

LISA GIOMBINI

MUSIC FROM BEYOND (OR HOW TO DEAL WITH A MUSICAL FORGERY)

1. Introduction. Muse of the Spirits

Rosemary Brown first met Franz Liszt around 1923. At the time, she was only seven years old and Liszt had been dead for more than three decades. There he was, however, standing before her in his sinister black tunic. «When you grow up», Liszt said to the little girl, «I'll be back and give you some music»¹. Rosemary was a weird choice though. A part from some few piano lessons, she did not receive any proper musical education and could not play by ear or improvise².

Liszt, however, kept his word. Starting in 1961, he transmitted to the woman a considerable number of unpublished compositions of his own, either by guiding her fingers on the keyboard or by dictating notes and rhythms that she diligently transcribed, though she could only partially understand them. He was not the only one. Several other renowned composers – including Chopin, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Berlioz, and even J. S. Bach – took advantage of Rosemary's ability as a medium to communicate their unpublished works to the world of the living. In a short time, Rosemary Brown became a celebrity³. Musicians and psychologists alike were fascinated by her

¹ As 'Liszt' later explained to Rosemary: «We in spirit hope to help people to realize that they are evolving souls destined to pass into the realms of non-matter where they will continue to evolve. This realization should give them a whole new dimension of thinking, and raise their self-image above its earthbound limits» (Brown 1974, 23).

² At least according to what Rosemary Brown writes in her autobiographic books, *Immortals at my Elbow* (1974) and *Look Beyond Today* (1986).

³ Mainly thanks to the BBC documentary, *Mrs. Brown and the Composers*, produced by Geoffrey Skelton and Daniel Snowman in 1969 and broadcasted the same year on British national television.

compositions. Some musical authorities of the time, including Leonard Bernstein, testified in favour of the goodness of her music, attesting to its stylistic plausibility (Douglas 2001). Predictably, many others were much less impressed by Rosemary's endeavour. None, however, ever came up with a convincing explanation for the pieces' existence.

While the theories surrounding Mrs. Brown are many, simply assuming she was a psycho or a charlatan in search of publicity begs the questions raised by the actual existence of the pieces she wrote. In this paper, I argue that Mrs Brown's musical forgeries may rather be seen as an unconscious response or even perhaps an unwitting testament to our culture's fascination with original art objects and the cult of genius. Scorned by the world of the experts, banished to the provinces by the general audience, musical forgeries represent an awakening call for philosophers and aestheticians. They force us, like no other artistic phenomenon, to question the cognitive and cultural frameworks that underlie our aesthetic appreciation of the arts and music. Bringing to the fore our concerns for authenticity, originality and authorship, forgeries compel us to prove that our interest in the provenance of an artwork is more than a form of fetishism or cultural indoctrination. Here, I address the issue by scrutinizing a fundamental concept in our notion of art, namely, that of artistic creativity. It is because art is a form of creative achievement that authenticity counts as a central factor of evaluation. This, in turn, tells us something about the value of musical forgeries themselves.

2. Forgeries in Art and Music

If we rule out the supernatural origins of her music, one way to look at Rosemary Brown's story is by resorting to the notion of musical hoax. Extravagant as it was in type and style, Mrs Brown's is certainly not the first hoax music had to confront with, and will not be the last. Hoaxes, and other similar forms of artistic cheating, are as old as the human kind itself.

Most of the time, hoaxes in music have taken the form of plagiarism or appropriation. From Franz von Walsegg's historic appropriation of Mozart's *Requiem* at the end of the eighteenth century; the incredible story of the pianist Joyce Hatto, who ended up plagiarizing more than one hundred piano recordings in her home studio between

the Eighties and Nineties; to the highly discussed lawsuits surrounding the authorship of many contemporary pop-songs⁴, cases of plagiarism are countless in musical history. Plagiarism is normally defined in terms of a work presented to an audience with the intention to deceive about its real nature. Fraudulent intentions are indeed necessary to distinguish cases of plagiarism from honest pastiches, unwitting quotations or explicit homages⁵. A most typical case of plagiarism is an instance where someone republishes existing musical pieces or excerpts (themes, passages, motifs) and present them as one own's, to add on one own's reputation.

Rosemary Brown, however, was not a plagiarist. She didn't steal other composers' works. Instead, she attributed *her own* musical pieces to prestigious names in music history. There is a technical word that we can use to describe the result of this activity: she produced a series of *musical forgeries*. Unlike plagiarism, where theft of intellectual content is involved, what is in question in forgery is the attribution of authorship. One steals a target artist's name in order to add value to one own's work, to capitalize on the artist's established reputation.

This is, of course, a much common phenomenon in the visual arts, where paintings and sculptures of famous and highly-esteemed artists are often faked for their immense monetary value. Experts can only guess at the number of forgeries that have been bought and sold in the recent past. For example, a former director of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art claimed that up to 40 percent of the works on the market might be forgeries (quoted in Ewell 2014, 168). The possibility of monetary gain from visual art forgery is indeed enormous⁶.

Forgery in the musical realm, however, is a much trickier philosophical issue. For a start, it is a matter of controversy whether musical works can be forged at all. A long and distinguished tradition in aesthe-

⁴ One recent example is the hit song 'Ice Ice Baby', which copies almost note by note the famous bass drum introducing the song *Underpressure* by the Queen and David Bowie.

⁵ It is also possible that a honest copy or pastiche can later be used as a forgery by misrepresenting the provenance of the work (for example by adding a false certificate of authenticity or a fake signature). See Dutton (2003, 259).

⁶ One of the most forged work of all time is in fact Leonardo's Mona Lisa. Hundreds of copies of this work of art are known to exist, and while some of these are as old as the original, a few are even reputed by the owners to be the authentic Mona Lisa, a facsimile of which, they claim, now hangs in the Louvre. Few, however, would be so misguided as to make a referential forgery of the Mona Lisa or any other famous work and then try to sell it as the original.

tics drawing back to Nelson Goodman (1968) would have us reject the very possibility of forgery in music. As renown, Goodman believed that: «In music, unlike painting, there is no such thing as a forgery of a known work» (Goodman 1968, 112). This idea stemmed directly from his conception of music as an allographic art. According to Goodman, forgery can be defined as an object falsely purporting «to have the history of production requisite of the (or an) original of the work» (1968, 112). While production history is necessary to establish the correct identity of a work in an autographic art like painting, in allographic arts like music, it does not intrude upon the work-identity. As a matter of fact, all that is needed for a piece to be identified with a certain musical work is that it complies with the relevant written notation (the ‘spelling’ of the piece). So, for example, no forgery is produced if someone copies the score of Chopin Waltz Op. 64 No. 1 note for note, with her own handwriting and on a modern sheet of paper, but just another correct instance of it. As Peter Kivy puts it: «when versions of a work are note for note identical, they are the same version of the same work, hence cannot bear the relation of forgery to original» (Kivy 2001, 219). For Goodman, and for the many authors who have followed his lead, the autographic-allographic distinction makes Western written music unforgeable. Of course, this does not forbid that manuscripts, autographed music sheets and particular musical recordings can actually be forged – though the latter perhaps in a broader sense⁷.

It is important to notice, however, that the scope of Goodman’s argument only covers the production of forgeries of existing musical works, i.e., exact copies of works that are already known. What remains possible is the making of forgeries of a different variety, involving the creation of new (or ‘unknown’) works in the *style* of another composer. Following Jerrold Levinson (Levinson 1990, 103), we can call the first kind «referential » and the second kind «inventive» forgeries. While a referential forgery is one in which some particular, original, pre-existing work is copied, an inventive forgery is a work attributed to a target artist, but one which is not a copy of any pre-existing work by that artist. In cases of inventive forgeries, thus, it is a

⁷ This would be the case in which a pianist, for example, produced a recording of Chopin’s Waltzes and then sold this to the market as a retrieved disc by a famous interpreter.

known style that is emulated, whether that of a particular artist or of an artistic movement (Hick 2010, 1947).

A part from music, cases of inventive forgery are very common in painting and literature. In painting, for instance, one popular example is van Meegeren's work *Supper at Emmaus* (ca. 1933). The painting counts as inventive forgery because it imitates some features of early Vermeer's style, without copying, however, any existing works by the Flemish master. As renowned, the forgery fooled many experts at the time, partly because of the scarcity of other early paintings by Vermeer to make comparison (Werness 1983, 25). In poetry, one famous example of inventive forgery, quoted by Margolis (1983, 162-63), is the case of the epic poem *Ossian*, published by the Scottish poet James Macpherson in 1760. Macpherson attributed to an ancient bard named Ossian verses he himself had written by emulating the style of fragments of genuine Gaelic poetry. Eventually, it was found out that Macpherson actually collected some old ballads, but had extensively readjusted them by introducing a massive deal of his own.

Among other artistic fields, music composition is especially suited for inventive forgery. One does not have to struggle to discover instances of this phenomenon spanning throughout the entire history of music. Mozart's *Adélaïde Concerto*, for example, is in fact a spurious work by Marius Casadesus, as are Handel's *Viola concerto in b-minor* and J.C. Bach's *Viola Concerto in c-minor* (see Saint-Foix 1939, 101-102). The famous *Adagio in g-minor*, which almost everybody knows as *Albinoni's Adagio*, was written by Remo Giazotto in 1958, while Valentin Strobél's *Concerto* is actually by François-Joseph Fétis (see Jackson 1940, 390-391). The best-known musical forgeries of all time, however, are probably the compositions by the famous twentieth-century Austrian violinist and composer Fritz Kreisler (also quoted by Levinson 1990, 102). In the early 1900s, Kreisler wrote several musical pieces in Baroque's style and presented them as Antonio Vivaldi's and Giuseppe Tartini's originals. Relevantly to our purposes here, when truth came out in 1935, Kreisler responded to critics' complaints by simply retorting that: «The name changes, the value remains » (quoted in Biancolli 1998, 168). In more recent years, a pretty sensational case occurred after the 'rediscovery' of six Haydn sonatas, hailed as the musical find of the century. In January 1994, the BBC Music Magazine published a statement by H.C. Robbins Landon, one of the most

acclaimed Haydn scholars of our century, certifying the sonatas as authentic. Less than a month later, the same magazine issued a retraction. The sonatas were in fact not by Haydn at all, but all newly written in the 1990s. Having labelled the works «The Haydn Scoop of the Century», Landon was forced to reconsider the sonatas as a brilliant yet «rather sinister» forgery (Beckerman 1994; Reece 2018a)⁸.

3. What Motivation for Musical Forgery?

Widespread a practice as it seems to be, musical forgery leaves us baffled when we try to investigate its motives. While cases of forgery in the visual arts have been intensively discussed in aesthetics and the philosophy of art⁹, philosophers have remained silent on the motivations for forgery in the musical realm. The issue, however, is much less obvious than one might think. Why would somebody bother to produce a musical forgery?

Although it is possible to make some money from such activity or acquire some transient mediatic resonance, there is no substantial incentive to forge musical works comparable to the lucrative rewards available to those who forge paintings or sculptures¹⁰. One cannot get rich by selling faked musical compositions, nor can one get personal fame or recognition, since to produce a musical forgery one has to disguise one own's name in the first place. The absence of practical purposes, however, makes the issue even more fascinating.

The first thing to notice is that, as is the case with many other human activities, there is probably no general or universal answer to the question of motivation for musical forgery. The psychological reasons that push someone to forge a musical work may vary as widely as those involved in any other kind of human activities. Moreover, it must be noted that musical forgeries are 'scholarly' as much as artistic projects, and often very complex ones – requiring thorough knowledge of

⁸ There is also suspicion surrounding a great many other works, for example Haydn's 2nd Horn Concerto and others. See Feder (2001).

⁹ For an overview of the debate see Goodman (1986); Dutton (1983); Morton and Foster (1991); Bowden (1999); Kivy (2001); Wreen (2002); Kulka (2005).

¹⁰ Though in the visual arts forgers generally produce their fakes for the money they bring, in the twentieth century they have often tried to find a moral justification for their activities. The famous Dutch forger Van Meegeren, for example, claimed that he counterfeited paintings as a tool to take revenge of the critics who had humiliated him as an artist.

the chosen author's or period's style, as well as the necessary technical ability to imitate it. As such, the invocation of reasons can hardly explain them fully. What is sure, however, is that the rationale for musical forgery seems to be less materialistic than that for its visual counterpart. As historian Anthony Grafton (1990) has argued, relevant motivations for forgery in music may include the gratification that arises from testing one's technical mastery; the enjoyment of perfectly reproducing a style; the satisfaction of a virtuosic endeavour; or even the pleasure of inventing and playing works in a style for which one has an affinity. Importantly, sentimental factors also play a decisive role in pushing one to forge music. In particular, according to Grafton, one might be led to musical forgery by a form of profound veneration and love for the forged author: «in most cases in which forgers have attributed greater deeds, more magnanimous sentiments, and more eloquent words to historical figures than the record warrants, *love* has probably been their preeminent motivation» (1990, 39, my emphasis).

Interestingly, a sentimental penchant of this sort might have actually been one of the main drives behind Mrs. Rosemary Brown's forger activity. As Reece (2018b) claims, Rosemary Brown can be seen as a late-age musical prodigy who, due to the accident of her birth and class and gender, never had any proper chance for higher musical education. Despite the paucity of her upbringing, the woman cultivated an intense fascination with canonical pieces in classical music and a real obsession for their venerable 'dead' authors. Writing musical works in the style of her beloved composers – and being able to do it successfully – represented a way for her to satisfy this longing, even though she was arguably aware that the objects of her 'backward-looking passion' were merely fabricated. On this account, a crucial element to understand her story might be the sheer pleasure she gleaned from immersing herself in, impersonating with and recreating the beloved historical idiom of her favourite composers, whether she acted consciously or unconsciously. So strong was her attraction for the great composers of the past, and so precarious her mental health, that Rosemary ended up becoming a 'music psychotic', haunted by the ghosts of her dead idols (Reece 2018b, 19).

This obsession for artistic geniuses of the past and the products of their minds, however, is in fact very common in our cultural milieu. In the Occident, it seems that we all tend to care much about who

created a work of art and when: our responses to the arts are profoundly affected by this information. Even today, in the age of image replication and proliferation, we are willing to travel distances to view some authentic art objects, although there are many reproductions around that may offer us rewarding aesthetic experiences. In the domain of classical music as well, our aesthetic appreciation is deeply influenced by ideas of authorship and authenticity. Among other things, this explains why, after revelation that the Landon's retrieved 'Haydn' sonatas were a twentieth-century forgery, no one has dared to perform them in public anymore, although when information about the sonatas' origins was still undisclosed, authoritative interpreters had deemed them of great value, and worthy of becoming as widely renown as possible¹¹. Relevantly, the importance we Westerners attribute to authorship is not equally shared by other world cultures. Most Asian countries, for instance, interpret what is to be aesthetically valued in terms that are not reconcilable with ours. This accounts for the fact that many sanctuaries in the Far East are cyclically rebuilt, reconstructed, replicated, and relocated: in the context of local culture it is just the aspect of the temple and not its material origins that hosts its value (Lowenthal 1994, 63; Han 2017, 67).

On the other hand, we should not forget that the high value we place on authenticity is a modern phenomenon in our culture too. The same pejorative meaning of the term forgery, as we understand it today, is a post-nineteenth-century concern that grew out of the increasing status gained by individual artists and composers. During the Renaissance, for example, artists took on trainees who studied painting techniques by copying the works and styles of the master. These works were not considered 'forgeries' in any negative sense, but rather 'tributes' to the master, if not 'originals' in the first place. Over the course of the subsequent centuries, however, the well-documented rise of the middle classes, alongside the emancipation of the individual artist and later, the composer (Goehr 2004; 2007), brought to the increasing importance assumed by authorship over content and fuelled the emergence of the cult of artistic genius. These social processes contributed to reposition art, with music included, as a cultural commodity, which

¹¹ The famous pianist and musicologist Paul Badura-Skoda, for example, recorded a CD of the six forged Haydn-Sonatas in 1995. See Beckerman (1994).

began attaching previously unknown importance to works by particular, identifiable artists or musicians. Eventually, this resulted in the current aesthetic policy (Stalnaker 2013, 408) that brings us to seeking out originals even when we are unable to distinguish them from forgeries or copies. In adopting this policy, we appear to recognize, even if not explicitly, that concerns others than purely artistic or aesthetic should take precedence in how we appreciate and evaluate art¹².

These considerations may lead us reconsider our interest for authenticity in the terms of a process of cultural indoctrination, one closer to a form of fetishism than to a sound aesthetic practice. From this perspective, rather than just a mythomaniac, Mrs. Brown can be better thought of as an exemplary *representative*, if not even a *victim*, of our own culture legacy, whose musical forgeries, in turn, appear as the illegitimate children of the commodity driven musical world we all live in.

4. Fetishism?

Contemporary philosophers have long tried to rescue our preference for originals from the fetishist allegation. The issue has given rise to one established debate in aesthetics, mainly revolving around the value of authentic art objects and their forged counterparts. The deepest question in the debate is simply, why authenticity matters? One could argue that a work's status as a forgery might make no difference to its aesthetic appreciation. When we cannot see a difference in a forgery, or when a work of art satisfies us, it should be aesthetically irrelevant who created it and when. To put the question in its strongest form, suppose not just the common recipient, but even the greatest connoisseurs will never be able to perceive any difference between two works, an original and a faked one. In this case, what could there possibly be a justification to prefer the first to the second?

Putting aside the cultural value we attribute to original objects, some authors have argued that there simply is no relevant ground for

¹² This explains why the discovery that a work is by the hand of a famous artist rather than of his/her pupil (cf., for example, the famous cases of Rembrandt's *The Unconscious Patient* or Caravaggio's *The Cardsharps*) suddenly invests it with new attractive qualities that make its market value increase exponentially (Harrison 1968, 121). Importantly, in this case the artwork in question is not cherished because of its perceptible qualities, but because of the artist it came into contact with.

such a preference (Lessing 1965; Zemach 1986, 1989; Jaworski 2013). If no aesthetic difference can be perceived between two works, we have no reasons for discriminating against the forgery. For example, since both the experts like H. Robbins Landon and the general audience at large enjoyed the six 'Haydn' sonatas as much as Haydn's authentic ones, then the pieces should be deemed of equal value.

Underlying this position is the formalist assumption that aesthetic appreciation depends merely on the visual, auditory or otherwise sensual appearance of a work of art. In the words of Nick Zangwill, a proponent of this approach, aesthetic appreciation relies on those properties «that are determined solely by sensory or physical properties – so long as the physical properties in question are not relations to other things and other times» (Zangwill 2001, 56). This claim is often traced back to the approaches of early twentieth-century art theorists such as Clive Bell (1913) and Roger Fry (1920), who affirmed that an artwork's aesthetic merit derives entirely from abstract features of its appearance, such as a painting's line, colour and spatial organization (Bell 1992, 123-124). A consequence of this view, which applies to music as well as to the visual arts, is the idea that to evaluate a work of art we should not draw on external, contextual or historical knowledge, but confine ourselves to direct scrutiny of the work, whether looking at, listening to or reading off its surface features. Aesthetic evaluation must be independent of all knowledge a viewer may bring to a work. In this sense, the fact that a work is a forgery cannot affect its appraisal. When we are captivated by an inauthentic musical piece, the experience we have is an aesthetic one in every proper sense of the word. For example, many music experts are known to enjoy Kreisler's faux nineteenth-century music (see Biancolli 1998). Similarly, people take aesthetic pleasure in 'Albinoni's Adagio' despite common knowledge that the piece was actually composed by Giazotto in the twentieth-century. According to the formalist, these aesthetic responses are genuine, independently of the authenticity of the relevant pieces which engendered them – or lack thereof. To affirm the value of a work of art and music, and then turn around and deny it once the work is known to be a forgery, would be just hypocrisy or snobbery (Lessing 1965; Zemach 1986).

Because external or historical knowledge has such a powerful impact on our standard experience of art, however, formalism has

appeared counterintuitive to many in the aesthetic community (Lamarque 2010, 122). Those who reject it have insisted that a work's evaluation depends not just on its 'form' but also on how an artwork was made, when, by whom and against what cultural background, and that in this sense, authenticity has a great role to play. Their arguments have come in two varieties.

One variety claims that the reasons to prefer the original to the forgery are not aesthetic but moral: because forgeries are easily mistaken for originals they can be used to deceive (Dutton 1993, 2003; Korsmeyer 2008, 2019).

It is a moral and social conditioning, not aesthetics *per se*, that makes forgeries unacceptable to us. Works of art, besides being formally attractive, are manifestations of both individual and collective values, in virtually every conceivable way. They enable us to understand the development of our civilization in time «as an intelligible history of the expression of values, beliefs, and ideas, both for artists and their audiences » (Dutton 2003, 270). When in front of a forgery, not only are we being deceived about the history of the work, but also about the history of the artistic genre to which the work belongs, and, consequently, about the cultural and social sensitivity from which the work originated. To study a fake Liszt as a true one tampers our understanding of Liszt as a composer, the evolution of post-romantic musical structures and the nineteenth-century music climate in general. What is more, replicas and forgeries may also be counter-educational with respect to the way in which people conceive of their own culture, becoming prompters of deception for future generations, who can be misled in their evaluation of the past (Korsmeyer 2008, 121).

One problem for the moral justification, as underlined by Stalnaker (2013, 462) is that it cannot account for why we prefer to be in contact with an authentic work even when there is no deception involved, that is, when the forgery is clearly known as such. If, to better suit the many visitors who visit the Uffizi every day, Botticelli's Primavera and a high-quality, clearly labelled copy were hanging in different parts of the Museum, most of us would still choose to line up in front of the 'real' thing. Weirdly enough, we would do so though despite being unable to tell if the works were switched.

The second variety of arguments try to overcome these difficulties by pointing to specific 'proveniential properties' (Davies 2009,

220) of a work of art – historical, contextual, relational – that do not affect the way a work looks or sounds, but do allegedly affect its aesthetic appreciation. In this view, what we admire in a work of art includes much more than what our eyes or ears can grasp (see Walton 1970; Sagoff 1978, 2014; Wollheim 1980; Levinson 1979; Danto 1981; Dutton 1979; Currie 1989; among the many). Our appreciation of art is shaped by what we know about an object's history. One reason for this is ontological. Levinson (1979; 2007), for example, has contended that a work of art is a historical artifact, object or structure that is the product of a particular individual's invention at a particular time and place; in this sense, all these pieces of information have consequences for how we properly experience, understand, and evaluate it. This position is generally known as 'contextualism' in the literature. In a contextualist perspective, artworks are essentially «historically embedded objects» (Levinson 2007, 4) or «historical individuals» (Rohrbaugh 2003, 177), thus they can have neither art status, nor identity, nor aesthetic properties, nor aesthetic meaning, outside or apart from the contexts in which they have arisen and in which they are produced. A consequence of this idea is that any appropriate appraisal of art is inevitably bound up with cultural knowledge coming from sources outside the work. Art requires the identification of a relevant context to be brought into focus, including the circumstances under which a work was produced and the type of procedures involved. Cultural and historical knowledge may therefore legitimately inflate or deflate appreciation.

A concern about this position is that claiming that works of art are 'historically-embedded objects' does not give us any principled reason why proveniential properties should play a key role when it comes to appreciating and evaluating them. Many objects, in fact all human artefacts, are historically-embedded. Nevertheless, we do not always include facts about their origins in our appraisal of them, nor deem the context of production essential to their identification. We evaluate a steak knife for its ability to cut meat, regardless of who made it and where. We appreciate parquet flooring and wooden furniture for their smoothness and the warm quality they convey to a space without scrutinizing their origins. Even our appreciation of food is very often irrespective of who cooked it and how, although part of the joy of eating relies admittedly on the belief that we are eating certain things

(Danto 1981, 14; Korsmeyer 1999, 92). What the contextualist needs to show, thus, is why the art case should be any different from other cases; in other words, they have to explain what is so special about art that makes historical and contextual factors central to its evaluation. This, in turn, amounts to prove that proveniential properties – those on which authenticity resides – are artistically relevant in the first place.

Importantly, answering to these questions is also fundamental if one wants to ground the difference between an original work and a forgery.

5. Originality and Creativity

One possible strategy to support the contextualist claim is to take into account the second principal meaning that the word authentic takes in the philosophical jargon (see: Kivy 1995, 108). Authenticity, in this sense, is not a matter of a work's essential relationship to its origins (who created it and when) but is rather the property of an object of being 'original' – an innovative product of the artist's genius. We say that an artwork is authentic, i.e. original, when it challenges 'prevailing taste', is 'ingenious' or 'ground-breaking' (Gracyk 2009, 156; Dutton 2003, 267). While the relevance of the first meaning of authenticity is debatable, the artistic import of the second seems relatively uncontroversial¹³. A relevant part of what we admire and enjoy in music and art is innovation, the capacity of generating new artistic paths and solutions from pre-established conditions. All things being equal, a work of art that is an original expression of an artist's genius is more aesthetically valuable to us than a derivative one: it opens up new perspectives, excites our imagination in new ways, or stimulates unusual forms of aesthetic pleasure among the audience (Young 2006, 468)¹⁴.

¹³ Consider however that in earlier periods of art history, artistic excellence was often attributed to artists who were closely following rather than infringing convention. Arguments against the aesthetic relevance of originality can be found in Meiland (1983, 121-2) and Vermazen (1991, 276-277). Vermazen, in particular argues that the reason why we think originality gives artworks value is that many works do have value in virtue of properties that also help make them original. This leads us to falsely assume that they have value in virtue of their originality.

¹⁴ Quoting Kivy (2001), Young calls this 'personal authenticity'. That works can be *fully* original in this sense is questionable, for each work of art is at least partially derivative to the extent that it is indebted with an existing artistic tradition. This, however, does not remove the

Relevantly, originality, as an artistic merit, is intimately related to our concept of artistic creativity if not the very same property as creativity (Grant 2018, 333). This means that if we want to explain how a work is original we have to explain how it is creative in the first place. But what is creativity?

Although essential to our conception of art, creativity is a problematic, not to say contentious notion. There are indeed as many different postulations on the meaning of creativity as there are disputes over the sense in which a particular composer or artist may be considered 'creative'. Despite the great variety of approaches available on the table (Gaut & Livingston 2003; Krausz, Dutton & Bardsley 2009; Paul & Kaufman 2014; Gaut & Kieran 2018), a somewhat classic account of creativity has been provided by Margaret Boden's (2004; 2009; 2010).

On a very general level, Boden takes creativity to be the capacity of a composer or an artist to generate ideas or contents that are both *new*, *surprising* and *positively valuable*. Notice that, by this definition, creativity involves not only novelty but also value, a position also shared by the majority of authors (Gaut & Livingston 2003, 8; Sternberg & Lubart 1999, 3; Kieran 2014, 125). We may think that a certain product is surprising and innovative; if we cannot find any worth in it, we wouldn't call it creative. Creativity, in this sense, is the quality of objects – both artistic and non-artistic – which exhibit 'originality' but are also considered 'valuable' – whatever definition of value we rely on¹⁵.

According to Boden, among the several forms that artistic creativity can take, three major kinds can be identified (2004, 3; 2010). The first – not directly related to music – is what she calls «combinational creativity» (2004, 7). This involves making unfamiliar combinations of familiar or already existing ideas. Examples include poetic imagery, creative associations in visual arts, collage in painting or textile art, and analogies. (Boden 2004, 3). The other two types of creativity are more relevant from a strictly musical point of view, and involve either

possibility that it be innovative, for tradition provides a background for the artist's creative innovation.

¹⁵ Of course, value can have a wide range of meanings: a musical work can be musically valuable to a particular audience, technically valuable to the development of a musical instrument, compositionally valuable as a new musical form or structure, and so on. All these values, however, seem to contribute to the work overall artistic value.

exploring or *transforming* what Boden refers to as the artist's «conceptual spaces» (Boden 2004, 4). Conceptual spaces are «structured styles of thought» which derive from a person's own cultural background; they are inherited – in the sense that they aren't originated by one individual mind; and include «any disciplined way of thinking that's familiar to (and valued by) a certain social group» (Boden 2004, 4): ways of literary writing, styles of sculpture, painting, or music are prominent examples.

In Boden's view, «exploratory creativity» takes place when an artist or composer explores the edges and boundaries of a conceptual space, testing what can be done within an existing style, and finding new areas and directions in which to take the artistic act. Exploratory creativity is valuable because it enables the audience to see possibilities they hadn't glimpsed before and appreciate what potential a certain style of thinking has (Boden 2004, 4-5). «Transformational creativity», on the other hand, involves artistic acts which, having explored one existing conceptual space, set out to transform and redefine it. As a result of the artist's 'transformative' creative action, a pre-existing style is transformed in a way that makes supposedly «unthinkable» ideas – thoughts which previously (within the untransformed conceptual space) were literally inconceivable – to come about.

Without getting into the details of Boden's theory, what is important to notice is that in all forms of creativity she describes, there is a direct correlation between the composer's conceptual space and his/her perceived 'creativity'. According to Boden, to understand whether a work can actually be considered creative (i.e., both innovative and valuable), we must have a sense of the *socio-cultural context* in which the artist was acting, and which determined the prevailing «thinking style» of her epoch. In other words, defining art as essentially 'creative' means taking into account how artists work within the conventions and limitations of a given historical period so as to explore or transform – in Boden's terms – the possibilities inherent in the prevailing 'conceptual space' of their time. Events occurred in the provenance context of an artwork, comprising the life and experience of the creator, play thus a fundamental role in our evaluation of art as a creative endeavour. Interestingly, this ties Boden's account of creativity to the other approaches in aesthetics which identify an artwork's value with the character of the artist's achievement or performance in

creating the work (Dutton 1979, 305, 2009; Davies 2004, 200-205). According to Denis Dutton, in particular, musical works, as much as works of art in general, can be regarded as 'creative achievements' in that they represent ways in which certain human beings have overcome a number of technical and conventional constraints, making do with available materials and styles with the aim to produce an artistic result (Dutton 2009, 186-187). The stylistic or historical 'space' against which artworks are created is for Dutton the necessary ground against which to assess the works' value. In this sense, to appreciate how successful an artist was in her creative attainment (i.e. how original, innovative and valuable) we must have sense of the challenges she had to face, even though the final product may be designed for our appreciation as an object of contemplation in its own right, i.e., independently of the efforts of the creator herself and of the context in which she has worked.

Interpreting creativity as a process of exploration or transformation of an existing conceptual space helps us tie our evaluation of an artwork to its context of origins, thus connecting the first to the second meaning of authenticity (i.e., correct attribution to originality). To the extent to which we assume that art (whatever else is true of it) is 'creative', proveniential properties need to count as artistically relevant. More than a form of cultural indoctrination, our preference for authentic artworks reflects therefore our tendency to regard art as a special sort of creative enterprise, special because it somehow embodies features of the individual who produced it (Farrelly-Jackson 1997, 144). The notion of authenticity, thus, is as much internal to our idea of creativity as the idea of creativity is to our concept of art.

This has consequence for the way in which music and art in general are appraised. Considering a musical piece as just a pleasant arrangement of notes cannot be enough for a fuller appreciation and understanding of the piece as a work of art, namely, as a product of human creativity. We also need to consider how the pleasing harmony of notes is a solution to a problem – a demand one existing 'conceptual space' has placed on the composer, and the composer has addressed in an original and valuable way.

6. Conclusion. Back on Musical Forgery

Equipped with these conceptual tools, we can now go back to examine the issue of musical forgery.

As a way of comparison, let us consider first Liszt's authentic oeuvre. One of the reasons why we take the work of the Hungarian composer in such high esteem is because it is largely recognized that Liszt was able to explore the technical and aesthetic boundaries of nineteenth-century music, and piano music especially, in a pioneering and groundbreaking way. As a pianist, Liszt broke all rules, turning religious themes and sacral images into brilliant piano pieces, which he embellished with his own pianistic virtuosity. As a composer, Liszt can be considered the founder of a highly innovative style, as well as a forerunner of a whole new genre, the so-called symphonic poem (see Cormac 2017). Critics praise the harmonic density and intense melodic mysticism of Liszt's pieces, which seem to be ahead of their time in anticipating musical impressionism and even perhaps atonality and polytonality. Listeners appreciate how orchestration, piano technique and musical expressivity are stretched in his compositions to achieve extraordinary formal freedom and novelty of language. More importantly, everybody agrees that is the masterly, valuable manner in which these results are attained that makes Liszt the great composer we believe he is. Liszt, it can be assumed, engaged in forms of originality and value: therefore, we can easily recognise a creative achievement in his music.

Let us now turn to a present-day forger of Liszt. We can easily see that none of the previous considerations apply in this case. Today, Liszt's compositional style no longer represents a novelty for audiences, let alone an aesthetic obstacle. None would claim that Liszt's music is '*Unmusik*', as Brahms once had to define it (quoted in Bartok 2006, 60) Pianists play Liszt, singers sing Liszt, and audiences appreciate Liszt. The modern forger does not need to overcome any technical or stylistic barrier, struggle against any convention, challenge any contemporary praxis. She no longer needs to explore or transform the musical idiom as the 'real' Liszt did, precisely because Liszt has already done so. For the same reason, no twentieth-century Liszt forgery, however appealing to the ear or cleverly structured it might be, could be praised to be «ahead of its time», since it will necessarily be, by its very

nature, a conservative piece of music. In Boden's terms, the 'conceptual space' that the forger occupies is markedly different from Liszt's. As a result, no forgery of Liszt can be recognised as 'creative', or at least not in the same way that authentic work is, because the forger has not engaged in the same exploratory and transformative process the 'real' Liszt did, even if her final product may be sonically accepted as 'sounding like Liszt'. Consequently, her forgery would not even be 'art' in a proper sense, at least to the extent that it is a misrepresented creative achievement. In this dichotomy between 'then' and 'now', we are justified in favouring the authentic Liszt.

Notice that these considerations also provide us with a criterion for assessing how 'successful' a certain musical forgery may be. If we assume that the general purpose of a forgery is to deceive the recipients about its true nature, a successful musical forgery will be one that looks more 'trustworthy' and/or harder to disclose. Obviously, not all musical forgeries are the same, in that not all forgeries are equally capable to deceive their audience. Presumably, this depends to a considerable extent on factors external to the music itself, and related to the concocted history of the piece's retrieval, the causal connections with the alleged composer's biography, the reliability of the forger's sources etc.

Drawing on our previous discussion, however, we can identify some broadly conceived artistic features that will arguably contribute to make a forgery more plausible. The first thing to consider is that each composer possesses a unique and distinctive style in terms of formal arrangements, preferred solutions, and harmonic decisions that we expect to recognize in any new works he/she produces. To imitate the creative authorship of a certain composer, a musical forger must thus be able to write music in the composer's recognizable style, infusing in the forged piece a sufficient amount of personal expression to give demonstration of the specific idiom of the composer him/herself. This, however, won't be enough to turn the piece into a 'trustworthy' forgery. Just like a caricature or a parody, a forgery that follows too closely the dictates of a certain style has little chance to appear fully convincing, and may be easily revealed as such. If we follow our former definition of creativity, we can rather infer that a forgery will be more successful the more it combines expected familiar features of the composer's style with unexpected, unfamiliar details. As Boden argues

(2004, 269-276) unpredictability – the capacity of an artist to push through the boundary of a style and subvert it – is indeed one standard characteristic we attribute to the musical (and artistic) genius. In this sense, a good forgery is one that balances stylistic imitation with some infringements and transgressions of the very rules that each style poses; which in turn requires considerable artistic sensitivity and inventiveness on the part of the forger, if not creativity in a proper sense.

We can find evidence of this in one of Mrs. Brown's music compositions, the 'Liszt-inspired' piano piece titled *Grübelei*, which is generally considered her most convincing forgery, way above other pieces in Rosemary's repertoire (Jeffries 2019). *Grübelei* is actually a very unusual work, and, remarkably, one that is even difficult to attribute at first listening. According to Mrs Brown, 'Liszt' began dictating it *on air* during a documentary made by the BBC in 1969, but at the beginning she found herself unable to cope with the musical complexity. The piece counts indeed several markers of technical difficulty. It employs two time-signatures juxtaposed (a constant 5-against-3 rhythm) as well as changes of key, chord extension, chromatic modulation, and comprises accidentals thrown everywhere. During the taping, Rosemary even asked Liszt if perhaps he could change to another Hungarian rhapsody or something of that sort, but Liszt assured her that *Grübelei* «was going to impress the listeners far more» (quoted in Gush 2011). As predictable, Liszt was right, for while many others of Brown's transcriptions might be considered only competent pastiche, this work is a different, far more innovative bit of musical imagination, featuring impressionistic harmonies and simultaneous meters that would have been daring by the standards of 1886. Combining accurate stylistic imitation – some passages closely resemble cadenzas in Liszt's *Liebesträume* – with unexpected and much more contemporary musical elements, the piece reminds us of the historical Franz Liszt: in his lifetime, a man who could never be accused of being old-fashioned.

If expected-unexpected musical forgeries such as *Grübelei* represent the perfect invitation for deception, thus, it is because they comply with our standard construal of the artistic genius, and reflect a tension that is inherent in our conception of creativity, as the capacity – in the words of neurologist Jason Brown – «of generating recognizable patterns while being concurrently able to constantly reinvent or modify these patterns» (Brown 1997, 37).

At the end of the day, maybe this is what really turns a forger into a *great* forger: that she is able to become an artist herself.

Bibliography

Bartok B. 2006: *Ecrits*, P. Albèra & P Szendy (eds.), Editions Contrechamps, Open Edition Books.

Bell Clive 1913: *Art*, Chatto & Windus, New York.

Bell C. 1914: *The Aesthetic Hypothesis: Significant Form and Aesthetic Emotion*, in P. Alperson (ed) *The Philosophy of the Visual Arts*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992.

Beckerman M. 1994: *All Right, Maybe Haydn Didn't Write Them. So What?*, «New York Times» (May 15 1994).

Biancolli A. 1998: *Fritz Kreisler: Love's Sorrow, Love's Joy*, Amadeus Press, Bradford, West Yorkshire.

Boden M.A. 2004: *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms*, Routledge, London-New York.

Boden M.A. 2009: *Creativity: How Does It Work?*, in M. Krausz, D. Dutton, K. Bardsley (eds.) *The Idea of Creativity*, Brill, Leiden.

Boden M. A. 2010: *Creativity and Art: Three Roads to Surprise*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Bowden R. 1999: *What is Wrong with an Art Forgery? An Anthropological Perspective*, «The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism» 57, 3, , pp. 333-343.

Brown J. 2017: *Metapsychology of the Creative Process: Continuous Novelty as the Ground of Creative Advance*, Imprint Academic.com 2017.

Brown R. 1974: *Immortals at my Elbows*, London, Bachman & Turner.

Brown R. 1986: *Look Beyond Today*, Bantam Press, London.

Cormac J. 2017: *Liszt and the Symphonic Poem*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017.

Ewell B. 2014: *Artful Dodgers: Fraud and Foolishness in the Art Market*, Abbott Press, Bloomington (IN).

Danto A.C. 1981: *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1981.

Davies D. 2004: *Art as Performance*, Blackwell, Oxford 2004.

Douglas M. 2001: *Rosemary Brown, a Friend of Dead Composers, Dies at 85*, «The New York Times» (2 December 2001).

Dutton D. 1993: *Art Hoaxes*, in G. Stein (ed) *Encyclopedia of Hoaxes*, Gale Research, Detroit. Available at: [http://www.denisdutton.com/art hoaxes.htm](http://www.denisdutton.com/art%20hoaxes.htm).

Dutton D. 1979: *Artistic Crimes*, «British Journal of Aesthetics» 19, 4, pp. 302-341.

Dutton D. 2003: *Authenticity in Art*, in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford University Press, New York (NY), pp. 324-343.

Dutton D. 2009: *The Art Instinct. Beauty, Pleasure, & Human Evolution*, Bloomsbury Press, New York.

Feder G. 2001: *Joseph Haydn: Work List*, in S. Sadie, J. Tyrrell (eds.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Farrelly-Jackson S. 1997: *Fetishism and the identity of art*, «British Journal of Aesthetics», 37, 2, , pp.138-154.

Fry R., 1920: *Vision and Design*, Chatto & Windus.

Gaut, B., Kieran, M. [eds] 2018: *Creativity and Philosophy*, London-New York, Routledge.

Gaut, B., P. Livingston. 2003: *The creation of art. Issues and perspectives*, in B. Gaut and P. Livingston (eds), *The Creation of Art. New Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.1-32.

Goehr L. 2004: *Dissonant works and a listening public*, in T. Huhn (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Goehr L. 2007: *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works. An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007.

Goodman N. 1968: *Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis 1968.

Goodman N. 1986: *A Note on Copies*, «The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism» 44, 3, , pp. 291-292.

Gracyk T. 2009: *Authenticity and art*, in S. Davies, S., M.K. Higgins, R. Hopkins, R. Stecker, D.E. Cooper (eds.), *A Companion to Aesthetics (Second edition)*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden (MA).

Grafton A. 1990: *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Grant J. 2018: *Creativity as an Artistic Merit*, in B. Gaut, M. Kieran (eds.), *Creativity and Philosophy*, Routledge, London-New York.

Gush E. 2011: *The Music of Rosemary Brown from a Pianist's Perspective*, «Scribd» (May 15 2011). Available at: <https://it.scribd.com/document/50093980/music-of-Rosemary-Brown-article>

Han B.C. 2017: *Shanzai. Deconstruction in Chinese*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA).

Harrison A. 1968: *Works of Art and Other Cultural Objects*, «Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society» 68, pp. 105-128.

Hick D.H. 2010: *Forgery and Appropriation in Art*, «Philosophy Compass» 5, pp. 1047-1056.

Jackson C. 1940: *Pseudonymity: A modern case*, «The Journal of Religion», 20, 4, pp. 390-391.

Jaworski P.M. 2013: *In Defense of Fakes and Artistic Treason: Why Visually-Indistinguishable Duplicates of Paintings Are Just as Good as the Originals*, «The Journal of Value Inquiry» 47, 4, pp. 391-405.

Jeffries S. 2019: *All hail Rosemary Brown – the dinner lady who played like a pianist possessed*, «The Guardian» (5 December 2019). Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/dec/05/rosemary-brown-liszt-beethoven-pianist>

Kivy P. 1995: *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*, Cornell University Press Ithaca (NY) 1995.

Kivy P. 2001: *New Essays on Musical Understanding*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Kieran M. 2014: *Creativity as a virtue of character*, in E. Paul, S. Kauffman (eds.), *The Philosophy of Creativity: New Essays*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 125-44

Korsmeyer C. 1999: *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (NY).

Korsmeyer C. 2008: *Aesthetic deception: On encounters with the past*, «The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism» 66, n. 2, pp. 117-127.

Korsmeyer C. 2019: *Things. In Touch with the Past*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Krausz M., Dutton, D. Bardsley K. [eds.], 2009: *The Idea of Creativity*, Brill, Brill.

Kulka T. 2005: *Forgeries and Art Evaluation: An Argument for Dualism in Aesthetics*, «The Journal of Aesthetic Education» 39, n. 3, 2005, pp. 58-70.

Lamarque P. 2010: *Work and Object. Explorations in the Metaphysics of Art*, New York (NY), Oxford University Press.

Lessing A. 1965: *What Is Wrong with a Forgery*, «The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism» 23, 4, pp. 461-47.

Levinson J. 1979: *Defining Art Historically*, «British Journal of Aesthetics» 19, n.3, 1979, pp. 21-33.

Levinson J., 1990: *Music, Art, and Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics*, Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press 1990.

Levinson J. 2007: *Aesthetic Contextualism*, «Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics», 4, n. 3, 2007, pp. 1-12.

Lowenthal D. 1994: *Criteria of Authenticity*, in K.E. Larsen and N. Marstein (eds.), *Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention*, Bergen, Tapir Publishers 1994, pp. 35-64.

Margolis J, 1983: *Art, Forgery and Authenticity*, in D. Dutton (ed) *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art*, Berkley, University of California Press 1983.

Meiland J.W., 1983: *Originals, Copies, and Aesthetic Value*, in D. Dutton (ed.), *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art*, Berkeley (CA), University of California Press 1983.

Morton L.H., Foster, T.R. 1991: *Goodman, Forgery, and the Aesthetic*, «The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism» 49, n. 2, 1991, pp. 155-159.

Rohrbaugh G., 2003: *Artworks as Historical Individuals*, «European Journal of Philosophy» 11, n. 2, 2003, pp. 177-205.

Reece F. 2018a: *Composing Authority in Six Forged 'Haydn' Sonatas*, «Journal of Musicology» 35, n.1, 2018, pp. 104-43.

Reece F. 2018b: *Rosemary Brown's Lisztian Ghost Writing*, «International Conference 'Elvis lives in Amsterdam Manifestations of the imaginary musician': Book of Abstracts», University of Amsterdam 29 Nov., 1 Dec. 2018. Available at: <https://asca.uva.nl/programme/conferences/elvis-lives-in-amsterdam/elvis-lives-in-amsterdam.html?cb>

Sagoff M., 1978, *On Restoring and Reproducing Art*, «The Journal of Philosophy» 75, n. 9, 1978, pp. 453-470.

Sagoff M., 2014: *Art and Authenticity: A Reply to Jaworski*, «The Journal of Value Inquiry» 48, pp. 503-515.

Saint-Foix G. 1939: *A propos d'un Concerto attribué a Mozart*, «Revue de Musicologie», 19, 66/67, 1939, pp. 101-102.

Stalnaker N., 2013: *Fakes and Forgeries*, in B. Gaut and D.L. (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (3d Edition), Routledge, London-New York, pp. 395-407.

Sternberg R.J., T.I. Lubart., 1999: *The concept of creativity: Prospects and paradigms,* in R. J. Sternberg (ed.) *Handbook of Creativity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999.

Vermazen B. 1991: *The Aesthetic Value of Originality*, «Midwest Studies in Philosophy» 16, 1991, pp. 266-279.

Walton K.L., 1970: *Categories of Art*, «The Philosophical Review» 79, 3, 1970, pp. 334-367.

Werness H., 1983: *Han van Meegeren Fecit*, in D. Dutton (ed.), *The Forger's Art*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

Wollheim R. 1980: *Art and Its Objects*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Wreen M. 2002: *Forgery*, «Canadian Journal of Philosophy» 32, 2, 2002, pp. 143-166.

Young J.O. 2006: *Art, Authenticity and Appropriation*, «Frontiers in Philosophy in China», 3, 2006, pp. 455-476.

Zangwill N., 2001: *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, Cornell University Press Ithaca (NY) 2001.

Zemach E.M. 1986: *No Identification without Evaluation*, «The British Journal of Aesthetics» 26, 3, 1986, pp. 239-251.

Zemach E.M. 1989: *How paintings are*, «The British Journal of Aesthetics» 29, 1, 1989, pp. 65-71.