Musical Improvisation in the Age of Beethoven and ‘Open’ Forms

Fondazione Giorgio Cini
Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, Venezia
28–29 November 2014

Improvisation constituted a crucial aspect of musical life at the turn of the 19th century. Extemporaneous performance of a piece by an instrumentalist or singer or in the ‘duels’ that pitted two musicians against each other, taking turns to produce virtuoso improvisations, was often a key moment in both public and private concerts. Although they were not written down, these improvisations generally respected the ‘rules’ laid down by contemporary theorists, and the musical ideas could be organized in ways which were by no means a matter of chance, above all when the improviser was a composer. At the same time, precisely because it was common practice in public and private assemblies, improvisation also conditioned the act of composition itself. Numerous instrumental and vocal pieces from Beethoven’s time, while being organized according to one of the traditional forms, reveal moments of ‘openness’, i.e. of syntactic liberty, whether in the macro-structure or in the construction of brief segments. The influence of improvisation on the composition of a piece is no less evident when the piece manifests stylistic features and formal aspects which reveal the composer’s desire to enshrine in the score a musical thought that clearly derives from the extemporary and virtuosic elaboration of a theme, often suggested by the title given to the piece. From the end of the 18th century improvisational practice and formal structuring constituted a dialectic whose outcomes had an impact on a range of ‘open’ forms. This conference investigates this dialectic on various levels comparing contemporary sources with more recent analytical approaches.
**SESSION I: THEORY OF IMPROVISATION**

Chair: Gianmarie Borio
Università di Pavia; Fondazione Giorgio Cini

Sala Barbantini

**SESSION II: FROM IMPROVISATION TO COMPOSITION: ‘OPEN’ FORMS**

Chair: Susanna Particelli
Università di Cosenza e di Calabria

Mauro Targa
Università di Torino

The Elocutionary Improvisation in Beethoven's Kleineä®lieder

Catherine Cipolla
Hunter College, City University New York

Didactics and Display in the Capriccio and Portata for Violin, 1765-1785

Music examples performed with the violinist Lucy Morganart

Rohan H. Stewart-MacDonald
Center for Music Otto Luiz Beethoven, Laura

The Prima Fiaschetta of Johann Nepomuk Hummel: Structural Coherence and the Spirit of Improvisation

**SESSION III: IMPROVISATION INVOLVING INSTRUMENTS AND VOICE**

Chair: Paulus Rasch
Universität Ulm

Scott Burnham
Princeton University

The Flute of the Antepenultimate Fantasia and Cadenza in the Classical Style

Giorgio Pagamone
Università di Chieti e Pescara

Ad architio dei concerti*: Vocal Cadenzas and Ornaments in Prima Ottocento Opere

Tiziano Maria Augustin
Universität Wien

La voce di opera*: Vocal Improvisation, ‘abbellimenti e flourishes’ in the Opera of the Age of Beethoven

17.45
Final Discussion

**SESSION IV: IMPROVISATIONAL ELEMENTS IN ‘CLOSED’ FORMS**

Chair: Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen
Universität Zürich

William E. Caplin
McGill University, Montreal

Fantastical Forms: Formal Functionality in Improvisational Genres of the Classical Era

Elaine Niskanen
Columbia University, New York

Manuscript and Finale: Beethoven’s F-Minor Variations and After

Pietro Borghi
KU Leuven

Beethoven’s Implicit Concept of the ‘Sonata quasi fantasiosa’ Genre: A History of Interpretations

**28 NOVEMBER\**

**SALA BARBANTINI**

**Final Discussion**

**20.45**

**CONCERT**

Davide Amodio, violin
John Irving, fortepiano

**CONCERT PROGRAM**

Improvisation*

Antonio Salieri, Serenata Unisono (transcription for violin and fortepiano by Davide Amodio)

Improvisation*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Violin Sonata in E-Minor K304

Improvisation*

Antonio Salieri, Scherzi (transcription for violin and fortepiano by Davide Amodio)

Ludwig van Beethoven, Violin Sonata in D-Major Op. 12 No. 1

*Improvisations are freely inspired by the collection L’Art d’inventer à l’improviste des Fantasies et Cadences pour le Violon by Bartolomeo Campagnoli (1752-1827)