

**Exploring Authenticity in Performance: A  
Comparative Performance Analysis of Arnold van  
Wyk's *Night Music* for Piano.**

by

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## **DECLARATION**

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## Abstract

Arnold van Wyk was a composer and a pianist. He recorded his largest work for piano, *Night Music* (1958), on LP in 1963. Steven de Groote performed *Night Music* on 21 July 1984 at the Cheltenham International Festival of Music. This live performance was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on 24 September 1984 and a copy of this broadcast exists in the Arnold van Wyk collection in the J.S. Gericke Library at Stellenbosch University.

*Night Music* is a perfect example of Van Wyk's compositional techniques for the keyboard. It demands a considerable musical imagination and piano technique from the performer. The score of *Night Music* contains many detailed instructions regarding the different musical parameters and it also encloses unusual terms such as *glacial* or *lugubre*. It shows that the composer is extremely concerned to control all aspects of the performance and expects great depth of interpretation of the performer.

Analysing the score of *Night Music* together with a performance by the composer enables one to consider two versions of "authenticated text". The comparison between Arnold van Wyk's recording, score and Steven de Groote's performance allows the researcher to draw conclusions about score fidelity as a condition for "authenticity" in performance. Therefore, the primary aim of this research project is to yield interesting perspectives on notions of authenticity in performance with regard to these two particular performances of *Night Music*.

The main body of this thesis consists of four chapters. In Chapter One a philosophical discussion about authenticity in performance is presented. Chapter Two focuses on the contextualisation of the work under discussion, including the reception and a short analysis of *Night Music*. It is followed by Chapter Three which compares the pianism of Arnold van Wyk and Steven de Groote. These latter two chapters form the background of the comparative performance analysis of the renditions of *Night Music* by these two performers which are presented in Chapter Four.

Through the careful comparative analysis of Arnold van Wyk's and Steven de Groote's performances of *Night Music* it was possible to observe that a composer can present a version of his work that departs quite radically from the score. As "authenticity in performance" strives to honour the composer's intentions as notated in the score, this discrepancy illustrates the controversial nature of the discourse on the "authentic" in music.

## Opsomming

Arnold van Wyk was 'n komponis en pianis. Hy het sy langste werk vir klavier, *Nagmusiek* (1958), in 1963 opgeneem. Steven de Grootte het *Nagmusiek* op 21 Julie 1984 in Cheltenham by die International Festival of Music uitgevoer. Dit was 'n lewendige opname wat uitgesaai is op BBC 3 op 24 September. 'n Kopie van die uitsending word bewaar in die Arnold van Wyk versameling wat in die J.S. Gericke Biblioteek van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch gehuisves word.

*Nagmusiek* is 'n perfekte voorbeeld van Arnold van Wyk se komposisie-tegnieke vir die klavier. Dit vereis aansienlike musikale verbeelding en klaviertegniese van die uitvoerder. Die partituur van *Nagmusiek* bevat baie gedetailleerde instruksies met betrekking tot verskillende musikale parameters en sluit ook ongewone terme soos *glacial* of *lugubre* in. Dit toon dat die komponis baie begaan is om alle aspekte van die uitvoering te beheer en besondere diepte in interpretasie van die musikus verwag.

'n Analise van die partituur van *Nagmusiek*, tesame met die uitvoering deur die komponis, stel mens in staat om twee weergawes van die "outentieke teks" te vergelyk. So 'n vergelyking tussen Arnold van Wyk se opname en bladmusiek en Steven de Grootte se uitvoering stel die navorser in staat om afleidings te maak omtrent getrouheid aan die partituur as voorvereiste vir die "outentisiteit" van die uitvoering. Die hoofdoel van die studie is daarom om interessante perspektiewe op die idee van "outentisiteit" met betrekking tot die spesifieke twee uitvoerings van *Nagmusiek* te verskaf.

Die hoofdeel van die tesis bestaan uit vier hoofstukke. Hoofstuk Een behels 'n filosofiese bespreking oor outentisiteit en uitvoeringspraktyk.. Hoofstuk Twee fokus op die kontekstualisering van die werk onder bespreking: aspekte soos die resepsie daarvan en 'n kort analise van *Nagmusiek* kom aan die beurt. Dit word in Hoofstuk Drie gevolg deur 'n vergelyking tussen die speelstyl van Arnold van Wyk en Steven de Grootte. Die laasgenoemde twee hoofstukke vorm die agtergrond van die vergelykende analise van die interpretasies van *Nagmusiek* deur hierdie twee musici wat in Hoofstuk Vier uiteengesit word.

Met behulp van 'n noukeurige vergelykende analise van Arnold van Wyk en Steven de Grootte se uitvoerings van *Nagmusiek* was dit moontlik om vas te stel dat 'n komponis 'n werk kan aanbied wat redelik radikaal afwyk van die partituur. Omdat "outentisiteit" in 'n uitvoering daarna streef dat die komponis se intensies, soos genoteer in die partituur, gerespekteer word, illustreer hierdie bevinding dat "outentisiteit" in musiek 'n kontroversiële aangeleentheid is.

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## Chapter I: Authenticity in Performance

Authenticity in music, and particularly in performance, is a widely discussed theme among musicologists generating passionate for and against arguments. It is important to note that both these terms, “authenticity” and “performance”, contain complex and often contradictory meanings, individually and in combination. The current study will therefore restrict itself to introducing simple notions of these terms that are pertinent to the research topic.

Performance in music could be described as an act of presentation of a work, written by a composer at a certain time, to a specific audience. Stephen Davies expresses the idea as follows: “...the composer needs the services of the performer if her ideas are to be publicly presented...” (2003:62). If one considers a performance as a “vehicle” to access the composer’s ideas, the notion of authenticity is inevitably implied, as the term in music refers to the faithful representation of the text. Therefore, it is possible to relate “authentic” with “accurate” or “truthful”, which means that an accurate interpretation of a given work should be “faithful” to the ideas of the composer and hence authentic. Thus, as Davies states, the degree of authenticity can be assessed according to how faithful the performance is to the composer’s text (2003:54).

Another important characteristic of authenticity in performance is the fact that an infinite number of authentic executions of the same work can exist. This is due to the fact that “...any musical notation underdetermines the sound of a faithful performance”, consequently, “different sounding performances may be equally and

ideally authentic” (Davies 2003:55). Indeed, a score can no more than objectively specify some musical elements of a work, such as pitch or rhythm. Yet even if those parameters could be determined exactly in notation (which they frequently can’t), this still leaves some room for subjectivity. An interval or a rhythm doesn’t need to be, or shouldn’t be, mathematically correct to be considered musical. Other musical aspects, for example dynamics or character (indicated in terms like *giocoso*, *con bravura*, etc), are naturally relative and indeterminately so, which means that the performer has to interpret them creatively.

Of course the particular kind of musical notation discussed here is characteristic of Western cultural civilization and this dissertation is restricted to this historical and cultural sphere. This is important to note, as the specific notion of authenticity outlined here is only valid when applied to conventionally notated music where the text specifications provide criteria in terms of which it is possible to evaluate the “correctness” and “authenticity” of a performance. Consequently, in this kind of music musical notation is the basis to assess performances in terms of authenticity. If the score contains or represents the composer’s musical ideas, and a performance is the accurate realization of those ideas, it logically follows that a performance must subsequently be authentic. Nevertheless, because musical notation does not fully determine the sound of a performance, it contains within it the possibility of multiple different authentic performances. This could lead to problems regarding how to distinguish between an authentic and inauthentic performance. It is interesting to note that in other musical languages (some types of folk music, say, or jazz), the indeterminacy associated with improvisation, for example, is a requirement



to accomplish an authentic performance rather than the fault line between the authentic and the inauthentic.

Authenticity is not only a function of text, but also of communication between composers, performers and audiences. The originary musical ideas of the work (composer) inevitably become more vague as the audience experiences the music as mediated by the performer(s) according to her/his/their own circumstances and aesthetic values. The dynamic relations between composer, performer and audience have been closer or more distant at different times in history, and have been intensively studied and explored by scholars and musicians. A pertinent example of extreme ambiguity and abstraction of these boundaries is the famous John Cage work, *4'33"*, in which the material of the piece is fully constituted by silence. The ambiance of the hall becomes part of the music and the listener can imagine and interpret all musical parameters freely. The presence of a performer is required but in a radically reformulated role, whereas the composer's 'originary ideas' become transferred to the listener's imagination. With the "musical text" being constituted as so indeterminate, the notion of authenticity as a correspondence to a text is here undermined. The example exposes the discourse of authenticity in performance as extremely problematic, not only from the point of view of performance, but from the point of view of determining the composer's intention.

The question arises if there is any point to pursuing a notion of authenticity in performance if the notion is so philosophically vague. Surely the listener can always independently decide how to interpret the music regardless of the performer's ideas and notions of accuracy and, in any case, originary musical ideas of any piece of music will always just remain in the composer's mind. It is impossible to say to what

extent these ideas ultimately find their way into a particular piece of music, so that it is possible to say that there is a sort of vagueness and indeterminacy that is inherent and characteristic of any type of artistic expression. The composer invites the audience to choose the course of a journey in which the performer is the guide. According to this perspective authenticity becomes an obsolete term, striving towards what is in fact impossible and unattainable and constituting a counter-intuitive opposite to what Western music proposes to be in its essence.

On the other hand, the importance of authenticity in performance as a factor of order and balance is irrefutable, setting criteria and landmarks of how the music should sound. Ultimately it leads to a conscientious and necessary respect for the authority of the composer, a way of evoking sincerity in the role of the performer. Stephen Davies explains it thus:

Beyond the level of an acceptably competent performance, authenticity is value conferring. Because we have an aesthetic concern with the musical interest of the composer's ideas, and because those musical ideas must be mediated by performance, we value authenticity in performance for the degree of faithfulness with which the performance realizes the composer's musical conception as recorded in the score. (2003:91).

To be sure, Davies also emphasizes that a performance can be assessed using notions other than authenticity, opening up the possibility that a hypothetically inauthentic presentation can be highly praised (2003:91). According to this perspective a performance can simply be assessed according, for instance, to the expressive qualities of the performer or his/her virtuosic skills. Moreover, although

such a performance could contain noticeable inaccuracies, it could still be acclaimed by listeners and considered a respected interpretation of the musical work.

There are important historical contextualizing factors that have contributed to the increased interest in the notion of authenticity in performance. During the twentieth century, the world experienced some of the worst atrocities and human catastrophes that led to the destruction of and redefinition of Western culture on many levels, including the material and symbolic. On the other hand, the same period was also characterized by extraordinary technological advances, spurred on by the requirements of war. In the second half of the twentieth century these technological advances formed the basis of what is now commonly called globalization. The virtues and problems of globalization are now a major point of discussion in our and other societies. There is an obvious political interest in these ideas, but the interest of the present author is confined to some of the cultural implications of globalization, specifically as these pertain to notions of authenticity.

One of the most important of these is that the increased ease of communication between cultures has resulted in a relative standardization of certain societal and cultural practices. In this regard it is interesting to observe how Western music has assumed a universal aspect – even becoming a part of World Music – and how jazz, or even more obviously pop music, have become central ingredients of the world's music consumption. The globalization of gastronomy or fashion design is another case in point.

In one of the contradictions inherent in globalization, however, different cultures become more aware of their heritage as a means of identity. Although it seems a paradox when considering its homogeneous impulses, globalization evokes nationalist and individualist feelings in people as the conscientious need for the protection of singularity, the unique essence of each human being. Striving for the achievement or protection of that which is “authentic” or “original” thus assumes enhanced importance and relevance in a globalized world. This cultural and societal dynamic casts authenticity in performance in yet another light. Notions of “authenticity” in music performance entail the replication of original ideas or concepts, or a collection of original sounds, in musical works. In the context outlined above it acts as an authority, protecting the identity of those works. It can be comparable to the effort usually made to restore historical buildings according to their original conceptions.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the authentic performance movement has its origins in the second half of the last century. The aim of this movement was to create performances of works of classical music, the overriding concern of which was an attempt to recreate performances similar to the musical periods and styles in which these compositions originated. The historical phenomenon is also commonly known and referred to as historically informed performance, the main tenets of which are described as follows by Davies:

A highly authentic performance is likely to be one using instruments contemporary to the period of composition (or replicas of such instruments) in its performance, involving an interpretation of the score in the light of stylistic practices and performance conventions of the

time when the work was composed, employing ensembles of the same size and disposition as accord with the composer's specification, and so forth (2003:82, 83).

As has been explained above, literal authentic performance is more of an ideal than a real possibility. Historically informed practice is however premised on setting parameters within which the performance could be considered authentic. As the citation from Davies confirms, these parameters include the use of period instruments, "Urtext" scores that are believed to be identical or at least closer to the original intentions of the composer and particular musical and technical considerations relating to how those pieces were performed when they were written. This last element of what is now considered standard authentic performance is also the most controversial, as it is viewed as impracticable by some authors. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, for example, criticizes the movement remarking:

Historical research may provide us with instruments, and sometimes even quite detailed information on how to use them, but the gap between such evidence and a sounding performance is still so great that can be bridged only by a large amount of musicianship and invention (1984:13).

The author also refers to authentic performances as "emotionally restrained" and accuses the movement of being nothing more than a "reflection of current taste" (Leech-Wilkinson 1984:14). Moreover, Leech-Wilkinson argues that authenticity in performance leads to a loss of freedom in the act of interpreting musical materials (1984:15). This is due to the fact that it prescribes too many conditions and

procedures concerning how the performance should be executed. To some extent, the notion of “authenticity” could start acting as a moral constraint as it assumes the authority of “truth”, something that might result in a homogenization of musical practices.

No-one has criticized historically informed performance more vehemently than Richard Taruskin. In his article “The Limits of Authenticity: A Contribution”, he systematically describes problems and paradoxes within the concept of “authenticity”. According to Taruskin, editors working towards the establishment of Urtext scores avoid deep critical engagements with the text, as “that requires the courage of commitment and choice, and the multifarious exercise of personal judgment ... they fasten on a single extant source and elevate it to the status of authority. The assumption seems to be that the errors or accretions of old are preferable to the errors of today ...” (1995:69, 70). The result of this kind of editing is “neutral” or “clean” scores that do not necessarily indicate how early music should sound. Another criticism is made to authentic movement performers:

Many, if not most, of us who concern ourselves with “authentic” interpretation of music approach musical performance with the attitude of textual critics, and fail to make the fundamental distinction between music as tones-in-motion and music as notes-on-page. (Taruskin 1995:70).

Consequently, those performers also evade the “responsibility of judgment and choice” (Taruskin 1995:70). The use of original historical instruments or their replicas as the most important requirement for an authentic performance of early music has

also been targeted by critics. In the first place, replicas of original instruments should not be considered “authentic”. Furthermore, as the author Harry Haskell maintains, the use of historical instruments, regardless of whether they are originals or reproductions, leads to the “impression that the instruments are the principal attraction in concerts and recordings of early music, relegating the performers – and even the music itself – to a supporting role” (1988:183). Although the matter of historical instruments and performance techniques is tangential to this study, it does constitute an important part of the discourse on authenticity and has relevance here at least to the extent that it shows exactly how controversial the notion of authenticity in performance is.

Recordings introduce yet another perspective on the notion of authenticity. Clearly, recorded music provides another kind of text – often composer- or performer sanctioned – against which at least twentieth-century repertoire could be measured. But the idea of recordings also brings a new dilemma, namely the extent to which the studio recording is a true reflection of a performer’s capabilities and performance in real time. That there are inevitable artificial aspects to studio recordings, or even to recorded live performances, especially in terms of *ambiance*, cannot be disputed. Listeners undoubtedly experience recordings differently than live presentations of musical works.

Recordings bring into sharper focus another important aspect of authenticity in performance, already present in the privileging of the musical score as text, and this is the status of performance as a historic fact. A historically-informed performance presupposes performance as a historical event. Of course all performances (intended to be “authentic” or not) have an inherent historical

dimension in that they constitute actions specifically identified as performances at certain times and places. Thus, in this dissertation, the performance of one of Arnold van Wyk's compositions constitutes a historical fact with a certain referential value and meaning. History doesn't always represent past events in exactly the same ways, and certainly cannot be equated with the past itself and how things truly happened. In some situations, it is indeed impossible to fully prove what is considered to be an historical fact. More precisely, history consists in a set of smoothed-out assumptions and narrative connections aimed at satisfying our present needs and preparing us for the future. Nevertheless, society needs to believe in historical facts as the "truth" so that its cultural foundations can rest secure.

In this sense it is possible to compare an "authentic" performance with an historical fact, as an artefact that perhaps, even though it doesn't recall the complete truth of a past event, strives toward it. It is possible that society needs "authenticity in performance" to fulfil the need of maintaining links with the past (tradition) and to sustain the belief of secure knowledge of the way things happened in the past. According to this admittedly broader perspective, it is reasonable to consider "authentic performances" desirable, acknowledging inevitable limitations in the same way society admits the inconsistencies in history.

Of course the less polemical view to take on historically informed performance – certainly less polemical than that of Taruskin – is that authenticity in performance does not necessarily exclude the possibility of other kinds of performances, all of which can coexist and contribute to a desirable diversity in music. If some critics refer to "authenticity" in music as a fashion, this seems tenable but not damning as it



is also possible to argue that fashion or taste is an important and intrinsic characteristic of any form of art. Taste has always been an important factor in determining the aesthetic values of the society.

Contextualizing the general background above with the specific focus of this dissertation, it is important to note that the performances that will be analysed here are recorded performances. Moreover, Arnold van Wyk's recording was produced in a studio, while Steven de Groote's interpretation was captured live, opening up different aspects of the "authenticity" debate. It is obvious that in a studio recording it is possible to correct certain faults through repetition. In the case of a live recording, that possibility does not exist. Furthermore, Arnold van Wyk was not primarily a pianist but rather a composer, and Steven de Groote was a professional pianist. The discussion of authenticity inevitably has to acknowledge that discrepancy. Then again, it is also known that Arnold van Wyk regarded himself as quite a good pianist (more on this later in this thesis) and as a matter of fact he was satisfied with his recording of *Night Music*. After he made the recording of *Night Music* on 20 November 1961 he wrote in a letter to his friend, Freda Baron:

I think I did well: things went so well that I and Christie who was turning were almost crying as I was playing. There are still a couple of wrong notes but they are inconspicuous and the new

recording has what even the penultimate one didn't, sweep and spontaneity. So all in all I am very pleased.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the composer was satisfied with his recording means that a certain kind of authority inheres in it and that it could be read retrospectively as indicative of the composer's "intentions". Finally, it is relevant to say that when Arnold van Wyk recorded the composition in the early sixties, the notion of "authenticity in performance" was as yet not so widely discussed (or accepted) among scholars and musicians. Indeed, it is possible to say that Arnold van Wyk played piano in an anachronistically "romantic manner", characterized (as the cited comment above indicates) by less concern for accuracy than has become usual in our time.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the most essential ingredient of an "authentic" performance in its aesthetic dimension was possibly to realize the full emotional potential of the work. Further contextualizing the general background on historical performance given in the earlier part of this chapter, it is also important to note that Van Wyk's performance of his music and De Groote's performance of Van Wyk's music are, when taking the long historical view, "contemporaneous events". This means that there is no significant time gap between the period of the composition and the performances in question. In the case of Van Wyk performing his own work, the discourse of "authenticity in performance" is clearly not of the same order as that dealing with the interpretation, or more precisely execution, of early music. In this case it pertains more accurately

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Freda Baron, 26 November 1961. The current author should like to thank Stephanus Muller for this and other information from the Arnold van Wyk collection, which was not yet accessible at the time of writing this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> A qualification may be in order here. Of course there was always a concern for accuracy in performance, but the degree of importance that musicians and scholars attributed to it has substantially changed over time, a change most drastically effected by the advent of recording technology.

to how *different authorized texts* (score and performance) complement or contradict each other and what this means for subsequent performers of *Night Music*.

A last contextualizing point that needs to be made is that in this thesis “authenticity” is discussed in relation to a particular work and its existence as score and authorized performance, and not in terms of musical style. Thus, the aim is not to assess, for example, what is the “authentic” sound of a certain musical period or a specific historical composer. Instead, “authenticity” is treated in terms of how accurate the realization of this specific work is, and what possible discrepancies between score and composer-performed recordings tell us about notions of the “authentic” as we associate this with compositional intention. Within these particularized parameters, it is hoped that this case study of *Night Music* will contribute interesting perspectives about the wider implications and meanings of “score compliance” and “authenticity to the text”, notions that remain important to performers today.

## Chapter II: Reception and short analysis of *Night Music*

Arnold van Wyk's *Night Music* is his largest and most ambitious piano work by far. Except for the juvenilia, the list of which is only now being compiled at the University of Stellenbosch, the other solo piano works are the *Pastorale e Capriccio* (1948, revised in 1955), *Four Piano Pieces* (1965), *Tristia* (1968-78) and *Ricordanza* (1973-79). Written between 1945 and 1955, *Night Music* lasts a full twenty-five minutes and was first performed by Van Wyk at a broadcast concert in Johannesburg in 1956. In June 1958 he completed a revised version and the first public performance of the definitive score was given in 1959. The work is dedicated to the memory of the pianist Noel Mewton-Wood, a friend of the composer during his years in London who committed suicide in 1953. In Van Wyk's programme notes, found at the back of the LP recorded by him in 1961, the composer says the following about the work:

I speak of my intention to give a comprehensive portrayal of night in this work – to speak of its beauty, mystery and fearfulness, and to show night as the prototype of love, sleep and death. It is best to consider the work as essentially elegiac – as a song of mourning. But my mourning is not always done under a willow tree in the moon's pale gleam – I also rebel against the hardness of life and I remember the good things that are no more (Van Wyk 1961).

In these programme notes the composer shows reluctance to write about the “symbolic meaning” of the work. He states that words are too definite to explain music and programmatic elucidation limits the power of music to speak in different

ways to different people (Van Wyk 1961). Nevertheless, it is clear enough from the citation above that in spite of his reluctance to “explain” or “articulate”, Van Wyk still attempts to capture in language what *Night Music* represents. This fact suggests that the work has a strong programmatic aspect. Indeed, the music speaks to an element of tragedy depicted in the dark atmospheric sound textures, but also in the intensified and defiant climaxes. Nostalgia is a further ingredient suggested in some eloquent melodic passages.

The style of *Night Music* has at various times been associated with the piano music of Ravel, not least by the composer in a set of undated lecture notes found amongst his documents.<sup>3</sup> Following a performance by Irene Kohler in London, the *Daily Telegraph* reports on 19 March 1960: “Van Wyk’s nocturne variations, which owe a good deal to Ravel...” (Cooper 1960). Reviewing a later London performance by John Ogdon, Ronald Crichton also compares the style of *Night Music* with “the piano works of Debussy and Ravel” (Crichton 1968), but the author continues to state that the composition can be linked even more strongly to the late works of Gabriel Fauré:

Even if Mr van Wyk were to assure me solemnly that he didn’t know or didn’t like (hardly conceivable) the later works of Fauré, I should still insist that *Night Music*, in mood and atmosphere as well as in the way much of it is written, inhabits the same lonely, subtly original world (Crichton 1968).

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<sup>3</sup> The author should like to thank Dr. Stephanus Muller for this information.

Indeed the mournful and melancholic character of *Night Music*, as well as some textures and the spectrum of sound colour could be heard as comparable with some of Ravel's piano music, but comparisons like these should naturally only be a way of exemplifying the style of the work without compromising its specific identity and originality. Regarding form, the work has been compared to Franz Liszt's famous b minor sonata. Writing in the London *Sunday Times* of 21 January 1968, one critic (of which the name remains unknown) writes of "The one-movement form, in some respects akin to that of Liszt's sonata..." (1968). *Night Music* was also well received in South Africa. Reporting on a performance of the revised version of the work in 1959, Rosa Nepgen writes as follows in *Die Burger*:

Most of the people probably came to listen to the revised version of *Night Music* and they were well rewarded. For a modern work it is particularly tight and firmly woven together, almost like a fine tapestry, but with strong colour and a lot of detail. In contrast with some other contemporary works, of which the technique and form are the most important, this work certainly contains the musical content that also addresses the feelings – sometimes in a very strong manner (Nepgen 1959).<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting that in the reception of the work, the intensity of *Night Music* is at times associated with (or dependent on) Arnold van Wyk's interpretation of the music, thus conflating life and work through the composer-as-performer. In the *Cape Times* of 2 September 1959, B.M. [Beatrice Marx] writes as follows of Van Wyk's performance:

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<sup>4</sup> The author would like to thank Esthea Kruger for assisting in the translations from the Afrikaans into English.

His playing of [Night Music] last night certainly justified his ambition [to convey a picture of night as “the prototype of love, sleep and death”], for the atmosphere of tragedy prevailed all through the sombre work to bring the picture vividly to life. Much of course, was due to his actual handling of the work, the touch employed in the various episodes to underline individual interpretations of each, and the sympathy with which a composer approaches his own work (1959).

The importance of interpretation in *Night Music* had also been emphasized by another critic, when s/he remarked in the London *Sunday Times* of 19 April 1966 that the work “suffered most from under-interpretation” in the interpretation of pianist John Clegg.

However, *Night Music* was not favourably received by all critics. Indeed, the work also received some negative criticism, mainly about problems pertaining to structure. One such opinion can be found in the London *Times* of 19 March 1960:

Arnold van Wyk’s *Night Music* would have held together better if it had been broken up into movements. Its unity was not easy to follow because it began with variations and four nocturnes which in turn led into what was probably the principal section, so that the unifying idea implied in the title did not emerge (Author unknown 1960).

In the *Daily Telegraph* of 19 March 1960, another negative judgment about structure could be read into the reference to “Van Wyk’s nocturne variations” being “loosely constructed and prolix” (Cooper 1960). Perhaps it is important to note in this regard

that the composer struggled to finish the work, something that might have impacted on or been the result of structural problems. In a letter to a friend, Van Wyk thus refers to *Night Music* as “one of the bitterest struggles I can remember or imagine” (Van Wyk as quoted in Muller 2006).<sup>5</sup> This pronouncement is confirmed by the long period over which Van Wyk worked on *Night Music* (1945-1958 according to sketches in the Van Wyk Collection in Stellenbosch), a period that included at least one formally revised version.<sup>6</sup> The importance of *Night Music* was remarked on by many of the critics cited above, and as Van Wyk’s largest work for piano it must be the best example of the composer’s compositional techniques for the keyboard. Certainly, in Van Wyk’s own mind, *Night Music* stands out as a work of singular significance:

Perhaps the biggest work that I have written to date is *Night music* for solo piano – in this work I came very close to saying what I set out to say (Van Wyk cited in Muller 2006).

*Night Music* consists of seven sections played without a break: *molto lento*; *presto non troppo*; *larghetto*, *poco rubato*; *allegretto fantastico*; *lento non troppo*, *teneramente*; *allegro agitato e tempestoso* and an *epilogue*. Some authors consider the work as a single movement. An unknown critic described it in *The Sunday Times* of 21 January 1968 as a “one-movement form”. Yet Van Wyk refers to the initial *molto lento* in his programme notes on the work as the “opening movement” (Van

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<sup>5</sup> The author would like to thank Dr. Stephanus Muller for making available to him an unpublished paper entitled “The Classical Structure of Melancholy”, delivered at the combined IMS and IAML Conferences in Göteborg, Sweden, in 2006.

<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, length of time devoted to “finishing” works may not be the best indicator of technical difficulties in the case of Van Wyk, who struggled most of the time to complete works and who generally spent many years before the completion of even short works.



Wyk 1961). Although the different sections were all written using motive variations and elaborations from the opening *molto lento* and are composed without any break in-between, the seven sections are still strongly contrasted in character and in tempo, with alternation between slow and fast tempi. The opening *molto lento* is followed by four nocturnes, all exploring dark atmospheres. The sixth section of the work, *allegro agitato e tempestoso*, is the largest and main part of *Night Music*. It is written in sonata form and can be perceived as the climax of the entire work with its agitated and stormy musical character. As Muller has pointed out, this section was only written later in the compositional process and Van Wyk was still not satisfied, revising it extensively during the years of 1957 and 1958 (Muller 2006). With reference to the incorporation of this sonata-form section, Van Wyk states in his programme notes:

This integration is very necessary – too much ‘atmosphere’, in the long run, becomes uninteresting. Therefore also the fact that this central part is much tighter in conception and execution. (Van Wyk cited in Muller 2006).

The first section, *molto lento*, introduces the central tonality of the work, a minor, and the A-B-A’ form in which it is structured corresponds to the changes of tempo in the score. The section starts with a *misterioso* accompaniment in quavers in a minor, but the figure contains striking dissonances of minor second and major seventh

intervals. In the third bar, the first embryonic motive, *a*, appears as shown in Example 1 below:<sup>7</sup>

**Example 1:** *Night Music*, motive *a*, bars 1-5.

This motif is recognizable by its initial diatonic ascending movement and its intervallic descending shape, after changing direction chromatically at the top. This motive is repeated a second time, but while in the example above it ends on the dominant, E, in the second appearance the composer diverts it back to the tonic, A. Furthermore, in this second appearance the accompaniment effects a different harmonic trajectory, ending the motif in A major in bar 9. In exactly the same bar the second embryonic motive, *b* follows:

**Example 2:** *Night Music*, motive *b*, bars 9-12.

<sup>7</sup> The motive *a*, as well as subsequent motives *b*, *c*, *d*, *e*, *f*, *g* and *h*, were highlighted by Van Wyk in his programme notes, (Van Wyk 1961) and also discussed by Ferguson in his analysis of *Night Music* in *Composers in South Africa today* (1987: 21-23). Because the main focus of this study is not on providing an analysis of *Night Music*, or critiquing existing analyses, this analytical description of Van Wyk will be adopted to provide the structural framework for the remarks on performance that form the main endeavour of this thesis.

Here the chromatic tension between E flat and F flat is the most expressive aspect of the motive. The accompaniment is noticeably more chromatic and dense compared to the accompaniment of the first motive. The composer introduces the third motive, c, with a long note, E flat, as is shown in the following example:

**Example 3:** *Night Music*, motive c, bars 17-19.

With this motive the composer introduces the central sub-section, B, of the *molto lento*. The texture is less dense than with the previous motives and the harmony plays a more important and expressive role. The melody is still characterized by the

presence of chromatic elements and the insistent repetition of the E flat. At the end of this motive, the composer releases the harmonic tension with a d minor chord and melodically the E flat resolves in a D in the melody. It is followed immediately by the fourth embryonic motive, *d*, as shown in Example 4:

**Example 4:** *Night Music*, motive *d*, bar 20.

The image shows a musical score for motive *d*, bar 20. It consists of two staves. The top staff is marked with a *7* and an *8va* bracket, indicating an octave transposition. The bottom staff is marked with a *7*. The time signature is 3/2. The music is written in a style that suggests a piano or harp. The dynamics are marked as *ppp* (pianissimo) and *p* (piano), with an *accel.* (accelerando) marking and a *f* (forte) dynamic at the end. The notation includes various note values and rests, with a final note marked with a *b* flat. The score is enclosed in a box labeled *d*.

This is the shortest of the motives and it consists of two lines (for the left and the right hand respectively) performing the same notes and rhythm with a distance of 6 octaves between them.

Each of the four motives presents a new rhythmical element which is varied and elaborated throughout the whole work: motive *a* consists mainly of long minims, motive *b* introduces crotchets and quavers, motive *c* incorporates a triplet and in motive *d* semi-quavers are included. Although shorter rhythms are progressively introduced with the different motives, this is balanced by lightening the texture as it is

shown in the examples above. Another aspect, especially important in view of the remarks on performance later on, is the expressively important chromatic element present in all the motives and in the whole work.

The A' sub-section corresponds to the return of the initial tempo. The four initial notes of motive *a* reappear in the left hand, moving in parallel tenths. The right hand performs a variant of the initial accompaniment in quavers, this time in the high register of the piano and moving down chromatically. Only in bar 29 does the quaver accompaniment reappear in its original form, followed by the addition of a variant of the *a* motive in the left hand and in chordal format. The section ends after this phrase, with the dissipation of the accompaniment into the repetition of the notes B and C in the central part of the keyboard. A long B in the melody, never resolving to the tonic (A) connects to the following section of *Night Music*.

The *presto non troppo* is a short scherzo developed with variants of *d*, *c*, *b* and *a*. The tonality is described by Van Wyk as a duality between C major and C minor (Van Wyk 1961), although this is hardly audible in the strong dissonant environment of the accompaniment. The pianissimo triplet-accompaniment is based on motive *d*, while a fragment of motive *a* is recognisable in bars 77 to 79 (Example 5). From bars 80 to 85 the left hand clearly resembles traces of *b* (also Example 5):

**Example 5:** *Night Music*, variants of motives *a* and *b* in the second section of the work, bars 77-86.

Variant of motive a

Variant of b

This restless scherzo is contrasted by the nocturnal atmosphere of the next section of the work, *larghetto, poco rubato*. This slow, mainly elegiac section is written in A flat major. It starts with a long melody derived from motive c and it is accompanied by a sequence of trills that at times unfold in brief undulating arpeggios. It is followed by a second melody, motive e, which is clearly derived from a and is accompanied by a triplet figure. Like motive a, this melody also has an ascending-descending contour and starts with an even rhythm. However, e is more expansive and rhythmically varied than a. This is followed by the introduction of a new motive, f, which is derived from a and c and its use, in alternation with a fragment of the first melody of this section, leads to the climax of this section, where motive g is introduced (Example 6):



**Example 6:** *Night Music*, motive *g*, bars 151-152.

Motive *g* also originates from a combination of previous material and the use of fast, interrupted, new rhythmical figures. This, together with accents and a *fortissimo* dynamic, endow it with an agitated, stormy character. Subsequently the section returns to a plaintive mood with the use of motive *e* and ends with a sequence of tranquil chords. This section of *Night Music* with its relaxed-tense-relaxed outline clearly resembles an A-B-A' form.

The *allegretto fantastico* section is a short scherzo that starts as a two-part canon. It uses a variant of *a* being alternated with a version of *c*. In this section, the composer incorporates double dotted rhythms, which is an entirely new element in the work and gives it the *scherzando* character. The high register of the piano is

explored and although mainly soft dynamics are used, the section unfolds in a short *molto f*, *violent* passage in its central part.

The next section of the work is a short nocturne, *lento non troppo, teneramente*, in E flat major. It uses variations and combined versions of *d*, *a*, *b* and *f*.

**Example 7: Night Music**, variants of *d*, *a*, *f* and *b*, bars 247-248 and bars 256-257.

Variant of *d*      Fragments of *f* varied

Lento non troppo, teneramente ♩ = c.100

*p*  
*pp* molto dolce

sempre legato

tre corde 8b

Fragment of *a* inverted and varied

Variant of *b* followed by fragments of *d*

*p*

accel.

*pp*

10"

In bar 262, there is also a varied restatement of motive *c*. This section has a rich and dense polyphonic structure and it uses the unusual time signature of 11/8. Furthermore, in bar 258, the composer writes a *piu mosso* and a faster metronome



indication. This section subtly prepares the listener for the next section of the work, *allegro agitato e tempestoso*, as it clearly sets up a considerably different atmosphere in relation with the previous musical material. It starts with a more “authoritative” melody in octaves (*f appassionato*) and on two occasions the composer specifies the term *inquieto*. The repetitive bass line that starts in bar 262 and accompanies a *chiamando* melody has an unstable and anxious content despite the soft dynamic.

The next section, written in sonata form, comprises a “violent” exposition. According to Van Wyk, it uses variants of variants, *f*, *g* and *e*, and it introduces a new fierce motive *h* (Van Wyk 1961), which is still related to the first motive of the exposition, especially regarding its rhythmical conception:

**Example 8:** *Night Music*, motive *h*, bars 308-309.

Motive *h*

The development stands in contrast with regard to dynamics and character to the exposition. Soft dynamics and the high register of the piano are mainly used. In the development, a varied presentation of motive *c* appears:

**Example 9:** *Night Music*, variant of *c*, bars 329-330.

With the recapitulation the “violent” material reappears and the section ends with a long C sharp connecting to the last section of the work.

The *epilogue* starts with the tempo and expression marking *largo irrealmente*. Short fragments of previous motives are presented, bringing together thematic elements of all the previous sections. Eventually Van Wyk incorporates a motive from the opening section with the *tempo iniziale* marking, which is followed by an expansive new melody accompanied by soft arpeggios in the left hand. After this *adagio* section the composer reintroduces the initial tempo with the correspondent accompaniment in quavers. However, in comparison with the motif of quavers in the opening section, the minor second interval is, at this stage, followed by an octave and not the major seventh. The material becomes sparser towards the end of the work and ultimately the harmony stabilizes in a minor, fading out in the low register of the keyboard.

As described previously, *Night Music* encompasses variation and sonata procedures. Motives are varied throughout the work in their intervallic and rhythmical aspects. As in a traditional variation form, new rhythmical elements are explored in the variations, which require proficient technical skills of the pianist. *Night Music* starts with mainly elegiac sections, followed by a long and strong climax, *allegro agitato e tempestoso* and, subsequently, returns to the “atmospheric”, final *epilogue*. It is possible to find resemblances of this macro form in almost all the sections of the work: clearly in the first and third sections but also visibly in the fourth, fifth and sixth sections of the work. This fact suggests that Van Wyk uses this compositional process to assure coherence and balance in the musical material layout.

## Chapter III: The Pianism of Arnold van Wyk and Steven de Groot

### 3.1 Arnold Van Wyk as pianist

Arnold van Wyk was born on 26 April 1916 on a farm near Calvinia, South Africa. Although some members of his family showed a natural talent for music, it soon became evident that the most gifted one was Van Wyk (Ferguson 1987:1).<sup>8</sup> He was soon able to improvise on the piano after being taught sporadically by his sister, Minnie. Nevertheless, the opportunities for musical development in this part of the country were scarce and Van Wyk only started having more serious piano lessons when he came to study in the Stellenbosch Boys' High School (today known as Paul Roos Gimnasium) where he received piano lessons from the cellist Hans Endler and later from Miss C.E. van der Merwe. It was here that Van Wyk learned how to read and write notation properly. In 1936, Van Wyk started a Music Baccalaureate at the University of Stellenbosch with the help of Morris Friedland, who offered him a small bursary and an interest-free loan. Here he received piano tuition from Alan Graham and Maria Fisser. Van Wyk started having increased success as a composer and eventually he was offered the first scholarship for a South African composer from the Performing Rights Society of London. He abandoned the course at Stellenbosch and entered the Royal Academy of Music in London in 1938 where he studied composition with Theodore Holland and piano with Harold Craxton. At the Royal Academy Van Wyk received his first formal composition lessons and he also had a

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<sup>8</sup> The biographical information of this first section is entirely based on Howard Ferguson's chapter on Arnold van Wyk in Peter Klatzow's *Composers in South Africa Today*.

few bassoon lessons. Van Wyk remained at the Royal Academy of Music for four years and he spent a total of eight years in London, from 1939-1946. He was only able to return to South Africa after the end of the Second World War. His years in London were extremely important for Van Wyk's creative development, especially in terms of his compositional skills: a number of his works were performed in London and some were also published by Boosey & Hawkes. Although Van Wyk lived in South Africa for the rest of his life, he still made three overseas trips between the middle of 1960 and 1980, mainly for the purpose of performing his works in London. He also considered returning to London on a permanent basis, encouraged by friends like Howard Ferguson or Dame Myra Hess. Eventually, Van Wyk was appointed as a senior lecturer in Music at the University of Cape Town in 1949, which offered him a secure financial income. He resigned from this post in 1960 but was appointed in 1961 as a lecturer in Music at the University of Stellenbosch. He remained in this job until his retirement in 1978.

After returning to South Africa, Van Wyk initially embarked on an intensive performance activity as pianist as he had no other source of income.<sup>9</sup> In a letter to Jan Bouws on 4 November 1947, Van Wyk set out a typical program for his solo piano recitals: the D major Toccata by J.S. Bach (BWV 912), the F minor variations (Hob. 17/6) by Franz Joseph Haydn, the Franz Schubert A minor Sonata (D. 537), Frederic Chopin's C minor Nocturne (op. 48 no. 1) and Second Ballad (op. 38), Béla Bartók's "Bulgarian Dance" from *Mikrokosmos*, the Debussy Preludes *Puerta del*

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<sup>9</sup> This material relating to Van Wyk's performing career and the reception thereof is based on an unpublished paper by Dr. Stephanus Muller, "What about touching a pijano?", delivered at the thirty first annual congress of the Musicological Society of Southern Africa at the University of Stellenbosch, 26-27 August 2004. The current author would like to thank Dr. Muller for making this paper available to him. The reception of Van Wyk's performing career is also based in newspaper reviews which are referenced in the text.

*Vino*, *General Lavine* and *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune* and Ravel's *Alborado del Gracioso* (*Miroirs* no. 4). Significantly, Chopin was an important influence in Van Wyk's compositional style, especially in his early works and was also, along with Schubert, one of the composers that the composer most performed. According to Muller, Van Wyk played Chopin for his first public performance in Pretoria in September 1934 (where he played Chopin's G minor Ballad, op. 23) (Muller 2004). In 1972, in the Little Theatre in Cape Town, he ended the recital celebrating the awarding of his honorary doctorate by the University of Cape Town by playing Chopin's Nocturne in C minor (op. 48 no. 1), the Mazurka in E minor (op. 41 no.1), the Mazurka in A flat major (op. 50 no.2), the Mazurka in C sharp minor (op. 50 no.3) and a long-time favourite, the Barcarolle (op. 60). During this same recital he also performed Haydn's Sonata in C minor (Hob. 16/20), J.S. Bach's Adagio in G major (BWV 968), Schubert's Sonata in B flat major (D. 960) and Leoš Janáček's *In the Mist*. In the *Cape Times* on 2 August 1972 a review of this performance was released under the rubric "Intimate recital":

The sonata in B flat by Schubert came before the interval, and here Mr. Van Wyk was more at ease technically than before. Haydn's "sighing" *appoggiaturas* and intricate ornamentation taxed the technical capabilities of the recitalist, but one never felt deprived of his overall understanding. "In the Mists" was the highlight of the recital, with the artist deeply engrossed in the impressionistic sounds. Chopin pieces were all played with characteristic Chopinesque *cantilena* (Gie 1972).

Muller also notes that Schubert's A minor sonata (D. 537), B flat major sonata (D. 960) and some duo piano works such as the Duo Lebensstürme (D. 947), the Rondo in A major (D. 951) and the Sonata Grand Duo (D. 812) were also intensively performed throughout his career (Muller 2004). Van Wyk's strong admiration for Schubert also found expression in an arrangement for piano and orchestra of Schubert's Fantasia in F minor (D. 940) for piano duet. From time to time Van Wyk would perform a Mozart piano concerto with one of the big orchestras in South Africa. Some of the characteristics of his playing are made evident in the reviews following these performances. In the *Cape Times* of 24 April 1957, for instance, a review appeared under the banner "Three Concertos by Mozart Played":

The three soloists of the evening were Arnold van Wyk, Laura Searle and Christie Feros in (respectively) concertos in E flat (K. 482), C minor (K. 491) and B flat (K. 595). It was good to find in Mr. Van Wyk's playing singing qualities of touch and delicacy in phrasing that have come with the years. Only in the final rondo did its ever-recurring subject sound trite and lacking in Mozartian gaiety (Marx 1957).

Van Wyk did not perform much twentieth-century music, possibly with the exception of some Debussy and Bartók.

Critics considered Van Wyk an "intimate" performer. His interpretations were often considered as introspective but refined and some critics characterized him as a performing "tone poet". In an early review dating from the time after Van Wyk had returned from England and before he had started lecturing at the South African College of Music, *Die Volksblad* writes:

Without show or flashiness he magically achieved refined mood nuances on the piano. The main key of his playing is a quiet muteness that always shows intimate emotion, but can tend towards passiveness. His flowing piano-playing and refined interpretation has a strong lyrical accent, as if the pianist is deeply affected by every thematic change of the composition (DÉCOR in *Die Volksblad*, 18 November 1947).<sup>10</sup>

In *Die Burger* of August 1972,<sup>11</sup> the banner of the review reads: “Poetical playing by tone poet”. The author of the review continues to state that: “His music taste gives one the impression that he is sitting and improvising in front of his piano, ‘lost in thought’” (Bouws 1972). Generally critics praised Van Wyk’s tone control at the piano, especially his expressive lyrical eloquence in soft melodic passages. On the other hand, that same introspectiveness was also heard to act as a restraint on a more exuberant, virtuosic pianism. In the *Cape Argus* of August 1972, the author thus states:

For those listeners to whom technical perfection is the be-all and end-all of musical experience, Van Wyk’s recital would have been a disappointment. Frankly, Van Wyk is not a virtuoso (very few performers are) but he is a musician in the best sense of the word (Sand 1972).

But here it is also important to note that Van Wyk did not consider himself a virtuoso.

In a letter to Jan Bouws he writes in 1947:

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<sup>10</sup> Translation from the Afrikaans by Esthea Kruger.

<sup>11</sup> The precise date of this cutting in the Van Wyk Collection could not be determined.



I am playing quite well nowadays, even though I am – thank God – no virtuoso. And people are hearing things (in my playing) that they cannot hear from the great virtuoso's such as Moiseiwitsch (cited in Muller 2004).<sup>12</sup>

Some reviews that shed light on Van Wyk's performing capabilities make it clear that his musical gifts were sometimes hampered by his lack of pianistic skills. Writing in *Die Burger* under the heading "Arnold Van Wyk receives great oration" on 2 September 1959, the author admires his composition, *Night Music*, but also signals the ambiguity surrounding his performance capabilities:

Arnold van Wyk is not only the smooth concert pianist. One can notice sometimes that his technique is lacking but at the same time he gives so much more than the concert pianist (Nepgen 1959).<sup>13</sup>

Indeed Van Wyk frequently performed and recorded his own piano compositions and he was also often the pianist in some of his chamber music works like the *Duo Concertante* for viola and piano. *Night Music* in particular was performed several times by the composer and until the end of his life performing this music remained important to him. On 2 July 1980, for example, he writes to Freda Baron:

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<sup>12</sup> Translation from the Afrikaans by Esthea Kruger.

<sup>13</sup> Translation from the Afrikaans by Esthea Kruger

The reason for my practising is that I have to play *Night Music* here in Stellenbosch at a concert ... I'm actually thinking of memorising that frightening score, for what I think will be the very last time I'll play it in this life, which means THE VERY LAST TIME, because I don't think they have pianos in hell ...<sup>14</sup>

Apart from the discussion of Van Wyk's pianistic skills in this thesis, the current author has found two more reviews of his playing of *Night Music* on different occasions. In the *Cape Argus* on 2 September 1959, the critic reports as follows on a concert: "Not so good were the occasional blemishes in technique and – more serious and more than once – the blurring of shape by bursts of speed." (Author unknown). This comment will prove to be significant in the light of the results of the comparative analysis of Van Wyk's playing that follows. Equally significant and stating "the other case" as it were, is a comment in *Die Burger* on 10 May 1965: "Few composers understand the art to perform their own music in the way that Arnold van Wyk performed his *Night Music*!" (Brill 1965). These two citations exemplify the dualism "musicality – technique", in which Van Wyk was believed to succeed and fail respectively. If this were indeed the case, it would not be too speculative to connect the deficiency in technique to Van Wyk's late introduction to serious piano lessons. The fact that Van Wyk as a pianist showed some technical deficiencies and, on the other hand, was an accomplished composer, could be the reason for the fact that he was mainly considered a composer rather than a pianist. Muller argues in his paper "What about touching a pijano?" that "he was seen in his lifetime as piano-playing composer rather than pianist." He also argues that Van Wyk

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<sup>14</sup> I should like to thank Stephanus Muller for providing this information.

was at times described as a composer in programmes where he was performing as a pianist. The 1959 review in the *Cape Argus*, partly quoted above, is thus introduced under the banner: “Composer heard as pianist” (Author unknown).

### 3.2 *The pianist Steven de Groot*

Steven de Groot was born in 1953 in Johannesburg and also died in this South African city in 1989.<sup>15</sup> For generations, several members of his family had been professional musicians and De Groot, already as a child, was touring South Africa and playing trios with his father (Pierre de Groot) and brother (probably Oliver de Groot). De Groot’s piano teachers included Lamar Crowson in Cape Town, Eduardo de Pueyo at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels, Rudolf Serkin, Mieczylaw Horszowski and Seymour Lipkin at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. His graduation at the Curtis Institute was in 1975. Working with such respected and acclaimed international pedagogues was surely essential for De Groot’s successful career. In 1977, De Groot won the young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York and in the same year he was the gold medallist of the Van Cliburn Competition in Texas. He also won the prizes for the Best Performance of a Commissioned Work and Best Performance of Chamber Music in that competition. After winning the Van Cliburn competition, De Groot performed

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<sup>15</sup> Most of the material used in this section of this thesis is based on Cara Kleynhans’s thesis “Steven de Groot (1953-1989): Die Loopbaan van 'n Suid-Afrikaanse Konsertpianis”. Unpublished Masters thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2007. The author would like to thank Esthea Kruger for translating relevant sections of this thesis from the Afrikaans. Some of the biographical material used in this section about Steven de Groot was also based on Will Crutchfield’s article in the *New York Times*, 24 May, 1989.

with some leading orchestras from all around the world, including the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington DC, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam and the Mozarteum Orchestra of Salzburg. He played regularly as a recitalist and chamber musician. His engagements as a recitalist included a Carnegie Hall debut in New York in 1977. De Groote joined the faculty of Arizona State University in 1981 and in 1987 moved to Fort Worth to teach at the Texas Christian University. Surviving a severe plane crash in 1985, De Groote was able to restart his performing career. However, in 1989, while visiting family in Johannesburg, De Groote was hospitalized and he died from organ failure.

As De Groote was born in a family of musicians, the choice of becoming one was natural for him. He stated the following in a Curriculum Vitae used by the Van Cliburn Foundation for the promotion of his career: “There was never any thought in my head of not being a musician – the thought of being anything else would strike me as being downright weird” (cited in Kleynhans 2007:75). It is also acknowledged that De Groote always wanted to be a concert pianist and his dedication to accomplish this goal was remarkable. De Groote thus proclaimed “I want to accept the challenge, be a concert pianist and build a reputation as one” (cited in Kleynhans 2007:75).

De Groote was regarded by authors as an “intellectual” pianist. Generally, his style of playing piano could be characterized as controlled in intensity and passion. His technical skills at the keyboard were also highly praised. De Groote, quoted by Charles Ward, thus stated: “one’s preparation should be cerebral; one’s performance should be spontaneous” (cited in Kleynhans 2007:78). Charles Ward also proclaimed the following regarding De Groote’s performance:

It was a statement by a performer who has found the elusive key to the secrets that give music its life. Strong, highly controlled, his performance had both the discipline and shape that makes playing so attractive (cited in Kleynhans 2007:78).

Concerning De Groote's technical skills at the piano, Deon Irish, in 1982, commented as follows:

Technical brilliance was the hallmark of this rewarding recital by Steven De Groote, surely the best of a fine crop of young South African pianistic talent. ... none of these works (Brahms, Liszt, Debussy) could be attempted by a pianist technically less than virtuosic; but exceptional ability is required to infuse the music whilst coping with almost every pianistic horror known to Man. That De Groote managed to do just that bears eloquent testimony to his award winning stature as a major international talent (cited in Kleynhans 2007:79).

Francois du Toit remembers De Groote the pianist as follows: "Steven was a no-nonsense performer and his playing was characterized by no excessive movements at the piano." Du Toit continues to state that: "He had an incredible control of the keyboard, both technically and as regards sound control" (cited in Kleynhans 2007:79).

Despite the fact that De Groote reportedly had an "intellectual" and highly technical approach to music (or perhaps because of it), his purpose was at all times fully to respect the composer's intentions in the work. The notion of an "intellectual" approach also finds expression in some commentators' references to a serious and

temperate attitude while performing, underlying a basic aim to present the musical work to the audience. In this regard, Edward Greenfield states:

Here is a splendidly positive and forthright artist who can coax the keyboard into the most bewitching array of sounds, and whose principal disadvantage at the moment seems to be that his virtuosity doesn't show. Looking at him as he calmly tackles the Knuckle-cracking textures of Bartok's Out of Doors Suite or Schumann's Symphonic Studies, one might think it all too easy, and from there deduce that De Groote is a chilly interpreter (cited in Kleynhans 2007:79, 80).

De Groote's performing style required a careful choice of non-flashy but refined and elegant programmes. It is recognized that he tended to choose works by composers not so much known for the virtuosic component of their music but rather for the (other) intrinsic artistic value of their works. In this regard Chism writes:

De Groote tended to music of unquestionable artistic worth rather than the dreary and obvious procession of display pieces favoured by so many contestants. In other words Haydn, Mozart, Schubert and Prokofiev as opposed to Liszt, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin (cited in Kleynhans 2007:83).

De Groote's repertoire encompassed works by composers of different periods such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Brahms, Rachmaninoff, Debussy and Prokofiev. Nevertheless, in a conversation with Coenraad Visser, De Groote affirmed that his favourite composers were Haydn, Mozart and Schubert (Kleynhans

2007:84). His interpretations of Mozart were well admired and according to Daan Du Toit, De Groote was reported to have said that the jury at the Van Cliburn Competition was especially impressed with his interpretation of Mozart (cited in Kleynhans 2007:84). De Groote was also considered an excellent interpreter of Schubert as is made clear from the following quote:

The pianist clearly responded to the Viennese lyricism of this work (Schubert Sonata in E-flat major) ... Somehow the playing was less self conscious, his excellent technique was at the service of the music and the result was more expressive and less strident than previously. (cited in Kleynhans 2007:85).

Moreover, De Groote was acclaimed and received favourable reviews concerning his interpretation of works such as Rachmaninoff's Second piano concerto, Brahms's Second piano concerto or Chopin's First piano concerto (Kleyhans 2007:86). This provides evidence that he was a "well-rounded" interpreter of different styles, including the well-known, truly virtuosic works.

However, it is possible to find reviews containing negative criticism about De Groote's performances, and perhaps not surprisingly this negative criticism has something to do with the possibility of musical superficiality enabled by such a splendid technique. Although his interpretation of Prokofiev's works was generally well reviewed, Schoenberg thus stated the following concerning De Groote's performance of Prokofiev's Eighth Sonata in his Carnegie Hall debut:

As winner of so prestigious a competition as the Cliburn, it went without saying that Mr. De Groote was well trained, with a big technique and sound musicianship. Thus it was no surprise to hear him whip through the difficult Eighth Sonata by Prokofiev in a smooth manner. But the music, with its empty-sounding rhetoric, has not aged well, nor did Mr. De Groote's elegant but polite playing do much to vitalize the piece. He did not have many ideas about it. The playing itself was unexceptionable, but the phrase succeeded in a bland manner, without the rhythmic bite that can redeem the work. (cited in Kleynhans 2007:90).

### *3.3 Comparative remarks*

The general critical reception of Van Wyk's and De Groote's pianism explored in this chapter, affirms that these performers had very different performing styles. Yet both were recognized for their truthful musicianship and for seeking the deepest musical meaning in a work. Critics sometimes pointed to technical deficiencies in Arnold van Wyk's playing. Nevertheless, they still acclaimed his musical abilities and remarked on the fact that his main focus was on composition. His piano playing, it is clear, was the hand-maiden of his composing, perhaps even an intrinsic element of his compositional process. On the other hand, Steven de Groote was a prize winner of a well-known international competition. His objective was always to be a concert pianist and he succeeded, studying with internationally renowned pedagogues and establishing an international career after winning the Van Cliburn Competition. De Groote, in contrast to Van Wyk, was never criticized on the technical level of piano playing. On the contrary, critics generally praised his technical mastery of the instrument. The criticism directed at him was linked to the idea of musical superficiality as a result of technical facility. The reception of these two pianistic



styles will form the background of the comparative performance analysis of these two pianists' performances of *Night Music* which will follow in the next section.

## **Chapter IV: Performance analysis of *Night Music* with specific reference to Van Wyk's and De Groote's recordings**

Performance analysis as a discipline is approximately forty years old and became interesting to scholars as a means to bridge the gap between performers and analysts. Nicholas Cook explains it thus: "I would like to counterpose not so much the analyst and the performer but rather the 'writing' and the 'performing' musician, or, more precisely, music as writing and music as performance" (1999:250). Essentially, the analyst's activity was previously centred on reading and analyzing the score without allowing the performer to intervene in his work. Performance analysis brought about a change in the situation, as its aim is to bring together the ideologies of both sides in order to extend our musical understanding. It helped lessen stigmas about these disciplines which were up to that point seen as two opposing entities: analysis (a scrupulous and rigorous method) and performance (an intuitive expression). Although the score-orientated approach to analysis is imperative as part of the process, the new growing respect that scholars acquired for the performers' insights allowed the performance-analysis discipline to distance itself from the entirely prescriptive nature of conventional analysts.

Some authors, such as Rink, distinguish between two types of performance analysis: prescriptive and descriptive. The first kind, also defended by theorists such as Schenker, emphasizes theoretical score analysis as a means to achieve an improved performance. This "analysis is prior to, and possibly serving as the basis of, a given performance" (Rink 2002:37). Latartara and Gardiner continue to describe this concept as follows: "From this prescriptive mode, the interaction between

analysis and performance is a one-way process, moving from analysis to performance” (Latartara & Gardiner 2007:55). The second category, descriptive performance analysis, involves the performance as the main object of study. Rink describes it as the “analysis of the performance itself” (2002:37). It reverses the “one-way flow by beginning with the performance instead of the score” (Latartara & Gardiner 2007:55). It usually focuses on the study of musical parameters such as time, dynamics and articulation.

The analysis of the score is naturally of the utmost importance to the performer. It provides him/her with the tools that are required to accomplish a structured and coherent interpretation of the composition. It is acknowledged that intuition, although essential in any performance, is not sufficient to create a respected rendition of a musical work belonging to the Western cultural tradition. Being acquainted with the form of the work, comprehending how all the musical parameters relate to one another and knowing its historical context provide the musician with a greater understanding of the text. Although the way a performer and an analyst scrutinize the score differ substantially, it is reasonable to believe that score study is an important task of both parties. Then again, if we consider the performance itself as the case study, as it is clearly the central parameter of scrutiny for a performer, it also helps the analyst to comprehend the work. The aural representation of a composition and the physical mechanisms of a performance are inherent aspects of the musical work. Consequently, analyzing a performance is a way of analyzing the composition itself.

Analysing the score of *Night Music* together with a performance by the composer, allows one to consider two versions of “authenticated text”. Comparing Arnold van Wyk’s recording and score with a performance by Steven de Groote potentially makes it possible to draw conclusions about score fidelity in performance as a condition for “authenticity”. Therefore, the primary aim of this performance analysis is to find differences between the composer’s rendition and his score, and to use the comparison with Steven de Groote’s performance to set the results in a broader perspective. Given the reception history of the pianism of Van Wyk and De Groote, it is reasonable to expect at the outset that De Groote’s performance might be more accurate than that of Van Wyk, while Van Wyk’s performance could reveal musical subtleties not fixed in the score. Naturally, discrepancies between sound and text can be relevant to a discussion of authenticity in performance. If it is indeed possible that Van Wyk’s performance of his work is less “accurate” than another performance by a pianist not so much connected to the poetic aspect of the work, this could change the way in which we regard “authentic” performance. Comparing two different renditions of the same work also helps the researcher to find the discrepancies between each performance and the score. To a lesser extent it is the aim of this performance analysis to arrive at an estimation of Arnold van Wyk as a pianist. This evaluation of the composer’s pianistic skills is important in order to understand if the discrepancies found between his performance and the score are due to technical, pianistic problems or, on the other hand, as a deliberate intention to re-interpret his score in this performance.

The performance analysis conducted in this thesis could also yield interesting viewpoints concerning the role of the performer in the musical tradition of the West,

thus contributing to a much broader and historically fraught debate.<sup>16</sup> Musicologists, composers and performers have historically all interrogated the function of the performer. Thus, different opinions have created radical perspectives regarding how a performance is characterized and what its purpose and importance in music should be. On one hand, there are authors who argue that a performer should only reproduce a text. The score is the musical work and the performance is just a vehicle to allow listeners, not familiar with musical notation, to comprehend it. This stance clearly positions performance as a secondary activity: it is not considered a musical product but just a course of action to achieve it. This point of view is clearly questioned by an “authorized” recording of a work by a composer like Van Wyk, especially a recording that differs from the score in important ways. On the other hand, the perspective exists that music cannot be fully understood without its aural representation. One can possibly argue that music requires sound and a complete musical experience should therefore not exclude the performance practice. In fact, if one bears in mind that the score does not fully determine the sound of a performance, it is plausible to assume that a performance is necessary to achieve the final product of a musical experience. This concept refutes the idea of the score, or “text” as a complete autonomous entity by also including the performer as an important or actually essential part of the process. In this conception, the role of the performer is not just to execute the musical work but also to interpret it. It takes into consideration the performer’s individual personality and through the confrontation between his/her ideas and the composer’s stipulations in the score a more

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<sup>16</sup> A short description showing different perspectives concerning performance and the role of the performer is included. The purpose is to clarify how this specific performance analysis can be related and add points of view regarding the philosophical discussion about musical performance and its actor: the performer.

interesting and lively musical experience is created. The relation between score, composer and performer is inter-dynamic in this case and not determined in a linear way from the composer to the performer. It is also possible to claim that it is through the multiplicity of performances that the composition becomes accessible to the main public and consequently “popular”. Moreover, the diversity of performances allows a more exciting experience of that composition in generating different perspectives and renewed interest for the musical work. In this study, the fact that Arnold van Wyk’s rendition of *Night Music* can possibly be less accurate than Steven de Groote’s performance, especially taking into account that the composer can perform his work differently to what he has written in the score, surely adds interesting issues regarding the matter outlined above. The differences between the score and the composer’s rendition can hence be perceived as a way in which the performer is emancipated from the composer, in the sense that the composer himself as pianist does not follow his own instructions completely. Even if there is no intention of doing so, the existing data (“text” and “sound text”) offer us the possibility of raising this argument.

In this dissertation, the case studies of both performances of *Night Music* entailed repeated listening to the two recordings. The analytical framework was based on a pre-designed set of standard criteria which encompassed the categories of “tempo”, “rhythm”, “dynamics”, “articulation” and “other”. In this last parameter, there were mainly assessments concerning character but also regarding the use of the pedal and obvious inaccuracies. At the end of each movement of the composition a section designated for general conclusions was included. The design was representative of

descriptive performance analysis, although it also required a careful study of the score beforehand. Empirical observation and qualitative measurements were mainly used. The aim of this research project was not to present quantitative results. The reason why this performance analysis was based in empirical observation, through intensive listening to both renditions, was that it was adjudged adequate as a means to locate the differences between the composer's score and performance. Making use of computer software to establish these differences would be, in this case, too exigent and certainly not essential.

In the following section, a brief explanation on how different musical criteria were analyzed will be enunciated. The pianist Heinrich Neuhaus made the following proclamation in his book *The Art of the Piano* pertaining to tempo and rhythm:

As every live organism lives according to a rhythmical pulse, a musical work should also be interpreted with a certain beat, but this pulsation is closer to the heart beat than to the seismograph's record during an earthquake (1987:41).

In this statement, Neuhaus clearly argues that tempo and rhythm in music should not be performed mechanically, for instance, according to the pulse of the metronome. Instead, musical tempo needs to be executed embracing a natural gesture, which can be compared, for instance, to human breathing. The difficulties of analyzing tempo and rhythm thus arise from the fact that it is not supposed to be metronomic, unless the composer specifically requires it. Then again, the performer must balance tempo and rhythm carefully in his execution, making use of just the necessary nuances in order to allow the natural flow of the musical phrases. In this thesis, the

metronome was indeed used for assessing the average tempo used by each pianist. Both of them naturally had tempo inflections in their renditions. However, in accordance with the composer's stipulations as written in the score, it was possible to assess whether those deviations were musical decisions or inconsistencies.

Dynamics were judged in accordance with the relative nature of this musical element. In reality, this relative essence also applies to all other musical components. Bearing in mind that a certain musical passage with the dynamic indication of *mezzo forte* is played with a certain volume of sound, a section with *pianissimo* written in the score must be performed using considerably less sound. As obvious as this might seem, it is important to note that the judgment of dynamics can become problematic for the researcher. This is demonstrated in the following example: consider a segment of the musical work in which *piano* is required, but the composer indicates one voice to be performed *cantabile*. The volume of this voice should in reality be higher than *piano*, most likely not less than *mezzo forte*. Hence, the "soft" dynamic ambiance is in fact generated by the execution of the other voices *piano* or even *pianissimo*.

Judgments regarding articulation were incorporated through the careful comparison between each performance and the articulation markings written in the score. Different articulation requires dynamic changes on those specific notes, for instance, accents or *tenutos* or differences in the length of the notes, as for example *staccatos*. For that reason it is possible to evaluate if the articulation specifications by the composer are being respected by each performer.

How the pianists used the pedal could be extremely difficult to assess by just listening intensively to the recordings (the different nature of the two recordings –



one in a studio and one live – played no small part in this). In this thesis an observation about pedalling occurs only once where this constitutes a clear deviation from what is written in the score.

Van Wyk wrote many detailed instructions in the score of *Night Music* and, with reference to character; he made use of unusual terms such as *glacial*, *niente*, *lugubre* or *spetralle*. It shows that the composer was expecting great depth of interpretation and spiritual insight of the performer. From this perspective, although it is a subjective aspect and a matter of opinion, it was decided to include in the comparative analysis considerations regarding musical character. With careful listening to the recordings and taking into consideration all the other musical elements it was possible to understand where the differences in mood and musical intention occurred in each rendition. It was also assessed if these were coherent with the specific requirements in the score. These considerations do not affect the outcome or the conclusion of this performance analysis because the differences between each rendition and the score were mainly assessed using less subjective musical criteria such as tempo, rhythm and articulation. These deliberations concerning character are incorporated to review other musical characteristics of the performers, which can be related to “musicianship”.

One general constraint regarding the performance analysis of Van Wyk’s and De Groote’s renditions of *Night Music* is the fact that both these recordings lack good sound quality. Van Wyk’s recording was made in 1963 and the format is LP. Especially in the low register of the piano, it is sometimes quite difficult to distinguish the pitches of the notes he is playing. De Groote’s recording is from a BBC Radio 3 broadcast of a performance that took place on 21 July in 1984 at the Cheltenham

International Festival of Music. It is a live performance, which was broadcast on 24 September in 1984, and the sound is sometimes not sufficiently clear for the purpose of research. Consequently, especially in the low register of the piano, it was at times extremely difficult to distinguish pitches.

The results obtained from the comparative performance analysis of Van Wyk's and De Groote's renditions of *Night Music* will now be discussed. The presentation of the results is structured in accordance with the seven movements of the work: *molto lento*; *presto non troppo*; *larghetto*, *poco rubato*; *tempo giusto*: *allegretto fantastico*; *lento non troppo*, *teneramente*; *allegro agitato e tempestoso* and *largo irrealmente*, *epilogue*.

The first section of the work includes three sub-sections: *molto lento* with a tempo indication of  $\text{♩} = c. 60$ , *a tempo*, *poco più lento* with a tempo marking of  $\text{♩} = c. 52$  and a final sub-section with a score indication of  $\text{♩} = 60$ . The tempo Van Wyk chooses for the first sub-section is approximately  $\text{♩} = 48$ ,<sup>17</sup> in the second sub-section he plays in the tempo of  $\text{♩} = c. 44$  and in the final sub-section he continues using the same tempo as in the second sub-section. The tempo De Groote chooses for the first sub-part is about  $\text{♩} = 63$ , the second part of the movement he plays in the tempo of  $\text{♩} = c. 52$  and he increases the tempo again for the final sub-section of the work to roughly  $\text{♩} = 60$ . Comparing these tempi, it is clear that De Groote's performance is closer to the

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<sup>17</sup> In this specific movement, the results regarding tempo are presented as approximate measurements because in both renditions there are substantial tempo fluctuations. It is important to note that the composer does not suggest exact tempos for this movement, instead using the term *circa* (when giving the tempo indication in the beginning) and *rubato* (in bar 22).

stipulations in the score in terms of the execution of tempo indications than that of Van Wyk. However, in this particular case, the elegiac and melodic character of the movement suggests that one can also interpret it in a slower tempo, as in the composer's performance. With regard to rhythm, the composer's rendition seems to be generally very precise. There are indeed many rhythmical inflections but they seem to be in accordance with the natural flow and shape of the melody. The same situation happens in De Groote's performance, in which the rhythm is executed with precision but also with musical nuances. With regard to dynamics, although one can observe a general concern to respect the indications in the score, it is possible to detect a few inaccuracies in the composer's recording of this movement. For instance, Van Wyk does not execute the *crescendo* and *decrescendo* marked in the score for the middle voice in bars 11 and 14. It is also noticeable that he does not start the *stringendo* in bar 27 with a dynamic *piano* as the score demands. Although there are *tenuto* markings for the first three notes of this *stringendo*, it still sounds too loud for the dynamic indication in the score, creating a *reinforzando* articulation. In contrast, De Groote executes the dynamics accurately in accordance with the score indications. In bar 21, one can perceive that the composer does not respect the *tenuto* marking for the G on the third beat, by playing the following F with too much weight. In De Groote's rendition, the researcher could not recognize any inaccuracy pertaining to articulation. One small detail in bar 20 is the fact that De Groote connects the sound of this bar with the following bar. He uses the pedal to do it and disregards an eighth note rest in bar 21. Although it is a matter of interpretation, one can see by Van Wyk's performance that the composer's intention is actually to create a short "static" rest at the beginning of bar 21. In this first movement of the work, despite some small discrepancies between text and recorded sound, it is

reasonable to consider both recorded performances as precise. Even with small inaccuracies in the composer's performance, it is important to note that his interpretation of this section seems to be more eloquent and expressive than De Groote's rendition.

The second movement of *Night Music*, *presto non troppo*, has a tempo marking of a ♩=c.160. This section has a basic rhythmical character built on a triplet semi-quaver motive. Van Wyk plays this movement much faster at ♩=c.200, while De Groote chose a tempo closer to the score stipulation of approximately ♩=168. It is important to note that in the composer's interpretation the tempo fluctuates considerably while in De Groote's performance, the tempo is remarkably steady. Furthermore, it is clear that Van Wyk chose a significantly faster tempo in comparison with De Groote's performance and his own requirement notated in the score. With regard to rhythm, the composer's rendition is generally not steady or even. Van Wyk clearly often rushes or "squashes" the triplet semi-quaver figures and some runs. From bars 58 to 60, bars 63 to 65 and still in bars 42 and 87, one can hear examples of lack of rhythmical precision resulting in an unclear layout of the musical material. On the other hand, De Groote's interpretation of this movement is rhythmically very exact. In his rendition, the tempo and rhythm are steady and therefore the 'text' is presented in a more comprehensible and coherent way. Concerning dynamics, one can observe from bars 77 to 79 that Van Wyk does not play the melody for the right hand with enough sound (or alternatively the difference in dynamic level between the hands is not sufficient). This especially occurs towards the end of that short line, from bar 78, where a blurred rhythm is also noticeable. The indication of *mezzo piano* is written in the score in contrast with the *pianissimo* for

the left hand, but it does not come across in his interpretation. In bars 75 and 84, De Groote accents the first notes of each bar with the result that those notes seem to be part of the melody. This is not written in the score, although it has to be said that the same occurs in Van Wyk's rendition of bar 84. As a general conclusion for this specific section of the work, it is possible to consider De Groote's performance as being more accurate than Arnold van Wyk's, mostly because the composer's performance has a lack of rhythmical exactitude. Van Wyk chose a considerably faster tempo and that can be a possible explanation for some loss of control in his interpretation. In this movement, the rhythmical problems are definitely the most prominent issue in the composer's rendition, especially bearing in mind that steadiness of rhythm is essential for an accurate performance of the *presto non troppo*.

The next section of the work, *larghetto, poco rubato*, has a time indication of  $\text{♩}=\text{c}$ . 52. Although this is the only quantitative tempo marking in this section, there are some other points in the score where the tempo is supposed to change. In the beginning, the composer writes *poco rubato*, which means he expects tempo inflections. In bar 130 the composer stipulates *poco inquieto* and in bar 140 *pochissimo piu mosso*. With an *incalzando e stringendo* passage, which starts in bar 145, the composer builds up more tension until the climax, which starts in bar 151 and ends in bar 154. Tempo I is specified in bar 155 after two bars of decreasing the tempo. Additionally, a *ritenuto*, an *esitando* and a *precipitato* are stipulated precisely in bars 129, 134 and 152. Finally, the composer includes a *tranquillissimo* affecting the last three bars of the movement. It is arguable that this term should suggest only change of mood, but it is probable that some performers might want to achieve this

with a slight decrease of the tempo. These several tempo instructions produce a “slow – faster (climax) – slow” tempo setup in the movement, with a gradual increase of tempo for the climax and an abrupt decrease of tempo for the conclusion of the movement. Van Wyk chooses approximately the same tempo as De Groote for the beginning of this movement: around  $\text{♩} = 48$ .<sup>18</sup> Both renditions are a bit slower than the score suggestion but are adequate for the lyrical musical content. From bar 125, where the composer still plays approximately in the same tempo, De Groote increases the tempo to about  $\text{♩} = 60$ . There is no instruction in the score to motivate this decision, but it is clear that De Groote chooses to increase the tempo according to the change of musical material. The *poco inquieto* passage lasts three bars, bars 130 to 133, and both performers bend the tempo as required. After the *poco inquieto* passage, *a tempo*, in bar 134, is respected by De Groote, who returns to the previous tempo in bar 125. Van Wyk, however, decreases the tempo only until roughly  $\text{♩} = 58$ . No increase of the tempo was recognizable for the *pochissimo piu mosso* passage in De Groote’s performance. Nevertheless, *pochissimo* implies just a very small increase of tempo and the composer completes the specification with *ma molto quieto* which translates to “but very quiet”. The composer, indeed, increases it ( $\text{♩} = c.63$ ). Furthermore, Van Wyk accelerates the tempo for the *incalzando e stringendo* passage and de Groote remains approximately in the same tempo, which can be viewed as an inaccuracy. While Van Wyk arrives at a tempo of about  $\text{♩} = 66$  in the climax (bar 151), De Groote does not increase it. In accordance with the broader musical material, which culminates in a thicker texture in the climax, de Groote

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<sup>18</sup> In this movement it is important to remark the use of quantitative measurements only to show the average tempo chosen by each pianist. This is due to the constant tempo variations in both renditions, as required by the composer.

possibly prefers to interpret the *sempre aumentando* requirement (bar 249) with a broader and not faster sound. In the final tempo I, in bar 156, both performers return to their initial tempos but Van Wyk interprets the *tranquillissimo* as implying a considerable reduction of tempo until the end of the movement. With this description regarding tempo, it is possible to detect only a few discrepancies between score and recording in both renditions. Taking into account the several tempo instructions and the fact that the composer adds a *poco rubato* at the beginning of the movement, it is reasonable to consider Van Wyk's rendition accurate in terms of respecting tempo indications and to consider De Groote's performance fairly competent in this regard. In relation to dynamics and articulation, De Groote performs this section of *Night Music* with precision. Van Wyk, on the other hand, in bar 127 does not execute the *crescendo* and *decrescendo* specified for the middle voice and in bar 151 he does not articulate the *tenutos* marked for the A and the B in the third and the fourth beats respectively. Additionally, in some technical pianistic details, such as the arpeggios in bar 118, De Groote's execution is clearly more rhythmically precise. Overall, despite some small details, both performances of this movement are clear and accurate.

*Tempo giusto: allegretto fantastico* has a tempo indication of  $\downarrow = c.69$ . Van Wyk plays approximately in the tempo as suggested in the score and De Groote chooses a slightly faster tempo of roughly  $\downarrow = 72$ . As a movement of which the character is defined mainly by its rhythmical movement, it has to be said that Van Wyk does not succeed in maintaining the tempo and rhythm steady. His interpretation reveals many unrequested tempo nuances. The major problem is the fact that Van Wyk accelerates the tempo in several points throughout his

performance of this section. Bars 180 and 181, bar 190 until the end of bar 193 as well as bars 215 and 216 are some examples where this happens. Consequently, in bar 180, the last two chords for the left hand are not executed and in bars 215 and 216 the imprecise execution of the semi-quaver passage for the right hand is obvious. Due to the uneven tempo, especially the third beats of some specific bars are not perceptible in his rendition. It is possible to hear this in bar 172, very clearly in bar 180 and also in bar 186. In bar 182, Van Wyk does not respect the articulation stipulated for the left hand, specifically the accent and *sforzando* predetermined for the C and the D. On the contrary, De Groote maintains a solid tempo and rhythm throughout his execution of the movement, making use of less and less extreme inflections. As a result his rendition is remarkably accurate, carefully respecting the articulation and dynamics required by the composer in his score.

The following section of the work, as described in the second chapter, is a melodic, tender and short slow movement. According to the structure of this section there are two tempos specified: an initial *lento non troppo* (♩=c.100) and a *piu mosso* (♩=c.120), beginning in bar 258. The initial serenity of the section is gradually surpassed by a more agitated mood, corresponding to the *piu mosso* sub-section, which subtly functions as a preparation for the next section of the work. In this regard, both performers render accurately the character changes implied by the metamorphoses of the musical content. Furthermore, Van Wyk and De Groote choose, on average, the same tempos suggested in the score and meticulously respect the prescribed articulation. There is also an evident respect for the polyphonic structure of the movement, with all the melodies being well shaped and defined. However, in bars 261 and 265, where the composer includes the expression



*inquieto* and also an *accelerando* and *ritardando*, Van Wyk increases the tempo excessively, resulting in some loss of definition in especially the middle voices. In bar 251, De Groote plays the top B with an extra wrong note in the second part of the first beat. Taking into consideration that his recording derives from a live performance, this kind of inaccuracy is to be expected during the execution of a long and technically demanding work such as *Night Music*.

The performance analysis of the following movement of *Night Music*, *allegro agitato e tempestoso*, illustrates some inaccuracies or discrepancies between Van Wyk's "notated text" and "sound text". It is the longest section of the work, relatively fast and technically demanding, and one can observe especially the recurrence of rhythmical problems and an uneven tempo but also some more obvious inaccuracies in Van Wyk's execution. Some flagrant irregularities can be noticed in bars 316, 327, 333 and 350. In bar 316 the composer/performer repeats the musical material of the third beat (two G's and a B flat) one extra time, resulting in the addition of one extra beat in the bar. A similar situation occurs in bars 327 and 333, where Van Wyk plays the left hand one beat late, after the rest (B flat and E flat in the first case and D and G in the second case). For that additional beat, Van Wyk repeats one extra time the quaver triplet figure in the right hand. Doing the opposite in bar 350, Van Wyk skips one beat, according the D sharp and B sharp (written with a duration of two beats) just one beat. This movement has a tempo indication of  $\downarrow = c.126$  and it is rhythmically constructed with a basic motif of a quaver triplet. Van Wyk's unsteady tempo fails to maintain the pulsation of the rhythmical motive. There are four different tempos marked in the score: *allegro agitato*, *pochissimo piu mosso*, *meno mosso* and *tempo primo*. The *meno mosso* lasts two bars, followed by the instruction of

*ravivando el tempo* for the next two bars where the performers are requested to increase the tempo again for the *tempo primo*. Van Wyk performs this movement in the tempo of approximately  $\downarrow=152$  and De Groote chooses the tempo of  $\downarrow=126$ . De Groote performs the movement with a relatively steady tempo in comparison with Van Wyk's rendition. In neither execution is any increase of tempo noticeable for the *pochissimo piu mosso*, but for the *meno mosso* the performers slightly reduce the tempo as specified by the composer. With regard to rhythm, the problems in Van Wyk's interpretation are basically due to the irregular and unbalanced tempo. Examples of unclear rhythm in his execution can be found in bars 271, 285, 297, 318 and 323. In general, Van Wyk accelerates the tempo excessively at certain points in these bars. Apart from the imprecise rhythm, other problems occur such as the lack of synchronization between the hands in bar 318. In bars 272 and 274 Van Wyk incorrectly performs the rhythm of the third beat of each of these bars: instead of playing a crotchet followed by a quaver, he plays the opposite, a quaver followed by a crotchet. Furthermore, in bar 309, Van Wyk executes the semi-quaver passage too loud for the indicated *piano* and in relation with the previous *fff violento* passage. Concerning articulation, it is possible to observe that the composer/performer does not execute the accent marked for the right hand in the first beat in bar 298. On the other hand, relevant inaccuracies were not found in De Groote's rendition of this section of *Night Music*.

In the last movement of *Night Music*, which functions as an *epilogue*, the composer offers the listener a flashback of the previous themes and motives of the work. Amongst other things (like contour, rhythm, etc.), these themes and motives are made recognizable by the tempi in which they appear (which reflect the tempi

stipulated when that material appeared for the first time). The work ends with the initial tempo and with the same musical material as heard at the beginning of the work. The renditions of this section of the work are accurate, and the performers carefully respect the different tempos specified in the score.

It seems reasonable to conclude that De Groote's performance of *Night Music* is generally more accurate in comparison with Van Wyk's rendition. To be more precise, De Groote respects the various specific, particular and demanding instructions specified by the composer, making his rendition of the work generally closer to the score. *Night Music*, in its seven sections, alternates between slower and faster tempos. The slower movements have more melodic and eloquent characters, making it possible to assess the musical competence of the performer in terms of executing the emotional and "poetic" content of the work. The faster sections can be considered more demanding from a technical pianistic point of view.

In view of this performance analysis, it is possible to draw conclusions with regard to Van Wyk's control over these two different aspects of piano technique. The composer/performer is indeed very precise and accurate in the slower sections of the work, specifically the first, third, fifth and seventh movements. He renders these sections with a great depth of interpretation, making use of a wide palette of tone colours and expressively shaping every single phrase. In contrast, in the faster and rhythmically more intricate movements (specifically the second, fourth and sixth sections), Van Wyk's playing is full of irregularities. The major problems are related to an inconsistent and unsteady tempo that leads to other inaccuracies (most noticeably with regard to rhythm). As these inaccuracies occur consistently in the

more technically demanding sections of the work, it is logical to associate them with some lack of pianistic skills. The fact that Van Wyk was not primarily a pianist but rather a composer is the most plausible explanation for the kinds of inaccuracies that appear in his interpretation of the work. There is an obvious discrepancy between Van Wyk's "musical" and "technical" abilities as a pianist. This is made clearer by the comparison with De Groote's performance of the work. Coherence and consistence are the outstanding characteristics in his rendition and, considering that the recording analysed in this study was a broadcast of a live performance, it is remarkably precise and accurate.

It is rational to assume that Van Wyk did not intend his recording to present discrepancies between his "sound text" and the score, but, nevertheless, the fact is that they are indeed different. In this sense *Night Music* underlines the problem of "authenticity" if it is viewed as a form of *Werktreue* or faithfulness to the text. This approach reads the score as the authoritative and primary "text" because the score is supposed to reflect the intentions of the composer. But what happens when the composer himself actualizes this text in an "authorized" and approved recording, and it appears that this rendition is less accurate and "true" to the text than one made by another pianist (De Groote in this case)? In this context, which "text" should be considered more "authentic": the score, the composer/performer rendition or De Groote's performance?

## Conclusion

The performance analysis of *Night music* illustrated discrepancies between the composer/performer rendition of the work and the score. The kind of non-correspondence between score and performance could be connected to technical inaccuracies which, it could be argued, were unintentional on the part of the composer. If one regards accuracy as the essential requirement for the notion of 'an authentic performance', this presents a problem. For here is an instance where the composer, Van Wyk, fails to present an 'authentic' realization of his own work, or at the very least, gives a 'less authentic' rendition than that of De Groote. This argument could be extended by saying that in Van Wyk's performance the ideas of the composer are not being 'truthfully transmitted' to the listener as there are, in the performance, elements that don't correspond to the instructions given in the score. It is a paradoxical conclusion, as Van Wyk *is* of course the composer.

When one considers that Van Wyk was indeed satisfied with this performance (as this study has revealed) and that the recording was made in a studio (providing the possibility of re-takes and editing), it is reasonable to assume that for Van Wyk, an 'authentic' rendition of his work had less to do with accuracy than with other factors. As a performer, Van Wyk's central focus was not accuracy. Although De Groote's 'sound text' is a broadcast of a live performance where repetition was obviously not possible, it reveals considerably less inaccuracies than Van Wyk's rendition. Nevertheless, it is important to note that if the presence of inaccuracy in performance is seen as the determining factor of 'authenticity', both performances

comprising this case study should be considered 'inauthentic'. This, of course, is a totally counter-intuitive conclusion.

As explained in the first chapter, 'authenticity' (at least according to some authors), *could* be assessed according to the degree of faithfulness or correspondence between the score and the performance. It is a perspective complicated all the more by the fact that the score of *Night Music* contains detailed instructions, suggesting that the composer intended to regulate every aspect of the performance. But this notion constitutes an ideal, perhaps a kind of Platonism that is relevant less in determining issues of 'authenticity' than it is in exploring philosophical matters of ontology.

A more productive line of reasoning could entail an alternative view of 'authenticity' to one based on accuracy. It is known that, even though he was proud of his pianism, Van Wyk did not consider himself a virtuoso. It is therefore possible to speculate that his primary aim as a performer was rather to transmit the full *poetic* substance of the work. In this regard, it can surely be argued that Van Wyk succeeds in presenting a performance characterized by great depth of interpretation. Although this is obviously a subjective argument, it is one shared by many other critics. Chapter 3 of this study documents how critics generally praised Van Wyk's musicality and quality of interpretation, pointing to his technical deficiencies as his most prominent weakness as pianist. The opinions regarding Van Wyk's own performances of *Night Music* are no exception to this. The notion of 'accuracy' as a requirement for 'authentic performance' is based on meeting the criteria provided by the notated material in the score. However, if one relates the concept of 'authenticity' with the idea of 'truthfulness' or 'honest' interpretation, objective criteria (like

accuracy) disappear. This would enable a view according to which the expressive qualities in Van Wyk's interpretation could be heard to represent a kind of 'truthfulness', which in turn could be related to the notion of 'authenticity'.

Considering the notion of 'authenticity' in the context of the score and the two performances of *Night Music* by Van Wyk and De Grootte respectively, the concept of 'authenticity' is questioned *per se*. Bearing in mind that conventional ideas on 'authenticity' are connected with an accurate execution of the score as directly equal to the truthful representation of the composer's ideas, this case study raises important questions. This line of argument assumes the position of the composer as the ultimate authority regulating issues of 'authenticity'. The composer is the author of the work and as it is his/her ideas and intentions that lead to the work, the composer is the final arbiter of 'authenticity'. And yet, in this case study, the composer is also the performer, and thus his rendition of *Night Music* must be as authentic a presentation of the work as the score. At this point the reader and listener is presented with not one but two 'authenticated texts': the score and its performance. Since they are different, the notion of 'authenticity', at least as connected to the idea of a single 'truth', is undermined.

What is revealed by this problem is that the notion of 'authenticity' has less to do with accuracy (Van Wyk's performance is riddled with inaccuracies), than with the protection of the authority of the composer. For performers, this authority usually inheres in the score as the representation of the composer's intentions. In fact, this view of 'authenticity' is based on the assumption that a score contains the composer's ideas, or even more radically, that it *is* the composer's ideas. Thus the score and composer's intentions come to be seen as one single entity. Authenticity

in performance strives for the protection of those ideas, as represented in the score, not least because the notated material is frequently the only source of the composer's ideas when dealing with historical composers. The fact that, in this case study, the composer was still alive to perform and record his work creates a different perspective. Now the score and composer's ideas have to be considered as two different entities. The fact that Van Wyk presents two different 'authenticated texts' could be interpreted as validating a view according to which the performer is endowed with the ability to render an 'authentic' interpretation that differs from the score.

It is well-known that as a composer, Van Wyk used to revise his works almost obsessively. To a certain extent, his performance of *Night Music* could be seen to constitute just another version (if not revision) of the work. This may be pushing the conclusions of this case study too far, but it does speak to the fact that the performance is not only a vehicle to access the composer's ideas, but also an indispensable and intrinsic element of the process of music making. This argument envisions performance and the performer as entities with the same degree of importance as the score. Thus the differences between Van Wyk's 'text' and 'sound text' remain as valid and not reduced to the listing of so-called 'inaccuracies'. Van Wyk's performance becomes a reformulation of the written text as the performance itself stands as another 'text' of the same work.



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