

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN'S *VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF PAGANINI*:
THE EFFECT OF POLYSTYLISM THROUGH PASTICHE AND
MUSICAL BORROWING IN VARIATIONS

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Paganini's 24th caprice still remains to this day one of the most celebrated themes in classical music history. Many composers have used this theme to create variations and each composer attempted to produce stylistically unique variations on this piece. Hamelin's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* stands out because his piece incorporates musical borrowing and many different composers' styles. His variations integrate music from different centuries, using pastiche and musical borrowing from figures such as Beethoven, Liszt, Brahms, Chopin, and Rachmaninoff. More provocatively, Hamelin's variations reach outside of Classical music, even adopting elements from salsa and friska. The spectrum of composers and styles included in this set are so radical and shocking that it creates a parody of not only Paganini's theme, but also the tradition of theme and variation pieces it has inspired. Due to its multiple variations juxtaposing extremely different styles, Hamelin's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* presents the listener with a musical puzzle that is designed to invoke surprise. The juxtapositions of extremely different styles in these variations create disjointed variations with polystylism. The polystylism in this work diversifies his variations, while unifying these seemingly unbalanced movements through broad musical references. As such, both performers and listeners stand to benefit from a detailed, critical examination of the piece. I consider not just the musical sources themselves, but also the ways in which they interact, paying close attention to Hamelin's use of parody and humor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Niccolò Paganini's 24th caprice theme has been explored in keyboard variations by many composers in the last two centuries. Of these, Marc-André Hamelin's (b. 1961) *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* stands out because his piece, unlike any previous composers', incorporates musical borrowing and many different composers' styles. Hamelin's set of variations integrate music from different centuries, using pastiche and musical borrowing from figures such as Beethoven, Liszt, Brahms, Chopin, and Rachmaninoff. More provocatively, Hamelin's variations reach outside of Western art music, even adopting elements from salsa and friska. The spectrum of composers and styles included in this set are so radical and shocking that it creates a parody of not only Paganini's theme, but also the tradition of theme and variation pieces it has inspired.

Due to its multiple variations juxtaposing extremely different styles, Hamelin's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* presents the listener with a musical puzzle that is designed to invoke surprise. As such, both performers and listeners stand to benefit from a detailed, critical examination of the piece. Hamelin's clever trajectory in this composition assumes a broad base of knowledge. As the music requires background knowledge to be appealing, the contrasting references in the music need to be analyzed to appreciate Hamelin's artistic choices. Its impact, moreover, depends on a certain degree of information overload, referencing familiar styles and well-known compositions in quick succession. It is not simply enough to know his references; informed musicians must also understand the effect of his fast-paced pastiche. My dissertation will analyze the effect generated by Hamelin's wide variety of styles. The sources of pastiche and musical borrowing in this polystylistic music will be identified, and I will explain pastiche

and quotations seemingly unrelated to Paganini's theme. Furthermore, I intend to consider not just the musical sources themselves, but also the ways in which they interact, paying close attention to Hamelin's use of parody and humor. The ultimate goal is a well-informed but subjective answer to the question of how this piece functions artistically.

1.1 Purpose and Significance of Study

Studies of pastiche and musical borrowing abound in literature on twentieth and twenty-first century music. According to J. Peter Burkholder, pastiche and musical borrowing are recognized "as a family of interrelated techniques for reworking existing music in new compositions."¹ Although these techniques are centuries old, more composers started using them in the twentieth century and wishing their quotations and allusions would be recognized.² Musicians of all genres use musical borrowings. According to Sherri Hampel in "Are Samplers Getting a Bum Rap?" musical borrowing was even incorporated by contemporary rock musicians. Richard Grabel, a New York music attorney and former rock critic quotes "pop music is based on borrowing."³ Burkholder states that "being aware of the variety of ways in which composers have reworked existing music can help us understand individual works more deeply."⁴ Studying the compositions that use pastiche and musical borrowing ultimately allows us to understand the original composers' writing styles more clearly and reveals the nature of their music. My dissertation will pursue these goals in relation to Hamelin's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*. Although it seems so distant to relate Paganini to Beethoven, Hamelin

¹ Peter Burkholder, "The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field," *Notes* 50, no. 3 (March 1994): 859.

² Burkholder, 866.

³ Don Snowden, "Sampling: A Creative Tool or License to Steal?: The Controversy," *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 1989, 2.

⁴ Burkholder, 857.

includes Beethoven and other composers in his variations. The transformation of the materials engages the listeners to evaluate Hamelin's perception of Paganini's theme and how it relates to the materials from which he borrowed. By continuing this tradition, Hamelin pays tribute to the contributions of those composers in a new language. Hamelin's particular use of pastiche and musical borrowing takes the form of polystylism. Such a collection of styles appears nowhere else in the repertoire of Paganini variations.

The juxtapositions of extremely different styles in Hamelin's Paganini variations, creating polystylistic variations, warrant an aesthetic assessment because the experience of listening to this music with great awareness holds a value to musicians. This invites more in-depth exploration to appreciate Hamelin's rendition of the famous theme. As for the significance of my project, not only will it provide a detailed understanding of Hamelin's Paganini variations, but it might also provide a model for understanding other polystylistic works.

1.2 The Composer

Mark-André Hamelin, born in 1961, is a world-renowned pianist and composer. His recording of Leopold Godowsky's complete *Studies on Chopin's Etudes* won the Gramophone Award, and New York Times critic Harold Schonberg called him a "super-virtuoso."⁵ Others have described him as "ultimate perfection,"⁶ "a piano wizard [with] fastidious fingers,"⁷ and

⁵ John Rhein, "Pianist Marc-André Hamelin can play anything – just don't call him a virtuoso," *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 2016,

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/ct-classical-hamelin-ent-0518-20160517-column.html>

The term comes from the critic Harold Schonberg's review of Hamelin's Godowsky recording on the New York Times on Jan. 15, 1989.

⁶ Paul Griffiths, "Ultimate Perfection," *London Times*, Dec. 5, 1992.

⁷ Niels Swinkels, "Marc-André Hamelin and the Mystery of Human Creativity," *San Francisco Classical Voice*, November 11, 2013,

<http://www.sfcv.org/events-calendar/artist-spotlight/marc-andre-hamelin-and-the-mystery-of-human-creativity>

“the best pianist Canada has produced since Glenn Gould.”⁸

In his Hyperion exclusive discography of over 60 recordings, Hamelin explores and unearths forgotten composers. “His intrepid exploration of the rarities of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries”⁹ includes composers such as Charles-Valentin Alkan, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Joseph Marx, Leopold Godowsky, Frederic Rzewski, Ferruccio Busoni, Kaikhosru Sorabji, Nikolai Medtner, Nikolai Kapustin, and others.¹⁰ His knowledge of these composers is indebted to his constant searches for rare music in secondhand music stores to expand his already sizable collection of sheet music.¹¹

Hamelin’s use of pastiche and musical borrowing has been a feature in his other works, especially in his earlier set of *12 Etudes in All the Minor Keys*, which pays homage to the tradition of etudes that were written and performed by Chopin, Liszt, Paganini, Debussy, and Scriabin.¹² His *Toccata on "L'homme armé"*, which is based on a song from the French Renaissance Masses,¹³ was composed as a commissioned work for the 2017 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The musical inspiration in Hamelin’s “Triple Etudes (after Chopin)” came from Godowsky’s legendary performance, in which Godowsky quoted the themes from Chopin’s three different etudes to make them into one etude, although the manuscript unfortunately does not exist anymore.¹⁴

⁸ Carrol Bergeron, “Review on Hamelin’s recital” *Le Devoir*, June 25, 1994.

⁹ “About,” Marc-André Hamelin, accessed November 18, 2018, <https://www.marcandrehamelin.com>

¹⁰ Jory Debenham, “Review: Piano music by Marc-André Hamelin,” *Notes* 70, no. 1 (September 2013): 186.

¹¹ John Rhein, “Pianist Marc-André Hamelin can play anything – just don’t call him a virtuoso,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 2016.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/ct-classical-hamelin-ent-0518-20160517-column.html>

¹² Debenham, 186.

¹³ His composition detail listed on www.marcandrehamelin.com

¹⁴ Debenham, 187.

Hamelin is exceptionally aware of the tradition of pastiche and how to re-apply it into composition effectively and promote it to the public. Being a composer-pianist who discovers ‘rarities’ in piano music and an avid collector of a massive quantity of scores, Hamelin uses his knowledge of and exposure to a diversity of composers and styles to produce a unique collection of musical languages in his variations.

1.3 The Theme by Paganini

The theme of Paganini’s *Twenty-fourth Caprice in A minor*, op.1 for solo violin is undeniably an ideal source to make a set of variations. In the *Guardian*, Stephen Hough explains the nature of the Paganini’s theme in order to account for its popularity:

It is written in the clean, white-note key of A minor – a pure starting point – and exposes the bare bones of its tonal simplicity: a textbook example of classical harmony, it shifts rhythmically from tonic to dominant and back, like a tennis ball over a net. In the second half of the theme, we hear a circle of fifths... Paganini's theme cuts a dashing rhythmic shape as its melody repeatedly turns on itself with a swagger and clip of the heel. All points that make this musical material eminently suitable for variation.¹⁵

Paganini’s 24th caprice theme, indeed, has been pursued in the keyboard repertoire by many composers in the last two centuries— namely Franz Liszt (1851), Johannes Brahms (1863), Mark Hambourg (1902), Ferruccio Busoni (1913), Ignaz Friedman (1914), Sergei Rachmaninoff (1934), Witold Lutoslawski (1941), Robert Muczynski(1994), Lowell Liebermann (2001), etc. The popularity of this ubiquitous theme still continues to this day as contemporary composers redesign it with original ideas.

Paganini variations from figures like Brahms and Hambourg were expressed in a much more conservative manner than Hamelin’s version. In an attempt to take this manner further,

¹⁵ Stephen Hough is a professor at Julliard School of Music and Royal Academy of Music, and is one of the leading pianists on today’s classical concert venue. He is also a writer, and this article was written by him when he was performing Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* and Lutoslawski's *Variations on a Theme by Paganini* on the opening night of the BBC Proms concert in 2013.

Rachmaninoff created a theme in his eighteenth variation from *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, op. 43, by inverting Paganini's theme and changing it to a major key. He also borrowed a theme from Gregorian chant, *Dies Irae*, to plant a reference from a more distant musical source. However, Hamelin's composition distinguishes itself from other Paganini variations in its adaptations of different styles. The references quoted in Hamelin's composition are even more radical and of greater variety. Some of the variations even appear unrelated to Paganini's theme. For example, Hamelin's Var.7 borrows from Beethoven's Sonata, op.109, which is stylistically and historically distant from Paganini. Moments like these are so jarring and perplexing that they require more in-depth clarification.

Hamelin's variations are converted into a set of polystylistic music. To a certain extent, Hamelin treats Paganini's theme as a genre by drawing historical connections and references to other figures that used this theme, like Liszt and Rachmaninoff. The variations primarily pay homage to Paganini, but they simultaneously celebrate many other composers by reutilizing their compositions. The breadth of the styles included in this set of variations synthesizes the long history of Western classical music.

CHAPTER 2

PASTICHE AND MUSICAL BORROWING

Pastiche represents a “work in which the creator has imitated the style of another writer or artist.”¹⁶ The term “pastiche” comes from Italian *pasticcio*, which is rooted in the post-classical, thirteenth-century Latin *pasticium*.¹⁷ The form was properly introduced to classical music around the 1730’s as an opera or other medley work of various pieces from different compositions or by different composers.¹⁸ An example is seen in Handel’s opera *Muzio Scevola*. The first two acts were composed by Filippo Amadei and Giovanni Bononcini respectively, and only third act was composed by Handel.¹⁹ Recent example of pastiche opera from nineteenth century includes Rossini’s *Ivanhoé*.²⁰

From a historical perspective, all major composers’ works reflect on the past, obviously influenced by earlier compositions. This comes closer to pastiche in moments when composers look back on history to find inspirations. Some of Mozart’s writing imitates Baroque period composers, as shown in his piano concerti no.1 through 4. His *Preludes and fugues*, K.404a, scored for a string trio transcribe J.S. Bach’s fugues, with some of the preludes written by Mozart in the style of Baroque music. The other examples are his *Great Mass in C minor*, K.427,

¹⁶ Percy Scholes, *The Oxford Companion to Music*, edited by John Owen Ward, London: Oxford University Press, 1974, 767.

¹⁷ IBID.

¹⁸ Curtis Price, "Pasticcio," *Grove Music Online*, May 20, 2018, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000021051>.

¹⁹ Anthony Hicks, “Muzio Scevola,” *Grove Music Online*, December 1, 1992, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O903102>

²⁰ Mark Everist, *Music Drama at the Paris Odéon, 1824–1828* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002), 181.

a “Missa solemnis,” and *Adagio and Fugue in C Minor*, K.546, which is in the style of Handel’s overture— all of which results in pastiche.²¹

More recent examples include Prokofiev’s ‘Classical Symphony’ and Stravinsky’s *Pulcinella*. While composing the complicated double-fugue theme of the *Hammerklavier Sonata op.106*, Beethoven studied phrases of Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*.²² In *Variations on a Roco Theme*, Tchaikovsky emulates the styles of the eighteenth century, particularly Mozart’s, by adding repeat signs and relocating variation.²³ Pastiche can also be done on a small scale, such as borrowing a short theme. For example, Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms both wrote variations on a theme by Robert Schumann; Puccini borrowed Chinese melodies for *Turandot*; and nineteenth-century fugues referred to the B-A-C-H melody.²⁴ Pastiche could be a major factor, such as borrowing in full texture, as in Stravinsky’s *Pulcinella* or a melodic line from Russian folk tunes in *The Rite of Spring*.²⁵ Regardless of the scale, pastiche evidently motivated many composers to incorporate historical composition into their own music.

2.1 Historic Overview of Pastiche and Musical Borrowing

Musical borrowing and pastiche have been studied for over a century.²⁶ In musical borrowing and pastiche, various motives such as “mildly contemptuous satire, neutral

²¹ Lindsay Kemp, “How Mozart loved Handel,” *Gramophone*, January 1, 2015. <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/feature/how-mozart-loved-handel>.

²² Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 428.

²³ Roland John Wiley, "Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Il'yich," *Grove Music Online*, June 18. 2018, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000051766>.

²⁴ Burkholder, 865.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid*, p, 851.

historicism, and worshipful nostalgia” can be identified.²⁷ However, some have accused the use of pastiche as lacking musical creativity to be actively fertilized. Tchaikovsky admitted to his use of pastiche in *The Queen of Spades*, describing it as “a slavish imitation of the style of the past century and not composition, but as it were, borrowing.”²⁸ An American composer Henry F. Gilbert remarks, “That which is imitative, or borrows its character from something else, cannot be as strong nor have such a sure and lasting effect on us as that which has an original character of its own.”²⁹ Whereas borrowing musical languages of other composers may be criticized as unoriginal, familiarity with different types of musical tools developed from other composers and other eras could facilitate the musical work in a way that otherwise could have been overlooked.³⁰

The trend reversed in the nineteenth century, as more composers started using pastiche and musical borrowing, and wishing their quotations and allusions to be recognized.³¹ More people started to see the value in implementing musical borrowing and pastiche from other musical sources. Burkholder states that pastiche and musical borrowing should be recognized “as a family of interrelated techniques for reworking existing music in new compositions.”³² Musicians started to acknowledge it as a ‘musical technique’ and believed in this technique to bring new perspectives in existing music. Burkholder states that “being aware of the variety of ways in which composers have reworked existing music can help us understand individual works

²⁷ Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, “The varieties of musical pastiche: a taxonomy,” *Musical Times* 158, no.1938 (Spring 2017): 42.

²⁸ David Brown, *Tchaikovsky: a biographical and critical study, vol.4.* (London: Gollancz, 1978), 246.

²⁹ Henry Gilbert, “Originality,” *The Musical Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (January 1919): 3.

³⁰ Burkholder, 851.

³¹ *Ibid*, 866.

³² Burkholder, 859

more deeply.”³³

The trend of musical borrowing and pastiche still continues on in the current era. Neo-romanticism and post-minimalism are echoes of pastiche of the past. Pastiche persists across all arts: literature, musical theater, film, and architecture. The art of pastiche depends on its modern taste, as it re-connects with the past:

Living pastiche approaches the past bearing the riches of the present, and centres on values of self-renewal and energisation, not on nostalgia and escapism. At its most rudimentary and controversial, it popularizes on the past by sweetening it with contemporary taste.³⁴

As Western art music progresses with new techniques in musical writing and as musicians are exposed to different musical languages, innovative and fresh musical languages will be created, enriched with possibilities that could not have previously been attained.

My dissertation offers a combination of analytical listening, historical research, and subjective interpretation. These strategies are blended throughout the dissertation, first in identifying the sources of pastiche and musical borrowing, then in analyzing variation technique and polystylism, and finally in my analysis and interpretation of the piece. Through analytical listening, my aim is not to discover as many pastiches as possible, but to make sense of those pastiches and musical borrowings. Historical research provides a better understanding of the various musical choices and approaches that Hamelin synthesizes in his work. Subjective interpretation will allow greater insights into the personal experience of listening to this kind of music and the musical messages it conveys.

³³ Ibid, 857.

³⁴ Edgecombe, 38.

2.2 The Sources of Pastiche and Musical Borrowing in Hamelin's Variations

The aesthetics of quotation and allusion— two main components of pastiche— have been explored by composer Alfred Schnittke. The principle of quotation “manifests itself in a whole series of devices, ranging from the quoting of stereotypical micro-elements of an alien style, belonging to another age or national tradition to exact or reworked quotations.”³⁵ The principle of allusion, on the other hand, “manifests itself in the use of subtle hints.”³⁶ Of these two types of musical borrowing, the sources of allusion may not be possible to be identified, whereas the quotation can be attributed to a precise source. Hamelin's Paganini variations contain both of these principles of musical borrowing. Some musical borrowings are clearly quotations, while some of these styles are allusions. This paper will identify the musical quotations and posit the sources of allusions.

A pastiche of Liszt appears in the first variation. As shown in Example 2.1, his pastiche imitates the idiom of the fourth etude “Mazeppa” from the *Transcendental Etudes* (S.136). Liszt composed three versions of “Mazeppa,” and contemporary pianists are only familiar with the final version. However, Hamelin's choice of pastiche belongs to the unfamiliar first version; this reveals Hamelin's knowledge of unsought compositions. As if emphasizing the complexity of the piece, Hamelin matches its reputation for being notoriously difficult to play. Also, in Var. 14, Liszt's infamous “La Campanella” etude is quoted from *Grandes études de Paganini*, S.141.³⁷ In this variation, the theme of “La Campanella” and Paganini's 24th caprice theme is used simultaneously, as shown in Example 2.2.

³⁵ Alfred Schnittke and Alexander Ivashkin, eds. *A Schnittke Reader*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 87, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9168>.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 89.

³⁷ Liszt's “La Campanella” is a work that originally borrowed a theme from Paganini's 2nd violin concerto in B minor, op.7.

Example 2.1: Hamelin's Var.1

Var. 1
Pochissimo più mosso (♩ = 152)
con bravura
sempre *f*

29

This musical score is for the first variation of Hamelin's. It is written for piano in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Pochissimo più mosso' with a quarter note equal to 152 beats per minute. The performance instruction is 'con bravura' and the dynamics are 'sempre f' (always forte). The score consists of two systems of two staves each, with a measure rest in the first system. The music features a complex, chromatic melody with many accidentals and a steady accompaniment.

Liszt's "Mazeppa" from the *Transcendental Etudes*, S.136

Allegretto. M. ♩ = 132.

This musical score is for Liszt's 'Mazeppa' from his Transcendental Etudes, S.136. It is written for piano in 6/8 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' with a quarter note equal to 132 beats per minute. The score consists of two systems of two staves each. The music is characterized by a driving, rhythmic accompaniment in the bass and a melodic line in the treble that features a prominent, sweeping slur over several measures.

Example 2.2: Hamelin's Var.14, "La Campanella" theme with Paganini's 24th caprice theme

412
grazioso
(distintissimo)

416
appena rit.

This musical score is for Hamelin's 14th variation, which combines the 'La Campanella' theme from Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 12 with Paganini's 24th Caprice. It is written for piano in 3/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system starts at measure 412 and includes the performance instruction 'grazioso (distintissimo)'. The second system starts at measure 416 and includes the instruction 'appena rit.' (just a little slower). The music features a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass and a melodic line in the treble that includes a prominent, sweeping slur over several measures.

Through the similar movements of melodic lines, the second variation imitates Brahms's style of *Paganini Variations Book 1, Var.1*. Also, the second half of Hamelin's Paganini variation 7 mimics Brahms's *Paganini Variations Book 2, Var.7*, as shown in Example 2.3. The structure of these pieces is identical in that the sixteenth-notes in groups of three, preceded by a pick-up note in the left hand, is coordinated with the four eighth-notes in the right hand, making a syncopated rhythm. And lastly, in Var. 11, there is a short passage of a friska tune originating from Hungarian folk dances, reminding the listener of Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*.

Example 2.3: Hamelin's Var. 7



Brahm's Paganini Variations Book 2, Var.7



In the seventh variation, Hamelin clearly quotes Var. 3 of the third movement of Beethoven's piano sonata op.109. Hamelin's version is almost identical except that Beethoven's is in E-major and Hamelin's is in A-minor. Hamelin quotes Beethoven again in the eleventh variation, which includes a passage from Beethoven's 5th Symphony, op.67. Even though a motif from this symphonic work occurs suddenly and briefly, the listener recognizes its source immediately.

Example 2.4: Hamelin's Var.7, Beethoven's piano sonata op.109, Var.3 of third movement

Var. 7
Allegro vivace (♩ = 160)

177

f *p subito*

88 **Var. III.**
Allegro vivace. ♩ = 60. M. M.

a) *f* *p* *cresc.* *f* *p* *cresc.* *f* *p*

Example 2.5: Hamelin's Var.11, quoting Beethoven's 5th symphony, op.67

303 (♩ = 100)
ff

Example 2.6: Hamelin's Var. 13

Var. 13
(l'istesso tempo, poco rubato)
pp
mf
p
mp
cantabile
cresc. poco a poco
sempre cresc.
poco rit.
*(far hand *)*
opulent!

* Make sure the top F is heard clearly, as part of the melody.
** But without lifting the pedal.

Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, op.43 further increased the notoriety of Paganini's theme, and Hamelin includes it in his variations; Hamelin's thirteenth variation imitates Rachmaninoff's eighteenth variation. As shown in Example 2.6, the style of Var.13 is almost identical to Rachmaninoff's theme from the eighteenth variation except that Hamelin inverts it. He changes the key signature 15 times in this variation alone, traveling to different keys in almost every measure. As a humorous touch, Hamelin prints the heading "Var. 18" in the score, only to slash this number out and replace it with "Var. 13." Any musician familiar with Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody* and the theme of the eighteenth variation would catch this joke.

Hamelin's Paganini variations include a few quotations that appear briefly to be considered prominent passages. For example, the fifth variation briefly refers to Chopin's *Barcarolle*, op.60 for a few measures, as shown in Example 2.7.

Example 2.7: Hamelin's Var. 5



Chopin's Barcarolle, op.60



The tenth variation shows glimpses of dissonance, and yet it still sounds tonal to the ear. However, fragments of ideas jump between high and low registers of the keyboard with disconnected passages, arguably imitating the style of Second Viennese School composers.

Example 2.8: Hamelin's Var. 10

The image displays a musical score for 'Var. 10 (l'istesso tempo)'. The score is written for piano in 2/4 time. It consists of four systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system starts at measure 265 and includes a dynamic marking of *pp*. The second system continues from measure 265 and includes a dynamic marking of *sempre pp* and a triplet of eighth notes. The third system starts at measure 270 and includes a dynamic marking of *ppp*. The fourth system starts at measure 275 and includes a dynamic marking of *ppp*, a tempo change to *senza rit.*, and a *lunga* marking. The score features various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

The ninth variation resembles a passage from *Solfeggetto* by C.P.E. Bach, in the way the sixteenth-notes ascend and descend. The fact that *Solfeggetto* moves up from tonic to dominant toward higher registers reveals a similar harmonic pattern and direction in Hamelin's version.

Hamelin takes it to such an extreme that he uses almost the entire register of the keyboard.

Example 2.9: Hamelin's Var.9

Var. 9
(l'istesso tempo)
mp
pedal in touches only
234
diminuendo
pp
(senza sentire)
239

C.P.E. Bach's Solfeggetto

Prestissimo.
mf
Ph. E. Bach.

Whole-tone scale is used in Hamelin's first variation, and the tone cluster technique is used throughout, especially in the fifth and thirteenth variations. While maintaining the harmonic

progression of Paganini's twenty-fourth caprice, the sixth variation also is filled with tone clusters and polychords, as shown in Example 2.10. Although compositional techniques such as whole-tone scales, tone clusters, and polychords do not belong to one composer, their significance is in the adaptation of different styles into this music.

Example 2.10: Hamelin's tone cluster



Hamelin's tone clusters and polychords



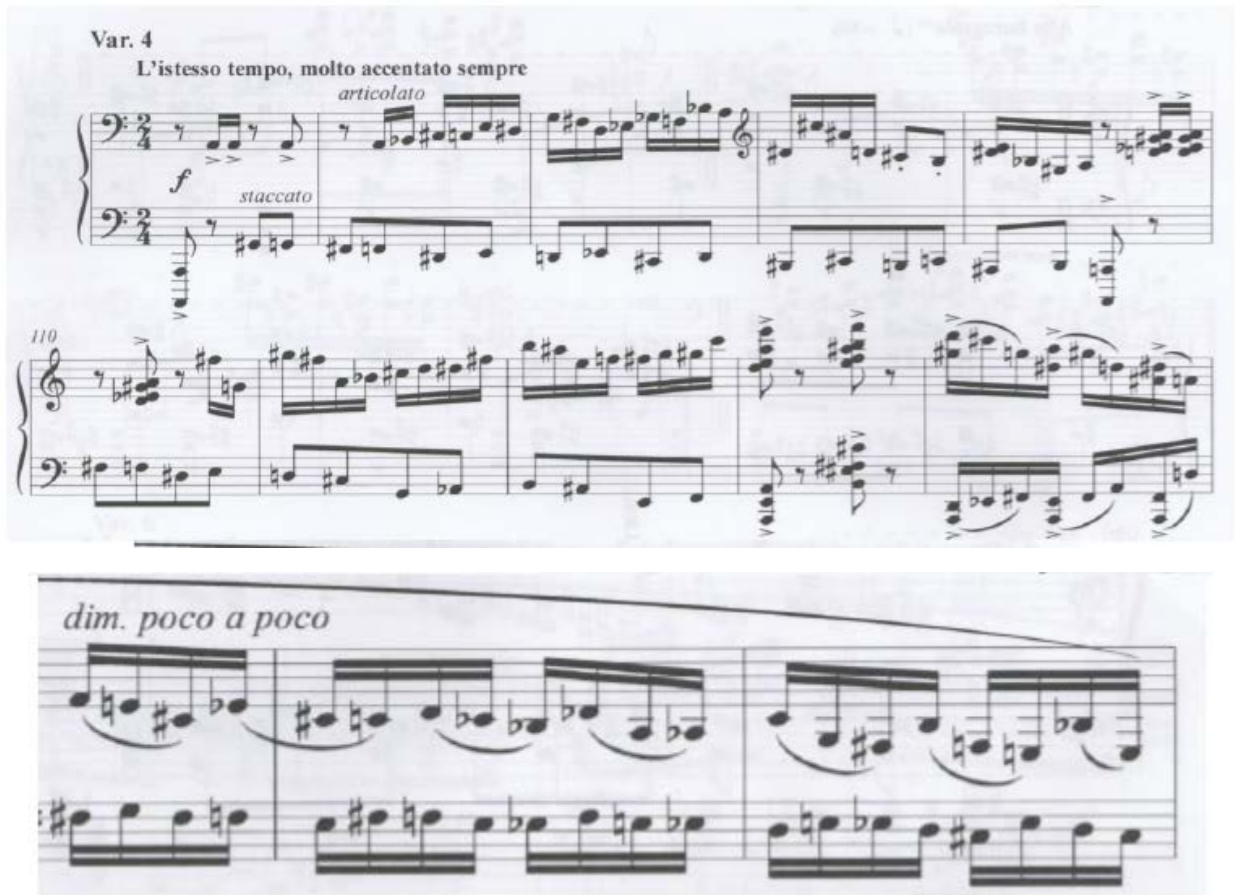
Besides the whole-tone scales and tone clusters that only affect pitch and harmony, Hamelin also manipulates the metric system using ‘hemiola’ and rhythmic displacement. In Var. 14, Hamelin employs a 6/8 time signature, and divides six eighth-notes into three groups of two. Then he takes it further by dividing twelve eighth-notes into three groups of four.

Example 2.11: Hamelin’s Var.14, showing two ‘hemiola’



The instances of rhythmic displacement are more complicated. In Var. 4, instead of using a 4 + 4 measure phrase, Hamelin displaces the rhythm by one beat, making it a 4.5 + 3.5 measure phrase, as shown in Example 2.11. This unusual modification generates the effect of disorientation in terms of phrase balance to the listener. The following ninth measure contains two chords on the beats, orienting the confused ear. Also, at the end of Var. 4, the right hand plays the sixteenth-notes in groups of three while the left hand plays the sixteenth-notes in groups of four, as shown in Example 2.12.

Example 2.12: Hamelin's Var. 4, showing rhythmic displacement



The juxtaposition of different musical styles also reaches outside of Western art music. In Var. 11, there is a short interruption of popular styles and themes. The indications in the score read 'charleston,' 'beer garden,' 'salsa,' and 'friska.' Hamelin comments in the score that these effects are like flipping between radio stations.³⁸ Hamelin's idea to duplicate this effect creates polystylism. However, Hamelin goes further than other composers who use polystylism, by referencing popular styles from different countries. In fact, he is flipping between the cultural traditions of popular music from diverse regions.

³⁸ Marc-André Hamelin, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, (2011 New York: C.F. Peters Corporation, 2013), 12.

Example 2.13: Hamelin's Var. 11, showing 'Charleston,' 'beer garden,' 'salsa,' and 'friska'

The image displays a musical score for Hamelin's Var. 11, divided into four distinct sections, each with its own tempo and dynamic markings. The score is written for two staves, likely representing a piano and a bass.

- Charleston:** The first section is marked with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 116$ and the style 'charleston'. The dynamics are *mp* and *leggiero*.
- beer garden:** The second section is marked with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 138$ and the style 'beer garden'. The dynamics are *f* and *crude*.
- salsa:** The third section is marked with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 112$ and the style 'salsa'. The dynamics are *mf*.
- friska:** The fourth section is marked with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 180$ and the style 'friska'. The dynamics are *mp* and *p dolce*.

In correspondence, Hamelin has claimed that his labeling here is to clear any stylistic doubt and that these passages are stereotypical.³⁹ Three of these styles are dance music: 'Charleston' refers to swing jazz from 1930's America; 'salsa' refers to Latin jazz; and 'friska' is

³⁹ Marc- André Hamelin, email message to Warren Kim, August 7, 2019.

Hungarian folk dance music. Only one style, 'beer garden,' has an uncertain musical origin. Beer gardens originate in Germany, so we can theorize that the reference is to Bavarian traditional dance music. In referencing different cultures in this variation, Hamelin embraces diverse music styles with polystylism.

CHAPTER 3

VARIATION TECHNIQUE AND POLYSTYLISM

The success of variation writing is reflected in a composer's innovative adaptation of the theme. Certain elements of the theme must remain constant as others change.⁴⁰ The beauty of the variation depends on the fact that endless imagination is unlocked as long as it remains within reasonable boundaries; the theme works as a fixed point pulling the variation together, acting like a "secure foothold" to both listener and composer.⁴¹ As types of variations have evolved over the course of time, the meaning of "secure foothold" that unifies the variations has changed. The theme must adopt the qualities that are appropriate to the variation form in order to serve specific needs.⁴²

Hamelin's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* expands the variation technique where the non-thematic sources act as a "secure foothold" to bind the movements. His music not only contains the traditional variation style and technique, but also practices another technique where the use of musical quotations and allusions more generally operate to bind the variation. The uniqueness of Hamelin's variations is that they adopt the traditional rules to some extent, and yet break all these traditions, in such a way that his free-form variation embraces the blend of musical languages and personalities.

Many scholars tend to categorize types of variations. For example, Hugo Leichtentritt states that there are two categories of variations: ornamental and characteristic.⁴³ Many works in

⁴⁰ Robert Nelson, *The Technique of Variation: A Study of the Instrumental Variation from Antonio De Cabezón to Max Reger* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1948), 8.

⁴¹ Hugo Leichtentritt, *Musical Form*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 104.

⁴² Wadham Sutton, "A Theme of Paganini," *Musical Opinion* 94, no.1122 (March 1971): 287.

⁴³ Leichtentritt, 51-95.

variation form mingle the two styles.⁴⁴ Ornamental variations retain the harmonic basis of the theme that aims at virtuosity, and a characteristic variation transforms the theme into something with an entirely new character.⁴⁵ The ornamental variations retain the same harmonic progression with embellished melodic lines, such as a traditional variation style from the Classical Era shown in Haydn's *Variations in F Minor*.⁴⁶ The character variation renovates the theme into an entirely different character, allowing it to be aloof from the theme without completely losing contacts.⁴⁷ The ornamental or so-called "cantus-firmus" theme variation has been used since Bach, but the character variation became popular in the nineteenth century as Beethoven used it in his *Diabelli variations*.⁴⁸ Scholars have proposed to define the types of variations in a different system. For instance, Vincent D'Indy, in "Cours De Composition Musicale," claims that many of the variations belong to the contrapuntal and decorative category.⁴⁹ Such classification systems are of limited relevance to my project. There can be free constructed variations "showing hardly any relation to the theme, either by melodic resemblance or similarity of harmony."⁵⁰ Free variation form opens new possibilities that otherwise would inhibit the composers attempting to conform to these classifications.

However, even in freely constructed variations there must be a fixed point that combines the variations in the singular development of an idea. In Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*, op.120, the theme from one variation to another is not easily recognizable; the original theme never

⁴⁴ IBID.

⁴⁵ Leichtentritt, 95.

⁴⁶ Nelson, 5.

⁴⁷ IBID.

⁴⁸ Leichtentritt, 97

⁴⁹ Vincent D'Indy, *Cours De Composition Musicale*. (Paris: A. Durand et fils, 1902), 468.

⁵⁰ Leichtentritt. 104.

returns in its original form throughout the thirty-three variations. Even though it sounds as if a new motif is invented in every variation, each variation is a fragmented idea of the original theme. Instead of a melodic-harmonic plan, it employs the harmonic plan, as shown in Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, and Brahms' *Haydn Variations*.⁵¹ Beethoven's use of a fragmented theme continued into the Romantic Era; Robert Schumann composed *Carnaval*, op.9 in this fashion. The cyclical treatment of the theme is like Berlioz's *idée fixe* and the Wagnerian *leitmotif*. The procedure that the thematic motive is used and transformed is completely untraditional. Composers explored new ways to unite the variations without following certain classifications of variation technique.

A set of theme and variations must preserve certain boundaries to be faithful to the original theme, and at the same time be different enough to be creative. The craftsmanship of compositional technique to differentiate one variation to the next has been demonstrated through countless composers over the course of music history. As the history of Western art music has advanced to this point and the quantities of compositions have accumulated, it became a demanding task to produce unique compositional techniques that do not overlap with other previous composers' languages. However, this did not stop composers to search for new musical languages and compositional techniques. When the musical language is expressed in a similar way to other works, this raises the question of originality in music. To a certain extent, it became impossible for a piece of music not to be referred to earlier works because of their common rules, sounds, and patterns, and "if we examine the music that borrowed in some way from its predecessors, we would be examining all music."⁵²

⁵¹ Nelson, 18.

⁵² Burkholder, 863.

Musical originality becomes a more apparent issue in a variation form whose theme is borrowed from other sources, because the idea comes from another composer's work. Especially borrowing a theme from a well-known source like Paganini's 24th caprice— whose popularity inspired many musicians and produced many versions of the theme— make it inevitably difficult to remain original. In the pursuit of originality, Hamelin's "Variations on a Theme of Paganini" uses pastiche and musical borrowing, creating a set of collective languages, which are the languages used by other composers. The collective languages created from different sources naturally produce a polystylism in the variation form. Polystylism— which is a combination of many styles from different sources— envelops all of Hamelin's variations and is a fundamental color and characteristic in this work.

The adaptation of polystylism through pastiche and musical borrowing from the Baroque to the twentieth-century era is the innovative approach taken by Hamelin to diversify the variation form. Many of the variations are marked by a different predominant historical style. Historical composers and their styles of writing become the compositional technique that differentiates each variation. In this sense, Hamelin's method to diversify variation form offers a unique approach; it reminisces on diverse musical styles to create his own language.

3.1 Hamelin's Variation Technique

The systems and constructions of variations have developed throughout the centuries, offering diverse results in their treatments. Though variation form can be divided into many categories, Hamelin's approach stands out in contrast with others of the genre. The uniqueness in Hamelin's approach becomes apparent when looking at the overall effect. While the majority of composers, such as Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms pursued the variation form with a singular

idea that highlighted the unity of style,⁵³ Hamelin pursued disjointed musical styles by using quotations and allusions to unify the variations. Variation must recognize the duality of discrete units with an overarching narrative that connects variations.⁵⁴ Compared to the traditional style that overarches a whole set of variations with unity, Hamelin's approach sounds shocking with contrasting styles from one variation to the next. Yet Hamelin unifies his variations through different means of musical writing. The idea is similar to Edward Elgar's *Variations on an Original Theme*, op. 36, popularly known as the 'Enigma' Variations, in the way that each variation contains a distinct idea of a different colleague's personality. Each variation represents a unique designation to one style, one person, or one idea.

Hamelin's variations are diverse because they feature a collection of styles from different centuries. Hamelin uses this technique to unite the variations. Diversity as a tool to unify variations is counterintuitive and creative. A broad range of references with broad connotations are brought to the variation, even the ones that are difficult to relate to Paganini; for example, Beethoven's piano sonata initially appears to have no relation to Paganini's 24th caprice directly. However, Hamelin's quotations from Brahms's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, or from Rachmaninoff's theme that is included in the eighteenth variation in *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, clearly connects Hamelin's variations to his predecessors' in a creative way. By expanding the boundaries of variations further than the traditional standards, Hamelin manages to include many pastiches of different composers into his variations. In doing so, these variations naturally adopt polystylism. It becomes a variation technique that divides and at the same time unifies Hamelin's variations.

⁵³ Nelson, 16.

⁵⁴ Joanna Pepple, "The Language of Johannes Brahms's Theme and Variation: A Study of His Chamber Works For Strings" (M.M. diss., East Carolina University, 2012), 3.

3.2 Hamelin's Polystylism

Although the examples of stylistic pluralism in music can be found in Monteverdi, Bach, Couperin, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Wagner, Mahler, and Ives, only in the twentieth century has polystylism become more obvious in composers' works.⁵⁵ Although the origin of polystylism cannot be confirmed because it is an organic musical movement, scholars often turn to Mahler and Ives when discussing early twentieth century examples.⁵⁶ However, more bold examples of polystylism appear later in the century, such as in the works of Alfred Schnittke (1934-1989).

In fact, the term 'polystylism' is now associated most closely with Schnittke, who defined it in his book "A Schnittke Reader."⁵⁷ His first symphony quotes various composers like Beethoven, Chopin, Grieg, Haydn, Mozart, Strauss, and Tchaikovsky.⁵⁸ Many writers have analyzed the polystylism in Schnittke's works, such as Jean Tremblay in her dissertation "Polystylism and narrative potential in the music of Alfred Schnittke." Her dissertation emphasizes that polystylism and its stylistic richness resists a straightforward interpretation, and the audience benefits from these cultural references that create narrative potentials. However, polystylism sometimes inspires disapproval. Gavin Dixon criticizes that although Schnittke strived to create his musical identity with single unity in his symphony, the process has been a struggle due to the plurality of cultural and ethnic roots.⁵⁹ Dixon suggests that the sense of unity

⁵⁵ John Webb, "Schnittke in Context," *Tempo*, no. 182 (September 1992): 19.

⁵⁶ Webb, 19.

⁵⁷ The term is rather contemporary. Although Schnittke is well-known with the term, there are other polystylistic composers like Peter Davies, John Zorn, Michael Colgrass, and many such.

⁵⁸ Ivan Moody, "The Music of Alfred Schnittke," *Tempo*, no. 168 (March 1989): 7.

⁵⁹ Gavin Dixon, "Polystylism as dialogue: a Bakhtinian Interpretation of Schnittke's Symphonies 3,4, and His Concerto Grosso No.4/Symphony No.5," (PhD diss., Goldsmiths College, 2007): 299.

in this symphony is destroyed by borrowings from multiple cultural and ethnic sources. This compositional technique can hinder a symphony's unification and has proved to be less effective in symphonic works.

While polystylism prohibits the conception of a musical identity in Schnittke's work, Hamelin reintroduces this method in a different form. Variation form may be suited to polystylism due to its nature of separation between movements. Unlike Hamelin, Schnittke never experimented with the idea of planting polystylism into a variation form. Hamelin's use of polystylism in variation form contrarily benefits each variation to be distinguished from other variations, while the plurality of different roots only enforces the variations' unification through quotation and allusion. Polystylism can be articulated in variation form since it is not required to organically flow from one idea to the next as in a symphony. Yet it denies total freedom since the variation has to be bound in some sense.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In order to understand Hamelin's musical choices, it is imperative to contextualize many of the quotations and references to understand how these pieces fit together, why their contrast is intriguing, how they function artistically, and how the music is actually portrayed to the listeners. I am not interested only in reconstructing Hamelin's intentions (if such a task is even possible), but also in understanding why many juxtapositions in this piece matter.

4.1 Analysis of Hamelin's Musical Choices

Hamelin's variations are characterized by quick juxtapositions that confuse the listener, creating the impression of disorder. To offset the listeners' confusion, Hamelin uses certain strategies. Despite ostensible chaos throughout this piece, he builds a sense of order by characterizing each variation movement with specific indications, such as *bravura*, *marziale*, and *barcarola*.⁶⁰ Hamelin accordingly places pastiche and musical borrowing in the same company.

For example, Hamelin uses variation titles to indicate his purpose. In Var. 14, Hamelin cites "La Campanella" from Liszt's *Grandes études de Paganini*, S. 141. This theme is simultaneously canonized with Paganini's 24th caprice theme. The title of the variation, "*Alla giga*," reveals the reason why the two themes, Paganini's 24th caprice theme and "La Campanella," are mingled together. The *Alla giga* (gigue) movement uses compound meter and possesses fugal connotation in some degree.⁶¹ Hamelin puts this

⁶⁰ Hamelin marks all the indication in Italian, probably to commemorate the fact that Paganini was Italian.

⁶¹ G.B. Sharp, "Gaultier and Chambonnières: Two French Tercentenaris," *The Musical Times* 113, no. 1558 (December 1972): 1180.

movement in 6/8 meter and combines the two themes simultaneously to create a contrapuntal texture.

Another revealing title is found in the *Alla barcarola* movement. Like a traditional style of a barcarolle, the meter in this variation is set in 6/8 at a moderate tempo. To complement this variation's style accordingly, Hamelin summons the quotation from Chopin's Barcarolle in F-sharp major, op.60. Other examples are the *bravura* movement quoting Liszt's virtuosic "Mazeppa" from *Transcendental Études*, and the *Allegro vivace* movement quoting Beethoven's piano sonata op.109.

Overall, printing titles of variations in this piece can help the audience to understand pastiche and these juxtapositions so they can follow the work and anticipate pastiches planted in the variations. These titles also will allow them to speculate about how the connotations are depicted through pastiche and musical borrowing.

In addition to using titles to minimize the confusion, Hamelin enhances the unique musical language using tone cluster technique throughout many variations. For example, in Var.5 Hamelin uses tone clusters to highlight an unusual gondolier atmosphere, as shown in Example 4.1. Though clusters have been accused as "anti-harmony, as a transition between sound and noise,"⁶² the acceptability of it depends on its appeal to the ear. With this technique, Hamelin indicates this *barcarola* should be played "as if the canal were rat-infested."⁶³ He uses tone clusters to add 'murky' colors with a melodic line on the top notes. Hamelin achieves the "rat-infested canal" effect through

⁶² John Schneider, *The Contemporary Guitar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 137.

⁶³ Marc-André Hamelin, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, (2011 New York: C.F. Peters Corporation, 2013), 6.

his choice to blend tone clusters just enough to create harmonic chaos, without losing its contact with the musical development and clear harmonic course.

Example 4.1: Hamelin's Var. 5

The image shows a page of a musical score for 'Var. 5' by Hamelin. The title is 'Alla barcarola' with a tempo marking of quarter note = 54. The score is in G major and 6/8 time. It features two systems of music. The first system starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes the instruction 'con molto pedale'. The second system begins at measure 137. The music consists of dense, overlapping chords in both hands, creating a rich, textured sound.

The following sixth variation uses heavy tone-clusters with a slight touch of poly-harmony. Each hand plays chords back and forth in succession, and the only indication written, *pesante*, does not suggest much on how to create this effect— especially because the dynamic indication is *piano* with *senza crescendo*. However, Hamelin builds this *pesante* effect with each hand executing a thicker tone cluster without any dynamic change, creating further dissonances in the harmony as the music moves forward.

Just as variations' titles and tone clusters lend clarity to the piece, the use of pastiche and musical borrowing in Hamelin's variations allow the harmonic elements to function more clearly. The use of musical borrowing more generally elucidates the nature of harmony. In Hamelin's work more specifically, the reason many instances of pastiche and musical borrowing can coexist is because they are harmonically compatible to the context. For example, the opening of Var.7— being an almost identical quotation from the third movement of Beethoven's piano sonata op.109— is guaranteed to quickly seize

the listener's attention. Aside from Hamelin's adjustment to transpose this theme into the key of A-minor instead of Beethoven's choice of E-major key, all other markings such as meter, tempo, articulation, and dynamics are all identical. This duplication of musical reproduction is only achievable because the harmonic progression is identical. The changes between the tonic and dominant key used in Beethoven's sonata allow this passage to be implemented in Hamelin's Paganini variations. Var. 11 also confirms this harmonic progression by using musical borrowing from Beethoven's 5th Symphony. Through this use of musical borrowing, Hamelin points out that the motif of this symphony is primarily built upon the harmonic pattern of tonic and dominant.

Many composers have demonstrated brilliant solutions to musical problems. One such composer is Rachmaninoff, who demonstrated a compositional alternative for solving a harmonic problem. His technique is used in Hamelin's Paganini variations. In this case, Rachmaninoff became an exemplary source from which to borrow ideas.

Hamelin borrows and applies Rachmaninoff's idea used in his *Rhapsody* into his own variation movement. Rachmaninoff's strategy to negotiate the key signature, which is a half-tone apart from the original key of A-minor that Paganini's 24th caprice is based on, is used by Hamelin in his own variations. Hamelin combines the key signature of Liszt's *La Campanella*, which is in G#-minor, with Paganini's theme in A-minor.

As shown in Example 4.2, the 23rd variation in Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody* displays the conflict between the piano solo and the orchestra to establish the key of A-flat (enharmonically same as G-sharp) against the key of A. This battle of key dominance between A-flat and A is used in Hamelin's fourteenth variation. Example 4.3 shows that Hamelin borrows

Rachmaninoff's idea of this tonal battle to embrace the key of G-sharp from *La Campanella* against the original key of A-minor.

Example 4.2: Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, op.43, Var. 23

Var. XXIII
E'istesso tempo (Тот же темп)

The musical score is presented in four systems. The first system includes a first ending (I) and a second ending (II) for both the right and left hands. The second system continues the melodic and harmonic development. The third system features a fortissimo (ff) marking. The fourth system concludes the variation with a fortissimo (ff) marking. The score includes first and second endings for both the right and left hands, indicated by 'I' and 'II' and '1' and '2' respectively. The key signature is one flat (F major/D minor).

Example 4.3: Hamelin's Var. 14

355 *rit. - precede*
ritardando

361 *stacc.*

372 *grazioso*
ad libitum

375 *appino ra.*

379

381

383 *eccitandoli poco*
Gtr.

392

401 *crac: molto*

412

422

* Make sure to feel these three bars in two. (Make sure the staff does as well.)

425

432

442

The musical score consists of ten systems of piano accompaniment. Each system includes a treble and bass staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes various performance instructions such as *rit. - precede*, *ritardando*, *stacc.*, *grazioso*, *ad libitum*, *appino ra.*, *eccitandoli poco*, *Gtr.*, and *crac: molto*. Measure numbers 355, 361, 372, 375, 379, 381, 383, 392, 401, 412, 422, 425, 432, and 442 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. A performance tip is provided between measures 383 and 392: "* Make sure to feel these three bars in two. (Make sure the staff does as well.)". The score concludes with a double bar line at measure 442.

In the same manner of Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody*, Hamelin writes a thunderous dominant key (E-major) followed by the tonic key (A-minor) in *fortissimo* to escape from this 'wrong' tonality.

4.2 Effect and Interpretation

Humor is one key component of a listener's reception of this piece. Humor is "a communication of ideas which can only be expressed and embodied in language."⁶⁴ The reception of this piece can be wildly different depending on the musical knowledge of a listener. Humor functions differently according to each listener's ability to recognize pastiches in this music. In that sense, this music only enchants musically-informed ears. With unexpected pastiches and musical borrowings, Hamelin conveys humor to the listener in this work.

Music remains open to multiple interpretations and experiences because it is an abstract art.⁶⁵ However, "the context [is] determined by the literary components of the work does not invalidate the claim of the music to its share in the humor."⁶⁶ The musical humor exists without literary components, just like the last two measures of Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody*- which creates an immense build-up by the full orchestra and the piano, only to end lightly. Burstein explains the equation of humor, saying, "The joys of striving toward ideals are often accompanied by a sense of shame and frustration as we fall short of our goals."⁶⁷ Rachmaninoff plants this humorous gesture to end his *Rhapsody*. Nicola Hartmann claims that this kind of musical

⁶⁴ William Listowel, *A Critical History of Modern Aesthetics* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1933), 529.

⁶⁵ Fred Fisher, "Musical Humor: A Future as Well as a Past?" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 32, no. 3 (Spring, 1974): 378.

⁶⁶ R. Gruneberg, "Humor in Music," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30, no. 1 (September 1969): 123.

⁶⁷ Poundie Burstein, "Comedy and Structure in Haydn's Symphonies," In *Schenker Studies* 2, ed. Carl Schachter and Hedi Siegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 67.

deception is the best musical humor.⁶⁸ This quotation became a musical symbol of humor, and Hamelin quotes this ending of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody into his tenth variation. Although the context is placed differently, the quotation emphasizes the end of Hamelin's work with a humorous mark.

Musical humor derives from unexpectedness.⁶⁹ The example of this is the musical borrowing from Beethoven's 5th symphony that is included in Hamelin's Var.11. The theme appears loudly following each measure marked *dolce piano* (mm: 296, 299, and 302). This motif appears out of context. Hamelin indicates in the score that "all style changes should be as sudden [...] the effect should be a bit like flipping between radio stations."⁷⁰ Hamelin uses Beethoven's short motif, following a soft and *dolce* passage to contrast the character dramatically. This sudden appearance of the quotation creates humor. Psychologists note the relationship between unexpectedness and humorousness. H. Gilbert notes that humor "is aroused by unexpected, incongruous happening; by unusual and sudden interruptions of the natural or customary order of things."⁷¹ The shock resulting from unexpected events causes our sense of amusement. Through the frequent use of pastiche and musical borrowing, Hamelin also immerses the listener in humor, increasing the enjoyment of the piece.

Hamelin not only introduces humor to the listener with unexpected entrances of pastiches and musical borrowings, but he also creates a parody in doing so. W. Kindermann says that "parody should not be associated inevitably with humor; Beethoven's use of parody embraces a gamut of effects... What is a fundamental aspect of parody, however, is the allusion that points

⁶⁸ Nicolai Hartmann, *Ästhetik* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1953), 417.

⁶⁹ Henry F. Gilbert, "Humor in Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 12, no.1 (January 1926): 41.

⁷⁰ Marc-André Hamelin, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, (2011 New York: C.F. Peters Corporation, 2013), 12.

⁷¹ Gilbert, 41.

beyond itself; with or without irony, such an evocation enjoys a complex existence between two modes of being— literal, and referential.”⁷² For example, the reason that Hamelin adopts the theme from *La Campanella* with Paganini’s 24th caprice theme simultaneously in Variation 14 and also uses the pastiche of *Solfeggietto* by C.P.E. Bach in Var. 9 is that they share the same harmonic progressions. Aside from humor, Hamelin’s work here ultimately makes a point that many sources of musical borrowings are harmonically simple. It demonstrates the parody of tonal simplicity between the tonic and dominant in Paganini’s theme, as well as the pastiche and musical borrowing Hamelin refers to.

In addition to humor, Hamelin creates instability through disjointed phrases. Romantic Austro-German composers, especially Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms pursued organic musical construction.⁷³ Heinrich Schenker wrote “every linear progression... begins, lives its own existence in the passing tones, ceases when it has reached its goal – all as organic as life itself.”⁷⁴ The gradual unfolding of a single underlying principle results in organic unity, and integrity of the unity is violated when divided into parts.⁷⁵ Organic music develops from one idea to the next, and exists as a whole construction. This musical idea applies in variation form as well. Schoenberg coined the term “developing variation” as an essential aspect of music since 1750, which differs from purely local varied repetitions that contain no developmental consequences; developing variation includes the aspect of forward motion.⁷⁶

⁷² William Kinderman, *Beethoven's Diabelli Variations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 69.

⁷³ Leonard Meyer, *Style and Music: theory, history, and ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 189-200.

⁷⁴ Ruth Solie, “The Living Work: Organicism and Musical Analysis,” *19th-Century Music* 4, no. 2 (Autumn 1980): 147.

⁷⁵ Leonard Meyer, *Style and Music: theory, history, and ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 192.

⁷⁶ Ethan Haimo, “Developing Variation and Schoenberg’s Serial Music,” *Music Analysis* 16, no. 3 (October 1997): 350-354.

The musical development in variation form, shown by composers like Beethoven and Brahms, is organic, moving from one musical idea leading to the next, which is contrary to Hamelin's choice of disjointed progress. J. Peter Burkholder comments on Brahms's style quoting, "Brahms's thorough knowledge of the past allowed him to recreate old forms, from the familiar sonata to the virtually forgotten chaconne and invest them with the same *organic approach* to form which Mozart and Bach had demonstrated."⁷⁷ Unlike the organic development shown in Brahms's Paganini Variations or the freely-developed yet narrative nature of Rachmaninoff's Paganini Rhapsody, Hamelin's Paganini Variations avoid the trend of promoting organically-developing variations. By separating the variations with polystylism, the movements became disjointed. As this includes difficult and disjointed phrases occurring often in a swift manner, the listener can be easily confused.

The confusion increases even more through inconsistent rhythmic modulations. While hemiolas are common, instances with rhythmic displacement unsettle the sense of order. Hamelin also creates chaos in harmonic development. As mentioned above (p.15), in Var. 13, he changes the key signature 15 times and confuses the sense of tonic and key orientation. This rhythmic and key confusion that is combined with the disjointed phrase structure makes the music shocking at first to the listener.

Frequent presentation of polystylism through pastiche and musical borrowing shape the variations as disjointed, and consequently, it produces confusion. The shocking moments become more apparent in Hamelin's variations in the unfolding of themes and phrases because he repeatedly breaks the pattern. For instance, Var. 5 includes an added measure twice in different time signatures, interrupting the flow of the music. Var. 10 has an odd 19 measures in its

⁷⁷ Burkholder, 78. The italics have been added by the author.

entirety, without clear beats in any measure; this destroys all sense of balance in the treatment of theme and variation. Hamelin's unusual treatment of the variation interferes with the flow of themes and the direction of phrases, especially when combined with pastiche and musical borrowing, resulting in perplexity.

Through analytical listening and historical research, this piece can be clearly understood when one is musically informed. This then challenges the audience to listen with greater attention. In this piece, despite its lighthearted and simple nature, the appreciation of it actually depends on the familiarity with the references it incorporates. One must be a well-informed musician in order to interpret how parody and pastiche are working in different ways throughout this piece. This work requires the listener to be ready for a quick and disjointed pace, and to be able to follow the rapid progression and interplay of contrasting elements and disjointed styles.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Paganini's 24th caprice still remains to this day one of the most celebrated themes in Western art music history. Many composers have used this theme to create variations and each composer attempted to produce stylistically unique variations on this piece. Hamelin incorporates many different styles to diversify his variations, while unifying these seemingly unbalanced movements through his use of quotation and allusion. Despite his use of disjointed styles, Hamelin accomplishes the sense of order by incorporating pastiche and musical borrowing in each variation accordingly. This in turn creates shock and confusion, as well as humor. It also creates parody that reveals the simple harmonic nature of Paganini's 24th caprice. The elements that Hamelin parodies in Paganini's theme correspond to Stephen Hough's explanation for its popularity: the piece "exposes the bare bones of its tonal simplicity [...] it shifts rhythmically from tonic to dominant and back [...] Paganini's theme cuts a dashing rhythmic shape as its melody repeatedly turns on itself with a swagger and clip of the heel."⁷⁸ Hamelin borrows compositional writing techniques that were previously used and exemplified by other composers; these various compositional styles were used to create a unique color at every opportunity. This approach to variation form promotes a compositional procedure overlooked in the past and may open a new window to different approaches of variation form in the future. Hamelin's variations may sound radical and confusing at first, but a deeper reading and understanding reveals that his artistic choices assemble and present diverse traditions of classical music in a way that holds great value to both performers and listeners alike.

⁷⁸ Stephen Hough, "On the art of variation: why Paganini's theme is so popular," *The Guardian*, July 5, 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/jul/05/how-paganini-became-pop>.

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