




THE ART OF THE UNSPOKEN

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RHETORICAL DEVICES, LINGUISTIC PARALLELS AND
THE INFLUENCE OF THE SINGING VOICE
IN CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC PIANO LITERATURE

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WHY AND HOW

- Understanding the way composers and performers viewed expression, emotion and ultimately, communication is crucial to teaching **how to perform** these pieces today. This is intrinsic to developing a sound world and stylistic delivery for different musical eras.
- The central position is that rhetorical and linguistic connotations and use of “singing style”, allow a better understanding of how drama and lyricism can be brought to life in performance.



- Music is a tonal art. . . . It speaks only with sounds. But it speaks just as clearly and intelligibly as do words, ideas or visual images. Its structure is governed by rules, just as spoken language
- Performers . . . recreate music in its organic unity, its integrity materially concretized in sound.
- Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*

CHAPTER 1

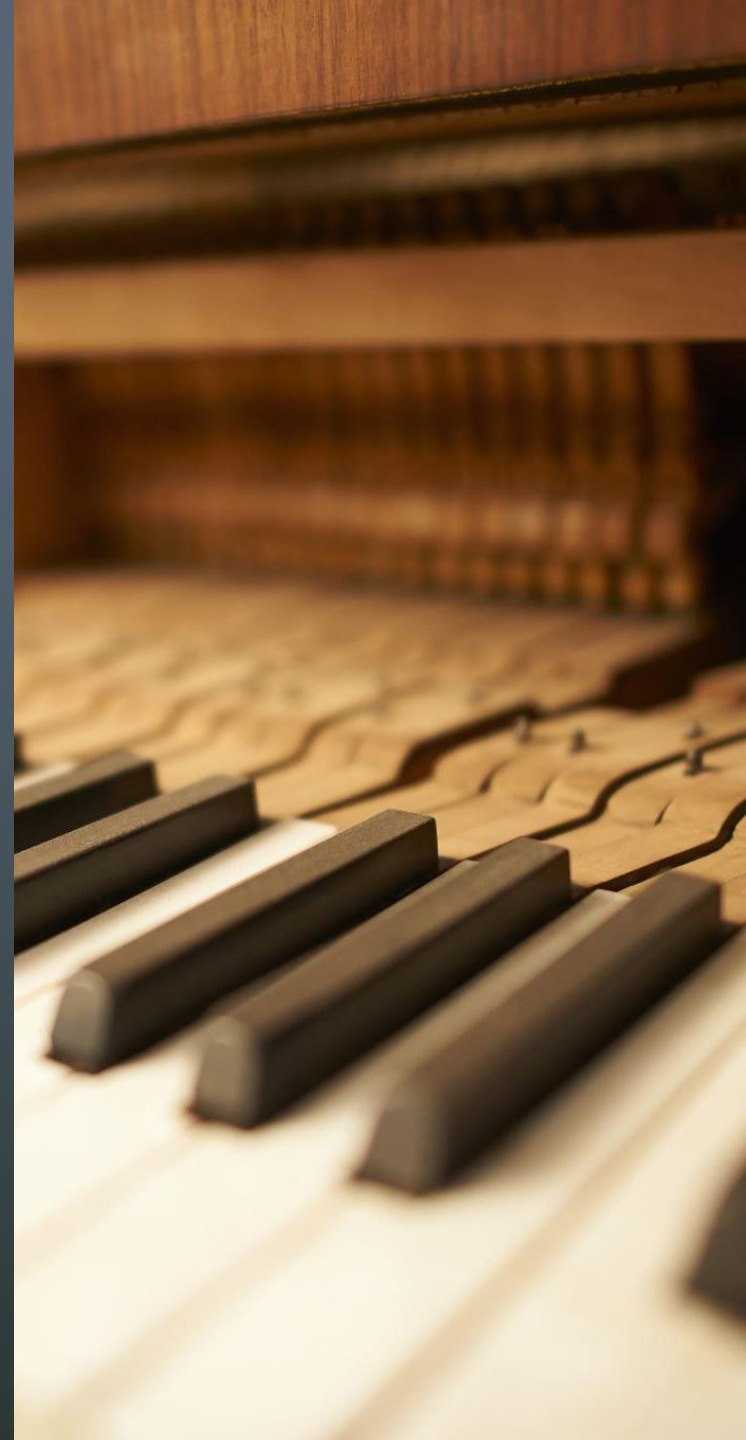
- The relationship between instrumental music and language
- Emphasis on the dialogue between the arts
- Tracing interactions between artists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

- Rhetorical tradition closely linked with music, expression, emotion and meaning since ancient times
- Most apparent in music with lyrics
- Influence of language led to non-verbal applications to instrumental music

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Change of status of instrumental music as a result of the way in which it compared with language
- Instrumental music without language less valued – more functional
- Accompanied dances or plays
- Dance suites - solo keyboard pieces



MEANING AND STATUS

- Instrumental music gradually gained additional value with a vocabulary of its own
- became recognised as capable of meaning and expression
- More composers used it as a vehicle for expression and its status increased
- Ultimately music was considered the universal language, transcending boundaries



CHAPTER 2

- Review of the relevance of rhetoric to wordless music, tracing the continuity of the rhetorical tradition.
- The rhetorical approach focuses on the architecture of purpose: emphasis, articulation, surprise, and gesture work together to create a persuasive whole.
- The influence of J. S. Bach's music and the teaching of his pupils acted as catalysts for rhetorical ideas well into the nineteenth century.

RHETORICAL TRADITION

- The idea of a ‘speaking’ or ‘oratorical principle’ (*redendes Prinzip*), underlined the tendency of borrowing the expressive vocabulary of vocal music in order to make instrumental music ‘speak,’ too
- distinction between dance or military music, and the ‘speaking’ music which had the capacity to touch the heart
- Performance tradition endures even in colloquial terms – values of ‘having something to say’ and making the music ‘speak’

CHAPTER 3

- Discussion of musical-rhetorical figures with musical examples in piano works from J. S. Bach to Franz Liszt.
- Rhetorical devices in music have the power to create mood and atmosphere, convey meaning through inflection and gesture and move audiences.

CHAPTER 3

- Composers consciously employed them for these purposes and expected performers to recognize and apply them in performance.
- The focus on expression characterized both Classical and Romantic eras, and references to rhetoric pervaded instrumental music.

CHANGE IN AESTHETIC BELIEF



Change in aesthetic belief from universal to individual human nature, which in turn affected the way composers perceived themselves and their mission in expressing emotions.



Performers eventually evolved as individuals, too, adding some of their own personality on the process of recreating music.

EXPRESSIVE DECLAMATION

- The focus on expression characterized both Classical and Romantic eras
- Schubert placed great value on “expressive declamation.” As late as 1860, Schindler was writing about Beethoven’s “oratory at the piano” (*Redekunst am Pianoforte*) including such specific rhetoric devices as the “speaking rest” (*sprechende Pause*).
- Similarly, in a article on Schumann written in 1855, Liszt refers to music as a “twin sister of language,” and makes specific references to musical grammar, logic, syntax, and rhetoric.

CHAPTER 4

- Examines dramatic elements and the significance of their musical interaction: plot and character.
- Cultivate habits of purposeful direction and clear definition of individual thematic material.
- Literary comparisons incite the imagination and can be useful in addressing more complex aesthetic issues, such as ‘organic’ quality in art, the concept of unity in diversity, memory, evolution and incompleteness.

CHAPTER 4

- Theatrical plot is mirrored in formal structure
- Character reflected in musical content.
- Trace the shift in emphasis between the late eighteenth century,
- Formal structure held the foremost role, while in the nineteenth century, content ultimately determined form. Character pieces and thematic transformation will be seen as part of this shift of emphasis from form to content.

INFLUENCES ON FORM

- Principles derived from rhetoric and theatre are woven together into piano music
- **Form**
- structure, logic and persuasion from Rhetoric
- Interaction, contrast and transformation from drama

INFLUENCES ON CONTENT

- **Content**
 - consistent emotions and expressivity from Rhetoric
 - conflicting or changing emotions and diverse characters within the same piece from theatre
- Performance - *Elocutio*

CHAPTER 5

- The closest approximation of the orator in the performing arts is the actor, or the singer.
- An essential part of the ability of piano music to convey meaning is by emulating the singing voice.
- The influence of the vocal model is linked to elements of expressive performance and singing piano style.
- The desire to achieve vocal expressivity on the keyboard predates all the technical developments of the piano.

EXPRESSIVITY AND THE VOCAL MODEL

- Show connections between composers, performance traditions and pedagogical writings to support the continuity of the model of the singing voice for pianists as a path to expressive performance
- Connect unspoken narrative and dramatic, fluid musical architecture
- Musical image influences choice of technique

- In Schumann's words, with Liszt "the instrument blazes and sparkles in the hands of its master . . . it is no longer piano performance of this and that sort, but the speech of a bold character. He triumphs over skill and the danger of the tool and renders the serenity of art."
- It is this "speech of a bold character" that forms the essence of expressive piano playing.

Translation of fragment from Carl Friederich Weitzmann, *Geschichte des Klavierspiels und Klavierliteratur* (Stuttgart: 1863).

CHAPTER 6

- Sets out practical applications to modern performance training, and a wider pianistic pedagogical context
- This brings together ideas such as reflective practice, the musical intention in relation to technical means used, as well as the role of physical comfort and breathing, and focus.
- These elements point the way to achieving an integrated approach to performance.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH



Musical Image and Clarity of Intention



Physical comfort/ Breathing awareness



Proactive Mindset



Focus in preparation and performance



Effective Communication

- “Play from the soul, not like a trained bird!”

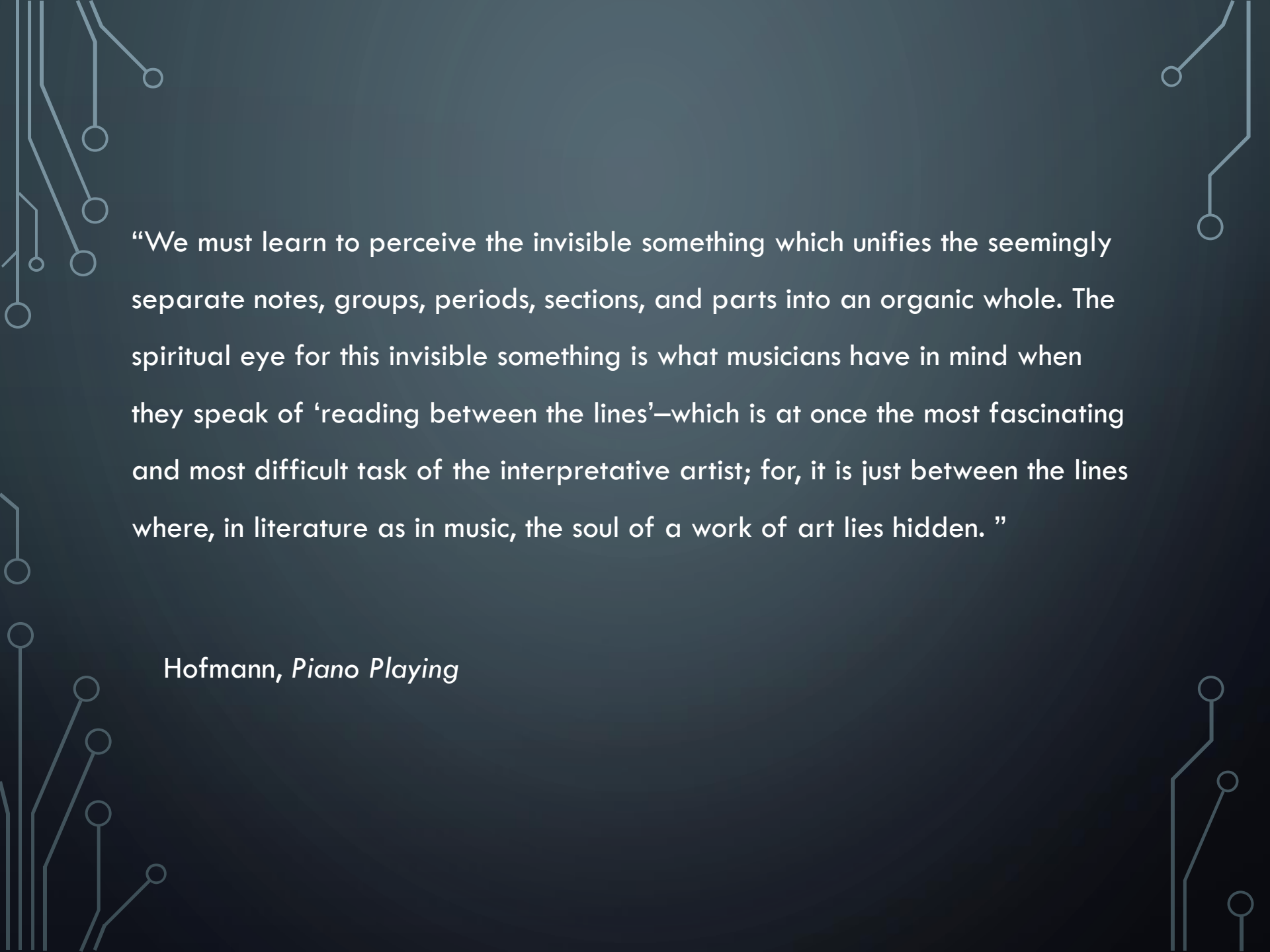
C.P.E. Bach

-“Yet I am not in want of joy in my own heart, and that which people cannot give me, music gives me, and all lofty feelings, which I cannot utter, are spoken to me by the piano.”

Robert Schumann

CONCLUSIONS

- Performers are the rhetorical link to the audience
- Awareness of rhetorical and linguistic elements in solo piano music contributes to a more effective performance
- Practical applications to teaching within historical context and performing traditions
- The parallel with language and meaning opens the doors to a better understanding of music from the past
- Offers a connection to the way composers and performers viewed communication with their audiences



“We must learn to perceive the invisible something which unifies the seemingly separate notes, groups, periods, sections, and parts into an organic whole. The spiritual eye for this invisible something is what musicians have in mind when they speak of ‘reading between the lines’—which is at once the most fascinating and most difficult task of the interpretative artist; for, it is just between the lines where, in literature as in music, the soul of a work of art lies hidden.”

Hofmann, *Piano Playing*

This book focuses on the influence of rhetoric, dramatic concepts, and the singing voice in Classical and Romantic solo piano music. These traditions were shared by composers, performers and pedagogues but have gradually fallen into obscurity. Rhetoric provides a guide for logical organization and persuasion, dramatic plot and character influence form and musical content, while singing offers a natural model for expression and inflection. Historical and aesthetic information along with literary and musical aspects are presented here to inform current performance practice.

Composers consciously employed rhetorical figures and expected performers to recognize and apply them in performance. Thinking of music in terms of plot and character cultivates habits of purposeful direction and clear definition of individual thematic material. Literary comparisons incite the imagination and can be useful in addressing more complex aesthetic issues, such as 'organic' quality in art, the concept of unity in diversity, memory, evolution and incompleteness. The desire to achieve vocal expressivity on the keyboard predates all the technical developments of the piano. These concepts have practical application to modern performance training, and a wider pianistic pedagogical context is explored in the final chapter, advocating for an integrated and meaningful approach to performance.

Dr Gabriela Mayer is a pianist, pedagogue, and researcher with a passion for connecting interdisciplinary insights. As a recipient of a Fulbright Graduate Fellowship to Germany, Dr. Mayer studied piano performance at the Hochschule für Musik 'Hanns Eisler' in Berlin. She also completed a Doctorate in Musical Arts at the University of Maryland in the USA, graduating with the highest honours. Since moving to Ireland, she has engaged in teaching as well as performing. She has given concerts and masterclasses as part of the Erasmus programme at European partner institutions and participated in Innovative Conservatoire Seminars and other activities of the AEC. She currently holds the position of Head of Department of Keyboard Studies at the MTU Cork School of Music. Her interest in effective practice and performance preparation has led to being part of the international collaborative project 'From Potential to Performance'. Dr Mayer is also active as an international peer reviewer.



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RHETORICAL FIGURES

REPETITION/ DEVELOPMENT

- *paronomasia* (strengthening)
- *epistrophe* (turn-around)
- *anadiplosis* (or doubling)
- *epiphora* (repeat phrase after new material is introduced)
- *Versetzung* (repeat of a motive starting on a different note)
- *gradatio* or *Klimax* and *katachresis* (misuse –dissonances)
- Audio example - Mozart Fantasia in C minor



RHETORICAL FIGURES EMOTION/ EXPRESSION

- *suspiratio* (sigh)
- *Tmesis* (breaking-up of a phrase)
- *abruptio* (abrupt interruption)
- *paranthesis*
- *pathopoeia* (emotional tension)
- *saltus duriusculus* (abrupt jump)
- *passus duriusculus* (abrupt step)
- Audio Example – Beethoven Sonata Op. 7/2nd movement



RHETORICAL FIGURES

GESTURE AND INFLECTION

- *aposiopesis* (general pause)
- *interrogatio* (interrogation)
- *parenthesis* (parenthesis)
- *dubitatio* (doubting)
- *hyperbaton* (unexpected shifting)
- *katachresis* (misuse) is applied to harmony through harshness, or a string of dissonances, meant to underline negative emotions
- Audio Examples: Beethoven –Sonata Op. 10. No.3 –fourth movement – Liszt – Die Loreley – song transcription



RHETORICAL FIGURES

ARTICULATION/ EMPHASIS

- Attract attention to a significant point
- *Accentus* (Latin) = *accendere* in Italian = *anzünden* in German, meaning 'to set on fire' or 'to light.' i.e. to illuminate
- Combining *amplificatio* (build-up) or *koloratur* (coloring) with variation, ornaments and passages
- Audio Example; Schubert Sonata in a minor Op. 42 –First movement



ACCENTS

- *Grammatical* accent, normal stress that occurs at the beginning of a measure or other metric group
- *Oratorical* accent, a stress given to an important melodic note, whether or not it falls upon the normal grammatical accent
- *Pathetic* accent, an especially intense oratorical accent, often upon a salient dissonant melodic tone

Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style*