

A Comparative Study on the Three Editions of the First Movement of Beethoven's Sonata Das Lebewohl--A Case Study on the Comparison of the Expression Notations

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Abstract

The three common editions of the first movement of Beethoven's sonata Das Lebewohl are the First edition, the Shanghai Educational Publishing House edition which is derived from Wiener Urtext edition and adapted by Peter Howsid based on the original materials, and the WeinerLeo edition published by People's Music Publishing House in 1981. This thesis analyzes and compares these three editions from the perspectives of the ornament, slur and dynamic notation. It aims to offer suggestions on selecting the edition of the music score for performance and teaching.

Keywords

Beethoven's piano sonata Das Lebewohl; expression notations.

1. Introduction

Beethoven's sonata Das Lebewohl has been performed by many people. Besides, many publishing houses and performers have revised the music score with their own understanding, such as G. Henle edition, Wiener URTEXT edition, ABRSM edition and so on. Nowadays, due to the development of network technology, the number of editions of the music score which can be found is very large. These available editions are commonly used. However, most of the performers do not understand the differences among these editions accurately and cannot choose the suitable one so that they cannot interpret and perform the sonata exactly. This thesis will compare and analyze the three editions from the perspectives of the ornament, slur and dynamic notation, and make a suggestion on the performance and the study of the first movement of Das Lebewohl.

The three editions studied in this thesis are very typical. First edition is the original one (hereinafter refers to as Original edition), nearly the same as Beethoven's manuscript. It only sorted out and copied Beethoven's manuscript without any addition or revision, which is well worth studying and discussing. In addition, in teaching, WeinerLeo's edition published by People's Music Publishing House (hereinafter refers to as People's Music edition) is popular with students who are at the beginning stage of learning Beethoven's work, and it is widely accepted by modern and contemporary performers and Beethoven researchers. Some indicative revisions are added in this edition to help beginners understand and perform. There are some misprints and inaccuracies in the score, but it is obvious that these errors are not Beethoven's thought. Therefore, this edition also corrects these errors which may be made by Beethoven's clerical errors. Some notations are added as well, such as dynamic notations, syntactic notations, slurs which the original one obviously lacked, and martellato marks which were ignored by the original one, but should be added according to the features of the work. Although many revisions are made in this edition, in essence, it is strictly faithful to the original one. What's more, the edition of Shanghai Music Publishing House (hereinafter refers to as Wiener edition) is derived from

Wiener URTEXT edition and adapted by Peter Howsid according to the original materials. Wiener Urtext Publishing House is famous for publishing the most authoritative edition that is based on composer's manuscript and the original edition. This edition examines each part in detail and compares various available original materials in order to be closest to the intention of the composer. It has been the most common edition in the market and one of the editions which are played most frequently in modern and contemporary performance.

This thesis will compare and analyze the three editions from the perspectives of the ornament, slur and dynamic notation, and make a suggestion on the performance and the study of the first movement of Das Lebewohl.

2. The Comparison of Ornament

2.1 Turn

There are three bars with turn in the first movement of Das Lebewohl: the third, the ninth and the tenth bar. As Figure 1 shows, the turn notation in People's Music edition is most detailed. It shows how to perform turn precisely, which is friendly for beginners. In contrast, as Figure 2 and Figure 3 show, the original edition and Wiener edition only contain turn notations without any other marks.



Fig 1. People's Music Edition Turn

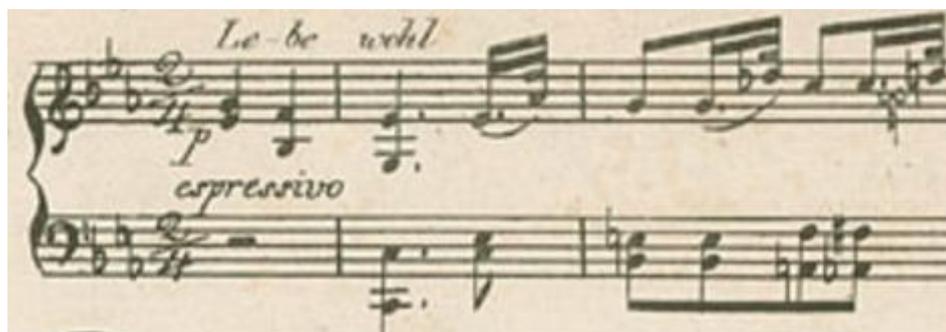


Fig 2. Original Edition Turn



Fig 3. Wiener Edition Turn

2.2 Staccato

In the sixth bar, a staccato mark is added on the last note to the slur of the triplet played by the right hand in People’s Music edition, while there is only a slur in Original edition and Wiener edition. As Figure 4 shows, the addition of a staccato mark makes the music score more explicit to show performers how to play, which is suitable for beginners. According to Figure 5 and Figure 6, there is only a slur with nothing else in Original edition and Wiener edition.



Fig 4. People’s Music Edition Staccato



Fig 5. Original Edition Staccato



Fig 6. Wiener Edition Staccato

Additionally, in the 16th bar, People’s Music edition is different from the other two editions. Figure 7 shows that the addition of the staccato in People’s Music edition gives a direction to performers about how to perform this part, whereas as Figure 8 and Figure 9 show, no extra notations are involved in Wiener edition and Original edition so that the music score will not constrain performers, but give them freedom to deal with it depending on their own understanding.



Fig 7. People’s Music Edition Staccato



Fig 8. Original Edition Staccato



Fig 9. Wiener Edition Staccato

2.3 Tenuto

In the 18th bar of the work, all of these three editions contain a “ten.” mark which means tenuto. Tenuto is a musical term in Italian, meaning “to hold”. In practice, tenuto is marked by its abbreviation “ten”. Besides, it is also notated by a short horizontal line placed immediately above or below the note to indicate that the duration of the note or the chord should be fully held. It is usually notated in a phrase with a staccato or within a passage to cause performers’ attention. According to Figure 10, in People’s Music edition, the mark “ten.” is added to all of the four melodic tonics in the soprano and the basso. In Figure 11, it can be found that the melodic tonics of the soprano and the basso are notated in Wiener edition. As figure 12 shows, the mark “tenuto” is only written on the right hand in Original edition.



Fig 10. Dynamic Notation People’s Music Edition



Figure 11. Dynamic Notation Wiener Edition

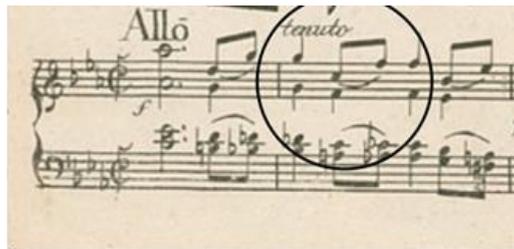


Figure 12. Dynamic Notation Original Edition

3. The Comparison of Slurs

3.1 Phrase Slur

The sections the slur links are the phrases in the work. It helps performers understand the complete meaning of each phrase in the work and indicates the sharps and flats in the music.

Take the section from the 50th bar to the 52nd bar and the section from the 54th bar to the 56th bar as examples. From Figure 13, it can be found that in People’s Music edition, both of the two sections consist of two repeated phrases with some varieties, and the two phrases in each section are linked by the slur notated in the soprano. In the performance, performers can grasp the breath and tone of the music based on the slurs. On the contrary, in Wiener edition and Original edition, there are no slurs. See details in Figure 14 and Figure 15.



Fig 13. Phrase Slur People’s Music Edition



Fig 14. Phrase Slur Original Edition



Fig 15. Phrase Slur Wiener Edition

As for the 221st bar to the 224th bar, according to People’s Music edition in Figure 16, the phrase belongs to two parts and is linked by two slurs notated in each part. It is not easy for people who are at the early stage of learning to separate the phrases exactly. Such slurs can show the beginning and the end of the phrase, and provide an indication for learners to play the sharps and flats in the music. Apart from that, the note linked by the two slurs serves as a connection and tells performers that the tones of the two parts below the slurs are interconnected. Figure 17 and Figure 18 describe the other two editions in detail.



Fig 16. Phrase Slur People’s Music Edition



Fig 17. Phrase Slur Wiener Edition



Fig 18. Phrase Slur Original Edition

Furthermore, in the 251st bar to the 255th bar, superimposed slurs are used in People’s Music edition in Figure 19. Generally, the superimposed slur is used because the phrase is long enough, or due to the need of typesetting, or the purpose of the composer and the editor that they want to make the music score easier for performers to understand the internal structure within the long phrase.



Fig 19. Phrase Slur People’s Music Edition

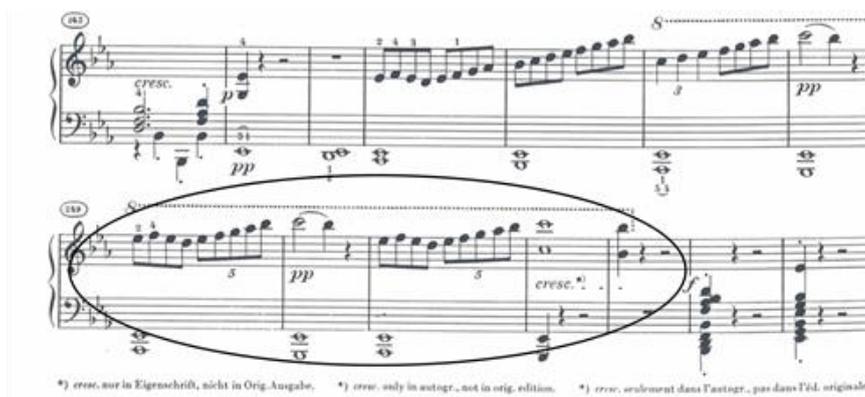


Fig 20. Phrase Slur Original Edition

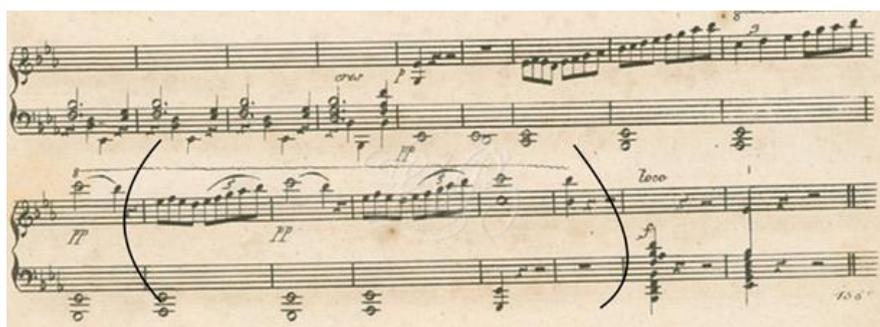


Fig 21. Phrase Slur Wiener Edition

3.2 Phrasing Slur

The sections it connects are the phrasings in the phrase. It describes the performance of each phrasing in the phrase, and serves as the indication and guidance for performance.

Take the section from the 29th to the 32nd bar as an example. In People’s Music edition in Figure 22, the function of the slur is to separate the phrasings. Therefore, performers should not be disturbed with the slur in order to achieve the fluency in playing the phrase. What’s more, performers do not need to raise the hand in accordance with the indication of the slur. However, from Wiener edition in Figure 23 and Original edition in Figure 24, it can be found that these two editions give freedom to performers to deal with it.



Fig 22. Phrasing Slur People’s Music Edition



Fig 23. Phrasing Slur Wiener Edition



Fig 24. Phrasing Slur Original Edition

In addition, here is an example of the section from the 225th to the 237th bar. People’s Music edition in Figure 25 divides the long phrase into eight phrasings. According to the music score, it requires performers to play the phrase completely and coherently. As for the eight phrasings, performers should make a comparison among them and interpret them on the basis of the slurs.



Fig 25. Phrasing Slur People’s Music Edition



Fig 26. Phrasing Slur Wiener Edition



Fig 27. Phrasing Slur Original Edition

3.3 Motive Slur: It Describes the Specific Tone of Tthe Work

In the first and the second bar of the music score, People’s Music edition in Figure 28 marks out the motive of the work. When analyzing the structure, motive is the most important element in one phrase, one period or even the whole work. It is a material of musical idea with characteristics. It is also the core theme of the work, the seeded material for development and the dominant tone. However, Wiener edition in Figure 29 and Original edition in Figure 30 only notate the chord.



Fig 28. People’s Music Motive Slur



Fig 29. Wiener Edition Motive Slur



Fig 30. Original Edition Motive Slur

3.4 Melody Slur: It Usually Tends to Show the Melody to Readers

To deal with the section from the 19th to the 31st bar, in People’s Music edition in Figure 31, slurs are added to the melody played by the right hand consciously because the composer or the editor wants to highlight the melody of the work.



Fig 31. Melody Slur People’s Music Edition



Fig 32. Melody Slur Wiener Edition

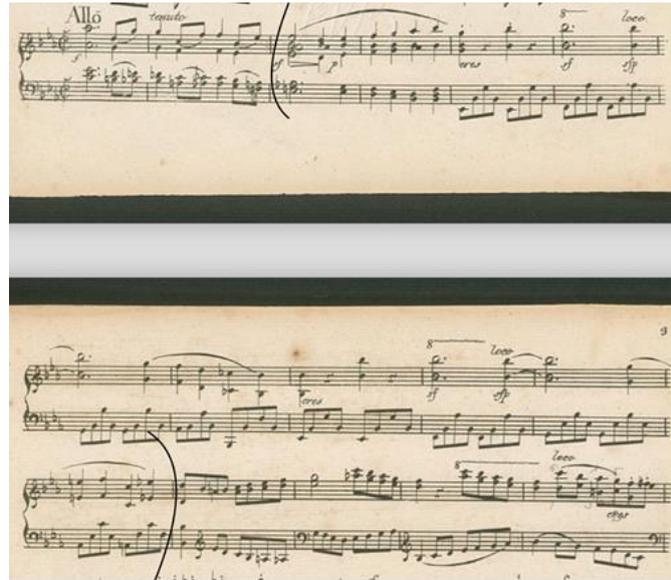


Fig 33. Melody Slur Original Edition

3.5 The Comparison of Dynamic Notations

In the seventh bar, a mark “P”, standing for “piano” is added in People’s Music edition in Figure 34 to give an indication to performers that the note here should be softer than the former accented note, while in Wiener edition in Figure 35 and Original edition in Figure 36, no marks are added because this phrase is the development of the former one in which the “P” mark has been notated.



Fig 34. Dynamic Notation People’s Music Edition



Fig 35. Dynamic Notation Wiener Edition



Fig 36. Dynamic Notation Original Edition



Fig 37. Dynamic Notation People’s Music Edition

In the 58th bar, the mark “mf”, standing for “mezzo-forte” is written in People’s Music edition in Figure 37, which indicates a more subtle degree of loudness. From this perspective, People’s Music edition is more suitable for beginners to learn Beethoven’s work. By contrast, Wiener edition in Figure 38 and Original edition in Figure 39 without any other marks leave more room for performers to interpret the work.



Fig 38. Dynamic Notation Wiener Edition

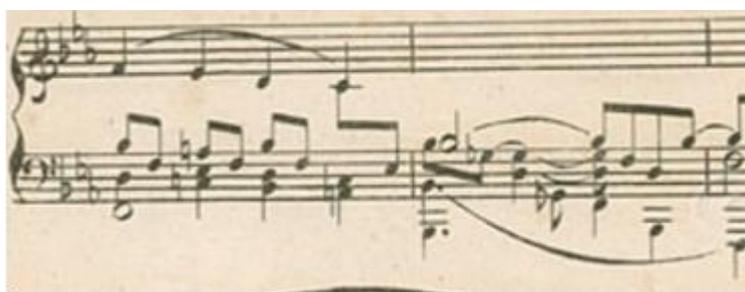


Fig 39. Dynamic Notation Original Edition

Aside from that, in the 150th bar, the mark “mf” is marked in People’s Music edition in Figure 40 to indicate the process of performance, which is suitable for the performers who study Beethoven’s work at the early stage. In contrast, no notations are added in the Original edition in Figure 41 and Wiener edition in Figure 42.



Fig 40. Dynamic Notation People’s Music Edition



Fig 41. Dynamic Notation Original Edition



Fig 42. Dynamic Notation Wiener Edition

Furthermore, in the 96th bar, the three editions are different from each other. On the one hand, as Figure 44 shows, in Wiener edition, the mark “p” is notated in both the 95th and 96th bar to suggest that the melody of this phrase should be softer and the end of this phrase must be played softly. On the other hand, there is no notation in the 96th bar in People’s Music edition in Figure 43 and Original edition in Figure 45 because the mark “p” has been notated in the 95th bar.



Fig 43. Dynamic Notation People’s Music Edition



Fig 44. Dynamic Notation Wiener Edition

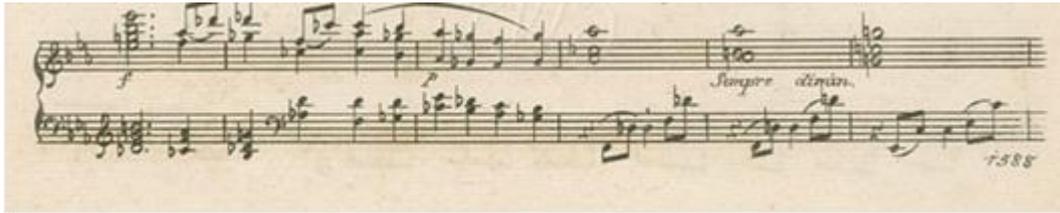


Fig 45. Dynamic Notation Original Edition

4. Comprehensive Analysis

4.1 The Development of Three Editions

The reason why the music score of the work is evolved constantly, and the new edition is published one after another is that many pianists revise the original one with their own interpretation. The pianists have their own experience and live in different ages, so they have different interpretations of the work and new ways to do with it. On the basis of the original score, they add their own interpretation of the music score appropriately in order to make more performers show the work better.

In this thesis, People's Music edition, Original edition and Wiener edition are studied. When creating the original one, the composer changes and modifies the work too many times, so the original music score is not clear enough to read. Then the editors arrange the original music score and compile a new edition, Wiener edition. After that, to help the beginners who have difficulty in dealing with the original one read and study the music score better, People's Music edition is compiled. The directions and notations in this edition are the most comprehensive, which provide specific guidance for beginners. The development of the three editions can be described as follows. From Original edition to Wiener edition, there is little revision. The later edition is the formulation and arrangement of the former. From Wiener edition to People's Music edition, there are more revisions, including ornaments, slurs, dynamic notations, pedal notations and so on. Except for that, editor's own interpretation of the sonata Das Lebewohl is added in the later edition.

4.2 Suggestions on the Selection of the Three Editions

Performers need to choose an edition in correspondence with their level so as to study the music score better. Besides, performers can choose different editions to study at different stages or levels of learning. First of all, People's Music edition is suitable for the beginners at a middle level and the performers who play Beethoven's work for the first time, because the notes and proposed revisions are most detailed, which can help beginners who are at their primary stage understand the thought and feeling of the work. However, it is the detailed notes in People's Music edition that may restrict the performers to play in the later period of study. Therefore, performers can change another edition of the music score after grasping it, with the result that they can put their own feelings into the performance. Secondly, Wiener edition is suitable for those performers who are at a high level, because this edition with only a small number of notations is the closest to the original one, which leaves more room for performers. However, if the performers at a high level choose People's Music edition, they will be restricted when performing and cannot make the best use of their abilities. At the same time, this edition is also suitable for the performers who are at a lower level, but enter upon the late stage of learning. Thirdly, Original edition is suitable for the performers at all levels who have mastered how to deal with the work, grasped the performance of the work, and had a mature performance of the work to study this edition again. Performers can judge whether the feeling they express and the way to do with the music score are in conformity with the original composer. Moreover, a further improvement can be made in their performance.

The music score is the major carrier that western music can be passed down to today. It is the music score that makes the culture of music spread and inherited. A perfect performance of one work is based on the performer's accurate understanding of the music score and the work. And the accurate

understanding depends on performer's study and analysis of the music score the composer left. Every ornament, every slur, every dynamic notation, every musical notation and every note in the music score is the expression and statement of the composer. For performers, in order to perform the culture of music perfectly, they should have an exact understanding of the style of the work, the thought and feeling that the composer wants to express. Through the different editions of the music score, it can be seen that people have different understandings and interpretations of the same work in different ages and different style. It is of great significance for performers to judge different editions of the same work objectively in the process of learning and interpreting the work. Therefore, performers need to analyze the modification and addition the editor revises, and understand the indications the editor shows so that they can get the inspiration and perform perfectly.

Among these three editions of Beethoven's Das Lebewohl, Original edition is the best one to show the original creation. Any performance and academic study should refer to the Original edition firstly. Only by taking the original one as the basis, can the performance and the study be accurate. Apart from that, in the process of study, performers can refer to Wiener edition and People's Music edition, and compare these two editions. In Original edition, the notations and marks are different from that of modern editions. What's more, there are little contemporary direction marks and notations in many music scores of original edition, which makes the beginners have difficulty in dealing with it. On the contrary, there are more notations in People's Music edition, which can offer a great help to performers who study Beethoven's work for the first time. By taking Original edition as the basis, choosing different editions at different stages of learning and referring to more editions with academic values, we may make a further improvement in our understanding of the music, the interpretation of the work and the fluency in performance.

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