

“Rewriting” as an Inter-Textual Approach to Contemporary Composition. Three Sketches for Two Violins by Paolo Geminiani

The artistic path here proposed is that of a past which leaves again its traces through new sonorities, while new compositions are profoundly marked by the same past and musical echoes revive in contemporary violin writing. The *fil rouge* is the topic of **rewriting**. In other words, it is that stylistic and aesthetic cipher which is suitable for linking together two worlds so different from each other, such as music by Johann Sebastian Bach or Niccolò Paganini and new musical approach of contemporary violin music.

The Italian composer **Paolo Geminiani** [b.1960] guides us on his personal artistic research through three short pieces (or sketches) for two violins, inspired to J. S. Bach’s *Andante* (from *Sonata* BWV 1003), to 6th Caprice by N. Paganini and to an unpublished page by the philosopher/composer Giovanni Piana [1940-2019]. In his music, Paolo Geminiani aims at testing the timbre and all expressive potential of the violin in contemporary repertoire, while getting inspired by the experimental Italian research (F. Donatoni, A. Corghi, A. Solbiati, A. Guarnieri) and by the fecund tribute of mathematical patterns to composition.

In this context, “rewriting” is a *wish* and a *need* to rethink tradition in the contemporary age, with the aim of creating new artistic values; it is also a sort of reutilization of stylistic patterns from the past with the intention of proposing them again, deformed as they may appear, in the post-modern writing of the contemporary age. “Rewriting” represents a specific *inter-textual practice*, which originates from and within the comparison between musical texts, far away in space and time. One text enlightens the other, bringing out a character or highlighting a difference. In all cases, it is always an *interpretation*, both when the composers emulate their predecessors by reminding the listener of ancient music through their remake and when they keep their distance.

Paolo Geminiani, *Metonimie (Shadows of a Bach’s Andante)*, 2015, for Two Violins. It embodies the composer’s desire to “rewrite” the well-known *Andante* of the *Violin Sonata* No. 2, BWV 1003, composed by J. S. Bach, by combining short fragments of the original piece with newly composed, more rarefied ones, suffused with sounds and patterns typical of contemporary music. The piece, therefore, results in a complex network of connections, a “substitution of terms” - or metonymies - for the traditional musical phrase. This goal is achieved by structurally reinterpreting some of the fundamental ideas of Bach’s music (namely the two-part structure, the recurrence of voice articulation, and the typically Baroque contrast of a stable zone and a dynamic evolution). The choice of compositional material favours certain stylistic elements, which are emphasized gradually during the performance of the piece. Hence, the most prominent features are repeated quavers over a chromatically/diatonically descending bass, a descending four-semiquaver pattern of the first riff with an emphatically expressive connotation, as well as excerpts of original musical material which return in more elaborate guises.

Paolo Geminiani, *Allusions & Inferences (after Paganini)*, 2018, for Two Violins. The piece takes after the 6th Capriccio by Niccolò Paganini, a long and moving *cantabile* during which an incessant *tremolo* (of the left hand) sustains the melody. Paganinian echoes, references, interferences and short circuits come back to life here, this time through sundry interpolations almost deconstructed, with an explicit citation of the 16th Capriccio by Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695-1764). In other words, the piece shows us today the two faces of the Paganinian mood - *cantabile* and virtuosity - miraculously in balance.

Paolo Geminiani, *Restitutio memoriae (remembering Giovanni Piana)*, 2021, for Two Violins. At the end of the path, the composer Paolo Geminiani is inspired by an unpublished page by Giovanni Piana (titled by *Dodecaphonic Duet* for two violins), reinterpreting the original twelve-tone series (proposed by Piana himself at the beginning of his piece) in an absolutely freeway, sometimes incomplete or deliberately repetitive. However, in *Restitutio memoriae* the two violins are used in constant and

reciprocal interaction, resorting to *extended violin techniques*, stratification of the double stops and to different kinds of imitative passages (melodic, polyphonic, gestural, articulative).



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Biography

Archimie Duo sprang from the collaboration between the violinists **Alessandro Cazzato** and **Sharon Tomaselli**. They performed in major Festivals and Concert Halls, including: Spectrum Concert Series NYC, Carnegie Hall NYC, St. Martin in the Fields, Lucca International Festival, SKG Bridges Festival, BeArtive Management Company, Milano Spazio Classica, Florence Nova Musica. Their repertoire spans from Baroque to Contemporary music. They collaborate with Tactus Label for world premiere recording, including unpublished works by Felice Giardini and Franco Margola. Devoting to artistic research, they founded *ViolinisticaMente Music Collection* (devotes to new scores, didactics and tools for teachers and students). Cazzato is full-time Violin Professor at the Conservatory of Music “N. Rota”.

Paolo Geminiani studied in Composition and Electronic Music with A. Corghi, A. Solbiati, F. Donatoni, A. Guarnieri. He won and received commendations at many International Competitions. He is a Universal Edition composer and a full-time Professor at the Conservatory of Music “B. Maderna”, Cesena.

Links and more

<https://www.alessandrocazzato.com/projects/archimie-duo/>

<http://www.paologeminiani.it/rewritings/>

Recording

<https://www.alessandrocazzato.com/media/>

<https://soundcloud.com/alessandro-cazzato-778835717/paolo-geminiani-metonomie-shadows-of-a-bachs-andante-2015>

<https://soundcloud.com/alessandro-cazzato-778835717/paolo-geminiani-gesture-without-motion>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHR7RDPrt0A&t=2s>