

# Nine Variants on Paganini

for Double Bass and Piano

Frank Proto

Allegro Brillante ♩ = 90

16

Musical notation for measures 16-23. The bass line features a series of triplets of eighth notes, starting with a flat and moving through various accidentals. The treble line has a few notes with slurs and accents.

24 **A** a tempo *f* meno mosso *ff* a tempo 2 *accel.*

Musical notation for measures 24-32. Measure 24 starts with a treble clef and a key signature change to one sharp. It includes dynamic markings *f*, *ff*, and *accel.*, and tempo markings *a tempo*, *meno mosso*, and *a tempo 2*.

33 *ff*

Musical notation for measures 33-39. The bass line continues with eighth notes and triplets. Dynamic marking *ff* is present.

40 *f* 4

Musical notation for measures 40-48. The bass line features a 4-measure rest in measure 47. Dynamic marking *f* is present.

49 **B**

Musical notation for measures 49-53. Section B begins with a treble clef and a key signature change to one flat. It includes a slur over a group of notes.

54 *ff*

Musical notation for measures 54-60. The bass line continues with eighth notes. Dynamic marking *ff* is present.

61 *ff*

Musical notation for measures 61-67. The bass line features a series of eighth notes with slurs. Dynamic marking *ff* is present.

68 3

Musical notation for measures 68-73. The bass line continues with eighth notes and ends with a 3-measure rest. Dynamic marking *ff* is present.

\* Solo or Orchestra  
Tuning may be used.

© 2002 Liben Music Publishers

INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT SECURED - Publisher member of ASCAP - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
The making of any unauthorized adaptation, arrangement or copy of this publication,  
or any part thereof, is an infringement of the Copyright Law.

76 **C** **I**

83

88 *(ossia)*

93 *dolce e legato*

98

102 **II**

107

113

118

124

128

133

139

147

**E** Adagio

*rubato*

*p*

*> p*

*f*

*ff*

**Piu mosso**

**F** **Piu mosso**

III

*3*

*3*

**Molto allegro** ♩ = 120

*accel.*

*ad lib*

*rit.*

**IV**

**Vivace** ♩ = 152

185

Musical staff 185: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals).

190

Musical staff 190: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals and slurs.

195

Musical staff 195: Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals and slurs.

200

Musical staff 200: Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals and slurs.

205

Musical staff 205: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals and slurs.

210

Musical staff 210: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals and slurs.

215

Musical staff 215: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals, slurs, and accents.

220

Musical staff 220: Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals, slurs, and accents.

224

Musical staff 224: Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals and slurs, ending with a double bar line and a 5/4 time signature change.

230 **V** *Rubato*  
2

Musical staff 230: Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time signature. The staff contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals, slurs, and accents, including a fermata over a note.

237

**G** Molto rubato e espressivo

242

246

250

256

**H**

260

*rit.* -----

264

268

**I**

272

*ossia*

277

283 **VI** Feroce ♩ = 100 a tempo meno mosso ♩ = 72

294 **J** Largo ♩ = 52

298

301

303 *ad lib*

308 **K** Molto Allegro

311

314

317 *ad lib*

322

**VII** Pesante ♩ = 56

3

328

*molto rubato*

*pizz.*

*molto vibrato*

332

♩ = 90

336

*arco*

**L**

*p*

*molto rubato e espressivo (accompaniment remains in steady tempo)*

340

342

344

346

348

**M** a tempo

GMI (MA 7)

GMI<sup>7</sup>

CMI<sup>9</sup> MA<sup>7</sup>

CMI<sup>7</sup> CMI<sup>6</sup>

Solo: Improvisation

354

GMI<sup>9</sup>(MA 7)

GMI<sup>7</sup>

GMI<sup>6</sup>

AMI<sup>7</sup>(b5)

D<sup>7</sup>(b9)

GMI<sup>(MA 7)</sup>



359 **N**

364

366

369 **ad lib**

371 **O a tempo**

373

375

377 **ad lib** **VIII** Tempo I ♩ = 96

(*accel.*) -----

5 **P**

*p*

395

*mf*

400

*ff*

405

410

*f*

415

**Q**

*3*

421

Musical score for measures 421-426. The piece is in 3/4 time. The right hand features a melodic line with triplets and slurs. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with triplets and slurs. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

427

Musical score for measures 427-431. The right hand continues the melodic line with various intervals and slurs. The left hand maintains the accompaniment. The key signature has one flat.

432

Musical score for measures 432-437. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand continues the accompaniment. The key signature has one flat.

438

Musical score for measures 438-442. Measure 438 is marked with a box containing the letter 'R'. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand has a bass line with slurs and accents. The key signature has one flat. The dynamic marking *ff* is present.

443

Musical score for measures 443-447. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand has a bass line with slurs and accents. The key signature has one flat.

448

Musical score for measures 448-452. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand has a bass line with slurs and accents. The key signature has one flat. The dynamic marking *ff* is present.

453

Musical score for measures 453-457. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand has a bass line with slurs and accents. The key signature has one flat. The dynamic marking *sfz* is present.

IX \* Cadenza

end of cadenza

Presto

ff

462 S

467

473

477

481

*molto rit.*

*ad lib*

*p*

*a tempo*

*ff*

*a tempo*

*ff*

\* See Notes - Page 14 and 15.

# Ingredients

## Theme

Two staves of bass clef music. The first staff contains a series of eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. The second staff continues the theme with similar rhythmic motifs and includes a fermata at the end.

1. Variation 1: A bass clef staff with eighth-note patterns and accents, followed by a treble clef staff with a similar rhythmic pattern.

2. Variation 2: A bass clef staff with a melodic line and a treble clef staff with a simple harmonic accompaniment.

3. Variation 3: A treble clef staff featuring a five-finger exercise with a slur and a fermata.

4. Variation 4: A treble clef staff with a melodic line featuring triplets and a fermata.

5. Variation 5: A treble clef staff with a tempo marking "Molto rubato e espressivo" and a melodic line with a fermata.

6. Variation 6: A treble clef staff with a melodic line featuring a triplet and a fermata.

7. Variation 7: A treble clef staff with a melodic line featuring a triplet and a fermata.

8. Variation 8: A bass clef staff with a rhythmic pattern featuring accents and a fermata.

9. Variation 9: A bass clef staff with a rhythmic pattern featuring a triplet and a fermata.

Two empty musical staves, one for bass clef and one for treble clef, with a fermata symbol at the end of the treble staff.

## *To Cadenza or not to Cadenza*

I have not composed a *cadenza* for the Nine Variants because I believe that at some point in any concerto-like work the soloist should be free to bring his own conception, personality, thoughts and ideas into the performance. Ideally the *cadenza* should be an improvised reflection on the written elements of the piece, singularly created for each performance. While this type of improvisation is alive and well in jazz, various kinds of ethnic or folk music and even in some styles of popular music, it is virtually non-existent in most *classical* music today.

I am writing these words in an age where most performances of the great concerti in the standard repertoire strive mightily to sound the same. Playing fast movements at break-neck speed or languishing over slow movements is not really the essence of inspired musical thought. Yet performers who do dare to stray outside the accepted boundaries of today's expectations are clobbered with accusations of being crude, uncultivated or tacky and are attacked with any number of other venomous denunciations. Of course there are many instances where nasty incriminations are probably more than justified. However, wouldn't it be exciting to go to a performance wondering what the soloist was going to do with all of the musical materials that the composer has provided him when that spot known as *The Cadenza* arrives in the music? Better still - how about hearing that same artist the next evening, the next week or the next year playing the same work, realizing a totally different *cadenza* (or would it be an *improvisation*?) and mulling over the differences of each performance with some friends?

To help achieve this goal I've given you a list of elements or *ingredients* taken from the body of the piece. They are the *theme* and the beginning of each *variation*. Following are a few hints on how you might make use of them:

- Refer to them as *reminders* of the various materials that make up the piece.
- Refer to them as a jazz musician refers to the *chord changes* to remind him of the underlying harmonic structure of a piece.
- Take only three or four ingredients and develop them exhaustively.
- Make a collage using minute elements of many of them.
- Work them out in a different order each time you use them.
- Ignore them and work out a free improvisation from memory based loosely on any elements of the piece that suit you at the moment.
- At the bottom of the page there are two blank staves. Use them to make notes to remind yourself of any other motifs, elements, ornaments, patterns or figures that you might want to use.

If you are not accustomed to improvising, composing and/or arranging don't be afraid to try. Even great improvisers will tell you *it doesn't always work*. Superb jazz musicians, avant-garde performers, song stylists or even gypsy fiddle players will be happy with their improvisations only a small percentage of the time. But audiences - especially attentive ones - love the element of surprise and can, under the right circumstances, help performers to go beyond what even they believe might be their limitations.

## *Program Notes*

Niccolo Paganini's 24th Violin Caprice has inspired composers for many generations. The simple 16-measure tune lends itself both melodically and harmonically to a myriad of treatments from styles classical to the avant-garde. If there were such a thing as *repertoire for composers* this little melody would certainly occupy a prominent spot. Whether writing short variations on the melody or developing longer *songs* or *movement-like* segments using mainly its harmonic underpinnings, it is one of those challenges that - *when all's said & done* - is just plain fun.

Working with the 24th Caprice though usually implies more than just *fun*. Paganini (1782-1840) is still regarded as one of the greatest violinists of all time. Though ill for much of his life, he managed to transform the technique of the violin both as a performer and a composer, influencing giants such as Robert Schumann, Berlioz, Brahms, Rachmaninov, Liszt and Lutoslawski. If there is one word that comes to mind when thinking of Paganini that word has to be *virtuoso*. So here is where we want to have some great fun. But here is where we also run into a bit of trouble, because for the performer it is not *easy* fun – although *easy* is the way it has to appear to the audience.

All ages have their virtuosos and ours is no exception. For us double bassists, through the efforts of some exceptional performers and teachers, the past 40 years or so have also seen a great advancement in the playing technique of our instrument. One of these performers is François Rabbath whom I've had the pleasure of collaborating with for the past 25 years. Rabbath (born in 1931) has helped to transform the playing technique of the instrument both through his performing and more importantly, by documenting his very unique technique in his multi-volume method: *Nouvelle Technique de la Contrebasse (A New Technique for the Double Bass)*. He possesses an astounding, Paganini-like technique and is one of those virtuosos who have the ability to make the extremely difficult sound easy. The *Nine Variants* was composed for and dedicated to him.

François Rabbath performed the world premiere performance of the *Nine Variants on Paganini for Double Bass and Orchestra* with the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra on March 31, 2002.

Frank Proto  
February, 2002