An improvisatory approach to nineteenth-century music

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Chapter 12. Playing with genres

12.1 Introduction: genre as a locus

Searching the internet for 'improvisation in the style of' results in a large number of hits on YouTube. Compositions and sometimes improvisations 'à la manière de', followed by the name of some popular composer, have become a fairly common phenomenon in classical music during the twentieth century, especially in less serious settings. Musical pastiches had already appeared during the nineteenth century (e.g., in Grieg's suite *Aus Holbergs Zeit*), but the explicit reference to the style of one specific composer seems to me something that occurred especially in the twentieth century, possibly starting with Alfred Casella's collection of pastiches *À la manière de...* op. 17 and 17*b*, which included two compositions by Ravel: *À la manière de Borodine* and *À la manière de Chabrier*.[1027] The Dutch pianist Harry Holtman became popular in the 1960's with musical performances, verging on a cabaret-like style, in which the audience was invited to provide themes and names of composers whose styles he would imitate in his piano improvisations.[1028] It is a type of musical humour that flourishes when there is a shared knowledge of the classical canon – and that demands a deep practical knowledge of this repertoire on the side of the performer. At a more serious level, the Swiss pianist Jean-Jacques Hauser used to include improvisations 'à la manière de...' in his recitals, while adopting his alter ego Antonej Sergejvitch Tartarov.[1029]

It is an approach that shows the twentieth- and twenty-first-century understanding of musical style as primarily a feature of a specific composer. Quite a different view was expressed in earlier centuries, where the focus in treatises and other writings was often rather on a style in general than on a particular composer. In the seventeenth century, for instance, Christoph Bernhard distinguished between different musical styles such as the *stylus antiquus* or *ecclesiasticus*, the *stylus luxurians* and the *stylus theatralis*. Bernhard explicitly connects the use of specific musico-rhetorical 'figures' (*Figuren*) and other compositional techniques with a particular style.[1030] Even in the eighteenth century, such general styles were still distinguished, especially the church style and the theatrical style. It would be a natural thing for a Baroque composer to apply different styles according to the needs of situations; the work of Johann Sebastian Bach, who famously also combined features of different national styles, is a good example. 'Improvising in the style of Bach' therefore is in the end a claim that is very hard to fulfil.

[1027] An exception is Clementi's collection of 'preludes and cadences' in the style of different composers (→ chapter 10.4), which, however, primarily focuses on a specific genre.

[1028] https://youtu.be/6Vc-zoDX9i4

[1029] www.tartarov.ch

[1030] Bartel, D.: *Handbuch der musikalischen Figurenlehre.* Laaber, 1985; 37-42.

During the Baroque period, another factor had become of fundamental importance: musical genre.[1031] The last chapter of Johann Joachim Quantz's *Versuch*, for instance, is entitled 'Wie ein Musikus und eine Musik zu beurtheylen sey' [how a musician and a piece of music are to be assessed]; here he outlines what is to be expected concerning various types of pieces, or in the terminology of this study, genres. In the realm of instrumental music he distinguishes, for instance, between the concerto, the overture, the symphony, the quartet and the trio. Each genre is subdivided and presented in great practical detail. The first *allegro* movement of a concerto, for example, should differ from an *adagio* movement with respect to key, form, type of melody and, of course, tempo. In a trio (Quantz writes about the Baroque trio sonata here), the opening 'theme' (Quantz doesn't use this term) should be not too long in order to avoid *Überdruß* [boredom] when it is imitated by the other voice – and so on.[1032] Just as it is the task of a carpenter to make a good piece of furniture, it is the task of a musician to make a piece of music that fulfils the expectations of both peers and audience.

It is generally acknowledged that this view did not fit in with the nineteenth-century understanding of music as an art. The cliché of the Romantic genius, creating immortal and unique art works, is still influential today, both with respect to how we tend to see the nineteenth century, and how we look at our own time. As musicologist Michael Talbot has argued, post-1800 music can be characterised as composer-centred, involving a shift of focus in which the rise of the 'work-concept' (Lydia Goehr) is to be seen as a consequence, rather than as its cause.[1033] Whereas it is assumed that a Baroque musician such as Bach saw himself as a kind of craftsman, this is surely a qualification that would have displeased many a composer from the period central to this study; even Ferand still uses the term pejoratively when he refers to nineteenth-century organ improvisation (→ chapter 1.1).

Nonetheless, I argue in this chapter that the understanding of musical genres as described by Quantz had a very long life during the nineteenth century, though the genres themselves obviously might have changed. Several examples have already played a role in this study: the song without words in chapter 2, preludes and cadenzas in chapters 9 and 10, and dance forms as discussed in chapter 11. Bel canto music (chapter 4) definitely shows genre-specific features as well, for instance in the use of cabalettas. Even within the context of the Romantic genius cult, the idea of genre as a generator of musical production may have remained of influence for a long time. In this chapter, I will show that

[1031] The term 'genre' is sometimes used in a very general way, for instance when 'chamber music' or 'opera' are called genres; in this study, the more specific meaning applies.

[1032] Quantz, J.J.: *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen*. Berlin, 1752; facsimile reprint Kassel, 1997; 275-334.

[1033] Talbot, M.: 'The Work-Concept and Composer-Centredness'. In: Talbot, M. (ed.): *The Musical work: Reality or Invention?* Liverpool, 2000; 168-186.

genres have also been a very important source of inspiration for extempore music-making, and that they may still play this role today when it comes to 'historically inspired improvisation'.

To many, the term 'genre' as applied here might have lost much of its relevance today. This is understandable in the light of the *Urtext*-paradigm. When music-making is reduced to the performance of scores, and with a score-dependent attitude, it is logical that musical genres are taken for granted. Quantz primarily wrote for creators of new music, not for performers of existing compositions! In music theory, it is rather musical form that has become the focus of attention. I argue, however, that when we look at nineteenth-century music with the eyes of an improviser, a genre-centred approach becomes much more relevant, and in addition deepens the understanding of composed music.

Genre as a concept distinguishes itself by being multifaceted. The genre 'waltz' involves much more than just the well-known oom-pah-pah rhythm; it implies characteristics concerning phrase construction, melodic shape, form and harmonic development – to mention just aspects that have been discussed in the previous chapter. To a musician who wants to make a new waltz, the genre is like a guiding principle that serves as a *Fundgrube* for musical ideas. In the terminology proposed by this study: it is a locus communis. In the previous chapters, loci on different levels have been examined: from the detailed level of ornamental patterns (→ chapter 9.6) and the higher level of dance rhythms (→ chapter 11), to the more overarching level of phrase construction (→ chapter 4.5) and harmonic structures such as cadences and sequences (→ chapter 9.5). Though these loci work on different musical parameters, they share the characteristic of acting as 'guiding principles', as sources of invention that prompt concrete musical ideas. Genre, I argue, is such a locus communis, too – but on an even higher level. The genre 'waltz' guides improvisers (or composers) in their musical choices; it creates expectations, and includes a multitude of 'lower-level' loci as mentioned above.

This is not to deny the importance of the nineteenth-century composer- or artist-centredness. However, I argue that thinking in genres may be seen as the background against which the Romantic emphasis on artistic personality flourished. It is in the dialectic of genre-centredness and composer-centredness that the Kant-based idea of genius as an artist who makes his own rules manifests itself. The nineteenth-century genius musician was also a craftsman.

In this chapter, the focus will be on musical genre as a locus, and thus on the supra-personal aspect of craftsmanship. It consists of three main parts. In sections 12.2-12.5, I will follow in detail Carl Czerny's unique account of early-nineteenth-century piano improvisation, understood as an enumeration of fashionable genres. I will compare his explanations with other texts, by Czerny himself as well as Adolf Bernhard Marx. The descriptions of genres in this section may seem unnecessarily detailed for the purpose of proving the point mentioned above. However, since this

study also aims to provide a basis for historically inspired improvisations, such a dictionary of genres may be useful to anyone who is interested in following this path. Though Czerny's own compositions have faded into oblivion, I will show how his ideas are also relevant for a composition that has always been considered a classical masterwork: Franz Schubert's *Wandererfantasie*.

In the second part (section 12.6), I will examine to what extent genre still played a role in the late nineteenth century; the focus will be on improvisations that were recorded in the early years of the recording era. The third part (section 12.6) analyses a recording of a sonata that I improvised in 2013. I will show that here, too, genre-specific loci are a valuable way to describe the course of the music.

To conclude this introduction, the focus on craftsmanship might raise the suspicion that idiomatic improvisation as described here resembles 'colouring within the lines'. However, the idea of this chapter is not to give a complete historical analysis of nineteenth-century forms of piano improvisation, but to provide historical information that can help create 'stepping stones' towards historically inspired improvisation. In that sense, the idea of applying genre-centred thinking to the nineteenth century seems worth emphasising because it forms an indispensable basis for such improvisation. But most importantly, like all loci, genre is not a limitation, but a catalyst of fantasy.

12.2 Czerny's fantasy on one theme

Czerny's Anleitung: 'genuine, fantasy-like improvisation'

The first three chapters of Carl Czerny's *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* op. 200, dealing with various types of preludes and with cadenzas, were already discussed in chapters 9 and 10 of this study. The remainder of his book describes various forms of *das wirkliche, selbständige Fantasieren (Improvisieren)* [the genuine, full-fledged, fantasy-like improvisation]. Czerny's taxonomy is as follows:

- Improvising on a single theme (chapter 4)
- Freer improvisation on several themes (chapter 5)
- The potpourri (chapter 6)
- Variations (chapter 7)
- Improvising in the strict and fugal style (chapter 8)
- The capriccio (chapter 9).

In this section (12.2), I will discuss Czerny's chapter 4 in detail; this is the chapter that contains most definitions of genres and that will therefore be of central importance to this study. The other chapters will be discussed successively in sections 12.3 through 12.5; the fugue, however, is elaborated as an

example of genres (section 12.2), and the capriccio will be mentioned briefly at the end of section 12.6.

Upon cursory reading, Czerny mainly seems to give many written examples, leaving the modern reader only the option of performing scores instead of being inspired to improvise. In reality, however, Czerny takes much trouble to make the reader a co-creator by indicating alternative solutions in footnotes – for instance, 'Auch hier noch längere Durchführung und Modulationen, auch Gesangstellen'[1034] [here also, even lengthier development and modulatory material as well as thematic material[1035]]. In order to take advantage of Czerny's book, it will neither be a good idea to try to improvise 'in the style of' Czerny, nor even to treat the example compositions as unique pieces that should be imitated. As for the first approach, even an early-nineteenth-century musician such as Czerny still consciously applies and distinguishes between different styles, which he calls the *brillanter Stil* [brilliant style] and the *ernster Stil* [serious style]. He even mentions a *gebundener und fugirter Stil*[1036] [contrapuntal style]. It was the tragedy of Czerny's reputation as a composer that he published almost exclusively commissioned compositions in the then popular brilliant style, while many more serious pieces remained in his desk drawer; most of them were never published at all.[1037]

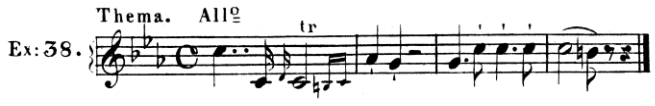
Improvising on a single theme: the improvisor as an orator

In my view, an aspiring improviser will be much more successful when he acknowledges the importance of genre-specific loci in Czerny's book. The fourth chapter, 'Vom Fantasieren über ein einzelnes Thema' [Concerning improvisation on a single theme], seems to take the student's awareness of genres for granted, but mentions them nonetheless while discussing the adaptation of raw thematic material to different musical circumstances. Czerny lists a number of 'auf dem Pianoforte übliche Gattungen' [genres that are familiar for the pianoforte], and shows how a short motivic passage can be adapted to each genre. This does not contradict the idea of a locus as a *Fundgrube* for musical ideas: the motivic material is abstracted to such an extent that it functions at the most as a melodic skeleton. As I mentioned in chapter 3.4, Czerny compares the player with an orator. Just as an orator must possess a thorough knowledge of many topics, an improviser should not only know his harmony, but also be familiar with important compositions 'aller Zeiten' [from all periods], and moreover with contemporary popular tunes (especially opera arias). According to Czerny, both verbal and musical improvisation happen almost unconsciously to a certain extent, as if in a dream (today one might say in a flow); nevertheless the player has to adhere to his plan,

[1034] Czerny op. 200; 47.
[1035] Czerny op. 200, transl. Mitchell; 56.
[1036] Czerny op. 200; 100.
[1037] Cf. Biba, O.: 'Carl Czerny – Januskopf?' In: Loesch, H. von (ed.): *Carl Czerny: Komponist, Pianist, Pädagoge*. Mainz, [2009]; 1-31.

especially when he intends to develop a given theme. If not, he will lapse into a 'rhapsodische, unverständliche Trockenheit' [rhapsodic, incromprehensible tediousness] or an 'überflüssiges, breites Ausspinnen' [overabundantly broad spinning out[1038]]. Czerny's text shows that the possibilities of development reside in the existing musical genres.[1039]

An interesting question is what exactly Czerny means by the word *Thema* [theme]. From his examples, it becomes clear that the term does not refer here to a full-fledged theme, such as a first or second theme in a sonata form, or in a variation cycle. The 'theme' Czerny chooses as a point of departure is rather a fragment, in fact quite a bit like the 'incipit' from chapter 2.[1040]



Example 12.2.1

The idea that an improviser, virtually a musical orator, grasps such a fragment and develops it into an extended fantasia recalls a passage in Johann Peter Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe.* In January 1826, a German *improvisatore*, 'Dr. Wolff' from Hamburg, visits the elderly Goethe in Weimar. Oskar Ludwig Bernhard Wolff was the best-known German improvising poet, the first one to imitate Italian celebrities in the German language.[1041] As a theme (*Aufgabe*), Goethe gives him 'his return to Hamburg'. Goethe is impressed by Wolff's performance, but criticises what he calls his subjectivity. The theme, very general and unspecified in itself, would have given cause for many 'loci communes', for instance, connected with the character of Hamburg as a city. In Goethe's words:

> Was ist (...) Hamburg für eine ausgezeichnete, eigenartige Stadt, und welch ein reiches Feld für die speziellsten Schilderungen bot sich ihm dar, wenn er das Objekt gehörig zu ergreifen gewußt und gewagt hätte![1042]
>
> [What a remarkable, peculiar city is Hamburg! And what a rich field was offered him for the most minute description, if he had known or ventured to take hold of the subject properly![1043]]

Instead Wolff doesn't take advantage of the possibilities the theme offers (at least in Goethe's eyes), and seems to have indulged in the emotions the idea of the return aroused in him, something that could have occurred in any city: a commonplace in the negative sense, one might say. In a similar

[1038] Czerny op. 200, transl. Mitchell; 43.
[1039] Czerny op. 200; 36.
[1040] Czerny op. 200; 37.
[1041] Esterhammer, A.: *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750-1850*. Cambridge, 2008; 178.
[1042] Eckermann, J.P.: *Gespräche mit Goethe.* Weimar, 1913; 164.
[1043] Oxenford, J. (trans.): *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret* (vol. 1). London, 1850; 281.

way, Czerny's theme (in fact also an *Aufgabe*) should be adhered to because its application to several genres will 'offer rich fields' for musical ideas.

Czerny on form

In the introduction to his *School of Practical Composition* op. 600 (1848),[1044] Czerny elaborates on the importance of genres ('species') and on the question of how the application of pre-existing genres relates to originality. It is a passage that also applies to improvisation and is moreover highly relevant for modern discussions about the artistic value of improvisation in historical styles; the passage is quoted in full here.

> *To compose* signifies, in a musical sense, to invent pieces, which, in respect to their ideas and the development of the same, are *new*, and consequently different from all others previously existing. A piece which possesses these properties is, therefore, *an original composition.*
>
> But, in order to become a regular musical piece, these ideas and their development must assume a determinate *form*, and the composition must therefore belong to a *species* already in existence: consequently, in *this* respect, no originality is, in general, necessary. For, if we compose a *Rondo*, for example, it must, in regard to its construction, have the same form and conduct, as all pieces of this species which have been hitherto written, otherwise it would not be a Rondo.
>
> A piece must therefore possess the three following properties, if it would aspire to the character of a composition:
>
> 1st Its ideas and figures must be original, and at the same time also beautiful and effective.
>
> 2dly It must observe all the rules of pure composition. And,
>
> 3dly It must have the regular form and construction which are stipulated by the species to which it belongs, and which, since the birth of modern music, have been established by the works of all good masters.
>
> As to originality and beauty, both these depend on the talent of the author, and on the diligence and sound sense with which he employs the same.
>
> The composer must betimes devote the most zealous assiduity to the study of the theory of music, so as to imbue himself not only with the terms but also with the spirit thereof; and that so completely until it becomes to him, as it were, second nature. Not less important, however, is the art of duly disposing his ideas, and of giving to pieces that form which answers to their object, and makes them appear clear and interesting to the hearers.

[1044] The English translation by John Bishop was published prior to the German text; the latter was considered lost for a long time, which is why the English translation is regarded as the first edition. For this reason, I will quote from the English edition. (Scheideler, U. & Wörner, F. (eds.): *Lexikon Schriften über Musik; Band 1: Musiktheorie von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart.* Kassel, 2017; 106.)

> These forms are by no means of mere arbitrary creation: they were invented, improved, and extended by degrees, and in the course of time, by distinguished geniuses; and the approbation and acknowledgement of a refined world, through several generations, have stamped them with the seal of imperishableness. They depend as much on natural laws, as those rules by which the painter must dispose his groups and figures, the architect his pillars and columns, and the poet the incidents of his narration or his drama.
>
> The extension or entire abolition of these regular limits, could only be permitted even to the greatest genius, after he had sufficiently exercised himself in the same, and become accomplished therein. But even in this case it is always a hazardous undertaking for the composer, as the present age, in the first instance, and afterwards futurity, decides whether these innovations are actually to be considered of real advantage to the art.[1045]

Czerny's text gives the impression of verbally preluding on the later nineteenth-century discipline of *Formenlehre*. In 1832, he published a translation of Anton Reicha's *Traité de haute composition musicale* (1824 / 1826) in a bilingual edition; Reicha's view on musical form, and especially Czerny's translation of crucial terms, foreshadow what would become the focus of twentieth-century controversies surrounding the topic of *Formenlehre*:

> OBSERVATIONS GENERALES SUR LES COUPES, CADRES OU DIMENSIONS MELODIQUES La coupe est le *patron* de la Mélodie et d'un morceau de Musique en général.[1046]
>
> [General observations concerning 'cuts', frames or melodic dimensions / The cut is the model of the melody and of a musical piece in general.]

> ALLGEMEINE BEMERKUNGEN ÜBER DIE RAHMEN, UMKREISE ODER MELODISCHEN AUSDEHNUNGEN Der Rahmen (Umkreis) ist die *Form* (oder so zu sagen *die Hülse*) der Melodie und eines jeden Musikstückes im allgemeinen.[1047]
>
> [General observations concerning the frames, outlines or melodic dimensions / The frame (outline) is the form (as it were the container) of the melody and of every musical piece in general.]

This sense of musical 'form' as a container that has to be filled with 'content' was to become problematic, in particular for the development of sonata-form theory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even an early-twentieth-century book like Marcel Dupré's *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue* (→ chapter 13.4 and 13.5.) seems to reinforce this idea. In defence of

[1045] Czerny, C.: *School of Practical Composition* op. 600, vol. I. London, 1848; 1-2.
[1046] Reicha, A.: *Traité de haute composition musicale* (trans. C. Czerny). Wien, 1832; 477.
[1047] Ibidem.

Czerny, however, it should be emphasised that both his translation and his own composition treatise are not meant to be music-analytical works: their focus is on explaining how to create new music. A revaluation of musical genre avoids such problems; after all, the idea of form as a container is not conveyed in the French original, where it rather seems to be seen as the 'appearance' of a piece of music. I deem it likely that this was also Czerny's intention, given the fact that in his translation he adds two equivalents to the original text, as if he is attempting a description of something for which no precise words exist. If we acknowledge that both Reicha and Czerny connect with the eighteenth-century tradition in which musical genres are loci communes or *Fundgruben* for musical ideas, Czerny's description of musical 'species' is to be seen as an invitation to musical creation, rather than as a pedantic systematism.

Czerny compared with Marx

In addition, the reference to Kant in Czerny's remarks about musical species being developed and changed only by 'geniuses' reveals that this nineteenth-century text was still firmly rooted in the late eighteenth century. The almost contemporary and highly influential *Kompositionslehre* (1837-1847) of Adolf Bernhard Marx provides an interesting contrast to Czerny by giving a more modern and organicist view on musical form.[1048] A discussion of this difference would lie outside the limits of this study. However, the short section Marx dedicates to 'Die Kunst der freien Fantasie' [the art of free fantasy] is particularly interesting in relation to the topic of improvisation. He emphasises the role improvising can play in developing a mastery of the content of his book: improvisation is primarily treated as a *Kompositionsübung* [exercise in composing].

> Für Melodisirung und Rhythmisirung giebt der Lehrgang Gesetz und Anleitung. Auch die Uebung mag schriftlich beginnen. Aber zur Fortsetzung dieser Uebung, bis Geläufigkeit und ein gewisser Reichthum an Gestaltungen erlangt ist, bietet sich bei der Leichtigkeit der Aufgaben die Improvisation als günstigste Form. Mehr Aufwand, als einmalige Darstellung am Instrumente, sind die einzelnen Gestaltungen nicht werth, oder man kann sie hinterdrein besonders notiren. Nicht die einzelnen Gebilde, sondern die Kraft und Gewandtheit im Bilden sind das Werthvolle.[1049]
>
> [This method gives an introduction to and rules for building melodies and rhythms. Here as well, the first exercises may be written. But when the exercises are to be continued until the student gains fluency and a certain richness in his creations, improvisation will be the most fortunate way to deal with the easier assignments. Such creations don't deserve more effort than a one-off realisation on the instrument, or else one may notate them separately afterwards. What is valuable are not the individual creations, but rather potency and skillfulness in the act of creating.]

[1048] Marx, A.B.: *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, 4 Bände. Leipzig, 1837-1847.
[1049] Marx, A.B.: op. cit., Buch 2; 463.

Incidentally, Marx does not suggest that this should count as 'real' improvisation:

> Ist nun dies Alles "freie Fantasie"? – Keineswegs. Es sind nur Vorübungen, die der glücklichen Stunde freien Schaffens, wenn sie später schlägt, zu Statten kommen.[1050]
>
> [Now, is all this 'free improvisation'? – Not at all. These are just preliminary exercises, which may come in useful when the fortunate hour of free creation has come.]

Nevertheless, improvising occurs for him in the context of a composer-centred view on music-making. The great improvisers whom Marx mentions are also famous composers: Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. Even their 'extraordinary' achievements in the field of improvisation are presented as a means to heighten their powers of creation (*Schöpferkraft*).[1051] As I have shown in chapter 8.3, this is a topos in nineteenth-century thinking about improvisation. Besides, the fact that Marx does not aspire to teach improvisation up to this high artistic level is hardly surprising, since his pretensions in the field of composing are relatively modest:

> Endlich soll man stets eingedenk bleiben, dass es nicht der nächste Zweck der Kompositionslehre ist, Komponisten herzustellen, - das geschieht auf absonderlichen Wegen, - sondern: höhere Kunstbildung zu verbreiten. Sie wirke dann, wie und wozu sie kann.[1052]
>
> [Finally one should always remember that the first goal of this composition method is not to produce composers – this happens in peculiar ways – but to disseminate elevated *Bildung* in art. Let it then work according to its capability.]

This last remark is not without relevance for the modern debate about higher music education, either; the fact that this is very often exclusively framed as 'professional training' cannot always be reconciled with the sinuous developments – indeed *auf absonderlichen Wegen* – successful careers tend to take in real life.[1053]

The difference between Marx and Czerny concerns the presentation of the material and the level of philosophical reflection. However, Marx's approach does not contradict the fundamental importance of musical genres. Czerny's op. 600 might even have been influenced by Marx's book, as seen in the identical and somewhat peculiar example of Mozart's piano sonata *à quatre mains* KV 381 that both books give when sonata form is discussed: Czerny reduces the piece to a two-hand

[1050] Marx, A.B.: op. cit., Buch 2; 464.
[1051] Marx, A.B.: op. cit., Buch 2; 459.
[1052] Marx, A.B.: op. cit., Buch 2; 464.
[1053] Ludwig Holtmeier has shown that Marx, self-taught in the field of music, never received the thorough practical education Czerny assumed. It is not clear to which type of reader the *Kompositionslehre* is addressed, but Marx's teaching at the university of Berlin took place in the form of academic lectures that had a theoretical focus. Marx was averse to the idea that a composition could be based on models and craftsmanship: for him, it should be the product of 'artistry'. Holtmeier, L.: 'Feindliche Übernahme: Gottfried Weber, Adolf Bernhard Marx und die bürgerliche Harmonielehre des 19. Jahrhunderts'. *Musik und Ästhetik*, Jahrgang 16, Heft 63 (2012); 5-25.

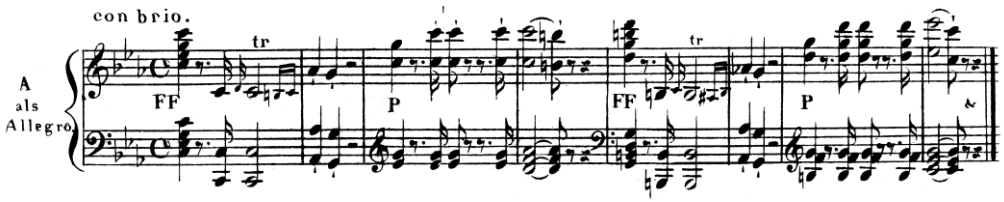
version, while Marx gives a one-staff reduction. Marx presents his example in the context of his slightly problematic distinction between sonata and sonatina form; Czerny also mentions the word sonatina in relation to this sonata, though unlike Marx, he doesn't develop this distinction.[1054] In addition, Czerny's mentioning of the piano etude as a genre was probably influenced by Marx. A notable difference between the two books is the very strong focus on form in Marx, whereas Czerny rather tends to mention many aspects of each genre. For this reason, Marx's approach was seen as formalistic by later generations (the reception of Czerny's op. 600 was very limited); I would argue, however, that the 'horizon' of his *Kompositionslehre* was characterised by the evidence of musical genres, which Marx might have taken for granted; the originality of Marx's book is in the organicist view on form, but this does not imply that contemporaries would have forgotten about genres while reading it. To later generations, this background might have been less evident.

Examples of genres

Let us return to the fourth chapter of Czerny's op. 200, where the author demonstrates how the theme mentioned above can be used for music in different genres. As an exercise, still valuable today, Czerny recommends proceeding similarly with any motif the student might come across[1055] – the simpler the theme is, the more possibilities it offers. As an alternative to the theme mentioned above, he gives an extreme example that consists of only three notes: *A*, *B und C* (A, B-flat and C), and uses this combination as an opening motif.[1056] This is precisely how Robert Schumann built the theme (the term is used in the traditional sense here) of his Abegg-variations op. 1 on the letters of the surname Abegg; the piece was published in 1831.

The following discussion surveys the different genres that Czerny illustrated under the inspiration of his C-minor theme, along with the *A-B-C* theme where relevant:

a. *Allegro (ungefähr, wie das erste Stück einer Sonate)* [Allegro (more or less as the first movement of a sonata)]:

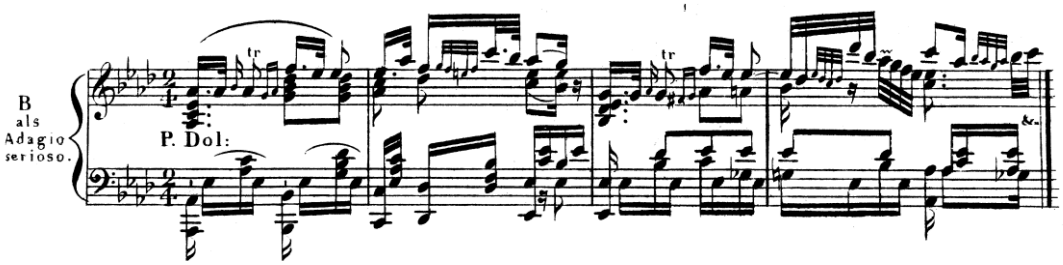


Example 12.2.2

[1054] Czerny op. 600 I; 37.
[1055] Czerny op. 200; 42.
[1056] Czerny op. 200; 39.

Here the theme appears virtually unaltered. Today, the sonata form is primarily understood as a more abstract formal principle that manifested itself in many guises at that time, even in slow movements. It seems, however, that Czerny had a specific kind of music in mind that he connected with this type of movement. This assumption is not directly supported by Czerny's own description of the first movement of a sonata in his *School of Practical Composition* op. 600, where he writes that the 'commencement' (i.e. the first theme) may be either 'soft and melodious' or, 'on the contrary, strongly marked'.[1057] Marx, however, who coins the term *Sonatenform* in his *Kompositionslehre*, emphasises the 'elevated form' (*höhere Form*) of the first sonata movement, which calls for a *tiefere Bedeutung* [deeper meaning] of the thematic material; this material should be suitable for remodeling and development.[1058] Czerny also starts his explanation of sonatas in his op. 600 with the qualification of the sonata as the most important form of composition.[1059] Thus it seems that the combination of a serious, elevated character and the expected presence of motivic cells in the first theme suffices to suggest a musical locus. This idea might have led to the common characterisation of the first theme as masculine, and the second theme (*Gesangsthema*) as feminine – a designation that has fallen into disuse, for understandable reasons.

b. *Adagio (im ernsthaften Styl)* [Adagio (in the serious style)]:

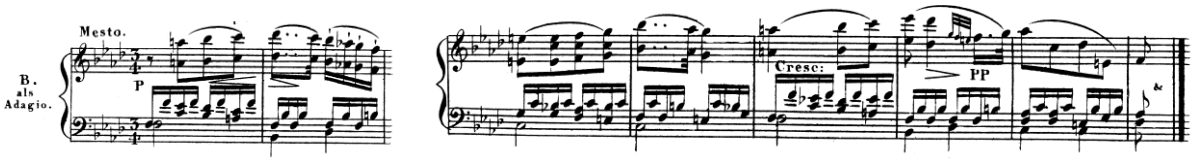


Example 12.2.3

The theme has already undergone considerable changes here: the example is in the major mode, and the most striking motivic difference is the omission of the characteristic octave leap at the beginning. Incidentally, the latter is the case in almost all examples that are derived from this theme.

For the '*A-B-C* theme', Czerny gives an Adagio-example as well:[1060]

[1057] Czerny, op. 600 I; 34.
[1058] Marx, A.B.: op. cit., Band 3 (1845); 214.
[1059] Czerny op. 600 I; 33.
[1060] Czerny op. 200; 39.

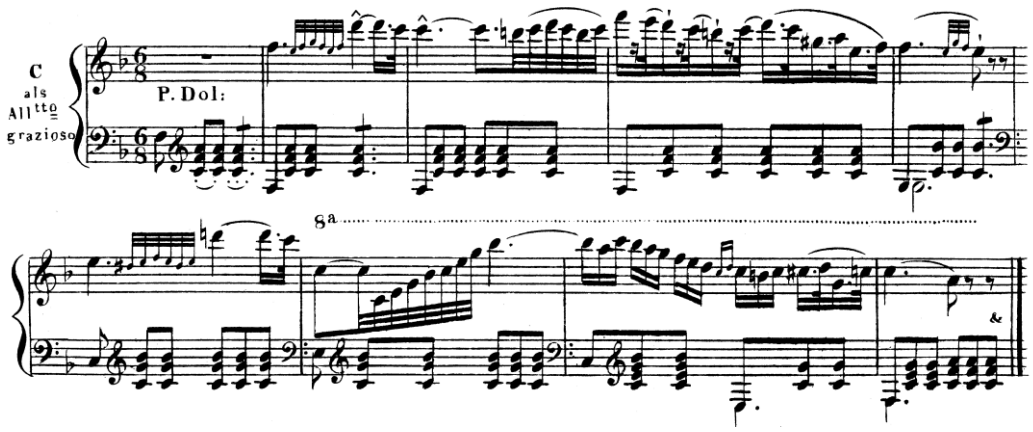


Example 12.2.4

Both examples are in 2/4 (the 3/4 indication in the second example is a mistake) and show a rather rich texture; chord changes often occur every eighth note, and the expressive melody is in the right hand, sometimes in octaves. In op. 600 Czerny quotes, as an example of an 'Adagio in the serious style', the *Largo* from Clementi's piano sonata op. 12 no. 2, which fits the same characteristics (except for its triple meter). He writes:

> It is no easy matter to compose a long Adagio, which shall maintain an equal degree of interest throughout. The slow [sic] usually soon becomes wearisome and fatiguing; and in order to avoid this, an adagio must either distinguish itself by its grand ideas and modulations, or by charming and expressive melodies, or else by very elegant and tasteful embellishments; and there are Adagios, which very happily combine all these properties.[1061]

c. *Allegretto grazioso (einfach, oder mit Verzierungen in der galanten Schreibart)* [Allegretto grazioso (unadorned, or with embellishments in the galant style)]:

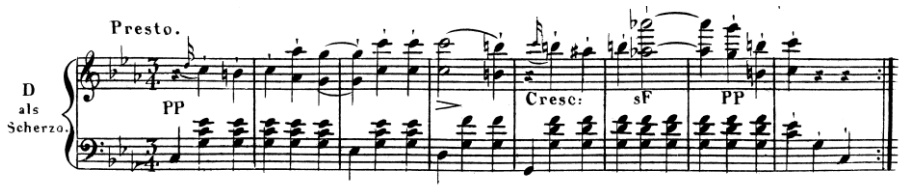


Example 12.2.5

The chosen 6/8 metre may exemplify for Czerny this type of elegant Allegretto. The harmonic rhythm is very slow, with up to four bars on one chord; the example only has tonic and dominant harmonies, which suggests a strong focus on primary harmonies throughout the piece. The simple structure of the accompaniment in repeated chords contributes to the impression of uncomplicated naturalness. The right hand plays a single line, and is thus free to add brilliant ornamentation at will. The texture slightly resembles that of a bel canto aria.

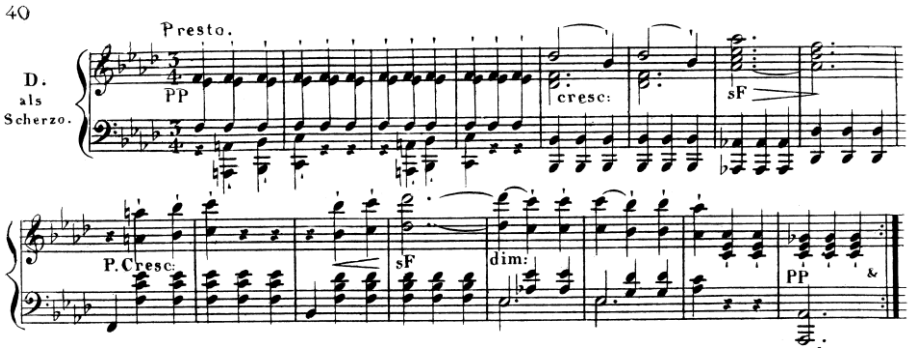
[1061] Czerny op. 600 I; 58.

d. *Scherzo Presto (à Capriccio)* [Scherzo presto (à capriccio)]:



Example 12.2.6

The *A-B-C* pendant goes as follows:



Example 12.2.7

Even more than the previous loci, this one shows the influence of Beethoven. The use of repeated staccato chords is remarkably consistent. The *à capriccio* element probably resides in the sudden differences in dynamics, and (in the second example) in unexpected modulations. The harmonic rhythm is slow.

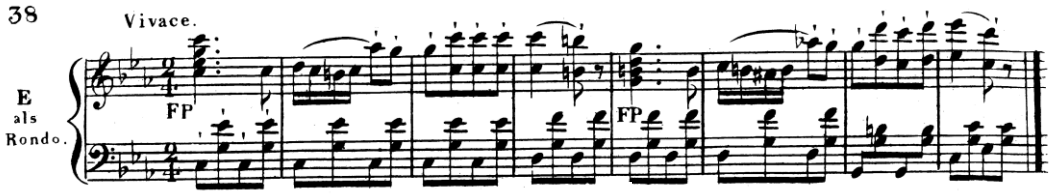
e. *Rondo vivace*:

In his *School of practical composition*, Czerny writes about the character of the Rondo genre:

> In regard to its character, the Rondo is exceedingly varied. There is the *Rondo pastorale*, *Rondo sentimentale*, *Rondo militaire*, *Rondo alla Polacca*, *Rondo di Walze*, *Rondo en Galoppe* &c. In the latter cases, the theme of the Rondo must consist of a corresponding national dance-tune, and, throughout its principal parts, remain true to the character of the same. In the chapter treating on dance music, will be found the necessary particulars concerning the peculiarities of each kind of dance.
>
> There are, moreover, Rondos founded on some nationality, as the *Rondo espagnol*, *Rondo russe* &c. In such cases, the principal subject must actually comprise national melodies answering to the title, or we must be able to impart to the ideas of our own invention, the form and peculiarity of such melodies.
>
> In grand Rondos, it is generally of good effect if a Coda in a different, and quick degree of movement be added at the end: for a lively and transporting conclusion always imparts an increased interest to compositions either of a brilliant or of a characteristic kind. For such a Coda we employ either the

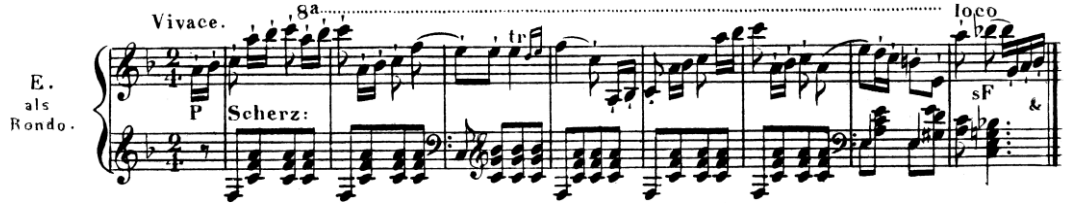
> principal subject in a quicker degree of movement, or content ourselves with brilliant figures, transient modulations, powerful chords, and the like.[1062]

Czerny introduces many sub-genres here. The 'chapter treating on dance music' will be discussed below; the remark about the 'form and peculiarity' of folk melodies that should be 'imparted to the ideas of our own invention' clearly expresses the consciousness of melodic loci that are inspiring new ideas. The Rondos in the *Anleitung* are not so varied:



Example 12.2.8

The *A-B-C* rondo has a similar appearance:



Example 12.2.9

The genre Czerny demonstrates here might be called the 'rondo brillant'; its movement resembles the *Écossaise* and its joyful and appealing melody over a harmonically simple accompaniment invites brilliant passage work. Many composed rondos such as Chopin's op. 1 or the finale of his *First Piano Concerto* op. 11 are of the same type. The last movement of Czerny's own *Piano Concerto* op. 214 is such a brilliant rondo as well.

Though Czerny does not actually mention it, the four genres a, b, d and e may together form a complete sonata according to the classical model.

f. *Polacca*:

The *polacca* (polonaise) had already occurred in Baroque dance suites and was very popular in salons. In his op. 600, Czerny writes:

> The Polonaise (*Polish dance*) resembles the Minuet, it having the same time, degree of movement, number of bars, and even similar modulations. But there are certain little figures which form its national peculiarity; and this especially happens in the *last* bar of each part, where the cadence must be so

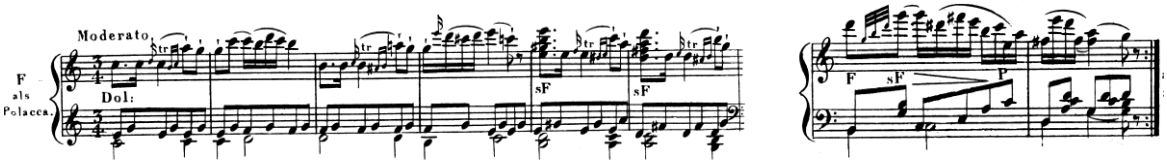
[1062] Czerny op. 600 I, 76-77.

constituted, that the first two crotchets of the bar shall occur on the dominant seventh, and the third crotched on the tonic. For example:

Example 12.2.10

The character of the Polonaise may be either sentimental, or heroic, and its form gives occasion to very pleasing and gentle, or piquant ideas.[1063]

In this description, Czerny does not mention the characteristic rhythm on the first beat, familiar from many nineteenth-century polonaises, especially Chopin's (dotted eighth note plus sixteenth, or eight note plus two sixteenths). The examples in the composition treatise and in the *Anleitung* indeed show an accompaniment that consists of oscillating eight notes, over which an elegant melody unfolds. The typical *Polonaise* rhythm is not present in the accompaniment, and only superficially in the melody. The general impression is one of elegance and smoothness:

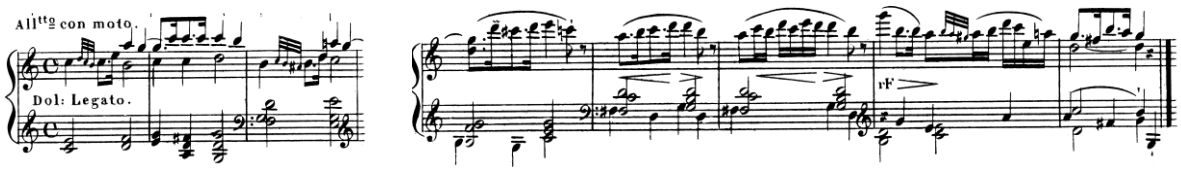


Example 12.2.11

This type of *Polonaise* quite strongly contrasts with the famous compositions of Chopin, who imbued the genre with a nationalistic, heroic and sometimes brusque feel.

g. *Thema zu Variationen* [Theme for variations]:

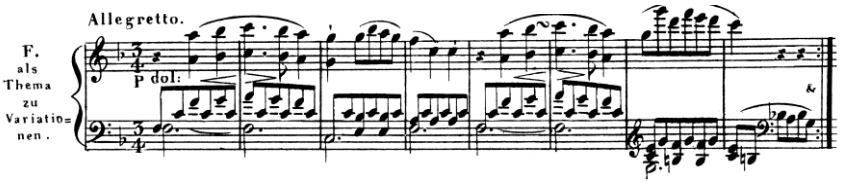
In chapter 7 of op. 200, Czerny writes that a theme (in the elaborate sense) that serves as a basis for a set of variations should be melodious, with few modulations, rhythmically simple and symmetrical in form.[1064] His example, which is based on the C-minor fragment, corresponds to the first half of such a binary form in the major mode:



Example 12.2.12

[1063] Czerny, op. 600 I, 104.
[1064] Czerny, op. 200, 94.

The same applies to the example with the *A-B-C* motif:



Example 12.2.13

h. *Als Fuga* [as a fugue]:

Czerny moulds the C-minor theme into two different fugue subjects in different metres, and proceeds similarly with the *A-B-C* motif. This concerns the so-called *gebundener und fugirter Styl* [strict and fugal style]. In chapter 8 of op. 200, Czerny discusses this type of improvising in detail, distinguishing three subspecies of the polyphonic style that culminate in the fugue.[1065] The first one, *durch viele nach einander folgende Accorde und daraus entstehende Modulationen* [through a succession of many chords and modulations generated through these], is 'reasonably attainable only on the organ'[1066] when the improvisation is to be more developed in length. Nevertheless, Czerny's illustration of this type is for the piano; it is a short polyphonic piece in 4 to 5 voices. There is no subject, and there are no imitations; moreover, the passage contains only evaded cadences. Sometimes sonorous octave doublings occur. It is hard to tell which locus communis is presented here; an example from composed literature that jumps to mind is the middle part of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Pièce d'Orgue* BWV 572. Other composed examples are not numerous, unless one thinks of Italian *Toccate per l'elevatione*, as found in Girolamo Frescobaldi's *Fiori musicali*. Possibly such compositions represented an improvisational tradition that still existed in Czerny's days.

The second subspecies is similar, but contains imitations: *Durch Imitationen, indem man irgend eine Figur in allen Stimmen, Lagen und Octaven wiederhohlt* [through imitations, in which one repeats some sort of figure in all voices, positions and octave ranges]. The example piece somewhat resembles Baroque keyboard fantasias, though the voices enter almost simultaneously. Probably because of its more lively rhythm, Czerny deems this genre suitable for both piano and organ.

Finally, the third species is the proper fugue, in which Czerny distinguishes between a free and a strict style (without explanation). The eighth chapter includes a very lively *fughetta* in 3/4, with continuous and rather dense three-part writing. It is in a brisk tempo (72 bpm for the dotted half note), with eight notes throughout and often two chords per bar. Considering the length of the subject (8 bars), improvising such a piece is certainly not an easy task! On the other hand, the episodes stand out by virtue of their harmonic uniformity: they are all based on falling-fifth sequences. This

[1065] Czerny op. 200; 100.
[1066] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 115.

virtuosic *fughetta* probably is intended to illustrate Czerny's remark that the *figurirte, laufende und scherzhafte Gattung*[1067] [figured, flowing and jovial sort] works especially well on the piano. The examples Czerny gives with respect to the C-minor fragment and the *A-B-C* motif only contain the subjects and the beginnings of the answers; it looks like Czerny intended to give both a more serious and a lighter version of a fugue theme.

In op. 600 Czerny further elaborates on the fugue. He presupposes that the reader has perfected the studies of strict composition and counterpoint, and refers to 'the works of Marpurg, Kirnberger, Albrechtsberger and particularly (...) Reicha' (cf. chapter 13.4).[1068] Here he also explains what he probably hinted at in op. 200 with his remark on a free and a strict fugue style:

> Besides the strict fugue, there is also one of a more free kind, which approximates to the Sonata-form. The most esteemed models of this description are: Mozart's overture to Zauberflöte, and the Finale to his grand Symphony in C. Also the Finale to Beethoven's Quartett Op. 59 (No. 3, in C major), and that to his Sonata Op. 106. Hummel likewise gave a similar Finale in his Sonata in D, Op. 106.
>
> This mixed species unites the charm of beautiful melody with the spirited effects of the moving form of the fugue, in the most interesting manner: but in order to produce a successful work of this kind, we must be perfectly master of strict fugue composition.[1069]

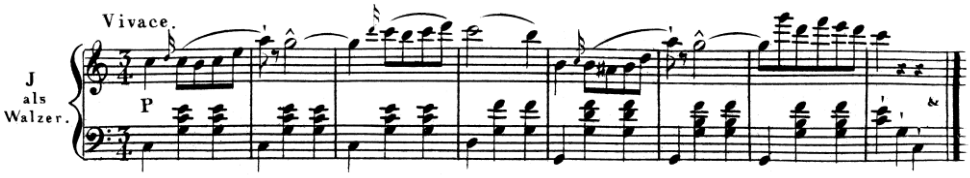
Actually, the importance that Czerny attached to fugues may be somewhat surprising to readers today. Popular image has it that the art of Johann Sebastian Bach had fallen into oblivion after his death because it didn't match with the new galant taste; allegedly, Bach's son Johann Christian mockingly used to call his father 'die alte Perücke' [the old wig]. The iconic start of a Bach-revival was Mendelssohn's famous performance of the St. Matthew Passion (with cuts) in 1829. In reality, however, it was precisely the most hermetic part of Bach's legacy, his unrivalled art of complex counterpoint, that seems never to have been really forgotten, at least in circles of *Kenner* [connoisseurs]. In Vienna, Mozart was introduced to the fugues of the master from Thüringen by the Austrian diplomat of Dutch descent, Gottfried Freiherr van Swieten; Beethoven had already became familiar with the *Well-Tempered Clavier* as a boy. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Albrechtsberger was giving instruction in strict counterpoint to his many students. Muzio Clementi's well-known collection *Gradus ad Parnassum* not only contains the often played etudes, but also (among other types of pieces) many fugues. The fugue was quite obviously seen as an indispensable part of a pianist's repertoire at the early nineteenth century, and the many composed examples clearly are modelled after Bach's examples. The fact that Bach's keyboard fugues were written for harpsichord (or clavichord) instead of the piano seems to have been of no importance to

[1067] Czerny op. 200, 100.
[1068] Czerny op. 600 I, 118.
[1069] Czerny op. 600 I, 125.

early nineteenth-century musicians. Czerny himself wrote a *Schule des Fugenspiels* op. 400, and Kalkbrenners *L'Harmonie du Pianiste* (discussed in chapter 9.5) also includes at the end a 'Fugue très simple pour en mieux faire comprendre la contexture' [very simple fugue in order to understand better its structure]. Fugues belonged to the daily bread and butter of nineteenth-century musicians, especially keyboardists.

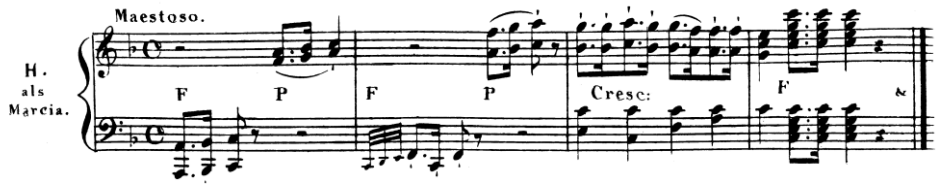
j. *Walzer, Ecossaise, Marsch u. drgl.* [Waltz, Scottish dance, march etc.]:

Czerny's last topic could hardly contrast more with the sternness of the fugue: all sorts of dance forms and other light genres that must have been popular in the salons. His treatment of dance is very brief and superficial (→ chapter 11.1); it only consists of a short example of an innocent waltz in C-major on basis of the C-minor theme:



Example 12.2.14

... and a march starting with the tones A, B-flat and C:



Example 12.2.15

In his *School of practical composition*, however, Czerny dedicates an entire chapter to all kinds of dance forms (one of them is de *Polonaise* mentioned above).[1070] Apart from the *Polonaise*, Czerny discusses *Waltz*, *Galop*, *Minuet*, *Quadrille*, and national dances such as *Mazurka*, *Polka*, *Ecossaise*, *Bolero*, *Fandango, Tarantella* and *Siciliana*. (It seems that Czerny didn't consider the *Polonaise* a national dance.) Regarding the minuet, Czerny writes that 'as a dance, it is certainly no longer in use';[1071] indeed, Schubert published minuets only until 1816.[1072] Sometimes one has the impression that Czerny's knowledge of dance forms did not always sprout from personal experience. His discussion

[1070] Czerny op. 600 I; 100.
[1071] Czerny op. 600 I; 102.
[1072] Dürr, W. & Krause, A. (eds.): *Schubert Handbuch.* Kassel, 1997; 442.

of 'the Russian national dances', for instance, is too superficial to have been helpful to a student,[1073] and the explanation of the *Ecossaise* elicited an amusing correction by the translator John Bishop:

> The tunes designated by the term 'Ecossaise', by continental composers, bear no resemblance to Scotch dances. (...) Mr. Czerny's explanation must therefore be considered as applying only to (...) imaginary imitations of Scottish music; and as *genuine* Scotch dances are so numerous the pupil can easily provide himself with models.[1074]

Bishop then refers to Schilling's *Lexikon der Tonkunst* (→ chapter 8.3) for more information about this difference.

Czerny concludes his discussion of how to mould basic thematic material into existing musical genres with advice on how to proceed when the theme happens to consist of a complete and well-designed melody (in other words, the opposite of the three-tone example). In such a case, he suggests selecting a motif from the melody that may be developed 'according to all rules of imitation'. In this way tediousness will be avoided.[1075]

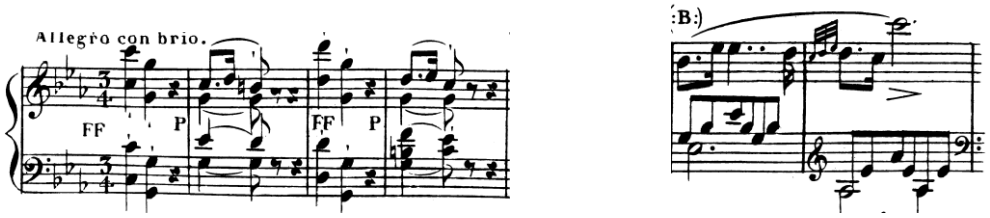
Fantasy on one theme

Repeatedly Czerny advises the reader to find suitable models in composed music. For the art of developing a large piece from a simple motivic cell, for instance, he refers to the following works (and in this order):[1076] Beethoven: first movements of *Symphony V* in C minor op 67 and *Symphony VII* in A major op. 92; last movement of the piano sonata in D minor op. 31 no. 2 (Czerny writes: op. 29); *Piano Trio* in D major op 70 nr. 1; W.A. Mozart: *Symphony* in G minor KV 550, 1st movement; several string quartets and quintets; L. Cherubini: *Overture Anacreon*; J.N. Hummel: *Rondo* in E-flat major, op. 11; Beethoven: *Andante favori* in F major WoO 57. The fifth symphony is obviously still a textbook example of this phenomenon, the other ones might be more arbitrary.

Czerny's basic idea is that different genres may be combined to create one extended extempore fantasy. This may be done on the basis of one theme, but an improvisation may also be built on several themes. The first type of 'genuine' improvisation Czerny discusses is the 'fantasy on one theme'. It is slightly peculiar that this is the context in which Czerny mentions the improvisation of a sonata allegro (as in section 12.*2a*); after all, a sonata exposition generally has two themes. Czerny might have been aware of this contradiction; witness his remark that the player should find 'zum ersten Teil einen passenden Mittelgesang (...) (welcher sich häufig auch aus dem Hauptthema entwickeln, oder wenigstens mit ihm vereinigen lässt)[1077]' [a suitable subsidiary melody for the first

[1073] Czerny op. 600 I; 108.
[1074] Czerny op. 600 I; 106.
[1075] Czerny op. 200; 42.
[1076] Ibidem.
[1077] Czerny op. 200; 43.

section (a theme which may frequently evolve even from the principal theme, or at least be compatible with it)[1078]]. Such a strong relation between first and second theme in a sonata form was not normal in Czerny's time; nor do we see such a relation in the specific compositions mentioned above. It is an idea that rather recalls Joseph Haydn, who is well known for his 'mono-thematic' sonata forms. In the first sample fantasia on one theme, however, Czerny indeed writes a second theme that shares motivic content with the first theme. The beginnings of the first and second themes are shown here:[1079]



Example 12.2.16

Czerny briefly describes a conventional sonata exposition, to be followed by a fantasy-like development section:

> Der erste Theil dieses Allegro kann, wie in der Sonate, völlig abgeschlossen werden, wogegen man dann im 2ten Theil sich der freyesten Fantasie und Ausführung, und allen Arten von Modulationen, Imitationen &:, völlig überlassen kann, sich jedoch des Mittelgesangs auch wieder erinnern muss, und endlich in der Haupttonart schliesst.[1080]
>
> [The first section of this Allegro can have a conclusive ending, as in the sonata; by way of contrast, one can surrender fully to the freest inventiveness and fulfillment of ideas and to all sorts of modulations, imitations, etc. in the second section. However, one must also reintroduce the subsidiary melody, and conclude finally in the principal key.[1081]]

It is important to note that Czerny seems not to require that the improviser play a full recapitulation that repeats all material from the exposition. Indeed, it is very difficult, and in a way contrary to the idea of improvising, to remember in detail a relatively large stretch of music in a discontinuous form (for the exposition is separated from any recapitulation by a very extended development section). A recapitulation that mirrors the exposition in detail is to be seen as typical for composed music. Even in the academic approach of Marcel Dupré, who demands a full recapitulation, this part may differ from the exposition as long as it is similar in form.[1082] Czerny's awareness of the difficulty of

[1078] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 51.
[1079] Czerny op. 200; 44 and 46
[1080] Czerny op. 200; 43.
[1081] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 51.
[1082] Dupré, M.: *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*. Paris, 1925; 114.

remembering long passages when improvising is evident in a remark he made about another example composition, where he writes:

> Repetitionen sind im Fantasieren nicht wohl möglich, denn selten bleibt das eben Gespielte so lange im Gedächtnisse.[1083]
>
> [Repetitions are not particularly feasible when improvising in fantasy style, for seldom is the precise material that has been played previously remembered for that length of time.[1084]]

Czerny's first example fantasy on one theme in C minor consists of a slow introduction that prepares for the central theme, followed by a (truncated) sonata allegro. A complete exposition (the relation between the two themes was discussed above) is followed without interruption by a modulating development section; however, Czerny mentions in a footnote the possibility of extending the codetta and concluding the exposition 'förmlich' [formally],[1085] in line with his earlier description. However, the development section does not use the second theme, despite his remark in the introductory text. It modulates to A-flat major, finishing on a dominant-seventh chord with a fermata. The next section of the fantasy is an *adagio* in A-flat according to the characterisation in section 12.2*b*. The melody (derived from the main theme) suggests the antecedent of a period; instead of the expected consequent, however, comes a development of the material that modulates by sequences to the dominant of A minor or major. At this point, Czerny writes that one may interpolate the 'Motiv, als Thema, mit einigen Variationen in A dur' [motif, as a theme, with some variations in A major].[1086] However, in the example fantasy these variations are omitted; instead comes the final section, a rondo in the manner of section 12.2*e*. Here as well, the usual rondo form is very truncated: in fact the theme appears only in the beginning and in the end. The overall structure of the first fantasy clearly follows the pattern of a sonata in three movements, though all themes are derived from one basic theme, and the slow and the last movements in particular are formally truncated.

In op. 600, Czerny briefly mentions the various types of fantasies he has discussed in great detail in the *Anleitung*. He regards it as typical for the *Fantasie* to exhibit the 'unconstraint, surprising variety' that results from the improvisatory 'fancy and inspiration of the moment, without preparation and even without thought'. When fantasias are composed rather than improvised, 'the composer must endeavour (...) to approximate as closely as possible to the freedom of extemporizing'. The structure Czerny suggests in op. 600 also resembles that of a sonata: introduction – *allegro* – *adagio* – variations – rondo – fugue (if desired). The difference with a sonata, Czerny writes, is that

[1083] Czerny op. 200; 55.
[1084] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 64.
[1085] Czerny op. 200; 46.
[1086] Czerny op. 200; 49.

the movements are connected, and also 'that each piece must have a more free development'. This freedom consists 'in the unrestricted use of modulation' and 'in an arbitrary interruption of the course of the ideas'. The example from op. 200, discussed above, exactly fits this picture.

The Wanderer Fantasy as a fantasy on one theme

Czerny writes that it is difficult to compose such a fantasy, and that not many have been written. One such composition he mentions in both op. 200 and op. 600 is Beethoven's *Chorfantasie* op. 80, and in the *Anleitung* he also cites the finale of the *Ninth Symphony* op. 125. Interestingly, neither of these is a piano piece (except for the introduction to the choral fantasy), which reveals Czerny's strong focus on musical structure and thematic content in general. He could, however, have mentioned a piano piece that was published in Vienna in 1823 by Franz Schubert, a composer who is not mentioned a single time in the *Anleitung* – even though Czerny must have been familiar with his work.[1087] Schubert's composition in question is the *Fantasie* in C major op. 15 (D 760), also known as the *Wandererfantasie.* It was published by Diabelli who, incidentally, continued to publish Schubert's hitherto unprinted compositions after his death in 1828; Diabelli also published Czerny's *Anleitung*, and Czerny often visited Diabelli's shop on the Graben in Vienna,[1088] so it seems likely that he knew this composition. The *Wandererfantasie* is one of the most demanding piano compositions from the early nineteenth century, and as it so happens, it is a perfect composed example of a fantasy on one theme as described by Czerny.

The piece is built on a phrase taken from Schubert's own song *Der Wanderer* D 489 from 1816.[1089] The text of this passage (bars 23-30) reads: *Die Sonne dünkt mich hier so kalt / Die Blüthe welk, das Leben alt / und was sie reden leerer Schall / ich bin ein Fremdling überall* [Here the sun seems so cold / the blossom faded, life old / and men's words mere hollow noise / I am a stranger everywhere.[1090]]. It is very likely that in the fantasy, Schubert was at least as inspired by this text as by the melody itself: in the original song the slow basic tempo is sped up at this passage (*etwas geschwinder*), but in the piano piece Schubert turns the phrase into a gloomy *adagio* melody that serves as the theme for a number of variations. The *Wandererfantasie* is an example of what music theorist Janet Schmalfeldt has called 'music that turns inward': music in which a middle part or

[1087] Czerny published *Drey brilliante Fantasien über die beliebtesten Motive aus Franz Schubert's Werken* [three brilliant fantasies on the most popular motifs from Franz Schubert's works] op. 339 for piano à quatre mains in 1834; the 'popular motifs' include many still famous songs, but also the Trauerwalzer (→ chapter 11.5).
[1088] Biba, O. & Fuchs, I.: *»Mehr Respekt vor dem tüchtigen Mann«: Carl Czerny.* Kassel, 2009; 20.
[1089] In his first *brilliante Fantasie* op. 339 Czerny even quotes this song, though not the passage Schubert used for the *Wandererfantasie.*
[1090] Trans. Richard Wigmore; https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/1542.

movement serves as the 'inward source' of the composition.[1091] Indeed, the central *adagio* of the *Wandererfantasie* 'serves as the motivic matrix for all other 'movements''.[1092]

The fantasy opens with an elaborate *allegro* sonata-like exposition on a theme that extracts the rhythm of the opening motif from the song phrase, transposed to a radiant C major. The second theme is in E major and, despite the changed dynamics and character, originates from the same cell. It is a perfect illustration of Czerny's remark that the second theme may 'evolve from the principal theme'. What follows is an extended development section on the principal theme, interrupted by a contrasting melodic idea in E-flat major that can be seen as vaguely related to the song as well (its opening motif, ^#4 - ^6 - ^5, might be derived from the ornamental ^5 - ^6 - ^5 in the song). Finally, the development section picks up the opening theme again and modulates eventually to the dominant of C-sharp minor, the key of the *adagio*. It is here that the original source material of the entire piece appears for the first and only time. The *adagio* connects to a scherzo (*presto*) in A-flat major with a trio in D-flat major. The principal theme of the scherzo is a rather straightforward transformation of the opening idea of the fantasy within a new metrical and tonal environment. The scherzo itself is in a vague sonata form, with a second theme that is not connected to the main material. The trio is built on a theme that clearly derives from the melodic idea in the development section of the first movement. The expected 'da capo' of the scherzo turns out to be a truncated repeat, followed by a more developmental section that modulates to the dominant chord of the home key, C major. In this way the entire scherzo plus trio follows the pattern of the first movement of the fantasy. The last movement, finally, starts like a fugue (*allegro*) on a theme that is quite similar to the principal theme of the first *allegro.* It is a fugue 'of the more free kind': after the exposition (4 voices, with sonorous doublings) the texture opens up to form a brilliant finale, only occasionally alternating with polyphonic fragments.

In its overall structure (sonata *allegro*, *adagio* with variations, scherzo with trio, fugue – finale, all movements connected to each other) the *Wandererfantasie* precisely represents Czerny's idea of a fantasy on one theme in which all movements of a classical sonata are present, albeit in a truncated form. Incidentally, the length of the *Wandererfantasie* (usually approximately 22 minutes) is not much shorter than an average sonata. Its thematic material is all derived from one basic theme. What is special about the *Wandererfantasie* is the fact that the basic theme itself is placed at the centre of the work; all other themes are derived from it. In Czerny's examples the basic theme rather appears at the beginning of the piece, which makes sense when such a piece is improvised. As has been shown, Czerny also writes 'that each piece must have a more free development' than in a formal sonata, consisting 'in the unrestricted use of modulation' and 'in an arbitrary interruption of the course of

[1091] Schmalfeldt, J: *In the Process of Becoming*. New York, 2011; 143.
[1092] Schmalfeldt, J.: op. cit., 156.

the ideas'. Both elements are surely present in the *Wandererfantasie*. The formal 'liberties' and the many modulating passages have been mentioned above; besides, the keys of the different movements are definitely more remote than usual in a composed sonata: C and E major in the first movement, C-sharp minor in the *adagio,* A-flat and D-flat major in the scherzo, and finally C major in the fugue. The choice of keys might be less arbitrary than it seems, though; if one connects the key of the trio to the C-sharp minor of the *adagio*, the key of the scherzo itself (A-flat) could be interpreted as a dominant within a large C-sharp minor / major tonal area. The main key progression in the piece then becomes C – C-sharp – C, a transposed version of the main expressive motif in the song theme: ^5 - ^6 - ^5. Whether indeed these ideas crossed Schubert's mind as well will probably always remain an open question, but it is a fact that the turn from C to C-sharp (in between first and second movement) or vice versa (in between third and fourth movement) is extraordinary in the late-classical or early-Romantic context of this composition.

Czerny's first fantasia does show many modulations, but the main keys of the movements (C minor – C major – A-flat major – C major) are within the limits of expectation. It is followed, however, by a second fantasia that is 'more free' in some respects. Its central theme is derived from the one in the previous fantasy (it is basically its inversion). The piece consists of four connected movements: an introduction (*vivace*, without metre) in E-flat major, an *allegro moderato ed espressivo* in 4/4, likewise in E-flat major, a scherzo (*presto*, 3/4) in D minor, an *adagio con moto quasi andante* (in 4/4) in E major, and finally an *allegretto grazioso ed animato* (6/8) in E-flat major. This succession of keys is surely much less common. Together, the movements resemble the design of a classical sonata with the scherzo as a second movement, as in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. The individual movements, however, are less straightforward than in Czerny's first fantasy. The introduction resembles a free instrumental prelude rather than a formal introduction, and contains no thematic material. The allegro starts like a sonata exposition with a relatively lyrical theme, but it is interrupted before a second theme has the chance to enter. The scherzo has no trio, and in the last movement a second theme is merely suggested. As such, each movement exemplifies Czerny's idea of 'an arbitrary interruption of the course of the ideas'. The notions of a 'free development' and 'unrestricted modulation' are clearly shown in this fantasy as well. Each movement (except for the introduction) in fact starts with a 'proper' presentation of a theme (all of them variants of a period structure), which is then developed, mainly by subjecting fragments of it to modulatory sequences, interspersed with virtuosic arpeggios and other passage work. Sometimes a theme is used as a bass line, with a new idea in the upper voice. The modulations often move in unexpected directions, and there are many sudden changes of mood. To summarise, the second fantasy on one theme mainly seems to be a demonstration of development techniques. It is not easy to characterise the type of music that results;

the closest resemblance might be the set of cadenzas Beethoven composed for his own piano concertos (→ chapter 10.1).

12.3 Fantasies on several themes

The fifth chapter of Czerny's *Anleitung* focuses on fantasies on several subjects. Here as well, a fantasy is essentially a combination of different genres. The crucial difference with a fantasy on a single subject seems to be that, in this case, secondary musical ideas assume more independence; however, the subject that is used at the beginning of the fantasy is supposed to recur often in between contrasting ideas: it is 'die Basis auf welche alles übrige gebaut ist'[1093] [the basis on which everything else rests].

This is indeed what Czerny shows in the example fantasy in D minor in his fifth chapter. However, the opening motif is so present throughout the entire piece that the difference with the previous type (the fantasy on one theme) is only small. It starts with a *maestoso* in 4/4 on the principal motif; this opening sounds at first as though it might be a presentation of the theme in the style of a sonata allegro. However, immediately after the theme an instrumental recitative (as in Beethoven's sonata in A-flat major, op. 110) makes the energy disappear, and the opening section finishes on a dominant harmony with fermata; as a result, the *maestoso* section functions in retrospect as an introduction, especially since it is followed by an energetic *un poco vivo*, this time representing the 'true' main theme. This modulates to F major, leading to an *andante* of which the melody is derived from the principal theme, and that in this way makes the impression of a second theme as in a one theme-fantasy. The *allegro con moto* that follows contains virtuosic passage work with modulations and picks up the main theme again, and in this way works as a development section. Subsequently an *andantino sostenuto* in B-flat major brings in a really new theme for the first time. This could count as the slow movement within the sonata structure. Modulations and developments lead towards a final *allegro vivace ed affettuoso* that is again based upon the principal theme, with a vague ABA structure clearing the way for a brief contrasting idea. A coda (*più mosso*) concludes the composition.

In his discussion of the fantasy on several themes in op. 600, Czerny presents an analysis of Hummel's *Fantasie* in E-flat major, op. 18, in which he also refers to 'the rules of the Sonata'.[1094] Other comparable compositions he mentions are, for instance, Mozart's *Fantasie* in C minor KV 475 and the 'fantasy' for organ in F minor KV 608, referred to in the four-hand piano version; he also mentions Beethoven's *Sonata quasi una fantasia* in E-flat major op. 27 no. 1.[1095] Neither Mozart's nor Beethoven's pieces, however, show the permeating role of the initial motif.

[1093] Czerny op. 200; 63.
[1094] Czerny op. 600 I; 84.
[1095] Czerny op. 200; 63.

12.4 The potpourri

The type of fantasy that the early nineteenth-century piano virtuosos played on stage, often featuring popular opera tunes, is described by Czerny in the sixth chapter of the *Anleitung* under the title of *Potpourri.* He writes that the previously described fantasies on a single or several themes are not always suitable when one improvises for a large audience, like in a theatre (concert halls were not numerous yet).

> Bei einem sehr gemischten Publikum [will] doch der bei weitem grössere Teil nur durch angenehme, bekannte Motive unterhalten, und durch pickante und glänzende Ausführung in Athem erhalten werden.[1096]
>
> [In dealing with a largely heterogeneous public, surely the majority by far will be entertained only by pleasant, familiar tunes and will be sustained in spirit by piquant and glittering performances.[1097]]

From today's perspective, opera fantasies look like a primary manifestation of solo improvisation on the early nineteenth-century concert stage. In chapter 1.2 I argued that the modern view that classical music is something that happens essentially in public concerts or on recordings might lead one to miss an essential part of nineteenth-century musical life. To be sure, both composed and improvised opera fantasies (for piano or for other instruments) were a very popular genre in the nineteenth century, and some of them (for instance, those for piano by Liszt) are still performed nowadays as showpieces of virtuosity. Within Czerny's categories of improvisation, however, the opera fantasy or potpourri does not at all occupy centre stage: rather, it is presented as a special instance, when the pianist is dealing with a largely non-educated audience. One even gets the impression that for Czerny it is not the most interesting musical utterance; his own compositions in this genre (to which he refers) are part of his 'commercial' output, not of the serious work he was more proud of. In the *Anleitung*, Czerny seems to explain aspects that can make this type of piece musically more interesting. It is clear that these extempore fantasies are based on an awareness of the public for whom one performs (*Rücksicht auf das Publikum*[1098]), and that the pianist therefore should be familiar with all popular tunes of the moment. For this reason, Dana Gooley calls this type of solo improvisation a 'discourse of community'. As an example he mentions Hummel, who 'produced such dialogues and intertexts by making free fantasies into a meeting and reconciliation of pleasant and learned styles, with their distinct social coordinates. He also opened himself out to the audiences by adapting his playing to their listening level according to the needs of the occasion'.[1099] In this way, Gooley argues, nineteenth-century solo improvisation is not 'the epitome of Western individualism', but can

[1096] Czerny op. 200; 75
[1097] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 86.
[1098] Czerny op. 200; 75.
[1099] Gooley, D.: op. cit., 107-108.

be reconciled with 'theorizations of improvisation of the CSI school' which 'have generally taken collective, group improvisation as a default norm'.[1100] This may all be true, but Czerny emphasises that an experienced improviser may 'auch in diese Manier sehr viel Kunst, und daher auch doppeltes Interesse legen'[1101] [surely exhibit great artistry and therefore twice the interest in this style as well[1102]]. By applying the art of development, he may 'den leichtesten Produkten des herrschenden Geschmacks, den einfachsten Volksmelodien eine edlere Seite abgewinnen'[1103] [find a more noble side even in the frivolous products of popular taste and the simplest folk songs]. In other words: a good musician may use this potentially superficial genre to his own benefit, or even to the benefit of musical art.

One way of elevating the potpourri is to make use of the meaning of the texts of the quoted melodies, and in this way add a kind of 'meta-meaning':

> Gesangs-Motive, deren Worte allgemein bekannt sind, können durch sinnige Zusammenstellung einen artigen oder bedeutenden sinn bilden.[1104]
>
> [Melodies of songs, whose words are generally familiar, can be combined in a meaningful way and get a pleasant or interesting signification.]

A similar way of involving textual associations was already discussed in the context of preluding in chapter 9.8.

Czerny gives a notated example of the potpourri, as well; it is telling that the themes are not opera tunes of the day, but rather by classical masters: Bach, Händel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Cherubini and Beethoven; it is as if Czerny wants to show that the potpourri need not be built on ephemera. He stresses the importance of variation in metre and tempo in order to avoid monotony. He also recommends combining two or more themes in surprising ways, such as playing one of them as a soprano and the other one simultaneously as a bass; moreover, a theme can be played as a canon. Incidentally, Czerny warns the reader that such sophisticated effects should be applied with moderation and should sound spontaneous: 'denn meistens klingt dergleichen steif und unnatürlich'[1105] [for as a rule they sound stiff and affected[1106]]. They will have to be premeditated in most cases anyway.

Later in his opus 600, Czerny discusses the potpourri as well, and stresses here the importance of 'a refined taste, and an accurate knowledge of that kind of elegance which is the style of the day'. An

[1100] Gooley, D.: op. cit., 107. 'CSI' refers to the journal '*Critical Studies in Improvisation*', → chapter 1.2.
[1101] Czerny op. 200, 75.
[1102] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 86.
[1103] Czerny op. 200; 75.
[1104] Ibidem.
[1105] Czerny op. 200; 77.
[1106] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 90.

interesting excursion on embellishments makes clear the ephemeral character of products of the brilliant style:

> Embellishments are an object and an offspring of fashion, and grow old, as soon as better or at least others of a pleasing kind are invented. (...) In reference to this, the young composer must naturally take only the *newest* and most tasteful compositions for a model, and particularly endeavour to form his taste, by hearing the best modern and generally esteemed Operas, and good singers; for, as a matter of course, *in this respect*, the ancient authors can rarely be taken as an example. He who neglects this in his youth, will experience great difficulty, at a more advanced age, in keeping pace with the times.[1107]

One wonders whether Czerny still approved of his earlier potpourri on classical themes in op. 200 when he wrote these words, and maybe even whether he was also secretly referring to himself in his last remark.

12.5 Variations

The principle of embellishing a given theme connects with the last sort of improvisation to be mentioned in this survey based upon Czerny's account: the theme with variations. Both in op. 200 and in op. 600, Czerny devotes a chapter to this form, which he calls 'one of the oldest forms in the realm of composition'.[1108] He refers to Bach's *Goldberg variations* as an unsurpassed model in the art of variation, and writes that countless variation works have been composed for over a century (as we know now, Czerny could easily have doubled this estimated time span). 'Besides, the variation-form is one of the few which, in all probability, will never grow old.'[1109] Apart from the theme with variations as a musical form, Czerny sees the principle of variation as an 'indispensable resource for almost all species of compositions',[1110] because a theme that returns is usually varied. 'Auch Concerte sind meistens nur freyere Variationen des vorhergehenden Tutti'[1111] [even concertos are, for the most part, only freer variations of the preceding Tuttis[1112]] – a bold statement!

In the *Anleitung*, Czerny also emphasises the importance of acquiring dexterity in improvising variations. From a historical perspective, this is a modest position: akin to ornamentation, variation is probably one of the oldest improvisational techniques in Western music. It is not difficult, for example, to imagine Jacob van Eijk's variations for solo recorder in *Der fluyten lusthof* (1649) as the notated result of improvisations, or as written examples for an improvisational practice – especially since the composer was well-known for his open-air performances as a recorder player on the

[1107] Czerny op. 600; 88-89.
[1108] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 107.
[1109] Czerny op. 600; 21.
[1110] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 107.
[1111] Czerny op. 200; 94.
[1112] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 107.

Janskerkhof [the cemetery of the church of St. John] in Utrecht on summer evenings in the 1640's. Several decades earlier, Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck's reputation as an improviser was based mainly on his inexhaustible fantasy while varying on well-known tunes. As late as 1882, Hugo Riemann still wrote that 'every decent musician should be able to improvise variations on a given melody' (→ chapter 8.3).

Even today, the didactic value of improvising variations is obvious. Especially in the context of an early Baroque style, variations on a ground (*chaconne*, *passacaglia*) have become a popular first step towards 'historically inspired improvisation', in particular by instrumentalists. A very attractive aspect of this form is its flexibility in instrumentation: it can be performed on solo keyboard, including organ, but as well on (combinations of) monophonic instruments with basso continuo. A wealth of historical material is offered in *50 Renaissance & Baroque Standards* by Pascale Boquet and Gérard Rebours;[1113] Martin Erhardt's *Upon a Ground* provides a detailed methodical approach.[1114] What makes such figurative variations relatively feasible for students is the predictability of the harmony, which continuously repeats the same pattern. Following the example of eighteenth-century composed variation cycles, each variation usually is built on one musical idea, often in the form of a rhythmic motif. Once such an idea has been invented, it takes less concentration to carry it through a variation, assuming that the player knows the harmonic pattern well. In this way the player can plan the next variation while still performing the previous one – thus learning to think on several levels simultaneously, an essential capacity of an improviser.[1115] Czerny must have been familiar with this phenomenon as well, witness a footnote in another chapter in the *Anleitung*:

> Während solchen Passagen (welche geübte Finger leicht ohne besondere Aufmerksamkeit fortsetzen können) hat der Spieler nachzudenken, welche Form er nachfolgen lassen soll.[1116]
>
> [During such passages (which practiced fingers can execute easily without any particular attention), the performer has to concentrate on the type of style he should have in the following section.[1117]]

In the *Anleitung* Czerny mentions six ways of varying upon a theme, followed by the first half of a theme with 32 notated sample variations. After the uncompleted theme, Czerny writes that the

[1113] Boquet, P. & Rebours, G.: *50 Renaissance & Baroque Standards*. Courlay, 2007.
[1114] Erhardt, M.: *Upon a Ground*. Magdeburg, 2013.
[1115] In the teaching of improvisation, the importance of thinking on various levels at the same time becomes obvious already at an early stage. It reveals itself, for instance, in improvised canons (see http://metricimpro.eu/video/improvising-canons/). In this exercise, the 'leader' has to make up a melody, but at the same time predict how it will sound together with the canon voice, and check whether the 'follower' is still with him. When students are unable to focus on different things at the same time, it often happens that they stop the performance in order to think.
[1116] Czerny op. 200; 57.
[1117] Czerny op. 200, trans. Mitchell; 66.

student can 'easily' compose the second half; likewise, each notated variation only contains the beginning, to be continued by the improvising student. In the chapter on variations in the *School of Practical Composition* op. 600, Czerny develops this description of variation techniques in a more systematic way. Even for a student today, Czerny's summary still has great instructional value:

> Numerous are the ways and forms in which a theme may be varied, but they admit of being divided into the following six principal classes:
>
> 1. In which the theme is strictly preserved in one hand, whilst a new, augmented, or even florid accompaniment is performed by the other.
>
> 2. In which the theme itself is varied by adjunctive notes, without however changing the melody.
>
> 3. Where, either in one or in both hands, passages, skips, or other figures are constructed upon the harmony of the theme; so that the leading idea of the melody is retained, yet without again giving the theme in a complete state.
>
> 4. Where, upon the foundation-harmony of the theme, another new simple or embellished melody is invented, of such a kind, that it can either be played together with the theme, or by itself, instead of it.
>
> 5. Where the theme receives other harmony, or artificial modulations, which may be combined either with the strict, canonic, or fugued style, or with imitative figures.
>
> 6. In which the *time*, the *degree of movement*, or even the *key* of the theme is changed, but in which the original melody must always be clearly distinguishable. To these may be added, lastly, the more free development of the theme in the Finale.[1118]

Each 'class' is then exemplified by a number of beginnings of variations on a (fragment of a) theme.[1119] The order of Czerny's six classes follows the logic of a development from an unaltered quotation of the original melody to more free variations in which metre, tempo, and key may be different and the theme harder to recognise. In no. 1, only the texture of the accompaniment is varied; actually this way of varying is not very common in variation cycles of Mozart or Beethoven. Rather, a remote predecessor can be found in the variation techniques of Sweelinck, who frequently placed new counterpoints against an unaltered melody. Any influence on Czerny of Sweelinck or the English virginalists, however, cannot be assumed. Possibly this was simply the easiest way of varying Czerny could imagine. No. 2 describes the kind of figurative variations common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; a type that still makes up the majority of Mozart's piano variations. No. 3 touches upon an essential point: the question of whether one varies upon the tune or the harmony. As I showed in chapter 3, Baroque embellishments started to include aspects of both. Variations on grounds and passacaglias, however, usually focus on the harmony only, except for cases where a

[1118] Czerny op. 600 I; 21.
[1119] For a reproduction of these examples, see the appendix.

preferred upper voice stands out, such as in the famous *Follia*. When the theme for variations is a tune or song instead of a bass line, the focus naturally is on the melody. The typical theme of a variation cycle, however, has a simple and easily recognisable harmonic basis (→ section 12.2*g*), which tends to be an important factor as well. In Czerny's third step, the distinguishability of the melody starts to be sacrificed, and in no. 4 it is dropped altogether, resulting in purely harmony-based variations. No. 5 again uses the original melody as a backbone for the variation, while re-harmonising it in unexpected ways. No. 6 finally describes the most free type of variations, namely the so-called character variations, which most likely were originated by Beethoven. They were to become the standard variation technique in the course of the nineteenth century. Character variations, however, also had an eighteenth-century predecessor, namely chorale suites such as Dietrich Buxtehude's variations on *Auf meinen lieben Gott* BuxWV 179, in which each variation resembles a different dance.[1120] In character variations each variation, while following the harmonic, structural and / or melodic outline of the theme, is a semi-autonomous piece with its own character, key and especially tempo, such that the variations tend to represent different musical genres. Indeed Czerny's example variations in this manner match his list of musical genres (→ section 12.2).

Despite the emphasis on piano music in this chapter, it should not be forgotten that the art of variation in the nineteenth century was not at all limited to the keyboard. The theme with variations as a genre may be typically instrumental: composed variation cycles for the voice are exceptional (Adolphe Adam's bravura variations on *Ah! Vous dirai-je Maman* for soprano, flute and orchestra are a stunning example). However, cycles for monodic instruments are numerous, especially those with piano accompaniment. Niccolò Paganini, whose spectacular virtuosity and emotional power caused a thrill throughout Europe and inspired Liszt to reach a similar level on the piano, is known often to have improvised them on stage. When he was appointed first violinist at the court of Princess Elisa Baciocchi (Napoleon's sister) in Lucca in 1805, he had to perform at two concerts per week. 'I always played an improvisation: I always wrote down a bass for the piano and on that harmonic background I improvised on a theme'.[1121] To his contemporaries, Paganini's art transcended everything they had heard before, inciting comparisons with wizardry and devilry; the format of such improvisations, however, was firmly rooted in eighteenth-century loci communes.

[1120] Rathey, M.: 'Buxtehude and the Dance of Death: the Chorale Partita Auf meinen lieben Gott (BuxWV 179) and the Ars Moriendi in the Seventeenth Century'. *Early Music History* Vol. 29 (2010), 161-188.

[1121] Quoted in Borer, Ph.: 'Paganini's Virtuosity and Improvisatory Style'. In: Rasch, R. (ed.): *Beyond Notes: Improvisation in Western Music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.* Turnhout, 2009; 202.

12.6 Genre in the later part of the nineteenth century

Genre in composed music

It would be an exaggeration, and therefore untrue, to suggest that nineteenth-century music was as much based on traditional genres as music of the eighteenth century. The compositions of Czerny's younger contemporary Robert Schumann, for instance, definitely redefine genre-based conventions (especially his earlier work). The Romantic elevation of instrumental music, the inspiration that came from poetry and landscape, the aesthetic preference for the 'fragment', and above all, the focus on the individual composing genius: everything led towards an increasing urge for originality. The short piano piece (*Klavierstück*), a characteristic vehicle of nineteenth-century musical production, was typically published in collections and series, however without much of a common ground with respect to musical genre. Collections such as Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* op. 12 or his *Novelletten* op. 21 show a degree of variety that has no parallel in eighteenth-century music. Even Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* and Chopin's *Nocturnes* considerably differ from each other, and in Brahms's *Klavierstücke* unity in genre is hardly enhanced by subspecies such as *Capriccio*, *Intermezzo* or *Rhapsodie*.

Nevertheless, I argue that old genres remained of importance for a long time, albeit in a more hidden way. In Brahms's *Handel Variations* op. 24, a magnificent series of character variations that sometimes push the limits of the theme to the extreme, individual variations may very well correspond with genre-specific loci communes such as a *scherzo* (variation 10), or even a Hungarian *Verbunkos* (variations 13 and 14), consisting of the characteristic couple *lassú* (slow) and *friss* (fast). Variation 19 suggests a *siciliano*, but the tempo indication *leggiero e vivace* contradicts this idea – as if Brahms wants the player *not* to interpret the variation in this way. Then again, the addition *ma non troppo* casts doubt on the latter view. This contradiction shows in recordings, both old and new, of this variation: the views on tempo are relatively consistent, but the differences in articulation are considerable, and thus the character of the performances of this piece. In general the clearly defined genres of dance music remained part of nineteenth-century 'art music', and folk music even became increasingly important with the rise of nationalism. Sometimes individual creations of composers became so influential that they became genres in their own right, such as the 'Mendelssohnian' scherzo, the *chant sans paroles*, or the nocturne à la Chopin; the last two types were adapted and transformed by, among others, Fauré. Just as in pre-1800 music, it is crucial that the interpreter recognise such loci (→ chapter 2.3), that he understand the idea – which may be more difficult when the references to genres become less explicit, as in Brahms's op. 24. To summarise, genre-based thinking can be recognised even in compositions from the later part of the nineteenth century, despite the fact that the picture is less clear than for one century earlier. How does this relate to improvising?

The classical music world is blessed with a small number of recorded improvisations[1122] that date from the early years of recording. Several composer-pianists were recorded while improvising; in most cases the limited length of the wax roll forced them to play short pieces. Some of these recordings will be analysed here through the lens of loci communes on the level of genre, and sometimes also on more detailed levels. I will show that especially in such improvised pieces musical genres form a common thread.

Recorded improvisations: Arensky

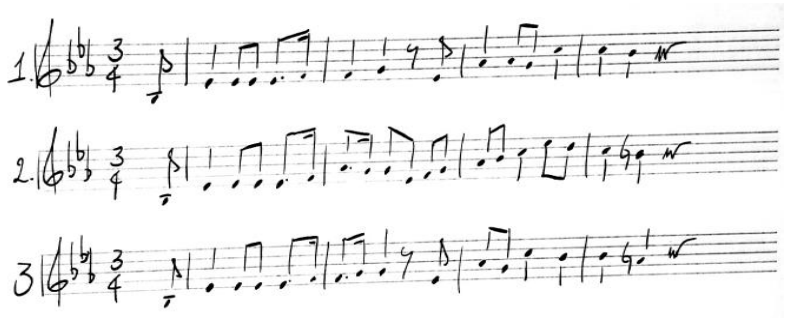
The recordings of the playing of Anton Arensky on the Julius Block cylinders were already mentioned in chapter 7.5. Arensky also recorded two piano improvisations for Block in 1892 and 1893.[1123]

[12.6 #1 Arensky: improvisation a; rec. 1892]

The first one (cylinder C 112, recorded on 24 November, 1892) is a slow piece in a triple meter in E-flat major. It is structured very tightly in a simple rondo-form: the piece opens with a singing melody, built as a classical period with a modulating consequent. A contrasting section has eight bars[1124] with a two-bar extension, after which the opening theme is repeated (halved in length). A second contrasting section is partly inaudible due to a damaged cylinder, but its length must have been sixteen bars. The piece finishes with another statement of the main theme, again in halved length, after which a four-bar coda concludes the music. With every repeat of the main theme, the music sounds more grand.

The melody is accompanied with chords, which gives the piece a chorale-like texture. In mood, key, tempo, and above all its opening motif there is a strong reminiscence of Mendelssohn's well-known *Notturno* in *Ein Sommernachtstraum.* This piece is so famous that it might count as a genre in its own right, as mentioned at the end of the previous section. Hitherto this analytical description of Arensky's improvisation might give the impression that we are dealing with well-planned or even composed music. There is, however, an interesting improvisational feature to it: every time the first phrase sounds (altogether three times), it is slightly different in a way that would be unlikely in a composition. One might surmise that Arensky remembered the opening 'bar' precisely, and that his memory of the rest of the phrase was more superficial; in the third phrase, for instance, the intervallic movement corresponds with the first time, but the metrical placement is different.

[1122] In this case: performances of music that had not, or not yet, been notated, and which are labelled as such.
[1123] The Dawn of Recording (MARSTON 53011-12**),** CD 1, track 15.
[1124] Strictly speaking, bars only exist in written music. Since there is no alternative, I also apply the term to descriptions of improvised music here.



Example 12.6.1

Harmonically the music follows conventional loci of cadential harmony, and the coda is based on what Gjerdingen calls a 'quiescenza', not unlike Mendelssohn.

[12.6 #2 Arensky: improvisation b; rec. 1893]

The second improvisation (cylinder C120) was recorded exactly one year later. It has the same rondo-form, but the genre is a Schumann-like fast waltz. The piece makes a well-structured, practised and premeditated impression, almost as if it were a composition. However, I have not been able to relate it to an existing work, either by Arensky himself or by others. It should be added that the recording happens to be unclear, leaving much to the imagination of the listener.

Transcriptions of recorded improvisations

In jazz, transcriptions have become a well-proven way to study recorded improvisations. Similarly, a number of recorded improvisations by well-known classical composers have also been transcribed, often many years later. During a holiday in Tiana in 1903, Isaac Albéniz visited the wealthy industrialist Ruperto Regordosa Planas and improvised three piano pieces, which were recorded on Planas's new phonograph cylinder. These are the only existing recordings of Albéniz's playing. In 2009, they were transcribed and published by Milton Rubén Laufer.[1125] The second and third improvisations were transcribed as well and published by Agustín Manuel Martínez.[1126] In addition, Enrique Granados recorded several improvisations. During a visit to New York as a result of the premiere of his opera *Goyescas* in 1916, Granados recorded some of his piano music on Steinway Duo-Art piano rolls, including two 'improvisations'. Henry Levine and Samuel Randlett transcribed one of them in 1967, and published it as *Rêverie-Improvisation*.[1127] The other one, *Improvisation on the Jota Valenciana*, was transcribed and published together with the Albéniz-transcriptions by Agustín Martinez in 2006. In addition, Granados made an acoustic recording of an *Improvisation on*

[1125] Albéniz, I. (transcription: Milton R. Laufer): *Drei Improvisationen 1903*. München, 2009.
[1126] Martínez, A.M. (transcriptions): *Improvisaciones.* Barcelona, 2006.
[1127] Revised edition by Alicia de Larrocha in: Granados, E.: *Integral para Piano*, vol. 3 (A. de Larrocha, ed.). Barcelona, 2001.

El Pelele in 1912 in Barcelona, which was transcribed by Martinez as well.[1128] Edward Elgar also recorded five improvisations in London in 1929, which were transcribed and published by Iain Farrington in 2006.[1129]

The status of such scores raises interesting questions. Within the tradition of classical music, and especially under influence of the *Urtext*-paradigm, it is tempting to see them as something similar to 'normal' scores (i.e., scores written by the composers themselves). In chapter 2.3, I distinguished between the descriptive and the prescriptive function of scores. It seems to me that transcriptions of recorded improvisations are to be seen primarily as descriptive: they are a reflection of the transcriber's observation in the form of a musical text. The (especially rhythmic) discrepancies between different transcriptions of the same recording show that this can be done in many ways (not to mention the many mistakes in some transcriptions). The prescriptive aspect, however, is problematic. To be sure, if one aims to perform the transcription, there is necessarily a prescriptive side to it; but in my opinion, it should not be mistaken for a score by the composer himself. It is striking that such transcriptions are often presented as part of the composer's oeuvre: Farrington, for instance, regards the Elgar transcriptions as 'a considerable addition to [Elgar's] slender repertoire'[1130] (for the piano, that is), and De Larrocha even includes the *Rêverie-Improvisation* in her edition of Granados's complete works. By contrast, I argue that transcriptions should be taken for what they really are, namely mere transcriptions, and therefore interpretations, of recordings. In what follows, I have occasionally used published transcriptions of recorded improvisations as a reference.

Recorded improvisations: Albéniz

[12.6 #3 Albéniz: improvisation a; rec. 1903]

The improvisations of Albéniz, although sometimes hard to decipher because of the quality of the wax cylinders,[1131] are consistent and convincing little pieces of music. All three of them are based on dance genres. The first one (cylinder no. 167) is identified by both transcribers as a Minuet – not in the strict Baroque or Classical sense, but because of its similarities with other compositions of Albéniz with that title. It is remarkably regular in its phrase structure; after a first part in D-flat major,[1132] consisting of four eight-bar phrases, follows a contrasting section consisting of a period (eight plus eight bars) in F minor. After this, the beginning is repeated, this time only with two eight-

[1128] Martinez, A.M.: op. cit.
[1129] Farrington, I. (transcriptions): *Edward Elgar: Five Piano Improvisations.* London, 2006.
[1130] Ibidem, preface.
[1131] The cylinders (with numbers 167, 168 and 169) were part of the collection of the violinist and conservatoire director Xavier Turull, who sold them to the Bibliotheca de Catalunya in 2000 [Albeniz, I.: op. cit., III].
[1132] For a discussion about the correct recorded pitch, see the preface to Albéniz, I.: op. cit., III.

bar phrases. As for the form, this is a clear example of a rounded binary. The improvisational character shows in the repeat of the beginning, which is far from precise. Just the opening bars are repeated with exactness; for the rest of the repeat, it is rather the melodic outline and the harmonic model, and of course the key, that create the impression that this section is indeed a restatement of the opening.

It is not easy to improvise during a predetermined amount of time. The length of a wax cylinder recording was two minutes at maximum, but much shorter would be a waste of material. After the rounded binary, I argue that we can hear Albéniz extending the improvisation. Suddenly the tight organisation of the sentences is gone. He does not choose to begin a new episode in another key, but continues in D-flat major. Though this is only speculation, it sounds as if he is filling in time, as though he is unsure how much is left.

[12.6 #4 Albéniz: improvisation b; rec. 1903]

The second improvisation, recorded on cylinder no. 168, has received from Agustín Martinez the title 'Seguidillas', a clear genre indication. Indeed, the music shows characteristic features of this Castilian dance form, such as the alternation of interludes that suggest guitar accompaniment, and free melodic verses (always in unison). The interludes, with characteristic *acciaccaturas*, are based upon the Phrygian tetrachord, another well-known locus. This improvisation, too, gives the impression of landing intentionally on a strong ending (with large syncopated chords), after which the music nevertheless continues with another verse. The interlude that follows is harmonically less focused: it starts like the type of interlude that stands on the dominant (V – II7 – V pendulum), but at the very last moment Albéniz returns to the tonic, after which a short coda (I – $II^{6/5}$ oscillation) finishes the piece with repetitive chords on the tonic that are perhaps less effective than the fake ending of 15 seconds before.

[12.6 #5 Albéniz: improvisation c; rec. 1903]

The third improvisation on cylinder no. 169 has a very strong Spanish local flavour, too. It is in the same key as the previous piece, F minor. The piece is kept together by a characteristic theme that returns slightly differently (except for the beginning) each time. The introduction of a contrasting idea in G-flat major suggests the beginning of a B section, but the idea is dropped and the music returns to F minor. Did Albéniz realise that he was about to run out of time? Safely back in F minor, the main theme is picked up again, but from now on it circles around chord oscillations that keep confirming the tonic until the end.

To summarise, Albéniz's improvisations are very clearly based upon loci communes from folk music, especially the second and third ones.

Recorded improvisations: Granados, Saint-Saëns

Unlike Albéniz, Enrique Granados also recorded improvisations on piano roll, which reduces the distortions as they often occur with old wax cylinders. The improvisation on *El Pelele* and the *Rêverie-Improvisation* form an interesting new category, because both pieces are closely connected with compositions by Granados himself.

[12.6 #6 Granados: Improvisation on *El Pelele*; rec. 1912]

El Pelele ('The Straw Man') is the title of a piano composition from 1914 which belongs to the collection entitled *Goyescas* – compositions that are inspired by the paintings of Francisco de Goya. *El Pelele* is a rather densely written and virtuosic piece. The *Improvisation on El Pelele* was actually recorded a few years earlier in Barcelona[1133] and may be seen as an earlier version of the later composition. It is technically less complex but follows roughly the same course. The essential musical ideas are all present, though often in a simpler form. Probably this was a premeditated improvisation, a not yet notated sketch of a piece that would later be reworked as *El Pelele*. It is very interesting to note how Granados has later modified the original concept (the one presented in the 'improvisation') by making the transitional passages more effective; in these passages, modulations were added and repetitions were replaced with material that showed more diversity. This recording provides a fascinating insight into the workshop of this composer.

[12.6 #7 Granados: Rêverie-Improvisation (piano roll; rec. 1916)[1134]]

In the *Rêverie-Improvisation* the situation is reversed. This piece was recorded in New York after Granados had recorded ten of his own works on piano rolls; the technician left the recording equipment on while Granados improvised.[1135] The recording is clearly related to a composition that was published for the first time in De Larrocha's edition of the complete works in 2001, as a part of the *Goyescas*: *Crepusculo*. The sole source for this edition is an undated manuscript that was probably written around 1910.[1136] This means that when Granados recorded his piano roll in 1916, *Crepusculo* was a finished but still unpublished composition. The improvisation may therefore be seen as a further development of ideas that had already been notated. It is extremely interesting to compare *Crepusculo* and *Rêverie*. *Crepusculo* has a simple ABA structure in which the A part is repeated exactly. In the *Rêverie* the initial A section largely coincides harmonically and melodically with its composed counterpart, but with many differences in timing. The middle part of *Crepusculo*, an

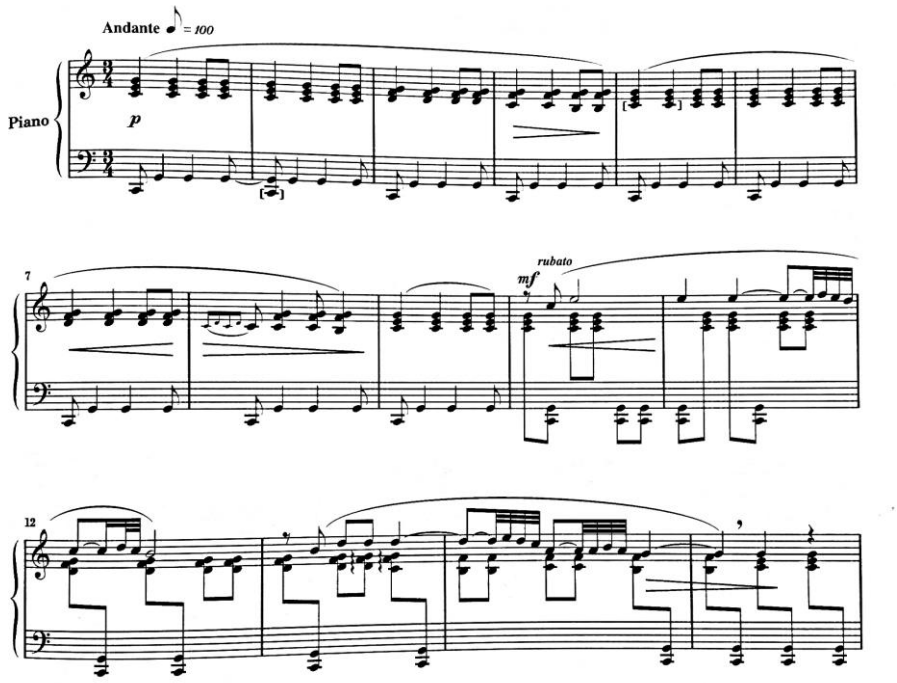
[1133] Recording for Odéon no. 68651, matrix xs 1511; issued on *The Catalan Piano Tradition*, VAI/IPA 1001, 1992.
[1134] https://youtu.be/6p4RUYmgICY (uploaded 2020 by 'Enrique Granados – Onderwerp')
[1135] Hess, C.A.: *Enrique Granados: A Bio-Bibliography*. New York, 1991; 126.
[1136] Granados, E.: *Integral para Piano*, vol. 3 (A. de Larrocha, ed.). Barcelona, 2001; 25.

Allegro molto leggiero evoking bird songs, is absent in the *Rêverie*. Instead there is a much longer section that initially suggests guitar music (such as in Debussy's prelude *La sérénade interrompue*), but soon goes off the rails into a frenzied fantasy with varying metres and fortissimo chord repetitions. A return to the 'guitar' music (but not repeated precisely, thus suggesting real improvisation) leads back to the recapitulation of the A section. In the improvisation, however, this repeat is not literal; again the outline is followed faithfully (suggesting that Granados had it firmly in mind), but there are new deviations in timing. Unlike *Crepusculo*, the improvisation finishes with a short coda that recalls both the guitars and the atmosphere of the beginning. It is wonderful to see how Granados must have had a reduced version of the A section in mind, and was able to play with it without getting rid of its structure. The A section of *Crepusculo* served as a true locus communis to him.

[12.6 #8 Granados: Improvisation on the *Jota Valenciana* (piano roll; rec. 1916)[1137]]

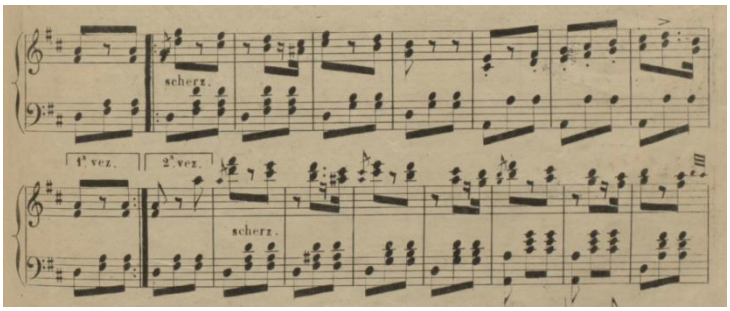
A second improvisation Granados recorded for Duo-Art in 1916 is on a roll with the title: 'Improvisation: theme of Valenciana Jota, with the influence of South Arab Music' (Duo-Art recording no. 6295). The background, and also the genre, of this piece are puzzling. A *jota* is a dance in a fast triple metre; in fact, Granados composed a *Jota Valenciana*, also referred to as *Valenciana*, as the seventh movement of his *Danzas Españolas* op. 37. This piece was described as his favourite encore.[1138] At the end of his stay in New York, Granados was invited, together with the Dutch singer Julia Culp, to perform for president Wilson at the White House. At this occasion Granados played several arrangements and original compositions, and as well 'Jota Valenciana' and 'El Pelele'.[1139] As Granados also recorded his 'Improvisation on the Jota Valenciana' during the same trip, however, one wonders which version was played at the concert in the White House, because the Spanish dance from op. 37 and the improvisation have very little in common. The improvisation is a rather slow piece, transcribed by Martinez in a 3/4 metre with M.M. 100 for the eighth note:[1140]

[1137] https://youtu.be/RDldUQKYetc (uploaded 2010 by 'Ednay Arkspay')
[1138] Hess, C.A.: *Enrique Granados: A Bio-Bibliography.* New York, 1991; 26.
[1139] Hess, C.A.: op. cit., 31.
[1140] Martínez, A.M. (transcriptions): *Improvisaciones.* Barcelona, 2006 ; 15.



Example 12.6.2

I suspect that this notation is slightly misleading; more in line with a jota would be to transcribe it in 3/8, still with tempo 100 for the eighth notes, with frequent hemiolas across two bars. Even notated in that way, however, the piece is still unusually slow for a jota. I argue that this piece is to be understood as a transformation of an ordinary jota, in which the tempo is slowed down and the ornamentation in the melody raises associations with 'South Arab music'. This does not yet explain, however, why it is called an improvisation on *the theme of the* Valencian jota. I deem it possible that the title refers to a piece by a now forgotten composer: José Valero. José Valero Peris (who died in 1868), an 'ardent defender of Spanish opera and Spanish music',[1141] wrote a *Jota valenciana* for piano that has some similarities with Granados's ornamented melody, especially in a sequence of descending tetrachords, starting on the ^3:[1142]



Example 12.6.3

[1141] Draayer, S.R.: *Art Song composers of Spain*. Lanham, 2009; 77.
[1142] Valero, J.: 'Jota valenciana'. In: *Obras escogidas de varios autores*. Madrid, [1910]; 5.

Interestingly, Valero also published a song with the title 'El Pelele' (1849).[1143] Has he been a hidden influence on Granados?

Granados was a virtuoso pianist. He studied piano privately in Paris with Charles Wilfrid de Bériot, the son of the violinist Charles-Auguste de Bériot and the mezzo- soprano Maria Malibran. De Bériot encouraged the improvisational talent of Granados, who indeed seems to have improvised frequently on stage.[1144] A review in the *Revista Musical Catalana* from 1915 informs the reader about the nature of such improvisations:

> Amb el més gran romanticism traduí el pensament chopinià compendiat en pàgines com el *Nocturn*, òp. 1, el *Vals,* òp. 64, núm. 2, La *Berceuse* i la *Polonesa-fantasie*, òp. 22.
>
> [With a grand, Romantic gesture he translated the Chopin into a compendium of the following pages: the Nocturne, op. 1, the Waltz. Op. 64 no. 2, the *Berceuse*, and the *Polonaise-Fantasy* op. 22.][1145]
>
> (NB the opus numbers of the Nocturne and of the *Polonaise-Fantaisie* are incorrect).

These words give the impression of a compilation, rather than a fantasy on several themes or even a potpourri. Finally, two recorded 'improvisations' by Camille Saint-Saëns, often presented as an *improvised cadenza for Africa op. 89*, recorded in 1904,[1146] and a *Samson et Delilah improvisation* (piano roll, 1915),[1147] are in reality compilations of fragments from these large works.

Recorded improvisations: Elgar

The five improvisations Edward Elgar recorded in 1929 officially fall outside the scope of this study on basis of their recording date; however, given the essentially nineteenth-century character of Elgar's music, there is good reason to include them in this discussion.

Unlike Granados and Albéniz, Elgar was not a virtuoso pianist: he even seems to have disliked the instrument. On the other hand, he used the piano when composing, and developed musical ideas at the keyboard.[1148] Iain Farrington supposes that Elgar, who was very much aware of the potential of recorded sound, made recordings of his improvisations to stimulate progress on new work, for in the 1920's he had composed very little (possibly due to the death of his wife Alice in 1920). Elgar's recorded improvisations are therefore not to be seen as performative musical presentations, but rather as stages in a creative process with compositions as final goals.[1149]

[1143] Draayer, S. R.: ibidem.
[1144] Hess, C.A.: op. cit., 8.
[1145] Quoted in Hess, C.A.: op. cit., 85.
[1146] https://youtu.be/rRX_d1OAci4
[1147] https://youtu.be/U82UJTu9uaE
[1148] Farrington, op. cit., preface.
[1149] Elgar's improvisations are included in the CD-box *The Elgar edition : The complete electrical recordings of Sir Edward Elgar* (EMI 0 95694 2; 2011), CD 8, tracks 9-13.

[12.6 #9 Elgar: Five improvisations (rec. 1929)[1150]]

Elgar's first improvisation in G major is based on a theme by somebody else: Rossini's jolly ballet music for the *Pas de trois* (no. 15) in the third act of *Guillaume Tell.* Elgar, however, does something that reminds one of Granados's jota: he literally quotes the first section of Rossini's polka-style melody, but drastically slows down the original tempo and enriches the harmonisation. As a consequence, the theme sounds like a nostalgic piece in Elgar's lighter style, such as *Salut d'amour.* With respect to a genre, it resembles a Romantic *Gavotte*, in atmosphere similar to Brahms's piano arrangement of Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Gavotte.* After the transformation of Rossini's music, Elgar continues with a very free middle part in B minor that is transcribed accurately by Iain Farrington in a 4/4 metre, but that might also be seen as a *senza tempo* passage. A bridge section modulates back to a shortened repeat of the first part, but with just a few changes – which suggests that Elgar knew this theme well.

The second improvisation in G minor (3'30") starts with a gloomy passage. If the reader allows me a small speculative digression: surely it would be in the spirit of Elgar to associate this beginning with the famous first lines of Dante's *Divina commedia*: 'Midway upon the journey of our life / I found myself within a forest dark, / For the straightforward pathway had been lost.' (translated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow). The music truly wanders and searches. Again, the transcription in 4/4 is at the same time accurate and misleading: it is as if Elgar applies metre very freely, rhythmically closer to recitation (like in Anglican chants) than to classical or Romantic musical phrases. Indeed, this suggests a way of gaining access into this music: that is, by understanding it as free musical declamation. A new, scherzo-like theme follows that makes a premeditated impression, but it soon dissolves again into the heightened declamatory style. Fragments of musical ideas emerge and disappear: this is certainly an example of an improvisatory style, but rather of a musician who improvises to himself than of an improviser who addresses an audience. Unnoticed, the music slips into a regular melody that Farrington has identified as Elgar's song *Fate's Discourtesy* from the cycle *The Fringes of the Fleet* on texts of Rudyard Kipling (1917). With a few interpolations in the manner of the beginning of this improvisation, this song forms the backbone of the remainder of it, though the music ends in a dark G minor. There is a strange contrast between the optimism of the song text and the gloomy setting in this improvisation; Farrington supposes that this might have to do with Elgar's later disillusionment with the wartime era that had produced the song.

The third improvisation in G major (7'50") seems partly very premeditated to me; at least the relatively virtuosic main theme is heard many times without changes and without any hesitation. Its harmonic structure, based on a falling fifth sequence but with a major chord on the sixth degree,

[1150] https://youtu.be/qE2A4Z4_IQE (uploaded 2017 by 'Rodders')

combined with a largely ascending melody, is also rather original. The theme always sounds in the main key, and almost always in the same register. The episodes make a more improvisatory impression; the rather searching harmony is often based on a stepwise line in the bass but lacks more than once a certain harmonic 'logic'. Elgar plays a few elegant modulations and occasionally recalls the texture in the free parts of the previous improvisation. On the whole this piece is somewhat reminiscent of Arensky's second improvisation, and actually it has a Schumannian flavour as well.

From 1913 until his death in 1934, Elgar was working on a never completed piano concerto.[1151] In 1998, the composer Robert Walker realised a performable version of the concerto on the basis of the remaining sketches. Walker used the theme and the general set-up of the fourth improvisation (11'40") for the third movement of the concerto. Whereas the sketches of the first and third movements are fragmentary, the middle movement exists at least in a coherent sketch for two pianos, which Elgar gave to the then young pianist Harriet Cohen. His fourth recorded improvisation gives a different version of this second movement, which makes it comparable with Granados's *El Pelele-* and *Rêverie-* 'improvisations'. Here as well, a composer plays with musical ideas that had not yet been formulated on paper, or not yet been published. In all cases, a musical piece – like a story – had begun to take shape, but still was in a state of flux. The main musical ideas were already relatively concrete, while the connecting material and episodes were still more open. From an analytical point of view, it is very interesting that in both *El Pelele* and in Elgar's middle movement, the tonal plan was obviously fixed at a relatively late stage; the main themes, however, were determined early in the process.

The fifth improvisation (16'20") is the only one to finish in a key that is remote from the opening key: it starts in D minor and finishes in A-flat major. It is possible that Elgar was stopped by the limited recording time. The piece gives the impression of a loosely constructed funeral march *à la* Chopin: there is even a contrasting theme in C major that strikingly resembles – at least in atmosphere – the middle section of Chopin's march in the piano sonata in B-flat minor op. 35. This theme reoccurs later in D major; it looks like Elgar remembered especially its opening bar and the generally descending scalar motion. The funeral march itself opens with a motif of a rising D-minor scale in thirds that initially gives the impression of an introduction, because after four 'bars' a new melody starts, accompanied by a oscillating accompaniment in the left hand that, again, resembles Chopin's composition. In the course of the piece, this melody disappears, and it is especially the scale motif from the 'introduction' that is developed. Elgar modulates often and extensively in this improvisation, but towards the end there appears to be a recapitulation of the beginning in D minor, after which he unexpectedly modulates to F minor. It is easy to imagine that he planned another episode here, eventually to come back to the main key again, but that he was interrupted by the recording engineers. The music turns to the relative major key and introduces a new melodic idea

[1151] For a survey of the history of the concerto, see http://www.elgar.org/3piancob.htm

that Farrington quite convincingly links to the opening theme, also in A-flat major, of Elgar's First Symphony, written more than twenty years earlier. It is possible that Elgar planned to finish the improvisation in a tender D major, and decided to choose A-flat major instead because there was no time left to modulate back from F minor. The combination of the key of A-flat and the atmosphere in the coda might have brought to his mind this earlier theme. This may be speculative reasoning, but structurally the introduction of new melodic material in the coda is highly unusual because it contradicts the concluding character of a coda, suggesting a new beginning instead.

The traditional view on piano improvisations by composers such as the ones discussed above would be that most of these are not really improvisations, but rather pre-studies for compositions. The background of this view is the idea that it is the composition that counts. However, when we acknowledge that a score and a performance are different entities, this view is too simplistic. Regardless of the connection with composed or premeditated musical material, or the particular occasion for the improvisation, every recording discussed above is still a recording of a performance. If these recordings make clear one thing, it is the absolutely continuous fluidity of musical creation, which is by definition an inextricable mix of on-the-spot decisions, more or less vague plans, and premeditated material. The role of loci communes, for instance on the level of genre, but also of harmonic patterns and melodic tendencies, is demonstrated time and again. A composition is fundamentally different from an improvisation, but the acts of improvising and composing are related. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, Czerny's approach to improvisation had lost little of its validity, even though pianists had stopped improvising fantasies on stage for many years.

Free fantasies

Some passages in Elgar's improvisations, especially the second one, sound so free that they give the impression of escaping any locus communis. Especially when the metrical organisation becomes unclear, all sense of musical direction gets lost. In other words, the listener no longer knows what to expect. Metre is basically any regularity of pulse, which means that there is difference between strong and light beats. From the earliest polyphony on, this difference has been of fundamental importance for the treatment of dissonances. But in the twentieth century, this approach to dissonance treatment shifted radically with the rise of the idea of the 'emancipation' of dissonance; as a result, the expectation of a 'resolution' disappeared. Indeed this often led towards a dissolution of metre as well, for instance in serialist scores where the bar lines often no longer refer to a noticeable pulse. In the context of tonal music, vagueness or even absence of metre is primarily associated with the notion of improvisation. In nineteenth-century composed music, *senza tempo* or *senza misura* passages virtually always occur as special moments within a frame of metrical music, typically as an introduction or as a small cadenza – indeed, music that is associated with improvisation. Very often such passages avoid polyphony and harmonic development. Within the styles discussed in this study,

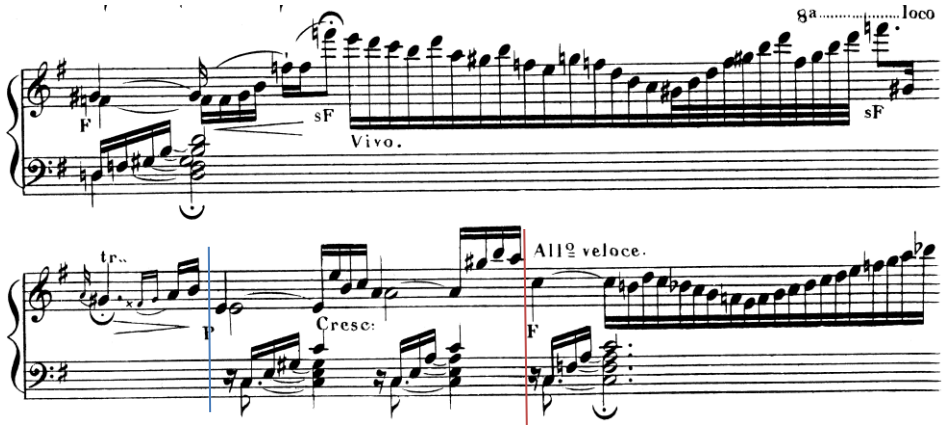
music that is free of any metre might be seen as the ultimate manifestation of the improvisatory; or to state this situation in reverse, suggesting this freedom in a score or applying it in a performance strongly suggests improvisational liberty (→ chapter 7).

Since dissonance treatment in tonal music is coupled to metre, any 'traditional' use of dissonances and consonances immediately suggests a metre. This is true of the passages in Elgar's improvisations mentioned above, but it also can be heard in a remarkably free improvisation that the German pianist Egon Petri recorded for Julius Block. It was recorded in 1923, still on wax rolls – by then already an old-fashioned technique.[1152] Especially at the beginning of his improvisation, Petri's music wanders freely and it is difficult to hear it in a fixed metre; at the same time, however, there clearly is a pulse, especially from the moment when it consists of more than just a single voice.

Is it indeed true, as I suggested at the beginning of this section, that such music escapes any locus communis? Already the fact that resolving dissonances suggest a metre implies the opposite, though it may very well be that patterns are interrupted and combined in unusual ways. Even the idea that this 'free' music does not belong to any genre is not true, since it is precisely this absence of formal conventions that defines a genre first described by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: the *freye Fantasie*.

Bach's free fantasy, as written about in his *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen* (1762), falls outside the scope of this study. However, Carl Czerny referred to it in his description of more elaborate preludes.[1153] Czerny describes this type of fantasy as 'anscheinend völlig bewusstlos, gleich dem Umherirren in unbekannten Gegenden' [seemingly unconscious, resembling wanderings into unknown regions]. He adds that it can be very expressive and effective, but that it should not be drawn out too long and that it should alternate with rhythmically more defined passages. (Incidentally, Petri does precisely that in the course of his improvisation.) Czerny's example prelude is written without bar lines, but there can be little doubt about which beats are strong and which are weak. Moreover, well-known harmonic formulas are recognisable in the music. In the following fragment, for instance, the blue line indicates an imaginary bar line that corresponds with the downbeat nature of the following suspension chord. What is slightly unusual about the locus of the cadence formula in this 'bar' is the fact that it finishes on a less stable sixth chord; indeed, Czerny uses this instability for a surprising continuation, marked by the red imaginary bar line. The surprise consists of the placement of a 6/4 chord on the same bass note (again a typical downbeat-chord), implying a cadence in F major and thus a sudden modulation to that key (which indeed takes place). In keeping with the surprising effect, it has been marked *forte*.

[1152] The Dawn of Recording, CD 1, track 28.
[1153] Czerny, op. 200; 20-21.



Example 12.6.4

This example from Czerny may serve to show that even in a free fantasy, seemingly without metre, there are in reality small scale harmonic and melodic loci at work, each of them momentarily suggesting a metre. Such loci, however, may be connected in unexpected ways, and the successive metres may differ. The latter is what gave the 'declamatory' effect to Elgar's free passage discussed above: the music could not easily be written in a fixed metre, but it did project the feeling of strong and weak beats, only in irregular groupings.

Capriccio

Even on the level of genre, one may combine loci in unusual ways. The last chapter of Czerny's *Anleitung* treats what he calls the *Capriccio*:

> Ein willkührliches Aneinanderreihen eigener Ideen, ohne besondere Durchführung, ein launiges schnelles Abspringen von einem Motiv zum andern, ohne weiteren Zusammenhang, als den der Zufall, oder, absichtlos, der Musiksinn des Spielers giebt. Das humoristische kann und muss also darin vorherrschen.[1154]
>
> [An arbitrary linking of individual ideas without any particular development, a whimsical and swift shifting from one motive to the other without further relationship than that bestowed by chance or, unintentionally, by the musical inclination of the performer. Thus the sense of the humorous can and must prevail therein.[1155]]

Czerny's example piece indeed can be seen as an arbitrary combination of fragments that individually correspond with genres as presented above in section 12.2. He writes that the *Capriccio* in the true sense is the freest form of improvising and that composed examples are rare (many pieces with this title he regards as fantasies, as described earlier). However, there is one piece of Beethoven that he 'recommends': the *Fantasie* op. 77. This is an extraordinary composition, different from anything

[1154] Czerny op. 200; 105.
[1155] Czerny / Mitchell, 121.

else Beethoven wrote. Czerny gives G minor as its key, but actually it finishes in B major – which is already one of its 'whimsical' features. In all other respects as well, Beethoven's *Phantasy* meets Czerny's description of the *Capriccio* as a category of improvisation. It consists of fragmentary sections in the most diverse tempi, continually changing keys, without any thematic connection. Nonetheless it 'works' as a piece, which is probably because it more or less stabilises in the second half when a theme with variations in B major appears. Though this is also interspersed with contrasting ideas and virtuosic runs, B major remains the main key until the end of the piece. Beethoven even lets the theme return *adagio* in the coda.

In this chapter, emphasis has been laid on the importance of genres. This is very much in line with the role the concept of locus communis plays throughout this study, a concept of which genres are an instance. To some readers, this approach might give the impression of being too one-sided. Isn't the selection of source material too much focused on treatises that confirm views which were traditional already at the time of publication, especially in the case of Czerny? Didn't I mention the fact that compositions of, for instance, Schumann were much more innovative? It is a question that relates to the one I already raised at the end of the introduction to this chapter (section 12.1).

First of all, Schumann's innovations I referred to at the beginning of section 12.3 concerned the fixed genres as they were handed down from the eighteenth century. As noted earlier, one could argue that Schumann 'redefined' musical genres in the sense that he didn't content himself with elegant allegrettos, funeral marches and dance forms as Czerny presented them. Schumann's innovations led to the situation that was earlier illustrated with Brahms's *Handel Variations*, in which musical genres still play an important role as loci communes, but less overtly so. Schumann's *Novelletten* cannot be called a genre in its own right, but parts of individual compositions from this cycle definitely fall within the genres of a march, a song without words, a waltz, etc. In addition, there is the tendency for composers such as Schumann to create their own genres, for instance the 'im Volkston'-type of music. Emphasising the importance of musical genre does not imply that the innovative aspects of these works are to be ignored. I do believe, though, that the importance of traditional musical genres in nineteenth-century music has been neglected somewhat in recent classical music practice – a neglect that possibly coincides more or less with the decline of an improvisational approach to music-making.

Second, as I mentioned in chapter 1, locus communis as a concept has served in this study as a lens through which to look at improvisation. It creates the possibility of saying at least something about an inherently ephemeral topic, but of course it is not the only possible approach. On the other hand, within the modern landscape of discussions about improvisation, which are perhaps somewhat dominated by the CSI narrative, I do think that this aspect, strongly connected with a possibly forgotten kind of musical craftsmanship, deserves more attention than it tends to get. In the context

of nineteenth-century music, improvising demanded being well-educated in music; just as an orator had to be well-read, so an improviser had to know 'alles Gute und Grosse der Meister aller Zeiten' [every good and valuable work by the masters from all periods] and should have memorised a large stock of interesting ideas from musical literature, as Czerny wrote.[1156] Musical erudition was regarded an important quality.

Finally, it is good to stress once more that a locus communis, including musical genre, is to be thought of as a *Fundgrube* of musical ideas, not as some pattern or schedule to adhere to; it doesn't serve as a limitation of fantasy, but, on the contrary, as a source of inspiration.

12.7 Historically inspired improvisation: a fantasy on one theme

In this section an example of what I termed 'historically inspired improvisation' will be discussed. The question of how this recorded improvisation may be regarded stylistically will eventually be answered at the end of this section. The goal of my analysis is to show how the notion of 'locus communis' serves as a way to bring the stylistic aspect into the discussion.

At a concert as part of the second Erasmus Intensive improvisation project in 2013 (→ chapter 1.1) I improvised a sonata on a theme provided by the audience. I chose to ask for a theme immediately before my performance, and in response somebody sang the beginning of the main theme of the Harry Potter films. I repeated the theme on the piano and allowed myself about 20 seconds to think.

[12.7 #1 Harry Potter sonata: theme]

Before I asked for a theme, I had already told the audience that my intention was to improvise a sonata with connected movements. The inspiration for that idea came from pieces such as Liszt's sonata in B minor, Saint-Saëns's cello concerto and, especially with respect to one single theme connecting the different movements, Schubert's *Wandererfantasie*. In addition, I knew a recording of the organist Pierre Cochereau improvising an organ symphony on the theme of *Veni creator* in 1972.[1157] At that time I was not yet familiar with Czerny's ideas about fantasies on a single theme as described in this chapter (→ section 12.2). Therefore, the recording discussed here is not to be seen as an application of ideas that have been developed in this study; rather, it may serve as an example of an approach to improvisation that I have been practicing all my professional life, and that has been at the basis of the present study.

Since I did not know which mode or key to expect for the theme, I had not established the key beforehand. On the other hand I do have a certain preference for D-flat major, so had it been a theme

[1156] Czerny op. 200, 36.
[1157] CD release on Ursina Motette / CD 12611 (1999)

in major, this key would have been a likely choice; the eventual B-flat minor is obviously closely related to this key. As for the form, I like to think of such an improvisation as a walk through a city: one plans where to finish, and roughly knows how to get there; it may very well be, though, that a reason to deviate from the planned direction arises, and that one decides to follow an unforeseen street. This is not a problem, but it means that one has to compensate afterwards for the unplanned digression in order to reach the final goal. Of course, I was familiar with the structure of a sonata, and with sonata form as such. These formal principles, however, represented only rough directions to me, and guidelines for generating appropriate musical ideas. I didn't yet use the concept of loci at that time, but most certainly I found the idea of making a sonata to be more of an inspiration than a limitation. Stylistically I am quite fond of improvising in a late-Romantic idiom, and if the theme would allow for it, I intended to choose that language – which is what happened. The instrument, a Steinway D grand piano, suited this style too.

The improvisation was recorded from the audience with simple equipment.[1158] For the sake of convenience, I have split the original recording (26 minutes) into three different sections according to the movements of the piece. In this analysis, I will focus on both genre-specific loci and loci on a more detailed level (including texture, phrase structure, harmonic patterns and melodic gesture). I will particularly show loci that are based on the canonisation of specific compositions. An added value of analysing one's own recording is that one may remember one's intentions at a certain passage, and even any associations. It will be possible to reconstruct at least partly the horizon of this improvisation, which is much less the case when the analyst does not coincide with the performer.

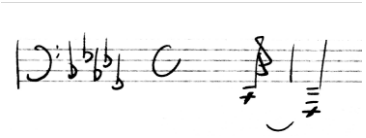
a. Introduction and first movement

[12.7 #2 Harry Potter sonata: 1st movement]

The first movement is in a free monothematic sonata form. It starts with a slow introduction prolonging the dominant (0'00"- 1'02"). The isolated tones in the lower register are an allusion to the beginning of the Liszt sonata. During the introduction I had already in mind how to start the following 'allegro' movement: the key of B-flat minor made me think of Rachmaninov's *Second Sonata* op. 36, a piece I actually didn't remember except for the impressive beginning gesture. What I imagined or 'premeditated' of the opening of the fast movement was just this very beginning: a fast downward gesture to the low B-flat, played fortissimo, after which a tumultuous arpeggiated B-flat minor texture would provide the setting for the main theme – a rather Rachmaninov-like setting, but, as mentioned above, the precise notes of his B-flat minor sonata were unfamiliar to me. It is just this beautiful opening gesture and a familiar texture in Rachmaninov's work that served as loci to

[1158] Thanks to Jaap-Jan de Rooij for sharing the recording with me.

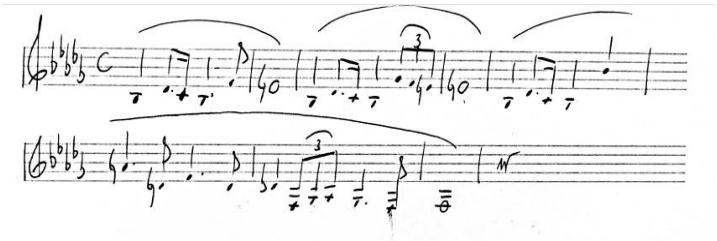
me. During the slow introduction I prepared for this opening by letting an opening motif grow from the isolated tones. Easy to remember, it returns throughout the improvisation as a motto, just like in Czerny's description of fantasies with several themes.



Example 12.7.1

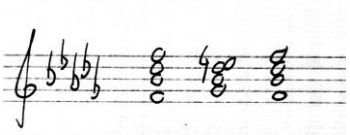
The more melodic fragments in the very low register are dropped during the course of the introduction. The leaping motif, on the other hand, is developed through the interplay of consonances and dissonances, highlighting the tritone.

At 1'03" the main theme enters, clearly in a Rachmaninov-derived locus. The original material is changed and expanded:



Example 12.7.2

The melody has the form of a classical period with sentence structures within the antecedent and consequent. Harmonically, the theme circles around a chord oscillation that is also easy to remember and that returns several times in the improvisation. With hindsight, it recalls Saint-Saëns's 'fishes' from the *Carnaval des animaux*.



Example 12.7.3

The first theme as a whole has a rounded ABA structure, and at 2'49" a deceptive cadence leads into a transition that modulates through sequences to G-flat major. I remember that I consciously decided not to use the more common D-flat major for the second theme because I wanted to enjoy that key in the slow movement, so D-flat major was 'saved' for later. At 3'29", the second theme starts.

The texture of the second theme is a familiar locus in compositions of Chopin, Liszt and Rachmaninov alike. Melodically it is equally derived from the Harry Potter motif. It has a simple repeated structure, with rather Chopinesque *fioritures* in the repeat. As a result, the 'second theme'

section is relatively short. I suppose that this is also due to the monothematic design of the exposition: with contrasting material, this section would most likely have been more developed.

At 4'24" a codetta winds up the exposition. The motif from the introduction sounds in the bass register; the harmony is a transposition of the harmonic cell of the main theme, and the passage also has a strong reminiscence of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. This last allusion was unconscious; the other two features were not unconscious, but not 'planned' either: they were the result of the idea to go back to the beginning of the piece. Motivic connections are the consequence of this idea, not the other way around. The music comes to rest on a long G-flat major chord.

At 4'41" the development section starts with an exploration of the tritone. The idea of the codetta is picked up and pushed into a Scriabin-like enlarged tonality. At 5'40" the music even becomes completely chromatic. At 5'53" the main theme enters and is developed by sequence; after the chromatic passages, this sequence must have felt very commonplace to me, which is why it soon accelerates and becomes increasingly chromatic. At 6'08" it lands on a theme-derived ostinato in E-flat minor that is combined with the opening motif in both the extreme high and low registers. At 6'27", the chromatic density increases again (with some brief reminiscences of the first movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*) until 6'40" where a quasi-recapitulation occurs with thematic material in the home key, but on a 6/4 harmony on a pedal F in the bass; the chord pendulum of the first theme develops into a new double pedal on the tritone B-flat / E as a tremolo (6'53"), combined again with the opening motif in the extreme registers. In the bass this results in an obsessive tritone on the low D-flat; from 7'07" on a very chromatic melody in the low register enters that sounds like a chromatic distortion of the cello-imitation in Chopin's etude op. 25 no. 7. At 7'40" the low D-flat resolves to a C, with a dominant-seventh harmony as a result. At 7'46" the previous ostinato motif from 6'08" joins in, and the tritone-tremolo changes into a trill. The dominant-seventh chord turns into a half-diminished sonority, which initiates a (postponed) II – V – I progression in B-flat minor, thus creating the expectation of the recapitulation. The cadence is interrupted at 8'02", where the motif of the trill (heard previously at 7'46") is picked up and expanded chromatically to multiple voices (another allusion to Scriabin), all this on a very long pedal F (sometimes latent) in the bass. At 8'30" the double trills converge on a long trill on the high F above a V7-harmony; again, this is extended by adding the opening motifs in extreme registers, but this time the bass motif resolves into an octave, obsessively repeated on the low F, thus supporting a large crescendo that finally leads to the long-expected recapitulation at 8'57". In summary, the part that really prepares for the recapitulation (from 6'08" on) occupies almost half of the length of the entire development section. The obvious model for such an increase in tension on a delayed return of the home key is Beethoven, and later Bruckner.

The recapitulation opens with roughly a repeat of the first theme as presented in the exposition, including the ABA structure – a clear example of how one remembers not the details of the musical foreground, but rather harmonic, melodic and formal loci communes. Interestingly this obviously included finishing with a deceptive cadence (9'55"). In the exposition this was the moment of the transition; in a monothematic sonata there is a small formal problem here, for the material of the second theme coincides with the first theme. If I would have chosen B-flat major for the second theme recapitulation, it might not have worked like a new theme, but rather as a modification of the first theme. Moreover, I probably didn't remember the precise form of the second theme clearly at that moment. For these reasons I chose to go with a truncated recapitulation – which in any case is a familiar strategy in Romantic sonatas, since the well-balancedness of a literal recapitulation conflicts with the archetypal sense of development in that style. The VI harmony at 9'55" is prolongated this time with thematic material, including the by now familiar chord pendulum. The music comes to rest on a conventional cadential return to the tonic, one more time postponed at 10'15" before it is finally reached at 10'24". The coda picks up the tremolo with the opening motif as at the end of the recapitulation.

In a written analysis like this the reader easily gets the impression that especially thematic and motivic connections must have been planned. This, however, was not the case; the most convincing evidence for that is the fact that most material was directly connected with a subject that was suggested only one minute before the music was played. One might say that the musical discourse was guided by the clear principle of the traditional sonata form, but that says nothing about the actual musical content. On the contrary, this example shows that what is usually called musical logic is not (necessarily) the result of a well-designed master plan. It often rather stems from a musical narrative based on the concatenation of musical ideas, just like an improvising orator who may connect with what he has said earlier without having sketched the whole structure of his speech beforehand. Chapter 14 will explore this phenomenon further.

b. Second movement

[12.7 #3 Harry Potter sonata: 2nd movement]

After a transition with a chromatic melody on the dominant harmony, a Mahlerian locus (see the introduction to the *Adagio* of his ninth symphony, a piece in the same key), an accompaniment settles the key of D-flat major at 0'37". The hesitant character, caused by the repeated interruptions, somewhat elevates it above the level of a generic accompanying texture and gives it a slightly thematic content. At 1'20" a drawn-out cantilena starts, based upon the motivic material of the Harry Potter theme. The texture is a well-known locus in Romantic piano music; harmonically and melodically there are influences of Rachmaninov, but also Mahler, for instance in the slow ornamental turn at

2'28". At 2'36" a deceptive cadence leads towards a developing passage with modulating sequences that eventually ends up in chromatic shifts as in the late work of Gabriel Fauré (2'50"), and leads back to a cadence in D-flat again, concluding the first section. At 3'17" a new idea in C-sharp minor (but also derived from the Harry Potter motif) is introduced. (The succession of the first and second sections in Fauré's *Nocturne* no. 6 in D-flat major op. 63 possibly crossed my mind here; associations are often triggered by similarities in key). At 3'29" the opening motif sounds quietly in the bass, but is not pursued. Harmonically, this passage is perhaps indebted to Fauré. Quite surprisingly, a new idea in F minor comes in at 4'02"; this idea, which is not related to the theme, consists of rapid arpeggios over a descending tetrachord. The idea of introducing fast arpeggio passage work might also be borrowed from Fauré's sixth nocturne, though in that piece it constitutes a separate section. Here it functions as a bridge that leads back to a recapitulation of the main musical idea; at 4'15" the arpeggios change into rapid scales on a prolonged dominant harmony, leading to a very extended trill on a high A-flat, still delaying the tonic resolution. Under this trill the arpeggio idea sounds again, this time in D-flat major, followed by the familiar playing with the opening motif in a dialogue between the high and low registers of the piano. At 5'08" the music that opened this movement returns, though with due alterations. The principal melody (or at least what I remembered of it) sounds in the tenor register. At 5'53" it starts to wing upward in the manner of Mahler and Richard Strauss, disappearing into the sky, as it were, *diminuendo al niente* – until at 6'29" the introduction to this movement is freely quoted, confirming once more the associations with Mahlerian loci, and finally resolving into the tonic. At 6'58" a coda wraps up the movement, quoting a variant that Liszt notated for the end of his concert-study *Harmonies du soir* – a rather extraordinary harmonisation of the descending whole tone scale in the bass.[1159] This was a conscious quotation, probably again triggered by the key. The opening motif of the sonata softly sounds during the final chords.

c. Third movement

[12.7 #4 Harry Potter sonata: 3rd movement]

The third movement starts as a fugue, and it was my plan to develop it into a grand Romantic piano fugue as in Brahms's *Handel variations* or César Franck's *Prélude, Choral et Fugue.* The theme, of course based upon the Harry Potter subject, consists of a simple repetition of the subject of this sonata in 4/4. With hindsight I think that it was not a very successful fugue theme: the sheer repetition makes it difficult to create direction, and harmonically it is rather monotonous as well. Just one minute of thinking time would have been enough to invent a better one, but this time obviously wasn't available: the idea of making a fugue only came during the slow movement.

[1159] Ramann, L.: *Liszt-Pädagogium* (Leipzig, 1902). Facsimile reprint Wiesbaden, 1986; ch. XI, 6.

In the fugue exposition there are actually no problems; the monotony of the theme can be used to create a pensive and legato exposition, a bit like the beginnings of many Reger fugues, or maybe also some of the slow fugues of Shostakovitch. The voices enter in the order bass – tenor – alto – soprano. At 1'11" the soprano again enters with a contra-exposition of the theme in the main key. The texture becomes slightly less polyphonic. At 1'31" there is an entrance in F minor in the low bass register, over which slow chord arpeggiations try to move the music to a higher level of intensity. I remember, however, that I didn't quite see at that moment how to continue this track: at 1'49" the music starts to calm down again; the chromatic intensity disappears and gives way to more consonant simplicity. To be very honest, I remember that I quite simply felt bored with the fugue as it developed, and in a split second I decided to let it 'die' and think of an alternative. Listening to the recording, this passage indeed comes across as a draining off of all energy. Instead of trying to keep the idea of a fugue alive, I reckoned it rhetorically better to go for an extreme option. The passage from 2'00"-2'13", standing on the D-flat major sixth chord, lazily quoting the opening motif of the sonata, almost sounds like playing automatically while thinking about what to do next – which probably it was.

At 2'14" suddenly there is some real finale music: a fast duple metre with fast passage work and dotted rhythms, a locus that probably goes back to the last movement of Beethoven's *Appassionata* sonata. With hindsight I am happy with the decision I took (though I see alternative possibilities for the fugue now, of course). Because the fugue dries up so clearly, it works like an introductory feint that makes the finale only much more effective. If I had played the fast music immediately after the slow movement, it would probably have sounded rather predictable. The element of surprise just does the job of launching off to an energetic finale. Incidentally, the repetition of the theme one fifth higher at 2'25" shows that the fugue-idea still crossed my mind. Together with a restatement of the theme in b-flat at 2'41" the first section of the finale works like a paraphrase of the fugue exposition.

At 2'52" a contrasting idea starts with dense chromatic passages, but on a very stable basis of D minor. At 3'17" the theme sounds again in F minor, then turning into a dominant that resolves to a recapitulation of the finale's beginning at 3'37". The second idea in D minor briefly returns, quoting also the arpeggio idea of the slow movement, but at 4'03" the beginning theme is reaffirmed, played fortissimo and with octaves that recall French symphonic music like Berlioz or Saint-Saëns. At 4'27" a peroration starts, speeding up the tempo even further and coming to a halt at 5'00" with quotations of the opening motif from the introduction. At 5'19" the music has suddenly turned inward, prolonging the final chord with a Rachmaninov-style progression that, however, is in fact a modification of the harmonic motif of the theme of the first movement; thus the last word is given to the opening motif.

What is the style of this improvisation? Although I used loci that can be associated with a specific composer or even composition, this does not mean that I was really playing 'in the styles of' these composers (→ section 12.1). On the whole, more general loci of genre, form, and harmony define a more or less late-Romantic piano style, influenced by Lisztian virtuosity and late-nineteenth-century chromatic harmony. Sometimes the chromatic density becomes so strong that there are almost moments of atonality; even in Rachmaninov such moments are extremely scarce. They may be found in the later works of Scriabin, but then they would probably not be combined with more commonplace harmonic progressions as occur here. As an example of 'historically inspired improvisation' this can be seen as an improvised fantasy-sonata on one theme in a late-Romantic piano style.

Often when style-oriented improvisation is the subject of discussion, it is framed in terms of rules and restrictions. I would like to emphasise again that this is not necessarily correct. An orator might choose a different idiom when talking to school children, compared to when he delivers an academic paper, without feeling 'restricted by the rules' of the appropriate idioms; for me it was not different in this case. If I decided that a particular melodic or harmonic phrase would be too 'classical' for this style, I avoided it – but just because it would endanger the unity and organic quality of my 'story'. During the process of improvising there were merely positive decisions; in an ideal world it should be like that in all music-making.