A Stylistic Analysis and Performance Guide for James Sclater's "Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini"

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A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR JAMES SCLATER’S

VARIATIONS AND TOCCATA ON A THEME BY PAGANINI

by

David Michael Ward

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
Of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

December 2013
ABSTRACT

A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR JAMES SCLATER’S

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This document exists as a resource for understanding and performing the piano music of the American composer James Sclater. It focuses specifically on the Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini (2002), his most important solo piano composition. Sclater’s extensive output includes works for orchestra, voice, opera, band, chorus, as well as compositions for soloists and chamber music.

After a brief biographical summary and some historical background for the subjects under discussion, the main portion of the study provides a stylistic analysis of Sclater’s Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini, a significant and heretofore unexamined piano work which fuses elements of twentieth-century techniques with a more traditional style of composition. The piece continues a tradition of works by various composers that utilize the well-known caprice theme of Paganini as a point of departure, with Sclater’s colorful contribution to this lineage reflecting his individual predilections, aesthetics, and temperament.

The attractive conflation of old and new qualities, adept compositional craftsmanship, and appealing musicality found in James Sclater’s work produces admirable creations which are worthy of examination, research, and performance. His compositions offer intriguing, vital responses to the confrontation of tradition and innovation in twentieth-century art music. Because of the quality, accessibility, and
The analysis and discussion contained within this document explicates, elucidates, and supports these assertions. The material to be learned in this study includes a deeper understanding of the piano music of James Sclater, as well as insight and perspective regarding his style of composition resulting from the analysis and discussion associated with the dissertation. The musical elements of melody, tonality, harmony, rhythm, texture, tempo, and form are analyzed and explored. As this document is also a performance guide, performance concerns found in the music are addressed. Appendixes include a complete list of works, a letter of permission from James Sclater, an IRB approval form, and excerpts from an interview with the composer.
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December 2013
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer would like to sincerely thank the committee chair, Dr. Lois Leventhal, as well as the other committee members, Dr. Joseph Brumbeloe, Dr. Edward Hafer, Dr. Jay Dean, and Dr. Ellen Elder for their advice on this project. Their kind suggestions have been helpful in the completion of this document.

Special gratitude also goes to Dr. James Sclater for his gracious aid and permission to copy music examples. His generous support and caring assistance is truly appreciated.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Even though the works of composer James Sclater may be described as somewhat conservative in nature, an attractive conflation of old and new qualities, adept compositional craftsmanship, and appealing musicality produces admirable creations which are worthy of examination, study, and performance. This composer’s artistic style exhibits an intriguing mixture of the traditional and the contemporary. James Sclater’s compositional output offers an interesting, vital response to the confrontation of tradition and innovation in twentieth-century art music, a subject of much discourse for contemporary theorists and musicologists. Furthermore, there is enough range and diversity in the works of this composer to make many of them interesting and rewarding for the performer as well as listener.

Sclater’s extensive output includes published and unpublished works, and his catalog encompasses works for a great assortment of genres and instruments. His compositions have been performed throughout the United States, Europe, and Russia by a variety of artists, and he enjoys a respected stature among musicians. In spite of his esteemed status among fellow composers, not much has been written about him. The extant academic material includes three previous dissertations concerning portions of his vocal music. Because of its quality and accessibility, Sclater’s work deserves support, research, and appreciation. The analysis and discussion contained within this document explicates, elucidates, and supports these assertions. It is hoped that the present

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1A clearer picture of Sclater’s compositional style will form over the course of the following musical analysis, and further information contained in the conclusion and interview with the composer will add to an understanding of the composer’s musical approach.
examination will advance and propagate further research and enjoyment of the music of this worthy composer.

The central purpose of this study is to provide a stylistic analysis and discussion of *Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini* (2002) of James Sclater, a noteworthy and heretofore unexamined piano work which embodies a blending of elements of twentieth-century techniques with a more traditional style of composition. The *Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini* continues a concatenation of works which utilize the well-known *caprice* theme of Paganini as a point of departure, with Sclater’s colorful contribution to this lineage reflecting his predilections, aesthetics, and temperament. Spanning forty-four pages and a performance time of approximately twenty-five minutes, this substantial piece makes a fine contribution to the repertoire of any pianist, and enriches the piano literature.

The material to be learned in this examination includes an enhanced understanding of the piano music of James Sclater, as well as insight or perspective regarding his style of composition resulting from the analysis and discussion associated with the dissertation. The document incorporates relevant research, personal correspondence and interviews with the composer, as well as a stylistic analysis and discussion of Sclater’s major, representative solo piano work. It opens with an introduction, followed by biographical information and some historical background about the subjects under discussion. The subsequent main portion of the study provides a stylistic analysis and discussion of Sclater’s *Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini*, examining Sclater’s compositional techniques and style in regard to melody, harmony, tonality, rhythm, texture, form, tempo, and motivic development. Performance
concerns found in the music are addressed, so this document can also be considered to be a practical performance guide to this composition. A conclusion summarizes the findings of the study. Appendixes include a complete compilation of works, a letter of permission from James Sclater, an Institutional Review Board approval form, and excerpts from an interview with the composer.
CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR JAMES SCLATER

James Stanley Sclater (pronounced “slaughter”) was born on October 24, 1943, in Mobile, Alabama. At that time, the composer’s father, Arthur L. Sclater, was an amateur drummer who played with local bands and orchestras.2 His mother, Naomi Bell Sclater, studied piano as a youth.3 When James was six years old, his parents began his musical training with piano lessons. In middle school clarinet lessons were initiated, and the clarinet later became a particular favorite among instruments for personal performance.4

While a student at Murphy High School in Mobile, Sclater was involved with the school band program, and the school choral director, Myrtle Peter, was his first composition teacher.5 These activities, along with attendance at concerts of the Mobile Symphony, encouraged him to further his musical studies at The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.6

In 1962, Sclater entered The University of Southern Mississippi as a composition and theory student, where he studied composition with William Presser and clarinet with Gomer Pound.7 During this period he was a music copyist for the music department, and eventually arranged and composed for The University of Southern Mississippi Marching

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3Ibid.
4Ibid.
5Ibid., 2.
6Ibid.
7James Sclater, personal interview by author, June 17, 2013.
Band. He received a Bachelor of Music degree in theory and composition in 1966 and a Master of Music degree in composition in 1967 while in Hattiesburg.\(^8\)

In 1970, Sclater completed a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at The University of Texas at Austin, where he studied with composer Hunter Johnson.\(^9\) During his academic career in Texas, he was an arranger for The University of Texas Band, taught band arranging, and assisted in teaching the orchestration classes.\(^10\) During this period he also was the music librarian at the Austin Public Library.\(^11\)

Upon graduation from The University of Texas, Sclater accepted a teaching position at Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi. Here his duties included activities as professor of music, coordinator of the theory and composition area, and composer-in-residence. After forty years of dedicated service, Sclater retired from Mississippi College in 2010.\(^12\)

The composer has garnered many honors and awards over a long and distinguished career. A partial list would contain these prizes: the nationally recognized Ostwald Prize for the composition, *Visions* (1974); Mississippi Music Teachers Association Composer of the Year Award (1976, 1984, 1994 2002 and 2006); Mississippi College Arts and Sciences Distinguished Faculty Lectureship (1989 and 2002);

\(^8\)James Sclater, personal interview by author, June 17, 2013.

\(^9\)Ibid.


\(^11\)Fisher, 2.

\(^12\)James Sclater, personal interview by author, June 17, 2013.
Mississippi College Faculty Distinguished Professor of the Year Award (1997);
Mississippi College Humanities Professor of the Year (chosen by the Mississippi
Humanities Council) (1998); Music Composition Award from the Mississippi Institute of
Arts and Letters (1980, 1990, 1995, 1999 and 2003); Mississippi Arts Commission
Individual Artist Fellowship (1987); Mississippi College Faculty Honoree for the
Mississippi Legislature Higher Education Appreciation Day (1996); yearly awards for
serious music from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers since
1991; Emmy nomination for music written for the Mississippi Educational Television
production “George E. Ohr: The Mad Potter of Biloxi” (1994); and performance of his
works at the Kennedy Center 1976 Bicentennial Parade of American Music.\footnote{Adams, 3.}

Among others, Sclater has been honored with commissions from the following
entities: 275\textsuperscript{th} anniversary celebration of his home town of Mobile, Alabama; Mississippi
Music Teachers Association (1976, 1984, 1994, 2002 and 2012); Mississippi Symphony
Orchestra (1971, 1976, 1989, and 1997); Mississippi College (1992); U.S. Eighth Air
Force Band (1975); University of Southern Mississippi Orchestra (2009); University of
Southern Mississippi Wind Ensemble (1991); Mississippi Music Educators Association
(1976); duo-piano team of Frank and Sandra Polanski (1976); Ross Price, tenor (1998);
Raymond Payne, clarinetist (2000); Mississippi University for Women (1983); American
Guild of Organists (2000); First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi (1979);
Woodland Hills Baptist Church, Jackson, Mississippi (1979). Publishers of his music
include EC Schirmer, Southern Music (TX), GIA, and Shawnee Press.\footnote{Adams, 3.}
In the performance realm, James Sclater served as principal clarinetist for the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra from 1971-1998, and since 2000 he has performed with the Mississippi Wind Ensemble.\textsuperscript{15} In 1998 he also established a clarinet and piano duo titled \textit{Lyricas} with Dr. Angela Willoughby, professor of piano at Mississippi College and choir director at Fondren Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Mississippi. They have performed in London, England, as well as venues throughout the Southeastern United States, and have recorded a CD together entitled “Conversations.”\textsuperscript{16} The composer has also enjoyed playing clarinet in a number of free-lance bands in the Mississippi area.

Sclater has also continued his own research activities with the publication in 2001 of four articles in the \textit{International Clarinet Association Journal} about the renowned English clarinetist Regional Kell. The preliminary work and research for this series was done while on sabbatical from Mississippi College in England during 1998-1999.\textsuperscript{17} Within these articles, the composer develops and explains, among other things, his personal ideas about the importance of melody and lyricism in music and its use in composition.

His professional associations include the following groups: Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters, (1999-2002, Board of Directors); Committee to Re-Structure Mississippi Symphony Orchestra, (1997, Member); Mississippi Symphony Orchestra, (1992-1995, Board of Directors); On-Line clarinet Resource, WWW journal, (1996, 1997).\textsuperscript{16,17}

\textsuperscript{14}Adams, 4.

\textsuperscript{15}James Sclater, personal interview by author, June 17, 2013.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Adams, 4.
Editorial Board); Mississippi Music Teachers Association, Theory/Composition area, (1987-1989, Chairman); Public Schools APAC Program (Advisor in Composition); and Jackson Symphony Orchestra Local #579, Jackson, Mississippi (Union Representative). His memberships include ASCAP, Southeastern Composers League, College Music Society, Phi Mu Alpha, Pi Kappa Lambda, AFM, Kappa Kappa Psi, Omicron Delta Kappa, Who’s Who in America, Jackson Wind Symphony, and the International Clarinet Association.\(^{18}\)

In his personal life, Sclater married Ann Judy Davis of Columbia, Mississippi in 1967. Mrs. Sclater holds a Bachelor of Music degree in organ performance from The University of Southern Mississippi as well as a Master of Music degree in organ performance from The University of Michigan. She is on the faculty of Hinds Community College and has served as accompanist for Millsaps College (Jackson, Mississippi), Belhaven College (Jackson, Mississippi), and Fondren Presbyterian Church (Jackson, Mississippi). The Sclaters have one child, Patricia, who received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from William Jewell College in Bolivar, Missouri as well as the Master of Arts degree in English from The University of Missouri at Kansas City. Their daughter lives and works in Kansas City, Missouri.\(^{19}\)

The total compositional output of the composer includes choral works, solo pieces, chamber works, art songs, church music, opera, band music, orchestral works, as well as music for chorus and orchestra.\(^{20}\) Retirement from academia has given James

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\(^{18}\)Fisher, 102, along with personal interview by author, June 17, 2013.

\(^{19}\)Adams, 4.
Sclater the time to pursue other interests such as reading, writing, photography, cooking, as well as increased clarinet performance. In retirement, the composer also plans to devote larger amounts of time to composing.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20} Please see Appendix B for a comprehensive list of the composer’s works.

\textsuperscript{21} Rebecca Wright, “Sit Down and Do It.” Diversions/Music, 26 Jackson Free Press, June 22, 2011.
CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Toccata

The word “toccata” (literally a touched thing) is a broad term particularly associated with keyboard pieces displaying manual dexterity, and its meaning has undergone various transformations over time. The earliest examples, such as those of Frescobaldi (1583-1643), Merulo (1533-1604), Rossi (1600-1674), and Gabrieli (1555-1612), came primarily from sixteenth and seventeenth-century Italy. These toccatas were characterized by a style in which one hand performed brilliant runs of florid figuration and vertiginous passage-work against chords in the other hand, and these pieces were usually quite idiomatic to the instrument. In the first instances of this type, the distribution of labor placed the more energetic passages in the right hand, while in later constructs the activity was more evenly allocated between the hands. These late Renaissance and early Baroque works were also sometimes entitled “preludio,” “praeludium,” or “ricercare.” They were usually free in form, multi-sectional in character, and marked by harmonic extravagance. All of these musical attributes contributed to the striking impression of improvisation and spontaneous creation when these compositions were performed. However, the ricercare later developed into a composition with more strict contrapuntal or fugal qualities, and can be seen as a relative of, or precursor to, the fugue.

In the later Baroque period, the Italian composer Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725) composed a somewhat new type of toccata comprised of many sections containing fugue, recitative, or variation elements. It is clear that there exists some measure of cross-
fertilization between the genres of *toccata* and variation. In the Germanic countries of this time, composers such as Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707) and Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) developed the *toccata* into a longer, large-scale work of several types. One form consisted of a piece in which *toccata* and fugal elements were closely connected, and another variety of *toccata* was a large autonomous movement in uniform rhythm preceding a fugue. This quality of unceasing rhythmic motion, by means of which tension is built up, later became a cardinal characteristic of the modern *toccata*, with this *perpetuum mobile* effect lending a unifying force to the composition.

The *toccata* was less used in the Classical and Romantic periods, with the *Toccata* (op. 7, 1830) by Robert Schumann (1810-1856) illustrating a notable exception. This piece demonstrates the interrelated, flexible nature of the concepts of variation, *toccata*, *etude*, and *caprice*, with Schumann’s work incorporating characteristics commonly found in the *toccata*, sonata, and *etude*. Throughout this unusual sonata-toccata construction of Schumann, the *moto perpetuo* rhythms consistently drive forward in a relentless onslaught of effervescent energy. Even though it was somewhat less used in the Classic and Romantic periods, the *toccata* genre’s salient feature of display is often found in such musical constructs as the exercise and study, while its rhythmic and formal freedoms are seen in the *caprice* and rhapsody.\(^{22}\)

In the twentieth century a number of composers, such as Claude Debussy (1862-1918) (*Pour le piano*, 1901), Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) (*Toccata*, op.11, 1912), and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) (*Le Tombeau de Couperin*, 1917), continued to utilize the *toccata* concept, with most instances exhibiting the continuous rhythmic continuity, or

moto perpetuo, typical of later toccatas. But, overall, there have been fewer compositions of this type than before. Because the twentieth century is frequently marked by a technical proclivity, an empirical orientation, and a tendency to define, measure, or quantify, perhaps the more indefinable character of the toccata has not been as attractive to those modern composers with a more exacting, technical approach.

The Paganini Theme

Nicolo Paganini (1782-1840) was an outstanding violinist of the Romantic period, whose tumultuous temperament and dazzling virtuosity caused many astonished listeners of the time to attribute his performance prowess to magic or some sort of supernatural secret. Franz Liszt (1811-1886) wrote the following description of Paganini’s magnetism:

The excitement he created was so unusual, the magic that he practiced upon the imagination of his hearers so powerful, that they could not be satisfied with a natural explanation. Old tales of witches and ghost stories came into their minds; they attempted to explain the miracle of his playing by delving into his past, to interpret the wonder of his genius in a supernatural way; they even hinted that he had devoted his spirit to the Evil One, and that the fourth string of his violin was made from his wife’s intestines, which he himself cut out.23

Later, audiences were especially inclined to speculate in this manner after seeing Paganini’s cadaverous image on stage, ravaged from the effects of syphilis and tuberculosis, still playing with undiminished vigor and captivating mastery. Spectators were also amazed to see Paganini perform a complete, difficult piece with less than the standard four violin strings, sometimes accomplishing this feat with only one string.

This violinist was particularly gifted in the art of improvisation, and Paganini’s imaginative style of performance reinforced his reputation as an artist of Romantic freedom and originality. He was, in Robert Schumann’s words, “the turning-point in the

history of virtuosity.”24 “The particular lesson he taught his contemporaries was to master the resources of the instrument down to the last technical detail and to utilize a total technique for expressive purposes.”25 Indeed, mere perfection of technique would not have thrown the whole of musical Europe into paroxysms of admiration. Paganini’s audiences were spellbound because of his artistic genius, which routinely captivated listeners with its supreme artistry, subjectivity, and imagination.

Paganini also taught and composed, although his reputation as a composer did not correspond to his tremendous prestige as a performer. However, his overall influence on other composers can be considered one of his more important and lasting legacies. Composers such as Schumann, Liszt, and Brahms (1833-1897) attempted to transfer Paganini’s remarkable violin effects to the piano. Additionally, in his pursuit of free expression and artistic creativity, Paganini was seen as one of the pioneers of Romanticism. His Twenty-Four Caprices, op. 1 also inspired many subsequent composers, including James Sclater, to draw on his themes as basic compositional material.

The designation “caprice,” or “capriccio,” originated in the Renaissance to describe a lively instrumental composition in a free improvisatory style, but the word was used interchangeably with ricercar, canzone, or toccata. In the nineteenth century, the term was more often associated with works of a capricious or whimsical nature. In the twentieth century, perhaps under the influence of neoclassicism, the terminology reverted back to its original meaning as a contrapuntal instrumental piece in the manner of a

25 Ibid.
ricercar, such as Igor Stravinsky’s (1882-1971) *Capriccio* (1929) for piano and orchestra.

Paganini’s *Twenty-Four Caprices*, op. 1, for solo violin, from which the well-known Paganini theme is extracted, were composed between the years 1801 and 1807. They constitute a comprehensive compendium of musical devices which the violinist had conceived and worked out during the years he studied and explored the potential of the violin. This composition was the only important piece published during Paganini’s lifetime (published 1820), and was considered by many Romantic composers to be his finest achievement. Paganini’s *caprices* were influenced by *L’arte di nuova modulazione* (1733) of Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695-1764). This famous Italian violinist’s similar composition also incorporated twenty-four *caprices* which focused on modulation and harmonic progressions utilizing pivot chords.

James Sclater’s subject in his *Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini* is the legendary theme from the twenty-fourth *caprice* of the Paganini set, this last *caprice* being somewhat different from the rest of Paganini’s collection. Unlike the other twenty-three, this final *caprice* of Paganini’s group is actually a theme and eleven variations, with a short finale attached to the end. Each of the eleven variations contained within this *caprice* explores a specific violin technique for the right or left hand, and a high level of virtuosity is maintained throughout. Figure 1 shows the basic Paganini theme:

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The twenty-fourth Paganini caprice as a whole contains a theme, in a minor, of two parts (twelve measures long) in 2/4 time, plus eleven variations. The basic theme itself exhibits qualities of variation, the second half being a variant of the motive in the first half. The sixteen-bar theme is in binary, or two-part form, since binary form implies a move to the dominant or relative major, while the first part simply ends on an implied dominant chord. The theme consists of a four-measure A section that is repeated, followed by an eight-measure B section. The B section moves through much of an implied circle of fifths, at first with a new chord every measure, later with an accelerated harmonic rhythm as it approaches its cadence. Because most circle of fifths progressions are by nature a type of sequence, the B section of this theme is conducive to treatment with melodic or harmonic sequences, and we shall see this later in Sclater’s use of the Paganini theme. There may also be more troubled interruptions, imaginative excursions, or developmental twists within this B section.

All eleven of Paganini’s variations follow the above construct exactly except for the B section of variation two, which is one bar short. Schematically, the basic Paganini theme would be represented as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{A} \\
\text{B}
\end{array}
\]
Even though the Paganini theme may seem a bit pedestrian at first glance, its developmental plasticity and value as germinating material is evident from the numerous works of subsequent composers who were inspired by it. The attraction of this versatile theme may be attributed to several salient factors. First, the theme’s clear harmonic basis harbors much potential for development. The theme unfolds through a very elemental implied harmonic progression: first I-V, then a circle of fifths progression. Second, its steady repetition of sixteenth-note figures and tight motivic organization lends a certain toccata-like unifying effect to any development, yet leaves room for variability. Indeed, the whole Paganini structure is held securely together by the driving, uniform rhythm that permeates it. Thirdly, with a memorable profile, the contour of the distinctive theme can be easily maintained, imparting a strong motivic identity to any succeeding variations. Certainly, melody and rhythm seem unusually bound together in this pliable theme. Finally, the basic melody is quite counterpoised in its use of conjunct and disjunct intervals, retaining a pleasing aesthetic balance of steps versus skips.

According to Wadham Sutton,

The strong attraction of this theme lies in large measure in its essential flexibility, for it is not a theme at all, but rather is as much a skeletal framework which is suggestive of a harmonic scheme. Its structure is of an artless simplicity: a few bars of tonic and dominant harmony, a sequence through the subdominant to the relative major and a direct return to the tonic by way of a strategically placed augmented 6th chord. The melodies which can be made to fit so conventional a progression are legion, and Paganini’s initial impulse is sufficiently neutral to accommodate an infinite number of perfectly legitimate modifications. So pliable is this theme, so flexible its structure, that practically any treatment can be made to be relevant.  

Additional characteristics that likely make the Paganini subject attractive for compositional use include its binary-like form, slow harmonic motion, and a diatonic

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basis for the subject. Binary-type form is useful because numerous developments or variations can be achieved in the second section of a piece of this kind. Furthermore, slow harmonic rhythm allows for freedom within the harmonic organization, permitting the inventive usage of chord materials. Lastly, a diatonic melody can generate more ornamental gesture, either chromatically or diatonically, than a chromatic melody.

Brahms felt that the capricci of Paganini evidenced as great a gift “for composing in general as for the violin in particular.” That is high praise indeed. Yet it is unlikely that Paganini could have anticipated the remarkable number of compositions which later borrowed his fertile formula for inspiration, using it as the nucleus for a musical work. Based on these observations, it is entirely reasonable to expect more musical productions of this nature in the future.

28 De Courcy, 74.
CHAPTER IV

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF VARIATIONS AND TOCCATA

ON A THEME BY PAGANINI

Compositional Techniques

Taken as a whole, James Sclater’s compositional style can best be described as conservative in nature, incorporating characteristics of “neoclassicism” and “new romanticism.” But the scope and variety of his extensive output challenges specific categorization or stereotyped identification since his works represent diverse tendencies. In addition, the application of a convenient label to any composition would also depend upon the particular piece or movement under consideration.

An overview of Sclater’s approach to composition does, however, reveal a number of important prominent features. The composer works basically within the traditional system of tonal harmony, adding other ingredients or material. These supplementary harmonic elements include dissonant features, free harmonization, tonal ambiguities resulting from altered or non-functional chords, scattered pentatonic or modal references, and some quartal melodic intervals or harmony. But his dissonances are usually subordinated to a tonal context, with the tonality most decidedly clear. The composer believes in expressive melody and lyricism, and his melodies are typically comprised largely of scalar steps and chordal leaps. Sclater has stated that his preference is for “conservative melodies that are gracious to sing and allow for clear text projection.”

His writing for the voice displays a gift of melody, along with the ability to compose for the combination of voice with accompanying instrument to good effect. In

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keeping with this desire for clarity and comprehensibility, the composer does not object to the transposition of his music, for he would rather “hear it than have it sit on the shelf.” In the area of rhythm, he utilizes syncopation, meter changes, and irregular meters to increase excitement and interest, but does not generally use extremely complicated rhythmic combinations. Frequently employing traditional forms, his musical structures are typically tightly-knit and satisfying. The composer makes extensive use of traditional techniques and tools of musical composition such as sequence, repetition, imitation, intervallic expansion or compression to develop a motive, fragmentation, register change or displacement, and inversion. Sclater also writes well for the piano, drawing on the capabilities and expressive range of the instrument, from eloquent lyricism to a highly motoric and percussive style. He is successful in exploring the sonority of the instrument in ways that are personal and distinctive. His keyboard works exhibit virtuosic elements, often requiring an advanced level of skill and a comprehensive command of technique where the performer is physically challenged and fulfilled. Yet his piano writing is quite idiomatic and adroitly exploits the piano’s sonorities, admirably taking full advantage of the potential and distinctive characteristics of the instrument. All of these factors help give the musical works of James Sclater such ample creativity, charm, and variety as to be able to please the taste of most any listener.

Asked about his evolution as a composer, Sclater’s response sheds light on his compositional approach: “Yes, when I got out of school I was taken with certain “New Music” tendencies. I think I have mellowed in a sense…more emphasis upon

30 Mabary, 62.
communication and structure. I never gave up on tonality like so many others.”

Sclater has also stated, “It sounds silly, but I just want to get to the point that I can write music I won’t think is dated after a few years.” It is clear that these comments reveal the approach of a traditionalist or classicist. These and other stylistic characteristics will become abundantly clear during the course of the following analysis.

Stylistic Analysis

Commissioned by the Mississippi Music Teachers Association, James Sclater’s Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini was completed in February, 2002. This piece was premiered by Angela Willoughby at the 2002 Convention of the MMTA and was the winner of the 2003 Musical Composition Award from the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters.

Theme

The theme in Sclater’s set is itself a further variation of the well-known motive from the twenty-fourth caprice for solo violin of Nicolo Paganini. Historically, variation sets have often started with a clear presentation of a fundamental primary theme, followed by the respective variations. However, if the melody was well-known, rather than first stating the basic theme, many composers would immediately begin the set with the varied forms of the motive. Sclater’s approach to this can be seen as a hybrid of these tactics, with the second half, the B section starting at measure nine, already significantly modified. In addition, whereas Paganini simply sets the first four measures within a

\[\text{\textsuperscript{31}Fisher, 8.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{32}Ibid.}\]
repeat sign, Sclater renders the complete first section with no repeat because he has fleshed out this part with harmonic elaborations.

The intervallic relationships in the Paganini and Sclater themes will constitute important building blocks for all of the subsequent Sclater variations. The intervals in order of occurrence are the second, third, fifth, and octave, followed by the fourth, sixth, tritone, and seventh. But in order of thematic importance, the key intervals are the third, fifth, and octave, followed by the fourth and sixth. These form the foundation of both the melodic and harmonic material of the work, and the ramifications of their use will be seen in many of the following variations. These basic intervals can be observed in Figure 2.

![Figure 2. Paganini: Original Theme, Intervals, mm. 1-12.](image)

In the score, the composer states that the principal melodic pitches in the original Paganini theme are A-E-A-E-A-E-A-E// A-F-G-E-FB-EA-FE-A, while his are A-E-A-E-A-E-A-E-A// Bb-F#-G#-E-FBb-EA-FE-A. In the Sclater variations, the intervallic derivation or melodic profile may not always be readily apparent or easy to detect, but the musical gestures will definitely recall the theme to varying degrees. The principal Paganini notes can be seen in Figure 3.
An additional important building block for Sclater’s variations will be the head motive from the Paganini theme. Its shape, usually containing the intervals of the third and fifth, will characterize many of the forthcoming variations, and it is exhibited in Figure 4. Indeed, it can be stated that most of the Paganini theme is derived from this vital, central head motive.

For future reference and comparison with the subsequent Sclater variations, Figure 5 presents Sclater’s complete basic theme.
The principal notes in Sclater’s version of the Paganini theme may be represented as shown in Figure 6:
Examining Sclater’s theme, one can see that the composer has straightaway capitalized on a number of intrinsic features of Paganini’s original idea. As mentioned before, because the overall binary form of the theme encourages modifications in the second half, the B section already contains significant adjustments. Since the diatonic nature of the melody allows for more ornamental gesture, embellishing enrichments are added in this B section through chromatic alterations.
Some other immediate alterations include the use of octave displacement to repeat the complete B section with both hands one octave higher, and the stretching of the theme by one more measure. These deviations bring the total number of measures for Sclater’s extended version of the theme to twenty-six versus the twelve of Paganini, with these modifications only slightly altering the structural form of the theme. Figure 7 depicts the octave displacement.

![Figure 7. Sclater: Basic Theme, Octave Displacement, mm. 15-19.](image)

Sclater’s theme does, however, retain a number of features from the Paganini original. These include the identical a minor tonality, some of the implied harmonies, the binary-like form, the 2/4 time signature, the contour of the theme, and the basic metrical or rhythmic patterns.

Whereas Paganini ends the entire melodic theme with an octave descent to a tonic a, Sclater chooses to ascend an octave to finish on a higher a, as did a number of previous composers such as Franz Liszt. Figures 8 and 9 show the octave jumps upward at the end of the melodies in section B of Sclater, and Figure 10 presents Paganini’s original, which descends.
Figure 8. Sclater: Basic Theme, First Octave Leap in B Section, mm. 10-19.

Figure 9. Sclater: Basic Theme, Second Octave Leap at End of B Section, mm. 20-26.

Figure 10. Paganini: Original Caprice Theme, B Section, Octave Leap Down, mm. 7-12.

Sclater’s treatment of the harmony in his theme displays a heightening of harmonic interest through chromatic alteration. Many variation sets based on the Paganini
motive start with simple harmonies, such as tonics and dominants, and progressively increase the complexity of this musical ingredient. Sclater’s version immediately begins with a substantial level of harmonic action, with the A section at once directing seventh chords in an ascending chromatic line from measure 1 through measure 9. These culminate with the dominant seventh on E which begins the B section at measure nine. Figure 11 illustrates this harmonic movement.

![Figure 11. Sclater: Basic Theme, Chromatic Motion, mm. 1-9.](image)

Counterbalancing the chromatic ascent of seventh chords in the bass from mm. 1-9 shown in Figure 11, Sclater mirrors the upward motion with a descending bass line in mm. 21-26 of section B, and this reversal gives Sclater’s theme an admirable symmetry. This mirror feature is illustrated in Figure 12. This chromatic feature is used in many subsequent variations, sometimes reversed or symmetrical, sometimes not, and it lends an appreciable coherence or unity to the composition in addition to chromatic color.
In the B section, many variations sets built on the Paganini theme move through the circle of fifths until arriving at some variety of augmented-sixth chord, followed by a common dominant to tonic cadence to end the theme in the tonic a minor. In his B section, instead of a circle of fifths, Sclater uses a modification in which the music traverses a series of seventh chords a tritone apart, a “sequence of tritones,” before returning to the tonic of a minor. These chords separated by a tritone are the only chords in the theme to receive accents. Figure 13 presents this harmonic motion.
The a minor tonal centricity is maintained throughout the theme, even though it is inflected by non-functional seventh chords, tritones and chromatically altered notes. These harmonic and tonal features are used to enrich and color the theme, rather than challenge the tonality in any meaningful way. In many of Sclater’s compositions, non-functional harmonies are often used to embellish and infuse the music with increased harmonic interest and appeal.

Also interesting to note is the use of modality, or the natural minor, during the A section of Sclater’s theme in bars two and six. This is in contrast to Paganini’s original which uses the melodic minor. (Sclater does use the melodic minor pitches of F# and G# in the B section). This can be seen in Figures 14 and 15.
In comparing the rhythmic aspect of Sclater’s theme to the original from which it is derived, one sees that the composer adds a flourish of thirty-second notes or similar decorations to the end of each long phrase of both the A and B sections, rounding off each part. The element of rhythm is very important to this composer, for he believes that a reductionist approach to this musical component, such as sometimes happens in the process of a Shenkarian analysis, can weaken the sense of rhythm or at least one’s aesthetic appreciation of it. The composer uses various harmonic and rhythmic tools to elaborate and expound upon his theme, and some of these rhythmic enhancements can be seen in measures eight, measures fifteen through seventeen, as well as measures twenty-four through twenty-six. Otherwise, Sclater’s rhythmic treatment in his theme is similar to the Paganini original. Figures 16 and 17 present these rhythmic-accenting arabesques.

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33 James Sclater, interview with the composer, June 17, 2013.
In the area of performance considerations, such as dynamics or articulation, Paganini tends to maintain one dynamic level or articulation throughout each of his eleven variations. Already in Sclater’s theme alone, we find many adjustments of dynamics, accents, and articulation. Figure 18 provides the first page, showing these performance considerations.
For a better appreciation of Sclater’s compositional style, each of the succeeding fourteen variations and toccata will be examined, focusing on the most prominent or salient features in each selection. In order to enhance and refine the stylistic understanding of the examined music, this study will also look at any ancillary or
subordinate features that may be of interest. The analysis will inspect aspects such as melody, harmony, tonality, rhythm, texture, form, tempo, and performance considerations. The assumption is that the analyst will discriminate between salient and peripheral features, and this discrimination is a critical judgment. Each variation is sharply focused on a few specific features and has its own special character, which in turn is frequently bound up with specific problems of pianistic execution. Sclater’s composition clearly continues the variation type discussed earlier in which variation elements are fused with qualities of the etude or toccata. As Sclater stated, “I decided upon a gesture, motive, or style for each one. Each variation is sort of an etude, dealing with a certain ‘thing’ for the pianist to do. I was trying to do something challenging for the player which might have some appeal for the listener.”

Variation One

In Figure 19, we see that the first variation engages primarily with intervallic play and register shifts. The intervals of the perfect fourth and fifth alternate in both parts, at first matching in interval type while later diverging into disagreement, with the hands never playing together.

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34 James Sclater, e-mail message to author, July 30, 2012.

35 In the original score, measure numbers did not restart at number one for this variation.
In a dialogue between the hands, the figures are tossed in constant motion from register to register, varied in their groupings, and often answer one another in imitative responses. The variation is characterized by an animated toccata-like quality, with relentless rhythmic motion and non-stop driving energy. Figure 20 shows this activity.

Figure 19. Sclater: Variation 1, Perfect Intervals, mm. 27-40.

Figure 20. Sclater: Variation 1, Register Shifts and Imitative Responses, mm. 41-53.
With irregular accentuation and varied metrical groupings, the beat is constantly displaced and shifted to and fro so that the groupings cross the barline. Just as a more regular pattern in the hands finally seems to be established, the hands reverse themselves, keeping the listener guessing as to which arrangement will triumph in this kaleidoscopic array of shifting configurations. Persistent, motoric eighth notes integrate this variation, and this rhythmic agitation is depicted in measures fifty-four through fifty-nine in Figure 21. This shifting of meter creates a strong sense of anxious intensity.

![Figure 21: Sclater: Variation 1, Rhythmic-Metric Reversals, mm. 54-59.](image)

As displayed in Figure 22, towards the end of this highly disjunct variation, the exploitation of rapid register contrasts becomes greater, encompassing most of the keyboard. Requiring control and delicacy, the pianist must be fleet of hand and nimble, for the perilous shifts and leaps may be difficult to accomplish, especially when keeping in mind the intended “stealthy, light” objective as indicated at the top of the score. The performer must look far enough ahead in order to be prepared for each upcoming group. A searching restlessness permeates this variation, and it is perhaps important to note that it is marked to be played soft to medium loud with a relatively quick tempo. But even though there is a high amount of activity, the motoric quality and sameness of rhythmic values in this variation necessitate a performance in which the music has direction. The pianist would be wise to ensure that the sequences or any repeating material are
performed with enough variety to keep the listener engaged. This variety could involve such factors as phrasing, touch, dynamic level, as well as crescendo or diminuendo.

Figure 22. Sclater: Variation 1, Rapid Register Shifts, mm. 75-86.

One component contributing to the stealthy, unsettled atmosphere of this variation is the use of some octatonicism. Example 23 indicates this use of octatonic elements, seen when the reader examines one horizontal line or part separately in the figure.

Figure 23. Sclater: Variation 1, Elements of Octatonic Scale, mm. 27-33.

In Figure 24, Sclater’s original theme can be clearly discerned. Whether the performer accentuates or emphasizes this motive or any feature in a variation is a difficult matter of personal interpretation, for some artists will ask the important question as to
what should or should not be emphasized during performance. In other words, there is a legitimate question as to whether one should bring out what is perhaps already obvious, for instance, which could create a sense of redundancy or distortion.
Figure 24. Sclater: Variation 1, Identification of Original Theme, mm. 27-59.
Variation Two

Variation two is a turbulent one, containing potent major-minor clashes juxtaposed with chromatic double octaves. These attributes, especially the bi-tonal chord occurrences, contribute forcefully to the “angry,” pesante atmosphere, as per the performance mark at the beginning of the score. In this variation the composer has effectively exploited the percussive aspect of the instrument.

The bi-triadic collisions can be seen as a modal type of bitonality in which a non-euphonious homonymous complex of major and minor triads in close harmony contain a conflict between the major and minor third above the same root. These harmonic impacts provide spice, sparkle, and audacious discordance, rather than alternative tonal centers, and the tonality of a minor is never truly disputed. Such stinging chords can also be seen as a type of acciaccatura accent, producing a brittle effect. The performer must aim very carefully and prudently look ahead when dropping to play these obstreperous occurrences, as a massive cacophony of noise will result if these thunderous chords are missed. A special effort to listen carefully while playing should also be made here because too much pedal use during the octaves and chords will result in blurry, unclear playing. Typically, the treble contains the major triad, and the bottom counters with the parallel minor. Interestingly, the poly-chords punctuating the second beats in the middle range simultaneously contain both the major and minor third of each respective harmony. These various bold splashes of dissonant sonority are shown in examples 25 and 26.
Figure 25. Sclater: Variation 2, Bitonal Clashes, mm. 1-8.

Along with these crashing chords, Figure 26 displays the chromatic double octaves that also contribute to the tumultuous torrent heard here. Within each hand, these interlocking octaves outline a whole-tone scale of ambiguous orientation, combining to make the complete chromatic and a rich texture. The chromatic bursts of fiery figuration within this vigorous variation illustrate well Sclater’s reoccurring use of chromaticism throughout this composition.
Figure 26. Sclater: Variation 2, Chromatic Double Octaves, mm. 9-21.

Some pianists may find these interlaced chromatic octaves somewhat difficult as far as accuracy or smoothness, but when the performer concentrates on both thumbs during execution, this performance concern is alleviated to a large degree. For best effect and to avoid any monotony in the somewhat repetitious bi-tonal chords, these chromatic double octaves should perhaps swell intensely, even exaggeratedly, during the hairpin dynamics.

In some variations, the original theme may be scarcely recognizable, more difficult to identify, or presented in a setting in which it is not apparent. Regarding the degree to which the intervals in the original tune of Paganini are used in his variations,
the composer stated, “Some variations follow rather closely and others do not.” This divergence from the theme is due to many factors, such as the use of modified melodic material, including material that appears to be different or supplementary, varied harmonic treatment, or the use of compositional techniques such as melodic fragmentation, expansion, or compression. However, this should be reconciled with the fact that the composer has done this for the purpose of increased creativity and imaginative use of the material. As far as harmony, since the original Paganini theme is a succession of single notes for the violin, it is important to remember that the interval constructs are clear, whereas the harmony is only implied, and perhaps even more open to creative use.

While in some of Selater’s variations the motive can be more difficult to detect, in others the original theme can be readily discerned. Overall, in most of the variations the harmonic scheme or phrase structure of the original theme is traceable to the extent that the listener remains at least somewhat securely oriented. Conforming well to the Paganini theme, in variation two we can clearly see the theme’s strong outline, as depicted in Figure 27. One can also observe in the following example how the octaves gradually grow in complexity, density, and range, increasing to their maximum in the B section from measure nine onwards.

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36James Sclater, e-mail message to author, July 30, 2012.
Figure 27. Sclater: Variation 2, Identification of Original Theme, mm. 1-21.
Variation Three

Next we find a study in broken octaves, found mostly in the right hand, which are used to create truncated thematic gestures. These broken octaves outline melodic fragments of the theme, mostly delineating and exploring the developmental possibilities of the interval of the third. Figure 28 demonstrates the concentration on this important interval within this highly chromatic variation.
Figure 28. Sclater: Variation 3, Theme Fragments, Chromaticism, mm. 26-48.
Although appearing less frequently, fourth and fifth theme fragments also appear in this variation, as demonstrated in Figures 29 and 30.\(^\text{37}\)

Figure 29. Sclater: Variation 3, Fourths, mm. 26-30.

Figure 30. Sclater: Variation 3, Fifths, mm. 35-43.

At first, it appears that the melody in broken octaves will attempt to present the original Paganini head motive. But after the initial four notes, A, C, B, A, it seems as if the melody cannot quite reach the final expected note of E. What follows is a humorous developmental series of ever-larger extensions in which the melody stretches each time in

\(^{37}\)In the original score, measure numbers did not start at number one for this variation.
an attempt to complete the first part of the Paganini theme, finally arriving at the E in measure 31. Example 31 depicts this whimsical melodic treatment.

\[ \text{Example 31} \]

Once this E is finally attained, it is as if the melody is unable to contain its elation in the achievement, and it celebrates by continuing further up in a sequence of broken octaves outlining thirds, each one a step apart. Figure 32 depicts this amusing sequence.

\[ \text{Figure 31. Sclater: Variation 3, Interval Expansion, mm. 26-34.} \]
These culminate on the high Bb in measure 34, which begins the B section. In the next portion, chromatic broken octaves descend from this high Bb in two blocks forming the interval of a sixth, or two thirds combined, depending on how it is viewed. Taken together, these six broken octave groups, which form thirds in outline, contain the original melodic profile characteristic of section B: Bb, F#, G#, E. (Often the G# is enharmonically respelled as Ab). Following this passage, chromatic second-inversion chords in the right hand descend to what can be interpreted as a deceptive cadence on an F chord in measure 41. In order to end the variation in the home key of a minor, a white key *glissando* then sweeps up to an A in the high register of the piano. This is followed by third fragments in measures 45-48, which end on a Picardy third. Figure 33 illustrates the finishing features found in this playful variation.
Figure 33. Sclater: Variation 3, B Section Theme, Deceptive Cadence, *Glissando*, Picardy Third, mm. 26-48.
As to performance concerns, pianists may find continuous broken octaves like the ones found in this variation to be painful or tiring to the wrist and forearms during or after execution. This performance issue can be alleviated to a great degree during execution if the performer uses forearm rotation, thus making sure to maximize use of the larger muscles of the upper arm, shoulder, and back, rather than the smaller, weaker ones of the forearm. In order to avoid fatigue, care should also be taken to ensure that there is no pressure, weight, or down-bearing applied to the keys while playing, since to achieve volume or power in piano playing one uses speed, not weight. Some pianists say one should use weight and then release it. But weight is always counterproductive and tension-producing when playing the piano. The pianist should remember that when using arm rotation, arm drops, or whole arm and shoulder movements when playing, he is using bigger, longer levers and enlarged body gestures to attain speed, and not confuse these larger anatomical units or bigger motions with weight. In other words, the solution to most problems in piano technique involves not weight, but concepts found within the area of body mechanics – motion and energy.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{38}While at Juilliard, the author studied with one of the most famous piano technique specialists in the United States, Jeanine Dowis, assistant to Rosina Lhevinne. Ms. Dowis always stressed that while playing the performer should strive to eliminate as much weight, pressure, or down-bearing as possible for greater speed, control, tone quality, and ease. The author has observed pianists who confuse speed with weight eventually understand this concept if they picture an elephant hypothetically trying to play the piano, with its heavy hand producing a soft volume if the key is played very slowly. Weight does not contribute anything to piano playing except tension and fatigue; it should be avoided at all costs. It is best for the performer to always think of his hands and arms as playing “up, forward, and out”, as Ms. Dowis advised. Similarly, for the avoidance of discomfort, it is better for the performer to think while playing of the movement of the structural bones rather than muscles and tendons, as the latter way of thinking can promote tightness. Fundamentally, when speaking of piano technique, speed, energy, and control are the crux of the matter. While it takes many years to acquire a satisfactory piano technique through skill acquisition, this technical advice is supplied because such specialized expertise can be beneficial to the understanding and performance of the composition under consideration.
Variation Four

With the next item in the series, we “change gears” so to speak, with a variation of an introspective, improvisatory-sounding character which differs sharply with what came before, releasing at once the tension of the preceding variations. The composer states that he “attempted to regulate the ebb and flow of the piece through the placement of fast and slow variations.”\(^\text{39}\) A plangent melody and countermelody, both based on the Paganini original, are given to the right hand. The left hand complements these leisurely-paced lines with an accompanying figuration of broadly-spaced broken chords which decorate the higher melodies. The thickened texture resulting from the dispersal of material into three lines, unhurried pacing, and melodic material of a plaintive nature combine to project an atmosphere of forlorn sadness. These elements serve to create the character of the variation, and passing dissonances further darken this mood with a sense of melancholy and sorrow. Even though the use of pedal is a very personal decision, it will probably be used in this variation due to the rich harmonies found here, and care should be taken that it is not overused to the point of unnecessary blurriness, since three parts exist within a contrapuntal texture containing much step-wise motion.

Variation four will also benefit from a generous use of rubato, and the composer has indicated some of this with breath commas, as well as indications such as largamente, rallentando, a tempo, and meno mosso. Figure 34 presents this shadowy setting.

\(^{39}\) James Sclater, e-mail message to author, July 30, 2012.
Figure 34. Sclater: Variation 4, Three-part Texture, mm. 1-18.

Derived from the Paganini original, the initial top melodic gesture is a leap up of a fifth from the tonic A to the dominant E, followed by a slow descent in steps back down to the tonic. This weeping melodic line is later continued in a similar fashion, but now with a larger leap up to the A an octave above in measure nine, with the octave leap also derived from the A section of the original themes. Consequently, a longer octave step-wise drop back down to the tonic follows, somewhat reminiscent of the drooping grief
commonly associated with a lament bass. This bare, skeletal remnant of the original theme is shown in Figure 35.

![Figure 35. Sclater: Variation 4, Main Theme Gesture, mm. 1-14.]

The counterpart to this principal top line is generated from the prominent interval of the third found in the Paganini head motive. This middle countermelody constantly circles around, and fills in, distances of a third in the center of the texture as exhibited in Figure 36.
Figure 36. Sclater: Variation 4, Countermelody, mm. 1-9.

With lush overtones and the “color note” third of the chord prominent, the idiomatically-written left hand accompanying figurations finish the rich texture and fill out the harmonic resonance. However, since this supporting bass line should probably be the softest, the performer must take considerable care to keep the arm light, free, and up so as to not overpower the other elements within the multiple levels of sonority with an unexpected drop of the arm—because these arpeggio chords in extended position stretch the hand, great caution should be taken in their execution to avoid too much volume from excessive motion or speed.

In the B section, the theme’s melodic profile is easily discernible in the treble part, maintaining much of its original form. As the top sharply etches the thematic profile it is joined by the middle countermelody which is now inverted, and the composer brings this inner-voice melody to the attention of the pianist with performance notes. To this is added the left hand broken-chord accompaniment, and the three parts now produce a
three-against-four polyrhythm. These lines in aggregate combine to create rich seventh-chord harmonies moving in a tritone sequence, maintaining the original sequence of tritones pattern from Sclater’s theme. In this second part of the variation, the phrases reach their fervent culmination, constituting in essence diapasons of passion or emotional outbursts. The composer accomplishes this intensification by slowing down the tempo, increasing the harmonic resonance, and intensifying the volume as well as left hand accompaniment. The drama is further heightened through the use of powerful crescendos. Perspicacious pedaling will add to the sonorous sound of this languid, slower segment. Figure 37 illustrates the dramatic features in section B.
At the end of this variation, when the B section melody is normally repeated with modifications, Sclater reverses the placement of the lines by situating the last part of the main theme in the bass and places the circling thirds counter-melody at the top in a second-inversion triadic form. This switching of locations gives variety as the variation unwinds and trails off in an introspective, dreamy manner, as shown in Figure 38.
This variation eschews technical virtuosity for lyrical cantabile playing, for it is characterized more by its sensitivity than bravura. Control of voicing, or melodic inflection, is the paramount performance concern in this variation, so the performer must be careful to project the poignant principal melody clearly, as well as subordinate the middle countermelody, all the while providing quiet harmonic support with the left hand broken-chord accompaniment. All three parts of this texture require a separate dynamic level according to the importance the performer feels they each should be given. The
composer clarifies this by assigning separate dynamic levels to the melodic lines. The challenge which stems from adept handling of multiple dynamic levels necessitates careful listening while playing, along with discriminating regulation of the speed of each key, in order to voice effectively and project attractively-balanced melodic lines. If the performer adds to this a refined use of harmonic pedaling along with sensitive phrasing, an aesthetically pleasing result can be obtained. Since three parts exist within a contrapuntal weave, for a different interpretation the pianist could pedal less in order to differentiate the three melodic lines with an articulation that is different in each line. This would impart a clearer sound to the texture, delineate the lines more contrapuntally, and allow for imaginative use of creative phrasing through the use of articulation, dynamics, and phrasing.

*Variation Five*

Variation five offers a light-hearted contrast to the preceding one, for a somber mood has been superseded by an affable, ebullient disposition. This variation is characterized by rapid, staccato left hand crossings, and is quite etude-like in this respect. Figure 39 makes clear the emphasis on these harried hand hurdles.
Since the tempo suggested by the composer falls within an *allegro* range, and the left hand is called upon to quickly cover large swaths of the keyboard, this specific physical task could pose a challenging technical hurdle for some pianists. This difficulty can best be dealt with if the performer visually looks ahead as much as possible to the upcoming keys to played, and attempts to mentally group the music into larger units according to their musical meaning and relationships. This will facilitate comprehension, memory, and therefore execution. For example, many of the left hand crossing thirds can be seen to progress in a succession of related steps, skips, or repeats when they are considered without their octave displacement, and the right hand can be understood to outline simple major and minor triads. Especially if the right hand is comprehended in this way, the player can then focus on the more difficult jumps of the left hand. Also, considerable use is made of the compositional technique of sequence, and this understanding can also aid performance through the recognition of musical connections.
Even with these difficulties, the quick tempo should be maintained or this variation could lose much of its humor and sound tentative or timid.

This variation is also a study in the use of restricted, specific intervals. The important intervals of the third and fifth are once more extensively used, and upon examination, the observer will discover that use is made of them almost exclusively. While no particular interval is solely dedicated to any one hand, except for three sevenths found in measures 48 through 50, the left hand is comprised largely of thirds (Figure 39). In addition, even though this variation may at first appear to add more departures from the theme, the subtle melodic connection with the head of the original motive can be easily observed in the above example. Figure 40 below depicts the three exceptional sevenths.

*Figure 40. Sclater: Variation 5, Rare Sevenths, mm. 43-54.*
The extended melodic profile or connection to the theme may be a bit more difficult to discern in this variation, especially because the two rather contrapuntal parts are quite disjunct and *staccato*. But when one notices the important performance indication “jovial” at the top of the score, apparent attenuated associations are not so much of an issue due to the humorous quality found here, with hints of the theme playfully peeking through. Even so, the relationships and links to the original motive are still perceptible. This is clarified in Figure 41.
A couple of variations in the Sclater set, such as this one, contain trios. They continue the practice or tradition in which the trio normally offers contrasting material of
a lighter nature. Indeed, the instance found here is imbued with greatly increased humor through the use of heightened chromaticism, syncopations, disjunct melodic lines, and repeated comical neighbor notes. Note the playful patter and imitative reversal of parts in the hands starting in measure 40 in the example below. Adding to the capricious clowning, we can observe impish interruptions of the head motive from measure 45 through measure 48, first stated outlining g# minor. Following this, the left hand seems to become lost and confused, stating the head motive twice, and then trailing off into aimless sevenths to stop on a prolonged g#. Overall, this amusing turn of events amounts to an atmosphere of clever confusion as to the direction of melody and orientation of tonal centricity. With a witty quality reminiscent of a Haydn scherzo, the entire trio can be seen as a befuddled, leading-tone g# to the main body of the variation in a minor. In the trio, the assertion of g# as an area of teasing tonality is accomplished through relentless repetition of the note g#, and its placement at the beginning and end. There is a mischievous uncertainty to this trio, making for entertaining playfulness. This delightful aspect of jocular jesting is demonstrated in Figure 42.
Figure 42. Sclater: Variation 5, Trio Section, G# Leading-tone Centricity, mm. 31-60.
It is worth noting that the trio builds on a rhythmic pattern which appeared in the first part of the variation. Figure 43 features this rhythmic cell which is later used in the trio.

![Figure 43. Sclater: Variation 5, Rhythmic Pattern Used for Trio, mm. 25-30.](image)

**Variation Six**

Broken sixths, parallel major chords, and chromaticism characterize variation six. It is also perhaps the most dissonant or “modern-sounding” one thus far, with raucous cross relations, tritones, and dissonant sevenths embedded within the texture. The accumulation of dissonance contributes to this variation’s characteristic sonority, and incessant *toccata*-like figuration gives the music an agitated, driven quality.

The prevalent sixths are highlighted in Figure 44. They are of both the major and minor variety, and will be used in the variation’s upcoming trio as well. As spans of a sixth appear quite often in the B section of the Paganini and Sclater themes, the consistent use of this interval lends coherence to the composition as a whole.
The interval of the sixth also outlines ascending second-inversion chromatic chords used in contrary motion in the left hand, clearly returning to the chromatic bass idea appearing at the very beginning of Sclater’s original theme. These sixth-spanning chromatic chords are shown in Figure 45.

This use of sixths and chromatic chords is applied to the following trio, and this is clarified in Figures 46 and 47. Note the reversal of parts in the hands compared to the beginning of this variation.
In this trio in particular, one observes that the root motion of the mostly non-functional chords is often by thirds. A salient stylistic characteristic of Sclater’s use of harmony is a tendency to shift to a new chord through the use of a common tone, often moving a third away. The harmonic motion, often by chromatic thirds, can be seen as yet another embodiment of the idea of the important interval of the third from the head motive. This characteristic harmonic feature is delineated in Figures 48 and 49.
Figure 48. Sclater: Variation 6, Trio, Harmonic Motion by Thirds, mm. 19-23.
Figure 49. Sclater: Variation 6, Trio Continued, Harmonic Motion by Thirds, mm. 24-50.
Even with increased dissonance and disjointed melodic patterns, the original head motive and theme can be discerned as in Figure 50. With the greater amount of dissonance, disjunct melodic lines, and repetition found in this variation, it is important for the performer to give meaning to the interpretation in the sense that it has musical direction. Because the composer has focused to such a great degree on a few specific musical ideas, if not careful, the somewhat repetitious melodies and rhythmic configurations in this variation could become for the listener a bit repetitious. This danger can be alleviated with a creative musical use of phrasing, dynamics, timing, and touch. The performer should perhaps highlight any differences in these elements found in the music for contrast. The interpretive part of performance is extremely personal, but many performing artists feel there is an unwritten maxim in the area of performance which directs the player to interpret and play any repeating musical idea somewhat differently. This allows for variety and interest, which is very important for effective playing. It should be remembered that the “magic” or enchanting power of musical performance often lies “between the notes” or hidden behind the explicit indications in a score. Thus, for example, when three similar phrases occur in this variation, perhaps the third one could have a special meaning and be played somewhat differently, as in measures one through four. Or, the second and third phrase could be performed in a different manner form the first one. Combinations of timing, touch, phrasing, and dynamics could be varied in numerous ways in many places to make the performance more interesting, with this varied treatment of the material an important part of interpretation. The possibilities are endless, and this is surely a great part of the joy of performance as well as listening.
Figure 50. Sclater: Variation 6, Head Motive and Theme Principal Notes, mm. 1-23.
Reiterating the g# leading-tone idea from the trio of the previous variation, this trio does so not in a humorous way as before, but in a more aggressive, discordant manner. It does, however, maintain the traditional practice of relaxing the trio somewhat, with the tempo slightly decreased and the volume reduced, as shown by the suggested tempo marking *poco meno mosso* and dynamic marking *mezzo piano*. Figures 51 and 52 depict the continuation of the g# leading-tone gesture.

*Figure 51. Sclater: Variation 6, Trio, G# Leading-tone Centricity, mm. 19-23.*
Figure 52. Sclater: Variation 6, Trio Continued, G# Leading-tone Centricity, mm. 24-50.
Variation Seven

In Variation seven we encounter the use of musical parody. Besides the Paganini theme, an additional source of inspiration for this variation is the fourth piano *étude* in c# minor from the op. 10 set of twelve *études* of Frederic Chopin, composed between 1829 and 1832. In the score James Sclater states, “The right hand figuration is a spoof of a familiar Chopin étude in c# minor.” In Figure 53, one can easily see why this particular Chopin *étude* was chosen, for in its beginning the Chopin *étude* outlines the Paganini head-motive shape using sequential thirds and fourths.

![Figure 53. Chopin: Etude op. 10, No. 4, Similarity to Paganini Head Motive, mm. 1-2.](image)

In Figure 54 one can view Sclater’s clever crafting of the head motive in a similar way, as well as the use of the important intervals of the third and fifth, these intervals appearing together and over the long span of a phrase.
Figure 54. Sclater: Variation 7, Head Motive, Important Thirds and Fifths, mm. 1-6.

The Chopin study also clearly outlines the broad interval of the fifth which is so prevalent in the Paganini and Sclater basic themes, as shown in Figure 55. Of course, the Chopin etude’s key centricity is c# minor while the Sclater variation is in a minor, so the reader must transpose the material.

Figure 55. Chopin: Etude op. 10, No. 4, Thematic Interval of the Fifth, mm. 1-4.
Partly because of the influence of the Chopin *etude*, the Paganini head motive as well as overall thematic profile are particularly clear in the A section of Sclater’s seventh variation, as portrayed in Figure 56. Thirds and fourths are used copiously in one half of a melodic phrase, while sixths, which are extensively used in section B of the original Paganini and Sclater themes, are utilized in the other portion of the phrase. The beginnings and middle of phrase groups outline fifths, giving the principal notes of the theme. The following figure calls attention to the principal notes within the theme.
Variation 7

Energetic, robust
Figure 56. Sclater: Variation 7, Theme Principal Notes, mm. 1-19.

The use of chromaticism and sequence characteristic of Sclater’s variations again stands out in this particular variation, manifested in Figure 57. Figure 58 exhibits his use of an inverted form of cascading chromatics.

Figure 57. Sclater: Variation 7, Use of Chromaticism, Sequence, mm. 10-12.
This variation is yet another example of the strong connection between the genres of variation and etude. Since the Chopin etude, composed in part for the development of piano technique, was to a large extent the inspiration for this variation, technical difficulties of pianistic execution may here present themselves for some performers especially in terms of accuracy and smoothness of playing. Charged with energy from the presto tempo and scintillating swirls of sixteenth-note figurations, some performers may also find this variation with its athletic manifestation of the twisting head-motive difficult to play without tiring. To facilitate execution of this scherzo-like filigree, the performer should mentally group these fleeting formations into patterns in which the upper arm can assist in directing physical energy to the weaker fingers, such as the fourth and fifth. This means the mental groupings as far as performance will tend to start on the second half of each beat of these groups, allowing the pianist to in effect lift or throw the arm and hands
toward the weaker fingers for more power and speed. The Figures 59 and 60 below show this grouping for the Chopin and Sclater pieces.

Figure 59. Chopin: Etude op. 10, No. 4, Mental and Physical Groupings for Easier Technical Execution, mm. 1-2.

Figure 60. Sclater: Variation 7, Physical Groupings for Easier Technical Execution, mm. 1-3.

Additionally, in the groups in which sixths are found, advantageous use of arm-rotation will help make these running sixteenth-note groups easier, since extra strength and speed to cover the greater intervalllic distance will result from the use of stronger muscles of the upper arm and shoulder during rotation movement in conjunction with larger anatomical motions. Figure 60 above delineates the sixth groupings.

This variation once more makes use of harmonic motion by chromatic thirds through a common tone shared by two chords. Figure 61 calls attention to this typical harmonic feature of Sclater’s music.
Finally, since this variation contains much step-wise or neighbor-note melodic movement within a rapid setting, the interpreter should use little to no pedal during execution or the playing will be overly blurry and unclear. This is especially true here since the harmonies present in this variation change on practically every beat.

**Variation Eight**

In the next treatment of Paganini’s motive, the primary pitches of the theme are placed in the left hand, while the right hand exhibits a striking use of dissonant *arpeggios* in a furious flurry. These insistent right hand figures span the entire range of the keyboard, exploiting register contrasts, and give a wild quality to this segment of the piece. Figure 62 introduces this vociferous volatility while illuminating the theme in the left hand. The composer may seem to have significantly altered the intervallic content of the theme, but in reality he has only added embellishing notes or extended-chord type decorations.
Since the performance note at the head of the score suggests that the performer should project a boiling, agitated mood when playing this variation, presumably this segment should be taken at a rapid tempo and played loudly. Consequently, the right hand may pose performance challenges with its difficult passage work, particularly for those with small hands because the notes do not lie easily under the hand. These arpeggio combinations stretch the hand, but because power and speed are needed here, the performer should not try to stay close to the keys in an attempt to be accurate, which could tire the pianist with a cramped hand position and give a wooden, uniform tone quality. Rather, the artist should endeavor to use the whole arm and shoulder in a circling
motion to cover the arpeggios, thereby giving more speed and power from the larger muscles of the upper arm, shoulder, chest, and back. This constant whole upper-body motion will prevent fatigue, allow for smooth execution, and deliver aesthetically-pleasing phrasing through improved control of the variability of tone quality. With this type of technical execution, endurance should not be a problem.

The composer continues his frequent use of chromaticism and sequence in the B segment, and we have seen this to be a powerful unifying device in many of the variations. Figures 63 and 64 express this material.

Figure 63. Sclater: Variation 8, Chromaticism and Sequences, mm. 9-14.
Figure 64. Sclater: Variation 8, Chromaticism and Sequences, mm. 15-22.

The composer uses melodic and harmonic movement by thirds again as well, helping to give coherence to the work, but this time tertian chords are not used but instead quartal and quintal type harmonies appear. Figure 65 below clarifies these harmonic features.
As in some of the previous variations with a moto perpetuo character, since there is a high level of unity within this variation the interpreter would do well to vary any repetitions and sequences by means of articulation, dynamics, and phrasing contrasts for greater musical effect and the consequent pleasure of the listener.

**Variation Nine**

Variation nine is marked by an elf-like, puckish humor induced by dotted rhythms and staccato articulation. The composer has mixed and recombined a few rhythmic cells into a larger, balanced amalgamation containing admirable unity, but also enough variety to maintain interest. A lavish use of staccato touch adds to the light-hearted, comical nature. *Staccatissimo*, the superlative form of the performance indication for short articulation, is even present in measure fourteen. These features are demonstrated in Figure 66.
Figure 66. Sclater: Variation 9, Rhythmic Configurations, *Staccato* Articulation, mm. 9-15.

The important original head motive can still be detected in the jumping rhythmic-melodic configurations, as revealed in Figure 67. The reader must look for the outlines of the prevalent thirds and fifths from the original theme.

Figure 67. Sclater: Variation 9, Use of Head Motive, mm. 1-4.

Even though the melodic motion in this variation is quite disjointed and marked by frequent skips, the principal original theme is present, as indicated in Figure 68.
Figure 68. Sclater: Variation 9, Original Theme, mm. 1-18.

As in two previous variations, this one also contains a trio. It does not appreciably alter the character like many trios, except for the use of rhythmic fluctuations and
mordant, biting minor seconds which give the trio a more mocking, sardonic quality compared to the first part of the variation. This treatment is presented in Figure 69, which also shows the original theme.
Figure 69. Sclater: Variation 9, Trio, Principal Theme Notes, Minor Seconds, Rhythmic Fluctuations, mm. 19-38.
This variation also displays extensive chromaticism, as demonstrated in Figure 70.

Figure 70. Sclater: Variation 9, Chromaticism, mm. 9-15.

Figure 71 illustrates more use of chromaticism, including ascending chromatic chords in the left hand which are reminiscent of the early chords used in Sclater’s original theme at the very beginning of the composition.
As far as performance concerns, since this variation is quite waltz-like and a bit comical, it would be wise to generally maintain a very short touch to give it a lilting, dance-like quality. If the performer finds this a bit repetitious, especially in sections where one finds the same rhythmic values such as in measures fourteen through fifteen, he could perhaps vary the phrasing, dynamics, and articulation a bit to give it greater interest and charm.

**Variation Ten**

We come next to a variation in which the most eminent feature is rhythm. It is in essence an *etude* for the rapid playing of matched rhythmic groupings in both hands which are widely spaced and set within constantly shifting surroundings. This amounts to

*Figure 71. Sclater: Variation 9, Ascending Chromatic Chords, Prevelant Chromaticism, mm. 19–29.*
a presentation of parallel motion patterns of great variety and intense focus. The
composer has disguised the basic 12/8 meter by a constant regrouping of the eighth-notes
into patterns of two, three, four, five, and six notes. Figure 72 makes clear the rhythmic
focus of this selection.

![Figure 72. Sclater: Variation 10, Constantly Changing Rhythmic Groupings, mm.1-3.](image)

As the composer has set these rhythmic groups of kaleidoscopic fluctuation
within ever-changing registers and dynamics, the incessant figural motion gives the
sensation of sparkling filigree in perpetual flux. It perhaps even gives the impression of
the sound from a highly synchronized rhythm section of an orchestra or marching band.
The following figure shows some of the constant shifts of musical setting provided for
these changing rhythmic groupings.
Figure 73. Sclater: Variation 10, Shifting Registers, Dynamics Setting, mm. 10-15.

Even though this particular variation is quite different melodically, the all-important head motive, especially the interval of the third, is still discernible in large outline as in many of the other variations. It is found accented within a span of rhythmic groups, often starting the first note of a group. Figure 74 expresses the head motive, and Figure 75 shows the predominance of intervals of the fourth and fifth, a particular from the A section of the theme we have observed in many previous variations. In fact, for successive notes in this variation, only fourths and fifths are utilized.
As stated earlier, even though the composer has placed the Paganini motive into a backdrop of a quite different nature, the principal theme is present, usually located serially at the beginning of a number of measures. Figure 76 exposes the interesting manner in which the composer has fused the original melody to such novel rhythmic conditions. Note also the use of figuration in extreme registers, with the Bb apogee of the
right hand, in measure five, two keys from the very top of the keyboard.

*Figure 76.* Sclater: Variation 10, Principal Theme, Extreme Register Apogee, mm. 1-12.

Although leaner and more linear with monophonic parallel lines, the rapid execution of this variation without strain may nonetheless prove difficult to pianists with smaller hands, as the hand is called upon to cover large portions of the keyboard quickly.
with the hand in a stretched-out position. The best way to manage these tightly-knit but awkward patterns is to utilize the whole arm and shoulder, not just the lower arm and hand, in a circling motion since the rhythmic groupings often quickly reverse directions in quasi-circular waves. As the whole arm and shoulder advantageously lead and physically power the rhythmic groups, the performer will have the added speed, control, and finesse necessary to perform this variation with the “delicacy and punch” the performance notes at the beginning of the score indicate it should have. In so doing, with practice the pianist will have little trouble with these agile gestures, as exemplified in Figure 77.

In any piano composition, the employment of pedal should be determined by sensitive use of the ear, musical considerations from the piece itself, as well as the attributes of the specific piano and acoustics of the performance hall. The composer has wisely written *senza pedale* in the score, and a judicious application of little to no pedal here will keep the music clear.

![Figure 77. Sclater: Variation 10, Final Gestural Flourish of Rapid Register, Dynamic and Rhythmic Shifts, mm. 22-24.](image)

Finally, even though this variation is marked by constant rhythmic movement, the nature of that movement is somewhat similar and continuous, and this could sound
repetitious to the listener or give the effect of a high level of sameness. To counter this, the performer should carefully vary or emphasize the dynamics in the piece, perhaps even varying them more than is indicated in the score, as volume is, after all, a very relative element and open to interpretation. For further enhancement of musical interest and variety, the performer may also wish to diversify his use of timing or articulation in this variation.

Variation Eleven

The following variation is one in which the composer has created the impression of improvisation or spontaneous creation within a written-out framework, projecting a feeling of romantic freedom.\(^4^0\) He achieves this impromptu quality through idiomatic writing for the piano of a sumptuous harmonic nature marked by overtones, free treatment of the original melody, and an imaginative use of embellishment and ornamentation.

The two hands are given the melody in octaves with an interspersed, mostly-\textit{arpeggiated} accompaniment, but only the overall outlines of the structure of the theme are retained. This can be seen in the upward and downward shape or direction of the scalar melodies, generally located in the two middle lines of the florid texture. These middle parts make extensive use of outlines of intervals of thirds and fifths, which we have seen are perhaps the two most prominent intervals in the whole composition. The outer two lines provide a reverberating resonance of harp-like rolled chords and written-out \textit{arpeggios}, and these idiomatically written sonorities create a rich, opulent sound for

\(^{40}\)The composer stated that the slow variations toward the end are attempts to do neo-romantic type pieces. James Sclater, e-mail message to author, July 30, 2012.
the piano which helps establish the lush, expressive atmosphere. Variation eleven is also unusual in that it is notated in four staves throughout.

The performer must remember that even though very short note values are found throughout this variation and the level of rhythmic activity visually appears to be high, the tempo should likely be quite slow to give a dreamy, intimate quality to the sound. In the \textit{meno mosso} section from measures twenty-three through the end, the performer should not be afraid to take a much slower tempo in order to project a contemplative, introspective mood. However, if the performer is not careful, these free, improvisatory phrases could sound somewhat aimless. Therefore, it is important for the interpreter to shape each phrase through timing, touch, and dynamics according to the meaning he finds therein to give the music direction. As in much of the piano literature, this fine balance between unity and variety, or motion and stasis, requires great consideration and artistry. The warm and impassioned disposition of the somewhat disguised theme is presented in Figures 78 and 79.
Figure 78. Sclater: Variation 11, Principal Theme in Shapes and Intervals, mm. 1-4.
Figure 79. Sclater: Variation 11, Principal Theme in Shapes and Intervals, mm. 13-18.
The melodies in variation eleven may seem unconnected or random flights of fancy, but this is not disingenuous, for the melodic gestures follow the broad shape of the original Paganini and Sclater themes, particularly the head motive. Although it appears somewhat subterranean, the basic melodic theme or silhouette is present, moving in one direction, followed by an ensuing motion in the opposite direction. In other words, the reader can see that the melody in the middle two staves often moves a third up or down, followed by a move by a fifth up or down, tracing the head motive. Thus, the composer explores the contours and potential of the head motive. As a reminder of factors such as the shape and changes in directional movement of the original motive, the Paganini theme is provided below.

![Figure 80. Paganini: Original Theme, mm. 1-12.](image)

In Figure 81 one sees that the composer has specified that the *arpeggiated* arabesques and rippling chords are to be played differently, emphasizing the importance of the shimmering accompaniment in producing the intended “romantic” effect in this more complicated texture.
Figure 81. Sclater: Variation 11, *Arpeggiated* Accompaniment, mm. 5-8.

**Variation Twelve**

In variation twelve we find the focus of attention returns to perfect intervals and a clear melodic line, contrasting sharply with the previous variation. Here emphasis is placed on perfect fourths and fifths, found mostly in the right hand, along with an energetic melody in the left hand which is unmistakably derived from the original theme.
As discussed before, the outline of perfect fourths and fifths can be seen in the shapes of the original Paganini and Sclater themes, and it should also be remembered that, theoretically, fourths and fifths are inversions of each other. Figure 82 reveals the concentration on these related intervals.

![Variation 12](image)

*Figure 82. Sclater: Variation 12, Utilization of Prominent Intervals, A Section, mm. 1-6.*

The disjunct, wide-ranging left hand melody is dispersed over the entire bottom half of the keyboard, but in its relationship to the original theme this energetic embodiment of the motive is still explicit. Since there is a high degree of disjunct writing, frequent rests, and chromatic linear movement, a compelling interpretation will contain almost no pedal in order to project the musical lines effectively. These frenetic features can be observed in Figure 82 above and especially the B section below in Figure 83.
Figure 83. Sclater: Variation 12, Principal Notes of Original Theme B Section, mm. 7-12.

Obtained from the ascending and descending chromatic chords in the presentation of the original Sclater theme, ascending and descending chromatic melodic lines are frequently found in this variation, and they always outline the interval of either a third, fourth, or fifth, the most important intervals found in the composition. This compositional coherence is presented in Figures 84 and 85.
Figure 84. Sclater: Variation 12, Ascending and Descending Chromatic Lines Outlining Important Intervals, mm. 4-9.
Mention was made of the Schumann *Toccata* (op. 7, 1830) in the earlier discussion about the compositional genre of the *toccata*. The Schumann piece was seen as a type of hybrid combining the characteristics of the *toccata*, *sonata*, and *etude* due to its technical difficulty in performance. This Sclater variation is quite similar to the Schumann piece in the configuration and repetition of the fourths and fifths found throughout, and is quite *etude*-like. Figure 86 makes this resemblance clear.
Figure 86. Schumann: Toccata, mm. 11-15.

Many pianists find the Schumann Toccata technically difficult and tiring due to the awkward physical layout of the continuously alternating fifths, fourths, and thirds. During performance the hand is stretched out and constantly employs the weaker fourth and fifth fingers in an extremely repetitious pattern. The allegro tempo found in the Schumann piece only increases the challenge of playing without strain. Since this Sclater variation and the Schumann piece display similar traits, including great speed, a comparable problem could present itself. In order to facilitate execution, for each group of intervals the pianist should drop and then lift the hand toward the weaker fingers four and five while playing, in essence creating a constant up and down motion while playing—down for one interval, up for the next. This will allow the bigger, stronger upper arm, shoulder, and upper body to assist the weaker fingers and forearm for less tension and fatigue. In addition, constant motion and changing of hand and arm positions are characteristics of good piano technique. If the fingers and hand are kept close to the keys and level, this produces a static position and strains the hand and forearm because the weaker muscles and tendons in this lower part of the arm must bear most of the physical burden when playing. Over the long term, a tense hand or arm position and, more importantly, utilization of mostly the weaker muscles and tendons of the forearm can lead to the physical ailments of tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome. Furthermore,
the use of adequate motion while playing can give more variety to tone quality as well as volume, and thereby assist in the creation of artistic phrasing.

*Variation Thirteen*

The paramount concerns in this penultimate variation include minor chord movement in contrary motion along with the manipulation of a highly disjunct theme within a canonic, two-voice texture. The chord movement in contrary motion is set forth in Figure 87, and the canonic texture is shown in Figure 88.
variation thirteen also exhibits characteristics of twelve-tone writing applied in a style which is free in nature. Although the notes in each phrase of the two-part texture usually contain all of the twelve tones of the chromatic scale, this is not a strict dodecaphonic piece in an exacting sense, for many compositional elements are handled in
a traditional manner and, at any rate, there is not an extensive use of different versions or conjugates of any row of tones. In addition, the a minor tonal centricity is firmly maintained throughout, which counters the normal idea behind a twelve-tone composition. It can be seen from the examples above and below that the imitation is not completely strict, with octave displacement or register adjustments in evidence, along with a use of rhythm that is somewhat free. As far as the area of interpretation, if the performer slightly accents the first couple of notes of each closely-following imitation, the contrapuntal character so apposite to this variation will be projected much more effectively and the thematic entrances will be far clearer and efficacious.

Adept use of traditional compositional devices, a characteristic of Sclater’s musical style, is clearly present. This can be seen in the answering presentations of the quasi-twelve-tone idea in measures six through nine compared to measures two through four, where exact inversion is used. The arrangement of phrases also sets up a type of tonic to dominant relationship or a customary order of fugal entries, since the answers are usually stated a fifth away from the first statement of the canonic idea in any one group, as in comparing measures two through four with measures six through nine. Though the theme is somewhat disguised, these canonic melodies can also be viewed as containing the rudiments of the original Paganini and Sclater themes. A leap of a fifth, characteristic of the original theme at the end of the head motive, starts each individual phrase, and the “question and answer” phrases start on a and then e, as in comparing the beginning of measure two to the beginning of measure six. Thus, with this thematic material of a more complex, imitative nature, the original theme is only minimally represented or attenuated through casual allusion to the theme. However, relating back to the original Paganini
theme, these imitative patterns maintain some of the general shape and profile of the theme in their up and down directional movement. Figure 88 draws attention to the different presentations of these imitative, angular canonic melodies. As this composer enjoys the use of traditional compositional devices, it is also interesting to note the use of diminution in measure sixteen and measures thirty-six through thirty-eight where the important interval of the third is yet again manipulated.
Variation 13
In this variation, the composer continues the use of chromaticism found in the original theme by combining minor chords moving in contrary motion with chromaticism. The jittery lines in the imitative texture mixed with copious cross-relations found throughout the chromatic chords create a palpable tension in this variation. Figure
89 provides an example of this admixture. The triads are of the minor type without exception, non-functional, and supply coloristic sonority and richness.

\[\text{Figure 89. Sclater: Variation 13, Chromatic Minor Triads in Contrary Motion, mm. 24-29.}\]

At the end of the variation, even the simpler two-voiced texture makes a contribution to the contrary-motion chromatic occurrences, as related in Figure 90, where once again, the important interval of the third is developed. The presentation of basic ingredients, such as chromaticism and specific intervals, from the original theme which are dressed in different ways lends coherence to the composition as a whole.

\[\text{Figure 90. Sclater: Variation 13, Two-Voice Contrary Chromatic Motion, mm. 45-48.}\]
Variation Fourteen

Variation fourteen is redolent of neo-romanticism and emotional expression. Imbued with a romantically-oriented countenance which is direct, lyrical, and reflective, the distinguishing features of variation fourteen are similar to those of variations four and eleven, the other decidedly “romantic” selections from the group. The strategic ordering of variations within the composition concerning atmosphere, character, and energy level attests to the wise, artistic regulation of the ebb and flow of the piece. This comprehensive placement of variations has prevented an overly-prolonged presentation of any one mood or character. The tension of variation thirteen having subsided, variation fourteen evokes eloquent serenity before the flurry of activity in the toccata finale. Figure 91 depicts the “romantic” setting of this subdued, but highly ornate variation.

41Sclater, e-mail message to author, July 30, 2012.

42The composer stated that he wished to pace the ebb and flow of the piece with judicious placement of the individual variations. Sclater, e-mail message to author, July 30, 2012.
Figure 91. Sclater: Variation 14, “Romantic” Setting, Development of Theme, mm. 1-15.
Within a highly embellished texture, the composer allows fragments of the theme to leisurely emerge, wrapped in a setting of idiomatic piano writing saturated with opulent overtones, widely-spaced sonorities, and less vigorous rhythmic movement. One can observe a free handling of the graceful melodic fragments, with particular use of the important interval of the fourth, which occurs frequently in the B section of the original theme, along with the octave, which stands out in the A section of the theme. The composer develops the motivic ideas based on the interval of the fourth and octave through repetition and sequence, with the head motive from the original theme also making subtle appearances here and there. Figure 92 illuminates this intervallic manipulation.
Figure 92. Sclater: Variation 14, Use of Head Motive, Octave Manipulation, mm. 16-24.

Marked fluctuations of tempo and dynamics for expressive effect are also employed, and this sensual context along with the points made above come into focus in Figures 92 and 93. Notice also in Figure 91 that this is the only variation in the whole composition to contain pedal markings, indicative of the desired sonorous atmosphere. Elsewhere in this variation the composer utilizes such expressive suggestions as *poco piu mosso*, “moving more,” “becoming more agitated,” and “gentle, subdued” to indicate the rise and fall of moods.
At the very end, a series of thirds, derived from the original theme, finish off the melodic statements, and a nod to the inverted form of the Paganini theme from the eighteenth variation of the well-known *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* by Rachmaninoff is given in measure fifty-four. A countermelody built mostly with the interval of the third derived from the head motive is imbedded within a melismatic flourish which runs from measure fifty up to the high tonic of Db in measure fifty-four. Figure 93 portrays the expression of strong “romantic” sentiment ending variation fourteen.

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43 Sclater’s last variation is placed in the key of Db Major, the same key of the eighteenth variation in the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* by Rachmaninoff in which the inverted Paganini theme is found. This fact further points to the “romantic” nature of this final Sclater variation, as the Rachmaninoff variation is also marked by overt, romantic expression. This Sclater variation is clearly in part presented in homage to the Rachmaninoff piece.
Figure 93. Sclater: Variation 14, Important Third Interval, Rachmaninoff Quote, mm. 41-55.
Toccata

The toccata which rounds off Sclater’s set of variations accords well with the traditional concept of the toccata in that its stylistic traits and distinctive features reflect many of the qualities customarily associated with that genre. These hallmarks include a display of manual dexterity, a multi-sectional layout, a brilliant, motoric style of writing, and the impression of improvisation or spontaneous creation through free use of factors such as rhythm and formal organization. As in many toccatas, this example displays the impression of improvisation by moving quickly from one idea to the next.

The light, dreamy quality of the previous variation has been forcefully superseded and shattered by a finale which is cast serious and determined in temperament. The uninterrupted intensity of this movement contributes to the effect of a single mood, and the toccata requires from the performer speed, brilliance and rhythmic vitality. Overall, the ingredients contained in the toccata are designed for the enhancement and intensification of musical excitement and energy in order for the toccata to serve as the tempestuous climax of the composition.

The toccata is greater in length than the variations, and contains three main gestures which are juxtaposed throughout the toccata. These include a moto perpetuo sixteenth note theme, a syncopated chordal passage, and a turbulent repeated-note tune in 7/4 meter. Display-oriented bursts of energetic figuration, accents, and fluctuating dynamics abound within the moto perpetuo segments. These figurations primarily consist of perfect fifths in the right hand quickly alternating with the left hand one half-step removed, creating a highly chromatic line between them. This cascading chromaticism within a motoric rhythm races along until arriving at the highly syncopated chordal
section at measure twenty-four. Figure 94 shows the animated activity typical of the moto perpetuo sections.

**Figure 94. Sclater: Toccata, Moto Perpetuo Sixteenth Note Theme, mm. 1-9.**

The volatile syncopated passages which intervene at measure twenty-four are filled with dynamic excitement and variety. Also displaying continuous motion and activity, they nonetheless effectively break the pattern of the previous moto perpetuo and place emphasis on register shifts, changes of meter, and chordal leaps. The perilous jumps that populate this section could pose a treacherous technical difficulty for some pianists. The best way to handle this would be to continuously look ahead in order to prepare for each throw of the hand. But most importantly, the pianist should discover the connections in the music which logically bind these vaulting formations, thereby aiding the ease of performance. For example, by understanding that many separate leaping configurations differ or move by only one note compared to the next group, the pianist
will be able to form larger, clearer mental groups which will make the execution easier. In other words, if the performer practices measures twenty-four through twenty-seven without the octave displacement register changes, he will see the meaning and connections in the passage more easily, not allowing the leaps to confuse or cloud his conception. Likewise, if the player practices measures twenty-eight through thirty-five with an eye on the fact that the motion is in essence by chromatic fifths, performing this should be much easier. The following figure presents one of the syncopated chordal segments, highlighting the changes of meter.

![Figure 95. Sclater: Toccata, Syncopated Chordal Section, Meter Changes, mm. 24-35.](image)

Growing ever more emphatic, another section of *moto perpetuo* is followed by another section of syncopated chord leaps, at which point the *toccata* is punctuated with the first of two appearances of the repeated-note tune in 7/4 meter. Similar to the Schumann-like double-note patterns discussed in variation twelve, this portion raises the dramatic intensity even further with double-note octave arrangements in the right hand coupled to filled-in octaves in the left, giving a widely-spaced, powerful texture and
sound. With performance indications that read “boisterous, noisy,” frequent accents, *forte* volume level, and use of extreme registers of the piano, this section projects an aggressive, *pesante* character. However, the performer must be careful not to over-accent the beginning of each beat of this 7/4 section, even though they are accented, or the listener will have great difficulty hearing the notes on the offbeat, and an overly metric, mechanical sound could result. In reference to the continuous escalation of drama, in some pieces such as the *toccata* the composer has attempted to make the “structural tension of the piece a product of the elements returning at very short intervals.”\(^4^4\) In order to avoid fatigue during performance of these intense, demanding 7/4 sections, the player should keep the arm as light as possible with an advantageous, slight lift outwards and up of the elbow and arm. Especially for these sections, this slightly held-out approach will offer the benefit of a more relaxed arm and hand because the ulna and radius of the forearm are less crossed compared to the position typically taken by pianists, allowing for more freedom, less tension, and easier execution.\(^4^5\) Figure 96 illustrates the vehement mood of this 7/4 portion. Notice also the continuing use of chromaticism in this segment of the *toccata*.

\(^{4^4}\) James Sclater, personal interview by author, June 17, 2013.

\(^{4^5}\) Many pianists do not realize that the typical position of the arms taken while playing contains a crossing of the radius over the ulna in an “x” formation within the forearm, which can create tightness and stress in the arm. This is in contrast to the anatomical position as understood in the medical field in which these bones, ligaments, and tendons are straight, aligned, and support each other. The typical arm position used while performing automatically has the potential for tension, and amounts to a built-in disadvantage if the performer is not aware of this fact and able to mitigate the physical situation through slight adjustments.
Another tool utilized by the composer to amplify the drama in the *toccata* is the use of a key locus in each succeeding section which rises by steps. Because much of Sclater’s harmony is non-functional or coloristic, these can be seen as big, structurally-functioning chords which mark formal junctures of the work. Though the *toccata* remains in a minor, this continuous elevation of the pitch center of successive sections heightens the listener’s interest and pushes the tension even one step further. The next series of figures, Figures 97 through 101, display these points of demarcation and arrival within the ever-rising escalation of pitch level.

*Figure 96. Sclater: Toccata, Double-Note Melody of 7/4 Meter Section, mm. 69-73.*
Finale: Toccata

Figure 97. Sclater: Toccata, First Moto Perpetuo Section, A Centricity, mm. 1-9.

Figure 98. Sclater: Toccata, Second Moto Perpetuo Section, B Centricity, mm. 36-46.
Figure 99. Sclater: Toccata, Third Moto Perpetuo Section, C Centricity, mm. 91-99.

Figure 100. Sclater: Toccata, First Repeated-Note Section, Ab Centricity, mm. 69-73.
Maintaining a high level of intensity, the three main gestures of the toccata are filled with resolute drive and vitality, and these elements are crafted and ordered in such a way as to establish the closing function of the toccata. To end the toccata’s whirlwind of continuous, bustling motion and bring everything to a cohesive climax, the composer presents both parts of the head motive, using the important intervals of the third and fifth in succession, followed by a crystal-clear statement of the head motive in the final measure, all within a powerful, widely-spaced setting marked fortissimo. In a virtuosic tour de force, the toccata brings both a sense of excitement and finality to the end of the piece for a brilliant ending. Figure 102 displays the final flourish of the composition.
Figure 102. Sclater: Toccata, Final Presentation of Theme, mm. 147-157.
SUMMARY

This treatise has examined a substantial forty-four-page piano work of approximately twenty-five minutes duration by a significant twentieth-century American composer, a composition which continues a distinguished line of pieces that employ a well-known theme of Nicolo Paganini as a point of departure and inspiration. Further, this document has offered practical performance-guide suggestions and ideas for the composition in the areas of execution and artistic interpretation.

The variation concept is an essential, versatile compositional process or form which has often been successfully combined with other designs. Having the power to provide unlimited manifestations of modification and repetition, this type of musical organization has the inherent capacity to impart balance, unity, and variety to a work as a whole. We have seen that the Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini of James Sclater mixes characteristics of the genre of variation with that of the etude, a practice with precedents in the works of such distinguished composers as Franz Liszt, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms. In many ways, Sclater’s composition may be considered to be a collection of individual technical studies based on a pluripotent theme. To be sure, this composer’s choice of theme perhaps shows wisdom as so many admirable composers have deemed this motive worthy of use. As in many of the previous compositions based on the Paganini theme, variation technique and form are closely bound and inextricably linked, with each variation typically containing a number of pianistic concerns that have the potential to expand the performance techniques of the performer while providing lofty, creative expression. In Sclater’s piece there is a carefully crafted symbiosis between technical performance demands and musical content,
and Sclater’s stylistic contribution to the lineage of Paganini variations reconciles traditional compositional techniques with modern, twentieth-century musical language. It is not unreasonable to say that Sclater’s addition to the impressive group of pieces based on the Paganini theme constitutes a compositional achievement that deserves a place alongside previous examples in this lineage, even though the overall success of the piece is to be determined since it is an unpublished work.

The main thrusts of the composition can be encapsulated within two primary areas. First, the intervals from the original Paganini theme have been utilized for the purposes of intervallic manipulation and development. The composer has provided myriad manifestations of the principal theme which is the basis of the work, compressing, stretching, and developing the motive, and the subtlety with which he transforms this motivic idea reveals the extent of his fecund creativity, which never seems to tire or founder. He has made use of intervallic expansion and contraction, fragmentation, sequence-based melodic elaboration, and furnished a wide variety of melodic settings and figuration for the theme. The second main concern of the piece is the creative use of specific gestures that are distinctive to each variation, and these give the work much of its stylistic character. The basic elements from which these gestures originate include rhythm and meter, harmony, dissonance, texture, figuration, ornamentation, register contrast, musical parody, canonic imitation, and contrast or opposition of tempi and tension, all of which create diverse musical settings and moods. Thus, each variation has its own character that results from the consistent use of specific musical gestures. These gestures, often etude-like, may challenge the pianist and offer opportunities for the development of pianism.
While the melodic component may be the more load-bearing part of the work, Sclater has injected the work with exciting coloristic harmonies, chromaticism, and intriguing dissonance for diversity. Though most of the harmonies are non-functional in the common-practice period sense of chord grammar and functional chord progressions, they give the theme a backdrop of polychromatic richness and brilliance through use of a vibrant harmonic palette. In reference to the composer’s free harmonization, assertion or voice-leading often determines chord movement as much or more than functional harmonic progressions. Thus, the Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini is tonal, but the tonality is not that of a hegemonic type from the common-practice period. It should also be remembered that the original Paganini theme is a monophonic melody for the violin, and therefore any harmonies attached to it are implied.

In the area of rhythm the composer has used syncopation, polyrhythms, compound meters, quick changes of meter, and unusual barring or grouping of beats, but in the main he has kept the rhythmic component from becoming too complicated. This particular composer feels that much twentieth-century music is overly dense or complex, and therefore difficult for many listeners to comprehend. Sclater agrees that the “ripping dissonances and frantic rhythms of new complexity pieces, for instance, practically overload in creating sensations of extreme intensity.”46 Related to this, the textures in Sclater’s piece are generally of two main ideas appearing simultaneously, with this expanded occasionally to perhaps three or four components. Overall there is clarity to the composition which makes for rewarding listening.47

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46Metzer, 16.
In the *toccata*, we have observed the strategic use of factors such as *perpetuo moto* writing, syncopation, boisterous repeated notes, chordal jumps, meter changes, increase of volume or density, and a steady rise of local key centers in order to escalate the magnitude of excitement in that section of the piece, bringing the work to a rousing conclusion. The *toccata* rounds off the composition with a *tour de force* of rhythmic activity of a motoric nature, evoking a sense of finality and completion.

The preceding stylistic analysis has examined the application of powerful unifying devices throughout the composition such as the consistent use and development of important intervals from the original theme, utilization of imaginative chromaticism, use of sequence originating in the basic theme, frequent harmonic motion by thirds, and the frequent employment of motoric writing for continuity. These consistent elements have imparted to the composition an admirable constancy and coherence. For variety, the composer has utilized ingredients such as tempo contrasts for ebb and flow, creative use of rhythm such as meter changes, syncopation, dislocation of strong beats, and unusual rhythmic groupings, coloristic harmonies which are both traditional and non-traditional, imaginative forms of idiomatic writing for the instrument, and the wide range of moods found in the respective variations. Tempo fluctuations are important to the contrast of character and mood found between the variations. Repetitive patterns in fast variations seem to push the music forward, and in slow ones, the repetitive patterns create a sense of quiet and calm. Sclater adroitly exploits the piano’s sonorities and possibilities in a

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47 James Sclater, personal interview by author, June 17, 2013. The composer feels that much twentieth-century music has “too much information,” which can be understood to mean an excessive use of extremely complicated rhythm, overly dense musical writing, or an exceedingly complex compositional style. The adage “artistic quality does not depend on complexity” may be another way of wording this concept.
personal way, with this set of variations providing a compendium of many of the composer’s stylistic characteristics.

Displaying order and logic, there is enough unity and coherence in Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini to satisfy a sense of completeness and logic, but enough variety to avoid stagnation and keep the listening experience interesting. Indeed, the tension between expression and structural control reaches a state of rapprochement in Sclater’s variations in that the balance between both sides is strengthened through emotional projection on the one hand, and the structural design and unity supplied by the variation format on the other. The basic intervals and gestures are in many ways the fundamental structure of the piece, vital components that give a deeper internal order in addition to the external order at the surface, creating variety within unity. Indeed, structural elements such as these must stir underneath heterogeneous ingredients, the music must acquire buoyancy and flow from some inward source, or we simply are observing good housekeeping or something handsomely assembled. Though he displays a sovereign command of musical composition, James Sclater realizes that simplicity and directness can often say much more than the most sophisticated of intellectualities. With unabashed vitality and a non-doctrinaire attitude which avoids sterility and the technical dryness or emotionlessness of abstract modernism, Sclater creates works that entreat much more than a single listening. This composer clearly knows that freedom is connected to limits, and artistic communication requires coherence, accessibility, and comprehensibility.
APPENDIX A
LIST OF WORKS
PUBLISHED COMPOSITIONS

Suite for Saxophone (1968) – Tenuto Publications


Trio for Flute, Clarinet, and Bassoon (1968) – Western International Music

Suite for Clarinet and Piano (1971) – Brightstar Music

Prelude and Variations on Gone is My Mistress (1971) – Powers Pub.


Four Songs on Texts of Emily Dickinson (1972) – Mt. Salus Music

Concert Piece for Brass Quintet (1973) – Shawnee Press

Three Psalms (1978) – Shawnee Press

Christmas Suite for Woodwind Quintet (1978) – Shawnee Press


Four Etudes for Solo Harp (2001) – EC Schirmer

Sweeter Music (2001) – EC Schirmer

The Piping Carol (2005) EC Schirmer

Five Old American Songs for Clarinet and Organ (2007) – EC Schirmer
UNPUBLISHED COMPOSITIONS – AVAILABLE FROM THE COMPOSER

BAND MUSIC

*Essay for Winds* (1965)

*Sinfonia for Solo Winds and Band* (1966)

*Olympiad Overture* (1972)

*Visions* (1973) – winner of Ostwald Prize

*Coventry Variations* (1975)

*Mobile Suite* (1977) – commissioned for the 275th anniversary of the founding of Mobile

*Symphony Number Two* (1977) – derived from Mobile Suite


*Huehueteotl* (1996) – withdrawn for revision

*Concerto for Piano and Wind Ensemble* (2008)

“...for fallen heroes” (2009)

CHORAL MUSIC (SATB, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

*Bread of Heaven* (2012) – brass, trio, organ – written for Aberdeen First UMC


*Child of Light, Son of Radiance* (2011) – TTBB, english horn

*Blessed!* (2011) – clarinet, piano – written for Galloway Memorial UMC choir

*The Lord is my Shepherd* (2008) – written for Chislehurst-Sidcup Grammar School Choir (UK)


*Let All Mortal Flesh* (2007) – chorus, flute, piano

*Ubi Caritas* (2007) – written for Chislehurst-Sidcup Grammar School Choir (UK)
Ubi Caritas et Amor (2007) – written for Hinds Community College Singers

In the Beginning (2007) – handbells – written for Mississippi College Singers

Red, Red Rose (2007)

Mary's Admonition to Jesus (2006) – guitar

The Piping Carol (2005) – winner, 2004 Welcome Christmas! Carol Contest

The Humble Heart (2002) – SSA – commissioned by Chaminade Club

Set Me As A Seal (2004) – piano – MMEA commission


Bound for the Promised Land (2003)


If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee (2003) – organ

A Quiet Alleluia Harpsongs (2003) – SSA, brass quintet


Lullay My Liking (2000) – three pop solo, unison choir, organ

Lord of Life (2000) – harp

Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us (1999)

Song of Gladness (1999)

Mary Had a Son (1998) – sop solo, chorus, cello, harp

Prayer for a Wedding (1997)

Lenten Service Music (1996) – m-sop, chorus, organ

Sweeter Music (1995)

A Marriage Blessing (1995)

Four Modern Carols (1993)
Veni Emmanuel (1993)

Momento Nostri Domine (1990) – sop, clarinet, chorus

Sacred Harp Fantasy (1986)

Sing Me a Glad Song (1985) – chorus, brass, perc

Herrick Songs (1981)

Lord’s Prayer (1981)

Music: To Music (1980)

Child in the Manger (1979) – chorus, sop, ten, flute, organ

CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA

Ring Out, Ye Crystal Spheres (2011) – SATB, orchestra – written for First Presbyterian Choir, Jackson, MS


A Chain of Blossoms (1983) – SSA, sop solo, orchestra – poems by Emily Dickinson – commissioned by Mississippi University for Women for the 150th anniversary of school

OPERA

The Christmas Gift (1981) – opera in four scenes – piano and orchestra versions available

SOLO VOCAL MUSIC

The Two Shall Become One (2011) – S, T, piano

Reflections in the Mirror of Childhood (2010) – mezzo-sop, chamber orchestra – written for Viola Dacus

The Hare and the Tortwazay (2008) – an “aesopera” – two sopranos and piano
Light Upon Silver (2006) – cycle of 25 songs divided into five parts – texts by the composer based upon photographs by Arthur L. Sclater

Within the Circles (2002) – sop, alto, piano – commissioned by Chaminade Club

Chaminade Songs (2002) – commissioned by Chaminade Club

Beyond the Rainbow (1998) – commissioned by Ross Price


But love Is Not a Simple Song (1992) – written for Cindy Morrow

Songs from Telephone Poles (1991) – written for Cheryl Coker

Three Songs on Texts of Emily Dickinson (1998)

Patchenpoems (1988)

Shaker Lyrics (1984) – MMTA commission

Devilish Mary (1983) – ten, bar, piano

ERA-tic Behavior (1980) – m-sop, alto sax or clarinet

Kinderscenen (1978) – m-sop, flute – MMTA commission

Songs of Time and Passing (1976) – MMTA commission

Four Songs on Texts of Emily Dickinson (1972) – sop, clarinet

Visions of the Future (1970)

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

Celebrations! (2009) – University of Southern Mississippi Orchestra commission for the 100th anniversary of the university

Morgana (1997) – Mississippi Symphony Orchestra commission

Concerto for Orchestra “Images of Weltry” (1989) – Mississippi Symphony Orchestra commission
Fiddle-ation (1994)

“Overture” to The Christmas Gift (1987)

American Images (1976) – Mississippi Symphony Orchestra commission

Introduction to the Orchestra “Variations on Yankee Doodle” (1975)

Symphony Number One (1970) – Doctoral thesis

Adagio for String Orchestra (1967) – premiered by Dallas Symphony Orchestra

Three Personality Studies (1967) – chamber orchestra

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC – SOLO AND ENSEMBLE

Sweet Swingin’ Suite (2013) – violin, clarinet, piano – commissioned by Argot Trio

Sacred Harp Triptych (2012) – clarinet, violin, cello

Pentimento (2012) – solo harp

Eight Bagatelles for Woodwind Trio (2012) – flute, clarinet, bassoon

Suite for Brass Trio (2012)

The Harp of the Dagda (2011) – flute, cello, piano – commissioned by Mna Tri’

Serenade for Clarinet and String Quartet (2011)

Brazilian Folk Dances for Two Harps (2011) – for Elaine Barber and Delaine Fedson

Three Bagatelles for Two Clarinets (2011) – for Wilber Moreland

Moments for Two Harps (2011) – for Elaine Barber and Delaine Fedson

I Woke Up This Mornin’ (2011) – two harps – for Elaine Barber and Delaine Fedson

A Bagatelle for Lawrence Injae Eighmey (2010) – piano

A Slow Waltz for Benjamin Injae Gurch (2010) – piano

Life Is Now a Duet (2010) – two cellos

Gray December Rag (2009) – clarinet, piano
Wondrous Love (2008) – clarinet, organ

When the Saints Go Marching In (2007) – clarinet, organ – arr.

Seaside Ragtime (2007) – piano – written for Quinton and Ann Dickerson


String Quartet Number One (2005)


Shadow Lines (2002) – horn, organ – Chaminade Club commission

Red Scarf Rag (2002) – piano – Chaminade Club commission

Waltz on the Name of Cecile Chaminade (2002) – piano – Chaminade Club Commission

Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini (2002) – piano – MMTA commission

and winner of Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Music Award


Images of Southern Religion (2001) – brass, organ – Southern Regional AGO commission

A Little Dance for Lisa (2000)

A Quiet Song for Elizabeth (2000) – clarinet, piano – for Elizabeth Bennett Sclater

Resurrectus (2000) – clarinet

Celebration Waltzes (2000) – piano

Lenten Sketches (2000) – harp – written for Elaine M. Barber

Schubertliederfantasie (1999) – clarinet, piano

Fanfare and Dialogue for Two Clarinets (1998)

Prelude on “Good King Wenceslas” (1998) – organ
Three Anniversaries (1997) – piano

Divertimento “Famous Couples” (1996) – two clarinets

Clarinet Poker (1996) – sop clarinet, bass clarinet, c-bass clarinet

Two Bach Melodies (1995) – clarinet, organ

Three Mozart Lieder (1995) – clarinet, piano

Crucifixus (1995) – clarinet

Character Sketches “Theme, Variations, and Fughetta” (1994) – MMTA commission

Three Chorale Improvisations (1990) – organ, synthesizer

Stately Processional (1989) – organ; organ and trumpet

Sixteen Alternate Hymn Harmonizations (1989) – organ

Six Inventions for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon (1988)

Chamber Concerto (1987) – clarinet, strings – unfinished

Suite for two Pianos (1976) – commissioned by Frank and Sandra Polanski

Sonata for Piano (1974) – for Patricia Walston

Brass Quintet Number One (1972)

Suite for Clarinet and Piano (1971)

Festival Fanfare (1971) – Jackson Symphony Orchestra commission

Trio (1968) – flute, clarinet, bassoon

FILM, TELEVISION SOUNDTRACKS

For Mississippi ETV

Southern Exposure (1995)

Mad Potter of Biloxi (1993)

Arthur Guyton (1992)
The Write Channel (1978)

For Mississippi College

Breakthrough (1976)

Service to God and Mankind (1975)
APPENDIX B

LETTER OF PERMISSION

December 20, 2011

Dr. James Sclater
710 Dunton Road
Clinton, MS 39056

Dear Dr. Sclater,

The purpose of this letter is to request permission to include in my dissertation excerpts from your main piano works as applicable to the document which is entitled *A Stylistic Analysis of the Major Piano Works of James Sclater*. Five copies of this work are scheduled to be published by The University of Southern Mississippi in May of 2012.

If you are amenable to this request, please sign and date as indicated below.

Thank you for your consideration and kind assistance in my completion of this academic dissertation.

Sincerely,

David Ward

Signature ______________ Date 15/12
APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
  Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 12111304
PROJECT TITLE: A Stylistic Analysis of James Sclater's Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
RESEARCHER/S: David Michael Ward
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Arts & Letters
DEPARTMENT: Music
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: 11/27/2012 to 11/26/2013

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair
APPENDIX D

EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEW WITH JAMES SCLATER

The following comments, observations, and opinions shed light on the composer’s approach to music as well as the characteristics and qualities of his compositional style. The aesthetic thread that runs through much of the interview is warranted for musical reasons. The Cambridge-educated music philosopher and critic Roger Scruton states that musical analysis can be seen as a prelude to important matters of aesthetics and musical meaning. He implies that theories and analysis can be justified only by showing their relevance to an analysis of a critical narrative type, which is a description of what can be heard in the music “when it is heard as music.”48

David Ward: The purpose of this dissertation project has been an examination of your piano music, discussing its characteristics and style, resulting in a stylistic analysis and performance-guide.

James Sclater: Well, anything I can do to help you with it, I’d be glad to do it.

David Ward: Well, thank you, I think the interview will be simple, relaxed, and rather straightforward.

James Sclater: On the variations, the Mississippi Music Teachers Association do a composer of the year every year, and they got me into that. We agreed that I’d do a piece for them. I think it worked out to about twenty minutes worth, and then I put the toccata on the end. Each of the variations is kind of like an etude, dealing with one or two particular problems, one particular style, harmony, chord progression, or…

David Ward: Or figuration…

James Sclater: Yes, one type of figuration.

DW: I guess it is impossible for us to not be influenced in any way whatsoever by the musical past, and as far as your very general style, I pick up on perhaps many influences from many different composers, like Prokofiev, Bartok, Barber, Tippett…

JS: A little bit of a whole lot. I don’t know that there is any way to separate all of that out actually. I don’t think of myself as being all that original…this is music that could have been written 50, 60 years ago. And I don’t apologize for that. It’s kind of difficult to talk about my own music. I would prefer someone else to analyze it. I don’t really adopt an analytical approach to writing.

DW: Well, as far as an analytical approach, the pianist and teacher Jerome Lowenthal always said that “the more talent you have, the less knowledge you need.”

JS: In each of these variations I just got an idea of the gestures that I wanted to hear in each one of them. When I was in graduate school, if you were not writing like Webern, or Stockhausen, you were just junk, worthless. I was trying to be a part of that, and I came to the realization that I was never going to be because I wasn’t interested in hearing it.

DW: That is what is good about your music I think. You use some modern techniques, but it is much like a neo-romantic style. You write music that is music, not just designs that appeal to the eye or reason. You don’t hide emotion behind complexity and abstraction.

JS: I think that’s alright. I’m not ashamed of it.

DW: If the pianist Rubinstein could come to this present time, I think one of the first things he would say is, “Most pianists don’t really interpret anymore.”
JS: This is the impression I have when people play my music. Very often they are scared to put themselves into the music.

DW: This is the modern, technical influence. It’s been pounded out of them, any of their own personality in the performance, as if they are naughty to put themselves into it. My main New York City teacher, Gary Graffman, who was one of Vladimir Horowitz’ only two students, always told me one must have courage and convictions when one plays in order to be convincing. Somehow, most modern pianists seem to be afraid they are going to offend someone or something.

JS: I don’t think that’s a good thing. This is what I experienced in the 1950s and 1960s, this emphasis. It’s like composers were trying to justify their work by being super-rational. I don’t feel the need to do that. Well, I don’t think any of my pieces will work unless the performer interprets big time. As an example, the slow movement from my piano concerto is for me the antithesis of the technical approach. It’s so romantic. I don’t try to analyze it ahead of time, I just try to do my thing, and if anyone else is interested in it, then they can analyze it. When we were in graduate school we were given a heavy dose of Boulez and Stockhausen and I just can’t get a handle on it. If I don’t want to hear something again, you know, I mean I’ve always thought a good question to ask about a piece is whether I would want to hear it again. I try to meet the audience half way. I don’t necessarily want to write the simplest piece, but whatever I do I like to do it in a way that the audience can have some interaction. I don’t have anything against complexity if I’m not made too aware of it.

DW: Exactly. A lot of modern music sounds like a computer that has gone crazy!
JS: I mean, you’ve got to want to hear it four or five times, and I never wanted to hear any of that.

DW: And it is difficult to remember much modern music. The neo-romantic composer George Rochberg said the fundamental problem of music in the modern period is it doesn’t understand that when the ear listens to something that cannot be remembered, no matter how hard it tries, the ear withdraws in weariness and frustration. Your music is old-fashioned in the good sense of the word, and you are always tonal.

JS: It was many years ago, I realized the person I want to please is me, because if I do what I feel is not right, I may end up pleasing no one. What I write is things I want to hear. I’ll make it as good as I can for me, and then if anyone else thinks it’s OK that’s even better. I don’t think I am the best interpreter of what I write. I expect people to interpret, and I think that pieces have many possible ways that they are able to work. The worst possible thing I think is to not put your stamp on it. It just drives me crazy when people don’t do anything.

DW: Yes, if Horowitz or Rubinstein could come forward in time to the present, they would probably say, “Pianists don’t really interpret now!” Rubinstein said the most important thing in performance is to make the music “come alive.” Horowitz said he felt “most modern pianists just look at the music and follow orders like a robot, which results in playing that is technical, cold, and lifeless.” However, he said, “I pretend I am behind the music, looking outward and interpreting.” It’s like the old saying “read between the lines.” The public is starving for personality and life in the performance of classical music. What they get is technical, faceless entities with too much reserve, an almost ascetic attitude.
JS: Well, this may sound simplistic, bottom line is I write it and hope that someone else can put themselves in it. I can’t play it. I don’t have the technique to play it.

DW: The clarinet is your instrument.

JS: It’s so discouraging to hear just notes and rhythms. I heard that Rubinstein said, “When I play a piece many times in a row, on purpose I change fingerings just to see what might happen.”

DW: I agree. Contrary to that, the pianist and teacher Sasha Gorodnitzki always said, “You should play a piece the same way every time.” Even if for some strange reason one wanted to do that, I don’t think it is possible. You use non-functional chords often instead of typical harmonic progressions.

JS: I don’t know really how to describe what I do because I just do it instinctively, but I think what happens is I think in terms of measures, groups of measures being in a particular mode and that changes really often.

DW: This is what I thought; it’s like chord areas or key regions that are kind of kaleidoscopic coloration changes, really mosaic color shifts. Is that fair to say?

JS: Yes, but I mean I don’t have any organized approach.

DW: I like the fact that in your music everything seems clear, you can hear everything that’s going on, the texture never gets too thick.

JS: Well, part of that may be due to the fact that when I wrote these pieces I tried to be able to play them slowly, but that may be a self-imposed limitation!

DW: If I tried to play the clarinet, your instrument, I don’t think I would be able to make a pitch!

JS: I like to hear lines, and I think I try to make it so that they can be heard.
DW: Did you know that Prokofiev said, “All of my work is based on melody.”? People think his music is rather dissonant, but the dissonance is subordinated to a tonal context and there always is some kind of line or melody.

JS: I like to hear melody, I like to hear tunes, I like for…

DW: Some lyricism…

JS: I like some lyricism; I don’t want to put out too much information. I’ve heard a lot of music in which I thought the level of information was too high.

DW: It’s overly complicated and technical.

JS: I couldn’t take it all in. So what I try to do is thin it out.

DW: And in all of that you have to have priorities, not a mish-mash. Adele Marcus always said, “If everything is important, nothing is important.” I feel real artistry should always be the goal, that virtuosity should only be used to transcend virtuosity itself. Technical things should be secondary or tertiary in importance since tools and technique have no meaning in themselves. As far as specific priorities, an extremely important aspect to the Variations and Toccata on a Theme by Paganini is the intervallic content.

JS: What I did was more based on the intervals and the gestures than on any key.

DW: Yes, those are very important, the basis of the composition. Did the Brahms sets of variations have an influence on your piece?

JS: Only in the sense that I wanted to have certain gestures come back in the piece over and over. I didn’t listen to those pieces much because I didn’t want to be too influenced.

DW: Do you ever think about or compose with what could be called tonality without tonics or tonal relativism, where a concluding tonic is logically prepared but it does not function as a controlling element throughout the piece?
JS: I think that’s pretty much what I do all the time.

DW: That’s what I thought, or a tonic may be absent at the end but the prevailing tonality has survived, like there is an overall tonality but you add a lot of non-functional chords that add spice and color.

JS: Yes.

DW: It seems that in the area of musical analysis, the quality of cyclicism is attractive to many analysts. Do you make use of cyclic elements in this piece?

JS: In this particular piece I don’t believe I did, I didn’t bring anything back later in the piece.

DW: Except maybe for the fact that variations by their nature are perhaps a bit cyclic in developing a theme, developing variations…

JS: The only thing there would perhaps be the intervals.

DW: Yes, you use much intervallic manipulation and development. What do you think about Schenkerian analysis?

JS: I rely on people who are more into that. The reservation I have with it is it doesn’t deal with rhythm.

DW: You do get a lot of reductionism and abstractness in the twentieth century. Reductionism often ignores many of the things that give music its charm and elegance because it stresses, for example, the preponderance of the tonic triad. And much of abstract modernism seems to come from a fear of being thought a traditional composer, so the modernist composer convolutes things. But there is limited value in that. In contrast to musical composition, what other literary or academic writing have you done?
JS: I did a biographical study on the English clarinetist Reginald Kell. I also wrote a series of about twenty-five poems based on the photography of my father.

DW: I bet those are very enjoyable. Would you say you have any distinctive periods to your compositional output?

JS: The only thing I would say is that over the years it has probably gotten simpler.

DW: That might be good, making it more accessible.

JS: Yes.

DW: Speaking of that, how was the reception of this piece upon its premier at the 2002 Convention of the MMTA?

JS: The audience seemed to really like it. But I always wonder if people are being nice about it.

DW: Oh no, I’m sure they enjoyed it, since it is a nice piece. Are any of the variations linked together in groups?

JS: The grouping is mostly about tempo contrast. I tried to give them an ebb and flow through tempo changes.

DW: Do you feel that music is really a reflection of something higher; that it is a window into a world of truth and beauty, of virtue and purity, which really is not obtainable through anything else; that it can improve us, elevate us; that it points to a finer, nobler world?

JS: Oh, absolutely.

DW: Have you written any twelve-tone music?

JS: I did a trumpet piece that also had some traditional-sounding chords in it.
DW: Are you familiar with the Samuel Barber *Piano Sonata*? That is an interesting piece that has a movement with elements of twelve-tone writing, but it is done in a more traditional way with a more traditional sound which is almost romantic sometimes.

JS: I like that piece a lot.

DW: Yes, I figured you would. That is a twelve-tone piece I like. Well, that is about all the questions I have for now. This interview will give some perspective to your compositional style and musical approach, and it will make a nice addendum for the treatise. I have particularly enjoyed the parts of the discussion about aesthetics, interpretation, and attitudes towards music, as this is not discussed enough in my opinion. You know, scientists and specialists devote their lives to research within narrow fields that often become further restricted as time passes. It is nice to consider a broader perspective of things, more of a view of the whole. I am glad that we have agreed on so many issues. This has been a very enjoyable interview, and I thank you very much for your help with this project. I think your music is attractive, accessible, and would be enjoyable for most listeners. It is clear that people need music they can enjoy, believe in, understand, and relate to.

JS: I try to write what I think I would enjoy hearing.

DW: I believe you have been successful, and I thank you again.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Wright, Rebecca. “Sit Down and Do It.” *Jackson Free Press*, Diversions/Music, 22 June 2011.