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Performing
BEETHOVEN

Edited by
Robin Stowell

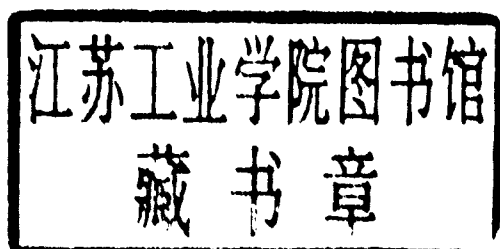
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Edited by

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BEETHOVEN'S *BASSO CONTINUO*: NOTATION AND PERFORMANCE

TIBOR SZÁSZ

Malcolm Frager *in memoriam*

It was not long ago that London's musical public was swept into a controversy triggered off by Adolf Aber's strong words that graced the first page of *The Musical Times* of June 1948:

the recent [Adolf] Busch concerts at Kingsway Hall stood out as high-lights of the concert season . . . the chief factor, it cannot be doubted, was the conviction that the music of Bach and Handel was being performed in the only right and proper way . . . many in the audience heard for the first time in their lives how these works ought to sound.

To come straight to the point: the fundamental difference between a Busch performance and a normal 'modern' performance lies in the treatment of that one line, the *basso continuo*. It is lamentable that so many artists in these days have forgotten that this line was written, beyond any doubt, for a keyboard instrument . . .¹

The pioneering efforts of Busch and Aber have long since been fulfilled, at least in the sense that even among 'modern' performances (to use Aber's term) of the Baroque orchestral and choral repertoire, the presence of keyboard continuo is the rule rather than the exception.

If Aber and Busch returned today to champion the cause of reinstating Beethoven's figured and unfigured bass to its rightful place in musical performance, their task would be much more difficult. First of all, they would not find a modern edition of Beethoven's *Materialien zum Generalbass*,² or a modern edition that accurately reflects the thrust of Beethoven's notation with regard to keyboard continuo practices in his piano concertos³ and masses.⁴ Furthermore, if they tried to produce

1 Adolf Aber, 'On the Continuo in Bach', *Musical Times*, 89 (1948), pp. 169–71 and 367–8.

2 The *Materialien* – a compilation of rules and examples for the notation and realisation of keyboard harmony and accompaniment – represents the beginning section of *Beethovenautograph* 75 preserved in Vienna's Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde.

3 In all modern editions, the continuo and cue notation found in the original editions were ignored. Under Beethoven's supervision, the five piano concertos and the Triple Concerto Op. 56 were published with a figured or unfigured bass engraved with the same size noteheads as the keyboard solos; by contrast, instrumental cues were consistently represented by small-size noteheads.

4 In all modern editions, the figured-bass notation found in the original edition of the Mass in C major

a modern edition incorporating Beethoven's continuo instructions, they would first have to solve the problem of evaluating the function of Beethoven's figured bass:⁵ does it exclusively represent authentic keyboard continuo, or is it also used to represent harmonic cues of the orchestral activity?

In a recent article devoted to Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 in E♭ major⁶ (written in 1809 and published first in England and then in Germany),⁷ I attempted to show that the composer's detailed figured bass instructions clearly require the soloist to realise the continuo in long tuttis while prohibiting the realisation of figures that occur in very short ones. In other words, the overwhelming majority of the autograph and printed figures in the 'Emperor' represent genuine keyboard continuo that must be realised in performances with full orchestra.⁸

Linda Ferguson's evaluation of Beethoven's tutti notation in the 'Emperor' is correct: 'the soloist would be left to play . . . all of the longer tuttis . . . plus by far the majority of short tuttis within long solo sections'.⁹ Also correct is Ferguson's conclusion that keyboard continuo is required in all of Beethoven's piano concertos and the Triple Concerto for piano, violin and cello in C major Op. 56.¹⁰ The only exception is the slow movement of the Piano Concerto in G major Op. 58 where keyboard continuo is excluded.¹¹

But every solution of a problem is a new problem. Now that the need for continuo in Beethoven's piano concertos does seem to have been established, an even thornier problem remains: how do we realise the composer's directions in performance? Because no nineteenth-century realisation of Beethoven's concertos is known to have survived, the difficulties of solving this new problem are considerable. However, this essay aims to provide some practical guidelines for realising Beethoven's continuo indications in his five piano concertos and the Triple Concerto, as well as in his Mass in C major Op. 86 and the *Missa solennis* Op. 123.

Op. 86 was altered, and the autograph and printed figures for the *Missa solennis* were suppressed; in both works, the undocumented addition of the term *Organo* in Breitkopf and Härtel's *Gesamtausgabe* obscures the meaning of the original notation.

- 5 Beethoven's figured bass in sketches and cue-staves was never transferred into published scores and lies outside the scope of this essay.
- 6 Tibor Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto: Basso Continuo or Orchestral Cues?', *Early Keyboard Journal*, 6–7 (1988–9), pp. 5–71.
- 7 The English edition (1810) reproduces only the composer's detailed *col Basso* adaptation of the string bass to the keyboard idiom; by contrast, the German edition (1811) reproduces the almost full range of Beethoven's autograph continuo instructions.
- 8 Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto', pp. 62–3.
- 9 Linda Faye Ferguson, 'Col Basso and Generalbass in Mozart's Keyboard Concertos: Notation, Performance Theory, and Practice' (PhD diss. University of Princeton 1983), p. 271. This author disagrees, however, with some of Ferguson's interpretations of where continuo is to be provided.
- 10 Ferguson, 'Col Basso and Generalbass in Mozart's Keyboard Concertos', pp. 243–71.
- 11 *ibid.*, pp. 265–8.

BEETHOVEN'S CONTINUO TERMINOLOGY: DEFINITIONS AND
COMMENTS

When evaluating the explicitness of autograph and printed continuo indications, Beethoven's *Materialien zum Generalbass* (1809) provides a convenient dividing line.¹² In works published before the *Materialien*, Beethoven left the realisation of continuo to the ingenuity of the performer, whereas in works published thereafter, he explicitly notated how it is to be realised.

Written probably right after his compilation of the *Materialien*,¹³ the unsurpassed clarity of Beethoven's continuo instructions in the full-score autographs of the 'Emperor' is due in part to the presence of one technical term: *tasto solo* (*t.s.*). With it, Beethoven indicated when the soloist must abstain from realising continuo.¹⁴ Whereas Beethoven never used *t.s.* in his earlier work published with figured or unfigured bass, he consistently included it in works published after his compilation of the *Materialien*.

In effect, every technical term used in autograph, manuscript, and printed sources of Beethoven's works finds its definition in the composer's *Materialien*. But since the *Materialien* was never assessed in terms of its relevance for performance practice, Beethoven's definitions need to be quoted, translated, and commented upon. For readers unfamiliar with Beethoven's continuo¹⁵ and cue¹⁶ notation in autograph and printed sources, two tables follow.¹⁷ Table 1.1. is then discussed in detail.

- 12 According to Gustav Nottebohm, at least the first sixteen pages of the *Materialien* were written during the second quarter of 1809 ('Beethovens theoretische Studien', *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 41 (1863), pp. 689–90).
- 13 The date 1809 is inscribed by Beethoven in his full-score autograph of the 'Emperor'.
- 14 Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto', pp. 10–14. In the present essay, the term continuo will consistently and exclusively mean the right hand's activity of providing accompaniment in *tutti*. Nevertheless, the absence of continuo activity does not necessarily imply the absence of keyboard sound: it may still be present through the left hand's customary activity of adapting the string bass to the keyboard idiom.
- 15 For details on Beethoven's continuo notation, see Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto', pp. 10–28. Though listed in the category of continuo notation, Beethoven's figured and unfigured bass may exceptionally represent harmonic cues of the orchestral activity (Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto', pp. 44–54). In Table 1.1, the term 'idiomatic bass' is used only for works in which the notated bass line contains fragments that represent a purposeful adaptation of the string bass to the keyboard idiom.
- 16 For details on Beethoven's cue notation, see Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto', pp. 8–9. In Table 1.2, the term 'cues' refers to instrumental cues in the right- or left-hand staff. The term *Clavierauszug* means the modern equivalent of a piano reduction. Due to carelessness, some instrumental cues which appear in the original editions of Beethoven's works were engraved in improper large-size notes.
- 17 In the two tables, autograph sources are reduced to those used as *Kopiaturnvorlage* or, when not extant, to a relevant autograph source; printed sources are limited to the last version supervised by Beethoven.

Table 1.1. 'Col basso continuo' notation in piano concertos and masses
 Beethoven autographs *v* editions (Y = present; N = absent; ? = not known)

Opus numbers		15	19	37	56	58	73	86	123
Figured bass	– autograph	Y	N	N	N	?	Y	?	Y
	– edition	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Tasto solo	– autograph	N	N	N	N	?	Y	?	Y
	– edition	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
All'ottava	– autograph	N	N	N	N	?	Y	?	Y
	– edition	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
Unisono	– autograph	N	N	N	N	?	N	?	N
	– edition	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Telemannbogen	– autograph	N	N	N	N	?	Y	?	Y
	– edition	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Unfigured bass	– autograph	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Y	?	Y
	– edition	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Realisation	– autograph	N	N	N	N	?	N	?	N
	– edition	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Idiomatic bass	– autograph	N	Y	N	N	?	Y	?	Y
	– edition	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y

Tasto solo (t.s.)

Definition: 't.s. signifies that one should depress only the keys notated [in the left-hand staff] without adding any accompaniment [with the right hand], until the figures return [to indicate the resumption of two-handed accompaniment]'.¹⁸

By its very nature, *t.s.* qualifies the function of figures immediately surrounding it. Because *t.s.* designates a momentary cessation of right-hand accompaniment, its occurrence in a given tutti substantiates the logical inference that the figures that precede and follow its advent represent authentic keyboard continuo.¹⁹ When the

18 Nottebohm, 'Beethovens theoretische Studien', *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 41 (1863), p. 688.

'T.S. zeigt an, daß man nur die vorgeschriebene Taste ohne alle weitere Begleitung anschlagen solle, bis wieder Ziffern kommen.' Beethoven's sentence represents a conscious rewording (i.e. not an absent-minded copy) of Daniel Gottlob Türk's definition in *Kurze Anweisung zum Generalbaßspielen* (Halle and Leipzig 1791), p. 29. Both definitions are identical in effect with those of Johann Albrechtsberger, Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, C.P.E. Bach, Johann Michael Bach, Johann Joseph Klein, Georg Simon Löhlein, August Eberhard Müller, Joachim Hoffman and Adolph Bernhard Marx. Beethoven's accompanying musical example is not reproduced, since it is an exact copy of Türk's original.

19 The presence of *t.s.* constitutes an effective way to identify authentic continuo practices. Significantly, the Archduke Rudolph's theoretical figured bass drills do not contain a single occurrence of *t.s.*; see Susan Kagan, *Archduke Rudolph, Beethoven's Patron, Pupil, and Friend: His Life and Music* (Stuyvesant, N.Y., 1988), pp. 58–67.

Table 1.2. *Cue notation in piano concertos and masses*Beethoven Autographs *ν* Editions (Y=present; N=absent; ?=not known)

Opus numbers		15	19	37	56	58	73	86	123
Cues – R.H.	– autograph	N	Y	N	Y	?	Y	?	N
	– edition	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Cues – L.H.	– autograph	N	Y	N	Y	?	Y	?	Y
	– edition	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Clavierauszug	– autograph	N	N	N	N	?	N	?	N
	– edition	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Separate cue system	– autograph	N	N	N	N	?	N	?	N
	– edition	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N

keyboard player is expected to provide uninterrupted right-hand accompaniment in a given tutti, the term *t.s.* must, of course, be absent during that tutti.

The above continuo notation limits the freedom of the performer to the maximum extent by prescribing every detail of accompaniment: right-hand activity (figures) *ν* inactivity (*t.s.*), and left-hand activity (the purposeful adaptation of the string bass-line to the keyboard idiom) *ν* inactivity (rests or instrumental cues entered in the left-hand staff). Among Beethoven's concertos, only the 'Emperor' contains such detailed continuo instructions.

In the concertos published before the compilation of the *Materialien* (i.e. Nos. 1–4 and the Triple Concerto), Beethoven did not curtail the freedom of the soloist. In these works, the total absence of the term *t.s.* suggests that the soloist is free to determine the specific alternation of the three complementary forms of accompaniment: playing with both hands, with the left hand alone, or with neither. In the original editions of these works, the tutti notation is limited to a constant flow of figures (as in the Piano Concerto in C major Op. 15) or of melodic and harmonic cues (as in the other concertos). Whether figured or unfigured, the *basso continuo* line is engraved with the same size noteheads as the solo passages, whereas cues are distinguished by small-size noteheads. The composer's sparse figured bass notation in the full-score autograph of the Piano Concerto Op. 15 will be discussed later.

All'ottava and unisono

Definition: 'In places marked with *unisono* (*un.*, *all'unisono*, *all'ottava*) the right hand must play along with the left by reproducing the latter's pitches at the higher

octave; where the accompanist is to resume playing chords, figures must be recommenced.²⁰

The term *all'ottava* is often mistaken for the term *col ottava bassa*. The two terms should never be interchanged, for one designates the right hand's continuo activity (paralleling the cello line by playing single pitches at the higher octave – *all'ottava*), while the other designates the left hand's idiomatic keyboard adaptation of the string bass (doubling the cello line plus adding the double-bass pitch – *col ottava bassa*). Confusing the two terms is an age-old problem that had already plagued the preparation of both the English and the German editions of the 'Emperor'.²¹ Recently, Ferguson has confused the two terms by equating the keyboard player's activity of reproducing 'both cello and double-bass pitches' with the indications *all'ottava* or *all'unisono*.²² Consequently, her assertion that the 'Emperor's autograph *all'ottava* indications are 'sometimes written simply as "8"' appears to be flawed.²³ What Ferguson is probably referring to is Beethoven's figure '8' placed beneath the bass line, in which case it represents not the right hand's *all'ottava* but the left hand's *col ottava bassa* activity.²⁴

Nevertheless, when placed above the bass line, the figure '8' can indeed be used to represent the right hand's *all'ottava* activity.²⁵ This notational alternative is mentioned in Beethoven's truncated sentence from the *Materialien*: 'Auch vermittelst der Zahl 8 8 8 oder abgekürzt 8–.'²⁶ According to Beethoven's consistent notational custom, distinction between *all'ottava* and *col ottava bassa* is achieved through the placement of the figure '8' on the music staff. When placed above the bass note, '8' always denotes the doubling of the bass note at the higher octave (i.e. with the right hand); when placed below, '8' always indicates the doubling of the bass note at the lower octave (i.e. with the left hand).

Because Beethoven preferred to reserve the term *all'ottava* as a nearly exclusive notational symbol for doubling a succession of bass notes at the higher octave,²⁷ his

20 Nottebohm, 'Beethovens theoretische Studien', p. 688. 'Bei den mit unisono (un., all'unisono, all'ottava) bezeichneten Stellen spielt man in der rechten Hand und zwar die nächstliegende höhere Oktave mit; wo der Begleiter wieder ganze Akkorde angeben soll, setzt man wieder Ziffern hin.'

21 Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto', p. 16, ns. 22 and 23; p. 21, Fig. 1; and p. 37, paragraphs 1 and 2.

22 Ferguson, 'Col Basso and Generalbass in Mozart's Keyboard Concertos', p. 235.

23 *ibid.*, p. 268

24 Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto', p. 52, Ex. 16a.

25 *ibid.*, p. 17, Ex. 3a, 1/71, downbeat.

26 Nottebohm, 'Beethovens theoretische Studien', p. 688. In Türk's original, the sentence is rounded off with these additional words: 'pflegen Einige das *all'unisono* zu bezeichnen'. (*Kurze Anweisung*, p. 29). The completed sentence translates: 'Some [composers] prefer to notate *all'unisono* by means of a chain of 8 8 8 or, in shortened form, 8–' [placed above the bass notes in Türk's original example and its reproduction in Beethoven's autograph].

27 *Missa sollemnis*, beginning of Gloria.

choice of the numerical alternative ('8' placed above an isolated bass note) must not as a rule be equated with the sound of an empty octave. The full-score autograph of the 'Emperor' and the realisation incorporated in the original edition of the *Missa solennis* clarify Beethoven's use of the numerical alternative: when placed above an isolated bass note, '8' generally represents a full chord, its treble note doubling the bass pitch.²⁸

One of the most difficult interpretational problems in Beethoven's *oeuvre* arises through the presence of *t.s.* coupled with the total absence of *all'ottava* indications in the original edition of the Mass Op. 86. The undocumented *all'ottava* and *Organo* additions in Breitkopf and Härtel's *Gesamtausgabe* of Op. 86 suggest that the editors' interpretations of the original edition are not always reliable.

⌒ Telemannbogen (the arc of Telemann).²⁹

Definition: 'By means of an arc certain composers indicate the diminished triad, certain incomplete chords, suspensions, harmonic changes over an unchanged pitch, and other places that must be accompanied in the right hand with a two-voiced texture.'³⁰

Beethoven's *Telemannbogen* indications were consistently ignored in printed editions, though they are retained in the subscription copy of the *Missa solennis* purchased by the King of France.³¹ In the 'Emperor', Beethoven's use of the *Telemannbogen* is limited to a single situation: the arc is placed above the figure '5' in order to alert the soloist that the chord to be realised must not contain any pitches in addition to those of the diminished triad.³² In the *Missa solennis*, the arc is used in two situations. Most commonly, it is used as in the 'Emperor';³³ less frequently, it indicates incomplete chords (such as two pitches at the interval of a major second and a perfect fourth respectively played above the bass).³⁴ The above *Telemannbogen* indications found in the manuscript copy of the *Missa solennis* purchased by the King of France are always correctly realised. This same realisation was incorporated (with minor changes) into the printed edition supervised by

28 'Emperor', 1/62 and *Missa solennis*, *Kyrie*, bar 128. In both, '8' marks the resumption of chordal continuo activity.

29 See Wolf Hohobhm, 'Der Telemannische Bogen', *Studien zur Aufführungspraxis und Interpretation der Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 32 (1987), pp. 32–5.

30 Nottebohm, 'Beethovens theoretische Studien', p. 688. 'Vermittelst eines ⌒ bezeichnen manche Componisten der verminderten Dreiklang, gewisse unvollständige Akkorde, Vorhalte, durchgehende Harmonien und andere nur zweistimmig zu begleitende Stellen.'

31 Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, catalogued as L. 1121.

32 Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto', p. 20, Ex 4 b, bar 251; and p. 22, n. 26.

33 Gloria, bar 115, second beat; Sanctus, bar 41, second beat; and Agnus dei, bar 240, downbeat.

34 Gloria, bar 334, downbeat, notated as a '4–2' capped by a *Telemannbogen*.

Beethoven.³⁵ Though the origin of the printed realisation is not known, it is obviously the work of an experienced continuo player. That this person may have been Beethoven himself is certainly a possibility: in his early teens, he was employed both as a 'Cembalo player in the orchestra, i.e. one who provides the thoroughbass during symphonies', and as 'Court Organist of the Prince'.³⁶ Because Beethoven had repeatedly authorised the incorporation of this realisation into manuscript copies and the original edition, it should not be dismissed on the grounds of its unknown origin; in fact, it may be accepted as the last authoritative version of the Mass.³⁷ Therefore, organists can rely on the printed realisation (excepting obvious misprints or mistakes) rather than attempt to realise the composer's early version of the piece as recorded in the figured bass notation of the full-score autograph.³⁸

PARALLELS BETWEEN MOZART'S AND BEETHOVEN'S SHORTHAND CONTINUO NOTATIONS IN FULL-SCORE AUTOGRAPHS

In the Henle edition of the first three piano concertos, Hans-Werner Kùthen has played down the continuo implications of the figured and unfigured bass found in the original editions of these works. Citing an alleged absence of autograph continuo indications in the full-score autographs, Kùthen has produced an edition that shows the soloist at rest in *tuttis*.³⁹ By contrast, Ferguson has reasoned that a full-score autograph can be used as evidence of performance practice only if it has been prepared with the clear purpose of serving as *Kopiaturvorlage* for the printed piano part.⁴⁰ Among Beethoven's piano concertos, only the full-score autograph of the 'Emperor' fits this condition: in it, Beethoven has presented posterity with the most detailed performance practice instructions that can be given within the framework of *Generalbass* notation: the right hand's continuo activity (figures or *all'ottavas*) or inactivity (*t.s.*), and the left hand's idiomatic keyboard adaptation of the string bass.

35 Aside from a few improvements in the realisation itself, the figured bass notation engraved in the original edition is inferior to that found in the copy purchased by the King of France.

36 *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 21 (1827), p. 346. 'Im vierzehnten Jahre ward er Cembalist im Orchester, d.i. der bey Symphonieen den Generalbass begleitete; im 16ten Hoforganist des Kurfürsten.'

37 The term 'authoritative' is used in the sense defined by William S. Newman, 'On the Problem of Determining Beethoven's Most Authoritative Lifetime Editions', in *Beiträge zur Beethoven-Bibliographie* (Munich 1978), p. 128.

38 For example, in Gloria, bars 4, 38, 42, and 184–5, the organist should play *all'ottava* as in the realisation, and not *t.s.* as in the full-score autograph. The undocumented addition of the term *Organo* in Breitkopf and Härtel's *Gesamtausgabe* suggests that the editors did not understand the meaning of Beethoven's term *tasto solo*.

39 L. van Beethoven, 'Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke', III, Band 2, *Klavierkonzerte I*, ed. H.-W. Kùthen (Munich 1984).

40 Ferguson, 'Col Basso and Generalbass in Mozart's Keyboard Concertos', p. 244.

Ferguson's admirable line of reasoning concerning autograph evidence of performance practice seems to be weakened by her parenthetical statement pertaining to shorthand notation in the full-score autograph of the Piano Concerto in C major Op. 15, where Beethoven's habit of extending the keyboard bass 'into the first [bar] or two of tutti' is characterised as 'perhaps absent-minded'.⁴¹ I prefer to characterise it as a deliberate shorthand convention that reflects the persistence of continuo practices in the Classical period. To assess the purport of Beethoven's notational habit (i.e. extending the keyboard bass into the tutti), one must place it in the larger context of Baroque and Classical notational history.

For the twentieth-century mind, the greatest difficulty with autograph continuo notation lies in grasping the broad implications of time-saving conventions such as incomplete and shorthand notation. Take, for example, one of the most elementary shorthand terms, *col basso*. When applied to the keyboard idiom, this term was used generically; as such, it made no distinction between the left hand's restricted *col Basso* as opposed to the two hands' *col basso continuo* activity. The term was usually condensed to *colB* (as used by Mozart) or *Cb* (as in the full-score autograph of Beethoven's Piano Concerto Op. 15).⁴² The purpose of these generically used abbreviations was to spare the composer from having to write a realisation, write a figured bass, or write out separately the keyboard and the string bass. Naturally, composers took full advantage of each and every option, and it is nothing short of miraculous that we possess even a scrap of positive proof for continuo beyond the traditional shorthand.

How keen composers were on saving time can be ascertained from the third option. Though it spared the composer from having to write two sets of bass lines, it still did not eliminate the task of writing out in longhand notation one or the other. Two options were available: to use longhand for the string bass and enter the shorthand *cB* into the keyboard system's left-hand staff; or to use longhand for the keyboard bass and enter the shorthand *col cembalo* into the empty string bass staff. That composers overwhelmingly chose the first option is not surprising: it saved them several letters. Ironically, what saved ink in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has caused an inordinate amount of it to be spilled in the ongoing twentieth-century debate on whether *cB* represents *bona fide* keyboard continuo or a mere cue *continuum* of the orchestral activity. As with any widely practised time-saving conventions, the answer is contained only in a few documents created by composers or copyists who took the trouble to walk the extra mile as did Beethoven in the notation of his 'Emperor'.

41 *ibid.*, p. 248.

42 See 1/453 downbeat; in 1/452, Beethoven had entered in longhand the beginning of the soloist's *col basso* activity. Beethoven's notation is an exact replica of Mozart's habitual way of indicating the inception of continuo activity in long tutti.

By discovering the true ending to Mozart's *Konzert-Rondo* in A major K386, preserved in the British Library, Alan Tyson has unwittingly unearthed the Rosetta stone of this composer's *cB* shorthand. Contrary to his habit of entering *cB* into the piano system's empty left-hand staff (a habit so ingrained that no exceptions are known either earlier in this piece or in any of his piano concertos), Mozart filled out the keyboard system's left-hand staff with a longhand bass line; thereafter, on two consecutive pages, he entered this shorthand term into the empty string-bass staff: *col cembalo*.⁴³

Should anyone suggest that the case of K386 is but an accident, two manuscript copies of instrumental concertos prove that Mozart's 'accident' is not unique in the notational history of the Baroque and the Classical eras. What appears to be accidental in Mozart's autograph is revealed as the premeditated notational principle in Johann Friedrich Agricola's full-score manuscript copy (c. 1750) of J. S. Bach's Triple Concerto in A minor BWV 1044,⁴⁴ and in a manuscript copy of Joseph Haydn's Concerto for organ (harpsichord) and violin in F major Hob. XVIII:6.⁴⁵ In both, the copyist has consistently entered the bass pitches into the keyboard soloist's left-hand staff while marking the empty string-bass staff with the shorthand *col Cembalo*.

The Haydn concerto's manuscript copy offers some revealing insights into the mentality of the copyist who, it seems, had encountered an unexpected problem while copying the first movement's second long tutti: was *col Cembalo* perhaps too ambiguous a term? So at the next turn of the page, our conscientious copyist coined a new term: *col B. del Cemb. (col Basso del Cembalo)* – the string basses should reproduce only the pitches produced by the soloist's left hand.⁴⁶

Had eighteenth- and nineteenth-century composers used the shorthand term *col Basso del Cembalo* in lieu of *cB (col Basso)*, performers today would doubtless no longer be busy debating whether or not to play continuo, but rather how to play it in a style proper for a particular composer. What they would discover is that the term *basso continuo* is a misnomer when applied in an unqualified sense to the piano concertos of Mozart and Beethoven.

The first person to sin against Mozart's concept of keyboard continuo was none other than his father Leopold who, with the best of intentions, 'improved' his son's

43 See facsimile in Alan Tyson, *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), pp. 284–5.

44 See facsimile on p. XI of the *Neue Bach Ausgabe*, VII:3.

45 Page 1 of the manuscript bears the title: *Concerto per il cembalo e violino principale/ con 2 violini, viola e basso./ di/ J. Haydn*; it is catalogued as *Littera W, No. 13.490* in the Brussels Conservatory Library. The *Kopiaturvorlage* for this document was a manuscript now preserved in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden, Musica 3356/O/16a. The *cembalo secondo* part that begins at the first solo of the *Violino principale* does not represent a continuo realisation: it is a keyboard adaptation of the violin solo part, to be executed only when a violin soloist is unavailable for performance (i.e. it represents an alternate version for two solo keyboards and orchestra).

46 The term occurs on p. 12 in the Brussels copy.

autograph notation by providing figured or unfigured bass in short tuttis where Wolfgang had prohibited keyboard activity.⁴⁷ Beethoven fared no better at the hands of his dedicated copyists and engravers: they, too, 'improved' his notation by ignoring certain autograph indications that were meant to qualify figures in short tuttis as representing orchestral cues.⁴⁸

Through the curtailment of continuo activity in short tuttis, Mozart and Beethoven, perhaps more than other composers, granted the soloist a prominent status as *primus inter pares*.⁴⁹

MOZART'S REALISATION OF THE PIANO CONCERTO IN C MAJOR K246

Few discoveries relating to composers of the Classical period have incited greater controversy than the discovery in 1920 of Mozart's autograph additions to an eighteenth-century keyboard part belonging to a complete set of orchestral parts of the Piano Concerto in C major K246. Recently, Robert D. Levin has concluded that this document 'does not shed light on Mozart's own continuo playing'.⁵⁰ The basis of Levin's pronouncement is his agreement with Ferguson's theory that Mozart's additions do not represent a continuo realisation but rather an *ad hoc* arrangement for a performance on two pianos.⁵¹

Although Ferguson's theory can be refuted on purely musical grounds, this is no longer necessary thanks to the discovery of a second eighteenth-century manuscript copy of the Piano Concerto K246 containing Mozart's additions.⁵² That Mozart's additions were copied into the keyboard part belonging to a second, complete set of orchestral parts for this concerto (produced for the Mozart family at some expense, one supposes) strongly suggests that the additions were not prepared for a performance on two pianos but for a performance with orchestra where an amateur soloist was being assisted in the task of providing a continuo realisation.

A preliminary assessment of the second set of orchestral parts shows it to have been used by one of Mozart's Parisian students who entered not only 'improvements'

47 In full-score autographs, Mozart interdicted keyboard activity by entering rests into the left-hand staff of the keyboard system, as in: K238, 2/84–5; K242, 1/190–2 and 2/end of bar 64 and beginning of bar 65; K271, 1/63–4 and 66–7, 3/79–82 and 352–5; K415, 1/167.

48 Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto', pp. 44–54.

49 See Szász, 'Figured Bass in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto', pp. 42–3.

50 Robert D. Levin, 'Instrumental Ornamentation, Improvisation and Cadenzas', in Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie, eds., *Performance Practice*, (2 vols., London 1989), II p. 288.

51 Ferguson, 'Col Basso and Generalbass in Mozart's Keyboard Concertos', pp. 13–4 and 25–7; and Linda Faye Ferguson, 'Mozart's Keyboard Concertos: Tutti Notations and Performance Models', *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1984/85), pp. 32–9.

52 I found this document in a large collection of manuscript copies of works by Mozart preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris. The orchestral parts of the Concerto in C major K246 are catalogued as D. 11.980. Title of keyboard part: Concerto. Del Sig.^{no} Amadeo Wolgango Mozart./Cembalo.

to his teacher's continuo realisation but also an unmistakably French-styled figured bass to one of the 'improved' bars.⁵³ Interestingly, the manuscript contains a loose leaf bearing a hitherto unknown cadenza to the first movement of K246 that seems to represent a hurried (and later corrected) copy of a now lost Mozart autograph.⁵⁴

As to whether Mozart's notated realisation sheds light on his own continuo playing, the answer is a qualified 'yes'. The argument that Mozart would have played a more virtuosic realisation is flawed, because it is based on the mistaken assumption that the student's technical deficiency prevented the composer from creating an elaborate accompaniment. In fact, nothing prevented Mozart from elaborating his realisation with trills, arpeggios, scales, Alberti basses and other ornamental, figurative or virtuosic passages, since any amateur capable of playing the solos would have obviously been capable of incorporating their stylistic and technical features into a continuo realisation. In addition, a comparison of Mozart's realisation with the nearly seventy Classical realisations known to this writer shows it to be similar in every essential detail to the most elaborate of these. The only exception is the doubling of the oboes in 2/9–12 which suggests that the realisation was conceived with two alternatives in mind: when only strings were available, the soloist would play the oboe doubling;⁵⁵ but when winds were also available, the soloist would leave out the oboe doubling. When placed in the context of eighteenth-century performance practices, Mozart's full-score autographs and his realisation of K246 suggest the following guidelines for the performance of continuo with full orchestra.

- (1) As a rule, the soloist plays continuo only when the double-basses are playing, and only if not excluded by rests entered in the left-hand staff of the keyboard part. If the cellos and the double-basses play *divisi*, the soloist reinforces the double-bass line (at the notated rather than the actual pitch).
- (2) When not otherwise excluded, the soloist plays non-stop in the middle register of the keyboard: mostly with both hands, occasionally with the left hand alone.

53 Entered in longhand, the amateur's realisation ignores Mozart's appropriate *t.s.* choice during four thinly orchestrated bars: 1/20, 22, 30 and 31. In 1/20, the student's realisation is a harmonic abomination. Figures complement the realisation at 1/22, where the third and the first inversions of the dominant seventh chord in C major are notated as a slashed '4' and '5' respectively. In French notation, these slashed figures indicate the presence of the tritone (the intervals of the augmented fourth 'f-b' or the diminished fifth 'b-f') in the aforementioned chords. See Michel Corrette's *Le Maître de clavecin* (Paris 1753), p. 17, 'Leçon en ut.', and the note on the bottom: 'Les François chiffrent le Triton ainsi', followed by a slashed '4'.

54 The orchestral parts (and perhaps the cadenza, too) may have been copied already in Salzburg (i.e. prior to Mozart's arrival in Paris).

55 The money-making potential of K246 as a teaching piece *par excellence* may have given Mozart the incentive needed to compose an accompaniment that could accommodate student performances using the reduced forces of a small string ensemble or even a string quartet (see Mozart's *a quattro* performing alternative for his piano concertos K413, K414, K415 and K449). The Paris copy contains two sets of fingerings in the solos of the three movements: one by the copyist, the other by the amateur.