

# Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D major Op 61 and its performance in accordance with Joachim's traditions. by Otto von Tideböhl (Alternative transliteration: Otto von Tidebel').

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Translation by Nadia Koudasheva.

Translator's note: For historical purposes I was prioritising exactness of translation, rather than taking liberty for the purpose of achieving language structures more common in contemporary English, for example retaining double negatives. My personal notes are shown in italicised square brackets. It would also be interesting to determine which edition Tideböhl was using. The letter and biography excerpts provided by Tideböhl in the footnote are in effect double translations, having been translated by myself from the Russian version presented by Tideböhl. Since the letter and biography in question were originally written in German, the translations found in the footnote here should not be referenced without consulting the German original. The text below should also be viewed with consideration of the historical time in which it was originally written.

## *Part 1*

von Tideböhl, Otto (фон Тидебель, Отто), *The Russian Musical Gazette* (Русская музыкальная газета) No 17, 26 April 1909, 453-455

Accessed from <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/pn000115322/view/?#page=233>

Violin Concerto in D major Op 61 was written by Beethoven in 1806. On the manuscript there is a note written personally by Beethoven: "Concerto par Clemenza pour Clement". Without doubt, the acquaintance and close association of Beethoven with the violinist Clement prompted him to write this concerto, first performed publicly in Vienna on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1806, by Clement. Beethoven dedicated Concerto Op 61 to his childhood friend – Stephan von Breuning. And so, the violinist Clement was the first performer of Beethoven's concerto – and indirectly may also be the reason of its appearance.

Franz Clement (1784-1842) was a violin soloist and then conductor at the 'Theater a. d. Wien' from 1802-1811, and then from 1818-1821. He was a remarkable personality in the musical sense, not to mention the extraordinary talent of a violinist; he possessed such a remarkable musical memory, which bordered with incredible and phenomenal.\* There are testimonies about him as a violinist, showing him as a rare, outstanding musician. Although Clement's playing did not show particular strength of tone or audacity, and his Adagio did not impact the listener in a breathtaking way, in his performance there were extraordinary beauty, grace and gentleness; impeccable clarity; he overcame the most impossible difficulties with extraordinary ease – distinctive, and inherent exclusively to him. Confidence in the performance of the most difficult passages did not leave him for a moment. But, being a virtuoso by nature, he not infrequently deviated from the true purpose of a serious musician.

Despite this, Beethoven must have valued Clement as a violinist very much, if he made up his mind to write a concerto with Clement in mind as the performer. Clement performed this concerto the first time in the space 'Theater a. d. Wien' on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1806. According to the communication of Dr Bertolini to Otto Jahn, Clement played the concerto at sight, as at the first rehearsal the concerto was not yet completely finished. It is doubted how correct this message is, especially as this would have been even more remarkable and phenomenal than his memory. As is known, the concerto sets the highest demands to the performer; one can suppose that performing concertos was in a way Clement's way of advertising.

From our contemporary violinists the fame of the inimitable performer of Beethoven's concerto has been earned by Joseph Joachim, who passed away last year in Berlin. Notes and markings for the performance of this concerto have been collected by his many students. These

notes and markings can at least partially give some understanding about this work in the way Joachim communicated it.

The greatest teacher in the world, the artist [visual artist – ‘*hudozhnik*’]-violinist Joachim is now in the grave. During his life a huge number of violinists from around the whole world flocked to Berlin to listen to and to learn from him, therefore in a pedagogical sense his role is huge. I think that there is no cultured country which would not have at least a few representatives of his school. The younger generation of violinists, cannot not be interested by the notes offered here about the performance of this concerto with the traditions passed down by Joachim to his students.

## Part 2

von Tiedböhl, Otto (фон Тидебель, Отто), *The Russian Musical Gazette* (Русская музыкальная газета) No 18/19, 3-10 May 1909, 481-485.

Accessed from <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/pn000115322/view/?#page=247>

The first movement, the *Allegro ma non troppo*, starts in a very original way: the timpani have a solo of same-note crotchets. This solo is joined directly by the main motif. Beethoven applied the first four strikes of the timpani in a very thought-through way, both as an individual motif, and as a unifying element of the whole movement, especially in the *Durchführung* [*Tiedböhl uses the Russian version of Durchführung, which means full thematic statement*]; as can also be seen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> bar of the aforementioned theme. The solo parts are positioned in such a way, that the cantilenas, having been played by the violin, transfer into the orchestra, and then are as if framed by the passages of the solo violin. The overall character of the first movement is more on the graceful rather than the majestic (*stately*) side, however places of depth and meaningful content are also not absent.

The image shows a page of a musical score for the first movement of a concerto. The title is "I часть. Allegro ma non troppo. Timpani solo." The score is written for Timpani and includes various musical notations such as dynamics (f, mf, dolce, p), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions (SIV Corde). The score is divided into sections labeled A through T. The notation includes treble clefs, time signatures, and various rhythmic values. The score is presented in a clear, legible format with standard musical notation.

A) The first movement is often taken too slowly. The marking *ma non troppo* should mean that we shouldn't take too fast a tempo, while not depriving this movement of a smooth Allegro character, because otherwise the character of the performance would have ended up being too heavy-weighted and stumbling.

B) The first movement should be started with a wide stroke and in a distinct style, but without any exaggerated pathos – cheerfully and smoothly. In bar 5, *piano* is indicated; this indication should not be taken literally; a tone which is too weak would be out of place here as the whole concerto is written symphonically. Conspicuous exaggerated effects of *piano* and *pianissimo* which are so applicable in chamber music, in the performance of the concerto are suitable only in rare cases.

C) Here one has to start simply, with little force, and thereafter gradually increase the tone; in the third bar a *crescendo* starts; the force of the tone, and primarily, the communication energy, have to quickly build and be performed with an ever-increasing rise until the end of the passage. So that nothing disrupts the smoothness of the performance, bow changes need to be thoroughly rounded, since any abrupt change would ruin the impression. The divine melody which follows should not be performed with a harsh or weak, insignificant, tone, however not *sonore* either, but with all the depth of expression and a tone strong enough to not lose the *solo* character.

D) These triplets are played very smoothly and lively; the adjoining broken octaves need to have a soulful character.

E) Despite what may seem from a cursory glance, this part is more singing-like rather than full of bravura.

The low notes of the broken octaves should not be filled with too weak a tone as notes of secondary importance, so that the melody could be clearly highlighted.

F) Just as much as this passage starts simply, the *crescendo* needs to be carried through strongly, starting from the third bar. In the fifth bar, as shown by the articulation/stroke [*original – shtrih*] indication, the passage takes on an energetic, nearly abrupt character. The last bar gradually softens [*in the gentle sense*], so it can connect well with the adjoining triplets. Although the trill on *mi* should not become annoyingly imposing [*original – nazoylivoy*], it should be strong-enough to not become lost in the orchestra.

G) Many artists play this staccato with a bouncing-off bow (*spiccato*). In any case, this part is performed lightly and gracefully. The following triplets should be played strictly legato with a singing-like tone, but without abruptly standing out, rather, merging with the orchestra.

H) This singing-like place is played with great expression. In the 5<sup>th</sup> bar of it, the *crescendo* is played passionately; one should play the sixteenth notes energetically and with fire, however it is recommended to use a wide, even stroke, not *martellato*.

I) Although with this figuration every note needs to sound clear and distinct, it should not be harshly hammered. The passage needs to carry a singing-like character.

K) The staccato is very light and in the second bar the dotted sixteenths [*here it would be interesting to know which edition was used by Tideböhl*] are with a bouncing bow. [*full stop added*] The *crescendo* in the third bar should not be carried out rapidly or with fire. Such a performance is appropriate in the *crescendo* 4 bars before the big Tutti.

L) Do not treat this place as being of secondary importance, instead play it very expressively (of course, they should not sound annoyingly imposing, these triplets). Staccato places in them need to be played distinctly, but not abruptly [*original – rezko*]; more on the singing-like and soft [*in the gentle sense*] side, rather than the brilliant.

M) The difference in rhythm from the rhythm of the triplets should be clearly expressive. The eighths are accented not harshly, while the sixteenths should not follow too early.

N) Correct performance of this cantilena is achieved not through strength of tone, but by warmth and depth. At the same time, one can allow themselves a liberty: to take a slight respite after the last eighth note of the second bar. It goes without saying that this liberty should not be exaggerated.

O) Simply and strictly in time. Crescendo gradually. The difficulty of this section is that it should not be performed dryly or like an etude.

P) It seems to me, that it would be best to play this part in the same way as shown the first time (letter G.). Some performers on the contrary, desiring to add variety to the performance of these two parts, omit legato, such that every note is played with a light *detache*. However, this puts at danger the rounded communication [*original - okruglyonnoy peredachi*] of this part.

Q) It should be performed with a light (not bouncy) [*original - ne prygayushchim*] bow. Starting from the fourth bar, the performance is like the parallel part at letter K.

R) Too great a fear of harming the style of the concerto causes some violinists to play cadenzas only made up of a more or less successful collation of melodies and passages which have already appeared in the concerto itself. Meanwhile for such a mighty first movement of Beethoven's concerto neither such a meagre cadenza nor a cadenza in the spirit of contemporary virtuosity are fitting. Of course, themes from the concerto have to lie at the cadenza's basis, but freely reworked with small beautiful episodes personally composed by the compiler of the cadenza. To allow such freedom, without harming the style of the whole concerto, is the main difficulty when compiling cadenzas for the Beethoven concerto (good cadenzas are written by Joachim himself).

S) At the end of the concerto this wonderful melody in its stately, solemn calmness appears as if from other spheres. The first bar needs to be performed with deep expression, but without any crescendo or diminuendo. Any strengthening or easing of sound would have interfered with the specific character [*original – harakternoy*] of communication of this melody. Warmth of expression needs to be manifested exclusively with the help of the spiritual enlivenment of the tone; to achieve this more easily, this part is played only on the G string, but with soft [*in the gentle sense*] gentle stroke; a more strong, sonorous tone, to which playing on the G string could prompt, would have destroyed the necessary impression.

T) This part already starts quite strongly, especially from the third bar, both in relation to expression and in terms of the strength of tone.

### *Part 3*

von Tiedeböhl, Otto (фон Тидебель, Отто), The Russian Musical Gazette (Русская музыкальная газета) No 20/21, 17-24 May 1909, 520-523. Accessed from <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/pn000115322/view/?#page=266>

The second movement, *Larghetto*, in the accompaniment of which, apart from a string quartet, only clarinets, bassoons and trumpets take part, is a musical narrative poem, full of lovely daydreams, perhaps created by Beethoven on one of the moonlit summer nights. The violins con *sordino*, alluring appeals of the horns, dreamy melodies telling stories about love and love happiness in the clarinets and bassoons, and above all this, lovely caressing fantastical passages and divine cantilena of the solo violin – all of this is unified in harmony and in the simplest way brought to ideal beauty. Those who will be able to communicate this in the way in which it was

intended, will make an irresistible and enchanting impression on the listeners.



Excerpt taken from *The Russian Musical Gazette (Русская музыкальная газета)* No 20-21, 17-24 May 1909, p521, accessed from <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/pn000115322/view/?#page=266>

A) These figurations in the solo violin, like arabesques surround the orchestral theme. Not annoyingly imposing [*original – nazoylivo*], but expressively, crystal clean in tone.

B) This scale must be performed with great ascending energy [*original - s energiyey vverh*]

C) Little notes very simply, without excessive sophistication [*original - ne izoschryayas*]; the sixteenth notes two bars later should not be seen as an insignificant transition, as may seem at first glance; correct communication demands great [*original word, is 'big' – bolshogo*] and very free expression. While the following melody needs to be performed nobly, this needs to be not in an academically-restrained way, but warmly. Further on, under the indication 'perdendosi', despite the tone continuing to weaken, the performance needs to remain inspired [*original – oduhotvoryonnyy*].

D) Despite the *ppp*, the tone should under no circumstances be timid and limp, but although weak, needs to sound clear and clean.

E) In accordance with the character of this whole movement, a short cadenza is enough here. Big, lengthy cadenzas would be out of place here.

The finale, as a *Rondo*, has a lighter character than the first movement; it is full of vivacious freshness and spurting merriment and humour. The horns, sounding con sordino in the *Larghetto*, uncontrollably rejoicing in this *Rondo*, and following them. Only once is this merriment disrupted by a melody which bears a character of gentle sadness.

*[This space is intentionally left blank]*



Excerpt taken from *The Russian Musical Gazette (Русская музыкальная газета)* No 20-21, 17-24 May 1909, p522, accessed from <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/pn000115322/view/?#page=266>

- A) The theme needs to be communicated in a casually merry, almost naughty way, gracefully rhythmic, well-marked.
- B) So that this place sounds completely as spry as the similar place played earlier in a lower position, many violinists play it in the same way as Joachim, exclusively on the E string.
- C) With a big singing-like tone, but not dragging out the tempo, rhythmically.
- D) ‘Crescendo’ should be carried through lively, with fire, but without making the tempo faster.
- E) This bouncing bow place is replaced by the detaché stroke at the crescendo and *f*.
- F) From the second bar the energy of the performance gradually lessens, from the third bar the performance is very gentle, soft [*in the gentle sense*], caressing (of course without mawkishness). The adjacent sixteenths – well connected, the staccato – softly [*in the gentle sense*].
- G) These sixteenths are not as an addition to the orchestra or something secondary. On the contrary, they have to be performed expressively; *pps* need to sound quite clearly.
- H) This reminder of the first movement is played very energetically, with fire. The adjacent 3<sup>rd</sup> movement theme – even more spryly, energetically, merrily, than at the beginning of the third movement.
- I) From this place, although the stroke is light, it is already not spiccato.
- K) The tone at the Piano, although is soft [*in the gentle sense*], needs to have a colouring of brilliance, and a defined rhythm.
- L) These sixteenth notes commence in a boldly sweeping [*original – razmashysto*], with a big tone; as one comes closer to the end of the sixteenths figuration, the tone takes on an ever more brilliant character and strength, so as not to be suppressed at this place by the orchestra.

M) This motive, resembling the main theme, should be played with slight restraint, almost timidly, when compared to the manner of performance which was applied at the beginning of this movement, all the while being simple and natural.

The last two concluding chords of course with great *ff* energy.

#### *Footnote from Part 1:*

\* This is what the opera singer [*Joseph August?*] Röckel writes in a letter to his friend Spehr [*perhaps the reference is to Johann Peter Spehr?*]: "The first production of Beethoven's opera 'Fidelio' was not successful; the opera suffered from many tiring long drawn-out sections, as well as from other shortcomings. In other words 'Fidelio' did not have the desired success and was taken off the stage. Beethoven made up his mind to change a lot in it and invited his friends for a discussion of this question. The gathering was at the house of Prince Lichnowsky, where, apart from the owner and his spouse, were present: Stephan von Breuning, the poet Collin, Treitschke, Clement, the opera director Mayer, the actor Lange, Beethoven's brother Karl, me, and the composer himself. Because we needed to go through the whole opera (Röckel continues in his letter), we got to work straight away. Princess Lichnowsky played at the piano from the score. Clement, positioning himself in the corner of the room, performed by memory all the different instrument solos which came up in the opera. Because everyone knew Clement's extraordinary musical memory, no one apart from me was surprised by this. Mayer and I, to the extent that we were able to be of use, performed the various vocal parts of the opera: I sang the top voices, and he the bass ones. Even though Beethoven's friends, knowing the character of the latter, were prepared for all sorts of arguments, they had never had to see genius composer in such an agitated state; without the request and plea from Princess Lichnowsky, a lady of the highest degree of sensitivity and tactfulness, who for Beethoven was like a second mother and was considered by him as such, - it is unlikely that his friends, with their combined efforts, would have had any success in this endeavour without the assistance of the princess. When finally, thanks to their combined effort, which lasted from 7 till 1, Beethoven agreed to sacrifice three numbers and when we, weary, hungry and thirsty, finally decided to strengthen ourselves with a magnificent dinner, none of us were merrier or happier than Beethoven himself. This is how I came to know Beethoven in fury and in good spirits. When he saw me sitting opposite him deep in the process of devouring some dish of French cuisine, and when I answered "I don't know" to his question of "what are you eating?", he cried with his booming voice: "He eats like a wolf, not knowing what he eats. Ho-ho-ho!". Apart from this excerpt from Röckel's letter, we find a note regarding Clement in the autobiography of the famous violinist Spohr: "Clement, having listened a few times to Haydn's 'The Creation' (this composition was not yet printed) captured it in his memory so well, that he was able to write a Claviersauszug [*modern spelling - Klaviersauszug*] from it using only the text, and brought it to Haydn for him to have a look. For the first moment Haydn was shocked and scared, assuming that his score was stolen or secretly copied; when looking at the Claviersauszug more closely he found it so correct and faultless, that gave his consent for its publication."