CRITICAL REFLECTION

by

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The Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme 2008-2011

"THE ATONAL PIANO"

A Performer's Reflections on the Piano Music by Fartein Valen,
informed by the Performance Practice of The Second Viennese School

Grieg Academy
UIB

2014

Contents

Front page photo: Portrait of Fartein Valen (by Agnes Hiorth) and Annabel Guaita standing next to the composer's piano. (Private photo from a visit in Valenheimen, 2010)

Introduction

Critical reflection provides an opportunity to come to a closer understanding of the aspects of musical interpretation related to the concepts of originality and expression of the musical work. At first glance, artistic processes of interpretation seem unpredictable and turn out differently for every performer on the individual level. However, what is common to most modern interpreters of the classical-Romantic tradition of musical works is the aim to be original, to do something innovative in relation to interpreting a specific work or style. What has been considered an inevitable part of interpretive practice is the quest to find fruitful ways to make a fresh interpretation and the same work sound "new" and different. This leads to a set of general and more specific issues related to the concept of the "musical work", its interpretation and expression, which I had to handle when confronted with the repertoire chosen as a case study for my project, namely a selection of early modernist atonal piano works by Fartein Valen, Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, and Alban Berg. In the end, my efforts boiled down to the question: How can the familiarity with a specific historical performance style set free or limit artistic expression, understood as the quest for originality?

In my collection of texts reflecting the artistic process, I have therefore tried to be as honest and self critical as possible. They reflect my artistic choices and turning points. The texts show the continuous reflection that has taken place during my work with this material. In the first part, *Becoming an Informed Performer,* I explain my motivation behind the project, the theoretical basis for my project and how I place myself in relation to historical performance practice. The second part, *Atonal Scores and Idiomatic Resistance: Learning the Material*, deals with the practical study of the works. This is meant to give a more detailed account for the craft-related phase I went through, when dealing with this specific repertoire. In the third part, *Similarities Revisited: Valen in European Context,* I compare Fartein Valen's piano works with piano pieces of the other three composers in the project, Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern. In the fourth part, *Comparing Recordings, Resisting Traditions. Essays on Interpretation,* I discuss different problems linked with the way analytic performance practice treats music, before I discuss how I experience three different recordings of Valen's *Nachtstück*, op. 23 and how I see my own recording of this piece in relation to this. In the *Epilogue* I reflect upon what it means to be in motion as an artist and how the act of performing a piece by Valen influences my continuous evolution as an artist.

Appendix includes a list of the various networks and professional environments that influenced and supported my artistic process. This text is about collaboration with other musicians and artists and about the interaction with the audiences during the concerts. Enclosed inside the back cover: a CD with music examples on tracks 1 to 7.

Part 1: Becoming an Informed Performer

This project started in 2005, with my master's thesis at the Grieg Academy on the subject of Alban Berg's *Piano Sonata,* op. 1. I was rehearsing, performing and recording this sonata, and the master's thesis reflected my rehearsal process. With this work, I challenged and opened my own perspective on interpretation of the style of the Second Viennese School. Continuing my studies of this style, preparing and performing Valen's *Variations for piano,* op. 23, I felt an increasing discontent with the practical and theoretical knowledge I had acquired about Valen's music, compared to the style of the Second Viennese School. At this point I felt a strong need to become a more "informed performer" in order to expand my interpretive scope of Valen's music. Turning to the bookshelves, I found that there was almost no research available on the performance of Valen's music other than a doctoral thesis written by the pianist Einar Røttingen.[1] Røttingen's approach takes the Romantic tradition of piano playing as a point of departure, and highlights the connection Valen had to the composer Max Reger. Røttingen points out the similarities between Valen and Schoenberg, Berg and Webern's music, and gives some hints about the consequences for performance practice. The hints that I found here challenged me to go further than Røttingen in applying what might be called a performance theory of the Schoenberg school into my research on Valen. The key focus I took on as a performer at this stage was to put my hypothesis of a connection between Schoenberg and Valen to the test and make it part of my performance of Valens music.

Alfred Cramer inspired me immensely to move further in this direction.[2] Here I eventually found the kind of applied theory on Schoenberg's performance style that I was searching for. My recitals and many discussions with Cramer later during this project gave me a fine opportunity to explore the scope of Cramer's guidelines for performing in Schoenberg's style. An important source of information for Cramer was found in Eduard Steuermann's recordings of Schoenberg's piano music. In his theory, Cramer outlines stylistic tendencies of the performance practice of the Second Viennese School, derived from his listening analysis of Steuermann's performance style (Cramer 1997:142).

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1 Røttingen, Einar. *Establishing a Norwegian Piano Tradition: Interpretive Aspects of Edvard Grieg's Ballade op.24, Geirr Tveitt's Sonata no.29 op.129 and Fartein Valen's Sonata no.2 op.38* (NMH, Unipub, 2006).

2 Cramer, Alfred. *Music for the future – Sound of Early Twentieth- Century Psychology and Language in Works of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg, 1908 to the First World War* (University of Pennsylvania, 1997).

1.1 Defining the project

In 2008 I applied for the project *På sporet av en tapt tradisjon. Performativ analyse av Fartein Valens* Variasjoner for klaver, *op. 23 (1936) i lys av den andre wienerskolens fremføringspraksis* at the Norwegian Academy of Music. My application was accepted at the same time as I was accepted by the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme for this project, *The Atonal Piano*. I decided to go on with the Artistic Research Programme since they gave me the welcome opportunity of being able to learn and play the pieces, and at the same time to investigate all these questions on interpretation raised by practice.

In recent years artistic research programmes have been offered in several countries, mostly in northern Europe, as a way by which to integrate artistic work into institutional structures that were designed with humanistic scholarship and scientific research in mind. As I observed, different artistic research programmes might vary in the kind of written work that is expected and its relationship to more established types of research. During the three years as research fellow in this programme, the emphasis was on a rigorous cultivation of one's own artistic exploration and its significance rather than on a preparation of a traditional academic dissertation. My participation in the programme included attendance at several seminars on critical reflection, where the programme participants discussed issues of writing along with our artistic results. Søren Kjørup was invited to give a two-day seminar, during which we discussed other research fellows' texts. Another issue we discussed in these meetings and seminars was: For whom are we writing? For the evaluation committee? For non-musicians, for an audience or for other fellow musicians? Our texts were not published or distributed in any organized way, and these questions were not clearly answered, particularly because the programme was new and is still in the process of developing its expected outcomes. The regulations also suggested that the research fellow could choose his/her own medium and form. Indeed, there was no prescription that one had to write a text. Many of the examples from candidates who had already completed the project were artistic projects in their own rite. For example, I was inspired by the project of the Finnish ceramicist Caroline Slotte. Slotte focused on a qualitative study of the artistic potential of the ceramic second-hand material. She said that her text could be seen as a kind of travelogue the purpose of which is to visualize, discuss and provide a background for her artistic research.

> *I have endeavoured constantly to observe my artistic processing of the ceramic objects with a perception of meaningfulness. And I have set a goal of not using language for any purpose other than as a means of seeking to understand* [4]

This approach of using language as a means of "seeking to understand" inspired me to do the same with my own musical and artistic process. I wanted to discuss theory that had a close relation to the direct experience of music and to be able to write about the process and at the same time remaining close to the real premises of being an artist, going as it were from practice to theory, not from theory to practice. I turned once again to the bookshelves, looking for a kind of theory that could be linked with my own world as a performer. What I found were the books by the pianists Alfred Brendel[5] and Artur Schnabel[6]. They became my dialogue partners throughout the entire project, both through their writings, but also by virtue of their "voices" heard in their recordings.

Schoenbergs writings on performance and interpretation became another major theoretical source I experimented with during the project.[7] Schoenberg was a composer also acting as a conductor and theorist with strong opinions on performance. I found his "voice" inspiring, challenging me to experiment with his ideas. An article by the Danish composer-musicologist Jan Maegaard became another significant source I could draw on in my project.[8] Maegaards article contains an analysis of Fartein Valen's particular transitional musical style that he developed after his *Ave Maria for sopran og orkester,* op. 4. In his concluding remarks, Maegaard asks for a performer that can take his ideas further into practice, a request I took on in my project. Last but not least I see the earlier mentioned dissertation by Alfred Cramer as an important theoretical basis for my project. I wanted to apply the stylistic ideas of the performers of the Second Viennese School and to experiment with them when performing Valen's music.

1.2 The musical work: Action and Reflection

There was never a search for historical authenticity in my approach. I am influenced by Taruskin's arguments in *Text and Act* (Taruskin, 1995) that historical authenticity does not exist. One can never re-create the conditions of the past, even with historical instruments. Audiences today listen differently than they did in the past. Taruskin brings in the notion of perception into the discussion.

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4 Slotte, Caroline. *Second Hand Stories -Reflections on the Project* (The National Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme, 2011).

5 Brendel, Alfred. *The Veil of Order. Alfred Brendel in conversation with Martin Meyer* (Faber and Faberin Sabon, 2002).

6 Schnabel, Artur. *Reflections on Music* (Simon and Schuster; First edition, 1934)

7 Schoenberg, Arnold**.** *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schöenberg.* Part VII *Performance and Notation*, p 319 (University of California Press, London, 1975).

8 Maegaard, Jan. *Fartein Valen, Einsamer norwegischer Komponist atonaler Musik*, Bericht über den 2. Kongress der Internationalen Schönberg-Gesellschaft (Wien, 1968).

I thought a lot about this in conjunction with atonality. What was experienced as atonal and difficult to listen to, when Schoenberg wrote his *Drei Klavierstücke,* op. 11 (1909) may be perceived very differently today. I experienced an example of this when I visited the Arnold Schoenberg Centre in Vienna and found a review in Andrea Lepay's thesis written after the first performance of Schoenberg op. 11.[9] The critic was horrified by the slow tempo that the pianist chose for the second movement. One simply could not play this difficult atonal music so slowly and bore people like that, the critic wrote. Today, Schoenberg's op. 11 is considered as neither atonal nor very difficult to listen to. The tempo that the pianist chose was not very slow when compared to how pianists perform it today. This illustrates Taruskin's point aptly, in my opinion. One cannot blindly trust the past as something that is equally valuable for today. Taruskin's words about becoming historically informed are "knowing what you mean and whence comes that knowledge".[10] It's knowing history as something dynamic that can open up new possibilities. Taruskin's polemical newspaper articles from the 1980s and 90s are the basis for his 1995 book and were the main reason the Historical Informed Performance (HIP) movement revised its rigid concept of authenticity. Thus, Taruskin and others initiated a re-assessment of the concept of authentic and informed performance, which influenced everyone, including me.

My goal has been to investigate Valen's music in as many ways as possible, not by trying to create a historically correct performance, but to find an artistic and meaningful interpretation based on historically informed knowledge. That made it necessary to try to pin down some general ways of thinking about and performing atonal music. Another approach that I have taken at times has been to try to come as close as possible to the composers' intentions being aware of that the composer does not necessarily have the best solutions for how to play his own music. The composer himself is not the wise sage who has all the answers to the questions raised by the work. Knowing what the composer wanted from the performer makes is possible for me to make a more informed choice. I may go against the composers' intentions or I may agree with him; however, the important thing is to know. Performing in a way that is informed by history still requires many decisions. This openness for new notions about the same material is shown even in the most *texttreue* performers of the Second Viennese School, who changed their playing during their lifetime.

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9 Lepay, Andrea. *Interpreting Schönberg's Drei Klavierstücke, op. 11 no 2: An examination of recorded performances, past and present, and piano performance practices appropriate to this work* (Claremont, 1984).

10 Taruskin, Richard. *Texts and Act*, p 67 (New York and Oxford, 1995).

Texttreue rendition of the score has been an appropriate approach to performance practice. To develop a practice for a specific musical repertory is to understand the specific sounds or techniques that each notated symbol refers to. Christopher Daniel Bagan's thesis *Performance Practice Considerations in Schönberg's* Fünf Klavierstücke*,* op. *23* is an example of this approach, well written, intelligently and not dogmatic.[11] He starts with the idea that specific notations are to be played in specific ways, but he finds space for the performer to be a musician. He does this by thinking of notations in three categories: not just the prescriptive, but also the reinforcing and the comparative (and the impossible). But even when he analyses a whole piece (in the last chapter), he is thinking basically about how to make "the highly detailed notation" (Bagan, 2006, p.100) directly audible. The analysis includes a theoretical analysis of the musical movement, but the whole approach is still to go from literal notation to a performance, bottom-up, so to speak. His concept of the whole piece is built on his principle of realizing notation and on his principle of analysis. Another approach "reads" the whole piece, forms a sense of what is being stated and expressed, and makes the performative expression the servant of all that. Darla Crispin offers an example in her article.[12] She proposes taking a piece by Schoenberg, deciding what needs to be heard (in her example, these were some features of the twelve-tone row), and then in performance doing whatever it takes to make those features audible. I see this as more an example of a *werktreue* approach, an attempt to see the meaning behind the score.

There are some problems with those two ways of analysing the performance. One does not need to ignore the written details; one cannot ignore the whole. That is, one needs to blend bottom-up with top-down. Also, both Bagan and Crispin see the content of the music in terms of a limited set of analytical categories: pitch-class set analysis, twelve-tone analysis, and some aspects of form. How about analytical categories such as texture? And how about the expressive content sometimes as specific as Schoenberg's reaction to Mahler's death in *Sechs Kleine Klavierstücke,* op. 19, no. 6, but often general emotional states. Valen was not a 12-tone composer; yes, there are intricate pitches and forms, but there are also birds and views.

Alfred Cramer's thesis tries to take a middle ground. Cramer pays close attention to the realization of specific symbols, but thinks of them as flexible devices (if he were categorizing like Bagan, many indications might be suggestive), which can be reinterpreted, based on top-down principles.

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11 Bagan, Christopher Daniel. *Performance Practice Considerations in Schönberg's* Fünf Klavierstücke, *op. 23* (The University of British Columbia, 2006)

12 Crispin, Darla, in Schwab, Michael. *Experimental Systems: Future Knowledge in Artistic Research* (Leuven University Press, 2013).

Cramer suggests a broadening of analytical and expressive categories for this music. He offers a strong argument that the Schoenberg circle's performance practice did mix *texttreue* and *werktreue*. I found the comments on how the Schoenberg circle emphasized the techniques of phrasing very useful for my own playing and tried to develop resources that would help the listener hear novel structures in the music. Cramer's comment on how using more time in larger than in smaller interval spans, was something Steuermann uses to provide *legato* connectedness. I remember thinking that these findings were not particularly unique to Steuermann. I discussed this with Cramer and he told me that at that time he had the sense that pianists often played the Vienna School's music mechanically, without doing so many "pianistic" things. There may be two reasons for that. Maybe those pianists thought the music ought to sound "modern", and thus avoided usual strategies that they would use to make earlier music sound expressive. Maybe pianists could not figure out when to employ these common-sense pianistic techniques and sonorities, so they did not use them or they used them strangely.

The American pianist who studied for 12 years with Steuermann was Russell Sherman. He stated that he learned things like infinite gradation of pedal or *diminuendo* to make a *legato* from Steuermann. Sherman was not saying that Steuermann was the only one who did these things, but that they stand out in Steuermann's approach.[13] Cramer also connects piano playing to what he heard in Kolisch's violin playing. If it is notated *am Steg pp*, one hears lots of windy sound and less pitch. The technique results in sounds that are not written notes, and he wanted to suggest that Schoenberg and his followers when playing the piano might similarly have embraced doing things not literally written in the score, if it helped them realize the score. This is different from the license Busoni took in his arrangement of Schoenberg's piano piece, op. 11, no. 2, where Busoni added all sorts of figuration to make the music more "pianistic".[14] Cramer describes some of the technical devices that Steuermann and the others would use, more than describing the essence of any of their performances. He turns to things they (or their students) said, and in those cases I would try to understand the principles of how they interpreted the music. He approaches this from the perspective of a music theorist/historian and it might well be that Cramer imagines decisions that Steuermann never consciously made.

[13] http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/14/arts/l-russell-sherman-where-he-learned-it-511633.html

[14] Correspondence between Schoenberg and Busoni on this matter can be found in Busoni, Ferruccio. *Selected Letters.* Ed: A. Beaumont (Columbia University Press, New York, 1987).

My project takes the early modern concept of *werktreue* as a premise. This is a premise I have found in the theories and practice of Schoenberg and Kolisch. Coming closer to all of this music meant to me to try to be as accurate, clear and soberly true to the score as I possibly could. It is of course impossible to erase one's personality while playing, but the attitude of being less inventive and more attentive is a choice of the performer that is very much in line with the reality of what we do in the practice room. As a basic method I started out with a *texttreue* reading, taking the composer's score at face value. However, taking the decisive step from *texttreue* to *werktreue* interpretation, I am not trying to play the score itself merely as it is written but am instead trying to find the meaning behind the score. I have not intended to challenge Lydia Goehr's critique of *werktreue* as a regulating concept in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*[15], but to explore and criticize it "from the inside". My basis is a respect for the text, not to do the opposite of what is written. There might be a *forte* in the score, but one must make one's own decision as to the kind of *forte* one wishes to apply. Many of Valen's piano pieces have interested me because I can feel that the scores themselves contain a certain quality. There is an idea and a structure I have to *discover* and realize through my playing. The discovering is motivated by my question: What does this work need from me as a performer to become alive? Is this being true to the work? When I started with this project my intention was to arrive at a set of premises for Valen's pieces. But wanting to being honest to my own artistic practice, arriving at any conclusions or setting authoritative premises for performance of Valen's music would be against everything that I believe performing is about. As a performer I am always in the process of discovery.

My research goal as mentioned above, has been to shed light on this specific kind of process of action and reflection, which I believe only can be conceived of through practice. This kind of practical analysis takes into consideration the changeability that the performer has in his or hers artistic intentions. This takes into consideration that the artistic result is not a fixed thing. The artistic result is constantly changing and influenced by the experiences that come from performing the piece in different concert halls with different acoustics, for different audiences and also other influences affecting the performer over time. These influences may be from other teachers or fellow musicians that the performer plays for. In my case, this has been an important part of my development with this repertoire. This is also a kind of experience that can be achieved only over a long period of time. You have to "live" with the piece of music so to speak, meaning that you need

[15] Goehr, Lydia. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Clarendon Press, 1992).

to take the piece with you into different situations and let time and experience do their work. In my case during this project period, this entailed changes in the way I played the music, yet at the same time my artistic standpoint and attitude towards this music grew stronger. This temporal process creates familiarity with the music and in the next chapter, I will discuss some of the challenges with rehearsing and performing this music and the strategies I found to solve them.

Part 2: Atonal Scores and Idiomatic Resistance: Learning the Material

One of my goals with this project was to develop specific strategies related to the rehearsing of atonal scores, strategies that cannot be developed by the knowledge of tonal scores. Although we are much more familiar with this music than when it appeared in Schoenberg's own time, there is still a strong idiomatic resistance within this music. In the beginning nothing sounds familiar in the atonal landscape, the pianist's hands have no harmonic structures to connect to and there is a long line of resistance, or number of barriers, in getting it ready to be performed. These barriers or "line of resistance", as I call it, is still a very important part of the process that led me to a deeper artistic connection to this music. The process of creative rehearsing does not only include artistic work, but also pure craftsmanship. As I see it, there is a difference between craftsmanship and artistic work, even if the two terms are closely connected. Craftsmanship has more of the physical quality of practice. This means learning the notes by finding fingerings and hand-dispositions. Whereas the artistic work with the music is working on musicality issues and sound production such as which tempo is suitable for the piece, how to shape a phrase, how to use agogics and how to distribute the dynamics both horizontally (dynamical differentiation of voices in one passage) and vertically (in the piece as a whole).

2.1 Challenges and strategies with atonal music

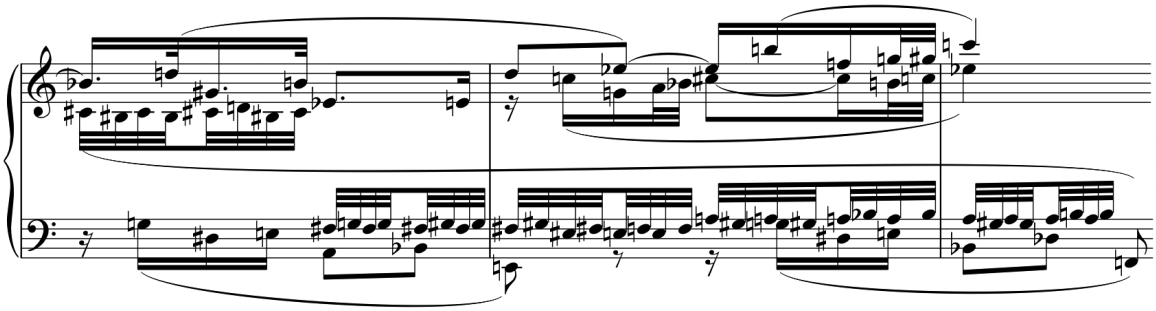
In music with traditional harmony, the hands easily find their way through the *arpeggios* and scales. In atonal music you do not have technical features such as the *albertibass* of the classical period which once you have learned it, you can recognize and use in many of the classical pieces. In atonal music such familiar patterns pianists often repeat and imitate almost do not exist. Every composer has his own system for using the instrument. There is no longer a single, common style; there is one for each composer. So you have to learn and to know a new way of playing for every composer. A passage by Chopin may be built upon an a-flat major chord, something that my hand is familiar with from the many pieces I have played before. With Valen, Webern and Schoenberg there is no such thing as a clear major scale or an *arpeggio* with clear harmony. The knowledge you get from doing this detail work is also not really transferable to the next piece you play. If you play a melody, a twelve tone row for example, it is not so easily recognizable. To know instinctively whether it is an f or an f-sharp is not something that one hears naturally. To recognize a melody, to

sight read a score or to transpose a melody is not possible. It is an intellectual task to learn a piece, not a task that can be facilitated by "the ear". That is why this music takes so much time to learn. A phrase in music is a recognisable musical unit, generally ending in a cadence of some kind, and forming part of a period or sentence. The experiencing of a phrase is connected to tension and relaxation. When much of the atonal music has no clear tonal centre, the relaxation of the phrases becomes harder or even impossible to define. It can also be harder to find a distinct character in the music. As I mentioned earlier, this music has a strong intellectual appeal. This means that in the beginning of the rehearsal process, the music speaks more to the brain than to the heart. That might be the reason why it takes longer to evoke a feeling, a memory, or an image.

One of the strategies I developed to meet these challenges was to practise singing, instead of playing. Following the score and singing the different phrases aloud made me hear the phrases more naturally. It also helped me find the natural breathing. This was not something I did only once, but I would return to many times during the rehearsal process. Moreover, it was useful to practise not only the dynamics I wanted as the final result. Playing soft passages loud would enhance the technique and make the fingers more confident and familiar with more difficult passages. Playing a strong passage softly would enhance the ability to listen. Furthermore, I feel it was important to practise at different tempi. Increased consciousness about tempo changes and *ritardandi* with a view to making them organic is important in order to make relationships in these matters.
As for rehearsing polyphonic voices, I practised and sang one voice at the time. I asked myself if it was clear to me which one was the main line, and then I made sure that this was heard and also very clear in the way I phrased it. It was also useful to decide the instrumentation and character in each passage. Is it a soft violin or a sharp trumpet playing this line? This developed my inner ear. I had a clearer goal in terms of the sound I wanted to produce.

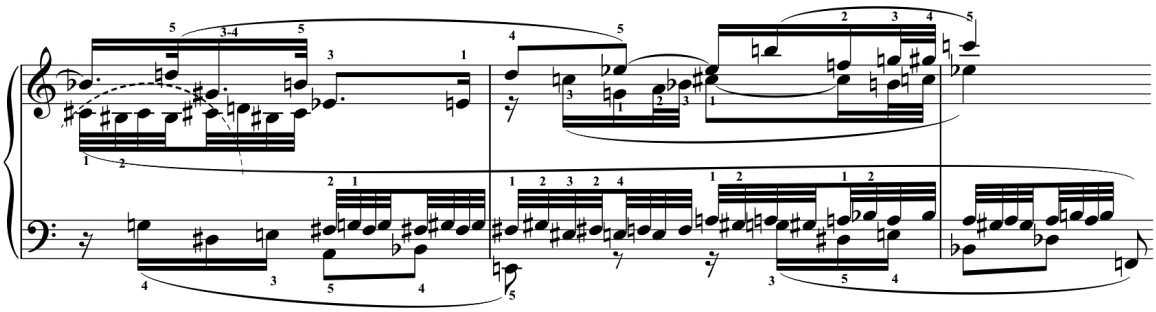
In the following paragraphs, I show some specific examples of how I solved some of the challenges of *legato* phrasing, hand dispositions and fingerings in Valen's music.

2.2 Idiomatic resistance 1: Legato phrasing and fingering.



Fartein Valen: *Variations for piano*, op. 23, variation IV

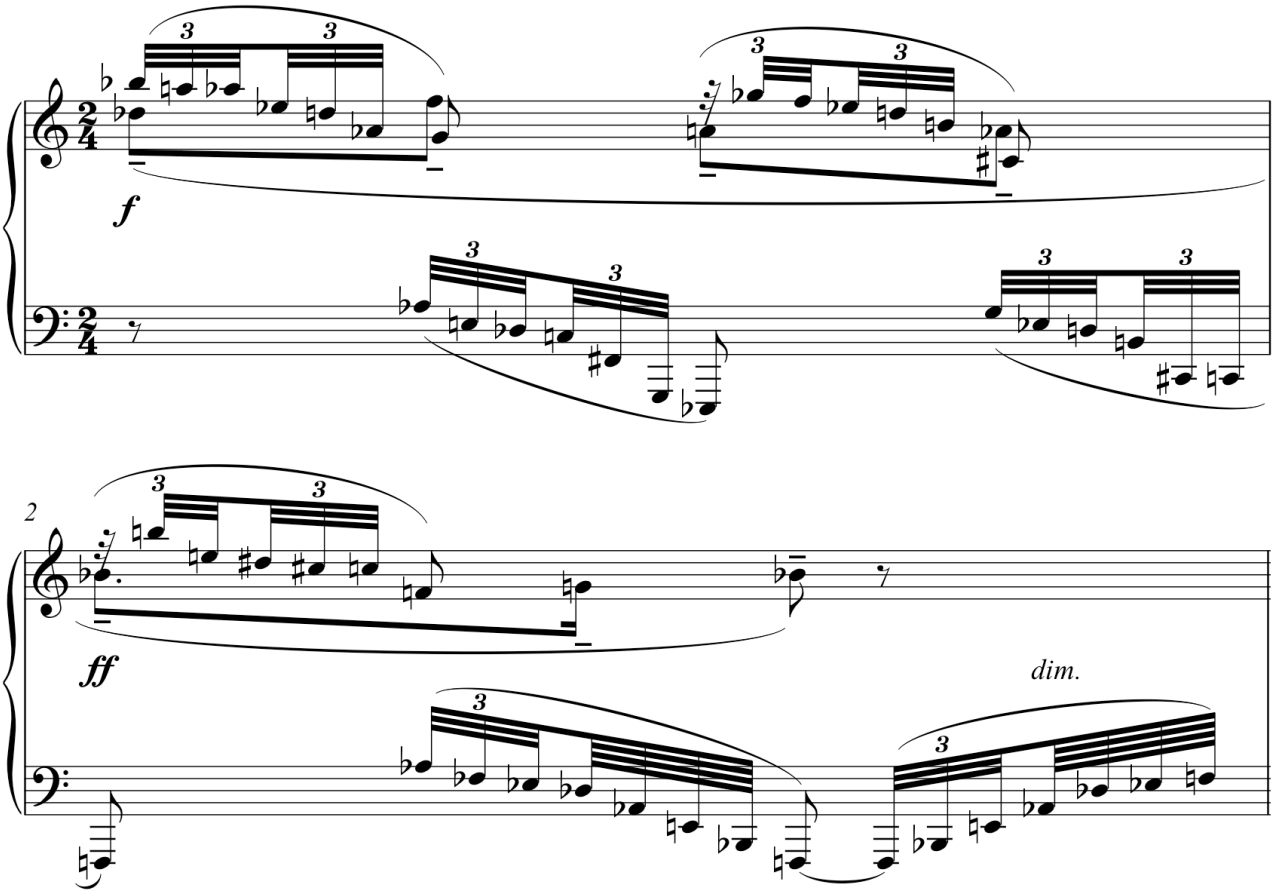
The alto voice might start in the left hand, but when the left hand starts to play the bass, it is not possible to reach the last three notes in the alto. To carry out the *legato* slur in the soprano is a similar challenge. I cannot stretch my fifth and fourth fingers to span the interval of d to g-sharp in the first bar (although I have quite a large hand for a woman). At first glance, the solution might seem obvious: two voices with the right hand and two with the left. However, this is not possible to carry out. You simply do not "have enough fingers". Valen did seldom provided fingerings in his scores, nor is it as simple an issue as it is with a composer like Chopin who tried out the passages on the piano while composing. The work of choosing fingerings is closely connected to *legato* playing as *legato* is connecting the sounds to make the piano sing continuously. Because the piano is not a singing instrument, a real *legato* is actually not possible to perform in the same manner as with vocal music or with a cello, for example. To give the illusion of *legato*, it is therefore important to be able to follow a note without lifting the first. The choice of which fingers and hands to use is therefore crucial, and with Valen's music it becomes a big task even before you actually can start playing the piece. Here is the same passage as shown above, but with my work of disposition of the hands and fingers.



Fartein Valen: *Variations for piano,* op. 23, variation IV (with hand disposition and fingerings)

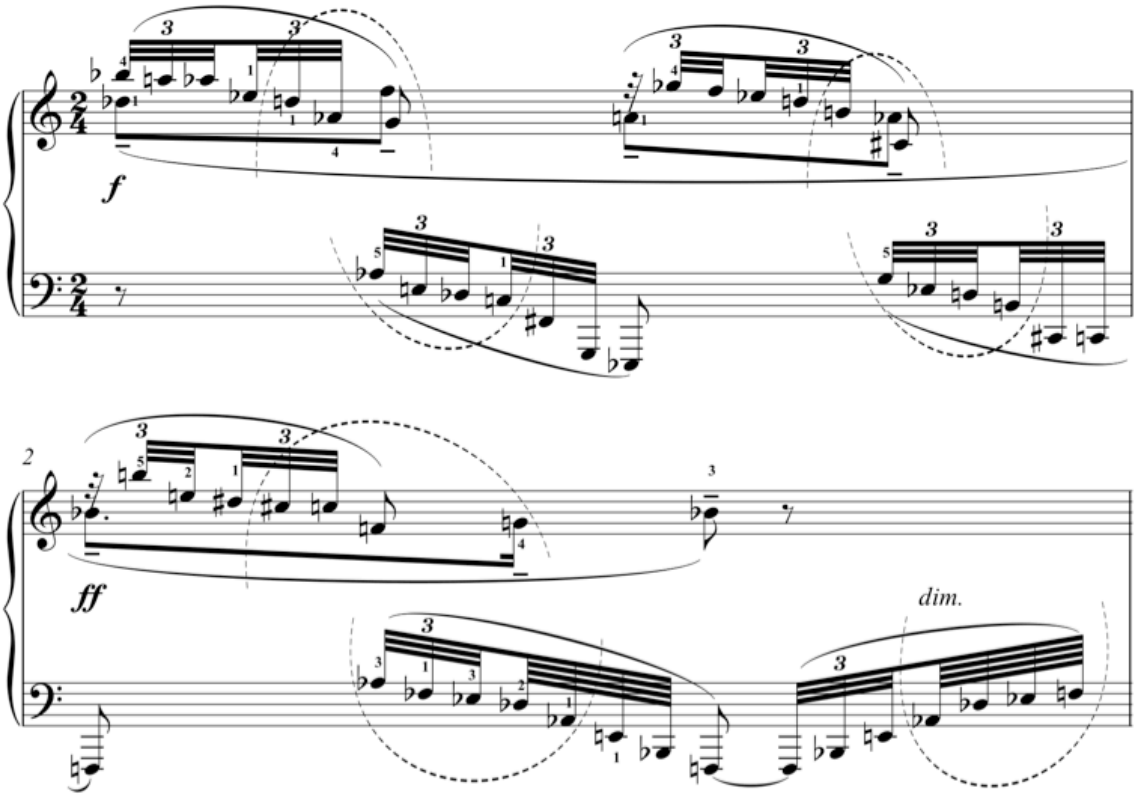
The five first notes of the alto voice can be played in the left hand, but when the left hand starts to play the bass, I cannot reach the last three notes in the alto, and then I have to play this with the right. Next there is the problem of the soprano voice: since I cannot stretch my fifth and fourth fingers over the interval of d to g-sharp, I have to catch the g sharp in the first bar with the third finger and very quickly slide to the fourth finger, if I really want to make this passage *legato* as Valen's score indicates. Changing hands and sliding fingers on the same key is also something inorganic and very difficult to perform in the fluent tempo of this variation without compromising the evenness of the passage.

2.3 Idiomatic resistance 2: Playing thematically



Fartein Valen: *Prelude,* op. 29, no. 2, bar 40-41

This is exactly how it is written in the score. The idea behind this passage is that the tones in the middle voice stand out clearly because they are a part of the thematic idea of the piece (marked with a tenuto sign). If I play this with the right-left-right-left - idea suggested by the notation, it feels inorganic. I tried this version for months before I ended up with the following version.

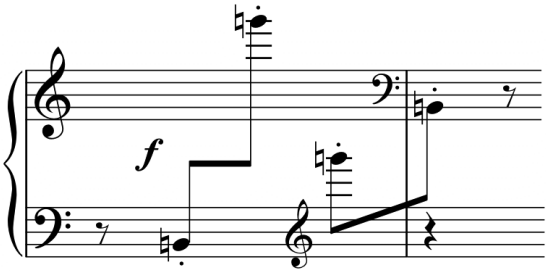


Fartein Valen: *Prelude* op. 29, no. 2, bar 40-41, with different hands and fingerings

In this way the thumbs are able to play the thematic tones. Alas, they have a tendency to become too hard and without nuances. It helps to sing this theme aloud, so that one remembers that this phrase also has to be shaped organically with nuances and a direction of the overall idea. But the process of finding better solutions for the finger logistics actually continues, even after this project has come to an end. One goes through so many stages with this "layout issue", spending a lot of time trying to do something that, in the end, is impossible to do. Even if I find the solution, I need to practise a very long time before I start to believe in it. Then I also have to keep it "alive", because if I do not play these passages, I will lose the good feeling that I have built up. Another strategy is visiting some of the hardest passages *every day*, even months before a concert, playing them with gentle, organic movements. Despite this, there is no guarantee that it will not go wrong during the concert. Having said that, I have to stress that the most practical solution is not always the best *musical* solution.

2.4 Idiomatic resistance 3: Large leaps

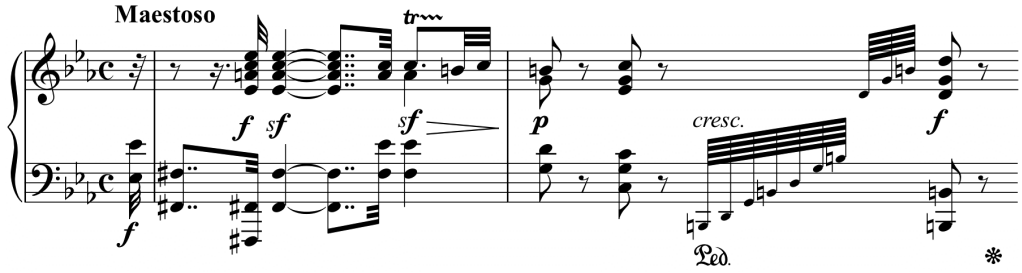
In Webern's *Variationen für Klavier,* op. 27, there is an example of particular difficulty concerning execution.



Anton Webern: *Variationen für Klavier*, op. 27, 2nd mvt, bar 12-13

This bar is difficult to play in tempo. Webern's notation suggests that the left hands have to make a big leap in a very short time. Why not make life easier and play the second g with the right hand and the b with the left? I have seen the pianist Glenn Gould doing so in his recording of this piece on video. In my opinion, he fails to express the tension of the gesture in this way. It is written in a difficult way, and it should *sound* difficult.

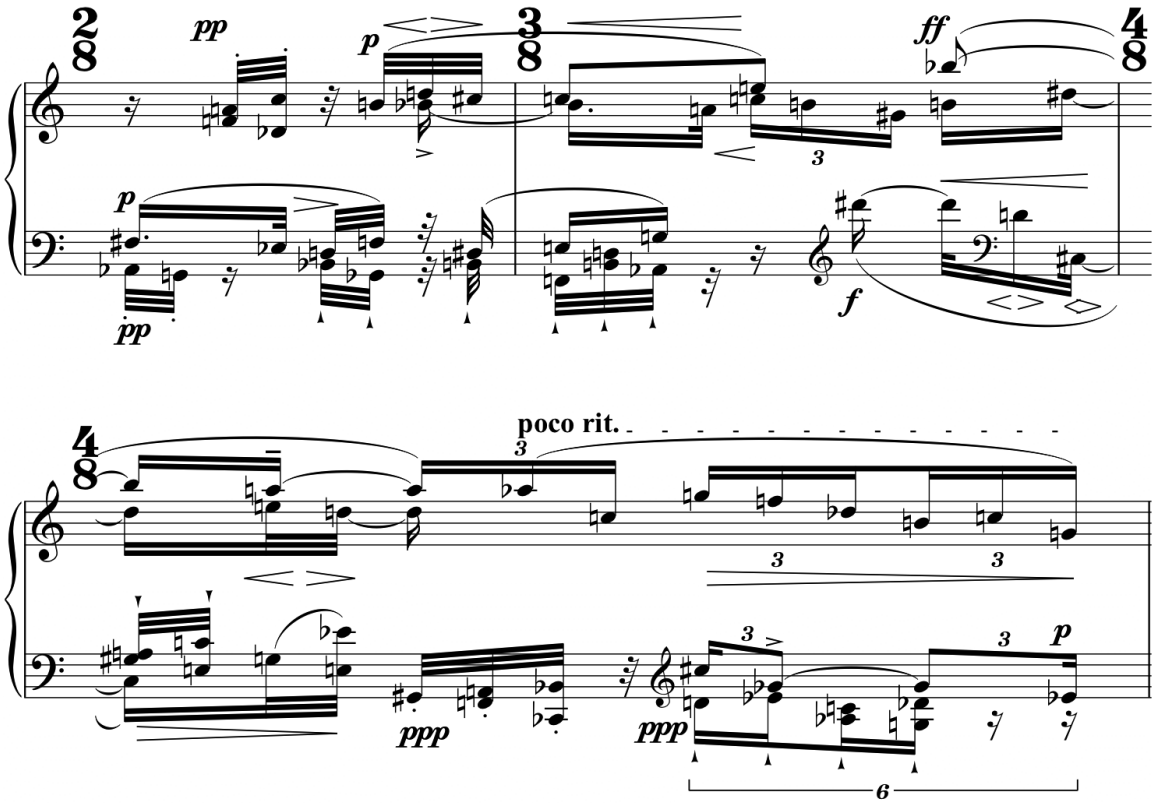
At this point, I allow myself to jump back to the classical repertoire, where I identified a similar issue in the opening of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Sonata*, op. 111:



L. van Beethoven: *Sonata,* op. 111, 1st movement, bar 1-2

The intention of opening with this kind of large interval in the left hand in the very first bar of the piece might have been to make the performer of that piece nervous. As a result, even a trained pianist might miss the first notes of the opening phrase. When playing the notes in a *texttreue* manner, as Beethoven wrote it down, the gesture conveys a dangerous character, the tension that this piece is based on. Changing that, as many pianists do, by taking the first octave (e-flat) in the right hand, would take away the particular character that derives from the danger of playing what is written.

The difficulties with Schoenberg's music are of a different nature. He sometimes writes very ambitious passages that are hard to execute because of the number of simultaneous voices.



Arnold Schoenberg: *Fünf Klavierstücke,* op. 23, no. 1 Sehr Langsam, bar 26-27

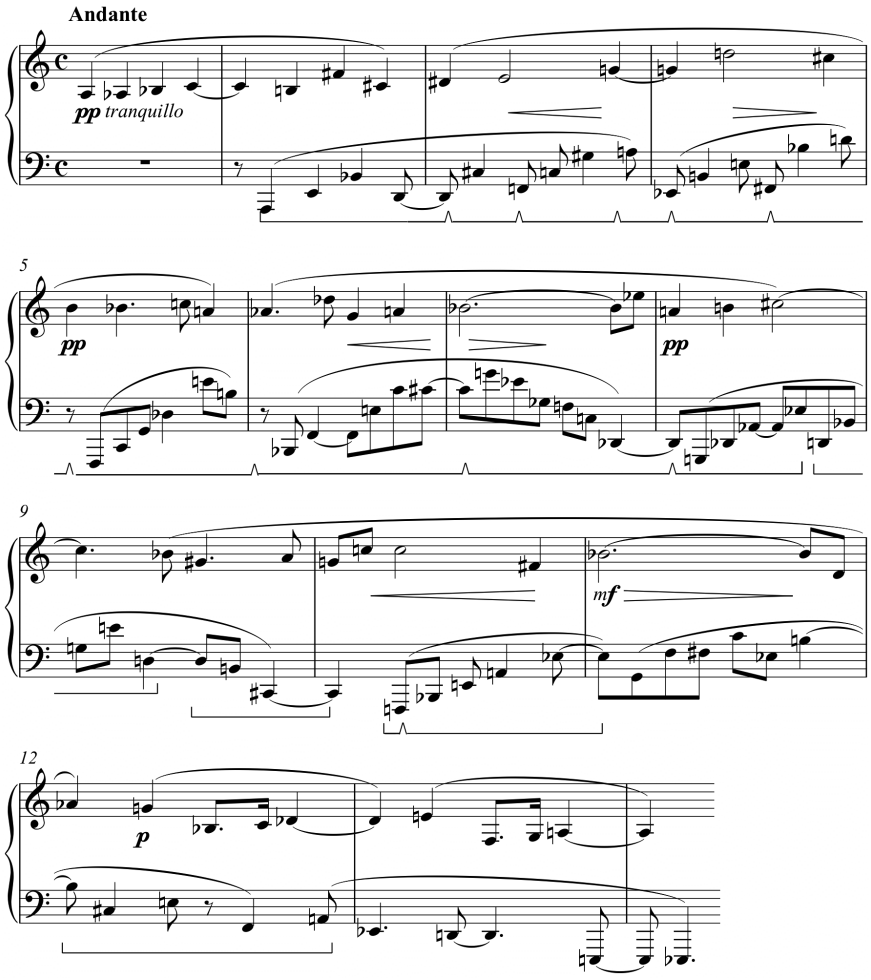
In this passage you have to make the tenor voice sing while the bass is *staccato*, all in one hand. There are also two voices in the right hand that are important. And to make it sound clear and comprehensible, one needs to pay attention to what goes on in every voice at the same time.

2.5 Idiomatic resistance 4: Pedalling

Hardly any piano score by Valen contain pedal indications. Does this mean that these works should be played without pedals? Pianists usually assume that composers from the Romantic period did not always write in pedal marks, because it is implicit in the tradition. The use of pedal in music based on diatonic tonality is connected to the expression of harmonies. Your ears will tell you when to change the pedals in order not to mix the harmonies. In Valen's music there are seldom clear harmonies that can guide pedalling. What then guides the use of pedals? What becomes especially important is the pianists' approach to the possibility of using the third pedal, the *sostenuto* pedal that some grand pianos have, where only the notes that are being held down when the pedal is

pressed are sustained. Then it may be the mix of the *sostenuto* pedal and the other pedal that creates a disadvantage: namely, you cannot use the left pedal.

In *Prelude,* op. 29, no. 1 we have Valen's own pedals written, and these are long pedals where the



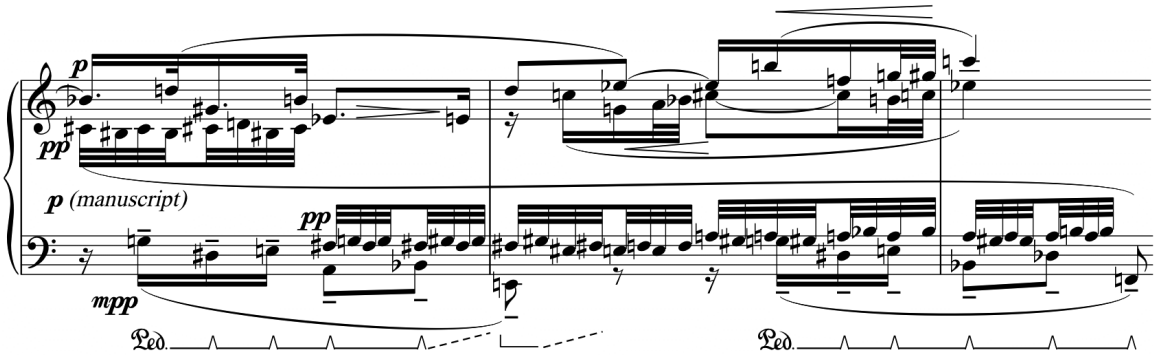
Fartein Valen: *Prelude,* op. 29, no. 1, bar 1-13

voices get blurred in a "cloud of sounds".[16]

This becomes a strong musical idea in the *Prelude*. Valen seems to have strong opinions about what he wants from the different pedal marks. When the left hand line rises as in bar 11, there is no pedal mark. In this way he creates a melodic effect that builds up under the right hand's melody. Note also the pedals on the first beat in bar 8. It is very tempting to change the pedals on the d flat before. he way he indicates the pedals ensures that the beautiful chord in bar 7 is sustained and the d flat is a part of that chord and not the next. The challenge with this use of pedals is to make the phrasing clear so that this voice becomes "alive" and supports the right hand melodies.

[16] Fartein Valen: *Prelude*, op. 29, no. 1, Edition Lyche (1948)

In the next example, Valen's *Variations for piano,* op. 23, the challenge is to use pedals in a way that does not interfere with the clarity of the polyphonic lines. My general guideline is that the small intervals cannot be in long pedals, but the bigger ones can. I also try to have less pedal in *p* and then use it to get more sound out of the *f* parts. This example also shows how I make a dynamic difference between the three voices. By the sign *mpp* in the bass, I mean a slightly pronounced *pp*. I found one dynamic sign (the first *p*) in the original manuscript of the score. This was not added in the printed version.



Fartein Valen: *Variations for piano,* op. 23, variation IV with my pedalling and my own dynamic marks

In Schoenberg's piano music, there are few pedal markings. In the foreword of *Fünf Klavierstücke*, op. 23 Schoenberg writes: "In general the best fingering is that which allows an exact interpretation of the note groups without the aid of the pedal". Working on his music, I found that this rule was sometimes difficult to follow. Edward Steuermann wrote on this matter:

> *Schoenberg always insisted that his music should be played almost without pedal, which I obeyed only half-heartedly. You cannot play the modern piano without pedal. You have to use it, of course, so that the tones are not blurred, and to make sure that the "sober" sonority without pedal vibration, which is so characteristic comes through.*[17]

Even though we know that Schoenberg always considered Steuermann the first ambassador of his music, Steuermann did not obey Schoenberg's guidelines at any cost, but did what he found most suitable for the music. Listening to Steuermann's playing of Schoenberg made me discover the beauty of a "sober sonority" that I believe also could be suitable for creating a clear sound in Valen's complex and polyphonic texture.

In Schoenberg's *Drei Klavierstücke,* op. 11, no. 1, bar 13, he writes "mit Dämpfung (3. Pedal)". Here Schoenberg refers to the third pedal on earlier Vienna pianos that operated the muffler that is a strip of felt (between the hammers and the strings) which produced an extremely soft sound. This damper pedal became a special invention in Vienna, my German/Austrian source, the pianist Jochen

[17] Schuller, Günter. *A conversation with Edward Steuermann* p. 34

Köhler told me.[18] Schoenberg's piano is still to be found at the Schoenberg-Haus in Mödling nearby Vienna where the composer lived from 1904 to 1925. However, the piano has been refurbished since, so the sound may not be exactly the same compared to Schoenberg's times. Schoenberg's remark on the damper pedal in the score indicates a special effect. Köhler also told me that the Viennese pianos at that time were in not in very good condition. Amongst other things, they were out of date when it comes to repetition of the keys.[19] Schoenberg himself was a cello player and he even constructed his own cello, mostly because he could not afford to buy a good, expensive instrument. When Schoenberg asked Steuermann to record his music, Steuermann did not feel ready. Schoenberg nevertheless insisted that he played them. To know this "authentic" sound of this instrument is definitely interesting, but Schoenberg wanted to widen the musical expression of the music, not of the instrument by using this pedal.

Anton Webern did not write pedals in his only work for piano solo, the *Variationen für Klavier,* op. 27. Even though, there exists a special edition which might tell us more about the ideas Webern did have ideas on pedals. This is an edition where Webern's ideas of interpretation were notated with the aid of the Austrian pianist who first performed the piece, Peter Stadlen (1910-1996). We can "hear" Webern's voice through the score, shouting to the pianist Stadlen during his playing of different passages: *Forwards, more, gently, lyrical, fast, lightly* and so on. Peter Stadlen writes the following foreword:

> *Webern entered only a fraction of the colouristic and the legato pedalling, which he so frequently either indicated, or else silently tolerated, particularly in the arioso passages of the outer movements. I no longer feel confident to be able to distinguish between the two categories, and prefer this aspect to remain unspecified. An exception are the three passages in III, bars 53-55 where I distinctly remember my astonishment that he should have been prepared to sacrifice the explicitly indicated pungency (taste) of the quavers or, again, to allow the so meaningfully devised sequences of crotchet intervals to add up climactic six note chords.* [21]

What Stadlen tells us is that these bars (53-55) will sound fundamentally different with and without pedals, and that he was very surprised when he heard that Webern wanted pedals in these bars. The pedal will make these bars sound more, as he says "like chords" rather than individual notes. In this way Webern not only creates sound clouds, but also intensifies the climax of the piece, not unlike

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18 In a private conversation with Jochen Köhler, April 2014

19 There are more information on Schoenberg's Ibach piano in an article by Walter Szmolyan about Schoenberg's instruments, Internationale Schoenberg-Gesellschaft--founded (1972). Available at http://www.schoenberg.at. This piano is also discussed in the book by Jean-Jacques Dünki: *Schoenbergs Zeichen*. Lafite: Wien 2005 <http://musikzeit.at/musikzeitneu/?page_id=800>. Included with this book is a CD with Dünki playing Schoenberg's piano works on his piano in Mödling. There is another pianist, Jura Margulis who is working on reconstructing this damper on modern pianos. For further information about this, one may visit his home page www.juramargulis.com.

21 Stadlen, Peter. *Foreword to Anton Webern:* Variationen für Klavier*,* op. 27 (Universal Edition, 1937/1979).

Valen's *Prelude,* op. 29, no. 1. It also is a very good example of the way to think generally around performances of Webern. Webern might have taken for granted the use of colouristic pedals (sustained pedalling) by the performers because it was a part of the common performance tradition. The long slurs that Fartein Valen indicates in all voices, makes one want to use pedals to render the lines. But this may come in conflict when polyphonic texture calls for clarity in all voices.

2.6 Idiomatic resistance 5: Polyphonic Playing

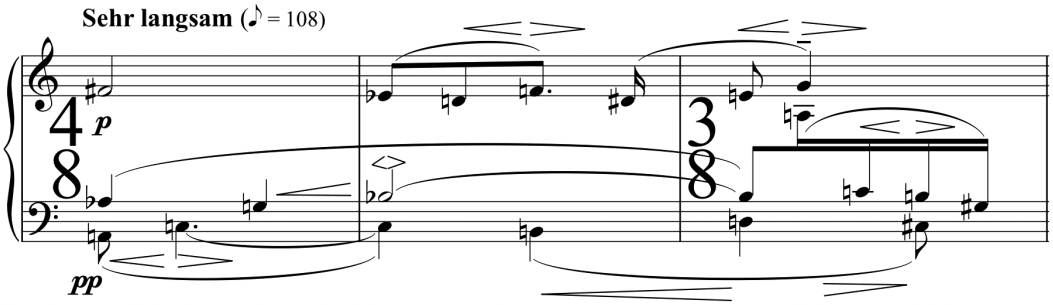
With Valen's counterpoint exercises in mind, playing a fugue from *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* by Johan Sebastian Bach became a ritual and natural part of my daily practice. I normally play slowly and meditatively, trying to let the four voices of the fugue run through my fingers and ears like running water, sensing how the simultaneous flowing currents of the fugue bring me into a state of sensitive listening. One major issue raised by polyphonic playing is to articulate the voices clearly, while maintaining the sense of their unhindered, simultaneous flow. Working on polyphonic music for such a long time made me ask: How do I as a pianist make provisions for this aspect of clarity? If I choose to play the voices in the same dynamics, then over a certain level of loudness, it becomes difficult to hear and follow all the voices at the same time. I decided to investigate how different pianists were dealing with this. I listened to recordings of J.S. Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* where the pianists strongly emphasize the appearance of the main fugue theme every time. Then I discovered Artur Schnabel's recording of J. S. Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*[22]. In the fugue, he produces a sound that actually makes it possible to hear all the voices at the same time, without favouring one. As a principle, this seems to be an adequate strategy for Valen's polyphony when all the voices seem equally important, like in the example of variation IV from *Variations for piano,* op. 23. I believe it is important to render polyphonic clarity by articulating each voice's individual character. Herein lies the problem with Valen: the way he writes is so complicated that it is sometimes impossible to perform what is actually written. He can write three- or four voices at the same time, and add *legato* slurs in all the voices. He wants notes to be held that are not possible to hold as long as they are written while playing the other voices at the same time. I turned to Schoenberg to see if he could give some good ideas on polyphonic playing.

[22] Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903, Recorded 15-16 June, 1948 in EMI Abbey Road Studio No. 3, London, Matrices: 2EA 13126-1, 13127-1 and 13128-1, First issued on HMV DB 21150 and 21151

As previously mentioned, clarity in polyphonic structures was of utmost importance for Arnold Schoenberg, both as a composer and as a performer (see his rules for the *Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen*[23]). Concerning this matter, Alfred Cramer said:

> *Recent scholarship has tended to claim that comprehensibility was what the music exhibited when a listener was able to follow the connections between statements of motives and later developments of them. Clearly, certain kinds of performances can help make this kind of comprehensibility happen. I tend to think of Schoenberg's comprehensibility as being like comprehensibility of language: when you hear a language you know, you react instantly to the meaning of the words, without very much awareness. When you hear a language you don't know or don't know well, you notice a lot of sounds, which in fact get in the way of comprehending what is being said. In the nineteenth century, musical romanticism, it had to do with an idea the hearing music could be like hearing a language you know; Schoenberg's indebtedness to romanticism is largely that he still wanted that effect. But he emphasized ways of producing comprehensibility for years because he felt his new music had the potential to fulfil that Romantic goal, and he was trying to think through what it would take to make it happen*[24]

Schoenberg was much more realistic than Valen in his way of writing. You do not meet the same problems in the hand and fingers when playing what is written. Schoenberg also writes specific expression- and articulation marks for each voice. In this way, I experience that Schoenberg is communicating to the performer that the voices are independent and important. In the first of his *Five piano pieces*, op. 23, a short piece of only 35 bars, there are as many as 54 "hairpins" (dynamic markings for *crescendo* or *decresendo*), of many different types. He also varies the different accentuation marks (*tenuto*, *marcato,* etc).



Arnold Schoenberg: *Klavierstück*, op. 23, no. 1, bar 1-3

This three-voice texture should sound as three independent horizontally moving lines, and not merely verticality (as one main voice accompanied by secondary voices) forming a unity of sound "as a whole". But the question of emphasizing one voice in polyphonic music had not been something totally new. I found that this actually was a part of a style that was common in the first part of the previous century, something Schoenberg did not find suitable for his music.

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23 Smith, Joan Allen. *Schoenberg and his Circle – A Viennese Portrait,* Part II: Performances: *Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen,* p 81 (Schirmer Books, New York, 1986).

24 Private conversation with Alfred Cramer, Bergen, December 2010

> *Today's fashion of emphasizing one voice by playing it strongly and everything else softly seems more and more intolerable to me… I believe … Each voice must have life, be somewhat expressive, and that is only possible if the interpreter has a concept of the total sound. After all, if a composer heard that many voices and if these aren't ornamental, but part of the composition – where now one, now another of these voices has significant influence on the progress of the work – it must be possible at some point to realize it as the composer heard it.*[25]

Schoenberg's detailed performing marks became a way to avoid the type of playing he is referring to. Each voice must have life, he said. This, I believe, is also very relevant for Valen's music. His German-inspired way of writing makes each note a part of an architectural structure. That implies that the tones are never ornamental and should not be played in a blur, something that a performer would allow more of in for example Claude Debussy's music.

When I started this project, I claimed that Valen's scores did not provide enough information for the performer. I felt that my understanding of Valen's music would be clearer if I knew more of his ideas through more expression marks and being more specific with dynamics and tempo indications. Working on Schoenberg's music at the same time I started to ask myself what Schoenberg wanted to attain by including so many expression marks. The score is a link between the composer and the performer where the composer's ideas are communicated. But if the composer has a certain sound or gesture in mind, the idea might get lost when the idea is written down, because the score only shows what notes to play on the instrument. Is it possible that the late Romantic tradition that Schoenberg came from was also influencing his choices of these detailed marks? Did he write them in order to attain – or rather to avoid something?

Valen's contact with performers was lacking quite often, nor did he perform his own music in public. He was a perfectionist when it came to the structure of the piece, but the fact that he apparently did not receive much feedback or questions concerning performance, made his scores somewhat unfinished in regard to performance indications. When it comes to articulation marks, I am not sure it would be more helpful if Valen were more specific. However, with my experience of Schoenberg's scores in mind, where I had to deal with his extremely detailed performance indications, it became more and more an obstacle that I had to surpass before I could connect with the artistic expression of the piece. For a long time I had to be so detailed about executing every *marcato*, slur and hairpin, that I got somehow stuck in details and had problems finding the unhindered flow in my playing.

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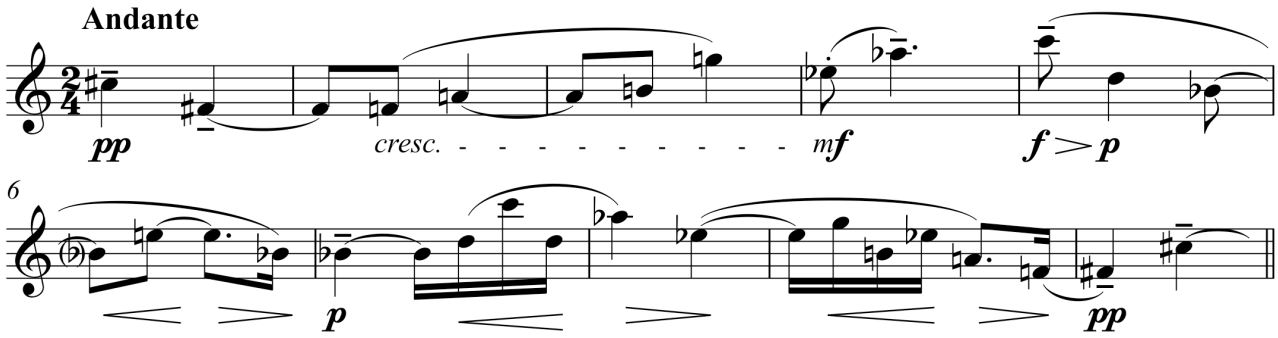
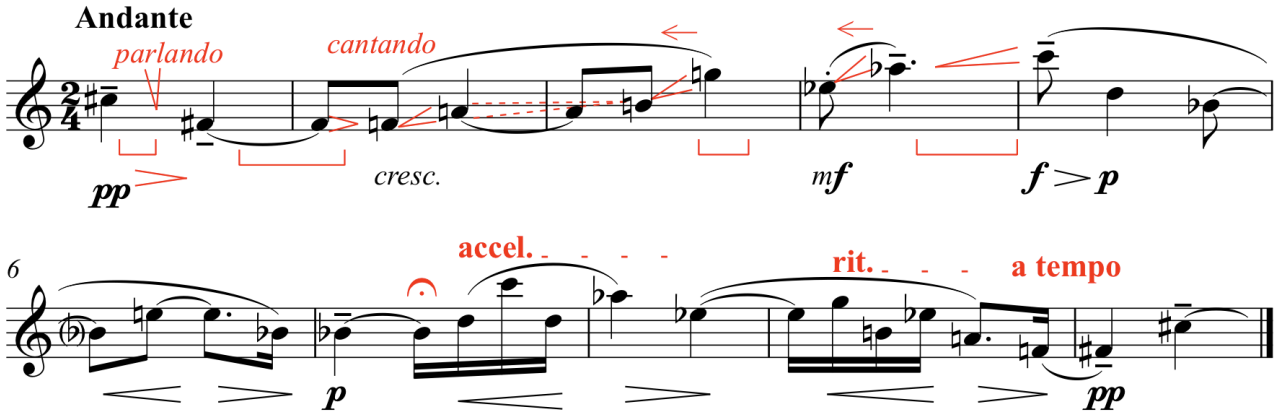
[25] Schoenberg, Arnold. *Style and Idea Selected Writings of Arnold Schöenberg* p 319 (University of California Press, London 1975).

In the next example, the main theme from Valen's *Variations,* op. 23, he is quite generous with his performing indications. Yet the challenge with playing this melody is to unfold its beauty. It is not enough just to follow the dynamic indications. So what is the strategy to meet this challenge? Here is what is written in the score:



Fartein Valen: *Variations,* op. 23, bar 1-11

In the following example, I notated (in red) all the small adjustments in timing and dynamics that I do to make this simple melody become alive in all its beauty and simplicity. This is an attempt to notate some of the performer's "hidden work" even though it does not reveal exactly what I do.



Fartein Valen: *Variations,* op. 23, bar 1-11, with my own performing marks

I try to experiment with the interplay between sound and time. The effectiveness of a climax does not necessarily relate to how loud it sounds in decibels, but depends very much on how it is prepared: the timing. It's all about listening to the silence, giving it the space that the room allows, that lets the phrase breathe. It's about giving the intervals in the melody time to sound, speak, and say something meaningful. It is how to achieve lightness in the shorter notes so that they do not become musically stiff. It is not to rush over the special moments, but neither to dwell too long over

them. This example may indicate the way I think when interpreting Valen, allowing the unusual melodies, sounds and chords to resonate inside me as a human being.

2.7 Open rehearsals

The first performance of Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony* no.1, op. 9 in 1913 provoked fights between those who were against – and those who were for the musical development that Schoenberg represented. As a reaction to that, Schoenberg withdrew himself and his music from the public stage to the "private" sphere. In 1918 one of his composition pupils, Erwin Ratz, invited Schoenberg to conduct ten open rehearsals of this piece. Audiences as well as musicians and Schoenberg's students were invited and gradually got to know the piece before he finally played it through. This led to the founding of the *Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen*. With his "Society for Private Musical Performances" Schoenberg created an important arena where composers and performers could spend time together rehearsing and performing new music undistracted. This paved the way for a new kind of concert culture leading to the acceptance and understanding of the modern music of that time. One of the important messages to the performer Schoenberg insisted on was to create what he called "comprehensible" performances of his music.

During the project period I did different kinds of "open rehearsals" in the spirit of Schoenberg's *Society* with master students at the Grieg Academy (2009-11), the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland (2011) and the Pomona College in Claremont, California, (2012). These open rehearsals fostered an array of relevant questions and comments from the students, which pushed me further in my investigations of the issues on how to perform the music. Accordingly, I created open rehearsal situations for a regular concert audience. Demonstrating various interpretive options, even displaying widely different versions for an audience, has provided me with a deeper understanding and appreciation for the music, as well as it had an impact on my own ways to rehearse and perform. For example, I would demonstrate how each voice has its own life by playing and even singing each melody making the audience familiar with the melody, feeling the intervals, and thus showing where the point of gravity in the melody is. Once I made the audience whistle one of Schoenberg's melodies, and it became amusing and also a way to bring the audience in direct experience of the music that I later would play. Then I would show them how it was the pianists choice to bring out different voices. One version with emphasizing the upper voice and one version with making all the voices stand out clearly through articulating them very differently and individually. An example of this can be seen in the video of the concert lecture in Valenheimen from 2011, playing and demonstrating Valen's *Intermezzo,* op. 36 in front of the small, but very

attentive audience in Valenheimen. These encounters with the audiences gave me a new awareness and confidence in my interpretations. [28]

[28] Fartein Valen: *Intermezzo*, op. 36. Concert lecture: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_BoVDUrXVI

Part 3: Similarities Revisited: Valen in European Context

The Danish musicologist and composer Jan Maegaard (1926-2012) discussed in an article the relationship between Valen and Schoenberg's piano pieces.[29] In the remainder of this article he expresses the wish that performers' would challenge and discuss his views, because finally, he says, an important interpretation of the expressive "gehalt" of the music is our own musical experience of the score.

Maegaard points out similarities and differences between Schoenberg and Valen. Whereas he sees Schoenberg's music as full of contrasts, short breathed and multi coloured, he describes Valen's music as more monochrome in the way it unfolds slowly and continuously. This, he claims, is the reason why especially his orchestral works have been perceived as rather cold and less dynamical, something he finds as a limited if not completely wrong opinion about Valen's music (Maegaard, 1988:1).[30] He argues in favour of recognizing a high expressiveness in Valen's music and sees three main sources of inspiration for his music: The late Romantic tradition, Johan Sebastian Bach, and Arnold Schoenberg. What is interesting about this is that he also points out how Valen distances himself from certain stylistic means used in all three sources. Up until *Trio for piano, violin og cello,* op. 5, his musical innovations are still embedded the late romantic realm of sound. After this piece, Maegaard argues that he becomes more Spartan. His compositions are less overloaded with notes and he also composes more influenced by Bach's polyphony. Then again, he does not use traditional tonality and goes more into a more atonal world of sounds. Yet, he never starts using Schoenberg´s dodecaphonic system, he is uses more free, melodic based rows, but compensates for this with a stricter use of form. In this way, Maegaard shows how Valen uses these three influences, yet distancing himself from them, and he also asks: does Valen also distance himself from the expressivity that this music possesses? This inspired me to go further into the question of expressivity in Valen and has been one of my points of departure for my own reflections and practical research on this music.

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[29] The whole article can be read in Vollsnes, Arvid O. (red) *Aspekter ved Fartein Valens musikk* (ISBN 82-991841-2-6. Oslo 1988). http://www.hf.uio.no/imv/forskning/prosjekter/norgesmusikk/musikkhistarkiv/valen/aspekter/vr-maegaard.pdf.

[30] Denne markante forskel, som navnlig træder frem i orkesterværkerne, harhaft en indflydelse på opfattelsen af Valens musik som kølig, til tider måske ligefrem kønsløs, som et fletværk af stemmer i en lidet dynamisk polyfon struktur. (Maegaard, 1988: 1)

3.1 Similarities to Arnold Schoenberg's piano pieces

In Valevåg, Valen studied theoretical articles, books, and the musical works of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern thoroughly. In his personal notes we also find when he acquired each work and when he studied it, and it is interesting to compare each work in question to the piece he was working on at the same time.[31] These were very productive years for Valen, completing no fewer than 27 works between 1930 and 1940. Schoenberg in particular became a major source of inspiration for Valen, even though Valen never started using the twelve-tone technique. To place Valen's historical position in relation to the Second Viennese School, one has to call in mind that Schoenberg was born thirteen years before Valen, and Alban Berg only two years before Valen. Webern was born four years before Valen. He never met Schoenberg except for one concert in Berlin after having heard one of his string quartets. This took place early when Valen was a student in Berlin in 1913. He approached him but was too shy to greet him, something he would always regret. From one of his private letters we learn that the *Kolisch Quartet* had plans to perform one of Valen's string quartets in Norway. [33] The *Kolisch Quartet* wanted to show Valen's quartet to Schoenberg. For unknown reasons, that never happened.[34]

There is a quote from Valen's letter dated 1 April 1928 to his sister Sigrid that documents that he heard Schoenberg's 3rd string quartet with the Wiener Streichquartett (later called Kolisch quartet) during his stay in Paris:

> *Some time ago I attended a very interesting concert. It was Viennese string quartet that played Schoenberg's reached the last string quartet and it made such an impression on me and Monrad [The composer David Monrad Johansen] that it was after that that he decided to read with me. The concert hall Courtroom almost half full but there was a very famous person present namely Monsieur Clemenceau, the republic's previous president. I was looking in the score and he followed me interested with his eyes, Monrad told me later.*[35]

On 21 July 1928 in a letter to Else Kielland he writes more clearly how Schoenberg has inspired him to proceed with its own dissonant polyphonic style:

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31 Tjøme, Berit Kvinge. *The Articulation of Sonata Form in Atonal Works by Fartein Valen,* p 410-419 (PhD- UiO, Unipub, 2002).

33 The quartet that was founded in Vienna in early 1920, lead by primarius Rudolf Kolisch and associated with the *Second Viennese School.*

34 Private letter to his sister, Sigrid Valen (1937).

35 "For en tid siden var jeg paa en meget interessant koncert. Det var Wiener-strykekvartetten som spilte Schönbergs sidste strykekvartett og den gjorde saadant indtryk ogsaa paa Monrad at det var efter den at han bestemte sig for at læse med mig. Salen var ellers næsten halvfuld men der var en meget berømt tilhører tilstede nemlig ingen anden end Monsieur Clemenceau republikens forrige president. Jeg sad med partituret og han fulgte mig saa interesseret med øinene fortalte Monrad mig senere." (Personal letter from Valen to his sister Sigrid Valen dated 1 April 1928)

I have been so inspired since I came here. Firstly I was revising and transcribing Walt Whitman, and later I started string quartet [String Quartet No. 1 op. 10]. I had first thought of having both piano and clarinet, but felt quite relieved when I reduced it to four strings. Since I started to read with Monrad, and since I heard Schoenberg, I have lost all scruples, I have not felt so certain for a long time [In a footnote:] When I look at what I have written I become completely surprised, it sounds incredible confident, but please understand that this is the "atonality" I mean, so I do [not] explain it further, all right. This is my dividend of Paris, and many times I think that this was exactly why I would go there.[36]

This connection to Schoenberg does not imply, however, that one can blindly use the same approach in performing both the composers' works. Valen's piano pieces raise their own questions. Comparing Valen to Schoenberg has, nevertheless, helped me to reflect on many similar performance-related questions. I think it is important to remember that it was the expression in Schoenberg's music that caught Valen's interest at first. He was impressed by Schoenberg's control over polyphonic techniques and when studying his works, he felt rather encouraged by this; as he puts it, he was finally able to completely understand his own style. In the effort of comparing Schoenberg to Valen, it has been important for me as a performer to remember that Schoenberg went through many styles during his compositional life as mentioned. Valen did not write in 12-tone technique, but Valen's piano trio has similarities to Schoenberg's early style prior to the dodecaphonic technique, with longer melodic lines and horizontal polyphony rather than chord progressions. Schoenberg did not arrive at serialism until about 1923.

All of these four composers in my project had a relation to the Romantic tradition. How to interpret the score is connected to how we understand the style of the composer and the use of *rubato*, something that was implicit in the style of late Romanticism. The questions of how much – and where – is a complex question that has to be treated differently for each of these composers. Schoenberg is very detailed in some of his pieces, less so in others. Berg is so detailed about it that he actually manages to show his exact idea of *rubato*. Webern and Valen are quite similar in this matter; tempo modifications are almost absent in the score, yet we know that Webern wanted a lot of them according to the Stadlen Edition of Webern's *Variationen für Klavier,* op. 27.

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36 "Jeg har været saa oplagt siden jeg kom hit. Først reviderte og renskrev jeg Walt Whitman, senere begyndte jeg paa en strykekvartet [Strykekvartett nr. 1 op.10]. Jeg hadde først tænkt paa at ha baade klaver og klarinet med, men følte mig helt lettet, da jeg hadde reduceret det til fire strykere. Siden jeg læste med Monrad, og siden jeg hørte Schönberg, har jeg mistet alle skrupler; jeg har ikke følt mig saa viss i min sak paa længe.*

*[I fotnote:] Naar jeg ser over det jeg har skrevet blir jeg helt forskrækket, for det lyder umaadelig selvsikkert, men du forstaar det er dette med "atonaliteten" jeg mener, saa jeg behøver [ikke] forklare det nærmere, ikke sandt. Det er mit utbytte av Paris, og mange gange synes jeg at jeg skulde komme derned bare for dette." (Personal letter to l Else Kielland 21 July, 1928)

In polyphonic texture, Schoenberg gives detailed marks for expression and articulation for each voice, while Valen does not differentiate like this at all. It is therefore not always clear from Valen's scores what is supposed to be in the foreground. Valen, however, uses a tenuto sign, very often in secondary voices. Røttingen (2005) claims that these can be thought of as similar to Schoenberg's *Hauptstimme,* indicating principal and secondary lines. If we compare this to Schoenberg's thoughts on performance matters, Schoenberg is concerned with clarity and that all notes should be heard. When it comes to Valen, as a performer you have to orientate yourself in his complex, polyphonic texture, finding out what should be in the foreground, what are the secondary voices and what is background. As mentioned, Schoenberg's piano music is sometimes overloaded with performing marks, quite the opposite of Valen's, the four voices having sometimes very different articulation and dynamics. I noticed that by struggling to realise all these marks in Schoenberg's scores, my playing gained in intensity. The intensity is connected to the awareness I need to achieve, in order to listen to all the voices at the same time and make sure that all are individual and yet integrated in a total sound. I asked myself if this was the same intensity that would gain Valen's music expressive qualities.

3.2 Similarities to Alban Berg's and Anton Webern's Piano Pieces

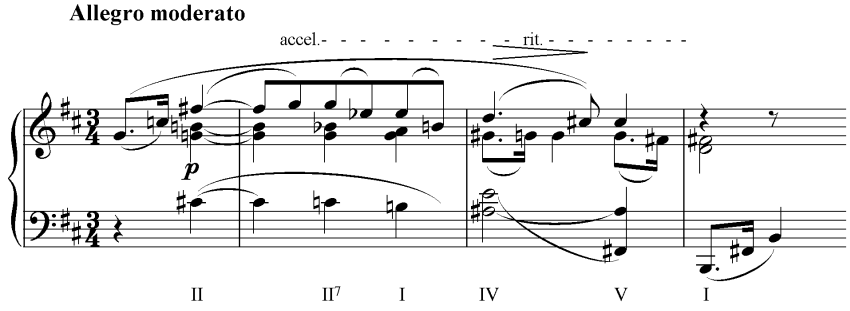
I have found it useful to recall Webern's strong relation to nature at the same time as I consider his music's intense expressivity. Like Webern, Valen had his own strong feeling for nature; and this connection enables me to find the expression in Valen's work. Some of Valen's works exhibit a transitional tonal idiom, and I have used my interpretive work on Berg's *Sonate für Klavier,* op. 1 to access Valen's expressivity in such works. Berg wrote his piano sonata when he was twenty-five years old, studying under Schoenberg. Specifically, I find these tonal references represented in Berg's sonata conveying a nostalgic quality, which I access by thinking of what the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould (1932-82) called the "twilight of tonality" in this work.[38] I believe this also can be said about some of Valen's pieces, because he still seems to be keeping some of the late Romantic qualities while expanding the tonality into a yet untouched and uncharted landscape.

Outbursts of expressivity and stretched *legato* phrases are found in the music of both. Another similarity to Berg is the strictness of material. Every motif in Berg's sonata can be traced back to

[38] Gould, Glenn. *The Berg sonata is music which looks back over a dynasty, which reflects the excitement and instability of a transition, and which prophetically forecasts the future. It is music from the twilight of tonality*. Liner notes to Hallmark Recital Series: RS-3 (1953), http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~weinberg/berg.html

the first eight bars. The strictness of the material is constantly developed through variation. "Developing variation" was a term coined by Schoenberg to mean music in which musical motifs and ideas are restated frequently, but in the form of variations on the original rather than being mere repetitions.[39] Developing variation was important to many composers before and around 1900 such as Brahms, Reger and Busoni, composers whom Valen felt kinship with. They had in common that they all studied the music of Johann Sebastian Bach closely.

In Berg's sonata, the notation of tempo modifications are very detailed. Terms like *bewegt*, *accell*, *rit*, *stringendo*, *rascher*, *allargando*, *langsamer*, *animato*, *langsameres Tempo (aber doch bewegter als zum Sluß des Ritardandos)* etc. make it advisable to look into a way to treat tempo *rubato*. In Romantic performance practice, *accelerandos* and *ritardandos* were also considered important tools for phrasing and expression. *Diminuendo* was almost synonymous with *ritardando*, *crescendo* with *accelerando,* and these were employed to unify each phrase. As this example shows, the *accelerando* starts in the first bar and arrives in the culminating point of the phrase in the first beat of the second bar. Followed by *ritardando* towards the end of that phrase, it whips up the excitement or tension right from the start.



Alban Berg: *Sonate für Klavier,* op. 1, bar 1-4

Universal Edition published a new edition of this sonata in 2006 edited by Klaus Lippe. This edition was based on proof reading done on sketches and a fair copy from Berg's hand. Many notes and accentuations have been corrected as well and tempo modifications are added. One of them is in the very beginning of the score where the tempo in the 1926 edition is simply marked *Mäßig bewegt*, while in the new edition *Allegro Moderato* (Tempo I) has been added. As we also see later, Berg refers to this as *tempo primo* (I), thereby giving a guideline that I believe is crucial for the understanding of what is the main tempo reference in this piece. In this edition, *Piú lento* (Tempo II) and *Molto piú lento* (Tempo III) has also been added every time the second and the third theme

[39] Schoenberg, Arnold. *"Brahms the Progressive"* in *Style and Idea. Selected Writings of Arnold Schöenberg*. (University of California Press, London,1975).

appear. In the old edition, the marking was a confusing: the tempo indication was *Viel langsamer, quasi adagio* for the tempo II section, and *quasi adagio* for the tempo III section. This tells us that the tempo flexibility Berg is referring to is not a spontaneous or improvised "personal expression", but something that has a connection to the form and construction of the piece. The pianist David Burge also questions the degree of tempo changes in Berg's sonata. He argues that it has to be done with care, so that the relationship between the parts is not lost. He also argues that the score gives directions for this, and should therefore be carefully respected. As an example, he shows how the second theme appears three times with a different tempo each time. In bar 11 (*Rascher als Tempo I*), in bar 29 (*Langsamer als Tempo I*) and in bar 29 (*Viel langsamer*). He states that the performer should be arriving at these key points

> *with a sense of inevitability and avoiding any kind of rubato on rubato that can creep into a performance of any romantic work.*[40]

This sense of principal tempo I have found to be of utmost importance in my thinking around of tempo relations, also in Valen's music.

When I first was looking at Anton Webern's *Variationen für Klavier,* op. 27, I had the impression that the music should be played very exact and with very little room for personal adjustments. Due to Webern's sudden death in 1945 he never got to influence the performers of his time, so his music could develop and influence a performance practice around his music. The music of the Second Viennese School, and especially that of Webern, gained in dominance in the 1950s and 1960s, but this resurgence had relatively little connection to the music-making practices of the Schoenberg circle. By that time Schoenberg and his two leading students were dead, and the events leading up to and including World War II had scattered the composers and performers of the Schoenberg circle around the world. Webern's music especially was little known until musicians after World War II, as many have argued, reinterpreted it as a model for their own objectivism. Thus, post-World War II performances of the music were often characterized by an objectivism that arose with little connection to the composers or to the performance practice that the Schoenberg circle tried to establish over many decades earlier. To some extent the post-World War II objectivism was an echo of the *New Objectivity*[41] movement of the 1920s, which influenced the Schoenberg School's

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[40] Burge, David. *Twentieth Century Piano Music (*Schirmer Books, 1990).

[41] The New Objectivity was an anti-romantic and anti-expressive ideological wave that emerged after World War I. In this period many artists distanced themselves from the Romantic ideals from earlier in the century. It was an aesthetic ideology that influenced both composers and performers, such as Hindemith and Stravinsky. Stravinsky's sewing machine performances are a familiar example: one should play without *rubato* and beautiful tone. One would play what "was in the notes" and avoid emotional expressions. Maybe many performers also regarded Webern as a composer whose work should be played "without emotions".

compositions at that time, but with which they coexisted uncomfortably, as the *New Objectivity* rejected the introspective subjectivity that was central to the Schoenbergian aesthetic:

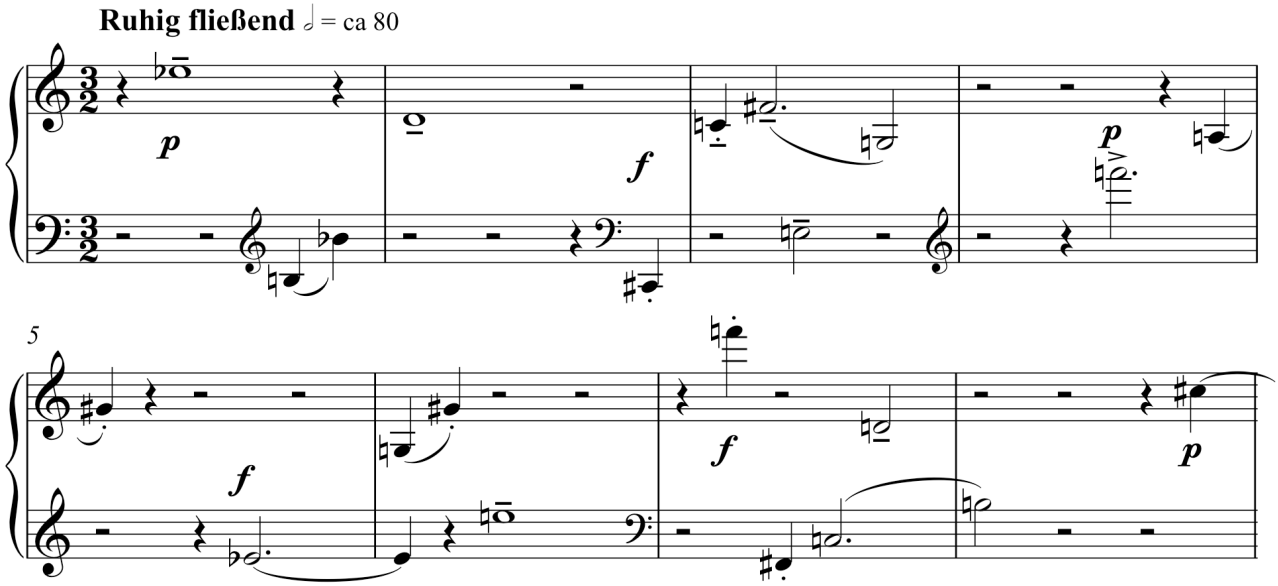
> *The Romantic (or subjective) style of performance considered the performer as that person whose feeling, personality, temperament, poetry (destiny) etc. was to be expressed or represented. The objective style commits the contrary mistake by even suppressing those expressions which represent the composer.*[43]

The conductor Pierre Boulez made two very different complete recordings of Webern's works, one recorded between 1967 and 1972 (CBS/Sony), and the second recording was released in 2000 (Deutsche Grammophon). The first recording is far more rigid in tempo and aggressive in sound quality. I perceive the latter as far more expressive, with softer *pianissimos* and more *rubato* allowing for the connections and transitions of the different musical parts. Maybe these two recordings show that the perception of Webern's music very slowly and gradually changed from being played in a modernistic manner into a practice inspired more by late Romantic performance criteria.

When I became acquainted with the "Stadlen Edition" of the *Variationen für Klavier,* op. 27, I got closer to the qualities Webern wanted the performers to retain from the late Romantic tradition. The main expression for the whole piece he writes in the beginning: "coolly passionate, lyrical expressiveness" *kühl leidenschaftliche, Lyrik des Ausdrucks*. This is a state of extremely split personality. In the copy in which Webern pencilled performance notes to Stadlen, Webern actually wrote *crescendi* and *diminuendi* for single notes played on the piano. This may indicate his desire for an expressivity that was beyond the capabilities of the instrument he chose. As the piano has an envelope with little sustained quality, a true *crescendo* on a single note is impossible. Moreover, the Stadlen edition sheds new light on how Webern was thinking concerning the interval spans in larger phrase units. This is similar to the way Valen uses very large intervals to create expression, yet demanding a strong melodic connection from the performer. This score is a good example of how a performing tradition has disappeared, and has provided important information in regards to Webern's works. Webern's style can seem very abstract and objective, not unlike many of Valen's scores, but as the Stadlen edition shows, there are many hidden keys to phrasing, rubati and how performers can express the structure and drama of this work. To exemplify this, I want to comment on how I perceive the opening of the third movement of Webern's *Variationen für Klavier,* op. 27. I group these notes into five units, trying to make each one of them respond to each other. By

[43] Unpublished note from Schoenberg dated 1940, Arnold Schoenberg Archive, Vienna.

extending the rests slightly between each unit, I believe I can make a difference in better communicating the notion of "questions and answers" to the listener.



Anton Webern: Variationen for piano, op. 27, 3rd mvt, bar 1-8

This use of rubati is strongly linked with artistic choice and personal taste. This piece has been performed in many different ways, ranging from an "academic" and objective position, to a more freewheeling use of *rubato*. I have used various types of *rubato* for expressive and dramatic purposes, for example longer *fermatas* and static moments in the last movement, followed by a drive and increased pushing forward in the next variation. The recording of Webern conducting Alban Berg's *Violinkonzert* with Louis Krasner and the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1937 is an example of the extreme *rubati* that Webern himself would allow in his performances[44]. The tempo is sometimes so slow and the *ritardandi* so extreme that one can ask whether they are illogical. Nevertheless, the recording is a historical document showing that slow tempi and extreme and illogical *rubati* may be said to be a part of the performance practice of the Second Viennese School.

When I heard Peter Stadlen's own recording of Webern's *Variations für Klavier*, op. 27, I was amazed by how softly he was able to play and suddenly understood that the notation of the notes had to be made into sentences, something I think Webern communicates through his comments to Stadlen.

Track 1: Anton Webern, *Variationen für Klavier,* op. 27.

[44] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTYAm0BXkxs

Peter Stadlen, piano

His *pianissimo* touch is absolutely amazing and when listening to this, it inspired me to play even softer in the *pianissimo* parts of this piece. But in all the parts in fast tempo, Stadlen seems to exaggerate, or play faster than he is actually able. The second movement has a very nervous character, but misses the connection to the pulsation. In the climax before the end of the third movement, he plays many wrong notes and the special off-beat rhythms that Webern creates get lost, in my opinion. I sensed such a big difference between the Stadlen edition and his actual performance style that for a period of time I was very confused. I found myself guided towards a new appreciation of the work's logic as I attempted to recreate the *rubati* indicated in Stadlen's edition of the work. At the same time, I would concede that such *rubati* sounded illogical.

The comparison of apparent similarities between these three composers has been of great importance for my quest for the particular expressivity in Valen's piano pieces. Furthermore, nature images, such as "night" (*Nachtstück*, op. 23, no. 1), "waves" (*Prelude*, op. 29, no. 1), "birds" and "thunderstorms" (*Intermezzo*, op. 36) helped me to achieve a deeper understanding of the unique characters in Valen's music, especially regarding the choice of tempi. Crucial to me was to shape clearly and to phrase each voice individually at a tempo that enables the complex polyphonic textures to unfold. It is very tempting to begin being very active as a performer, adding a "lot of extras" in Valen's scores. This might be illustrated by adding a lot of *rubati* and accents to "spice up" the contrasting moods in his music. I found myself doing this at many concerts when I still did not yet believe enough in his music. I now believe that doing less can be expressive as well. I do not intend to claim that doing nothing at all bestows on the performer the virtue of a "purely" objective rendition of the score. I would instead describe it as putting myself into a passive-active state of listening and observing. In this state I will know in the moment when to push the tempo, and when to let go with the flow. This will make me articulate the phrases so that the notes are connected into meaningful sentences, and give me the intuition to connect each phrase with the whole piece. It is not about having fixed ideas from the beginning. Instead, *werktreue* means a continuous process, a flow between time and me and the piece. Recalling Taruskin's words, it is about a new and unique situation each time I play a piece by Valen, one that has its own development. The magnitude of one dynamic climax will influence the next one. This cannot be planned. This is the real situation. This is here and now.

Part 4: Comparing Recordings, Resisting Traditions. Essays on Interpretation

4.1 Performers during the Transition to the Twentieth Century

An important step towards a process of reassessing and re-contextualizing my own strategies and choices with Valen's music has been to listen to different historical recordings and in this way encounter different traditions and playing solutions. The problem is that Fartein Valen had hardly any contact at all with performers of his music during the time he was active as a composer. Robert Riefling is the only pianist who has recorded his music and who we know had direct contact with Valen himself. Another pianist who is known to have played for Valen is Dagny Knudsen. Yet there is nothing in existence that attests to her style of playing and unfortunately there is no recording of her playing. There is also very little research done that would enable a definition of the style of performance in Norway in the twenties. I therefore had to turn to other musicians and pianists to see if there were traditions and different directions in the history of pianists and ascertain the pianists who belong to the various directions. The pianists I will present here have a different connection to this music. I have tried to become better familiar with them, both by reading about their musical and artistic approach and also by listening to their recordings. In addition to Artur Schnabel, Eduard Steuermann, and Glenn Gould, they were the Norwegian pianists Robert Riefling, Einar Henning Smebye and Håkon Austbø.

In many of Fartein Valen's private letters we find descriptions of concerts he listened to in Berlin. He is enthusiastic about pianists like Ferrucio Busoni (1866-1924) and Ignaz Friedman especially mentions Arthur Schnabel and his soft, rich sound and delicate phrasings. These performers have in common that they were also devoted composers and teachers. They were pianists with a more modern approach, involving less *rubato* and less of the sentimentality we find in the late Romantic period. This became a path that I wanted to pursue at the beginning of the project. My two questions were: What playing style did Schnabel actually represent, and how could this be interesting for me in relation to performing Valen's piano music? It also was important to look into this, knowing that

these were the performers that the composers from the Schoenberg school had in their musical environment.

After 1850, pianists began to break away from Romantic pianism and create a new school where they distanced themselves from the self-expressive manner of Liszt and others.[45] Schnabel entered the scene at a mature age, and he was anything but what people expected to see and hear. Schnabel was not out to impress or entertain the audience, and played music which he saw as more interesting than himself and that he "considered better than it can be performed" (Schonberg: 1987: 426). Because of this, Schnabel was for many years anything but a success. He was strongly criticized during his lifetime, particularly by pianist colleagues who thought he played too many wrong notes.[47] His small fingers limited him. Nevertheless, Schnabel became a legend, especially through his work with the Beethoven sonatas, an achievement, which shines with intellectual strength and aristocratic phrasing. Likewise, many of his students bore this tradition into the twentieth century. To me, Schnabel represents the kind of intellectual pianist who played with a cool distance to the music, while still being expressive, but not overly so.

Performers from the Second Viennese School came from the Romantic tradition and kept many of the conventions of the late Romantic style. At the same time they moderated these in different ways, so that they would not be mistaken as a "sentimental" fall back into the *rubato-espressivo* culture. The violinist Rudolf Kolisch, mentioned earlier as one the most important performers associated with the Schoenberg School, developed a particularly economical playing style where all the typical virtuosic means of expression are scaled down to the minimum necessary, in the best Schoenbergian spirit. He called it *Wiener Espressivo*.

> *Non espressivo is also espressivo; through the bare negation it becomes so. What we mean is a specific art of expressivity. I call it the Viennese Espressivo to characterize it clearly.*[48]

Kolisch wanted to get away from the notion of *espressivo* as a rhetorical figure that one simply "sticks" to a musical gestation process without actually being able to convey its inner meaning: hence "structural intensity". *Wiener Espressivo* can thus be seen as a continuation of the Viennese aesthetician Eduard Hanslick's conception of music as a dynamic, "spiritual" flow and his criticism of the Romantic "aesthetics of feeling". Talking to Arnulf Mattes at the Department of Musicology,

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45 Schonberg, Harold. The Great Pianists (Simon and Schusters, 1987).

47 At this time the expectation for technical perfection from performers increased, in part due to the advances of digital recording technique, which allowed for the possibility to splice in "right notes" in passages where wrong notes had been played.

48 Smith, Joan Allen. *Schoenberg and his Circle – A Viennese Portrait (Schirmers Books, New York, 198*6).

University of Oslo about his research on the playing of Rudolf Kolisch, I learned that by the term *Wiener Espressivo,* Kolisch wanted to make a distinction between the Vienna Classical instrumental Classic instrumental music and the "pre-espressivo" music by J.S. Bach.[49] At the same time he changed his playing style when he moved to America and it is during that period that most of the Schoenberg and Webern quartets works were recorded. These recordings done with the Kolisch Quartet in 1936/37 display a lot of personal freedom. It was interesting to read the discussion in my supervisor Alfred Cramer's dissertation: the statements from the group's second violinist Eugene Lehner who feels that these recordings fail to live up to the group's intentions, taking so many liberties with the score:

> *In our recording I find many bad habits. There are most disturbing rhythmical inaccuracies, too many shortened beats, senseless accentuations, unintended accelerandi, quite often too fast tempi, unclear articulation, defective timing and others–things that cannot be excused by the term "free diction."* [50]

But it is also a fact that we have no pre-war period recordings of that repertoire that we could compare it to. Schoenberg's own view on performances also changed during the course of his life. He adopts extreme postures through his comments, from distancing himself from the hyper-Romantic espressivo culture to approval of the Hungarian violinist Tibor Varga's highly romantic interpretation of his *Violinkonzert*. Tibor Varga is just about as far away from Kolisch's Wiener espressivo as one can get.[51]

What conclusions can we draw from this? It tells me that the performers in the Second Viennese School where also in motion, influenced by time and place. It also tells me that trying to define a performance style only from a selection of recordings may be insufficient. One has to recall the unstable situation of the musicians, individually searching for jobs, having problems rehearsing regularly and often encountering quite poor recording conditions. However, besides the "accidents", there are certain features, which are consistent regarding articulation, accentuation, dynamics, agogics and choice of tempo. But again, one might be cautious about drawing conclusions from the stylistic idiosyncrasies of the Kolisch group, in order to mark ideological differences between contemporary performers or ensembles.

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49 Kolisch/Türcke. *Zur Theorie der Aufführung - Musik-Konzepte* 29/30, 1983, p. 17ff.

50 Lehner, Eugene. Liner notes to Schoenberg, *String Quartets Nos 1-4* on the Present Recordings (1991)(Archiphon ARC-103/4) 20 found in Alfred Cramer: *Music for the future – Sound of Early Twentieth- Century Psychology and Language in Works of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg, 1908 to the first world war* p 175 (University of Pennsylvania, 1997).

51 Mattes, Arnulf. E-mail 20 June 2013

Nevertheless, I will turn to one of my main sources of inspiration in this project, the pianist Eduard Steuermann (1892-1964). His playing heard in the recordings of Schoenberg's music have a touch of exactitude and emotional distance to the music. On the other hand, the articulation, the strong command of sound production and characterization of the different voices gives his playing a communicative and extremely clear quality.

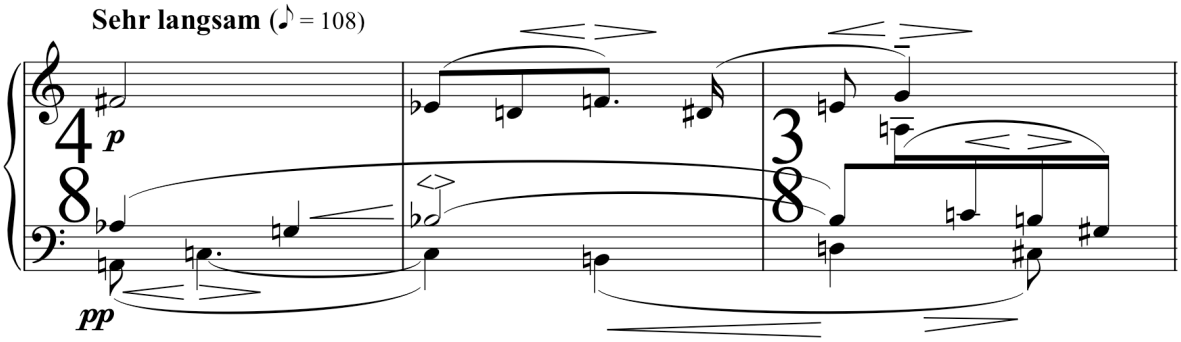
4.2 Comparing recordings of Arnold Schoenberg's *Klavierstück,* op. 23, no. 1

Eduard Steuermann's playing of Schoenberg's along with my own playing and development of musical and artistic ideas. At first, I found his playing quite sober and intellectual, and found this sort of "cool expressivity" not so inspiring for my own playing of the same piece. At first I was very inspired by the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould and the kind of very personal approach he had to the pieces he played from the *Second Viennese School*. Taking Schoenberg's performing marks to the extreme, or simply ignoring them, makes this kind of approach appear at first more personal to me. In recent years, I have found myself appreciating the special emotional distance with which Steuermann treats Schoenberg's piano music, and finding it to be as personal as Gould's, yet in a different way.

Track 2: Arnold Schoenberg, *Fünf Klavierstücke*, op. 23 no. 1,
Eduard Steuermann, piano

Track 3: Arnold Schoenberg, *Fünf Klavierstücke*, op. 23 no. 1,
Glenn Gould, piano

If we look at the score in the next example, we see that Schoenberg writes *sehr langsam.* He also writes 108 bpm to the eighth note, which in my opinion does not make the flow of the piece very slow.



Arnold Schoenberg: *Klavierstück,* op. 23, no. 1, bar 1-3

Listening to Steuermann, we can find that he takes a tempo closer to 98, while Gould is as slow as 66. My experience is that in order to hear the complex structures, the tempo has to be adapted so that the pianist's ability to render the score clearly correlates to the actual sound. This tempo may be different from pianist to pianist.

> *The pianist is apt to form his musical conception of a composition from its instrumental aspect. . . . First, he must pianistically understand (and not misunderstand) every single idea of the piece. Second, he must be able to build up these different ideas into one fluent stream of music. Third, he must do justice to that melodic-polyphonic element which, to my feeling, is the very essence of Schoenberg's music.*[52]

The relation between tempo and expressivity is multifaceted. A slow tempo allows more expressivity, but it does not necessarily become more expressive only by virtue of being slow. What Steuermann is saying in the quotation at the beginning of this text, is that getting a fluent musical stream and doing justice to the polyphonic element are his first priorities. I would assume that all pianists playing Schoenberg would agree that these are important issues. But how they solve this practically may differ. My experience is that Steuermann uses many ways to articulate the melodic lines with his fingers and by this, produces many colours, sounds and different characters.

Already in the beginning of the piece, in bars 4 and 5, hear how he articulates (probably by high finger lifts) in bar 5 and by doing this creates a very clear, crisp sound. My perception is that he takes care of the polyphony by varying the articulation in the different voices. He follows Schoenberg's tempo and articulation marks quite strictly, yet he uses all the small "hairpins" for what they are worth and thus it becomes highly expressive, on a quite subtle level. He takes liberties, but not in the way Gould does. Steuermann's liberties are in his articulation, the many ways he is able to use the finger articulations, and the different colours he produces on the piano.

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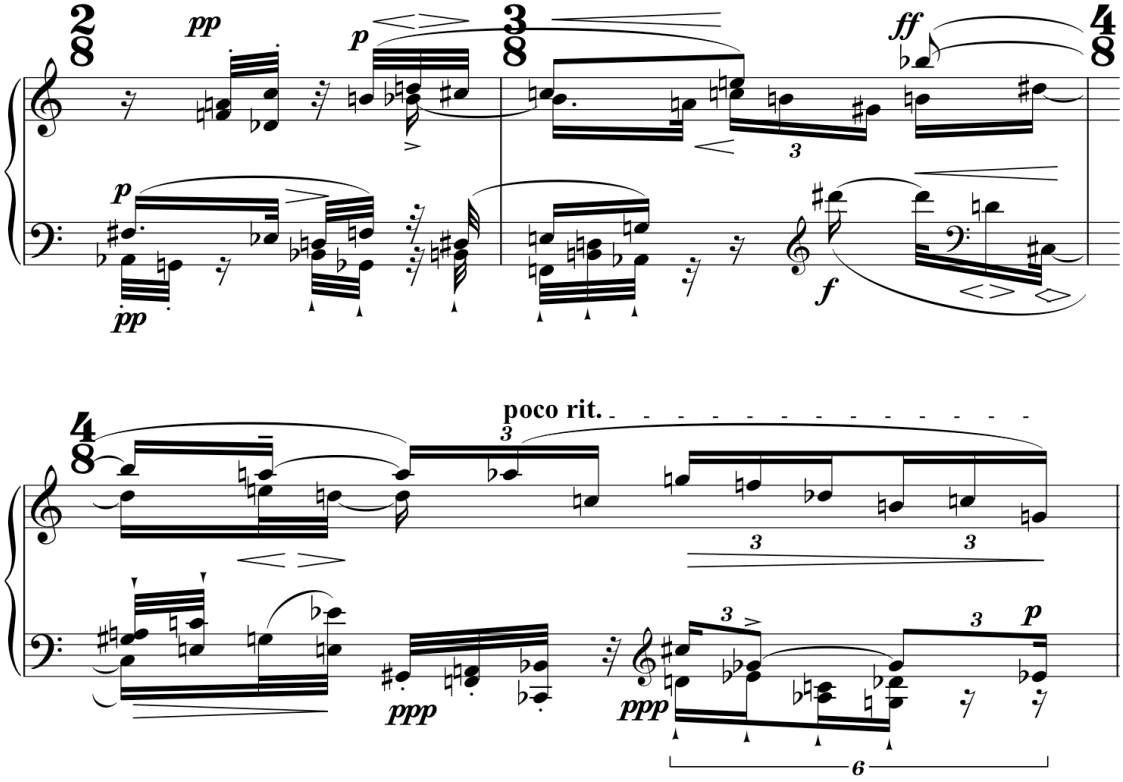
[52] Steuermann, Eduard. *The Piano music of Schoenberg* in *The Not Quite Innocent Bystander,* p 4 (University of Nebraska Press,1989).

The way he changes articulation between *pp* and *ppp* in bar 29 is amazing. The dynamic range of the recording sounds small and intimate, but that may well be an effect of the recording equipment.

Glenn Gould plays with a lot of a desired *rubato*, but not randomly without a sense of the structure. An example is how he pushes forward in bar 3, and by that obtains a forward drive in the phrase, making it connect with the next. Gould accelerates the tempo at the climax of the piece in bars 26-29.



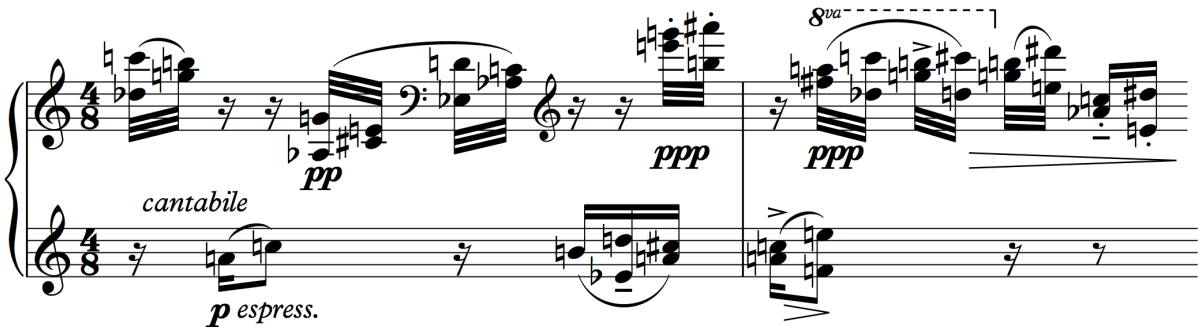
Arnold Schoenberg: *Klavierstück* op. 23, no. 1, bar 26-29

Gould also starts slowing down well before *poco rit* in the last bar of the score, and in this way he creates clarity in the complex texture. He ignores the beginning of the following slur in bar 2, and prefers to "sing through" and thus connect the phrases. He also chooses to ignore the pauses in bar 11, and keeps the pedals throughout the passage. This creates bigger contrasts to the next *staccato* part that starts in bar 13.

The dynamic range of the piece is *ppp-ff. Gould* plays everything more loudly than Steuermann and I cannot hear any difference between *pp* and *ppp.* Steuermann appears to me to be a performer who tries to remain close to the composer's intentions, yet who is able to transmit the love and beauty he

sees and feels in this music. I feel he is "explaining" the music by rendering the text so clearly. In contrast, Gould appears to be "seducing me" not only with the music but also with his sound. Then again, what is personality in performing? Does ignoring the composers performing marks, or taking them to the extremes, make the performance more personal and then again, more expressive? What, then, would then the relation between "personal" and "expressive" be? All performance involves some degree of using one's personality. There are, however, different approaches to the degree of personal involvement in relation to bringing out the composer's intentions in the score. On the one extreme, you may have highly subjective performers who may disregard or exaggerate many of the performing indications given in the score. On the other side, you have performers who, as a basic attitude, try to be true to the text and see themselves "in service" to the music. Which of these extremes has more personality? For many, it is the first category that is considered the most personal, because it is often more outwardly exhibitionistic, spectacular and loud on stage, though not necessarily very deep or sensitive to the nuances of expression and the subtle qualities of sound production.

However, Gould's use of silence is almost palpable, and that – in my opinion – is a tool for expressivity. His *pianissimo* is so quiet, yet audible, something that is very difficult to achieve in Schoenberg's complex texture.



Arnold Schoenberg: *Klavierstück,* op. 23, no. 1, bar 19-20

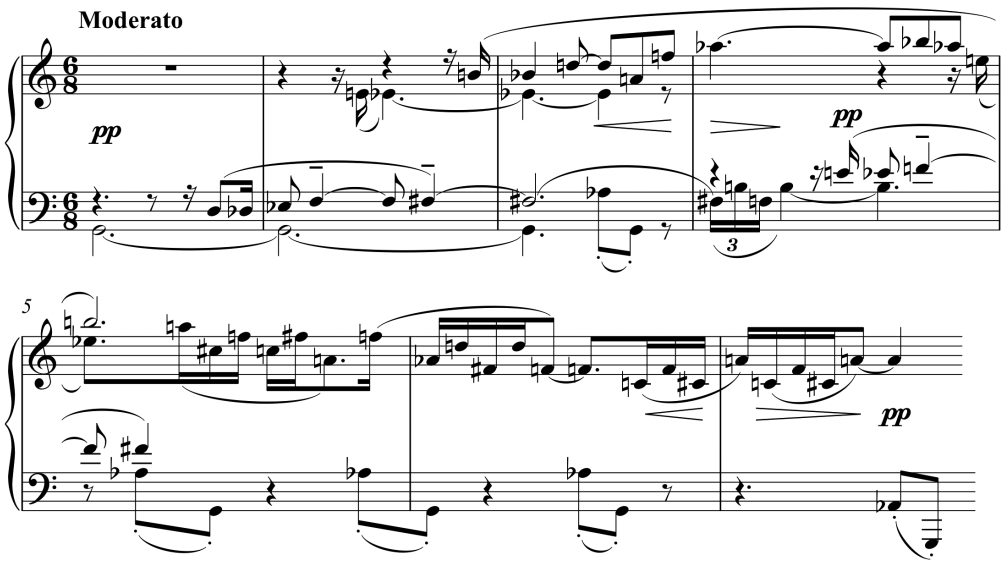
In bar 19 Schoenberg writes *espressivo* in the left hand. He also adds the word *cantabile* and *p* as a contrast to the right hand where it says *pp*. It is interesting to see Schoenberg's link between *espressivo* and *cantabile*, because very often I used to think of expressivity connected to the quality of the human voice; the more *legato* and singing tone, the more expressive. Gould plays this left hand line in bar 19 noticeably more loudly than Steuermann who instead uses a little more time in

the rising interval.[53] Too many tempo modifications can disturb the feeling of the whole, both in a phrase, but also in the piece as a whole. The effects can stay on "the outside". You have to arrive at a tempo, not copy a tempo. And that I believe is one of the secrets of playing espressivo. You can play slowly, feel and articulate the intervals, do all the articulations, respect the rests, but the "language" has to be your own. It has to be felt inside. You have to finally understand and believe in what you are "saying" in the moment you are playing. That is why there is not an easy way to play this music. The line of resistance that comes from learning to speak this new language will provide the indispensable confidence you need to have in order to be convinced.

4.3 Comparing recordings of Fartein Valen's *Nachtstück,* op. 22, no. 1

Nachtstück, the opening piece from *Four Piano Pieces,* op. 22, no. 1 begins with a deep g that lies like an organ point throughout the entire opening. From there a peculiar chord, very typical for Valen, rises. It creeps upwards, semitone by semitone towards the high register and then a quaint seventh chord (g, f-sharp, a, f, a-flat). A typical chord that can be found in many of Valen's orchestral works is struck. The beginning of *Nachtstück* has a peculiarly "soft-spoken" atmosphere of silence and expectation at the same time. These first seven bars create a phrase with its highpoint on an a-flat on the fourth bar. The "theme" creeps from one voice to another at the same time as some notes set as pedal tones. In Valen's orchestral works it is often the violins' long bows that bear the tones. On the piano the sound dies out gradually once the key is struck, but it seems as though Valen tries to transcend the nature of the instrument by writing long phrasing slurs that show that he wishes the tones to be held. It is not a traditional melody but a phrase that is very typical for Valen.

[53] As I commented on earlier regarding Webern's *Variationen für Klavier,* op. 27, the feeling of the interval becomes an imitation of the human voice that will naturally take more time in larger spans than in smaller.



Fartein Valen: Nachstück, op. 22, bar 1-7

The whole *Nachtstück* is built on the musical material presented in the first seven bars. It is turned upside down or played backwards, sometimes in a spider web of three, at times even four voices. Valen's musical discourse fascinated me from the very beginning. I admire his ability to unite all aspects of a work in one single long journey that connects the beginning to the end: his ability to develop a few small motifs that build up a large field of tension, to join the first and the last note in a single large wave. I enjoy following this thread, where the details become important building blocks of a larger whole. It was therefore not surprising to read that Valen admired Anton Bruckner but saw Gustav Mahler as his total opposite:

> *I have now heard two symphonies by Mahler. I was very excited, but with the best will in the world I did not manage to be captivated. There are several very pretty isolated moments, but as a whole it did not seem convincing; the intellectual material is, therefore, not significant enough. I cannot understand that they place his side by side with Bruckner. Bruckner is something else entirely. Each of his motifs is inspired by the grace of God.*[54]

Already at this point in time, the 26 year-old Valen shows that musical unity would become important for him as a composer. He shows that he does not wish to create "pretty moments" but a convincingly unified whole. What does he mean, however, by "convincing unified whole"? To approach this, it is perhaps simpler to ask: why did Valen not find Mahler convincing? One example could be the third movement of Mahler's *Symphony* no. 1 (1893). It begins with a serious funeral march, later breaking into a *Klezmer,* and salon-like music. A sharp contrast between two starkly contrasting ideas: a gravely serious theme and one with ironic cheerfulness. Was it perhaps the slow pulse in Bruckner's music that fascinated Valen? Bruckner begins softly, slowly building

[54] Valen, Fartein. Private letter to Otto Mohr, Berlin, 1913

up towards a climax. There are no sharp breaks. He stays in the same mood. We can hear this, for example, in his *Symphony no. 4*, (1874). The strings open with a soft tremolo that becomes the background for the falling intervals in the horns. In this way he creates an expectation that reminds us of Valen's *Nachtstück.* Many of Valen's pieces begin this way, with a quaint, murmuring mood, a solemnity, an expectation that something greater is bound to happen.

Nachtstück as a genre

Nachtstück is the German counterpart to the French *Nocturne.* In French, the word comes from *nocturnal*, with a Latin provenance from *nocturnus*, meaning "nightly". *The New Grove Dictionary of Music* describes the genre as an "instrumental composition of a thoughtful, dreamy character, especially written for the piano". It also falls under the category "character piece" which was typical of the Romantic period, with a free form and descriptive titles. It is natural to mention Frederic Chopin (1810-1849) who, with his twenty-two *Nocturnes*, developed this type of character piece into a very popular genre. Chopin was himself inspired by the Irish composer John Field (1782-1837) who is said to be the originator of these character pieces. Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) has also made his contribution with his thirteen *Nocturnes.* The notation of Chopin's *Nocturnes* reflects the performance practice of the time, when rhythmic flexibility (*rubato*) was seen as an important tool for phrasing and expressivity. *Diminuendo* was at that time almost synonymous with *ritardando*, and *crescendo* with *accelerando,* even though it was not notated in the score, and this was done in order to create phrases. Early in the twentieth century the German composer Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) wrote *Suite 1922*, with *Nachtstück* as one of its movements. This latter, like Valen's *Nachtstück*, has few indications of tempo flexibility. Hindemith's *Nachtstück* can be seen in the light of the *New Objectivism*, thus making it easier to understand his sparing use of agogical means. Twelve years after Hindemith wrote his *Nachtstück*, on an October evening in 1934, Valen got the inspiration for his *Nachtstück*. "Twilight falls upon the Garden of Valevåg October 1934" I have notated on the front page of my score, after reading Bjarne Kortsen's biography of Valen[55], where Valen, in conversation with the author, explained to him the background for this composition. Like many of Valen's works, *Nachtstück* has relatively few performance indications.

Comparison of three recordings of *Nachtstück*

Two complete recordings of Valen's piano works exist today, and few pianists have chosen to include Valen in their repertoire. I have found four released recordings of Valen's *Nachtstück* besides my own from 2011. These were done by the pianists Robert Riefling, Einar Henning

[55] Kortsen, Bjarne. *Fartein Valen: life and music.* (Oslo,Tanum, 1965)

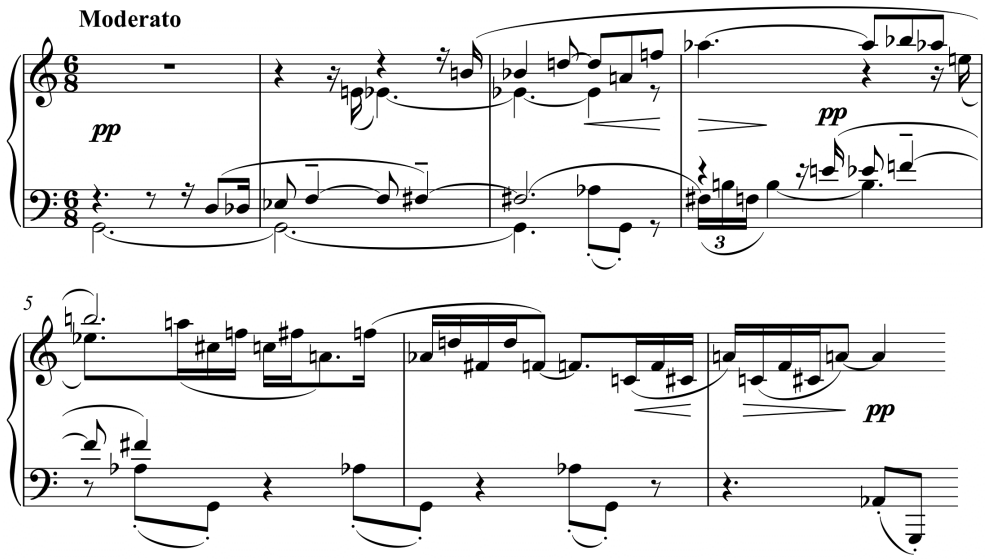
Smebye, Håkon Austbø and Torleif Torgersen. I have chosen three of these recordings as a background for the discussion about interpretation in this essay, also bringing my own interpretation into it, thus putting myself in a context regarding the interpretation of Valen's music.

Robert Riefling (1911-1988)

Riefling's release of Valen's complete piano music in 1980 remained, for a long time, an indisputable monument. Riefling is considered to be one of the greatest Norwegian pianists of the previous century. Riefling knew Valen well and is also one of the few pianists whose recordings we can listen to and who actually played the works for Valen. This, in itself, grants him a special position. In this essay I refer to Riefling's 1980 recording on BIS, *Fartein Valen: The Complete Music for Piano*. Also in existence is an LP recorded for Argo in London around 1950 that has a gentler sound. The big differences between these two recordings are most probably due to the quality of the instruments and recording equipment used. Although I do not intend to go deeper into this question, it is important to keep in mind the effect these factors have on our experience of listening to a recording.

Track 4: Fartein Valen, *Nachtstück* from *Four Piano Pieces*, op. 22
Robert Riefling, piano

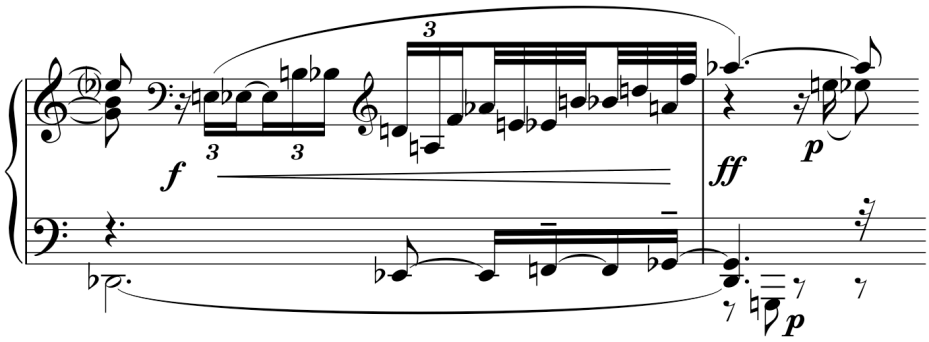
There is something very convincing about Riefling's playing. His technical level is very high. This is particularly obvious in fast passages, where he manages to combine high speed with clarity in all the voices. In Valen's *Nachtstück* he achieves the climaxes in a dramatic way with a lot of drive and intensity. The sixteenth note motifs have a motoric character, and he employs very little tempo flexibility in them. His touch is unromantic and distinct. I therefore experience Riefling as modernistic and very faithful to the score. What makes his interpretation of *Nachtstück* distinctive is that it really becomes a polyphonic piece. His use of pedal is sparing, and he insists instead on using "finger legato", which is a major challenge in Valen's music, since it often requires wide spans for the hand (see also 2:6).



Fartein Valen: *Nachtstück,* op. 22, bar 1-7

The score gives the impression of four-part writing, but it is unclear whether Valen wants the four voices to be heard individually or rather wants a homogeneous sound. The first note g is supposed to linger for a long time before anything else happens, and this note is still there when the second voice begins to move above it. Riefling plays this note g rather strongly, with the result that it can be clearly heard until the third bar. No pedal indications are given and Valen notates *pp* three times in the course of the phrase, with two swells along the way, one towards the high point and one at the very end of the phrase. Sometimes Valen marks a middle voice with *tenuto*, as here, and one may wonder whether he does this in order to show which one is the main voice, not unlike what Schoenberg refers to as *Hauptstimme*. Riefling manages to make this voice clearly heard by holding it down in the fingers, specially the long notes (f-sharp in the second and third bars) and the continuation of this (f-f sharp in the fourth and fifth bars). Riefling thus achieves a high degree of clarity and voice leading. There is something "ascetic" about this way of handling the piano. Riefling studied in Germany with Karl Leimer, Wilhelm Kempff and Edwin Fischer, pianists who belong to the "Schnabel-school", thus representing quintessential German pianism in modern times. This school has its roots in the German and Austrian repertoire from Bach to Brahms. Harold Schonberg describes it, in his book *The Great Pianists,* as a style that favours seriousness and strength before charm, intellect before instinct and sobriety before brilliance. What influences Riefling most, in my opinion, is his longstanding work with Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*, which he went on to record in 1985.

Riefling's attack has a percussive and *non-legato* quality. We can, for example hear this on bar 21.



Fartein Valen: *Nachtstück*, op. 22, bar 21

This is a typical Valen figure that spins on top of a seventh chord and accelerates to a peak. We can hear every tone well articulated and clearly, as if each finger gets its own individual attack. High lifting of the fingers was common practice in the German school in the nineteenth century, until the German pianist and pedagogue Rudolf Breithaupt revolutionised piano technique in 1905 with his "arm weight technique". Riefling has an *anti-cantabile* way of playing that makes reference to a more modernistic rather than a Romantic playing style. Or maybe he is simply very influenced by his Bach recordings. There is nevertheless a "technical" touch about Riefling's Valen. It is dramatic, but also a bit too static and one-sided in terms of sound. The sound in the *forte* sections in this recording is too uncompromising to fulfil the Nocturne's potential as a piece of "dreamy" character. Twenty-five years would pass before a new complete recording of Valen's piano music appeared in the market.

Einar Henning Smebye (b. 1950)

Smebye studied with Bruno Seidlhofer (1905-82), a close associate of Berg and Schoenberg, in Vienna. Smebye was later exposed to the French piano tradition when he studied in Paris with one of the greatest female pianists and pedagogues within the French piano school, Germaine Mounier (1920-2006). Smebye has recorded a lot of Norwegian music, such as the complete piano works by Harald Sæverud and many other contemporary works.

Track 5: Fartein Valen, *Nachtstück* from *Four Piano Pieces*, op. 22
Einar Henning Smebye, piano

Listening closely to the first phrase of his recording of *Nachtstück*, we can hear Smebye's use of agogics. He underlines certain notes with both length and sound. His tempo is faster than Riefling's, and he keeps it strictly steady. It seems, however, that he wishes to make a point of these three notes in this phrase. He achieves this by pausing slightly before the a-flat in bar 4, the b-flat in bar 5 and the a in bar 7. A number of Valen performers were recently asked by the arrangers of the Fartein Valen Festival to describe Valen's music. It was interesting to read Smebye's description:

> *...without a doubt Norway's greatest composer. Philosophical depth, consciousness of form, feeling for Nature, uncompromising, he is Norway's Beethoven.*[56]

Could one perhaps say that Smebye puts Valen in the context of Viennese Classicism? Whether or not one can speak here of an aesthetic that is inspired by old rhetoric, Smebye, in any case, does not interpret Valen with a Romantic singing quality nor does he emphasize the lyrical aspects of Valen's melodies. His emphasis on form fits, instead, with the ideas that interested Beethoven and Schoenberg. Smebye's recordings do not represent a new approach to Valen. The sound is dry, almost aggressive at times, evoking associations to Boulez and pointillist music. However, he is rhythmically more improvisatory than Riefling, almost gesticulating, broadly using agogics. He makes *Nachtstück* into an extroverted and strongly communicative piece of music, but he sadly misses at the same time some of the gentle nightly atmosphere one generally associates with a night-inspired piece.

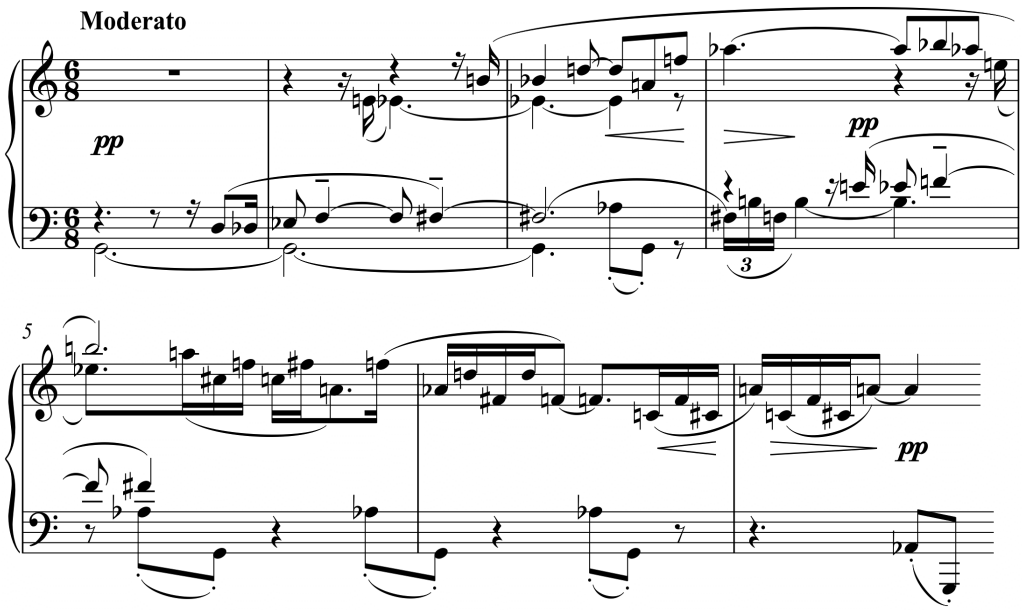
Håkon Austbø (b. 1948)

Austbø released his CD *Norwegian Imperatives* in 2009, placing Valen in a Norwegian-modernist context, together with Finn Mortensen and Rolf Wallin. To my ears, Austbø's recording represents the opposite pole to Smebye's recording, going, as he does, to extremes of making *Nachtstück* into an impressionistic sounding piece. Valen's score becomes a mere sketch, a sort of layout on which he can explore his colourful sound palette. Sound colour takes centre stage. The dynamic range is stretched at both ends with a barely audible *pianissimo* and big energetic outbursts in *fortissimo*. A generally very free handling of the tempo gives *Nachtstück* a rhapsodic, flowing character. With this improvisatory, dreamy character, Austbø achieves a larger legitimization of the work's title.

Track 6: Fartein Valen, *Nachtstück* from *Four Piano Pieces*, op. 22
Håkon Austbø, piano

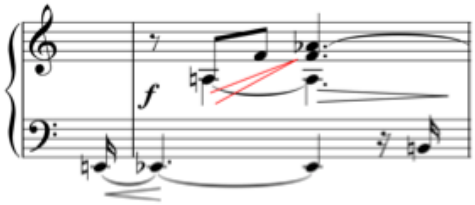
[56] http://www.farteinvalen.no/nyheter/einar-henning-smebye-om-fartein-valen/

It seems as though Austbø creates a mood picture with his silken touch, and he colours it by allowing the pedal to linger slightly over the minor second. Partly because such pedalling can disrupt Valen's fine polyphonic web, it strikes me at once that Valen's polyphonic lines are not Austbø's main concern. Austbø plays a lot with the tempo and this contributes towards creating direction and forward motion. I will attempt to describe the way he plays the first phrase.



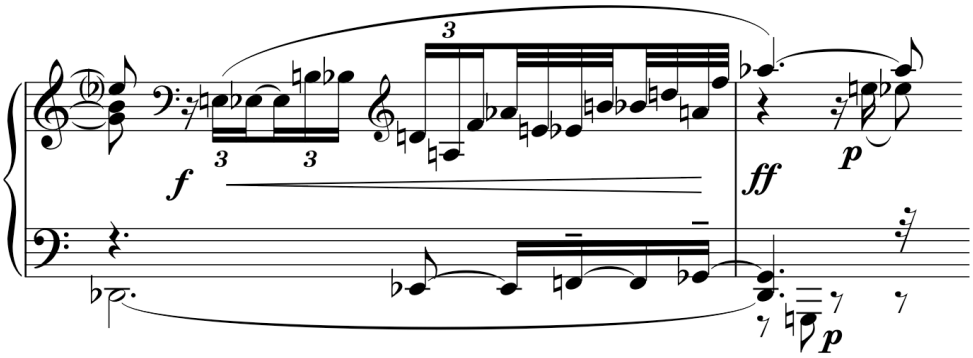
Fartein Valen: *Nachtstück*, op. 22, bar 1-7

He accelerates at the end of the first bar, lingers, accelerates again and it seems as though he hesitates somewhat before the last three notes before reaching the top On this a-flat he increases the tempo on the lower voices and then ligers again on the last three notes leading up to the b-flat. The e-flat and b-flat that are notated simultaneously are attacked separately, the right hand coming slightly after the left. He also plays the sixteenth-note motive at the end of the phrase *rubato* and *ritardando*. It all seems unplanned and spontaneous and I get a sense of improvisation. Austbø uses, as mentioned, a lot of variation in sound and he approaches Valen's score with a lot of imagination. A small, but telling example is bar 13. The red sign shows the way it sounds, deviating from Valen's score.



Fartein Valen: *Nachtstück,* op. 22, bar 13

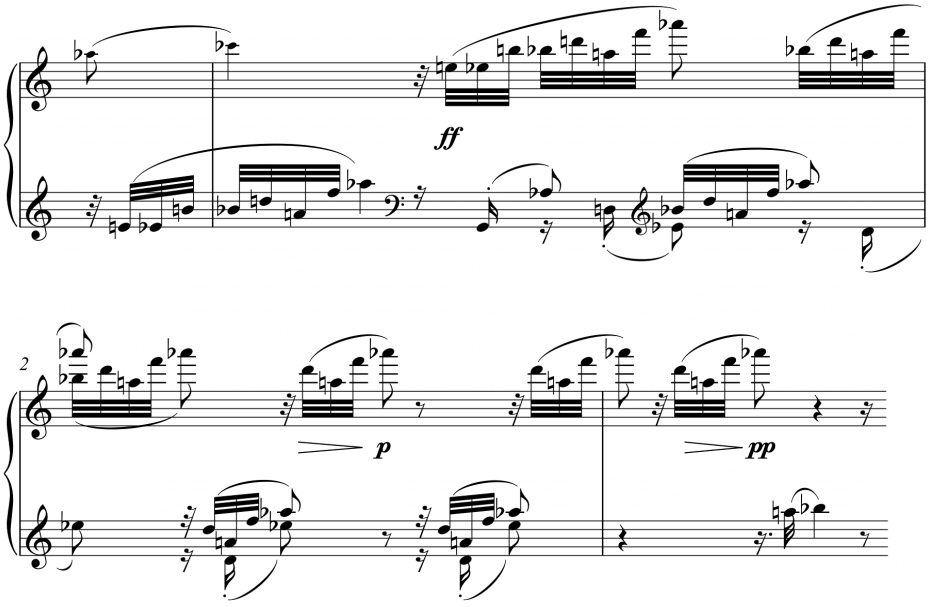
This impression is further reinforced in bar 20 and 21, where the first *fortissimo* appears.



Fartein Valen: *Nachtstück*, op. 22, bar 20-21

Austbø goes all the way. It seems as though the effect, the dramatic outburst is more important for him than hearing the actual notes and articulating the different intervals with which Valen creates this section. It is dramatic and wild, but creates a sound effect rather than a structural high point in the work's whole conception.

In the next high point in bars 33-36 there is also a considerable deviation from the main tempo, if one can, in any way, speak of a main tempo in this recording. Austbø uses a rapid tempo and gives this section a wilder and more virtuosic character. He creates a feeling of anxiety and it becomes, again, unexpectedly dramatic. (He actually neglects playing the final left hand figure in bar 34. We do not know whether this is a slip on the part of the performer or the result of a wrong splice from the producer).



Fartein Valen: *Nachtstück,* op. 22, bar 33-36

Austbø studied in Paris in the years 1966-71. Could one therefore state that his playing is influenced by the French piano school? He is also especially well known for his interpretations of Olivier Messiaen and Aleksandr Scriabin. A good example of French playing style can be found in the work of Marguerite Long (1874-1966). Long knew Fauré, Debussy and Ravel and received direct instructions from them, thus acquiring a special insight into their performance preferences. But even here we can see that the French style is not necessarily unified. In her book, *Le Piano* from 1959, she summarizes French pianism with emphasis on singing quality: "There is a concern that every note be delivered in the manner of an orator or of a singer".[57] She further writes that French style and technique are based on elegance, clarity and timbral suppleness. If one studies closely the French composer Claude Debussy and his preferences, one can find that he was just as concerned with clarity as with tone colour. Marguerite Long describes Debussy's playing style in the following manner:

> *Debussy was an incomparable pianist. How could you forget the subtleness, the caress, the depth of his touch. (...) There resides the special Debussy technique; this softness in the continuous pressure, and the colour he obtained with this touch on the soft dynamic level alone. He played almost without any harshness in the attack, but with a full and intense sonority.*[58]

Austbø's timbral preferences are here very similar to his treatment of Messiaen and Scriabin. All the same, it seems that what he wins in tone colour and imagination he loses in structure and clarity. I wrote at the beginning of this essay that one of the most unique aspects of Valen's music is the way he builds a musical whole. Every note is important and constitutes a building stone in a larger structure. I somehow cannot grasp this in Austbø's recording. Events become isolated and I miss the feeling of the long lines. However, this recording represents a new approach to Valen's music; in this respect it breaks with the previous recordings.

Reflection on my own recording of Nachtstück

My interpretations of Valen's piano music have changed considerably over the past six years. The CD recording from 2011 shows how I thought about and played the music at that point in time. I was near the end of my stipend project and had strong ideas and preferences about how I wanted to approach his music. I was concerned with clarity. At the same time I very much wished to stretch a long line like a thread through the entire work. I also wanted to bring out Valen's polyphonic qualities, as well as find a cantabile sound.

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57 Schonberg, Harold. *The Great Pianists*, *p 364* (Simon and Schuster, 1987).
58 Idem.

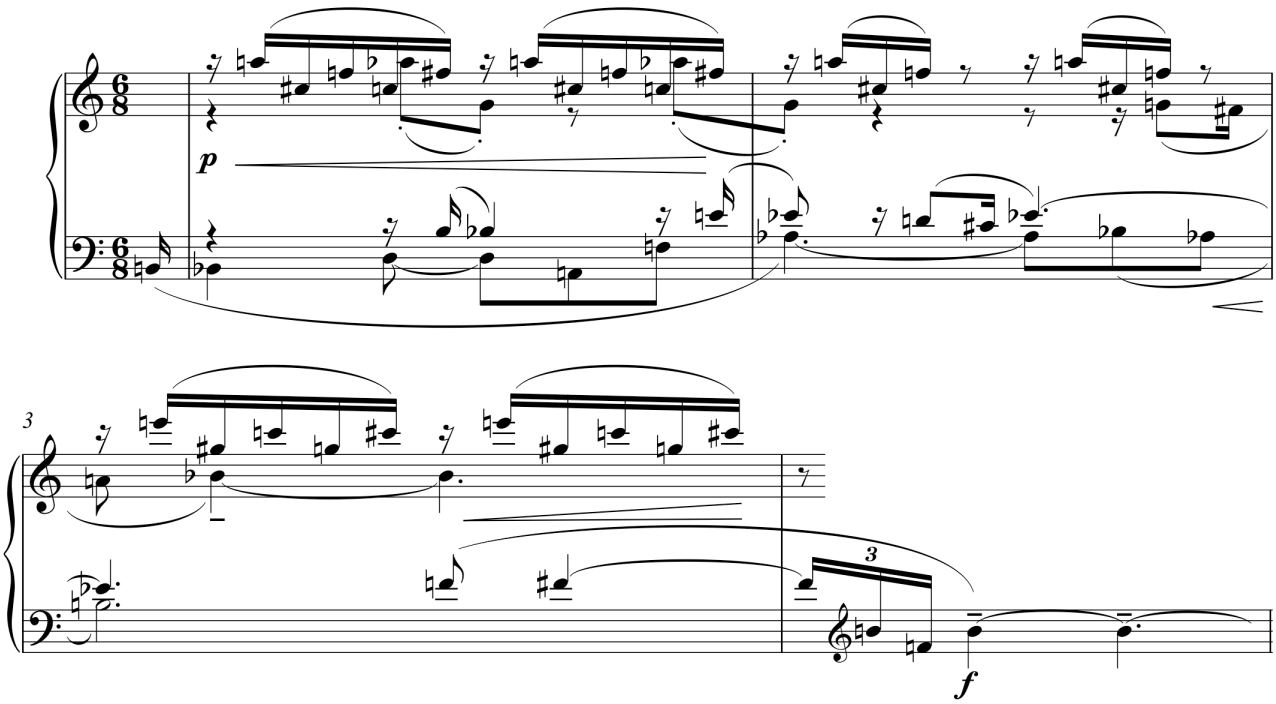
Track 7: Fartein Valen, *Nachtstück* from *Four Piano Pieces*, op. 22
Annabel Guaita, piano

Tempo

The first challenge with this piece is the choice of tempo. Valen writes *Moderato*. In one of his many working manuscripts of this piece, I find the following tempo: 88-92. That is quite fast, considering that the piece starts at a very slow tempo, and that the values of the notes are being doubled into more than the triple within the same tempo. If one tries to keep a continuously steady tempo, there will be problems with the faster notes of the climactic bars (bars 33-36 and 40-46). My tempo on this recording is slower than Valen's indication in the working manuscript and also slower than what is implied by his desired duration for the piece: 4'10''. I spent 4'22'' in my own recording, which is definitely the slowest version of them all. Smebye has the fastest recording at 3'43'', and Austbø 3'45'' is also quite fast; Robert Riefling, on the other hand, is not so fast at 4'13''. My aim, by beginning slightly slowly, was to avoid slowing down when the note values become shorter (that is, faster) so that a unity of tempo contributes to creating a red thread that runs through the entire piece. At the same time I wanted to retain clarity and a singing quality through the high points in bars 33-36 and 40-46. These climaxes are complex. There is an increase of density, both in the note values and between the voices. Everything happens at once, and in all the voices. I believe that the slow tempo I chose reflects my attempt to play every passage very *legato* and to respect Valen's slurs. The work I reflect upon in *2:2 Idiomatic resistance: Legato Phrasing and fingering*, shows that one of my strategies was keeping the tempo down and thereby bring out all the voices. I wrote this part before the recording in 2011. This approach changed. I don't try to play as *legato* anymore, but instead I try to make the piece more comfortable to play--chiefly by lifting fingers if I have to, especially where I use a lot of *sostenuto* pedalling as in the climactic bars (33-36 and 40-46). In the matter of tempo, although Austbø played this piece in the shortest time, his recording exhibits the most *rubato* playing. In my opinion he plays extremely quickly in the climaxes and this – along with the strong dynamics – results in virtuosic and dramatic expression.

Polyphonic structures (playing with instrumentation)

The following passage is a typical example on Valen's polyphonic texture.



Fartein Valen: *Nachtstück,* op. 22, bar 14-17

Four voices are evolving at the same time. The main theme that in the beginning was spreading out from the bass to the soprano is now being presented exclusively in the bass line. At the same time Valen is writing his peculiar *tenuto* signs in the alto voice. The four different recordings we now have listened to, solve this challenge of polyphonic playing very differently. In 2.6 *Idiomatic resistance 5: Polyphonic Playing,* I asked if it was possible to hear all the voices at the same time, without favouring one. Some of my questions in this particular passage were related to this: How do I create clarity and comprehensibility? This in turn led to another issue about which I recall Schoenberg's words on how emphasising one voice was considered intolerable. How strongly shall I emphasize the bass line? Shall I emphasize it at all? Through my open rehearsals with the different audiences during the project (as described in *2.7 Open rehearsals),* I started to verbalize and find metaphors for the sound ideals I had for the different voices. This is when I started to experiment with the ideas of instrumentation. Listen to my recording and you will find the passage starting at about 1:00. I was not trying to play one of the voices any stronger than the others, but used my imagination to create a special sound colour for each voice. For the bass line I tried to make this line warm and resonant, as the cello would have played it. I was trying to imitate of *legato*

connectedness and the singing tone which is the main quality of this instrument. Then I imagined the soprano voice being played by a flute with a thinner, and more brilliant and crisp sound. I imagined the first two notes in the alto voice as faintly sounding bells, and tried to play them softly percussive and thus make them stand out more clearly from the rest of the texture.

In the Riefling recording, this passage is found at 0:57. Apart from choosing a much sharper sound in all the voices, he takes Valen's *tenuto* signs very literarily, especially the b-flat in bar 15. He does not emphasize the bass line very much, but emphasises all of the voices. It is therefore more difficult to follow each voice throughout the passage and hear which tone that belongs to which voice. Smedbye plays this passage at 0:47. He articulates the voices much more than both Riefling and I do. The sound is crisp and the tempo aggressive. Austbø starts to play this passage at 0:51. He plays much more with the timing in this passage. He sometimes hesitates before important notes and in this sense one can say that he is inspired by the late Romantic tradition of *rubato.* Going back to my own recording, I notice now more than ever how I choose to let the voices evolve "by themselves" so to speak. I do not push the tempo as much as is done in the other recordings, and I do not favour any one voice over another. I also play the *f* less loudly than the other recordings. I do this consciously to save the occasion for a bigger climax in the next *f.* Am I too ascetic? Am I too Spartan? I do not believe so. I have chosen a quieter and more poetic sound quality for this piece, and this decision came after a long dialogue with myself and the other existing recordings.

Along the way during this project I rediscovered Riefling. This is somewhat paradoxical, since it was precisely this recording that in a way provoked me into challenging Riefling's "modernistic" approach throughout this project. What made me change my mind? Having struggled directly with the challenges of Valen's complex polyphonic structures, I can only admire Riefling's ability – putting aside the matter of tempo – to achieve clarity in the lines and melodies. I fell for the intensity of his polyphonic playing, for his uncanny skill in bringing the serious and unadorned qualities of Bach's music into Valen's world. At the same time I still cannot help but miss a certain sensual approach to sound. I have also discovered a play of tonal colours that Austbø shows is available and possible to read into Valen's scores. My main concepts of clarity and sound have acquired further nuances and possibilities. I have been led deeper into Valen's sound universe, while also becoming stronger in my conviction about what is important for me as a performer. Working on this essay, the detailed listening to and discussion around the three other recordings, also led me further inside my own interpretation. Now, two years after the recording I have calmed even more down, revelling more than before in the lyrical and poetic landscape. I now try to

lovingly develop this meditative approach more than I did on the recording. My original feeling that Valen's scores specifically demand honesty, a clear mind and a warm sound, has only become stronger. I felt strongly that bringing out Valen's virtuosic and extrovert qualities were not the right way for me to go. This music should not, in my opinion, be made into a vehicle for virtuoso display. There are extreme means of expression – through the use of dynamics, articulation, texture/register, dissonances etc. – but all of these musical parameters are components of musical forms and structures and have clear references to the classical criteria for audible clarity, coherence and comprehensibility. This duality and area of tension between expression and form is what makes this music so interesting and demanding.

Epilogue

About Being in Motion

I have found that my performance work with Valen and the Vienna School did not lead to a set of precise principles for playing in a *texttreue* fashion, but to a practice where the details may change from one performance to the next. My manner of approaching the music and preparing performances is, in the end, what I have developed, even while my performances may sound different from one year to the next. Just as Steuermann and the performers of the Second Viennese School changed their artistic approach in the course of their lives, (in ways sometimes even contradicting their own words), I found myself making complete turnarounds in my own approach many times. I believe these turning points were possible thanks to the long time I was able to concentrate on studying these pieces, and so the process led right into the core of my personality.

My research question, whether the acquisition of knowledge about a specific historical performance style can set free or limit artistic expression, was very clear at that point: My problem in doing research on the music as well as performing it was that I was caught very much in my own head and thoughts. Ideas, different ideals, thoughts and reflections continued to proliferate constantly during practising. I felt it was a limitation. When I perform, I need silence and peace of mind, because the most important thing I do when I perform, is to listen. I suppose most performers think and reflect when they practise, but many times I felt an urge to be original and to produce new insights in this music, and I tried to "turn over every little stone I found along the way" in order to produce something interesting. It took me away from the peace and calm I need in order to really listen when I play. The break I had from the project between the first concert in December 2011 and the second appraisal in 2013 was important in this regard. When I started to prepare for the final presentation concert that was to be played in June 2013, I could not go back thinking or reading about the research I had done. I did not want to think or listen to any recordings at all. I wanted to listen to myself. I wanted to be honest and sincere even if I would risk not doing something completely innovative an original with this music. I knew that one of my challenges was to play *fortissimo*. I had a tendency to become tense, accelerate tempo every time I approach a climax, especially in Alban Berg's *Sonate für Klavier*, op. 1. I always seemed to be unable to listen to myself very well in those moments. Also in sections of fast tempo with many notes, especially in Valen's highly complex passages like the left hand at the climax of *Prelude*, op. 29 no. 1 and some

of the variations in Webern's *Variationen für Klavier*, op. 27**,** I noticed that it became a blur if I played too fast. One possible solution was to just keep the tempo and to use more pedal, as Valen suggests in the prelude, but then I felt I was not facing or solving the real problem. I wanted to "speak" every note, as if taking the words of Schoenberg about clarity even further. So I started to look for a different way to approach the piano, in order to meet the complexity of these works in a different manner.

One of my strategies in this last period was to play even more slowly and take time to articulate more, not hiding anything, not even the accompanying voices, in Valen. I noticed that it was possible to hear everything that was going on at the same time only at a certain tempo. This also meant that I started to articulate the long slurs in smaller groups. After working like this for a while, I felt as if I was not singing Valen's music anymore, but more like speaking it. The *legato* became less connected and with less weight from the arm. The hand got closer to the keys and I was suddenly able to listen and to pronounce his music more clearly. I felt a big difference in the artistic approach, as if I had left behind the ideal of *cantabile*, and gone more into a rhetoric way of playing.

Another issue I questioned was my use of body movements when I played. I noticed that I moved my hand and sometimes even my body a lot, also after a chord had been struck. It became clear to me this was an old habit that was connected to the desire to express the music even more and maybe not trusting that what I already had done was enough. I realized that I cannot change anything after the chord or the note is struck. I can only listen to the sound. I noticed that when I kept still and did not move in the silences, I myself, and maybe the audiences too, could listen even better. I tried to centre my body instead of moving back and forth, thus creating a sense of stability and strength that kept my body continually open and not tense and closed. I started to believe more in the idea that fortissimo is not only about the amount of sound, but also in the attitude of the performer. Valen's music is full of silence, and I believe this also needs to be expressed. The moments of silence are also articulated as rests, but also have to be a part of the performance before, during and after the piece is played.

This has been a fruitful journey, and one that has not yet ended. I have allowed the different approaches to performance that I have learned to finally coalesce in my own artistic approach. Expressing the peacefulness in this music is something I have always, from the very beginning, found to be attractive and essential in all of these composers' music. Playing with Valen's

mysterious world of sounds, Webern's hyper expressiveness, Schoenberg's deep psychological states and Berg's youthful energetic drive and intensity is also about giving myself and other listeners space to listen.

Reflections on Performing

I enter the stage in half darkness. Valen's *Variations for piano*, op. 23 already sounds in my head. There is a strong feeling of familiarity with the piece – it is about me and the piece- a connection that is built upon a process of hard struggles but also breakthroughs. Nothing else exists – I am away from this world, and the audience somewhere out there in the hall may take part in my journey through the piece I am about to play, if my connection to the music works. At this stage with the piece, I am in a state of trust. Trust that all the work that I have done will carry me through the piece, even if I let go of some of my control and chose to live, listen and feel in the moment. My goal is to live the life of the piece there and then, experiencing it being born and the whole development of it, connecting moment with moment. I want to listen to the sounds I produce and try to relate them to one another. I am in a state of being inside the music, but yet keeping a distance so that I will be able to listen to myself. This is the ideal flow that I always hope will happen in a concert. But it does not always happen. The process of becoming really familiar with a piece by Fartein Valen is particularly arduous and time consuming. But this resistance is also what can make the connection to the piece very strong. To find this kind of "mindful state" is a main motivation for me when I play Valen. In his music I find it important to strike a balance between spontaneity and structural playing. It is hard to know when a piece by Valen is nearing readiness to be performed. When can I stop slowly polishing details and start to play through the whole piece? In the play-through, you start to lose the detailed work you have done, the craftsmanship that has been put into it. In Valen the details are so important because every note seems to be important. The notes cannot go unfelt through my fingers, so I have to listen to every connection, nourish the sound in every passage and connection. A whole life is in every piece, and every piece is a unique world.

Approaching the concert is like finding again the freshness that gets lost when you start working on a piece. In Valen this acquires a special kind of meaning that is different from composers who work with traditional harmonies. When I perform Valen's music, a large part of it has to do with keeping control so that I do not miss one note. This is a paradox because the audience cannot really hear if I play a wrong note. In Chopin or Mozart, you would hear the wrong note immediately. Playing Webern, I feel exactly the same way. I think it has to do with the concentration and awareness that is important to communicate in this music. If I lose control, I lose the connection to

me, to the instrument and to the music. When I recorded the CD *L'Altra Beltá* in May 2011, I became more careless about keeping control, knowing that I could redo the passage if something went wrong. This experience made me more confident because I discovered that I did not lose control even though I was not taking so much care anymore. I also expanded the range of dynamics of the pieces I played, discovering how soft it was possible to play, yet being able to hear clearly what I played. I was thinking: "I will take this with me into my next concert".

The days before the concert I find myself asking: "what is really important?" "Where do I want to bring the audience?" The atmosphere of the piece becomes important. The moments of silence become important. The energy becomes important. In the moment of performing, there is no time for hesitating. I want to go into the softest *pianissimos* or to the maximum of desperation. It has to be magic. And afterwards, I look at the piece differently. I also get impulses from the audience. It is an interaction that makes me listen differently to the music. It is as if I am listening together with the audience and discovering the piece again. My experience tells me that a piece by Chopin will float on its charm alone. Valen's music cannot. I have to give full attention to the piece, otherwise it becomes "meaningless". At the same time I have to explain the piece to the audience, so there has to be a distance in my relation to it as well. To explain the piece means for me to become aware of the music's inner relationships. It means I know where the main point of culmination is and it makes me structure my path towards it. Then I can allow the music to be released.

This situation cannot be rehearsed. The magic that happens in the concert hall is the real thing.

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Scores

Fartein Valen:

Nachtstück from *Four Piano Pieces,* op. 22 (1934/35) Copyright 1948, Edition Lyche, nr 154
Variations, op. 23 (1935/36) Copyright 1949, Edition Lyche, nr 151
Prelude op. 29, no. 1 (1937) Copyright 1952, Edition Lyche, Oslo. No. 100
Prelude op. 29, no. 2 (1937) Copyright 1948, Edition Lyche, Oslo. No. 95
Intermezzo, op. 36 (1939/40) Copyright 1952, Edition Lyche, Oslo. No. 226

Arnold Schoenberg:

Sechs Kleine Klavierstücke, op. 19, no. 2 (1911) Copyright 1913, Universal Edition, Wien No. 5069
Fünf Klavierstücke, op. 23, no.1 (1920) Copyright 1923, 1951, Wilhelm Hansen, Copenhagen
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Alban Berg:

Sonate für Klavier, op. 1 (1908/09) Copyright 2006, Universal Edition, Wien, No. 33070

Anton Webern:

Variationen für Klavier, op. 27 (1936) Copyright 1979, Universal Edition, Wien. No. 16845

Appendix

Contact with Various Networks and Professional Environments

Supervisors

Einar Røttingen, pianist and professor Grieg Academy (*Main supervisor*)
He has been my main supervisor who encouraged me to start this project. He guided my piano playing during the project period 2008-2011 and he was also very helpful in order to clarify my thoughts and process with the issues of critical reflection. His doctoral thesis (Røttingen, 2005) on Norwegian piano music, especially his thoughts about performing Valen's *Sonata* op. 38, has been inspiring and influential reading.

Morten Eide Pedersen, composer, musicologist and teacher at Grieg Academy (*Supervisor*).
He helped me in the beginning of the project and asked important questions that I had to reflect on concerning Valen's music and style.

Alfred Cramer, musicologist and violinist, Pomona Institute, Claremont, USA (*Supervisor*).
He was my external (international) supervisor whose dissertation (Cramer, 1997) inspired me for the idea of this project. Cramer was in Bergen twice during the project period and gave lectures at the Grieg Academy while supervising my project and sharing his knowledge and thoughts on the performance practice of the Second Viennese School. He also invited me to play a concert and give a lecture about my project at Pomona Institute in May 2012. There we played Anton Webern's *Vier Stücke für Geige und Klavier,* op. 7 (1910/rev 1914/ published 1922) and compared – on stage for the audience– different sketches from the composer's hand. (For example, how the violin ended with a *glissando* instead of seven notes until about 1920). He has been most present and helpful in my writing process.

Arnulf Mattes, musicologist, research fellow Oslo, Norway. (*Supervisor April-May 2014)*.
Recently completed a Post Doc project: *Musical Expression in Transforming Cultures: A Comparative Study of Rudolf Kolisch's Performance Practice*. He has given me valuable insights and new perspectives on my writing. In a unique way he has enlightened me to open up for a more

theoretical focus in this text, yet make me see how I can take care of the practical-artistic aspects at the same time.

Other Professional Musicians and Artists

Jordi Mora, conductor, Barcelona, Spain

Specialist in chamber music and musical interpretation through his knowledge of Musical Phenomenology. He graduated as an oboist from the Hochschule für Musik in Würzburg, Germany, and took a degree in Musicology at the University of Munich, where he completed a dissertation entitled *The Structuring of Vertical Functions in the Symphonic Works of Beethoven*. He studied orchestral conducting and Musical Phenomenology under Sergiu Celibidache, as well as taking part in courses in Mainz, Trier, London, Stuttgart, Paris and Munich, the latter with the Munich Philharmonic. He has conducted major orchestras in Germany, Spain, Italy, Romania, Greece, Russia, the U.S. and Argentina, and has been conductor of the Münchner Camerata, the Greek Symphony Orchestra and the Orquesta Sinfónica del Vallés. He has been a member of the jury of various international competitions (Mitropoulos, Tárrega). He has taught extensively in Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Norway and Argentina in particular, and since 2003 he has held the post of professor of conducting at the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya. He is currently conductor of Orquesta Sinfónica Segle XXI and the Bruckner Akademie Orchester in Munich, with whom he is conducting Bruckner's complete symphonic works.

I worked through all the artistic material with Mora and we discussed many issues concerning the interpretation of all the music in the project. This work was of utmost importance for me and influenced my playing of the pieces concerning how to create a feeling of unity and musical continuity in all these works. Most important was the detailed intensive work we did together on Valen's *Trio,* op. 5 with Oliver Szűts, violin and Sebastian Dörfler/Ben Nation, cello. The main topics were how to create thematic relationships between the polyphonic voices and to create clarity in the complex structure if this piece.

Jochen Köhler, Pianist, managing director and Professor of Piano and Piano Pedagogy at Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, Faculty of Philosophy II, Institute of Music, Department of Music Education/ Performance.

The connection he has to music from the *Second Viennese School* goes back to when he was sixteen

years old and he devoted himself to Schoenberg's music supported by his teachers in Bremen, Prof. Luciano Ortis and Prof. Aloys Kontarsky. The latter was a student of Eduard Erdmann, one of the early performers of Schoenberg's and Berg's music. Kontarsky was well acquainted personally with Alban Berg and performed Berg's *Sonate für Klavier,* op. 1 and *Sechs Kleine Klavierstücke,* op. 19 by Schoenberg already in 1919 in Berlin and also knew Steuermann from the *Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, Darmstadt* (Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music).[61] Jochen Köhler also got rich information about Schoenberg and his circle by many people in Vienna who had been in contact with members of the Viennese School or with students of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern. He has played Schoenberg's complete piano music, *Pierrot Lunaire,* op. 21, as well as solo pieces, chamber music and lieder by Berg and Webern. As a teacher he dealt with the music of the *Second Viennese School's* composers in regular teaching as well as in master classes at the *Arnold Schoenberg Center* in Vienna.

I visited Jochen Köhler in Vienna twice (in 2010 and in 2011). He was also once in Bergen, giving a lecture at the Grieg Academy on performance practice of the *Second Viennese School*, as well as working through all the music of the project, also the piano pieces by Valen. I also got many historical recordings from him (such as the Stadlen performance of Webern's *Variationen*). I recorded all the lessons with him, and I felt I got a personal contact and insight in a certain way of thinking about the piano, and got a bit closer to what I earlier in the text called the German piano school. I asked Köhler specifically about this and he answered the following.

> *Of course German musicians are well trained in underlining specific elements typical for German composers: a special feeling of what we call "innig", a clear structure, the importance of bass lines and middle voices, comprehensibility (especially of the form), the cantabile touch....*[62]

With this, I started to play more with voicing and colours in the middle different voices. Jochen Köchler was focussing a lot on sound, that the sound of the instrument should always be interesting and beautiful. He also focused a lot on finding and expressing the character of the music. The key word was always "singing"! He made me actually sing with my voice the different melodies in Schoenberg and Webern! For Schoenberg he told me to be more free in my approach to the tempo. He wanted me to bring in more contrasts, but keeping the relationships in dynamics and tempos. Köhler was not acquainted with the music of Fartein Valen but went nevertheless directly into the music with great understanding and respect.

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61 http://www.internationales-musikinstitut.de/en/

62 Köhler, Jochen. Personal conversation in Vienna, 10 April 2011

Olivér Szűts, violin, Györ/Hungary, Vienna/Austria. Violinist and chamber music player that lived and played in the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra in Bergen from 2008-2011. He had great knowledge about the Viennese way of playing the music of Lanner and the Strauss Dynasty, through years of experience playing with various traditional Viennese ensembles. We had many interesting discussions in our rehearsals that lead me to a deeper understanding of some unwritten "rules" of this tradition.

> *The 3rd beat is late, but the 2nd is early. Sometimes it is more exaggerated, and sometimes it's more straight. The length of the "Nachschläge" varies, depending tempo and harmonics. It would be quite impossible trying to notate it, all that retaining-releasing. But it's very logical and organic on the other side, once you got the feeling for that it is following the line like a rollercoaster.*[63]

It especially influenced how we played the second movement of the Valen's *Trio*, op. 5 and Anton Webern's *Vier Stücke für Geige und Klavier,* op. 7, which we performed together several times.

Mai Goto, pianist, Osaka, Japan/ Bergen, Norway. A wonderful person, friend and pianist for whom I played for the last months before the final concert of the project on 7 June 2013. What she did was so simple, yet so difficult: she taught me to listen more, to do less and stop fighting with myself and the piano.

Marko Nouwens, pianist, The Netherlands, Bergen/Norway. A great pianist whom I played for many times and who helped me by making all the musical examples for the text.

Geir Rege, musicologist, Bergen, Norway
He read my texts many times and helped me on my way of developing a critical "polyphonic" voice in my writing. His own master in musicology about listening experiences in Webern (Rege, 2003) was most inspirational.

Sigurd Imsen, violinist in Trondheim Symphony Orchestra and fellow researcher in the programme.

Else Olsen S, from Bergen. Pianist and fellow researcher in the programme.

Berit Kvinge Tjøme, musicologist and writer. I met her personally as well as reading all her books about Valen.

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[63] Szűts, Olivér. Personal conversation, Bergen 2010

Ricardo Odriozola, Violinist, composer and teacher at the Grieg Academy. Translator and proof reader of many parts of this text.
Fartein Valen- Sendstad, owner of Valenheimen and the composer's closest living relative. He has become a good friend and has supported my project all the way.

Contact with Network and Different Audiences

Valenfestivalen, Haugesund, Norway
An important arena where I performed many times during the project period.

The Schoenberg Centre, Vienna, Austria
I visited this centre in 2008 and got a lot of books and copies of articles, original scores and performer's notes of the Second Viennese School's composers.

Valen for Children: Can Valen Fly?

Collaboration with the dancer Henriette Blakstad, the video artist Charlotte Engelhaart and the stage director Anne Mali Sæther.

During the first year in the project I got a request from Sveio Kommune, where Valen's estate, Valevåg is situated. I was to develop a performance built on Valen's music for 10-14 year-old school children for the opening of the Fartein Valen Centre that was to take place during 2013. I collaborated with the dancer **Henriette Blakstad**, the video artist **Charlotte Engelhaart** and the stage director **Anne Mali Sæther.** We made a 20 minute "test balloon" where we tried out some ideas that we were to develop into a longer performance later [66]. Although we actually never got to play *Can Valen fly?* for children, because to the plans to build the Valen Centre were postponed. The process of making it was interesting enough in itself to deserve a chapter in this text.
The basis for the performance was Valen's *Variations,* op. 23. All of us prepared ourselves by reading and listening, trying to come as close as possible to Valen as a person and to his compositional ideas. Anne Mali Sæther gave me the task of finding images in his music inspired from his life. The task would sound like: "Could you find his horse in one of his rhythms, or the cactuses in his melodies, or maybe how to play on the piano as if imitating his cat's soft paws?" Then we met for three days in Charlotte Engelhaart's studio in Nesodden to work out the ideas.

[66] This live performance may be seen on You Tube: *Kan Valen fly?* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNCeJPZzhis

The performance starts with me giving a small demonstration of the piece, afterwards playing the whole piece in dialogue with dancers, choreography/improvisation and video. The video transforms ideas from Valen's music into geometrical forms. Sometimes they multiply, sometimes they move backwards and forwards on the screen, similarly to how Valen sometimes plays with his motives. The dancer is trying to catch the tones that have become lights dancing on the screen. Valen's music gets transformed into movement, into a bodily expression, colours and sound.
Because I wanted to give the children an idea of how it is to play many voices at the same time, I compared it to the multi-tasking situations we all know from the hustle and bustle of early morning. The text from the performance goes like this:

> *It is as if the voices speak with one another. Playing four melodies with two hands is no easy matter. It reminds me of someone I know. She manages to eat her breakfast while brushing her hair with one hand, talking at the same time in her mobile phone AND trying to fetch the car keys, which have fallen behind the sofa, with the other hand. One needs to divide one's hands in two and to manage to have four thoughts going on simultaneously in ones head, trying to reach the end without having lost contact with any of them. The fingers must also be completely soft, like rubber. They must hold the notes, not release them, hold them until the next one takes over.*[67]

The meeting with these artists and their interpretation of Valen's music influenced how I looked upon playing Valen's music the following years. During the days we were working together, developing the ideas, I started breaking down my own intellectual distance from the music. This very direct way of thinking about his music was very healthy in this first phase of the project, forcing me to look for images and metaphors. That forced me to discover Valen's variety in expression. It made me also become more aware of the different characters in Valen's music.
A special challenge arose in the performance situation. The timing of the images of the video was set beforehand. So I had to play in the same tempo as I did when I rehearsed, looking at the video to adjust the timing. I wanted to be free, to communicate with the music, with the dancer and with the audience, but felt this restriction of tempo flexibility as a straitjacket.
Having to wait more and take slower tempi than I would have done musically between the different variations, in order to synchronize with the video and the dancer, I lost my timing and the focus on the wholeness. Through this experience I discovered that tempo is something that is "alive". A tempo taken in the rehearsal room feels completely different on stage. The distance to the audience, the instrument, the acoustics are all variables that I as a musician adjust to, on a conscious or a

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[67] Original Norwegian text: *Det er som om stemmene snakker med hverandre. Å spille fire melodier med to hender… det er ikke så enkelt, det…Det er litt slik som en jeg kjenner har det om morgenen, det. Hun klarer å spise frokost samtidig som hun forsøker å børste håret med den ene hånden…mens hun snakker i mobiltelefonen OG forsøker å få tak i bilnøklene som har falt bak kommoden med den andre. Man må dele begge hendene sine i to, og klare det å ha fire tanker i hodet samtidig, og forsøke å komme til slutten uten å ha mistet taket på noen av dem… Fingrene må også være helt myke som gummi altså… ! De må holde tonene, ikke slippe dem, holde til den neste overtar…*

subconscious level. We performed *Kan Valen Fly?* in Vigdatun, Sveio on September 28th 2009 for a handful of local politicians, school teachers and Valen-enthusiasts, in order to get financial support to extend the show into a 45-minute school concert. The following year we were granted funding by the local SR Bank but, for different reasons, the final realization of the project has been put on ice.

Intermezzo – Concert Lecture in Valenheimen

An event that influenced my connection to Valen's music, was my visits to his home Valenheimen in Valevåg. In his home I found a spirit that I believe it is important to get in touch with in order to get close to the very essence of his expression. The interior of the house is functional and simple also in a very charming way. There are coffee cups of thin porcelain, the old pale pink rugs in the working room and solid oak tables. The view from his windows is the fjord and the mountains that surround them. His love for art and literature is present by all his bookshelves filled with classics from Norwegian, Danish and German literature. On the walls of his studio, we find works by the Norwegian contemporary painter Agnes Hiorth. When I entered his working room, beside the old piano was his working desk with his pencils were still there as if he had been sitting there working just a few hours earlier. Beside his piano is a bench with piles of his own scores as well as Bach's and Schoenberg's. In his drawers, there are still small envelopes with seeds from his roses and cactuses, delicately wrapped and each one of them named. It was a meeting with a house that had a strong reflection of his music: with the quiet, cultivated, religious, honest, hard working man who got up every morning at 7 AM to work.

He met resistance all his life for the language he had chosen to develop. Yet he never fought back with words. I cannot exactly show how this meeting affected my playing but it made me believe in going further into the expression in his music even more. Meeting Fartein Valen-Sendstad, Valen's closest living relative, has also been important. Playing for him while he was sitting in the armchair with a glass of wine, listening, and the conversations we have had on music, and the connection to life and philosophy and religion, made a great impact on me. Through this, I discovered that an intimate setting of a concert with Valen's music is what works best. Being close to the audience, inviting them to listen and to discover the warmth and beauty there, is in Valen's music.
From this meeting came the idea of concert lectures. In April 2010 I did a concert lecture about *Intermezzo,* op. 36 in the same room where the piece was written.[68] The comments people gave

[68] The live concert lecture may be seen on You Tube. *Konsertforedrag om Fartein Valens Intermezzo,* op.36 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_BoVDUrXVI

afterwards were that they were able to listen throughout the whole piece, being able to keep their attention. Some said that the music did not seem so difficult anymore, that they were surprised that there actually were emotions in the music that they could feel and understand.

CD with Music Examples

Track 1: Anton Webern, *Variationen für Klavier***,** op. 27
Peter Stadlen, piano. Darmstadt '96 Internationale Ferienkurse für Musik 1946 – 1996 Vol. 1 (WWE 1CD 31897), Nr. 04 Unveröffentlichte Aufnahmen aus dem Archiv des IMD(Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt) WWE 1CD 31894- WWE !CD 31897, LC 7989 Label: Col Legno

Track 2: Arnold Schoenberg, *Fünf Klavierstücke***,** op. 23, no. 1
Eduard Steuermann, piano. (Columbia Records, 1957)

Track 3: Arnold Schoenberg, *Fünf Klavierstücke***,** op. 23, no. 1
Glenn Gould, piano. (Sony Classical, 1964/65)

Track 4: Fartein Valen, *Nachtstück,* from *Four Piano Pieces*, op. 22, no. 1
Robert Riefling, piano. *Fartein Valen: The Complete Music for Piano* (BIS 1980)

Track 5: Fartein Valen, *Nachtstück* from *Four Piano Pieces*, op. 22, no. 1
Einar Henning Smebye, piano. *Fartein Valen: Complete Piano Works* (Arena, 2005)

Track 6: Fartein Valen, *Nachtstück* from *Four Piano Pieces*, op. 22, no. 1
Håkon Austbø, piano. *Norwegian Imperatives* (Arena, 2009)

Track 7: Fartein Valen, *Nachtstück* from *Four Piano Pieces*, op. 22, no. 1
Annabel Guaita, piano. *L' Altra Beltá* (Lawo 2011)