

# Stravinsky, Ditta, and Bartók's First Piano Concerto<sup>1</sup>

Richard TARUSKIN

Professor emeritus  
University of California, Berkeley  
Email: taruskin@aol.com

Received: September 2019; accepted: December 2019

**Abstract:** In a memorable letter of 18 March 1926, brought to the attention of Anglophone scholars by David Schneider, Bartók's second wife Ditta Pásztory described her reaction (obviously also reflecting that of her husband's) to Stravinsky's Piano Concerto just after listening to its Budapest première with the composer at the piano as being attracted to the machine music but missing in it what she called her "homeland." In the present article I should like to show that the machine music described as intimidating is no more threatening than a sewing machine, because the inspiration for it was 1920s-style performances of Bach. Furthermore, despite his notorious rhetoric, Stravinsky too aimed at exaltation and catharsis. Parallels between the climaxes in Bartók's First Piano Concerto and those in Stravinsky's (especially in the first movement) might reveal the real kinship between the two works. At the same time, Bartók's obviously different approach to Bach, testified in his few fragmentary recordings, may help us understand the differences of aesthetics between the two composers in their respective neoclassical style showcased in the most important genre for a concertizing pianist.

**Keywords:** Béla Bartók, Igor Stravinsky, Ditta Pásztory-Bartók, neoclassicism, Johann Sebastian Bach

When László Vikárius sent me the list of titles and abstracts to help me find a topic for the talk I had agreed to give at the "Bartók and the Piano" symposium, Virág Büky's title ("Mozart, Ditta, and the Third Piano Concerto") leapt out at me and solved my problem, and I hope she does not mind my parodying it. Ditta

1. Written version of the paper held on 14 September 2019 at the Budapest international musicological symposium "Bartók and the Piano."

Pásztory-Bartók's role in the creation of the First Piano Concerto was much smaller than in the case of the Third. She was only an onlooker when Bartók actually wrote the piece, but she wrote a letter to her mother-in-law Paula Voit Bartók that is now, thanks to an article by David Schneider that has been widely cited in the Anglophone literature, very much a part of the Concerto's history, and I will take it as my starting point.

David's article cited a previous article of mine, in which two of my own research interests – Stravinsky and performance studies – had intersected, and I in turn have cited David's dissertation, the book he based on it, and the article itself in various writings and talks. So this paper resumes our conversation. His texts and mine all echoed Ditta's letter, which contrasted Bartók and Stravinsky both as composers and as pianists. All of us – Ditta, David, and I – agreed that when thus compared, Stravinsky emerged as the forbidding modernist and Bartók as the nice humanist, who couldn't really emulate the evil Stravinsky, even when he wished. So today I will do a little penance for my infidelity to the composer to whom I have devoted so much of my time as a scholar, and allow their performances – of a somewhat earlier repertoire – to suffer a bit of deconstruction, perhaps revealing a bit of Bartók's humanity in Stravinsky and a bit of Stravinsky's cold-bloodedness in Bartók.

The letter in question is the one in which Ditta described the ambivalent impression Stravinsky made on her and her husband the evening of 15 March 1926, when he performed his Concerto for Piano and Winds with the orchestra of the Budapest Opera, performing as the Philharmonic Society under Emil Telmányi. Possibly echoing the words of reviewers, she wrote of “miraculously beautiful-timbred machine music, music of pulsating rhythm,” in which “truly one gets caught up,” but “in which there is absolutely no room for feelings,” but only “bare rhythm, bare hammering.” This is “the new direction,” she writes, and, as she tells her mother-in-law, she hopes her husband will be able to resist it, for “if Béla were to make such music, then for Béla I would not be able to be the artist that I am and always will be,” because in his music “there is also the profound pulsating rhythm, the timbre, but ... the feelings also live, and it has soul.”<sup>2</sup>

Actually, Ditta never mentions the Concerto in her letter, and never refers explicitly to Stravinsky's piano playing. It is reasonable to assume that she had these in mind when speaking of “the new direction,” since the concert ended with *Petrushka*, a score already familiar in Budapest, and one that accompanied a ballet full of pathos. The Piano Concerto was understandably, and probably deliberately, off-putting and forbidding, and evidently succeeded in putting the Bartóks off that night, since Ditta never mentions meeting Stravinsky on this occasion,

2. Quotations from Ditta Bartók's letter (18 March 1926) come from David SCHNEIDER, “Bartók and Stravinsky: Respect, Competition, Influence, and the Hungarian Reaction to Modernism in the 1920s,” in *Bartók and His World*, ed. by Peter LAKI (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 184.

whether in the green room or at a reception or anywhere else. That seems to me a rather striking fact, considering Bartók's prominence in the Budapest musical establishment, and the fact that he and Stravinsky had met previously, in Paris. (In his famously untrustworthy memoirs, Stravinsky puts this meeting in London; Bartók described the meeting in an interview with Aladár Tóth as having been unsatisfactory.)<sup>3</sup> That estrangement speaks louder than Ditta's letter, in fact, about Bartók's reaction to Stravinsky's new direction.

Also noteworthy is the fact that the opening selection on the program that evening, *Le Chant du Rossignol*, the so-called tone poem that Stravinsky had extracted from his opera *The Nightingale*, was the very piece that Stravinsky described to Bartók at their Paris meeting as "the last in [his earlier] style," after which "he ... turned to the road of 'completely objective' music."<sup>4</sup> Actually *Le Chant du Rossignol* could be described as coming midway between Stravinsky's prewar ballets and his early essays in neoclassicism. I suspect that it is the piece that Ditta had in mind when writing about Stravinsky's "miraculously beautiful-timbred" compositions, for I doubt anyone would have described the deliberately clunky orchestra of the Concerto for Piano and Winds that way. There is plenty in the *Chant du Rossignol*, especially in the "Chinese March" section, that could be described as "bare rhythm," especially the proportional tempo shifts, replacing the use of accelerando or ritardando, which the *Chant du Rossignol* has in common with the next piece Stravinsky composed, the *Symphonies d'Instruments à vent*.

Nevertheless, David Schneider, and following David many other writers (including me), have concluded that Bartók's First Concerto was heavily influenced by the experience of hearing Stravinsky perform his Concerto for Piano and Winds. Indeed, that exhilarating impression is now cited as one of the main springs that put Bartók creatively in motion in his wonderfully productive piano year (or, more accurately, half-year) in 1926, when he finally shook off a creative hiatus or block that had kept him silent for three years, and composed not only the Concerto, but before it the Piano Sonata, the *Out of Doors* Suite and the Nine Little Piano Pieces, all (including the Concerto) between June and November, six frenzied months in all. David points to several features of Bartók's Concerto that resemble Stravinsky's. Most generally there is the pulsating rhythm, straightforwardly manifested in the themes of Bartók's outer movements, which hammer away at the bare rhythm of a single obsessively repeated pitch. More specifically there is the fact that both concertos begin, unusually, with slow introductions; and there is also the predominance of wind timbres and especially percussion in Bartók's orchestration.

3. Quoted in *ibid.*, 180.

4. *Ibid.*, 180.

He could have gone even further. Both Bartók's concerto and Stravinsky's have passages in which the soloist's two hands alternate in contrasting registers, in a manner that emulates string-instrument *bariolage* technique. Such passages are ubiquitous in Stravinsky's Concerto, partly because it is an easy way to play fast without much technique. Their rhythmic rigidity can indeed be described as mechanical, and that is the reason why I thought it appropriate to illustrate it at the symposium with the composer's Pleyela pianola roll. There was a lot of music written in the 1920s that glorified the machine age. Before Stravinsky adopted his "new direction," the rhythmic rigidity of his music was often attributed to its evocation of primitive rituals, pre-eminently in *Le Sacre du Printemps*. (That interchangeability of futurism and primitivism in the interpretation of what Ditta called the "profoundly pulsating rhythm" has always been a telling aspect of the big change in musical rhythm in the years surrounding the Great War.) But there were other factors influencing Stravinsky's rhythm as well, including American dance music, and – of most immediate tactical concern to Stravinsky in the 1920s – "Bach" (always to be imagined in quotes), or rather the rhythmically rigid style of performance associated in those days with Bach's keyboard music. The main machine in Stravinsky's "machine music" turns out to have been the sewing machine.

Credit for that meme, as we now say, may belong to Arnold Bax, the British composer, who is widely quoted (mainly in books of famous insults) as having said, "All Bach's last movements are like the running of a sewing machine."<sup>5</sup> What evidently reminded Bax and countless others of that sort of running were the running sixteenth-notes that one finds in so much Baroque music, another quality of "bare rhythm" to put beside the hammering repeated eighth-notes over which Ditta marveled in her letter. The hammering eighths are foreground rhythms, the running sixteenths make up a ground rhythm – the background against which events transpire. Both are examples of what Nicolas Nabokov, writing about Stravinsky, called "monometrical rhythm," referring to the quality of isochrony – uniformity of note values.<sup>6</sup> Stravinsky used this term himself in a sketch from around 1920, for a never-completed composition to be called "Cinq pièces monométriques."<sup>7</sup> The bariolage effect and the monometric pulsation were both aspects of Stravinsky's deliberate adaptation of Bach – a much more specific adaptation than is usually identified. In an article of long ago I established, at least to my own satisfaction, that Stravinsky had borrowed heavily from Bach's very widely performed keyboard concerto no. 1 in D minor, which is assumed (based not only on Bach's known habits, but also on the prevalence of the bariolage ef-

5. Harriet COHEN, *A Bundle of Time: The Memoirs of Harriet Cohen* (London: Faber, 1969), 46. See also Matthew PARRIS, *Scorn: The Wittiest and Wickedest Insults in Human History* (London: Profile Books, 2016), 274.

6. Nicolas NABOKOV, "Stravinsky Now," *Partisan Review* 11/3 (Summer 1944), 332.

7. See Richard TARUSKIN, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (Berkeley, CA etc.: University of California Press, 1996), 1601.

fect) to be an arrangement of a violin concerto.<sup>8</sup> These passages prove, by the way, that in at least this one case, Bach did not transpose his model when arranging it for keyboard, because the left-hand note, corresponding to the low string in the bariolage, is D, which is an open violin string (as it had to be in bariolage).

David Schneider was quick, and right, to point up the inevitable differences between Bartók's concerto and Stravinsky's, owing to their differing heritages and temperaments. There is, for example, the tradition on which Bartók is said to have drawn in his slow introduction. Where Stravinsky's had been a typical neo-Baroque evocation of the "French overture" style, Bartók relied on the Central European romantic legacy of creation metaphors in which (as Schneider writes) the music "gradually build[s] a distinct shape from amorphous musical material" by the use of pedal points (in Bartók's case broken up into repeated pulses) "that provide a backdrop for metaphorical birth." He cites Beethoven's Ninth, *Das Rheingold*, Mahler's First Symphony, and Bartók's own *Wooden Prince* as eminently non-Stravinskian precedents. He also cites Bartók's irrepressibly romantic reliance on fluctuating tempos and dynamics, and his predilection for emotionally laden culminations. This, surely, is what Ditta had in mind when she insisted that alongside the pulsing rhythms, Bartók's music had "soul." László Somfai has also called attention to these culmination points – indeed, "Hungarian culmination points," as he calls them, where Bartók is likeliest to introduce typical Hungarian rhythms and melodic turns.<sup>9</sup> The First Concerto displays an excellent example at the end of the first movement (rehearsal figure [50]): The note values expand, the harmony becomes tense with tendency-tones, and out of the blue, and at the last minute, the rhythm goes Hungarian (that is, Lombard). David Schneider explicitly contrasts this culmination, which he calls "emotional," to the "mechanical" coda his exposure to Stravinsky obliged Bartók to append to the movement to compensate for the expressive outburst his temperament had forced upon him.

I now think this contrast overdrawn in conformity with our preconceptions about the Bartók/Stravinsky relationship, which has contributed toward one-sided, stereotyped and perhaps caricatured portrayals of the two composers. Stravinsky, too, ends the first movement of his concerto with a slow culmination, marked *Largo del principio* (rehearsal figure [46]). It is a reprise of the opening, as befits a piece in French overture style. It is not preceded (as in Bartók) by a *ritardando* but by a proportional shift, in keeping with Stravinsky's then strict view of tempo relationships, but I wonder whether one is justified in calling it

8. Richard TARUSKIN, "The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past," in *Authenticity and Early Music*, ed. by Nicholas KENYON (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 169–180; reprinted in Richard TARUSKIN, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 116–128.

9. László SOMFAI, "A Characteristic Culmination Point in Bartók's Instrumental Forms," *Conference in Commemoration of Béla Bartók: Budapest 1971*, ed. by József UJFALUSSY and János BREUER (Melville, NY: Bellwin Mills, 1972), 53–64.

mechanical, despite what David Schneider describes as its “rigid metrical matrix.” As he quite accurately describes it, “the bars of 2/4 are at once divided into quarter notes in the orchestra and quarter-note triplets in the piano’s left hand while each large division of the bar is respectively supported by its own subdivision, sixteenth notes in the dotted melody in the orchestra and sextuplets in the piano right hand.”<sup>10</sup> But although very exactly calibrated, the Largo is hardly lacking in emotional valence. I think it is merely by convention that we call Stravinsky’s rhythmic climax mechanical or objective rather than expressive. It seems to me that it is obviously both, and that its purpose is quite similar to that of Bartók’s culminations – namely, elevation or exaltation.

It seems odd to me, moreover, that so many commentators omit to mention that this precise moment in Stravinsky’s Concerto is the point at which he is most closely copying his evident model, the D-minor concerto of Bach. As I pointed out in my own earlier discussion of Stravinsky’s Concerto, that “metrical matrix” that David calls “rigid,” hence particularly Stravinskian, actually appears in the Bach concerto almost exactly the way it does at the beginning of Stravinsky’s coda, a montage of steady sixteenths in the solo part, eighths in the bass, quarter note attacks in the second violin, and syncopated half-note attacks in the viola (replaced after six bars by syncopated quarters). The keyboard part at the beginning of Bach’s passage, moreover, is copied exactly at the beginning of Stravinsky’s.<sup>11</sup>

So the contrast between Bartók and Stravinsky breaks down just a little, with Bach actually functioning as the softening agent. Nor is Bach the only predecessor to whom Stravinsky alludes in his Concerto. Before naming the next one, I cannot resist quoting an irate anonymous reviewer on the Amazon.com website who takes the Decca recording of the piece by Olli Mustonen (with Vladimir Ashkenazy conducting the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin) severely to task, writing that “Mustonen needs to learn to treat the piano more percussively! The accompaniment too! Everybody should remember, this is Stravinsky, not Tchaikovsky!” That made me laugh, because as long as I have known Stravinsky’s Concerto, I have chuckled in recognition at the point where the flute, then the oboe, and finally the clarinet play a yearning, arching clarinet tune from the slow movement of Chaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony. That Stravinsky was actually quoting at this point is strongly suggested by the coincidence both of timbre and of pitch: Chaikovsky’s clarinet and Stravinsky’s oboe play the melody in the same key (compare Stravinsky’s first movement at three bars before [22] with the *Moderato con anima* after letter [C] in Chaikovsky’s second movement).

Nor is that all. In Stravinsky’s slow movement, the horn plays a tune, six bars after [57], which tantalized me cruelly for years. It is full of easily recognized

10. SCHNEIDER, “Bartók and Stravinsky,” 189.

11. The passages are laid out side-by-side in the essay referenced in note 8 above.



topics, beginning with the *Seufzer*, or “sigh,” commonly found in Bach, and yet I thought I knew where it had to come from this time, and it was not Bach. It was not until by chance I heard a broadcast of the *Sérénade mélancolique* for violin and orchestra – Chaikovsky at his very schmaltziest! – that I was able to identify Stravinsky’s source, at least to my own satisfaction.

What is such a thing doing in the midst of one of Stravinsky’s most astringent early essays in neoclassicism? One way of explaining it away would be to say that Stravinsky was mocking Chaikovsky’s sentimentality, as perhaps he did when he brought back the same motif in the last movement of his *Sonate*, the solo sonata he composed the next year, but at a tempo that turns sighing into panting. (The passage comes at the top of page 15 in the Russischer Musikverlag/Boosey & Hawkes edition of the sonata.)

But no, the pathos seems entirely unmocked in the Concerto’s slow movement. If it has remained hidden, the only thing hiding it, I would say, is the discourse surrounding Stravinsky’s neoclassicism (beginning with words like “astringent”), a discourse that Stravinsky did a great deal, of course, to abet. But claiming kinship with Chaikovsky was an important part of the cultural politics in which Stravinsky’s chief employer, the Ballets Russes, was engaged in the early 1920s – a campaign in which Stravinsky took a very active part, even contributing a ghost-written “open letter” to the Times of London (nominally addressed to Diaghilev) in support of the ill-fated revival of *The Sleeping Beauty*.<sup>12</sup>

In later years, Stravinsky let his guard down, as we may learn in a memoir by his son Sviatoslav, known professionally as Soulima, that indirectly but unmistakably concerns the Concerto for Piano and Winds. In an interview published shortly after his father’s death, Soulima recalled the change:

I know that he himself evolved not only in his music but in his concept of interpretation. ... He was then [i.e. at the time of the Concerto] much more strict in his statements about interpretation. ... When we were separated during the war I had no contact with him, and I had several years in which to mature. I was no longer a young student. I had played a lot and had developed my own opinions; I still played his music, of course, but I revised it completely. I knew that I was doing something that people liked more. I applied not the techniques of, say Chopin to Stravinsky but what I knew about sensitive playing. And I must tell you about one instance when I had a reward. After many years of life in different countries, we got together again, and in a Town Hall concert [in New York] I played his music, in a quite different way. It was much more human, more elaborate, more evaluated. I didn’t tell him I had reworked it. He was de-

12. It appeared in the issue of 18 October 1921 under the heading “The Genius of Tchaikovsky,” and is reprinted in Eric Walter WHITE, *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works* (Berkeley, CA etc.: University of California Press, 2/1979 [1/1966]), 573–574.

lighted. He said, “You never played my music better! Don’t change anything.” So I knew I was going in the right direction.<sup>13</sup>

Soulima’s contribution to that Town Hall concert in 1949 consisted precisely of playing the solo part in the Concerto for Piano and Winds while his father conducted. That performance was later preserved in a studio recording.<sup>14</sup> A comparison between Stravinsky’s piano roll and Soulima’s recorded performance of the second movement – the Largo, which contains the putative reference to *Sérénade mélancolique* – will substantiate this memoir, especially at the two composed cadenzas, which Stravinsky *père* had somewhat grudgingly marked “poco rubato,” but which Stravinsky *filis* plays, quite beautifully, *molto e molto rubato*. Who is to say that that is not what Stravinsky wanted from the beginning? In the same memoir, Soulima recalled his father’s

great mistrust of most conductors and performers; it is the more surprising that his printed piano music has so few indications of how to play it. He was afraid to put in anything. He said, “If I put in a crescendo, they will give me too much, so I’d better put nothing.”<sup>15</sup>

These remarks are among the reasons why I gave an essay on Stravinsky’s ideas about performance, and about musical “objectivity” in general, the title “Did He Mean It?,” and ended it with a quotation from John McClure, Stravinsky’s producer for Columbia Records, who had worked more closely with Stravinsky the conductor than anyone else, and who dismissed his postures and pronouncements on performing his music as “baloney.”<sup>16</sup>

So much for Stravinsky the objectivist. But I have been deconstructing Stravinsky for decades; you surely expect it from me. What do you say we do a little deconstructing of Bartók for a change? I will not contest his musical or his ethical humanism, but the extreme contrast between his playing style and Stravinsky’s, so easily and convincingly demonstrated in the case of Mozart, does break down a little when we look at earlier music. We do not have any recordings of Stravinsky performing music by J. S. Bach or his contemporaries, but we do have such recordings by Bartók. Before hearing one, it would be wise to remind oneself how Scarlatti is played by today’s early music specialists. When I gave this paper as a talk at the Budapest symposium, I used a recording of the Sonata in B-flat, K70, as played by the Italian harpsichordist Francesco Cera, a pupil of Gustav Leon-

13. Ben JOHNSTON, “An Interview with Soulma Stravinsky,” in “Stravinsky: A Composers’ Memorial,” *Perspectives of New Music* 9/2–10/1 (Spring–Summer / Autumn–Winter 1971), 15–16.

14. RCA Victor LM 7010 (1949).

15. JOHNSTON, “An Interview with Soulma Stravinsky,” 15.

16. In the Tony Palmer film, *Once at a Border* (1982). See Richard TARUSKIN, “Did He Mean It?” in id., *Russian Music at Home and Abroad* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), at 497.



hardt.<sup>17</sup> It takes Sgr. Cera 35 seconds to play the first half without repeat. In his famous recording on piano, Bartók plays it with repeat in 48 seconds.<sup>18</sup> Bartók, it thus transpires, played at slightly better than one-and-a-half times Cera's speed; and it seems even faster because the playing is so uninflected and relentless – and (forgive me) heartless, albeit in an entertaining way to which a pupil of Leonhardt would never stoop. It was sewing-machine playing on a really advanced model.

As for the second half of the sonata, like most such binary pieces it goes into the opposite mode for the first cadence after the double bar. Even at his mad tempo, Bartók relaxes a bit for the minor – something I am sure he could not have helped doing, even if he had wanted to. But on the repeat, he relaxes far less for the G-minor cadence, and then he actually manages to pick up the speed afterwards, so that he lops two seconds off the time it had taken him to play the second half the first time around. Why this Roger Bannister-like sprint to the end?

We can only speculate, but I think these speculations will give us reason to mistrust the evidence of commercial recordings for the study of performance practice. Bartók's Scarlatti record, as I have mentioned, is a famous one. He recorded it for Columbia around 1929, but did not authorize its release, probably because there are a few moments of less than perfect control in the superfast playing. It was issued by Péter Bartók as a 78 RPM single in 1949 – the very first item produced under the label Bartók Records. It has been reissued many times since, in many formats, because, despite its imperfections, as sheer piano playing it is a gripping *tour de force*.

It was to have been (and eventually was) issued as a 10-inch 78 RPM disc, with two sonatas on each side. The theoretical maximum duration of a 10" RPM side was just about three minutes. (For a 12" side the maximum was four and one-half minutes – just the length of Cage's 4'33", and the probable reason for its length.) That meant that each Scarlatti sonata could last no more than approximately a minute and a half; hence the need for extreme speed. The two sonatas on the first side came between them to 2'49" – no problem at all. The second side was longer – in fact dangerously long as it turned out. The combined length of the two sonatas, of which the B-flat major was the second (and last on the disc) was 3'07". That means that there was a question whether the second item could even be accommodated in full.

In those days, in most recording studios, there was a light that would turn on to signal that a recording was in process. When the time limit was reached, the light would go off, and anything played after that moment was not recorded. Bartók, I propose, was racing that light while playing the second half of the B-flat-major

17. Available on YouTube at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDKW0DpLuY0>> (accessed 10 December 2019).

18. As YouTube will attest: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ce7z-z2xIKw>> (accessed 10 December 2019).

sonata, and possibly being egged on by a gesticulating recording producer. If that is the case, then the performance recorded did not reflect Bartók's decisions (or rather, at the very least, it reflected not only Bartók's decisions), and we would be ill-advised to conclude that it represented the way he would have performed the sonata at concerts. That may even be why he did not allow its release.

According to László Somfai's annotations to the complete centenary edition of Bartók's keyboard recordings, Péter Bartók suffered no such qualms. Having received the master disc from his father, he "treasured it as a favourite."<sup>19</sup> It was probably a family treasure, and with good reason. It is not, however, a reliable historical document. It does nevertheless raise the possibility that Bartók was not above the sort of virtuoso display that produced the sewing machine effect when applied to music with extremely regular pulsation.

Much better documents of performance practice are broadcast air checks, where the artist is subject to fewer external pressures, but where, owing to the same limitations on duration, the recording is likely to be fragmentary. There are two such documents relevant to the question of Bartók's Bach performances. A tiny passage from the A-major keyboard concerto, broadcast and recorded on the same day as the Mozart Rondo in the same key (K386), is too indistinct to tell us much. But three movements from the G-major Partita, from a broadcast recorded two weeks earlier on October 14, 1936, tell us that while Bartók did not mind using Scarlatti as a coldhearted display vehicle, his Bach playing remained, to quote Soulima Stravinsky, "much more human, more elaborate, more evaluated" – in short, "romantic" in style. The Preambulum is adapted, the way Busoni might have adapted it, with octave doublings, in the case both of melodic runs (using both hands) and of the bass in chordal passages. The fugal gigue, with its overly artful inversion of the subject, is rattled off with suitable briskness albeit with some moments of technical unsteadiness; but the *passepied* is played with a lilting rubato that is surely intended to convey *galanterie*, and does so very beguilingly.<sup>20</sup> Stravinsky, in 1926, would surely have disapproved of this performance – or at least would have been at pains to say he disapproved. One can still fairly ask, in the light of Soulima's memoir, whether he really would have meant it. One cannot ask such a question of Bartók.

19. László SOMFAI, "Bartók at the Piano," booklet accompanying Hungaroton LPX 12326–33 (1981), 21.

20. It, too, can be found on YouTube at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIId4kPmK1z0>> (accessed 10 December 2019).