

FIRST MOVEMENT OF THE BEETHOVEN THIRD PIANO CONCERTO: AN  
ARGUMENT FOR THE ALKAN CADENZA

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The goal of this dissertation is not only to introduce the unique cadenza by Alkan but also to offer an argument from the performer's point of view, for why Alkan's cadenza should be considered when there exists a cadenza by Beethoven himself, not to mention those by a number of other composers, both contemporaries of Beethoven and later. Information in reference to the brief history of the cadenza and the pianoforte in the time of Mozart and Beethoven is presented in Chapter 2. A brief bibliography about Alkan is presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 describes not only the cadenza in the era of Alkan, but also a comparison which is presented between Beethoven and Alkan's cadenzas. Examples of the keyboard range, dynamic contrast, use of pedal and alternating notes or octaves, and creative quote are presented in Chapter 4. In conclusion, the revival of Alkan's cadenza is mentioned, and the author's hope to promote the Alkan's cadenza is presented in Chapter 5.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose

Charles-Valentin Alkan, a contemporary and friend of Liszt and Chopin, was a leading French composer and pianist whose music was neglected during his lifetime, although later advocated by such modern pianists as Ferruccio Busoni, Harold Bauer, Carl Friedberg, Raymond Lewenthal, Egon Petri, Ronald Smith, Claudio Arrau and Marc-André Hamelin. Among Alkan's lesser-known contributions to the piano literature is his cadenza to the first movement of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. Alkan's cadenza is unusual in that it consists of 197 measures. The duration of the cadenza is about 8 minutes while the first movement itself lasts only about 10-13 minutes. Beethoven himself wrote a cadenza to this movement as did many other composers from Ignaz Moscheles, Franz Liszt, Clara Schumann, Carl Reinecke, Gabriel Fauré to Wilhelm Kempff, and others. With so many cadenzas to choose from, including the original by Beethoven himself, why would a modern day pianist choose the Alkan cadenza?

The following quotation is perhaps a very precise answer to the question posed in the title of the dissertation: "The simple answer... is that each generation wishes to make its own contribution to the interpretation of the greatest masterpieces of music."<sup>1</sup> The goal of this dissertation is not only to introduce the unique cadenza by Alkan but also to offer an argument from the performer's point of view, for why Alkan's cadenza should be considered when there exists a cadenza by Beethoven himself, not to mention those by a number of other composers, both contemporaries of Beethoven and later.

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1. Roger Smalley, "A Case of Neglect: Two Virtuosos' Cadenzas for Beethoven (Alkan and Medtner Cadenzas)," *Music & Musician*, Vol. 20, (1972): 30.

CHAPTER 2  
BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CADENZA AND THE PIANOFORTE  
IN THE TIME OF MOZART AND BEETHOVEN

The Cadenza in the Time of Mozart

In order to begin setting forth the argument for the Alkan cadenza, it is necessary to speak briefly about the cadenza in the time of Mozart and Beethoven. In the time of Mozart, a cadenza was generally improvised by the performer, who was almost always the composer. Mozart's own extant cadenzas generally were written out in the rare instances when he knew that someone else (perhaps a student) was going to play his piece. Pianist and musicologist Robert Levin believes that, "in the public's mind Mozart's skills as an improviser transcended his deftness as a pianist and composer."<sup>2</sup>

Mozart's cadenza usually had two functions: "to reinforce the effect of the final cadence and to display the agility of the soloist's fingers."<sup>3</sup> This already establishes the fact that virtuosic display was expected from the soloist. Mozart himself was a great improviser on the stage, and always delighted the audience. According to pianist Stephen Hough, the composer "using themes from the concerto along with stock patterns of arpeggios and other figuration, and finally rounding everything off with a trill. Often in the score only this final trill is indicated."<sup>4</sup>

Even in Mozart's time there were opposing views about whether or not the performer should improvise the cadenza. Flutist and composer Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773) discussed performance practices related to the cadenza: "Among instrumentalists there are still a

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2. Robert Levin, "Improvised Embellishments in Mozart's Keyboard Music," *Early Music*, 20 (1992): 221.

3. Vincent Cheung, "Mozart's Transformation of the Cadenza in the First Movements of his Piano Concertos," *Massachusetts Institute of Technology published online*, 1997, accessed on April 19, 2014, [http://web.mit.edu/ckcheung/www/MusicalWritings\\_files/MozartCadenza\\_web\\_19971031.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/ckcheung/www/MusicalWritings_files/MozartCadenza_web_19971031.pdf).

4. Stephen Hough, "How Beethoven Redesigned the Cadenza – Twice," *The Telegraph*, (February 21st, 2014), accessed on April 20, 2014. <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/stephenhough/100073476/how-beethoven-redesigned-the-cadenza-twice/>.



few who possess the requisite knowledge.”<sup>5</sup> He believed that the ability to improvise was practical and beneficial “if, unlike many, you do not wish simply to memorize cadenzas by rote.”<sup>6</sup> From his words it can be inferred that many musicians even at that time lacked outstanding improvisation skills and needed to sketch out a cadenza and memorize it before a performance.

Another view was represented by composer and organist Daniel Gottlieb Türk (1750-1813): “A cadenza is often first invented during the performance, and if it succeeds, the player receives so much the more applause. But this enterprise is too risky and one should not count on such a happy coincidence when playing for a large audience... For my part, I would rather choose the more certain way which is to sketch the cadenza in advance.”<sup>7</sup>

In modern times, musicologist and pianist Robert Levin adheres to Quantz’s view: “No wonder, then, that it is still relatively rare to hear a performance of Classical music that goes beyond the printed page; and when it does, the embellishments and cadenzas presented are usually the product of careful preparation rather than risk-laden spontaneity.”<sup>8</sup> Levin encourages performers to improvise the cadenza rather than simply memorize rigidly. “Let’s face it,” he adds. “They’re not going to get Beethoven back. But why not try to get back to a feeling of danger, a feeling of this music being new?”<sup>9</sup> This twentieth century viewpoint lends weight to the argument for a cadenza by someone other than the composer, even if one does not have the ability to improvise oneself.

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5. Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, trans. Edward R. Reilly (New York: Schirmer Books, 1975), 186.

6. Quantz, 181.

7. Daniel Gottlob Türk, *School of Clavier Playing Or Instructions in Playing the Clavier for Teachers and Students*, trans. Raymond Hagg (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1982), 301.

8. Levin, 221.

9. Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim, “A Cultural Conservation/ With Robert Levin: The Classical Improviser.” *The Wall Street Journal*, (September 23, 2010), accessed April 19, 2014. <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748703466704575490203321546176>.

Mozart himself was “one of the first composers to write cadenzas down meticulously.”<sup>10</sup> Some composers such as Muzio Clementi and Joseph Haydn were not satisfied by simply following the tradition of improvisation, and started a sort of “anti-improvisatory” movement to incorporate their own musical ideas into a cadenza, and to write the music out in order that other performers might be able to perform these cadenzas as well. Gradually it became the tradition to write the cadenza down and this convention was inherited by the next generation of composers including Beethoven and Hummel.

After the appearance of the first fortepiano around 1700, generally credited to Bartolomeo Cristofori, the instrument underwent a series of changes over the next 150 years or so, as both composers and later performers sought more variety of tone, more power, faster repetition in the action, etc. From Jeewon Lee’s dissertation on Mozart cadenzas we learn that “The pianoforte introduced a multitude of new sounds, varying colors, and a wider range of both dynamics and register. Mozart’s twenty-seven concertos lie at the heart of the entire pianoforte repertory and many studies have been done on these masterpieces.”<sup>11</sup>

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10. Jeewon Lee, “The First Movement Cadenzas for Mozart Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor, K466.” (DMA diss., Rice University, 2012), 14.

11. Lee, 9.

## The Cadenza in the Time of Beethoven and the Influence of the Developing Fortepiano on his Virtuoso Writing

By the time Beethoven wrote multiple cadenzas for his piano concertos, music was more routinely being published and more and more often a composer's music was being played by someone other than the composer. The compositional features of Beethoven's cadenza began to exceed the scope of a traditional cadenza, foreshadowing the compositional and harmonic developments of the later nineteenth century.

Although Beethoven is famous for incorporating a free fantasy style into his classical structure, his cadenzas are more formal, and strictly follow the previous generation's tradition. Isaacs in his dissertation states "their great length, reliance on rhythmic momentum, motivic development, harmonic excursion, pianistic virtuosity and effect provide an extreme contrast to their Mozartean predecessors, both in style and in aim."<sup>12</sup>

The cadenza for Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 first movement is a good example. Instead of the traditional reinforcement of the tonic chords found in most Mozart's cadenzas, the music instead begins with the rhythmical and stormy quasi-canon, which derives from the opening theme. Compared to Mozart, Beethoven's cadenza is full of tempo contrasts from its stormy beginning to *poco meno allegro e risoluto* to *Presto*, finally calming down to *Tempo I*, and is closely related to the swift evolution of the instrument, which offered Beethoven a greater range of dynamic possibilities.

According to Joseph Kerman and Alan Tyson's book, "Beethoven's cadenzas were all probably composed in 1809."<sup>13</sup> Based on Chao-Hwa Lin's dissertation, it can be inferred that Beethoven composed the cadenza to the third concerto on Streicher's fortepiano. "After 1808,

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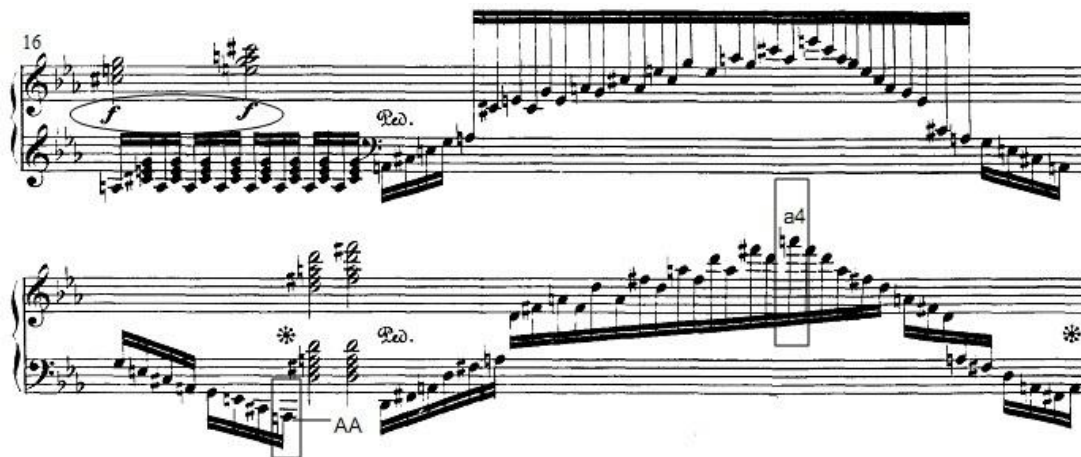
12. Nicholas Isaacs, "The Keyboard Cadenza", (DMA diss., Stanford University, 1986), 42.

13. Joseph Kerman, And Alan Tyson, *The New Grove: Beethoven* (New York; W. W. Norton, 1893), 160.

Beethoven began to explore a six – octave range, from FF to f4...Beethoven expressed his preference for Streicher’s fortepiano once again in his letters.”<sup>14</sup>

According to composer and critic Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752-1814) “Streicher... at Beethoven’s wish and advice has given his instruments greater resonance and elasticity, so that the virtuoso who plays with strength and significance may have the instrument in better command for sustained and expressive tones.”<sup>15</sup>

Example 1. Beethoven's Cadenza to his Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1st movement, measure 16.



Compared with Mozart’s cadenzas, Beethoven employs much longer melodic lines using a broader range of the keyboard (see Example 1). In Example 1, Beethoven’s arpeggios span the paragraphs written without bar lines in a free style which can be found again in his late piano sonatas. Mozart’s phrases are much shorter, generally two measures (see Example 2).

In Example 1 measure 16, the composer indicates the range from the lowest AA to the top a4, exactly five octaves of the keyboard. The arpeggio covers almost the full keyboard, offering more opportunity to show dazzling virtuosity. These passages tend to be more extended than those found in the typical Mozart cadenza (see Example 2): C#-d4 which is about four

14. Chao Hwa Lin, “The Impact of the Development of the Fortepiano on the Repertoire Composed For It From 1760–1860.” (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2012), 148.

15. Elliot Forbes, *Thayer’s Life of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 461.

octaves. In measure 34, there is a rhythm-free phrase within the cadenza, starting from the fermata and written in small notes, which resembles a solo recitative.

Example 2. Mozart's Cadenza to his Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major, K.453, 1st movement, measures 32-34.

The image shows a musical score for measures 32-34 of Mozart's Cadenza. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 32-33) has a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a bass clef staff. Measure 32 features a fermata over the first note of the treble staff, with a box labeled 'd4' below it. Measure 33 shows a melodic line in the treble staff and a more active line in the bass staff. The second system (measure 34) features a long, sweeping melodic line in the treble staff that spans across the measure, with a fermata at the end. A box labeled 'd4' is placed below the treble staff in measure 34. The bass staff in measure 34 has a few notes, including a C# note in the final measure.

Dynamically, the Streicher fortepiano offered a wider contrast of bright and dark voices. In Example 1, Beethoven put two *fortes* under two successive dominant chords, which come from the first half of the opening theme. The dynamic range in most of Mozart's cadenza on the other hand does not demand as much from the piano or from the performer as does that of Beethoven in Example 1. This reinforces the notion that it was unusual in Mozart's era for such specific emphasis on dynamics (see Example 2).

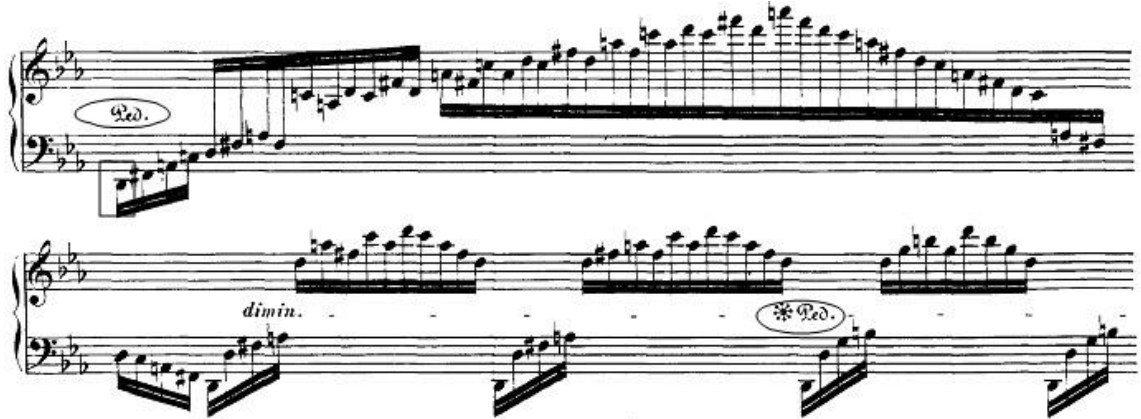
Another significant development is that Beethoven is among the first composers to specify detailed pedal markings in the score (see Example 3). Streicher's fortepiano was even equipped with four pedals, which were "*una corda, bassoon, moderator, and damper pedal.*"<sup>16</sup> Beethoven delighted in writing specific pedal markings on the music in order to indicate a specific effect he wanted. In Example 1 and 3, Beethoven put pedaling marks to cover all of an

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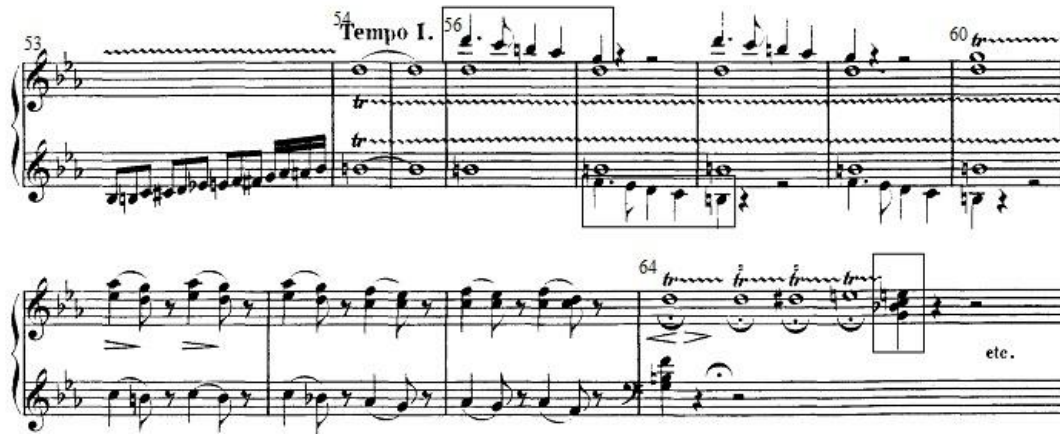
16. Lin, 148.

arpeggio, which stayed within the same harmony. Streicher's fortepiano allowed these broken chordal sonorities to sound louder and longer throughout the range of the instrument.

Example 3. Beethoven's Cadenza to his Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1st movement, measure 17.



Example 4. Beethoven's Cadenza to his Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1st movement, measures 53-64.



Additional technical challenges are posed in the trills performed simultaneously by both hands at the end of the cadenza, with the addition of extra voices which must be played in one hand while still trilling (see Example 4 measures 56 and 57). One of the most daring aspects of Beethoven's trills in these places is his prolongation of the trill on the leading tone D and the supertonic B natural, and finally stopping on the dominant seventh of F (see Example 4 measure 64), before the return of the orchestral tutti. All these characteristics represent Beethoven's

mature compositional style and can also be found in his later sonatas, including opus 109 and Op. 111.

The compositional style of cadenzas changed from Mozart's period to the time of Beethoven, influenced both by the development of the pianoforte and by the increasing levels of virtuosity. In Mozart's time, "the composition style incorporated an ever greater degree of the Fantasy element – frequent use of minor mode and chromatic effects, swiftly changing tempo, texture, motion, harmony and an emphasis on intensity rather than balance."<sup>17</sup> Beethoven created his own format by incorporating the free fantasy materials into a formal structure. Examples of this can be found in his cadenza for Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor Op. 37. According to Isaacs, his cadenzas "are much more formal in design, and follow more strictly the traditional rules of composition and design."<sup>18</sup> By the 19th century, there are two points of view. One is that the structure of the cadenza is not as formal as before. Again Nicholas Isaacs reminds us that "the compositional style reflects spontaneity and the changeability that was essential to the Romantic style (in other words, the distinguishing qualities of Fantasy itself) that the formally – composed cadenza would have lacked profile in their works."<sup>19</sup> Examples of this can be found in Liszt's two piano concertos, by which time the formal, end-of-movement cadenza was not a regular feature of all composers' concerti. Certainly neither Liszt nor Chopin chose to write formal cadenzas, although Grieg and Schumann did.

The second point of view is that "the cadenza is partially accompanied (as in Bloch's Concerto Symphonique for piano and orchestra-although interestingly enough the first example of an accompanied cadenza which I know of is that composed by Beethoven for the first movement of the piano transcription of his own Violin Concerto). The substitution of other

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17. Isaacs, 40.

18. Isaacs, 42.

19. Isaacs, 52

cadenzas is obviously out of the question."<sup>20</sup> These two points of view show that the treatment of the cadenza became much more versatile and creative than during previous periods, and the composers felt more able to depart from classical tradition.

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20. Smalley 30.



## CHAPTER 3

### CHARLES-VALENTIN MORHANGE ALKAN-A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Charles-Valentin Morhange Alkan, a French composer and pianist of Jewish heritage, was born in Paris on Nov. 30, 1813. He was the eldest of five brothers. Along with an older sister, all of them became musicians. As a child prodigy, Alkan gained attention at the age of seven, when he won a Premier Prix for Solfège at the Conservatoire de Paris. Italian composer Cherubini praised Alkan as “astonishing for his age,” and described his ability on the piano as “extraordinary.”<sup>21</sup> His other successes included three Premier Prix for piano, harmony, and organ at the Conservatoire de Paris. His first publication, a set of variations for piano based on a theme by Daniel Steibelt, appeared in 1828 when he was only 14. In the 1830s, Alkan quickly gained a reputation among musical circles as an idiosyncratic pianist and composer. He even received invitations to perform for nobility, including the Princesse de la Moskova.

Paris in the early 19th century was one of Europe's musical and cultural centers, continually attracting top composer/performers such as Chopin, Liszt, Sigismond Thalberg, and writers such as Victor Hugo and George Sand. Many artists emigrated from other countries to settle there. Alkan had a close relationship with Chopin and Liszt, as well as George Sand and others in this circle. In the 1840s, Alkan lived in the same neighborhood as Chopin and on different occasions, they often gathered together to play and to discuss musical topics, "including a work on musical theory that Chopin proposed to write."<sup>22</sup>

Because of Alkan's shyness and misanthropy, he received few invitations to perform after the birth of his son Elie-Miriam Delaborde (1839-1913). He chose to disappear from the

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21. Hugh Macdonald, “Alkan, Valentin,” *Oxford Music Online*, accessed on Jan. 13, 2014, [http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2084/subscriber/article/grove/music/00579?q=alkan&search=quick&pos=2&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2084/subscriber/article/grove/music/00579?q=alkan&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit).

22. David Conway, *Jewry in Music: Entry to the Profession from the Enlightenment to Richard Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 229-30.

concert platform at the climax of his career, and engaged instead in composition and studying the Talmud, as well as giving early musical training to his son who ultimately became a virtuoso pianist and taught at the Paris Conservatory. Alkan did not come back to the stage until 1844 under the sponsorship of La France Musicale,<sup>23</sup> with two additional recitals in 1845 in the Salle Erard.<sup>24</sup> Alkan played other composers' works more than his own. His rare recitals drew wide attention from the leading musicians of the time, receiving accolades for his virtuosity and musicianship. However, Alkan withdrew twice more in his life, with the longest gap being twenty years after 1853. One of the reasons for his withdrawal may have come from the fact that he failed to secure the position of head of piano department at the Paris Conservatory in 1848. Alkan treated teaching very seriously, and had been demonstrably eager to attain that prestigious position. His shy and unsocial personality probably contributed to this decision, but given the politics of the time, it is equally likely that some anti-semitism was in play as well. As it turned out, however, the position was accorded to one of his former students, Antoine Marmontel, who later trained Bizet and Debussy. When Alkan returned to the concert stage once again in 1873, he played more recitals than before – up to six per year-until 1880, in both the Salle Erard and the Salle Pleyel. He practiced twice a week at Erard, and gave piano lessons in the afternoons until the end of his life.<sup>25</sup>

Like Chopin, Alkan's compositional output focused primarily on piano music, although he did write some chamber works, a chamber concerto, and one symphony. Influenced no doubt by his association with Chopin and Liszt, Alkan was fond of composing works in groups or sets. He composed 25 preludes op. 31 in all the major and minor keys plus an extra prelude in C major in 1847; 12 Etudes in all the major keys Op. 35 in 1848, followed by 12 Etudes in all the minor

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23. La France Musicale is a French weekly music magazine founded in 1837 in Paris.

24. Macdonald.

25. Macdonald.

keys Op. 39 in 1857. The two sets of etudes display his taste for virtuosic techniques. Of these two sets, op. 39 can be considered one of the milestones in his compositional life. In the opus 39 etudes, Alkan demanded the most difficult techniques from the performer along with very specific demands for dynamics, resulting in a musical work that requires bravura and exceptional stamina. He combined three pieces (movements named “Tutti”, “Solo” and “Piano”) together to form *Concerto for Solo Piano*, and he also combined four movements from *Etudes dans tous les tons mineurs* Op. 39 (movements named "Allegro", “Marche Funebre", "Menuet" and "Finale"), into the *Symphony for solo piano*. This is a work that contains many extended virtuoso passages and explores the full length of the keyboard, requiring an almost orchestral sound from the pianist. Due to the demands placed on one performer with only two hands, these two major works can be compared to Liszt’s transcriptions of Beethoven's symphonies. Other important keyboard works include *Grand duo Concertant*, Op. 21, *Grande Sonate: Les quatre ages* Op. 33, *Sonate de concert*, Op. 47, *Sonatine pour piano*, Op. 61, among others.

To speak of Alkan's compositional style is to speak of a study in contrasts. On the one hand, he was deeply conservative, both in his life and in his music. On the other, he has been frequently compared to Berlioz. Unlike other romantic era composers, Berlioz was not a good pianist and wrote few pieces that include the piano, despite the popularity of the instrument at that time. There are no piano solo works by Berlioz but almost forty songs and choral music with piano accompaniment. Berlioz wrote in 1855 after the experience of judging over ninety pianos a day for several weeks at the Exposition Universelle, “The piano! At the thought of that terrible instrument my hair stands on end and I feel a tingling in my toes; just in writing the word I am entering volcanic terrain.”<sup>26</sup>

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26. Hugh Macdonald, *Berlioz’s Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 96.

Berlioz instead chose the symphony as his medium and in his symphonic works gave voice to his innovative ideas about the composition as well as the size of the orchestra. He sought to expand the orchestra beyond what had existed up until that time, and experimented with new instruments in order to further enrich the sound an orchestra was capable of producing. “The need to exploit sonorous elements, to color melody, harmony and rhythm, governed Berlioz’ orchestration and caused him to regard the orchestra as a never-ending source of effects. His aim was to search for timbral variety, to expand the orchestral spectrum, and to discover within each family of instrumental sounds a wide gamut of shades.”<sup>27</sup> Compared to his contemporaries, Berlioz’s style was absolutely unusual and bold. “Simple chord-structures whose freshness results from unusual juxtapositions, wiry orchestration, with no feather-bedding, energetic and irregular rhythmic propulsion, highly strung melodic shapes, elliptical forms, and a general absence both of routine and self-indulgence.”<sup>28</sup>

What Berlioz did with the orchestra is similar to what Alkan achieved on the piano. Just as Berlioz sought to enrich harmonic possibilities in his music and to explore a more adventuresome approach to orchestration, so Alkan sought to push the boundaries of the possible within the limitations of the piano. Alkan's *Symphony for Solo Piano* is a clear attempt to achieve an orchestral sonority on the keyboard. Alkan was fascinated with the improvements to the piano which allowed a composer to write powerful chords and sonorities as well as to write in a very virtuosic manner, challenging a pianist to his utmost, by requiring the utmost in terms of sound and technique.

One of his many unconventional ideas was his thinking about key schemes within the pieces. Both the *Symphony for Solo Piano* and the *Concerto for Solo Piano* from the *Etudes dans*

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27. Elliott Galkin, *A History of Orchestral Conducting in Theory and Practice* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 1989), 92.

28. Julian Rushton, *The Musical Language of Berlioz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 14.

*tous les tons mineurs* Op. 39 have different and unrelated keys in all of the movements. This technique was used as well in the *Grand Sonata* Op. 33 in which different keys are used for each of the structurally unusual movements. In this way, Alkan also illustrated the ageing process by marking each movement in a successively slower tempo. As with Berlioz, his music was considered inaccessible at the time. "Its funeral march could well have come from Berlioz."<sup>29</sup> Musicologist Brigitte François-Sappey mentions the frequency with which Alkan has been compared to Berlioz by different musicians. Hans von Bülow called him "the Berlioz of the piano", while Schumann, in criticizing the *Romances* Op. 15, claimed that Alkan merely "imitated Berlioz on the piano." Ferruccio Busoni repeated the comparison with Berlioz in a draft (unpublished) monograph, while Kaikhosru Sorabji commented that Alkan's *Sonatine* Op. 61 was like "a Beethoven sonata written by Berlioz."<sup>30</sup>

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29. Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight* (Milwaukee: Amadeus Press, 2002), 28.

30. Brigitte François-Sappey and François Luguénot, *Charles Valentin Alkan* (Paris: Bleu Nuit, 2013), 5.

## CHAPTER 4

### CADENZA IN THE ERA OF ALKAN AND A COMPARISON OF THE BEETHOVEN CADENZA AND THE ALKAN CADENZA

By the later 1830s, the piano of the day was beginning to more closely resemble the modern piano, with far greater dynamic range, much more ability to sustain a long tone, more rapid action allowing for single and double notes. Franz Liszt spoke about the piano in the following letter in 1837:

Thanks to improvements that have already been made and those that the diligent efforts of pianists add every day, the piano is continuing to expand its assimilative capability. We play arpeggios like a harp, sustained notes like the wind instruments, and staccatos and a thousand other passages that at one time seemed to be the special province of one instrument or another. The improvements forecast in piano making will undoubtedly provide us before long with the variety of sonority we still lack.<sup>31</sup>

As a composer, Alkan took advantage of every possible improvement to the instrument, including improved pedal mechanisms, strength of tone, and the perfection of the escapement mechanism. During Alkan's lifetime, the development of the modern piano progressed very rapidly, with many different instrument makers contributing to the technical advancement of the instrument. Increasingly, these instruments were used for public performances. Isaacs states in his dissertation, "the emergence of virtuoso performers who were not great composers was due to demands of an ever – growing audience among the middle classes."<sup>32</sup> Their reaction to the performers and to their music was overwhelming. In Lin's dissertation we learn that "the rise of the middle class and the fortepiano influenced music educating and publishing in London. Public concerts were social, cultural, and commercial centers."<sup>33</sup> The audience was not satisfied with a merely competent performance, but expected more virtuosity, including a bigger sound, more

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31. Liszt's letter to Adolphe Pictet, Chambéry, September 1837, in *An Artist's Journey: Lettres d'un bachelier en musique, 1835-1841*, trans. Charles Suttino (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 45-46.

32. Isaacs, 40.

33. Lin, 59.

dynamic contrast and dazzling techniques. Many witnesses later testified that” Liszt's playing raised the mood of audiences to a level of mystical ecstasy.”<sup>34</sup>

Alkan’s music is unique, with little or no resemblance to his contemporaries, such as Franz Liszt or Chopin. Hugh MacDonald states that “Charles – Valentin Alkan was a man of deeply conservative views, whose style of life, manner of dress and faith in the traditions of earlier music marked him off from other musicians and from the world in general...Alkan had thereafter every reason to be different from other pianists, other musicians and other composers....”<sup>35</sup> Unlike Liszt or Chopin, Alkan’s sense of musical structure was mainly influenced by the traditional classical period. In his cadenza to Beethoven’s Third Piano Concerto, the cadenza exists as an independent part of the movement but it “re-interprets the material in the light of Alkan’s own wholly individual musical language.”<sup>36</sup>

Alkan is one of few faithful advocates of classical tradition in the middle to late nineteenth century. His music is deeply influenced by the works of Beethoven, especially those of Beethoven’s middle period. Smalley notes “His musical style is therefore particularly close to that of the Third Piano Concerto. But there are also differences, notably an extended harmonic range and greater resources in the use of the piano.”<sup>37</sup>

It is important to know what kind of pianos Alkan played and composed music for. According to William Eddie, “Liszt and Alkan preferred Erard’s...Erard specialized in the widest variety of tone colour from soft to loud... the most brilliant bass power was possible and employed to great advantage by many composer including Alkan...these pianos have immense

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34. Alan Walker, Franz Liszt, *The Virtuoso Years, 1811 – 1847* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), 289.

35. Macdonald, 57.

36. Smalley, 30.

37. Smalley, 30.

clarity, power and dynamic range.”<sup>38</sup> Also Erard had the “latest double-escapement action and successfully provided pianos in a seven-octave range.”<sup>39</sup> In fact, the Erard piano was closer to today's modern piano, and offered composers and performers more possibilities to express themselves.

Example 5. Alkan Cadenza to Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, measures 48-56.

The image shows a musical score for Alkan's Cadenza to Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3, measures 48-56. The score is in C minor and features dense chords and a wide range of notes. Measure 52 includes a box labeled 'g#5' and the instruction 'poco meno mosso.' Other markings include 'cres: e ritens.', 'ff', 'Sostenuto.', and 'cres: molto.'

Compared with Beethoven’s cadenza, one of the major differences in Alkan’s cadenza is the broader range (see Example 5 and 6). The highest note is g#5 in measure 52 of Example 5, and the lowest drops to BBBb in measure 129 of Example 6 (Beethoven’s: AA-a4). The fantasy-style passages disappear, and Alkan employs very dense chords throughout the cadenza.

38. William Eddie, *Charles Valentin Alkan: His Life and His Music*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 202- 203.

39. Lin, 188.



Example 6. Alkan Cadenza to Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1st movement, measures 128-129.

The image shows a musical score for two staves, treble and bass clef. Measure 128 is marked 'Poco riten.' and measure 129 is marked 'Accelerando.' and 'Rinforzando tanto che possibile.' The score shows a transition from a moderate tempo to a faster one, with a significant increase in volume and dynamic range. Pedal markings ('Ped:') are present in measure 129, and a low bass note is indicated as 'BBBb'.

Indications of the power of the Erard piano can be found throughout this cadenza. In Example 5 between measures 50-51, Alkan wrote *cres e riten* right after *f*, and the dynamic reaches *ff* within two measures. Alkan appears to be searching for the right dynamic marking to indicate his wish for ever more sound, and resorts to *Rinforzando tanto che possibile* in measure 129 (see Example 6) in which the lowest bass renders a powerful sonority. Alkan employs sudden alternations between dynamics in order to exaggerate the contrasts between phrases. In Example 5 measure 53, the entire measure not only remains in the range of *ff*, but also gets reinforced by a long pedal, which begins one bar earlier. Unexpectedly, *p* and *Sostenuto* show up in the first half of the next measure (measure 54) with a quarter rest in between. All these are examples of Alkan taking advantage of the new keyboard's ability to play extremes of dynamics, and are reminiscent of Beethoven's similar behavior with the Streicher piano of his time. Musicologist Hugh Macdonald says "Alkan also shared Beethoven's delight in low piano sonorities, especially clustered chords in the left hand, a feature of the instrument that was neglected by most other composers of the age; and he persisted in exploring both top and bottom ends of the keyboard with feverish intensity, as though he might eventually break that barrier and reach even higher and lower than the piano had ever reached before."<sup>40</sup>

40. Hugh Macdonald, *Beethoven's Century: Essays on Composers and Themes* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 59.

Example 7. Alkan Cadenza to Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1st movement, measures 147-162.

The image displays a musical score for a piano cadenza, measures 147 through 162. The score is written for piano and is in C minor. It begins at measure 147 with the tempo marking "Il mezzo movimento." and the dynamic marking "p, e staccatissimo." A circled instruction "Senza pedale" is placed below the first system. The score is divided into systems of two staves each. Measure 151 features the dynamic marking "sempre p". Measure 154 includes "sf" and "p" markings. Measure 157 is marked "Scherzando." and "Poco cres: soltanto." with "sf sf" dynamics. Measure 160 is marked "Sonoro." and "ff". Measure 161 is marked "ff". Measure 162 is marked "Ped." and "ff". The score concludes with a double bar line at the end of measure 162.

Alkan also paid extra attention to how and exactly where pedal indications were marked.

The Erard piano offered a heavy bass and powerful tone, thus making it easy for harmonies to blend, especially in fast-moving passages. However Alkan clearly was following in the tradition

of classical pedal marking which avoids accumulation of sound when different harmonies are in motion. In measure 129 (see Example 6), Alkan put pedaling marks above each new harmony to keep the harmony clean in a particularly loud passage. Another example of his accurate use of pedal can be found in Example 7. Alkan put *Senza Pedal* under measure 147 in order to ensure a crisp sound which creates a contrast to the previous dreamy atmosphere (see Example 7). There is no pedal use until measure 161. Instead of ending the pedals exactly on the third beats of both measures 161 and 162, he delayed lifting the pedal until the end of the third beats in both measures, leaving the final quarter note in each measure free of pedal. This deliberate design is indicative of Alkan's specific instructions regarding the control of the pedal.

On the other hand, from measure 130 to 132 of Example 8, Alkan used only one pedal indication for three measures to blend the harmonies. The basic harmony in these three measures is dominated by diminished sevenths, which descend in sequences of four chords. A despairing chaos is achieved by intentionally using one pedal within this descending progression. At other times, Alkan wrote only a few pedaling marks to indicate starting points but did not mark the end of the pedal, thus leaving some interpretive leeway to the performer.

Perhaps the most daring moment of the cadenza occurs when Alkan quotes the first subject of the finale from Beethoven Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67 to serve as one of the climaxes of the cadenza (see Example 9). Such bold innovation represents Alkan's idiosyncratic approach and is rare among his contemporaries. The first subject of the first movement of Concerto No. 3 is clearly set in a low register but in C major, and perfectly matches the subject of the finale of Symphony No. 5 in the top register.

Example 8. Alkan Cadenza to Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1st movement, measures 130-133.

Example 8. Alkan Cadenza to Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1st movement, measures 130-133.

Example 9. Alkan Cadenza to Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, measures 117-121.

Another creative device used frequently in Alkan's cadenza is the alternating notes or octaves which are used liberally at different times (see Example 10 and 12). In Example 10, the first section of massive repeated notes on C appears starting at measure 74 and lasts for four pages. These repeated notes require the fingers to alternate quickly. In measure 74, the repeating notes on C are played by both index fingers in sixteenths, while the pianist brings out the melody in lower register. From measure 75, the melodic line in the right hand joins in and responds to the bass register melody in a polyphonic progression. The two hands remain in very close proximity to one another until measure 82, in which the repeated notes switch to two registers

(see Example 11). Since the atmosphere in this section is dreamy, it requires a subtle control of "piano" dynamics in both melodic lines, while still controlling the repeated notes in a still lower dynamic as the texture becomes much more complex and thicker. At the beginning of measure 90, Alkan replaces the single notes in the left hand with octaves (see Example 12). Alkan asks for two separate piano dynamic lines and asks for *Espressivo* for the treble register. The liberal use of repeated notes was only possible because of the development of the piano by this time.

Example 10. Alkan Cadenza to Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, measures 71-76

Example 11. Alkan Cadenza to Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, measures 81-82.

Example 12. Alkan Cadenza to Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, measures 89-90.

The image shows a musical score for two staves, likely piano and left hand. The key signature is C minor (three flats). The score is divided into two measures. The first measure is marked *Dim:* and features a melodic line in the upper staff and a rhythmic accompaniment in the lower staff. The second measure is marked *Espressivo.* and features a melodic line in the upper staff and a rhythmic accompaniment in the lower staff. The second measure is also marked *p b.* and *sempre Ped.*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

While Alkan stubbornly insisted on following in the footsteps of Beethoven, other Romantic composers such as Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, and Brahms were on their musical way to developing a newer compositional style for the cadenza. All in all, there are two musical tendencies to be found in the later romantic cadenzas. One tendency continues the tradition of placing the cadenza near the close of a movement—generally the first movement. Two examples of this are to be found in the concertos of Brahms and Schumann. Brahms' treatment of the cadenza is slightly different in that for his D minor concerto, he puts the cadenza in the last movement (with the title "Cadenza quasi Fantasia") rather than the first. Both Brahms and Schumann retain a general adherence to classical harmonic language, although their vocabulary begins to show signs of divergence from the old model. Regardless of which harmonies they use at the outset of their cadenzas, they return to the conventional tonic six-four progression before the end of the cadenza. Like Alkan, both Schumann and Brahms cadenzas show a preference for trills, chromatic progressions, and demanding dynamics. All the above features "reflecting the stability of classic models with a romantic overlay of melodic expression...emphasize the stylistic traits of each composer in general terms...their musical personalities being revealed in melody and texture rather than in harmony and design."<sup>41</sup>

Concertos of Mendelssohn, Chopin and Liszt lack a traditional cadenza. Mendelssohn's concertos are still in classical style, although he employs the through-composed format rather than having three separate and distinct movements. Likewise Chopin and Liszt lack a traditional cadenza. "So much of their compositional style reflects spontaneity and the changeability that was so essential to the Romantic style that the formally-composed cadenza would have lacked

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41. Isaacs, 51

profile in their works."<sup>42</sup> The elements of fantasy, which are so apparent in Alkan's cadenza to Beethoven Concerto No. 3, can also be found in both Chopin and Liszt's concertos. These elements include free rhythm, unusual phrase lengths, irregular structure and recitative style. Alkan's cadenza to the Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 first movement incorporated and absorbed elements from both classical cadenzas and romantic cadenzas.

Even though Alkan's music was ignored for almost a century by performers, academics, critics and audiences, only a few composers, including the greatest ones, have achieved immediate acknowledgement by the public and critics. J. S. Bach was credited as a highly respected organist in his time. His reputation as a composer was not broadly spread until the young Mendelssohn conducted Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* nearly one century after its composition. Since then, Bach has rightly been considered as one of the greatest composers of any era. Franz Schubert was a prolific composer in his short life. Many of his works were never performed publicly during his lifetime and he was unable to support himself as a composer. His works remained undiscovered until 1838 when Robert Schumann discovered his Symphony in C major and gave the first public performance of the piece. Domenico Scarlatti's keyboard works were not widely known until Vladimir Horowitz began to perform and record them in the 1960s. Since that time they have become staples in the piano repertoire.

Alkan's music remained largely unknown after his death until the end of nineteenth century. Even in his homeland France, his music was neglected until after the First World War. Although the first recording of Alkan's work, "*Prière*", Op.64 No.12 for pedalier was unearthed recently in the United States National Park Service's Edison archives, the name of the performer is unknown. All the information we have is that it was recorded in Paris in January 1888 (two months before Alkan's death) by Edison's assistant Theo Wangemann. Given that neither

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42. Isaacs, 52.



audiences nor critics were sufficiently exposed to Alkan's music, it becomes a bit clearer why his music and his reputation as a significant and interesting composer languished until the later release of commercial recordings in the 1960s." France remained uninterested in Alkan's music after the First World War, possibly because of the anti-Romantic movement of Stravinsky and his followers... Alfred Cortot in his historical survey of French piano music passed Alkan off as just an organist..."<sup>43</sup> It remains difficult for Alkan's music to find a well-deserved place among his contemporaries.

Although Busoni, Raymond Lewenthal, Egon Petri, Ronald Smith, Roger Smalley, and recently Marc-André Hamelin and Jack Gibbons advocated for Alkan's cadenza, we must still question why it did not attract enough attention from audiences and critics. Despite the renown of those artists mentioned above, performances of Alkan's cadenza were generally isolated events, which is to say that there were not repeated performances of this cadenza, and only limited ones could be found before the 1960s when recordings of Alkan's music began to appear. There is no proof that this cadenza was even played during Alkan's lifetime. Possibly the earliest performance of it is when Busoni conducted Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 at one of his Berlin Philharmonic concerts in 1906 with Rudolph Ganz as the soloist. However, "Critics excoriated all participants for such blasphemy against Beethoven."<sup>44</sup>

After being neglected for more than a century, this cadenza has begun to be revived. More pianists are performing it, and the public has begun to appreciate the novelty and the creativity of this special piece. This cadenza has been heard more frequently in live performances and recordings. Roger Smalley, as both composer and pianist, gave a performance of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, and Alkan's

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43. Eddie, 215.

44. Rimm, 235

cadenza was included. Hamelin has been performing Alkan's music, and revived this cadenza by frequently playing the cadenza along with Alkan's transcription of Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement for solo piano. It is not surprising that he not only made a live recording at London's Wigmore Hall, but also "played the cadenza once in the context of the original concerto."<sup>45</sup> Hamelin himself wrote that: "This colossal cadenza explores every detail of Beethoven's thought...this musical merger foreshadowed Godowsky's ingenious contrapuntal combinations of several of the Chopin etudes into one piece, as well as Busoni's own similar treatment of Bach's music. The vivid arrangements of Godowsky and Busoni, rising from the brilliant groundwork laid by Alkan...at once follow and depart from those of their predecessors."<sup>46</sup>

The critics gave a glowing review to this astonishing cadenza. Gramophone's reviewer said "I was left with a satisfying sense of symphonic structure in Hamelin's titanic performance. Titanic, too, is the only word for Alkan's cadenza which flies in the face of today's less ostentatious climate with its cataclysmic climax juxtaposing the concerto's opening subject with material from the finale of the Fifth Symphony."<sup>47</sup> Hyperion Records commented "Alkan's Beethoven is unquestioningly Alkanesque: the personality, thrust and texture, the peculiar Franco- German synthesis, cannot be the work of anyone else."<sup>48</sup> Lately the young Italian pianist

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45. Rimm, 235.

46. Rimm, 235.

47. M. Stewart, "Marc-André Hamelin live at the Wigmore Hall." *Gramophone UK online*, (March, 1995), accessed on Feb. 8, 2015. [http://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/marc-andr%C3%A9-hamelin-live-at-the-wigmore-hall?utm\\_expid=32540977-3.FNZqseMjTvyRLIewfMgTiA.0&utm\\_referrer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Furl%3Fsa%3Dt%26rct%3Dj%26q%3D%26src%3Ds%26source%3Dweb%26cd%3D5%26ved%3D0CDwQFjAE%26url%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.gramophone.co.uk%252Freview%252Fmarc-andr%2525C3%2525A9-hamelin-live-at-the-wigmore-hall%26ei%3DkF7YVPuGMMGDNVWUgqgO%26usg%3DAFQjCNFOZABTGEG2lyMNi0CS6DfYH2tBQw%26sig%3DDHpx61oPOcdtswR9ScaA%26bvm%3Dbv.85464276%2Cd.eXY](http://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/marc-andr%C3%A9-hamelin-live-at-the-wigmore-hall?utm_expid=32540977-3.FNZqseMjTvyRLIewfMgTiA.0&utm_referrer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Furl%3Fsa%3Dt%26rct%3Dj%26q%3D%26src%3Ds%26source%3Dweb%26cd%3D5%26ved%3D0CDwQFjAE%26url%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.gramophone.co.uk%252Freview%252Fmarc-andr%2525C3%2525A9-hamelin-live-at-the-wigmore-hall%26ei%3DkF7YVPuGMMGDNVWUgqgO%26usg%3DAFQjCNFOZABTGEG2lyMNi0CS6DfYH2tBQw%26sig%3DDHpx61oPOcdtswR9ScaA%26bvm%3Dbv.85464276%2Cd.eXY).

48. Ates Orga, "Marc-André Hamelin live at the Wigmore Hall." Hyperion record online, (1994), accessed on Feb. 8, 2015. [http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D\\_CDA66765](http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDA66765).

Vincenzo Maltempo has been performing Alkan's music, and played the cadenza in public. Pianist Jack Gibbons, another authority on Alkan, also put this cadenza on his concerto list.

As Levin mentioned earlier, we are not living in Beethoven's period, and could not "get Beethoven back. But why not try to get back to a feeling of danger, a feeling of this music being new?"<sup>49</sup> Pianists of previous generations had been conservative, and followed the convention left by their predecessors. For current day pianists, there are more options when deciding which cadenza to choose for Beethoven's third piano concerto. There is no good reason to exclude Alkan's cadenza which not only retains elements of classical refinement, but also re-interprets the original through the lens of later 19th century virtuosity. As Ronald Smith commented, "Alkan may not prove to be the most original of the great piano composers of his century but he is almost certainly the most exploratory."<sup>50</sup> In conclusion, it is this author's hope that Alkan's cadenza to Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 first movement will be discovered by more pianists and programmed more extensively in the near future.

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49. Corinna da Fonseca- Wollheim.

50. Ronald Smith, *Alkan. Volume Two: The Music* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1987), 248.

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