

Metronome marks used by Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens

Many questions - a few answers

The organ compositions by Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens (1823–1881) do not belong to the most popular repertoire of our time. In consequence, the question of tempo in these works has not been discussed, at least not in any detail. Yet the question is an interesting one. From contemporary reports, we know that Lemmens himself usually employed a sedate tempo, verging on the slow, and this practice carried over into his repertoire teaching – this is all perfectly consistent with the prevailing ideology of a new, correct church music.¹ The published organ works by Lemmens that include metronome marks, however, present an entirely different picture. These works are the *Four Organ Pieces in the Free Style* and the *Trois Sonates*, all published in England.² To apply the notated metronome marks consistently in these pieces verges on the impossible. It is technically challenging, musically unsatisfactory, and the subjective experience of the tempo can be quite at odds with the Italian tempo notations at the heads of the pieces. In any case, the player will be forced to apply the markings very flexibly in order to play certain passages at all. As a result, most performers try to come as close to the metronome markings as they can, but with no real guidance beyond their own intuition. Unsurprisingly, newer editions usually omit the metronome markings or adjust them to something more technically feasible. Given this situation, I think it is important to take a closer look at Lemmens’s metronome marks, considering each piece individually.

In the discussion below, I provide the following information for each piece, in this order: Italian tempo indication, metronome mark, and meter. For some pieces I also give the average fastest note values and the calculated total duration. “One-tick” durations are calculated by reading the metronome markings in the modern manner: the indicated note value equals one beat of the metronome or pendulum. “Two-tick” durations are calculated by letting the indicated note value equal *two* beats of the metronome.³

¹ Joris Verdin, “French Organ Music of the Nineteenth Century: the Romantic and the Symphonic, with Catholicism to Taste,” in *The Haarlem Essays*, ed. Paul Peeters (Bonn: Dr. J. Butz Musikverlag, 2014), 291–312.

² Lemmens’s *École d’Orgue*, which was published on the Continent, contains no metronome markings at all.

³ The term “two-tick” is used here in preference to “metrical” or other similar terms (the concept *tictac* is known from France in this period).

Lemmens' *Four Organ Pieces in the Free Style*⁴

Piece No. 1: Allegretto in B-flat Major

Tempo indication:	Allegretto
Metronome marking:	Met: ⁵ quarter note = 152
Meter:	3/4
Fastest note values:	eighth-note triplets
One-tick:	ca. 4 mins.
Two-tick:	ca. 8 mins. at eighth note = 152

The image shows a page of musical notation for an organ piece. At the top left, it is labeled 'N^o 1.' and 'ALLEGROTTTO. Met. ♩ = 152.'. The title 'Allegretto.' is centered at the top, and the composer's name 'J. LEMMENS.' is on the right. The score is written for organ with four staves. The first staff is for 'Great. Flute 8', the second for 'Swell Oboe.', the third for 'Great.', and the fourth for 'Ped Soft 16.'. The music is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. It features eighth-note triplets and a crescendo. The number '3593' is at the bottom center.

Figure 1. J. Lemmens, Piece No. 1: “Allegretto,” *Four Organ Pieces in the Free Style*, 1.

⁴ Jacques Lemmens, *Four Organ Pieces in the Free Style* (London, New York: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1866).

⁵ In this section, I have reproduced the abbreviation for metronome exactly from the sources, which include “M.M[.]”, “Met.” and “Met.”.

If we take the quarter note as the counting unit, the piece seems very fast, almost like a *prestissimo*. It seems we can reasonably exclude this interpretation. If we use the eighth note as the counting unit instead, the tempo might feel slow at first for an *allegretto*. This is especially true if we tried the one-tick tempo first, whereas if we start straightaway with eighth note = 152 we avoid that effect. Either way, if we do choose to use the two-tick interpretation, the initial sluggish sensation subsides over the course of the piece, a point I will return to at the end of this section.

Piece No. 2: Christmas Offertorium

- Chorus of Shepherds

Tempo indication:	Allegretto Maestoso
Metronome marking:	Met: quarter note = 120
Meter:	C
Fastest note values:	quarters with eighth-note upbeats
One-tick:	ca. 2 mins. at quarter note = 120

Figure 2. Lemmens, “Christmas Offertorium: Chorus of Shepherds,” *Four Organ Pieces*, 10.

Here, the metronomization and the meter both suggest the quarter note as the counting unit. No discussion seems necessary: the metronome marking applies to the quarter note.

- *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*

Tempo indication: **Andante**
Metronome marking: none
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth-notes
One-tick: n/a

- *Pastorale*

1.

Tempo indication: **Animato**
Metronome marking: Met: quarter note = 104
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values: eighth-notes
One-tick: 2 mins. 30 secs.

14

PASTORALE.

Animato. Met: ♩ = 104.
Great. Flute, 5 or Stoppt. Diap.

Swell.
Bassoon.

Flute 16 & 8.

5.533

Figure 3. Lemmens, "Christmas Offertorium: Pastorale," *Four Organ Pieces*, 14.

Here, the meter and the metronome marking appear to contradict one another: the metronome mark is for the quarter note, while the meter suggests that the eighth note is the counting unit, raising the possibility of a two-tick reading. Nevertheless, the one-tick method, with one tick

for a quarter note, seems musically most convincing. Letting the quarter note (or more accurately, two eighth notes) equal 104 allows the eighth notes to move at a natural tempo. This approach is perfectly defensible considering the prescribed use of the metronome at the time, which was simply to help the player pick up the correct tempo before beginning to play. It is easy to pick up the tempo of the eighth note from the quarter note; here, the eighth note would be 208, a value that was at the limit of the metronome scales of the time. Of course, one could also give the same tempo as dotted quarter note = 69, but it is easier to find the value of the single eighth note when starting with the quarter note.

There are alternative ways to read this metronomization. First, we could let the *eighth* note equal 104, “two-tick reading.” This would make the piece very slow, a full five minutes long, but it is not completely out of the question. Secondly, we could assume a printing error, and let the *dotted* quarter equal 104. But this would make the piece unnaturally fast. Moreover, with a duration of only 1 min. 40 secs., this *Pastorale* would also be too short in proportion to the whole.

- *Adoration*

Tempo indication:	Andante Sostenuto
Metronome marking:	Met: quarter note = 66
Meter:	C
Fastest note values:	quarter notes, some eighth notes
One-tick:	2 mins.

This movement became the second movement of the *Sonate Pascale* (see below).

- *Chorus*

Tempo indication:	none
Metronome marking:	Met: quarter note (as in the first movement) = 120
Meter:	C
Fastest note values:	quarters with eighth-note upbeats
One-tick:	ca. 1 min.

This piece reprises the first movement, “Chorus of Shepherds”

Piece No. 3: Fantasia

This piece later became the first movement (*Allegro*) of the *Sonate Pascale* (see below).

Piece No. 4: Grand Fantasia in E Minor “The Storm”

Tempo indication:	Andante Sostenuto, Poco Adagio
Metronome marking:	Met: eighth note = 108

Meter: C
 Fastest note values: eighths in the first section, sixteenths in the second and third, thirty-seconds in the “poco animato”
 One-tick: ca. 7 mins.
 Two-tick: ca. 12 mins.



Figure 4. Lemmens, Grand Fantasia in E Minor “The Storm,” *Four Organ Pieces*, 32.

The metronome marking cannot be read literally here: it would be completely impossible to maintain a one-tick tempo throughout the various sections of the piece. There is an obvious alternative solution: letting the eighth note correspond to two ticks of the metronome. The modern notation would be eighth note = 54. Why was the tempo not notated in this way here? Perhaps for pragmatic reasons. Remembering that the metronome is just a practical aid for finding the correct tempo, we note that the number 54 is more difficult to work with than 108. Using the two-tick method makes it possible to play the entire piece at more or less the same tempo (disregarding the occasional fluctuation). In this way, the introduction becomes a true introduction, a moment of calm before the storm; the trumpet solo in bar 41 takes on meaning within the framework of a pastoral scene; the articulations in the “poco animato” can be respected; and finally, the player can preserve the relationship between note values in the “storm,” beginning at bar 69, “accelerando” up to eighth note = 108.

36

Poco Animato.

The image shows a page of musical notation for a piece titled "Poco Animato." The page number is 36. The score is arranged in three systems. The first system includes a Piccolo part (marked *ff* and *Bourdon 16'*) and a Trumpet part (marked *(Swell.)*). The second and third systems continue the musical notation for these instruments. The notation is complex, featuring many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and rests. At the bottom center of the page, the number "3539" is printed.

Figure 5. Lemmens, Grand Fantasia: poco animato, *Four Organ Pieces*, 36.

- *Prayer*

Tempo indication:	Andantino
Metronome marking:	Met: quarter note = 100
Meter:	C
Fastest note values:	quarter notes
One-tick:	ca. 1 min. 30 secs.

As this new movement begins, it is logical to change counting units and switch from the two-tick to the one-tick method of counting. The choice is justified by the tempo indication, "Andantino," and the notation in "prayerful" half notes. The tempo feels natural and can be maintained throughout.

44

PRAYER.

ANDANTINO. Met: ♩ = 100.

Voix Célestes

3535

Figure 6. Lemmens, Grand Fantasia: Prayer, *Four Organ Pieces*, 44.

-*Agitato* (no movement indication)

Tempo indication: **Agitato** (written between the staves)

Metronome marking: Met: quarter note = 144

Meter: C

Fastest note values: eighth notes

One-tick: ca. 35 secs.

Two-tick: ca. 1 min

46

M. 11 $\text{♩} = 144$.

Open Diap. 8.
Great Diap. 8.
Stopt Diap. 8.
Comba 8.

AGITATO.

Bourdon 16. 8.

9.533

Figure 7a. Lemmens, Grand Fantasia: agitato, *Four Organ Pieces*, 46.

Following this one-tick metronomization produces a perfect “prestissimo” character, while applying two-tick still will produce a more "agitato" feeling because of the possibility of playing rubato.

-Last section

Tempo indication:	none
Metronome marking:	Met: quarter note = 108
Meter:	C
Fastest note values:	eighth notes
One-tick:	ca. 3 mins.
Two-tick:	ca. 6 mins

48

Mett. $\text{♩} = 108.$

Diapasons 8.
Flute 8.

3533

Figure 7b. Lemmens, *Grand Fantasia* (a new section with no tempo or character indicated), *Four Organ Pieces*, 48.

There is no reason to change counting units for this new section; it is not a new movement, nor is any tempo indication given, only the metronome marking quarter note = 108. Two-tick makes more sense because of consistency and character, especially in the coda, taking back the motive of the *Prayer* at two-tick tempo, *perdendosi*.

Total duration for the *Grand Fantasia*:

One-tick:	13 mins.
Two-tick:	21 mins.

Both the one-tick and the two-tick durations are acceptable for a *Grand Fantasia*, but the one-tick interpretation is harder to argue for. The first movement, the *Andante Sostenuto*, is the most important part of this symphonic poem. Beginning with the first appearance of sixteenth notes, reading the metronome marking in the modern way would deprive the movement of almost all of its musical meaning. There would be no narrative, no intelligibility, nothing but the kind of virtuosity that is ultimately unrewarding for the performer and immeasurably dull for the listener.

Lemmens' *Trois Sonates pour Orgue*⁶

Sonata No. 1 in E Minor "Pontificale"

Allegro moderato

Tempo indication: **Allegretto moderato**

Metronome marking: M.M. half note = 116

Meter: 4/2

Fastest note values: quarters, a few passing eighths

One-tick: 5 mins. 30 secs.

Two-tick: 11 mins.

The image shows a page of musical notation for 'Sonate Pontificale. N°1.' by J. Lemmens. The score is written for organ and consists of three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system is marked 'ALLEGRO MODERATO' and 'M.M. ♩ = 116'. It includes dynamics 'Gr. p' and 'Sw. p'. The second system features a crescendo hairpin. The third system includes a forte 'f' dynamic. The score is numbered 3533 at the bottom.

Figure 8. Lemmens, Sonata No. 1, 1.

The 4/2 meter indicates a stately and calm pace for this movement, in full agreement with its solemn spirit. If we interpret the metronome marking of 116 literally, this character is lost. If, on the other hand, we change the counting unit from the half to the quarter note, the piece begins to bloom in a beautiful, vocal manner. Moreover, one passage for the *vox humana* only

⁶ Jacques Lemmens, *Trois Sonates pour Orgue* (Mainz, Paris, Bruxelles: Schott & Co., n.d. and London: Novello, Ewer & Co., n.d.). This edition is in landscape format, and bears the same plate number, 3533, as the *Four Pieces*. The version in portrait format, also published by Schott, has the plate number from the *École d'Orgue*: 19009. The date of publication is probably 1874. Information taken from: Annelies Focquaert, Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens, Doctoral Thesis Universiteit Antwerpen 2014 pp. 120-124.

makes sense when played this way. The resulting duration of 11 mins. is perfectly suitable for the opening movement of a stately sonata.

Adagio

Tempo indication: **Adagio**
 Metronome marking: quarter note = 100
 Meter: C
 Fastest note values: sixteenth notes (after the “*piu mosso*”)
 One-tick: 2 mins.
 Two-tick: 4 mins.



Figure 9. Lemmens, Sonata No. 1: adagio, 8.

Applying the metronome marking in the modern way produces a very un-*Adagio*-like character. Clearly, the counting unit for the metronome here must be the eighth note. Again, this fits with the pragmatic way the metronome was used: just as in “The Storm,” a quick beat (here quarter note = 100) is easier to work with than a slow one (50, which is at the lower limit of the metronome’s scale). This would make the Adagio 4 mins. long, which is in good proportion to the first movement.

Marche Pontificale

Tempo indication: **Maestoso**
 Metronome marking: quarter note = 108
 Meter: C

Fastest note values: eighth-note triplets
One-tick: 5 mins.

A one-tick reading of the metronome mark gives a completely natural tempo for a stately *Marche* that does justice to both the staccato and the dotted rhythms as well as the declamatory triplets. The piece lasts for about 5 mins.

Fuga

Tempo indication: **Fanfare**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 126
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes with some sixteenths
One-tick: 2 mins.
Two-tick: 4 mins.

The image shows a page of musical notation for a piece titled 'Fuga' on page 21. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of staves. Each system has a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass line. The music is in common time (C) and features a 'Fanfare' character. The notation includes eighth-note triplets, staccato rhythms, and dotted rhythms. The page number '21' is visible in the top right corner, and the number '3583' is at the bottom center.

Figure 10. Lemmens, Sonata No. 1: Fuga, 21.

Here there is no true tempo indication, only a character indication (“Fanfare”) and the metronome marking. The “Fanfare” character – with a harmonic pulse at the eighth-note level, strong upbeats slurred to the following downbeat, and the use of sixteenth notes – calls for a two-tick interpretation: that is, the counting unit should be the eighth note. Moreover, only a

two-tick interpretation allows the sonata to end in a sufficiently stately manner. With eighth note = 126, the duration is about 4 mins.

Total duration of Sonata No. 1:

One-tick: 14 mins. 30 secs.

Two-tick: 24 mins.

Sonata No. 2 in E Minor, "O Filii"

Prélude (sic.)

Tempo indication: **Allegro non troppo**

Metronome marking: Met. quarter note = 104

(Part 1: Introduction)

Meter: C (with one transitional bar in 2/4)

One-tick: 47 secs.

Two-tick: 1 min. 30 secs.

The image shows a page of a musical score for the Prélude of Sonata No. 2 by J. Lemmens. The page is numbered 25 in the top right corner. The title "Sonate O Filii N° 2." is centered at the top, with "J. LEMMENS." below it. The score is for piano and consists of three systems of staves. The first system is marked "PRÉLUDE. ALLEGRO NON TROPPO. Met. q = 104" and "Swell." It begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The second system continues the piece, showing a change to a 2/4 time signature. The third system ends with a double bar line and a "cres:" marking. The number "3533" is printed at the bottom center of the page.

Figure 11. Lemmens, Sonata No. 2, 25.

Both the one-tick and the two-tick interpretations are possible in Part 1 of the *Prélude*. The former produces more of an "Allegro molto" than an "Allegro non troppo," but the latter does not give us a true "Allegro." The solution might be found by looking ahead to Part 2, which

also lacks a tempo indication, but does have a faster metronome marking. Applying the two-tick principle in Part 1 and letting eighth note = 104 allows the first part to evolve towards the *fortissimo* opening chords of Part 2 in a stately and noble fashion (whether one chooses the one-tick or the two-tick interpretation for Part 2). The two-tick version makes the 2/4 bar more natural, since you don't have the feeling of an incomplete bar.

Part 2

Tempo indication:	none
Metronome marking:	Met. quarter note = 126
Meter:	C
Fastest note value:	eighth notes and dotted eighth-sixteenth trochees
One-tick:	5 mins.
Two-tick:	10 mins.



Figure 12 . Lemmens, Sonata No. 2, 26.

Here, a one-tick reading of the metronome mark produces a strong “agitato” effect, not an “Allegro non troppo.” This is most apparent in the chords and the pedal part. At the one-tick tempo it also becomes nearly impossible to correctly execute the dotted rhythm in eighth and sixteenth notes in the chords. The fugato section loses its serene character, the *piano* passages on the Flute produce the wrong effect, and, above all, the effect of the move to the major scale on the last page is not satisfying. In my opinion, therefore, the two-tick interpretation is most convincing for Part 2, as well as Part 1.

Cantabile

Tempo indication: **Andante**
Metronome marking: Met. quarter note = 72
Meter: C – 3/4 – C
Fastest note value: eighth notes
One-tick: 5 mins.

Everything here suggests the one-tick interpretation is correct. Even when the meter shifts to 3/4, there is no reason to consider any counting unit but the quarter note.

Fuga

Tempo indication: **Allegro con fuoco**
Metronome marking: Met quarter note = 138
Meter: C
Fastest note value: eighth notes
One-tick: 2 mins. 33 secs.
Two-tick: ca. 5 mins.

Figure 13. Lemmens, Sonata No. 2, 39.

In this *Fuga*, the constant secondary dominants, the extravagant use of altered chords, the double pedal, the challenges of execution, the expressivity, and the fugue genre itself all point to a two-tick interpretation. The “con fuoco” character comes from the complex writing and the fiery, expressive harmonies rather than a forceful, exaggerated tempo.

Total duration of Sonata No. 2:

One-tick: ca. 12 mins. 30 secs.

Two-tick: ca. 21 mins. 30 secs.

Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, “Pascale”

Tempo indication: **Allegro**

Metronome marking: Met: quarter note = 160

Meter: 3/4

Fastest note value: eighth notes

One-tick: 4 mins. 30 secs.

Two-tick: 9 mins.

(This is the same music as the Piece No. 3 from the *Four Pieces*.⁷)

Sonate Pascale.
N° 3.

41

J. LEMMENS.

ALLEGRO. Met: ♩ = 160.

Great.

8 & 4 ft.

16 & 8 ft.

3533

Figure 14a. Lemmens, Sonata No. 3, 41.

⁷ The way the metronome mark is notated – “Met:”, written with a colon – suggests that the plates from the *Four Pieces* were reused without any changes. In the other sonatas, only a period is used: “Met.” see my remark on separate page about footnote 4

Here a one-tick tempo would be much too fast: technically nearly impossible to execute, and devoid of musical meaning. The two-tick method again feels a bit slow, especially in the opening theme, but counting in eighth notes rather than quarter notes does more justice to the passages with the indication “Trumpet” and to the jubilant chords.



Figure 14b. Lemmens, Sonata No. 3, 43.

Adoration

Tempo indication:	Andante sostenuto
Metronome marking:	Met: quarter note = 66 ⁸
Meter:	C
Fastest note values:	quarter notes, some eighth notes
One-tick:	2 mins.

Here there is no reason to question the one-tick interpretation of the metronome marking. As in the *Christmas Offertorium*, putting the beat on the quarter note produces the most convincing and natural result.

⁸ See footnote 4.

Final: four sections:

- *Alleluja*

Tempo indication:	Maestoso Recitando
Metronome marking:	none
Meter:	6/4 – C – 6/4 – C
Fastest note value:	quarter notes
Duration	n/a

I will not consider this section, as no metronome marking is given.

- *attacca subito*

Tempo indication:	Allegro
Metronome marking:	Met. quarter note = 166 ⁹
Meter:	3/4
Fastest note value:	eighth notes
One-tick / Two-tick:	see paragraph below

Victimae Paschali,

Tempo indication:	piu lento
Metronome marking:	none
Meter:	3/4
Fastest note value:	quarter notes with eighth-note upbeats
One-tick / Two-tick:	see paragraph below

Tempo primo after a five-bar “*ritenuto*” and fermate

Tempo indication:	tempo primo
Metronome marking:	none
Meter:	3/4
Fastest note value:	eighth notes
One-tick / Two-tick:	see paragraph below

This large movement in ABA form stands at the center of the through-composed *Final*. It consists of two outer parts with a metronome marking of 166 – the *Allegro* in 3/4 and a *Tempo primo* – and a middle section, the *Victimae Paschali*, marked only “*piu lento*.” For the two outer parts together, the one- and two-tick durations are:

One-tick:	2 mins. 30 secs.
Two-tick:	5 mins.

The “*piu lento*” has no metronome mark. If we posit a slower tempo suitable to the larger context, perhaps quarter note = 144, then the duration of the *Victimae Paschali* would be about:

One-tick:	1 mins. 30 secs.
Two-tick:	3 mins.

⁹ The period after “Met”, as in the Sonate No. 1 and Sonate No. 2, indicates that this movement was newly engraved or newly composed.

52

Final.
ALLELUIA.

MARSTOSO RECITANDO.

J. LEMMENS.

ff

p

attaca subito.

ALLEGRO. Met. ♩ = 166.

f

3533

Figure 15a. Lemmens, Sonata No. 3, 52.

The same problem arises here as in Part 1 of the *Allegro non troppo*. The one-tick tempo seems improbable, for the reasons mentioned above. The two-tick tempo feels very slow at first, but because of the form of the movement, however – a fugue in strict legato style (*style lié*) – it cannot be ruled out (see figures 15b and c).

Figure 15b. Lemmens, Sonata No. 3, 58.

58

cres: *cres:* *ff*

cres. *cres.*

59

cres: *cres.*

cres.

Maestoso. *tutti.* *rit.*

3538

Figure 15c. Lemmens, Sonata No. 3, 59.
Maestoso

Meter: 6/4 – C

This part corresponds to the introduction to the *Final* (the *Alleluia*, see above).

Total duration of the *Final*:

One-tick: 4 mins. plus the several bars of the “maestoso”

Two-tick: 8 mins. plus the “maestoso”

Total duration of Sonata No. 3:

One-tick: ca. 10 mins. 30 secs plus the “maestoso”

Two-tick: ca. 19 mins. plus the “maestoso”

General Remarks

As a rule, Lemmens only notates metronome markings above 100. Slower markings appear only twice:

166 allegro

160 allegro

152 allegretto

144 agitato

138 allegro con fuoco

126 fanfare-fuga

126 *no tempo*

120 allegro maestoso

116 (for the half note) allegro moderato

108 andante sostenuto

108 andantino

108 *no tempo*

108 maestoso

104 animato

104 allegro non troppo

100 adagio

72 cantabile-andante, almost exclusively quarter notes

66 andante sostenuto, same as previous

Most of the values lie between 100 and 166: precisely the range of values that can be picked up from a metronome with relative ease and are readily divisible into smaller note values.

Perhaps the best example is the theme from the *Fuga-Fanfare*, from the *Sonate Pontificale*.

Fuga.

FORFARK ♩ = 126.

Fl. 16, 8, 4.

3533

Figure

16. Lemmens, Sonata No. 1, 20.

Here, with the metronome set at 126 we can instantly comprehend the rhythm of the theme, counted in eighth notes.

In the specific pieces with slower metronome markings, such as the last two on this list, this method is less necessary, as these pieces have an uncomplicated and fairly even rhythm, smooth throughout. The “Cantabile andante” (72) and “Andante sostenuto” (66) are excellent examples of this style.

The metronome marking eighth note = 108 at the beginning of *The Storm* seems particularly remarkable. But it is, in fact, the best way to use a ticking metronome in a way that allows the tempo of the middle part to agree with the introduction. The inclusion of the indication *Poco Adagio* in the first measure removes any doubt.

We can conclude that Lemmens always chooses the most pragmatic solution: he favors faster metronome settings because it is easier to pick up the tempo from a metronome ticking fast than one ticking slow. To determine how many ticks of the metronome correspond to the note value indicated, we turn to the Italian tempo heading and the general character of the piece.

In other words, we have to choose between a one-tick or a two-tick interpretation of the metronome marking for each piece individually, and for each movement of a sonata. The application of the two-tick method in pieces where high metronome markings pose a problem follows a logical pattern that takes into account whether the indicated note values are subdivided during the course of the piece. Tempi that seemed unplayable at a one-tick tempo frequently feel too slow at a two-tick tempo; but the slower tempi are playable and actually rhetorically convincing. Perhaps we should not let our present-day sense of tempo take undue

precedence over a method that can account both for the metronome markings exactly as written and other musical parameters. The slower two-tick tempo accords completely with the character of the music in every case, in both the *Four Pieces* and the *Sonates*. The “drama” of the former and the stately character of the latter can both appear to best advantage when we deal with the metronome markings on a case-by-case basis. Nor are the two-tick pieces are not inordinately long. On the contrary, the sonatas would be on the short side if all the metronome marks were read in the modern, one-tick manner.

Ideological context

As this analysis makes clear, there are musical, technical, and expressive reasons to consider playing certain pieces by Jacques Nicolas Lemmens at what modern conventions would call half-tempo. This may seem a radical hypothesis, but there is additional evidence to support it.

In his day, Lemmens was hailed as a modernizer, perhaps even the savior, of Catholic organ playing. From the mid-1800s, an increasing number of voices began to call for a move away from the more worldly style of Lefébure-Wely and the young César Franck. The Catholic Church wanted to distance itself completely from the outside world, and it began to search for a religious style that would accord with Catholic thinking. The elements of that style included the traditional compositional techniques of strict contrapuntal and fugal writing; a solemn rhythm, as found in the music of the old masters of the Palestrina school; a very reserved attitude toward the expression of emotions; limited use of orchestral effects; and so on.

Tempo was another essential element of this new style of “true” Catholic church music, organ music and performance. Its advocates argued for a slow to moderate tempo as the norm, tailored of course to setting, function, and content. They spoke of “eternity,” “infinite things,” (Victor Hugo), the “calm of the definitive” and “works whose majestic calmness and serene beauty are well suited to inspire quiet contemplation” (Edgar Tinel).

Edgar Tinel (1854-1912) was the director of the Lemmens Institute, the *Institut de Musique Religieuse*, between 1881 and 1909. Tinel took over the directorship when Lemmens died young, soon after the founding of the *École de Musique Religieuse* in Mechelen in 1879. As director of the Lemmens Institute, Tinel stood at the very center of Catholic church music in Belgium, a country that served in many respects as a model for its southern neighbors, and he was an important influence on upcoming generations of organists. Tinel’s now-legendary speech to the Société Saint Grégoire in 1883 was published in *Musica Sacra*, the periodical of the episcopacy:

How does one mold a good organist? [...] it comes down to defining good taste, and to teaching [...] all that is appropriate to perform in [the church]. [...] Some works that are written in a rather *concertante* style [...] are easily recognized by their altogether worldly, joyful character; by their lively, bouncing rhythm, their martial, dance-like or exaggerated tempo. [...] Though these works may sometimes be signed by great masters, they are nonetheless absolutely out of place in the church, whether played before, during, or after a service.

One molds a student’s taste by having him study the works of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century masters, Frescobaldi, Asola, Pitoni, Fasolo, Hassler, [...] and Palestrina

[...]: works whose calm majesty and serene beauty are made to inspire quiet contemplation.¹⁰

A review of the 1882 organ examinations at the Lemmens Institute by one of the founders, Kanunnik Van Damme, reveals that the audience was quite critical of the tempi of the pieces performed. Van Damme boldly asserts that although “certain artistes” have accustomed their listeners to fast tempi, this dizzying speed often makes music less comprehensible and is unsuited for the church. In other words, this school for church music taught moderate tempi as an essential element of performance. Similarly, of the organ exams in 1880, we read:

The exams of the students from the organ class were most brilliant. In their performances, listeners could admire the incomparable qualities of the Master, the perfection of the fingering, the excellent use of the pedal, the pureness and correctness of the playing, the sureness of the touch, and above all, that imperturbable pace that lends grandeur to the performance, as commanding as a lion’s paw! Several compositions by Monsieur Lemmens were interpreted in this manner.¹¹

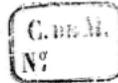
Material for comparison from pieces for harmonium and for piano

It is notable that the flexible use of the two-tick principle in Lemmens’ music occurs in those works of his that were published in England (although a continental edition was available for the sonatas too). The phenomenon of “too-fast” metronome markings does not occur so often in his harmonium pieces published in France or Brussels. In those pieces, all the metronomizations must be interpreted using the one-tick method, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary – one excellent example of such a case is the *Fuguettes*.

¹⁰ Edgar Tinel, Speech to the Société Saint Grégoire, *Musica Sacra* 2, no. 12 (1883): 99.

¹¹ Joseph Duclos, “Essai sur la vie et les travaux de l’auteur,” in *Du Chant Grégorien, Ouvrage Posthume de Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens*, (Gent, 1886), xxxvi. Duclos quotes from *L’Univers*, Saturday August 14, 1880.

N^o 4.
FUGUETTE.



LEMMENS.

① Allegro (♩ = 152)

ORGUE.

A.P. E. & C^o 228. E. URRING, G.R.S. Haymarket St. London E.C. 1.

Figure 17. Lemmens, Fuguettes, 1.

The metronome mark quarter note = 152 must be read in the manner prescribed at the time for 2/4 meter: there are four beats, and the eighth note becomes the counting unit.¹² Consequently, the piece follows the two-tick principle, resulting in eighth note = 152.

Several piano works published in Brussels (Mayence, Déposé 1856) present a similar picture. The *Aspiration Religieuse* must certainly be one-tick, the *Promenade sur l'eau* is likely two-tick, and there can be no doubt that the *Rikke-Tikke-Tak* in 2/4 is two-tick.

¹² See Part 1 on the use of the metronome.

RIKKE TIKKE TAK.

J. LEMMENS.



Animato. (Met. $\sigma = 152$.)

PIANO. *p* *Staccato.*

poco cresc.

dim.

poco cresc.

Rit.

N. 761.

Figure 18. Lemmens, Rikke-Tikke-Tak, 1.

The British context: Wallace and Rooke

The flexible application of the two-tick principle is a recurring feature of English musical editions of this time, and it is safe to assume that Lemmens was acquainted with this fact. One bit of evidence comes from a program for a concert he gave on November 16, 1871 in the Exhibition Palace in Dublin.¹³ The program lists works by William Vincent Wallace,¹⁴ including selections from the opera *The Amber Witch*.¹⁵ I thought it was important to look closely at this score, especially since it contains metronome markings.

Here are my conclusions: the metronome markings here do not indicate absolute values, in the modern manner. Instead, each marking must be interpreted as a function of all the parameters that can influence the tempo, including the Italian heading, the character of the piece, the meter, the smallest note value, and the text. The metronome helps the player find the correct tempo before playing the piece. It is not supposed to keep ticking along while the piece is performed; as I mentioned in the first part of this article, that would go against all the expressive principles of the time, and against contemporary instructions for the use of the metronome. In some cases, of course, the beat of the metronome ultimately does coincide with the given note value; but sometimes this is not the case. The choice is dictated by the context, and as I demonstrated for the pieces by Lemmens above, each piece requires a new choice. As a quick indication of the consequences of this approach, I might mention that in the first act of Wallace's opera, a full 25 of the 49 metronome markings should not be interpreted in the modern way, but instead either according to the two-tick method, or transformed from a binary to a ternary rhythm (I will return to ternary meters in more detail below).

As I was examining Wallace's music, I remembered a problem I had encountered much earlier with a song in an anthology from my own library. This volume reproduced William Michael Rooke's "*The Spell is Woman's Love*" from the opera *Amilie*, with the peculiar metronome marking of 112 1/2.¹⁶ Before the piano reduction of *Amilie* became available in its entirety on IMSLP,¹⁷ I believed this metronome mark to be an error. *Amilie* was published in London in 1837, about twenty years after its composition but only shortly after its premiere in Covent Garden.¹⁸ Most of the pieces in the piano reduction have metronome markings, and if we examine these closely, there can be no doubt that they must be interpreted on a case-by-

¹³ "Grand French and Irish Concert" Dublin concert announcement, *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (November 16, 1871). Special thanks to Annelies Focquaert for providing her unpublished documentation.

¹⁴ Rooke, Balfe, Wallace: Irishmen.

¹⁵ See William Vincent Wallace, *The Amber Witch: Romantic Opera in four acts*, arr. from the score by Edward F. Rimbault (London: Brewer & Co., 1860-1861). Lemmens doubtless used this score during his performance in Dublin, where he accompanied his wife Helen Sherrington on a Mustel harmonium.

¹⁶ Rooke was an Irish citizen (1794–1847).

¹⁷ William Michael Rooke, *Amilie or the Love Test: Grand Romantic Opera in three Acts* (London: Duff and Hodgson, 1839), http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/d/d3/IMSLP161912-PMLP290759-Rooke_-_Amilie_VS_IArchBPL.pdf.

¹⁸ It may be of little consequence, but I might add that Covent Garden was not unfamiliar to Lemmens, since his wife Helen Sherrington regularly appeared there in leading roles.

case basis. In most of the pieces the decision is between one-tick and two-tick, and the context makes the choice clear. If we actually try out the metronome markings, we can see that half of them need to be interpreted as two-tick. In cases where there is any doubt (i.e., both interpretations seem possible), the metronome marking is followed by the fraction $\frac{1}{2}$, which is meant to indicate that a two-tick interpretation is intended. This explains the marking of “112 $\frac{1}{2}$ ” for “The Spell is Woman’s Love.” A similar notation also appears in three other cases.¹⁹

Figure
Rooke,
Spell is
Love,”

In every

$\frac{1}{2}$
when

unit is
unclear
the first
of a

in both
tick and
tick

THE SPELL IS WOMAN'S LOVE.

♩ = 112 $\frac{1}{2}$.
SOLO Violoncello.

ANDANTE.

419 An Obligato Violoncello Accompaniment to this song may be had separately.

19. W. M.
“The
Woman’s
1.

case, the
indication
appears
the
counting
initially
because
few bars
piece are
musically
plausible
the one-
the two-

interpretations.

¹⁹ On p. 45: 80 $\frac{1}{2}$. On p. 84: 96 $\frac{1}{2}$. On p. 168: 112 $\frac{1}{2}$.

We can conclude that in binary meters there is always a choice to be made between one-tick and two-tick. Regarding ternary meters, both the anthology and the IMSLP scores also provide some interesting data. I will offer a few examples here.

3/4 meter

In pieces written in 3/4, Rooke's metronome markings indicate the tempo of the half note:

Allegretto, 1 half note = 76

Meter 3/4

fastest note values: eighth notes, triplets on repeated tones

This is to be interpreted as read; from the half note, one can find the value of the quarter note (= 152).

Allegretto, 68 half note = 69

Meter 3/4

fastest note values: eighth notes

The same applies; quarter note = 138. Applying 69 for the dotted half note would result in an impossible tempo for the singer.

Allegro, 156 half note = 88

Meter 3/4

fastest note values: eighth notes

Similarly, quarter note = 176. Three-voice choir.

The Amilie Waltz, 267

This piece has no metronome marking, but none is needed to define a normal waltz tempo.

Wallace's metronome markings, in contrast, give the quarter note, as in the following examples.

Romance, 95

Tempo indication: **Andantino con moto**

Metronome marking: quarter note = 144

Meter: 3/4

fastest note values: quarter notes

Since the quarter note is the fastest note value in this piece, this marking is not too fast to interpret as one-tick.

Finale Act I, 115

Tempo indication: **Allegretto con grazia**

Metronome marking: quarter note = 152

Meter: 3/4

fastest note values: eighth notes

Pride, you go be fore a fall,..... We know some spell, some
 you go be..fore a fall Good mor...row,
 causd this mischief all, Good mor...row,
 spell..... hath causd this mischief all, We
 wick...ed spell, hath causd this mis.....chief all.
 Pride, you go be....fore a fall,
 Pride, you go be....fore a fall,
 know some wick..ed spell hath causd this mis...chief all.
 MARY.
 Ah! some spell hath causd this mis.....chief all.
 ELSIE.
 We know some wicked spell hath causd this mischief all.
 Bases, (coming towards Mary)
 Good mor....row Pride! you go be....fore a fall. Viol.
 Cello.
 7544

Figure 20a. Wallace, "The Amber Witch," 115.

The fastest note value in this example is the eighth note. Here, it is important to be able to convey the dactylic rhythm. The text is set in quarter notes with some extended passages in eighth notes and, with its repeated notes, is more declamatory than melodic; it is questionable whether quarter note = 152 is a workable tempo. At such a speed it becomes difficult to pronounce and comprehend the text.

Figure 20b. Wallace, "The Amber Witch," 120.

The one-tick approach, therefore, might be possible, but would be difficult to realize effectively in the context of an opera setting, performed in a theater. Meanwhile, the slower

CHORUS of Villagers.

Ey, Ey, Ey, Ey, Ey, Ey, Her child is sick, His cow is sick, My child is sick, My cow is dead,

Soldiers, Tenors & Basses.
p Save you, fair mai...den when so...ever you pray For

MARY *agitato un poco.*
 Have I done this?

ELSIE
 Yes! thou hast!

Villagers.
 dead! Thou hast! Thou hast! Thou hast!

Tutti.
 Thou hast! Thou hast!

Soldiers.
 thoughtless sin...ners re...col...lect us all!

7544

two-tick interpretation at eighth note = 152 would certainly convey the character of “con grazia.” The first solution, meanwhile – leaving aside the question of whether or not it is technically feasible – hardly corresponds to the expected duration of a *Finale*.

It is nevertheless a strange coincidence that this metronome marking is the same as Lemmens’s in his *Allegretto*, and that in this piece the harmony definitely progresses by the bar. The opening bars emphasize this movement with repeated notes in the fashion of a *bourdon* or drone: eighth-eighth-quarter-quarter, eighth-eighth-quarter-quarter, eighth-eighth-quarter-quarter.

Figure 20c. Wallace, “The Amber Witch,” 121.

Tempo indication: **Andante con moto**
 Metronome marking: quarter note = 80
 Meter: 3/4
 fastest note values: eighths, sometimes sixteenths with *un poco rit* on repeated notes

Here, the one-tick approach is perfectly convincing. Remembering that *Andante* and *Allegretto* are both moderate tempos, however, it is a puzzle as to why there is such a very great difference between the metronome markings for this “Andante” (quarter note = 80) and an “Allegretto con grazia” on page 115 that, at quarter note = 152, is almost twice as fast. The discrepancy might suggest that we should not interpret the 152 in the modern way, but rather should use either the two-tick. With the two-tick method, we arrive at quarter note = 76, placing the “Allegretto con grazia” in a reasonable relationship to the “Andante con moto.”

Allegretto, 240

Tempo indication: **Allegretto**
 Metronome marking: quarter note = 104
 Meter: 3/4
 fastest note values: eighth notes in the voice, sixteenths in the orchestra

Allegro, 243

Tempo indication: **Allegro ma non troppo**
 Metronome marking: half note = 100
 Meter: C
 fastest note values: eighth notes

Tempo I, 247

Tempo indication: **none**
 Metronome marking: quarter note = 112
 Meter: 3/4
 fastest note values: eighth notes in the voice, sixteenths in the orchestra

Here, one-tick is a possibility, but it would make the outer sections quite fast. On the other hand, it makes sense to have a slightly faster metronome marking for an “Allegretto” than for the aforementioned “Andante con moto” of the *Quintet* on page 135 (quarter note = 80).

Trio, 266

A very virtuosic piece with broken chords in sixteenths, eighth-note triplets, etc.

Tempo indication: **Andante con moto**
 Metronome marking: quarter note = 88
 Meter: 3/4
 fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Air, 317

Tempo indication: **Andante con tristezza**
 Metronome marking: quarter note = 80

Meter: $3/4$
fastest note values: eighth notes in the voice, sixteenths in the orchestra

Latin Hymn and Chorus (page 359)

Tempo indication: **Lento ma non troppo**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 66
Meter: $3/4$
fastest note values: eighth notes

Allegro, 360

Tempo indication: **Allegro**
Metronome marking: none
Meter: C
fastest note values: quarter notes

Tempo primo, 361

Tempo indication: **none**
Metronome marking: none
Meter: $3/4$
fastest note values: sixteenth notes

New section in major mode, 365

Tempo indication: **none**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 84
Meter: $3/4$
fastest note values: eighth notes

A one-tick tempo yields perfectly convincing results for all of these pieces in $3/4$ meter. We might conclude that in general, one-tick is appropriate for relatively low metronome settings (90–100 or below), while we can consider two-tick for higher ones.

6/8 meter

In Rooke's pieces in $6/8$ meter, the metronome markings give the quarter note, from which it is easy to calculate the eighth note.

Overture, 1

Tempo indication: No tempo indication, but **Moderato** is probably still valid
Metronome marking: quarter note = 76
Meter: $6/8$
fastest note values: eighth notes, upbeat sixteenths

The best tempo solution is eighth note = 152. This fits logically with the aforementioned *Allegretto* in $3/4$ (also on page 1), where half note = 76, thus quarter note = 152. Again on page 3, quarter note = 76.

Air: Who has not mark, 45

Tempo indication: **Andante**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter note = 80 ½
Meter: 6/8
fastest note values: sixteenth notes

We can deduce that dotted quarter note = 40; as we saw above, 1/2 is added to clarify that the two-tick interpretation is correct, because the beginning of the piece would also work at a one-tick tempo.

When the morning first dawns, 175

Tempo indication: **Allegretto**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter note = 69
Meter: 6/8
fastest note values: sixteenth notes

This can be read as one-tick. It results in a rather fast tempo for an *Allegretto*, but half that tempo is certainly not an option; it would be completely at odds with “80 1/2” for the earlier *Andante*. It would make no sense to insist on M.M. = 35 here; *a fortiori*, the tempo must be higher. On the other hand, it seems illogical that the large leap between 40 and 69 should correspond to the rather small difference between *Andante* and *Allegretto*. Likely this is a printer’s error and should have been quarter note = 69, corresponding to eighth note = 138.

6/8 meter in *The Amber Witch* by Wallace

Introduction - Chorus, 170

Tempo indication: **Allegro ma non troppo**
Metronome marking: none
Meter: 6/8

But taking into account the following:

Allegro l'istesso tempo – voices *con fuoco, 174*

Tempo indication: **Allegretto**
Metronome marking: half note = 112
Meter: *C alla breve*
Fastest note values: eighth-notes, quarter-note triplets

It is logical to propose, based on the *l'istesso tempo*, that dotted quarter note = 112 for the 6/8 meter – which is also musically convincing.

Oh Lady Moon, 188

fastest note values: **Andantino con moto**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter note = 92
Meter: 6/8
fastest note values: eighth notes

The one-tick interpretation works here.

12/8 meter

Rooke

Air, 128

fastest note values:	Andante con moto
Metronome marking:	dotted quarter note = 76
Meter	12/8
fastest note values:	eighth notes

Certainly one-tick.

“Pierre,” 141

fastest note values:	Andantino
Metronome marking:	quarter note = 69
Meter	12/8
fastest note values:	eighth notes

Two solutions work musically:

One-tick:	eighth note = 138
One-tick:	dotted quarter note = 69

The second seems to be a better solution.

Finale, 272

fastest note values:	Andantino
Metronome marking:	quarter note = 54
Meter	12/8
fastest note values:	eighth notes with sixteenth-note upbeats

This should probably be dotted quarter note = 54; as for the *Andantino* on page 141, this is the most convincing solution. But the “54” is remarkable, it is an exceptionally low value. It can only be explained by the character of this particular piece.

Wallace

“Elsie,” 297

fastest note values:	Allegro agitato
Metronome marking:	quarter note = 132
Meter:	12/8
fastest note values:	eighth notes

No tempo indication, 301

Metronome marking:	none
Meter:	C

Below, 301

Metronome marking: quarter note = 132

Meter: 12/8

Allegro molto, 303

Metronome marking: half note = 104

Meter C alla breve

One-tick is perfectly possible here, given that the 12/8 meter actually has four beats. This is confirmed by the transition to both the C-meter and the C-alla breve, where the voices have quarter notes and the orchestra continues with eighth-note triplets. These are the beats given by the metronome. Thus we let the beat of the metronome (at 132) equal a dotted quarter. The pronunciation of the words poses no problems since eighth notes usually occur only as repeated notes. Moreover, it is a dramatic scene that does call for a fast tempo.

6/4 meter

Rooke's metronome markings for 6/4 meter, as for 6/8, are "binary" numbers for a note value that has two beats:

No tempo indication, 14

Metronome marking: half note = 116

Meter 6/4

fastest note values: quarter notes

Figure 21a. Rooke, "The Amber Witch," 14.

Here, one clearly needs to derive the quarter note from the half note – consider, for instance, that the rhythm in the first few bars moves in pairs of quarter notes. This results in quarter note = 232.

The coda is marked "Molto presto"; half note = 96. The rhythm here is ternary and the beat is dotted half note = 96 or quarter note = 288, in complete agreement with the feeling of *molto presto*.

Figure 21b. Rooke, The Amber Witch, 23.

Moderato, 24

Metronome marking: half note = 116

Meter 6/4

fastest note values: quarter notes

The only completely convincing solution is the same one used on page 14.

No tempo indication, 33

Metronome marking: half note = 76

Meter 6/4

fastest note values: eighth notes

It seems most logical to see the quarter note as = 152. On page 37, music is quoted from page 14 (where the metronome marking was 116) with no tempo change indicated. This is somewhat strange, since it is so much slower. The coda is also similar to the coda from page 14, "molto presto," although it lacks a metronome marking.

No tempo indication, 230

Metronome marking: quarter note = 92

Meter 6/4

fastest note values: quarter notes

This must be an error and should be half note = 92, just as on page 284, where the same music recurs. We can thus apply the one-tick method here, with quarter note = 184. Two-tick would be extremely slow, considering 92 for the dotted half note would be extremely fast.

Wallace does not use the 6/4 meter, although he does write frequent quarter-note triplets in C.

Closing Remarks

The edition of Rooke's opera *Amilie*²⁰ is perhaps not fully representative of the period to which the Lemmens editions belongs, as it predates Lemmens's productive period in England by more than thirty years. On the other hand, the edition does provide ample support for the supposition that metronome markings were handled differently than in the twentieth century or today.

The Wallace edition does coincide with Lemmens's activities in England, and concert programs show that he was familiar with it. There is no doubt that Lemmens used the piano reduction of *The Amber Witch* for his piano (or harmonium) accompaniment, and like any other player he too would have had to make sense of the metronome markings in a musically convincing manner.

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²⁰ Rooke, *Amilie*, or The Love Test, Grand Romantic Opera, in three Acts, Performed at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, The Words by, I. T. Haynes, The Music Composed by W. M. Rooke, London, Published by Duff & Hodgson and Cramer, Addison & Beale.