

**ESSAY**

Variations on Themes Composed by Engels¹

Ömer Er

MY MUSICAL PIECE IS A COMPOSITION created by giving references to the small musical forms found in the letters of Engels mainly written to his sister Maria (Lindley, 2010). These musical notations were dated 1838 and further. Among these notations, I realized several songs and pieces of Engels, structured in choral forms. In fact, Engels also mentioned in these letters that he felt inadequate because he did not have enough knowledge of notation and composition.

In these letters, Engels also mentions about concerts and operas that he watched, such as *Night in Granada* and *The Magic Flute* of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. He had told his sister Maria that the orchestration of these operas was not so good, and it was very difficult for him to analyze the composition of these musical pieces. In another letter he also tells his younger brother Herman Engels that he still regularly works on compositions and songs (ibid.).

Frankly, when I read his letters, I was struck by the fact that he often stated that he felt a deficiency to work in these compositions. This made me surprised. When I started to analyze his compositions, I also saw that he always worked on compositions having small forms. Then, I decided to develop these small structures through larger forms. So, I developed my own compositions within these forms by empathizing with Engels and trying to develop a bond with him.

When this work was commissioned to me for the symposium, 7th Marxist Inquiries on Science-The School of Marxism and Sciences, titled

1. This essay is mainly based on the speech I made before the performance of my musical piece at the symposium, 'Actuality of Friedrich Engels at his 200th Birthday' premiered on youtube in December 18, 2020.

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'Actuality of Friedrich Engels at his 200th Birthday' by the organizing committee, it was planned as "variations on piano". But when I started to focus on my composition with piano, I felt that sounds of piano wouldn't be enough to express my feelings. That's why I started with a classical orchestration and then I harmonized this with new age sounds.

To sum up, my composition can be considered as a collage of Engels' little melodic musical pieces. This can be also seen as a new designed version of Engels' pieces including my own melodies. Addition to that, my composition also carries new orchestrations carrying the resonance of Engels' period and the spirit of that time. However, as an individual living in this century, I tried to mash up melodies of my own age through his time.

In my work, which generally begins in a classical way, I tried to express Engels and reflect his feelings as much as I could. Therefore, I hybridized my own experience, soul, and my feelings for Engels with this collage of my composition. As I mentioned before, I wanted to reinforce the emotion, the thought, the power, universality and eternity of Marxism and communism by using different effects towards the end of my composition, which started as classical and simple way. Therefore, at the end of the composition, I wanted to create an effect of a powerful public reception, as if Engels were entering to an arena while meeting with people. In this way, I wanted to express his messages and tried to convey such a great philosophy and worldview in the conditions of that day.

My profound thanks to great master whom I'm eternally grateful.

REFERENCES

- Lindley, Mark. 2010. "Marx and Engels on Music." *MR Online*. August 18.
<https://mronline.org/2010/08/18/marx-and-engels-on-music/>



WORK

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OMER ER

Handwritten musical score for Violin and Cello. The score is written on five systems of staves. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system includes the instruction "1. Violin II Cello" and a "Tema" marking. The third system features dynamic markings "decresc." and "mp". The fourth system includes "cresc.", "mf", and "decresc." markings. The fifth system is divided into two parts, labeled "1" and "2", and ends with a "p" (piano) marking. The score concludes with a large, stylized signature or flourish.



VIDEO

Video recording of the *Variations on Themes Composed by Engels* performed by the composer is available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zog-ZOCJl7A&t=1s>