Marten Noorduin

# Beethoven's Indicators of Expression in His Piano Works

Despite the intense interest that Beethoven has enjoyed in both scholarship and performance over the last years, a review of recently published editions of the piano sonatas has shown that the number of real editorial improvements that can realistically still be made in this repertoire has probably reached its limits.[1] There may be several other pieces by Beethoven with or for piano where there is still much important editorial work to do, some of which are addressed in this very volume, but for Beethoven's piano sonatas, which probably constitute the most published music on this planet, there seems to be very little space for another edition that focuses mostly or exclusively on the text.

Much more fruitful, then, is to address the elephant in the room: the substantial gap between current performance practices and the historical evidence. Here, an edition that includes research-led commentary can really make a difference, and there are some recent examples of editions that have done so with notable success, such as the recent Bärenreiter edition of the violin sonatas by Neal Peres Da Costa and Clive Brown.[2] Furthermore, there has been a wealth of research on pretty much all aspects of performance practice for piano that future editions can draw on, some of which can be found in this volume.

Nevertheless, despite all of this work, there is one aspect that has hitherto been largely ignored, as Beethoven's uses of the expressive indications like *dolce*, *cantabile*, and *espressivo* have never been systematically explored.[3] One partial explanation is that for many, these indications do not need much explaining, as on the face of it they seem self-explanatory and are simply used to heighten expression in a particular way. As this article will show, when seen from a historical perspective this is clearly not the case, and these indications contain more information than is often assumed.

In 1829, two years after Beethoven died, the German music theorist Johann Daniel Andersch compared understanding the appropriate expression in music with the philological work done on hieroglyphics, a grand project at the time that, with the help of the Rosetta Stone, would soon lead to a workable translation of Egyptian hieroglyphics:

1 Marten Noorduin: Is There Any Scope for Another Edition of Beethoven's Piano Sonatas?, in: *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 17/2 (2020), pp. 329–340.

2 Ludwig van Beethoven: Sonatas for Pianoforte and Violin (3 volumes), ed. by Clive Brown and Neal Peres Da Costa, Kassel 2020.

3 For an example of a study that examines this issue through a more theoretical perspective, see Sara Ellen Eckerson: Beethoven's Dolce: Interpretation, Performance and Description. The Case of Music, PhD thesis, University of Lisbon, 2016.

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> "Expression in performance: the true display or reproduction of the character given to the work by the composer, or of the feelings indicated by the same. The black characters of the notation are not just [indicating] throat and finger dexterity, but are rather hieroglyphs, in which a deep meaning can be sensed, which needs to be discovered, grasped, and explained to others."[4]

The comparison between translating Egyptian hieroglyphics – at the time arguably the most well-known intellectual problem on the planet[5] – and trying to understand the indicators of expression in music may be very apt, and there were several precedents for doing so.[6] Both can be translated with external sources: hieroglyphs with the Rosetta Stone and expressive indications with treatises and musical dictionaries. Neither of these sources, however, quite fit the original text: the hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone do not completely correspond to the Ancient Greek text, and composers' use of expressive indications is often highly individual and dependent on a variety of contextual and developmental factors. Thus, in both cases the best approach seems to be to take account of the consistencies within the text and use the translation to make educated guesses as to its intended meaning. Building on this perceived similarity between hieroglyphics and expressive indications, this paper will offer an interpretation of Beethoven's expressive indications, focussing in particular on three of the most common expressive indications in Beethoven's oeuvre: *espressivo*, *dolce*, and *cantabile*.

In general, Beethoven often used expressive indications with material of structural importance. As Barry Cooper has shown, the "Freude" theme from the fourth movement of the Ninth Symphony is foreshadowed several times throughout the preceding movements.[7] In each case, the relevant material is marked with an expressive indication, as can be seen in Figure 1. A phrase resembling the "Freude" theme appears in bar 74 in the woodwinds, and it is marked *dolce*, the first appearance of that indication in the symphony. When this material re-appears in the recapitulation in the horn, it even contains the same pitches as the first full expression of the theme in the final movement; the preceding *dolce* presumably applies to this material too. The trio of the second movement contains very similar musical material in the oboe in bar 413 in a passage that includes even the same decrescendo into *dolce* as the horns in the previous movement. The third movement

4 "Ausdruck im Vortrage: Das richtige Darstellen oder Wiedergeben des von dem Tonsetzer seiner Arbeit gegebenen Charakters, oder der in demselben gezeichneten Gefühle. Nicht bloße Gegenstände für mechanische Kehl- und Fingerfertigkeit sind die schwarzen Charaktere der Notenschrift, sondern Hieroglyphen sind sie, in welchen ein tiefer Sinn zu ahnen ist, der entdeckt, erfaßt und andern erklärt werden soll." Johann Daniel Andersch: *Musikalisches Woerterbuch für Freunde und Schüler der Tonkunde*, Berlin 1829, p. 37. All translations by the present author unless otherwise stated.

5 Jed Z. Buchwald/Diane Greco Josefowicz: *The Riddle of the Rosetta. How an English Polymath and a French Polyglot Discovered the Meaning of Egyptian Hieroglyphs*, Princeton 2020.

6 Denis Diderot: *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*, Paris 1751, pp. 215 f.

7 Barry Cooper: *Beethoven*, Oxford 2008, pp. 336 f.

includes the most literal foreshadowing of them all in which two *cantabile* passages in the winds and strings spell out the theme that will soon be sung in the last movement. In short, these expressive indications are in some sense also structural indications, as they mark the themes and motives that tie the whole symphony together.

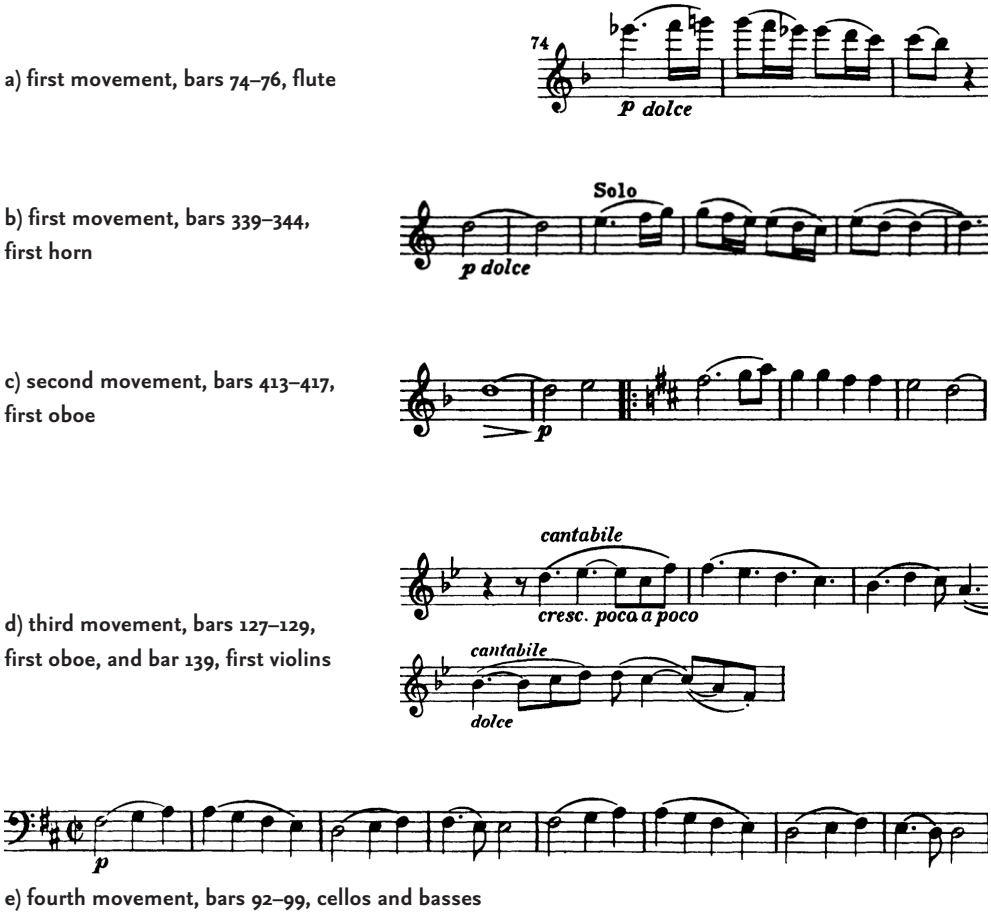



**Figure 1** Thematic coherence indicated by expressive indications in the Ninth Symphony

Secondly, Beethoven seems to have been somewhat inconsistent with the use of expression indications, and they are unequally divided across his oeuvre, with his later works generally having more of these indications than his earlier works. The most indications are found in the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies; the third movement of the former counts no fewer than 25 *dolce*, and there are as many as 57 occurrences in the first movement of the latter. Most other works – even the late ones – have far fewer of these indications, and in most works with piano the number of expressive indications can be counted on the fingers of two hands.

But what were these indications meant to convey? To answer that question, I will focus on the ways in which Beethoven uses these indications within the somewhat more constrained set of pieces that are the focus of this volume, starting with *espressivo*, the most general of the expressive indications.

**Espressivo** In his 1802 musical dictionary, the theorist Heinrich Christoph Koch defined *espressivo* as a word that contributes to the enhancement of the expression

> "[…] in a principal voice. If found at the start of a piece as adjective to the heading, this means that it applies to the entire piece; if found here and there in the middle, it only applies in the passage where it is found, which, much like in the first case of the entire piece, the composer wants to have performed extremely pleasantly."[8]

About three decades later, Beethoven's student Carl Czerny refreshingly cut to the heart of the matter in his *Pianoforte School* Op. 500 and simply recommended that, in almost every case in which a composer writes *espressivo*, it is appropriate to slow down.[9] Although some have taken Czerny's words to be directly representative of Beethoven's performance practice, recent work has problematised this interpretation. The core of the criticism is the fact that Czerny by the 1840s is far more interested in giving rules on how to play effectively in the 1840s than he is in transmitting an older style of performance.[10] Czerny has stated as much himself in the fourth part of his *Pianoforte School*:

> "[Beethoven's] performance depended on his constantly varying frame of mind, and even if it were possible exactly to describe his style of playing, it would not always serve us as a model, (in regard to the present otherwise cultivated purity and clearness in difficulties); and even the mental conception acquires a different value through the altered taste of the time, and must occasionally be expressed by other means, than were then demanded."[11]

8 "[…] um auf die Verstärkung des Ausdrucks bei der Ausführung einer Hauptstimme aufmerksam zu machen. Stehet es zu Anfange eines Tonstückes als Beywort der Ueberschrift, so beziehet es sich auf das ganze Tonstück; kommt es aber nur hier oder da in der Mitte desselben vor, so erstreckt sich seine Beziehung bloß auf die Stelle, wo es stehet, die sodann, so wie im ersten Falle das ganze Tonstück, der Tonsetzer vorzüglich anziehend vorgetragen haben will." Heinrich Christoph Koch: *Musikalisches Lexikon*, Frankfurt am Main 1802, col. 545.

9 Carl Czerny: *Von dem Vortrage. Dritter Theil aus Vollständige theoretisch-practische Pianoforte-Schule op. 500*, Vienna 1839, pp. 25 f.

10 Marten Noorduin: Re-Examining Czerny's and Moscheles's Metronome Marks for Beethoven's Piano Sonatas, in: *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 15/2 (2018), pp. 209–235.

11 "Indessen hing er dabei von seinen stets wechselnden Launen ab, und wenn es auch möglich wäre, seine Spielweise ganz genau wiederzugeben, so könnte sie, (in Bezug auf die jetzt ganz anders ausgebildete Reinheit und Deutlichkeit bei Schwierigkeiten) uns nicht immer als Muster dienen; und selbst die geistige Auffassung erhält durch den veränderten Zeitgeschmack eine and're Geltung, und muss bisweilen durch and're Mittel ausgedrückt werden, als damals erforderlich waren." Carl Czerny: *Die Kunst des Vortrags der ältern und neuen Claviercompositionen. Supplement (oder 4ter Theil) zur großen Piano-*

So whether or not any of Czerny's comments actually represent what Beethoven had in mind is debatable. Simply put, Czerny is not the Rosetta Stone that some people have said he was.

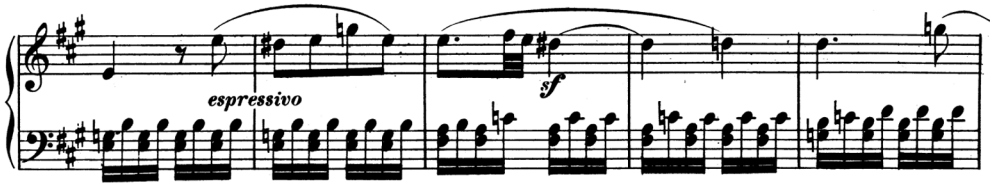
The question then remains, what can be learned from the ways in which Beethoven used *espressivo*? Firstly, it appears in 85 movements as an expressive indicator by my count,[12] and in a variety of genres, from piano pieces to orchestral works to songs. Secondly, much like Koch recommends, the term only seems to appear in principal voices, even in chamber or orchestral works. In other words, no accompaniment figure is ever marked *espressivo*. Thirdly, it is used in a variety of tempos, from Largo to Allegro, but does not appear in the fastest tempos.

On the whole, *espressivo* appears in three different places in Beethoven's compositions. Firstly, it is used to mark an important new theme, such as a second theme. Examples of this are found in virtually all genres that include the piano (see Figure 2): the second theme is marked *espressivo* in, amongst others, the first movements of the Piano Sonatas Opp. 2 No. 2 and 101, in the second movement of the Cello Sonata Op. 102 No. 2, in the second movement of the *Emperor* Concerto Op. 73, where it is the theme with which the piano opens, and there are many other examples.

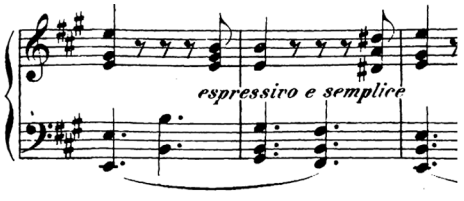
The second way in which Beethoven uses the term is to draw attention to motifs of themes that have already appeared, as can be seen in Figure 3. This somewhat more nuanced use of the term can be seen in the second movement of the *Kreutzer* Sonata, for instance, where the *espressivo* in variation 3 seems to refer back to bar 5 of the theme; and the same expression in the *Choral Fantasy* Op. 80 marks some material that at first sight seems a mere decorative flourish but upon further examination calls back to the opening material from the piano solo fantasy. Something similar happens in the third movement of the *Hammerklavier* Sonata Op. 106, where *espressivo* is used to highlight material based on the opening theme. One somewhat exceptional use of *espressivo* occurs in the first movement of Op. 70 No. 2, where the term appears at the end of the Sostenuto introduction to foreshadow the following Allegro theme, but the same principle applies. There

forte-Schule op. 500, Vienna [1846], p. 34. 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. 32.

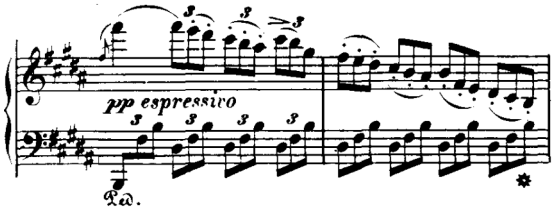
12 These are Opp. 1 No. 2/ii; 1 No. 3/i; 2 No. 2/i; 3/iv; 15/ii; 29/ii; 30 No. 2/iv; 35; 43/iii; 47/ii; 54/ii; 55/i & ii; 56/i & ii; 58/i & ii; 59 No. 1/iii; 59 No. 2/ii; 60/ii; 69/i; 70 No. 2/i; 72a; 73/i & ii & iii; 74/i & ii; 77; 79/ii; 80; 81a/i & iii; 84/vi; 85/iii; 94; 95/ii & iii & iv; 96/ii; 97/iii & iv; 98/i; 101/i & iv; 102 No. 1/i; 102 No. 2/i & ii; 104/i & iv; 105 Nos. 3 & 4; 106/i & iii; 107 Nos. 3 & 6 & 7; 108 No. 15; 109/i & ii & iii; 111/i & ii; 113/vii; 118; 120 Var. 30 & 31; 123/ii & iv & v; 125/i & iii & iv; 130/i; 131/ii & vii; 132/i & iii & iv; WoO 27/iii; 28; 40; 66; 93; 130. See also the database of Beethoven's entire oeuvre at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6395027 (last accessed 20 September 2022).



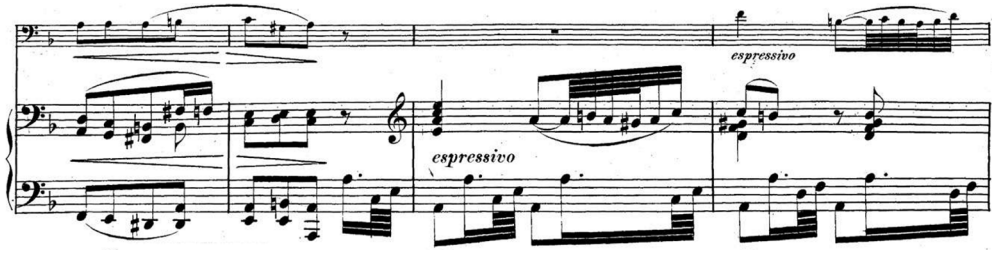

a) Piano Sonata Op. 2 No. 2, first movement, bars 58–62




b) Piano Sonata Op. 101, first movement, bars 25–27




c) Piano Concerto Op. 73, second movement, bars 16 f.



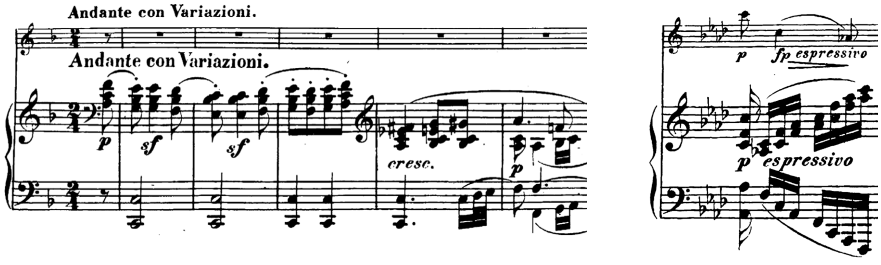

d) Cello Sonata Op. 102 No. 2, second movement, bars 7–10

**FIGURE 2** Espressivo used to introduce new themes

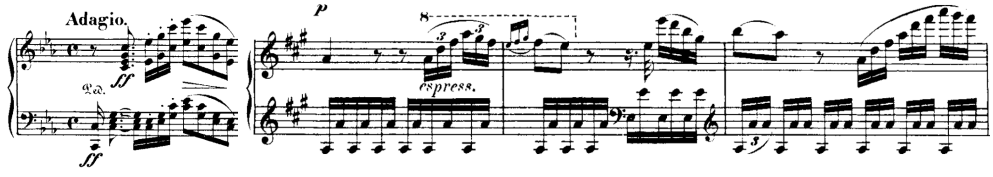
are plenty of other examples of this, sometimes marked with *con espressione*, such as in the first movement of the Piano Sonata Op. 2 No. 1, in which thematic motifs are recalled.

Thirdly, *espressivo* is used in longer sections or even entire movements, and, as Koch suggested, it seems likely that the intended effect of *espressivo* needs to be applied throughout in these pieces. Most of these sections are relatively short introductions or single variations in a set, but there are a small number of longer movements that also have this indication.[13]

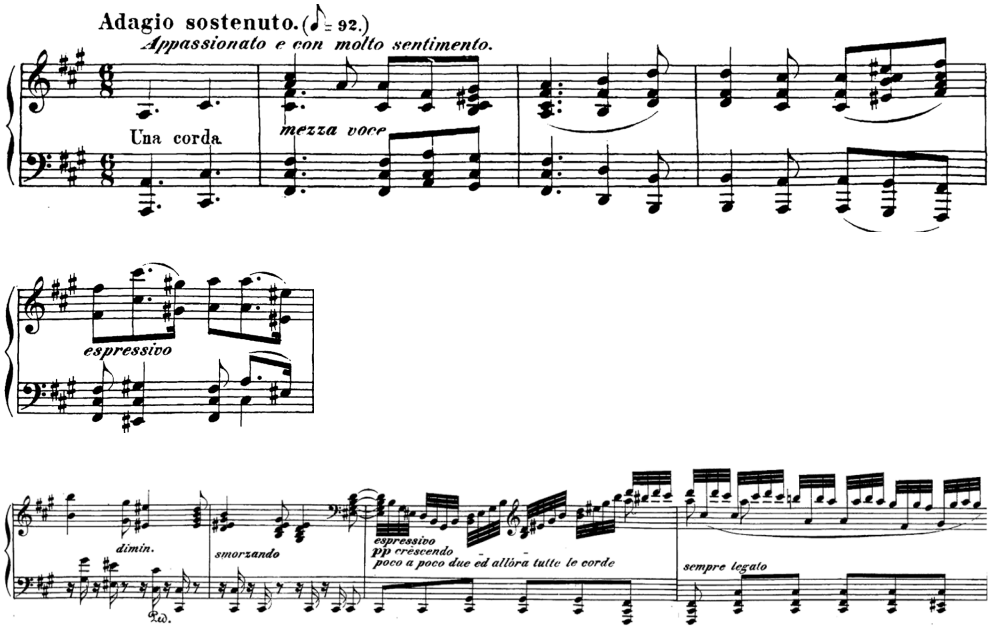
13 *Espressivo* is used in this way in Opp. 5 No. 2/i; 24/ii; 29/ii; 30 No. 1/ii; 70 No. 1/ii; 81a/ii; 83 No. 1; 96/ii & iv; 105 No. 4; 107 Nos. 9 & 10; 109/i & iii; 110/i; 120 Var. 31; 121a; 123/iii; 130/v; 131/i; and WoO 76.



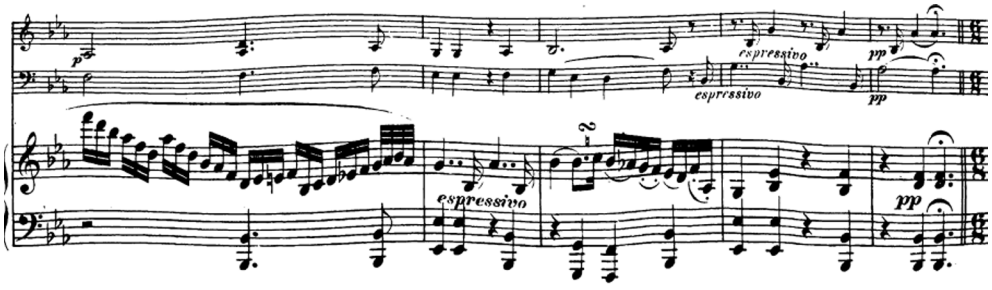

a) Violin Sonata Op. 47, second movement, theme, bars 1–5, and variation 3, bar 5




b) Choral Fantasy Op. 80, bars 1 and 307–309




c) Piano Sonata Op. 106, third movement, bars 1–4, 26, and 85–88




d) Piano Trio Op. 70 No. 2, first movement, bars 15–20

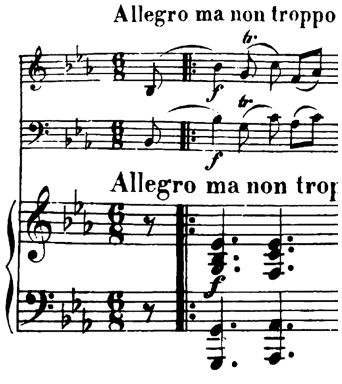
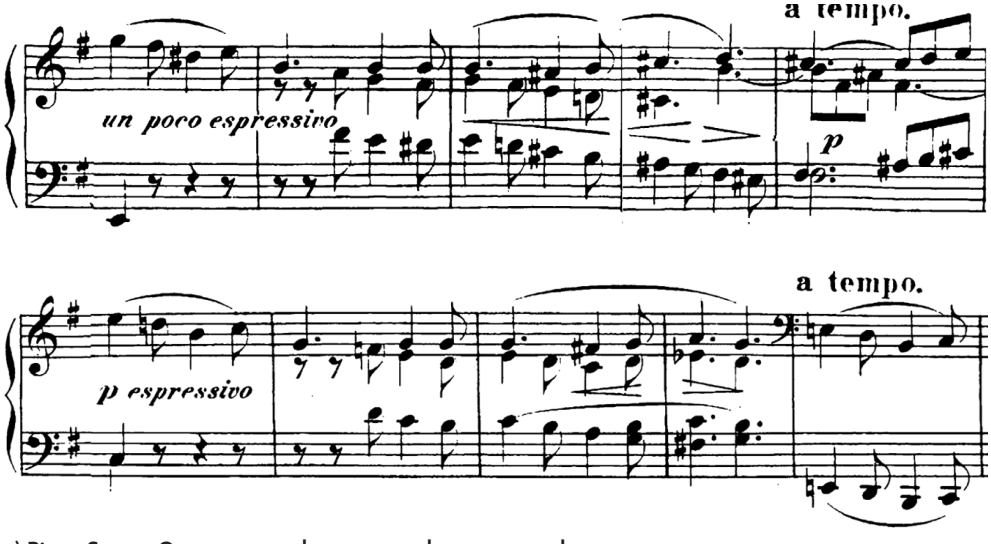



**FIGURE 3** Espressivo used to highlight motifs

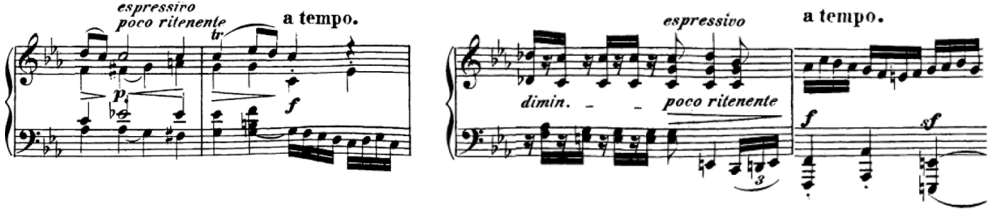
How might Beethoven have envisioned the effect of *espressivo*? Some clues can be found in Beethoven's late works, where the notation becomes more explicit than in his earlier works, and particularly the Piano Sonatas Opp. 109 and 111 can be considered the equivalent of the Rosetta Stone for *espressivo*. The second movement of the former contains several instances in which the term *espressivo* is followed by *a tempo* a few bars later. The same can be observed in the first movement of Op. 111, where Beethoven also adds an explicit instruction to slow down as well as dynamic hairpins. So it is clear from context that *espressivo* is, at least in some cases, associated with slowing down. Furthermore, the hairpins found in Opp. 109 and 111 are also found throughout many longer sections and movements that have *espressivo* as part of the tempo indication, as can be seen in Figure 4a–g below.

So there is a whole range of pieces marked *espressivo*, all of which contain dynamic hairpins or something very similar such as a crescendo followed by subito *piano*. The only two pieces marked *espressivo* without extensive hairpins in Beethoven's oeuvre are in fact the seventh variation (*Adagio molto e espressivo*) from WoO 76 (which only contains a *cresc.* that goes to *piano* towards the end) as well as the folksong variations Op. 105 No. 4, which are marked *Andante espressivo assai* but which do not contain any dynamic indications at all.

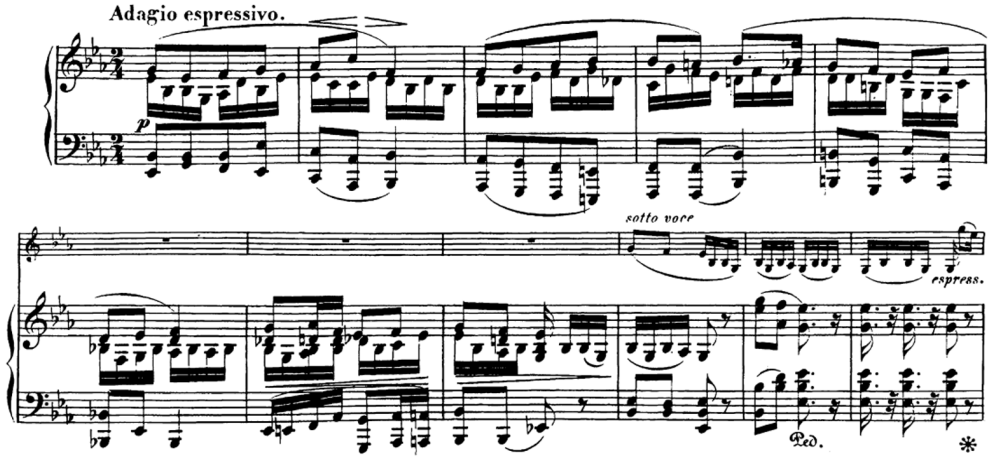
It is worth noticing that all of the movements that contain *espressivo* in their tempo indications are slow movements and that Beethoven's slow movements were probably




a) Piano Sonata Op. 109, second movement, bars 29–33 and 120–124

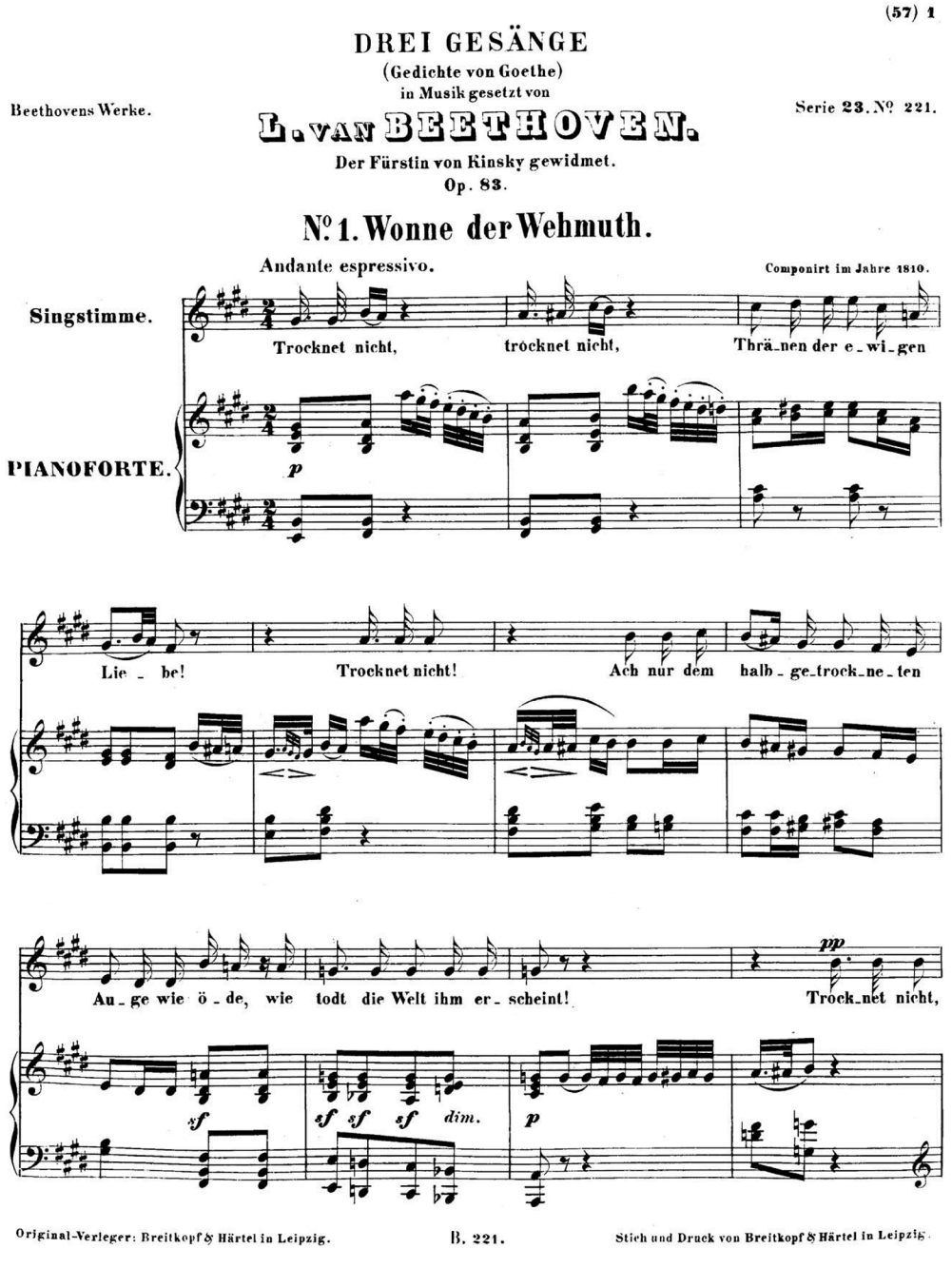



b) Piano Sonata Op. 111, first movement, bars 34 f. and 99 f.




c) Violin Sonata Op. 96, second movement, bars 1–11

FIGURE 4 Changes in dynamics and tempo as a consequence of *espressivo*




d) Song Op. 83 No. 1 (continued next page)

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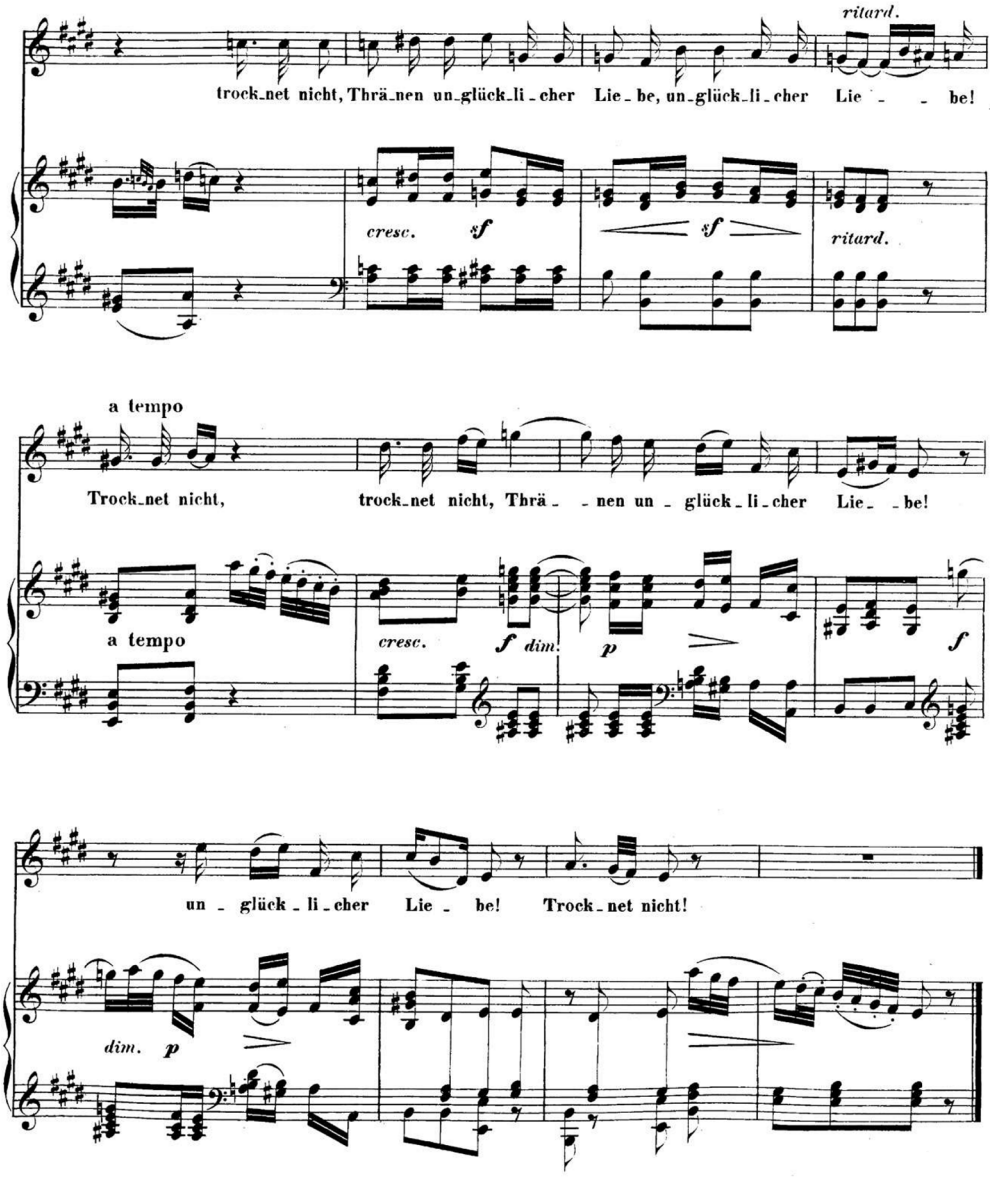
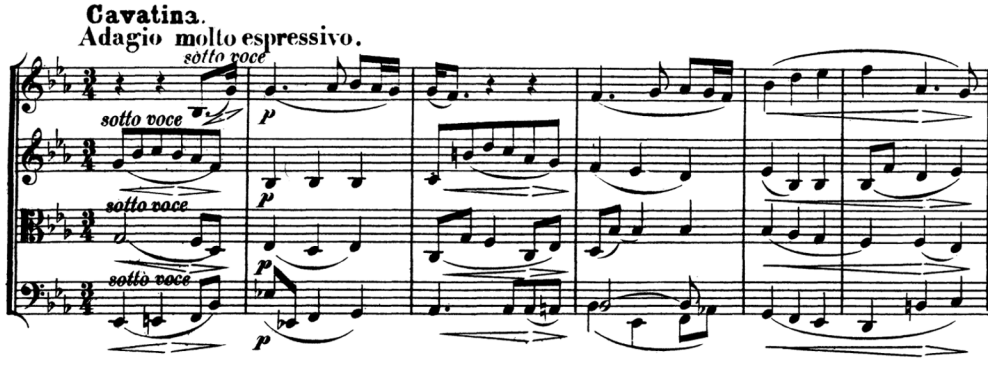
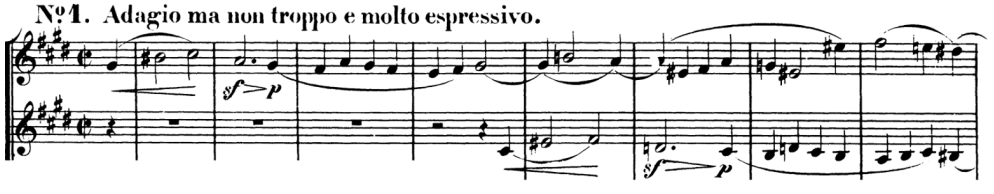
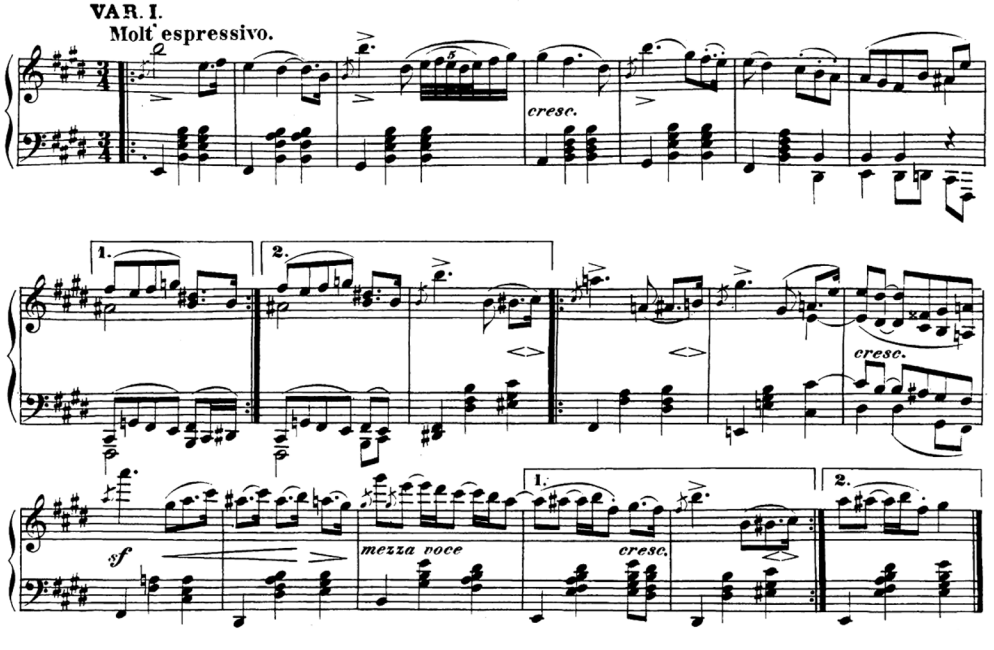

ritard.
trock-net nicht, Thrä-nen un-glück-li-cher Lie-be, un-glück-li-cher Lie - - be!
cresc. sf sf ritard.
a tempo
Trock-net nicht, trock-net nicht, Thrä- - nen un-glück-li-cher Lie- -be!
a tempo
cresc. f dim. p f
un-glück-li-cher Lie- be! Trock-net nicht!
dim. p




e) String Quartet Op. 130, Cavatina, fifth movement, bars 1–6




f) String Quartet Op. 131, first movement, bars 1–8




g) Piano Sonata Op. 109, third movement, variation 1

intended to be more flexible than his fast movements on account of the greater variety of note values present in the former.[14] If that is indeed correct, then this would explain why a flexible tempo is not explicitly indicated in these movements, as it was implied by the tempo indication already, and why only the dynamic indications needed to be added for the desired effect to be achieved. In summary, rather than merely meaning slowing down, as some seem to have assumed, on the basis of the evidence, it seems that *espressivo* was likely meant to communicate both dynamic and tempo flexibility.

At this point, however, sceptics might wonder why Beethoven would write the same thing twice, i. e. write *espressivo* and then also write down what it means, as he does in the piano sonatas Opp. 109 and 111 (see above). Many aspects of Beethoven's notation in his later works, however, are tautological: he often wrote the same expression in both German and Italian, such as in Opp. 101 and 110, and also used what Thomas Schmidt has called "cautionary dynamics", repeated instances of the same or similar dynamic markings, such as ***pp*** followed by *sempre* ***pp***,[15] in order to ensure that performers knew what he had in mind. So writing *espressivo* and then also indicating the supposed effects of this indication was not something that was beyond Beethoven and fits perfectly within the pattern of increasingly explicit markings observed in Beethoven's later works.

If this interpretation of *espressivo* is correct, then it would explain why many nineteenth-century editions insert hairpins in so many places marked *espressivo*.[16] Consider, for instance, the Cello Sonata Op. 5 No. 2 which opens with a lengthy slow section marked *Andante sostenuto e espressivo*. In several nineteenth-century editions of this sonata, hairpins are added, and although no editor seems to precisely agree with any other where they should go, it seems very likely that the addition of these in principle conforms to Beethoven's understanding of *espressivo*. Figure 5 shows the cello part of Friedrich Grützmacher's edition of Beethoven's Op. 5 No. 2, with his additional indications marked. Admittedly, tempo flexibility, the other part of *espressivo*, is generally not indicated, but most editors were somewhat shy with those markings anyway, probably in part because, as is quite widely accepted now, in the nineteenth-century flexible tempos were the norm.[17]

**14** Marten Noorduin: *Beethoven's Tempo Indications*, PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2016, pp. 167 f.

**15** Thomas Schmidt: Preventive and Cautionary Dynamics in the Symphonies of Mendelssohn and his Time, in: *The Journal of Musicology* 31/1 (2014), pp. 43–90, here pp. 59 f.

**16** See Brown/Peres Da Costa: *Beethoven Sonatas for Pianoforte and Violin, Performing Practice Commentary*, pp. 22 f.

**17** See Clive Brown: *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750–1900*, Oxford 2004; Neal Peres Da Costa: *Off the Record. Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing*, Oxford 2012, amongst others.

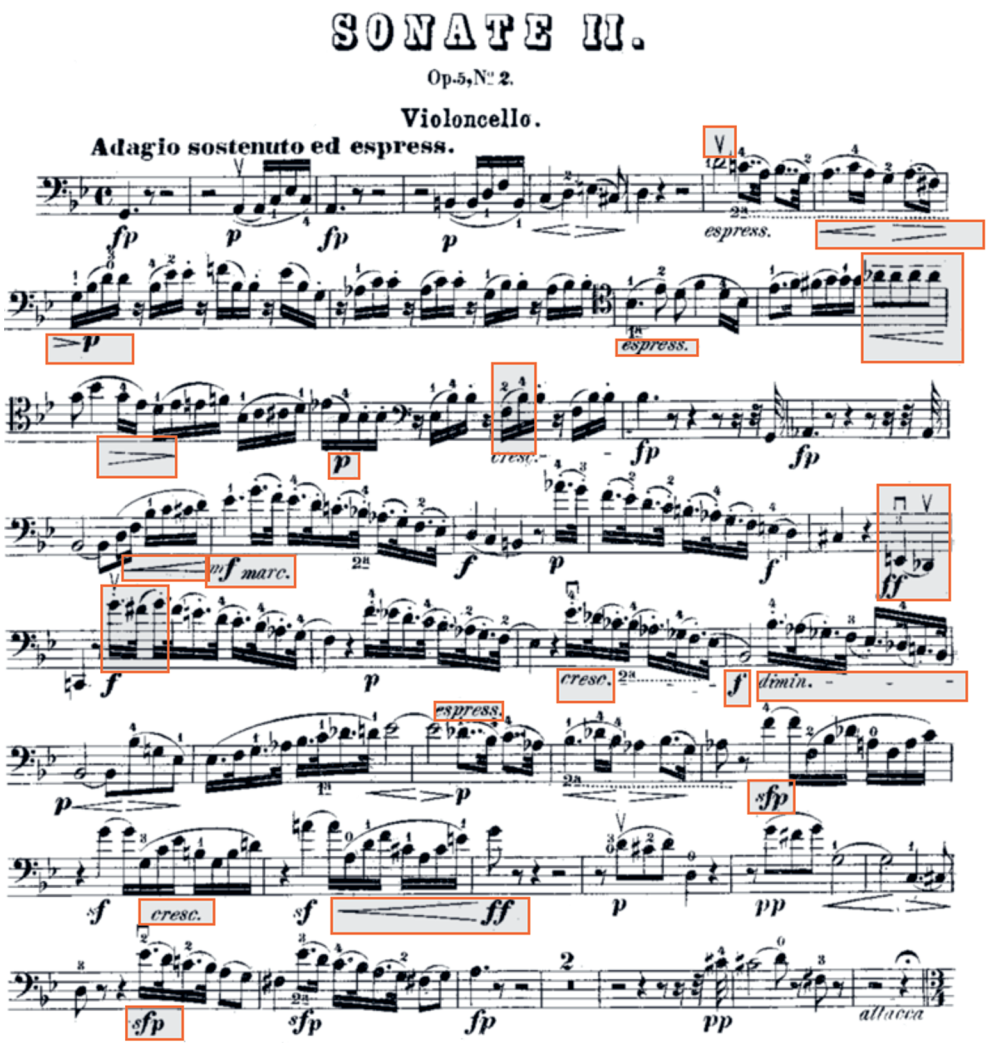
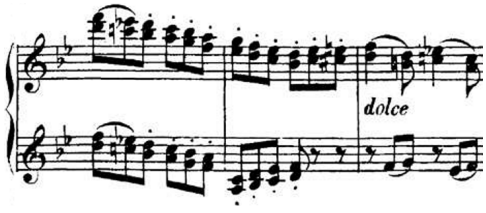


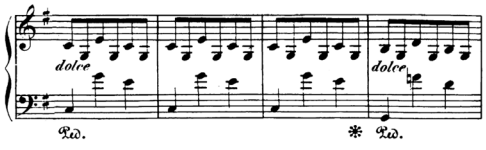

**FIGURE 5** Cello Sonata Op. 5 No. 2, ed. by Friedrich Grützmacher, cello part. Additions by the editor marked in brackets by the CHASE Project (http://mhm.hud.ac.uk/chase/, last consulted 15 September 2022).

**Dolce** What about other indications of expression? As stated before, *dolce* is one of the most common expressive indicators, and at first sight it often appears to be used in a way very similar to *espressivo*. It also appears to mark mostly second themes as well as some motifs that have already appeared. However, it is sometimes used very differently from *espressivo*, and appears in some of the fastest music that Beethoven wrote. Even in slow movements, it is often used in combination with the shortest note values of the movement, as can be seen in the Violin Sonata Op. 96 in Figure 6. Furthermore, unlike *espressivo*, it also occurs in voices other than what is at the time the principal one. So *dolce* is clearly a different kind of indication from *espressivo*.

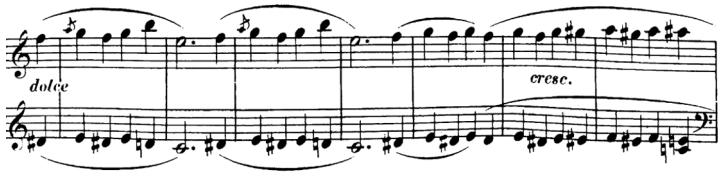
a) Rondo for Piano and Orchestra WoO 6, Presto, bars 346–348, piano part



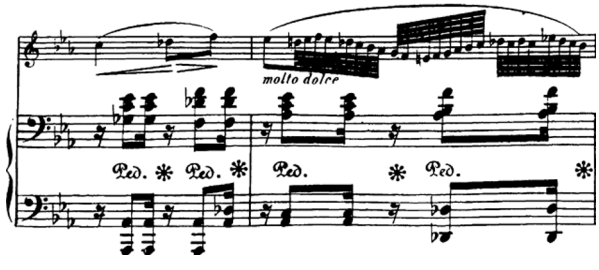

b) Piano Sonata Op. 79, first movement, Presto, bars 67–70

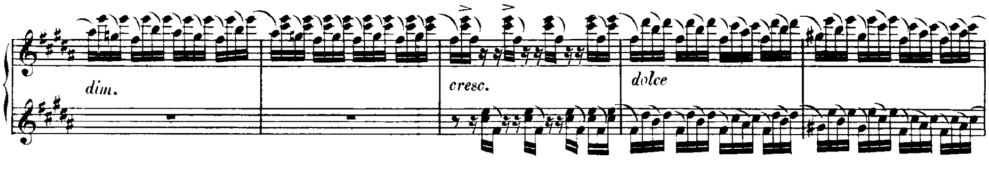



c) Piano Trio Op. 70 No. 1, third movement, Presto, bars 19–25, piano part

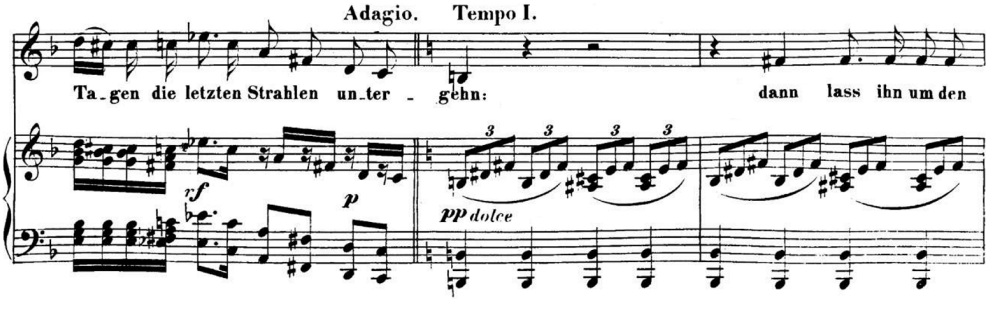



d) Violin Sonata Op. 96, second movement, Adagio espressivo, bars 18 f.




e) Piano Concerto Op. 73, second movement, bars 57–61, piano part




f) Song "An die Hoffnung" Op. 94, bars 62–64

FIGURE 6 Beethoven's uses of *dolce*

The difference between *dolce* and *espressivo* is borne out in the definitions that theorists contemporary with Beethoven gave. These are notably more straightforward than in the case of *espressivo*: Jean-Jacques Rousseau simply defined it as the French equivalent of the Italian dynamic indication *piano*,[18] and Daniel Andersch defined it as "quietly and sweetly".[19] Koch gave the most expansive definition as needing "a somewhat weak tone, because if one says something sweetly or pleasantly, one speaks with a quiet and dampened voice".[20] Lastly, Hummel, in his *Anweisung*, simply listed *dolce* as a dynamic indication along with *piano*, *mezzo forte*, and others.[21]

All of this is to say that, unlike *espressivo*, *dolce* does not seem to imply any change in tempo in itself and instead implies a particularly sweet and quiet tone of voice. And this seems to make sense in the context of Beethoven's use of this term: across Beethoven's oeuvre, many passages are marked "piano e dolce".[22] Furthermore, there are several cases in which a decrescendo goes straight into a *dolce*, as if it were a dynamic indication, which is then followed by a crescendo. So it seems that *dolce* fulfils a role somewhat similar but not identical to that of *piano*: to indicate a quiet and somewhat sweet tone of voice.

Here, one could ask whether *piano* and *dolce* are synonyms in Beethoven's works, as Rousseau implies. After all, we determined the meaning of *espressivo* by looking at the context, so if *piano* and *dolce* often appear together or in close proximity, why could they not be the same?

The answer has to do with the fact that in Beethoven's oeuvre, *dolce* and *piano* appear together in the earliest works, when his scores are, for a lack of a better word, less explicit than in some of his later works. Furthermore, there are several cases in which *piano* and *dolce* are clearly contrasted. In the Righini Variations, for instance, every single variation starts with a dynamic marking, even if it is identical to the dynamic level at the end of the previous variation. Variations 1 and 13, however, are only marked "dolce", which, if the term were synonymous with *piano*, would be a very odd thing to do.

So it seems most likely that *dolce* was meant to indicate both a quiet dynamic and a particularly pleasant tone colour. In this sense, it is notable that *dolce* often – but not always – appears in passages for the piano that use one or more of the pedals in order to

18 Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Dictionnaire de Musique*, Paris 1775, Vol. 1, p. 221.

19 "Sanft, zärtlich mit lieblichem Vortrage." Andersch: *Musikalisches Woerterbuch*, p. 135.

20 "Es erfordert aber auch zugleich einen etwas schwachen Ton, weil, wenn man jemanden [sic] etwas süßes oder angenehmes sagt, man mit sanftem und gezogenem Tone der Stimme spricht." Koch: *Musikalisches Lexikon*, col. 444.

21 Johann Nepomuk Hummel: *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel*, Vienna 1827, p. 57.

22 These occur in Opp. 1 No. 3/ii; 2 No. 1/iv; 4/iii; 46; 52 No. 6; 57/ii; and 106/i.

enhance a special effect, such as a particular tone colour.[23] This use of the pedal is also recommended in several contemporary treatises;[24] however, there is no persuasive evidence that, for Beethoven, *dolce* generally implies the use of pedal.[25]

***Cantabile*** Lastly, then, what about *cantabile*? This indication is used least often among the ones discussed in this paper, and it only appears in 40 movements as an expression indicator.[26] In an additional 33 cases, however, it appears in a tempo indication.[27] Theorists generally suggest that *cantabile* simply means "play as if you are singing",[28] which Koch further defines as "with tones tied together and moderately strongly".[29] And it is indeed true that, on the whole, movements marked *cantabile* generally have a lot of slurs in them that tie notes together, as do individual sections with the same indication. Unsurprisingly, the term is mostly found in slow to moderate tempos and/or in the context of large note values in stepwise motion.

There are, nevertheless, some reasons to believe that *cantabile* could have additional meanings, as in several pieces that contain singers, an important part of the principal vocal line first occurs in an instrumental part in a passage marked *cantabile*. This includes the aforementioned Ninth Symphony but also the *Missa Solemnis*, the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, and the *Choral Fantasy* Op. 80, as can be seen in Figure 7. Here, the term implies mimicking the performance style of the singer, who will sing this line soon. The precise meaning of this for pianists is hard to say with certainty, as the performance styles of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention to be able to confidently describe the sound that is being referred to

**23** See the Piano Sonata Op. 79, first movement; the Piano Trio Op. 97, third movement; the Folksong Variations Op. 107 No. 7, variations 3–4; and the Song Op. 108 No. 14.

**24** See e. g. Johann Peter Milchmeyer: *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen*, Dresden 1797, pp. 57–66. For a discussion of the use of the pedal in piano treatises around this time, see Leonardo Miucci: Beethoven's Pianoforte Damper Pedalling. A Case of Double Notational Style, in: *Early Music* 47/3 (2019), pp. 371–392.

**25** This would be a fallacy known as affirming the consequent. See particularly Barry Cooper's paper on the matter in this volume, pp. 40–58.

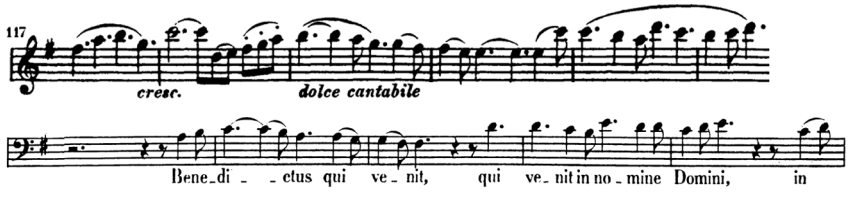
**26** *Cantabile* is found as an expression in Opp. 15/ii; 17/iii; 47/ii; 58/ii; 59 No. 1/iii; 60/ii; 61/ii; 70 No. 1/ii; 73/ii; 74/ii; 80 (piano fantasy); 81a/ii; 84 No. 5; 85 No. 1; 102 No. 1/i; 106/i & iv; 107 Nos. 4 & 9; 109/iii; 110/iii; 111/ii; 119 No. 11; 123/ii & iv; 125/i & iii; 126 No. 2; 127/ii; 130/iii; 131/iv; 132/iii.

**27** These tempo indications are found in Opp. 1 No. 1/ii; 1 No. 3/ii; 9 No. 1/ii; 13/ii; 16/ii; 18 No. 2/ii; 18 No. 5/iii; 20/ii; 21/ii; 30 No. 2/ii; 34 (theme); 38/ii; 50; 51 No. 2; 69/iii; 78/i; 85/xii; 87/ii; 97/iii; 98/vi; 104/ii; 109/iii; 110/i; 119 Nos. 4 & 8; 120 Var. 30; 123/iv; 125/iii (& iv); 126 Nos. 1, 3 & 6; 127/ii; 131/iv; 135/iii; and WoO 36 No. 1/iii; 47 No. 1/i; 74; 92; 98.

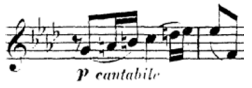
**28** See for instance Rousseau: *Dictionnaire de Musique*, Vol. 1, pp. 114 f.: "[…] adjectif Italien, qui signifie *Chantable, commode à chanter.*"

**29** Koch: *Musikalisches Lexikon*, cols. 299 f.: "[…] mit an einander geschleiften Tönen von mäßiger Stärke".

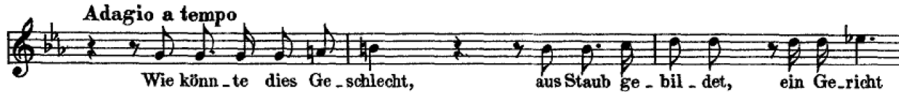
here, nor is it likely that there are sources that could substantiate any such claims.[30] But the wealth of later nineteenth-century recordings can provide some guidance, so perhaps *cantabile* can best mean a slight flexibility of tempo and a use of timbre and tone colour that sets the relevant material apart from its surroundings.[31]

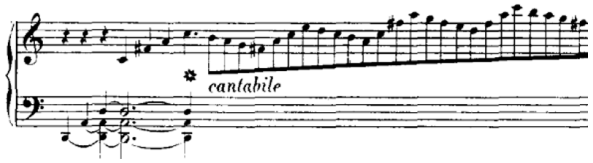


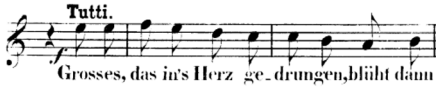

a) Missa Solemnis: Benedictus, bars 117–122, violin solo and bars 134–138, bass




b) Christ on the Mount of Olives, No. 1, bars 27 f., clarinet, and bars 87–89, tenor




c) Choral Fantasy Op. 80, fantasy, bar 17, and first entry of the tutti sopranos, bars 444–446

**FIGURE 7 Passages marked *Cantabile* as precursor to the vocal line**

30 Although many nineteenth-century authors have made a positive link between piano performance and singing (see for instance Hummel, Czerny, and Robert Schumann), it is neither clear to what extent Beethoven shared this opinion nor whether this consensus goes beyond favouring a sensitive treatment of the melody, particularly in rich textures in which the melody risks being overshadowed. One example out of many specifically dedicated to this purpose is Sigismund Thalberg: *L'art du chant appliqué au piano*, Paris 1853.

31 See e. g. David Greco: *Waking the Dead Diva. Recovering the Expressive Sound World of Forgotten Nineteenth-Century Singers*, PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2020.

On reflection, a number of conclusions can be drawn from this overview of Beethoven's use of expressive indications. Their use is anything but arbitrary, and particularly in later works, these terms appear in highly specific contexts – often with second or subsidiary themes and important motifs – which, together with discussions from contemporary literature, can serve to illuminate their intended meanings. Accordingly, Beethoven's use of *espressivo* implies both dynamic and tempo flexibility, *dolce* implies a stable, quiet, and sweet tone, and *cantabile* is associated with singable lines, both in terms of composition and performance. All three, but particularly *espressivo* and *cantabile*, were used by Beethoven to mark structurally important material, and accordingly, understanding the ways in which these indications are used is valuable for both performers and analysts.

It may very well be, however, that Beethoven was less consistent with these indications than his notation may suggest, and there may be hidden intended meanings behind these expressive indications that have slipped through the net of the broad approach that this paper has taken. This, however, is both inevitable, as it is not possible to know that we have exhausted the interpretative possibilities even if we had, and not necessarily undesirable: unlike with the Rosetta Stone with which Andersch compared these indications, even a partial understanding of these indications can lead players to interpret Beethoven's music in new and worthwhile, historically informed ways that would otherwise not be made.

## Content

INSTRUMENTS AND KEYBOARD PRACTICES

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