

GENRES AND FORMS IN THE CREATION FOR THE FOUR-HAND PIANO
FROM CLASSICISTS TO ROMANTICISTS
Stylistic and interpretative coordinates

ABSTRACT

The choice for the field and theme of the paper is equally justified by two factors: an objective one, linked to the research of the historical circumstances that contributed to the appearance and development of this chamber genre, and a subjective one, related to my stage activity for over a decade within the piano duo “Capriccio”, ensemble that offered me the privilege of discovering the greatness of classical musical art and the temerity of the Romantic musicians, in pages of reference dedicated to the four-hand piano.

Chapter I THE PIANO or A FOUR-HAND ORCHESTRA

I.1. *The evolution of keyboard instruments and the birth of the piano*

The history of the piano begins with its furthest ancestors: *the monochord* (instrument used in ancient Greece) and *the tympanon* or *the doulcemelle* (introduced in Europe from Asia, in the 9th -10th centuries) and continues with the clavichord and the harpsichord. In 1709 (1711) the Italian Bartolomeo Cristofori (1655-1731) builds *the gravicembalo col piano e forte* (it.), instrument that combined the ample sonority of the harpsichord with the possibilities of nuance and the melodiousness of the clavichord. Cristofori’s construction principles will be spread first in Germany, then in England. During the 18th century, the piano built by Cristofori was enriched by the addition of the two pedals (1783), the keyboard extension to six octaves (1794), the use of wider keys and stronger chords, varying in thickness and material (1795). In France, the brothers Érard enlarged the dimension of the keyboard up to seven octaves, taking the keyboard out of the case, patenting *the escapement* (1794) and *the double escapement* (1821). The last century didn’t add anything significant to the construction of the piano, only fine technical retouches, the modernization of the case’s line and keeping the secrets that give the instruments the superlative of sonorous beauty.

I.2. – *Historical coordinates of the piano interpretation*

The harpsichord represents the reference point to which all following accumulations relate to in the interpretative domain. The harpsichord players’ interpretation would not pursue the cultivation of sensitivity and the preoccupation to accomplish the legato of expression, the only notable thing in playing the harpsichord being the avoidance of keeping a note more than necessary, so that the mechanism would allow for a new attack. In the Classical period, the piano technique was set on the articulation of the hand’s palm and wrist, the players not using at all the articulation of the elbow or of the arm, and, by avoiding the pedal, would not exploit the color resources of the piano. We don’t know many details regarding the Romanticists’ interpretative practice, but we can still point a few directions of the interpretations of that age: the abundant use of the rubato and of the extreme dynamic contrasts, a slight slowdown of the tempo between the two themes of the sonata form, the clear differencing of the contrasting passages and, not rarely, the text modification with a freedom that emerged in the music spirit.

I.3. – *The four-hand piano duo*

I.3.a. – *A piano and four hands*

The first work destined to the duo for a single keyboard instrument appears in England, about the beginning of the 17th century and belongs to the composer William Byrd (1539-1623). The starting point for the four-hand piano recitals is considered that one when Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and his sister performed for the first time in public in London (on the 13th of May 1765) *The Sonata in C major KVI9d*. As a consequence to the popularity and great demand for this chamber genre appear the first manuals and methods for guiding the four-hand playing written by Carl Czerny (1791-1857) and Louis Köhler (1820-1886). In the Romantic period, the ensemble of one piano and four hands becomes a constant presence on the European stages through the recitals sustained by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847) with his sister Fanny Mendelssohn (1805-1847) and Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870), Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) and Clara Schumann (1819-1896), Franz Liszt (1811-1886) and Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849), the last two sharing the same piano in a concert that took place in Paris (1831).

I.3.b. – *Two pianos and four hands*

The history of the formula two piano and four hands begins in England as well with a short piece composed by the virginalist Giles Farnaby (approx.1563-1640), continues with the sonatas written by Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710), the suite of Georg Friedrich Händel (1685-1759) and the concerts of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). In the Classical period, only a few composers point their attention to this kind of instrumental ensemble: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composes a sonata, a rondo and a concert, Frédéric Chopin a rondo, Robert Schumann (1810-1856) a theme with variations, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy two concerts, Johannes Brahms a sonata and a theme with variations. The most prolific Romantic composer of the genre remains Franz Liszt, both by the original compositions dedicated to this piano ensemble (a suite, a concertino and a concert) and, especially, by the arrangements that he made.

Chapter II CLASSICISM or THE REDESCOVERY OF THE SUPREME BEAUTY

II.1. - *General considerations*

Defined as an artistic movement that promotes the idea of perfection of forms, the balance and stability, Classicism originates in the last decades of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, in France. The norms of the new current will be spread throughout Europe through the works of the writers-philosophers Voltaire (1694-1778), Denis Diderot (1713-1784) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Other distinguished representatives of the literary movement were the Italian Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793) and the German Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), while in painting and sculpting the Spanish Francisco Goya (1746-1828), the English Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830) and the Italian Antonio Canova (1757-1822).

II.2. - *Classicism in music*

The beginning of the musical Classicism can be identified with the middle of the 18th century. Two Italian operas consecrate the birth of this musical genre: *Euridice* (1600) by Jacopo Peri (1561-1633) and *Orfeo* (1607) by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). In the second half of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century *opera seria* and *opera buffa* emerge and the German composer Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787) is the one that reforms the opera through his heroic operas. As far as the instrumental music

concerns, the classical style asserts itself as a consequence of: 1. the appearance of the School of creation and interpretation in Mannheim – which will give the interpretative act rigor and precision, intensifying the expressive values through a series of technical innovations and 2. sketching the first sonata forms – in Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach's works. The composers Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven bring their most significant contribution to the genre.

II.3. – *Forms and genres in the creation for the four-hand piano*

The sonata form is encountered, in most situations, in the first parts of the sonata as genre. She respects the division into the three large sections: *exposition*, *development* and *recapitulation* and has variable dimensions, according to the inspiration of each composer; *the rondo form* is present as an architectonic structure specific to some parts from the sonata as genre or represents the frame in which the rondo genre evolves. *The lied form* is frequently used in the slow parts of the sonatas, in the themes for variations, dances, marches etc; *the form of theme with variations* is specific to the genre of theme with variations; *the fugue form* accompanies exclusively the fugue as genre; *the free forms* are those that include fantasies, divertissements or overtures.

Chapter III ROMANTICISM or THE ASPIRATION TO INFINITY

III.1. – *General considerations*

Manifested in all artistic and cultural domains, Romanticism bursts at the beginning of the 19th century and essentially expresses the primordially of the imaginary world as opposed to reality, the prevalence of feeling over reason. The philosophical principles of Romanticism have been defined by Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854). The literary romantic creation covers almost all the expressive range of the current: in France, François de Chateaubriand (1788-1848), Alfred de Musset (1810-1857) and Victor Hugo (1802-1885); in Germany, Novalis (1772-1801), Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) etc; in England, William Wordsworth (1770-1850), George Gordon Byron (1788-1824), John Keats (1795-1822) etc; in Italy, Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873), Giacomo Leopardi (1788-1837) and in Russia, Mihail Lermontov (1814-1841) and Aleksandr Sergheevici Pushkin (1799-1837). Romanticism characterizes the plastic arts as well, represented almost exclusively by the French painters Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) or Jean-Baptiste Corot (1796-1875) and in England by William Turner (1775-1851) and John Constable (1776-1837).

III.2. – *Romanticism in music*

In Europe there is a noticeable expansion of concert halls, permanent orchestras, publishing houses, musical associations and festivals, and, in the big cities, private musical schools and conservatoires appear. From an interpretative point of view, the virtuoso-conductor appears, real competitions among interpreters begin. There is a diversification of the instrumental musical genres and in the field of the lyric theatre, the style called *bel canto* is replaced in the second half of the 19th century by the dramatic one, present in the works composed by Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) and Richard Wagner (1813-1883). The romantic composers enrich the musical and emotional content by enhancing the role of dissonances, intensifying

chromatics, diversifying the color palette through original timbre combinations, different rhythms, approaching rubato as a principle of expressivity.

In the second half of the 18th century, *national schools* appear: the Russian school that imposes itself from the first decades of the century through Mihail Ivanovici Glinka (1804-1857) and Aleksandr Sergheevich Dargomijsky (1813-1869), being fully recognized in Europe through the creations of Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) and the members of “The Five Group”: Mili Balachirev (1837-1910), Cesar Kui (1835-1918), Aleksandr Borodin (1833-1887), Modest Musorgsky (1839-1881) and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908).

III.3. – Forms and genres in the creation for the four-hand piano

The sonata form gets larger dimensions in comparison to the form specific to the classical period, through the richness and the diversity of the thematic labor and the sinuous harmonic aspect: *the form of theme with variations* keeps the structure specific to the genre and is enriched with short cadence passages between some variations; *the lied form*, in bi- and tripartite forms, simple or composed, remains the basic construction of the slow parts of the sonatas as genre, of themes with variations and of the most miniature genres; *the rondo form* is used as structure of the last parts of the sonata as genre or in the rondo genre. In the forms A-B-A-C-A or A-B-A-development-A-B-A, *the fugue form* is encountered only in two works signed by Anton Arensky; *the free forms* are the most attractive for the Romanticism representatives.

Chapter IV STYLISTIC AND INTERPRETATIVE COORDINATES

IN CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC CREATIONS FOR THE FOUR-HAND PIANO

IV. 1. Sonata or the symbiosis of contains with form

IV. 1. a. – Historical background and evolution

The sonata as musical form has as basis *the monothematic sonata* appeared towards the end of the 16th century and the pattern of the bipartite structures present in the component parts of the pre-classical dances suite. In the 17th-18th centuries, the sonata gets a new direction through the works of Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757) and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach who installs the bithematism and divides the sonata form in three parts: *exposition*, *development* and *recapitulation*. *The sonata as musical genre* is found in the *trio-sonata* of the 17th-18th centuries, initial name for the *sonata da chiesa* and *sonata da camera*. The fusion and crystallization of the two types of sonata take place in Classicism. After the classical period, the archetype of the sonata genre will have multiple and diverse aspects.

IV. 1.b. – W.A. Mozart – The Piano Sonata in C major KV 521

The sonata was finished on the 28th of May 1787 in Vienna and has a three-part structure.

THE IST PART (*Allegro*) is written in *C major* tonality, 4/4 measure and respects the architecture of the classical sonata form.

THE IIND PART (*Andante*) is written in the 3/4 measure and is included in the form of a tripartite lied with the scheme: **||: A :|| B A v Codetta**. Characterized by the lack of harmonious conflicts, the thematic

material evolves in a serene atmosphere, accompanied by purity and elegance, replaced in the median section by the change of tonality (*D minor*) and a stormy outburst.

THE IIIRD PART (*Allegretto*) is written in the 2/4 measure and respects the rondo-sonata form. The work finishes with a *Coda* with a volcanic temperament, similar to that one met on the pages of Mozart's overtures.

IV. 1. c. – L. van Beethoven – The Piano Sonata in D major op.6

The piece was composed between 1796-1799 and has a two-part structure.

THE IST PART (*Allegro molto*) is written in *D major* tonality, 3/4 measure and respects the established pattern of the classical sonata.

THE IIND PART (*Moderato*) is written as well in *D major* tonality, 4/4 measure and is a popular rondo of the form: **Refrain-Couplet 1-Refrain-Couplet 2-Refrain+Coda**. It creates a serene, pastoral atmosphere that conquers through the delicacy of the melodic line, the discretion of the accompaniment, the harmonic simplicity and the intimate nuance *piano dolce*.

IV. 1. d. – A. Rubinstein – The Piano Sonata in D major op. 89

The piece was composed in 1870 and has a three-part structure.

THE IST PART (*Moderato con molto*) is written in *D major* tonality, 4/4 measure and is included in the sonata form inspired from the tradition of the Viennese Classicists.

THE IIND PART (*Allegro molto vivace*) is written in *D minor* tonality, 3/4 measure and has the form of a scherzo with trio: **A B Av + Coda**. The playful spirit of the melodic configuration, the vivid tempo and the rapidity with which the musical ideas associate combine harmoniously into a serene atmosphere.

THE IIIRD PART (*Andante-Moderato-Allegro assai*) written in *A major* tonality, 6/8 measure, is part of the structure: **A B Av Bv Avv + Coda**. The five sections are individualized through lyricism and serenity.

IV. 2. – The theme with variations or the power of re-creation

IV. 2 a. – Historical background and evolution

The history of the variations in the instrumental music begins in the 16th century, in Spain, with the appearance of the first works for the lute composed by Antonio de Cabezón (1510-1566) and Luis de Narváez (approx.1500-1555/1560). The theoretical and practical substantiation of the theme with variations takes place in the 18th-19th centuries through the division into two large categories: *strict variations* and *free variations*. Within these two categories, we can identify *the variations of ornamental type* (the initial sonorous material is enriched with the help of some ornamental figures) and *the variations of character* (the initial meaning and emotional content are modified by changing the tonality, the measure or the tempo).

IV. 2. b. – J. Haydn – “Il Maestro e lo Scolare” HobXVIIa

The piece was composed in the period 1768-1770 and includes a theme and seven strict ornamental variations. On its entire course, it keeps the *F major* tonality, the 2/4 measure, the initial tempo (*Andante*) and as form, both the theme and the variations are included in the pattern: **: ||: a :|| ||: b a :|| .**

The explicit didactic explanation, mentioned by Haydn himself in his manuscript, limits the compositional means to the usage of less difficult elements from a technical point of view, aspect which determines a certain austerity of the musical language. In spite of this, the work gets flavor through naturalness and flexibility of the melodic lines.

IV. 2. c. – W.A. Mozart – *Andante with variations in G major KV501*

The work was composed in 1786 and comprises the theme, five variations and Coda.

On its entire course, it keeps the 2/4 measure, the moderate tempo (*Andante*) and the formal architecture of the type: **||: a ||: b av ||:**. From a tonal point of view, the basic tonality *G major* is left only once in the IVth variation, which is in *E minor*. The most profound alterations of the theme appear on a melodic and rhythmic level. The dynamics, quite bold for those times, has a rather large ambitus and culminations which reach the nuance fortissimo (the Vth variation).

IV. 2. d. – Fr. Chopin – *Variations in D major on a theme by Thomas Moore*

The work was written in 1826 and comprises an introduction, the theme and six variations.

Under a formal aspect, the introduction belongs to the category of free forms, while the theme and the variations to the bipartite pattern: **a b**. At a tonal level, the basic *D major* tonality is kept in introduction, theme and variations I, II, IV, VI, while variations III and V evolve in the homonymous tonality, *D minor*. From a metric point of view, we have a 4/4 measure (introduction), a 6/8 measure (theme, variations I, II, III, VI), 2/4 measure (variation IV) and alla breve (variation V). As language particularities, we notice ample, richly ornamented melodic lines, a diverse dynamics that comprises an array of nuances from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*.

IV. 3. The fantasy or the sublime art of improvisation

IV. 3. a. – *Historical background and evolution*

The instrumental fantasies first appear about 1530 in Italy and Spain, in the works for the lute by Francesco Canova da Milano (1497-1543) and those for the vihuela of Luis de Milan (1500-1561). With the beginning of the 17th century, the fantasy gets the character of introductory piece to the fugue. The fantasy reaches its climax in the creation composed by Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707) and especially, by Johann Sebastian Bach, whose work includes 15 compositions of this genre. Starting with the 18th century, the composers use the term *fantasy* when they wish to distance themselves from the structure of the sonata form. In the 19th century, forms that aren't part of a fix pattern are approached more and more, through an extremely rich cultivation of the theme with variations and of some program works for the orchestra.

IV. 3. b. – W.A. Mozart – *The Fantasy in F minor KV594*

The piece was composed in 1790 and has a three-part structure.

THE IST PART (*Adagio*) is written in *F minor* tonality, 3/4 measure and is included in the pattern of a free architecture, of the form **a¹ a² a³ a⁴**.

THE IIND PART (*Allegro*) is written in *F major* tonality, 4/4 measure and has a new thematic material, in the pattern of the classical sonata form.

THE IIIRD PART (*Adagio*) returns to the 3/4 measure, the basic *F minor* tonality and re-exposes the sonorous material found in the first part of the fantasy, that it enriches through a series of grupettos, figurative elements that seem to evoke the nostalgia of moments full of tenderness.

IV. 3. c. – Fr. Schubert – *The Fantasy in F minor op.103 D940*

The piece was elaborated in the period of January-April of 1828 and has a four-part structure.

THE IST PART (*Allegro molto moderato*) is written in *F minor* tonality, 4/4 measure and is set in a free construction, which combines specific elements of the rondo form with those of the sonata form.

THE IIND PART (*Largo*) keeps the 4/4 measure but evolves in a new tonality (*F sharp minor*) and a very slow tempo (*Largo*) This part is set in a tripartite form with the structure: **A B Av**.

THE IIIRD PART (*Allegro vivace*) keeps the *F sharp minor* tonality but brings a change in tempo and measure (3/4), specific to the scherzo form with trio: **A B Av + Coda**.

THE IVTH PART (*Allegro molto moderato*) returns to the initial tonality (*F minor*), to the 4/4 measure and is set in a free structure that combines elements of the sonata, rondo and fugue forms.

IV. 4. The dance or the sound of movement

IV. 4. a. – *Historical background and evolution*

The independent dance instrumental music appears about the beginning of the 16th century, period when the Italian Ottaviano Petrucci (1466-1539) and the French Pierre Attaignant (approx.1494-1551) have their first works destined to the lute or the keyboard instruments printed. The starting point for the dance suites is the pair *pavana – gagliarda*, dances which open the path to the appearance of the baroque suites. To their basic nucleus, composed by *allemande, courante, sarabande* and *gigue*, the forms of *menuet, bourrée, gavotte, passepied, loure, rigaudon, polonaise* etc. will frequently be added, enjoying a high appreciation at the European royal courts. The *waltz* imposes itself as a society dance by the end of the 18th century, being consecrated at the beginning of the 19th century, through the impressive number of waltzes signed by Johann Strauss-the father (1804-1849) and Johann Strauss-the son (1825-1899).

IV. 4. b. – Fr. Schubert – *Noble Waltzes op.77 D969*

The work was composed in 1826 and comprises a succession of 12 waltzes.

Waltz no.1 (*C major*) inspires a general atmosphere of joy and optimism; **Waltz no.2** (*A major*) is in emotional contrast with the first, through the tenderness and delicacy it inspires; **Waltz no.3** (*C major*) approaches a diversified dynamic palette with imposed accents, sudden nuances; **Waltz no.4** (*B major*) is impregnated with obvious echoes of the popular Austrian melodies, in a calm, serene atmosphere; **Waltz no.5** (*C major*) bursts with energy and exuberance; **Waltz no.6** (*C major*) evokes the naturalness of a Mozart page through the simplicity of the melodic line; **Waltz no.7** (*E major*) can be considered a climax point due to the energetic tempo; **Waltz no.8** (*A major*) evokes an intimate affective mood; **Waltz no.9**, the only one

composed in a minor tonality (*A minor*) suggest a dignified and serious attitude; **Waltz no.10** (*F major*) evokes a scene filled with elegance and purity; **Waltz no.11** (*C major*) reintroduces a festivity atmosphere full of dynamism given by the poignant rhythmic configurations and the alert tempo; **Waltz no.12** (*C major*) restores the optimistic tone and the joyful atmosphere emanated by the previous waltz, the culmination of the sonorous frenzy being reached as an expression of the jovial character specific to the waltz.

IV. 4. c. – J.Brahms – Waltzes op.39

The piece was composed in 1865 and comprises a compact suite of 16 waltzes.

Waltz no.1 (*B minor*) has the features of a shiny overture which opens generously the entire cycle of dances. **Waltz no.2** (*E major*) brings a contrasting note in comparison to the previous one, through an elegiac atmosphere given by faded sonorities; **Waltz no.3** (*G sharp minor*) radiates intimacy reflected by a gracious melodic line; **Waltz no.4** (*E minor*) shows a Brahms with an acute sense of melancholy and nostalgia; **Waltz no.5** (*E major*) conquers through simplicity and innocence; **Waltz no.6** (*C sharp major*) brings a state of concentrated meditation freeing itself into an explosion of sincere joy; **Waltz no.7** (*C sharp minor*) comes with a dreamy atmosphere, with obvious imagistic nuances; **Waltz no.8** (*B flat major*) evokes the profound relationship based on a mutual appreciation, which Brahms had with Johann Strauss-the son; **Waltz no.9** (*D minor*) suggests an attitude of resignation in front of an intangible ideal; **Waltz no.10** (*G major*) brings an optimistic spirit; **Waltz no.11** (*B minor*) proves Brahms' admiration for the authentic folklore, through the seething sonorities and the passionate tempo; **Waltz no.12** (*E major*) evokes contradictory emotions, from the pensive thinking to the soul's anxiety and restlessness; **Waltz no.13** (*C major*) is built under the form of an effervescent dialogue between two contrasting motives: one dynamic and poignant, the other sparkling and slightly ironical. **Waltz no.14** (*A minor*) has a humorous character, through the capricious melodic line; **Waltz no.15** (*A major*) represents one of the most beautiful and well-known examples of Brahms' lyrics; **Waltz no.16** (*D minor*) is traversed by the nostalgia for the past, the regret for the lost purity and a nostalgic sadness lacking tragic accents.

Chapter V INTERPRETATIVE VIEWS

Alongside the emotion of the feeling, a view and a just interpretation of a musical text equally supposes trust and capacity of thinking which systematize the sonorous material. Only through the absolute conjunction of the feeling with the intellect, will the interpreter manage to put aside any tendency of approximation in expressing the artistic truth and respect art's eternal laws: logic and grace. Inevitably, the interpretation of the same piece by different musicians always implies the personality and the stylistic conception of the artist, thus being entitled to an original reading of the musical material, by which to express his individual-creative orientation, but his view over the work must not break the limits imposed by the composer and the stylistic coordinates which each opus inherently holds.

A few observations over the different interpretative variants of some works that have been analyzed in the previous chapters: Ludwig van Beethoven – *The Piano Sonata op.6 in D major*, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – *Andante with variations in G major KV501*, Franz Schubert – *The Fantasy in F minor op.103*

D940, Johannes Brahms – *Waltzes op.39*, are meant to illustrate these considerations and actually point the differences of conception, in the perception of the groups of interpreters: Louis Lortie-Hélène Mercier and Lang Lang - Christoph Eschenbach, Mirka Lachowska – Edgar Wiersocki and Patrick Ayrton - Wolfgang Glüxam, Emil Gilels – Elena Gilels and Assaf Sommer – Øyvind Sundsvaen, Silke Thora Matthies – Christian Köjn and Judith Burganger – Leonid Treer.