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Poly-Style Variations

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Abstract. One of the branches of the historical evolution of the genre of variations is the saturation of the principle of altered repetition by means of polystylistics. However, this rather bold solution is linked with a number of questions. Two of them are examined in the article: what kind of stylistic interactions generate the phenomenon of polystylistic variations and wherein is the unity of stylistic multiplicity contained. The diversity of stylistic relationships is disclosed. Comprehension is made of the mechanisms of integration of the movements and the completion of the many-styled variation construction, including those that are so specific for polystylistics as the manipulations with timbre, the genre-related homogeneity of variations, the selectivity of the choice of styles, as well as the programmatic content. Special attention is given to the artistic goal-setting, which spans the construction of a preliminary-mosaic perspective of the musical world, the reconstruction of the historical retrospective of the art of music, play, the focus on a particular aesthetic position—whether it be comical, reverent and idealizing, dramatic or tragic.

Keywords: variations, style, polystylistics, stylization, play, programmatic content

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Полистилевые вариации

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Аннотация. Одно из ответвлений исторической эволюции вариаций — обогащение принципа изменённого повтора полистилистикой. Весьма смелое решение сопряжено, однако, с рядом вопросов. В статье рассматриваются два из них: какого рода стилевые взаимодействия порождают собою феномен полистилевых вариаций и в чём кроется единство стилевой множественности. Вскрывается многообразие стилевых отношений. Осмысляются механизмы интеграции частей и завершения многостилевой вариационной конструкции, в том числе такие специфические для полистилистики, как манипуляции с тембром, жанровая однородность вариаций, избирательность отбора стилей, программность. Особое внимание уделяется художественному целеполаганию, которое охватывает построение эскизно-мозаичной картины музыкального мира, реконструкцию исторической ретроспективы музыкального искусства, игру, фокусирование на определённой эстетической позиции — комической, пиететно-идеализирующей, драматической, трагической.

Ключевые слова: вариации, стиль, полистилистика, стилизация, игра, программность

Introduction

Examination of musical form in its stylistic aspect discloses such a particular phenomenon as the many-styled perspective of musical compositions. The realization of this tendency in form-generation [1] naturally leads to the necessity of narrowing down the angle of observation and concentrating on one structural model—namely, that of the variation. This kind of necessity is stipulated by an entire set of reasons:

1. First, a significant diffusion, if we suppose so, of poly-stylistic variation in the practice of composition. Stylistic excursions are also carried out by the great masters (Ludwig van Beethoven, Carl Maria von Weber, Henri Herz), as well as by those composers who have not achieved great renown.

2. Second, by the formation of a historically steadfast tradition of polystylistic variation transformations tested by time. The idea of stylistic metamorphoses inspired the masters of the distant past (Nicolas Bochsa, Charles Dancla, August Fryderyk Duranowski, Ferdinando Carulli), as well as musicians from more recent times (Paul Hindemith, Ludvig Schytte), among them, our contemporaries (Vladimir Kobekin, Alfred Schnittke).

3. Third, a noticeable involvedness in the polystylistic variation of performing musicians (in particular, jazz performers), who are capable, while being on stage, of spontaneously transforming what seems to be a rather regulated type of compositional work, bringing in the spirit of free improvisation (just as pianist Victor Borge and Denis Matsuev, as well as violinist Stephane Grapelli are capable of doing this).

4. Fourth, an unabated interest on the part of researchers towards this phenomenon. This may be judged not only by the statements by

authoritative scholars,[1] but also by publications of younger authors that have appeared in recent times. [3; 4; 5]

The attractiveness of the outlined phenomenon for the academic community is undoubtedly stipulated by the fact that the poly-style reality created in such variations presents a problem field containing numerous unsolved questions. Without claiming any broad coverage of them, let us settle merely upon the following, firmly connected with each other: *what kind of stylistic interactions generate the phenomenon of poly-style variations* and *wherein lies the unity of stylistic plurality*.

Stylistic Plurality in Variations

As compositional practice shows, it is possible to take different paths towards polystylistics.[2] The simplest one of them is the ***appeal towards another composer's musical theme***. Let us delineate this model of stylistic interactions as a-a^1-a^2-a^3.

Strictly speaking, variations stemming from a derived theme are in a certain sense always polystylistic, naturally, if the composer preserves it in its original state and does not adapt it to his own style. However, even upon exact replication of the quoted original, the stylistic "freeness" may even not be perceived upon hearing. We are convinced of this by the numerous variations by Mozart and Beethoven on themes by their contemporaries (Antonio Salieri, Giovanni Paisiello, etc.), wherein the fact of the combination in one composition of the music of different composers does exist, but the polystylistic effect is not immense, and it is doubtful that it was planned. It follows that in variations on a derived theme we must see a particular potential of polystylistic unfolding, which does not necessarily unfold by any means.

Naturally, we are interested by those cases where initially a stylistic difference is conceived, and not only is it conceived, but is even exaggerated in every way, for example, by a bold departure from the stylistic traits of the initial theme into the realm of serialism in the *Five Variations on a Theme of Schubert* for piano by Helmut Lachenmann (1956), or, on the other hand, in the serial and then pointillistic deformation and dematerialization of the Christmas hymn *Silent Night* by Franz Gruber in Alfred Schnittke's piece *Stille Nacht* for violin and piano (1978). It is understandable that in the given conditions the scheme presented in its basic letter and number form becomes transformed.

Stylistic "disparity" is likewise not concealed by Paul Hindemith in his *Second Sonata* for Violin Solo op. 31 No. 2 (1924). The variations break free decisively with the quotation of Mozart's well-known song *Komm, lieber Mai* ("Come, beloved May") opening and concluding the sonata's finale. While preserving the structural outlines (a simple rounded binary form consisting of an introductory tune and a refrain) and certain basic pitches of the derived melody, Hindemith in his variations boldly immerses them into the "interwoven ornaments" of the chromaticisms and dissonances close to him.

Polystylistic tendencies are also directly manifested by composer from the Urals Vladimir Kobekin in his *Double Variations* for Violin and Suspended Cymbal (1979). Unlike Hindemith's work, here they are presented as a contrast between two themes. After genetically folkloristic

[1] Cases of stylizations in variation compositions by Beethoven and Tchaikovsky are marked by Victor Tsukkerman. [2, pp. 115–116]

[2] As we understand the terminological difficulties, which are inevitable upon a stylistic approach toward music, let us bring in some clarifications: by "polystylistics" (the Russian equivalent of which would be "raznostiliye" ("diversity of style")) we understand the intonational-stylistic interactions in a musical composition; a "polystylistic" composition is one that is examined as derivative from the "polystylistic" conception.

lamentations—at times, raging, at other times languidly drooping—we hear Johann Sebastian Bach's famous melody, which has become the symbol of grief—Peter's repentance in Aria No. 47, *Erbarme dich, mein Gott* ("Have Pity on Me, My God") from the St. Matthew Passion. Notwithstanding the common roots of genre and intonation—*lamento*, the stylistic distance between the vernacular folkloristic element and the highly professional, Russian and Western European tradition, marked by the signs of the "present" and the "eternal," is overwhelming. Thus, the subsequent variation technique is directed at overcoming it.[3]

Genuine stylistic heterogeneity is capable of being expressed by ***several themes in different styles (with variations on them***), joined in one work, possessing a schematic appearance: $a\text{-}a^1\text{-}a^2 – b\text{-}b^1\text{-}b^2 – c\text{-}c^1\text{-}c^2$. Such creative projects in Ludwig van Beethoven's legacy are interpreted by Larisa Kirillina in her publications. [6; 7] In the composer's op. 105 and 107 song cycles, each of the songs—the Scottish, the Tyrol, the Austrian, the Russian, the Little Russian—appears in the guise of variational transformations, thereby generating a small, or subvariational cycle.

The practice of combination of themes created in different styles with autonomous variation is not limited to Beethoven's oeuvres. This model is followed by such compositions as, for example, the *Airs nationaux variés* ("Folk Songs with Variations"), (ca. 1814) op. 73 by Italian guitarist Ferdinando Carulli. The same composer's *Souvenir des grands Auteurs* ("Remembrances of the Great Authors") (1830) op. 286 are provided with a preface informing about the creative goal: "Véritable Album contenant seize Motifs des plus célèbres Compositeurs des 3 écoles, Française, Allemande et Italienne, chacun avec une ou deux Variations pour la Guitare" ("The present album contains sixteen motives by the most well-known composers of three schools: the French, the German and the Italian, each endowed with one or two variations for guitar"). Numerous times, French harpist Nicolas Bochsa resorted to the same idea. His pieces for harp—*3 Airs connus varies* ("Three Well-Known Airs with Variations") op. 66, *3 Airs variés* ("Three Airs with Variations") ca. 1810 op. 72 and op. 73, *3 Airs favoris* ("Three Favorite Airs") op. 177, *La Mazurka, l'Air Saxon et le Scotch Reel*, ("Mazurka, Saxon Air and Scottish Reel"), publ. 1810, and Two Ballet Pieces op. 325—contain themes from French, Italian, German, Swiss, Polish and Russian music, with the "tails" of the variations neighboring each other. In the pieces *Les caractères* ("The Characters") (ca. 1841), op. 118 by François Hünten, *3 Airs varies* ("Three Airs with Variations") (1800) op. 5 by August Fryderyk Duranowski and other comparable oeuvres the carefully outlined musical picture of multinational Europe is also recreated.

Creative practice has shaped yet another model of connection of stylistically heterogeneous music subjected to variation—***variations on one and the same theme in different styles***, corresponding to the scheme of *a-a/b-a/c-a/d.* At first, the composers pursuing this path were apprehensive about extending the limits of the work's stylistic system. So, Carl Maria von Weber's *Nine Variations on a Russian Theme* for piano op. 40 J. 179 (1815) include not only the "Russian" element, but also the "Polish" (a polonaise in Variation No. 5) and the "Spanish" (a bolero in Variation No. 9). The *Variations Caracteristiques sur un Theme Arabe "Pas de L'Abeiller"* ("Characteristic Variations on an Arab Theme from Friedrich Burgmüller"), (1844) op. 137 by Henri Herz are embellished

[3] For more detail on the indicated works, see: [1].

with polonaises in the Variation No. 2 and the Finale, marked *Tempo di Polacca*, which disengages from both the initial theme and the other variations.

It must be acknowledged, nevertheless, that already the 19th century is not afraid to shock the listener with stylistic motley eclecticism. French pianist and composer Theodor Latour approbated the idea of poly-style variations in a large piano composition (with some episodic participation of a flute) *26 Variations in Imitation of Eminent Professors* (1808). The theme from the popular Gavotte of Achilles and Deidamia from François Charlemagne Lefevre's *Les Noces de Gamache* ("The Wedding of Gamache") (*Don Quixote*) gives life to a gallery of portraits, among which are "depictions" of Jan Dussek, violinist and composer Giovanni Battista Viotti, Daniel Steibelt, Muzio Clementi, opera prima donna Angelica Catalani, Johann Baptist Kramer, and in conclusion—of Latour himself.

The selfsame strategy was boldly applied by Danish composer Ludvig Schytte. The complete title of his piano piece op. 24 sounds exhaustive: *8 Silhouetten (Schattenbilder) nach Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Grieg, Rubinstein als Variationen über ein Original Thema* ("Eight Silhouettes of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Grieg, Rubinstein as Variations on an Original Theme") (1884).

Already at the present time, American composer Jonathan Posthuma in his *Seven Variations on a Theme by Mussorgsky* for piano (2010) virtually picked up the influence established by the Russian classic in *Pictures at an Exhibition*. The multilingualism of the initial programmatic subtitles of the separate pieces (demonstrating French—*Promenade*, Latin—*Gnomus*, Italian—*Il vecchio castello*, Polish—*Bydło*, German—*Samuel Goldenberg und Schmuÿle*, and Russian—*Balet nevylupivshikhsya ptentsov* ("Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks")) was transferred by him to the different musical styles, in which the *Promenade* appears. The orchestral version of the selfsame work by Mussorgsky carried out in 1995 by American musician Byrwec Ellison*, presents the Russian musician's masterpiece in the styles of several composers,* fitting it into the context of world art. The decisive step taken by outstanding American conductor Leonard Slatkin brought the *Pictures at an Exhibition* into a polystylistic space of arrangements: in 1991 and 2004 he suggested to the public this suite-like composition as a montage of pieces orchestrated by different composers and conductors (Sergei Gorchakov, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Leo Funtek, Maurice Ravel, Leonard Stokowski and others).

Finally, another type of polystylistic solution of form has been formed in creative practice—namely, ***collective variations on one theme***, which may appear schematically in the following way: *a-b/a-c/a-d/a*. An entire brigade of musicians is included in the process of the collective oeuvre, inevitably predetermining the stylistic "variety." It appears especially naturally in Anton Diabelli's beneficiary project—the musician and the publisher gathered around himself fifty composers (among which were: Franz Schubert, Carl Czerny, Franz Liszt and Ignaz Moscheles) who wrote variations on his theme during the years 1819–1824.[4]

The stylistic heterogeneity is also perceptible in the work "Hexameron"—*Grand Concert Variations on the March from Vincenzo Bellini's Opera "I Puritani"* S. 392 (1837) by six composers—Franz Liszt, Sigismund Thalberg, Johann Peter Pixis, Henri Herz, Carl Czerny and Frédéric Chopin. Notwithstanding the single

[4] Inspired by this idea, Beethoven composed music that separated into an independent composition—the *Thirty-Three Variations on a Theme of a Waltz of Diabelli*, published together with the other variations.

principle of concert-virtuoso coloration of the theme, adhered to by all the musicians, still, in several cases their individual features are also discernable, for example, the elemental emotion of the inspirer of the project—Liszt.

This tradition was also continued by our compatriots by their collective composition *Parafrazy* ("Paraphrases") (1878–1879) on an unchangeable theme taken from a Polka by Borodin and labeled *Tati-tati* by Vladimir Stasov. Alexander Borodin, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, César Cui and Anatoly Lyadov seem to compete in their wit and boldness of artistic fantasy, the impulse of which was served by an extremely simple tune. The plan turned out to be so successful and prospective that Rimsky-Korsakov, Lyadov, Glazunov and their associates resorted to consolidation of artistic energies several more times: the stylistic polyvocality is sounded in the Variations on a Russian Folk Theme for String Quartet in *G major*, dedicated to Mitrofan Belyayev (1898), the Variations on a Russian Theme from Nikolai Ivanovich Abramychev for Piano in *A major* (1900), and the Variations on a Russian Folk Theme for Orchestra (1903).[5]

The 20th century took up the slack in good grace. The "voices" of Dmitri Kabalevsky, Eugen Kapp, Yuri Levitin, Georgy Sviridov, Rodion Shchedrin and Andrei Eshpai intertwined themselves into a salutatory "chorus" of Soviet composers in the *Variations on a Theme of Glinka* for piano (1957), dedicated to the memory of the luminary of Russian musical classics. Later on, eleven conservatory pedagogues presented a musical offering to the Moscow Conservatory, which was celebrating its centenary—*Variations on Themes from Myaskovsky's Sixteenth Symphony* (1966). As we see, socially weighty events, the composers' positive ethical and esthetical conceptual position, a dialectic unity of the overall intonational basis and, at the same time, a diversity of style became traditional concepts of collective artistic projects.[6]

Variations as a Unity of Styles

Spanning over a motley selection of styles gathered together within the space of one composition, one is inevitably confronted with the question of what is it that makes it possible for this "incongruence of styles" acquire integrality and what are the mechanisms of its unification. It stands to reason that the polystylistic diversity possesses a common denominator represented by the theme. Still, nonetheless, its energies turn out to be insufficient for organizing the inner contrasting whole, especially the large-scale and consisting of many movements.

The question indicated by us is enrooted in the nature of variational composition—the centrifugal forces threaten its integrality. The testimony to this is the unregulated number of movements, an absence of any clear completion (let us say, a recapitulation), the variability of the inner structuring (for example, the permissibility in Robert Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes* of alternating etudes-variations with etudes that are not variations and the inclusion of several nonobligatory etudes *ad libitum*). These dangers along the path of achieving integral construction increase in the conditions of polystylistic composition.

One of the traits of the described phenomenon is a greater openness, a disconnection of polystylistic construction. In polystylistic conditions, the natural recurrence denoted by Boris Asafiev is realized in full measure:

[5] The poly-style idea is also realized in the String Quartet dedicated to philanthropist Belyayev *B-la-f* (1886), the constituent movements of which were composed by Nikolai Rimky-Korsakov, Anatoly Lyadov, Alexander Borodin and Alexander Glazunov (for more detail about this see: [8]).

[6] The variational plans of creative communities have been frequently illuminated in Russian musicology: [9; 10; 11; 12].
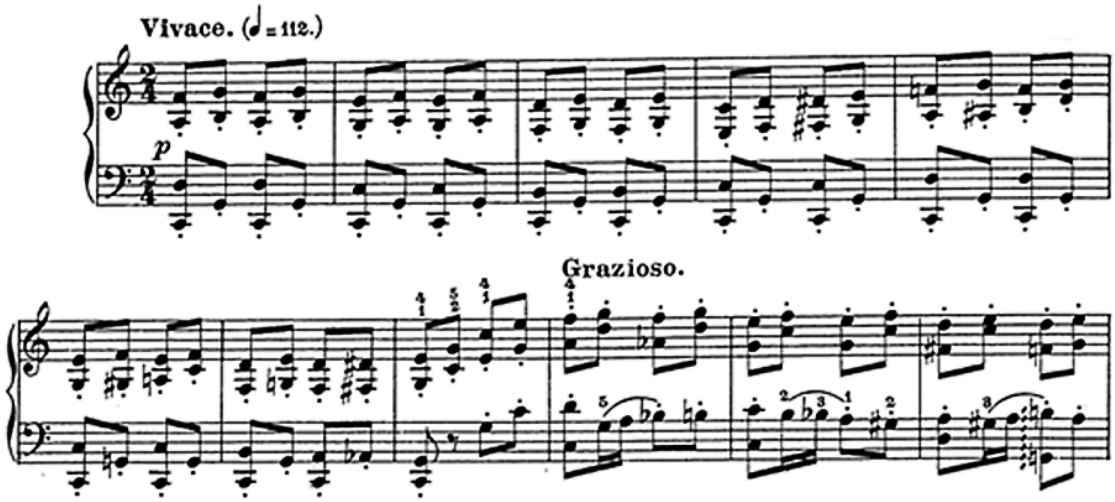
"…No matter how splendid or dynamically brilliant the finale of any of the variations is—technically, we could conceive an even stronger variation following it!" [13, p. 41] The process of transformations of the aforementioned *Variations on the Theme "Tati-tati"* by Russian composers (1878–1879) manifests itself clearly. The initial stylistic structure of the *Paraphrases* changed in time. At first, Franz Liszt brought in his brightly expressed stylistic "self" into it, having felt enthusiasm about the Russian composers' plan and having replenished their collective composition with his Prelude (1880). Then Nikolai Shcherbachov joined this project with a sharply dissonant concluding piece *Motley Colors. A Small Supplement to the Paraphrases* (1889). Hereby, three structural-stylistic versions of variation of Borodin's polka were gradually formed.

The powerful polystylistic potential of an unpretentious melody subsequently provided for its natural outlet into a grand intertextual space. The musical pleasantry was responded by Ludvig Schytte in his *Variations grotesques* (1890) for piano op. 63 No. 4, dedicated to Rimsky-Korsakov, the composer having indicated already at the beginning of the piece his own original, melodically and chromatically distorted "perspective" of the theme *Tati-tati* (Example No. 1). Our contemporary, St. Petersburg-based composer Gennady Belov suggested his programmatic stylistic modifications of the simple theme in his four-hand piano *New Paraphrases*. The humorous idea of the musicians of the past could not be bypassed by American composer Lyle Neff, an admirer and researcher of Russian music, who dedicated numerous scholarly articles and presentations to it and who has defended his doctoral dissertation on César Cui's operas (Example No. 2). His enthusiastic voice sounded out in the piano piece *"Tati-Tati" Polka in emulation of the composers of the Strauss family based on the two-finger theme used in the collective "Paraphrases" by Cui, Borodin, Liadov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Liszt, and Shcherbachov* (2013).

It must be acknowledged that an insufficient systematization of variational composition is exacerbated in the poly-style conditions at the various stages of life of a musical work. Obviously, it is provoked by the *composers* themselves, for example, by the St. Petersburg-based Sergei Slonimsky, who programmed a certain self-sufficiency of the movements of his

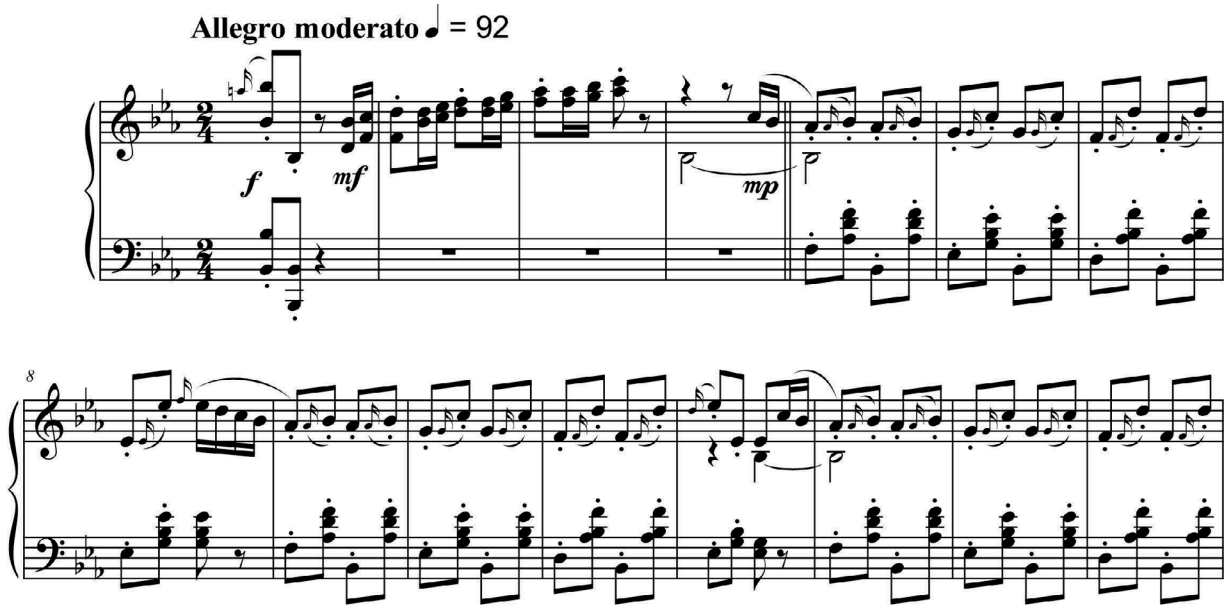
Example No. 1

Ludvig Schytte. *Variations grotesques*. Theme and First Variation



Example No. 2

Lyle K. Neff.
Polka *Tati-tati*



piano piece *The Three Graces* (1964)—"a *suite* in the form of variations on motives of Botticelli, Rodin and Picasso." It was expressed differently by German composer Siegfried Ochs: in 1878 he composed his *Variationen über das Lied 's kommt ein Vogel geflogen* im Stil bekannter Komponisten ("Variations on the Song 'The Bird Arrived' in the Styles of Well-Known Composers"), while a year later he deemed it possible to add to it a second volume of stylistic transformations of the same melody. Another German composer, Friedrich Sipp, constructed about ten versions of his oeuvre *O du lieber Augustin. Metamorphosen eines Gassenhauers im Stil berühmter Komponisten* ("Oh, my Dear Augustin. Metamorphoses of a Popular Tune in Styles of Outstanding Composers") (1983), which are differentiated by performing ensembles, the numbers of variations and an "assortment" of stylistic models.

Obviously, the "rules of the game" set by the composer or composers are accepted by the *performers*. No wonder then that the complete sets of the work *13 Ways of Looking at the Goldberg Variations* by pianist Gilbert Kalish, who gathered together pieces by various composers on the theme of the Aria from Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, then became their first performer (2004), and the recording of this composition made by Lara Downes, do not coincide.

Even more complicated is the fate of the performance of the aforementioned Variations by Ochs. In the recording of the American Symphony Orchestra (1916) the "bravura opera aria" *à la* Giuseppe Verdi and the allusion to Siebel's Aria from Charles Gounod's opera *Faust* disappeared, but at the end a brisk *Militaermusik* ("Military march") was added. In addition to that, each variation is preceded by pronunciation of the last name of the subsequent "portrayed" composer, bringing the work closer to a set of relatively independent pieces. The recording by the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie under direction of Werner Andreas Albert (1969–1971) was enriched by versions of Chopin, Schumann, Brahms, Meyerbeer, and, once again, a military march brought in earlier by American musicians. However, subsequently, the same orchestra with conductor Peter Falck and arranger Friedrich Rosenkranz (1995) dispensed with the stylizations of Chopin, Schumann and Brahms. The Düsseldorfer

Kammerbläser (Düsseldorf Chamber Wind Orchestra) (2009) returned to the first volume of Ochs' variations, having supplemented it with a stylization of Meyerbeer and the already statutory military march. As we can see, the performance versions may also differ in the number and the order of the variations, as well as in the order of the replicated styles. We may add to this the observations about what seems to be the technical side of performance practice: not infrequently the variations are performed on concert stages with the name of each title or each composer being announced, or they are recorded on compact discs in separate tracks, rather than as a unified composition. Thus, the structural mobility of the complete set and the disunity of the movements also affect the performance state of the existence of the work.

Naturally, the realization of the danger of eclecticism compels the musicians to exert special efforts for extinguishing the centrifugal forces in poly-style work in variation form. In practice, there has been developed a fair share of techniques and means neutralizing the disunity of the individual movements. A sufficiently viable approach is that of differentiating them the following way: the factors of the form-generating (in the broad sense of the word) character and the factors of a sense-making signification.

From the point of view of ***form-generation*** in poly-style variations, many of the standard unifying means are effectual, such as those described in great detail by Tsukkerman: the *thematic* (the recapitulation of the initial theme or introducing a new theme in the coda, synthesizing in it of themes or techniques of utterance tried out in various variations), the *structural* (involving a large-scale finale; an introduction preparing the variations or contrasting with them, adjacent to which, as a "retransition," an entire procession of variations is arrayed as a single "entity"; a group of variations and the arches between them assembled on the basis of diverse signs; crystallization of the "middle ground form"), and the *dramaturgical* (the culmination as a "point of attraction" of the sections adjacent to it). [2, pp. 168–190]

The musicologist's observations are confirmed by the compositional practice of modeling styles. The effect of the recapitulation is achieved by New Zealander and Canadian musician Ernest John Robertson in his *Dance Variations* op. 28 by the return in the finale of the tempo and meter-rhythm of the initial Sarabande. In Beethoven's *Six Folk Songs with Variations* op. 105, the Austrian song (No. 3), adjacent to the Scottish songs, forms a center of a three-element "middle-ground form" (according to Vladimir Protopopov). In the composer's *Ten Folksongs with Variations* op. 107, the Scottish sections alternate with several Tyrolian, as well as one Russian and one Little Russian section, in correspondence with the principle of the rondo. The twenty-four *Insomniac Variations* op. 24 by Ernesto Ferreri are properly concluded with a powerful final fugue coming out of a number of short structurally determined sections, while the Eighth and the Nineteenth Variation, entering into a relationship of "Precedent" vs. "Reminiscence," astringe the numerous fragments with a strong intonational framework.

The organizing role of the *tonal plan* is immense. Ferdinando Carulli encompasses the six sections of his *Folk Songs* for guitar op. 73, each of which is defined by a melody of one of the European peoples with variations on it, with the following circle of keys: *D minor–A minor–A major–A minor–A minor–D major*. In the transcription of the aforementioned Variations by Siegfried Ochs by the Düsseldorf chamber wind orchestra, most noteworthy is the finale: the unexpected appearance of the military march, alien to the theme and the variations (a "change for the last time," according to Tsukkerman) is emphasized by a harsh tonal shift, which in the aggregate signalizes of an exhaustion of a number of stylistic metamorphoses.

To what the distinguished theorist noted let us add that *timbres* also participate in the achievement of the unity of poly-style variations.

Not coincidentally, the longsighted Theodor Latour gives admission (*ad libitum*) in the 5th, 12th, 17th and 24th sections of the *26 Variations in Imitation of Eminent Professors*, besides the obligatory piano "the accompaniment of the flute"—thereby, he acquires the opportunity of operating with the alternation of large structural blocks and building the form hierarchically, in two levels: a motley assemblage of numerous equivalent small pieces (the lower level) is subservient to the strictly organized large-scale principle (the higher level).

For Siegfried Ochs, the composer of the humorous variations on the German song *'S kommt ein Vogel geflogen* ("The Bird Arrived") for piano, the timbral aspect was not relevant, but it acquired significance for musicians of later times who were solving the task of transcribing Ochs' work for orchestra. In the version performed by the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie under the direction of conductor Werner Andreas Albert (orchestrated by Friedrich Rosenkranz, recording made in 1969–1971) the timbral dramaturgy is provided by new, inserted variations (in comparison with the piano original version). A number of sections for orchestra (Theme–Bach–Haydn–Mozart–Johann Strauss–Verdi–Gounod) is followed by a solo section, where Chopin is presented as a pianist, after which, once again, in a timbral sound variety, there appear Wagner–Beethoven–Mendelssohn, after which Schumann follows in two hypostases—for piano, and then for orchestra, leading to a convincing conclusion (Brahms—Meyerbeer—Military March). Thereby, in the overall composition there are timbral arches presented, and the rondo principle of alternation of the orchestral and the piano sound is traced out. As we become convinced, due to the timbral dramaturgy, it becomes possible to neutralize the "suite-like" autonomy of the variations.

In addition to this, the cementing element of the poly-style is served by the preservation of a single *genre sphere*—usually in the sphere of dance. An illustrative example of that are Ernest John Robertson's *Dance Variations*, where jive, tango, polka, slow twostep and the concluding waltz are connected to the Sarabande theme in the role of variations. Ferdinando Carulli in his *Folk Songs* for guitar op. 73 resorts to a rondo-type, that is, an ordered alternation of songs and dances. For his musical parodies, titled *Anton Notenquetscher at the Piano* (1896), timed for celebrating the birthday of the founder of the famous piano factory in Berlin Karl Bechstein, Moritz Moszkowski selected a number of stylistic models, indicating at popular composers particularly of piano music.

Equally perceptible is the thoughtful treatment of *style models*. Their diversity, though seeming to be virtually entirely free, in reality is organized quite rationally. Thus, the large number of the composition's movements are not infrequently compensated by the fewness of the chosen styles (the six movements in Beethoven's op. 105 present only two styles—namely, those of Scottish and Austrian music). On the other hand, the styles do not necessarily have to contrast starkly with each other (for the *Six Songs with Variations* op. 89, written in 1859, Charles Dancla selected the styles of six Italian masters that were quite close to each other). The stylistic determinants of the dramaturgy are also thought out—for example, the easily identifiable chronological strategy of succession of styles, which will be discussed in greater detail later.

Finally, the integrality of the poly-style construction is at times strengthened by the *programmatic content.* Spanish composer Joaquín Turina Pérez in his *Hippocrates* variations from the Trilogy for piano op. 86 (1935) constructs an intriguing plotline by means of subtitles of the theme and the subsequent fragments: "Doctor" – "Patient" – "A Case of Musical Paranoia" – "Doctors' Chorus" – "Catastrophe" – "I Surrender" – "The Doctors Back Down" – "Commentary."

As the programmatic element to the piano parodies *Anton Notenquetscher at the Piano*, Moritz Moszkowski turns to a large fragment of Mephistopheles' dialogue with a student about the search for his path from the Fourth Scene of Goethe's *Faust*. However, the object of discussion presently (in the verbal stratum belonging to Alexander, the brother of Moritz Moszkowski) turns out to be the technique of stylistic transformations (Example No. 3). In addition, the composer is also aided by the rondo principle of alternating with each other two figurative-artistic strata: the verbal dialogue broken into segments and the small musical-stylistic "portraits."

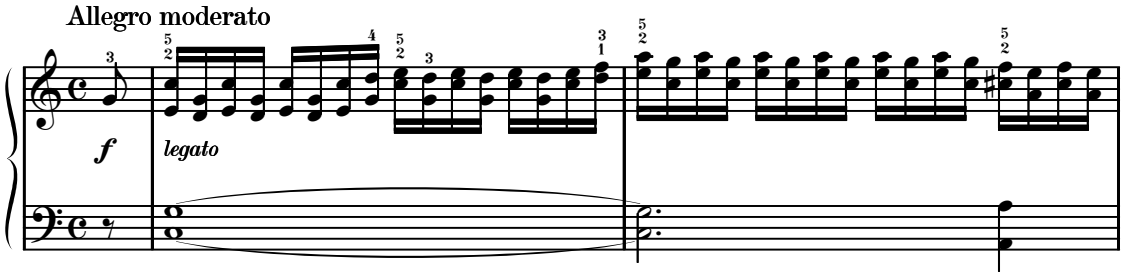
As we see, the composer has a substantial amount of "technological" resources for cementing the many-styled whole. However, at times, they are insufficient. The natural fragmentariness and incompleteness of the whole, multiplied by diverse styles, transfers

Example No. 3

Moritz Moszkowski.
Anton Notenquetscher at the Piano

Mephisto
This was already better in comparison;
Now the same chief motive appears
In another chain of passages,
As if Clementi wrote this.

The third piece sounds:



Mephisto
I like *Holzauktion* so much.[7]

Pupil
How grateful I am to you for the lesson!
Yes, my skills were poor before,
But now, O master, I virtually feel
How my fingers soar up;
Today I shall become a true pupil of the muses,
Worthy of the instrument.

[7] The abbreviated title of the Berlin street song *Im Grunewald, im Grunewald ist Holzauktion* ("In Grunewald, in Grunewald there is a Forest Auction") with the music of Franz Meisner (1892) set to Otto Teich's text (1890), forming the basis of Moszkowski's variational composition.

the problem of unity from the sphere of "form" to the sphere of its motivation—the sphere of ***artistic content***. Let us examine some of those artistic tasks that such a variety of variations is called to solve.

Mosaic. The simplest reason for poly-style variations is the creation of a panorama, a statement of plurality, diversity. Such a conception stems from the principle of the attributes of the suite, well-known in music, connecting rather intrinsically what in themselves are valuable and autonomous pieces.

As testified by history, the suite principle was successfully approbated on the basis of dance music, for example in the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and François Couperin, as a dialectic combination of commonness (the dance stratum) and individualization ("multiformity" of the dance models). Already in the baroque suite, several dances with clear indications of their national origins were canonized: the German Allemande, the French or Italian Courante, the Spanish Sarabande, the British Gigue. Combined with national traditions, the aspect of poly-genre also had a mundane point of its basis—the practice of dance evenings and balls. All sorts of pot-pourri compositions based on popular melodies, usually dance-like in their nature, had flourished in salon music-making. Divertimenti from "characteristic" dances, unconnected with the plotlines of the performances, were established on the ballet stage (in Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* and the second act of *Swan Lake*, as well as Alexander Glazunov's *Raimonda*). It goes without saying that the spectrum of nationally colored dances broadened, involving into the overall "roundelay" the Minuet, the Gavotte, the Sicilienne, the Polonaise, the Mazurka, the Waltz, etc. The variation form considered this experience and made its contribution into the unity of dances in the guise of their common thematic germ.

Relying on long-established traditions, the variation form at first mastered the different types of national cultures. The obvious priorities in it were formed by Scottish, Polish, German and Austrian music. The mosaic conception with its indisputable simplicity, opened up the possibility of familiarization with a multicolored musical world, which attracted in their time Nicolas Bochsa, François Hünten, and August Fryderyk Duranowski. In the 20th century it was already applied by Christa Sokoll in her composition *Eine Reise um die Welt. Neue Variationen über "Bienchen summ herum"* ("A Journey Around the World. New Variations on the Song 'The Bee Buzzes'") for an ensemble of recorders, with "stops" in Europe, the Near and Far East, North and South America. In its due time, the idea of plurality became worked out in detail, differentiating individual compositional styles. On this scale, preferences have also been formed: they are definitely handed over to Johann Sebastian Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin and Wagner, which, nonetheless, does not hinder the "portraying" of others, even less famous possessors of lesser original styles.

Reconstruction of historical perspective. A "text speaking in many voices" (according to Yuri Lotman) is constructed not only on the basis of synchrony, but also by means of another idea—the appearance of stylistic models in chronological order. It is rather simple, but artistically attractive. The motion along "the arrow of time" unwittingly traces the path of the history of Music. Such an effect is achieved by Giovanni Pietro Orefice in his composition *Goldschmieder Variations. Metamusical Travel with the Aria of the Goldberg Variations of J.S. Bach (BWV 988) Playing with Other Composers Works* for two pianos (2021). The composer transfers the main theme in a consistent manner from the baroque era into the music of the Viennese Classicists, then the Romanticists and, finally, into the music of Debussy. Correspondingly, the melody of the German children's song that Christa Sokoll became fond of is "flying" in her earlier work *Bienchen, summ herum. Heitere Reise durch die Musikgeschichte* ("The Bee Buzzes. A Merry Journey Through the History of Music") for

15 recorders (1980), into the music of the 14th century, Johann Sebastian Bach, Joseph Haydn and onwards, "landing" into modern times.

The historical vector provides not only an "all-presence in time" (according to Alfred Schnittke). Completing his *Bäcker-Beck-Variationen im Still verschiedener Meister* ("Bäcker-Beck Variations in the Styles of Different Masters") (1926) with the section "Fleischer," the composer of this surname, German composer Hans Fleischer, a great admirer of the music of past ages, seems to array his own artistic "genealogy," leading it from Bach and Handel to his contemporaries (which makes his work different from the spacious conception of Theodor Latour, who in his *Twenty-six Variations Imitating Outstanding Professors* appeared in the surroundings of his colleagues).
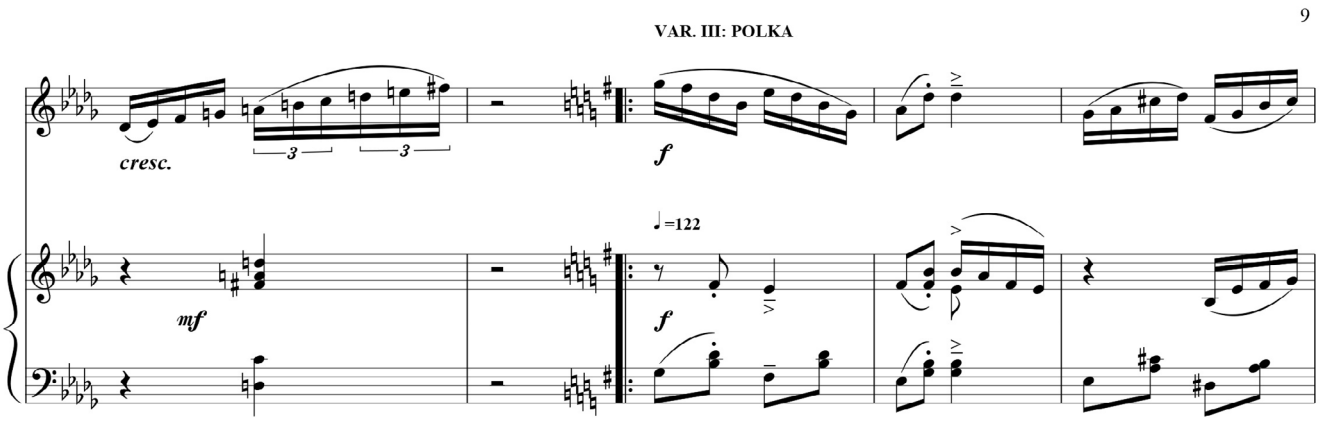
Play. Such a directive may be predesignated by the programmatic component, an example of which we may consider to be the composition *13 Ways of Looking at the Goldberg Variations* written by a group of composers. In the general title, of course, we may trace an intertextual interchange with Olivier Messiaen's grandiose piano cycle *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant Jésus*. At the same time, the titles of the pieces tune us to humorous dialogues with Bach: "Ghostly Variation," "Fantastic Variation," "My Goldberg (Gymnopedie No. 1)," "In Pursuit of Goldberg," "The Goldmore Variation" (involving the combination of Johann Gottlieb Goldberg's last name, included in the title of Bach's composition, and the important American patron Irving S. Gilmore; the international festival for pianists named after the latter has commissioned twelve composers to write pieces based on the Aria of the Goldberg Variations), "Variation on a Variation with Variations."

Play is unfolded in music as a *modus vivendi*, as well. Its attributes are frequently present in the initial theme—clearly constructed, woven from repeated simple intonations of a folkloristic-vernacular or scherzo-like character. The variation sections are also subservient to play. In Ernest John Robertson's *Dance Variations* the "rules of the game" are already set by the beginning sections, where a sharp leap occurs in space and time from the initial old Spanish Sarabande into contemporary African-American jive. Subsequently, the tonus of play is supported by other surprises: the transitional passage, modulating with gusto from *B-flat minor* in the second variation, the "Tango," to *G major* of the third variation, titled "Polka," breaks off abruptly by a lengthy mystifying pause (Example No. 4).

Even more perplexing is the following boundary—between Variation No. 3, the "Polka,"

Example No. 4

Ernest John Robertson. *Dance Variations* op. 28, transition to Variation No. 3



and Variation No. 4, the "Slow Twostep" (mm. 257–269): gradually fading away repercussions of the polka are replaced with indecisive pensive phrases. Two transitional structures between variations assemble into a stratum of form in opposition to the masterfully modelled dances. Their free-fantasy, improvisational character seems to indicate at the presence of a certain independent creative will—the composer himself.[8] As a result, the form of the whole from the presumed dance "suite" is transformed into an artistically more original balancing between "dances" and their "composer-demiurge" playing with the material created by him, creating "in front of our eyes."

Yet another aspect of play is mastered by polystylistic means—as a *type of activity*. The unsurpassable stylistic dissonance, and with it a smile of the grateful listener, are aroused by the appearance of jazz—in a series of genre- and style-related modifications of the simplistic theme. Quite enchanting are the jazz finales of the poly-style collisions of the songs *Zhil byl u babushki seren'kiy kozlik* ("There lived at Grandma's a Little Grey Goat") and *V lesu rodilas' yolochka* ("A Little Fir-Tree was Born in the Forest") in performance by Denis Matsuev, as well as the theme of Paganini's Twenty-Fourth Caprice developed by the musicians of the Matsuev Quartet.[9] Along with jazz, in the variations another one of their aesthetical resources is generated—a demonstration of performance skill. At the same time, the audience's enthusiasm of the boundless performance freedom and virtuosity is by no means limited to proud professional self-affirmation. In it, virtually, the play essence of music (and even, as philosophers justly assert,—of existence) is manifested.

The aesthetical position. Poly-style variation has been examined from early times as a field of reflection, as an opportunity to speak out one's understanding, one's evaluation of what is taking place in art and life. In the spectrum of the relations uttered this way, undoubtedly, there is a predominance of those that fall under the label of the *comical* (in an entire palette of its gradations from a naïve joke to a rather wicked type of grotesquerie). At the same time, words frequently come to the aid of music. They realize themselves, for example, in the verbal comments, indicating one of the aspects of the comical—exaggeration (*furioso* in Emanuele Delucchi's scores, *Prestissimoristringendo* in Gerd Büntzly's scores, *with zest* in Ernesto Ferreri's scores).

The composer frequently declares openly the comical angle in the titles of his compositions, for example, such as *Unvermeidliche Variationen über einen Ohrwurm* ("Inevitable Variations of an Imposing Melody") by Büntzly, *Variations grotesques* by Schytte, and *Insomniac Variations* by Ferreri. Musicians also make use of the informative potential of the subtitles: German composer Cornelius Gurlitt labels the *Variations on the Theme of "Ah, du lieber Augustin"* op. 115 (1880) as *humorously treated in the style of classical Composers*, American composer and programmer Benjamin Nacar in the *Variations on the Theme of "Für Elise" in the Styles of Different Composers* (2020) places the subtitle (*How Not To Play Für Elise*), while German opera singer Hans Nissen (*Thirteen Variations on a Children's Song*, 1960) and German choral conductor and composer Siegfried Ochs (*Folk Song with Variations in the Styles of the Old-Time and the Newest Composers*, before 1878) called their works *Ein musikalischer Scherz* ("A Musical Joke"), and Austrian composer and pianist Karl Hermann Pillney labels his *Adventures of a Popular Melody* (before

[8] About the phenomenon of the composer's presence in his own oeuvre, see: [14].

[9] Let us give the amazing instrumentation of the quartet ensemble: piano, balalaika, double-bass and percussion.

1968) as “Parodische Variationen für Hörer mit Sinn für musikalische Eulenspigeleien” (“Parody Variations for Listeners Understanding Musical Jokes”).

Words are also effectual in the titles provided for separate variations. Quite humorous are the verbal presentations of the versions of the song *V lesu rodilas’ yolochka* (“The Fir Tree was Born in a Forest”) (1985) in Mikhail Yermolov’s composition: “The Beginning of Mozart’s ‘Christmas Sonata’” (in the style of Mozart), “The Second Movement of Beethoven’s ‘Hypothetique Sonata’” (an allusion to the slow movement of the “Pathetique” Sonata), “The Miniature ‘Dance of the Small Trolls under the Christmas Tree’” (in the style of Grieg), “Prelude ‘The Fir Tree with Needles of the Colors of Henna’” (an allusion to Debussy’s *La fille au cheveux de lin*), “Gavotte ‘On the Kremlin Christmas Tree party’” (in the style of Prokofiev with a quotation of the scalar passage from *Juliet as a Girl*), “The Early Romance ‘The Fir Tree was Sad in Lilac Fog’ by Rachmaninoff set to a Text by Zinnaida Gippius” (an allusion to Rachmaninoff’s romance *The Lilac*), “An Improvisation ‘The Green Prickly Soviet Christmas Tree” (in the jazz style of Oscar Peterson).

Words are entrusted even with such important tasks as the unfolding of an enthralling storyline. It is successfully solved not only in the aforementioned *Hippocrates* variations, where Joaquin Turina Pérez has observed the interrelations between doctors and a patient. In a detailed scenario of Nicholas Ma’s piano piece *Jingle Bells but 18 classical composers are decorating a Christmas Tree* (2017) against the background of numerous quotations and allusions, such as: “Chopin Adds Christmas Lights,” “Rimsky-Korsakov Freaks out at a Bee in his House,” “Schubert Wanders into the Room,” “Rachmaninoff Wonders Where Mozart is,” “Mozart Jump Scares Rachmaninoff,” “Rachmaninoff Faints,” which ends in a fight and the use of the Christmas tree as a weapon.[10] A humorous musical psychodrama of torments at night is unfolded by Ernesto Ferreri in his *Insomniac Variations*.

Finally, incorporated words place musical works into a larger comical context: an album of the EMI company with background compositions by Ochs and Pillney performed by the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie under the direction of Werner Andreas Albert was released in the series *Meisterworke des musikalischen Humors* (“Masterpieces of Musical Humor”) (Il. 1).



Il. 1. Envelope of the CD from the series Masterpieces of Musical Humor.
Number from the EMI Electrola Catalogue:
C 063-28180

[10] Inspired by the effective result of the imaginative joke, Nicholas Ma composed another similar variation work—*Happy Birthday but 13 classical composers are fighting over the last slice of cake*, published in 2022.

The music itself also makes it possible to become convinced that the comic potential is effective in a state of poly-style unity. It is not difficult to observe that for the intonational bases for such varying, composers felt the need for melodies of a special kind—they were all characterized by a simplicity of melodic contour, rhythm and structure, as well as unpretentiousness, childlike naïveté, sincerity and playfulness. Such traits undoubtedly characterize the 17th century Austrian folksong *Ach, du lieber Augustin* ("Ah, you Dear Augustin"), the jaunty American song with an initial humorous meaning and presently a patriotic meaning *Yankee Doodle*, the song *Happy Birthday to You,* which has become truly iconic, as well as the most popular melody *V lesu rodilas' yolochka* ("The Fir Tree was Born in a Forest").

The comical angle is also supported by variations. In them, not only is a painstaking stylization undertaken, but also an incidence creating a comical effect, an exaggeration of certain features of one or another style, especially distinctly, together with a simple key tune. The comic effect is created by the "transformation into minor" of the initial theme, its transpositions and transferals into the extreme registers, its metric-rhythmic scale up (for example, the statement of Beethoven's melody in a blistering tempo in sixty-fourth note durations in a 3/8 meter at the beginning of the *Variations on the Theme of "Für Elise" in the Styles of Various Composers* by Benjamin Nacar). Intensive work is carried out with the material, which includes thematic derivations (articles and allusions), thematic condensations (strettos, contrapuntal combination, a swift succession of themes by various composers), collage-like "collisions" and supple deviations or modulations of intonation and style, combinatorics and other techniques.

The composer's humoristic frame of mind is also revealed by all sorts of intonational "pranks." Such works as, for example, the *Insomniac Variations. Theme with 24 Variations and a Fugue* for piano op. 24 (2007) by Ernesto Ferreri. In them the composer resorts to eclectic "adjacencies" of styles (for example, in Variations No. 2, *Aberti,* and No. 3, *Rhumba*) and contrasting intonations. There are numerous exaggerations (mellifluent cadences, an affecting "colorization" of chords of harp-like arpeggio motions), unpredictable modulations, sudden stops (prolongations of a chord concluding the Twentieth Variation for ten seconds, tremolos of the sounds of perfect fifths in a low register for 20 seconds in the transition between the 22nd and the 23rd Variations). The composer is generous with *staccatos*, mordents, grace notes and fermatas. As a result, numerous small details are assembled into quite a veracious picture of chaotic dithering of thought—a nocturnal nightmare.

Subjecting the theme to stylistic trials, musicians are hardly limited to jesting. The polystylistic multitude is given more serious roles. For example, it makes it possible to create a sort of *musical offering*. The idea of expressing homage to his colleagues was thought of by Theodor Latour in the poly-style panorama of the music of the turn of the 18th and the 19th centuries under the title of the *Twenty-Six Variations Imitating Outstanding Professors*. The Homage to Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, *Grotesque Variations* by Ludvig Schytte focused itself on the theme—a chromatically "sharpened" tune of *Tati-tati*, associated in this case with the master of Russian art (although, as it is known, the authorship of the melody belongs to Alexander Borodin), and the scherzo tone of the music. The idea of artistic co-authorship also turned out to be productive. In 1956 eight French composers presented the well-known pianist Margaret Long their musical gift—the piece *Variations on a Theme by Margaret Long*. Similarly, the celebration of the 80th anniversary of Hungarian musician Zoltán Kodály was marked with the appearance of the orchestral *Variations on a Theme by Zoltán Kodály* (1962) by five of his composition students, who were united by their treatment of a theme from the

String Quartet No. 1 by their teacher. Many other collective variation works were intended to honor significant musical public figures (Mikhail Glinka, Mitrofan Belyayev, the creator of the compilation of folksongs of the Vyatka region Nikolai Abramychev) or significant dates for musical life (such as the centennial of the Moscow Conservatory).

The aesthetic position that could be described as *idealizing* is close in its essence to musical offerings. The unusual composition *Wie einst Lili Marlen. Varianten end poetische Parodien im Stile großer Meister über das weltbekannte Lied* ("When once Lili Marlen. Variants and Poetical Parodies in the Styles of the Great Masters on the World Famous Song") for piano or orchestra (1981) was formed up by German composer and pianist Hans Priegnitz. The lyrical song, which captivated the world in the 1940s, especially in the performance of Marlene Dietrich, appeared here not only in the "public comments" of the greatest musicians (Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, the Romanticists, Bartók and Johann Strauss)—the musical phrases are alternated with reminiscences of verses of famous poets (Goethe, Eichendorff, Heine and others). Thereby, with the joint forces of two types of artistry—the musical and the poetic—the composer transformed the humble daydreams of a soldier about his meeting with a girl into a veritable symbol of humanity elegized by art.

The field of artistic possibilities of poly-style "reversing" of a theme is seen by the composer much broader and spans over rather complex aesthetical-philosophical conceptions. This pertains in full measure to the aforementioned *Double Variations for Violin and Suspended Cymbal* by Vladimir Kobekin, wherein the concluding counterpoint of two self-sufficient and distinct strata of music—the folkloristic-vernacular and the professional-academic—appear as created out of compulsion, rather than being organic. The listener becomes a witness to a remarkable *drama*: while speaking virtually about the same thing—a lamenting pouring of the human soul,—two musical civilizations seem not to hear or understand each other.

Absolutely *tragic* is the conception of Alfred Schnittke' short piece *Stille Nacht* ("Silent Night") for violin and piano. The melody of the Austrian Christmas hymn with the same title by Franz Xavier Gruber, composed in 1818, is filled with grace and divine luminosity. At first, it envelopes the affectedly contemplating soul with its serene consonant sound. However, confronted with an aggressive onrush of dissonantly chromatic means, the theme, which long since has become the symbol of eternal harmony and perfection, gradually becomes distorted and disappears. The composer seems to forewarn us about the danger stemming from avant-garde innovations and usurps by itself the fundamental bases, the reliable traditions of art, or, on the other hand,—resonating with the grandiose conception of his Symphony No. 1—about the Evil and Chaos that threaten Good and Beauty.[11]

Conclusion

We have become convinced that musicians are well familiar with such potential of variations, as the possibility of a brave "departure" from the pivot-theme. In practice, this knowledge becomes manifested not only in academic textural, timbral or other—inventive—transformations of the source material, but also in the decisive changes of its genre- and even style-related appearance.

Polystylistics is quite diverse in variations, both in the chosen "originals for portrayal" and in the means of their dislocation. It becomes scaled in the sphere of individual compositional

[11] The aesthetic aspect of polystylistics is examined in rather great detail in the publication: [15].

styles and, to take it broader,—in the spheres of styles of national cultures and great epochs. In terms of disposition, it is also solved in different ways: the stylistic distinction appears between the themes and the variations, between the respective themes, between the blocks of "theme with variations," and between the variations themselves. Not infrequently, it is combined with contrast of genre—heightening it and bringing greater detail to it (the polonaise and mazurka serve as intonational signs of Polish culture, the tarantella represents the Italian culture and the bolero—of the Spanish). The distance between the styles also oscillates from barely perceptible to quite obvious and even marked out.

Upon the repeated statements of the theme in different styles, certain natural recurrences of the variation form become more acutely perceptible. On the one hand, with the enhancement of contrast, the tendency of disintegration of the movements becomes fortified. However, on the other hand, additional centripetal mechanisms of its compensation become involved. Besides the means developed by the evolution of variation form, it became possible to disclose such means specific for polystylistics as timbral dramaturgy, genre homogeneity of the variations, the selectivity of the choices of styles, as well as programmatic qualities. The potential destructivity of the poly-style variations pales in comparison with a clearly set, professionally and convincingly solvable artistic goal. As it has turned out, their artistic goal-setting is quite diverse. It covers a preliminary mosaic picture of the musical world (a sort of metamusical model of being), presents a construction of the historical retrospective of the art of music. The element of play was rightfully established it within a range spanning from the manipulation of musical material and even with large-scale strata of music through playing on the instrument (as a type of activity, a demonstration of performing skills, the "condition of the soul"), up to the philosophical assertion of the play paradigm of existence. Poly-style variations turned out to be in possession of focusing on a particular aesthetical position—comic (in its various tints), reverently-idealizing, dramatic, and tragic.

Beyond all doubt, an unconditional priority for musicians is assumed by play and jest, which are quite close to each other. Such an aesthetic predilection on the part of variations has stipulated a special demand here of themes of a song and dance variety, unpretentious in a childlike way, which are everybody's favorites.

As can be seen, the variation form has undergone an evolution. One of the ramifications of its historical motion has become its permeation with differently styled models. This idea, having been generated rather a long time ago, continues to be relevant at the present time, as well. It is adhered to by many composers, most notably—by British musician Paul Coles in his *Concertino, Theme and Variations in the Style of Various Composers* for piano and orchestra (before 2020), Italian pianist, organist and composer Carmelo Mantione in his *Variazioni su un tema di Bach in differenti stili storici* ("Variations on a Theme by Bach in Various Historical Styles") op. 11 for piano (2015), as well as Benjamin Nacar, Giovanni Pietro Orefice, Jonathan Posthuma and other musicians.

The stylistic space of the genre of variations is expanding. Examples of contemporary art are penetrating into it (the music of Arnold Schoenberg, Bela Bartók, Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich, Georgy Sviridov, Erik Satie, John Cage and George Gershwin finds itself subservient to the art of portrayal). The variation form has been substantially enriched by the energies of jazz, ballroom dance (Argentinian tango, American foxtrot, African American jive, and Afro-Cuban rumba), and cinema, specifying the meeting points between the academic and entertainment strata of music and opening up new aesthetic perspectives before it.

Finally, in the mutual interactions between "variations" and "style," the reevaluation of

these categories themselves becomes obvious. This occurs upon interpretation of "style" as a "theme" of variation (a "theme of the highest order"), which was carried out in the piano piece *Toccatina-Collage* (No. 12 from the *Polyphonic Notebook*, 1972) by Rodion Shchedrin, thereby creating a brilliant example of a sort of "double variations" in the alternating styles of Bach and Shchedrin. Judging by everything, the principle of variation that it itself is simple—that of repetition with changes—has by no means exhausted its form-generating and artistic resources, and the centuries-old history of variations shall continue in the future.

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