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“Havanaise” by Charles Camille Saint-Saëns

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ABSTRACT

This project is about romantic piece “Havanaise” and my own process of studying it. Topics that I find most interesting regarding the piece and which I cover in this project are origin of the piece, different phrasing solutions, as well as my own perspective and journey of learning the piece.

The goal of this project is not only improvement of my interpretation, but also getting to know myself as a musician through self-analysis and finding new ways to approach the music in general.

Key words:

Havanaise, Camille Saint-Saëns, habanera, Cuba, rhythm, violin, repertoire, romanticism, interpretation, bow, phrasing

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Introduction

Throughout the years of playing and engaging in classical music, I believe that one tends to connect to certain epochs more than the other. Although I find each musical style remarkable, Romanticism is the one that makes me feel at home, which is why I decided to write about romantic piece from my repertoire – “Havanaise”, composed by Camille Saint-Saëns. The composer’s use of habanera style as the main fundament of this piece is what captured my interest the most and awoke my curiosity for additional research and exploration, which will undoubtedly help me experience the piece on an even deeper level and improve my own performance of such an outstanding piece.

The aims of my project:

- To broaden my knowledge about the piece;
- To improve my own interpretation of the piece, both technically and artistically;
- To become aware of my personal perception of the piece.

The methods I use in order to reach the aims of the project:

- Research regarding the composer, the piece itself and its origin through different sources, which would help me understand the composer’s idea better and connect with it as a performer;
- Listening to several interpretations of the piece, followed by comparison between different phrasing solutions among chosen performers, as well as demonstration of my own musical idea; this method will help me discover different possibilities regarding the interpretation, which might bring more inspiration and creativity to my own ideas;
- Analysis of the piece with focus on the connection between violin and piano, which should also affect my musicianship;
- Review of my practising journal and my personal approach to the piece, in order to enhance my technical abilities.

1. Camille Saint-Saëns and his “Havanaise”

1.1. Camille Saint-Saëns

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 – 1921) was a French composer, organist, pianist and writer, known as one of the leaders of the French renaissance in music in the 19th century. Even though his views conflicted with the Romantic aesthetic, which he was criticised for, he is not considered as a composer with a distinctive musical style, but rather as a defender of the French tradition or “the musician of tradition“, as Claude Debussy described him.¹

“I am an eclectic spirit. It may be a great defect, but I cannot change it:
one cannot make over one’s personality“.²

- Camille Saint-Saëns

Camille Saint-Saëns’s musical language is considered to be conservative, presented through well-defined phrases of three or four bars in duple, triple or compound metres, characteristic AABB pattern and repetitive rhythms in order to create an exotic atmosphere. The most distinctive aspect of his music is the harmony, which he preferred to use for achieving the sense of colour in his orchestrations, rather than using purely orchestral effects.

Apart from the “Havanaise”, Saint-Saëns is mostly known for his orchestral works “The Carnival of the Animals”, “Danse Macabre”, “Symphony No.3” (“Organ symphony”), Piano Concertos and the opera “Samson and Delilah”. Towards the end of his life, he developed an austere style comparable to Gabriel Fauré’s.

The “Havanaise” is a piece which clearly represents Saint-Saëns’s composing style – it is written in duple metre with four-bar phrase, repetitive *habanera rhythm* and accompaniment coloured through harmonies.



Camille Saint-Saëns

¹ *New Grove Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Saint-Saëns“

² *New Grove Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Saint-Saëns“

1.2. “Havanaise” in E-major for Violin and Piano / Orchestra, Op. 83

“Havanaise“ is a virtuoso piece originally written for violin and piano in 1887, orchestrated and published the following year in Paris. The first performance of the piece took place on 7th January 1894 at the Concerts du Châtelet, with the Belgian violinist Martin-Pierre Marsick as a soloist, even though Saint-Saëns dedicated the piece to the Cuban violinist Raphael Diaz Albertini.³

Saint-Saëns commenced composing the “Havanaise” in Brest in 1885 during the tour with Albertini and it is believed that the piece is a product of their friendship. Saint-Saëns allegedly started composing the piece in a cold hotel room while listening to the crackling of the wood from a small fire he made, which inspired the melodic idea, followed by decorative phrases. The piece “breathes the warm air of Spanish Indies, intended to depict the seductive movements of a dark Spanish girl [...] and the violin interposes phrases which suggest flirtatious glances“.⁴

It is not so surprising that Saint-Saëns dedicated this piece to the Cuban violinist, taking in consideration that “Havanaise“ was inspired by *habanera* – a Cuban style in music and dance from 19th century, probably introduced to Saint-Saëns by Albertini himself.

1.3. Habanera

From the very first contact with “Havanaise”, I could hear and feel the warmth, passion and soul of a Latino sound, which somehow always speaks to me in a very overwhelming way. Such a sound was quite astonishing since for Saint-Saëns, being a French composer, *habanera rhythm* was not even his own national style. I could not but ask myself why and how such a compound happened. On the other hand, I do in fact have understanding for this, since I, coming from Serbia, also find myself drawn to various styles of music. Returning to my first impressions of the piece: what, then, is the characteristic rhythm used in this piece, or more generally asked: what exactly is a *habanera*?

The Cuban *contradanza* was the first written music based on an African rhythmical pattern and the first Cuban dance that reached international popularity. However, it became known as *habanera* outside of the Cuba, meaning “the dance of Havana”, which due to its international popularity in the 19th century was later adopted in Cuba itself,⁵ however, the term was never used by those who created it.⁶

Contradanza is a Spanish and Spanish-American version of the *contredanse* – an internationally popular style of dance and music in the 18th century, derived from English country dance and adopted at the French court. Musicologists are facing many difficulties in finding the origin of *contradanza*; however, the most common belief is that the

³ Bru Zane Mediabase; [http://bruzanemediabase.com/eng/Works/Havanaise-in-E-major-op.-83-Camille-Saint-Saens/\(offset\)/9](http://bruzanemediabase.com/eng/Works/Havanaise-in-E-major-op.-83-Camille-Saint-Saens/(offset)/9)

⁴ Brian Rees, *Camille Saint-Saëns: A life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), 274.

⁵ Peter Manuel, *Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 97.

⁶ John Storm Roberts (quoting Alejo Carpentier), *The Latin tinge: The impact of Latin American music on the United States* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 6.

contradanza used the French *contredanse* as a prototype. It was introduced in Cuba by French immigrants during the Haitian Revolution (1791-1803), according to the novelist Alejo Carpentier.⁷ On the other hand, some prominent Cuban musicologists believe that the *contradanza* had been introduced in Cuba directly from Spain, France or England several decades earlier.⁸

In the mid-19th century, the Cuban *contradanza* starts to differ from the [French] *contredanse*, mainly because of the addition of the African cross-rhythm – *tresillo*⁹, which in combination with *backbeat* creates the *habanera rhythm*. In the first half of the 19th century, the *contradanza* became so dominant at the Cuban musical scene that most of the Cuban composers, whether composing for the concert hall or the dance hall, used it in their pieces.¹⁰ In the 20th century, the *habanera* gradually became a relic form in Cuba.

The Cuban style in music was embraced by many composers at the time, among which were Jules Massenet, Maurice Ravel, Manuel Samuell, Sebastian Yradier, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, Emmanuel Chabrier etc.¹¹ Consequently, it seems very natural that Saint-Saëns also found inspiration in Cuban styles, sounds and rhythms for some of his pieces, including the “Havanaise”.

“La Pimienta”, anonymous song published in 1836, is the earliest known piece to use *habanera rhythm* in the left hand of the piano, which Saint-Saëns also used for “Havanaise” (example 4).¹²

Habanera rhythm, example 1:



Habanera rhythm, example 2:



Habanera rhythm, example 3:



Habanera rhythm, example 4, from “Havanaise” (example 3 in violin part + example 1 in piano, bassline):

⁷ Manuel, *Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean*, 52.

⁸ Manuel, *Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean*, 54.

⁹ Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004), 134.

¹⁰ Olavo Alén Rodríguez, *De lo Afrocubano a la Salsa* (Havana: Ediciones ARTEX, 1994), 82.

¹¹ Wikipedia; *contradanza*, 09.04.2019.

¹² Roberts, *The Latin tinge*, 6.

2. The art of phrasing

2.1. My definition of phrasing

As a performer and conveyor of music, I realized the importance of the musical idea that each performer needs to create for a certain piece of music, as well as the way that idea is interpreted, and that is what we call *phrasing*.

From my perspective, phrasing is what one could reach after combining all the features of a certain musical piece, which implies the main characteristics – melodies, harmonies and rhythms, followed by equally significant elements – articulation, dynamics, tone, tempi etc. All those technical details in music should be mastered when reaching an idea of phrasing in any piece of music.

However, phrasing is certainly not only about technique. I strongly believe that technical features should never be used as a goal itself, but rather as a foundation and tool for reaching the ultimate goal of music, which are emotions, expressed exactly through phrasing. Furthermore, I am not sure if phrasing could be defined; it is the way one feels the piece, demonstrated through the language of music, which is why I believe that it could never really be the same for two different performers. In my opinion, expression and emotions are the core of music in general and it is, therefore, of great significance how one decides to phrase a piece of music and simultaneously leave the individual mark.

“Phrasing is always something essentially personal. It has really no fixed laws [...] and depends wholly on the musical and the poetical sense of the performer”.¹³

- Leopold Auer

Being able to comprehend a piece and reach the musical idea of a high quality requires a lot of knowledge and experience, as well as sense of musicianship, and even if one possesses such qualities, each piece of music is a challenge of its own. I have never encountered an “easy piece” during my musical life and it is certainly not the case with the “Havanaise” either.

~ In music theory, a phrase is a unit of musical meter that has a complete musical sense of its own, built from figures, motifs, and cells, and combining to form melodies, periods and larger sections.¹⁴

¹³ Leopold Auer, *Violin Playing as I Teach It* (New York: Frederick Strokes Company, 1921)

¹⁴ *New Grove Dictionary*

2.2 Phrasing in the “Havanaise”

As mentioned in the first section, Saint-Saëns repeats the *habanera* rhythmic pattern a lot in the „Havanaise“ and, in my opinion, this is an important reason, perhaps even the most important one, for the significance of phrasing in this piece. Some people tend to believe that repetitive sections in a piece make it tedious, but I, on the other hand, see such music as a challenge to convince them of the contrary. Throughout the time I spent working on the „Havanaise“, I realized that it is the piece which demands a true musician – one who is able to connect to the piece on a personal level, one who has childlike imagination, one who is able to repeat the same sentence over and over again, each time in a different way.

“There are two schools of thought on phrasing: one more intuitive, the other more analytical. The intuitive school uses a verbal model, equating the function of phrasing with that of punctuation in language. Thus, said Chopin to a student, ‘He who phrases incorrectly is like a man who does not understand the language he speaks.’”¹⁵

- Nancy Toff

In order to experience different ways of phrasing and interpreting the „Havanaise“, I decided to listen to and analyze several interpretations of the piece performed by some of my favourite violinists – Jacques Thibaud, Jascha Heifetz, Yehudi Menuhin, Leonid Kogan and Maxim Vengerov.

Jacques Thibaud and Jascha Heifetz

The earliest interpretation of “Havanaise” I found is one by Jacques Thibaud¹⁶, from 1933, followed by Jascha Heifetz’s¹⁷, from 1937. These two interpretations are quite different, even though they were done only four years apart, which simply shows how two individuals can interpret the piece in their own personal way.

Thibaud, who was French, had a very unexpected way of playing the “Havanaise”, in my opinion. Perhaps because of his shared nationality with the composer himself, I expected a better connection with the *habanera* style, or with what I believe to be *habanera* style. The *habanera* rhythmic pattern is definitely the most important characteristic of this piece, since Saint-Saëns uses it as some kind of refrain, and in my opinion, the way one decides to interpret that combination of triplet and two quavers is crucial. Thibaud has a very special way of playing the triplets, which tend to sound like syncopation (page 7, example 2) and which I personally am not very fond of. Another characteristic of his interpretation which I do not agree with is vibrato. In my opinion, he uses vibrato which is too fast and flat in a way, and that might be what makes his interpretation rather agitated.

¹⁵ Nancy Toff, *The Flute Book: A Complete Guide for Students and Performers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 150.

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pe1PAGhsXvk>

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeApec5uZMU>

Thibaud shows an incredible technical level through this piece, with very quick, yet clear passages and precise bow technique, however, I did not feel the Cuban fire which habanera naturally holds. For my taste, his interpretation has this sharp sound which puts my focus on technique and admiration towards that aspect, rather than musicianship and emotions that should come through the habanera rhythm. Such interpretation might be a consequence of piano accompaniment, which is done in the same manner. (Audio 1; page 16, example 5)

Heifetz, on the other hand, who is accompanied by orchestra, has a warmer, rounded sound with very slow and wide vibrato and gentle treatment of each note, done through impressive technical skills. This kind of style is definitely much more engaging, in my opinion, because it makes all the contrasts, such as tempi and different characters, more convincing. Even in very technical parts, Heifetz manages to keep the feeling of storytelling and he still delivers certain atmosphere, which in Thibaud's case sound purely technical, as if it was an etude. Although contradicting, this impression might be due to Thibaud's exaggerated use of portamenti, which disables clear and effective contrast from the previous section.

Certain technical solutions also differ between these two musicians. While Thibaud plays double-stops without removing the bow from the strings, Heifetz uses an off-string technique, which creates greater contrast after very romantic, slow-paced phrase (example 1, Audio 2). When it comes to the first virtuoso part, Thibaud also decides to play technique more similar to *detaché*, rather than *sautillé*, which Heifetz, on the other hand, goes for (example 2). In the very last part of the piece, Heifetz and Thibaud change their previous musical style – Heifetz plays very short and “sharp” with a jumping bow, while Thibaud slides more and makes the part more romantic and smooth (example 3).

All in all, I find it extremely interesting that these two interpretations differ so much, taking in consideration such a short time between these recordings. I believe that I learned something from both of them – different parts in the piece are very contrasting and they need to be interpreted very clearly in order to make the piece more alluring, technical parts are also music and finally, it is more than acceptable to experiment and play in my own individual way.

Example 1, bars 135-164 (*romantic part + virtuoso double-stops*):

Example 1, bars 135-164. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a 'romantic part' with expressive phrasing and a 'virtuoso double-stops' section with rapid sixteenth-note patterns. Performance markings include *P molto espressivo*, *f*, *p*, *cresc.*, *sfz*, and *ff*. Fingerings and bowings are indicated throughout.

Example 2, bars 74-99:

Example 2, bars 74-99. The score is in G major and 3/4 time, marked *Allegro* ($\text{♩} = 160$) *(Piano)*. It consists of a continuous sixteenth-note pattern with various dynamics and articulations. Performance markings include *sul G*, *sul D*, *cresc.*, *mf*, and *ff*. Fingerings and bowings are indicated throughout.

Example 3, bars 300-324:

The musical score for Example 3, bars 300-324, is presented in four staves. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 2/4. The first staff is marked 'Allegretto' and 'p molto tranquillo'. The second and third staves are marked 'sul D'. The fourth staff is marked 'Lento' and 'pp'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings.

Yehudi Menuhin and Leonid Kogan

Once again, I chose interpretations which were recorded soon one after another – Menuhin’s interpretation was recorded in 1957¹⁸ and Kogan’s in 1958.¹⁹ This time, there is even bigger difference between the styles of performers and I think it is incredible how much inspiration one can get from listening to several different versions of the same piece. Each and every interpretation has its own idea of “Havanaise” and its own individual mark.

Leonid Kogan has a very similar style as Jascha Heifetz, followed by even greater contrasts between the different sections in the piece (Audio 3; page 11, example 2). He is gentle in the romantic sections, determined and attacking in virtuoso parts and more than clear with his musical ideas. Being incredibly skilled in both technical and artistic aspect, he really keeps the attention of a listener and creates the passionate Cuban atmosphere during the entire piece.

Menuhin, on the other hand, is something completely different from all the versions I have analysed so far. From the very beginning, it is clear that the tempo is a bit slower than usual, which creates a very calm and soothing feeling and makes the habanera rhythm even more flirtatious and captivating.

¹⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KFiVgS_XaE

¹⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKb_EkHcz4o

Menuhin, unlike other players I mentioned so far, makes clear accents on every last quaver from the habanera rhythm, which gives the piece the original feeling of a dance that habanera is. The first change of tempo and character (page 11, example 2) is a huge surprise in Menuhin's interpretation, since the beginning was so relaxing and pleasant. Suddenly, one can feel tension and an intense atmosphere, which leads to another appearance of romantic habanera section.

Even though the contrasts are quite extreme, there is not so much experimenting with the bow technique, as it was the case with previous performers. Menuhin's *staccato* is mostly played with the bow laying on the strings and his double-stops (page 11, example 1), although played with separate bowing, sound even more connected than in Thibaud's interpretation. He rarely ever decides to use the short, jumping bow, even when it is marked so in the music, however, it does not make his interpretation monotone at all. On the contrary, he chooses to express very unexpected musical ideas about certain sections, such as the last virtuoso section which includes sliding thirds and sixths (Audio 4, example 4). Instead, he plays the section very soft and gentle, with the long bow and singing habanera rhythm which should actually be more attacking and short, and that kind of unpredictability is exactly what makes his interpretation stand out, in my opinion.

I believe that Menuhin's interpretation is the one that made the greatest impression on me, mostly because it is so very different from everything else I have heard. There are many surprises in his performance and it somehow encourages me to try something different from what I am used to in my own interpretation of the "Havanaise". What's more, he has very interesting solutions for certain technical passages that I have been struggling with (such as *staccato*) and it is really inspiring and helpful to hear such a great and historically important violinist play certain technicalities in his own way, regardless of what is expected.

Example 4, bars 265-272:

The image shows a musical score for a violin piece, specifically Example 4, bars 265-272. The score is written for a violin and includes a tempo marking of "Allegro, ma non troppo" with a metronome marking of a quarter note equal to 126. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score features a double stop section marked "mf sul Ded A" and a section marked "sul Ded A". The music is characterized by a habanera rhythm and includes various technical passages such as triplets and slurs. The score is presented in three systems, with the first system starting at bar 265 and the third system ending at bar 272.

Maxim Vengerov

Maxim Vengerov²⁰, the youngest one among previously mentioned violinists, recorded the “Havanaise” in 1992, and it might not be surprising that his interpretation feels the closest to my own musical idea regarding this piece.

Habanera rhythm, which other violinists played with slightly pause in the bow before each note, is now very smooth and more *legato* sounding. Triplets have the wonderful connection between them, done through continuous movement of the right hand without pausing the bow. The way Vengerov plays characteristic and repetitive habanera rhythm definitely coincides the most with my idea of romantic style, in comparison to the interpretations of previously mentioned violinists and in my opinion, it is the most accurate presentation of Cuban habanera. (Audio 5; page 12, example 3)

Although very romantic, Vengerov does not lack virtuosity in fast, technical sections, which he, as well, makes very interesting to listen to. However, it seems as if he enjoys the very romantic parts more; every appearance of the theme is more and more passionate and sensitive, with a lot of emotions and creativity.

From my point of view, it seems as if Vengerov’s interpretation is a combination of all the best elements from previously mentioned musicians. He possesses very virtuosic passages, incredible technical skills shown through just right usage of both slow, legato bow and fast, jumping one, he has incredibly warm sound and sense of habanera style, he shows great contrasts through the whole piece and most importantly, his performance is filled with overwhelming amount of passion and intense emotions.

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coYr-YRSNR0>

3. Analysis of the “Havanaise”

3.1. Accompaniment and its significance

Since “Havanaise” has a very interesting structure divided in several parts, which differ in tempo and character (*Allegretto e lusinghiero – Allegro – Tempo Primo – Allegretto – Allegro ma non troppo – Allegretto*), it is of great importance how soloist and accompaniment connect to each other and that both players (violinist and pianist) have the same musical idea and feeling about each part of the piece. I myself have experienced various situations with different pianists regarding this piece and I realized how big difference it makes when I do not have to push the music forward or hold it back, but simply enjoy and make music as I feel it, with someone who breathes in the same way and tempo as I do.

Once again, one of the most crucial elements in both sections is habanera rhythm. In the very beginning of the piece, the piano introduces the habanera rhythm without the soloist, however, the soloist takes it over after 10 bars (example 5) and it is therefore very important that the pianist and the violinist have the same idea of how to interpret this rhythmic pattern, otherwise, it would sound very unclear and chaotic. What’s more, habanera rhythm is present in almost every bar of the piece, apart from more technical sections (such as *Allegro* and *Piu Allegro* from *Allegro ma non troppo*). Otherwise, the habanera rhythm is always in some of the parts, in a transparent or hidden way (example 6) and it is, therefore, even more important that both soloist and pianist do it in the same manner.

I have never had the opportunity to play the “Havanaise” with the orchestra, but I assume that it is not the same feeling as playing with the piano. Having a conductor when playing the “Havanaise” must be of great significance and help, since there are so many tempo changes. Furthermore, the orchestra consists of string musicians and it might be a bit easier to adjust the technical aspect when reaching the same style, by using the same bow technique for example, which obviously is not an option in piano accompaniment. That is why the soloist and accompanist need to listen to each other very carefully and find just the right way of playing the habanera style.

When it comes to more technical sections of the piece, I believe that the soloist should always set the tempo and character, if possible. Such sections are already demanding and sometimes even stressful, so it is very important that the soloist does not have to think about adjusting to the pianist at such moments. I realized that I cannot focus on my technique well enough when the accompaniment is not in the same tempo as I am, because all of my energy goes to listening to the piano and adjustments, and I strongly believe that it should be the opposite.

In order to perform the “Havanaise” on a high level, soloist and accompaniment definitely have to think in the same direction and share the thoughts about the piece, as well as possess the same sense for such a special style as habanera.

Example 5, bars 1-18:

Allegretto e lusinghiero

Violin

Piano

Allegretto e lusinghiero (♩ = 104)

p

col Pedale

13

Example 6, bars 50-67:

The image displays a musical score for Example 6, covering bars 50 to 67. The score is written in treble and bass clefs, with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score is divided into three systems, each containing a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. Red horizontal lines are drawn under specific passages in the piano accompaniment, highlighting triplet figures and other rhythmic patterns. The piano part features several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over the notes) and dynamic markings such as *p* and *mf*. The vocal line consists of eighth and quarter notes, often with slurs and accents. The overall texture is intricate, with the piano accompaniment providing a complex harmonic and rhythmic foundation for the vocal melody.

3.2. Practising journal

My personal journey with the “Havanaise” has begun about eight months ago and even though it is not a short period of time, I am still not done with improving my interpretation and broadening my knowledge regarding the piece. It has been a long, yet exciting process of both technical and artistic development, as well as exploration of my inner self and my individuality, which I try to place in each piece I play.

The 1st phase of practising the “Havanaise” was rather simple – I was listening to several different interpretations and doing the basic work, such as reading the notes and figuring out the fingerings that seem the most comfortable. I never exaggerate when it comes to listening to other musicians, because I do not want to be affected by someone else’s musical idea of the piece. It somehow feels dangerous to get used to certain kind of interpretation; it can be easily transferred to one’s own way of experiencing the piece and what’s more, it can prevent an artist from leaving its own individual mark. However, I did need some kind of introduction to the piece, so I decided to hear a few performances before starting with my own process of learning the “Havanaise”. What’s more, I tried not to focus on technical aspect of the piece only, although it was just the first phase, but also to include some kind of phrasing, that which comes in a natural, intuitive way, in order to keep the main point of practising – music.

The 2nd phase of my practising journal begun once I felt comfortable enough with all the notes and my left hand in general. It is the phase in which I focused on the most demanding parts in the terms of technique and tried to find the best way to make them playable and accurate.

There are several parts in the “Havanaise” which require very controlled and well-thought-out technique, and even though I made a huge progress over the time, I still did not manage to bring them on a level which would satisfy my own criteria. I believe that is due to lack of musicality in this phase, which makes practising tedious and tiresome. This phase focuses on purely technical aspect of the piece and I personally find it the hardest one.

One of the technical demands that I mostly struggle with is definitely the short *staccato* section which appears two times in the piece (example 7 and 8), marked with *Più mosso* (tempo should be faster), which is what makes it even harder to play, considering the alignment with the piano. There are many different ways I have been practising this particular section. At first, I played it *legato* in order to make all the shifts (position changes) smooth and precise. Afterwards, I practised the section in a *detaché* technique, followed by *spiccato*. Then I tried to place all the notes on one (up)bow, as it’s written, but without lifting the bow from the strings. I would push the bow using my point finger and stop it before each note. After these three methods, I tried to play the section using *staccato* bow technique. I keep learning about this technical requirement all the time and I realized many things – I have to stop the bow before the *staccato*, I have to begin the *staccato* from the string (not from the air) and I have to synchronize movements of my right hand with movements of my left hand, or better said fingers. (Recording 1)

Example 7, bars 117-124:

Example 8, bars 181-192:

Another interesting technical part is *Allegro* section (page 11, example 2). This section is simply fast and consisted of many notes, which requires slow practising and relaxed mindset, in order to prevent panicking. Again, there are several methods I use in order to bring this section to a high level – *legato* on two semiquavers, *legato* on four semiquavers, *legato* on half a bar and *legato* on the whole bar, playing each note 4 times, 3 times and 2 times, dotted rhythm and reverse of dotted rhythm, playing open strings without the left hand and finally, playing as it is written and trying to reach the speed required for natural jumping bow which is close to *spiccato*, called *sautillé*. (Recording 2)

The last section I would like to pay closer attention to are sliding chromatic thirds and sixths in a combination with habanera rhythm (page 13, example 4). One of the biggest struggles in this part is to find the way to play the chromatic thirds as clear as possible. Although they are all played in one bow, they are not supposed to be done as *glissando*, but rather as some kind of *staccato* which happens in the left hand while bow goes slowly over the strings. Another difficulty is intonation, during and after the chromaticism. As soon as one finishes the virtuosic thirds, which starting from the 1st position gradually reach the 8th, one has to jump to 4th position and “catch” another double stop while playing the accurate habanera rhythm with short bow technique (this part repeats once again, but half-step higher). This section has a great effect on the audience and if done right, it certainly creates admiration and amusement. When it comes to practising methods, at first I practise all the position changes to make sure that intonation is correct and after that I focus on articulation of both left and right hand. (Recording 3)

The 3rd phase is probably the phase I enjoy the most and that is exploration of phrasing and various musical ideas. It is usually not so hard to find the general feeling and sense for a piece, since a musician should possess that ability naturally, however, intuitive phrasing is sometimes not very clear or constant and it, therefore, needs a thorough understanding.

The repetitive habanera rhythm is definitely the characteristic that brought me to a lot of thinking regarding phrasing and style in which it should be done. Of course, there are several ways to play that pattern (as concluded in section 2.2.), however, I especially like the one of Maxim Vengerov. I definitely believe that triplets should be interpreted with such a smooth bow change that they almost sound as *portato* (bow technique which contains slightly separated notes played in one bow direction). It makes the atmosphere more soothing, easy-going and also more passionate, in my opinion. I also think that the last quaver note in a bar should be adequately accented, as Saint-Saëns marked, in order to create the flow and charm of habanera dance. Throughout the time of practising the “Havanaise”, I realized that I do not play all the triplets in the same way each time the theme appears. It was something I was doing unconsciously, but once I came to that realization, I did not like that habit at all. Although it is a small detail, it completely changes the piece and ever since I heard that irregularity, I started doing my best to keep the flirtatious rhythm of triplets from the beginning thorough the whole piece. I find it extremely interesting that one can play in a certain way without realizing it, but it is still so much more fun and stable to seek full control over the interpretation. (Recording 4)

When it comes to more technical parts, such as *Allegro* (page 11, example 2), it is very significant that one has a clear idea of phrasing or otherwise, the whole section would simply sound as an exercise. In that part, I try to make music by putting light accents at the beginning of each group of four semiquavers. I also try to lead the phrase through my own solution for dynamics, which I use to bring up the tension to an even higher level. It is really important that one has a lot of energy and power in this section, as well as a completely different attitude than in the previous part, in order to make it sound alive and meaningful. (Recording 5)

A section that I am still experimenting with and trying to find the phrasing solution that suits me the best is the very last part – *Allegretto* (page 11, example 3). It is quite different from all the other parts and I still did not manage to figure out the best style for it. Some of the famous violinists play it in a rather relaxed way, using the short bow movements, while others play it in a more romantic and broad way. I certainly like both solutions and I hope that I will manage to find my way of interpreting this section. (Recording 6)

All in all, I believe that most important aspect of this piece is that musician really connects to the “Havanaise” and feels joy while performing it, and I tend to believe that after that, everything else develops naturally. It really makes a lot of difference when artists feel that certain piece belongs to them and that it something that unexplainably happens or does not happen.

The 4th phase of my process of learning the “Havanaise” is inclusion of accompaniment, which was not as simple as I first thought it would be. I was aware of all the tempo changes and that it was going to take some time until my pianist and I get used to all of them, however, I realized that it takes much more than pure practise and agreement. Over the time, I came to conclusion that both musicians included need to feel the piece in the same manner and have the same passion for it, which would lead to synchronized breathing and sense of pulse throughout the whole piece. I believe that it is not something that could be learnt. It is natural that people are different and have various preferences, so in my opinion, one just needs to find its appropriate and corresponding musical match in order to make the interpretation reach its full potential.

Conclusion

Doing the research and analysis of the “Havanaise” and my own approach to it made me learn and realize many different things:

- I should always have certain level of knowledge about the piece and the composer before playing it; it makes an incredible difference to know the details and peculiar facts connected to the piece and composer’s attitude towards it when being in the process of learning the piece
- I should pay a lot of attention to my own artistic and technical solutions, as well as personal attitude towards the piece; I realized that I sometimes play or think in a certain way which I never thought-through, but it somehow appeared and became a habit; I should always be fully aware of my intentions and purposes in music
- development of my interpretation is not only done through practising and creativity, but also through continuous and conscious reflection put into words; writing down my thoughts and actions during the process of learning the piece makes it much easier and clearer to know what it is that I should change and in which way
- I should not avoid seeking the inspiration from other musicians; exploring various different performances of the “Havanaise” made me come to conclusion that there is always something to learn from each musician and performance and it does not necessarily have to affect my own individuality.

Since I started working on this Independent Project, I noticed a change in my attitude towards practising and shaping the “Havanaise”. Imagining Saint-Saëns in a cold hotel room with the sound of fire, immediately encourages me to produce a warm, round sound, while listening to the crackling of the wood in piano bass line.

Research about habanera rhythm made me realize that my own idea about it, based on a pure intuition, was not completely matching with what habanera really is and helped me create a more adequate style.

Thanks to the practising journal I started writing for the needs of this project, I got to experience how much personal reflection affected my efficiency and control over what I really should be improving in my interpretation. I have always had my own thoughts about my interpretation, but I have never really documented them, which usually lead to forgetting the most of it.

Lastly, I am more than glad that I paid more attention to different interpretations of the “Havanaise”. On the contrary from what I was afraid of, I received a completely new energy and inspiration that I would never experience if I did not include that method in my Independent Project.

This research not only helped me develop my interpretation of the “Havanaise”, but also my general attitude and the way I approach to the music in general.

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