

Lyric Variations

For Violin Solo

Benjamin R. Fuhrman

Circa Seven Minutes

Program Notes

“*Goldberg*, not Theme and...” Whenever I hear the word “variations,” some part of my subconscious dredges up random movements from some abysmal Classical Period sonata; or worse, one of my student pieces. This is probably due to how I learned music as both a performer and as a composer; playing/composing simple, repetitive themes, then progressing on to slightly more complex variations. Lather, rinse, and repeat ad nauseam.

Fortunately, while learning composition, I was also exposed to Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* and their alternative take on the term. While a standard set of variations closely follows the melody, elaborating on the theme as they progress, Bach’s variations are written with the bass line and harmonic progression as the functional basis. This alternate take on the term opened up a world of possibilities to my mind at the time, but it would take years before I considered actually writing a set of variations. However, when I was asked to write a piece for solo violin immediately after finishing my second work for saxophone quartet and computer, the time felt right to attempt it. The fact that I would be writing for my primary instrument only served to cement the feeling of returning to my musical roots.

However, I decided to do it my way.

Rather than following the standard theme and variations pattern, the *Lyric Variations* begins with a 32 bar introduction followed immediately by the three bar theme and the subsequent variations. However, instead of following the melody as expected, the variations are actually derived from merging fragments of the introduction with the theme, creating hybrid melodic lines. And while these lines retain similarities to the fragments that were used in their creation, other variables come into the mix to shape the direction of the sound in new directions.

While nominally a D-based blues, the *Variations* also draws from a variety of my musical influences, subtly shifting the harmonic structure. Beyond moving from consonance and stability into atonality, the *Variations* uses both Arabic and Klezmer scales while exploring the range of the violinist’s technique. Slow lines give way to rapid passages. Intricate polyphony resolves to simple, static chords. Stable meters are interrupted by unstable shifts. Step-wise passages decay into wide-ranging and disjunct leaps. And simple melodies become intricate variations before returning to their original sources.

They are variations, but they’re really variations on influences and expectations.

-Benjamin R. Fuhrman

To Barton Samuel Rotberg

Lyric Variations

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Slow, somewhat rubato ♩ = 56

Violin

5

12

18

23

27

32

p *mp* *mf* *ff* *mf* *ff* *ord.* *mf*

Broadly

ord.

2
36 *f*

V

40 *mp* *mf*

V

45 *mf*

V

48

53 *ff*

58 *mf*

62

65 *mf*

69 *f* 3

Musical notation for measures 69-71. Measure 69 starts with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. Measure 70 has a 16-measure rest. Measure 71 has a 3-measure rest. The piece is marked *f* (forte).

72 *Broadly ff*

Musical notation for measures 72-74. Measure 72 has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. Measure 73 has a 3-measure rest. Measure 74 has a 2/4 time signature. The piece is marked *Broadly ff* (fortissimo).

75 *f*

Musical notation for measures 75-77. Measure 75 has a treble clef and a 3/8 time signature. Measure 76 has a 2/4 time signature. Measure 77 has a 2/4 time signature. The piece is marked *f* (forte).

78 *f*

Musical notation for measures 78-80. Measure 78 has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. Measure 79 has a 3-measure rest. Measure 80 has a 2/4 time signature. The piece is marked *f* (forte).

81 *f*

Musical notation for measures 81-84. Measure 81 has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. Measure 82 has a 3-measure rest. Measure 83 has a 3-measure rest. Measure 84 has a 2/4 time signature. The piece is marked *f* (forte).

85 *rit.*

Musical notation for measures 85-87. Measure 85 has a treble clef and a 3/8 time signature. Measure 86 has a 2/4 time signature. Measure 87 has a 3-measure rest. The piece is marked *rit.* (ritardando).

88 *sul tasto pp*

Musical notation for measures 88-91. Measure 88 has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. Measure 89 has a 3-measure rest. Measure 90 has a 3-measure rest. Measure 91 has a 2/4 time signature. The piece is marked *sul tasto pp* (pianissimo).

pp

Musical notation for measures 92-95. Measure 92 has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. Measure 93 has a 3-measure rest. Measure 94 has a 3-measure rest. Measure 95 has a 2/4 time signature. The piece is marked *pp* (pianissimo).

First musical staff with treble clef, featuring a series of eighth-note runs with various accidentals (flats and sharps) and slurs.

Second musical staff with treble clef, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. It continues with eighth-note runs and slurs.

Third musical staff with treble clef, continuing the eighth-note runs and slurs.

Fourth musical staff with treble clef, starting with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking. It continues with eighth-note runs and slurs.

Fifth musical staff with treble clef, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. It features a long, sweeping slur over a series of eighth notes.

Sixth musical staff with treble clef, continuing the eighth-note runs and slurs.

Seventh musical staff with treble clef, continuing the eighth-note runs and slurs.

Eighth musical staff with treble clef, ending with a fermata and a final treble clef symbol. It features a long, sweeping slur over a series of eighth notes.

Misurato ♩ = 64

89 *ord. fff* 5

91

94

97

101 3

104 *ff*

108 4/8

112 *fff*

6
115

rit. *V*

A tempo ♩ = 56

121

poco allargando $\frac{3}{3}$

Slightly faster ♩ = 64

p *f*

125

128

ff

132

rit. *V*

A tempo ♩ = 56

136

mf *mp*

140

sul tasto *mp* *mp* *pp*

rit.