

Barry Cooper

Beethoven's Pedal Marks Revisited

Beethoven's pedal marks have been the subject of several brief studies in the past, notably by William S. Newman and David Rowland, and more recently by Leonardo Miucci.¹ A more comprehensive study has now been completed by Chi-fang Cheng, who worked with the present writer examining all Beethoven's pedal marks, including those in his songs and folksong settings, which had never previously been considered.² She documented the pedal marks and provided a useful checklist of almost all the works that contain them. However, the ideas offered in the present paper are my own, although she was able to incorporate many of them into her dissertation. Unlike Rowland's study, which concentrated on Beethoven's pedalling practice in performance, the present one concentrates on the pedal marks in the scores themselves (just the damper pedal, not the *una corda* indications), and it addresses a series of questions.

Earliest indications of dampers The first question is, which works contain Beethoven's earliest pedal marks – or rather, indications of removal of dampers? Whereas French and English piano makers had begun building a pedal for damper removal by the 1790s, on Viennese pianos of that date dampers were normally removed by knee levers, and so Beethoven's earliest markings were bound to indicate damper removal rather than actual pedal. There has been considerable confusion in the literature concerning the dates of these markings,³ and the earliest ones appear amongst his sketches rather than his finished compositions. Miucci has found five references in the *Kafka Sketch Miscellany*, which covers the period 1786–1799, as follows:⁴

- 1 William S. Newman: *Beethoven on Beethoven. Playing His Piano Music His Way*, New York 1988, pp. 231–252; David Rowland: *Beethoven's Pianoforte Pedalling*, in: *Performing Beethoven*, ed. by Robin Stowell, Cambridge 1994, pp. 49–69; Leonardo Miucci: *Beethoven's Pianoforte Damper Pedalling. A Case of Double Notational Style*, in: *Early Music* 47 (2019), pp. 371–392.
- 2 Chi-fang Cheng: *Beethoven's Pedal Markings*, PhD dissertation, University of Manchester 2020.
- 3 Tilman Skowronek, for example, suggests that Beethoven's first pedal markings, other than sketches, appeared in his first two piano concertos in versions from 1795 and in his Piano Sonata Op. 26, which dates from 1801. See his *Beethoven the Pianist*, Gothenburg 2007, p. 332. The dates he gives for the concerto manuscripts derive from Newman: *Beethoven on Beethoven*, p. 233.
- 4 Miucci: *Damper Pedalling*, pp. 377–381; see also Ludwig van Beethoven. *Autograph Miscellany* from circa 1786 to 1799, ed. by Joseph Kerman, London 1970, where the sketches were first transcribed.

- fol. 96 r (circa 1792) “mit dem Knie” (among harmonisations for The Lamentations of Jeremiah)
- fol. 51 v (1793) “mit register” (part of an abandoned work in E major)
- fol. 72 v (late 1795) “ohne Dämpfung” (among cadenza sketches for the first movement of the First Piano Concerto)
- fol. 138 v (late 1795) “Dämpfung” (among sketches for a second-movement cadenza for the same work)
- fol. 82 r (mid-1796) “mit dem Knieschieber” (in a preliminary idea for “God Save the King” Variations, WoO 78)

The earliest case, which is also cited by Newman and Rowland, indicates “with the knee”, reflecting the Viennese practice, which was evidently the same in Bonn, where the sketch was written. The 1796 indication, “with the knee lever”, is similar. The 1793 sketch refers to “register”, which here means the apparatus on the instrument, like the registration for organ stops, as distinct from the actual keys. Since the mark accompanies a low note followed by higher chords, similar to the 1792 texture, it surely refers to the damper mechanism rather than a moderator or other device found on some pianofortes of the time. The other two sketches refer specifically to “dampers”. Although the second one might imply “with dampers”, this would be a pointless indication since it would reflect normal practice, and it must therefore indicate “raised dampers”.

There is also a damper mark, largely overlooked, in the contemporaneous Fischhof Miscellany, on folio 27r, datable to late 1796 or early 1797.⁵ It is a double one: “(ohne dampfung)” appears in bar 1 and “(ohne dam[p]fung)”, with a letter missing, in bar 3 (see Example 1). This is for an unused theme in E \flat major, and as in the earliest two sketches in the Kafka Miscellany the raised dampers serve to sustain a low note under repeated chords. It is self-evident that the dampers must be replaced in bars 2 and 4.

EXAMPLE 1 Sketch with damper marks, 1796/1797 (Fischhof Miscellany, fol. 27r)

5 Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung, Beethoven aut. 28; for dating, see Douglas Johnson: *Beethoven's Early Sketches in the 'Fischhof Miscellany'*. Berlin Autograph 28, Ann Arbor 1980, Vol. 1, p. 171.

Thus all Beethoven's known damper marks of the 1790s are in sketches for works or passages that he never published, and there are none in his finished works, let alone published works, of the 1780s and 1790s. The reason is that there was no standard notation for releasing dampers on keyboard instruments. Just as in the sixteenth century staccato could not be indicated, and in the seventeenth century crescendos were not indicated, in the eighteenth century the precise tempo was not indicated, since there was no *metronome*, and pedal, too, was not marked. In each case it was up to the performer to decide, and no damper markings by any composer are known from before the 1790s. This does not mean that Beethoven never used pedal in any performance in the 1790s, for his sketches show clearly that he did; but the lack of standard notation prevented him indicating where, in any of his scores before 1800. But why 1800?

The first composer to use pedal markings was Daniel Steibelt, in 1793.⁶ During the 1790s he worked in Paris, then London, and in both cities he published several works with pedal marks. A few other composers in both cities then started including pedal marks, using a variety of signs for pedal and pedal-off.⁷ Viennese composers, however, were a little slower in doing so. Steibelt then arrived in Vienna in 1800 and took part in a famous piano duel with Beethoven around May that year, at the house of Count Fries. According to Ferdinand Ries, Beethoven played his *Clarinet Trio* (Op. 11), and Steibelt then played in a quintet of his own and improvised. Ries mentions Steibelt's striking tremolando effects, and although he does not mention pedal, we can be confident that Steibelt used it.⁸ It is significant that Beethoven's first damper indication in a score appeared so soon after this meeting. Whatever Beethoven thought of Steibelt's music, he used a tremolando effect in the slow movement of his next piano sonata (Op. 26), as has often been noted; and he also began using damper marks, again following Steibelt – notably in that tremolando passage. If Steibelt was the immediate cause of Beethoven's adoption of the marks, however, it was evidently another pianistic rival, Joseph Wölfl, who prompted the precise notation Beethoven used. Whereas Steibelt had used a variety of symbols such as crossed circles, Wölfl used “*Senza Sordini*” in the third of his three sonatas Op. 6, which were published in Augsburg in 1798/1799 and were actually dedicated to “M^f. L. VAN BEETHOVEN”, whose name is even more prominent on the title page than Wölfl's own. The two composers had known each other in Vienna, generating much rivalry between their supporters but clearly no animosity between the two of them (in

6 Rowland: *Beethoven's Pianoforte Pedalling*, p. 56.

7 See Cheng: *Beethoven's Pedal Markings*, pp. 49–53.

8 Franz Gerhard Wegeler/Ferdinand Ries: *Remembering Beethoven*, trans. by Frederick Noonan, Arlington 1987, pp. 70 f.; originally published as *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven*, Koblenz 1838, p. 81.

contrast to Beethoven's relationship to Steibelt). The indication appears in the first and third movements of the sonata, and its extent is indicated by a wavy line, as in an 8va sign, rather than being cancelled by "con sordini". Since on many Viennese pianos at that time the damper mechanism was operated by a knee lever rather than a pedal (as on most French and English models), "senza sordini" was a better instruction than "pedal", since there might not be a pedal as such.⁹

Beethoven's first known use of the effect in an autograph score is found even before his Sonata Op. 26 of 1801, in his First Piano Concerto. Although this was composed in 1795, the surviving score dates from 1800. It was apparently written out shortly before his performance of the work at his benefit concert of 2 April 1800, but the piano part was extensively revised later in the year.¹⁰ It was probably at this stage, thus shortly after Beethoven's encounter with Steibelt, that the new damper marks were added.¹¹ Being a string player, Beethoven was familiar with the terms "senza sordino" and "con sordino" in the singular, and therefore used these, unlike Wölfl's more correct "sordini". The concerto was then published in Vienna by Tranquillo Mollo in March 1801. At the same time Mollo published the Piano and Wind Quintet Op. 16, again with "senza sordino" indications. This quintet, like the First Piano Concerto, dates from somewhat earlier (1796), but the autograph is lost. It seems implausible that it contained damper markings at that stage, and they were presumably added for the published version in 1801. Another much earlier work with "senza sordino" markings is the Second Piano Concerto Op. 19. The earliest version of this dates back to Beethoven's Bonn days, but the surviving autograph score dates from 1798. It contains no pedal marks, however, for he always played the piano part from memory and did not write it out until April 1801, when he was badgered to do so by the publisher, Franz Anton Hoffmeister. This separately written piano part contains "senza sordino" markings in both of the first two movements.¹² By late 1802 Beethoven had published several more works with "senza sordino" markings, as follows:

- 9 Rowland (*Beethoven's Pianoforte Pedalling*, p. 55) suggests Johann Baptist Cramer as a possible model for Beethoven, since the two had met in 1799; but the link here seems more tenuous chronologically than Steibelt, and Beethoven had not necessarily seen any of Cramer's pedal marks; moreover Cramer used "ped" rather than "senza sordini".
- 10 See Kurt Dorfmueller/Norbert Gertsch/Julia Ronge: *Ludwig van Beethoven. Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis*, Munich 2014 (hereafter *LVBWV*), Vol. I, p. 78.
- 11 The score is in Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung, Beethoven aut. 12. The damper indications appear in the following places: I.335 s.s.; 353 c.s.; II.91 s.s. [c.s. omitted]; II.6 <s.s. deleted>; II.8 s.s.; III.148 s.s.; 151 c.s.; 483 s.s. [485 c.s. omitted].
- 12 Bonn, Beethoven-Haus, HCB Mh 4.

Op. 24	Violin Sonata in F major (Mollo, October 1801)
Op. 26	Piano Sonata in A \flat major (Cappi, March 1802)
Op. 27/1–2	Piano Sonatas in E \flat major and c \sharp minor (Cappi, March 1802)
Op. 28	Piano Sonata in D major (Bureau d'Arts et d'Industrie, July/August 1802)
WoO 46	"Bei Männern" Variations (Mollo, early (?) 1802) ¹³

Beethoven's earliest known use of an explicit "pedal" indication appears in his Kessler Sketchbook, around June 1802. It is found amongst his early sketches for the Prometheus Variations Op. 35, where "senza s:" appears alongside "pedal", thus confirming the performing intention but showing uncertainty about the best notation.¹⁴ In later sketches and the autograph score, however, Beethoven retained "senza sordino", which also appears in the first edition of August 1803. His hesitancy about the notation was justified: Josephine Deym wrote to her sister Therese Brunsvik in a letter dated 6 April 1802, shortly after publication of the Sonatas Opp. 26 and 27: "Concerning con Sordino I cannot tell you anything yet, as I did not see Beethoven."¹⁵ The implication is that Josephine and Therese had not previously encountered the term in piano music and did not understand it. This was probably true for many other performers at the time.

The first actual pedal mark in a published Beethoven score occurs in his Sonata Op. 31 No. 2, which was issued by Hans Georg Nägeli in Zurich in April 1803. "Ped." appears several times in the first movement and is cancelled by a large "O". Unfortunately the autograph score does not survive, and so it is uncertain whether this was Nägeli's modification of Beethoven's original "senza sordino" or was Beethoven's own mark. It seems unlikely, however, that Nägeli would make such an alteration – and do so correctly every time – considering how many faults there are in his edition. Thus it was presumably Beethoven's own indication, even though the sonata was largely finished before the Prometheus Variations. The difference in notation between these two works may be due to Beethoven seeing the sonata as directed more towards the French market, in Nägeli's series "Répertoire des clavecinistes", whereas the variations were aimed at the Viennese and German markets. Pedal marks also appear in the first edition of the "Kreutzer" Violin Sonata Op. 47. Again the autograph is lost, but a corrected copy that dates from before 11 December 1803 contains pedal marks, shown as "ped:" and a large "O".¹⁶

¹³ Dates and publishers taken from LVBWV.

¹⁴ Vienna, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, A 34, fol. 84r.

¹⁵ "Wegen con Sordino kann ich dir noch nichts berichten, weil ich Beethoven nicht sah." *Beethoven aus der Sicht seiner Zeitgenossen*, ed. by Klaus Martin Kopitz and Rainer Cadenbach, Munich 2009, Vol. 1, p. 145. All translations by the present author unless otherwise stated.

¹⁶ New York, Juilliard Manuscript Collection, 15 B393s n. 9; for dating, see Ludwig van Beethoven: *Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Sieghard Brandenburg, Munich 1996–1998, Vol. 1, pp. 199–201 (letter 173).



EXAMPLE 2 Sketch with “O”
apparently denoting pedal
(Landsberg 6, p. 119)

Around December that year Beethoven was also working on early ideas for the Waldstein Sonata, which appear in the sketchbook Landsberg 6.¹⁷ On page 119 he tried a theme in 6/8 metre, but placed a large “O” at the start (see Example 2).¹⁸ Since it would not make sense to indicate pedal-off at the start of a work, just as with the “Dämpf[u]ng” sketch of 1795 (see above), Beethoven was evidently confused by the newly evolving notation, and was using “O” erroneously to denote raised dampers. This would be effective at this point, and we must assume that the dampers would be replaced when the $g\sharp$ was struck in bar 2. Apparent confirmation of this interpretation appears two pages later in the sketchbook (page 121), where a similar “O” has been deleted and replaced with “s Sordin”, followed by “c. s.” in the next bar. Thus at this stage Beethoven had still not completely abandoned his earlier damper notation; but by the time he came to sketch the finale of the sonata he had switched to the more modern form, using “ped.,” “pe” or “pedal” on pages 137 (twice) and 139 (three times), though each time omitting the pedal-off sign. When writing the autograph score of the sonata, he consistently used “ped.,” cancelled by “O”, and added a lengthy and oft-quoted explanation on page 1, stating that “ped.” denoted raising of both bass and treble dampers. Thus Beethoven was aware of split pedals, or at least the split damper mechanism, but never marked them to be used.¹⁹ He also showed no interest in other pedals such as lute or bassoon sounds, which he may have regarded as rather gimmicky, and he came to the *una corda* pedal only slowly, marking it mainly in his later works.

One surprisingly late work that uses the older damper notation is his Third Piano Concerto. No damper marks appeared in his early, slightly incomplete draft of 1800, but his late revisions, added to the score in black ink and apparently dating from early 1803,

17 Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska; facsimile and transcription in *Beethoven’s “Eroica” Sketchbook*, ed. by Lewis Lockwood and Alan Gosman, Urbana 2013.

18 The “O” is omitted in the transcription in *Beethoven’s “Eroica” Sketchbook*, Vol. 1, p. 119. The relationship of the sketch to the Waldstein Sonata is elucidated in Barry Cooper: *Beethoven’s Preliminary Sketches for the “Waldstein” Sonata*, in: *Ad Parnassum* 28 (2016), pp. 1–20.

19 The autograph is in Bonn, Beethoven-Haus, Bodmer НСВ Мh 7. A discussion of the various types of split damper mechanism available to Beethoven at the time and how he might have used it in performance is in Skowronek: *Beethoven the Pianist*, pp. 330–336. See also Skowronek’s article in this volume, pp. 345–357.

show a single “con sord” in bar 49 of the second movement. He actually meant “senza sordino” at this point, however, as is confirmed in the original edition of 1804, which contains several other “senza sordino” marks, clearly based on a lost source. This is his last known use of this notation, for thereafter his surviving scores consistently used “ped.” and “O” for damper marks.

Unwritten pedal How often did Beethoven want pedal to be used, even though he did not mark it? Here much reliance has been placed on a remark by Carl Czerny: “Use of the pedal was very common with him, far more than one finds indicated in his works.”²⁰ Many people might interpret this as giving modern pianists carte blanche to add pedal wherever they like. Nevertheless, there must be doubts about this interpretation – for three reasons. Firstly, although Beethoven would have felt entitled to alter his own works in performance, Ferdinand Ries reports that he very rarely added notes or embellishments, and even more rarely did he instruct others to do so.²¹ Thus, even if he added extra pedal himself, this does not necessarily mean he wanted others to do so, especially in places that might be completely inappropriate. Secondly, Czerny studied with Beethoven mainly during 1801–1803. If Beethoven at that time played works published earlier, from a time when he did not write damper marks, he would surely add some pedal in suitable places. This would then leave Czerny with the impression that Beethoven added pedal “far more than one finds indicated”, as he says; but this would not necessarily apply to later works where pedal was specifically marked, even though Czerny might assume that it did. Thirdly, in Beethoven’s later works there is often quite detailed and extensive pedalling. Had he wanted more, he was perfectly capable of inserting it, and would surely have done so. Thus if one wants to play his music as he intended, one should be very wary of adding any more pedal to works where some is marked already.

There is another questionable line of argument. It is sometimes claimed that pianists should add pedal where it seems ‘obvious’, on the grounds that Beethoven marked only the less obvious places. Artur Schnabel claimed that Beethoven’s pedal indications appear only in places where one would not expect them.²² He was perhaps thinking of places such as the recitative passage in the Sonata Op. 31 No. 2. Thus the implication is that Beethoven simply did not need to indicate pedal in places where performers would use it anyway. Miucci has reached a similar conclusion: “Beethoven did not add pedal

20 “Der Gebrauch der Pedale war bey ihm sehr häufig, weit mehr, als man in seinen Werken angezeigt findet.” See *Beethoven aus der Sicht seiner Zeitgenossen*, Vol. 1, p. 232. Czerny made the same point elsewhere too.

21 Wegeler/Ries: *Remembering Beethoven*, p. 94.

22 See Anne-Louise Coldicott: *Performance Styles Since Beethoven’s Day*, in: *The Beethoven Compendium. A Guide to Beethoven’s Life and Music*, ed. by Barry Cooper, London 2006, pp. 298–302, here p. 299.

markings for passages where he expected his players to use the pedal according to convention."²³ There are three problems here. Firstly, conventions were not well established in early 1800s like they are today. Even if some conventions were emerging in Vienna by that time, what about Beethoven's 179 folksong settings, nearly all of which were intended for the British and especially Scottish market? Could Beethoven really expect the young ladies of Edinburgh, playing his folksong settings, to know the pedal conventions found in Vienna, when by all accounts the ladies had scarcely mastered the basics of piano playing? These folksong settings have been completely ignored in previous literature on Beethoven's pedal marks. Yet over a quarter of them have at least one pedal mark;²⁴ and these pedal marks appear only in the same sorts of contexts as those in his other works. There was no extra guidance for the players at elementary level. Secondly, one of the most obvious and conventional places to use pedal is on the final chord of a movement (though not every movement). It can be found in this context at an early stage in the works of other composers such as Jan Ladislav Dussek, Leopold Koželuch and Joseph Wölfl,²⁵ and became quite a common practice. Thus Beethoven should have needed no pedal mark added here, after perhaps the first three or four occasions. Yet this final tonic chord – very often as some kind of broken chord with elaborate decoration – is precisely the most frequent location for his pedal marks, and in several movements it is the only place where he marks pedal (see, for example, the first and last movements of the Sonata Op. 26). By the time of his last four piano sonatas, conventions should have been well established, yet eight of these twelve movements have a pedal mark for the final chord, and the other four are clearly better without one. Why did he bother writing these pedal marks, if he could rely on convention? Thirdly, using information from theorists of the period, such as Johann Peter Milchmeyer and Friedrich Starke, Miucci perceptively identifies five categories that they recommend for performers to add pedal even if not marked.²⁶ If these passages were becoming established as conventional for pedal to be added, as implied by the theorists, Beethoven would not have needed to indicate pedal marks there. Yet he sometimes did, as in the following cases.

The first category is slurred arpeggios across several registers. Beethoven tended to use a pedal mark instead of a slur in long arpeggios, as in the opening of *Für Elise* (fairly short arpeggios), the end of Op. 57 (and near the end of its first movement), and the incredible six-octave arpeggio from "contra E" at the climax of the finale of Op. 101

23 Miucci: *Damper Pedalling*, p. 392.

24 The list in Cheng: *Beethoven's Pedal Markings*, pp. 67–69, is not quite complete, omitting the settings that have no opus or WoO number; altogether 49 of the 179 settings include a pedal mark.

25 See Cheng: *Beethoven's Pedal Markings*, pp. 136–154.

26 Miucci: *Damper Pedalling*, pp. 374–378.

(bars 228–231), which is marked with pedal even in the sketches.²⁷ Occasionally, however, there are slurs and a pedal mark too, as at the end of Variation 4 in the finale of Op. 109 (bar 113b), where both hands have slurs. A long slurred arpeggio occurs at the start of the third variation in the finale of Op. 111, but Beethoven did not mark pedal here and probably did not want it, as it would quickly cause problems of harmony if similar pedalling were used with the following slurs. The second category is broken chords combined with crescendo or diminuendo, with dampers being raised throughout the crescendo but lowered near the end of a diminuendo. Beethoven quite often marks pedal with broken chords, but without removing it at the end of a diminuendo, as in the slow movement of Op. 106 (bars 178–180) and the end of the first movement of Op. 57. The third category, sustaining a slow melody over repeated chords or figuration, is less commonly pedalled by Beethoven, but examples can be found, such as the start of the “Klagender Gesang” in Op. 110 and a passage near the end of Op. 109 (bars 184–187). As in the previous two categories, these passages do not exactly correspond to those of the theorists, which could be the reason why Beethoven felt it necessary to mark the pedal here. The fourth category, reinforcing an accent, is rarely found, though Miucci notes an example in the finale of the *Moonlight Sonata*. The final category involves sustaining a bass note with the pedal when the left hand is otherwise occupied, as in Example 1 above and the first two sketches noted in the *Kafka Miscellany*. Again Beethoven sometimes, but not always, marks pedal in this context, as at the end of “Abwesenheit” in the *Lebewohl Sonata* Op. 81a, bars 49/50 of the first movement of Op. 111, and bars 67–74 of the first movement of Op. 79. This last case is particularly noteworthy, for the previous eight bars have the same texture but with no pedal mark. Beethoven was deliberately contrasting the two sonorities by omitting the pedal in bars 59–66, no doubt hoping that pianists would not blindly follow the instruction books at this point; and just in case one suspects he simply forgot to add pedal, he made the same contrast in bars 83–98. A similar contrast of sonorities, with the low note only sometimes pedalled, occurs in the finale of his *Fifth Piano Concerto*: for example, bars 1/2 are pedalled, 3/4 not pedalled, with different dynamic but similar in texture; and 162–166 pedalled, 167–172 not pedalled, this time with the same dynamic and texture.

Thus, at the very least, the situation is more complex than previously thought. It may be that Beethoven always intended pedal in these contexts, but did not always feel it necessary to reinforce convention (inasmuch as there was one) by writing it in. Alternatively, in works where he included pedal marks in some places, especially his later works, he really did not want pedal used where it was not marked. This seems much more likely,

27 See Barry Cooper: *The Creation of Beethoven's 35 Piano Sonatas*, Abingdon 2017, p. 163; the sketch is in Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Mendelssohn 2, p. 69.

since he was quite meticulous and detailed with his dynamic markings, ornaments, articulation and pedal marks in these works, attempting to leave nothing to chance, and it would have been so easy to add more pedal if he had wanted it. Moreover, Schnabel's suggestion that Beethoven inserted pedal marks "only" where they might seem improbable is clearly untenable. Nevertheless, Schnabel is right to assert that Beethoven's pedal markings must be observed, "because they are an inseparable part of the music as such, and if one does not observe these pedal marks, the music is changed."²⁸ This injunction recalls one in the first edition of Arthur Sullivan's famous song *The Lost Chord* (1877): "N. B. The Pedal marks should be very carefully observed."²⁹ This insistence on careful observation of pedal is made despite some harmonic blur that results between consecutive chords in some sections of the accompaniment. There is no reason to suppose Beethoven was any less concerned than Sullivan about the issue.

Let us now examine a specific case that has already aroused comment previously – the start of the first variation in the Sonata Op. 109 (see Example 3). Rowland has suggested that it is "unlikely" that the passage "should be played without the pedal".³⁰ This makes sense in the first bar; yet in the second and third bars there would be an unavoidable blur in the right-hand notes, which militates against this interpretation. Beethoven did sometimes use pedal across changes of harmony, as in the first movement of the *Moonlight Sonata*, where he indicates pedal throughout, and in the above-mentioned recitative passage in Op. 31 No. 2. This type of blurring was also not unusual with other composers of the period,³¹ and so the blurring that would result in Op. 109 is not an impossible sound. But it is fairly rare in Beethoven, especially in his late works, except if very brief, very high or very soft, and it is not found in contexts similar to this one. He could easily have written "ped." at this point, as he did in several other places in the sonata, but he chose not to. Hence he evidently did not want pedal here. The use of short bass notes, sustained through the bar only in the imagination, has a long history, stretching right back to the style *brisé* of Baroque composers. It is still common in the works of Haydn and Mozart, right through to Rossini and Verdi (as in the famous "La donna è mobile" in *Rigoletto*). Thus this is presumably the effect Beethoven wanted here, rather than with the texture smudged by the pedal, as later editors have suggested. Miucci cites Moscheles's edition of 1858, where the editor freely adds pedal at this point in Op. 109, along with

28 Artur Schnabel: *My Life and Music*, New York 1988, p. 136. See also Coldicott: *Performance Styles*, p. 299.

29 Arthur Sullivan: *The Lost Chord, Song, with Pianoforte & Harmonium (ad. lib.) Accompaniment ...*, London [1877], p. 2.

30 Rowland: *Beethoven's Pianoforte Pedalling*, p. 61.

31 See *ibid.*, pp. 64–67, which refers to this effect "around the turn of the century, in Vienna and elsewhere", and gives examples by Joseph Gelinek, Muzio Clementi and François-Adrien Boieldieu.

molto espressivo

EXAMPLE 3 Sonata
Op. 109, finale,
bars 17–20

EXAMPLE 4 Sonata
Op. 109, finale,
bars 200–203

other changes such as a diminuendo hairpin instead of “cresc.” in the fourth bar of the variation.³² Although, as Miucci observes, Moscheles was well acquainted with Beethoven, he did not hear him play this sonata, since by the time it was written in 1820 Beethoven had ceased performing. Moscheles’s revisions of Beethoven’s text must therefore be regarded as anachronistic.

The last chord of the same sonata is marked with pedal (see Example 4), which had been previously absent in the whole of the final reprise of the original theme (bars 188–203). This use of pedal for a final chord (and any repetitions or respacing of it) is very common in Beethoven’s music, as mentioned earlier, and is a way of emphasising the close, almost like an amen. The pedal notated on this final chord here subtly differentiates it from the chord at the end of the original theme, giving a wonderful extra resonance that greatly heightens the sense of fulfilment at the end of a long and arduous journey. If pedal is added during this reprise variation – for example, to sustain the bass note in bar 200 – the whole effect is lost. Thus the variation, and therefore the original theme that it closely matches, were evidently intended to be without pedal. And if the pedal is not used with the theme, then its absence in Variation 1 no longer leaves the sound seeming uncomfortably dry.

It is worth noting that, where there was pedal on the final chord, Beethoven never indicated a pedal-off at the end of a movement, although some of his contemporaries did. Many modern editions have followed their practice by inserting pedal-off marks at the end of Beethoven’s movements, and not always using editorial brackets. Sometimes they even misplace the pedal-off sign well before the final double bar. A particularly unfortunate case is the end of Variation 32 of the *Diabelli Variations*. Beethoven forgot to

32 Miucci: *Damper Pedalling*, p. 389.

include the pedal-off mark in his autograph score, but he carefully placed it at the start of Variation 33 in the corrected copy for the printer.³³ Diabelli, however, placed it at the end of Variation 32, just before the double bar. This misplaced sign survives in modern editions and is consequently observed incorrectly in many recordings, with an uncomfortable and unauthorised silence between the two variations, where there should be no break in the sound. Modern editions in fact often misplace Beethoven's pedal-off marks at the ends of bars, situating them just before the barline, whereas Beethoven placed them after the barline, whether as *con sordino* or as a large "O". The only exception was when pedal was required at the beginning of the next bar, in which case he placed his pedal-off before the barline – usually one note before it, as in bars 105 and 106 of the finale of Op. 109. Where such a change of pedal is needed for consecutive bars, one might expect syncopated pedalling (where the pedal is lifted as a new chord is struck, then immediately lowered). This syncopated pedalling is normal practice today, and it is quite possible that Beethoven sometimes did this in performance; perhaps he even intended it where the pedal-off is marked before the barline. There is no firm evidence that he did, however, and he never indicated it in his scores, unlike Muzio Clementi.³⁴

Beethoven's pedal and pedal-off marks, like his dynamic marks, are sometimes slightly preplaced in his autographs – for example, between a barline and the first chord of the following bar; but in such cases it is obvious where it is intended to apply. He also sometimes forgot to indicate pedal-off, leaving uncertainty about his intentions. In the second song in *An die ferne Geliebte*, for example, the pedal mark on the opening G major chord is not cancelled, and so it is unclear whether the pedal is to be sustained through the following rest and perhaps the next chord, also G major, before being released on the ensuing D major chord, or whether it is to be released at the start of the rest, creating a pregnant silence. In all other ways, however, his pedal marks are very precisely aligned, even at a specific point in the middle of a rest. This applies, for example, in bars 101 and 105 of the finale of the Waldstein Sonata, where he altered a crotchet rest to two quaver rests, so that he could align the pedal-off mark with the second one. Similarly, in bars 2 and 4 of the first movement of Op. 111 he carefully placed the pedal-off mark on beat 4 in his composing score; unfortunately, in his hastily written fair copy the mark in bar 2 is ambiguously aligned and the one in bar 4 is missing.³⁵ Consequently most later sources and modern editions have misplaced the marks, showing them later in the bar.

33 Both manuscripts are in the Beethoven-Haus, Bonn: NE 294 (autograph) and Bodmer HCB Mh 55 (copy).

34 See Rowland: *Beethoven's Pianoforte Pedalling*, p. 62, which cites a passage from Clementi's *Fantasia* Op. 48.

35 The composing score is in Bonn, Beethoven-Haus, BH 71; the fair copy is in Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung, Artaria 198.

In both passages in these two sonatas, the pedal-off mark appears after a pedalled quaver that is followed by a quaver rest (two quaver rests in the case of the *Waldstein*). It is unclear why Beethoven did not simply write a crotchet, which would sound exactly the same as a quaver plus pedalled rest. It could be simply a random notational irregularity, but it could be partly an indication of how the music should feel to the pianist. The pianist might then respond slightly differently: a quaver followed by a quaver rest, even if all pedalled, might well be played more lightly than a solid crotchet with pedal.

Changes in piano design How far did Beethoven respond to changing piano design by adopting different pedalling patterns in his later works, or for works intended for other countries – France or Britain? Mostly there is no evidence that he did this. His pedal practices remained very similar throughout his life. For example, the unusual pedalling at the start of the finale of the *Waldstein* Sonata might be connected with the arrival of his Érard piano shortly beforehand. Yet he had used exactly the same unusual procedure in the similar texture in Variation 8 of the *Prometheus Variations* (Op. 35), composed a year before the arrival of the Érard. The only significant changes in his pedal markings between 1800 and the 1820s are that they tend to become more frequent in his later works, and their use combined with scales, especially loud scales, disappears. One finds this blurred harmonic effect, for example, in the C major Piano Concerto, the Quintet Op. 16, and the finale of the *Waldstein* Sonata; but the last use of an extended scale with pedal is at the end of his song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*, where the music is mostly piano or pianissimo. Beethoven may have intended the resultant blurring to suggest the echo of the mountains, though unfortunately many present-day performers disregard this pedal marking.

This avoidance of loud pedalled scales may be partly due to the increased sustaining power of later pianos, which would make a loud blur rather unpleasant. As mentioned earlier, Beethoven does sometimes explicitly mark pedal across a change of harmony, even in later works; but nearly all of this later blurred pedalling is found in very soft or very high passages, or both soft and high, which mitigates the effect. The end of the *Bagatelle* Op. 126 No. 3, where blurred pedalling appears with soft but very low notes, is unusual.

Use of the pedal was still fairly unsophisticated in Beethoven's day, with no indications of half-pedal, or frequent and rapid changes of pedal to aid legato, or sudden removal and re-application of pedal to create a faster diminuendo on a chord. Nor was pedal used to reinforce a fortissimo (on some Clementi pianos the damper pedal actually made the sound slightly softer rather than louder). It is significant that in the above-mentioned passage of contrasting sonorities in Op. 79 (bars 59–74 and 83–98) it is the soft, dolce sections, not their loud counterparts, that have pedal marks. Beethoven's greater use

of pedal marks in his later works may be a reflection of increased confidence in and awareness of their effectiveness. He was, however, quite restrained with them on the whole, no doubt aware that they would have to work well on all types of piano, not just local Viennese ones or the most recent models.

Pedal in Beethoven's early works Since the absence of damper marks in works Beethoven composed before 1800 was evidently due to a lack of standard notation, rather than a reluctance to use pedal or knee-lever, the question arises of where in these works he would have intended pedal to be used by later performers. He added *una corda*, originally absent, in a later authorised edition of the slow movement of the Sonata Op. 28,³⁶ but unfortunately he did not do the same with the damper pedal or with any pre-1800 works. Since his use of pedal marks changed hardly at all between early and late periods, however, one can conclude that in the works of the 1790s he probably intended similar effects, and would have marked pedal in similar contexts if the notation had been available. Thus here it would arguably be desirable, or at least in line with his intentions, to add some pedal, but probably only in the kinds of contexts where he marked pedal in later works.

Three examples of different types of such location will suffice as illustrations, the first being final chords. Pedal here is especially appropriate if they are broken or repeated with different spacing, as at the end of the finale of the Sonata Op. 7 (see Example 5, which shows editorial pedal corresponding to Beethoven's later practice). Czerny actually recommends "[t]he last four bars with the pedal",³⁷ which seems absolutely right. Although the previous 14 bars have somewhat similar figuration and texture, it is unlikely that Beethoven intended pedal here, since the chords change several times, and any pedal would also undermine the sense of conclusion in the last four bars. Beethoven also quite often used pedal for extended arpeggio passages or broken chords, though mainly just in special effects rather than ordinary broken chords. A good example where he probably intended this in early works appears in the first movement of the Sonata Op. 2 No. 3, in the unusual extended arpeggios during the cadenza-like passage, in bars 218–231. Again Czerny recommends the effect: "At the transition into A flat (at the end – before the cadence) the pedal must be harmoniously used."³⁸ His phrase "harmoniously used"

36 See Ludwig van Beethoven: *The 35 Piano Sonatas*, ed. by Barry Cooper, London 2007, Vol. 2, Commentaries, p. 27.

37 "[...] die letzten 4 Takte mit Pedal." Carl Czerny: *Die Kunst des Vortrags der ältern und neuen Claviercompositionen. Supplement (oder 4ter Theil) zur großen Pianoforte-Schule op. 500*, Vienna [1846], p. 41. English: Carl Czerny: *The Art of Playing the Ancient and Modern Pianoforte Works. Being a Supplement to the Royal Pianoforte School Op. 500*, trans. by John Bishop, London [1846], p. 39.

38 "Bei dem Übergang nach As (am Schlusse, vor der Cadenz) ist das Pedal harmonios anzuwenden." Czerny: *Die Kunst des Vortrags*, p. 38. English: Czerny: *The Art of Playing*, p. 36.

EXAMPLE 5 Sonata Op. 7, finale, bars 180–183

EXAMPLE 6 Sonata Op. 2 No. 2, first movement, bars 133–137

indicates that the pedal should change with each change of harmony, which would be in line with Beethoven's later practice. A third context in which Beethoven sometimes used pedal was, as mentioned earlier, to sustain a bass note in a broken-chord passage (as actually marked, for example, in the finale of the *Lebewohl* Sonata Op. 81a, bars 29/30, 33/34, 37–44). An early opportunity for using this technique appears in the development section of the first movement of the Sonata Op. 2 No. 2 (Example 6, showing editorial pedal), and again Czerny concurs: "In the 11th bar of the second part [bar 133], whilst the left hand is held over the right, the pedal must be used, as long as the harmony does not change."³⁹

Thus Czerny seems to have been quite sensitive to the places where Beethoven used pedal, for he does not make a habit of recommending pedal for every passage that uses arpeggios or broken chords. Nevertheless, there are some places where his suggestion is questionable. In the first movement of the *Appassionata* Sonata, which Czerny claims to have played for Beethoven several times, he recommends pedal at bar 14 (where there is broken-chord figuration), and at 17 and 20 (where there are loud F major and C major

39 "Im 11ten Takt des 2ten Teils, während dem Überschlagen der linken Hand ist das Pedal zu nehmen, so lange die Harmonie nicht wechselt." Czerny: *Die Kunst des Vortrags*, p. 38. English: Czerny: *The Art of Playing*, p. 34.

chords).⁴⁰ However, this is a movement where Beethoven uses extensive pedal marks, often in quite striking places. He could have easily included them here, but did not – which implies that he believed these passages to be more effective without pedal. Thus pedal here is, at best, optional, perhaps tolerated by Beethoven himself (if his weak hearing noticed it when Czerny played for him), but certainly not necessary.

Pedal in vocal works Beethoven seems to have been hesitant to include pedal marks in his songs, for none are found until the duet “Odi l’aura” Op. 82 No. 5, composed in 1809/1810.⁴¹ Perhaps he regarded his songs as destined for a more amateur or dilettante market than his sonatas, chamber works and concertos, thus a context where accompanists would not be in the habit of using pedal. Pedal marks are, however, found in most of his songs from 1814 onwards, and there are 21 in *An die ferne Geliebte* (1816) alone. A somewhat similar pattern arises with his folksong settings. Of the 53 in the initial batch (Groups I and II) sent to George Thomson in July 1810, only seven contain pedal marks, which remained fairly scarce in most of the next ten batches. In the last five batches sent to Thomson (Groups XIII–XVII), however, more than half the settings use pedal (11 out of 19).⁴²

In Beethoven’s folksong settings he rarely had the poetic text, and so any pedal marks were prompted by purely musical reasons. They appear mainly on final chords and in certain broken-chord or arpeggio passages. In the songs, however, the text was always present, and his first use of pedal in a song, at the start of “Odi l’aura”, was clearly prompted by the text. The gently rustling breeze to which the poet draws attention is readily portrayed by soft, high-pitched tremolandos, and the potential hardness of the repetitions is mollified by the addition of pedal, which helps to smooth out the sound to enhance the effect of rustling. Beethoven was certainly one of the first composers, if not the first, to indicate pedal for expressive purposes, and he did so in several later songs. Most striking is his combination of repeated chords and pedal to suggest some kind of flickering light. This can be found in the final song of *An die ferne Geliebte* for the last beams of the sun setting behind the hills (bars 278–282); in *Resignation* (WoO 149) for the flickering light of a flame; and for twinkling stars in *Abendlied* (WoO 150). In view of these cases, it would surely be appropriate to add pedal in “Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur”, the fourth of the *Gellert Lieder* (Op. 48), at the appearance of similar repeated chords that

40 Czerny: *Die Kunst des Vortrags*, p. 61. English: Czerny: *The Art of Playing*, p. 59. Cf. Carl Czerny: *On the Proper Performance of All Beethoven’s Works for the Piano*, ed. by Paul Badura-Skoda, Vienna 1970, p. 14, and Cheng: *Beethoven’s Pedal Markings*, pp. 29 f.

41 A list of Beethoven’s songs containing pedal marks is provided in Cheng: *Beethoven’s Pedal Markings*, pp. 321 f.

42 The groups are those listed in Barry Cooper: *Beethoven’s Folksong Settings. Chronology, Sources, Style*, Oxford 1994, pp. 211–220.

Wer trägt der Him-mel un-zähl-ba-re Ster-ne?

pp

[ped.] [O] [ped.]

EXAMPLE 7 “Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur” Op. 48 No. 4, bars 18–23

portray the “innumerable stars of the sky” (“Wer trägt der Himmel unzählbare Sterne”; see Example 7, with editorial pedal added in line with Beethoven’s later practice). The song was composed in 1801/1802, before Beethoven had begun indicating pedal in vocal music. Another song where added pedal would be appropriate is *In questa tomba oscura* (WoO 133), composed in 1807. Here a voice from the grave pleads to be left in peace, and in the central section the piano has a low tremolando accompaniment. Since this is very similar to the tremolando passages in the “Marcia funebre” movement in the Sonata Op. 26, where Beethoven explicitly marks pedal, and the expressive context is similar, inserting pedal at this point in this song would probably be in line with his intentions.

Conclusions Beethoven’s pedal marks raise quite a diversity of issues that have not previously been addressed adequately. The biggest uncertainty in works that already have some pedal marked is how far he wanted any extra pedal added by performers. At one extreme, he may have been happy to allow the performer to add pedal indiscriminately according to personal taste, an approach that appears to be common in modern performances. At the other extreme, he may have wanted pedal used in his later works only where specifically marked. Somewhere between these two positions, he may have expected performers to have read the relevant theorists and be able to deduce where it was appropriate to add pedal, sometimes but not always marking this in for confirmation in certain contexts.

There were, however, no well-developed pedal traditions in those days, and so Beethoven could not expect pianists in several different countries to know exactly where he would want it added. This would account for why he often added pedal marks in obvious places as well as surprising ones. It follows, therefore, that the second of these three positions, adding no unauthorised pedal in his later works, is probably close to his intentions. In these works his pedal marks are quite extensive, and he could easily have

added others if he had so desired. The fact that he did not do so strongly suggests he marked pedal only where he thought it beneficial. Pianists should therefore be very cautious about adding any extra at all in works that are already provided with extensive pedal marks. He never wrote “senza ped.”, for he evidently regarded a pedal-off mark as sufficient indication. He did, however, indicate “con sordino” in his earliest works that have damper marks, and this is quite explicit. A noteworthy case is in bars 163–166 of the finale of the *Moonlight Sonata*. These bars contain two extended arpeggios, which might invite pedal. Yet the first is explicitly marked “con sordino” whereas the second is “senza sordino”, thus creating a deliberate contrast. Hence it would be misguided to assume that any unmarked arpeggio should have pedal added, even if this is recommended by some theorists. A similar contrast between pedalled and unpedalled phrases occurs in the passage in Op. 79 mentioned earlier. Another noteworthy passage is bars 465–474 of the finale of the *Waldstein Sonata*, where there are octave glissandos for both hands in alternation. Since such glissandos are particularly difficult on modern keyboards, because of their greater depth of key than on early pianos, many pianists split the octaves between hands and sustain the accompanying chords with the pedal. Yet Beethoven specifically places a pedal-off sign at the beginning of this passage, and pedal does not resume until bar 485. Thus he clearly did not want this pedal effect during the octave glissandos.

In the early works, however – those composed up to 1800 (including the Piano Sonata Op. 22) and songs written before 1810 – the situation is different. Here Beethoven did not include any pedal marks where he would have wanted them. In the instrumental works it was because no sufficiently widely recognised notation had evolved, while in the vocal works the reasons are less obvious but are probably related to their use as non-serious salon music (even if the texts themselves might be serious), where pedal marks might be considered too sophisticated. It would therefore probably be in line with his intentions either to play all these works without any pedal as marked, or better still to add pedal but only in places where one can conjecture that he was likely to have done, according to the principles derived from his later practice. This would particularly apply to final chords – especially when written with some broken figuration – and to some arpeggio passages or broken-chord figuration, notably where a bass note is sustained beneath the figuration as in Example 1. There may also be a few places where Beethoven would have applied or at least allowed blurred pedalling, even during scale figuration, although on a modern instrument a judicious half-pedal would be closer to the intended sound than full pedal in such places.

One could apply these principles not just to selected passages but to a whole sonata. In the *Pathétique Sonata*, for example, a likely place for adding pedal in the first movement would be the sustained chords at bars 89–92 and the reprises of this passage; and in the

second movement the final two (or three) chords of the movement. It is quite likely, however, that Beethoven would have added pedal marks nowhere else in the sonata, had he first published it a few years later. There are certainly many places in this sonata where adding pedal would not be consistent with his normal practice, such as single staccato chords, or legato passages where the fingers alone can create a smooth sound. Thus Beethoven probably did not intend pedal in the chords at the end of the first movement, nor the theme at the start of the second, where the pianist could use finger legato.⁴³ One should be particularly cautious about adding pedal in places such as these, which may seem ‘obvious’ today but are not consistent with the places where he ever marked it. Such pedalling risks being gratuitous and may actually cause problems.

It must be emphasised that pianists are not obliged to follow Beethoven’s intentions, and are perfectly at liberty to disregard his pedal marks, such as the one at the end of *An die ferne Geliebte*, or add pedal wherever they wish. Many pianists will no doubt continue to do so. On the other hand, some pianists will surely want to reproduce his intended text, and should therefore generally refrain from adding pedal in works where he had already marked some, since it is far from certain that any such addition would be in line with what he wanted. But the pedal marks he did write are, as Schnabel observed, an integral part of the score. Thus, if someone wants to play what Beethoven wrote and intended, then in the words of Sullivan, the “pedal marks should be very carefully observed.”

43 Czerny noted how well Beethoven used to join full chords without using the pedal, see Gustav Nottebohm: *Zweite Beethoveniana. Nachgelassene Aufsätze*, Leipzig 1887, p. 356.

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