

REMIXING AS A LUDUS-COMPONENT OF THE MODERN CULTURE

KATERYNA PIDPORINOVA¹

SUMMARY. The modern development of culture motivates the appearance of new modifications of the play element, based on the concept of Homo Ludens by J. Huizinga. The article substantiates a new scientific concept – remixing as the dominant principle of the organization of artistic matter. A definition of this concept is provided. The specificity of its manifestation is thought over using examples from pop culture, academic musical art (in particular, the creativity of the pianist-composer M.-A. Hamelin, the sketch duo Igudesman & Joo, the Rondo Veneziano orchestra), authentic performance, the opera genre (productions of “Alcina” by G. Handel, “La Cenerentola” by G. Rossini), products of the TV industry. The main vectors of the remixing process are characterized in accordance with the realization of the final artistic goal. The organic nature of the interaction of play logic with the combinatorial thinking of Homo Modernus is revealed.

Keywords: principle of remixing, modern culture, remix, play element, Homo Ludens, Homo Modernus.

Introduction

Culture always appears as a mirror of the collective consciousness of society, reflects the national mentality through the prism of individual creative worldviews. The leading mechanisms of the formation of a cultural layer of a certain era, time interval, historical segment depend on many factors of human existence. Each new cultural paradigm brings to the fore its own dominant principles, forms, and approaches. The powerful round of progress associated with the research and development of artificial intelligence has fundamentally

¹ *PhD in Arts, Associate Professor of the Piano Accompaniment Department, Kharkiv I. P. Kotlyarevsky National University of Arts, Ukraine. E-mail: katernapidporinova@gmail.com*



changed the image of the Modern Man – Homo Modernus. Obligatory online inclusion of the individual in today’s information flow forms a different model of world perception: in particular, visualization, mobility of thinking, fragmentation and laconicism, vividness and emotionality of design / expression become priorities. The world processes of globalization, commercialization, unification and “open access”, on the one hand, open the doors for the general public to the cultural treasury of any corner of the Earth, on the other hand, encourage the search for national identity = originality as an attempt to resist universal sameness and cultural clichés. At the same time, the human essence, marked by J. Huizinga at the beginning of the 20th century as Homo Ludens, remains unchanged, as does the attraction to the Play, which in modern conditions takes on new modifications. One of such modifications of the play beginning of Human is *remixing as the dominant principle of the organization of artistic matter*. Until now, this principle has not been the focus of scientific research. This determines the relevance of the presented topic.

Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

Analysing a wide range of cultural assets, J. Huizinga² substantiates the characteristics of playing, its features and functions; shows numerous parallels with various cultural phenomena; studies the mental-coloured expression of the concept of “play”, etc. The scientist’s warning about reducing the play element in the future becomes conceptual. Time shows that this did not happen: adapting to the realities of today, play retains its own cultural dominance, although it changes the forms of the corresponding interaction.

At the present stage, J. Huizinga’s play concept gives impetus to further discussions. The concept of “play spirit”, its development and significance for the study of playing is thought over in the work of P. McDonald.³ The philosophical aspect of “Play of Logos” is revealed in the article by H. Yosuke.⁴ J. Daniel-Wariya⁵ points to the poetic methodology of J. Huizinga, demonstrating different contexts of the author’s use of the term “magic circle”. A separate group consists

² Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Angelico Press, 2016.

³ McDonald, Peter. ““Homo Ludens”: A Renewed Reading.” In *American Journal of Play*, XI, 2, 2019, pp. 247-267.

⁴ Yosuke, Hayashi. “Dialogue, Conversation, and Disputation as “Play of Logos”: Based on Johan Huizinga’s Homo Ludens.” In *Memoirs of Osaka Kyoiku University*, LXVII, 2019, pp. 299-309.

⁵ Daniel-Wariya, Joshua. “Rhetorical Strategy and Creative Methodology: Revisiting Homo Ludens.” In *Games and Culture*, XIV, 6, 2019, pp. 622-638.

of scientific works devoted to the phenomenon of modern video games. Thus, A. Chapman⁶ establishes a relationship between the structure of play interactions in video games and the specifics of the corresponding historical content. The Ukrainian scientist I. Skyba⁷ considers the video game phenomenon as a genre of virtual artistic culture in its convergence with art. M. Sicart complements the concept of Homo Ludens by J. Huizinga with the concept of Homo Poieticus by L. Floridi, seeing the ludic drive in the creation of virtual worlds by players; thinks over the positive and negative aspects of the interaction between humans and digital technologies through playing, which remains a cultural dominant of cognition and communication.⁸

Scientific works on the study of remix expand the playing perspective. A.S. Waysdorf⁹ interprets the remix as part of the modern media landscape, distinguishes its aesthetic, communicative and conceptual forms. J. Ng¹⁰ indicates the ability of the remix to illuminate cultural transformations that determine identity, experience, and individual self-expression. His own concept of remixes – “remixology” – is offered by D.J. Gunhel.¹¹

From the standpoint of intertextuality, cultural dialogue, and playing logic, the problem of the relationship between “the Own” and “the Borrowed” in modern musical art is thought over in the study of Ukrainian scientists, where the concept of remixing is used for the first time.¹² The presented article offers and substantiates “remixing” as a *scientific concept* that appears as a universal tool for learning about today’s cultural processes.

Remixing, remix and pop culture

The proposed concept of “remixing” is a derivative of the term “remix”, which has become established in the realm of popular music. Remix involves making a number of changes to the original composition by mixing and

⁶ Chapman, Adam. “Playing Against the Past? Representing the Play Element of Historical Cultures in Video Games.” In *Historia Ludens*, Routledge, 2019, pp. 133-154.

⁷ Skyba, Ivan. “Video Game as a Phenomenon of Modern Culture.” In *Proceedings of the National Aviation University*, XXXI, 1, 2020, pp. 163-169.

⁸ Sicart, Miguel. *Playing Software: Homo Ludens in Computational Culture*. The MIT Press, 2023.

⁹ Waysdorf, Abby S. “Remix in the age of ubiquitous remix.” In *Convergence*, XXVII, 4, 2021, pp. 1129-1144.

¹⁰ Ng, Jenna. “The cut between us: Digital remix and the expression of self.” In *The Routledge Companion to Cult Cinema*, 2019, pp. 275-284.

¹¹ Gunkel, David J. “Principi di Remixologia: Una Assiologia per il XXI Secolo e Oltre.” In *ODRADEK*, V, 1, 2019, pp. 411-434.

¹² Anfilova, S., et al. ““The Own-The Borrowed” in Artistic Culture of the 20th-21st Centuries.” In *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, IX(I), 2020, p 268.

adding new means of artistic expression, creating an updated version that should attract an additional audience, maintain a success rating, that is, remain in the active layer of modern art. Therefore, the prefix “re-” means repetition, a return to what was previously created; the base of the word “mix” indicates the method of working with artistic material – mixing, combining, addition, variability of changes, etc. The concept of remixing emphasizes the procedural of the indicated principles, expanding the circle of their influence. In different sectors of culture, remixing has different manifestations. The chosen position makes it possible to understand phenomena of a various order as a whole and to identify common patterns.

Remix is a product of pop music, of an “easy” art that often finds itself in the “blind” zone of Ukrainian musicology. The study of remixes from the standpoint of cultural remixing opens up new scientific horizons, allowing to explore the artistic tastes of the audience, to understand the dominant formulas of life as a time, national, age coordinate, etc., to reveal the specificity of expressive effects, meaningful priorities or characteristic figurative roles.

Let us turn to the famous composition “UpTown Funk” by M. Ronson and B. Mars (2014), which became the most popular single of its time and brought the authors prestigious awards.¹³ Covering a wide palette of rhythms and intonations of funk music of the 1980s, “UpTown Funk” proved to be relevant in the 21st century owing to the masterful “mixing” of various stylistic clichés. Appealing to the experience of the previous tradition, operating with typical rhythm-intonations and modernizing the atmosphere with a visual series create a special “charisma” of this composition. The closeness of the composition to the remix gave rise to accusations of the authors of plagiarism.¹⁴ It should be noted that none of the songs that claim the place of the original or prototype were as popular as “UpTown Funk”. The question arises: what ensured the crazy success of the “old-borrowed” on the more competitive and brutal modern world stage? The first is the professionalism and artistic intuition of the authors, the ability to feel the needs of the audience, choose the appropriate musical “puzzles” and create a new combination of them, which is perceived as an independent organic artistic integrity. The second is the charisma of the performers, their energy, magnetism and individual manner. The third is the visualization of singing, including the creation of a music video clip, which organically integrates the aesthetic atmosphere of the 80s of the previous century into today’s day, synthesizing the past and the present. Thus, we should rather not talk about

¹³ Uptown Funk - Wikipedia

¹⁴ “Did Uptown Funk steal from this 1980s girl group song?” *News.com.au*. Bondarenko, Oleksiy. “Марка Ронсона и Бруно Марса обвиняют в воровстве песни Uptown Funk” (“Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars accused of stealing Uptown Funk song”). *Liroom*.

plagiarism in the traditional sense of the word, but about *creative donation*, when mixing leads to the appearance of a self-sufficient composition with its own artistic value, the popularity and recognition of which is the achievement of new authors.

In this case, the play of Homo Ludens gravitates towards the “game of the mind”, which confirms the dominance of the combinatorial type of thinking of Homo Modernus: the creativity of the result is achieved with the help of “mix”, and not the originality / novelty of the source material.

Another vivid example of remixing in the field of pop culture is Michael Jackson’s famous “posthumous” performance of the “Slave to the Rhythm” at the Billboard Music Awards (2014) created with the help of hologram. What is important here is not only the reproduction of the figure of the Artist, but the stylistic correspondence, which was reflected in all the details of the production: from the costumes and the colour palette of the whole to the dance-plastic score, where real people created the effect of real presence, an allusion of the union of two worlds – the hereafter and the real. This approach, which was determined by correctness, tact and sincere love for the creative work of the Master, points to another play vector of remixing – *Playing with Time, which actualizes the mechanism of memory, creative dedication, a kind of cultural canonization.*

Without stopping its development even under conditions of war, culture finds new tools for the formation of a nationally oriented artistic environment. In modern Ukraine, this search is reflected in the creation of a large number of remix collections, which include both arrangements of Ukrainian folk songs and updated compositions by Ukrainian singers (an example is the popular YouTube channel @MAVERMUSIC¹⁵). This is perceived as the actualization of another vector of remixing – the *modernization of the national heritage, the purpose of which is to strengthen the “united nation”* through the aesthetic connections of different generations and cultural layers, a kind of reprogramming / updating of the nationally colourful repertoire of “light” music as a powerful tool of quick influence.

Some ways of remixing in musical art

“Serious” (academic) music steps in the same direction. This affects both compositional and performing creativity. Variations and transcriptions turn to be the most open to the influence of remixing. The potpourri balances on the border between “light and serious” music. All these genre forms deal with a form-creating artistic dialogue between “the Own” and “the Borrowed”.

¹⁵ MAVERMUSIC. <https://www.youtube.com/@MAVERMUSIC>

An example is the creative work of the modern pianist-composer M.-A. Hamelin. The artistic world of his own compositions requires broad musical knowledge from the listener. These are original artistic “rebus” that reflect the principle of remixing in the mirror of the laughing tradition.

The piano cycle “12 etudes in all minor keys”¹⁶ was created by M.-A. Hamelin as a Hommage to Ch.-V. Alkan’s composition of the same name (which he performed as a pianist). The dialogue with tradition is revealed in the corresponding preface, where the author indicates the original artistic prototypes. Most of the etudes are related to the creative work of famous artists. Using the potential of the etude M.-A. Hamelin creates a special playing field where competitiveness, creativity, parody, encryption, mirroring and more meet. Etude No. 1 Triple Étude (after Chopin) variably combines three etudes by F. Chopin (No. 2, op. 10; No. 4, op. 25; No. 11, op. 25), which is perceived as a play-response to the well-known musical trick by L. Godowsky; and Etude No. 10 After Chopin corresponds to Chopin’s Etude No. 5, op. 10. Etude No. 3 After Paganini-Liszt is the author’s mix “La campanella”. Etude No. 6 Esercizio per pianoforte is a stylization of D. Scarlatti’s compositional style. Etude No. 9 After Rossini is based on the “Neapolitan Tarantella”, which in the process of thematic development transforms into an intonation “shape-shifter”.

M. A. Hamelin uses the similar principles in the “Variations on a Theme of Paganini”,¹⁷ which not only extend the line of the compositions dedicated to the art of the outstanding violinist and intonationally connected with him, but also maximally absorb all the stylistic layering of the previous tradition, which directly collides with the modern information space. In particular, in Variation No. 11, the author points to the effect of switching between radio stations: charleston, beer garden, salsa, and friska appear sporadically on the variable field of a quasi-Paganini caprice.

The play basis of the compositional position of M.-A. Hamelin is confirmed by the well-known play “Waltz-minute”, in which the reprise turns out to be a friendly caricature of the famous waltz by F. Chopin. Leaving the intonation-harmonic waltz contour of the original source recognizable, M.-A. Hamelin adds a dissonant texture, changes the touch, dynamics, emphasis, thus embodying the collision of the Past with the Present as aesthetic antipodes, the organic balance of which creates a new (motivated in a modern way) artistic integrity. Creativity of M.-A. Hamelin demonstrates another play vector of remixing – *competitiveness as a search for Self (one’s own Self)*.

¹⁶ Hamelin, Marc-André. *12 études in all minor keys. for Piano solo*. Peters Corporation, 2010.

¹⁷ Hamelin, Marc-André. *Variations on a Theme of Paganini. Piano solo*. Peters Corporation, 2013.

This search is carried out not only by the artist, but also by the recipient (listener, viewer, performer, researcher). This is not a competition based on the principle of “who is better”, it is a *competition of cognition* as a game of consciousness in a system of artistic mirrors.

Different forms of realization of the indicated vector of remixing are manifested in the creative work of artistic teams located in the border zone between academic and mass musical cultures. Let us name the world-renowned sketch duet Igudesman & Joo and the famous Italian chamber orchestra Rondo Veneziano. Choosing the form of a sketch show allows the chamber duet to create compact pop sketches based on the academic repertoire. The brightness of performance, high professionalism, acting skill and huge artistic experience provide an opportunity to freely combine musical fragments, which, according to the principle of remixing, become an integral part of today (this is evidenced by the *mise-en-scène*, costumes, manner of communication with each other and with the audience, supporting entourage). The humorous vector as “laughing at oneself” reveals the continuity of cultural traditions and their growth into modern art, demonstrates the presence of appropriate (plot, rhythm-intonation, harmonic, stylistic) patterns. It is not by chance that among the tasks of their show, the artists highlight the desire to make classical music more accessible to today’s young audience.¹⁸ Behind the “light” genre there is a serious game of the mind: the meaningful level, hidden behind the humorously funny one, requires the knowledge from the viewer.

The phenomenon of Rondo Veneziano’s popularity is subject to the influence of remixing. The organic combination of cultural attributes of the Past and the Present is manifested in the mutual extrapolation of different temporal cultural layers-correlates: turning to classical musical samples – creating original stylized compositions; performing on old stringed instruments – adding synthesizers, bass guitar, percussion to the sound; preservation of graceful and demanding baroque phrasing – introduction of ostinato rhythm formulas of modern music; costume nature of a visual solution – clip-making and modern script solutions. The found aesthetic balance provides a special effect of perception – the positivity of the energy charge. In conditions of acceleration of the rhythm of life and increase of nervous tension for Homo Modernus, the adapted baroque art acts as an alternative reality = an artistic place behind the looking glass that seems to slow down the pace of existence, thus reducing the level of stress. In this case, the vector of remixing can be labelled as *optimistic stylization = psychological help*.

¹⁸ Igudesman & Joo, 2023.

The interest in authentic performance confirms the principle of remixing. Today, we are not able to reproduce the performance style of the playing of the past eras for a hundred percent. It will always be a remix, but with a different degree of closeness to the original, a different set of relevant components and different aesthetic and artistic tasks. Let us turn to the singing art of castrati, the formation and education of performance skill of which, it would seem, was lost forever. However, stage realities speak otherwise. Today, the revival of the art of castrati is associated with the creativity of countertenors. The recognized modern countertenors on the world stage: P. Jaroussky (France), I. Davies (GB), C. Dumaux (France), M. E. Cencic (Austria), F. M. Fagioli (Argentina), V. Barna-Sabadus (Germany), F. Mineccia (Italy), S. Mariño (Venezuela) and others. This vector of remixing can be labelled as the path to Self. Homo Modernus strives for renewal, turning its face to the Past. It is essentially a masquerade, but with a different opposite sign: not fun, but seriousness, not laughter, but reflection. The human essence is unchanging, so it is a return to Oneself several centuries earlier, an attempt to understand Who I was and Who I am through the prism of the baroque art.

Remixing, musical theatre and TV

On the opera stage, the baroque repertoire is constantly increasing, which is facilitated by the development of the countertenor vocal school. Little-known compositions from other eras also return to the stage. In the struggle for the attention of a discerning audience, directors-producers of opera performances are forced to find a balance between traditional and innovative solutions. The projection of artistic events onto the current social space is relevant as an idea of uniting times, which removes the distance between the characters and the audience. This regulates the choice of costumes and decorations, the construction of *mise-en-scènes* and scenic plasticity, the introduction of symbols as meaningful markers, etc. The new play with space-time points to the dominance of the principle of remixing. Its action is aimed at *actualizing eternal themes*, embedding and revealing a myth, a fairy tale, a well-known plot in today's reality.

In the opera "Alcina" by G. Handel (dir. A. Marcon, 2015¹⁹), the fairy tale nature and sorcery of the plot converges with reality with the help of a costume and decoration plan. The men are dressed in business suits with ties, the women – in bright dresses of a modern design, the main character – in a typical military uniform. The sorceress Alcina's dwelling is a luxurious room,

¹⁹ "Handel 1735 Alcina HWV 34 Andrea Marcon." *Felices Cantus Händel*.

again with a modern design, where museum exhibits placed in glass containers are perceived as symbols of antiquity. At the moment of the aria “Verdi prati”, Alcina’s sister in love Morgana meets Bradamanta, the bride of the enchanted Ruggiero, disguised as her brother. The fact of the dress change is levelled here by the director’s decision: the women are dancing in a rather intimate setting; the emphasis is on Bradamanta’s bright red dress. All this fills the scene with a number of additional subtexts.

The similar ways of modernizing a fairy tale can be found in the productions of the opera “La Cenerentola” by G. Rossini. In the version of the Teatro Comunale Bologna²⁰ the opera is fulfilled in the style of “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” by L. Carroll, its card theme line. This affects the chosen colour palette and features of stage outfits. This method creates an allusion of the place behind the mirror. Another version of modernization is offered by J. Bellonini’s production at The Lille Opera:²¹ all the characters do not wear wigs and are dressed in everyday clothes. The fairy tale nature of the events is indicated by the bright multi-coloured costumes and the expressive theatricality of the make-up. Against the background of darkened scenery, created in the spirit of minimalism, there is a parallel with the aesthetics of pantomime. In Opera North’s version²² Cinderella wears a denim skirt, the prince wears traditional black trousers and a white shirt, and the palace ball is recreated using modern ballroom dance costumes. The references to the well-known film images of the 20th century can be seen in the production. The origins of remixing in opera art can be seen in genre searches of an earlier time – the culture of a rock opera and a musical. In the realm of opera, the vector of remixing can be defined as the *creation of a modern context* (symbolization, allusions, references, allegories, projections, etc.).

The experience of the film and television industry reflects the principle of remixing with the emergence of the movie-remake genre. Another line of remixing is related to the creation of modernized adaptations of famous classical works. An example is “Romeo + Juliet” (dir. B. Luhrmann, 1996). The dominant vector of remixing is the adaptation of today. Another direction is implemented in the genre of parody films, which form an artistic quest for movie fans. Parody films approach the potpourri music genre. The vector of play logic comes to the fore, which spreads from the zone of the personal I to the zone of the Collective consciousness. Examples of remixing are various TV-shows that have their analogues-doubles all over the world,

²⁰ “LA CENERENTOLA di Gioachino Rossini.” *Teatro Comunale Bologna*.

²¹ “Gioachino Rossini: La Cenerentola.” *ALTEA MEDIA / I LOVE TV*.

²² “Cinderella (La Cenerentola) | Your Reaction.” *Opera North*.

migration of TV series, scripts, film ideas, video games based on films, cartoons, comics, books, etc., where artistic events are adapted to another national and cultural tradition.

Conclusion

The principle of remixing appears as the dominant ludus-component of modern culture. Its influence is felt in all spheres and is based on the play logic of Homo Ludens, and the specifics of development are stipulated by the combinatorial thinking of Homo Modernus. *Remixing is understood as a play component of culture, which is implemented as the leading principle of creating a creative product, which involves an open or hidden appeal to already existing artistic material, organized into a new self-sufficient integrity with the help of the combinatorial thinking of the author-artist.*

Among the determined vectors of remixing there are: creative donation, playing with time as cultural canonization, modernization of national heritage as an embodiment of unity, competition-cognition as a search for Oneself, laughter at Oneself and laughter at All of us, optimistic stylization as psychological and aesthetic help, a way to meet Oneself, updating eternal themes, creating a modern context, adapting to the present. The mentioned directions do not exhaust the variety of manifestations of remixing, which indicates the perspective of this research and the further potential of the presented topic.

Regulating the search paths of cultural development, the principle of remixing stimulates the emergence of new forms of creative presentation: installations, performances, various shows, max-D cinemas, etc. Mixing the means of expression of various types of art, time-space coordinates, visual-auditory effects, associative-manipulative mechanisms, etc., artists try to “reach” the audience, find an understanding of Themselves in the mirror of the Other and change the reality for the better.

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