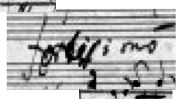
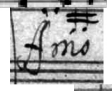
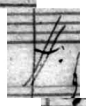
fff - even more extremely loud and vibrant than ff



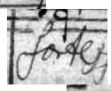
fortissimo - extremely loud and vibrant with even more special intensity and importance than ffmo and ff



ffmo - extremely loud and vibrant with more special intensity and importance than ff



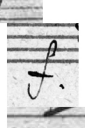
ff - extremely loud and vibrant



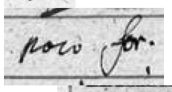
forte - strong and more important and more featured than f and fo and for

for - strong and more important and more featured than f and fo

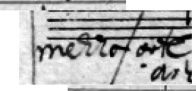
fo - strong and more important and more featured than f



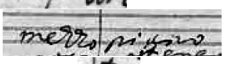
f - strong



poco forte - less strong than f



mezzoforte - less strong than f or poco forte



mezzopiano - more than p but less that mf

p - soft like normal speaking volume

p/ - soft with emotional intensity

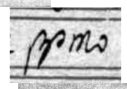
p// - soft with vibrant emotional intensity

pp - very soft

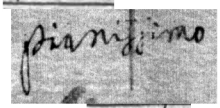
pp/ - very soft with emotional intensity

pp// - very soft with vibrant emotional intensity

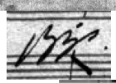
ppmo - very soft with vibrant emotional intensity and a greater importance in the dramatic sequence



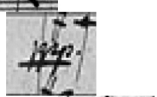
pianissimo - very soft with vibrant emotional intensity and an even greater importance in the dramatic sequence than ppmo



ppp - extremely soft



ppp/ - extremely soft with emotional intensity



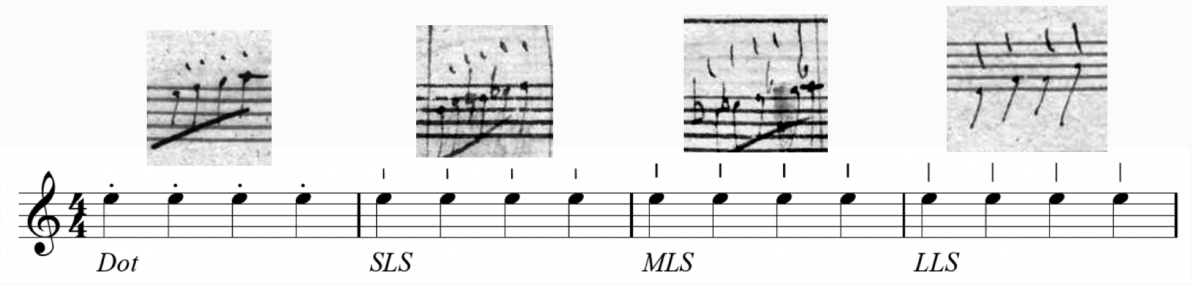
ppp// - extremely soft with vibrant emotional intensity

Long Line Staccato LLS - extreme energy in the initial articulation like PPa

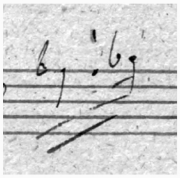
Medium Line Staccato MLS - less energy in the initial articulation than LLS like Pa

Short Line Staccato SLS - less energy in the initial articulation than LLS or MLS, like Ta

Dot - most delicate in the energy of the initial articulation like ta

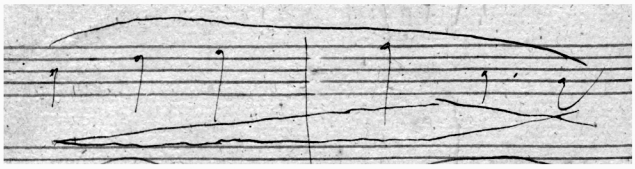


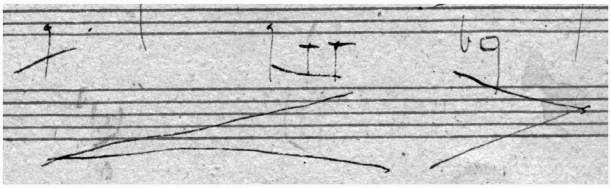
Staccato is basically short and detached but length can vary by context and Beethoven sometimes uses staccato to indicate some kind of energy that can happen in the middle of a long note showing that his undertanding of the meaning of the staccato mark is more complicated



Diamond swell pair - a rise and then a fall in emotional intensity (usually volume also) felt as one event - "in one line"

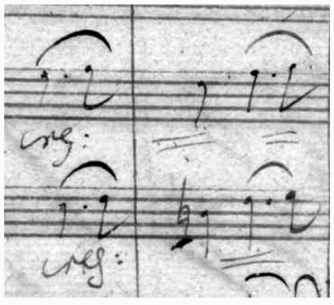
Separated swell pair - a rise in emotional intensity (usually volume also) felt as one event followed by a fall in emotional intensity (usually volume also) felt as a second event





These swells seem to benefit from some amount of pulling back of the time at the wide part of the swell

Crescendo or diminuendo reinforcer - greater numbers during a time span in a certain part show that that part is featured in the crescendo or diminuendo



Beaming - the choice of how to beam notes together shows where Beethoven wanted to feel notes grouped in larger units and where he wanted to feel notes separated into smaller units.

A note by Nicholas Kitchen about Beethoven Op. 59, No. 2 and insights that come from reading the manuscript

Welcome to the concert whether in person or on the internet! It is saying the obvious that we feel vividly the privilege of celebrating, reveling in and exploring this music together with you!

I can tell you that the first time you learn a piece such as Op. 59, No. 2, you enter immediately a musical landscape of daunting complexity. What has been an interesting surprise personally is to experience that as I know that landscape better and better it does not get simpler, it actually becomes more complex and more mysterious how Beethoven could have fashioned all these layers in one thinking process. Adding to it that he would eventually do this imagining without even the chance of hearing his ideas presents something of a miracle. But whether you are the quartet that performs these works over many years or the audience member that hears these works for many years, this depth and complexity nourishes a tireless love that causes us to immerse ourselves in this music again and again.

Ironically, our computer-filled world means that we have easy access to an additional very-much-hand-made layer: Beethoven's manuscript. Sadly, we cannot view the manuscript of Op. 18, No. 2, as it is lost. But with Op. 59, No. 2, especially aided by resources such as the website of the Center for Beethoven Research at Boston University, within moments you can have every page of the Op. 59, No. 2 manuscript at your fingertips. Here is the BU address followed by the Berlin Library address it will lead you to. The manuscript can also be found on www.imslp.org

https://www.bu.edu/beethovencenter/beethoven-autographs-online/

https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN729578615&PHYSID=PHYS_0001

There are hundreds of paths one could take into investigating the content of this music and allowing the manuscript to give new ideas. I would like to take us down two of them. The first is about the last movement and the second is about the second movement.

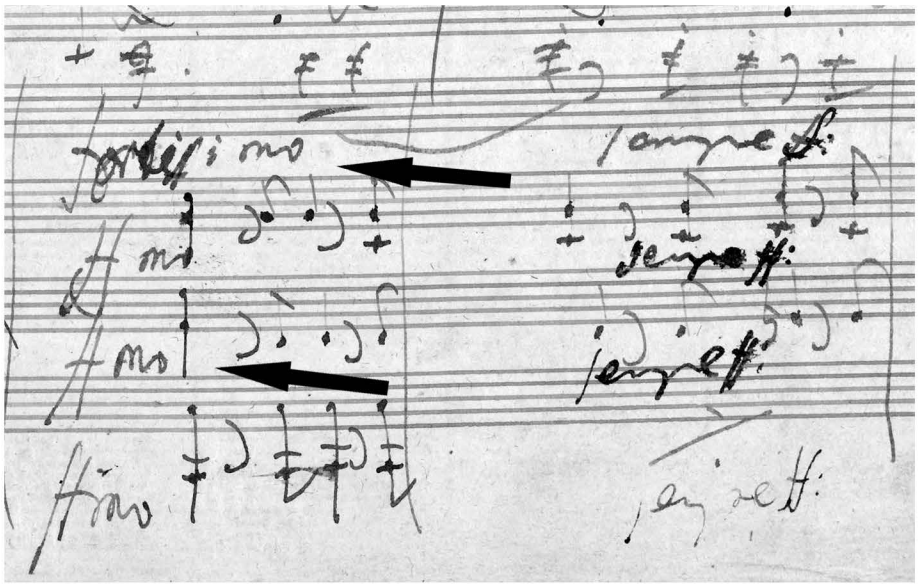
The last movement hurls us into a bristling march. The "wrong key" feel of C major makes it all the more bracing in its effect. This march is very engaging, but let's present it in its worst light, it happens too many times in a similar way. Or does it?

First, let's zoom out to the largest view of the whole piece. The first movement is so disturbingly restless, it barely has anything you could call a melodic theme and is truly unsettling. The second movement brings us a kind of inner peace and evokes, at least for me, the most profound sense of good will resonating through the cosmos. The third movement in its main section is a texture made up of fragments, sad and nervous - a huge contrast to the middle section that gives us the smiling and playful rendition of the Russian folk-tune "Glory". All these three movements stay in the circle of the tonality of E minor and E major. And then we are thrust into the C major of the last movement and the march that seems crazily upbeat - wonderful but jarring. But in the movement this upbeat mood will fail to prevail. Over and over, this march theme will be sucked into the whirlpool of e minor, where the piece has been and will be. And the way the march theme will eventually be sucked into the whirlpool of the Coda is not just frightening, it is harrowing! So perhaps we could think of Beethoven's many repetitions of the march theme as a story-tellers choice, he lets us see the smiling character repeatedly, ultimately making the hurling of this character into the underworld at the last lines all the more overwhelming. So, the theme appears many times, but what I want to show you in the manuscript is that Beethoven spends a lot of creative energy working with how this march is going to be perceived and by his subtle markings creates many layers of contrast between the repetitions. Just to clarify, there are differences in the settings of each march theme, but I am pointing out that there is even more variety in the manuscript than we are accustomed to encountering in our printed editions, where the variations I am about to show you are not visible.

Let's work backward in the story and see what special attention Beethoven lavishes on this march figure.

In this insert I include a glossary I put together for an MEME edition I just made of the 8th symphony. MEME stands for Manuscript Expressive Markings Edition. These editions attempt to show in a printed form the expressive details that are in the manuscript. In the manuscripts, besides different swells and staccati, you find a much larger spectrum of dynamics than one finds in print. Part of that spectrum shows varying levels of intensity and importance in the loud dynamics by the addition of letters. "f" is made more important and energetic by growing to "fo" which grows further to "for" and then "forte". "ff" grows to "ffmo" and to "fortissimo". Op. 59, No. 2 has a handful of "ffmo" markings, all choice moments, and only one "fortissimo". Let me explain the location of the one "fortissimo". It certainly is a fantastic one!

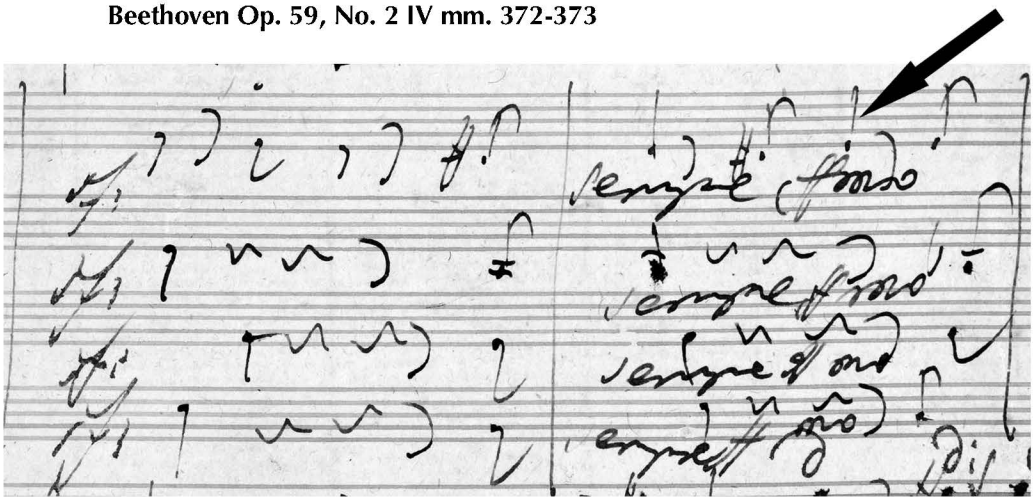
Let's rewind the story from its final moment, the hurling of the march theme to the nether world in the last bars of the movement. The moment we see here is the march theme being shouted out for the final time before the descent.



Beethoven Op. 59, No. 2 IV mm. 372-373

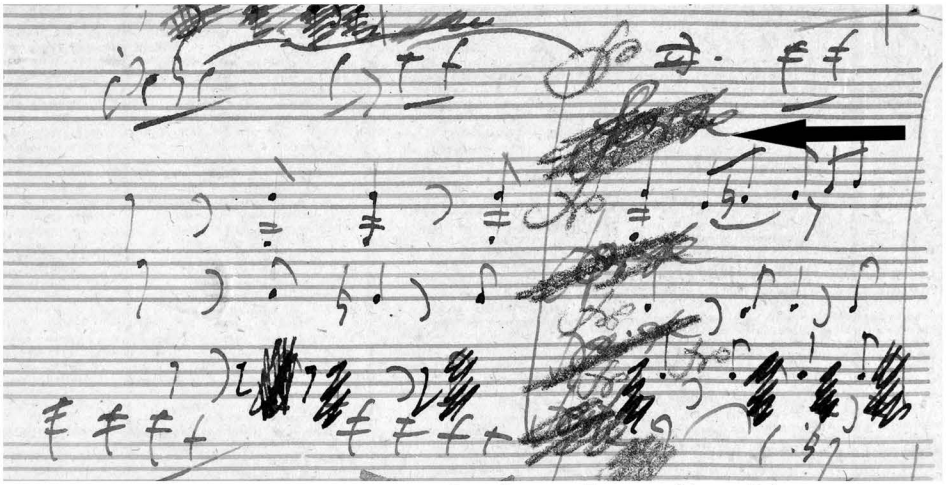
It is a perfect place for the "ffmo" that you see in Violin 2, Viola and Cello, but what I love is that "ffmo" just wasn't quite enough for the march theme in Violin 1 - this moment had to have one more turn of the knob to go to "fortissimo" - the only one in the piece! Now ride down from this apex, be sucked into e minor, accelerate to beyond Presto and notice the next use of "ffmo" right where the harmonic piling on of agitation goes from thrilling to insane - what could be more perfect for placing these four "sempre ffmo" markings!

Our group makes a real effort to know these markings (I try to make new editions, MEME editions, that allow players to see them, for one) and I tell you, what could be more exciting in this thrilling music than to literally have Beethoven urging you on with this, his own special word!!!!



Beethoven Op. 59, No. 2 IV mm. 394-395

Basically, all of the march themes up to this "fortissimo" one are started with a fortepiano, a sharp strike and then a soft dynamic. But was it always this way? No. At a certain moment, Beethoven considered having the last march theme before the fortissimo be one step closer to the outburst by being "forte". Here is the last march theme before the "fortissimo" and you can see that he put "forte" but then changed his mind, making is "fp" like the others.



Beethoven Op. 59, No. 2 IV mm. 283-284

So, he chose not to have this form of variety in the repetitions, but instead created it in other ways. We will look at some of the wonderful creativity brought to different appearances of the march theme. But before going there, let's look at a curious moment in the music:

Beethoven Op. 59, No. 2 IV mm. 339-348

I will not break every detail down but look here at where the group basically stomps its feet and brings the careening quartet to a stop. You see "forte" on the second violin stomp, then "ffmo" on the cello stomp. Then, right when the group has tried to start again the whole group stomps to a halt again and that is given an emphatic "forte". Marvelous!!!

For the more subtle creativity employed dealing with the march theme, I want to show you one page that reveals an enormous amount.

Beethoven Op. 59, No. 2 IV mm. 142-151

So, the menu that Beethoven is working with in this canon between the violins has the march skipping figure and then an ornamented version of the same. The three-note thrust that starts the gesture has two options, one with a three-note slur connecting with the downbeat staccato note (look at Violin 2), and one with a two-note slur leading up to a separate staccato downbeat. The ornamented version also has two versions - a four-note slur version that reaches across the downbeat and a version that has a one two-note slur upbeat leading to another two-note slur on the down beat. Seeing the whole manuscript, it is easy to start to feel that Beethoven was a little loose with how these looked and maybe it doesn't matter too much and perhaps they should all be the version that reaches across the bar line. That is what we see in print. BUT, look a little closer and you start to see various instances where there is little question that the distinction is intentional. This moment is one of them. The two-note version in violin 1 is very clearly made distinct from the four-note version in violin 2. And furthermore, the two-note version in violin 1 is progressing to the new section where the ornamented version will become counterpoint to the powerful new whole notes and half notes. This new material is "ff" but notice that violin 1 is using the lightest staccato - dots - and it is only the answer of the slower notes that gets the infusion of "ffmo" on the next line - all of this allowing the big notes to dominate.

I would spend too much ink going through every version of the march theme, but once one sees the two-note version and the three and four note versions, you quickly notice that Beethoven is lavishing wonderful imagination on employing these slight variations for each repetition. So, in fact, our theme that might seem too many times too similar is NOT in fact the same each time! Not surprising, actually, but surprising that it takes looking at the manuscript to be able to see it!

Now to the Enigma of Staccato

The second movement unfolds with its serene and deeply felt hymn-like opening. That hymn is repeated in Violin 2, Viola and Cello as Violin 1 adds faster-moving commentary. Look at that line in violin 1.

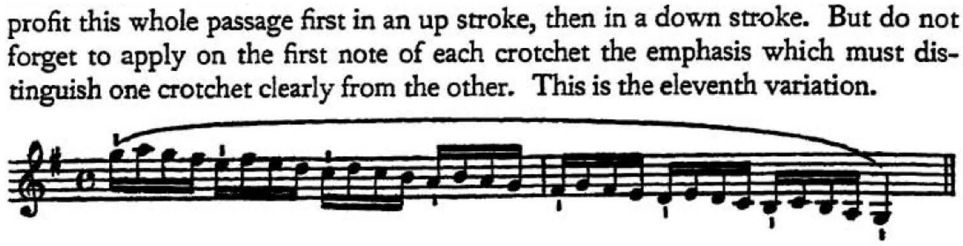
Beethoven Op. 59, No. 2 II mm. 7-12

An eighth note, two sixteenths - slurred between the first to notes but also with staccato on the second and third note or just the third. Actually, there are options being worked on in the violin and the form that shows in the cello in the parallel place helps us understand. In both, there is more staccato at the outset and the staccato diminishes in number and intensity as the phrase continues.

Beethoven Op. 59, No. 2 II mm. 84-87

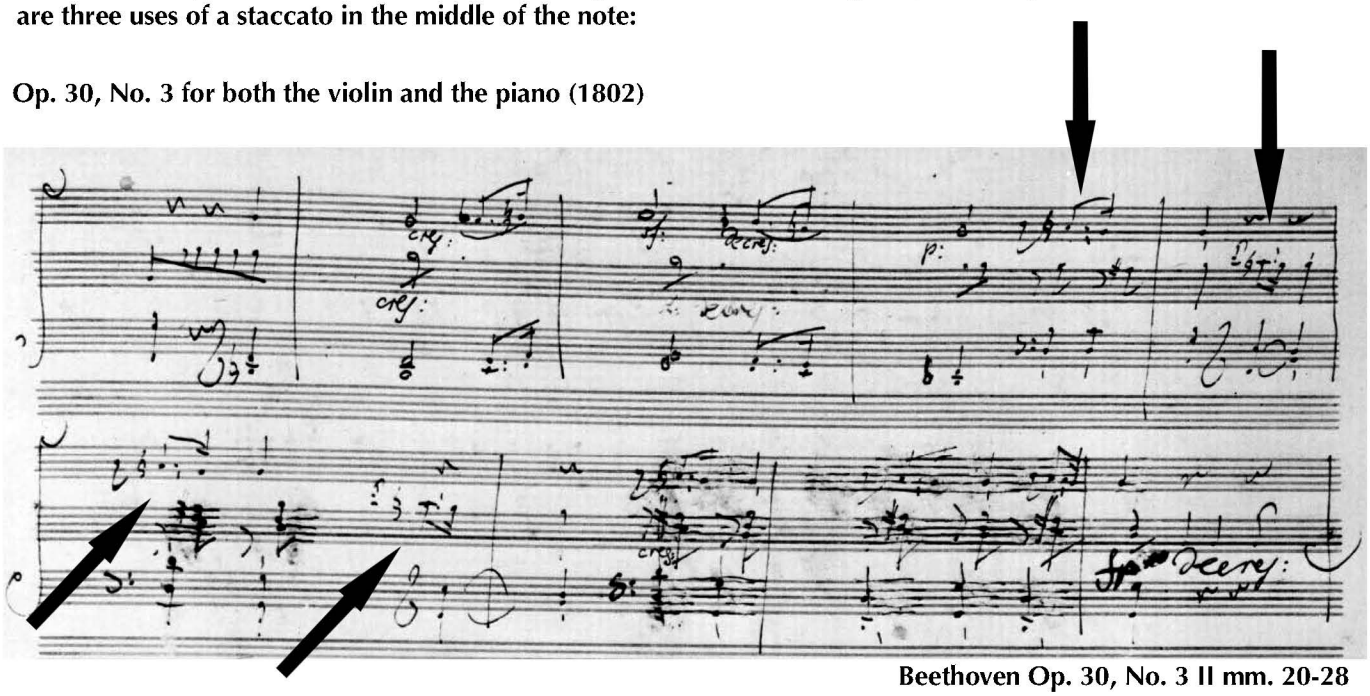
The basic way the first violin part and cello feels convincing is as a dotted rhythm - one note three quarters of the beat followed by a fast note worth on quarter of the beat. But Beethoven feels the need to create some very energetic disturbance of that basic idea. What I want to share with you is a way of reading Beethoven's relationship with the mark of staccato that at least has helped me come to a way of playing this passage that I actually love and it allows me to relate to this enigma with more confidence.

So, what does the staccato tell us to do? The explanation we get as beginners is to play the note short, and this works well for the great majority of times we encounter staccato. As violinists we learn off-the-string staccato and soon we get called on to do a sharp stroke on-the-string which we may call marcato. This explanation of the learning process could go on a long time, but let's fast-forward to work on an understanding where length is only one part of the story. Now while we are getting to a wider definition let's realize that in a book such as Leopold Mozart's Violin-School the line staccato is used for the off-string stroke but it is also used in slurs to indicate giving an accent (the word used is "emphasis").


profit this whole passage first in an up stroke, then in a down stroke. But do not forget to apply on the first note of each crotchet the emphasis which must distinguish one crotchet clearly from the other. This is the eleventh variation.

Also expanding our notion of the context, Haydn and Beethoven put staccati in their manuscripts that have extremely varied lengths. For me (and the guide at the start of this document shows this as a system) reading both composer's manuscripts I come away reading four types of staccato: dot, small line staccato, medium line staccato and long line staccato. And along with what often becomes shortness, the crucial instruction I get from each particular staccato mark is about the intensity of the energy on that note, usually shown with the bite of the note. So, when a staccato mark is longer it tells me to put more energy into the bite of the attack: a dot might be "ta", small line staccato "Ta", medium "Pa" and long would be "PPa", and this often couples with the release to create shortness. But here is where it becomes interesting because Beethoven does not restrain himself to obvious use of the staccato energy and does not hesitate to put staccato in the middle of a longer note. To show range in years and periods and instruments here are three uses of a staccato in the middle of the note:

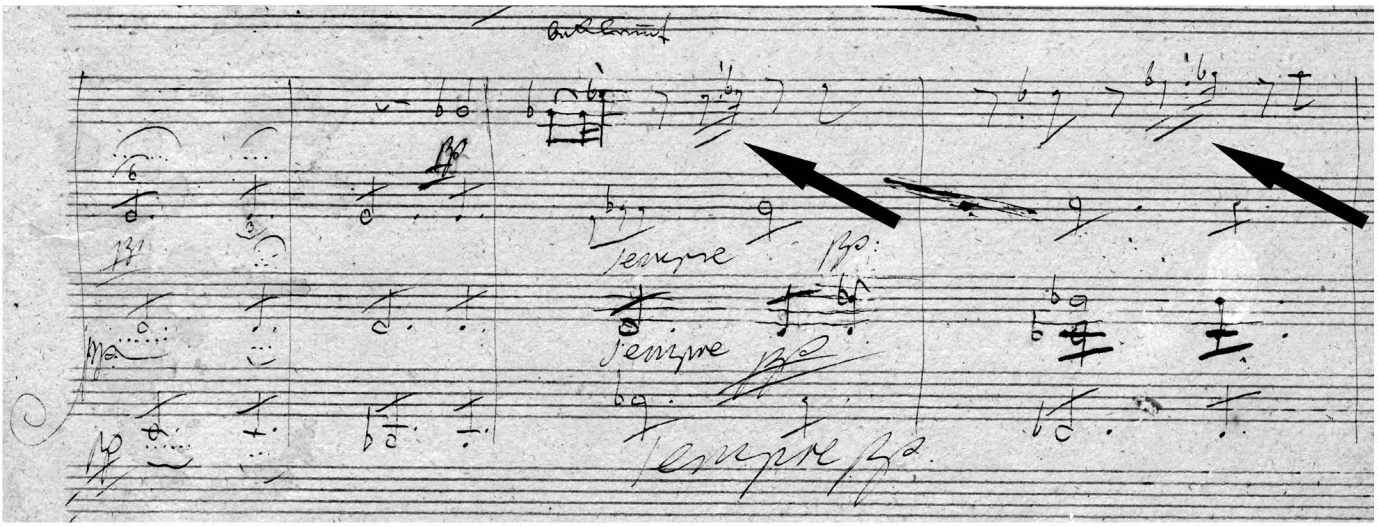
Op. 30, No. 3 for both the violin and the piano (1802)



Beethoven Op. 30, No. 3 II mm. 20-28

The second example is what we already discussed in Op. 59, No. 2 (1806) and this example involves a tie.

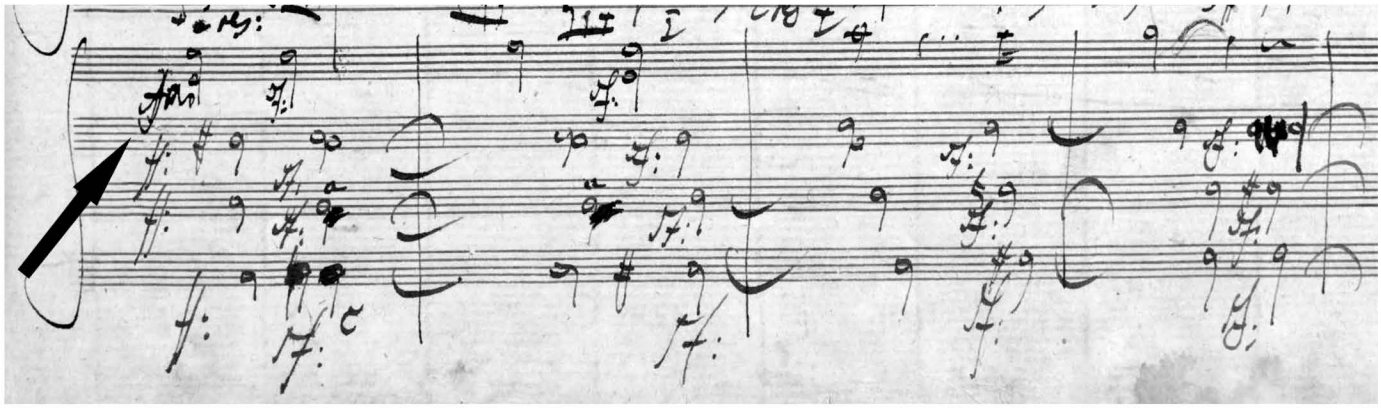
The third example is a staccato in the middle of the note in the "beklemmt" section of the Cavatina Op. 130 (1825).



Beethoven Op. 130 V mm. 40-43

All of them are in music that has a highly expressive energy and to put it simply I think Beethoven is guiding us to add an impulse in the middle of the note, a kind of sob or shake of the voice, not a strange concept but something that is not so easy to notate. And seeing it this way causes a very direct reading: I play the note and at the staccato I shake the note as I might sing it while in a high state of emotion. So, actually it is such a welcome instruction! But yes, enigmatic! And let's appreciate in Op. 59, No. 2 that for especially the first violin this movement has some of the smoothest, most floating passages. So, what a marvelous contrast to have the gliding music and in contrast the section where the singing is literally shaking with emotion!

Just to circle around to dynamics there is one "ffmo" in the second movement of Op. 59, No. 2, and what a fantastic one it is! It comes, slightly sloppily drawn, when the hymn of the beginning returns and is re-harmonized with chromatically charged chords in huge full-bar syncopations. What could be greater than to try to bring the "ffmo" energy to this moment!



Beethoven Op. 59, No. 2 II mm. 138-141

What I share with you here represents my personal reaction to the expressive marks that are in the manuscript. It also reflects the intertwined insights of the members of the Borromeo Quartet since these marks have become part of our group's discussion of musical approaches. A person may disagree with much or all of what I suggest, but what is true is that all the marks I mention ARE in the manuscript, put in by Beethoven in the same form from 1802 to 1827. I love what these marks show us about the expression of the music, that is why I make the effort for them to be seen through MEME editions and communications such as this one. What I have no doubt of is that availing yourself of the ability to see the manuscripts of these magnificent pieces will be nothing but a benefit to you in your understanding of the work, and why not see EVERYTHING that Beethoven himself marked? Now, finishing this introduction, we move on to the most important thing - listening to the music! Thank you for sharing all of this together with us.