CHAPTER 13: INDICATED TEMPO

A. Background. Proper performance tempo is essential to produce the desired affekt.
   • The practice of providing an indicated tempo marking at the beginning of a movement or piece has not always been in place. It was assumed the performer would garner the information from contextual notation clues.
   • Composers were acutely concerned with the fundamental need to establish an appropriate tempo. Although inherent tempo parameters provided guidance, composers were ever-striving to more clearly specify their intentions for the performer.
   • There were (and still are) several mitigating and influencing circumstances.
     ◦ Tempo interpretations varied from one region or country to another.
     ◦ Each individual composer’s taste impacted tempo choice.
     ◦ The composer’s underlying affekt associated with the tempo may vary any given tempo.
     ◦ Associated meanings of words continually evolve over time.

B. Inherent tempo. Each time signature had its own manner of execution and inherent movement. Refer to chapter 5 for extensive discussion.

C. The interaction of indicated tempo and note values created the speed and affekt.
   • C. P. E. Bach focuses on the interaction between affekt and written notes to come to an appropriate tempo.
• Türk provides concrete definitions of indicated tempi.

J. The Metronome
• With the ever-blossoming ranks of amateur musicians in the Classical Era clear tempo indications became extremely important to composers.
• The metronome was invented circa 1812.
• The benefit of the metronome is that it is entirely mechanical and marks time with absolute equality.
• The detriment is that it is entirely mechanical and marks time with absolute equality.
• Although Beethoven hailed the metronome he also saw its limits. He warned that the metronome was to set the pace only.
• The metronome was considered a fabulous tool. It provided composers an opportunity never before available: to pinpoint the exact tempo of a given section.
• The metronome was never intended to pinpoint the speed of an entire section or piece or to set the pace in stone.
• The purpose was to provide information regarding the affekt of the music that could only be attained at the suggested tempo, thus preventing the performer from straying too far from the composer’s intention.
• The Classical Style projects the composer’s musical concept through affekt rather than a mechanized tempo. When it is all said and done, if the following question can be answered, the performer will have arrived at an appropriate tempo: What is the general intent, the spirit, at the core of the indicated tempo?

INFLUENCES APPLIED

A. Begin by determining the affekt.
• Examine inherent tempo clues in conjunction with the written indication at the beginning of a section, movement, or piece.
• Reconcile and merge inherent and indicated tempo directions. Determine how those clues apply to the piece in the context it was written.
B. Listening facilitates developing a sensitivity to stylistic taste.
C. As the style translates to the modern piano determine what tempo choices are possible with the capability of the instrument at hand.
D. Determine what tempo is appropriate in the hall in which the music will be played.
E. Consider the capability of the performer.
F. Choose a tempo that may be executed well to convey the desired affekt.
G. When using the metronome remember that it is a tool to aid in getting at the affekt.
   • Look for plausible parameters.
   • There is no absolute right or wrong.
   • The final goal is to play the style on the instrument at hand at a tempo that strives for truth, allowing the composer’s ideas and details to be expressed fully.
H. The over-riding concern should not be about speed, but rather, capturing the essence of the directions left over 200 years ago; communicating the composer’s intent with realistic, tasteful playing.