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Bach-Busoni Chaconne: A Piano
Transcription Analysis

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Bach-Busoni Chaconne.

A Piano Transcription Analysis

by

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Abstract

In 1893 Ferruccio Busoni transcribed, for the piano, the famous Bach Chaconne for violin solo from the Partita No.2 in D minor. Numerous transcriptions of this piece for different various instruments exist; however Busoni's transcription stands above all others. The purpose of this study was to analyze what the famous, twentieth-century pianist did when he transcribed Bach's Chaconne. What information exist on the topic comes primarily from pianists who dared to learn this exceptionally difficult, beautiful composition. Busoni's accomplishments lie in the new concept, a conceptual transcription, which has two roots: understanding how, historically, we are connected to the music, and how once genres have a special meaning in the twentieth-century. Every generation of musicians brings their own specific point of view and interpretation.

Busoni lived on the border of the two centuries and, in his transcription, reveled

in several issues overlooked by the previous generation. With his keen understanding of the piece, Busoni highlighted many different genres present in the music, thus allowing recognition of the last movement of the Partita No. 2 in D minor as a Requiem for Bach's wife.

By underscoring the genres, Busoni used them as strata. The idea of strata comes from the aesthetics of “play,” and from a different approach to the quality of sound on piano originally intended for a high string instrument. Busoni's arrangement of the texture added both orchestral quality and stereophonic perception.

The strata add to a certain reading of Bach's original. Busoni promoted a dramatic approach opening the possibility of reading the chaconne as a multi-layered form. Through Busoni's, we see the possibility not only of a tripartite, variation form, but also a composition, with the elements of a concerto, and a sonata. Who could imagine, that a composition written by a young composer at the *fin de siecle*, intended for practical use by pianists, would subtly influence so many contemporaries and generations, that they will find his findings and music inspiring.

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Chapter 1

Historical Background of the Chaconne and the Purpose of the Present Study

The chaconne dance genre has a long history and was well known in J. S. Bach's lifetime. For this reason, it was considered nothing special when he named his fifth and last movement from Partita No. 2 in D minor a Chaconne. Nobody at the time could have predicted that this movement, written in Cöthen between 1720 and 1723, would become one of the most famous pieces in the violin literature. Every generation of musicians, fascinated with the dramatic music of the Chaconne, would study it and attempt to adopt it to their own needs and instrumentation. It is this fascination that led to the birth of so many transcriptions. Its ongoing popularity in the twentieth century is evidenced by the enormous number of recordings available.

There are numerous theoretical works and essays which are related to the topic of J. S. Bach's Chaconne. Jon F. Eiche¹, Robert P. Murray² provide us with its history. Phillip Spitta,³ Albert Schweitzer,⁴ Donald Francis Tovey⁵, Sister Felicitas

¹ Jon F. Eiche, "Background," in *The Bach Chaconne for violin solo: A Collection of Views*, ed. Jon F. Eiche (Bloomington Indiana: frangipani Press, 1985), 18-23

² Robert P. Murray, "the Editions," op.cit., -24-41.

³ Phillip Spitta. "The Chaconne for violin," op. cit, 66-70.

⁴ Albert Schweizer, *J. S. Bach*. (Moscow: Muzika, 1966).

Curti⁶, Hedi Gigler -Dongas⁷, Jon F Eiche⁸ and Nans Vogt⁹ attribute many articles to the form, structure, harmony, and melody. The problems of articulation and bowings are addressed in the essays of Andreas Moser¹⁰, Carl Flesh¹¹, Joseph Szigeti¹², Jaap Schroeder¹³, Eduard Melkus¹⁴. However, there is almost nothing written about the numerous transcriptions of this work.

Since Mendelssohn's attempt to revive Bach's art, many musicians have turned their attention to the famous Chaconne from Partita no. 2 in D minor, creating transcriptions for every imaginable instrument and ensemble. Mendelssohn himself attempted to "improve" the last movement of the partita and make it more understandable for the tastes of a nineteenth-century audience. Other composers followed with their own transcriptions, the Schumann, Brahms, and Busoni versions being some of the most famous.

Busoni's transcription is one of the most brilliant piano works not only because of the merit of the original piece, but also as a transcription itself. Its

⁵ Donald Francis Tovey, "Bach Linear Harmony," op. cit., -72-75.

⁶ Sister Felicitas Curti. "J.S. Bach's Chaconne in D minor: A Study in Coherence and Contrast," op.cit., -75-94.

⁷ Hedi Gigler -Dongas. "Symbolism of the Cosmic Triad in Bach's Chaconne," op. cit., 94.

⁸ Jon F. Eiche. "A Schenkerian Analysis of the Theme," op.cit., -108-112

⁹ Hans Vogt. "Partita in D minor," *Johann Sebastian Bach's Chamber Music. Background, Analysis, Individual works* .(Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1981)

¹⁰ Andreas Moser. "Joachim Plays Bach," op, cit., 112

¹¹ Carl Flesh, "J, S Bach, Chaconne from the Partita No. 2, in D minor, for Solo Violin," op. cit, 114

¹² Josef Szigeti, "Differing Interpretations of the Opening and closing Bars," op.cit., 11-26

¹³ Jaap Schröder, "The Chaconne and Baroque Tradition," op.cit., -130.

¹⁴ Eduard Melkus, "The Bach Chaconne for Solo Violin: Some thoughts on the History of Its Interpretation," op.137.

quality rivals such works as the Bach-Gounod “Ave Maria,” the Mussorgsky-Ravel “Pictures at an Exhibition,” and the Bizet-Schedrin “Carmen.”

Information about the Chaconne transcription is rare in musical literature. There is little said about the transcription in dictionaries and Busoni biographies, and information in the specialized literature about the Chaconne is seldom devoted to its transcriptions, barring cursory information. It is evident that there exists a void in the literature regarding the Chaconne, one which I attempt to fill in this paper.

Why is this particular transcription so popular? What is so unique about Busoni’s Chaconne that makes it so bewitchingly beautiful? Is it the technique, the texture, or the piano arrangement? What new ideas could Busoni have possibly brought to this piece that still fascinate and connect listeners of today to the baroque era?

Attention to all of these ideas brought forth a concentration on several issues that would affect elements of musical language such as melody, harmony, and texture as well as genre, structure, form and basic sound. That's why this document will follow a type of variation form, where the “theme” will be the historical development of the chaconne genre and the history of this transcription, as well as the facts about Busoni's life with relation to the transcription (Chapter1).

The following chapters of this document will consist of “Variation” on this theme, the last of which is a coda (Chapter 2-6). Each of the “Variations” chapters will emphasize a special problem. “Variation one” (Chapter 2) will concentrate on the melodic development in the Chaconne and its difference from Bach's original

work to the Busoni's version. “Variation two” (Chapter 3) is devoted to the harmonic and textural treatment by Busoni and how it differs from Bach's score. “Variation three” (Chapter 4) will adumbrate the orchestral and timbral influences on Busoni's transcription.

“Variation four” (Chapter 5) will explore what contributions Busoni did to the form and structure of the piece, genre issues and their development in the Chaconne. “Variation five—the coda” (Chapter 6) will summarize what was discovered through the analysis of Busoni's transcription and answer the question which were postulated in the Chapter one.

The study of the Chaconne transcription involves analyzing the arrangement as well as the original text, which often reveals new facets in Bach's work through the interpretation of the arranger. In case of the Chaconne, Busoni, through his arrangement, illuminates the possibility that it is a Requiem for Bach's first wife. .

The circumstances surrounding the writing of the Second Partita in D, particularly its last movement are not well documented. We know that the whole partita was written in Cöthen, between 1720 and 1723. Unlike most partitas, which had four principal movements, the fifth and last movement of the Partita No. 2 is a chaconne instead of a gigue. This movement alone is longer than all the other movements in the composition. It seems that this particular movement was added later to the cycle. Its dramatic power allows it to balance the dramaturgical development in the previous four movements. This unusual structure allows the Chaconne to be performed as a solo piece as well as part of the whole partita, unlike other cyclical works. Many musicologists tried to reconcile the significant

dramatic power of the Chaconne with the rest of the partita.

It is a well known fact that Bach accompanied his employer Prince Leopold to Baden-Baden as a part of his entourage. Upon returning from the three-month journey, he learned that he had become a widower, that his wife had already been buried, and that her Requiem had been performed. Overcome with grief as well as the responsibilities of holding his family together and raising it alone, he poured all of his emotions into this movement, which crowned the already finished partita.

In his music there are several rhetorical ideas, which suggest close association with the idea of death, particularly genre, strong emphasis on the Phrygian tetrachord, the spiral shape of certain melodic gestures, and certain harmonic progressions, all of which Busoni stressed in his arrangement. To recognize all these elements so highlighted by Busoni gives the performer a possible insight into the composer's frame of mind and a subsequent guide to interpretation.

Busoni was actually the first composer in a long time to use these rhetorical ideas, and in so doing gave them a new, broader life in contemporary music. It is thanks to this revival that they have been developed to be used in conjunction with such elements as timbre, space, and texture to create novel musical effects. After Busoni, several other composers on the other part of the continent started to exploit the ideas of stylizing musical elements of the past. In fact it became a part of their musical thinking and compositional style. For example, it became a characteristic of Igor Stravinsky's music in the period of 1920-1930.

The Chaconne owes its popularity not only to the unique musical material,

but also to the use of a stereotypical genre. Even after the Chaconne genre become outdated, it was still familiar to the audience because its reference to a dance type. This situation illustrates a balance between individual characteristics and general traits that does much to lend recognition to the chaconne. Such a balance is not very obvious in the beginning, but in the course of the piece's development it becomes evident. This principle opens many possibilities for the author, and gives the music mobility in developing material. As a result, the music is brought together into a cohesive image. This principle of the individual and general realizes itself in deep structure.

Any given genre, by virtue of its uniqueness, will guide a performer's interpretation by its connotations. Musicians have defined genres to possess characteristics which influence perception, and so a simple genre name—Concerto, Symphony, Valse, Chaconne—will immediately have a communicative function.¹⁵ The characteristics that defined these genres have changed over time (or even disappeared) and renew the nature of the original genre.

The etymology of the word “chaconne” is lost in ancient history. Various authorities have attributed it to the name *Chacon*- a successful Spanish admiral of the seventeenth century, to the Spanish dance called *Chica* (“Jig,”) to the Italian - *chico* - (“blind,”) and to the French “chanson,” etc. Whatever its name, the musical genre has survived in two versions: as an originally very joyful, even boisterous

¹⁵ Arnold Sohor, “Musical Genre Theory: Problems and Perspectives,” *Theoretical problems of musical Forms and Genres*. (Moscow: Soviet composer, 1971), 71

Mexican dance that made its way to France by way of Italy and Spain, and secondly as a mourner's dance from the time of Spanish consolidation, known as "Chaconne de Espagne."¹⁶

In France, it became a court dance, where Lully was one of the first composers to arrange it as the finale of his scenic works. After him Purcell in the "Fairy Queen" did the same. Glück in his operas *Orpheus and Euridice* and *Iphigenia in Aulide* used the chaconne as a finale. With time, the chaconne became an instrumental work. One of the first composers to use the Chaconne in this way was Merulo in his Sonata concertate for two violins with basso continuo in 1637.

There are several dances related to the chaconne, including the passacaglia, folia, and sarabande slow, stately court dances, used for special occasions, like funerals and openings of state balls. The main difference between the passacaglia, folia, sarabande and chaconne, is that the first three typically have basso ostinato, which is not always true for the Chaconne. With time, even these differences were erased, and today the names of these dances remind us of their country of origin as well as their form.

The chaconne and the related dances (passacaglia, folia, and sarabande) use $\frac{3}{4}$ meter with the emphasis on the second beat. They are all written in variation form, which was useful for long court dances that required enough time for all the dance steps to be completed.

We can find elements of all of these dances in numerous Bach

¹⁶ Jon F Eiche."Background," in *The Bach Chaconne for Violin Solo: A Collection of Views*, ed. Jon F. Eiche (Bloomington, Indiana: Frangipani Press, 1985), 18-23.

compositions, in the variety of sarabandes for different harpsichord and violin works, as well as for an ensemble (including the Orchestral Suite in B minor). However, he wrote only two pieces by the name “chaconne”—the concluding movement in Cantata 150, “Meine Tage in den Leiden” in B minor and the last movement of the D minor Partita. He also wrote the Passacaglia in C minor (BWV 582) for organ.

J. S. Bach’s Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin were part of the German tradition of solo works. His predecessor Heinrich Biber wrote a “Passacaglia” for violin solo. Johann Jacob Walter and Johann Paul von Westhof also wrote Sarabandas and Partitas for violin solo. According to Jon F . Eiche in his essay “Background,”¹⁷ the last two composers influenced Bach in his writing for violin, particularly Sonatas and Partitas. After Bach, Georg Philip Telemann continued the tradition with twelve Fantasies(1735) for violin solo.

Due to his thorough knowledge and mastery of the violin, Bach was able to indicate slurs and bowing, expressing his concern for practical matters of performance. After the death of J.S .Bach the Chaconne was considered a piece which every ambitious violinist needed to learn in order to become a master. It was not, however, considered a piece for public performance, partly because of its technical difficulties. To this day, the “Chaconne” remains in the repertoire of every good violinist.

The society in Germany in Bach’s time perceived the genre of the chaconne

¹⁷ _Jon F. Eiche_,"Background", the Bach Chaconne for violin solo the Collection of views, ed . Jon F Eiche (Bloomington, Indiana: Frangipani Press, 1985), 18-23

to be the dance of a grief-stricken mourner. In instrumental works the name “chaconne” gave composers a perfect opportunity to create dramatic development, in which dignity had to be preserved at all costs and simultaneously contend with the potentially overwhelming emotions inherent in the piece. Slow tempo, $\frac{3}{4}$ meter, basso ostinato or ostinato harmonies, and variation form comprised the usual recipe for the instrumental chaconne. It is amazing how Bach, using this elementary plan, created an almost symphonic picture for the last movement of Partita No. 2.

The influence of the piece on other musicians resulted in many transcriptions for different instruments and ensembles. A lot of purists argue that transcriptions of Bach’s music (and indeed transcriptions as a genre) are not serious artistic works, and that somehow, this type of music is not as genuine as an original.

The motivations for the birth of the transcription led to their persistence since medieval times. One such motivation was that a transcription popularized a work which would otherwise be within the narrow confines of one instrument. Bach himself was not averse to such practice in part because it enabled him to learn and to sharpen his craft.

For instance, in his transcriptions of the Vivaldi concertos he made use of thematic material, bowings, and orchestration similar to Vivaldi's. Bach’s transcriptions of his own works, for example, a fugue for violin solo from the first sonata for unaccompanied violin (BWV 1001) which he transcribed for organ as the Prelude and Fugue in D minor, BWV 539, are esteemed by many instrumentalists.

By writing the Chaconne J.S. Bach created an “ideal,” a “myth,” which will exist until the end of the world. Generations of musicians look with awe on the Chaconne, and try to create their own version of the piece. Using various media, different artistic personalities have explored this music, with varied success. Virtuoso pianist Alexander Siloti wrote his own transcription of the Chaconne based on the Busoni version, which he explained at the top of page: “after Busoni.” Similar things have happened with other Bach’s works. The famous C Major Prelude and Fugue from the Well Tempered Clavier is a fine example; we all know the Romantic version, the so-called “Ave Maria” by Gounod, and the twentieth-century arrangement which uses the Bach- Gounod version glossed with a Duke Ellington improvisation. David Brubeck wrote a “Chromatic Fantasy” inspired by the work of the same name by J. S. Bach.

Another motivation for transcriptions is that a musician who likes a piece ultimately desires to experience for himself the joys and tribulations of performing it, as well as expressing his emotions through it. This explains the wide variety of versions spanning all settings and orchestration: accompanied versions by Robert Schumann and Felix Mendelssohn, a solo piano version for the left hand by Johannes Brahms, an Andre Segovia guitar example, orchestral versions by Maximillian Steinberg, Alfredo Casella and Leopold Stokovsky, and even the choreographed version by George Balanchine and Kenneth Oberly. The latest transcription was created three years ago for harpsichord by Lars Mortensen in which for first time in its history, the Chaconne was transposed to the key of A minor. Not all of the transcriptions will survive, or will be worth mentioning in the

history books, but they declare unanimously that the fascinations between the musicians and artists with J. S. Bach's Chaconne continues.¹⁸

The popularity of the music of the Chaconne is dependent not only on the beauty of the piece, but also on the seemingly simple perception of the music, which is based on the familiar dance genre. The transcription serves two purposes: (1) to popularize the music and make it enjoyable for many instrumentalists, and (2) to approach the original composition through the transcriber's experience. When the performer perceives the music from this viewpoint, he gains a greater understanding of the piece.

From the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century transcriptions surged in popularity because they filled the role of show pieces: the masses loved the familiar music (based on time-honored genres) and the display of virtuosity. Many of these transcriptions treated popular operatic works often filled with never-ending technical passages which had no connections to the music of the opera. Unfortunately, transcriptions of this sort were of poor quality, since the goal was simply to demonstrate the virtuosity of the performer.

One of the first master transcribers was Franz Liszt. He changed the whole concept of transcription not only for his own instrument but for others as well. The Hungarian composer advocated that a transcription should follow the *spirit* of the composition; that following the original text literally is not always possible, and in

¹⁸ The complete list of transcriptions, to the best of my knowledge, appears in the appendix to this dissertation., p.150.

any case inadvisable. Liszt thought that new media—especially organ, piano, and orchestra— would bring to the music something which would compensate for the inevitable loss of the original artistic ideas. Sir Donald Tovey when talking about the piano transcriptions of Liszt mentioned “that Liszt was by far the most wonderful interpreter of orchestral scores on the pianoforte the world is ever likely to see,” a judgment with which Liszt's greater successor in this field, Ferruccio Busoni, readily concurred.¹⁹

Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) become familiar with the art of transcription in early childhood. He listened to them at home and in the concert hall, where his mother ####an accomplished pianist and accompanist performed with his father ####a virtuoso clarinetist, who was himself famous for his performance of various transcriptions. Busoni's parents sent him to Germany, whose educational system and culture they held in high regard. He rapidly became known as a fine composer (under the tutelage of V. Meier), and a brilliant virtuoso, intellectual, and pedagogue.

As a pianist he was deeply influenced by the playing of Franz Liszt. According to Edward J. Dent, Busoni's father brought him to play for the maestro, although it is not clear whether or not he actually performed, since no testimonial exist for this event. Busoni studied Liszt's compositions and his technical approach to the instrument, and derived from these a striking display of virtuosity wealth and

¹⁹ Allan Walker, *Reflection on Liszt* (Ithaca, London : Cornell University press, 2005), 11.

inventiveness. Busoni paid much attention to the beauty of melodic line and color.

In his writing for the pianoforte Busoni shows an inexhaustible resource of color effect.... This preoccupation with color effects on the pianoforte began to make itself evident after Busoni had begun to devote himself to the serious study of Liszt, but it remained to dominate his mind up to the end of his life.²⁰

Liszt made several transcriptions of J. S. Bach's work, among them the famous “Weinen, Klagen.” At the end of the nineteenth century many composers turned their innovative creativity towards elements of art which had been approved over the ages. Unfortunately, the fashion and mind-set of the time forced them to the background. To balance the modern “aggressiveness” of Wagner and his followers many composers considered Renaissance and Baroque styles as alternatives to the “modern” explosion of dissonance. Music of the late Renaissance, early Baroque and especially the music of J. S. Bach were viewed in German-speaking countries as a healthy alternative to the “scandalous” and “amoral” music of Busoni’s contemporaries (Strauss, Schönberg, and Berg) and their techniques. Busoni’s love of Bach was therefore supported by the establishment in Germanic musical circles.

²⁰Edward J. Dent, *Ferruccio Busoni*. A biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 145-146.

Bach's music came to represent the New at the turn of the century. Bach was an important stimulus to composers ... less because of any specific structural technique or historical role, but because the *Aussenhalt* or "framework" of his music offered composers around 1900 a way out of the more conventional Classic-Romantic idioms and structures. Often based on the chorales it played the role of almost folk music at the end of the nineteenth century. Bach's role as an continuous inspiring source becomes obvious in the musical art in many end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries composers especially in the art of M. Reger and G. Maler²¹

J. S. Bach's music engendered much of Busoni's musical personality. For Busoni Bach's music became a continuous inspiration, and constituted the highest criteria and material by which he judged his own musical talent. He devoted this talent to transcribing several of these works, weaving Bach's tunes into his own compositions, and editing Bach's piano works, among them the Well Tempered Clavier, the Partitas, and the French and English Suites. These editions (which are as instructive in our time as they were in Busoni's) bear elements of Busoni's attitude towards piano playing and personality.

Throughout his life, Busoni was a legendary figure in the musical world. To be sure, his performing art fascinated his audience, but it was his radical views on music which earned him a controversial reputation in musical society. His innovations into musical writing and his explorations of harmony are still considered some of the most remarkable of the twentieth century. Busoni published

²¹Walter Frisch, *German modernism. Music and Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 145.

his credo in the aesthetic essay “Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music.” In this manifesto he defended the right of a composer to create a transcription and argued that it should be viewed as an individual artistic work:

Every notation is in itself the transcription of an abstract idea. The instant the pen seizes it, the idea loses its original form...
a transcription does not destroy the archetype, which is therefore, not lost through transcription...
the performance of a work is also a transcription, and still, whatever liberties it may take, it can never annihilate the original.²²

Ferruccio Busoni made a transcription of Bach’s famous Chaconne in the years between 1891 and 1892, while living in Boston. He dedicated it to prominent composer and virtuoso pianist Eugen d’Albert. Unfortunately d’Albert found the transcription too controversial and never performed it. Busoni premiered the piece himself in Boston on the 30th of January, 1893. Since then this transcription has become the acid test of a performer's audacity. There are four versions, each more complicated than the last. The first edition was published by Breitkopf & Haertel, soon after the premiere. It was longer than the final version by five measures. Busoni continued to work on the text throughout the rest of his life, publishing new editions in 1902, 1907, 1916. In each successive edition he clarified his ideas, simplified the technical aspects of the text, and altered the voicing and fingering.

²²Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of A New Esthetic of Music*, translated by Theodore Baker (New York: G. Schirmer, 1911), 17-18.

This last edition is the focus of this analysis.²³

Busoni's transcription of the “Chaconne” is distinctive due to the treatment of the musical material. In this work Busoni communicate some ideas characteristic of the Romantic era, and some which would later become a hallmark of twentieth-century music. The originality of the treatment of the genre, and the composer's profound understanding of the rules of musical perception demand the listener's absorption. This transcription formed one of his “preliminary steps toward the more elaborate studies which are in the nature of commentaries on Bach written not in words but in music.”²⁴

The different stylistic roots are united by the uniqueness of Bach and Busoni non-traditional attitudes with which they approached the genre, both of which are prominent when listening to the piece. Attention to these types of problems allows us to recognize the Chaconne's true genres and formal structure. Bach and Busoni created different solutions to these problems which resulted in differing solo sections. The consideration of the problems creates the possibility of a more passionate, even “theatrical” expression, and results in a new understanding of musical time and space, as heard in this piece.

²³ Paul Banks, Preface to J. S. Bach, Chaconne ([London]: edition Peters, 1997).

²⁴ Edward J Dent, *Ferruccio Busoni, A Biography*. (London: Oxford University Press,

Chapter 2

Melodic Types in the Chaconne

One of the most expressive features in the Bach “Chaconne” is its melodic line. The development of the new variations and their melodic lines are so rich that often they are perceived as new themes and melodies. In addition, the genre of the theme changes in successive variations. There are three types of melodic lines in the Chaconne. The first is associated with the chorale, the second with the lyrical sphere, and the third with repetitive toccata-like music.

In the beginning, the chorale melody follows the example of the Chaconne de Espagne (a stately mourners dance), which starts on the dominant, leaps up to the second scale degree, proceeds to the third and then resolves to the tonic.

Andante maestoso, ma non troppo lento
Feierlich gemessen, doch nicht schleppend

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Arranged for concert performance on the piano by
Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924)

Phrygian

Example 2.1 The theme of the chaconne, the chorale.

In these first declamatory motifs we can hear elements of primitive genre signals, like a

fanfare, which we can often find in Bach's themes. Since Busoni transposed the opening theme an octave lower, we can continue to call this motif a fanfare motif. However, in the lower register of the piano it sounds more like a bell, the sound which fascinated Busoni and was used in many of his other compositions²⁵. In the chorale appearances during the whole Chaconne these motifs will change, depending on the role the chorale will play at certain time in the form. However, in the closing of the first movement and at the end of the Chaconne they are reinforced in Busoni's transcription by doubling and range, thus forcing us to accept the "primitive" instrumental signals as a part of a content, or "story."

After such a declamatory beginning there follows the pattern of the Phrygian mode tetrachord in mm.3-4. This action creates a versatile, active melodic line, painting an exclamatory image and enhancing the drama of the melody itself (mm.1-9). After the initial leap, the descending melodic line fills the resulting gap and releases the tension until it is repeated in the second phrase, where it reaches a culmination with another leap from the tonic up to the sixth scale degree, which happens to be the highest note in the melodic line of the chorale. (Such intonation is known in Baroque music as an *exclamatio* motif²⁶ Bach used it in many other of his compositions.) It then descends to the dominant and onward to the third scale degree. The music sounds like a noble, quietly passionate speech.

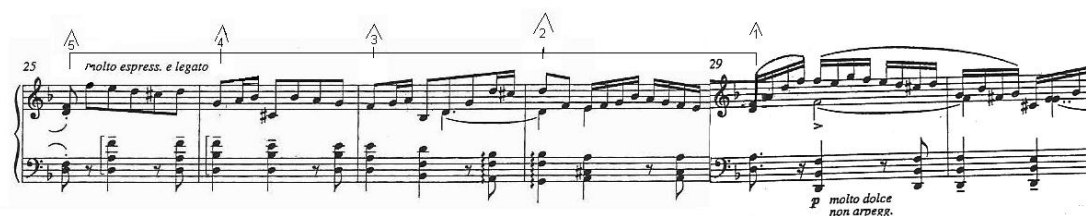
This ascending melodic leap to B flat is important not only because it is a culmination—emotional, harmonic and melodic,— but also because it predicts the further

²⁵ Antony Beaumont. *Busoni The Composer*. (Bloomington: Indiana university Press,1985).

²⁶ U. Cohn. *About Stravinsky's Two Fugues*. Questions About Contemporary Music. (Leningrad: Soviet composer,1982).

development of the melodic line and the texture in the Chaconne. The theme is located in the low register and the development of the texture and register can move only one way to the upper regions. It suited Busoni's idea and concept of music to move from darkness to light. Knowing that Busoni's repertoire as a pianist included Beethoven's "Appassionata" as well as several other sonatas, we can see that he could get such inspiration from another German giant of Austro-German tradition. The second movements in many Beethoven's sonatas are variations, often starting in the low register with the tendency of reaching upper regions through contrasting development. Registral development in the Chaconne resembles that of the second movement of the "Appassionata," though on the smaller scale, since there are only four variations in Beethoven's movement.

Bach's use of the variation form and technique causes variation of the melody through changes in articulation in addition to the more common methods. Busoni adds a differentiated timbral element and genre contrast, which was hidden in the background of the Bach score. The rhythm follows the characteristic Chaconne formula, with its emphasis on the second beat. From a Schenkerian point of view the basic melody of the Chaconne descends from scale degree:

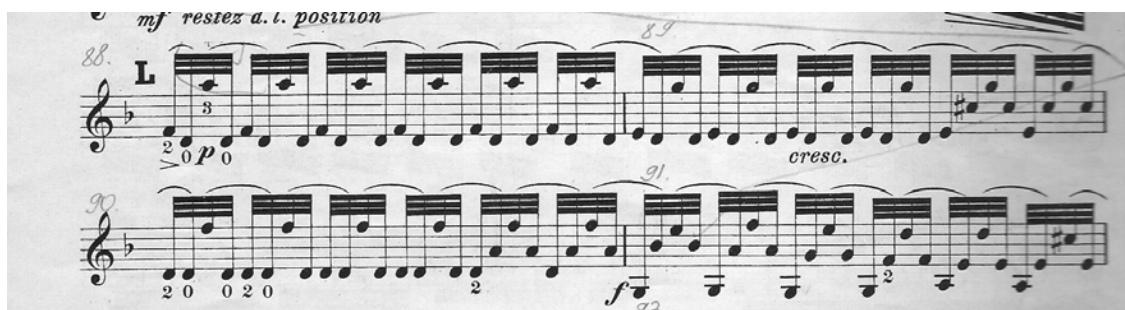


Example 2.2, Var. 3

Lyrical-type melodies have a different pattern. Their line is more pliable and the range of the melody becomes very wide and wave-like. It saturates with expressive intervallic leaps and scale passages, which are often symmetrical: the ascending leap is followed by a descent (m m. 25-28). In these melodies we can hear a lot of “sigh” and “suffering” intonations, indicated by descent from scale degree 6 to 7 in harmonic minor. Rhythmically they are simpler than the previous ones: consecutive even eighth notes or sixteenth notes gracefully form the shape of a melody. In this way they withstand the onslaught of the more dramatic, rhythmically and texturally complex material, which explores different registers, and engages in polyphonic development (imitations, sequences). In the lyrical sections, the chaconne rhythm almost disappears, but the emphasis on the beat two is still present in the melody through emphasis by leaps, important intonations, and various expressive intervals such as tritones and diminished sevenths. In these sections we can often hear a chromatic scale. The melodic line perpetuates the genre of the melody, even in the absence of the Chaconne rhythm.

Melodies which belong to dance-like material and resemble the toccata rhythmically, in Bach's original version had several leaps from the short ostinato tonic on the open string to the fifth scale degree on the "E" string, many repetitive notes (steady, even sixteenth notes), and a faster rhythm. Busoni inverts the melodic passage, he divides the melody between two hands and arranges it to sound more like a harp plucking. The leap to the fifth scale degree is followed by another “Phrygian” tetrachord, and then by a steady filling by sequential passages. These are mostly diatonic compared to the chorale and lyrical melodies.

Bach's original version:



Busoni transcription:

Example 2.3

In his transcription Busoni follows Bach faithfully, hardly changing Bach's melodic line. When the changes occur, they result in changes in the direction of the melody (Var. 4, m.38, Var.13), and alteration in spacing of the melodic chords and their quality. (m m. 42, 61, 68, 94).



Bach original score (m m.66-67)



Example 2.4. Busoni transcription (mm.67-68)

Busoni achieves a vertical layering of melodies from different genres by transposing the original Bach melody to the lower or middle layer (Var. 5 and 6, m m. 41-49 and 52-57):

9

4. Più mosso, ma misurato
Bewegter, doch immer gemessen

 A musical score for a piano piece, numbered 4. The tempo/mood is indicated as "Più mosso, ma misurato" and "Bewegter, doch immer gemessen". The score is in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of one flat. It features multiple layers of music. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *poco cresc.* (poco crescendo), and *più cresc.* (più crescendo). The bottom layer is marked *reggiero ma marcato*.

Example 2.5

He supplies the melody for the top layer either by creating his own or using imitation techniques. These melodies have a broken line and are organized in short motifs usually derived from the inner voices of Bach's score. Busoni uses them in order to underline the chaconne-sarabande rhythm.

Used in conjunction, these methods create an unusual combination of polyphonic

intensity, as well as a dramatic upper line development, which allows Busoni to shift the attention of the listener to other music material, and its characteristic color and range. In addition, Busoni stresses the range difference in the variations by an enlarged dramatic contrast a typically Romantic style element. For instance, Busoni places the stern chorale theme in the bottom layer and the fragile melody at the top a contrast which plunges the music into the emotionally profound romantic style. (Var. 3) This is one of the many manifestations of the resulting contrast.²⁷ This emphasis on melodic disparity opens Bach's parentheses and depicts Busoni's conception of the piece. He promotes an understanding of the structure which signals to the listener a twentieth-century persuasion that separates us from the original Baroque style.

Busoni writes the melodic line in unison in order to increase its volume and expressiveness. (e.g. m. 230). The meaning of the music altered and reflects once more Busoni's interpretation. Busoni open the "Chaconne" an octave lower than Bach. His heritage of romantic music traditions demands a dramatic scene produced by contrasting melodies, stressed in range as well as genre.

In the third measure of the opening theme, (example 2.1) we can hear a Phrygian tetrachord. In the music of the Baroque era, it is widely associated with the image of Death and is used as an ostinato bass for the chaconne and sarabande dances. Two of the many examples are Dido's last aria from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and Bach's "Crucifixus" from the B Minor Mass. This Phrygian melody permeates Bach's original violin Chaconne although as a hidden motif in the beginning. During the development of

²⁷ This topic will be explored more deeply in the Chapter 5, "the Form of the Chaconne."

the “Chaconne” it becomes a prominent theme attaining the position of Fate or Death. Busoni amplifies this motif, often creating a counter melody in another voice, or enhancing the expressiveness by separating the melody among several voices.

In his article “The Phrygian Inflection and the Appearances of Death in Music,” William Kimmel explains that the descending melodic spiral “must be classed as a death gesture

...From earliest times the spiral gestalt has appeared along with labyrinth as a symbol of transformation### of the life and death cycle: generation-growth-decay-death-rebirth or regeneration. The ascending clockwise spiral is associated with creative power, growth, and life; the descending counterclockwise spiral with decay, destruction, and death. The combination of the two, the double spiral, symbolizes the perpetual transformation from life to death and from death to life.²⁸

Bach's text is full of the single and double spiral melodies. One of the most impressive is in the third variation(ex.2.2), which is entirely built on the descending spiral gesture. Variation 22 is an example of an ascending spiral, where several voices have a similar structure:

²⁸ William Kimmel. “The Phrygian Inflection and the Appearances of Death in Music.” *College Music Symposium*, 20, 2, (Fall, 1980): 60.

146

p molto legato

150

sostenuto m.d.

sostenendo

cresc.

f

Example 2.6. Var.22.

The beginning of the middle D-major section is a double spiral, that signifies emotional growth followed by tragic wreckage.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system, starting at measure 138, features a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a melodic line with slurs and ties, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. Above the treble staff, the instruction *quasi Tromboni* is written. Below the treble staff, the markings *ten.* and *dolce* are present. The second system, starting at measure 142, continues the piece. The treble staff shows more complex melodic figures, and the bass staff has a more active accompaniment. The marking *molto espress.* is placed below the treble staff. In measure 145, the marking *m.s.* appears above the treble staff, and *pp* (pianissimo) is written below the bass staff.

Example 2.7. Var. 21

The beginning final section, Var. 31, also happens to be built in the single spiral shape.

It is not a coincidence that Bach used these symbolic gestures (which he helped to create). A performer familiar with their meaning would have no doubt as to the interpretation of his music.

Chapter 3

Selected Textural and Harmonic Elements in the Chaconne

In his approach to the harmony Busoni tried everything possible to make the piano transcription of the “Chaconne” true to the original composition. Nevertheless, it is amazing how Busoni’s personality shines through Chaconne via his transcription’s more intense, theatrical approach. The harmonic language of the piece is a prime example of how Busoni dramatized the music, and deepened the atmosphere, yet at the same time his knowledge and understanding of Bach’s compositional style allowed him to create a version that seems to be a natural result of the transition from violin to piano.

It is well known that minor mode had special meaning for J.S. Bach, because it allowed him to exploit its connection with pain and suffering. The keys that Bach used (D minor for the first and third movement and D major for the middle section) show that Bach was looking for a specific color, which was developed during the Baroque era. (In the Baroque era the crystallization of the functional minor -major became a colorful and expressive part of the harmonic and musical language). With the development of the mode system and its gradual transformation to the major-minor system many contemporaries of J. S. Bach explored the possibilities of unusual sonorities, modulation, and extensive use of the chromatism. This trend penetrated many other arts as well, for it allowed for deeper expression of the many facets of human feeling. For example, in the Renaissance, there was a tendency to deepen color in a painting toward both light and dark sides. In the Baroque era, many prominent artists like Rembrandt continued this

tradition, often using a special effect in the paintings which involved rays of light traveling from the very depth of darkness to glorious brightness. This agreed with the religious philosophical doctrine from the earth to the sky and onward to heaven. When Busoni transported the range of the opening theme an octave lower, he changed not only the color of the minor, but of the theme as well, deepening it with a lower, more profound sound. This allows us to hear the harmony and its color more clearly; each individual chord becomes significant, and every little change in rhythm or melody becomes of the utmost importance. Busoni added additional voices, thereby creating another layer of sonority and genre, which significantly changed the perception of D minor. In Busoni's transcription, D minor feels deeper, more dramatic. By adding or altering voices, Busoni was able to create the effect of lightness or depth. He did whatever it took to dramatize and intensify the music of the Chaconne, often mixing approaches.

Busoni frequently combined vertically two or more layers of different genre material. One layer is always Bach's original; in the second layer Busoni emulates Bach but uses his own material. (Vars. 3, 24) The result is an admirable harmonic correspondence. Busoni seldom changed Bach's harmonic underpinning. He did, however, occasionally switch the subdominant chord to a sharper ii^6 (m. 133), and modify Bach's appoggiaturas by harmonizing them. This created, for example, a new modulation using chromatic scale degrees, such as a lowered third (m.134) and lowered second (m. 135), and simultaneously painted a darker minor color.

130 *Tempo I*
ff *molto tenuto*
 133
 136
 Edition Peters

Example 3.1, Var. 20, Chromatic changes in mm. 133-135

Combining different genre material based on the same Chaconne creates a more complete sound scale, and intensifies the harmony and sonorities; note also the use of chromatism and organ pedal point (Var. 10, mm. 78—82),

78 *mf*
tranquillo
p
ff > p
 80

Example 3.2

Imitations (Var.4,mm78-82)

p *poco espress.* *quasi f* *p* *quasi f*
 35 *p* [*quasi f*] *poco* *dolce*
 38 [*7*] 1 2 4 3 2 *dimin.* *poco*

Example 3.3

Later, stretto imitation of D-C-B flat-A (Var. 39 mm. 258–259) serves the same purpose.

sempre più allargando *Stretto*
 8va *loco*

Example 3.4, Var. 39. Last chorale.

Bach's music in the Chaconne bears all the elements of polyphonic style. That is why the voice leading technique, so free and bold, gives rise to interesting harmonies. Bach does not retain the same number of voices throughout the whole composition which allows him free combination of chords, and dissonant sonorities. Busoni takes Bach's approach and develops it further. Because of the genre layers the number of voices varies; Busoni often spreads the voices from top to bottom, divides them, thereby amplifying their disconnection and sense of dialogue. (Var. 6)



Example 3.5, Var. 6

It is interesting to note, that even when the number of voices increases, Busoni does not use ninth-chords. At the most we can find seventh-chord sonorities, with a mixture of doublings. Frequently he will double the whole chord in a different range, which creates a substantial sonic effect. To create a grandiose sound, Busoni changes Bach's melodic line every so often, switching the range and adding octave doubling or tripling to the passages (Var.5, mm. 41–48).

He composes the chords in Bach's style, admirably guessing the harmony. These newly created vertical chords do not follow a strict pattern of voices; Busoni varies them,

using two, three, or four voice chords. The use of a mixed pattern of voices could be explained through the use of sonority and the mode of expression. As a result, we can hear a twentieth century musician's attitude towards dissonance- he uses it like a bright color, one which does not exist in "proper" classical voice leading. Occasionally he even uses seventh chords, without resolving the dissonant seventh, or— a 6/4 chord without preparation (mm. 92-93).



Example 3.6

These chords represent a certain function in the D minor system, but they are used as a sonic color as well. Such perspicacity helps the range and the timbre, which is recreated with the help of articulations. Busoni leaves these chords "hanging," unresolved in the bass, so that they attract the listener's attention. However, there are many cases when Busoni follows Bach, and the dissonances appear as the product of the developed voice leading system.

Already in the opening statement of the theme- a period, which consists of the two equal-length segments (sentences), we can hear some of the methods with which Busoni operated when writing the Chaconne. The theme is written in a three and four voice chorale style. Busoni transposes it an octave lower, which brings a different sonoristic image. (ex. 2.1) He only changes harmony once in this theme- at the end of a

cadence, where Bach uses $V^{6/5}$. This chord sounds softer, but Busoni stressed the main authentic function of the chord, putting the low “A” in the bass-a V^7 of the d-minor. In addition, he adds some voices to the chords (mm. 4, 5, 8), doubling them, and rhythmically changing the voices in the harmony- instead of holding them, like Bach required, Busoni repeats them. Compared to the violin, all of these techniques create a fuller “column” sonority on the piano, which again emphasizes the genre of the chorale. This practice is typical of the entire piece.

In the opening, Bach uses the harmonic progression of $i-ii^2-V^{6/5}-i$, with which he often opened other compositions. (For instance, the C-major prelude, D-major prelude from WTC first volume, Chromatic Fantasy opening, etc.). Mark Etinger in his work *Early classic harmony* mentioned that

genre very often shows a propensity to use this cadence in the beginning of a piece. Compositions which belong to the fast, motoric sphere rarely use it. Compositions which belong to the sphere of a deep imaginary world, with a reasonably slow tempo could anticipate this cadence from the first measure. As an example, we can show that most Sarabandes in the suites and partitas use this formula, with the exception of some Sarabandes in the French suites.²⁹

Since the sarabande is almost equivalent to the genre of the chaconne, Etinger's observation can apply to the Bach Chaconne as well. During the development of this progression as a part of the theme, Busoni adds more voices to it, and stresses the emphasis on the subdominant function, using more $vi^7 iv^7$, and ii^7 chords. (Vars.2,3).

²⁹ Mark Etinger, *Early Classical Harmony*. (Moscow: Muzika, 1979),138



Example 3.7. Var. 2

Through these actions, we can see not only the continuation of nineteenth-century traditions (as we know, the subdominant as a function was developed widely during the Romantic era, however, in Bach's time composers stressed the dominant function), but also the twentieth-century musician's development of possibilities which were hidden in the cadence itself.

It has been mentioned that the Chaconne as a genre belongs to the Basso Ostinato form, which means an unchanging bass with variations. Bach does not use this particular form in the fifth movement of the Partita in D minor. That's why, I would like to contest the information about the chaconne and passacaglia dances is given in Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne's book *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*. The information about Bach's Chaconne (BWV1004) is in my opinion incorrect. It is named a Fourth Sonata for solo violin, instead of a "Second Partita for violin solo in D Minor," and the authors claim that "the premise is a four-measure ostinato bass which is varied either melodically—into chromatic descending tetrachord, descending diatonic tetrachord, or a

variation of the two—or harmonically, as in the first arpeggio section.”³⁰ The Chaconne in D minor does not have an ostinato bass, its theme is an eight-measure structure, and the meaning of “arpeggio section” remains unclear.

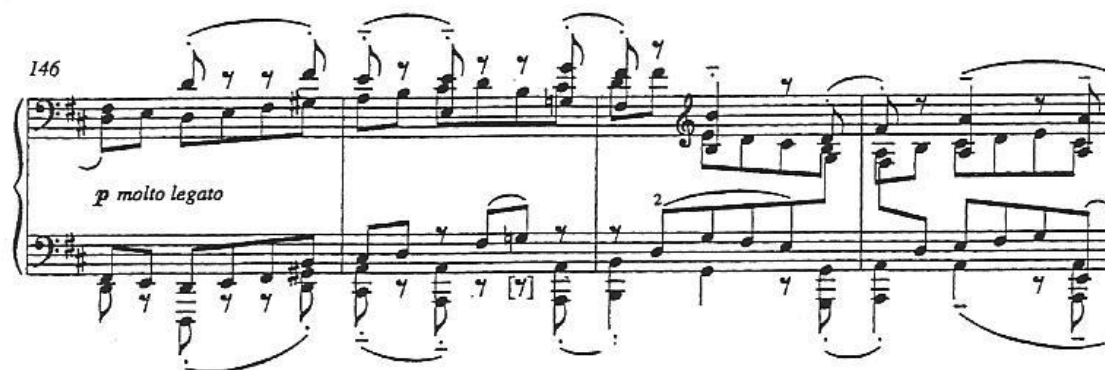
Bach, throughout the Chaconne, rather than changing harmony, intensifies it through the use of chromatism, either through a chromatic bass line, or through the contrast between the former and less chromatic (almost diatonic) sections. Busoni goes further. Not only does he intensify the harmony, he uses it to dramatize the work, and make it more theatrical. For example, by gradually adding texture, Busoni creates the feeling of growing, intensifying musical material. By creating another layer of figurative voices, using the unison in the wide range (Var. 33),



Example 3.8, Var. 33.

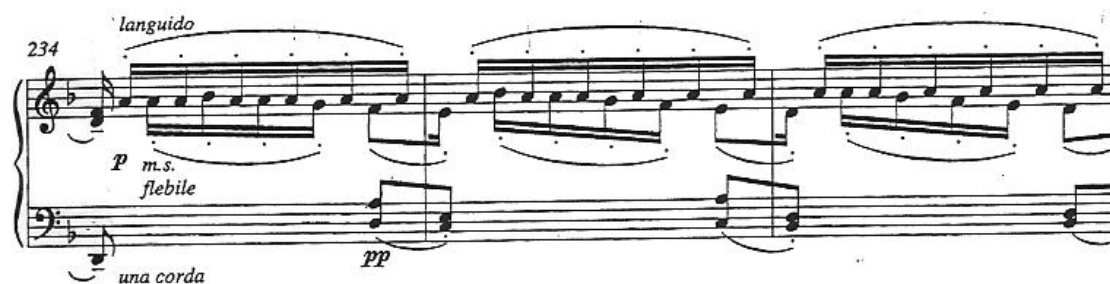
and separating the main layer on the top from the bass, Busoni creates the feel of a wide (Vars. 22, 37)

³⁰ Little Meredith and Natalie Jenne, Dance and the Music of J.S. Bach (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001): 202



Example 3.9 var. 22

or small space (Var. 34).



Example 3.10

Busoni follows Bach in his treatment of expression. It is a well known fact that Bach often uses 5-6 voices in organ works, Masses (B minor), and cantatas in which the tone of expression can be described as sublime, majestic, solemn pathos. Contrary to this, the 1-3 voice setting relates to dances, and joy, as in the Gigue from the fifth French suite, and G major Prelude and Fugue from the WTC, volume one. In such settings Busoni often stresses the most important chords-like the first beat ### by doubling a third in the chord , which makes it sound heavier (m m. 156-157).



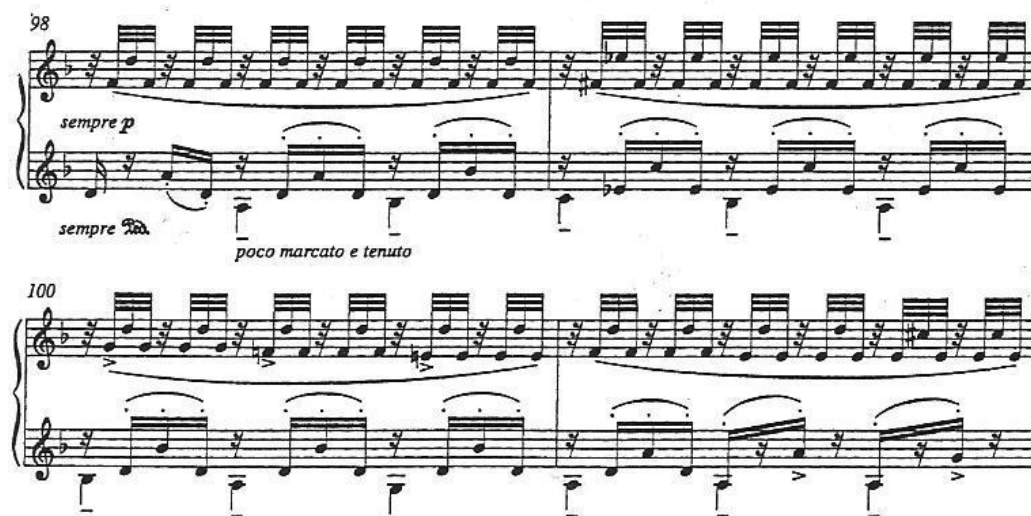
Example 3.11

He also either adds a second layer - in the bass of the Chaconne-chorale theme (m m.158-166),



Example 3.12, Var. 24

or transfers additional voices several octaves up and down (m. m. 106-110;166-172), covering a very wide range of space.



Example 3.13

Occasionally, Busoni switches voices from top to bottom, simultaneously doubling them (Var. 22, example pg.28). The melodic line is very close to Bach's original second inner voice, with a slight alteration. However, what was meant to be a supportive harmony becomes an exclamatory upper voice, and what was a top voice becomes an inner moving voice which is responsible for the feeling of a stately walk

Another way that Busoni highlights the tune is to compose imitational voices, which fill the space between the lower and the upper layers (mm.182-190), thereby intensifying the development of the moment, making the texture tighter and fuller, and dramatizing the whole section.

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system begins at measure 181, marked with a treble and bass clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is indicated as 'poco ruen.' and 'a tempo misurato'. The music features rapid, sixteenth-note passages in both hands, with a 'ff' (fortissimo) dynamic and 'non legato' articulation. The second system starts at measure 184, continuing the intricate texture with similar rapid passages and dynamics like 'fz' (forzando) and 'non legato'. The score is written in a clear, professional notation style.

Example 3.14

In the closing chorales (Vars. 20, 29, 39), which portray the feelings of majestic pathos and sacred elations Busoni increases the number of voices. Occasionally, as in the previous category, he uses imitation, creating a middle layer of voices. The difference

with regard to previous category is that the middle layer is doubled in unison. Altogether this portrays a vibrant and loud sonority (mm.198-205).

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system, starting at measure 198, is marked 'molto cresc.' and 'non legato'. It features a dense texture of chords and arpeggios in both hands. The second system, starting at measure 201, is marked 'sempre ff' and continues the dense texture. The third system, starting at measure 204, is marked 'con fuoco' and 'fs martellato', showing a more rhythmic and accented texture. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 2/4.

Example 3.15, Var. 29, increase in the number of voices.

Often there is double voicing (m m.131-137. See example 3.1).

A certain method of piano playing- like arpeggios and jumps in the left hand (which gives an idea of the wide range of musical space) or the martellato touch (mm..57,67-69,130-137, 254-260) together with the unison movement which encompass three octaves, leaves us with an almost visual image of a large-scale object. The same

idea comes to the listener's mind when Busoni lays bare the inner-voice movement and divides Bach's melodic line in several voices and layers, often doubling voices in unison which creates a dialogue between the motifs and phrases (mm. 57-64 ; 222-224,). He likes to add voices, creating the four-voice harmony, which was only suggested by Bach in the two-voice violin setting (m m. 222-224)



Example 3.16.Var. 7



Example 3.17. Var.32

When one looks at similar moments in other composers' transcriptions, it is difficult to compare them with the Busoni composition. Mendelssohn writes too weak a harmony and texture to support such a dramatic composition, for example (see m m.61-64 Mendelssohn version of the Bach Chaconne); Schumann, in his transcription of the

piece, has an element of the grandiose in certain moments, because he covers a wider range of musical space. However, his chords sound too “light” because of the close setting in which they are written. They do not produce enough sound to support the majestic melody above.

It is helpful to look upon these closing chorales as cadences in the general sense because they appear at specific moments in the structure. They become a focal point, partially because of the reasons given above; the cadences become harbingers of a structural border. When we take into account that Bach often used fuller voicing when writing the cadences (Tocatta and fugue in D minor, WTC), we can see that Busoni maximizes the power, making these moments significant through adding voices, often doubling the thirds (m m. 156- 157). He breaks the melodic line by placing the first note in the group in the bass and the rest in the upper regions, creating a sense of space as well as a dialogue.

In the first appearance of the Chaconne- theme in the upper voice we can hear a Phrygian tetrachord (mm.3-4). This tetrachord, as a “yellow” thread, pervades the musical texture of the “Chaconne”. Although not always obvious, its dark sonoristic color paints all of the material in which it appears. Bach usually used the Phrygian tetrachord in the opening chorales in the bass (for example, Chorale #237). According to Christoph Wolff, it was part of the old system, which Bach combined with the new elements of development. Phillip Spitta showed that Bach made extensive use of old modes in connection with poetic ideas and musical content. The Phrygian tetrachord in the Chaconne plays the role of “death” which is latent inside the chorale. The resemblance to the famous “Dies Irae” sequence strengthens this connection. Busoni promoted this idea

with vigor and underlined it with the Phrygian cadence. It was a cornerstone of the aesthetic of the romantic era, namely the struggle between fate and the individual. It is interesting to note that in the last movement (variation 34 until the end), almost all of the variations, with the exception of Var.32 and the last appearance of the theme at the end, are based on the Phrygian tetrachord. Consequently they are also reduced to a shorter version of the whole theme of the Chaconne (only four measures). It is important to note that in this last appearance the Phrygian tetrachord figures prominently not only in the bass, but also as a stretto imitation (m. 259. Look at the example 3.1).

It almost seems as though Bach concealed a guide to the interpretation in the score! This also explains the relative brevity of the third section of the Chaconne. “Death” is winning, despite human struggle. The Phrygian element does not appear in the first section of the last movement (in variation 32). Rather, this section is dominated by a melodic element which was not promoted in Bach’s version but which was heavily stressed by Busoni, who separated the first note of each group of sixteenths and divided them into two voices. (Look at the example 3. 17)

With the help of articulation (Busoni indicates a certain pianistic touch), the perception of the insistent plea and assuaging stands apart from the other variations. This perception continues to promote their dependence on the Phrygian tetrachord. Another interesting detail is the appearance of the raised sixth scale degree in the bass. It immediately softens the moment and brings to the last instance a fleeting hope.

Often the Phrygian cadence appears in the melody, and several times it appears in the bass. When this happens (for instance, in variations 26 and 28) Busoni creates two genre layers, played simultaneously. On the top we hear a Bach original chordal setting,

in the bass a repeated, rumbling, timpani-like accompaniment, which belongs to the toccata type genre. The bass of the top line follows the descending tetrachord in D-C-B-A (which makes it sound almost as a mixolydian D major), which contradicts a natural D-major (in other words a C natural against C sharp). Could these be elements of polymodality? A foreboding fate threatening a contented present? In this instance, Busoni used an approach similar to Bach's, combining different types of modes in one harmony. Bach often does this through melodic lines, intertwining different types of minors in one melody as in the first two measures in the "Chromatic Fantasy, where up the scale we hear melodic minor, and down ### natural followed by a harmonic minor, or prelude in F minor from the first volume of the WTC.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano variation. The top system, beginning at measure 190, is marked 'più largamente' and 'etwas breiter'. It consists of a treble staff with block chords and a bass staff with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The bottom system, beginning at measure 93, features a treble staff with chords and a bass staff with a more complex rhythmic pattern, including triplets. Dynamic markings 'ff' and 'ten.' are present, along with the instruction 'non arpegg.'.

Example 3.18, Var. 28

The same idea is used in the variation 9. There Busoni alters Bach melodic line underlying the Phrygian mode, with which he stresses the pathos and the dark drama. The

original Bach line is a melodic minor, which as a contradictory dialogue phrase, returns later in a Phrygian mode. In addition, Busoni splits the scale passages, using the first note as a harmonic fulcrum, changing the melodic minor to the natural and combining all of it together. It provides the performer with the idea of an constant struggle, an argument between the plea and the unyielding fate.

Example 3.19 Var. 9

As one of the elements of the development forces, Bach used sequences often, the Chaconne being no exception. It contains many different types of sequences, in which Bach intermittently varied the melodic chain. Often, when the variation is a contrast to previous development, the sequences are not very obvious (See Var.3, mm. 25-27, example 2.2).

However, in the subsequent variations Bach emphasizes one or another type of the sequence. (Var..4, example 3.3). These sequences are responsible for the harmonic

development in which Bach either maintains the same key or modulates. Following Bach's clues, Busoni built them either on one harmony (Vars. 6, 37, mm. 232-233. Look at the example 3.5), or used sixth chords, triads, and diminished sevenths.

Near the end of the Chaconne sequences are the based on the small motivic elements, taken from music material which was already developed throughout the whole composition. Consequently they repeat the Phrygian route. Busoni, using genre layers, was able to use more imitations, which in reality, are also sequences. Although Busoni typically follows Bach's score, in certain instances he prolongs the sequential chain, thereby altering the structure, much like he did in Var. 11. Bach's original score has only four measures of sequential descending line, based on the diminished seventh chord (each new chain is equal to one measure, and moves down by the interval of a second).

The image shows a musical score for Example 3.21, Var. 11. It consists of three systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system starts at measure 82, marked 'molto p' and 'dolente'. The second system starts at measure 84, marked 'p sempre' and 'poco'. The third system starts at measure 86, marked 'poco'. The sequence continues with a final measure marked 'pp'. The music features a descending sequence of diminished seventh chords, with various articulations and dynamics indicated.

Example 3.21, Var. 11

Busoni harmonizes this sequence using layers of texture: the middle layer ascends against Bach's descending melodic line, and the lower bass layer is used to pass chromatic notes, following a hidden Phrygian tetrachord. Busoni increases drama in the variation by adding four measures of the same sequence and reversing the roles of the top two voices. In addition, he alters the route of the bass from a modal cadence to a melodic minor cadence unfolding down. The change to the minor mode is significant because it subtly changes the character of the music, making it sound more like pleading. Bach used diminished seventh chords in circumstances which relayed emotions of grief. We can clearly see how a performer will read this particular line as a passionate expression of human suffering.

Bach used two types of sequences: one belongs to the diatonic category and is typical of the Chaconne's "perpetuum mobile areas like toccatas or recitatives. They have fewer chords to support them, usually are based on the tonic chord some times with an additional seventh. The other sequences are those which belong to the chromatic category. In contrast, they have several chords —sixth-chords, and diminished-chords with different scale degree alterations (mm. 33-37, look at the example on the page 35, Var. 4)

One of the most effective elements in Bach's musical language is an interrupted cadence (Deceptive cadence), which he uses at the end of a form in combination with recitative. For example, Bach uses this element successfully at the end of the Fugue in B-flat minor in the Well Tempered Clavier first volume, before the final stretta we can hear an interrupted cadence, followed by the recitative, which increases the sense of deep philosophical sorrow. Many Bach's chorales have the same type of cadence: "Here Crist,

der ein'ge Gott's Soh," "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme," "Ich ruf ' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ," "Ist Gott mein Shield" und "Helfersmann." etc. This technique of interrupted cadence is used throughout the "Chaconne" to enhance the dramatic effect.

On the border between the triumphant middle section and the beginning of the reprise we can hear a D^7 of the D-major resolving into the sixth chord through a chromatic vii^o7 / VI (diminished seventh chord of the sixth) followed by II^6 and only then- a trill between a D^7 and $I^{6/4}$. These elements are harbingers of the arrival of the doubled tonic in unison. Bach then wrote a sixth scale degree sixth chord, followed by a Phrygian cadence harmonized by seventh chords on the strong first beat. Both Bach and Busoni used the bass line to unite these two harmonies. However, Busoni changes the range of the sixth chord-- the bass leaps an octave higher and the structure of the following chords becomes by contrast tighter and closer.

Using this striking change in sonority, Busoni succeeded in showing extreme facets of human emotion, with a typical nineteenth century sense of drama. In retrospect we can see partially where the atonal Shoenberg aesthetic comes from.

The melodic line in variation 31, which fallows the cadence has characteristics of an improvisatory recitative. Busoni stressed this cadence through the breath sign and tempo (his comment on the tempo is "Largamente" and "Piu sostenuto"), lowering the musical material an octave, thus creating a spatial contrast (not only for genre and the range, but rhythm, texture and harmony as well). This creates a cooling effect- it is not really an interrupted cadence, but considering the circumstances in which the theme appears, it almost sounds like one. An emotional move caused by the combination of different musical elements has been used by Busoni as a powerful tool to create a picture

of extreme dramatic shock.

211

trillo a piacere

Più sostenuto
Ruhiger

mf espress.

214

218

più espress., poco cresc.

Example 3.22, Vars. 30 and 31

One of the most powerful elements in Bach's animation of harmonic language was an organ pedal point, used in many different compositions. It is common knowledge that Bach used dominant and tonic pedal point, especially in the cadence areas. He was one of the first composers to use a dominant pedal point as a tool for accumulating energy and instability. In the Chaconne such zones are immense. One of them contains variations 24, 25 and 26 (dominant pedal point).



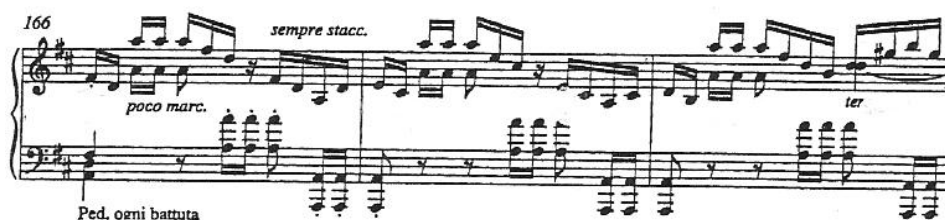
Example 3.23, Dominant pedal point in var. 26

In these variations, Busoni succeeds in creating a picture of immense splendor, with various shades of light, tenderness and severity. In these variations Bach used some intonations which Albert Schweitzer two centuries later would call intonations of “Joy”- three identical even notes repeated in the iambic fashion. These intonations can be found in many other compositions, for example, in the first cello suite , at the end of a prelude- mm.40 -43-top voice.

These sections represent the concentration of many musical forces in order to create an apogee. Busoni takes an advantage of this in order to remind the listener of the majesty of the theme; he combines several musical elements (Var. 24) on the dominant pedal point, with Bach's original harmonic figuration. The difference in genre, range, and articulation helps to portray this variation as one of the highlights of the piece.

In the next two variations Busoni increases the rhythmical activity of all voices by using the “Joy” intonation consecutively, going from top of the musical line to the

bottom (in this particular case the “Joy” intonations are built on the dominant). Because they appear in all three layers one after another- top melody, middle and bass (they become part of the pedal point), we can feel how grandiose the texture and the sound become. This enormous sound also owes some of its grandeur to the progressive use of overtones.. In Var. 26, the “Joy” transfers to the “Battle” intonation, which is a four times one note repeated motif, with the same iambic rhythm as the “Joy” intonations. We can almost hear the roll of drums and the ringing of bells. These intonations on a consistent dominant are repeated by all the voices successively in the style of a roll call. The effect is that of unprecedented growing dynamics- the space and the overtones vibrate between them, the texture grows thicker and all resolves in the glorious chorale on the tonic pedal point- Vars. 27- 30. Busoni creates a harmony out of Bach’s two voice texture (Var. 26) and changes the distribution of the voices. He transfers Bach’s lower voice to the middle of the harmonic chord and changes to sixths what went in thirds. This drastically alters the sonority of the passages and the section. Such intensification of the sonorities, coupled with the rhythm and the range cover, reminds one of a symphonic crescendo.



Example 3.24 Intensification of the sonorities, Var. 25

Busoni does not change harmonic language of these variations, he follows Bach in emphasizing the dominant function, even through short modulation to the A major, (m.

m.168, 172 Var. 25) In this we can see a progression of chords usually found in the cadence areas: $I^{6/4}-V^{v4/3}/V--V-I^{6/4}$. In the second part of variation 26, instead of returning to the harmonic formula mentioned above and used in the previous two variations, both composers resolve through the $V^7--V^{6/5}$ to the tonic, thereby rounding the structure in which a tonic pedal point begins.

The pedal point on the tonic receives accumulated energy from the dominant pedal point. Usually, on the tonic pedal point at the end of the section or at the end of a movement the energy dissolves. At this juncture, however Busoni and Bach reach an almost ecstatic emotional state. This is done with the help of harmonic figuration in the middle layer in Busoni's transcription. Bach has a two voice chorale melody, with imitations. By adding a tonic pedal point, figurations in the middle, and doublings in the chords, there arises a vista of sound. Starting from the 27th variation, Busoni, like Bach, emphasizes the chorale and the chaconne genre, which contrasts greatly with previous material. This contrast invokes the style of a majestic hymn. However, Busoni intensifies and recreates the rhythm in the chorale and hymn sections, through fracture. It is interesting that both composers follow the harmony of the opening theme. For instance, $I-IV(II^2)-VII-IV^6-V^7-I$ makes a nice arch to the beginning, reminding us of the nature of the theme. The genre, the emphasis of both composers on the subdominant function, and the fact that the melodic line has ceased to ascend but instead winds down allow us to conclude that the energy of the music has reached its pinnacle. We also have a spatial effect, which answers to the representative side of the content. For example, in variation 28, where the range of the chorale falls to new, lower boundaries and where the Phrygian tetrachord appears again, it becomes clear that the section is coming to a close. The last

splash of energy in the last two variations of the middle section(Vars. 29 and 30) is based on the contrasting elements, which contain in their music the rising motif in the bass from the beginning of the second section. In addition it is a leading voice in the middle of the texture in the first variations. The Phrygian tetrachord is loudly proclaimed from the top and the bottom chords. The fractional rhythm amplifies the excitement. The ostinato appearance of the familiar intonations portrays the whole episode as one whole section.

Usually the tonic pedal point serves two functions: in the beginning of the structure it collects the energy and propels it further; at the end of the structure it wraps up the development and calms down the excitement of the moment. Chaconne has both types of tonic pedal point. Two most interesting moments in the “life” of the Chaconne happens in the beginning and the end of the first section. These sections contain several tonic pedal points. In Bach’s text (m. m. 77-80), we hear a usual progression harmonizing Phrygian tetrachord I natural -v⁶-iv⁶-i^{6/4}-V(harmonic).

Busoni intensifies and dramatizes this section, making it obvious that it is one of the Chaconne's highlights. After extremely dynamic development through cadenza-like scale passages in thirty-thirds, Busoni establishes a tonic pedal point at the bass (mm.-78-81).

78 *dolce espress.* *mf* *tranquillo* *p*

80 *ff > p*

Example 3.25, Var. 10 tonic pedal point

In the upper voice, (an octave lower than Bach's original material), we hear harmonic figuration, with the typical Busonian habit of separating the first note of the passage from the rest, creating another layer of the texture between the top and the bass. Busoni writes supporting chords, which are a vertical version of the above harmonic line. This creates the impression of almost orchestral fullness. Collecting melodic line in one chord, which simultaneously follows the melody in the different voice became Busoni's trademark in this piece (Var. 10, 33, 34). He adds to the middle layer in the whole texture either chords, which are like a vertical melody, or inner voices (often figurative), which surround the chord progression (Var. 27). In both cases the sonoristic effect is that of space-tutti-, filled with symphonic sound. These moments happen in the culminating zones of the piece. Such arrangement of the piano score becomes an unobtrusive guide to the audience, which allows cognizance of these zones as a pinnacles of the development. The texture, range and the pedal point on which these zones are often built create a scene

of emotional flight which resolves in the series of recitative-like variations , based on the sequences of a diminished seventh chord(Var.11): the energy ebbs down slowly, only to be picked up again in Var. 12 with a continuous, sorrowful recitative.



Example 3.26, Var. 12

This new recitative brings the listener to the another circle of development. It starts on the tonic pedal point based on the first octave “D”. The repeated thirty second static chord figuration comprises the texture, which, coupled with the narrow range, creates a feeling of uncertainty and desperation. The theme appears before us transformed, as if in a new “dress” and in a new timbre- that of the harp.

We hear that the organ pedal has appeared in the theme several times. Each time it manifested itself as a unique texture, range and genre. Busoni also tried to imitate an alternative timbre. In these instance we can hear a development in the appearance of the theme through the sound and color. All “harp” variations—13-18—have tonic pedal point

for at least half of their structure. Often we can hear a repeated reverberating sound an octave higher from the organ pedal. The resonance between the two notes assures that the overtones correspond and as a result produce a bell-like sonority. (A few years later, according to Irina Barsova,³¹ we hear the same type of the percussive sound applied to the harp in the symphonies of Gustav Mahler. His art several decades later would influence music of Dimitry Schostakovitch's and partially similar to Mahler's the use of a harp. However, we should not forget that Busoni was the first, who heard different quality tone in very familiar orchestral instrument. His innovative approach to the sound quality helped to create an uncertain atmosphere in this part of the Chaconne.

³¹ Irina Barsova. Symphonies of Gustav Mahler. (Moscow, Soviet Composer,)1975.

Chapter 4

The Orchestral and Timbre Influences

Musicians have long known that Busoni's transcription of the Chaconne was something exceptional, mostly due to its technical difficulty. Many musicians realized that Busoni's version was intrinsically beautiful, but were not aware of the exact reason. Unfortunately, not many could recognize what exactly happened in the score, or what Busoni did specifically to make it sound like an extraordinary piece of music.

Busoni's transcription attracts the listener and the performer from the very first note because of its sound quality, although few recognized this right away; in fact, it is my sincere belief that part of the magic of the Chaconne lies in the Busoni's unique understanding of sound and timbre.

Busoni's formative years as a musician and composer comprise the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. Growing up in the Romantic era, his art and tastes bear all the burdens and innovations of his time. Being familiar with the orchestral works of Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner, as well as with the earlier music of the Baroque and the Classical era, Busoni's concept of sound was different than that of his predecessors.

Busoni approached the music of Bach's Chaconne from the perspective of the modern piano, which obviously had completely different abilities than the violin. "I start from the impression that Bach's conception of the work goes far beyond the limits and means of the violin, so that the instrument he specifies for performance is not adequate (for its realization)" — this is a draft response by Busoni to the pianist d' Albert in May

1894.³²

The Bach text assumed a smaller plane (level) for the vertical sonorities and timbre specific to the violin, which could not be changed. The color of the timbre could be slightly altered, depending on the technique of the performer. In Bach's time the violin had a smaller, duller, and plainer sound. Such a sound was the result of gut strings on the instrument, a different type of bow and bowing technique, and the baroque style, featuring the absence of regular vibrato and less real legato. After Bach's death, the instrument and its technique evolved rapidly, leading to the more brilliant, more contemporary technique of Mozart's time. The Romantic's built the foundation for what would become today's perception of sound and technique.

The piano of Busoni's time was essentially a modern piano, with a larger sound and more colorful possibilities than the instrument from the early nineteenth century. It can sustain sound, and has a much bigger range than the violin. With the help of the pedal, a good pianist is able to recreate a multi-faceted sound.

The progress of piano technique and that of the instrument itself (longer steel strings, steel frame, pin block, and tension in the strings) produced a growth in the sound volume and became part of the Romantic tendencies in the development of piano literature. One of these tendencies was the harmonic achievement of the Romantic composers, namely the idea of depth. One of the most striking ideas of Busoni in transcribing the Chaconne was that he perceived the violin texture of the Chaconne with a much deeper quality of sound. In transcribing the Chaconne, he added depth to the piano

³² Paul Banks, Preface to the Chaconne (Leipzig, New York: Peters, 1973), 3

texture. On the baroque violin it is impossible to get this effect, even if the chords are located in the lowest possible register of the instrument, where the opening theme of the Chaconne is played. On the violin chords are usually played “arpeggiato” and with sweeping movement from the lowest note to the upper one of the chord, rather than simultaneously. Jaap Schroeder writes:

The need to arpeggiate three-and four part chords is most certainly not an unfortunate limitation of our instrumental technique. On the contrary, such arpeggiation heightens the rhetorical eloquence and should be carefully cultivated. Depending on the effort desired, a chord can be played either with a dramatic sweeping movement or as a leisurely spread arpeggio.³³

This means that the overtones of each note of the chord cannot be sustained and die out quickly. On the piano all the notes in the chord can be played simultaneously and be sustained. This allows the overtones to blend and support each other, and creates a fuller sonority. In the lower register the chords sound more “orchestral,” often fuller and deeper, depending on the scoring. The strings in the lower registers of the piano are longer, and create a louder, deeper sound than the high strings and the strings of a violin. Busoni contrasts the loud, low chords with the quiet high chords to create a “spatial” effect. In the smaller and higher strings of the violin the chords will always sound less dense, because proportionally the vibrational wave is smaller. That is why Busoni transposed the theme of the opening chorale an octave lower□ because he was able to

³³ Jaap Schroeder, “The Chaconne and Baroque Tradition,” in *The Bach Chaconne for Solo Violin. A Collection of Views*, ed. Jon Eiche (Bloomington, Indiana: Frangipani Press, 1985), 133.

create from the very first note a depth and fullness of sound which contributes to the tragic and dramatic image of the music.

In this transcription Busoni also divides the chords for the main voice and the accompanying voices, very much like the top orchestral voice and the rest of the score voices. For the audience to feel the depth in Bach's score is not possible, because for Bach the chord is a result of the equal voicing, which comes from the polyphonic nature of his thinking, thus the chord becomes an acoustical color. Having divided the voices into the primary and the harmonic, Busoni at the end of the first exposition of the theme crosses the hands, underlining the primary voice and distributing the voices amongst the hands. Thus he achieves the affect of spatial depth both acoustically and visually. He momentarily draws attention away from the descending upper voice (a Phrygian tetrachord). Bach and Busoni both aim only subtly to feature the clandestine Phrygian tetrachord until its presence in the composition can no longer be ignored. The evolution of the tetrachord throughout the Chaconne is slow, yet pervasive.

Strata (which are discussed in the fifth chapter) are the realization of the idea of depth and stereophonic sound, which Busoni promoted. The listener can hear both concepts in the repetition of the figurative motif and in the scale passages in different contrasting registers. In Busoni's transcription, the idea of depth engenders a stressed dialogue arrangement of the melodic and harmonic lines. A dialogue includes two often contrasting ideas such as life and death, choice and fate. Its use results in ideas that are presented at opposite extremes of musical texture, or that proceed in opposite directions.

Franz Liszt, whose music and art Busoni viewed as a link between German and Italian musical culture, was one of the first pioneers who tried to use the piano to produce

orchestral sonorities. This inevitably led to a change of expression and sense of color in the piano sound, as well as the development of a new harmonic language. Busoni's approach to the piano followed in the Lisztian tradition, which meant a big, full sound, almost like an orchestra. A Paris critic wrote about Busoni's performance:

he transformed the piano into an impressive substitute for the orchestra...In her opinion his rendering of compositions involved their total exposure and produced some surprising sounds.³⁴

Ferruccio Busoni heard the piano with orchestral quality tone timbres. He was not the first composer who tried to imitate orchestral sound through pianistic touch. Franz Liszt, his beloved compositional mentor, did it many years earlier, transcribing, for example, Beethoven's Symphonies. The difference, however, lies in the knowledge for the pianist which of the orchestral timbres and details are involved. Liszt wrote in the scores of his transcriptions precisely which idealized sound of Beethoven's orchestral timbres should be heard by the performer on the piano. He even uses "Beethoven's original phrasing, even where this conflicts with the pianists best interests."³⁵ Instead of the simple reproduction of the orchestral score Liszt tries through the pianistic texture and technique to reproduce an orchestral effect.

Busoni, on the other hand, tries to reproduce in the Chaconne (in the piece originally written for a string instrument--the violin) through pianistic technique, sound and touch, an orchestral effect. The Italian master imagines the orchestral timbres in the

³⁴ H. H. *Stuckenschmidt, Ferruccio Busoni: Chronicle of a European* (Great Britain, Calder and Boyars, 1970), 79

³⁵ Alan Walker, *Reflections on Liszt* (Ithaca and London. Cornell University Press, 2005), 20.

texture of Bach's violin piece and reproduces a pseudo-orchestral sound. He heard a certain quality in the sound and stressed it: "Busoni's recreation of the Chaconne in pianistic terms is an astonishing tour-de-force, conjuring up a dazzling array of keyboard textures, some of which (see bar 138) quite explicitly evoke an orchestral equivalent)."³⁶



Example 4.1. Var. 21, Busoni imagines tromboni timbre in it.

In the beginning of the D Major section Busoni wrote --"quasi tromboni." He also wrote in the score of his fourth Sonatina for piano--"Campana" or "Campane di Nathale," in the Kammer-Fantasie we see the remark "quasi Tromba," in the Sonatina seconda he asks the pianist to play "quasi Violoncello;" frequently he imitates on the piano a specific type of instrument playing, for instance in the 24 Variation in the Chaconne the composer imitates the violin through a pizzicato-like sound (the pianist needs to play short light staccato in the dynamic of pp). In the Kammer-Fantasie we find an indication in the piano score of the specific violin technique--spiccato, in the Sonatina Seconda--spiccatissimo;

³⁶ Paul Banks, op. cit., 6

in the variation 28 of the Chaconne we hear a rumbling of the timpani; variations 13--18 sounds like the harp. It is interesting to note that Busoni stressed repeated notes in them to be played staccato, thereby getting a striking tone. That is exactly the way Alfred Brendel describes such a moment: "Do not forget that the harp is a plucked instrument. The pianist should play harp notes with round fingers "*sempre poco staccato*" within the sustained pedal." ³⁷ It is very interesting and unusual for the imitation-harp sound to be used as a partially percussive instrument. However, in this instance the piano produces the correct result. It is also peculiar that Busoni was (to the best of my knowledge) the first composer who conceived of the timbre of the harp through a percussive approach. Several years later this process was reversed in Gustav Mahler's symphonies, and several decades later in Dimitry Shostakovich's orchestral music.

Inheriting the grand orchestral tradition of romantic music and its great sound enabled Busoni to enrich the Chaconne with innovative tone quality, which was nevertheless familiar to the audience, thus making it more acceptable. The dark, rich and tragic expression of tone quality in the Busoni's version could come from the Berlioz "Symphonie Fantastique" (especially the last movement) and its monumental decorativeness combined with the sharpened timbre awareness could come from Wagner's operas. The wide variety of piano timbres are full of implications taken from the dance, the symphony and the opera of the past, and they embody philosophical ideas and serve the expressive goals in the Bach- Busoni Chaconne.

Simultaneously, several other more contemporary analogies can be seen in Busoni's

³⁷ Alfred Brendel, *Turning the piano into the orchestra in On Music Collected Essays* (Chicago: A Cappella Books, 1976), 286.

interest in color, timbre and sound. In all of his experiments with piano writing, technique and color, Busoni was not alone. Some of his contemporaries were trying to do similar things, among them the Frenchman Claude Debussy, who experimented with timbres and sonorities in orchestral music as well as in his piano compositions. Busoni was familiar with some of Debussy's works, and liked them so much that he fashioned his “Nuit de Noel” and “An die Jugend” (especially the former) after the French composer’s “Pour le Piano,” which is stated in Busoni’s manuscript. Many piano pieces of Debussy, especially his twenty four Preludes (1908–1913), represent a study in timbre. We can see in them a continuation of Lisztian traditions in developing pianistic colors. Many pages of the piano scores sound and look like an orchestral score, especially preludes from the second volume, where all preludes (Nos.13-24) are written on three line staves. Busoni wrote the Chaconne in 1897, fifteen years earlier than Debussy’s Preludes. In Variation 18 he also uses three-line staff; and many voices in the piece sound like individual solo timbres, since they are deeply differentiated by color. (Apparently, such writings will become part of Busoni’s personal compositional style, because same way of setting the texture we will see in many of his later works like *Sonatina seconda* and *Kammer-Fantasie*). We can hear the same approach in the second volume of Debussy's Preludes. It is enough to look at the last prelude “Feux d'artifice”—to find many expressive color-timbre sonorities in abundance.

In each of his compositions Busoni has detailed instructions on how to play and how to achieve the sound he has in mind: “marcati i temi,” “A mezzo voce parlando,” “mormorando e sempre dim,” “Perdendosi, oscurandosi, Espressivo intimamente, dolce chiaro, Spiccato, strappato, sempre piu calmando e scemando, piu languendo,” etc. In

each prelude Debussy like Busoni in his scores gives similar instructions to the performer: “aussi léger et pp que possible,” “laissez vibrer,” “Les notes marquées du signe-doucement timbrées,” etc.

Since Busoni wrote the Chaconne several years earlier than Debussy’s Preludes, we have no evidence that Debussy knew about the Chaconne. On the other hand, during his time in Russia Debussy was very interested in many events in the Russian musical arena and undoubtedly he knew about Busoni and his compositions. The artistic figure of the author of the Chaconne, during his short time in Moscow, created quite a stir in Russian musical circles. Busoni connects with Debussy, despite their complete difference in style, through his colorful perception of the pianistic sound and texture. However, being a composer from the German school, which is so opposite to the aesthetic of the French school, Busoni kept an attitude toward harmony as function, not as an acoustical “cluster.”

Debussy in this regard is closer to Bach in his approach to the sound. Busoni also parallels Debussy since in their early years of composition they both tried to find new colorful expressions and new sonorities. Their aesthetic approach was very different, despite the similarity of some of their technical forms. It is interesting that both composers hold the music of Bach in the highest esteem, and refer to his compositions as a well from which anybody could partake.

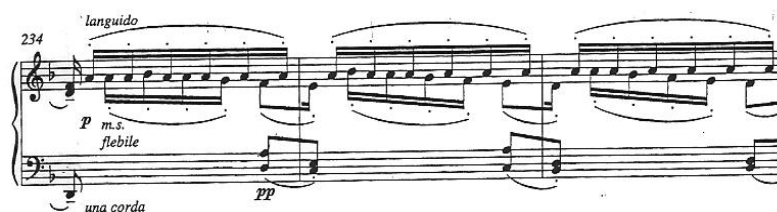
Both Busoni and Debussy use similar methods in their piano writing, which approximates orchestral scoring. Between them, we need first to notice timbre personification. It was already mentioned in Busoni’s case; in Debussy “Le petit Berger” and “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” where the oboe timbre is imitated, are examples.

Another similarity is the use of doubled chords, which we hear through contrasting registers; and harp-like passages (compare the Busoni Chaconne Vars.13--18, with Debussy's "Ondine," "Feux d'artifice," and "Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest").



Example 4.2 , Var.13(harp-like passages).

Both composers feature repetitions of figurative motives, which often are based on the intervals of a second (see the Busoni Chaconne Vars.13, 34;



Example 4.3

and the middle section of Debussy's prelude No.7, "Le collines d'Anacapri," and "Des pas sur la neige").

It is interesting to note that in the twentieth century the influence of Debussy's orchestral and piano writings affected in many different ways several composers who hold different aesthetic positions, including Igor Stravinsky and Sergei Prokofiev. Transcribing the "Rite of Spring" for piano, four hands without imitating the timbral colors on the piano would sound meager and weak. Imagining the timbres of woodwind

instruments in the first movement of Stravinsky's Piano Sonata helps the performer achieve the right quality of touch and sound. It would be a dull performance if a pianist was ignorant of this relationship. He would therefore not be able to reproduce the orchestral timbres in Prokofiev's Piano Suite from the ballet Romeo and Juliet. It is important to note, however, that it was Ferruccio Busoni who was the first composer after Liszt in the German influenced countries to start the process of identifying timbres in piano music, before Debussy. Busoni went on to develop the "New Classicality," founding a new way of expressing thoughts through sound, color, and timbre.

Busoni follows Bach in this endeavor. For him, the expressiveness of color and timbre are inseparable. The difference is that Bach conceived of the D minor Partita in a single dimension and heard colors in it as a violin timbre. Busoni opens the borders of violin sound to the bigger and fuller sonoristic adventures of the piano. "To be able to give a passage the needed expression, a passage conceived by the composer far beyond the instrument, one must go far beyond the instrument with one's imagination,"³⁸ says George Enescu about playing the Chaconne on the violin.

For Busoni the layers of sonorities represented different colors; the music gained more volume.

In his transcription of the Preludes and Fugues in D, E-flat, and E minor the editor has devoted much care to registration, and he refers to them as a collection of examples of this method. The piano transcription of the Chaconne for the same master may be included in the series, in as much as the editor has in both cases treated tonal effect in an organistic sense. This procedure, which has been

³⁸ Hedi Gigler-Dongas, "Symbolism of the Cosmic Triad in Bach's Chaconne," in *The Bach Chaconne for violin solo. A collection of view*, (Bloomington, Indiana, Frangipani Press., 1985), 103

variously attacked, finds its justification chiefly in the meaningful content which cannot attain complete expression through the violin, and also in the example set by Bach in the characteristic organ transcription of his violin fugue in G minor.³⁹

Busoni exploited all the resources of the instrument (as Bach did for the violin), which produced new colors. It is easy to see that the composer not only transcribes the violin part to the piano texture, but he also imitates the sound of other instruments, for example the harp (Vars.13–17), or the aforementioned trombones in the beginning of the middle movement;



Example 4.4

pizzicato violin (Var.24).

³⁹ Ferruccio Busoni, First Appendix to *The Well-Tempered Clavichord*, Vol. 1, by Johann Sebastian Bach, revised, annotated, and provided with parallel examples and suggestions for the study of modern piano-forte technique by Ferruccio Busoni, (New York: G. Schirmer; Boston: Boston Music Co.; Leipzig: Fr. Hofmeister, 1894), 169.

Example 4.5 a

Example 4.5, b.
and timpani (Var.28)

We can remember that Antony Beaumont in his book “Busoni the composer”[□] writes of Busoni's obsession with bells:

...which Ronald Stevenson has traced back to the acoustical surroundings in which the composer grew up. Festive tolling of bells is already to be found in an early Busoni's piano piece entitled “Preparazione alla Fiesta” (from Una fiesta di Villagio, op. 9); for the early

1880's this bell imitation is quite remarkable.⁴⁰

(Ronald Stevenson obviously forgot that Liszt wrote “La Campanella” much earlier and that Busoni was aware of its existence.) We can hear this same bell sound in many places in the Chaconne. In fact, I would like to remind the reader that the opening of the theme of the variations starts with the intonational quality of a bell fanfare.



Example 4.6, Chorale theme

The “Campane” sound occurs in Variation 7, and a tingling of the Glockenspiel in the Variation 30, in D major section and at the end of it. The bell sound also appears in the Vars. 34 and 35.



Example 4.7. Var. 35

“Busoni’s love of bells must have been founded on their complex haze of

⁴⁰ Antony Beaumont, *On Music: Collected Essays* (Chicago, Ill.: A Cappella Books, 2001), 35

overtones in which one could pick out any number of themes or chords at random-- an earthly representation of the vibrations of the "Sounding Universe."⁴¹ The color of the timbre becomes more expressive in the Chaconne, and the expressiveness becomes more memorable. It underscores the poetical meaning of the music. Antony Beaumont writes that Busoni never attempted to make a piano sound like an orchestra. I would have to disagree with this statement; it would appear that an old-fashioned view colored the author's lines. The noted German musicologist H. H Stuckenschmidt in his book "Busoni" perspicaciously observes:

He saw the instrument as some kind of super orchestra. One has only to compare his transcriptions with the originals, no matter whether these are organ pieces or orchestral scores, in order to have the clearest possible picture of the spiritual path that he followed in his music... In Busoni's art inspiration and realization have become one.⁴²

The fact that Busoni emphasizes the matter of orchestral sound and timbres is a unique element for focusing the attention of the audience. Busoni leads the audience to the imaginary sound of a certain orchestral instrument. The image of this orchestral sound is vaguely familiar to listeners (even if the audience does not recognize it immediately). The vague recollection of a familiar sound dressed up in a specific timbre will prod the listener's imagination. The appearance of an identical sound during the development of the piece becomes one of the many tools which helps the listener to recognize its

⁴¹ Antony Beaumont, op. cit., 265

⁴² H. H. Stuckenschmidt, *Ferruccio Busoni. Chronicle of a European* (Great Britain: Calder and Boyars, 1970), 92

structure. Together, with other tools of musical expressiveness, it enriches the perception of the twentieth century audience.

The sound and timbre also serve to guide the listener through the material by using rhythmic patterns and articulation to indicate where the music should increase and decrease in volume, thereby stressing significant moments in the piece. The familiar timbre accent allows the listener in the concert hall to adapt to the contemporary music. The sound that Busoni attempts to achieve using timbres caters to the demands of a twentieth century audience, which has become increasingly accustomed to multicolored, stereophonic sound and synthesizers.

Unlike all of his predecessors in the endeavor of transcribing the Chaconne for the piano, (amongst them Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms), Busoni heard this music differently. It can be seen in his attitude towards texture, and as a result of the vertical, which comes from the idea of a layer, (we will discuss the idea of a layer in the chapter the Form of the Chaconne). From this idea comes Busoni's attitude towards the treatment of the music of the Chaconne as an orchestral tutti and solo parts. We recognize these comparable moments by the music material, texture, register and dynamic dramatize the music. The comparison between orchestral and solo episodes represent Busoni's favorite dialogue type of treatment of musical material and it all contributes to the enrichment of musical image. The "solo" part over an accompaniment usually belongs to the lyrical sphere (Vars. 3, 34) and often is expressed in virtuosic cadenzas (Vars. 9, 12). Sometimes, we can hear it as a top of the layer, like in the variations 3, 24. The orchestral part we can hear through the solemn processional music (Vars. 2, 22), as well as the ecstatic jubilation which requires a grandiose sound (Vars. 29, 30). It is very

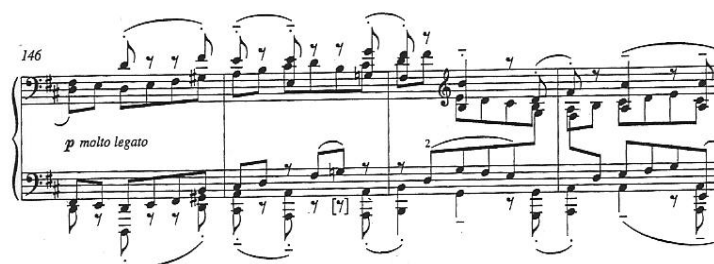
possible that such treatment of the piano texture comes from studying Liszt's transcriptions of the Beethoven's Symphonies. To emphasize the difference between these two parts Busoni used comparison of music and the texture as well as a timbre palette of the piano sound. Such actions deepened the contrast between the music materials and became other dramatizing elements in the score.

For every composer, the texture is a representation of a musical idea. The character, color, imitative timbre, and structure of the theme depend on the choice of texture (e.g. thin or dense, chords or scales, polyphony or homophony). Every group of variations in the Chaconne has a certain type of texture that unites it with the rest. For Busoni the quality of the sound and texture becomes very important. He hears Bach's piece through orchestral setting. By stressing orchestral timbers in the writing and in the mind of a performer and the listener, he stresses a rounded volume of orchestral sound. By sharply changing registers from top to bottom, comparing them, and doubling them, Busoni effectively creates a different piano sound and sonoristic effect. His Chaconne delivers an almost stereophonic sound, instead of the monophonic characteristic of the violin version. The violin representation of the Chaconne is meant to be performed from one focal space point--the stage. Busoni transcription uses the same surroundings, however the sound quality is different. We know that before he wrote the Chaconne, he studied the organ works of J. S. Bach and transcribed several of them for the piano. Active reverberation (so characteristic of organ music in the church), influenced the sound of the Busoni's Chaconne as well. The organ delivers its sound from different locations, depending on where the pipes are situated. In his endeavor to create a fuller sonority, Busoni uses all piano registers, with thick layers of texture and pedal. Together,

with all other components of the musical language, it creates almost stereophonic sound.

What distinguishes Busoni's arrangement from others is also that he uses several opposite timbre combinations at the same time, thus realizing the orchestral score idea. When he combines quasi pizzicato violins' timbre with low brass (chorale) in variation 24, it helps to create a fuller spatial sonority of the orchestra. At this moment he creates a timbral strata. Another example could be variation 27, where orchestral tutti in the chords are competing for attention with the rapid strings passages in the middle layer.

Bach clearly indicates which voice at the moment takes the leading position and which plays an imitative role. In Busoni's transcription, the function of the voices can be changed. In the piano texture, timbres unfurl at the borders of the structure. Every voice can play both the main and the accompanying role, as a result of the polyphonic nature of Bach's original score. We can see it clearly in the aforementioned example of Var. 22, where the functions of the voices change on the second beat: the top voice becomes accompanimental, while the middle voice leads the development.



Example 4.8. Var.22

It has already been shown how Busoni doubles chords in various ranges. In doing this, the composer realizes the principle of orchestral register contrast combining layers of

high pitched sonorities and timbres—chords or unisons—with low pitched groups. As a result, the quantity of similar overtones increases, which makes the chords and textures sound fuller, bigger and more dense (Vars.18, 29) .

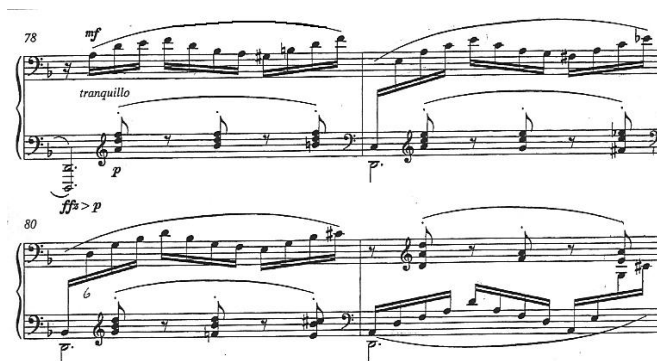


Example 4.9.Var.29

Music that is written for the high strings cannot produce dense sonorities, because of the shortness of the string. A lot of the expressiveness comes from the manner of playing the chords on the violin, through a certain type of bowing. On the piano, the combination of similar overtones from the different ranges, (longer and shorter strings) allows Busoni to create a very saturated, almost orchestral, texture and sonority. Each layer produces a certain amount of overtones: some are shorter, some are longer. Combined, they not only double the volume of the existing sound, but increase it several times more, pushing the space and the strings between the layers to resonate. Such experiments with sound had been tried before Busoni by John Field, Frederic Chopin and especially Franz Liszt. Busoni, being a good student, creates a truly magnificent orchestral sonority on the piano, while going even further, and differentiating orchestral

timbres through the piano sound.

Another way of creating the illusion of orchestral sound becomes apparent when Busoni experiments with the textural treatment of the motifs. He transfers the elements of a motif from one voice to another, he deliberately separates the first note in the group from the rest, creating a question-answer expression, which also demands a color change in playing; Here, the combination of the different overtones, supported by the harmony, floating from the bottom to the upper voice or, vice versa, in consecutive time, creates the feeling of wide space, which is filled with the different sonorities and colors. (Vars.10, 12,19)



Example 4.10, Var.10

Busoni clearly tries to overcome the closed space of the piano sonority. He divides the piano texture into several layers of space. Moving in his quest for emotional fulfillment in developing Bach's Chaconne characters, from the lower range to the upper one, comparing them in the dialogue fashion, Busoni achieves a very different quality of a sound. It produces almost stereophonic type of sound..

Every line in Busoni's interpretation of the piece is clear and pliable. He changes

the range of the theme and other musical material not only because it is more convenient for the instrument and its technique, but also because of the colorfulness and the expressiveness of the music. The color itself also becomes more individualized, bright and expressive, (comparing to the Bach original), transposing emotions, and the expression becomes more colorful, when considering different pianistic approaches and the range of the instrument. He uses the expression of color as a tool for showing an emotional moment. For example, through comparison of the lush bright triumphant apotheosis at the end of the second movement, and emotionally shattered beginning of the third movement, where the theme sounds almost perplexed and thin, Busoni creates a tragic picture. The score of the overtones in the harmony and texture are three times more at the end of a movement than in the beginning of a third movement. The richness of the piano texture, (which occupies most of the keyboard), along with the rhythmical movement, melodic and harmonic support provide a big comparison, a contrast to the thin and ascetic close chords in one layer.

We can find more evidence that Busoni was influenced by orchestral thought and sound in his treatment of the contrapuntal texture. Usually there is one main voice and another which is less prominent. When we talk about the main and contrapuntal voice in the Bach Chaconne, we have to realize that often the textures of Busoni's composition are layers of several different thematic materials. In this particular instance, it is very hard to distinguish between the most and least important material. Busoni frequently changes the texture in the variations. This occurs during the end of the structure on the main beat, and never in the middle of a thought or structure. It is reminiscent of the classical method of changing timbres in the orchestra on the main beat, where the first timbre disappears and

the new one takes over. As an example, we can look at the end of the second variation and the beginning of the third; or the end of the fourth — beginning of the fifth; thirty sixth variation going to thirty seventh — all of them showing the same idea.



Example 4.11. Var.2

Another important texture change happens when a new layer appears together with the first one, adding to the number of the voices. This changes the function of the main voice to the continuous contrapuntal. In variation 22 (example 4.8), the top voice is Busoni's creation, the middle (originally Bach's top) becomes an inner escort. Transformation from one role to another happens on the second beat of the dance (Chaconne), which stresses the genre and the timbre as well.

Richard Wagner, whose orchestral scores often were on Busoni's writing table, used to switch bass with the middle voices, when the melodic line was stable. Gustav Mahler, Busoni's contemporary, picks up this approach and goes further. Irina Barsova in her book "The Symphony of Gustav Mahler" noted several interesting moments in Mahler's treatment of the texture, which applies to the aforementioned texture changes in Busoni's Chaconne as well.⁴³ Who influenced whom is hard to tell. Both composers were

⁴³ Irina Barsova, *The Symphonies of Gustav Mahler* (Moscow: Soviet composer, 1975),

looking in their art for a different type of sound, they were both influenced by the music of Bach and Wagner:

He took a serious interest in and frequently admired the work of other great composers such as Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, Claude Debussy and Bela Bartok. But even in his admiration, he remained critical; his appreciation was always qualified.⁴⁴

However, we should not forget that Busoni wrote the Chaconne almost at the same time (1893) when Mahler finished his first Symphony (1888); the first performance was in Budapest in 1889, the first performances in Germany in Hamburg and Weimar in 1894.

The young pianist-composer, who tried to do his best in the performance field, who strove to compose music which would be clear and expressive, was one of the innovators in the field. He used traditional tools having in mind new images and sounds. He succeeded in part, and prepared the way for others, who would use the same tools, but in a different harmonic language and a different attitude toward structure, creating a new musical world, and influencing future generations of composers.

In the twentieth century, it became possible for the first time to preserve a performance through recording. Finally, we were able to hear the sounds of different instruments and their interpretations by famous performers and have a historical perspective of each interpretation. In the matter of stylistic authenticity of earlier eras, such as Baroque for example, many musicians were able to recreate the original texts, but did so according to traditions and analytical resources from contemporary manuscripts.

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⁴⁴ H. H. Stuckenschmidt, *Ferruccio Busoni, Chronicle of a European* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1970), 95.

There are many discussions about what the historic performance should be, what kind of sound should be used, what kind of bowings, etc. However, because of our knowledge and the ability to hear variety of performances, we can discuss the differences between the Romantic and Classical or Baroque attitude in the interpretations. In this view it becomes clear that the sound by itself becomes a historical category as well as an element of the style. A listener in the concert hall expects to hear a certain type of a sound in the particular style: in the classical concert a full, clear, and even vibrating sound, almost stereophonic; in the rock concert a loud electronic, engineered sound. Contemporary listeners know that music of the Baroque should not be performed with a Romantic type of a sound and dynamics and vice versa. Today we are imitating the sound of the Gregorian chant, Ars Nova, and Baroque through even “white” sound, slightly hollow, without many overtones and vibrato. In vocal performance we call it an instrumental sound. Because of it, we can assume that during Bach’s time the Chaconne probably had the effect on the audience of deep saturated sound. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Baroque type of a sound did not satisfy the aesthetic demands of the listener. The development of instruments, orchestral technique and effects, enlargement of the acoustical space of the hall and the development of the other arts (opera, literature as well as paintings etc) led to the sophisticated concept of what the sound of the Romantic music should be ### big, round, and full of color, shades, and depth. Sophisticated philosophical ideas and historical concepts led to the search for a new, emotionally charged sound. In Busoni’s art, this search resulted in the attempt to create a stereophonic sound, which in our time has become the norm and which the listener expects to hear in a concert hall as well as in other media--radio, television, and compact discs. Busoni’s

acquaintance, critic Rita Boetticher, in her essay “Busoni’s Music and Microphone”

which was published in 1934:

...goes on to draw parallels between his ability to exchange one sound effect for another and modern attempts to track down new or imitative sounds with electrical devices... In 1906 in America Busoni had been introduced to the electric dynamophone invented by Dr. Taddeus Cahill; the possibilities it offered of producing synthetic sound fascinated him and inspired a vivid description of the instrument in his “Outline for a New Musical Aesthetic.”⁴⁵

Busoni was a twentieth-century pioneer in the sphere of chamber music and particularly piano music, who was looking for the new aesthetically pleasing and adequate twenty century sound.

Busoni’s work was just the beginning of the development of new ideas in musical language and piano writing, and only a small number of his accomplishments in this field were recognized during his lifetime. Nevertheless, he was the one who paved the way for other unique compositional endeavors.

⁴⁵ H.H. Stuckenschmidt, *Ferruccio Busoni. Chronicle of a European* (Great Britain, London: Calder and Boyars, 1970), 80

Chapter 5

Different aspects of the Form of the Chaconne

One of the most exciting possibilities for a composer is the challenge of creating variations from one of his themes, some themes being alike, and others different. This process forges new facets to the composition, and thus creates new possibilities for development. For these reasons, the variation form, one of the oldest on the planet, remains one of the most exciting and useful form in any style of music, and will be for ages to come.

The Bach-Busoni Chaconne is written in the variation form (as it is well known and was mentioned before). In this, Bach followed the tradition of his time by writing the Sarabandes, Folias and Chaconnes in the variation form, which was characteristic of these genres. Bach loved the form and was very adept with it, as evidenced by his numerous compositions in this particular form. I would like to point to the so-called “Goldberg” Variations, the “Crucifixus” from the B minor Mass, the middle movement of the harpsichord Concerto in D minor, etc. While the last two compositions were written on a basso ostinato, the others are free variations on the theme. However, it is easy to see that Bach was using other forms in these variations as well. In order to support such enormous compositions as the “Goldberg” Variations, he needed other means to sustain the structure. Relative independence of the theme and clear separation of one variation from another (in the long run) often create a situation in which it is difficult to maintain a coherent structure. Thus it became a common practice for many composers, Bach included, to combine several variations into small groups, inside one

overarching variation form. And that's also why we can find traces of other forms as well. We found them in the tripartite form (Chaconne), in the canons which appear after every third variation, in the use of familiar yet different dance genres ("Goldberg"), and in the use of polyphonic type development. Usually, in such variations, the tonal plan does not change. However, Bach would not be Bach if he could not find some interesting changes to the norm. For example, in the famous D minor Harpsichord Concerto, in the second movement, the thirteen-measure bass theme in its third and fourth statement appears in the dominant and subdominant keys; another example is the Chaconne's middle section, which is written in the parallel key—D major. An important aspect of the variation to consider is whether or not it has a coda, because it confirms the completeness of the cycle. The D minor Chaconne has one, as well as the "Goldberg" Variations.

The Bach-Busoni Chaconne begins as is traditional, with the theme followed by the variations. The agreed upon number of variations varies, depending on the era of musicological thought. Some musicologists count every variation as an unchanging eight-measure unit. Others question how many measures are in the theme, often presenting it as only a four-measure structure. I believe the answer to this dilemma is that the theme is eight measures long, with a repeated beginning and two different cadences, and it is followed by thirty nine variations. My analysis of the Chaconne reveals that while most of the variations are eight measures long, some are shortened by a half (only four measures). The variations tend to become shorter toward the end of the piece for the reasons that were discussed earlier in the Chapter 3, "Selected Textural and Harmonic Elements in the Chaconne." On a larger scale, all of the variations are grouped in a

tripartite fashion, in which the opening theme in different “dress” appears in the beginning and before the end of each section.

Bach used different means of developing these variations. One of the methods that he employed was to arrange several variations in groups that use the same type of development, emotional heights and genre characteristics. These groups usually consists of two or three variations. During a certain stage of the development of the whole, he concentrated on particular intonations, which hold a special meaning for Bach and for the performer, who is supposed to deliver these meanings to the audience. For example, Bach uses the Phrygian tetrachord at the end of the composition, or the “Joy” motif in the middle section (Vars. 24-25); he also uses the same or similar intonations, themes, genres and means of development in the different parts of the whole composition.

Rudy Marcozzi claims that there is another structural component, which helps to cement the variations together. He explains, that on a deeper level of structure there are:

sixteen measures which occur sixteen times to create the 256 measures of the chaconne. In this way, the smaller 4 and 8-measure phrases at the surface level are given underlying structural support. By displacing the beginnings and the ends of the smaller surface units so that they does not necessarily coincide with those of the deeper structural units, Bach is able to provide strength to the massive chaconne.⁴⁶

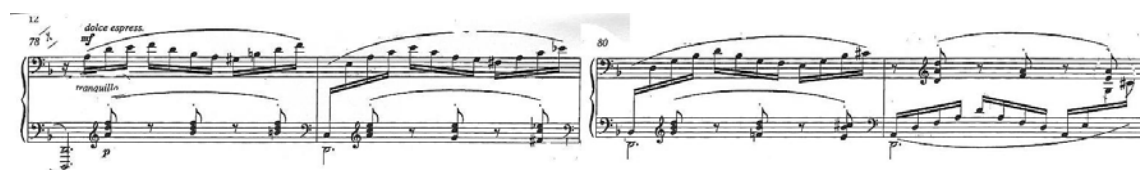
One can disagree with this assessment; however, it could be attributed to the different

⁴⁶ Rudy Marcozzi, “Deep-level structures in J. S. Bach’s D minor Chaconne,” in

type of analytical method used by Marcozzi.

Busoni's contribution to the structural development of Bach's Chaconne manifests itself on several different levels. One such contribution was the promotion of a dialogue style development, which Busoni inherited from the Romantic era. It illuminates the music's more individualized character and also affects the interpretation. The influence of the dialogue idea upon the Chaconne will be discussed in connection with many aspects of Busoni's treatment of the form.

Busoni likes to accentuate the dialogue type melodic line. He separates the melodic line, dividing it between the main beat in the bass and the rest in the top voice (Var.10):



Example 5.1, Var.10

he highlights inner voices of the melodic line, creating another layer of texture(var.7):

10 *largamente*
breit
f
marcatissimo

61 *con bravura*
m.d.
non affrettare

Example 5.2, Var. 7

he divides the melody in to different segments, often dividing it into two separate voices

(Var. 4):

32 *poco espress* *quasif* *p* *quasif*

35 *p* *quasif* *poco* *dolce*

Example 5.3, Var. 4

he directs part of the melody as an ascending voice then sharply switches directions to the descending line for an answering voice in the low register.



Example 5.4, Var.5

He accentuates the sonorities of the line through the texture, using a unison movement and supporting the main harmonic function in it through the rhythm, for example### mm. 33 and 230, thus creating arches. Such information for the performer becomes invaluable and it also provides guidance. It helps the audience to recognize the shape of the music and to form their own understanding of the piece, create their own interpretation.

One of the very interesting illustrations of it is the opening theme. It is written in the genre of the chorale, which will appear almost in the same texture, at the end of the first section (mm.130-137). However, in this appearance of the theme, Bach and Busoni after him reverse the theme, starting at the second part of it. The leap to the climatic B-flat in the melody of Var. 20 (an exclamatio motif) as the first cadence in this variation instead of the second, like it sounded in the first appearance of the theme, indicates that it indeed has reached a climax. It also clarifies it as a coda within the first large section of the Chaconne. It becomes very significant that, by starting the chorale from the second

part of the theme, both composers avoided the appearance of a Phrygian tetrachord. This tetrachord ruled the field several variations before and represented a mighty, inexorable force. By avoiding it and ending the first part of the chorale on the D major chord, Bach and Busoni emphasize the turn of events towards “Hope,” toward a happier circumstance. It is also very interesting that the second part of the theme is built mainly on the “sigh” sequence, the first chain of which is the end of the first cadence. This by itself suggests nothing unusual, but what is unusual is that the cadence concludes not on the minor triad tonic, but on the parallel major one, with the third scale degree on the top of the chord.



Example 5.5. Var. 20. End of the first section. Chorale.

One cannot disregard such harmonic procedure because it is indeed the end of a cadence, and it is also a resolution of the dissonant harmony to the consonant, which stresses the

second beat, in a manner so characteristic of the chaconne genre. Such changes in the quality of a mode in the chord are extremely important because they direct the mind towards the future, giving the audience a glimpse of it, because a D major section follows directly. This main theme will be heard during the unfolding of the Chaconne mainly in two different genres: as a jubilant hymn and as a severe chorale. The jubilation is concentrated at the end of the middle section (Var. 29), the severity and the tragic feeling permeates the condensed reprise (Var. 31).

198 *non legato*

201 *sempre ff*

204 *on fuoco*
f martellito

Example 5.6, Var. 29. Chorale-hymn.

Example 5.6a, Var. 31. Beginning of the reprise. Chorale with the recitative.

If in the second section, inner voices push the music ahead, in the reprise, the static chord progression curbs the excitement and resists future development. In the second section, the appearance of the chorale sounds lush (especially in the Busoni version) as it is full of several layers of the texture, which helps the listener feel the grandiose pride of human existence. At the beginning of the reprise, the chorale shrinks in stature. The texture reverses to the earlier close chordal setting. The intonations of a plea and the Phrygian tetrachord permeate the development. In it, two contradictory elements, the plea and the Phrygian tetrachord, unite, contributing to the sense of drama### Busoni's favorite accomplishment.

In its final hearing in the coda as the last variation, the chorale reaches its almost sculptural appearance, as a representative of severe inexorable faith. All chords are doubled, the range of the texture covers several octaves, and the Phrygian tetrachord reigns supreme in both sections of the chorale and in a stretto. The significant change, however, is that we hear only the first part of the chorale, and not the second, which does not have the Phrygian tetrachord. Bach and Busoni choose to repeat four measures of the

faithful Phrygian cadence, affirming the highest power.



Example 5.7. Var. 39, final chorale.

Busoni, in the beginning of the Chaconne, used the same range as Bach used. At the end of it, Busoni changes Bach's melodic line one last time, reaching the pinnacle by changing the range of the melody. With all the chord arrangement and doubling of the voices, Busoni fulfils the sense of a drama to the last sound of this composition.

The chorale appears with a certain regularity each time in a different texture. With its severe character Bach's chorale represents the meaning of an inexorable fate, which influences the reading of the form, and creates another layer to it.

We can address several perspectives of form of Bach's Chaconne, all of which could prove interesting to investigate. However, it is important to discover what Ferruccio Busoni added to the composition in terms of structural development. His contribution primarily lies in the idea of layers. The idea itself is not new; it is actually part of the polyphonic style; however, there are many other meanings of the word. As a result of polyphonic thought and improvisational development (variations are closely connected to both), very often we find a special effect called a layer or a stratum. This term is used widely in musicology. Often different meanings accompany its use. One of

the most common meanings of stratum is that of textural component. In this particular instance, the term “stratum” is used with a different definition.

Strata is a representative of a concrete realization of “poly-tendencies” (tendencies that combine in one different, often contrary, phenomenon). It is actually one of the characteristic aesthetic tendencies in the twentieth century. Obviously, the concept of multiple strata realizes a possibility to combine in one moment of time, on one plane (here we have to consider another type of art), different views of one subject, different time periods of one action, etc. As an example one might remember the art of Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Marc Chagall, the movies of Federico Fellini and Andrey Tarkovsky. In the theater and literature, a bright illustration of the same idea is found in the plays of Bertold Brecht and George Sadule.

On the other hand, the combination of several different principles assumes activization of the process because the act of combining, by its nature, already reflects interaction (reciprocity). As is well known, this common tendency in much art could be explained by its polyphonic nature. The “strata” is a result of the double nature of the genre of the Chaconne by Bach-Busoni, and comes from the principle of “play,” in other words from theatricalization, which is one of the most characteristic elements of the dance and concert genres. Dialogues, which are part of the theatre, penetrate the Chaconne, which is built on a single idea, (Vars. 32, 34). We can hear them through the contrasting transformation of the music and through the “strata.” The “strata” could be textural, thematic and structural, generic as well as dramaturgical. Structural layering often results in second- and third-level forms. All of these we can find in the Bach-Busoni Chaconne.

The synthesis of genres and the dramaturgy of their development creates special

artistic unity, a new aesthetic wholeness. This, at the same time, stipulates certain conditions which are characteristics of modern art: co-subjection, confluence (blending, merging), and establishing relative balance between genres. The phenomenon of the “strata” occurs in its most elemental form in harmonic poly-combinations—polytonality. Yuri Tulin wrote that “you cannot look upon polytonality only from the vertical point of view; it would be a one-sided outlook. You are missing a possibility that it could be born by independent origin.”⁴⁷ Thus we can conclude, that a “strata” could be an independent phenomenon inherent in the nature of a certain genre and existing independently. Thematical “strata” are the result of the duality of a genre and the dramaturgy of the composition. The relationship between dramaturgy and duality of a genre is strengthened when the perception of the stratum is detached and elevated. The thematical stratum is a result of a special polyphonic organization because linear thinking prevails. In Busoni’s version of the Chaconne, you find several such moments. For example, in the third and twenty fourth variations one can hear on the top a lyrical beautiful Bach melody, at the bottom Busoni’s accompaniment to it### a severe original tune of the Chaconne. Both layers are connected through similar metric and rhythmic organization and intonation. As one of the constant parameters for identifying the independent layers we can name timbral disconnection (separation) because only it gives the impression of a discrete layer. Of course, genre individuality, harmonic relationships, and the development dramaturgy of each layer play a very important role.

The Thematical strata appears for the first time in the third variation. In the upper

⁴⁷ Yuri Tulin, “Modern Harmony and its historical origin., in *Theory Problems in the twentieth century music* (Moscow:Musika,1967), 157.

level Busoni continues with the original Bach melody, which stresses smooth movement and use of chromatism. The melody soars in the high region of the fifth octave. The lower layer has a different character. It has an affinity to the fragmented melodic line and chord texture, which appears at the bottom of the second and third octaves. Both tunes are connected through metro-rhythmical organization and common intonations. For the most constant parameters in defining the independence of strata, we should probably count registral isolation and thematical material, because only these two give the feeling of the discretion of the layer.

Another parameter that should be given serious consideration is the genre. One of the most important contributions to the transcription of the chaconne by Busoni is his attention to genre. He hears hidden possibilities of certain genres in the music of the Bach Chaconne and brings them out. He underlines genres heavily through the rhythm, texture and timbre. We can hear several genres which are a constant in the music. They develop together with the variations and almost modulate from one to another. Busoni promotes the lyrical song, or lament, toccata, chorale, and cadenza. Of course, the harmony and the dramaturgy of each stratum plays an important role as well. In the Chaconne, the thematical layers in the beginning and in middle sections appear with certain regularity; however, in the last section a peculiar transformation happens: what in the beginning sounded like a menace, at the end sounds like a entreaty (Vars. 32 and 34), what in the beginning sounded like a dialogue, at the end is united on the basis of layer organization.

The stratum appearances in the Chaconne are dramatic and short; however, through the distance, they tend to resolve to the united thematic tonic at the end. That would partially explain the appearances of chorales in the “orchestral” texture at the end

of each section, which sounds almost like a Da Capo return. (It is not the first time that Bach writes Da Capo. He indicates so in his own words in the “Goldberg” Variations before the final appearance of the theme, the Fifth Brandenburg concerto last movement also is a Da Capo movement, however there is no written indication.) Possibly, that is how we can explain such enormous sound and textural thickness in the chorales, which conclude the first section and the coda of the whole piece. We can also include the end of the second section (Var. 29). Such “arch” relationships between the tunes creates a certain strain; because of this, the moments in which the “stratum” appears becomes significant in identifying culminations in the structure of the composition or stressing other special moments in the piece. It reminds the listeners strongly of the change of sequences and episodes in the movies. In modern times, our perception takes a more dynamic view of timely transposition and intertwining of the dramaturgical events. We also can see, that polyphony (in the wide understanding of the word), shows itself as a mechanism of the harmonic movement gradually directing developmental process.

The thematic strata in the Chaconne are arranged unevenly, forming a certain progression of the most tense moments, which is responsible for a gradual increase in dynamics. The whole fabric of the composition, together with the layering, thereby draws and gradually increases the interest of the audience because its attention is pointed toward special moments.

The organization of the “strata” mirrors a special form of the time-space relationship in the Chaconne. Time and the space are multidimensional. That's why the space, which plays an enormous role in structuring the perception of music, could be viewed from the horizontal and the vertical perspective. The filling of the space during a

certain period of time with sound images of considerable length could be continuous or interrupted— it all depends on the emotional and image systems of the composition, as well as the character of the organization of the material itself.

The phenomena of “strata” often gives a special feeling of an expansion of the musical space. Thus, the thematic layer, could play the role of a heavy beat in the composition. When two themes are combined in a thematical layer, a “super-theme” □ emerges. Such a “stratum” has all the indications of a theme and becomes the recipient of the individual and image affinity. Much of the time, such a theme has a closing function. Timbre, sound elements and texture play a big role in it; they all create a specific sound and space image.

The layers appear with certain regularity. Each appearance gives the impression of growing, of consecutive widening of the musical space. However, another opposite tendency works here as well. The strata form a special organization, which in certain circumstances is divided by the separate sounding layers, mirroring the fractured space. Such “layered” space corroborates the objective fact of its existence. Vertically, we hear a certain sounding of a “Strata.” Horizontally, we have a combination of different thematical formations. Such formations could appear simultaneously or through the displacement of the horizontal lines. Many scholars have studied the problems of time and space, including Selincourt, Orlov and Kramer. They view movement as an essence of time and space. Movement is the unity of the continuity and discreteness of time and space. Therefore, the multidimensionality of time is inseparable from the multidimensionality of space. The most essential manifestation of the

multidimensionality of time in the given Chaconne is the effect of time contraction, which causes multidimensionality in (Vars. 23 and 34-37). The vertical joining of several thematic textures gains time, which corresponds to a general aesthetic direction. It is important that time itself becomes a special, independent unit acting within certain spatial boundaries. The internal time of a musical piece, in contrast to objective time, uses a variety of the subjective perceptions of time. Time acts as a process different from the real time; therefore, time flows, contracts, and stretches. The constriction can create a hierarchy of organization levels (as means of development, theme, and form).

The constriction occurs at a certain instant, at a certain place in a given piece. As mentioned above, the rhythmical discretion causes activation of motion. As a result, an internal acceleration is formed. That is how the effect of the internal constriction of the piece is created (an expansion also represents another possible type of time). Uneven balance between the sections of the Chaconne represents the constriction of the time within them. The second section is shorter than the first, the third shrinks in duration almost by a third compare to the first section. Time constriction happens through an intensification and acceleration of development. At the same time, the space develops almost proportionally to the time constriction. Bach and Busoni after him retain the low range from the beginning and proceed to enlarge it further in to the higher region, and the dynamics of the piece grow. There is only one break from this continuous *crescendo* on the border between the end of the second section and beginning of the third. Intensified growth of development quickly compensates for the short downturn in dynamics, adding tremendous emotional strain. The development of the range, dynamics and character after the break, without any delays, crescendos straight to the coda.

It is important to notice that in all the developing sections Bach and Busoni use more frequent rhythm (faster values.) Both composers follow the example of the rhythmic development in the first section. Such rhythm helps the listener feel the acceleration of time. Cadential zones, as a rule, compensate for such acceleration. Thus we hear several of them in the Chaconne.

All of the cadenzas are found in the middle or at the end of the three major sections of the Chaconne. The energy, which was accumulated and concentrated in the structural zones directly prior to the cadenzas, finds itself propelled in them to the highest level of intensity, in which time is suspended and rarefied. Therefore the existence of an inner time-space rhythm, occurs in the complimentary rhythms, which is so characteristic of polyphonic music. One of the first cadenzas appears in Variations 8 and 9. They come into existence after long and intense development wherein the intonations, derived from the inner voice of the first variation, prevail.

The Phrygian tetrachord, besides the theme, first appears in Variation 2. In Variations 1 and 3 we can hear just few traces of it. However, it is not yet very threatening in character. The first time when we sense it is in the seventh variation. Busoni triples Bach's original texture in unison, which sounds very grandiose on the piano. In addition, Busoni stresses the march-like movement in the rhythm, which gives the listener a sense of something triumphant. Apparently for Busoni, the genres of the solemn chaconne (the meter in the dance is 3/4) and of the ceremonial march (where the meter is 4/4) felt very close. The imperturbability of the chorale underscores the rhythmical preciseness and tenacity of a march. Therefore, I perceive Variations 7 and 10 as march-like.

Example 5.8. March-like Var. 7

Such closeness between the chorale and the march later on will unite in the D major section in the jubilant Hymn—Variations 27-29. It would be interesting to consider where Busoni found the idea of uniting two such different genres. Of course, Bach already had it in the original version; however, two of Busoni's most beloved composers—Liszt and Chopin, who also loved Bach— often used the same combination. For example, Chopin combines these genres in his preludes in E major, and C minor, Liszt, in the closing theme of his B minor Sonata. Could this be a triple influence on Busoni, which he used to our advantage?

In the cadenzas, Busoni treated Bach's material in an improvisatory fashion. He stressed flood of individual emotions. As always, he added voices to the chords; he doubled a single melodic line or even tripled it in unison. Some of the scale passages were treated as embellishments instead of part of a texture, as it was in Bach's score. For

example, in variation 9 Busoni compresses the energy and forces the embellished passage to be played in between times with lightening speed, which propels the emotion to a new height. To regularize the bar rhythm he extends one of the passages by repeating it up an octave, which exceeds Bach's original range; Busoni also adds an extra measure, a diminished seventh chord in an arpeggio, which travels down almost the entire keyboard, adding a tremendous sense of a drama as well as a feeling of dispersed energy. Thus Variation 9 consists of the five measures, the only asymmetrical variation in the Chaconne.

Example 5.9. Cadenza, Var.9

Structurally these cadences are shorter by half than the eight-measure theme.

Partially this shortening happens because the time in them is compressed; the level of energy and emotion overflows the form's boundaries. The other reason is that they are built harmonically on the Phrygian cadence, which is four measures long. The same type of emotional and rhythmical frenzy is heard in Var. 19, right before the Da Capo appearance of the chorale in Var. 20. The cadenzas in the D major section (there are two—Vars. 26 and 30) are eight measures long; the “Fate” Phrygian tetrachord is not present in them. They are based on the dominant prolonged in the top voice and on the dominant pedal point (Var. 26), and Var. 30 is anchored to the tonic pedal point as well as to the prolonged top tonic voice.

Die folgenden 16 Takte nach und nach immer stärker und belebter

166 *poco marc.* *sempre stacc.* *ter.*

Ped. ogni battuta
Ped. zu jedem Takt *poco marc.*

169 172

[dim.]

Example 5. 10, dominant pedal point



Example 5.11, tonic pedal point

The motifs in this section are repetitive and fragmented. We hear several sequences. In Busoni's version they have the conversational inclination but not a dialogue of the □ ### pro-contra### type, which makes the music feel as an ecstatic and exuberant, but not controversial, compared to the opening section. As usual, through the whole Chaconne, Busoni promotes an orchestral sound with enlarged texture, dividing the chords between different ranges.

In the last section of the Chaconne, we hear another two cadenzas, united in one section as a coda (Vars. 37, 38). Both follow the pattern set up in the previous movements: Var. 37### the pattern from the D major section cadenzas; Var. 38### the pattern from the first section (Vars. 9, 19). If the performer or the audience had not yet concluded by this particular moment that we were moving toward the coda, then these two variations should convince the listeners that it is indeed a coda, one which combines in its structure the elements from previous codas, thus creating another (double) arch to the previous sections. Variation 37 builds on the sequence, with the triple rhythm in the

top layer that intensifies the movement while Variation 38, with the scale-like passages in pro-contra dialogues between the layers and D minor scale in unison (almost like in the ninth variation), leads us to the final presentation of the chorale theme

A *genre strata* emerges when two or more genres are combined at the same time. This new stratum creates a new aesthetic wholeness which comes as a result of the synthesis of a genre.

In the Bach-Busoni Chaconne, we can discuss several levels of genre synthesis. First, the Chaconne is a solo performance piece, which also is a part of the cycle of the suite; Second, it is a dance, in which the theme is presented in the style of a chorale. Third, it is written in variation and as well as tripartite forms; and Fourth, the whole composition is a hybrid between two different instruments, attitudes and compositional styles. The rules of development for both genres, the Chaconne and the Chorale, interact, occasionally, they are in balance; occasionally, one of them takes the lead. For both genres, development through variation is a natural occurrence; for the dance, because it takes some time to develop intricate step movements; for the chorale, because of the many verses.

In the Bach-Busoni Chaconne, we hear several different genres, which are displayed horizontally and emphasized by Busoni with regular intensity. We hear a lament and a lyrical song (Vars. 3, 34, 24), a toccata (Vars. 13-17, 25, 26); a hymn-chorale (the opening, Vars. 18, 20, 21, 27-29, 31, 39), a cadenza (Vars. 9, 19, 30, 37, 38) and a recitative (Vars. 10, 12, 31, 32). Thus the genre of the Chaconne coexists with the aforementioned genres throughout the development, both vertically and horizontally. Often, on the upper level of the stratum, we hear a lyrical melody (Var. 24), a hymn (Var.

28), or a recitative (Var. 32) while, on the lower level, Busoni introduced the opening chorale theme or its variation. Combining two genres vertically, Busoni creates a strata.

The idea of mixing genres is not new to western music. Many musicologists identify similar techniques in mixing different types of musical material in Baroque music and in the twentieth century.⁴⁸

The mixed genre was an idea that enabled Baroque composers to combine the molecules of different genres and compositional techniques within a single work.

As a result, not only numerous styles, but also diverse genres came together and merged into one another into the Baroque music. It was full of both stylistic and genre antithesis. The structure of the genre was determined by principles of contrast, the juxtaposition of “old and new,” “order and freedom.”⁴⁹

In his dissertation Christoph Wolf, also describes Bach's style as a combination of *stile antico* and *stile moderno*.⁵⁰ Still, these are opinions of present day authors. Michael Praetorius, who analyzed music in the early Baroque period, wrote:

Some do not attach any significance to the fact that in the composition of some canticles the motet and madrigal manners should be mixed at the same time. I take the liberty of not agreeing with this opinion, for it is particularly beneficial in concertos and motets.⁵¹

Ferruccio Busoni was one of the first twentieth-century composers who, through continuation of the Baroque tradition, used hybridization of genre as a means of

⁴⁸ Marina Lobanova, Arnold Sohor, to name just a few.

⁴⁹ Marina Lobanova, *Musical Style and Genre, History and Modernity* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 2000), 173.

⁵⁰ Christopher Wolff, *Der Stile Antico in der Musik Johann Sebastian Bach: Studien zu Bachs Spätwerk* (diss., University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, 1966; Wiesbaden, 1968).

⁵¹ Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*, Bd3, (Wolfenbüttel, 1619, Kassel, 1958), 80

developing musical material and as an enrichment of the artistic image. He started what Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Bartok and Lutoslavsky would later develop further into a synthesis of genres.

In the nineteenth century, the influence of different literary genres on music became one of the Romantic characteristics of the style. Several genres in particular were used more often than the others: the ballade, the rhapsody, the poem, and the legend. For all of these genres, common characteristics were lyric and epic characters, the combination of plural elements, and the unstable structure of these rhapsodic forms. Busoni, continuing with the traditions of the previous century, included many of these literature elements within the Chaconne, thus underscoring its personable, intimate approach. It ensures that genre dramaturgy influences the Chaconne, which combines one whole movement with the cycle, reflecting freedom and improvisational expressiveness. However, the varied elements of the dance form predominate, and from the structural point of view arises compatible functions.

Genre strata bring their own correctives to the traditional form of the chaconne dance and to it a means for development. It is not simply a combination of a dance with other genres, but a parallel development of them, a stratum organization. The development of a lyrical rhapsodic (poem, ballade) line is connected with some suite-elements, which freely blend elements of motoric movement, instrumental signals, and song-like melodies, and as well dance signs, etc. The same improvisational influence allows the composer the freedom to express the images of the piece, which often show as the polar emotions: from impetuosity to ecstasy.

The simultaneous presence of several genres inside one chaconne helps Busoni to

bring out a special monologue-type expressiveness of the music as well as the dialogue type, pro-contra. It is interesting to note that the elements of a dialogue permeate monologue-type expression as well. Monologue becomes more agitated, and stressed. It brings out the expressiveness of the individual personality of the writer, in this case Busoni through Bach. According to Huizinga the principal characteristic of “play” (which he postulates in his “Homo Ludens”) is that when there is a “competition” in the play between the partners there is an equality, otherwise such competition could not exist. Thus, combining the more lyrical element (which represent the individual) with the austere, somber chorale presentation (which represents the general side), Busoni creates a new, synthetic genre. This genre becomes more “chamber-like” and at the same time “symphonized.”⁵²

Genre strata bring to the composition certain elements of a hidden program. This program is a result of the extra genres influencing the main ones—lyrical songs, poems, and familiar church sequences. This hidden program reveals itself in a special contrast of material and through the development of the music. The contrast is in the differing characters of the themes, their confrontation with each other, and the tension between them, horizontally as well as vertically, through the layers.

We can find in every theme a combination of elements from many different genres. The opening chorale itself combines the elements of song and dance, chorale and church sequence, and even instrumental signals (e.g., the ascending leap from the

⁵² In this case the terms —“chamber” and “symphonious”— are used to emphasize the expressive of the terms “lyrical and dramatic”

repeated fifth scale degree to the repeated second— mm.1-2, from which will develop the intonations of “Joy”). The same chorale in the reprise is combined with a recitative-type melodic line in Var. 31. In the music from the third variation, we hear a sorrowful lament in the melody underscored by a dance rhythm in the accompaniment. The difference in the registers and textures underscores the fragility of the melody. The contrast itself becomes multi-layered. When Busoni combines two themes in the third variation, the contrasts between the music of the previous material and the aforementioned variation becomes not only horizontal, but vertical, as well as multidimensional. As a result, performers receive unobtrusive guidance on the intended interpretation. In Busoni's version of the Chaconne, the lyrical sphere is underscored. The lyrical element is shown from many vantage points, which allows us to see it with different emotional shades. In this we see the realization of the principal variety in unity. Each of the genres used in the Chaconne, when taken separately, is a simple genre with a homogenous structure. Interacting with each other, they give birth to a special artistic result that consists of several image components and layer dramaturgy.

Dramaturgical Strata. When listening for the whole Chaconne without interruption one can only wonder how Bach was able to create such a continuous line of tense dramaturgy. From the beginning until to the end the dramatic power of the piece grows on the crescendo, with the culmination held out nearly to the very end. However, of the three movements every one has its own dramatical musical lines in which we hear several climatic zones. Bach and Busoni used similar types of dramaturgy for each movement in the Chaconne. Bach prepares the appearance of the culmination through

the variations in which many sequences are used. Through the organ pedal points, he creates an atmosphere of supercharged energy and ensures that these climatic zones grow bigger towards the end of each movement. Busoni, having a spatial and multifaceted sound in mind, draws an almost visual image of a steady growing anticipation through the texture and genre stratum, which resolves itself in the culmination. Bach first shows the theme and then proceeds to develop it, in every section using similar type of genres, variation techniques, textures and contrast. However, in the second and third sections, the process is consequently shorter in each. As a result, we hear a local line of dramaturgical development corresponding with one that rules over the whole composition.

It is well documented that the Chaconne belongs to one of the earliest transcriptions by Busoni. Already contemplating the famous “Aesthetics of Music” □ Bach’s Chaconne became the earliest manifestation of Busoni’s thoughts, because Busoni was leaning towards the idea of “Absolute” music and was critical about the necessities of the symmetry and architectonics in music. His position was that the composers of the future should look to free forms and not be dependent on the old forms. Thus the Chaconne, which is built on the variation and symmetry principles, challenged him to overcome it and write a transcription, which would be following Bach’s original music and, at the same time, be perceived as one breath from the beginning until the end.

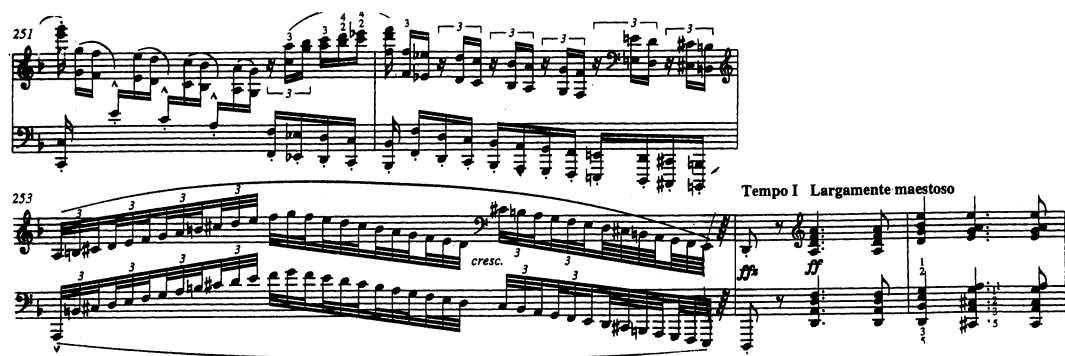
The main contrast in the Chaconne lies in the mode change between the outer and inner movements and between the chorale, the Phrygian cadence, and the lyrical theme. In Busoni’s transcription, the D major section shines, proclaiming “Joy” and religious ecstasy in unison; the outer movements bring to mind feelings of tragic

uncertainty and inner suffering.

Typically, in the tripartite structure, usually the main culmination appears either at the end of the middle section or in the reprise. In the transcription of Bach by Busoni, we hear two main culminations: one at the end of the D major section (Vars. 29-30), and the second at the end of the reprise. The latter almost supercedes the former and creates an upper line to the dramaturgical stratum (Vars. 37-39)

The golden mean marked by the culmination in Bach's original version occurs close to the beginning of the lyrical variation (Var. 24) in the D major section, which is relatively close to the center of the piece. In Busoni's transcription, the culmination is deeper in the same variation — m.162, which is understandable if we will recall that Busoni added five more measures to the piece in the first section. The second culmination arrives during the last cadenza in the reprise (Vars. 37 and 38.) The golden mean does not correspond with the real culminations in the whole piece and in all three sections of the Chaconne. However, in each section the golden mean is getting closer and closer to the real culmination, because the number of measures in the D major section and in the reprise are much smaller. In the first section (Busoni version) we hear 138 measures, in the second movement 75, in the third 48. Respectively, in the first section the golden section happens at measure 84, in the second at measure 184, and in the third measure 243. It shows how progressively shorter and more intense each structure became. The main culminations in each section are much further in the development, and closer to the end of each of them. That means that dramatic development is more intense, with slower unfolding of musical ideas in the beginning of the section. It also shows that expository subsections of all three sections are longer than developmental ones.

In the tripartite setting, it is common to have a culmination in the reprise. This culmination is very powerful and close to the end, which partially happens because the reprise is shortened; it follows the dramaturgical development of the Chaconne to the very end. To withstand such an onslaught Busoni creates a caesura, which in the original text is absent. This caesura is small, but dramatically very effective—a thirty second rest. However, the abrupt movement stops on the second scale degree, on the light beat, and without resolution to the tonic, which comes on the main beat in the next measure. For the first time in the entire composition this low range tonic unison presents the full rhythmic formula of the chaconne dance (the first beat is present) and starts the final majestic chorale, which gives the impression of finished conflict.



Example 5.12.

The last cadence and the beginning of the last chorale. The reason that the Bach-Busoni Chaconne has two grandiose culminations in the versions by both composers, is in the continuous development of the musical image, in progressive movement to the final result. According to Kramer, the Chaconne belongs to the multiply-directed type of form; he underscores that “the multiply directed forms can have one or several final

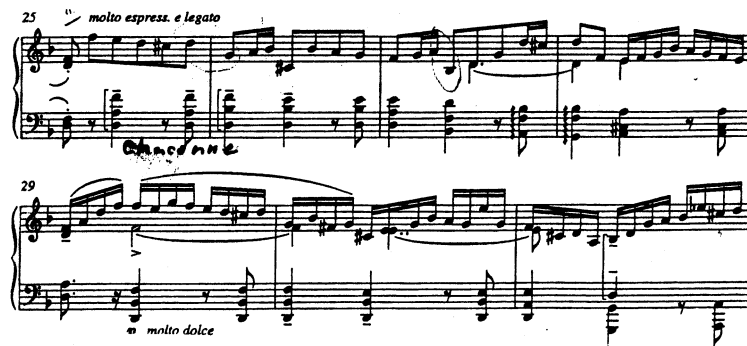
cadences, not necessarily at the close of the piece.”⁵³ □

Busoni underscores two attempts at the final culmination which are divided by time and space. The first attempt at culmination (Vars. 29 and 30) does not answer the conflict that was postulated in the first movement. Despite the grandeur of the first attempt at culmination, it falls short of reaching the final goal. Only the last culmination (Vars. 37 and 38) brings the apotheosis and exhaustive resolution of the conflict. Having two such powerful moments during the life of the piece, in one movement, could create a problem for the performer because he will have to answer for himself which one of the culminations is more important. In deciding he will find a solution to his own interpretation.

As already mentioned, each section of Bach-Busoni work has its own dramatic line of development with its own beginning, culmination, and conclusion. Each culmination zone supercedes the former. The tensions grow from one culmination to another, with the biggest at the end of each section, and, finally, they reach the glowing pinnacle at the end. The tension increases because the developmental process does not stop in them, it continues through every culmination, so tension flows from one to another, which ensures a smooth transition of emotions. The smaller, local culminations guide the listener’s ear, creating an upper line of dramaturgical power. This upper line becomes the most visible dramaturgical point, on which the listener’s attention focuses. Busoni maximizes this effect by increasing textural density, intensifying the rhythm, and ensuring that each culmination reaches a higher range.

⁵³ Jonathan Kramer, *The Time of Music* (New York: Shirmer, 1988), 50

In the beginning of the Chaconne, Bach starts to explore variational possibilities based on the chorale elements. In the third variation, the developing pattern breaks, and a new image is introduced. The contrast between these two images and themes is remarkable. It is explored and developed until the end of the composition. Two of the elements in the Busoni's version which helps to create this contrast are the thematic and genre strata, which are introduced here for the first time in the Chaconne.



Example 5.13

Layers throughout the Chaconne are heard in different situations; they play an enormous role in the dramaturgical development of the piece. In fact, they are a direct result of the genre strata. The layers of different kinds are shown when the artistic image changes, providing contrast as well as guidance about the interpretation of the form. With their help, Busoni underscores special structural moments as well as the culminations. The layers are dispersed unevenly throughout the Chaconne. Because of this, the moments of their appearance bear special significance for the growing dynamics of the piece. However, on a different level of the form's structure, it secures different culminations, which do not always correspond with the main pinnacles of the section. After the

appearance of the layer, which usually consists of one variation, it often dissolves into the doubling of the upper level texture, which, as a rule, is Bach's original material. Such treatment of the texture creates special zones of more intense moments and zones of relaxation. After the first appearance of a layer in the third variation, we hear it again in the fifth variation, (Example 5.4) where the Phrygian tetrachord continues to make its existence known. We hear its threatening motif in the bass on the main beat of every consequent measure. In the seventh variation, which is one of the first local culminations, Busoni highlights it heavily. Therefore, the pattern is set: except in the coda of the first section, every pinnacle will prominently display a Phrygian tetrachord. In the coda of the first section, the first part (which contains the Phrygian tetrachord) is exchanged with the second part of the chorale. Bach, emulated by Busoni, tries to turn the events of the first section to a different, happier path. It provides the performer and the listener with another hidden clue of a program, which should not be ignored.

In preparation for the final appearance of the chorale, we hear several other culminations; they clarify the structure as well as our understanding of the music. The listener could easily recognize these culminations not only because of the dramatic music, but also because of the prominently displayed Phrygian tetrachord. Having several culminations in each of the movements, following relatively close by one after another, each of them grander than the previous one, creates a straight line of dramaturgy and assures the fluidity of the formal development (Vars. 7, 9, 10, 18, 27, 29, and 37). The listener will be able to recognize such a process as a pattern for the whole Chaconne. This straight type of development, in later styles, becomes a hallmark of the sonata form.

At the same time, we hear in the Chaconne, on the higher level of a strata,

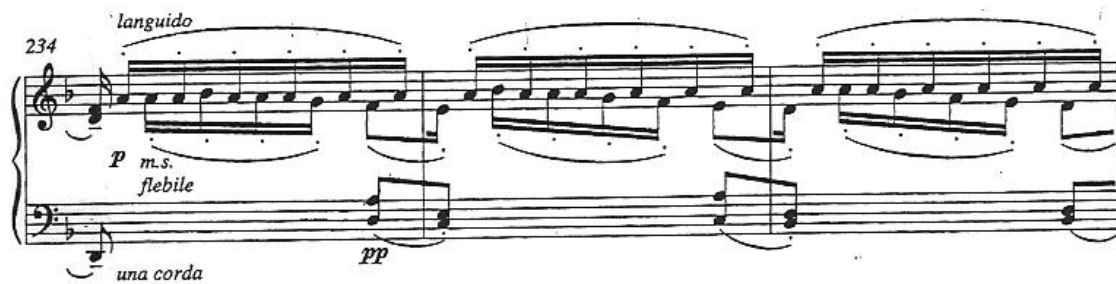
another type of dramaturgical development. Because the dramaturgical pattern is similar in every one of the tripartite section, it becomes recognizable. Despite the difference in the musical material, the texture and the modes in which variations appear, the similarities of the process, together with the similarities of genre, create musical arches.

Variations which resembles concert cadenzas become one such type of genre-arches, (especially in Busoni's version), revealing themselves in the frenzied rhythm, (metro- rhythmic freedom), virtuosic scales and chords passages all around the keyboard, and the fluidity of the melody (Vars.9, 19, 30, 37, and 38). Several of them (Vars. 9, 19, 37, and 38) consists only of four measures, because they are built on the Phrygian tetrachord in the bass.

In Bach's art, the cadenzas never were objects of pure virtuosity, treated with less thematic weight. It is enough to remember a famous cadenza from the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto's first movement, which is treated as an especially dramatic and important part of the structure, with an enormous emphasis on the material itself and its development. In many chamber, vocal, and orchestral works by J. S. Bach we hear cadenzas, which highlight the character of the music, unlike in some later compositions, especially concertos in late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the presence of a cadenza allowed the display of pure virtuosity. When Busoni highlights these cadenzas, he underscores their equal importance in the Chaconne compositional development and structure. As a master, born in the Romantic era, it was natural that in his interpretation cadenzas, more so than other elements, bear remnants of the Romantic style. It reflects clearly in Busoni's underlining the improvisational music material (the individual side) and the development in cadenzas. These cadenzas appear without any caesuras,

continuing the metro-rhythmical wholeness with earlier and future material. They are built on the scale passages, diminished seventh and dominant seventh chords, and often are filled with figurative material that explores certain intonations and rhythms of the Chaconne. From the point of view of timbre, they could be purely pianistic.(Vars.9 and 37), as well as orchestral (Var. 30) In such cadenzas, Busoni shows the composer's desire to promote impetuosity of one emotion and the function of it is to fill out the time of a structure and accelerate the development. The cadenzas either precede or follow climactic zones. These climactic zones have a significantly different level of tense musical material: they are louder, rhythmically faster, and massive in texture. These zones become an impulse for the next development.

The development in the second and third section follows the same path as in the first section. While similarities partially ensure the unity of the whole, they are in reality the arches, which help to support the composition's structure and the listener's attention. We hear similar types of contrast between the two materials, and as before, in the first movement, the second theme in the D major section (Var. 24) and in the reprise (Var. 34) is introduced as a genre stratum. It is interesting to note that in the D major section and even more so in the reprise, in both second themes Busoni heavily accentuated a dominant scale degree in the upper and lower layer.



Example 5.14. Reprise, Var. 34

As was explained earlier, Bach never changed the tonality of the Chaconne. In the sonata form, the second theme is usually shown in the dominant key. In the Chaconne, the second lyrical theme sounds in the tonic key. The way that Busoni arranges the appearance of the second theme of this variation cycle, the contrast and texture between the chorale and the lyrical second themes, and the character change brings to mind the surface appearance of a classical sonata form, despite not having a dominant key in the tonal plan. It could be that by accentuating a dominant scale degree so prominently in the melody of the second theme of the D major section and the third movement, Bach unconsciously headed in the direction of the sonata form with its uninterrupted development within the form of the Chaconne.

Between the two main characters in the Chaconne's first section### the solemn chorale and the pleading lamentation— the number of the variations between the two themes is also two. The same amount of space— two variations—separates the chorale theme and its lyrical counterpart in the third and second section. Both composers increase the speed of a development in these sections through shortening by half the variation which comes right before the second theme (Vars. 23 and 33). Through this action the

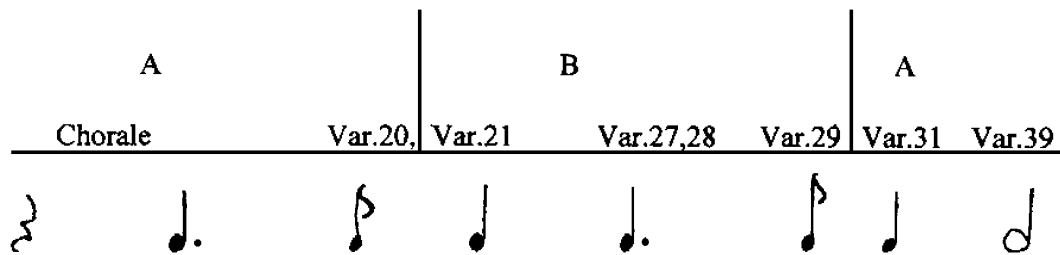
variation time compressed as well as its development.

After showing the contrasting material, both Bach and Busoni increase the speed of the development in the second movement. The first culmination arrives in the same way it did in the first section. Following the culmination, the development starts to accelerate again. In the D major section and in the reprise, after both themes are presented, the development, which follows, is progressively shorter, unlike the similar structure in the first movement. It is much more intense, due to a lesser amount of time in between the first strata of the sections and the final chorales.

In culmination zones and cadenzas often an individualized material, such as a Phrygian tetrachord, mixes with more unified material such as scales and sequences. Busoni stressed this emphatically through various elements of his musical language. He increases the texture of the chords and their range distance, uses virtuosic scale passages, raise the dynamic level of the section and fragments the rhythmic formulas. In all of it, I find a tendency to the more individualized type of treatment of music material and a tendency to theatralization. That is how Busoni imposes the view of a twentieth-century musician onto the subject. He heavily promotes psychological and theatrical attitudes, which becomes a rising trend in the twentieth century and affects the reading of the whole form, which becomes multi-layered.

To summarize all of what was said about culmination, I offer a scheme of four levels of culminations. To the lowest level belong the local culmination of every section within each of the three main section. In the second level we can see one central culmination in every section of the tripartite form; the third level has two principal culminations of the whole Chaconne, Vars. 28-30 and Vars. 37-39. These three levels

represent emotional and dynamic peaks in the structure. The fourth level contains summary culminations, which are floating above all other levels and are dispersed in the whole composition in the rhythm of the Chaconne dance—the Chorale.



These culminations summarize the development of ideas and present the main thoughts, the thrust of Busoni's transcription.

Form strata. The form of the Chaconne becomes a most intriguing topic to analyze, because of the simultaneous intricacy and simplicity of the structure. There are definitely many layers, some of which are obvious, some hidden. Yet, one needs to understand all levels of the form to produce a successful interpretation. The performer chooses which one to emphasize, which ones to tone down, thus declaring his reading of the artistic image.

A sophisticated composition consist of many levels to be analyzed. The more levels that exist, the more complex the composition is. The polyphonic nature of the Chaconne results in several levels of structural organization. On the surface, it is clear that the Chaconne is a tripartite form in a variation setting; such forms were common to Western compositional practices during the Baroque era and in Bach's art. However, Bach treated uniquely even such a simple form, subjecting it to the needs of musical

“story.” This partially explains the imbalance in the length of the sections in Chaconne.

Busoni contributes to the form by renewing content of the Chaconne using a dialogue structure. In it, musical elements are interlaced with non-musical, which results in the genre strata. The fusion of musical and outer-musical elements bring forth associative denseness, a hidden program, and theatricality. Busoni contributes to the interpretation of the form, emphasizing its emotional struggle between human soul and implacable Fate, between the hero and his surroundings, topics common enough in the Romantic era. Combined with the Baroque and Lutheran traditions of intricacies and orderliness, the result was an extremely emotional, passionate piece. Busoni brings three forces together: a chorale, representing the ordered universe, gentle but conflicting human emotions, and death, as an inevitable and unbendable fate. The struggle between them becomes the central story in Busoni’s interpretation of Bach’s “tale.”

In the artistic atmosphere of the nineteenth century, fate dominates reality and the artist tries to escape, in terms of Kant's philosophy of the phenomenal world, towards the spiritual, the noumenal, which results in a juxtaposition of opposites in genre, structure, text, and mood. This conclusion becomes obvious through analysis of melodic and harmonic language, genre, and form. Many of these elements are full of symbolism. As we know, these symbolic clues, which permeated Bach's art with all kinds of symbolic meanings, help to support analysis of the form and to partially guide it.

It is no wonder that we find many of them in the Chaconne. For example, the symbolism of tripartite form already reminds us of the “trinity, spiritual synthesis...[and]

is associated with the concept of heaven”⁵⁴ The structure of the piece is based upon thirty nine variations. The number three “expresses sufficiency, or growth of unity within itself,” and the number nine —“the triangle of the ternary, and the triplication of the triple...It is the end-limit of the numerical series before its return to unity...It was the symbol of truth , being characterized by the fact that when multiplied it reproduces itself.” In addition, the sum of three and nine equals twelve, which represents “symbolic order and salvation...Linked to it are the notions of space and time”⁵⁵ The theme of the chorale will appear in the beginning of each section and at the end of it, the virtuosic cadences appear in every movement after a similar type of development in each of them and in the same situation. Thus, symmetrical arches emerge. The symbolism of this symmetry is □ “equivalent to achievement, crowning triumph and supreme equipoise.”⁵⁶ These symbols are like a hidden code. In the reading of the code, the interpreter finds support for his concept of the piece. The Phrygian tetrachord, with its ostinato appearance throughout the Chaconne becomes the symbol of death. The single and double spiral forms of the melodic line and in the harmony in specific variations, is associated with death (both mortal and spiritual), and rebirth.

As we discussed several times already, the Chaconne is written in variation form. The opening chorale serves as a kernel from which all of the intonations and motifs of the piece arise. Many of these variations are grouped in pairs: the first being a main thought, the second a variation on it. In part, such a method of organizing the musical material

⁵⁴ J. E. Circlot, *A dictionary of Symbols*, translated from the Spanish by Jack Sage (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1962), 222.

⁵⁵ Circlot, op. cit., 224

⁵⁶ Circlot, op.cit., 309

comes from the organization of the opening theme, which has a repeated structure as well. Often Busoni, working from Bach's original, varied one or several intonations from the theme. Both composers vary their tools of development, such as sequences, imitations and counter melodies. In this, Busoni seemingly prefers to elaborate, which is, in part, why he added four extra measures to the variation that follows the second culmination of the first section (Var.11). In Busoni's Chaconne, such elaboration through continuous sequential and imitative development helps to disperse the energy which was developed during the previous two culmination.

Almost from the beginning, in the third variation Bach and Busoni introduce multifaceted contrasts of range and character, genre and texture, rhythm and variation techniques, thus providing a new impulse for development. This contrast between variations plays an enormous role in the whole Chaconne, because it introduces a conflict. This conflict becomes a potent force of development in the composition. We see it through the lens of the dialogue texture and in the roles of the relationship between the cadences and culmination zones. On a larger scale, this type of contrast shows itself even between the minor mode in the first part and major mode in the second. This contrast identifies two very important spheres of music in the composition: a dramatic character and a lyric one, between which the drama, underscored heavily by Busoni, unfolds.

Because of the contrast between these two musically polar opposite characters comes to mind an analogy with the characteristic type contrast in the classical sonata form. It is true that we cannot talk about a sonata form in the Chaconne structure. However, Bach often, in many ways, was ahead of his time. We find the phenomena of the sonata form in many of his compositions. As a reminder, look to upon the piano

Partita No.6 in E minor, in which the Corrente, Sarabande and Bourree are written in the quasi sonata form with the second subject in the dominant key.

Historically, Bach's art finds itself between two epoch— the Baroque and the Classical. Hence, he effectively shows the legacy of several prominent styles— the stile antico, the Baroque and the early Classic. This historical ambiguity of an artistic figure reveals itself in the range of genres used, which includes chorale transcriptions and solo instrumental concerto, compositions that came close to the pre-sonata form and cantatas. It also shows unorthodox decisions in the use of these forms, which are one of many characteristics of Bach's style, resulting from the continuous process of finding new possibilities for developing musical thoughts within the boundaries of familiar genres— another reason why we find several levels of structure in many of Bach's compositions, particularly in the Chaconne.

Ferruccio Busoni's historical position was similar to Bach's. He also witnessed the disappearance of one epoch and arrival of a new style. He chose to connect the ideas of the past with those of modern times through the blending of musical styles (Baroque and contemporary idioms). In his transcription of the Chaconne, he promoted the forms and the expressive musical tools that were close to his heart as a contemporary composer. That is why he underscored the forms, which in Bach's time had only began to appear.

In the original composition of Bach's Chaconne, we hear elements of many structural levels, even the rhetoric of the sonata form. Busoni promoted straight dramatic development of the sonata form partially because of its dramatism and partially because it was common in the nineteenth century to use the sonata as a genre and form for large-scale compositions. Bach's original text allowed such interpretation of the music. In

addition, we see not only the elements of the future sonata form in the original Chaconne, but other forms besides the variation and tripartite structure.

On one level, the whole Chaconne resembles the sonata form with exposition### (Vars.1-20) first section, developmental section— D major section and the shortened reprise (Var.31-36) plus the coda— Vars.37-39, with last appearance of the chorale theme in Var. 39. The chorale theme serves as a first subject, Variation 3 as a second subject; for the reprise, Var. 30 represents the main subject and Var. 33 the secondary subject.

On another, lower level, the first section has almost all of elements of a sonata, except the harmonic difference between the first theme (chorale) and second theme (Var. 3). Variations 5 through 13 represent a development section, and the reprise is shortened but without losing any of the main themes.

The second section looks like a symmetrical binary (à la Domenico Scarlatti), with the first subject being the chorale in D major, and the second theme being Var.24, which in the Busoni version is shown on the dominant pedal point. Thus, some type of tonic dominant relationship is present. The second part of the symmetrical binary starts in the new appearance of the chorale in Var.27. The third section is another symmetrical binary, with the chorale (Var.31) as first theme and the Var. 34 as second theme, in which the dominant pedal point in the melody is heavily emphasized. The second part of this structure arises in Variation 35. The genre strata as well as the range and timbral color, strongly supports such an understanding of the structure. If we consider the chart below, we see how similar genres appear at corresponding moments in the forms structure. These genres appear in similar situations at the beginning of the movements and in the

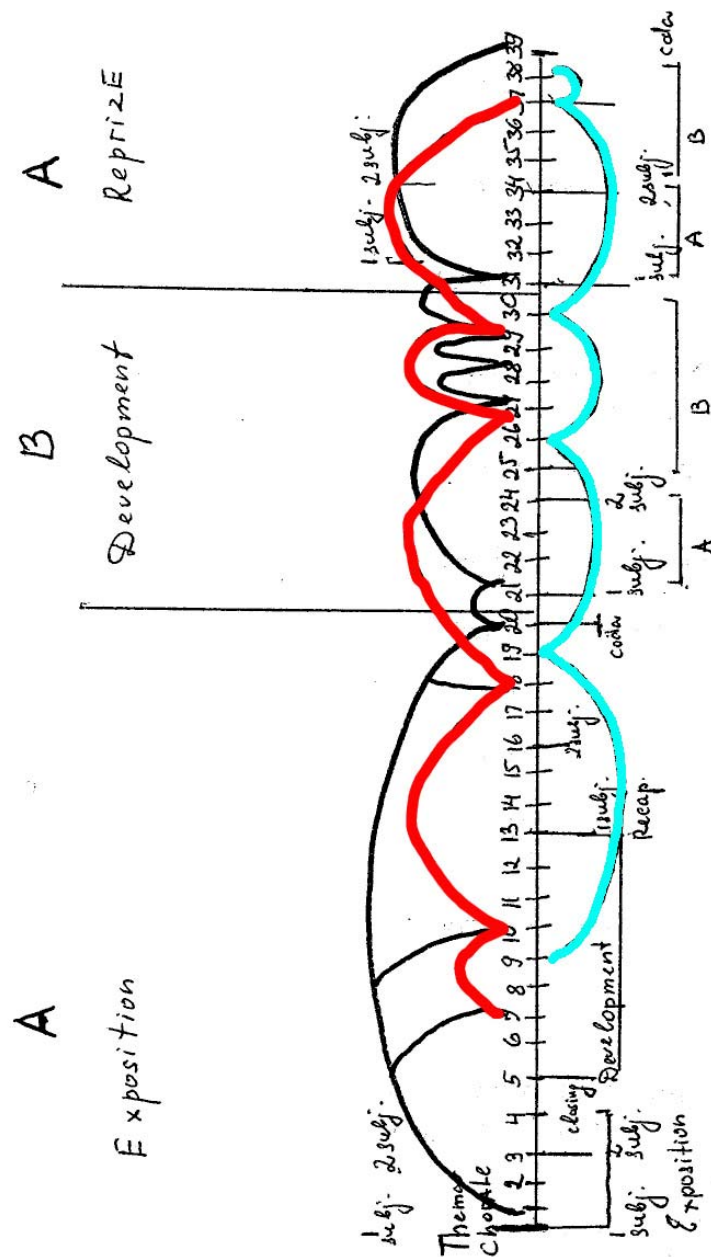
same order: chorale, lament (lyrical song), cadenza, or fast dance, like toccata, followed by cadenza. All of the lyrical melodies we hear in the upper region in contrast to the chorales. Every time, this contrast becomes an impulse to move further from one image to the next and to its development. (See figures on the next pages).

Bach- Busoni Chaconne Scheme

Part I

Theme	mm1-9	d-minor	Chorale	(First subject)
Var.1	9-17			
2	17-25			
3	25-33		Lament	(second subject)
4	33-41			(closing)
5	41-49			(Development)
6	49-57			
7	57-65			
8	65-73			(Busoni enlarged the variation by four measures, using imitation and inversion of the main motif)
9	73-78		Cadenza	(Busoni prolonged the harmony for one measure)
10	78-82		Recitative	
11	82-90			
12	90-94		Recitative	
13	94-98		Toccata	(Recapitulations, first subject)
14	98-102			
15	102-106			(Second subject)
16	106-110			
17	110-118			
18	118-126			
19	126-130		Cadenza	Coda (Closing)
20	130-138		Chorale	
Part II				
21	138-146	D-major	Chorale	(Development) First subj.
22	146-154			Bridge
23	154-158			
24	158-166		Lyrical song	Second subject
25	166-174			
26	174-182		Cadenza	
27	182-190		Chorale	
28	190-198		Chorale	
29	198-206		Chorale	
30	206-214		Cadenza	
Part III				
31	214-222	d-minor	Chorale	(Recapitulation) First subj ..
32	222-230		Recitative	Bridge
33	230-234			
34	234-238		Lament	(Second subject)
35	238-242		Toccata	
36	242-246			
37	246-250		Cadenza	Closing- Coda
38	250-254		Cadenza	
39	254-262		Chorale	

Chart B



Chords ●
 Culminations ■
 Cadenzas ●

Several times I have mentioned that symmetrical arches appear on every level in the music of the transcription. Symmetry plays an enormous role as a developmental tool in the Bach-Busoni Chaconne. The entire tripartite structure is symmetrical. This principle of symmetry connects different levels of the structure. The symmetry comes from the influence of the extra-generic existence and is an organizing element during the development of the “plot.” We hear and see it in two forms: 1) as a mirror symmetry and 2) as a proportional symmetry.

Mirror symmetry reveals itself in the disposition of the themes and in the process of how the themes interact with each other. The appearance of the chorale theme is one of the most prominent examples. We hear the chorale in similar situations (at the beginning and the end of each movement) all throughout the Chaconne. The structure of it does not change. However, as I showed in the third and fourth chapters, the texture, the range and the color are different each time and they transform the image of the chorale in each appearance. Therefore, symmetrical disposition serves both as a function of image and of semantics. The appearance of the chorale becomes similar to the theatrical personage of a herald in Greek tragedies, who announces what is happening behind the scenes. These events mirror the character of the narrative; that is why the theme changes every time depending on what is narrated.

The second kind of symmetry--proportional--is connected to the appearance of the new themes, which are products of the development of the variations and appear in similar situations. The symmetry in this case is more general. Its meaning consists of the more complicated relationships between the themes and the overall form. Often with such

symmetry, we find elements of a rondo form as another layer. In the Chaconne, with the numerous cadenzas present through the composition, we see how this is indeed true. The symmetry shows itself there in the similar arrangement of the variations in every movement as well as in the similarity of the genres of the themes and in the appearances of the chorales in the beginning and at the end of each section.

These two principles could be intertwined. In this instance, the symmetry shows itself in the similarity of the situations in the development of variations, and in that certain themes are displayed with regularity throughout the Chaconne. The cadenzas are a fine example because they appear through the whole Chaconne with regularity and in similar situations. The synthesis of these two principles becomes one of the most important, cementing factors for the wholeness of the variations. Partially because of this, we see elements of different forms in the layers### the rondo and concerto forms. The role of symmetry is ambiguous in the transcription. On the one hand we can understand it as helping to show how the sections of the structure are divided; on the other hand, a repeated theme or a variation helps to convey the feeling of inner unity. Closely associated with the symmetry principle are the cadenzas and culmination zones. In every section of the Chaconne, we hear the cadenzas at the end of developing sections, never in the beginning of a movement. Such placement is promoted especially in Busoni's version as a characteristic and a tool of personification. These cadenzas bring into focus different personifications. In the beginning and at the middle of the section they are not present because greater attention is devoted to the development of the material. The piano part is virtuosic enough. Only when the situations are ripened do the cadenzas appear, bringing with them the most difficult keyboard acrobatics and

emphasizing specific ideas, moods, and images. In the cadenzas, the author's "I" shines most brilliantly which in all other sections is hidden from the listener. In the cadenzas, the composer's intentions open up: thus it is no wonder that all of them are built on and accentuate the Phrygian tetrachord. In the combination of symmetry with the variation principles, Busoni maintains a certain balance between the quality of the material and his development, organization, language, and syntax.

Culmination zones either precede or follow the cadenzas. If we hear it before the cadenzas then they sound like an orchestral apotheosis, after which turmoil ensues. If we hear a culmination zone after a cadenza, its character bears some elements of intimacy and lyricism brought by the cadence. These statements are true in all cases in the Chaconne except at the end, where the dramatic caesura suddenly stops the struggle against fate—an enormous, grandiose and spatial Chorale the last time proclaims its will. As I discussed before, the Chaconne is the fifth movement of the partita. This last movement does not have repeats and doubles. The whole composition is written as a set of variations. In order to organize the variations, Bach created a tripartite setting, which assured listeners' perception of the form. In addition, being just a part of the partita, the tripartite structure plays the role of a three-movement cycle with a shortened, dramatized reprise. This reprise becomes not only a synthesis of what was before, but almost a pinnacle of the Stratum organization (from the point of view of the thematic material and structural development). In the reprise we can see the realization of the unity of the two different spherical images, two thematic spheres and two functions of the form. The Chaconne's third section plays the role of the reprise as well as a finale of whole cycle. It becomes the symbol of the two time categories### the past and the present.

Such a cycle also brings to mind a traditional concerto form. Bach's "Italian" piano solo concerto had been written by this time. The Chaconne has all the possibilities to be on the border between a solo movement of the partita and a solo violin concerto. In Busoni's transcription, the elements of the concerto form appear in the "tutti" (Vars. 7, 10, 18, 20, 27, 29, and 39) and the "solo" (Vars. 8, 9, 13, and 31) textures, in the cadenzas, and the timbral elements. It is also reflected in the virtuosic competitiveness of the texture and the dialogue treatment of it. The use of many contrasting genres helps to create a dialogue texture.

"Concertare," as an element of a dialogue, and "play" are reflected in the contrasting use of motifs. The sense of genre impresses itself on the listener's subconscious during the performance, which suggests a feeling of familiarity, without recalling the name of the genre. The idea that a cadenza could appear in a solo movement of a partita not only once but several times as a solo as well as an orchestral cadenza recalls a concerto in one movement, such as Liszt's A major concerto, which was so close to Busoni's heart. As a reminder, I would like to point out that Liszt first thought to name his concerto in A major "Concerto Symphonique."

That a variation on the theme could be interpreted from the structural point of view as a concerto form realized itself in the second part of the twentieth century, when the interest in Baroque music was on the rise. One such example we can find in the music written in 1977 by Latvian composer Peteris Plakidis.

In his piano concerto the first movement is called a chaconne, which in reality is a set of variations on a theme. In the development of the music (like in the Bach-Busoni Chaconne) we can hear two themes, where the second theme acts as a counterpoise to the

main theme, and as a continuous development of the preceding material. These themes correspond to each other as a first and second subject in the sonata form. Thus, we can conclude that Busoni in his transcription tried many different new ideas which echoed many years later in the art of other composers.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

All his life Ferruccio Busoni studied the music of J. S. Bach. For him it exemplified the highest level of human creativity. Bach influenced all of the genres in which Busoni practiced his compositional skills. Following Liszt's and Bach's example of writing transcriptions, Busoni created a new type of the genre. When we look at one of Busoni's most famous works, a transcription of the Bach Chaconne, and the lesser known *Kammer-Fantasie* on Bizet's *Carmen*, it becomes obvious that he not only wrote paraphrases, in the old operatic style, for performances of which his clarinetist virtuoso father was famous, but composed solid compositions with a certain conceptual agenda. Before and after Busoni were composers who arranged brilliantly the music of their predecessors. Liszt and Kreisler are prime examples. However, their ordering of musical themes was fairly arbitrary. These composers were concerned with the promotion of the music; they wanted to introduce and make familiar beautiful material to a wide audience, while adding to the repertoire of their fellow instrumentalists. That partially explains why, for them, one of the main criteria was musical contrast and the beauty of the themes.

Busoni kept all this in mind and pursued the same goals. However, for him, it was also very important how these themes interacted with one another. He gives his own dramatic reading of this familiar material, which conceptually could be different from the original (as seen in the Chaconne, and in the *Carmen Fantasie*). We hear the influence of such an approach in similar conceptual settings made by the next generation of

composers. For example Schedrin's transcription of themes from Carmen became one of the most brilliant examples. The melodies that the composer picks up from this very well known work, and the way he arranges musical material--how one theme follows after another-- clearly indicates that there is an idea, a concept, which becomes characteristic of his style. In his transcriptions, Busoni starts with the music that represents something from human experience. In the Chaconne, it is a chorale (representing faith); in Carmen, it is a scene from the market. Busoni finishes both the Chaconne and Carmen with the Fate themes. In the Chaconne, it is a Phrygian tetrachord in a stretto inside the chorale, which represents the Fate as well; in Carmen, a descending scale sequential leitmotif of fate with its fatal implications, which have elements of the Phrygian tetrachord as well.

In the Bach Chaconne Busoni was not able to reorder material as he wished. However, he definitely underscored the ideas that were important to him as an individual. Busoni, transcribing the Chaconne, underscores genre as a character element on which he based the composition's development. In Busoni's transcription, the chorale represents the general idea of human experience and the particular idea of fate. That's why he constructed the texture of the chorales with such care. The more intimate, lyrical material, (which represents an individual idea), follows as a contrast to the more general idea, forcing it to change. That is partially why the chorale changes within. The element of a doubt penetrates it, which we can hear through dialogues (e.g. Var.10). It almost reminds us of the Greek myth of Orpheus and Euridice. The individual, lyrical material is able to turn the chorale's fate around and at the end of the first section, we can hear this through the resolution of the suspension to the D major tonic instead of the minor. The middle

section, full of happy memories, follows, and then a sudden loss of paradise —

Orpheus turns around and the magic disappears. The third section is a tragic reaction to the second and represents the struggle against fate and its dictum.

In Busoni's transcriptions one of the most important elements becomes the logic of the emotional changes, where any section embodies certain psychological experiences that he derived from Bach. The lyrical, individual element, which is realized in the monologue-type of development which Busoni promotes, combined with the symphonic development, results in a composition with several movements combined into one.

In Busoni's Chaconne, we can hear that he heavily highlighted several elements of Medieval and Baroque music such as the Phrygian tetrachord, “sigh” and “exclamatio” motifs, chorale and toccata genres, textures and rhythms, as well as others. These elements Busoni subsequently used frequently, and it became part of his compositional style. Several years later in the twentieth century a score of other composers, among them Maurice Ravel, Charles Ives, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, and Gia Kancheli will use the same idea of almost forgotten medieval melodies, musical genres and tools, and they will write music based on the stylization of Medieval and Baroque music.

The transcription of the Chaconne by Busoni is not really a stylization. It is his original composition based on his experience of the idioms of different composer and genre. For Busoni Bach's music became his own. By mixing his own compositional skills with Bach's material, Busoni created a new medium, that became characteristic for twentieth-century art in general. In cinema, literature and music the use of fairy tales, myths and Bible stories as well as old chants, sequences and other material from the past became the basis for new concepts and a new expressive language. Similar use of

material was common in the Medieval and Baroque periods. As a musician of the twentieth century, Busoni accomplished a synthesis of different genres by using the tools of his own time in combination with the materials and genres of the Baroque era. Alfred Schnittke at the end of the twentieth century explained why a stylization is not always possible:

Today it is impossible to write anything vital in the musical language of the eighteenth century (unless one is setting oneself a special task). It is bound to be a dead stylization, the galvanization of the corpse; but one can write in modern language, giving its intonations an archaic tinge (or, the reverse, in “old” language, but with the modern logic of development). This invariably brings with it a paradoxicality of musical logic that does not fit into the framework of a single style or epoch.⁵⁷

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Ferruccio Busoni was one of the first composers who recognized one of many possibilities allowed to the modern author when he uses elements of the past. Bach's material, combined with a modern conceptual approach to the form, texture, and harmony created a unique and intriguing composition. This approach to the music remains fresh in the ears of the listener, even today.

This type of artistic expression required the listener to be knowledgeable in all of these materials. A simple old story, in the author's reinterpretation, suddenly becomes a journey through the intricacies and sophistication of the conceptual artistic story.

Thomas Mann, Berthold Brecht, Osip Mandelstamm, and Jorge Sadule are a few of the most prominent examples from the literature. Being versed in the tradition of the past and

⁵⁷ Alfred Schnittke, *Paradox as an Element of Stravinsky's Musical Logic*, in Igor Stravinsky: Essays and Materials, ed. Boris Yarustovsky (Moscow: Soviet composer, 1073), 386

its idioms, a contemporary listener and the performer will gain a comprehensive understanding of the myriad complexities of Busoni's Chaconne. The synthesis of Bach's original music with Busoni's reinterpretation offers a unique reward for the performer and the listener: a chance to look upon familiar music through different eyes, with respect to expression and attitude.

The use of material and genres of the past was one of the sides of Busoni's transcription. It came from the principle of "play." This principle allows us to explain many specific features from the organizational as well as from the perceptual point of view. The idea of "play" could be seen in the concerto elements, such as the high virtuosic texture, and in the effect of overcoming technical obstacles. This principle is responsible for the special organization of the form's strata organization-where contrasting elements are layered one on another. The phenomenon of the strata becomes one of the central problems in Busoni's work. In fact, it will become one of characteristics of his musical thinking and style. Strata in the Chaconne exist on several different levels: (1) thematic; (2) genre; (3) dramaturgy; and (4) form. On every level strata have their own characteristics as a musical tool and as an artistic result. Such varied use of the possibilities of the strata allows me to interpret them as a method of artistic thinking in Busoni. Several decades later the art of many composers with different stylistic orientations, such as Charles Ives, Witold Lutoslavsky, Igor Stravinsky and Aram Khachaturian, just to mention a few, prove that such a method becomes a norm, which means that starting from Busoni's Chaconne we can talk about the aesthetic phenomena of the twentieth century.

The strata approach reflects one of the characteristic tendencies of the twentieth

century— the hybridization of genres. In the Chaconne this principle is reflected in the development of the chorale and dance as a result of the aesthetic unity and parallel development of the dramaturgy in each. As a result, in every section of the Chaconne, the expository portion is larger than the rest of the form.

Of course, this feature is evident in Bach's music, but Busoni underscores it with the quality of sound, texture and harmony. Busoni was able to achieve almost stereophonic sound, which he distributed evenly within the growing form and texture. In the main culmination of each movement, he created an orchestral tutti-type sonority, which grew out of its low and somber beginnings. Stereophonic sound, which Busoni promoted with vigor, comes from several media and is very much influenced by the organ, orchestral and electronic sounds of early twentieth-century instruments. The concept of music as a struggle between Life and inevitable Fate and Death also influenced the sound. The result was the promotion of the Phrygian tetrachord. The Bach Chaconne does not have a basso ostinato; however, Busoni actively demonstrates to the listener that this music indeed has a constant element— a Phrygian tetrachord. The chorale and the tetrachord become a guide to the interpretation.

A change in the general approach to artistic formation brings forth a different attitude toward the thematic material by Busoni. Thus, in this research, particular attention was brought to the classification of the character themes in the variations (Chapter 2) by their motivic content and genre characteristics. Busoni's attitude towards the Chaconne leaned more towards its individualized lyrical side. That is why he stressed the dialogue-type melody, which resulted in a change in the range of the melodies as well as in the direction of Bach's original material.

The timbral, textural and harmonic treatments (which are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4) undergo a complete makeover in comparison to the original Chaconne. The difference in the treatment by Busoni lies in the different medium (piano instead of the violin), the different attitude towards sound, and his understanding of the implied genres of the piece. Busoni, following the previous generation's traditions (particularly Liszt, whom he adored as a master), imitates the sounds of certain orchestral instruments through piano sonorities. He gets an orchestral sound out of the piano not by means of the volume and breadth of imitating orchestral tutti, but because he associates particular sounds on the piano and their texture with a certain method of playing on the imitative instrument. In addition, he combines several sonorities together in the timbral strata, thus creating an imitation of an orchestral score. Liszt associated the sound of certain passages with certain orchestral instruments. We need only look at the scores of his adaptations of Beethoven symphonies for the piano, which are full of instrumental cues. However, he does not imitate the sound of several instruments together at the same time like in an orchestra. Busoni, through use of the timbral strata, was able to achieve a multi-faceted sonoristic effect.

Busoni's remarkable achievement with the sound in the Chaconne lies also in imagining a new way of playing an orchestral instrument. He was the first composer who used the sound of the harp as percussive. This was suggested in the piano score! After him, the idea continues to appear in compositions of Mahler and Shostakovich.

One of Busoni's most significant achievements is his ability to illustrate a sense of depth through texture, genre and sound. The sound perception changes in listener's imagination because of the spatial treatment of the texture. Through the different use of

the strata, Busoni was able to create both shallow and deep space, and development between them. He maximizes this spatial effect with textural and timbral elements, where range development and stratas plays an important role. Busoni even uses the visual effect of crossing hands to emphasize the idea of space and depth.

The presence of strata illuminates the hybridization of the genre, the use of “montage devices of organization as well as the condensation of artistic time, the simultaneous conveying of several communications.”⁵⁸ In such settings, Busoni’s emphasis on the genres of the chorale in the dance chaconne rhythm, Phrygian tetrachord, hymn and toccata as well as other genres throughout the composition, provokes numerous allusions in the memory of a contemporary generation. By recognizing these allusions, the composer, as well as the musical community creates a link between eras and traditions. The old genres and the new approaches correspond, conveying a dialogue between old and new, drawing out historical memory.

Bach and Busoni both lived during very interesting times, where everything around them was changing. New ideas, new styles of life and new instruments were coming into their lives. They both eagerly were looking into new possibilities to express their talent. Bach, like in many of his other compositions, tried new structural possibilities, promoting a budding sonata form. In Bach’s Chaconne we can see several layers of form. Besides being a variation form it is a tripartite, with elements of a sonata form. Busoni emphasizes this structural possibility with all musical means. Each section could be viewed as an independent sonata form or symmetrical binary. Besides these

⁵⁸Marina Lobanova, *Musical Style and Genre: History and Modernity* (Australia, Canada: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2001), 180

forms, I found some evidence of a concerto form as well. We can see that in the specific virtuosic elements through the effect of overcoming obstacles, through numerous cadenzas and tutti and solo variations. Busoni promoted all of this using, besides other musical means, timbral associations.

Busoni wanted to explore new sound possibilities and dramatize already existing material such as Bach's Chaconne. That's why in his transcriptions he heavily promoted what Bach only hinted. The Chaconne does not have an "official" sonata form. However, most of its elements are present, except the tonal contrast between the themes. Busoni highlights the sonata form, because it exposé's the dramatic power of the music most convincingly. By using all of the achievements of previous musical eras and his predecessors, Busoni symphonized development in the Chaconne by dramatizing the music through the strata and through the form, emphasizing the sonata structure. Thus he created a unique synthetic genre which belong to the "chamber" group and is at the same time is "symphonized."

In order to hold together such a massive composition, Busoni promoted musical arches, which lay hidden in the Bach score. He did this by promoting genres as a recognizable tool. For example, in every section, the same types of genres are used to pinpoint structural similarities. The opening and closing of sections is always a chorale, which opposes a lament. The themes correspond to each other as the first and second themes in an exposition in a sonata form.

The cadenza-variations are another example. Busoni treats them as an explosion of human emotions, as well as a gentle reminder of the unity of the piece. Symmetry plays an enormous role in Busoni's transcription as a developmental tool. Through it

Busoni is able to convey the feeling of unity, on the other point of view the symmetry shows to the listener how the sections are divided.

In the twentieth century one of most important genres brought forward from the nineteenth century (but underrepresented at that time) was the requiem. The turbulence of the century assisted in creation of many. Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin*, Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem*, Rutter's *Requiem*, Berg's Violin Concerto (with Bach's chorale *Es ist Genug* in the last movement), Schnittke's *Requiem* and *In Memoriam*, etc. These are just a small sample of the scope of the trend; the list can go on. The requiem itself is a genre rooted in the past and in the memory of many generations. In Busoni's Chaconne the treatment of the chaconne dance (which by itself was a mourner's dance)⁵⁹ as well as that of the chorale and the underscoring of the Phrygian tetrachord as a death theme performs a special function with a long tradition in German speaking countries. This function is as the representation of emblematic figure in the chaconne. Many musicologists tried to put a precise name on the chorale used in the Bach's original text and failed. That people would tried their utmost to associate the music of the chorale with a certain text speaks about the instinctive search for the meaning of this particular music and its relationship to the rest of the composition. However, I believe that Bach did not intend to use a specific chorale for this piece. Instead, he used a symbolic representation of the musical sequence and genre, in a composition that, even in those times, alluded to

⁵⁹ I would like to remind my readers that many composers in the twentieth century used genres of the chaconne, passacaglia, and sarabande as a dramatic development of mourners emotions. As one example we can remember the music of Dimitry Shostakovich, who used this old symbolic dances in many of his compositions. Passacaglia from the eight Symphony, third movement of the trio op.67, and third movement of the violin concerto op.99 are a few examples.

the mourners' rituals. In the solo violin piece, which was part of the suite, nobody would suspect that it was indeed a Requiem for Bach's wife. The solo instrument functions like a very intimate narrator relating the story of Bach's life and its grief; the genres in these works turned into semantic elements that revealed the Chaconne's hidden symbolism.

The chorale in Busoni's transcription represents an inexorable fate and the Phrygian tetrachord represents Death. In Bach's original composition the genres are hidden in the texture. In fact, Bach does not accentuate genre in the themes that arise from the variation development. Busoni relies on them to get across his point of view. In this regard it becomes clear why Schumann's and Mendelssohn's arrangements did not become popular. Besides other problems in their attempt to make the Chaconne more accessible to the musical community, they did not pay enough attention to genre, and in many ways contradicted the suggested genre with their accompaniments. By emphasizing and combining genres, Busoni made a connection with the past, which made the composition and its structure more accessible to for the listener's perception. The chorale and the Phrygian cadence become tragic symbols of life, the embodiment of individual destiny. At the same time, we hear through the arrangement of the cadenzas, in which the author's "I" is heard clearly, and through Busoni's arrangement of the chorale and the tetrachord, the author's attitude toward these symbols. All of this made Busoni's transcription very successful and popular.

It is interesting that there are dissertations devoted to the Chaconne's transcription by composers who did not make a such an impact on musical history. Many of their names are almost unknown. However, the works of Mendelssohn, Schumann and

Brahms are not analyzed. Even if one considers the arrangements of the former two composers inferior to their other works, there are still several interesting moments which should be investigated; Brahms's transcription is among the finest in the literature. It would be very interesting to investigate how these composers' arrangements are different from Bach-Busoni, and what impact they had upon future generations in the art of transcriptions.

In 1893, Busoni wrote music based upon the famous Bach Chaconne that became the harbinger of a new era. A musician of the twenty-first century can easily see in the music of this composition many details that in the twentieth-century became a norm, including the synthesis of genres, and the use of medieval tetrachord in its original meaning as a symbol of Death and Fate. Busoni's experiment with sound produced a unique arrangement of piano texture. He continued to develop orchestral sound on the piano, and tried to find ways for modern piano compositions to sound stereophonically. Everything Busoni did bear elements of uniqueness, impeccable taste and beauty. His individual style combines naturally with the traditional elements of musical thoughts, which are presented in a new, multifaceted interpretation. This transcription, which is oriented towards the listener and his or her perception of the music, assures the wholeness of the work's aesthetic value and artistic results. The uniqueness, wholeness and richness of Busoni's transcription of Bach's Chaconne became the aesthetic property of his compositional style and a realization of an aesthetic truth.

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Appendix

A List of Arrangements of J.S. Bach's Chaconne in D minor.¹

Accompaniments for violin

F. W. Ressel(1845)

Felix Mendelssohn (1847)

Robert Schumann (1853)

Piano transcriptions

Carl Debrois van Bruyck .(1855)

Ernst Pauer (1867)

Joachim Raff. (1865)

C. Wilschau.(1879)

Count Geza Zichy.(c.1880)

Schubert F.L.(c.1858)

W. Lamping (1887)

Brahms Johannes.(1878)

¹ Information for this list was gathered from following sources: Georg Feder, "History of the Arrangements of Bach's Chaconne," in *the Bach Chaconne for Solo Violin: A Collection of Views*, ed. Jon Eiche (Bloomington , Indiana: Frangipani Press, 1985), 24-40; Lars Ulrick Mortensen, "J. S. Bach: Keyboard Partita in A minor after BWV1004," in *The Keyboard in Baroque Europe*, ed. Christopher Hogwood (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 218.

Hartman Hans. (1892/3)

Ferruccio Busoni (1893)

Martinus Sievking (1914)

Maria Herz (1914)

Alexander Siloti (1924)

Phillip Isidore (1925)

Emmanuel Moor. (1936)

Arthur Briskier (1954)

Karl Hermann Pilney (1968)

Lars Mortensen (2002) for harpsichord, change in the key from D minor to A minor.

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For Organ

W. T Best

O.H Messerer (1909)

Wilhelm Middelshulte

Arno Landmann(1927)

B. Todt (1909)

for piano trio

Maria Herz (1912)

for string quartet or string orchestra

———— (1927)

for string quartet

For Orchestra

Maximillian Steinberg (1909)

Jenő Hubai (1931)

Alfredo Casella (1936)

Riccardo Nielsen (1936)

Leopold Stokovsky (Stokovsky version survived only as a recording)

For Ballet

George Balanchine (1972)

Kenneth Oberly (2003)