ALEXANDER BUONO ACADEMY

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Sonata No. 20, Op. 49, No. 2

A GUIDE TO INTERPRETATION

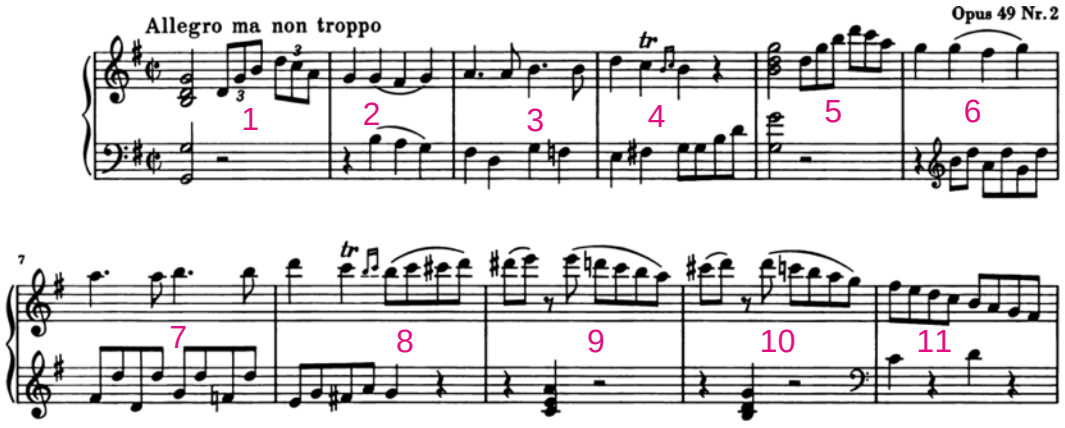
BY COSMO BUONO

This work and its companion piece, “Sonata No. 19 in G Minor, Op. 49, No. 1”, were most likely composed in 1795 or 1796, and were not published by Beethoven. The decision to publish them came in 1805 from Beethoven’s brother Kaspar, to which the composer reluctantly agreed. Beethoven was very meticulous about what he permitted to be printed, and frequently reserved works for reworking at a later time. Perhaps he had the same intention for these, but both pieces are quite lovely in their original version.

Sonata No. 20 is in two movements, both in the key of G Major, and neither the manuscript nor first edition have dynamic markings, which is further indication that Beethoven may have had further revision in mind.

FIRST MOVEMENT-*ALLEGRO MA NON TROPPO*

I think the piece should begin with a good *fortissimo* chord then perhaps lighten a bit on the following arpeggio. The trill in measure 4 should begin on the upper note C and 3 trills (CBCBCB) and then the ending would sound quite graceful and fitting. The same for the parallel one in measure 8. I would suggest the following fingering:



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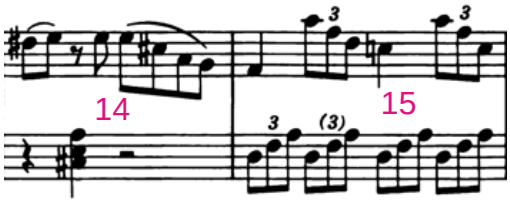
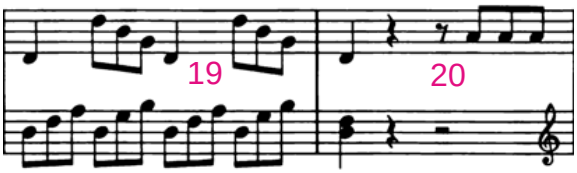
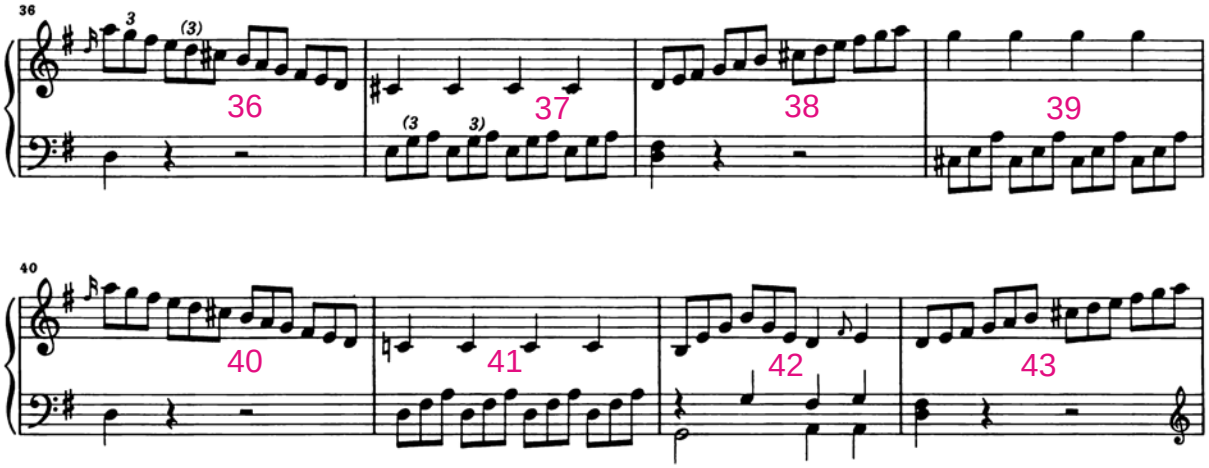
At measure 15, the left hand triplets may prove problematic in keeping them even and controlled. Practice very slowly and keep your fingers close to the keys so that you can control the sound. Once you are able to do this effectively remember the physical feeling as you bring it to tempo. Throughout this section, allow your imagination to create dynamic changes and nuance to enhance the expression.



For the second melody beginning at measure 20 create a contrast in mood. I believe it is more lyrical so you can take it just a bit slower and less dynamic than the opening.



For the scale passages beginning at measure 36, I think crescendos and decrescendos will enhance their effect. But don't be predictable. Often we hear pianists always make a crescendo when the scale ascends and a decrescendo when it descends. Try doing the opposite sometimes or for one of them nothing at all. Perhaps surprise us by making one of them piano.



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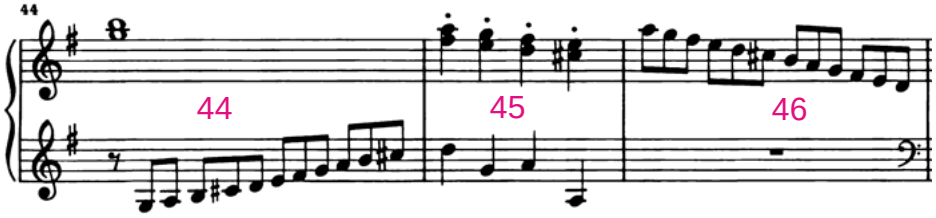
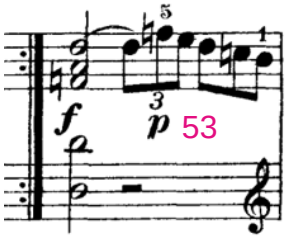
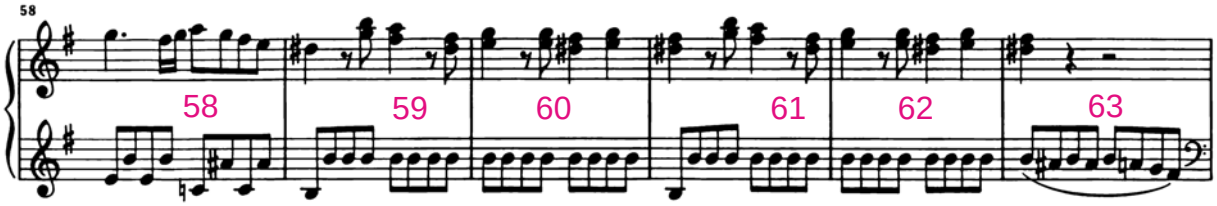
The most important thing is to use your imagination and try different ways of presenting them expressively. Decide how short you want the staccatos on measure 45 and similar spots.



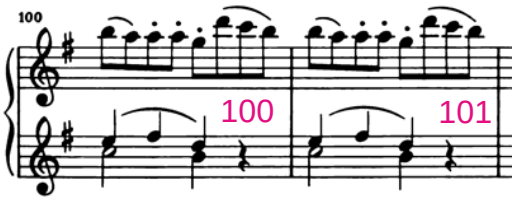
At the development on measure 53, do change the character, as Beethoven expands the theme and makes it more dramatic.



At measures 59-62, perhaps change fingers for the repeated notes in the left hand for a bit more control.



At measure 100-101 notice little figure in the left hand and think about how much it should be brought out.



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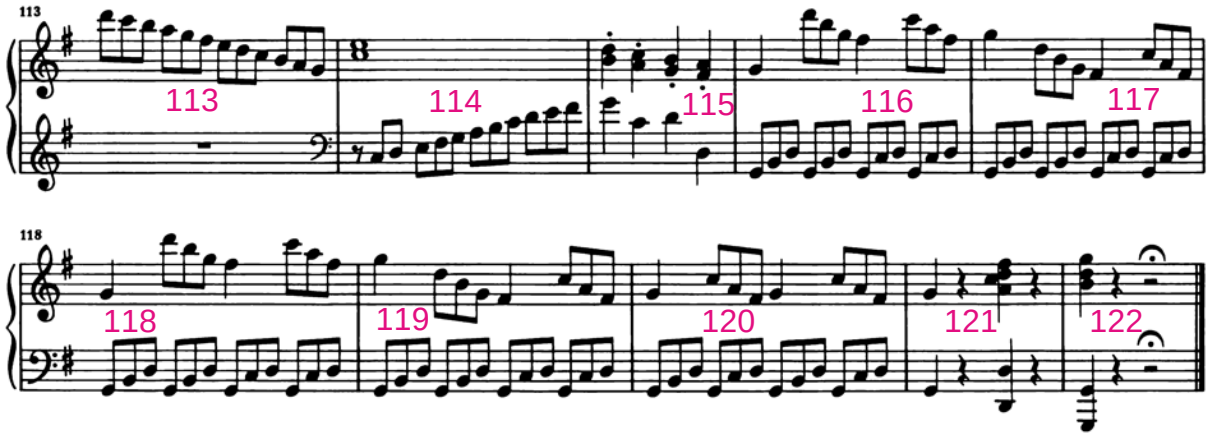
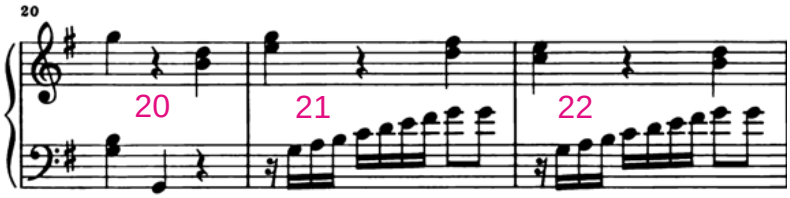
Then at measure 117 to the end really make it brilliant and conclusive.



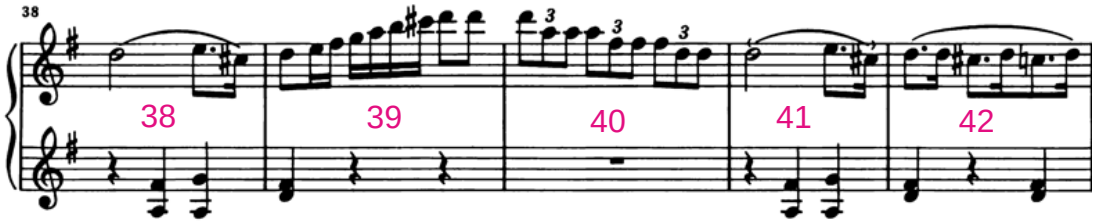
SECOND MOVEMENT-*TEMPO DI MENUETTO*

This charming movement should not be taken too fast, but in the style of a graceful minuet. Beethoven uses the same theme in the “Minuet” of his Op. 20 “Septet.”

Allow the dynamic to rise and fall as the melody unfolds, and certainly in the scale passages starting at measure 21.



At measure 41 we move back to a statement of the melody, and I think a *ritard* leading to it would be lovely and point us to the restatement of the theme.



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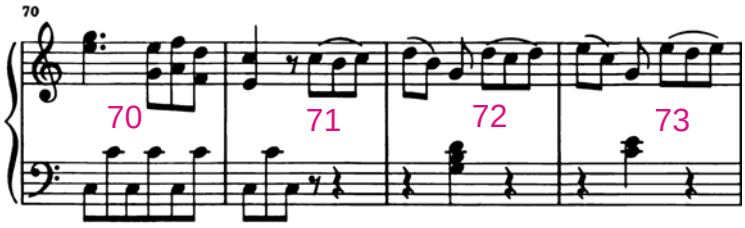
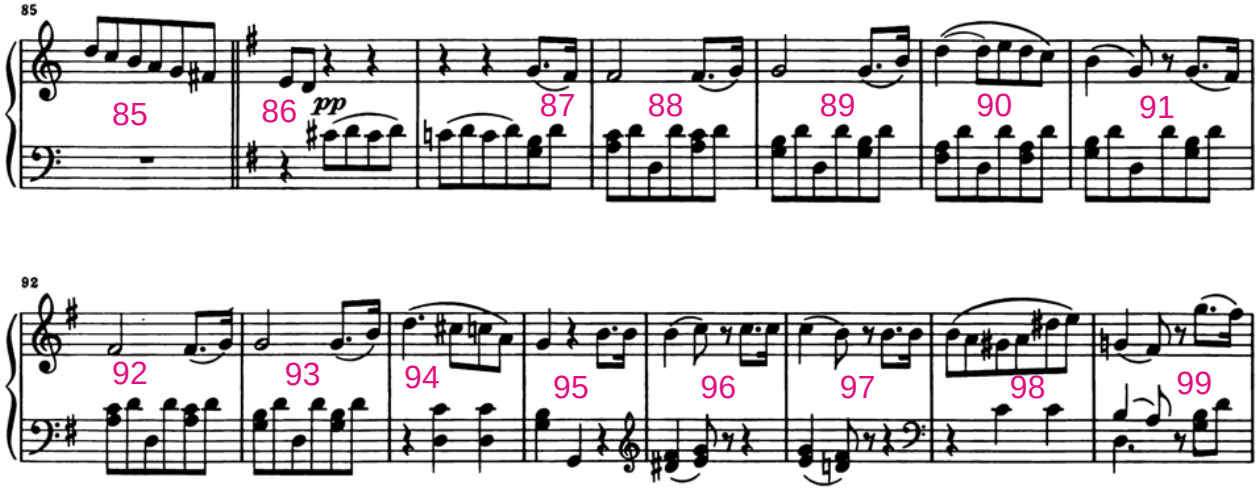
In the middle section at measure 71, the mood turns a bit boisterous so don't be afraid to have fun with this and change character and dynamic.



At measure 86, we return to the grace of the minuet, and Beethoven concludes it quietly. Don't get too quiet in the final measures, as you want to save the softest playing for the final chords, however a *decrescendo* and *ritardando* would be very effective. The passages of this movement generally lie very well under the hand and the usual scale fingerings work well with the scalar passages.



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