THREE PIANO SONATAS BY FRIEDRICH KUHLAU

by

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M.Mus., The University of Western Ontario, 1984

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(School of Music)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October 1988

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ABSTRACT

Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832) ranks as a minor master of the early nineteenth century. As a composer of keyboard music he is perhaps best known for his sets of sonatinas, but the twenty-two sonatas he composed from 1809 to 1831 form a significant part of his extensive output. This study examines three of his sonatas—Op. 4, Op. 46 No. 2 and Op. 127—and places them in historical context through a discussion of the importance of this genre in the repertoire of that era. A survey of contemporary keyboard performance practices is also included, as well as an introductory biographical sketch.

Kuhlau’s style is undeniably conservative, with phrases of regular and predictable length in evidence throughout, and his music is often derivative of that of earlier composers from C.P.E. Bach through Beethoven. However, his works also reflect numerous traits of early Romanticism. They are melodically rich, widely spaced sonorities are frequently employed, and his textures range from delicate nuances to thickly scored passages. From a purely pianistic point of view, he displays a fondness for scalewise and arpeggiated passages so often used to excess by lesser composers of his era, but he also clearly demonstrates that he was aware of more innovative approaches to keyboard writing.
Throughout history, countless minor composers such as Kuhlau were highly respected during their lifetimes; nevertheless, most of their compositions, including those under consideration here, have not survived on the concert stage. Consequently, there exists a vast body of literature of which little or nothing is known. It is both necessary and useful to study such works in order to gain a more complete understanding of music of their period. Moreover, a closer examination of them might well lead to a reassessment of their worth, which in turn may encourage more frequent performances.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professors Gregory Butler and Robert Silverman for their valuable insights into this study and to Professor Paul Douglas for providing scores of the three sonatas under consideration here. The assistance of Mrs. Margaret Weber and Ms. Renate Zenker in providing English translations of the German sources is also greatly appreciated. Finally, I am deeply grateful to my wife Karla for her constant encouragement and support throughout my doctoral studies.
CHAPTER I

Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832)

Daniel Friedrich Rudolph Kuhlau was born at Uelzen, near Hanover on September 11, 1786. His father was a military bandsman and thus, from an early age, Friedrich was exposed to a great deal of music. Little is known about his early childhood other than he was the youngest of several children and his family lived a simple existence. At the age of ten, Kuhlau lost the sight in his right eye in an unfortunate accident. Although most sources do not provide any details concerning this mishap, Dan Fog states that Kuhlau was blinded in "an accident on the street." During his long convalescence his family discovered his musical abilities when it became his favourite pastime to play a small clavichord which could be placed across his bed. Reinhold Sietz asserts that Kuhlau received early instruction from his father and that there is no documentation concerning his

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3William Behrend, op. cit.
other piano teachers.4

However, it was not until he completed school at the age of fourteen that Friedrich received regular instruction. In 1801 he went to Hamburg to study theory and composition with C.F.G. Schwenke, Kantor of the Katherinenkirche and a learned scholar and pupil of Marpurg and Kirnberger.5 Kuhlau's earliest known works—songs and compositions for flute and piano were published during his studies in Hamburg.

In 1810, Hamburg was invaded by Napoleon's troops. Kuhlau's name was placed on a conscription list. Fearing that his artistic career would be interrupted, he fled to Copenhagen, where his success as a pianist and composer was immediate. As early as January 1811, he appeared as "Mr. Kuhlau of Hamburg" in a concert at the Royal Theatre.6 This program featured his C major Piano Concerto which he later dedicated to Weyse. The success that Kuhlau enjoyed in Copenhagen convinced him to take up permanent residence there, and in 1813, he became a Danish citizen.

That same year, he was appointed Court Chamber Musician at the Royal Theatre, a position without salary. The following

4Reinhold Sietz, "Friedrich Kuhlau," Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 7 (Basel: Barenreiter Kassel, 1958): 1875. Sources however, undoubtedly document Kuhlau's outstanding skills as a pianist even though little information is available concerning his teachers.


6Behrend, op. cit.
year, his first stage success, the Singspiel Roverborgen ("The Robber's Castle") was produced at the Royal Theatre. This work was also well received in later years in German theatres.\textsuperscript{7}

Kuhlau's music was considered fresh, lively, and extremely colourful and was highly regarded by most of his contemporaries. Some older musicians, however, found many of his works extremely radical. According to Behrend, the composer F.L.A. Kunzen, for example, was apparently horrified by much of Kuhlau's music.\textsuperscript{8}

In 1816, Kuhlau was appointed Chorus Master at the Royal Theatre and during the 1816-17 season, his first opera Trylleharpen ("The Magic Harp.")--based on a libretto originally intended for F.L.A. Kunzen\textsuperscript{9}, was produced with less success than Roverborgen.\textsuperscript{10}

Kuhlau asked to be relieved as Chorus Master and instead be paid a salary as a chamber musician for which he was willing to play at the Royal Court. He also suggested that on alternate years he would compose and play at both the Royal Court and Royal

\textsuperscript{7}Carsten Hatting, \textit{op. cit.}


\textsuperscript{9}Carsten Hatting, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid.
Theatre. His request was granted.\textsuperscript{11}

Kuhlau appeared as a piano soloist until 1822. It was no small accomplishment that he premiered all of Beethoven's piano concertos at the Danish courts. Kuhlau's reputation as a concert pianist spread in Scandinavia, especially Sweden, which he visited four times. He became a member of Stockholm's Music Academy and through his public appearances there acquired many pupils among the Swedish nobility. After 1822, however, composing occupied most of his time and he virtually abandoned his concertizing.

He travelled to Vienna in 1821 and again in 1825 when he met Beethoven. A vivid account of the meeting is given in Thayer's \textit{The Life of Ludwig van Beethoven}. Apparently, after consuming a great deal of food and wine at a nearby inn, the two composers returned to Beethoven's house where a lively evening followed in which they exchanged impromptu canons:

Kuhlau improvised a canon on B-A-C-H, to which Beethoven replied with the same notes as an opening motive on the words "Kuhl, nicht lau." ("Cool, not lukewarm") a feeble play on the Danish musician's name but one which served to carry the music.\textsuperscript{12}

Beethoven's recollections of the evening are recorded in a letter which he sent to Kuhlau:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{11}Behrend, 282. However, Reinhold Sietz states that Kuhlau made numerous other requests for salaries or salary increases which were denied.' (Sietz, \textit{op. cit.})

To Herr Kuhlau

September 3, 1825

I must confess that in my case also the champagne went too much to my head and that again I had to experience the fact that such indulgence hampers rather than promotes my ability to work. For though I am usually well able to reply on the spot, yet I haven't the faintest recollection of what I wrote yesterday. Remember now and then your most devoted Beethoven.13

In 1828, Kuhlau was made an honorary professor at the Royal Conservatory in Copenhagen and he continued to enjoy a successful career. Two events during the last year of his life, came as a severe blow to Kuhlau. The first was the death of his parents and the second, a fire which swept through his home, destroying all of his unpublished manuscripts, including a second piano concerto and a textbook on thorough bass playing, only fragments of which survive. Apparently, he had delayed the publication of these manuscripts by choice in order to have financial backing in bad times.14 This misfortune led to a decline in his health and he was admitted to hospital. He contracted a chest ailment from which he never recovered and he died in Copenhagen on March 12, 1832.

Kuhlau's large and varied output that survives15 includes three operas, one singspiel, incidental music, one piano concerto, and 112 songs. A substantial amount of chamber music

14Behrend, 283.
15Fog, 12-15
may be divided into two categories: with and without flute. The
former includes duos, trios, quintets, variations, rondos, and
fantasias. The latter consists of violin sonatas and piano and
string quartets.

The list of piano works is equally extensive and spans his
entire career. There are sonatinas, sonatas, rondos, and
variations for piano duet. As well as sets of variations,
rondos, waltzes and ecossaises, the solo literature includes
sixteen sonatinas which, because they are easy to play and well
written, have deservedly gained a widespread reputation as
effective teaching pieces. The twenty-two sonatas represent
Kuhlau’s larger works for the instrument. They are virtually
unknown and have not been examined previously in sufficient
detail to ensure a greater understanding of their structure and
style. The three works chosen for this study: Op. 4 in E-flat
major, Op. 46, No. 2 in d minor, and Op. 127 in E-flat major
demonstrate the salient features of Kuhlau’s pianistic style.

In order to place these sonatas in their proper historical
context, it is necessary to give a brief description of important
developments in the early nineteenth century which greatly
affected music and the arts.¹⁶

First, with a growing European population, there was a

¹⁶For a more detailed presentation see Williams S. Newman,
The Sonata Since Beethoven, 3d. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and
Company, Inc., 1983), 41-66. Also Friedrich Blume, Classic and
greater proportion of composers,\textsuperscript{17} performers, amateur musicians and music lovers than in previous eras. More music was published and distributed throughout Europe than ever before. That newly published compositions were more readily available is reflected by the fact that, even in the relatively small and isolated city of Copenhagen, Kuhlau had access to a diverse body of literature. His variations for piano, for example, are based on compositions by Beethoven, Bellini, Cherubini, Hummel, Mozart, Rossini and Weber.\textsuperscript{18}

Similarly, the rise of the public concert had important ramifications. Although such events had been organized in the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century witnessed a more marked increase which fundamentally changed the relationship between the composer, performer and the consumer. With a larger middle class population, the public concert signalled a distinct shift from aristocratic to public patronage of music with a new interdependence of artistic creativity and commercial marketability. Artists now depended more and more on public acceptance for their livelihood. In turn, greater support of music enabled numerous minor masters such as Kuhlau to enjoy successful careers.

The nineteenth century saw the rise of the piano as the most popular concert and domestic instrument. Enlarged,

\textsuperscript{17}Newman points out that his comprehensive study deals with some 625 composers in the nineteenth century as opposed to 400 in the Classical and 300 in the Baroque eras. (Newman, 15).

\textsuperscript{18}Fog, 12.
mechanically improved, and now spanning a wide dynamic range, the piano became a highly attractive medium for composers and virtuosi alike. Evlyn Howard-Jones describes the era:

The pianoforte became in very truth the household orchestra, capable of a compass, resonance, a dynamic variety, a rapidity of execution, and (with pedal) a continuance and collecting of sonorities that made it the ideal instrument for the study and enjoyment and the bringing of all and every kind of music under the control of one pair of hands.19

The increasing significance of the piano coincided with the beginning of the great age of the piano virtuosi. This period produced numerous composers who did little performing and pianists who gained a reputation and livelihood chiefly by playing the works of other composers. Pianists were judged primarily by their skills as virtuosi:

a virtuosity that sometimes reached to such an extent that it came to be regarded as something awe inspiring, even supernatural or demonic, so that the performing artist was also able to participate in the advantages that came to the creative artist.20

In the 1790s, there had been a great effort to improve music education and the sonata was recognized for its didactic as well as its artistic merits.21 Undoubtedly, its artistic merits were equally vital. Beethoven had unquestionably set the

21 Newman, 51.
masters of the Romantic era avoided the genre and concentrated their main efforts on the character piece. However, as William S. Newman points out, the number of extant sonatas by nineteenth-century minor masters is significant. Thus, the sonata was the technical and musical ideal to which many lesser composers such as Kuhlau aspired.

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22 Newman, 15.
CHAPTER II

Sonata in E-flat Major, Opus 4.

I. Largo assai - Allegro con brio
II. Moderato - Thema con variazioni
III. Adagio
IV. Vivacissimo

Composed in 1809, the Sonata in E-flat major was Friedrich Kuhlau's first work in this genre. The exuberance exhibited throughout the sonata undoubtedly reflects that of a youthful composer but more importantly, the skilful writing found in Opus 4 attests to an impressive knowledge of the piano and its sonorous possibilities.

The first movement opens with a striking 39 measure introduction, Largo assai, in the tonic minor, in which an underlying dramatic quality is effectively created. The introduction conveys the impression of a piano reduction of an orchestral French overture. Dotted and double-dotted rhythms, octaves, thickly scored chords and wide leaps are extensively employed. Kuhlau's pedalling indications and expression markings intensify the drama.
Figure 1. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, First Mvt., mm.1-39.

Largo assai

SONATA
In the sonata-allegro that follows, the keyboard style exhibits the composer's fondness for virtuoso sixteenth-note passages as well as thickly textured chords in dotted rhythm reminiscent of the slow introduction. These two alternate throughout the movement.

Figure 2. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, First Mvt., mm.47-49.

Figure 3. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, First Mvt., mm.64-69.

Two main musical ideas contrasting in character dominate the entire movement. Both are found in the first subject area. The first (motive "a") is capricious in nature.

Figure 4. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, First Mvt., mm.40-46.

The second (motive "b") is characterized by a strong dotted rhythm and possesses a more stately quality.
The colourful contrasts found in this movement result primarily from Kuhlau's juxtaposition of these disparate musical ideas.

The secondary theme combines the playful and majestic features of motives "a" and "b" respectively. Although the second theme is not markedly contrasting in nature, it creates variety by fusing the opposing characteristics of the two motives.

Figure 6. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, First Mvt., mm.95-98.

An unusual technical problem exists in two parallel passages. The first occurs at the end of the exposition and the second immediately preceding the coda. The left hand is scored above the right and, in the final measure of the section, moves to a more conventional arrangement.
If performed in this manner, the pianist must quickly slip the right hand over the left for one measure. No doubt the visual effect of this manner of execution would be impressive and perhaps Kuhlau specifically intended the passages as a vehicle for virtuoso display. However, the hand crossing here is unnecessary and the following suggestion provides a more comfortable alternative.

Figure 8. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, First Mvt., mm.133-140.

Most of the development section consists of transpositions of motive "b" accompanied by scale passages or arpeggios. The climax at measure 162 is achieved by employing the most densely scored chords found in the movement and a dynamic indication of fortissimo.

Figure 9. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, First Mvt., mm.162-165.

The first appearance of a new accompaniment figure in broken octaves at measure 165 adds greater energy to this dramatic portion of the movement. (See Figure 9 above.)
Worthy of mention is a highly virtuoso passage found immediately before the coda. Beginning in measure 309, the left hand initiates a chromatic scale. When the right hand enters, the left reiterates the accompaniment figure which first appeared at measure 165. This leads to a double trill in the right hand lasting for six measures while the left employs hand crossing with fragments of the second subject. At the end of the double trill, the right hand leaps to a scale passage and the left to a chord. This represents one of the most difficult passages found in the movement, an example of effective virtuoso writing.

Figure 10. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, First Mvt., mm.309-320.
II. Moderato – Thema con variazioni

The theme, with its folk-like lyricism and charm is divided into two sections, the second repeated.

Figure 11. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, Second Mvt., mm.1-24

The variations which follow present further examples of adept keyboard writing.

In variation 1, espressivo e ligato, the gently rolling triplets temporarily smooth the edge of the dotted rhythms prevalent thus far.

23It is possible that this work is based on a folk song since such settings were common practice of the day and certainly abound in Kuhlau’s varied keyboard output. (See Fog, 12-14).
In the second section, the music once more assumes its rhythmic vitality in a variation of the dotted rhythm where colour is ingeniously created through the juxtaposition of high and low registers in the right hand.

Variation 2 is intensely dramatic and set in the relative minor. It opens *forte e con fuoco*, with chords in dotted rhythm accompanied by rapid scale passages and marked by sudden dynamic contrasts.
Variation 3 is similarly cast in a quick tempo. Here, a legato right hand melodic variation is contrasted with broken octaves in the left hand; a favourite device of Kuhlau.

The *grave* section immediately following Variation 3 marks the beginning of a free variation followed by a coda. From this point forward, since there are no variations of the theme in its entirety, the *grave* indication not only signals an abrupt change of mood but clearly initiates an important structural turning point in the movement.

The stark *forte* octaves at the opening firmly set the funereal atmosphere which underlies this section. Near the end, the solemnity tapers to a delicate *pianissimo* leading to the *Allegro scherzando*, a variation of the second half of the first phrase of the theme. The ornate right hand is supported by a chordal accompaniment. After a short cadenza, the coda, *moderato*, brings the movement to a dramatic close with loud and densely scored arpeggiated chords. The following example presents the *grave* section until the end of the movement.

Figure 15. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 4, Second Mvt., mm.57-61.
Figure 16. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 4, Second Mvt., mm.73-108.
III. Adagio

The third movement cast in a ternary structure with modified recapitulation, reveals a more rich and varied keyboard style. Here Kuhlau strikingly abandons any traditional or stereotype forms of piano writing in favour of a more innovative approach. Accompanimental devices range from single notes to thirds, octaves, and densely scored arpeggiated chords. Equally impressive is the melodic treatment in the right hand which includes some of the most diverse and elaborate ornamentation encountered in this study. All of the writing effectively heightens the emotional content of the movement.

The chorale-like opening displays the skillful use of middle register chords in closed position which add warmth and richness to the sound.

Figure 17. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, Third Mvt., mm.1-11.

The second section moves to the more plaintive relative minor in a nocturne-like setting. At measure 25, Kuhlau uses an
elaborate right hand figuration suggestive of and predating the music of Chopin yet, composed in 1809, is no doubt influenced by current trends in keyboard writing.

Figure 18. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, Third Mvt., mm.22-26.

The middle section reaches a climax in measures 30-33 where thirty-second note passages are intensified by the indication cresc. e accelerando. After the rallent. e smorz. the recapitulation begins.

Here one finds all the notes of the opening with an added staccato accompaniment creating a thick, dark sound.

Figure 19. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 4, Third Mvt., mm.33-36.
Beginning at measure 38, the use of a different accompaniment figure adds a sense of rhythmic drive which creates momentum and helps carry the music along until the quiet ending.
Figure 20. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 4, Third Mvt., mm. 37-49.
IV. Vivacissimo

In the final movement, Kuhlau recaptures the character of the opening sonata-allegro in a rapid *motto perpetuo* which places continuous demands on the performer. The finale utilizes a predominantly thin and somewhat repetitive keyboard layout, and the high register complements the light hearted nature of the music.

Elements of contrast and variety are not as prevalent as in other movements. However, Kuhlau creates subtle changes by inverting the two voices found in the right hand. This technique is employed throughout and commences in the opening measures.

*Figure 21. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 4, Fourth Mvt., mm.1-8.*

Passages similar to this alternate with or accompany energetic chromatic runs.

*Figure 22. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 4, Fourth Mvt., mm.34-39.*

However, the most outstanding feature of Kuhlau’s finale is his extensive use of the high register which enhances the frivolous nature of the movement. Often this involves awkward
hand crossing.

Figure 23. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 4, Fourth Mvt., mm.9-15.

In keeping with the character of numerous other finales, this movement portrays no profound depth of feeling but effectively relieves any emotional tension which may have resulted from previous movements. Undoubtedly, the finale presents a fitting conclusion to a sonata of many variegated moods.

From a pianistic viewpoint, the technical demands here are pressing. A successful performance requires deftness and clarity of articulation in order to successfully depict the character of the movement and the colour of the upper register.
CHAPTER III

Sonata in D Minor. Opus 46 Number 2

I. Adagio patetico - Allegro agitato.

By the time the Sonata Opus 46, No. 2 was composed in 1822, Friedrich Kuhlau’s career in Copenhagen was well established. Thirteen years had passed since the completion of Opus 4 and during this period Kuhlau had produced other piano sonatas as well as numerous shorter and simpler pieces for the instrument—waltzes, sonatinas, easy rondos, and easy variations. Many of these works, especially the sonatinas, are recognized as valuable pedagogical material for young pianists and represent the best known compositions of Kuhlau. In contrast to Opus 4, the more facile nature of Opus 46, No. 2 clearly exemplifies Kuhlau’s easier compositions for piano. It is a work marked by brevity and more extensive use of thinner textures. It consists of a slow introduction, adagio patetico, followed by a rondo, allegro agitato.

By its very nature, Opus 46, No. 2 blurs the distinction between the terms "sonata" and "sonatina". The Harvard Dictionary of Music defines the former simply as:

a composition for piano (piano sonata) or for violin, cello, flute, etc., usually with piano accompaniment which consists of three of four
separate sections called movements. 24

In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, William S. Newman provides a more lengthy, broad discussion:

a term used to denote a piece of music usually but not necessarily consisting of several movements almost invariably instrumental and designed to be performed by a soloist or small ensemble. The solo and duet sonatas of the Classical and Romantic periods with which it is now most frequently associated generally incorporate a movement or movements in what has regrettably come to be called Sonata-Form (or "first-movement form"), but in its actual usage over rather more than the last five centuries the title "sonata" has been applied with much broader formal and stylistic connotations than this. 25

The *Harvard Dictionary of Music* states that a "sonatina" is:

a diminutive sonata, with fewer and shorter movements than the normal type and also usually simpler, designed for instruction (Clementi, Kuhlau). 26

The *New Oxford Companion to Music* provides a similar description:

a short relatively undemanding type of sonata, often for piano. Several composers of the late Classical period (e.g. Clementi and Kuhlau) wrote large numbers of keyboard sonatinas for didactic purposes, and these are still used today as teaching material. 27

The definitions presented above raise a question concerning


26Willi Apel, *op. cit*.

Opus 46, No. 2: namely, whether or not the term "sonatina" is more applicable to this work. At the outset, one must assume that, with his understanding of form and the established practices of the time as well as his experience as a composer of both sonatas and sonatinas, Kuhlau knew the difference between the two types. Clearly, he had specific reasons for calling this a sonata. Closer examination of Opus 46 No. 2 reveals two important factors. First, although this work is indeed shorter than the traditional sonata, the emotional depth and intensity of feeling found here is on a more grandiose scale than one would expect in a sonatina. Second, the technical difficulties, though less taxing than most sonatas, are by no means on the elementary level of a sonatina. Clearly, this work fits William S. Newman's broad definition in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* where the discussion is not limited to specific numbers and types of movements.

Like Opus 4, Opus 46 No. 2 begins with a slow introduction. In Opus 4, the introduction was followed by a whimsical and playful sonata-form in the parallel major. In this later sonata, however, the introduction heralds a solemn event which is carried through in the following movement.

The introduction demonstrates a more clear formal organization resulting in an overall structure of A B A' C A'' Cadenza. The "A" sections parallel the more orchestral, dramatic passages which alternate with lyrical, melodic "B" and "C" sections. Throughout the introduction, the drama is further heightened through more extensive use of diminished chords.
The introduction begins with thick, arpeggiated chords in dotted rhythm marked by sudden dynamic contrasts where Kuhlau, once again, utilizes the orchestral capabilities of the piano. In measure 5, a lyrical plaintive melody with quiet accompaniment is suggestive of a piano interlude and provides contrast with the intense opening. At measure 9, the opening, rhythmically varied and extended, returns until measure 15 where another lyrical section, now in E-flat major, presents a striking departure from d minor, and is extended with an elaborate right hand figuration. From this point forward, the slow introduction functions as an extended Neapolitan preparation for the rondo. The opening section returns once more in measure 23, in E-flat major. Commencing in measure 28, a cadenza-like passage brings the introduction to a close. Figure 24 presents the complete introduction, which, at a glance, reveals a more diverse keyboard approach combined with a tightly woven formal structure.
Figure 24. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 46, No. 2, mm.1-29.
The movement which follows complements the character of the introduction. The allegro agitato abandons the traditional sonata-allegro design, in favour of an unusual rondo form. The overall structure is A B C A' C' A'' Coda, a rarity in this genre. Clearly, Kuhlau does not feel restricted by the established formal structures of his time and the resulting work demonstrates freshness in approach, musical content and, once again, reflects a skilful use of pianistic tone colour.

Figure 25 presents the rondo theme where the broken chord accompaniment helps create a sense of agitation in the simple melody.  

Figure 25. F. Kuhlau, Sonata Op. 46 No. 2, Rondo, mm.1-30.

The first episode, in the subdominant minor, provides more than a change of key. Here Kuhlau changes the texture by

28 The resemblance to the Rondo of Beethoven's Sonata, Opus 13 is striking.
employing thicker, emphatic chords alternating with subdued, arpeggiated figures. This section is less tuneful and somewhat more fragmented than the rondo theme and reinforces the agitato character.

Figure 26. F. Kuhlau, Sonata. Op. 46 No. 2, Rondo, mm.44-55.

It is in the chorale-like second episode that the music evokes a more striking mood change. Kuhlau achieves greater harmonic interest through more extensive use of chromaticism and his setting is a more gently lyrical. However, the underlying sense of agitation which has been prevalent thus far is preserved by the chromaticism.

Figure 27. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 46 No. 2, Rondo, mm.76-93
The first refrain is an exact repetition of the opening until near the end, where the texture becomes more fragmented through an extended passage utilizing large leaps.

Figure 28. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 46 No. 2, Rondo, mm.174-181

Beginning in measure 186, the second episode is completely restated in the key of D major, the tonal centre for the remainder of the movement. The section ends in progressively longer note values and softer dynamics.

Figure 29. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 46 No. 2, Rondo, mm.224-233

This provides an effective transition to the most significant change in the movement, the largo section, beginning with the anacrusis to measure 234.

Figure 30. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 46 No. 2, Rondo, mm.234-248
Paradoxically, the chords are thicker yet Kuhlau’s setting creates an ethereal and harp-like effect producing a striking transformation of the rondo theme. At measure 242, the low accompaniment adds depth and darkness to the sound, perhaps foreshadowing the energetic coda, *Prestissimo*.

Figure 31. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 46 No. 2, Rondo, mm.249-263

The final section is cast in two parts, each repeated, and consists mainly of rapid scale passages punctuated by broken chords supported by sustained bass notes: an energetic conclusion to the sonata and one which again exemplifies Kuhlau’s virtuoso writing.
CHAPTER IV

Grande Sonate Brillante, in $E^b$ Major, Opus 127

I. Allegro

II. Adagio con molto espressione

III. Rondo, Allegro con spirito

The Grande Sonate Brillante, Friedrich Kuhlau's last composition for piano, was composed in 1831. The advanced features of earlier sonatas are more prominent here than in Opus 4 and Opus 46, Number 2. Clearly, it is the most colourful, tightly organized and convincing work of the three chosen for this study. Pianistically, it presents a greater variety of keyboard figurations and this factor combined with the overall length of the work, increases the technical challenge to the performer. Perhaps this accounts for the title "Grande".  

The first movement is cast in a well constructed sonata form where the diverse nature of the keyboard writing demonstrates a mature sense of musicality and style. The opening measures immediately reveal a different aspect of Kuhlau's creative genius. The subdued, waltz-like theme with its initial thin scoring depicts an introspective mood unlike the large orchestral gestures of the introductions to both Opus 4 and Opus

29William S. Newman states that, during the nineteenth century, "'Grande' appears as a qualifier in Sonata titles too often and variously to have any one connotation." (Newman, 28).
46 Number 2. In measure 9, the texture thickens yet the phrasing and articulation preserves a distinct lightness which enhances the quality of the intimate opening.

Figure 32. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 127, First Mvt., mm.1-24.

At measure 25, the music bursts into a lengthy passage of sixteenth notes which persists until one measure before the second subject; a favorite transitional device of the composer. Kuhlau does not limit himself to traditional scalar passages but also incorporates less conventional figurations such as the broken chord figure at measures 27-33. It is precisely this keyboard style which distinguishes Opus 127 from the works discussed previously.

Figure 33. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 127, First Mvt., mm.25-43
Pedalling indications are sparse throughout Opus 127 and are carefully placed at specific points to produce colourful effects. Especially noteworthy are Kuhlau’s instructions at measures 34-35, and 40-41 (See Figure 33 above). In each case, beginning with the emphatic chords, the pedal is to be held through the ensuing scale passages until the final beat of the following measure. Obviously, Kuhlau’s intent is to add a new sonority here. Although the resulting sound may have been acceptable on a nineteenth-century piano with a less-resonant quality, the literal application of these indications on a modern instrument would depend on the acoustics of the particular hall and the nature of the instrument used. Perhaps some adjustment of Kuhlau’s pedalling would be necessary.

The treatment of the dolce second subject is similar to that of the first and resembles the character of the opening.

Figure 34. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 127, First Mvt., mm.66-75.

The section beginning at measure 76 is not merely transitional but takes the form of a short development of the second subject. Fragments of the theme are scored in the left
hand while the right provides a varied sixteenth-note accompaniment. Once again, this marks a departure from Kuhlau’s usual approach to transitional material.

Figure 35. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 127, First Mvt., mm.76-87.

The chorale-like passage beginning at measure 112 acts as a temporary interlude in a more introspective mood reminiscent of the first and second subjects. The diminuendo continues until measure 120 where a sudden crescendo leads to a *risoluto* ending of the exposition. Here, Kuhlau intensifies the drama with fortissimo broken and solid chords, arpeggios and octaves.
Although the development section begins in a contemplative manner similar to that in the opening of the movement, Kuhlau's approach at measure 133 is more striking. The reiterated B-flats, gradually reveal the direction of the music and effectively create a sense of improvisation as though all of the ensuing material evolves from a single pitch.

The most arresting technique employed in the development section is an inversion of the main theme which is stated after one bar of silence. Although the texture and register is identical to the opening of the movement, this transformation of the subject creates one of the most striking passages in the movement.
The remainder of the development consists of an ornate version of the main theme supported by a left hand accompaniment.

An almost literal recapitulation follows in which only the ending is altered. The interplay of high and low registers produces an emphatic conclusion to the movement.
II. Adagio con molto expressione

The *Adagio con molto expressione* contains some of the finest writing in the three works under consideration here. As in the *Adagio* of Opus 4, Kuhlau utilizes a ternary structure containing a digression in the tonic minor followed by a modified recapitulation. In Opus 127, however, the restatement is more extended and the immense variety exhibited here reflects Kuhlau's awareness of newer developments in keyboard writing.

In the opening measures, Kuhlau ingeniously makes use of both dynamics and rests to strengthen his emotional statement. An underlying melancholic atmosphere is emphasized by fp indications in a theme fragmented by recurring rests. Note, however, the pedalling instructions at measure 5 which deliberately blur the silence, lending a new sonority to this portion of the theme. Perhaps this too foreshadows the gradual disintegration of the rests as the first section of the movement progresses.

Figure 41. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 127, Second Mvt., mm.1-9

At the anacrusis to measure 11, the theme is scored an octave higher in the right hand while the accompaniment fills in the gaps, thus diminishing the size of the rests so prominent in
the opening. Here also, Kuhlau's pedal markings are meticulously placed so as to clearly highlight the rests in measures 12 and 13 which are to be slightly more pronounced than those in measures 11 and 14.

Figure 42. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 127, Second Mvt., mm.10-17.

By measure 17, the punctuation by rests gives way to a flowing *espressivo* which closes the final section.

The digression is marked not only by an abrupt change of mode but by a distinct difference in keyboard layout. While the accompaniment recalls the segmented nature of the opening, the melodies are now comprised of longer lines. The use of octave doubling and expressive left hand melodies also adds variety to the keyboard approach.

Measures 40 and 41 provide the transitional material leading to the recapitulation which is an elaborate modification of the opening and profoundly demonstrates Kuhlau's genius in this movement.

The melody is scored using thicker chords and placed in a higher register while the left hand provides a delicate harp-like accompaniment. Here, despite the continuity of the accompaniment, the pedal indications preserve a fragmented structure in the right hand melody.

Figure 44. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 127, Second Mvt., mm.40-44.

It is from the tenuto assai at measure 48 that Kuhlau generates most of the remaining material in the movement. The right hand moves to the middle register and is supported by a new accompaniment figure. After a fermata this material is treated sequentially, cadencing on the dominant of G major.

Figure 45. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 127, Second Mvt., mm.45-53.
At measure 54, another brief transformation of the opening returns in G major, far removed from the home key. Here the melody is stated in the left hand and decorated with an ornate version of the harp-like accompaniment from measure 42.

Figure 46. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 127, Second Mvt., mm.54-57.

A lengthy passage of material derived from the *tenuto assai* begins at measure 58. From this an agitated mood arises from the fragmented right hand, the crescendo, and the ascending octaves.

Figure 47. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 127, Second Mvt., mm.58-61.

This pattern continues until measure 65 where the delicate coda begins and the music winds down to its peaceful conclusion.
Figure 48. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 127, Second Mvt., mm. 62–76.
III. Finale: Allegro con spirito

The final movement is a lengthy sonata rondo where distinct features of earlier works are combined with novel ideas. The overall structure is A B A C (Development) A Coda.

The rondo theme is scored in a transparent texture characteristic of Kuhlau's style. In Opus 124, however, there are two notable differences. The manner in which the theme is presented and extended departs from any previous procedures. Kuhlau's approach recalls the Baroque practice of fortspinnung; the steady unfolding or spinning out of a theme. The material expands in a manner giving the impression that all of the music is generated from the opening measures, thus lending greater motivic and thematic unity to the movement.

The theme is transformed through the use of varied accompaniment figures. At measure 9, the E-flat pedal tone adds greater depth to the sound while at measure 13, the accompaniment adds a distinct lilt to the theme.

Figure 49. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 127, Third Mvt., mm.1-31.
The first digression is marked by an extreme modification of the movement’s previous keyboard style and depicts a more forceful emotional content. Thick *risoluto* chords are now utilized with driving rhythms and *sforzando* accents. As noted earlier in this study, Kuhlau’s careful attention to pedalling instructions greatly enhances the sonority.

Figure 50. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 127, Third Mvt., mm.43-50.

The developmental episode begins at measure 158 and is made up of two sections. In the first, Kuhlau transforms the material from the first episode into a subdued setting of the eighth-note rhythm in the left hand supported by sustained chords. Later, this is inverted in measure 166.

Figure 51. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 127, Third Mvt., mm.158-173.
At measure 195, the use of octaves in the low register adds depth to the sound and helps create a sense of urgency. The thick chords, wide leaps, *fortissimo* and *con molto fuoco* indications render the climax at measure 202 highly effective.

Figure 52. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 127, Third Mvt., mm.195-207.

Measure 228 marks the beginning of the second section of the developmental episode, in which a thinner texture restores the original character of the movement. Here, Kuhlau manipulates the material from the transitional passage (measure 67) which had been derived from the rondo theme itself. At measure 228, it is given a developmental treatment. This is the only instance of such a procedure in this study and greatly enhances the overall unity which is so convincing in the movement.

Figure 53. F. Kuhlau, *Sonata*, Op. 127, Third Mvt., mm.228-240.
The final refrain is shortened and leads to the coda and a dramatic change in the pace of the movement. Kuhlau creates an intense rhythmic drive to the final cadence by switching from the predominant eighth-note rhythm to triplets and, later, sixteenths at measures 315 and 337 respectively. The music spans a wide range of the keyboard and thick chords accompany triplet and sixteenth-note figures in a forceful dynamic setting which brings the movement to an exciting close.

Figure 54. F. Kuhlau, Sonata, Op. 127, Third Mvt., mm.328-350.
The three sonatas under consideration here -- Opus 4., Opus 46, Number 2, and Opus 127, represent a small portion of the vast amount of nineteenth-century keyboard literature of which little or nothing is known. Although Friedrich Kuhlau was highly respected in his time, these works have not survived. William S. Newman makes an interesting comment concerning neglected compositions:

The number of topflight sonatas alone that has accumulated over some three centuries has far surpassed both the occasions and the outlets, public or private, for hearing them. The same question of neglect keeps coming up even for sonatas that do survive, at least to a degree, such as those by Schubert or Schumann. Whatever more inherent reasons may exist in such works, when they do get neglected, the answer ordinarily is that they are not being killed by time but inundated or buried alive by music's own population explosion.30

No doubt, history ultimately determines what is indeed "topflight" and any attempt to assess the overall importance of Kuhlau's sonatas as well as his contribution to the literature must be based on the clear realization that these are the works of a nineteenth-century minor master. Yet, just as clearly, he is a composer successfully working within his own limitations. Newman also makes reference to numerous reviews of Kuhlau's sonatas by his contemporaries:

The gist of many, progressively brief reviews of his sonatas and sonatinas is that in spite of his prolificity he continued to put out works of noteworthy skill, variety, and

30Newman, 16.
interest within acceptable tastes and idioms and reasonable technical limits, there being mild objections only to excessive passage work (mostly scales) and overly prolonged endings.\textsuperscript{31}

Thus, during his lifetime, Kuhlau gained public praise and approval for his efforts. This study has demonstrated the salient features of his style and perhaps revealed why his compositions have since fallen into obscurity.

It is evident that Kuhlau’s music frequently looks backward to earlier practices. Of course, many greater masters have done so on numerous occasions. There is, however, a fundamental and crucial difference. For example, when Beethoven incorporated fugal elements into his late piano sonatas, he did so with the utmost sophistication. He imparted his inimitable mark of genius on these compositions and cast his shadow of influence far into the future. On the contrary, Kuhlau often recalls earlier styles in their most elementary and undeveloped states. The harmonic simplicity, clear formal structures, and extensive use of thin textures, model the pre-Classical style and offer little that would profoundly influence subsequent generations of composers. Thus, it is not surprising that his music became outdated.

Nonetheless, these sonatas also contain numerous passages characteristic of early Romantic music. They are melodically rich, with frequent use of widely spaced sonorities and textures that range from delicate nuances to powerful orchestral-like gestures. These compositions display an early Romantic fondness for scalar and arpeggiated passages, often used to the excess.

\textsuperscript{31}Newman, 604.
Numerous passages cited (particularly from the slow movements) demonstrate Kuhlau’s ability to keep abreast of current styles. As a minor master, Kuhlau’s influence was limited to his lifetime. Assuredly, he was a leading figure in the cultural life of Copenhagen from 1811–1832. A competent craftsman, he not only produced numerous works in accepted styles and forms of the time, but also promoted the compositions of others. He is yet another example of a talented composer whose works were in vogue throughout his career but have since fallen into obscurity—a man whose contribution has been frozen in time. To make one final reference to an earlier citation from William S. Newman’s *The Sonata Since Beethoven*, Kuhlau’s piano sonatas have not necessarily been "buried alive by music’s own population explosion," but, more accurately, assigned to the realm of the lesser known by a greater proportion of more masterful compositions.

Nevertheless, this investigation has shown that these works are well crafted and suited to the instrument. Many of Kuhlau’s compositions have not been examined previously in sufficient detail to ensure an understanding of their structure and style. It is hoped that this endeavour has, in some manner, helped to add new knowledge about his extensive output for piano and demonstrate his mastery of the craft of instrumental composition.

There exists a vast amount of nineteenth-century piano music which has not yet been explored. Investigation such as this is necessary in order to provide a more complete picture of the

32 Newman, 604.
music of the period and will prove beneficial to performers, teachers, and musicologists alike. It is the writer's hope that closer examination of works such as these will encourage more frequent performances.
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