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The collaborative pianist

Encounter the art
through collaboration

Abstract

This essay explores the core elements of working as a collaborative pianist, focusing on piano reductions. It offers practical solutions for professional collaborative pianists and students, answering how they can create their piano reductions and providing practical advice and tools to enhance their skills.

Collaborative piano playing involves pianists representing symphony orchestras or other instruments while collaborating with solo instrumentalists, choirs, or groups using piano reductions. This requires skill and innovation to preserve the unique sounds of the orchestra or instruments while creating new solutions and seamless collaborations. Professional collaborative pianists share valuable insights on tackling these challenges.

The essay's results emphasize the need to discern essential notes, agree on tempo, prioritize rhythm, and effectively support the soloist. The pianist must familiarize themselves with the piece, listen to recordings, and engage in collaborative performance with mutual respect. They should also possess proficiency in reading sheet music and comprehending reduced scores.

One of the key findings was the importance of collaboration in music. It was suggested that a piano reduction should not become too simple or too complex but should present the essential musical properties of the score. This underscores the crucial role of the collaborative pianist in the musical process. The collaborative pianist should strive for a deeper understanding of the vocal line, ensuring they are well-prepared to support the soloist at crucial points in the music effectively. A scholar and collaborative pianist advises preparing their own version of a score and creating a piano reduction in real-time. The importance of imitating the symphony orchestra in one's piano playing, because replicating the sounds of orchestral instruments creates a notably richer and more varied piano sound. Musical collaboration is not just a technical process, but an emotional and psychological partnership. Listening to the orchestra part and understanding the orchestra, orchestral sounds, and musical form, can significantly enhance performance.

Keywords: collaboration, collaborative pianist, piano reduction.

Sammanfattning

Den här uppsatsen utforskar kärnelementen i att arbeta som kollaborativ pianist, med fokus på pianoreduktioner. Den erbjuder praktiska lösningar för professionella kollaborativa pianister och studenter, svarar på hur de kan skapa sina pianoreduktioner och ger praktiska råd och verktyg för att förbättra sina färdigheter.

Kollaborativt pianospel involverar pianister som representerar symfoniorkestrar eller andra instrument samtidigt som de samarbetar med soloinstrumentalister, körer eller grupper med hjälp av pianoreduktioner. Detta kräver skicklighet och innovation för att bevara orkesterns eller instrumentens unika ljud samtidigt som man skapar nya lösningar och sömlösa samarbeten. Professionella kollaborativa pianister delar värdefulla insikter om hur man hanterar dessa utmaningar.

Uppsatsens resultat betonar behovet av att urskilja viktiga toner, komma överens om tempo, prioritera rytm och effektivt stödja solisten. Pianisten måste bekanta sig med stycket, lyssna på inspelningar och delta i ett kollaborativt framförande med ömsesidig respekt. De bör också ha färdigheter i att läsa noter och förstå reducerade partiturer.

Ett av de viktigaste resultaten var vikten av samarbete inom musik. Det föreslogs att en pianoreduktion inte skulle bli för enkel eller för komplex, utan skulle presentera partiturets väsentliga musikaliska egenskaper. Detta understryker den kollaborativa pianistens avgörande roll i den musikaliska processen. Den kollaborativa pianisten bör sträva efter en djupare förståelse av sångstämman, och se till att de är väl förberedda för att effektivt stödja solisten på avgörande punkter i musiken. En forskare och kollaborativ pianist ger råd att förbereda sin egna version av ett partitur och skapa en pianoreduktion i realtid. Vikten av att imitera symfoniorkestern i sitt pianospel, eftersom att replikera ljuden från orkesterinstrument skapar ett märkbart rikare och mer varierat pianoljud. Musikalisk kollaboration är inte bara en teknisk process, utan ett känslomässigt och psykologiskt partnerskap. Att lyssna på orkesterstämman och förstå orkestern, orkesterljuden och den musikaliska formen kan avsevärt förbättra framförandet.

Nyckelord: kollaboration, kollaborativ pianist, pianoreduktion.

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1. Introduction

As a collaborative pianist, I've developed a deep appreciation for the singular and intimate nature of duo performances. The profound connection that emerges during these performances—audible, physical, emotional, and metaphysical—particularly in public settings, has left me in awe. This has kindled a strong curiosity, a driving force that motivates me to delve deeper into the elements that contribute to the enchanting quality of a duo performance. The challenges that collaborative pianists face are exciting to explore.

Aiming to create a piano reduction of a composition crafted initially for a symphony orchestra presents many essential considerations. Should collaborative pianists seek to replicate an orchestra's diverse sounds, rhythms, and dynamics, or should they adhere to other traditions regarding the sounds produced? These are not only academic inquiries but also deeply impactful ones that influence the interpretation and execution of the work.

Producing a piano reduction of a musical score is undeniably challenging. Arrangers must grapple with how closely they should adhere to the original score regarding harmony, rhythm, and melody. The orchestral score often contains intricate details that stretch the limits of a single pianist's capabilities, thereby adding to the complexity of the task.

1.1 Aims

This study, involving three professional collaborative pianists, aims to delve into their unique role as collaborative pianists and their approaches to piano reductions. Their wealth of experience can potentially enrich the teaching methods of music educators.

1.2 Research questions

According to three professional collaborative pianists, what are the collaborative pianists' essential roles, and which important aspects are there when creating piano reductions?

2. Literature review

The literature review is a comprehensive exploration of a wide range of topics, from the very definitions and historical context of collaborative pianist, piano reductions and transcriptions to the profound influence of Franz Liszt as a master transcriber. We delve into the practical application of piano reductions, the intricate process of simplifying a piano reduction, and the thoughtful considerations for orchestral arrangements. We also examine the art of piano arrangements, the pivotal role of collaborative pianists, the nuances of piano technique, and the fascinating realm of the physics and metaphysics of piano playing, guided by twelve fundamental principles. Lastly, we present Rubrecht's model and its insightful comparison of simplification and complexity.

2.1 Collaborative pianist

The word collaboration comes “from the Latin word structure, it can be broken down into two parts, con- (“with”) and labōrō (“work”)” (Yang, 2023, p. 2).

Collaborative pianists have historically played a crucial role in providing musical support for singers and instrumentalists across different periods of musical history. Regarding the terminology used in the classical music industry, the term 'piano accompanist' has been the more traditional choice. However, in recent years, the term has been shifting towards the term 'collaborative pianist.' The distinction between the two lies in the level of engagement and the role of interpreting or creating music in partnership with other musicians.

The term collaborative pianist has become used commonly in recent years, in an attempt to change the perception of accompanists as secondary performers to that of equal partners with co-performers and to reflect the musical, emotional, and psychological partnership involved in collaborative performance. (Geringer & Sasanfar, 2013, p. 162)

Numerous classical pianists have been striving for greater recognition by avoiding the terms "accompanying" and "accompanist" in favor of "collaborative piano" and "collaborator" (Morgenroth, 2015).

When piano accompanists are mentioned, there is a sense of subordination to the soloist or group. In contrast, collaborative pianists approach the performance as equals, resulting in a more engaging and unrestricted performance that results in different responsibilities and opportunities for the collaborative pianist.

Sir Herbert Hamilton Harty, a renowned Irish pianist and composer, was referred to as the "prince of accompanists" by *The Musical Times* in the 1920s. He preferred the term collaborator instead of accompanist, as he believed the latter term had led to the neglect of the art of

accompanying. He believed that a skilled collaborative pianist should possess the following four essential qualities: an all-around technique, exceptional sight-reading ability, the capability to transpose, and the ability to read orchestral scores and transfer them to the piano (Watts, 2019).

The ensemble pianist or the accompanist or the man 'at the piano' – to be first rate at his job does not need to be a superman. He does need to be a good pianist, he does need sensitive ears, and he does need a sensitive musical brain. Strangely enough, too, he does need in his chemical makeup, that repository of all human feeling, that source of poetry, fire, and romance, namely, a heart. — Gerald Moore (Yang, 2023, p. 13)

Gerald Moore, the renowned English classical pianist, was most famous for his collaborations with many distinguished musicians throughout his career. He firmly believed that the most important quality for a collaborative pianist was the transformative ability to express their innermost feelings through their music. While other musical abilities, such as having a good ear, taste, finger dexterity, or even vision, were necessary, they were all secondary to the heart. If the heart did not function properly, then all other abilities would be of little use (Yang, 2023). Similarly, Ibes (2010) talks about 'going through the motions without the emotions,' which aptly captures what he describes as the mental process pianists undergo to truly immerse themselves in music.

2.1.1 Roles of collaborative pianists

“Of all the different branches of piano playing, the one which has been most consistently neglected is that of the art of accompaniment” (Watts, 2019).

Collaborative pianists who perform trios by composers such as Mozart, Schubert, and Brahms, using a combination of piano, violin, and cello, have a distinct and multifaceted role that offers an abundance of possibilities. With the piano serving as the backbone of the ensemble, the violin and cello work in harmony to create a harmonious and melodic sound that is both emotive and captivating. The pianist's role is to provide support while also showcasing virtuosity, offering a range of tonal colors and textures that complement the string instruments. By balancing technique and artistry, pianists playing in trios can create a truly transcendent auditory experience that is both beautiful and thought-provoking.

In the context of musical ensembles, the trio is a prime example of how each instrumentalist plays a distinctive role, characterized by unique tonal qualities. Such a group requires no reference to any instruments beyond their own, thereby emphasizing the importance of individual performance.

However, when it comes to a piano reduction, the role of the composer or arranger becomes even more vital. They must provide precise instructions to the collaborative pianist regarding tonal qualities, requiring a high degree of precision and attention to detail. For instance, the collaborative pianist might be instructed to play specific passages with the sound of an oboe or

another instrument from the orchestra in mind. This task highlights the importance of considering the sound and concept of a symphony orchestra, thus underscoring the critical role of the collaborative pianist when shaping the overall musical experience.

2.2 History

The practice of creating piano reductions can be traced back to the Baroque era, and the significance of transcribing music into reductions has endured across various musical epochs.

Compositions of, among others, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), and Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827) have left an enduring legacy of concertos for piano and orchestra. Notably, these illustrious composers did not generally pen a second pianist's piano reduction of the orchestra part. Nevertheless, subsequent generations of pianists have recognized the historical significance of these works and have published sheet music score versions for two pianos, comprising solo piano (piano I) and piano reduction of the orchestra (piano II). Consequently, the cultural value of these concertos has been preserved for posterity.

Colton (1992) describes the centuries-old practice of transcribing music into reductions by the organist masters Johann Gottfried Walther and Johann Sebastian Bach:

When Walther and Bach arranged orchestra concertos for keyboard instruments, they were simply following an old organist's custom of transcribing ensemble music for solo instruments. This practice, known as intabulation, was widely spread during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and forms the historical background for Bach's keyboard arrangements. (p. 2)

During the nineteenth century, the transcription of orchestral and chamber music works into reduced piano works for solo or other combined sets of instruments gained significant popularity among music enthusiasts. This practice served two primary purposes. Firstly, it provided a gateway for amateurs to perform pieces that would have been otherwise beyond their technical abilities. Secondly, it allowed virtuoso performers to showcase their technical prowess and musicianship to audiences (Colton, 1992).

During the Romantic era, composers like Liszt were among the most important and influential musical figures (Hoi-Ning Lee, 2016). Liszt and notable composers such as Tchaikovsky, Grieg, and Rachmaninoff revolutionized the approach to piano reductions. Their focus shifted from mere reproduction of orchestral sounds to prioritizing a pianist's performance's technical and musical aspects. This departure from the traditional view, emphasizing adherence to a set interpretation, marked a significant shift in piano performance. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that specific piano reductions from the mid-19th and early 20th centuries still adhere to the traditional perspective.

Original orchestrally-conceived piano music, then, has a context in both functional realisations and a more creative approach associated with Liszt's transcriptions and later (in response?) Alkan

in his own published arrangements (his solo adaptations of Mozart and Beethoven piano concertos can be seen as particularly significant in this regard, paving the way for his later original work in this form). As Isidor Phillip noted, Alkan took the idea of the 'orchestral' piano to a further extreme than any other 19th century composer, Liszt and Schumann included. (Inglis, 2017, p. 12)

Boyd (2001) discusses the exceptional pianist and composer Leopold Godowsky, who was known for arranging already challenging pieces to create even more intricate versions. Charles-Valentin Alkan, another virtuoso and composer, similarly pushed the boundaries by creating piano reductions of musical works that surpassed the complexity of those by any other 19th-century composer (Inglis, 2017). Boyd (2001) explained that composers arranged already challenging pieces to create even more complex versions for professional pianists.

The art of performing piano reductions is a continuously evolving process. When renowned organists Walther and Bach transcribed orchestral concertos for keyboard instruments, they adhered to the conventions of their time as organists (Colton, 1992). Liszt's transcriptions of Beethoven's complete symphonies exemplified his distinctive artistic vision (Roberge, 1993), expanding the possibilities both in terms of artistic transcendence and technical pianistic capability. The essential elements of performing piano reductions are inherently linked to the musical demands of each historical period. Thus, the demands during the time of the great organists Walther and Bach differed from those of the Liszt era, as well as from the current context in which professional collaborative pianists operate in diverse musical settings and with varying equipment, including different pianos and acoustic environments.

2.3 Liszt: master piano transcriber

Franz Liszt is widely considered to be one of the most skilled transcribers of songs, chamber music, and orchestral works for solo piano in the history of Western classical music. His reputation as a virtuoso pianist and composer is largely attributed to his innovative transcriptions of works by some of the most celebrated composers of his time, including Beethoven, Schumann, and Wagner. Liszt's transcriptions of Beethoven's nine symphonies in particular are regarded as groundbreaking achievements in the art of transcription for piano.

According to Roberge's (1993) study, Liszt's transcriptions not only demonstrated his exceptional technical abilities but also his unique artistic vision and interpretation of the original works. In this way, Liszt's transcriptions have had a significant impact on the development of piano music as a distinct art form and is regarded as one of the most accomplished transcribers of songs, chamber music, and orchestral works for solo piano. He is mainly known for his transcriptions of Beethoven's nine symphonies. According to Roberge (1993), Liszt pioneered the art of transcribing works for the piano.

He successfully captured the essence of the original work while transferring it to a new medium, making Beethoven's nine symphonies more widely available.

Although Beethoven's symphonies gained popularity with Liszt's transcriptions, they are still considered one of the most challenging pieces in the piano repertoire and are rarely performed.

According to Latham (2011), transcribing a piece involves copying it while changing its layout or notation, whereas arranging involves changing the medium of the composition. The exact definitions of transcription and arrangement are disputed, but generally, transcription involves re-notating a piece, while arrangement involves re-imagining it for a different ensemble or medium. According to Boyd (2001), arranging a piece of music involves transforming it from one medium to another or simplifying it, while piano reduction involves condensing a piece of music into a single piano staff.

Liszt himself considered the art of transcribing from one medium to another to be a creative work, further underscoring the importance of multiple perspectives and approaches in the interpretation and performance of music (Kregor, 2010).

2.4 Applying piano reductions

The technique of creating piano reductions in real time is of utmost importance in contexts where an orchestral score needs to be played *prima vista*, which, according to Gabriëlsson (2020), means playing something at “first sight.” A prime example is the rehearsals at opera houses, where a piano répétiteur's role is to support and collaborate with singers, often under time constraints. This unique responsibility demands a high level of skill and experience, as the piano répétiteur must carefully select which notes or music to highlight, creating a safe and supportive environment for the singer to perform at their best. “As the répétiteur assists in the singer’s learning process, it is important to know the vocal line as well as, or even better than the accompaniment” (Melck, 2019, p. 19).

The art of playing piano reductions is a transformative journey that requires a deep understanding of the key principles of piano playing, as Ibes (2010) discussed. By applying these principles, one can gain insight into the more abstract aspects of piano playing and effectively collaborate with other instrumentalists as a collaborative pianist. According to the renowned collaborative pianist Gerald Moore, nurturing and maintaining the wellsprings of poetry, passion, and romance—in other words, one's heart—is of the utmost importance (Yang, 2023).

2.4.1 Simplifying piano reductions

According to Latham (2011), a piano reduction is an arrangement of an ensemble composition made for piano. “The music is every single performance of a song, not the simplified representation of it on the lead sheet” (Husby Liland, 2015, p. 24). A piano reduction is a musical score that can be simplified to assist less experienced pianists in performing advanced technical repertoire. According to Persson (2006), the process of simplification or reduction not only facilitates performance but also offers a profound understanding of the musical structure. In his view, the learning process of classical pianists can be significantly enhanced if sheet music were simplified, as it would illuminate the musical structure and progression.

When making a piano reduction, it is vital to remember the wide range of tonal intervals present in an orchestra and the difficulties that arise when trying to replicate them using only the limited length and stretchability of a pianist's fingers and hands.

Because of the imperfections and inaccuracies encountered in orchestral reductions, collaborative pianists can prepare their own version (Stsura, 2021). Creating an own reduction requires a lot of knowledge and is typically not a job for a beginner. It is important to work according to some guidelines and establish patterns so that the work with reducing musical material gets effective.

Staying true to the original score can pose difficulties for pianists when making a piano reduction. Some reductions may have a lot of information and technical requirements that can make it challenging for the collaborative pianist when collaborating with a soloist or group. An arranger who deeply understands pianists' technical abilities has a better chance of creating a playable piano reduction, regardless of the technical level.

The staff pianist of Boston Symphony explained how he got caught up by all the notes:

Lost in the specific pianistic difficulties of playing the orchestral reduction, I was unable to play with any sense of coherent musical expression. (Corliss, 2017, p. 225)

To truly express oneself through music, it is essential to devote sufficient time and attention. If too much time is spent reading sheet music and resolving technical difficulties, the focus might shift from musical expression. Therefore, it is advisable to complete the technical aspects of piano playing and score study well in advance of any public performances so that the emphasis can be on musical expression.

2.4.2 Orchestral reductions

The shape and tonal quality of each sound represented in the orchestra is challenging to reproduce if not impossible with the means of a piano. Therefore, the arranger must consider what are the most basic and distinctive sounds in the orchestra and try, if possible, to bring these out in the piano arrangement.

While pitch and harmony are responsible for the vertical arrangement of music, and rhythm of the horizontal arrangement, dynamics is used to control loudness variations across time. (Elowsson, 2018, p. 10)

Producing a piano reduction of a music score is a challenging task as arrangers must decide how closely they should follow the original score in terms of harmony, rhythm, and melody. The orchestral score often includes intricate details beyond the capabilities of a single pianist. The level of difficulty in creating a reduction can vary between publishers.

An important aspect of an effective piano reduction would seem, then, to be finding a balance between keeping it sufficiently simple so that the pianist can learn it in a short time, and the risk of sacrificing either the essential musical properties of the score (pitch classes, rhythm, dynamic), or the acoustic impression of its performance. (Stsura, 2021, p. 17)

Søren Schauser has asked, "Are some notes in a piece of music more important than others?" He also asked, "Not all tones seem to be of equal importance. But which tones are absolutely essential?" (Sivelöv & Schauser, 2018, p. 31). According to Stsura (2021), the essential musical properties of the score are important considerations for collaborative pianists playing piano reductions and arrangers.

Arrangers tasked with the challenge of creating piano reductions of orchestral scores often face the difficulty of reproducing dynamic effects on the piano. Unlike other instruments, such as the woodwind, brass, and string sections in a symphony orchestra, which rely on techniques such as blowing air into the instrument or using a bow to sustain the sound, the piano relies on the hammer striking the strings and the resulting resonance, which quickly diminishes after reaching its highest point of volume. Therefore, achieving the same technical advantages on the piano as other instruments often requires considerable time and effort. In contrast, the organ has the ability to reproduce orchestral effects more effectively than the piano, as it is unrestricted in producing endless lines of sonority and has superior capabilities in terms of horizontal time.

Henning (2023) emphasizes that working with orchestral reductions is a task that demands precision, which can only be achieved through careful consideration and thorough preparation from the collaborative pianist. Henning (2023) further explains that the creation of an illusion of orchestral instruments is not just a possibility, but a result of meticulous attention to detail, such as the weight, mass, speed, depth, and shape of the fingers.

A study has shown that it is not possible to create playable reductions of orchestral works, etc., by only using a computer-based program as the source for evaluating the technical difficulties a pianist may encounter. Since many conditions depend on the player's skill, there is no complete description of what a playable score is. The tempo can also be changed during the piece and thus affect the possibilities to execute it (Nakamura & Yoshii, 2018).

2.5 Music pedagogy for collaborative pianists

As a piano teacher in a small liberal arts university, Karl E. Rubrecht observed that the students' pianistic technical skills varied. Generally, they would be at an intermediate level. Rubrecht noticed that his colleagues who taught at similar schools would attract intermediate to moderately difficult levels, while institutions with more prestige would attract students who played at a higher level of difficulty. According to Rubrecht (2003), an important part of a teacher's job is to find appropriate literature for their students to play.

It is important to set the bar at the right height to help students progress. If a student is not stimulated enough, they will receive too little input to grow. On the other hand, if they are overwhelmed with too many demands, this can hinder their technical and musical development.

Piano pedagogues, in a collaborative effort with their piano students, can set goals for their music development, ensuring that their goals are manageable and providing the proper stimulation and motivation for progress without overwhelming the student. Similarly, when choosing a repertoire, it is crucial to consider the student's level. Piano pedagogues may need to arrange some of the music material to match the student's technical level or sheet music readability. As Nakamura and Yoshii (2018) suggest, arranging musical pieces to make them easier for beginners is common. This approach also benefits intermediate pianists who struggle with advanced repertoire, giving them the chance to play a musical work they cherish at their pianistic level. Persson (2006) suggests that piano instructors can use reductions as a pedagogical tool to enhance their students' learning. This approach could contribute to a more effective learning experience, as it provides a clear and structured framework for interpreting and performing complex musical compositions.

By simplifying the piano version of the accompaniment part (piano II), complex orchestral works or non-piano pieces become more accessible to beginner—to intermediate-level pianists. These transcriptions allow them to play these pieces as piano soloists and assist when collaborating with a soloist. This practical approach to piano reductions can be highly satisfying for these students or performers as it, according to Persson (2006), provides a clear and structured framework for interpreting and performing complex musical compositions.

Pianists looking to collaborate with solo pianists in performing a piano concerto from a specific period need to obtain a piano reduction of the orchestra part (piano II) that suits their pianistic abilities. The layout of sheet music, especially in the piano repertoire, plays a crucial role in the

score's readability (Persson, 2006). The size and placement of notes on a piano score can significantly influence its readability. The strategic use of G-clefs and F-clefs is crucial to ensure the scores are easily legible. When used appropriately, octave signs can eliminate the need for helplines, making the music more accessible for the pianist to read and perform confidently.

2.6 Piano technique

Willem Ibes provides principles for pianists' use of physics and metaphysics in their piano playing. The concept of metaphysics according to Ibes can be explained as follows:

So it is with the "ultimate meaning" of an artwork; we may be far away or get close to its ultimate realization but there never comes a point where we can say: I have got it forever [...] In other words, a truly masterful performance is always a gift, always something that transcends even the best efforts of our mind/hearts and intellect. For a lack of a better word we may call this the spiritual dimension. (Ibes, 2010, p. 18)

Meta derives from the Greek word meaning after or beyond and concerns aspects beyond our physical experience. Thus, the metaphysical experience may, for that reason, be called a spiritual dimension.

One of the principles of physics concerns how to touch the key and produce a sound by pressing the key with the weight of the arm rather than just the fingers. The art of touching the key to produce a sound begins from the moment the hammer strikes the strings and they vibrate and resonate sound, the sound will gradually fade away. Even as our hands and eyes move on to the next notes, our ears must persist in hearing the sound as long as it endures. Each sound, once produced, remains in our perception until it ceases. (Ibes, 2010)

According to Ibes (2010), the physics and metaphysics of piano playing can be classified into several fundamental principles, including but not limited to melody, meter and meter accent, dynamics, tempo, style, structure and articulation, meaning and transcendence. These principles, when properly applied and practiced, can greatly enhance the quality and effectiveness of a pianist's performance, and ultimately lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the art of piano playing.

Rhythm is not a fleeting event, but a continuous presence and to transition smoothly from one key or sound to the next the pianist needs to maintain the same volume or color when moving from a lower register to a higher one (Ibes, 2010).

According to Ibes (2010) a significant number of highly skilled pianists have ruined their performances as a result of incorrect usage of the sustaining (right) pedal. He provides an in-depth analysis of the methodology employed to produce the desired effect of three distinct pedal techniques: the legato pedal, staccato pedal, and half pedal and stresses their importance.

Rubrecht (2003) compiled a comprehensive list of 15 technical challenges that are universal to pianists playing a piano concerto. These challenges, such as alternating hand figurations, hand-over-hand arpeggios, scalar passagework, extended hand arpeggios, hand span larger than octave, extremely fast tempos, voicing challenges, melodies doubled at the octave between hands, patterning, double notes in-passagework, arpeggios divided between hands, polyrhythms, large leaps, passages of same-hand octaves and fat chords. These technical challenges can be daunting for any pianist, regardless of their role either as a collaborative pianist or piano soloist.

2.6.1 Pianistic technical challenges

Liszt stated the following about possibilities and limitations with transcriptions of music:

Within the span of its seven octaves it encompasses the audible range of an orchestra, and the ten fingers of a single person are enough to render the harmonies produced by the union of over a hundred concerted instruments. ... Thus it bears the same relation to an orchestral work that an engraving bears to a painting: it multiplies the original and makes it available to everyone, and even if it does not reproduce the colors it at least reproduces the light and shadow. (Roberge, 1993, p. 925)

Working with just ten fingers and a piano, forces an arranger into a selective process, working within strict limitations of sonority.

While the sound of a piano can never fully replicate the grandeur of an orchestra, pianists embark on a creative journey to imitate these sounds. In his book *Notes from the Pianist's Bench*, Boris Berman ponders that while a piano will always sound like a piano, the process of recreating the sounds of orchestral instruments results in a piano sound that is notably richer and more diverse (Henning, 2023).

It is widely accepted among music professionals that a single piano is inadequate for reproducing the full range of harmonics, rhythms, and melodies present in an orchestral score. To fully capture all the intricate details of such a work, at least two pianos are typically required. The advantages of having two pianists when playing an orchestral work are numerous. With two performers, the complexities inherent in such music can be more fully represented, as each pianist is better able to focus on specific elements of the score. This can be especially important when fast or technically challenging passages from the string or horn sections must be played simultaneously with contrasting bass lines and melodies. Without two pianists, a single performer must manage the daunting task of playing four independent voices simultaneously.

Pianists often face the daunting task of reproducing the complex sounds of a symphony orchestra, presenting numerous challenges. These challenges frequently test the pianist's technical and musical capabilities to the fullest, as the arrangements they work with essentially entail a direct transcription of the original score. Consequently, strict adherence to imitating the unique sounds and functions of various orchestral instruments is required.

According to Roberge (1993), keyboard arrangements of orchestral works and piano arrangements of chamber music are similar to engravings and photographic reproductions of paintings. While the medium transfer may result in a loss of color, it makes the work more accessible to a broader audience.

3. Method

In the research project, three professional collaborative pianists were engaged to participate. The information gathered from their interviews has been meticulously analyzed and discussed in the later phases of the project. The selection of data has been carried out with great care, focusing on its relevance to the objectives and research inquiries of the essay. Any segments of the interviews that do not directly relate to the project have been omitted from the results chapter. The collected data have been examined and interpreted. The findings are presented using the hermeneutic loop in the discussion chapter.

3.1 Methodology

The chosen method for this essay is the qualitative method. According to Bryman (2018), qualitative research primarily focuses on language rather than quantitative data.

Gathering insights and experiences from specific respondents is essential when conducting qualitative research. Bryman (2018) states that data collection and analysis should be systematic and careful and have a theoretical framework for interpreting the data. Furthermore, formulating general questions for respondents, interpreting the data, and presenting findings and conclusions are also important.

Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of qualitative research is that the approach allows you to identify issues from the perspective of your study participants and understand the meanings and interpretations that they give to behaviour, event or objects (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 10).

Broadly speaking, qualitative research is a methodology that enables you to use a particular set of research techniques, like in-depth interviews, to look closely at people's experiences (Hennink et al., 2020). These techniques help collect the necessary data to present new findings and conclusions.

3.2 Hermeneutics

In Greek mythology, Hermes is the messenger of the gods, delivering divine and complex messages to humans. "Hermeneutics" comes from the Greek word "hermeneuein," derived from Hermes. "Hermeneuein" has three primary meanings: 1. To speak, recite, or express something. 2. To understand, interpret, or explain something. 3. To translate (Rasmussen, 2006).

Furthermore, Rasmussen (2006) suggests that all three points are related to the idea that a text, message, thing, or event can be understood through being read, spoken to others, explained to a

listening audience, or translated into another language. According to Rasmussen (2006) hermeneutics, understanding must ultimately have a practical and moral significance.

Gilje (2020) states that hermeneutics aims to make something unclear into something clear. It is about interpretation. If everything were clear, there would be no need for it. Thus, it fulfills a role.

3.2.1 The hermeneutic loop

The hermeneutic circle is a concept that can be applied to text analysis. This means that the interpreter analyzes the text as if in a circle between the parts and the whole text. According to this rule, the interpretation must be based on the entire text, not its individual parts, and the individual parts must be interpreted based on the context of the entire text. This process is called the hermeneutic circle (Gilje, 2020).

The repetitious nature of the hermeneutic process can be likened to the experience of listening to a lieder (German song) multiple times. Upon initial listening, one may predominantly focus on the melody and harmony while only partially comprehending the lyrics. Subsequent repetition of listening brings about an evolving and coherent understanding of the lyrics. With each repetition, the listener delves deeper, discerning subtle nuances and symbolic messages and becoming attuned to aspects such as form and dynamics depending on the listener's maturity and prior musical knowledge. This underscores the pivotal role of these factors in the hermeneutic framework.

Not only is there a circularity to and fro between part and whole, but there is also a circularity of interpretive understanding in the expansion and variation of perspectives on the part-whole configuration itself. This is another example of circularity in the hermeneutical endeavor (Jost & Hyde, 1997). The interpretative component opens up even more opportunities for understanding and interpretation within the framework of the hermeneutical circle. This means that as we delve deeper into the interpretative process, we uncover additional layers of meaning and insight. By engaging with the hermeneutical circle, we are able to continuously reassess our understanding, gaining deeper insights and new perspectives on the subject at hand.

Spinoza clarified that hermeneutics is a method that can contribute to reconstructing intentional meaning, but it is not suitable for clarifying questions of truth. The first rule states that interpretations must be close to the text and that complicated words and phrases must be interpreted in the light of more comprehensible words and phrases. Thus, Spinoza presents a crucial distinction between meaning and truth: just because we can discern a sentence's meaning, it does not necessarily mean that it is true (Gilje, 2020). The text discusses how interpreting data from an interview using the hermeneutical perspective does not necessarily provide factual answers. Instead, it focuses on understanding the different components and the overall meaning

of the specific text. This approach emphasizes looking at the entire context and understanding the nuances of the content rather than seeking absolute truths or facts.

3.3 Data collection method

Three professional collaborative pianists were interviewed using semi-structured interviews to gather their views on essential aspects of working with piano reductions. The questions, designed to be open-ended, are pre-determined to prompt discussion and enable me as an interviewer to follow up with questions, thus enhancing the possibilities for a deeper understanding of their shared knowledge and experiences.

The interviews followed a logical sequence, commencing with five questions about each participant's musical background. This initial phase aims to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the participants' musical journey and experiences. Subsequently, the interview will delve into seven questions that specifically address issues related to collaborative pianists and piano reductions, thereby providing a contextual framework for the discussion.

Each interview was conducted using a telephone's built-in recorder. The recording was transcribed into text using a Microsoft Word program.

3.4 Translation

To facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the essay, it was written in English instead of Swedish, a decision that will benefit reaching a wider audience. During the semi-structured interviews, two participants spoke in Swedish, necessitating a translation for the benefit of all readers. The resources used for the translation were Google Translate, a transcribing and translation program in Microsoft Word, translation resources from the internet, and prior knowledge of the English language to ensure the accuracy of these translations. The third participant - a US citizen, was interviewed in English, so no translation was necessary. However, there was a need for clarification of some specific words. In these instances, the meaning of those words needed to be clarified to ensure the correct meaning in the context in which they were spoken.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Vetenskapsrådet (2002) has developed criteria to guarantee that research adheres to ethical guidelines. According to Vetenskapsrådet, research is crucial for the advancement of individuals and society. Consequently, society and its members have a valid interest in ensuring that research is pursued, addresses essential questions, and maintains high standards of quality.

In their 2017 publication, Vetenskapsrådet highlights the critical nature of anonymization or de-identification in survey data to separate any linkage between responses and specific individuals. This process ensures that unauthorized individuals and the research team are unable to re-identify the data, thus preventing the association of any specific survey responses with an individual's identity.

The names and personal information of the participants are omitted from the essay in accordance with the guidelines set forth by Vetenskapsrådet. For the purpose of this essay, the participants will be identified as respondents 1, 2, and 3. Each respondent has given permission for me to share the information obtained from the interviews.

Vetenskapsrådet (2002) provided recommendations regarding principles concerning research ethics. These recommendations suggest that researchers should, at the appropriate time, ask research participants if they are interested in knowing where the research results will be published and in receiving a report or summary of the research. Each of the research participants has been provided with this information.

The research ethical principles outlined by Vetenskapsrådet (2002) emphasize the importance of information, consent, confidentiality, and responsible data utilization. Researchers must secure the consent of participants, who should have the autonomy to decide their level of involvement. Additionally, confidentiality measures must be implemented for sensitive data, and the use of research-related data for non-scientific or commercial purposes is prohibited without consent (Vetenskapsrådet, 2020).

The requirements of the research project have been met by following ethical standards. Verbal consent was obtained from the respondents to include their semi-structured interviews. They were also informed in writing, through individual letters, about the intention to publish the results in the essay.

3.6 Selection of the respondents

Three professional pianists were chosen based on preexisting information about them. Each respondent possesses significant experience in collaborative music.

Before the study, the respondents were selected with the specific goal of working from a subjective point of view. The participants were chosen to participate in the semi-structured

interview because they had valuable experience and subject knowledge, which aligned with the study's objective of gathering in-depth insights.

Subjective selection, a method that allows the researcher to tap into a wealth of insightful information, is especially well-suited for designing an exploratory study. It not only permits the investigation of relatively unexplored topics but also the inclusion of interesting or unusual examples. This comprehensive approach, backed by the most experienced individuals in the research topic, instills confidence in the effectiveness of the research method (Denscombe, 2018).

Respondent 1 is a collaborative pianist with extensive training in classical piano. She holds degrees in classical performance from her home country and a master's degree from Sweden. She also obtained a teacher's certificate after completing additional educational training. Her musical journey began at a prestigious music school when she was six years old, and she later pursued higher education at a conservatory, specializing in classical piano for four years.

Respondent 2 is a collaborative pianist who specializes in rehearsal and voice training for singers and collaborates with bachelor's and master's students. He started playing the piano and taking lessons at six or seven. He received his formal education at undergraduate school and then later at university.

Respondent 3 is an accomplished concert pianist with a focus on contemporary art music. He began playing the piano at a young age and has received formal education at prestigious institutions at home and abroad. Currently, he performs in various venues and concert halls and occasionally teaches at institutions.

3.7 Validity and reliability

The selection of data is predominantly based on its relevance to the objectives and research inquiries of the essay, underscoring the importance of these objectives. For example, sections of the interviews deemed irrelevant, such as instances where respondents divulge private information leading to the disclosure of things concerning their private identity or when the discussion divagates from the topic, have been omitted from the results chapter. This approach ensures that only the most pertinent data is utilized in the analysis, further emphasizing the significance of the research.

In their study, Hennink et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of understanding participants' perspectives and the meanings they assign to behavior, events, or objects. The reliability of participants' experiences is crucial for ensuring consistent and repeatable measurements. Therefore, it is important to closely examine people's experiences, as suggested by Hennink et al. (2020).

Validating whether a measurement accurately captures what it aims to measure is essential for ensuring the accuracy of findings. Analyzing results and using theory should follow a strict pattern of accuracy and a systematic, consistent approach. It is vital to note that high reliability does not guarantee high validity, but high validity is a direct result of high reliability, illustrating the intricate relationship between the two.

In order to ensure that the vocabulary used by all three participants consistently and accurately conveyed the intended meaning in the text, several techniques were employed. These techniques, as suggested by Hennink et al. (2020), involve structuring the discussion by first introducing the topic of the question to the respondent, then starting with a broad opening question followed by specific questions. Finally, a closing question was asked, and post-discussion questions were followed up to gather additional information.

The model by Hennink et al. (2020) provides a structured approach to conducting research interviews:

1. Start by making the respondent comfortable and discussing any ethical considerations related to the interview.
2. Begin with opening questions designed to help the respondent feel at ease and relaxed.
3. Progress to asking general introductory questions to set the stage for the interview.
4. Use transition questions to smoothly move into the key topic areas of the interview.
5. Pose important questions to gather valuable research data from the respondent.
6. Conclude the interview with summary questions to ensure a clear understanding of the respondent's input and to wrap up the discussion effectively.

An important aim of the study has been to ensure its reliability by employing a systematic, meticulous, and theoretical framework for interpreting the data, as recommended by Bryman (2018).

4. Results

The forthcoming chapter presents data gathered from qualitative interviews with three professional collaborative pianists, including their musical backgrounds and answers to the semi-structured interviews.

4.1 Respondents' musical background

A summary of the respondents' answers and highlights of their similarities and differences will be presented. All of them were introduced to playing the piano at a young age and received their first experience as a collaborative pianist while studying in school. Additionally, all respondents have pursued higher education at an academy or conservatory.

When asked about their role models as pianists, respondent 1 mentioned Sviatoslav Richter, the U.S.S.R./Russian pianist. Respondent 2 referred to two teachers: one of them at undergraduate school, who he described as a smooth and stylish pianist, and another teacher at graduate school who was a good collaborative pianist, sight reader, and conductor. Respondent 3 was fond of three pianists: the Polish pianist Arthur Rubinstein, the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould, and the Argentine pianist Martha Argerich.

The respondents' opinions regarding developing their style as collaborative pianists were diverse. The first respondent felt compelled to learn collaborating with other instrumentalists at a relatively early stage in adulthood. In contrast, the second respondent believed that he only fully embraced his role as a collaborative pianist at the age of 40. The second and third respondents acknowledged that their growth as collaborators is an ongoing process.

4.2 Orchestral instruments

The respondents were asked about the most challenging aspects of playing music originally written for symphony orchestra or other types of ensembles on a single instrument, such as the piano. They answered that the key role as a collaborative pianist playing piano reductions of orchestral scores is to emphasize the imitation of orchestral sounds. Additionally, it is important to make selections of the most important voice parts that are represented in the score.

Playing a Mozart concerto can be a challenge. There are not always many notes, but it can be difficult to make it sound like Mozart, like with a string orchestra. That is a challenge in itself. Then, when it's a bigger concert, romantic or more contemporary, there are a lot more notes, and it can be basically impossible to play everything. But you have to do your best, and then it's the challenge to choose. (Respondent 3)

In his response, Respondent 3 highlights the difficulty of replicating Mozart's music while imitating a string orchestra. Additionally, he mentions the challenge of playing all the notes in more extensive pieces from the romantic period or contemporary compositions, emphasizing the need to discern which notes are essential.

4.3 Musical priorities

When asked about their musical priorities, whether they prioritized rhythmical or harmonic elements first, the respondents answered that they prioritized rhythmic ones first. This specific question was designed to understand how they manage to successfully play a musical piece from start to finish, especially if they had limited preparation time or were playing the piece for the first time. The respondents, with their wealth of experience, undoubtedly agreed upon prioritizing the rhythmic content first and foremost to keep the group/ensemble or soloist they play with intact.

When you set a tempo and we go, then that's the most important thing, especially with vocalists. They need to know how to time their breath. And if they're constantly trying to guess when to breathe, then they're not going to breathe very well. And the tone, the vocal tone will suffer because of that. (Respondent 2)

According to respondent 2, the most important thing when a collaborative pianist works with a vocalist is to agree on a tempo and then stick to it. A vocalist needs to be considerate of their breathing so that the vocal tone will not suffer, or in other words, be of good quality.

Respondent 3 highlights the importance of harmony but considers rhythm as the most important element, especially in contemporary music.

Respondent 1 emphasized the importance of prioritizing the soloist and identifying significant melodies, themes, and other elements in the score. This approach ensures that the collaborative pianist can provide adequate support to the soloist at crucial points in the music.

4.4 Piano technical challenges

With its unique ability to hold notes for an indefinite period, the organ can accurately reproduce an orchestra's sustained sounds, which starkly contrasts the piano. The piano's sound, as we know, fades as the strings lose their volume.

Sometimes I tend to invent things just to make it sound better because you know it doesn't sound so empty in orchestras, that is, in orchestras when it's on the piano. It is usually like Viennese classicism. I think they have written too little, and then it sounds very short and dry and boring. So sometimes I add tremolo. (Respondent 1)

Respondents provided various practical tips and tricks when asked how to counteract this. The first respondent, for instance, recommended using the sustain pedal (right pedal) whenever

needed. She shared that she used it everywhere, even to hide details, or if there were challenging passages, she used the pedal to hide. The second respondent suggested sustaining a long chord by playing it softly on a strong beat, and the third suggested a similar technique using a soft tremolando instead.

4.5 Transformation

Piano reductions refer to the process of transforming one or more musical mediums into another. For example, a piece originally composed for an orchestra may be transformed into a piano arrangement. When asked about their rehearsal process, the respondents were asked how they approach transforming the sounds of a symphony orchestra into a piano arrangement. They were also asked if the process differed when imitating a single instrument, such as a harp. All three respondents highlighted the importance of keeping the sounds of the symphony orchestra in mind and striving to accurately imitate them.

I had very good teachers when I started playing. She always said that our piano is an imitation of a symphony orchestra. So, every time I had a piece with some melody, she would sort of, not force me - suggesting that I fantasize which instrument it would imitate. What instrument is similar to that melody? And always in my playing, almost always I have that in mind to imitate different instruments in an orchestra. (Respondent 1)

Respondent 1 highlights her teacher, who likens the piano's function when playing from orchestral piano reductions to imitating the symphony orchestra. According to the teacher, imagination is a significant driving force in portraying this imitation in one's piano playing or through the instrument. Depending on how the melody is structured, the timbre of the piano's sound corresponds to different orchestral instruments.

4.6 Imitation

The upright piano and the grand piano are both powerful instruments that are capable of producing incredibly soft and loud sounds. When the respondents were asked whether it is ideal for a collaborative pianist to imitate the volume of the instrument(s) that the piano reduction represents, they made it clear that the student or soloist should be the center of attention.

I think that it is important for whatever soloist there is to experience some big sound behind them. One must also take into consideration, say, the room you're in or how extreme the difference can be between how loud the piano can be, or how quiet it can be. Now, there's, I mean - the piano can play very quiet as well, but how does that really support the soloist? Often it doesn't support them that well. They need to feel like they have some kind of support behind them. (Respondent 2)

According to respondent 2, the collaborative pianist needs to use his judgment on how much sound support the soloist needs and adjust to the room's acoustics.

If I play with a soloist who is capable of playing louder than the piano, which is supposed to be like an orchestra, then I play and keep going on. But if that's not possible, then of course I back off and don't play on as much. (Respondent 1)

Respondent 2 notes that the collaborative pianist's role in adjusting the sound support provided to the soloist is crucial. This ensures that the soloist is not overpowered by the piano's volume or feels inadequately supported by it.

4.7 Types of piano reductions

When asked about their preference for piano reductions, respondents were given two options: a lightly reduced version with thick notes, big chords, and mostly difficult passages with a lot of detail, or a heavily reduced version with light notes, smaller chords, and mostly easier passages with less detail.

Respondent 1 highlighted the pianistic technical challenges involved in playing piano reductions of Wagner's work. Respondent 2 pointed out the technical challenges in playing a piano reduction of Handel's work, while respondent 3 mentioned the technical challenges of playing a piano reduction by Copland. It is evident that regardless of the historical period, musicians are confronted with various technical challenges depending on the music they perform and the context in which it is presented.

I think it really depends. I most often do like the lighter reductions. They can be a bit light on harmonic support. If it's a famous piece that's done often, you might find more than two reductions. You might find a number of different reductions, and I tend to like best the compromised ones, the medium ones. I like those, especially ones that do take the physical piano approach in mind. You know, some of them just don't. Some Bach reductions, cantatas, Bach cantatas and it's just everything is in there and it's terrible! It's so many voice parts to choose from. So that's all interesting. And you know in a way it's an interesting challenge to choose which ones to play and which ones not to play. (Respondent 2)

Respondent 2 prefers piano reductions that consider his physical limitations and abilities as a pianist, respecting the capacities of his fingers' physical geometry and anatomy. He finds playing unpleasant when many complex elements, such as several voice parts, make the playing overwhelming.

The respondents agreed that if they were short on time, they preferred a heavier reduced (easier) version. However, if they had sufficient time, they preferred a lighter reduced (more difficult) version. One respondent preferred a medium difficulty level for piano reductions.

4.8 Educational implementation for piano students

The respondents provided tips for piano students who want to develop their ability as collaborative pianists, play from piano reductions, and other specific qualities. They also suggested what to pay attention to when collaborating with other musicians.

Above all, listen to the orchestra part, that is, get to know the piece. It is very, very helpful. Simply know how it sounds, get a picture of the piece itself. You don't really have to play everything that is written, and someone has also done that reduction. Play the important one. (Respondent 1)

Respondent 1's remarks primarily focus on the importance of closely attending to the orchestral part as a collaborative pianist. The respondent emphasizes the necessity for the pianist to thoroughly acquaint themselves with the piece, including the recommendation to listen carefully to the orchestral part. Additionally, the respondent advises against rigidly adhering to the notes written in the score, instead advocating for the exercise of judgment, and prioritizing the essential elements in their performance.

Look at the score and try to follow along and imagine in your mind. Don't just go to the accompaniment and just start practicing it like a solo piano piece. And then, of course - just try to listen as closely to the soloist or whoever whom you're accompanying as possible. Of course, that means that one needs to be prepared with their own part enough to really be able to split their attention and listen. (Respondent 2)

Respondent 2 advises beginning by reading and imagining the music in your head before playing it on the piano. Of course, when the pianist starts to practice, they should never practice it as a solo piece but keep in mind the soloist part so that the whole is envisioned and imagined.

Listen to the person you are playing with. And it's always a give and take when you play together with people. You shouldn't be a total slave, but you should contribute, with tempo, feeling and not just hang around and hope that the soloist solves everything - that you just go along. You have to provide a foundation that is stable. Listen and take initiative - mixed. (Respondent 3)

Respondent 3 proposes mutual respect and engagement in a collaborative performance.

As a vital component of the musical ensemble, the collaborative pianist occupies a pivotal role in providing a steadfast foundation for fellow musicians according to the respondents. They also emphasized that aspiring collaborative pianists should possess proficiency in reading sheet music and comprehending reduced scores. To truly internalize the essence of a musical piece, aspiring pianists are advised to actively listen to recordings of the original music by an orchestra and envision the piece independently. Ideally, they should be capable of mentally simulating the orchestral rendition.

Moreover, they must listen to their fellow performers attentively, thoroughly understand their melodic contributions, and proactively support them during rehearsals. The preservation of rhythmic and harmonic integrity within the ensemble, coupled with the ability to instill the

performance with the appropriate emotive quality, emerged as crucial attributes for a collaborative pianist.

Furthermore, the respondents recommended familiarizing oneself with the orchestral component and gaining a profound understanding of the musical piece. It was emphasized that not every element in the score needs to be performed; rather, the focus should be on executing pivotal musical elements while maintaining the pulse and preserving the melody, thereby facilitating the soloist's orientation within the musical composition.

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses the respondents' answers to the semi-structured interviews related to the theory in the literature review.

5.1 Orchestral instruments and types of piano reductions

[...] Then, when it's a bigger concert, romantic or more contemporary, there are a lot more notes, and it can be basically impossible to play everything. But you have to do your best, and then it's the challenge to choose. (Respondent 3)

Søren Schauser has asked, "Not all tones seem to be of equal importance. But which tones are absolutely essential?" (Sivelöv & Schauser, 2018, p. 31). Respondent 3 acknowledges the skill required in playing all the notes in more extensive pieces from the Romantic period or contemporary compositions, and the need to discern which notes are essential. Stsura (2021) suggests that collaborative pianists, with their unique skill set, should be attentive when creating a piano reduction so it does not become too simple or too complex so that the essential musical properties of the score are presented.

I think it really depends. I most often do like the lighter reductions [...] I like those, especially ones that do take the physical piano approach in mind. (Respondent 2)

What does it mean to think of the "physical piano"? The study by Roberge (1993) demonstrates that Liszt's transcriptions not only display his exceptional technical skills but also his unique artistic vision and interpretation of the original works. This highlights the inseparable nature of the physical approach and the artistic vision. As Ibes (2010) points out, playing piano reductions is a transformative journey that necessitates a deep understanding of the critical principles of piano playing. Rubrecht's (2003) compiled list of technical challenges offers guidance for overcoming these challenges as a collaborative pianist.

5.2 Musical priorities and piano technical challenges

When you set a tempo and we go, then that's the most important thing, especially with vocalists. They need to know how to time their breath. And if they're constantly trying to guess when to breathe, then they're not going to breathe very well. And the tone, the vocal tone will suffer because of that. (Respondent 2)

To ensure successful cooperation among musicians, respondent 2 emphasized the importance of agreeing on a tempo and maintaining it. Collaboration derives from the Latin word "structure," composed of "con-" meaning "with," and "labōrō," meaning "work" (Yang, 2023, p. 2). Emphasizing the understanding and implementation of collaboration is crucial for musicians.

These conditions also benefit vocalists by promoting mindfulness of their breathing, ultimately improving vocal tone quality.

Respondent 3 accentuates the importance of harmony, yet deems rhythm the most essential element, particularly in contemporary music. Rhythm, in this context, is not just a stable foundation for the musician or musicians with whom you play, but a universal language. As Ibes (2010) eloquently stated, rhythm is not a fleeting event, but a continuous presence, always at play, not just in critical moments, but throughout the piece, connecting us all and fostering a sense of appreciation for its omnipresence.

Respondent 1 highlighted the importance of the soloist and the recognition of significant melodies, themes, and other elements in the score.

Melck (2019) places a strong emphasis on the importance of a collaborative pianist's understanding of the singer's vocal line in a musical piece. The collaborative pianist's knowledge of the vocal line is not just a supplement to the accompaniment part, but a crucial skill in assisting the singer's learning and performance. Melck goes as far as to suggest that the vocal line should be understood better than the accompaniment part. This approach inspires and motivates the collaborative pianist to strive for a deeper understanding of the vocal line, ensuring they are well-prepared to support the soloist at crucial points in the music effectively.

Sometimes I tend to invent things just to make it sound better because you know it doesn't sound so empty in orchestras, that is, in orchestras when it's on the piano. (Respondent 1)

Boyd (2001) discusses the historical practice of composers arranging already challenging pieces to create even more complex versions designed for professional pianists. Respondent 1 follows this practice, creating increasingly complex pieces in real-time, much like a repetiteur. Furthermore, the respondent seems to follow the method suggested by Stsura (2021), which involves preparing his version of a score and creating a piano reduction in real-time.

5.3 Transformation and imitation

I had very good teachers when I started playing. She always said that our piano is an imitation of a symphony orchestra. So, every time I had a piece with some melody, she would sort of, not force me - suggesting that I fantasize which instrument it would imitate. (Respondent 1)

Apart from respondent 1, who grasped the transformative power of fantasy in imitating orchestral sound, the French pianist and composer Isidor Phillip, as mentioned in Inglis (2017), noted that Alkan, the French virtuoso pianist, and composer, took the concept of the "orchestral" piano to an even greater extreme than Liszt and Schumann. According to Henning (2023), Boris Berman explained that while a piano will always sound like a piano, replicating the sounds of orchestral instruments creates a notably richer and more varied piano sound. The perception of the piano as an orchestral instrument or symphony orchestra, as pointed out by the teacher to respondent 1, places greater technical and imaginative demands on the performer.

As noted by Roberge (1993), Liszt was cognizant of these technical challenges as he discussed the seven octaves range of the keyboard, which he considered equivalent to an orchestra's range, and the ten fingers' ability to produce harmonies equivalent to a hundred concerted instruments. It is uncertain whether Liszt meant that the piano replicates the harmonies created by over a hundred concert instruments. However, Roberge provides more insights when Liszt later compares the transformative process of transcribing orchestral music into piano to what "an engraving bears to a painting" (Roberge, 1993, p. 925).

If I play with a soloist who is capable of playing louder than the piano, which is supposed to be like an orchestra, then I play and keep going on. But if that's not possible, then of course I back off and don't play on as much. (Respondent 1)

I think that it is important for whatever soloist there is to experience some big sound behind them...the piano can play very quiet as well, but how does that really support the soloist? Often it doesn't support them that well. They need to feel like they have some kind of support behind them. (Respondent 2)

The text below introduces the concept dynamics that respondents 1 and 2 characterize as "some big sound behind them," "very quiet," "some kind of support behind them," "louder than...," and "don't play on as much." Elowsson (2018) explains the concept as dynamics that are used to manage changes in loudness over time. Respondent 2 mentions "sound support," and Respondent 1 mentions "louder than" and "don't play on as much." However, beyond these individual interpretations, we can also perceive the profound collaboration between two musicians, a concept related to what Geringer and Sasanfar (2013) discuss when speaking of musical collaboration as an emotional and psychological partnership where the musicians' expertise in dynamics or sound support result in supporting their collaborator or soloist, ensuring their safety and success during rehearsals and performances.

5.4 Educational implementation for piano students

Above all, listen to the orchestra part, that is, get to know the piece. It is very, very helpful. Simply know how it sounds, get a picture of the piece itself. You don't really have to play everything that is written, and someone has also done that reduction. Play the important one. (Respondent 1)

Understanding the orchestra, orchestral sounds, and musical form, as respondent 1 suggests, can significantly enhance performance, as Persson (2006) confirms. The process of simplification or reduction not only aids in performance but also deepens our understanding of the musical structure. This pedagogical strategy encourages educators to collaborate with students, using simplified sheet music to illuminate the musical structure and progression, thereby fostering a sense of inclusion and shared learning.

Look at the score and try to follow along and imagine in your mind... And then, of course - just try to listen as closely to the soloist or whoever whom you're accompanying as possible. (Respondent 2)

Listen to the person you are playing with... Listen and take initiative - mixed. (Respondent 3)

Respondent 2 draws attention to using qualities such as listening carefully. Similarly, according to Yang (2023), one needs sensitive ears. Respondent 2 suggests reading and visualizing the music in the head before playing it on the piano. Respondent 3 suggests mutual respect and participation in a collaborative performance. Moreover, they must listen to their fellow performers attentively, but more than that, they must strive to understand their melodic contributions on a deeper level. This understanding is not just about the notes, but about the emotions and intentions behind them. It is about connecting with their fellow performers on a profound level, and proactively supporting them during rehearsals.

The ability to instill the performance with the appropriate emotive quality, as Yang (2023) described the esteemed collaborative pianist Gerald Moore would advocate by using "that repository of all human feeling, that source of poetry, fire, and romance, namely, a heart." — Gerald Moore (Yang, 2023, p. 13). These qualities emerged as crucial attributes for a collaborative pianist.

5.5 Method discussion

Rasmussen (2006) explained that hermeneutics aims to understand, interpret, and explain. Delving deeper into the interesting issues that the collaborative pianists' in these semi-structured interviews have experienced when working with other musicians and playing piano reductions, it has been helpful to use the hermeneutical approach proposed by Gilje (2020) to clarify something unclear. Gilje (2020) emphasizes that interpretation must be based on the entire text, not its individual parts and that the individual parts must be interpreted based on the context of the entire text. This has provided an excellent theoretical framework, a method focused on the essential parts of the semi-structured interviews when discussing the results. Within the context of the hermeneutical circle, the interpretative component creates even more avenues for understanding and interpretation; the more explored in the interpretative process, the more layers of meaning and insight are uncovered.

According to Bryman (2018), the essence of qualitative research is in language. The interviews serve their purpose as the focus is to collect data that can be used to understand the meanings and interpretations that the research participants give to behavior, events, or objects (Hennink et al., 2020). The ideal requirement has not been to find evidence-based facts but rather to open up for discussion or to explore many possibilities for interpretation of the data. Spinoza's thoughts on the crucial distinction between meaning and truth suggest that just because we can discern a sentence's meaning, it does not necessarily mean it is true (Gilje, 2020). Similarly, no value is added to the findings from the respondents, whether true or not, since the application of theory

and the principles provided by the respondents can be understood and applied differently from individual to individual.

5.6 Further research

Further research on this topic would include conducting semi-structured interviews with three professional opera singers. These interviews would focus on exploring the singers' perspectives on essential aspects of their collaboration with collaborative pianists when they play from piano reductions.

The perspective of opera singers on essential aspects for successful collaboration when working with collaborative pianists playing piano reductions may further deepen and confirm the insights shared by collaborative pianists in this essay. The conclusions drawn from the empirical material, including the theory chapter and literature review, along with the use of the hermeneutical loop, could potentially pave the way for exciting future research projects involving opera singers.

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Appendix

A) Semi-structured interview: Musical background

1. How did you encounter the piano?
2. How old were you when you first collaborated with someone or played with one or more musicians in a larger musical context?
3. What does your musical education look like?
4. Who are your foremost role models shaping you as a pianist?
5. At what point did you feel you were shaped as a collaborative pianist and developed your own style?

B) Semi-structured interview: Interview questions

1. What are the most difficult challenges in playing music initially written for a symphony orchestra or other type of ensemble and then transferring this to a single instrument such as the piano?

2. If you were to collaborate with a soloist or group and have limited preparation time, alternatively, the piece plays prima vista, and you need to select which notes to play due to the piece's great degree of difficulty. Which musical element do you prioritize first to ensure that the soloist or group succeeds in getting through the piece with you from start to finish, and why? The rhythmic or the harmonic?

3. Unlike the organ, which can sustain the notes endlessly and more faithfully reproduce the sustaining timbres of the orchestra, the piano's tone is dying with its strings diminishing in volume. What do you do to counter this? Do you have any tips or tricks?

4. Piano reductions are a transformation from one or more mediums to another - e.g., from orchestra to piano or harp to piano. What is your rehearsal process like, and how do you, as a collaborative pianist, think musically when you must transform all the sounds of the symphony orchestra? Is the process different if you use a harp or other instruments you try to recreate in your performance?

5. The upright and grand pianos are large and powerful instruments that can play incredibly soft and powerful. One of the ideals of a collaborative pianist is to try to imitate the volume as faithfully as possible that the instrument(s) that the piano reduction represents. Why, why not?

6. Which type of piano reductions do you prefer, the lightly reduced ones with thick texture in the notes, big chords, and primarily tricky passages with a lot of detail / or the heavily reduced ones with light texture in the notes, more minor chords and mostly easier passages with less detail? Why?

7. What tips would you like to give piano students who want to develop their abilities as a collaborative pianist and play from piano reductions? What qualities do they need to develop, and what do they need to pay attention to when collaborating with others?