

## ***The Late-Eighteenth-century Ballroom at One's Fingertips: Contredanse and Beethoven's "Tempest" Sonata***

In her very recent book "The Viennese Ballroom in the Age of Beethoven," Erica Buurmann (2021) depicts the late eighteenth century vibrant Viennese life animated by social dances. Wye Allanbrook (1983), who brought the topic of dance to a central position in the analysis of Mozart's music, showed the pervasiveness of dances in the classical repertoire. Decisions about meter, rhythms and phrase structures derived mostly from their association with social dances, which as part of a widely shared culture, greatly contributed to conveying specific affects. The contredanse especially attracted scholars' attention as it became by far the most in vogue among the social dances in the late eighteenth century. It gained tremendous popularity as it involved a big number of dancers and was freed from the constraint of a long and rigorous training that French court dances had traditionally imposed. Characterized by versatility, the contredanse circulated all over Europe under different names and served as a model for composing vivid movements of classical Viennese sonatas and symphonies. How could social dances inform the musical compositional process? How is knowledge of dance movement transferred into the performing musician's body, if at all?

The time signature  $3/8$  of the last movement of Beethoven's "Tempest" Sonata Op. 31 No. 2 (1802) suggests that what served as a model for the piece is a German contredanse, called sometimes "la Boîteuse," to be translated as "Limping." Strikingly, this limping character is translated quite literally to the movements of the left hand right at the beginning of the piece, where dance music is expected to have a steady three-beat accompaniment. This is the first of a long list of analogies that can be drawn between Beethoven's hand movements and the contredanse's particularities. The pervading motive of three to four notes as circumscribed by a single hand position reflects the unsophisticated body expression that characterized contredanse choreographies, which focused more on the figures on the floor (the directions to be followed and the patterns to be accomplished as a group) than conveying distinct affects through refined gestures. Unified figures are also what Beethoven achieves with the two hands in the development section when the motive progresses throughout the registers of the keyboard. One could see in the hands' approaching one another and their moving away from one another a mirroring of the typical coupling and uncoupling of dance partners in a contredanse. In his stylization of the dance, Beethoven reproduces the very aspect that made the contredanse so popular in the late eighteenth century: the sheer joy of the self-expressing body.

Drawing from cognitive science, Lawrence Zbikowski (2012) concludes that the effectiveness of dance topics is accounted for by the fact that music represents bodies' movement in space or dance steps "through sonic analogs—that is, through musical materials the central features of which are analogous to the central features of the dynamic process at hand." Most attempts to unveil the intimate relationship between dance and music consider music primarily as a sound phenomenon. My current research on Beethoven's "Tempest" sonata, drawn from a physical reading of the score as experienced during my practicing on a replica of a c.1800 Walter fortepiano (the type of instrument for which the sonata was written) rather suggests an analogy between dance and the pianist's bodily movement.

For the L8nite Performances EPARM 2022, I aim to share my embodied understanding of Beethoven's assimilation of the dance, as representative of a predominant cultural practice in his milieu, by retracing a potential path of the work that focuses on an "in-the-flesh" creative process. The program will feature the six Ländler WoO 15 (1802), my own completion of a fragment from the Kessler Sketchbook representing a nascent idea for the "Tempest" sonata's last movement, a piano arrangement of the String Quartet Op. 18 No. 6 "Allegretto quasi Allegro"—creating a bridge to the last movement of the "Tempest" Sonata's Finale. (See videos 1 and 2, included with this application.)



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