

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MUSICAL DISTORTION IN
KAIKHOSRU SORABJI'S AND VLADIMIR HOROWITZ'S
PIANO PARAPHRASES BASED ON
BIZET'S OPERA *CARMEN*

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This study focuses on a comparative analysis of two piano paraphrases, *Pastiche on Habanera from 'Carmen'* by Kaikhosru Sorabji and *Variations on a Theme from Bizet's 'Carmen'* by Vladimir Horowitz. These compositions idiomatically distort the original material in a manner that was not explored up to the moment of their respective conception. They expose each composer's free compositional approach, reflecting musical freedom rooted in the originality of their musical thinking. The aesthetic uniqueness of these two compositions strongly stimulates and justifies academic interest to explore their technical construction, musical differences, and artistic significance. This study proposes to undertake a comparative study of these two compositions, analyzing (1) aspects of the musical character, which are linked with embellishment, or rearrangement of original material, and (2) differences in performance approach based on recorded examples and critical observations by others of the performances of these works by Sorabji and Horowitz.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

In music, piano paraphrase is a free compositional technique used to reinterpret and rearrange original compositions into piano settings.¹ During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many composer-pianists became interested in the opera genre and used it as a source to compose opera paraphrases for the piano. The operas inspired paraphrases, which allowed their creators to explore new possibilities of color and texture for the instrument as well as to expand the virtuosic demands of the paraphrase for the modern piano.²

Pastiche on Habanera from 'Carmen' by Kaikhosru Sorabji (1892-1988) and *Variations on a theme from Bizet's Carmen* by Vladimir Horowitz (1903-1989) are two important examples of opera paraphrase in the twentieth century. These compositions idiomatically distort the original material in a manner that was not explored up to the moment of their respective conception. They expose each composer's free compositional approach, reflecting musical freedom rooted in the originality of their musical thinking. The aesthetic uniqueness of these two compositions strongly stimulates and justifies academic interest in their technical construction, musical differences, and artistic significance. This study proposes to undertake a comparative study of these two compositions, analyzing (1) aspects of the musical character, which are linked with embellishment, or rearrangement of original material, and (2) differences in performance approach based on recorded examples and critical observations by others of the performances of these works by Sorabji and Horowitz.

¹ Malcom Boyd. "Arrangement." *Grove Music Online 2nd ed.*, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01332>.

² Ibid.

Method

The method of this research will focus on a comparison between *Pastiche on Habanera from 'Carmen'* by Sorabji and *Variations on a theme from Bizet's Carmen* by Horowitz. This comparison will be supported by a brief musical analysis of key segments of the two works, comparing their musical character by examining the different degrees of distortion in both composer-pianists' works. I will discuss their differences in the musical character, which will be shown in examples from each edited score, as well as referring to observations in Paul Rapport's book on the celebration on Sorabji's music, and critical analysis by Marc-André Roberge of Sorabji's *Carmen* paraphrase.

This analysis will also examine aspects of distortion by inspecting Sorabji's and Horowitz's performance approaches. In support of these aspects, I will investigate the evidence left by Horowitz's and Sorabji's own recordings, as well as reviews and testimonies of their playing styles.

This research will rely on primary sources, authoritative musical scores, and secondary sources such as books and articles. The primary sources include Sorabji's two essays, interviews with Horowitz, and the recorded performances of both composer-pianists. Use of these sources will demonstrate the uniqueness of their paraphrases, and their relevant scholarly interest.

CHAPTER 2

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THE TWO COMPOSER-PIANISTS

Kaikhosru Sorabji

An English composer-pianist, Kaikhosru Sorabji (1892-1988) wrote a large number of compositions for piano, voice, and orchestra. Sorabji's particular interest in piano, along with his career as a concert pianist, motivated him to produce many compositions for this instrument. His compositions for piano, as well as for voice and other instruments, were not well known to the general public during most of his lifetime, because this was due to Sorabji's few public appearances and limited private performances, and because he banned all public and broadcasted performances of his compositions. Nevertheless, two of his friends, Donald M. Garvelmann and Frank Holliday, in 1970 introduced Sorabji's music on the New York Radio Station WNCN.³ In 1976, Sorabji withdrew the prohibition of performances on his works, thus allowing professional pianists such as Yonty Solomon, Marc-André Hamelin, Michael Habermann, and Geoffrey Douglas Madge to publicly perform, to broadcast, and to record his music.⁴ Through these pianists' performances and the support of his friends, Sorabji's music received significant attention from the public, making it an important part of the contemporary music repertoire.

³ March-André Roberge, "12. *Un tessuto d'esecuzioni*: A Register of Performance of Sorabji's Works," in *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, ed. Paul Rapport (Cambridge: Scholar Press, 1992), 433-437.

⁴ Alistair Hinton, "Sorabji Archive, A short Biography," accessed August 27, 2014, <http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/biography.php>.

Vladimir Horowitz

Vladimir Horowitz (1903-1989), unlike Sorabji, was an internationally known concert pianist. Although he spent most of his lifetime as an active concert pianist, Horowitz's accomplishments are not limited only to his numerous performances and recordings, but they extend to his achievements as a composer of original piano works as well as piano paraphrases. Among his works, Horowitz's piano paraphrases became well known to the public through his live performances and his own recordings, which highlight Horowitz's idiomatic interpretation of his arrangements. In the case of the paraphrases, his most representative works are *Variations on a theme from Bizet's opera Carmen*, *Wedding March and Variations* by Mendelssohn-Liszt, *By the Water* by Mussorgsky, and *The Stars and Stripes Forever* by Sousa.⁵

Horowitz's performance career - unlike Sorabji's career, which consisted mostly of private performances - began with numerous concerts with demanding programs in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which enabled him to establish himself as "the most prominent of the younger generation of Soviet pianists."⁶ After leaving the USSR, Horowitz became extremely active as a recitalist, soloist with orchestras, and a recording artist, which allowed him to present himself to a wide variety of audiences in Europe and the United States and to collaborate with major musical figures such as Arturo Toscanini, Zubin Metha, and Claudio Abbado. His vast experience as a performer allowed Horowitz to considerably expand his repertoire and to develop his own musical interpretative approach, thus he left a legacy of a large number of historically memorable performances such as Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor in collaboration with Zubin Metha and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra,

⁵ The Horowitz website. "Concertography and Information: Compositions and Transcriptions," accessed March 6, 2014, <http://www.vladimirhorowitz.info/>.

⁶ Harold C Schonberg. "Horowitz, Vladimir." *Grove Music Online 2nd ed.*, accessed August 17, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/13372>.

and Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor in collaboration with Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra, among many other compositions for piano and orchestra, and solo piano.

CHAPTER 3

DISTORTION IN PIANO PARAPHRASE

Piano Paraphrase in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Composer-pianists of the nineteenth century used opera paraphrases to display their creative skills of reinterpretation in a different manner than the way that Sorabji and Horowitz approached it in the twentieth century. Their appropriation and interpretation of the original compositions did not radically change the original operas, but mainly embellished on and rearranged them to make them suitable for recital performances. Also, at the structural level, their opera paraphrases mainly juxtapose multiple operatic scenes of a particular opera in a coherent manner to achieve a new pianistic composition with unique characteristics. One known example of this approach is Franz Liszt's Reminiscences of *Don Juan* from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. In this paraphrase, Liszt juxtaposes materials from the different acts of *Don Giovanni*, embellishing on them greatly and adapting them for his virtuosity as a pianist.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Sorabji and Horowitz radically expanded their use of the paraphrase technique in both compositional and pianistic aspects. They used their knowledge of the piano and of the paraphrase genre to reinterpret and to transform *Carmen* into two unique and distinct piano compositions, which they achieved by using different procedures than those used in the nineteenth century. They reinterpreted and transformed *Carmen*'s primal setting by distorting its original meaning by means of their own aesthetics and creative imagination. Sorabji's concept in *Pastiche on Habanera from 'Carmen'* can be traced down to Busoni's aesthetic influence, and Horowitz's impression in *Variations on themes from Bizet's Carmen* can be attributed to have had influence of Liszt's pianism.

Sorabji and Busoni's *Kammer-Fantasie über Bizets Carmen*

Busoni's piano arrangements of known instrumental and vocal works are a major influence on Sorabji's paraphrasing technique. Sorabji was attracted by Busoni's creative and intellectual interpretation of an original material, which transforms the original *Carmen* in both character and setting.⁷ Busoni's approach strongly inspired Sorabji to transform the contents of the original material he used for his paraphrases into unique and original compositions. Robert Rimm wrote about the direct influence of Busoni on Sorabji's *Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasia of J. S. Bach, followed by a Fugue and Prelude after J. S. Bach* (transcription of the first movement of BWV 815a).⁸ Other compositions by Sorabji that can be attributed to have been directly influenced by Busoni are his *Concert Transcription of Rapsodie Espagnole*, based on Maurice Ravel's *Rapsodie Espagnole* and *Concert Paraphrase of Schlußszene aus Salome* based on Richard Strauss's closing scene from the opera *Salome*.

Sorabji's idea of reinterpretation and transformation was, in particular, established through working his first paraphrase, *Pastiche on Habanera from 'Carmen,'* which was inspired by Busoni's *Carmen* paraphrase. Busoni's adaptation of *Carmen* fundamentally stemmed from his aesthetic thinking, which explicates that the various free natures of music encompass all musical genres in one.⁹ In his book *The Essence of Music and Other Papers*, he uses Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's symphonic opera *Don Giovanni*, and Ludwig van Beethoven's use of thematic development from his early wind octet in the Finale of his opera *Fidelio*, as examples of

⁷ Michael Habermann, "9. Sorabji's Piano Music: Free Fantasies, Paraphrases, and Shorter Works," in *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, ed. Paul Rapport (Cambridge: Scholar Press, 1992), 357-358.

⁸ Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and The Eight* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 2002), 293.

⁹ Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*, trans. Th. Baker (New York: Dover Publication, INC., 1911), 76-77.

musical integration.¹⁰ In Busoni's *Kammer-Fantasie über Bizets Carmen*, this aesthetic view allowed Busoni to rhetorically change the characteristics of the different thematic material he borrowed from the original, disguising and transforming it into something that faintly resembles Overture of Act IV, Jose's Flower Aria, Habanera, and the closing scene of the original opera. This concept in Busoni's reinterpretation of *Carmen* attracted Sorabji. He commented on this in his book *Around Music*: "Uncanny power of seizing upon material of a quite ordinary character, and so taking possession of it . . . that it loses all its own identity and becomes merely a medium for him."¹¹

Influenced by Busoni's interpretive style and his free aesthetic concept, Sorabji developed his concept of distortion through the radical musical transformation, which converts the familiar elements into the unfamiliar.¹² He applied this concept to the original characteristics of *Carmen*'s aria "Habanera." Sorabji's musical distortion transforms the original into a pastiche by altering and deforming Bizet's original material.¹³ Michael Tilmouth states, "Pastiche is the compositional technique that parodies certain characteristics of another composer or type of composition by infusing satiric intent."¹⁴ Sorabji reflected the pastiche's nature in his paraphrase by distorting the original material elements in a complex manner.¹⁵

Sorabji's complexity in his music originates from his idea of fusing together the compositional styles of various composers in his paraphrase such as Liszt's virtuosity, Busoni's

¹⁰ Ferruccio Busoni, *The Essence of Music and Other Papers*, trans. Rosamond Ley (New York: Dover Publication, INC., 1957), 1-4.

¹¹ Kaikhosru Sorabji, *Around Music* (Conneticut: Hyperion Press, INC., 1979), 28.

¹² Michael Habermann, "9. Sorabji's Piano Music: Free Fantasies, Paraphrases, and Shorter Works," in *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, ed. Paul Rapport (Cambridge: Scolar Press, 1992), 357-358.

¹³ Kaikhosru Sorabji, *Pastiche on The Habanera From 'Carmen' by Bizet: Introduction*, ed. Marc-André Roberge, *Trois Pastiches for Piano Solo* (England: The Sorabji Music Archive, 1992), v.

¹⁴ Michael Tilmouth. "Parody (ii)." *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20938>.

¹⁵ Michel Habermann, "9.Sorabji's Piano Music," in *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, ed. Paul Rapport (Cambridge: Scolar Press, 1992), 340-341.

conceptual approach, Mahler's complex use of harmony and melody, and Debussy and Ravel's colorful sound and fluid musical textures.¹⁶ Busoni commented on the complexity in Sorabji's music: "Judging from an initial impression . . . Mr. K.S's talent manifests itself in the harmonic and ornamental complexity of his sonorities, which seem to come to him naturally, easily and in a generous vein."¹⁷

These styles of those composers became a strong influence on Sorabji's musical writing, which Sorabji fully assimilated and used it to develop his own compositional technique of elaboration.¹⁸ He developed this technique by transforming musical materials such as rhythm, harmony, melody, and textures. Michael Habermann specified the importance of this point in Sorabji's music, as he had the opportunity of studying a large number of Sorabji's works for piano with the composer himself. According to Habermann's article "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji," he discusses: "Liszt, Busoni, Godowsky, and the Impressionists are the source of Sorabji's piano writing, though his use of the instrument is even *more* elaborate and daring. His music is notated on three or more staves in order to facilitate reading, the upper staff to be played an octave higher than written."¹⁹ As shown in the above quotation, Habermann observed that Sorabji used the idea of elaboration to provide a solid foundation to cohesiveness in music writing.²⁰ Habermann stated that "his goal was to create music inherently cohesive without recourse to traditional motivic or formal compositional procedures. He achieved this objective by

¹⁶ Michel Habermann, "9.Sorabji's Piano Music," in *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, ed. Paul Rapport (Cambridge: Scolar Press, 1992), 340-341.

¹⁷ Ferruccio Busoni, *Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. Antony Beaumont. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 300.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Michael Habermann, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji," *The Piano Quarterly* Vol.122 (Summer 1983): 37.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

basing his pieces on “musical gestures” (as opposed to strictly defined themes), which through constant variation and juxtaposition permeate the whole.”²¹

Sorabji’s complexity featured in his piano writing style presents many pianistic challenges during the process of learning and performing his music. Habermann detailed these challenges in an interview on National Public Radio in 1983:

It is a little difficult to describe the difficulty because there are so many difficulties. Oh - there are long stretches, long scales in double notes, so you have to play two notes at the same time instead of one note, but they have to go at the same speed as if you were playing a single note passage. So there are stretches of chords, and combinations of rhythms; for instance, you might have three or four different rhythms going on in different registers. . . . And it’s not so much a question of stretch, but of texture – a lot of things going on at the same time, and one has to be able to differentiate these various melodies and accompaniments, and countermelodies and on top of that his pieces are very, very long.²²

As it can be observed in this short transcript of the broadcasted interview, the musical reason that prompted Sorabji to introduce these pianistic demands was to bring various idiomatic characters and musical effects to his music, it was not simply to appeal to a mere pianistic display.

Vladimir Horowitz

Horowitz’s distortion and transformation of Bizet’s *Carmen* highly contrasts with Sorabji’s concept of defamiliarizing the original “Habanera” aria through an extreme satiric distortion. Horowitz developed the idea of musical distortion through an exploration of the known repertoire of piano paraphrases. His exploration is grounded in Franz Liszt’s

²¹ Michael Habermann, “Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji,” *The Piano Quarterly* Vol.122 (Summer 1983): 37.

²² Michael Habermann interviewed by Susan Stamberg, July 14, 1983, transcript, Articles about Sorabji and Habermann, www.michaelhabermann.com

compositional approach to the piano paraphrase genre, on which he intended to display brilliant virtuosic pianism and his own imaginative reinterpretation of original works.²³ Horowitz not only became influenced by Liszt's piano paraphrase writing style, but he melded it with his own idiomatic musical approach creating unique compositions.²⁴ Horowitz believed that the piano paraphrase is a rich musical genre, which he could use to explore the endless possibilities of the piano. His deep understanding of the instrument enabled him to extensively investigate its capabilities of expressing music that was not originally intended for the instrument. He did so by experimenting and exploring the viability of adapting original elements such as instrumental colors and textures for his instrument.²⁵ His use of these materials reflects an amplification of their original character combined with the bravura style of his pianism. This produced an extreme musical transformation of the original, which distorted it and idiomatically adapted it for the piano. One well-known example of this is Horowitz's rearrangement of *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Mussorgsky. In this piece, Horowitz strove to keep the original contents of the music, but not its original texture for the piano; he radically broadened its sonorities and expanded its dramatic content.²⁶ David Dubal commented on Horowitz's rearrangement of this work: "Horowitz enlarged Mussorgsky's sound and texture in the *Pictures*. Purists persist in hating it, but the impact is awesome and is so perfectly Horowitzian in manner that it must be judged on his terms."²⁷

Horowitz's idea of distorting the original material was also applied to his *Carmen* paraphrase. Horowitz's take on *Carmen* transforms the original by exaggerating its original

²³ Malcolm Boyd. "Arrangement." *Grove Music Online 2nd ed.*, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01332>.

²⁴ Vladimir Horowitz and David Dubal. *Remembering Horowitz: 125 Pianists Recall a Legend; Horowitz Speaks with Dubal: 11. Transcription*, Shirmer Books, 1993.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ David Dubal, *Evenings with Horowitz* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991), 301-302.

character through compositional devices, which were intended to highlight Horowitz's virtuosity as a performer. His distortion is reflected in the intensified character imprinted to the original gypsy motive of Act II, thus exaggerating and transforming the original atmosphere into a much "extroverted character."²⁸ Horowitz depicted this character through focusing on orchestral sound, voicing abilities, and dynamic ranges. The next chapter will develop these three elements with musical examples.

²⁸Vladimir Horowitz and David Dubal. *Remembering Horowitz: 125 Pianists Recall a Legend; Horowitz Speaks with Dubal: 9. Spontaneity and Contrast*, Shirmer Books, 1993.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF MUSICAL CHARACTER

Sorabji: Pastiche on Habanera from ‘Carmen’

Sorabji’s complexity is focused on using theme, rhythm, and harmony. Sorabji’s use of thematic material is centered on the melodic fragments of the Habanera. This analytical approach was proposed by Marc-André Roberge on his New Critical Edition of the Trois Pastiches.²⁹ The proposed fragments consist of three different melodic ideas: idea 1) descending chromatic line (mm. 8, 2nd beat – mm. 12, 1st beat), idea 2) a motive in emphasis of the tonic, D major (mm. 27, 2nd beat – mm. 29, 1st beat), and idea 3) a variation of idea 2 in E minor (mm. 32, 2nd beat – mm. 33).³⁰ See Example 4.1.1, 4.1.2, and 4.1.3.

Example 4.1.1: Idea 1 from *Carmen* by Bizet, mm. 8-12.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are in French and English. The French lyrics are: "est un oi-seau re - bel-le Que nul ne peut ap-pri-voi - ser, Et c'est bien en vain qu'on l'ap - pei-le, S'il lui con - vient de re - fu - ser. Rien n'y". The English lyrics are: "like an - y wood-bird wild, That none can ev - er hope to tame; And in vain is all woo - ing mild If he re - fuse your heart to claim. Naught a -". The score includes a descending chromatic line in the vocal line, which is highlighted with a red box. The piano accompaniment is in a bass clef and features a steady rhythmic pattern.

Example 4.1.1 © Copyright 1989 by Dover Publications, Inc., Mineola, New York.
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²⁹ Kaikhosru Sorabji, *Pastiche on The Habanera From ‘Carmen’ by Bizet: Introduction*, ed. Marc-André Roberge, *Trois Pastiches for Piano Solo* (England: The Sorabji Music Archive, 1992), i-iv.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, iii-iv.

Example 4.1.2: Idea 2 from *Carmen* by Bizet, mm. 26-30.

l'a - mour! L'amour est en - fant de Bo - hême, Il n'a ja -
 oh love! A Gyp-sy boy is Love,'tis true, He ev - er
 vient de re - fu - ser! fuse your heart to claim!
 vient de re - fu - ser! fuse your heart to claim!

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Example 4.1.3: Idea 3 from *Carmen* by Bizet, mm. 31-34.

mais, jamais connu de loi, Si tu ne m'ai - mes pas, je t'ai - mé; Si
 was and ev - er will be free; Love you not me, then I love you, — If

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The idea 1 contains three different texts which share the same melodic line: ‘L’amour est un oiseau rebelle’ in the first verse, ‘L’oiseau que tu croyais surprendre’ and ‘Tout autour de toi

vite, vite' in the second.³¹ The idea 2 'L'amour est enfant de Bohème' and the idea 3 'Si tu ne m'aimes pas' are found in the first verse.³²

Sorabji creates a distortion of Bizet's original idea through variation of its melodic fragments. In the opening and closing cadenzas of his paraphrase, he introduces Bizet's melodic idea 1 by presenting it in chromatic descending line, as shown in Example 4.2.

Example 4.2: Prelude from Pastiche on Habanera from 'Carmen' by Sorabji, mm. 11.

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is in 4/4 time, with a 4:3 time signature change indicated by a dashed vertical line. The top staff has two sections: 'a) similar with the original' (measures 11-14) and 'Descending Chromatic Line' (measures 15-18). The bottom staff has two sections: 'b) deconstruction' (measures 11-14) and 'ralentissez peu à peu le trémolo' (measures 15-18). The score includes various musical notations such as chords, single notes, and rests.

Example 4.2 © Copyright 2014 by The Sorabji Archive, Hereford, England.
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As shown in the above example of the opening cadenza, Sorabji presents Bizet's melodic idea in a similar melodic and rhythmic design with respect to the original, as shown in a) (mm. 11). Immediately following, in b), he begins to distort the melodic idea by deconstructing it rhythmically and making it appear distant and unfamiliar (mm. 11).

Sorabji frequently combined two melodic fragments in different voices. The example below shows the melodic combination of the idea 1 and idea 2. This combination intentionally conceals the two familiar melodic ideas on three different staves; this highly amplifies the distortion effect through hiding the melodic material on a complex texture. See Example 4.3.

³¹ Kaikhosru Sorabji, *Pastiche on The Habanera From 'Carmen' by Bizet: Introduction*, ed. Marc-André Roberge, *Trois Pastiches for Piano Solo* (England: The Sorabji Music Archive, 1992), iii-iv.

³² *Ibid.*

Example 4.3: The Combination of Ideas 1 and 2 from Pastiche on Habanera from ‘Carmen’ by Sorabji, mm. 20-24.

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As shown in the example 4.3, Sorabji draws the combination of ideas by placing idea 1 in the top voice (mm. 20, 2nd beat –mm. 24, 1st beat) and idea 2 (mm. 21, 2nd beat – mm. 23, 2nd beat) in the inner voices. These two ideas are interrupted by broken rhythmic figures and dissonances, altering the bass line and the original harmony, thus contributing to the overall feeling of defamiliarization.

Sorabji’s use of the pastiche technique to distort the meaning of Bizet’s Habanera can also be found in the rhythmic complexity he imprints on his own composition’s design. He uses a variety of rhythmic figures as embellishments, achieving in this manner a highly complex overall effect by combining many dissonances and rapid figurations simultaneously. See Example 4.4.

Example 4.4: The Rhythmic Complexity from Pastiche on Habanera from 'Carmen' by Sorabji, m. 101-106.

The image displays a musical score for Example 4.4, consisting of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 101 to 103, and the second system covers measures 104 to 106. The music is written in 7/8 time and features complex rhythmic patterns. Red circles and boxes highlight specific motifs: 'rhythmic embellishment' (circled in red) and 'Idea 3' (boxed in red). The score includes treble and bass staves for piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked '24' at the beginning of the first system. The score includes various rhythmic markings such as '3', '6', and '7' indicating groupings or accents. The 'rhythmic embellishment' motifs are characterized by complex, syncopated rhythms, while 'Idea 3' motifs are more melodic and rhythmic in nature.

Example 4.4 © Copyright 2014 by The Sorabji Archive, Hereford, England.
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As shown in Example 4.4, Sorabji distorts the expanded melodic contour of idea 3 by making it almost unrecognizable to the ear (mm. 102- mm. 106, 1st beat). This effect is obtained by highly embellishing the surrounding texture of idea 3 with complex rhythmic figures (mm. 101-mm. 106).

Another notable feature of Sorabji's rhythmic complexity is an unexpected switch of meter changing the Habanera meter 2/4 into 3/4 (mm. 104-105) and 3/4 into 2/4 (mm. 105-106). This metric adjustment helps to enhance the dramatic point of the climax in the original aria, which imitates the traditional singing style of the character Carmen. See Example 4.5.

Example 4.5: The Shift of the Meter from 2/4 to 3/4 from Pastiche on Habanera from 'Carmen' by Sorabji, mm. 104-106.

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As shown in example 4.5, Sorabji's distortion of the metric system is accompanied by the sub-divisions into the sixteenth note value in the inner voices throughout a large range of keyboard, thus producing its rich sonorities created with octaves and full inverted chords.

Sorabji's distortion is also reflected in the complexity of his harmonic language. His use of different and complex chordal sonorities plays an important role in imprinting his paraphrase with a satiric character. The use of extended harmony consists of combining a traditional harmonic approach with highly dissonant sonorities built of chromaticism and inverted chords (mm. 110-112). He highlights the distortion effect in his composition by prolonging the tonic pedal D in the bass (mm. 112, 3rd beat – mm. 113). See Example 4.6.

Example 4.6: Use of Complex Harmonic Language with Idea 2 from Pastiche on Habanera from ‘Carmen’ by Sorabji, mm. 110-113.

The image displays a musical score for Example 4.6, consisting of three systems of piano music. The first system (measures 107-110) is marked 'p. 13'. It features complex harmonic textures with triplets and a 'Tonic Pedal' in the bass. The second system (measures 111-112) highlights 'Idea 2' in the treble and bass staves, 'Inverted chord' structures, and 'Chromaticism' in the bass line. The third system (measure 113) shows a 'Tonic Pedal' in the bass and a complex melodic line in the treble with a fermata. Red annotations highlight specific harmonic and melodic elements throughout the score.

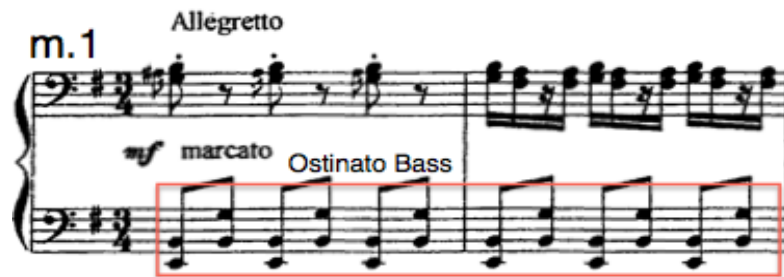
Example 4.6 © Copyright 2014 by The Sorabji Archive, Hereford, England.
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As demonstrated in example 4.6, Sorabji does not resolve the melodic idea 2 into a typical cadential resolution, thus amplifying the harmonic distortion and making it sound unfamiliar (mm. 110 – mm. 113).

Horowitz: Variations on Themes from Bizet's *Carmen*

Horowitz's distortion is focused on highlighting the orchestral sound, the different voices, and differences of dynamic range in his playing. He does so by reproducing the orchestral sound in every range of the keyboard and by imitating the diverse colors of the orchestral instruments. See Example 4.7.1 and 4.7.2.

Example 4.7.1: The Ostinato Bass from Variations on a theme from Bizet's *Carmen* by Horowitz, mm. 1-2.



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Example 4.7.2: Rapid Ascending Triplet Runs and the Descending Figuration in 3rds from Variations on a theme from Bizet's *Carmen* by Horowitz, mm. 42-50.

The image displays a musical score for Example 4.7.2, consisting of three systems of piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. The first system begins at measure 42 with a piano (pp) dynamic. The second system starts at measure 43 with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The third system continues the piece. Red boxes and ovals highlight specific musical features: 'a tempo ascending figure' in the high register of the piano, 'vocal line' in the middle register, and 'descending figure' in the high register. The piano part features rapid triplet runs and descending figuration in 3rds.

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As shown in the above examples, number 4.7.1 features a texture in the piano which imitates the strings' pizzicato from the ostinato in the bass register of the orchestral score (mm. 1- mm. 2), while number 4.7.2 emulates the woodwinds' brilliant color in the rapid triplet runs in the high register (mm. 43- mm. 50). Horowitz continues enhancing the richness of color in his paraphrase by adding the vocal line of the mezzo soprano in the middle register of the piano (mm. 43- mm. 50). See Example 4.7.3.

Example 4.7.3: The Vocal Melodic Line from Variations on a theme from Bizet's *Carmen* by Horowitz, mm. 21-27.

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The previous example shows the vocal melodic line in the middle register of the piano. As indicated by a), the singing voice is first placed in the upper part of the texture, making it more evident and exposed to the ear (mm. 23- mm. 24, 1st beat). Following b), presents the continuation of the melodic line alternating in the upper and lower voices of the texture, thus creating contrast and highlighting Horowitz's pianistic voicing abilities (mm. 25- mm. 26, 1st and 2nd beats). He continues developing his paraphrase by restating the already presented material in a variety of combinations and in all possible registers of the piano. See Example 4.8.1.

Example 4.8.1: Use of Different Textures and Registers from Variations on a theme from Bizet's *Carmen* by Horowitz, mm. 1-2.

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Example 4.8.2: Use of Different Textures and Registers from Variations on a theme from Bizet's *Carmen* by Horowitz, mm. 109-112.

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.8.2, starting at measure 109. The score is in G major and 2/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a 'Vocal Line' in the bass register and 'Short Woodwinds' in the upper register. Red boxes highlight the vocal line and the woodwind figures.

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Example 4.8.3: Use of Different Textures and Registers from Variations on a theme from Bizet's *Carmen* by Horowitz, mm. 131-133.

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.8.3, starting at measure 131. The score is in G major and 2/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a 'Gypsy Theme' in the middle-high register and a 'ff' dynamic marking. A red box highlights the Gypsy Theme.

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The three previous excerpts feature Horowitz's use of different textures and ranges.

Example 4.8.1 is placed in the middle-low register of the piano and suggests a texture, which imitates a combination of pizzicato in the bass with short woodwind figures in the upper part (mm. 1- mm. 2). Example 4.8.2 uses the middle-high and middle-low register of the instrument and develops the vocal line (low register) accompanied by short woodwind thirds in staccato articulation (mm. 110, 3rd beat – mm. 112). Example 4.8.3 is placed in between the high-middle and middle-low registers and strongly develops the Gypsy theme producing an energetic sound of orchestral tutti (mm. 131- mm. 133).

Horowitz's orchestral conception can also be observed in his musical distortion through exaggeration of the dynamic range in his paraphrase. Emmanuel Ax commented on Horowitz's use of the dynamic contrasts by stating that: "His performance shows a huge dynamic range, achieved through complete control of subtle shadings in the soft music, so that he was able to differentiate without having to resort to great volume – when he played fortissimo, it sounded much more enormous than anyone else, because our ears had been so sharpened and engaged by the delicacy of the dynamics from before."³³ His dramatic use of a wide range of dynamics can be found in his paraphrase's cadenza. See Example 4.9.

Example 4.9: Cadenza from Variations on a theme from Bizet's *Carmen* by Vladimir Horowitz, mm. 127-130

The image shows a musical score for a cadenza. It consists of three systems of piano and bass clef staves. The first system is marked 'm. 127 Cadenza' and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second system ends with a red box highlighting the final notes. The third system includes markings for *ffz cresc.*, *rit.*, and *fff*, and ends with the text 'B major'. A red oval highlights the *fff* dynamic marking.

Example 4.9 © Copyright 1968 by Prs Libraries- Pianoraescores by New York, New York.
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³³ David Dubal et al., *Remembering Horowitz: 125 Pianists Recall a Legend* (New York: Shirmer Books, 1995), 73-74.

As shown in example 4.9, Horowitz constructs the overall cadenza by increasing the dynamic range varying from *p* to *fff*. He begins it by developing a texture made of broken arpeggio figures in the softest dynamic (*p*), which gradually turns into the loudest dynamic (*fff*) with the arrival of a thick B major chord (m. 127- mm. 130). This extreme use of dynamic range and stimulating sound effects in the cadenza can be clearly appreciated in Horowitz's recorded live performance of the piece in 1968.³⁴

³⁴ YouTube, "Horowitz-Bizet's Carmen Variations," YouTube Web site, Windows Media Player video file, 3:51, accessed March 17, 2014. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzghL3_HPgk.

CHAPTER 5

PERFORMANCE APPROACH OF TWO COMPOSER-PIANISTS

Sorabji's Pianism

Sorabji's achievement as a concert pianist, as well as a composer, was of significant importance during the twentieth century. Although his performing career, compared to Horowitz's, was brief (as a concert pianist between 1920 and 1936 and as a recording artist in private sessions with Frank Holliday between 1962 and 1968), Sorabji strongly developed his own playing style and left a great impression on the audiences that had a chance to hearing him. His pianism focused on extreme virtuosity, which he used to highlight the various exotic sonorities and to distinctively expose the textures of his compositions. According to Michael Habermann, Sorabji's virtuosic pianism produced diverse colorations of sound.³⁵ Habermann specified this in an interview on National Public Radio, stating that: "all the virtuosity that might be entailed in performing it was for the purpose of coloration and mood."³⁶ Habermann also connected the diversity of colors found in Sorabji's playing to a frequent use of the damper pedal in order to enrich the resonances of the piano.³⁷

Sorabji highlighted his virtuosic pianism through emulating *bel canto* singing style in the manner of "aiming for a form of speech in tones."³⁸ Geoffrey Douglas Madge specified Sorabji's reason of adapting the singing style to his pianism, stating that: "... it is important to have the

³⁵ Michael Habermann interviewed by Liane Hansen, April 14, 1996, transcript, Articles about Sorabji and Michael Habermann, www.michaelhabermann.com.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Geoffrey Douglas Madge and Paul Rapport, "10. Performing *Opus clavicembalisticum*," in *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, ed. Paul Rapport (Cambridge: Scolar Press, 1992), 392-393.

fingers act on the keys the way the tongue articulates speech. This is one aspect of *bel canto*, which is often neglected in instrumental performance: the notes from the piano should sound like a form of sung speech.”³⁹ As shown in the above quotation, Madge commented that Sorabji’s adaptation of the *bel canto* singing style enabled his playing to create the poetic expression, which can be regarded as the important musical approach to piano playing as well as the vocal singing. Madge observed that Sorabji’s playing depicted the poetic expression by producing warm sonorities accompanied by his use of the damper pedal in the piano: “The way he played chords and the way he pedaled were notable. His sound was not harsh but warm, much more related to *bel canto* technique than to virtuoso piano technique, which may be surprising...”⁴⁰

Sorabji’s pianistic approach, which combined extreme virtuosity with *bel canto* singing style allowed him to imprint various musical characteristics in his playing. Frank Holiday, a close friend of Sorabji, remarked the composer’s piano music:

The prime and overriding impression made by Sorabji’s music is of its great beauty, range, and variety; the second, of its essential dynamicism. It is always moving, evolving, and that is why any comparison with the static arts is so hopelessly inadequate. If, at any one moment of time, a cross-section of a particular composition of his may be compared with a mosaic, the composition as a whole may be said to resemble a series of seamlessly joined moving mosaics passing across ones’ aural “field”....⁴¹

This unique characteristic in Sorabji’s playing also received attention from Ferruccio Busoni, to whom he dedicated his *Piano Sonata No.2*. After hearing Sorabji playing the sonata, Busoni commented:

Judging from an initial impression – surprising enough, incidentally – Mr. K.S’s talent manifests itself in the harmonic and ornamental complexity of his sonorities, which seem to come to him naturally, easily and in a generous vein. Here is a realm of liberty, even if still disordered and exuberant. The music is written conscientiously and is unaware of its

³⁹ Geoffrey Douglas Madge and Paul Rapport, “10. Performing *Opus clavicembalisticum*,” in *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, ed. Paul Rapport (Cambridge: Scolar Press, 1992), 392-393.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Frank Holliday, “11. Splendour upon Splendour: On Hearing Sorabji Play,” in *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, ed. Paul Rapport (Cambridge: Scolar Press, 1992), 423-424.

irregularities – chiefly of proportion -: but it departs, not without a certain effect, from ‘traditions’ and breaks through to a zenith which is no longer purely European, and is capable of producing exotic vegetation....⁴²

Complexity, variety, exoticism, freedom, and dynamism were characteristics of Sorabji’s profile as a pianist. This fact can be clearly appreciated in other numerous comments referring to Sorabji’s performances of his piano works: “Norman Peterkin wrote that Sorabji “... was a virtuoso pianist of international standards.” Cecil Gray also attested to the pianist’s “remarkable technical virtuosity,” although he qualified it by adding, ... “particularly in the performance of his own works.”⁴³

In contrast with the previous commentaries on Sorabji’s playing style, other critics did not agree with his creative interpretation of his own piano works, stating that Sorabji altered musical elements from his scores, changes which ranged from pure dynamics to phrase shaping.⁴⁴

Evidently, Sorabji took certain musical liberties in the performances of his compositions based on the understanding of the flexible nature of music. This motivated his concept of distortion, which can be understood as “extreme liberties which brought deviations in every respect of music.”⁴⁵ Sorabji clarified the reason of the musical liberties he took in a letter to Michael Habermann:

You say in your kind letter of 22nd that you perceived marked liberties and deviations in performances (by self) of my Le Jardin Parfumé. I don’t doubt it for ONE MOMENT! ... I get over the ground in my own music, and within my limitations EMPATHIC AND DECIDED as they are claim to do no more than give a bird’s eye view of the music. Such liberties as I take – and who has better right to do so than myself in my own music? – are dictated by the condition of my fingers at any particular time when I was recording; then

⁴² Ferruccio Busoni, *Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. Antony Beaumont. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 300.

⁴³ Michael Habermann, “A Style Analysis of the *Nocturnes* for Solo Piano by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji with Special Emphasis on *Le Jardin Parfumé*” (DMA diss., Peabody Conservatory of Music, 1984), 16-20.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

I modify and alter AS SUITS ME. That's all there is to it. The music as printed embodies my INTENTIONS⁴⁶

Horowitz's Pianism

Horowitz's pianism focusing on his own creative approach, like Sorabji's, was a notable part of the twentieth century. The uniqueness of Horowitz's own musical ideas was developed through his prolific knowledge of the piano literature; his creativity was aided by studying instrumental and vocal repertoire.⁴⁷ His broad understanding of piano, instrumental, and vocal literature, as well as a prodigious technique enabled him to interpret the classical piano repertoire in an innovative manner. This fact can be appreciated in Horowitz's lengthy discography of studio recordings and recorded live performances. In these abundant examples, Horowitz achieved his own unique version of the standard repertoire by highlighting a diverse level of sonorities, phrase shapes, brilliant pianistic displays, and effective dramatic contrast.

Horowitz's creative musical approach, like Sorabji's, can be also perceived in his concept of "diverse interpretations of a work."⁴⁸ In some regards Horowitz's approach is similar with Sorabji's concept of musical liberties, which Sorabji intended for the pure exploration of musical flexibility. Horowitz, too, believed that music contains infinite possibilities to be shaped and to be expressed, for which a performer needs a high degree of individuality which will enable him/her to play the same work differently in each performance. In this way, a performer brings its fresh musical spirit to each concert or recital, which is an essential factor in live and recorded performances.⁴⁹ Horowitz emphasized this in an interview with Elyse Mach: "Perhaps, too, I can

⁴⁶ Michael Habermann, "A Style Analysis of the Nocturnes for Solo Piano by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji with Special Emphasis on *Le Jardin Parfumé*" (DMA diss., Peabody Conservatory of Music, 1984), 16-20.

⁴⁷ Vladimir Horowitz and David Dubal. *Remembering Horowitz: 125 Pianists Recall a Legend; Horowitz Speaks with Dubal: 9. Spontaneity and Contrast*, Shirmer Book, 1993.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

say that a work should never be played the same way. I never do. I may play the same program from one recital to the next, but I will play it differently, and because it is always different, it is always new.”⁵⁰ Horowitz’s philosophy regarding distinctiveness and freshness on his various interpretations of a same work developed not only for a musical reason *per se*, but from an individualistic performance perspective, which prevented him from imitating other pianists’ style of playing.⁵¹ Horowitz emphasized this with his concern regarding the pianism of his late time. A great number of pianists became exposed to a growing amount of records available on the market, with the unfortunate side effect of encouraging a tendency of imitating the recordings and therefore losing artistic individuality.⁵² He also commented on the syndrome of perfection encouraged by the modern recording industry, which provokes the anxiety of note-perfect performances to musicians and puts on a secondary level the freedom of spirit and spontaneity in music performance.⁵³ He strongly stressed that musicians need to use recording products carefully, in a way that does not override one’s individual spirit.⁵⁴ Horowitz specified this at an interview with Elyse Mach:

I never listen to my own recordings because I don’t want to influence myself. As I said earlier, each time I play it is different. The great danger in listening to records is imitation. When Chopin taught and his pupils tried to imitate him, he sent them home and told them to bring something of their own.

So many times people who are studying piano study with recordings, and they are so used to hearing note-perfect performances on record that they want to duplicate the same note-perfect performance in the concert hall. They are not concerned about projecting the spirit of the music because they are concentrating so much on the notes: it becomes an obsession with them. If they make a smudge or something, they think it is a bad performance. A few wrong notes are not a crime. As Toscanini once said, “For false notes, no one was ever put in jail.” As I said earlier, imitation is a caricature. It is better not to listen to yourself. Find your own way each time.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Elyse Mach, *Great Contemporary Pianists Speak for Themselves* (New York: Dover, 1980-1988), 119.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

This belief enabled Horowitz to create his own musical approach emphasizing original artistry in music making. Horowitz stressed his opinion regarding artistic individuality during his recording session of Schumann's Fantasy op. 17 in 1965 by saying that, "An artist isn't the same day after day, so there can never be a *final* interpretation. It will be changing always. If I made four recordings of the same piece within a month, each would be different."⁵⁶

Horowitz's playing style was grounded in a strong influence of Liszt's virtuosic pianism.⁵⁷ Although Liszt's virtuosity influenced Sorabji's playing, Horowitz's pianistic style highly absorbs Liszt's virtuosity. In the book *Alfred Brendel on Music*, Alfred Brendel commented on Liszt's virtuosic approach to technique, which stems from pure musical and interpretative reasons: "Liszt's teaching concentrated on interpretation. There certainly do not seem to have been many pianists who measured up to his ideal of technique; what he demanded was 'a technique created by the spirit, not derived from the mechanism of the piano'."⁵⁸ Reflecting Liszt's philosophy, Horowitz achieved his reinterpretations of the original through utilizing his virtuosic pianistic skills in a sensitive and musical manner, which allowed him to develop a wide variety of sonorities in the piano.

Horowitz's pianistic approach was to create loud full sonorities, which contrast in color with the soft and delicate section, thus producing a contrast of intensity in a strong, clear, and direct manner.⁵⁹ He showed this contrasting intensity through numerous performances of his *Carmen* paraphrase. Arthur Rubinstein, a colleague pianist of Horowitz, commented on Horowitz's performance of *Carmen* paraphrase in his Paris debut in 1926: "The greatest success

⁵⁶ Elyse Mach, *Great Contemporary Pianists Speak for Themselves* (New York: Dover, 1980-1988), 125.

⁵⁷ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), 167.

⁵⁸ Alfred Brendel, *Alfred Brendel on Music* (Chicago: A Cappella Books, 2001), 280-281.

⁵⁹ Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), 434.

of the evening was his encore, his own arrangement of the dance in the Second Act of *Carmen*.
He brought the three repetitions to a shattering climax which made us jump up.”⁶⁰

⁶⁰ David Dubal, *Evenings with Horowitz* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991), 159-163.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to explore the different concept of distortion in *Pastiche on Habanera from 'Carmen'* by Sorabji and *Variations on a theme from Bizet's Carmen* by Horowitz. The idea of distortion was inspired by the individual musical thinking of Sorabji and Horowitz, which radically transformed the original materials into something new and unique. This transformation altered the original character of the compositions and, by doing so, introduced into the modern pianistic repertoire a new style of writing, and a different approach to performance.

It would be of great value to modern research, to explore the aesthetic influence of the use of distortion in contemporary composer-pianists of Sorabji's and Horowitz's time. It could be inferred, based on this study, that they contributed to music in two different fields. In the case of Sorabji, his contribution is reflected in the compositional area. His use of dissonant sonorities and extremely complicated textures was original and had, with the exception of Charles-Valentin Alkan, Leopold Godowsky, Max Reger, and Charles Ives' piano works, no parallel in the compositions for piano of his time. In the case of Horowitz, his contribution can be recognized mostly in the performance area. Horowitz was known by the public and his colleagues, due to his different yet convincing interpretations, for bringing a breath of freshness to the standard piano repertoire. He was also known for transcribing well known works to the piano, and for rearranging and distorting piano works to make them fit his playing style and personality. Horowitz's career primarily focused on performing, due to this he did not have many students and unfortunately did not leave any major pupil that could be considered as an heir of his playing style. After these considerations, and based on the evidence presented by this paper, it could be

inferred that Horowitz mostly influenced the way on which the modern pianists were perceived by the audiences and media. As numerous numbers of reviews for Horowitz's live and recorded performances commented, Horowitz's pianism highlighting his brilliant pianistic execution, as well as enriched and various sonorities, achieved his own musical transformation in music; this was greatly appreciated as a significant inspiration to the modern piano school of his time.

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