

VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY PAGANINI:
SELECTED WORKS FOR PIANO SOLO BY LISZT, BRAHMS, HAMBOURG,
LABUNSKI, AND BERKOVICH

by

SANGWON MOON
(Under the Direction of David Fung)

ABSTRACT

Caprice in A Minor, Op. 1, No. 24 for solo violin by Niccolò Paganini is a great inspiration for many composers. This study explores and compares the characteristics of these five works, and also focuses on exploring the influence of Liszt and Brahms on the compositions by Hambourg, Labunski and Berkovich. Finally, the thesis focuses on musical attributes such as texture, figuration, rhythm, meter, and hemiola. Along the way, I provide a brief biographical introduction of the five composers.

INDEX WORDS: variations, Nicolo Paganini, Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms, Mark Hambourg, Wiktor Labunski, Issak Yakovich Berkovich.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY PAGANINI:
SELECTED WORKS FOR PIANO SOLO BY LISZT, BRAHMS, HAMBOURG,
LABUNSKI, AND BERKOVICH

by

SANGWON MOON

BME, Konkuk University, South Korea, 2008

MM, Northern Illinois University, 2015

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2022

© 2022

Sangwon Moon

All Rights Reserved

VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY PAGANINI:
SELECTED WORKS FOR PIANO SOLO BY LISZT, BRAHMS, HAMBOURG,
LABUNSKI, AND BERKOVICH

by

SANGWON MOON

Major Professor:	David Fung
Committee:	Liza Stepanova
Committee:	Dickie Lee
Committee:	Peter Jutras

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to my piano professor and advisor, Dr. David Fung, for his supervision, advice, and guidance from the earliest stage of this project as well as for giving me encouragement during difficult times. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee: Dr. Dickie Lee, for taking the time to provide direction, especially regarding the language in my document; and Dr. Liza Stepanova and Dr. Peter Jutras, for their support and invaluable feedback. It was a pleasure working with my entire committee.

Finally, I cannot describe how grateful I am for my family's unwavering love and support. My parents have sacrificed so much to help me to attain my DMA, for which I am eternally grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF EXAMPLES.....	vi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Content.....	1
Review of Literature	3
Composers.....	5
2 PIANO SOLO WORKS: VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY PAGANINI.....	8
Mark Hambourg, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i>	8
Wiktor Labunski, <i>Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini</i>	14
Isaak Yakovich Berkovich, <i>Variations on the Theme of Paganini</i>	17
3 CONCLUSION.....	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	23

LIST OF EXAMPLES

	Page
Example 1: Brahms, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , bk. 1, var. 4, mm. 1–12.....	9
Example 2: Hambourg, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , var. 5, mm. 22–30.....	10
Example 3: Brahms, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , bk. 1, var. 5, mm. 1–8.....	10
Example 4: Hambourg, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , var. 11, mm. 1–5.....	11
Example 5: Brahms, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , bk. 1, var. 2, mm. 13–16.....	11
Example 6: Hambourg, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , var. 2, mm. 1–3.....	12
Example 7: Brahms, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , bk. 1, var. 1, mm. 1–8.....	12
Example 8: Hambourg, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , var. 2, mm. 8–15.....	13
Example 9: Brahms, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , bk. 2, var. 12, mm. 1–4.....	13
Example 10: Hambourg, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , var. 4, mm. 1–5.....	14
Example 11: Brahms, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , theme, mm. 1–4.....	14
Example 12: Labunski, <i>Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini</i> , theme, mm. 1–3.....	15
Example 13: Labunski, <i>Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini</i> , var. 1, mm. 1–6.....	15
Example 14: Brahms, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , bk. 1, finale, mm. 1–8.....	16
Example 15: Labunski, <i>Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini</i> , var. 4, mm. 1–10.....	16
Example 16: Liszt, <i>Grandes études de Paganini</i> , no. 6, var. 10, mm. 1–6.....	18
Example 17: Berkovich, <i>Variations on the Theme of Paganini</i> , var. 6, mm. 1–8.....	18
Example 18: Brahms, <i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini</i> , bk. 2, var. 14, mm. 1–8.....	19
Example 19: Berkovich, <i>Variations on the Theme of Paganini</i> , finale, mm. 1–6.....	19

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Variation form is considered one of the oldest musical devices, and numerous composers have written variations on borrowed themes. Among these, Nicolo Paganini's Caprice in A Minor, Op. 1, No. 24 for solo violin might be one of the best-known pieces, serving as a thematic source for a plethora of composers. This theme is likely historically connected to variation form since Paganini originally conceived of it this way.

Paganini is the gold standard of virtuosity for many violinists, but not only violinists interact with this composer: the piano variation sets inspired by his Caprice No. 24 also display varying levels of virtuosity. My recording project and accompanying paper focus on five variation sets drawn from Paganini's twenty-fourth caprice; this study explores the lines connecting these works. For breadth, the selection features varying levels of virtuosity—from pedagogical works to concert pieces—and features lesser-known works by Mark Hambourg, Wiktor Labunski, and Isaak Yakovich Berkovich.

Content

- I. Franz Liszt, *Grandes études de Paganini*, S. 141, No. 6 (1851)
- II. Johannes Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, Op. 35 (1863)
- III. Mark Hambourg, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* (1902)
- IV. Wiktor Labunski, *Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini* (1943)
- V. Isaak Yakovich Berkovich, *Variations on the Theme of Paganini* (1967)

This study explores and compares the characteristics of these five works, and also focuses on exploring the influence of Liszt and Brahms on the compositions by Hambourg,

Labunski and Berkovich. Rachmaninoff could also be considered an influence, as Berkovich's *Paganini Variations* demonstrates characteristics such as thick and chordal textures that sound like the bells of Rachmaninoff's *Prelude Op. 3, No. 2*. However, this document is not intended to explore works beyond my recording repertoire, therefore Rachmaninoff is excluded from the present discussion.

Of the five sets, the variations of Liszt and Brahms are among the most celebrated iterations of Paganini's theme found in the piano repertoire. However, the ways in which these two composers deal with the Paganini's theme differ considerably. While Liszt's *Grandes études de Paganini* are transcriptions of the entire set of Paganini's theme and variations, Brahms, on the other hand, does not transcribe the original material, rather recomposing every variation as different technical exercises. These variations are only related to the original violin line via their melodic motives.¹ Thus, their influence on subsequent composers that utilize the same theme is notable. This document explores such compositional echoes, which are present in the sets by Hambourg, Labunski, and Berkovich.

A preliminary exploration of the Paganini variations by Hambourg, Labunski, and Berkovich reveals similarities to those of Liszt and Brahms with respect to melody, rhythm, and figuration. Hambourg's use of polyphony, parallel sixths, and triple meter in his set of variations is highly reminiscent of Brahms. Labunski's final variation is reminiscent of Brahms's *Paganini Variations*' Book 1 finale with regard to tempo, meter, and the motivic use of the minor second interval. Berkovich's finale features similar gestures to those in Brahms's *Paganini Variations* Book 2 finale. There are many other examples of these echoes, which I explore in more depth below.

¹ Benita W. Tse, "Piano Variations Inspired by Paganini's Twenty-Fourth Caprice from Op. 1" (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1992), 87-88.

Review of Literature

Many sources examine the variations of Liszt and Brahms, but writings on the Hambourg, Labunski, and Berkovich variations are scarce. Labunski and Berkovich's works are well known in piano pedagogy, but Hambourg's work is still underexamined. In addition, biographical information about the three later composers is limited.

Dissertations

- “Wiktor Labunski: Polish-American Musician in Kansas City, 1937–1974: A Case Study,” an EdD dissertation by J. Richard Belanger, focuses on general biographical information and provides brief remarks on all of Labunski's compositions, including his *Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini*.
- Wenli Zhou's DMA thesis, “Piano Variations by Liszt, Lutosławski, Brahms, and Rachmaninoff on a Theme by Paganini,” introduces the Twenty-Fourth Caprice in A Minor, Op. 1 first and analyzes each variation. Zhou also provides harmonic and structural analysis of Brahms's *Paganini Variations*, Op. 35.
- Yoona Choi also contributed to the research on variations on Paganini's theme. Her DMA thesis, “The Paganini Variations: A Study of Selected Works by Liszt, Brahms, Rachmaninoff, Lutosławski, and Muczynski,” provides background, general analysis, and a performance guide. She also offers pedagogical suggestions.
- *The Variations of Johannes Brahms*, by Julian Littlewood, provides in-depth details on Brahms's treatment of the theme.
- Javier Clavere's 2011 DMA dissertation, “A Study Guide to Franz Liszt's *Grandes études de Paganini* S. 141,” discusses the background and overall formal structure of all the études and compares Liszt's versions to Paganini. His dissertation focuses on technique and suggests appropriate exercises for playing the études. He also provides

practice suggestions and a performance guide.

- Benita Wan-Kuen Tse contributed research on the influence of Paganini's Caprice No. 24. Her DMA thesis, "Piano Variations Inspired by Paganini's Twenty-Fourth Caprice from Op. 1," first describes the origin of the variation form and offers historical background on Nicolo Paganini. The author examines five piano works, detailing the historical background and influences with transcription techniques and pianistic devices.
- Szu-Ting Chou's 2012 MM dissertation, "The Influence of the Theme and Variation of Paganini's Caprice No. 24 from Twenty-Four Caprices for Solo Violin on Two Major Piano Solo Works: Liszt *Grandes études de Paganini* No. 6 in A minor, S. 140 and Muczynski *Desperate Measures (Paganini Variations)* for Piano, Op. 48," examines two major solo piano sets of variations on Paganini's theme by Liszt and Muczynski. The dissertation begins with biographies of the composers and focuses on melodic contour, rhythm, and structure as compared with Paganini's original theme.

Journal Articles

- "The Leschetizky School," by Alan Becker (*American Record Guide*, vol. 73, no. 3), introduces the Leschetizky school and gives brief biographical information on Leschetizky's students, including Mark Hambourg, Ignaz Friedman, and Michael Zadora.
- "The Hambourg Legacy," by John Bell Young (*American Record Guide*, vol. 62, no. 1), includes a review of Mark Hambourg's recording of Chopin's *Andante spianato*. The author provides information on Hambourg's musical style and biographical details in his review of the album.
- "Pupil Savers: Student Favorites—Remembering Paganini," by Elizabeth Ann Reed (*Clavier*, vol. 44, no. 1), features a brief review of *Four Variations on a Theme by*

Paganini by Labunski, and includes a general analysis of the third and last variation.

- “Hambourg on Leschetitzky and His Method,” by William Smythe Babcock Mathews (*Music*, vol. 17), is an interview in which Mark Hambourg provides thoughts and musical insights on his teacher Leschetitzky.

Composers

Since this document focuses on the echoes and connections between multiple sets of variations, I will provide only brief biographical introductions for the composers.

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) represents nineteenth-century, Romantic-era music and is known for progressing the art of piano performance and virtuosity. He opened many possibilities for expression on the piano through sonic effects that emerge from wide registers, textural complexity, dynamic contrast, colorful virtuosic techniques, and lyrical melodies.² Liszt’s piano music uses pedal points in unique ways; imitates orchestral colors and textures; and features extremely technical passages such as wide-ranging leaps and drastic changes of register, grace notes, and other accented forms of embellishment; and virtuosic, consecutive octaves. He also arranged pieces for various instrumentation, including piano, organ, opera, and orchestral works, all of which bear hallmarks of his rich harmonic language and lush sound.³

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was a classicist born in the Romantic era. Thus, he is considered a romantic classical composer.⁴ He showcased extraordinary proficiency in many

² Wenli Zhou, “Piano Variations by Liszt, Lutosławski, Brahms, and Rachmaninoff on a Theme by Paganini” (DMA diss., Rice University, 2012), 15-16.

³ Javier Clavere, “A Study Guide to Franz Liszt’s *Grandes études de Paganini* S. 141” (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2011), 23.

⁴ Zhou, 55.

genres, and his music contains a dialogue between the richness of romantic lyricism and balanced, formal structures. Rather than representing musical splendor or virtuosic techniques (like other composers of the time), Brahms expressed musical atmospheres and romanticism through the tight-knit structures, many of which can be typified by his pianistic writing. This structural focus may be why he seemed to favor variation form: it is, itself, the embellishment of a theme, and that theme contains everything from the first utterance through all the subsequent versions.⁵

Mark Hambourg (1879-1960) was born in Russia and lived in London after his debut. He was a pupil of the celebrated pedagogue Theodor Leschetizky and was a pianist with as impressive and brilliant a transcendental technique as Godowsky. One of the first pianists to make gramophone records, he performed a very wide range of repertoire, from J. S. Bach to contemporary music. He composed for solo piano, including *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* and also published pedagogical works for the piano such as *How to Play the Piano*, *From Piano to Forte*, and *The Eighth Octave*.⁶

Wiktor Labunski (1895-1974), a Polish musician who settled in the United States during the mid-twentieth century, was a celebrated pianist, composer, and pedagogue. He was born in Russia and educated as a pianist at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and then moved to the United States in 1928, serving as a music school director. Later, he relocated to Kansas City and served as a faculty artist-in-residence. He spent thirty-seven years in Kansas City, where he contributed to the development of musical culture and education and gave over two hundred local piano recitals. Labunski wrote thirty-one known compositions, all of which are located at the University of Missouri–Kansas City. Presently, among the eleven published

⁵ Zhou, 55.

⁶ John Bell Young, “The Hambourg Legacy,” *American Record Guide* 62, no. 1 (January/February 1999): 261.

works, *Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini* has been the most popular.⁷

Soviet composer, pianist, and teacher Isaak Yakovich Berkovich (1902-1972) contributed more as a piano teacher than as a performer. For most of his career, he contributed to piano pedagogy repertoire. He wrote many publications, and his pedagogical works for piano include *Thirty Easy Pieces*, *Three Sonatinas for Piano*, and *School of Piano Playing*. His other works include études, arrangements of folk songs, and numerous adaptations of piano pieces.

⁷ J. Richard Belanger, "Wiktor Labunski: Polish-American Musician in Kansas City, 1937–1974: A Case Study" (EdD diss., Columbia University, 1982), 116.

CHAPTER 2

PIANO SOLO WORKS: VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY PAGANINI

In this study, I compare the three lesser-known works with those of Brahms and Liszt, focusing on musical attributes such as texture, hemiola, meter, rhythm, and figuration. First, I explore Mark Hambourg's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* (1902). Second, I analyze Wiktor Labunski's *Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini* (1943), and finally, I will discuss Isaak Yakovich Berkovich's *Variations on the Theme of Paganini* (1967).

Mark Hambourg, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*

Hambourg composed the theme and sixteen subsequent variations in 1902. It was the longest of his compositions, and appears to have been inspired more by Brahms than Liszt. Alan Becker agreed with previous commentators that most variations on Paganini's Caprice No. 24 were inspired by Brahms's version.⁸ I would like to expand Becker's thought regarding several factors.

First, textural characteristics of Brahms's music often in appear in Hambourg's Paganini variations. Brahms's music is generally characterized by a very thick texture emphasizing harmonic thirds, sixths, and octaves. In addition to polyphonic textures, Brahms deployed metric and rhythmic devices such as polyrhythm and hemiola in some of his variations.⁹ Example 1 shows Brahms' use of repetition and alternating figurations.

⁸ Alan Becker, "The Leschetizky School," *American Record Guide* 73, no. 3 (May/June 2010): 182.

⁹ Zhou, 69.

Example 1. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, bk. 1, var. 4, mm. 1–12.



An arpeggio of sixteenth notes appears in the left hand. The first beat is emphasized by tonic harmony, and the trill note appears in the right hand. Then the figuration of the left and right hands alternates and proceeds with a prominent line emerging from that texture in the lowest voice, descending through a scale.

Brahms frequently used a method of alternating melody figuration in the left and right hand parts in his variations. This characteristic can be observed in Hambourg's variations, as seen in Example 2.

Example 2. Hambourg, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, var. 5, mm. 22–30.



The original Paganini Caprice No. 24 is in a 2/4 meter that maintains a 2/4 pulse throughout the piece, without any change in meter. Liszt's Paganini Étude No. 6 is essentially an arrangement of the original violin piece for the piano and duplicates the original's expression. Liszt imported and maintained the 2/4 meter throughout and recontextualized the melody in a "Lisztian" pianistic texture. However, Brahms only imported the original theme before varying it, using duple, compound, and even quadruple meter. Hambourg's Paganini variation set also seems to follow Paganini's original theme but is more reminiscent of Brahms's variations than Liszt's because of the varying meters. The following examples show how Brahms adopted various meters.

Example 3. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, bk. 1, var. 5, mm. 1–8.



Brahms's Var. 5 is characterized by a polymeter, with the right hand operating in 2/4 and the left hand in 6/8 simultaneously. This results in a two-against-three rhythm between the two hands. The metric accents are shifted and the left hand contradicts the meter even more by the use of hemiola.¹⁰ Polymeter also appears as 2/4 for the right hand and 3/8 for the left hand in Book 2, Var. 7.

This kind of bifurcated meter can also be found in Hambourg's variations. In his Var. 11, Hambourg created a performance effect by juxtaposing 12/16 in the right hand and 4/4 in the left hand, contrasting two beats against three (Example 4).

Example 4. Hambourg, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, var. 11, mm. 1–5.



In Hambourg's variations, many rhythmic patterns are similar to Brahms's—including a parallel progression of thirds or sixths, and hemiola. The following examples present how Hambourg might have been influenced by Brahms.

¹⁰ Tse, 93.

Example 5. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, bk. 1, var. 2, mm. 13–16.



The rhythm appearing in the right hand (Example 5) and the rhythm appearing in the right hand of the Hambourg variation (Example 6) have the same pattern of short-short-long durational values.

Example 6. Hambourg, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, var. 2, mm. 1–3.



The following examples show that Brahms frequently used parallel sixth progressions often in Book 1, Var. 1 (Example 7).

Example 7. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, bk. 1, var. 1, mm. 1–8.



In Var. 1, parallel sixth progressions appear consistently in the right hand. Consecutive thirds in contrary motion, with occasional sustained lower notes, create a thicker texture. Hambourg also used this kind of progression in the right hand of his Variation 2 (Example 8).

Example 8. Hambourg, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, var. 2, mm. 8–15.



The hemiola occurs frequently in the music of Brahms. In the Example 9, Brahms marks the meter as 6/8, however, it is grouped simple two beat system first, and changed to three beat system, creating a hemiola.¹¹

Example 9. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, bk. 2, var. 12, mm. 1–4.



¹¹ Zhou, 68.

Hambourg also used hemiola in his variations. In Var. 4, Hambourg marked the meter as 6/8, but a closer inspection reveals that the 6/8 meter alternates with 3/4, creating a hemiola (Example 10).

Example 10. Hambourg, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, var. 4, mm. 1–5.



Like Brahms, Hambourg used metric and rhythmic devices such as hemiola and polyrhythm. In addition, Hambourg's use of varying meters, as well as parallel sixths and third progressions that create thicker textures, suggest Brahms's influence. However, Hambourg's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* tends toward a larger form and bold pianistic contrasts, using transitions and attacca between variations.

Wiktor Labunski, *Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini*

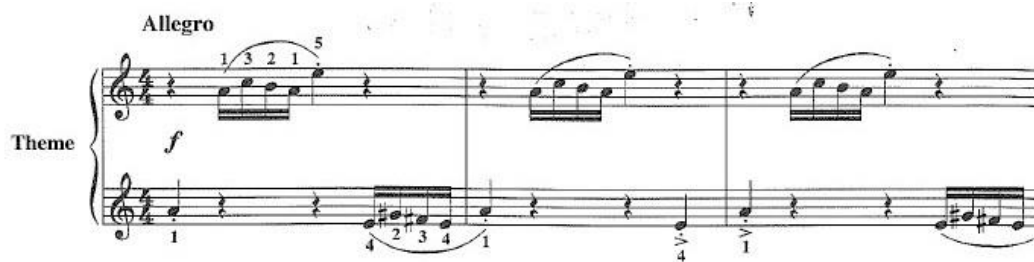
Wiktor Labunski's *Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, originally published in 1943, was a winning composition in a contest sponsored by the Society of American Musicians. It is a set of short variations intended as a pedagogical piece, specifically for intermediate students. This work is less directly influenced by Brahms than Hambourg's, but its focus was ultimately on simplification.

First, unlike Brahms's and Liszt's almost exact duplication of Paganini's caprice theme (Example 11), Labunski split the theme between the right and left hands based on harmony. One measure includes the harmonic progression of tonic to dominant. The rhythm of theme has also been simplified with no grace notes (Example 12).

Example 11. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, theme, mm. 1–4.



Example 12. Labunski, *Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, theme, mm. 1–3.



Labunski also simplified other Brahms variations. For example, his Var. 1 appears to be an analysis of Brahms's Book 1 Var. 1 (see Example 7 above). As shown in Example 13, Labunski divided the consecutive sixth passage in the right hand and simplified the texture by separating that motion into two separate hands.

Example 13. Labunski, *Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, var. 1, mm. 1–6.

Labunski's final, fourth variation contains almost identical rhythmic patterning to Brahms's Book 1 finale (Example 14). Labunski simplified Brahms's thick texture by

removing a characteristic half-step inner voice gesture (Example 15). The fast tempo and dramatic, arpeggiated flourish at the finale also mark it as Brahmsian.¹²

Example 14. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, bk. 1, finale, mm. 1–8.



Example 15. Labunski, *Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, var. 4, mm. 1–10.

The use of almost identical rhythmic patterns and basic harmonic progressions from Brahms' *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* suggest a connection between Labunski and his predecessor, Brahms. However, Labunski's *Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini* is simplified for pedagogical purposes and uses rhythm segmentation in both hands.

¹² Elizabeth Ann Reed, "Pupil Savers: Student Favorites—Remembering Paganini," *Clavier* 44, no. 1 (January 2005): 4.

Isaak Yakovich Berkovich, *Variations on the Theme of Paganini*

Isaak Yakovich Berkovich's *Variations on the Theme of Paganini* (1967) is a well-known piece for early advanced-level students. Berkovich's variations are more difficult than Labunski's, however, but show a progression of passages using both hands and a simple rhythmic pattern. As a result, each variation creates a variety of atmospheres. In addition, this work reveals the influence of several composers, including Brahms, Liszt, and even Rachmaninoff, standing in contrast to the works by Hambourg and Labunski.

First, I would like to explore a part of Berkovich's composition that is similar to Liszt's Paganini Étude No. 6. Liszt arranged Paganini's Caprice No. 24 for piano. Other composers in this study were heavily influenced by Brahms. However, Berkovich was different. Like Liszt, Berkovich drew on Paganini's theme and variations, while Brahms used only the caprice's original theme.¹³ As in Paganini's work, each of Berkovich's variations shows the characteristics of a particular technique, such as thirds, tenths, octaves, and long successive trills against a cantabile melody. The main difference from the original is the alteration of harmony and additional melodic material, creating a rich sound.¹⁴

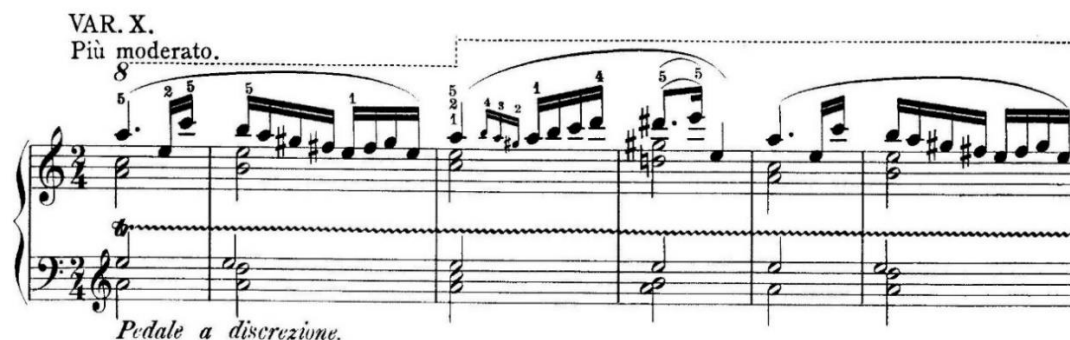
In Var. 10 of Liszt's Paganini Étude No. 6, Paganini's original melodic line is found in the right hand while layers of sound are created through the addition of a long dominant pedal trill in the left hand (Example 16).¹⁵

¹³ Yoona Choi, "The Paganini Variations: A Study of Selected Works by Liszt, Brahms, Rachmaninoff, Lutosławski, and Muczynski" (DMA diss., West Virginia University, 2017), 23.

¹⁴ Zhou, 18.

¹⁵ Zhou, 29.

Example 16. Liszt, *Grandes études de Paganini*, no. 6, var. 10, mm. 1–6.



Berkovich's Paganini Var. No. 6 presents a consecutive third melody line in the right hand according to basic harmonic progression instead of following the original melodic line of Liszt's version, and the left hand shows long successive trills, creating a minor second interval. Then, the right and left hands invert. Long, successive trills appear in the right hand, and the left hand leads the main melody line again (Example 17).

Example 17. Berkovich, *Variations on the Theme of Paganini*, var. 6, mm. 1–8.

It is easy to see that Berkovich was influenced by Liszt, but his variations also have components that can be connected to Brahms. For example, a passage in Brahms's Book 2, Var. 14 begins with a rapid run in the right hand (Example 18). Berkovich used almost the same rapid run in the right hand (Example 19).

Example 18. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, bk. 2, var. 14, mm. 1–8.



Example 19. Berkovich, *Variations on the Theme of Paganini*, finale, mm. 1–6.



The difference between Brahms and Berkovich is that Brahms furnished his variation with thicker textures, meter changes, and cross-rhythms while Berkovich maintained the rapid runs and showed consistent progression.

Berkovich, like Labunski, composed his Paganini Variations for pedagogical purposes. Unlike the strong Brahmsian characteristics in Hambourg and Labunsky's variations, Berkovich's composition features a variety of composers' styles, including those

of Liszt, Brahms, and even Rachmaninoff. However, Berkovich used almost the same patterns and progressions as Liszt and Brahms, suggesting his variations were mainly influenced by those two composers.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

This study focused on three of the five works performed in my recording project: the Paganini variations of Hambourg, Labunski, and Berkovich, three lesser-known composers. I compared these with the well-known previous models, “warhorses” of the repertoire by Brahms and Liszt, exploring the similarities and differences that emerge from the repetition of thematic content.

I found that Hambourg’s Paganini Variations were heavily influenced by Brahms. Countless features, such as varied meters, rhythmic patterns, and the use of consecutive thirds and sixths with thick textures, draw lines to Brahms’s Paganini variations.

Labunski’s four Paganini variations are short and simple, therefore yielding fewer similarities with their predecessors than Hambourg’s. But as an intermediate-level pedagogical work, one that does not use the original theme as written as Brahms’s does, it exists as a simplified version of the Brahms Paganini variations in terms of textures and figuration.

Berkovich’s Paganini variations share similarities with those of Brahms and Liszt, including long successive trills, cantabile melody, and the multilayered sound of Liszt’s Paganini études. In addition, Berkovich’s final variation connects to Brahms’s finale, with the rapid run passages of the right hand through the harmonic minor collection being almost identical. Although not detailed in this paper, there are also apparent connections to other composers: Rachmaninoff’s musical characteristics and a 3/4 mazurka similar to the variations in Tchaikovsky’s Piano Trio.

Throughout this study, I have suggested how the Paganini variations of Hambourg, Labunski, and Berkovich were influenced by those of Brahms and Liszt. Although these works have different motivations, characteristics, and sound worlds from those of Brahms and Liszt, and seem on the surface to have no link aside from the initial thematic material, there are clear similarities and echoes to be found. These links are crucial for understanding how composers and pedagogues find their own voices amongst others and communicate that dialogue to students through repertoire choice and musicianship.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Becker, Alan. "The Leschetizky School." *American Record Guide* 73, no. 3 (May/June 2010): 18182.
- Belanger, J. Richard. "Wiktor Labunski: Polish-American Musician in Kansas City, 1937–1974: A Case Study." EdD diss., Columbia University, 1982.
- Choi, Yoona. "The Paganini Variations: A Study of Selected Works by Liszt, Brahms, Rachmaninoff, Lutosławski, and Muczynski." DMA diss., West Virginia University, 2017.
- Clavere, Javier. "A Study Guide to Franz Liszt's *Grandes études de Paganini* S. 141." DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2011.
- Reed, Elizabeth Ann. "Pupil Savers: Student Favorites—Remembering Paganini." *Clavier* 44, no. 1 (January 2005).
- Tse, Benita Wan-Kuen. "Piano Variations Inspired by Paganini's Twenty-Fourth Caprice from Op. 1." DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1992.
- Young, John Bell. "The Hambourg Legacy." *American Record Guide* 62, no. 1, (January/February 1999): 261–62.
- Zhou, Wenli. "Piano Variations by Liszt, Lutosławski, Brahms, and Rachmaninoff on a Theme by Paganini." DMA diss., Rice University, 2012.