Chopin’s C**antabile** in Context

Dissertation

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Abstract

The term and concept of *cantabile* developed in the context of Italian opera, where it characterized a slow-moving, lyrical aria; but in and after the eighteenth century it assumed a far broader role in European composition and performance, providing a defined and recognizable context for ornamentation and *tempo rubato* in both vocal and instrumental music. Although modern scholarship has recognized diverse elements of *cantabile*, particularly in nineteenth-century opera, its signature features of ornamentation and *tempo rubato* remain comparatively unexplored in relation to the essential domain of piano music. Indeed, since Gerald Abraham’s landmark Chopin’s Musical Style (1939), nineteenth-century piano *cantabile* has most often been relegated to the status of a generic lyricism that requires no further explanation.

My dissertation restores a forgotten reality, first by tracing the absorption of *cantabile* into French music, where it formed a natural alliance with *bon goût* and came to play a key role in French piano methods by leading early nineteenth-century pedagogues, and then by studying more closely the music and Parisian environment of Frédéric Chopin, who most spectacularly reproduced *cantabile*’s vocal qualities in an
original pianistic idiom. The fifteen cantabile markings found in his compositions, datable between 1828 and 1846, allow a focused and penetrating glimpse of his stylistic trajectory, from brilliant pianism to stripped-down simplicity and, ultimately, integration of contrapuntal density, always underpinned by the use of harmonies and rhythmic figures derived from the Polish music of his youth. As they broaden our vision of cantabile to a fundamental yet idealized style involving spontaneous embellishment and responsive rubato, these passages also refine our understanding of how melody was created and improvised in standard early-nineteenth-century performance practice, why cantabile was particularly conducive to an intersection of French and Italian style, and how Chopin’s own cantabile writing could represent the pinnacle of its adaptation to piano music.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to anyone whose passion for learning and continuous self-transformation has led to the overcoming of insurmountable personal difficulties in pursuit of an advanced degree. It is also dedicated, with immeasurable gratitude, to the small group of individuals without whom I would not have been able to finish this Ph.D. This is for you, and I thank you.
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without the insight of David Kasunic, Jeffrey Kallberg and others, who have made themselves available to me since our meeting at the conference celebrating the bicentennial of Chopin’s birth in Warsaw, in February-March of 2010. I am also grateful for the support provided by the Presidential Fellowship I received from The Ohio State University, which enabled me to write uninterrupted during 2012. The faculty here at Ohio State has also been an unfailing source of knowledge and stimulation. I wish to thank Arved Ashby for serving on my committee with enthusiasm and for his encouraging words about my topic. To my Advisor Lois Rosow I owe thanks for her patience while guiding me through the treacherous but glorious terrain of the eighteenth century. Finally, my advisor Graeme Boone has repeatedly gone above and beyond the call of duty to ensure my progress and to push me towards excellence as a writer, thinker, and scholar. I will always be indebted to him.
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INTRODUCTION

I first considered cantabile as a topic when I encountered the short, little-known piece by Chopin, penned in 1834 and marked simply “cantabile.” Research into the term revealed a surprising complexity of meanings lying beneath its apparently straightforward surface. The primary Italian, German, and French sources that discuss cantabile in opera and instrumental music between 1723 and 1840 reveal a disconnection between its original context of specific and consistently identifiable characteristics and its interpretation today as denoting a mere “lyric” style. Particularly in relation to Chopin’s music, cantabile has been viewed as a style of writing he shared with Italian opera, invoked somewhat haphazardly by scholars in reference to that evident but unqualified relationship. The task of restoring cantabile to its original meaning begins with pinpointing how and when its understanding shifted in the scholarly consciousness to its current association with generic singing melody, thus moving away from its original early eighteenth-century environment of a slow tempo, spontaneous decoration of the melody, and elastic tempo rubato in relation to a regularly moving bass.
Cantabile in the Literature

Since the middle of the last century, scholars have usually conceived of cantabile as a self-evident, lyric style that requires no further explanation. Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, for example, contains no separate entry for cantabile, and the New Grove devotes only a single paragraph to the term.\(^1\) The only comprehensive definition I have found is in the “Cantabile” entry of the Handwörterbuch der Musikalischen Terminologie; author Thomas Seedorf covers cantabile’s diverse qualities admirably from its origin in late medieval chant until the late eighteenth century. These include Caccini’s literal characterization as well-constructed, singable melody; the quality of simple and unaffected anti-virtuosity, contrasting with the bravura, as described by Heinichen and other early eighteenth-century German writers on the art of composition; and what Seedorf calls an “anthropological” connection to the voice as the supremely natural instrument in mid-eighteenth-century France, as propagated by Blainville and Rousseau. His article concludes, however, with only a brief discussion of early nineteenth-century cantabile and does not mention its ubiquitous presence in opera or zealous adaptation to piano music between 1820 and 1850 — a period that stands out, it could be argued, as its historical zenith.

Today’s partial understanding of cantabile is reflected in recent scholarship on Chopin, the result of a similar trajectory away from the precise nineteenth-century

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\(^1\) The New Grove Dictionary of 2001 devotes its single paragraph nearly entirely to instrumental music, and then refers to cantabile’s formal presence in the operatic scene in a single sentence: “As a title, it is used in 19th-century Italian opera for the slow first section of the double aria, followed by a tempo di mezzo and cabaletta.” See The New Grove Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.ohio state.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/04746 (accessed May 29, 2012), s.v. “Cantabile.”
understanding of the style in relation to his music. A significant shift took place during the decade before World War II, by which time the passing of individuals within Chopin’s environment had severed direct contact with his habits: evidently, this break — compounded by the social upheaval of a global conflict — was enough to allow for a drift of scholarly understanding of his cantabile away from its two fundamental and inextricable components of ornamentation and rubato, and towards a non-specific designation of “singing” Italian melody.

The best collection of first-hand descriptions of Chopin’s performing style appears in Le Courrier musical of 1910, in an issue dedicated exclusively to Chopin. It contains interviews by French pianist Francis Planté of several members of Chopin’s intimate circle, including the cellist Franchomme, the countess Potocka, and the princess Marceline Czartoryska. Planté describes the inseparable nature of ornamentation and rubato in Chopin, and points out that distorted interpretations of rubato in Chopin’s music would be averted if the technique were properly understood as “but a great freedom and fantasy in the melodic design with its fioriture.”

The most recent monograph known to me that conveys an accurate conception of cantabile is Ludwig Bronarski’s Chopin et l’Italie of 1947. In a chapter on Italian elements in Chopin’s music, he begins with a section entitled Le cantabile; élégance et souplesse de la mélodie, followed by Les Ornements et le tempo rubato. On some level, Bronarski understands the relationship between the cantabile style and ornamentation and rubato, although he does not explicitly link those two characteristics to cantabile as their

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generating source. He does emphasize the personal and “spiritual” qualities of Chopin’s style of ornamentation, and he points out the role *rubato* plays in providing the temporal flexibility necessary for the ornaments to glisten with their signature sparkle.³

It would seem that, at the time of Planté’s writing in the early twentieth century, the innate relationship between *cantabile*’s two fundamental traits and Chopin’s music went unquestioned. By the time of Bronarski just after World War II, however, the relationship had already begun to loosen into something less essential. Gerald Abraham’s *Chopin’s Musical Style* was published in 1939, the first year of World War II, and it is one of the first to depart from the conception of ornamentation and *rubato* as inextricable elements of Chopinian melody. Abraham makes valid points about Chopin’s “stylization of *bel canto*” and use of vocal techniques such as repeated notes and *parlando*; yet he uses the terms “*cantabile* melody” and “pseudo-*cantabile* effect” without definition, and seems to be unaware of the inextricable association between ornamental techniques and responsive tempo *rubato*, as well as their innate presence in the *cantabile* aria.⁴

Since then, the tendency in scholarship has been to relegate Chopinian melody to a generic relationship with Italian opera; or to gloss over discussions of *bel canto* and Chopin’s melodic style altogether. Noted scholar Jim Samson is an example of the latter; perhaps in a desire to skirt the fruitless controversy over which opera composer exercised the most influence on Chopin, in his biography of 1996 he acknowledges the range of

characteristics taken from Italian and French opera that surfaced in Chopin’s music, but argues that the ornamental, bel canto melodies composed after his arrival in Paris were essentially prepared by exposure to singers and compositional efforts of his earlier Warsaw period. While Samson’s argument has merit, it serves to draw attention away from the transformations in lyric writing that occurred after Chopin’s arrival in Paris.\(^5\)

And as David Kasunic has observed, Samson’s Chapter on bel canto in The Music of Chopin does not mention Bellini at all.\(^6\) This is surprising, given the quantity and diversity of the music Chopin composed in that style while in Paris, in sustained contact with Bellini and other composers, as well as the penetrating insight Samson shows in his musical analysis.

The most important study specifically devoted to Chopin’s cantabile is Jonathan Bellman’s article “Chopin and the Cantabile Style” of 1989.\(^7\) Even here, however, amid discussions of contemporary keyboard practices of fingering, improvised ornamentation, tone, and temporal flexibility, the author positions those qualities under a general umbrella of style without naming the cantabile aria as their generating source. The term “cantabile melody,” as Bellman employs it, seems to mean merely “melodious.” He concludes the article by claiming that “this much is certain: the more successful we are at finding and using these subtle variations in touch and rhythm, the closer we are to recovering the tools Chopin used in his realization of the cantabile style.”\(^8\) This assertion

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\(^5\) Jim Samson, Chopin (New York: Schirrmer, 1997), 64.


\(^8\) Jonathan Bellman, “Chopin and the Cantabile Style,” 70.
supports Bellman’s chief concern of performance practice, most prominently at the level of the particular ornament or expressive gesture, rather than the historical background of the style he wishes to realize at the keyboard.

My dissertation will restore cantabile to its original meaning. As I establish the connections between the historic cantabile aria and Chopin’s fifteen passages marked cantabile a century later, I will demonstrate how he translated the earlier, traditional style into an original pianistic idiom, preserving its signature features of lyric melody, implied selective, spontaneous ornamentation and tempo rubato, while incorporating heightened counterpoint and dramatically innovative bass lines. Significantly, the cantabile passages from all periods were invigorated with “marginal” folk idioms, integrating what we could call an ethnic flavor taken from Polish music into a wide variety of genres, while still maintaining the recognizable and intensely emotive quality of mainstream Italian operatic melody.

Chapter One presents the background of the concept of goût, or taste, in eighteenth-century France, in social interaction as well as music, where the desire for pleasing moderation was heightened during currents of naturalism and Neo-Classicism. Definitions by Rousseau and Framery illustrate the breadth of musical goût during that period and its general meaning as what was considered socially appropriate and charming, as well as its more specific meaning of clusters of ornamental notes, i.e. notes de goût. It is only by understanding the eighteenth-century role of taste as a synonym of the act of ornamentation itself, and the importance of tasteful ornamentation in the
cantabile aria as presented by Framery, that the nineteenth-century French definitions of cantabile as “taste, soul, and simplicity” found in method books for piano discussed in Chapter Three assume their true meaning.

Drawing on contemporaneous pedagogical treatises and dictionaries, Chapter Two situates cantabile into the landscape of early nineteenth-century opera, including its noble and elegant character; its incorporation of spontaneous embellishment, and resulting tempo rubato; its educational value for developing singing technique, including breath support and the selection and execution of ornaments; and its status as synonymous with canto spianato, or lyric, spun-out melody, sprinkled with selective ornamentation designed to highlight the text. The diversity of arias classified as cantabile is also explored, and how it united the aesthetic ideals inherited from the past century with lush, expressive, sostenuto melodies in the works of Bellini. Following Chopin’s intersection with Bellini in Paris 1831-1833, his Andante spianato seems to have been a fruitful experiment that brought together his own ideals, and Bellini’s bel canto spianato.

The cantabile aria was not only held up as an aesthetic ideal not only for vocal music, but was also increasingly adapted to French keyboard music. Through descriptions in pedagogical treatises for piano as “taste, soul, and expression” and other supportive commentary on style, Chapter Three outlines the early nineteenth-century implementation of cantabile. Contemporaneous writers tried to explain Italian cantabile in French terms, successfully grasping its elegance, lyricism and tasteful ornamentation, while remaining perplexed about its accompanying trait of rubato (which they never link
to *cantabile* by name). Indeed, being the only context for *rubato* in which one performer executes the melody as well as the independent yet supportive bass line, the challenges in keyboard music were particular and vexing.

In their attempts to reproduce vocal *cantabile* on the keyboard, composers usually erred on the side of outdated textures and idioms; excessive melodic filigree; or imitation of existing operatic works. Nowhere was the lack of inspiration more noticeable than in the perfunctory left-hand writing, frequently resembling either an Alberti bass or a note-by-note outline of the prevailing harmony. It is precisely in the accompaniments of passages marked *cantabile* that Chopin achieved what may be, in comparison with the music of his contemporaries, his most dramatic innovations in the texture of *cantabile* writing.

Chapters Four and Five culminate the dissertation, beginning with a focus on the characteristics of ornamentation and *rubato* in Chopin’s compositions and his playing style, and concluding with an analysis of the fifteen passages Chopin specifically marked *cantabile*. On a case-by-case basis, scholars and performers have come to logical conclusions about how to interpret and execute Chopin’s ornaments; others have made general observations about the relationship between Chopin’s lyric writing, and baroque as well as early Romantic operatic textures of florid melody over sparse bass lines. The next step is to take the operatic origin of Chopin’s *cantabile* to its logical conclusion, and to argue, in his music, for the inextricable and mutually dependent relationship between the florid ornamentation — a fabric operating on the level of the phrase, section, or work, rather than on the level of the individual note — and temporal *rubato* in relation to the
steady underlying bass. This can be observed implicitly in many passages, but I have chosen to focus on the fifteen passages Chopin chose to mark cantabile.

Analysis of the textures of Chopin’s cantabile passages reveals that the writing for melody and bass evolved significantly and in different ways. Chopin’s left-hand textures grew out of the repetitive figuration of the Alberti bass, as well as the sparse harmonic outlines of early nineteenth-century opera; both accompaniments functioned in a slow harmonic rhythm, forming a clear trajectory from fairly simplistic and subordinate, to independent lines of greater interest, with the use of dense chords and multiple voices. The evolution of the melodic lines is much more complex.

The character of the melodies marked cantabile ranges from early floridity in the La ci darem la mano Variations, Op. 2, followed by a period of simplification in the Cantabile of 1834, and a later incorporation of counterpoint in the Barcarolle and Sonata Op. 58. The diversity of the cantabile passages shows us that just as his early understanding of the style’s character was an inevitable outgrowth of past operatic traditions, his conception eventually transcended the operatic texture of its heritage, and that he became comfortable merging its spontaneous embellishment and rubato with surprisingly dense contrapuntal textures. Yet within their diversity, it must be reiterated, lies the persistent influence of ethnic music: the passages marked cantabile from all periods show evidence of the rhythms and chordal textures germane to Polish folk music that surrounded him from his earliest youth.

In a certain sense, one might argue that Chopin perfectly assimilated into piano music the operatic tradition he inherited, yet from another, he manipulated it in an
unprecedented way while maintaining its essential core. As in all studies of Chopin’s style, it is imperative that we balance our understanding of him as admiring of and building on the past, while recognizing his use of contemporary source material including popular opera and social dance music. Resisting the scholarly temptation to make Chopin conform to any of the available contemporaneous models, and to draw concrete conclusions about his sources of inspiration, we are better able to balance his comparative originality with his use of past traditions, acknowledging both without willfully privileging either.

Chopin’s application of *cantabile* constitutes an ingenious mélange of past and present, to be explored in depth in the following pages.
CHAPTER ONE

CANTABILE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

In the course of the eighteenth century, as Italian opera spread across Europe, discourse about the cantabile aria and the style derived from it surfaced in a variety of literary genres including didactic manuals and treatises, dictionaries and encyclopedias, and writings on aesthetics. In Germany, cantabile was linked to the galant style in composition, first by Johann Mattheson, who cited Italian opera for its galanterie — its stylishness and modernity — and eventually as an explicit reaction against learned counterpoint. In Germany and Austria, moreover, cantabile entered in instrumental music. J. S. Bach, whose interest in Italian music is well known, wrote that his Inventions and Sinfonias of 1723 would show amateurs of the keyboard how “to obtain a cantabile style of playing.” Haydn and Mozart used the marking cantabile numerous

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9 French and German explanations tended to be more explicit and comprehensive in this respect than the Italian, perhaps because Italian authors relied to a greater extent on the reader’s first-hand knowledge of that country’s operatic traditions.


11 “Eine cantable Art im Spielen zu Erlangen.” Quoted by Seedorf, ibid., 9. In a discussion of Bach’s performing directive and related remarks by C.P.E. Bach and Guillaume Nivers, Yonit Lea Kosovske summarizes: “Thus I suggest that the term cantabile is a reminder to think lyrically and rhetorically like a singer who conveys text through music.” See Kosovske, Historical Harpsichord Technique: Developing La douceur du toucher (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 100-1. For literal translations of cantabile into German, Seedorf lists the adjectives “singbar” and “gesanglich,” and “cantabel” and “kantabel” as terms found in primary sources. It certainly seems that Bach intended “cantabile” when he
times in lyric slow movements in their piano sonatas and string quartets from the 1750s to the 1790s; and C. P. E. Bach discussed the characteristics of *legato* and spontaneous ornamentation germane to works marked *cantabile*. During this entire period, however, the French engaged with *cantabile* solely as a vocal style, and the most useful information for understanding it from a French perspective is therefore found in French vocal compositions and discussions of vocal music.

During the early eighteenth century, issues of Italian vs. French style, taste and ornamentation were addressed in the genre of the French *cantate*, which, according to David Tunley, incorporated some elements of Italian style including “the continuo anticipation of the melody, ostinato and ground bass, the da capo and ritornello forms”: these were synthesized with traditional French emphasis on expression of the text and selective ornamentation. The typical *cantate* contained three recitatives and three airs; one of these, sometimes marked “air tendre,” was slow and tender, and thus would seem to be the obvious point of stylistic connection with the slow-moving, expressive Italian *cantabile* aria.

Yet in extensive research on the genre and its characteristics, Tunley has shown that the French often avoided the signature Italian technique of motivic development, with its “angularity and long passages of sequential writing,” and remarks that

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“throughout the repertoire there are also many airs that owe little to Italian inspiration, particularly the slow and tender ones.” I would suggest, however, that the lyric character of such airs helped to pave the way for the increasing appreciation, and gradual assimilation, of the Italian *cantabile* aria and style.\(^\text{12}\)

When we turn to eighteenth-century French writers and critics, we find that in discussing the state of music, many are preoccupied with reconciliation between the restrained decorum of the prevailing *goût*, or taste, and the more demonstrative Italian style. A particular concern was tasteful ornamentation, an issue that will occupy the next few pages.

In general practice, ornaments were not always notated, but singers were expected to embellish tastefully. The problem was that neither the ornaments nor the art of tasteful ornamentation were ever precisely or consistently defined. As late as 1755, Jean Antoine Bérard admits in his *L’Art du chant* that “it is surprising that until now no one has thought it wise to determine the quantity and meaning of the ornaments.”\(^\text{13}\) The challenging process of selecting and properly performing ornaments was intended to produce the desired “sense of nobility or subtleness to the point of restraint,” qualities


often “referred to as bon goût,” and considered necessary for a correct interpretation of French music.\textsuperscript{14}

In addition to the practical difficulties regarding tasteful ornaments, a further conundrum eighteenth-century French authors faced in their discussions of taste in music is that as an abstract concept it hovered between what could be evaluated rationally and what existed independent of reasonable judgment as an artifact of the social and musical status quo. Because of its volatile and contingent nature, le bon goût resisted definition. In the introduction to his article on l’honnête-homme, Don Fader expressed this dilemma, one that he found to originate in seventeenth-century notions of taste.\textsuperscript{15}

The “enigma” surrounding the concept of taste is largely the result of attempts by 18th-century philosophers to rationalize a notion whose initial 17th-century usage was based upon a tension-filled relationship between the more philosophical academic tradition of criticism and concepts derived from the social world of the aristocracy which emphasized noble “feeling.” In fact, one important theme highlighted in the criticism of the time was that artistic production ought to be measured against the tastes and values of “good society.”

Eighteenth-century thinkers attempting to flesh out taste discovered that ultimately, rational evaluation could go only so far. Good taste was, in fact, a non-rational, intuitive sensing or recognition of the tasteful, brought about by a social conditioning that varied according to time and place. Aware of this, writers were reluctant to commit to a concrete definition. The inability to prescribe rules for tasteful ornamentation would surface, as we shall see, in the Conservatoire’s early nineteenth-century discussion of the cantabile aria, known for its tasteful character as well as spontaneous ornamentation.

\textsuperscript{14} Hehr, “How the French Viewed the Differences,” 76.
The fact that those two qualities came to be evoked by the single word *goût* brought an additional level of confusion to discussions of *cantabile*.

During the later eighteenth century, the spirit of the Enlightenment inspired debates among men of letters, and the heightened intellectual activity brought *bon goût*, music, and ornamentation together in the discourse, in what proved to be an especially provocative way for *cantabile*. Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire de musique* of 1768 and the *Encyclopédie méthodique* by Momigny and Framery published in 1791 — the latter structured as a reprint of most of Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire* entries, followed by selective responses signed by one or both of the authors — frame their own debate over contemporary music. Their articles on taste and *cantabile* are most illuminating.

Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire* includes an entry on taste, which he first declares to be a matter of individual perception: taste is variable, in the sense that personal preference determines one’s favorite type of music, be it *airs* “pathétiques” or “gais,” ornamented or simple: “One [person] will look for simplicity in the melody, the other will [emphasize] ornate features, and both of them will call elegance the taste they prefer.”16 After noting the personal aspects of taste, Rousseau observes another kind of taste, a normative or universal taste known to those who are rigorous and methodical in their thought [bien organisés], rather than prone to the changeable habits and fashions of the moment.

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16 “L’un cherchera la simplicité dans la mélodie, l’autre sera cas des traits recherchés, & tous deux appelleront élégance le goût qu’ils auront préféré.”
He concludes the entry on taste with the difference between *Goût* and *Génie*:\(^\text{17}\)

Au reste, le Génie crée, mais le Goût choisit: souvent un Génie trop abondant a besoin d’un Censeur sévère qui l’empêche d’abuser de ses richesses. Sans Goût on peut faire de grandes choses; mais c’est lui qui les rend intéressantes. C’est le Goût qui fait saisir au Compositeur les idées du Poète; c’est le Goût qui fait saisir à l’Exécutant les idées du Compositeur; c’est le Goût qui fournit à l’un & à l’autre tout ce qui peut orner & faire valoir leur sujet; & c’est le Goût qui donne à l’Auditeur le sentiment de toutes ces convenances. Cependant le Goût n’est point la sensibilité. On peut avoir beaucoup de Goût avec une âme froide, & tel homme transporté des choses vraiment passionnées est peu touché des gracieuses. Il semble que le Goût s’attache plus volontiers aux petites expressions, & la sensibilité aux grandes.

*For the rest, Genius creates, but Taste chooses: often an over-abundant Genius needs a severe Censor to prevent it from abusing its riches. Without Taste one can do grand things; but it is [taste] that makes them interesting. It is Taste that allows the Composer to grasp the ideas of the Poet; it is taste that allows the Performer to grasp the ideas of the Composer; it is Taste that furnishes to one and the other everything that can decorate and give value to their theme; and it is taste that gives the Listener the feeling for all of these arrangements. However, Taste is not sensibility. One can have a great deal of taste with a cold soul, and a man carried away by truly impassioned things is little affected by the graceful. It seems that Taste attaches itself more willingly to little expressions, and sensibility to the grand.*

The closing remark, specifying that *goût* occurred most naturally through “small expressions,” could very well be a reference to the clusters of ornamental notes called *notes de goût*, to be discussed shortly.

From Rousseau’s description of *goût* we can gather that it required a more sophisticated discernment than the instinctual *génie*, and was involved at every stage of the musical process, from compositional text-setting to performance and interpretation by performers and audiences. Most relevant here is its role in the discernment and execution of proper ornamentation, and its distinction from the equally essential aspect of soulful

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sensibilité. In their blend of rational restraint and expressive intensity, definitions of cantabile as “taste, soul, and simplicity” in the early nineteenth-century methods for piano considered in Chapter Three synthesize the cool and the heat of these extremes.

The musical co-dependence of goût and sensibilité offers some explanation as to why Rousseau places “soul” immediately after taste: it implies the need to counteract or balance, with the individual’s intensity, the restraint and elegance fundamental to proper and tasteful ornamentation.

Rousseau’s rather technical definition of notes de goût is concerned with how to divide up the time between structural, essential melodic notes and the decorative clusters inserted between them.

NOTES DE GOÛT: Il y en a deux espèces: les unes qui appartiennent à la Mélodie, mais non pas à l’Harmonie; en sorte que, quoiqu’elles entrent dans la Mesure, elles n’entrent pas dans l’Accord: celles-là se notent en plein. Les autres Notes de goût, n’entrant ni dans l’Harmonie ni dans la Mélodie, se marquent seulement avec de petites Notes qui ne se comptent pas dans la Mesure, & dont la durée très-rapide se prend sur la Note qui précède ou sur celle qui suit.

There are two species of these: Some belong to the melody but not the harmony, such that, although they fit into the measure, they do not fit into the chord; these are fully written out. The other Notes de goût, belonging neither to the harmony nor the melody, are notated only with little Notes that are not counted in the measure, and whose very brief duration is taken from the preceding or following note.

Rousseau thus divided the ornamental notes into two categories. The first was notated as part of the melody, and fell within the rhythm but not the harmony. The second type fell outside the harmony, melody, and rhythm, causing a linear, temporal subtraction from the note values on either side. Without using the actual term, this is a perfect description of the mechanical process of tempo rubato.
Further insight into the taste-ornamentation relationship is found in Rousseau’s entry *Goût-du-chant*: “It is similar to what one calls in France the art of singing or playing the notes with the ornaments that suit them.” That description hearkens back to earlier *agréments* utilized by generations of composers, such as Couperin and Rameau, in music for the *clavecin*. Evidently, for Rousseau, *goût* in music was linked to the art of embellishment, though we are left to speculate regarding the precise nature and degree of the ornamentation itself.

Several decades later, in 1791, Nicolas Framery and Jérôme Joseph Momigny published their *Encyclopédie méthodique*, structured, as stated earlier, in dialogue with Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire* entries. Following Rousseau’s *Goût* article, Framery praises (without elaboration) Rousseau’s definition of *goût* as superior to his more popular entry *génie*, but Momigny’s remarks are more detailed:

> Le *goût* est ce tact fin, délicat & prompt qui met dans les ouvrages ou y fait discerner tout ce qui a de la grâce & de l’élégance. Evitant le commun autant que le recherché, il simplifie ce qui est trop compliqué, orne & brode ce qui est trop nu ou trop simple.

Taste is that fine, delicate, and ready tact that introduces into works, or allows us to discern in them, all that is graceful and elegant. Avoiding the common as much as the obscure, it simplifies that which is too complicated, ornaments and decorates that which is too bare or too simple.

In a brilliant combination of thought and practice, Momigny pinpoints what few authors seem to be able to put into words. Taste involves the enactment or discernment of musical grace and elegance, but also requires the action of adding ornamentation to

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simple music, and in the rarely-articulated other side of the equation, the act of stripping
unnecessary or excessive notes from the overly complex. Between the two extremes lies
the desirable golden mean, defined by the avoidance of contrasts on either side.

In response to Rousseau’s article *Goût-du chant*, Framery states that since the art
of ornamentation is an innate skill, it is difficult to teach the student how to ornament
properly, but that conversely even if one possesses the necessary skills, expression of text
and proper melodic alterations can be achieved only through proper discernment. After
much derision of the current state of singing in France and the *mauvais goût* propagated
by the masters themselves, Framery reflects the increasing openness to Italian practice in
concluding that the superior Italian method is the only solution for the French school of
song.20

After explaining ways in which the penultimate syllable or note could be
decorated, Momigny states that many acceptable possibilities for ornamentation exist,
without as he puts it “erasing the design of the theme and without taking away anything
from the gracefulness of execution.” He then concludes that ornamentation could be
applied appropriately in innumerable ways to voice or instrument, on appropriate
syllables or notes, so long as the selection fits naturally.21

The eighteenth-century dictionary articles by Rousseau, Framery and Momigny
provide a picture of taste as a two-way process that enabled the performer and listener to
discern the appropriate expressive sentiments and suitable adornment of a particular

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21 “sans que le dessin du thème en soit effacé & sans rien ôter à la grâce de l’exécution. . . . en observant
qu’on ne doit se permettre que celles que comporte la nature de notre voix ou de notre instrument, &
l’habileté de notre exécution.”
work. Taste was general and specific; it was sometimes connected to the overarching qualities of simplicity and naturalness, and sometimes confined to a personal and subjective preference of one style over another. Also crucial was the performer’s individual ability to discern and adorn melodies that were too bare, and to simplify the overly complex: moderate ornamentation was, in relation to taste, the guiding imperative.

Having examined the relationship between goût and ornamentation in the writings of Rousseau and Framery/Momigny, I return to cantabile per se. Joseph Lacassagne published his *Traité général des éléments du chant* in 1766.\(^ {22} \) Dedicated to the Dauphin, it follows the typical pattern of an explanation of musical mechanics and definition of basic Italian terms followed by musical examples, presumably to be used by students as technical exercises. In the list of Italian terms he includes cantabile, with the brief definition of “Qui est chantant, ou aisé à chanter.”\(^ {23} \) Interestingly, patetica is also listed, a term that was used by Pier Francesco Tosi as a synonym of cantabile in his treatise of 1723, discussed below in Chapter Two.\(^ {24} \) Patetica is defined by Lacassagne as “expressif ou avec sentiment,” and as we shall see, those qualities overlap with later French definitions of cantabile in music for voice as well as piano.

More interesting are the numerous musical examples provided later in the treatise, in increasing order of length (no example exceeds 50 measures) and difficulty, set in both simple and compound meter and in major and minor. Among these examples, nine are marked cantabile. They occur in duple and triple time and their melodies, set primarily

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\(^ {23} \) Lacassagne, *Traité général*, 42. Regarding “aisé à chanter,” see the discussion of Framery’s commentary on Rousseau, later in this chapter.

\(^ {24} \) See ch. 2, 44-45.
in eighth and quarter notes, move frequently by step and are fairly sparse — only one example, number XXX on p. 130 and the densest of all, set in 3/8 mineur, contains several stretches of sixteenth notes and trills decorating the final eighth note of several measures. Another interesting and exceptional setting is a Rondeau marked Cantabile on p. 118. The rest of the examples are decidedly undecorated and leave ample room for spontaneous embellishment.\footnote{Lacassagne’s treatise shows that already by the middle of the eighteenth century, the Italian cantabile aria was familiar enough to certain educated Frenchmen (and in this case an abbot), to be included as an expressive term and score marking on musical exercises in a pedagogical work.}

Charles de Blainville published his \textit{L’Esprit de l’art musical} in 1754; he was known for discovering a “third mode” between major and minor, but in the spirit of naturalism he also sets forth a theory of music’s origin, beginning with man’s first vocalization as “le premier cri de nature” which he defines as \textit{cantabile} (vocal music), the highest genre of music, ranked above the genres \textit{sonabile} (instrumental music), and \textit{harmonico} (sixteenth-century style, layered counterpoint).\footnote{Charles de Blainville, \textit{L’Esprit de l’art musical} (Geneva: n.p., 1754; repr. Geneva: Minkoff, 1974), 12-15.}

\textit{Genere cantabile}.\footnote{It is unclear why Blainville uses “genere,” instead of “genre,” to refer to each of the categories of music. The Latin verb “genero,” to beget or procreate, does not offer a plausible alternative.} Ce genere, ou le chant proprement dit, est le premier cri de la nature, c’est la souche de tout l’art Musical. L’homme chante même en parlant, de-là naît la Musique . . .Le chant est donc le genre supérieur en Musique, puisque c’est le premier sentiment dont les hommes ont été inspirés, & auquel la Musique doit son origine . . .
‘Cantabile,’ naturel aux Français. Le caractère du chant François tient particulièrement au Cantabile qu’on examine. Nos chants se saisissent, se retiennent aisément par cœur; nos plus beaux monologues s’entendent même avec plaisir, quoique sans accompagnement. Il en est autrement des morceaux Italiens qui ne se montrent que parés de tous leurs atours, dont les beautés échappent à l’instant comme une flamme subtile; on dirait que c’est un langage fait pour les Dieux, qu’il n’est permis qu’à un petit nombre d’entendre.

Genre cantabile. This genre, or song proper, is the first cry of nature and the source of all musical art. Man even sings while talking, and from there music is born . . . . Singing [vocal melody] is therefore the superior genre in music, since it is the first feeling that inspired mankind, and to which music owes its origin . . .

Cantabile, natural to the French . . . . The character of French singing [vocal melody] is particularly attached to the Cantabile examined here. Our melodies are grasped and are remembered easily by heart; one listens to our most beautiful monologues with pleasure even without accompaniment. It is otherwise with Italian pieces, which only show themselves when adorned with all of their finery, whose beauties escape each moment like a delicate flame; one would say that it is a language made for the gods that only a small number to hear.

It is possible that Blainville’s frame of reference for French cantabile melody included the lyric air tendre discussed above, especially those of his contemporaries, such as Jean-Philippe Rameau. In any case, Blainville’s conception of music as hierarchical, with the voice in the supreme position as the most natural instrument, harmonizes with the idea expressed in Rousseau’s Essai sur l’origine des langues, begun in 1755 and published in 1781: as the instrument closest to nature, in the sense of being uncorrupted by modern society, the voice was also the only vehicle for pure and untainted musical expression. Here Blainville uses cantabile broadly as the overarching category of “vocal music,” and as the “basis of all musical art” from which stem all other forms of musical expression. In agreement with Rousseau’s writings on language, he claims that speech is a form of singing, making it a close relative of the cantabile.

It is likely that Blainville and Rousseau were familiar with each other’s work;
Rousseau’s *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* of 1750 probably influenced Blainville, whose *L’Esprit de l’art musical* of 1754, and its hypothesis about the ideal purity that existed within a primitive context before the invention of modern society, would have interested Rousseau. When he later developed his own theories on the matter in the *Discours sur l’origine de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* of 1755, their ideas had been circulating for half a decade or more. We know that Rousseau plagiarized extensively from Montesquieu, Bossuet, Plutarch, and Montaigne in his *Premier discours*, and it is not far-fetched to suppose that he continued to integrate others’ ideas into his own.  

In his definition of *cantabile*, Rousseau observed that the term was passing bit by bit into common French usage, but he seems not to have had a thorough grasp of its meaning. Following the blueprint of the *Encyclopédie méthodique*, Nicolas Framery began his entry “*cantabile*” with a reprint followed by a critique of Rousseau’s own definition.  

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*Adjectif italien, qui signifie chantable, commode à chanter. Il se dit de tous les chants dont, en quelque mesure que ce soit, les intervalles ne sont pas trop grands, ni les notes trop précipitées; de sorte qu’on peut les chanter aisément, sans forcer ni gêner la voix. . . . (J.J. Rousseau.)* 

*Italian adjective, meaning singable, appropriate for singing. It is used to describe all melodies in which, regardless of the time signature, the intervals are not too large, nor the notes too rushed; such that one can sing them easily without straining or irritating the voice. . . .* 

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28 Robert Wokler, *Rousseau: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 29. As Wokler points out, it is important to remember that Rousseau continued to draw on the ideas of others in his *Second discours*, but that his response to them differs dramatically: whereas in the *Premier discours* he presents past thinking about history as accurate, in the *Second discours* he refutes established ideas as false.  
Not mincing words, Framery responds that it would be hard to find a “more false definition” than this, and counters Rousseau’s claim that *cantabile* is “easy to sing” with the claim that it is actually the hardest musical style to execute properly, since the slow tempo makes breath support, pure tone, and rhythm especially difficult; he asserts that large intervals are in fact used in this slow genre with time for accurate intonation.

He then corrects Rousseau’s grammatical modeling of *cantabile* solely as an adjective, replacing it with what he calls something more substantive: “Just the same it is not true that it [*cantabile*] is an adjective, or it should at least be said that it is intended here as a substantive like a mortal [person], a jealous [person], drinking, eating.”30 In his discussion of eighteenth-century German sources describing *cantabile*, Seedorf comes to exactly the same conclusion about the style’s “Substantive” nature: it connotes much more than “singing” or “in a singing style.”31 So does Pierre Lichthenthal in his *Dizionario*, discussed in Chapter Three on page 52. I am in agreement with all three: though an adjective grammatically, *cantabile* has the features of a noun, and it involves action, like a verb; it is an aria and style with particular characteristics, and a performative utterance that means to express, to connect the melodic notes in *legato*, and to ornament tastefully throughout the process. Framery’s use of verbs (as well as adjectives) as nouns is entirely appropriate and

30 Framery/Momigny, *Encyclopédie méthodique*, Framery, s.v. “Cantabile,” 202: “Il n’est pas même vrai que ce soit un adjectif, ou du moins il fallait dire qu’il est pris ici substantivement comme un mortel, un jaloux, le boire, le manger.”
31 Seedorf, *Handwörterbuch*, s.v. “Cantabile,” 1: “Das Sustantiv Cantabile verweist explizit vor allem im deutsche Schriftum und hier auch in nationalsprachlichen Synonyma wie “das Singende” auf ein vielschichtiges Konzept musikalisches Denkens, in dem Kompositionstechnische, aufführungspraktische und ästhetische Aspekte zusammenfließen.” He concludes that especially during the eighteenth century in German writings, *cantabile* was considered to be the “reference point, and end, of all music.”
evocative here, since the moment-by-moment spinning out of ornamentation was an act
germane to cantabile’s character.

Instead of viewing the perspectives of Rousseau and Framery as mutually exclusive,
we can learn from them that certain aspects of cantabile formed a paradox: its stepwise
melodic motion could be simple in appearance, but its slow tempo and occasional
ornamented leaps demanded excellent technique.

Framery continues with the most comprehensive eighteenth-century description of
cantabile known to me. In a remark similar to later descriptions of cantabile, especially that
of Domenico Corri, he calls it “the type of piece where one must unite all the means, all of
the powers, all of the ornaments of singing.”32 He lists the cantabile third after the arias
parlante and bravura; a slow aria, it was the place for repose and reflection, with selective
embellishment inserted to break up the monotony, and time to appreciate modulations that
pass by more quickly in the fast-moving bravura. Ornaments are permitted, but only those
that always stay linked to the core [fond] of the underlying melody. The first general
description of cantabile concludes with the following luxurious statement:

C’est une draperie élégante & riche sous laquelle on doit toujours apercevoir le
nu. . . . On reproche quelquefois aux Italiens d’étouffer le chant sous des
broderies trop multipliées. Ce n’est peut-être pas l’abondance qu’il en faut
accuser autant, que le choix. Un seul agrément, de mauvais goût peut nuire
davantage à la mélodie, qu’une multitude de passages qui seraient tous dans le
style propre du morceau.

*It is an elegant and rich drapery under which one must always perceive the
nude. . . . The Italians are sometimes reproached for smothering the melody
under a multiplicity of embroideries. It is perhaps not the abundance that must
be blamed so much as the choice. A single ornament in bad taste can have a*

tous les pouvoirs, tous les ornements du chant.”
more negative effect on the melody than a multitude of passaggi in a style appropriate to the piece.

In the striking visual analogy of a nude figure covered in a lavish drapery, Framery emphasizes the necessity of preserving the transparency of an underlying melody; ornamentation was meant to enrich, not obscure, and that was only possible through the selection of particular ornaments — not merely the appropriate quantity. In this case, bad taste results in the choice of embellishments that do not favor the melody appropriately.

He continues by challenging the contrasting French and Italian understandings of cantabile; if the Italians have used what is reasonable to perform cantabile successfully for almost a century, why do the French cling to misguided beliefs about its performing style in opposition to theirs, and “keep sounding out certain views without challenging their validity”? This leads to a rebuttal of the three misplaced claims upheld by the French, which Framery concludes with his own guideline.

1. Une belle simplicité est préférable à toutes les broderies. Framery acknowledges that simplicity in the arts is the goal of the l’homme de goût, and is always preferable to poorly chosen ornaments, but asserts that one must “guard against confusing simplicity with nudity.” Framery turns to architecture for evidence that even simple façades are ornamented; then to the poetry of Racine, which although composed in a simple style, offers proof that merely reducing twenty lines to two would result in an overly spare nudity of verse. After all, he states, is not poetry an ornamented art? And

33 “Si tout ce qui vient d’être dit est conforme à la raison, comme il l’est à l’expérience des Italiens depuis près d’un siècle, pourquoi donc avons-nous sur le cantabile des idées si opposées aux leurs?” Framery, s.v. “Cantabile,” 203.
because of that, are we to renounce it entirely? He concludes that “simplicity does not consist in rejecting ornaments, but in arranging them with enough art so that they embellish, rather than obfuscate, the subject.”

2. Le chant doit exprimer les paroles & les agréments nuisent à l’expression.

Framery states that slower-moving arias of a tender or melancholic sentiment will naturally take more time to unfold and use decorative flourishes. He returns to poetry to argue for the appropriateness of ornament as an expressive device. Acknowledging contrast in the manner of ornamenting, depending on the given sentiment, he returns to architecture for a logical illustration: the frontispieces of temples of Venus and Minerva would certainly not resemble each other; neither would the attire of the disparate figures of a queen and a dancer. He concludes that as each genre has suitable ornaments, so it is inappropriate to reject them altogether.

3. Un personnage affecté d’un sentiment vif ou profond doit exprimer simplement & rapidement sa pensée. To this Framery responds that it takes time to be expressive, and that it is equally appropriate to ornament pieces of a sad character as it is those with a happy one. His example is striking because he uses the performance of instrumental music to prove the affective power of appropriate ornaments, stating “Quel est l’homme un peu sensible qui n’a jamais été ému jusqu’aux larmes en entendant exécuter un beau cantabile par un habile instrumentiste?” He then challenges the belief that the clusters

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34 “La simplicité ne consiste donc pas à rejeter les ornemens, mais à les disposer avec assez d’art, pour qu’ils embellissent le sujet au lieu de l’offusquer le sujet.”

35 The connection between sensible and cantabile is interesting here in light of Rousseau’s juxtaposition of goût with little expressions, and sensibilité with the grand (see p. 16 above). A cantabile melody could, however, employ delicate and tasteful ornamentation even as it evoked from the listener a powerful emotional response.
of ornamental notes considered appropriate in instrumental music would somehow be inappropriate if applied in vocal music.

Framery concludes with his own argument for spontaneous ornamentation:

4. Finally we forbid singers to embellish the composer’s idea. This is a matter of convention. In Italy the composer writes a very simple cantabile, because he assumes that the singer has enough taste and a head enough for harmony to fill in the framework appropriately. In France, where one has reasons for counting less on the ability of the singer, we don’t let them do anything. If the composer wants his sustained notes to be linked by little notes in between, he writes them out. What is the result? That in Italy a singer is able to develop more comprehensive talents, and that the listener joins to the pleasure of variety that of simultaneously considering the imagination of the composer and that of the virtuoso. In France, by contrast, the singer is no more than a simple executant, and the listener always hears the same thing, since we can only make him hear what is written.

Evidently, Framery was quite aware of Italian practices, including the greater degree of openess and flexibility on the part of composers, who did not attempt to notate ornamentation in cantabile melodies; the greater responsibility entrusted to performers to fill in those melodies; and the expertise required to fulfill the task. He was also aware of the comparatively more rigid trend of notating ornamental notes in French practice, which
prevented the singers from acquiring the necessary skills. Not surprisingly, the recurring theme in his discussion is the central and controversial element of ornamentation.

From Framery’s perspective, the French were intolerant of spontaneous embellishment in the *cantabile* aria, and while embellishment was permitted in the context of instrumental music, it was considered inappropriate for the singer to contribute notes to the score. Part of the problem lay in what seems to have been the incompetence of the typical French singer, who did not possess the skills necessary to embellish melodies appropriately of his own accord. While in Italy the expectation of improvisatory embellishment led to the singers’ expertise, in France the rejection of most embellishment prevented the development of the necessary skills.

The second half of the century also saw the appearance of multiple *solfège* singing manuals in Italian style; one example authored by Jean-Louis Bèche and Levesque is entitled *Solfèges d’Italie avec la basse chiffrée par Léo, Durante, Scarlatti, Hasse, Porpora, Mazzani, Caraffa, David, Perez, etc.*. In its list of Italian terms *cantabile* is defined as “Chanter aisément sans forcer ni gêner la Voix,” which is in fact also found in Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire* discussed earlier in this chapter. Of the work’s nine musical examples marked *cantabile*, all are from arias by renowned contemporaneous or recent composers: nine are by Leo, one by Cafaro, and one by Hasse. The majority is in 4/4; four are in minor, and five in major. Apparently, singing the *cantabile* was considered to be a useful pedagogical tool. Sylvie Mamy has documented this and several other Italian *solfège* manuals published in French during the last third of the eighteenth century, and

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into the early nineteenth, by Gibert (1769), Rodolphe (1784), Bailleux (1786), and Durieu (1804).\textsuperscript{37}

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, the French still found the Italian style of embellishment excessive; melodic and stylistic compromise was necessary to please the tastes of French audiences, who were more familiar with the point-by-point, localized word-oriented approach of the French \textit{agrément} as opposed to the broad, phrase-oriented or even strophic conception of Italian melody and \textit{fioriture}.\textsuperscript{38} As the Italians Piccinni, Sacchini, Paisiello and Cherubini fulfilled commissions for the Parisian stage, they restricted \textit{fioriture} and embellishment to selective, prominent words, set primarily as cadential flourishes. In comparison with much eighteenth-century practice as well as with the vigorous melodic language of Rossini, written ornamentation in these works is noticeably sparse.

Consider, for example, an air from Sacchini’s \textit{Renaud} of 1783, in which decoration is also quite rare. A \textit{cantabile} in 3/4, “Renoncez a votre haine” in Scene VIII of Act III, sung by Renaud as part of a longer dialogue with Armide, contains simple and lyrical melodic writing, moving primarily in stepwise motion. The otherwise sparse embellishment occurs for an entire bar at both statements of the climax on the word \textit{maux}

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\textsuperscript{38} Damien Colas, “Les Annotations dans les matériels d’exécution des opéras de Rossini à Paris 1820-1860: Contribution à l’étude de la grammaire mélodique rossinienne” (Ph.D. diss., Université François Rabelais, Tours, 1997), 68-69: “Aussi bien dans la musique instrumentale que vocale des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, la pratique française de l’ornementation repose sur la mise en valeur d’une note donnée (à laquelle correspond un \textit{mot}, dans la musique vocale) au moyen d’un \textit{agrément}. Or rien n’est plus éloigné de cette conception ‘par points’ de l’ornementation que la conception italienne, qui porte sur la ligne mélodique entière. C’est l’équilibre et le profil général de la phrase musicale qui sont travaillés, pour mettre en valeur, non pas un seul mot, mais un vers ou une strophe complète.” The focus of this chapter is not the differences between French and Italian conceptions of ornamentation, but Colas’ point illuminates the challenge faced by Italian composers attempting to compose melodies ornamented in a French style.
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(bad deeds), followed by a cadential fermata where the singer would typically add additional ornaments — supplementing the notated embellishment in the score.\textsuperscript{39}

Figure 1. Antonio Sacchini, \textit{Renaud} (1783), Act III, Scene VIII, “Renoncez à votre haine.”

By the end of the century, the practical problem of inadequately trained singers overshadowed the debates over issues of national style. In 1802, an English guidebook

described the remarkable state of French spectacle at the Opéra, while emphasizing the deplorable state of French singing:40

The splendid decorations, the dancing, which appears to exceed human powers, the spacious stage, the rapidity and exactitude of the scene shifting, are nowhere to be equaled. . . . It is, nevertheless, to be lamented, that in their ardor for the advancement of the arts, the Parisians should have neglected to purify their taste, by an importation of the Italian school of music. Nothing can be worse than the style of singing which characterizes the French school.

The Italian school of singing technique evident in the solfège manuals was indeed on the verge of a more concentrated and effective implementation through the centralized French Conservatoire’s official singing curriculum. As the Italian style came to be embraced more decisively, the venue for printed debate about musical style shifted away from individually authored pamphlets into pedagogical treatises as well as journals of music criticism, where serious, if subjective, discussions of practice took place. Those sources will figure more prominently in the following chapters.41

The nineteenth century dawned in France with an emphasis on educational reform, spawned in part by the turmoil of the Revolution. The next step in the progression toward Chopin’s realization of the grand cantabile tradition in piano music is reflected in nineteenth-century operatic cantabile as presented in instructional manuals for voice and piano, the topic of Chapters Two and Three.

CHAPTER TWO
OPERATIC CANTABILE AS CHOPIN KNEW IT

The last chapter considered vocal cantabile in late eighteenth-century France, in which embellishment sanctioned by good taste, restraint, and moderation played a prominent role. Those qualities continued to influence the vocal cantabile style practiced in Paris at the time of Chopin’s arrival in the fall of 1831. Although the fragmentary nature of scholarship on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century opera makes it difficult to argue any point comprehensively, it is nevertheless possible to situate early nineteenth-century vocal pedagogy and other writings in relation to those inherited trends. Amid the reforms and changes taking place in Post-Revolution Paris, the evidence reveals continuity, as well as contrast, with eighteenth-century pedagogy and practice.

The arrival in Paris of Italian operas by Cherubini and Spontini, as well as a new interest in Mozart, helped increase the general public’s familiarity with the Italian style. With the arrival of Rossini in 1824 in contract with the French government, his directorship and influence at the Théâtre italien one year later, and the structural reforms he masterminded in composition, an operatic blueprint was established for the formal scene, as well as for plot themes and expressive content. To this model Bellini and
Donizetti conformed to various degrees, pleasing French audiences and sustaining their growing taste for operas in the Italian style.\(^{42}\)

As it had been during the eighteenth century, the *cantabile* aria continued to be a standard element in early-nineteenth-century opera, and the selection and execution of improvised ornamentation remained central to its proper performance. I will first summarize the role of spontaneous embellishment in the *aria cantabile* in Rossini’s Parisian operas, as documented by Damien Colas. Then, I will consider four representations of *cantabile* in singing treatises: the official *Méthode de chant* of the Conservatoire (1804),\(^ {43}\) Domenico Corri’s *Singer’s Preceptor* (1810),\(^ {44}\) Alexis de Garaudé’s *Méthode de chant* (1830/41),\(^ {45}\) and Manuel Garcia’s *Traité complet sur l’Art du Chant* (1841/1847),\(^ {46}\) the last of which presents the relationship between the *aria cantabile* and *canto spianato* as self-evident. Supplementing these are definitions of

\(^{42}\) Rossini revised his Neapolitan operas *Maometto II* and *Mosè in Egitto* for French premières in 1826 and 1827; they became the more conservative *Le siège de Corinthe* and *Moïse*. Philip Gossett remarks that in the originals, “extremely florid vocal lines, emphasizing the virtuosic and the generic, co-exist with far-reaching experiments in formal structure, which seek to give musical expression to particular dramatic situations. In the Paris revisions both extremes are planed down, resulting in a more consistent, if less audacious, dramatic continuum, and a reduced gulf between declamatory lines and florid passages.” One has to wonder if the more restricted revisions did not also contribute to the crystallization of an economic, manageable formal structure easier for other composers to replicate. See The New Grove Masters of Italian Opera: Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi (New York: Norton, 1983), 49.


cantabile and canto spianato from Pietro Lichtenthal’s Dizionario of 182647 — adding supportive evidence for the synonymous relationship the terms and styles shared — and Marcello Perrino’s vocal treatise of 1810.48 Finally, I will consider Chopin’s relationship with opera, Bellini, and the spianato or cantabile melodies in Bellini’s music.

The nature and degree of spontaneously inserted melodic decoration continued to be a central yet controversial component of opera. A complete absence of embellishment would have been inconceivable, but as Rossini called for increased fidelity to the score, singers complied and curtailed the amount of improvised flourishes delivered in concert.49 As we saw in the last chapter, finding a tasteful degree of decoration in the slow, lyric cantabile was considered a critical aspect of its interpretation and performance. The challenge of finding that golden mean continued in 1820s and 1830s Paris.

It is commonly known that florid ornamentation, notated as well as improvised (especially during the repetition of previously stated material), was a salient feature of the virtuosic cabaletta. It is also known, but less emphasized, that the same process of spontaneous embellishment was an essential part of the cantabile — made technically

48 Marcello Perrino, Osservazioni sul canto (Naples: Stamperia Reale, 1810).
49 Damien Colas, “Melody and Ornamentation,” in The Cambridge Companion to Rossini, ed. Emanuele Senici (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 104-23; and Jean Starobinski’s reflection upon Rossini’s operatic reforms discussed in Stendhal’s Life of Rossini: “Stendhal cites the sopranos Crescentini and G. B. Velluti (1780–1861) as examples of supreme achievement in the improvisational use of the arts of ornamentation and vibrato. And he criticizes Rossini for having wanted to put an end to the practice of performers taking such liberties; Rossini enforced strict adherence to the written score without the addition of vocalizations or ‘sung decorations’ of the singer’s own invention. That was the essence of his revolution.” See Starobinski, “Ombra Adorata,” Opera Quarterly 21:4 (2005): 612-30, esp. 621; and Stendhal, Life of Rossini, trans. Richard N. Coe (New York: Criterion, 1957), 318-33. Of course no dramatic change in performance practice takes place overnight, and spontaneous embellishment in some form would have undoubtedly continued for some time.
exact not through sequential fioriture, but through a slow-moving and exposed vocal line. The key differences were therefore the quantity and character of the ornamentation required.

In his 1997 dissertation on the annotations of singers in Rossini’s operas in Paris from 1820 to 1860, Damien Colas devised a methodology for understanding the melodic “grammar,” or position in the musical phrase, of added ornamentation in Rossini’s Paris operas. The ornamental excerpts were written out, primarily by singers but occasionally by Rossini himself. Colas explains the rarity of the surviving annotations as a sign of their high degree of difficulty, which prompted putting pen to paper for off-stage rehearsal, rather than as an indication of a fixed or absolute relationship between the process of annotating and ornamentation in performance: "... the ornamental figures to be notated with priority were those which were the most necessary or the most difficult to

30. William Ashbrook mentions Rossini’s directive to soprano Clara Novello that in the second statement of a cabaletta a singer was “supposed to introduce some ornamentation of the vocal line.” See the Oxford History of Opera, ed. Roger Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 117. See also The New Grove Dictionary of Music, s.v. “Cabaletta,” and Richard Hudson’s Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 80. Hudson outlines Manuel Garcia’s discussion of canto spianato (which he calls relatively unadorned) and canto fiorito, concluding that “all of these categories of plain and florid singing are suitable, then, for tempo rubato.” That is certainly true; but it must be reiterated that the spianato was actually quite ornamented, albeit not with the sequential passaggi of the faster-moving arias (as Garcia’s list of examples demonstrates). Naturally, its slower tempo would be more conducive to a temporal elasticity between solo line and accompaniment. Trying to measure the suitability of a work for the application of rubato based on its slow or fast tempo, however, misses the primary point: the presence, and extent of ornamental melody — in any speed it might occur — is what necessitates the temporal accommodation of rubato.
memorize.”\textsuperscript{51} Clearly, a great deal of impromptu embellishment took place beyond the surviving written examples.\textsuperscript{52}

Colas’ source material was the corpus of surviving annotations made by singers between 1820 and 1860 while performing roles of Rossini’s French operas composed for Paris, supported by information drawn from every known vocal treatise published between 1723 (Pier Francesco Tosi’s \textit{Opinioni de’ cantori antichi e moderni})\textsuperscript{53} and 1886 (Madame Marchesi’s \textit{Variantes et points d’orgue}). He discovered that the added ornamentation fell into two broad but distinct formal and textural categories articulated much earlier by Tosi that remained applicable to Rossini’s early nineteenth-century operas. The slow \textit{adagio} most often incorporated ornamental \textit{interpolation}, or the insertion of clusters of small note-values between longer pitches in the original melodic line.

\textsuperscript{51} Damien Colas, “Les Annotations dans les matériels d’exécution des opéras de Rossini à Paris 1820-1860: Contribution à l’étude de la grammaire mélodique Rossinienne” (Ph.D. diss., Université François Rabelais, Tours, 1997), 35: “Il est clair que, pour un chanteur de la première moitié du XIXe siècle, les tournures ornementales à noter en priorité étaient celles qu’il était le plus nécessaire ou le plus difficile de mémoriser.”

\textsuperscript{52} For other examples of singers’ embellishments, see Philip Gossett, \textit{Divas and Scholars: Performing Italian Opera} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), esp. ch. 9, “Ornamenting Rossini,” 298-99, which references notebooks containing ornamentation recorded by sopranos Laure Cinti-Damoreau and Adelaide Kemble, as well as multiple performing editions with particular ornaments known to have been added by famous divas of the time including the castrato Velluti, Emilia Bonini, Maria Malibran, and Rubini. Didactic treatises by Cinti-Damoreau and Garcia \textit{fils} round out the circle of evidence, valuable for their musical examples and commentary regarding execution. The familiar theme of tasteful moderation was reiterated by Damoreau: “I do not offer them [examples of ornaments and cadenzas] to you to be performed at any cost, despite your physical capabilities and your character. I propose these models of variations, rather, so that later your taste will lead you, within your individual means, to invent others that suit you properly.” Cinti-Damoreau, \textit{Méthode de chant composée pour ses classes du Conservatoire} (Paris: n.p., 1849), cited in Gossett, \textit{Divas and Scholars}, 301. For more information about Damoreau and the general practice of embellishment, see Austin Caswell, \textit{Embellished Opera Arias, Recent Research in the Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries}, vols. 7-8 (Madison: A-R Editions, 1989); and idem, “Mme. Cinti-Damoreau and the Embellishment of Italian Opera in Paris: 1820-1845,” \textit{Journal of the American Musicological Society} 28 (1975): 459-92.

\textsuperscript{53} Pier Francesco Tosi, \textit{Opinioni de’ cantori antichi e moderni, o sieno osservazioni sopra il canto figurato} (Bologna: Lelio dalla Volpe, 1723).
Rather than that form of note-based improvisation, ornamentation in the faster allegro usually consisted of substitution, or recomposed melodic lines in a chain of symmetrical cells strung together on different pitches.\textsuperscript{54} Without explanation, Colas bases his definitions of the two primary genres of patetica-cantabile and allegro on Tosi, then associates them with Garcia’s 1846 descriptions of canto spianato and canto fiorito. Apparently, Colas found it self-evident that at the time of Garcia, canto spianato had become another name for the spun-out, smooth technique germane to the cantabile aria.

The contrasting tempo, meter, character, and texture of the styles canto spianato and fiorito (or genres cantabile and allegro) were naturally conducive to different types of ornamentation that formed distinct temporal relationships with the melody. In the slow-moving cantabile, ornamentation most often occurred in three contexts: at the ends of phrases, still within the meter; at the end of sections, similar to a cadenza and marked with a fermata outside the meter; and in the variety of primary concern here, as decorative material inserted between long melodic notes in the middle of the phrase — in Garcia’s words for the purpose of “pleasing and offering relief.”

In the allegro, by contrast, the ornamentation was based on patterns of “traits,” or runs, which required stamina and agility, took place in longer, more substantial scale-based passages, and usually consisted of replicated cells performed in strict rhythm with the orchestra. An additional difference is that in the cantabile the original melody remains recognizable when reproduced with the appropriate amount of ornamentation, whereas in the allegro, the melody and the ornamentation are indistinguishable; in effect,

\textsuperscript{54} See Damien Colas, Les Annotations, Introduction, 71; and “Melody and Ornamentation,” in Cambridge Companion to Rossini, 116-17.
the ornamentation becomes melody — the conclusion cited by Gerald Abraham and Maria Ottich regarding Chopin’s melodic writing in his late works.55

Here a critical distinction must be made between “open” and “closed” textures, a concept presented by Friedrich Lippmann in his groundbreaking work on Rossinian and Bellinian melody during the 1980s. Open melodic textures take place at the beginning of music that develops into longer arias and duets; the excerpts begin simply, are typically syllabic or word-centric, and escalate into a more ornate ending. They are representative of the highly expressive, poetry-oriented singing championed by Tosi and subsequent writers since the early eighteenth century, as well as the declamatory French mélopée of French tragédie en musique. By contrast, closed textures occur whenever the orchestra lapses into a sustained, regular rhythm, moving away from the rhythmically unpredictable punctuation commonly used for expressive purposes in recitative.56

It should be noted that in theory, both textures could be used in slow or fast tempi with contrasting, associated characteristics; the texture is recognized not by the speed or other qualities of a given aria, but rather by the relationship between orchestra, voice, and

56 Colas draws his understanding of “open texture” from Friedrich Lippmann’s study “Per un’esegesi dello stile rossiniano,” Nuova rivista musicale italiana 2 (1968): 813-56, esp. 817. See also Friedrich Lippmann, “Vincenzo Bellini und die italienische Opera seria seiner Zeit, Studien über Libretto, Arienform und Melodik,” Analecta musicologica 6 (1969): 154-69. Scott Balthazar draws Lippmann’s discussions as background for Rossini’s participation in the stylistic progression from melodies containing “open” and “closed” characteristics to a primarily “closed,” more declamatory style using longer, periodic phrases taken up by Bellini and Donizetti in the 1830s: “In contrast to Rossini’s dual approach, Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi wrote closed melodies almost exclusively.” And in summary of Rossini’s melodic duality: “In short, Rossini’s melodies constitute an enormous array of organizational possibilities delineated on one end by the tightly integrated Bellinian lyric form and on the other by the looser style of open melody.” See Balthazar, “Rossini and the Development of Mid-Century Lyric Form,” Journal of the American Musicological Society 41:1 (Spring 1988): 102-25, esp. 102 and 124.
type of ornamentation. However, although both the cantabile and allegro could be composed in closed textures — the cantabile most noticeably in the music of Bellini and Donizetti — slow-moving cantabile passages are unquestionably more suited to the elasticity and note-by-note improvisation of open textures than the allegro. That is one reason why the spun-out, cantabile style with linear rubato functioned so well in through-composed arias with a figured bass. In Donizetti and Bellini, it is as if the moment-by-moment generating spianato principle in open textures of the late baroque was tamed to fit within a more predictable “closed” form and texture, utilizing repetition of the phrase at a slower pace, rather than the driving harmonic rhythm and constant variation in a through-composed form. The result created time and space to focus the listener’s attention on the syllable or word being expressed instead of the ornate fioriture sung around it.

Colas discovered that tempo was the primary factor in determining whether or not these fioriture required advanced preparation prior to performance. In the singers’ annotations of Rossini’s arias, the technical demands of the fast-paced cabaletta passages frequently caused the ornaments in these arias to be notated, “worked out,” and memorized. By contrast, very few annotations for the slower-moving cantabile exist, indicating that singers drew almost exclusively from an arsenal of options known by heart to ornament the cantabile passages spontaneously on stage. Rare preserved notations are limited to the aforementioned cadences or points d’orgues at the ends of passages or sections, which are more elaborate than the more frequently occurring decorations surrounding single notes in the middle of the phrase, and therefore required
more practice.\textsuperscript{57} In regard to the impromptu incorporation of smaller flourishes, which could be tossed off frequently and whimsically en route to the cadential passagework, we are left largely to speculation — in early nineteenth-century opera and in the later lyric writing of Chopin.

The Conservatoire’s \textit{Méthode de Chant} (1804)

A slow-moving aria required the advanced technique of an especially strong breath support to sustain and connect its long melodic notes and execute properly the light, elegant, and diverse ornamentation between them. The Paris Conservatoire’s official treatise of 1804 opens its chapter on arias with the following quote (the list of arias continues with the \textit{Andante, Allegro, Agitato, l’Air syllabique, and the Rondeau et Airs a deux mouvements}).\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{quote}
Le mot \textit{CANTABILE} signifie CHANTANT.

Le mouvement qui lui appartient est extrêmement LENT.

Le \textit{Cantabile} est pour la musique vocale, ce que les \textit{ADAGIO} de CORELLI, de GEMINIANI, de TARTINI sur tout, et de NARDINI après lui, étaient pour la musique instrumentale.

Ces Adagio sont des modèles en ce genre.

Quant aux modèles du \textit{Cantabile*} que nous avons pour le chant, on les trouve parmi les airs de ce caractère composés par LEO, par VINCI, par HASSE, par CAFFARO, par PICCINNI, par SACCHINI, par IOMELLI, par GLUK, etc.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{57} “Dans ces mouvements, la lenteur du tempo et la relative souplesse de l’accompagnement permettent au chanteur d’ ‘improviser’ en temps réel une tournure ornementale sans risque de fourvoiement. Lorsque le tempo est rapide, en revanche, les figures en diminutions doivent respecter rigoureusement le nombre de notes imposées par la pulsation métrique, et la moindre déviation porterait un chanteur peu expérimenté hors du contexte harmonico-mélodique.” Colas, \textit{Les Annotations}, 35-36.

*footnote: . . . Ces morceaux que l’on peut considérer comme des modèles de simplicité et de pureté . . .

Un morceau de musique tel que le Cantabile, est le plus difficile qu’on puisse exécuter; aussi il n’appartient vraiment qu’aux grands talents de le bien chanter, car il exige les qualités de la voix les plus parfaites, et l’emploi le plus sévère de la Méthode de Chant.

Les qualités requises qu’on doit avoir pour bien chanter le Cantabile, sont: 1. de posséder parfaitement l’art de filer les sons, de savoir bien prendre et retenir longtemps la respiration, car c’est dans ce caractère sur tout qu’on trouve souvent l’occasion d’employer la Messa di Voce . . .
2. d’exécuter les phrases de chant, les agréments et les traits avec expression, et avec la noblesse qui distingue ce caractère de tous les autres.
3. enfin, de mettre beaucoup de moelleux et d’ongction dans le PORTAMENTO de la voix.

Le style du Cantabile ne comporte pas beaucoup de traits; il demande au contraire une grande simplicité. Il exige que tous les traits, et spécialement les agréments qu’on y emploie, soient exécutés d’une manière large, et analogue à la valeur du mouvement de ce caractère, c’est-à-dire qu’ils soient articulés plus lentement que partout ailleurs, mais toutefois sans leur donner de la pesanteur, sans leur faire perdre l’élégance, la légèreté et l’expression qui leur sont propres.

Voilà ce que l’on peut dire en général concernant le Cantabile.* Le reste consiste en applications particulières, et dépend tant du goût des maîtres, que des dispositions et de l’application des élèves.

*footnote: Ce genre, qu’on peut appeler à juste titre le NEC PLUS ULTRA du chant, est malheureusement négligé, ou pour mieux dire, perdu de nos jours soit dans la musique instrumentale soit dans la musique vocale.

The word Cantabile means singing.

The tempo it belongs to is extremely slow.

The Cantabile is for vocal music that which the Adagios of CORELLI, GEMINIANI, TARTINI above all, and by NARDINI after him, were for instrumental music.

These Adagios are the models in this genre

Concerning the models of Cantabile we have for singing, one finds them among the character arias by Leo, Vinci, Hasse, Caffaro, Piccinni, Sacchini, Jomelli, Gluck, etc.

*footnote. . . One can consider these pieces to be models of simplicity and purity.

A piece of music similar to the Cantabile is the most difficult that one could execute, and it only truly belongs to the great singers, because it demands the most perfect vocal qualities, and the most severe exercise of singing technique.
The required qualities one must have in order to sing the Cantabile well, are: 1. to possess a perfect drawing out of long notes, to know how to draw in and hold the breath for a long time, because it is above all in this character that one finds the opportunity to use the Messa di Voce... 2. to perform the melodic phrases, the ornaments and figures with expression, and with the nobility that distinguishes this character from all of the others. 3. finally, to put a lot of softness and tenderness in the portamento.

The style of the Cantabile does not have a lot of ornaments, on the contrary it demands a great simplicity. It demands that all of the features, and especially the ornaments one uses, are executed in a broad manner analogous to the tempo of this character, that is to say that they may be articulated more slowly than anywhere else, but nevertheless without giving them heaviness or causing them to lose the elegance, lightness and expression that are proper to them.

That is what one can say in general about the Cantabile. The rest consists of specific applications, and depends on the taste of the masters more than the personalities and discipline of the students.

*footnote: This genre, that one can rightly call the Nec Plus Ultra of song, is unfortunately neglected in the present day, or better said, lost, in instrumental music and especially in vocal music.

The quote is remarkable in several respects. The authors begin their explanation with a comparison with Italian violin music, most notably Tartini, whose playing and writings on the legato, vocal cantabile and detached sonabile were a hallmark of the second half of the eighteenth century, and must have continued to circulate in the surrounding musical discourse. Furthermore, in its slow-moving, spun-out ornamentation, the adagio genre was the instrumental counterpart to the vocal cantabile, and was certainly familiar

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59 Phrases gleaned from this definition are found in Castil-Blaze’s *Dictionnaire de la musique moderne*, v. 1, 2nd ed., 1825 (Paris, Adrien Égron), s.v. Cantabile, 86-87; as are portions of Heinrich Friedrich Mannstein’s cited on p. 56, n. 68. Castil-Blaze does add “chantable” to the Conservatoire’s “chantant,” uniting the two translations of Italian *cantabile* offered by Seedorf (see p. 15, n. 13). Under s.v. “Air,” 22-23, he adds the following about about the *cantabile’s* formal position: Le grand air, proprement dit, se compose maintenant d’un cantabili [sic] tendre ou mélancolique, amiable ou plein de sensibilité, et même de tristesse, dont le repos se fait sur la dominante ou le rélatif. Ce cantabili est suivi d’un allégro [sic] vêmement, d’une belle expression qui se termine dans le ton primitif. . . . Quelquefois le cantabili se trouve placé au milieu de l’air qui a commence par un allégro que l’on reprend ensuite [examples of little-known French operas follow]. The first part of the description uses the usual slow-fast sequence of *cantabile-cabaletta* positioned in the last half of the scene by Alexis Garaudé.
enough to the student reader to illustrate the style. Interestingly, Manuel Garcia fils mentioned the violinist Paganini 40 years later as an exemplary performer of the *tempo rubato* common in slow *adagio* movements, and included the *cantabile* in his extended discussion.  

Furthermore, those listed as models for *cantabile* writing were all eighteenth-century composers; Hasse was already active in the 1720s, and Gluck’s reform operas date from the 1760s and 1770s. At the time of its publication in 1804, the authors of the *méthode* were holding up models from 30 to 80 years in the past. It is not surprising that the conservative institution of the Conservatoire endorsed the excellence of the previous generation rather than the more questionable recent or current trends. In this case, all of the composers mentioned (Leo, Vinci, Hasse, Caffaro, Piccini, Sacchini, Jomelli, Gluck) had connections to Naples and its simple, lyrical melodic language central to the *cantabile*. Indeed, the “noble simplicity” of late eighteenth-century opera, a concept discussed by the German neoclassic art historian J.J. Winckelmann in relation to ancient Greek sculpture and seized upon by other writers as analogous to Gluck’s musical style, is at the heart of the *cantabile* aesthetic: it is that nobility and composure the authors

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60 Garcia/Paschke, *Traité complet*, v. 2, 77: “Two artists of a very different kind, Garcia (my father), and Paganini, excelled in the use of the tempo rubato applied *by phrase* [original italics]. While the orchestra maintained the tempo regularly, they, on their part, abandoned themselves to their inspiration to rejoin with the bass only at the moment the harmony would change, or else at the very end of the phrase.”
Two decades later it was echoed in Heinrich Ferdinand Mannstein’s description of cantabile in his vocal treatise discussed shortly.\textsuperscript{62}

To sing the cantabile properly, the authors recommend “filer les sons,” or drawing out long notes; holding and retaining the breath; noble and expressive execution of ornaments, which distinguishes this character from all others; and much softness and sweetness in the portamento, a tender, sighing ornament. Not condemned, ornamentation is merely qualified; the subsequent description emphasizes slow, broad, and elegant execution of ornaments needed to match the character of the cantabile. Finally, the authors position cantabile as the “nec plus ultra” of song, and complain in an incensed diatribe that the essential art of the cantabile had been lost in contemporaneous practice. Due to certain singers’ premature desire to perform, and instructors whose neglect of the good school of instruction was corrupting the public taste, the unfortunate result was that undiscerning audiences received “the mediocre as good and the bad as mediocre.”\textsuperscript{63}

The warning to young singers is quite similar to Pier Francesco Tosi’s given 80 years earlier, and might reflect the general desire of an aging singer to preserve the tradition of his youth as modern practice evolves beyond him:\textsuperscript{64}


\textsuperscript{62} Heinrich Ferdinand Mannstein, Das System der gro\ssen Gesangsschule des Bernacchi: Système de la grande méthode de chant (Dresden: n.p., 1835), 62: “Il n’est pas défendu au chanteur de faire usage d’embellissements approuvés par le bon goût, mais qu’il se garde d’en user trop fréquemment et de nuire ainsi au plus bel ornement du Cantabile, qui consiste dans une noble simplicité.” The excerpt on cantabile is cited in full on p. 54, n. 73.

\textsuperscript{63} The ensuing discussion is from Mengozzi et al., Méthode de chant, 76-77 and 88-89.

\textsuperscript{64} Pier Francesco Tosi, Opinioni de’ cantori antichi e moderni (Bologna: Lelio dalla Volpe, 1723), trans. John Galliard, Observations on the Florid Song, or Sentiments on the Ancient and Modern Singers (London: Wilcox, 1743), 78-79. To explain the cantabile aria to his readers, Galliard also includes a footnote in this passage: “Cantabile, the tender, passionate, pathetick; more singing than allegro, which is
To my irreparable misfortune, I am old; but were I young, I would imitate as much as possibly I could the Cantabile of those who are branded with the opprobrious name of ancients; and the Allegro of those who enjoy the delightful appellation of moderns. though my wish is vain as to myself, it will be of use to a prudent scholar, who is desirous to be expert in both manners, which is the only way to arrive at perfection; but if one was to choose, I should freely, without fear of being taxed with partiality, advise him to attach himself to the taste of the first.

We return to the fact that at least to some extent, the controversy over what Tosi called “ancient” and “modern” styles, and what the Conservatoire labels good and bad taste, centers on the slippery matter of ornamentation — its selection as well as its deployment.

In Chapter Eight of his treatise, entitled “Of Cadences,” Tosi spells out most clearly the relationship between taste, ornamentation, and rubato in the cantabile aria:

Good taste does not consist in a continual velocity of the voice, which goes thus rambling on without a guide, and without foundation; but rather, in the Cantabile, in the putting forth of the voice agreeably, in Appoggiatura’s, in art, and in the true notion of graces, going from one note to another with singular and unexpected surprises, and stealing the time exactly on the true motion of the bass.

lively, brisk, gay, and more in the executive way.” Indeed, in numerous passages Tosi contrasts the cantabile with the allegro; in many of those he also emphasizes its similarity to the patetica, an aria type discussed by Joseph Lacassagne (see ch. 1, 20), as well as a character referenced multiple times by Hélène de Montgeroult in her discussion of expressive keyboard music (ch. 3, 106-21). To Tosi, the patetica was an aria type cherished in the past, a synonym of the cantabile, and the appropriate context for selective embellishment and accompanying tempo rubato. As discussed pp. 44-45, it was, in his opinion, superior to the fast-moving allegro known for its virtuosic display: “The taste of the ancients was a mixture of the lively and the Cantabile, the variety of which could not fail giving delight; but the moderns are so pre-possessed with taste in mode, that, rather than comply with the former, they are contented to lose the greatest part of beauty. The study of the Pathetick was the darling of the former; and the application to the most difficult divisions is the only drift of the latter. Those performed with more judgment; and these execute with greater boldness. But since I have presumed to compare the most celebrated singers in both stiles, pardon me if I conclude with saying, that the moderns are arrived at the highest degree of perfection in singing to the ear; and that the ancients are inimitable in singing to the heart.” Pier Francesco Tosi, Opinioni de’ cantori antichi, e moderni, trans. and repr. John Galliard, ch. 7, “of Airs,” 109-10. In her introductory overview of eighteenth-century opera, Naomi André observes that Tosi’s treatise, though published in 1723, describes the moderately florid cantabile in practice during his career in the late seventeenth century. See André, Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 40.

65 Tosi/Galliard, 129.
In light of the importance of selecting ornaments carefully, it is revealing that in
the fifth chapter directly preceding the arias themselves, in a discussion entitled “Des
divers caractères du chant,” the Conservatoire’s method sidesteps any attempt to
prescribe the art of proper ornamentation:

Nous enseignerons simplement de quel style il faudra exécuter les agréments du
chant, dans chacun des caractères que nous allons faire connaître; mais nous ne
désignerons nullement les endroits où il faudra les placer; nous ne feron
plus aucun choix de TRAITS (footnote) et nous passerons de même sous silence,
la place qu’ils doivent occuper sur un chant donné: cela n’appartient qu’au goût,
et à la mode qu’on ne saurait fixer.

We teach simply the style of executing the ornaments of singing, in each of the
characters that we will make known; but we do not designate where one must
place them; neither do we select any ornaments, keeping silent about the place
they must occupy in a given melody: this belongs only to taste, and the fashion
that we would not know how to determine.

Due to their dependence on the prevailing fashion, the impossibility of determining
precise parameters for ornamentation at a given time would be echoed exactly in
Montgeroult’s treatise for keyboard published fifteen years later, discussed in Chapter
Three. An exact prescription for ornamentation would certainly leave one vulnerable to
criticism as soon as surrounding tastes evolved in a new direction.

The difficulty in selecting appropriate ornamentation did not eliminate its
necessity, however, and in a lengthy footnote, after emphasizing the imperative of
embellishment and the danger of excess, followed by an exhortation for teachers and
students to seek moderation, the authors continue:

Nous ne prétendons pas pour cela bannir l’usage de broder le chant; au
contraire nous l’admettons: mais il faut le pratiquer avec sagesse, avec goût, et
avec intelligence. L’excès est par tout condamnable; le bon sens réprouve la
méthode vicieuse d’entasser trait sur trait; monument gothique surchargé d’ornements, et cet abus entraîné, sans qu’on y songe, dans une foule d’inconvénients, dont les plus remarquables sont: de dénaturer, sans le rendre meilleur, un chant que le compositeur s’est donné souvent beaucoup de peine à trouver [. . .].

We don’t pretend to forbid the use of embroidering the melody; on the contrary, we allow it: but it must be practiced with wisdom, with taste, and with intelligence. Excess is reprehensible everywhere; good sense disapproves of the incorrect method of piling on feature after feature; gothic monument overloaded with decorations and this abuse, carried away without a second thought by a mob of difficulties, of which the most notable are: to deface, without making it better, a melody that the composer often gave himself a lot of trouble to find [. . .].

Similar to Framery’s properly adorned nude mentioned in the last chapter, a visual analogy is used, but this time gothic architecture is chosen to illustrate how a lovely structure can be defaced through excess. Applying that imagery to the cantabile, we can deduce that ornamentation should be selected with discretion in order to preserve its simple character. We can also conclude that due to its changeable nature, rules for the proper character and degree of ornaments at one point in time do not apply to other periods in history. Even so, taste and fashion, while inconsistent, subjective by nature and prone to the ignorance or excess of consumers, were consistently relied upon to determine a proper execution. As the discussion of cantabile concludes above, “the rest depends on the taste of the masters.”
A second treatise with a significant discussion of the *Cantabile* is by Italian singer and publisher Domenico Corri, based in London. In his *Singer’s Preceptor* of 1810, he divided music into three styles and accompanying speeds: The *cantabile* (slow), the *andante* (moderate), and the *allegro* (fast). A definitive association between tempo and character was not unusual during the eighteenth century, but as we will see in the piano methods considered in the next chapter, discussions of *cantabile* in relation to piano music usually fell under the category of terms designating expression, placed directly after terms indicating tempo such as *largo*, *adagio*, and *allegro*. Corri described the *cantabile* aria in the following way.\(^{66}\)

is assumed, thus, in singing, the former refers to the Cantabile Style, the latter to the National Air.

In these Styles any passage of the following description thus (sixteenth-dotted eighth) or (dotted eighth-sixteenth) the shortest of the two notes ought to be made still shorter, and a smart accent given to the second note thus (thirty second-double dotted eighth) or (double dotted eighth-thirty second).

In addition to the application of water as a metaphor for the ongoing flow of the cantabile, the image also illustrates the moment-by-moment surging and spinning out of supported ornamentation in the spianato style. Cantabile is the technical and aesthetic “source,” or spring, from which all other styles issue, generated steadily in practice by the smooth perpetual motion of the spianato.

Corri continues that the melody is to be “left alone” by an unobtrusive accompaniment that should only “gently touch part of the harmony,” presumably outlining the desired harmony through some type of sparse arpeggiation while avoiding unisons with the melody above. The guideline fits into the lean yet fluid, arpeggiated orchestral accompaniment of slow-moving arias during the early nineteenth century, well-suited to spontaneous ornamentation and rubato. Corri also warns against the danger of triple meter lapsing into a folk-like jig if taken too quickly, and draws a class distinction between the more familiar “tone and manner” appropriate to national airs, and the more formal or “grand” demeanor appropriate to the cantabile. Presumably, the English audience of the treatise prompted the unusual but informative comparison with regional folk music, in relation to which the cantabile was considered a distinct and superior art form.
Corri’s poetic language exalts the *cantabile* as pre-eminent in a way reminiscent of Tosi and other eighteenth-century sources: his comments reflect that at as late as 1810, to some musicians its reputation as ideal aria type and style was still intact. Furthermore, its two central elements of ornamentation and *rubato* remained essential in a tradition that foreshadowed the later developments in the keyboard music of Chopin.

Moving forward chronologically, the pedagogical principles articulated by the Conservatoire and Corri were likely known to Pietro Lichtenthal, whose three-volume *Dizionario* of 1826 contains a definition of *cantabile*:67

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is sprinkled throughout Lichtenthal’s entries cited here. Most striking is his juxtaposition of cantabile with “baroque melody” — which, as we know from Tosi’s treatise, actually encompassed both the lyrical cantabile and the virtuosic allegro. Presumably, Lichthental was reacting to the excessive ornamentation that was by that time associated with baroque music and which he saw as diametrically opposed to the simplicity of the cantabile. From his point of view in 1826, baroque melody was excessively ornate, and the contrasting qualities of lightness and elegance germane to the cantabile were superior.68

Alexis De Garaudé’s Méthode complète de chant (1830/41)

A third vocal treatise that highlights the cantabile is Alexis de Garaudé’s work, Op. 40, of 1830, reprinted and expanded in 1841. Garaudé served as Professor of Voice at the Conservatoire from 1816 to 1841 and would have been familiar with the institution’s official method of song. James Stark reports in his Bel Canto: a History of Vocal Pedagogy that Garaudé “updated and expanded” the earlier official method,

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68 Lichtenthal’s use of Baroque song in opposition to cantabile is informed by Rousseau’s definitions of genie and compositeur. Under “génie,” Rousseau cites the Neapolitan masters Leo, Durante, Jommelli, and Pergolesi, through whom Metastasio’s genius, manifested in the libretto, could arouse the listener’s feelings. Under “compositeur” Rousseau contrasts “ce goût bizarre et capricieux qui sème partout le baroque et le difficile, qui ne sait orner l’harmonie qu’à force de dissonances, de contrastes, de bruit” with the “sanctuaire de l’harmonie . . . de bon goût et de l’expression” of Leo, Pergolesi, Hasse, Terradeglias, and Galuppi. As Rousseau associates “bizarre” taste with the baroque, he juxtaposes it against the “sanctuary of good taste” possessed by the same Neapolitan composers held up in the Conservatoire’s singing method as models of cantabile writing. It could be that in Lichtenthal’s mind, since the cantabile style eschewed excessive ornamentation and harmonic complexity — signature features of baroque music — it was perceived to be in good taste. See Rousseau’s Dictionnaire de musique (Paris: Duchesne, 1768), s.v. “Génie,” 230-31, and “Compositeur,” 108-9; also Francesco Degrada’s comments in “L’opera napoletana,” in Storia dell’opera v. 1, ed. Guglielmo Barblan and Alberto Basso (Torino: UTET, 1977), 238-39.
primarily through the addition of solfèges exercises gleaned from his travels across Italy.\textsuperscript{69} I can add that some of those training examples were marked Andante cantabile.

In Garaudé’s definition of Cantabile some interesting particularities emerge.\textsuperscript{70}

\begin{quote}
Le CANTABILE est un morceau qui, par son style large, majestueux et simple, exige beaucoup d’art et de perfection: c’est la pierre de touché du chanteur. L’habitude de bien prendre et retenir sa respiration, la manière de bien poser sa voix, de soutenir et de filer les sons, le moelleux et l’expression des ports de voix, telles sont les qualités rares et précieuses qu’il faut acquérir pour bien chanter le CANTABILE. Ce sont ces mêmes qualités qui constituent, dans son véritable sens, ce qu’on entend par la bonne Méthode Italienne, dont tout le monde parle, et que peu de personnes connaissent. Depuis les célèbres Farinelli, Pacchierotti, Marchesi et Crescentini, on a rarement chanté le Cantabile avec la pureté de style et la sensibilité expansive qui en font l’essence et le charme principal. C’est de ce genre qu’on pourrait s’écrier avec Pétrarque “el canto che nell’anima si sente.” Une partie des chanteurs modernes ont chacun leur petite provision de traits insignifiants, qu’ils ajoutent tant bien que mal à toute espèce d’airs d’un mouvement lent; ils ajoutent à cela des aspirations forcées qu’ils prennent pour de l’expression, des ports de voix trainés en miaulements qu’ils supposent être l’accent du sentiment, et voilà ce que quelques artiste appellent aujourd’hui chanter le CANTABILE!
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
The CANTABILE is a piece which, by its broad, majestic, and simple style, demands much art and perfection: it is the singer’s touchstone. The habit of taking in and holding one’s breath well, the manner of placing one’s voice well, of supporting and moving through the notes, the mellifluousness and the expression of portamentos: such are the rare and precious qualities that constitute, in its true sense, that which is understood by the good Italian method, of which everyone speaks, and which few know. Ever since the celebrated Farinelli, Pacchierotti, Marchesi, and Crescentini, the Cantabile has rarely been sung with that purity of style and expansive sensibility that constitute its essence and its principal charm. It is of this genre that one could exclaim, with PETRARCH, “the song that is felt in the soul.” One part of modern singers have each their little supply of insignificant features [traits], which they adjust as much good as bad in each space of the slow-moving arias; to these they add forced ambitions which they take for expression, ports de voix dragged and meowing which they suppose to be the stress of sentiment, and that is what certain artists call singing the Cantabile today!
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{70} Alexis de Garaudé, \textit{Méthode complète de chant}, 249-50.
After further discussion of *Cantabile* in relation to the Adagio and Allegro, Garaudé continues:

La SCÈNE est ordinairement composée d’un RÉCITATIF simple, d’un RÉCITATIF obligé, d’un *CANTABILE* et d’un ALLEGRO ou AGITATO.

*The SCENE is normally composed of a simple RECITATIVE, an obligato RECITATIVE, a CANTABILE, and an ALLEGRO or AGITATO.*

Garaudé uses singers rather than composers to echo the Conservatoire’s lament of former models of proper execution lost to the present day. To the techniques of thick *legato* and *portamenti*, typical of the *cantabile*, Garaudé adds a description of its usual place in the musical scene, following the recitative and preceding the fast, concluding *cabaletta* (called *allegro* or *agitato*).

Garaudé’s description of the “singer’s touchstone” implies that the skills required in the *cantabile* function as a technical foundation for the entire art of song. After he describes the particular aspects of breath, support, and *legato*, he refers back to the “good Italian method” that made those performing techniques possible. From Garaudé’s

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71 Garaudé was probably familiar with Mannstein’s *Das System der großen Gesangsschule des Bernacchi: Système de la grande méthode de chant*, published six years earlier in German and French (Dresden: n.p., 1835), which describes *cantabile* in similar terms on p. 62: “L’apogée de la perfection du chant est placé dans le *Cantabile*, ou c’est plutôt le véritable chant et voilà pourquoi sa dénomination est dérivée de *Cantare*, chanter. *Le Cantabile* est la pierre de touche du chanteur, car, pour le bien chanter, il faut qu’il réunisse toutes les qualités qui caractérisent le véritable artiste, savoir: la formation du ton par excellence, le portamento parfait, étant l’élément du *Cantabile*, la profondeur du sentiment, un goût exquis, l’art de la respiration et la prononciation distincte et noble.” Mannstein’s description echoes the eighteenth-century understanding of *cantabile* as the ideal, elegant style articulated by Domenico Corri in 1810. Mannstein continues under the section titled “L’air” (63) with an exhortation for restrained embellishment, guided, as usual, by good taste: “Le *Cantabile* demande un mouvement très-lent, c’est pourquoi tous les ornement, dont, d’ailleurs, il ne faut se servir que rarement, doivent porter un caractère de grâce et de douceur. Le martellement du trille doit être plus lent que dans tous les autres genres de chant, et sa cadence exige une exécution des plus calmes. Les cadences et les fermates doivent commencer par une mise de voix aussi longue que possible, et finir par un trille prolongé. Il n’est pas défendu au chanteur de faire usage d’embellissements approuvés par le bon goût, mais qu’il se garde d’en user trop fréquemment et de nuire ainsi au plus bel ornement du *Cantabile*, qui consiste dans une noble simplicité.”
remarks it is not implausible to interpret the *cantabile* as more than just the supreme aria type, but as one that encompassed the fundamentals required for proper execution of all other genres of song. If experiencing difficulty in breath control or the delivery of ornaments at any point, the singer could return to the *cantabile* as a benchmark or guiding compass for proper technique. The remarks illuminate the inherent paradox within *cantabile*, a simple style suitable for beginners that also contained advanced secrets of the art only skilled musicians were capable of performing successfully. Incidentally, the multiple singing examples marked *cantabile* in the Conservatoire’s method also supports its value as an educational tool.

From the pedagogical discussions of *cantabile* by the Conservatoire, Corri and Garaudé the *cantabile* emerges as a style and genre based primarily on a simple, noble, yet spontaneously ornamented eighteenth-century singing tradition falling into neglect during the early nineteenth; as similar to the slow-moving and improvisatory instrumental *adagio* for violin; as demanding wide-ranging technique needed for adequate breath support and the performance of tasteful ornamentation; and as providing an essential technical foundation necessary to the proper singing of all other styles. All of this contributed to its aesthetic status as the “nec plus ultra” of song, the “superlative of all styles,” and the singer’s “touchstone,” upon which his art rested. We now explore the relationship of this style to the *bel canto spianato* tradition as found in early nineteenth-century sources.
In his study of Bellini’s relationship to the Italian aesthetics of opera, Simon Maguire sets forth (bel) canto spianato as the “true” manifestation of the bel canto tradition of spun-out, smooth legato melody.\textsuperscript{72} More recently, Nicholas Baragwanath has documented the interchangeable relationship between the terms and styles cantabile and spianato in multiple early nineteenth-century Italian treatises, and where the connected styles figure in the larger bel canto tradition:\textsuperscript{73}

In general, the terms bel canto, canto spianato, canto figurato, and occasionally cantabile were all used to refer to the smooth, expressive, and heavily ornamented style of singing (hence also of melody) of the great eighteenth-century castrati . . . [and] as inherited and adapted by their successors, the soprano prima donnas who came to the fore in the early nineteenth century as a result of the Napoleonic suppression of castration.

A stylistic convergence took place between old and new in the virtuosic singing practices straddling the two centuries. Eighteenth-century tradition remained present even as it was absorbed into higher voice types with different capacities for florid embellishment.

\textsuperscript{72} Simon Maguire, Vincenzo Bellini and the Aesthetics of Early Nineteenth-Century Opera (New York: Garland, 1989).

\textsuperscript{73} Nicholas Baragwanath, The Italian Traditions & Puccini: Compositional Theory and Practice in Nineteenth-Century Opera (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 351, n. 14. The phrase “heavily” ornamented is relative, and may refer more accurately to how singers executed the cantabile rather than the true character of the style as described by writers we have examined. Baragwanath goes on to pinpoint the relationship between the canto spianato and poetry: “Canto spianato was generally associated with the traditional recitation of poetry, while bel canto aspired to a ‘natural’ form of pronunciation. The castrato Girolamo Crescentini, for instance, maintained that his exercises were designed to teach a kind of lyric declamation: ‘Singing should be an imitation of speech’ (Il canto deve essere un’ imitazione del discorso).” That does not mean, however, that the result would necessarily be considered beautiful by today’s standards. The unaesthetic qualities of a pronunciation perceived as “natural” to the bel canto of the early nineteenth century were discussed by Roger Freitas in a paper delivered at the 2011 annual meeting of the American Musicological Society. His research, focused on the singing techniques of Giuditta Pasta, suggests that the definition and practical performance of what was considered to be “natural”—a fundamental aspect of eighteenth-century cantabile melody—was, during the first half of the nineteenth century, centered around the proper articulation and declamation of individual words and syllables rather than the production of a smooth, sustained legato line. Whether or not the same performance practices were in effect during the late eighteenth century is an open question, as is the precise relationship between diction, the “natural,” and “expression,” another frequently occurring term.
The boundaries between the two styles of execution were fluid, but the early nineteenth-century definitions continued to link the *spianato* style to *cantabile*, a term more familiar to us now due to its prevalence in instrumental music, a context in which, to my knowledge, the indication *spianato* is either exceedingly rare or non-existent. Understanding this connection helps us trace the obscure lines running between the classic Italian school of song, to operatic *spianato* and operatic (and instrumental) *cantabile*, to Bellini’s operas, and finally, to Chopin’s use of the term and style on the piano.

Lichtenthal and Perrino

On page 126 of Lichtenthal’s *Dizionario* cited above, the definition of *canto* discusses the union of poetry and words, then goes on to explain the different genres of song. After mentioning the diverse characters of singing, and the *parlante* and *semplice* types of recitative, Lichtenthal continues with a variety called *istrumentato* before linking the *canto spianato* with the *cantabile*:74

Quello [recitative] che chiamasi *istrumentato*, e in cui il compositore ha voluto contraddistinguere con precisione il sentimento, ha bisogno d’essere corroborato e sostenuto dal cantante; quindi potra egli, secondo il sentimento delle parole e la corrispondente espressione del Canto, usare degli abbellimenti, collocando ciascuno di essi in quel posto che gli conviene, ed in cui valga a vieppiù accrescere la forza dell’espressione (v. RECITATIVO). Il così detto *Canto spianato*, o sia il *Cantabile* (le di cui qualità particolari, oltre le sopra descritte, sono: di possedere perfettamente l’arte di filar i suoni, d’eseguire le frasi del Canto, le grazie ed i tratti con espressione, e con quella nobilità che distingue questo carattere da tutti gli altri) soffre pochi abbellimenti, e questi devono

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74 Lichtenthal, *Dizionario*, 126-27.
eseguirsi con maniera larga, sostenuta, dignitosa, senza che riescano però pesanti, nè perdano l’eleganza, la leggierezza e l’espressione.

The one [recitative] called istrumentato, in which the composer wanted to distinguish the feeling with precision, needs to be strengthened and supported by the singer; so that, according to the emotion of the words and the corresponding expression of the song, it can use embellishments, each one placed in a suitable, good position that increases the force of the expression. (see Recitative). The similar genre called spianato or cantabile (which, among the highest qualities enumerated, demands from the singer that he possess perfectly the art of legato, to execute the phrases of the melody, the grace and features with expression and the nobility that distinguishes this genre from all the others) tolerates few ornaments; and these ornaments must be executed in a broad manner, sustained, dignified, without which they are in danger of becoming heavy and losing elegance, lightness, and expression.

Lichtenthal presents cantabile and canto spianato as interchangeable terms and styles. It is significant that his language used to describe the spianato draws from the Conservatoire’s definition of the cantabile — which incidentally contained no mention of spianato — indicating that a terminological fusion of the two terms had taken place between its publication in 1804, and the later treatise by Garcia of 1847, which, as we will see, presents the spianato as a central style with only supportive mention of the cantabile.

Lichtenthal reiterates the Conservatoire method’s claim that the cantabile “tolerates few ornaments”; those included must be broad, elegant, properly supported and light. Along the golden mean between overloading the cantabile and leaving it too bare, Lichtenthal leans toward restraint as the guiding imperative. Again, the concept extends back to the language of Tosi, whose emphasis on simplicity in the cantabile, in contrast with the demonstrative allegro, could not have been clearer.

At least one other author more closely connected to the Italian school linked the two styles some years earlier. Marcello Perrino was chief administrator at the
Conservatory of San Sebastiano in Naples where Bellini studied. In 1810 he published a singing method that contains a chapter entitled *Ombreggiamento, e legatura della Voce* (Vocal Shading and *Legato*). After stating the importance of dynamic shading in degrees of *piano* and *forte*, and making an analogy to the color-shading of *chiaroscuro* in painting, Perrino continues:\(^75\)

\begin{quotenews}
La maniera di ombreggiare e di legare la voce appartiene a quell genere di melodia, che comunemente dicesi cantabile, cioè ad una melodia larga e spianata esprimente un tenero affetto dell’animo: A sostenersi perciò la voce nelle cantilena di tal natura con una soave espansione, o sia cavata di tuono, e con quella gradazione di piano e forte che richiede l’espressione, ha ella bisogno di una forza flessibile, che a guisa di una molla gentile l’appoggi e la sostenga . . . Per legatura della voce non deve intendersi soltanto la maniera di legare col medesimo fiato due o più tuoni senza batterli distintamente, ma bensì quella costante scorrevole eguaglianza, e flessibilità della voce, con cui fluir deve nell’attacco e pasaggio de’ tuoni componenti la melodia.
\end{quotenews}

\begin{quote}
The methods of vocal shading and legato apply to that type of melody, which is commonly called cantabile, that is, a broad and spun-out [spianato] melody that expresses a tender feeling of the soul; in order for the voice to maintain its power in such cantilenas with a gentle expansiveness or cavata di tuono, and in that shading of piano and forte required by the sentiment, it requires a supple strength which supports and sustains it in the manner of a gentle spring. . . By vocal legato one does not just mean the method of joining two or more notes with the same breath without attacking them individually, but rather that constant even fluidity, and suppleness of the voice, with which it must flow in the sounding and passing of the notes comprising the melody.
\end{quote}

Perrino mentions the breath support highlighted in the educational methods, and uses the same illustration as Corri of a bubbling and flowing spring of water. The two methods were published in the same year, but it is possible that Perrino had read Corri’s work, and if not, that streaming water was considered by many Italian writers to be an appropriate

\(^{75}\) Marcello Perrino, *Osservazioni sul canto* (Naples: Stamperia reale, 1810). Maguire’s translation in *Vincenzo Bellini and the Aesthetics of Early Nineteenth-Century Opera*, 167, is used here. He omits one paragraph from the passage about joining the expression with the imagination, but it is not relevant to this discussion.
metaphor for the style. Thus, *cantabile* was still common enough in the musical vernacular of 1810 to serve as reference point for manifestations of *canto spianato*, the longstanding and fundamental Italian singing technique.

Manuel Garcia’s *Traité Complet* (1841/1847)

Several decades later the *spianato* had apparently become the preferred term for the *cantabile*, sufficiently representing its stylistic attributes, and eliminating the need for an explicit association between the two terms. In his two-volume *Traité complet sur l’Art du Chant* (1841/1847), Manuel Garcia Junior, inventor of the laryngoscope and son of the world-famous pedagogue of *bel canto*, Manuel Garcia Sr., devoted an entire section to the *canto spianato*, which he placed second after recitative in Chapter Five on “Various Styles,” without linking it with the *Cantabile*. Garcia calls *spianato* the most noble of all, slow, simple and relying primarily on shading of emotion and musical chiaroscuro for its expressive power, language which certainly calls to mind other discussions of *cantabile*. The style required proper intonation, articulation, breath support, drawn-out sounds [*sons filés*], sensitive dynamics, portamentos, and *tempo rubato*. Garcia continues: “The artist who has reached this result, so difficult to obtain

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76 Manuel Garcia Jr. was a failed-singer-turned-inventor of the laryngoscope, a mechanism with mirrors inserted into the throat for the purpose of viewing the vocal cords. Lucie Manén reports that Garcia’s emphasis on the invention, in itself a useful object, regrettably directed singing technique away from the use of upper air passages, which had been a “first principle of Bel Canto technique and teaching.” However, such a departure from the technical process of sound production Garcia Jr. inherited does not seem to have instigated a similar progression away from traditional views in matters of style. See Lucie Manén, *Bel Canto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 7-10.

77 The following discussion is taken from Garcia/Paschke, *Traité complet*, ch. 5, 186-92.
with only these resources, completing their effect with the *cantabile*, knows how to phrase all kinds of songs."

Presumably, by *cantabile* here Garcia intends the slow-moving, expressive arias that typically occurred third in the contemporaneous *scena* as described by Garaudé. After a lengthy discussion of how to sustain notes of significant duration, Garcia concludes:

These rules for the spun-out [*spianato*] style, as we have just given them, are applied in all their vigor only to the *largo* (examples follow). The other *cantabile* movements, such as the *adagios*, the *maestosos*, the *andantes*, etc., although they retain a certain gravity from the *largo*, will be successively modified by aspects borrowed from the florid style, and alternately present long sustained notes and vigorous and showy passages.

The *cantabile* qualities of long notes with florid decoration could therefore be manifested in any slow-moving aria, but the ratio between the two elements was determined by the slowness of the tempo.

Garcia then lists the following examples of *spianato* arias:

1. “Casta Diva” from *Norma* (Bellini, 1831, Milan)
2. “Ahi! se tu dormi svegliati” from *Capulet e [i] Montecchi* (Bellini, 1830, Venice. libretto rewritten by Romani, originally for Vacchay’s Rome e Giulietta)
3. “Idolo del mio cor” from *Romeo e Giulietta* (Zingarelli, 1796, Milan)
4. “Bel raggio lusinghier [o] ?” from *Semiramide* (Rossini 1823, Venice)
5. “Per che non ho del vento” from *Rosmunda d’Ingheliterra* (Donizetti, 1834, Padua)
6. “Qui la voce sua soave” from *Puritani* (Bellini, 1835, Paris)
7. “In si barbara sciagura” from *Semiramide* (Rossini, 1823, Venice)
8. “Sois immobile et vers la terre” from *Guillaume Tell* (Rossini, 1829, Paris)
All of these arias save “Sois immobile” are for female characters, and the majority of them were written for the soprano voice type. Four of these ten illustrations of cantabile chosen by Garcia are credited to Bellini, but the aria “Ah! se tu dormi svegliati” was actually composed by Vaccai for his *Romeo e Giulietta*, and first inserted into Bellini’s *I Capuleti e [i] Montecchi* by Maria Malibran in 1832. García Jr. was Malibran’s older brother and an esteemed singing instructor; he surely knew the story behind the aria, and may have attributed its authorship to Bellini in order to avoid contradicting the average reader’s frame of reference.

The differences between these arias are initially more apparent than their similarities. Upon listening, they fall into two disparate stylistic categories: 1) unhurried restraint with static presence on every note; and 2) highly ornate melody driven by perpetual motion. The Mozart, all three of Bellini’s arias, and Rossini’s French aria “Sois immobile” of *Guillaume Tell* group themselves naturally into the first category. Based on lean, legato melody in which moderate notated decoration is reserved primarily for the conclusions of phrases, the melodic core seems to consist of an unhurried presence within every note, which has a spellbinding effect on the listener: each moment is a round, full world of sound. Interestingly, though it belongs in this category and

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78 Philip Gossett reports that Malibran’s substitution was taken up by Giuditta Grisi and finally condemned by Romani in 1836. Ricordi published the aria as “sanctioned” by Bellini in his edition of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* — the edition readily available today includes Vaccai’s music, with the following note: “To be substituted, if desired, as is generally done, for the last piece of Bellini’s opera.” See *Divas and Scholars: performing Italian opera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 556, n. 26. In 1834, Giuseppina Ronzi de Begnis chose to go against the “pasticcio alla Malibran,” and opted instead to sing Bellini’s original. Fortunately, her performance was well-received (*Divas and Scholars*, 211f).
contains a relatively bare melodic line, to his “Sois immobile” Rossini adds a dynamic, ascending counter-solo in viola that serves a dramatic purpose but simultaneously distracts the ear from the singer’s line.

By contrast, in Donizetti’s “Perche non ho del vento” and Rossini’s Italian arias, the generative principle is one of motion instead of stasis; the flourishing trills and movements between and around notes constitute, instead of supplement, the melodic core. In Rossini especially, frequent long scales rise above pure display to become an inextricable part of the melody, which would cease to function without them. In fact, these arias are closer to the gymnastic landscape of Verdi’s “Caro nome” and Manon’s Jewel Song than the other listed spianato arias. When viewed in this light, the similarity between Bellini and Mozart is striking, and the connection underlines Bellini’s comparatively simple orientation that Chopin would also share. To my ear, the cantabile, spianato style is indeed most effective when unadorned melodic notes are showcased the majority of the time, allowing a sense of lush, timeless presence to expand through each note while relegating decoration and orchestral involvement to secondary, supplemental roles. When they do occur in this context, the ornamental flourishes bubble forth as in the metaphoric spring water discussed in Corri and Perrino.

It is perplexing how a singing expert could group such contrasting arias under the umbrella of one genre. For Garcia, the points of connection between these arias must have been the slow-moving tempo, step-wise melodic contour and long notes that offer ample opportunity for ornamentation, as well as their expressive dramatic function and placement in the formal structure. Yet he was also aware of the diversity within a single
genre. In the section preceding the discussion of arias in “The Various Styles,” he emphasizes how character varies and serves to differentiate an aria from another of its kind:

It is a question here of grasping well what distinguishes one cantabile from another cantabile, one agitato from another agitato; for example, the cantabile “Casta diva” is stamped with an extasy full of tenderness and dignity, while the cantabile “Fra poco a me ricovero” paints the despondency of a soul broken by grief. As to the particular ideas, one studies the intention and performance of them in each period, in each phrase, taken one after the other. One must choose, among the shades of feeling which express these ideas, the tint which is the most appropriate to the dominant emotion.\(^7\)

Thus, the character and emotion of an aria varied widely within each genre, and would be selected on a case-by-case basis according to its appropriateness in a given context.

Naturally, the chosen character related to the ratio between melodic notes and decoration, which also varied dramatically. Depending on the factors of tempo and quantity of notated ornamentation, the singer would have more or less room and opportunity to add at will. In each of these diverse examples, the governing stylistic principle of spianato, i.e. lyric legato and spontaneous decoration, was active — a principle perfected by Vincenzo Bellini, author of three of the ten arias given as illustrations.

In his 1989 dissertation “Vincenzo Bellini and the Aesthetics of Early Nineteenth-Century Opera,” Simon Maguire demonstrated that Bellini’s particular spianato craft was in fact a revival of the traditional Italian school of song. Self-described as “a first attempt to study the Italian attitudes to opera while Bellini was studying and composing,” Maguire’s work surveys eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Italian writings on aesthetics.

\(^7\) Garcia/Paschke, Traité complet, v. 2, 168.
of the bel canto tradition to unearth its most significant principles. His introduction reminds the reader of the German tendency to trivialize the compositional value of early nineteenth-century Italian opera, and alerts us to what has become a typical evaluation of Bellini through comparison with what came later, rather than viewing his achievements as a culmination of what came before.80 Maguire traces longstanding Italian operatic inspiration from ancient Greek practice. Naples emerged as a concentration of this tradition, where “three-quarters of the composers that achieved any eminence during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had… strong connexions, either being born there or having studied there, and often teaching there as well.”81

The aesthetic objective practiced in Naples was to realize opera as the optimal convergence of poetry, music, and drama as movement, mime or dancing. The distinct pronunciation of text — “expression” referring to clarity as opposed to conveyed emotion — would be enhanced by music crafted in order to allow the necessary space for expression to unfold. Some of this “space” was created literally through the avoidance of counterpoint. Lack of middle voices, basses instead of cellos, and soaring soprano melodies made for a two-part hollow soundscape waiting to be filled by the singer and the text.82 This was certainly true of Bellini’s works, and especially true of the cantabile markings of Chopin’s early period, which, though quite florid, are restricted to one melodic line and sparse accompaniment, lacking the inner density common in the left-hand writing of his later works.

80 Simon Maguire, Vincenzo Bellini and the Aesthetics of Early Nineteenth-Century Opera, 1-5.
81 Maguire, Vincenzo Bellini, 25.
82 Maguire, Vincenzo Bellini, 32-35.
The aesthetic beliefs described above are relatively familiar to us today; their centrality to Bellini is perhaps less well-known. Part of Bellini’s focus on the old-fashioned school of song can be explained by his classical education. He received compositional training at the Real Collegio di Musica in Naples, where his teacher Niccolò Zingarelli (author of one example of spianato from the opera Giulietta e Romeo included in Garcia’s list of spianato arias), taught him how to compose solfège exercises, of which he composed several hundred examples that have unfortunately been lost.\footnote{Maguire, Vincenzo Bellini, 10.}

Bellini also studied singing with former castrato Girolamo Crescentini, who worked in Paris and is listed as one of the co-authors of the Paris Conservatoire’s official vocal method.

Of the previous generation, his instructors instilled a conservative approach in Bellini, who went on to achieve a stripped-down, spacious compositional style based on simple melody, without sounding dated on the one hand, or excluding Rossini’s “modern” developments in florid writing on the other. Yet Bellini’s emphasis on simplicity and declamation distinguishes him from his contemporaries; his aesthetic objectives seem closer to the earlier values of control, nuance, and textual expressivity advocated by Tosi (1723) than the early nineteenth-century emphases on volume, spectacle, and vocal display under Rossini. Notwithstanding, his manner of executing these ideals differs dramatically from both. The emphasis on textual expression upheld by Tosi was simultaneously offset by the spontaneous and highly florid improvisation of
“open” textures, and unobstructed rhythmically by the regular tempi in the closed arias of Bellini and Donizetti.

Similarly, Rossini combined his orchestral flair and rhythmic energy with highly florid writing in textures that were more open — in that regard more reminiscent of the baroque than either the more recent, closed, classic simplicity of a Mozart aria, or of the soon-to-arrive transparency of Bellini’s closed forms with sustained, simplified melody and selective decoration. As stated above in the discussion of closed textures, text in Bellini was expressed and emphasized through space and sostenuto, rather than the crowning of a given syllable or note with elaborate décor. That is one key shift in Chopin’s music away from tendency toward stile brillant pianism that showcased virtuosity as melody, and other simple but constantly moving melodies, toward his hauntingly simple, mature melodies composed of few, long notes that emanated a celestial spaciousness. To Chopin’s relationship with opera we now turn.

Chopin and Opera

When considering the subject of Chopin and opera, it is important, as David Kasunic has pointed out, to acknowledge Chopin’s wide-ranging operatic source material that included French opera, and to remember how fragmented our understanding remains due to his limited, surviving correspondence. Chopin’s few letters from the years

84 David Kasunic, “Chopin’s Singing Voice, From the Romantic to the Real” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2004). Kasunic exposes the oversight in scholarship regarding the inspiration Chopin derived from French opera, in addition to Italian, as well as Chopin’s general reluctance to give musical commentary in the few surviving letters from his early years in Paris. (p. 40, n. 51). I would suggest that in spite of distinct national traditions, the differences between French and Italian operas performed in Paris.
before and just after his arrival in Paris communicate his love of opera, but when it comes
to the operas themselves, his admiration was indiscriminate, and the opera (and
composer) always takes second place to the *prima donna* under discussion. For example,
he spends a fair amount of time extolling the attributes of various singers, be it the
Viennese soprano Mademoiselle Heinefetter’s divine singing in *Otello* on 23 November
1830, or her perfect intonation, flexibility, and *portamenti*, but absolutely cold delivery
that froze his nose off in the front row a few weeks later;\(^{85}\) or the favorable effect of
Henriette Sontag’s *diminuendi* and original ornamentation, which “breathes over the
stalls of the theater a scent of the freshest flowers, which caresses deliciously but rarely
moves one to tears”,\(^{86}\) or the delightfully drawn-out and distinct *gruppetti* of Mlle.
Gladkowska in a performance of *La Pie* [*Voleuse*].\(^{87}\) *La Pie* is among operas Chopin
mentions by Rossini including *Mahomet*, *Le Barbier de Seville*, and *La donna del Lago*.\(^{88}\)

His report from Dresden on 14 November 1830 doesn’t mince words about a
particular performance: “I saw an opera, *Tancrède* that was bad.” Most likely Chopin
uses the French title to refer to Rossini’s *Tancredì* of 1813, and it could easily be that his
displeasure stemmed from a poor interpretation rather than the music itself. Once in
Paris, Chopin’s letters from the fall of 1831 indicate that he was in sensory ecstasy from

\(^{85}\) Letters from Vienna to Jan Matuszynski in Warsaw, dated November 24 and December 26, 1830.
Hedley’s *Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin* (London: Heinemann, 1962), 66; and Sydow’s
*Correspondance de Frédéric Chopin*, v. 1 (Paris: Richard-Masse, 1953), 241. The negative description of
Heinefetter is omitted from Hedley’s English translation.

\(^{86}\) Letter from Warsaw to Titus Woyciechowski at Poturzyn from Warsaw, June 5, 1830. Hedley, *Selected
Correspondence*, 48.

\(^{87}\) Letter from Warsaw to Tytus Woyciechowski at Poturzyn from Warsaw, October 5, 1830. Hedley, *Selected
correspondence*, 201-2.

\(^{88}\) Letter to Tytus, October 12, 1830. Hedley, *Selected Correspondence*, 59-60.
the magnificent performances delivered in each operatic production. Again he highlights the characteristics of particular singers, using the composer and particular work merely as a preface to these remarks.  

This is not meant to imply that Chopin lacked an ability to evaluate the music he heard, but as was often the case, he was simply more enthusiastic about his favorite performers, and did not indicate a marked preference for any particular composer over another. Yet since the majority of operas Chopin heard were probably by Rossini, it is natural that in the surviving letters he mentions performances of Rossini’s operas most often.

Having established Chopin’s love of opera and the similar aesthetic approach he shared with Bellini, the nature of their personal and musical relationship must be evaluated. Prompted by unreliable remarks by contemporaries Hiller, Liszt, and Schumann, twentieth-century musicology embraced the idea of Bellini’s stylistic influence on Chopin. The limited evidence of personal contact was overlooked by Jean Chantavoine, who argued that Chopin’s love of Bellini’s and Rossini’s operas was a multifarious affair of race [in this context surely a reference to culture], age, circumstances, fashion, and especially of taste; and in the case of Bellini, “almost an affair of the heart.” Günther Wagner suggested that the majority of Chopin’s formative

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89 The letter to Tytus, December 12, 1831 contains the famous remark “Mme Cinti-Damoreau’s singing could not be bettered — I prefer her to Malibran. Malibran amazes you — the other ravishes you.” Hedley, *Selected Correspondence*, 100-1.

90 Gastone Belotti examines what he calls the small but real “problem” of Chopin and Bellini’s relationship, cautions against overreaching in scholarship, and suggests that the best solution is to move away from the question of “influence” towards one of “affinity.” See *F. Chopin l’uomo*, v. 1 (Milan: Sapere), 1974, 491-501.

The personal contact between Chopin and Bellini in Paris is therefore established, but minimal. In terms of composition, aside from the variation he wrote on *I Puritani* for the collaboration with Liszt, Thalberg, Pixis, Herz, and Czerny in the Hexameron, Chopin’s known musical connections with Bellini consist of a piano accompaniment to *Casta diva* sketched out for Pauline Viardot, the presence of both composers’ works in Baroness d’Est’s personal album, which, as Eigeldinger claims, strongly suggests that Chopin and Bellini socialized, however frequently or infrequently, in the Baroness’ salon during this season; and the Étude Op. 25 No. 7, composed 1836 and derived from the opening cello theme from Act II of *Norma*. Only the last qualifies as inspiration for an original composition.

David Kasunic effectively summarizes both sides of the Bellini controversy, acknowledging the correspondence by Hiller, Liszt, and Schumann that mentions Chopin’s friendship with Bellini 1833-1835, as well as scholars who insist on Chopin’s

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96 To Hiller we owe the account of Chopin’s association with Bellini in the salon of Madame Freppa, as well as Chopin’s emotional response to *Norma*’s premiere in 1833. Concerning the latter, in light of the subsequent popular reception of the work documented by Alicia Levin, and the fact that Hiller published his recollection decades after the event, one wonders to what degree his memory had perhaps unwittingly
independent musical maturation, best represented by Arthur Hedley: “to speak of Chopin’s “indebtedness” to Bellini is to ignore historical fact.” Kasunic cautions against such an exclusive binary: Chopin was indeed a mature musician upon his arrival in Paris, yet the development of his melodic style thereafter is equally apparent. But rather than undergoing a drastic transformation of his stylistic language, it appears that Chopin experienced artistic stimulation after meeting Bellini in 1833; their friendship likely fueled and reinforced what he was already in the process of discovering on his own. In light of the evidence, the precise degree of mutual influence during this process remains conjecture rather than fact. A similar situation occurred between Chopin’s keyboard predecessors Hélène de Montgeroult and Jan Ladislav Dussek, whose music, writings, and personal association reveal a parallel cultivation of fluid and expressive melodies during the early nineteenth century.

Thus, the Bellini-Chopin “problem” is a manufactured one. If scholars insist on a personal connection that generated Chopin’s emulation of Bellini on the keyboard, they are basing that claim on a poorly documented personal and professional relationship as well as loose source material which, in the case of Bellini, does not exceed what Chopin heard by other French and Italian composers of opera and integrated into his works. Alternatively, if scholars insist on attributing influence solely to Rossini, or to no

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embellished the intensity of Chopin’s reaction to the (then) fairly unfamiliar work. See Hiller, Künstlerleben (Cologne: Mont-Schauberg, 1880), 146-57; and Levin, “Seducing Paris: Piano Virtuosos and Artistic Identity” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2009), 163-68.


Jeffrey Kallberg shows that Chopin’s most intense formal and harmonic reform occurred during his last years, 1845-1849, while under the influence of counterpoint treatises by Cherubini and Kastner. See “Chopin’s Last Style,” Journal of the American Musicological Society 38:2 (Summer 1985): 264-315.

particular individual, they will be forced to deny links with Bellini and multiple other composers. In fact, as Kasunic concludes, Chopin’s wide variety of source material indicates that he excluded nothing that he was exposed to on the operatic stage, and it is fruitless to try and isolate one composer as more influential than another.

Rather than looking for specific melodic derivatives of particular arias, which are interesting but do not inform our understanding of Chopin’s more fundamental and far-reaching stylistic development, for this chapter it is more productive to recognize that Chopin marked the term cantabile in his concerti, invoking the spun-out lyricism of Italian song, at least three years before he first heard Bellini in 1831. It is also true that his cantabile markings dating from after his encounter with Bellini’s music do show stripped-down melodies, more selective ornamentation, and melodic elisions that create focus and length. The evidence indicates that Chopin’s own application of cantabile did not begin with, but rather was stimulated by, Bellini’s unique formulation of the bel canto spianato tradition, and evolved decisively beyond re-creation of a musical style à la mode, into unique fusion with his other two primary stylistic languages of counterpoint and the Mazurka dance. This progression will be examined more closely in Chapters Four and Five on style and the fifteen passages Chopin marked cantabile.

Conclusion

Central to the cantabile aria’s character was simplicity, elegance and nobility, with moderate and tasteful melodic ornamentation as presented in the Conservatoire’s treatise and in those by Domenico Corri and Alexis Garaudé. The early nineteenth-
century term of choice for the *cantabile* became *canto spianato*, a longstanding tradition involving perpetually generated, sustained and ornamented melody; a terminological bridge between the two was formed explicitly in definitions by Perrino (1810) and Lichtenthal (1826). Manuel Garcia’s discussion of *spianato* arias demonstrates the consistent principle of smooth, decorated, *legato* melody in a slow tempo, in characters ranging from the lean elegance of Mozart’s “Dove sono” and Bellini’s “Casta diva” and “Ah! non credea mirarti,” to the florid motion of Rossini’s “Bel raggio lusinghiero” and dexterous trills and turns of Donizetti’s “Perche non ho del vento.”

Texturally, the *spianato* or *cantabile* style had evolved from a primarily open, through-composed form based on relatively elaborate, free decoration of individual syllables, to the closed, periodic arias of Bellini, punctuated with selective decoration of significant syllables or words placed on principal melodic notes. Exposure to Bellini’s arias did not begin, but rather stimulated Chopin’s own discovery of lean, lyric melody, as we will see in Chapters Four and Five.

We now turn to four French treatises for piano to create a context for nineteenth-century *cantabile* in Parisian keyboard music.
Although much about piano music composed in Paris before Chopin’s arrival in 1831 is well documented, its terrain as well as its scholarship remains uneven. The primary achievements were operatic: as French Grand Opera developed the dramatic orchestral writing originally inspired by Revolutionary marching band hymns into a spectacular and original genre, Italian opera flourished during Rossini’s tenure at the Théâtre-Italien, where the crème de la crème of celebrated international singers performed regularly.  

Music for piano occupies a comparatively diminutive place on the musical map. Several French scholars have laid the groundwork of cataloguing the piano repertoire of the period, but have provided little convincing stylistic interpretation of a music that is often mediocre in form and content.  

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101 In La Musique française de piano avant 1830 (Paris: Didier, 1953; repr. New York: AMS, 1978), Georges Favre offers the most detailed interpretive study of post-Revolution French piano music until Chopin. Favre is opinionated about the repertoire: he observes, regarding Méhul, the “richesse et la variété de son inspiration musicale” (47) and a brilliant, orchestral sense of voicing in his first sonata (45); he adores the “caractère essentiellement lyrique” of Adrien Boieldieu (84). Yet he is quick to point out the “mauvais goût” and “monotonie” of Louis Adam (56, 59) as well as the “abondante et médiocre production” of Dussek (80). Although the music of the era was inconsistent in quality, Favre’s emphatic pronouncements about its strengths and weaknesses is suspect. Adélaïde de Place’s Le Piano-forte à Paris entre 1760 et 1822 (Paris: Amateurs des livres, 1986), is a catalogue of works published by well- and lesser known composers during that period, supplemented by brief but insightful remarks. Specialized studies of
evaluate genre and style in this repertory, feeling no need to justify a repertoire that is in many ways problematic.\textsuperscript{102}

The French struggle for excellence was in part a practical one. After resisting the influx of Italian opera and instrumental music throughout the eighteenth century, the Revolution further handicapped French society and its system of music education, already weakened by a poor level of singing instruction carried out across France within the Church — a problem Bernard Sarrette determined to correct through the founding and development of the centralized Conservatoire.\textsuperscript{103} During its early years, the desire at the Conservatoire to increase the competence of French singers, and in so doing to end the reliance on foreign singers, led to the adoption of the celebrated Italian school of song in the Conservatoire’s official curriculum, shown in the official \textit{Méthode de chant} of 1804 discussed in the last chapter. Italian castrati Mengozzi and Crescentini were installed as instructors, and the Prix de Rome was established in 1804 to immerse talented French composers in the Italian tradition, and to improve, through their works, the international reputation of French music.\textsuperscript{104}

individual composers include Francis-Brigitte Sappey’s \textit{Alexandre P.F. Boëly (1785-1858): Ses ancêtres, sa vie, son œuvre, son temps} (Paris: Amateurs de livres, 1989), which provides a useful historical narrative of a retrospective French composer in the midst of blossoming Romanticism, but takes a defensive stance about music that can only be judged, at best, as fraught with inconsistency. Georges Favre also wrote a biography of Adrien Boieldieu (1775-1834), \textit{Boieldieu: Sa vie -- son œuvre} (Paris: Droz, 1944-45).\textsuperscript{102}

In the introduction to the ten-volume series of early nineteenth-century piano music published by Garland in 1993, a reproduction of the French \textit{Trésor des pianistes} dating from the second half of the century, Jeffrey Kallberg mentions the “negative qualities” of the repertoire, but also presents the music as revelatory of the surrounding historical context. See his “Introduction to the Series,” \textit{Piano Music of the Parisian Virtuosos 1810-1860}, v. 1 (New York: Garland, 1993), vii-viii.\textsuperscript{103}

Emmanuel Hondré, “Le Conservatoire de Paris en quête de sa mission nationale,” in \textit{Musical Education in Europe (1770-1914)}, v. 1, ed. Michael Fend and Michel Noiray (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2005), 81-102, esp. 84.\textsuperscript{103}

Hondré, “Le Conservatoire de Paris,” 93.\textsuperscript{104}
For this study, the significance of early nineteenth-century French piano music lies not in an evaluation of the repertoire’s merit, but in what the collective ensemble reveals about the stylistic priorities of that transitional era. Groomed in the late eighteenth-century musical vernacular, and playing on instruments equipped with expanding keyboards and pedals capable of sustained sound, composers responded to the range of new possibilities with mixed results.

Elements of the cantabile style had been active in the musical vernacular for several decades, and its influence would only increase during the transition into early nineteenth-century instruments. Derek Carew has identified what he calls the “cantabile-decorative style” to refer to the slow-moving, vocal and embellished textures common in slow movements of sonatas, concertos, and theme-and-variations works between 1760 and 1850. Carew does not single out cantabile in piano music as descending from Italian opera, but he does acknowledge its widespread and idiomatic presence in keyboard music.105

In France, singing on the keyboard was spurred on, after 1800, by increasingly resonant pianos; in particular, the genres of the Romance and the Nocturne conveyed a popular singing style with distinct French and Italian poetic and ornamental characteristics.106 Transferred to the piano, these two genres became prime vehicles for

105 See The Mechanical Muse: The Piano, Pianism and Piano Music, c. 1760-1850 (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 293-95 and 324-35. See also p. 435 for Carew’s discussion of cantabile’s presence in the assortment of musical topics used during improvisation, defining it in that context as “florid right-hand filigree-work over a more-or-less regular accompanying left hand.”

106 Writings on the Nocturne and Romance are too numerous to list in their entirety here. Among the best are James Parakilas, “‘Nuit plus belle qu’un beau jour’: Poetry, Song, and the Voice in the Piano Nocturne,” in The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries, ed. Halina Goldberg (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2004), 203-23; Jeffrey Kallberg, “‘Voice’ and the Nocturne,” in Pianist, Scholar,
the execution of French *son continu*, a finger-based *legato* technique that cultivated the aural illusion of sung melody on the keyboard and counteracted its natural decay.  

Once we have established the link between French emphasis on singing melody and eighteenth-century Italian *cantabile*, and recognized it as the historical model for much lyric writing in the early nineteenth century, a divide between teaching and practice becomes glaringly obvious. While the objective of recreating *cantabile* at the keyboard was acknowledged and promoted, examination of the piano literature reveals that few composers before Chopin dared, or were equipped, to translate the *cantabile* principle successfully into a fresh pianistic idiom.

Usually, the “failure” evidenced itself in two ways: following one trend, the basic framework of Mozart’s sonatas written thirty years earlier continued to be applied to instruments capable of a broader, orchestral range and expressive sound world. To some extent, despite their innovations, Jan Ladislav Dussek and Hélène de Montgeroult fall into this category. Following a different, opposing trend, excessively virtuosic music composed of formulaic and relentless passagework did not successfully integrate ornamentation into the melody or appropriate *rubato* between the hands, and leaving the music with a pianistic but not operatic sound, a vertical rather than linear orientation, and

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107 In her study of music before 1820, Maria Rose suggests that the technique of *son continu* enabled the French to embrace the Italian singing style as a desirable aspect of piano music during its development after the Revolution. In her investigation into singing on various instruments during that period, however, the term and history of *cantabile* are mentioned only in passing.
a bombastic and superficial effect. Louis Adam shows elements of both currents, and Pierre Zimmermann falls primarily into this second category.

The textural disparity of these two approaches is explained somewhat by their different functions, and the labels of “salon” music vs. “virtuosic” music have been used to understand two relevant contexts in the post-classic terrain. Stylistically, it took several decades for composers to move beyond the extremes of simplicity and banality on the one hand, and excessive virtuosity on the other: the few composers who ventured outside of these boundaries were often marginalized as anomalous. Practically, it took time for them to learn how to capitalize on the instrument’s new capabilities, and to infuse the inherited cantabile style with originality. Study of cantabile in French pedagogy and practice across this period illuminates this gradual metamorphosis, allowing us to link Chopin’s performing style with the ornamental bon goût innate to the French adaptation of cantabile, and to illuminate the musical landscape surrounding Chopin’s outstanding accomplishments.

108 Edith Meister’s “Stilelemente und die geschichtliche Grundlage der Klavierwerke Friedrich Chopins” (Ph. D. diss., University of Hamburg, 1936), contains a rare and penetrating analysis of composers and traditions that preceded and surrounded Chopin. She divides early nineteenth-century piano music into three categories: 1) intended for an orchestra or other ensemble; 2) destined for the salon; 3) and virtuosic, in which the composer puts himself and his technique at the center of the experience. Meister puts Dussek into the salon category because of his music’s simplicity and its broad public appeal, but she also calls his works “neither musical nor lyrical,” apparently unaware of his interest in rubato and the singing, cantabile style.

109 In his article “The Practice of Early Nineteenth-Century Pianism,” Jim Samson states the following about post-classic piano repertoire: “Far from describing a process toward Romantic individualism and subjectivity, this repertory actually tolerated a greater degree of stylistic uniformity than anything we find in so-called Viennese classical music. As the practice was increasingly institutionalized and popularized under a commercial imperative (through benefits, salons, conservatories, tours, and ‘seasons’), there was a corresponding reification of genres, forms, materials and performance styles . . . . Post-Classical virtuosity was, then, an art of conformity, where individuality was often translatable as novelty and interpreted, at least by the more high-minded critics, as a kind of excess.” See The Musical Work: Reality or Invention, ed. Michael Talbot (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 110-27, esp. 116-17.
Among the many French methods for keyboard published in the earlier nineteenth century, I will consider four that contain the most insight into cantabile: Dussek’s and Pleyel’s Méthode pour le piano forte of 1797; Louis Adam’s Méthode de piano of 1804; Hélène de Montgeroult’s monumental Cours complet of 1810-20; and Pierre Zimmermann’s Encyclopédie du pianiste-compositeur of 1840. This chapter will show how Adam and Zimmermann did not ignore cantabile, but focused on technique and the establishment of a compositional school, while Dussek and especially Montgeroult attempted to mold eighteenth-century Italian cantabile and its qualities of spontaneous ornamentation and rubato to the developing early nineteenth-century piano — all within a French aesthetic. The pianos in use at that time must be characterized before we can address the pedagogies designed for them.

Since composers exploited an idiom tailored to the particular capacities of the instrument available to them, we have much to learn from old pianos about keyboard writing of the period. Rosamund Harding and Sandra Rosenblum have painstakingly compiled evidence to show the particularities of piano construction that followed one of

110 Numerous methods published in French in Paris do not address cantabile in any substantial way. They include Bernard Viguerie’s L’Art de toucher le fortepiano (Paris: the author, 1798); Henri Herz’s Méthode complète de piano (Paris: n.p., c. 1831); Charles Chaulieu’s Cours analytique de théorie musicale, in which he defines cantabile merely as “mouvement lent, mais gracieux” (Le Pianiste 1:7 [May 1834]: 99); Friedrich Kalkbrenner’s Méthode pour apprendre le piano à l’aide du Guide-mains (Paris: Meissonier Fils, c. 1846); and of course Sigismund Thalberg’s L’Art de bien chanter au piano (Paris: n.p., 1853), which, after a promising title and introductory remarks, contains 24 virtuosic transcriptions of operatic arias. The pieces allowed Thalberg, through dynamic contrast and his three-hand technique, to project the melody over a sweeping, gymnastic accompaniment, but they are entirely at odds with the texture and aesthetic of cantabile.

two general designs, each reputed for different strengths.\textsuperscript{115} The English tradition focused on resonance, a full, rich tone, and heavier keys that required more strength to manipulate. In direct contrast was the Viennese/German tradition, which focused on clarity of tone and light, responsive action. According to Harding, “there can be no doubt that the style of these musicians was very greatly influenced by the type of pianoforte they used.” As the century progressed, the gap widened between these two types of instruments, and their influence on the music increased: innovative performers were able to explore the range of effects made possible by the power and resonance of the English models, while conservative players clung to the more old-fashioned sparkle of the finger-based Viennese performing tradition.\textsuperscript{116}

A parallel could be drawn with the Pleyel and Erard pianos. The latter inaugurated the groundbreaking repetition action upon which modern double escapement action is based, patented in England in 1821 and popularized by crowd-pleasing


\textsuperscript{116} After tracing the development from Clementi through his contrasting students John Field and Hummel, Harding summarizes the two different schools of construction: “At this time (1824) only two types of pianofortes were recognized, those with the English Action giving a powerful tone, but unsuitable for rapid execution owing to a somewhat heavy touch, and those with the Viennese or German Action giving a comparatively poor tone, but with a light touch suitable for a very rapid playing . . . . All other types . . . . were regarded merely as variations of these.” The contrasting strengths of Viennese clarity and facility and English fullness of tone were described in detail by Hummel, student of Clementi: “The German piano may be played upon with ease by the weakest hand. It allows the performer to impart in his execution every possible degree of light and shade, speaks clearly and promptly, has a round fluty tone, which in a large room contrasts well with the accompanying orchestra, and does not impede the rapidity of execution by requiring too great an effort . . . . To the English construction, however, we must not refuse the praises due on the score of its durability and fullness of tone. Nevertheless this instrument does not admit of the same facility of execution as the German; the touch is heavier, the key sinks much deeper, and consequently, the return of the hammer upon the repetition of a note cannot take place so quickly . . . . this mechanism is not capable of such numerous modifications as to degree of tone as ours.” Johann Nepomuk Hummel, \textit{Méthode complète théorique et pratique pour le pianoforte}, v. 2 (Paris: Farrenc, 1829), iv, 64-65. Cited in Harding, \textit{The Piano-forte: its History}, 152.
By contrast with the Erard’s full resonance, the delicacy of the Viennese sound was highlighted in the Pleyel, which Chopin favored for its responsive, sensitive touch. As Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger has summarized the matter “In their sonorous qualities, if not in details of workmanship, the Pleyels of those days were closer to some Viennese instruments . . . than to the Erard. These characteristics, in perfect harmony with Chopin’s playing and taste, explain his well-known predilection for the Pleyel.”

During the decades preceding Chopin’s arrival in Paris, Parisian pianists were working with instruments less capable of sustained sound, but as Maria Rose points out, the replacement of the harpsichord by the piano in France had been gradually generating a pivotal stylistic shift toward legato, singing melody since 1785. The aesthetic of son continu and its finger-based legato, together with the influx of English pianos capable of greater resonance, oriented the French favorably toward the new sound and style. Even within the institution of the Conservatoire, the new shift toward resonance was evidenced by the replacement of the clavecin, a bulwark of French keyboard tradition, with the piano over the course of its first years 1796-1802.

The broad transition from the harpsichord to the resonant piano, designed for the purpose of filling concert halls with sound, was gradual. The two treatises to be discussed by Jan Ladislav Dussek appeared only one year apart in 1796 and 1797, but their titles illustrate this change: the first is designated “for piano or harpsichord” while

117 Harding, The Piano-forte: its History, 158.
the second, embellished and published by his friend the piano maker Pleyel one year later, is designated only “for piano.”

Dussek: Methods and Music

Jan Ladislav Dussek settled in London and married the daughter of Italian publisher Domenico Corri, author of *The Singer’s Preceptor* discussed in Chapter Two, above. The personal liaison with Corri was in addition to a business partnership that facilitated the publication of his compositions and first piano method of c.1796; the title page of the edition I consulted lists the publisher as “Corri, Dussek & Co.”¹²⁰ In spite of his years in London, Dussek was, and is, only marginally linked with the English school because a full connection would imply stylistic adherence to Clementi’s more technical orientation. He spent his last years in Paris from 1807 to 1812, where through his virtuosic yet refined and intimate style he exercised what Rose calls a “profound impact on the piano in public and private spheres in France.” Dussek performed his concerti most frequently in Paris, and it is reasonable to conjecture that his late works, composed during his last tenure there, were written with the desire to please the musical tastes of Parisian audiences; he seems to have understood the flexibility of tempo and the parameters that framed the appropriate ornamentation desired by French sensibility.¹²¹

Dussek’s first method, or *Instructions on the art of Playing the Pianoforte or Harpsichord* of c. 1796 is divided into a volume of text and musical examples in the form

¹²⁰ Jan Ladislav Dussek, *Instructions on the art of playing the pianoforte or harpsichord* (London: Corri, Dussek & Co.), 1796.
of lessons, “to which are added Op. 32 expressly composed by Ignace Pleyel, six progressive sonatinas with violin accompaniment ad libitum.” To accommodate beginning students, Pleyel’s examples were written in the five-finger position. At the end of the first volume he included a “dictionary of Italian terms and other words used in music,” in which cantabile is defined briefly as “in a vocal style.”

Related to the physical action and response of English pianos, the term sostenuto is defined as “to sustain the sound, by keeping the fingers pressed down on the keys.”

Rubato, an important aspect of Dussek’s performing style, is conspicuously absent. Its omission might be better understood from a discussion of Dussek’s music in Le Pianiste in March of 1834, which explains his refusal to mark rubato due to the inability of performers to execute it properly; instead he began to substitute the marking espressivo.

Dussek, who liked the Rubato very much, in spite of the fact that he never wrote it in his music; Dussek had tried to make it visible by means of syncopations; but when they were properly executed, one was still far from capturing his suave and delicious manner. He renounced it himself and contented himself to write: espressivo.

Published one year earlier in his first method, the definition of espressivo avoids the issue of time altogether; Dussek was 37 years old at the time of its publication, and it

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123 Anonymous, Le Pianiste 1:5 (March 1834): 44-47. See also Richard Hudson, Stolen Time, 127, n. 25.
is possible that at that point he had already begun using the term *espressivo* to indicate *rubato*. It is noteworthy that in his definition of *espressivo* he also chose to say nothing about *rubato*, perhaps in order to avoid misinterpretation:  

(Wavec expression) mot qui s’applique soit à l’ensemble d’un morceau, soit à un ou plusieurs passages, et qui indique, dans l’un et l’autre cas un caractère particulier de chaleur et de sensibilité.

(With expression) word that applies either to an entire piece or to one or more passages, and that indicates in both cases a particular character of warmth and sensitivity.

Of course, depending on how Dussek understood the meaning of warmth and sensitivity, altering time would not be out of the question. Regardless, it is interesting that a pianist renowned for *rubato* in performance would choose to omit it entirely from his instructional method.

The inimitable personal performing styles attributed to both Dussek and Chopin forms an interesting link between them. Separated in Paris by more than 20 years, their styles were distinct, but they shared a way of performing their own compositions that was famously difficult for others to replicate. The discussion of Chopin in Zimmermann’s method, to be discussed later, sheds some light on the public perception of Chopin’s interpretation of his own works. Furthermore, an unsigned review of Chopin’s Op. 15 Nocturnes described the *rubato* in the third in G Minor as “from one end to the other,” a *rubato* that “no arrangement of note values can express well.” The review continued with a comparison of Dussek and Chopin’s flexible execution, and criticism of Chopin for his limited number of concerts, a fact that curtailed the public’s ability to understand

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and assimilate his unique manner of stretching time in his own works. It is clear that both Dussek and Chopin took extra-textual liberties in temporal fluctuation, for the sake of expression.\textsuperscript{125}

The second version of Dussek’s method, \textit{Méthode pour le pianoforte} (1797),\textsuperscript{126} contains Dussek’s original text, expanded with much new information. Its Italian glossary begins with tempo indications, which are divided into the five standard categories of \textit{Largo, Andante, Adagio, Allegro,} and \textit{Presto}. Two pages later, under “Des Termes relatifs à l’expression aux nuances des sons et des mouvements,” Pleyel’s influence shows in the expanded definition of \textit{cantabile}:\textsuperscript{127}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Cantabile} mot qui n’a point d’équivalent en français et qui est lui-même entièrement française, il est applicable aux morceaux de tous les degrés de lenteur, et qui n’étant pas chargés de notes permettent de déployer les sons de la voix et des instruments; Morceaux qui veulent être exécutés avec beaucoup d’âme, de gout et surtout de simplicité.

\textit{Cantabile} word that has no equivalent in French and which is itself entirely French, it is applicable to pieces of all degrees of slowness, and which, not being burdened with notes, allow one to deploy the sounds of the voice and the instruments. Pieces that wish to be executed with much soul, taste and above all with simplicity.
\end{quote}

We shall see the concluding sentence again, unacknowledged, in Louis Adam’s method, but the rest of the definition is even more illuminating. The notion that \textit{cantabile} has no equivalent in the French language, but is itself an entirely French style says much for the presence of \textit{cantabile} in international practice, if not terminology, at the turn of the century.

\textsuperscript{125} See the full review in \textit{Le Pianiste} 1:5 (March 1834): 78-79.
\textsuperscript{127} Dussek and Pleyel, \textit{Méthode pour le pianoforte}, 64.
As a French musician, Pleyel was equipped to make decisive comparative analysis of international musical styles. In his opinion the style *cantabile* was more familiar than the term itself, from which we can infer that Italian *cantabile* had been disseminated in Paris to the extent of being recognized as organically “French” in some contexts by native readers and listeners. It is logical to assume that as the association between *cantabile* and music written in France in a similar style became embedded, the term would naturally infiltrate the French vernacular. Yet although Dussek used ornamentation and *rubato* in his own personal *cantabile* performing style, in his pedagogy he chose not to link the term itself to a concrete musical practice. It is also possible that the presence of *cantabile* in French literature, including the dictionaries by Rousseau and Framery/Momigny (1768 and 1791) cited earlier in Chapter One, gave Pleyel the familiarity to give *cantabile* the more detailed and authoritative definition lacking in Dussek’s earlier treatise.

A slow tempo is to be expected in *cantabile*, and Pleyel says it encompasses “all shades of slowness.” More significantly, the *cantabile* should not be burdened (chargé) with many notes, because it is precisely the simplicity of its melody that allows the performer to add notes spontaneously in a vocal or instrumental context. The action of adding such notes is called “déployer,” meaning “to put into play” or “implement.” One description taken from a nautical context in the Larousse French dictionary reads “to unfurl or extend the sails.”

It is easy to visualize the slow-moving, majestic expanse of curling, rippling canvas as the wind gradually gives it shape. Similarly, the *cantabile*

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demanded the graceful and measured distribution of spontaneous embellishment in the act of “déployant les sons,” or unfurling the notes. The command is qualified by what follows: “Pieces that want to be executed with much soul, taste, and especially simplicity.” Thus, cantabile required a tasteful, yet simple and moderate execution.

In a logical progression, Pleyel’s definition of cantabile moves through the general traits of tempo and texture to the performer’s specific task of adding notes, and the subjective but essential elements of taste, soul, and simplicity. “Simplicity” restates the need for a moderate quantity of embellished melodic notes; the concepts of taste and soul are more elusive. Yet while “soul” seems to refer to the individual’s developing role in stirring as well as expressing emotions in the music, as we saw in Chapter One, “taste” had been connected to cantabile for some time in the French practice of expected but properly curtailed embellishment. Thus, onto traditionally restrained French melody cantabile had begun to superimpose the role of individual expression.129

For whatever reason, Dussek’s first definition is cursory and generic, but Pleyel’s articulation situates cantabile within a well-defined, pre-existing French style with a strong relationship to taste, and by extension, its associated ornaments. The conclusion is two-fold: even as elements of cantabile were preserved and recognized as organically French, the cantabile style had become increasingly commonplace through the standardization and spread of Italian practice. In that light, the convergence of French and Italian stylistic elements within cantabile seems as inevitable as it is remarkable.

129 The use of the word “soul” in Pleyel’s definition brings to mind Descartes and the question of where and how the passions are activated and expressed during the experience of making music or listening to it. It is a topic beyond this study, but the role of the soul in expressing emotions, and its relationship with the rational mind as understood during the Enlightenment, would certainly have fallen within the frame of reference of the literate Frenchman of the early nineteenth century.
One of Dussek’s unusually explicit examples of cantabile style and texture is found in the concerto Op. 70 in E-flat (C.238) of c. 1810. At a time in which the fast-slow-fast blueprint dominated concerto form, in a novel formal deviation Dussek’s first movement contains a miniature compression of that sequence. It begins in a typical allegro brillante ma non troppo, but moves on to an uncharacteristic slow and expressive development section, followed by a return to the fast opening material. At the beginning of the development in m. 316, Dussek wrote “cantabile ornamenti ad libitum, ma piu tosto pochi e buoni” (cantabile ornaments ad libitum, but preferably little and good). Dussek is commanding the performer to use the ornaments familiar in a cantabile context, but to err on the side of tasteful selectivity.

![Figure 2. Dussek, Concerto pour le piano-forte, Op. 70 (1810), I, Allegro ma non troppo, m. 316.](image)

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130 This discussion is informed by Maria Rose, “L’Art de bien chanter: French pianos and their music before 1820,” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2006), 376.

131 Although Dussek’s use of Fast-Slow-Fast in an opening concerto movement was novel, it is not impossible that the idea was inspired by the three-part structure common in slow movements of piano Fantaisies composed by his contemporaries Hummel, Clementi, Moscheles, and Kalkbrenner. All of them inserted slow three-part cantabile movements into their Fantaisies, after the usual Introduction and Exposition, in an overarching form inspired by the sonata. Dussek was bold to condense the idea and apply it in the genre of the concerto, and seems to have been the first to do so. For a discussion of the early nineteenth-century Fantaisie see Jean-Pierre Bartoli, “Réflexion sur l’évolution de la fantaisie pour piano au début du XIXe siècle en France,” in Le Pianoforte en France 1780-1820, ed. Florence Gétreau (Paris: CNRS, 2009), 191-203, esp. 200.
This precise phrase is recalled in the seventh volume of the first Année of Le Pianiste dedicated to Henri Herz, where editor Charles Chaulieu (dit Martin) recorded a summary of his Cours Analytique de Théorie Musicale, which included in Chapter IX a Glossaire Italien-Français with a definition of cantabile as “mouvement lent, mais gracieux.” A few pages later he continues with a list of “Quelques phrases usitées.” Interestingly, six of these 27 phrases are identified as quotations from composers’ works, indicated by parentheses. One example is the entry ascribed to Johann Kessler: Andante,

\footnote{132 Katharine Ellis, Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris, 1834-1880 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 47.}
ma non troppo e con tristezza — pas trop lent, mais avec tristesse. (Kessler). Listed just before that is none other than Cantabile, ornamenti ad libitum, ma più tosto pochi e buoni; — chant, ornemens à volonté, mais plutôt rares et bons. (Dussek). This is most likely a reference to Dussek’s Op. 70; I have not seen it elsewhere.

Keeping in mind that by 1810 at the age of 50, Dussek had most likely already begun indicating rubato with the marking espressivo, and in this particular concerto the use of rubato and its relationship with cantabile is supported by markings con anima and con molto espressione in the same section. Both markings also reinforce the triangular meaning of cantabile as “taste, soul, and simplicity” defined by Dussek/Pleyel, Adam, and indirectly, Montgeroult: the soul is manifested through the expression of ornamental melody and rubato, and all take place naturally within a cantabile context.

In her discussion of Dussek’s Op. 70 Concerto, Maria Rose observes that insertion of a lyrical cantabile section into a fast tempo is rather peculiar. I would agree, but would add that a slowing of the tempo is communicated in the term cantabile, which was defined as extremely slow and closest to the Adagio by the Conservatoire’s method of song in 1804, and as between the Largo and Andante by Montgeroult (which also amounts to an approximate Adagio). Apparently, Dussek assumed that the performer would adjust the tempo appropriately; only a much slower tempo would accommodate the ornamentation and rubato innate to cantabile, produced automatically during the insertion of spontaneous embellishment. In a further vocal reference, the first movement

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of the Op. 70 Concerto is in A-B-A, *da capo* aria format. The three-part fast-slow-fast movements within contemporaneous fantasies were mentioned earlier; Dussek’s three-part structure also anticipates, even as it inverts, the character of calm-turbulence-calm Chopin frequently applied in his Nocturnes (Opus. 9 No. 1 in B-flat Minor and 15 No. 1 in F are good examples).

Overall, the stylistic and interpretive advice in Dussek’s English method is disappointingly superficial, and besides technical exercises it contains no original music. In light of his prolific oeuvre and personal performing style, both aspects are surprising, but they are also consistent with contemporaneous practice.¹³⁵

Most relevant to this chapter is the fact that Dussek brought a performing style of singing melody, developed on the new resonance of English pianos, to the Parisian musical culture around the turn of the century. His well-received performance style, as well as the diffusion of his teaching manual published and amplified by Pleyel, must have spread awareness of expressive *cantabile* performed with *rubato* on the piano. But general knowledge of the concept of *rubato* among practicing musicians did not translate into proper execution, which seems to have remained somewhat of a performing mystery in 1820 at the publication of Montgeroult’s treatise, as well as years later into Chopin’s era. In the well-known 1833 review of Chopin’s Nocturnes Op. 15, discussed in the next

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¹³⁵ Most contemporaneous methods contain a section of vague remarks about style and interpretation, after an opening section explaining the mechanics of music, usually supplemented with musical illustrations by renowned composers. That fact highlights de Montgeroult’s unique inclusion of hundreds of original études, designed to illustrate specific elements of style and articulation at the keyboard.
chapter, the anonymous author emphasizes the daunting task faced by young performers trying to execute Chopinian *rubato*.

In his *Méthode complète de piano* of c. 1830, Henri Herz provided an evocative description of Dussek’s playing in language similar to that of Montgeroult’s treatise. Herz’s method was published c. 1832, 12 years after Montgeroult’s, and he may have encountered hers; but that fact would not have affected his remarks about Dussek in the section on “De l’Expression et de la manière de phrase.” Earlier in the passage Herz uses the case of Hiller to illustrate the skill of altering and slowing the tempo in order to give audiences time to follow modulations. He continues that “Hummel, who brought a wise moderation in the tempo, was, among all the pianists of his time, the one who captivated to the highest degree the attention and interest of the listener.”

Herz then states that if a tempo is too uniform it can result in monotony: “every phrase of melody demands a slower speed than the flourish of embellishment that follows.” And in a reference to temporal flexibility, what he calls the “double character” of the melody and the accompaniment sometimes demand a different rhythmic effect from each hand:

Ainsi, tandis que la droite semble s’égarer en de folles variations, la gauche, appuyant à contre temps sur les basses, la suit à pas pesant et par notes syncopées. Ce cas, comme tous ceux où l’expression est complexe, exige non seulement les mains parfaitement indépendantes l’une de l’autre, mais, si je puis le dire, avec une âme différente dans chacune d’elles. C’est ainsi que Dussek...
répandait un peu vaporeux et mélancolique sur certaines périodes en laissant chanter la main droite d’une manière vague et nonchalante, tandis que la gauche exécutait des batteries rigoureusement en mesure. . . . J’ignore pourquoi cette manière de phraser, tant prônée naguère, est tombée maintenant dans l’oubli.

This way, while the right [hand] seems to wander into wild variations, the left [hand], grounded on the bass in a different rhythm, follows it [the right] with heavy steps and syncopated notes. This case, as all those where the expression is complex, demands not only two hands perfectly independent from one another, but also, if I can say it, a different soul in each. It is in this way that Dussek spread out a bit hazy and melancholic in certain phrases while letting the right hand sing in a vague and nonchalant way, whereas the left executed the accompanimental figures in strict time. . . . I am unaware of why this manner of phrasing, so highly extolled not long ago, has fallen into oblivion today.

Without using the term tempo rubato, Herz describes the respective regularity and flexibility required by the left and right hands to produce what seems to matter most to him — a suitable expression. Herz even dares to say that each hand must have “a different soul” in order to deliver a complex and appropriate expression in certain contexts. Most relevant here is of course that Dussek was chosen to illustrate the style of singing, expressive melody over a strict bass, which had, from Herz’s perspective, fallen out of use around 1830. It makes one wonder if he would have revised that opinion after hearing the young Chopin perform in Paris several years later.

More than any other late eighteenth-century pianist, Dussek’s expressive aspirations joined with unconventional formal experiments to capitalize on the sound quality and potential of the developing piano. In retrospect, although his textures were simple and his treble at times overly florid, he did move away from foursquare, predictable forms and formulaic topics with free improvisation relegated primarily to cadenzas, and toward a greater degree of ornamentation and expression created spontaneously by the performer. With its operatic sweep, spontaneous embellishment,
and staggering of melody and bass, the *cantabile* texture provided a natural vehicle for Dussek’s experimental style. And as resonant instruments, the sustaining pedal, and an operatic model converged in his music to produce a fresh keyboard sound, Dussek’s music also foreshadowed the long, more fluid phrases of Chopin, their simplicity, and the innovation necessary to create them.

**Louis Adam**

Renowned keyboard performer and composer Louis Adam was chosen to author the fledgling Conservatoire’s first official manual of piano instruction. Adam was chief Professor of piano at the Conservatoire from its founding in 1795 until 1847, a time during which keyboard pedagogy was responding to the instrument’s changes with its own transition from eighteenth-century *clavecin* technique to the greater physicality demanded by the modern piano. Many of the Conservatoire’s official treatises, including Adam’s, were crafted to restore the purity of pre-Revolution musical ideals and as a result, some of the teaching is already outdated in its time. Adam is far from progressive, but under the influence of modern virtuosity, evolution through expanded musical examples is visible across the various editions of his method.

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In his study of the French keyboard school before 1830, George Favre divided its members into two categories. The first, “superior” group was trained in classical practice but open to contemporaneous stylistic developments, led by Boieldieu, Hérold, and Boëly, whom he calls the “best representatives of this essentially French movement.”

The second group was prone to superficiality and catered to public taste. This group was led by Adam, inspired by Cramer, Steibelt, and Dussek, and characterized by “un abus de la virtuosité et une absence presque complète de pensée.”

Such a characterization of Dussek contradicts scholarly consensus, and Favre may have been reacting to some excessive technical figurations, visible on the music’s surface but not always indicative of the music’s content, such as it is. Although Favre’s slanted remark may contain some truth about Adam’s tendency toward hollow virtuosity, he overlooks the fact that Adam’s oeuvre was not one-sided; his lyrical Romances for keyboard did go beyond imitation to “represent a transition from operatic piano transcriptions to the genre of the solo Romance.”

Adam was also capable of writing reflective, slow sonata movements, two of which will be discussed here.

In his method, Adam spends a significant amount of time discussing proper fingering and hand position, but in a progressive stroke he allows for the arm’s motion between wrist and elbow — surely a response to the increased force required by heavier keys of the developing pianoforte. As a general rule, immobility between elbow and shoulder and even the wrist was still mandatory, and excess movements or grimaces were

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still strictly forbidden, a principle still upheld by Henri Herz in his method published c. 1830.  

In the sixth section, entitled “De la manière de toucher le piano et d’en tirer le son,” Adam discusses the need for the performer to imitate the inflexions of the voice in order to express the “phrases de chant qui seules font le charme de la musique.” Right after the section on tempo markings entitled “Des mouvemens et de leur Expression” where I had initially thought Adam would place Cantabile, the section “De l’expression des termes ajoutés aux mouvemens” follows, where he does include it. Presumably, these terms were to influence the expressive character of a given tempo without necessarily qualifying its speed, and are placed second when joined with a tempo marking. The formulation calls to mind the pairings Adagio cantabile and Largo cantabile used by Haydn and Mozart in their keyboard sonatas of the 1770s and 1780s, which foreshadow Adam’s own coupling of standard tempi with a more precise indication of character. Adam states that cantabile “Exige un chant pur, beaucoup de goût, d’âme et de simplicité” — a description he probably encountered in Dussek and

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143 Rose, L’Art de bien chanter, 46-47. Henri Herz leaves no doubt as to the impropriety of excessive movement and facial gestures while playing. “Keep yourselves from this affectation of gestures and physiology, from these convulsive movements, from these inspired looks by which the performer at the piano resembles the sibyl on the tripod [trépied]. The pianist is not and must not look like a pantomime.” See Herz, Méthode complète de piano, 19; repr. Christoph Kammertons, Henri Herz, ein Enfant terrible, Appendix, 36.

144 Günther Massenkeil, “Cantabile bei Beethoven,” in Beiträge ‘76-78, Beethoven-Kolloquium 1977, Dokumentation und Aufführungspraxis, ed. Österreichische Gesellschaft für Musik (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1978), 154-59. According to Massenkeil, the marking of cantabile occurs fifteen times in Haydn’s string quartets, primarily within the expressions Adagio cantabile and Largo cantabile; Mozart used the marking 17 times in his piano sonatas, once coupled with Adagio (in the Musical Joke, K. 522) and the remainder with Andante; Beethoven restricts his use of the term to works for piano, either solo or chamber music. He included the marking in each of the nine piano sonatas Op. 78-111, composed between 1809 and 1822, preceded in those cases by the terms Adagio, Andante, or Moderato.
Pleyel’s joint method of 1797, substituting only the verb “demands” for the original “wants.”

A substantial section of musical examples by Mozart, Clementi, Scarlatti, Handel, and Emmanuel Bach follows, an original March and Pastorale, then two articles on the pedal and the art of accompanying. The work concludes with a short passage under “Du Style,” in which Adam stresses the distinct character of a given work that should be evoked by the performer. After opposing the Andante (more sustained tones; sometimes sad and often melancholy) with the Allegro (full of fire), and remarking on the diverse demands of agility and sensitive accompaniment of the Presto, he continues:

Tous ces divers caractères ont encore leurs nuances, l’Allegro vivace et l’Allegro agitato en présentent deux différentes; le Cantabile et l’Andante exigent un tout autre genre d’expression que l’Adagio; c’est à l’exécutant à leur donner le degré de chaleur d’expression et de vivacité dont ils sont susceptibles.

All of these diverse characters still have their nuances, the Allegro vivace and the Allegro agitato present two different ones; the Cantabile and the Andante demand an entirely different type of expression than the Adagio; it is up to the performer to give them the degree of warmth of expression and vivacity of which they are capable.

Whereas Montgeroult placed the Cantabile close to the Adagio and between the Largo and the Andante, Adam links it with the slightly faster Andante. He concludes that composers demand a wide range of expressive qualities the student must be prepared to provide. In what could be evidence of Rameau’s abiding influence, he exhorts students to “penetrate the temple of harmony” for assistance in the endeavor.

145 Louis Adam, Méthode de piano (Paris: n.p., 1804), 160. Adam was almost certainly quoting from Dussek/Pleyel, Méthode pour le piano-forte (Paris: Pleyel, 1797), 64.
146 Adam, Méthode de piano, “Du style,” 233.
Adam also used the marking *Cantabile* in slow movements of his sonatas. In the Op. 10 *Grande Sonate dans le style dramatique, dédiée à Clémenti*, alternatively entitled *Souvenir et Regret de la perte du Célèbre Pianiste et Compositeur Clementi* composed in 1810, Adam included a slow movement marked *cantabile* to the left of the staff; in the typical place for tempo and expressive markings above the staff he wrote *Grazioso con molto Espressione*. The separate positions of the terms make *cantabile* seem closer to a title than an expressive marking, and enforce its status as defining an independent genre.

![Figure 3](image)

*Figure 3. Louis Adam, Grande Sonate Op. 10 (1810), II, Cantabile, Grazioso con molto Espressione, mm. 1-8.*

The work is in 3/8, set in eighth notes in the left hand, with about fifty percent of the notes in the right hand moving in sixteenths. The pattern alternates between fast scale-based passages and longer note values in the right hand; it is around these notes that one could conceivably add decoration, especially for the contrast needed during repetition. Formally, the movement is in two sections of one page each, the second marked “Mineur”; each is in binary form, with a final Da Capo repetition of the major *Cantabile* section. The dated impression of the form is coupled with a Mozartian simplicity and elegance, but the work lacks the tight periodic construction and cadential drive of the earlier composer. The writing for left hand is unremarkable in every respect.
— a common feature in early nineteenth-century piano music. Composers rarely conceived of independent left hand lines that supported the right hand melody through a subordinate but distinct melodic interest of their own. George Favre notes that in all three movements of Adam’s Op. 10 “toute trace de musique disparaît sous la virtuosité prépondérante.” That is more true of the outer movements than the Cantabile, which is in a lyrical, albeit eighteenth-century idiom.

Another cantabile marking appears in Adam’s Grande Sonate composée pour le piano-forte et dediée à Mademoiselle Laure Didot, Op. 13. The Sonata opens with a typical Allegro Maëstoso Brillante first movement. In the same binary form as the Adagio of the Op. 10 Grande Sonate, the slow movement of Op. 13, marked Andante Cantabile to the left and Grazioso con molto espress. above, contains a Majeur section after the opening Mineur. In this movement Adam reverses his strategy and the work concludes in a minor key. But once again the music is unremarkable, and seems closer stylistically to Mozart than to early Romanticism. The most forward-looking element could be the placement of Adam’s score markings, in the position of pseudo-title to the left and the character description above.

In retrospect, Adam was more of a conduit than an active innovator during the transitional post-Mozart years, and his works and writings reveal the accepted standards of his day rather than any significant innovation. Adam’s tendency toward conservative, stylistic imitation, first in a post-Mozartian vein, then overly virtuosic, brings the distinctiveness of Montgeroult’s and Chopin’s ideals and practice into vivid relief. And

147 George Favre, La Musique française de piano, 115.
so we turn to Hélène de Montgeroult, Adam’s contemporary at the Conservatoire, who shared her friend Dussek’s appreciation of Italian melody, and articulated the most thorough and illuminating explanation of *cantabile* on the piano known to me. Her method is the most comprehensive and progressive treatise for keyboard published in French between the Dussek/Pleyel method and Pierre Zimmermann’s treatise of 1840.

Hélène de Montgeroult

The Marquise Hélène de Montgeroult was denounced during the Terror in late 1792, at the age of 28, some months after the death of her husband. She was put on trial and in danger of being guillotined. According to witnesses, Bernard Sarrette risked his own life to intervene on her behalf in front of the Tribunal February 14, 1793 because he wanted her to teach at the yet unfounded Conservatoire. He managed to bring an instrument into the courtroom on which she proceeded to perform the Marseillaise so rousingly that all present were compelled to sing along. She was released and her house at Montmorency restored.¹⁴⁸ She held the position of Professor at the Conservatoire for only three years from its founding in 1795 until 1798, and maintained a private social life; she chose not to frequent the numerous other Parisian salons and preferred to entertain friends like the Baron de Trémont at her soirées. Persecuted during the Revolution as an aristocrat, several decades later Montgeroult was no doubt still acutely conscious of her elite social rank. Antoine Marmontel suggests this could be why she

kept to herself and did not mingle with other artists in salons, a habit that contributed to her apparent absence in the surrounding musical discourse.  

Due to her privacy, it is difficult to gauge the precise level of Montgeroult’s involvement in Parisian musical life, but the publication of her *Cours complet* in 1820 insured public awareness of her existence. Some proof is found in César Gardeton’s compilations of the general population and their occupations: although his fairly comprehensive *Annales de la musique* of 1819-1820 contain no record of Montgeroult, Gardeton’s *Bibliographie universelle* of 1820 includes her method:

*Cours complet de l’enseignement du forté-piano, conduisant progressivement des premiers elements aux plus grandes difficultés; par madame la comtesse de Montgeroult; divisé en trois parties. Prix: 100 fr.*  
Les deux premières parties se vendent ensemble 70 fr.  
La 3e partie seule, 40 fr. Chez Janet et Cotelle.

Complete course of piano-forte instruction, *progressing from the elementary to the most difficult; by Madame the Countess de Montgeroult; divided into three volumes. Price: 100 fr.*  
*The first two volumes are sold together 70 fr.*  
*The third volume alone, 40 fr. at Janet et Cotelle.*

In the list of musicians later in the volume her entry reads simply “compositeur-amateur, rue de Clichy” with a note directing the reader to her entry under piano methods. The entries are minimal, but acknowledge Montgeroult’s status as a practicing musician with a published three-volume treatise.  

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Her friend the Baron de Trémont wrote that she, “femme du grand monde, dut à la nature une organisation musicale telle, qu’elle était la première pianiste d’une époque où brillaient Clémenti, Steibelt, Dusseck et Cramer.” He found her méthode to be the most comprehensive in existence, “le plus complet qu’il y ait, en 3 vol. In-fol.” Elsewhere he emphasizes her priority of phrasing on the piano as corresponding to a singer’s breath or violin bow, to be executed with thick, sustained legato at all times:

Elle s’était faite une étude particulière de phrase comme les grands chanteurs d’Italie; Marchesi, Crescentini, &a. La phrase chantante était exprimée conformément à la respiration du chanteur [. . . ] L’artiste doit donc parvenir à lier des notes […] et a prolonger et nuancer le son comme s’il était emis par un archet ou par la respiration. Alors il [. . . ] chantera, ce qui est le but essential de la musique. Aucun des pianistes, ses contemporains n’a appliqué comme elle ce principe; aucun n’a eu un aussi grand volume de son, ni n’a joué l’adagio avec une aussi profonde expression.

She made a particular study of phrasing like the great singers of Italy; Marchesi, Crescentini, etc. The singing phrase was expressed in conformity with the breathing of the singer . . . . The artist must therefore achieve the binding together of notes . . . . and prolong and nuance the sound as if it were produced by a bow or by the breath. Then it [. . . ] will sing, which is the essential goal of music. None of her pianist contemporaries applied this principle as she did; none had such a great volume of sound, or played the adagio with such profound expression.

Trémont’s descriptions portray Montgeroult as a musician on a level comparable with the most advanced pianists, with a particular aptitude and zeal for teaching and performing melody on the keyboard in a singing, legato style.

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Montgeroult’s *Cours Complet* (1810-1820)

In correspondence with Montgeroult from 1810, her friend Dussek had expressed anticipation of her work-in-progress, the eventual *Cours complet* of 1820. (As unlikely as it seems, her biographer Jérôme Dorival mentions that she may have conceived of the treatise as early as 1784 at the age of 20.)

Stylistically, the two friends saw eye to eye; it is not surprising that in her 1820 method, Montgeroult discusses *rubato* in terms that were, compared to other writings of the time, exceptionally explicit and authoritative.

Montgeroult’s *Cours Complet* consists of three volumes. Volume 1 contains an informative preface followed by 972 exercises divided into 17 chapters accompanied by introductory remarks. Volumes 2 and 3 consist of 114 études, each focused on developing a particular skill, with reflections on style, aesthetics, and practice to assist the student. A final chapter in Vol. 3 contains four options for performing *appoggiatures* and other ornamentation by the castrato Luigi Marchesi; other works include three sets of variations in the style of Handel, three fugues, one canon, a fantasy, and variations in old and modern styles. Dorival is right to assert that her method stands out for its emphasis on musicality as well as its number of original compositions.

Rather than the setting forth of basic music theory followed by elementary technical exercises one finds in her predecessors Adam and Dussek/Pleyel — maintaining a pedagogical emphasis even as it conceals the authors’ compositional expertise — Montgeroult’s music-filled work aims to

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move the student beyond physical proficiency and into mature performance. Her
extensive and systematic method reflects the decade(s) spent on its composition.

In the opening pages on basic musical mechanics, under “Mouvements qui spécifient le caractère particulier de certains morceaux de musique,” Montgeroult defines
_Cantabile_ as

Mot à mot – Qui peut se chanter – s’applique aux chants d’un caractère expressif ou gracieux. Comme mouvement il se classe entre le Larghetto et l’Andante.\(^{155}\)

_Literally – That which can be sung – applies to melodies of an expressive or gracious character. As a tempo one classifies it between the Larghetto and the Andante._

The tempo markings _Larghetto_ and _Andante_ fall on either side of _Adagio_, and we can assume that in Montgeroult’s mind _Adagio_ was the ideal tempo for _cantabile_. Her use of the word “gracieux” recalls Rousseau’s use of the same term in relation to taste more than half a century before; and of course the word “expressive” reflects the common theme voiced by Dussek and Adam.

According to Rose, the three most salient stylistic features of Montgeroult’s method were _legato_ touch; a three-level texture (consisting of soprano melody with bass octaves and patterned figures called _batteries_ in the left hand); and most significantly for this chapter on _cantabile_, imitation of the voice through appropriate ornamentation and _tempo rubato_. The two most common techniques for creating that vocal illusion on the piano were 1) repeated notes for sustenance, and 2) an art of phrasing with _rubato_ to emulate a singer’s breathing, accomplished through the hands rather than the pedal. (In

\(^{155}\) Montgeroult, _Cours complet_, v. 1, x.
fact, Montgeroult’s Étude No. 101 for the pedal describes its use solely in terms of creating dramatic special effects, and as Rose notes, she was unfamiliar with the modern syncopated style of pedaling on an ongoing, bar-by-bar basis. Rose concludes that Steibelt and Adam were gifted in the first of these two techniques, (shown in the second movement of Adam’s Sonata Op. 8 No. 2), and Montgeroult primarily in the second—though Montgeroult did describe a “re-sounding” technique aimed at an effect of sound achieved through a less abrasive, massaging motion without the fresh attacks used in Bebung.  

Because of their centrality to cantabile, the work’s most potent references to keyboard lyricism, ornamentation, and rubato are shown below.

Imitation of the voice / Listening to singers:

1. Illusion of song (sustained sound) on the piano

Comme le Piano ne peut imiter le bel art du chant dans ce qu’il a de plus parfait, c’est-à-dire dans la faculté de prolonger les sons, il faut s’emparer d’une des imperfections qui lui sont propres, ce qui sera déjà une première imitation, de telle sorte, que cette imperfection même, adaptée au Piano, fasse prendre le change à l’oreille, et que secondée d’ailleurs par quelques moyens auxiliaires, elle concoure le fait à produire l’illusion du chant dans ce qu’il a de plus expressif . . .

As the piano cannot imitate the beautiful art of song in its most perfect attribute, that is to say in the faculty of prolonging sounds, one must take advantage of one of its imperfections, that which will already be a first imitation, such that this very imperfection, when adapted to the piano, in effect tricks the ear, and when assisted also by certain other means, contributes to producing the illusion of singing in its most expressive sense . . .

(Preface, p. I)


Rose, L’Art de bien chanter, 38 and 154.
2. Imitating song sustains and improves quality of sound

L’habitude prise de soutenir les sons pour l’imitation du chant, procure encore un avantage bien remarquable; elle augmente le volume du son, en même temps qu’elle en améliore la qualité.

The habit adopted of sustaining sound in order to imitate vocal melody brings yet another remarkable advantage; it increases the volume of sound while it improves its quality.

(Preface, p. III)

3. Singers as examples for young pianists; an illusion possible via different means

Le jeune pianiste qui voudra perfectionner l’art du chant, devra se choisir un modèle parmi les grands chanteurs de l’école d’Italie, le suivre pas à pas, réfléchir sur ses moyens pour juger les cas où ils peuvent s’appliquer exactement au mécanisme du Piano, et ceux où pour produire des effets semblables, il faut employer des moyens contraires . . . Pourquoi dans le bel art de la musique borner à faire dire pauvrement au Piano le peu que son mécanisme semble lui permettre de dire, sans chercher à l’initier dans les secrets de l’art par des illusions qui lui soient propres, et à étendre pour lui le domaine de l’expression et des effets dramatiques?

The young pianist who wants to perfect the art of singing, must choose himself a model among the great singers of the Italian school, follow step by step, reflect on his methods to judge the cases where they can be applied exactly to the piano’s mechanism, and those where he must employ the opposite methods to produce similar effects . . . Why in the beautiful art of music restrict the piano to saying poorly the little its mechanism seems to allow it to say, without seeking to initiate it in the secrets of the art by illusions that are appropriate to it, and to expand for it the domain of expression and dramatic effects?

(Preface, p. III)

4. Through practice students succeed in imitation

Son succès est prouvé par l’expérience: nous pouvons assurer avoir entendu phraser et chanter avec tout l’art qui distingue les habiles chanteurs Italiens.

His [the student’s] success is proved by experience: we can assure of having heard phrasing and singing [on the piano] with all of the art that distinguishes the capable Italian singers.

(Preface, p. IV)

5. Rubato illustrated in singer and orchestra as right and left hands of the pianist

La respiration prend un temps plus ou moins long dans chaque mesure, cependant l’orchestre exact dans sa marche suit rigoureusement la mesure; mais le chanteur développe librement le cours de la phrase, et ce n’est qu’à la fin, qu’il doit se retrouver en mesure avec l’orchestre. En appliquant ce procédé au Piano, on trouvera que la main droite qui joue la partie du chant, peut-être comparée au chanteur et la main gauche à l’orchestre qui accompagne.

The breath takes more or less time in each measure, however the orchestra, precise in its step beat, follows the measure rigorously; but the singer freely develops the flow of the phrase, and it
is not until the end that he must be back in time with the orchestra. Applying the above to the piano, one will find that the right hand playing the melody can be compared with the singer, and the left hand with the accompanying orchestra.

(Preface, p. I)

Montgeroult presents a singer performing with an orchestra as the model all pianists should strive to replicate on the keyboard, motivated by the need to overcome its problematic decay of sound. Through intelligence and hard work, pianists would succeed in producing on their instrument the aural illusion of legato that comes naturally to the voice. Ornamentation is one means to this end: as the extra notes help sustain the sound, they also function practically to bridge the gap between disjunct melodic notes. In the final example of the temporal relationship between singer and orchestra, Montgeroult makes an analogy between the florid right hand and the soloist, and the regular orchestral accompaniment and steady left hand. Young pianists could imitate singers successfully by listening to them for the purpose of acquiring their art, a command given by C.P.E. Bach in 1753.¹⁵⁸

The attempt to reproduce vocality on the piano leads to the practical working-out of graceful embellishment and its inevitable result of temporal adjustment. Ornamentation and rubato are listed in the second category of citations, and both were to be done in good taste.

¹⁵⁸ “... that one should not pass up any occasion especially to hear skilled singers; through that one learns to think in a singing way, and one does well also to sing in the imagination in order to affect the right performance.” [. . . . das man keine Gelegenheit verabsäumen müsse, geschickte Sänger besonders zu hören: Man lernet dadurch singend dencken, und wird man wohl thun, daß man sich hernach selbst einen Gedancken vorsinget, um den rechten Vortrag desselben zu treffen.] See Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, v. 1 (Berlin: Henning, 1753), 121-22.
Ornamentation and Rubato:

1. Three types of ornaments: classic; outdated; tasteful

Il y a trois genres d’ornemens:

1). Les ornemens anciens qui se trouvent dans les vieux auteurs classiques, tels que Handel, Scarlatti, Bach & dans les Appoggiatures qu’ils ont notées, il en est qui ont encore de la fraîcheur, parce que leur tournure peut s’allier avec le stile moderne.

2). Les ornemens surannés, c’est-à-dire ceux dont on abuse et qui, sans avoir le cachet d’ancienneté, sont devenus triviales par leur popularité et le mauvais emploi qu’on en a fait. Un nouvel ornement est trouvé charmant; il circule aussitôt; on l’applique à tout sans discernement, et bientôt il est abandonné par les talents distingués qui, tout naturellement, s’écartent des traces de la médiocrité; car en fait de goût elle flétrit tout ce qu’elle touche.

3). Enfin la troisième espèce est celle qui réunit toutes les conditions qu’un goût sévère exige; l’une des plus délicates consiste à adapter à chaque genre de musique des ornemens qui lui soient propres. Rien n’est plus commun, et en même temps plus choquant, que d’entendre faire les mêmes Appoggiatures à des ADAGIO, des RONDO, des ANDANTE &c. Ces ornemens doivent être empreints de la couleur du sujet. C’est ainsi que dans un Adagio pathétique, les Appoggiatures participeront de son expression et l’augmenteront encore. Il en sera de même pour tous les caractères de musique auxquels on les ajoutera. [. . .]

Je donne ici un modèle qui sera pour l’élève le sujet d’une importante étude. MARCHESI, est le chanteur le plus célèbre pour l’étendue et la variété de son goût. Il a lui même noté les quatre manières différentes dont il chantait la scène qu’on trouve ci-après […] et c’est ici le lieu de rappeler cette absolue nécessité d’avoir une telle indépendance entre les deux mains, que la gauche maintienne rigoureusement la mesure, tandis que la droite, ainsi que le chanteur, parcourt largement la phrase chantante, sans la précipiter pour la finir avec la mesure, et en imitant le plus possible les accents et les nuances que la voix lui donnerait. C’est ainsi, seulement, qu’il peut espérer d’approcher de la largeur d’expression et de style qui distingue les grands chanteurs.

There are three types of ornaments:

1). The ancient ornaments that one finds in the old classic authors, such as Handel, Scarlatti, Bach, and in the appoggiaturas that they have notated, there are some which still have freshness, because their demeanor can be aligned with the modern style.

2). The outdated ornaments, that is to say those which are abused and which, without having the character of ancientness, have become trivial through their popularity and the bad use made of them. A new ornament is found charming; it circulates immediately; it is applied to everything without discernment, and soon it is abandoned by distinguished talents who, quite naturally, distance themselves from the traces of mediocrity; because in matters of taste it [mediocrity] withers whatever it touches.

3). Finally the third type is that which unites all of the conditions a severe taste demands; one of the most delicate consists of adapting to each genre of music the ornaments appropriate to it. Nothing is more common, and at the same time more shocking, than to hear the same appoggiaturas in the Adagio, the Rondo, the Andante, etc. These ornaments must be stamped with the color of the subject. This way, in a pathetic Adagio, the appoggiaturas will participate in its expression and further augment its expression. It will be the same for all the characters of music to which one adds them [. . .]
I give here a model that will be the subject of an important study for the student. Marchesi is the most famous singer for the breadth and variety of his taste. He himself notated the four different ways which he sang the scene found below [. . .] and this is the place to recall that absolute necessity of having such independence between the two hands that the left maintains the beat strictly, while the right hand, like the singer, broadly traverses the melodic phrase without speeding it up so as to finish with the beat, imitating as much as possible the accents and nuances that the singing voice would give to it. It is in this way only that he can hope to approach the breadth of expression and style that distinguishes the great singers.

(Vol. I, 17eme Suite, p. 232)

2. Ornamentation counteracts decay of sound in slow pieces; difficulty of achieving broad and natural effect; same principles apply to expressive/brilliant works.

Il nous reste à parler des appogiatures ou ornemens qu’on introduit dans un chant pour en augmenter l’effet, et surtout pour remplir dans des morceaux très lents la lacune produite par la brièveté du son de l’instrument . . . Ces appogiatures doivent toujours participer du caractère de la musique à laquelle on les joint . . . Sans doute une aussi grande complication de recherches, d’observations, et de détails pour produire des effets larges et naturels pourra paraître une tâche impossible à l’élève déjà parvenu à un certain degré de talent . . . les mêmes principes qui conduisent à porter cette illusion dans les morceaux d’expression, dirigent aussi l’exécution de la musique brillante.

It remains for us to talk about the appoggiaturas or ornaments one introduces into a melody to augment its effect, and especially to fill up the gap produced in very slow pieces by the brevity of sound of the instrument . . . These appoggiaturas must always participate in the character of the music to which they are added . . . Without doubt such a grand complication of research, observation, and details for producing broad and natural effects might appear an impossible task to the student who has already achieved a certain degree of talent . . . the same principles that guide one to bring this illusion into pieces of expression also guide the execution of brilliant music.

(Preface, p. II)

3. Broad, noble, elegant style of ornaments to suit melody; importance of good phrasing

Les traits de cette belle musique sont, comme ses chants, d’un stile large, noble, pathétique ou élégant. Cette étude peut être extrêmement utile, non seulement pour les traits d’exécution, mais surtout pour ceux d’une grande expression musicale. Là, aussi, il pourra apprendre une des choses les plus rares et les plus difficiles, c’est de bien phraser [. . .]

The features of this beautiful music are, as in its melodies, of a broad, noble, pathetic or elegant style. This study can be extremely useful, not only for the performing figures, but especially for those of a grand musical expression. There, also, he [the student] will be able to learn one of the most rare and difficult things, namely how to phrase well [. . .]

(Vol. I, 14me Suite d’Exercices, Exercices de notes coulées et détachées pour varier l’exécution des traits)
4. Ornaments executed broadly whether in broad melody or in spread-out group of multiple notes.

A decorative figure is broad, not only where the melody is spread out, but also where the figure, solely for display and not accompanying any melody, traverses the keyboard with a profusion of notes during several measures in a single phrase . . . . it is only through a broad and firm execution that one can give interest to ornaments that are greatly spread out, and to phrases of melody that don’t always draw to a close, but melt into the performative figures.

(Vol. II, Étude No. 67 (25eme des deux mains), Pour acquérir une exécution large quoique dans un mouvement vif et parcourant le clavier.)

5. Danger of brilliance displacing broad, expressive melody

Rushed and violent playing, only concerned with the part called executive, must not be confused with energy; warmth and power must remove neither the grandeur which is indicated by the extreme length of the melodic phrase, nor the pathetic expression, which is never more sensitive than in an animated movement . . . .

In making dotted notes in the right hand, overly rushing the sixteenth notes will be avoided, on the contrary it will be done with the breadth and softness that would be put in by a singer of good taste.

(Vol. III, Étude No. 107 (24eme de main gauche), Pour lui donner de la rapidité dans un trait continu)

6. Broad and noble execution of appoggiaturas to sustain sound; resulting rubato

Nous n’avons pas noté tous les Appoggiatures dont ce genre de chant est susceptible, parce que le temps fait vieillir les tournures qui sont plus que le chant sujettes à l’empire de la mode. En se pénétrant bien du caractère de ce morceau qui est indiqué par le long développement des phrases, l’artiste sentira que les appoggiatures doivent être d’un style aussi large que noble, et que leur exécution doit participer de ces deux qualités, c’est-à-dire que les ornemens composés de sons liés s’écouleront sans hâte, et seront inspirés seulement par le besoin de remplir le vide que laisse sur le Piano la trop longue durée d’un son qui ne peut pas être soutenu . . . . L’exacte mesure de la main gauche doit être rigoureusement maintenue, quelque altération que causent dans la droite l’expression du chant et le développement des Appoggiatures qu’on y introduit. La batterie de la basse sera jouée aussi liée que possible, et presque toujours piano.
We haven’t notated all of the appoggiaturas to which this genre of song is susceptible, because time renders old-fashioned the ornamental figures, which are, more than the melody, subjected to the empire of fashion. In absorbing well the character of this piece that is indicated by the long development of the phrases, the artist will sense that the appoggiaturas must also be of a style as broad as it is noble, and that their execution must participate in these two qualities, that is to say that the ornaments consisting of legato should unfold without haste, and will be inspired only by the need to fill the void left on the piano by the over-long duration of sound that cannot be sustained . . . The exact time of the left hand must be rigorously maintained, despite whatever alteration might be caused in the right, by the expression of the melody and development of the appoggiaturas introduced into it. The bass figures should be played as legato as possible, and almost always piano.

(Vol III, Étude No. 110 (54eme des deux mains), Pour chanter d’un style large)

7. Ornaments change according to fashion; sanctioned by taste, they require rubato

Quoique l’on ait dû s’interdire dans un ouvrage classique l’emploi des Appoggiatures, qui, n’étant que des tournures, varient et vieillissent comme la mode qui les a créées, nous avons cependant jugé qu’il serait utile de donner un seul exemple de la manière de placer avec sobriété quelques Appoggiatures à un morceau d’un style large, et dans le choix de ces ornements nous avons préféré à ceux qui ont la fleur de la nouveauté, et dont la durée n’est pas certaine, ceux que le temps et le bon goût ont consacrés. Le seul moyen de leur conserver dans l’exécution cette liberté qui en fait la grâce, est d’y employer ce que l’on nomme IL TEMPO RUBATO [sic]. La nécessité de donner aux notes une valeur pour les faire entrer dans la mesure, enlèverait aux Appoggiatures toute leur élégance, si on les jouait exactement dans les proportions où elles sont écrites.

Although the use of appoggiatures in a classic work would have been avoided, which, since they are merely turns of phrase, change and age just like the fashion which created them, we have nevertheless thought it useful to give one sole example of the proper way to add a few appoggiatures to a piece of broad style, and to choose not those ornaments which have the flower of novelty, which may not last, but those which are sanctioned by time and good taste. The only way to preserve, in their execution, that freedom which gives them their grace, is to use the so-called TEMPO RUBATO. The necessity of assigning value to the notes in order to make them fit into the measure would rob appoggiatures of all of their elegance, were one to play them in the exact rhythms in which they are written.

(Vol. III, Étude No. 113 (59me des deux mains) Pour faire des Appoggiatures et les co-ordonner avec la partie de main gauche)

8. Rubato as melodic alteration over regular accompaniment

Il est des moments où l’expression demande que la partie supérieure dépasse un peu la valeur de certaines notes; l’accompagnement ne doit point en être altéré. L’anticipation ou le retard dans la mesure servent souvent à l’expression; mais ils ne produisent qu’un défaut d’ensemble désagréable, si l’une des deux mains ne maintient pas constamment l’équilibre. Cette anticipation est ce qu’on nomme en Italie TEMPO ROBATO [sic].
There are moments where the expression requires that the upper part slightly exceed the value of certain notes; the accompaniment must not be altered for that reason. Anticipation or retard of tempo often serve expression; but they only produce a disagreeable flaw overall if one of the two hands does not constantly maintain the balance. This anticipation is what they call TEMPO RUBATO in Italy.

(Vol II, Étude No. 38 (15me. Étude des deux mains), Pour bien accorder le chant avec l’accompagnement)

Since rushed execution is anti-vocal at heart, and therefore anti-cantabile, Montgeroult emphasizes breadth of execution from the level of the melody down to particular ornaments (she uses the adjective large frequently). Her conviction about broad execution probably grew out of her experience touring as Viotti’s accompanist. Classically trained Viotti was well-versed in the cantabile style — he was cited in the Conservatoire’s singing method as one of its masters — and Montgeroult was intimately exposed to his solo art over years of concertizing abroad.¹⁵⁹

In performance, she also would have learned how to support the soloist’s cantabile art successfully from the keyboard. A skill acquired by all good accompanists is how to change the usual note-to-time ratio. Anyone who has played consistently for singers or instrumentalists understands the full, rounded presence on each note that comes naturally to the voice, wind instruments, and strings, but must be carved out intentionally on the keyboard. The pianist must consciously moderate the execution of each note as it is played, or he is in danger of lapsing into the rapid and mindless stream that is all too common in piano playing, at the expense of the melodic flourish or turn.

¹⁵⁹ Anne-Noëlle Bailly-Bouton reports that Montgeroult became acquainted with Viotti around the age of 20 in the salons of Mme. Vigée-Lebrun and Mme. de Staël, where they improvised together. During the Revolutionary years the duo concertized abroad before she returned to France and was tried by the Tribunal. See Bailly-Bouton, “La Vie et l’œuvre d’Hélène de Montgeroult (1764-1836),” unpublished Master’s thesis, University of Paris-IV Sorbonne, 1993; also Bouton, “Montgeroult,” in Dictionnaire de la musique en France au XIXe siècle, ed. Joël-Marie Fauquet (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 815.
This is not to deny the importance of playing with larger scale, phrase-oriented
direction, but simply to counteract, through a constant and energized listening, the
tendency of most pianists to lapse into mental complacency or detached playing.
Conscious engagement with each note played — especially during ornamental notes that
degenerate all too easily into superficial flourish — does a great deal to generate breadth
and counteract the passive, mechanical playing that results from mental disconnection.
As Montgeroult explains and Zimmermann will reiterate, the singer’s natural
expansiveness can be learned if the pianist is willing to listen, study, and actually sing the
melody himself before attempting to play it.

I am convinced that Montgeroult’s experience as an accompanist gave her the
conviction and authority to make such emphatic pronouncements, and it distinguishes her
from most of her fellow nineteenth-century pedagogue-pianists. Incidentally, in her
treatise Montgeroult never distinguishes between solo playing and accompanying, but the
challenge of supporting a soloist would have inevitably foregrounded the piano’s
mechanical deficiencies, and given her the practical context in which to experiment and
overcome them. Application in solo playing would follow as a matter of course.\footnote{Originally, the role of pianists at the young Conservatoire was to accompany singers, which raises interesting questions about supporting a melodic line vs. emulating it in the context of solo keyboard, playing, as observed by Fiorella Sassanelli in the discussion following her oral presentation “Scelte musicali e repertori degli allievi pianisti all’École Royale de Musique et de Déclamation di Parigi: gli ‘Exercices des élèves’ 1800-1824 e il ‘morceau de lecture à vue’ del 1829,” given at the conference Compositori mitteleuropei e La Nascita di un Virtuosismo pianistico francese, Rome, October 13, 2012.}

It is clear from Montgeroult’s remarks that imitation of the voice required
insertion of tasteful embellishment, and execution of this embellishment with appropriate
largeur could only result in temporal rubato. The two co-existed in a context of mutual
dependence; just as it was impossible to perform ornamentation naturally without elongating certain portions of the right-hand melody, staggering its alignment with the left hand, so from a practical standpoint it would be equally unnecessary to use temporal rubato in relation to a melody without clusters or flourishes of additional melodic notes.

In summary, Montgeroult’s pedagogy stands out from that of her peers in several key ways. Her ideas were remarkably well-defined and articulated. Although the cantabile texture of melodic ornamentation executed with tempo rubato between the hands was in use during the second half of the eighteenth century, no keyboardist before or after her lifetime articulated its application to the piano with such clarity and comprehension. In addition, her treatise discusses musical style in greater detail than Adam, Dussek, and most others, moving beyond mere description to concrete illustrations at the keyboard. Her original études were designed to teach the pianist how physically to generate specific qualities, be it legato, other detached forms of articulation, trills and ornamentation, or other techniques. Another salient feature is the objective of her systematic technical instruction: expressive playing. In her work, traditional technique is not reiterated as a matter of course, but is explained through original music as a means toward the end of expressive performance. And finally, as stated, her guidelines for imitating Italian opera on the keyboard through ornamentation and rubato in a fluid, phrase-oriented context of cantabile are unparalleled.

In light of her lyric orientation, Montgeroult must have been concerned by the emphasis on virtuosity evident in much of Louis Adam’s later music. Yet arguably, the two composers used the same keyboard traditions, outlined earlier, to arrive at different
stylistic objectives. Adam joined post-classical bravura in the vein of Clementi with early nineteenth-century expansion in tessitura, virtuosic passage-work, and use of the pedal.\textsuperscript{161} Inspired by Dussek as well as concertizing partners such as Viotti, Montgeroult used finger-based legato, Italian vocal rubato and some experimental harmonies to elevate late eighteenth-century lyricism and simple textures to a new level. It is no surprise that in spite of her method’s stylistic sophistication, Pierre Zimmermann’s three-volume \textit{Encyclopédie} of 1840, complete with instruction about the compositional process, was chosen as the new official curriculum to replace Louis Adam’s method of 1804.

Montgeroult’s teachings about rubato and expression foreshadow the development of these principles in Chopin, who integrated the same elastic right hand over a steady bass into more elaborate harmonic and rhythmic textures. The result will be discussed in Chapter Three, but the stylistic affinity between Hélène de Montgeroult and Frédéric Chopin makes the lack of proof in support of their acquaintance all the more curious.

\textbf{Montgeroult and Chopin}

In spite of extraordinarily similar stylistic principles — and in spite of mutual acquaintance Baron de Trémont, intimate friend of Montgeroult and host of popular

\footnote{\textsuperscript{161} The third movement of Adam’s Sonata Op. 10, dedicated to Clementi, seems to be titled, rather than merely marked, \textit{Cantabile}; the term is placed to the left of the stave, with the tempo and expressive marking \textit{Grazioso con molto expressione} in the usual position of an expressive or tempo marking directly above. The movement also contains the command “prenez la pedale du jeu celeste.” Pedals in addition to the sostenuto were therefore still present in the instruments and invoked in the repertoire. See Adam, \textit{Grande Sonate dans le style dramatique, dédiée à Clémenti}, Op. 10 (Paris: Pleyel, 1810).}
soirées at which Chopin is known to have performed — Montgeroult’s primary biographer Jérôme Dorival has found no trace of contact between them.\footnote{Jérôme Dorival, \textit{Hélène de Montgeroult, La Marquise et la Marseillaise} (Lyon: Symétrie, 2006), 9-10.} In light of their shared insistence on singing Italian melody, as well as mutual disdain for the surrounding egocentricity, flamboyant virtuosity, and inappropriate bodily movements of their peers, the fact is remarkable. How, indeed, could it be that Chopin arrived in Paris 11 years after the publication of Montegroult’s reputed method, the most comprehensive French treatise for keyboard on the market, and failed to mention it or its author in any extant correspondence? Furthermore, she is not mentioned in the multitude of diary entries and other reminiscences by Chopin’s students, friends, and colleagues. If Montgeroult’s social standing or reputation as a musician could have helped to cement his reputation, why did Chopin not interact with her either in person or in writing? In light of the fact that he attended at least two of the Baron de Trémont’s soirées, which were frequented by his friend the Marquise de Montgeroult, the lack of evidence is even more mystifying.\footnote{Eigeldinger reports two occasions on which Chopin is known to have attended Trémont’s musical soirées. The first is recorded in a note written by Chopin on the 14th of February, 1838, stating that he was expected to play his Concerto Op. 11 at Trémont’s two days later on the 16th. The second is induced from an undated note signed by Chopin that reads “j’aurai de plaisir à Vous revoir demain,” signed “Chopin, Samedi.” The incompatible days of the week prove that the notes refer to separate occasions. See Eigeldinger, \textit{Chopin: Pianist and Teacher}, 286-87, n. 28 and 30.}

In addition to the physical constraint of old age (Montgeroult was 62 in 1831 and died five years later),\footnote{Anne-Noëlle Bouton, s.v. “Montgeroult, Hélène-Marie-Antoinette de Nervo, Mme de,” in \textit{Dictionnaire de la musique en France au XIXe siècle}, 815.} the issues of gender, musical politics, and social class present themselves as possible constraints. It was indeed exceptional in the 1830s for a woman in music (or any field, for that matter) to achieve the status of a publicly recognized
expert. Married female pianists often limited their careers in order to maintain social respectability; one good example is the French pianist Marie Bigot, close friend and admired interpreter of Beethoven to whom, as one biographer reports, he gave the autograph of the *Appassionata Sonata*. The figure of Clara Schumann illustrates the more public end of the spectrum for a performing female pianist, but in her case generating an income remained a priority after Robert’s death.

Gender also confronted politics in the institution of the Conservatoire, which, in terms of faculty, was a bulwark of masculinity. The hiring records of the Conservatoire indicate that during Montgeroult’s tenure 1795-1798, among the ten Professors of keyboard she was the only female. While male chauvinism might not have stood in the way of Montgeroult’s professional credibility, if frustrations from a discriminatory environment were coupled with disagreements over style (possibly with Louis Adam), it may have contributed to her resignation in 1798 after only three years.

Another reason why Montgeroult and Chopin may have never met could be buried in the politics of social standing. Chopin’s non-aristocratic origin may have been a deterrent, but rather than the position of either individual in the social hierarchy, it is

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168 See Dorival, *Hélène de Montgeroult*, 200-1, where he suggests that Adam’s emphasis on technique, and the interest of the general public in “pots-pourris” and other showpieces, prompted de Montgeroult to observe in the Preface of the *Cours* that the “current mode of instruction was vicious.”
more likely that the potential ramifications of interaction may have kept them apart. Stylistic affinity aside, if Chopin hoped to achieve endorsement from the bastion of musical authority that was the Conservatoire, it was to his advantage to ingratiate himself to Zimmermann rather than to the marginalized, publicly tried aristocrat Hélène de Montgeroult. Though one letter contains a joking, disparaging remark about Zimmermann’s works, another dated 17 February 1848 includes a copy of his cello sonata Op. 65, sent “A Son ami Zimmermann.” After years living as neighbors in the Square d’Orléans and mixing at least occasionally at Zimmermann’s soirées, they had remained on amicable terms.  

Furthermore, Chopin had always been aware of the politics involved in musical interaction. A letter written from Paris in November of 1831 just weeks after his arrival mentions a letter of introduction to the composer Cherubini in his possession, and his intent to study with the reputed Kalkbrenner. Chopin was undoubtedly aware of the need and advantages of associating himself with esteemed figures, their studios and established school of instruction endorsed by the Conservatoire. In his case, the unusual choice to remain independent and unaffiliated with a teacher proved fortuitous.  

Having a cautious yet socially and politically conscientious disposition, it might be unlikely for Chopin to have initiated contact with a woman bearing a complicated

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170 See Arthur Hedley, Selected Correspondence, letters of November 18 and 27, 1831.
history, perceived by Parisian insiders as somewhat of a theoretical maverick whose peripheral salon operated outside of the Conservatoire circle. As impossible as it seems, we are reduced to speculation on the matter of any direct contact between stylistic intimates Hélène de Montgeroult and Frédéric Chopin; the matter invites further investigation.

Pierre Zimmermann

The final French pianist-composer to be considered is Pierre Zimmermann. Musically and socially, Zimmermann was a central figure in the Conservatoire’s piano faculty during the 20s and 30s; he formed the next link in the tradition of French pedagogy, passed on to his own student-turned-music historian Antoine Marmontel. In 1832 he took up residence in the luxurious Square d’Orléans, then situated in the northeast Poissonnière district of Paris. There he was host to the Conservatoire’s socio-political nexus, populated by Cherubini, Boieldieu, Kalkbrenner, and others constituting the *crème de la crème* of mainstream Parisian pianism.\(^\text{171}\)

He also entertained Liszt and Chopin throughout the 1830s and early 1840s at his biweekly Thursday salons, overlapping with Chopin and George Sand’s residence only a stone’s throw away at the Square’s Nos. 9 and 5 between 1842 and 1849.\(^\text{172}\) The pair was friends with Mme. Marliani, wife of the Spanish ambassador and occupant of No. 7.

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Famous past and present inhabitants of the square formed an artistic and “intellectual colony” that included Pauline Viardot, Kalkbrenner, the ballerina la Taglioni, Alkan, Marmontel, the sculptor Dantan, and Cesar Franck, the elite privy to the intimate soirées held in Zimmermann’s salon. One can only imagine the steady stream of wealthy, aristocratic or otherwise talented visitors inspired by such an illustrious array of residents.\(^{173}\)

Beyond his charismatic social milieu, Zimmermann was the most significant native French pianist and Conservatoire-based pedagogical figure of the generation after Louis Adam.\(^{174}\) As stated, his substantial treatise of 1840, the *Encyclopédie du pianiste-compositeur* of 1840 was the most comprehensive and systematic to appear in Paris since Montgeroult’s twenty years earlier. The three-part method follows the expected progression from basic mechanics to systematic technical development, interspersed with selective and minimal advice regarding style and interpretation. Its emphasis is on technical proficiency, and Part II is entitled “Exercices propres à faire aborder toutes les difficultés de l’Ecole moderne.” In it he includes thirteen examples of études by Chopin, and others by Czerny, Hummel, Thalberg, Cramer, Kessler, Alkan, Henselt, Ravina, Moscheles, Hummel, Kontsky, Clementi, Bertini, Czerny, Taubert, Kalkbrenner, and Döhler, and Zimmermann himself.\(^{175}\) Part III includes compositional advice on the construction of genres such as theme and variations and fugue, with corresponding examples.

\(^{173}\) Ganche, *Dans le souvenir de Frédéric Chopin*, 72.
At the end of the first section Zimmermann includes the obligatory list “Des Termes italiens,” which contains *cantabile* in the fifth and final section related to expression:\(^{176}\)

1. Termes ayant rapport aux mouvements . . . (*Largo, Larghetto, Adagio, Andante, Andantino, Allegro, Allegretto*)
2. Termes qui se rapportent à l’intensité du son . . . (*Piano, Pianissimo, Dolce, Forte, Fortissimo*)
3. Termes modificateurs des mouvements . . . (long list including *Sostenuto, Tempo rubato* defined as “sans une observation rigoureuse de la mesure,” *Ritardando and Rallentando*)
4. Termes qui modifient la force du son . . . (*Crescendo, Diminuendo, Smorzendo, Mezza voce, Sotto voce, etc.*)
5. Termes relatifs à l’Expression . . . (*Arioso, Cantabile, Con anima, Con duolo, Flebile, Languido, Piangendo, etc.*)

As we saw in the treatises of Dussek and Adam, Zimmermann places *Cantabile* not in the list of terms affecting tempo, but in the final category of expressive terms. It is defined as “d’une manière chantante,” with a second line underneath in smaller font, “il comporte un peu de lenteur.” The slowing of tempo is a consistent trait in descriptions of vocal and instrumental *cantabile*, and was usually necessary for the practical implementation of its *fioriture* and *tempo rubato*.

In Chapter IV of Part II, Zimmermann includes less common sections on the quality of sound and the pedal, interspersed with the more usual “du Style” and “des Notes de goût.” To a great extent, the passage describing sound echoes his predecessor Montgeroult.\(^{177}\)

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\(^{177}\) Zimmermann, *Encyclopédie*, v. 2, 58.
En général on doit tenter à élever son style, se garantir de l’affectation et de la mignardise, c’est pour ainsi dire en chantant de poitrine qu’on évitera cet écueil.

Le piano n’ayant pas la faculté de soutenir les sons est enclin à la sécheresse, il faut faire tous ses efforts pour déguiser cette imperfection, le jeu lié*, peut souvent pallier ce défaut; la pédale aussi peut être d’un grand secours.
* Et par conséquent l’emploi fréquent de la substitution des doigts.)

In general one must attempt to elevate one’s style, to safeguard oneself from affectation and preciousness; it is through singing from the chest, as it were, that one will avoid this pitfall.

The piano, not having the capability of sustaining sound, is inclined to dryness; one must bend all one’s efforts to disguising this imperfection, legato playing * can often alleviate this fault; the pedal can also be of great help.
* And consequently the frequent substitution of fingers.)

“Singing from the chest” is a remarkable statement indeed, here presented as a remedy for affected playing in the upper echelon of nineteenth-century piano pedagogy. As discussed above, accompanists understand the value of singing the melody of a given song or aria before rehearsal, and how only through this act of using the breath is the pianist able to “physicalize” or embody the more gradual and rounded process of sound production natural to the voice.

Zimmermann echoes Montgeroult’s guideline, and may have unknowingly cited her observations prefacing her Étude No. 101, in Vol. III, “pour la difficulté du ton.” After stating the impossibility of marking all the necessary nuances in the score, she had declared that the student can provide them “s’il a soin de chanter avec la voix la partie haute de cette étude, avant de l’exécuter.”178 Finally, Zimmermann commands the pianist to “disguise the imperfection” of sound decay through the resources of legato and the pedal. The pedal is advocated as one of several solutions, to be applied not as a matter of

course, but as a last resort when other options fail. In the same passage prefacing the étude about the pedal, Montgeroult had also cautioned that the pedal must be applied only when finger-\textit{legato} is impossible.\textsuperscript{179}

Zimmermann’s discussion of style is four times as long as his remarks on sound. He begins by stating that the desirable qualities of “soul, sensibility, refinement, and nobility” are revealed by the great pianist. Two of these four character qualities have been named in other methods for piano and voice in relation to \textit{cantabile}, and the other two are part of the same field of synonyms; the description reinforces the foundational nature of \textit{cantabile}, its importance for proper technique and general musical deportment, and the lack of success in its absence.

Not surprisingly, while acknowledging the difficulty of “reproducing melodies” posed by the instrument, Zimmermann selects Dussek as an example of a modern pianist who knows how to “find a voice and accents on the piano, however resistant [rebèlle] it [the instrument] may be.” In this context, it is not difficult to interpret “voice” as almost literal rather than figurative: Dussek was able to draw a singing melody from the piano that very closely imitated the human original.\textsuperscript{180} Indeed, a few paragraphs later in the context of periodic phrase structure, Zimmermann makes a triangular analogy: the words of the pianist must not, any more than those of the orator, be interrupted by the breath; rather, the art of phrasing on the piano is the art of breathing for the singer.

\textsuperscript{179} Maria Rose remarks that Montgeroult preferred legato without use of the pedal, which was reserved for volume in special effects such as arpeggiated chords in a “pathetic” character, tremolos, and crescendos. Montgeroult’s reluctance to incorporate the pedal indicates that the fairly constant use of the pedal to sustain sound, with frequent changing to avoid the blurring of harmonies, was most likely not practiced by her. See Montgeroult, \textit{Cours complet}, v. 3, 310; and Rose, \textit{L’Art de bien chanter}, 358 and 391.

\textsuperscript{180} Zimmermann, \textit{Encyclopédie}, v. 2, 58.
Zimmermann continues to emphasize the importance of variation, encouraging varied repetition and condemning uniformity as the instigator of boredom. On the other side of the spectrum, exaggeration is also dangerous, and style must be tempered with control and a regularity of tempo. “Playing too fast, too loud, and not releasing the pedal,” he continues, “are sure signs of mediocrity.” Several points about controlling the tempo relate to principles of performance practice of the style of cantabile. The author acknowledges the need to slow the tempo at the climax of a difficult passage, “under the pretext of style but in reality to facilitate the execution.” He admonishes against retarding melodies in a systematic way, and rushing the ornaments: they must be executed with elegance rather than speed.\footnote{Zimmermann, Encyclopédie, v. 2, 58.} The only musical example in this section is given to illustrate the execution of blocked chords, which should be arpeggiated when stressed and preceded by ornamental notes. In a clever linguistic parallel, Zimmermann calls the second notes in these groups “l’œ muet de la musique.”

It is here, at the end of a paragraph emphasizing the need for interpretation to vary according to the author, that Zimmermann discusses Chopin: “The tact that will serve to interpret Hummel, Beethoven, will be entirely different in the case of Chopin.” At the mention of this name, Zimmermann felt compelled to continue with the following paragraph:\footnote{Zimmermann, Encyclopédie, v. 2, 59.}

\begin{quote}
Puisque nous venons de nommer Chopin nous ferons remarquer que sa musique a un cachet qui permet de se relâcher un peu de la rigoureuse observation de la mesure. Il faut cependant user sobrement de l’indication que nous donnons ici, car il ne s’agit, pour quelques pièces de ce maître, que d’un certain abandon rempli d’un charme inexprimable sous les doigts de l’auteur. Chopin, comme
\end{quote}
tout talent original ne peut être imité, cependant il faut tâcher d’entrer dans l’esprit de ses compositions afin de n’y pas faire de contresens.

*Since we just mentioned Chopin we shall observe that his music has a character that allows one to slightly relax from the strict observation of the measure. However, one must use sparingly the indication we give here, because it only concerns, in certain pieces of this master, a certain abandon filled with an indescribable charm under the author’s fingers. Chopin, like every original talent, cannot be imitated; however one must strive to enter into the spirit of his compositions so as to not make nonsense of them.*

Chopin is the only pianist Zimmermann discusses in this degree of detail. As noted by Baron de Trémont in 1843, Chopin’s works were particularly effective when played by the composer: “C’est un musicien à part, qui n’a de rapport quelconque avec aucun autre.” Several years later in 1849, Trémont would echo Zimmermann’s own articulation of the effect of Chopin performing his own music: “The study of his works can only profit from listening to him play his music, because the most exact execution of his compositions cannot give an idea of what they become under his hands . . .”¹⁸³

Chopin’s style was original enough to render imitation impossible, and instead Zimmermann warned students to avoid false or nonsensical interpretation [*contresens*]. To some degree, then, Chopin’s music was perceived as vulnerable to misinterpretation every time it was played by someone else.

Zimmermann’s description evinces a reluctant admiration. The originality but also irregularity of Chopin’s music in comparison with that of contemporaries created a dilemma for teachers and students, and resisted any firm rules for its interpretation. In the case of Chopin, a greater than usual disparity existed between an exact or “correct”

reproduction of the notes and the composer’s own rendition of them. One perceives a degree of uncertainty in Zimmermann’s words, especially when compared with the relative confidence of his short statement about Dussek. After exhorting the reader to listen to the *chef-d’oeuvres des grands maîtres* in a return to the voice that reminds again of Montgeroult, Zimmermann concludes the section on style with one of her observations:184 “Singers are a profound source of instruction, because the goal is the same for all [musicians], only the means are different.”

The subsequent section “Des notes de goût” is disappointing in its brevity, and limited to musical examples showing how to adorn the approach and conclusion of trills, one of many ornaments active in the repertoire of the time. Yet several comments are noteworthy. Sparing application of ornaments is encouraged, especially in the works of the “grand maître,” and they must agree with the prevailing harmony. Two principles follow: first, the student must not embroider during the first statement of the theme; and second, one of the most perplexing aspects of nineteenth-century performance is addressed, directly but ambiguously.

On tachera, quel que soit le nombre de notes exécutées par la main droite de conserver la mesure à la main gauche qui doit servir de régulateur.”

One will attempt, no matter what might be the number of notes executed by the right hand, to conserve the measure in the left hand, which must serve as regulator.

In a reiteration of Montgeroult’s Italian *tempo rubato*, Zimmermann describes his own version of the rhythmically strict left hand “Kapellmeister” used in Wilhelm Lenz’s in his

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oft-cited description of Chopinian rubato.\(^\text{185}\) It is revealing that abruptly and without explanation, Zimmermann leaps from discussing ornamentation to its natural consequent: distorted time. As noted in Chapter One, impromptu embellishment in opera necessitated rubato, and while the relationship is rarely defined in piano literature, the practice was the same. Zimmermann’s unstated, contextual linking of the two implies that the association between ornamentation and rubato was a foregone conclusion; it also indicates that the reader, a musician of some ability, was well enough acquainted with the practice to understand a concept that would have been too complex for a novice. Of course, it could also be a simple case of oversight on the part of the instructor.

In the subsequent pages, Zimmermann forms what may be the most explicit link between this tradition of inserted ornamentation, implied rubato, and the cantabile texture. On p. 70 of Part II entitled “Exercises propre à faire aborder toutes les difficultés de l’Ecole moderne,” containing a collection of études and fugues, Zimmermann included a Nocturne marked Andante to the left beside the top of the staff, and Cantabile ed espressivo above.\(^\text{186}\) This work had been published previously as No. 16 in his undated set of 24 études, Op. 21, probably dating from the 1830s, where it is marked Romance instead of Nocturne; the inclusion of such a technically “simple” work in a serious collection of études suggests that it was viewed as a stylistic and technical


\(^{186}\) This piece was mentioned in Jeffrey Kallberg’s “Sense and Meaning in Two Recently Discovered Annotated Editions of Chopin,” in Chopin in Paris: the 1830s (Warsaw: Narodowy Institut Fryderyka Chopina, 2007), 331-42, 340; and discussed by Jonathan Bellman in his article “Improvised Ornamentation in Chopin’s Paris,” Early Keyboard Studies Newsletter 8:2 (1994): 1-7, esp. 4-7. Kallberg is interested in the role of embellishment in the Nocturne, and Bellman uses Zimmermann’s piece to substantiate his argument for the commonplace role of improvisation during Chopin’s tenure in Paris. Neither scholar was concerned with the role of the cantabile style or marking within contemporaneous practices of embellishment.
necessity for the contemporaneous pianist. In the version published as an étude, the bare framework of the rather unstimulating nocturne melody is presented without suggested ornamentation. Presumably, the objective of the original “study” was the art of inserting decorative notes in a way similar to the example Zimmermann wrote out in his pedagogical treatise. The ornamented version in his method of 1840 was abridged slightly from the pre-existing étude: it is eight bars shorter, minus one statement of the theme.

Figure 4. Zimmermann, *Encyclopédie du Pianiste-Compositeur* (1840), *Nocturne*, p. 70, mm. 1-14.
Beginning on the fifth staff, he included a second melodic line above the original melody, marked “Ornemens,” that contains embellishments in the form of scales between large intervals; extra notes in dotted rhythms between slow-moving melodic notes; and other repetitions and additions. These flourishes are typical of those used by Chopin and other pianists of the time. Although the nature of decorative notes had evolved, as late as 1840 they still underscore Montgeroult’s 1820 prescription of ornamentation designed to bridge and support principal melodic notes.

In spite of his comments on restraint, it should be noted that within the spectrum of 1830s keyboard practice, Zimmermann practiced a great deal of spontaneous addition. In his *Pianistes célèbres*, Antoine Marmontel discussed his teacher Zimmermann’s penchant for embellishment while performing Chopin’s works, and Chopin’s chagrin over such a liberal interpretation of his music:
Soit profond amour de l’art, soit excès de conscience personnelle, Chopin ne pouvait souffrir qu’on touchât au texte de ses œuvres. La plus légère modification lui semblait une faute grave qu’il ne pardonnerait même pas à ses intimes sans en excepter Liszt son admirateur fervent. J’ai maintes fois, ainsi que mon maître Zimmermann, fait jouer comme pièces de concours les sonates, concertos, ballades et allegros de Chopin; mais restreint à un fragment de l’œuvre, je souffrais a la pensée de blesser le compositeur qui considérait ces altérations comme un véritable sacrilège.  

Whether it was profound love of the art or excessive personal conscience, Chopin could not abide anyone touching the written text of his works. The slightest modification seemed to him a grave fault that he would not pardon even in his intimates, without exception for Liszt, his fervent admirer. A great many times I have, like my teacher Zimmermann, had Chopin’s sonatas, concertos, ballades and allegros played like show pieces; but restricted to a fragment of the work, I suffered at the thought of wounding the composer who considered these alterations to be a veritable sacrilege.

In certain contexts, Zimmermann (and presumably other pianists) did not hesitate to make significant additions to works by other composers. We know that Chopin left copious ornamental additions in the scores of Madame Dubois, Jane Stirling, and other students, and that he never played one of his compositions the same way twice. Chopin’s temperamental disposition adds credibility to Marmontel’s assertion; Chopin reserved the composer’s carte blanche to alter his own works, but wanted other performers to respect his scores as published. Indeed, we can infer that when he used the marking cantabile Chopin believed in the practice of non-notated ornamentation for his own works. But even in those contexts Chopin would have found appropriate, he and

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188 Eigeldinger, _Chopin: Pianist, Teacher_, 244-66; and idem, “Regard nouveau sur les partitions annotées de la collection Camille Dubois-O’Meara,” in _Noter, annoter, éditer la musique: Mélanges offerts à Catherine Massip_ (Geneva: Droz, 2012), 495-511.
189 “Chopin never played his own compositions twice alike, but varied each according to the mood of the moment, a mood that charmed by its very waywardness; his playing resembled nothing so much as the tender delicate tints seen in mother-o’-pearl, and rendered apparently without the least effort.” Edith J. Hipkins, _How Chopin Played: From Contemporary Impressions collected from the Diaries and Notebooks of the late A.J. Hipkins_ (London: Dent, 1937), original page unknown; cited in Eigeldinger, 55.
Zimmermann surely differed in terms of how to tastefully embellish, and to what degree — factors relegated by subjective and fluctuating bon goût.

Zimmermann prioritizes the art of composition (hence the title of “encyclopedia for composer-pianists”) and devotes an entire section to examples of multiple genres with commentary. His treatise includes some of his own works as illustrations, and strongly emphasizes the étude as a pedagogical tool — listing Chopin’s études as seemingly unremarkable examples among works by his contemporaries. He devotes less time to interpretation and does not define cantabile (or any other term), merely listing them in categories designating expression, tempo, etc. Elsewhere, however, he does include and discuss the fundamental elements of cantabile, namely spontaneous melodic embellishment and the consequent of naturally occurring rubato.

Conclusion

Early nineteenth-century French pedagogy presents cantabile as an established and expressive genre, consisting of florid Italian ornamentation and rubato inherited from the eighteenth century. Dussek and Pleyel expressed the paradoxically foreign and Italian, yet simultaneously French nature of the concept of cantabile, and described its sparse texture that allowed for insertion of spontaneous embellishment. The first movement of Dussek’s concerto Op. 70 with the marking “cantabile ornamenti ad libitum . . .” illustrates the texture of cantabile and practice of spontaneous embellishment within an innovative, A-B-A first movement form. Dussek’s method is representative of treatises by a leading performer similar to Thalberg’s, Kalkbrenner’s and Herz’s, with a
combination of theoretical basics and the author’s personal views about music and performance.

Professor Louis Adam wrote a conservative method for the Conservatoire’s official curriculum, echoing Pleyel’s definition of *cantabile*, but making no original contribution to that style; he did value *cantabile* enough as a genre to place the marking as a title in multiple slow movements of his sonatas. Adam’s colleague Pierre Zimmermann composed the *Encyclopédie* that replaced Adam’s treatise as official curriculum, and contains moderate and careful remarks on style with an emphasis on the art of composition, using classic composers as models. He included descriptions of spontaneous ornamentation and accompanying alteration of time in *rubato*, provided a rare example of suggested embellishment in a Nocturne marked *cantabile*, and explained the unusual role altered time played in the works of Chopin, especially in (or under) the hands of their creator. He also cautioned against rash emulation of Chopin’s bafflingly singular style.

In her extensive treatise containing hundreds of original études, Hélène de Montgeroult transmitted the melodic embellishment and *rubato* used in Italian opera to the right and left hands on the piano. She was the most retrospective in her aesthetic orientation, and her presentation of ornamentation and rubato is exactly in the line of baroque castrato and vocal pedagogue Pier Francesco Tosi, her predecessor by nearly one hundred years; yet at the same time, her works show the expanding tessitura, use of the pedal, and three-part textures possible on the modern instrument. She harnessed the
baroque aesthetic not to the Romantic keyboard idiom evident in Chopin, but rather to a largely classic one.

Her clear and thorough explanation of style and expression stands out dramatically from the other technique-based methods: without a professional position at stake, she was at liberty to concentrate on interpretation and beautiful sound, and devoted no attention to the art of composition. Montgeroult’s stylistic position would have marginalized her in relation to the more conservative, traditional French teachings of her male peers (which I believe at least partly explains the note-oriented, localized and cadential embellishments they advocate, eliminating the more complex rubato that was generated by more elaborate Italian fioriture). Furthermore, Montgeroult’s method was self-published and not known to have been reviewed or advertised by a single Parisian journal — common practice, for example, during the later era of Le Pianiste (1833-1835). It remains impossible to estimate the degree to which her teachings infiltrated piano performance in Paris outside of her own salon and that of her friend the Baron de Trémont, but her practical application of the texture of baroque cantabile on a modern keyboard positions her as the style’s leading exponent, and sets her apart as the most obvious stylistic predecessor to Chopin.

All except Zimmermann link cantabile to taste, or the addition of spontaneous ornamentation in French music discussed in Chapter One; soul, which is not explained but adds a component of individual expression; and simplicity, the caution against excess or artifice in the expected decoration. The authors’ descriptions of cantabile complement each other, but differ in terms of degree and complexity. Pleyel’s definition of the term
in French is earliest as well as the longest, but co-author Dussek does not expound further on its practical application and makes no mention of *rubato*. Adam and Zimmermann were leading Conservatoire Professors of piano; logically, their methods are most traditional and practically oriented. That could be why, aside from the obligatory short definitions of the term, they refrained from direct endorsement or illustration of what was an essentially Italian style known for its expressivity.

Chopin may very well have been exposed to the methods by Dussek, Adam, and Zimmermann, yet because of the obscure circumstances surrounding Montgeroult and her method — the one closest to his own ideals — we have no way of knowing the extent to which her application of *cantabile* at the keyboard crossed his path or exercised tangible influence on his performance practice. The fact that *cantabile* was known and taught in official as well as peripheral Parisian pedagogy, but was executed through either a classic keyboard idiom (germane to the harpsichord and fast becoming passé), or a post-classic emphasis on virtuosity (popularized by mainstream audiences but unattractive to Chopin), adds credence to *cantabile*’s widespread familiarity in the musical consciousness, even while highlighting the original role it played in Chopin’s music.

The next chapter considers how Chopin harnessed the operatic aesthetic of ornamented *cantabile* melody over *tempo rubato* to an original texture and pianistic idiom.
CHAPTER FOUR

CANTABILE IN CHOPIN: ORNAMENTATION AND RUBATO

Chopin accomplished the realization of cantabile on the early nineteenth-century piano through emulation of Italian melody, interspersed with glittering pianistic fioriture, showcased through his special brand of tempo rubato and placed over bass textures that began in a supporting role, but increasingly took on their own distinct identity across his lifetime. The relationship between ornamentation and rubato in Chopin’s cantabile melodies changed dramatically during the years after his arrival in Paris in 1831, a stylistic shift that brings into relief his early use of “cluttered” decoration, his late infusion of counterpoint, and his consistent integration of chords and rhythms from ethnic Polish music across early, middle, and late periods.

Before the stylistic characteristics of the fifteen passages marked cantabile can be properly understood, the particularities of Chopin’s ornamentation and rubato must be understood as outgrowths of the eighteenth-century cantabile tradition — a connection that has been acknowledged, but not fully investigated, in scholarship.

The Eighteenth-Century Heritage of Cantabile

In fact, a profound connection exists between eighteenth-century cantabile practice, taught in the Italian conservatories where Bellini and many other opera
composers received their training, and Chopin’s own stylistic orientation. Based on the operatic trends discussed in Chapter Two, this chapter will illustrate how the execution of semi-improvised florid melody, with hands operating independently in linear *tempo rubato*, is a natural application of the pre-existing *cantabile* tradition in opera. The matter of texture will be addressed more thoroughly in the next chapter; this one will define *cantabile’s* two fundamental traits of ornamentation and *rubato*.

Chopin Scholarship: Ornamentation

Several important twentieth-century studies have considered connections between ornamentation in Chopin and eighteenth-century style and practice. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger’s articles “Chopin et l’héritage baroque”190 and “Chopin et Couperin: Affinités sélectives,”191 as well as Wanda Landowska’s article “Frédéric Chopin et l’ancienne musique française,”192 have compiled an admirable amount of eighteenth-century evidence and discussed the relationship between practice described in that source material and Chopin, but do not explore the pervasive stylistic implications in his music, or the way those elements evolved over the course of his career.

In her “Frédéric Chopin et l’ancienne musique française,” Wanda Landowska acknowledges that she cannot find concrete evidence to support her conviction that Chopin owned or studied Couperin’s works, but her conclusion takes into account the

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matter of compositional similarity with no direct contact. She acknowledges the element of mystery when two otherwise disconnected musicians share a particular stylistic quality:

C’est ainsi que nous trouvons très simplement la parenté rythmique, ou autre, entre un menuet de Rameau et une “mazurka” populaire, entre un thème de Buxtehude et un motif norvégien de Grieg. Ce qui pourrait nous sembler coïncidence amusante, ou problème inextricable, ne sera qu’une conséquence naturelle et fatale de ce roulement continué.\(^\text{193}\)

It is the case that we very simply find a rhythmic or other kinship, between minuet by Rameau and a popular Mazurka, between a theme of Buxtehude and a Norwegian motive of Grieg. What could seem like an amusing coincidence, or an impossible problem, will only be a natural and fated consequence of this perpetual motion.

In addition to attempting to explain points of stylistic connection that reach back and forth across multiple cultures and centuries, it is important to recognize and accept the sometimes inexplicable nature of stylistic overlap.

Eigeldinger’s “Chopin et l’héritage baroque” is an invaluable exploration of the early \textit{rubato} found in Pier Francesco Tosi’s vocal treatise of 1723, including the use of the \textit{cantabile} aria in practice at that time. Eigeldinger’s observations are astute, yet I believe his interpretation of Wilhelm Lenz’s exceptional remarks about the \textit{cantabile} joining the \textit{bravura} in the first movement of the Concerto in E Minor is not entirely accurate. Lenz described the movement after witnessing a lesson Chopin gave to Carl Filsch:\(^\text{194}\)

\(^{193}\) Landowska, 107.
Hier ist Chopin der Bellini des Pianoforte. Das Thema ist auf das Sinnigste harmonisch verwerthet. Das 1ste Thema (E-moll) ist männlich, wenn man das 2te weiblich nennen will, der Ausdruck passionirt im Sinn italienischen Opernstyls, dieser im besten Sinne des Wortes und dramatisch verstanden. Der Pianist hat erster Tenor, erster Sopran, immer Sänger, Bravoursänger in den Passagen zu sein. . . Chopin wollte des ganze Passagenwerk zu einem cantabile-Style gezwongen wissen. So lehrte er Filsch, den Liebling seines Herzens, diesen 1sten Satz verstehen. . . Cantabile wollte er die Passagen durch ein gewisses Mass in der Tonstärke und Bravour, durch das möglichste Eingreifen jedes Motivkörnchens, durch die höchste Delikatesse im Anschlag, selbst wo nur Gänge vorlägen, was die Ausnahme ist.

Chopin is here the Bellini of the Pianoforte. The theme is realized harmonically in the most clever way. The first theme (E Minor) is masculine, while one wants to call the second feminine, the expression passionate in the sense of Italian operatic style, this understood in the best sense of the word and dramatically. The pianist must be first tenor, first soprano, always a singer, a bravura-singer in the runs. . . Chopin wanted the runs cantabile, with a certain measure of strength and bravura within, trying to bring out as much as possible the slightest thematic fragments, using the most delicate touch, even where the runs are no more than runs — which in this piece is the exception.

It should be noted that it is extremely rare to find a discussion of style that wedds lyricism to bravura-style passages. Based on Lenz’s unusual description, Eigeldinger draws a bold conclusion about the selective nature of the marking cantabile in Chopin’s works: “If the marking cantabile appears relatively rarely in his compositions, it is that it is self-evident and does not only count for the passages bearing a cantilena, but also for certain bravura traits.” However, rather than a generalization about singing melody “holding true” in bravura passages most opposite to its character (however accurate that might be in certain cases), Lenz’s remarks were actually focused on the execution of a particular work.

195 “Si la mention cantabile apparaît relativement rarement dans ses compositions, c’est qu’elle va de soi et ne vaut pas seulement pour les passages qui comportent une cantilène, mais même pour certain traits de bravoure.” Eigeldinger, “Chopin et l’héritage baroque,” 68.
More importantly, the self-evidence of the *cantabile* marking depends on one’s interpretation of it; if understood to mean “lyric” or “melodious,” as many scholars have, then *cantabile* qualities can certainly be deduced from the tempo and texture of a given passage. But if the marking *cantabile* is understood to elicit the embellishments, *rubato*, and particular manner of expression — indeed, the entire tradition Eigeldinger himself so carefully sets forth through Tosi and other eighteenth-century sources — then it becomes much less obvious. Even as Eigeldinger brings insight and expertise to the subject of *cantabile* style, he reminds us how easy it is to underestimate the connotations of the marking.

Eigeldinger’s article on Couperin and Chopin links ornamentation back to the eighteenth century, and states that “For the execution of diverse ornaments, the practice of Chopin often refers to the principles inherited from the late baroque aesthetic.” Since Chopin’s possession of Couperin’s scores cannot be proved, the tenuous connection Eigeldinger draws between Chopin’s ornamental style and Couperin’s florid *style brisé* is not entirely convincing. More plausible are Eigeldinger’s remarks about the composers’ mutual emphases on beautiful tone, *legato*, and long phrasing according to the principles of rhetoric.\(^{196}\) Finally, although the compositional style of the two composers appears similar in certain excerpts — keeping in mind Landowska’s conclusion about the inexplicable nature of some readily apparent stylistic connections — if we ignore the distinct environments and motivations that produced apparently similar results, then we

obfuscate the dramatic differences in conception and purpose held by two individuals living a century apart in contrasting musical milieux.

At this critical juncture the question presents itself: if we know that Chopin owned and admired the works of Bach, but if we cannot prove that he was significantly exposed to operas composed before Mozart, does that render invalid a stylistic connection between his music and elements of style active in earlier eighteenth-century repertoire? I don’t believe so. Rather, drawing the connection helps us to interpret the stylistic elements at work in his music, whether or not they were known by name or traced to their origin by Chopin himself. If certain pre-existing characteristics did resurface in Chopin’s music, consciously or unconsciously, it might illustrate the phenomenon of inexplicable stylistic overlap articulated by Landowska. At any rate, rather than limiting ourselves primarily to studying Chopin’s music through the more immediate source material of the early nineteenth century, we can expand our appreciation of history and its stylistic cycles through observing the overlapping elements between his music and the cantabile tradition that predated him by at least a century.

Probably due to their complexity, since the mid-twentieth century Chopin scholars have addressed ornamentation and rubato as separate entities disconnected from their original cantabile context. Discussions of ornamentation fall into two categories. The first focuses on general stylistic similarity between Chopin and Bellini or Rossini, which does include ornamentation, but only cursory analysis of it; writings by Julian
Budden, Gerald Abraham, and Robert Wagner are illustrative. The second category zooms in to a micro level, aimed at practical questions such as whether trills should begin on the upper or lower notes, how they should conclude, and note-by-note coordination between the hands. Writings by John Petrie Dunn, George Kiorpes, and Jan Holcman are representative of this group.

However, in an effort to pinpoint exactly how to play these individual ornaments, scholars have neglected the surrounding stylistic context — in spite of the fact that knowledge of their context and character greatly informs contemporaneous performing habits. In a texture-oriented study of embellishment in Chopin’s Nocturnes, Jonathan Bellman’s D.M.A. thesis takes a step towards middle ground, examining the original markings and cadenzas found in his students’ scores, diaries, and correspondence, and

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200 Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger’s “Chopin et Couperin: Affinités sélectives” and “Chopin et l’héritage baroque” draw general connections between Chopin and eighteenth-century baroque practice; the former tries to find connections between Chopin and Couperin based on somewhat unconvincing passage-based analysis, and the latter does not link him to any particular composer.
considering the implications for performance of the Nocturnes today. But again, he does not fully incorporate the source that inspired those later manifestations.  

Chopin Scholarship: Rubato

The signature work on rubato is Richard Hudson’s Stolen Time: the History of Tempo Rubato, which examines the origins of eighteenth-century keyboard rubato and its nineteenth-century development, drawing in the process on Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger’s compilation of primary sources surrounding Chopin. Although Hudson approached rubato as an independently occurring characteristic, in the course of his study he encountered the ornamental notes inherent to slow-moving cantabile textures, and identified three stylistic functions of the rubato markings: the projection of a long, singing line; the temporal robbery from preceding or following notes; and an escalation of intensity when reaching up towards a higher note. All of these characteristics are present in a cantabile texture; the ornamental notes bridge gaps between long notes to support and propel the melody forward, creating melodic interest and shortening or lengthening the durations of adjacent notes.

Hudson also analyzes Chopin’s fourteen rubato markings, which fall into three contexts of varied repetition; intense expression of a melodic high point; and establishment of a particular mood. It is no coincidence that eleven of Chopin’s fifteen

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203 Hudson, Stolen Time, 198.
204 Hudson, Stolen Time, 214.
***cantabile*** markings occur in works composed between 1828 and 1835 — the period corresponding exactly with Chopin’s fourteen markings of *rubato* analyzed by Hudson.\(^{205}\) Since *rubato* was an essential aspect of a *cantabile* texture, it is logical that evidence of one might coincide with the presence of the other. Because of the close relationship between the two within that context, and the fact that *cantabile* style was executed through ornamental melody in *rubato* against the accompaniment, it is important to clarify what Chopin intended by the score marking *rubato*, and to distinguish it from the temporal flexibility he applied so convincingly in his inimitable performing style. The *rubato* markings will be considered before continuing, in the next chapter, with the analysis of each passage he marked *cantabile*.

**Rubato Markings in Chopin**

Chopin first marked *rubato* in a G-sharp Minor Polonaise without opus number of 1823 (not included in the list below), at cadential conclusions to its two major sections in bars 12 and 27, where the marking is placed over two V-i resolutions. Eigeldinger believes that Chopin actually intended *senza rigore* — a short and gradual slowing down — and that he misapplied the term *rubato* in these two cases. Indeed, the only opportunity for the staggering of hands would be to place the G-sharp resolving bass octaves before the chord in the right hand, and that alternative is not compelling in this case. Furthermore, in this curtailed context there is no opportunity for the altered temporal relationship to develop over the course of a phrase in a usual *cantabile* style; the

\(^{205}\) Hudson, 175.
affect is abrupt and undeniably strange. It is, however, interesting to surmise that at the
tender age of 13, Chopin was not yet well-versed in the practical use of a term and style
that would become inextricably associated with his musical language.\textsuperscript{206}

While still a young man, Chopin marked \textit{rubato} fourteen times, during his mostly
developmental years from 1826 to 1835. At the beginning of this period he used a
variety of specific score indications such as \textit{con anima} and \textit{tranquillo}; as with many
composers, the majority of these fell out of use entirely during his maturing process, and
the frequency of remaining markings also declined. In the case of \textit{rubato}, the irritation
provoked by misinterpretation may have also persuaded Chopin to abandon the term, as
we saw in the last chapter in contemporary pianist Jan Dussek, whose frustration over the
inability of others to execute \textit{rubato} caused him to replace the marking with the less
problematic, but also less specific, \textit{espressivo}.\textsuperscript{207}

In Chopin, the marking \textit{rubato} occurs in three contexts: 1. at the beginning of a
piece (three times); 2. for variety during repetition (five times); and 3. at the start of a
closing or climactic section (six times). The markings are listed first chronologically,
then in categories according to the surrounding context, with associated measures. Dates

\begin{footnotes}
\item[207] See ch. 2, page 84, for a discussion of \textit{rubato} in Dussek. “Dussek, who really loved \textit{Rubato}, in spite of
the fact that he never wrote it in his music; Dussek tried to make it visible through the means of
syncopations; but when one executed these syncopations accurately, one was still far from giving his suave
and delicious manner. He renounced it and contented himself to write: \textit{espressivo}.” \textit{Le Pianiste} 1:5 (March
1834): 44-47. Eigeldinger makes a comparable statement in regard to Chopin: “It is easy to conclude . . .
that Chopin, after Op. 24, renounced the use of a term which he would have had to employ constantly
without the slightest assurance of his intentions being correctly understood.” \textit{Chopin: Pianist and Teacher},
122, n. 99.
\end{footnotes}
of publication are listed chronologically. In the subsequent categories, dates of composition and publication are listed, if different.²⁰⁸

**Chronological Occurrences of Rubato Markings:**

1. *rubato*, (Mazurka) Op. 6 No. 1 in F-sharp Minor; 1832
2. *rubato*, (Mazurka) Op. 6 No. 2 in C-sharp Minor; 1832
3. *rubato* (Mazurka) Op. 7 No. 1 in B-flat Major; 1832
4. / 5. *rubato* (Mazurka) Op. 7 No. 3 in F Minor; 1832
5. / 7. *sempre - - - - rubato* (Trio), Op. 8, in G Minor, I. Allegro con fuoco; 1832
6. / 12. *rubato*, (Concerto) Op. 21 No. 2 in F Minor, III. Allegro vivace; 1836
7. *rubato*, (Mazurka) Op. 24 No. 1 in G Minor; 1836
8. *rubato*, (Mazurka) Op. 24 No. 2 in C Major; 1836
9. *rubato*, (Mazurka) Op. 67 No. 3 in C Major; 1835/1855

**Beginning of piece:**

1. *languido e rubato*, (Nocturne) Op. 15 No. 3 in G Minor; 1833
3. *rubato*, (Mazurka) Op. 67 No. 3 in C Major; 1835/1855

**Variety during repetition:**

1. *rubato*, (Mazurka) Op. 6 No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, m. 9; 1830/1832
2. *rubato*, (Mazurka) Op. 7 No. 1 in B-flat Major, m. 48; 1832
3. – 4. *rubato* (Mazurka) Op. 7 No. 3 in F Minor, mm. 17 and 93; 1830-32/1832
4. *rubato*, (Concerto) Op. 21 No. 2 in F Minor, III (finale), mm. 157 and 173; 1829-30/1836
5. *rubato*, (Mazurka) Op. 24 No. 2 in C Major, m. 29; 1834-35/1836

²⁰⁸ In the *rubato* markings I have followed Hudson’s example of counting each marking, even in cases of exact repetition. Dates are taken from Krystyna Kobylanska, *Frédéric Chopin: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis*, trans. Helmut Stolze, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: Henle, 1979).
Closing or Concluding Section:

1. *rubato*, (Mazurka) Op. 6 No. 2 in C-sharp Minor, m. 65; 1830/1832
2. -3. *sempre* - - - *rubato* (Trio), Op. 8, No. 1 in G Minor, I. Allegro con fuoco, mm. 22-24 and 159-161; 1829/1832
3. *poco rubato* Op. 9 No. 2 in E-flat (Nocturne), m. 26; 1830-31/1832
4. *poco rubato*, (Rondo) Op. 16; m. 132; 1832-33/1834
5. *poco rubato*, (Rondo) Op. 16; m. 132; 1832-33/1834
6.-7. (Concerto) Op. 21 No. 2 in F Minor, III. Allegro vivace, mm. 157 and 173; 1829-30/1836

In the eleven cases of repetition or conclusion, the length of the section marked *rubato* is between one half and one full phrase in length, directly followed by another expressive marking or the end of the section or work. The three cases of a marking at the beginning are relatively unusual, but we can still conclude that when Chopin marked *rubato*, approximately 80 percent of the time he intended a short expressive gesture to heighten a dramatic effect, or to accentuate a work’s concluding climax.

The “Polish” Element and *Rubato*

The possibility that it took time for Chopin to develop the skill of wielding *rubato* encourages us to guard against being seduced by the notion, advanced by certain scholars today, that Polish qualities or Polish national style was the driving force behind Chopin’s *rubato* score markings. Over half of Chopin’s *rubato* markings are found in works published in 1832, and it is true that six of these instances happen to occur in Mazurkas. But it is also true that with its inherently flexible approach to rhythm, the Mazurka leant itself easily to temporal alterations of various kinds (as recollected by Charles Hallé in the famous quarrel between Chopin and Meyerbeer over how to perform rhythm in a
Mazurka, discussed later in this chapter). Furthermore, if other Polish accents, articulations, and temporal alterations were left unmarked for foreign consumers, why would a Polish rubato need to be indicated? On the contrary, the relative prevalence of rubato markings in a Polish genre might be a good argument for their non-Polish origin—an idea that resonates with the technique’s undisputed Italian origin.209

We can conclude that when Chopin marked rubato he intended to heighten temporarily the expression of a phrase or section, to vary the repetition of previously stated material, or to showcase a concluding climax. The closest example of an entire work in rubato is the Nocturne in G Minor Op. 15 No. 3, which is marked languido e rubato at the very beginning; but even that work contains a contrasting mid-section, in typical Nocturne A-B-A form. We cannot know exactly what Chopin intended by the marking in every situation, but as Hudson has shown, since the late eighteenth century pianists understood rubato in practical terms of staggering the hands, usually placing the melody ahead of the bass in anticipation rather than after for an effect of delay.

The other salient conclusion is that the marking rubato can and should be distinguished from the cantabile marking. When Chopin wrote cantabile in a score, he evoked the florid ornamental style, sustained for several phrases and germane to the slow-moving eighteenth-century aria, which required a regularly moving bass line around which the decorative melodic notes were clustered. Rubato is one feature of cantabile.

209 In his thought-provoking article “Das Tempo Rubato bei Chopin,” Das Musikleben 2:10 (1949): 260-64, Alfred Kreutz concludes that Chopin’s rubato was performed exclusively in the style of Mozart, with a steady left hand and flexible right hand above. His view was partly based on Italian practices of stretching tempi practiced in the Italian region of Lombardy during the seventeenth century, creating an effect known elsewhere as “Lombard taste.” The association adds a new dimension to the identity of early rubato in Italy.
and may have originated within its operatic context, but the marking rubato in piano music is not directly associated with that longstanding tradition — and therefore does not necessarily indicate added ornamentation. Also significant is that in Chopin’s music the marking rubato occurs in a range of tempi including fast, which indicates a decisive contrast with the slow-moving melody, time required for ornaments, and sustained rubato in a cantabile.

**Rubato in Chopin’s Performing Style**

In the minds of contemporary listeners, Chopin’s way of playing was firmly linked with rubato, if we can judge by eye-witness accounts. In an 1834 volume of *Le Pianiste*, Charles Chaulieu defined rubato as “unspecified note values borrowing from one [note] to another; languisando, and espressivo, combined [réunis],” followed by (Chopin) in brackets — presumably to help the reader grasp the meaning of the term rubato through an association with Chopin’s playing.\(^{210}\) The Nocturne Op. 15 No. 3, mentioned earlier, is marked languido e rubato in bar one; the set of Nocturnes Op. 15 was reviewed in *Le Pianiste* earlier in 1834 in an article that states “It [No. 3] is in rubato from one end to the other.”\(^{211}\) The piece was most likely one of Chaulieu’s reference points.


\(^{211}\) According to Shaena Weitz, the journal *Le Pianiste* was founded, directed, and authored by friends and professional pianists Henri Lemoine and Charles Chaulieu. The latter sometimes signed his articles, and was discussed in ch. 3. Weitz presented her paper “‘Le Pianiste’ 1833-35 and its History of Pianism in
Richard Hudson’s analysis of *tempo rubato* concludes that both varieties were practiced in Chopin’s time; the older, eighteenth-century Mozartian linear *tempo rubato* based on a rhythmically regular bass line with flexible, displaced melody above, requiring independence of the hands. Based on remarks to his students emphasizing a strict left hand below a flexible melody, Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger emphasizes Chopin’s retrospective understanding and practice of the earlier *rubato*, as well as his abhorrence of what he considered to be inappropriate temporal distortion.\(^{212}\)

The second variety was vertical, in which the hands slowed down or sped up together, and was usually a more temporary effect that could come and go within the same work. Hudson concludes that the vertical *rubato*, in which the hands sounded together, grew in common practice after 1850 and was most likely practiced by Chopin liberally in the environment of the Mazurkas, which involved an unpredictable temporal elasticity. Although it is indisputable that temporal elasticity occurred in Polish music, however, it is perhaps a stretch to conclude from that such a temporal fluctuation constitutes a distinct variety of “Polish” *rubato*.\(^{213}\)

The well-known account related by Charles Hallé of Chopin’s dispute with Meyerbeer over a Mazurka is relevant here. The Mazurka Op. 33 No. 3 in C major was composed in 3/4 time, but performed by Chopin’s student Wilhelm Lenz with a rhythmic interpretation that Meyerbeer heard as 2/4. Since Meyerbeer was a highly accomplished

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\(^{212}\) See Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 49-51.

\(^{213}\) Eigeldinger concludes that the *rubato* present in the Mazurkas is of a Polish, “national” variety. His assumption is based partly on the Polish elements in works containing the marking, as well as their genres. See *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 121.
musician, we can gather from this example that according to Chopin, the genre (and texture) called for a particular temporal inflection that was appropriate to its Polish identity. Hudson suggests that what most likely occurred in Lenz’s performance of the Mazurka Op. 33 No. 3 in C major was an effect of the doubling of beat 2, resulting in a stretched 3/4 — or seemingly compressed 4/4 — realization.\textsuperscript{214}

The implication for this chapter is that in Chopin, the texture of a given work was the most important factor for determining the appropriate \textit{rubato}. Execution of these examples at the keyboard makes this abundantly clear: in the blocked chords and dotted rhythms of the Mazurka dance, the texture is sometimes fairly similar in both hands, or the right hand moves in simple eighths against waltz-like, down-up-up quarters in the left hand. The absence of florid ornamentation in the right hand eliminates the necessity of \textit{rubato} with the bass below, and the hands can easily accelerate or decelerate together according to the expression of the moment. By contrast, when the melody is decorated with ornamentation within an operatic, \textit{cantabile} texture, additional time is required to move around the bass below, and to create the aural and “emotional” logic Chopin projected.\textsuperscript{215} In this second case, \textit{rubato} is a consequence of writing in the \textit{cantabile} style.

\textsuperscript{214} Hudson, \textit{Stolen Time}, 185-86.
Among the various accounts of Chopin’s *rubato*, only one, drawn from direct contact with his friends, pinpoints what the cumulative evidence indicates. Francis Planté was a Parisian pianist born in 1839 whom Antoine Marmontel described as “uniting the exquisite poetry of Chopin, the *maestria* of Thalberg, and the felicitous innovations of Liszt.” He was considered to have “achieved the perfection in interpretation [. . .] . The most tender expression was always contained within the limits of the purest taste.” Although still a child at the time of Chopin’s death, in his “Lettre sur Chopin,” published in a special issue of *Le Courrier musical* of 1910, Planté described his “reconstruction” of Chopinian practice according to the testimony of several intimate friends, who provided the following picture of his *rubato*:

*Son grand ami Franchomme, la comtesse Potocka, la princesse Marceline Czartoryska me donnèrent des échos pour ainsi dire, de son jeu et de sa manière toute personnelle. Ce qu’on a tant appelé, me disaient-ils, et à cause de lui le “Tempo rubato” (dont on a peut-être trop abusé, et à tort dans l’interprétation de ses œuvres), n’était d’après ses fidèles auditeurs, qu’une grande liberté et fantaisie dans le dessin mélodique avec ses fioritures, que l’académicien Legouve appelait si élogialement: “La toilette de Chopin.” L’accompagnement, au contraire (c’est-à-dire les *basses*) restait quand même rythmique; à ce point qu’alors qu’il jouait avec accompagnement, sa main gauche tombait, paraît-il, toujours impeccablement avec le bâton du chef d’orchestre.*

*His great friend Franchomme, the countess Potocka, the princess Marceline Czartoryska gave me echoes, so to speak, of his playing and his entirely personal manner. What we so often called, they told me, the ’Tempo Rubato’ because of him (which has been perhaps overly abused, and wrongly in the interpretation of his works), was, according to his most faithful listeners, but a great freedom and fantasy in the melodic design with its fioriture, which the academic Legouve...*
called so eloquently: ‘the toilet of Chopin.’ The accompaniment, by contrast (that is to say the bass) stayed rhythmic all the same; to the point that when he played with accompaniment, his left hand apparently always fell impeccably with the baton of the conductor.

Here Chopin’s *rubato* is linked explicitly to his ornamented melody above a regular bass, both germane to his florid, decorative melodic style. They were indeed inseparable, since it was (and is) impossible to perform one appropriately without the other.

Ludwik Bronarski offers a compelling interpretation of the first-hand evidence in his *Chopin et l’Italie* of 1947. After discussing the influence of his teacher Josef Elsner on Chopin, his contact with Rossini and music by other Italians in Warsaw, and interaction with Italians Cherubini and Bellini in Paris, Bronarski arrives at the most convincing description of Chopin’s *rubato* I have encountered. Outside of Francis Planté’s and Wilhelm Lenz’s potent but brief remarks, he is the only scholar I have found to have elaborated on the intrinsic relationship *rubato* shares with ornamentation in Chopin. Excepting a quote by Liszt, I cite in full his section entitled *Les Ornements et le tempo rubato*, beginning on p. 99:

A côté de ce caractère général, à côté de leur *cantabile*, les mélodies de Chopin ont encore un trait qui permet de parler de leur “italianisme”: c’est leur...

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220 Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger groups his quotations regarding *rubato* and ornamentation together in *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 49-54, but they are separate from the remarks on *cantabile*. On p. 121, in the notes to p. 52 he states the following about ornamented *cantabile*: “This art of improvising in a *cantabile*, still alive in Romantic *bel canto* and in Paganini’s violin playing, gradually fell into decline after Hummel or else became stereotyped in the hands of some pianists.” He goes on to describe the notes written in small clusters as giving “the impression of improvised ornaments.” Needless to say, groups of notes in a score may resemble others that are improvised, but by definition they are distinct. Furthermore, it seems that the practice of improvising in a *cantabile* was at least alive and well into the 1840s, though of course Romantic piano playing was saturated with mannerisms, a conformity discussed by Jim Samson on p. 78, n. 112 above. In “Chopin et l’héritage baroque,” Eigeldinger acknowledges the relationship among *cantabile*, ornamentation and *rubato* within the *bel canto* tradition, and infers its presence in Chopin’s practices, but does not state how this relationship is illustrated in keyboard practice.
ornamentation. Dans ces “agréments,” dans ces fioritures, il y a certainement aussi, dans une certaine mesure, influence du bel canto italien; mais là encore Chopin sut s’assimiler ses modèles et, tout en maintenant les mêmes principes, il sut imprimer à ses ornements une marque personnelle, en les “spiritualisant” et en leur donnant une finesse, une élégance, un charme qui n’ont peut-être jamais été atteints, ni avant ni après lui, et certainement jamais dépassés. . .

Il est aussi fort probable que ce’est le rubato des chanteurs italiens qui, en premier lieu, détermina celui de Chopin et l’amena à faire un si ample et si fin usage de cette manière de donner à la mélodie plus d’expression et plus de relief, de la rendre plus libre et plus flexible, par des modifications presque imperceptibles des relations entre ses divers éléments. Le tempo rubato de Chopin-pianiste est demeuré célèbre; et l’interprétation adéquate de ses œuvres l’exige impérieusement, tellement celles-ci sont basées, dans leur caractère, leur habitus, leur essence même, sur ce mode de traiter la matière sonore. Le rubato confère, pour une grande part, à la musique de Chopin cette fluidité, ce chatoiement qui n’ont jamais encore été atteints avant elle et qui -- malgré toutes les affinités que l’on peut constater -- la distinguent des modèles italiens que Chopin avait sous les yeux, ou sous les oreilles, si dire se peut.

In addition to this general character, in addition to their cantabile, the melodies of Chopin have another characteristic that allows one to speak of their “Italianism”: it is their ornamentation. In these “ornaments,” in these fioriture, there is certainly also, to a certain degree, influence of the Italian bel canto; but there also Chopin knew to assimilate his models and, while maintaining the same principles, he knew how to stamp on these ornaments a personal mark, while “spiritualizing” them and giving them a finesse and an elegance, a charm that they have possibly never attained, neither before nor after him, and which they have certainly never surpassed. . . .

It is also very likely that it is the rubato in the Italian singers that, in the first place, determined Chopin’s, and brought him around to making such an ample and fine use of this manner of giving more expression and highlight to the melody, making it more free and more flexible, by barely perceptible modifications of the relations between its diverse elements. The tempo rubato of Chopin-the-pianist has remained famous; and the adequate interpretation of his works demands it imperiously, given the degree to which they are based, in their character, their habitus, even their essence, on this manner of treating the sounding material. For a large part, the rubato bestows on the music of Chopin this fluidity, this shimmer that had never been attained before and which — in spite of all of the affinities that we can observe — distinguishes [his music] from the Italian models that Chopin had before his eyes, or before his ears, if one might say.

Bronarski understands that Chopin’s variety of ornamented rubato was drawn directly from the Italian opera he and other Parisian pianist-composers knew and emulated.
Unfortunately, in the first sentence he separates the “general character” of the “cantabile” in Chopin’s melodies from the characteristics of ornamentation and rubato he proceeds to explain. It seems that Bronarski, perhaps unaware of cantabile’s origin, was reducing the term to an indication of general lyricism.\textsuperscript{221} As stated in the introduction, by the middle of the last century work on Chopin by the most insightful of scholars had already begun to drift away from the nineteenth-century understanding of cantabile as a texture that required a flowing, spun-out ornamentation in the treble, weaving a temporal rubato around the regular bass notes below.\textsuperscript{222} In sum, while the term rubato referred to temporal robbery, and may or may not have also included spontaneously added notes, cantabile indicated both.

Conclusion

Work on Chopin’s ornamentation and rubato has too often been disconnected from its original cantabile context, resulting in partial and inadequate understandings of both. Francis Planté (1910) described the inextricable nature of ornamentation and rubato within a cantabile context; Ludwik Bronarski (1947) describes the ornamentation and rubato accurately, eloquently, and thoroughly, but his use of the term cantabile in

\textsuperscript{221} As stated in the Introduction, the section preceding rubato is entitled \textit{Le cantabile; élégance et souplesse de la mélodie}. He opens the rubato section with “In addition to this general character, in addition to their cantabile, Chopin’s melodies have another characteristic that speaks of their ‘Italianism’: it is their ornamentation.” He situates cantabile as an overarching style that is related but not directly linked to Chopin’s style of ornamentation.

\textsuperscript{222} In his discussion of Chopin’s piano aesthetic, Bronarski invokes the concept of habitus to explain the organic nature of Chopin’s style of ornamentation. Ornamented melody was indeed an essential component to Chopin’s structural vocabulary; his architecture depended on it. While it should not be taken too far, the concept of a living habitus emphasizes the essential quality of the ornamentation observed by Maria Ottich (see p. 41), as opposed to an understanding of it as decorative or optional.
relation to those two components had already begun to shift away, however slightly, from the inextricable relationship of their origin. Richard Hudson’s more recent work on *rubato* claims that Chopin applied all three varieties of *rubato* in his performing style, the earlier, later, and sub-category of later, syncopated, and expressive variety tailored to the Mazurkas. When he marked the term in a score, however, I believe that it could not and did not represent the earlier, linear operatic *rubato* germane to the *cantabile* aria. It most likely did refer to some form of the later, vertically oriented *rubato* in which both hands moved together in a temporary expressive gesture. As noted earlier, Chopin applied the marking most often in his early experimental period and in the context of the Mazurka dance, a genre with a reputation for temporal elasticity.

Keeping in mind the texture-generated context of *cantabile* that required both ornamentation and *rubato*, we now turn to Chopin’s marking of the term *spianato*, and his fifteen explicit *cantabile* markings. In them, with a stroke of the pen, Chopin gave new life to Italian operatic tradition across keyboard genres; experimented with progressive accompaniment for the left hand; and synthesized the currents of lyricism, dance, and counterpoint in his music.
CHAPTER FIVE

HOW DID CHOPIN USE CANTABILE?

Following the discussion of Chopin’s ornamentation and rubato in the last chapter, I will now examine Chopin’s Andante spianato of 1833-35, as well as his fifteen passages explicitly marked cantabile, to illuminate the florid writing, followed by a simplified cantabile, that characterize his works composed from 1828 to 1835. I will also demonstrate how Chopin innovated texturally by infusing the cantabile passages written throughout his lifetime with characteristics found in Polish music; and finally how, in the passages marked cantabile composed after 1837, he crafted an original union between counterpoint, energized rhythms, and his trademark, lyric cantabile melodies.

Based on the overview of ornamentation and rubato presented in the last chapter, and the relationship of those features with the earlier eighteenth-century cantabile, this chapter will first consider the textural characteristics of the passages marked cantabile.

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224 In two works we have less convincing evidence for the marking cantabile: the Mazurka Op. 67 No. 2, and the Fantaisie-Impromptu Op. 66, both published posthumously. Jan Ekier’s recent edition omits the marking cantabile in these two works. Yet since we do not know for certain that the markings are inauthentic, I have included the two passages. See below my discussion of the passages marked cantabile.
The Texture of Chopin’s *Cantabile*

Defining texture is a slippery matter. In her analysis of four Nocturnes by Chopin, Lisa Jean Zdechlick lays out the existing scholarship that defines texture in terms of lines, voices, and the spatial relationship between them. One limitation is of course how the categories of monophonic, polyphonic, and homophonic textures, geared towards isolating individual melodic lines, fail to represent the sound-worlds created by their composite wholes, especially as they evolve in real time. Zdechlick thus moves beyond the isolationist approach to contribute a more holistic, sound-based approach to understanding texture, illustrated in visual graphs of the stylistically disparate Nocturnes in B-flat Minor Op. 9 No. 1; C Minor Op. 48 No. 1; C-sharp Minor Op. 27 No. 1; and E-flat Major Op. 55 No. 2.225

By “texture” I first mean the relative presence or absence of note density in the melodic and bass lines, and the sound created by their interaction. My intent is similar to how I understand Zdechlick’s, in that I emphasize what is, in *cantabile*’s case, an audible sound-world that can be recognized through its signature relationship between a melodic line consisting of fairly long, sustained notes spun-out with decorative flourishes, and a bass that remains relatively sparse and unobtrusive. As we shall see, what is so fascinating about Chopin is the way he manipulated that “stereotypical” *cantabile* texture in a variety of ways throughout his career, while maintaining, it would seem, the recognizable stamp of a *cantabile* texture.

At the same time, in his *cantabile* passages, Chopin designed melodies that varied fairly dramatically in terms of motivic length and degree of repetition, above bass lines that were more predictable and repetitive. To explain the role of melodies and bass lines in the passages Chopin marked *cantabile* I will borrow Friedrich Lippmann’s framework of “open” and “closed” textures in relation to opera, discussed in Chapter Two. The model provides a way to characterize Chopin’s melodies that range from what Lippmann would call “closed” and fairly repetitive, to “open” and fairly florid, with bass lines that were, in spite of varying degrees of independence, consistently “closed,” repetitive and rhythmically even.\footnote{See the discussion of Lippmann’s work on texture in opera in ch. 2, p. 39. For a concise introduction to the role of texture in early nineteenth-century piano music see Leonard Ratner, “The Piano: Texture and Sound,” in *Romantic Music: Sound and Syntax* (New York: Schirmer, 1992), 31-50.}

Melody is, of course, central in *cantabile*, and will be discussed shortly in relation to Chopin. First I will consider Chopin’s bass lines, which contain left-hand writing that deviates most radically from the original *cantabile* context. Pier Francesco Tosi’s treatise of 1723, which contains the first mention of *tempo rubato* in a context of the *cantabile* aria, is not accompanied by musical illustrations, nor is the English translation by John Galliard published in 1743. Thankfully, Roger North, an amateur English musician who heard Tosi perform in London some time before 1695 when his first manuscript was published, and probably again in the 1720s, did include musical examples. One of these is reproduced by Richard Hudson, and shows a staggering of the melody, in anticipation or delay, depending on the passage, on both sides of regularly moving bass notes. With the exception of a rare cadential leap of a fifth and one
unchanging pitch, in the examples cited by Hudson, the bass moves in a step-wise motion
with implied harmonic changes in a pattern of tension and resolution on each note. A fast
harmonic rhythm was indeed germane to a *basso continuo*, and required the singer to
hear the chord changes in order to craft his embellishments appropriately with the
sounding harmony.\(^{227}\)

The bass in that early eighteenth-century musical environment is different from
the one Chopin knew, and from which he derived much of his musical vocabulary
approximately one hundred years later. Although his individual figures for the left hand
in *cantabile* passages vary in contour and length, and although they evolved from
sparseness towards greater autonomy and melodic interest, they maintained the function
of providing the melody with regular markers over which it could scatter clusters of
ornamentation, prompting the natural ebb and flow of temporal *rubato*. Chopin’s writing
for the left hand was conceived out of the repetitive patterns of the Alberti bass; its
underlying repetitive grid created stability and regularity, as well as harmonic stasis not
experienced by the early eighteenth-century singer over a comparatively dynamic *basso
continuo*.

While the changes in the bass lines across Chopin’s fifteen passages marked
*cantabile* can be explained in terms of a linear, progressive evolution that culminated in
his late period, the melodic characteristics are more varied and difficult to sort out. To a
certain extent, Chopin’s melodies in his *cantabile* passages can be modeled using Scott
Balthazar’s description of the transition that occurred gradually in opera between Rossini,

\(^{227}\) See Hudson, *Stolen Time*, 43-51. The example by Roger North is reproduced on p. 46; the original
resides in the British Museum, MS Add. 32532, fol. 7v (c. 1695).
Donizetti and Bellini, a period during which textures shifted away from being fairly “open,” with little repetition and much opportunity for florid embellishment accompanied by rhythmically flexible bass lines, and toward a more “closed” and controlled use of melody above a rhythmic, regular bass. According to Balthazar, the point at which an aria becomes “closed” is when the bass line lapses into a steady rhythm, which can happen at any point in slow and fast tempos.²²⁸

Chopin’s Three Categories

Taken as a whole, Chopin’s cantabile passages do not match up exactly with these two groups; a third category of “semi-open” textures is evident, with a closed left hand, a fairly regular melody and a moderate amount of ornamentation. Furthermore, Chopin’s cantabile passages do not evolve chronologically from open to closed textures over time; elements of both are present in his earliest as well as latest works. Because Chopin only used regular, repetitive figures in the bass, it grounds the melody in a predictable regularity that simultaneously enables spontaneous creation above.

Yet unlike opera, a “closed” behavior in the bass is not necessarily associated with any particular features in the melody; rather, it is the genre and style of the individual composition that determines the speed, contour, and length of the melodic motive, as well as its frequency of repetition. These factors dictate the quantity and elaborateness of embellishment that would be suitable in a given phrase. Naturally, the

longer the melody, the more conducive it is to ornamentation. When the melodic motive lasts two measures or less, the brevity and simplicity give it an earthy and folk-like quality reminiscent of Schubert’s Ländler. It is when the melody unfolds in larger, four-bar units that are sequenced without exact repetition that the possibilities for ornamentation open up tremendously.

Surprisingly, based on the criteria of a melody that is at least one measure long, does not contain exact repetition, and contains space for added ornamentation, only four passages of the fifteen marked cantabile have melodies that can truly be called “open,” namely the early La ci darem la mano Variations, Op. 2; the Lento Cantabile sketch that was later reworked in the Funeral March Sonata, Op. 35, as merely “Lento”; the Largo in the late B Minor Sonata Op. 58 No. 3; and the opening theme of the Barcarolle Op. 60.

The La ci darem Variation V marked cantabile is ample, but does have a subordinate, formulaic, and unobtrusive left hand below an elaborate, virtuosic soprano that could still conceivably be embellished. The Lento cantabile is a flashback of sorts to Chopin’s Andante spianato, composed 1834-35 while he may have been the greatest Bellinian influence, showing a stark simplicity in both hands conducive to the addition of fairly elaborate ornamentation. In the two late works, the uncharacteristically dense left hand accompaniment — the Barcarolle’s dense, bombastic chords, and in the Sonata’s wide tessitura traversed with crisp staccatos and dotted rhythms — supplements as well as challenges the distinctly “open” character and flow of the soprano melody.

Other semi-open passages contain both “open” and “closed” elements. The First Concerto Op. 11 contains two cantabile markings, one in each of the first and second
movements. The *cantabile* passage in the first movement occurs at the entrance of the second theme and is fairly closed; it moves in entirely stepwise motion (less open than the occasional leap that could be bridged with ornaments) and arch form. It is 8 measures long, but is repeated immediately and almost exactly with a few different notes only at the cadence. The second movement opens with *cantabile* in the piano, with a melody in short two-bar segments in a dotted rhythm that feels more like a dance than a lyric aria, giving a closed impression; then it ascends to a fermata via a sweeping, chromatic scale very typical of an open *cantabile*. Thus, both melodies have “open” and “closed” elements, but are constrained by their brevity and excessive repetition, as well as the constricted and repetitive bass beneath. A contrasting example is the early *Rondeau a la Mazur* Op. 5 of 1828, in which the two passages marked *cantabile* are in tight four-bar phrases with nearly exact repetition and little discernible space for spontaneous ornamentation.

The *Rondeau* raises again the question of influence from Polish style, discussed in the last chapter in relation to *rubato*. Indeed, the *Rondeau* is one of three works containing a *cantabile* marking with a Polish connection, including the Fantasy on Polish Airs Op. 13, and the Mazurka Op. 67 No. 2.\footnote{The marking *cantabile* in the Mazurka Op. 67 No. 2 is of uncertain origin. See ch. 5 of this study, p. 172, n. 249.} The marking in the Fantasy occurs in the introductory section before the material based on Polish Airs, in a *stile brillant* manner of a highly virtuosic right hand moving up and down the keyboard over a controlled, regularly moving bass line. The style of the Mazurka is closer to the early *Rondeau*, and
uses similarly succinct melodic motives, but in a slightly more open, 2 + 2 question-answer format rather than exact repetition every two bars.

The interesting point is not that works in a Polish character could be marked *cantabile*, although that is an unusual hybrid application of the style, but that the Mazurka’s rhythmic and concise melodic language could have exercised such a broad influence on Chopin’s writing in other genres. Recognizing that certain elements were in the general musical vernacular of the time and cannot be attributed to any single source or genre, it is interesting to consider that the early tendency towards simple, repetitive melody in units of two and four bars may not have come primarily through Schubert or even Mozart, but rather through the natural expression of Polish folk music native to the environment of his youth.

**Varied Melody: Conclusion**

Above Chopin’s regular and consistently “closed” bass lines, therefore, the melodies ranged from simple and repetitive with little space for extra notes (the *Rondeau* and Mazurka); to simple and repetitive with room for florid *interpolation* discussed by Damien Colas and cited in Chapter Two, that is, embellishment between notes in the middle of the phrase (as in the Concerto Op. 11 and the *Lento Cantabile* later incorporated into the Sonata Op. 35); to the open, declamatory and highly florid and operatic Nocturne Op. 15 No. 1 that could have been based on a contemporaneous aria.
Thus, the amount of ornamentation suitable or even possible in Chopin’s passages marked *cantabile* varied as widely as did their individual characters. We now turn to the works themselves.

Chopin’s *Spianato*

As the only work marked *spianato*, and therefore the only one in which Chopin designated the synonymous *cantabile / spianato* style through the latter term, the *Andante spianato* forms a nice bridge into the fifteen passages Chopin marked *cantabile*. Whereas *spianato* was used only in discussions of opera and in relation to the *cantabile* aria by Manuel Garcia,230 Lichtenthal,231 and Perrino232 as observed in Chapter Two (and by many others), *cantabile* had been used as a score marking in instrumental music since Haydn’s string quartets in the 1750s.233 The difference between *spianato* and *cantabile* is therefore of practical more than semiotic significance: in an apparent continuation of the eighteenth-century tradition, Chopin and other pianist-composers marked *cantabile* almost exclusively when intending the lyrical, spun-out, slightly florid style represented by both terms. Incidentally, although *spianato* was used regularly in discussions of opera arias during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, opera scores were marked *cantabile* when indicating the same aria type, tempo and expression. The tradition of

232 Marcello Perrino, *Osservazioni sul canto* (Naples: Stamperia reale, 1810), 41.
cantabile as a score marking was therefore far-reaching, while the term *spianato* was apparently reserved for didactic or analytic discussions of the operatic repertoire.

Chopin composed his *Andante spianato* around 1835\(^{234}\) and attached it to the previously composed *Grande Polonaise*. The work was dedicated to the Baroness d’Est, in whose home Chopin interacted with Bellini and Hiller in the early 1830s, and in whose Album each of them inscribed a composition.\(^{235}\) (Chopin’s choice for that Album was his *Fantaisie-Impromptu* Op. 66, published posthumously.) The left-hand writing of the *Andante* is particularly sparse; the basic pattern covers one measure, ascends an octave and a fifth from bass G, and descends in exactly the same way with three extra notes forming fifths up and down. The framework could not be simpler, and is a slight extension of Bellini’s signature three-notes-up, three-down rolling bass beneath arias such as “Casta diva” and “Ah! non credea mirarti” (the opening four bars in the bass even mimic an orchestral introduction). The action articulates the prevailing harmony without disturbing the melody, and when combined with a slow harmonic rhythm, it casts a static spell under which the *cantabile* unfolds with ease.

David Branson has drawn a connection between the *Andante Spianato* and John Field’s Nocturne No. 12, also in G Major, taken from a slow interlude in the first movement of Field’s Seventh Concerto, which Chopin heard Field perform in Paris in 1833. The opening spread pattern in the bass is undeniably similar, and the occasion of

\(^{234}\) Gastone Belotti, “Le date di composizione dell’Op. 22 di Chopin,” in *Saggi sull’Arte e sull’opera di F. Chopin* (Bologna: Antiquae Musicae Italicae Studiosi, 1977), 185. Belotti dates the work from the “first months of 1835,” and argues that it was originally intended as part of the Op. 27 set of Nocturnes.

Field’s concert may very well have served Chopin’s creative thought-process, but it would be inappropriate to give Field’s work too much credit: it contains a highly florid, scale-based melody — exactly what Chopin avoids in his careful selection of each melodic note that results in economy and simplicity.²³⁶

Chopin anchors the melody and atmosphere in the tonic by beginning the first 20 measures with an ascending G to D; after measure six he alternates with a different chord in the crest of the wave in the middle of the bar, concluding with five notes moving between the D to G as in the opening fifth. At measure 21 he moves to the relative minor, followed by the dominant, then minor v en route to B Major (III), but preserves the same pattern by re-iterating the opening two notes in the last five. In spite of the accelerated harmonic rhythm, the effect is remarkably stable.

Keeping in mind the “hollow” quality of Italian opera constructed on outer voices, the calm in Chopin’s work is intensified through the large distance of two to four octaves between the hands. The tranquillo marking at the opening indicates Chopin’s peaceful intention, and when played at an unhurried tempo, the tranquility is intensified to a veritable world on each melodic note. One is lost in the musical present, unaware of what just happened and what is to come. It is a kind of musical meditation, similar to the tranquilizing effect of Bellini’s sostenuto, spianato melodies. The two composers shared the ability to distill and transmit melodic beauty through calm and simplicity. Only when the pianist listens to each note with concentration and direction is he able to approximate the same degree of energy that a supported voice can project automatically. In this

context, Chopin’s emphasis in pedagogy on singing and listening to singers is entirely natural, and students recalled his unwavering dedication to this principle as the only means of realizing a beautiful melody. ²³⁷

The ornamentation Chopin uses in this piece is full-fledged cantabile, with fioritura occurring at the mid-phrase caesura, during the cadential approach, and as portamenti bridging the gap between two notes in measures 15-17, 11 / 19-20, and 45. Garcia’s definition of spianato includes the placement of ornamentation in exactly these places where long notes usually occur, and one is permitted to borrow from the florid style. ²³⁸ From Colas’ study of the grammar of Rossinian melody we can gather that these elaborations at the caesura and cadence fit the standard operatic blueprint for melodic construction of the time. ²³⁹

In this last example in measure 45 Chopin resolves a long high E to the D down an octave with a cascade of fifteen notes, and rhythmically inflexible pianists are forced to rush through the notes, scrambling to fit them into the allotted time. In this case, an appropriate use of tempo rubato would realize this spianato style of ornamentation more naturally, allowing a sufficient length of time on each note as Lichtenthal described, without usurping the melody. Chopin was said to perform his ornaments like shimmering

²³⁷ Moritz Karasowski wrote that “The best way to attain naturalness in performance, in Chopin’s view, was to listen frequently to Italian singers. . . . He always held up as an example to pianists their broad and simple style, the ease with which they used their voices, and the remarkable sustaining powers which this ease gave them.” Friedrich Chopin; Sein Leben, seine Werke und Briefe, v. 2 (Dresden: Ries, 1877), 93; cited in Eigeldinger, Chopin: Pianist and Teacher, 44. An anonymous Scottish lady who studied with Chopin recalled his comment, “Music ought to be song.” Reported in James Cuthbert Hadden, Chopin, 6th ed. (London: Dent, 1934), 188. And of course, Chopin’s famous dictum “Il faut chanter avec les doigts,” recalled by Emilie Gretsch, in Maria von Grewingk, Eine Tochter Alt-Rigas, Schülerin Chopins (Riga: Löffler, 1928), 20; cited in Eigeldinger, Chopin: Pianist and Teacher, 45.
²³⁸ See Garcia/Paschke, 191.
filigree, and disliked the exaggerated embellishments common in the performance practice of operatic cadenzas. Since in this case the practice involves taking a group of notes and adapting them to what sounds appropriate in a given context, the objective should be one of tasteful equilibrium between the supported melodic line and the faster moving filigree.  

One other notable feature is Chopin’s circling repetition of the melody, which once recognized seems redundant, but because of its beauty does not tire the ear. The theme itself actually consists of two mini-statements elided in the middle; after two complete statements in tonic with varied ornamentation, the subsequent statement in the minor elides into a mini-development, which repeats one motive twice before rising to a long, high note and two measures of transition into the restatement of the theme. The theme occurs again twice with even more elaborate embellishment, then branches off into

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240 Moritz Karasowski continues the above quote about emulating singers with the following description of Chopin’s ornamentation: “The attack of Chopin’s fingers . . . brought forth the finest, most noble sound-action. No other pianist of his time possessed his performance and fine taste, and the ornamentation that he wove into appropriate places in his playing, was often compared to filigree or the most delicate . . . textiles from Brabant.” See Friedrich Chopin; Sein Leben, seine Werke und Briefe, v. 1 (Dresden: Ries, 1877), 93. See also Jean Kleczynski, O wykonywaniu dzieł Szopena (Warsaw: n.p., 1879), trans. Alfred Whittingham, How to Play Chopin: The Works of Frederic Chopin, Their Proper Interpretation, 6th ed. (London: Reeves, 1913), 47-49: “The root of his [Chopin’s] musical tendency was truly the aspiration to a broad and noble style. This beautiful style in the course of time became absolutely his own. . . . This style is based upon simplicity; it admits of no affectation, and therefore does not allow too great changes of movement. This is an absolute condition for the execution of all Chopin’s works, especially of his earlier works, and more especially of his concertos; the richness and variety of the ornaments would tend to sickness and affectation if the execution were not as simple as the conception. . . . Thus, for example, these arabesques, these frequent digressions, are not meaningless ornaments and paltry elegance, as were the ornamental passages of Herz, amongst others; but they are, if we may be allowed the expression, the transparent lace-work through which the principal thought smiles upon us, thereby gaining yet another charm. This is a matter that must not be disregarded in executing them. These ornamental passages, these gruppetti of a certain number of notes, most frequently appearing when the same motto appears several times; first the motto is heard in its simplicity; afterwards, surrounded with ornaments, richer and richer at each return. . . . Chopin differed in his manner of using arabesques and parenthetical ornamentations, from the usual manner of his time, which was to dwell upon such passages and to endue them with importance, as in the cadenzas attached to the airs of the Italian School. Chopin was perfectly right. In spoken language we do not use the same tone of voice for the principal thought and the incidental phrases; we leave the latter in the shade, and properly so.”
dense passage work in a duet for the right hand; these sixths descend into four bars of
stepwise, descending *gruppetti*, which repeat exactly, then reverse direction to ascend
towards the simple, unornamented final cadence on a single treble G. The repetition
creates a sense of familiarity and calm, while the constant elisions give an almost
imperceptible forward motion. Chopin uses the same effect to a lesser degree in the
*Fantaisie-Impromptu*, where he elides middles and endings of phrases, creating a sense of
continuity even as the long beginning and ending notes infuse an overall sense of calm.

Between the final cadence of the *Andante* and the beginning of the Polonaise
Chopin switches from 6/8 to 3/4 for 30 measures, and to strong quarter notes derived
from the Mazurka. The motive consists of a cadential IV-V-I progression that is itself
developed, then sequenced and “spun out” in the manner of the *Andante*, but in a limited
manner that stays rooted in G Major. The character is decidedly more rigorous. I had
originally understood the *semplice* marking to indicate an absence of *rubato* that would
have occurred in the *tranquillo*. However, the famous dispute about *rubato* between
Chopin and Meyerbeer was prompted by the Mazurka Op. 33 No. 3 that *is* marked
*semplice*, yet was performed by Lenz (apparently correctly in Chopin’s presence) in a
manner that conveyed the impression of irregular time. It would appear that by *semplice*
Chopin did not intend to eliminate *rubato*, but rather to simplify the passage’s
embellishment.

After returning to the fluid material of the *tranquillo* for fourteen bars he
concludes with one more four-bar statement of the IV-V-I cadence in a Mazurka style,
this time with a fermata over the resolution. At first glance (or listen), this material does
not explain itself easily. Excepting purposes of contrast and extension, why would Chopin change compositional gears so drastically within this movement? As ironic as it seems, perhaps he was toying with the technique of spinning out a concise motivic kernel in an ‘incompatible’ texture and style, adding slight embellishments during repetitions, and for the sake of continuity truncated the modulation to E (VI) in order to elide with the restatement. It is also as if, en route from highly lyrical writing in an Italian manner toward a section in a Polish character, Chopin wanted to bridge the severe stylistic gap with an animated cadential formula. With that in mind, it could have been a tongue-in-cheek gesture for listeners expecting a gradual diminuendo and conclusion of the first section. And as we’ll see, similar, rhythmically dynamic mini-episodes occurred often enough to indicate that it was one of his favorite gestures.

Finally, the section framing the dance-like material discussed above is more than a coda; it is a denouement that seems patterned after Bellini’s descent from the climactic high B-flat in “Casta Diva,” where, through eight descending turns of four notes each, Bellini moves down by thirds, then up and back down to finally come to rest on tonic F. Chopin follows exactly the same pattern: he repeats the same motive four times, descending by thirds, then varies it four more times in order to weave his way back to a low tonic G. If one removes the resolution to G from the previous page before the cadential Mazurka, this concluding denouement could be joined almost seamlessly with the earlier material. When viewed this way, extension plays at least some role in the Mazurka section. The lyricism of the Andante-spianato may be equaled or even surpassed by the Nocturnes, but it is certainly the most systematically spun-out of
Chopin’s melodies, and in that respect it is without question most closely aligned, of all his works, with the mechanics of the *cantabile* aria.

Chopin’s Explicit *Cantabile* Markings

The *Cantabile* marking occurs fifteen times in Chopin, within the contexts of solo piano, solo concerto, and chamber music, usually placed at the beginning of a lyrical section that borders more extroverted material. The markings are listed here by date of composition; the two markings considered to be less authoritative by Jan Ekier are explained in footnotes.

1.  *Tranquillamente e cantabile.*
   *Rondeau a la Mazurka*, Op. 5; m. 93.

2.  *Tranquillamente e cantabile.*
   *Rondeau a la Mazurka*, Op. 5; m. 293.

3.  *Cantabile e molto legato.*
   1827-28; published 1830 (Vienna), 1833 (Paris, London).

4.  *Cantabile.*
   *Fantaisie sur des airs nationaux polonais*, Op. 13; m. 20 (over piano entrance in Introduction).

5.  *Andante cantabile* (quarter = 69).
   *Nocturne* Op. 15 No. 1 in F; m. 1.
   1830-31; published 1833 (Leipzig), 1834 (Paris, London).

   Concerto Op. 11, I. Allegro maestoso; m. 61 (second theme).
   1830; published 1833 (Leipzig, Paris) 1834 (London).
7. *Cantabile.*
   Concerto Op. 11, II. Larghetto; m. 12 (over opening piano theme).

8. *Andante cantabile* (dotted quarter = 63).
   *Grand Duo Concertant* (based on themes from *Robert le diable*); m. 188.
   1832-33; published 1833 (Berlin, Paris, London).

   *Fantaisie-Impromptu* Op. 66, D-flat section, m. 43.
   1834-35; published 1855 (Berlin), 1856 (Paris), ? (London).

10. *Cantabile.*
   “*Cantabile*” in B-flat, without Opus number, m. 1.
   1834; autograph MS. (Paris).

11. *Lento cantabile.*
   “*Lento cantabile*” fragment, m. 1.
   1837; re-used as *Lento* in Funeral March Sonata Op. 35, Mvt. III, m. 31
   1839; published 1840 (Leipzig, Paris, London).

12. *Cantabile.*
   *Prelude* Op. 28 No. 21 in B-flat, m 1.
   1839; published 1839 (Leipzig, Paris), 1840 (London).

   Sonata Op. 58 No. 3 in b min., III. Largo; m. 6 (start of theme).

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14. *Cantabile* (quarter = 144).\(^{242}\)

*Mazurka* Op. 67 No. 2 in g minor, m. 1.
c. 1845-49; published 1855 (Berlin), 1856 (Paris).

15. *Cantabile*.

*Barcarolle* Op. 60; m. 6 (above beginning of theme).

Eleven of these fifteen *cantabile* markings occur in works composed between 1828 and 1835. Beginning with these, we can establish a context for *cantabile* in Chopin’s early period, after which the four later works bring his later development into relief. The first three works were composed before his arrival in Paris in 1831 at the age of 21.

1 - 2. The *Rondeau a la Mazurka* Op. 1 dates from 1826-1828, when it was first published in Warsaw. It contains two markings of *Tranquillamente e cantabile*, in mm. 93 and 293. Written in 2/4 with a predominantly march-like dotted rhythm, the work’s character does not seem highly suitable to *cantabile*, but does contain several decorative passages. One example at bar 303 is a short, cadent excerpt marked *tenuto* before the return of thematic material. When we remember that a certain variety of Chopinian *rubato* took place naturally in the folk-oriented Mazurkas, the ornamentation and *rubato* implied by the marking *cantabile* seems more natural in a work with a distinctly dance-

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\(^{242}\) Similarly, the Mazurka known as Op. 67 No. 2 in g was not published during Chopin’s lifetime. The fate of its autograph is not known. Ekier omits the marking *Cantabile* at the beginning of the work included in the Paderewski edition (Fryderyk Chopin: Complete Works, ed. Ignace Paderewski, v. X [Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 1958], 159-60). See Ekier, *Wydanie narodowe dzieł Fryderyka Chopina*, Series B, v. 1, WN 64 (Kraków: Polskie Wydawn. Muzyczne, 2007), 28-29; and Kobyłanska, *Frédéric Chopin*, 160-61.
like, Polish character. This style of writing also surfaced as cadential or transitional material in the *Andante spianato*, and more substantially in works to come.

3. The Op. 2 *La ci darem la mano* Variations were finished c. 1828, and in the midst of *bravura* pianism typical of operatic transcriptions, it contains one marking of *Cantabile e molto legato* in the last Variation, No. 5, after the conclusion of the short introduction at m. 10. The writing is a departure from the relentless fanfare characteristic of the more extroverted variations, and the relatively sparse left-hand accompaniment under an active and florid right hand is typical of *cantabile*. The reprieve of the slow final variation sets up the concluding *Alla Polacca*, which returns to a more extroverted character with energetic dotted rhythms in the opening pattern of eighth-2 sixteenths, eighth-eighth, quarter. The transition recalls a similar sequence from a *cantabile* to a section in a Polish character found in the following work.

4. Last in this trio of earliest pieces, the *Fantaisie sur des airs nationaux polonais*, Op. 13, dating from 1828 to 1830, has *cantabile* over the piano entrance in measure 20. It is an interesting case. The marking occurs in what seems to be an introductory section of material completely unrelated to the following three Polish folk songs. It functions as an improvisatory “prelude-like” section before the actual composition begins, and belongs in the tradition of keyboard improvisation described by Czerny, John Corri (son of Domenico Corri discussed in Chapter Two), and others. At the same time, the introduction is close to the typical *cantabile* texture found in opera, consisting of sparse,
rolling accompaniment in the strings, with unfolding, back-and-forth, limpid and expressive melody weaving above. I was surprised to discover how close this work is in texture and character to the introductory material Henri Herz often used in his two-part, slow-fast, flamboyant works for the piano — clearly derived from opera’s ubiquitous cantabile-cabaletta. Herz’s works, for example the Grande fantaisie brillante sur l’opéra Lucrezia Borgia Op. 147 and the Souvenirs de la Scala, Cantabile et Rondo Op. 150 No. 1, also open with improvisatory material full of sweeping flourishes that might have informed Chopin’s choice of character and structural design. In the opening section, therefore, the Fantaisie ventures into a musical vogue, in which the improvisatory keyboard prelude and operatic cantabile traditions intersect. Naturally, Chopin drew on the surrounding lingua franca in piano music even as he formulated his own ingenious language.

Finally, his shift from a cantabile texture to a section in Polish character by means of a Mazurka-esque cadential passage is noteworthy. Chopin had used the same gesture as transitional material between his Andante spianato and Grand Polonaise — in that case a section of 30 bars consisting of short 3-bar units. Gastone Belotti reports a third passage of similar character shared by the unpublished Lento con grand espressione (mm. 32b-45 in the bass) and the second Concerto (Finale, measures 145-148 in unison). This connection occurred to me as well, and I would add that in these two

243 At the beginning of the first Air, m. 65 contains a notated gruppetto-like flourish that Wilhelm Lenz called “characteristic of Chopin’s ornamentation.” See Lenz, “Übersichtliche Beurtheilung der Pianoforte-Kompositionen von Chopin,” Neue Berliner Musikzeitung, 26:36 (1872), 283.

cases the injection of Mazurka material functions simultaneously as conclusion to a previous section, and transition into a return of the thematic material. The passages are remarkably similar; both date from the early 1830s, and it is not inconceivable that Chopin’s work on them overlapped. At any rate, in addition to their function as bridge from one section to another, the passages are in 3/4 and share a strong rhythmic stress on beat two. In addition to its practical role, the fact that Chopin uses this technique in distinctly different genres adds credence to its status as a favorite personal mannerism.

5. The only Nocturne marked *cantabile* is Op. 15 No. 1 in F, with *Andante cantabile* inscribed above the opening. The work was written between 1830 and 1833, and published between 1833 and 1834 as first in the set of three Nocturnes mentioned in the previous discussion of *rubato*.

At first it seems surprising that in this most lyrical of genres, Chopin marked *cantabile* only once. One explanation might be that the slow lyricism and *cantabile* texture found in many Nocturnes would have been enough to invite impromptu additions by the performer, thus making redundant a marking whose qualities would have unfolded naturally in performance. Furthermore, the fact that the marking *cantabile* occurs in only one Nocturne does not detract from its significance, but rather supports its super-generic transcendence; far from being limited to genres perceived as more lyrical, tender or expressive than others, as a style and texture *cantabile* was equally suitable to any work-

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Cantabile’s operatic origin only adds to its adaptability and suitability for all pianistic contexts, since to invoke cantabile was to reference the most admired vocal genre, that was associated, as we’ve seen, with the qualities of beautiful, sustained sound, intense expression, thick legato, and tasteful ornamentation.

Here the extent of Chopin’s stylistic similarity with John Field should be evaluated. Field’s Nocturnes and three Romances seem to be derived from the popular and relatively simplistic contemporary vocal Romances studied by Maria Rose. His simple rhythmic subdivisions fall into duplets, groups of four, or triplets that match up easily with the right hand melodic notes. The effect is decidedly unadventurous, and lacks the spontaneous independence of cascading notes in the melody that does not attempt to match up with the ongoing accompaniment below. Even the relatively simple contrasting patterns of four notes against three is used rarely, as in the four examples in No. 11 in E-flat Major, a work that is incidentally marked cantabile over the right hand melody in measure six; this measure could be interpreted as the defined beginning of the melody, preceded by a preface or pick-up of three high B-flats.

The notable exception is the final Nocturne No. 17, dating from 1837, by which time Field would have been familiar with Chopin’s style. But even in this more florid work, the left hand is usually given rests, or merely holds a chord while the right hand

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245 Field’s role as pioneer in the development of the piano Nocturne during the first two decades of the nineteenth century is well-documented in David Branson’s John Field and Chopin (New York: St. Martin’s, 1972). In their work on the Nocturnes cited above, pp. 78 and 139, Jeffrey Kallberg and Jim Parakilas have traced the connections between Field’s Nocturnes and Chopin’s own development of the style, and the heritage of the piano Nocturne in vocal Nocturnes composed by Parisian composers Felice Blangini and Louis Jadin, among others.
spins out its roulade. The texture lacks the integration yet independence between parts fundamental to operatic cantabile that Chopin was able to generate. The simple, repetitive, and often incessantly stepwise short melodies, united with basic left hand eighth notes or triplets, seem closer to a French Romance than the comparatively ambitious rhythmic and ornamental complexity of opera seria.

Interestingly, Field’s Nocturnes Nos. 5 and 6 are marked Andantino cantabile and Andante cantabile. The left-hand writing in No. 5 could be viewed as a blueprint for Chopin’s more elaborate accompaniment to Op. 27 No. 1 in D-flat, and the change to repeated chord-triplets in both hands in the middle of the second page is exactly what Chopin selected for the climactic return of A material in his C Minor Op. 48 No. 1. The use of dense, layered middle voices is a striking innovation for the time, and though it becomes common in Chopin, the technique was still rare in the 1830s; for that, Field’s ingenuity must be credited.

No. 7 is a longer experiment with the same technique, occurring in rolled chords for the left hand with a discernible melody for the thumb in the top notes. The long melodic notes in the two-page work do lend themselves to the ornamented rubato of cantabile, but as already stated Field chose not to attempt complex, staggered rhythms and timing between the hands. The next Nocturne No. 6 in F, marked Andante cantabile, opens with a simple melody, soon developed with a string of 11 ascending gruppetti and repeated during the return on the next page. A lovely cadenza before this return marks

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one of the more interesting and operatic moments in the work, which is overall more banal than inspired.

Chopin probably knew and benefited from Field’s efforts, and his performance style was incidentally compared to Field’s by Kalkbrenner, but he also incorporated Italian cantabile to a significantly greater degree. The Nocturne Op. 15 No. 1 is marked Andante cantabile over the opening measure of an A-B-A form, with lyrical material in the opening and closing sections, contrasted with a furiously dramatic middle section. Chopin opens the melodic A section with repeated notes in triplets for resonance and melodic support – not in the right hand principal melody, but ingeniously set in the middle of left-hand sixths, fifths, and chords. On a modern piano this can sound percussive and dense, but on the muted but penetrating clarity of a period Pleyel it would create a lush background of hazy sound that supports rather than encircles rather than obscures the melody. The opening statement of the melodic theme moves almost exclusively in step-wise motion; in the first 8 bars, except for the opening ascending fourth, a descending third in measure 2, and a descending fourth at the cadence, every note moves to an adjacent pitch. (Chopin continues this design in the turbulent B section over an agitated bass, which provides a thread of thematic continuity despite the drastic change in character). The step-wise motion gives an impression of vocality, as do the fioriture starting in measure nine at the restatement of the theme and the gruppetti in the final section.

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Will Crutchfield has argued that the “opening gesture of serene, step-wise descent,” the “ornamental triplets” in the restatement of the theme, and other faint “melodic and ornamental echoes” were inspired by the homesick aria in a performance of Donizetti’s Anna Bolena that Chopin attended at some point during the compositional process.\(^{248}\) As David Kasunic points out, although a case can be made for these similarities, it is imprudent to attribute an extraordinary influence on Chopin to any one particular aria, since he was exposed to a wide variety of French and Italian operas but was reticent to articulate his musical preferences.\(^{249}\) Chopin’s exuberant praise for multiple singers he heard further indicates a broad, inclusive approach to surrounding source material — all of which contained language of *cantabile* in one form or another. In the case of the Nocturne Op. 15 No. 1, Chopin most likely did incorporate the melodic language found in Anna Bolena, and possibly other operas too, since all of them contained the language of *cantabile*.

6. In Chopin’s first Concerto, Op. 11 in E Minor (1830, published 1833-34), *cantabile* occurs twice: once in the first movement, marked *Allegro maestoso*, where *cantabile* is indicated for piano and orchestra in m. 61 above the piano’s entrance with the second theme, and in the second movement titled “Romance” and marked *Larghetto*, where *cantabile* is placed in m. 12 over the opening piano theme. Among Chopin’s fifteen *cantabile* markings, this work contains the only one about which we have a record.


of Chopin’s thoughts, given as instruction during a lesson to his prize pupil Carl Filsch. Wilhelm Lenz observed their memorable rehearsal of the first movement in 1842 and recalled the experience, discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, pp. 136-37:250 “He [Chopin] wanted the runs cantabile, with a certain measure of strength and bravura within, trying to bring out the slightest thematic fragments as much as possible, using the most delicate touch, even where the runs are no more than runs — which in this piece is the exception . . . .”

Of note is the operatic terminology in Lenz’s equation of the soloist with tenor and soprano, as well as the harmonious coexistence between the contrasting bravura and cantabile arias. This involves the difficult feat of bringing out the “slightest thematic fragments” essential to the broad melodic presence of cantabile, invigorated by the energetic, yet subordinate passage-work of the bravura. The term cantabile occurs first in the first movement above the orchestra’s entrance with the second theme, bar 61; and above the opening theme of the second movement, titled “Romance.” The second theme of the first movement could not be simpler; it is entirely step-wise, ascends the interval of a fifth and descends a fourth. Its return is decorated with selective gruppetti and additional notes. We can assume, however, that upon seeing the marking, performers altered Chopin’s notation at will.

One example of cantabile embellishment is in a little-known alternate version of the first-movement piano part composed by German virtuoso Adolph Henselt, born 1811, who settled in St. Petersburg in 1838 and formed a practical link between the Hummel

and Liszt schools. His variation on Chopin’s concerto is entitled *Fragment du concerto en mi mineur par Fr. Chopin, Interprétation de A. Henselt.* Just below this on the title page, the work is described as “fingered, simplified, and accompanied by explanatory remarks concerning the execution of the use by students of the Imperial establishments of education of the noble young women in Russia.” Other than an occasional added musical term, Henselt’s remarks are nowhere in the score, and my interpretation is therefore based purely on my own analysis. Henselt’s variation is presented underneath Chopin’s original in smaller notes, as two parts of one staff, with “Fr. Chopin” and “A. Henselt” to the left of each at the opening. Interestingly, Henselt does not make radical changes to the original. His alterations in the unnumbered score consist of changing note values, such as transforming a run of sixteenths into thirty-seconds to match the rest of the measure at the top of page three; rhythmic simplifications that delineate a string of notes in the right hand into the more readable groups of four sixteenths or thirty-seconds over the slower moving left hand at the top of page four; and redistribution of an eighth note followed by a group of seven sixteenths as four/two/three sixteenths — all helpful on a practical level for students of average ability. Not surprisingly, in a pedagogical context Henselt supplements the standard practice not notated by Chopin with a conventional turn to exit the trill that concludes the first phrase. He also subtly enhances Chopin’s ideas, such as filling in notes in the statement of the theme to create a graceful, weaving, step-wise pattern that adds interest while falling naturally under the fingers.

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251 I am indebted to Kenneth Hamilton, who brought this version to my attention and kindly supplied me with photocopies of it from the holdings of the Westminster Music Library in London [call number unknown].
Henselt’s changes were primarily rhythmic, made for pedagogical reasons. However, other creative details do exist: a syncopation staggering right and left hand eighth notes at the bottom of page four adds rhythmic interest to a simple measure, and decorative grace notes at the top of page five add complexity. Changes that seem to be motivated by style or taste include an occasional added bass note, register change, or even additional marking, for example the *pesante* on the second staff of page three. Most importantly for this chapter, when the *cantabile* second theme returns, Henselt adds a grace note and trill to Chopin’s original, giving us an idea, however basic, of the ornamentation the marking might have elicited. Furthermore, if this didactic work inspired these minor embellishments, it is conceivable that a virtuoso would have used much more elaborate decorations in live performance.

Finally, the first movement of the Op. 11 concerto contains an unusual amount of other expressive markings conducive to *cantabile*, including *con anima* at measure 246 above the restatement of theme in octaves, and *espressivo, legatissimo, tranquillo, dolce, leggerissimo*, and *delicatissimo*. All of these are typical of Chopin’s early period, during which he specified the character or mood on a passage-by-passage basis. He later modified this practice, and generally speaking, works after the Op. 24 Mazurkas published in 1836 contain noticeably fewer markings,\(^{252}\) the majority of which are fairly generic. In the vein of the opening movement of Dussek’s concerto Op. 70, Chopin’s

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\(^{252}\) Hudson, *Stolen Time*, 179: “In his earlier works, Chopin frequently employed terms to describe a particular mood or rhythmic flow. After the Op. 24 Mazurkas, written in 1835 and published in 1836, there is a steady decline in the use of such terms, as well as in the number of metronome markings.” Eigeldinger observes an “increasing sobriety visible at all levels of Chopin’s musical editing,” and in the case of *rubato* reasons that “Chopin, after Op. 24, renounced the use of a term which he would have had to employ constantly without the slightest assurance of his intentions being correctly understood.” Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 121, n. 99.
first movement is an admirable fusion of bravura virtuosity with lyric cantabile. In Chopin’s case, it is a combination of expected convention infused with his own personal language.

7. The second movement, marked Larghetto, is more cantabile than the first movement, in the traditional character of slow and expressive middle movements. The marking cantabile occurs in bar 12 over the opening piano theme. The first page alone includes scale-like flourishes, turns, grace notes, portamenti, portati, and repeated pitches staggered in syncopation against the accompaniment, all techniques used at that time by opera singers. The numerous expressive markings are compatible with a cantabile work, and as in the first movement, they show Chopin’s early preoccupation with indicating the precise character of nearly every passage.

8. The Grand Duo Concertant for cello and piano was composed between 1832 and 1833, and based on themes from Meyerbeer’s Robert le Diable, which premiered at the Opéra on November 21, 1831, just one month after Chopin’s arrival. Following a short transition from an Allegretto section, at measure 188 he marked Andante cantabile over the beginning of new material taken verbatim from Meyerbeer’s Andante cantabile late in Act Five, “Dieu puissant, ciel propice,” introduced by Alice. Interestingly, Meyerbeer
marked *con molto portamento* over multiple orchestral parts as this theme unfolds, and *Vibrato* above Robert’s echo of the theme.\(^\text{253}\)

The piano introduces the theme in right-hand octaves, with a down-up-up-up pattern in chords in the left hand. The octaves in the right hand make spontaneous ornamentation impossible without dropping the thumb, and it would also be disconcerting for the soloist to hear *rubato* in the short introduction, unless it was planned ahead of time to match the cellist’s interpretation which would defeat the point of spontaneous improvisation. Although he marks *cantabile* over the piano part, here Chopin could have intended the character to take effect in the cello part a few measures later; even so, the practical difficulty of collaborative *cantabile* presents itself in the form of two conflicting melodic voices. Common sense says that in this case, the pianist would assume the role of the orchestra, maintaining a steady rhythm while the cellist wove his melody around and through the less dynamic lattice provided. The texture of the piano part makes that seem unlikely, and the case is worth exploring further, since it remains the only collaborative context of a *cantabile* marking between a piano part and solo string instrument in Chopin.

9. The *Fantaisie-Impromptu* Op. 66 is next in the sequence of early compositions. It was begun between 1834 and 1835, inscribed in Madame d’Est’s Album,\(^\text{254}\) and


published posthumously. The work is notable for its stormy outer sections in C sharp
minor, whose drama abates during the D-flat middle section, marked *Moderato-cantabile* — in this case set somewhat faster than the usual *andante or adagio*, probably for reasons of continuity. The single-note rolling bass in the left hand is more like the Bellini--esque *Andante spianato*, marked *tranquillo*, than any of Chopin’s other *cantabile* passages, but this tempo is faster and more dynamic. Pianists usually ignore the *sotto voce* in the middle of the staff directly above the left-hand entrance, and instead generate a turbulent rumble that interferes with the melody. Chopin is concise, avoids any excess decoration, elides phrases on the fifth scale degree of A-flat to sustain forward motion, and uses exact repetition of the theme. Even the descending groups of seven notes he includes to move from a high C down to an E-flat above middle C are not clustered as quick decorative notes, but are instead spread out; they seem to communicate both essential melody and decorative flourish. It is frankly hard to believe that Chopin began this piece in 1834; its stripped-down, distilled melody over an animated bass line is typical of his more mature writing. Its exact date aside, these long melodic notes lend themselves very nicely to the melodic ornamentation ordained by the *cantabile* marking.

10. Concluding the works marked *cantabile* composed during Chopin’s early period is the slight piece simply titled *Cantabile*, and more time will be spent on its explanation. The work is of unknown origin, and its whereabouts seem never to have been publicly advertised. We know of its existence thanks to Karl Geigy-Hagenbach, also known as

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As noted on p. 72, in Madame d’Est’s album Chopin inscribed his Op. 66 Impromptu in C-sharp minor, published posthumously, and Bellini included an *Andante cantabile* in F, “O crudel che il mio pianto.”

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Charles Geigy, a Swiss industrialist whose vast assimilation of famous signatures is highly esteemed among collectors. In 1925 Hagenbach took it upon himself to make his collection known to the world, publishing the Album von Handschriften berühmter Persönlichkeiten. With descriptions of the entries in French, German, and English, the volume is organized by occupation, e.g. Statesmen, Poets and Writers, Painters, and Musicians. The variety and importance of the subjects is impressive; the entries range from Catherine de Medici to Napoleon, from Schütz to Tasso. The value of the musical signatures lies in the fact that many of them are situated as autographs underneath short works probably composed as gifts to private individuals, being otherwise unpublished and therefore unknown to the public.

On page 262 of this collection appears a facsimile of Chopin’s piece. Its six staves form three braces of music which contain sixteen measures of music; the staves appear to be printed, not hand drawn, with clear margins above and below. Cantabile is marked at the left above the top staff, beginning in the characteristic place of a tempo marking, in Chopin’s slanting, slender hand. Just after the end of the piece, under the sixth staff, is the signature “F. F. Chopin,” and under that, “Paris, 1834.” No watermark is visible in the facsimile and there is no other clue about the paper, precise date, or context of composition.

Apart from the facsimile in Hagenbach’s album, the autograph remained hidden from public view. Kobylanska’s catalogue of Chopin’s works states that the autograph is

“Verschollen . . . Beschreibung nach Hagenbach, dem als Vorlage ein von einer nicht genannten Persönlichkeit ausgeliehenes, nach dem Autograph angefertigtes Klischee gedient hat.” It would thus seem that Hagenbach never owned the original, but borrowed the photograph of Cantabile from an unknown person for the sake of his book. This claim is considerably strengthened by a 1931 article published in the Polish journal Muzyka by Ludwik Bronarski, directly discussing the little Cantabile. I cite his illuminating comments in full:

Mr. Geigy-Hagenbach has published an album which contains reproductions of samples of famous people's writings [citation of Hagenbach’s Album von Handschriften]. The publication is very interesting in and of itself. And it is also a very helpful addition to the collectors of autographs. For on page 262 there is a reproduction of Chopin's signature. The text of explanation says only: “Chopin Fryderyk-Franciszek, 1810-1849, great composer and pianist.” On the note paper there is written a short piece of music. It takes up two double systems and the beginning of a third one. The handwriting is distinct and careful. Although it was carefully written and even though the reproduction was good, it is possible that I did not decipher the original correctly. This concerns in particular the second and third eighth notes in the accompaniment of the fourth measure.

At the end of the writing stands “F. Chopin Paris 1834.” Mr. Geigy-Hagenbach explained to me that the reproduction was made from the plate [cliché or photo-roll] which was lent to him. Mr. Geigy-Hagenbach doesn’t know who owns the original writing and he doesn’t know if this piece was ever published.

This Cantabile looks like a fragment, or to be more precise, like the beginning of a bigger piece of music. A melodic line in the first eight measures leads you to expect to see the development of the thought unfold. However, the last group of measures, creating a kind of postlude or coda — and making in itself the most beautiful part of this piece — arrives very unexpectedly. This last section of

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256 “Lost . . . description according to Hagenbach, who used a borrowed photo-roll (from an unknown individual), made from the autograph, as his source.” Krystyna Kobylanska, Frédéric Chopin: Thematisch-Bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis, trans. Helmut Stolze, ed. Ernst Hertrich (Munich: Henle, 1979), 232.

257 Ludwik Bronarski, “Pamiątki Szopenowskie” [Chopin’s Thoughts], Muzyka 2-4 (1931): 212-19. Many thanks to Sara Zdrojkowska for locating this article in the Warsaw University Library and sending me an English translation.

258 The signature actually reads “F.F. Chopin.”
measures breaks the initial impetus, destroying the logic of construction and in this way brings a kind of disappointment.

How much more round and harmoniously developed are the Preludes in A major and in C minor, whose length is so very similar to that of our Cantabile! With this we experience a feeling similar to that of going downstairs, where, expecting a few more steps we suddenly touch the flat ground. It also reminds us of the humorous story of Mark Twain. It begins in a very interesting way and then is suddenly broken by the declaration of the author that he doesn’t know how to find his way out of a much too complicated story he created for himself. In Chopin’s Cantabile the surprise was not planned. It is possible that its beginning was created as a theme to a Nocturne.

“Feuille d’Album,” in E Major, written in 1843 in the album of Anna Szeremetjewowa (and published by the committee for building Chopin’s monument in Warsaw) is presented as “thought to be a nocturne for several measures.” And the relationship with the not distant Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op. 9, nr. 2, is quite significant. It is then possible that as later it was recognized as not worth further distribution it was used as a passing page in an album.

It is worth notice that several works of Chopin unknown until now (which he himself didn’t publish, finding them less worthy) are all from the year 1834. (The Prelude in A-flat Major, published at Henna in Geneva, the Mazurka in A-flat Major recently published by M. Mirska at Gebethner & Wolff in Warsaw, and our Cantabile).

In fact, knowing Chopin, it is not the best idea of which he is capable. It even strongly reminds one of Field. Even so it does contain interesting and truly Chopinesque details. For instance: the beginning with the tonic chord which gets a small seventh and becomes dominant already at the beginning, the seductive resolution of this chord to the sixth degree, the chromaticism of measures 8-11 and so on. These several measures totally evoke the unusual personality of Chopin. His typical charm and beauty hover above it. And in spite of it being a very small piece we remain impressed and under its influence. And, especially if we receive it with the appropriate piety and love that are deserved by all “Chopiniana.”

Bronarski’s comments raise several important issues. The difference in musical quality and ambition between the Cantabile and other short pieces like the Preludes in A Major and C Minor is one; or the Feuille d’album of 1843, a short work intended as an Albumblatt, is another; and the question of what criteria distinguish a fragment from an independent work is a third. Certainly, the Preludes are, musically speaking, on a
different level. To some extent, this can be explained by their context. They are written first of all as part of an established genre in which the overarching musical content is expected to follow a certain formal pattern of theme and development. The Preludes may be the shortest genre of Chopin’s œuvre, but they are also written in the concise language of the character piece, in which an entire story may be condensed into a few measures. The Prelude also follows the musical precedent of introduction and improvisation, and gratifies those expectations created by the genre itself; the purpose of an Albumblatt, by contrast, or in this case the Cantabile, is to present an independent musical gesture that pleases the recipient, whoever that may be, and its sketch-like qualities may in this context even be seen as an advantage.

Nonetheless, this short piece does have a fairly typical cantabile texture. The melody falls within a natural soprano range, and the long melodic notes allow for improvised decoration. The way Chopin splits the melody in the soprano between the top and bottom of the hand, during the cadential approach of both phrases when ornamentation was especially common, creates the outline of a duet and suggests that extra notes could be inserted naturally to bridge the two voices.

We now leave Chopin’s early period behind and turn to the five remaining cases that occurred during his middle and late periods: a sketch of the melody that became the Lento in the “Funeral March” Sonata Op. 35, published in 1840, which will be saved for last; the Prelude Op. 28 No. 21 in B-flat, published in 1839-40, whose date of composition is unknown; the third movement of the Sonata Op. 58 No. 3 in b minor, marked Largo, with cantabile at the start of the melody m. 6; the Mazurka Op. 62 No. 2,
probably composed in 1845 to complete a set begun a decade earlier (which makes one wonder if it might have been drafted years before); and the Barcarolle Op. 60, of 1845-1846.

12. Written in 3/4, the Prelude shows density and contrapuntal complexity in the left hand, beginning with single-note intervals and diverging in contrary motion, from single-note to third, fourth, sixth, and octave, underneath long melodic notes in the right hand. The spread registration — within the left hand and between the hands — eliminates potential harmonic interference between the comparatively dense left hand and the right hand’s sparse harmonic outline. Keeping in mind the difference between modern instruments and the French pianos Chopin played, in this case the action underneath does seem to distract from the unfolding melody above, and poses a practical problem for the contemporaneous performer: if the marking cantabile indicates free insertion of additional notes such as the portamenti invited by the spaced, descending, long melodic notes, the only possible way to do so in this prelude, without colliding and creating discord with the left hand, is to significantly relax the tempo. Even so, along with the Fantaisie-Impromptu, the left-hand writing is the most active among the cantabile passages. It advances beyond the contained, sparse accompaniment of Chopin’s early works, and shows the creative, note-against-note counterpoint of his later writing in the tenor and bass.
13. Next chronologically is the Sonata Op. 58 of 1844-1845, which contains a cantabile marking at the beginning of the third movement, also marked Largo. Slower and more grave than the usual cantabile tempo, the largo here might have been intended for a general tempo and character guideline for the entire movement, and it is certainly possible to accelerate slightly during the performance of the cantabile section. Chopin underpins this cantabile with a radically low bass, and staggers the unusually low melodic line with dotted rhythms and chords in the tenor register. The higher interjections infuse the unshakable quality with a march-like vigor. (Similar dotted rhythmic patterns are present in multiple Mazurkas, including the Op. 50.) Here, the use of chords in the left hand instead of spread single notes adds a layered, contrapuntal density more common in his late works.

Chopin also uses octaves frequently in spite of the low register, and plays with contrapuntal, dramatic contrary motion between the hands. It is conceptually bold, and would have been inconceivable for him a decade earlier. Furthermore, he moves from the original cantabile motive to a painfully beautiful sostenuto section, with graceful, cascading notes around the static treble melody, above a supporting bass melody of its own. If played at the appropriate tempo, an unhurried space expands out from each melodic note: indeed, the marking sostenuto was one of Bellini’s favorites for his arias in a cantabile texture, including the autograph of “Casta Diva,”259 and the connection is

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259 Modern editions of “Casta Diva” are marked Andante cantabile, but in fact the facsimile of Bellini’s autograph is marked Andante sostenuto, with a third, illegible short word that has been partially marked through. In the marking above the staff, the short word resembles “oper”; scratched out; below, it looks more like “afl____,” the remaining letters marked through. Bellini changed many of his score markings at different times, but seems to have been particularly fond of sostenuto for contexts that required the sustained legato melody innate to cantabile. See Norma, Tragedia lirica in Two Acts: A Facsimilie Edition
unmistakable in this *legato* passage with an almost palpable presence reaching through and between each melodic note.

After Chopin literally winds down the lovely *sostenuto*, moving up, then down and back up in single eighth notes, he interjects the dotted D-sharp motive of the *cantabile* theme that rings like a bell from afar a full eight bars before its actual restatement. He then flirts with a chordal cadence that develops dramatically in contrary motion until the hands are spread a full four and a half octaves apart. During the brief, truncated restatement of the theme, Chopin punctuates the *cantabile* identity of the passage: not only has the left hand switched from dotted rhythms to spread triplets in a more typical fashion, but at the caesura of the phrase he notates a fifteen-note flourish of ornamentation in wave form, followed by a short elaboration of a turn during the penultimate measure.

14. At first glance, the Mazurka Op. 62 No. 2 in G minor appears to be an anomaly. This Mazurka placed second was actually the last in the set of four to be composed (1845-1849); Nos. 1 and 3 date from a decade earlier. Yet once again we find the contextual relationship between *cantabile* and temporal flexibility: the following Mazurka in the set, Nr. 3, is marked *rubato* in the opening measure — and as noted it was composed ten years earlier in 1835. Perhaps as Chopin assembled the set, the contact with earlier works reminded Chopin of his past *cantabile* markings, and inspired him to

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use it once again. Practically, it is challenging here to determine how one should ornament, stagger the hands, and create *rubato* as commanded by the marking, in this dance with note values prone to rhythmic punctuation and synchronized attack.

Famous for his early nineteenth-century style, improvisatory interpretations of Chopin’s works, the pianist Raoul Koczalski reported that Chopin was particularly fond of introducing spontaneous ornamentation in the Mazurkas, meaning those not marked *cantabile*; in this case the marking *cantabile* makes Chopin’s usual practice explicit. Based on the few five short ornamental additions Chopin notated to all of the Mazurkas in his students’ scores, Eigeldinger takes issue with Koczalski’s claim. However, the rare copy of Karl Filtsch’s Mazurka from his *Premières pensées musicales* (c. 1841-1845) reproduced in Hudson’s monograph adds decisive credibility to Koczalski’s recollection. Not only does Filtsch mark *rubato* in bar 18, but he also includes four glittering arches of chromatic ornamentation in the two published pages, two full beats each, in exactly the style of Chopin’s filigree.

And in fact, the elegant appoggiaturas at the crest of the melodic arches begin to suggest the more elaborate *fioriture* of the earlier works. It could be that in line with his usual practice, Chopin was inviting a *gruppetto* or other figuration at each of the mini melodic apices. The work is remarkably poignant: at m. 33, the left hand drops out completely for a melancholic melodic solo of eight bars. The descending scales of a

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260 Raoul Koczalski to Carl Mikuli in *Vorwort zu Fr. Chopin’s Pianoforte-Werke*, ed. Mikuli (Leipzig: Kistner, 1880), 203, cited in Eigeldinger, *Chopin Pianist and Teacher*, 74 and 148, n. 173. Eigeldinger reminds us that in contrast with the Nocturnes, most likely for reasons of privacy or the desire to keep the embellishments fresh, only five of Chopin’s small ornamental variations in the Mazurkas have been preserved in students’ scores.

261 Hudson, *Stolen Time*, 239.
tenth at the cadences at the end of the A and A’ are simple and wistful, even mournful. Unfortunately, we have little information about the work to help illuminate the character Chopin intended to create.

15. The Barcarolle Op. 60, composed 1845-46, is written in the more dense and contrapuntal style of Chopin’s late period. Fused into Italian cantilena, the work sounds more like retrospective ‘stylization’ than the earlier works. It draws from the duets of Italian gondoliers; after a short introduction, the left hand begins the rolling bass pattern evoking the rise and fall of waves. Over these spread, single notes, the right hand enters with the famous duet in thirds. Directly above this entrance of the main theme, Chopin placed the marking cantabile in measure six; it would not have belonged above the preceding non-vocal accompaniment.

By this time, Chopin’s lean textures had been filling in substantially, due in part to his study of counterpoint treatises by Cherubini and Kastner. Charles Rosen has commented on the equal and paradoxical influences of Bach and Italian opera in Chopin’s music. Both are forcefully present yet harmoniously coexistent in the Barcarolle, which is more dense, substantial, and powerful than lyrical works from his early period. In comparison with the youthful concertos Op. 11 and 21, which are full of lyrical melodies and embellishments transferred to the keyboard, this work is a serious

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263 “There is a paradox at the heart of Chopin’s style, in its unlikely combination of a rich chromatic web of polyphony, based on a profound experience of J.S. Bach, with a sense of melody and a way of sustaining the melodic line derived directly from Italian opera.” Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 344.
and systematic elaboration on a lyrical style. The lovely, wistfully poignant runs and flourishes over purely supportive material have been replaced with an active soprano duet in thirds, sixths, and octave-based chords, and a restless, dynamic bass: in the Barcarolle, a German sensibility vies with the Italian in Chopin’s creative consciousness. Indeed, “the greatest master of counterpoint since Mozart”\textsuperscript{264} shows his craft, and in this case it rivals his lyricism.

11. It may seem illogical to end with the eleventh work on a list of fifteen, but the marking \textit{cantabile} forms a unique relationship with the \textit{Largo} of the Sonata Op. 35 (1839-1840). In his study of the Funeral March Sonata, Jeffrey Kallberg discusses a little-known sketch of a melody that predates what was later published as the tranquil, exquisite theme of the \textit{Largo}’s B section. Contrast is formed with the sinister march, which frames this reprieve with somber, relentless octaves. Kallberg shows the relationship between this material and a march in Rossini’s \textit{La Gazza Ladra}; the similarity is compelling, and we know that Chopin was familiar with this work as early as 1828, when he experimented with its material in the unfinished Polonaise mentioned above.

Most importantly for this chapter, Kallberg drew attention to a little-known piece by Chopin marked \textit{Lento cantabile} and dated 1837, that later reappeared as the lyrical mid-section of the sonata’s second movement, marked simply \textit{Lento}, as published in 1839. Initially surprised by this change, I wondered why Chopin would remove the label

\textsuperscript{264} Rosen, \textit{The Romantic Generation}, 285.
*cantabile* from music that appears so suitable to that word in texture and character; he certainly could have placed *Lento* for the opening march and added *cantabile* for the mid-section. One possible explanation for its omission lies in the new location of the passage within a somber, surrounding context: that darker character simply does not match the *cantabile* style.

We have traced the strong associations between rubato, ornamentation, and operatic *cantabile* that would have been elicited by the marking. The evidence suggests that a contemporary performer, when presented with a slow-moving work in this texture, would have inserted additional, ornamental notes to bridge the gaps between primary melodic notes, as discussed by Montgeroul — indeed, in a work marked *cantabile*, such ornamentation would have been self-evident. In this case, however, such adornment detracts from the experience of profound isolation that would be represented by the *preghiera*, the operatic genre that, as Kallberg has argued, is the movement’s ultimate inspiration. In the atmosphere of intense, operatic lyricism in this hushed and desperate prayer, “less” actually creates “more.” It is a *cantabile* stripped bare, in which the absence of sensuous décor leaves a distilled, almost spiritual purity.

**Conclusion**

Many years ago, Ludwik Bronarski concluded what my own study of Chopin revealed before I encountered his text: in a genuine, purely original, and even spiritualizing way, Chopin took the Italian vocal model around him and transformed it
into unprecedented pianistic language. It is difficult to develop inspiration from one medium into convincing, natural idiom in another. Yet Chopin was able to preserve the vocal spirit while imprinting his piano music with an idiomatic as well as personal stamp – a feat that is nothing short of remarkable when contextualized in the then-fashionable mass production of operatic transcriptions, or otherwise unsuccessful attempts at achieving a genuine vocality in original compositions.

Chopin’s techniques include creating lyric contrast within a larger work or section of more extroverted material in the Funeral March Sonata and Fantaisie-Impromptu, as well as the Barcarolle, which stands alone as a unique grafting of Italian lyricism onto mature counterpoint. And in its minimal accompaniment, proliferation of long notes and carefully placed ornaments, the Andante spianato represents the most literal translation of early nineteenth-century operatic cantabile onto the keyboard.

In reflecting on the fifteen cantabile markings, however, one realizes that in contrast with the expectations generated by a recognizable style or topic, it is precisely in these passages marked cantabile that Chopin demonstrates the essence of his innovative flair. From the stripped-down, declamatory Nocturne Op. 15 No. 1, to the note-against-note left-hand writing in contrary motion in the Prelude Op. 28 No. 21, to the intensely melancholic Mazurka Op. 67 No. 2, to the dramatically charged, contrapuntal Barcarolle; all of these passages merged experimental gestures within a recognizable cantabile texture. We can conclude that as Chopin used cantabile, he intentionally and playfully integrated non-, and even, as it were, anti-cantabile elements.
Excepting the diminutive Albumblatt marked *Cantabile*, an invisible line can be
drawn between the early, more conventional passages marked *cantabile*, including the
*Rondeau a la Mazurka* Op. 5, the *La ci darem la mano* variations Op. 2, the *Fantasy on
National Polish Airs*, the *Grand Duo Concertant* and the Concertos, and the passages
which follow. After the customary, elaborate *cantabile* florid writing above strictly
diminutive bass lines in the early works, perhaps it is no coincidence that the period
1833-1835 emerges again as pivotal, offering further support for a stylistic redirection
connected, but not exclusively indebted, to Bellini’s music. The open space in the upper
register created by new melodic simplicity may, in actuality, have sparked his creative
left-hand writing. No matter how they are interpreted, the passages marked *cantabile*
encapsulate aspects of Chopin’s trajectory from an emulation of operatic language into
the creation of his own personal and original pianistic idiom.

Chopin’s feat of pianistic *cantabile* remains unparalleled: no composer of piano
music before or since has achieved such an organic union of operatic tradition with
original keyboard craft. It is only through understanding the pervasive role *cantabile*
played in his œuvre that we comprehend how ingenious, and unique, were his stylistic
innovations. He created a balanced intersection of Italian opera from the past and
present, with German compositional practice from the previous century, and with ethnic
rhythms from his youth. This study is meant to encourage us to step back and take in the
broader picture of the evolution of the *cantabile* genre from its origin in eighteenth-
century opera until its fruitful arrival in the works of Chopin. Then, and only then, can
we properly contextualize, in relation to cantabile’s far-reaching and profound presence in the landscape of music history, the numerous excellent studies that examine Chopin’s individual stylistic characteristics, related to cantabile, of ornamentation, pedaling, rubato, as well as numerous studies of isolated passages or works in comparison with other composers.

I conclude with a question that arises from this study as a whole: if Chopin’s artistic progression as a composer was as highly complex, dynamic, and dramatic as we have seen in the cantabile style, might his pathway through other genres and their styles and idioms prove, upon closer examination, to be equally transformative?
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