

7. *The Recapitulation and Its Cadenzas*

The recapitulation embraces several new features: the restatement of the opening melody accompanied by pulsating triplets carried over from the central section (cf. Chopin's Nocturne Op. 48, No. 1); the use of inner-voice melody (cf. Chopin's C# minor Etude, Op. 25, No. 7); the interpolation of 3 cadenzas as a technique of peroration (cf. Britten's setting of Auden's *Hymn to St Cecilia*); the use of 'distinct', 'animated', unmeasured *fioratura* in the cadenzas, a *bel canto* feature of Chopin's nocturnes modified by the example, say, of the third movement of Bartók's Fourth String Quartet, 1928 or of his *Musique nocturnes* from *Out of Doors* (Example 16 (i)); and a deployment of a strong centripetal voice-leading feature to counteract the centrifugal effect of the cadenzas. The cadenzas not only introduce *senza misura* music, but also add a new 'timbral colour' to the pedalled and unpedalled sonorities (cf. bars 1-22 and 22-45): the 'dryly sonorous' texture, with the sustained fifths harmony in the bass, releases an eerily cavernous reverberation around the filigree ornamentation as in Schoenberg's *Klavierstücke* Op. 11, No. 1 (Example 16 (ii)); and the fantasia-like articulation includes trills, grace notes, *rinforzando* attacks, wedge staccatos, weights, portatos, *plaintes* (*legato-staccato* sighing figures) and fermatas. As Waterman remarked, the *Night-piece* 'is obviously composed by someone who understands the sonorities and tonal resources of the modern piano'.⁷

12

(i)

14 (Mäßige) *langsamer*
Die Tasten tonlos niederdrücken!

(ii)

ohne Ped.----- ohne Ped.-----

Example 16. (i) *Musique nocturnes*, No. 4 of Belá Bartók's *Five Pieces for Piano*, *Out of Doors* (1926), bar 12, showing a precedent for Britten's cadenza style; (ii) the first of *Drei Klavierstücke* Op. 11 (1910) by Arnold Schoenberg, bars 14-17, showing piano reverberation.

Although the cadenzas share an overall teleology, with dynamic peaks rising from *mf* to *f* and *f/sf* respectively, and although, as we shall see, there is a single overarching voice-leading embracing both the 'main text' and the cadenzas, each cadenza is prepared differently (Example 17). In the first case (i), the approach in bar 51 is broadened to $\frac{3}{2}$ (by comparison with bar 4) with a *crescendo* into the stacked-fifths harmony marked *sf* (bar 52); in the second case (ii), the approach in bar 55 is broadened to $\frac{5}{4}$ and falls to *pp* as it leads to a bare-fifths chord; and in the third case (iii), the approach in bar 61 is a contraction of bar 13 to $\frac{7}{4}$, with the last note D# being treated already as an Eb. (Moreover, the equivalents of bars 14 and 15 are also dropped). Here, in bar 62, the bass chord is now a tortured tritone.

(i) *cresc.* *sf*

(ii) *espress.* *pp* *poco*

(iii) *cresc.* *sf* *senza misura* *senza Ped.*

Example 17. The three different approaches to the cadenzas in Britten's Night-piece ending in a different chord in each case: (i) bars 51-2, (ii) bars 55-6, and (iii) bars 60-2.

More fascinatingly still, each cadenza is quitted differently. Bar 54 is in $\frac{3}{2}$ rather than $\frac{3}{4}$ (as at bar 6), yielding a 'slow-motion' *portato* in the left-hand melody; bar 58 is a précis of bars 8-10, with bar 9 effectively omitted; and in bars 63-5, the two-part dissolution of the diminished harmony rises rather than falls through three octaves, thus spanning C to A rather than Eb to F# as at bars 18-20 (Example 18). A revision of bar 21 is therefore needed to carry the A down to F in the left hand: this comes at bar 66. As this bar is now in $\frac{7}{4}$, it no longer pre-empts the $\frac{7}{8}$ metre (as was the case in bar 21). Yet its reduction of the *murmurando* figuration from triple to duple values anticipates the duple version of the figure that opens the following *tranquillo* at bar 67, again effecting good continuity.

(i) *poco f e dim.* *chiaro* *pp* *(dim.)*

(ii) *a tempo* *pp* *tranquillo*

Example 18. The printed version of Britten's Night-piece, showing (i) bars 18-22 and (ii) their reworking in bars 63-7.

At this point, we need to address a discrepancy between the second manuscript version and the printed version. Whereas the energy of the second cadenza dissolves with three fermatas acting as a 'brake', the third cadenza accumulates energy, with fermatas again interrupting the flow of energy (bar 62). In the manuscript version there are three quaver rests that carry fermatas, the third preceded by a quintuplet;⁸ in the printed version, however, there are only two (the versions are shown as Example 19 (i) and (ii) respectively). Moreover, in the manuscript version, the dynamic after the first fermata is *mf*, and after the second, *f*; whereas in the printed version the dynamic after the first fermata is immediately *f*. Why this change? Is it a copyist's error or a decision by the composer to condense the intensification at this stage? The manuscript version gives a more deliberate approach to the *sf* attack, whereas the printed version adds point to its more precipitate arrival. Pianists may want to choose for themselves (and for this reason the suppressed elements are restored in square brackets in the printed version in Part Two).⁹

The highpoint of intensity is the *sforzando* A in bar 62: in the manuscript (alone) this is marked *lunga*. The instruction *vibrato* reflects a seemingly eccentric view of Britten's that this effect can indeed be achieved on the piano (so much was reported by Imogen Holst): it is not (just) a sign for the performer to complete the instruction with a gesture.¹⁰ Whatever the case (and neither Fanny Waterman nor Michael Roll remember debating the point), the *vibrato* is the highpoint of intensity in the recapitulation, if not in the piece. It is as if a creature – an anthropomorphic human – has been trapped or wounded; it quivers before emitting heart-rending plangent sobs until with a final shudder it comes to rest on another fermata marked *lunga*. What has caused this outpouring that rends the night's silence? Is it a re-enactment by Nature of the suffering suggested in the more human, central section of the piece?

As we have already noted (from Example 18), in the hushed, eerily legato *a tempo* that follows (from bar 63), the rising, overlapping, pedalled diminished sevenths suggest the lifting of the mist until all stands revealed in the clarity of the moonlight.

(i)

(ii)

Example 19. Britten's *Night-piece*, bar 62 (i) in the second manuscript version, and (ii) in the printed copy.