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Re-Approaching a Taxonomy of the Opera Fantasia: A Clarified Genre, A Clarified Context

*Grižtant prie operos fantazijos taksonomijos:
patikslintas žanras, patikslintas kontekstas*

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Abstract

To discuss opera fantasias as a corpus situated in a historical and social context – not to mention the ways in which opera fantasias interact with and comment on that context – we must first ask not only “what is an opera fantasia?” but also “how can such a piece be described and categorized?” Many scholars of the opera fantasia have emphasized the blurred boundaries between variation sets and fantasias. However, woodwind fantasias rarely occupy ambiguous positions between variation and fantasia by using a single theme but stepping beyond the category of “theme and variations”; by avoiding virtuosic ornamentation on themes yet altering them; or by including multiple solo instruments.

Often a desire to separate out and describe the “true opera fantasia” (as per Charles Suttoni) pairs with a desire to exceptionalize a single composer while, purposefully or incidentally, denigrating the genre as a whole. Yet carefully considering aspects including variation methods and characteristics, levels of virtuosity, specific titles, and number of operatic themes solidifies the idea of the fantasia as a distinct genre. At the same time, this allows for analysis of cultural reception and placement of these works as a genre beyond individual composer characteristics. For example, the wide range of titles assigned to opera fantasias does not necessarily reflect a wide range of differences in content. Nevertheless, the title “potpourri” can have strongly negative implications, while the title “concerto” can be seen as an attempt at elevating a fantasia into a more established genre. From implications of censorship to attitudes towards woodwind virtuosity to a prolonged Italian focus on vocalità in instrumental music, woodwind opera fantasias in their specifics and as a clarified genre reflect their nineteenth-century Italian context and the often Germanic history of musicological reception between the times of their composition and now.

Keywords: woodwinds, virtuosity, opera, fantasia, genre.

Anotacija

Norėdami aptarti operos fantazijas kaip visumą istoriniame ir socialiniame kontekste, ką jau kalbėti apie operos fantazijų sąveiką su šiuo kontekstu ir apie komentarus jam, pirmiausia turime išsiaiškinti ne tik tai, kas yra operos fantazija, bet ir kaip tokį kūrinį galima apibūdinti ir klasifikuoti. Dauguma operos fantazijų tyrinėtojų pabrėžia, kad variacijų rinkinių ir fantazijų ribos neryškios. Tačiau medinių pučiamųjų instrumentų fantazijos retai užima dviprasmiškas pozicijas tarp variacijų ir fantazijų, nes naudoja vieną temą, bet peržengia temos ir variacijų kategoriją; vengia temų virtuozinių instrumentuotųjų, bet jas perdirba; įtraukia kelis solinius instrumentus.

Dažnai noras išskirti ir aprašyti „tikrąją operos fantaziją“ (pagal Charlesą Suttoni) yra lydimas siekio išskirti vienintelį kompozitorių ir kartu tyčia ar netyčia sumenkinti visą žanrą. Vis dėlto atidžiai išnagrinėjus tokius aspektus kaip variacijų metodai ir ypatybės, virtuoziško lygiai, konkretūs pavadinimai ir operos temų skaičius, fantazijos, kaip atskiro žanro, idėja sustiprėja. Kartu tai leidžia analizuoti šių kūrinių kultūrinę recepciją ir jų kaip žanro išskyrimą, nesiejant su individualių kompozitorių charakteristikomis. Pavyzdžiui, plati operų fantazijoms priskiriamų pavadinimų įvairovė nebūtinai atspindi didelių turinio skirtumus. Vis dėlto pavadinimas „popuri“ gali turėti labai neigiamą konotaciją, o pavadinimas „koncertas“ gali būti vertinamas kaip bandymas fantaziją pakylėti į labiau pripažįstamą žanrą. Nuo cenzūros implikacijų iki požiūrio į pučiamųjų instrumentų virtuoziskumą ir užsitęsusių italų dėmesio instrumentinės muzikos vokalumui, medinių pučiamųjų operų fantazijos savo specifika ir kaip išgrynintas žanras atspindi XIX a. Italijos kontekstą ir dažnai germaniškąją muzikologinės recepcijos istoriją nuo jų sukūrimo laikų iki dabar.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: mediniai pučiamieji muzikos instrumentai, virtuoziskumas, opera, fantazija, žanras.

“This is trash music; you must feel ill, this is musical pornography!” In an article in the journal of the International Double Reed Society, oboist Sandro Caldini recounts as such his brother’s reaction to the opera fantasias composed by nineteenth-century Italian composer and oboist Antonio Pasculli. Caldini (responsible for many of the current editions of Pasculli’s music and much of the basic information

we know about him) then explains his own response to this outburst, one familiar to many performers and scholars of the fantasia.

I [Caldini] was very disappointed with his answer and after putting away the score in my library I began thinking about which oboe pieces are really important and why Pasculli’s pieces aren’t beautiful but funny. (Caldini 1994: 39)

Not beautiful but funny: this reflects common twentieth-century opinions of the opera fantasia as well as the opinions of many nineteenth-century critics, particularly those from Germanic traditions.

But whether Pasculli's pieces are beautiful or funny, whether they are therefore "art" or the "emotionally void" virtuosic music that critics have derided, they are important. They reflect the physical possibilities of their instrument, true, but they and their myriad companions also reflect the tastes of audiences and musicians at the time of their composition. Scores of positive reviews, commenting on tasteful alteration of operatic melodies and beautifully skilled musical interpretation of vocal lines, survive in nineteenth-century musical journals. Recent musical and musicological discussion can be particularly vicious about virtuosic instrumental music, particularly that by little-known composers, dismissing it as overly focused on technique or as purely commercial. A twenty-first-century review of a Pasculli CD argues that:

In his operatic fantasias the thematic material is of less importance than the amazing technical demands made on any player [...]. The musical allusions may now be lost, but the technical display remains supreme. (Anderson 2008)

Surely the reviewer of the Pasculli CD contradicts himself by admitting that "the musical allusions may now be lost" (Anderson 2008); if knowing the musical allusions is relevant to a fantasia, this implies both that the pieces are not solely interesting from a technical standpoint and that for Pasculli's audiences the thematic material of fantasias such as his would be known and important. And this is indeed true beyond a doubt.

Flautist Giuseppe Gariboldi is praised for the way in which he "preserves the thoughts of the author" – his reliance on past musical material is crucial – with each theme emerging clearly through "daring" ornamentation and "a flood of notes"; "Nothing is bolder than his passagework, nothing sweeter than his singing."¹ And Ernesto Cavallini is the "Paganini" of the clarinet not because of his brilliant and astonishing technique but because his instrument "sings, animates, lights up; in a word, he 'poetizes' it and makes it produce hitherto unknown effects."² In Cavallini we see only one of many comparisons of other instrumentalists to Paganini, but we see an unusual comparison. The association of other instrumentalists to physical, technical Paganinian virtuosity is exceedingly common; less common is the association of Paganini with "poetizing." These comparisons also stretch far past the nineteenth-century. Contemporary references to Pasculli note that he was particularly "modest" about his abilities. Yet Pasculli is often heralded as "the Paganini of the oboe" by modern players. Books, articles, and sheet music refer to him as such, citing his "staggering

virtuosity" and creation of "the illusion of double stopping by setting a slow-moving melody against constant florid motion, reminiscent of Paganini's études" (Burgess and Haynes 2003: 154–156). It is the physical abilities and external trappings of composition that elicit this comparison, and this comparison leads to a flattening of the genre of the opera fantasia, both its reception and the realities of its musical content and compositional approaches.

Further in this text, I return to Paganini in the form of the duology of Paganini and Liszt, our pseudo-fathers of nineteenth-century virtuosity. First, I tackle another duology, one fundamental to the concept of the opera fantasia as a genre and to its positioning in society.

Clarifying the genre

How did the term "fantasia" come to be associated with the genre of the opera fantasia? The answer involves two separate strands: the development of the virtuosic piece based on an external theme and the changing nature of the term fantasy or fantasia, which has its origins in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century works. In the latter context, "fantasia" emphasized the "free" nature of a composition, its imaginative aspects and, perhaps ironically, its freedom from words (Field 2001). The free and imaginative qualities of the fantasia survive in the opera fantasia, a genre nearly defined in its performances by virtuoso instrumentalist-composers and the free, pseudo-improvisatory alterations of texted melodies during those performances by those musicians. Contemporaneously, however, the term also referred to "parody" works based on themes from polyphonic sacred and secular music, a context much more similar to "fantasia" as later used to describe works based on themes from operas. The history of the fantasia is one of the persistent coexistences of multiple contrasting genres sharing a designating title. In the nineteenth century, this contrast was heightened, the free-form instrumental genre appearing in the Romantic era in the form of the orchestral fantasia – a work of art, both a legitimate alternative to compositions in sonata form and a term redolent of compositional artistry, daring and brilliant – which coexisted with virtuosic but derivative "opera fantasias" (also see Coppola 1998). An 1805 article in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* described Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony as "really a very extended, daring and wild fantasia"; Beethoven's "fantastical" daring was the key to his genius, a "revelatory" power which was fascinatingly ambiguous to contemporary audiences (Richards 2001: 184–185).³ But there was a huge disparity between this and the evolving views of the virtuosic opera fantasia. Carl Czerny's slightly disdainful remark that "the majority will be entertained only by the pleasant, familiar tunes [of opera fantasias] and will be sustained in spirit by

piquant and glittering performances” provides a concept in striking opposition to the orchestral fantasia as Beethovenian, “difficult and exceptional” (Richards 2001: 185). Opera fantasias (and potpourris – a closely related genre often differing only in title but occasionally indicating more simplistic alteration of operatic melodies) are pointedly not difficult or exceptional, except for the performer.

Approached from a stylistic angle rather than a semantic one, opera fantasias flowed out of variation sets based on operatic themes, which were popular at the end of the eighteenth century. Virtuoso music flourished in salons and aristocratic parties as well as at public concerts, and the music for these occasions, such as *quatuors brillants*, is another parent of the opera fantasia. The wider genre, including early works by composers such as Louis Spohr (1784–1859), Daniel Steibelt (1765–1823), and Johann Baptist Cramer (1771–1858), then became popular far before the generally assumed 1830s and 1840s.⁴ In both his compositions and his writing on music, Louis Spohr demonstrates the dual nature of the fantasia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; in contrast to his potpourris, described as light virtuosic works “clearly designed for use at the music parties which were an essential element of any concert tour,” Spohr’s compositional style is also an “ingenious combination of variation and free fantasia,” here referencing the “pure” or non-sonata fantasia (Brown 1984: 27, 50).

Creating a definition

To discuss opera fantasias as a corpus situated in a historical and social context – not to mention the ways in which opera fantasias interact with and comment on that context – I ask not only “what is an opera fantasia?” but also “how can such a piece be described and categorized?” Definitions of the opera fantasia and of signifying approaches to variation and ornamentation vary widely by necessity, reflecting each author’s primary focus on genre, technique, composer, and/or locale. My own definition, of course, does not escape this. But in bringing together previous definitions and taxonomies of the opera fantasia and related genres and techniques, I aim to focus more precisely on the coherence of the opera fantasia as a distinct genre, the presence of certain techniques above others, commonalities across composers, and the significance of Italianate persistence of the genre.

My primary definition is that an opera fantasia must use multiple themes from only one opera, must include virtuosic variation and/or ornamentation on more than one of those themes, and must feature a single solo instrument. In discussing the development of variation, Elaine Sisman emphasizes blurred distinctions between variation sets “tricked out with all manner of introductions, finales and

virtuoso details” and fantasias, claiming the two genres are “nearly indistinguishable” (Sisman 2001). Past scholarship more generally either emphasizes the fuzziness of the genre or the limited nature of it; see Charles Suttoni’s claim that most fantasias have “very little to do with the dramatic character of the opera” in contrast to Liszt’s “more dramatically cogent choice of thematic material, encapsulating, as it were, the dramaturgical essence of the opera” or Robert Nelson’s lack of distinction between pieces using multiple themes and pieces using one theme (Suttoni 2002; Nelson 1949: 5).

However, my definition reflects the reality of fantasias for woodwind instruments, in which compositions divide strongly into “single theme and variations” and “multiple themes and variations,” the latter, broadly, being fantasias. While they can vary considerably in formal specifics and appear under many different titles, as a genre these fantasias have considerable consistencies in style and format. Woodwind fantasias rarely occupy ambiguous positions at the edges of this definition by using a single theme but stepping beyond the category of “theme and variations”; by avoiding virtuosic ornamentation on themes yet altering them; or by including multiple solo instruments. Despite his valuable contributions to scholarship of the opera fantasia, Suttoni’s work is biased in favor of presenting Liszt as an exceptional composer of fantasias, with a goal of re-establishing only his compositions as worthy of the canon. Examining a large corpus of fantasias reveals that many composers align more with Liszt, by including “dramatically cogent” themes, than with Suttoni’s general definition.

A taxonomy of variation

As my specific definition of the opera fantasia is at once straightforward and uncommon, it is helpful to explore the opera fantasia through a taxonomy of variation rather than focusing on literal definitions. Indeed, opera fantasias both vary considerably in formal specifics (appearing with sonata-form movements or ritornellos, in tripartite ABA form, or with series of variations) and maintain considerable consistencies in style and format when looked at as a unit. In this context, I am indebted to Nelson’s working through of variation methods and characteristics, to Robert O. Gjerdingen’s discussions of schemata, and to Jim Samson’s and James A. Hepokoski’s approaches to genre (see Nelson 1949; Gjerdingen 1988; Samson 1989; Hepokoski 1989). For those writing on variation forms and techniques, such as Nelson and J. Peter Burkholder, the key dividing line is that between “structural” variation and “free” variation; the first is the more traditional approach to variation, where the theme remains fundamentally similar to its original form, and the second is the late-nineteenth-century approach that includes “use of theme motives or of transformations

of the melodic subject,” as seen in pieces like Strauss’s *Don Quixote* or in Schoenberg’s approach to variation (Nelson 1949: 9). Free variation rarely appears in opera fantasias, in which the emphasis is on an extended, faithfully presented operatic melody – Liszt is, unusually, a possible true exception here. Within structural variation, then, I focus on the distinction between the single-theme variation set and the multiple-theme fantasia. Significant trends in the methods of varying operatic themes within these compositions help to narrow down the field of the opera fantasia.

Variation sets versus fantasias

Theme and variations can be opera-based works but are not fantasias. Like fantasias, theme and variations on operatic themes were written for every instrument; those for woodwinds include Beethoven’s famous variations on *Là ci darem la mano* for double reed trio, Louis Spohr’s variations on a theme from *Alruna* for clarinet and orchestra, and Giuseppe Giacomelli’s rather less well known *Variazioni per flauto solo sopra un tema della Lucia di Lammermoor*. These pieces were extremely popular, and many Italian woodwind performers who composed fantasias also composed variation sets, but they are out of place in my discussion here. Variation sets share the range of virtuosity present in fantasias, but they lack the compositional connective tissue and, to a large extent, the narrative overtones of true fantasias. It is rare to find an unambiguous theme and variations set – one presenting only a single theme with a series of variations – which uses the title “fantasia” rather than the literal “variations.” However, a slightly ambiguous type of theme and variations that includes a second “andante” theme is also common and sometimes appears under this title. Examples of this include Antonio Torriani’s Op. 4 *Fantasia per Fagotto con Accomp.to di Piano Forte sopra un tema del Pirata* and Ernesto Cavallini’s *Variazioni per Clarinetto sopra un Tema dell’Opera “Elisa e Claudio” del Maestro Mercadanto*. Each briefly presents one operatic theme before moving on to a second theme and a series of explicitly labelled variations on that theme, each new variation with a different marked tempo and presenting a new character. These pieces exist on a continuum between a single theme with variations and a true fantasia, with some pieces using several themes but including a labelled theme and variation section on one of them. Ernesto Cavallini’s *Variazioni per clarinetto sopra motivi dell’opera “L’elisir d’amore,”* for example, presents four themes, one of which is labelled as “tema” and followed by labelled “variazioni” using different methods of ornamentation. “Fantasia” instead signifies a composition that features one or few variations on each of multiple themes rather than many variations on one theme: standard opera fantasias use anywhere from three to eight themes. Those falling within

the upper end of that range are extremely common, and fantasias with ten or more themes by no means unheard of. Even when many themes are used, however, variation will occur throughout a fantasia.

Approaches to variation and ornamentation within the fantasia

Aside from the number of themes and the general form of the fantasia, are there differences in approaches to variation within a variation set and within a fantasia? Most variation techniques occur in both kinds of compositions, but there are notable characteristics that help to solidify the fantasia as a distinct genre despite the range of forms contained within that genre.

While variation sets frequently include a minor-mode variation, shifting modes either from major to minor or the reverse is very uncommon in opera fantasias. However, the habitual reordering of operatic themes in fantasias so as to end with a triumphant major mode theme is reminiscent of modal shifting. Additionally, themes are commonly transposed in fantasias to facilitate transitions between themes or to navigate the technical challenges (range, switching between auxiliary keys played by the same finger, cross-fingerings) of a given instrument. An example with more virtuosic implications is Paganini’s *Non più mesta: Variazione sul tema “non più mesta accanto al fuoco” dalla “Cenerentola” di Rossini*, in which Paganini uses scordatura tuning. As Rossini wrote “Non più mesta” in the key of E major, there seems no particular reason for Paganini to have set his variations in scordatura E flat rather than in notated D major except as an excuse to show off the technical possibilities available to his instrument. Usually, though, transposition within a fantasia is merely pragmatic.

Variation through ornamentation pervades variation in fantasias, occurring with nearly every theme presented. Levels range from very little ornamentation on any theme, such as in Raffaele Parma’s *Pot-pourri sopra motivi dell’opera Rigoletto di Verdi*, in which he rapidly moves through eight themes with only a small amount of elaboration or ornamentation on each theme; to so much ornamentation that the theme is almost invisible, such as in Giacomo Mori’s semiquaver laden reprise of “Oh! voce! è dessa” in his *Fantasia per oboe sopra melodie della Beatrice Tenda*. The latter is a common approach to ornamentation in fantasias, in which the melody is completely filled in with running semiquavers or demisemiquavers; it typically appears as a kind of contrapuntal variation in which the theme is presented in one voice and the variation in another, frequently occurring in final run-out sections in which the piano has the melody and the solo part plays virtuosic ornamentations on the melody above it. Level of virtuosity impacts both

intended performers and audiences of a performance, as well as potential formal and narrative overtones of a piece. More virtuosic works might be more attractive to an audience while simultaneously inviting a more negative critical reception. However, different kinds of ornamentation must be considered alongside pure difficulty level.

The kinds of ornamentation applied to any given theme of a fantasia can be clearly divided into those derived from the original vocal part and those that emphasize the instrumental nature of the fantasia. Fantasia composers often copy not only articulation or dynamics but also ornamentation directly from the original operatic vocal line. This often, but certainly not always, occurs in situations where that operatic vocal line has a connection to the solo instrument. Beyond this, additional ornamentations are often heavily inspired by vocal techniques for adding graces and divisions.⁵ However, composers also almost always include ornamentation that allows for specifically instrumental virtuosic display. Scales and arpeggios are either inserted into the melody line or repeated above a piano melody to demonstrate the range of the instrument and the technical facility of the performer. Another extremely common variety is extended ornamentation in which the solo instrument, as in many famous variations on “Carnival of Venice,” essentially plays both an entire melody and a fast-paced accompaniment. However, composers sometimes insert scalar or arpeggiated flourishes within otherwise straightforward presentations of themes, creating a middle-ground of vocal and instrumental ornamentation. As with pure considerations of difficulty level, these kinds of variation potentially impact performers, audiences, and critics in their reception of a work. Vocal ornamentation serves to connect fantasias to their operatic musical context, while instrumental ornamentation serves to direct attention to the performer and to specific themes. Highlighting the instrumental nature of a fantasia performance also reacts against a historical Italian privileging of voice over instrument. While this might seem to connect the fantasia to Germanic instrumental genres, though, we paradoxically also see instrumental virtuosity portrayed negatively in critical reception, where these distinctions are often ignored.

Given these characteristic uses of themes and variations, I summarize the genre as follows. Though they vary widely in formal specifics, opera fantasias have considerable consistencies in style and format. After a piano introduction, the solo instrument frequently announces itself with a cadenza that is only very loosely, if at all, connected to operatic material; trills and arpeggiated swoops, rather than melodic ornamentation, are common in these cadenzas. Themes appear initially as in their original operatic presentation and are only then ornamented and varied in increasingly complex ways. A composer first adds “vocal” ornamentation – that is, ornamentation either directly copied from the vocal line

in the operatic score or that could plausibly be sung by the operatic performer – to a given melody before repeating the melody with greatly increased and deeply instrumental variations, such as simultaneous presentations of melody and rapid accompaniment figures. Composers tend to alternate slow and fast tempos, and virtuosic variations and cadenzas appear on themes of any tempo. The pieces end triumphantly in a flurry of virtuosic closing material in the major mode, featuring arpeggios and scalar passages and loosely derived from a fast tempo theme. The straightforward presentation of eight or ten themes one after another, with little thought given to connecting or musically expanding them, may be a common perception of the opera fantasia, but it is not the reality.

The seemingly perpetual presence of intricate ornamentation and variation is unsurprising, given the genre’s characteristics, but instances in which the operatic melodies seem nearly obscured by the technical fireworks go far towards explaining some of the negative critiques of virtuosity in works such as these. However, numerous positive reviews survive of even intense virtuosic ornamentation of operatic melodies by Italian musicians and critics. The frequency with which positive descriptions appear reinforces the divide between negative critical opinions of virtuosity and positive opinions of virtuosity held by audiences and many musicians. As the fantasia moved from its early days as virtuosic salon music on composers’ grand tours to its legacy as excessive and unnecessary, critical discussions treat the genre as continually marginal even as fantasias flourished. Treating the genre of the fantasia as distinct and purposeful allows for current performers and scholars to understand composers’ decisions and cultural receptions of these works.

Identifying the fantasia: Inconsistencies in titling

While laying out a definition of the fantasia may be straightforward, identifying these works outside of performance can be more challenging. Fantasias appear under a wide array of titles – *fantasia*, *souvenir*, *divertimento*, *reminiscenze*, *capriccio*, and *potpourri* – and their full titles are often long and descriptive, including mentions that the melodies or themes are “*trascritte e variate*” or even “*fantasticati*” by the composer of the fantasia. Do these titles reflect meaningful differences in their compositions? Generally, no. Generically identical pieces for a range of instruments arise under the titles listed above as well as *fantaisie*, *paraphrase*, *rondo*, *caprice*, *rimembranze*, and others, often bolstered by adjectival description such as “grand,” “brilliant,” or “concertante.” All levels of difficulty and both vocal and instrumental ornamentation styles appear in all. Kenneth Hamilton describes a nineteenth-century attitude to the genre that implies that titles were not generically significant:

Any type of piece based on an operatic melody could be described as a “fantasia” [...] the expression was soon joined by a host of other titles considerably more fanciful, such as “mélange”, “capriccio”, “souvenir”, and even “hommage”. (Hamilton 1989: 1–2)

Despite this, titles are revealing and significant. Rarely do we know the reasoning behind a composer or publisher’s choice of a specific title, and the choice sometimes seems to contradict the implications of variation intensity or kind as discussed above. However, titles provide a convenient way for critics and scholars to shape the way in which pieces are viewed, and the impact of designating a fantasia “potpourri” or “grand concerto” remains an important piece of the historical legacy of opera fantasias and significantly contributed to contemporary and modern opinions of fantasias as a wider genre.

The term “potpourri” has never implied as serious a composition as the term “fantasia” and it has almost always been linked to the use of pre-existing sources. By the end of the eighteenth century, the potpourri was established as a composition made of a string of pre-existing songs or themes (often operatic in origin, and not always from a single source), sometimes including variations on a theme (Lamb 2001). Potpourris were generally commercial and popular, designed to please audiences who were already familiar with the songs or themes being presented. Of course, fantasias were also meant to be popular and directed at audiences familiar with the operatic material on which they are based. However, many composers wrote potpourris as well as fantasias, and the term is often purposefully used negatively in reference to fantasias by composers such as Liszt. In contrast, being called *concerto* does not suddenly make fantasias such as Pasculi’s concertos respected as serious artistic works or standard in the canon in any way, but there is a difficult-to-prove sense that they are performed more frequently in conservatory oboe recitals than other works by Pasculi – and certainly more than oboe fantasias by other composers. At the same time, François Borne’s fantasy on *Carmen* is surely as canonical for the flute as Pasculi’s “concerto” on *La Favorita* is for the oboe, and the artistic status of Pasculi’s concerto is no higher than Borne’s fantasia; neither holds the concert status of a Mozart concerto or a Handel sonata, and neither is performed as often as a serious work.

Especially in situations where form is flexible, titles are also an important piece of genre construction and indication. Genre is always historically located and localized; “statements about a genre are statements about the genre at a particular stage” (Fowler 1982: 47). Here, the generic norms of the opera fantasia are linked to ways that fantasias became seen not as merely passé but as almost harmful to serious musical development. Lamborn Cock’s “regret” in a nineteenth-century review of *Zampa*, *Fantaisie, pour piano*,

sur l’Opéra d’Hérold by Théophile Arènes, that “the superficial musical education of the day should create an extensive demand for such pieces” or Sandro Caldini’s experience with “trash music” and “musical pornography” are merely two examples of the dramatic statements about the worthiness of the fantasia that surface repeatedly from performers, critics, and academics (Cock 1873: 283). Yet genre interpretations doubly move backwards through history. They first establish a genre by linking works throughout time – from an early fantasia on a just-published opera to a late fantasia on an opera from fifty years before – and thus often linking anachronistic characteristics of that genre with individual works. The same interpretations then impose what have come to be the modern connotations of a genre on works in their original context. Taken as a genre, as a corpus, titles reflect the (sometimes unconscious) intentions of the composer, and they also reflect musical conventions and institutions that shape the culture behind their composition and reception. The classification of a work as a fantasia, as with other works that fall into genres deemed low art or popular art or bourgeois art, is enough to “guide” critical attention firmly away from the work, by means of disparaging the genre as a whole.

Clarifying the context

How, though, does this classification, this guiding, this localizing, this connotative power arise? In a word, virtuosity. Virtuosity, and the complicated history and power of the performer and composer in instrumental music in the nineteenth century.

When discussing instrumental virtuosity and more widely, the connected but contrasting duology of Paganini and Liszt suffuses the history of the opera fantasia entirely. Paganini may have been a virtuoso, but the equally virtuosic Liszt “justified” his fame and career by establishing himself as a serious composer. A telling, though probably unconscious, point is Liszt’s original name for his *Grandes études de Paganini*: the set was first published as *Etudes d’exécution transcendante d’après Paganini*. Liszt, by composing over Paganini, was transcending him. Like Paganini, Liszt achieved success through novelty as a virtuosic performer of previously unheard ability, but Liszt, as an acceptably serious musician, transcended Paganini’s mere virtuosity. While his status derived from his symphonic writing more than his opera-based works, these latter pieces are still seen as worthy of discussion in a way that other opera fantasias are not.⁶

Liszt’s compositions based on operas, often referred to as “paraphrases” but titled “Réminiscence” or “Grande fantaisie,” “sometimes encapsulate an entire act in a 15-minute concert piece, juxtaposing and combining the themes en route” (Pesce et al. 2001). He moves beyond the mere

presentation of themes to a composition whose art comes from the manner in which he alters and links themes. This concept of “encapsulating” a larger work within a fantasia returns again and again in scholarship of Liszt; however, this is hardly unique to Liszt’s opera fantasias. Instead, it is a common characteristic of the genre. On both macro and small-scale levels, it is vanishingly rare for a fantasia to present its themes in strict operatic order, and fantasias seem to contain purposefully chosen melodic themes – often avoiding “big hits” and focusing on certain plot points – rather than a mere selection of operatic highlights or a random assortment of melodies or a collection of melodies linked by solely by character or key or style. This is true across difficulty levels, instruments, source operas, and means of variation or ornamentation. However, each of these elements can contribute to purposeful compositional effects. The art and alteration inherent in this encapsulation create narrative and “ecphrastic” art in a fantasia.

Nevertheless, if Liszt is seen as the highpoint of the fantasia, the most respectable and canon-worthy of its composer-performers, Paganini is in many ways seen as his opposite. The two are the root of numerous polarized stereotypes of the fantasia and critical responses to the genre. For example, while Liszt’s compositions tend to use several themes, Paganini’s tend towards theme and variation on a single theme and are rarely if ever described as transcending presentation or encapsulating narrative. Yet Paganini has in some ways become the single reference point for the genre of the opera fantasia rather than the variation set. Descriptions of other virtuosos as “the Paganini” of a given instrument abound far beyond those mentioned above, though not all of these comparisons are necessarily flattering even within their technical scope; oboist Baldassare Centroni was most likely compared to Paganini not only because of his playing abilities but also because of his tortured appearance while playing (Burgess and Haynes 2003: 153).⁷ This use of Paganini as a point of comparison is a result of both his self-mythologized reputation and the fact that Paganini, active a generation before Liszt, was seen by many as the origin of the true virtuoso, previous contenders for the title like the woodwind Besozzi family notwithstanding. In reception, even Liszt often exists in relation to Paganini. Edward Neill claims:

[Paganini] not only contributed to the history of the violin as its most famous virtuoso but also drew the attention of other Romantic composers, notably Liszt, to the significance of virtuosity as an element in art. (Neill 2001)

And on the occasion of Liszt’s centenary, Gustav Kobbé described Liszt as “the Paganini of the pianoforte, the greatest virtuoso that ever lived”; in the same sentence he describes John Singer Sargent as “the Paganini of the brush” (Kobbé 1911: 7).

Comparison to Paganini creates a frisson of excitement, but in some ways it is less egotistical to claim Paganini as an ancestor than to claim Liszt. This is to claim virtuosity rather than artistry. Many contemporary reviews speak of Paganini’s musicality, the beauty of his playing and compositions, and his expressivity and taste, but many more denounce his playing as fireworks, technicality, and charlatanism. For every claim that “none of the phenomena of his execution appears to be exhibited for the sake of their own display: they appear as means, not ends” (London’s *The Examiner*), there is one (often by a German critic) that claims “that which satisfies the Italian audiences [...] is found to be a series of bewildering tricks” (Louis Spohr’s diary) or that “his compositions [...] are beneath all criticism” (Hamburg’s *Literarische Blätter der Börsen-Halle*) (Pulver 1936: 93, 156, 245).

Where Liszt became a noted pedagogue, proponent of the expressive power of music, and innovator of forms, Paganini published little and taught less. His reputation may have been flashier, but his powers were narrower. In this way, despite common comparisons, Paganini is a poor representative of the virtuoso composer-performer of the opera fantasia, who frequently held a respected teaching position and frequently published virtuosic compositions. But this reflects their respective reputations in critical discourse as the nineteenth century progressed.

The early twentieth century saw a dip in Liszt’s popularity as well as Paganini’s, of course. The view of Romantic music, and of opera fantasias even more so, as flamboyant and excessive continued well into the twentieth century, contributing strongly to musicological avoidance of these pieces and to the rehabilitation of Liszt by portraying his opera fantasias as surpassing, rather than representative of, the genre.

The decline of the fantasia

During Liszt’s virtuosic career, the purposeful denigration of the fantasia and of virtuosic music in general by large swaths of musical critics, particularly in France and Germany, was then already well in progress. Nineteenth-century French critics, including François-Joseph Fétis and Léon and Marie Escudier, were crucial participants in undermining the position of the opera fantasia in the canon, criticizing fantasias’ blurring of private and public genres, lack of improvisation, and use of “found” rather than original themes as a basis for variations (Levin 2009: 155). In twentieth-century musicology, those defending the fantasia as worthy tend to call upon the “serious” merit of Germanic art music and mention Mozart’s and Beethoven’s variations on opera arias, blurring genres and downplaying virtuosity. For example, Suttoni refers to Mozart’s variations

on Salieri, Paisiello, and Gluck, and Beethoven's on Dittersdorf, Grétry, and Salieri as proto-fantasias (Suttoni 2002). Interestingly, Chopin – whose *Grand Duo Concertant pour Piano et Violoncelle sur des Thèmes de Robert Le Diable* and *Variations on "Là ci darem la mano"* are just as "fantastical" as those by Cramer or Czerny, to whom the Mozart variations are dedicated – is almost never mentioned. Secondary literature also more often discusses composers from early in the nineteenth century and treats their compositions as more serious and worthy of attention; those who followed Liszt seem both overwhelmingly numerous and rarely discussed. This is partially due to record-keeping trends and genuine decline in popularity and performances in Northern Europe, but both this decline in popularity and the lesser emphasis in secondary literature can also be largely attributed to contemporary and modern biases of critics and researchers.

Fantasias did increasingly have to contend with new symphonic genres for legitimacy, with virtuosity remaining an explicit or implicit piece of most criticism by "elite" critics and performers uncomfortable and unhappy with the public views on virtuosity and virtuosos.⁸ In this context, the historical flattening of generic characteristics and combination of fantasias and other variation genres makes sense. But this is hardly the full picture of their reception. Descriptions of Italian opera characteristics make clear how deeply parallels run between opera fantasias and nineteenth-century Italy's dominant cultural art form. Beautiful singing, entertaining melodies, a reliance on the familiar over the original (and certainly over the "foreign"), and the use of affective and musical formulas (*partimenti*): given these operatic characteristics, the embrace rather than mere acceptance of the opera fantasia as a genre is hardly shocking. Furthermore, many of the flaws perceived in the fantasia as a genre both contemporaneously and in later years are in fact characteristics that were, if not hallmarks of Italian opera, at least accepted realities of Italian opera composing. While uniformity could be critiqued then, and undeniably has been since, for nineteenth-century Italian opera there was an expectation of predictability in style, and a "certain suspicion" of genius (Wilson 2007: 124–127).⁹ Tradition and the norm were paramount, and audiences' taste to a large extent still determined success.

Pier Paolo De Martino's book *Le parafrasi pianistiche verdiane nell'editoria italiana dell'ottocento* lists "poco meno di 3500 titoli di pezzi pianistici sulle opere di Verdi" – just under 3,500 piano "paraphrases" on Verdi operas (De Martino 2003: 47). De Martino draws this number solely from ten Italian publishing houses and from publications dating 1840–1900 (Ibid). In his count, De Martino includes both fully fledged fantasias and theme-and-variations and 4-hand duets like those that I separate from fantasias, but this still marks the scale of this compositional trend in the

middle of the nineteenth century. These Verdian fantasias also appeared alongside continued compositions based on *bel canto* classics by Donizetti, Bellini, and Rossini. In Italy, concerts featuring fantasias and virtuosos remained popular, frequent, advertised, and reviewed through the end of the nineteenth century and beyond. The simultaneous difficulty and accessibility of opera fantasias there forces a reminder of the suffusion of opera in the Italian audience's musical minds, of the importance of reference to the initial opera, and of the importance of beautiful melody, beautiful line, beautiful instrumental singing. Admiration may be required, but it is not mindless admiration of finger technique. Furthermore, reviews highlight both vocal ornamentation and instrumental ornamentation, revealing a contemporary understanding of some of the taxonomical distinctions ignored or misunderstood elsewhere.

But while Italian fantasia reviews remain generally positive even at the end of the nineteenth century, even in these we get hints of a changing tide, and a movement away from the fantasia. Often the negativity is relatively benign; critics remark that concerts are overly long or that pieces have been heard many times before, but that audiences still applauded rapturously. There is a sense of "historical inevitability" in the "triumph of artists over virtuosos" and the rise of "symphonic taste," but the demonization of virtuosity and subsequent lasting decline of virtuosic music – described by Hanslick as "an oversaturated indulgence in sensuality and enthusiasm" – was engineered, not inevitable (Gooley 2006: 76). Below, we see the merging of Northern European critical conceptions of virtuosity and Italian ones, and the way in which the fundamentally Northern European approach to twentieth-century musicology has shaped our twenty-first-century views of the opera fantasia.

In late nineteenth-century Italy, the power of opera came from its expressive powers and its emotional connection to the audience, albeit a connection made specifically through well-crafted vocality. Fantasias tap into the expansive properties of music, both warping opera narratives and expanding excerpts of operatic music into representations of entire operas. Their selection of themes and the varying ways in which those themes are treated virtuosically and melodically are relevant, and their repetitiveness and simplicity of structure and ornamentation mirror the comforting sameness of operas themselves. Of course, a key difference between a fantasia and an opera itself is that the fantasia is based almost entirely on pre-composed music, and thus while this compounds the immediate emotional connection made with the audience of a fantasia it also greatly increases problems of derivativeness. The way in which fantasias are "pre-fabricated" functions on a much larger scale than the way in which operas are. Furthermore, the stereotype of an opera fantasia as moving rapidly through a large number of themes without significant elaboration

or ornamentation on those themes, which are merely presented one after another, with all musicality or “meaning” absent, is true for some compositions. Nevertheless, this reuse of operatic material, and more specifically this precise allegiance to the writing of the opera composer, is praised in contemporary reviews of opera fantasias.

At the same time, fantasias, like performances of opera selections, demonstrate a privileging of the performer over the composer (although this distinction is complicated by the frequent fusion of fantasia performer and fantasia composer). As in piecemeal opera performances, picking out certain arias and scenes from an opera and rearranging them in fantasias can be seen as privileging “event” over “work” (Poriss 2010: 113). This rubs against the increasingly important *Werkkonzept*, and was one primary reason that, as the nineteenth century progressed, public opinions in the north and then in Italy were purposefully manipulated against fantasias.

Sometimes, however, the fantasia’s status as a new work re-asserts itself. Nineteenth-century music journals abound with positive descriptions not only of performer-composers’ playing, but also of their compositions, including fantasias. Flautist Giuseppe Gariboldi, described in the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* in March 1862, “presented himself to us as composer and as performer [...]. Gariboldi’s music has all the brightness that characterizes Italian compositions”.¹⁰ It was exactly, though not exclusively, the “valuation of performer personality” that made fantasias so popular during their time. Virtuosity was competitive and performative, with personal triumphs and rivalries narrated in magazines and drawing in audiences.¹¹ At the same time, virtuosos held concert-goers’ attention by avoiding “abstraction” and instead “drawing on what listeners had seen on stage to present brilliant new sonic pictures” (Weber 2008: 143).

The same François-Joseph Fétis who frequently criticized the fantasia wrote a biography of Paganini, describing him as superior in “original fancy, poetry of execution, and mastery of difficulties” and well suited to “an Italian public, athirst for novelty and originality” (Pulver 1936: 92). Magazines like *Le Pianiste* also ranked new compositions, reviewing a work by Kalkbrenner, for example, in April 1834 as good for the student or “aging virtuoso” (Levin 2009: 196). And Czerny himself believed fantasias should be good entertainment, “pleasant, familiar” and “glittering” (1829) (Czerny 1983: 86).

Hanslick expresses a similar idea with a negative slant in his comments on Clara Schumann, written in 1856:

As a young girl she already stood above the insipid trifles of virtuosity and was one of the first to preach the gospel of the austere German masters. (Hanslick 1963: 48)

We see, then, that fantasias and other virtuosic music suffered in comparison to the ever-rising tide of the Germanic canon in two ways: first, through literal comparison

between fantasias and “serious” compositions, and second, through the comparison of the deification of Beethoven to the cult-like appreciation of virtuosos such as Paganini and Liszt. The first is evident in both contemporary and more recent sources.

Dana Gooley describes this Hanslick-esque framing of virtuosity in comparison to “symphonic values,” which “transformed [virtuosity] from a separate musical value into a hierarchically subordinate position on a single scale of musical value” (Gooley 2006: 105–106). Fantasias therefore could not be equal to symphonies or sonatas or the operas on which they were based, because to “fantasize” a work was to diminish it rather than expand it. Even the usually exceptional Liszt fell afoul here; his fantasia on Meyerbeer’s *Le Prophète*, in which Liszt produced 765 bars of new material from eight bars of Meyerbeer’s theme, was critiqued by a friend as insufficiently original and therefore insignificant (see Hamilton 1996). As with many nineteenth-century musical theories and opinions, these views of fantasias have proven tenacious. In a twentieth-century example of “hierarchically subordinate” virtuosity, Carl Dahlhaus categorized the fantasia under “Trivial Music,” describing it as “competing with art music” (Levin 2009: 161). And Leon Plantinga associates the fantasia with “handiwork” and with the (bourgeois and feminine) commercial, showing the lasting ramifications of nineteenth-century opinions (Ibid: 157).

Virtuosic fantasias further suffered in comparison to “serious” art music by placing a large amount of attention on the performer (the individual) and, in the eyes of their critics, not enough on the original composer or music itself. The philosophical separation of musical content or meaning from the bodied nature of performance led to a valuing of the permanent work over ephemeral performance (for discussions of this see Cvejić 2016 and Leistra-Jones 2013). A fantasia based on themes written by another composer could in some ways never be an authentic expression of artistry, as it seized control of a pre-existing *Werk* created by another (true) artist (see Leistra-Jones 2013: 427–430). However, idolizing performers has been a lasting legacy of virtuosic art music.

As the deification of Beethoven became increasingly overwhelming in the academy, the appreciation of virtuosic performers such as Paganini and Liszt was seen as the bourgeois equivalent; to critics, the key difference was the canonical validity of the object of worship as “the philistinism of the bourgeois public made them susceptible to worshipping false gods” (Kawabata 2012: 18).¹² For this reason, criticism of virtuosity functioned as an “ethical criticism” of the middle class, although it took on “the appearance of disinterested, purely aesthetic responses or comments” (Gooley 2006: 105). Critics were suspicious of popular taste as well as music that tried to appeal to that taste. In a

musical world of limited resources for composers, aligning oneself improperly in the competition between virtuosic popular compositions, which enabled the careers of many composer-performers, and “art music,” which enabled the careers of composers seen as more inspired, was a critical sin.

Conclusion

In the end, even the cultural power of opera in Italy could not keep the opera fantasia from slowly losing both popularity and standing. For insight into the frustration in providing any comprehensive study of this genre and its development, we need not look any further than De Martino’s introductory essay in *Le parafrasi pianistiche verdiane*. There he describes these pieces as “always neglected because of their lack of value as art music” (“sempre trascurate a causa del loro scarso valore come musica d’arte”), a perhaps counterproductive statement (De Martino 2003: 1). And Sergio Martinotti writes without any apparent irony of the “histrionics” of the virtuosos, who are “generous mediators, great performers but obscure musicians” (Martinotti 1972: 193).¹³ The decline of virtuosity has had long-lasting impacts on musicology and the reception of virtuosic music in general and the opera fantasia specifically.

Of course, though Martinotti goes on to make the unlikely claim that “with regard to virtuosity, the history of music in fact stops in the mid-nineteenth century,” virtuosity itself has not disappeared (Ibid: 291).¹⁴ It is only the supportive reception of virtuosity, and the extent to which performance abilities are seen as equal to compositional abilities, that has declined. As Levin writes, “the outrageous public personae, flamboyant performances, and sex appeal of the virtuoso remained intact,” allowing us to draw a line from Paganini or Liszt not only to modern performers like Hillary Hahn, Lang Lang, and Cecilia Bartoli, but also to Elvis and the Beatles, and to Beyoncé, whose own career has been characterized by a tension between composition and performance (Levin 2009: 302).¹⁵ As ever, Paganini and Liszt – their personas, performances, compositions, and receptions – continuously reinsert themselves into discussions of virtuosity by other musicians and for other instruments. And Paganini again serves as a reminder of the increasing tension between music as an act and music as a work, and between Italian and Northern European critical approaches to music. While the doctrine of *Werkkonzept* became increasingly influential, “the valuation of the work and the valuation of performer personality were fundamentally incompatible” (Kawabata 2012: 109–110). Even an approach like that of Fred Maus, who injects performativity into ideas of the work by arguing that “a score is an object; a work, however, is an *experience* of an object,” relies on a more unchanging composition than likely existed for many

(woodwind) virtuosos and their performances of their opera fantasias (Maus 1999: 177). Still, in Italy as well as in Germany and France, in opera as well as in symphonic music, “a text-based aesthetic” and “authorial control and aesthetic purity” became increasingly discussed and increasingly valued as the nineteenth century progressed, to the detriment of the deeply Italian, deeply virtuosic, deeply experiential, deeply contextual genre of the opera fantasia (Poriss 2009: 5). By examining the genre as a legitimate body of taxonomically distinct works and by grappling with the complexity of these works beyond the faux exceptions of Liszt’s fantasias, we as scholars and musicians can not only freshly approach opera fantasias as valuable music but also understand their contemporary and current resonances in musical traditions and societal customs.

Could capriccios (a title that confers its own genre yet was used on fantasias) be “the most insipid and foolish things, the most boring in the world” to an Italian writing a musical dictionary in 1869?¹⁶ To be sure. Could flautist Emanuele Krakamp perform two fantasias as the intermission to a *commedia* in 1852 Genoa?¹⁷ Of course. Did the published eulogy for Antonio Pasculli begin by praising his modesty as a performer (the myth that Pasculli referred to himself as “the Paganini of the oboe” was just that) but lamenting the time “when, with culpable indifference, they see fade the luminous and benevolent stars that illuminated the streets, which inflamed the psyche”?¹⁸ Naturally.

Every setting, every genre, every approach resists flattening. But because of and despite this complexity, approaching the opera fantasia as a coherent and meaningful group of works clarifies both a genre that has been consciously stifled and cultural resonances that still impact music reception and performance today.

Endnotes

- ¹ Original in Italian: Nei pezzi sopra motivi altrui, Gariboldi sa conservare il pensiero dell’autore; in mezzo ad un diluvio di note, il tema emerge sempre chiaro e limpido... Nulla di più ardito de’suoi passi, nulla di più dolce de’suoi canti. ([Anon], “Notizie ...” 1862: 45)
- ² Original in Italian: [...] lo chiamano il Paganini del clarinetto. Sotto il suo soffio, questo istrumento canta, si anima, si accende; in una parola, egli lo poetizza e gli fa produrre effetti finora ignoti. ([Anon], “Bordeaux” 1852: 227).
- ³ Even as the fantasia was a way to escape the bounds of the sonata, “free fantasia” could be used to mean the “development” of sonata form, emphasizing the juxtaposition, combination, and fragmentation of themes that occurred during that section. See Coppola 1998: 171.
- ⁴ William Weber traces the fantasia explosion to the 1810s and also discusses the potpourri as a popular genre in eighteenth-century Bordeaux. See Weber 2008; also see Walter Schenkman’s discussion of “well-established antecedents”

- to the opera fantasia in the eighteenth century, such as variations on “popular operatic tunes” by Mozart and Beethoven (Schenkman 1981: 57).
- ⁵ A good introduction to the variety of divisions and graces that might be added by a vocalist can be found in Robert Toft’s book (Toft 2013).
- ⁶ See, for example, Kenneth Hamilton’s dissertation (Hamilton 1989) and works on virtuosity such as Susan Bernstein’s *Virtuosity of the Nineteenth Century: Performing Music and Language in Heine, Liszt, and Baudelaire* (1998).
- ⁷ Other comparisons include Paganini of the flute Johann Sedlatzek and Jules Demersseman; of the double bass Giovanni Bottesini, Domenico Dragonetti, and modern virtuoso Renaud Garcia-Fons; of the clarinet Ernesto Cavallini; of the cello Adrien-François Servais, and of the guitar Pasquale Taraffo.
- ⁸ Gooley’s dual focus on critics and performers throughout is important: other framings often elide the conscious turn toward “serious” concerts as statements of artistic judgement by performers such as Clara Wieck Schumann. He also writes a great deal on the ways in which critics specifically set out to turn public opinion against virtuosic pieces and performers, artificially diminishing the standing of pieces such as fantasias through (ironically) “repetitive, mechanical rehearsals of phrases such as ‘excessive ornament’ and ‘superficial virtuosity’” (Gooley 2006: 76–77). Gooley’s *The Virtuoso Liszt* further addresses these issues, pointing to anti-virtuosity articles in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* and the Paris *Revue et gazette musicale* as well as to Liszt’s rebuttal *De la situation des artistes*.
- ⁹ And let us not forget the member of management at the Teatro alla Scala who in 1836 wrote that a certain Rossini opera was being reproduced “in its original form” because “Rossini’s genius must be respected in every way possible” (Gossett 2006: 212–213).
- ¹⁰ Original in Italian: Gariboldi si presentava dinanzi a noi come compositore e come esecutore. ... La musica di Gariboldi ha tutto lo splendore che caratterizza le composizioni italiane; il colorito, la spontaneità, l’entusiasmo vi abbondano. [Anon] 1862: 45.
- ¹¹ The Italian debate between the Briccialdi and Boehm flutes, discussed in Chapter 2, though not directly a competition between virtuosic players, certainly drew upon competing displays of virtuosity via various flute key systems.
- ¹² See also Gay 1996: 23.
- ¹³ “gli istrionismi difforni dei virtuosi ... i generosi mediatori, grandi esecutori ma musicisti oscuri.”
- ¹⁴ “Inoltre, il virtuosismo è una situazione limite, che si determina nell’800 e perdura oltre i confini del secolo come elemento degradato e come fenomeno deterioro di Kitsch, ma di per sé non cresce nei valori dell’arte: nei confronti del virtuosismo la storia della musica si ferma infatta a metà Ottocento.”
- ¹⁵ Reception of Beyoncé’s *Lemonade*, while acknowledging the “129 credited musicians, producers and composers,” speaks of the performer as nearly the sole artistic voice; the strength of her persona means that she is able to embody the work as a whole, functioning as creator as well as performer (see, for example, Perrott et al. 2016).
- ¹⁶ See, for example, Barberi’s description in the *Dizionario enciclopedico universale dei termini tecnici della musica antica e moderna dai greci fino a noi*: Capriccio – le cose più insipide e sciocche, e le più noiose del mondo. (Barberi 1869: 277)
- ¹⁷ Based on the 1852 record in Italian newspaper: Il valente flautist-compositore [...] eseguendo fra gli atti d’una commedia due grandi suoi pezzi di concerto con accompagnamento d’orchestra. [...] I pezzi trascelti dal Krakamp erano fra i migliori non solo ma anche fra i più difficili del suo repertorio, perciò non è a dire qual profluvio di note sgorgasse dal suo strumento in un colle più deliziose melodie di *Norma*, nonché della simpatico canzone siciliana della *Luisella* [...]. (G. 1852: 175–176)
- ¹⁸ Original statement in Italian: Altrettanto riprovevole, e disgustosa, e ributtante, è però la irricoscenza degli uomini verso cotesti loro grandi benefattori; ... quando con colposa indifferenza vedono tramontare gli astri luminosi e benefici che ne illuminarono le vie, che ne infiammarono la psiche! (Gentile 1924: 5)

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Santrauka

Operos fantazijos, kaip žanro, istorijai ir dabartinei recepcijai didelę įtaką padarė XIX a. vokiečių ir prancūzų kritikai. Ir virtuozistikumo nuosmukis, ir *Werkkonzept* iškilimas kirtosi su operos fantazijos populiarumu, ypač Italijoje. Straipsnyje pirmiausia klausama ne tik tai, kas yra operos fantazija, bet ir kaip tokį kūrinį galima apibūdinti ir kategorizuoti. Nors apibrėžimuose dažnai akcentuojama, kad variacijų rinkinių ir fantazijų ribos neryškios, operų fantazijos turi nemažai bendrų bruožų, kurie jas skiria nuo variacijų rinkinių. Remiantis medinių pučiamųjų instrumentų operų fantazijų pavyzdžiais, straipsnyje parodoma, kad fantazijos retai užima dviprasmišką poziciją tarp variacijos ir fantazijos, nes naudoja vieną temą, bet peržengia temos ir variacijų kategoriją; vengia temų virtuozinių instrumentuočių, bet jas perdirba; įtraukia kelis solinius instrumentus.

Fantazijos kaip atskiro žanro idėjos įtvirtinimas leidžia analizuoti šių kūrinių kultūrinę recepciją ir jų kaip žanro išskyrimą, nesiejant su individualių kompozitorių charakteristikomis. Pavyzdžiui, plati operų fantazijoms priskiriamų pavadinimų įvairovė nebūtinai atspindi didelių turinio skirtumus. Vis dėlto pavadinimas „popuri“ gali implikuoti neigiamą reikšmę, o pavadinimas „koncertas“ gali būti vertinamas kaip bandymas fantaziją pakylėti į aukštesnį lygmenį. Straipsnyje parodoma, kaip Lisztas ir Paganinis

tapo operos fantazijos žanro atstovais: Paganinis – tipišku, o Lisztas – išskirtiniu kompozitoriumi. Nepaisant to, operos fantazijos labiau atitinka Liszto, o ne Paganinio prieigą. Dėmesys Paganiniui atspindėjo neigiamą kritikų nuomonę apie šį žanrą ir leido jiems žvelgti į šiam žanrui priklausančius kūrinius kaip pernelyg supaprastintus, neturinčius autorių intencijų ar meninės vertės. Toks požiūris į fantazijas, priešingai nei XIX a. itališkame kontekste, vis dar daro įtaką šių kūrinių recepcijai.

Delivered / Straipsnis įteiktas 2022 03 01