

## CHAPTER IV.

OF VARIATIONS.

In progressive order, we now pass on to the art of composing variations.

This art is not so insignificant, as is imagined. For not only in actual variations can the composer display much taste, skill, grace, and even originality; but likewise in most of the other forms (as in the Sonata, the Rondo, the Adagio, the Quartett, the Symphony, and in vocal music) he is frequently under the necessity of varying a melody upon its recurrence, in order to avoid the monotony of a simple repetition; and this he can only effectually perform, when he already possesses the facility of inventing tasteful and ingenious melodic figures. Besides, the variation-form is one of the few which, in all probability, will never grow old. For so often as a melody, an opera air, or a national song acquires a general popularity, so often will pleasing and tasteful variations upon the same, be welcomed by the public, and even the present esteemed Fantasias are, in reality, nothing more than free variations on such favorite subjects.

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When the choice of a theme for variations rests with the composer, he must especially observe that it be melodious, pleasing and rhythmical, and that it consist of two parts, each of which can be repeated. An ill-chosen, cramped, or too trivial theme has a detrimental influence on the most successful variations, and only causes regret at the pains bestowed upon them.

Numerous are the ways and forms in which a theme may be varied, but they admit of being divided into the following six principal classes:—

1. In which the theme is strictly preserved in one hand, whilst a new, augmented, or even florid accompaniment is performed by the other.

2. In which the theme itself is varied by adjunctive notes, without however changing the melody.

3. Where, either in one or in both hands, passages, skips, or other figures are constructed upon the harmony of the theme; so that the leading idea of the melody is retained, yet without again giving the theme in a complete state.

4. Where, upon the foundation-harmony of the theme, another new simple or embellished melody is invented, of such a kind, that it can either be played together with the theme, or by itself, instead of it.

5. Where the theme receives other harmony, or artificial modulations, which may be combined either with the strict, canonic, or fugued style, or with imitative figures.

6. In which the *time*, the *degree of movement*, or even the *key* of the theme is changed, but in which the original melody must always be clearly distinguishable.

To these may be added, lastly, the more free development of the theme in the *Finale*.

We here give as an example, the first four bars of a simple theme, followed by the different kinds of variation classed according to the above order.

As no single set of variations exists, which comprises all these forms, we hope by means of this peculiarly designed model, fully to answer the foregoing object.

Allegretto moderato.

THEME.

*p*

FIRST CLASS. Strict preservation of the melody, with a varied accompaniment.

Var. 1.

*p*

Var. 2.

*p*

Var. 3.

*p dol.*

Var. 4.

*p*

*tr*

*pva*

SECOND CLASS. Variations of the theme by means of adjunctive notes.

Var. 5.

*p*

Var: 6. *p*

Var: 7. *f*

Var: 8. *fp*

THIRD CLASS. Passages, skips, and other figures formed on the harmony of the theme, with a retention of the leading idea of the melody.

Var: 9. *f brillante.* *sva*

Var: 10. *ff*

Var: 11. *ff*

Var. 12. *ff* *gva* *loco* *gva* *loco*

Musical score for Variation 12. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The piece starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked with *gva* (glissando) and *loco* (loco). The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

Var. 13. *pp leggier:* *gva* *loco* *gva*

Musical score for Variation 13. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 2/4. The piece starts with a pianissimo (*pp*) and *leggier:* (light) dynamic. The right hand has a complex melodic line with slurs and accents, marked with *gva* and *loco*. The left hand has a simpler accompaniment with chords and single notes.

*gva* *loco*

Musical score for Variation 14. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 2/4. The piece starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked with *gva* and *loco*. The left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

Var. 14. *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp*

Musical score for Variation 14. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 2/4. The piece starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The right hand has a complex melodic line with slurs and accents, marked with *ff* and *pp*. The left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

Var. 15. *f*

Musical score for Variation 15. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 2/4. The piece starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

Var. 16. *ff* *sf* *gva*

Musical score for Variation 16. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 2/4. The piece starts with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked with *sf* (sforzando) and *gva*. The left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

FOURTH CLASS. New melodies and embellishments on the harmony of the theme.

Var: 17.

*p dol:*

Var: 18.

*p*

Var: 19.

*un poco sostenuto.*

*p dol: con grazia.*

*pp*

Var: 20.

*p*

Var: 21.

*pp*

FIFTH CLASS. The theme with other harmony, with new modulations, or with a strict conduct of the parts.

Var: 22.

*p*

Var: 23. *p legato.*

Canon. *f*

Imitation. *f*

Var: 26. *p legato.*

SIXTH CLASS. Variations in other keys, times, and degrees of movement.

Adagio maestoso. *p pp pp*

Audante grazioso. *dol. h*

34. *Var.* *p dol.*  
 Allegretto.

33. *Var.* *p*  
 Tempo di Polacca.

32. *Var.* *f*  
 Tempo di Marcia.

31. *Var.* *p dol.*  
 Tempo di Minuetto.

30. *Var.* *p espressivo.*  
 Minore. Andante.

29. *Var.* *p*  
 Minore. Andante.

Allegro molto. Tempo di Galoppo.

Var:  
35.

Allegretto vivace. Tempo di Walze.

Var:  
36.

The last six numbers, from 31 to 36, are more especially adapted for the concluding variation and the Finale belonging thereto.

In the second bar of the theme, the first chord is  $\frac{6}{4}$ , and in the fourth bar  $\frac{7}{2}$ . But as these are merely to be viewed as chords of suspension, it has been allowed, in the *third* class of variations, immediately to take the chords into which they resolve, instead of them, as may be seen in N<sup>OS</sup> 9 to 16.

This license depends on reducing the theme to its most simple foundation-harmony, and varying it in this form.

The harmony upon which the foregoing theme is founded, is as follows:—

But we must only allow ourselves this freedom occasionally in each set of variations, as the majority of them must remain more faithful to the theme. It is also sometimes permitted to vary the chords of the theme in another inversion, or position.

When we determine on writing a variation in a different key, it must bear some relation, even though distant, to the former: for example, from E flat major, we may go to C minor, A flat major, G major, or B major. In the case of a very distant key, (such as from E flat major, to E or D major,) we must introduce a modulation more or less extended for the purpose of leading to it: and similarly, in order to return to the original key.

We may assume three species of variations:—

1. Those in an easy and tranquil style, designed for less skilful players: or flowing and agreeable compositions for amateurs.
2. Those in a severe, harmoniously interesting, artificial or characteristic style, where the theme and its several component parts are variously developed.
3. Brilliant, difficult, or bravura variations, intended for practised performers, and requiring a highly cultivated facility.

Each of these three species possesses its value; for the talented composer can render them all interesting and substantial, and players of every rank have a right to expect good compositions, suited to their abilities.

But the composer must determine before-hand in what style he will treat his theme, as well as for what kind of treatment it is best adapted. For *unity* of tendency and of character can and must be observed, as well in variations, as in other works.

Formerly it was usual to write twelve, or even more variations on a theme, but at present such a number would be tiresome. Five, or at most six variations are sufficient, while, on the contrary, the Introduction and the Finale may be more extended than heretofore.

In respect to the order in which the variations should succeed one another, the composer has to observe:—

*First*, that the species and classes of the same change as much as possible: for example, after a tranquil, an animated one, and after an ardent, a serene.

*Secondly*, that each variation surpasses its predecessor in interest, in order to enhance the effect to the end.

*Thirdly*, that notwithstanding all change, each variation is suited to the others, and forms a necessary sequel to the preceding.

When the variations are written in a major key, one is always proper in a minor key, in order to increase the change; but it must at least be preceded by *three* major variations. In like manner, in a set of minor variations, at least one in a major key must be introduced. The most suitable place for the slow variation, is immediately before the Finale.

In the single minor variation, the composer is at liberty to modulate into the nearest related major key, at the end of the first part, even if the major theme there proceeds differently, or without any modulation taking place.

Nearly all the great instrumental composers have likewise written variations, and we possess a large number of very beautiful works of this kind by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven &c. as well for the Pianoforte alone, as with an accompaniment for other instruments; and Haydn has even employed this form with great effect in his Symphonies for the full orchestra. In modern times nearly every theme which is tolerably pleasing has been frequently treated in this favorite manner, and the young composer, who must naturally be *well read* in all branches of composition, will find numerous models in the variations of Hummel, Moscheles, Ries, Kalkbrenner, Herz, Thalberg, Onslow &c. and even in the more ancient ones of Dussek, Cramer, Steibelt, Clementi, Gelinek and others, which may guide him in his first attempts, and also prove to him the great variety which is practicable in this form.