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Dinu Lipatti's Fantasy for Piano, Op. 8

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Going over Lipatti's Fantasy for Piano, Op. 8 (1940), I felt the call to do an in-depth analysis of the score's piano writing issues, and thus the idea was born of a study which I first titled "Fantasy for Piano, Op. 8, by Dinu Lipatti: Piano Writing and Its Implications in the Performance".¹ On my way to interpreting Lipatti's musical language as concerns this very dimension of piano writing, at one point I felt that, in order to fit the Fantasy's artistic spirit, a highlighting of what is innovative in it would be more appropriate.

As part of the Romanian musical output of the 20th century, the Fantasy is, unfortunately, not often played. I was astonished to see that between the first performance, given by Dinu Lipatti on May 12th, 1941, and its next rendition in public, as given by Viniciu Moroianu on December 4th, 1992, there is a 51-year gap. Nobody can bear witness to the fate of the score during this period.²

We cannot overlook the fact that Dinu Lipatti and George Enescu had a splendid musical collaboration,³ which, naturally, also took the shape of an exclusive musical communication. This will also be highlighted in this analysis, showing melodic similarities between Enescu's Piano Sonata, Op. 24, No. 1 (Enescu 1956) and Lipatti's Fantasy.

¹ The present study is a revised version of the paper presented during the Dinu Lipatti International Symposium, Bucharest, in 1995.

² The score was published in 1999, by Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, under the supervision of Constantin Ionescu-Vovu (see Lipatti 1999).

³ See, for example, Lipatti's recordings of Enescu's music (Ainley 2012).

One of the traditions preserved in the 20th century music was the sound translation of composers' names. As an example, we can think of the homages rendered to (Chailley 1981: 72-74), or of Constantin Silvestri's subtle quote of Enescu's name in the finale of his third Concert piece, Op. 25 (the cell E – Es – C, Silvestri 1979: 74; see Ex. 1).



Ex. 1. Silvestri, *Concert piece*, Op. 25, No. 3, mm. 101-104.

Lipatti's *Fantasy* uses similar musical cryptograms, and it is a statement of Enescu's influence on him (the work's five movements will for that matter happily occasion frequent references to Enescu's Piano Sonata in F# minor, Op. 24, No. 1).

Comparing the debut of the *Fantasy*'s first movement with that of the third movement from Enescu's Sonata, we can safely affirm that the former mirrors the latter (see Ex. 2a and 2b). The Sonata begins with a ground bass over which the brilliant composer's "signature" (the inversion of the cell E – Es – C and its transposition upwards by a minor second) is engraved. The *Fantasy* commences by an ostinato descant while the bass reveals Enescu's name in the form of a chordal writing supported by a broken rhythm.



Ex. 2a. Enescu, *Sonata Op. 24, No. 1, 3rd movement*, mm. 1-3.

Andante malinconico $\text{♩} = 50$ *senza rigore*

a tempo

mf *mp* *p*

5

Ex. 2b. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 1st movement, mm. 1-8.

The Fantasy's first movement comprises two sections contrasting in attitude, character, and writing. The first one is improvisatory, as can be seen right from the aforementioned ostinato, built on a second-based musical figure (G# – F and C – B, see Ex. 2b) anwhich subsequently transforms into a sub-motive in unison and leads into the second, strict, section featuring two sub-motives based on a descending minor second (see Ex. 3).

The essence of the first movement is reprised in the coda, structured on two phrases delimited by a fermata and which stress the character of the two sections configuring the whole of the first movement.

Vivace $\text{♩} = 88$

mf

pp dolce cresc.

48

66

70

Ex. 3. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 1st movement, mm. 48-50 and 66-70.

Bearer of a profoundly lyrical and refined expressive message, the second movement unfolds over three sections in the form of a varied ABA. The first section (A) begins with a solo soprano later to be almost identically doubled by the bass (see Ex. 4).

Molto tranquillo ♩ = 56
(Ob.)
p espress.

mp
(Fig.)
p sotto voce

dolce

Ex. 4. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 2nd movement, mm. 1-10.

Could the solitude of this extended soprano line suggest the nostalgia of a “song without words”? The thought is quickly interrupted as by means of a short interlude followed by a unison ostinato we step into the median section of the second movement. This section (B) is delimited by a fermata; a change in attitude and tempo occurs, too, while metrically a bar becomes a beat (see Ex. 5). The writing presents a two-voice canon developing on an ostinato leitmotif.

rit. **Presto**

pp *ppp* *legato*

35 42

Ex. 5. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 2nd movement, mm 35-49.

As the ostinato leitmotif evolves, so does the writing, which becomes brilliantly virtuosic. The end of the median section corresponds to the transition to the last section of the second movement.

This last section (A varied) is a re-presenting, a recalling of the first section (A) in an innovative manner, as the initial solitary solo soprano is now paralleled by the left hand while a middle voice carries a chromatic melody.

The median level fills in the melody: the chain of seconds supports a rhythm targeting a continuous semiquaver pulsation.

Molto tranquillo ♩ = ♪.

p
ppp legato

271

274

8^{va}

Ex. 6. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 2nd movement, mm. 271-276.

A fantasy will of course feature moments of pure virtuosity. In Lipatti's work, they materialise in the *Scherzo* configuring the third movement. It shares some of the tempo and the character of the second movement's median section, its homogenous writing stems mainly from the continuous (ternary and binary) quaver pulsation, and it displays a rich range of dynamics growing from *pp* to *ff*.

I should mention that in the manuscript the fourth movement is located between the first and the second. I believe that it was at the end of the second movement that the idea of breaking up with the first part of this section and of treating it as a freestanding part first took shape. In favour of this argues the rhythmic and melodic cell in the beginning of the fourth movement which we meet again in the *Scherzo*: during the elaboration of the *Fantasy* the cell would have been just a reminiscence of a prior phrase, but it eventually became an anticipation of the fourth movement (see Ex. 8a and 8b).

Presto ♩ = 208

pp *leggiero*

130

Ex. 7. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 3rd movement, mm. 1-5 and 130-134.

senza rigore *a tempo*

p

149

Ex. 8a. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 3rd movement, mm. 149-154.

Allegretto cantabile ♩ = 96

p *espressivo*

Ex. 8b. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 4th movement, mm. 1-2.

Deeply refined and delicate, the writing of the fourth movement unfolds as a theme and variations. The theme, an accompanied monody of four musical motifs in the key of E major and grouped under slurs, features a soprano

carrying the melody and a bass accompaniment on a steady quaver rhythm looking like broken chords sustaining the harmony (see Ex. 9).

Allegretto cantabile ♩ = 96

Ex. 9. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 4th movement, mm. 1-10.

The first variation comes with a polyphonic writing where the theme is identified as the descant's second voice and is accompanied by the bass; the accompaniment remains almost identical to the one which had supported the theme (Ex. 10).

senza rigore *a tempo*

Ex. 10. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 4th movement, mm. 11-15.

♩ = ♩

Ex. 11. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 4th movement, mm. 43-45.

The second variation brings the theme in the key of its relative minor (C# minor). The score retains the polyphonic writing, later (in the third variation) to be transformed into a chordal one.

Tension builds up, reaching its climax in the variation's conclusion. This climax doesn't disrupt the musical discourse; on the contrary, it completes it, anticipating the moment of reminiscence. The fourth variation brings a quote from the Fantasy's debut: an ostinato soprano and a bass featuring chordal writing backed by a broken rhythm (Ex. 12).

Ex. 12. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 4th movement, mm. 49-52.

Ex. 13. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 5th movement, mm. 1-5.

The enharmonic change which the ostinato undergoes is the connection with the last variation, where we witness a return to a polyphonic writing, a modulation back to E major, and a conclusion as cantabile as the opening.

The fifth movement (the Fantasy's finale) is, just as the first, structured in two sections delimited by two different tempos.

The first section develops on a toccata-like writing reaching towards a strict sonata form.

The second section is defined by its improvisatory character, and it is here that Lipatti plants musical cells and motifs similar to those from the third movement of Enescu's Piano Sonata in F# minor, Op. 24, No. 1 (see Ex. 14).

a tempo
p più legato
mp
 357

Ex. 14a. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 5th movement, mm. 357-358.

a T:
p con grazia
sempre pp
 26

Ex. 14b. Enescu, *Sonata Op. 24, No. 1*, 3rd movement, m. 26.

poco
 3
 375
 (en résonance
 sans frapper
 l'accord)

Ex. 14c. Lipatti, *Fantasy*, 5th movement, mm. 375-377.

m.d. m.g.
sempre m.g.
sempre Xed.
en résonance, sans frapper pp l'accord
teneramente
rall.
più pp
PPP
en résonance lunga
 58-60

Ex. 14d. Enescu, *Sonata Op. 24, No. 1*, 3rd movement, mm. 58-60.

I found interesting to discover this kind of similarities between Dinu Lipatti's Fantasy, Op. 8, and George Enescu's Piano Sonata in F# minor, Op. 24, No. 1. The structure of the Fantasy displays, along its five movements, several piano writing aspects which illustrate Lipatti's musical thought: aural events unfold in an improvisatory manner, the listener witnessing alternating highly virtuosic and highly refined, introspective sections. The score features polyphonic or harmonic piano writing, glimpses of keyboard toccata or hints of impressionist tones.

English version by Maria Monica Bojin

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