
GRIEF, DENIAL AND RAGE
A Revisionist View of Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on five common examples of editorial licence that find resonance in practically all performances and recordings of the Adagio sostenuto of Beethoven's fourteenth piano sonata. The sixteen editions cited include those by Cappi (First Viennese Edition, 1802), Simrock (First German Edition, 1802), Czerny (1856), Liszt (1857), von Bülow (1871) and Schnabel (1935), and two Urtext editions published by Henle Verlag (1980 and 2013). The five examples of editorial licence are:

- 1. almost universal disregard of the tempo alla breve specification;*
- 2. a traditional pianistic cantabile voicing for the two principal subjects contrary to the composer's explicit directives;*
- 3. forcing the swells of the second subject to be expressed in the melodic line instead of in the accompaniment only;*
- 4. shifting the climax of each swell in measures 28-31 of the development section;*
- 5. re-distribution of the swells in measures 62-65 of the coda.*

Example 1 appeared implicitly in 1846 with Czerny's slow metronome marking and became explicit in Liszt's 1857 edition by replacement of the alla breve sign with common time; either or both of these practices have been widely copied. Although modern Urtext editions contain none of the above distortions beyond one tiny instance in the coda, the highly influential editions by von Bülow and Schnabel incorporate all five of them, as do most extant recordings and contemporary performances.

It is suggested that these five editorial distortions sit more comfortably with the popular image of this sonata influenced by association with romantic love and moonlight. Against this, adherence to the Autograph renders more coherent an interpretation of the three movements of the sonata as a confidential confession to the keyboard of the composer's grief, denial and rage, respectively, on being confronted with tragedy. According to this interpretation, the opening Adagio sostenuto is inarticulate with grief, the concluding Presto agitato is inarticulate with rage, while the intervening dance-like Allegretto contrives the carefree flippancy of denial. The two well-recognised possible sources of the tragedy – unfulfilled love and encroaching deafness – are discussed in the light of two different approaches to rendering the music of the Adagio: distorted versus undistorted.

Table 1

Examples of editorial distortion in the *Adagio sostenuto* movement of Beethoven's *op. 27 no. 2*. Shaded cells and text indicate departures from Beethoven's *Autograph*. Audio clips illustrating these departures relative to the *Autograph* may be found at <http://www.qedinteractive.com.au/LVB27-2.htm>.

Example No.		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
Editor; Publisher	Year	Pulse MM ♩ =	1st Subject special <i>pp</i> sign unmodified	2nd Subject dynamic shaping	Climax of swell in measures 28-31	'Hairpin' placement in <i>coda</i>	
						Measures 62-63	Measures 64-65
Ludwig van Beethoven; <i>Autograph</i>	1801	<i>Alla breve</i> ⁺ -	E*: Yes ⁺ , R*: Yes, C*: Yes	No	4th half-beat	Above treble	Below bass
First Viennese Edition; Gio. Cappi e Comp, Vienna	1802	<i>Alla breve</i> -	E: Yes, R: Yes, C: <i>pp</i> not aligned with LH G sharp as in <i>Autograph</i>	No	Inconsistent	Between staves	Below bass
First German Edition; N Simrock, Bonn	1802	<i>Alla breve</i> -	E: Yes, R: No special <i>pp</i> C: <i>pp</i> between staves	No	8 th eighth-note; M29 > omitted	Between staves	Between staves
Carl Czerny; N Simrock, Bonn	ca. 1856	<i>Alla breve</i> 60	E: Yes, R: No special <i>pp</i> C: <i>pp</i> between staves	No	8 th eighth-note; M29 > omitted	Between staves	Between staves
Franz Liszt; Ludwig Holle, Wolfenbüttel	1857	Common time -	E: Yes, R: Yes, C: <i>pp</i> between staves	No	Mostly 2nd beat (i.e., 3rd beat in common time)	Between staves	Between staves
Ignaz Moscheles ; Eduard Hallberger, Stuttgart	1860	Common time 60	E: Yes, R: Yes, C: <i>pp</i> between staves	No	2nd beat (i.e., 3rd beat in common time)	Between staves	Between staves
S Lebert & H von Bülow; J G Cotta, Stuttgart	1871	Common time 52	E: footnote instruction to emphasise the melody, R: melody marked <i>più marcato del principio.</i> , C: <i>pp</i> replaced with <i>una corda</i> ; G# marked <i>marc.</i>	Yes – accent on C in measure 16 of exposition; accents on D in measures 52 and 54 of recapitulation, each preceded by a <i>crescendo</i> on the respective anacrusis.	2nd beat (i.e., 3rd beat in common time)	Between staves	Between staves
Giuseppe Buonamici; Augener, London	1903	Common time 54	E: melody marked <i>p</i> R: Yes C: <i>pp</i> between staves	Yes – <i>crescendo</i> on anacrusis	2nd beat (i.e., 3rd beat in common time)	Between staves	Between staves
Alexander Winterberger; G Bratfisch, Frankfurt	1908	<i>Alla breve</i> 63	E: Yes, R: Yes, C: <i>pp</i> not aligned with LH G sharp as in <i>Autograph</i>	No	2nd beat	Between staves	Between staves
L Köhler & A Ruthardt; C F Peters, Leipzig	1910	<i>Alla breve</i> -	E: Yes, R: Yes, C: <i>pp</i> between staves	No	2nd beat	Between staves	Between staves
A Casella; G Ricordi & C., Milan	1920	<i>Alla breve</i> 60	E: " <i>ma espress.</i> " added, R: No special <i>pp</i> , C: <i>pp</i> between staves	Yes – <i>crescendo</i> 'hairpin' on anacrusis above the treble staff followed by accent on first beat	2nd beat	Between staves	Between staves
M Pauer & CA Martiniessen; C F Peters, Leipzig	1920 1927	<i>Alla breve</i> -	E: Yes, R: Yes, C: <i>pp</i> between staves	No	2nd beat	Between staves	Between staves
H Schenker; Universal Edition, Vienna / Dover Publications, New York	1921 / 1975	<i>Alla breve</i> -	E: Yes, R: Yes, C: <i>pp</i> below bass	No	2nd beat	Above treble	Below bass
Artur Schnabel; Edizioni Curci, Milan	1935	<i>Alla breve</i> 63	**See Schnabel Example 2 below	Yes – <i>crescendo</i> 'hairpin' on anacrusis above the treble staff; original 'hairpins' relocated below bass staff	2nd beat	Between staves	Between staves
B A Wallner & C Hansen (Urtext); Henle Verlag, Munich	1980	<i>Alla breve</i> -	E: Yes, R: Yes, C: <i>pp</i> below bass	No	4th half-beat	Above treble	Below bass
Kendall Taylor; Allans Publishing Limited, Melbourne	1987	<i>Alla breve</i> 52-54	E: General <i>diminuendo</i> sign added in measure 4; ' <i>cantabile</i> ' added alongside <i>pp</i> applied to opening theme at measure 5, R: Yes, C: <i>pp</i> below bass	Yes – <i>crescendo</i> on anacrusis in both exposition and recapitulation; <i>decrescendo</i> in succeeding measure in exposition only	2nd beat	Above treble	Below bass
N Gertsch & M Perahia (Urtext); Henle Verlag, Munich	2013	<i>Alla breve</i> -	E: Yes, R: Yes, C: <i>pp</i> not aligned with LH G sharp as in <i>Autograph</i>	No	4th half-beat	Above treble	Below bass

⁺Assumed from both First Editions.

*E: Exposition at measure 5, R: Recapitulation at measure 42, C: Coda at measure 60.

**Schnabel Example 2

E: Adds *diminuendo* 'hairpin' in preceding measure and *ppp* sign for preceding half-beat,

R: Adds *diminuendo* 'hairpin' at 1st beat and *ppp* at 2nd half-beat,

C: Adds *pp* above treble at 1st beat, *ppp* above treble at 2nd half-beat and "*dolcissimo*" to LH melody at 4th half-beat

Schnabel also adds alongside the *pp* sign in the exposition the words "*dolcissimo, cantando, con intimissimo sentimento ma molto semplice, non patetico a sempre bene in tempo e misura*". At the equivalent point in the recapitulation he simply adds "*come prima*".