

***Six miniatures for violin and piano* composed by Fritz Kreisler. Formal analysis and aspects of the accompaniment technique**

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Abstract: This article treats aspects of the accompaniment technique in six of Fritz Kreisler's most widely played miniatures: *Liebesfreud*, *Liebesleid*, *Schön Rosmarin*, *Caprice Viennois*, *Tambourin Chinoise* and *Syncopation*. The works are analysed both from a formal point of view and from an accompanist's point of view, who has to also know in detail the soloist's score in order to reveal certain meanders and agogic details of the musical discourse and in order to support and perfectly co-ordinate rhythmically and dynamically with the violinist's intentions. To this end, several personal grounds related to the vision of interpretation and the problematics of the accompaniment technique are presented with solutions and suggestions of exercises of the imagination. Additionally, each analysed title is followed by a YouTube link, through which the respective track can be listened to as played by violinist Florin Croitoru, accompanied by the undersigned.

Keywords: Kreisler, waltz, accompaniment, piano, violin.

1. Introduction

Born in Austria in 1875, Fritz Kreisler was one of the greatest virtuosos in the first half of the 20th century, a musician whose artistic career continues to represent a model worthy to follow. Coming from late 19^h-century musical education, Kreisler benefited from the conquests of the technique of sound recording and rendition, being one of the first musicians, who became famous not only through concerts and recitals, but also through vinyl recordings and through radio broadcasts. Parallel to his performing activity, Kreisler composed stage music, a well appreciated string quartet and numerous miniatures for violin and piano, filled with that pre-war Viennese charm, which his warm sound, modulated by intense *vibrato* and combined with discrete *glissandos*, made unforgettable. At the same time, he also rearranged, recomposed and reorchestrated works belonging to previous composers in a very personal manner.

This text aims to bring to light the miniatures dedicated to the violin-piano duo. The fact that Fritz Kreisler was also a remarkable pianist means that

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his accompaniments were precious accomplishments. The composer himself stated that his works lose meaning without piano accompaniment (Lochner, 1957, p. 42). This is why the presence of a professional accompanist, in full command of their piano technique and used to play together with a solo performer and to deeply assimilate their stage partner's score, is important. Only in this way can a pianist offer a soloist both the freedom to fancifully carry out their musical discourse and the possibility of diversifying their artistic message through harmonic emphases, by evincing the contrapuntal technique, the rhythmic pattern and, last but not least, by revealing timbrality with the help of the sourdine and pedalling.

The genre of miniature is emblematic for the composer's works. His compositional debut is marked by three Viennese waltzes - *Liebesfreud*, *Liebesleid* and *Schön Rosmarin* – first published in the cycle *Alt-Wiener Tanzweisen* for violin and piano in 1905. These nowadays famous pieces can be found in all professional and amateur violinists' repertoire, being played on all the world stages or in restaurants, where *café-concert* bands still play. Their success in the era and the need of an adequate repertoire to his interpretative style determined Kreisler to always compose new miniatures. Some of them bear an opus number, for instance *Caprice Viennois*, *Op. 2*, *Tambourin Chinois*, *Op. 3*, *Romance*, *Op. 4* (published in 1910). Soon, however, the composer abandons numbering his opera, the miniatures being circulated only under their nevertheless very evocative names. Like, for example, *Toy Soldier's March* (1917), *Polichinele (Sérénade)* (1917), *La Gitana* (1917), *Aucassin and Nicolette*, *Medieval Canzonetta* (1917), *Marche Miniature Viennoise* (1925), *Syncopation* (1926), *The Shepherd's Madrigal* (1927) (after a German melody from the 18th century), *Gypsy Caprice* (1927) or *Cavatina* (1933). Towards the end of his life, Kreisler only composes sporadically. He adapts *Retrospection* and *Scherzo* from the *String Quartet in A Minor*, he composes *Viennese Rhapsodic Fantasietta* (1948) and *Episode* (1965).

Another field in which Kreisler created intensely is the one of "paraphrases", after the music of illustrious composers in the history of music. Initially Kreisler claimed that he had discovered the manuscripts of those pieces in archives in order to create a certain aura of interest and a feeling of novelty regarding the music. Only in 1935 did he admit that he had written them himself. Despite the reproaches and the criticism, Kreisler's popularity did not suffer, the composer considering them *a storm in a tea pot*. His miniatures are full of charm and imagination and are still part of concert life nowadays: *Allegretto in the Style of Boccherini* (1910), *Allegretto in the Style of Porpora* (1913), *Andantino in the Style of Martini* (1910), *Aubade Provençale in the Style of Couperin* (1911), *Chanson Louis XIII et Pavane in the Style of Couperin* (1910), *Preghiera in the Style of Martini* (1911), *Tempo din Menuetto in the Style of Pugnani* (1938) and *Variations on a theme by*

Corelli in the Style of Tartini (1910). Out of all these, maybe the most frequently played, also due to the fact that it is part of the didactic repertoire for violin, is *Prelude and Allegro in the Style of Pugnani* (1910).

Last but not least the arrangements for violin and piano of a few famous works belonging to notorious composers have to be mentioned: Albeniz's *Malaguena* and *Tango* (1927); Chaminade's *Spanish Serenade*; *Mazurkas* by Chopin (1915; 1930); *Humoresque* (1906), *Slavic Dances* (1914), *Song My Mother Taught Me* (1914) and *Negro Spiritual Melody* (*Larghetto* from Symphony Op. 95) (1914) by Dvořák; *Spanish Dance* from *La vida breve* by Manuel de Falla (1926); *Spanish Dance* (no. 5) by Granados (1915); *Spanish Serenade*, Op. 20 no. 2 by Glazunov; *Tambourine* by Leclair (1913); *Lied ohne Worte: May Breezes* by Mendelssohn (1913); *Rondo* (from the *Haffner Symphony*) by Mozart (1913); *Tambourine* by Rameau (1913); *Dances from Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov (1922); *Andante cantabile* and *Humoresque* by Tchaikovsky (1925-1926).

The influence of personality on music is perhaps clearest in Fritz Kreisler's case. This is manifested primordially in the highly sensitive interpretations, of superlative vocality, but also unexpectedly transpire in the case of the compositions or adaptations that the musician passionately and patiently polished his entire life. Probably the most obvious example to this end are the popular Viennese melodies, not devoid of a certain charm, but which Kreisler's genius propelled into eternity. Any trace of awkwardness in accompaniment and harmonisation or in treating the violin line have disappeared by magic. The original melodies are mostly quoted with precision but their outlines are full of altogether unexpected and perennial depth and expressiveness. "I began to compose and arrange as a young man. [...] What I composed and arranged was for my own use, reflected my own musical tastes and preferences. [...] it was not until years after that I [...] thought of publishing the pieces I had composed and arranged. [...] I have never written anything with the commercial idea of making it «playable». [...] I have always felt that anything done in a cold-blooded way for purely mercenary considerations somehow cannot be good. It cannot represent an artist's best." (Martens, 2007, p. 77)

In the following pages we will analyse a few of Kreisler's works especially through the lens of the accompanist's role and less through the much more interesting perspective of the violinist.

The three waltzes from „Old Vienna” are like ornaments chiseled with a jeweler's refinement and minuteness. They emanate the joy of carefree living in imperial Vienna, that so-called *gemütlich* (comfortable, cosy, snug), which so well characterises Kreisler's violin style. The small waltzes were initially attributed to Joseph Lanneri Johann Strauss the father. But Kreisler played these three pieces before their being published in 1905. The false attribution of

paternity was a deliberate gesture of Kreisler himself in order to confer definite success upon them but he would recognise their paternity in 1910. The waltzes were circulated in countless chamber or symphonic versions, including solo piano versions composed by Kreisler himself or arranged and recorded by Sergei Rachmaninoff.

2. *Liebesfreud* op. 10 no. 1¹

This is one of the pieces that is played most often by contemporary violinists, a piece joining differing emotions, moments of youthful enthusiasm but also nostalgia and sentimentalism. The waltz debuts in *Allegro* with a series of ascending arpeggios, proposed at the violin on double strings and markedly supported at the piano in *f* (fig. 1). The structure is ABACDCA.



Fig. 1 Fritz Kreisler, *Liebesfreud*, op. 10 no. 1, mm. 1-6

Period A debuts with an anacrusis, lending the miniature dance-specific momentum, which leans precisely on the general crotchet rest on the first beat in the third measure, perceived as an impulse for the unstressed beats. This effect is so strong that it creates a veritable springboard for the following melodic outline. Although the waltz debuts with an upbeat of one beat only (a crotchet), we immediately ascertain that the consistent anacruses are actually formed of two beats. The rhythmic type is maintained at the beginning of the second phrase, also (mm. 4-8), but Kreisler galvanises the outline through a hemiolic series, transforming the ternary pulsation into binary groups. We remark that while the violin plays a new formula in thirds, the piano continues to accompany in a ternary manner, in ascending arpeggios, a version obviously derived from the first motif. The consistent period resumes the two phrases

¹ Fritz Kreisler, *Liebesfreud*. Violin: Florin CROITORU; Piano: Clementina RISTEA-CIUCU, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLYI23fKv9A>

with a slightly modified cadence and the entire edifice is repeated in order to be better consolidated in listeners' memory.

After this great spirited section, Kreisler proposes a new gracious and evocative outline. The dimension of the upbeat increases with another one and a half beats, while the line of the violin diminishes, renouncing the amplification conferred by the double strings (fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Fritz Kreisler, *Liebesfreud op. 10 nr. 1*, mm. 31-38

The piano accompaniment, which until now had limited itself to a rhythmic-harmonic exposition of the waltz pulsation, grows thinner, but, at the same time, discreetly proposes a counter-melody, whose evolution becomes increasingly interesting, more involved in the discourse until the moment when it will become an equal partner to the violin.

From the point of view of construction, Period B maintains the same pattern as in A. After a simple, symmetrical square phrase with the upbeat amplified to five quavers there follows a consistent hemiolic binary unit, in which the upbeat is reduced to only a sixteenth note. This new structure is repeated, as well, but the repetition is done identically only at the violin, the piano becoming increasingly involved, imitating the violin line.

After resuming the double A period in the same *C Major* tonality, Kreisler proposes an ample three-part structure (Period C) in the tonality of the subdominant (*F Major*), which returns to the gracious atmosphere and the evocative tone in B, while the second phrase reminds one of the double-string trajectory (thirds) enriched by a small formula (itself previously proposed in the second phrase from A). In fact, the whole material in the first section of C originates in the previously displayed material. In other words Kreisler's compositional effort does not include development; he merely builds on already utilised themes (fig. 3).



Fig. 3 Fritz Kreisler, *Liebesfreud op. 10 nr. 1*, mm. 81-86

As far as the piano accompaniment is concerned, it resumes its discreet role of rhythmic and harmonic support to the dance, with small emancipation tendencies towards the end of the phrases, where the waltz-specific rhythm comments through a descending chromatic itinerary.

As in the case of the previous structure (C), in section D the violin resumes the process of transforming the previously displayed thematic material, reassembling, with different results, elements of trill, arpeggio, five-quaver upbeat and the double strings. Beyond predominantly using the quaver pulsation, the composer galvanises the discourse by again involving the piano, which displays a series of rhythmic chords through repeated interventions in the high register. The timbre of the piano nearly transforms, so that we hear different timbres (brass in the middle register, to which the woodwinds answer in the high register), while the violin personifies the string group in the orchestra, that acts as a counterpoint to the complex outline.

We also remark that the first piano motif is made up of an ascending chromatic itinerary, a counterpoint to the contrary evolution of the violin, both derived from that apparently banal accompaniment formula in the conclusion of the C Period. As before, the composer repeats the newly displayed structure (D), following it up with Period C, as the entire waltz closes with a repetition of the first double A period.

Over the course of this spirited waltz, the pianist must take into account the violinist's manner of attack, the lengths and short durations of each sound, the stresses, the sudden changes of state marked through the pedalling technique, so that the timbres of the two instruments fuse to a point where a new, bright or sensitive sound results, capable of expressing the most intimate and profound experiences characteristic of human nature.

3. *Liebesleid op. 11 no. 2*²

A slow (the composer indicated *Tempo di landler*), sentimental, simple, slightly nostalgic waltz, composed out of sequenced phrases and structured as follows: ABCABC+Coda.

The first motif of Period A debuts with a one-beat upbeat (crotchet), a leap of one fourth, followed by a leap of a fifth, galvanised through the hemiolic technique (mm. 1-2; fig. 4).

² Fritz Kreisler. *Liebeslied*. Violin: Florin CROITORU; Piano: Clementina RISTEA-CIUCU. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUzMFv7qSpw>

LIEBESLEID

[Love's Sorrow]



Fig. 4 Fritz Kreisler, *Liebesleid* op. 11 nr. 2, mm. 1-13

The second motif is undulating, graduate, with the cadence on the subdominant. We have to remark the rhythmic type of the cadence, with short sounds (quavers followed by rests), which stress the nostalgic, evocative character of the melody. The following phrases sequence the pattern freely and have modified cadences, being galvanised through hemiolas. The second exposition (a double period) repeats the first section, with the piano discreetly acting in counterpoint.

The miniature continues with a new structure, which takes us to the area of the subdominant, *F Major – D Minor*, in order to cadence again to the base tonality, i.e. to Minor (fig. 5).



Fig. 5 Fritz Kreisler, *Liebesleid* op. 11 nr. 2, mm. 33-45

From a thematic point of view, the melody is simplified, but surges through the rhythmic-melodic galvanisation of the upbeat, three quavers in an ascending chromatic passage. We also have to remark that the cadence formula now appears in counterpoint at the piano. This new phrase is sequenced, as well, but the new structure, Period B, is no longer only made up of sequencing, as in the case of the double A period, but receives an apparently new

consecutive phrase, actually derived from the cadence formula of the last phrase in A. Here also the melodic course is fragmented, galvanised through shorter sounds (crotchets followed by rests), like sighs, a melodic pattern that justifies its appellation. This structure as well is repeated with a slight variation (more enthusiastically and more dynamically) by the violin and enriched through a piano counterpoint. Additionally to the motif, which is rippled with a cadence, Kreisler introduces a chromatic comment, sometimes simple, sometimes supported through itineraries of parallel descending sixths.

Without repeating the first structure A, Kreisler modulates to the *A Major* homonym. The tempo is slower, the discourse changes, it seems a remembrance of nostalgic memories. The melodic profile is wavy, gradually predominant, galvanised through hemiolas, overlapping the binary of the violin and the ternary accompaniment of the piano (fig. 6).



Fig. 6 Fritz Kreisler, *Liebesleid op. 11 nr. 2*, mm. 65 – 77

Only the upbeat is maintained, amplified at an octave, seventh and then sixth, outlining a descending itinerary, which underlines the feeling of nostalgia. As in the previous thematic displays, Kreisler repeats the entire structure, adding a piano commentary.

The miniature continues by concisely resuming the previous structures in *A Minor*, as the displays are no longer repeated. The small reprise continues with the slightly varied resumption of structure C in *A Major*, extended through a short coda, ornamented with trills and closed with a leap to the octave in the *flageolette*. There is a counterpoint at the piano in this simple ending, also. We remark the transformation of the rhythmic-melodic formula in the cadence, proposed at the piano, where the sounds are very short (the sixteenth notes), alternated with the longs ones (minims tied to dotted quavers), which also underline the nostalgic atmosphere.

The intimate, discreet sonority of the accompaniment, that has to impose a nostalgic atmosphere, sometimes dominated by resignation, sometimes by joy, has to predominate over the whole process of this waltz, while the dancing character can be maintained, despite the slow tempo through the anticipation of the second beat, which thus becomes slightly prolonged, a defining imprint of the performing style of the Viennese waltz.

4. *Schön Rosmarin op. 12 no. 3*³

Probably the most widely known and most frequently played waltz but also the most serene, spirited and dancy from this three-waltz cycle. Its structure is a simple, three-part ABA. As opposed to the previous miniatures, *Schön Rosmarin* proposes a much more alert movement of the violin line, with a predominant pulsation in quavers. The first phrase debuts with a four-quaver upbeat in an ascending arpeggio. Then we come across the spirited rhythmic formula specific to waltz, a shortened crotchet, followed by a quaver rest, a quaver and dotted crotchet (fig. 7).



Fig. 7 Fritz Kreisler, *Schön Rosmarin op. 12 nr. 3*, mm. 1-5

We ascertain that, excepting the arpeggios, the profile of the initial motif of section A possesses the same cadence formula, which we heard before in the previous pieces of the cycle. At the same time, the process of sequencing is reiterated (the upward transformation of the ascending third into a descending sixth). But immediately Kreisler proposes a second phrase with a series of undulating arpeggios in quavers along an ample register. The entire structure is repeated identically and followed by section B at the subdominant (in *C Major*), galvanised through the same procedure of the hemiolic rhythmic. As in the previous pieces, the piano, which until now had limited itself to supporting the rhythmic-harmonic canvass, intervenes again with a parallel melody, that complement “at a third”, as usual in traditional music.

³ Fritz Kreisler. *Schön Rosmarin*. Violin: Florin CROITORU; Piano: Clementina RISTEA-CIUCU. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fFsnbiZfi8>



Fig. 8 Fritz Kreisler, *Schön Rosmarin op. 12 nr. 3*, mm. 32-38

As opposed to the other two waltzes, the repetition of the structure occurs in a Minor tonality (*C Minor*), which produces a few interesting chromatic transformations at the level of harmony, the cadence of the structure being, however, on *B flat Major*. The last resumption of the new melodic structure (B) is again proposed in *C Major*, allowing the identical resumption of the first A section.

Over the course of this waltz in a fast tempo, a pianist has to assimilate right away the violinist's interpretative style, precisely following all the agogic and dynamic intentions, that they wish to express, intentions, which oftentimes are not written, but are part of the playing style of this type of music. Lightness of execution, the immediate decanting of the musical intentions, the jovial character and a graceful touch are essential attributes for a successful interpretation.

5. *Caprice Viennois op. 2*⁴

The miniature published in 1910 is a spectacular piece, in which elements of great violin performance are alternated with those of refined sensibility, given by the melancholy *ländler* melody. There is a three-part architecture of the piece – ABA – a form preceded by an introduction only played at the piano through a descending-octave leap, ornamented through a fast upward-moving formula of sixteenth-notes triplets. The violin immediately responds to this formula with another, amplified in dimension and ambitus, probing the high register of the violin, an intervention presently accompanied by a chromatic itinerary, with a cadence on a dominant-seventh chord. The motif of the violin is repeated in the low register and enriched with artificial *flageolettes*. A series of piano chords outline a complex, chromatic cadence, enriched with modulating suggestions, over which the violin plays a spectacular descending chromatic tirade, starting from the high register on the *B* string, in order to find its cadence on the tonic of the *B Major* chord (fig. 9).

⁴ Fritz Kreisler. *Caprice viennois, op. 2*. Violin: Florin CROITORU; Piano: Clementina RISTEA-CIUCU. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E4ncFiIRY8>

CAPRICE VIENNOIS [Caprice in Viennese Style]

The musical score for Fritz Kreisler's *Caprice Viennois* (measures 1-15) is presented for Violin and Piano. The tempo is marked *Allegro molto moderato*. The Violin part begins with a melodic phrase, while the Piano part provides a harmonic accompaniment. The score includes several performance instructions: *poco rit.*, *sol D*, *rit.*, *sol G*, *andante con moto*, *rubato e con passione*, *sul D.*, and *poco string.*. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

Fig. 9 Fritz Kreisler, *Caprice Viennois* op. 2, mm. 1-15

A phrase with a new melodic profile (*Andante con moto*) is evocatively proposed by the violin. This time the leaps are alternated with a gradual, sometimes chromatic itinerary, while the harmonic itinerary of the piano is galvanised through very short and threatening thirty-second-note anticipations. Although the atmosphere seems changed, we, however, recognised the obsessively repeated “signal” element from the debut of the Introduction. The entire section closes with a long *F#* (the dominant) of the violin, under which we hear the descending chromatic itinerary of the piano, much amplified and galvanised by sixteenth notes.

The evocative and, concurrently, slightly threatening introduction is immediately followed by a suave *ländler*, *Andante con moto*, in *B Major*, attractive through the simple discourse and the relaxed atmosphere of the folkloric song (fig. 10).



Fig. 10 Fritz Kreisler, *Caprice Viennois* op. 2, mm. 16-23

The theme is displayed in thirds and fourths at the violin, which renders certain *glissandos* necessary, a fact which discreetly “vocalises” the melody. Both the rhythmic-harmonic sonic profile and the architecture are tributary to the nostalgic and sentimental Viennese traditional melodies. The double period is made up of simple, symmetrical, related phrases. The accompaniment of the violin is extremely simple in order to draw one’s attention to the undulating itinerary of the violin, limiting itself, however, to discreetly supporting the characteristic rhythm, dotted crotchet, quaver, crotchet. As in the previously analysed miniatures, step by step, the piano joins the discourse with chromatic counter-melodies, supporting the discourse of the violin. As the melody unfurls, the discourse is amplified and enriched through ornaments and increasingly larger leaps, underlined through *ritenuto*, an indication allowing the violinist to action the exchanges in high positions. Finally, structure A closes with a conclusive period, *più vivo*, evocatively proposed by the violin through a pedal of tonic B, while the inferior voice outlines a descending profile, grouped on an obsessively repeated hemiolic structure (fig. 11).



Fig. 11 Fritz Kreisler, *Caprice Viennois* op. 2, mm. 60-76

The contrast element is provided by a three-quaver Presto. The brightness of the violin reminds one of the signal formula in the Introduction in a scintillating discourse enriched through leaps, trills and *staccato* (fig. 11). A brief reminder of the tonality of the dominant (*F*♯), proposed in octaves by the piano, makes the connection to the *ländler* structure in A, constituting the Reprise, which closes the miniature with a last conclusive phrase extracted from the Introduction.

The entire progress of this miniature full of virtuosity and semantic meanders in the discourse of the violin must be emphasised through the suppleness of the accompaniment, which confers upon the text the feeling of lightness, imponderability, even simplicity of the musical gesture, of elegance and effervescence of the Viennese spirit, like the freshness of a perfect sparkling wine, which releases its bubbles in a “flûte” crystal glass.

6. *Tambourin Chinoise* op. 3⁵

This work is frequently present in great soloists’ repertoire. It is structured in an ABA form. Because the dance has declaredly oriental origins, we would have expected to hear a work exclusively composed in an anhemitonic pentatonic scale, without flat notes and static from a tonal point of view. Of course, the sprightly theme from Kreisler’s *Tambourin Chinoise* debuts in this modal type, with the anhemitonic pentatony on *B flat*, yet the composer will soon introduce modulating accidentals and even chromaticism, firstly in the piano discourse (fig. 12).

TAMBOURIN CHINOIS

[Chinese Drum]



⁵ Fritz Kreisler. *Tambourin chinois*, op. 3. Violin: Florin CROITORU; Piano: Clementina RISTEA-CIUCU. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67SQiecBpSs>



Fig. 12 Fritz Kreisler, *Tambourin Chinoise* op. 3, mm. 1-22

Another interesting element is also the inner construction of the phrases, evidently contradicting the “European type”, the Viennese, simple, symmetrical, well-proportioned type. Thus, the first motif (mm. 2-4) debuts with an upbeat of a quaver ornamented with a *trill*, followed by a descending *staccato* series of other quavers, which stop onto a stressed crotchet on the second beat of the measure. This formula is condensed, varied through an ornamentation of sixteenth notes and becomes a model for an identical (mm. 5-6) or transformed repetition, developed through elimination (mm. 7-9), since it loses the stress on the weak beat, a technique reminiscent of *stretto*. After this precipitation with a developing role, the third motif closes with a long stressed sound. It is presently followed by the conclusive motif 4 (mm. 9-12), made up of small written ornaments, closed through a long *B flat*, representing the tonic.

This first structure dimensioned as a period is repeated with a different cadence, in order to allow the modulation towards *A flat Major*. The third period provides a certain architectural regularisation, being made up of two motifs, the first being derived out of the first one in the piece, the second one in sixteenth notes being related with the second motif from measures 5-6. There follows an ample development made up of phrase-like structures, repeated in a modular manner in the same „harmonic step” of a third, with many chromatisations in both ways and sequencings stopping on a *F Major* pedal (m. 47), the dominant which will allow the return to the base tonality, *B flat Major*.

We will analyse now each structure bringing new thematic elements. In measure 31 Kreisler proposes a formula combining the arpeggio with a formula (derived from the initial trill). This one-measure structure (a submotif) is repeated thrice and is continued through a chromatised ascending scale. The

entire phrase (in *A Major*) is sequenced strictly, then freely at ascending thirds (*C Major* and *E flat Major*) in order to reach a climax (mm. 43), harmonised with a ninth Major chord on *C # Major*, found at a distance of eight dominants (fig. 13).



Fig. 13 Fritz Kreisler, *Tambourin Chinoise* op. 3, mm. 39-49

A complex chromatic itinerary, descending with both discourse partners, will brings us back to the close tonal circle, with a cadence on *F Major*, the dominant of the base tonality. This great developing structure could have been used as a bridge, had the author wished to modulate towards a new theme in a *sonata*-type ampler architecture. Yet, Kreisler decides to finish this section with a reprise of the main theme, however, still introducing a new conclusive, decisive structure, noted *molto marcato*, derived from the conclusion of the previous development (m. 47). The violin sonically displays the new theme in double strings (fourths and fifths), recomposing previously displayed microstructures: a leap of a fourth, a formula with a different rhythm but always in double strings. This period with an exotic sonority is also built in a novel way: after a first square phrase the composer launches a new development, through elimination and sequencing, again modulating to a removed tonality, *F# Minor*. Kreisler actually introduces a polytonal moment, overlapping a *F#7* chord onto a fifth on *B*. Very soon he returns through a dominant seventh chord to the base tonality. Thus closes the whole trajectory of section A (fig. 14).



Fig. 14 Fritz Kreisler, *Tambourin Chinoise* op. 3, mm. 56-72

The contrast on a tonal level but also in writing is brought by the second section, *Più lento* (B), in which the tempo becomes twice as slow (the crotchet becomes a minim) and the type of writing is drastically modified. The isochronous pulsation of *staccato* piano quavers is abandoned in favour of a free singsong, accompanied through arpeggios. From a tonal point of view, the structure debuts uncertainly, oscillating in the area of *G Major*. We remark that here, also, the composer uses a more evolved harmonic language, avoiding a clear tonal display in favour of a more diffuse one with added sounds, whose sonority makes us think of jazz. However, the architecture of the phrases is a “European”, proportioned one, even if the rhythmic of the violin seems to avoid the firm display of the strong beats, in a free progress, grafted onto the piano accompaniment, with a syncopated rhythm emphasised through accents, a moment, which, again, can make us think of rhythmic patterns of jazz (fig. 15).

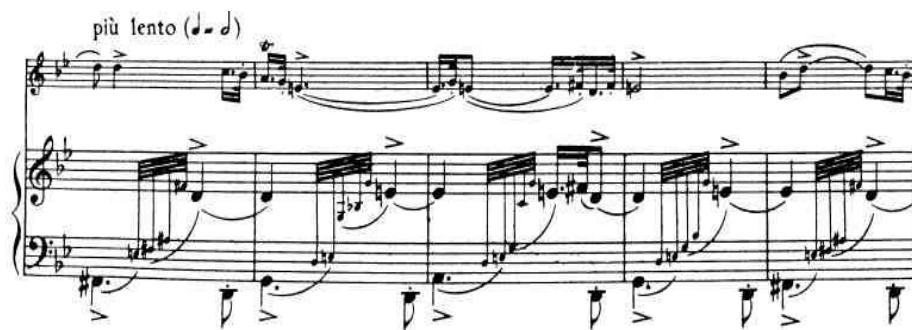


Fig. 15 Fritz Kreisler, *Tambourin Chinoise* op. 3, mm. 93-97

From a melodic point of view, the material is made up of leaps of various dimensions, with dotted rhythms, ornamenting a fragment of a descending tonal scale. The structure, at the level of a double period, is made up of four thematically related phrases, A, A1 (with a modified cadence), A2 freely sequenced and developed through elimination (it lacks the ornamentation of the second motif) and, finally, A3 – a last variation of the initial A, amplified through a free cadence. This large structure is repeated in order to impose the new thematic material in the listeners' conscience. Finally, the work ends with an identical repetition of the entire structure.

We cannot finalise this succinct analysis of the *Tambourin Chinoise* without undelining the diversity of the colours of the accompaniment. An equal partner to the musical discourse, the piano is not limited to a mere rhythmic accompaniment with an oriental tinge, but intervenes in the discourse with refined discretion, underlining the accents or strengthening the violin line with heterophony, by displaying the secondary lines (the playing at a third, originating in traditional practice). Maybe the most interesting piano writing is used in the middle section, which alternates ornamental elements and the technique of arpeggios with crossed hands, thus also producing a spectacular visual effect, a sign of the composer's remarkable piano technique.

7. Syncopation⁶

A miniature published in the interwar period (1927), it shows a different facet of Kreisler's multicolour style. It is a piece influenced by American music, a mix of *foxtrot* and *ragtime*⁷ full of humour and savour, which reminds us that the author also composed music for Broadway. We must mention that

⁶ Fritz Kreisler. *Syncopation*. Violin: Florin CROITORU; Piano: Clementina RISTEA-CIUCU. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWXClqIE3E>

⁷ In both *foxtrot* and *ragtime* small striking rhythmic-melodic interventions in the accompaniment appear at the end of phrases, meant to complement the long sounds of the pauses between motifs. From these, the most frequently met are the syncopations and the descending octave leaps.

foxtrot, a dance, which appeared in 1914, originates in the older *ragtime*, a very popular genre from 1895 to 1918, whose main feature was a syncopated rhythm, enriched with polyrhythmic formulas of African origin. From a melodic point of view, the discourse of *ragtime* is fractured, reconstituting in a characteristic manner the apparent polyphony of the Baroque. The type of harmonic progression (sequencing) is also characteristic, itself much used subsequently in jazz music. It must be said that ragtime inspired other European composers, as well, like Erik Satie, Claude Debussy and Igor Stravinsky.

The ABAB-structured piece proposes an atypical architecture for the two main sections through an identical repetition of the first exposition, i. e. aa¹-bb¹ and debuts with a short introduction at the piano in a I-V-I cadence meant to clearly announce the *G Major* tonality of section A. We remark that, immediately after the quaver upbeat on the sound *D*, the melody is fractured in two sonic levels through a descending leap of a fourth over the octave, followed by another of a seventh in a contrary direction.

Syncopation

Fritz Kreisler



Fig. 16 Fritz Kreisler, *Syncopation*, mm. 1-12

We must also remark the stress on the weak half of the beat, suggesting a syncopation in the bass in a formula characteristic of the foxtrot dance (etimologically, the name of the dance references the *trot*, the stage “dance” of a famous actor and *vaudeville* dancer, Harry Fox, who named this type of dance). The violin presently displays a sprightly melody. The sixteenth note and quaver pulsation is broken at the end by a syncopation on half beats, completed by the intervention of the piano in the bass with sixteenth-note triplets and a harmonic delay of quavers (fig. 16).

This entire rhythmic effort must be done with ease, not in the classical manner of performance, in order to maintain the spirit of the dance it alludes to. It is recommendable that the pianist does not use pedalling, as all semantic relations are achieved through the touch adapted to this percussive type of attack.

Derived from the first one, the second motif impresses an ascending direction onto the discourse. The connection between the motifs is completed here, also, by a piano formula, originating in the introductory motif and displayed in the high register. The climax is brought about and underlined through a melodic change in the second phrase. The new motif very artfully describes the gesture of a potential dancer, who briefly exaggerates their movement, in order to attract attention and presently return to the previous movement. The last phrase closes the entire process with a characteristic formula in the low register of the piano. This first period is followed by another, largely symmetrical one, excepting the climax in the fourth phrase, where the submotif is amplified and underlined through a *sforzando*, followed by the syncopation characteristic of the type of music.

The following B section, which features the same pattern of succession, i. e. bb¹, confirm the relatedness with *ragtime* through the rhythmic-melodic type with irregular repetitions, underlined through accents on the weak beats and inner syncopations of quarter beats and through the architectonic construction based on sequences. This time the piano renounces the motif-end interventions characteristic of *foxtrot* in favour of a *staccato* pulsation on half beats with sixteenth notes followed by rests (fig. 17).

In order to underline the harmonic evolutions or to emphasise counter-melodies, small chromatic passages are often used in *ragtime*, which we also come across in Kreisler’s miniature, acting in counterpoint to the sequenced itinerary of the violin (phrase 2), all the more, even contaminating the main line of the discourse.

2

Fig. 17 Fritz Kreisler, *Syncopation*, mm. 18-28

From an architectonic point of view, the second exposition of section A is built by sequencing a diatonic formula, polyrhythmically repeated and syncopated, sometimes completed through chromatic itineraries. This irregular sixteenth-note pulsation only stops at phrase end, where the cadence is clearly undelined by both partners through harmonic crotchet itineraries. Yet, in this segment, Kreisler prefers another way of underlining the cadence, one characteristic to the ragtime genre, chromatised and syncopated on the violin level and at the pianist's right hand, while the low register of the piano clearly displays the pulse of quavers created through sixteenth notes followed by rests (fig. 18).

Fig. 18 Fritz Kreisler, *Syncopation*, mm. 34-36

The process is also continued in the display of the following structure, B, still dominated by the ragtime style, in which, this time, the pianist's left hand continues to play the basic pulsation, while the right hand displays chords in a chromatic itinerary, rhythmized according to the same polyrhythmic pattern, also characteristic of the style. The violin displays the discourse at the superior, more sonorous octave in order not to be covered by the denser writing of the piano and, of course, in order to achieve an impressive ending. Kreisler's rhythmic fantasy in realising the accompaniment also needs to be mentioned, each phrase always being composed according to a different rhythmic-melodic pattern, but strictly keeping the characteristics of the genre.

Maybe more than in the case of other of Kreisler's works, we find in this miniature the evident proof of the importance of the piano accompaniment. From the formal construction of the piece to the stoic maintenance of the violin discourse in the sphere of the *G Major* tonality (with passing modulations), we realise that a successful interpretation depends on the pianist's capacity of faithfully rendering the dancy and exuberant spirit characteristic of the type of music, eliminating as much as possible any reflex of the classical technique of playing, which would tend to standardise the musical discourse from a stylistic point of view.

8. Conclusions

Fritz Kreisler's works constitute an important presence in concert life and are unfailingly part of the repertoire of contemporary performers. But however brilliant and expressive the violin discourse, it is not fulfilled artistically without the piano accompaniment, a defining element for a successful interpretation of this type of music, full of delicacy, tenderness, expressiveness, exuberance, ease, humour and virtuosity. That is why the pianist needs to follow and empathise with the violinist's musical intentions, to complement the melodic discourse through personal gestures but also allow space for the partner's agogic and rhetorical emphases, everything in the very free, fluid, yet charming style of the music characteristic of imperial Vienna before World War I. Another element, which needs to draw the accompanist's attention, is the use of the *sourdine*, that can discreetly envelop the accompaniment or dilute the harmony in a transparent veil, like slight blurs in old time-worn photographs of that era.

As Kreisler the virtuoso violinist was also a very good pianist, the writing of the accompaniment in his works is very efficient and so there is no danger that the accompaniment cover the plane of the violin. In fact, both partners are treated as soloists. However, following and supporting the dynamic plane of the violin discourse must be a permanent preoccupation of the pianist, since certain effusions can even change the perfect proportions of Kreisler's music. But too much "discretion" can harm the entire sonic edifice, depriving it of the

harmonic foundation that the entire edifice is supported by. In this sense, one must recommend carefully controlled pedalling, knowingly appropriated and very well executed, the resonance and the quality of the sound being improved by slightly opening the lid (the half-prop) in order not to muffle the sonority and still capitalise on the timbral values and the expressiveness of the accompaniment in this partnership full of subtlety and virtuosity.

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