Her left and right hands slow down or speed up suddenly in places at the same time, which sounds expressive. But this conflicts with the evidence to be discussed in Chapter 3, which points out that Szymanowska was using what Hudson (1994) called early rubato, in which the left hand maintains steady time while the right hand makes rhythmic adjustments.[43]

Polish pianist Anna Lipiak (1992-), a graduate of the Music Academy in Bydgoszcz, specialises in the performance of music from the Romantic period. Recently, she has been working on the rediscovery of works by historically-neglected female composers. In 2023, Lipiak released *Female Power*, an album of twelve pieces by female composers, including Szymanowska's *Nocturne in B flat major*. Lipiak points out on her website that the inspiration for this album came from her observation that the significant contribution that female power has made to the arts, and specifically to music, has been unjustifiably overlooked. She argues that her motivation for performing these works was driven by considerations of artistic quality rather than factors relating to gender and ethnicity.[44] Unfortunately, however, she does not provide any detailed discussions of the interpretive decisions she took in the performance of these pieces.

In her performance of the *Nocturne in B-flat major*,[45] as compared to the other

[42] "Uncommon Voices," Navona Records, accessed December 5, 2024, https://www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6440/#notes.
[43] Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 22.
[44] Anna Lipiak, "'Female Power' - Anna Lipiak - Piano," *Anna Lipiak*, accessed December 5, 2024, https://annalipiak.com/en/buy.
[45] Anna Lipiak, "Maria Szymanowska - Nocturne in B flat major - Female power

pianists discussed before, she sits higher, with an elegantly restrained posture and a slightly arched palm. This approach is consistent with the posture adopted by Szymanowska, which will be explained in Chapter 3. Moreover, in contrast to Stojanovska, Lipiak uses early rubato. Her playing is gentle, with the contrast between *forte* and *piano* generally presented through subtle changes. However, in a few places, for example in bar 39, she makes a clear contrast with the subsequent soft dynamic by exerting greater force at the beginning of the bar. Such heaviness, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, is something to which Szymanowska would have objected. Like Ciborowska, she makes extensive use of sustaining pedals, which ensures the coherence of the accompaniment. But this treatment resonates too much at bar 39 because of the powerful forces exerted, and fuzziness follows, once again conflicting with the historical evidence. It can be noted that pedalling is one of the major issues facing modern performers, which inspired me to discuss this in my thesis.

Period or Modern Instruments?

Should modern pianists adopt historical instruments, contemporary with the repertoire to be performed? Unlike the performers who choose to play on a modern piano discussed earlier, Aurelia Vişovan (1990-) from Romania, who studied at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, is not only a pianist, but also a harpsichordist and fortepianist, with interests in historically informed performance practice.[46] In 2018, Vişovan participated in the 1st International Chopin Competition

project (Anna Lipiak pianist)," YouTube video, 4:54, June 27, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch v=Aw2FLkNR4as.

[46] "Aurelia Visovan," KNS Classical, accessed December 6, 2024,

on Period Instruments.[47] This competition has, as its stated aim, a desire to explore the historical sound of the music of Chopin and his Polish contemporaries by challenging competitors to perform on instruments in common use at that time. In the first stage of the competition, Vişovan chose to play Szymanowska's *Polonaise in F minor* from a given repertoire of polonaises by Polish composers active in the first half of the nineteenth century.[48] She performed on a period instrument, a specially commissioned copy of a fortepiano by Fredyryk Buchholtz (c. 1825).[49]

As will be discussed in Chapter 3, Vişovan's playing is in line with the tradition of improvisation adopted by Szymanowska, with a lot of extra ornamentation. For instance, in bar 5, at the repetition, she adds an acciaccatura to differentiate it from the first time; at bar 13, she uses a mordent; and at bar 15, in the Trio section, she applies vocal-style flourishes using scales. As I will show in Chapter 3, period instruments have a shorter resonance, thus fuzziness can be avoided when using the damper pedal. Vişovan's frequent pedalling does not result in the bass accompaniment interfering with the upper register, and the main melody is well emphasised. This phenomenon inspired me to consider that similar effects are possible on the modern piano, if the performer is aware of the differences in period instruments and adapts accordingly, as I will demonstrate in my recitals and in

https://www.knsclassical.com/artist/aurelia-visovan/.

[47] "Edition 2018," International Chopin Competition on period instruments, accessed December 6, 2024, https://iccpi.pl/en/2018/poprzednia-edycja/.

[48] "Music Sheets now available," International Chopin Competition on period instruments, accessed December 6, 2024, https://iccpi.pl/en/2018/aktualnosci/273.

[49] "Pianos," International Chopin Competition on period instruments, accessed December 6, 2024, https://iccpi.pl/en/2018/pianos; Aurelia Vişovan, "Aurelia Vişovan – M. Szymanowska, Polonaise in F minor (First stage)," YouTube video, 5:30, September 11, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxzF1v5O1pM.

Chapter 4.

Male-bodied Performers of Works by Female Composers

Inspired by their quality and historical significance, several male-bodied pianists have become interested in performing Szymanowska's works. Moscow-born pianist Alexander Kostritsa (birth date not available), who studied at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, has recorded *Szymanowska: Complete Dances for Solo Piano* (2015). In his online description of the album, Kostritsa points out that the genres in Szymanowska's collection of music about dance were similar to those later favoured by Chopin, and that these pieces vary in depth of expression, exhibiting diverse stylistic characteristics. In addition, some of the pieces, such as polonaises, contain sections with technical challenges.[50]

Kostritsa's interpretations in the album, such as his reading of *Cotillion*,[51] are generally characterised by clear and prominent melody. His adoption of a fast tempo and gentle sound is in line with the liner notes of his album, which emphasise the light and pleasing characteristics of Szymanowska's collection of dances.[52] This suggests that the usually heavier and stronger arm of a male body does not necessarily mean a heavier touch. In keeping with the mainstream style, however, he treats notes exactly according to the score. He plays repeated passages

[50] Alexander Kostritsa, "SZYMANOWSKA, MARIA (1789–1831) Complete Dances for Solo Piano," *Grand Piano Records*, accessed December 7, 2024, https://www.naxos.com/ecard/grandpiano/GP685/.
[51] Alexander Kostritsa, "Cotillion," track 51 on *Szymanowska: Complete Dances for Solo Piano*, Grand Piano GP685, 2015, compact disc.
[52] "About this Recording," Grand Piano Records, accessed December 7, 2024, https://www.naxos.com/ecard/grandpiano/GP685/.

without any kind of variation. As I will demonstrate later in Chapter 3, ornamentation and improvisation were very important to Szymanowska, thus Kostritsa's treatment could be regarded as historically inaccurate. In my view, such a literal reading can lead to tediousness.

Another male-bodied pianist who has recorded the works of Szymanowska is Sławomir P. Dobrzanski (1968-) from Poland, who studied at the Chopin Academy of Music and the University of Connecticut. In 2001, Dobrzanski published *Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer*, a biography of Maria Szymanowska, with a focus on analysing her piano compositions, and suggesting the influence she had on Chopin's compositions.[53] Afterwards, Dobrzanski released the album *Maria Szymanowska complete Piano works* (2013).

In his study, Dobrzanski points out the importance of emotional elements in Szymanowska's music. By reviewing contemporary comments on Szymanowska, Dobrzanski notes that, in the early nineteenth century, concepts that may be summarized through words such as 'elegance', 'delicacy' and 'subtlety' in piano performance were widely considered to be 'feminine' aspects, and that such concepts were associated with Szymanowska's playing.[54] In his discussion of Szymanowska's nocturne, Dobrzanski praises the expressive melodic line within the homophonic texture,[55] and demonstrates several similarities between the nocturnes of Szymanowska and Chopin.[56] Notably, in the first half of the nineteenth

[53] Slawomir Pawel Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," (DMA diss., University of Connecticut, 2001).
[54] Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," 36-40.
[55] Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," 118-119.
[56] Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," 145.

century, Chopin's music was commonly perceived as poetic, emotional, and feminine,[57] and the genre of nocturne was particularly perceived as being closely associated with feminine qualities.[58] As a male-bodied pianist, in his playing of Szymanowska's works such as *Nocturne in B flat major*, Dobrzanski's posture is upright and elegant, and his playing exhibits subtle dynamic changes and a lightly singing quality.[59] From the analysis of his performance, Dobrzanski's playing reflects the 'feminine' style of the early nineteenth century as he defines in his study. Such an interpretation raises questions about the impact that Szymanowska's female body may have had on her playing, which will be discussed in Chapter 3, as well as reflections on recreating a historically 'feminine' style of playing in performance, which will be explained in Chapter 4.

These and other performers testify to an increasing interest in rediscovering the works of musicians who have been forgotten and marginalized owing to their gender, as well as suggesting that this interest is primarily driven by an appreciation of the quality of the musical works. Szymanowska and her piano music have become an important part of this engagement. This interest inspired me, as a performer, to demonstrate, through embodied practice, the similarities and differences between myself and these performers, and the reasons for them. And I will show in my thesis and recitals that compromise is possible on the modern

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[57] Erinn E. Knyt, "Ferruccio Busoni and the 'Halfness' of Frédéric Chopin," *The Journal of Musicology* 34, no. 2 (2017): 243.
[58] Jeffrey Kallberg, "The harmony of the tea table: Gender and ideology in the piano nocturne," *Representations* 39 (1992): 105-106.
[59] Slawomir P. Dobrzanski, "Nocturne in B flat major," track 40 on *Maria Szymanowska complete Piano works*, Acte Préalable AP0281-83, 2013, compact disc.

piano, taking account of the historical evidence without the need to play the original instruments. I hope this will provide further inspiration for interpreting Szymanowska's piano music, as well as contributing to the promotion of quality music that had been neglected.

Embodied Practice

Embodied practice is one of the responses to the challenges set out above. Within the trend of a growing consensus in musicology on the idea that performance and analysis can be mutually beneficial, resources in recent years have provided evidence and discussion exploring embodied practice. This concerns ways in which the performer's body can be seen as central to the formation and expression of musical knowledge. A growing number of publications have explored embodied practice in the study of music, and they have informed my methods.

In *Meaningful musical performance: A bodily experience*, Jane W. Davidson and Jorge Salgado Correia (2001) evaluate interview reports of rehearsals and performances to provide evidence for exploring the meaning of performance.[60] Their study suggests that when unfamiliar music does not have clear messages, it can be negotiated with the body to bring meaning to the work.

Later, in 2005, Elisabeth Le Guin proposed that the embodied experience of the performer has priority, and with this in mind, she examined the work of the

[60] Jane W. Davidson, and Jorge Salgado Correia, "Meaningful musical performance: A bodily experience," *Research Studies in Music Education* 17, no. 1 (2001): 70-83.

eighteenth-century cellist Boccherini.[61] In her study, Le Guin's bodily responses are the primary means of interpretation, meaning that she perceives Boccherini's thoughts through bodily sensations, and the associated affects. Not all performers would agree with this approach, as some are more interested in conveying the interpretation of the music aurally. However, Le Guin reinforces the persuasiveness of her interpretation by referring to the socio-cultural context, the notion of virtuosity, and even the medical concepts that influenced Boccherini.

In the absence of details about Szymanowska's playing, I approach it by presenting her social background in Chapter 2 and identifying the performance tradition of her musical circle in Chapter 3. Given the limitations of such documented evidence, I continue my research with embodied practice, taking into account the views of Davidson, Salgado Correia and Le Guin. Thus, I use the performance-and body-oriented approach to enhance my understanding of Szymanowska's playing. In the intellectual climate created, I establish a connection with Szymanowska, verifying and sensing through experience, which helps to explain the influence of the context on her playing.

Throughout this study, I pay particular attention to the demands that early nineteenth-century society placed on female pianists. It is interesting that Ben Spatz (2015) develops practical suggestions for embodied technique as knowledge by providing an atlas of bodily techniques within the three domains of physical culture, performing arts and daily life.[62] In relation to gender differences, he argues that

[61] Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
[62] Ben Spatz, *What a Body Can Do* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge,

there are no standard answers to the questions involved in the field of gender in performance, and that paths need to be found through the technique of embodiment.[63]

In my research, Spatz's point is explained more clearly through a practical case study. In the study, particularly in Chapter 4, as a female performer, I use my body to experience physically the early gender-related demands. This approach helps to evaluate whether the demands are motivated by early gender constraints or by the need for technique, thus determining whether or to what extent there is a need to continue to retain these demands in modern performances of Szymanowska. My embodied practice is used as a major contributor to knowledge production to develop technically appropriate methods of performing Szymanowska today.

Arnie Cox's work has had a profound impact on music and embodied discourse. In *Music and Embodied Cognition* (2016), drawing on disciplines such as neuroscience, cognitive science, music theory, psychology, and even philosophy, Cox demonstrates the approach of mimesis and cognition in embodiment.[64] In his research, he proposes the mimetic hypothesis, which considers that the imitation of musical sounds and the physical actions that produce them can be an important tool for musical comprehension. The imitation involves not only open behavioural imitation, but also secret imitation in the imagination, which is behaviour that operates as a link between the brain and the muscles of the body.

2015).

[63] Spatz, *What a Body Can Do*, 182.

[64] Arnie Cox, *Music and embodied cognition: Listening, moving, feeling, and thinking* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).

Cox's view has proved important to my own approach to deciphering Szymanowska's playing. In Chapter 3, I adapt his insights to create a new approach to strengthening connections with Szymanowska's music through embodied practice. By creating a fictionalised musical agency that is simultaneously performer, listener and reflector, the same approaches are reproduced, based on written information gained on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century performance. In the process, I develop the ability to infer and imagine from my body's perception of the music as it moves and grows. The imitation makes it possible to interpret how the early approaches are manifested in Szymanowska's playing and provides support for supplementing the missing details within a reasonable range.

Music, Analysis, and the Body: Experiments, Explorations, and Embodiments, edited by Nicholas Reyland and Rebecca Thumpston, includes the work of numerous scholars to provide a more comprehensive and critical overview of how the embodied experience of music influences the analysis, theorising, and interpretation of musical texts.[65] More specifically, the perspectives of composers, performers, and audiences are considered as subjects of embodied analysis in the practical topics of composing, improvising, listening, and performing. The lack of scholarly work that considers musical embodiment from a performer's perspective is noted in this book. In her article, Thumpston (2018), who is a cellist, describes cases of listening to her own practice of Elgarian ascent, suggesting that self-reflection in embodied practice can serve as an effective object of analysis.

[65] Nicholas Reyland, and Rebecca Thumpston, *Music, analysis, and the body: Experiments, explorations, and embodiments* (Leuven; Paris; Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2018).

Thumpston further states that practice is guided by the inner will that is felt within the body when listening to music, rather than repeating the established compositional process.[66]

In Chapter 4 of my thesis, Thumpston's ideas are further extended. As a modern pianist, I do not intend to use embodied practice to pursue the exact replication of earlier performances. The understanding of musical experience is a product of the body's continuous interaction with the environment.[67] Therefore, I clarify my understanding of HIP through a discussion of four authenticities. I examine and reflect on the application of information gained through historical evidence in the modern performance setting, from the perception of bodily movement and personal experience, and to expand more plausible modern interpretations.

However, there are no studies of embodied practice specifically relating to Szymanowska. Reflections on the literature suggest that the detailed implications of many of these ideas could be further demonstrated in specific case studies of how embodied practice can be applied to the field of historical performance. There are more possibilities for testing the body as knowledge and expression in practice-based research on specific cases, to bring embodiment to a more prominent place in scholarship.

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[66] Rebecca Thumpston, "THE 'FEEL' OF MUSICAL ASCENT," in *Music, Analysis, and the Body, in Music, analysis, and the body: Experiments, explorations, and embodiments*, edited by Nicholas Reyland, and Rebecca Thumpston (Leuven; Paris; Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2018), 75-92.

[67] Martin Clayton, and Laura Leante, "Embodiment in music performance," in *Experience and meaning in music performance*, edited by Martin Clayton, Byron Dueck, and Laura Leante (New York; Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 275.

Currently, some studies apply embodied practice to the interpretation of early musicians' works. Jun Ishimura claims to have applied embodied practice in exploring new ways of playing Chopin's sonatas, by recording her experiences on period instruments and explaining how they made her feel through touch.[68] She reflects on her experiences in conjunction with written sources on Chopin's playing, creating new knowledge and explaining their impact on her approach to articulation, dynamics, pedalling, texture balance and tempo in her performance of Chopin's works on the modern piano.

Influenced by Ishimura, I also draw on the experiences of historical instruments in my research. Benjamin Vogel (2011) describes the characteristics of several major types of piano in Szymanowska's time, offering thoughts and evidence about the pianos she played.[69] I am grateful for Vogel's study, which assisted me in selecting instruments similar to those played by Szymanowska. I learned about early performance through early nineteenth-century pianofortes, whilst perceiving the differences between them and the modern piano.[70] Such embodied practical

[68] Jun Ishimura, "Creating a new interpretation of Chopin's piano music using a comparison of modern and historical instruments through the performance of the second piano sonata," (PhD diss., Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, 2020).

[69] Benjamin Vogel, "Piano – the main attraction of the Polish salon during Maria Szymanowska time," *Annales – Centre Scientifique de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences à Paris*, vol. 16. (2014): 128-140.

[70] Fortunately, through my searches and contacts within the UK, the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection at the Finchcocks Charity was able to provide me with access to several relevant early instruments. Given the popularity of the Conrad Graf in early nineteenth-century Poland and the fact that Szymanowska had purchased a Broadwood piano in 1827, it is fair to say that these two pianos from the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection met the requirements of the historical instruments I need to refer to in my research. Instrumentalists (on concert pianos and early keyboards) Gary Branch and the curator of the Finchcocks charity, Cesar Hernandez,

research helps to uncover the challenges surrounding posture, dynamics and pedalling in modern performance, and provides references for adjustments towards producing similar musical effects to those of early times.

In recent years, early female musicians have gained increasing scholarly attention. In addition to issues of compositional technique and gender, detailed studies of their music have raised questions related to performance practice. Notably, embodied practice can also be found to have contributed to the search for answers by scholars in this field.

From a performer's perspective, Sock Siang Thia (2014) explores how the piano sonatas, trios and miniatures of Fanny Hensel and Clara Schumann can be approached by modern pianists.[71] Thia investigates the structure, style, and expressive intention of works by the two female musicians to assess the similarities and differences between their music. Drawing on existing scholarly knowledge, Thia documents her intimate experience of playing the works, and makes subjective artistic choices in terms of rhythm, dynamics, articulation, tempo, and pedalling to form her interpretations.

In exploring the representation of the seventeenth-century female composer/singer Strozzi, Lester seeks to present her musical style and to analyse her music in comparison with the work of musicians in her musical circle, thus

provided an introduction to the construction and performance instructions for these early nineteenth-century keyboard instruments.

[71] Sock Siang Thia, "Portfolio of recorded performances and exegesis: Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel and Clara Wieck-Schumann: a study through performance of their selected piano works," (PhD diss., Elder Conservatorium of Music, 2014).

demonstrating Strozzi's attitude towards the vocal tradition as well as the ways in which it was expanded.[72] The process of analysis is based on the use of embodiment for understanding. This means that Lester sings selected songs as case studies to gain insights into the importance of rhetoric in Strozzi's music from a performer's perspective, examining the underlying meanings and gendered implications, as well as re-evaluating the experience of the self.

Combining Thia and Lester's approach, as presented in Chapters 3 and 4, my interpretation derives from practical documentation (including text, audio, and video) of my examination of selected works of Szymanowska that served as case studies on the modern piano, as well as repertoire for my recitals.

As will be discussed in Chapter 3, *Six Minuets* (1819) is chosen as music about dance and contains seemingly contradictory information on tempo that can better point out the tempo tradition that Szymanowska followed in this particular genre.[73] Given that the *Vingt Exercises et Préludes* (1819) contains a great deal of tempo terms and is suitable for exercises in improvisation, I take this set of works to analyse the application of tempo as well as tempo rubato traditions in them.[74] *Six Marches* (1819) contains operatic passages, which makes it feasible to show how the tradition of tempo rubato followed by Szymanowska was utilized in short pieces to enhance their expressive quality in line with their singing character.[75] *Polonaise in*

[72] C. N Lester, "Representing Strozzi: A Critical and Personal Re-Evaluation of her Life and Music," (PhD diss., University of Huddersfield, 2019).
[73] Maria Szymanowska, *Six Minuets* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1819).
[74] Maria Szymanowska, *Vingt Exercises et Préludes* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1819).
[75] Maria Szymanowska, *Six Marches pour le pianoforte* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1819).

C major (1819), with the pedal markings it contains, provides some evidence of Szymanowska's attitude towards pedalling, and points to period instruments that can be examined to explore more clues about the early sound.[76] And it even draws attention to the many challenges facing an understanding of the tradition of pedalling. Traditional posture is examined in the recital repertoires, the contradiction between action and sound inevitably motivates further exploration.

As will be presented in Chapter 4, the programmes of the recitals are also used as typical examples to show the challenges of performing Szymanowska's music in terms of posture and movement, dynamics and pedalling, and to present suggestions for solutions.

Caprice sur la romance de Joconde (1819) was composed in the *Stil brillant* that Szymanowska is known for, with many technical difficulties, and adapted from an opera.[77] The research therefore explains how the challenges posed by developments in instruments, performance techniques, and social mindset (including gender issues) in modern performance can be dealt with by adjusting to the appropriate posture and movement, while maintaining the lightness, elegance and singing tone of this work. This piece also shows the lack of dynamics can be addressed by imitating the treatment in contemporary operatic singing. Additionally, the confusion caused in modern performances by long pedal indications of the piece leads to the exploration of adjusting the depth of pedal depression. The *Vingt Exercises et Préludes* (1819), which contains a large number

[76] Maria Szymanowska, *Polonaise in C major* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1819).
[77] Maria Szymanowska, *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1819).

of dynamic marks, is investigated to find ways of presenting the large dynamic range and resolving the conflicts with the earlier sounds brought about by the sudden dynamic shifts, while approaching Szymanowska's 'feminine' style. The use of the soft pedal to compensate for the natural tonal transitions on the modern piano is also appropriately developed through this set of works. Moreover, it provides a good example of experimentation through ways to use the sostenuto pedal to maintain the integrity of phrases with clarity on the modern piano. In *Six Minuets* (1819), I present the use of syncopated pedalling in place of rhythmic pedalling used in the early period to avoid chaotic sounds, and to make big leaps in a coherent way on the modern piano. *Nocturne in B-flat* (date unknown),[78] has an absence of pedal notation, so I attempt to demonstrate the use of the sustaining pedal in this piece by considering the similarities between Szymanowska and John Field in terms of the nocturne genre.

Along with practice and reflection, the ways in which early works can be effectively developed in modern performance are presented through a series of performance decisions as shown in my two recitals and recordings.

[78] Igor Belza*, Maria Szymanowska* (Krakow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1987), 172. The piece was unpublished during Szymanowska's lifetime. The musicologist Igor Belza discovered it in a piano music collection published in 1852 by Lucja Rucinska in St. Petersburg, and Belza speculated that it had been composed during Szymanowska's settlement in Russia.

Chapter 2. Maria Szymanowska's Biography and Social Environment

The surviving historical records of Maria Szymanowska are few and incomplete. Most of the available information focuses on her adulthood and public activities. However, it is possible to build a picture of her life by investigating the cultural and political context of her time and how it influenced her career. It is also important to realise that Szymanowska's social environment helped to form her identity through nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and a degree of gender freedom for women.

Szymanowska was born in Warsaw at the end of the eighteenth century. The existential threats to Poland from Austria, Russia and Prussia, led to the 'three partitions of Poland' that took place from 1772 to 1793. By 1793, Poland did not exist as a state. The state's persistent turmoil fuelled romantic nationalism, which in turn looked for its own artistic voice by taking lessons from mainly Italian and French musicians. In addition to staging foreign musical works, and the fact that some Polish theatres could sell tickets to the public, the creation and performance of Polish-language opera since 1778 also contributed to the formation of a national identity and the promotion of national culture.[79]

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, music took on something of its modern 'classical' appearance with the tendency of the newly dominant middle-class culture to copy aristocratic fashions.[80] On the other hand, it was also a social custom that women from a good family background should master the skill of

[79] Anna Parkitna, "Opera in Warsaw, 1765–1830: Operatic Migration, Adaptation, and Reception in the Enlightenment," (PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2020), 15.
[80] Parkitna, "Opera in Warsaw, 1765–1830," 18-19.

playing the piano, often as a means of providing family entertainment. As part of the middle class, Szymanowska's family provided her with a good environment in which to learn music because they believed that it was an important means to enter the mainstream of Polish culture.[81]

In 1795, the area where Maria Szymanowska's family was located merged with Prussia. A number of theatre companies from Germany and Italy came to Warsaw. Many works were staged here, for example, Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, creating a diverse musical scene in the city.[82] Szymanowska is considered one of the typical performers of *Cantabile* and *Stil brillant*,[83] her lyrical playing and addition of a great deal of ornamentation have been described as imitating Italian singers.[84] It can be assumed that during her childhood Szymanowska was exposed to and influenced by Italian opera and many other music genres.

The development of native music teachers was also promoted.[85] From 1798 to 1804, Szymanowska received early piano lessons at home from the private piano teacher Antoni Lisowski (date of birth unknown) and later the German musician

[81] Halina Goldberg, "Album musical de Maria Szymanowska," *Music and Letters* 83, no. 4 (2002): 671.
[82] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, 12-13.
[83] Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," 25-67.
[84] Slawomir Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," 46, quoted from Igor Belza, *Istoria Polskoy Muzykalnoy Kultury* (Moscow: State Music Publishing Co., 1954). The review is about her concert in St. Petersburg on April 3, 1827, from *Journal de St.-Petersbourg*.
[85] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, 12-13, quoted and translated from Jan Prosnak, *Kultura Muzyczna Warszawy XVIII Wieku*, Vol 2 (Krakow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1955), 95.

Tomasz Gremm (1746-1810).

Meanwhile, salons organized by nobles, intellectuals and artists, as well as musical societies, played an important role in catering to cultural needs, rather than the previous cultural institutions. Musicians contributed to the development of local music in Warsaw by organizing various concerts, not only in the theatres but also in private music salons, to maintain a sense of national identity in culture. It is worth mentioning that Szymanowska's family salon was also one of the places where European musicians at that time were keen to gather outside of public performances.

There is no unified and definitive answer to the question of Szymanowska's compositional education. The common view is that she seems to have been self-taught and influenced by the musicians who frequently visited her family's salon, such as Józef Elsner (1769-1854). The salon undoubtedly established her ties with the music circle, and it played a key role in shaping her performance and compositions, since most of her subsequent works - such as the Études, Preludes and Nocturnes - are classified as sentimental salon music.[86] This type of music is rooted in classical music but is also influenced by folk music. It is homophonic with an emphasis on melodic prominence.[87]

Signs of Szymanowska's future career occurred during the period when Napoleon broke the Prussian domination of Warsaw and established the Duchy of

[86] Anne Swartz, "Maria Szymanowska and the Salon Music of the Early Nineteenth Century," *The Polish Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1985): 52.
[87] Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," 78-81.

Warsaw (1807-1815). In 1809 Szymanowska made her first trip abroad to perform in France. Here her talent was appreciated by the public and other musicians, as evinced by the many dedications and autographs that she collected in her albums. This trip also helped her to gain popularity.[88] After her return from France, she married Teofil Jozef Szymanowski in 1810 and subsequently had three children. She did not stop being involved in music-related activities during her marriage. From 1812, she gradually gained fame as a pianist in Warsaw.

Her desire to perform in public, however, contradicted her husband's idea that women's activities should revolve around the family, but it also demonstrated her fight for greater freedom as a woman. The Napoleonic Code, as implemented in the Duchy of Warsaw at the time, set out a new definition of marriage and allowed divorce. It remained in force even in the Kingdom of Poland, which came under Russian rule afterwards (from 1815). This code made it feasible for Szymanowska to divorce, which she did, later in 1820, to follow the path of a professional performer.

The Russians took over most of the Polish territory, including Warsaw, when they established the Kingdom of Poland in 1815. Initially, the cultural environment was relatively free. Szymanowska became a member of the Amateur Music Society in Warsaw that year. In this society, Szymanowska had the opportunity to attend regular public and private concerts, which somewhat overcame the limitations of her career due to her gender.

Szymanowska gained more fame in 1816 when three of her songs were

[88] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, 15.

published in the much-loved patriotic song collection *Śpiewy Historyczne*. She later composed many musical works with Polish folk characteristics, such as mazurkas and polonaises, that show the influence of nationalism on her music. In addition to Szymanowska, this collection also includes works by other female composers, which may have offered Szymanowska the reassurance of same-sex role models.

It is worth noting that while the actual ruler of the Kingdom of Poland, Constantin Pavlovich, the Tsar's brother, worked against any forces that tried to make Poland independent, his love of music led him to support a number of musicians, including Szymanowska. Szymanowska's *Six Marches* was dedicated to Constantin.[89] In addition, in 1818 Szymanowska performed for Constantin's mother, Princess Maria, in Warsaw.[90]

From 1818-1827 Szymanowska gave concerts in several European countries, such as France, Italy, England, Germany and Russia. She received much praise and became acquainted with more musicians, including John Field and Johann Hummel, whose works were common in her repertoire, and her playing is also generally considered to have been similar to theirs.

One of her most illustrious tours was the one to Russia in 1822, where she was awarded the title of First Pianist of the Imperial Princesses Elizabeth and Maria. Tsar Alexander I's wife and mother, Princesses Elizabeth and Maria, had a great interest

[89] Maria Szymanowska's piano work *Six Marches*' dedication is: *Monseigneur le Grand-Duc Constantin commandant en chef l'armée polonoise*, which translates into English as: Monsignor the Grand Duke Constantine Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army.
[90] Syga and Szenic, *Maria Szymanowska i jej czasy*, 86.

in music, and Princess Maria had heard Szymanowska's play before. It is reasonable to assume that this professional status bestowed on Szymanowska, which was difficult for a woman to achieve, stemmed in part from the two princesses' admiration of this female musician's ability. On the other hand, before that, most of Szymanowska's works were published by Breitkopf & Härtel between 1819 and 1820. Thus, in the early 1820s, she established herself as a professional musician.

In November 1827, Szymanowska decided to move to Russia, settling first in Moscow and then in St Petersburg. She continued to pursue music activities in Russia until her death in 1831. While the salon was popular as a cultural institution in Russia from the 1820s to the 1830s,[91] Szymanowska continued her family's tradition by establishing her own musical salon here, which was popular with the upper classes and cultural figures of many countries, including Russians and Poles. An inseparable bond was formed between her public image and salon music. On the other hand, Szymanowska's fondness for Rossini's operas is mentioned by her daughter Helena in her diary of the family's life in Russia.[92] The popularity of Italian opera in Russia once again had a deep influence on Szymanowska.

Unfortunately, with political tensions increasing between Russia and Poland in 1830, Szymanowska gradually began to withdraw from public activity. She was pronounced dead of cholera in 1831.

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[91] Nataliia A Ogarkova, "The Music Salon in Russia in the First Half of the 19th Century," *Вестник СПбГУ. Искусствоведение* 10, no. 1 (2020): 781-2.
[92] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 117, quoted from Helena Szymanowska-Malewska, *Dziennik 1827-1857*, ed. Zbigniew Sudolski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ancher, 1999), 25.

Szymanowska achieved considerable admiration as one of the few successful female professional musicians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A review of her life makes it possible to realise that the context of the period she lived through had a constant influence on her career.

With the support of her family and social circle, and her own struggle for gender rights and policies that give her more freedom, she found a place for herself in female-dominated salons and even public concert halls and publishing houses.

The continuing turmoil in her homeland and the insistence of her compatriots on their national culture led to traces of nationalism in her works. This nationalism evolved into a sentimental style of music, with a greater emphasis on emotional expression. And such sentimentalism was popular in the salons of the time.

Szymanowska's early exposure to the multi-cultural spread of Europe in her homeland and her later musical tours also stimulated her potential to integrate a diverse range of music. Thus, much of her music is cosmopolitan, for example, the international singing style of her music derives in large part from the long-standing influence of Italian opera. In addition to the singing cantabile tone, the cosmopolitanism is also reflected in her focus on ornamental melodies, which has led to *Stil brillant* with a combination of sentimental lyricism and virtuosity, featuring technical skills (e.g., leaps, rapid scales and arpeggios).

It can be said she stands out as a woman who forged a successful career in a male-dominated field. She deserves to be considered alongside figures such as Hummel, Field and, yes, Chopin, as one of the most significant and accomplished pianists of the virtuoso age, regardless of gender.

Chapter 3. The Performance Tradition of Maria Szymanowska's Time

Although the doors of professional music institutions gradually started to open to women in the nineteenth century, there were initially some gender-specific limitations to music education. Very few music schools offered women the opportunity to study composition in the early nineteenth century. Moreover, at Leipzig, for example, even if a woman was accepted into a music school, she would not be given the same length of study as a man.[93] Private music education for women at home was common in Europe. As to Maria Szymanowska, aside from the fact that she received piano instruction from the private music teachers Antoni Lisowski and Tomasz Gremm in the early stages of her learning, she relied heavily on self-teaching.

Fortunately, through the support provided by her family's music salon, Maria was exposed to the musical culture of the time and gradually built and expanded her music circle, which was invaluable to the development of a female musician. In the process, she was exposed to the performance traditions of this milieu, which would have been of considerable significance to her playing. Unlike her male counterparts, records of her performances and details of her technique are notably lacking. However, the traditions of performance in her music circle combined with the literature and press reports about her playing, provide an important way to seek some answers. A discussion of the historical evidence will help modern pianists to understand the performance practice of Szymanowska.

[93] Reich, "European Composers and Musicians, ca. 1800–1890," 149.

Male pianist-composers of the early nineteenth century normally played exclusively their own works, while women mostly played the works of others. This practice of limiting the repertoire for female pianists, which was prevalent in nineteenth-century Europe, indicates the dominance of the patriarchy.[94] Mozart's sister Maria Anna Mozart (1751-1829), for instance, who was a harpsichord player and fortepianist, received relatively faint praise from contemporaries for her 'precise and brilliant' execution of well-known printed sonatas, while her brother was lauded much more fully for his improvisations.[95]

In the accounts of Szymanowska's public performances, her repertoire usually consisted of works by male musicians of the same period, such as Johann Hummel (1778-1837), John Field (1782-1837), August Alexander Klengel (1783-1852) and Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785-1849). Surprisingly, she also occasionally performed works of her own composition, in a way reflecting her struggle against the gender issues that existed in the field of performance during this period.

Szymanowska was considered by the public at the time to be similar to two pianists in terms of performance: Johann Hummel and John Field. This analogy with male musicians can be explained by the prevailing gender bias of the time. For nineteenth-century women, promoting their abilities by breaking from the established norm of an exclusively or stereotypically male composer in piano

[94] Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris," 359.
[95] Nicholas Baragwanath, "Mozart's Early Chamber Music with Keyboard: Traditions of Performance, Composition and Commodification", in *Mozart's Chamber Music with Keyboard, ed.* Martin Harlow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 29.

performance, would have led to accusations of unfeminine behaviour.[96] That said, it is undeniable that the technique and beauty she inherited from the music of these virtuosos is reflected not only in the recognition she received from playing their works, but also in her playing and composing.

Szymanowska's performance was often compared with that of Hummel. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) even called Szymanowska a 'female Hummel'.[97]

Hummel was considered one of the greatest musicians of his time. As a virtuoso pianist, 'his playing was the subject of many an enthusiastic review in which certain features remain constant: his clarity, neatness, evenness, superb tone and delicacy, as well as an extraordinary quality of relaxation and the ability to create the illusion of speed without taking too rapid tempos'.[98] As a pupil of Mozart, his method of piano teaching was widely accepted. Hummel's piano treatise - *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte* (1828) - was purchased by piano teachers and students in most European countries at the time.[99] His approach to performance technique ranged from the basics of posture, tempo and rhythm, and musical symbols, to the technical emphasis of a

[96] Laura Vorachek, "Reading Music: Representing Female Performance in Nineteenth-Century British Piano Method Books and Novels," *Clio: A Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History* 39, no. 3 (2010): 313.
[97] Anna E. Kijas*, Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 35, quoted from Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Goethes Briefe: Briefe Der Jahre 1821-1832* (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1967), 79-80.
[98] Joel Sachs, "Hummel, Johann Nepomuk," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001), 11: 830.
[99] Mark Kroll, *Johann Nepomuk Hummel: A Musician's Life and World* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2007), 269.

complete fingering system, and the aesthetic aspects of playing, such as rhythmic freedom, pedalling and improvisation.

Szymanowska's musical initiation was likely influenced by Hummel's methods. Her musical style was very similar to Hummel's, whose music many considered to be feminine.[100] Their playing has been judged to be lyrical and vocal,[101] to convey a refined, good musical taste to the audience. Perhaps this explains Szymanowska's tendency to choose to play Hummel's works and to adopt a method similar to his, in a situation where female pianists were generally expected to play the works of their male peers.

Szymanowska's playing also resembled that of the Irish pianist John Field, who had a profound influence on musicians such as Chopin and Schumann. Szymanowska shared his enthusiasm for the cantabile style of playing, and this resemblance even extended to their compositions. Her interpretation of one of Field's Nocturnes received enthusiastic praise.[102] Szymanowska's later piano nocturnes can also be considered to share many characteristics with Field's Russian nocturnes. This is probably why Robert Schumann called her 'the feminine Field'.[103] Her performances of John Field's works also received wide acclaim. A concert she gave in Dresden was reviewed by the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* as follows:

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[100] Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris," 364.
[101] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, 34.
[102] Syga and Szenic*, Maria Szymanowska i jej czasy*, 263. The review is about her concert in Leipzig on October 20, 1823, from the Weimar Literary Newspaper.
[103] Robert Schumann, *Music and Musicians: Essays and Criticisms*, translated, edited, and annotated by Fanny Raymond Ritter (London: W. Reeves, 1877), 298-299.

> She possessed a magnificently strong touch on her instrument, combined with delicacy and much expression. She played the Rondo by Field with great skill and with all the peculiarity demanded by the compositions of this master.[104]

Because of these similarities, Szymanowska was even suspected by her contemporaries and by future generations of academics of being a pupil of Field, but this speculation is not supported by evidence. All we know is that Field had recommended Szymanowska's work to the publisher Breitkopf and Härtel in 1819.[105] But according to her daughter Helena's diary, later in Russia Szymanowska and Field became more and more involved in their music and lives, meeting and playing in private and public music venues, and Field even dedicated an Allegro to her.[106]

It could be argued that the similarities to Hummel and Field allowed Szymanowska to meet the general requirement for female performers, whilst gaining recognition for her professionalism, and indeed could be seen as her solution to gender issues. On the other hand, like Hummel and Field, the fact that many of her compositions are dedicated to women reflects the importance she placed on the market for women.[107] At the same time, it implies the reason why she

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[104] Anne Swartz, "Maria Szymanowska and the Salon Music of the Early Nineteenth Century," *The Polish Review* (1985): 47, translated from *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 46 [not 25, as cited by Swartz] (1823), 760.
[105] Anne Swartz, "Maria Szymanowska and the Salon Music of the Early Nineteenth Century," *The Polish Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1985): 45, quoted from Heinrich Dessauer, *John Field: sein Leben und seine Werke*, No. 44 (Langensalza: Hermann Beyer & Söhne, 1912), 54-55.
[106] Robin Langley, "Field, John," in *The new Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrell, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001), 14; Syga and Szenic, *Maria Szymanowska i jej czasy,* 375.
[107] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, 131-149. In Kijas's

shared with Hummel and Field the musical style suitable for women.

This chapter will explore the tradition of piano playing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, mainly in terms of several elements of performance, using as reference figures contemporaries from Szymanowska's music circle such as Hummel and Field. Many aspects of the tradition were reconstructed and applied in my recitals, as described below. Further considerations on the application of research findings in performance must wait until the next chapter.

Piano Playing Posture

Posture is often considered the most fundamental factor in the process of playing the piano, affecting the overall balance of the body and the strength exerted on the keyboard, and reflecting the aesthetic standards of the times. Here, posture in the performance tradition of Szymanowska's time will be discussed first.

According to Hummel's treatise, there are three key points to appropriate playing posture: the first is to keep the upper body straight, the arms relaxed and not too far away from the body; the second is to have the palms of the hands slightly arched in a circular curve; and finally, he mentioned avoiding violent movement, using the middle part of the fingertips and pressing them forward to strike the keys with a full and beautiful tone.[108] These are the basic requirements for

collation of Szymanowska's work, it is clear from the information about the dedicatees that a large number of works were for women.

[108] Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte, Commencing with the Simplest Elementary Principles and Including Every Information Requisite to the Most*

a player to be able to achieve elegant and expressive playing.

John Field, who also avoided big body movements in his performance, was recalled by his pupil Alexander Dubuc (1812-1898) as being very good at controlling his playing movements and hardly ever struck the piano keyboard with obvious exaggerated actions.[109]

On the other hand, in the nineteenth century, middle-class and aristocratic women of the time often played the piano with the initial intention of enhancing their advantage in attracting potential marriage partners, as the piano was considered a more feminine instrument and could emphasise their good education.[110] This led to a general social expectation that women 'of condition' should be able to play the piano with elegance, decency and grace. Clues to this quest for feminine elegance can also be found in novels that reflect the social realities of the time. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Blanche Ingram's piano playing is described thus: '[she] seated herself with proud grace at the piano, spreading out her snowy robes in queenly amplitude, [and] commenced a brilliant prelude.'[111]

During this period, the visual appearance of female performers at the piano influenced the perception of their professionalism. The body language and facial expressions of female pianists needed to be well-controlled to convey an emotional

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Finished Style of Performance, Vol. 1-3 (London: T. Boosey, 1828), 3.
[109] Patrick Piggott, *The Life and Music of John Field, 1782-1837: Creator of the Nocturne* (London: Faber, 1973), 105.
[110] Burgan, "Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction," 60-61.
[111] Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Jane Jack and Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), chap. 17.

understanding of the work to the audience while avoiding any trace of frivolity.[112]

Surrounded by such cultural values, Szymanowska was no exception. In most of her surviving portraits, she is shown in an elegant and dignified manner.[113] One of the paintings in Szymanowska's album shows her playing the piano in 1819. This painting (Figure 1), in the collection of the Polish Library in Paris, depicts a performance in a salon consisting of Szymanowska with a cellist and a singer (who perhaps helped her turn the score).[114] In this scene our female pianist, as Hummel's viewpoint suggests, keeps her body at a proper distance from the piano, sitting upright on a seat higher than a modern pianist, her arms dropping naturally to the keyboard. She maintains a modest posture while still displaying feminine grace, just as other women of the era did when playing the piano.

[112] Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris," 372.
[113] Maja Trochimczyk, "On Genius and Virtue in the Professional Image of Maria Szymanowska," *Varsovie-Paris*, vol. 14 (2012): 263.
[114] Benjamin Vogel, "Piano – the main attraction of the Polish salon during Maria Szymanowska time," *Annales – Centre Scientifique de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences à Paris*, vol. 16. (2014): 131, quoted from Maria Szymanowska's album (1819), Polish Library in Paris, inv. no. SHLP MAM 972.

Figure 1. Author unknown, Musical evening in one of Warsaw parlours, 1819, from Maria Szymanowska's album, The Polish Library in Paris.[115]

These findings highlight the influence, and even the demands, of the performance educational culture and social ideology of contemporaneous early nineteenth-century pianists, especially upon women. In contrast, today's performers often present rich and sometimes exaggerated body language, including female pianists. The posture that Szymanowska presented in her playing was partly due to the social demands on women of the time.

In my practice as a female pianist, I have emulated a stance commonly adopted in Szymanowska's music circle by applying the aforementioned traits. In the process, I examined the performance of this posture on the modern piano. When I played in a straight, high seated position with my arms naturally dropping over the keyboard

[115] The picture appears to depict an old tradition of the 'accompanied sonata', in which a cellist, if available, would double the piano's bass part while another instrumentalist would counterpoint the melody. Here, the scene recalls accounts of the Parisian nocturne, which – before Chopin – was usually a song with keyboard accompaniment.

and arched palms, it produced less of a legato effect than expected. This graceful posture made it less easy to achieve the appropriate tone in the singing melody. Also, the most frequently highlighted virtues of her playing include her handling of dynamics, whereas in my practice I was not able to activate more of my body parts to balance the strength, and found it difficult to control the shifts between dynamics.

It is clear that there is a discrepancy between the modern performance practice and the expectations generated by the information currently available regarding the performance posture tradition of her music circle. This challenges the modern performer to explore interpretative approaches: whether to risk a completely different outcome in a process that is 'faithful' to the original practice of Szymanowska and others as recorded in writing, or to rethink the reasons for the differences and what adjustments should be made to performance posture. Given the development of instruments, performance space, audience reception, and the progress of social thinking, I approached these questions through further embodied practice, as explained in Chapter 4.

Tempo

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had their own conventions regarding tempo. Compared to the modern concept, the meaning of musical tempo in this period is more focused on fluid movements guided by mood and affect. The piece is driven by involuntary bodily movement in response to a given emotional state and is dominated by an overall tempo that guides the performer in

considering speed in an emotional sense.[116] In this sense, there is great value in preserving the tempo tradition followed by Szymanowska in modern performance.

The most obvious indication of the speed of Szymanowska's work is undoubtedly the tempo term, which often appears at the beginning of the score. Nicholas Temperley (1966) expressed his lack of confidence in the tempo terms of the Classical period as he felt that they failed to inform the performer about the exact speed of the work, pointing merely to fast or slow.[117] Certainly, this view presents the dilemma facing the modern performer. But in contrast to the tempo standards provided by the metronome, the tempo in Szymanowska's time depended on the core characteristics of the work. I would argue that these terms are not as vague as Temperley suggests, since the affect of the performance they represent and the associated 'movement' is worthy of attention.

Moreover, as these musical terms have developed, there has been some disagreement between different musicians at different times as to the understanding of the speed that should be conveyed by particular musical terms. It is therefore necessary to explain these terms in relation to tempo in more detail here in the context of musicians such as Szymanowska and Hummel.

The nuances in the understanding of musical terms are reflected in their implementation by composers and performers. Different versions of the order of

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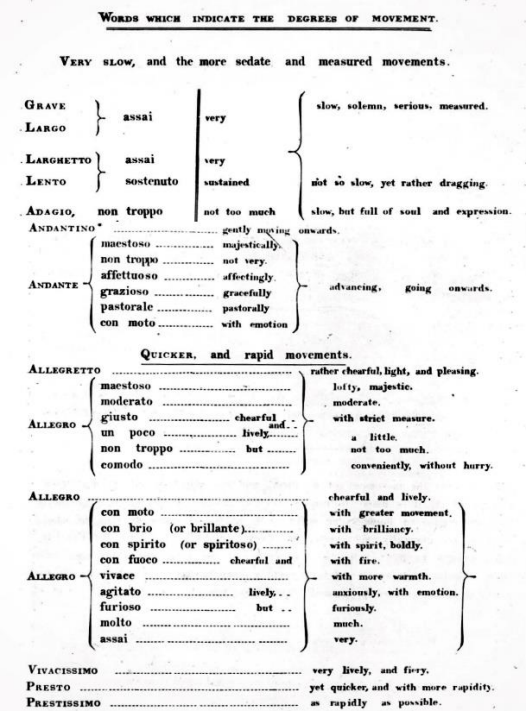
[116] Nicholas Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions & Puccini: Compositional Theory and Practice in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 66-74.
[117] Nicholas Temperley, "Tempo and repeats in the early nineteenth century," *Music & Letters* 47, no. 4 (1966): 323.

precedence of tempo terms exist, such as different orders arising according to region, mainly between the two schools of Italian and English musicians. There is also a division and order of these terms according to style. In Hummel's treatise, he listed and catalogued tempo terms from slow to fast (Figure 2). One of the striking points is that he linked these terms closely to affective expression, giving a more vibrant meaning to tempo, and demonstrated them by way of sixty practice pieces, widely available to piano students studying at the time.



WORDS WHICH INDICATE THE DEGREES OF MOVEMENT.

VERY SLOW, and the more sedate and measured movements.

GRAVE, LARGO	assai	very	slow, solemn, serious, measured.
LARGHETTO	assai	very	
LENTO	sostenuto	sustained	not so slow, yet rather dragging.
ADAGIO,	non troppo	not too much	slow, but full of soul and expression.

ANDANTINO ..... gently moving onwards.

ANDANTE: maestoso ..... majestically. / non troppo ..... not very. / affettuoso ..... affectingly. / grazioso ..... gracefully / pastorale ..... pastorally / con moto ..... with emotion — advancing, going onwards.

QUICKER, and rapid movements.

ALLEGRETTO ..... rather cheerful, light, and pleasing.

ALLEGRO: maestoso ..... lofty, majestic. / moderato ..... moderate. / giusto ..... chearful and lively ..... with strict measure. / un poco ..... a little. / non troppo ..... but ..... not too much. / comodo ..... conveniently, without hurry.

ALLEGRO ..... chearful and lively.

ALLEGRO: con moto ..... with greater movement. / con brio (or brillante) ..... with brilliancy. / con spirito (or spiritoso) ..... with spirit, boldly. / con fuoco ..... chearful and with fire. / vivace ..... with more warmth. / agitato ..... lively. . . with anxiously, with emotion. / furioso ..... but . . furiously. / molto ..... much. / assai ..... very.

VIVACISSIMO ..... very lively, and fiery.

PRESTO ..... yet quicker, and with more rapidity.

PRESTISSIMO ..... as rapidly as possible.

Figure 2. Words that Indicate the Degrees of Movement, from Hummel's *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte,* 1828.[118]

What is certain is that in the early nineteenth century, there was an increasing tendency to use faster tempo in movements that called for them. Allegro, which

[118] Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte*, 68.

means ‘cheerfully’, represented a significantly faster tempo in the minds of early nineteenth-century composers and performers than mid to late-nineteenth-century musicians considered it to be.[119] The six last symphonies of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, as marked by Hummel, are also significantly faster than the usual treatments nowadays.[120] It is reasonable to assume that Maria Szymanowska, sharing the tempo conventions of the period, may have played the fast pieces at a slightly higher speed than the modern understanding of musical terms.

As for the disparate views that exist in some tempo terms denoting slow speeds, they are also of note. Hummel refers to ‘Andantino’ specifically in his ordering of tempo terms. At a time when some people place it after ‘Andante’ (in order from slow to fast), Hummel considered that Andantino is a derivative of Andante. Since Andante means ‘moving’ or ‘walking’ in Italian, and Andantino corresponds to ‘moving a little’, Hummel suggested that it has a lesser degree of movement than Andante and argued that it deserves to be slower.[121] The difficulty in harmonising the ordering of terms denoting slowness is also reflected in the debate over the speed of Largo and Adagio. In this discussion, Hummel belongs to the side of musicians who considered Largo slower than Adagio,[122] as Largo originally meant ‘broad’, while Adagio means ‘at ease’. In this respect, it once again emphasises that understanding the emotional meaning behind the tempo terms

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[119] Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 336-337.
[120] William Malloch, “Carl Czerny's metronome marks for Haydn and Mozart symphonies,” *Early music* 16, no. 1 (1988): 72.
[121] Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte*, 69.
[122] Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900,* 341.

serves as a strong guide to capturing the speed of Szymanowska's music.

It is worth noting that, with the patenting of Johann Maelzel's metronome in 1816, Hummel expressed his strong admiration for it.[123] Hummel pointed out that this device helps to improve the situation in which the work is presented with the wrong musical affect in different performances due to the existence of considerable differences in the standards of tempo between regions and other factors.[124]

Metronome markings can also be found in the works of Carl Czerny (1791-1857). However, the almost 'impossibly' fast speeds of his pieces raised questions among performers, and has led to various hypotheses for his usage of the metronome, such as the 'theory of the variable use of the metronome'. Noorduin (1925) refutes these claims on the basis of Maelzel's own statements, stating that metronome speeds are consistent with notation. And Noorduin argues that as one of the few virtuoso pianists with great skill, there is the possibility that Czerny met his own speed requirement, but also proves the reasonableness of lowering the speed within a small range.[125]

Thus, when I attempted to find some inspiration for the performance of Szymanowska's work from Maelzel's scale (Figure 3), it was not about setting a mechanical speed, but rather providing a range to which the emotion underlying the terms can be referenced. In Szymanowska's Etudes, I noted that the tempo

[123] Kroll, *Johann Nepomuk Hummel: A Musician's Life and World*, 273.
[124] Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte,* 65.
[125] Marten Noorduin, "Czerny's 'Impossible' Metronome Marks," *The musical times* 154, no. 1925 (2013): 19-46.

terms marked at the beginning of several pieces imply fast playing, such as Vivace and Presto. The tendency towards faster sections in the early nineteenth century led me to approach the fastest speed within the scale range offered by Maelzel's metronome, which is also better suited to the purpose of exercising difficult techniques in practice pieces.

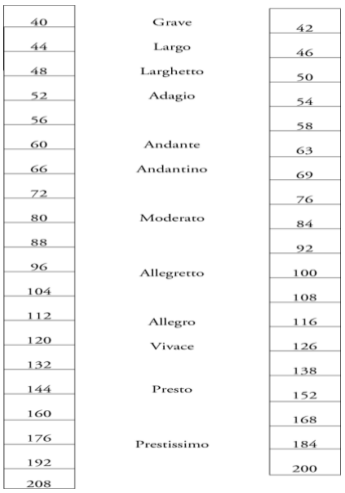

Figure 3. Johann Nepomuk Maelzel's metronome scale, 1816.[126]

In addition, the politics and music of Maria Szymanowska's time were extensively and closely linked. Not surprisingly, the political upheavals of the early nineteenth century led to a number of changes in musical culture, and dance music, which was an essential part of noble activities, always had a strict system before this. With the social changes of the French Revolution leading to the weakening of the aristocracy and the rise of the middle class and the development of musicians' desire for freedom of expression, court dances were affected. The conventions of music related to dance gradually blurred and the exact speed of them became

[126] Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900,* 307.

somewhat difficult to assert.

Szymanowska's work contains many compositions related to dance, such as *Cotillon* (1824),[127] *Danse polonaise* (1824),[128] *Dix-huit Danses* (1819),[129] *Grande Valse* (1820),[130] *Six Minuets* and *Six Marches*. It is worth noting that there is music that is not dedicated to actual dancing, but rather discourses on or represents a memory of dance. The titles of the works in their first publication indicate that most of Szymanowska's music about dance was primarily dedicated to royalty and nobility. Her *Six Marches* is dedicated to Konstantin Pavlovich, the Grand Duke of Russia; her *Polonoise* is for Countess Mokronoska, who was born as Princess Sanguszko in Poland, an amateur pianist; and *Grande Valse a quatre mains* for Comtesses Celine et Hedwige Zamoyski. From the perspective of the target groups for these works, it is easy to fall into the misconception that Szymanowska confined herself entirely to the tempo conventions of courtly dance music.

The minuet, one of the representatives of the aristocratic dance, is usually characterised by restrained elegance and a moderate speed.[131] But in my recital repertoire, *No. 6* from the *Six Minuets* is marked at the beginning with the term 'Vivace', which means 'lively', or 'vibrant' in Italian. In practice I noticed that playing this piece at a moderate speed would not capture this mood very well. The conflict

[127] Maria Szymanowska, *Cotillon ou Valse Figurée pour le piano* (Paris: Hanry, 1824).
[128] Maria Szymanowska, *Danse polonaise* (Paris: Hanry, 1824).
[129] Maria Szymanowska, *Dix-huit Danses de différent genre pour le piano-forte* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1819).
[130] Maria Szymanowska, *Grande Valse pour le pianoforte à quatre mains* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1820).
[131] Eric McKee, *Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz: A Study of Dance-Music Relations in 3/4 Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 42.

fully validates the piece as a solo reflection on the dance, rather than a token of the dance itself. According to Goldberg (2008), Szymanowska's and Hummel's works about dance fall into the category of non-utilitarian works primarily for listening.[132] And these kinds of piano works are more focused on technique and emotional expression. In this sense, I retained the character of this type of work, by deciding to play *No. 6* at a faster speed, and the accompanying bodily movement provided me with a feeling of aliveness. The process for exploring the tempo of this piece can be found in Audio 1.[133]

Tempo Rubato

Maria Szymanowska is known to have had a talent for making her playing expressive. To present a more virtuoso performance in a singing style, she improvised by using tempo rubato,[134] a flexible form of playing for expressive purposes, originally applied in Baroque vocal music. According to Richard Hudson's classic study (1994), tempo rubato can be divided into two main types, early and late rubato, and the point at which they are distinguished is in the nineteenth century.[135]

Yet both types of rubato existed in some form during the first half of the

[132] Halina Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 78.
[133] See https://youtu.be/Fq53cBK82Nk.
[134] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, 78-79. The evidence is documented in the concert review of Szymanowska's playing in St. Petersburg on April 3, 1827, from *Journal de St.-Petersbourg*.
[135] Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 1-2.

nineteenth century, making the type that Szymanowska used less easy to identify. Like Szymanowska, Hummel and Field also tended to adopt a tempo rubato to enrich their performances. Here I will discuss the use of tempo rubato techniques in her music circle.

Before that, it is necessary to discuss improvisation, which was an important skill of the period that enabled virtuoso pianists to show their great musical talent, as it required the ability to play and compose without prior preparation and in a logical manner, adding more pleasure and unexpected charm to the music through mature technique and a commendable imagination. The original meaning of the word virtuoso was very different from the modern understanding. Nowadays it indicates a physical, technical ability to play or sing with great speed, accuracy and agility. But it derives from the Latin *virtù*, which, via the English word virtue, can be defined as a moral good. The moral assets of a virtuoso concerned the virtues of knowledge and understanding, having meticulously studied counterpoint and harmony, and the more elusive virtue of a spark of invention, imagination and creativity.

One thing that should not be overlooked is the importance Hummel placed on improvisation. The improvisations that he usually gave were a traditional element in his music tours of the 1820s and a much-anticipated part of the show. Improvisation was also part of the performance tradition for Szymanowska, as evinced by her frequent improvisations in the salons of St. Petersburg.[136] Compared with printed

[136] Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," 66, quoted from Maria Iwanejko, *Maria Szymanowska*, (Poland: Polskie Wydawn Muzyczne, 1959), 72.

works, improvisation tends to be more suited to a delicate, sentimental playing style,[137] as Szymanowska's playing is generally understood to have been. Many other musicians of the same period maintained this tradition, such as Carl Czerny, who also emphasised the appeal of improvisation for performance and explained methods in his published method *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte: 200tes Werk* [1829].

In the early nineteenth century, large musical genres such as sonatas and concertos were generally, by default, the exclusive domain of male composers. As a woman, Szymanowska's works are mostly of the short type that would not incur social opprobrium, like etudes, marches, minuets, and mostly used obvious repetitions. If repeated phrases were played with exactly the same treatment, there would be a tendency to bore the audience. The expression of emotion in this period of performance relies more on dynamic changes and the touch on the keys. On this basis, rhythmic flexibility can be used to enhance expressiveness through nuance, demonstrating the experience and the good taste of the performer. The appropriate use of tempo rubato to improvise enabled Szymanowska to diminish the limitations in compositional genre due to her gender.

It is likely that most of us now perceive tempo rubato as the kind of performance in which the player departs from the strict pulse during the flamboyant parts of the piece and accelerates and delays the tempo with flexibility. This is very different from the method of tempo rubato used by Hummel et al.

[137] Carl Czerny, *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte: Opus 200*, translated and edited by Alice L. Mitchell (New York; London: Longman, 1983), 26-27.

Hummel himself had a positive attitude towards the relationship between tempo rubato and sensitive performance. With regard to tempo rubato, Hummel had a clear approach, in which the left hand maintained a steady and strict time and the right hand was free to make some rhythmic adjustments to present the melodic line. This displacement of melody and accompaniment, built on the concept of syncopation, as Daniel Gottlob Türk calls it,[138] is what Hudson means by 'early rubato'.

In addition, Hummel pointed out that players need to plan their use of tempo rubato: 'The player must previously examine which bar, as compared with the rest, the greater or fewer notes of embellishment, as upon this is grounded the slower or quicker performance of them...'[139] This also means that according to this tradition, the time value of one note is given more, after the other has been taken away. Interestingly, modern pop singers do exactly this – they are usually off the beat to provide expressive syncopation and groove. The practice comes from opera, when singers would float freely above the regular accompaniment. The Italian opera singer Giuditta Pasta (1797-1865), who often performed in the same concerts as Szymanowska, was praised for this technique, and the critic suggested that their contact contributed to the singing style of Szymanowska's playing.[140]

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[138] Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 121, quoted from Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule, oder Anweisung zum Klavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende: mit kritischen Anmerkungen* (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1802).

[139] Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte*, 303.

[140] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, 78; Sandra P. Rosenblum, "The Uses of Rubato in Music, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries," *Performance Practice Review* 7, no.1 (1994): 41.

Hudson found one work marked 'Tempo Rubato' among Hummel's manuscripts (Figure 4). In comparison with the published version, it was found that Hummel subsequently changed this mark to the more precise term 'Adagio'. In the 1820s, Hummel commented that the players' frequent and exaggerated modifications of time were superficial expressions of emotion.[141] These confirm his preference for moderate, more restrained rhythmic adjustments than excessive additions of changes.

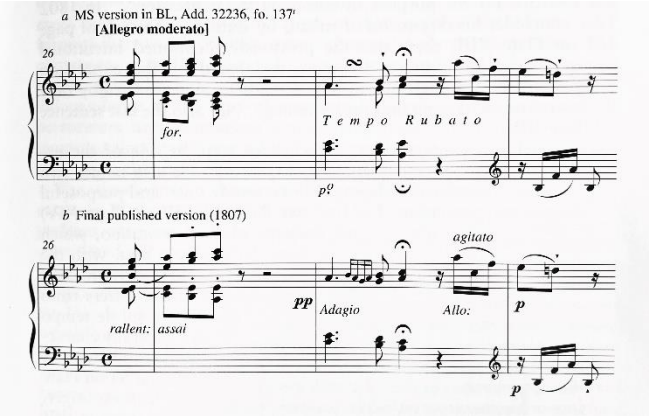

Figure 4. Hummel's *Sonata No. 3, Op.20*.[142]

Like Hummel, some musicians of the time, such as his teacher Mozart and Field, held a similar attitude, in which the rhythm of the accompanying parts does not change when some parts of the melody are slightly accelerated or delayed. This is evidenced by the appreciation expressed by the pianist Louise Farrenc for Field's use of tempo rubato.[143]

[141] Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte*, 69.
[142] Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato*, 141.
[143] Louise Farrenc and Aristide Farrenc, *Le trésor des pianistes,* Vol. 1 (Paris: Farrenc, 1861), 3-4. Louise Farrenc's original comments can be translated as: 'I know that some great artists have used a kind of tempo rubato, which consists of an

Tempo rubato is not a deliberate pattern of tempo processing. It tests our natural feeling for the music. The performer can experiment with more possibilities to enrich the emotion in practice, like using tempo rubato to develop the ability to improvise, which is more in keeping with the original purposes of the creators of the period.

Here, I explore how the tempo rubato used by Szymanowska can be presented through my performance practice of the recital repertoire. Given the same usage of early rubato in opera, the prevalence of the early tempo rubato approach used by Hummel and Field in this period, and the similarities she shared with them in playing, it can be inferred that Szymanowska agreed with them in terms of rubato. The use of early tempo rubato leads to a consideration of the distribution of time value. In my practice, I have tried to follow the principles of the early rubato by keeping the left-hand accompaniment steady, considering the changes that can be made in the right hand.

For musicians like Czerny, Kalkbrenner and others of the same period, the preludes existed doubly as not just annotated works, but as technical exercises for improvisation or preparation for improvisation, prevalent in performances before the mid-nineteenth century. Czerny explained the formation of improvisation ability through numerous examples of technical exercises, of which the Preludes are

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undulation, a slight delay or acceleration of certain parts of the singing passages, during which the rhythm of the accompaniment will not change in any way: […] the famous violinist Paganini and the pianist Field, as far as I know, used this tempo rubato with great charm. According to a statement in Mozart's letters, this great man seems to have used this tempo rubato in the performance of his own compositions'.

considered to be the basis for the development of improvisation. Suitable as a warm-up introduction before the start of a formal performance of a work in a private circle, and with the same characteristics as the work, Preludes can be linked to the more formal work that follows by running or transitioning into them.

Like them, Szymanowska had her own set of preludes, and it can be inferred that Szymanowska created her preludes in this tradition with the same goal in mind, using them to develop the ability to improvise.

When I improvised with tempo rubato in the first piece from Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes*, I made a displacement in bar 19 (Figure 5) to create a syncopated effect (Figure 6), allowing the right-hand melody to develop a surprise in what would otherwise be a tedious repetition of the preceding bar 18. The effects before and after applying the rubato can be heard in Audio 2.[144] In the subsequent bar 24 (Figure 7), the first note of the corresponding right-hand melodic part was delayed (Figure 8), thus drawing out a stronger anticipation of the melody, which in turn had the aural effect of emphasising the melody and enhancing the musical expression. A comparison between the version played according to the score and the one improvised with tempo rubato can be heard in Audio 3.[145] As demonstrated in Audio 4,[146] the same approach was applied to bars 21-22 of *No. 4* (Figure 9 & Figure 10).

[144] See https://youtu.be/pkmVX7LvfPI.
[145] See https://youtu.be/Sc1hZ06yJ0g.
[146] See https://youtu.be/B37R0C1Bz2E.

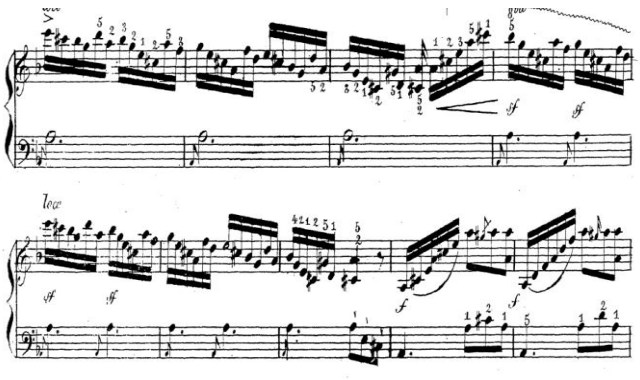

Figure 5. Maria Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 1*, bars 11-19.[147]

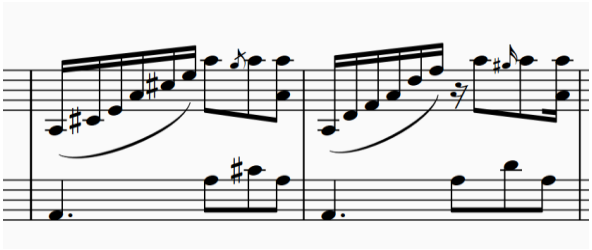

Figure 6. Maria Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 1*, bars 18-19, with tempo rubato.[148]

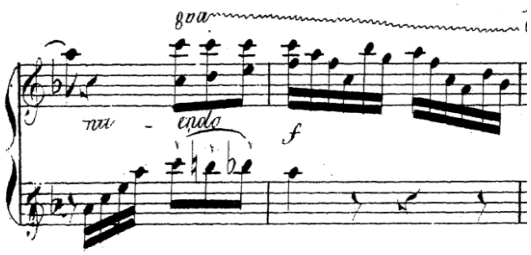

Figure 7. Maria Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 1*, bars 24-25.[149]

[147] Szymanowska, *Vingt Exercises et Préludes*.
[148] This is a reworked version of Maria Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 1*, bar 18-19, using tempo rubato, based on my performance practice.
[149] Szymanowska, *Vingt Exercises et Préludes*.

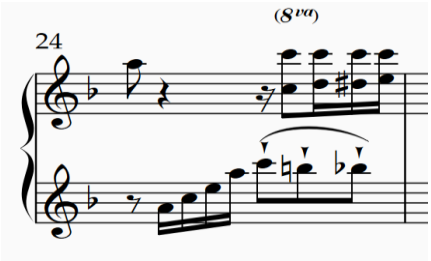

Figure 8. Maria Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 1*, bar 24, with tempo rubato.[150]

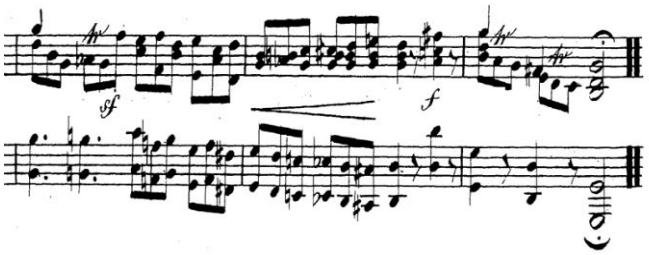

Figure 9. Maria Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 4*, bars 21-23.[151]

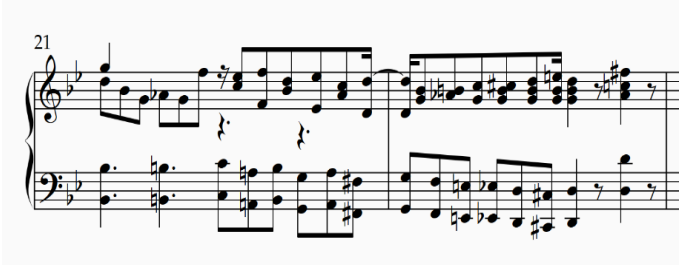

Figure 10. Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 4*, bars 21-22, with tempo rubato.[152]

[150] Reworked version of Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 1*, bar 24, using tempo rubato, based on my performance practice.
[151] Szymanowska, *Vingt Exercises et Préludes*.
[152] Reworked version of Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 4*, with tempo rubato, based on my performance practice.

In addition, Szymanowska's performances were often praised for their singing effect, a property that is inseparable from her use of operatic melodies in her works. In her short work *Six Marches No. 4*, she followed the compositional trends of the time by adapting a melodic fragment from *The Uncle Valet* by the Parisian opera composer Domenico Della Maria (1768-1800).

As mentioned before, tempo rubato, a practice initially applied in opera, is most likely applied here as well. In bar 29 the abbreviation of the Italian term espressivo can also be noted (Figure 11), which implies that from here onwards the performance is expected to be more expressive. In my recital, this characteristic was achieved by making a little improvisational adjustment to the rhythm. In bar 33, when the melody seems to be falling into another repetition of bar 29, I made the first quaver integrate into the preceding dotted crotchet, breaking the otherwise dull alignment of the accompaniment with the melody (Figure 12). The way to play from the score, and the version with the tempo rubato applied can be found in Audio 5.[153]

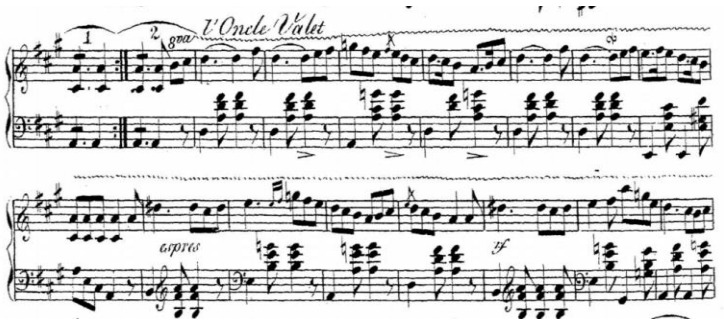

Figure 11. Szymanowska's *Six Marches No. 4,* bars 20-35.[154]

[153] See https://youtu.be/6GEpoAjMGSc.
[154] Szymanowska, *Six Marches pour le pianoforte No. 4*.

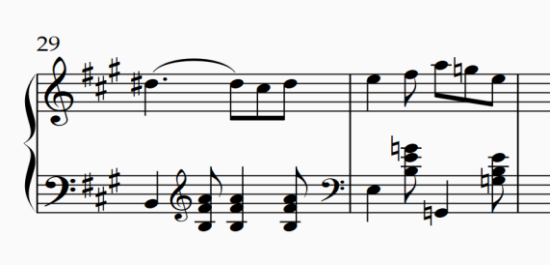

Figure 12. Szymanowska's *Six Marches No. 4,* bars 33-34, with tempo rubato.[155]

Although the term was rarely explicitly marked in Szymanowska's piano works during that period, there can be little doubt of the significance of tempo rubato to her music. The examples above are not intended to provide the only way to apply tempo rubato, but rather to stimulate more thoughts on the reconstruction of this tradition.

Pedalling

On the modern piano, foot-controlled pedals can be found underneath the keyboard: the una corda (soft pedal) on the left, the sostenuto pedal in the middle and the sustaining pedal (also known as the damper pedal) on the right. These devices are now used to make corresponding adjustments to the sound during performance.

The presence of pedal markings can be noted in the first published editions of some of Maria Szymanowska's works. It is essential to trace the role played by pedals in the performance tradition of Szymanowska's time and to perceive in it her

[155] Reworked version of Szymanowska's *Six Marches No. 4*, with tempo rubato, based on my performance practice.

attitude and ideas about the use of pedals. However, pedal markings only began to appear in printed scores from the 1790s onwards,[156] some markings are omitted or missing from scores, making the extent of pedal use not fully reflected. Such a situation may confuse modern performers when playing from sheet music alone. And information on pedal use at the beginning of the nineteenth century is varied yet difficult to interpret, various issues need to be considered when tracing the history of Szymanowska's use of pedals.

Any consideration of pedal usage will inevitably point first to the manufacture of historical keyboard instruments in the early nineteenth century. The popularity of the piano at the beginning of the nineteenth century led to a flourishing of piano manufacture, with mainly English and Viennese pianos becoming prevalent. The smooth, light tone of the Viennese piano corresponded to its simpler and lighter construction, while the English piano had a more complex construction, heavier hammers, a heavier touch and a louder tone.

The Viennese pianos were mainly promoted in Poland at the time of Szymanowska's residence. In the local aristocratic salons, Viennese pianos were most popular, such as the famous Conrad Graf piano.[157] The Viennese piano was certainly an important inspiration for Szymanowska's playing and composing in Poland. Although it is difficult to pinpoint which Viennese piano Szymanowska used most often, it is possible at least to attempt to approach a similar effect to

[156] The earliest known pedal markings are by Daniel Gottlieb Steibelt (1765-1823) in his work *Pot-Pourri no. 6*, published in the 1790s.
[157] Benjamin Vogel, "Piano – the main attraction of the Polish salon during Maria Szymanowska time," 128-140.

Szymanowska's playing by examining the keyboards that were in general circulation in the area during this period, such as the Conrad Graf, through shared characteristics.

On the other hand, as Szymanowska toured Europe in the 1820s, the difficulty of carrying the instrument with her means that we cannot exclude the possibility of her using an English piano. Indeed, she purchased a John Broadwood piano in 1827. This explains why I examined this early nineteenth-century English piano alongside the Viennese piano of the same period.

Based on the findings presented earlier, I examined one 1826 Conrad Graf Viennese grand fortepiano, and one 1823 John Broadwood grand piano located in the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection of Historical Keyboard Instruments.[158]

Most pianos built after 1810 had pedals controlled by the foot. According to my observations, the early nineteenth-century Viennese piano, represented by the Graf grand fortepiano, usually had four pedals, namely the sustaining, moderator, bassoon and una corda.

It is interesting to note that the 'Fagotto' at the beginning of the Trio in Szymanowska's piano work *Polonaise in C major* (1819) is the Italian word for bassoon, and is intended to indicate the bassoon pedal of the Viennese piano. This

[158] The Richard Burnett Heritage Collection at The Finchcocks Charity is a collection of historic keyboard instruments from the seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, including the famous Conrad Graf Viennese fortepiano and John Broadwood English grand piano of Szymanowska's period. I would like to thank Richard Burnett MBE & Katrina Burnett of The Richard Burnett Heritage Collection for providing me with the use of their historical instruments, as well as Cesar Hernandez for adjusting the instruments and Helena Lloyd and Gary Branch for explaining and offering guidance on the instruments.

is a pedal that overlays paper or silk on the bass strings to create a buzzing effect, similar to that of the bassoon and capable of emphasising the bass.[159] This led me to focus attention on highlighting the corresponding bass melody passages to preserve the effect as much as possible when playing the Trio on modern piano. And this device once again proves the validity of referring to the Graf in responding to questions about the use and effect of the pedals on the Viennese piano when performing works by Szymanowska, or at least some of her works.

I noticed that the lightness of the Viennese piano gives it the advantage of being suitable for playing fast passages, and its muffler guarantees a clear sound, but also leads to a very dry sound when playing slow movements. In this case, the use of pedals can provide compensation. When using the sustaining pedal, this early nineteenth-century Viennese piano has a clear sound in the higher register, and the bass harmonics can be well connected, and slightly muffled but not to the extent of a modern piano.

The English pianos of the same period, which were good at creating singing effects, were usually equipped with a sustaining pedal and an una corda pedal, although some manufacturers increased this to three pedals, such as the 1823 Broadwood. It has an una corda and two sustaining pedals divided in two to control the treble damping and bass damping, with the middle C as the dividing line, which can be activated either independently or simultaneously. This design offers the player the possibility of creating a wider range of sound effects, likewise being able

[159] Kenneth Mobbs, "Stops and Other Special Effects on the Early Piano," *Early music* 12, no. 4 (1984): 473.

to accentuate the clarity of the upper register. Surprisingly, I also found that when lifting the damper pedal, unlike on modern keyboards where the sound disappears instantly, the historical keyboard leaves a slight aftertone, although this level of aftertone is not enough to cause confusion.

Whether on the Viennese instrument or the English keyboard, it is certain that Maria Szymanowska used pedals in her playing. Both instruments, although each has its own characteristics, seem capable of avoiding an overly chaotic sound when using pedals.

In most of Szymanowska's works for solo piano, there are not too many obvious pedal markings or specific notes on their use, except for the previously mentioned bassoon pedal, and only a few pieces in which the sustaining pedal notation appears, such as *Six Minuets No. 6* bars 63-74 (Figure 13). It is difficult to conclude from this the full intent behind these pedal markings and whether these notations, which seldom appear, are the result of her omission. More clues may be gained by observing the pedal attitudes of Field, Hummel and others of the same period.

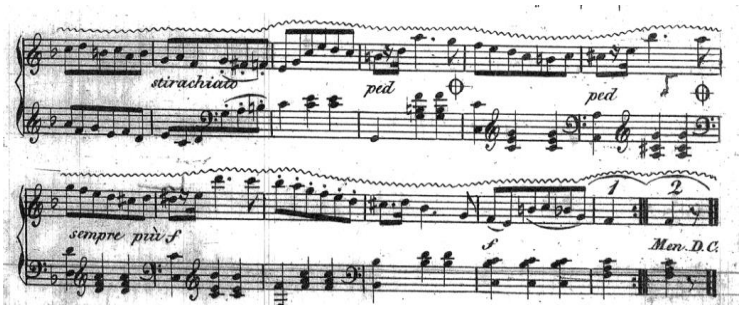

Figure 13. Maria Szymanowska's *Six Minuets No. 6* bars 63-74.[160]

Among the musicians who used pedals creatively in the early nineteenth

[160] Szymanowska, *Six Minuets*.

century were the members of the London school, including Field, and in particular Crammer and Dussek, who were known for their cantabile style and who promoted the use of pedals to create beautiful melodic lines. Field was an early experimenter in the use of pedals. His nocturnes benefit from pedals, which extend the textures of the left-hand accompaniment, presenting a singing tone, and a slight blurring.[161] At the same time, however, he did not rely on them excessively. Rather, he combined pedalling with the control of his fingers. This may be related to Field's early influence by his conservative teacher Muzio Clementi (1752-1832), who did not promote pedals in his early years (Clementi's attitude towards them changed later).[162]

On the other hand, Field rarely used the una corda, and if he did it was not to present extremely weak dynamics, as many modern players do, but a specific tone, according to Alexandre Dubuque (1812-1898):

> His use of the pedal was moderate. He never used the una corda to play pp or diminuendo. The fingers did these.[163]

In Czerny's account of pedalling, early nineteenth-century Vienna was divided into two schools, represented by Beethoven (1770-1827) and Mozart's protegé Hummel. The Hummel school accused Beethoven of misusing the pedal, claiming

[161] Nicholas Temperley, "John Field and the First Nocturne," *Music & Letters* 56, no. 3/4 (1975): 337-338; Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling*, 121.
[162] Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling*, 39.
[163] Dessauer, H., *John Field, sein Leben und seine Werke* (Langensalza: Hermann Beyer & Söhne, 1912), p44, quoted in Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling*, 141.

that it caused a lack of clarity of sound.[164] On the other hand, Czerny asserted that Mozart and his contemporaries would not have been able to use the damper pedal because such a device did not exist at the time.[165] This may further lead to the misconception that Hummel, as Mozart's student, was opposed to the use of the damper pedal.

In fact, Hummel was more in favour of careful and moderate use of this device:

> Though a truly great artist has no occasion for pedals to work upon his audience by expression and power, yet the use of the damper pedal, combined occasionally with the piano pedal (as it is termed), has an agreeable effect in many passages. . .[166]

And Hummel's preference for the pedal in the slower movements, which should switch with the changes in harmony, reflects again Hummel's desire for a clear sound.

But perhaps Hummel himself used pedals a little more frequently in practice than he admitted in his method books. He pointed out the redundancy of some pedals, such as the bassoon and harp,[167] but in fact, he explicitly marked the bassoon pedal notation 'fagotto' in one work,[168] just as Szymanowska had marked it

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[164] Carl Czerny, and Ernest Sanders, "Recollections from my life," *The Musical Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1956): 309.
[165] Carl Czerny, *Complete Theoretical and Practical Pianoforte School* (London: Cocks, 1839), 100.
[166] Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte*, 62.
[167] Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling*, 41.
[168] Johann Hummel, *Trois Amusements op. 105 no. 1* (Paris: Maurice Schlesinger, 1824).

in her work. This seems to suggest that Hummel and others were gradually shifting from their earlier conservative attitudes to a more open-minded one on the use of the pedal, although it is difficult to find clear evidence in their statements.

The characteristics of keyboard instruments throughout history and the attitudes of musical contemporaries towards the pedal reflect this: the use of the pedals was relatively restrained, yet as the pedals gradually became popular in the nineteenth century, so did the attitudes of musicians loosen towards them. They used this configuration to explore more musical possibilities, while also adhering to principles, and Szymanowska was well aware of the traditions of the period. It is likely that her use of the pedals was more complex than was presented in her scores. But whatever the specifics of Szymanowsa's use of pedals in her playing, clarity is likely to have been an important prerequisite for her to consider.

However, it is important to note that the construction of the keyboard instrument, as well as other factors, may not lead to exactly equal perceptions of sound clarity between early nineteenth-century musicians and us. This certainly poses further challenges for modern performance and implies that the use of the pedal in playing Szymanowska's piano pieces today requires deliberation to cope with complex cases.

Chapter 4. Interpreting Szymanowska in my Recitals

For mainstream classical pianists, historically informed performance has morphed into a much broader movement in recent decades. In this chapter, performance practice issues in Szymanowska's piano works will be discussed through the recital repertoire, presenting my decisions on interpretation while trying to provide performers with suggestions on HIP in the context of modern performance.

To try to clarify the current situation and my own stance, in the outline below I discuss the current views on HIP through four general categories about authenticity in music performance summarized by Kivy.[169] There is of course an overlap between these categories and some methods can be incorporated into several of them.

The first one is called 'authenticity as intention'. This claim advocates that the most important factor is that the performer 'recreates' the composer's intention to ensure the authenticity of the performance. The pianist Rudolf Serkin (1903-1991) typified this stance, through his belief that performance was about conveying the musical 'work' rather than showing off the performer's own individuality, and this could not be done without tracing the composer's conception.[170]

This kind of claim, however, leads to what the musicologist Richard Taruskin refers to as 'The Poietic Fallacy', which he defines as the overly strong conviction

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[169] Peter Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

[170] Peter Serkin, "Serkin on 'Music's Own Voice'," interview by Louise Sweeney, *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 6, 1989, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.csmonitor.com/1989/0206/lser.html. This is from an interview with Rudolf Serkin's son (Peter Serkin), in which he gives a detailed account of his father's performance philosophy.

that the most important thing about a musical work is the composer's intentions.[171] There is no doubt that the shape of a work is highly dependent on the composer's original conception. But how can we possibly know the entire intention of a composer who is no longer in existence? Taruskin even points out that composers did not always have absolute standards for the performance of their works. An authentic performance that interprets the composer's intentions can also be seen as a creative behaviour to some extent.[172]

In the early nineteenth century, composers habitually performed in ways that did not correspond to the score.[173] For example, the nineteenth-century virtuoso violinist Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840) deliberately concealed his pioneering use of harmonics in concert performances of his Caprices in the published scores, to prevent his techniques from being easily imitated.[174] It is likely that Szymanowska's actual playing also differed from that represented in her scores. In that case, can we still assume that her scores are a record to be followed exactly?

The second one is 'authenticity as sound'. This claim attempts to reproduce the physical sonic phenomena of music by recovering its sound materials, such as venues and instruments that were used in the early performances. Musicians who follow this approach include John Irving (1942-), Robert Hill (1953-), and Trevor

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[171] Richard Taruskin, "The Poietic Fallacy," *The Musical Times* 145, no. 1886 (2004): 10.
[172] Richard Taruskin, "On Letting the Music Speak for Itself: Some Reflections on Musicology and Performance," *The Journal of Musicology* 1, no. 3 (1982): 338-349.
[173] David Rowland, *Early Keyboard Instruments: A Practical Guide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 21-22.
[174] Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century: the Oxford History of Western Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 256.

Pinnock (1946-).

What seems interesting, however, is that from the listener's viewpoint, if this 'authenticity' is only restored on a physical level, without considering the effects on perception, can it really reproduce an analogous effect to the original? Will the restored sound still have the same effect on modern audiences? As Kivy asks, perhaps this sonic authenticity requires a more carefully considered intervention in modern times that can contribute to the preservation of the original artistic value of the work.[175] With the differences in instruments between the two periods, should we insist on using the early pianoforte to play Szymanowska's pieces? Also, the venue where Szymanowska often played, the salon, was a place of conversation, drinking and card playing in the early nineteenth century. Should modern pianists stage a party in which the music of Szymanowska serves as but one of many entertainments?

The third category is called 'authenticity as practice'. This is a way of presenting an authentic performance by reconstructing past knowledge and trying to apply it in practice. It involves the consideration of elements such as treatises on playing, listener's accounts, concert reviews, and so on. It also attempts to reconstruct past embellishment/improvisation practices, as, for instance, in John Mortensen and Giorgio Sanguinetti's efforts to recover lost skills in partimento and improvisation.

This approach allows the individual performer to engage with a perception of early musical performance traditions, but I would suggest, requires embodied

[175] Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*, 188-232.

practice to recover aspects that cannot be fully explained in words. To some extent, this approach also involves the performer's personal considerations. For instance, Figure 14 (see page 80) shows that Szymanowska uses a simple harmonic schema in bars 1-4 of her *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde*: the bass cadence pattern 1-4-5-1. Any partimentist, or pianist at the time, would have recognised this as a standard pattern. Bars 5-8 present a variation on the theme of bars 1-4, using the same harmonic schema. In the early nineteenth century, pianists often improvised variations. Treatises such as *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte* by Czerny explain in detail the improvisation methods for variations at that time.[176] In the light of these early treatises, can a modern performer 'authentically' alter the second appearance of the theme in bars 5-8 in performance?

In contrast to the former three categories, 'personal authenticity' is markedly more individualistic. The advocates of such claims often play music based on their own subjective feelings. Vladimir Horowitz (1903-1989) and Lang Lang may be regarded as adherents of this approach.

Although such pianists are often criticized for a lack of historical insight in their performances, they nevertheless maintain that the performer should have the freedom to show his/her own understanding of the musical work, to present their own personality and feelings through the score. Taruskin emphasises the vital role that the performer plays in music, claiming, in a well-known phrase, that music

[176] Czerny, *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte: Opus 200*, 107-114.

cannot speak for itself; it must be generated by a human, with feelings and emotions.[177] As fortepianist Malcolm Bilson declares, 'Some would argue that most players of today may be more faithful to the text, but those of the past played with more imagination and flair'.[178] As I discussed in the previous chapter, improvisation was popular in Szymanowska's time, and this tradition likewise granted a certain freedom to the performer. From this point of view, the fourth claim can be considered to contribute, to some extent, to the demands of authenticity required by historical performance.

These four claims that underpin the above categories highlight the fact that HIP is a problem for modern pianists, and everyone has a different answer, from the rigid observance of historical evidence to the rejection of 'composer's intentions' in favour of personal voice. When discussing authenticity, the musicologist Will Crutchfield presents a balanced view that seems to me to make sense:

> the crucial challenge is to keep that aliveness in mind as the goal; though it can be approached only indirectly, it is more important than the correctness. History is its own reward, and accurate research into past performing style a wonderful pursuit. But for performers its value lies only in the extent to which it can participate in the quest for aliveness.[179]

Given the modern situation and the different claims made about HIP, I should

[177] Taruskin, "On Letting the Music Speak for Itself," 338-349.
[178] Malcolm Bilson, foreword to *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music*, by Sandra P Rosenblum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), xiii.
[179] Will Crutchfield, "Fashion, Conviction, and Performance Style in an Age of Revivals," in *Authenticity and early music: a symposium*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 26.

make clear my own understanding. In investigating, I used a more integrated approach.

As was questioned in the previous discussion, the lack of detailed performance annotations in Szymanowska's scores suggests that it may not be possible to fully realise the 'composer's intentions'. And Goehr (1992) points out that performance in full accordance with scores leads to a neglect of musical tradition and is an injustice to the interpretation of music. Sensitivity to historical factors can improve the situation and can promote the perception that regulative concepts are critical and revisable.[180] It has led me not to copy and follow Szymanowska's scores exactly, but rather to identify the key principles of performance based on the understanding of these elements.

Also, given the ubiquity of modern instruments nowadays and the rarity of historical ones, it is difficult for performers and listeners to make the leap demanded by 'authenticity as sound'. This explains why I chose to perform on an 'anachronistic' modern instrument. The sound of earlier instruments can have an alienating effect upon an audience not accustomed to it. Also, given the radical change in social behaviours and settings, salon performance seems far removed from modern concert practice, and difficult to recreate, both in terms of venue/acoustics and perception. I prefer to utilise my own experience on earlier instruments to gain inspiration for playing the modern piano in modern settings, rather than limiting the pianist to fortepianos and other early keyboard instruments,

[180] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 87-286.

as in ‘authenticity is sound’.

Meanwhile ‘authenticity as practice’ inspired me to take embodiment as a research tool through early treatises (such as those by Hummel, Field, Czerny and Kalkbrenner), to perceive the performance of Szymanowska through the body.

By these means, I developed my own thoughts for performing Maria Szymanowska’s works in a modern performance setting, which enabled me to take account of the value of the performer advocated by ‘Personal authenticity’.

In this chapter, I will use such an approach to delve into posture and body movement, dynamics and pedalling, as demonstrated in practice through my recitals.

Posture and Body Movement

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, much of the teaching of piano playing was concerned with the technical training of the fingers. A large number of works were composed for this purpose. Among the better known are *Gradus Ad Parnassum* (1817) by Clementi and *The Art of Finger Dexterity Op. 740* (1844) by Czerny. Even machines for exercising the strength of the fingers were created, mostly designed to inhibit the movement of limbs while isolating the fingers.[181] Field emphasized avoiding too much bodily movement and concentrating on finger

[181] Yoshinori Hosaka, “Sumiko Mikimoto’s Piano Method: A Modern Physiological Approach to Piano Technique in Historical Context,” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2009), 11-14.

control.[182]

This restraint on the body is even more noticeable in the demands placed on women in piano performance. In the previous chapter I mentioned that, owing to socio-culturally induced requirements, women of Szymanowska's time needed to play with grace and to maintain feminine 'purity' by avoiding exaggerated movements and drawing less attention to themselves. They played as if they needed to interpret male-composed musical pieces with compliance, rather than being able to be as creative as male musicians, and this limited their behaviour when playing. This is reflected in many of the piano method books of the early nineteenth century. These books defined the performance and repertoire choices for women. In *Letters to a Young Lady*, Czerny, for example, mentions his desire for female piano performers to play with composure and to avoid playing overly complex and difficult repertoire.[183]

The general social and cultural ideology of the period deliberately narrowed the space for women's musical activities to the private sphere. Within this environment, few women presented themselves in public, which was one of the reasons for the flourishing of the salon at the time.[184]

In modern times, however, it is a fact that the body language of the players in piano performances, and even in performances on other instruments, is much

[182] Piggott, *The Life and Music of John Field, 1782-1837*, 105.
[183] Carl Czerny, *Letters to a Young Lady, on the Art of Playing the Pianoforte: From the Earliest Rudiments to the Highest State of Cultivation: Written as an Appendix to Every School for that Instrument*, 2nd ed (London: R. Cocks & Company, 1842), 38.
[184] Tia DeNora, "Music into action: performing gender on the Viennese concert stage, 1790–1810," *Poetics* 30, no. 1-2 (2002): 28.

richer and more exaggerated than it was in Szymanowska's time. The involvement of the arms, the back, the head and even facial expressions all confirm the changes that have taken place in modern performance.[185] For example, pianists Denis Leonidovich Matsuev (1975-), Lang Lang and the female pianists Yuja Wang (1987-) and Mitsuko Uchida make extensive use of bodily and facial movement in their performances.

The use of body language depends on the demands of the pianist's performance, guided by their understanding of melodic flow, dynamic changes, etc. Heinrich Neuhaus (1888-1964), the celebrated Russian pedagogue, also emphasised the importance of mobilizing all parts of the body for modern pianists to create good sound quality.[186] The movement also enhances the public concert stage effect, being another source of information about the musical work that the audience receives in addition to the sound. It is a key factor in the audience's judgement of the performance.[187]

The modern open-mindedness towards performance is even more evident in the acceptance of female pianists. The number of female professional performers and their acceptance has increased significantly compared to the early nineteenth century. The ranks of the first prize winners of international piano competitions

[185] Contemporary accounts of Arcangelo Corelli's violin playing from the early 1700s do, however, stress that he made wild and extreme movements and exhibited impassioned emotional states.
[186] Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, 69.
[187] Jane Davidson, "Communicating with the Body in Performance," in *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*, ed. John Rink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 144–52.

include female pianists who are skilled in the use of physical movement in their performances, such as Martha Argerich (1941-), first prize winner of the VII International Chopin Piano Competition, and Yulianna Avdeeva (1985-), first prize winner of the XVI competition.

Due to these changes, as a modern female pianist, I have attempted to ignore some of the unnecessary restrictions placed on the posture and movements of female performers in the early nineteenth century, to find the appropriate posture and movements for performing Szymanowska's works today, depending on the needs of the performance.

Understanding how the instrument has changed in both periods helped me to realise the need for diverse postures and body movements. Through embodied experience, I have tried to communicate with Szymanowska's works on pianos from different periods.

In the process, it became clear that playing certain passages in the same position on a modern piano as on a piano of Szymanowska's time did not produce exactly the same musical effect. In terms of external appearance, the Broadwood factory purchase records clearly stated that the piano Szymanowska purchased had a 6½ octave keyboard.[188] And the Graf piano I found at the Richard Burnett Collection has only 6 octaves. Modern pianos have expanded to seven octaves plus three lower notes. In addition to the increase in notes, the keys of modern pianos are wider than those of the early nineteenth century. In the 1820s, Graf pianos usually had

[188] Benjamin Vogel, "Maria Szymanowska's Grand Pianos," *Annales – Centre Scientifique de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences à Paris*, vol. 14. (2012): 247.

octave spans of 160mm,[189] while the standard scale of most modern pianos is commonly 188mm.[190] The increased width of the keys required me to utilise more body movements, to stretch arms away from my body in order to touch the keys at a distance.

Compared to modern pianos, the strings and soundboard of early nineteenth-century instruments were thinner. Early keyboard instruments, such as Viennese pianos like the Graf I practised on, had a lighter and simpler wooden frame and could not support as much tension as the metal frame commonly used in modern pianos. The hammers on them were also smaller, shorter and lighter than modern ones, possessing a lighter and simpler action.[191] I found the keys on such a keyboard instrument are easier to touch and can produce a clear but softer sound with relative ease.

In comparison to the Viennese style of piano, the English pianoforte like the Broadwood has a more complex structure. However, the modern piano has a more complex double escapement and heavier hammers than early nineteenth-century pianos, which produce more resonance and louder sound.

In addition, the average key dip of the modern piano is about 10-11mm, whereas on the pianoforte of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it

[189] Stewart Pollens, *A History of Stringed Keyboard Instruments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 33.
[190] Eri Yoshimura and Kris Chesky, "The Application Of An Ergonomically Modified Keyboard To Reduce Piano-Related Pain," *MTNA e-journal* (2009): 2.
[191] Vogel, "Piano – the main attraction of the Polish salon during Maria Szymanowska time," 127.

was about 4-8 mm.[192] The increase in key depth also means an increase in volume range, which is more difficult for me to control with touch on the modern keyboard.

Differences in the structure of instruments suggest that modern pianists, especially female pianists such as myself, should use other body parts along with the fingers to engage the control and coordination of strength in order to match the quality of the modern piano.

Szymanowska's music is mostly known for its *Stil brillant*, a popular style of music during the transition period from the Classical to the Romantic. This style of performance typically focuses on techniques such as trills, fast-running scales, big leaps, and arpeggiation.[193] Szymanowska was also adept at using lyrical melodicism in imitation of singing. One of the most representative pieces is her *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde* (1819). This work was inspired by the French Opéra-Comique *Joconde, ou Les coureurs d'aventures* (1814), composed by Nicolas Isouard (1775-1818). This piece is for professional or advanced amateur pianists and contains scales running across several octaves and numerous big leaps, together with other technical difficulties.[194] It served as a typical example in my recital of how I addressed these challenges through adjustments to posture and movement, while presenting the singing character in performance.

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[192] Kenneth Mobbs, "A performer's comparative study of touchweight, key-dip, keyboard design and repetition in early grand pianos, c. 1770 to 1850," *The Galpin Society Journal* 54 (2001): 11.
[193] Natalia Strelchenko, *Style Brillante: Piano technique in Performance Practice of early 19th century. Critical reflection* (Oslo: The Norwegian Academy of Music, 2011), 11.
[194] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, 104-105.

The left-hand accompaniment from bar 9 of Szymanowska's *Caprice* (Figure 14), for example, requires a legato with a soft tone to set off the singing quality of the main melody. Earlier in my practice, when I sat in 'historical' female style, my arms tended to press their weight passively against the keyboard, accompanied by a feeling of being somewhat restrained. I have also found that if I always maintain the early nineteenth-century tradition of touching the keys with the palms arched, the span of the chords makes it difficult for modern players with small hands to retain a legato line. The legato can be achieved if one concentrates on finger control in exactly the same posture as in the early nineteenth century, but it is easy to cause hand stiffness over time.

The fact that early posture is not always applicable in modern times encouraged me to make adjustments. In my recital, I chose to sit slightly lower in a position that would provide support for the natural movement of the upper body and transfer strength fluently, sometimes bending slightly, to create the softness on the modern piano. I have noticed in my practice that this helps to train the arms actively to relax, which brings about the supple movements of the wrist and fingers and allows the palms of the hands to be flattened somewhat. Making the palms slightly flattened allowed me to better control the evenness of the touch, and prevented the unsuspected sudden sound of modern keys, achieving the effect required earlier. And I combined finger control with wrist and arm movements in a rolling motion. Touching the keys gently in a relaxed state, the hand followed the flow of the accompaniment and consciously distributed the power to each note. Such movements are more conducive to creating the exquisite singing effect on modern

piano. The effects of using the historical posture and the posture after adjustment can be found in Video 1.[195]

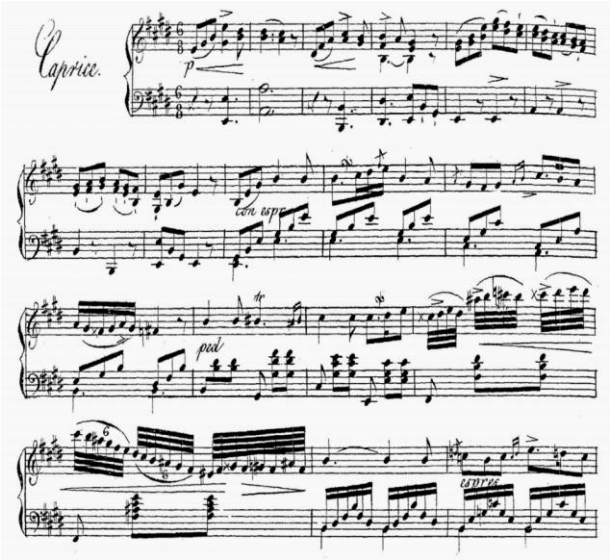

Figure 14. Szymanowska's *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde*, bars 1-17.[196]

The large leaps in the work, such as at bar 71 (Figure 15), are also a problem for modern pianos, because the width of the keyboard has increased. When I played, I placed the fifth finger of the right hand on the g^2, trying not to move the whole arm or swing the palm too much while relaxed, but using the forearm more to swing to the left. Also, keeping the palm slightly flat made it easier for me to touch keys that are at a distance. Given that I am pursuing precise reach and a clean sound, this approach is equivalent to a lever principle involving the entire arm, allowing me to make frequent, rapid, large jumps with ease and flexibility. It avoids too many unnecessary movements to exert too much power and interference with the hand. Video 2 provides the process of exploring appropriate posture and movements.[197]

[195] See https://youtu.be/xIbXTqgHVmQ.
[196] Szymanowska, *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde*.
[197] See https://youtu.be/40nrsrb3gTQ.

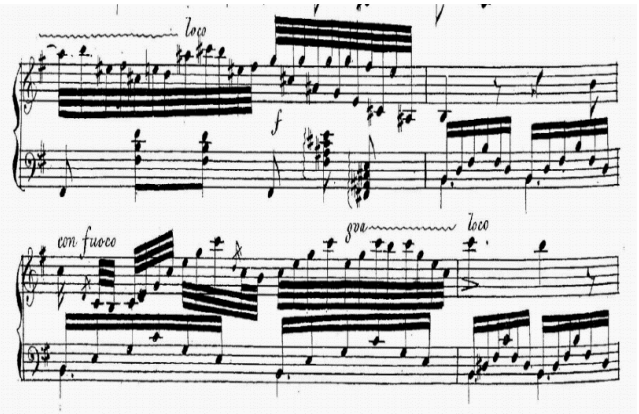

Figure 15. The leaps in Maria Szymanowska's *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde*, bars 71-74.[198]

I found that, on the one hand, as the instrument developed, it was difficult to always maintain exactly the same posture when playing Szymanowska's works. On the other hand, the historical posture comes with a degree of early social restrictions on gender, and for some modern pianists, maintaining this tradition requires the abolition of a performer's personal authenticity.

To conclude, in recitals, I have decided to address the issues such as those arising in the examples with adjusted sitting and hand positions, supplemented by proper body movements, to achieve a relaxed state suitable for the modern pianist according to the technical requirements of the piece and my understanding of Szymanowska's music style. I believe the details can be adapted according to the pianist's personal conditions and the ultimate aim of these adjustments should be to achieve the desired musical effect.

[198] Szymanowska, *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde*.

Dynamics

In contemporary comments about Maria Szymanowska's playing, in addition to the elegance of her posture and her singing tone, there is praise for her handling of dynamics. This technique enriched the musical colours and imagination in her performance. A more detailed account of this remarkable ability of Szymanowska can be found in the music review by Maurycy Mochnacki (1803- 1834), a friend of Chopin and also a music critic:

> In her playing, [...] and the continuity of whole-, half-, and quarter-notes, combined with the most diverse and gradually developed shading in passages from the highest fortissimo to piano, from piano to crescendo, from crescendo to decrescendo, etc., amaze the most exacting connoisseurs.[199]

Szymanowska's attitude to dynamics in her performance has certainly influenced her compositions. In her *Etudes and Preludes* and the *Six Minuets*, for instance, it is clear to see the rich dynamic markings.

For modern pianists, dynamics are an important factor that cannot be overlooked when performing Szymanowska's music, and it is also a challenge to deal with the dynamics in her work. In modern piano works, it is clear that dynamic range has increased, and the emergence of markings such as *fff* and even *ffff* makes us realise that the development of the instrument has led musicians to try to develop more of the capabilities of the modern piano. This also leads me to consider that there may be dynamic differences between the modern piano and the

[199] Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 52.

pianoforte of the early nineteenth century due to their different characteristics.

When I was at the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection,[200] I tried to sense the difference in volume between the early nineteenth-century pianoforte and the modern piano by playing on a Graf from 1826. I found that the Graf was capable of achieving both strong and soft sounds, but its maximum volume could not reach the intensity of the modern piano, even if I pressed the keys with great force. Surprisingly, however, when I tried to touch the keys gently, the Graf responds well in terms of the soft and light sound, which is not easy to achieve on a modern piano.[201] What is more, most pianos of the early nineteenth century had a moderator pedal, a device which places a strip of fabric between the hammer and could make the sound as quiet as that of the clavichord.[202]

One might point out that because the volume of sound of the pianoforte of the early nineteenth century was generally lower than that produced on modern pianos, the volume presented by the dynamic markings in the score could be reduced correspondingly, in decreasing order, when playing Szymanowska's works on the modern piano: for instance, if the *f* were treated as *mf* and the *mp* became *p*, in an attempt to imitate the dynamic effect of Szymanowska's playing by this

[200] The practice on early nineteenth-century instruments in this research is supported by this instrument collection, details of which can be found in Introduction and Chapter 3.
[201] I examined other Viennese pianofortes of the same period as well as English pianos, such as Johann Fritz and John Broadwood, Clementi & Co at the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection of the Finchcocks Charity. The conclusion is the same as in the text, that the English piano has a louder volume than the Viennese, but not to the extent of a modern piano.
[202] Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling*, 18.

means.

With a long habit of playing modern pianos and the experience of listening to modern recordings, one might also encourage pianists to use the modern piano to the best of its capability——given the fact that Szymanowska handled dynamic transitions excellently, modern pianists should play louder to accentuate the dynamic contrasts even more.

In addition to the different characteristics that keyboard instruments have brought with their development, there is another aspect we need to be aware of. Daily life in the nineteenth century would have been much quieter, whereas we in modern times are used to the loud noises that come with modern technology, such as planes and railways.[203] As a result, these influence the perception of the volume on the piano.

At the beginning of my research, I practised playing according to these ideas but did not receive a satisfactory result. Towards the later stages of the research, I would argue that this simple adjustment to reduce or increase the volume proportionally cannot present her music properly given the multiple complications.

The salon was a place to display culture, refinement, wit, and conversation. It would have been considered rude and uncouth to play too loudly or extravagantly in a salon setting.

In addition, Szymanowska, like Hummel, Field and Klengel, is closely associated

[203] Eva&Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart on the keyboard*, trans. Leo Black (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), 20.

with *Stil brillant*. In composing in this style, apart from the techniques included in the performance mentioned, the composers generally aimed for elegance and lightness as showed in Szymanowska's preludes, etudes, and the fantasy. Unlike the typical Romantic musicians of later years, the *Stil brillant* musicians did not approve of extreme dynamic contrasts, especially an excessively heavy sound.[204] Instead, they sought to portray the desired music tone with emotion in an appropriate and refined manner. Szymanowska was adept at creating a singing effect with the pianoforte, which is of interest to the *Stil brillant*. The tone is generally accentuated by the melody and the accompaniment is not overly heavy, to avoid spoiling its vocal-like subtlety.

Szymanowska did not create the richness of tonal colour by using percussive keystrokes to trigger a heavy sound. It is evident from the review of her concert in St Petersburg on 21 April 1824 that she indeed performed in this way:

> Szymanowska's impressive performance and poetic artistry brought out the composer's hidden meaning within the music. Mme. Szymanowska plays in a subtle non-aggressive manner, her touch is delicate and calm, she brings out even and lyrical tones on her instrument […] Her technique was greatly apparent in the last composition [Herz Variations]. The entire audience was enraptured.[205]

Further to these, there seems to be a subtle link between her gender identity

[204] Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," 82.
[205] Kijas, *Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831): A Bio-Bibliography*, 2010, 118, quoted in and translated from Helena Szymanowska-Malewska, *Dziennik 1827-1857*, ed. Zbigniew Sudolski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ancher, 1999).

and the dynamics. When considering the reception of the English piano in Poland, Chopin's teacher Józef Elsner argued that the English movement was too hard and heavy for Polish women and mentioned that even for Szymanowska it might be a challenge.[206] This statement shows that even though Szymanowska was better at presenting dynamics, she was still being measured by the standards of women, who were generally considered to be less powerful than men. And Szymanowska's status as a woman further limited her use of physical movement to exert power. These reflect a degree of prejudice against female pianists like Szymanowska because of their gender at the time. I therefore inferred that due to her gender, Szymanowska did not treat dynamics, especially in terms of *forte*, as heavily as a male pianist.

With all these in mind, when performing Szymanowska's works on the modern piano in recitals, I treated dynamics with more consideration of how they can be used for the elegant and delicate emotional expression that Szymanowska pursued, rather than over-exaggerated volume contrasts.

From the recital repertoire, Szymanowska's Exercise *No. 10* (Figure 16) has a wealth of dynamic markings spanning from *pp* to *ff*. With the absence of recordings and detailed performance documentation and the changed multiple factors mentioned earlier, it becomes a challenge to deal with this dynamic range in my recital.

[206] Dobrzanski, "Maria Szymanowska (1789--1831): Pianist and composer," 68, quoted from Maria Iwanejko, *Maria Szymanowska* (Krakow: Polskie Wydawn Muzyczne, 1959), 73.

In the case of dynamics in Szymanowska's music, it is clear what their role is, but this does not imply that the performer needs to fall into the paradox of avoiding dynamic contrasts due to a fear of exaggerating them. It is important to have an appropriate range for presenting the dynamic contrasts in modern performance. In other words, one can choose to set upper and lower limits for *forte* and *piano* notes. It is already known that Szymanowska often used *crescendo* and *decrescendo* in her compositions, a design that created the richness of sentiment. Through this feature, I derived ways to better grasp the dynamic range of a work on the modern piano which is to classify this range in the usual rank order of *pp>p>mp>mf>f>ff* for six levels of dynamics.

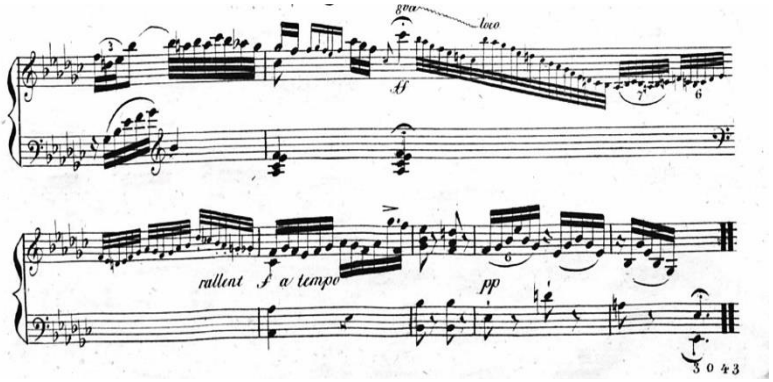

Figure 16. The dynamic range from *ff* to *pp* in Maria Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 10*, bars 21-26.[207]

It is worth noting that in my research, instead of determining the dynamic range from the strongest tones first, I aimed for the volume of *pp* first. The softness of the *pp* has obviously increased the limitations of the modern pianist to express the sound. Because of the mechanics, it is not as easy to play such soft sounds

[207] Szymanowska, *Vingt Exercises et Préludes*.

naturally on a modern piano as it is on the pianoforte of the early nineteenth century. I need to be extremely careful with them.

András Schiff (1998) suggests that piano players need to be imaginative when approaching *pp*.[208] When I tried to present *pp* early in my practice, I was aiming for a faint sound. However, I found this aim could easily lead to a misunderstanding: while overly seeking the low-volume sound that a pianoforte can achieve, the touch of modern piano keys is too weak to develop a normal tone, even resulting in occasional uneven or absent notes.

Daniel Gottlob Türk (1750- 1813), whose piano method was popular in Poland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, emphasised the necessity of making both *forte* and *piano* sound clear and bright to create a beautiful tone.[209] Thus, I reconsidered focusing on presenting a degree of softness that can be achieved while the sound can still be heard with clarity, which is certainly more suited to the qualities of a modern piano. The faint sound effect generated by using an extremely weak touch, and the clear sound effect after adjustment are demonstrated in Audio 6.[210]

So how should I treat *ff*? Should I exert maximum force to present it more clearly? The melody in the part marked *ff* is a fast-moving passage. I found that

[208] András Schiff, "Schubert's Piano Sonatas: Thoughts about Interpretation and Performance," in *Schubert Studies*, ed. Brian Newbould (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 194.
[209] Daniel Gottlob Türk, and Raymond H. Haggh, *School of Clavier Playing, or, Instructions in Playing the Clavier for Teachers & Students* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1982), 354.
[210] See https://youtu.be/2beM8YY8O34.

when too much strength was used to increase the volume to show the *ff*, it somewhat hindered the technical training of the finger dexterity.

It seems to me that *ff* for Szymanowska was mainly about presenting a contrast with the usual soft sound to show the delicate fluctuation of emotions, rather than an extra loud volume. The sixth level of *ff* was reached by gradually increasing the strength to the keyboard. The crucial principle I found in practice is that *ff* should be at the upper limit of strength which can still form a tone, rather than exerting too much force on the keys to produce an unpleasant sound (the contrast can be heard in Audio 7).[211] As Neuhaus said, once the limit is exceeded, what we get is noise.[212]

Here I chose to control my strength, while also paying attention to the relaxation of the arms to avoid reaching the level of 'noise'. The American pianist and educator Otto Rudolph Ortmann (1889-1979) also advocated this method to reduce the noise caused by the impact.[213] The performer needs to listen carefully and adjust the strength repeatedly under this premise to find the appropriate degree for the different dynamics.

For the modern pianist, dynamics brings more than a few challenges to performance. Szymanowska also did not always notate *crescendo* or *decrescendo* to transition dynamic changes in her works. On early pianofortes, sudden dynamic changes, such as from *f* to *p*, or from *p* to *f* could be done relatively easily and sound

[211] See https://youtu.be/n1fSQqiQOsI.
[212] Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, 58.
[213] Otto Ortmann, *The Physical Basis of Piano Touch and Tone: An Experimental Investigation of the Player's Touch Upon the Tone of the Piano* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1925), 150.

clear. Whereas repeating the same operation on a modern piano did not give the same effect, especially from loud to soft.

In bars 35-36 of Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 1* (Figure 17), there are noticeable sudden dynamic changes (*f* followed by a sudden drop to *p*) to evoke a shift in character, emotional colour and mode. Such dramatic change requires a perfect dynamic treatment to clearly delineate the different characteristics of both before and after.

When I was practising on the modern piano from a strong *f* to a soft *p* in an instant, I tried to play the soft sound with less strength. However, the strong resonance of the modern piano meant that the lightness and clarity of the early pianoforte could not be achieved easily on the f^3 . Instead, it was accompanied by a disturbance of the aftertone of the previous strong chords. And it was extremely difficult to control the strength at the moment of pressing the key. Given the tempo of the piece (Vivace), it was difficult to completely pull back from the heavier strength previously applied in time to achieve the desired level of softness. In the other case, the performer will enter into the misunderstanding of not being able to form a full tone, as discussed earlier, by pursuing excessive softness of touch.

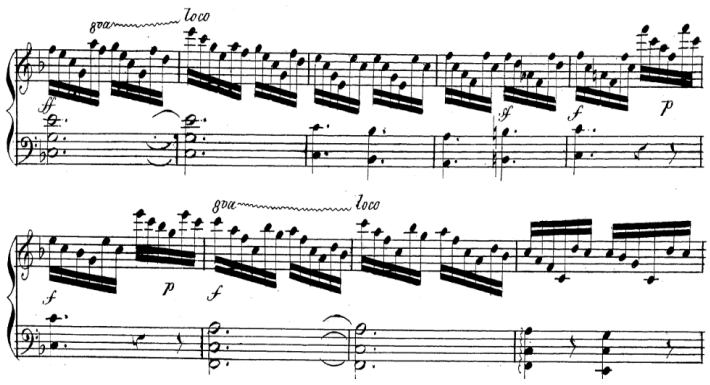

Figure 17. The sudden dynamic changes in Maria Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 1*, bars 31-39.[214]

However, it is still possible to consider solutions in a different way. It may be unsatisfactory to try to improve the insufficient effect of sudden dynamic change on the modern piano by merely adjusting the strength of the keystrokes. Some pianists, such as György Sándor (1912-2005), suggested that the speed of the hammer, controlled by the speed of the keystroke, influences the volume and tone.[215]

In my practice, when the key was pressed quickly, a louder sound was obtained, and a softer sound was produced when the key was pressed more slowly. With such discoveries, I switched from *f* to *p* with a slight delay in touch. After c^2 , I did not rush to play f^3 immediately afterwards. Instead, it was like a slight breath taken by a singer, which is more fitting to Szymanowska's vocal-like playing. This pause did not last too long, it mainly slowed down my touch on f^3 . I noticed that although this operation does not exactly reproduce the effect of sudden dynamic change on early nineteenth-century pianoforte, it still allowed me to improve the problem caused by the resonance delay quite well, providing more lightness and clarity to the soft part.

[214] Szymanowska, *Vingt Exercises et Préludes*.
[215] Sándor, *On Piano Playing: Motion, Sound, and Expression*, 14.

The problem arising from using less strength and the better effect of taking a short pause can be found in Audio 8.[216]

As the above examples suggest, in playing Szymanowska's works the dynamic is not a simple issue of volume level passing through exaggerated contrasts, it is more about presenting a relative effect. Just as Türk suggested: 'every tone must be played with its proper intensity, plainly and clearly separated from the others'.[217] Determining the degree of dynamics is something that can vary depending on the situation, and the clear tone should be an important element for the performer to pursue.

Of course, a competent pianist needs to have insight into dynamics that are not clearly marked in the score. The composers of the late eighteenth century afforded the performer a considerable degree of freedom in dealing with dynamics, the execution of which relied heavily on the performer's comprehension of the work, and in many cases, the performer was also the composer.[218] In addition to the familiar rule that the accompaniment needs to be much softer than the melody, the performer needs to be aware that dynamics are also related to the genre/style of the piece. Different styles of pieces need to be played with the performer's discretion on how to deal with dynamics given the purpose. For example, a waltz should be loud, but a soft waltz can evoke romantic images about an imagined or remembered dance.

[216] See https://youtu.be/Br3d8rtjz18.
[217] Türk and Haggh, *School of Clavier Playing*, 324.
[218] Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900*, 59-61.

In works of this period, the absence of some dynamic markings in the score does not mean that they are excluded from the performance. Therefore, when practising recital repertoire, I tried to speculate on the hidden information imparted by dynamic markings.

In *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde* (Figure 18), bar 126 is marked with *f*, followed by bar 127 and bar 128, both of which are marked again with *f*. At first, when I tried to play exactly as the dynamic notation indicated, with no dynamic changes, the repeated *f* markings made me confused. It encouraged me to consider whether this means that there is some further dynamic change between *f* that has been omitted from the notation, such as a gradual dynamic change.

Some of the nineteenth-century pianists, such as Field, Hummel and Chopin, incorporated the contemporary bel canto style into their aesthetic about the piano, particularly in terms of cantabile and dynamics.[219] The singing quality of the keyboard performance benefits from this approach. Given that Szymanowska's piece is an adaptation of an operatic work whose dynamics clearly mimic vocal singing, I correlated the dynamics with the approach of the vocal singer.

A gradual dynamic change determined by melodic lines is commonly mentioned in treatises of Szymanowska's time, as Czerny says: 'According to the general rule, every ascending passage must be played crescendo, and every descending passage, diminuendo'.[220] Eventually, I made a *decrescendo* and then a *crescendo* in bars 126-

[219] Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher: As Seen by His Pupils* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 112. Bel canto style is an Italian term that translates as fine singing, as represented in contemporary opera.
[220] Czerny, *Letters to a Young Lady*, 15.

128, as the melody falls and rises. This allowed the melody to flow naturally into each marked *forte*, which is exactly the way vocalists often present in their singing. The contrast between playing exactly the dynamic notation indicated in the score and adopting gradual dynamic changes can be heard in Audio 9.[221]

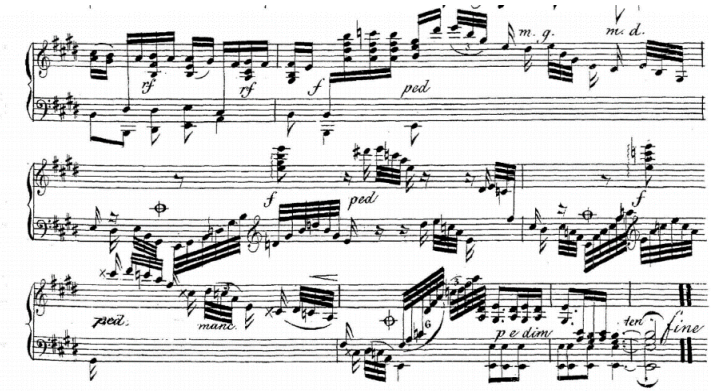

Figure 18. Maria Szymanowska's *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde*, bars 125-131.[222]

Certainly, this is a solution I tried for the dynamic omission, and we cannot indicate the exact way that all the dynamics in the works should be handled. Yet it is possible to try to find the ideal sound in practice, appropriately based on the pianist's experience and taste.

Pedals

From the time when Maria Szymanowska lived to the present day, piano pedals have developed both in terms of the construction of keyboard instruments, the sound effects they convey and people's attitudes towards them in performance. Szymanowska did write some pedal markings in her piano works, such as in the *Six*

[221] See https://youtu.be/x9OZeWwEV5Y.
[222] Szymanowska, *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde*.

Minuets, *Six Marches*, and *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde*, but these lack specific explanations and performance instructions.

In the previous discussion, it was suggested that, even though Szymanwoska, Hummel and Field, among others, showed a more cautious attitude towards the pedal as a relatively new device, in their scores or their treatises, it is still possible to detect signs of a gradual opening of their minds to the pedal. Many modern pianists, on the other hand, esteem the pedal for its role in performance as it gives the piano richer tones and removes dryness. Thus, in the performance of Szymanowska's works, these complexities have led me to explore some ideas, to fill in and develop effective pedal usage in modern days.

The most obvious pedal markings in Szymanowska's works are intended for the sustaining pedal, also known as the damper pedal, a device that is still used on modern pianos. This pedal gives the piano a rich resonant effect. Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894) called the damper pedal the soul of the piano.[223] At the beginning of the nineteenth century, composers usually depressed it to enhance the harmonic coherence between notes, enriching the sonority and gaining an opportunity to extend the tone. Field, who played in a similar style to Szymanowska, benefited from this operation in his nocturnes, which have a slight harmonic blurring effect. Indeed, composers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries suggested that in some situations the use of a sustaining pedal could achieve a singing tone,[224]

[223] Alfred Brendel, "Schubert's Piano Sonatas, 1822–1828," *Alfred Brendel on Music* (Chicago: A Cappella Books, 2001), 144.
[224] Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling*, 48.

which is also a feature of Szymanowska's playing that is often praised.

Since the structure of the piano differs between the early nineteenth century and today, however, the notation associated with the sustaining pedal in the early scores presents limitations. For today's pianist, the notations *ped.* and * are often counterintuitive, resulting in poor legato or over-lasting resonance. On the other hand, did Szymanowska want the sustaining pedal to be used only when she wrote it down? All of these concerns lead today's pianists to approach the pedal with more discretion and sensitivity.

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, when using the sustaining pedal in a pianoforte such as the Graf of the 1820s, the sound of the high register does not overlap between harmonies in a chaotic way. On the contrary, a beautiful coherent tone can be achieved. The harmonic changes in the low register of the pianoforte are more blurred than in the high register. But this degree of slight blurring is not to the point of being disturbing, instead creating a soft fluctuating pattern as in Field's Nocturnes, a distinctive harmonic mist that serves to complement the high register.

The more powerful resonances of the modern piano have led to the development of sustained pedal effects. Such a degree of resonance not only extends the duration of the harmony, but also increases the volume. In many cases, when I followed the pedal indications in Szymanowska's scores precisely, it would lead to confusion. The longer reverberations of the louder sound usually result in a constant collision between harmonies, creating a mess. For these reasons, it is necessary to consider how to balance the use of the sustaining pedal in the performance of Szymanowska's works.

Many composers use the pedal to achieve large leaps that cannot be made by hand alone, and Maria Szymanowska is no exception. From my recital repertoire, in bars 32-34 of *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde* (Figure 19), the sustaining pedal seems to be used to maintain a coherent image with multiple large spans of melody and accompaniment. The next indication of the sustaining pedal is not given again until bar 35. This solved the problem of dryness in the sound when played on the pianoforte in the early nineteenth century and made the melody sound more fluent.

However, such instructions can lead to confusion on a modern piano, especially for those who have not practised on a fortepiano. In practice, I found that the sustaining pedal across several bars seemed long and even difficult to accept, because of the more powerful resonance of the modern piano and the consequent louder volume. As a result, I decided to adjust the use of the sustaining pedal.

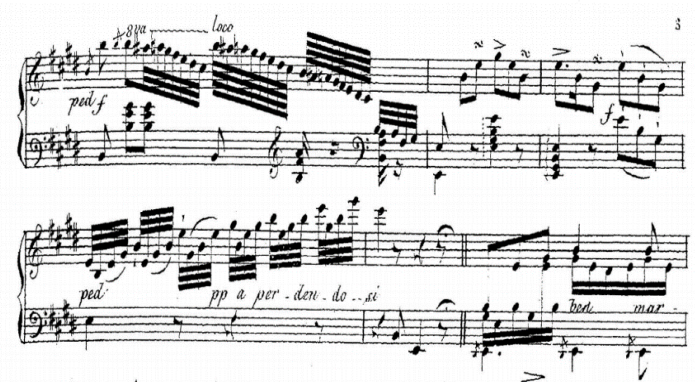

Figure 19. The sustaining pedal marks in Maria Szymanowska's *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde*, bars 32-37.[225]

Most people, faced with this overwhelming accumulation of sound caused by

[225] Szymanowska, *Caprice sur la romance de Joconde*.

using the sustaining pedal for a long time on a modern piano, would choose to shorten the duration of the pedal depression. What needs to be considered, however, is whether this destroys the sound effect for which the piece was originally designed. Through practice, I found that it is difficult to determine where to release the pedal when following the shortening option. The abrupt transitions caused the integrity of the phrase to be disturbed, especially for the melody part in the high register. This puts the performer in a dilemma. Both following the pedal markings precisely and shortening the pedal duration make it tough to reach an ideal state of performance.

There is no doubt that the long pedal provides a better emphasis on the structure of the phrase. The structural integrity of the phrase is particularly important for this piece, which is an adaptation of a vocal work, and it would be a pity to abandon it out of hand. Instead of just focusing on changing the length of the pedal, I tried to shift our attention to controlling how deep the pedal is depressed. Most pedal markings simply indicate when the pedal is depressed, but not by how much. Sándor pointed out that in addition to depressing the pedal completely, the performer can depress a half pedal, or even one third or less. By depressing the pedal completely, the dampers are removed from the string to the greatest extent possible. With a partially depressed sustaining pedal, the dampers touch the strings very slightly, and different sound effects are obtained.[226]

By continually adjusting the depth of pedal depressions and listening, I eventually decided to play the long passages with only a third of the pedal

[226] Sándor, *On piano playing: Motion, Sound and Expression*, 164.

depressed. This method helped to reduce the resonance, as it caused part of the string to vibrate. At the same time, this operation ensured a certain degree of potential coherence. Although a slight blurring still occurred, this was in fact the effect of what was contained in some of the earlier keyboard-played works discussed earlier. Modern performers often resort to a more aggressive approach in order to cover up this blurring, which is not really a wise choice. Performers can experiment repeatedly in similar situations to find the appropriate degree of partial pedal depression and explore more richness of tone once they have become proficient at this skill. The process of finding solutions to the problems posed by long pedal can be found in Video 3.[227]

Most of the pedal markings that appear in Szymanowska's compositions are marked directly below the notes. This was the more common type of pedalling in the early nineteenth century and is called rhythmic or simultaneous pedalling. This method allowed the pedal to fall on the beat, meaning that the note and the pedal were pressed at the same moment. Early pianists hoped that this technique would enhance resonance by raising the damping, thus effectively acting as an emphasis.[228] Unlike the early pianoforte where the sound was able to pass away over time with this approach, the modern piano continues and even amplifies the effect of resonance until once again the most obvious problem between the modern piano and the sustaining pedal emerges: chaos. This is particularly evident in the position marked by the pedal below the notes in the low register.

[227] See https://youtu.be/ENvSP3yEa30.
[228] Sandra P Rosenblum, "Pedaling the Piano: A Brief Survey from the Eighteenth Century to the Present," *Performance Practice Review* 6, no. 2 (1993): 162-167.

The problem of using rhythmic pedalling was exposed at the beginning of the Trio in *Six Minuets No. 6* (Figure 20) when I was practising. The first sustaining pedal mark appears below the F. This degree of low register, followed by two sets of chords, makes the rhythmic pedalling clearly inappropriate for modern pianos.

Another technique I eventually adopted in my recital, commonly used after the mid-nineteenth century, is syncopated pedalling, in which the pianist has to press the pedal immediately after the note is played.[229] As shown by the comparison in Video 4,[230] the advantages of this method can be demonstrated when it is used in the case of *No. 6*. Because the pedal came in after F, the involvement of the F in the resonance was diminished. It avoided to a large extent any 'muddying' of the harmony that followed. On the other hand, because the pedal and F formed a coherent set of actions, it could still be beneficial for large leaps.

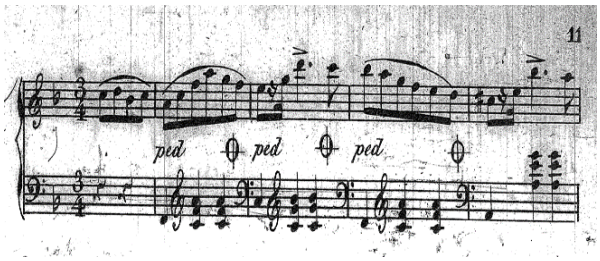

Figure 20. The sustaining pedal marks in Maria Szymanowska's *Six Minuets No. 6*, bars 33-36.[231]

Also, it cannot be ruled out that Szymanowska used a pedal in her playing when the sustaining pedal markings were missing in the score. The omission of

[229] Rosenblum, "Pedaling the Piano: A Brief Survey from the Eighteenth Century to the Present," 166.
[230] See https://youtu.be/oHrjuHHME30.
[231] Szymanowska, *Six Minuets*.

pedal notation was common for pianists of her time, even for Steibelt.[232] Modern pianists are advised to use their sensitive ears and understanding of the work to make wider choices and break the limitations of markings on the score. Field was adept at using sustaining pedals in nocturnes, but he also did not make any pedal notations in his piano work *Nocturne in B-flat major*. This inspired me to utilise the effective sustaining pedal in recital when playing Szymanowska's *Nocturne in B-flat* even where there were no notated markings, maintaining the harmonies and achieving the slightly hazy character of the nocturne (Video 5).[233]

In addition to the sustaining pedal, there were also 'soft' pedals in the early nineteenth century, such as the una corda, moderator and lute. When this type of pedal was depressed, the hammer hit only one or two of the three strings of the pianoforte to obtain a different and specific tone. A similar device can be found on the modern piano, usually the left pedal. Szymanowska did not give any clear and detailed indications about the soft pedal. The attempt to use this type of pedal in Szymanowska's music today needs further discussion.

There are some positive attitudes towards the soft pedal in terms of its behaviour in presenting soft dynamics, while some believe it is meant to present a special sonority. Hummel and Field, within Szymanowska's musical circle, rarely marked in their works or explained in detail their attitude toward the soft pedal. Yet they did make use of such pedals in their playing. Field did not tend to use the soft pedal very often, and his use of this pedal was not intended for the control of

[232] David Rowland, "Early Pianoforte Pedalling: The evidence of the earliest printed markings," *Early music* 13, no. 1 (1985): 9.
[233] See https://youtu.be/HoPQNZtP2gA.

pianissimo sound.[234] Beethoven, for his part, explicitly expressed his use of una corda to create a special effect called the mezza voce, which can be translated as 'half voice'.[235] In modern times, some of the most famous pianists have expressed their views on this type of pedal. Neuhaus disapproved of the use of the soft pedal in the pursuit of all degrees of *pianissimo*, whereas, in contrast, the alteration of the tone is the value it should have.[236] Schiff also rejects such a use.[237]

Traces of Szymanowska's use of the soft pedal in the scores are difficult to find. It seems a risky move to use the soft pedal at low volume for numerous phrases of her works. But the singing character of her music leads me to suggest that it might be possible to exploit some of the advantages of the soft pedal with great discretion.

When the soft pedal is used in the middle of a performance, it is difficult to ensure that the sudden changes in tone do not seem extreme. Nevertheless, the soft pedal can be useful in some cases for phrase endings and slurs, which I applied in the recital. In Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes*, the last two bars of *No. 20* in the cantabile style (Figure 21), I depressed the soft pedal, to compensate for the lack of softness in tone of the modern piano. As shown in Video 6,[238] it connected the four chords in a more distant, slightly muffled tone without being

[234] Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling*, 141, quoted from Dessauer, *John Field: sein Leben und seine Werke* (Langensalza: H. Beyer & Söhne, 1912), 44.
[235] Charles Rosen, *Piano Notes: The World of the Pianist* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 253.
[236] Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, 167.
[237] Schiff, "Schubert's Piano Sonatas: Thoughts about Interpretation and Performance," in *Schubert Studies*, 194.
[238] See https://youtu.be/88liEfkClTM.

abrupt in the presence of a rest, similar to the singer's natural treatment at the end. Of course, this approach needs to be tried and listened to in order to be applicable to similar situations, rather than being adopted as a general habit.

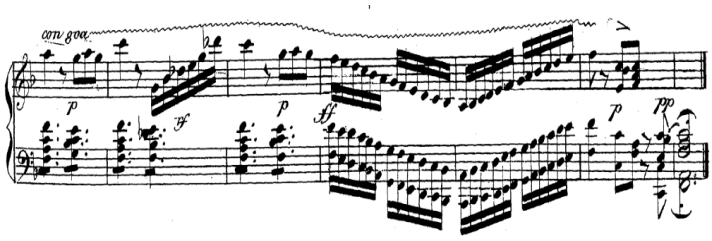

Figure 21. The ending in Maria Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 20*, bars 83-89.[239]

Unlike the sustaining pedal and the soft pedal of the modern piano, which are similar to the pedal devices of the early nineteenth century, the sostenuto pedal (also known as the middle pedal), is a relatively new device. It does not belong to the period in which Szymanowska lived, but emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century and is still in use today.[240] Sándor praised this device as one of the reasons for the significant improvements in modern piano and encouraged to learn the use of this pedal.[241]

In a way, the sostenuto pedal is similar to the sustaining pedal in that both serve to extend the sound. But it is special in that it can sustain a single note or chord while giving freedom to subsequent notes that are not expected to have the same effect, it is more targeted. Modern pianists generally use this pedal to maintain or accentuate an important note or chord in a phrase, so that the rest part of the

[239] Szymanowska, *Vingt Exercises et Préludes*.
[240] Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling*, 23.
[241] Sándor, *On piano playing*, 172.

phrase will not be too blurred by the accumulated resonance. The sostenuto pedal is used somewhat similarly to the syncopated pedalling, it is depressed after the target note has been pressed.

In recital, the advantage of this 'new' pedal device was shown in *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 10*. In bar 4 (Figure 22) the pianist's ability to play the next three chords while retaining the minim d in the left-hand accompaniment is further challenged by the increased width of the modern piano keys. This is particularly true for those with small hands like me, a female performer. In passages where the accompaniment notes are mostly in the low register and marked with a *crescendo*, using the sustaining pedal did not seem to be a good decision for me— as the volume increased, the resonance effect became more powerful, leading to the risk of the melody being overshadowed by the accompaniment.

I noticed that the sostenuto pedal had a better result in dealing with this problem. I depressed the sostenuto pedal immediately after pressing the D and released it as soon as the time value of the D was finished. This allowed me to play the next three chords more liberally, while preserving and emphasising the D. Video 7 demonstrates that, compared to the sustaining pedal, the sostenuto pedal preserves the original structure of the phrase to a great extent and ensures clarity of sound.[242] The qualities of the sostenuto pedal do deserve to be examined more carefully in some specific cases when modern pianists consider how to deal with the differences between the two eras of keyboard instruments.

[242] See https://youtu.be/npt_FPWC1cI.

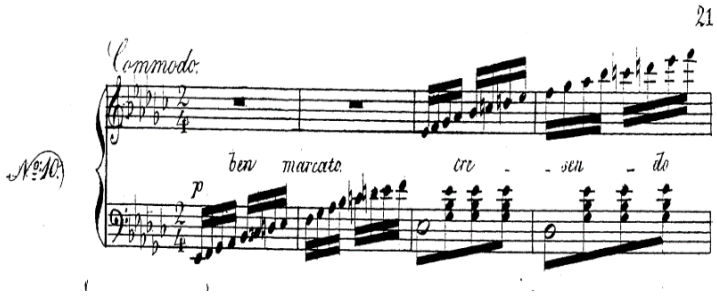

Figure 22. Maria Szymanowska's *Vingt Exercises et Préludes No. 10*, bars 1-4.[243]

[243] Szymanowska, *Vingt Exercises et Préludes*.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

This study has examined how to perform Szymanowska's piano works in the modern day from various perspectives, concentrating on considerations of authenticity, history, and gender. Considered from the standpoint of today's piano player/learner, this study proposed feasible solutions to performance issues in the process of answering a series of research questions, with the final results presented in two recitals of Szymanowska's piano works.

Following the introduction, in Chapter 2, my examination of the close connection between Szymanowska's environment and her career development during the major stages of her life suggests potential significance to the modern performer (Research Question 2).

The historical evidence suggests that she liked to emphasise emotion, especially in the societal background of Polish nationalism, invigorated by imperial threats from both East and West. More importantly, her interest and experience of contemporary opera, especially Italian, inspired her to project a singing cantabile tone in her piano performances. Connected to her interest in opera was her use of the fashionable *Stil brillant*, which derived in large part from highly ornamented vocal melodies translated into instrumental virtuosity. With these findings in mind, I was able to target several principles I intended to present when performing her music in recitals (RQ 5). What's more, the evidence relating to her activities in the salon and public concerts demonstrated the extent of Szymanowska's achievements in confronting limitations due to gender (RQ 4).

In Chapter 3, I used detailed contemporary reviews and treatises relating to Szymanowska's male peers, Hummel and Field, whose performance styles were considered similar to hers, to gain insights into the vague information on performance present in sources concerning her (RQ 3). The similarities with male musicians like Hummel and Field served to underline the fact that she was treated as an equal professional. At the same time, she was able to retain the feminine traits that the public would expect to see, as well as satisfy the needs of the female market for which she was targeted (RQ 4). I described how the performance traditions in terms of posture, tempo, tempo rubato and pedalling can be used in the interpretation of Szymanowska's music. The evidence presented significantly influenced my approach to performance in recitals (RQ 5).

The painting from Szymanowska's album presenting her performance posture, in addition to contemporary accounts of how women sat at the piano, helped to explain what Hummel and Field emphasised in this regard (RQ 3). This implied that she acquiesced to the restrictions on the performance posture expected of women, to ward off any criticism (RQ 4). This discovery motivated me to revisit posture in performance today.

The study of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century tempo conventions altered my perception of tempo terms as mechanistic and standardized (RQ 3). I followed instead the early conventions in my recitals, guided by Hummel's views and practices of making the tempo of the music emotionally oriented and playing at a somewhat faster speed than the usual modern perception (RQ 5).

The next thing I discovered is the existence of an early type of tempo rubato,

which I had previously overlooked. A concert review of Szymanowska mentions that she used such rubato (cf. page 56). Szymanowska's use of rubato can be understood as an attempt to challenge the improvisatory behaviour common to her male peers by projecting this creative ability (RQ 4). The limitations of the evidence were supplemented by a comparison between the singing character of Szymanowska's music and sources that documented the use of rubato by Hummel and Field (RQ 3). By these means, I was able to determine the application of early rubato as used by Szymanowska and apply it in the recital repertoire (RQ 5).

As for pedalling, after identifying the keyboard type used by Szyanowska, I examined Hummel's and Field's approaches to guide me in obtaining inspiration (RQ 3). I found that contemporaries focused on clarity when using pedals, but this was insufficient for making decisions in recitals. The complexity of pedal notations in the scores of Szymanowska, Hummel, and Field, as compared to their actual performances, as well as the differences in pedal construction between modern and early pianos, suggesting differences in perceptions of sound clarity, can lead to confusion for modern pianists.

As the findings pointed to the need for more applied critical thinking, I became aware that there was no simple answer to the 'authentic' reproduction of Szymanowska's performance practice. This led me to reconsider the meaning of HIP (RQ 1). In Chapter 4, I attempted to seek out practical performance possibilities for modern pianists through embodied practice (RQ 4). In descending order of significance, I applied the following authenticities in my recitals: 'Authenticity as Practice'; 'Personal Authenticity'; 'Authenticity as Sound'; and 'Authenticity as

Intention'. I presented solutions to challenges in posture and movement, dynamics, and pedalling in my recitals, whilst keeping in mind Szymanowska's 'feminine' singing style (RQ 5).

In terms of posture and movement, I considered the development of views on female pianists, instruments and performance methods in both periods. This resulted in convincing arguments that Szymanowska's performance posture was influenced to some extent by gender (RQ 4). And in my embodied practice I found that the early posture made it difficult for me to use the strength in a relaxed state to present the techniques required by the repertoire. Thus, I weakened the early restrictions on the female pianist's posture and made some adjustments to the early treatises that focused on the fingers, to reach a result more suited to modern pianists (RQ 4). I adopted a relaxed posture and appropriate body movements (including seating and wrist height adjustments and palm extensions, forearm swings, etc.) in recitals to meet the demands of techniques such as large leaps across the keyboard. This is effective in a modern performance setting for balancing strengths without disrupting the singing quality of Szymanowska's music (RQ 5).

In terms of dynamics, I demonstrated that the original markings may be misleading due to different performance settings and perceptions of dynamics at different periods. I analysed the close connection between Szymanowska's 'feminine' style and dynamics and gained sound inspiration on period keyboards (RQ4). I then experimented with the qualities of modern pianism while fitting the acclaimed effect of clarity, elegance, and vocal-like singing subtlety in Szymanowska's playing (RQ 4). In recitals, I demonstrated, through some

representative examples, how I accomplished the challenges of graded dynamic markings such as *pp*, *ff*, and sudden changes, as well as missing markings in scores, by using appropriate strength and speed of touch, and by learning from singers (RQ 5).

Previous concerns about the pedalling tradition being caused by multiple factors were further verified in practice. In recitals, I presented my effective use of pedals in modern piano performance, as I have discovered through embodied practice (RQ 4 & 5). The series of suggestions include the use of partial and syncopated pedals to alleviate the chaos caused by sustaining pedal when it intends to maintain legato, speculation on the use of pedals in unmarked nocturnes, the benefits of the soft pedal in special endings, and the use of the sostenuto pedal to relieve unexpected resonance when connecting chords.

With these results, this study suggests a reasonable reconstruction of Szymanowska's practice in the modern day (RQ 1). My approach is to filter the evidence through my own personal agency as a modern female performer, making it possible to present Szymanowska's music in the present with a form that contains both historical and modern vitality. This research will hopefully influence the modern performer to attempt a posture that is premised on being able to satisfy the needs of the music well, rather than being confined by unnecessary cultural ideologies. Rather than following the simple information that appears on the score, tempo can be analysed and evaluated in various aspects of the contemporary context. Rubato can be identified as the corresponding type based on the collected accounts, and the performers can try to feel the charms of improvisation not

available in the scores according to the guidance provided by the early treatises. The performer can also realise that similar early dynamic effects can be experienced on the modern piano through a grasp of the musical style and adaptation of playing techniques. Changes in the construction of the pedals require adjustments and even innovations to be used in practice on the modern piano, rather than blindly following early pedalling and score markings, to avoid phrase structures and sound effects significantly different from those of the early period.

Finally, I hope that this study of Szymanowska will shed new light on her performance practice and encourage more pianists to explore her works. The structure of this study set out to demonstrate the importance of combining practice with theory and to bridge the gap between the two. It thus promotes the further development of embodied practice in the field of historical performance (particularly in relation to female musicians) and demonstrates the feasibility of music researchers supplementing scholarly material by using embodied practice to broaden their thinking from a performer's perspective. It is also intended to motivate performers to reflect critically on HIP, to develop their skills in practice according to the situation and demands. In addition to those performers who may benefit from this research, the methods involved might also be applied in pedagogy more broadly to explore a range of interpretative options for the performance of early nineteenth-century piano music.

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