

The Study of Piano Pedal Use in “Secondary Creation” in Baroque and Classical Period

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Abstract: *The use of pedals in piano performance is a critical factor and an irreplaceable tool for pianists. Pedals allow for a range of expressive possibilities, from sustaining notes to creating dynamic contrasts and articulations that are otherwise unachievable. Understanding how to apply pedals appropriately requires a deep comprehension of diverse compositions and the intentions of the composers. Each composer might have a different approach to pedal use, and this understanding helps achieve a performance that is true to the spirit of the music. The nuanced use of pedals has played a pivotal role in shaping the performances of piano music across different historical periods, contributing to the richness and diversity of piano repertoires^[2]. This research focuses on the piano pedal, explicitly examining its fundamental structure, the differences in pedal usage across various keyboard instruments, and the principles of proper pedal application. This research will delve into the mechanics of different types of pedals, such as the sustain pedal, soft pedal, and sostenuto pedal, and their roles in achieving various effects. This study explores the logical and scientific connections between piano compositions and pedal techniques by analyzing piano works from different periods, with a particular emphasis on the Baroque era.*

Keywords: *Piano pedal, Classical period of piano works, Baroque period of keyboard works, Bach, Beethoven*

1. Introduction

Throughout the history of piano development, numerous innovations have shaped the instrument into its modern form. One significant evolution in this journey was the introduction of lever-style pedals, which later evolved into the more sophisticated foot-operated pedals. These mechanical advancements enhanced the piano's performance capabilities and significantly extended the keyboard's range. With these improvements, pianists could produce a wider variety of sounds and effects, which significantly amplified the expressive capacity of the piano^[1]. Consequently, this led to developing sophisticated pedal techniques integral to modern piano playing.

In the entire process of musical expression, piano performance bridges the gap between spiritual and material realms. A composer's creation originates from a place of spiritual inspiration, where emotions, ideas, and visions take form. The performer's role is to interpret and translate this spiritual essence into tangible, audible performance. It involves a deep emotional connection with the music and a thorough understanding of its technical demands^[7]. Therefore, musical composition can be regarded as a "primary creation," while musical performance is a "secondary creation." The performer's task is to bring the written notes to life, adding a layer of personal interpretation and emotional depth, which can vary from performer to performer, making each rendition unique.

The Baroque period's distinct musical styles and performance practices provide a rich field for examining how early composers intended pedal use and how these intentions have evolved over time^[5]. Furthermore, it will delve into the factors influencing the performer's "secondary creation" from the perspective of music aesthetics while adhering to the composer's original score. This includes considerations of historical performance practices, stylistic nuances, and the balance between technical execution and emotional expression.

The prospects for the development of piano art are vast and promising. As new techniques and technologies emerge, the possibilities for musical expression continue to expand. Both approaches offer valuable insights and benefits, whether a performance leans towards aesthetic freedom or strict objectivism. Rigidly adhering to the original score without any personal emotional input can result in a mechanical and lifeless reproduction of the music, which may fail to resonate with audiences^[4]. On the

other hand, excessively disregarding the markings of the original score to showcase individual playing styles can confuse audiences, especially those unfamiliar with the piece. The ideal musical expression strikes a balance between authenticity and creativity. This balance allows the performer to remain faithful to the composer's intentions while bringing their unique voice and interpretation to the music. Pedals are essential tools in achieving this balance, allowing pianists to offer varied interpretations and highlight distinctive performance characteristics when playing works from different periods. For instance, using the sustain pedal can create a rich, resonant sound that adds depth to Romantic-era pieces. In contrast, the precise use of the soft pedal can enhance the delicate, intricate passages in Classical works.

The thoughtful and informed use of pedals can transform piano performance, adding depth and nuance to the music. By understanding the historical context, technical mechanics, and aesthetic considerations, pianists can utilize pedals to enhance their interpretative possibilities and bring more extraordinary expressive richness to their performances^[3]. It honours the legacy of past composers and contributes to the ongoing evolution of piano music, ensuring that each performance is a unique and compelling experience for both the performer and the audience.

2. The pedal use in Baroque keyboard works

In the music research topic, the creation background of Bach's works remains a widely discussed topic. This ongoing debate shows why some pianists hesitate between the harpsichord and the modern piano when performing Bach's keyboard work. The harpsichord, a prominent instrument of the Baroque period, is characterized by its crisp tone and shallow keys, leading to a limited vocal range and expressive capabilities compared to modern pianos^[15]. Modern pianos, with extensive 88 keys, responsive keys, and pedal system, offer a broader palette for musical expression.

The use of pedals in piano performance is crucial, mainly when playing works requiring extensive music spans. Pedals help performers achieve a legato effect, ensuring smooth transitions between notes. Despite their significance, research on right pedal techniques remains relatively limited within academic circles, relying heavily on pianists' experiences and insights^[3]. For example, Polish pianist Hoffmann put forward the principles of pedal use in Piano Performance, advocating that players should rely on the ear to guide the pedal and use the right pedal to change the tone and clear harmony. He believes that performers should refrain from using the right pedal to raise the volume or obscure the difficult points in the performance, which has some guiding significance in piano performance^[20].

Whether playing Bach's keyboard works pedal use on the piano is debated in the music community. There are two leading schools of thought regarding interpreting Bach's works. One opinion advocates for restoring the timbre of the harpsichord to the authentic charm of Baroque music, arguing that pedal use might obscure the original sound quality and style in Bach's works. Others believe modern pianos should transcend the limitations of the harpsichord by incorporating pedal elements into the strengths of contemporary instruments; they think that the piano's pedal use can enhance the musical expressiveness and richness of Bach's works.

In an interview, renowned pianist András Schiff mentioned that he did not perceive significant advantages in using the pedal for Bach's music but was acutely aware of its potential pitfalls^[21]. Schiff asserted that relying on pedals to achieve legato effects in Bach's music, rather than utilizing technique, was incorrect. His argument underscores the importance of authentic interpretation, warning that pedal use could compromise the stylistic integrity of Bach's keyboard works^[11].

The rapid development of printing technology in 19th and 20th-century Europe led to numerous editors infusing their emotions into the printed editions of "The Well-Tempered Clavier" (Bach's work), resulting in many different versions available for pianists to choose from. This variation also influenced performers' interpretative styles, as different pianists playing from different editions can present the same work in markedly different ways.

Bach's keyboard works were initially composed in the harpsichord, and excessive pedal use on the piano may alter the original style of these works, potentially leading listeners to misinterpret the musical style of the Baroque period. Bach's keyboard work is predominantly polyphonic, and overuse of the pedal can result in unclear voice leading and a departure from the work's intended character. Some performers' preference for pedal use might stem from the structural differences between the harpsichord and the modern piano. The harpsichord's narrow range allows for effective legato playing. In contrast, the piano often requires pedal use to achieve a similar effect^[10]. Using the right pedal is

sometimes necessary, but it should focus on the specific requirements of each work. Performers who prefer pedal use may seek a louder, more sustained sound. However, using pedals to emulate the grandeur of an organ on a piano can be stylistically inappropriate. Moderate pedal use can be highly effective in enhancing the listening experience. Keeping the balance of pedal use provides a more dynamic and nuanced interpretation of the music. By using auditory judgment, the pianist can skillfully determine when to engage the pedal to enrich the sound and when to lift it to maintain clarity. This thoughtful approach ensures the desired sound quality, allowing the music to resonate with greater emotional depth and precision.

3. The pedal use in classical piano works

As we delve into the study of classical piano works, one of the most obvious distinctions between Classical and Baroque compositions is the presence of clear pedal markings on the music scores. This raises several essential questions: How did composers indicate pedal usage in classical works? Are these pedal markings systematic and intentional? How does the presence of pedal indications influence a pianist's expressive capabilities? These are the critical areas our research will focus on.

Previous studies have explored these questions, particularly concerning Beethoven's pedal indications. Grundmann and Newman offer contrasting perspectives: Grundmann advocates for strict adherence to the pedal markings as the composer prescribes, suggesting that the pedal should be used only where explicitly indicated^[14]. On the other hand, Newman adopts a more liberal approach, allowing for greater interpretive freedom based on the pianist's artistic judgment.

In contemporary performance, pianists are engaged in an exciting journey of exploration, often pushing the boundaries of traditional interpretations. Most of us bring the limitations and habits ingrained through years of rigorous training on modern pianos. While necessary for mastering the instrument, these limitations can also constrain our interpretive choices^[13]. However, as our performance skills reach new heights, we gain the ability to transcend these constraints, no longer feeling bound by the written indications. This newfound insight might lead us to re-evaluate and potentially alter our approach to playing, enabling a more personal and expressive interpretation of the music.

3.1 Damper-pedal

The earliest instances of pedal indications date back to the 1790s, with Beethoven being one of the first composers to systematically mark pedal use in his scores. For example, in Beethoven's Sonata No. 12, Op. 26, he includes pedal markings such as "Senza Sordini" and "Con Sordini" four times within bars 31-36. These terms, interpreted in modern performance practice, correspond to the soft and damper pedal. "Senza Sordini" also appears frequently in Beethoven's Sonata No. 14, Op. 27, No. 2, further emphasizing its significance in his work.

Beethoven's sonatas demand a rich acoustic palette and fuller harmonic resonance. Typically, a single pedal application suffices for each harmonic change, with the pedal being lifted and reapplied as the harmony shifts. In more advanced performance practices, the damper pedal is employed to enrich the sound and achieve a warm, expressive quality^[17]. It allows for the seamless connection of notes that cannot be physically linked by hands, such as when playing over-octave chords. Additionally, it aids in smoothing transitions between individual notes or chords, making the overall musical flow more natural^[10].

However, the use of the damper pedal requires careful moderation. Overuse can lead to a blurring of harmonies and melodies, compromising the clarity of the music and distorting its structural integrity. Therefore, performers must be mindful of the music's characteristics and use the damper pedal judiciously to enhance the expression without overwhelming the composition's delicate balance^[8].

3.2 Synchronous pedal

The "synchronous pedal" is a nuanced piano-playing technique, though it lacks a standardized musical term. This technique involves quickly lifting and reapplying the damper pedal in synchronization with the performance of new notes or chords. By aligning the pedal movements with these musical changes, the pianist can achieve a continuous and clear melodic line while maintaining the integrity of the harmony.

For instance, in Beethoven's Sonata No.8, Op.13, No.2, the left hand provides harmonic accompaniment. In contrast, the right hand carries the main melody. If the damper pedal is used indiscriminately, the resulting sound may become muddled, with the harmony and melody clashing. The synchronous pedal technique allows for more precise control, ensuring that the sustain of individual notes or chords managed effectively^[11]. This precision helps to maintain clarity and separation between the different musical lines, preventing them from overlapping in a way that would blur the musical texture.

The effectiveness of the synchronous pedal lies in the pianist's ability to change the pedal swiftly and seamlessly, ensuring that each transition is smooth and does not disrupt the flow of the music. The application of this technique should be adapted to the specific characteristics of the music being performed. In fast-paced and complex passages, frequent use of the synchronous pedal can help maintain clarity, allowing individual notes and chords to resonate distinctly^[6]. On the other hand, in slower-tempo works, such as those marked "andante," a more sustained use of the damper pedal may be more appropriate, helping to create a sense of continuity and smoothness in the performance.

Mastering the synchronous pedal technique requires control and a deep understanding of the music. When executed skillfully, it can significantly enhance the expressiveness of a performance, allowing the pianist to bring out the subtle nuances of the work. The pianist can effectively shape the sound using precise pedal techniques, ensuring that the music's inherent character and emotional depth are fully realized.

4. Finger pedal

In piano performance, the finger pedal is a unique technique that relies heavily on the player's finger control and does not involve any physical mechanical Pedal. At its core is the delicate control of the fingers, pressing the keys to continue and connect the sound of the notes. This technique manifests muscle memory and the fingers' power. It involves the high coordination and cooperation of the player's tactile and auditory systems^[9]. Because the finger pedal is not explicitly noted on the score or expressly noted by composers or publishers, its use is often overlooked by performers.

However, finger pedals are essential in performing specific piano, incredibly complex fugue works. Fugue works often contain multi-part contrapuntal structures, and one hand usually has to deal with two or even three separate parts simultaneously. Finger pedals can help the player to separate these parts clearly, ensuring the independence and clarity of each part in timbre and force. In this process, the key to mastering the finger pedal is how to control the time value of each finger when playing different notes under different strength conditions and deal with the strength relationship of notes^[18]. These fine controls are related to the independent expression of each voice part and affect the musical expression and structural clarity of the whole work.

To achieve this control, the performer must closely combine the auditory and tactile systems' sensitivity through long hours of practice. Specifically, this practice requires the performer to constantly adjust and feel the strength of the fingers during the performance to precisely control the continuation and disappearance of notes and ensure that the notes of each part can be presented independently and coherently^[12]. At the same time, the player also needs to work on the sensitivity and evenness of the fingers to ensure that the independence and hierarchy of each part can be clearly expressed when playing a complex multi-part structure.

The author believes that when playing Bach's keyboard works, the finger pedal can replace the right pedal of the piano to a certain extent, especially in some specific works. It is feasible to maintain the continuity of sound and timbre by controlling the way of touching the key of the finger. By precisely controlling the strength of the fingers, the performer can effectively adjust the balance of the music and make the relationship between different parts more harmonious^[16]. Through long-term practice, players can improve the control of finger strength and the sensitivity and uniformity of fingers to achieve the ideal effect in the performance. Mastering this technique will undoubtedly greatly enrich the performer's means of expression so that he can deal with complex works more freely and accurately and better convey the musical connotation of the work.

5. Conclusion

Pedals in piano performance are an indispensable tool that significantly enhances a pianist's

expressive capabilities. Pedals provide a range of possibilities, from sustaining notes to creating dynamic contrasts and articulations that are otherwise unattainable. Mastering pedal technique requires a deep understanding of the diverse compositions and the intentions of their composers, as each composer may approach pedal use differently^[19]. This understanding is crucial for delivering performances that remain true to the spirit of the music. The nuanced application of pedals has been instrumental in shaping the interpretation and performance of piano music across various historical periods, contributing to the richness and diversity of the piano repertoire^[21].

The development of the piano pedal spans over a century. This performance tool has a profound historical impact; it provides valuable practical insights for musicians to perform early works at a higher level. From the initial invention to modern piano performance, advancements in pedal technology have significantly enhanced musical expressions. The pedal plays a crucial role in piano performance, giving musicians greater freedom of musical expression and the possibility of varied harmony change.

The Russian pianist Anton Rubinstein said, "The pedal is the piano's soul." This statement underscores the central importance of the pedal in piano playing^[22]. It is not merely a performance tool but a key for the performer to express emotion and build the sound. Using the pedal skillfully, performers can create richly layered sound effects, giving musical works more vividly.

This paper considers the importance of adhering to the music scores from an aesthetic perspective. It analyses the factors influencing the performer's "secondary creation" or interpretive decisions during a performance. Through this comprehensive analysis, the paper highlights the pivotal role of pedal technique in shaping the expressive potential of piano music across different historical periods. However, mastering the pedal use can't only be achieved quickly. It is an area that requires life-long study and deeper exploration by piano performers. Understanding the essence of the work and studying the composer's intentions is essential for using the pedal appropriately. Only through continuous learning, practice and related research, enhancing musical cultivation and performance skills, can pianists grasp the profound meaning of "The pedal is the piano's soul" and understand the pedals' value in their performance.

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