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## EDITORIAL NOTES

The **Dotzauer Project** just concluded its *first phase* at the end of 2022 with the successful publication of the five books of original pieces for two cellos (Opp. 52, 58, 63, 156, and 159). Before delving deep into its *second phase*, I decided to publish a bonus piece, encouraged by American-Ukrainian Maestro Yuriy **Leonovich Dotzauer** (1783—1860) titles this piece “*Aria Russa con XX variazioni per il Violoncello Solo accompagnamento Secondo Violoncello, Op. 32*”. The Italian is a bit rough, but it basically means “Russian Air with 20 Variations for the cello, accompanied by a 2<sup>nd</sup> cello, op. 32”. It is a virtuoso piece, very challenging, and it covers most techniques one may ever encounter on the cello, with only harmonics being conspicuously absent.

While the theme is labelled as Russian, historical research has lifted any doubt on its origin, returning its original Ukrainian origin to it. It is called “*Їхав козак за Дунай*” (transliteration: “Ikhav Kozak za Dunaj”, translation: “The Cossack rode beyond the Danube”), and its text was written by Semyon **Klimovsky** (ca. 1705—1785), a Ukrainian philosopher and Cossack of the Kharkiv regiment. This song quickly spread across Europe, even becoming one of “the most whistled, hummed, and muttered” tunes of Germany, and, thus, one of the most used themes for variations by composers. In Germany, it came under the title “*Schöne Minka*”, from the first words of a poem by Christoph August **Tiedge** (1752—1841) “*Schöne Minka, ich muß scheiden*” (“Lovely Minka, I must part”). It is still considered one of the most popular Ukrainian folk songs. During the Soviet times, the song was popularised under the title “*Ти ж мене підманула*” (You lied to me), which is a humorous days-of-the-week song where the man gets stood up at different venues. This version has been covered by artists from all over the world and from different genres. The song “*Orysyia*” by the Ukrainian folk group *Mandry* is

also based on the “Kozak” theme.

A quick research on classical compositions based on this theme returns an astonishingly generous list, of which here are but a few examples:

- ©: Carl Maria von **Weber** (1786—1826), *9 Variations sur un air russe, Op. 40*, for piano, published in 1815
- ©: Ferdinand **Ries** (1784—1834), *3 Sets of Variations, Op.33*, for piano, published in 1810-11
- ©: Johann Nepomuk **Hummel** (1778—1837), *Adagio, Variationen und Rondo über ein russisches Thema, Op. 78*, for flute (or violin), cello, piano, published in or around 1818
- ©: Ludwig van **Beethoven** (1770—1827), *10 National Airs with Variations, Op. 107*, for flute (or violin), and piano, composed around 1818, and *23 Songs of Various Nationalities, WoO 158a*, for voice, violin, cello, and piano

To this, we can add Dotzauer’s set of twenty variations, Op. 32, published in 1815 with *Friedrich Hofmeister*. I found it striking how all these composers were roughly of the same generation—born between 1770 and 1786—and published their variations on this theme in a short time span—between 1810 and 1818.

At the time, Ukraine was known as “Little Russia”, and this has brought over countless translation issues. Nevertheless, all these composers appeared to be quite confident that this theme had to be Russian. To strike a blow for all of them, I believe that they all referred to it with the name “*Schöne Minka*” that came to them through the German translation. An analysis of the original text, though, unquestionably marks this as written in a language that, over time, would have become what is today recognised as the Ukrainian language.

## The Theme

This theme is simple: two periods of eight bars, one going from D minor to its relative F major, one coming back home. The last four bars of each period are the same. One thing sets Dotzauer's variations apart from the others, and that is the rhythmical treatment of the theme. As an example, here is the theme from Beethoven's Op. 107/7 (in A minor):

The image shows a musical score for the theme from Beethoven's Op. 107/7. It is titled 'TEMA. N° 7. AIR RUSSE.' and is marked 'Andante.' The score is for Flauto (Flute) and Pianoforte (Piano). The Flauto part is in the treble clef and the Pianoforte part is in the bass clef. The key signature is one flat (F major/D minor) and the time signature is 2/4. The score consists of two staves, each with eight bars of music.

In here, and in all other mentioned variations, the rhythm of the melody is undotted throughout. Now look at how Dotzauer lays the theme out:

The image shows a musical score for the theme from Beethoven's Op. 107/7, marked 'Andantino.' The score is for Flauto (Flute) and Pianoforte (Piano). The key signature is one flat (F major/D minor) and the time signature is 2/4. The score consists of two staves, each with eight bars of music. The first staff is marked 'La prima volta f, la seconda volta p.'

In Dotzauer's set, the theme is preceded by a long slow introduction, which helps set the mood of the piece. While the theme is in the key of D minor, the introduction is in D major and drops of the theme are poured for the listener sparingly. A suspended cadence at the end of the first page announces that something is about to happen, with the theme following suit.

## The Variations

All variations are in 2/4 metre, with the only exception being No. 19, which is in 6/8. Let's give a brief look at each of them:

**Var. 1**, marked with *Più moto*, offers a simple rhythmic deviation from the theme, shortening the note-values and insisting on the dotted rhythm idea.

**Var. 2** underlines the theme in the bass register, and flourishes long notes with arpeggios.

**Var. 3** does away with the dotted rhythm in favour of polyphony. The top line plays the theme, while the bottom line creates a counterpoint, helped by the second cello.

**Var. 4** focuses on broken octaves, with the theme being played by the thumb. We are definitely warming up.

**Var. 5**, marked *Tempo I*, is the first one to conceal the theme under its harmonic structure. Triplets around scale and chord notes are a good chance to practice

playing on the same string. Especially challenging is the run on the 3<sup>rd</sup> string (bb 102-6). This variation also breaks the link between the last four bars of the two periods.

**Var. 6** focuses on 32<sup>nd</sup> notes, with a heavy usage of the thumb. Using a compact bow in the upper middle third is paramount.

**Var. 7** is, once more, a polyphonic variation, just with a greater degree of difficulty. I suggest practicing the two voices separately (but with correct fingerings) as a pianist would do before building them up together.

**Var. 8** focuses on triplets slurred by three starting from the second note, with the theme hiding behind the top notes.

**Var. 9** changes the mood completely, and is marked *Lento*. The Second Cello starts alone, with the First (labelled *Obbligato*) imitates a 5<sup>th</sup> above, with Dotzauer blinking his eye towards Bach. There is no repeat in this variation.

**Var. 10**, marked *Allegro*, is all played on the IV string and is a furious rush that smashes into the next variation without time to catch one's breath.

**Var. 11**, coming back to *Tempo I*, is again all in 32<sup>nd</sup> notes, with double-stops in every rhythmical position where the theme would have played a note. The second cello accompanies in pizzicato.

**Var. 12** is an exercise in intervals of a 6<sup>th</sup>, while the second cello plays an accompanying pedal. The third bar shows an augmented second interval that is not found in the theme. It may be a mistake, but it has not been corrected, since the musical sense is preserved. An alternative could be to play D-sharp with B-sharp as second dyad of bar 212, and F-sharp with D-sharp as second dyad of bar 220.

**Var. 13** sees triplets coming back, this time all detached. Several chromatic runs enrich the connections between bars and beats.

**Var. 14** welcomes polyphony back, this time with the melody played by the lower voice (**Var 7** had it in the upper voice).

**Var. 15** is, possibly, the funniest of them all. It is all in sixteenth notes, with odd-numbered ones played with the bow, and even-numbered ones played pizzicato. The first period has an open A pizzicato, while the second period starts with an open C and ends with an open A.

**Var. 16** uses arpeggiated chords in 32<sup>nd</sup> notes to harmonise the melody of the theme. The suggested bowing is very useful as it helps emphasise the lowest note.

**Var. 17** has the theme played by the second cello. The first cello part is, instead, an upbeat and syncopated accompaniment, ranging from double stops to quickest octaves.

**Var. 18** goes back to triplets, where each one contains a broken chord and the suggested bowing alternates 5/8 with 3/8. The second period restores shorter bows.

**Var. 19** is the longest one and changes metre to 6/8. Each period is expanded to double its original length, and a coda with chromatic scales launches us towards a dominant seventh chord with fermata that preludes to the last variation.

**Var. 20** closes the set with two periods in 32<sup>nd</sup> notes of fiendish difficulty with the second cello again playing the theme, and with a short coda. The two cellos briefly dialogue in an *ad lib.* section, before rushing to an explosive end.

## Editorial annotations

The very few obvious errors were corrected by adding square brackets around missing accidentals when needed. The only big missing point is the change to bass clef before the last note of the first cello. The first edition kept it in tenor clef, making it sound like an A3, and the manuscript—if it still exists—has not been found. Another clear mistake was in **Var. 13**, bar 232, where the source had an 8<sup>th</sup>-note triplet in the first subdivision of the second beat.

## End notes

This piece, assuming one plays all repeats, could last around 24 minutes, making it a Sonata-size addition to the cello repertoire. Playing without repeats would reduce its overall length to 14 minutes. Single variations may be played on their own, and the piece would not lose its integrity if only a selection of them were performed in concert, as long as the introduction, the theme, and the last two variations made the cut. Quoting my colleague Yuriy **Leonovich**, to whom this edition is dedicated, and to whom go my deepest thanks for his help and inspiration:

“Dotzauer is underrated!”

The Editor

Michele Galvagno

Saluzzo, 7 January 2023