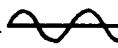


'A horribly bad sound'?: 'Open pedal' in Haydn's Sonata in C major Hob. XVI:50

Alexander Furman

There appears to be a certain mystique surrounding the use of the pedal in Classical period keyboard music. It is well known, for example, that Mozart used the knee levers fitted to the pianos of his day, in spite of the fact that he did not include one indication of this in the whole of his keyboard output.¹ Beethoven's pedal markings allow for the blurring of harmonies, among other effects (including the celebrated *senza sordino* indication on the autograph of the Sonata op. 27 no. 2). Recent research by William S. Newman shows that Beethoven exploited the pedal far more than was indicated in his scores.² Perhaps less famous, but equally fascinating, are the 'open pedal' markings which occur in the first movement of Haydn's Sonata in C major Hob. XVI:50. As the only pedal indications in his entire keyboard output, they represent something of an anomaly in keyboard works composed prior to 1800, and challenge the expected conventions governing the use of the pedal at that time. Following Haydn's direction exactly as marked results in an ephemeral wash of sound that seems at first more appropriate to late nineteenth-century piano music, and foreign in the context of the first movement's transparent texture. That is, of course, assuming that we understand 'open pedal' to mean damper pedal, as many people usually do. But this is a moot point. According to the great scholar of Haydn, H.C. Robbins Landon, 'such a use of the sustaining [damper] pedal would be wrong, blurring the music in a quite absurd way. Of course, what Haydn wanted is the *sopra una corda* effect'.³ Yet Christa Landon, the equally distinguished editor of the complete Haydn sonatas asserts, 'Haydn's pedal

marking ("open Pedal") can only have meant that there was to be no change of pedal at the passage marked '.⁴ Sandra Rosenblum, author of the remarkably comprehensive book *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music*,⁵ is somewhat more ambivalent, merely observing that 'if interpreted as damper pedal, then the only pedal marks in Haydn's music produce mixed harmonies'.⁶

Before exploring the issues raised by Haydn's 'open pedal' marking, it is worth commenting on its authenticity. Unfortunately, no manuscript of the sonata has survived, and the marking originates from the first edition published by Longman & Clementi in 1801. On the title page of this edition appears the signature of Therese Bartolozzi (née Jansen), a brilliant amateur pianist to whom Haydn dedicated at least two of the final three piano sonatas, as well as the three piano trios Hob. XV:27-29. Bartolozzi's name also appears in a list of pianists Haydn jotted in his London notebook. After Haydn left London to return to Vienna, she retained the manuscripts to both the C major Sonata and the E flat major Sonata Hob. XVI:52. A comparison between the engraved copy of Hob. XVI:52 and its surviving manuscript shows she remained totally faithful to Haydn's original, and the endorsement of her signature on the title page makes it more than reasonable to assume that her engraved copy of the C major Sonata Hob. XVI:50 is similarly exact.⁷

Assuming this marking to be authentic, Haydn's 'open pedal' direction (see Examples 1a and 1b) opens up questions for debate. The first, as we have already witnessed, is whether this marking refers to the *una corda* pedal or the damper pedal,



Example 1a: Haydn, Hob. XVI: 50, first movement, bars 73-74 (Allegro)

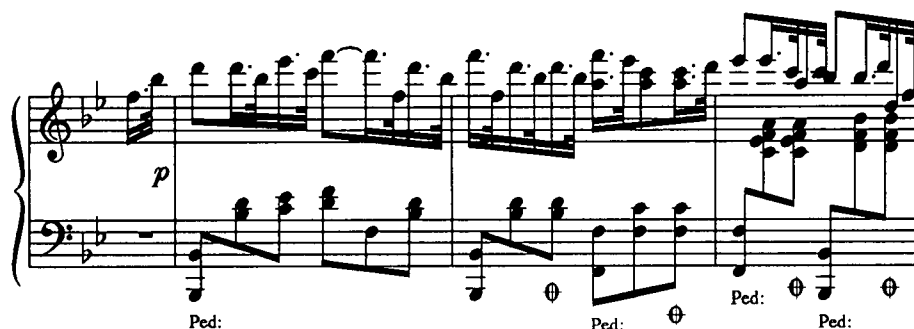


Example 1b: Haydn, Hob. XVI:50, first movement, bars 120-23

and if Haydn was referring to the damper pedal, for how long do we hold the pedal down? The second relates to the disparity between notational practice and performance practice of the time, as has been observed in the case of Mozart and Beethoven. As Haydn intended the pedal to be used in Hob. XVI:50, is there also a precedent for using the pedal in other parts of this sonata, or indeed in any other keyboard works from his London period? The answers to these questions lie in exploring the extent to which Haydn was inspired by the English fortepiano, and the ideas which he no doubt gleaned from the ‘professional’ pianists of the day, including Muzio Clementi, Jan Ladislav Dussek, Johann Baptist Cramer and Bartolozzi.

As much as any other factor, the evolving design of the English fortepiano from 1760-1790 led many composers who wrote for the keyboard to explore various pedal effects during the 1790s. While Viennese pianos continued to be manufactured with knee levers right up until the end of the eighteenth century, the dampers on English fortepianos could be raised by pedals as early as the 1780s.⁸ The two main types of fortepiano manufactured in England during the 1790s were the square fortepiano, which was played mainly by amateurs in private homes, and the grand fortepiano, used by professional pianists in concert situations. Most upright and square fortepianos were equipped with a pedal for raising the dampers, while grand

Example 2: Clementi, Sonata op. 37 no. 3, third movement, bars 1-33 (Presto)



Example 3: Dussek, Sonata op. 39 no. 3, second movement, bars 78-80 (Allegro moderato)

fortepianos were also fitted with an *una corda*. By the end of the decade, composers of the London Pianoforte School⁹ started to include pedal markings in some of their published keyboard music, although their individual nomenclature varied. Clementi used the term 'open pedal' in his Sonata op. 37 no. 3, third movement, bars 1-33 (Example 2) while Dussek, in his Sonata op. 39 no. 3, second movement, bars 787-88 (Example 3) marked his scores with the more conventional *ped.* and \oplus signs. Both these examples show the damper pedal being employed to sustain a bass harmony, in Clementi's case for an exceptionally long period.

Markings such as these, however, were fairly exceptional. Neither Clementi's *Introduction to the Art of Playing on the Pianoforte*, nor Dussek's *Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte or Harpsichord* contain any information or explanation for use of either the damper pedal or *una corda* although it is interesting that Dussek was reported to have 'kept the dampers almost constantly raised when he played in public'.¹⁰ The first English fortepiano treatise to make any mention of

the use of the pedal was Cramer's *Instructions for the Piano Forte* of 1812, which fortunately furnishes some fairly specific detail:

Square Piano fortes have but one Pedal, which serves to raise the dampers and is commonly placed near the centre of the Instrument.

Grand Piano Fortes (horizontal and upright) have two Pedals, the Right hand Pedal, is the same as in Square Piano fortes, and serves to raise the dampers: the Left hand Pedal serves to move the Keyboard from Left to Right, and takes off one or two Strings from the hammers; it is chiefly used in Piano, Diminuendo, and Pianissimo passages.

When the Right hand Pedal is to be used this mark \oplus is set under the passage, and when it is dropt this mark * is used. Some Authors prefer writing (Ped:) when the Open Pedal is to be used, and when it is to be dropt, they use this mark *. As the Left hand Pedal is only used in soft passages, it does not require any particular mark.

The Open Pedal is chiefly used in slow Movements, when the same harmony is to be prolonged. NB: When a change takes place in the

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Example 4: Cramer, Sonata op. 20, first movement, bars 1-7 (Largo Assai)

Harmony the Pedal must be dropt.¹¹

With respect to Haydn's markings, this account is illuminating. Cramer's writings clearly link the term 'open pedal' with the operation of the damper pedal, as the use of the *una corda* did not require any direction in the score. This description, combined with the evidence that other composers, such as Clementi and Dussek, clearly associated the term 'open pedal' with damper pedal, strongly supports the view that Haydn also intended the use of the damper pedal, and not the *una corda* pedal as suggested by H.C. Robbins Landon. Cramer had himself also indicated pedal markings in his Sonata op. 20, published around 1800, which are commensurate with the recommendations of his treatise (see Example 4).

If, as it seems, that 'open pedal' most likely denotes the use of the damper pedal, is it necessary to change the pedal during the 'open pedal' passages, or to allow for the harmonies to blur? In Cramer's treatise, he specifies that 'open pedal' is used to support a passage using the same harmony, and that a change in harmony demands a change of

pedal. Yet as early as 1762, C.P.E. Bach stated that: 'The undamped [upper] register of the fortepiano is the most pleasing and, once the performer learns to observe the necessary precautions in the face of its reverberations, the most delightful for improvisation'.¹² Presumably, C.P.E. Bach was accustomed to a Cristofori-type piano, such as those made by Gottfried Silbermann, where the reverberations would have died away quickly, accommodating changes of harmony without unpleasant dissonance. In 1797, Johann Peter Milchmeyer cautioned against mixing the 'resonance of the previous chord and the sound of the present' as it would produce 'a horribly bad sound'. Milchmeyer did allow, however, for blurred harmonies 'if the expression allows it'.¹³ Remembering that Dussek apparently kept the dampers 'constantly raised', and the bold experimentation by Clementi, Dussek and others, there is a strong case to support the view that Haydn wanted a blur of sound to be created by leaving the pedal depressed for the duration of the 'open pedal' section. In the case of the first 'open pedal' passage (Example

Example 5: Clementi, Sonata op. 40 no. 1, fourth movement, bars 210-225 (Presto)

1a), the only foreign harmony to conflict with the A flat tonality would be produced by the second slurred group between f and Bb. Due to the comparatively clumsy pedal design on English fortepianos of this time, which did not allow rapid movement, a change of pedal in the second bar would be decidedly awkward.¹⁴ Because of the short duration of the passage, the sound does not build up to the same extent as it does in some of Clementi's longer pedal indications. Therefore, it would seem permissible and tasteful to allow the pedal to remain depressed for the duration of this first passage. The execution of the second 'open pedal' passage presents more of a problem, as we cannot know what, in 1797, would have been perceived as 'a horribly bad sound'. The following passage from Clementi's Sonata op. 40 no. 1 does however shed some light on the apparently accepted limits of taste.

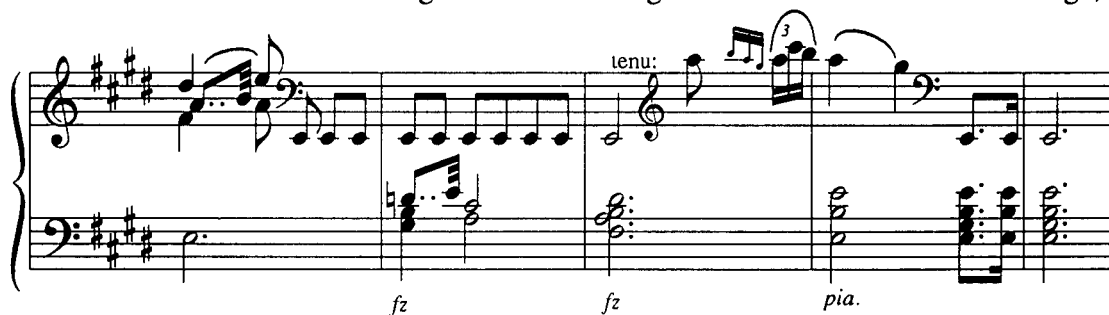
The similarity between this passage (Example 5) and the second 'open pedal' section (Example 1b) in Haydn's sonata is quite remarkable. Both passages are placed in exactly the same tessitura and even use the same alternation of right and left hand. It may even be possible that Clementi borrowed the idea for this passage from Haydn, as Clementi was certainly familiar with Haydn's works. Nevertheless, it is possible to leave the pedal depressed for the whole of this passage. Apart from the c#" in bar 120 and the g#" in bar

121, the notes in this passage are diatonic in the key of C major, and their presence is certainly not prominent enough to produce the kind of sound against which Milchmeyer advises.

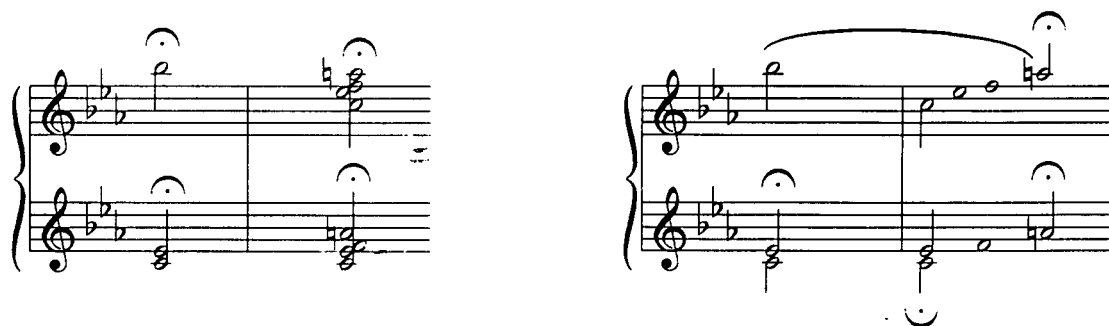
Finally, the question remains as to the appropriateness of using the pedal in any other passages of Haydn's London-period keyboard works. Remembering that Haydn's pedal markings are largely colouristic, there are a variety of places where the use of the damper pedal would seem appropriate. The final bars of the second movements of both the Sonatas Hob. XVI:50 and 52 might benefit from the use of the damper pedal, particularly in the case of Hob. XVI:52, where sustaining the lower chord provides a beautiful juxtaposition against the final melodic flourish (see Example 6).

Likewise, the adagio passage that occurs just prior to the recapitulation of the third movement of the same sonata provides scope for application of the pedal, particularly on the fermata chords in bars 195 and 196. In the autograph of this sonata, Haydn wrote out these chords according to the notation in Example 7.

Here, the effect of the rolled chords is enriched by the extra resonance created by the judicious application of the damper pedal. There are other places where the application of damper and even *una corda* pedal would be valid, and these, as a general rule, will correspond to sections displaying a slow rate of harmonic change, or perhaps



Example 6: Haydn, Hob. XVI:52, second movement, bars 52-56 (Adagio)



Example 7: Haydn, Hob. XVI:52, third movement, bars 195-196 (Presto), and according to autograph.

exploring some unusual aspect of texture, as in the case of Hob. XVI:50. It is worth remembering, however, that prior to 1800, pedals were applied selectively and were reserved for particularly special moments.

This article has not considered the appropriate performance of the 'open pedal' passage on a modern piano, and the polemics of this argument are not worth investigating at this time. Although an instrument such as a 1795 Broadwood will give a wonderful approximation of the kind of sound Haydn was exploring, we do not usually have access to such treasures. But even if only a modern piano is available for performance, the performer who has an understanding of the instruments and style of performance for which Haydn composed will create a potentially more satisfying, and perhaps more faithful, interpretation than one who has not.

NOTES

¹ Mozart spoke frequently in his letters about the design and construction of pianos in his time, writing in a letter to his father in 1777 that 'The device which you work with your knee is better on his [Stein's] than on other instruments. I have only to touch it and it works; and when you shift your knee the slightest bit, you do not hear the least reverberation'. E. Anderson, trans. and ed., *The Letters of Mozart and His Family* (London: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 328-29.

² William S. Newman, *Beethoven on Beethoven* (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 234. Newman documents contemporary accounts of Beethoven's playing including those by Czerny.

³ H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, vol. 3 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p.

445.

⁴ Christa Landon, ed., *Haydn: The Complete Piano Sonatas*, vol. 3 (Vienna: Wiener Urtext, 1973), p. 124.

⁵ Sandra Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 126-27.

⁶ Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music*, pp. 126-27. Rosenblum avoids making any judgement on this issue, instead concentrating her discussion of this passage on the formal function served by the marking.

⁷ The authenticity of this marking is discussed more comprehensively in Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, vol. 5, pp. 440-44 and also in Peter A. Brown, *Joseph Haydn's Keyboard Music: Sources and Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 53 and pp. 378-80.

⁸ For a comprehensive discussion of the pedals and stops on English and Viennese pianos during the period 1780-1800, see Kenneth Mobbs, 'Stops and other special effects on the early piano', *Early Music* 12.4 (1984), pp. 471-76.

⁹ This group included Haydn, Clementi, Dussek, Cramer, and later the Irishman, John Field.

¹⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm Michael Kalkbrenner, *A New method of Studying the Piano-forte* (London: D'Almaine, 1837), p. 9.

¹¹ Johann Baptist Cramer, *Instructions for the Piano Forte* (London: Chapell, 1812), p. 43.

¹² C.P.E. Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, ed. and trans. William John Mitchell (New York: Norton, 1949), p. 431.

¹³ Johann Peter Milchmeyer, *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen*, p. 61. Translation as quoted in Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music*, p. 117.

¹⁴ Experimentation with this passage on a 1799 Broadwood piano, housed in the Museum of Instruments at the Royal College of Music, London, has confirmed that rapid pedal changes are, at best, uncomfortable and complex. The resultant blurring of harmonies on this particular instrument was not, in the opinion of this author, sufficient to cause an unpleasant effect.