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Chopin performance tradition and its relationship to analysis

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City University of New York, 1994

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CHOPIN PERFORMANCE TRADITION AND
ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ANALYSIS

by

Steven Graff

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts, The City
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Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	v
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 The A Minor Mazurka, op. 59, no. 1	7
Kapell	12
Rubinstein	16
Ax	23
Second and Third Periods	31
Kapell	36
Rubinstein	38
Ax	43
Chapter 3 The Preludes	48
The A Major Prelude	55
Cone	60
Rosenthal	66
Rubinstein	72
The G Major Prelude	78
Cortot	89
Bolet	97
Chapter 4 Summary	107
Bibliography	115

Chapter 1

Introduction

Many analyses in recent decades have been dedicated to the study of Chopin's structural genius. His ability to create a satisfying musical journey within the smallest of forms, and his inventiveness in maintaining interest throughout pieces built almost entirely on four-bar phrases constitute aspects of his compositional skill that analysts continue to explore. Accordingly, the duty of pianists involves exploring the means of conveying such structural subtleties in their interpretations.

To what degree, then, have great Chopin interpreters actually demonstrated in their performances an awareness of the same issues that analysts have written so much about? In what ways do analytical perceptions of the progression of events in particular passages ultimately correspond with pianistic expression? For example, have pianists conveyed the means in which Chopin is able to provide a complete sense of closure within a prelude that lasts only seconds, or have they provided a sense of the tension created by the juxtaposition of a phrase overlap over a seemingly symmetrical four-bar structure? What types of analytical ideas seem to be directly related to performance, and what remain purely theoretical?

In this study I have taken some of my own analytical ideas, those of several analysts, determined what I believe they suggest to pianism, compared them to various recordings, and arrived at conclusions regarding certain aspects of the relationship between the analysis and performance of a sampling of Chopin's music. And as this study is designed as a performance practice guide for the piano student, I focus on exposing some of the pianistic devices great Chopin interpreters have used to convey analytical concepts in their performances.

In the first chapter I discuss the A Minor Mazurka, op. 59, no. 1, incorporating my own analytical and interpretive ideas with commentary by William Rothstein,¹ and explore how three pianists perform specific portions of the piece. As avoiding predictable phrasing in passages in which Chopin maintains four-bar units should very well represent one of the Chopin interpreter's concerns, at the beginning of this chapter I concentrate on various ways the three pianists add interest to the opening of the mazurka, a period built on three four-bar hypermeasures, by employing phrasing that counteracts monotony without disrupting the overall structure. As the piece develops, Chopin begins to toy with the four-bar patterning,

¹"Phrase rhythm in Chopin's nocturnes and mazurkas," in *Chopin Studies*, Jim Samson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 115-142.

employing phrase expansion and phrase overlap, and I discuss what the implications of these events are to Rothstein, and some of the ways the pianists convey them. In the process my discussion centers on facets of phrasing and nuance that I believe to be particularly relevant to interpreting Chopin, in this mazurka and in general.

The second chapter begins with a discussion of issues surrounding the Preludes, op. 28. Focusing on the A major Prelude, I propose what some of my analytical perceptions imply to the interpreter, and then turn to Edward Cone's analysis.² Many interesting points are raised by Cone, including motivic structuring, voice-leading, and antecedent/consequent relations. All are compared to two divergent recordings of the work. The discussion then moves to the G Major Prelude, and an analysis by Carl Schachter.³ He raises a number of issues, including the relationship between tonal and durational groupings, the enlargement of motivic figures, and the conflict between asymmetrical structuring and the symmetry Schachter believes it grows out of. This section explores how some of the observations made from durational reduction relate to differing performances.

²Musical Form and Musical Performance (W. W. Norton: New York, 1968), pp. 39-43.

³"Rhythm and linear analysis: durational reduction." Music Forum V (1980): 197-232.

An example of the type of issue this study raises involves Schachter's discussion of the manner in which the extended subdominant in the consequent phrase of the prelude gives the work a sense of finality, which serves as a testimonial to Chopin's mastery of small forms and his ability to provide a sense of a completed structure within those forms. Cone, on the other hand, seems a bit critical of Chopin's structuring in the A Major Prelude, by identifying premature closure at the end of the antecedent phrase. Do various pianistic interpretations present evidence that the pianists are in agreement with these analysts in that these structural events exist, and if so what do they do to convey them?

A general issue involves changes in performance-practice styles occurring in the twentieth century, and how such changes relate to analysis. Has the evolution of Chopin interpretation, a progression generally believed to show greater loyalty to the text yet a diminishing degree of personality, shown an increased or decreased conformity to analytical insights? In what ways do the performances of pianists who studied with pupils of Chopin in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century relate to analytical commentary, as compared with pianists who studied at American conservatories in the middle of this century?

There are two points regarding the process of doing this

project that need to be mentioned. First, the purpose of this project is to observe similarities and differences between analytical and pianistic thinking, two approaches that involve interpretation. I in no way mean to imply that the pianists play as they do because of what the analysts wrote. It is unlikely that any of the pianists read any of the analyses I discuss. Indeed, because of chronology, it is all but impossible. Second, there have been occasions when I have not fully agreed with what either interpreter, pianist or analyst, has done. But questioning what they have done is not what this project is about, and would undermine the basic issue, which is how analysis relates to performance.

Though this study in no way pretends to be a complete treatise on the evolution of Chopin performance styles, the recordings I have chosen do represent a wide spectrum of performance traditions in this century. They date from 1926, 1935, 1939, 1946, 1952, 1974, and 1988.

I have used the Paderewski edition for both the mazurka and the preludes. The editorial committee, consisting of I. Paderewski, L. Bronarski, and J. Turczynski, has produced an excellent reference tool for the piano student, providing extensive pages of commentary that discuss the autograph manuscripts and original editions of the works. As Chopin frequently made changes in his pieces (often during

student's lessons), there are frequent discrepancies between manuscripts and original editions, and in the Paderewski edition this is taken into account. However, the type of variants evident in the pieces covered in this study, although of interest to pianists learning these works, are not directly related to the particular issues discussed.

There are occasions when this type of detailed study may seem somewhat pedantic to the reader, as I spend pages discussing short fragments of recorded performances that pass by in seconds. However, the difference between the greatest pianism and merely competent pianism can be found in the most subtle aspects of phrasing and nuance. And by putting these passages and performances under a microscope as such I hope to expose interpretive ideas that can be applied to other pieces.

This study is written for the piano student, and it is my hope that it will be useful to students who wish to explore some of the responsibilities that accompany the challenging task of performing Chopin.

Chapter 2 The A Minor Mazurka, op. 59 no. 1: First Period

The A Minor mazurka, op. 59 no. 1, dates from 1845. It is an extraordinary example of the harmonic daring and melodic ingenuity so characteristic of Chopin's late works. Although it lacks the instant appeal and melodic sweetness of, say, op. 67 no. 3, or the rhythmic vitality of op. 17 no. 1, this piece transcends typical expectations of the mazurka. It reflects the dark, ethereal aspect of Chopin's artistry in the manner in which it evolves psychologically and, consequently, never ceases to disturb and fascinate.

The Polish dance element present in the mazurkas, usually exemplified by the left hand pattern of a single note followed by two repeated chords, is avoided by Chopin at the opening of this piece. There is no introduction (such as the groping chromaticism of op. 24 no. 4) but instead an immediate presentation of the simple rhythmic motive that saturates the work, two eighths followed by a quarter. By omitting the left hand until the third beat of m. 2, and then adding only a few scattered chords for several measures, the 3/4 meter does not become completely secure until m. 4. The metric ambiguity of the opening provides a striking contrast to the manner in which the left hand fills in the beats during the sequential transposition of the phrase, beginning at m. 5. This

additional sonority at the phrase's repetition in C Major discreetly evokes a sense of growth and movement. Chopin then plays with our expectations at m. 8, by pausing only momentarily at the C Major resolution, and uses a trill and tenuto marking to accentuate the French sixth. The cadential progression into E in measures 9 and 10 is followed by a somewhat sudden iv-v-i that re-establishes A Minor as tonic at measures 11 and 12.

In regard to the phrase rhythm of the passage, William Rothstein interprets this opening period as "consisting of three four-bar hypermeasures, each of which can also be considered a small phrase. This twelve-bar length is formed by giving one four-bar hypermeasure to each of three main harmonies--I, III, and V--each of which is preceded by its own dominant"⁴. Rothstein points out that unlike the expansion in the subsequent phrase, bars 1-12 "do not form an expanded phrase, because the pattern of assigning one hypermeasure to each main harmony...is strictly maintained; if anything, the squeezing of the final cadence into the third hypermeasure might suggest a contraction" (p. 132). What do Rothstein's comments suggest to the performer?

It is probable that pianists would sense that the opening

⁴"Phrase rhythm in Chopin's nocturnes and mazurkas," in *Chopin Studies*, Jim Samson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 130.

period divides into three units, regardless of whether they called them hypermeasures or not, and as Chopin's tenuto marking and trill at m. 8 provides a built-in division between the second and third hypermeasures, the pianist might consider finding some means of dividing the first from the second, and can do so with a subtle shift of dynamic inflection or tempo. Merely pausing after the third beat of m. 4 might sound pedestrian, and certainly might call the listener's attention to the tyrannical four-bar phrase so characteristic of this type of music. My own interpretive suggestion to avoid this would include using terraced dynamics; an increase in volume at the sequential repetition in C Major seems logical, what with the brighter key as well as Chopin's crescendo marking beginning at m. 3. However, the thicker texture in the left hand creates an automatic increase in volume, and therefore does not need too much help. As I play the opening right hand gesture somewhat tentatively and mysteriously at m. 1, I like to take a brighter attack in the right hand at the downbeat of m. 5. At m. 1 I think of the two eighths as leading to the second beat, while at m. 5 they decrescendo into the second beat. To avoid pausing after the the first hypermeasure, I would suggest continuing the movement over the barline, taking time after the downbeat of m. 5. Doing this keeps the line flowing naturally, yet allows

for breathing.

Rothstein's comment that each of the three main harmonies assigned to each hypermeasure is preceded by its own dominant has implications to the pianist. These dominant-tonic patterns might suggest more sound at each of the dominants (m. 3, m. 7, and the third beat of m. 11), and less sound at each of the resolutions (m. 4, m. 8, and m. 12). But Chopin contradicts this expectation by putting crescendo markings in the first two dominant-tonic resolutions. Had Chopin written in diminuendos, or even nothing at all, I could very easily feel the 4-bar unit as 3 + 1, as the first three measures could be felt as one progression that resolves into the fourth. But because of Chopin's crescendo marking, confirmed by his slurring, the pattern is actually 2 + 2, with the tonic resolution at m. 4 not simply resolving, but also leading into the downbeat of m. 5, smoothed out by the chromatic movement in the bass. Thus, the phrasing contradicts the harmony, presenting an interesting element of tension early on in the piece. The general movement of the entire period (I-III-V) might suggest an overall crescendo/diminuendo, or an increase and decrease of tension, climaxing at the second beat of m. 8. Rothstein's comment that the final iv - v - i cadence is squeezed into the third hypermeasure could easily suggest something to the pianist. Perhaps this contraction might be

expressed convincingly with a ritard beginning at the third beat of m. 11, leading into and accentuating the downbeat of m. 12, thereby giving a sense of finality to this sudden cadence that might otherwise sound hurried.

Now that a sense of some of the events taking place in this opening period has been established, I turn to three recordings of the work. The first is William Kapell's 1952 recording,⁵ a sensitive, poignant rendition. In regard to his Chopin interpretation, James Methuen-Campbell states that "one is reminded that Kapell came under the tutelage of Josef Lhevinne and Olga Samaroff; the values of the 'Golden Age' of Godowsky, Hoffman and Rachmaninov are everywhere evident."⁶ The amazing depth of Kapell's poetic powers are especially evident in the mazurkas. The second recording I will use is Artur Schnabel's 1939 version,⁷ which is to me the greatest recording of the mazurkas in existence in part because of Schnabel's mastery of the Chopinesque rubato. In the words of Franz Liszt: "Look at these trees, the wind plays in the leaves, stirs up life among them, the tree remains the same,

⁵RCA Victor (LM-1865).

⁶James Methuen-Campbell, *Chopin Playing From the Composer to the Present Day* (New York: Taplinger, 1981), p. 212.

⁷Seraphim (IB-6132).

that is Chopinesque rubato."⁸ Rubinstein is a shining example of a twentieth century artist with a unique understanding of this nineteenth century phenomenon. His rendition of this mazurka contains more rubato than any of the others I have heard, yet structurally it is the most straightforward. The third recording, made in 1988, is by Emanuel Ax.⁹ Ax studied at Juilliard with Mieczyslaw Munz, who had been a student of Busoni. Ax's rich tone and creative powers are evident throughout this recording. His sense of nuance places him as an excellent representative of the modern pianist's grasp of the art of Chopin interpretation.

KAPPELL

Kapell's execution of the opening period indicates that he interprets the passage along similar lines as Rothstein. It is fascinating to observe how cleverly Kapell conveys the structure of this seemingly straightforward passage. Aside from a subtle dynamic increase throughout the second hypermeasure, he maintains a mostly consistent dynamic, never rising much above *piano*. He delineates the harmonic

⁸Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 51.

⁹CBS (MT44544).

architecture, however, with subtle variances of touch and tempo. He enhances the intrigue of the missing left hand at the opening by accentuating the sudden appearance of the thirdless seventh chord at the third beat of m. 2. Further, he takes time before continuing the motion at the downbeat of m. 3. Thus, by calling the listener's attention to that chord it suddenly becomes apparent, in that miniscule moment in time, that something was missing from what happened previously, namely the left hand. Although he is back in tempo at the downbeat of m. 3, he makes a big *accelerando* beginning at the second beat that leads quite emphatically into the downbeat of m. 4. It is clear that he feels this downbeat as the peak of the first hypermeasure, and expresses his conviction with a modest increase in tone as Chopin indicates, in addition to the *accelerando*. It seems that this is his conception of this four-measure pattern, as he does the same thing in the second hypermeasure, accelerating into the downbeat of m. 8. In this instance, however, I had thought that the second beat is the peak of the phrase, what with the trill, tenuto marking (which he almost completely disregards), and unique harmony. But his interpretation understates Chopin's imaginative alteration of the phrase rhythm at m. 8, and gives the entire period a sense of consistency and architectural soundness. However, he does

take a split second after hitting the G# in the right hand at the downbeat of m. 9, calling attention to the tenuto marking after the fact, much as he had done by waiting after the left hand chord at m. 2 to stress that it hadn't been there before. Kapell was a master of this subtle psychological game, this pianistic ability to call the listener's attention to a musical event after it happens, rather than during or before. He does it again at the downbeat of m. 12 to convey the suddenness of Rothstein's contraction. Rather than taking time during m. 11, as I had thought the most convincing manner of isolating the contraction, he takes a moment after striking the tonic downbeat at m. 12. In addition to allowing him to illuminate the contraction with panache, this gives a sense of finality to the entire period, by accentuating the return to tonic. As an Agathie Christie story toys with our expectations, keeping us interested in the constant shift of direction, Kapell does the same in his interpretation. Just when one might say, "Kapell ignored the tenuto at m. 8 and hurried through the contraction at m. 11," he surprises with inflections that indicate that he is indeed aware of these things; and by making the listener wait longer to notice Chopin's imaginative phrase structure, the realization of what happened is all the more sweet.

A second pianistic device involves Kapell's ability to

separate phrases by adjustments of tempo within each phrase, rather than between. Something needs to be done to separate the first two hypermeasures, and as I mentioned before, there must be a better way than simply taking time between them. Kapell convincingly unites them by rushing at two corresponding moments, in the third measure of each hypermeasure (m. 3 and m. 7). Kapell is employing a type of parallel rubato that unites and thereby differentiates two parallel hypermeasures. It gives phrasing a sense of being from within, and is a wonderful subtlety that is unfortunately lacking in much Chopin playing, playing that too often imposes mannerisms on top of the music. It is much the opposite of what often happens when a pianist plays a phrase that repeats identically, as in a Mozart sonata. Pianists often play the repeat softer, as an echo, or perhaps a bit more tentatively, in order to add an element of variety to the repetition. Kapell, on the other hand, is presenting an element of unification to two corresponding phrases. It is one of the ways to successfully separate short phrases without chopping up the long line, a pianistic tendency that Chopin abhorred. Eigeldinger quotes Chopin as saying: "...do not play too short phrases; that is to say, do not keep continually suspending the movement and lowering the tone on too short members of the thought; that is again to say, do not spread

the thought out too much, by slackenings of the movement -- this fatigues the attention of the listener following its development" (Chopin: Pianist and Teacher, p. 43).

RUBINSTEIN

In a discussion comparing the temperament of Horowitz and Rubinstein, Harold C. Schonberg states that "Horowitz basically was an introvert. Artur Rubinstein is an extrovert who loves people, loves life and loves to play the piano. All this comes out in his interpretations."¹⁰ In the ensuing discussion of Rubinstein's artistry, Schonberg mentions that Rubinstein "never breaks a line or bends a rhythm; he has sentiment without sentimentality, brilliance without nonsensical virtuosity; logic without pedantry; tension without neurosis...Rubinstein never feels the need to prove something to himself and his audiences, or to counterfeit an emotion he does not feel. In his Chopin playing are none of the artificialities, stresses, underlinings, frigidity or hysteria that make so much contemporary playing unsettling" (p. 416). Schonberg's description accurately sums up the miracle of Rubinstein's artistry. On the one hand, his

¹⁰The Great Pianists (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 413.

playing seems so simple and honest, and on the other it always shows an understanding of the many structural and harmonic complexities inherent in Chopin's music. Perhaps I can shed some light on how Rubinstein achieves this miraculous contradiction in terms.

In his rendition of the opening period, his sense of the phrase structure is quite unique, and upon first hearing suggests that he is not thinking along similar lines as Kapell and Rothstein. In fact, he disregards some of Chopin's markings, which may suggest that he is not even thinking along similar lines as Chopin; but his ability to add his personality to the text makes a few dynamic sacrifices seem worthwhile. He begins the piece mezzo forte, disregarding Chopin's piano marking. But as the phrase continues it becomes clear that the larger sonority is necessary in order for him to make a diminuendo from the first note of the piece until the end of the second measure. He continues this pattern of mezzo forte -- diminuendo every two bars for the entire period, six times in all, suggesting that he feels this 12-bar period solely in groups of two, a totally different point of view from Rothstein and Kapell.

But upon closer examination it becomes clear that although Rubinstein conveys 2-bar patterns dynamically, he also acknowledges Rothstein's 4-bar hypermeasures with other types

of nuances. It is Rubinstein's ability to convey several varying phrase units at the same time (4 x 3 as well as 2 x 6) that gives his interpretation a constant sense of flux and tension, and perhaps helps to explain Schonberg's description of piano playing that has "...logic without pedantry; tension without neurosis..." And I maintain that it is Rubinstein's great mind that results in his unique ability to convey many different structural features at the same time, thereby producing interpretations that hold deep-rooted musical interest without sounding mannered. I have often wondered why Rubinstein never sounds boring while always sounding so seemingly straightforward. I believe I have found the answer. If all this is due to his intellect, I suppose it is talent, or inspiration, that tells him when he should do this, and to what extent. But this ability to assign one element of interpretation (such as dynamics) to express one musical feature, while another element (such as articulation) simultaneously expresses a somewhat opposing structural viewpoint, represents an interpretive device worthy of exploration by modern piano students.

For example, while Rubinstein emphatically conveys the two-bar phrases with diminuendos, he also conveys four-bar hypermeasures using, among other things, corresponding rubato. In the first hypermeasure he stretches the two eighth notes at

the downbeat of m. 1, almost suggesting a dotted eighth followed by sixteenth. When the motive repeats at the downbeat of m. 3, he plays the two eighths straight. In the second hypermeasure he does the same. The eighths at the downbeat of m. 5 are even more stretched, this time quite literally a dotted eighth and sixteenth (the increase in manipulation of the eighths conveys a greater intensity at the C Major repetition, another example of rubato being used to express harmonic movement), and the eighths at the downbeat of m. 7 are played straight. Thus, there is an overall sense of four-bar units because of the similarity between the downbeats of measures 1 and 5.

In addition, Rubinstein establishes four-bar units by uniting phrases through corresponding similarities of touch and pedalling. In the first hypermeasure he plays the left hand chord at the third beat of m. 2 short, creating a wonderful dry effect by lifting up the pedal before continuing into the third measure. But he plays the third beat of m. 4 (the A flat) legato. And he repeats this format in the second hypermeasure (the third beat of m. 6 is dry and the third beat of m. 8 is legato). Thus, through similarities of articulation the four-bar unit is established. And in addition, the first two hypermeasures are further projected by a sense of resolution into the downbeats of measures 4 and 8.

But in terms of the third hypermeasure, and Rothstein's contraction, Rubinstein seems to understate any such occurrence. He plays measures 9-12 with nonchalance, as though nothing noteworthy is happening. In fact, he plays the third hypermeasure more straightforwardly than the previous two, perhaps in an effort to let the increase in harmonic rhythm speak for itself. And he does allow the tension created in the previous eight measures (by conveying two phrase units simultaneously) to be counteracted with a general sense of resolve, possibly due to his intrinsic sense of balance, what I have suggested before as being an aspect of talent. Still, I prefer a bit more time taken at this point. And in regard to Rothstein's comment that the general movement of this period is I-III-V, Rubinstein seems to agree with my opinion that this might suggest a crescendo/diminuendo, with the III being the climax. While Kapell maintains a soft dynamic throughout, Rubinstein creates a large rise and fall, which is very impressive considering all the musical activity that is happening amidst that rise and fall.

In regard to the tenuto marking and trill of m. 8, Rubinstein, like Kapell, doesn't take any time. But what he does do, and this presents another subtlety in pianistic interpretation, is crescendo on the trill, creating the illusion of time being taken (simply because something

important is happening). Consider Alan Walker's discussion of several recordings of the finale of Chopin's B flat Minor Sonata: "Although Rachmaninov and Horowitz take precisely the same time, (1 min 10 sec), **Rachmaninov's performance sounds quicker.** Again, Cortot sounds quicker than Rubinstein, although his performance actually takes longer. The lesson is clear. Tempo is not expressed through the stop-watch. Dynamics, note-durations, phrasing, pedalling - all these things contribute to the total impression of pace which, as we have seen, may well contradict the clock."¹¹

Because there is more musical activity in Rubinstein's playing, as opposed to Kapell's, it sounds as if his mazurka is going along at a slower pace. In actuality Rubinstein maintains 120 m.m. to the quarter throughout the opening period, while Kapell hovers around 112. And when I turn the metronome on precisely when Rubinstein plays the first note I find that, although he is always either ahead or behind the beat of the metronome, by the end of the period **not one beat has been lost or gained.** The true Chopinesque rubato. Yet with Kapell, there are longer moments when he is completely with the metronome, and longer moments when he is completely without it, and by the end of the period it is difficult to

¹¹"Chopin and Musical Structure," in **The Chopin Companion: Profiles of the Man and the Musician**, Alan Walker, ed. (Toronto: Barrie & Rockliff, 1966), p. 249.

determine how many beats have been lost or gained. And because of the drifting, it sounds as if Kapell is faster when he is actually slower.

Walker's acknowledgment of the phenomenon of tempo is also illustrated by Rubinstein's displacement of the tenuto with a crescendo at m. 8. I believe that pianists do this type of thing more often than is thought, what with other structural features persuading the interpreter to convey a particular expressive marking in some fashion or another, without taking it too literally. Perhaps Rubinstein suspected that taking time here would shatter the overall structure, and therefore called upon dynamics to express the importance of the moment in an effort to preserve the composer's original intent without sacrificing what Rubinstein may have believed to be other important structural considerations. I suspect that some may find this type of mindset a bit presumptuous; after all, if a composer wants time taken, that's what should be done. Why should interpreters tamper with a composer's markings? But perhaps at times it is more important to try to understand a composer's thought-processes rather than only what's written on, for example, some "definitive" manuscript. A pianist's decision to replace one marking with another can often show great respect for a composer's genius, perhaps a greater respect than a pianist who merely takes every marking

at face value. The greatest Chopin interpreters seem to show an understanding of a work's structure and evolution, and thereby make the work's character come alive. Any musical machine can simply get loud where it should be loud, or soft where it should be soft. But a thoughtful, intelligent musician makes sacrifices, not because of negligence or even personal preference, but because of a desire to convey many structural levels of a work of art. And ultimately, that is the greatest attribute of scholarly research; not simply determining whether a composer intended a particular marking (or even a particular note) in some passage, but determining how he was thinking throughout the compositional process.

AX

Emanuel Ax's interpretation of the opening period illuminates interesting means of delineating the three hypermeasures. He is more involved with projecting the overall structure than the other pianists, although his version lacks some of the subtlety of Kapell, and some of the tumultuous activity of Rubinstein.

Although Kapell and Rubinstein employ rubato, they maintain a basically consistent tempo throughout. Ax, on the other hand, assigns different tempi to each hypermeasure. The first

hovers around 104 m.m. to the quarter, the second around 112, and the third returns to 104. This has nothing to do with accelerandos and ritardandos. Ax makes sudden shifts of tempo, quite uncoincidentally assigning one tempo to each hypermeasure, thereby expressing the overall phrase structure by adjustments of pace. And by increasing the pace in the middle hypermeasure, and returning to the slower tempo in the third hypermeasure, he is conveying the sense of rise and fall, of increase in intensity and resolve, that the harmonic movement of this period might suggest. It is possible that Ax feels the first hypermeasure as an upbeat to the second, due in part to the missing left hand at the opening. Because there is not a complete texture until the downbeat of m. 5, perhaps Ax's faster tempo in the second hypermeasure represents his fundamental concept of what tempo the piece should be, with the first hypermeasure leading into it, and the third resolving out of it. As this manner of assigning sudden shifts of tempo to particular blocks of music is reminiscent of the way interpreters of baroque music assign particular degrees of volume to blocks of music, what has been termed terraced dynamics, in a sense this alteration of speed is a type of terraced tempi. Ax is assigning particular tempi to particular hypermeasures, thereby expressing the structural implications of an entire period. While so much Chopin

interpretation emphasizes the "romantic" side of Chopin's music with an excess of accelerandos and ritardandos, terraced tempi is a means of emphasizing the structurally balanced, baroque and classical influences, exemplified by Chopin's admiration of Bach and Mozart.

In addition to altering tempo in this manner, Ax plays the second hypermeasure without any rubato, although he uses a lot in the other hypermeasures. He employs a type of parallel rubato that gives shape to the period; he consistently takes time between second and third beats occurring in the first and third hypermeasures (the characteristic mazurka rhythm), yet plays the second hypermeasure completely straightforwardly. In fact, the second hypermeasure suddenly does not sound like a mazurka at all, and the momentary change of character adds an element of color and shape to the entire period.

Chopin's omission of the left hand at the opening does not infringe on Ax's ability to immediately convey the mazurka rhythm. He does so quite convincingly in the solo right hand melody by taking time after the C natural in the first measure, right from the start creating a feeling of rhythmic instability. It seems important for pianists, particularly when playing a short Chopin piece, to create the proper atmosphere right from the very first note. As will be discussed in some detail in the next chapter, Chopin was a

master at presenting completely satisfying musical journeys within miniscule lengths of time, and it is therefore the responsibility of the pianist to make sure that everything means something within these small forms. And as much as Chopin the pianist and teacher encouraged spontaneity, he was not too forgiving of notes that were drastically out of place, and would not let a student continue a piece if it did not have the right mood from the very first measure. Unable to satisfy Chopin with the first chord of a Clementi exercise, a student reports Chopin as finally jumping up and shouting: "What was that? Was that a dog barking?" (Eigeldinger, p. 60). Every note counts, and there's no reason that a mazurka should not sound like a dance piece from the very beginning, left hand or not.

Carrying the point one step further, it is important for pianists to create the right atmosphere before they even begin a piece such as this (and after the piece ends). According to Edward T. Cone, "...music stands in great need of a frame to separate it from its external environment - to mark off musical time from the ordinary time before it and after it. Without such a frame, the chaotic, undifferentiated flow of ordinary time will encroach on each extreme of the

composition."¹² Cone is speaking, of course, of the importance of silence before and after a piece. In a world as powerful and brief as this mazurka, silence is crucial. And the silence is an opportunity for the pianist to feel that the piece is actually happening before beginning to play, and after finishing. If Chopin's B Minor Sonata is comparable to a large novel, telling a complete story of some vast human experience, his mazurkas are like poems in that they merely present some passing aspect of the human condition that already happened and will probably continue to do so.

As I listen to Ax begin this piece (or Rubinstein and Kapell), I hear the mood beginning before the music starts, as well as continuing after it finishes. And it is not because I have some sixth sense or vision into some other world; it is because of the way these great artists play the very first and last phrases. I think this point is important for piano students to understand, because if the right mood is present before and after a piece, the piece itself tends to maintain the atmosphere, forcing the pianist to concentrate on mood rather than outside influences (such as nervousness) that take away from convincing performances.

In the fourth measure Ax plays with our expectations,

¹²Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1968), p. 16.

conveying the ending of the first hypermeasure in an unusual way. While he takes time in measures 1-3, in the fourth measure, a measure of resolution, he speeds up. This is somewhat unusual, considering that a moment of resolve is often conceived via slowing down. Perhaps too often pianists follow the pattern of speeding up during moments of increased intensity, and slowing down during moments of resolution; and doing this all of the time lends itself to monotony and predictability in a performance. Variety is what adds interest to music, or to anything for that matter, and if a particular gesture is repeated too often, things can become dull. In a television sitcom, for example, I often find myself focusing on the relentless pattern of 1) several statements made by wacky characters, 2) a joke, and finally, 3) laugh track. Even in one of the better sitcoms, where the jokes are well-written, this predictability of rhythm can become unbearable. Shows are more interesting that have punchlines (much like moments of climax in a musical phrase) that are spaced at unpredictable intervals. Thus, a Chopin interpreter needs to make constant adjustments of the underlining rhythmic patterning, and should avoid falling into patterns that are too consistent. This ability to convey the unpredictable seems to be one of the elements that separates world-class Chopin interpretations from merely competent ones.

Altering reliable patterns when performing Chopin, even without justification, is sometimes important in keeping things alive. In Chopin interpretation, in fact, there are times when doing the opposite of what has been planned musically results in an equally convincing interpretation. Opposites are often closely related in certain ways, and at times can convey the same event equally well. For example, consider a speaker who wants to stress a certain point in his speech. He might suddenly surprise the audience with an unexpected increase in volume, or he might just as well whisper the phrase for emphasis. Consider the famous story of Chopin's last public concert in Paris. He played the entire last section of the Barcarolle pianissimo, even though his own dynamic marking indicates that it should be played forte. And if a pianist sits down to play the A Minor Mazurka at a recital and finds that the opening hypermeasure pours out of the instrument with a larger dynamic than the piano indicated by Chopin, rather than playing the C Major sequential repetition at an even larger dynamic based on a previous analysis that logically suggests such an interpretation, the pianist might do very well to play the second hypermeasure softer than the first. In the playing of the great Chopin interpreters, one can hear this constant flight of imagination and ability to react spontaneously to what is happening from

moment to moment. Because as we all know, as much as things can be planned, performing is often a completely new experience. Arthur Hedley comments that Chopin "...hesitated long before attaching a final indication of tempo or expression, so that no pianist has the right to treat these things as a simple matter of personal preference."¹³ Although this statement has a lot of meaning to the pianist who is practicing and preparing a Chopin work, it cannot and should not always be taken too seriously during performance.

In the eleventh measure, Ax shows an awareness of Rothstein's contraction, and uses an unusual declamatory effect to express it. He does not take time at the downbeat of m. 11, but does so after the second beat of m. 10, preparing for the D Minor harmony by taking a big breath before its dominant. And when he reaches the resolution into D Minor, he plays nonchalantly and completely in time, as if nothing unusual is happening. Ax is preparing for an event by preparing the dominant leading into the first chord of the event, and is providing a sense of indifference when the moment actually arrives. The importance of the moment itself then has a certain depth of meaning. Ax is presenting a

¹³"Chopin: The Man," in **Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician**, Alan Walker, ed. (London: Barrie & Rockcliff, 1966), p. 19.

subtle nuance that is evident in much good Chopin interpretation, allowing him to preserve the long line while still bringing out the importance of a particular event with finesse.

Second and Third Periods

There is suddenly a complete mazurka-like texture at m. 13, what with the familiar left hand pattern of a single bass note followed by two repeated chords, a texture that is missing in the first period, as well as in any other section of the piece. This might suggest to the pianist a brightening of tempo and sound, an exaggeration of the outdoorsy dance feeling lacking in this mainly undanceable, introspective work. I like to take a lot of time between the second and third beats, particularly in measures 14 and 16, giving the impression of breaking loose from the somewhat restrictive atmosphere of the first period. Also, the chromaticism of this passage (E Major - E flat Major - D Major) and the large amount of time spent in D Major (which Rothstein discusses in some detail), all suggest a sense of improvisation, and can be played with a certain recklessness. For example, I like to play the chromatic sequential repetition at measures 15-16 almost as if I'm having a memory slip, to better accentuate

the surprise of the unexpected harmony. When the theme returns in the left hand at the downbeat of m. 25, it is important to shift gears instantaneously, recapturing the contemplative mood of the opening without making too much ritard in measures 23-24; otherwise the return sounds labored (later I will discuss various ways of approaching the return of the opening material). I believe the climax of this entire section (measure 1-36) occurs in the midst of the second period, which is a type of development section, at the downbeat of m. 22; although it could possibly be thought of as occurring at the return of the theme at m. 25.

Rothstein's interpretation of the second period begins with an identification of an example of phrase expansion in measures 18-21. He explains that this is achieved by "interpolating extra, non-essential material" (p. 132), and that "to posit a phrase expansion is to separate a phrase into essential and non-essential components" (p. 132). He points out that the next step is to then determine what the prototype is (a Schenkerian term that describes the material that is "essential" or expanded upon). Rothstein provides his opinion of what the prototype would look like, and rewrites the text, cutting out measures 18-21 (p. 133).

I can't disagree with Rothstein as it seems clear that Chopin is spending an inordinate amount of time in D Major, in

a passage that has little to do motivically with the rest of the piece. However, I do want to stress that any such theoretical statement, such as labeling material as being "non-essential," is a matter of opinion, regardless of how obvious it may seem. Interpreting a passage to be "non-essential" does not necessarily imply to the performer that it should be played in a less important fashion (although it possibly could be) than other, "essential" passages. Chopin's lack of harmonic change in measures 18-21 is in itself surprising, much the same way sudden and numerous changes of harmony are surprising (another example of the similarity of opposites). Thus, by being the only passage in the section where Chopin spends so much time preparing one harmonic goal, measures 18-21 become, at least from one possible perspective, one of the most important passages in the piece. In any case, I find a sense of growth and intensity present throughout measures 18-21, and suggest making a crescendo, beginning at m. 18 and climaxing at the downbeat of m. 22. Chopin's unusual repetition of a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth should not be rushed -- the dotted rhythm should be played strictly in time -- as this is the only passage in the piece that this motive is repeated so incessantly (another observation that attributes importance to the expansion). In all fairness to Rothstein, however, by identifying this

expansion as being non-essential, he is not implying that it is unimportant. He states that "the comparison of a given prototype with its expanded version is the means by which the correctness of the rhythmic analysis may be judged" (p. 132). By considering what the prototype's relationship is to the original score, he is indeed assigning a sense of importance to the passage by attempting to shed some light on its underlying rhythmic significance.

Rothstein further points out that the harmonic goal of the entire period is E Major, based on the D# diminished seventh in measures 23-24, and that the period's complete resolution is not reached until m. 26, after the return of the theme at the downbeat of m. 25, creating a phrase overlap that connects the second period to the third: "The harmonic skeleton of the period is thus V# - IV# - V#, a large neighbour motion about the dominant, with the initial sequence serving to connect V# and IV#...The combination of phrase expansion and phrase overlap is complicated, particularly for a dance piece. That it is done within the framework of an apparently symmetrical structure, 3 X 12 bars - for the thematic reprise at bar 25 is complete and basically unaltered - is extraordinary. It is ironic that by recognizing an expansion in the middle period we are positing an asymmetrical underlying structure, since the prototype for bars 13-26 will inevitably be shorter than

twelve bars" (p. 133). What might these comments suggest to the pianist?

Rothstein's point that the general movement is around the dominant (E Major to D Major to E Major) to me suggests a sense of growth into the D major passage and resolution into the return of E Major. This would support my opinion that the climax is reached in the midst of the D Major expansion, although my reasons were not as much because of the overall harmonic movement of the period as much as because of the intensity created by the repeated dotted figure and the sheer unexpected quantity of music heading towards D Major. Rothstein's comment that the initial sequence serves to connect E Major to D Major makes me question my original interpretation--I had thought of measures 15-16 in relation to measures 13-14, playing them almost as a memory slip, softer than measures 13-14, to better accentuate the surprise of the first blatant enharmonic progression in the piece. But Rothstein points out that the E flat sequence is in passing; perhaps it should therefore connect E Major to D Major, by beginning with the same tone as that of m. 14, and diminishing in volume into m. 17. It is then possible to begin at m. 17 softly, allowing for a growth of sound throughout the expansion. Arriving at D Major is perhaps more important than the momentary E flat Major passage, and if too much is made of

E flat, there is not enough room to do something special at the downbeat of m. 17.

Rothstein points out Chopin's remarkable ability to preserve a symmetrical structure in spite of the expansion and overlap, and pianists might try to convey this "irony" in some fashion. As Chopin is writing irregular phrases within a regular 12-bar period that sits comfortably between two other 12-bar periods, the pianistic goal might be to somehow convey the friction created by the juxtaposition of regularity against irregularity.

KAPELL: Second and Third Periods

In his rendition of the second period, Kapell does many interesting things to express the complicated structure and harmony. Although I have suggested a boisterous rhythmic attack at m. 13 in order to convey the appearance of the left hand mazurka pattern, Kapell goes the other way. He plays the new figuration and harmony softly, magically, with his two hands not completely together at measure 13. He then plays measures 15 and 16, what Rothstein considers a passing harmony, with a crescendo that connects m. 14 to m. 17, followed by one longer, continuous crescendo that leads into the midst of the expansion.

The extent of music in D Major seems to have its effect on him. He employs terraced tempi beginning at m. 17, increasing the metronome two or three notches, and does not return to his opening tempo until well into the third period. Kapell certainly seems to recognize the existence of the expansion, and tries to get through it quickly, perhaps confirming Rothstein's notion that it is non-essential! He doesn't let up the tempo until measure 29, whereas I had thought it most logical to slow down at the return of the opening material. The effect Kapell achieves is comparable to watching a long-distance runner pass the finish line -- and continue running for a short distance. After running for 10 miles, it would be quite silly, probably impossible, to simply stop moving at the finish line. Its necessary to unwind, then walk a few steps. This is exactly what Kapell is doing. And in doing so, he is not only allowing the terraced tempi to unwind psychologically, but is also making sense of the overlap at m. 25. He ignores Chopin's diminuendo marking, which could have been used as an aid in returning to a dynamic reminiscent of the opening, and does not diminish in volume until m. 29. What is remarkable is that he maintains the fast tempo so far into the third period--for 5 measures--and doesn't reach a full sense of repose until the iv - v - i cadence at measures 35-36, in a way that thoroughly counterbalances the excess

energy present at the beginning of the period. Kapell preserves the long line by connecting one period to another with tempo and dynamics, and consequently gives shape to the entire section.

RUBINSTEIN: Second and Third Periods

Although Rubinstein maintains his opening tempo throughout the second and third periods, he does many other imaginative things that correspond with some of Rothstein's descriptions. The device of terraced tempi is uncharacteristic of Rubinstein -- there is no unessential material for him. Everything has meaning, and there is no musical event that could ever shake his unbelievable confidence. He does not allow the expansion to hurry, yet does employ a dynamic overlap as Kapell had (a tempo overlap, never!). And right from the first few measures of the second period he shows an incredible ability to illustrate a large number of structural occurrences, always doing so at unexpected moments.

In measures 13-14 he reacts to the natural rise and fall of the right hand by making a crescendo throughout the ascent into the downbeat of m. 14, and then an elegant diminuendo to the G# resolution at the second beat. In the E-flat sequence he follows the same rise and fall pattern, beginning at the

same dynamic as he had been at the downbeat of m. 13, but this time reaching a higher dynamic at the downbeat of m. 16, with a bigger crescendo leading to it. He then makes more diminuendo than before, allowing him to return to his original dynamic at the second beat of m. 16. In measures 17 and 18 he reaches an even higher peak. The point is, he always returns to the same fundamental dynamic of mezzo piano, and is able to generate a sense of growth throughout these three, sequential, 2-bar patterns without altering the basic sonority and mood. He is then able to make a color change at m. 19, at the beginning of the expansion, by using a generally lighter touch.

Often pianists think of a dynamic as what it is -- forte as forte, piano as piano. This is a misconception, as a particular dynamic can mean an infinite number of things, depending on its surroundings. Chopin, unable to produce the thunderous sonority of a pianist such as Liszt, understood this, and consequently produced a variety of textures within piano. And then when he did reach, say, an occasional forte at some climax, the effect was probably just as powerful as any moment in a Liszt recital. Playing the piano is a psychological game. It needs to be, because of the instrument's many limitations, the first and foremost being the inability to change the color of a note after it has been

struck. Pianistic interpretation is ultimately an intimate display of an artist's ability to create illusions of musical movement from an instrument that is, unlike a string instrument, incapable of increasing intensity on a single pitch. According to Erwin Stein, "The short sound of notes on the piano seems not to allow for much variety of colour, but the skillfull pianist works wonders with his touch, by balancing the texture and by imaginative pedalling."¹⁴ And what Rubinstein is doing is "working wonders" with his touch, by creating the illusion of one continuous crescendo throughout measures 13-18, while actually employing several progressively increasing, consecutive rise and fall patterns.

Rubinstein does many unusual things to express the uniqueness of the expansion. First of all, he seems to think of it as beginning at m. 19, where m. 18 concludes the third 2-bar sequence. Strictly speaking, Rothstein is correct in saying that the expansion begins at m. 18, because m. 17 could conceivably have led directly into m. 22, and the 4-bar patterning would be preserved (I suspect that Rothstein would agree that m. 18 serves two purposes: as the conclusion of the three 2-bar sequences as well as the beginning of the expansion). But Rubinstein changes the mood after the

¹⁴Erwin Stein, *Form and Performance* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1989), p. 65.

downbeat of m. 19, taking a moment after striking the A in the right hand, and doing the same after striking the D at the downbeat of m. 22, thereby establishing two 3-bar units from m. 19 until m. 25. Looking only at measures 19-21 it is somewhat unclear exactly what the phrase division is, although there is a sense that the 2 and 4-bar units of all the previous material are being disturbed. It seems as though Rubinstein looked ahead to measures 22-24, noticed that the melodic and harmonic structuring of those three measures imply a 3-bar unit before the recapitulation at m. 25, and by working backwards decided that measures 19-21 should logically be another 3-bar unit.

As measures 19-24 represent the only place in the piece where Chopin uses 3-bar units (another example of the expansion's importance), it is interesting to pianistically convey this wonderful deviation from the incessant 4-bar patterning. And Rubinstein does it in this instance by placing an agogic accent at the beginning of each new phrase.

Another interesting interpretive moment occurs when the two left hand chords of m. 22 are repeated in m. 23. While Rubinstein waits before the accented chord in m. 22, he rushes to the accented one in m. 23 (in addition to using more pedal and an increased sonority). Two identical accents within two identical passages can often mean two completely different

things, based on context.

The excess energy from the overlap seems to deeply affect Rubinstein. He works up such an emotional frenzy that instead of playing the left hand E and B at the downbeat of m. 27, where they are supposed to be, he plays them at the second half of the third beat of the previous measure, putting a huge accent on them. It really sounds as if he is also adding some notes (it is hard to tell what notes, though), but the effect is powerful.

As in Kapell's performance, when Rubinstein reaches measures 28-29, there is a real sense of the release of energy, and the way Rubinstein does it is by stretching time in these measures in a manner reminiscent of the way a swing hovers in the air motionless for a second or two before its downward journey. It seems important at times to have a moment of hovering in the air after a climax, before beginning a diminuendo and/or ritardando. It is very satisfying emotionally, possibly because it imitates a natural pattern in nature.

Rubinstein takes a lot of time before the second beat of m. 32 (the trill), contrasting what he had done at m. 8. This solidifies the overall structure, bearing in mind that the listener remembers what he had heard in the first period, and provides a sense of finality to the third period. Often

pianists play the exact same nuances at repeats of material. I suspect that audiences notice long-range changes, particularly if they involve a notable event such as this.

Although moments like this confirm in my mind that Rubinstein is aware of long-range musical structure, at the same time he seems aware of the most short-range structure, and everything in between. It seems as though the greatest pianists are those that are able to convey many levels of movement during one performance of one piece, from the smallest increments (note to note, hypermeasure to hypermeasure) to the largest (period to period, section to section). Pianists who only focus on movement in small increments can do beautiful things, but at times sound choppy, losing the long line and a sense of the ultimate goal of a section or movement. Conversely, pianists who only generate a sense of a work's overall architecture often allow too much musical time to pass without expressing the smaller increments of activity, resulting in performances that lack personality. It's an extremely fine line between these two extremes, and finding just the right balance is one of the pianist's foremost struggles.

AX: Second and Third Periods

Ax is the only pianist of the three who captures the outdoorsy, boisterous character at the downbeat of m. 13. He anticipates the change of mood by rushing and increasing the tone of the third beat of m. 12 -- another example of the overlapping of mood. Although it might seem more logical to play this third beat softer and slower than the first two, to provide a complete sense of repose and resolution, Ax begins the mood of the new period during the conclusion of the previous one. Its a type of interpretive foreshadowing. Ax is then able to convincingly accent the bass at the downbeat of m. 13, playing measures 13 and 14 with a full tone, using a quality of sound that would have sounded abrupt without overlapping moods. He plays measures 15 and 16 as an echo, in accordance with my interpretation, and uses the decrease in volume to begin softly at the downbeat of m. 17.

He does not seem to think of measures 17-18 as the third in a series of sequences, but begins preparing for the expansion in an interesting way. Although in measures 13-16 he uses a lot of color adjustments and rubato, in measures 17 and 18 (even though he is at the same tempo and dynamic level) he creates a new sonority by suddenly using no rubato at all, and a pure, expressionless tone. Its the same effect a violinist gets when he adds color by using no vibrato on certain notes (Joseph Fuchs does this a lot, adding a wonderful variety of

sound to his playing). In an effort to call measures 17 and 18 to the listener's attention as a special moment, to contrast the previous sequencing and to foreshadow the upcoming expansion, Ax is assuming a momentary style of playing that is quite the opposite of what the piece generally demands. Its much like playing a few well-chosen moments in a heavily pedalled piece of Debussy's with no pedal at all. The change of color is refreshing, and the majority of material that is pedalled has more meaning.

Ax seems to agree that the climax of the second period is reached at the downbeat of m. 22. He makes a huge crescendo leading into it, and takes time at the third beat of m. 21, allowing him to prepare for and fully emphasize the subsequent downbeat.

Ax's approach to the overlap is interesting, and quite unlike Kapell's and Rubinstein's. He prepares for the return of the theme by making a diminuendo in measures 22-24, paying most of his attention to the right hand figuration (unlike Rubinstein who focuses on the left hand), and at the downbeat of m. 24, captures the manner in which Chopin alters the third repetition of the right hand fragment. Ax ritards m. 24 and uses a lot of pedal, creating an atmosphere as if he (Ax, not Chopin) decided at the very last moment to alter the patterning of these measures by adding a triplet. By doing

this Ax is not only creating the improvised quality of sound that Chopin's playing had, but is pointing out an aspect of Chopin's compositional subtlety. Chopin could have maintained the same patterning from measures 22 and 23 in m. 24, leaving out the triplet, but instead makes a small and unexpected rhythmic adjustment.

Chopin interpreters need to constantly ask, what is Chopin doing that is unexpected? Pianists practice pieces so much and become so familiar with them that it becomes too easy to lose a sense of the elements of surprise in a work (an example of one of the dangers of over-practicing). It is difficult to radiate the surprise of a structural or harmonic deviation when you are not surprised!

Because Ax takes so much time during m. 24, and calls the listener's attention to the right hand, he needs to shift gears quite suddenly at the downbeat of m. 25, and does so by putting a big accent on the left hand E, bringing out the return of the theme quite emphatically. Ax's perspective of the overlap is different than Kapell's and Rubinstein's -- he allows the excess energy to dilute immediately at the second beat of m. 26 by waiting on the E octave for an extremely long time before proceeding to the third beat. He is then able to recapture the mood of the opening by the downbeat of m. 27, as if nothing extraordinary has happened. While Rubinstein

allows the swing to hover in the air before falling back down, what Ax does is comparable to someone simply grabbing a moving swing and holding it. Ax is holding the swing, waiting precisely as long as necessary for the energy to dissipate. He doesn't want to employ an interpretive overlap, and characteristic of contemporary pianists, conveys the overall structure more straightforwardly -- as the opening material returns at this point, so does the opening mood.

Chapter 3

The Preludes

The Preludes Op. 28 have been the subject of much debate from Chopin's day to the present. There is a certain irony in the fact that although Chopin is often thought of as a master of small forms, it is the very smallest of his pieces that have caused such a controversial reaction. Even Schumann, in spite of his admiration of Chopin, seemed confused: "The Preludes are strange pieces. I confess I imagined them differently, and designed in the grandest style, like his Etudes. But almost the opposite is true: they are sketches, beginnings of Etudes, or, so to speak, ruins, eagle wings, a wild motley of pieces."¹⁵ And I suspect that what is perplexing Schumann in 1839 is related to the same issue that is perplexing Edward Cone in 1968, Jeffrey Kallberg in 1992, and a great number of other scholars and pianists of different generations. It always seems to boil down to the fact that the preludes are too short for their own good. The crux of the problem can be found in a comment made by Lenz, a student of Chopin's: "The Preludes are on a small scale what the Etudes are on a large one, less developed but no less

¹⁵Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, "Twenty-four Preludes op. 28: genre, structure, significance", in *Chopin Studies*, Jim Samson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.177.

interesting or full of ideas" (Eigeldinger, p. 171). There are too many ideas in too little space, ideas that could never be thoroughly developed in such fleeting amounts of time.

It is this disparity between motivic content and structure that makes the preludes unique among Chopin's works, as it is Chopin's very ability to convincingly combine many diverse musical elements in short, yet thoroughly satisfying structural journeys that earns him the attribute of being a master of small forms. In the mazurkas, for example, Chopin is able to juxtapose relatively unsophisticated Polish dance writing with some of the nineteenth century's most sophisticated and innovative harmonic and melodic devices, all within a limited time frame. And in the Etudes, passagework that raised the technical expectations of pianists to unprecedented levels is simultaneously writing of a completely poetic and modest nature (unlike Liszt's Etudes, for example, in which display and structure are not as well integrated). Thus, are the preludes Chopin at his very best, or do they simply lack the necessary synchronization of structure and content required of any great work of art?

One of the main problems arising from pieces that never develop fully is that the endings often sound incomplete. For Jeffrey Kallberg, "The endings to the Preludes seldom give comfort. By this I mean that the endings often seem to stand

somewhat apart from the body of the prelude; their gestures at closure sound unrelated to what has passed before."¹⁶ This certainly presents an issue that needs to be dealt with by pianists. Kallberg goes on to give specific examples: "The stark final cadences of the A Minor, D Major and F# Minor Preludes produce an arresting textural contrast to the disjointed (in the case of the A Minor work) and exuberant (in the other two instances) figuration that precedes them" (p. 140). And listening to Arthur Rubinstein's recording of the A Minor Prelude¹⁷, to cite but one example of the many ways of dealing with such a problem, I suspect that it is no coincidence that the great Chopinist strongly over-emphasizes the penultimate chord of the piece, an E dominant seventh arpeggio. It might possibly be effective to under-emphasize it; the important thing, however, is that **something** must be done.

Another much-discussed issue regarding the preludes is whether they should be performed as a set or as individual pieces. Eigeldinger prefers the former, and his argument is quite fascinating: "Above all, the Twenty-four Preludes are a

¹⁶Jeffrey Kallberg, "Small forms: in defense of the prelude", in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, Jim Samson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 139.

¹⁷Preludes, recorded 1946, RCA Victor (60047-4-RG).

cycle by virtue of an omnipresent motivic cell which assures its unity through a variety of textures. Melodically, the cell is characterized by an ascending sixth which falls back on to the fifth..." (p. 181). Certainly, it would be an interesting experiment for a pianist to attempt to play the whole set, bringing out this "motivic cell" that unites the pieces. Surely it is possible, but I wonder if it is desirable. An intelligent viewpoint would be expressed, but considering the innumerable technical and emotional demands made on pianists, and the improvisational style of playing Chopin advocated, trying to bring out this relationship might take pianists' energy away from more important issues. I have listened to many recordings of the complete set, and I have yet to hear this relationship brought out.

Cone does not insist on the preludes being performed as a set or as individual pieces, although he does point out that in either case the interpretation would be different. In a discussion of the A Major Prelude he states that: "There is, to be sure, some evidence that it should not be regarded as a complete composition, but as one among twenty-four movements. If so, its performance in context might very well differ from the one that will arise from our assumption of its

independence."¹⁸ And as we will see later, Rubinstein's version of the piece (as it makes up part of a recording of the complete set) might differ somewhat from Rosenthal's (a recording of the prelude as an individual piece) because of, in addition to many other things, this very issue. In Rosenthal's performance there is a greater sense of climax and resolve, of reaching higher peaks, thus creating a greater sense of a larger musical journey. Rubinstein's performance exhibits more of one maintained sonority, clearly connecting the two works it sits between. Yes, Cone's comment is particularly relevant to pianists, not just in relation to the A Major Prelude, but in regard to being aware of the context of any piece or any movement.

Carl Schachter, in a discussion of the G Major Prelude, opts for the legitimacy of performing the preludes as individual pieces. He supports his argument by explaining that their heavily stylized qualities provides enough musical interest to allow them to stand alone: "Many of the Preludes - and especially those written in period form - have a character different from almost anything else in the literature: they sound like stylized fragments and, because they are stylized, they are satisfying and complete in themselves. Unlike some

¹⁸Edward Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance*, (W.W. Norton: New York, 1968), p. 39.

of Schumann's fragmentary pieces, which are often true fragments, even the shortest of the Chopin Preludes makes sense when played alone."¹⁹

In spite of his criticism of the endings, Kallberg ultimately confirms Schachter's opinion by suggesting that endings that "seldom give comfort" aren't necessarily a bad thing! Kallberg points out that our modern-day concept of form is quite different from Chopin's: "When we unreflectively discuss form as if its intent were self-evident, we therefore at least to some degree misrepresent its significance to his culture. All of us -- pianists and amateur enthusiasts as well as musicologists -- need to be aware of this disjunction between past and present: before we can probe aspects of form in Chopin's miniatures, we need to explore some of the ways in which the ideas of form and (to a lesser extent) smallness were construed in the first half of the nineteenth century" (p. 124). He goes on to say: "Perhaps full closure might arrive; perhaps it might not: the ambiguity or insecurity thus embodied in the unfolding recital would have had a strong appeal to the aesthetic sensibilities in Chopin's time" (p. 143).

Thus, in the following discussion of two Chopin Preludes,

¹⁹Carl Schachter, "Rhythm and linear analysis: Durational Reduction." Music Forum V (1980), p. 204.

and the relationship between performance and analysis, it is of vital importance to not lose sight of the fact that these pieces, regardless of whether they should be played as a set or as individual pieces, or have endings that are complete or incomplete, or have too much musical material for their own good, are indeed works of art from a different time, a time when a lack of a complete sense of resolution went hand in hand with an insatiable yearning for the unattainable, characteristic of the romantic movement. The analyses I use are those that look very closely at two preludes, reacting to them as individual pieces (in fact, as worlds unto themselves), representing the type of analytical approach that I believe to be particularly useful to the pianist.

Kallberg ends his article with a plea: "Chopin's historical challenge proves to be a good deal more provocative than the anachronistic performing and analytical practices of today, for it would ask audiences to accept the possibility of a work like the A Major Prelude standing alone in performance. In short, it would demand that we finally remove the veil of aesthetic suspicion from smallness" (p. 143). And so, by treating the A Major Prelude as an entity unto itself, I begin my discussion of the relationship between performance and analysis with this very shortest of the preludes.

The A Major Prelude

Looking at the work as a whole, it seems clear that the climax is the F sharp dominant seventh at m. 12. In a piece that is comprised entirely of tonic and dominant harmonies, this secondary relationship, although a quite ordinary progression in most contexts, is a strikingly beautiful moment in this one. And what makes the event so unique is where it happens within the piece, and how this harmonic change corresponds to the melodic line. What holds the prelude together motivically are the three repeated notes that end every phrase, and until m. 12 the harmony remains the same on all three notes. The simple harmonic rhythm that the listener has grown accustomed to in measures 1-11 is suddenly interrupted. The harmonic interest has only fallen at the downbeat of each phrase, what with the dissonance created by the appoggiaturas. Pianists have to do something to prepare the chord, using variances of touch and tempo. Chopin writes a crescendo, although I can easily imagine that he might have made a diminuendo in performance, what with his reputation for changing his own dynamic markings at the spur of the moment. Certainly, there is no need to rush into the third beat of m. 12!

The addition of the chromatic inner voice in m. 13 serves

as a type of denouement after the climax and needs to be brought out, not only because it appears nowhere else in the piece, but because it serves as exquisite voice-leading by connecting the "remote" A sharp to the more comfortable G sharp leading tone, allowing the climactic F sharp dominant seventh to connect smoothly with the ii-V-I final cadence.

This piece is built on eight nearly identical hypermeasures, and one of the pianist's goals might be to avoid accentuating these symmetrical divisions, in an effort to preserve the overall structure (the ascent to m. 12, and descent to m. 16). I propose varying the amount of time taken between each hypermeasure. And some of the decision-making in determining where and how much time to take has much to do with context. After the downbeat of m. 2, at the conclusion of the first hypermeasure, the listener is not yet aware of the two-bar patterning that is going to saturate the work. Therefore, time could convincingly be taken there. Or, time could be taken after striking the downbeat of m. 3, to accentuate the appoggiatura. In either case, the two phrases would be separated. But when the dominant-tonic pattern is repeated in the third and fourth phrases, the two-bar sequence is already familiar to the ear, and should be under-emphasized. Therefore, taking no time between these two hypermeasures, the pianist could possibly rush a bit

through m. 6, relaxing the tempo only after striking the A Major chord at the second beat of m. 7. This gives shape to measures 1-8, and provides an example of the importance of considering context (when something happens) as a determining factor in how something should happen. In regard to the repetition of the opening period in the A Major Polonaise, for example, Cone says: "My contention is that each statement is influenced by its position, by what precedes and what follows it, so that each is, in important respects, different from all the others" (*Musical Form and Musical Performance*, p. 46).

Certainly the context of the appoggiaturas is instrumental in determining how they should be played. The appoggiatura at the downbeat of m. 3 is repeated at m. 11. The time that might be taken at its first showing need not be parroted at its second. Conversely, the time that ought to be taken before the downbeat of m. 16 is all the more important and conclusive if too much time is not taken at the only other appearance of the identical downbeat (an A Major triad with an A in the soprano) at m. 4.

One of the intriguing aspects of the piece concerns a certain disparity between harmonic and melodic structure. I suppose it is that very disparity that creates tension and makes for musical interest, but it does present some problems for the performer. Consider the first four measures. The

movement from dominant seventh to tonic suggests more tone in measures 1-2, and less at the resolution in measures 3-4. This is one of the fundamental "rules" of piano playing; that passages of tension resolve into passages of relaxation with well-paced diminuendos. Yet, looking at the shape of the melodic line, it is clear that measures 1-2 present a descent to B', while measures 3-4 present an ascent to A". And according to Klenczynski, Chopin often told his pupils that "If the melody ascends, one plays crescendo, if it descends, decrescendo."²⁰ This presents a bit of a problem, does it not? Should the second phrase be played softer or louder than the first? If the harmony and melody in a passage suggest two opposing interpretations, what should the performer do?

Obviously, there is no single, correct answer. Interpretation is an act of decision-making, and the interpreter is not liable (or capable) of bringing out everything. And according to Cone, "Whatever decision one makes, one gains something, but one also loses something" (p. 35). However, I am suggesting (and am using the opening four measures of this prelude simply as an example of an idea that can be applied to other interpretive roadblocks) that at times like this, when harmony and melody have opposite interpretive

²⁰Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1986), p. 42.

implications, a solution can be found in considering another aspect of the compositional construction, namely, the rhythm. In fact, according to many analysts, including Cone, a piece's rhythm is the single most important consideration when making interpretive decisions.

Thus, consider the primary rhythmic motive that saturates the work, the three quarter notes at the end of each hypermeasure. These repeated notes repeat so often that they become an obstacle to be overcome in interpreting the work, and at the same time provide an answer in playing measures 1-4 convincingly. Yes, the resolution in measures 3 and 4 should be softer than measures 1 and 2; and yes the D# to E to A in m. 3 should crescendo. But although the level reached by the high A at the second beat of m. 3 can be louder than anything before it, a diminuendo on the second and third repeated A's can bring the general level down quite below anything before it. Both the harmonic and melodic implications of the passage are satisfied. And, if not too much diminuendo is made at the end of the first hypermeasure, the monotony of these three repeated notes is avoided early on in the prelude.

Cone

In his discussion of the prelude,²¹ Cone makes a number of insightful points, most of which I will compare to recorded performances. Ultimately, the crux of the analysis deals with the tension created by an inherent conflict in the piece, a conflict that affects the two parallel phrases (measures 1-8 and 9-16, antecedent and consequent), while simultaneously interpreting the work as one complete phrase. But first let's examine some his more specific points.

One of his first comments regards the melodic and harmonic climax at m. 12. Cone has divided the piece into eight hypermeasures of 6/4, stating that "This meter is so consistently supported by the motivic structure that toward the end, when the second measure is given additional stress, we hear it as a syncopation within the 6/4 rather than as a metrical shift...The crescendo in mm. 11-12, together with the melodic climax and the harmonic complication at that point, might tempt us to make that pair of measures, or perhaps the next pair, strong, but we should resist. These measures are harmonically the most active of the entire piece; to make one of them a rhythmic goal through downbeat status would break

²¹Edward Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance*, (W.W. Norton: New York, 1968), pp. 39-43.

the V-I-VI-II-V-I motion" (p. 40). This implies a different interpretation of m. 12 than I had thought most convincing. I thought the piece was centered around this moment, and that measures 12 and 13 needed to be separated from their surroundings. Cone sees its position within the surrounding harmony, and his analysis suggests playing in such a way as to illustrate its role as a passing harmony, connecting the tonic to the final V-I cadence.

One of the problems that Cone finds in the piece is caused by the finality of the cadence that ends the antecedent phrase (mm. 7-8). I do not have any problem with it, if solely because of the work's brevity (it is interesting that Kallberg's criticism of the preludes involve incomplete closure, yet Cone is identifying premature closure). In any case, Cone argues that the cadence at m. 7, although not perfect, is indeed authentic, and does sound too conclusive for its own context. Cone then goes on to describe what this suggests to the interpreter, in this case, and in general: "...when premature closure threatens, try to avoid it by lightening the cadence" (p. 43). On the one hand, this suggestion certainly encourages an interpretation that conveys the overall structure (much like viewing the F# dominant seventh as part of an overall progression, not as a "structural downbeat"); but on the other hand, to what degree

does avoiding the presentation of a work's structural "defects" actually improve a performance? Is not smoothing things out, so that nothing sounds out of place, characteristic of the trend in recent decades of Chopin interpreters, interpreters who play with a solid structural sense, but without personality? Is having a sense that the piece is over at m. 8, and then discovering that it really is not, necessarily a bad thing? Further, Cone believes that "...one test of a good performance is the extent to which the listener knows where he is, even in a work with which he is unfamiliar" (p. 45). I suspect that leading the listener to lose a sense of where he is might be a necessary ingredient in creating a performance that conveys a sense of improvisation and surprise; hence, personality. The recorded performances might very well shed some light on this issue.

In his analysis of the prelude's melodic and harmonic line, Cone presents a diagram of how he hears the piece (p. 41). Although the purpose of the diagram is, for the most part, a chance for the reader to witness Cone's thinking, thinking that leads to some general conclusions about the work's overall structure, he does make some interesting observations about where he believes certain voices lead, observations worthy of comparison with recordings. For example, in the antecedent phrase, he indicates (with dotted lines) that the

G# in the first hypermeasure leads to the high A in the second (the second beat of m. 3). Plus, his lines indicate that this high A connects all the way to the sixth hypermeasure, the A-C# in the top voice (the second beat of m. 11). Cone's reasoning for this connection seems obvious, but I question if this relationship is audible to the listener. Or better, what can a pianist do to make it audible to the listener? Perhaps by singing out the second beats of measures 3 and 11 with distinctly comparable attacks, attacks only evident in these two measures. Perhaps corresponding adjustments of tempo can make this relationship clear. In any case, the pianist must do something if this connection, or any connection for that matter, is to be brought out. He further indicates that the F# in the middle voice at the second beat of m. 5 relates to the E at the second beat of m. 7. Perhaps bringing out this inner voice would help to undermine Cone's premature closure at m. 7.

In the consequent phrase, Cone's voice-leading gets a bit more complicated. He indicates that the G# at the second beat of m. 9 leads to the high A at the second beat of m. 11. Certainly a leading tone needs to resolve (even if it resolves an octave higher), but it seems as though the B melodic voice at the second beat of m. 9 steals the show. It is possible, however, to balance the chords in such a way as to bring out

the relationship. Cone further suggests that the A# at the downbeat of m. 12 leads to the B at the second beat of m. 13. This relationship seems built into the overt sonority of the piece, and would be extremely difficult not to bring out. Finally, and a bit more challenging to the pianist, is Cone's connection of the F# in the top voice at the second beat of m. 13 to the E at the second beat of m. 15. Bringing this out requires just the right balance in the left hand at the second beat of m. 15, so as not to interfere too much with a singing A in the top voice, thereby providing a full sense of closure.

Cone's final point regards a certain paradox that arises within the prelude. In simplifying his voice-leading chart, he finds that the piece can be represented by the following pitches, each representing a hypermeasure (p. 41): B - C# - D - C# - B - C# - B - A. He goes on to say that "...this indicates that the whole can be heard as an augmentation of the second half - or rather, the second half as a diminution embedded within the whole!" (p. 41). He points out that the seemingly best way to bring out this relationship would be to accentuate the initial and cadential downbeats of each phrase, hypermeasures 1, 4, 5, and 8 (p. 42). However, Cone contends, "...at the next level, if we wish to make the augmentation as clear as possible, we must preserve the same pattern for the whole. This will mean underplaying both the cadence of the

antecedent and the initial of the consequent" (p. 42). Thus, the challenge to the pianist lies in how to interpret a passage such as hypermeasure 4, which is strong as a cadential downbeat, or as a conclusion to the antecedent phrase, yet is weak at a higher structural level, viewing the prelude as a whole (4 groups of 2 hypermeasures).

Although Cone generally believes that a cadential downbeat is indeed strong, and is "the goal of a crescendo" (p. 27), he contends that "because of the greater demands of the composition as a whole, not every phrase should be so considered" (p. 27). Certainly this is one of those cases, and in order to express the complete musical line in this prelude, too much sonority cannot be provided in the fourth hypermeasure.

In regard to Cone's general belief that phrase endings and beginnings are strong, Joel Lester suggests that "The other alternative is to accept phrase beginnings as metrically accented and most cadences as metrically weak. This approach denies any direct relation between the level at which a pitch or harmony arises and its accentual status."²² This viewpoint seems more in agreement with pianistic interpretation than Cone's does. Yet, certain pianists seem

²²Joel Lester, *The Rhythms of Tonal Music* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), p. 209.

overly trained in this regard. There are times when the constant decreasing of volume and intensity at moments of resolve can form a pattern in performance that grows predictable. Perhaps incorporating a sense of propulsion and growth to cadential downbeats, with the ever-popular pianistic diminuendos, might result in performances with greater textural variety and interest.

ROSENTHAL

The first recording I shall compare with Cone's ideas was made by Moriz Rosenthal.²³ Rosenthal studied with Chopin's pupil, Mikuli, for two years, and consequently presents many performance traditions most likely directly linked to Chopin.

Rosenthal's interpretation is so incomparably expressive, that even with repeated listenings, it never ceases to be completely compelling. And I believe that one aspect of what makes it so involves a performance tradition that has quite sadly evaporated in the evolution of twentieth-century performance practice. And that is the pianist's prerogative to roll a chord, any chord at any given time, at whim, and the related issue of not playing the two hands together. Taking these liberties adds a degree of sensitivity that this music

²³Pearl (GEMM CD9963), 1935.

requires. Some may believe that this kind of "mannered" playing represents self-indulgence on the part of the artist, a type of indulgence that is the antithesis of scholarly, analytical thinking, a type of thinking that supposedly puts the music first and the artist second. I, however, am arguing that the opposite is actually true. Having this freedom of expression grants the artist another means of conveying a work's melodic and harmonic implications, and can therefore be more "scholarly" and loyal to the text, even though it may seem less loyal on a more obvious level.

By varying when he rolls the chords (and for that matter, how slow or fast he rolls them, and what notes of the rolled chord are most accented or understated), Rosenthal is able to eliminate the possible monotony that can result from Chopin's symmetrical phrasing, which I had found an interpretive obstacle to be overcome. I had suggested, for example, taking time between the first and second hypermeasures, yet taking none between the third and fourth (based on context). Rosenthal, however, takes more or less the same amount of time between each hypermeasure, yet avoids monotony by surprising the listener with what chords he chooses to roll within each hypermeasure (if he rolled the same corresponding chord within each phrase, then that too might become monotonous). While he plays the three repeated chords of the first and second

hypermeasures completely together, in the third hypermeasure he rolls the second beat of m. 5. He then adds variety in the fourth hypermeasure by unexpectedly rolling the third beat of m. 7. Each hypermeasure has its own character, the monotony is avoided, all without altering the tempo too much between phrases. The variety is there, because the rhythmic pulse is constantly shifting from hypermeasure to hypermeasure, yet the long line is preserved. There is a danger of pianists of our generation to impose musicality from without, breaking up the line with ritardandos between phrases, all in an admirable effort to express structure. The ability to roll chords presents a sense of phrasing from within, a style of playing that I believe is closer to Chopin's own style. My suggestion of taking time between certain hypermeasures and not others, although a reasonable interpretive suggestion, has somewhat less validity in a nineteenth century mindset.

In regard to my comment about the appoggiaturas, that more time should be taken at the downbeat of m. 3 than at the downbeat of m. 11 based on context, once again Rosenthal's style of playing differs with my modern-day thinking. He seems more concerned with the momentary expressiveness of the appoggiaturas, and in both instances plays the left hand ahead of the right. In this case I find one criticism of his performance. Not only does he play the left hand ahead of the

right in those two instances, but he does so at the downbeat of every single measure! And for me, that becomes a bit monotonous. To the modern day pianist I say, yes, roll chords and play the left hand ahead of the right in Chopin, but do so with discretion. Any overly-used gesture can become predictable.

Concerning my discussion of the second hypermeasure being softer or louder than the first (harmony versus melody), Rosenthal does indeed permit the ascending melody to increase in volume, while using the three repeated chords to soften the tone beneath anything proceeding it. My analysis and Rosenthal's performance are in agreement here.

When Rosenthal reaches the F# dominant seventh (he makes a diminuendo instead of a crescendo, by the way), there is a sense that he is separating it from the rest of the piece. In fact, by taking so much time before it, and by rolling the left hand so slowly, the chord really sounds more like a metrical shift than a syncopation within the 6/4 (as Cone would have it). Yet, Cone's concern with preserving the V-I-VI-II-V-I motion seems at least partly adhered to: while Rosenthal's approach to the chord exaggerates its sheer surprise and relative distance from the V-I proceeding it, he begins the seventh hypermeasure (the third beat of m. 12) so delicately as to convey the F# dominant seventh's relationship

to the II-V-I following it. At times like this, when a particularly important harmony arises, analytical commentary on the chord's rhythmic and harmonic position must at times acknowledge that there is a sheer pianistic enjoyment of an unexpected moment, at least in the material preceding and during it. Yet, once the rhythmic and harmonic structure has been temporarily destroyed, immediately conveying the chord's contextual importance leading out of it satisfies both the listener's emotional and cerebral expectations. The greatest Chopin interpreters exhibit both pianistic and analytical genius.

Cone's discussion of premature closure does seem to be an analytical concern that has relevance to Rosenthal. Although Rosenthal does present a strong sense of A Major resolution in the fourth hypermeasure, a sense of resolution that may indeed sound a bit too conclusive, he plays the final cadence in such a way that only here is there a complete sense of finality. Rosenthal rolls the second beat of m. 15 quite slowly, taking a split second before reaching the high A, which thereby separates this hypermeasure from hypermeasure 4. In addition, he takes another split second before the downbeat of m. 16 (something he doesn't do before the downbeat of m. 8).

In regard to Cone's voice-leading, some of these melodic connections are important to Rosenthal, and some are not, as

might be expected. The G# of m. 2 does not relate to the A of m. 3 -- yes, harmonically speaking it is the leading tone. But because of the jump of register from the G# to the A, and because of the B in the soprano in the first hypermeasure, the connection between the two pitches (not the two harmonies) is not pianistically relevant. And, the connection between the high A of m. 3 and the A-C# of m. 11 seems to be an analytical concept that cannot be applied to performance. The connection between the F# at m. 5 and the E at m. 7 is audible in Rosenthal's performance, and I think it is partly because the two tones are next to each other, and the relationship between them is easy to convey pianistically.

In the second phrase, however, the high F# of the seventh hypermeasure does relate to the E of the eighth -- and by being able to roll certain chords, Rosenthal is able to bring out these inner voices and pitch relationships when he so chooses. Cone's connection between the G# of m. 9 and the high A of m. 11 seems more theoretical than practical. Although it is surely possible to bring out any pitch relationships in performance, it seems as though relationships in which too much time and register passes between them remain theoretical concepts, and not important interpretive suggestions, at least based on Rosenthal's performance (perhaps in Edward Cone's performance they're all audible).

Finally, in regard to Cone's discussion of two phrases versus one long line, and his final recommendation of underplaying the fourth and fifth hypermeasures, Rosenthal seems to differ partly in his interpretation. Although Rosenthal does underplay the fourth hypermeasure, he begins the fifth with a strong attack, an attack that clearly separates the piece into an antecedent and consequent phrase. Cone's suggestion of weakening the antecedent cadence and the consequent initial downbeat in order to preserve the long line, although a legitimate suggestion to pianists of the current generation, is questionable in terms of what it means to Rosenthal. Rosenthal presents so much color within each phrase with rolled chords and beautifully paced diminuendos on the three repeated notes, that by exaggerating the correspondence between the fifth hypermeasure and the first, a gesture that might lack subtlety in a contemporary performance adds a degree of simplicity to a fundamentally "mannered" one. It is comparable to the way in which Rosenthal can take the same amount of time between hypermeasures without sounding monotonous.

RUBINSTEIN

In addition to studying with Mikuli, Rosenthal studied with

Joseffy and Liszt. His playing, as demonstrated by this recording, is directly linked to nineteenth century pianism, representing a style of performance widespread in the early part of this century. And it was this very style that Arthur Rubinstein, born in 1886, grew up hearing. It certainly had its influence on him, although there was much about it that he rejected. According to Harold Schonberg: "When he (Rubinstein) was born...the pupils of Liszt and Leschetizsky had taken over, and the playing he heard in his formative years had a great deal of exaggeration and distortion. Liberty was the order of the day, in the name of 'expression'. It was a wonderful age of piano playing, but not an age that would be accepted today. Somehow Rubinstein avoided the prevailing anarchy."²⁴ His playing does exhibit a somewhat paradoxical culmination of styles: a certain nineteenth century influence (mainly because of the playing he grew up hearing), a natural affinity for Chopin (perhaps due in some part to his own Polish blood), and a certain directness of expression (possibly due in part to his studies in Berlin with Heinrich Barth, and the influence of the disciplining German school). Rubinstein is one of the important influences in disrupting any strong connection between the style of playing

²⁴Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists*, (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1963), p. 416.

at the beginning of this century and at the end. His 1946 version of the prelude²⁵ is an interpretation that represents a different conception of the work, and of Chopin, than does Rosenthal's recording.

As might be expected, none of the chords are rolled, and the left hand is always played with the right (even when Chopin writes a grace note in m. 15!). I've found occasional exceptions to this in other Rubinstein recordings, but in this prelude, he seems to let the piece speak for itself. In fact, he plays the three repeated notes almost always at the same level, except for a few exceptional places, and makes few adjustments of tempo between or within hypermeasures.

Perhaps because of the work's brevity, Rubinstein does not seem to mind the two-bar patterning, and takes basically the same amount of time between each hypermeasure. What he does do, however, is allow the half note concluding each hypermeasure to float in the air for longer than two beats. This way he is able to convey convincingly the repeated two-bar gesture in a manner that doesn't sound metronomic. He preserves the rhythm without allowing it to become irritating -- a good interpretive idea for pianists as well as an example of why Rubinstein's playing is both expressive and

²⁵RCA Victor (60047-4-RG).

straightforward. Once again, the concept of taking varying amounts of time between hypermeasures is replaced with a more musically-integrated interpretive idea.

My concern with whether the second hypermeasure should be softer or louder than the first is irrelevant in Rubinstein's performance. His second hypermeasure is of exactly the same intensity as the first. He does not make any adjustments of volume or expression until he gets to the third and fourth hypermeasures, indicating that his conception of the prelude is not eight groups of 6/4, as Cone hears it, but almost as four groups of 12/4. Rubinstein presents a larger musical structure than Rosenthal, and therefore, the well-chosen nuances that he does make have more meaning (such as waiting until the three repeated notes of the third hypermeasure to reduce his volume).

And, when he reaches the F# dominant seventh, there is a great sense of it as a syncopation within a consistent rhythmic flow than as being a metrical shift. This is logical, even though Cone hears 6/4 and Rubinstein projects 12/4, because the larger the pianist's rhythmical patterning, the less a harmonic change like this will sound like a shift in meter, and the more it will sound like a syncopation. Likewise, the smaller the rhythmic increments the pianist projects, the more the harmonic change will interfere with the

overall rhythmic flow. Part of what further creates a sense of syncopation is the fact that Rubinstein plays a subito piano on the chord, without any diminuendo leading into it, at the second and third beats of m. 11. Furthermore, he leads out of the chord more straightforwardly than Rosenthal, understating its connection with what follows. Maintaining a consistent tempo and dynamic before and after a harmonic surprise and only providing a sudden drop in dynamic level at the moment itself, as opposed to making crescendos/diminuendos and accelerandos/ritardandos before and after it, better conveys the chord's metrical position and underplays its harmonic position (the V-I-VI-II-I motion). You can't do everything, as Cone says.

As Rubinstein is thinking along larger structural lines than Rosenthal, many of Cone's comments seem to relate better to Rubinstein's performance. For example, the threat of premature closure seems to be an issue that Rubinstein needs to counteract. He does so by accenting the downbeat of m. 7, playing such a strong leading tone that the resolution loses its importance in comparison, and therefore couldn't possibly provide too great a sense of conclusion. Rubinstein seems to have a natural ability to draw the listener's attention away from that which may become problematical (much like a magician forcing the audience's attention away from some sly

movement of the hand).

Although many of Cone's voice-leading relationships in the middle voices do not come across (partly because Rubinstein does not roll the chords, and partly because Rubinstein seems more concerned with balancing every chord so that the melody always takes precedence), some of Cone's longer relationships, relationships that I had previously considered somewhat inaccessible to the pianist, do seem to be made clear. Because of the way Rubinstein sings out the high A in the second hypermeasure and the A-C# in the sixth, all the while underplaying the material between, this relationship is certainly audible. The larger the pianist's conception of the rhythmic increments in a work (and it does not have to do with tempo!) the easier these long-distance relationships can be felt.

As I mentioned earlier, Rubinstein places several moments of increased nuance in carefully chosen places. And in doing so, he presents another perspective in underplaying Cone's antecedent and consequent phrase, and creating one long line. While Cone suggests weakening the antecedent cadence and the consequent initial downbeat, in Rubinstein's performance the fourth and fifth hypermeasures are quite strong (except for a slight decrease in volume at the downbeat of m. 8). What Rubinstein does do, however, is present many delicate nuances

in only two of the work's hypermeasures, hypermeasures 3 and 7, the third hypermeasure of each phrase. By playing hypermeasure 3 softly and expressively, and then playing the cadential fourth hypermeasure louder and more straightforwardly, the sense of antecedent ending and consequent beginning is under-emphasized. By playing softly and expressively at hypermeasure 7, a parallelism between the two phrases is established, while the cadence of the antecedent and the initial of the consequent pass by unnoticed, simply by retaining their regularity. A different pianistic interpretation than Cone's, but the same theoretical concern is preserved (all roads lead to Rome).

The G Major Prelude

In a discussion of rhythm and linear analysis, Joel Lester lists the many positive facets of linear analyses, yet questions the importance of assigning metric notations to them: "[These facets] are displayed whether or not the analysis utilizes specific rhythmic and metric notations at some or all levels. In that the incorporation of rhythmic and metric notations raises the problems cited in this chapter and in that rhythmic processes both at the foreground and at higher levels involve far more complex matters than merely the

assignment of a duration and metric position, it may well be that traditional methods of notating hierarchic analyses are as well or better suited to reveal rhythm than more metrically notated analyses" (*The Rhythms of Tonal Music*, pp. 216-17). Lester raises a general issue that this study hopes to answer. Do analyses that "rearrange" pieces in an effort to decipher them present a closer or more distant correspondance with what is considered good Chopin interpretation, compared to analyses that leave the work as it is? Certainly pianists need to have a knowledge of harmony and voice-leading, but to what extent can an understanding of rhythmic and linear analysis with durational reduction improve one's performance? In his article on durational reduction,²⁶ Carl Schachter states: "By indicating tonal events in durational proportion and by specifying the larger metrical divisions, such an approach can sometimes clarify aspects of rhythmic organization not directly revealed by graphic analyses that deal mainly with voice-leading and harmony" (p. 198). What follows are some of Schachter's points, points derived from four durational graphs. Afterwards I will consider how this type of analytical thinking relates to performance. I list these points in the form of an outline so that later, when I discuss

²⁶"Rhythm and linear analysis: durational reduction."
Music Forum V (1980): 197-232.

Schachter's Four Graphs

EXAMPLE 4 *Prelude, Op. 28, No. 3* Chopin

The image displays four musical graphs (a, b, c, d) for Chopin's *Prelude, Op. 28, No. 3*. Each graph is a musical staff with various annotations:

- Graph a)** Shows the first two measures. The first measure is labeled "(antecedent)" with a circled 1. The second measure is labeled "(consequent)" with a circled 2. A double bar line is present between the two measures.
- Graph b)** Shows the first two measures. The first measure is labeled with a circled 1. The second measure is labeled with a circled 2. A double bar line is present between the two measures.
- Graph c)** Shows the first two measures. The first measure is labeled with a circled 1. The second measure is labeled with a circled 2. A double bar line is present between the two measures. Below the staff, Roman numerals I, IV, V, and I are indicated.
- Graph d)** Shows the first two measures. The first measure is labeled "(Introduction)" with a circled 1. The second measure is labeled with a circled 2. A double bar line is present between the two measures. Below the staff, Roman numerals I, IV, V, and I are indicated. The word "[Coda]" is written at the end of the second measure.

the relationship of the recordings to each analytical point, I can use the same numbering system for quick reference to each of Schachter's ideas.

1. In regard to the general form of the G Major Prelude, Schachter states that "In essence it consists of two phrases in antecedent-consequent relation" (p. 204). Based on this description, his first durational graph (example 4a) leads to several general observations.

a. He indicates how Chopin is able to provide a sense of completeness to a form that is built on only two phrases and might otherwise lack a thorough sense of conclusion: "Chopin avoids this difficulty by modifying the consequent phrase; most often, as in our Prelude, he enlarges it, and by delaying the final tonic, creates a stronger ending" (p. 204).

b. Schachter takes the previous point a step further by showing that the resulting asymmetry (even putting aside the introduction, coda, and added bar 11) grows out of a basic regularity: "By showing the main body of the piece with an equal duration for its two parts, I indicate that its asymmetrical proportions grow out of an underlying symmetry." And Schachter supports this argument with his general belief that an antecedent phrase sets up expectations in the listener, particularly an expectation that "the consequent will resolve the tonal tension produced by the antecedent and

that it will do so within the same amount of time. Were this not so, expansions or contractions of the consequent phrase would lose much, if not all, of their effect" (p. 205). How can pianists provide this sense of assymetry grown out of symmetry? Surely by somehow emphasizing the bars of expansion in the consequent.

What of added material in the antecedent? How can pianists convey the importance of the added material at m. 11? Should it be under or over-emphasized? Does an adjustment of tempo or volume increase or decrease its effect? And regarding any type of variances from a work's background structure, for that matter, I question whether its more interpretively advantageous to accentuate the passage in some way (be it more or less tone) or better to let the added material speak for itself.

c. Schachter believes that the final cadence of the piece arrives at a metrically weak position: "...the final tonic (bar 26) enters in the second half of a hypermeasure - in a metrically weaker place, therefore, than the dominant that precedes it" (p. 205). He goes on to justify his point by stating that "the goal tonic of the soprano line falls at the end of a legato slur - a notation that suggests that it is rhythmically, as well as metrically, weak" (p. 205). Joel Lester, however, finds some fault with Schachter's argument:

"Chopin's slurs also cross the arrival on the dominant in measure 24, a dominant that is metrically weak at every level in Schachter's analysis" (*The Rhythms of Tonal Music*, p. 209). Certainly Chopin's slur markings relate to the work's form. But do they support the rhythmic patterning in this case, as Schachter suggests, or did Chopin put a slur there simply because the melody ended? In any case, viewing the cadence as metrically weak would seem to imply a diminuendo in performance. On the other hand, if the cadence is indeed metrically weak, then perhaps too much diminuendo need not be made because there is added material afterward (the remainder of m. 26 and m. 27) in which a complete sense of resolution can be felt. In fact, if too much diminuendo is made leading into the downbeat of m. 26, does not the material afterward (bars 26-27) lose some of its meaning?

2a. Schachter's second graph (example 4b) and related commentary sheds light on the consequent phrase. He begins by pointing out that it is indeed the extended subdominant (beginning with the V7 of IV in bars 16-17) that "gives the goal tonic a finality it would altogether lack if it came at the end of a symmetrical sixteen-bar period" (p. 206). Does being aware of the existence of an extended sub-dominant suggest anything to the interpreter?

b. Schachter makes several comments about the nature of

this prolongation of IV. He begins by saying that even though the expansion exists, it does not ruin the 4-bar patterning. Chopin does toy with this patterning, however, as Schachter explains: "Note that the I and IV chords (of bars 12-23) occupy six bars apiece. The change of chord, therefore, overlaps the four-bar groupings and helps to prevent an excessive segmentation" (p. 206). And, as Schachter does not consider bars 16-17 as IV, but as two bars that lead to IV, he believes that "it would be incorrect to assume that the "harmonic rhythm" of six bars (I) plus six (IV) has as its basis the division of four plus eight bars of the larger meter" (p. 206). Schachter seems to be exposing an element of tension inherent in the passage, a passage in which "the conflict between tonal and durational groupings is built into the deeper fabric of the composition" (p. 207). The heart of the issue can be found in bars 16-17, and it will be interesting to observe how various pianists place those measures, if they play them in relation to what proceeds or follows them, and if they present a sense of "the conflict between tonal and durational groupings" characteristic of this passage.

3a. Schachter's third graph (example 4c) leads to several interesting points, the first of which concerns the consequent. He questions whether it is made up of two phrases

or one (sixteen bars or two groups of eight), based on "the cadential effect of bars 16-19...and the long halt in bars 18-19 on the soprano's e2..." (p. 207). He concludes, however, that the C Major is part of a I - IV - V - I progression, and therefore actually comprises one long phrase.

b. While I had thought of measure 22 solely as a C Major seventh, Schachter interprets the high B as a passing tone. And bar 23, which can easily be interpreted as a ii7 in first inversion, Schachter believes to be simply a IV, justifying the high A as an anticipation (p. 207). Certainly hearing these two measures as Schachter does (as IV with nonharmonic tones placed above) implies a different interpretation than hearing them as seventh chords. Do various pianists balance this descending soprano line in such a way as to exhibit a tendency towards either interpretation?

c. Schachter uses this graph to illustrate the fact that what he considers to be the main melodic notes (the high B of bars 5 and 14, the high A of 8 and 10) fall in the middle of the hypermeasures rather than at the beginning" (p. 207). This suggests a question for pianists -- if the main melodic tones of a work fall in weak metrical positions, should their "syncopated" position be brought out? Obviously, if important melodic notes always fell in strong metric positions, music would be predictable. Thus, should pianists emphasize or

under-emphasize melodic "irregularity"? Although exaggerating discrepancies between melody and rhythm seems to make for interesting performance in Beethoven, for example, how does it hold up in Chopin? Schachter also points out that this type of melodic line helps "to give the right-hand part the same contours as the ostinato figure of the left hand" (p. 208). In what ways can pianists show this relationship?

4. Schachter's fourth graph (example 4d) portrays the foreground of the prelude, including a representation of the introduction and coda. It sheds further insight into the work.

a. Schachter first refers to the last half of the antecedent phrase, pointing out that in bars 7-11 "the melodic progression e2 - a2 appears twice, together with its harmonic accompaniment...This is a simple example of prolongation by repetition" (p. 208). He then explains the two purposes behind it: "First, it continues the larger metric groups of four bars without retarding the melodic pace" (p. 208). Certainly Chopin could have filled up measures 7-11 without repeating anything. What I find fascinating is that perhaps he did, in fact, add an element of repetition here so that the added bar 11 would be all the more unique. Interestingly enough, if you sit at the piano and alter the melody of measures 9-10 so that it is different from measures 7-8, the

added bar is indeed less effective. Perhaps this is part of Chopin's underlying compositional skill, leading Schachter to comment that m. 11 "is heard so clearly as an extension that it does not at all disturb the hypermeter" (p. 208).

b. Schachter makes an additional point about m. 11: "Here the rhythmic quirk calls attention to a beautiful tonal development: the enlargement of the motivic neighboring-tone figures e2 - d2 and c3 - b2" (p. 208). I think it is quite possible for pianists to portray these relationships, particularly the connection of the C in m. 11 to the B in m. 14. The E at the third beat of m. 11 requires special care if it is to relate to the D at the downbeat of m. 12 because of the change of register.

c. Schachter discusses the correspondence between the introduction and ending: "the piece ends, as it begins, with a two-bar group. I doubt that this symmetry is accidental, though I can't prove that it is not" (p. 209). Accidental or not, it exists, but might be a difficult relationship to bring out pianistically because the note-values are different, although the harmony and metric organization are the same.

5. Schachter discusses a few aspects of the immediate foreground, and these points all seem to be quite capable of being brought out in performance.

a. He first establishes that the opening melody grows out

of the accompaniment. The position of the B to E to D in the left-hand in the opening measures (leading from the first sixteenth of the second beat to the last sixteenth of the second beat to the downbeat of the third) relates to the right-hand in that "The right-hand part of bars 3 and 4 have the same rhythmic contour 'stretched apart'" (p. 209). As Schachter contends, this subtlety is indeed striking.

b. Schachter then describes how Chopin uses this rhythm in bars 16 and 20 "for the reiteration of a single note...Thus we find that the tonal rhythm concealed in the figuration of the opening bar gradually evolves into a purely durational pattern" (p. 209). I wonder if this is one of those theoretical points that speaks for itself, or if pianists must do something to illuminate it. In any case, it is a perfect musical example to support Cone's general premise that "rhythm is basic" (*Musical Form and Musical Performance*, p. 25).

c. Two final comments regard the coda. Schachter first makes reference to "the progressive shortening of rhythmic groups" (p. 210). In addition to the length of the consequent and the mere existence of a coda, I believe this built-in accelerando in measures 28-31 also adds a sense of finality to a work that might otherwise sound incomplete (accelerating the rhythmic pacing such as this seems a point related to Jeffrey Kallberg's previously mentioned discussion of endings).

Finally, Schachter observes how "the two final chords indistinctly echo the accompaniment pattern and, indeed, the opening phase of the melodic line" (p. 210). This seems to be a theoretical point that is built into the music, requiring no extra effort on the part of the pianist. Or is it?

CORTOT

I begin with Cortot's 1926 version,²⁷ which is from the first recording made of the complete set. I chose this recording for several reasons. First, Cortot studied with Descombes, a student of Chopin's, and consequently presents performance traditions most likely directly linked to Chopin. Second, as this study deals with analysis and performance, it is interesting to note that Cortot required of all his students an analysis of the music they were playing.²⁸ Analytical understanding was important to him, and I wonder to what degree this is reflected in his own playing. Finally, Cortot is acknowledged to be one of the great Chopinists of all time, and I won't hesitate to treat his interpretation with some degree of authority. David Dubal, however,

²⁷HMV (DB 957/60).

²⁸David Dubal, *The Art of the Piano* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1990), p. 75.

discusses the pros and cons: "Cortot's Chopin output is replete with magical moments, though also the most commonplace errors. Surely there are listeners who will be repelled by his fanciful and extravagant rubato, which in fact in many places borders on the banal and sentimental. His style of enchantment is foreign to the more standardized contemporary way of playing. Bar-lines disappear with a seemingly random freedom" (*The Art of the Piano*, p. 76).

The numbering system of the following outline corresponds with the outline that established Schachter's points above.

1a. Cortot is able to provide a sense of completeness to the form, and seems well aware of the manner in which Chopin enlarges the consequent. While he plays the antecedent phrase with only the most subtle of nuances, he makes much greater use of rubato and variety of tone in the consequent, thereby accentuating its unexpected length and sense of finality. While Chopin is delaying the final tonic, Cortot is also delaying it -- by taking time leading into it. Also, he provides a sense of finality by rolling the G Major triad at the downbeat of m. 26.

b. The tremendous ritard that Cortot makes in bars 16 and 17, and the manner in which he rolls the right hand at the downbeat of m. 20, certainly convey interpretively the shattering of expectations in the consequent set up in the

antecedent. Although the ritard may only be a simple pianistic reaction to the sheer beauty of the modulation to C major, I suspect (particularly because it is such a big ritard) that Cortot is reacting to the expansion of the form here. And in this sense I believe that Cortot is indeed presenting a sense of assymetry out of symmetry.

Cortot plays the added m. 11 somewhat tentatively and with a slightly decreased volume in relation to its surroundings. It is quite subtle and in good taste -- he doesn't make a huge ritard or diminuendo as if to point out what's happening here-- but by pointing it out gently, it is all the more effective.

c. There is not a great sense of the final tonic being rhythmically and metrically weak because of the way Cortot approaches and executes the downbeat of m. 26. He cuts back the volume of the leading tone at the downbeat of m. 25, and then plays the G at the downbeat of m. 26 with more sound (the opposite of what pianists are generally taught and supportive of the belief that cadences are accented). Plus, the ritard that Cortot makes takes away from the importance of the chord's rhythmical and metrical position, and simply conveys a strong sense of conclusion. As Cortot resumes tempo after this tonic downbeat, there is a greater sense of measures 26 and 27 leading into the coda, rather than unwinding the tension of the previous resolution, as I had proposed. Also,

even though this resolution does fall in the middle of a 4-bar hypermeasure (the downbeat of the third bar), Cortot has already established a pattern of accenting the third bar of each hypermeasure. For example, in bars 3-6, it is the downbeat of m. 5 that is the most accented beat of the whole hypermeasure. Thus, based on what has proceeded it, this goal tonic does not sound metrically weak, at least in Cortot's rendition.

2a. As mentioned above, Cortot is well-aware of the existence of the extended subdominant beginning in measures 16-17. What might be added here is that in addition to taking so much time in 16-17, Cortot allows the right hand rhythm to lag throughout measures 16-23 (the entire C Major section). While he generally plays the right-hand sixteenth quick as it appears throughout the antecedent (at the end of measures 3, 4, etc.), its value is lengthened considerably here. I do not believe that this is a coincidence, but rather suspect that it is a pianistic means of conveying a sense of finality to the goal tonic by way of stressing the excess of subdominant.

b. Cortot is very clear about maintaining 4-bar groupings throughout the consequent. A few examples of how he does this include: a diminuendo into the downbeat of m. 15 (which establishes a 4-bar pattern at measures 12-15) and a diminuendo into the downbeat of m. 23 (which establishes a 4-

bar pattern at measures 20-23). And he does roll the downbeat of m. 20, which presents a sense of starting anew. But in measures 16-19 he does something that might very well convey Schachter's "conflict," and that is make a large ritard into the downbeat of m. 18, immediately resuming tempo after hitting this downbeat, thereby providing a sense of the tension created by 6 + 6 within a 4-bar environment.

3a. Although Schachter concludes that the consequent comprises one long phrase because of the overall progression, Cortot's performance suggests, at least to me, two groups of eight. Here is a good example of where analysis and pianistic interpretation differ -- while Schachter is certainly justified in concluding that only one phrase exists based on harmony (much the same way Cone placed the F# dominant seventh of the A Major Prelude within its harmonic surroundings), the pianist needs to do more with phrasing within the slow harmonic rhythm. Interpreters need to counteract the monotony of slow harmonic rhythm by breaking up the long line with more phrases. Conversely, passages of rapid harmonic change lose much of their effect if too many phrases are made within them.

b. It is somewhat difficult to determine in which way Cortot interprets the B and A of measures 22-23. From a pianistic perspective, these are simply melody notes that need to be sung out. I do suspect, however, that Cortot does hear

the dissonance of the B, because he projects it, allowing it to resolve into the A. I would conclude that Cortot does interpret the B as a passing tone, but I doubt whether he views the A as an anticipation. The A resolves the tension created by the B to a greater extent than it is related to what comes after it.

c. Even though the main melodic notes do fall in the middle of hypermeasures, Cortot does bring them out. For example, the high B at the downbeat of m. 5 is the loudest note in that hypermeasure, and the high A of m. 8 is the loudest note in that hypermeasure. And Cortot is indeed showing the relationship between the contours of the two hands; in addition to accenting the syncopation of the right-hand melody, Cortot accentuates the rise and fall of the left with well-paced crescendo/dimnuendos that reach their peak in a similarly syncopated fashion.

4a. Cortot does two things in measures 9 and 10 that complement the repetition. He plays the downbeat of m. 9 with less volume than the downbeat of m. 7, and rolls the downbeat of m. 10 quicker than the downbeat of m. 8. Here pianist and analyst are reacting to the same event in different ways; Schachter is explaining the role of the repetition within the structure, while Cortot is following the interpretive rule of altering a phrase that is repeated. Obviously, pianistic and

analytical concerns are not and should not be related here, if only in the sense that the existence of the repetition is recognized.

b. As I found with much of Cone's voice-leading, I find Schachter's pitch-relationships difficult to hear in performance, unless they are next to each other. For example, while I cannot hear the high C in m. 11 connecting to the high B of m. 14, I can hear the E at the third beat of m. 11 leading to the D at the downbeat of m. 12. Cortot takes special care in placing this downbeat delicately, and the change in register does not interfere with a smooth melodic line. A less thoughtful pianist might very well have produced a thump at the downbeat of m. 12. It would be presumptuous to assume, however, that Cortot is deliberately trying to bring out this relationship.

c. I cannot hear any pianistic relationship between the way Cortot plays the introduction and the ending. As I suspected, this seems to be a purely theoretical consideration. I suppose it would be possible to show the relationship, perhaps with a corresponding diminuendo into the second measure of each passage, although I doubt if the listener would hear anything more than characteristic pianistic diminuendos.

5a. Cortot does provide a sense of the melody growing out

of the accompaniment. In spite of the fact that Chopin puts an accent on the first right hand note, Cortot ignores it, playing the melody quite soft at first, allowing it to grow into the downbeat of m. 4. In regard to the relationship of the B-E-D between the hands, this is a bit difficult to convey pianistically. Of the three pitches as they appear in measures 1 and 2, Cortot does play the D somewhat emphatically, and does the same as it appears in the right-hand at the downbeat of m. 4. But for the most part, the beauty of this enlargement seems a theoretical point built into the music.

b. As mentioned earlier, Cortot allows the rhythm to lag somewhat throughout measures 16-21, and I had related his doing this to the extended subdominant. I wonder if Cortot is in some way aware of the manner in which Chopin is now using the opening rhythm on a single pitch. By dwelling somewhat on the rhythm here, it does seem as though Cortot is calling to the listener's attention the fact that, surprisingly, the melody is not changing in this passage. I will never know Cortot's motive for sure, but the end result is satisfying and complements Schachter's comments.

c. Cortot very much seems aware of the shortening of rhythmic groups in the coda. He allows the tempo to pick up a bit throughout measures 28-31, providing a subtle

accelerando into the beginning of each rhythmic group (the downbeat of m. 28 and m. 29, the downbeat and third beats of m. 30, and all four beats of m. 31). In regard to the manner in which the last two chords echo the accompaniment pattern and the opening melodic line, I find this relationship difficult to hear in Cortot's performance, particularly because he plays both chords at the same intensity, which doesn't echo the rise and fall patterns he established at the piece's opening.

BOLET

Jorge Bolet was born in Cuba in 1914, and received his training at Curtis as a student of David Saperton and Abram Chasins. Although somewhat critical of his Chopin playing in general, David Dubal finds favor with his renditions of the twenty-four preludes (*The Art of the Piano*, p. 52), and characterizes Bolet's general artistry quite eloquently: "...with Bolet, finesse and purity are the order of the evening. Each note must be in place; no effort is too insignificant. He spins iridescent webs of pianistic gold, cadenzas in colored sprays alight from the keyboard. His passagework is matched and evenly threaded. His digital skills are prodigious and he is capable of great tonal

refinements" (p. 51). The recording I am using is from a live recital at Carnegie Hall on February 25th, 1974.²⁹

Bolet's version of the prelude is far different from Cortot's, and in many ways exhibits performance traditions characteristic of a pianist who studied in America around 1930, as opposed to one who studied with Descombes in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century. Cortot takes Chopin's *leggiermente* and *piano* markings literally, and creates a variety of shadings and nuance within a very soft dynamic (which is characteristic of Chopin's own playing). Bolet, on the other hand, begins with a hefty *mezzoforte*, and approaches the piece in a rambunctious, virtuosic manner. Generally speaking, in Bolet's performance there is a sense of good technique and good musicianship; in Cortot's, technique and musicianship are completely integrated. While Bolet's left-hand passagework is extremely impressive and effortless, in Cortot's performance, it is not even passagework, just music. I do not mean to overly criticize Bolet -- this recording represents some of this century's best pianism -- I just mean to point out that a certain separation of technique and interpretation evolved in this century, quite sadly.

1a. While Bolet's tone is quite big throughout the antecedent and the first two hypermeasures of the consequent,

²⁹RCA Victor (7710 - 2 - RG).

at the downbeat of m. 20 he begins a quite-welcomed and well-paced diminuendo in the melodic-line, that leads all the way to the downbeat of m. 26. It is the only place in the piece in which Bolet assumes a generally quiet and introspective sonority, and in that sense accents the excess of C Major, and the prolonged consequent, by under-emphasizing it. Everything is relative: a mezzoforte in a Chopin recital must have sounded thunderous, and Bolet's momentary pianissimo in a mezzoforte environment is quite breathtaking.

b. Unlike Cortot's version, there is not a sense of "assymmetry grown out of symmetry". The diminuendo discussed above seems directly linked to the excess of C Major and the descending melodic line in measures 20-26. Bolet does make a ritard in m. 17, but not nearly as much as Cortot, with the result being an acknowledgement of the change of harmony, as opposed to an acknowledgement of the change of form. Once again, romantic pianism (as exhibited by rolled chords in Rosenthal's A Major Prelude) seems best able to convey theoretical considerations.

c. As opposed to Cortot's recording, there is a sense here of the final tonic arriving at a metrically weak position, and not only because of the diminuendo leading into it. While Cortot had established a pattern of accenting the third bar of each hypermeasure, Bolet has accented the first bar of each

hypermeasure (supporting the belief that initial downbeats are accented), and good examples of strong accents placed at such downbeats can be found at m. 7 and m. 12. When he reaches m. 24 he is in the process of making the diminuendo, and seems hesitant to suddenly accent the soprano G. But he does take a split second before striking it -- and sets it -- with the result being that this last hypermeasure is delineated and has a sense of propulsion from this initial downbeat, and the final tonic consequently sounds metrically weak. And once again, I seem in disagreement about the purpose of measures 26 and 27. Bolet, like Cortot, allows them to immediately lead into the coda, rather than unwind any previous tension.

2a. As mentioned earlier, it is the manner in which Bolet reduces volume in the extended subdominant that gives character to the passage. There are also a few other subtle nuances that separate the C Major section from its surroundings. For the most part, Bolet has played the left and right hands together throughout the antecedent. But in two well-chosen places in the consequent, he adds a degree of poignancy to the modulation, namely at the downbeats of m. 16 and m. 20. Plus, while he maintained a strict momentum in the left-hand throughout the antecedent, he allows the passagework to ritard at two places in the consequent, places where the left-hand takes on much musical meaning, at the last half of

measures 17 and 23. Finally, Bolet presents a new color at the downbeat of m. 24, which coincides with the return to G Major. Yes, Bolet is certainly aware of the extension of subdominant, but he seems to be counteracting any sense of finality it might add to the final cadence.

b. Because Bolet's ritard in measures 16-17 is not nearly as huge as Cortot's, and unlike the pupil of Descombes, remains within the bounds of the American Conservatory's limited concept of good taste, I cannot hear any "conflict between tonal and durational groupings." Bolet is simply acknowledging a lovely change in harmony, and does not convey the underlying rhythmical irony of this passage as well as Cortot. This ritard is placed on top of the music, whereas Cortot's is from within, the result being that the overall rhythmical structure is best depicted in the latter's performance.

3a. My earlier discussion of the analytical deduction of the existence of one phrase based on harmonic progression and how it varies with the duties of the performer, doesn't seem to hold up as well in regard to Bolet's performance. Unlike Cortot, Bolet does present a sense of one long phrase in the consequent. The progression of pianism throughout this century indicates a gradual acknowledgement of longer phrase groupings. The overall harmonic movement is easier to

comprehend by the listener. But is that necessarily a good thing? Plus, much of a work's inherent rhythmical tension, as exemplified by measures 16-17, seems to have gotten lost throughout the generations.

b. Once again, the high B at m. 22 has a sense of being a nonharmonic tone that resolves to the A in the following measure. Certainly, this is only natural -- a major seventh is a stronger dissonance than a major sixth -- and this is clearly conveyed in both recordings. Analysis is capable of multiple viewpoints, while interpreters must make a choice. Although an anticipation may very well exist at m. 23 in an overall context, the downbeat of m. 23 is a moment of resolve in a local one. The performer must make a decision when two moments of tension are consecutive -- how to execute the second moment of tension when it is also a moment of resolve. The answer seems to lie in making one steady diminuendo for all three notes, but Bolet gets so soft at the downbeat of m. 23 that this is not possible.

c. Unlike Cortot, Bolet does not bring out the syncopated melodic notes that Schachter discusses. Bolet has established a pattern of accenting the first bar of each hypermeasure, a totally different conception of the work than Cortot, and accenting the main melodic notes as well would obviously chop up the line. Thus, the parallelism between the two hands is

not felt as strongly in Bolet's performance as in Cortot's. I suspect that part of what gives Cortot's performance such a strong sense of the integration of technique and musicality is the manner in which he integrates the two hands. There is one continuous movement of sound, rather than melody with accompaniment. Integrating the theoretical relationships between the hands is an interpretive device which may not be considered enough by more contemporary pianists.

4a. Bolet's approach to the repetition in measures 7-11 is unusual. As he begins the hypermeasure with such a strong accent at the downbeat of m. 7, there is a certain expectation that the downbeat of m. 10 will be very light (following the pattern he established in measures 3-6). He accents the downbeat of m. 10, however, and allows the left-hand to crescendo in that measure, thereby connecting measures 10 and 11. Thus, there is a strong sense in measures 7-11 of 3 + 2, instead of 4 + 1. It seems as though Bolet's good taste, and desire to make sure that "each note must be in place" (Dubal) results in his somehow making sense of the added measure, rather than letting it speak for itself. The impact of the hypermeasure is somewhat reduced. Here pianist and analyst seem to be reacting to the same unusual event. My guess is that Schachter would want the shock of the added measure to be felt, whereas Bolet seems to want to understate it.

b. I find it impossible to hear the high C of m. 11 connect to the high B of m. 14. Even though I had originally thought that this relationship was possible to show, neither Cortot nor Bolet seem to relate these two pitches, and I am beginning to fully suspect that if too many measures pass in the interim, most pitch relationships remain solely theoretical points. The relationship of the E at the third beat of m. 11 to the D at the downbeat of m. 12, although audible in Cortot's performance, quite clearly does not seem to be a relationship Bolet is concerned with. He seems more concerned with achieving a fresh attack at the repeat at the downbeat of m. 12.

c. I cannot hear any relationship between the two opening measures and the two concluding measures. As Bolet disregards Chopin's diminuendo in m. 31, making a strong crescendo, he is able to play the penultimate chord strong, and the final one as an echo. But in the opening he plays measures 1 and 2 at the same intensity.

5a. There is less sense in Bolet's performance than Cortot's of the opening melody growing out of the accompaniment. The relationship between the B - E - D, or even the general parallelism in the contours of the lines in the two hands at this opening, is not evident. By not incorporating the two hands to the degree that Cortot does,

there is a greater sense of excitement generated in Bolet's performance, simply because of the separation of the lines. There is more musical activity conveyed; a virtuosic left-hand here, a pointed melody over there. The effect is more orchestral. With Cortot, the two hands combine to create a single, sensitive voice.

b. When Bolet reaches m. 16, and the opening rhythm appears on a single repeated note, there is a sense that he is reacting to it. Bolet makes a crescendo on the F throughout measures 16-17, compensating for the lack of melodic change with a change in volume. The effect is quite elegant, and provides another example of Bolet's interpretive sense (like his metric structuring at the added bar 11) of smoothing out that which is somewhat out of the ordinary.

c. Bolet does point out the shortening of rhythmic groups in the coda, but in a different manner than Cortot. While Cortot had emphasized each group (the downbeat of m. 28, the downbeat of m. 29, the first and third beats of m. 30), Bolet merely accentuates the change in patterning, using crescendos and diminuendos. He plays measures 28 and 29 as one phrase, m. 30 as one phrase, and m. 31 as one phrase. The shortening of rhythmic groups is conveyed, but the long line is preserved. It would be too unlike Bolet to accent the tenth (G and B) as it appears at the beginning of each rhythmic

group. Once again, he has managed to smooth out the unusual quite eloquently. He crescendos in m. 28 to connect it with m. 29, he makes a crescendo and diminuendo in m. 30, and he makes one crescendo in m. 31. Thus, he even avoids making a constant crescendo/diminuendo in each of the three patterns (measures 28-29, m. 30, and m. 31). As he makes a diminuendo on the last two chords, there is a sense of a reminiscence of the opening melodic line; the diminuendo corresponds to the diminuendo he makes from the B to G in measures 5-6 and 14-15.

Chapter 4

Summary

I began work on this dissertation with two general notions. First, that the Chopin playing that I considered to be the best did not necessarily present an awareness of the type of issues that analysts have written about. While I had often perceived relationships between the analysis and performance of a large variety of other historical periods and genres, the performance of Chopin's small forms seemed to demand too idiosyncratic a style of nuance, phrasing, and rubato to convincingly project the cumbersome commentary of analysts. While analyzing these forms seemed a worthwhile endeavor in itself, it also seemed an artform separate from the act of performing Chopin, an act dependent largely on the creative powers and personality of the pianist involved.

Second, and regarding the evolution of Chopin interpretation in this century, I was convinced that while playing generally grew less improvisatory, and as the egos and mannerisms of pianists gradually evolved into the type of interpretations generally accepted today, so did an increased adherence to analytical concerns. I had thought that the style of playing at the century's beginnings had next to nothing to do with analysis, and that as the century progressed the collective pianistic subconscious gradually put

Chopin higher and higher on a theoretical pedestal, so to speak, in accordance with an increasing number of analyses that delved deeper and deeper into Chopin's underlying compositional ingenuities. I now find both hypotheses to be incorrect, and while the discussion of the two preludes cancelled out my second supposition, the discussion of the mazurka began a gradual indictment of my first.

Kapell, Rubinstein, and Ax do point out most of the features Rothstein and I describe. This is not so surprising, since these observations very much concern the mazurka per se, without "rearranging" it to the extent that Cone and Schachter do with the preludes. What I found fascinating is how the three pianists expressed the analytical concepts, concepts I very much believe they made a conscious effort to convey.

In the first period, for example, Kapell exhibits an ability to stress an event by what he does after the event -- by waiting after the left hand chord at m. 2 to accentuate the fact that the chord hadn't been there before, or by waiting after the G sharp at the downbeat of m. 9 to point out the tenuto marking after the fact. To my ears this is what he's doing, and the end result raises an important point that piano students might consider. Conveying structure in Chopin often involves taking time just after an unexpected event, because if pianists wait just before it (as pianists often do) they

announce to the listener what is about to happen, and the impact of the event is therefore lost. Leading into it as if nothing extraordinary is about to happen (and this can certainly be applied to most unexpected harmonic changes) and then taking time just after preserves the shock while allowing what happened to be enjoyed and not rushed through.

Another device that Kapell employs that I suspect might be particularly useful to piano students involves his ability to unite hypermeasures by taking time within them at parallel moments, rather than between. The existence of groups of four is presented while the tyrannical four-bar pattern is understated. This type of "phrasing from within" represents a pianistic means of expression that I doubt is taught enough at modern conservatories.

As Rubinstein is able to show two groups of six with his dynamics and three groups of four with similarities of articulation and rubato, his opening of the mazurka presents a type of deeply-rooted tension that much contemporary playing lacks. This ability to convey many structural levels simultaneously represents another interpretive device students might consider. The added interest is basically unaffected as Rubinstein is able to radiate so much musical activity without changing the tempo.

Ax, on the other hand, delineates structure by assigning

particular tempi to particular hypermeasures in an effort to provide the entire period with a solid constructive sense. This type of "terraced tempi" emphasizes the structurally balanced side of Chopin, as opposed to only accentuating the romantic side (as many pianists do) with accelerandos, ritardandos, and rubato.

I find two devices that Kapell and Rubinstein employ in the second and third periods worthy of mention here. By connecting the second period to the third through an overlapping of tempo and dynamics, Kapell is able to (in addition to satisfying Rothstein's discussion) add a human style of declamation to his performance -- by not assuming that the return of the previous material necessarily demands a return of the previous mood, as the material is now in a different context. Plus, Kapell is giving shape to the entire section by not announcing the beginning of each period. At the beginning of the second period, Rubinstein is able to create the illusion of one continuous crescendo by actually employing several progressively increasing, consecutive crescendos, crescendos that always return to the same fundamental dynamic. Its a manner of increasing intensity without increasing the general sonority. I believe this to be a pianistic device lacking in much contemporary playing, as a crescendo is too often interpreted to mean one thing: one

general movement from softer to louder. Further, there is no reason pianists couldn't apply Rubinstein's concept to diminuendos to add color to their playing as well.

Although I had suspected that Rosenthal's playing represents a style of pianism that has little to do with analysis, I found the opposite to be true. For example, his ability to roll chords at whim in the A Major Prelude allows him to 1) bring out pitch relationships that might otherwise be difficult to convey, and 2) add character within each hypermeasure by which chord he does or does not roll (another example of phrasing from within that avoids the accentuation of the predictable patterning). Perhaps at some future time this "mannerism" will again be accessible to pianists, and not frowned upon.

As Rubinstein's rendition of the prelude is closer to a contemporary interpretation than Rosenthal's, particularly in that the former projects a larger structural sense, it is interesting to observe that certain types of comments from Cone have more validity in Rubinstein's performance. Examples include the need to avoid conveying the premature closure (in Rubinstein's performance and not in Rosenthal's), and Rubinstein's ability to connect more long-distance pitch relationships.

In the G Major Prelude, Cortot conveys more of Schachter's

points than Bolet. And it is interesting that it is the deductions made from rhythmic and linear analysis that seem so well-suited to this "romantic" style of playing. Schachter's discussion of assymetry grown out of symmetry, for example, is best expressed by Cortot as he is able to 1) make a ritard of such magnitude, and 2) roll the downbeat of m. 20.

Cortot and Rosenthal are able to convey many structural events more convincingly than pianists of later generations, and this may be due in part to the fact that they came from a time when pianists were trained as composers as well as pianists, and were therefore capable of expressing analytical concepts with a depth of understanding often lacking in many modern day performances. Unfortunately, pianism and composition have become two entirely separate modes of endeavor.

One of the differences between analysis and pianism concerns how harmonic rhythm affects phrasing. While Schachter concludes that the consequent comprises one long phrase based on harmony (as Cone does with the F# dominant seventh in the A Major Prelude), the performer needs to create more phrases because of the slow harmonic rhythm, counteracting the relative lack of harmonic interest. Conversely, passages with rapid harmonic changes seem to

suggest to the pianist to make fewer phrases as a means of preserving the long line, and retaining the impact of the changes.

Another example of the disparity between analysis and performance is evident when Schachter discusses the role of the repetition within the structure, and Cortot deals with it on a simpler level -- as an echo. And many of Schachter's and Cone's pitch relationships seem beyond the scope of these great pianists. The bottom line seems to be that while analysts are able to view a passage from multiple viewpoints, such as studying a mountain from all possible angles, pianists always need to make some type of choice. The act of performing is comparable to walking up the mountain, and if the top of the mountain, the interpretive heaven, is to be reached, the hiker needs to know which path to take. And the only way to know that is by viewing the mountain from all possible angles before embarking on the journey.

While Cortot exaggerates the sense of finality the extension of subdominant adds to the final cadence, Bolet seems to counteract it. Bolet's ritard at bars 16-17 acknowledges the harmonic change yet doesn't alter the structure, and he seems to make sense of the added measure 11 rather than project its weirdness. As great as Bolet's performance is (and my argument would be greatly reduced if I

compared Cortot's recording to a less than wonderful one), it illustrates many performance practice traits characteristic of modern pianism; pianism that needs to smooth things out and understate unusual structural events.

And understating unusual events is not the goal of analysts. It seems as though one of their concerns is to seek out that which is extraordinary in a piece of music, in an effort to explore the innovative, perhaps unacknowledged levels of genius hidden beneath the harmonies and melodies of works such as Chopin's mazurkas and preludes. And it would seem to take a performance style capable of exposing the extraordinary, the style evident at the beginning of the century, to illuminate the complete spectrum of Chopin's compositional attributes and subtleties. Perhaps it is time for pianists, audiences, and musicians of all sorts to turn back the clocks, readjust their ears to nineteenth century values, and search for what has sadly been lost.

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