The Damper Pedal

the magic on the right — how the piano learns to sing beyond your fingers

The pedal is played with the ear, not the foot. Pressing the right pedal lifts every damper off the strings, so sounds ring on and blend. Used well, it turns dry notes into one singing line; used carelessly, it turns music into soup. The skill is the **timing of the change** — called *legato* or *syncopated* pedaling: press **after** the note, change **at** the next one.

Right pedal — the damper

THE pedal · used with the right foot

Press it and every string keeps **ringing** after you let go of the keys — notes melt together into one glowing wash. 95% of all pedaling is this pedal.

Left pedal — una corda

the soft pedal

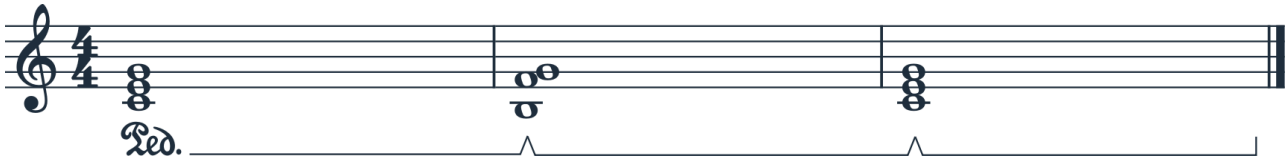
Makes the sound **softer and more veiled**. Used for special hushed moments — much later.

The middle pedal

varies by piano

On grands, a special note-holder (sostenuto); on many uprights, a practice mute. **Ignore it for now.**

HOW PEDAL IS WRITTEN — AND THE LEGATO PEDAL TRICK



The bracket under the staff = pedal down. The little notch at each barline = lift and re-press. Chords: C → G7 → C.

1. **Heel on the floor**, ball of the right foot resting on the pedal — the foot never leaves it.
2. Play the chord, THEN press — **press AFTER the sound**, not with it.
3. At the next chord: **lift exactly as your fingers play**, then press again right after. Up-down, quick as a blink.
4. Let your **ears** decide: if the sound blurs, your foot was late. Clean changes = invisible pedal.

Try it First, the magic trick: hold the pedal down, play one low C, let go of the key — the note keeps singing! Now play the three-chord example: C…press… G7-change… C-change. Then test yourself with eyes closed: if you hear two chords mixing, the change was late; if you hear a gap of silence, the change was early. Perfect is **seamless**.
The Moonlight Sonata asks for this pedal with the words *senza sordino*, "without dampers" (Handout 378).
Practice: Exercise 80. Recognize the signs: Exercise 75.

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