

Exploring Josef Hofmann's Recordings in My Pianistic
Journey

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Abstract

This exegesis studies Josef Hofmann's pianistic intricacy and sophistication by surveying the minutiae and architectonics of his performances of Romantic and Classical piano compositions. The scores, together with a variety of other pianists' recordings of the pieces involved, are referenced to establish the originality and significance of Hofmann's interpretations. Chapter I introduces late-Romantic and modern perceptions of Hofmann's style, and a framework is introduced for the analysis of his technique, based on elemental pianistic parameters. Chapter II elaborates on Hofmann's *jeu perlé*, which is associated with non legato and *leggiero* touches. Chapter III addresses Hofmann's passagework, including *fioriture* and trills, which are imbued with *jeu perlé* and largely devoid of manneristic gestural agogics. It also addresses the continuous runs in the mode of *toccata* or *perpetuum mobile*, where he exerts an elastic control of tempo. Chapter IV focuses on Hofmann's voicing, especially his exploration of inner voices and hidden melodies. Chapter V discusses Hofmann's phrasal shaping and structural projection, in particular how he calibrates and contextualises dynamic contrast, including *crescendo*, *decrescendo*, and *accentuation*. Chapter VI covers Hofmann's modification of the score, including added repeated notes, octaves, and ornaments. This detailed study offers insight into the complex make up of a pianistic personality, and offers any pianist—myself included—an avenue for self-comparison and thus self-analysis.

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Chapter I: Introduction

My fascination with Josef Hofmann (1876-1957) 's pianism began more than a decade ago when more and more of his recordings became available on CD. Before I started to explore his recordings, I had familiarised myself with the recordings of many great figures of the golden age of piano playing (e.g., Josef Lhevinne and Simon Barere). My exploration of Hofmann's recordings further widened and deepened my knowledge and understanding of the Romantic repertoire and performance practice, as his recordings presented pieces and dimensions previously unknown to me.

From the fin-de-siècle post-Romantic perspective, Hofmann was one of the early great modern pianists, alongside Ferruccio Busoni and Sergei Rachmaninov.¹ However, the vestiges of Romanticism in Hofmann's recordings can prove a bewildering or even "traumatic" experience for modern listeners.² To reconcile such different perceptions, I set out to find the authenticity and idiosyncrasy in Hofmann's realisation of the written music, in comparison with other great pianists' realisations.

The foundation of the stylistic and manneristic superstructure is technique. Jan Holcman points out the "four elements" of technique: accuracy, quantity, evenness, and speed.³ In pianistic endeavour, accuracy is about minimising wrong notes, whereas quantity is about minimising missing notes. Evenness includes "symmetry of timing", which is understood as "regularity of sounds following each other at equal intervals," and "symmetry of dynamics" understood as an "equal intensity in striking the keys". Dynamic gradation, including crescendo and decrescendo, can also be seen as a form of evenness.⁴ Clarity is arguably a subset of the aforementioned elements. When

¹ Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 355.

² Jan Holcman, *Pianists On and Off the Record* (College Park: University of Maryland, 2000) 20.
Frank Cooper, Liner notes for *The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 2*. VAIA 1020. 1994.

³ Holcman, *Pianists On and Off the Record*, 11-12.

⁴ Ibid. 11-12.

playing double notes by one hand or various synchronised intervals by both hands (Ex. 1), simultaneity is of key importance, which can also be seen as a subset of the elements.

Ex. 1



Lastly, speed is about playing any given passage or piece in a tempo as fast as marked, or faster, without compromising accuracy, quantity, and evenness. In my analysis of Hofmann's technique, I aim to explain how the quintessence — the fifth element that is musicality — binds the four elements, in light of idiomatic writings and interpretative approaches.

Chapter II: Articulation

In terms of articulation, Hofmann is an exponent of the style known as *jeu perlé*; Busoni, who also excels in *jeu perlé*, refers to it as *perlato* (pearly) and *granulato* (granulate).⁵ According to Busoni, the secret to this style of articulation is the *détaché* or non legato technique, which he finds more appropriate to the nature of the piano.⁶ Going against the tradition of the super legato and "velvet" touch established by Adolf von Henselt and Sigismond Thalberg, Busoni condemns the "overly refined legato".⁷

Hofmann dismisses the "sophism" of categorising legato into "various kinds" such as "firm legato" and "crisp legato" as "a product of non-musical hyper-analysis".⁸ Admittedly, "clinging" and "gliding" fingers over the keys can produce "the most beautiful tone in legato style", but Hofmann warns of the "calamity" of "clinging" devolving into "blurring" and "gliding" devolving into "smearing", and recommends preventative measures such as to "increase the raising of fingers" and to "use more force in their falling upon the keys".⁹ Hofmann holds to this approach even in passages with markings of *dolce*, *espressivo*, etc.—for example, in bb. 221—236 of the first movement of Chopin's *Piano Concerto No. 1*, which are marked *dolce*, *con espressione*, and *legato*,¹⁰ and bb. 1—18 of Chopin's *Berceuse*, which are marked *piano* and *dolce*.¹¹ Hofmann's approach is an antidote to the "overindulgent phrasing" and "sugary

⁵ Grigory Kogan, *Busoni as Pianist*, trans. Svetlana Belsky (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010) 41.

⁶ Ibid. 41.

⁷ Ibid. 40-41.

⁸ Josef Hofmann, *Piano Playing with Piano Questions Answered* (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser 1920) 25.

⁹ Ibid. 24.

¹⁰ Frédéric Chopin, *Piano Concerto*, 'Op. 11', Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 16, ed. Rafael Joseffy (New York: Schirmer, 1918).
Josef Hofmann, Historical Piano Collection. Dante HPC 002 (1991).

¹¹ Frédéric Chopin, *Berceuse*, 'Op. 57', Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 10, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1895).

The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 3. VAIA 1036 (1994).

sentimentality" practised and purveyed by many in the name of legato, cantabile, and something along those lines.¹² At bb. 127—131 of Chopin's *Fantaisie-impromptu*, marked *p* and *il canto marcato*, and bb. 1—14 of Liszt's *Waldesrauschen*, marked *dolcissimo* and *dolce con grazia*, Hofmann's legato is so articulated that it verges on non legato.¹³

Non legato is "the sort of touch where the finger makes a flexible attack with no help from the wrist", and "the active finger bounces off the key before the next finger descends", so the notes can be heard "distinctly".¹⁴ To preserve the distinct effect produced by fingerwork, the use of the damper pedal should be kept to a minimum. *Distintamente* (distinctly) is a term Busoni sometimes uses in his work to indicate this kind of touch. For example, in his transcription of Bach's *Chorale Prelude, BWV 734*, Busoni puts *Molto scorrevole, ma distintamente* (very flowing, but distinctly) next to the overall tempo marking *Allegro*¹⁵— and in his recording of this piece, Busoni's realisation of *Scorrevole ma distintamente* is essentially that of the portato mark, where the slur signifies *scorrevole* and the dots signify *distintamente*.¹⁶

Portato is also known as mezzo staccato, since in principle, the notes marked portato are supposed to be longer than those marked staccato given the same tempo.¹⁷ In practice, when the tempo gets faster and faster, and the space between notes gets more and more compressed, the literal distinction between portato and staccato (as well as staccatissimo) becomes ever more immaterial. For example, in Hofmann's recording of

¹² Kogan, *Busoni as Pianist*, trans. Belsky, 39.

¹³ Frédéric Chopin, *Fantaisie-impromptu*, 'Op. 66', Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 5, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1894).

Franz Liszt, *2 Konzertetüden*, 'S. 145', Klavierwerke, Band 4, ed. Emil von Sauer (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1917).

VAIA 1036.

¹⁴ Kogan, *Busoni as Pianist*, trans. Belsky, 41.

¹⁵ Ferruccio Busoni, *10 Chorale Preludes*, 'BV B 27' (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1898).

¹⁶ Busoni and His Pupils. Naxos Historical 8110777 (2004).

¹⁷ Kogan, *Busoni as Pianist*, trans. Belsky, 41.

the *Scherzo* of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata, Op. 31, No. 3*, where the tempo *Allegretto vivace* is set at approximately 110 crotchet beats per minute, the realisation of the semiquavers originally marked *staccato* sounds ambiguously between staccato and portato;¹⁸ in Hofmann's recording of Louis Brassin's piano transcription of Wagner's *Feuerzauber from Die Walküre*, where the tempo *Moderato* is set at approximately 90 crotchet bpm, the realisation of the semiquavers originally marked *staccatissimo* sounds ambiguous between staccatissimo and portato.¹⁹

Hofmann not only detaches the notes that are unequivocally marked to be detached, his non legato interpretation is sometimes an act of extrapolation, sometimes an act of interpolation. For example, in the first movement of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 4*, the semiquavers in bb. 86—88 are left without instruction for articulation. However, while the preceding quavers are marked portato, Hofmann extrapolates the portato to the following semiquavers.²⁰ In the first movement of Chopin's *Piano Sonata No. 3*, the slurred descending scale in b. 20 of the exposition is recapitulated in b. 138 with portato mark — Hofmann's interpolation of portato in b. 20 can also be understood as him extrapolating the portato from b. 138 to b. 20.²¹

Hofmann also applies non legato to the passages that are marked *leggiero*, and his *leggiero* is considered "unforgettable".²² Although non legato finger technique and

¹⁸ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Piano Sonata, 'Op. 31, No. 3'*, Ludwig van Beethovens Werke, series 16 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1862).

The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 5. Marston 52004 (1997).

¹⁹ Louis Brassin, *Feuerzauber from Die Walküre* (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1877).

The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 4. VAIA 1047 (1995).

²⁰ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Piano Concerto, 'Op. 58'*, Ludwig van Beethovens Werke, series 9 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1862).

Josef Hofmann in Concert. Archipel 0012 (2002).

²¹ Frédéric Chopin, *Piano Sonata, 'Op. 58'*, Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 11, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1895).
VAIA 1047.

²² Holcman, *Pianists On and Off the Record*, 142.

leggiero are related,²³ leggiero is not an instruction for articulation per se; non legato and legato markings are given as additional or conditional instructions at times. For example, in b. 45 of the second movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, there are staccato marks and portato marks alongside *leggiero*;²⁴ and in bb. 174—176 of the first movement of Chopin's *Sonata No. 3*, there is *legato* alongside *leggiero* — Hofmann plays the former detached in accordance with the non legato markings, and the latter also detached in spite of the legato marking.²⁵ Hofmann's approach to the leggiero passages can be seen as a "measure of classicism",²⁶ for the piano of the earlier Classical period was less sonorous than its modern counterpart, and was thus best suited for leggiero and ill-suited to legato.²⁷ The playing of the leading pianists of that era, such as Mozart, was "delicate" and "without legato".²⁸ Legato occupied such a small part of the pianistic lexicon that it was virtually unknown at that time.²⁹ The classical preference for non legato lingered through Hummel into the latter part of the 19th century,³⁰ when Liszt was still talking about the advantage of non legato over legato.³¹

On the modern grand piano, non legato reduces the "fullness and roundness" in sound production,³² thus resulting in a more ideal leggiero, or *leggierissimo* as intended by composers at times. As far as marking goes, *leggierissimo* is also sometimes coupled with *legato* or even *legatissimo*. For example, the passage in b. 69 of the second movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 2* is marked *leggierissimo* and *legato*,³³ and the passage in b. 37 of the second movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1* is marked

²³ Ibid. 142.

²⁴ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.

²⁵ Chopin, *Sonata*, 'Op. 58', ed. Mikuli. VAIA 1047.

²⁶ Schonberg, *The Great Pianists*, 364.

²⁷ Schonberg, *The Great Pianists*, 43.

²⁸ Joseph Banowetz, *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 151.

²⁹ Ibid., 151.

³⁰ Schonberg, *The Great Pianists*, 44.

³¹ Kogan, *Busoni as Pianist*, 40.

³² Ibid., 40.

³³ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.

*leggierissimo e legatissimo*³⁴ — Hofmann's realisation of these passages demonstrates again and again that the real *leggierissimo* often comes at the expense of legato and *legatissimo*.³⁵ In the coda of the *Romance* of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, there is a *legatissimo* marking in b. 105, a *sempre leggierissimo* marking across the barline between b. 106 and b. 107, and a *staccato* marking in b. 107; and the notes in b. 105 and b. 107 are identical³⁶ — Hofmann's non legato treatment of b. 105 can be seen as the *legatissimo* marking being overridden by the *sempre leggierissimo*, or the *staccato* marking from b. 107 being extrapolated to b. 105.³⁷

Non legato technique is instrumental in playing rapid repeated notes. According to Hofmann, when playing such notes, the fingers should not "fall perpendicularly upon the keys, but rather make a motion as if you were wiping a spot off the keys with the finger-tips, and rapidly pulling them toward the inner hand".³⁸ In Hofmann's recorded Chopin works, passages containing rapid repeated notes can be found in *Valse, Op. 34, No. 3*, *Valse in E minor Op. posth.*, *Valse, Op. 18*,³⁹ and the second movement of *Concerto No. 2*,⁴⁰ but they are too short and sporadic to fully demonstrate Hofmann's note-repeating technique. In Hofmann's recorded Liszt works, there are longer passages concentrated on the technique, in particular, bb. 142—177 of *Hungarian Rhapsody No.*

³⁴ Frédéric Chopin, *Piano Concerto, 'Op. 21'*, Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 15, ed. Rafael Joseffy (New York: Schirmer, 1918).

³⁵ Dante HPC 002.

³⁶ Chopin, *Concerto, 'Op. 11'*, ed. Joseffy.

³⁷ Dante HPC 002.

³⁸ Hofmann, *Piano Playing with Piano Questions Answered*, 22.

³⁹ Frédéric Chopin, *Valses*, Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 1, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1894).

The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 5. Marston 52004 (1997).

The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 6. Marston 52014 (1998).

VAIA 1036.

⁴⁰ Chopin, *Concerto, 'Op. 21'*, ed. Joseffy.

Dante HPC 002.

2,⁴¹ bb. 50—65 of *La Campanella*, S. 141, No. 3,⁴² and bb. 334—352 of *Tarantella*, S. 162, No. 3.⁴³ Hofmann's execution of the passages is considered "an example of unparalleled speed, evenness, and purity combined to the highest conceivable degree", "with the lightest finger staccato and without missing a note".⁴⁴

Moritz Moszkowski's *Caprice Espagnol*, Op. 37 has more repeated notes than any other piece Hofmann recorded.⁴⁵ It was Hofmann's signature encore, according to Harold Schonberg, who attended many of Hofmann's concerts,⁴⁶ and who finds Hofmann's repeated notes in the 1916 recording "incredibly clear".⁴⁷ Frank Cooper writes that Hofmann's repeated notes in the 1937 recording "whirl by at an unreal speed".⁴⁸

In terms of velocity, clarity, and evenness, Theodor Leschetitzki sees glissando as the "sound-ideal for passagework" — and Busoni points out that the sound of glissando is intrinsically "pearly".⁴⁹ When notes are played at an exceedingly fast speed close to that of glissando, the detachedness between notes is neither as audible nor as important as the distinctness of notes, since teleologically, non legato technique is a means to an end that is the *perlato* and *granulato* effect. Schonberg maintains that Hofmann's *jeu*

⁴¹ Franz Liszt, *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, 'S. 244', Klavierwerke, Band 1, ed. Emil von Sauer (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1913).

VAIA 1047.

⁴² Franz Liszt, *Grandes études de Paganini*, 'S. 141', Klavierwerke, Band 4, ed. Emil von Sauer (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1917).

VAIA 1047.

⁴³ Franz Liszt, *Années de pèlerinage II, Supplément*, 'S. 162', Klavierwerke, Band 6, ed. Emil von Sauer (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1917).

VAIA 1036.

⁴⁴ Holcman, *Pianists On and Off the Record*, 12.

⁴⁵ Moritz Moszkowski, *Caprice espagnol*, 'Op. 37', ed. Louis Oesterle (New York: Schirmer, 1899).

⁴⁶ Harold Schonberg, 'Josef Hofmann: Pianist sans peur et sans reproche', *Piano & Keyboard* 200 (1999), 40-44.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 40-44.

VAIA 1036.

⁴⁸ Frank Cooper, Liner notes for *The Complete Josef Hofmann*, Vol. 2. VAIA 1020 (1994).

VAIA 1020.

⁴⁹ Kogan, *Busoni as Pianist*, 41.

perlé is "unmatched",⁵⁰ and Vladimir Horowitz states that Hofmann was the only pianist whose passagework is immediately identifiable if recordings are played anonymously.⁵¹

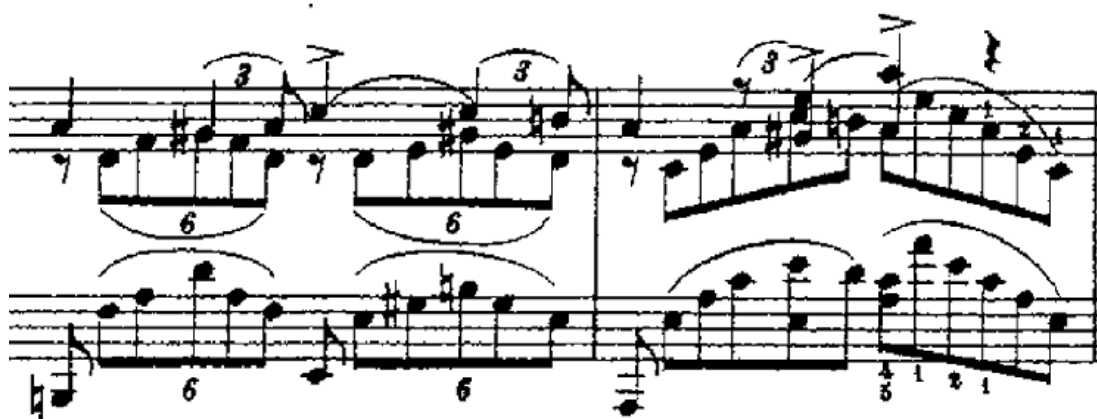
⁵⁰ Harold Schonberg, Liner notes for *The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 1*, VAIA 1002 (1992).

⁵¹ Holcman, *Pianists On and Off the Record*, 141-142.

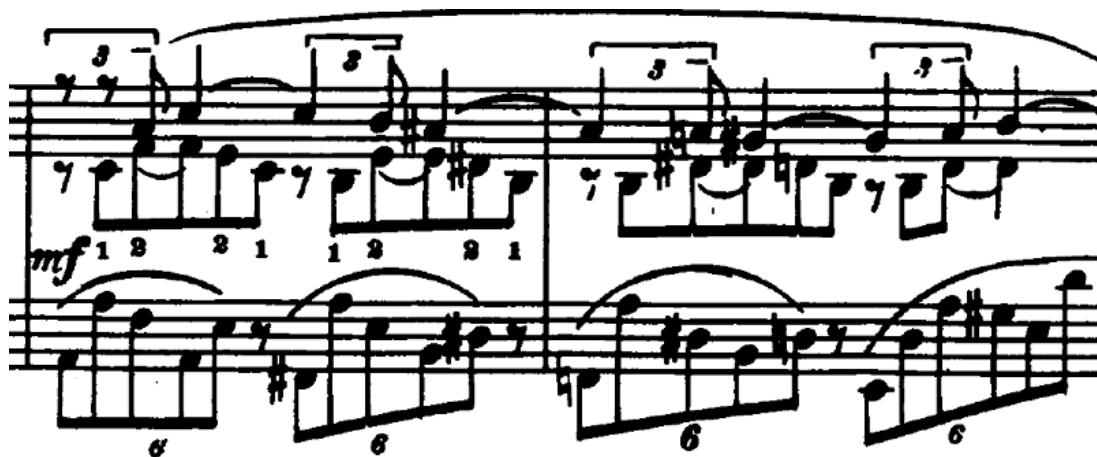
Chapter III: Passagework

Passagework, also known as "technical figurations",⁵² is a hypernym for a myriad of types and patterns — and the hyponyms are underdeveloped. To elaborate, I refer to the peculiar but similar figurations found in Arensky's *Piano Concerto, Op. 2* and Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto, Op. 30* (Ex. 2a & 2b).⁵³

Ex. 2a: Arensky's figuration



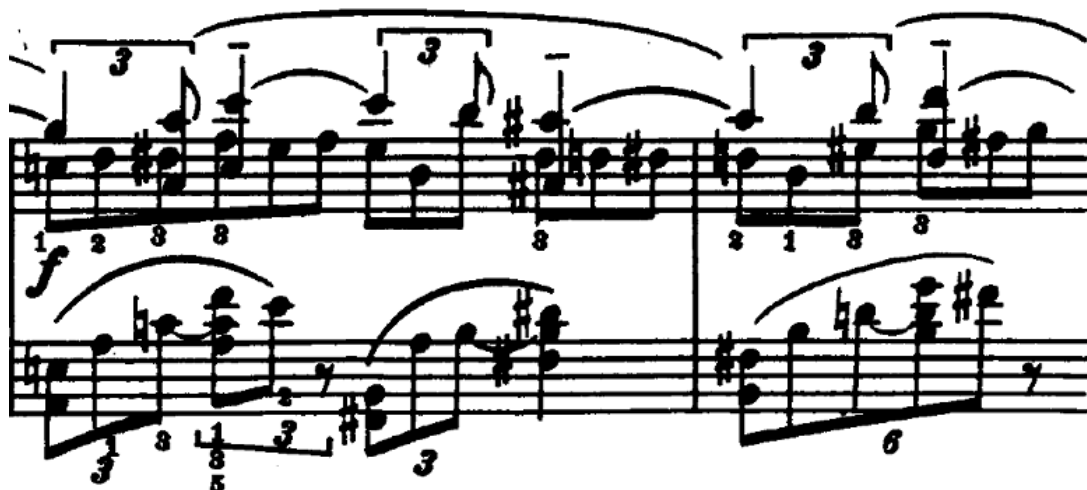
Ex. 2b: Rachmaninov's figuration



⁵² Ibid., 12, 141.

⁵³ Anton Arensky, *Piano Concerto, 'Op. 2'*, ed. Paul Pabst (Leipzig: Rahter, 1897).

Sergei Rachmaninov, *Piano Concerto No. 3, 'Op. 30'*. First edition (Moscow: Gutheil, 1910).



One can describe them using less generic hypernyms from existing vocabulary (arpeggi, sextuplets, octaves, et al.) and end up calling them "figurations" because there are no precise hyponyms for them in the established nomenclature. An analogy would be to describe the features of a species and end up calling it "creature" because the species had not been named binomially and colloquially. So before delving into Hofmann's critically acclaimed playing of *fioritura*,⁵⁴ it is necessary to examine "fioritura" terminologically and typologically.

Fioritura refers to not only the embellishing runs printed in the size of grace notes but also the ones printed in regular size. In some works, e.g., Chopin's two concerti, there are more fioritura printed in regular size than in the size of grace notes. Fioritura refers to intermittent runs as opposed to the continuous ones in the mode of *toccata* or *perpetuum mobile*. For example, in Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, the runs in b. 54, b. 58, b. 94, and b. 98 of the *Romance* movement can be referred to as *fioritura*, whereas the runs throughout bb. 128—167, bb. 212—217, bb. 340—412, and bb. 456—518 of the *Rondo* movement cannot.⁵⁵ An interesting case is the seemingly continuous runs that permeate bb. 19—46 of Chopin's *Berceuse*, which Cooper refers to as "fioritura passages".⁵⁶ Cooper's choice of words is justified because unlike the aforementioned

⁵⁴ * acclaimed by critics such as Harold Schonberg, Geoffrey Dorfman, Frank Cooper

⁵⁵ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.

⁵⁶ Cooper, Liner notes for VAIA 1020.

long runs in the *Rondo* of Chopin's *First Concerto*, which are grouped in semiquaver triplets for the most part, the grouping patterns of the runs in the *Berceuse* are much less consistent: bb. 19—22 and bb. 37—38 are grouped in demisemiquavers, b. 25—26 and bb. 31—34 in semiquaver triplets, bb. 39—42 and bb. 45—46 in demisemiquaver triplets, et al..⁵⁷ There is thus somewhat of an improvisatory feel to fioritura: the rhythmic groupings are less defined, leading to a more exploratory effect.

Fioriture are sometimes grouped into unusual tuplets, for example, in the second movement of Chopin's *Second Piano Concerto*, the fioritura in b. 26 is grouped into a tuplet of 29, and the fioritura in b. 28 is grouped into a tuplet of 27.⁵⁸ Typically, a fioritura is written within a bar or two, even if it comprises notes by the dozens; an extraordinarily long fioritura can comprise more than a hundred notes, e.g., the fioritura in b. 84 of Liszt's *Meine Freuden*, *S. 480*, *No. 5* and the one in b. 378 of the first movement of Rachmaninov's *Third Piano Concerto*.⁵⁹ It is debatable whether fioritura refers to any short embellishing run longer than an *appoggiatura doppia*, such as the group of five notes in b. 26 of the second movement of Chopin's *First Piano Concerto*,⁶⁰ the group of four notes and the group of three notes in b. 102 and b. 106 of Liszt's *Gnomenreigen*, *S. 145*, *No. 2*.⁶¹ A more fitting appellation for them could be a hypothetical diminutive of fioritura, *fioriturina* or *fiorituretta*, which is analogous to *toccatina* as a diminutive of *toccata*, or *codetta* as a diminutive of *coda*, and so on. By the same token, a more fitting appellation for the extraordinarily long fioritura could be a hypothetical augmentative of fioritura, *fioriturone*.

As far as fioritura and wording are concerned, Schonberg uses a rhetorical device

⁵⁷ Chopin, *Berceuse*, 'Op. 57', ed. Mikuli.

⁵⁸ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 21', ed. Joseffy.

⁵⁹ Franz Liszt, *6 Chants polonais*, 'S. 480', *Klavierwerke*, Band 9, ed. Emil von Sauer (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1918).

Rachmaninov, *Concerto No. 3*, 'Op. 30'. First edition.

⁶⁰ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.

⁶¹ Franz Liszt, *2 Konzertetüden*, 'S. 145', *Klavierwerke*, Band 4, ed. Emil von Sauer (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1917).

known as chiasmus as well as antimetabole to antithesise the difference between Hofmann's way of playing fioritura and the pedestrian way of playing: "Hofmann fits the fioritura into the bar lines of the measure, rather than expanding the measure to fit the fioritura."⁶² Expanding measures to fit in fioritura can be seen as "resorting to agological SOS" in the case of those whose technique has declined or never been great,⁶³ and as mannerism in the case of the in-form virtuosi. To exemplify, I juxtaposed Hofmann's 1938 live recording of Chopin's *First Piano Concerto* with Maurizio Pollini's 1960 live recording of the same work.⁶⁴ It is worth noting that Pollini's recording is his performance in the 6th International Chopin Piano Competition, where he won the first prize — he was thus evidently in form. When playing the continuous semiquavers and semiquaver triplets in the toccata-like and perpetuum-mobile-like sections—namely bb. 179—220, bb. 275—332, bb. 408—485, bb. 534—571, bb. 621—670 of the first movement, and bb. 120—167, bb. 212—217, bb. 340—412, bb. 456—518 of the third movement—the virtuosity Pollini exhibits is almost on a par with Hofmann. Given his technique, Pollini could have fitted any fioritura in the concerto into the bar lines of the measures if he wanted to; but he expands the measure considerably to fit the fioritura in places such as b. 161 and b. 391 of the first movement and b. 59 and b. 98 of the second movement.

Pollini's approach reflects one school of thought concerning fioritura-playing: fioritura originated from bel canto and the singers cannot vocalise fioritura as fast as the fastest fingerwork, and pianists should imitate the singers' speed.⁶⁵ The opposing school of thought, as reflected in Hofmann's playing, sees fioritura as a developing art form, where singers' limitations should not be pianists' shackles; and the tempo should "hardly ever be adjusted to accommodate the fioritura".⁶⁶ Hofmann is not alone in this regard:

⁶² Schonberg, 'Josef Hofmann: Pianist sans peur et sans reproche', *Piano & Keyboard*.

⁶³ Holcman, *Pianists On and Off the Record*, 20-21.

⁶⁴ *Maurizio Pollini Edition*. DG 471350 (2002).

Dante HPC 002.

⁶⁵ Geoffrey Dorfman, Liner notes for *The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 8*, Marston 52044 (2005).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Geoffrey Dorfman acknowledges Busoni as one the pianists who handles fioritura similarly to the way Hofmann does, but considers Hofmann more "fastidious".⁶⁷ A work for comparison is Chopin's *Nocturne, Op. 15, No. 2*, which Hofmann and Busoni both recorded: Busoni's fioritura-playing is similar to Hofmann's at b. 18, b. 20, and b. 51, but dissimilar at b. 11 and b. 54.⁶⁸ At b. 11, Busoni groups the first dozen notes of the fioritura into two sextuplets and accentuates the first note of each sextuplet, whereas Hofmann groups the first 18 notes of the fioritura into one tuplet and plays them much faster than Busoni does, then decelerates towards the end of the fioritura. At b. 54, Busoni prolongs the first note of the fioritura (a#') as an agogic and plays the next nine notes evenly in a much faster sweep, then he treats the penultimate note of the fioritura (f#') like a dotted note; Hofmann also treats the f# like a dotted note, but he plays the preceding notes evenly without initial agogic.

The prolongation of one note followed by an even and swift sweep should be distinguished from the subtly different manner that is taking multiple notes to gradually accelerate to full speed. When playing in the manner of one agogic followed by one sweep, the agogic can be at the very beginning or in the midst of a run. For example, at bb. 254—255 of the third movement of Chopin's *First Piano Concerto*, Hofmann's agogic is at the beginning of the run;⁶⁹ but at b. 57 of Chopin's *Grande Polonaise brillante précédée d'un Andante spianato*, Hofmann's agogic is in the midst of the run.⁷⁰ However, Hofmann seldom plays in this manner; instead, he often starts a fioritura at full speed and then more or less slows down towards the end of the fioritura. In Dorfman's words, Hofmann "brings dizzying flight of fancy to soft and gracious

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Frédéric Chopin, *Nocturne, 'Op. 15, No. 2'*, Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 4, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1894).
Naxos Historical 8110777.
VAIA 1036.

⁶⁹ Chopin, *Concerto, 'Op. 11'*, ed. Joseffy
Dante HPC 002.

⁷⁰ Frédéric Chopin, *Grande Polonaise brillante précédée d'un Andante spianato, 'Op. 22'*, Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 12, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1894).
Josef Hofmann: 1936-1945 Live Recordings. Urania URN 22.229 (2002).

landing".⁷¹ Metaphorically, the takeoff of Hofmann's flying fioritura is catapulted like that of an F-14 from an aircraft carrier where the 0-100 km/h acceleration is instantaneous; by contrast, the mannerism of dragging out the first multiple notes of a fioritura is like a normal plane on the runway gradually accelerating to takeoff speed.

On rare occasions, Hofmann does take time to accelerate at the beginning of a fioritura. For example, at b. 84 of Liszt's *Meine Freuden*, Hofmann takes the first dozen notes of the fioritura to accelerate to full speed. Nevertheless, such mannerism is absent in his playing of all the other fioriture in the piece.⁷² When eulogising Hofmann's fioritura-playing, Horowitz specifically mentions Liszt's *Meine Freuden* where Hofmann's runs "sound like gargling."⁷³ Hofmann's influence on Horowitz is acknowledged by Horowitz himself; ⁷⁴ his fioritura-playing is considered as "electrifying" as Hofmann's.⁷⁵ There are multiple pieces they both recorded containing fioriture for comparison. In Chopin's *Grande Polonaise brillante précédée d'un Andante spianato*, a nuanced detail is their treatments of the fioritura in b. 66 and its repetition in b. 210: their treatments of the first three triplets are similar in terms of instantaneity of fast start, simultaneity of double notes, clarity, and evenness; from the penultimate triplet towards the end of the bar, Hofmann decelerates slightly, Horowitz does not.⁷⁶ At b. 188 of the third movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata, Op. 27, No. 2* and b. 210 of Chopin's *Ballade, Op. 52*, a pattern of similarity and dissimilarity can be observed: Hofmann and Horowitz both decelerate towards the end of the fioritura, but Hofmann's tempo is considerably faster before the deceleration.⁷⁷ These examples should by no means lead

⁷¹ Dorfman, Liner notes for Marston 52044.

⁷² Liszt, *6 Chants polonais*, 'S. 480', ed. Sauer. VAI 1047

⁷³ Holcman, *Pianists On and Off the Record*, 141-142.

⁷⁴ David Dubal, *Evenings with Horowitz: A Personal Portrait* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991) 7.

⁷⁵ Holcman, *Pianists On and Off the Record*, 142.

⁷⁶ Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, 'Op. 22', ed. Mikuli. *Horowitz Plays Chopin Vol. 1*. RCA 7752 (1990). Urania URN 22.229.

⁷⁷ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Piano Sonata*, 'Op. 27, No. 2', Ludwig van Beethovens Werke, series 16 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1862).

to a conclusion that Hofmann does not often finish a fioritura without some sort of rallentando. In his recording of Chopin's *Second Concerto* alone, there are already multiple examples of him finishing a fioritura without rallentando: b. 273 and b. 275 of the first movement, b. 28 and b. 30 of the second movement, to name but a few.⁷⁸

Another type of ornamentation often featured alongside fioritura is the trill. For example, in Chopin's *Valse, Op. 34, No. 1*, each fioritura is preceded by a short trill;⁷⁹ in bb. 197—204 of Liszt's *Sonata in B Minor*, each fioritura is preceded by a long trill;⁸⁰ and in b. 378 of the first movement of Rachmaninov's *Third Piano Concerto*, the fioritura is followed by a sequence of trills.⁸¹ Like his fioritura-playing, Hofmann's trill-playing is so unique that, as Cooper puts it, it "deserves space unto itself".⁸²

To understand the uniqueness of Hofmann's trill-playing, it is necessary to address two contrasting approaches in historical performance practice. One approach is to start at a relatively slow speed and to take few alternations to accelerate to full speed, which can be seen as a condensed form of the *ribattuta di gola*. When playing in this manner, how slow the first few alternations are relative to the full speed and how many alternations it takes to accelerate to the full speed vary from trill to trill and from performer to performer. A writing that captures the spirit of the approach and amplifies it is in bb. 199—205 of Chopin's *Polonaise-fantaisie* (Ex. 3).⁸³

Ex. 3

Frédéric Chopin, *Ballade, 'Op. 52'*, Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 5, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1894).

Vladimir Horowitz: *1949-1957 Chopin Recordings*. Naxos Historical 8.111282 (2008).

Horowitz At Carnegie Hall - *The Private Collection*. RCA 754605 (2010).

Marston 52014 (1998).

⁷⁸ Chopin, *Concerto, 'Op. 21'*, ed. Joseffy.

Dante HPC 002.

⁷⁹ Chopin, *Valses*, ed. Mikuli.

⁸⁰ Franz Liszt, *Sonata in B Minor, 'S. 178'*, Klavierwerke, Band 6, ed. Emil von Sauer (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1917).

⁸¹ Rachmaninov, *Concerto No. 3, 'Op. 30'*. First edition.

⁸² Cooper, Liner notes for VAIA 1020.

⁸³ Frédéric Chopin, *Polonaise-fantaisie, 'Op. 61'*, Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 3, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1894).



Another approach is to reach the full speed at the first alternation. The recordings of some of Hofmann's peers show a mixture of the two approaches, whereas Hofmann's recordings show a strong preference for the second approach, so much so that the first approach is hardly ever adopted.

For instance, in Busoni's recording of Chopin's *Nocturne, Op. 15, No. 2*, when playing the two trills at b. 7 and b. 15, he reaches full speed after the first two or three alternations of each trill; at b. 55, he reaches full speed after the first alternation of the trill; at b. 56, he reaches full speed at the first alternation.⁸⁴ In Hofmann's recording of the same piece, he reaches the full speed at the first alternation of each of the four trills.⁸⁵ In Rachmaninov's recording of Carl Tausig's *Pastorale in E minor*, at b. 2, he reaches full speed after the first two alternations; at bb. 12—14, he reaches full speed at the first alternation of each of the three trills.⁸⁶ In Hofmann's recording, he reaches full speed at the first alternation of each of the trills in b. 2 and bb. 12—14.⁸⁷ Approximately, Hofmann's full speed often approaches 8 alternates per second, i.e., 16 notes per second.

Sometimes pianists play the first few alternations rather slow in order to play them marcato. For example, in the third movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata Op. 27, No. 2*, the trill in b. 188 arrives after passionate arpeggiation and chromatic scale: Emil Gilels plays the notes of the first few alternations slower and louder than the preceding

⁸⁴ Chopin, *Nocturne, 'Op. 15, No. 2'*, ed. Mikuli.
Naxos Historical 8110777.

⁸⁵ VAIA 1036.

⁸⁶ Carl Tausig, *Pastorale in G major*, ed. Giuseppe Buonamici (New York: Schirmer, 1902).

Sergei Rachmaninov: The Complete Recordings. RCA 888880872982 (1992).

⁸⁷ VAIA 1047.

notes of the ascending chromatic scale;⁸⁸ Horowitz does it in a similar fashion;⁸⁹ Ignaz Friedman even inserts a luftpause between b. 187 and b. 188 to prepare for the first few slow marcato alternations.⁹⁰ Contrastingly, Hofmann connects the chromatic scale and the trill seamlessly as he starts the trill in full speed without marcato or luftpause.⁹¹ To the same effect, Hofmann connects the trills written in sequence, e.g., the sequence where the principal notes of the trills are d"—c"—b'—c"—d"—c"—b'—c" in the first four bars of the *Coda* of Ignacy Jan Paderewski's *Menuet célèbre, Op. 14, No. 1*.⁹² Even when the principal notes of sequential trills are marked *marcato* or *sforzando*, e.g., in bb. 78—79 of Chopin's *Impromptu No. 1*, where the principal notes (ab", bb", b4") are marked *marcato*,⁹³ and in b. 229—230 of the first movement of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto, No. 4*, where two of the principal notes (d#""", g#""") are marked *sforzando*,⁹⁴ Hofmann doesn't compromise the seamless connection between trills for the sake of playing marcato or sforzando.⁹⁵ There are examples where the beginning of Hofmann's trills sound accented because he plays the first alternation like an acciaccatura with its adjacent note (which is even faster than the following alternations), such as the trill at b. 611 of the first movement of Chopin's *First Piano Concerto* and the one in b. 36 of the third movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 14*.⁹⁶

Hofmann's full-speed-from-the-start approach is necessary and ideal for certain trills

⁸⁸ Beethoven, *Sonata, 'Op. 27, No. 2'*, Beethovens Werke, series 16.

Emil Gilels: Recitals, Vol. 4. Melodiya MELCD1000790 (2004).

⁸⁹ RCA 754605.

⁹⁰ *Ignaz Friedman: 1927-1928 Recordings*. Naxos Historical 8.110686 (2002).

⁹¹ Marston 52014.

⁹² Ignacy Jan Paderewski, *Menuet célèbre, 'Op. 14, No. 1'*. First edition (Berlin: Bote & Bock, 1887). VAIA 1036.

⁹³ Frédéric Chopin, *Impromptu, 'Op. 29'*, Complete Works for the Piano, vol.5, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1894).

⁹⁴ Beethoven, *Piano Concerto, 'Op. 58'*, Beethovens Werke, series 9.

⁹⁵ VAIA 1036.

Josef Hofmann in Concert. Archipel 0012 (2002).

⁹⁶ Chopin, *Concerto, 'Op. 11'*, ed. Joseffy.

Dante HPC 002.

Beethoven, *Sonata, 'Op. 27, No. 2'*, Beethovens Werke, series 16.

Marston 52014.

written note by note rather than indicated by the *tr* or *tr*-chevron sign, such as the ones in bb. 9—16 of Chopin's *Étude Op. 25, No. 3*, where the alternations of each trill, starting from the upper auxillary note, are written in demisemiquavers in the tempo of crotchet = 120,⁹⁷ and the ones in Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz No. 1*, where the alternations are written in semiquavers in the tempo of *Presto*.⁹⁸ The fact that they are relatively short trills further rules out the slow-start approach. Hofmann recommends the fingering of two fingers to "preserve more clarity" when playing shorter trills; for extended trills, he recommends the use of three fingers and to "change fingers when those employed get tired".⁹⁹ In Liszt's *La Campanella*, the trill alternating between d[♯] and e extended from b.79 to b.83 is written note by note in demisemiquavers for the right hand — since the d[♯] needs to be played by the thumb of the right hand once every four demisemiquavers¹⁰⁰ — Hofmann's fingering would probably have been a combination of 3-5 and 4-5; and he plays the demisemiquavers in a tempo of approximately 240 quaver bpm.¹⁰¹

Given his extraordinary dexterity, when trills are indicated by the *tr* or chevron sign, Hofmann tends to play as many alternations as possible according to the value of the principal note and tempo marking; sometimes he extends the value of certain principal note as if it were marked fermata or tenuto to make room for even more alternations. For example, in b. 43 of Chopin's *Fantaisie-Improvisation*, the value of the principal note of the trill (bb') is a quaver and the tempo is *Moderato cantabile*: the trill is often treated as a mordent composed of one alternation (bb' and c") plus one adjacent note (bb'), and similar treatment applies to the trills in b. 47 and b. 51 (e.g., Wilhelm Backhaus,

⁹⁷ Frédéric Chopin, *Étude*, 'Op. 25, No. 3', Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 5, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1894).

⁹⁸ Franz Liszt, *Mephisto Waltz*, 'S. 514', Klavierwerke, Band 5, ed. Emil von Sauer (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1917).

⁹⁹ Hofmann, *Piano Playing with Piano Questions Answered*, 72.

¹⁰⁰ Liszt, *Grandes études de Paganini*, 'S. 141', ed. Sauer.

¹⁰¹ VAIA 1047.

Alexander Brailowsky)¹⁰². In contrast, Hofmann treats each trill as three alternations plus one adjacent note; at b. 75, he prolongs the quaver principal note to play eight alternations plus one adjacent note.¹⁰³ In bb. 11—24 of Liszt's *Chants polonais*, S. 480, No. 1, the value of the principal note of each of the trills is a crotchet and the tempo is *Allegro vivace*: Hofmann treats each of the trills as two alternations plus one adjacent note. At b. 25, he prolongs the crotchet principal note to play four alternations plus one adjacent note.¹⁰⁴

Occasionally, he starts a trill slightly ahead of its written beat to gain time for more alternations. For example, in b. 18 of the third movement of Chopin's *Piano Concerto No. 1*, the value of the principal note f♯" is a semiquaver and the tempo is *Vivace* — so short and so fast that the performer can barely squeeze in one alternation plus one adjacent note, (e.g., Pollini, Gilels).¹⁰⁵ Distinctively, Hofmann starts the trill at the downbeat, one semiquaver ahead of the written beat of f♯", thus gains time to play two alternations plus one adjacent note; and the same treatment can be heard at b. 26.¹⁰⁶ In b. 75 of Chopin's *Valse*, Op. 34, No. 1, the value of the principal note eb" is a crotchet and tempo is *Vivace*: Hofmann plays the first principal note as an acciaccatura so the upper auxiliary falls on the beat, thus gains time to play two alternations plus one adjacent note.¹⁰⁷

Another aspect of pianistic trills that deserves attention is the trills for the left hand. Such trills are often coupled with elaborate figurations for the right hand, therefore the

¹⁰² Chopin, *Fantaisie-impromptu*, 'Op. 66', ed. Mikuli.

Wilhelm Backhaus: Complete British Acoustic Recordings, 1908-25. Pearl GEMS 0102 (2001).

Brailowsky: A Retrospective, Vol. 2, The Piano Library PL 248 (1997).

¹⁰³ VAIA 1036.

¹⁰⁴ Liszt, *6 Chants polonais*, 'S. 480', ed. Sauer.

VAIA 1036.

¹⁰⁵ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.

DG 471350.

Gilels In Italy: Chopin, Schubert, Kabalevsky, Mozart. Archipel 0547 (2014).

¹⁰⁶ Dante HPC 002.

¹⁰⁷ Chopin, *Valses*, ed. Mikuli.

VAIA 1036.

texture is more of free polyphony than melody-dominated homophony, e.g., bb. 82—83 of the first movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 32*,¹⁰⁸ bb. 112 and bb. 114 of Chopin's *Ballade No. 4*.¹⁰⁹ According to James Huneker, Tausig's realisation of the left-hand trills in Chopin's *Ballade No. 4* provides the gold standard for how such trills should sound like: "trilled out quite independently, as if by a second player".¹¹⁰ In Hofmann's recorded work, the greatest concentration of such trills is in the coda of the first movement of Chopin's *Piano Concerto No. 1*: from b. 621 to b. 644, each bar features one left-hand trill with a nachschlag (two closing grace notes) leading to a note one octave below or above.¹¹¹ Holcman remarks that Hofmann's realisation "changes the sound of the piano into that of a furious roll of drums", which "leaves pianists with an indelible impression".¹¹²

In addition to being an example of concentrated left-hand trills, the coda of the first movement of Chopin's *Piano Concerto No. 1* is an example of continuous runs as opposed to fioriture. When playing such toccata-like and perpetuum-mobile-like sections, Hofmann often sets the initial tempi at a rate that leaves room for him to more or less accelerate towards the climaxes. For example, when playing the continuous semiquaver triplets at bb. 340—411 of the third movement of Chopin's *First Concerto*, where no tempo marking to the effect of acceleration is given, Hofmann sets the initial tempo at approximately 120 crotchet bpm and gradually accelerates to approximately 132 crotchet bpm.¹¹³ In traditional performance practice, this is often a default approach to the continuous runs without composer's and editor's injunction for or against acceleration, applicable to Romantic works and non-Romantic works alike. An example of its application to works by Classical composers is in Sari Biro's recording

¹⁰⁸ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Piano Sonata*, 'Op. III', Ludwig van Beethovens Werke, series 16 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1862).

¹⁰⁹ Chopin, *Ballade*, 'Op. 52', ed. Mikuli.

¹¹⁰ James Huneker, *Chopin: The Man and His Music* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1918) 290.

¹¹¹ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. II', ed. Joseffy.

¹¹² Holcman, *Pianists On and Off the Record*, 21.

Dante HPC 002.

¹¹³ Dante HPC 002.

of the first movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 32*: when playing the continuous semiquavers at bb. 35—49 and bb. 100—115, where the only tempo instruction is *a tempo* (referring to the previous *Allegro con brio ed appassionato*), Biro sets the initial tempo below 120 crotchet bpm and gradually accelerates to nearly 140 crotchet bpm.¹¹⁴ An example of its application to works by Romantic composers is Claudio Arrau's recording of Weber's *Perpetuum Mobile, Op. 24*, where the only tempo marking throughout the piece is *Presto*: Arrau sets the initial tempo at about 180 crotchet bpm and gradually accelerates to above 200 crotchet bpm.¹¹⁵ An example of its application to works by neoclassical composers is William Kapell's recording of the finale of Prokofiev's *Piano Sonata No. 7*, a toccata in septuple meter (7/8), with only one tempo instruction *Precipitato* throughout: Kapell sets the initial tempo at about 320 quaver bpm and gradually accelerates to above 380 quaver bpm.¹¹⁶ Such an approach can create an "expectation of continuation" just like fixed tempo does, and is considered as important as fixed tempo.¹¹⁷

Its application is sometimes expressed by composers and editors. For example, in *Marche des Davidsbündler contre les Philistins* of Schumann's *Carnaval*, it is verbalised as *sempre accelerando* and *stringendo sempre*;¹¹⁸ in Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* edited by Hans von Bülow, it is encapsulated in a phrase *poco a poco animando il tempo sin'al fine*.¹¹⁹ Such expressions substantiate and reinforce the

¹¹⁴ Beethoven, *Sonata, 'Op. 111'*, Beethovens Werke, series 16.

Sari Biro Legacy: Historic Performances 1944-1972. Cambria 1174 (2011).

¹¹⁵ Carl Maria von Weber, *Perpetuum mobile, 'Op. 24'*, ed. Franz Liszt (New York: Edward Schuberth & Co., 1892).

Claudio Arrau: 1941-1947 Recordings. Naxos Historical 8111263 (2007).

¹¹⁶ Sergei Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 7, 'Op. 83'*, ed. Levon Atovmyan (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1955).

William Kapell Rediscovered: The Australian Broadcasts. Sony 68560 (2008).

¹¹⁷ Nicholas Cook, 'The Conductor and the Theorist: Furtwängler, Schenker, and the First Movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony', in *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*, ed. John Rink (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 105-125.

¹¹⁸ Robert Schumann, *Carnaval, 'Op. 9'*, Robert Schumanns Werke, Serie 7, ed. Clara Schumann (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879).

¹¹⁹ Johann Sebastian Bach, *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, 'BWV 903'*, ed. Hans von Bülow (Berlin:

traditional default approach — the *lex non scripta*, so to speak. Furthermore, they can be interpreted in conjunction with the traditional default approach. In the coda (bb. 621—671) of the first movement of Chopin's *First Concerto*, an expression *sempre più animato* appears at bb. 647—648: Hofmann does not defer acceleration until b. 647; instead, from b. 625, he starts to accelerate from below 140 crotchet bpm to above 150 crotchet bpm; and by b. 647, his tempo is approaching 160 crotchet bpm.¹²⁰ In the development of the same movement, the only tempo instruction for the continuous runs is *a tempo* referring to the previous *Allegro maestoso*; and structurally, bb. 432—447 are a "transposed partial restatement" of bb. 408—431.¹²¹ From b. 408 to b. 431, Hofmann accelerates from approximately 132 crotchet bpm to 138 crotchet bpm; he brings the tempo back to about 132 crotchet bpm at the first few bars of the transposed partial restatement and then re-accelerates towards the climax of the section, approaching 150 crotchet bpm.¹²² This is a rather common approach to sections structured in asymmetrical or symmetrical binary form. In Backhaus' recording of Brahms' *Variations on a Theme of Paganini, Book I, Variation XIV*, where the two subsections are indicated by a double bar line, his approach is to make an acceleration towards the end of the first subsection, back to initial tempo at the beginning of second subsection, and then re-acceleration.¹²³ In the coda of Chopin's *Grande Polonaise brillante précédée d'un Andante spianato*, bb. 241—260 are a repetition of bb. 221—240: in Hofmann's recording, he decelerates to the initial tempo at bb. 240—241 where the authentic cadence bridges the two subsections and then re-accelerates;¹²⁴ and in Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli's recording, the tempo change is arranged in a similar

Bote & Bock, 1890).

¹²⁰ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.
Dante HPC 002.

¹²¹ John Rink, Chopin: *The Piano Concertos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 69.

¹²² Dante HPC 002.

¹²³ Johannes Brahms, *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, 'Op. 35', ed. Eusebius Mandyczewski (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926).

Pearl GEMS 0102.

¹²⁴ Chopin, *Grande Polonaise*, 'Op. 22', ed. Mikuli.
Urania URN 22.229

fashion.¹²⁵ Nicholas Cook refers to this structural approach as "tempo gradients".¹²⁶

Tempo change is considered "rhetorical" rather than "structural" when "smooth, highly controlled tempo profile is punctuated by a few individual features".¹²⁷ One of such features in playing toccata-like and perpetuum-mobile-like music is the momentary *ritenuto* or *meno mosso* (added by the performer rather than marked by the composer), which exists in even the most "serious" performances of the most "serious" compositions, contrary to the orthodoxy that "nothing explicitly stated in a score should be omitted, and nothing which is not stated can be added".¹²⁸ An example is Backhaus, an "extremely serious artist",¹²⁹ who, when playing the continuous semiquavers from b. 132 to b. 145 of the first movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 32* (where the only tempo instruction is *Tempo I* referring to the previous *Allegro con brio ed appassionato*), adds a *meno mosso* at bb. 135—137.¹³⁰

In Liszt's *La Campanella* (where the time signature is 6/8), Hofmann adds *ritenuto* or *meno mosso* at b. 13 from the fourth quaver beat to the sixth quaver beat, at b. 83 from the fourth to the sixth quaver beat, and at b. 86 in its entirety.¹³¹ At b. 377 of Liszt's *Tarantella*, where the composer indicates a slight change in sound and mood from the previous *rinforzando e fuocosso molto* to *strepitoso*, Hofmann adds a *ritenuto* and then accelerates towards the *Prestissimo* at b.385.¹³² In Chopin's *Impromptu No. 1*, b. 23 is marked *forte* after two bars of *crescendo*, and a *poco ritenuto* marking appears at the third and fourth beats of b. 24: instead of following the *poco ritenuto* at b. 24, Hofmann

¹²⁵ *Michelangeli: All Chopin Recital, Torino, 1962*. Music and Arts CD-924 (1996).

¹²⁶ Cook, *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*, 105-125.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Gregor Benko, Liner notes for *The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 6*. Marston 52014 (1998).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Beethoven, *Piano Sonata, 'Op. III'*, Beethovens Werke, series 16.

Wilhelm Backhaus: Live Recordings From Carnegie Hall. Profil 10006 (2010).

¹³¹ Liszt, *Grandes études de Paganini, 'S. 141'*, ed. Sauer VAIA 1047.

¹³² Liszt, *Années de pèlerinage II, Supplément, 'S. 162'*, ed. Sauer. VAIA 1036.

moves the *poco ritenuto* to the first and second beats of b. 23 to signify the arrival of the *forte*; and he does the same at bb. 105—106, where the notes, dynamic makings, and tempo marking are identical to bb. 23—24.¹³³ Hofmann's approach here is hardly idiosyncratic: another Chopin specialist Alfred Cortot also moves the *poco ritenuto* from b. 24 to b. 23 and from b. 106 to b. 105.¹³⁴

Hofmann is far from predictable when it comes to adding climactic *ritenuto* after crescendo. In Rachmaninov's *Prelude, Op. 3 No. 2*, an *fff* marking appears at the third beat of b. 35 after a series of crescendi: although it is rather common to treat the triplet at the third beat as agogics as if there were a *poco ritenuto* marking (e.g., Kapell),¹³⁵ Hofmann opts for a strict tempo without agogic.¹³⁶

¹³³ Chopin, *Impromptu*, 'Op. 29', ed. Mikuli.
VAIA 1036.

¹³⁴ Cortot: *Chopin Oeuvres pour Piano*. EMI CZS 7 67359 2 (1991).

¹³⁵ Sergei Rachmaninov, *Morceaux de fantaisie*, 'Op. 3'. First edition (Moscow: Gutheil, 1910).
William Kapell: Rachmaninov. Naxos Historical 8.110692 (2002).

¹³⁶ VAIA 1036.

Chapter IV: Voicing

A trademark of Hofmann's pianism is the unexpected voices he brings out from homophonic textures, both sporadically and creatively. His pupil Shura Cherkassky recalled that Hofmann "had this craze for what he called 'inner voices' and for the left hand".¹³⁷ For Artur Rubinstein, the impression was that Hofmann "liked to bring out accompanying voices which you never heard in the performances of others".¹³⁸ As Arrau correctly pointed out, however, such voices were not necessarily Hofmann's discoveries "as if nobody had ever noticed them before".¹³⁹ The search for inner melodies within textures is a Romantic tradition;¹⁴⁰ certain hidden voices within certain pieces have no doubt long been discovered and shared before Hofmann.

In Chopin's *Valse, Op. 64, No. 2*, for example, the music from bb. 33—48 is repeated five times after its first appearance throughout the piece: bb. 49—64, bb. 97—112, bb. 113—128, bb. 161—176, and bb. 177—192.¹⁴¹ When playing bb. 50—54 at the first repetition, Hofmann brings out the lowest note of the right hand in each bar, foreshadowing the inner voice he fully reveals in the subsequent repetitions: from the second repetition onwards, he brings out $g\sharp' - f\sharp' - e' - d\sharp' - c\sharp' - g\sharp' - g\sharp' - f\sharp' - e'$ and make it most salient at the fifth repetition.¹⁴² The idea of bringing out the inner voice at one or more of the repetitions in the Valse might have already existed in the time of Anton Rubinstein: Zofia Rabcewiczowa, who also studied with Anton Rubinstein, brings out the inner voice at the first, second, and fourth repetitions in her 1932 recording;¹⁴³ Wiatcheslaw Witkowski, also a product of the Russian piano school,

¹³⁷ Anna & John, Gillespie, *Notable Twentieth-century Pianists: A Bio-critical Sourcebook* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995) 150.

¹³⁸ Artur Rubinstein, *My Many Years* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980) 88.

¹³⁹ Joseph Horowitz, *Conversations with Arrau* (New York: Knopf, 1984) 40.

¹⁴⁰ Harold Schonberg, Liner notes of *The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 1*, VAIA 1002 (1992).

¹⁴¹ Chopin, *Valses*, ed. Mikuli.

¹⁴² VAIA 1036 (1994).

¹⁴³ *Golden age of Polish pianists*, Polskie Nagrania PNCD 300 (1995).

brings out the voice at the second and fourth repetitions in his 1944 recording;¹⁴⁴ and another Russian pianist Mischa Levitzki does it at the fourth repetition in his 1935 recording.¹⁴⁵ In bb. 227—230 of Chopin's *Ballade No. 4*, the two against three polyrhythm is grouped into sextuplets for the left hand against effectively nonuplets for the right hand: in his 1938 recording, Hofmann groups each sextuplet into two triplets at bb. 229—230 and stresses the first note of each triplet which forms an F minor major seventh arpeggio.¹⁴⁶ Hofmann may or may not be accredited with the discovery of the underlying voice, but the pianists one generation later who also highlighted the voice might very well learned the idea from him: Cherkassky, who admits that he "believed in Hofmann like a god",¹⁴⁷ mirrors Hofmann's approach in his 1953 recording;¹⁴⁸ Horowitz, who admits that Hofmann "was my first influence",¹⁴⁹ takes Hofmann's approach further in his 1949 recording as he brings out the F—Ab—c—e at b. 228 in addition to the F—Ab—c—e—f—ab—c'—e' at bb. 229—230.¹⁵⁰ In his 1937 recording of Chopin's *Ballade No. 1*, Hofmann uses the sostenuto pedal to hold the G' from b. 250 until the tonic chord on the third beat of b. 252, and the minor tenth on G' from b. 254 until the third beat of b. 256, thus adding a resonant layer to the torrential scales in b. 251 and b. 255.¹⁵¹ There is not enough evidence to conclude whether Hofmann originated this idea or adopted it from earlier pianists; nonetheless, the idea lived on to the next generation: Barere uses the sostenuto pedal similarly at the aforementioned bars in his 1947 recording.¹⁵²

A function of bringing out hidden voices is to make "slight variation(s) of identical

¹⁴⁴ *Svenska Pianister Före 1950*, Collector's Classics 21681 (2011).

¹⁴⁵ *Mischa Levitzki: Complete Recordings Vol. 3*. Naxos Historical 8.110774 (2004).

¹⁴⁶ Marston 52014.

¹⁴⁷ Gillespie, *Notable Twentieth-century Pianists: A Bio-critical Sourcebook*, 150.

¹⁴⁸ *Piano Masterworks: Shura Cherkassky, 1953*. Jube-NML1276 (2013).

¹⁴⁹ Dubal, *Evenings with Horowitz: A Personal Portrait*, 7.

¹⁵⁰ Naxos Historical 8.111282.

¹⁵¹ Urania URN 22.229.

¹⁵² *Simon Barere: Live Recordings at Carnegie Hall, Vol. 3*. APR 5623 (2002).

musical material that is heard several times", and Hofmann "raises this interpretive device to an incredibly imaginative and personalised level of artistry".¹⁵³ In the first movement of Schumann's *Kreisleriana*, the material from bb. 1—4 is heard five times: at the third time and fifth time, Hofmann brings out the last triplet semiquaver of the offbeat and the first triplet semiquaver of the onbeat, then the last triplet semiquaver of the onbeat and the first triplet semiquaver of the offbeat, and so forth.¹⁵⁴ In the first movement of Chopin's *First Concerto*, the material from bb. 179—184 is transposed in bb. 187—192; bb. 179—184 and bb. 187—192 are repeated in bb. 534—539 and bb. 542—547: Hofmann brings out the notes for the left hand on the second and third beats of each bar at bb. 534—539 and bb. 189—192 to make them be at variance with bb. 179—184 and bb. 542—547.¹⁵⁵ In Chopin's *Impromptu No. 1*, at bb. 90—93, which are a repetition of bb. 8—11, Hofmann brings out the notes with different-pointing stems for the left hand; at bb. 110—112, which are a repetition of bb. 28—30, he brings out the second note of each triplet for the left hand.¹⁵⁶

Hofmann does bring out the inner voice in both the first appearance of a musical material and its repetition or transposition. For instance, in the first movement of Chopin's *Piano Sonata No. 3*, the material from bb. 35—37 in the exposition is transposed in bb. 143—145 in the recapitulation: Hofmann brings out the $\text{bb}—\text{a}—\text{bb}—\text{a}—\text{bb}—\text{a}$ in the exposition and the corresponding $\text{g}—\text{f}\sharp—\text{g}—\text{f}\sharp—\text{g}—\text{f}\sharp$ in the recapitulation.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Joseph Banowetz, *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 87.

¹⁵⁴ Robert Schumann, *Kreisleriana*, 'Op. 16', Robert Schumanns Werke, Serie 7, ed. Clara Schumann (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1885).
Marston 52014.

¹⁵⁵ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.
Dante HPC 002.

¹⁵⁶ Chopin, *Impromptu*, 'Op. 29', ed. Mikuli.
VAIA 1036.

¹⁵⁷ Chopin, *Sonata*, 'Op. 58', ed. Mikuli.
VAIA 1047.

Sometimes Hofmann's different voicings in one passage can be heard when a piece is recorded more than one time. For example, in his 1937 recording of Chopin's *Berceuse*, where the time signature is 6/8, at b. 61—66, he stresses the dominant *ab* for the left hand on the second quaver beat and fourth quaver beat of each bar; at b. 67, he stresses the *ab* on the second beat, but not at the fourth beat.¹⁵⁸ In his 1918 recording, he does not lay emphasis on the repeated *ab*, neither does he in his 1938 recording; instead, the emphasis shifts to the notes with different-pointing stems at bb. 64—67: *bb'—ab'—bb'—ab'—gb'—f—f—eb—db*.¹⁵⁹ In his 1937 recording of Chopin's *Nocturne, Op. 15, No. 2*, he bring out the *c#—b—a#—d#—b#—c#—b—a#—a#—g#—d#—c#—b* for the left hand at bb. 55—57;¹⁶⁰ this inner voice is not brought out in his 1923 or 1943 recordings.¹⁶¹

In the idiomatic writings of some post-Romantic composers such as Leopold Godowsky and Rachmaninov, certain inner voices are intended to be highlighted as main melodies or co-melodies. This idiom is a further development of the "three hand effect" in the writings of Romantic composers such as Thalberg and Liszt.¹⁶² An example in Hofmann's recorded works is Godowsky's arrangement of Schubert's *Moment musical*: Hofmann's performance displays a kaleidoscope of inner melodic flourishings.¹⁶³ Another example is the middle section of Rachmaninov's *Prelude, Op. 23, No. 5*, on which Garrick Ohlsson comments that Hofmann "does the inner-voice

¹⁵⁸ Chopin, *Berceuse*, 'Op. 57', ed. Mikuli.

Urania URN 22.229.

¹⁵⁹ VAIA 1036.

Marston 52004.

¹⁶⁰ Chopin, *Nocturne*, 'Op. 15, No. 2', ed. Mikuli.

Urania URN 22.229.

¹⁶¹ VAIA 1036.

Marston 52004.

¹⁶² Wilhelm von Lenz, *Great virtuosos of our time* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973) 100.

¹⁶³ Leopold Godowsky, *Arrangement of Schubert's Moments musicaux, D.780*. First edition (New York: Carl Fischer, 1922).

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third-hand effect even better than the composer himself".¹⁶⁴

Hofmann sometimes brings the accompanying voice to somewhere between the foreground and the background. In other words, the dynamics are still balanced towards the melody, but the accompaniment sounds less restrained compared to the conventional approach. For example, in the *Rondo* of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, a pattern of the left-hand accompaniment in the refrain is chords and double notes in quavers: compared to Moriz Rosenthal's voicing and Pollini's voicing, Hofmann's accompanying voice sounds "sharper", more "resilient and bouncing", with "strong left-hand thrusts" and "unparalleled joie de vivre".¹⁶⁵

Antithetical to the "right-hand pianists", Hofmann directs the listener's attention to not only the horizontal and melodic elements of music but also the vertical and harmonic.¹⁶⁶ Despite being criticised for being attention-seeking and "irritating" by some,¹⁶⁷ Hofmann's voicing is in tune with the philosophy of Godowsky and Rachmaninov, whose works epitomise the heightened harmonic and polyphonic intensity of post-Romanticism.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Sergei Rachmaninov, *10 Preludes*, 'Op. 23'. First edition (Moscow: Gutheil, 1910).

Elyse Mach, *Great Contemporary Pianists Speak for Themselves* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991) 187.

VAIA 1036.

¹⁶⁵ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.

Moriz Rosenthal: *The Complete Recordings, 1928-1942*. APR7503 (2016).

DG 471350.

Dante HPC 002.

Harold Schonberg, Liner notes for *The Complete Josef Hofmann, Vol. 1*, VAIA 1002 (1992).

¹⁶⁶ Schonberg, Liner notes for VAIA 1002.

¹⁶⁷ Horowitz, *Conversations with Arrau*, 40.

Rubinstein, *My Many Years*, 88.

¹⁶⁸ Schonberg, Liner notes for VAIA 1002.

Chapter V: Phrasing & Shaping

Artur Rubinstein noticed that a "chief interest" of Hofmann's was a "slowly prepared crescendo ending in a volcanic outburst at the climax".¹⁶⁹ Hofmann's interest is similar to Rachmaninov's fixation with the culminating point or moment around which every piece or movement is shaped.¹⁷⁰ Although conceptually there can be a singular climax within a work to which all the other dynamic and emotive surges are subordinate, in a spontaneous virtuosic performance, there can be a few competing climaxes in terms of explosiveness or tension within a piece, a movement, or even a section. For example, in the third movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 2*, conceptually the most plausible architectonic climax is the *fff* after the *crescendo* from b. 469 to b. 484.¹⁷¹ But in Hofmann's performance, there is a competing climax: bb. 284—285 after the build-up from b. 261 to b. 283.¹⁷² In the third episode of the *Rondo* of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, the *fortissimo* after the build-up from b. 392 to b. 407 can be conceptualised as the climax of the section.¹⁷³ When externalised, the *con fuoco* passage from b. 380 to b. 388 is effectively a competing climax in Pollini's performance,¹⁷⁴ while in Hofmann's performance, bb. 364—368 become a competing climax.¹⁷⁵

Sometimes Hofmann deliberately shapes a phrase in an anticlimactic fashion. For instance, in the second movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, the *sforzando* on the downbeat of b. 45 is commonly and plausibly interpreted as a culmination of the phrase after the *crescendo* and *con forza* in bb. 43—44 (e.g., Sari Biro's interpretation and Pollini's interpretation); however, Hofmann treats the *sforzando* at b. 45 as *meno forte* relative to the *con forza* at b. 44.¹⁷⁶ After the dynamic surge from the *sotto voce* in b.

¹⁶⁹ Rubinstein, *My Many Years*, 88.

¹⁷⁰ Schonberg, *The Great Pianists*, 368.

¹⁷¹ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 21', ed. Joseffy.

¹⁷² Dante HPC 002.

¹⁷³ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.

¹⁷⁴ DG 471350.

¹⁷⁵ Dante HPC 002.

¹⁷⁶ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.

72 to the *con forza* in b.75, bb. 76—78 marked *crescendo appassionato* are likely the climax or a competing climax of the section, and the dashed line indicates that the *crescendo appassionato* does not end until the third beat of b. 78 (which are realised as such in Sari Biro's recording and Pollini's recording).¹⁷⁷ Unconventionally, Hofmann plays b. 77 *meno forte* relative to the preceding bars.¹⁷⁸

In the first movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 2*, the *con forza*, *crescendo*, and *sempre più stretto* in bb. 145—148 lead to a *fortissimo* on the sixth quaver beat of b. 148: Hofmann plays the *fortissimo* less loud than the preceding notes.¹⁷⁹ In the third movement of Beethoven's *Sonata No. 14*, the ending of the phrase in b. 167 is marked *sforzando* — given the *forte* that precedes it, the *sforzando* is commonly interpreted as *più forte* (e.g., Horowitz, Gilels);¹⁸⁰ but in Hofmann's realisation, the a" for the right hand is *meno forte* and the chord (f#, a, b#, d#) for the left hand is hardly audible.¹⁸¹ In the first movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, bb. 449—452 and bb. 453—456 are two segments of a sequence: despite the *crescendo* marking in each segment, Hofmann shapes each into one *decrecendo*.¹⁸² Given that the dynamic marking of each segment is traditionally realised as either *crescendo* (e.g., Gilels) or *sempre forte* (e.g., Pollini),¹⁸³ Hofmann's *decrecendo* is indeed contrary to expectations.

When phrasing involves a few shorter notes leading to a longer note, Hofmann sometimes slightly shortens the last note before the longer note, so the longer note

Cambria 1174.

DG 471350.

Dante HPC 002.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Beethoven, *Sonata*, 'Op. 27, No. 2', Beethovens Werke, series 16.

RCA 754605.

Melodiya MELCD1000790.

¹⁸¹ Marston 52014.

¹⁸² Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.

Dante HPC 002.

¹⁸³ Archipel 0547.

DG 471350.

arrives a fraction earlier than expected — and it is worth noting that in such instances, he does not prolong the penultimate shorter note like a dotted note. For instance, in Chopin's *Nocturne, Op. 48, No. 1*, the semiquavers on the last two beat of b. 20 lead to the crotchet on the downbeat of b. 21: in Hofmann's recording, the downbeat of b. 21 arrives a fraction earlier than expected as he slightly shortens the last semiquaver (eb") of b. 20.¹⁸⁴ In Chopin's *Ballade No. 4* (where the time signature is 6/8), the four semiquavers on the second quaver beat and the third quaver beat of b. 47 lead to a dotted quaver, and the pattern is repeated in b. 49: Hofmann compresses the space between the last semiquaver and the following dotted quaver in b. 47 and in b. 49.¹⁸⁵

When phrasing involves mordents, it is hard to predict whether Hofmann will start a mordent off the beat or on the beat, even though statistically, "anticipation" (off the beat) is more likely.¹⁸⁶ In bb. 138—139 of the first movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 2*, there are two mordents for the right hand, one at the beginning of b. 138 where the value of the principal note is a septuplet quaver, and another at the beginning of b. 139 where the value of the principal note is a semiquaver; in the recapitulation, the two mordents in bb. 287—289 are identical to the ones in bb. 138—139: at b. 138, Hofmann starts the mordents on the beat, while at b. 139, he starts off the beat. At bb. 287—289, he starts both mordents on the beat.¹⁸⁷

There are instances where Hofmann accentuates the offbeats when they are not supposed to be accentuated and instances where he accentuates the onbeats when the offbeats are expected to be accentuated. In bb. 9—11 of the first movement of

¹⁸⁴ Frédéric Chopin, *Nocturne, 'Op. 48, No. 1'*, Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 4, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1894).

Urania URN 22.229.

¹⁸⁵ Chopin, *Ballade, 'Op. 52'*, ed. Mikuli.

Marston 52014.

¹⁸⁶ Holcman, *Pianists On and Off the Record*, 202.

¹⁸⁷ Chopin, *Concerto, 'Op. 21'*, ed. Joseffy.

Dante HPC 002.

Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 21*, the only marked accent is on the second beat of bb. 11: but in addition to the marked accent, Hofmann accentuates the fourth beat of b. 9, the second beat and the fourth beat of b. 10.¹⁸⁸ When repeated (bb. 3—85 are repeated in accordance with the repeat signs), his accents on the aforementioned beats are even more pronounced.¹⁸⁹ In the first movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 2*, on the fourth beat of b. 294, the second beat and the fourth beat of b. 295, and the second beat of b. 296, Hofmann accentuates the notes played by the left hand and shapes them into an inner melodic line.¹⁹⁰ In the third movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, there are eight syncopated two-note slurs for both hands in bb. 206—208 and in bb. 450—452, where both hands are to drop on the offbeats with accentuation and to lift on the onbeats without accentuation (treating the 2/4 time signature as de facto 4/8): Hofmann rids the slurs of syncopation as he accentuates the onbeats instead of the offbeats.¹⁹¹ Similarly, at bb. 21—25, bb. 154—160, and bb. 281—285 of Weber's *Perpetuum Mobile*, Hofmann disregards the syncopated slurs and accentuates the onbeats.¹⁹²

Hofmann's emphasis and de-emphasis of pivotal sforzandi are unpredictable. For instance, in bb. 284—286 of the first movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, the first beat of each bar is marked *sforzando* with an ascending double-notes acciaccatura for the right hand and a descending double-notes acciaccatura for the left hand, after the figuration in semiquavers marked *crescendo*; the same pattern reappears in bb. 302—302: Hofmann's accentuation of the notes marked *sforzando* at bb. 302—302 is minimal.¹⁹³ And his sforzandi at bb. 284—286, although more accentuated than the

¹⁸⁸ Beethoven, *Piano Sonata*, 'Op. 53', Beethovens Werke, series 16. Marston 52014.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 21', ed. Joseffy. Dante HPC 002.

¹⁹¹ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy. Dante HPC 002.

¹⁹² Carl Maria von Weber, *Perpetuum mobile*, 'Op. 24', ed. Franz Liszt (New York: Edward Schuberth & Co., 1892).

Marston 52004.

¹⁹³ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy. Dante HPC 002.

ones at bb. 302—302, are still less pronounced than many other realisations (e.g., Pollini, Gilels).¹⁹⁴ In the development section of the first movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 2*, the downbeats of b. 227, b. 231, b. 233, b. 235, b. 237, and b. 239 are marked *sforzando*: one approach is to play every next sforzando louder than the previous one, thus shaping the six sforzandi into one crescendo (e.g., Vladimir Ashkenazy's 1955 recording).¹⁹⁵ Such an approach is structurally coherent, but in order to leave room for the fourth, fifth, and sixth downbeats to get louder and louder, the first few downbeats are hardly sforzandi. Hofmann's approach is an emphatic sforzando at the first downbeat, poco decrescendo for the second downbeat and third downbeat, then crescendo from the fourth downbeat to the sixth downbeat.¹⁹⁶

Hofmann has been criticised for "frightening the audience by using the violent contrast of a pianissimo followed by a sudden fortissimo smash".¹⁹⁷ An instance of such a contrast is in bb. 203—211 of Chopin's *Ballade No. 4*, where bb. 203—210 are marked *pp* and b. 211 is marked *f*: Hofmann smashes the F' for the left hand and the ab for the right hand together at the beginning of b. 211 as if they were marked *sf*.¹⁹⁸ Another instance is in bb. 169—174 of the first movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 21*, where bb. 169—173 are marked *pp* and the first beat of b. 211 is marked *f*: in Hofmann's recording, the contrast between the *pp* and the *f* is indeed violent.¹⁹⁹

Hofmann sometimes eschews the sudden frightening dynamic change in spite of authentic markings for such a contrast. For example, in the second movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 18*, the upbeat and downbeat of bb. 34—35 are marked

¹⁹⁴ DG 471350.

Archipel 0547.

¹⁹⁵ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 21', ed. Joseffy.

The Young Ashkenazy, Vol. 1: Chopin. Testament 1045 (2006).

¹⁹⁶ Dante HPC 002.

¹⁹⁷ Rubinstein, *My Many Years*, 88.

¹⁹⁸ Chopin, *Ballade*, 'Op. 52', ed. Mikuli.

Marston 52014.

¹⁹⁹ Beethoven, *Piano Sonata*, 'Op. 53', Beethovens Werke, series 16.

Marston 52014.

fortissimo after seven bars of *pianissimo*, and the downbeat of b. 39 is marked *fortissimo* after four bars of *piano*; the same pattern of dynamic marking reappears in bb. 133—144: Hofmann's realisation thereof has been criticised for lacking *sforzato*.²⁰⁰ In the third movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 14*, a recurrent pattern is the *sf* chords and octaves after the *p* figuration: the dynamic contrast in Hofmann's realisation is quite moderate compared to the more drastic ones (e.g., Gilels).²⁰¹ In Chopin's *Scherzo No. 1*, b. 385 is marked *fortissimo* after the *pianissimo* from b. 369 to b. 384: compared to the pianists who takes the *ff* to extremes (e.g., Kapell), Hofmann's realisation is rather restrained.²⁰² Hofmann also adds crescendo between closely situated *p* and *f* markings. In the first movement of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 5*, there is no crescendo marking between the *p* in b. 9 and the *f* in b. 11: the conventional approach is to play b. 10 without crescendo, and b. 11 as subito forte (e.g., Walter Gieseking, Pollini)²⁰³. In contrast, Hofmann plays b. 10 with crescendo to avoid a sudden and frightening dynamic change.²⁰⁴ In the first movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 2*, b. 149 is marked *con duolo* and *p* and b. 151 *risoluto* and *f* with no crescendo marking in between: Hofmann again adds a crescendo between the *p* and the *f*.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Beethoven, *Piano Sonata*, 'Op. 31, No. 3', Beethovens Werke, series 16.

Bruno Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) 328.

VAIA 1047.

²⁰¹ Beethoven, *Piano Sonata*, 'Op. 27, No. 2', Beethovens Werke, series 16.

Marston 52014.

Melodiya MELCD1000790.

²⁰² Frédéric Chopin, *Scherzo*, 'Op. 20', Complete Works for the Piano, vol. 6, ed. Carl Mikuli (New York: Schirmer, 1895).

William Kapell Rediscovered: The Australian Broadcasts. Sony 68560 (2008).

VAIA 1047.

²⁰³ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Piano Concerto*, 'Op. 73', Ludwig van Beethovens Werke, series 9 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1862).

Walter Gieseking: Concerto Recordings, Vol. 3. Naxos Historical 8.111112 (2006).

The Young Pollini. Archipel 0493 (2010).

²⁰⁴ Archipel 0012.

²⁰⁵ Frédéric Chopin, *Piano Concerto*, 'Op. 21', National Edition of the Works of Chopin, series A, volume 15, ed. Jan Ekier (Warsaw: PWM, 2005).

Dante HPC 002.

Hofmann's realisations of sequential crescendo and decrescendo are also marked by individuality rather than conventionality. In the third movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, the sequence in bb. 472—478 consists of three segments — in addition to the *sempre crescendo* marking with a dashed line from b. 472 to b. 475, each segment has an elongated crescendo mark for the left-hand ascending scale: the conventional approach is to play each segment from *meno forte* to *più forte* and the whole sequence from *meno forte* to *più forte* (e.g., Gilels, Pollini).²⁰⁶ In Hofmann's realisation, the left-hand scale of the first segment is played like a *rinforzando*, and the left-hand scales of the second and the third segments, albeit emphatic, are not *più forte* in relation to that of the first segment.²⁰⁷

In the third movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 2*, bb. 213—218 consist of a sequence made up of three two-bar-long segments, each having a decrescendo mark from the second beat of the first bar (of the segment) to the second beat of the next bar: Hofmann accentuates the triplet for the right hand and the chord for the left hand on the second beat of the first bar of each segment in a scintillating manner, which is quite different to other realisations (e.g., Ashkenazy, Witold Malcuzyński).²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.
Archipel 0547.
DG 471350.

²⁰⁷ Dante HPC 002.

²⁰⁸ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 21', ed. Joseffy.
Testament 1045.

Malcuzyński with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Kletzki - 1946-1949. GHCD 2323 (2007).

Chapter VI: Modification of Score

There are a variety of alterations Hofmann makes to the scores he performs. He adds repeated notes to the music in several ways. One method is playing a written note twice, like an acciaccatura with a principal note. For example, at b. 58 of Chopin's *Ballade No. 4*, Hofmann plays an ab' like an acciaccatura before playing the written ab' on the second semiquaver beat;²⁰⁹ and at b. 20 of Chopin's *Nocturne, Op. 48, No. 1*, he plays an octave (D, d) like an acciaccatura before playing the written octave (D, d) on the third beat.²¹⁰ Another method is repeating a written note once before playing the next written note. For example, in the first movement of Chopin's *Sonata No. 3*, Hofmann adds an $f\sharp'$ between the written semiquaver $f\sharp'$ and the next written semiquaver $g\sharp''$ on the fifth semiquaver beat of b. 70; and at b. 178, he adds a $d\sharp'$ between the written semiquaver $d\sharp'$ and the next semiquaver $e\sharp''$.²¹¹

Every so often Hofmann repeats written repeated notes many more times than notated. For example, in b. 76 of the second movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 2*, according to the notation, after the crotchet ab'' on the second beat and the tied sextuplet semiquaver ab'' , ab'' is to be repeated five times within the third beat and one more time off the fourth beat; Hofmann repeats ab'' six times on the second beat in addition to the repetition of ab'' on the third beat and off the fourth beat.²¹² And in bb. 326-327 of the third movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, b''' is to be repeated eight times in a sequence of two semiquavers, one quaver, two semiquavers, one quaver, and two

²⁰⁹ Chopin, *Ballade*, 'Op. 52', ed. Mikuli.
Marston 52014.

²¹⁰ Chopin, *Nocturne*, 'Op. 48, No. 1', ed. Mikuli.
Marston 52014.

²¹¹ Chopin, *Sonata*, 'Op. 58', ed. Mikuli.
VAIA 1047.

²¹² Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 21', ed. Joseffy.
Dante HPC 002.

semiquavers; Hofmann repeats b^{'''} ten times in sequence of ten straight semiquavers.²¹³ Then, in b. 137 of Liszt's *La Campanella*, the chord (d^{#''}, g^{#''}, d^{#'''}) is to be repeated five times in a sequence of five quavers; Hofmann repeats the chord fourteen times in an ad libitum manner with accelerando and decelerando.²¹⁴

Hofmann sometimes changes single notes into octaves in a con bravura manner. At b. 129 of Chopin's *Scherzo No. 1*, for example, Hofmann adds a B' to the written B to make the *fz* on the downbeat more emphatic.²¹⁵ And in bb. 313—316 of Weber's *Perpetuum mobile*, the scale for each hand is made up of single notes and to be played in parallel motion,²¹⁶ but Hofmann changes it into blind octave — a technique also referred to as *martellato*, "in which the two hands alternate playing octaves in such a way that the thumbs of the two hands combine to produce a scale, trill, arpeggio, etc., alternating notes of which are doubled at the octave above or below".²¹⁷

Historical recordings show that in olden days, virtuosi did change figurations made up of single notes for both hands in parallel octaves into blind octaves on occasion. One example is the figuration in bb. 496—511 of the third movement of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1* being turned into blind octaves in Rosenthal's recording.²¹⁸ Another example is Kapell's turning the figuration in bb. 609—617 of Chopin's *Scherzo No. 1* into blind octaves.²¹⁹

²¹³ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.
Dante HPC 002.

²¹⁴ Liszt, *Grandes études de Paganini*, 'S. 141', ed. Sauer.
VAIA 1047.

²¹⁵ Chopin, *Scherzo*, 'Op. 20', ed. Mikuli.
VAIA 1047.

²¹⁶ Weber, *Perpetuum mobile*, 'Op. 24', ed. Liszt.

²¹⁷ Marston 52004.

'Blind octaves', in *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Harvard University Press,
ed. D. M. Randel (2003)

<http://helicon.vuw.ac.nz/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/harvdictmusic/blind_octaves/0?institutionId=5378> (21 March 2019).

²¹⁸ APR7503.

²¹⁹ Sony 68560.

Hofmann adds ornaments to written notes every now and then. For instance, in his recording of Chopin's *Concerto No. 1*, at b. 118 of the second movement, Hofmann adds a mordent to the first triplet semiquaver of the third beat; at b. 598 of the first movement, he adds a turn to the quaver on the first beat.²²⁰

²²⁰ Chopin, *Concerto*, 'Op. 11', ed. Joseffy.
Dante HPC 002.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

Notation and additional instructions such as tempo, dynamics, and articulation are "inevitably inexact and lifeless", which "can never delineate every aspect of music adequately, leaving its fate substantially at the mercy of the performer's talent and understanding".²²¹ It is difficult to determine all the musical reasons behind Hofmann's pianistic approaches. Some reasons for certain approaches seem more obvious than others. For example, the added octaves and blind octaves are apparently "performances of places where tradition" and "artistic intuition" call for thunder and pyrotechnics;²²² the reasons for the slightly earlier arrival of a longer note after a few shorter notes and for the anticlimactic decrescendo are less clear: perhaps efforts to emulate certain features of vocal technique such as portamento and falsetto, thus infusing a sense of lyricism.

In Rachmaninov's estimation, Hofmann is the greatest pianist of his time, a bygone era known as the golden age of piano playing.²²³ Fortunately enough, there is a fairly extensive collection of Hofmann's studio and live recordings available for detailed study of his pianism, which inspires emulation from aspiring practitioners. One emulable aspect of Hofmann's treatment of the notation is to bring out inner voices "momentarily to produce textural effect";²²⁴ besides, when practising a piece (given the repetitive nature of practice), to pay attention to and lay emphasis on different voices of a certain passage in different sessions can make the practice less repetitive. Another emulable aspect is to occasionally play an emphatic bass note or octave or chord in a register one octave lower than written to achieve greater sonority, with a caveat that

²²¹ Kenneth Hamilton, *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 234.

²²² Kogan, *Busoni as Pianist*, 41.

Schonberg, *The Great Pianists*, 357.

²²³ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (England: Scholar Press, 1990) 379.

Schonberg, 'Josef Hofmann: Pianist sans peur et sans reproche', *Piano & Keyboard*.

²²⁴ Horowitz, *Conversations with Arrau*, 40.

such play should be reserved for certain climactic or *tutta forza* moments. In terms of tempo fluctuation, Hofmann is able to walk a fine line between *misurato* and metronomic, and to strike a balance between *rubato* and *ritmico*; when playing the *toccata*-like and *perpetuum-mobile*-like passages, his elastic control of tempo sounds as effortless as his elastic control when playing the *cantilenas* and the slow movements. Dynamic gradation is key to phrasal shaping and structural projection; Hofmann produces explosive climaxes through extraordinary dynamic surges and unpredictable anticlimaxes through unexpected decreases of volume. With regard to articulation, *jeu perlé* is the crown jewel of Hofmann's fingerwork. His impeccable *fioriture*, trills, repeated notes, and other figurations are predicated on "incredible suppleness of fingers, hands, and wrists, the most efficient movements possible, and a piano in faultless regulation".²²⁵

Some aspects discussed in the exegesis have been more general (e.g., *jeu perlé*) and can be thought of as positive attributes to inject more and more into my playing. But other aspects (e.g., individualistic voicing and phrasing) are much more specific, and there is thus a risk that merely mimicking these aspects will be counterproductive. This is because I would not have gone through the complex self-analytical process of discovering what works best for my pianistic faculties and musical personality. And going through that process ensures a deeper familiarity with the music. However, practising a phrase in a variety of ways, including those ways that Hofmann might have played the phrase, can be conducive: it broadens my palette of tools and makes me aware of a wider range of possibilities.

On a more personal level, exploring Hofmann's pianism has been an endearing experience. As a nostalgic pianophile myself, the visiting and revisiting of these mono recordings—within which the lost art of the golden age is enshrined—is a pilgrimage in my pianistic journey.

²²⁵ Cooper, Liner notes for VAIA 1020.

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