

**Comparative analysis of performance issues and
piano idiom in chosen compositions of
Amy Beach and Valborg Aulin**

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Dla Mamy

Abstract

Western classical music has historically been dominated by men, with women composers generally being denied prominence or canonical prestige. It was challenging for women to establish themselves as creative equals to men owing to social, cultural, and institutional barriers. This dissertation examines the works of two women composers from the late nineteenth century, Amy Beach (1867–1944) from the United States and Valborg Aulin (1860–1928) from Sweden. Despite emerging from different musical environments, their works exhibit significant stylistic similarities, even as each composer cultivated a unique and individual musical idiom.

The research largely investigates two early works: Beach's *Ballad* Op. 6 and Aulin's *Piano Sonata* Op. 14, *Grande Sonate sérieuse*. Beach's *Four Sketches* Op. 15 and Aulin's *Three Fantasy Pieces* Op. 30 are also briefly addressed. Written at an early stage in each composer's career, these pieces are analysed through the perspective of performance practice, devoting particular attention to pianistic idiom, technical difficulties, expressive demands, and interpretive possibilities. Aulin's formal training in Sweden, Denmark, and France contrasts with Beach's mostly self-taught upbringing in Boston's conservative environment. The study also considers the impact of musical education, geographic and cultural context, and exposure to modern trends.

This performance-based method emphasises the works' distinctive voices while situating them within late-Romantic musical contexts by integrating score analysis with the real-life experience of preparing for the performance and finally playing the pieces. By delivering the first comparative performance-focused examination of these two composers' piano works, the study addresses a scholarly gap and gives particular attention to the under-represented Aulin about whom little has been written in English language. This study aims to expand the canon, inspire historically informed performance, and contribute to a wider

appreciation of women's creative accomplishments in nineteenth-century music by showcasing their artistry and recording interpretative observations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On a first glance, the history of classical music appears to have been a male-dominated affair. Women were mostly overlooked, even though in real life they were present both as performers and composers; sometimes allowed to do so publicly, while for most of the time they were relegated to domestic music making. It was not a straightforward affair for women who wanted to make music, especially for those who wanted to compose. It took a considerable deal of bravery for women to make their way and penetrate the world of music, especially in the role of composers.

Since the history of music has been mostly written by men, convinced of their naturally superior creative powers, the idea that women could be equally good composers had either not occurred to them or seemed outright ludicrous (Citron 1993: 5). Even spectacularly talented women had to be contained, if anything to maintain the ‘respectability of their sex’. One of the notable examples was Fanny Hensel (née Mendelssohn), whose family restrained her from publishing her music because it was not seemly for a bourgeois married woman in mid-nineteenth century Europe, especially within the strictly Lutheran environment she hailed from. Some of her compositions were even published under the name of her famous brother Felix (Todd 2003: xxviii). It was only towards the end of her tragically short life that she mustered the courage – and the much desired support from her religiously puritanical family – to publish a few songs and short pieces. The wider gendered dynamics of authorship and visibility in nineteenth-century European musical culture are demonstrated by this particular case. It illustrates how, even in instances where women’s contributions were of equal artistic value, their artistic work was frequently suppressed, marginalised, or appropriated by male authority. Thus, the story of Fanny Hensel (née Mendelssohn) sheds light on the societal barriers that influenced how women’s music was received and

disseminated, and it still has resonance in issues about authorship, acknowledgement, and the canon today.

During the past century, as women earned hard-fought rights and their voices have become more assertive, particularly in the Western hemisphere, this has also been reflected in the world of classical music. During the past few decades, we have witnessed an unprecedented growth in the interest and appreciation of women composers (Pendle 2001: ix). Their compositions are nowadays performed more often, however – unless it is within the context of an all-woman themed concert or recital – it is still rare for a woman composer to be heading the bill. As reported by Donne Women in Music Foundation (2022), despite significant progress, women composers remain underrepresented – only about 7.7% of works programmed by orchestras worldwide in the 2021–2022 season were by women. The same tendency may be seen in solo piano recitals, where women's compositions continue to be noticeably overlooked.

It is my intention in this dissertation to explore two women composers, Amy Beach and Valborg Aulin, who in their own differing ways can be considered to be pioneers. They were both ambitious women eager to leave their mark in the male-dominated musical world of their times. One of them, Beach, managed to become a successful performer and a noteworthy composer, eventually managing to break through many of the constraints imposed by strict social mores, perhaps helped by a considerable inherited affluence and the fact that she hailed from a country still young and in search of a national identity. The other one, Aulin, held a lot of promise but was destined to remain forgotten for a long time, forced by circumstances that had nothing to do with her talent. It is my intention, throughout this dissertation, to explore their work in order to throw more light on their creativity and expression and contribute towards a better appreciation of their music. It is through performance that the work of the composer comes to life. The understanding and the value

that is derived from such an understanding of the music of these two composers will hopefully contribute to keep their music alive. It is for this purpose that throughout this dissertation I will strive to contribute towards mapping their historical significance and establish a tradition of performance practice of their works.

My interest in the piano works by women composers was sparked while working with one of my students towards her piano exam, where we discovered a composition by Amy Beach titled 'Arctic Night' (No. 1 from *Eskimos*, Op. 64). We found the music to be fun and engaging, and this led us to investigate further on available internet platforms, like YouTube and Spotify, about other women composers of the nineteenth century. That was how eventually I came across the name of Valborg Aulin.

Amy Beach was the first American woman composer that was successful in her field and was one of the pioneers of a nascent 'American' sound (Block 1998: ix). Having consistently relied on European influences, with European composers and European conductors and musicians dominating the classical music scene in the United States, towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a strong desire amongst American composers to find a distinctly 'American' sound that would convey not just an American coming of age but also the power of America as a source of cultural influence. Beach became a prominent proponent of 'the American voice', famously writing her *Gaelic Symphony* or *Symphony in E minor* Op. 32 to counter Antonin Dvorak's claim that his Ninth Symphony *From the New World* in E minor Op. 95 B. 178, supposedly intended to create an American symphony based on American tunes.

When it comes to literature about Amy Beach, while a lot has been written from a biographical point of view, analysis of her music and especially of her performance practices are scantier. There are some performance practices mentioned in dissertations, particularly from an American perspective (Zhang 2021, Eun Hae Choi 2020, Schulz 2019), as well as

the most up to date version of *The Cambridge Companion to Amy Beach* (Bomberger 2023). Nevertheless, her works are rarely performed in Europe and to my knowledge this type of research has never been done from a European perspective.

On the other hand, there is Valborg Aulin – who followed the steps of Elfrida Andrée, the first female Swede to graduate as an organist from The Royal Swedish Academy (Swedish Musical Heritage n. d.) – to become the first woman with a major in composition at the same Academy (George 1997: 7). Nowadays she is predominantly an obscure figure, largely because she stopped composing at some point during her life and there is not much material available about her and her compositions. She was active at the time when the Nordic countries in Europe were also looking towards art and culture to define their own national identities. These are the times of Edvard Grieg in Norway, who in 1869 had written 25 Norwegian Folk Songs and Dances Op. 17 for piano and *Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Folk Song* in G minor Op. 25 in 1875. Amongst his many compositions the most influential remain his Piano Concerto in A minor Op. 16 and the incidental music to Henrik Ibsen’s play *Peer Gynt*. In Denmark, composer Niels Gade – of whom Aulin was a student – was seminal in creating a Danish musical school. He died in 1890. In 1893 Finnish composer Jean Sibelius premiered his tone-poem *En Saga* Op. 9 to wide acclaim. Aulin would never enjoy such success. Literature about her is almost non-existent in the English language, and interest from Swedish writers has been only recent and mostly of a biographical nature, not about her compositions. This is a gap that this dissertation seeks to address.

My research will focus on a thorough analysis of the performance practices in two significant early works by each composer, in addition to a brief examination of two further compositions from the same foundational era. The choice of the pieces was very much determined by the fact that their period of composition largely coincides, and the fact that

they are both early pieces reflecting the youthful exuberance of the two composers. The works for this analysis will be Amy Beach's *Ballad* Op. 6 from 1894 and Valborg Aulin's Piano Sonata Op. 14 from 1885, along with concise reference to Amy Beach's *Four Sketches* Op. 15 and Valborg Aulin's *3 Fantasy Pieces* Op. 30. *Ballad* Op. 6 and Piano Sonata Op. 14 represent substantial forms in their music, while *Four Sketches* Op. 15 and *3 Fantasy Pieces* Op. 30 are miniatures written at the same time. Amy Beach never wrote a piano sonata, even though later she composed a Violin Sonata Op. 34 (1897) and a Piano Trio Op. 150 (1938). Both were inadequate for comparison with Aulin's sonata since they were written for other instruments and, in the case of the trio, it is also a much later work. The chosen compositions represent their early styles, at the beginning of their career and were selected as exemplary pieces from that period, which is particularly significant in the wider development of a nationalistic turn in classical music. As Carl Dahlhaus points out, national character was understood not as an external style that could be borrowed at will, but as something arising 'from within' and embodying the spirit of a people (1980: 101).

This research aims not only to introduce and shed more light on their works but also to compare their piano idioms and compositional devices, an analysis that has never been done before. Such an analysis aims to illuminate how two composers, hailing from different social backgrounds, in two different countries separated by more than five thousand kilometers in an age prior to our modern communication technology, shared similarities and influences on certain aspects of their creative output and differed from each other on others. This is a performance-based study; therefore, it focuses on ways of reading the score and understanding it better, in order to help future performers to play it and give them an idea of interpretation before they establish their own.

The main research questions are inspired by these considerations. The first question is related to the creative process itself. Amy Beach was famously (largely) self-taught,

absorbing her compositional skills from hours of studying by herself the scores of great composers. On the other hand, Valborg Aulin not only had formal music education at the Swedish Academy, but she also went to further her studies in Denmark and France. The question here, therefore, is about the impact that the trajectory of their musical education had upon their creative processes, the technique and expression, and the tackling of form by the two composers. One wonders whether self-education brought more, or less, freedom to a composer like Beach. Like other self-taught composers such as Telemann, Elgar, and Rimsky-Korsakov, she overcame the challenges of developing her own style without receiving any sort of formal tuition. This question is crucial to understanding how educational background formed early compositional decisions and interpretive practices, offering insight into both the creative process and the ways composers established their place in the music repertoire.

The second research question, linked to the first, concerns the musical influences on Beach and Aulin, and to what extent the geographical distance, as well as their education, and their respective social milieux held an impact upon the music that they were exposed to, and which then influenced them in their compositions. The fact that European talent was, towards the end of the nineteenth century, being imported to the United States and the fact that Beach came from a social class in Boston that still held contacts and to a certain point still looked up to the ‘old continent’, meant that the music of the most prominent composers of the day was more likely to be also available to her. However, Aulin, also due to her travels and her studies, was likely more prone to exposure to a wider spectrum of European composers, especially of contemporary music. In this dissertation, I will explore the extent to which their respective scores can throw light upon this matter, and how these influences then went on to shape the individual expression of each composer.

This will entail a detailed analysis of the score from the point of view of the performer, tackling tempi and dynamics, clarity of the score, and some major technical issues that the performer might encounter in the execution of the work. One can argue that the score speaks for itself (Cook 2013: 3–5), and that the previously stated research questions are not particularly relevant to the performance of these works. Whilst it may be true that we can never fully know the composer's intentions and frame of mind behind a composition, unless the composer left written somewhere all the thoughts that motivated the work in question, I hold that as a performer going beyond the music on the score and trying to understand context and influences brings the performer closer not just to the intentions of the composer but also to the composer herself, as a human being, and enables the performer to transmit to the audience the energy of such closeness. Elsewhere, Cook reminds us: 'Theorising music as performance – as a social event in which meaning is produced, rather than as sounded writing that reproduces pre-existing meaning – helps to open up possibilities for both creating and experiencing music that outmoded thinking has closed off' (2013: 7). Beach's *Ballad, Four Sketches*, and Aulin's Sonata were part of my final solo recital as part of this doctoral journey and I will cite from that experience to illustrate further not just the technical performative issues related to these two works, but also the experience of building a rapport with the composer through her work and transmitting it to the audience.

For many years musicologists focused more on studying the score itself without giving much weight to the actual performance of it (Cook 2013: 1; Soveral and Zurletti 2019: 125). Cook (2013: 1) writes that: 'The experience of live or recorded performance is a primary form of music's existence, not just the reflection of a notated text. And performers make an indispensable contribution to the culture of creative practice that is music'. Moreover, people writing about music performance in their majority tend to be theorists and the voice of active performers is often much less heard. According to Catherine Nolan

(1993/1994: 137): ‘interaction between analysis and performance is by nature selective, in that what the analyst and the performer perceive as problems may differ considerably’. The traditional theoretical analysis can be overly prescriptive and may not necessarily shed light – or the correct light – on how performers actually work. It is important to realise: ‘how and to what extent performers, in decoding the score and re-creating it through the sound, fulfil their choices through analytical work both in theory (the study of the score) and practice (application during execution)’ (Soveral and Zurletti 2019: 126). Therefore, it is crucial to have research carried out by performers that would give an insight into their studying methods and approaches to the musical text that would be beneficial for theorists and performers alike.

In the following chapter, I will be looking closely at the existing literature about both composers and its relevance to this study while acknowledging the existing gaps in research.

In chapter 3, I will have my focus on a number of methodological issues and outline the methodological aspect that I will employ towards the analysis of the scores selected for the purposes of this study and the main issues that I will be focusing on.

Chapter 4 will provide a description of the late-Romantic period from a historical point of view and the musical influences that shaped the musical landscape of the late nineteenth century. This will also situate Amy Beach and Valborg Aulin with the context of their respective social milieu and the musical environment in which they grew up in. Moreover, the same chapter will also discuss briefly the tradition of women composers.

Chapter 5 will contain an in-depth analysis of Beach’s *Ballad* and Aulin’s Sonata based on chosen performance issues mentioned in the applied methodology with a brief look at Beach’s *Four Sketches* and Aulin’s *3 Fantasy Pieces*. It will conclude with the comparative analysis of their respective piano idioms, finding similarities and differences in their style and piano writing.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I will seek to provide answers to the questions posed here by examining and engaging with the findings from this research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The literature available on Valborg Aulin and Amy Beach varies widely in scope and content. Aulin was a composer whose life and works remain largely unknown, whilst Beach remains the first American woman composer about whom a wealth of literature exists, tackling different aspects of her life, from the biographical to her compositional style. Writing about Amy Beach, therefore, is necessarily a selective exercise in order to choose the material relevant for the purposes of this dissertation. With regards to Aulin, the challenge remains to scrape enough information through scant literature, which is mostly available only in Swedish. Despite the recent trend to ‘uncover’ unknown women composers, Aulin Valborg’s work has yet to attract the attention of musicologists and scholars. So far, only two have specifically focused on her; the remaining sources are journals and newspapers. According to Woods (1980: 28):

If musical women survived in history of art at all, it is rather through lingering memories of their performing skills than of their compositions, or as educators conserving tradition rather than as innovators struggling to construct a personal and musical identity.

This certainly is the case with Aulin.

2. 1 Interest in women composers

Women composers have received increased attention in recent years, leading to more scholarship and a better appreciation of their work. Vicki D. Baker in ‘Inclusion of Women Composers in College Music History Textbooks’ (2003) points out that more material is now available about women composers in the form of dictionaries (*The Norton/Grave Dictionary of Women Composers*, 1994), encyclopedias (*International Encyclopedia of Women Composers* by Aaron Cohen, 1981) or anthologies (*Women Composers. A Historical Anthology* by James R. Briscoe, 2004) and that this pattern begins to establish female composers as historical figures.

Two articles on a Polish website *meakultura.pl*, namely ‘Czy muzyka ma płeć gender w codziennej przestrzeni audiowizualnej’ by Joanna Kwapień (2020), and ‘Women Composers: as Emerging from the Shadows’ by Karolina Kizińska (2012), explain the hurdles that women composers have encountered from the second half of the 19th century, when they first started to be allowed into universities and conservatories to study composition, to the present day. Kwapień maintains that interest in women composers became more popular since the 1988 symposium organised by the American Musicological Society focusing exclusively on women in music, where a number of proposals to popularise music composed by women were put forward.

The inclusion of women composers in textbooks has been heavily supported by Eugen Gates in his articles: ‘Where are all the women composers? Reclaiming a cultural heritage’(1994a) and ‘Why have there been no great women composers? Psychological theories, past and present’ (1994b). Gates fights back against the prejudice that women are not as capable of creativity in composition as much as men, since the latter supposedly possess greater visual-spatial skills traditionally associated with composition. Gates argues that the disadvantage of woman is not natural but social: before the second half of the 19th century, women could only study composition if they were nuns, of noble birth or coming from wealthy or musical families. When later on some educational institutions slowly opened their doors to them, women had more chances, even if they still encountered many obstacles. According to Gates, including women in the history of music and in textbooks would encourage younger generations of women to follow their dreams in pursuing a music career not only as performers.

2. 2 Valborg Aulin

The main biographical source about Valborg Aulin can be found in the dissertation written by Cecilia George, *En tonsättarbiografi* (1997) written under supervision of Eva Öhrström¹. George's dissertation mostly focuses on Aulin's biography and performances but devotes less space to her compositions.

Eva Öhrström, in her 'Borgerliga kvinnors musikarende i 1800-talets Sverige' (1987) focuses on several compositions and the influence on Aulin's work by other composers. Even though Öhrström's chosen compositions do not correspond with those chosen for the purposes of this dissertation, it is significant to note that she identifies composers whose styles and compositional techniques inspired Aulin in her composing, influences that are still relevant for the works referred to here, especially Chopin – in his use of rhythms, melody and character – Grieg, Liszt and Tchaikovsky for their use of compositional devices and character of the compositions.

To better understand Aulin within the context of the piano tradition in Sweden and the influence this may have had on her compositions, two Swedish books shed valuable light on musical life in Stockholm during the late 19th century. *Pianister i Sverige* by Tore Uppström (1973) traces the development of a piano tradition in Scandinavian countries, mainly through the influence of Liszt's disciples such as Hilda Tegerström and Bedřich Smetana in mid-19th century, followed up by Richard Andersson, pupil of Klara Schumann and Heinrich Barth. Martin Tegen's *Music life in Stockholm 1890–1910* (1955) depicts the cultural atmosphere in the capital at the time, with a particular emphasis on the performers and the concert scene. Uppström mentions Aulin briefly as a composer of the *Elegy* that was performed by the pianist Peterson in a public concert, as well as in the list of composers from the 19th century. Tegen

¹ Eva Öhrström is a specialist in Swedish music whose main focus is on women composers and whose other books and articles like '1800-talets Svenska musikhistoria ur kvinnoperspektiv' (1983) or 'Borgerliga kvinnors musikarende i 1800-talets Sverige' (1987) also shed light on Aulin's life and compositions.

only mentions Aulin as being the sister of Tor Aulin, a famous violinist and composer. Other important surveys of Scandinavian composers and their style of writing are John H. Yoell's *The Nordic sound. Explorations into the Music of Denmark, Norway, Sweden* (1974) and John Horton's *Scandinavian music. A short history* (1963). Even though both authors fail to mention Aulin, these books illustrate the musical climate in the Scandinavian countries during the 19th century, the sort of music that was being composed and how it was influenced by the contemporaries, and how it was received by the public.

A concise yet important source of information about Aulin is Anna Aulin's book *En fyrväppling av svenska tonsättare: Minnen om Aulin, Sjögren, Stenhammar och Peterson-Berger* (1944). Anna Aulin, who was her sister-in-law, acknowledges Valborg as a talented pianist who made a very good impression in Paris, where she studied, despite her 'lack of charm'². She describes her compositional talent as distinguished for her contrapuntal skills but lacking her brother's musical inspirations³.

The reason why her life and work aren't the subject of much scholarship could be that at one point in her life she ceased to compose and focused solely on teaching. Aulin moved to Örebro in August 1903, and it was not clear why she decided to do so. There was a belief that it could have been for personal reasons: in order to live independently from her mother, she would have needed to change cities. In addition, reviews of her last compositions from 1901 had been quite disappointing, and perhaps in Örebro she hoped to make a fresh start and avoid competing with newly graduated musicians in Stockholm. Unfortunately, there is no concrete

²'Despite her complete lack of external charm, which the French value so highly, she was highly valued thanks to her great talent'.

'Trots sin totala brist på yttre charme, som fransmännen skatta så högt, blev hon mycket uppskattad tack vare sin stora begåvning'.

³'She, however, lacked her brother's musical instincts, so her work was distinguished for contrapuntal skill but lacked freedom/flow'.

'Hon saknade däremot sin broders musikaliska ingivelser, varför hennes verk utmärkte sig för kontrapunktisk skicklighet men saknade flykt'.

evidence explaining why she made this decision (George 1997: 29). Also, her brother's more illustrious career, and his more substantial compositional output, might have overshadowed her own. Despite the general dearth of information about Aulin, her *Grand Sonata* seems to have sparked considerable interest in the more popular writing.

Sudip Bose, in her article 'Who was Laura Valborg Aulin? A glimpse at the composer of a grand, serious – and forgotten – masterpiece' on the website *americanscholar.org* (2018), writes a well-thought analysis of the piano sonata and draws out the influences visible in this work.

There is also a mention of her 'stunning grande sonata serieuse' which stands out in comparison to her other compositions (1885) in the article by Anastasia Belina from *guardian.com* (2018): 'Settling the score: celebrating the women erased from the musical canon'.

Other sources of information about Valborg Aulin are *Swedish Musical Heritage* website, which provides some bibliography about Aulin and scores of her compositions; as well as the library *Musik och Teater Biblioteket* and the Facebook group *Valborg Aulins vänne*, dedicated to keeping alive the memory and music of Valborg Aulin and posting information about all the concerts and activities connected to her person.

Through the academic network, I was also put in touch with Per-Henning Olsson, who is a senior lecturer at the Department of Musicology at the Uppsala University, who directed me to two websites (<https://sok.riksarkivet.se>, which is a Swedish biographical dictionary, and <https://levandemusikarv.se>, which is a *Swedish Musical Heritage* website) which I had already been recommended earlier by an employee of the library *Musik och Teater Biblioteket*, and I have included in the literature review. At the moment of writing this thesis, Per-Henning Olsson is in the process of writing a book about Aulin for *The Royal Swedish Academy of*

Music's series about Swedish composers and which is supposed to be ready later this year to be published in 2026.

2.3 Amy Beach

About Amy Beach, there is a considerable literature, consisting of a number of books, dissertations and articles. The newest resource is *The Cambridge Companion to Amy Beach* edited by E. Douglas Bomberger in 2023. It offers a mixture of biographical information and short descriptions of chosen pieces, *Ballad* op. 6 included. The most interesting part of the book is Part Three titled: 'Phoenix Redivivus: Beach's Posthumous Reputation'. With reference to changes in musical preferences, gender bias, and copyright concerns, this chapter describes the resurgence of Amy Beach's fame following her decline by 1944. It draws attention to the part that feminist academics (particularly Adrienne Fried Block) played in rekindling interest in Beach and her music via study and activism. It also points out how Beach has managed to gain more reputation as a significant American composer because of an increase in recordings and performances led by female pianists. The Companion is written with the general public in mind, and the biographical details and analyses of the pieces are quite generic and do not add anything new that was not covered in Adrienne Fried Block's book.

One of the most useful studies about Amy Beach is Adrienne Fried Block's book *Amy Beach: Passionate Victorian* (1998). Block covers every aspect of Amy Beach's life, both personal and professional, including her creative process of composing, her live performances, looks into her letters, and discusses her articles in periodicals of the era. It is a remarkable resource that helps navigate Beach's life as a woman, a composer, and a pianist.

Another valuable resource was Walter Jenkins', *The remarkable Mrs. Beach, American composer. A biographical account based on her diaries, letters, newspaper clippings, and personal reminiscences*, edited by John H. Baron (1994). Despite Jenkins having

personally known Amy Beach, the book itself might not have much scholarly claim since he wrote it out of affection as a tribute to Beach. Some of the commentaries, according to Block's review (1996), are blatantly biased and removed from the truth. Block argues that there are a lot of mistakes, not enough documentary evidence to support certain claims, and unsubstantiated statements attributed to Beach, which 'raise the question about the reliability of firsthand evidence in the book' (1996: 794). On the other hand, Peter Dickinson (1996) considers Jenkins' book necessary for studies on Beach. Despite the conflicting opinions about this resource, the number of letters, diary entries and newspaper clippings give an invaluable insight into her life as a composer and a performer, including helpful data about the pieces she performed during her concerts and how they were received. Moreover, there are personal remarks about Beach from the unique position of someone who was connected to her, and it would be unjustifiably dismissive to ignore such information.

Jeanell Wise Brown's *Amy Beach and her chamber music: biography, documents, style* (1994), besides its biographical outlook also deals with Beach's chamber compositions. Block (1998) considers the second part of the book, which discusses Beach's chamber works, as more pertinent than the first, which is a biographical outline of which Block is very critical. Brown's approach to the music in this second part is more descriptive than analytical. I found that the chapters about Beach's style of composition were very helpful in this regard and in relation to the compositional devices that Beach used in her works, and which can be found also in the *Ballad*.

Marmaduke Sidney Miles' doctoral dissertation: *The solo piano works of Mrs. H. H. A. Beach* (1985) analyses all of Beach's piano works on all levels: harmony, structure, texture, tempo, time signature, rhythm, dynamics and typical use of compositional devices. The objective set by Miles was to find the 'recipe' of Beach's style in composing for the piano, in order to recognise her music straightaway, find the characteristics of her style, and trace the

influences of other composers. Miles' work is invaluable for the purposes of this dissertation since it provides full analysis from a musicological point of view of the pieces that this dissertation focuses on. Nevertheless, throughout the whole dissertation there is a widespread gendered dismissal of Beach's work, possibly to support what seems to be a preconceived view of her as an inferior composer.

Lindsay E. Merrill's: *Mrs. H. H. A. Beach: Her life and music* (1963) is an earlier account of Beach's style from the 1960s. It provides further insight into describing Amy Beach's style and highlights traits that were consistent throughout all of her compositions. Merrill (1963: 216) holds that the most consistent aspect of Beach's writing was its eclecticism and that rather than being an inventor, she just extrapolated and absorbed ideas from others, a point of view that I can only partially share after my own analysis of her music.

An interesting source that focuses on the material used by Beach in her compositions is Anna Paulin Alfeld's *Unsung songs: Self-borrowing in Amy Beach's instrumental music* (2004). This dissertation mentions all of Beach's works that had melodic, rhythmical, or structural material 'borrowed' either from her own compositions or from that by other composers. Alfeld particularly discussed *Ballad* Op. 6, which is a chosen work for analysis in this dissertation. In this case, Beach reworked her own song to the words of Robert Burns. The material of the song has been expanded and the tonality changed from B flat major to D flat major.

A number of sources, particularly from the academic field, treat particular works by Amy Beach. Dissertations like *An analysis of Amy Beach's Variations on Balkan themes, Op. 60* by Yiwen Zhang (2021) and *Amy Beach's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in C sharp minor, Op. 45* by Katrina Carlson Rushing (2000), show an interest from students in specific compositions by Beach. Other dissertations are more comparative in their approach, especially when it comes to comparisons with other women composers or women in the arts. Jennifer

Martin's *What do you mean I have to stay at home?: Considering the chamber music of three female composers at the turn of the 20th century* (2020) discusses the expectations about women in the society and what role they were allowed to play in the music world comparing three American women composers active at the turn of the 19th century. While Myrna Garvey Eden's *Anna Hyatt Huntington, sculptor and Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, composer: a comparative study of two women representatives of the American cultivated tradition in the arts* (1977) investigates how women artists carved out professional places for themselves, handled the way the public perceived their work, and demonstrated artistic uniqueness, despite the gendered social constraints of their time period.

During her lifetime, Amy Beach was an active writer, especially in women's music magazines but also in other newspapers covering composition and music education. One of the popular music magazines from her times was *Etude*, where we can find several of her articles.

In 'Common sense in Pianoforte Touch and Technique' (1916) where she remarks about the importance of piano technique as the basics in order to be able to express the musical intentions of the composer: '[technique] must be the servant, not the master of our musical equipment, ready to respond at all times to whatever demands we make on it, and equally ready to illustrate the idea the greatest art conceals art'. Another article from the same magazine, 'To the girl who wants to compose. Mrs. H. H. A. Beach' (1918) shows how Amy Beach thought that composing included not only the technical but also the intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Here again she highlights the importance of expression in her compositions. Another example can be found in the *Los Angeles Examiner* of 28th June 1915, 'Music's Ten Commandments as given for young composers', where she writes:

Remember, the technique is valuable only as means to an end. You must first have something to say – something which demands expression from the depths of your soul. If you feel deeply and know how to express what you feel, you make others feel.

In those three articles, Amy Beach shows that expression in her composition and, we might assume, in her playing was of the utmost importance, while the technique was the basis upon which it stands and competence in its handling is taken for granted. It was a viewpoint which particularly resonated with me and was insightful towards my interpretative approach to play

Beach.

2. 4 Resources regarding methodology

Main resource regarding the analysis of musical score from a performer's point of view is Nicholas Cook's *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (2013). He advocates a change in how musical performance is understood within musicology. Cook's main argument is to rethink music in terms of a performance instead of the more traditional approach of separating between music and performance. According to him: 'The experience of live or recorded performance is a primary form of music's existence, not just the reflection of a notated text' (Cook 1993: 1). Even though Cook is not himself a performer, he investigates the approach of several performers-theorists on how they analyse music. One of his most compelling arguments is that:

succession of transitions is what music is. And my claim is that performance (and listening too, but I shall not pursue that here) is to a very large extent an art of transitioning – in other words, it is oriented to precisely the horizontal dimension of music that the spatialised, hierarchical models of theorist's analysis de-emphasise. (1993: 46)

Following this argument, I put as one of my methodological questions the transitions in tempo within the chosen works for analysis and how they can be understood from the score and interpreted in the context of the whole opus.

'In Reflections on the Relationship of Analysis and Performance', (1993/94), Catherine Nolan explores connections between musical analysis and performance. Nolan supports the claim about hidden conflict between theorists and performers.

For the performer, analysis, as well other intellectual study of a work cannot help but be primarily concerned with practical and utilitarian matters, since there is an unequivocally more important goal (to the former) to be achieved, and analysis is but one of several means to the end. For the analyst, analysis is an end, even a vocation, unto itself, or at least in tandem with theory, and performance of a work analysed is unessential to the validity (1993/94: 121).

If we hold to the argument made by Cook that music is performance, then theoretical analysis of a musical score must ultimately serve the purposes of performance. This means that any theoretical framework must take performance as its point of departure, making musical analysis more akin to theatrical analysis than literary criticism, if anything because of the linear nature of music as a performative act. This would serve better the purpose of understanding and interpreting a musical score by performers.

Another resource that explores the connection between musicology and performing is a volume from 2019 edited by Madalena Soreval and Sara Zurletti: *Performance Analysis: A Bridge between Theory and Interpretation*. Here again is brought the importance of analysis from the performer's point of view:

My goal is focused on performers: I consider them as a particular kind of musicologist, who must analyse the score in great depth to achieve a great level of performance. Therefore, rather than looking at the performer as a passive instrument in the hands of a musicologist, we would rather demonstrate how interpretative choices are in themselves analytical. It's about understanding how and to what extent performers, in decoding the score and re-creating it through sound, undertake their choices through analytical work both in theory (the study of the score) and practice (application in execution) (2019: 126).

Soreval and Zurletti's compilation of essays bridges academic perspectives and practiced interpretative methods in the current international discussion by providing a pluralistic and deeply reflective analysis of musical performance through the lens of interdisciplinary contributions.

About questions of interpretation, Bethany Lowe's 'On the Relationship between Analysis and Performance: The Mediatory Role of the Interpretation' (2003) places the focus more on the importance of the performer's internalisation of the music during the process of

interpretation. Lowe argues that, besides analysis and performance, lies the third element which is interpretation (2003: 49).

The Interpretation is a mental image or conception of a piece of music that exists in an interactive and mediatory relationship with the other two more concrete phenomena, [...]. This internalized feature of musical experience guides and informs the performance of music as well as the analysis of music and other music-related activities (2003: 49).

Lowe contradicts Nolan (1993/94) by putting theoretical analysts and performers on the same level where Nolan still holds to the view that the theoretical analyst sits higher in the hierarchy than the performer.

An earlier volume edited by Cook and Everist (1999) *Rethinking music*, especially the chapter written by José A. Bowen ‘Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works’, links to my argument about importance of influences on composer and eventually, the performer:

Any study of music in performance needs to distinguish between the general *style* of the period, the specific *traditions* of the musical work, and the individual *innovations* of the performer. In other words, some of the nuances of performance are dependent upon what and when, not just who. Similarly, those who study works need to recognize that they also cannot afford to neglect the what, when, and who of performance (1999: 445).

The perspective that a composition is often influenced by other composers and current stylistic trends is supported by this outlook. This perspective holds that it is necessary for the performer to formulate an interpretation to take into account the work’s connection with its historical and stylistic context in addition to the score.

Together, John Rink’s *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding* (2002) as well as another of Rink’s contribution to the book edited by Paulo de Assis: *Virtual Works – Actual Things: Essays in Music Ontology* (2018), namely the chapter titled: ‘The Work of the Performer’, make the case for redefining analysis as an interpretative, embodied act that emphasises the performer’s participation in both creating the piece and influencing musical meaning. This viewpoint reinforces the thesis’s fundamental argument, which holds that the

performer's perspective must be addressed in a performance analysis as a crucial, imaginative, and contextually conscious part of musical understanding.

One of the valuable resources aiding me in developing my approach towards music analysis was Jean-Jacques Nattiez's *Music and Discourse* (1990). Nattiez expands on the tripartition proposed by Jean Molino⁴, where music can be analysed from three correlative perspectives: poietic (the composer's or creator's techniques and objectives that shaped the composition), neutral or trace (the scores), and aesthetic (the processes of perception and interpretation by the listener). It is further developed in chapter 3 where I discuss my methodology.

2. 5 Resources regarding performance practice

The performer's analysis acquires a historical dimension from performance practice, suggesting that interpretive decisions are frequently historically situated in addition to simply personal considerations. It underscores the concept that analysis needs to take into consideration how the music was and can be brought to life beyond what is written on the page.

Clive Brown's *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice 1750–1900* (1999) touches on the connection between the notation and the performance, highlighting the importance of understanding very precisely the notation and how it was executed in the times of the composer:

He [Brown] is convinced that performances can always be enriched by greater awareness of the notational and stylistic conventions familiar to the composer and by a knowledge of the range of techniques employed by the instrumentalists or vocalists for whom the music was intended (1999: 2).

The book covers most aspects of notations, be it tempo markings, accents, dynamics, ornaments etc., and explains how each of them was understood and executed. It offers

⁴ Jean Molino is a semiology professor at University of Lausanne, tutor of Jean- Jacques Nattiez.

invaluable help for performers to decipher the writing of historic composers, especially those who do not have a performance tradition as is the case with Beach and Aulin.

Another resource that sheds light on performance practice of the nineteenth century, particularly composers performing their own compositions, and how their playing could differ from the actual score, can be found in Neal Peres da Costa's *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (2012). Da Costa focuses mostly on early recordings and compares them with the actual scores and highlights the manner in which the notation and performance can differ from each other. According to da Costa (2012: xxiii): 'musical notation fails to convey all essential aspects of a composer's intentions.'

Both these volumes proved to be helpful towards the analyses of the chosen compositions in my dissertation and aided me to shape the interpretation of the actual notation and include it in my performance.

2. 6 The gaps in literature

There are certain gaps in literature that I will seek to address in this dissertation.

As already highlighted above, there are no existing sources about Valborg Aulin in English apart from a few online articles, and those in Swedish focus mostly on her life but do not analyse her works or her piano idiom. This study will address this lack of knowledge by providing an analysis of her only Piano Sonata from the performer's point of view, with a brief look at her *3 Fantasy Pieces* Op. 30, and this will be the first time such a study is being conducted on this major work of hers.

With regards to Amy Beach, even though there are several resources about her life and compositions, this will be the first time that her *Ballad* Op. 6 will be analysed from a performer's point of view. It will also be the first time that the work of these two women composers, both of whom were also performers, and both composing at the same time even

though within different contexts, will be analysed from the perspective of a performer, compared and contrasted.

So far, the absolute majority of score analysis published have put the theoretical concerns above performance issues, perhaps because performers have been more busy performing than publishing their analysis. The fact remains that serious performers do their analysis of the score before performing, even if they leave it hidden from the public. Whilst this may be understandable, it also has the effect of limiting the references that subsequent performers can use from individuals who have already performed these scores. This results not only in the lack of references with which other performers can engage with, but also in lost insights and knowledge that eminent performers gained playing certain music during their career. The aim of this dissertation is to contribute by providing a performer's analysis of two works by two women composers who deserve to be better known.

Overall, this chapter has put in perspective the study within the ever-growing discussion on women composers as well as presented the biographies of Valborg Aulin and Amy Beach. It has introduced methodological and performance-practice literature that has been consulted when writing this dissertation, and exposed notable gaps in the literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology⁵

According to Charles Rosen (Wilson 2017), an effective performance is where the performer ‘respects the composer’s directions with absolute fidelity and yet with imagination’. Following the tradition commenced by Mahler and then religiously advocated by Toscanini, the musician is expected to remain faithful to the intentions and directions the composer sets within the score. According to Calabrese (2018: 132):

the very difficult task of the performer [is] how to respect all that is written in the score, being able to read across the ‘unanswered questions’ of what the score suggests, while at the same time remaining closest to the black marks printed on the paper.

3. 1 Two levels of analysis

The performer has to commence one’s preparation towards performance from a thorough analysis of the score on two levels.

The first level of score analysis is that which emerges from the score itself: the markings and annotations written by the composer, as well as the holistic structure of the piece, rhythms, patterns, and their connections (such as harmonic progressions), and other compositional devices used. This approach ties my methodology to one of the three of Jean-Jacques Nattiez’ aspects in the symbolic phenomenon for discussing, analysing and performing music: the trace or neutral level. The other ones being poietic (the composer's or creator's techniques and objectives that shaped the composition) and aesthetic (the processes of perception and interpretation by the listener). According to Nattiez (1990: 15): ‘Between the poietic process and the aesthetic process there exists a *material trace*, not in itself the bearer of an immediately decipherable meaning, but without which meaning(s) could not exist: a trace that we can analyze.’ In the case of music, the material trace is the score itself. However, the transformation

⁵ An abridged version of this chapter along with some of the findings in chapter 5 regarding Amy Beach’s *Ballad* were presented at the University of Malta Research Expo on 29 May 2024.

of the notated text into a performative text must also be a part of the neutral level for the performer. According to Cook (2013: 1), performing is one of the main ways that music exists rather than a secondary act. Delving deeper into score analysis, the performer will need to determine how to pace the music, not only in terms of tempo but also at a dynamic level. This might have to be achieved through an understanding of the music that goes beyond the composer's directions and markings or where the music itself begs an interpretation which is not exactly in line with the composer's directions and that would represent the neutral level in this context. This enlarged definition of the neutral level recognises the performer's function as an active facilitator, whose interpretation of expressive objectives and technical difficulties provides the otherwise silent trace tangible form. Manfred Clynes, an Australian pianist and theorist, (quoted in Mazzola 2018: 105), holds that to make the music come to life, the performer must provide all the subtleties and microstructure that the composer could not or was not able to notate. 'Therein lies his art.'

There might be instances where certain dynamics need to take more time to be achieved, even though no tempo markings are in the score, or a new phrase requires a short pause before starting, elements which come naturally to the seasoned performer but are not always written directly in the music. Wilkinson (Several and Zurletti eds. 2018: 66) explains that:

the performer's view of the music is slightly different from what is shown in the score. This may or may not be different from how the composer perceives it, but it is a notation adjustment – a filling in of detail on the small scale - different from what the score provides. This creative involvement on the part of the performer is necessary to some degree in any score; assuming this to be true, we come to a subtly different experience of the score as a fluid medium, constellation of signs and interpretation rather than a static trace.

It is this 'creative involvement' that separates from a mechanical performance, that might be note-perfect but does not convey the emotional complexity and the musicality of the work, and a well-rounded performance. The experience of the performer on a technical and musical level, but also on an intellectual and emotional level, making the performer 'ready' to

‘take in’ the work, makes the difference between simply playing the notes and truly embodying the music.

The second level of score analysis is that which gives context to the score, elements related to the composer’s background and career, which place the score within a larger frame that gives it a comparative historical dimension. According to Soveral and Zurletti (2019: 318):

If we want our performance to build a unitary context of meaning, what [Wilhelm] Furtwängler calls the ‘spiritual unity of the whole’, we have to tie together all the performance parameters into a single expressive intention. It is necessary that the form integrates all the particulars, that the whole of the form is in relation to the style of the period when the score was composed, with the language of that time, with the state of the other arts and culture in general. The performer must keep in mind horizontal relations – between the whole of the form and its particulars – and vertical – of the performance character with history of forms, of styles, of languages, of culture in general –, because those relations constitute the ‘context’ of music, its particular sort of meaning.

This second level is important to highlight style, possible influences, elements that enhance the performer’s interpretative arsenal. This corresponds with Nattiez’ poietic dimension of analysis and asks the question ‘how it was composed’ (1999: 175) which focuses on techniques and the objectives of the composer (or creator) that influenced the composition. Observing that the piece was influenced or modelled on a composition by another composer may clarify the matters of technique, character, and interpretation. Such connections enable the performer to make decisions about the quality of sound and the technique required to achieve it. It also sheds light on style, mood, and texture, even if the harmonic language is different.

This level in the cases of Amy Beach and Valborg Aulin must be seen in the context of their contrasting musical upbringings: Aulin received formal education at the Swedish Academy, in Denmark and in Paris, while Beach was primarily self-taught in the puritanical culture of Boston. These early experiences are ‘poietic codes’ included into their scores rather than just biographical information. While Aulin's Piano Sonata Op. 14 reveals her engaging with the Germanic sonata tradition filtered via Scandinavian influences, Beach’s *Ballad* Op. 6 indicates her integration and transformation of European idioms into an emerging American voice. The

performer can better place each piece into a network of stylistic models and cultural constraints by acknowledging such poietic contexts.

3. 2 Technique and interpretation

For the performer, however, the analysis of the score is also a technical analysis of performance, in the sense that it has to take into account all those technical requirements to perform the piece in a way that renders the quality of sound and expression intended by the composer. The performer, in this case the pianist, needs to decide about matters such as the kind of touch that needs to be applied to the composer's marking and how it should be practiced to obtain the desired effect. Moreover, the performer must devise effective strategies to tackle particular passages that might require more technical dexterity. Keeping in mind the type of instrument and the technique prevailing during the composer's lifetime is important for the performer to be able to achieve that sound using a modern instrument with its capabilities.

The performer, however, as an individual, is also an interpreter. As much as one would want to be faithful to the composer's intentions, the performer as interpreter is always engaged creatively with the score, as stated in Wilkinson quoted on p. 37. Interpretation not only depends on personal understandings of the music determined by the personality of the performer, as well as one's musical formation, but also on physiological elements that might give rise to different technical approaches. For example, the pianists with smaller hands would have to treat the wide chords differently than those with bigger hands, most likely arpeggiating the chords more often than it is written or indicated in the text. Also, the size of the fingers – having long, thin fingers in comparison to short and thick ones – reflects on the choice of fingering for certain passages. The performer, therefore, will look out for the curious, the different, the interesting, that draws her towards the music to be performed; technically it will be those challenging parts to play that will attract most attention and require adequate grasp

and mould. Such moments, whether unique in their structure or difficult in their execution, naturally attract the performer's attention because they combine the technical challenges with interpretative potential. Since they frequently serve as points of reference within the structure of the work, these sections offer the most chance for the performer to artistically shape the musical narrative. Despite one's objective to present one's own interpretation, the performer will not just analyse the score but also other available performances by other artists, not just to draw inspiration but also to study the manner by which other performers tackle the same piece of music both from a musical and emotional understanding of the work, as well as from its technical aspects.

3. 3 Four aspects of analysis

The analysis of Amy Beach's *Ballad* Op. 6 and Valborg Aulin's Piano Sonata Op. 14, which will be the core of this dissertation, along with a brief look at Beach's *Four Sketches* Op. 15 and Aulin's *3 Fantasy Pieces* Op. 30, will be based on the above-mentioned considerations. I will translate these into four major questions for enquiry: the question of musical influences; the question of dynamics; the question of tempi; and the question of technical proficiency and awareness, which covers a number of technical issues of interest to the performer because of the challenges they pose.

3. 3. 1 The question of musical influences

In compositions, where an established way of performing does not exist, as is the case in Aulin's Piano Sonata, knowing the musical influences that shaped the composer's style and musical language help the performer to make certain interpretative decisions. Based on the knowledge and understanding of works by other composers that were evidently influential upon the style of a composer like Aulin, and being familiar with the 'tradition' of performance

of those works, the performer will find herself in a better position to decide on the kind of technique to use. Technical choices like articulation, voicing, fingering, and pedaling are guided by this contextual knowledge, which ensures that they match the performer's interpretive intentions while also fitting the composer's aesthetic world.

The mood and atmosphere of the piece could also be directly inspired or perhaps reminiscent of other works by other composers, that could have been quite well known at the time, and the knowledge of which illustrates further the intentions, and the emotion that the composer intends to elicit. Doing this groundwork before actually sitting down to engage with the work itself from a technical and performative aspect already provides the performer with an interpretative framework with which to approach the piece.

3. 3. 2 The question of dynamics

Dynamic markings are generally intended to indicate how loud the sound should be. However, such markings also play a role in portraying the musical expressiveness of the score, they help to shape musical phrases, give emotional colours to particular passages, emphasise structural changes within the piece, as well as interact with the harmony and texture. Sometimes, these indications are not always clear or indeed possible to implement within the context of the performance. For instance, when composers mark several consecutive phrases as *forte*, it does not imply that all of them should sound at the same exact loudness level. Instead, performers must consider dynamic shaping by taking into account the musical context like phrase structure, texture, and harmonic language in order to introduce subtle nuances. According to Brown (1999: 59–60), during the eighteenth and even the nineteenth centuries the one of the primary criteria to evaluate a performer's competence in solo playing was the dynamic colouring and accentuation they added, which were influenced by both conventions and personal style. In some cases, the markings may not be straightforward or require effects that

are either impractical or physically challenging. An example of that would be sustaining a forte dynamic over a long stretch, which may prove tiring for both performer and the listener.

According to Heinrich Schenker the scores represent the effects the composers want to create but they do not explain the way these should be obtained (cited by Cook 1993: 37). Following this train of thought, sometimes dynamic writing is just the idea of a sound, but it does not necessarily mean that it has to be executed literally. Schenker (cited by Cook 1993: 37) holds that: '[the score] does not at all show the way the sequence should be played but indicates the effect the composer desires – leaving it up to the performer to find the means'.

Moreover, dynamic indications should not be treated only as volume instructions. Many times, they are the indication of the tone and character of the piece. Their interpretation must consider the whole context of the composition, including preceding and subsequent material. Therefore, performers need to be flexible when approaching written dynamics and treat them with critical awareness. Decisions regarding dynamics made by performers are deliberate and a must in a creative process:

It is shown that each performance is characterized by subtle variations regarding timing (tempo) or dynamics and that these variations may be related to the creative processes of expressivity and interpretation in different piano repertoire (Soveral and Zurletti 2019: xi).

3. 3. 3 The question of tempo

According to Cook (1993: 46), music has a more horizontal dimension, which means that it needs to flow and go from one note to another. This places a lot of importance on how notes are spaced and emphasized. Therein lies the importance of tempi and changes within: 'The artistry lies in the transition from each moment to the next' (Cook 1993: 190). Brown (1999: 282) notes that:

Historical evidence and contemporary experience demonstrate that tempo is among the most variable and contentious issues in musical performance. The majority of musicians regard it as their inalienable right to select their own tempo. To a considerable extent the exercise of choice

in this, as in other interpretative matters, has been seen throughout the [eighteenth and nineteenth century] period as an essential part of the performing musician's creativity.

Brown suggests that the performer should try to follow the composer's indications as closely as possible, but he should be also aware of relevant conventions and how the tempo could differ from one composer to the another, even if they used the same terminology.

This can all too easily happen when a term such as 'andante molto' is used by some composers to mean a faster pace than their normal andante and by others a slower one, or when the significance of [sign] for the tempo in particular cases is unrecognized. (Brown 1999: 282)

Therefore, deciphering and understanding the exact tempo behind the markings is not always an easy task. Sometimes, depending on the context of the musical conventions, the performer can allow herself some alterations in tempi that are not always indicated in the score once they make better sense within the whole context of the piece and its interpretation.

3. 3. 4 The question of technical proficiency and awareness

Every score poses different technical challenges that vary depending on the performer's technical proficiency, musical sensitivity and overall experience. Therefore, this section covers those aspects that I have personally found either intriguing, difficult to execute or ambiguous in their meaning and which do not fall into the previously established categories. Highlighting these challenges is important, as they reveal what is unusual, different and curious within the score, and suggest possible strategies for understanding and overcoming them.

3. 4 Conclusion

The analysis of a piece of music from a performers' point of view has to be done on multiple levels: a thorough analysis of the score is very important, but equally so a technical-performative analysis, as well as an analysis of other performances by other performers. It is not enough for the performer to know what the music says, but equally important is how what

it says is to be conveyed to the audience. The quote attributed to Johann Sebastian Bach (cited by Benda, 2018: 14) states that ‘It is easy to play any musical instrument: all you have to do is touch the right key at the right time and the instrument will play itself.’ Though it sounds simple, in reality it is a complex combination of various aspects that require thought and care – and practice – from the performer, who has to consider every challenge: whether the piece was written for an instrument that is similar to that, which we use nowadays in concert halls; the technique applied during the composer’s lifetime; the performing tradition of the work; and the best performing practice that will best transmit that musical experience to the listeners.

Grigory Sokolov (2016), one of the most acclaimed living pianists of the 21st century, when answering the question whether it is hard to talk about the music, replied that: ‘It is not difficult, it is impossible [...]. If it were possible, we would need no music.’ In the end, the task of the performer is to perform, and as much as one can prepare oneself towards performance, there remains an unspeakable bond between the performer and the music that in performance will drive the performer to make music, at once studied and objective – following the directions of the composer – and at the same time personal and intimate – moved by how the music ‘works’ on the performer.

Chapter 4: Historical background

4. 1 End of 19th century – historical background

The second half of the nineteenth century was characterised by the rise of nationalism and the industrial revolution. These two elements would have a lasting impact that rapidly transformed the world. The effect of this momentous transformation would also be felt in the music written at the time. Nationalism inspired composers to draw upon folk traditions, native languages, and cultural identities, giving music a strong sense of place and heritage. Simultaneously, the industrial revolution brought deep changes to everyday life, society, and technology, which not only influenced artistic creation but also transformed opportunities for women. Broadening education, new social roles, and greater access to public life allowed women to participate more actively in music – as performers, composers, and audience – marking a significant change in the cultural landscape.

4. 1. 1 Nationalism

The spirit of nationalism emerged from the French Revolution. During the Ancien Regime what was identified as the nation was largely synonymous with the territory ruled upon by the sovereign according to Divine Will. However, during the French Revolution, the will of the French nation – meaning the sum total of French citizens eligible to vote – came to be recognised as the legitimating power of authority (Stearns 2013: 53). This evolution in conceptualising the idea of the nation brought a new age of nationalism that quickly infected the rising middle-class, endorsing a progressive view of historical advancement, based on individual entrepreneurship within the context of a collective sense of identity (Gellner 1983: 126).

Perhaps the two major national achievements in Europe were the Risorgimento in Italy, leading the country's independence and unification in 1861, and the unification of Germany

ten years later. This new sense of nationalism led to the idealisation of the ‘folk’, the people and their primeval link to the land, leading to a reinvention of folktales, folk-song, dance and art, and an appreciation of local landscapes and traditions. In artistic spheres, including music, the artist went in search of the ‘authenticity’ of the local, expressing himself in rather sentimental and affected art-forms, rather than searching for the abstract universalist artform embraced by the previous era of rationalism (Gelbart 2007: 9). Thus, Richard Wagner’s reinvention of Germanic legends in the Ring Cycle of operas in music, or the Brothers Grimm collected folktales in literature, or Jan Matejko’s grand paintings depicting Polish historical events, became symbolic of this new sense of nationalism in European arts (Gelbart 2007: 9, Norberg 2022: 27, Rutecka-Baynes 2021: 180).

On the other side of the Atlantic, the United States, following a bloody civil war that ended 1865, saw the rapid transformation of the country into an industrial society (Breuilly 1993: 7). During the last quarter of the century, the United States attracted an unprecedented number of immigrants, especially from Europe, who contributed not just to the economic wealth being generated in the country but also to its cultural enrichment (Stearns 2013: 234). Immigration, combined by the wealth of industrialists and an emergent middle class, had its effects on cultural production. The United States became ever more attractive for artists to move to, especially since political and ethnic persecutions became more rife in Europe, and American entrepreneurs, keen to emulate their counterparts in the old continent, began funding European artists and buying their artwork. The economic wellbeing and the political standing of the United States as a young but energetic emerging power also played on American nationalism. As in Europe, where the historical turn of events, the rise of the middle classes and industrial advancement brought a new collective sense of identity in the form of nationalism, similarly in the United States there grew a desire to find a national identity especially through cultural expression (Gellner 1983: 36). The Americans were very much

aware of their relative cultural poverty in compared with the Europeans, as well as of the fact that their young nation was made of different ethnicities and ‘nationalisms’ that were still very much linked to Europe. Sears (1989: 215) argues that ‘Because American suffered from a sense of cultural inferiority to Europe [19th century American cultural attractions] often contained some evidence of equality with or superiority to the Old World’. What made American culture was an important debate in the United States during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

4. 1. 2 Industrial revolution

The invention of the steam engine changed the world. Transportation, that for millennia depended mostly on human feet, horses, and wooden carts or boats, was revolutionised by the steam engine train. Eventually this would also change water transportation with steam engine steel ships taking over from wind powered wooden ones. Suddenly distances were shorter, transportation could be in mass, and goods and people could travel large distances in a very short span of time. New machines were invented for the production of goods and mass production brought in a new culture of consumerism. New factories were being built, and fortunes were made. The production of steel, the mining of coal and the extraction of crude oil became crucial to these industries, and regions rich in these resources were soon transformed (Stearns 2013: 30).

These sudden changes meant that cultural products could also travel faster. The need for a better-trained workforce of lawyers, accountants, bookkeepers, bankers, insurance brokers, agents, public officials, and others, meant that education became more widespread (Stearns 2013: 276). This also had an impact on arts education, that not only became more accessible to a wider public, but also more desirable. Eager to emulate the manner of the upper classes, it was the turn of middle-class households to hold their own soirées and salons. Membership in a club also became a sign of affluence and wellbeing. Audiences in

performances grew in proportion to the expanding culturally educated public, and instead of commissions paid by aristocrats, artists started getting commissions from industrialists and other wealthy patrons, as well as by institutions. The more widespread access and the proliferation of educational institutions dedicated to the arts also meant that more and better trained artists were coming out of them.

End of the century Sweden could be taken as an example of the rapid social and economic changes brought by the industrial revolution. Mostly agrarian until the deregulation of trade in 1846, the first railway was built in Sweden in 1856 (Lambert 2021). This brought a wave of industrialisation that changed the face of the country. That it soon became a significant producer of iron and steel played an important role in Sweden's success story. Economic change brought also political change, and in 1865 there was a constitutional reform that two years later resulted in the establishment of two houses of parliament (Lambert 2021). The Swedish middle class rose swiftly, and their appetite for culture grew just as strongly. They were looking for a cultural expression that mirrored their ambitions and their values, a kind of sophisticated cultural expression that despite its lofty ideals was still rooted in those elements which they could identify with because they were born in them. Hence the turn towards romanticism, with its inspirations drawn from folklore and popular expression.

4. 1. 3 Women

The industrialisation of society, with the constant need for factories to acquire more workforce leading to mass migration from rural areas and the compulsion of thriving capitalism to widen its consumer market, meant that women had to play a wider role than in previous eras (Stearns 2013: 76). Women became increasingly present on the shop floor, even if this applied exclusively to working class women and, at least in the beginning, was seen as a failure on behalf of the man of the household to provide for his family. The market for consumables

targeted them as potential consumers. These circumstances made women more visible in society and provided them with more independence since they were earning and managing their own money. The rising middle class, with its values and world-view, meant that more women were getting a proper education, and even though it was still very much of a man's world, where middle class women were mostly forced to remain in the home to care for the family needs, a new desire by women to be present and active – even in public life and business – was being fomented. So much that it is during the late nineteenth century that women start demanding equal rights and the right to vote. By the end of the nineteenth century a number of women's associations advocating women's rights were already established in Europe and the United States.

This awakening of women to demand equality in a society that still treated them as inferior beings, was also reflected in the world of the arts and sciences. Woman started making unprecedented inroads in this sphere, even though they often had to face fierce opposition. In the scientific world, women's contributions were very significant: Henrietta Swan Leavitt, an American astronomer, changed forever the way we measure distances in the universe (Trimble and Weintraub eds. 2022: 4–5); Sofia Kovalevskaja, a Russian mathematician, whose contribution was significant in the field of mechanics and differential equations (Koblitz 1983: 239–257); Marie Skłodowska-Curie, Polish physicist and chemist, who won the Nobel Prize for her pioneering research on radioactivity (Curie 1938: 208–228). Hundreds of other women scientists broke the glass ceiling and contributed both to the advancement of science as well as women's education. In the arts, women were becoming always more prominent. In 1894, the painter Suzanne Valadon became the first woman to be admitted to the Societe Nationale des Beaux-Arts (Perromat 2021). The composer Louise Farrenc, who wrote – amongst other things – three symphonies and a number of choral works, was appointed as professor of piano at the Paris Conservatory, the only woman in the faculty (Briscoe 2024: 171)). Cecile Chaminade,

also a French composer, despite of the scathing attack from male critics, who labeled her music as soppy and sentimental, managed to sell over five million copies during her lifetime of her ‘Scarf Dance’, and she had a very keen following in the United States (Inaba 2019).

It took a lot of courage from women to pursue their struggle towards social and economic parity, however, once the process was set in motion there was nothing to stop it, even if most of the rights that today are considered obvious had to wait till the twentieth century to be obtained. Perhaps none like the dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1981: 226) captured the spirit of women’s awakening towards the end of the nineteenth century when in his 1890 play *Hedda Gabler*, Hedda exclaims: ‘For once in my life I want to feel that I control a human destiny.’

4. 2 Musical influences of late 19th century

The late 19th century was firmly rooted in the Romantic tradition that in music is generally considered to begin soon after the death of Ludwig van Beethoven, the last of the great classicists, in 1827. In the first part of the century, after the so-called transitional late works of Beethoven and the compositions of Franz Schubert, composers like Schumann, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Liszt opened the doors to the expression of emotions in music in a different way by redefining older forms or even developing new ones, especially for solo piano. ‘In the nineteenth century, the piano became the "utility" instrument par excellence it remains today’ (Todd 2004: 9).

Robert Schumann is believed to have said that ‘romanticism should include originality, fantasy and a touch of the poetic’ (Yoell 1974: 17). Composers of the second part of the 19th century are sometimes described as neo-Romantic, late-Romantic or modern:

the composers of the Neue Deutsche Schule, Liszt and Wagner included, together with several leading composers from the late nineteenth century nationalist schools, were classified not as ‘Romantics’ but as ‘Moderns’ or even in some cases as ‘Realists’, and that view remained largely intact until the upheavals of the early years of the twentieth century cast new light on their achievements (Samson 2001: 20).

The marker for the change is when:

a generation of composers departed or stopped composing around the mid-century (Chopin, Schumann, Mendelssohn); a very different generation came to maturity (Brahms, Bruckner, Franck); both Liszt and Wagner took off in radically new directions; the separation of art and entertainment was formalised in music drama and operetta; nationalist programmes were launched around the edges of Europe (Samson 2001: 21).

The composers of the late 19th century were heavily influenced by their predecessors, however, while they could not deny their admiration for them, they sought in true romantic spirit to overcome their influence, to supersede them, to give voice to their individuality and their freedom. Their romantic vision of historical progress meant that they saw it to be their mission to break boundaries and take music to a new level. As a result, the late 19th century became a highly productive period, with both orchestral and piano music seeking new forms and dimensions. Composers created works that were innovative and often broke the rules and conventions of earlier music.

Aulin and Beach's compositions of their early period may be considered as somewhat anachronistic or stylistically conservative when compared within the larger musical context of the late nineteenth century in which they were composed. Both composers created their musical language from well-established traditions and influences, particularly those deeply rooted in Romantic idioms, which they were most close to. Instead of altering it entirely, they refined and improved it. They do not always get involved with the more progressive musical trends that were surfacing among their contemporaries. Nevertheless, this should not be understood as a lack of originality, but rather as a personal choice in developing their own style.

4. 2. 1 Boston at the time of Amy Beach

According to Adriene Block (1998: 20) Boston in the late 19th century was 'considered by its civic leaders the Athens of America, boasted a rich cultural life and one of the finest musical communities in the country'. The move to Boston in 1875 was a game changer for Amy Beach.

That year Boston's composers also elevated their standing – John Knowles Paine⁶ became Harvard's first professor of music; Arthur Foote⁷ received his master's degree of music in Harvard; and George Whitefield Chadwick⁸ started working as a music teacher at Oliver College in Michigan despite his father's wishes (Block 1998: 21). There were musical performances organised and performed by the Handel and Haydn Society, where Amy Beach's mother sang in the choir. The performances included works by Handel, Mendelssohn, Haydn, Rossini, and Bach, just to name a few (Block 1998: 23). Symphonic concerts were offered by Theodore Thomas' orchestra and Carl Zerrahn, who led the Harvard Musical Association, a mere six years before the establishment of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (Block 1998: 24).

During the years of her childhood in Boston, Beach attended concerts by celebrated pianists, such as the one by Hans von Bülow in 1875 who performed not only solo piano pieces but also Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto and the premiere of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto which was dedicated to von Bülow himself (Block 1998: 24). There were also female musicians who gave concerts in Boston, like Julie Rivé in 1876 and Amy Fay, who studied for six years in Germany (Block 1998: 24). Other female pianists who made an impact on the Boston musical scene – and probably played an influence on a young Amy Beach – were Teresa Carreño, to whom eventually Amy Beach dedicated her piano concerto, and Anette Essipoff, pupil and – for a time – wife, of the celebrated teacher Teodor Leschetizky (Block 1998: 24–25).

As to her own musical education, Amy Beach started learning with Ernst Perebo, between 1876–82, who was German-trained and one of the best pianists in Boston at that time, also teaching at the New England Conservatory (Block 1998: 23). She then moved to Carl

⁶ John Knowles Paine (1839 – 1906) was the first American-born composer to become well-known for large-scale orchestral compositions. He was the senior member of a group of composers known as the *Boston Six* (also called The Second New England School) whose other members were Horatio Parker, George Chadwick, Edward MacDowell, Arthur Foote, and Amy Beach.

⁷ Arthur William Foote (1853 –1937) was an American classical composer and a member of the *Boston Six*.

⁸ George Whitefield Chadwick (1854 –1931) was an American composer and a member of the *Boston Six*.

Baermann, who was a pupil and a friend of Liszt and a colleague of von Bülow, with whom he taught advanced piano students in the Munich Conservatory (Block 1998: 28). Therefore ‘the lineage from Liszt to Baermann to Cheney conferred on her inheritance from Europe’s most brilliant pianist’ (Block 1998: 28). Over the next years, studying with Baermann, Beach made her orchestral debut with the Moscheles’ Piano Concerto no. 2 in G minor (Block 1998: 29). She also performed Chopin’s first piano concerto with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1885, that being the last concert of the season – which was a privilege for any pianist to play, especially for an up-and-coming talent. She also performed the Mendelssohn’s concerto no. 2 in D minor with Theodore Thoms as conductor, in 1885 (Block 1998: 30–33).

4. 2. 2 Sweden in time of Valborg Aulin

In the 19th century Nordic music was still forming its own character. As Yoell notes: For almost five hundred years the Nordic peoples have received a steady flow of foreign ideas. They showed some flashes of response in science and literature, but musically they had largely remained a colony (1974: 17). The first conservatory in Sweden, modeled on French examples, was intended to be established in the mid-19th century by Crown Prince Carl Johan (Yoell 1974: 25) and was opened for tuition in 1864.

During the Aulin’s formative years, Swedish composers were inspired by late Wagner and by Grieg, while Debussy’s influence was minimal (Yoell 1974: 33). Among Aulin’s contemporaries was Emil Sjögren, whose reputation in Sweden rests now chiefly on his songs, of which he wrote a hundred’ (Horton 1963: 103) and who was considered one of the leading composers during this time.

Aulin was brought up in a musical family. Her mother was an aspiring singer, her father an amateur violin and viola player, while her brother became an excellent violinist and composer. She began piano lessons with her aunt Clara at the age of six (George 1997: 7).

When she was twelve, she started studying with pianist and composer Jacob Adolf Hagg who had returned from Copenhagen where he was under the tutelage of composer Niels. W Gade. At thirteen she began studying harmony with Albert Rubenson, violinist and composer, who also directed the Swedish conservatory. Four years later she was accepted to the Royal Swedish Academy where she continued studying with Albert Rubenson, as well as with Herman Behrens (counterpoint), August Lagregren (harmony) and Ludvig Norman (orchestration). During her studies, Valborg Aulin received special attention from the composer Ludvig Norman, who followed with interest her compositional development'(George 1997: 8). Her piano teacher at that time was Hilda Thegerström regarded as one of the finest pianists of her era and a student of Franz Bervald and Franz Liszt. Aulin gave her first public performance at the age of twenty years, followed by a tour with her violinist brother Tor Aulin (George 1997: 8).

After five years of composition studies – during which she was the only female student majoring in the subject (George 1997: 7) – Aulin was twice awarded the Jenny Lind Scholarship⁹. This allowed her to study in Denmark with composer Niels W. Gade for a year, and then, in Paris, for three years she studied with the pianist E. Bourgain (a student of Theodore Rutter and Liszt) and composers Jules Massenet, Ernest Guiraud and Benjamin Godard. Upon returning to Sweden, she settled in Stockholm, where she taught piano, harmony, theory, and composition while continuing her performing career.

⁹ Jenny Lind Scholarship established by the internationally acclaimed Swedish soprano Jenny Lind was awarded to exceptional musicians in Sweden which allowed them to study abroad by covering their costs of living and accommodation. The first scholarship was awarded in 1876 and the scholarship programme run till 2024.

4. 2. 3 Tradition of women composers

As Gates observes (1994b: 31), 'The reason for not hearing about women composers doesn't lie in biology but in the circumstances around women's life'. Historically, women had few opportunities to pursue composition unless they were born into an aristocratic and wealthy family, a family of musicians, or chose to join a convent (Gates 1994a: 8). Some of the bias against women involved in the process of composing stemmed from the idea that, whilst women can understand music, their emotional nature prevents them from creating it, since this requires a more intellectual disposition naturally found in men (Kizinska 2012).

The first known women composers date back to the Middle Ages, perhaps the most known amongst them being Hildegard of Bingen, the twelfth century abbess and mystic. Over the centuries, other notable figures such as Barbara Strozzi, Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, Clara Rogers, Ethel Smyth, and Augusta Holmes left a lasting mark on subsequent generations of women composers (Bowers and Tick 1987: 5–7). Nevertheless, it was only toward the end of the 18th century that women really began to make significant advancement in music as institutions, like the conservatoires in France (1795) and eventually also in Germany (Leipzig, 1843), began to allow women to study an instrument – though not yet composition. Even then, women were often steered into teaching careers when they would not be allowed to reach professional levels as performers (Kizinska 2012).

The rise of salon music, a term first used by Robert Schumann, further shaped women's musical opportunities. Music moved from courts to private homes, creating spaces where young women could perform and enjoy music in a socially acceptable context. Yet the 'salon music' label carried a certain condescension, suggesting that such music was not always taken seriously – a perception that proved difficult to shake (Kicinska 2012). In a time when a distinction between art and entertainment was being drawn, 'salon music' was considered

mostly as light and superficial, characteristic that were often attributed also to women considered to be intellectually lightweight and superficial thinkers.

Among the pioneering women composers and pianists of the 19th century, Maria Szymanowska stands out as the first female piano virtuoso to achieve international recognition. She toured widely across Europe and gained acclaim both as a performer and as a composer (Horvath 2016). Following her footsteps, the prominent women of music during the 19th century were Clara Schumann (Robert's Schumann wife) as well as Fanny Hensel (née Mendelssohn, sister of Felix Mendelssohn). Both were gifted pianists, composers, and enthusiastic organisers and participants of musical salons. Schumann was a well-renowned pianist who managed the legacy of her husband after his death and toured relentlessly as a virtuoso pianist (Bowers and Tick 1987: 249–282). Hensel (née Mendelssohn) was as musically educated (and talented) as her brother but, because of prevailing social norms, never experienced the high-profile career her brother did (Inaba 2019).

In France, Louise Farrenc became the first woman appointed professor of piano at the Paris Conservatory in the early 1840s, and Cecile Chaminade achieved remarkable success touring internationally with her piano compositions, particularly in the United States (Inaba 2019). Although these women achieved a certain renown within the musical world of the late 19th century, there is no direct evidence that Valborg Aulin or Amy Beach were aware of their music or accomplishments. Block (1998: 24) speculates that Beach might have read the memoir by Amy Fay who studied in Germany and was acquainted with Clara Schumann and, therefore, she was aware of other women composers in the world. However, from the analysis of their music one can deduct that both Aulin and Beach drew primary inspiration from male composers, both predecessors and contemporaries.

Chapter 2 has described the larger historical context of the late nineteenth century and the main focus on the impact of nationalism and the Industrial Revolution on women's position in society. The main musical influences of the period has been also discussed. Amy Beach and Valborg Aulin have been situated within their cultural environments of Boston and Sweden, respectively, alongside the emerging tradition of women composers.

Chapter 5: Analysis

5. 1 Amy Beach – *Ballad* in D flat major Op. 6

The *Ballad* Op. 6 written in 1894 is in the key of D flat major, a violet colour according to Beach's synaesthesia: a colour association that she tied to particular key signatures (Block 1994: 10). According to Clarke (2019), purple has biblical associations with riches, regal status, and magnificence. Knowing the significance of the colour association straightaway gives the performer an idea of the mood that Beach wanted to convey through her composition. This immediately gives an orientation to the performance of the piece. In the case of *Ballad*, beauty, splendour and grandiosity go hand in hand with the lush melodies of a vocal line transcribed for the piano in the beginning, as well as in the magnificent chordal writing towards the end of the piece.

The *Ballad* is based on Amy Beach's art song 'O my luv is like a red, red rose' Op. 12 no. 3 (1889). Even though the opus marking suggests that the song was written after the *Ballad*, the copyright date points out that the song was published before. Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet, wrote the original poem which Beach set to music. The protagonist is a man who tells his sweetheart that he will remain true 'though he go thousands mile'. The most popular version of this song is matched with the traditional tune 'Low Down in the Broom'. In classical music, this poem had been used previously in compositions by Pietro Urbani, who scored it for a chamber ensemble (1794), and by Robert Schumann (1840) in his *Fünf Lieder und Gesänge*, Op. 27 as a second song in the cycle, titled 'Dem roten Röslein gleicht mein Lieb' (My Love is Like a Red Rose). Beach's version is an original composition, not stylistically – or melodically – derived from any folk music that was previously connected to Burns' verses (Block 1994: 59). The *Ballad* has been described as 'outstanding [...] intensely lyrical piece with long-breathed melodies' by Block (1994: 122).

While the original song by Beach was in the key signature of B flat major, the *Ballad* is in D flat major with modulation in the middle part to E major. In the original song, the voice had the melody, and the piano accompanied with triplet passages. In the *Ballad* both are incorporated in the piano score. The challenging aspect for the performer is to bring out the melody in quavers, sometimes in triplets, which travels from high to low register, moving from one hand to the other, while asserting the arpeggio-like and chord triplet accompaniment. Highlighting the voices is one of the main technical complexities in this piece since it requires different techniques for both hands. *Ballad* is a very intense and emotional piece with dynamics ranging from *ppp* to *fff* with few tempo changes and use of rubato. Expressions like *dolce*, *cantabile*, *dolce grazioso*, *appassionato*, *dolce cantando*, *molto teneramente*, *dolcissimo*, *con tutta forza*, *ben marcato*, *molto tranquillo*, *molto rinforzando*, *agitato*, *smorzando* and *morendo*, show a considerable range of emotions required from the performer when executing the piece.

5. 1. 1 Musical influences

The *Ballad* was composed in the late-Romantic style which, according to Samson (2001: 567) ‘witnessed a further intensification of emotional expression, harmonic complexity, and orchestral richness, as composers strove for greater depth and individuality in their music. This era saw the dissolution of traditional tonal boundaries and an increasing tendency toward musical subjectivism.’

Since the piece is a reworking of Beach’s own art song ‘O my luv is like a red, red rose’ Op. 12 no. 3, it remains the main musical inspiration for the *Ballad*. The composition does not appear to be modelled on any other piece by another composer. The first part *Andantino* follows more closely the song’s development, with few added flourishes of semiquavers, whilst the second part: *Allegro con vigore* is more of a virtuoso fantasy based

upon the song's themes using all the compositional tools at the composer's disposal, like doubling the notes, adding chords, some virtuoso passages, trills and tremolos.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Beach used different techniques to transcribe her song and transform it into a solo piece that can easily be traced to the Liszt transcriptions of Franz Schubert's *Lieder*. One can also feel a trace of influence from Frédéric Chopin's *Ballade* Op. 38 no. 2 in F major, and more generally the use of wide chords in creating the melody which was characteristic of the compositions of Johannes Brahms.

The beginning that starts on a repeated A flat note is reminiscent of the opening of Chopin's *Ballade* Op. 38 no. 2 in F major where a repeated C note opens the composition. The rhythm also feels the same, even though Beach's piece is in 3/4 time signature but making use of quaver triplets which give the feel of 9/8 time signature, while Chopin's is in 6/8.

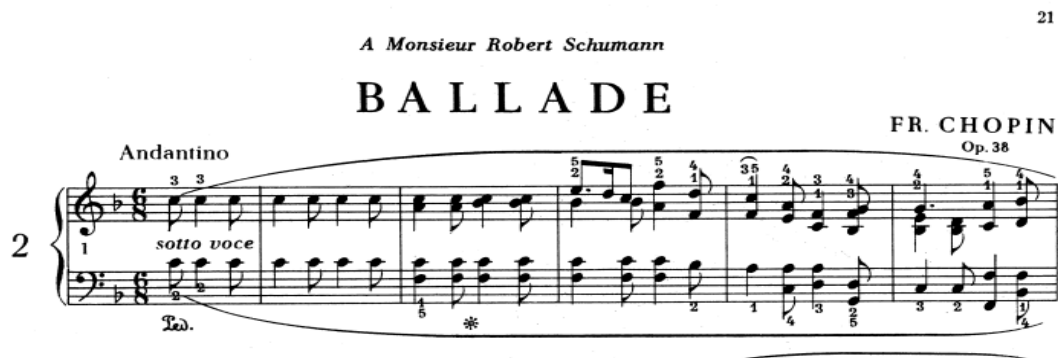


Figure 1. 1: Chopin, *Ballade* Op. 38 no. 2, bars 1–6



Figure 1. 2: Beach, *Ballad* Op. 6, bars 1–4

This type of opening which lingers on one note gives an aura of hesitation before the main melody opens. In Chopin's *Ballade* the repeated notes build up to the main theme and

introduce the main tempo. In Beach's it commences the four-bar introduction before the main melody appears. Understanding the origin of this concept is important because it can recall the pastoral, serene atmosphere of Chopin's *Ballade* and influence the pianist's approach and set the mood for the whole composition.

The texture of the *Allegro con vigore* part bears similarities to Brahms' uses of chords, octaves and even rhythms which could be seen in the example of his *Ballade* Op. 10 no. 1. Beach's writing is even more dense than Brahms and she also uses rhythms that include triplets and duplets.

The image shows a musical score for Brahms' *Ballade* Op. 10 no. 1, specifically bars 27-34. The score is written for piano and is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Allegro (ma non troppo)'. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets (indicated by a '3' over a group of notes), duplets (indicated by 'm.d.'), and dynamic markings like 'p' (piano), 'espr.' (espressivo), 'ben tenuto cresc.' (well sustained, crescendo), 'f' (fortissimo), and 'Ped.' (pedal). The score is divided into two systems, with the first system ending at bar 30 and the second system starting at bar 31. The page number '121' is visible in the top right corner.

Figure 1. 3: Brahms, *Ballade* Op. 10 no. 1, bars 27–34



Figure 1. 4: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 147–158

Being able to recognise the similarity to Brahms' works gives the performer an idea of the sound quality that should be present in this work. This means that even when the dynamics are loud, the warm, round sound ought to resemble more that of a string orchestra than a percussive one.

Brahms favoured a legato touch, rich tonal shading, and discreet but effective use of the pedal to achieve warmth and harmonic blending. His letters and the testimonies of his contemporaries emphasize his preference for a deep, singing tone and careful voicing of inner lines in chordal textures (Scherman 1997: 240).

In this 'Brahmsian' style of composition, the density of the notes never takes over the main line of melody and other secondary voices are retained in the background. Dynamics need to be adjusted accordingly. Wanting to retain the melodic line from her song and at the same time create a grander, more dense sound that would befit a substantial piano solo opus, the Brahmsian style was well adapted to Beach's needs.

In the way she reworked her song into a solo piano composition one can also note how much resemblance it bears to Liszt's transcriptions of Schubert's Lieder. Liszt, who like

Brahms, favoured a more dense and grand sound, tends to place the second verse of the song, or even the second appearance of the main melody, usually in the low register and the same can be seen in Beach's composition.

Die Welt wird schö-ner mit je-dem Tag, man
 weiss nicht, was noch wer-den mag, das Blü- - hen will nicht
 en - - den, es will nicht en - - den. Es

pp
tranquillo un poco meno. si cantato
cresc.
11

Figure 1. 5: Schubert, *Frühlingsglaube*, D. 686 (Arr. Franz Liszt), bars 29–36, annotated

Hörst die Nach - ti - gal - lenschla - gen? Ach! sie fle - hen dich,
 sempre *pp* gli accompagnamenti
 Ossia più facile
 p leggiero
 quasi Violoncello dolce cantando

Edition Peters 9885

Figure 1. 6: Liszt, *Ständchen 'Leise flehen'*– Lied von Fr. Schubert, S560/7a bars 38–41, annotated



Figure 1. 7: *Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 41–51, annotated*

In the examples above, Liszt's moves the melody into the lower register, which is played by the left hand in 'Frühlingsglaube', and by the right hand in 'Ständchen', with the left hand passing beneath and over the right hand. In her case, Beach incorporates the melody in the left hand sometimes as a top voice and sometimes as a bottom one. It indicates that most likely she had studied Liszt's transcriptions of Schubert's songs, which by the end of the nineteenth century had become quite popular in piano playing households (Wilson 2018). Beach applied the same technique to incorporate the voice melody in an organic way and not just as the top melody in the right hand. Writing the melody like this means that it becomes more challenging for the performer to execute it, as she must bring out the melody while other accompanying voices might be in the same hand or between the hands. It means that the sound quality has to differ between the fingers in one hand, which requires good control from the performer.

Beach also uses mini cadenzas or melodic flourishes that consist of scale or arpeggio-like passages or trills similar to the ones used by Liszt, intended to add brilliance to the playing and bring out the virtuoso element in the performance.



Figure 1. 8: Schubert, *Frühlingsglaube*, D. 686 (Arr. Franz Liszt) bars 46–47



Figure 1. 9: Liszt, *Ständchen 'Leise flehen' – Lied von Fr. Schubert*, S560/7a, bars 105–107



Figure 1. 10: Beach, *Ballad Op. 6*, bars 59–64

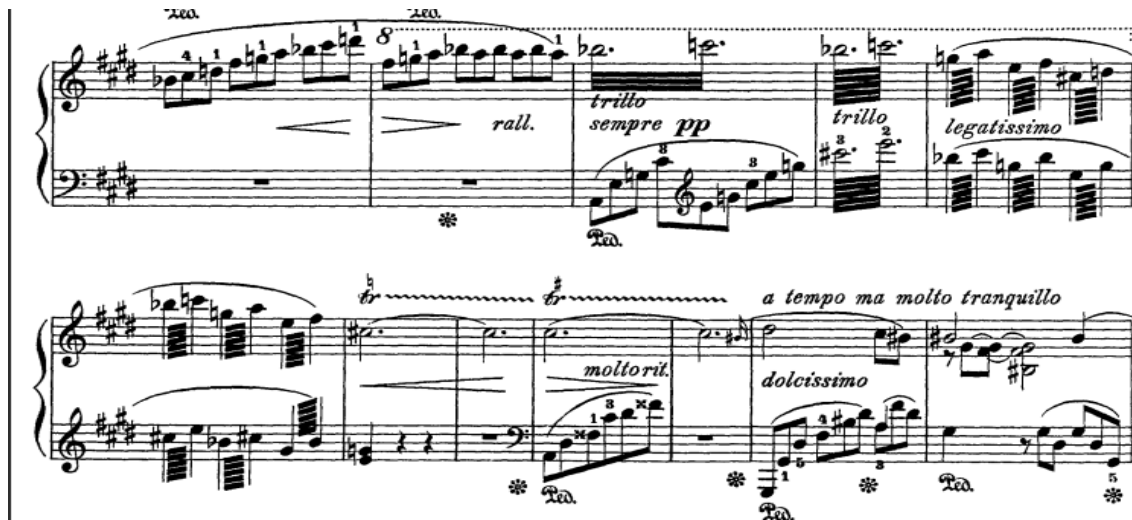


Figure 1. 11: Beach, *Ballad* Op. 6, bars 131–142

In Liszt's transcriptions, the virtuoso passages are placed usually towards the end of the piece, while Beach uses the trills and tremolos in the transitions between the different parts of the piece. Knowing that Beach used compositional techniques similar to the ones Liszt used in his transcriptions hints to the performer the manner in which one ought to play those passages. The performer must approach Beach's *Ballad* with a frame of mind for performance similar to that with which she would approach performing Liszt's transcriptions. According to Roberts (2022: 85): 'Liszt's treatment of Schubert requires a sophisticated control of tone colour and voicing, particularly in recreating the vocal line with warmth and legato while sustaining accompaniment figures with clarity and nuance.' The same is true when playing Beach's *Ballad*; recognising this and how to approach it enables the pianist to employ the same techniques as when playing a Liszt composition.

Beach treats the song's material more loosely than Liszt does with Schubert in his transcriptions. By adhering to the number of verses and including an additional piano part in between and at the end of the verses, he was more faithful to the song's score while transcribing it. Beach's approach is different. The second fast-paced section of the *Ballad* is more of a fantasy based loosely on the song's main melody, whereas the first part follows the

2

MY LUVE IS LIKE A RED, RED ROSE.

(Robert Burns.)

Mrs. H. H. A. BEACH.

Allegretto espressivo.

PIANO.

p

mp

Amy Beach
Ballad

Andantino

The image shows a musical score for Amy Beach's Ballad, specifically the Andantino section. It is written for piano in 3/4 time, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The tempo is marked 'Andantino'. The score begins with a piano (pp) dynamic. The melody is primarily in the right hand, featuring triplet patterns and a final phrase marked 'a tempo' and 'riten.'. The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and triplets. The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble and bass clefs, key signature flats, time signature, tempo marking, dynamics, and articulation marks like slurs and accents.

pp

riten.

a tempo

in - u - en - do sopra. poco rit.

Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

8

Ped. *

AP 8 & Co. 1954 = 6

56

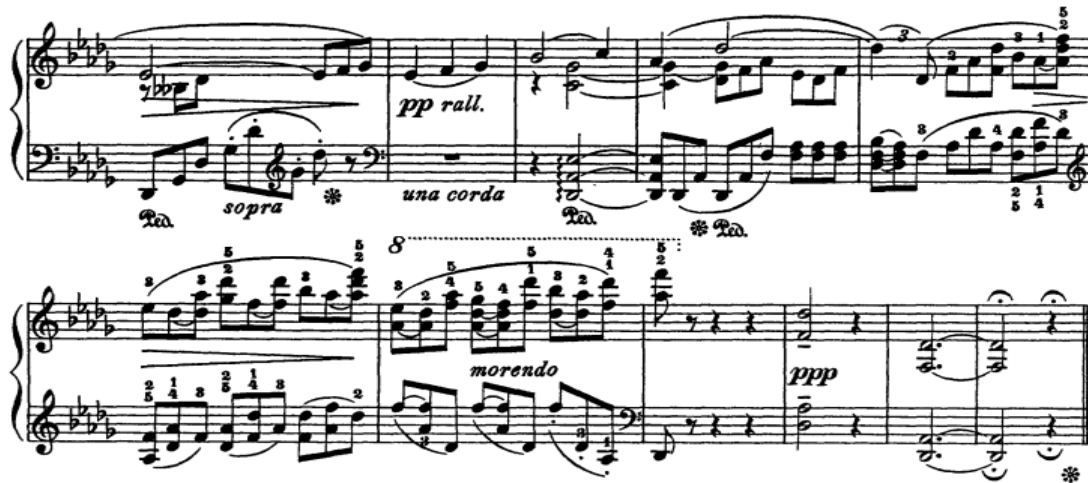


Figure 1. 15: *Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 178–188*

It is important to note that Figure 1. 12 was the song's solo piano introduction and Figure 1. 14 its ending; hence, there was no need to add the vocal line. Perhaps for this reason, she left them largely unchanged, adding only a few notes to give the chords a richer sound.

5. 1. 1. 1 Four Sketches Op. 14

To illustrate further the musical influences on Amy Beach and obtain further insight into the compositional voice, it is also worth considering another work by Amy Beach – *Four Sketches* op. 14 from 1892 (published two years earlier than the *Ballad*. The work in question consists of four individual pieces named: In Autumn , Phantoms , 'Dreaming' and 'Fire-flies' [sic] inspired by French Romantic poetry. Each piece from the *Four Sketches* opens with a verse, either by Victor Hugo or Alphonse de Lamartine, which sets the mood for the composition. The inclusion of poetic verses, alongside the fact that the *Ballad* itself was initially inspired by a poem, provides a clear intertextual connection between the two works and accentuates Beach's sustained interest in literature – particularly poetry – as an origin of structural guidance and musical ideas.

In addition to literary influences, musical references are also present in the *Four Sketches*. The first one: 'In Autumn' seems to inherit its character from Franz Schubert's Op. 94, no. 3 'Moment musical' by sharing similar rhythm, left hand accompaniment, use of accents as well as the choice of the tempo – in the case of Schubert, it is *Allegro moderato*, while Beach chose *Allegro ma non tanto* for 'In Autumn'. The distinctive pugnacious and cheeky style is further enhanced by staccato articulation. Picturing in mind Schubert's 'Moment musical' aids the performer to set the mood for the composition and bring out the required character.



Figure 1. 16: Schubert, 'Moment musical' Op. 94, no. 3, bars 1–7

Feuillages jaunissants sur les gazons épars - Lamartine

Allegro ma non tanto

Figure 1. 17: Beach, 'In Autumn' Op. 15, no. 1, bars 1–9, annotated

The second of the *Four Sketches* titled 'Phantoms' in its temperament might have been inspired by Robert's Schumann *Papillons* Op. 2 and his *Carnival* Op. 9. Both Schumann's compositions are suites inspired by a masked ball (Papillon) or masked revelers

in the case of Carnival. The connection to Schumann's works lies in the verse by Victor Hugo from his poem titled 'Fantômes' which precedes the piece. The poem recalls the tragic story of a young girl who dies not long after attending her first ball. The poem narrates how she met her sudden death when picking up flowers and left those around her in mourning. This narrative serves as the inspiration for the composition, particularly the girl's presence at the ball, which creates a thematic link to Schumann's works associated with dance and ballroom scenes. Additionally, the mood of the piece mirrors closely that of Schumann's and also shares its triple time signature and waltz character.

The third of the Sketches titled 'Dreaming' starts with a verse from a poem by Victor Hugo titled 'A celle qui est voilée' ('To the one who is veiled'). The poem focuses on a conversation between two lovers. There is also a cello and piano version of 'Dreaming' which was finished in 1937 by the composer and was noted in the composer's diary (cited by Block 1994: 284). It seems to be modelled on Franz Schubert's Impromptu Op. 90 no. 3 (Alfeld 2008: 4). Both pieces share the same key signature: G flat major, as well as a flowing accompaniment of triplets with a melody above it.



Figure 1. 18: Schubert, *Impromptu* Op. 90, no. 3, bars 1–4



Figure 1. 19: Beach, 'Dreaming' Op. 15, no. 3, bars 1–6

The character of the piece could have been also influenced by the Robert Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* op. 12 no. 1, which is in D flat major with a similar rhythm of triplets, melody in the right hand and key signature.



Figure 1. 20: Schumann, 'Des Abends' from *Fantasiestücke* Op. 12, no. 1, bars 1–13

The main issue for the pianist in this piece is similar to that in Schubert's *Impromptu* or Schumann's *Fantasiestücke*, that is to bring out the different voices, mostly in the right hand.

The fourth and last piece of this opus starts with a first verse from the poem titled 'Papillon' (Butterfly) by Alphonse de Lamartine. This short work describes the ephemeral life and graceful movements of a butterfly. This representation emerges to have served as a source of inspiration for Amy Beach's 'Fire-flies', a piece that similarly seeks to evoke a sense of lightness, continuous motion, and circularity.

It seems to be modelled after Frédéric Chopin's *Etude* Op. 25, no. 6, which is the study for double thirds (Alfeld 2008: 4). The *Etude* in question is in G sharp minor and in common time, while 'Fire-flies' is in A minor and in 6/8 time signature.

Allegro (♩ = 69) Op. 25 – Nr 6

18

Figure 1. 21: Chopin, Study Op. 25, no. 6, bars 1–6

Allegro vivace

p

Figure 1. 22: Beach, 'Fire-flies' Op. 15, no. 4, bars 1–6

The piece is also reminiscent of some youthful works by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, namely his *Scherzo* Op. 16 no. 2 which have similar character: fast and consisting of a lot of double thirds in staccato. There is also similarity to Mendelssohn's *Fantasie* Op.

28, no. 3, which is also in 6/8-time signature without double thirds but with fast circular passages and it also emits similar character to ‘Fire-flies’.



Figure 1. 23: Mendelssohn, Scherzo Op. 16, no. 2, bars 6–14



Figure 1. 24: Mendelssohn, Fantasie Op. 28, no. 3, bars 77–88

Though in transcribing her song, with its unique melody, Beach appears to be referencing herself and not looking outward for inspiration, by employing similar approaches found in the works of Chopin, Brahms, and Liszt, she utilised compositional elements and a

style that was prevalent throughout the late-Romantic period. In the *Four Sketches* she clearly draws stylistic inspirations from earlier Romantic composers like Schubert, Schumann and Mendelssohn. From a performer's perspective, understanding the origins of technical or musical elements aids in developing interpretation and facilitates the approach to certain sections. Technical and musical issues can be resolved far more quickly if one has prior knowledge of other pieces which certainly left a mark on Beach.

5. 1. 2 Dynamics

The main issue regarding the dynamics in Amy Beach's *Ballad* concerns the parts that are marked *ff* for a long number of bars. Those examples can be found towards the end of the piece where we can distinguish two culminations which can be found in Fig. 1. 25 (b. 119) and Fig. 1. 126 (b. 167). Beach appears to have aimed towards a sense of triumph and richness of sound in these culminations by using the *ff* dynamic marking. However, this should not be interpreted as a cue for excessive volume, particularly given the extended duration of this dynamic – nearly a full page – but rather suggests the need for careful control than overwhelming intensity. To shape the phrasing better and arrive to these culminations, it makes sense to begin these sections at a slightly lower dynamic level – even if the score indicates *ff* – so that a gradual sense of growth and arrival of the climax can be achieved more convincingly. Also, it is worth giving more attention to the accented notes, which are taken from the main melody of the song, while keeping all the other chords at a lower dynamic level. This way, the melody line is played louder and remains prominent, while the other chords do not create a wall of sound that would overcome the main melody. In this manner, a more balanced and nuanced sound is created that even at its peak of loudness will not lose from its clarity or overpower the listening experience of performer and audience alike.

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece titled "Beach—Ballad" by Op. 6, covering bars 100 to 120. The score is written for piano (p) and includes several performance annotations and fingerings.

Annotations and Fingerings:

- Bar 100:** The right hand has a circled *ff* (fortissimo) marking.
- Bar 101:** The right hand has a circled *sempre ff ed appassionato* marking.
- Bar 102:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 103:** The right hand has a circled *marc.* (marcato) marking.
- Bar 104:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 105:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 106:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 107:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 108:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 109:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 110:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 111:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 112:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 113:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 114:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 115:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 116:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 117:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 118:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 119:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.
- Bar 120:** The right hand has a circled *con tutta forza* marking.

The score includes various musical notations such as treble and bass clefs, key signatures (three sharps), time signatures (4/4), and dynamic markings (p, ff, marc.). It also features numerous fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) and articulation marks (accents, slurs, and phrasing slurs).

Figure 1. 25: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 100–120, annotated



Figure 1. 26: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 155–169, annotated

Another noticeable example of dynamic writing that allows for a degree of interpretative freedom can be found in the second piece from the *Four Sketches*, specifically in the second piece titled ‘Phantoms’.

The climax and the loudest part of the piece is in b. 64: *forte appassionato*. Here, as a performer, one needs to take into the account the whole character of the piece and its dynamic gradation throughout which rarely goes beyond *mezzo forte*. *Forte* is only mentioned once before in b. 54. Therefore, this climax cannot be too loud in comparison to the whole piece but has to come out as a culmination of all dynamics, a rather warm sound and more based on taking time to achieve the climax rather than bringing up the volume of the actual dynamic.



Figure 1. 27: Beach, 'Phantoms' Op. 15, no. 2, bars 54–68, annotated

Another example within *Four Sketches* – this time in the third piece, 'Dreaming' – demonstrates a dynamic approach comparable to that found in *Ballad*. The culmination of the third of the *Four Sketches* is written in a chordal texture, with expansive right-hand chords marked *sempre con tutta forza*. Once again, the interpretation of dynamic levels must be perceived in relation to the preceding musical context; despite precise notational markings, indications such as *forte* or *con tutta forza* should not necessarily be understood as the absolute maximum volume. According to Brown (1999: 68) the pianist should consider whether: 'when an isolated *f* or *ff* occurs, it implies an accent or is merely a reminder of the prevailing dynamic.' This applies to most *ff* markings in Beach's scores, they function as corresponding expressive directives, shaped by the internal logic and dynamic framework of the piece and serve as a reflection of the predominant dynamic.



Figure 1. 28: Beach, 'Dreaming' Op. 15, no. 3, bars 52–57, annotated

5. 1. 3 Tempi

With regards to tempo, the *Ballad* presents several tempo changes. Beach's marking is quite clear in this matter. Beach frequently employs *ritenuto* or *rallentando* markings at the transitions between phrases or musical ideas which, upon closer analysis, serves a clear expressive and structural function.

The composition has three main tempi:

Andantino bb. 1–90

Allegro con vigore bb. 90–123

Lento bb. 124– onwards

One of the interesting spots where the performer can add to Beach's tempo writing is visible in bars 123–126. Here, the tempo changes to *Lento* and the music comes almost to a standstill. The dynamic is marked as *ppp quanto possibile* with *una corda*. The right hand continues to hold the parallel octave A, while the left hand presents an ascending melody based on the A major 7th chord which eventually resolves into D major in bar 127. This melody in the left hand can remind one of a cadenza-like introduction. Even though the final note is not marked with a fermata, its arpeggiated notation may encourage the performer to take additional time in articulating the concluding chord. This slight delay allows for more

appreciation of the harmonic change and serves as a moment of transition, preparing the listener for the recapitulation of the first theme.



Figure 1. 29: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 123–126, annotated

The interpretative approach required in bars 123–126 also anticipates the ambiguity found later in the *Lento* section, particularly in bar 141, where the tempo indication raises questions about performance practice. Tempo marking in this bar is *a tempo ma molto tranquillo*. A common sense approach would be to go back to the previous tempo, which is *Lento*, but from the musical point of view Beach might have meant either *tempo primo: Andantino* or tempo of the second half: *Allegro con vigore*. The melody line comes from the verse which was used for the faster paced fantasia-like *Allegro con vigore* and therefore it serves as an introduction which slowly unravels towards the second and final culmination of the piece. Hence, I would perform in the second tempo of the piece: *Allegro con vigore* but slowly at first, according to the marking *ma molto tranquillo*. Since the slower section played a role as a breather between the two fast-paced, chordal moments in *ff* dynamics, returning to *Lento* tempo would feel out of place and stagger the development of this conclusion.

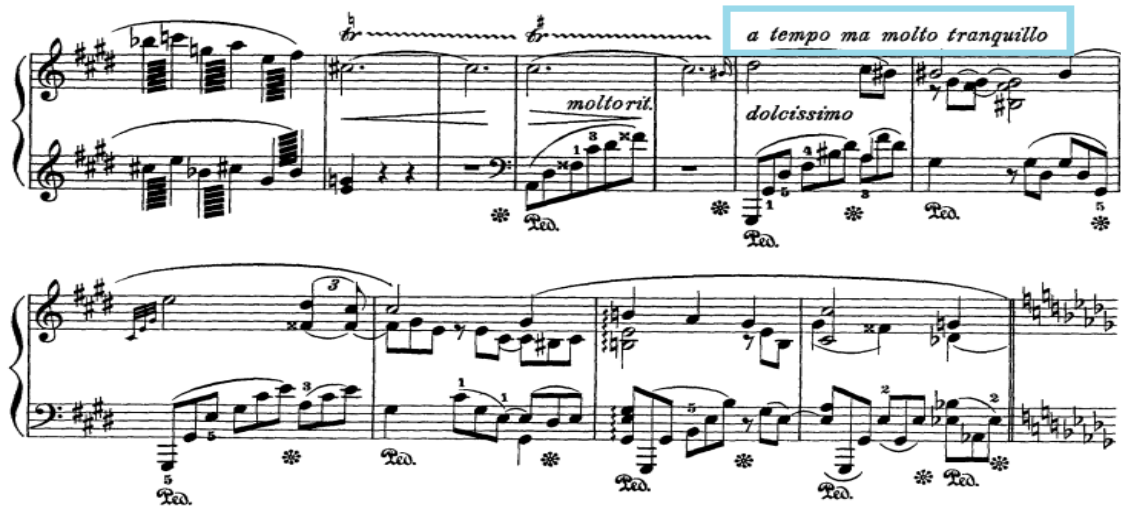


Figure 1. 30: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 136–146, annotated

5. 1. 4 Other issues

In addition to questions regarding musical influence, dynamics, and tempi, there are a number of other performance-related issues that require consideration.

The first section that draws attention is that between bars 22–30, which is marked *a tempo* and *dolce grazioso*. The first note of the melody, the minim, is noted as tenuto. It is essential that the minim at the beginning of the following bars in this section is played to its full value because it shapes the lyrical flow of the phrase. The performer needs to give importance to that note by giving it a more bell-like sound that lasts its prescribed two beats. What makes it difficult – and interesting at the same time – is that the last crotchet of the bar is an accented note. The top note of this arpeggiated chord in the left hand is continuing the melody which was in the right hand during the first and second beat of this bar. Thus, the performer needs to consider how to shape the melody between the two hands in a *pianissimo* dynamic throughout. Special attention should be given to distinguishing between the tenuto articulation – characterised by a sustained emphasis and full or slightly extended duration – and the accented articulation, which involves a more immediate, dynamic stress with a normal or sometimes slightly shortened value. This distinction has to be maintained while

still playing the relatively wide arpeggiated chord in the left hand. The best way to achieve this effect is to take the top accented note from the arpeggiated left hand note and play it with the right hand, at least in bars 23 and 25. This method, maintains the line of the melody in one hand, while the left hand plays the arpeggios and arpeggiated chord. Then, the right hand, after the accented note, finishes with a melodic interval of an octave. This takes some time to coordinate between the hands but creates the effect desired by the composer as indicated by the score.

Beach—Ballad

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (bars 21-24) shows the right hand with a melodic line featuring a trill in bar 23 and a grace note in bar 24, while the left hand plays arpeggiated chords. The second system (bars 25-28) continues the melodic development with a trill in bar 25 and a grace note in bar 26. The third system (bars 29-32) features a more intense section with a trill in bar 29 and a grace note in bar 30. The score is annotated with various performance instructions and fingering numbers.

Figure 1. 31: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 21–32, annotated

Also of particular interest are bars 37 and 38. Here it is worth looking into the grace notes in bar 37, in the middle voice of the right hand, which should not be played too fast. Even though they are demisemiquavers, they must be woven into the structure of the melody line, in a way a singer might approach them, rather than the instrumentalist who would

execute them in a very rhythmical and mechanical way. Singers usually treat ornaments and all notes as part of an expressive, lyrical line, rather than merely as technical flourishes.

According to Martha Elliot (2006: 3): ‘In expressive singing, every note – whether part of the main line or an ornament – must be shaped and phrased as part of a continuous melodic idea. The voice does not distinguish between “melody” and “decoration”; all is song’. However, an instrumentalist may take a more technical approach, treating it more like a technical exercise than demonstrating the beauty of the line. If we follow the singers’ approach, that beat would be a bit stretched to fully play the written-out turn, which is a combination of two appoggiatura notes. This way of performing the fast notes is also suggested because a similar figure appears in the next bar, bar 38. Here it is written in a slightly different rhythm: crotchet and two semiquavers within a triplet in an octave, not single notes. Therefore, here there is more time written in the score due to the longer first value (crotchet instead of quaver) but melodically it is very similar. Therefore, the written-out type of turn in bar 37 can be treated similarly as the notation in bar 38 which forces the notes to be played slowly.



Figure 1.32: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 37–38, annotated

Likewise, bars 80–81 have a comparable issue using same notes that demands a similar approach.



Figure 1. 33: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 80–81, annotated

Another interesting part for a performer and listener is the progression of chords starting in bar 55 in the left hand where there are repeated accents always falling on the F note. Firstly, in the F minor chord and then in D flat seventh, to eventually lead to F major in bar 59. The F note must be highlighted, as well as the changing tonality in the chord because it has a tonal and emotional significance. It is the first more virtuoso part in the right hand that follows with trills and tremolos in high register. Those notes in the higher register of the piano calm down the emotions mustered by the piece so far and can act as a bridge or connection to the next part. It is a necessary emotional break for the audience and the performer, and can act as a sort of temporary resolution, preparing the listener for what is yet to come.

It is also worth pointing out, that Beach's rhythm writing in bars 56–58 creates a slowing down effect without writing a *ritenuto*. She starts with semiquavers sextuplets in b. 56, followed by semiquavers in b. 57, and quaver triplets in b. 58. This way, without indicating *ritenuto* in the text, the rhythm itself slows down the flow of the music.



Figure 1. 34: *Beach, Ballad Op. 6*, bars 54–61, annotated

A noteworthy aspect of Beach's harmonic language is the modulation in bars 65–67, from D flat major, a key traditionally associated with spirituality and reverence for the divine, to C sharp minor, which represents darkness as Beach regarded all minor key signatures as black in her colour associations, achieved via its subdominant A major, a key often symbolizing balance and vitality (Clarke 2019). This adventurous modulation was likely necessary for Beach to change the mood from a spiritual one to one that reflects brightness and vitality. Marked *piu cresc. ed appassionato*, it leads to bar 71 with an A major 6th chord

and introduces a new melody line that will be later used in the top notes of chords in one of the last climaxes (bars 157–160 and bar 173). It is worth noting that this melody was written to the words ‘and I will love’ in the original song by Beach. The performer must decide how this theme should be presented to the audience, since it has such an important message within the context of the song. Probably, it was necessary to change the key from D flat major to C sharp Minor in the ballad because of the emotional context of the words of the poem that accompanied this part of the song. As the notes of the melody line are accented, the pianist needs to take time to play through them: even though they are marked *forte*, the sounds should be warm and rich, which requires a loose arm and approaching the notes from height.



Figure 1. 35: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 65–71, annotated

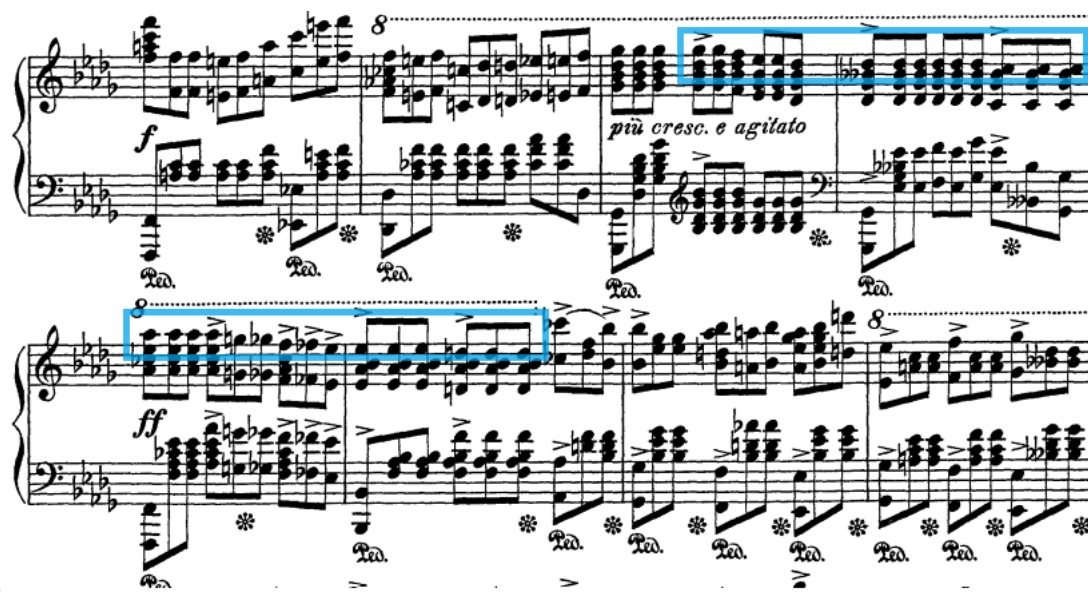


Figure 1. 36: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 155–162, annotated



Figure 1. 37: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 172–173, annotated

In addition to these harmonic shifts, particular notational details – especially those affecting hand distribution and technical execution – require careful consideration from the performer. From the performer’s point of view, the marking *sopra* (above) in bars 85 and 86, is of particular interest. It indicates that the left-hand notes should be played over the right hand, even though those notes could have been easily played by the right hand while it is holding a minim. It might be that by playing over the right hand, Beach wanted to achieve a bit of theatrical execution of those notes. When the pianist plays the note with the left hand above the right hand, it always looks more impressive from the audience’s point of view, even though it may not necessarily be difficult for the performer to play. Also, by playing them over the right hand, which might be a bit inconvenient, inadvertently the player needs to

take time for those notes, even though there are neither tempo markings nor tenuto markings on those notes. When a pianist crosses the left hand over the right hand, it requires more focus to keep the notes within the same line, despite changing the hand position. One should approach them more non-legato, lightly, to get the effect of little raindrops.

The same writing can be seen in bars 177–178.



Figure 1. 38: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 85–86, annotated

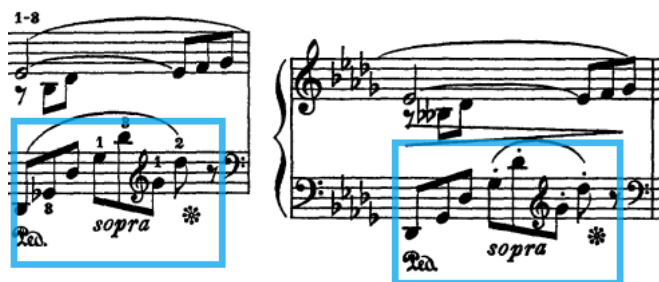


Figure 1. 39: Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 177–178, annotated

The trills in bars 133–136 are also worth of attention. They are written like tremolos and marked *sempre pp* and *legatissimo* and descend from the high register of the piano to the middle one within a space of three bars. As the tremolos are in the top register of the piano going down, one can imagine it is like the flutter of the wind, and therefore the performer should play them in the most exquisite and delicate manner possible to replicate that image.



Figure 1. 40: *Beach, Ballad Op. 6, bars 133–136, annotated*

5. 1. 5 Conclusion

The *Ballad* is a challenging piece to perform even though it cannot be considered a virtuoso show piece as its main character is of a singing quality rather than technical dexterity. Its challenges are more subtle and expressive. It requires from the performer to have great technical control, especially when bringing out inner voicing in dense chords which sometimes can mean moving the particular voice from one hand to another. Also, as the dynamic of the piece ranges between piano pianissimo to forte fortissimo, it demands a refined command of the sound. Moreover, the structure of the piece being rhapsodic requires the pianist to quickly shift from one mood to another – be it melancholic, dramatic or simply lyrical.

The musical character of the *Ballad* is mostly lyrical in *Andantino* and *Lento* with elements of turbulence and dramatic flow in *Allegro con vigore* and the finale. As already mentioned, it is not a strict virtuoso composition despite several technical difficulties. As it is a reworking of a song, the cantabile line of the melody is present throughout, even in the denser chordal texture. Due to it being a song transcription or transformation, the structure of the piece is more free and not very conventional or conservative. *Andantino* portrays more closely the song in question while *Allegro con vigore* along with *Lento* follows more the structure of a loose fantasy.

While Amy Beach's transcription of her own song may suggest an introspective, self-referential approach to composition, her compositional language remains deeply rooted within the stylistic traditions of the late-Romantic era. Beach uses the compositional devices and musical forms seen in compositions by Chopin, Brahms, Liszt, Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn, but she never clearly 'steals' a melodic or harmonic language. Those aspects of her writing seem to be her own. Merrill (1963: 216) claims that what transpires from Beach's writing is not being an inventor but rather a composer who absorbs ideas from others and through that creates her own eclectic style. While I can agree that her style has traits of the eclectic, I think her talent for writing melodies is very noticeable and it stands out throughout her compositions. Beach is a Romantic composer at heart who is open-minded for new harmonies and always pays very close attention to the melodic line which is very closely connected to singing and art songs in general.

I performed *Ballad* Op. 6 during my final recital. The work's expressive duality was most admired by the audience: the substantial chordal writing captivated with its harmonic richness and sonority, while the long-breathed, cantabile melody line attracted through its vocal lyricism. Also, the *Lento* part was very well received with its pianissimo dynamics and, trills and tremolos which evoked a magical mood and served as a breather between the two culminations in the piece.

Personally, I felt that with this piece I could convey all the possibilities of the singing tone of the piano especially since it is a reworking of a song. Therefore, the lyrical line was present throughout and its singing quality was what I could feel connects with the audience the most. Additionally, I found it important to think about the words that shaped the original music. I attempted to convey the emotional states that are implied in the lyrics into distinct colours and piano touches. Further, I also had to pay particular attention to the transitions between its contrasting sections. As a rhapsodic work – essentially a reworking of a song into

a solo piece – it requires a carefully balanced sense of timing. If the changes in tempo are too abrupt, or conversely, if there is too much time left between the sections, the music risks coming across as fragmented and losing its organic flow. Therefore, this issue had to be addressed, especially considering the hall's acoustics, which tended to be highly resonant. Such halls with a lot of echoes can easily blur rapid tempo changes or exaggerate pauses, making it even more crucial to maintain coherence and a natural sense of flow between the sections. Therefore, the balance between changes of dynamics and tempi had to be amended accordingly.

5. 2. Valborg Aulin – Piano Sonata Op. 14

Piano Sonata in F minor (*Grande sonata sérieuse pour le piano*) Op. 14 was composed in 1885 in four movements:

I *Adagio- Allegro* is in a sonata form where both exposition and recapitulation include introductory four bars in *Adagio* followed by *Allegro*, while Coda is marked *Grave*:

Exposition (bb. 1–69), Development (bb. 70–110), Recapitulation (bb. 111–200 with *Coda* being bb. 180–200). This movement is 'is especially memorable, with wonderful melodies, clever harmonic modulations, a clear sense of development, and an architecture that leads to drama' (Bose 2018).

II *Andante molto espressione* is composed in a rondo form: A (bb. 1–10), B (bb. 10–26), C (bb. 27–40), B' (bb. 41–49), D (bb. 49–70), B' (bb. 71–77), A' (bb. 77–92).

III *Scherzo capriccioso: Tempo di mazurka* has a ternary form with trio in the middle: Mazurka (bb. 1–64), Trio (bb. 64–161), Mazurka (bb. 161–236).

IV *Finale: Presto* combines sonata form with rondo principles, including the thematic development and recapitulation characteristic of sonata structure with numerous refrains and episodic returns typical of the rondo: A (bb. 1–40) B (bb. 41–56) C (bb. 57–70) bridge (bb.

71–76) A' (bb. 77–114) mix of B and C (bb. 115–132) bridge 2 (bb. 133–158) A' (bb. 159–172) B (bb. 173–180) C (bb. 181–194) A' (bb. 195–232).

Dedicated to Fröken Hilda Thegerström, a fellow female composer from Sweden 'who is responsible for some very melodious songs and piano pieces' (Elson 1903: 219–220) and Aulin's piano teacher from the Swedish Music Conservatory, the sonata has been described as 'stunning' (Belina 2018) and 'all the more impressive when we remember that it was technically a student work, composed during [Aulin's] first year abroad' (Bose 2018). Another description of Sonata and Aulin's playing can be found in one of the reviews from Aftonbladet¹⁰ from 1887 cited by George (1997: 55):

Miss Aulin is not enough piano virtuoso to let all the precedents of her own sonata come to honors, but in any case one could hear that there has been a truly outstanding work, testifying to both imagination [...] and modern harmony and rhythmic combination forms, especially in the two stanzas, which, although more or less coloured by Grieg [and] Chopin, were highly appealing and should be published separately— for the whole is not a strict sonata, but a collection of different pieces of character, which with independent designations would make a better effect.¹¹

The Sonata was composed in a broadly late-Romantic style as defined in Chapter 5. 1. Latham additionally observes that '[it] emphasized the apparent domination of emotion over form and order: value was set on novelty and sensation, on technical innovation and experiment, and on the cross-fertilization of ideas from different disciplines' (2004: 155–56). Late-Romantic style can be described as a sophisticated fusion of invention and tradition, powerful emotional expression, and changing perspectives on instrumentation, harmony, and structure. With a greater use of chromaticism, changed chords, and explorations of tonal

¹⁰ Aftonbladet is a Swedish daily newspaper published in Stockholm, Sweden since 1830.

¹¹ Fröken Aulin är icke tillräcklig pianovirtuos för att låta alla förtäriden i hennes egen sonat komma till heders, men i alla fall kunde man höra, att där föreligger ett verkligt framstående arbete, vittnande om både fantasi, stämning, samt modern! Harmonisk och rytmisk kombinationsförmåga, synnerligen i de båda mellansatserna hvilka, ehuru de mer eller mindre Grieg Chopin färgade voro högst anslående och borde utgifvas skildt – ty det hela är ändå ingen strang sonat, utan en samling olika karaktärsstycken, som med själfständiga benämningar skulle göra en ännu bättre verkan.

ambiguity, late-Romantic music saw a substantial expansion of harmonic vocabulary while still being primarily tonal (Samson, Ed 2001: 500–19).

The edition that I am using, which is the only existing typed one, is a transcription by Joseph Simunac from the original manuscript, which is available online on the Swedish Musical Heritage site as well as IMSLP¹². Since Aulin only inserted accidentals once in the bar, regardless of which octave the notes are in, Simunac tried to keep the piece harmonically consistent and inserted the missing accidentals.

5. 2. 1 Musical influences

This section will concentrate on the various sources of influence found in Aulin's Sonata, as they appear in each movement. This will illustrate the impact of past composers and their compositions on the sonata.

5. 2. 1. 1 The First Movement

Although we have no written record from the composer herself about the matter, style and certain phrasing borrowings suggest which influences played a part in shaping the Sonata. According to Bose (2018) some sections of the first part suggest inspirations from works by Franz Schubert, Frédéric Chopin and Edvard Grieg.

The first influence that springs to mind is the opening of Piano Sonata no. 3, also in F minor, Op. 14 by Robert Schumann, which shares the dotted rhythms in the beginning. Here the influence might be only limited to the same key signature and some rhythms visible in both compositions.

¹² Also referred to as the Petrucci Music Library, this wiki-based online resource is dedicated to collecting music compositions that are in the public domain and under free license.

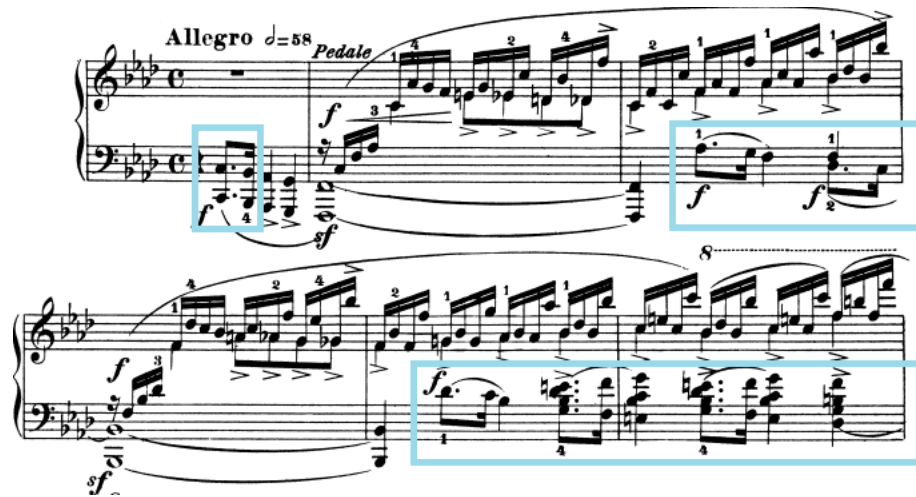


Figure 2. 1: Schumann, Piano Sonata Op. 14, no. 3, 1st movement, bars 1–6, annotated

I.

Figure 2. 2: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 1st movement, bars 1–10, annotated

The third movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Sonata *Pathétique* Op. 13 provides yet another illustration of potential influence. Both pieces are in minor keys (Aulin's is in F minor, Beethoven's is in C minor), and Aulin's opening movement incorporates a dotted rhythm that is also present in Beethoven's work. Both pieces have an intensely sombre and frantic character.



piano and follows with the *forte* in the faster part after four bars, while in Chopin's Sonata it is the other way round: firstly, *forte* and then *piano*. Therefore, Aulin did not blindly follow the same model as in Chopin's piece but made it her own by changing the dynamics while keeping the same idea of four slow bars followed by faster tempo. It seems as if she wanted to start out of nowhere and then build up more emphasis and turbulence in the first theme using *forte*.

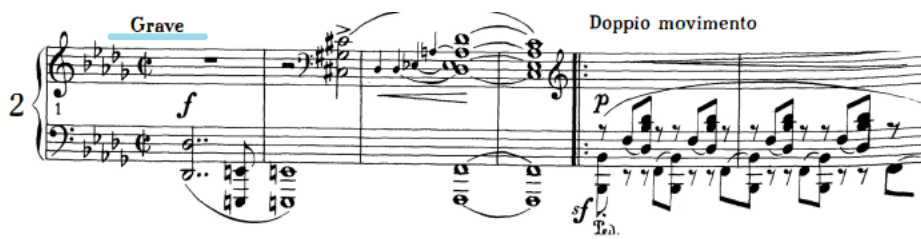


Figure 2. 5: Chopin, Piano Sonata Op. 35, no. 2, 1st movement, bars 1–6, annotated

5. 2. 1. 2 The Second Movement

In the second movement one can easily detect the influence behind the lyrical theme since the melody in the descending interval of a third and characteristic grace notes evoke the lyrical theme from the third movement of Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor Op. 15.

Grieg's concerto was composed seventeen years before Aulin's Sonata, and while there is no direct evidence confirming that Aulin attended any performance of Grieg's Piano Concerto, or studied the score before composing her Piano Sonata, it is highly probable that she was familiar with the work as it was largely popular. 'The concerto had been premiered in Copenhagen (1869) by Norwegian pianist Edmund Neupert; performances in Leipzig (1872) and Brussels (1874), London (1874), and New York (1874) soon followed' (Kijas 2013: 42). In her later years, Aulin performed the Grieg's Piano Concerto at least on one occasion in 1922 in Nikolai Church in Örebro where she lived (George 1997: 74).

The so-called 'Grieg' melody can be observed in bb. 11, 15, 19, 29, 41 and 71. When performing Grieg's Concerto, the grace notes are treated almost like a part of the melody, and

they are not rushed. Therefore, it can be wise to follow the same idea and include them in the melody line instead of just executing them exactly in time and in a fast manner.



Figure 2. 6: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 2nd movement, bars 10–20, annotated

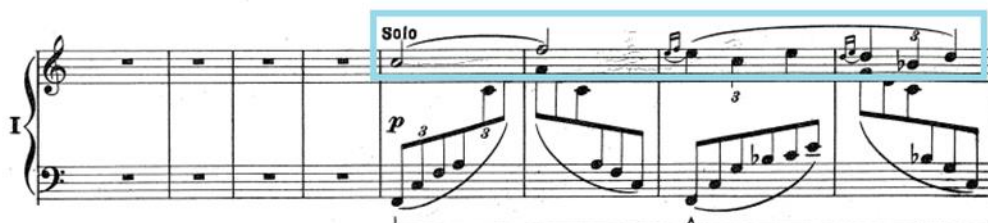


Figure 2. 7: Grieg, Piano Concerto Op. 16 in A minor, 3rd movement, bars 157–164, annotated

Still another possible influence can be found in the *misterioso* section in bb. 7–9 and bb. 85–89, which is very much reminiscent of the chordal, almost chorale-like part, in

Johannes Brahms' Intermezzo in A major op. 118 no. 2. In Aulin's writing the chorale part is in descending, almost using a chromatic scale, unlike in Brahms' Intermezzo where he uses mostly notes from the F sharp minor harmonic scale. Ideally it should be played *legato* and as smooth as possible, like in Brahms' Intermezzo. Playing in this way transforms this passage into a lyrical and introspective phrase in contrast to other ones with more lively rhythms.



Figure 2. 8: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 2nd movement, bars 5–9, annotated



Figure 2. 9: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 2nd movement, bars 85–88, annotated



Figure 2. 10: Brahms, Intermezzo Op. 118, no. 2, bars 58–65, annotated

5. 2. 1. 3 The Third Movement

The third movement is titled ‘Scherzo Capriccioso’, in ‘tempo di mazurka’ and bears characteristics of both mazurka and polonaise in its character and use of accents. It is clearly inspired by Chopin’s mazurkas since he was the one who introduced the mazurka form to the piano repertoire (Kennedy 2013: 543).

The mazurka traditionally has dotted rhythm, triple meter and accents on the weak beat (Latham 2004: 107), usually on the second one (Kennedy 2013: 543). Here the marking shows the last note (third beat) being accented. That is an indication that Aulin was influenced by Chopin’s mazurkas which sometimes have accents on the first or like in Aulin’s case, third beat (Chomiński and Wilkowska-Chomińska 1983: 246). As a result, it takes some time to develop that accent, and by not playing it too quickly, the pianist can ensure that the note will not sound too harsh. It is important to observe that the accent of the phrase does not persist in the subsequent bars; it occurs only in the first bar. It is only reasonable to perform comparable bars similarly, however it is unclear if this is an omission or if it is meant to be assumed that the accent is repeated.



Figure 2. 11: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 2nd movement, bars 1–4, annotated

5. 2. 1. 4 The Fourth Movement

The Finale, indicated Presto, in F minor and half time (alla breve C) seems to take its inspiration from both Chopin’s Prelude in E flat minor Op. 28 no. 14, as well as Chopin’s Sonata no. 2 in B flat minor Op. 35 and its fourth movement. In both pieces, quavers in triplets are playing one octave apart in a circling melody and this rhythm is used in most of

the movement. In Aulin's work this is clearly stated, starting from b. 9 onwards. Although it does not take up the majority of the movement – in contrast to Chopin's composition – the opening follows the same rhythmic and melodic idea of quavers in triplets. The same feeling of fury (marking *furioso* in b. 12) and agitation is pictured here, and knowledge of both Chopin's pieces helps to choose the right technique to achieve that character. The constant crescendo makes this part sound even more spirited and use of the rotation of the wrist to achieve the even notes in the triplets is the same technique that would be used in Chopin's compositions. Additionally, despite the fact that Aulin usually writes it in ascending order, its structure is comparable to Chopin's Prelude. The notes' pattern is simple to recall. Every triplet group has a single common note, while the other notes are broken chords and chromaticism.



Figure 2. 12: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 4th movement, bars 7–15



Figure 2. 13: Chopin, Piano Sonata Op. 35 no. 2, 4th movement, bars 1–6



Figure 2. 14: Chopin, Prelude Op. 28 no. 14, bars 1–6

5. 2. 1. 5 Three Fantasy Pieces Op. 30

The musical influence, that shaped Aulin in her writing of the Sonata are also visible in other works, such as in *Three Fantasy Pieces* for Piano op. 30, which date from the later period (1898). Here, the influences are mostly visible in the titles of the pieces, which also give a particular character to each composition. *Fantasy Pieces* surely remind one of Robert Schumann's *Fantasy Pieces*. He composed *Fantasiestücke* Op. 12 for piano that consists of eight pieces inspired by the 1814's collection of novellas *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* by E. T. A. Hoffmann. Each *Fantasy Piece* has its own title, like Aulin's. Another one is Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* Op. 73 originally for clarinet and piano but with Schumann's

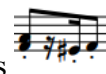
indication that they can also be performed by violin or cello and piano. Those were left without titles, just with tempo indication.

The first piece named 'Berceuse' is a type of composition pioneered by Frédéric Chopin. His Berceuse Op. 57 is in D flat major, the same tonality we find in other Berceuses: Franz Liszt's Berceuse s. 174 and Mily Balakirev's, and therefore, there is the tendency to compose it in a flat key signature. Aulin also stays on the 'flat' side and her composition is in E flat major.

The second piece is a 'Humoresk' [sic] which can be defined as 'a lively and capricious (sometimes a little sad) instrumental composition' (Kennedy 1994: 423).

The first to use the name humoresque as a musical piece was Robert Schumann for his Op. 20 for violin, cello and piano composed in 1839 (Britannica 2023). The well-known humoresque is Anton Dvořák's 'Humoresque' Op. 7 in G flat major from his collection of Eight Humoresques for piano, composed in 1894. It is uncertain whether Dvořák's pieces had reached Aulin and if she was familiar with them. Her 'Humoresk' was composed four years later than Dvořák's though. Also, Gustav Mahler used the term Humoresque when he first called his *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*Songs from the Youth's Magic Horn*), composed between 1888–89: Humoresque. In this piece there is a resemblance of Dvořák's G flat major 'Humoresque' with its lightness and staccato articulation. Aulin's version is in 9/8 time

signature but it uses similar rhythm figure of using rests and shorts notes values



which can be also seen in Dvořák's composition . This creates a particularly jolly and bouncy character.



Figure 2. 15: Aulin, *Humoresk Op. 30*, bars 98–103



Figure 2. 16: Dvořák, *Humoresque Op. 101, no. 2*, bars 1–6

The last of the three pieces is titled ‘Meditation’. The most famous *Meditation* was composed by Jules Massenet as a symphonic intermezzo from his opera *Thais*. It was orchestrated for violin and orchestra and premiered in 1884. Massenet was one of Aulin’s teachers when she was studying in Paris between 1887–90. Therefore, one can assume that she was familiar with his composition before she composed her *Three Fantasy Pieces* in 1898.

From this additional information regarding a later composition by Aulin, one can draw the conclusion that her inspirations were deeply late-Romantic in style since once more

we can find influences from Schumann and Chopin, with additional ones of later composers like Dvořák and Massenet.

Based on this analysis and my comparison of the pieces, the Sonata has been influenced by works by Frédéric Chopin (Sonata in B flat minor Op. 35, no. 2, Prelude Op. 28, no. 1 and his mazurkas and polonaises), Edvard Grieg (Piano Concerto in A minor Op. 15), Johannes Brahms (Intermezzo in A major Op. 118), Robert Schumann (Sonata in F minor Op. 14 no. 3), and Ludvig van Beethoven (Sonata *Pathétique* Op. 13). Each of them embodies the Romantic style (apart from Beethoven who is sometimes considered to be a late Classical or early Romantic composer) of Germany, Poland, and Norway, and they incorporate elements of folk music, such as melodies and rhythms (in the case of Chopin and Grieg). Aulin is mostly influenced either by the form, as in the case of first movement where the major influence is from Chopin's Sonata, or by the melodies and rhythms (2nd movement and Grieg's Concerto, 3rd movement and Chopin's mazurkas, 4th movement and Chopin's Sonata). Also, significant are Aulin's choices of titles for the pieces which can be observed in her *Three Fantasy Pieces* for Piano Op. 30 which can be connected to works of Chopin and Schumann, as well as Dvořák and Massenet. Even though sometimes she 'borrows' some ideas from prior composers, she strives to develop her own unique style.

It is reasonable to suppose that Aulin's inspirations came from the standard repertoire of her time, such as works by Frédéric Chopin, Robert Schumann, and Ludvig van Beethoven, to which she was exposed throughout her time studying composition and piano. However, she might have been drawn as well to the inventive nature of the music and their individual language of artists like Edvard Grieg or Johannes Brahms since they were closer contemporaries with her.

Although her musical style was rooted in early and late Romantic traditions, it may also be seen as moving, consciously or unconsciously, towards new trends that foreshadowed

New Objectivism, an early twentieth-century aesthetic that emphasised clarity, structural balance, and subdued expressiveness. Her music does not fully embrace these developments but might suggest a transitional position between the Romantic and modernist ideals.

5. 2. 2 Dynamics

In the case of Aulin, the most common uncertainties in performing her piece are prolonged parts in forte dynamics, repeated sections with same or similar dynamics, and quick changes of the dynamics within few bars. The performer needs to decide how to tackle these issues and make a decision on how to perform them based on the context and her musicality.

5. 2. 2. 1 The First Movement

In the first movement, Aulin creates dynamic contrasts within a few bars like in b. 5–*ff*, b. 7–*p*, b. 9–*mf*. She does the same thing in bb. 19–20: *ff con fuoco* and then bb. 21–22: *p*. Changes in dynamics occur within the span of four or five bars. This requires the performer to exert additional control to be able to switch the loudness of the playing in such a brief span of time. It pushes the pianist to take a moment of breath whenever the *piano* dynamic is marked to give time for the previous loud dynamic to disappear with its sound. Also, to give time to start the new phrase marked *piano* afresh with a bit of silence that precedes it. This can be observed in figures 2. 2 and 2. 17.



Figure 2. 17: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 1st movement, bars 19–22, annotated

Further on, the first theme, which is characterised by the dotted rhythms, between bb. 19–36 is mostly in dynamic *ff con fuoco*, *cresc. molto*, *ff sempre*. Therefore, the performer

needs to decide how to balance these loud dynamics. Otherwise, it would result in a monotonous *ff* for almost two and a half pages. One of the ways to interpret this passage would be to create a wave-like effect, following the natural rise and fall of the melody line and its phrasing. This can be achieved by dynamically stepping back in passages where the music flows seamlessly between the hands, as observed in bb. 25–26 and 29–30. Such an approach aligns effectively with the *crescendo molto* marking, allowing the increase in intensity to emerge organically from the phrasing rather than appearing abrupt or forced. The interplay between the hands in these measures generates a sense of continuous motion, and the subtle dynamic contrasts serve to highlight the overarching melodic line while maintaining clarity and balance. These passages can be envisioned as a gradual build-up, akin to waves swelling, leading naturally to the culmination indicated by the *crescendo molto*.

The image displays four staves of musical notation, likely from a piano score, showing measures 19, 23, 26, and 29. The notation includes various dynamics and markings:

- Staff 1 (Measures 19-22):** Starts with a treble clef and a key signature of three flats. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes marked *ff con fuoco*. The treble line has a triplet of eighth notes marked *p*.
- Staff 2 (Measures 23-25):** Continues the melodic line in the treble. A blue box highlights the marking *molto cresc.* in the bass line.
- Staff 3 (Measures 26-28):** Features a blue box highlighting the marking *ff* in the bass line.
- Staff 4 (Measures 29-30):** Continues the melodic line in the treble. A blue box highlights the marking *cresc.* in the bass line.



Figure 2. 18: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 1st movement, bars 19-36, annotated

5. 2. 2. 1 The Second Movement

In the second movement, starting from bar 27, *un poco più mosso*, a melody is introduced in the right hand with an accompaniment in the middle voice and bass that mostly replicates the rhythm of the melody line. This part is marked *dolce* and has *crescendo* and *diminuendo* markings within a bar (this happens in b. 27, b. 28, b. 32 and b. 33). This suggests to the performer to execute dynamics in a sort of wave-like way: to achieve a culmination in the middle of the bar on the note C flat in the right hand and then go down with the dynamic volume. In this case, the performer would do better not to play the phrase in the same way every time, despite the exact same marking and all being set in the *piano* dynamic. Each of the bars can grow dynamically a little more each time to give them more emotional weight. The other difficulty in this part is that the melody line in the right hand has to be approached from a higher point of attack in order to stand out, while the middle voice should be approached closer to the keys. Meanwhile, the left-hand bass notes need to be heard a bit more than the middle voice accompaniment. Therefore, the difference in approaching the three voices in a different way needs to be practised and later smoothly incorporated in the performance.

Un poco piu mosso

27

p dolce

cresc.

Red.

30

f

p

Red.

33

un poco cresc.

36

p

Red.

Red.

39

cresc.

f

Red.

Tempo I

Figure 2. 19: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 2nd movement, bars 27–41

5. 2. 2. 3 The Third Movement

Another part where performer has to amend the way the dynamics are indicated, is in the trio part of the third movement. The first theme consists of three ascending phrases repeating the same melody and rhythm as a tonal sequence and one phrase descending. Apart from the *pp* dynamics in the beginning of this section, there are no other dynamic markings. Performing

three consecutive phrases with identical dynamics would be uncharacteristic of the Romantic style, which is famous for its expressiveness and nuance. Executing those phrases in the same manner is likely to lower the musical interest for both the performer and the audience.

Therefore, to make that part a bit more interesting and musically significant, since each phrase is moving up with its melody line, the natural way of creating some variation of dynamics would be to create a dynamic ladder for each sequence and create crescendo. Thus, each phrase would start a bit louder and grow in intensity. The fourth descending phrase would be in diminuendo to reflect the descending melody:

1st phrase *pp crescendo*

2nd phrase *p crescendo*

3rd phrase *mp crescendo*

4th phrase *mf diminuendo*

The same course of action can be used in the following sections of trio which bear similar construction without descriptive dynamics.

Trio Più mosso

61

67

73

78

pp

p

Figure 2. 20: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 3rd movement, bars 61–82, annotated

5. 2. 2. 4 The Fourth Movement

In the fourth movement, in bb. 18, 20, 26, 28, 92, 95, 100, 102, where there are passages in the right hand with octaves in the left hand, there is an indication of *crescendo*. It could be interpreted as playing each group of triplets louder, each note equally. A more creative take on it would be to extract the second, third and fourth note of each triplet group and play them as a melodic line in *crescendo*. The inclusion of these expressive shape and dynamic variations into these bars will not only increase their musical significance but also bring forth the hidden melody that could otherwise be missed. This approach highlights more the interplay between different voices in the score and creates more engaging interpretation. Similar sections (bb. 158, 160, 166, 168) when this motive comes back can be performed in the same way.



Figure 2. 21: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 4th movement, bars 16–21, annotated



Figure 2. 22: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 4th movement, bars 26–28, annotated

5. 2. 3 Tempi

This composition contains several tempo markings that require evaluation in order to determine Aulin’s intentions when she wrote them. Many times, the changes between the tempi happen within not many bars, therefore the changes must be well-considered to not sound sudden but rather more like a smooth transition. The sudden changes would disrupt the structural integrity of the piece and would not feel organic but abrupt.

According to Wallace: ‘Adjustments of tempo can clarify form’ (1989: 50) and here is the case in point of bridging the different phrase transition to make the structure clearer and not sound chaotic. It can mean that some of the changes in tempi might have to be executed a bit earlier, or later, depending on the context to make it sound more natural.

5. 2. 3. 1 The First Movement

In the first movement, which is marked *Adagio: Allegro*, Aulin uses two tempi where four bars of introduction are in *Adagio* and then followed by an *Allegro*. This can be observed in the exposition and recapitulation sections of the first movement. The part which is confusing is towards the end, when four different tempi are used right after each other in close succession:

un poco rit. (b. 177)

Grave (b. 179)

Rit. (b. 182)

A tempo (b. 183)

The performer is given explicit instructions on how to carry out the first two: *un poco rit.* and *Grave*. The third and fourth are not so simple. While phrase *a tempo* is written in b. 183, we have the indication of *ritenuto* as mentioned in b. 182. This would suggest that the performer returns to her previous pace in b. 183 after slowing down in b. 182. The issue is that the tempo was previously *Grave* rather than *Allegro*, which is how the majority of the movement was written. Moreover, the melody there is the return of the theme from the exposition and recapitulation, which was originally marked *Allegro*. Playing this at a much slower speed, like *Grave*, would sound strange all of a sudden. To connect it to the main theme, I would play it in tempo primo, which is a more precise phrase. It is possible that Aulin used the indication *Grave* in its literally translated sense as ‘serious’, instead of tempo suggestion which would link it to the full title of the sonata: *Grande sonata sérieuse pour le piano*.

The final four bars, which are reminiscent of the *Adagio* part that is presented twice in this movement (bb. 1–4, bb. 111–114), are another source of uncertainty. Although Aulin did not add any tempo markings to this section, I would slow down the bar before *pp una corda*

(b. 197) to prepare the slow tempo for the remaining bars and then play them in *Adagio* tempo. This would further highlight the brace construction of this movement by repeating four bars of the same type at the beginning, middle, and end.

Figure 2. 23: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 1st movement, bars 179–190, annotated

5. 2. 3. 2 The Second Movement

Another instance of ambiguous performance instructions can be heard in the second movement (bb. 27–41), where *Tempo I* is introduced without any ritenuto preparations following the passage marked *un poco più mosso*. The chords on the second and third beats of b. 40 are already a part of the ‘Grieg’s theme’ (melody in the descending interval of a third and characteristic grace notes that evoke the lyrical theme from the third movement of Edvard Grieg’s *Piano Concerto* in A minor Op. 15 visible in bb. 11, 15, 19, 29, 41 and 71 which was described in 5. 2. 1. 2) which was initially in the slower tempo (*Andante molto espressione*). Slowing down the chords that lead to this motive might be a more expressive

and musical way to set the new tempo. It would provide a seamless transition rather than a sudden one.

Un poco piu mosso

27

p dolce

cresc.

30

f

p

33

un poco cresc.

36

p

39

cresc.

f

Tempo I

Figure 2. 24: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 2nd movement, bars 27–41

The change from the *tempo primo* to *più mosso* in bb. 47–50 reveals another intriguing aspect of the tempo marking. The *tempo primo* section's calming down is indicated by the marking *tranquillo*, which can be interpreted as a preparation to the faster tempo.

Slowing down happens right before the tempo picks up speed, thus even if the tempo is not particularly rapid, it will appear faster because there was a slower section right before. It is a clever piece of writing by Aulin because the tempo picks up even more later, making it potentially challenging to play quickly. To facilitate the transition, the final chord of the *tranquillo* can also be played at the new speed. Starting the new tempo from a previous bar allows the performer to have it more fluid and convenient.



Figure 2. 25: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 2nd movement, bars 47–50, annotated

The further interesting aspect of tempo marking is towards the end of the 2nd movement:

Poco tranquillo (bb. 69–70) – *Tempo primo un poco con moto* (b. 71) – *appassionato* (b. 75) – *Tempo primo* (b. 77).

This section follows the natural ebbs and flows of the sea-like, rocking 9/8-time signature, with tempo variations in four consecutive phrases. Starting at a slower pace (bb. 69–70) with hesitation like notes of A flat in the right-hand which help to slow down the tempo by bringing out the inner melody in the right hand. Afterwards, increasing movement (bb. 71–74) where the Grieg's theme comes back (melody in the descending interval of a third and characteristic grace notes that evoke the lyrical theme from the third movement of Edvard Grieg's *Piano Concerto* in A minor Op. 15 visible in bb. 11, 15, 19, 29, 41 and 71 which was described in 2. 1. 2) but this time in a somewhat faster tempo. As the movement reaches its climax, *appassionato* (b. 75), the player must consciously slow down in the light of the strong and deeply moving emotions this phrase elicits. And finally returning to the

initial tempo (b. 77) replicating the theme from the beginning of this movement. Since everything takes place in just ten bars, it must be fully developed so that any changes in tempo during the performance feel seamless and natural.

The musical score is for the second movement of Aulin's Piano Sonata Op. 14. It begins at bar 69 with a piano introduction marked 'appassionata'. At bar 77, the tempo changes to 'Tempo I' and 'dolce'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'. The score is in G major and 3/4 time.

Figure 2. 26: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 2nd movement, bars 69–92

5. 2. 3. 3 The Third Movement

In the third movement there are quite a few more instances of different tempo markings which leave space for interpretation on the part of the performer. Firstly, the whole

movement is in ‘tempo di mazurka’ with the last note (third beat) being accented. The accent requires time to develop, and by not playing it too quickly, one can ensure that the note would not sound too harsh. This results in a tilting mood and tempo instability despite the underlying pulse.

Before choosing the appropriate tempo for this movement, it is worth looking at the middle section: *Trio più mosso* which starts on the upbeat to bar 34 (see figure 2. 26). The *più mosso* must be notably faster than in the previous section in order to give the trio section a stronger feeling of forward motion. The earlier part, on the other hand, should feel active and playful (*giocosso*) without being overly rapid, keeping its light-hearted and humorous nature which would comply with Aulin’s intention of marking *giocosso*. Therefore, the performer ought to imagine the tempo of the trio before beginning the entire movement and then choose the tempo for mazurka a little slower than that.

Moving forward, section *un poco vivo* (bb. 5–9), which leads to *tempo primo* (b. 9), exhibits another curious element that reoccurs throughout this work. In *un poco vivo*, the first three notes of the chromatic ascending scale might be interpreted as a sense of hesitancy instead of just starting in a faster pace already. Especially, considering that the note D is repeated and the new phrase in b. 6 starts with a slur, as in opposition to the staccato articulation in the bar before, as well as with left hand accompaniment which was absent in the previous bar. This way you can treat the chromatic scale as preparation for the more moving tempo (*un poco vivo*). One can begin slowly and pick up the pace in the following bar. The last four notes in this section could also be slowed down. It portrays the idea of speed developing gradually before coming to a stop.



Figure 2. 27: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 3rd movement, bars 1–11, annotated

Transition from the mazurka part into the trio (b. 64) does not sound good when it is performed without any break, as it feels rushed and confusing, mostly since a completely new section is being introduced which does not have any connection to the previous one. The fact that Aulin did not write any fermata or rests indicates that she intended the entire movement to flow without encumbering pauses. Nevertheless, in this instance, the flow of the music itself seems to ask for a small breath before moving into trio. Especially considering that the new section is marked *pp*, the loud dynamic from before must be allowed to mellow down in order to do away with the booming sound and allow the quieter part more clarity of sound.

There is not a particularly striking melody or emotional undertone introduced in the trio (b. 64). One can argue that the interest in trio lies in its hemiolas which provide rhythmic uncertainty (similar technique is often seen in Brahms' compositions) and act as a contrasting element in this movement. To make this part more engaging and appealing, I would take the *più mosso* marking very seriously which means I would perform this part of the third movement in a moving, flowing tempo, much different to the mazurka part. The writing in the trio, which is based on similar phrases going up first in longer values (minims in bb. 64–67) and then faster ones (quavers in b. 68), can give the impression of moving forward step by step on a ladder up. Both the pace and the dynamics selections (described further in 5. 2. 2. 3) follow this kind of writing that has a sense of progress and therefore compels the

performer to move the tempo as well as gradually grow in dynamics. Otherwise, this part sounds really plain and is monotonous in comparison to the mazurka.

Trio Più mosso

Figure 2. 28: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 3rd movement, bars 61–82, annotated

It is also worth noting the speed with which this movement ends, reminiscent of rhythm of the mazurka with which this movement started. The mazurka rhythm is repeated five times with *ritenuto* in the last repetition (bb. 225–36) and it is followed by diminished broken chord starting on D flat. After that, the fourth movement starts *attacca*. As a result, it is worth a thought about structuring the final twelve bars, both to close the third movement and to get ready for the upcoming, intense final movement. To avoid dragging, it could be a good idea to avoid slowing down those bars (bb. 225–36) too soon. The final fourth (b. 231) or fifth repeat (b. 233) may be slightly slower to get ready for what is about to happen, that is the energetic and frantic fourth movement. Prior to it, the performer must also decide how long the fermata (b. 236) will last. Along with the previous arpeggio of diminished chord beginning on D flat from the previous bar, the final note, D flat, remains on the pedal (b.

235). It can be effective to end the fermata (b. 236) only when the notes from the diminished chord can no longer be heard. Then, simply let go of the pedal, take a brief silence, and proceed with the fourth movement. The writing in the final bar (b. 236) with fermata in the right and left hands suggests suspension of the end of this movement and staying a bit longer with the last chord on the sustain pedal. Even though, it is marked *attacca Finale*, one ought to clean the pedal and have a split-second silence to make the sounds of the third movement vanish before engaging with the fourth movement.



Figure 2. 29: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 3rd movement, bars 225–236

5. 2. 4 Other issues

5. 2. 4. 1 The First Movement

The wide chords that can be considered as unmarked arpeggiated ones are visible in the opening, in the *Adagio* part which can be observed in figure 2. 2. The chords in the right hand for most pianists will prove too wide to play them harmonically, therefore they would need to be arpeggiated. This must be done in a way that does not disturb the dynamics and the stillness of this introduction. Martin Kraus (who was a pupil of Liszt and teacher of Claudio Arrau – Chilean and American pianist considered one of the most prominent pianists in the twentieth century) explained that there are several ways to approach the wide unmarked arpeggiated chords depending on the context within the composition based on Liszt's

teaching. According to Kraus, Liszt demonstrated how to break chords in a variety of ways, including starting slowly and accelerating towards the highest note, making a crescendo to the highest note, making a diminuendo, or doing it freely with rubato. But always in order to give the broken chords a purpose derived from the previous one (Horowitz 1999: 38–39). I chose to break the chords making the crescendo towards the last notes in order to punctuate the melody line, as well as delaying the last note in bar 3, making it a culmination of this phrase.

5. 2. 4. 2 The Second Movement

There is an intriguing modulation that begins in *tranquillo* in bar 47 which leads to C sharp minor key signature, which appears in bar 50 when the time signature shifts to 6/8 and the speed to *più mosso*. To make it easier for the pianist, the chord progression of a *tranquillo* is written in an enharmonic manner rather than according to the rules of classical harmony:

F minor – B flat diminished (written enharmonically) – A major 7th (written enharmonically) – G flat diminished with major 7th – A flat major 7th – E major – G sharp major 7th.

In Aulin's works, the harmonic progression is sometimes written in a way that is more ‘friendly’ for the performer to play and decipher the notes, rather than constantly following the harmonic rules.



Figure 2. 30: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 2nd movement, bars 47–50, annotated

5. 2. 4. 3 The Third Movement

In the third movement, the mazurka accents that are placed by Aulin on the third beat, occur only in the first and second bars, but are absent in the subsequent ones. It is unclear whether she intended to continue using accents throughout the following bars and did not write them down, considering it obvious that the accent would be maintained on similarly structured bars, or whether this was an intended omission doing away with the accents altogether. I choose to retain the emphasis on the third beat because the subsequent bars comparable characters demand that they be played similarly. This can be observed in figure 2. 24.

5. 2. 4. 4 The Fourth Movement

A few bars of the lyrical theme that begin in b. 57 are curious from the perspective of the performer. The melody is in the middle register and is being passed between the hands in bb. 65–68, which is another instance of this theme being presented. It implies that the melody lines hand changes should not be noticeable and that the external voices must have significantly lower dynamics than the one in the middle. It is consistent with a larger aesthetic principle in Romantic piano music that emphasises the inner voices' cantabile quality even when they are hidden within elaborate textures and it is a reflection of Aulin's following the principles of Romantic and late-Romantic piano idiom.



Figure 2. 31: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 4th movement, bars 63–68

Another puzzle for the performer to tackle is the execution of rhythms in both hands in bb. 133–137 in the fourth movement. Here the right hand has quaver triplets while the left hand has



The question arises about how they should be played against each other: harsher and stricter, like a dotted rhythm, meaning that the last semiquaver would be played after the last quaver from the triplet; or more relaxed, matching the last semiquaver with the last quaver of the triplet? On one hand, it ought to be stricter to fit the theme from the first movement where this rhythm is used. Realistically, though, in fast tempo the tendency would be to play it as it is written which would sound relaxed, in a similar way as in Franz Schubert's compositions (for example: Impromptu in C minor no. 1, Op. 90). Many times in Schubert's compositions, when the pianist is faced with the notation of a triplet against a dotted figure, the 'triplet assimilation' takes place, which means playing the short note in the dotted figure as last note of the triplet figure (Arden 2020). Here the last note of each group in both hands is played together, despite the difference in the written rhythm. The choice of the way how to play it should be based on the score and the part's context within the movement rather than how easy it is to execute it. In the context of a rather fast section, it makes more sense to follow the Schubert's example and perform it as a triplet instead of trying to fit in the semiquaver

note after each quaver triplet in the right hand. It would definitely stagger the tempo and it would lose its flow.

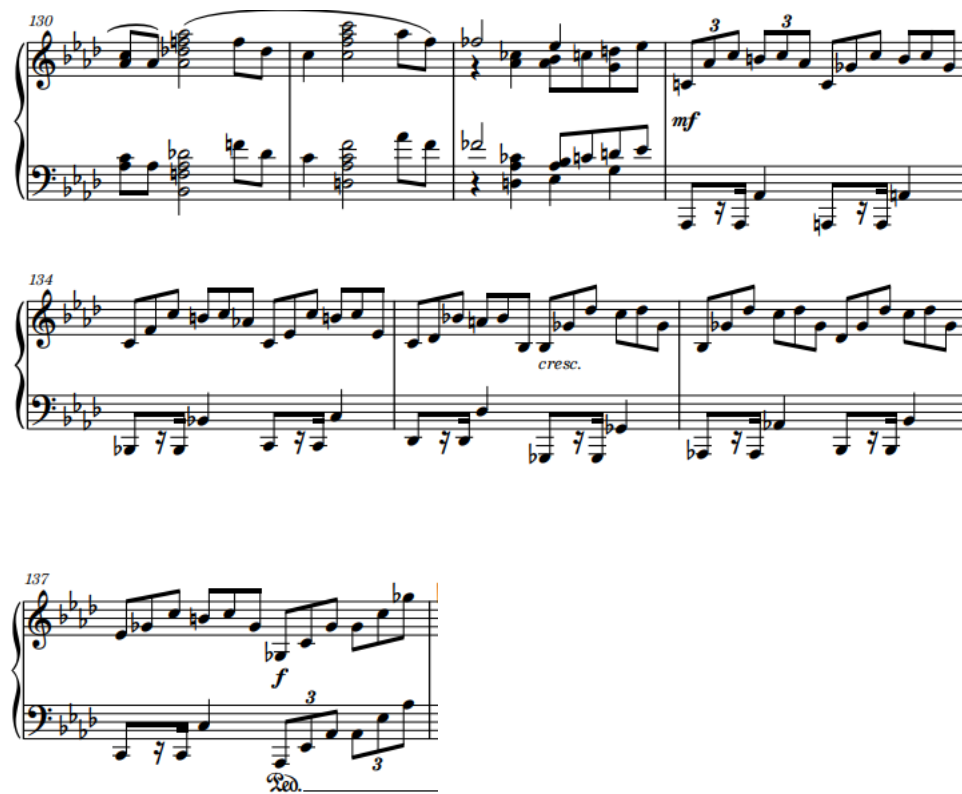


Figure 2. 32: Aulin, Piano Sonata Op. 14, 4th movement, bars 130–137



Figure 2. 33: Schubert, Impromptu Op. 90, no. 1, bars 50–55, annotated

5. 2. 5 Conclusion

From the performer's point of view, the Sonata poses several challenges, not only due to its technical difficulties but also due to its emotional depth and sheer length. There are instances of technical challenges which can be found in this composition, especially in the rapid figurations in the first and fourth movement as well as the *più mosso* part in the second movement. Those virtuosic passages require a methodical and systematic approach to practice and can be overcome with a consistent practice regime. The main difficulty lies in sustaining the overall energy and the flow of the piece throughout the performance which largely depends on the physical and mental stamina of the performer. Moreover, the tempo transitions which are frequent, and sometimes can feel abrupt, need to be kept in check during the performance to make sure that the structure of the sonata is sustained and that those changes sound intentional and organic. Furthermore, each movement has a distinctive mood which needs to be transmitted by choosing the appropriate tone colour and articulation.

As much as the piece is constructed in a traditional, classical way – which is a sonata form with the exception of the mazurka being the third movement – some of the harmonic language is far from being obvious. There are several instances of modulations and sudden chordal shifts which may sound surprising in comparison to earlier Romantic composers who mostly influenced Aulin's music. Those, not particular themes or melodies, (apart from the 'Grieg' theme mentioned earlier), contribute to the work's distinctive character, setting it apart from the early Romantic compositional style which was Aulin's key source of musical inspiration. Therefore, there are some elements of experimental piano language existent here which fit in with the late-Romantic idiom and in some ways is hinting the move towards new trends in music which focus on clarity, structural balance and restrained expressiveness (New Objectivity). There are instances of lyrical and cantabile writing, reminiscent of the vocal quality. Those can be especially observed in the second theme of the first movement as well

as in the second movement where the melody unravels in an expressive intimacy. Nevertheless, the main musical character of the piece is pathos and solemnity with occasionally lighter, capricious character visible in the third movement. Ultimately, it is the inherent energy that this piece emanates, especially coming to light in the fast-paced fourth movement, that needs to transpire through the performance and is the unifying element between the different moods and textures of the piece.

Regarding musical influences, Aulin's does not copy but rather assimilates and reinterprets those ideas into the creation of her own piano idiom. She draws inspiration from preceding composers in usage of form, melody, rhythms and even movement titles but she incorporates it with her own musical ideas to create a unique musical language. Her musical idiom can at times appear conservative or old-fashioned, closer examination reveals moments of harmonic (especially using enharmonic equivalents of the notes for the ease of reading them), formal (mazurka as a part of sonata form) and expressive experimentation that point towards a more bold and forward-thinking aesthetic. Aulin presents herself as a composer who respects Romantic principles while being both forward-thinking and historically aware in her approach.

During my final recital the reception of the Sonata by audience was quite enthusiastic. The listeners mostly praised its frantic energy and velocity, especially heard in the fourth movement. The audience also highlighted the dramatic figurations in the first movement, the exuberant and capricious character of the third movement and the lyrical quality of the second movement, reminiscent the 'Grieg' theme. During the preparation for the performance, I had to consider the acoustics in the hall. Therefore, some of the tempo transitions needed to take a bit longer than I had previously assumed in my analysis due to the reverberance of the sound. One of the main challenges during that evening was to convey the duality of the piece between its mainly dramatic quality and the more intimate and lyrical

one and transport the audience into those two dimensions. Overall, this experience proved to be memorable and a special moment to affirm Aulin's right to be present in the canon of piano repertoire.

5. 3 Comparative Analysis between Beach and Aulin

Despite their solid foundation in Romantic musical traditions, Amy Beach and Valborg Aulin's different upbringings, education and socioeconomic standing contribute to their unique musical idiom. Each composer's idiom poses its own challenges and requires of the performer to make interpretative decisions. In addition to structural and harmonic choices, a performer's unique style emerges from the technical and emotive difficulties they encounter. These aspects all affect how the music is perceived and experienced.

5. 3. 1 Similarities

Both Beach and Aulin exhibit a fondness towards expansive sounds and extended writing in fortissimo dynamics. It aligns with the Romantic fascination with the piano as an instrument capable of vast dynamic ranges and emotional depth. Also, during that period long crescendos and sustained fortissimo sound became integral part of the Romantic musical language.

According to Rosen (1999):

It is with the gradual crescendo over a full page or more of the score that the piano came fully into its own. [...] The size of the piano [...] induces the belief that one is dominating the sound from within [...] the pianist enters into the full polyphonic texture [...] and plays the greatest fortissimo with an exertion that makes him or her feel as if merged with the instrument.

This has been further discussed in Chapter 5. 1. 4 (dynamics in Amy Beach's writing) and 5. 2. 2 (dynamics in Valborg Aulin's writing), where I examined their use of dynamics and how it can be understood and interpreted. In their analysed compositions, the main issue regarding dynamics concerns the parts that are marked ff for a long number of bars.

Additionally, in the case of Aulin there are also repeated sections with same or similar dynamics which require the performer to make executive decisions on how to interpret them by either playing them the same as written or changing the dynamic level according to the context of the composition. Moreover, Aulin sometimes quickly changes the dynamics within few bars which causes the performer to adjust the tempo in order to make those dynamic changes more heard and meaningful.

Moving to other traits of their writing, both have a tendency to write wide chords. While Beach usually gives the indication to arpeggiate them (which can be observed in several figures like fig. 1. 7: b. 50, fig. 1. 15: b. 180, fig. 1. 23: b. 101, fig. 1. 25: b. 63, fig. 1. 29: bb. 23–25), Aulin's writing many times does not give any indication. Therefore, as was common in the Romantic and late-Romantic era, they will need to be broken since playing them altogether as one chord is not possible. According to Philip Corri¹³, whose suggestions regarding unmarked arpeggiations are discussed in book by Peres da Costa (2012: 125), arpeggiation was expected when particular expressive remarks were written in the score:

Of paramount importance is Corri's suggestion that certain common descriptive terms such as *con espressione*, *con anima*, and *dolce* were unequivocal indications that arpeggiation must be applied frequently. Where such expressions appeared there was no need for the composer to insert arpeggio signs: their skilful addition was taken for granted. This is particularly significant because such expressive terms no longer carry this meaning.

Even though Corri's suggestions are from a century earlier and he is primarily concerned with arpeggiations or rolling of the chords in order to express a certain feeling rather than for practical reasons which I am discussing here, I believe that the way we approach music from the technical point of view always needs to correlate and lead to musical expression, and knowing what predecessors did can only enrich our interpretation.

¹³ Philip Corri (1784–1832) was a composer and pedagogue born in Edinburgh. His comprehensive piano teaching manual, *L'anima di musica*, was released in 1810. It was the most comprehensive manual of its sort created in England at the time, and it is still a very useful for understanding the piano music of the era.

To support the idea of arpeggiating the chords, even if they are not marked even further and to make them matter more, let me quote Horowitz again (1999: 38–39) in his interview with Claudio Arrau, whose teacher was Martin Kraus – a figure already discussed in Chapter 5. 2. 4. 1 as a pupil of Liszt:

He [Kraus] would speak of Liszt's way of breaking chords [...]. He [Liszt] taught us several ways of breaking chords: to start slowly, and then accelerate toward the highest note; or to make a crescendo to the highest note; or to make a diminuendo; or to do it freely, with rubato. But always so that the broken chords would have a meaning coming from what went before.

In Aulin's Sonata, the wide chords which are the ones that can be considered as unmarked arpeggiated ones are visible in the opening, in the *Adagio* part which can be observed in figure 2. 2. Based on Kraus' recommendations reflecting Liszt's teaching, I chose to break the chords making the crescendo towards the last notes in order to punctuate the melody line, as well as delaying the last note in bar 3, making it a culmination of this phrase. This is further explored in Chapter 5. 2. 4. 1.

Another characteristic common to both composers is the full use of the capacities of whole keyboard by writing in different registers. In Beach's *Ballad* it is most common when she writes trills and tremolos, which can be observed in fig. 1. 32 and fig. 1. 38. In Aulin's Sonata this is visible in fig. 2. 21, where firstly both hands are in treble clef in bar 16 and then they both move to lower register in bass clef in the following bar (b. 17), as well as in fig. 2. 23, b. 19 where both hands are descending in chords from the higher register. The wide register range is part of their expressive and structural piano idiom.

Another aspect which is shared by both composers are the changes in tempo throughout the whole piece. Beach's marking is quite clear in this matter, while sometimes it is necessary to assess tempo marking in Aulin's writing in order to ascertain her intentions. Upon closer examination, Beach's frequent use of *ritenuto* or *rallentando* markings during the transitions between phrases or melodic ideas clearly serves a structural and emotional purpose. Meanwhile, Aulin employs tempo changes occurring within a few bars, therefore,

they must be carefully thought out to sound more like a fluid transition rather than abrupt. From the analysis of the score and while performing it, it seems that clear-cut changes of tempo were not her intentions and might not be possible depending on the acoustics of the space the composition is performed in. This has been discussed further along with examples in the score in Chapter 5. 1. 3 (Amy Beach) and 5. 2. 3 (Valborg Aulin).

My analysis of the selected piano pieces also reveals that both composers drew inspiration from the keyboard works of Schumann and Chopin. Chopin's influences are visible in Beach's beginning of the *Ballad*, where she repeats the same notes in the same manner as the beginning of Chopin's *Ballad* Op. 38 no. 2, as well as in the fourth of the *Four Sketches*: 'Fire-flies', which Beach seems to have modelled after Chopin's Study for double thirds Op. 25 no. 6. On the other hand, Aulin's inspiration from Chopin's works is visible in the opening of his Sonata in B flat minor, Op. 35, no. 2, whose first four measures in the tempo markings and character resemble those of Aulin's Sonata. Moreover, Aulin uses musical forms characteristic of Chopin, like the mazurka or polonaise, in the third movement of her Sonata or rhythmic and melodic patterns like those in Chopin's Prelude in E flat minor Op. 28 no. 14 as well as the aforementioned Sonata no 2 in B flat minor Op. 35 (fourth movement). This has been further discussed in Chapter 5. 1. 1 (Amy Beach) and 5. 2. 1 (Valborg Aulin).

Regarding Schumann's influence on Beach's works, it is visible in the second of the *Four Sketches* titled 'Phantoms' in its mood and temperaments which reflects Robert Schumann's *Papillons* Op. 2 and his *Carnival* Op. 9 which can be found in Chapter 5. 1. 1. 1. Meanwhile, the first movement of Aulin's Sonata shares similarities to Schumann's *Piano* Sonata no. 3, also in F minor, Op. 14 with the same key signature and dotted rhythms throughout. Additional discussion of this topic can be found in Chapter 5. 1. 1 (Amy Beach) and 5. 2. 1. 1 (Valborg Aulin).

Both Amy Beach's and Valborg Aulin's stylistic similarities fall within the essence of the late-Romantic style. Employing long fortissimo passages, exploitation of full dynamic range, as well as the whole keyboard and its registers mirror the ethos of this period which frequently used sound to create structural clarity and emotional intensity. Both composers use broad chords and extensive harmonic textures in their works, often without the use of visible arpeggiation markings and instead depending on the performer's intuition influenced by Romantic performance standards of practice. Moreover, their subtle handling of tempo, whether through unambiguous or implied changes, also adds to a dynamic formal rhetoric, bringing their composing style into line with a larger tradition of expressive tempo flexibility that was common in the late nineteenth century. They both also drew inspiration from compositions by Schumann and Chopin. These characteristics establish their standing in the evolving language of post-Romantic piano writing by emphasising how responsive they were to the emotional and structural capabilities of the piano.

5. 3. 2 Differences

The main difference in Beach's and Aulin's writing when comparing the scores is in their clarity of writing. While Beach's writing is usually very dense, with a lot of accidentals and changes of key signatures within the piece even though they could have been written differently enharmonically, Aulin's writing is clearer and easier to decipher. One might speculate that, in the case of Amy Beach, her lack of formal schooling in music when compared to Aulin, who was well instructed formally, is clearly visible in the manner of writing. Nevertheless, while Beach's texture is quite thick, her writing is very precise in giving explicit direction about the way of performing. On the other hand, Aulin's remarks can sometimes be ambiguous. Nonetheless, it is important to consider that Beach's compositions were published, and therefore underwent editorial processes, whereas Aulin's works remained in manuscript form

and were only transcribed by Joseph Simunac, about whom no biographical or professional information is currently available. Although Simunac's transcription appears to remain faithful to Aulin's manuscript, he occasionally made executive decisions based on the musical framework especially in clarifying the notes or repeating the articulation which was visible in a similar context. Since Aulin's composition was never prepared for publication, it is possible that she did not reexamine or modify certain musical markings with the degree of attention typically expected in printed scores, potentially leaving interpretative uncertainty for the performer. This is also visible in the marking of tempo changes, which in the case of Beach are quite clear, whereas in Aulin's writing most of the tempo changes are sudden and how to interpret them is left to the performer's experience and good taste. This observation has been further addressed in Chapter 5. 1. 3 (Amy Beach) and 5. 2. 3 (Valborg Aulin).

Another distinguishing factor lies in the characteristics of their musical styles and the specific elements in their writing that reflect their individual artistic voices. While studying and performing Beach's composition, both her *Ballad* and *Four Sketches*, the performer comes across the beautiful melody lines which come through all her compositions. Like the bel canto line of a singer but transcribed into the piano language. The melody is the primary element that captures the interest of both the performer and the audience, even though her harmonies are occasionally adventurous. In the case of the *Ballad*, this is obvious since it is the reworking of an art song but in her other pieces like *Four Sketches* this treatment of the melody line as being one of the most important aspects of the piece is clearly visible. Moreover, her writing is more virtuoso-like and has elements of brilliance which reflect the influences of Liszt, like use of trills and tremolos throughout. Also, the character of her compositions is more light-hearted, lyrical, even in the more triumphant culminations. In Aulin's compositions, the main characteristic that draws attention is not a particular melody (apart from the 'borrowed' melody from Grieg, which was discussed in Chapter 5. 2. 1. 2, fig. 2. 6 and fig. 2. 7) but rather the

relentless energy and the character which could be described as dramatic, raw and more enthralling. According to one of the reviews from Stockholms Tidingen¹⁴ from 1896 quoted by George (1997: 65): ‘Miss Aulin’s music in general seems depressing.’¹⁵ I would not call her compositions depressing but they do have a certain solemnity and seriousness to them, in accordance to the title of her Sonata: *Grande Sonate sérieuse*, even though there are elements of playfulness visible in the 2nd and 3rd movement.

Even though the discussed compositions are rooted in influences of Chopin and Schumann, Beach is more inclined to use compositional devices inherited from Liszt, Mendelssohn and Schubert, which links her more to the Germanic romantic tradition passed on from her teachers Ernst Perebo and Carl Baermann. Whereas Aulin, who travelled more and was educated in different institutions and countries (Sweden, Denmark and France, as discussed in Chapter Four) has a wider palette of inspirations – which include Beethoven, Grieg, Brahms, Dvořák and Massenet – which connects her more to the wider European tradition of 19th century music.

Beach and Aulin created their unique stylistic voices influenced by their individual educational backgrounds and cultural exposures. Beach’s compositional language was strongly rooted in the Germanic Romantic style. Aulin’s broader geographic and educational experiences, however, exposed her to a greater range of artistic currents, resulting in a more eclectic synthesis of European idioms from the 19th century. In this way, their compositions serve as both an example of the larger cultural and educational networks that influenced women composers of the late Romantic era and a reflection of individual inventiveness.

¹⁴ Stockholms Tidingen was a morning Swedish-language newspaper that existed in Stockholm, Sweden, from 1889 to 1984, with a break from 1966 to 1981.

¹⁵ ‘froken Aulins music I allmiinhet verkar nedtryckande.’

Chapter 5 has focused on detailed, in-depth analysis of Amy Beach's *Ballad* and Valborg Aulin's *Sonata*, with a brief mention of Beach's *Four Sketches* and Aulin's *Fantasy Pieces*, which were informed by the performance of those pieces. The applied methodological framework, which was established earlier, has helped narrow the findings. It has concluded with a comparative examination of their piano idioms, presenting both shared similarities and differences in their piano writing.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter will examine and discuss the dissertation's findings in an effort to provide answers to the research questions posed in the introduction.

Amy Beach and Valborg Aulin were two women composers that at the time of writing the two chosen pieces for analysis, the *Ballad* Op. 6 and the *Sonata* Op. 14 respectively, were both young women living within the context of the late nineteenth century – a time dominated by the industrial revolution and the rise of the middle class, from which both hailed. It was also an age characterised by nationalism, not least in the arts. Living thousands of kilometers away from each other, one in Boston in the United States and the other in Sweden after having spent time in Denmark and in France to further her musical studies, both women imbibed the late-romantic verve dominant in classical music at the time and – whatever the differences between them – their works remain immediately recognisable as of the late-Romantic piano repertoire.

One of the questions raised in the introduction was about their musical education, and the extent to which this impacted their creative process, technique, expression, and approach to the form. This question is particularly interesting in this case because it confronts two different approaches to musical education that were dominant at the time, especially with regards to women, for whom formal schooling in music was not always a given. For this reason, I wanted to investigate whether Beach's primarily self-taught musical education allowed her to be more or less creative, in contrast with Aulin's formal education, which potentially could have made her more rigid being compelled to follow formal rules of composition and music theory. This query links to a further research question about Beach and Aulin's musical influences and just how significantly their respective social contexts, educational experiences, and geographic distance had an influence on the music they were exposed to and, in consequence, the music they created.

Based on my research and analysis of the scores as well as finally performing them in public, I consider that Amy Beach demonstrates a higher degree of originality in her writing. In *Ballad*, she used her own, original composition as a foundation for further creative development. In *Four Sketches* some rhythms and particular figures evoke the compositions of Schubert and Chopin, but she integrated them in her own musical idiom.

On the other hand, Aulin draws more consciously from her knowledge of other compositions as the basis for development of her own, unique musical language. Even if some parts can be reminiscent of compositions by other composers, they are not imitations. Instead, Aulin works with widely recognised ideas and alters them, using them as devices to create a personal and distinctive voice.

Beach's work presents a greater number of issues related to performance and unexpected developments, such as hand crossings, significant use of trills, and tremolos, which enhance the expressive and virtuosic character of her music. The most captivating feature of Aulin's composing approach, on the other hand, is her skillful integration of borrowed idiomatic elements from other composers to mould them and develop her own particular voice.

It is worth noting that for both Beach and Aulin the influence of reference composers was important and played a crucial role in shaping their own compositions. We might assume that Aulin's formal education encouraged close engagement with compositions by those considered to be the most influential composers both contemporary and from the immediate past, possibly even promoting imitation as a pedagogical tool. Given that Aulin's Sonata was composed during her student years, it is reasonable to speculate that she may have been required to include influences from established works as part of her academic training. It is possible that certain parts of the piece were consciously modelled on existing compositions responding to compositional assignments or curricular requirements. If this was indeed the case, the evident stylistic references within the Sonata should not be interpreted as a lack of

creativity or musical imagination on Aulin's part, but rather as a reflection of the compositional conventions and curricular philosophies of the times.

On the other hand, Beach appears to have embraced the broad stylistic tools of the late-Romantic style and integrated them more freely into her own compositional voice. It was well-known that she religiously studied scores by earlier composers and it is plausible that she may have set herself compositional exercises very similar to those assigned within the context of formal academic settings (like in Aulin's case) – such as writing in the style of, or modelling a piece on, existing works. This approach is evident in her *Four Sketches* where no. 3 'Dreaming' bears clear stylistic traces of Schubert's writing and is particularly reminiscent of his Impromptu Op. 90 no. 3, while no. 4 'Fire-flies' is evidently influenced by Chopin's *Etude* for double thirds. In the case of the *Ballad* she reworked her own song into a solo piano composition which may in itself reflect a self-imposed compositional challenge or study.

Taking all of this into consideration, it may be overly simplistic – or even unjust – to reckon undeniably that Amy Beach was the more creative or innovative of the two composers. While her scores may at first glance suggest a greater level of originality, such a judgement must also take into account the different compositional circumstances and context under which the compared works were created. It is true that Aulin's Sonata at times unveils a degree of unevenness in compositional quality, particularly when compared to Beach's *Ballad*, which presents itself as a more tenacious and refined work. However, it is significant to take into account that the *Ballad* is a shorter composition that was prepared for publication, whereas the Sonata was a student work, likely composed within an academic setting and not subjected to the same level of revision or editorial refinement.

All those circumstantial factors mean that even though the discussed works are composed at the same time period and reflect similar stylistic influences, the circumstances of

creating these works played a significant role in shaping their final form. Therefore, these perceptions should not be used to judge the overall qualities of one composer over the other.

When taking into account Aulin's composition which has not been formally published, it may be beneficial to prepare a more critically edited version that addresses the numerous ambiguities related to dynamics, tempo indications, and other performance markings. Furthermore, this process could entail the correction or revision of certain passages where necessary. Such an editorial attempt would enhance the value of this research and provide a meaningful contribution to the dissemination and performance of Aulin's work. The analysis provided within this dissertation would be of considerable value to an editor that desires to provide a definitive edited version of the score of Aulin's Sonata.

The analysis of the scores of these selected pieces by Beach and Aulin shows that these two women composers both had a distinctive musical idiom worth of public appreciation. It also shows that despite remaining within the forms, style and musical language that were predominant at the time, they did not complacently do so but rather engaged creatively with these elements to find their individual expression. Thus, even though one might draw comparisons with their contemporaries, both their voices remain distinct and, from a performer's perspective, the satisfaction of engaging with their personalities remains constant and deeply intimate.

At this point, it is also important to remember Nattiez's tripartite model's aesthetic level, associated with reception. It provides an essential perspective for placing Beach's and Aulin's works outside of the score and performance, even though it is not the main subject of this dissertation. Their music's marginal status in the canon can be partially explained by the gendered and frequently limited discourses in which it was accepted throughout their lifetimes. Performances of these pieces now, however, take part in a unique musical process: a rediscovery, an extension of the canon, and a renewed recognition of the contributions made

by women to the late-Romantic piano repertory. In this way, the performer not only interprets but also helps to change how audiences perceive and appreciate these voices that have been marginalised for a long time.

This dissertation states that compositional originality in the late nineteenth century cannot be adequately evaluated without paying close attention to the purpose of the composition, its pedagogical context, as well as the practical, institutional, and economic circumstances under which a work was composed. During the comparative analysis and engagement with the aforementioned compositions in performance, the research questions the depreciating narratives that claim self-learning is more beneficial than institutional training. Rather, it presents two distinct yet equally complex compositional strategies: Beach's broadly assimilative idiom, in which stylistic influences are integrated with considerable freedom, and Aulin's analytical interaction with Romantic compositional ideas shaped by formal academic training. The study also demonstrates that recognised differences in coherence and refinement are not a result of creative ability but are instead due to composing circumstances and publication status. The study emphasises performance as a method of academic enquiry and provides both analytical and practical contributions to the revival of women composers' status in the nineteenth century. Ultimately, it asserts Beach's and Aulin's compositions as important, rather than peripheral, works of the nineteenth century and situates them within the piano canon of the Romantic era.

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