

The Art of Piano Playing in the 21st Century: A Pianist as a Reproductive or Creative Artist?

(on examples of Piano Sonatas by Ludwig van Beethoven)

This year, the whole humanity, under unfortunately extremely difficult circumstances, marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of the musical titan Ludwig van Beethoven.

Facing the challenge arising from the need to, in a form of concert-lecture on the topic: "The Art of Piano Playing in the 21st Century: A Pianist as a Reproductive or Creative Artist?", realize and explore my own position as a piano performer in adulthood, adopting artistic introspection seemed to me like a completely natural initial procedure. Self-reflection and even re-examination of personal artistic views, although chronically present in the life of every artist, however, this time was initiated by, in my case, very provocative philosophical, aesthetic, theoretical, musicological and numerous other discourses about music that I have encountered so far. As perhaps the most natural at the moment, the path through the piano works of L.V. Beethoven is imposed as suitable response to such an intriguing topic.

Another important name in the history of music certainly had an exceptional significance for me when it comes to answering the already mentioned question. FERUCCIO BUSONI, who in his book "A SKETCH OF A NEW AESTHETIC OF MUSIC" discusses different modalities in which music can exist. It was really a kind of déjà vu: a collision with what has already been seen.

Despite the fact that I was lucky enough to study with exceptional piano pedagogues, (two of them are pedagogical "grandchildren" of Heinrich Neuhaus (=@8E CAB 2>28G 593 C7), while the third has studied with Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, I have never heard such a thing from them. Therefore, since I do not have a rational explanation, how come that I, before all to my students (but also

when reviewing musical works, when working on my concert programs), explain the modalities of the existence of music exactly in the way Busoni elaborates this issue in his work ?!

I believe that preparation of any interpretation, that is, every revival of the role model that the composer heard in his inner hearing, expressed by Busoni's terminology, begins with the interpretation of the notation in the mind of the performer or the conductor. Namely, Busoni in his *Sketch of a New Aesthetics of Music*¹ states and considers ten different modalities in which music can exist:

1. Primal music, music by itself, the very idea and ideal of music (Plato's idea);
2. The composer's inner hearing, the echo of music itself in the composer's inner hearing;
3. Notation - the music in the notation represents a copy of the original of ideal music;
4. Interpretation of the notation in the mind of the performer or conductor, the concept of interpretation;
5. The very interpretation, translation, realization of that concept;
6. Acoustic perception of performance;
7. Auditory, unconscious choice from the whole that is received;
8. Bringing selected passages to consciousness - psychological reception;
9. Musical experience or aesthetic reception;
10. Remembering of music or renewing a musical experience in the inner hearing of the listener.

In this regard, he points out that what the interpretation itself (which represents the fourth modality of the existence of music) is precisely the interpretation of the notation in the performer's consciousness. Thus, in Busoni's opinion, the interpretation itself represents the translation, that is, the realization of

¹ Feru o Buzoni, Nacrt za jednu novu estetiku muzike, Beograd, Studio Lirica, 2014.

the concept of interpretation, and that is the interpretation of the notation in the consciousness of the performer. In that context, since the performer himself, as Busoni points out, needs to bring the stiffness of signs to life and make them more dynamic, he must start from the notation - the objective side of the musical genome, and cross (objectify) the composer's and his own conception. In this regard, for me, I perceive the essential question of the pianist's identity at the crossroads of his creative and reproductive attitude towards the musical work as unconventional, especially when it is raised by the performer himself, that is, self-reflexively. Also, I think that the topic itself initiates a very wide range of diverse ways of thinking, above all because it is deeply connected with many different, even contradictory artistic (performing, and even life) experiences. Starting from a personal point of view, this lecture first heads in the direction of illuminating the possible double position of the pianist: as a creative and as a reproductive artistic subject, and only after that I would move to transposing the reached conclusions into the field of reflecting on the performer's approach by selected inserts from Beethoven's piano sonatas.

For the most part of the 20th century, the consideration of the phenomenon of the creative and the reproductive in music, began and ended with a clichéd dichotomy contained in the idea of composers as creative and performers as reproductive artists, and as such, existed almost as implicit. Thus, there was such a predominant, and even exclusive, comprehending of the performing artist's character as reproductive, that in a given climate, the lonely and almost rebellious "voices" of pianists and other performers trying to "defend" their contribution beyond the mere reproduction of musica notations, were barely audible. The conclusions of such polemics, as a rule, ended with the unanimous acceptance of the contribution of the performer, but not to the extent that they could accept those contributions as creative, because in that way, they thought, they would desecrate the position of "true" creators!

Today, however, musicological practice, thanks to the contribution of a number of exceptional authors, has given rise to a significant number of much more liberal and even more objective attitudes and interpretations.

Taking into account all the above, I am going to start my own interpretation by performing the inserts from Beethoven's notation of the Piano Sonata in F Major, Op. 10, No. 2. In one word, I will focus on those segments of the musical flow of the first movement of this Beethoven sonata which, according to Tijana Popovi Mla enovi , a highly esteemed Serbian musicologist, represents "liberated spaces of musical text" and thus opens numerous possibilities for their interpretive correlations, or at least, I will try to find them.

Wishing to create a sort of equilibrium of interpretations of notions related to the topic question of my concert-lecture (on the strict division into creative and reproductive for the most part of the 20th century), I will list a few current thoughts (as a kind of antagonistic attitudes with extremely explicit recognition of the performant as potentially creative).

Zoran Bo~ani , a well-known Serbian music theorist, interpreting a musical phrase states the following: "The dynamic structure of a phrase can be different; it depends on many components of the musical flow, their correlations, the way these components interact mutually on that intra-phrase level. Exactly because of that, the analytical approach to the notations, its creative [Sic!] reading by the performer, has become imperative for the correct intonation of the musical work".²

Tijana Popovi Mla enovi , a Serbian musicologist, also, connects the creative and the performant in her text, as an already established truth: "Under these considerations, what can already be stated with certainty today, is that the complex issues of creativity [Sic!] in performing, i.e. in the realization of a musical work, have now come to the center of attention of contemporary music theory".³

² Zoran Bo~ani , *Muzi ka fraza*, Beograd, Clio, 2007.

³ Tijana Popovi Mla enovi , *Pojam i elementi analiti ke interpretacije*, u Mirjana Veselinovi Hofman (ur.), *Aspekti interpretacije*, Beograd, 1989, 135–150.

In the very end, I can express my regret that we all together have found ourselves in these, for all of us, difficult and I would say above all unknown circumstances, due to which we are in a situation that we can not see each other and perform live, as well as in a situation that we are kindly asked to shorten the length of our presentation. In that sense, I have decided to omit a selection of examples from Beethoven's piano sonatas from various periods of the composer's work, from the early sonatas, through the mature phase, to his late works of piano sonatas. Perhaps it came as a surprise for some of you, but I have decided to give preference to the performance of the first movement of the sonata by Ludwig van Beethoven, in F Major, Op. 10, No. 2, with which I am going to conclude my performance today, the interpretation intended to make you deliberate, and ultimately, to find your own, intimate answer to the question: **Art at the beginning of the 21st century - a pianist as a reproductive or creative artist?**