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## **TEMPO RUBATO AS RHETORICAL MEANS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF CHOPIN'S NOCTURNE OP.15-2 BY CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1905)<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** This article discusses how Camille Saint-Saëns reconstructed the Chopinesque *tempo rubato* in his piano performance of Chopin's *Nocturne Op.15 No.2*, as preserved on a piano roll (1905). Though Saint-Saëns had no direct experience with Chopin's performance, he learned that Chopin's *tempo rubato* relied on controlling the timing gap between the melody and the accompaniment. To examine the details of Saint-Saëns' *rubato* practice, I analyzed the 1905 piano roll using a MIDI recording (Stanford University Piano Roll Archive) and the open-source application called *Sonic Visualizer*. I mark the timing for each eighth note of the melody and the accompaniment to calculate timing gaps, showing that in Saint-Saëns performance, accompaniment largely preceded the melody at: joints of phrases, modulation, harmonically instable phrases, and melody notes with accent signs notated by Chopin. Whereas, when the melody precedes the accompaniment it is because of the trills, *gruppetti* and the music's demand for the expressive *accelerando*.

**Keywords:** Tempo rubato, Saint-Saëns, Piano roll, Chopin, Nocturne

**Sažetak:** U ovom članku se razmatra kako je Kamij Sen-Sans rekonstruisao šopenistički *tempo rubato* u sopstvenom pijanističkom izvođenju Šopenovog *Nokturna op. 15, broj 2*, onako kako je sačuvano na svitku za klavir (1905). Iako Sen-Sans nije imao direktnog iskustva sa Šopenovim načinom izvođenja, naučio je da se *tempo rubato* sastoji u kontrolisanju vremenskog raskoraka između melodije i pratnje. Kako bih ispitao detalje Sen-Sansove *rubato* prakse, analizirao sam svitak za klavir iz 1905. godine koristeći se MIDI transkripcijom (Stanford University Piano Roll Archive) i aplikacijom pod nazivom *Sonic Visualizer*. Označio sam vremensko rastojanje na svakoj osmini u melodiji i pratnji kako bih izračunao vremenski raskorak, pokazujući da je u izvođenju Sen-Sansa pratnja u velikoj meri prethodila melodiji na spojevima fraza, u modulaciji, u harmonski nestabilnim frazama i na melodijskim tonovima označenim akcentima koje je zabeležio Šopen. Kada melodija prethodi pratnji to je uzrokovano trilerima, *grupetima* i onim frazama u kojima muzika zahteva ekspresivni *accelerando*.

**Ključne reči:** *tempo rubato*, Sen-Sans, svitak za klavir, Šopen, nokturno

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I have never heard Chopin play, and never consoled myself for it; because I could have heard him, and it was my piano teacher, Stamaty, who prevented me from doing so, threatening me to expel from his lessons if he heard that I had listened to the great artist's performance. He was rightly afraid to be compared. (Saint-Saëns 2012, 668)

In 1910, 61 years after Frédéric Chopin's death (1810–1849), Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) wrote an article for the journal *Le Courrier musical* on Chopin's performing style. Despite never having seen or heard Chopin perform, Saint-Saëns was greatly interested in Chopin's piano playing style, specifically in his use of *tempo rubato*. Five years prior to the article's publication, Saint-Saëns preserved two of Chopin's pieces on piano roll: *Nocturne* Op.15 No.2 in F sharp major and the *Étude* Op.10 No.3 in E major.<sup>2</sup> In this article, I examine the recording of the *Nocturne*, and Saint-Saëns decisions surrounding *tempo rubato* in the recording of the piece, informed by his 1910 article. I discuss how Saint-Saëns' practice of *tempo rubato* were not arbitrary expressive choices, but deliberate stylistic decisions informed from Chopin's students' performance and from paying particular attention to Chopin's notational use of *tempo rubato*.

*Tempo rubato* literally translates to “stolen time” and indicates a rhythmic freedom during a performance. *Tempo rubato* is generally divided into two types: one is described as when some notes values are altered for expressive purposes, while the accompaniment maintains a constant rhythm. The other is described as when rhythmic alternations in tempo occur within the entire musical ensemble (Hudson 1994, 1). Jan Kleczyński (1837–1895) wrote that Chopin was said to have practiced two types of rubato (Eigeldinger 1988, 76), but most of Kleczyński's contemporaries argue that *Chopinesque rubato* refers to the expressive rhythm of notes with a constant accompaniment, a style which gradually disappeared during the second half of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century.

To examine how Saint-Saëns, who had no direct experience with Chopin's performance, reconstituted an “authentic” *Chopinesque rubato* I use an open-source application called Sonic Visualizer (version 4.3; Cannam, Landone and Sandler 2010) to analyse the timing gaps between melody and accompaniment for each eight note beats within Saint-Saëns' piano roll recordings. My analysis specifies the expressive and rhetorical function of *rubato* in relation to Saint-Saëns' writings on *tempo rubato* and the notation in the score of the *Nocturne* Op.15 No.2. Finally, I discuss the results of the analysis to explain that Saint-Saëns skilfully controlled the *rubato* to replicate what he learned through Chopin's pupils and piano teachers who wrote about Chopin's performing style.

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<sup>2</sup> Saint-Saëns preserved another piece by Chopin, *Impromptu* No.2 Op.36 on piano roll, released by Duo-Art in 1917.

## 1. Context: *Tempo rubato* as seen by Saint-Saëns and his contemporaries

To understand Saint-Saëns' interest in *tempo rubato*, we need to understand his opinion on Chopin's performance style as a pianist. In Saint-Saëns' 1910 article, he revealed how he was charmed by the Chopin-like *rubato* when listening to performances of two singer-composers who studied piano under Chopin: Viscountess Clémence de Grandval (1828–1907)<sup>3</sup> and Pauline Viardot (1821–1910). When reflecting on the experience of hearing de Grandval singing around 1847, when Saint-Saëns was approximately 12 years old, he wrote:

She sang a delicious piece, *The Source*,<sup>4</sup> in her own way accompanying herself; and I was struck and charmed by the tranquillity and fluidity of her pure playing, without needless nuances, which quite fitted in with my way of viewing. She received her calm and smooth style from Chopin, of whom she was a pupil. (Saint-Saëns 2012, 668)

On Pauline Viardot, Saint-Saëns wrote she had “the most valuable information about Chopin and his play; that his playing manner was much simpler than generally imagined” (Saint-Saëns 2012, 668). Recalling his encounters of Chopin's two students, Saint-Saëns wrote the following about the *tempo rubato*, which he considered an “indispensable” feature of Chopin's music:

Ah! This *tempo rubato* – what errors are committed in its name! For there is the true and the false, as in jewels.

In the true, the accompaniment remains undisturbed while the melody floats capriciously, rushes or delay, sooner or later to find again the support of the accompaniment. This manner of playing is very difficult, requiring a complete independence of the two hands. (Saint-Saëns 2012, 668)

Saint-Saëns' description of *tempo rubato* was repeated in a 1915 lecture he gave entitled “The execution of music and principally of ancient music”. He wrote that *tempo rubato* “means a grand liberty left to the singing [or melodic] part, while the accompaniment keeps a strict measure” (Saint-Saëns 2012, 931). For Saint-Saëns, *tempo rubato* concerned the relationship of the timing gap between the melody part and the accompaniment part.

Saint-Saëns' description of *tempo rubato* was not unprecedented. For example, two textbooks on piano playing style, endorsed by the Conservatoire de musique de Paris, referred to the same practice without citing the expression *tempo rubato*. One is *Méthode de piano du Conservatoire* (1804) authored by Louis Adam (1758–1848) and the other is *Encyclopédie du pianiste compositeur* (1840) by Joseph Zimmerman (1785–1853). Both authors were professors of piano at the Conservatoire. Adam wrote about the tempo alternation of the melody part and the observation of measure in the accompaniment part:

<sup>3</sup> She was also called Marie de Grandval.

<sup>4</sup> Clémence de Grandval, *La Source! Mélodie, paroles traduites du suédois*, Paris, H. Lemoine et fils, [1851].

Expression requires that certain notes of the melody are either slowed or hurried, but these changes should not continue throughout the entire piece, but only in a few places where the expression of a languid melody or the passion of an agitated melody requires a delay or a more dynamic movement. *In this case, the melody must be altered, and the bass should strictly mark the measure.* (Adam 1804) (emphasis added)

In the textbook by Joseph Zimmerman, the importance keeping the bass regular was emphasized in order to ensure the phrase was recognizable during the performance is described: “Do not allow the movement of the bass to be influenced by the slackening and the whim that sometimes the character of a melody requires” (Zimmerman 1840, 59). These opinions about *tempo rubato* within two official textbooks were also reflected in the *Méthode pour apprendre le piano forte à l'aide du guide-mains* by Frédéric Kalkbrenner. He recommended that the accompaniment should not participate in the nuances of expression within the melody part (Kalkbrenner 1831, 12).

Kalkbrenner, who studied with Adam, was close friends with Zimmerman, and a piano teacher of Stamaty (Saint-Saëns early piano teacher). Saint-Saëns would go on to criticize Kalkbrenner for having played continuously *legato*, style *molto espressivo*, and an “abuse of small nuances” (Saint-Saëns 2012, 791). Despite Saint-Saëns’ complaints, his understanding of the *tempo rubato* was clearly influenced by Kalkbrenner, and Saint-Saëns’ principles of *tempo rubato* were ultimately derived from the traditions of the Conservatoire – tracing all the way back to Louis Adam’s textbook.

The regularity of the accompaniment, as opposed to the flexibility of the melody in the musical performance, had to do with theories of musical phrasing in the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century. The treatises on harmony by Marin Mersenne (1588–1648), Johann Mattheson (1681–1764), Heinrich Christoph Koch (1749–1816), and Antoine Reicha (1770–1836) had explained musical composition using terms of grammar and rhetoric (Bonds 1991, 68ff). The comparison of the melody to language permitted piano teachers to recommend the clearly articulated phrasing and the observation of regularity of the measure. That was why Adam affirmed that “One of the first qualities required in playing music is to observe measure; without it there would be only indecision, vagueness and confusion” (Adam 1804, 160). Similarly, Zimmerman wrote: “I have already said somewhere that music, as with speech, is composed of words, phrases, and periods, for both of which the poses are arranged. Neither the words of pianist nor those of speaker can be interrupted by breaths, the art of phrasing on the piano, it is the art of breathing for singer” (Zimmerman 1840, 59). Chopin’s *tempo rubato* had an exceptional characteristic, admired by Professor Zimmerman:

As we have just referred to Chopin, we will point out that his music has a characteristic which allows one to relax from the rigorous observation of the measure. However, we must use soberly the indication that we give here, because it is only a question, for some

pieces of this master, of a certain abandonment filled with an inexpressible charm under the fingers of the author. Chopin, as all original talent cannot be imitated, however we must try to get into the spirit of his compositions so as not to misinterpret them. (Zimmerman 1840, 59)

Zimmerman was able to make such direct remarks because of the close relationship he had with Chopin. He organized famous musical soirées at the Square d'Orléans in Paris between 1832 and 1844 (Ueda 2016, 275ff), where Chopin was a regular visitor, and was also Chopin's neighbour between 1842 and 1849. Later, Jan Kleczyński made a similar observation to Zimmerman on Chopin's style: "There are passages in the works of Chopin, which not only do the leaves tremble (to continue comparison of Liszt),<sup>5</sup> but the trunk totters" (Eigeldinger 1988, 51). Kleczyński's remarks show that Chopin's *tempo rubato* was characterized by the flexibility of the tempo in the melody in relation to that of the accompaniment, which Kleczyński called "*demi-rubato*", as well as the simultaneous alternation of tempo of both parts. The alternating tempo in both the melody and accompaniment was considered exceptional by Chopin's contemporaries, as Zimmerman indicated.

Saint-Saëns never mentioned the alternation of tempo within the melody and accompaniment, but was interested in the *demi-rubato*. Saint-Saëns criticized his contemporary pianists for abusing "false" *rubato*.

When some cannot achieve this [*demi-rubato*], they give the illusion to themselves and to others by playing the melody in time and dislocating the accompaniment to make it fall at the wrong time; or else – and this is the worst of all – they are content to play the two hands one after the other. It would be a hundred times better to play everything evenly in time and the two hands together, but then they would not have 'the artistic air'. (Saint-Saëns 2012, 668)<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to his criticism, a listener of the *Nocturne* Op.15 No.2 performed by Saint-Saëns might notice that he frequently played "two hands one after the other". This caused discussion amongst musicologists of consistency between Saint-Saëns preferences and his practice: "Saint-Saëns' practices precisely what he forbids, or so it seems" (Costa 2012, 78). The reason for the dissonance between practice and performance is difficult to explain. As Neal Peres da Costa remarked, it might be that Saint-Saëns railed against "even more frequent dislocations, with much wider gaps between the left and right hands", or that he just intended to reprove the pia-

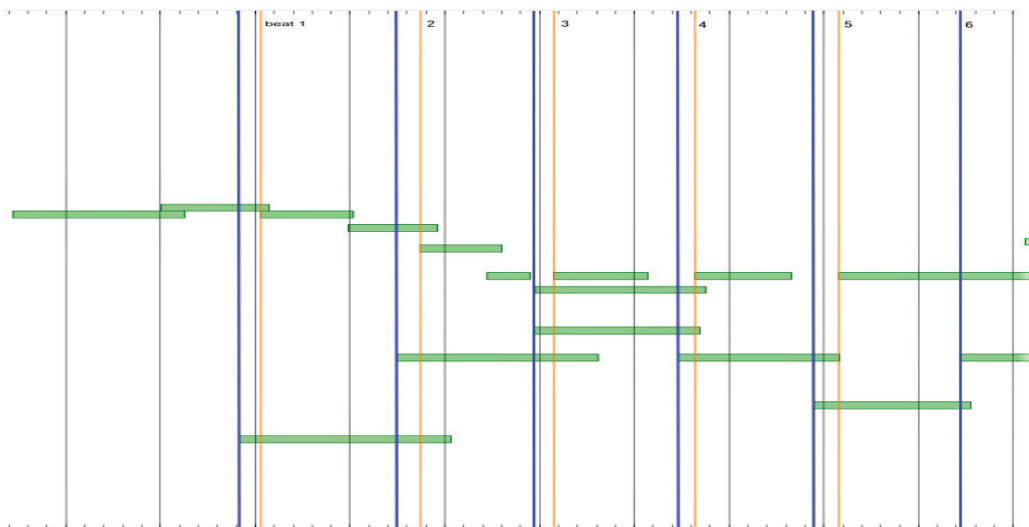
<sup>5</sup> Kleczyński bore in mind the following words of Franz Liszt cited by Frederick Niecks (1845–1924) who wrote about Chopin's *tempo rubato*: "Look at these trees!" he said, "the wind plays in the leaves, stirs up life among them, the tree remains the same, that is Chopinesque rubato" (Niecks 1888, 75).

<sup>6</sup> This citation refers to a French-English translation by Richard Hudson, which I have modified slightly (Hudson 1994, 195).

nists who “exhibited an imbalance between the two [hands]” without any consideration for his own performance (Costa 2012, 78–79). To approach this issue, I present a quantitative analysis of the timing gaps between Saint-Saëns’ right and left hands.

## 2. Method of Analysation

Saint-Saëns’ 1905 piano roll recording of the Nocturne Op.15 No.2 is an ideal recording to analyse Chopinesque tempo rubato, meaning a timing gap between melody and accompaniment, because it affords the ability to spatially observe the timing of all notes. First, I obtained the converted MIDI data of Saint-Saëns’ 1905 piano roll (Stanford University Piano Roll Archive, 2019). The MIDI format allowed me to calculate the duration of each note. Second, I used the open-source application “Sonic Visualizer” to mark the starting points of all notes on every eighth beat. Marking for the melody and the accompaniment was done separately. The marking was executed in two steps. First, automatically using the plug-in “Bar and Beat Tracker”, then, I manually adjusted the automatic markings so that the vertical marking bars were placed precisely at the start point of each beat. When there was more than one note on the same beat the first one was marked, except in the case of ornamental notes (printed as a smaller size on the score). Figure 1 shows the beginning of the MIDI data shown by Sonic Visualizer with beat marks for accompaniment and melody (Example 1).



**Figure 1** – Beginning of the MIDI data shown by Sonic Visualizer with beat marks in blue for accompaniment and orange for melody

**Example 1**

Frédéric Chopin, *Nocturne* in F sharp major Op.15 No.2, bars 1–2

N.B. The triangle marking on the first thirty-second note in bar 2 (in the right hand) shows the absent of a beat mark on the Sonic Visualizer because of a tie connecting the two notes

The marking process allowed me to obtain the precise timing of each eighth note beat and the timing gaps between the notes immediately before and after on the same beat. Table 1 shows the timing data for the first six beats of the accompaniment, the melody, and the difference between these two.

**Table 1**

The timing of the first six beats for the accompaniment and melody, and the difference between these two (in seconds)

Beat	A: Accompaniment (seconds)	B: Melody (seconds)	Difference between A and B (A – B)
1	2.91	3.02	-0.11
2	3.74	3.86	-0.12
3	4.46	4.57	-0.10
4	5.22	5.32	-0.09
5	5.94	6.07	-0.12
6	6.71	-	0

A negative value in the difference column (fourth column) means the accompaniment precedes the melody, whereas a positive value indicates the melody precedes the accompaniment (which does not occur in Table 1). If there is no beat between the melody and the accompaniment, the difference is set to zero (e.g. beat 6 of table 1). Using the 245 beats available in the *Nocturne* dataset, I calculated that the accompaniment precedes the melody 133 times, with an average time of 0.147s, while the melody precedes the accompaniment 30 times, with an average of 0.087s.

This suggests that Saint-Saëns delayed his right hand more frequently, and for longer, than his left hand. Evidently, the *tempo rubato* performed by Saint-Saëns consisted in delaying the melody in relation to the accompaniment.

### 3. Functions of *tempo rubato*

If Saint-Saëns' *tempo rubato* was not arbitrarily performed, how did he control the timing of his hands in relation to the melodic accents, ornamentation, harmony, and form of the *Nocturne* Op.15 No.2 by Chopin? To answer this question, I analyse the score of the *Nocturne* from Saint-Saëns piano roll. Figure 2 shows a formal schema of *Nocturne* Op.25 No.2.

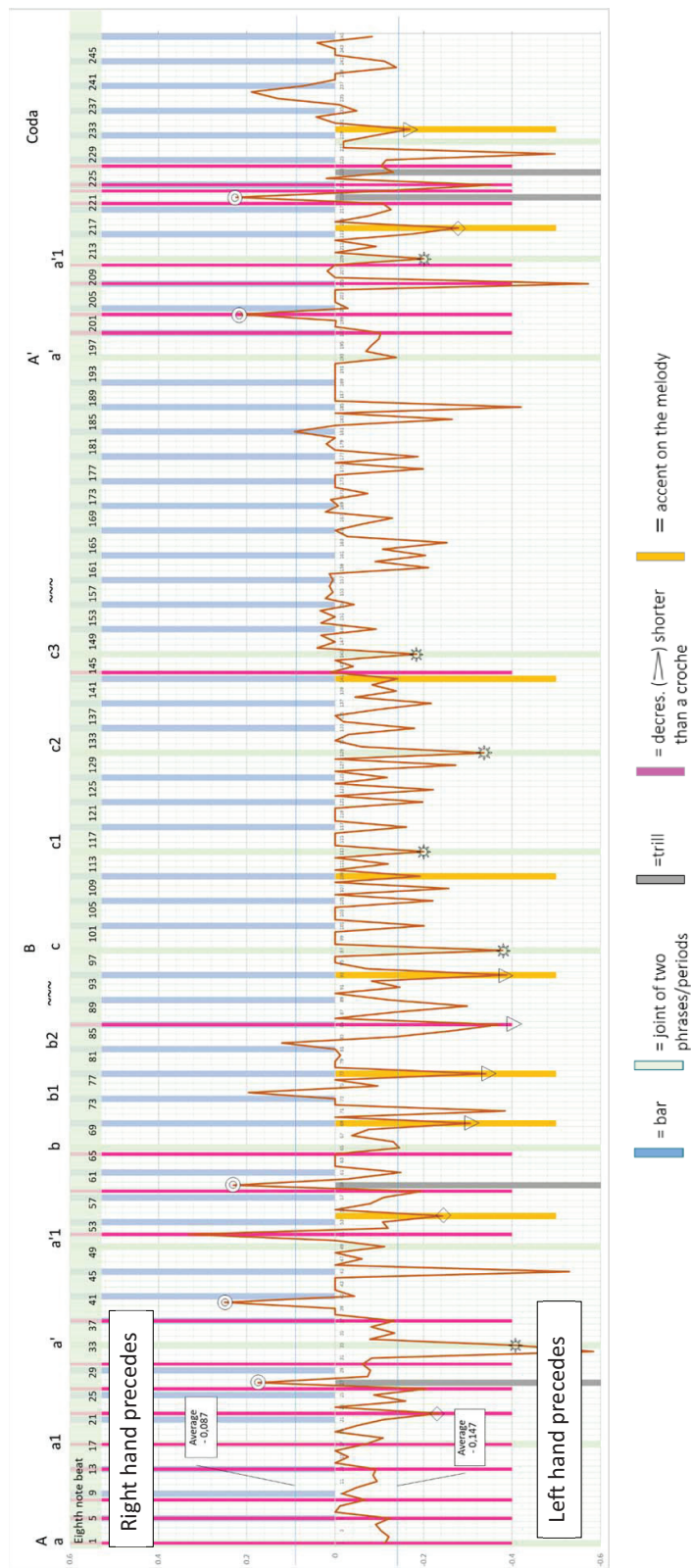
	Antecedent		consequent				consequent						
	⏟		⏟				⏟						
Bar	1	9	17		25	33		49	58				
Section	A				B				A'	Coda			
Phrase	a	a1	a'	a'1	b	b1	b2	c	c1	c2	c3	a'	a'1
Tonality	F# d#				F#				La	f#	F#		

Figure 2 – Formal schema of *Nocturne* Op.15 no.2 by Frédéric Chopin

#### 1) Emphasize the phrasing and the modulation

Graph 2 visualizes the timing gap between the melody and the accompaniment on 245 marked eighth note-beats. First, we observe the accompaniment preceding the melody in all cases – as determined from the joints of phrases and periods marked by green vertical bars. Out of the 11 joints, 6 show delays longer than the average, marked by ☼ in Figure 3. The most extreme delay in melody occurs at the arpeggios (beats 32 and 33; see example 2) which start the consequent (a') of part A (which will be indicated A-a' here after).





Marks for beats where the delay between the two hands is above average

- ♣ : Joint of phrases
- ▽ : Note with an accent (<) mark
- ◇ : Note preceded by a leap more than an octave
- © : Beat with a trill or a *gruppetto*

**Figure 3** – Gaps between melody and accompaniment, *Nocturne* Op.15 No.2 of F. Chopin performed by C. Saint-Saëns (Welte-Mignon piano roll, 1905)

**Example 2**Frédéric Chopin, *Nocturne Op.15 No. 2*, bars 5–15

beat 33: - 0.41s

beat 45: - 0.53s

Though the melody delays of 0.58 and 0.41 seconds at beats 32 and 33, this *tempo rubato* phrasing never causes a metric confusion because it occurs at the joint of the phrases between A-a1 and A-a'. Furthermore, in the first four-bar phrases of part B (c, c1, c2, and c3), the pianist delays the melody at the start of each phrase. The relatively large delay at the first beat of c2 is remarkable because it occurs at the same time as the modulation of F sharp major to A major, a minor third of the tonic.

The emphasis of the delay at beats 127 and 129 should be intentional, for a listener will not expect that the diminished seventh chord (F double-sharp -A sharp-C sharp-E) on the 127<sup>th</sup> beat will be followed by the third inversion of the dominant of A major. The leading note of a double-sharp F resolves to G-sharp, while the C-sharp of the bass moves to a surprising D-natural on which the dominant of A major is placed. It was on this D which Chopin indicated *fz* and an accent sign. Thus, the contrast between peaceful c-c1 section and agitated c2-c3 section is audibly reinforced.<sup>7</sup>

From these examples, it is evident that Saint-Saëns not only practiced the *tempo rubato* to clearly show the phrases and periods, but also to emphasize the harmonically elaborate and rhetorical strategy employed by Chopin.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Kleczyński qualified it as “tempestuous episode in the expansive and peaceful life of a youthful soul” (Kleczyński n.d., 34)

**Example 3**Frédéric Chopin, *Nocturne Op.15 No.2*, bars 110–117

**2) Imitate the vocal expression**

Saint-Saëns “stole” time at the beats where Chopin placed an accent sign in the melody. Though it is difficult to clearly distinguish the sign of the short decrescendo, also known as a “hair pin” *decrescendo*, from the accent sign, I found eight notes accompanied by the marks (>) or *fz* which emphasize a single note in the melody. The yellow vertical bars in figure 2 shows where these eight notes occur in the piece. At these eight accents signs, Saint-Saëns plays the bass at an above average time before the melody. For Saint-Saëns, *tempo rubato* and the accent signs are related. In example 4, the *rubato* serves as the means of expression. For example, during bars 14 and 54, there is a leap of notes over two octaves within two beats. The delay of the accented F sharp with the indication *con forza* at the second beat forms the climax of the part A. The leap of the eleventh from D sharp to the F sharp in melody does not technically demand any delay, however, if this part of the piece is sung by a soprano voice, the melody would necessarily claim a *rubato* to prepare for the leap and display the tessitura of the singer. The same eleventh leap exists at the second beat of bar 6, belonging to a1. Though there is a “hair pin” *decrescendo* instead of an accent sign, Saint-Saëns largely delays the right-hand (see figure 3, beat 22).

Chopin’s *cantabile* style derives from an operatic aria or cavatina sung by professional singers at an opera theatre such as the *Théâtre Italien* in Paris, a theatre which Chopin frequented (Eigeldinger 2000, 105–106). For many French pianists, as well as Chopin himself, the Italian operatic style offered a model playing style. One of the first piano professors at the *Conservatoire de musique de Paris*, Hélène

de Montgeroult, recommended young pianists “to choose a model from the great singers of the Italian school, to follow the model step by step, to think about its means, and to judge the cases where they can be applied exactly to the mechanism of the piano, and those where to produce similar effects” (Montgeroult c.1820, III). For Saint-Saëns, and for de Montgeroult, it was the singers who inspired the secrets of *tempo rubato*, and not the pianists.

#### Example 4

Frédéric Chopin, *Nocturne Op.15 No.2*, bars 12–15

Turning to the other accented notes at beats 69, 77 and 93 (bars 18, 20, 24) and belonging to section b: the amount of time the bass precedes the melody at the first beat of bars 18, 20, 22 and 24 increases over time (▽ marks in Figure 3). This occurs according to the harmonic progression representing the topic *lamento* (Caplin 2014, 415). At bar 17, the bass starts to chromatically descend from C sharp until the A sharp at the bar 22 (Example 5).

#### Example 5

Frédéric Chopin, *Nocturne Op.15 No.2*, bars 16–24

On an unstable harmony, Chopin places chromatic ornamentations, imitating a sigh, just after the first two accentuated notes of the melody (bar 18 and 20). According to the *lamento* bass and ornamentations, the harmonic rhythm accelerates from bar 18 to 23. Figure 4 shows the depressing harmonic progression from bar 17 to 24: a second inversion of *one* F sharp minor triad for bars 18–19, *two* dominant chords of G major and E major respectably for 20 and 21, and *four* various chords of D sharp minor for bars 22 and 23 on a A sharp pedal tone.

	>	>	(>)	>				
bars	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
f#: v		I <sup>6</sup> <sub>4</sub>		G: V <sup>2</sup>	E: V <sup>7</sup>	d#: V v	ii <sup>7</sup> <sub>3</sub> V ii <sup>4</sup> <sub>3</sub>	V

**Figure 4** –Harmonic evolution from bars 17–24 of *Nocturne Op.15 No.2* by Frédéric Chopin

The more the harmonic tempo accelerates, the more the melody delays. This produces an effect like a syncopation, creating drama and passion in the music without using words.<sup>8</sup> As Kleczyński stated: “As the music began to paint tumultuous or more vague and indefinite feelings, the rubato became more frequent” (Kleczyński 1880, 74).

### 3) Precedency of the melody

Although a preceding melody is less common than a preceding accompaniment, it still contains patterns of interest. Noticeable cases are in the trilled notes at beat 27, 59 and 219 (except beat 223 where the melody precedes despite the trill) in bars 7, 15 and 55, and at the *grupetti*, functioning as an anacrusis placed before a *fioritura* at the fourth beat of bars 10 and 50. The precedence of the melody can be explained through a quote from Chopin, recited by one of his pupils, Wilhelm von Lenz: “The left hand [...] is the choir master [*Kapellmeister*]: it mustn't relent or bend. It's a clock.<sup>9</sup> Do with the right hand what you want and can” (Eigeldinger 1988, 50). Following this principle, Saint-Saëns ensured that his left-hand maintained a regular tempo, and his right-hand clearly pronounced the ornamental notes. By using this approach, Saint-Saëns avoids the trills at bar 7 and 55 which delay the tempo. These trills are situated halfway along a phrase before it is closed by a cadence (Example 2,

<sup>8</sup> The delay of the note A natural in the right hand (beat 71, the third beat of bar 18) is also remarkable though it doesn't have an accent mark.

<sup>9</sup> This comparison was cited also by one of the pupils of Chopin Camille Dubois (1828–1907) who approved the book by Jan Kleczyński: *Frederic Chopin: on the interpretation of his works (Frédéric Chopin, de l'interprétation de ses œuvres)* (Kleczyński 1880, n.p.). This book was written based on the interviews with Chopin's pupils and friends.

bar 7). The same is true of the *grupetti* in bars 10 and 50. Certainly, Saint-Saëns wanted to play a four-bar phrase (a') continuously without slowing down. Indeed, he gave more importance to the *grupetto* at the bar 12 than at bar 10, because the former stressed the division of a' and a'1 (4 bars + 4 bars).

Another case where the melody precedes the accompaniment is on beats 74 and 82 of bars 19 and 21 (Example 5, the notes marked by ◯). As mentioned above, the harmony of b, b1, b2 gradually become more complicated, according to the expression of the *lamento*. The leading melody produces an *accelerando* effect, evoking emotions of unsteadiness and despair.

#### 4) Musical syntax

My argument so far has been that Saint-Saëns controlled *tempo rubato* according to the musico-grammatical and rhetorical elements of the composition, rather than abusing it arbitrarily. This fact is also supported by comparing how he played the two phrases (A-a', a'1), which formally correspond to each other. Figure 5 shows the timing gap between the melody and accompaniment at the consequent (A-a', a'1), and its recapitulated version (A'-a', a'1). It is worth noting that Saint-Saëns' performance was not faithful to the written score. Compared to Chopin's score, for example, Saint-Saëns replaced the melodic figure without ornaments at beats 208–212 with an ornamented version at beats 48–52, whereas the melodic parcel at beat 45–47 was replaced by beats 205–207.

Bearing this in mind, we observe a similarity in the leading accompaniment or the leading melody between beats 32–61 and beats 190–219 (figure 5), with an exception at beats 51/211 where the pianist alters the pattern between the two sections. As examined above, at beats 40/200 and beats 59/219 of a'-a'1, the melody precedes the accompaniment because of *grupetti* and trills, and at beats 54/214 the accompaniment precedes the melody when the melody makes large leaps. The similarity of two lines in the Figure 5 suggests that Saint-Saëns uses *tempo rubato* in the same way when a passage repeats. This periodicity of *tempo rubato* contributes to the syntactic unity of expression of the performance, which Saint-Saëns did not mention in his writings. Did he want to keep the secret of Chopinesque *tempo rubato* to himself?

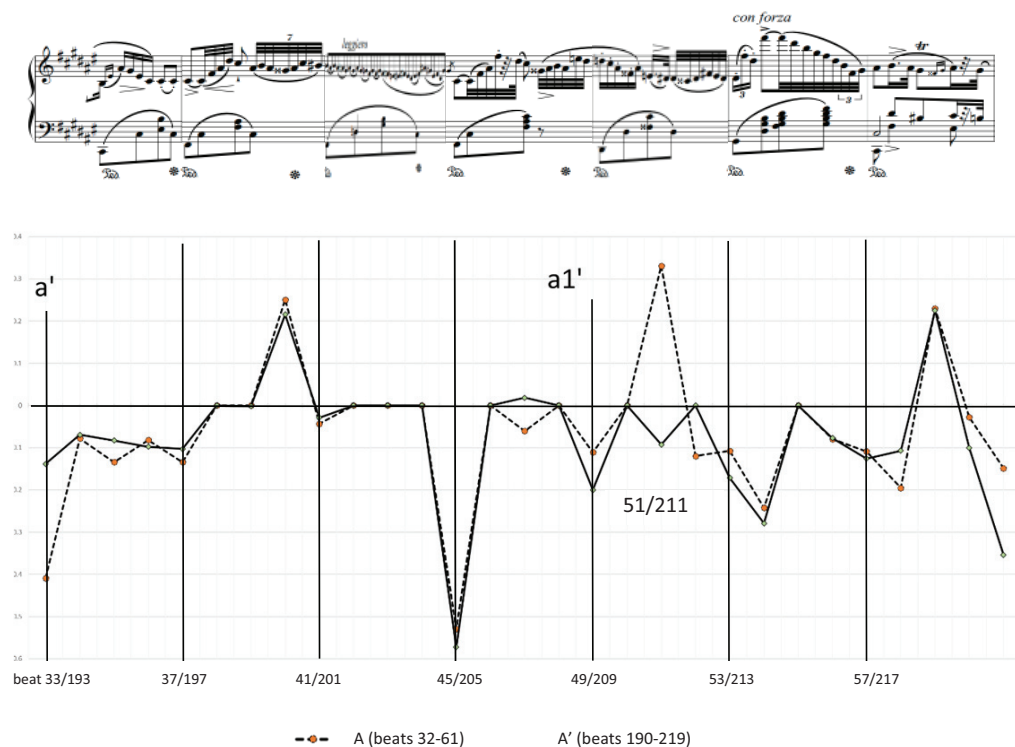


Figure 5 – Timing gap between melody and accompaniment, comparison of A and A'

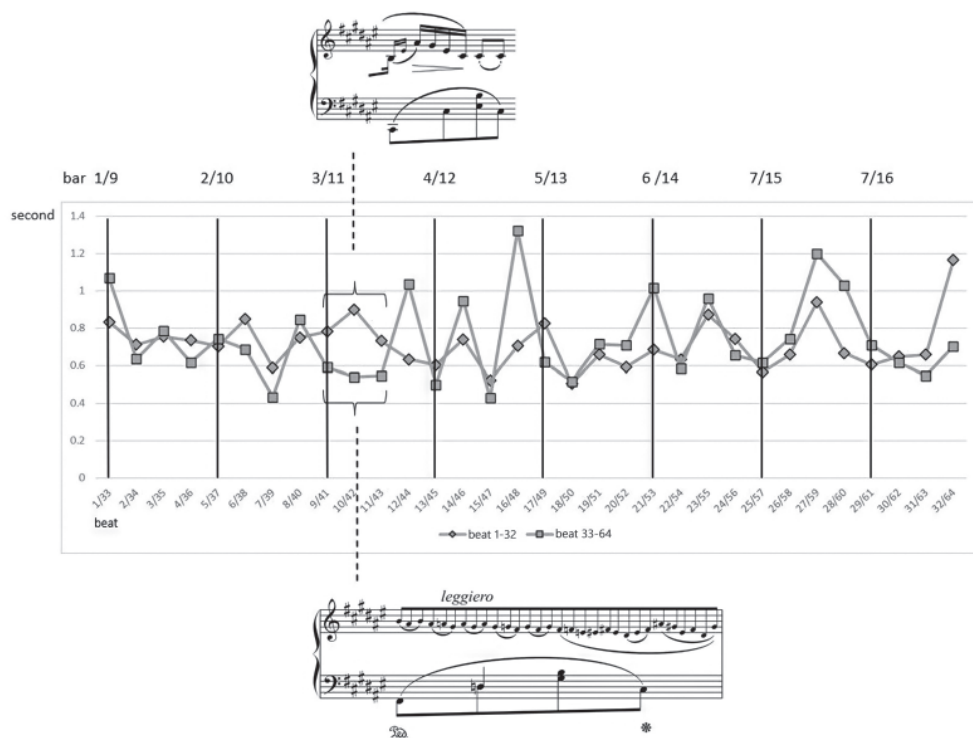
### 5) Fioritura

To better understand the phrasing of Saint-Saëns, it is important to examine how he played the *fioritura* during bar 11 and 51. The term *fioritura* indicates the “ornaments of the melody” (Fétis 1847, 379), but here it is defined as a group of many small notes relating to the main melody line. Compared with the large notes of main melody, the ornamental notes should be played *in tempo*, without modifying the rhythmic regularity of the accompaniment. Zimmerman writes in his textbook: “One should not ornament a melody which is played for the first time. Whatever the number of notes played by the right hand, one should try to keep the measure in the left hand which must serve as a regulator” (Zimmerman 1840, 60). This principle is also mentioned by Kleczyński who specifically referred to the *Nocturne* Op.15 No.2 by Chopin in his discussion. Comparing the bars 11, 15 and 51, he writes:

These ornamental passages should not be slackened, but rather accelerated towards the end; a *rallentando* would invest them with too much importance, [it] would make them appear to be special and independent ideas, whereas they are only fragments of the

phrase, and, as such, should form part of the thought and disappear in it like a little brook which loses itself in a great river; or they may be regarded as parentheses which, quickly pronounced, produce a greater effect than they would if they were [delayed]. (Eigeldinger 1988, 53)

The performance of the *Nocturne* by Saint-Saëns demonstrates this principle. Figure 6 shows the progression of the average tempo in the melody and accompaniment for the antecedent (A-a, a1) and the consequent (A-a', a'1), where the consequent is an ornamented version of the antecedent.



**Figure 6** – Comparison of tempo between the antecedent (A-a) and consequent (A-a')

The *fioritura* appears at beats 41-43. Compared with the naked version at beats 9-12, the *fioritura* accelerates during the first three beats of bar 11. At beat 44, the tempo slows down to re-join the principal melody line. To impress on listeners that a “parenthesis” was closed at beat 45, Saint-Saëns uses a large delay in the melody compared to the bass (Graph 3). The melodic “parenthesis” is why the pianist plays the *fioritura* so rapidly, to which Saint-Saëns added four notes (Example 6). Evidently, he intended to reconstruct and realize the “authentic” performing style of Chopin, considering the oral tradition handed down by pupils and friends of the Polish virtuoso.



### Example 6

Notated fioriture in the French first edition (above) and the enriched version by Saint-Saëns in his performance (1905, below)

The image shows a musical score for a piece in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of three staves: a treble clef staff for the melody, a second treble clef staff for a second voice or ornamentation, and a bass clef staff for the accompaniment. The top staff (French first edition) shows a melody with several ornaments (flourishes) marked with 'a' and 'b'. The bottom staff (enriched version) shows the same melody but with additional notes and ornaments. A dashed box labeled 'added notes' highlights a section of the melody in the enriched version, with dashed arrows pointing to the corresponding notes in the French first edition. The enriched version also includes a second treble clef staff with notes and ornaments, and a bass clef staff with notes and ornaments.

### Conclusion

The analysis of the *Nocturne Op.15 no.2*, preserved on the piano roll by Saint-Saëns, reveals that Saint-Saëns *tempo rubato* was not arbitrary, but skillfully controlled following the rhetorical strategy notated by Chopin. Saint-Saëns used *tempo rubato* to represent the grammatical articulations, the semiotic elements notated by Chopin, and the periodicity of phrases which assured the unity of expression. Saint-Saëns apparently played “the melody in time and dislocating the accompaniment to make it fall at the wrong time” and was “content to play the two hands one after the other” (Saint-Saëns 2012, 668), despite criticizing his contemporaries for the same style. However, the delay and precedency of melody in relation to the accompaniment were skillfully controlled according to the construction of phrases and periods, alongside the expressive elements of the piece. From this point of view, the *tempo rubato* can be classed as one of two types: *phrasing rubato* and *expressive rubato*. In the performance of *Nocturne Op.15 no.2* by Saint-Saëns, the *phrasing rubato* makes phrases and periods recognizable, whereas the *expressive rubato* is concerned with accentuation, emphasis of modulation, imitation of *cantabile* style, and *lamento* expression.

Therefore, the *tempo rubato* can be defined as the art of alternating tempo in musical delivery, that is, a rhetorical means for persuasive musical rhetoric. One of Chopin’s pupils, and professor of piano at the Conservatoire, Georges Mathias gave this explanation in 1897:

[The *tempo rubato*’s] essence is [a] fluctuation of movement, one of the two principal means of expression in music, namely the modification of tone and of *tempo*, as in the art or oration, whereby the speaker, moved by this or that emotion, raises or lowers his voice, and *accelerates or draws out his diction*. Thus[,] *rubato* is a nuance of movement, involving *anticipation and delay, anxiety and indolence, agitation and calm*. (Eigeldinger 1988, 49) (emphasis added)

To reconstruct Chopinesque *tempo rubato*, Saint-Saëns probably referred to the writings of Mathias and Kleczyński, though he only mentioned Pauline Viardot and Marie de Granval in his 1910 article with reference to *tempo rubato*. Based on the traditional comparison of the musical performance with the art of oration, he practiced what Cicero called *actio* or delivery, the last element of the five faculties of the ideal orator.<sup>10</sup> The *Nocturne Op.15 No.2*, that he preserved on the piano roll, is a reconstruction of the rhetorical performance, and is based on documentation about Chopin's performance - which Saint-Saëns had never listened. In this sense, Saint-Saëns can be considered as one of pioneers of what we call today a "historically informed performance".

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<sup>10</sup> Five canonical components of oration are: *inventio* (discovery of relevant arguments), *dispositio* (arrangement in the appropriate order), *elocutio* (expression in the appropriate words), *memoria* (memory) and *actio* (delivery) (Cicero 2000, 56).

## Rezime

### TEMPO RUBATO KAO RETORIČKO SREDSTVO: ANALIZA IZVOĐENJA ŠOPENOVOG NOKTURNA OP.15-2 KAMIJA SEN-SANSA (1905)

U ovom članku se razotkriva način na koji je Kamij Sen-Sans rekonstruisao šopenistički *tempo rubato* u svom pijanističkom izvođenju Šopenovog *Nokturna op.15, broj 2*, onako kako je sačuvano na svitku za klavir (1905). Iako Sen-Sans nije imao direktnog iskustva sa Šopenovim načinom izvođenja, od Šopenovih učenika je naučio da se učitelj *rubato* sastoji u kontrolisanju vremenskog raskoraka između melodije i pratnje. Zaista, na svitku za klavir iz 1905. godine, Sen-Sans je neretko odlagao melodiju u odnosu na pratnju. Međutim, on je često kritikovao pijaniste savremenike zbog upotrebe "lažnog" *rubata* "jer su svirali melodiju na vreme i time dislocirali pratnju, te je ona dolazila u pogrešno vreme." Utvrđeno je da je kritika u suprotnosti sa njegovom izvođačkom praksom koja je zabeležena 1905. godine na svitku za klavir.

Kako bih ispitao ovu kontradiktornost analizirao sam svitak za klavir koristeći MIDI transkripciju (Stanford University Piano Roll Archive) i aplikaciju *Sonic Visualizer*. Proračunao sam vremenska rastojanja između melodije i pratnje. Analiza je jasno pokazala da je pratnja većim delom prethodila melodiji na spojevima fraza, u modulaciji, u harmonski nestabilnim frazama i na onim melodijskim tonovima označenim akcentima koje je zabeležio Šopen. Kada melodija prethodi pratnji to je uzrokovano trilerima, *grupetima* i onim frazama u kojima muzika zahteva ekspresivni *accelerando*.

Poređenje vremenskog raskoraka tokom dva izlaganja inicijalne teme takođe razotkriva da se *rubato* redovno javljao, dozvoljavajući Sen-Sansu da obezbedi sintaksičko jedinstvo izraza. Rezultat analize je kompatibilan sa opisima *rubata* koje su dali Sen-Sansovi i Šopenovi savremenici. Zaključujem da Sen-Sansov *tempo rubato* nije bio proizvoljan već vešto kontrolisan, sledeći retoričku strategiju koju je zabeležio Šopen. Sen-Sans je tako demonstrirao „autentičan“ šopenistički *rubato* ugrađujući sebe u Šopenovu tradiciju interpretacije.