PERFORMANCE PRACTICE ISSUES IN RUSSIAN PIANO MUSIC

G. M. SMITH

PERFORMANCE PRACTICE ISSUES IN RUSSIAN PIANO MUSIC

by

GREGORY MICHAEL SMITH
A.mus.A., L.mus.A., B.mus. (Hon.)

Submitted for the degree of
MASTER OF CREATIVE ARTS

February 2003

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

_____

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the rapid growth of musical culture in Russia. This resulted in a large repertoire of piano music — ranging from miniatures to virtuosic etudes and sonatas. Growing out of the nineteenth century romantic tradition, and highly influenced by the social conditions of the time, Russian composers developed a distinctive style which closely reflected their culture, personalities and ideologies.

There are several approaches to studying performance practice. One is to study the interpretations of other pianists. While this does have many advantages, it has not been adopted in this paper as it has one flaw: it still fails to capture the distinctive language of these composers. Rather, the paper will study the social and musical influences on the composers, and, more importantly, their philosophies about pianism and the purpose of music. This will be related to interpretative issues in the works.

The repertoire has been divided into four areas. The paper commences with a study of the miniature, which is valuable in finding the 'essence' of a composer's musical language expressed on a small scale. Here, the 'elementary' considerations in performance practice will be studied. The second chapter discusses etudes. This is useful in gaining an insight into composers' conception of technique, and how this relates to performance practice. The third chapter deals with music that has extra-musical themes. This provides opportunity for a more detailed cultural and biographical study of the composers. To represent the large-scale repertoire of Russian composers, the sonata will be studied. Here, a detailed analysis of the composers' musical language and its relationship to expression will be discussed.

PERFORMANCE PRACTICE ISSUES IN RUSSIAN PIANO MUSIC

INTRODUCTION

There is something distinctive about Russian piano music from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Compared to the West, the musical culture of Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century was undeveloped. Russia lacked the court patronage which had greatly encouraged the development of instrumental music in the West. It was 1802 before Russia formed its first orchestra. Music was generally "looked down on for being 'proletarian'".[6] Rimsky-Korsakoff's father stated that "music should be regarded merely as a pleasant pastime, preferable to cards or drinking."[7]

Russian culture changed under the rule of Tsar Alexander II from 1855. The most significant change was the move to abolish serfdom. Culturally, this had wider implications. The historian Platonov wrote

> There was a whiff of softness and tolerance characteristic of the monarch (Alexander II). Petty press constraints were removed; the universities breathed more freely; society showed a more vigourous spirit; it was said that the sovereign wanted truth, enlightenment, honesty, and a free voicing of views.[8]

As a result, the arts grew rapidly: Tolstoy wrote *War and Peace*, and Dostoyevsky wrote *Crime and Punishment*. Central to this culture was the escalation of the Slavophile-Westerniser debate. On one hand, the Five (Balakirev, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Cui, and Borodin) were concerned primarily with promoting a distinctive 'Russian' culture. Their focus, in general, was on the social function of music — in their piano repertoire this is represented by a large body of miniatures, often programmatic, usually suitable for performance by amateurs (which, after all, is what the Five technically were). On the other hand, a distinctly more cosmopolitan musical scene was being established — particularly by Anton and Nicolas Rubinstein, the founders of the Moscow and St. Petersburg conservatories (established in the 1860s).

Culture was encouraged by the maecenases (wealthy patrons of artists). Celebrations would be held for the launch of new works. Faubion Bowers describes:

> Guests 'trans-cognacked' or 'trans-champagned' themselves, meaning

[6] Faubion Bowers, *Scriabin*, second edition (New York, 1996), p.51.
[7] Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakoff, *My Musical Life*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1936. Cited in: ibid.
[8] Platonov, *Istoriya Rossiyi*, Petrograd, p.701. Cited in: Alfred Swann, *Russian Music and its Sources in Chant and Folk-Song* (London, 1973), p.73.

> they drank to unconsciousness, in Mussorgsky's words. String quartets and their performers were launched in alcohol, like ships christened in champagne.[9]

Belaieff, for example, was a Russian timbre merchant who, after hearing 17-year-old Glazunov's *First Symphony* in 1882, decided to set up a publishing company. This later expanded to include planning concerts of works published by the firm. Glazunov, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Liadoff, Borodin, Taneyev and Scriabin were a few of the composers supported in the early days of Belaieff's company. Another prominent patron of culture was Solodovnikov, who funded the present Moscow Conservatory (which cost 200, 000 rubbles).

Also vital to the encouragement of culture were teachers such as Zverev, who supported young pianists, providing free board and daily lessons. Apart from being given a musical education, students were also given a cultural one: they were required to learn French and German, dancing, manners, and be familiar with literature (they were not allowed to mention the title of a book unless they had read it). They attended Italian opera at the Bolshoi, and gave private concerts in Zverev's house each friday evening to guests such as Tchaikovsky, the Rubinsteins, Kashkin, and Gutheil. Zverev's pensionaries included Scriabin and Rachmaninoff.

Contrasting to this cultured society was the politically unstable conditions of Russia. People feared attending a command performance at the opera house in case an assassination attempt was made on the monarch. Russia faced famine in the 1890s. This was followed by the increasingly harsh social effects of the 1905 and 1917 Revolutions, and the communist regime.

It was in this culture that Russian composers found that 'distinctive voice' which we associate with Russian music. Composers "demanded from their art an answer to the complicated and painful questions of existence. Through their art they wanted to understand themselves and their times."[10]

---

[9] Bowers, op. cit., p.42.
[10] Andrey Olkhovsky, *Music Under the Soviets* (Connecticut, 1975), p.17.

CHAPTER 1

THE PIANO MINIATURE

In a period (and country) where pianism was so virtuosic, why start a study with the piano miniature, a form where this virtuosity is hardly displayed? What the miniature does display, on a very personal scale, is the philosophy of the music — the reason why the composer wrote music and how he used musical rhetoric to achieve his purpose. A variety of approaches is revealed in the works studied in this chapter, which includes miniatures by Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Liadoff, Sorokin, and Shostakovich. This chapter will undertake an elementary study of the most important aspects of each composer's style in relation to performance practice. This will provide an insight into how to best convey the composer's overall 'message'.

SCRIABIN: *Poèmes* (op.32), *Scherzo* (op.46), *Rêverie* (op.49)

Scriabin's conscious desire to promote his philosophy through his music is quite clear. He wrote:

> I can't understand how to write *just* music now. How boring! Music, surely, takes on idea and significance when it is linked to a single plan within a whole view of the world. People who just write music are like performers who just play an instrument. They become valuable only when they connect with a general idea. The purpose of music is revelation. What a powerful way of knowing it is![11]

The extent of the 'mysticism' in his music increased in age, but the beginnings of it date back to his time as a student at the Moscow Conservatory. At this stage, Scriabin was already trying to create another, more ideal universe. In the words of a song written for his love of the time, Natalya Sekerina, Scriabin speaks of how "by the power of the mind he can enter her soul, and that this idea of 'creativity' will reveal to her a 'universe of delight.'"[12] His philosophy is further shown in a letter written to Natalya in 1893:

> The star is so beautiful, and I so love my star that if I cannot gaze on it, if it cannot shine down on me in my life, and if I cannot fly to it, then thought perishes, and with it everything else. Better that I disappear in a mad flight toward her. So the idea will remain and that will triumph.[13]

This is representative of Scriabin's mindset — Faubion Bowers describes that "the trick

---

[11] Alexander Scriabin. Cited in: Faubion Bowers, *The New Scriabin: Enigma and Answers* (New York, 1973), p.108.
[12] Ibid., p.34.
[13] Ibid.

of Scriabin's mind was to convert life's eternal tragedy into personal inner bliss."[14]

This theme of escapism is also shown in Scriabin's post-Conservatory years, where he turned heavily to alcohol as a "'course and physical' imitation of a more sublime spiritual ecstasy".[15] Two works from this period that represent this kind of quasi-drunken spiritual ecstasy are the *Poème*, op.32 no.1, and the *Rêverie*, op.49. Both works also share an improvised feel which, according to Grigori Prokofiev (a critic for the *Russian Musical Gazette*) is a feature of Scriabin's playing:

> ...the impression that lingers is one of ravishment. What makes Scriabin's music 'ravishing' is simply the enchantment of his performance. The tone is marvellous, despite a continuous sharpness, even clanging *mezzo piano*, but he achieves extraordinary effects. Don't forget he's a wizard with the pedal, though his ethereal sounds cannot quite fill the hall. He captivates his audience, too, by giving the impression of improvising. He breaks the rhythmic flow and something new comes out each time. This suffuses the performance with freshness.[16]

This freshness is displayed in Scriabin's recording of the first of the Op.32 *Poèmes*. One of the most striking features of this recording is its extensive use of *rubato*, which, as Prokofiev suggests, does break the rhythmic flow, but on the other hand creates a totally new effect. Scriabin stated that

> a composition must be many faceted … alive and breathes on its own. It is one thing today, another tomorrow, like the sea. How awful it would be if the sea were the same every day.[17]

This, in many respects, gives the performers licence to use their own degree of flexibility — as Scriabin expressed, the art of performance is "the art of experience".[18]

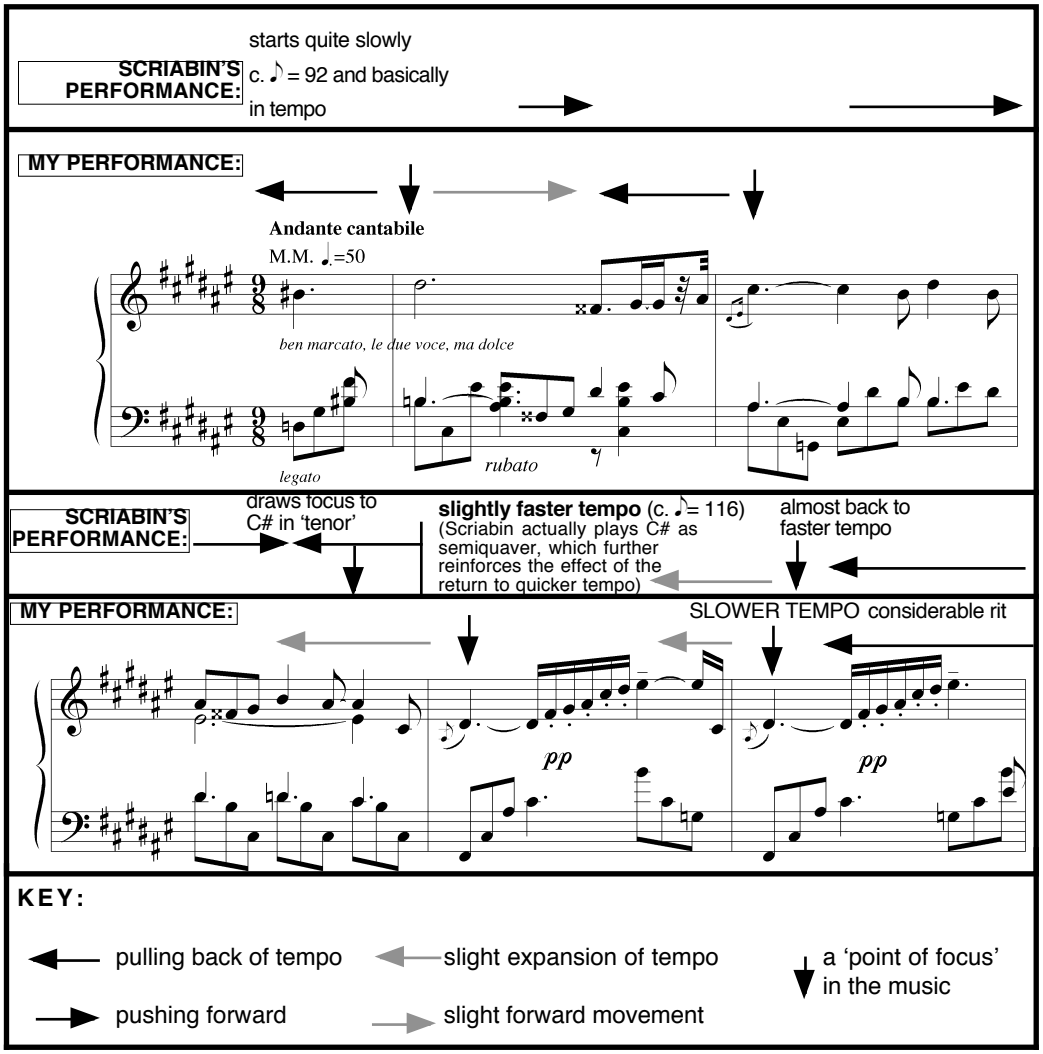
The need for spontaneity

One of the challenges of performing the opus 32 no.1 *Poème* is creating the spontaneity — making sure that any repetitions (or apparent repetitions) never appear the same. This can be achieved by highlighting the harmonic colours, while still maintaining an overall sense of melodic shape. Scriabin's performance, as did mine (though in a different way), shows that *rubato* is one way to achieve this. Figure 1 provides a comparison of tempo fluctuations in the two interpretations.

---

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p.35-6.
[16] Grigori Prokofiev. Cited in: ibid., p.197.
[17] Scriabin. Cited in: ibid., p.198.
[18] Ibid.

Figure 1: Scriabin – *Poème*, op.32 no.1, bars 1-5



In many ways, however, it is contradictory to graph these two interpretations because it goes against the very concept of Scriabin's performance — that it should be spontaneous. On the other hand, it reveals just how flexible the performer must be to create a performance based around the 'experience' of the music, rather than just the notes. Interestingly, neither Scriabin nor myself consistently reach Scriabin's original metronome marking of ♩. = 50 — we both tend to hover slightly under this, though exceed it on occasion. Scriabin's 'diversions' from his own score are quite common — Yavorsky stated that

> Scriabin always plays more or less as he has written his pieces. On occasions he plays them entirely differently ... and opposite the way they are marked ... More important is that when he changes them, it is always for the best.[19]

[19] Yavorsky. Cited in: ibid., p.198.

In both performances, the main effect of the tempo fluctuations is that the harmonic colours are highlighted. This is particularly the case at the very opening, where Scriabin characteristically opens with obscure harmony (not even remotely related to the F# major tonality of the work) and doesn't really 'cadence' until bar 4 (in a kind of V-I progression, though this is averted by the D# present in the right hand). Both of our performances heighten this effect by pulling back the tempo at the very opening. This, in effect, suspends the harmony: not really creating a need for resolution, but rather just "enjoying the sound". This also helps draw attention to the inner voices occurring in the first bar: the B-sharp to B-natural. My performance aims at projecting the continuation of this 'tenor' line (right through the bar, and further on), and also to slightly push the tempo forward to increase its direction (and help further support the predominant 'soprano' line). Scriabin's performance, on the other hand, pushes quite quickly through the three 'tenor' notes (A#-Fx-G#), implying that this line is not as important. This does have the advantage of compensating for his overall slower tempo, thus creating drive to push the melody forward into the new harmony.

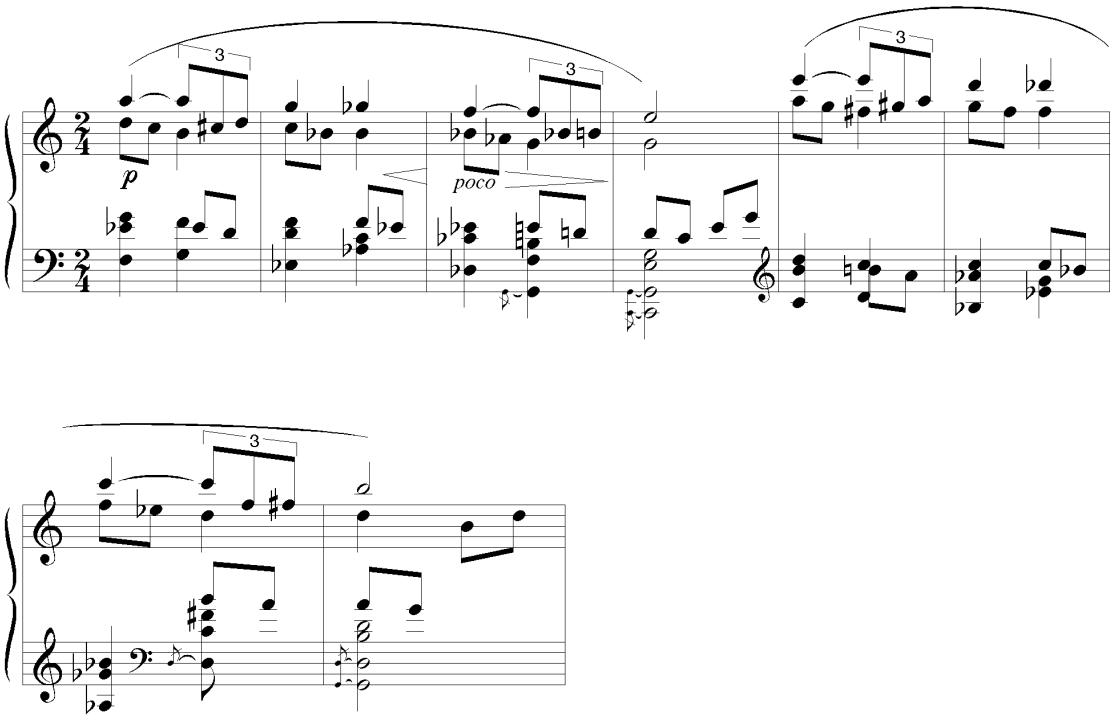
The variances in tempo also display (to a degree) the overall melodic shape in the performance. For example, in bars 4-5, Scriabin treats the C# to D# as being in the same, faster tempo — making this even more defined by playing the C# as a semiquaver. This essentially makes these two notes a new 'idea' — they possess a slightly more hopeful character in contrast to the preceding wallowing line. In my interpretation, on the other hand, I aim to keep the C#-D# as part of the preceding melodic line. This is achieved by drawing back the tempo until the D#. The result is that the ideas 'fuse' together rather than contrast.

A similar spontaneous approach is required in the *Rêverie* (opus 49). The work is quite short (one page), and extremely economical in thematic material (in an A-B-A-B-A form, with each section being almost the same each time). But this is representative of Scriabin's philosophy: "I want the maximum expression with the minimum means."[20] Scriabin also has few expressive indications on the score. Imaginative interpretation is therefore largely in the hands of the performer. This aligns with Scriabin's philosophy of spontaneity in performance: the performer is not bound to play the piece in any way, and is also not bound to play it the same way each time — the 'experience' of playing it is what is most important.

[20] Scriabin. Cited in ibid., p.54.

As with the *Poème*, it is important to constantly experiment with different tone colours. The work (which, interestingly, only as *piano* markings) never really gets 'loud' in effect — there can be variances in dynamics, but subtleties in tone colours within a *piano* sound are the most effective means of maintaining interest. The first section is shown in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Scriabin – *Rêverie*, op.49, bars 1-8



This section occurs three times, and the performer can create differences each time to keep the music interesting. It must be, as the title suggests, like a reverie: new thoughts should constantly flow through the performer's imagination — yet essentially all these thoughts are about the same thing.

There are two structures to take into account here: how an effect contributes to the large-scale structure of the piece (for example, the mood of the overall section), and how that effect adds colour on a subtle scale. Both are equally important in such a small-scale work.

In terms of large-scale differences between sections, the main contrast can be created by the quality of tone. For example, it can be effective to make the third appearance of the first section as soft as possible, using the *una corda* to further

enhance the effect. This can be heightened by decreasing the tempo of the final section, allowing it to slow down till the end, and die away into nothing. As is characteristic of Scriabin, despite the ambiguity of the harmony throughout, it cadences onto a C major chord at the end, so this dying away helps to create the overall feeling of resolution in the *Rêverie.*

Bringing out different parts of the texture can also have an impact on both the larger and subtler scales. This could be used, for example, in the second appearance of the first section — bringing out the 'tenor' melody here adds a new dimension to the section. The rich harmonies also contribute to the beauty of the work. There are advantages in concentrating on hearing every colour in each chord, perhaps even bringing out a certain note occasionally (such as the ninth one time, the seventh the next) to constantly create new colours. This is also seen, as Cherkass describes, in Scriabin's playing: "his innate sensitivity to harmonic clarity kept him in line. He could separate the voices very clearly."[21] Fresh ideas can also be achieved by taking the same melody in a different 'direction' each time — moving towards a different note of focus. This makes the shape of the phrase different, and can also have the effect of highlighting different harmonic and textural colours.

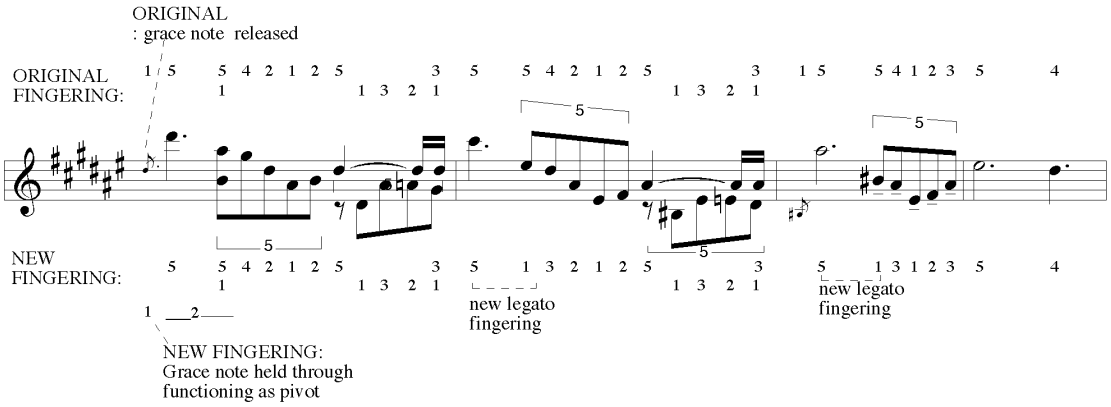
These are by no means all the techniques used to create colour in the work: often colour is created on the spur of the moment (at times, it is these that sound the best) and it is possible to combine several of these effects simultaneously.

SUBTLETIES OF MELODIC SHAPE

It is important for performers to have an acute awareness of the melodic shapes in Scriabin's works. At times, Scriabin's melodic writing can be quite widely spaced. This causes problems for the performer, and was discussed at the London Master Classes with Norma Fisher. Pianists must be careful not to break up the melodic line with any lapses in *legato*. This can be solved by re-fingering such passages.

[21] Cherkass. Cited in: ibid., p.201-2.

Page 9
Figure 3: Scriabin – *Poème*, op.32 no.1, bars 11-14



Although the original fingering fitted instinctively for optimum *legato* of the quintuplets, it caused the first note each time (i.e., the dotted crotchet note) to be separated from the quintuplet — thus breaking the melodic line. In the first bar, the fact that the first of the quintuplets contained two notes widely spaced made a finger *legato* impractical between the D# and the A#. Holding the D# grace note until the quintuplet is established in this case has a distinct advantage: it serves as a pivot — moving the hand into a new position while still maintaining a *legato* sound. The pedal can be used to maintain the sound of the higher D#. In the second and third bars of figure 3, creating the *legato* was less problematic — this could be achieved simply by re-fingering.

The other leap, between the grace note and the A# in bar 3 of figure 3, was impossible to play with physical *legato* because of its wide range. The method Norma Fisher suggested was to keep close to the keyboard and *think* the reverse of what I was physically doing. I was using an arch-like motion from the B# *over* the keyboard to the A#. The result of this was a fairly harsh, attacking tone which broke up the *legato* line. Fisher suggested that instead I approach the note from below. Much of this is psychological: to move underneath the keyboard in a similar arch-like fashion to approach the note from below is impossible, but it is possible to *think* this way. What the hand actually ends up doing is basically moving horizontally across the keyboard (fairly close to the keys), and then when the note is reached, a relaxed pushing action (into the key) is applied. This greatly improves the *legato* line of the section.

With the surrounding harmonies and textures often so vague (representative in many ways of Scriabin's desire for spiritual ecstasy), having a totally *legato* line makes the music more cohesive, and therefore more accessible to the listener. The quality of

the tone is important in creating this *legato* line. Horowitz wrote that "the most important thing is to make a percussive instrument a singing instrument".[22] This can be created in part by approaching notes (particularly the longer ones, that require an even richer tone to sustain) from below, as described before. It is important, though, to make sure that his melody is not in a monotonous tone. It needs to constantly present new colours, as Scriabin's performance does. As an exercise to find new colours, Fisher suggested playing a scale, very slowly, aiming for a different colour on each note. It does make the performer listen very carefully to the tone of the instrument. This can then be applied to the overall melody.

Achieving mysticism through flight

The opus 32 no.2 *Poème* is strongly representative of the composer's developing interest in philosophy. It is an idea taken from an opera which he started writing in 1900 but never completed. The libretto of the opera, which Scriabin wrote himself, is representative of his desire to overcome a struggle. Faubion Bowers describes the plot as follows:

> There are scenes in magical gardens, and a grand ball at the palace where the princess wearies of fawning flatterers. In the end, the hero wins the princess ("I will exhaust you with my overpowering kisses now you will learn sweet felicity"). The hero leads a people's rebellion and releases all the prisoners jailed by the king. The philosopher-poet-musician [the hero] and his princess die in each other's arms, in ecstatic culminative bliss, the "Act of Last Attainment". "I am the apotheosis of world creation. I am the aim of all aims, the end of ends", announces the hero.[23]

This "Act of Last Attainment" would later becomes the basis for Scriabin's early Mysterium philosophy, which was originally designed to signify the destruction of the universe to enable people to return to their 'simplest form' — "matter would dematerialize [sic.] and return to its purely naked state … invisible and nonexistent".[24] Scriabin saw music as a means of achieving this: he wrote that "the soul must exploit its creative ability (opposition), that is, must intoxicate itself with creativity before it can return to a state of peace".[25]

The hero character in the opera, representative of Scriabin, also reveals more of

[22] Vladimir Horowitz. Cited in Mach, op. cit., p.116.
[23] Scriabin. Cited in: Bowers, *The New Scriabin: Enigma and Answers*, op. cit., p.47
[24] Ibid., p.125-6.
[25] Ibid., p.117.

Scriabin's philosophy when he states:

> I AM THE MAGICIAN OF A POWERFUL HEAVENLY HARMONY, lavishing caressing dreams on mankind. With the POWER OF LOVE I will make life's springtime. I will find my long-desired peace BY THE STRENGTH OF MY WISDOM.[26] [Scriabin's capital letters]

In Scriabin's philosophy, the final goal is reached by moving "from the greatest delicacy (refinement), via active efficacy (flight) to the greatest grandiosity."[27] Aspects of flight and grandiosity are explored in the opus 32 no.2 *Poème*. This work needs considerable energy and drive — the tempo fluctuations and focus on individual colours that helped create the atmosphere of the first *Poème* are not appropriate in this case.

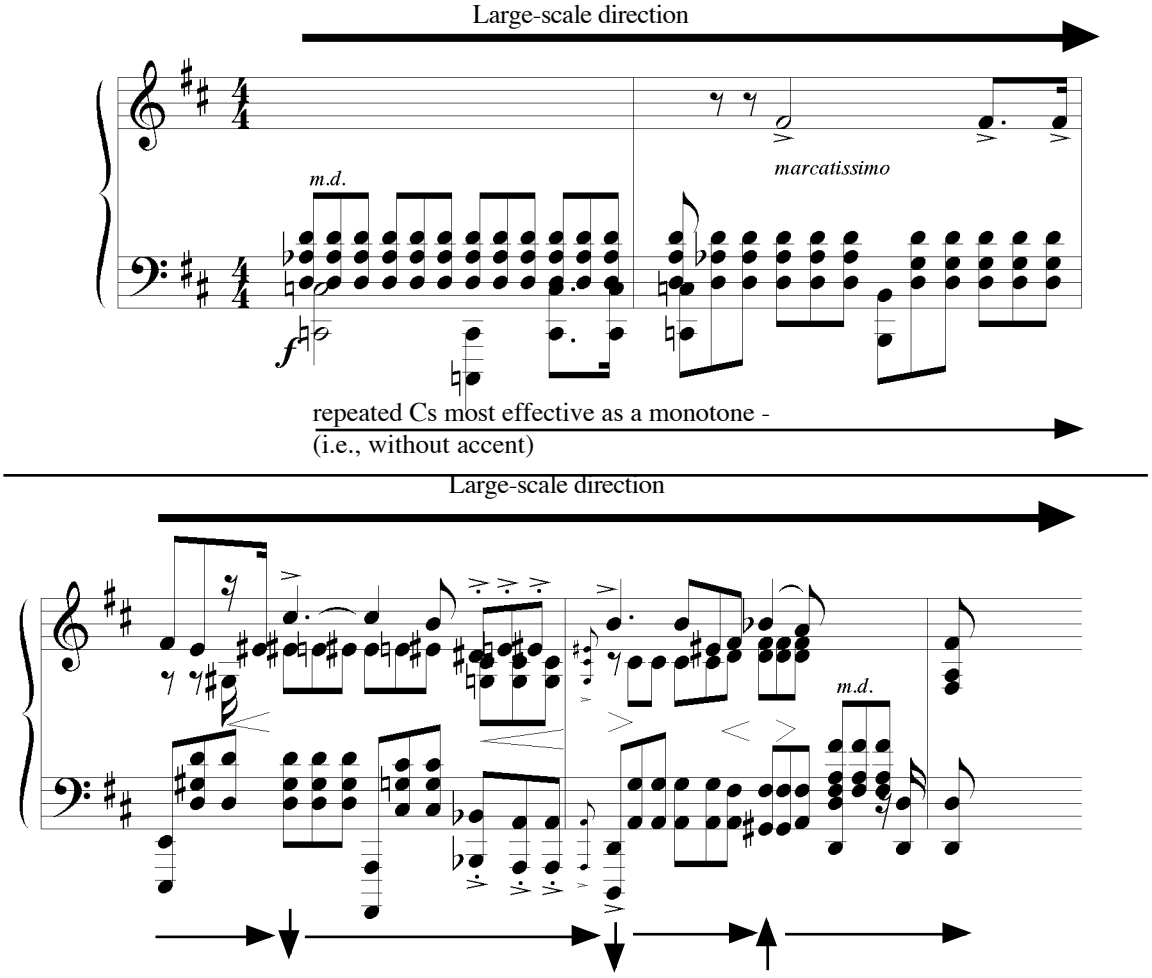
Grigori Prokofiev, describing Scriabin as a pianist, stated that "the actual sound was not big. The secret is in the energetic rhythm."[28] In this case, the energy is created by the driving quavers which continue throughout the entire work. The pianist should ensure that these do not overpower the main features of the work — particularly the overall structure of the melody.

The broad melodic framework is crucial to the success of the performance. It was drawn to my attention in the London Master Classes that I had a tendency to accent the first beat of every bar. This makes the overall effect too heavy, and impedes the forward drive. The effect is much greater if the placement of accents is dictated by the harmonic direction (on both small and large scales), rather than by the regular beat. Figure 4 shows small scale harmonic implications of the first four bars, though on a higher scale it is still the very beginning of an overall harmonic direction.

---

[26] Ibid., p.47.
[27] Ibid., p.55.
[28] Grigori Prokofiev. Cited in: ibid., p.197.

Page 12
Figure 4: Scriabin – *Poème*, op.32 no.2, bars 1-5



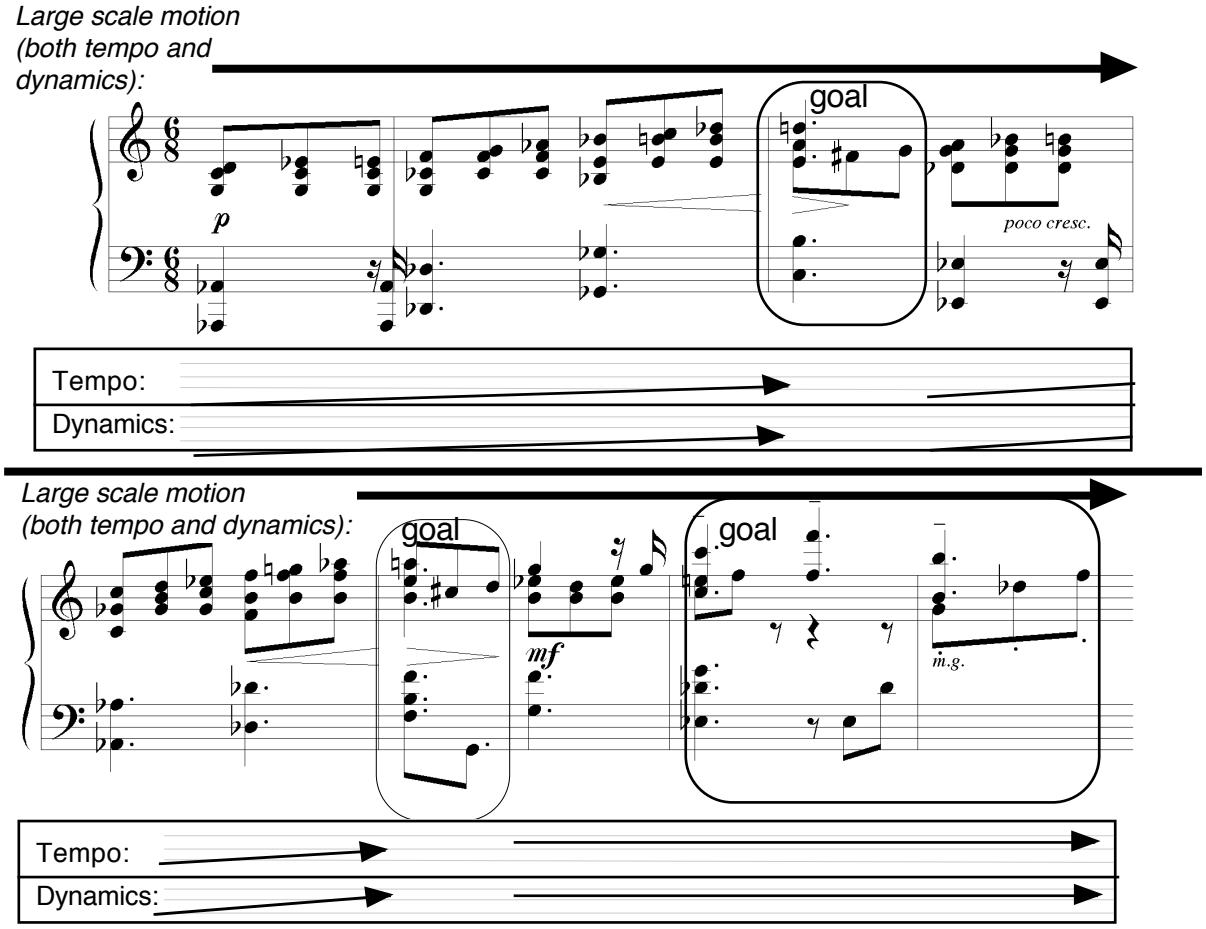
The problem was found to be largely due to the amount of movement in my playing, so it was suggested that I sit as straight and still as possible — this would then help create the overall grand effect of the work, both musically and in appearance. Norma Fisher described the work as having a very strong sense of purpose, and compared it to being drawn toward an object. The combination of considering the harmonic direction and avoiding movement rectified the overly 'cluttered' nature of my performance.

Much lighter than the grand heroic passion represented in the opus 32 no.2 *Poème*, but still representing the concept of flight, is the *Scherzo*, op.46. The main challenge in this work is projecting the ideas successfully at the rather ambitious speed of ♩ = 152. It is dangerous to race through the work and leave it at that. Focusing more on character rather than 'speed for speed's sake' makes the overall effect more

satisfying. Also, given Scriabin's heavy emphasis on spontaneity in performance, it seems out of context with his philosophy to just play this work 'straight'.

A successful way of interpreting this work, as in the previous works, is to let the overall harmonic progression dictate the direction of the music (the foundation of the harmonic rhythm is found in the left hand). However, there is an essential difference between this work and the second of the opus 32 *Poèmes* — it lacks the overall grandness found in that *Poème*, so the ways of creating direction can be more flexible. For example, in the opening bars, increasing the tempo and dynamics as the phrase progresses helps give the music a more playful character.

Figure 5: Scriabin – *Scherzo*, op.46, bars 1-6

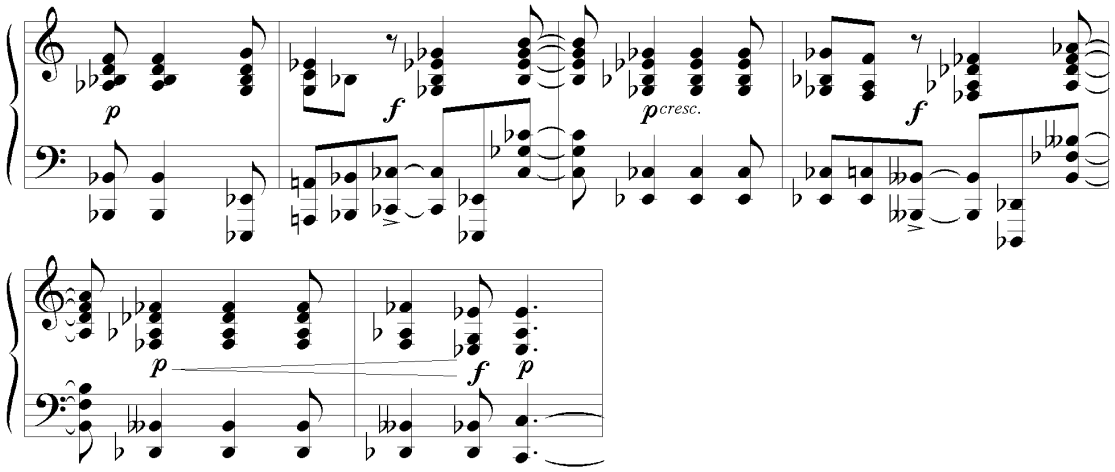


Note that the end of each phrase (which also happens to be the peak of the phrase) lands on a seventh chord, as a phrase commonly would in diatonic music — only this seventh chord never resolves. This is one of the factors that helps create the obscure harmonic colours of Scriabin's music. Also significant is the fact that the pinnacle of the overall phrase in this example (bars 5 and 6) is where the harmonic rhythm slows down

(to the extent of being just one chord for the two bars). Taking this into account, it would not be appropriate to 'tamper' too much with the 'flexibility' here, as it would diminish the effect of the climax.

The other method of creating the excitement in the work is to exaggerate all the contrasts: those between the lively outer sections and the melodic middle section, and also the sudden dynamic changes Scriabin marks on the score.

Figure 6: Scriabin – *Scherzo*, op.46, bars 23-28



These rapid contrasts are reflective of Scriabin's personality, as described by Sabaneyeff:

> His exterior and his psyche were in strange harmony with his half childish caprices which showed in his quick changes of mood, his sudden drop in spirits, and his fear of infection and bacteria.[29]

From a performance practice perspective, because of the nature of the writing, the performer needs to be careful when creating the *subito pianos* that the previous sound has cleared away. This requires lifting the pedal earlier, and even placing a little 'breath' between the loud and the soft to create an effective contrast.

Because of the brevity and speed of this *Scherzo*, a successful performance depends on these contrasts and maintaining the energy in the performance — even in the soft sections. Most of all, it needs to make musical sense to the listener — the performer needs to be convincing immediately, otherwise the piece will be over. This sense is created by basing tempo and dynamic fluctuations not already marked, around the harmonic motion of the work.

[29] Sabaneyeff. Cited in: ibid., p.37.

Both Scriabin's compositions and performance practices reveal a great deal about his personality and philosophies. What the first *Poème* and the *Rêverie* display is Scriabin's escapism from the present universe into one of his own filled with happiness of spirit, or spiritual ecstasy. Scriabin said that happiness filled him so much that "myriads of universes could sink in it without ruffling even its surface."[30] This is true of these two works: even though they are quiet, they are not in any way sombre — the intermingled melodies, harmonies, and textures evoke spiritual ecstasy. Similarly, the more energetic works, whether heroic (*Poème*, opus 32 no.2) or just exciting because of the energy created (*Scherzo*, op.46), project Scriabin's desire to overcome any obstacles in his path. They also share this happiness he describes, seeing that the obstacle, because of his philosophy (particularly later in life), can and will be defeated. Ecstasy, or happiness, is never predictable: it cannot be prepared. This is how Scriabin's philosophy relates to performance practice in this kind of music: it must be fresh, it must be spontaneous, and above all, it must be an 'experience' to perform and listen to the music.

Horowitz stated that

> The pianist should never be afraid to take risks. Sometimes they are incorrect, sometimes they are not. But I am not afraid to take risks if I need to in order to bring through the correct spirit of the work.[31]

It is obvious from Scriabin's performance practices that he was not afraid to take risks either. The Director of Scriabin Museum tabulated all the reviews of Scriabin's playing: the most prominent features being "arhythmical", "nervous", "magical", "wizard-like colors" [*sic.*], "pedalization", "tonal lights", "pauses", and "silences full of thought".[32] Faubion Bowers writes of the dangers of merely copying Scriabin's style:

> In trying to copy these notable aspects of the composer's own playing, the performer risks mannerism for manner, idiosyncrasy for personality, affection for affect, and artifice for art.[33]

It also should be remembered when trying to interpret Scriabin's music that, after he left the Moscow conservatory, he never performed the music of other composers, so he was not in the practice of following other composer's score directions. Also, he never liked other pianist's performances of his own works. It is known that Scriabin liked the 'experience' of music — this is what is evident in his composition and performance. All

[30] Scriabin. Cited in: Leonid Sabaneyeff, *Modern Russian Composers* (New York, 1927), p.58.
[31] Horowitz. Cited in Mach, op. cit., p.119.
[32] Bowers, *The New Scriabin: Enigma and Answers*, op. cit., p.197.
[33] Ibid.

the techniques discussed in the paper so far are intended to heighten the pianist's vocabulary of tone colours and the overall sense of shape. More important, though, is Scriabin's philosophy that the performer should enjoy the wonderful harmonies and textures, as they feel it at the time — then the spirit of the music will be communicated.

It is perhaps for this reason that when Rachmaninoff, a performer who carefully planned his interpretations, performed an all-Scriabin concert after Scriabin's death it was not received well by the critics. Sergei Prokofiev contrasted Rachmaninoff and Scriabin as performers: "When Scriabin played the Fifth Sonata every note soared. With Rachmaninoff all the notes lay on the ground."[34] In one all-Scriabin concert in 1915, an audience member, Ivan Alchekvsky, went back stage after the concert and grabbed Rachmaninoff and shouted at him. But as Faubion Bowers suggests, "Rachmaninov revealed other possibilities of playing the music, and, in a sense, broke Scriabin's monopoly on his own music."[35]

RACHMANINOFF: *Six Moments Musicaux* (op.16)

There is a marked difference between Scriabin's and Rachmaninoff's philosophies. Scriabin was searching to overcome his difficulties, and, in his mysticism created a very clear way of achieving this. For Rachmaninoff, on the other hand, his

> creative work, like his whole artistic life, did not constitute a straight line, or an uninterrupted, unanswering, striving for a goal, early set for himself. On the contrary, this profound and passionate, self-enclosed and pessimistic soul was will-less, just like his great teacher Chaykovski [*sic.*]; his genius was not shaped by efforts of willpower, but tossed about by ephemeral moods … Evidently, the composer himself felt that two paths lay before him, either the path of sensations, of enriching himself with life's experiences, but without the hope of shaping them artistically, or the severe path of an artistic-creator, attained only at the price of sacrificing the former.[36]

In his article, "As I Saw Rachmaninoff", Abram Chasins shares this opinion:

> In common with all visionaries he was an anguished soul because his achievements, despite their worldly success, never quite matched his dreams. He pursued that ever-receding horizon which drives every poet on and on until death frees him at last from the pain of the unattainable goal.[37]

[34] Sergei Prokofiev. Cited in: ibid., p.202.
[35] Ibid., p.27.
[36] Sabaneyeff, op. cit., p.106.
[37] Abram Chasins, *As I Saw Rachmaninoff* (http://home.flash.net/park~29/asisawrach.htm)

Sabaneyeff states that this frame of mind is due in part to the social spirit of Moscow as he was growing up:

> Music here was a terrible narcosis, a sort of intoxication and oblivion, a going off into irrational planes. Drunken mysticism, ecstatic sensations against a background of profound pessimism pervading existence. It was not form or harmoniousness, or Apollonic vision that was demanded of music, but passion, feeling, languor, heartache. Such as Chaykovski's [*sic.*] music and such also the music of Rakmaninoff [*sic.*] developed into.[38]

In Rachmaninoff's music, there is generally some kind of resolution to this "heartache". This is the case in the *Six Moments Musicaux*, written in December 1896. Even though he was only 23 at the time, and had not yet suffered the torment surrounding his first symphony (that would come the following year), his aesthetics of music — music as a means of exploring psychological sensations — still quite present. Each 'movement' represents an emotion which contributes to the overall effect of the work when played in its entirety (which, unfortunately, is quite rare). It moves through sullen reflection (no.1); anguish (no.2); emotional torment and depression (no.3); a kind of resolve to overcome this torment, yet the aggression reveals that it is still present (no.4); quiet, this time peaceful reflection (no.5); and concludes with the triumph and energy of no.6. In line with Sabaneyeff's assessment of Rachmaninoff's personality, the resolution isn't in a straight line — but it is there.

One of the difficulties in discussing the psychology behind Rachmaninoff's music is that, unlike Scriabin, he didn't discuss his music often. He rarely revealed extra-musical sources, stating that the listeners should "paint for themselves what [the music] most suggests".[39] Some insight can be gained from his approach to music in general. Rachmaninoff's compositional process and practice habits pose contradictions. On one hand there is the intellectual perfectionist:

> Rachmaninoff's creative ideas generally came to him away from the piano and typically underwent an extended gestation period before being committed to paper. Even then he did not necessarily regard them as finished products, but (like Bach and Chopin) often revised them extensively, based on performing experience).[40]

As a performer, Rachmaninoff emphasised the need to think carefully about the pacing

[38] Sabaneyeff, op. cit., p.105.
[39] Sergei Rachmaninoff. Cited in: Robert Cunningham, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Bio-bibliography* (Westport, 2001), p.11.
[40] Cunningham, op. cit., p.11.

of the music — that each work has one climax:

> This climax may be at the end or in the middle, it may be loud or soft; but the performer must know how to approach it with absolute calculation, absolute precision, because, if it slips by, then the whole construction crumbles, and the piece becomes very disjointed and scrappy and does not convey to the listener what must be conveyed.[41]

Yet this 'intellectualism' is deceiving, because Rachmaninoff also wrote of the dangers of "preconceived formulas", stating that "music must come from the heart and must be directed to the heart."[42] He suggested that

> real inspiration must come from within; nothing outside can help. The best in poetry, the greatest of painting, the sublimest of nature cannot produce any worthwhile result if the divine spark of creative faculty is lacking within the artist.[43]

Performers must balance between the 'intellectualism' and the 'emotionalism': be stylistically true to Rachmaninoff, attain the 'culminating point' successfully, and still be true to their own 'instincts' from the heart.

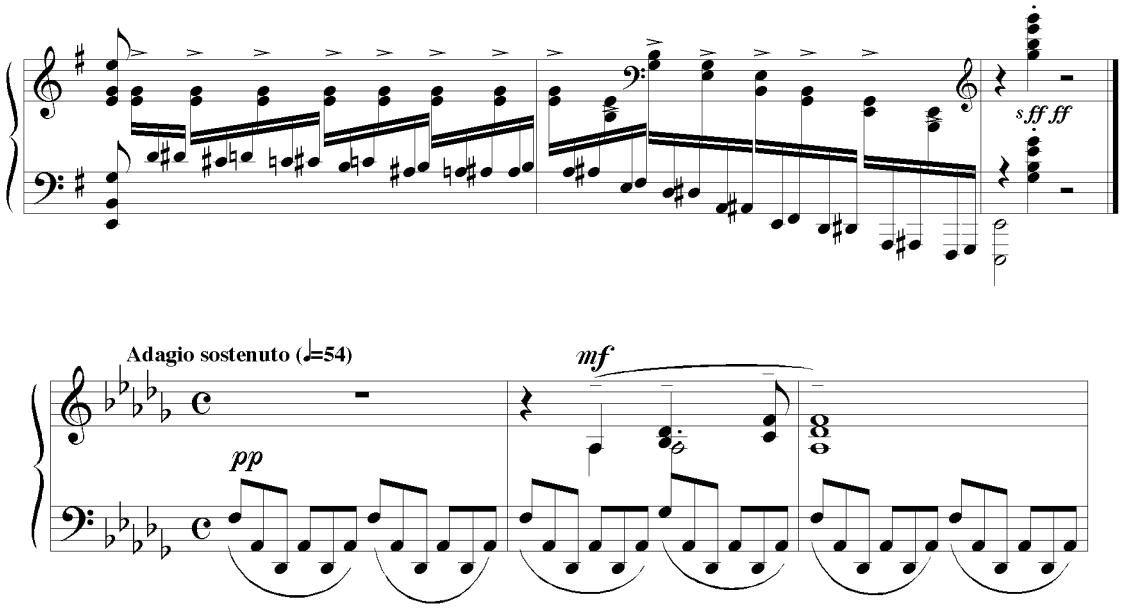
Focusing on the 'culminating point' in performance

The 'culminating point' in the *Moments Musical* works on several levels. The foreground level consists of the effect of the six movements as a whole: in which case, the culmination is at the end of the triumphant last movement. As a performer, it can be interesting to experiment with slightly different ways of getting to this point — i.e., thinking about how to make the most of the contrasting movements. One issue is the amount of space between each movement. Should the end of a movement signify an opportunity for the performer to catch their breath and the audience to cough and fidget, or is it more important to keep the overall emotional effect of the work as a whole? For example, after the torment of the fourth movement (in E minor), it can be quite effective to move straight into the calmness of the Db major fifth movement. On the other hand, silence between the movements can be equally as effective, as long as it is not used as an opportunity for fidgeting.

---

[41] Rachmaninoff. Cited in: Geoffrey Norris, "Sergey Rakmaninov", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1995), vol.15, p.555.
[42] Rachmaninoff, "Music Should Speak from the Heart", [interview with David Ewen], *The Etude*, 59:12 (December 1941), p.804. Cited in: Cunningham, op. cit., p.11.
[43] Rachmaninoff. Cited in Cunningham, op. cit., p.11.

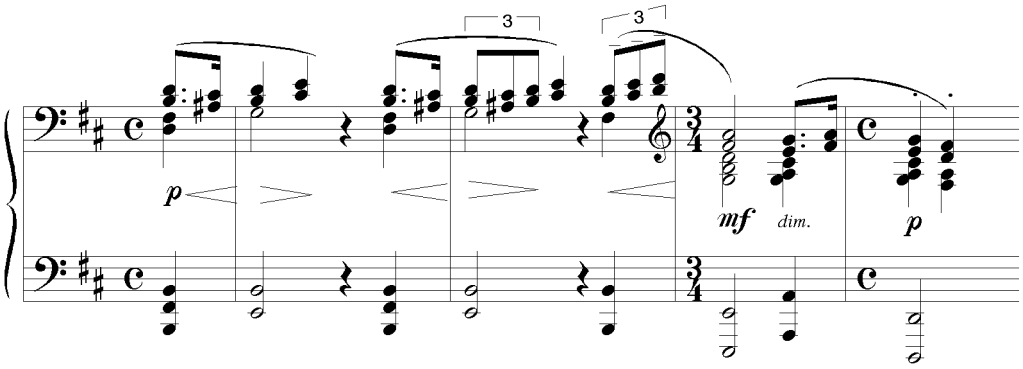
Figure 7: Rachmaninoff – *Moments Musical* No.4, bars 65-67 & No.5, bars 1-3



Either method can be effective. In some ways, it depends largely on the audience's attention span on the day, which can only be judged at the time. In between other movements, it generally works better to leave a little space between the movements. This is partly because the ends of the other movements, even the faster ones (excluding no.6) are slow and quiet, so the same sense of contrast isn't achieved.

The next level down is the culmination point within each individual movement. In terms of pacing, the third movement is the most difficult: mainly because of its slower tempo, the more limited textures, and the repeats. It is very easy to take this movement too slowly because of its overall sombre nature and the fact that the opening bars do work well slow. However, the danger in such a tempo is that the performer will not be able to maintain the emotional intensity and overall sense of shape: particularly from bars 14 onward where the music starts to intensify. Norma Fisher, at the London Master Classes, suggested that the tempo be taken from the 'tenor' line in the opening bars (i.e., the F#-G).

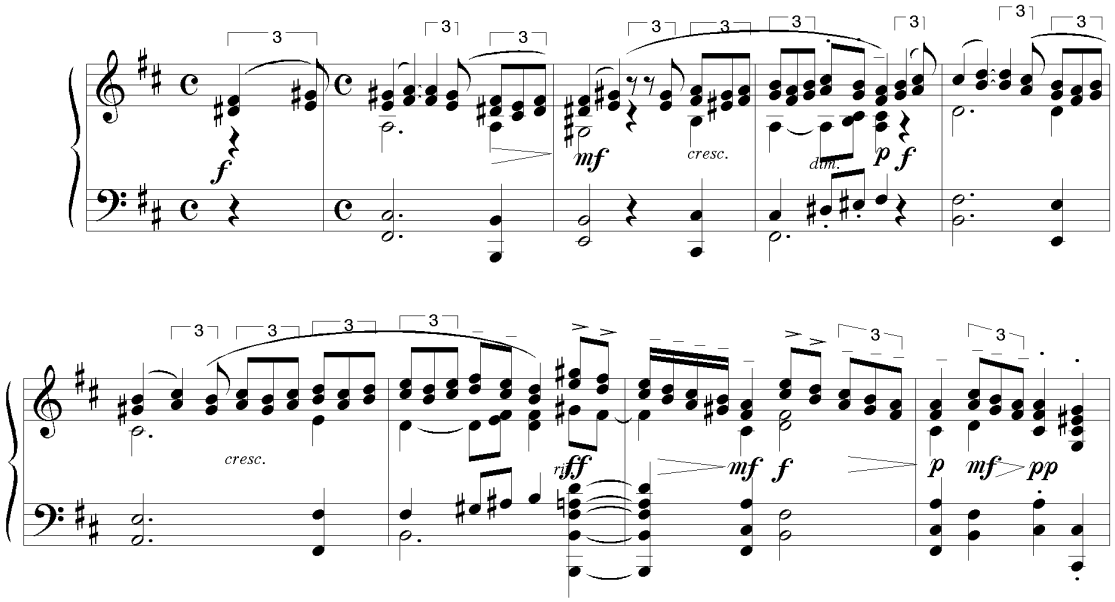
Figure 8: Rachmaninoff – *Moment Musical* No.3, bars 1-4



Projecting this tenor line will not only help resist the temptation to be too slow, but also add harmonic colour.

Another difficulty with pacing occurs in the second half of this movement. This is partly because of Rachmaninoff's dynamic markings. In this section, the music is driving towards a climax at bar 26. While reaching that point, however, there are drops in dynamics.

Figure 9: Rachmaninoff – *Moment Musical* No.3, bars 20-28

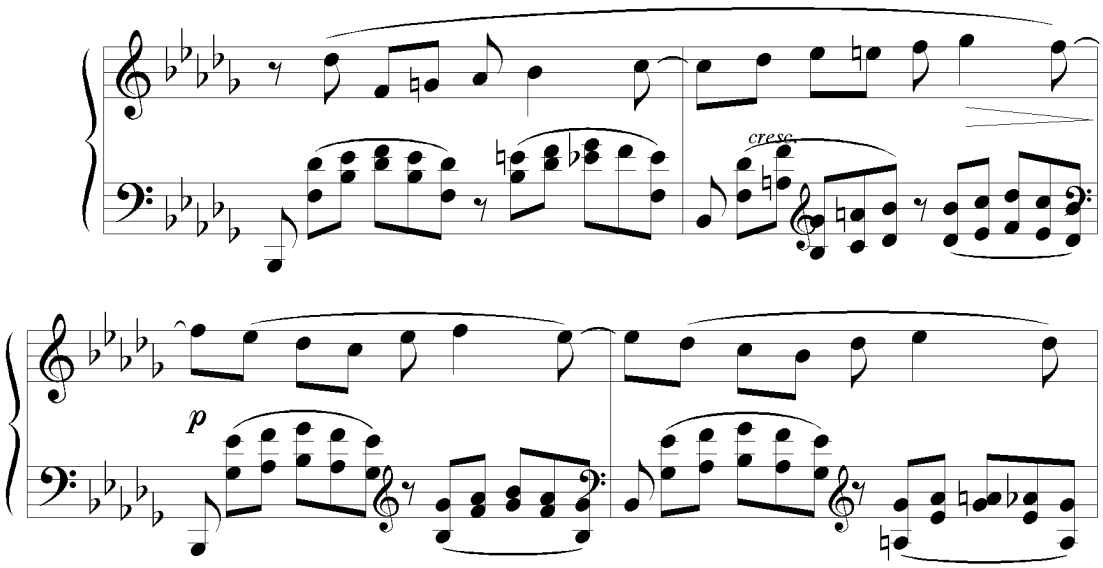


The danger for performers here is in losing their direction while dropping the dynamic level. This can be avoided by not slowing down as the dynamics decrease, and by immediately moving into the fuller-toned sections to keep the momentum. Also, slightly pushing the tempo throughout the whole seven bars can help maintain the intensity, while the other varied factors (dynamics) are providing colour. Once again, the tempo of this section is best taken from the harmonic progression found in the left

hand — if it makes sense, then the melodic shape will too.

Another element that can distract from the overall shape of a melody is the surrounding accompaniment. This issue is raised frequently in the first *Moment Musical*, where there is no melodic note on the first beat of every bar.

Figure 10: Rachmaninoff – *Moment Musical* No.1, bars 2-5



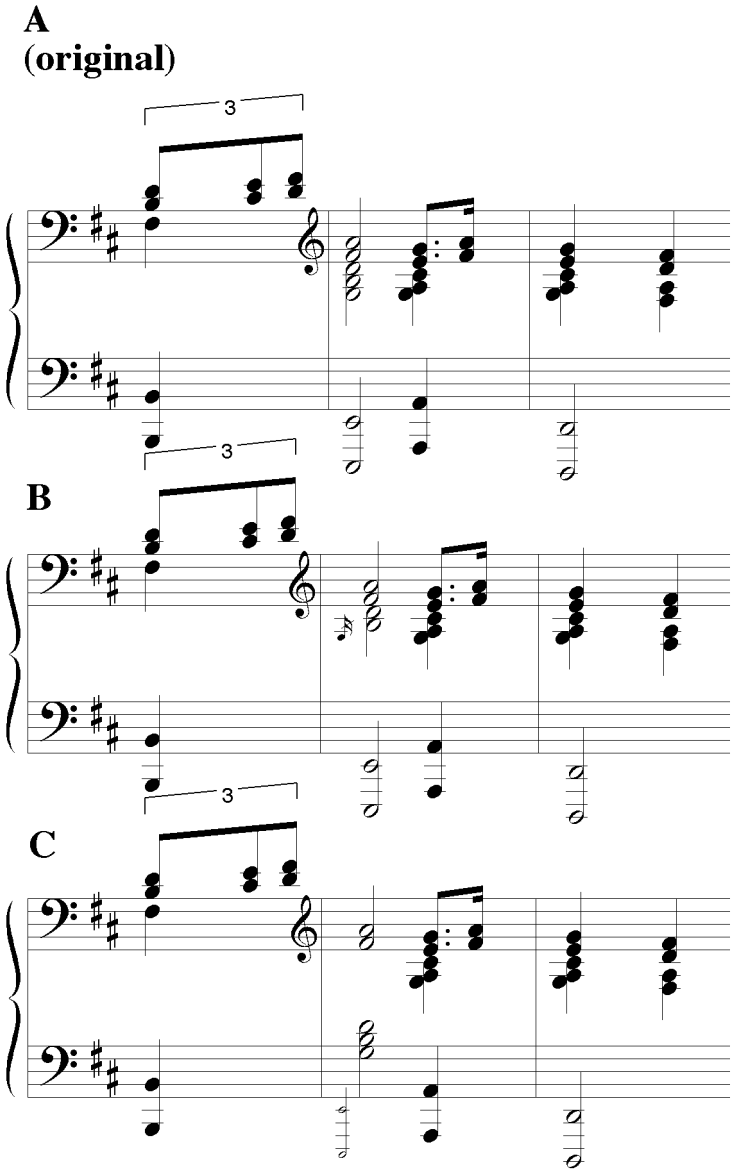
If the first melodic note (i.e., the semiquaver) of every bar is accented, the melody becomes too fragmented. It is useful for pianists to be conscious of the overall shape of the melody (in this case, four bars), and ensure that the first beat of every bar in the surrounding accompaniment is not accented.

On a more detailed level, rolled chords can at times interfere with the overall direction of a melody. This occurs in the third *Moment Musical.* The problem is caused by the wide span of the chords. Rachmaninoff had a particularly large hand. According to Cyril Smith, Rachmaninoff's left hand could play a chord C-Eb-G-C-G, while the right hand could stretch C (second finger)-E-G-C-E (thumb under).[44] He would have been able to play wide chords, such as that in bar 3 of the third *Moment Musical*, with ease. However, pianists with smaller hands must break up the chord without disturbing the overall melodic and harmonic direction. In his book *Introduction to Russian Piano Music*, Westerby proposes that the solution is to play such rich textures "with a two-manual piano, which I hope will become popular one day".[45] In the absence of that, it is

[44] Norris, *Rakmaninov* (London, 1976), p.81.
[45] Herbert Westerby, *Introduction to Russian Piano Music* (London, no date provided), p.12-13.

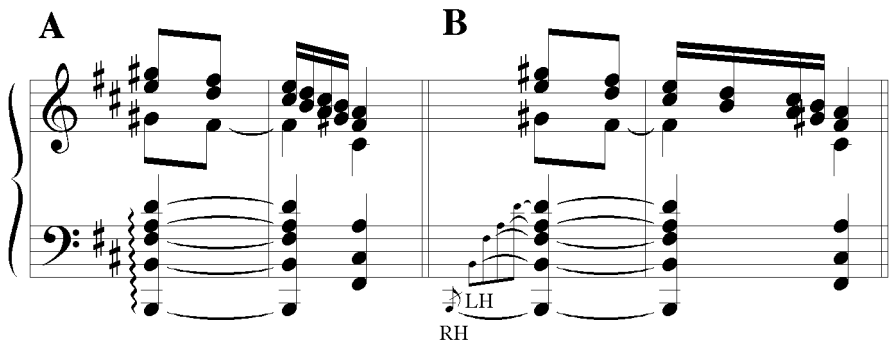
possible to break the right hand as shown in Figure 11 B. However, this interrupts the *legato* of the melodic line. It is more effective to treat the left hand octave as a grace note, and to allow the left hand to play the bottom of the right hand chord (Figure 11 C).

Figure 11: Rachmaninoff – *Moment Musical* No.3, bars 2-4



The advantage of this method is that the melodic direction is not disrupted by awkward leaps. A similar situation is evident in bar 26 of the same movement. In this case, not even Rachmaninoff would have been able to play the chord together. It is possible to play the entire lower stave with the left hand and the upper stave with the right (Figure 12 A). However, the awkwardness of the left hand can often result in a slight drop in intensity. It is more effective to play the bottom B with the right hand, then spread the rest of the chords accordingly (Figure 12 B).

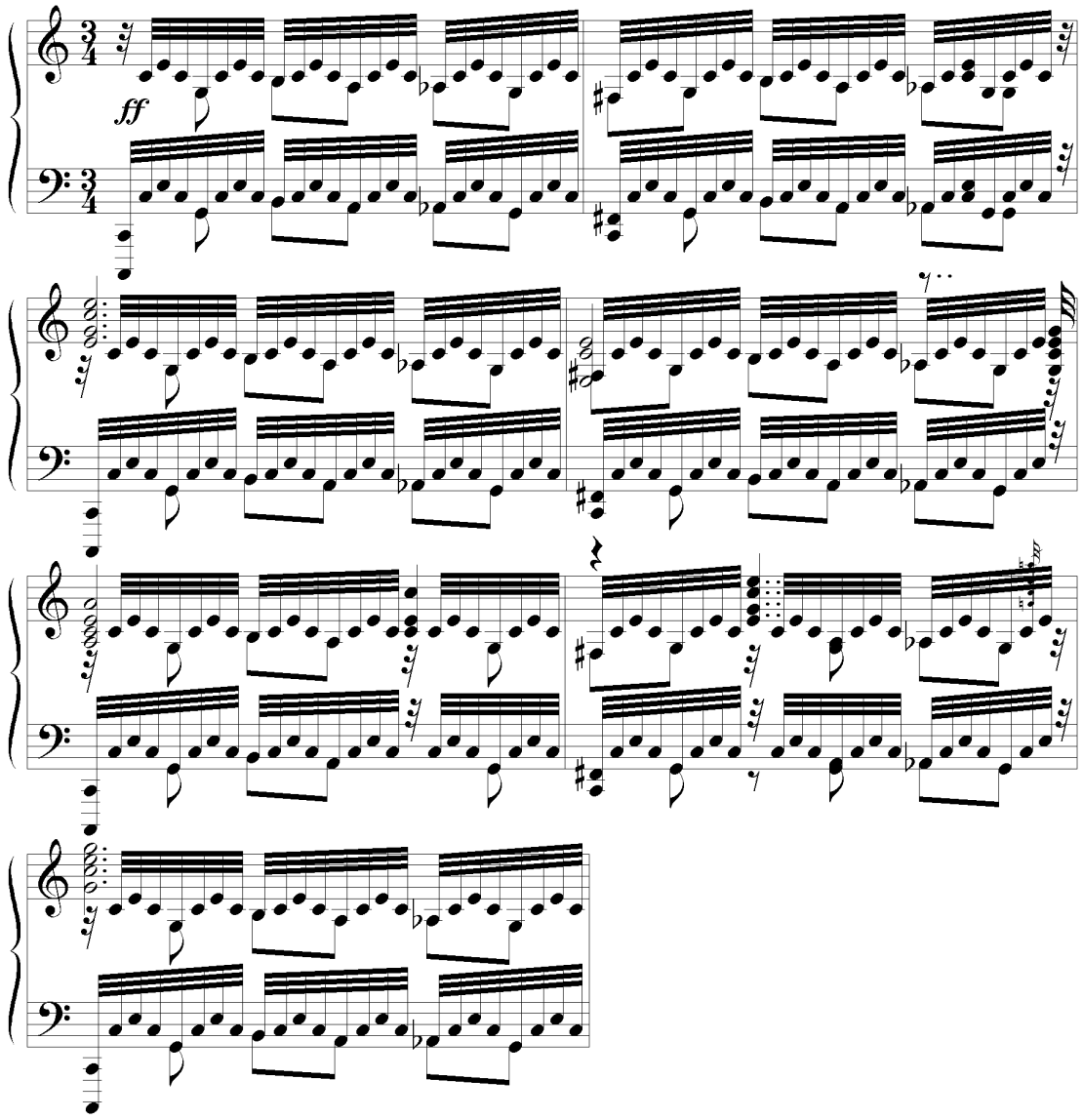
Figure 12: Rachmaninoff – *Moment Musical* No.3, bars 26-27



This allows a richer and freer tone, which is very important at this point, being one of the central climaxes of the work.

Another factor that can interrupt the melodic motion of the work is the sheer amount of notes present, particularly in the faster movements (Nos. 2, 4, & 6). However, it should be realised that although the rhythm may be moving quite fast, there are times when the overall effect (which is created by the melodic and harmonic rhythm) is still quite slow. This can be found in the *Moment Musical* No.6, where the overall effect is quite grand.

Page 24
Figure 13: Rachmaninoff – *Moment Musical* No.6, bars 1-7

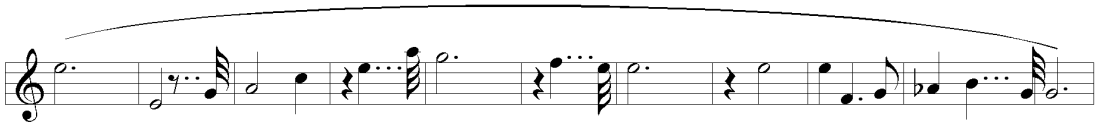


Performers should present what is important (the slower-moving melody) rather than all the notes in between. In the sixth *Moment Musical*, there are two levels of 'detail' that should be present, but not distract from the overall melodic line. One of these is the constant demisemiquavers. These are best played lightly. Slightly more problematic is the descending quaver movement in the lower parts of each hand, which can distract from the overall grandeur of the work. Given these a strong sense of direction, thinking in broad two-bar phrases, and avoiding accenting the quavers solves this problem. The result is that the movement in the inner parts complements the overall phrase, adding tension, rather than distracting from it.

On a higher level, the large-scale melodic structure has to be given shape.

Because this level of harmonic and melodic movement is so slow, it is easy just to 'bang out' these chords when they appear. However, it is more effective to consider the broad melodic shape of the work.

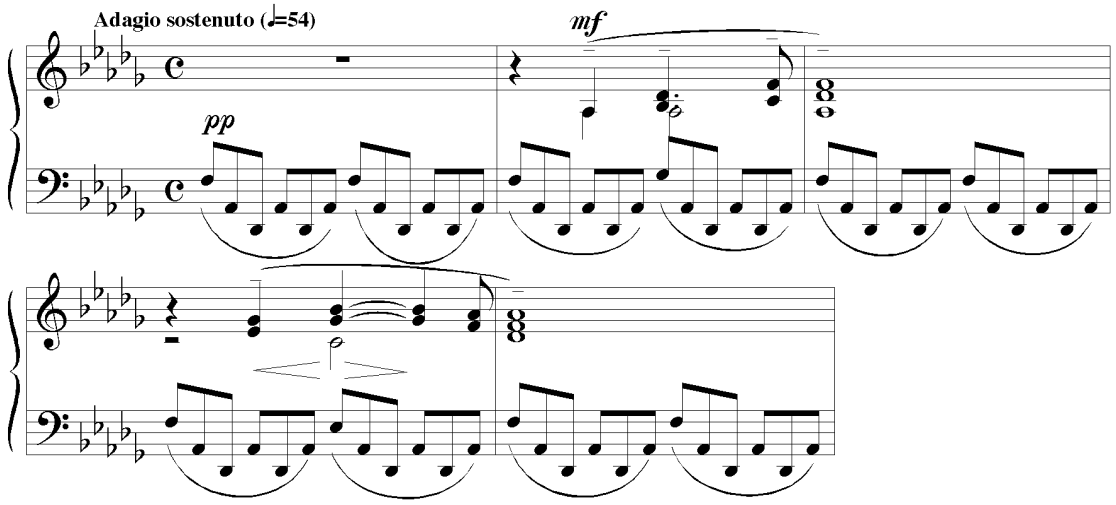
Figure 14: Rachmaninoff – *Moment Musical*, No.6, bars 3-13 (reduction)



Observing all these levels of shape helps give the movement the overall feeling of grandeur, which is important in providing a triumphant resolution to the harsher psychological states demonstrated in the previous movements. The triumphant ending reflects Rachmaninoff's belief, citing Hans von Bülow, that "music should exalt".[46]

Even the movements with less notes, such as the fifth *Moment Musical*, require consideration about which note should be projected more. In this case, the problem is the continuous triplet motion of the left hand.

Figure 15: Rachmaninoff – *Moment Musical*, No.5, bars 1-5



There is a danger that the movement will become staid and 'weigh down' the overall tranquility of the melody. A calm atmosphere can be achieved by aiming to avoid any sense of 'down beat' (i.e., playing quite soft and smooth). This requires careful control of the left hand, because the slightest inconsistency in tone in such a movement is obvious.

[46] Cunningham, op. cit., p.12.

Such a focus on the overall 'culminative point' helps avoid the temptation to over-sentimentalise Rachmaninoff's music. A reviewer of *The New York Times* wrote of Rachmaninoff's playing: "No one projects a musical idea, a dramatic emotion, with less self-advertisement in the communication".[47] The degree of spontaneity necessary for a successful performance of Scriabin generally does not produce a convincing performance of Rachmaninoff. The overall shape of Rachmaninoff's music has been too carefully planned. While the music should not be rigid, flexibility is best dictated by the larger-scale shape. At times, the key to effective pacing is found in the inner voices, as previously discussed in *Moment Musical* No.3, rather than the most obvious melodic voice. This too is evidence of Rachmaninoff's planning in composition and performance. Harold Schonberg wrote:

> When Rachmaninoff played, it was a unity. Everything was perfectly proportioned. Melodies were outlined with radiant authority, counterbalancing inner voices were brought out in chamber-music style. And those marvellous fingers were incapable of striking a wrong note. In an age of spectacular technicians, Rachmaninoff was peerless. Complicated figurations ... suddenly unravelled themselves in crystalline purity. The playing was at all times elegant. But it had inevitability rather than spontaneity. Rachmaninoff never gave the impression that he was doing something on the spur of the moment … With Rachmaninoff, you felt that it would be the same next year, and the years after that.[48]

Overall, Rachmaninoff's concept of music was that it must be " based upon the time-old principles of real beauty and not false art".[49] He once stated that

> My constant desire to compose music is actually the urge within me to give tonal expression to my feelings, just as I speak to give utterance to my thoughts.[50]

The performer has to find the appropriate balance between Rachmaninoff's expression and their own.

In an article entitled *Essentials of Artistic Playing*, Rachmaninoff warns of the dangers of performers not expressing music in their own style. He suggests that

> it is like the meals served in some hotels. Everything brought to the table has the same taste … a successful performer must have a strong

---

[47] *The New York Times*, 20 Feb. 1927. Cited in: John and Anna Gillespie, *Notable Twentieth-Century Pianists*, vol.2 (Connecticut, 1995), p.714.
[48] *The New York Times*, 1 April, 1973. Cited in: Gillespie, op. cit., p.715.
[49] Rachmaninoff. Cited in: Cunningham, op. cit., p.9.
[50] Ibid.

> individuality.[51]

Later, he states that "it is infinitely better to create than to imitate".[52] If the performer is aware of the culminating point, the performance will reflect Rachmaninoff's main intention, so they can then express the subtleties, such as countermelodies and subtle *rubatos*, in their own style.

The difference between Scriabin and Rachmaninoff and the following composers is that the former were both active performers of their own music, so it is easier to draw conclusions about how they preferred their music to be performed. Also, because of their greater success in their careers as composers, there is more documented evidence on their philosophies towards music.

LIADOFF: *Preludes* (op.11 no.1 & op.39 no.4)

Little is documented about Anatol Liadoff's personality in general. He was overall a very shy man. Kandinsky describes that he was "very secret and withdrawn, and painfully guarded his inner world."[53] One of his pupils, Lazare Saminsky, describes

> Liadoff's timid form hiding behind some column at the première of his works, was unique and unforgettable. Of course, he *never* appeared in acknowledgement of his plaudits.[54]

Mussorgsky stated that he was "extraordinarily nervous and highly strung".[55]

He also had a reputation for laziness. As a student, he was expelled from the St. Petersburg Conservatory for not attending classes. Later, when he became a teacher of harmony and counterpoint at that conservatory,

> teaching bored him so that he could scarcely drag himself to his classes; but once before his pupils, he imparted lucidly and with acid wit the wisdom of his remarkably keen mind.[56]

As Alfred Swan remarks, "though he groaned under the weight of it, this pedagogic task saved his life, since without appointed duties he would have gone down in utter

---

[51] Rachmaninoff, *Essentials of Artistic Playing.* Cited in: James Cooke, *Great Pianists on Piano Playing* (Philadelphia, 1976), p.213.
[52] Ibid., p.215.
[53] A. I. Kandinsky, in *History of Russian Music*, vol.III. Cited in Bowers, *Scriabin* (first edition), op. cit., p.72.
[54] Richard Leonard, *A History of Russian Music* (U.S.A., 1968), p.203.
[55] Mussorgsky, in a letter to Stassov. Cited in: Bowers, *Scriabin* (first edition), op. cit., p.72.
[56] Leonard, op. cit., p.203.

melancholia.[57]

The academic circuit in St. Petersburg at the time was following two trends. The first, in the tradition laid down by the Russian Five, was the study of Russian folk music. Liadoff made collections of folk songs for the Imperial Geographical Society. He tends to reserve the use of Russian elements for specifically Russian works, such as the *Eight Russian Folk Songs*. This may be attributed in part to the trend towards 'authentic' folk song harmonisations" that is, when harmonising Russian folk songs, they "should not be warped into modern or Western harmonizations [*sic.*]".[58] According to Leonard, Liadoff was one of the only composers to really "take on the true intonations of the folk song"[59] when he used it.

There was also an increasing interest in German music, which became the focus of the conservatory courses. This is seen in Liadoff's creative output: his piano music is predominantly small-scale preludes, intermezzos, variations, and the like. Liadoff's preference for such genres is likely to be due to his compositional process. Alfred Swan described that

> it seemed to take an age to tackle a composition, and when he finally did get busy he spent another age working on the piece like a jeweller, touching up, polishing and at last putting in all dynamic marks.[60]

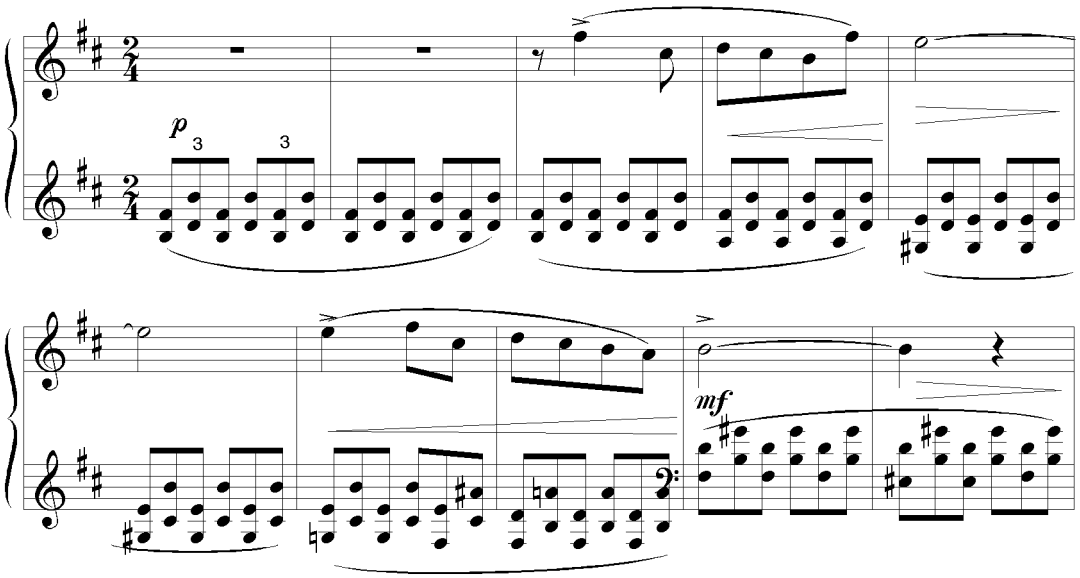
From Swan's account, it seems that Liadoff developed a certain intimacy with each composition. It is this intimacy which pianists can capture when interpreting the *Preludes*.

Creating an 'intimate' performance

The lyricism of the op.11 no.1 *Prelude* is the prime cause of its intimate feel. This can be highlighted by generally using a rich tone in the melody. This is complemented by an oscillating accompaniment, which is effective played as soft as possible. Liadoff's dynamic markings are effective for the shaping of the melody. Keeping in mind the overall shape of the *Prelude*, it is best to essentially keep the accompaniment at a softer dynamic level. The effect of this is that the opening passage is, overall, an almost bleak atmosphere, rather than having passionate surges every few bars.

[57] Swan, op. cit., p.142.
[58] Leonard, op. cit., p.200.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Swan, op. cit., p.142.

Page 29
Figure 16: Liadoff – *Prelude*, op.11 no.1, bars 1-10

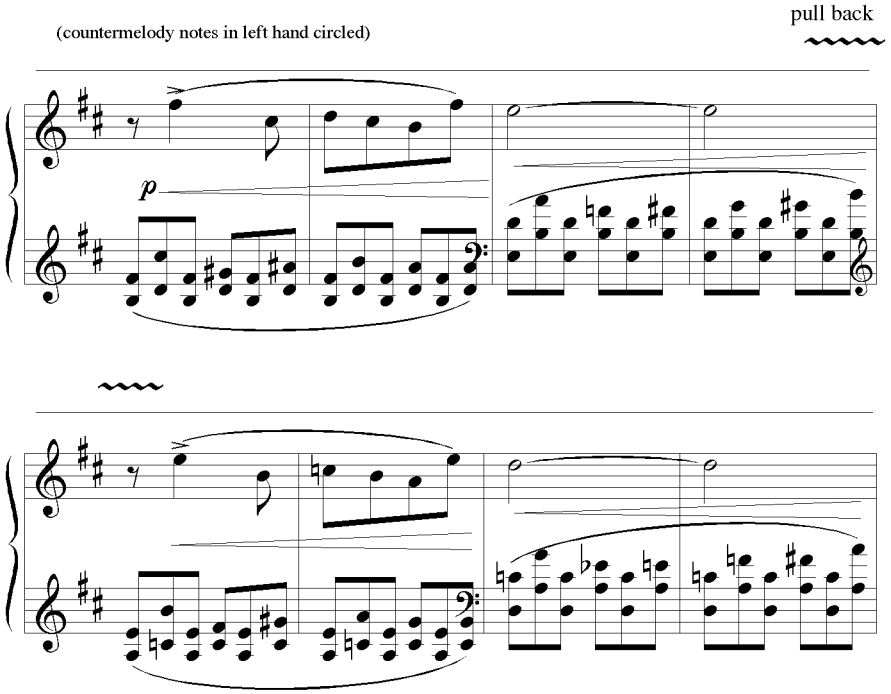


To highlight the expression of the opening, and the *Prelude* in general, it is effective to use slight tempo fluctuations. These must be instinctive. For example, it is possible to create the spacious atmosphere of the first two bars by slightly easing into the tempo.

When the opening melody returns later in the *Prelude*, it is effective to project the countermelody present in the upper part of the left hand. Slightly pulling back the tempo at the end of bar 44 highlights the end of the countermelody's phrase and colours the harmonic shift in the following bar.

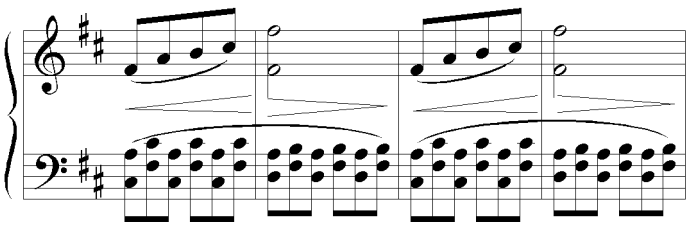
Page 30

Figure 17: Liadoff – *Prelude*, op.11 no.1, bars 41-48



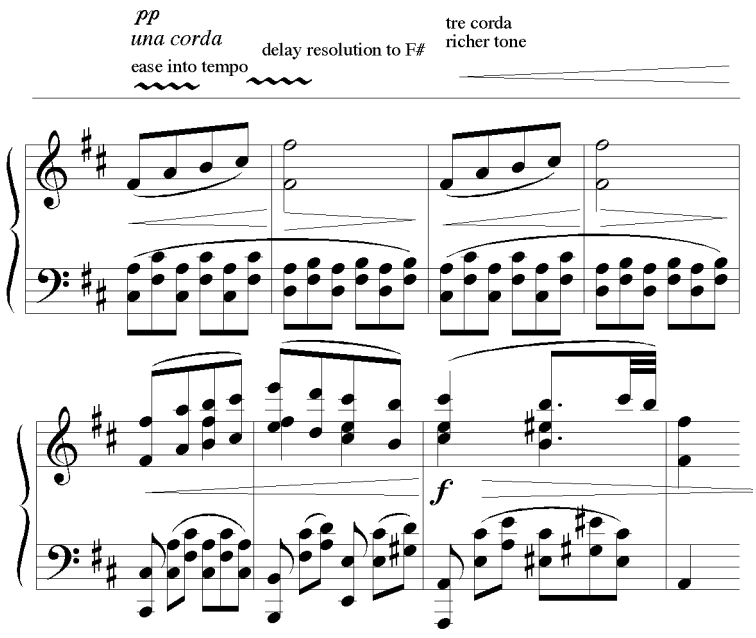
At times Liadoff repeats phrases without indicating any changes in expression.

Figure 18: Liadoff – *Preludes*, op.11 no.1, bars 19-22



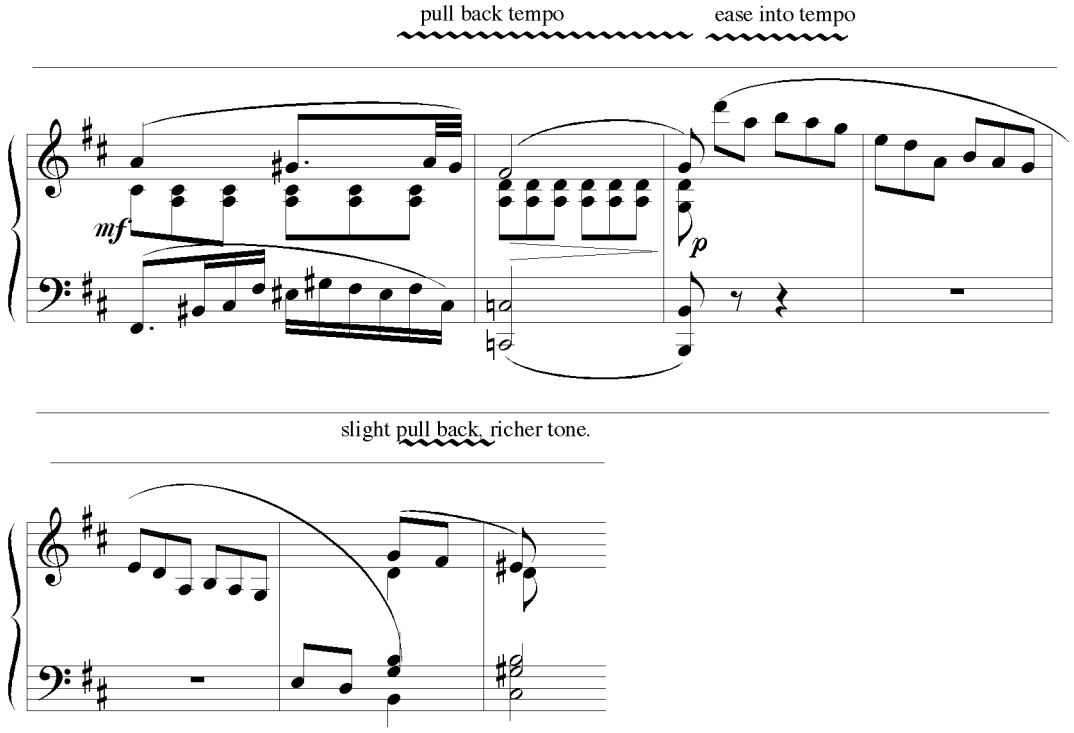
In such cases, performers can bear in mind the function of those phrases in the overall meta-phrase. In this case, these two phrases are serving to build up to the major climax of the first section. It is logical, then, that these phrases should intensify. This can be achieved by starting the first phrase as soft as possible (perhaps using the *una corda*) and slightly under tempo. The hairpin *crescendo* marked here can be interpreted as a slight one. It is effective to slightly delay the last note of the phrase (F#) — when it is played it can be played softly, with a sweet tone. This subtlety, though not exactly indicated by Liadoff, adds intimacy to the *Prelude*. The second phrase can have a fuller tone, and overall build up — propelling the music into the following climatic phrase. In this build up, for the first time in the work, the accompaniment can expand and support the melody.

Figure 19: Liadoff – *Prelude*, op.11 no.1, bars 19-26



Flexibility is also required in the bridging passing between the first and second sections. The freedom here is mainly in tempo: pulling back the end of the first phrase in bar 30, and easing into the start of the descending right-hand passage. This is matched by the quality of the tone colour — starting as soft as possible, and gradually increasing as the passage moves into the richer register of the piano.

Figure 20: Liadoff – *Prelude*, op.11 no.1, bars 29-35.

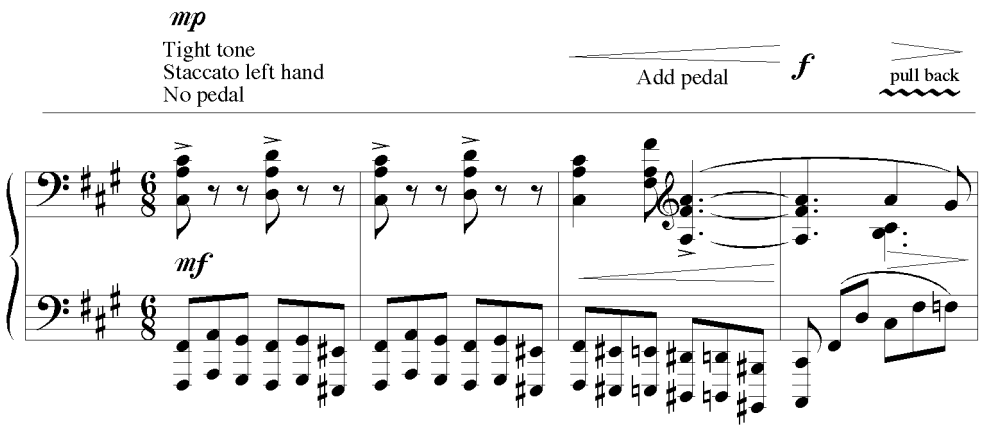


The interpretation of Liadoff's music is in many ways similar to the spontaneous approach required in Scriabin's music. Attention to subtle variances in tempo, tone colour, and shape greatly enhance the emotional impact of such stylistically 'simple' works.

Turbulence and heroism in Liadoff's music

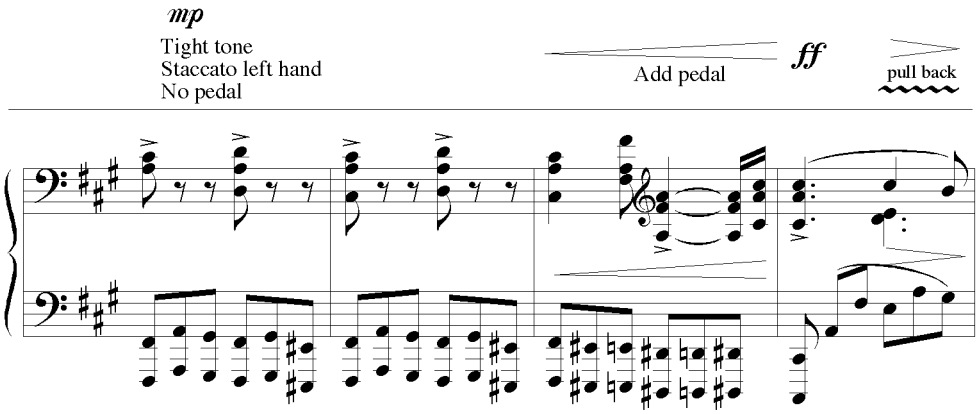
Contrasting to the intimate style of the op.11 no.1 *Prelude* is the more outwardly passionate op.39 no.4 *Prelude*. This passion can be created by dramatic gestures. The opening bars are quite mysterious. This can be enhanced by a tight tone and a short *staccato* in the left hand. There is no need for pedal in these bars. It is effective to start slightly under Liadoff's dynamic indication of *mf* to contrast more with the end of the phrase. The last two bars of this four-bar phrase have a more positive character. This can be enhanced by exaggerating the *crescendo* Liadoff has indicated, supporting the 'surge-like' effective by using the pedal, and slightly pulling back the end of the phrase. The melodic nature of the left hand in the fourth bar can also be projected to further promote this effect.

Figure 21: Liadoff – *Prelude*, op.39 no.4, bars 1-4



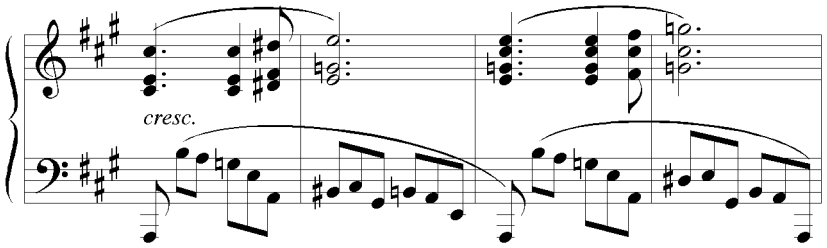
The same 'formula' can be used in the following four bars. Because of its role in the overall phrase (bars 1-19), the 'culminating point' of this phrase should be slightly louder than the first phrase.

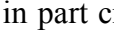
Figure 22: Liadoff – *Prelude*, op.39 no.4, bars 5-8



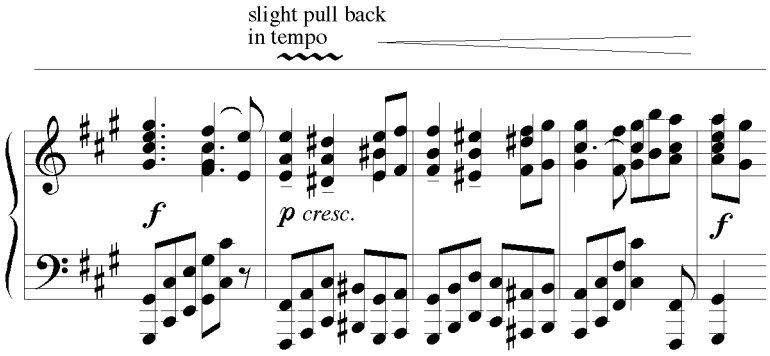
The next phrases possess a more heroic quality — aiming to overcome the turbulence. This can be achieved by a richer tone, consistently using the pedal, and by aiming for more *legato* phrases. As Liadoff indicates, the four bars should consistently build in tone.

Figure 23: Liadoff – *Prelude*, op.39 no.4, bars 9-12



The heroic quality of the preceding bars was in part created by the triumphant  rhythm. This is interrupted by an abrupt *piano* passage. The most obvious method of enhancing this is to exaggerate the sudden shift from *forte* to *piano*. The syncopation of the right hand in bar 14 not only creates tension, but also promotes the more *legato* nature of the following build up (i.e., straight crotchet movement, in contrast to the 'heroic' rhythm). This can be enhanced by slightly pulling back the first beat of bar 14. During the build up, pianists can intensify the sound by leaning towards the first beat of each bar. This creates a kind of yearning effect and is partly indicated by Liadoff's *tenuto* marks. At the peak of the new climax pianists can create passion by drawing attention to the return of the 6/8 subdivision in the right hand of bar 18. This can be achieved by slightly accenting the last three quavers of the bar (all moving towards the first beat of the next bar).

Page 34
Figure 24: Liadoff – *Prelude*, op.39 no.4, bars 13-17



Overall, exploring the contrasts between mysterious, turbulent, and heroic moments in this *Prelude* — through tone, articulation, dynamics, etc. — helps project the passionate nature of the work. In both *Preludes* studied in this chapter, an imaginative approach is required to communicate Liadoff's subtle expressions.

SOROKIN: *Three Dances* (opus 30a) & *Dance* (op.29, no.2)

Little is known about the career or personality of Konstantin Stepanovich Sorokin (born 1909). Information from the Library of Congress and British National Library catalogues can be used to provide a general picture. It is known that he was educated at the Moscow Conservatory and that he worked as a music editor for the Music State Publishing House in Moscow. This would mean that he would have been familiar with both past and current musical trends in Western Europe in a time when the Soviet regime was attempting to suppress its influence.

His published output, which was compiled from editions present in both the Library of Congress and the British National Library (Appendix 1) consists mainly of piano music. Most of this tends to be in traditional Western 'abstract' forms, such as sonatas, preludes and fugues, and waltzes. His work in the publishing industry is likely to have encouraged this kind of music, but under the Soviet regime, particularly under Stalin, such music was seen as formalist — "art for art's sake" — and was a symbol of bourgeois society.

There is also a considerable portion of his published works written for the young: such as the *Youth Concerto, Polyphonic Exercises for the Young: 24 Preludes and*

Fugues, and a collection entitled *Music for Children*. This may imply that he was an educator, or played that kind of role in the publishing company.

The majority of his published output is between 1961 and 1982, though it is not known whether all the works were written in this time frame. Nevertheless, his music emerges from a completely different society to that of Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, and Liadoff: a society that suppresses creative output. Soviet ideology toward music is summed up by Lenin:

> Soviet composers … have no right to be non political, hiding themselves away from the present in their personal little worlds. We do not need composer supermen separated from the common cause which constitutes the life of the whole Soviet people.[61]

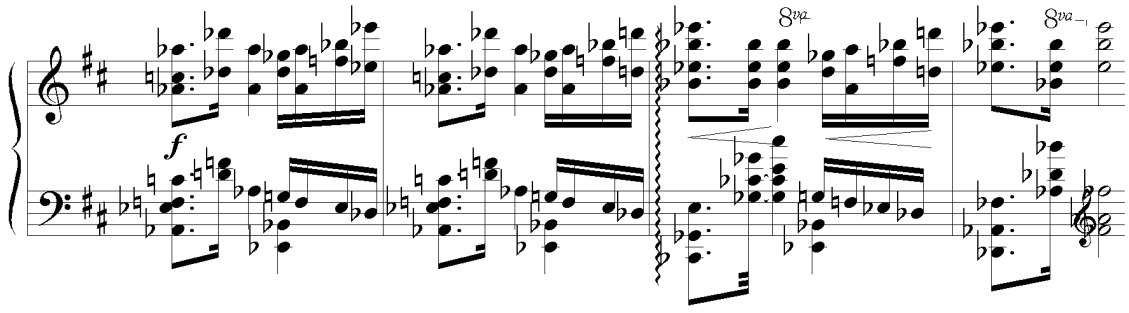
Yet Sorokin's output does not appear to reflect this trend at all (the relationship between music and soviet ideology will be discussed in detailed in chapter 4).

The *Three Dances from the ballet "The Ugly Duckling" by Hans Christian Anderson* possess a highly eclectic style, showing elements of the Russian neo-classicists, and, on the other hand, distinctly French harmonies. This would largely be due to his position as a music editor (Sorokin edited an edition of Debussy's *Preludes* in 1964). The *Three Dances* were published in piano solo form in 1966, but prior to this a two-piano four-hand version had been released in 1963. This version contained four dances. It can be assumed from the title that the dances are from a ballet, or an intended ballet. Whether or not it was ever completed or exists in an orchestral form is not known.

The texture of the solo piano version does imply that it was written in two-piano version first. As a result, there are several regions that are pianistically awkward. For example, certain passages in the *Minuet* require awkward leaps in a building texture.

[61] Olkhovsky, op. cit., p.13.

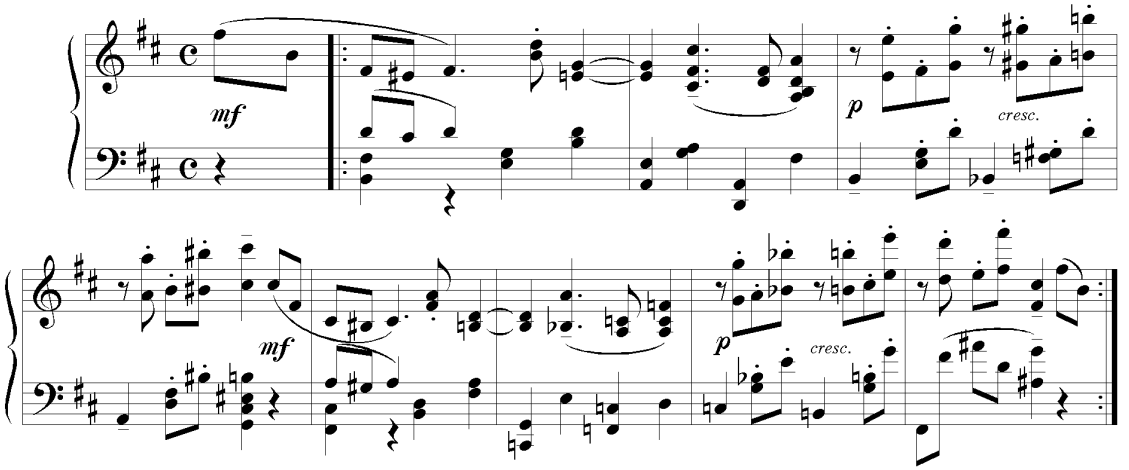
Figure 25: Sorokin – *Three Dances from "The Ugly Duckling"*, op.30a no.1 (*Minuet*), bars 23-26



Pianists must execute such awkward passages while still maintaining a sense of direction in the music. The most common solution is to simply provide more space for the awkward chord. In doing this, performers should ensure that they are building up in other ways apart from tempo, so that the climax can be reached effectively.

Flexibility of tempo is also a useful tool when interpreting 'sectionalised' works. Sorokin often uses very fragmented, economic material, and at times will shift to contrasting material abruptly. This is seen in the opening bars of the *Gavotte*.

Figure 26: Sorokin – *Three Dances from "The Ugly Duckling"*, op.30a no.3 (*Gavotte*), bars 1-8

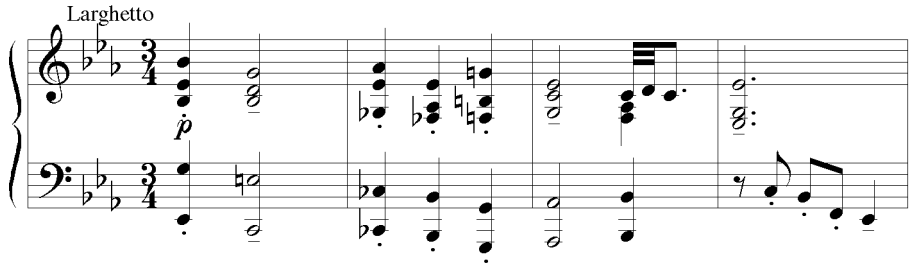


It is important to make the most of these contrasts. The first two bars (and the corresponding bars 5-6) are effective played *legato*, gracefully, and with a rich tone. The answering statement (bars 3-4, 7-8) can be light and playful. The effect can be likened, in reference to the ugly duckling theme, to the contrast between the mother duck and the little duck plodding behind. Much of this contrast is created by tone, but it can be heightened by starting bars 3-4 and 7-8 slightly under tempo and letting them increase. Such techniques are important in making such short, fragmented pieces interesting to the listener. However, it does raise the issue of exactly how much flexibility of tempo there should be in a dance form — particularly considering the fact that these dances were

intended as a ballet. In a concert situation, pianists do not have the entertaining choreography on the stage. The solo piano also doesn't have the colours of the orchestra either. So the dances can be treated more as stylised, not literal, dances. It is possible to perform these dances as just that — a minuet, a sarabande, and gavotte — yet that is not going to project to the audience the story of *The Ugly Duckling*. It is important, rather, to focus on the different 'characters' portrayed, and to let this — not the difficulties raised by the sometimes awkward pianism — dictate the tempo fluctuations.

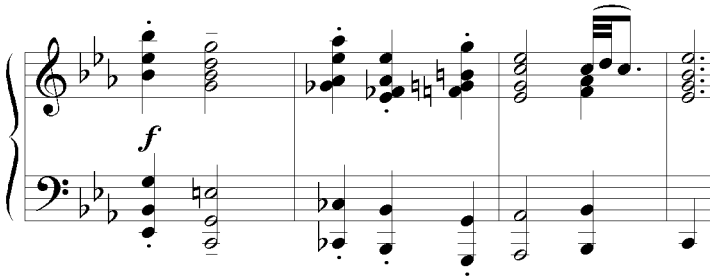
Performers can also project the character of the dances by exploring subtle pianistic colours. For example, in the opening of the *Sarabande*, it is the harmonic colours, particularly in the inner parts, that give the dance its magic. This can be enhanced with a sweet tone.

Figure 27: Sorokin – *Three Dances from "The Ugly Duckling"*, op.30a no.2 (*Sarabande*), bars 1-4



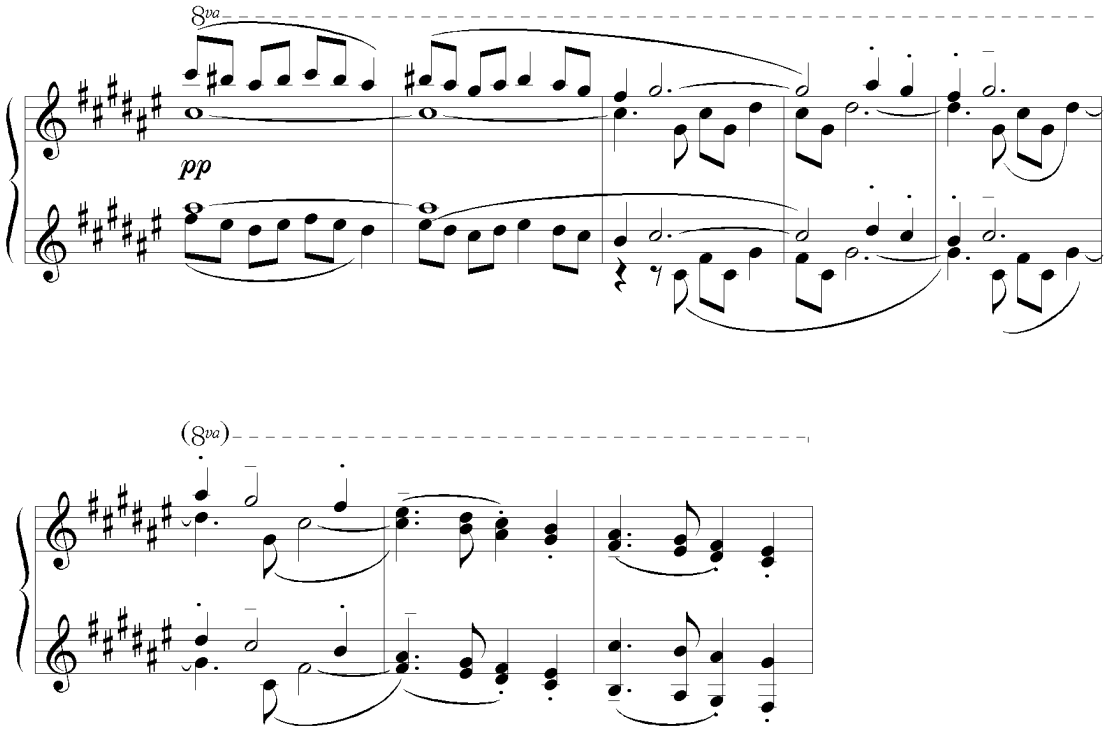
Several bars later, the material is repeated — enhanced with an expanded dynamic range, register, and slightly thicker harmonics. Pianists can exploit these characteristics.

Figure 28: Sorokin – *Three Dances from "The Ugly Duckling"*, op.30a, no.2 (*Sarabande*), bars 9-12



In the middle section of the *Gavotte*, being aware of the parallel fifths movement in the outer parts — combined with a delicate tone and attention to the subtle *tenuto* and *staccato* indications — creates an effective atmosphere (almost like a shimmering lake).

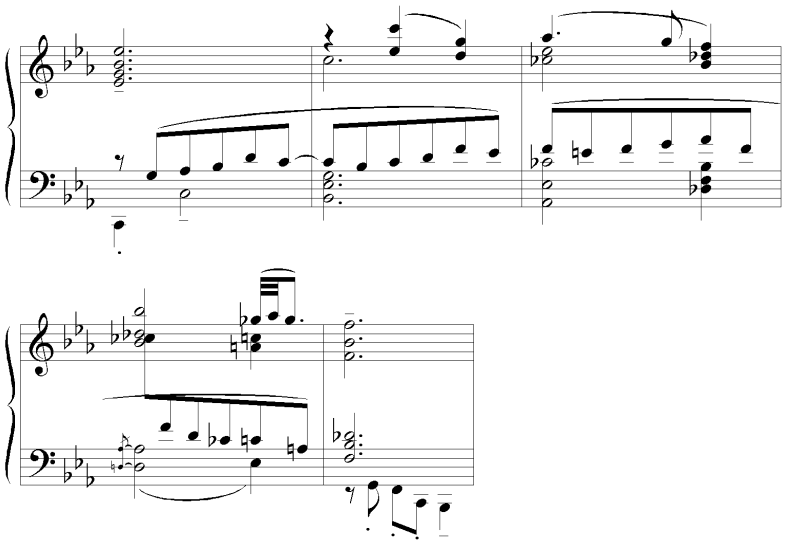
Figure 29: Sorokin – *Three Dances from "The Ugly Duckling"*, op.30a no.3 (*Sarabande*), bars 34-41)



Pianists can enhance this effect further by experimenting with the volume of individual parts. For example, the upper part could be projected more, and the lower echo it (the reverse is also effective).

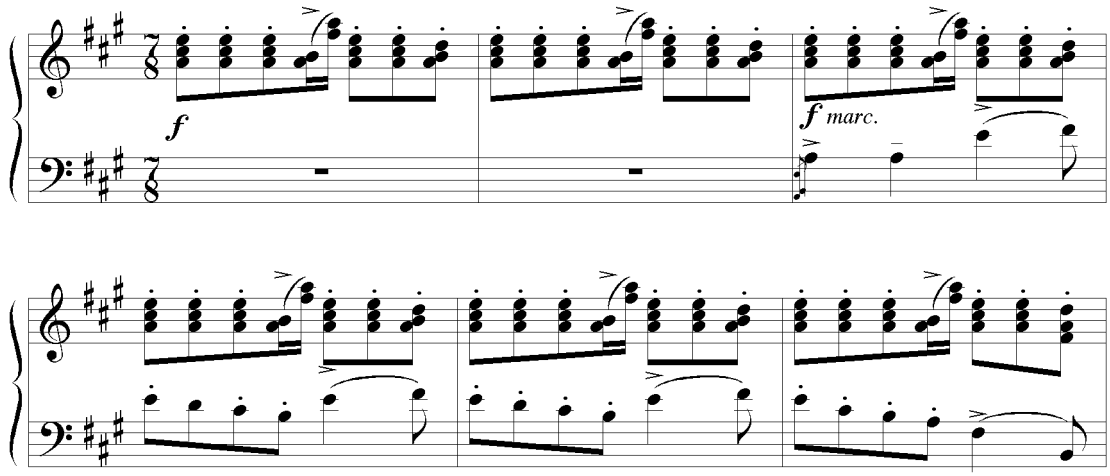
Pianists can also exaggerate the contrasts of character in the work. For example, the 'romantic' nature of the swooping countermelodies in the centre of the texture (figure 30) can be projected. This contrasts with the more playful, comical, *staccato* notes at the very end of the phrase.

Figure 30: Sorokin – *Three Dances from "The Ugly Duckling"*, op.30 no.2 (*Sarabande*), bars 12-16



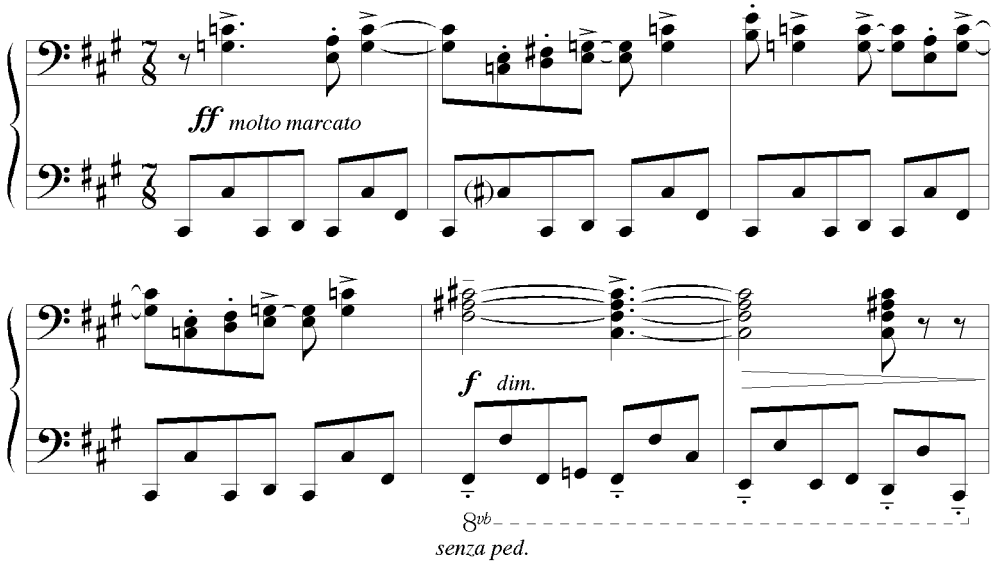
An imaginative interpretation of the dances from *The Ugly Duckling* is crucial in conveying Sorokin's subtle, colourful musical language — a language contrasting to that found in the more energetic *Dance* (op.29). Because of its irregular meter (7/8) and its greater focus on rhythm in general, the tempo fluctuations used in *The Ugly Duckling* dances are not appropriate. The vitality of the work can instead be captured simply by paying attention to Sorokin's markings: particularly articulation. For example, in the very opening, Sorokin creates additional excitement by emphasising the fourth quaver of each bar in the right hand (which is a 'troika-like' accompaniment) while consistently emphasising the fifth quaver in the left.

Figure 31: Sorokin – *Dance*, op.29 no.2, bars 1-6



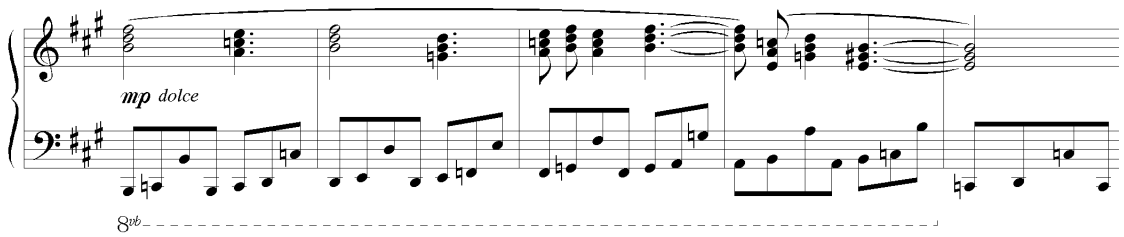
In the middle section, Sorokin uses syncopation to create energy. Pianists can enhance this with a percussive touch, particularly in the right hand, and a short *staccato* in the left.

Figure 32: Sorokin – *Dance*, op.29 no.2, bars 46-51



This is immediately contrasted with a more lyrical passage in the right hand. Performers can enhance this with a *dolce* tone quality (as indicated by Sorokin). The left hand continues the more aggressive ostinato, though it is now more subsidiary. Maintaining the short *staccato* yet dropping the dynamic level heightens this effect.

Figure 33: Sorokin – *Dance*, op.29 no.2, bars 52-6



Further contrast is achieved by Sorokin's pedal indications — the more aggressive section is marked *con ped.,* where as the subdued section is marked *senza ped.* (the pedal is removed two bars before this section, to move more gradually into the lighter sound).

Overall, a full realisation of the existing contrasts in Sorokin's music is crucial to communicate its energy — whether this be the primarily rhythmic and dynamic contrasts of the opus 29 no.2 *Dance*, or the more subtle 'characters' found in *The Ugly Duckling* dances.

SHOSTAKOVICH: *Preludes* (opus 34 nos 2, 5, 9, 10 & 20)

The *Preludes* of Shostakovich require similar attention to the projection of character. These works do not posses the introspection of the works studied by Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, or even Liadoff. This is reflective of his different attitude toward music:

> what can be considered human emotions? Surely not only lyricism, sadness, tragedy? Doesn't laughter also have a claim to that lofty title? I want to fight for the legitimate right of laughter in 'serious' music. When a listener laughs loudly during my symphonic concert, it doesn't shock me a bit, on the contrary, it pleases me.[62]

Matthew Rye writes that the *Preludes* (written in 1932-3)

> seem to have been written as a kind of relief after a series of large-scale dramatic works — film scores, theatrical music and, most significantly, the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk.*[63]

The *Twenty-Four Preludes*, as a set, follow the same key sequences as Chopin's. This in itself is reflective of how Shostakovich is starting, in this period, to "correlate the opposing forces of tradition and innovation." It is also reflective of the advice of actor and theatre director Vsevolod Emilyevich Meyerhold, which Shostakovich recalled in his *Memoirs*:

> you must prepare for every new composition. Look through a lot of music, search — maybe there was something similar in the classics. Then you must try and do it better, or at least in your own way.[64]

Having established a 'link' with the past, Shostakovich is then able to experiment, which happens to be another piece of advice by Meyerhold:

> you must strive for something new in each work, so that each new work stuns. Set a technical goal in each work. Today such a rule may seem commonplace, but in those days, at that time, it was a major discovery for me. We had never been taught anything like that [at the Conservatory] … All these considerations helped me very much in that period.[65]

This conscious search for originality accounts for the diversity of styles seen in the *Twenty-Four Preludes*.

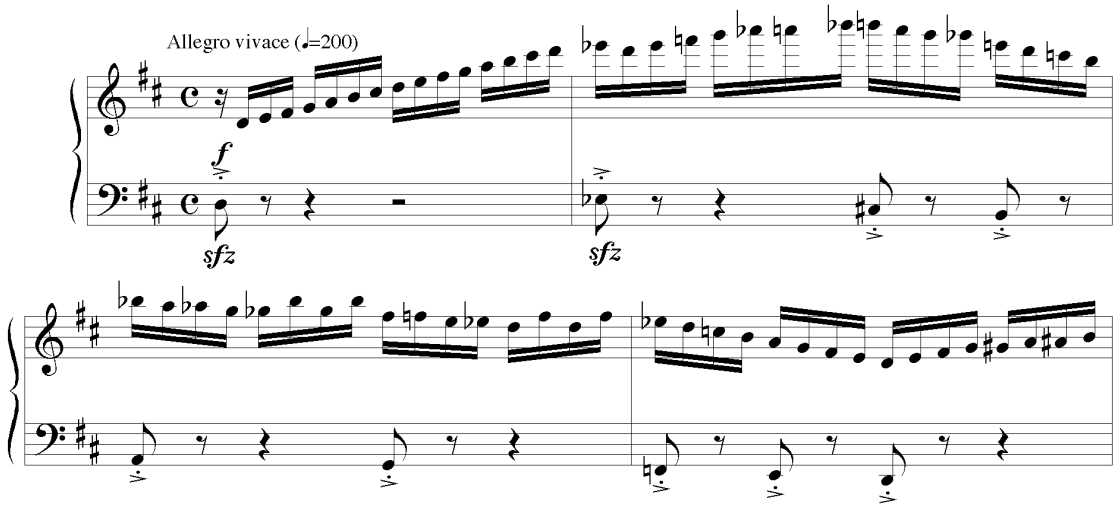
Because of the brevity of most of the *Preludes*, performers only have a short space to communicate the message of the work. Generally, the framework for

---

[62] Shostakovich. Cited in: Laurel, Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford, 2000), p.76-7.
[63] Matthew Rye, *Shostakovich and Scriabin: 24 Preludes* (Program notes to CD, Collins Classics, 1997).
[64] Dmitry Shostakovich, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Shostakovich* (London, 1979), p.61.
[65] Ibid.

successful interpretation is contained in Shostakovich's markings. In some cases, such as the *Prelude* no.5 or no.9, excitement is created largely by the sheer speed of the *Prelude*.

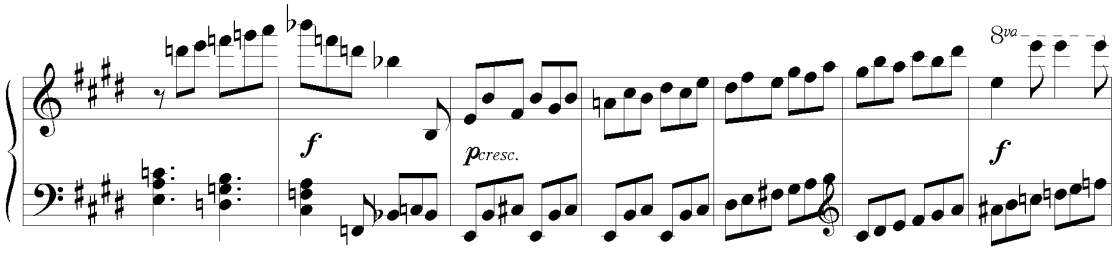
Figure 34: Shostakovich – *Prelude*, op.35 no.5, bars 1-4



This can be enhanced by projecting the left hand notes in a very 'cheeky' tone. This is not a work that requires the 'beautiful sounds' aimed at in the other works in the program. The tone in the left hand can be slightly gritty (like the harmony).

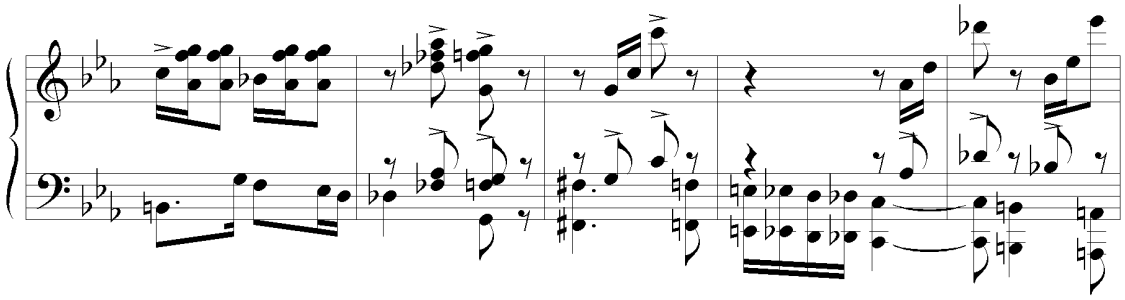
The excitement of the *Preludes* can also be enhanced by exaggerating score indications. An example of this can be found in figure 35, where pianists can exaggerate the shift from *forte* to *piano* (almost performing it as *fortissimo* to *piano*) then creating an effective *crescendo* from bar 21.

Figure 35: Shostakovich – *Prelude*, op.34 no.9, bars 19-25



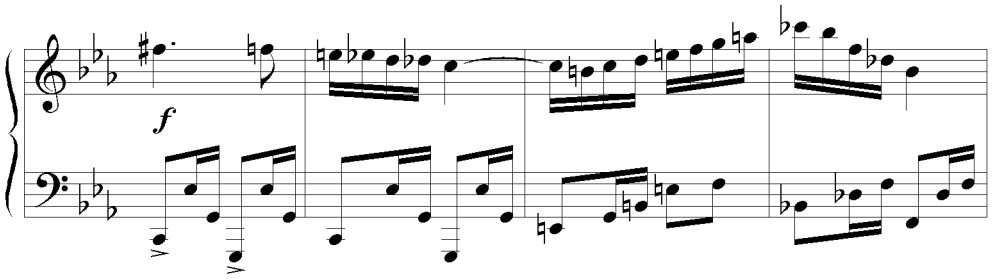
In other places, excitement is created by syncopated accents which pianists can project.

Figure 36: Shostakovich – *Prelude*, op.34 no.20, bars 21-25



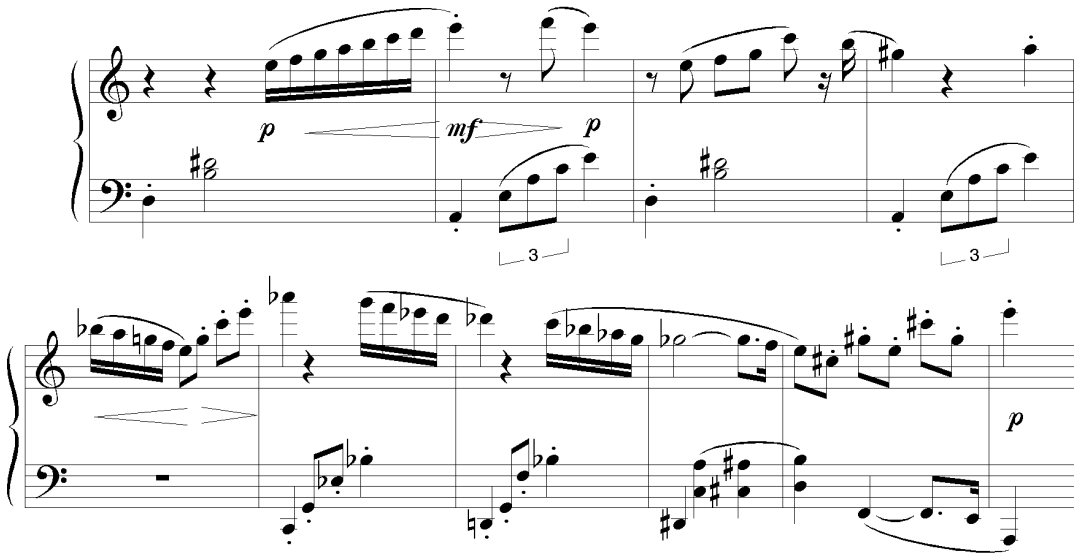
Accents in the left hand are also used to create a ponderous, almost march-like effect in the *Prelude No.20.* This can be enhanced by interpreting the accents as both a dynamic device and, though to a lesser scale, a rhythmic one (i.e., providing slightly more space around the accented note). This further defines the start of the new thematic 'group'.

Figure 37: Shostakovich – *Prelude*, op.35 no.20, bars 8-11



Other points in Shostakovich's *Preludes* require more subtlety. For example, the graceful nature of the opening of the second *Prelude* can be highlighted by carefully observing the rests (in the right hand) and the *crescendo* marking on the upward run. It is possible to create a little space in the semiquaver rest on the third beat of bar 6 (i.e., exaggerating the dotted rhythm nature) — this provides a little more lilt.

Page 44
Figure 38: Shostakovich – *Prelude*, op.34 no.2, bars 8-11

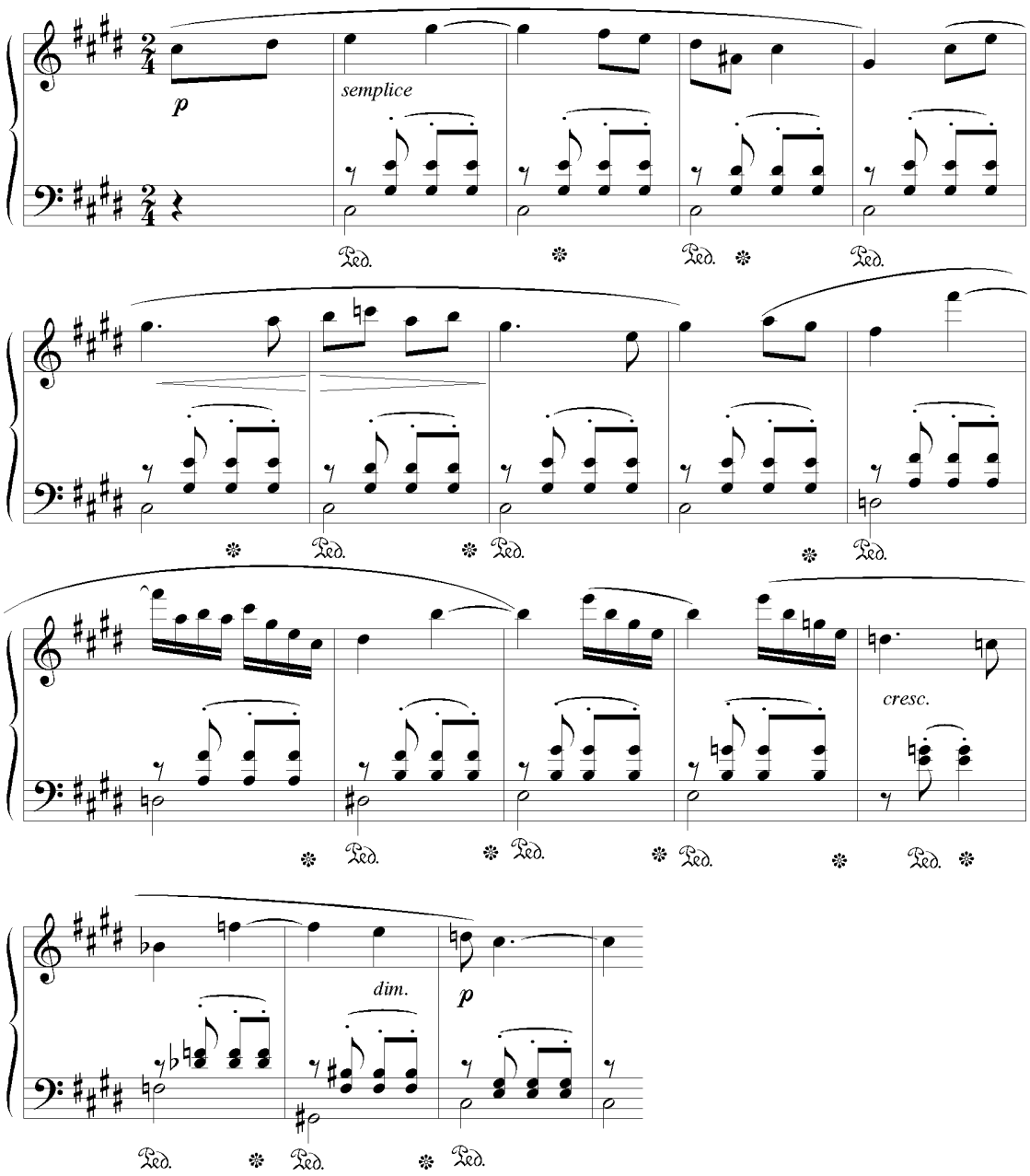


The success of this section is partly due to the combination of old and new styles — it has the feel of a Viennese waltz, yet has a quirky character created by a harmonic language which is "sometimes tonal, sometimes modal, sometimes somewhere in between".[66] Performers can enhance this by drawing attention to 'classical' devices — such as slightly pulling back the tempo in bar 12 to define the first 12-bar phrase, and also by drawing attention to the left hand in this bar, which quirkily cadences into the tonic.

Shostakovich's lyricism is evident in the tenth *Prelude*. However, the quality of this lyricism differs greatly from the other composers studied in this chapter — it is less sentimental. This is also reflected in his performance style: Shostakovich would play his own works "with technical finish, avoiding any show of emotion, it was 'objective' playing."[67] The lyricism of the tenth *Prelude* tends to speak for itself. Pianists do not particularly need to colour it in any way other than those limited expressive markings provided (it is, after all, marked *semplice*). However, if desired, it can be effective to create a slight space over the octave interval in bar 9, to highlight its expressive qualities.

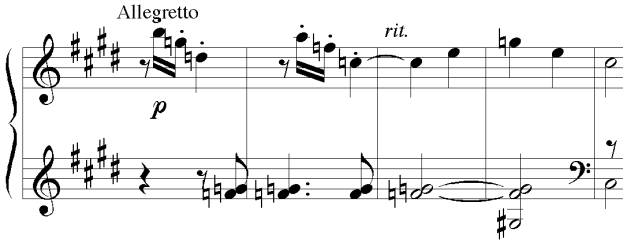
[66] David Fanning, *Shostakovich Studies* (Cambridge, 1997), p.8.
[67] Boris Schwarz, "Dmitry Shostakovich", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1995), vol.17, p.273.

Figure 39: Shostakovich – *Prelude*, op.34 no.10, bars 1-12



This is contrasted with the more playful interjection at the coda. As with the other *Preludes*, performers can exaggerate the contrasts between these sections — particularly through a crisp *staccato* and very rhythmic playing in the first two bars (figure 40). This can be effectively followed by a richer, more lyrical tone — enhanced by the *rit.*, and the expressive nature of the G-sharp in the left hand against the G-natural in the right.

Figure 40: Shostakovich – *Prelude*, op.34 no.10, bars 49-53



On the whole, unlike the other works studied, the interpretation of Shostakovich's *Preludes* is largely dictated by the markings on the score. Performers can exaggerate these to exploit the clever nature of the musical language. However, applying the 'sentimental' approaches to performance practice is not appropriate, as it is not fitting with Shostakovich's musical language. Rather, his language is more like his personality: "a man of few words, limiting himself to the essentials, expressing his thoughts in a direct and simple manner without adornment."[68]

The five composers studied in this chapter demonstrate the diversity of attitudes toward music in Russia from the late nineteenth- to the mid twentieth-centuries. On one hand there is the mysticism of Scriabin, and Rachmaninoff's desire for "music to give tonal expression to my feelings."[69] On the other there is music written for a more functional purpose: seen in the *Dances* of Sorokin and the *Preludes* of Shostakovich. The performer has to approach interpretation bearing these differing philosophies in mind. When performing the music of Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, and Liadoff the overall shape of the work is vital to its success, as it represents an overall emotional shape: be it ecstasy in Scriabin, overcoming darkness in Rachmaninoff, or a kind of idle daydream in Liadoff. The works of Sorokin and Shostakovich, however, rely more on contrasts in colours to make the music interesting. It is not so much the overall shape that is most important, but rather how interesting everything is within that shape that controls the effectiveness of the work. The main challenge for performers of all these composers is to find a balance between stylistic authenticity and personal interpretation. But, as Horowitz stated "the music is behind the notes ... he [the interpreter] must do something with the music. The worst thing is not to do anything."[70]

[68] Ibid.
[69] Cunningham, op. cit., p.9.
[70] Mach, op. cit., p.115.

CHAPTER 2

THE RUSSIAN ETUDE

In his biography of Scriabin, Faubion Bowers remarks that "art needs craft for fulfilment."[71] In seems logical, then, in a study of Russian music, to explore the quest for this artistic perfection. The *Etudes* of Bortkiewicz, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and Prokofiev display four different approaches to the meaning of technique, and indeed, their perception of music.

To understand these composers' conceptions of technique it is important to recognise that all four composers were educated in an environment that placed great emphasis on technique: the Imperial Conservatory (Moscow for Rachmaninoff and Scriabin, St. Petersburg for Bortkiewicz and Prokofiev). As the founder of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Anton Rubinstein's main aim was "to train a living army of performers", to create "an orchestra of generals".[72] Rachmaninoff described the Russian educational system in a conference with Nicholas Cooke:

> In music schools of Russia great stress is laid upon technic [*sic.*] … The course is nine years in duration. During the first five years the student gets most of his technical instruction from a book of studies by Hanon, which is used very extensively in the conservatories. In fact, this is practically the only book of strictly technical studies employed. … [The studies] include scales, arpeggios, and other forms of exercises in special technical designs.
>
> At the end of the fifth year an examination takes place. This examination is twofold. The pupil is examined first for proficiency in technic [*sic.*], and later for proficiency in artistic playing — pieces, studies, etc. However, if the pupil fails to pass the technical examination he is not permitted to go ahead …
>
> Personally, I believe this matter of insisting upon a thorough technical knowledge is a very vital one. The mere ability to play a few pieces does not constitute musical proficiency. It is like those music boxes which possess only a few tunes. The student's technical gasp should be all-embracing.[73]

With such a heavy emphasis on technique in their education as performers, it is logical that, as composers, the four musicians should write in a genre they were familiar with:

---

[71] Bowers, *Scriabin* (second edition), op. cit., p.54.
[72] Anton Rubinstein. Cited in: ibid., p.57.
[73] James Cooke, *Great Pianists on Piano Playing* (Philadelphia, 1976), p.210-12.

the etude.

However, the reasons for composing in this genre are far greater than merely attaining a technique. As Josef Hofmann remarked:

> Technic [*sic.*] represents the material side of art, as money represents the material side of life. By all means achieve a fine technic, but do not dream that you will be artistically happy with this alone.
>
> ...There is a technic which liberates and a technic which represents the artistic self. All technic ought to be a means of expression. It is perfectly possible to accumulate a technic that is next to useless.[74]

The violinist Ivan Galamian describes the musician's quest for a goal greater than mere technical accomplishment:

> A complete technique ... implies the ability to do justice, with unfailing reliability and control, to each and every demand of the most refined musical imagination. It enables the performer, when he has formed an ideal concept of how any work should sound, to live up to this concept in actual performance. A technique which fulfils these ultimate requirements can be called an accomplished *interpretative technique*. It is the fundamental goal for which one must strive, because it, and it alone, opens the way to the highest artistic accomplishment.[75]

It is this goal of artistic and interpretative accomplishment that this chapter shall focus in the selected etudes of Bortkiewicz, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and Prokofiev.

SERGEI BORTKIEWICZ: *Le Poète* and *Le Héros*

Contributing factors to Bortkiewicz's conception of technique

Sergei Bortkiewicz (1877-1952) was educated at the Imperial Conservatory in St. Petersburg from 1896-99 (while undertaking a law degree at university). His piano teacher there was Prof. van Arek, who was a student of Leschetizky and Brassins. In his autobiography, translated in Thadani's *Recollections, Letters, and Documents*, Bortkiewicz doesn't extensively discuss the musical influences there, although he does recall that although Prof. von Arek was "an excellent pedagogue", "he was often rude and moody".[76]

---

[74] Josef Hofmann. Cited in: Reginald Gerig, *Famous Pianists and their Technique* (Washington, 1974), p.1-2.
[75] Ivan Galamian, *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, p.5. Cited in: Gerig, op. cit., p.2-3.
[76] Sergei Bortkiewicz, *Recollections [Erinnerungen]*. Cited in: Bhagwan Thadani, *Recollections, Letters, and Documents* (Winnipeg, 2001), p.4.

In 1899 the student unrest amongst students in St. Petersburg caused the university to close, so Bortkiewicz was unable to complete his law exams. This meant that he would have to extend his studies by another year, and considering he was only doing the law degree to fulfil his father's wishes, he left the university and enrolled for military service. He wished to go abroad and further his musical studies, but, as the second youngest son in the family, was obliged to do military service before he could leave. He joined the Alexander Nevsky Regiment, but fell ill with inflammation of the lungs and was freed from military service by a medical board. This gave him a chance (after recovering) to go to Leipzig to study.

In Leipzig, Bortkiewicz studied at the Conservatory with Alfred Reisenauer, a pupil of Liszt. He describes these lessons in his *Recollections*:

> Reisenauer tutored twice a week, each time for four hours. Mostly it was the great hall of the Conservatory with podium and two Blüthner grands that were used. Reisenauer taught according to his master Franz Liszt: all students had to be present and had to play from memory. The scores were laid on a table and the Master selected one from them which interested him. If the interpretation of a performer did not please him, other students, who had this piece in their repertoire, had to show their ability. If this too was not good enough, the Master himself sat at the piano and played a fragment, seldom the entire piece. When the *Carnaval* of Schumann was presented, we all knew that "Coquette" should be played by all those who had the piece "in the fingers", that the Master, dissatisfied with everyone, would finally have to show himself how "coquettishly" one can play. Naturally he played the piece enchantingly.[77]

Reisenauer's view on pianism is revealed in the pianist's interview with James Cooke:

> I have always been drawn to the piano by a peculiar charm I have never been able to explain myself. I feel that I must play, play, play, play. I have played so much and so long that the piano has become a part of me. Yet I am never free from the feeling that is a constant battle with the instrument, and even with my technical resources I am not able to express all the beauties I hear in the music. While music is my very life, I nevertheless hate the piano. I play because I can't help playing and because there is no other instrument which can come as near imitating the melodies and the harmonies of the music I feel. People say wherever I go, "Ah, he is the master." What absurdity! I the master? Why there is the master (pointing to the piano), I am only the slave.[78]

---

[77] Ibid., p.13.
[78] Cooke, op. cit., p.230.

From this, we can see Reisenauer's 'self-assessment' of an inadequate technique. More importantly, the purpose of gaining a better technique is to free oneself from the "battle of the instrument" and achieve

> an artistic estimate of the composer's intention and to feel that during the period of reproduction he [the performer] simulates the natural psychological conditions which affected the composer during the actual process of composition.[79]

These ideals of artistic integrity are likely to have been instilled in Bortkiewicz during his time with Reisenauer. Yet, in terms of Bortkiewicz's conception of the meaning of technique, what is most significant is that Bortkiewicz was not entirely happy with Reisenauer's teaching methods:

> The meaningful remarks and understanding of the Master, his performance at the piano, were very instructive and of great value to the pupils, who already had all the technical requirements. However, among the 23-30 students there were very few who met this demand. Most, therefore, performed very rarely. Even to these, Reisenauer did no give any instructions or hints as to how a good and reliable technique could be acquired. With all the advantages of his teaching methods there was unfortunately a certain regrettable disregard of technical problems.
>
> ...Reisenauer was a pianistic genius. He did not need to practice much, it came to him by himself. He "played" with difficulties, he was a "natural technician". He thought and spoke very little about technical problems. Although I must thank my Master very much as regards music, I had to realize [*sic.*] later that I would have done much better if I had gone to Vienna, in order to cure myself under Theodor Leschetizsky.[80]

This displays Bortkiewicz's desire for technical perfection, and may be seen as one of the reasons why the etude concept is included in his compositions.

Initially, after finishing his studies at the Leipzig Conservatory, Bortkiewicz lived in Berlin and was a pianist, concertizing in Vienna, Budapest, Italy, Paris, and Russia. However, "the career of a virtuoso displeased me less and less. Since then I only play my own compositions and make an effort to show how these should be 'interpreted'".[81] This suggests a second possible reasons for writing the etudes: that, only performing his own compositions, they (1) further his own technique (or, seeing he was a teacher, his student's technique), and (2) display his pianistic technique to the

[79] Ibid., p.229.
[80] Bortkiewicz, *Recollections*. Cited in: Thadani, op. cit., p.13-14.
[81] Ibid., p.21.

eager audiences. The latter theory is less likely, considering Bortkiewicz's theories on 'superficial art'.

Bortkiewicz believed that he was living in an age of artistic decay. In his *Recollections* he recalls his youth. He describes the experience of going to the theatre or concerts:

> A visit to the theatre, a concert, was always a happening: for days, even for a week, one planned the treat. People came into the theatre in the early morning hours, even during the night, in order to get a ticket at the box office for the appearance of a famous actor. There was hardly any other country where artists were celebrated and worshipped as in Russia. One needs only to ask any veteran artist who has made guest appearances in Russia. All those with whom I have spoken about this, were electrified, so to say, at the very mention of the word Russia. It was really an artist's paradise. It was not only the fact that the hall was full in spite of the high prices ... After the performance, the celebrity was often carried by hand, often even the horses on his carriage were unharnessed and young fans brought him in triumph to his house in this manner, pulling along the carriage ... Yes, enjoyment of art was a real necessity in Russia at that time, the enthusiast was ready to sacrifice anything for art.[82]

This suggests a third aspect of Bortkiewicz's conception of technique: the pianist is not just a virtuoso, but also a revered member of society. To be a virtuoso, you must have a superb technique. But the deeper significance is that revered members of society may become the ones seen as the 'heroes' in times of need.

This is what happened in Communist Russia some years later. Bortkiewicz suffered the harsh conditions of the first world war and the resulting communist regime. In 1914 he was forced to leave his residence in Berlin and return to Russia. In his *Recollections*, he describes in gruesome detail the violence of the Bolsheviks after the 1917 revolution. What is most significant about this is that Bortkiewicz identifies a Russian

> culture which, in spite of Bolshevism, clings to the souls of men, even though often spasmodically, as something organic, indestructible. This is also the hope that the deliverance from evil and stupidity will come.[83]

Another representation of anti-communism and art representing 'good' refers to one of Bortkiewicz's idols, Tchaikovsky:

[82] Ibid., p.2.
[83] Bortkiewicz, in a letter to his friend Hugo von Dalen, dated 27 September 1937. Cited in: ibid., p.46.

> The Russian public loves, for example, Tchaikovsky more than everything, although his music is diametrically opposite to Bolshevism, aristocratic, "burjuisch", "White-Guard-ish", "monarchist". But the Russian public is composed of Russians, not Bolsheviks.[84]

Similar to the decay of society due to the Bolsheviks, Bortkiewicz linked the decay of post-war society to the mechanisation of art:

> One thing is certain ... that the *Mechanization [sic.] of Art* nowadays is a great backward step. The cinema is the greatest enemy of the theatre, the radio - of music in the house and concerts. The temples of art still stand there, but how little and how seldom they are visited, how much have they atoned for the reverential atmosphere which once enveloped the visitor even when entering the temple of art. Nowadays, people crowd to the nearest disgusting cinema house, or they remain at home listening to *Tristan and Isolde* on the radio at supper, or sitting on the toilet, that too with completely distorted tone and revolting hissing sound, without the middle voices, often without bass, a pitiful caricature of wonderful music.[85]

His reference to theatres and concert halls as 'temples' illustrates their important role in Bortkiewicz's conception of society. He contrasts this with his description of modern art when he states that "the wonderful goddess of music has become a worn out prostitute!"[86] This shows Bortkiewicz's rejection of the falsification of art. He writes:

> And the tempo! For God's sake this tempo, this horrible sickness of our times. The clever Romans have already said: non multa sed multum. One should not see as much as possible but observe, take time, consider, digest the impression!
>
> And this is so with music! One should not hear as many musical pieces as possible, but good ones, because there can be no art "en masse" which deserves respect. Art is elitist, and so is the enjoyment of art, because one must devote hours of the most reverential understanding to it ... If playing music in the house is dying out, so also is music. What one produces oneself, for example on the piano, while trying to analyse and study that piece of music, even if it sounds terrible, is more worth that [*sic.* - possibly mean to be 'than'] the hundreds of hours that one spends at the radio, until music, deprived of any meaning, enjoyed *en masse*, and on top of it sounding awful and distorted with all possible sounds, becomes nauseating.[87]

---

[84] Bortkiewicz, in a letter to his friend Hugo von Dalen, dated 25 November 1937. Cited in: ibid., p.47.
[85] Bortkiewicz, *Recollections.* Cited in: ibid., p.3.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

To extend Faubion Bowers' expression that "art needs craft for fulfilment"[88], under Bortkiewicz's theories, art also needs thought, and therefore interpretation, for fulfilment.

It is interesting that the two etudes studied in this paper, *Le Poète* and *Le Héros* (opus 29, both published in 1924), represent the two sides of Bortkiewicz's view of art: *Le Poète* showing the thoughtful aspect of music, and *Le Héros* representing the concept of music as a symbol for good in a period of corrupt and superficial society. Yet this is merely a convenient coincidence. The fact that the etudes are programmatic does suggest that they were not written purely for technical gain, and Bortkiewicz's desire and ability to make his music move the audience is illustrated in the public reception of his opus 15 etudes:

> My Op. 15 ten etudes for piano had just appeared with the publisher D. Rahter, when in Berlin I got acquainted with my present dear friend, the Dutch pianist Hugo von Dalen. When von Dalen returned to Berlin after a long absence, he introduced me to his young pretty wife and assured me that he owed his married happiness to me. Naturally I agreed. He told me that my concert etude Op.15, No.8 in D flat major pleased a young Dutch woman so much, that she had herself introduced to the pianist in order to ask him about the piece and the composer. From this acquaintance came love, engagement, and marriage. Yet more noteworthy is the fact that exactly the same story was told to me later in Vienna by my friend, Herr Ernst Horicky, department head in the Federal Chancellery, who came to know his wife in the same way. Since then I have named the piece in D flat major as the "Betrothal etude", and look on myself as a "matchmaker".[89]

Considering his education, career, and high regard for culture, it is clear that Bortkiewicz's primary objective is not technique, but musical worth. This can be related to certain performance practice issues in the etudes.

Achieving 'pure' art in performance

Before studying specific performance issues in the *Etudes*, it is valuable to examine Bortkiewicz's conception of performance. The most logical way to approach this with most composer-pianists is to look at their pianistic style. However, since there is no documentation on Bortkiewicz's performances this is impossible. Some

[88] Bowers, *Scriabin* (second edition), op. cit., p.57.
[89] Bortkiewicz, *Recollections*. Cited in: Thadani, op. cit., p.21.

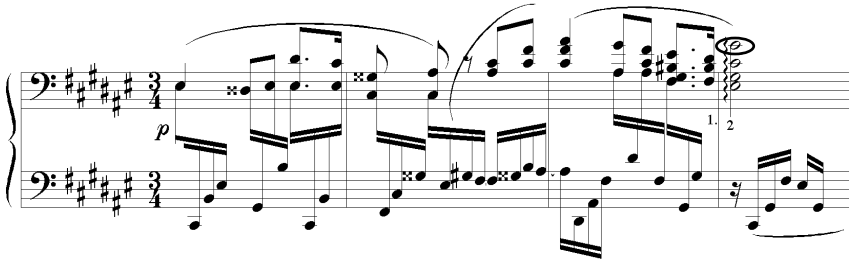
indication of his pianistic taste can be taken from his comments on pianists he greatly admired. For example, he described a recital by Anton Rubinstein:

> Rubinstein played the piano so magnificently and so uniquely that actually *what* he played was of no importance as to *how* he played ... He can really *sing* at the piano. When he attacked the keys with his mighty lion-like paws, which were at the same time as soft as velvet, and poor instrument almost gave up, cracking and groaning.[90]

He admired Scriabin's "great musicianship, his touch was magical, but he lacked power".[91] Bortkiewicz considered Rachmaninoff "the greatest and most interesting pianist of the present time. Everything that he plays bears the stamp of his highly artistic personality."[92] So despite the fact that there are very few expressive markings on the score of his etude, it is clear (particularly considering his rejection of superficial and mechanical art) that Bortkiewicz requires the pianist to produce a singing quality and pianistic colour.

In *Le Poète*, an etude for the left hand, a prime objective for the pianist is shape and projection of the melody. Fortunately, most melodic notes are assigned to the thumb or second finger, so the weight is naturally distributed to that note (figure 41). Difficulties start to occur when the hand is required to span over more notes in a relatively shorter space of time. For example, several problems in the fourth bar of figure 41 hinder the projection of the G# on the first beat (circled). Firstly, the awkwardness of moving from the last chord of bar 3 (labelled 1) to the widely spaced chord (2) then immediately to the accompanying figure in the lower register. Secondly, because it is the end of a phrase, there is an instinctive tendency to "die away".

Figure 41: Bortkiewicz – *Le Poète*, op.29 no.5, bars 1-4

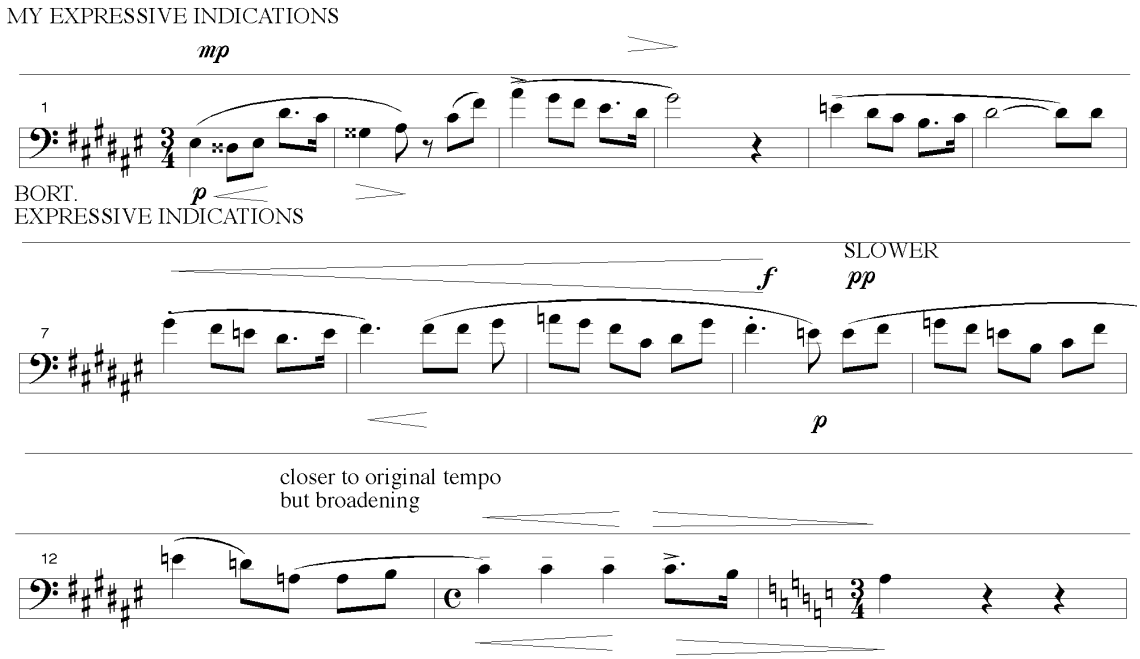


The solution is to take more time over the rolled chord. This also provides more expression. Projection of this G# is important for another reason: although it may be the end of a phrase and there may be an initial instinct to "die away", it is actually part

[90] Ibid., p.1.
[91] Ibid., p.23.
[92] Ibid.

of a greater phrase, so dying away significantly would detract from the overall shape. Figure 42 shows the overall phrase in the first part of the work. Bortkiewicz's expressive markings are written below the score, mine are written above.

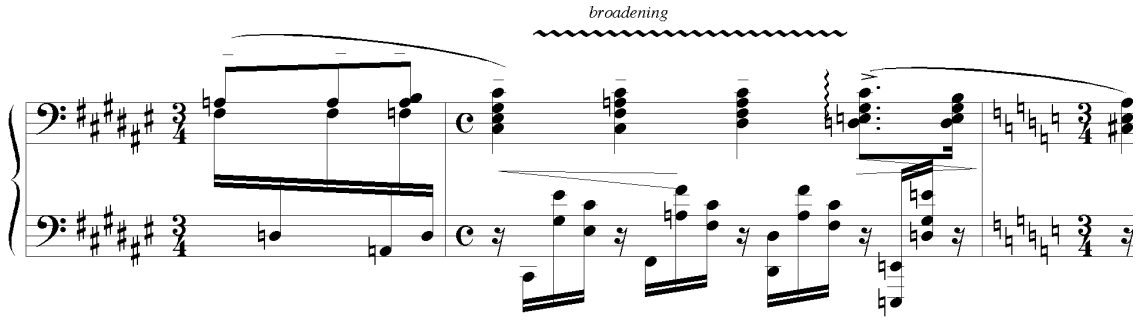
Figure 42: Bortkiewicz – *Le Poète*, op.29 no.5, bars 1-14



In works such as this, where freedom in tempo is appropriate, it is important to always keep in mind the "bigger picture", so that work still has musical shape, and is not fragmented.

In cases where Bortkiewicz does indicate expressive indications, it is important for performers to exaggerate them — this contributes to the musical colour, while being faithful to Bortkiewicz's original conception of the overall shape. For example, in bars 12-14 (figure 43), Bortkiewicz includes *tenuto* marks, hairpin *crescendos* and *diminuendos*, and an accent. It is possible to interpret the *tenutos* as a sign that the music should be broadened in tempo, as well as in tone (as one does when playing Rachmaninoff). Naturally, Bortkiewicz's *crescendo* marking enables the direction toward the accented note, and, as generally occurs elsewhere in the piece, the rolled chord occurs at a point in the phrase that musically requires more space.

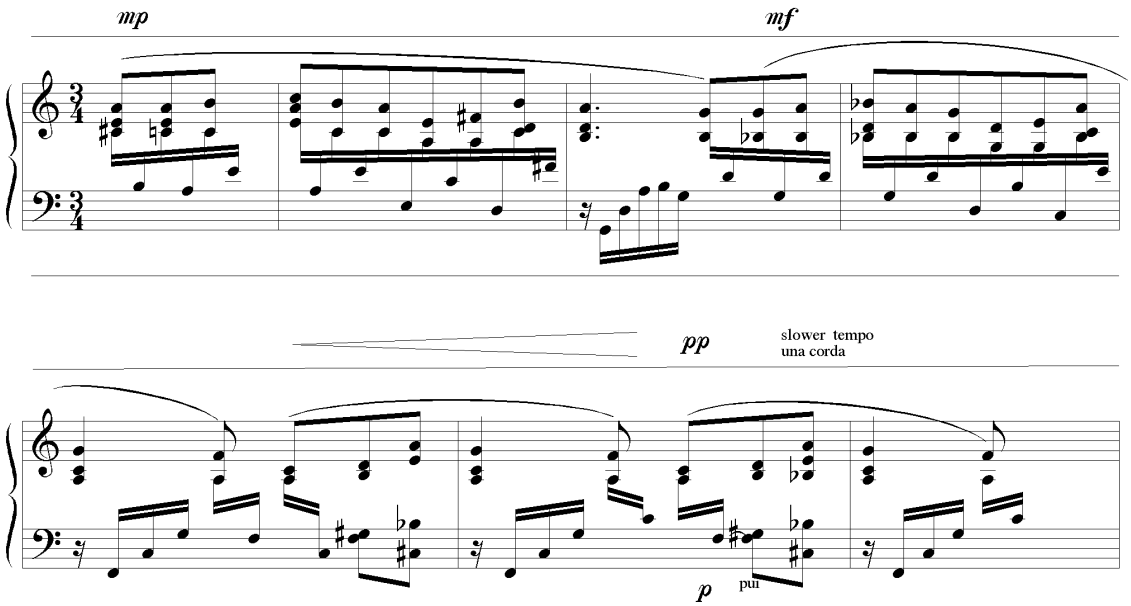
Page 56
Figure 43: Bortkiewicz – *Le Poète*, op.29 no.5, bars 12-14



From a compositional perspective, broadening these final two bars of the phrase serves another function. Upon hearing the entire opening 14 bars without any tempo fluctuations, but still with the same general dynamic shape, the listener is left with a feeling of uneasiness. This is due to a slight compositional weakness. The overall sound created at this stage is implied to be fairly settled. Yet, in their natural state, there aren't enough 'balancing out' phrases to match the tension creating ones (figure 42). While it does make sense to 'peak' around two thirds of the way through the phrase, in this case, the complete shape does not have a 'settled' feel if played entirely in strict tempo. Broadening the tempo in the last phrase (figure 43) makes the first metaphrase seem more complete within itself.

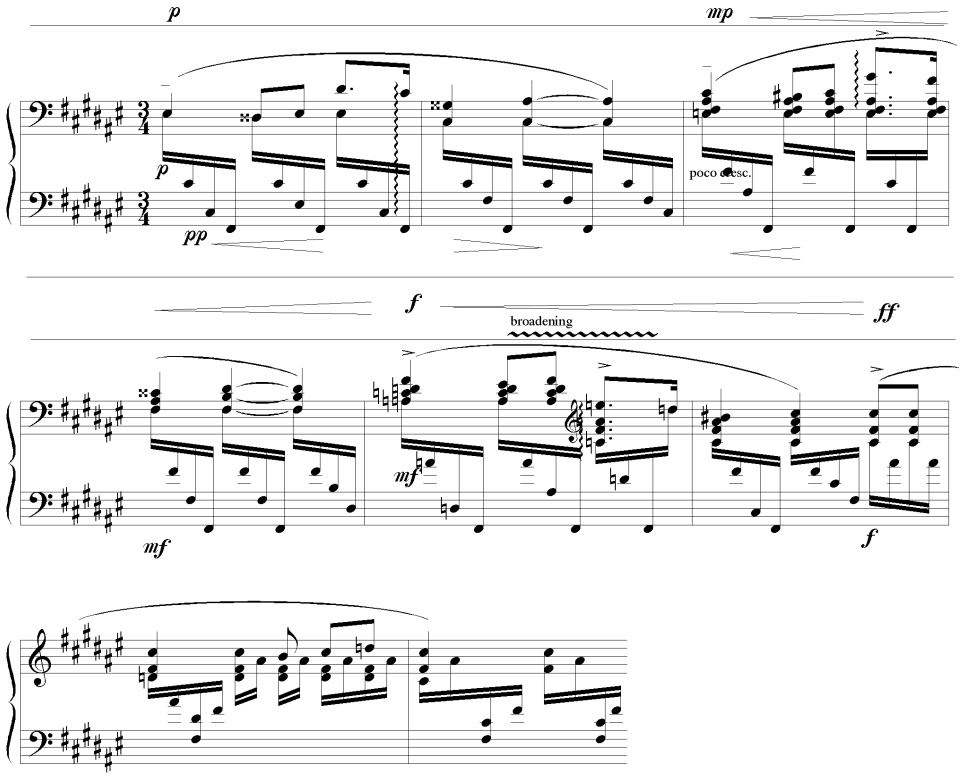
Bortkiewicz frequently uses 'echo' effects, like that found in bars 15-21 (figure 41). The shaping of the phrase preceding the echo is important to its effectiveness. The reason for this is the similarity of thematic material: the first two phrases are identical in shape, yet in sequence, and the third and fourth phrases are identical. The initial instinct of a performer when interpreting two identical or similar phrases is to have the second 'echoing' the first (as Bortkiewicz marks for the third and fourth phrases). Yet to do this in both instances would be predictable and lack direction. It is effective to do the very opposite of what may be expected in the first two phrases: rather than the second phrase echoing the first, it builds on it. This gives more direction leading into the third phrase, and allows the 'echo' of the fourth phrase to be even more dramatic, which can be played with the *una corda* to achieve tonal contrast, and played in a slower tempo to 'revel' in this colour and balance out the shape of the six bar phrase.

Figure 44: Bortkiewicz – *Le Poète*, op.29 no.5, bars 15-21



Performers also need to give careful thought to the interpretation of the last two pages, which function structurally as the coda. In the first eight bars of the coda (figure 45) Bortkiewicz has logically notated a dynamic increase — the pinnacle being the final phrase. Pianists can enhance this by broadening the tempo in the last two phrases.

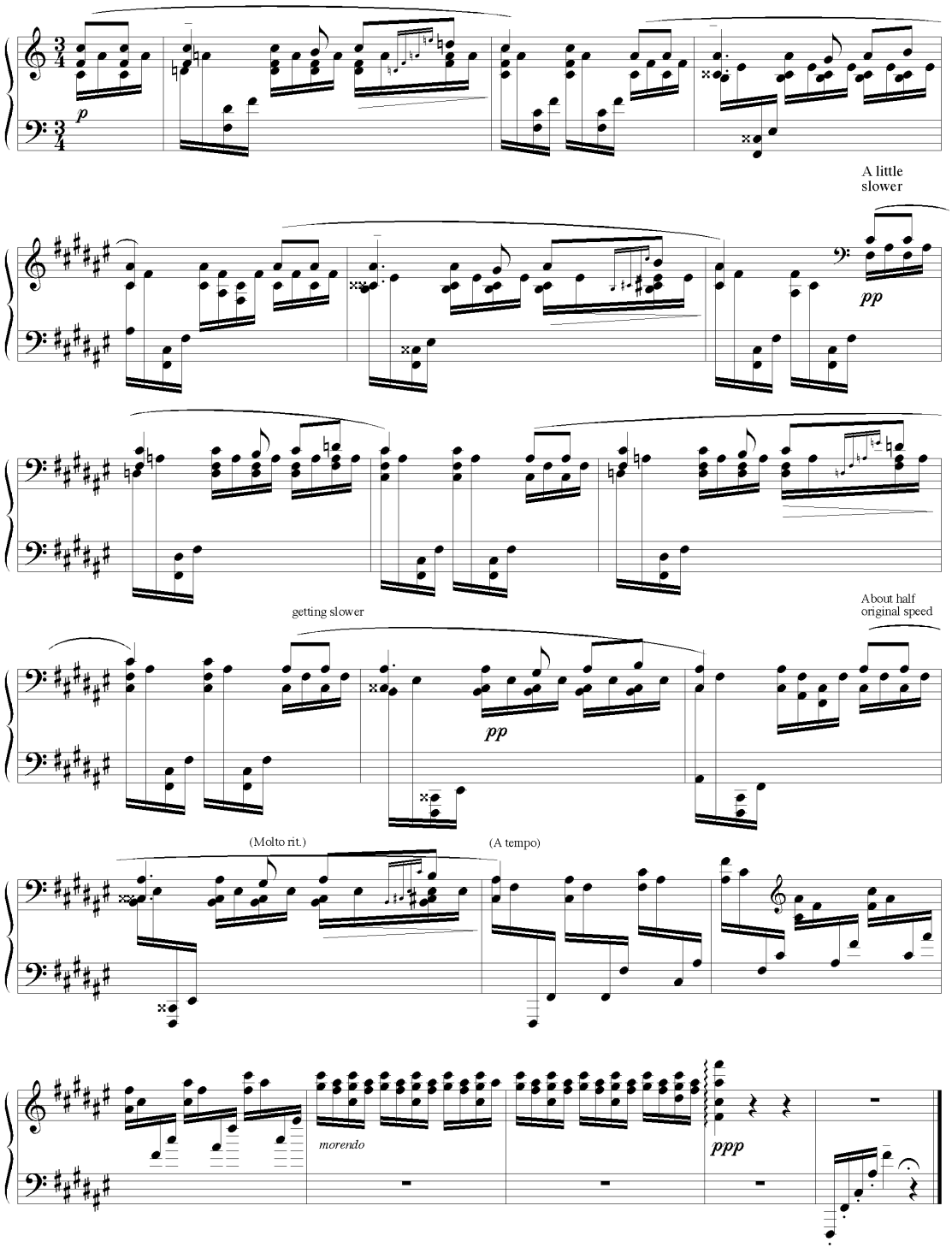
Figure 45: Bortkiewicz – *Le Poète*, op.29 no.5, bars 71-78



The nature of Bortkiewicz's writing actually suggests this: for example, in the fifth bar, the wide spacing of the accompaniment figure and the rolled chord in the middle of the phrase requires flexibility of rhythm for accurate and musical execution.

The section following this climax is more problematic. Bortkiewicz has few expressive indications except that the first bar (of figure 46) echoes the preceding climatic phrases (the last two bars of figure 45), and that the seventh bar should be *pianissimo*. From here till the end, there are a few hair pin *diminuendos*, always in the same part of the phrase, a *morendo* indication, and a *ppp* marking in the second last bar. From these markings, it is obvious that Bortkiewicz desires a 'dying away' effect. However, from a musical perspective it is a little dull to only follow his marked indications — especially considering that the whole section is essentially the same thematic material repeated in different registers. Once again, the solution is to have flexibility in tempo. It is effective to start pulling back the tempo from around bar 85 (seventh bar of figure 46), and on each repetition of the phrase take more time over certain parts of the phrase (such as the appogiaturas in bars 83 and 87). By the last melodic phrase of the etude (bars 91-92), the tempo is less than half the original speed (and as soft as possible), which enables this phrase to melt into the atmospheric concluding seven bars (which, once again, are very flexible in tempo).

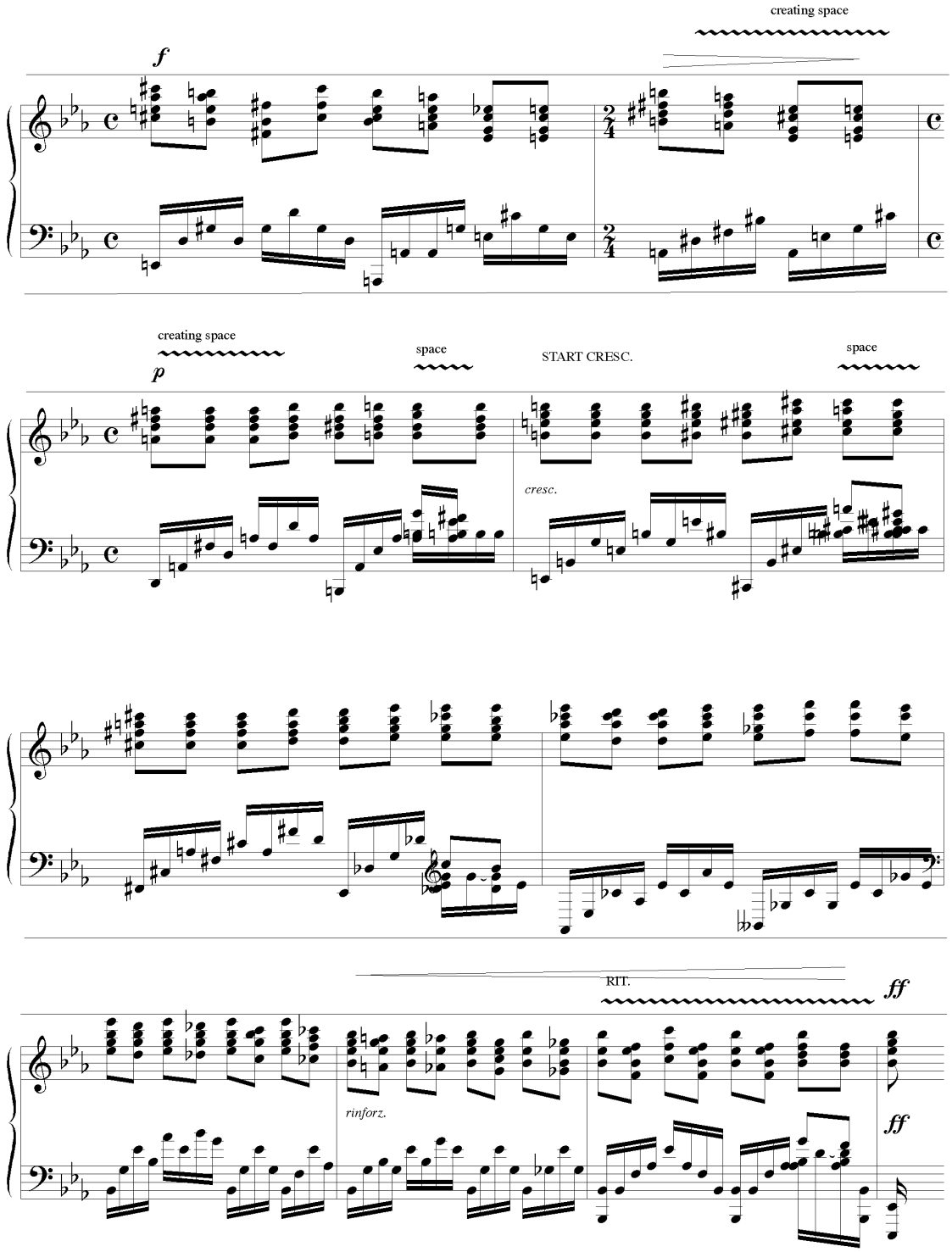
Page 59
Figure 46: Bortkiewicz – *Le Poète*, op.29 no.5, bars 79-98



Le Héros is even more sparse in its expressive markings than *Le Poète*. In the score, only three levels of dynamic are indicated: *f, ff,* and, at the end, *fff*. Yet, once again, the work lacks sufficient textural and thematic changes to prevent it from becoming dull if played as indicated. The instinctive places for dynamic variation are

usually caused by harmonic colour and variation in thematic material. An example of this is the modulation to D major at bar 13 (figure 47), which, with its chromatically ascending line, functions as a bridge between the two occurrences of the opening theme. The modulation can also be coloured by flexibility in the tempo of this section.

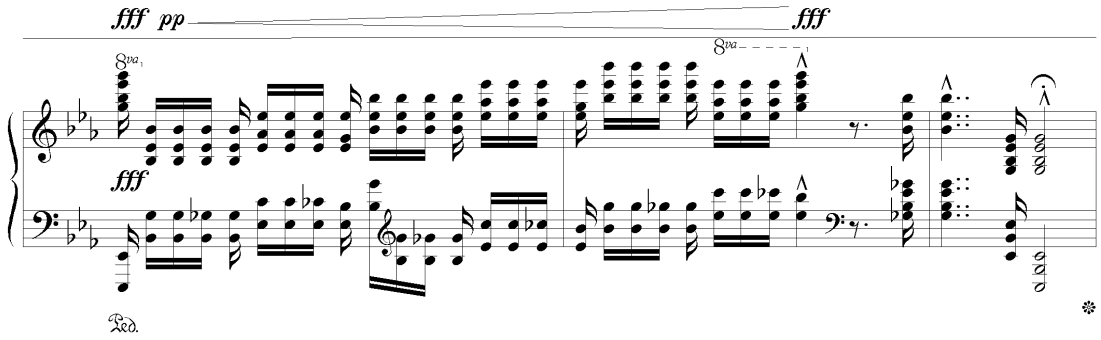
Figure 47: Bortkiewicz – *Le Héros*, op.29 no.6, bars 11-20



These fluctuations also enable Bortkiewicz's marking of a *crescendo* in the second bar of the bridge section to be achieved more effectively.

Another region that requires a similar approach is the final three bars. Here, Bortkiewicz marks the entire three bars *fff*. However, it was found that it is more effective to have the first chord *fff*, then drop to around a *piano* level, and build up as the chords move up the register of the piano.

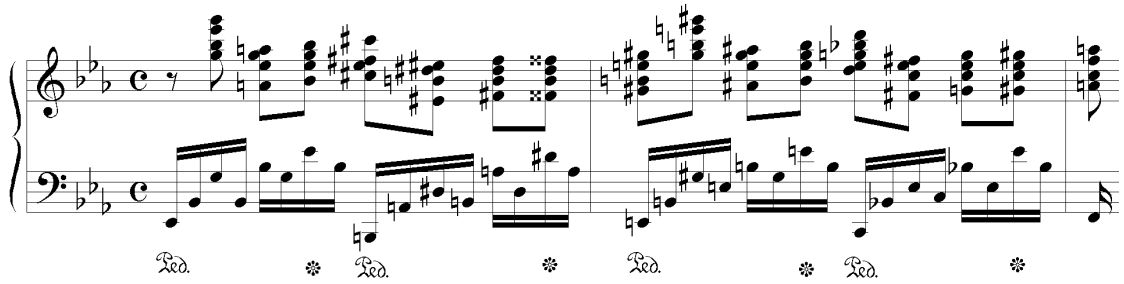
Figure 48: Bortkiewicz – *Le Héros*, op.29 no.6, bars 39-41



There are two advantages in this. Firstly, it adds excitement to the ending, which is essentially the same material transferred into different registers. Secondly, it enables clarity in texture. If all the chords were played *fff* as marked, frequent pedal changes would be needed to maintain a clean sound (given the chromatic nature of the left hand). However, if there is a drop in dynamics, pianists can get away with holding the pedal down for the third and second last bars (perhaps even the last). This enables the first chord to be held through, which emphasises the final nature of the passage, and the excitement of the other chords builds out of it rather than separate to it. As these chords move into the higher register of the instrument, they increase in sound (eventually to the *fff* level), yet pedal changes aren't needed here because of the thinner quality of the register. The overall result is a much broader sound, enabling a more convincing conclusion to the *Etude*.

In the rest of the work, the pedalling needs to be more precise. Because of the thick texture, and the regular harmonic rhythm of one chord each minim beat, it is essential to maintain a clean sound. To achieve this, it is most effective to release the pedal on the last quaver of each minim beat, to enable a clean harmonic shift to the next chord.

Page 62
Figure 49: Bortkiewicz – *Le Héros*, op.29 no.6, bars 1-2



The chordal nature of the right hand throughout the *Etude* causes two problems. Because *legato* is impossible, the phrase may lack direction. Also, since the work has no rhythmic or textural variation, melodic direction is essential to maintaining interest and emotional content in the work.

Pianists must also ensure that the right hand doesn't only project the upper notes of the texture (i.e., the melody notes). Being aware of the inner harmonic notes can add colour — the chromaticism provided by the right hand is the only change, both harmonically and texturally, in the otherwise minim beat harmonic rhythm (figure 49).

In general, imaginative interpretation is essential when performing the *Etudes* of Bortkiewicz. The interpretation is build on Bortkiewicz's expressive markings, yet additional flexibility is required to enhance the expressive qualities of the work. This ties in with Bortkiewicz's belief that music should be carefully considered so that it is not superficial art. In his obituary of Bortkiewicz, Neues Österreich describes that Bortkiewicz's music "breathes and gives pleasure because of the honesty and the directness of the characteristics, that are to be seen."[93] Bortkiewicz's music is a fine example of pianists' ability to move listeners. The music already contains its direct appeal to the audience , but it is the pianist's task to interpret the emotion. Considering Bortkiewicz desired 'pure' art, it is possible that he was influenced by Reisenaeur's theory on performance: to achieve "the natural psychological conditions which affected the composer during the process of composition".[94] Perhaps that is part of the role of the etude for Bortkiewicz: not merely programmatic pieces representing a picture of a poet and a hero, but aiming to achieve a musical representation of the state of mind of those characters.

[93] Neues Österreich. Cited in: Thadani, op. cit., p.69.
[94] Cooke, op. cit., p.229.

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF: *Etudes Tableaux*

Rachmaninoff's conception of technique

There are several reasons why Rachmaninoff chose to write in the etude genre. Being a composer/pianist, Rachmaninoff's career is very clearly divisible into periods when he performed and those when he composed. When Rachmaninoff's performance patterns are studied (Appendix 2), it is clear that the bulk of Rachmaninoff's 178 performances as a pianist between his graduation in 1892 and 1917 involved works of other composers. It can also be seen that associations with other artists influenced what genres Rachmaninoff composed in. When he did perform his works, they were mostly in concerts with his chamber works (i.e., his songs, *Trio élagiaque* for violin, cello and piano), and his piano works would 'fill up' the rest of the program.[95] For example, in a concert on 21 January 1894, the program was as follows:

Seven Morceaux de salon for piano, op.10
Six Songs, op.4 (with Elizaveta A. Lavrovskaya)
Six Songs, op.8 (with Elizaveta A. Lavrovskaya)
Trio élagiaque No.2 for piano, violin and cello.

However, with the exception of the performance of Tchaikovsky's first Piano Concerto in 1911 and the all-Scriabin concert of 1915, between 1909 and 1917 there is a shift in Rachmaninoff's pianistic activity — his concerts focus on his own piano works. For example, a concert on 5 December 1911 contained:

Five Morceaux de fantaisie for Piano, op.2
Seven Morceaux de salon for Piano, op.10
Six [originally nine] *Etudes Tableaux for piano*, op.33
Sonata no.1 for piano, op.28
Ten Preludes for piano, op.23
Thirteen Preludes for piano, op.32

On his tour to England in October-November 1911 he performed six of his *Etudes Tableaux*, op.33. From this information, a possible reason for the composition of the *etude* genre can be found: that they were composed as a means of furthering the composer's own pianistic technique, in the absence of learning (or at least performing) new technically demanding works. It could also be seen as a means of providing contrasting genres in his recitals — the *Etudes* particularly contrast the style of works such as the *Five Morceaux* op.2 and the *Seven morceaux de salon* op.10.

[95] The exceptions of this are the performances of his Piano Concerto No.2.

An insight into Rachmaninoff's rehearsal technique can also provide reasons for composing etudes. Rachmaninoff commented once that "the more I play the more clearly do I see my inadequacies."[96] Arthur Hirst described Rachmaninoff practising:

> When he began to work on a new piece, first of all he learned the layout of each bar and decided on the fingering. In his opinion half of the work was now done ... Rachmaninoff played his exercises very slowly and diligent pupils would have been heartened to hear at how slow a tempo this greatest of pianists used to practise, and with what painstaking attention to the monitored sound of each note and the work of each hand.[97]

Even before a concert, Rachmaninoff would play Hanon exercises and Czerny *Etudes*.[98] This shows the strong influence of Rachmaninoff's musical education at the Moscow Conservatory. The result in the performance was always effective. Harold Schonberg describes Rachmaninoff's performances:

> Professionals stood in awe of Rachmaninoff's workmanship, and of his ability to accomplish with apparent ease things that were next to impossible ... He grasped a chord with unparalleled security and his technique did not have a weak spot anywhere. The accuracy and deftness with which he could skim through the most complicated passagework left his colleagues breathless in respect and envy ... never was there a blurred line or a vague color [*sic.*]. Using the pedal with great tact, letting his fingers and not his feet do the work, Rachmaninoff was able to unfold the notes with fantastic clarity. "You have to peer into every corner," he once said, "take every screw apart, so that you can easily put the whole back together again."[99]

These accounts display Rachmaninoff's quest for perfection. A problematic quest, Robert Threlfall argues, as, for Rachmaninoff, "each performance is a challenge to attain nearer to that inner ideal conception whose complete realisation always to some degree eludes him".[100] Yet the quest is not purely technical. This is displayed in both his pianistic style and his compositional style: the purely technical focus of Hanon's exercises, and the rather bland musicality of Czerny's *Etudes* is far from the colour and expressive content in Rachmaninoff's *Etudes*.

The deeper significance of Rachmaninoff's quest for perfection is that though Rachmaninoff was a perfectionist and worked hard to achieve

[96] Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (England, 2000), p.398.
[97] Arthur Hirst, cited in Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.399.
[98] Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.398.
[99] Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists* (New York, 1987), p.391-2.
[100] Robert Threlfall, "Rachmaninoff's Revisions and an Unknown Version of his Fourth Concerto", *Musical Opinion*, 96:1145 (February 1973). Cited in: Robert Cunningham, *Rachmaninoff: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, 2001), p.11.

> an unerring technique, he used the piano primarily as a vehicle by which to achieve a realization [*sic.*] of a particular view of a piece as he had seen it in his composer's mind. Thus, all of his performances were compositions in themselves, deeply thought-out commentaries on the music he played, indelibly stamped with his own personality, and, as the invariably close similarity of different recordings of the same pieces made at different times proves, once he had 'composed' an interpretation, he remained faithful to it until the end of his days.[101]

In an interview with David Ewan, Rachmaninoff stated that the performer should play with "infinite care, never entrusting the smallest detail to chance inspiration".[102] Rachmaninoff's attention to detail and role as an interpreter, rather than a mere performer, gives us insight into his conception of technique: it is not for virtuosity's sake, but a tool to achieve a greater musical goal: to refer back to Faubion Bower's expression again, that "art needs craft for fulfilment".[103]

In an interview, Rachmaninoff further reiterates the importance of the performer-interpreter:

> If you are a composer you have an affinity with other composers. You can make contact with their imaginations, knowing something of their problems and ideals. You can give their works *colour*. That is the most important thing for me in my piano interpretations, *colour*. So you can make music live. Without colour it is dead. ... The greatest interpreters in the past were composers in both instances. Paganini, so we understand was a king of virtuosity ... but he was a composer too. Liszt and Rubinstein; and in our time Paderewiski and Kreisler. Ah! I know what you are thinking. But it doesn't matter. It makes no difference whether these are first- or fourth-rate composers. What matters is, they had the creative mind and so were able to communicate with other minds of the same order.[104]

In another interview, Rachmaninoff further discusses the advantages of being a 'creative artist' (composer-performer), as opposed to a mere 'interpreter' (performer):

> To my mind, there are two vitally important qualities innate in the creative artist which are not found, to the same degree, in the man who is solely an interpreter. The first is imagination. I do not suggest that the interpretative artist has no imagination; but it is safe to assume that a composer possesses the greater imaginative gift, because he must first imagine before he can create — imagine so powerfully that a

[101] Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.400.
[102] Sergei Rachmaninoff, "Music Should Speak from the Heart" [interview with David Ewan], *The Etude*, 59:12 (December 1941): 804. Cited in Cunningham, op. cit., p.12.
[103] Bowers, *Scriabin* (second edition), op. cit., p.54.
[104] Rachmaninoff, "Conversations with Rachmaninoff", article by Basil Maine in *Musical Opinion*, vol.60, October 1936, p.14-15. Cited in: Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.400.

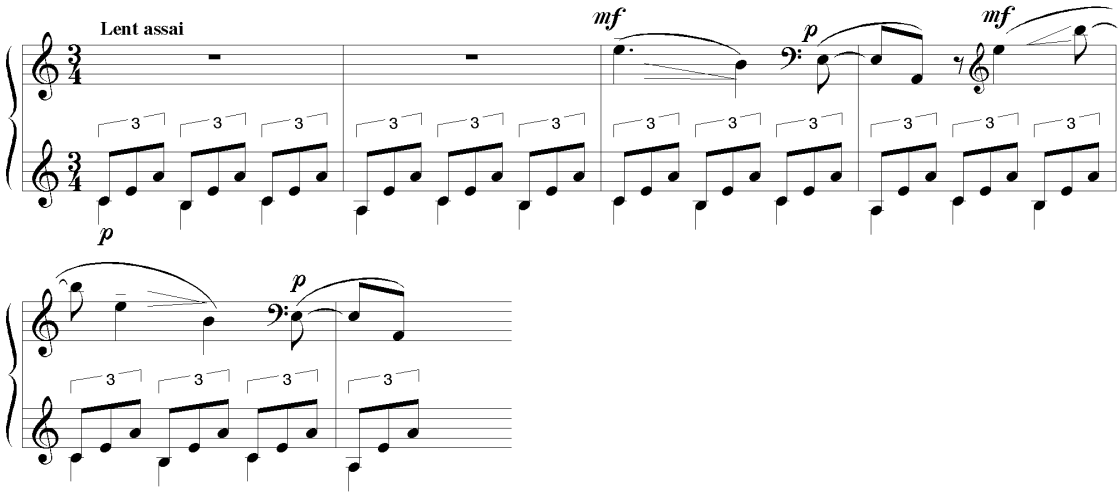
> concrete picture of his creation is vividly present in his mind before a single note is written. His finished composition is an attempt to recreate the essence of this picture in music. It follows that when a composer comes to interpret his own work, his own picture will be foremost in his mind, whereas every musician performing the work of another must imagine an entirely new picture for himself. Upon the vividness and extent of the performer's imagination the success and vitality of his interpretation largely depend; and, in this sense, it seems to me that the composer-interpreter, whose imagination is by nature so highly developed, may be said to posses an advantage over the purely executive artist.
>
> The second and even more important gift distinguishing the composer from every other type of musician is an intensely refined sensitiveness for musical colouring. ... Personally, I consider the possession of this acute colour-sensitiveness to be a composer's highest privilege. However fine a musician the executant may be, I think he can never acquire the talent for sensing and reproducing the full range of musical colour that is the composer's birthright.[105]

Herein lies the primary logic behind the *Etudes Tableaux* — rather than being etudes in physical technique, like those of Hanon and Czerny, they instead are etudes in these two important values of Rachmaninoff: shape and colour. Rachmaninoff's description of the compositional process actually hints at why the *Etudes* are called *Etudes-Tableaux* (meaning 'study pictures'). The fact that they are called this suggests extra-musical influences. According to an interview with Rachmaninoff in 1934, the Op.33 No.8 is "a musical representation of a Böcklin painting on the subject of 'Morning'",[106] yet generally Rachmaninoff does not reveal what the 'picture' is.

It is highly possible that it is not a 'material' picture at all, but a psychological/emotional state that Rachmaninoff is depicting. A clue (apart from the obvious intense emotion displayed in his works) that Rachmaninoff's *Etudes Tableaux* may be psychological mindsets is seen in his *Etude Tableau* op.39 no.2. Although described by his wife as representing "the sea and seagulls",[107] one can't help notice the constant use of the *Dies Irae* motif (in the accompaniment figure) that obsessed Rachmaninoff throughout his life.

[105] Rachmaninoff, "The Composer as Interpreter", Rachmaninoff in an interview with Norman Cameron in *The Monthly Musical Record*, November 1934, p.201. Cited in: Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.400-1.
[106] Oska von Reisemann (1934), *Rachmaninoff's Recollections*. New York: Macmillan. Cited in: Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.233. Note: Cunningham's *Rachmaninoff: A Bio-Bibligraphy* questions the reliability of some of the evidence in Reisemann's book. Apparently, Rachmaninoff was annoyed because Reisemann attributed the direct quotation to him [Cunningham, op. cit., p.92].
[107] Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (Indianna, 2001), p.218.

Page 67
Figure 50: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau,* op.39 no.2, bars 1-6



In fact, Rachmaninoff, the previous year, had worried much about death: his father had recently died, as had his colleagues Taneyev and Scriabin. In 1915 he discussed his fear of death with his friend Marietta Shaginyan:

> He asked me in a very anxious and hesitant tone, "What is your attitude towards death, dear Re? Are you afraid of death?" ... The occurrence of two deaths, one after the other — of Scriabin and Taneyev — had affected him deeply, and he had come across a fashionable novel about death and had immediately become ill from terror of it. Before this he had been just a little afraid of robbers, thieves, epidemics, but these, for the most part, he could cope with. It was precisely the uncertainty of death which affected him. It was terrible if there was something after death. Better to rot, disappear, cease to exist: but if there were something else after the grave, that was terrible. What scared him was that uncertainty, the impossibility of knowing ... "I have never wanted immortality personally. A man wears out, grows old, under old age he grows fed up with himself. I have grown fed up with myself even before old age. But if there is something beyond, then that is terrifying." He immediately became pale and his face began to tremble.[108]

Considering Rachmaninoff's "constant desire to compose music is actually the urge within me to give tonal expression to my thoughts",[109] and his comprehensive approach to interpretation, the *Etudes Tableaux* are both an outlet for emotion (for Rachmaninoff the composer), and a means of creating the emotion that he initially created in real, not 'imagined' colour (i.e., overcoming technical difficulties to achieve the ideal effects, for Rachmaninoff the performer). From the performer's perspective (not Rachmaninoff

[108] Marietta Shaginyan, *Vospominaniya o Rakmaninove* [Reminiscences about Rachmaninoff], 5th ed., Moscow, 1988, vol.2, p.299. Cited in: Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.271.
[109] Rachmaninoff, "Music Should Speak from the Heart] [interview with David Ewan], *The Etude* 59:12 (December 1941: 804). Cited in: Cunningham, op. cit., p.9.

performing his own work), part of the task therefore becomes, as Reisenauer put it, to "feel that during the period of reproduction he [the performer] simulates the natural psychological process of composition."[110]

Overall, in Rachmaninoff's mind, the picture (visual or psychological) he had during the conception of the work should not be the sole concern of the interpreter or the listener, because they should "paint for themselves what it most suggests"[111]: they should be the creative artist, not just an "executive artist".[112] To this end, performers have considerable licence to interpret Rachmaninoff's works as they choose.

Interpreting the 'Psychological Image' in the *Etudes Tableaux*

The *Etudes* focused upon in this paper are opus 33 no.3, opus 33 no.5, opus 33 no.8, and opus 39 no.2. In these works, one of the primary concerns, from a performance perspective, is the creation of an effective atmosphere: particularly at the beginning and ends of the works. The atmosphere of the concert hall was obviously important to Rachmaninoff. This is seen in Cyril Smith's description of Rachmaninoff's stage presence:

> Those who were fortunate enough to hear him play will almost certainly remember this very tall, melancholy figure, with his greying hair in a crew cut and his deeply-lined face set in a sombre expression, walking unwillingly to the piano as though he hated the very sight of it. Slowly he would take his seat, gazing round the audience with his gimlet eyes ... Such was the power of his personality that I have seen members of the audience cower down in their seats as his glance passed over them ... As he took in the stalls, the circle and the galleries, he would play a chord, *pianissimo*, then repeat it several times softer until it dwindled to less than a whisper. By then the audience would have quietened completely and Rachmaninoff was ready to begin his recital.[113]

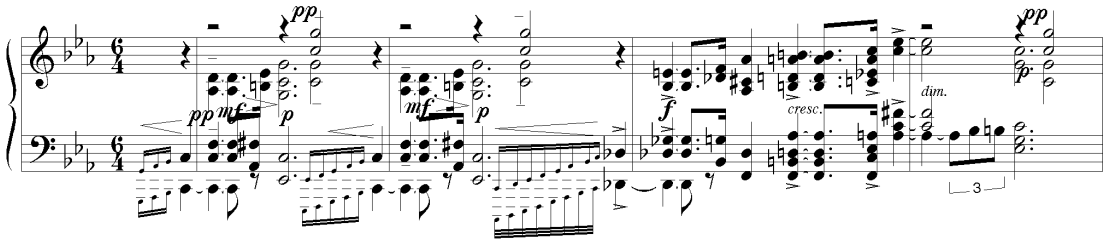
The approach to creating the atmosphere in the *Etudes Tableaux* varies according to the character of the work.

There are several aspects that contribute to the atmosphere of a work. One of these is tone production. For example, the opening of the c minor *Etude Tableau* (opus

[110] Reisenauer. Cited in: Cooke, op. cit., p.229.
[111] Rachmaninoff. Cited in: Bertensson and Leyda, op. cit., p.218.
[112] Rachmaninoff. Cited in Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.400.
[113] Cyril Smith (1958) *Duet for Three Hands*, London: Angus and Robertson, p.116. Cited in: Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.397.

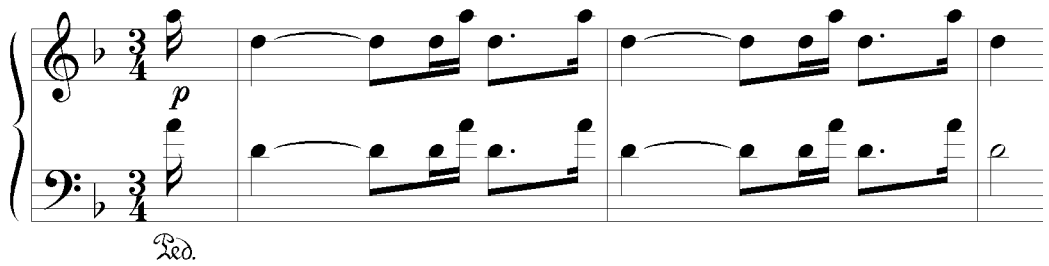
33 no.3) suggests mystery, foreboding, and unease. To create this effect, it is important that the tone quality of the opening is still essentially an attacking sound, even if soft. This is achieved by clear fingerwork. It is also effective for the *crescendos* on these runs to be exaggerated — saving most of the dynamic increase for the last couple of notes to intensify the effect. This increases the tension in the opening section.

Figure 51: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.33 no.3, bars 1-4



Although contrasting in atmosphere, the need for 'tonal presence' in a soft passage is also found in the opening of the opus 33 no.5 *Etude Tableau* (which according to Martyn displays Rachmaninoff's "inexhaustible obsession with the tinkling of bells"[114]).

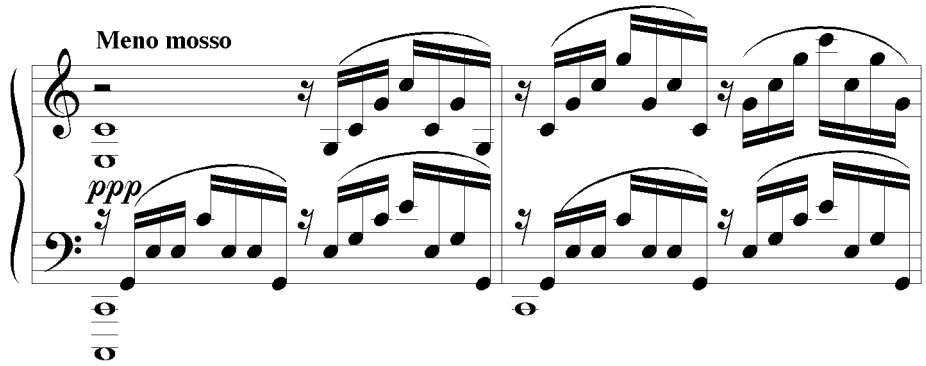
Figure 52: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.33 no.5, bars 1-3



In other passages, the pianist can explore the lower tonal range of the piano's sound. For example, in the opening of the second section of the opus 33 no.3 *Etude Tableau*, it is effective to employ the softest possible tone colour.

[114] Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.233.

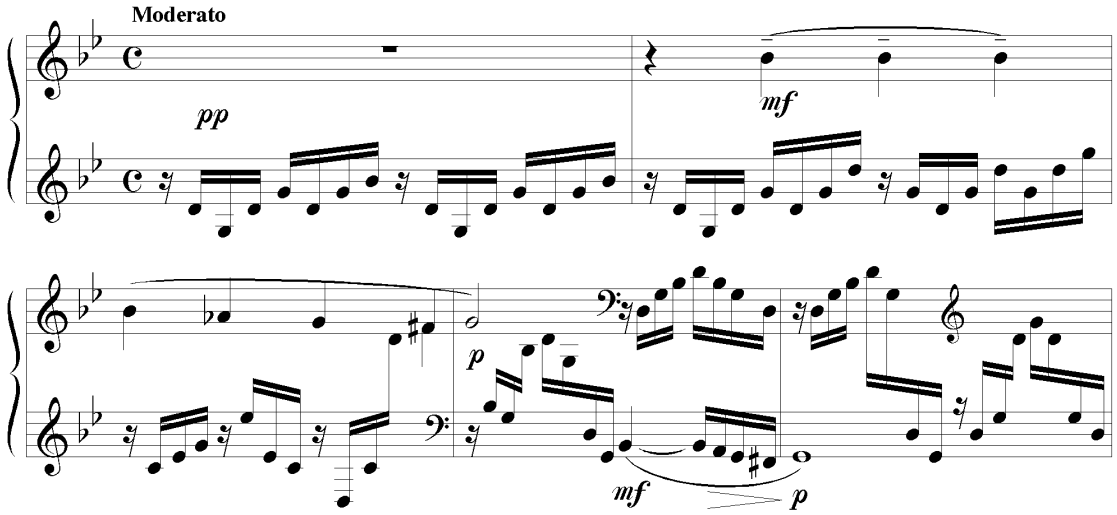
Figure 53: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.33 no.3, bars 18-19



This requires much control: in addition to the soft tone (which can be helped with the use of the *una corda*) performers should aim for a completely *legato* sound. This is difficult due to the repeated notes and wide span of the arpeggiation. The section must also be devoid of any accents, as the slightest variation in tone spoils the atmosphere. Overall, from a physical perspective, performers should maintain flexibility of movement, as tension ruins both the *legato* effect and the tonal quality. Attaining this control is quite difficult and may be seen as one of the purposes of the etude.

A similar tonal quality is effective in the opening bars of the opus 33 no.8 *Etude Tableau*. This passage can be quite magical if it is played as softly as possible, with the *una corda* to further soften the tone colour.

Figure 54: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.33 no.8, bars 1-5



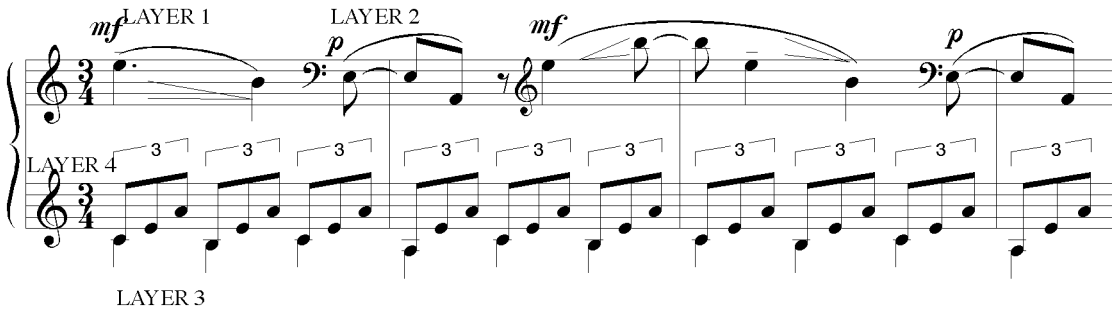
In sections like this, it is effective to maintain this quality of sound in the accompanying parts to maintain the atmosphere. The melody, on the other hand, needs to be projected in a richer tone. Rachmaninoff was obviously aware of this, as he indicates that the

melody should be played *mf.*

Projection of left hand melodies is of equal importance. For instance, in the g minor *Etude Tableau*, the principal melody is often 'answered' by the left hand (figure 54). The initial tendency is to echo the principal phrase with a softer dynamic. However, because this answer is in a different register, the listener tends not to recognise that this melody contributes to the 'overall' shape. It is effective to project this melody with a similar, if not warmer, tone as the principal melody. Once again, this is in adherence to Rachmaninoff's own markings (he marks the answering phrase *mf* and places a *tenuto mark* on the first note).

A similar problem occurs in the *Etude Tableau* opus 39 no.2. In this case, however, Rachmaninoff has actually marked the answering phrase *piano*. The solution to this problem can be explained in terms of the texture of this passage. There are essentially four layers: a principal melody (labelled layer 1), an answering melody (layer 2 – labelled a different layer because of the difference in register to layer 1), the *Dies Irae* motif (layer 3), and the chordal accompaniment (layer 4).

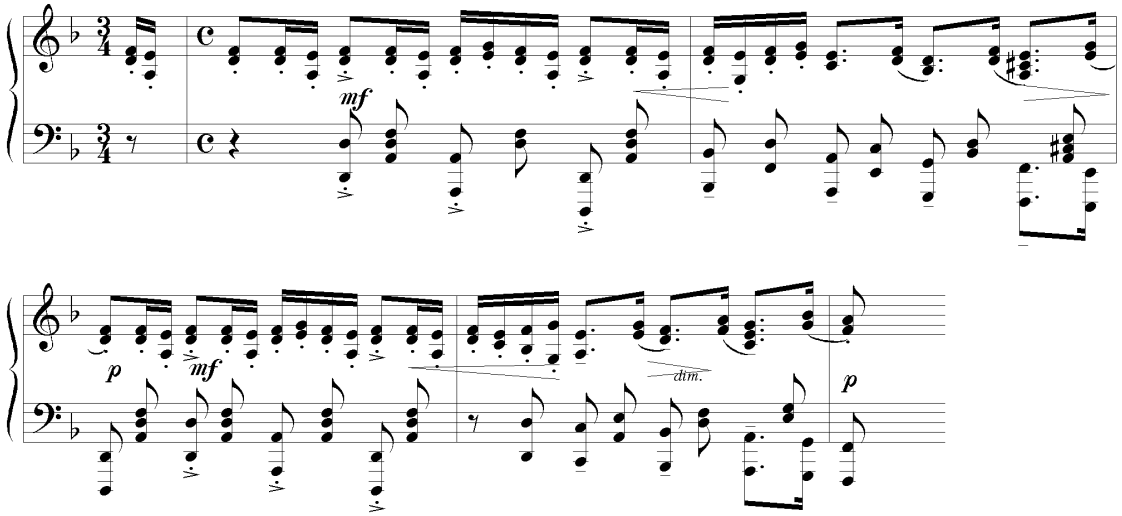
Figure 55: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.39 no.2, bars 3-6



Layer 4 serves a purely harmonic and textural purpose, and should be played as softly as possible — it gives the effect of the whole section being *piano* Layer 3, while melodic, is essentially of secondary function to layers 1 and 2. This usually projects sufficiently by itself without consciously drawing attention to it. Layer 1, being the principal melody is played in a rich tone (marked *mf*). What Rachmaninoff's dynamic markings are effectively doing is indicating where layer 2 is in the textural 'scheme'. However, the tone quality of layer 2 is still quite important — particularly considering its melodic quality. It is most effective for this layer to make the most of the rich sound of the lower register of the instrument, even if this means that the dynamic is a little higher than the *piano* and closer to *mezzo forte.*

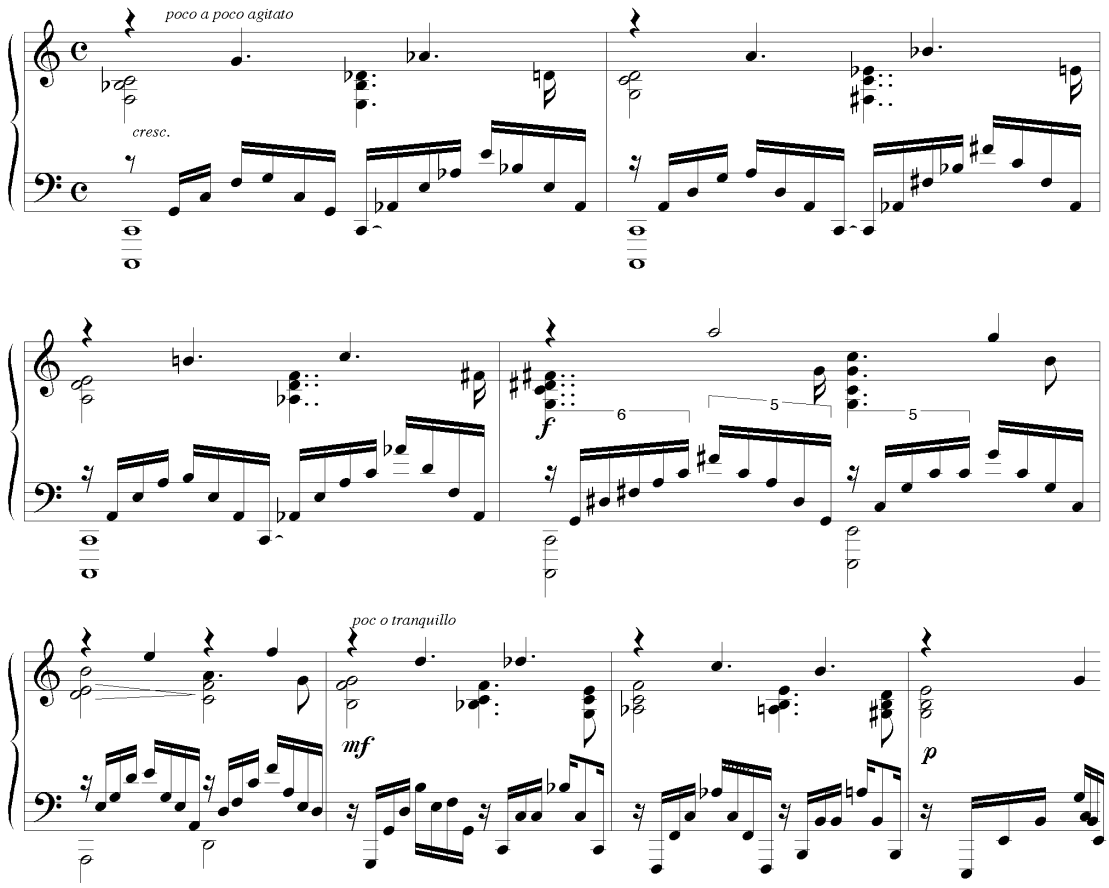
Even when not performing a melodic function, the lower register creates textural dimension and contrapuntal interest. An example of this is found in the *Etude Tableau* op.33 no.5, where Rachmaninoff actually accents the bass notes to indicate their importance.

Figure 56: Rachmaninoff – *Etudes Tableau*, op.39 no.2, bars 5-9



In other cases projection of the bass notes serves a much greater function. In the climax of the opus 33 no.2 *Etude Tableau* (figure 57), it is the bass pedal point that helps create the tension. Its release onto the E on the third beat of bar 33 signifies the end of the build up and the beginning of a more positive release, as the bass descends in fifths in the chain of applied dominants.

Page 73
Figure 57: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, opus 33 no.3, bars 30-37

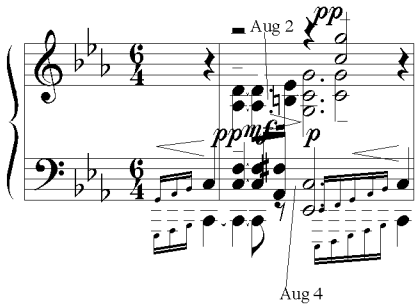


Another method of adding colour, and therefore atmosphere, is to consider projection of the inner voices. Abrahm Chasins comments on Rachmaninoff's "way of orchestrating chords with special beauty through individual distribution of balances and blendings."[115] In the *Etude Tableau* op.33 no.3, projecting inner parts not only adds more dimension to the sound, but also contributes to the unease of the passage because of the prominence of awkward intervals in the voice leading (such as the augmented second and augmented fourth).

[115] Abrahm Chasins. Cited in: Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.402.

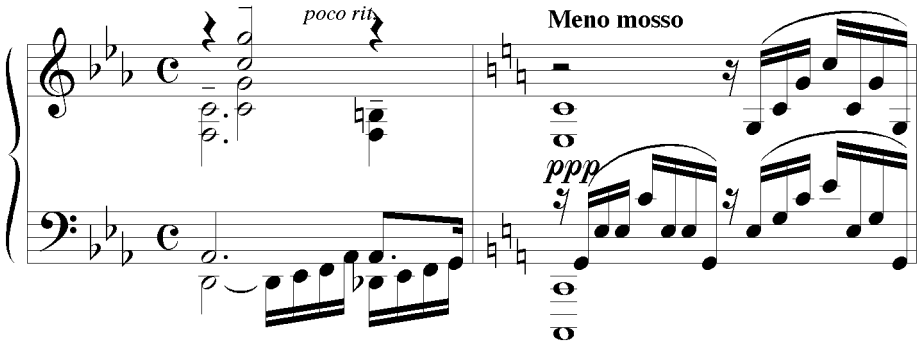
Page 74

Figure 58: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.33 no.3, bar 1



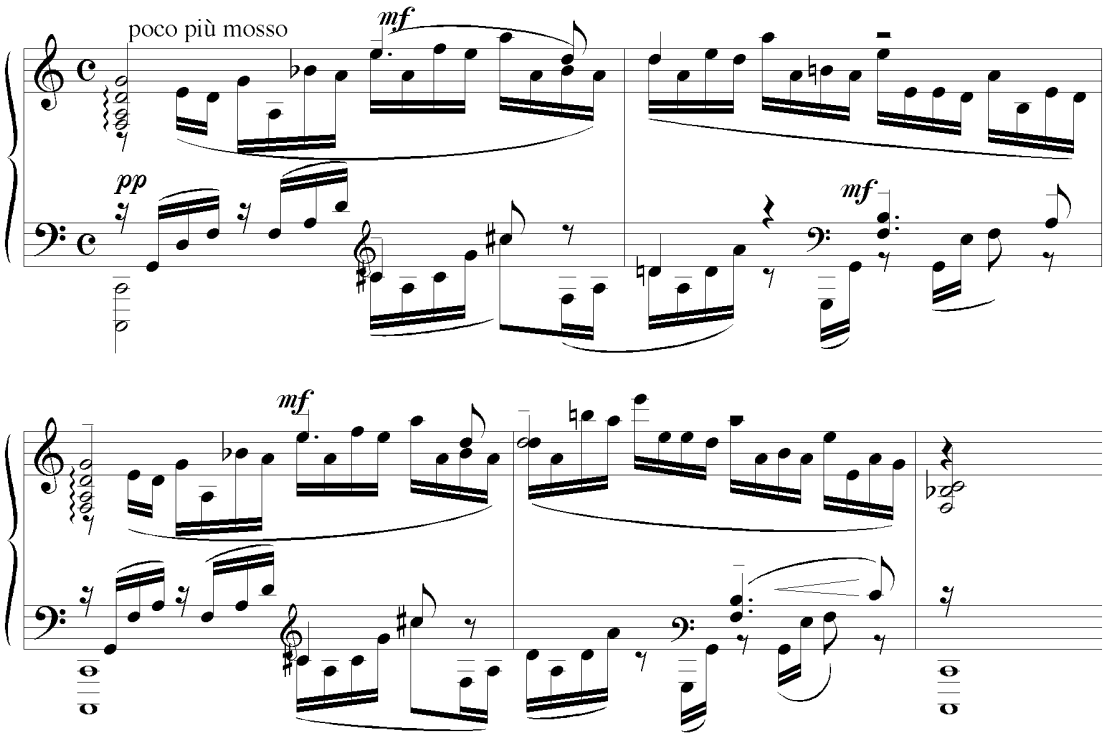
Another, though somewhat isolated, example of where appropriate voicing of inner parts contributes to the atmosphere is at the cadence into the second section of the work. Here, projecting the seventh's resolution to the third in the 'alto' part not only makes the cadence more defined, but due to the 'sweet' quality of the third, contributes to the beauty of the following C major passage.

Figure 59: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.33 no.3, bars 17-18



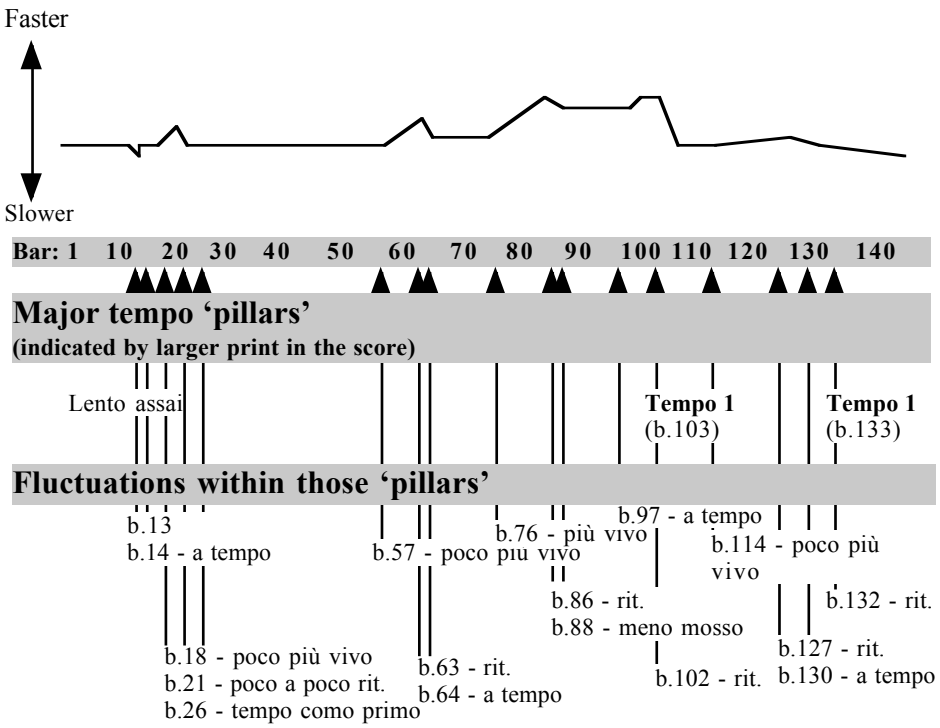
In other sections, such as figure 60, inner parts (this time actually marked by Rachmaninoff) start to thicken the texture and intensify the climax.

Figure 60: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.33 no.3, bars 26-30



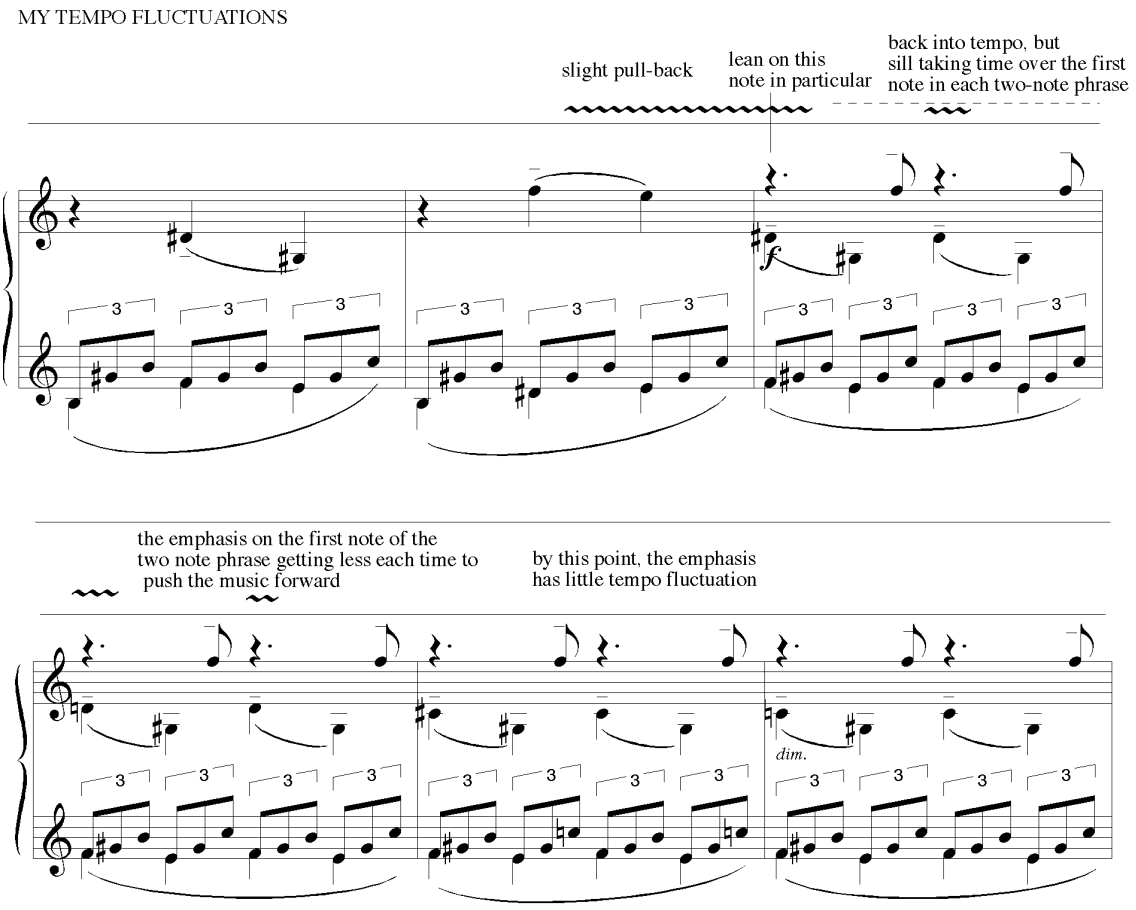
Atmosphere is also created by various levels of tempo fluctuation. In *Etude Tableau* op.39 no.2, variation of tempo is used on a broad scale to create an 'arch' effect.

Figure 61: Tempo fluctuations in Rachmaninoff's *Etude Tableau*, op.39 no.2



It is the task of the performer to ensure that the 'pacing' of these tempo changes is successful. Sometimes, smaller-scale tempo fluctuations can help achieve this. For example, although the *a tempo* at bar 97 implies a faster speed, pulling back the tempo leading into it, and leaning slightly on the first and third beats can actually help make the transition into the faster tempo smoother.

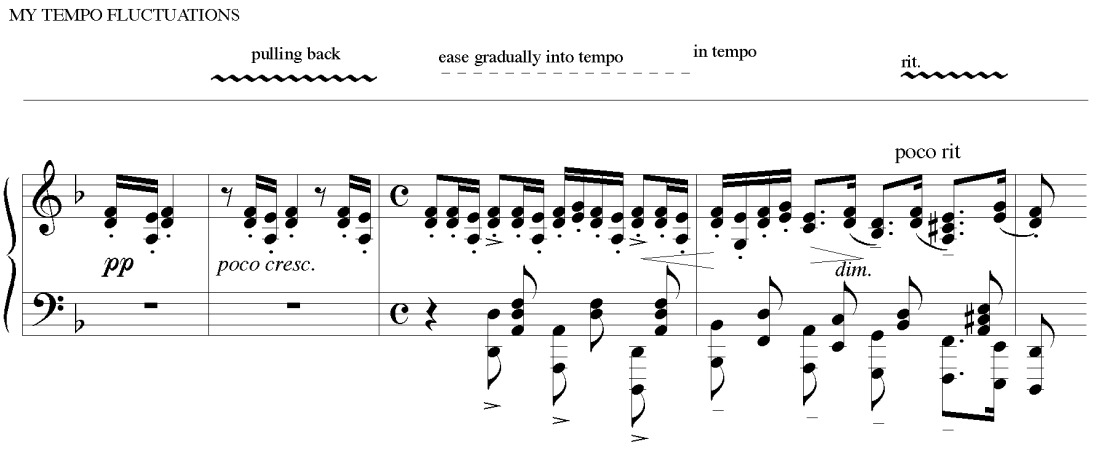
Figure 62: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.39 no.2, bars 95-100



This is exaggerating Rachmaninoff's *tenuto* markings (which imply space), and adds more musical shape to what is, thematically speaking, a relatively economic section.

At other times, tempo fluctuations can assist in creating the character (and shaping) of a phrase. For example, freedom in tempo in the opening of the *Etude Tableau* No.5 complements the motivic nature of the melody: as the motives expand, the tempo gains momentum.

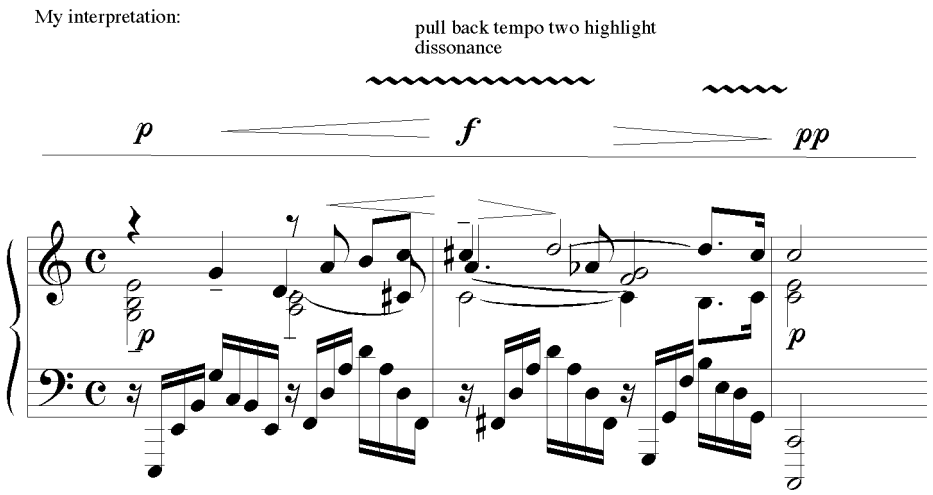
Figure 63: Rachmaninoff – *Etudes Tableau*, op.33 no.5, bars 3-7



This adds character to what is otherwise a repetitive melodic line.

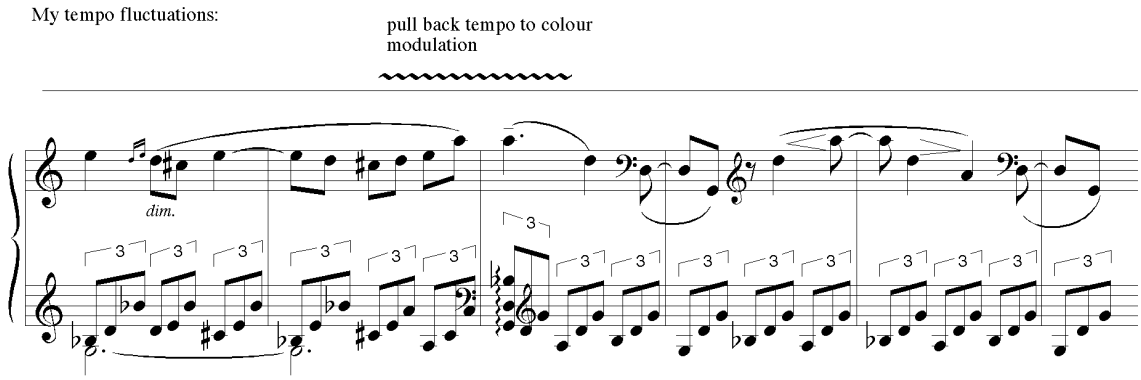
In other cases, tempo fluctuations can be used to highlight harmonic colours. For example, in the passage following the large climax in the op.33 no.3 *Etude Tableau*, pulling back the tempo, projecting the chromatic parts, and overall broadening the tone (the broadest point being the C# against the C on the first beat of the bar) increases the expressive nature of this section — a kind of last 'expressive' word before the return to essentially consonant harmony for the remaining six bars of the work.

Figure 64: Rachmaninoff – *Etudes Tableau*, op.33 no.3, bars 37-39



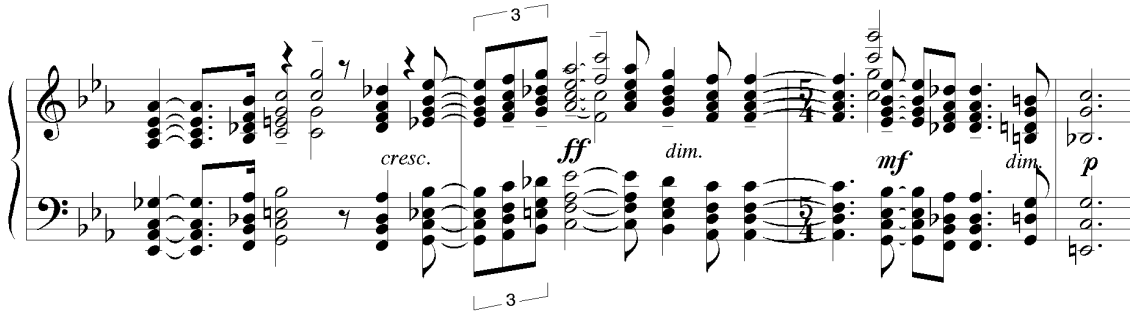
Another example of tempo fluctuation being used to highlight harmonic colour is in the opus 39 no.2 *Etude Tableau*. Here, slightly broadening the tempo over the barline colours the modulation into G minor, and also allows more time for the rolled chord to be played.

Figure 65: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.39 no.2, bars 33-38



The performance issues dealt with so far have been primarily musically based problems. However, there is one recurring technical problem: the awkwardness of the wide hand stretches required (due to Rachmaninoff's unusually large hands). For example, in bars 7-10 of the op.33 no.3 *Etude Tableau*, the left hand is constantly spanning the interval of a tenth, with awkward notes in the middle fingers. To avoid this, it is possible to 'roll' the left hand chords. This also works musically because it has the effect of pushing the texture forward more in this climactic section.

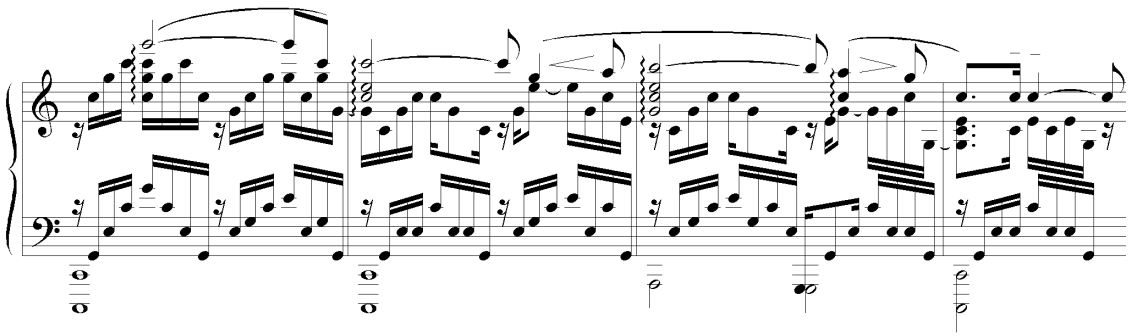
Figure 66: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.33 no.3, bars 7-10



The one disadvantage of this method, however, is that the bass notes sometimes aren't caught by the pedal, so the texture becomes unnecessarily thin. In fact, the very opposite of this should occur: the bass is doubling the melody in sixths, so projecting this would add more dimension to the section. Rapid pedal changes avoid this problem.

Later in the same *Etude*, the right hand faces a similar hand-span problem. In this case, the melodic notes also require projection.

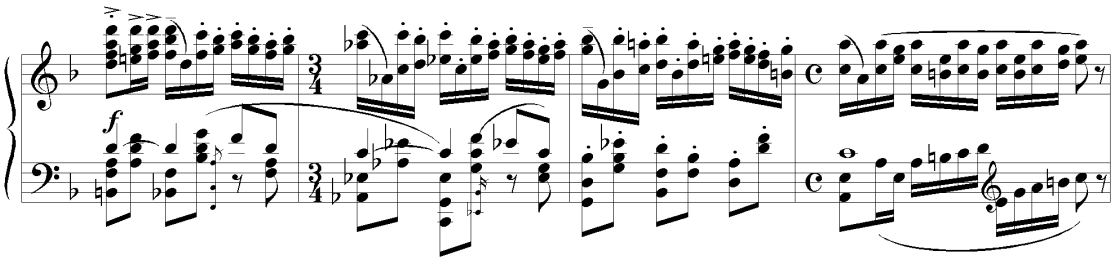
Figure 67: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.33 no.3, bars 20-23



The solution in this section, because of the different atmosphere, is to take more time over the rolled chord — this allows the top notes to be projected. This also enhances the spacious effect of the slow harmonic rhythm and wide arpeggiated accompaniment.

A similar issue occurs in the *Etude Tableau* op.33 no.5. This time, the projection of the melody in the left hand is more problematic because of the faster tempo.

Figure 68: Rachmaninoff – *Etude Tableau*, op.33 no.5, bars 32-35



Even though the tempo is fast, it is still possible to take a little more time over the widely spaced chords to ensure accuracy, projection of the melody (which, being in the centre of the texture, must be exaggerated), and clean pedalling.

Overall, attention to detail in tone production, highlighting the harmonic colours through voicing and subtle tempo fluctuations, and attention to the larger-scale implications of 'signposts' (such as tempo fluctuations) enhances the emotional effectiveness of the work. Attention to these may help to create the goal of pianistic perfection, but Rachmaninoff's quest is far greater than that. Rachmaninoff stated that

> Music … should be the expression of a composer's complex personality ... A composer's music should express the country of his birth, his love affairs, his religion, the books which have influenced him, the pictures he loves. It should be the product of the total sum of a composer's experiences. Study the masterpieces of great composers and you will find every aspect of the composer's

> personality and background in music. Time may change the technique of music but it can never alter its mission.[116]

It is possible to see, in retrospect, how the *Etudes Tableau* represent Rachmaninoff's 'mission' of music: they show influences (of art works) and emotional states through pure music. Rachmaninoff's essential mission of music was "first and foremost [to] be loved" — "it must come from the heart and it must be directed to the heart. Otherwise it cannot hope to be lasting, indestructible art."[117] The technical tools and musical colours that the *Etudes Tableau* embody enable the interpreter to more directly express, and therefore more easily permeate the listener's senses.

SCRIABIN: *Etudes* — op.2, no.1 & op.42

Because of the vast changes in Scriabin's approach to music between the composition of the opus 2 no.1 *Etude* (1886) and the set of opus 42 *Etudes* (1903), these will be studied separately.

Etude (op.2, no.1)

Scriabin wrote the C# minor *Etude* at the age of fifteen. At the time, he was studying theory with Taneieff, and studying piano and living with Zverev (the cultured atmosphere of Zverev's household was discussed in the introduction). Scriabin's conception of technique would have been formed in this environment. Here, Scriabin "could play any etude within an hour. He looked at the notes once, glanced at the page again, practised the main technical problem or difficulty at the piano, and then played it by ear, never to look at it again."[118] Scriabin's reasons for writing an *Etude* at this stage in his career are likely to have been because it was a standard genre in the nineteenth-century Western repertoire. This is in keeping with the other compositions he was writing (or half-writing) in the period: a rondo for orchestra, suite for strings, fantasy-sonata sonata, ballade, variations, scherzos, waltzes, and nocturnes. More specifically, Scriabin's chief model at the time was Chopin. Bowers described that "Skryabusha fell in love with Chopin. He slept with his music under his pillow at night. He carried it in hs book bag to Corp classes."[119] This influence is clearly seen in the c# minor *Etude*. The influence of Chopin shouldn't be held against him — as Scriabin once remarked,

---

[116] Rachmaninoff, in a interview with David Ewan, "Music Should Speak from the Heart", *The Etude*, No.59, December 1941, p.804. Cited in Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., p.32.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Bowers, *Scriabin* (first edition), p.133.
[119] Ibid., p.134.

"what if my music does sound like Chopin? It's not stolen. It's mine..."[120]

What is most remarkable about this composition is its maturity. Bowers describes that

> it is a contemplative, melancholy, searching piece whose simple ascending melody is underlined with plangent chords. It elicits a feeling of Russian expanse, of steppes, tundra ... loneliness. A wondering note sounds: a repeated question expressed by a falling interval of a minor third at each phrase end. There is no reply.[121]

This is, in some ways, reflective of his sensitive personality. As a child, he was "fearfully nervous, thin, delicate, subject to illness and unhappy."[122]

The beauty of Scriabin's music did not go unnoticed. Safonov described his talent in an incident in 1888.

> It frequently happened that he [Scriabin] played at my home, while I was taking a rest. Once I fell asleep and suddenly woke up to the most delicious sounds. I was afraid to stir so as not to break the enchantment. "What is this?" I asked. It was a new Prelude in D-flat major. This is one of the loveliest memories of my life. Scriabin possessed in the highest degree what I always impressed on my students: the less like itself a piano is under the fingers of the player, the better it is.[123]

It is clear from Scriabin's compositional style that the c# minor *Etude* is far from a mere technical exercise. Rather, it is an etude in pianistic control, colour, and musical shape.

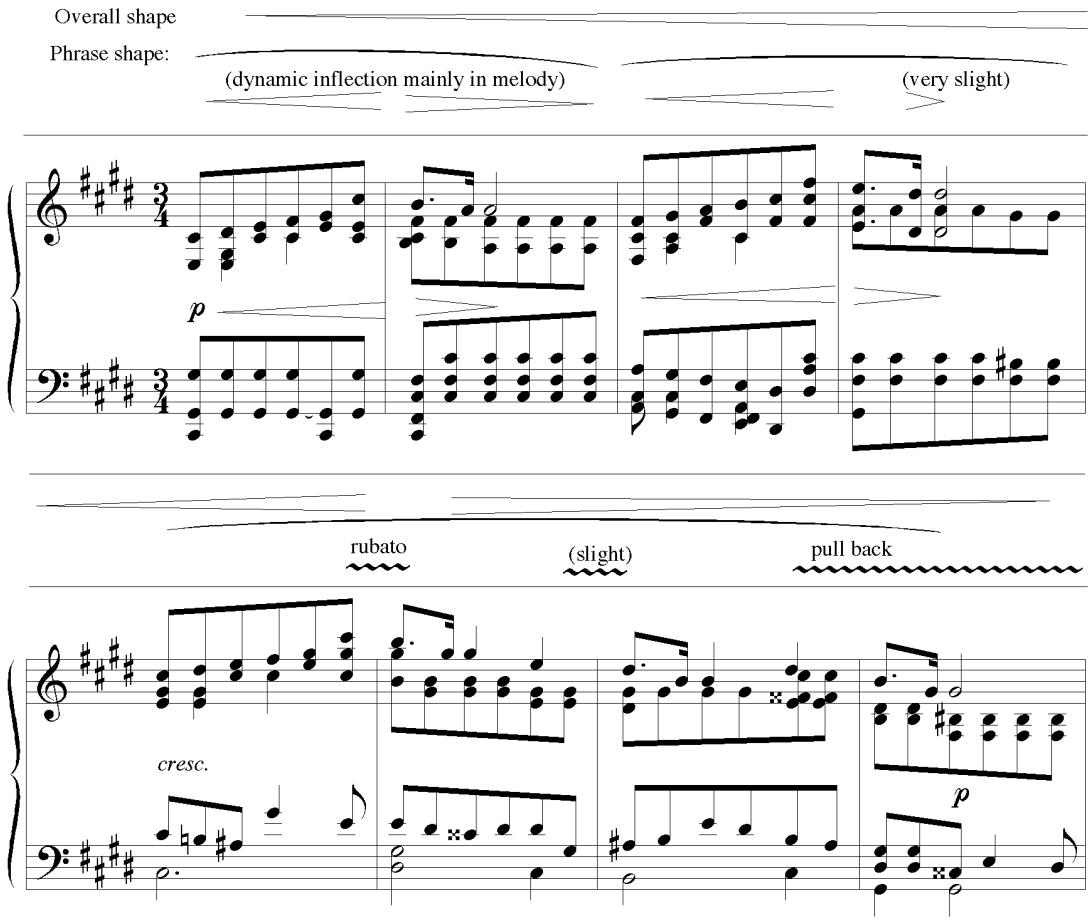
Performers should keep in mind the overall 'shape' of the *Etude*. Because of its expressive nature, it can be tempting to 'over-sentimentalise' — particularly by using too much *rubato*. It is effective, at the opening, to think of the overall shape of the eight-bar phrase. There can still be shapes within this shape (i.e. a slight surge in dynamics towards the middle of the first two phrases), but these occur as part of the large dynamic shape. It is for this reason that it is not effective to use too much *rubato* in the first four bars, as this would sectionalise the two-bar phrases. It is, however

---

[120] Scriabin. Cited in ibid.
[121] Ibid., p.136.
[122] Ibid., p.133.
[123] Safanov, *Musical Contemporary*, 1916. Cited in: Swan, op. cit., p.148.

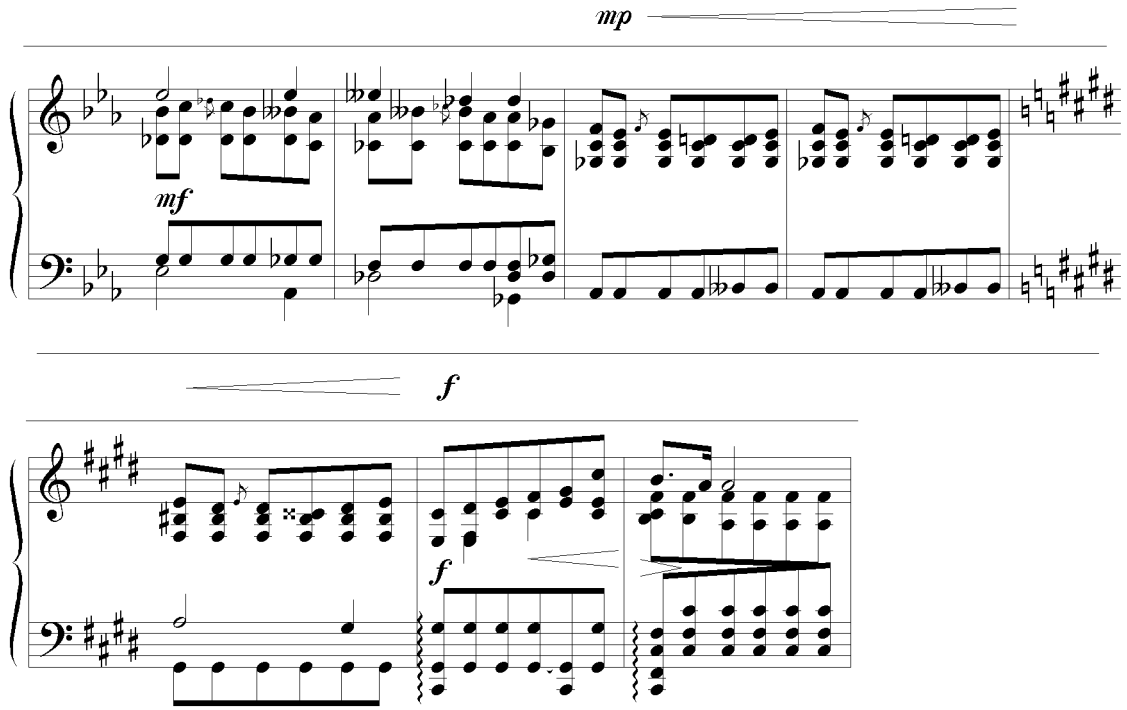
effective to use *rubato* to highlight 'turning points' in the melody. An example of this is between the last beat of bar 5 and the first beat of bar 6. This creates a sighing effect. This can be imitated in the following bar, though to a lesser extent — it would start to interfere with the overall shape if this inflection was overdone. While it is effective to maintain a rich tone throughout the majority of the phrase, this tone can be 'rounded' off in the final bar. Pulling back the tempo in this bar can also highlight this effect.

Figure 69: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.2 no.1, bars 1-8



Another section where pianists need to consider the overall direction of the music is the bars approaching the return of the opening theme (which is now played *forte*). In this case, no large *rubatos* are necessary. Pianists can intensify the build up by dropping the dynamic in bar 23, and constantly increasing the tone until the return of the main theme in bar 26.

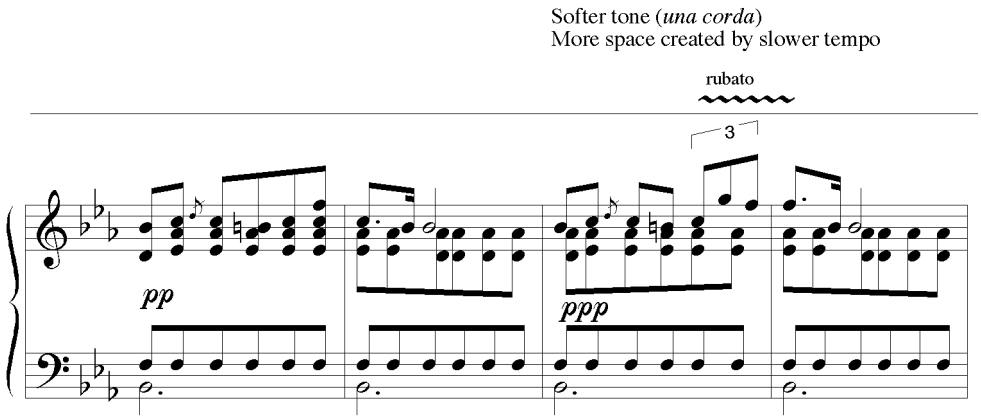
Page 83
Figure 70: Scriabin – *Etude* op.2 no.1, bars 21-27



The dissonance of the upper left hand in bar 25 can be projected to heighten the effect.

At times, Scriabin repeats similar material in an 'echo-like' effect. This can be enhanced by exaggerating the change in tone (i.e., exploring the softest range of the piano in the second phrase, and using the *una corda*) and by using an overall slower tempo in the second phrase. The expressive nature of the melodic change in the second phrase can be highlighted with *rubato*.

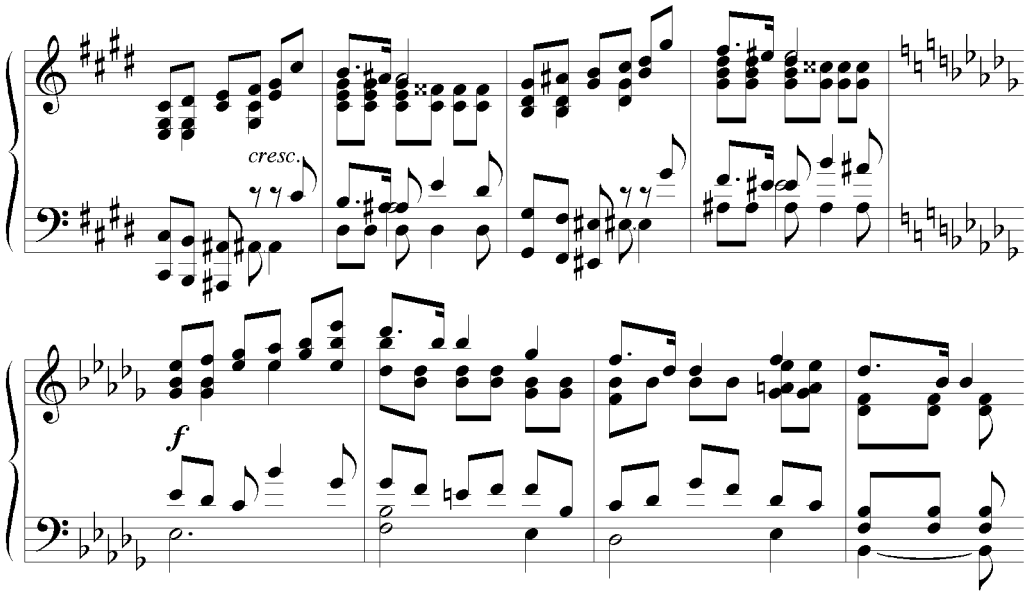
Figure 71: Scriabin – *Etude,* op.2 no.1 bars 17-20



Subtle *rubatos* are often the most intimate way of conveying the expression of the *Etude*. For example, it can be effective to draw attention to dissonances in the countermelodies. In bar 10, the resolution of the E to the D (in the upper left hand) can

be slightly delayed.

Figure 72: Scriabin – *Etude,* op.2 no.1, bars 9-16



When this device is repeated two bars later, there is no need to use such a *rubato* — rather the focus should be on intensifying the phrase towards its peak in the following bar .

A successful interpretation of this brief, 45 bar *Etude* is largely reliant on attention to its overall shape, a warm tone, and projection of expressive nuances. Although Scriabin's philosophy and style changed considerably in his later works, these performance issues remain consistent.

Etudes (Opus 42)

Approach to technique

Scriabin's approach to music was quite different to that of Bortkiewicz and Rachmaninoff. The essential difference lies in the fact that

> when Scriabin wrote music, he never derived his ideas from imagined theories, whether philosophical or otherwise, or even from purely aesthetic musical considerations, for he never regarded his art as a means of expressing his thoughts, as a propaganda tool intended to charm the listeners by appealing to their senses. His artistry was never the result of artificially contrived reasoning. On the other hand, his theories and his system of thought were never translations of his art into a language of concepts. Scriabin's thoughts did not follow his artistic creations like shadows, nor did they precede them as guiding

> beacons ... To understand the nature of Scriabin's personality, which can so easily be misconstrued in all his multifarious activities — as a musician, poet, philosopher, and even as a prophet — we must realize [*sic.*] that all represent different aspects of the same essence.[124]

However, this description of his art must not be taken too literally, as doing this would imply that Scriabin did not think at all about his compositional technique (and his distinctive style gives all evidence to the contrary). Rather, Schloezer (who, incidentally, is Scriabin's brother-in-law) is distinguishing Scriabin's artistic element of his personality as belonging to those

> artists who make an earnest effort to understand themselves, their creative work, and the world in which they live. They try to attain clarity, lucidity, and comprehensibility. They aspire to reveal themselves in rational terms, to articulate the elements that reflect their ideas. Having created something, they attempt to reconstruct intellectually the inexpressible and to rationalize [*sic.*] the transcendal. They intend to illuminate the apperception of their desire by appropriate ideology ... We witness in Scriabin a very strange phenomenon in which the artist fails to be satisfied solely by his artistic achievement and is constantly trying to justify it morally, religiously, and scientifically, to explain to others the meaning of his productions, to reveal their significance not only from an aesthetic but also from a metaphysical standpoint.[125]

So the perception of Scriabin's music is intuitive (reflective of his actual personality), yet his 'personality' is reflected both in his works of art and philosophical systems. Schloezer explains this in a diagram (where 'A' represents art, and 'B' represents philosophical system).

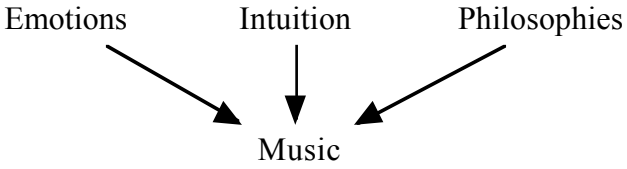
Figure 73: Schloezer's explanation of Scriabin's music[126]

With other composers, such as Rachmaninoff, their direct focus is more a conscious expression of emotions. Their creative process would look something more like this:

---

[124] Boris de Schloezer, *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic* (California, 1987), p.79-80.
[125] Ibid., p.75.
[126] Ibid., p.77.

Figure 74: Assimilation of Rachmaninoff and Bortkiewicz's compositional process



Also, Rachmaninoff and Bortkiewicz don't possess such a strong interest in philosophy. Their focus when creating music is entirely on the product, not a deeper significance of the product (or process of making it) in relationship to their philosophies.

Several aspects of Scriabin's personality and behaviour are important in understanding the opus 42 *Etudes*. The first is related to Scriabin's social interaction. Schloezer described that Scriabin "formed warm friendships easily, but he could as easily terminate them, and he could freely yield to influences."[127] It was in these friendships that Scriabin learnt or formed many of his philosophies, as he didn't read extensively.[128] For example, one of Scriabin's 'drinking buddies' in Switzerland was Otto Hauenstein (in around 1903-5: the period of the opus 42 *Etudes*, which were written in 1903), who regarded Scriabin as a prophet:

> They memorized [*sic.*] lines from the Acts in the Bible which substantiated their religious communism: "And all that believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man needs."[129]

It is significant that these contacts Scriabin made were often not interested in Scriabin's music but his philosophy. Hauenstein once remarked after a Scriabin concert: "What a lot of noise Alexandre makes".[130]

Yet, as implied by Schloezer's reference to Scriabin "easily terminating" friendships,

> Scriabin was interested in facts, events, persons, or objects only if they were relevant to his ideas and aspirations.
>
> As the years went by, this characteristic attitude became more pronounced. Scriabin seemed to lose the capacity for contemplating the world's reality and was entirely absorbed by the desire to exploit this reality for his purposes. Whomever he met, whatever subject he

[127] Ibid., p.104.
[128] Ibid., p.70.
[129] Faubion Bowers, *Scriabin* (first edition), op. cit., p.58.
[130] Ibid.

> tackled, his sole criteria were whether they would hasten or impede his progress and be allies or enemies. Nothing existed for him insofar as it affected his plans, positively or negatively. This is the reason why he seemed incapable of admiring art for arts sake.[131]

So how does this relate to Scriabin's perception of the etude? Like his attitudes to other philosophies and people, Scriabin did not perform the music of other composers after his graduation.[132] In fact, he went so far as to say that "nothing exists, the only thing that is is what I create."[133] So, if Scriabin, as a pianist, wished to improve his technique, he would need to write etudes to discipline his technique.

It is more likely, however, that the etudes were written to improve his own compositional technique. This is supported by Scriabin's belief that "Art ... was synonymous with spiritual transformation. His idealism referred not to the content of artistic work, but its realization [*sic*.]."[134] So, from a compositional perspective, Scriabin's concern is not so much the finished product (i.e., a product with a goal of being performed by another pianist), but the process of writing the work in 'alignment' with his philosophical values at the time. In Scriabin's eyes, art should be second to life.

> He once told me that Gogol suffered in the last years of his life, which led him to destroy the second part of his novel *Dead Souls*, is of greater import, not only for Gogol himself but all humanity, than the fate of the novel itself. Gogol was bound to sacrifice his creation for the sake of enhancing and intensifying his spiritual life.[135]

Given that Scriabin specifically entitled the works etudes, it is highly possible that the works were intended as a process to develop stylistic and pianistic techniques that would achieve the experience he desired.

Each *Etude* of the opus 42 set focuses on a specific texture. Some general features which occur throughout include an attempt to destabilise the rhythm by using cross rhythms. The effect of this is a kind of 'wash' of sound. This is found extensively in Nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8.

Figure 75a: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.1, bars 1-4

---

[131] Schloezer, op. cit., p.71-2.
[132] Bowers, *Scriabin* (first edition), op. cit., p.195.
[133] Schloezer, op. cit., p.65.
[134] Ibid, p.103-4.
[135] Ibid., p.99.

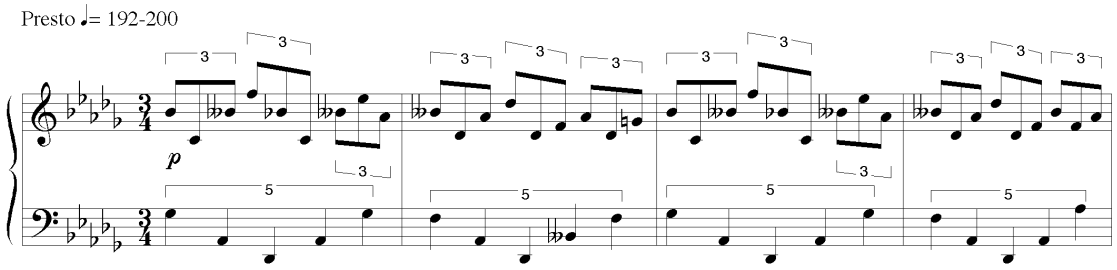


Figure 75b: Scriabin – *Etude,* op.42 no.2, bars 1-4

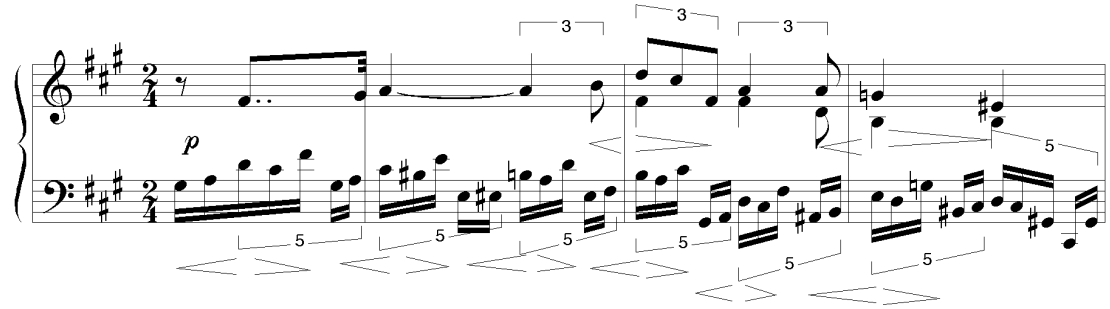


Figure 75c: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.6, bars 1-4

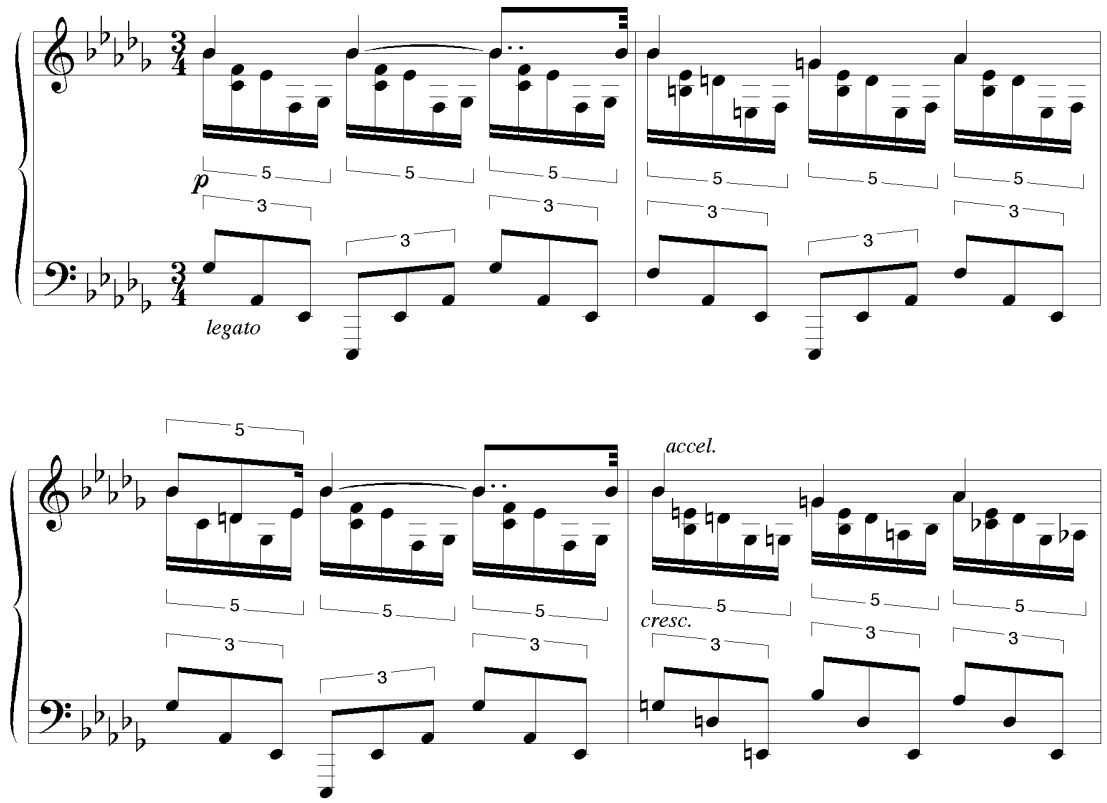


Figure 75d: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.7, bars 1-4

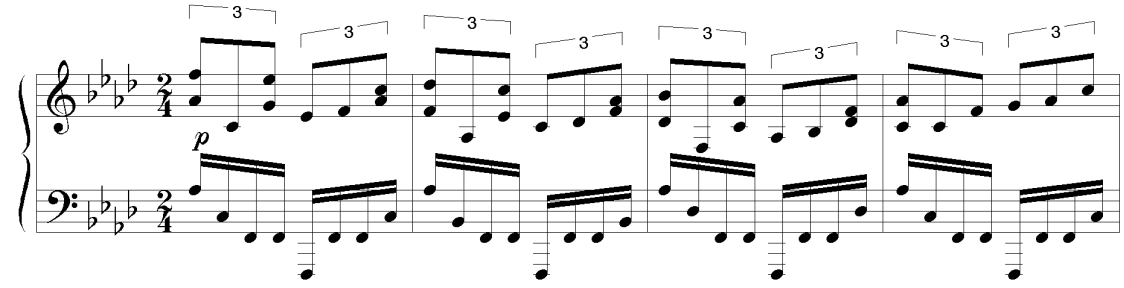
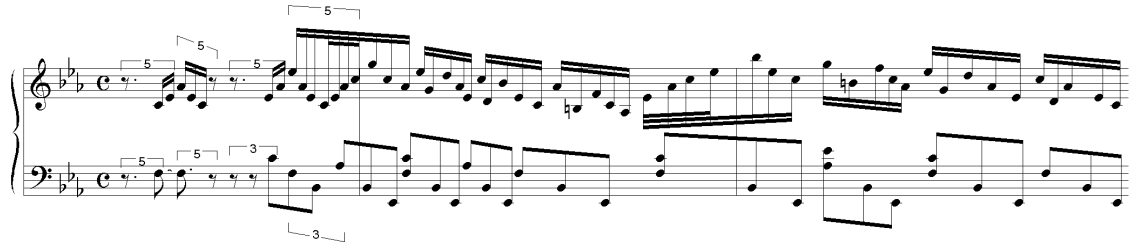


Figure 75e: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.8, bars 1-3



Another common device is the use of accompanying figures that 'overlap' the beat. This further removes the clarity and contributes to the 'wash' effect.

Figure 76a: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.2, bars 1-4

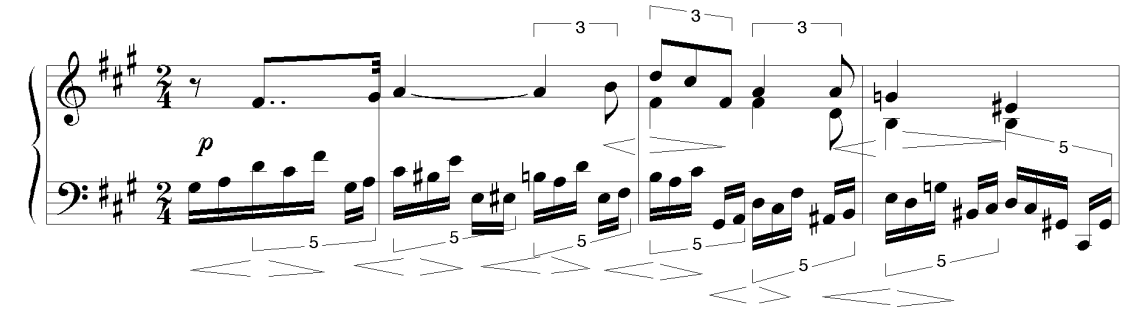
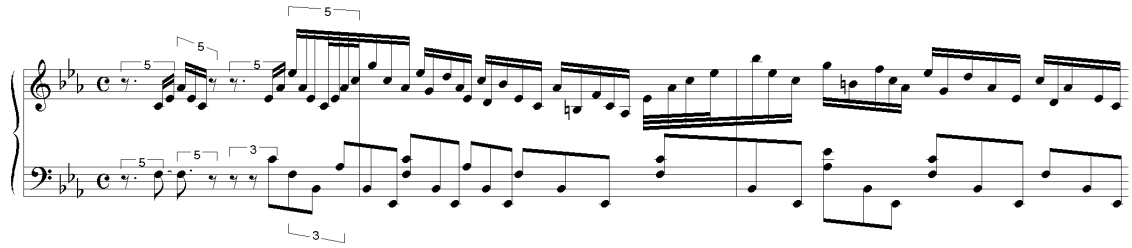


Figure 76b: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.8, bars 1-3



Page 90

The left hand often broadens the texture by continuously playing wide arpeggiations.

Figure 77a: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.1, bars 1-4

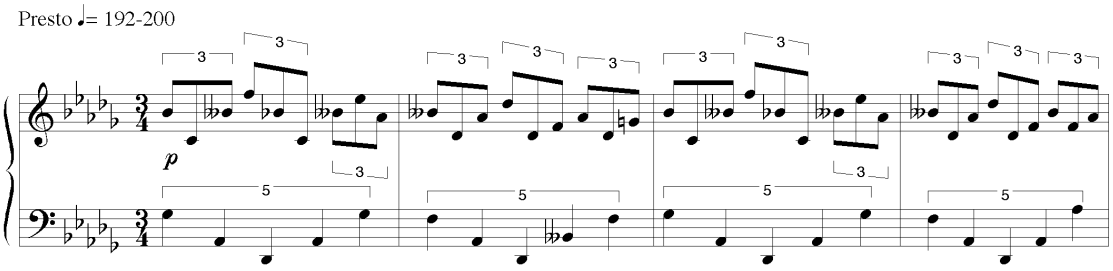


Figure 77b: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.4, bars 1-4

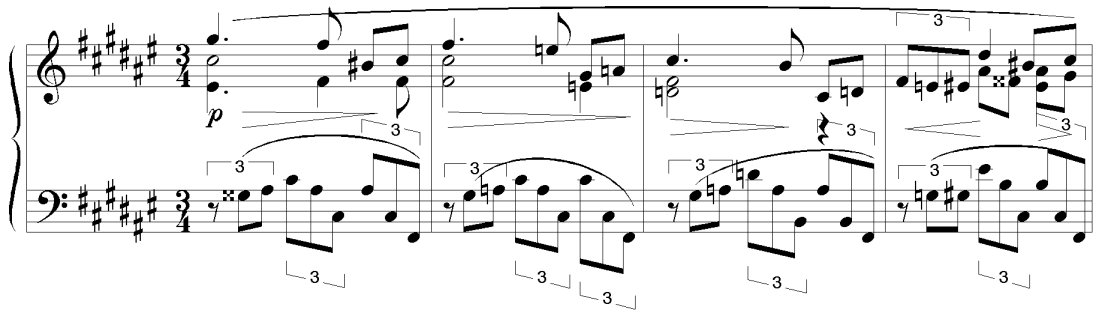


Figure 77c: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.6, bars 1-4

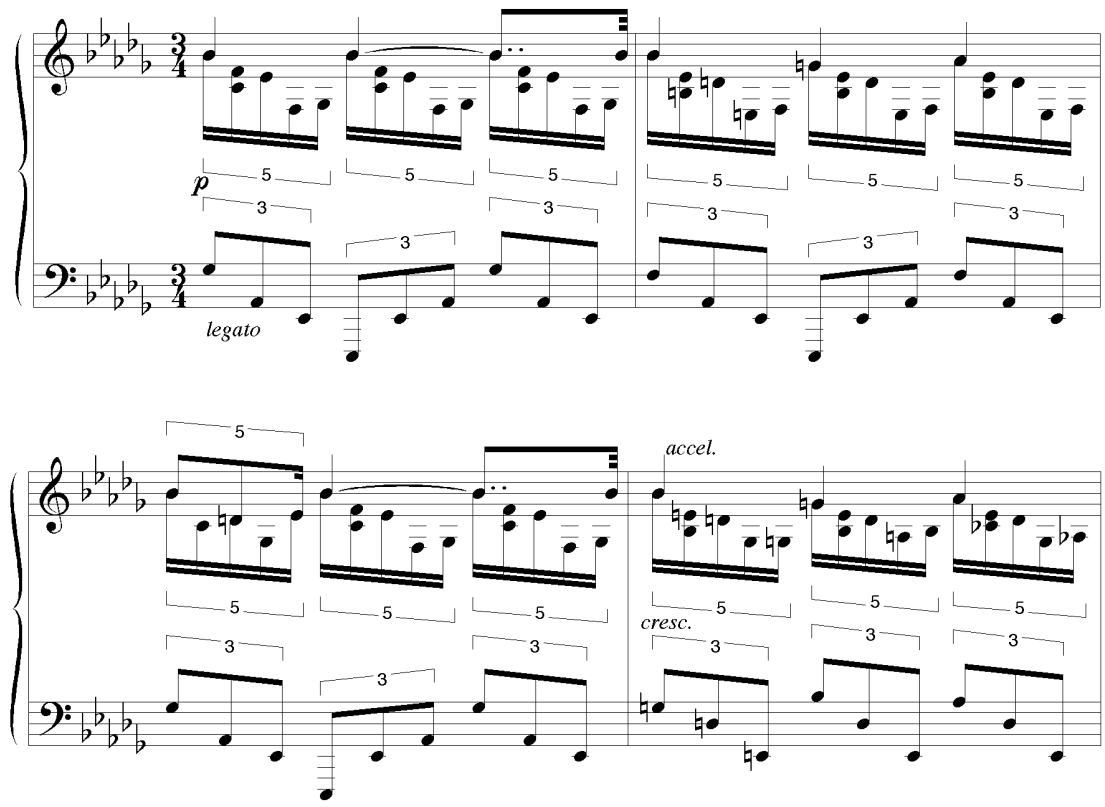


Figure 77d: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.7, bars 1-4

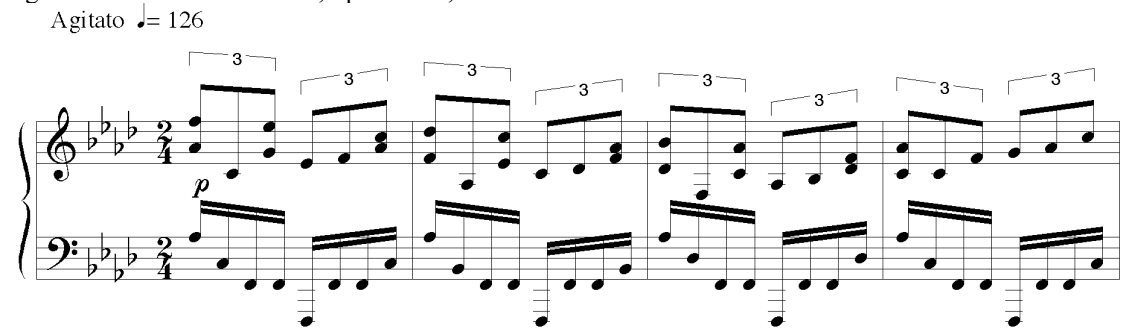
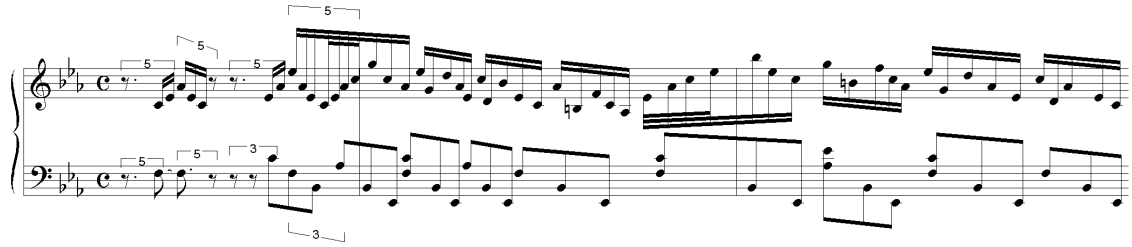


Figure 77e: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.8, bars 1-3



It is also significant that five of the eight *Etudes* are in major keys. Scriabin used major keys more during this period of composition because:

> how can you express mysticism with major and minor? How can you convey the dissolution of matter, or luminosity? Above all, minor keys must disappear from music, because art must be a festival. Minor is a whine. I can't stand whining.[136]

Faubion Bowers describes the significance of Scriabin's search for a new pianistic colour.

> Looking at Scriabin's compositions, we see at every turn how he worked for non-piano effects, to make the piano a kind of celestial orchestra of unearthly sounds. His first task was, invariably, how to defy the piano's laws — how to keep its evanescent tone for dissipating into the air, how to give the impression that piano strings can hold a note at the same intensity with which it starts, how to make the resonance last, and last, and last. The pedal sustains only the initial impact, the first of a series of rapidly diminishing decibels of sounds. Scriabin constantly densed extended figurations to prevent this — trills [this is particularly seen in the opus 42 no.3 etude], reiterated arpeggios, repeated chords, and melodic lines intensified by clusters of notes which flicker like fires to radiate steady heat.
>
> He strove to remove the human coefficient from music, so that all that was left would be the purest, blinding, most radiant light ... the light

[136] Bowers, Scriabin, p.103. Cited in: Robert Ruckman, *The Etudes of Alexander Scriabin: A Performance Perspective* (Michigan, 1996).

which man himself is when "the angel within unsheathes".[137]

Overall, the opus 42 *Etudes* are exercises in compositional techniques (the search of a new sound for the composer), and these new devices pose technical difficulties for the performer.

However, considering Scriabin's view on art, it seems illogical that Scriabin would write works of technical difficulty for the performer just for the purpose of developing technique. This would not achieve Scriabin's overall goal of music. Scriabin once commentated that "art is only an intoxicating drink, a miraculous wine."[138] Art, like a drink, is only really experienced while you are actually 'consuming' it — after this, it ceases to be art. This not only applies for the composer (in his process of composing), but also performers and listeners. This is where the technical difficulties must be put aside and the goal of performers should be to create the finest 'experience' possible.

Creating the 'experience' in performance

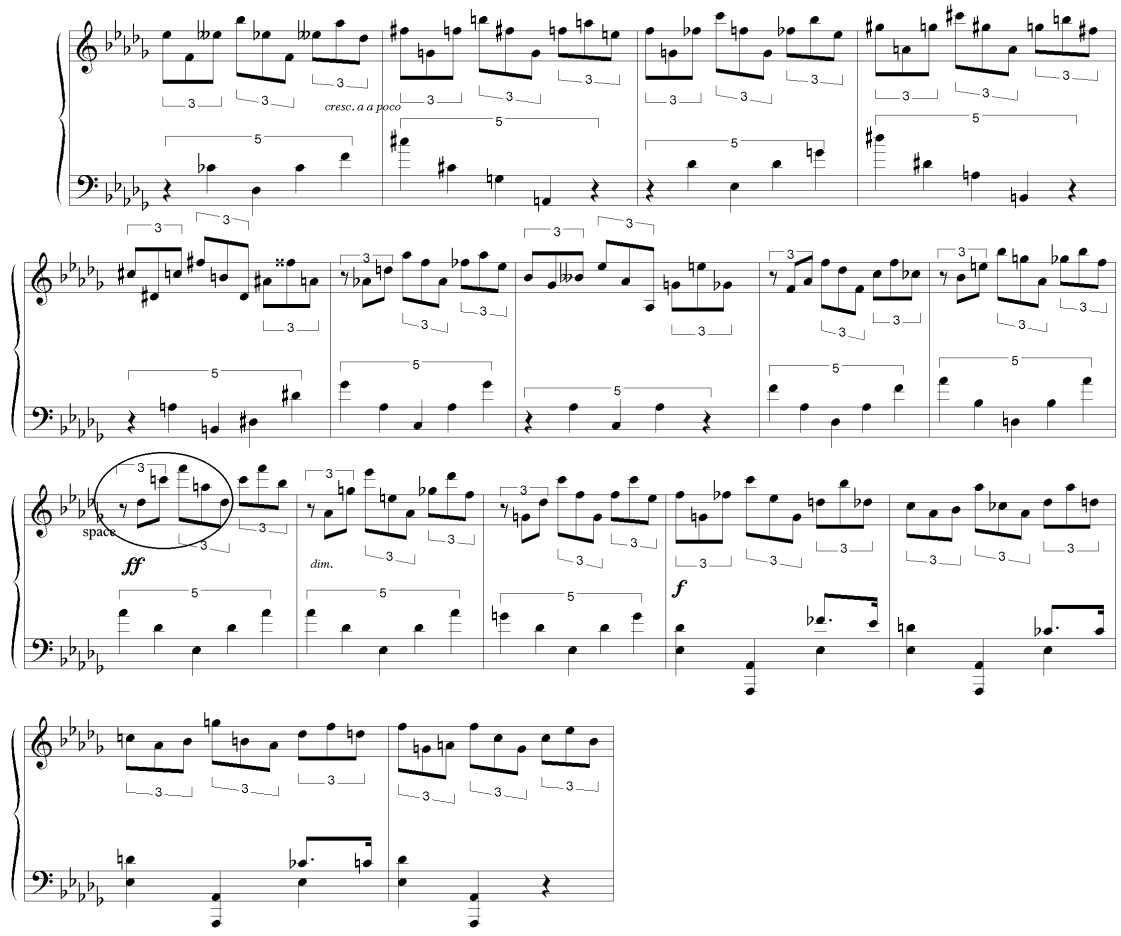
Considering the flexibility of interpretation evident in Scriabin's own playing (discussed in chapter one), the performer has considerable license to experiment with creation of overall shapes, flexibility in tempo, and subtle tone colours, to create a suitable 'experience'.

Despite the technical difficulties of the *Etudes*, the primary focus should be musical. This can be achieved by ensuring that there is always a good perception of the overall phrase: this helps make sense of the otherwise cluttered texture. For example, in the opening pages of the opus 42 no.1 *Etude*, there are several marked 'surges' in tone, but there is essentially only one major climax in the first two pages. The build up for this starts at bar 13 and it reaches its peak at bar 22. It is effective for performers not to sectionalise these eleven bars too much as this can distract from the overall shape. For the climax to be most effective, a fairly exaggerated *rubato* is required in the first three notes of the right hand of the climax bar — this makes the top note (F) the most important, and also draws the listener's attention to the climax. From this point until bar 29, the effect is basically the reverse.

---

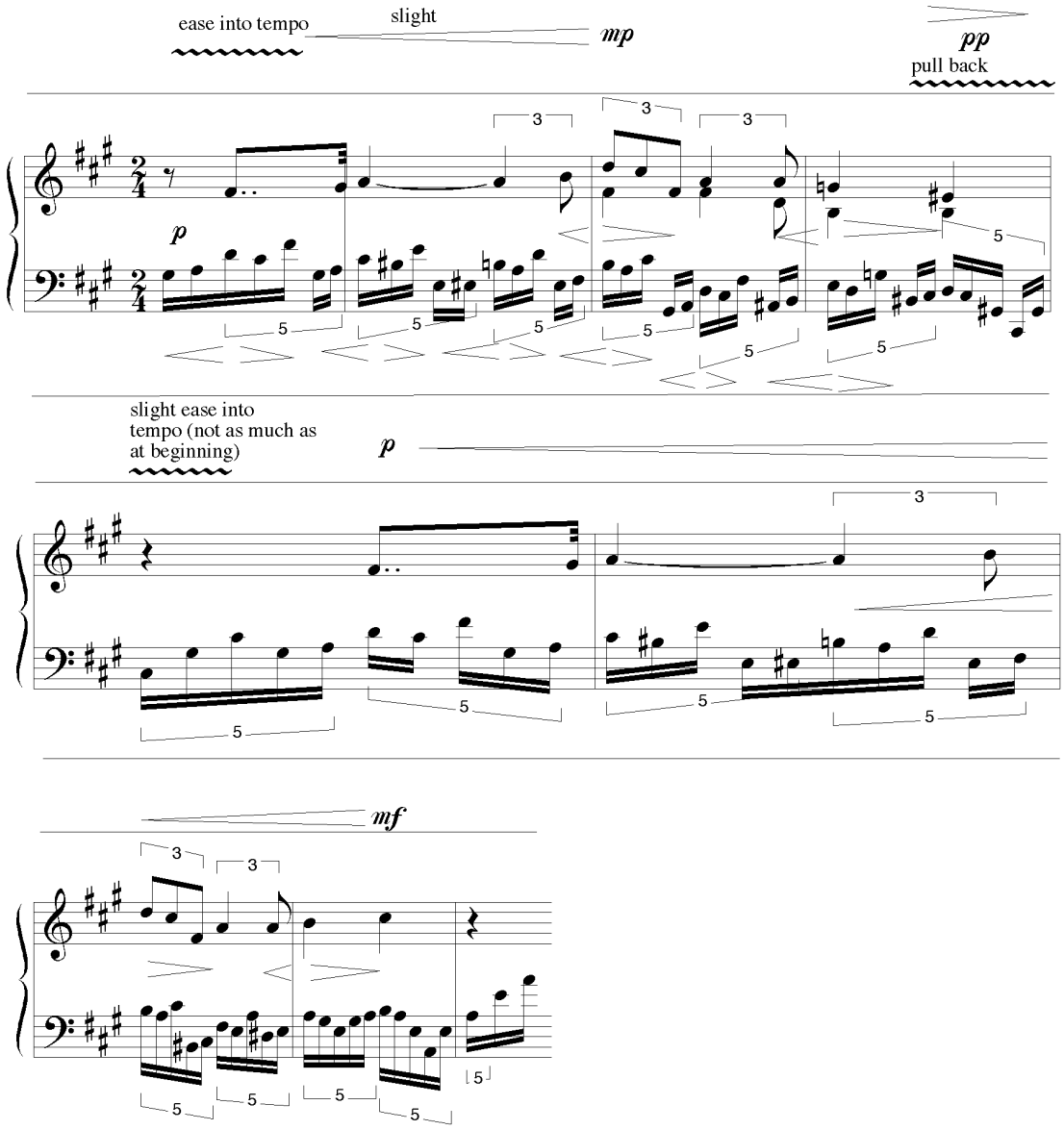
[137] Bowers, *Scriabin* (first edition), p.204.
[138] Schloezer, op. cit., p.100.

Page 93
Figure 78: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.1, bars 13-29



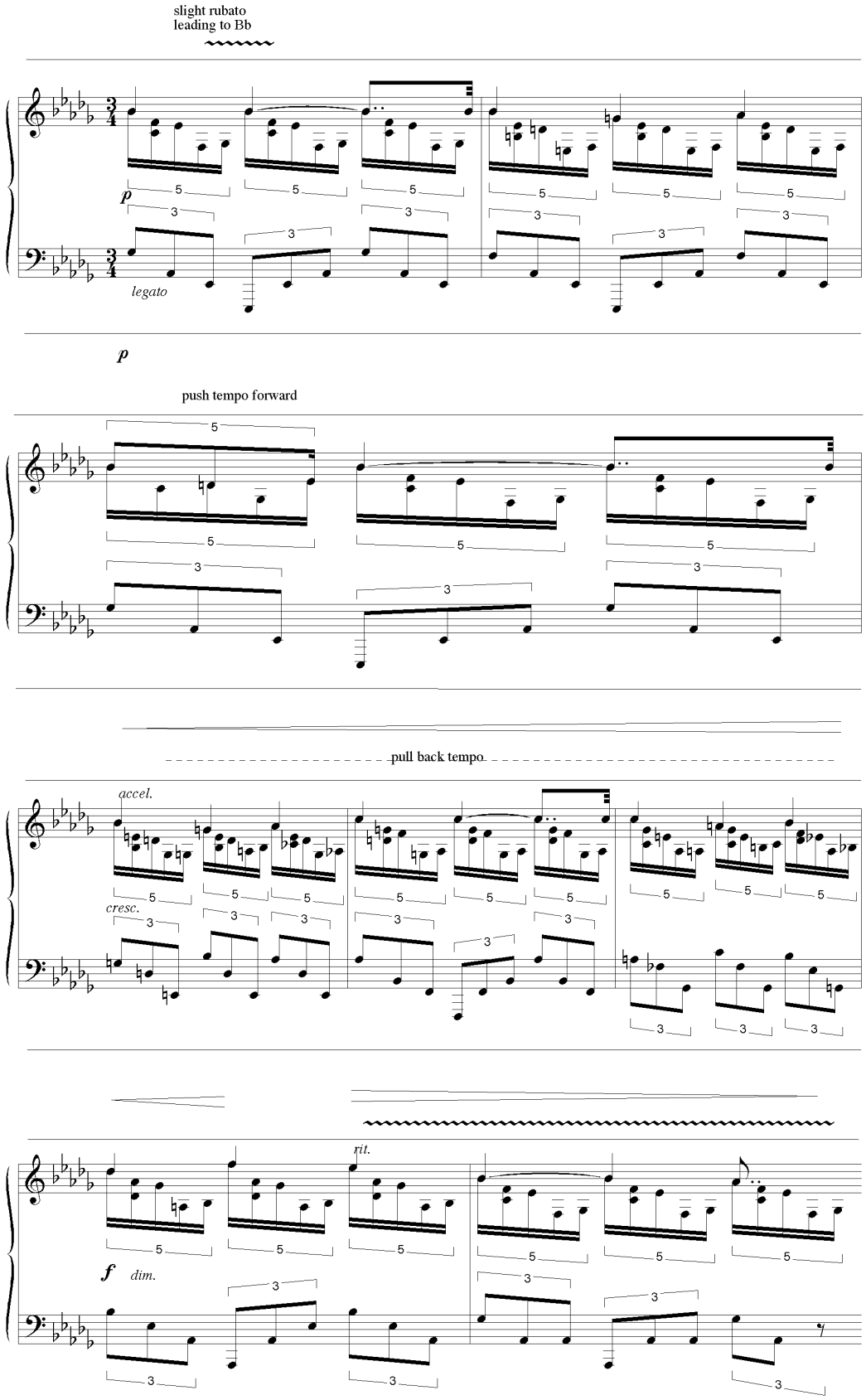
A sense of shape is important for the effectiveness of the second *Etude*. Here, performers should give the melody the same sense of shape that they would if it wasn't surrounded by the awkward 'across the beat' left hand patterns. To achieve this shape, pianists can use a mixture of tonal shape and rhythmic flexibility.

Page 94
Figure 79: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.2, bars 1-8



A similar use of shape requiring both flexibility in tone quality and rhythm occurs in the sixth *Etude*. Once again, the shape is dictated by the melody which must be strongly projected against the busy accompanying texture.

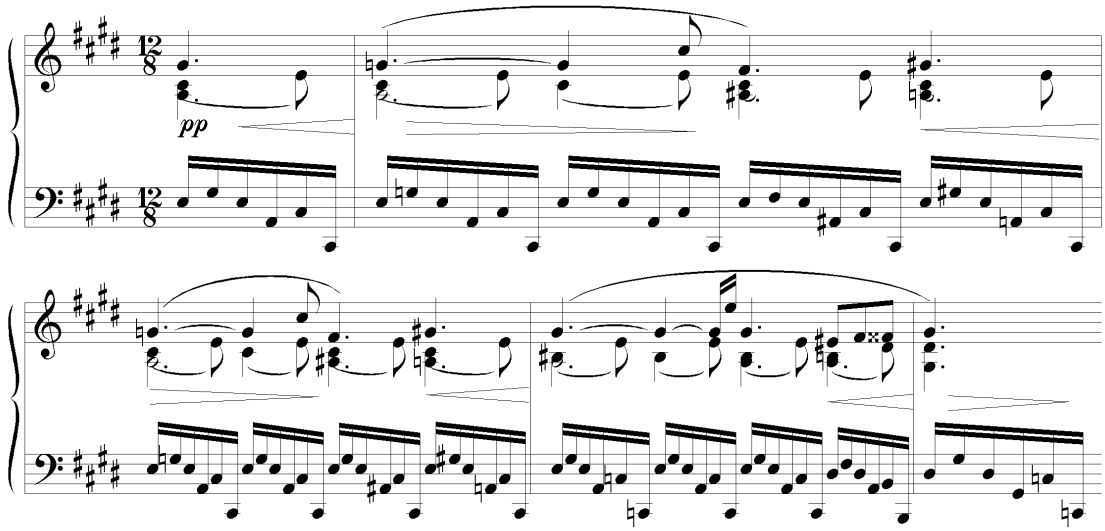
Page 95
Figure 80: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.6, bars 1-8



On a smaller-scale level, simply following Scriabin's marked hairpin *crescendos*

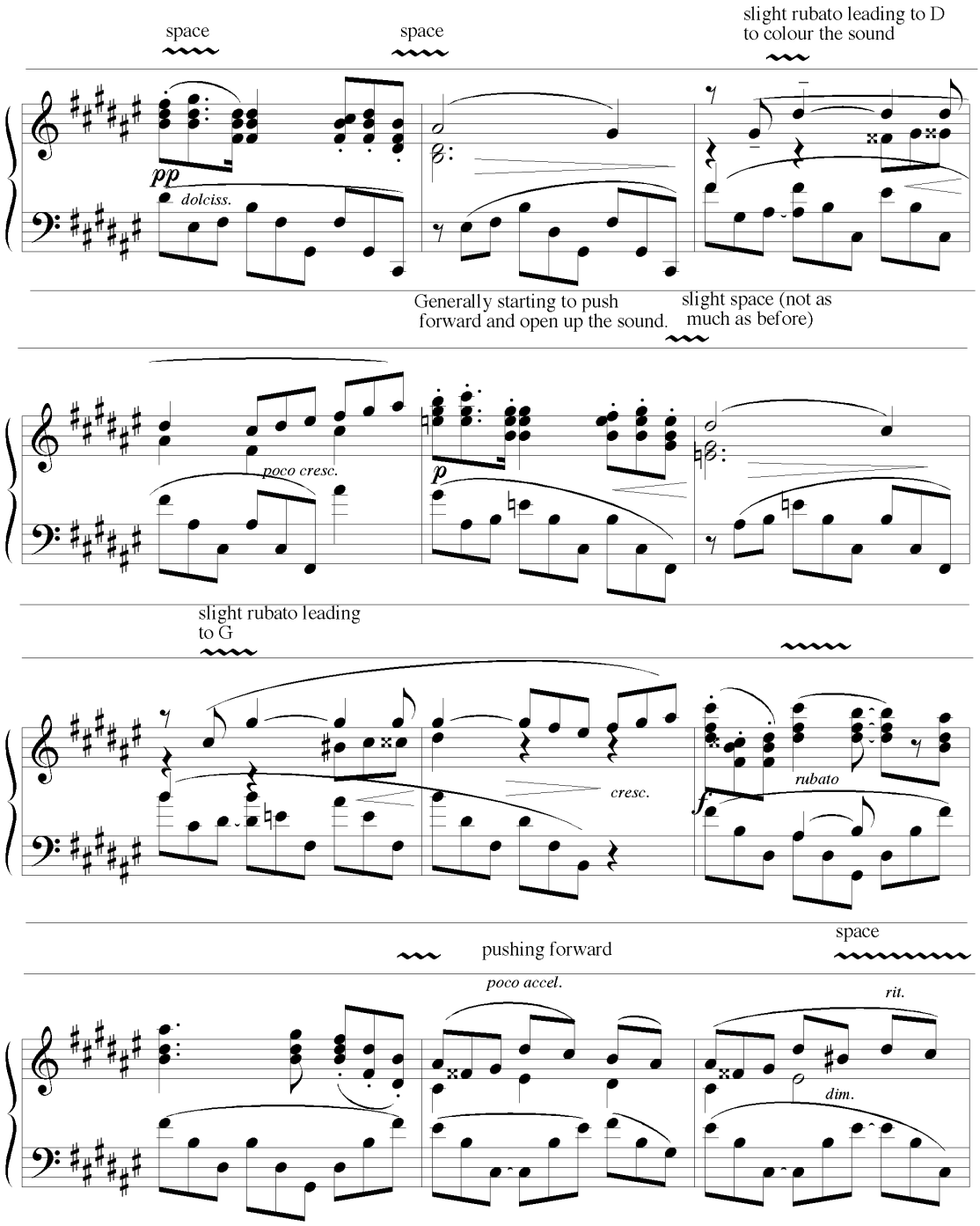
and *diminuendos* in the fifth *Etude* creates a more intense effect: highlighting both the first beat of the bar and the harmonic quality of the apparent seventh chord.

Figure 81: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.5, bars 1-3



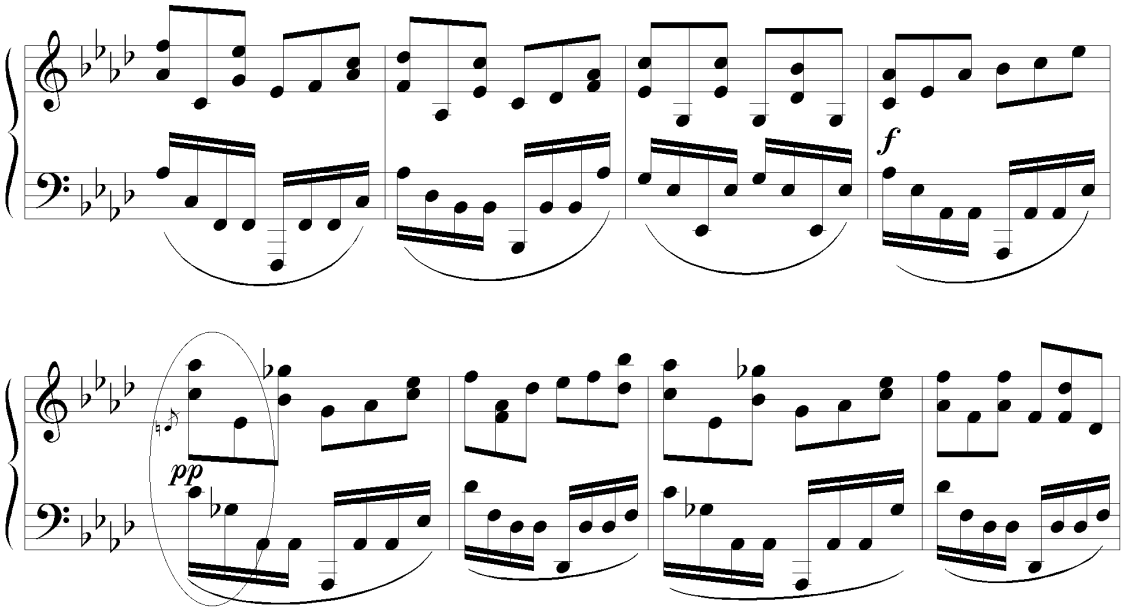
Undoubtedly the most flexible *Etude* is the fourth. Its slower tempo requires plenty of space (to contrast with the faster movements). Because of the flexible and expressive nature of this movement, many of the *rubatos* should be spontaneous. Figure 79 demonstrates the flexibility of tempo and direction of phrasing in the climax section of the *Etude*.

Page 97
Figure 82: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.4, bars 13-24



In other cases, tempo fluctuations may be more isolated (and spontaneous), and subtly colour harmonic shifts. For example, in the seventh *Etude*, the modulation into Db can be highlighted by pulling back the tempo slightly on the first beat of bar 25, changing the tone colour, and using the *una corda* pedal.

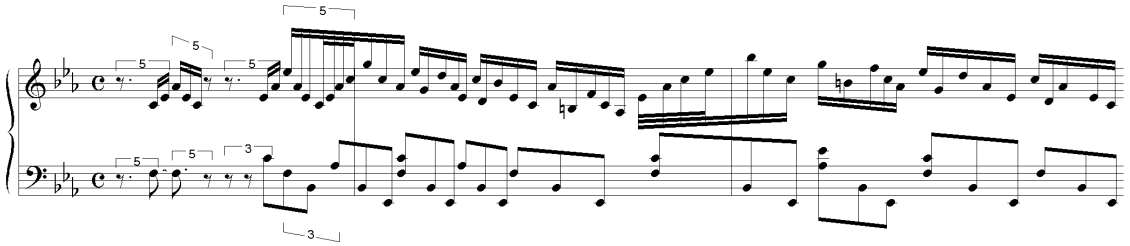
Figure 83: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.7, bars 21-28



It also has the advantage of allowing pianists more time to get over the awkward grace note in the right hand.

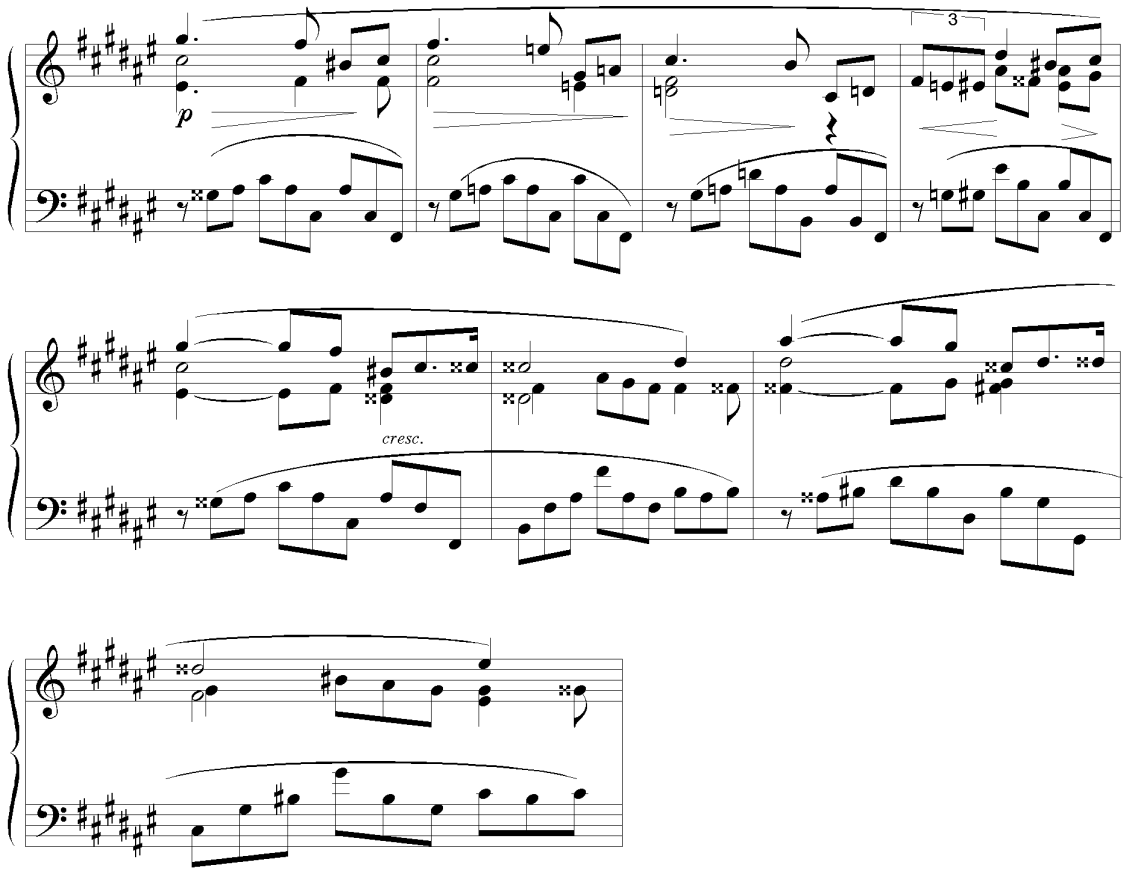
Atmosphere can also be created by bringing out inner voices. This is particularly the case in the opus 42 no.8 *Etude*. Considering the overall 'wash of sound' effect this *Etude* possesses, it is important to project the left hand (particularly the first note of each phrase). This enhances the texture.

Figure 84: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.8, bars 1-3



In the fourth etude, the 'alto' part can be projected between bars 25 and 32. This has two advantages: first of all it enhances the build up to the C#; also, it gives a new colour to the material that has been used before.

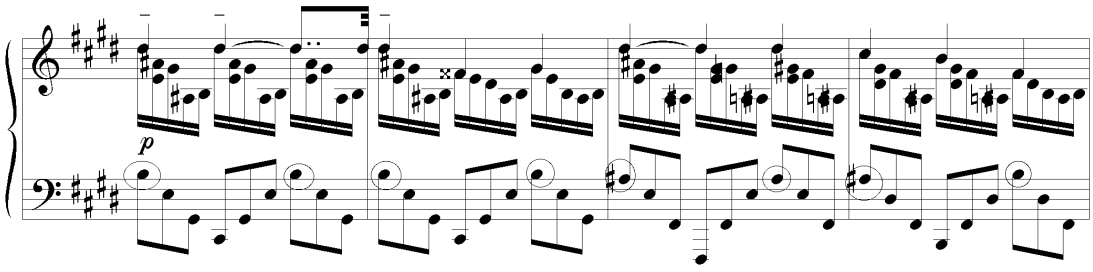
Figure 85: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.4, bars 25-32



Attention to such colours greatly enhances the emotional impact of this *Etude.*

Even though there is no indication to do this, it is effective to bring out the tenor melody that is implied in the middle section of the sixth *Etude* (on the first and third beats of each bar: i.e., B - B - B - B - A# - A# - A# - B).

Figure 86: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.6, bars 17-20



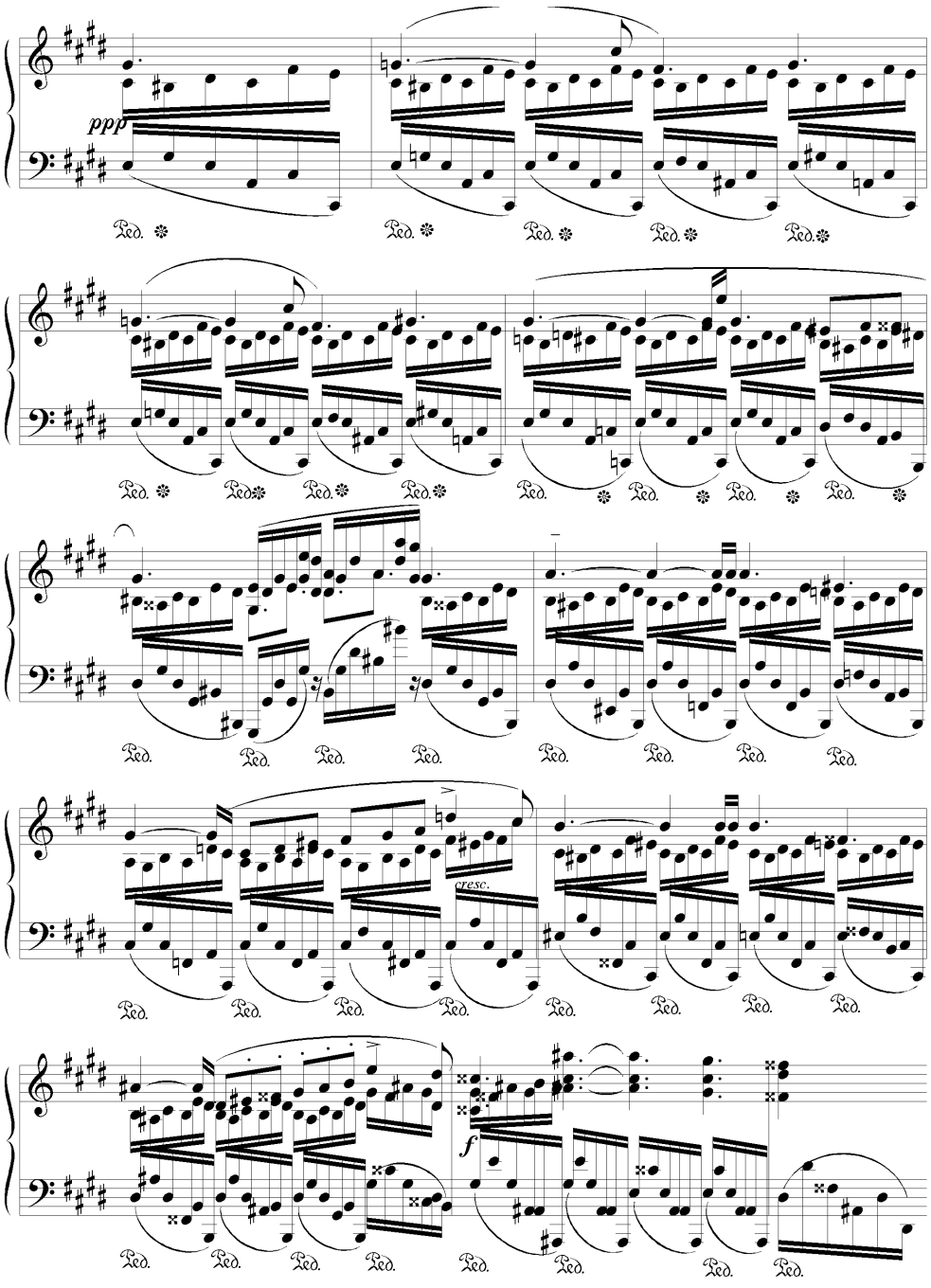
This creates more interest within the texturally consistent work.

Considering Scriabin's desire for a continuous sound,[139] the opus 42 *Etudes* are generally thickly pedalled. However, it can be effective to contrast this at times with

[139] Ruckman, op. cit., p.33.

light pedalling. An example of this is in the fifth *Etude*, where the opening material is placed in a thick texture yet marked *ppp*. In addition to the dynamic change, pianists can create a textural change by lightly pedalling this section (just a short pedal on each beat, immediately released). The effect is a much tighter, mysterious sound. This also provides opportunities for textural expansion — as the music starts to build several bars later (bar 14), the pedalling can increase.

Figure 87: Scriabin – *Etude*, op.42 no.5, bars 9-18



Overall, the focus of the *Etudes* is a mix between technical gain and musical colour. It is possible that Scriabin focuses on specific techniques so that they become 'automated'. Pianists can then focus completely on what is most important — the experience. A description of one of Scriabin's performances can give us an insight into this:

> "The Spirit came down upon us," Russian religious sectarians used to describe the peculiar state of mind of worshippers who became conscious of being possessed. I recall this state of possession at the last concert of Scriabin played in Petrograd in 1915, two weeks before he died. An inexpressible otherworldly look flashed in his eyes as he played his Third Piano Sonata, among other works. When I accompanied him home after a concert, late at night, I told him about my impression. He said that indeed he felt completely oblivious of playing before an audience; he was not even fully aware of what he was playing, not even conscious of being the performer.[140]

It must be remembered that Scriabin composed essentially for himself — he never liked other pianists' interpretation of his works.[141] The primary reason for the composition of *Etudes* is "the structure of his inner world, of that which represents for him the act of creation, of that which constitutes the essence of his *being* and his *doing* both at the same time ... His thought and music sprang from a common spiritual source."[142] The best way to approach his music, from a performance perspective, is to explore all the possible colours within his music — essentially for the purpose of self experience (if one was to follow Scriabin's philosophy), but also for the experience of the audience.

PROKOFIEV: *Etudes*, opus 2 (nos. 1 & 2)

Contrasting starkly with the intensely emotional music of Bortkiewicz and Rachmaninoff, or the highly philosophised music of Scriabin are the *Etudes* (op.2) of Sergei Prokofiev. One important factor must be considered when discussing these works: Prokofiev was only eighteen at the time, so neither his pianistic, compositional, or overall outlook on life were any where near as developed as the other composers'.

In terms of his development as a composer, Prokofiev was still not established. He was a student at the St. Petersburg Conservatory at the time the *Etudes* were written (1909). Even at this stage in his life, Prokofiev was interested in modern music. In 1908

[140] Schloezer, op. cit., p.102.
[141] Bowers, *Scriabin*, first edition, op. cit., p.196.
[142] Ibid., p.115.

he joined a society in St. Petersburg that was dedicated to the performance of modern music by Debussy, Dukas, Faure, Schöenberg, Reger, Richard Strauss, Hugo Wolf, Scriabin, and Stravinsky. It was for this society that Prokofiev played his *Diabolic Suggestions* (op.4) and his First Concerto, and became the "enfant terrible" of Russian music.[143]

At the Conservatory, Prokofiev was a student of Liadoff, who was not impressed by Prokofiev's style. He told Prokofiev after seeing some of his works: "I do not understand why you are studying with me — go and join Strauss and Debussy!" Prokofiev comments, in his autobiography, that this meant "Go to the Devil!"[144] It was Miaskovsky that was one of the first to recognise Prokofiev's work. In 1912, he published in the journal *Music* a comment on the *Four Studies* (opus 2):

> Here is a work which breathes strength and freshness. With that joy and astonishment one hears this clear, sane work slicing through the sickliness, anaemia and weakness of our time! .. These magnificent studies demonstrate at one and the same time a strongly marked sense of the fantastic, a tender but gay lyricism, a scourging irony and a powerful attack.[145]

Prokofiev hadn't really developed his style before the opus 2 etudes. The year before (1908), his *Symphony in E minor* was performed in a private performance. He found it "indifferently instrumental, [it] produced a rather confused impression". Yet the principles of his style are starting to creep into his conversation. In 1908, Prokofiev wrote "the chief merit of my life (or, if you prefer it, the chief convenience) has always been the search for originality in my own musical language. I abhor imitation and I abhor the familiar.[146] In addition to providing an insight into Prokofiev's musical language, the rather harsh wording of this comment suggests Prokofiev's strong personality. Leonard commented that Prokofiev possessed a

> natural aptitude for the gentle art of making enemies. Prokofiev's fault (or perhaps virtue) was his inability to speak with anything but utter frankness on any subject. He was gruff, outspoken, loudly sarcastic, sparing nobody's feelings and nobody's ideas. To some he was a porcupine personality, all spines and quills. At the Conservatory he caused untold anguish to the conservative professors by his reckless opinions and his radical music.[147]

[143] Leonard, op. cit., p.296.
[144] Sergei Prokofiev, *Autobiography*. Cited in: Claude Samuel, *Prokofiev* (London, 1971).
[145] Miaskovsky. Cited in: Samuel, op. cit., p.33.
[146] Ibid., p.35.
[147] Leonard, op. cit., p.296.

This attitude would have seeped into Prokofiev's piano playing at the time. Prokofiev commented that "they say one cannot give a piano recital without playing Chopin, and I am going to prove that one can."[148] In reference to Mozart's music he said "What primitive monotonous harmony."[149] Victor Seroff describes his piano playing at the time:

> Unwilling to dispense with his own sweeping and bold, but far from accurate style of playing, he also often disregarded the composer's text in pieces he was studying, omitting what he considered 'superfluous', or writing into the score accents, *accelerandos*, and *staccatos*, as well as introducing extra notes into the chords, thus altering them harmonically.[150]

When a student of Madame Essipova, Prokofiev got threatened with expulsion if he did not behave. He remarked that "She tries to part everybody's hair in the same way, using the same comb."[151]

The set of four etudes was dedicated to his ex-piano teacher Winkler "to commemorate the time I had spent in his class." It is possible that the etudes are representative of the pedagogy Winkler provided. It appears unlikely that Prokofiev wrote in the etude genre for the more idealistic or philosophical reasons that Bortkiewicz, Rachmaninoff, or Scriabin did. It could be seen, metaphorically, as an attempt to 'rewrite' the previously esteemed values of eighteenth and nineteenth century pianism and replace it with his own rhythmic, harmonically bolder, 'scherzando' style, yet this is pure speculation.

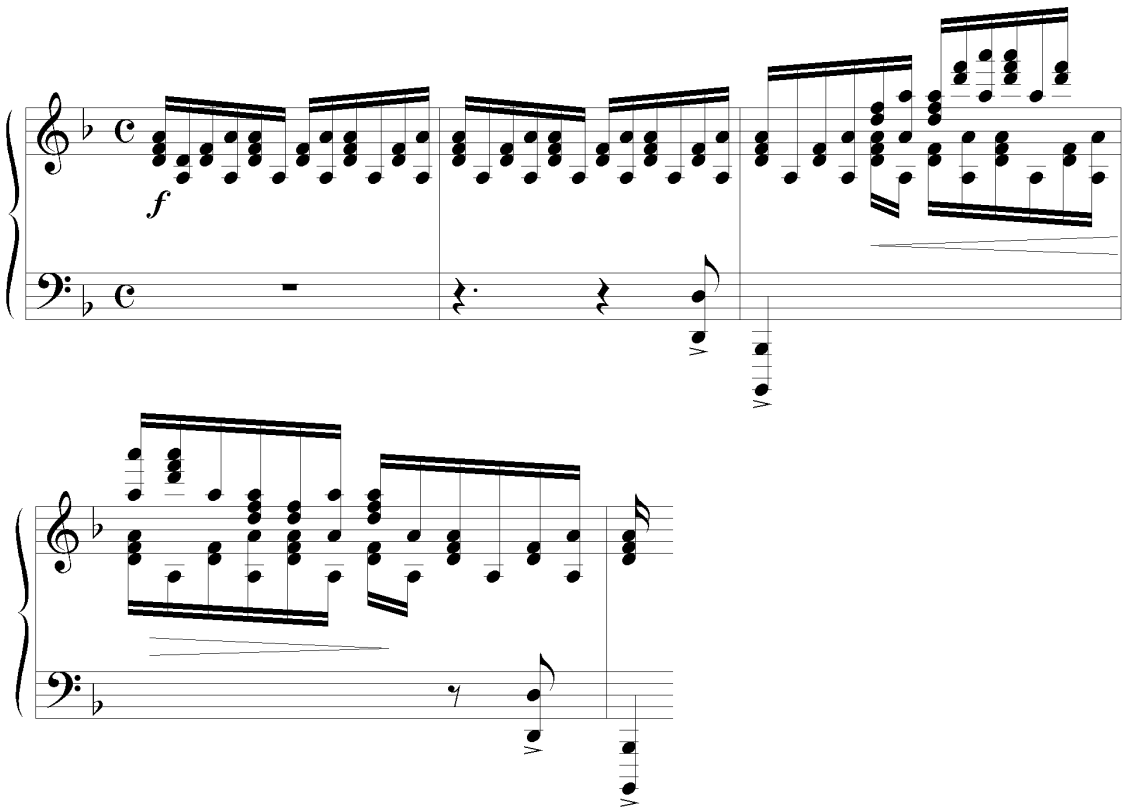
Capturing the 'satire' in performance

When performing the opus 2 etudes (nos. 1 & 2), it is important to capture the energy of Prokofiev's youthful style. To do this, pianists should observe Prokofiev's articulation marks. For example, throughout the opus 2 no.1 etude, there is a recurring left hand two-note leap with accents on each note.

---

[148] Victor Seroff, *Sergei Prokofiev* (London, 1969), p.77.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid., p.77-8.
[151] Ibid., p.78.

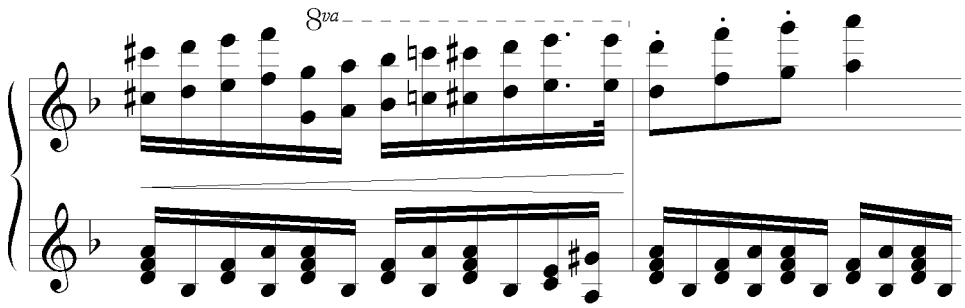
Page 104
Figure 88: Prokofiev – *Etude*, op.2 no.1, bars 1-5



Considering the second note of this motive is on the first beat of the bar, it seems logical to accent the second more than the first. Logical, but not in Prokofiev logic. In fact, because the first is more unnaturally accented, it should be the one accented more to create the bold effect. The hairpin *crescendos* and *diminuendos* marked in the opening bars can be exaggerated by dropping the dynamics in the beginning of the bar, surging up to *ff*, then falling down again.

One of the main technical difficulties in the first *Etude* is the awkward leaps.

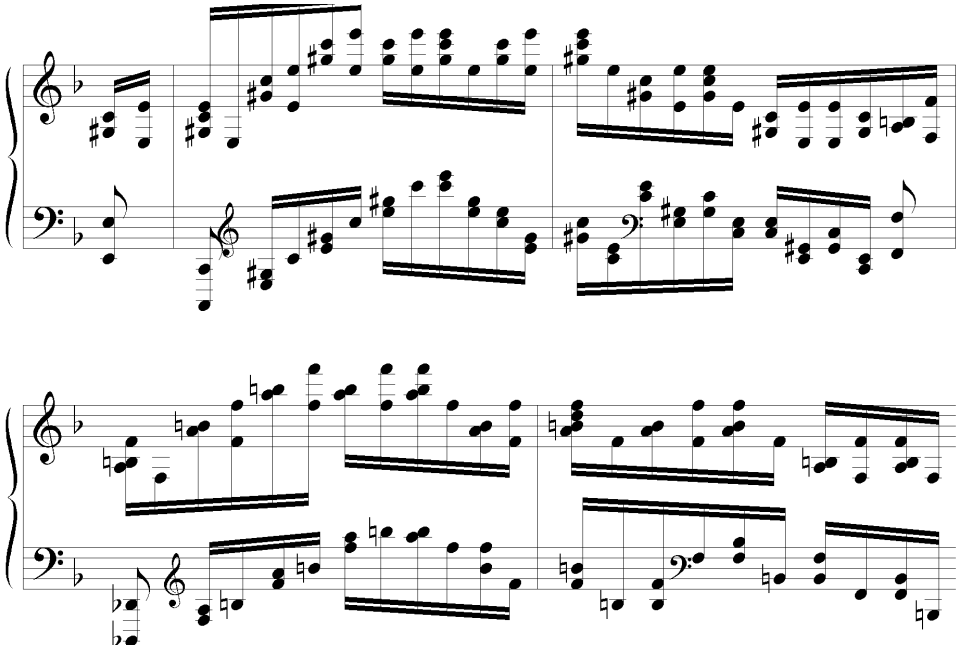
Figure 89: Prokofiev – *Etude*, op.2 no.1, bars 9-10



To overcome this problem, pianists should take a little more time over the leaps to ensure clean execution.

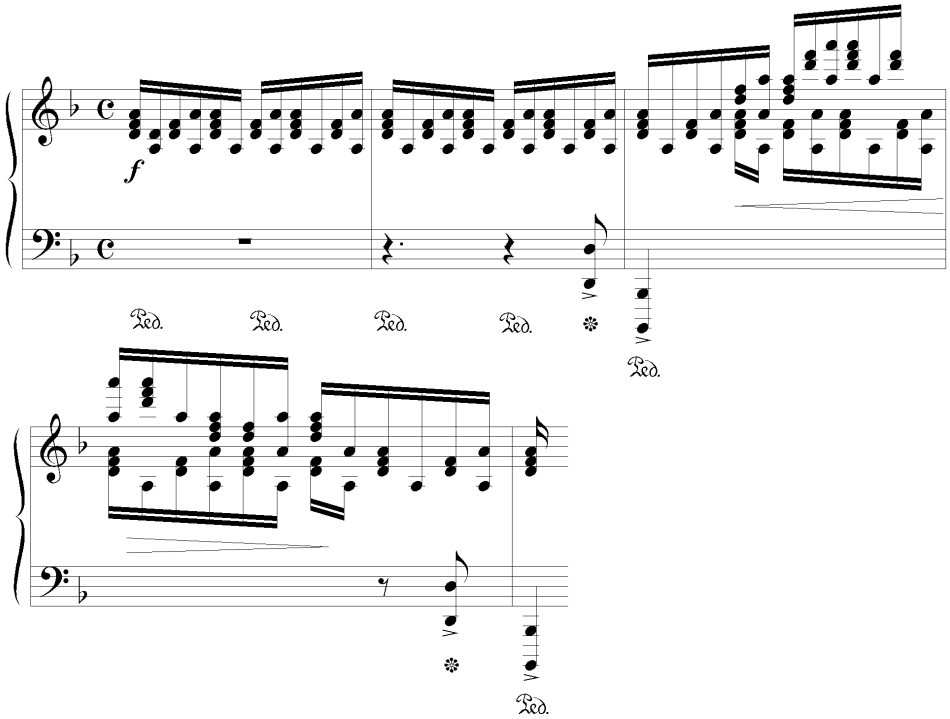
To maintain a bright sound, and so that the texture doesn't get too 'notey', it is effective not to place too much importance on individual semiquavers — i.e., just aiming for the first beats of each bar.

Figure 90: Prokofiev – *Etude*, op.2 no.1, bars 41-44



A bright sound can also be maintained by clean pedalling. For example, the opening bars could be pedalled as follows:

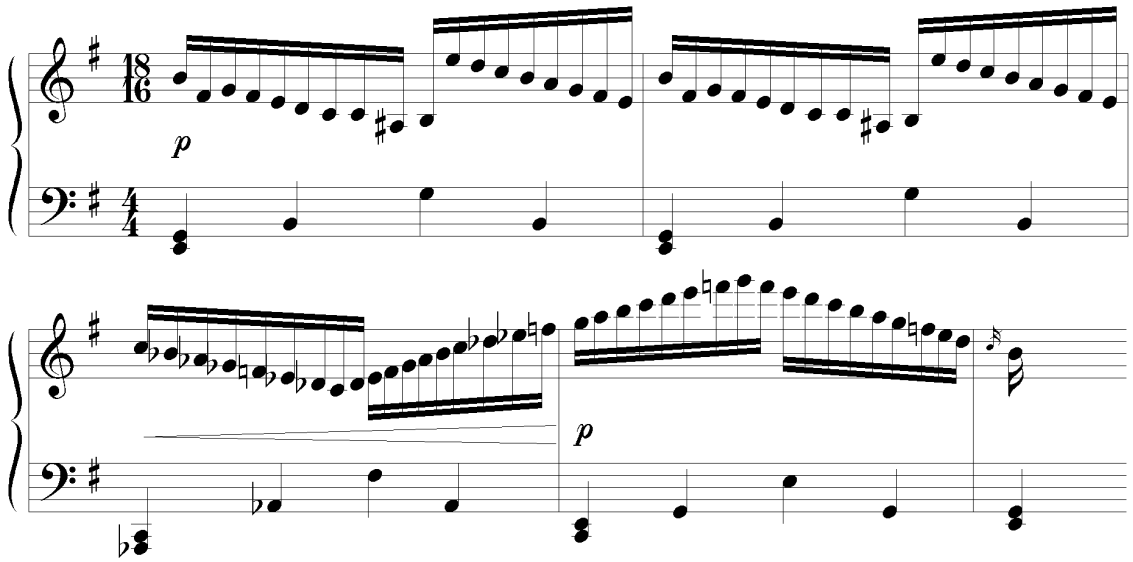
Figure 91: Prokofiev – *Etude*, op.2 no.1, bars 1-5



This also has the advantage of highlighting the accented left hand notes. Overall, if the accents are observed, care is taken for clean attack, and the performer keeps a one-in-a-bar feel, the work can be performed convincingly.

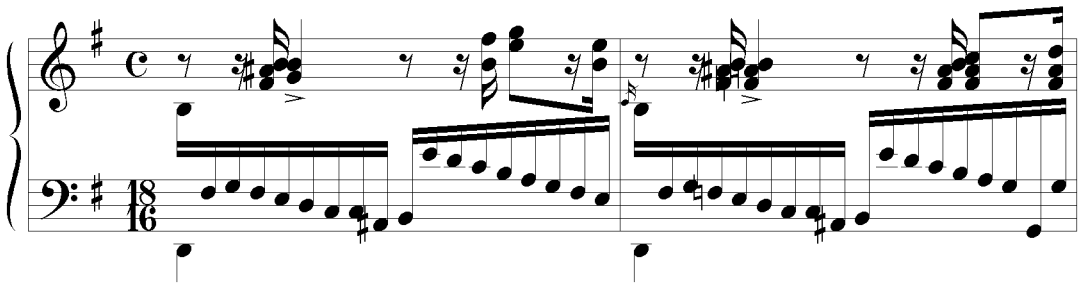
The second etude from this set has a completely different character. Once again, care must be taken to observe Prokofiev's expressive markings. For example, in the opening section, Prokofiev uses hairpin *crescendos*, followed by *subito pianos*. Observing these highlights Prokofiev's harmonic 'twist' from Ab major to C major in the third and fourth bars.

Figure 92: Prokofiev – *Etude*, op.2 no.2, bars 1-4



The primary technical difficulty occurs in sections where the left hand plays the scalic figure.

Figure 93: Prokofiev – *Etude*, op.2 no.2, bars 17-18

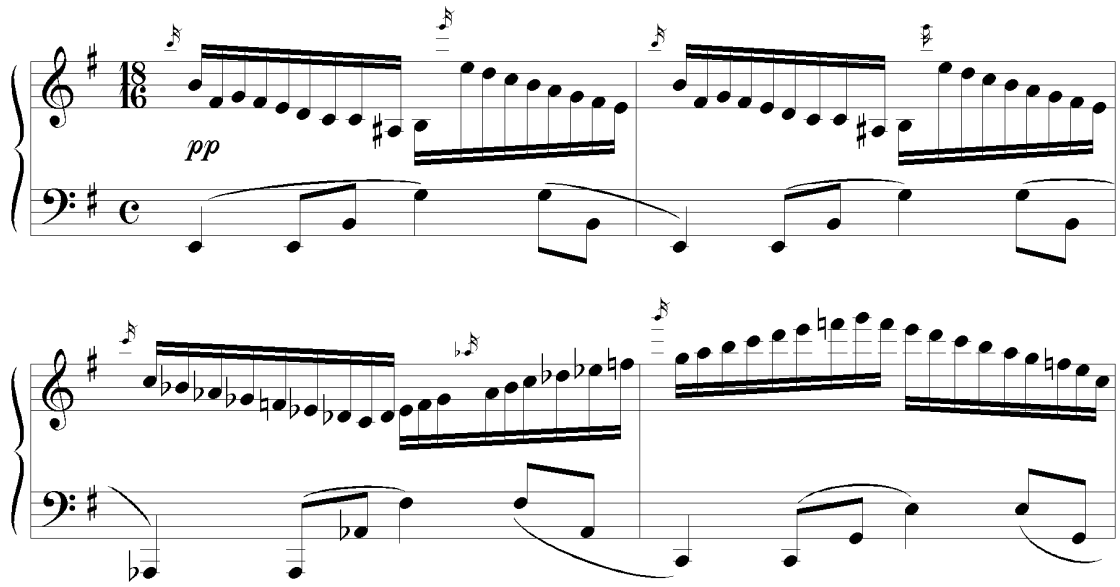


The main problem here is that the right hand must fit precisely in pulse (in a 9 against 2 rhythm). This is complicated even more by the semiquaver preceding the crotchet each time. This requires much practice with a metronome. Essentially, though, because the left hand is playing more notes, if the performer concentrates on the right hand in strict

tempo and lets the left hand fit in, the result will be more successful.

Another problematic area is the final section. Despite the awkwardness of the writing, it is important for performers to maintain an overall calm feel in this section. It is effective to adopt a flexible approach when executing large leaps, so that that no 'tense' tones interfere with the almost shimmering texture.

Figure 94: Prokofiev – *Etude*, op.2 no.2, bars 45-48



The interpretation of Prokofiev's music is in many ways more straight forward than that of Bortkiewicz, Rachmaninoff, or Scriabin. The main reason for this is that Prokofiev's musical aesthetic at this point in his career is much simpler. Prokofiev's conception of the etude genre is essentially as a technical showpiece. Contrasting to this are the etudes of Bortkiewicz, with their implications of the rejection of false art, Rachmaninoff's conception of the interpreter rather than the performer and his overall attention to musical colour in performance, and Scriabin's intensely philosophical desire to experience art. There appears to be a pattern of struggle in each of the composers which indirectly manifests itself in the etudes: whether that struggle be against an over-progressive shallow society, personal depression, struggle with the ideology of the outside world and a need to escape into a personal universe, or a struggle with conventions and authority. From a study of the etude, it has become clear that Faubion Bowers' quote could be extended further: Yes, "art needs craft for fulfilment", but more importantly, the composer needs art for psychological stability. It is clear that these etudes were written for far greater reasons than technical gain.

CHAPTER 3

RUSSIAN PIANO MUSIC DISPLAYING EXTRA-MUSICAL THEMES: PROGRAMMATIC MUSIC AND THE RUSSIAN ELEGY

It may, at first glance, seem a little odd to group programmatic music with the elegy. But on closer inspection, *The Seasons* of Tchaikovsky and *Tales* of Medtner have a surprising number of commonalities with the *Elegies* of Arensky and Rachmaninoff. Because of the intensively expressive musical language of all four composers, performers can instinctively 'tap into' the underlying passion. However, by studying both the 'obvious' and 'hidden' extra-musical influences (both cultural and biographical), performers can further empathise and discover these are by no means written purely for the nineteenth and early twentieth century salon.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *The Seasons* (opus 37 bis)

Understanding Tchaikovsky's musical language

It is possible to view Tchaikovsky's *Seasons* as simple nineteenth-century miniatures aiming only to please the amateur market. David Brown, in his biography of Tchaikovsky, dismissed the set as "no more than a set of salon pieces, tuneful and pretty, sometimes garnished with a mild picturesqueness prompted by the little poetic epigraph that Bernard selected to head each piece."[152] Presumably, if the performer was to take this rather superficial approach, to perform it 'authentically' he would need to play it as a nineteenth-century amateur would.

It is true that they were written for the amateur market. Tchaikovsky's *The Seasons* were written for the periodical *Nouvelliste*. The editor, Nikolay Bernard, requested a series of twelve piano pieces which would be published consecutively each month of the year. Tchaikovsky wrote each work in the month prior to it being published, starting in December 1875 and completing the cycle in November 1876. It is also true that Tchaikovsky wrote these works quickly. Kashkin (a fellow professor at the Moscow Conservatory) describes:

> so as not to miss any of the dates on which it had been agreed that the pieces should be delivered, he charged his servant to remind him, on a certain day of each month, of his commission. The servant carried out

[152] David Brown, *Tchaikovsky: The Crisis Years: 1874-1878* (London, 1982), p.122.

> this instruction very punctiliously, and once a month on the agreed day said: "Pyotr Ilich, it's time to send off to St Petersburg" — And Pyotr Ilich wrote a piece at a single sitting and sent it off.[153]

However, this does not imply that the works are of any less musical value. Tchaikovsky's compositional process at this stage in his life was at times fast. Tchaikovsky wrote in 1875 to his brother Modest:

> when composing, I have to bite my nails sometimes, smoke an enormous amount of cigarettes, and walk up and down the room before discovering the main theme. Sometimes, on the other hand, everything is easy and thoughts are born and push each other as fast as they can. Everything depends on the mood and humour you are in. But even if you are not in the proper mood you have to force yourself to work.[154]

The fact that they were written for an amateur market does explain the slightly more accessible style than some other compositions by Tchaikovsky in this era. This is shown in a comparison of the works written in this period for commission, or at least with a wider market in mind (such as *The Seasons* and *Swan Lake*) with those not (such as the *String Quartet No.3* and the *Third Symphony*). It is worthwhile, from a performance perspective, to firstly look at the commonalities between these works.

The *String Quartet No.3* and *The Seasons* were both written in 1876. When, for example, comparing the third movement of the *String Quartet* with "October" of *The Seasons*, at face value (purely from an analytical perspective) they appear to be completely different styles. The *String Quartet* possesses a far greater harmonic range and a more involved counterpoint than what is found in "October", or any of *The Seasons*. This is illustrated in figure 95, which displays a sample of the most complex harmonic and textural passages in each of the works.

---

[153] Kashkin, N., "Is vospominany o P. I. Chaykovskom" [From my recollections of Tchaikovsky], printed in *Proshloye russkoy muziki* (Petrograd, 1920). Cited in: Brown, op. cit., p.122.
[154] Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Modest dated 6 January 1875. Cited in: Tchaikovsky, *Letters to his Family* (New York, 2000), p.93.

Figure 95a: Tchaikovsky – "October", *The Seasons*, op.37 bis, bars 9-12

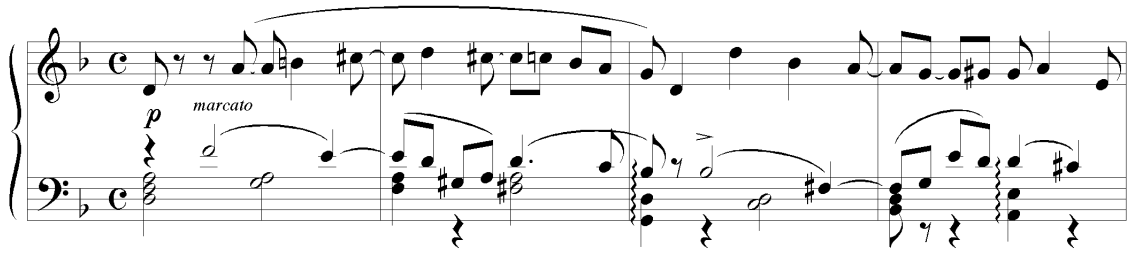
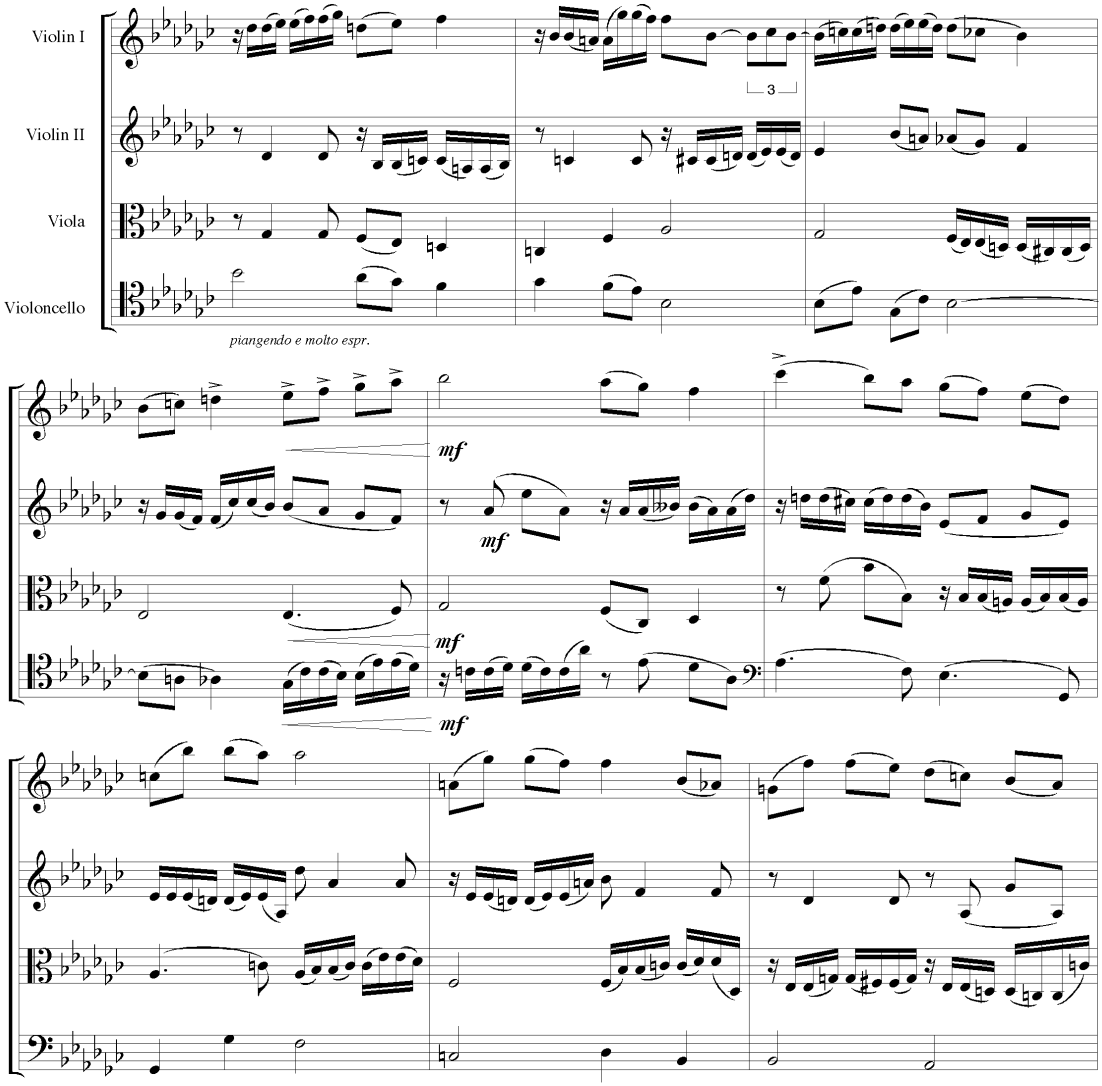


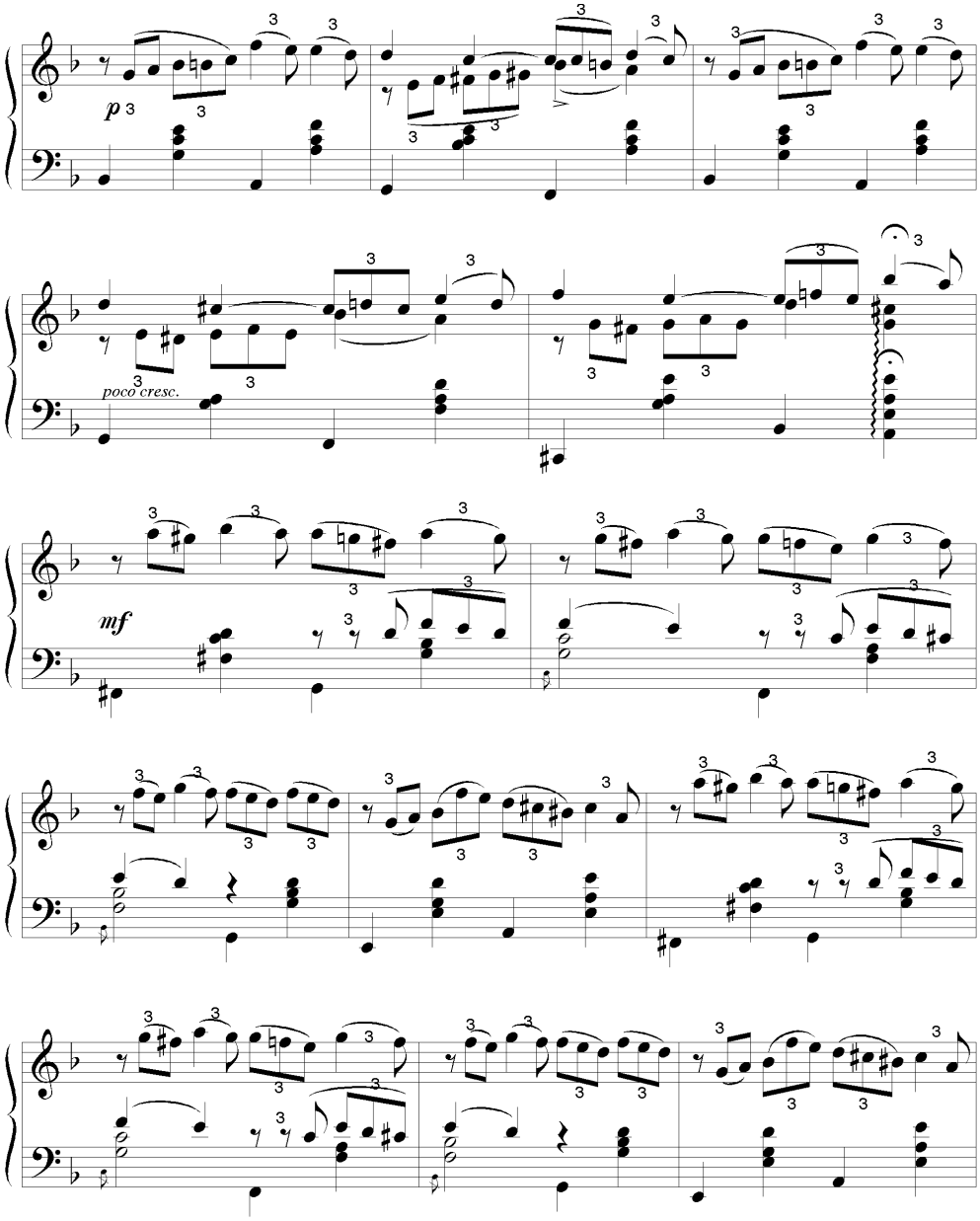
Figure 95b: Tchaikovsky – *String Quartet No.3,* op.30, third movement. Bars 45-53



The result, from a listener's perspective, is a more intense communication of emotion in the *String Quartet*. It is important to realise, though, this is looking at the music purely from the composer-listener stance, without considering the interpretation of the performer.

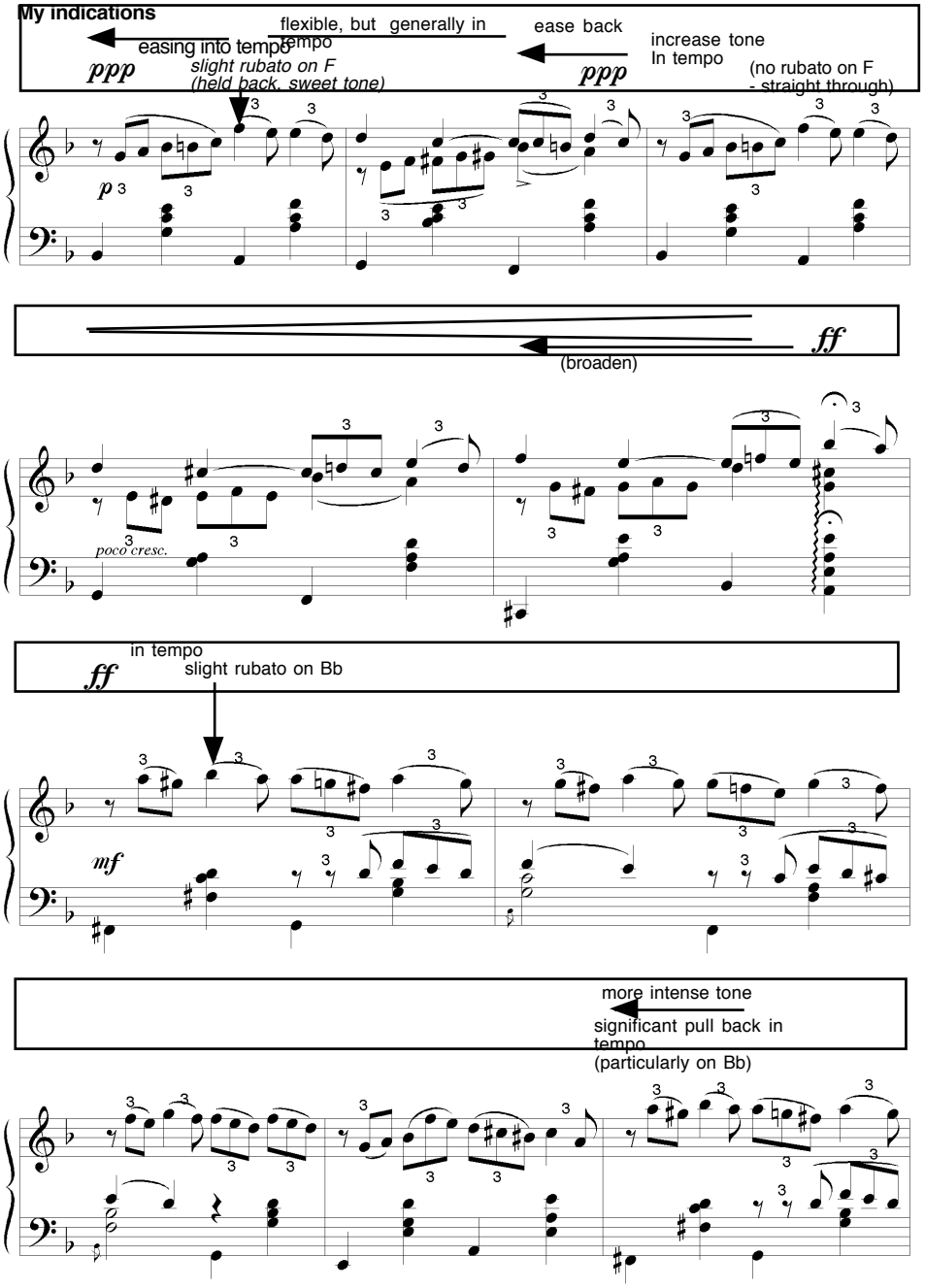
If played by a poor player, "October" would certainly have considerably less emotional impact on the listener than the *Quartet*. It is highly probable that a musician lacking imagination would play bars that contain identical musical content (e.g. bars 22-25 and bars 26-29) exactly the same — most probably giving the listener the impression that it is a nice tune, but little more.

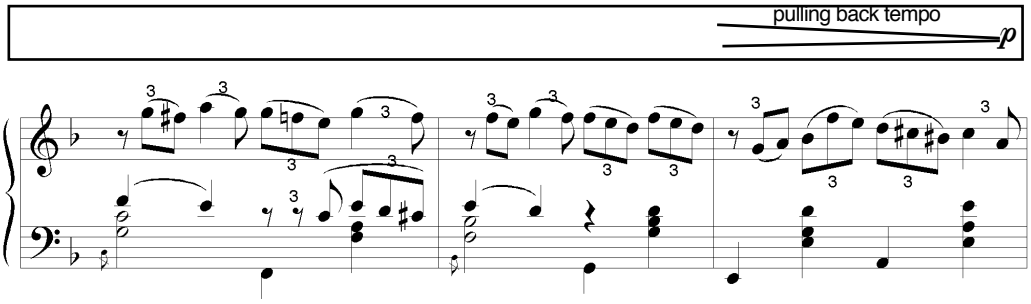
Figure 96: Tchaikovsky – "October", *The Seasons*, op.37 bis, bars 17-30



However, it is possible for the performer to interpret this passage as a passionate outcry and by extending the dynamic range of the work and using *rubato* the performer can create an emotion similar to the *String Quartet*, or even one of the climatic string melodies out of the one of the symphonies.

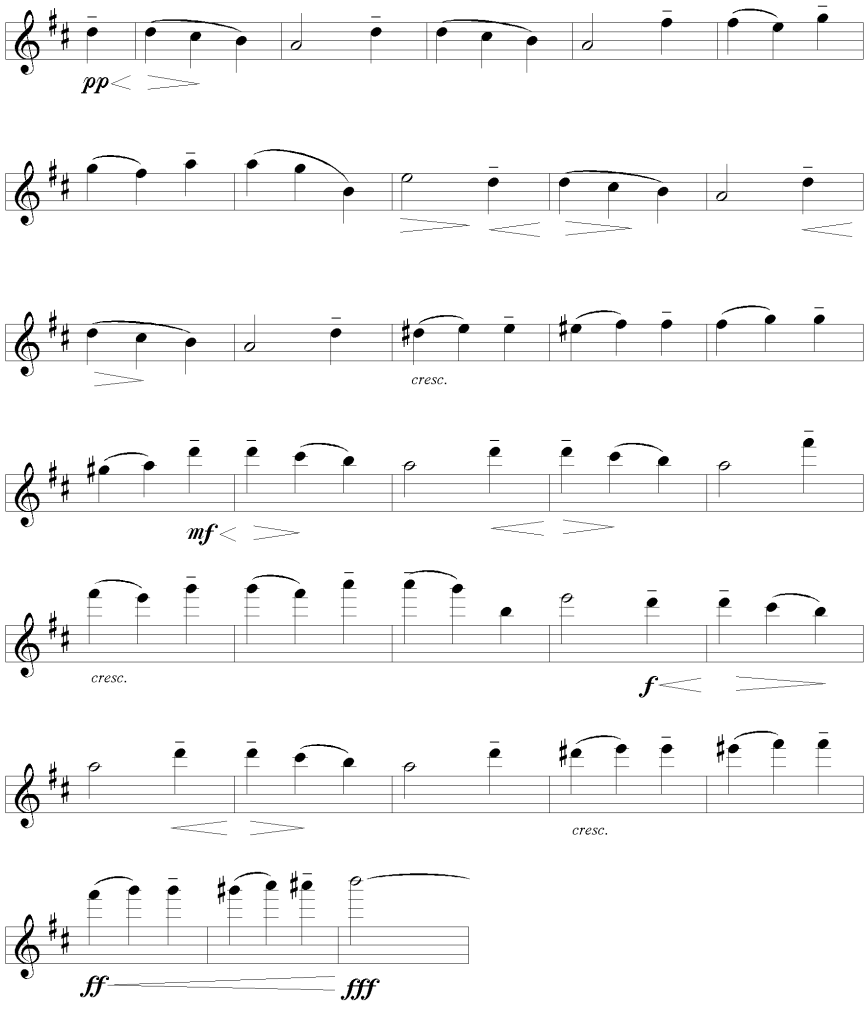
Figure 97: Tchaikovsky – "October", *The Seasons*, op.37 bis, bars 17-30





Such an interpretation can be justified purely from looking at Tchaikovsky's compositional technique — repetition is one of his chief tools of intensifying emotion. In one of the most intense, magical moments of Tchaikovsky's music — the last movement of his *Sixth Symphony*, melodic repetition contributes considerably to the impact of the music.

Figure 98: Tchaikovsky – *Symphony No.6*, op.74, fourth movement, bars 39-71, violin 1



As Leon Bolstein states (when discussing repetition in the *Fourth Symphony*):

> Tchaikovsky's brilliant achievement is the use of repetition with only slight variation, the marshalling of overlays and audibly discrete supplementary materials on common ground, and the effective creation of rhetorical bridges between clearly demarcated sections [i.e., if applied to "October", the middle section is clearly distinct from the outer sections]. Precisely because there is no Brahmsian transformation, the listener is drawn convincingly into the artificially created illusion of real experience of an emotional state of being. The listener judges the emotions to be as plausible, as intense, and as realistic as those he or she has experienced in real time.[155]

Simple music does not equate to simple expression — a fact which is proven by the music alone, without even considering the programmatic and external influences which will be discussed later in the paper.

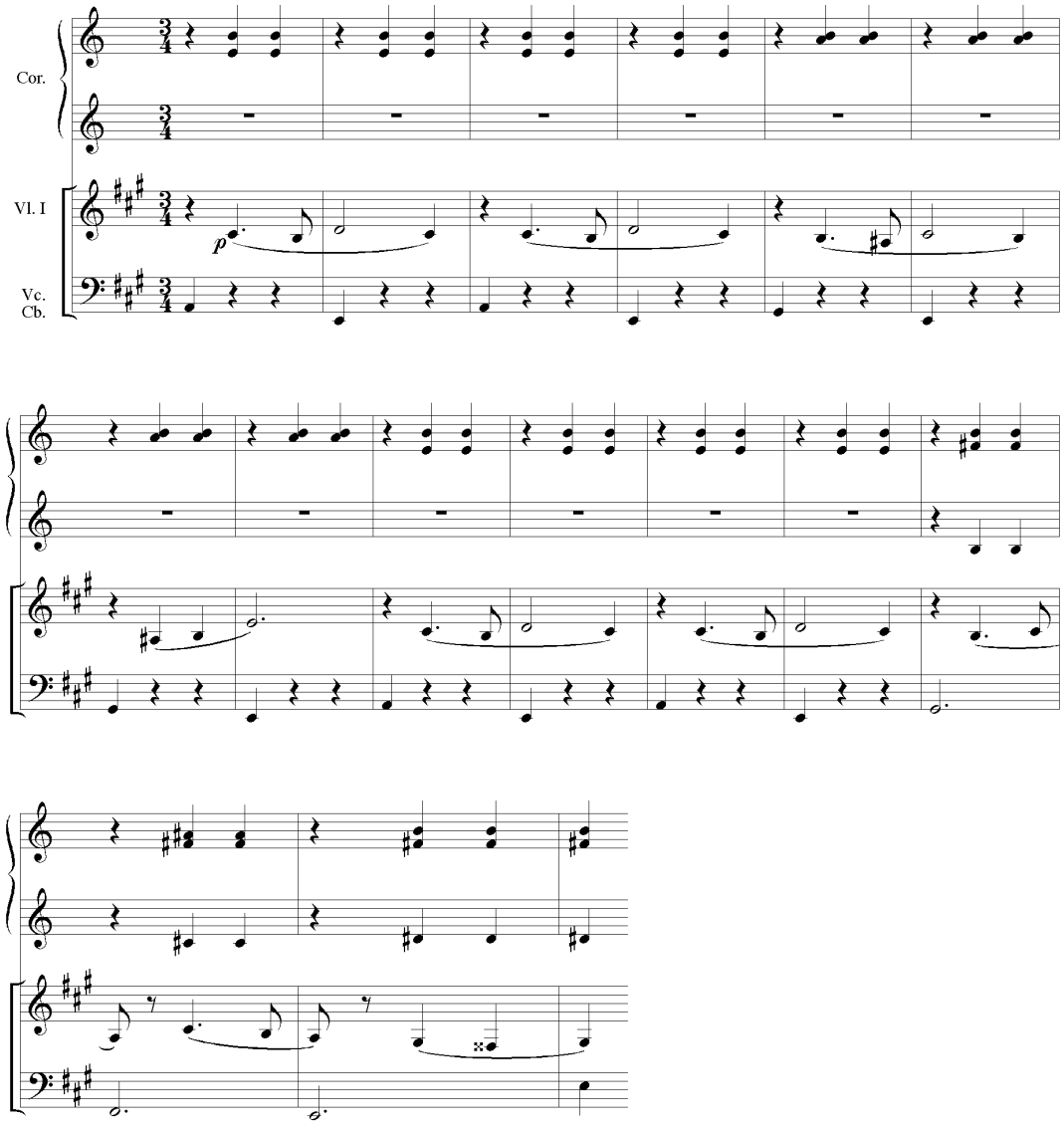
It is very easy to imagine *The Seasons* orchestrated. Considering Tchaikovsky's vast orchestral output, it can be useful for the performer to look briefly at Tchaikovsky's orchestration techniques. It is significant that Tchaikovsky used to compose a 'short score' first, saying that "the scoring is just the brainwork".[156] Therefore, it is possible to view his piano works as scores which need 'orchestrating' with pianistic colour. The most obvious characteristic of Tchaikovsky's orchestration is the predominance of strings. There is no orchestral work by Tchaikovsky that doesn't possess a rich melody in the string section — the warmth of that timbre akin to the warmth of Tchaikovsky's melodic style. This can be transferred to the piano — ensuring (despite what the accompanying parts are doing), a warmth in tone quality.

Tchaikovsky characteristically orchestrates in blocks — a melody is usually played in its entirety by a certain instrument (with the accompaniment also consistent), then the orchestration changes for the next section. This can be seen in the waltz from *Swan Lake*. The first sixteen bars of melodic material are played in the first violins, with a consistent accompaniment in the horns and lower strings.

---

[155] Leon Bolstein, "Music as the Language of Psychological Realism", *Tchaikovsky and His World* (Princeton, 1998), p.106-107.
[156] Tchaikovsky. Cited in: Alexander Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky: The Quest for the Inner Man* (New York, 1991, p.328).

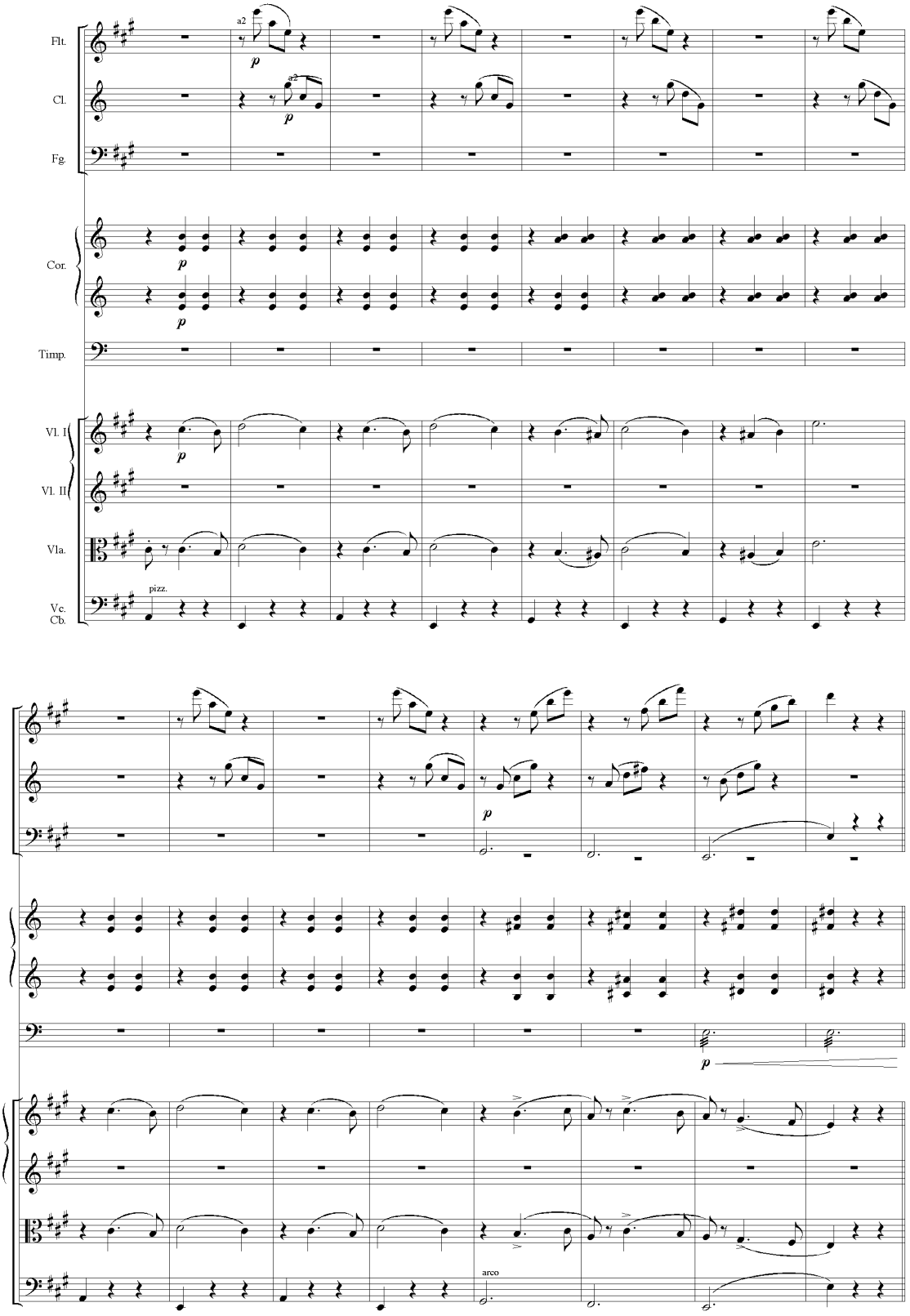
Page 115
Figure 99: Tchaikovsky – *Swan Lake Suite*, "Valse", bars 19-34



This is followed by a section which opens with the same melodic material, but Tchaikovsky doubles the melody this time in the viola, and adds flute and clarinet arpeggios for additional colour.

Page 116

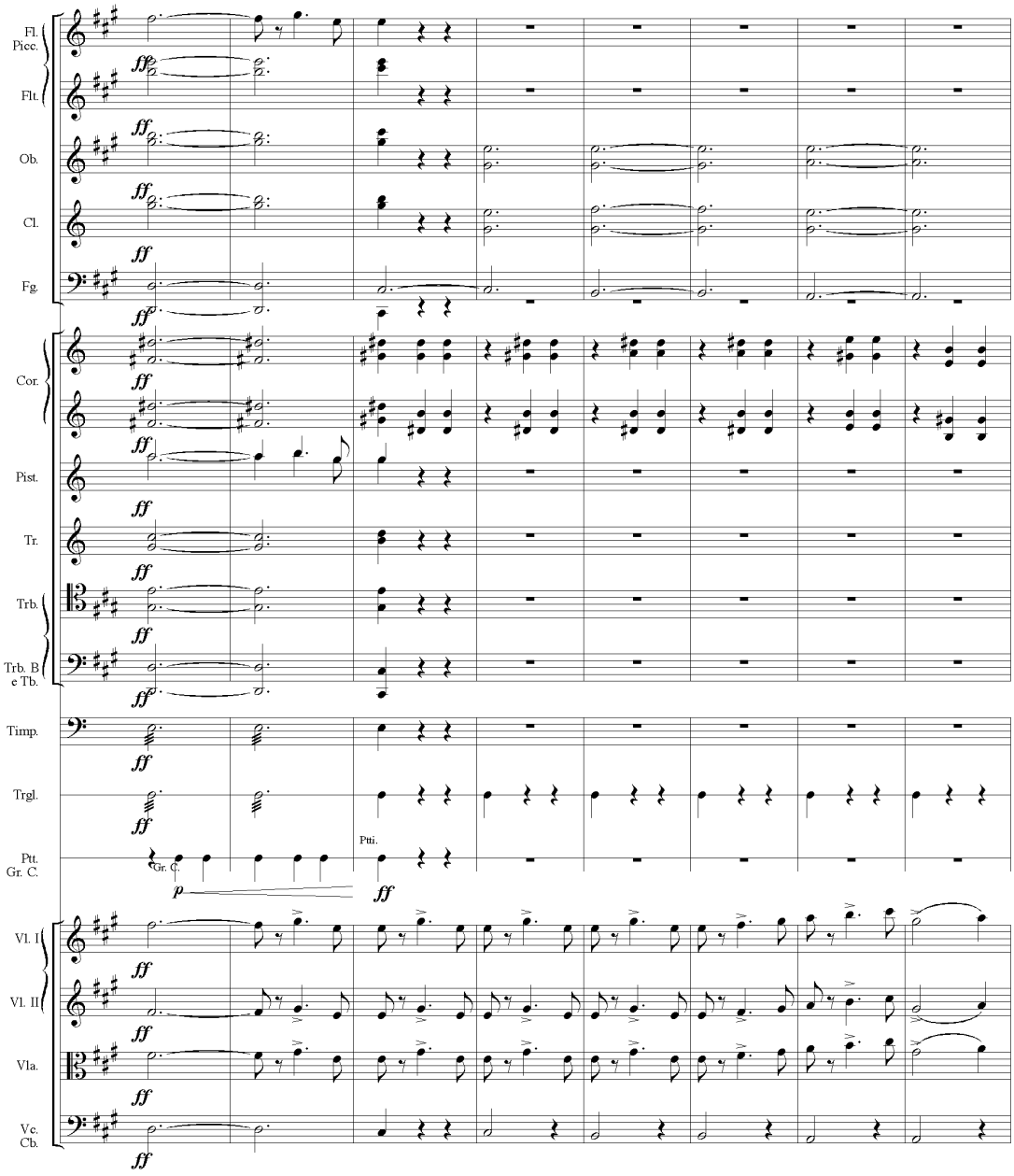
Figure 100: Tchaikovsky – *Swan Lake Suite*, "Valse", bars 35-50

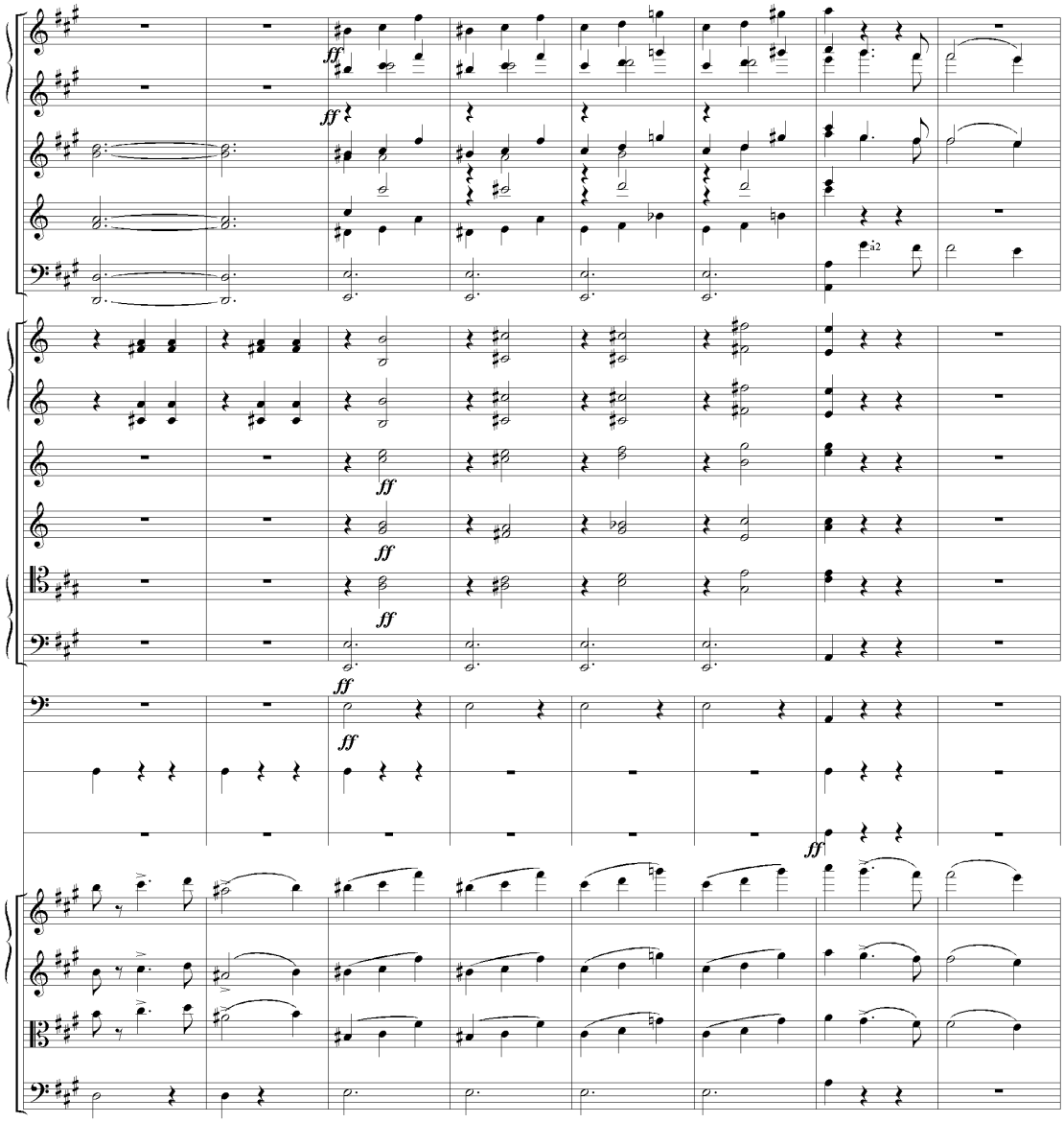


Page 117

When the thematic material changes completely, Tchaikovsky increases the orchestration further.

Figure 101: Tchaikovsky – *Swan Lake Suite*, "Valse", bars 51-66



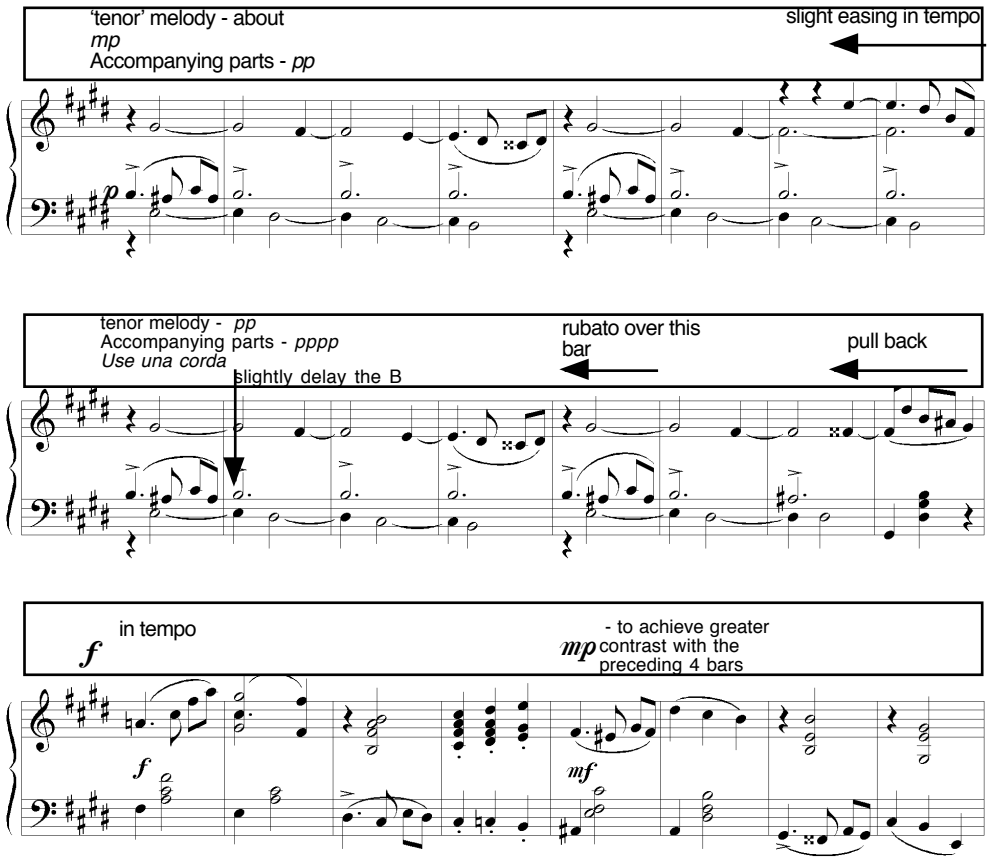


This is how Tchaikovsky achieves colour and shape, while maintaining unified thematic material.

A similar approach can be taken when interpreting *The Seasons*. From Tchaikovsky's markings in "December", for example, it appears on the score that Tchaikovsky wants the opening of each 'block' of thematic material in the first forty bars to commence *piano*. However, if he were orchestrating it, it is extremely unlikely that that he would have orchestrated each of these sections the same. It is up to the performer to 'orchestrate' the work by providing differences in tone colour. The middle section of "December" from *The Seasons* is almost identical to the waltz in *Swan Lake* (i.e., essentially the same thematic block twice, then new thematic material). Performers

can simulate the change in orchestration by changing the tone colour and using *rubato*.

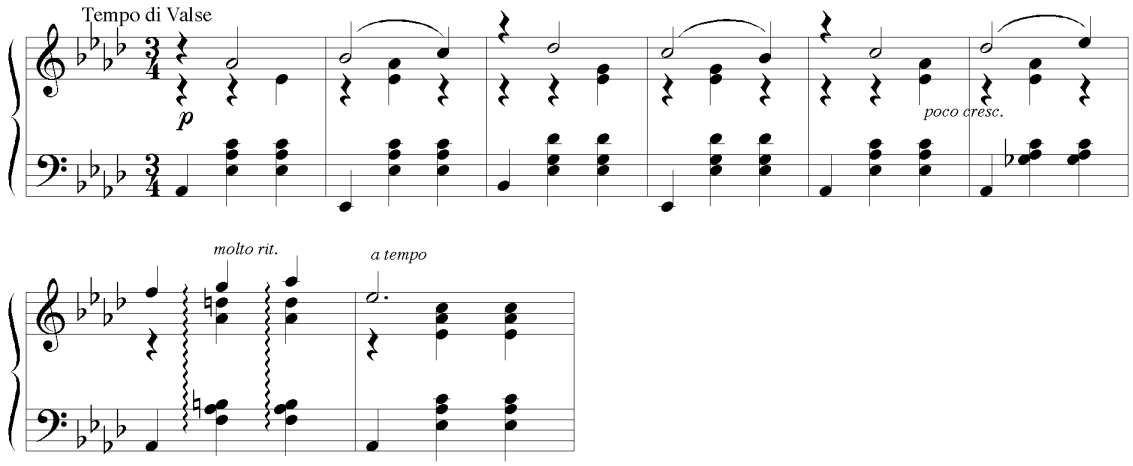
Figure 102: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "December", bars 88-111



Another example of block 'colours' can be found in the opening of "December". The opening eight bars are typical of Tchaikovsky's waltzes, and could be orchestrated in exactly the same manner as the opening of the *Swan Lake* waltz. The melody in the *Swan Lake* waltz appears in the strings — this contributes to the melodic warmth. When playing "December", it is effective to open with a warm quality in the melody line with a light accompaniment.

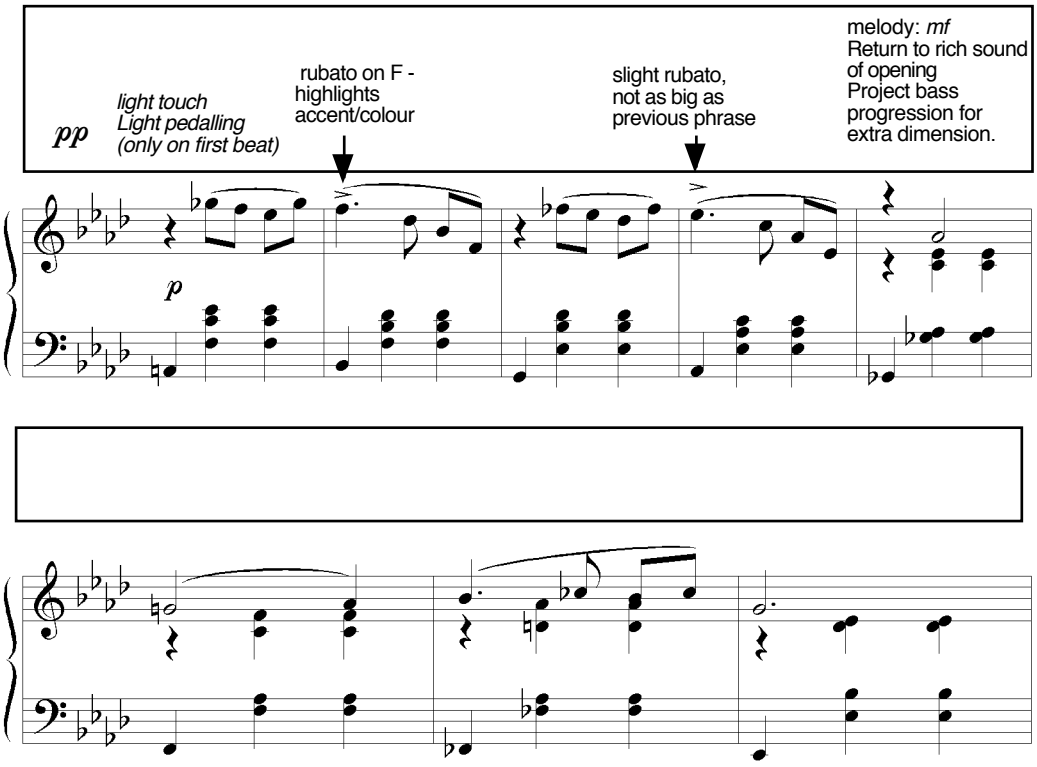
Page 120

Figure 103: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "December", bars 1-8



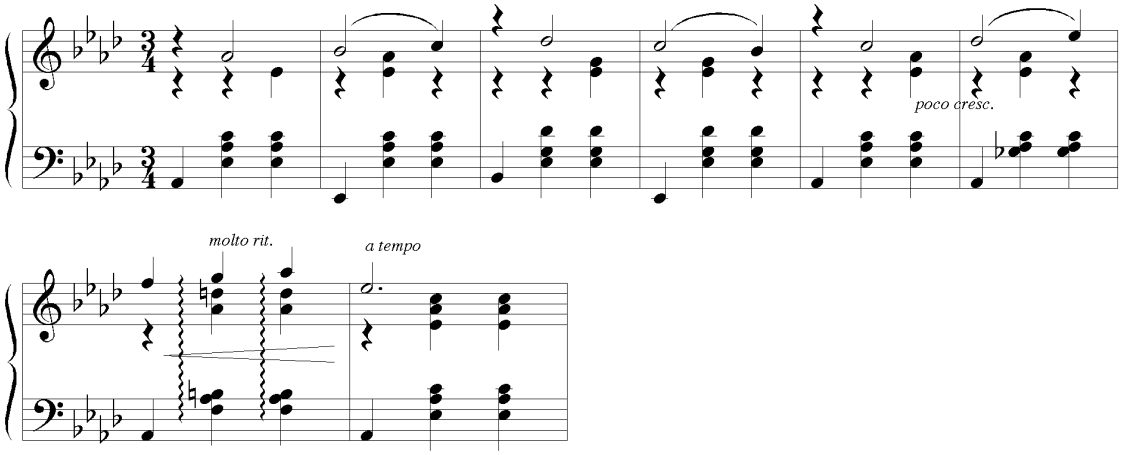
In bar 9 there appears to be a distinct change in character. It is quite effective to give the following eight bars a lighter character (both in dynamics and articulation, particularly in the accompaniment). It can also be quite effective to use a slight *rubato* leading to the F (in the melody of the second bar of the excerpt) to highlight the accents, using a similar *rubato* two bars later to the Eb, though not to the same extent (so it is not predictable).

Figure 104: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "December", bars 9-16



Following this is a return to the initial theme, which brings back the warmth of the opening.

Figure 105: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "December", bars 17-24



Using these 'blocks' of sound will add more colour and simulate Tchaikovsky's orchestral music: this contributes significantly to the listener's experience of the music. Many educated listeners would naturally associate *The Seasons* with his orchestral music (his ballets in particular). There is nothing wrong with this: by performing in this fashion, listeners may very well get an 'orchestral' picture in their mind and associate the melodies with the warmth of Tchaikovsky's other melodies, thus getting an insight into Tchaikovsky's musical (and, subconsciously, personal) character.

Extra-musical influences

Having established from purely musical analysis that these works have emotional worth, extra-musical influences can be explored. The "emotional" content in music is the somewhat complicated combination of the expression of culture, social interaction, events taking place in the composer's life, and the composer's psychological state. In this case there is also the additional influence of the program — encapsulating the months of the year in music. If, as Bortkiewicz's teacher Reisenauer put it, the role of the performer is to create

> an artistic estimate of the composer's intention and to feel that during the period of reproduction he [the performer] simulates the natural psychological conditions which affected the composer during the actual process of composition[157]

then the more performers study the extra-musical influences, the more they will empathise with Tchaikovsky's music.

[157] Reisenauer. Cited in: Cooke, op. cit., p.229.

The titles and accompanying epigraphs for *The Seasons* were actually added by Bernard after Tchaikovsky had written the music. Nevertheless, it is not hard to see why Bernard chose the poetry that he did, and referring to his 'descriptions' can be useful when discussing the culture that Tchaikovsky is depicting.

Figure 106: the titles and epigraphs Bernard added to *The Seasons* [only those months discussed in the paper are included below]

January: "At the Fireside"

A little corner of peaceful bliss,
The night dressed in twilight;
The little fire is dying in the fireplace,
and the candle has burned out.
— Pushkin

February: "Carnival"

At the lively Mardi Gras
soon a large feast will overflow
— Vyasamsky

April: "Snowdrops"

The blue, pure snowdrop flower,
and near it the last snow drops.
The last tears over past griefs
and first dreams of another happiness.
— Maykov

September: "Hunting"

It is time! The horns are sounding!
The hunters in their hunting dress are mounted on their horses;
in early dawn the borzois are jumping.
— Pushkin

October: "Autumn Song"

The fall, falling down on our poor orchard,
the yellow leaves are flying in the wind.
— Tolstoy

December: "Christmas"

Once upon a Christmas night
the girls were telling fortunes:
taking their slippers off their feet
and throwing them out the gate.
— Nekrasov

Interestingly, Bernard obviously thought that his choices were accurate depictions. When he published the works, he announced that "they will be pieces whose character will correspond exactly, both in their titles and their impressions to the month in which they will be published".[158]

While the music is not conceived as programmatic in a text-music sense, it was still written as a representation of that month of the year. Many of Bernard's epigraphs have a distinctly Russian flavour, and it is likely that Tchaikovsky also had "Russian" seasons in mind when writing the works. After all, he was proud of his nationality, exclaiming that "I am Russian, Russian to the marrow."[159]

> Why does a simple Russian landscape, a walk through countryside, forest or steppe on a summer's evening, move me so, that I lie down on the ground, filled with a kind of torpor, an immense upsurge of love for nature, my head turned by the intoxicating atmosphere that enfolds me as it wafts out of the forest or steppe, from the little river, the distant village, the humble country church: in short everything that goes to make up the scenery of my poor native Russia.[160]

An obvious depiction of Russian culture can be found in February, which Bernard has entitled "Carnival". The mardi gras the poem is referring to is Shrovetide, a significant part of Russian culture. It is a week-long festival held seven weeks before Easter — which is usually February (or the beginning of March). Once Lent had begun, all concerts and theatre ceased. Each day in the week would have its own rituals: "Monday was "Celebration"; Tuesday — "Flirting"; Wednesday — "Sweet Tooth", "Turning Point", "Carousing"; Thursday — "Merrymaking"; Friday — "Mother-in-Law Evenings"; Saturday — "Sister-in-Law's Party", "Good-Bye Party"; and Sunday was "A Farewell".[161] Overall, the week was filled with "tobogganing, entertaining guests and enjoying traditional gluttony. People were singing, riding troikas, kissing and hugging each other."[162] The week was rich in musical activity:

> At all hours of the day or night you could find a concert in some maecenas' house, or a *bliny* party where you spread pancakes with caviar or herring, or *blinchiki* with sweetened cloudberries, washing each mouthful down with gulps of vodka.[163]

---

[158] Written in sleeve notes to James Lisney's recording of *The Seasons*.
[159] Tchaikovsky. Cited in: Michael Hoffman, *Tchaikovsky* (London, 1962), p.10.
[160] Ibid., p.8.
[161] *Important Russian Spring Holidays, Customs, and Traditions* (www.ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/tarnareg/Holidays/HolidaysSpring.html).
[162] Ibid.
[163] Bowers, *Scriabin* (second edition), op. cit., p.47.

The pancake, incidentally, was the symbol of the spring sun. Tchaikovsky describes one Shrovetide in a letter to his sister in 1866:

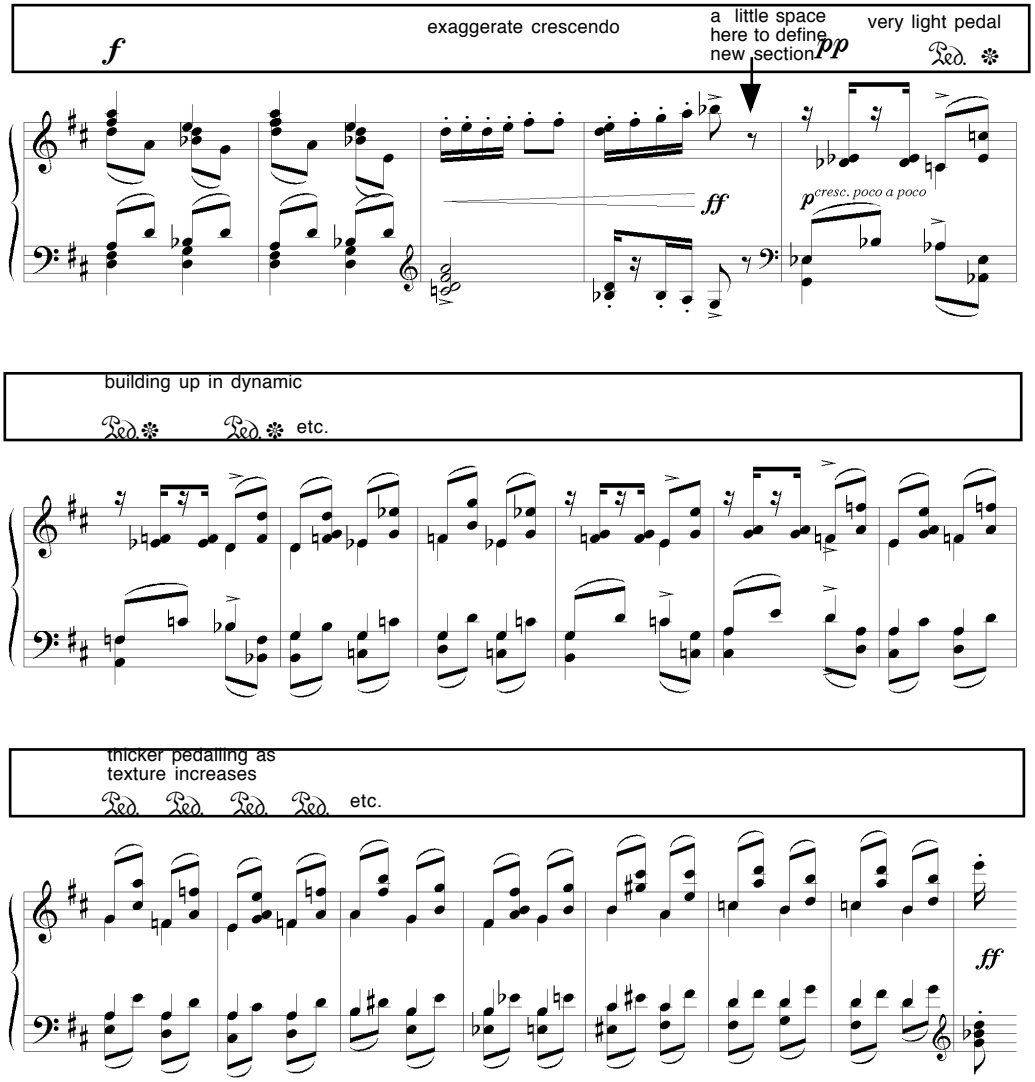
> I spend Shrovetide very quietly and was home nearly all the time. It was not until yesterday that I went to the funfair and the circus that belongs to it. The frost was bitter and the poor little equestrian dances in their short gauzy dresses were pathetic. Today is the first day of Lent and Moscow looks absolutely dead.[164]

It is very likely that the atmosphere of Shrovetide is what Tchaikovsky had in mind when writing *February* (in this case Bernard's claim to accurate representation of the music does appear to be founded). Pianists can use this cultural context to assist in their interpretation of the work. The main concern for performers is to make the music as exciting as possible. This is achieved primarily by attention to two things: contrast in dynamics and attention to articulations. For example, in figure 107, the dynamic range between the first four bars and the remainder can be exaggerated. Also, observing the accents and the two-note phrases helps to create more excitement. The sparing use of pedal at the start creates clarity in the two-note phrase. Characteristically, Tchaikovsky uses minimal thematic material in sequence to create the build up. Pianists can enhance this by using more pedal as the dynamics and sequences increase.

[164] Tchaikovsky, letter to Alexandra Davydova (7 February, 1866). Cited in: Tchaikovsky, *Letters to his Family* (New York, 2000), p.27.

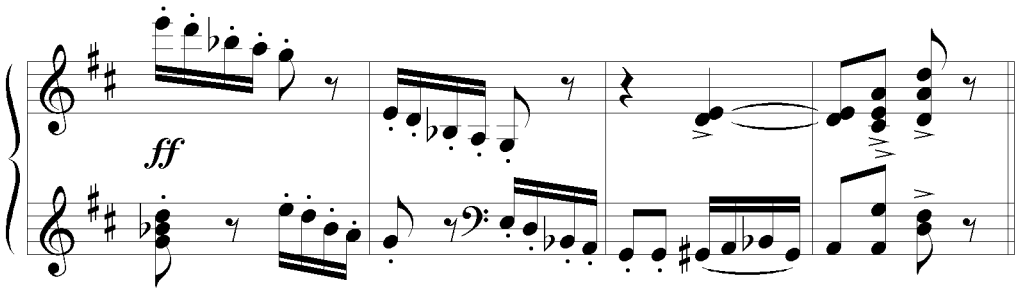
Page 125

Figure 107: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "February", bars 5-23



In the passage immediately following the climax, there is a risk of the semiquaver passage seeming a little pointless. This occurs if the pianist treats the semiquavers as four groups of four semiquavers:

Page 126
Figure 108: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "February", bars 23-25



It is more effective to maintain a sense of direction over the two bars of descending phrases, in fact keeping that direction going until the end of the four bar phrase. Once again, exaggerating the accents on the final two notes helps add more excitement. Particularly with the sense of direction over the entire phrase, it is possible to imagine these four bars as a toboggan sliding down the hill.

While some of *The Seasons* obviously reflect Russian customs, other are somewhat more obscure. Bernard's titles and epigraphs have their uses. By imposing pictorial images, Bernard was possibly aiming to: (1) ensure that the works represented the appropriate season enough, and that the audience was conscious why they were included in the season; (2) make the music more accessible (programmatic music is generally more readily understood by amateur markets). Katharine Boyes analyses the relationship between the poetry and the text of "April" in some detail:

> The subtitle and poetry attached to "April" describes the snowdrop, an early spring flower. In the first stanza of Maikov's poem the flower appears "blue" against the whiteness of the surrounding snow. (Blue is a color [*sic.*] associated with cold and sadness.) However, we are reminded that the word snowdrop is "pure" white in color — hence its name — and that in some parts of the world it blooms when snow is still on the ground. The second stanza of the poem laments the ending of Winter, but rejoices at the coming of Spring, "The first daydreams of new happiness". This also relates to sadness experienced in the passing of time, but with renewed hope as the seasons change. Spring is the season of renewal and re-birth of which the snowdrop is a part. The simple compositional style of "April" is in keeping with the portrait of a snowdrop. The reference to "tears" and "bygone sorrow" are suggested in the "sighing" figuration that permeates the piece and in the minor tonalities.[165]

It is plausible that, if he were to choose a text, Tchaikovsky would choose one with such a theme. Tchaikovsky loved nature, once exclaiming "thank God, I have again

[165] Boyes, op. cit., p.227.

become fully receptive to Nature, seeing and comprehending in each leaf and flower something unattainably beautiful, reposeful, peaceful, giving me again an intense love of life."[166] One year after completing *The Seasons*, he wrote a poem entitled "Lilies of the Valley", which he considered to be "the king of flowers". However, while the poem Bernard chose does fit the music, and Tchaikovsky's love of nature supports his choice in poem, the poem was added after the composition was written. These images were imposed upon the music. At this point, discussing programmatic music from a "pictorial" or "dramatic" purpose becomes somewhat obsolete. The deeper level of the program lies in its psychological realms.

Tchaikovsky's music is imbued with his personality. Konstantin di Lazari, a close friend, described that

> it was impossible not to love him. From his youthful appearance and wonderful eyes with their profound expression, everything about him created insuperable attraction, most of all his touching kindness and humility, which was surprising in one of such talent. No one was more capable of treating everyone sincerely and sweetly; no one's view of people had such a childlike purity and radiance. Conversation with him made everyone feel a certain warmth, a certain caress in the sound of his voice and in his eyes.[167]

In his letters, his directness of expression is also displayed. It is not uncommon to see in these letters phrases such as:

> I kiss you hard, dear Modia! Kiss Kolia's eyes and his little palm! How I love the little fellow!
>
> I embrace you...[168]

The warm hearted, direct quality of Tchaikovsky can be seen in his works, such as "January", "April" or "December". As discussed earlier in the chapter, these melodies would be played with the characteristic warm string tone in mind.

---

[166] Vladimir Volkoff, *Tchaikovsky* (London, 1975), p.44.
[167] Konstantin de Lazari. Cited in Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky Through Others' Eyes* (Indiana, 1999), p.92.
[168] Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Modest Tchaikovsky (8-20 August 1876). Cited in: Tchaikovsky, *Letters to his family*, op. cit., p.110.

Figure 109a: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "January", bars 1-8

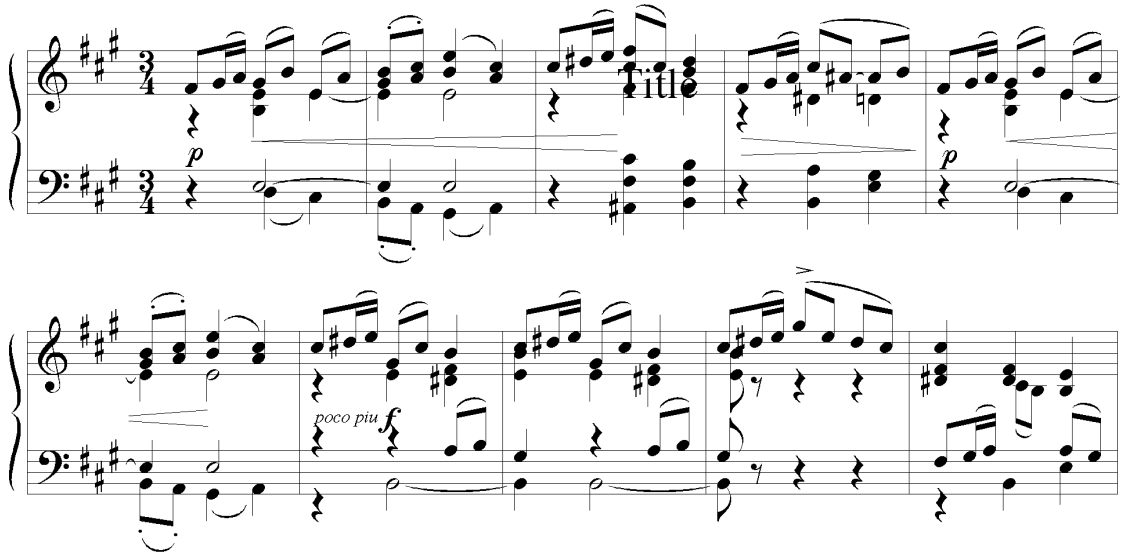


Figure 109b: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "April", bars 1-8

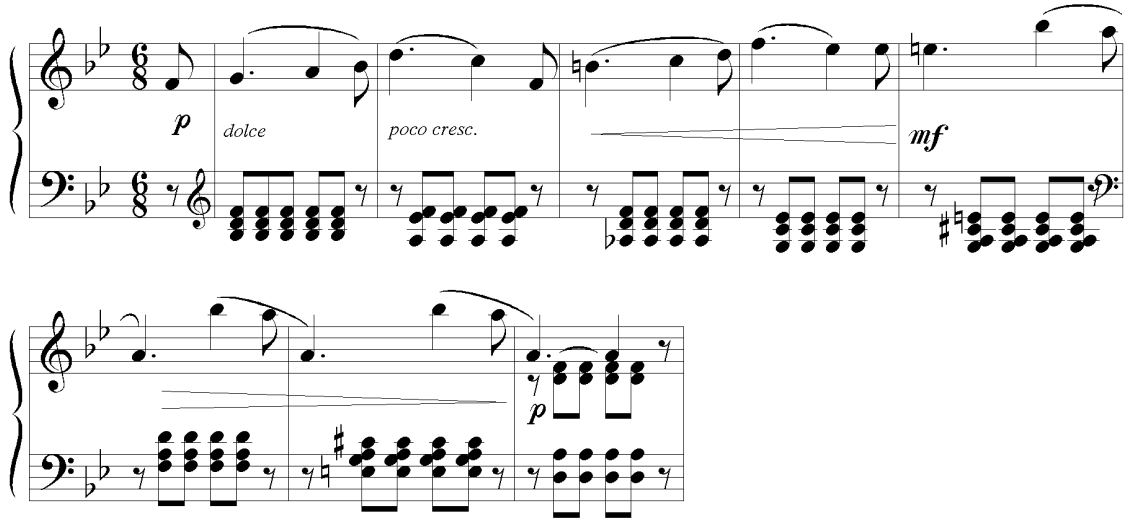
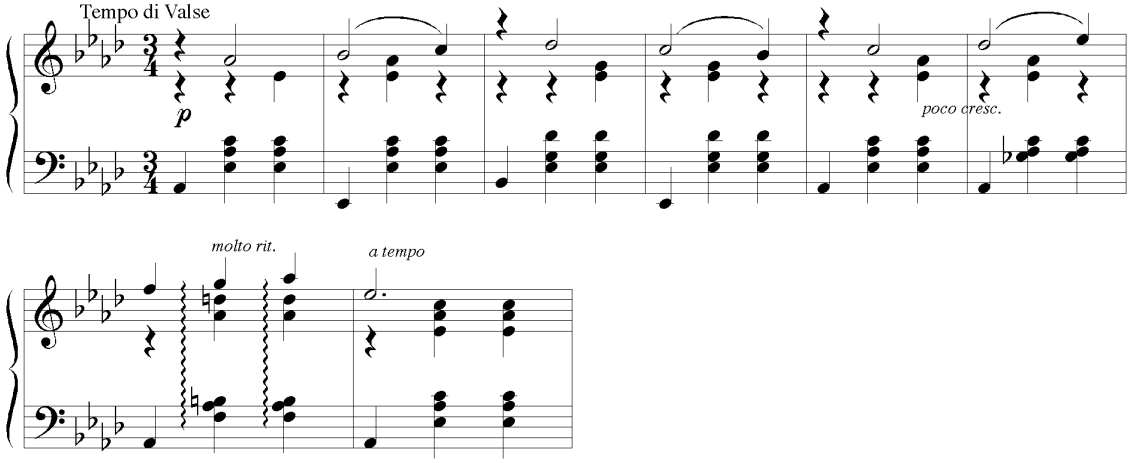


Figure 109c: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "December", bars 1-8



It is possible to view Tchaikovsky's *Seasons* also as programmatic in a sense of his personal character.

The journalist Alexander Sokolva shows a hint of a different side in Tchaikovsky's character:

> [Tchaikovsky] was notable for the extraordinary likeableness that colored [*sic.*] his many distinctive traits. He was unquestionably kind, but it was a sort of lazy kindness, owing not so much to gentleheartedness as to a desire to avoid conflict at all cost.
>
> He was always willing to let other have their way, though again not because of meekness or Christian humility, but simply because he either had no time or was just too lazy to argue.
>
> In his company, he was always reserved and very taciturn and only grew lively within his own circle, among people he knew well and liked...[169]

Tchaikovsky's dislike of crowds is evident in a letter he wrote either during or after a stay with his sister's in-laws (the Davydov family):

> From the moment our small circle was broken and whole heaps of acquaintances poured in on 'ours' and thereby in part on us, I began to frown and have made an inner vow never again to spend summer in such places where people dance virtually every day and pay visits to one another every minute. ... But here's the nasty part: I have had continual opportunity at Haapsalu to become convinced that I harbor [*sic.*] within me the disease called 'misanthropy'. I am overcome here by terrible fits of hatred toward mankind.[170]

At times, Tchaikovsky states that he had "become intolerably depressed as the result of a strong nervous disorder ... [and wished to] go away somewhere and hide in some lonely backwoods."[171] When Tchaikovsky was travelling to receive his honorary doctorate from Cambridge in 1893, "he was prepared to turn back halfway to Cambridge University to receive an honorary doctorate" because "the mere thought of public meetings or private parties where there could be many people whom he knew hardly or not at all could drive him to desperation."

In stark contrast to this, when alone, Tchaikovsky feared loneliness. "[I am] really disturbed by this unbearable state of mind which overcomes me every time I am

---

[169] Alexandra Sokolova. Cited in Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky Through Others' Eyes*, op. cit., p.97-8.
[170] Tchaikovsky. Cited in: Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky: The Quest for the Inner Man* (New York, 1991), p.101.
[171] Ibid.

abroad alone! There is something morbid in this!"[172] Evidence of this is also found in the letters to his brother Modest:

> Tomorrow, after a good night's sleep, I shall probably be in a better mood, but at this moment I can only quote Katerina in [Ostrovsky's] *Storm*. "Oh! How lonely I am without you!" Tomorrow morning I shall send you a telegram; writing this letter and the idea of sending a telegram has consoled me. The only good thing about separation from a beloved person is that it is possible to measure the strength of one's love him.[173]

So why did Tchaikovsky label himself frequently as a misanthrope? Part of the reason of this self-diagnosed 'misanthropy' was his homosexuality. Tchaikovsky wrote:

> I am here, very lonely here, and if it were not for working constantly I should simply give myself over to melancholy. It is also true that my damned homosexuality creates an unbridgeable chasm between me and most people. It imparts to my character an estrangement, a fear of people, immoderate timidity, mistrustfulness, in short, a thousand qualities whereby I am growing more and more unsociable. Just imagine, frequently now and at length I dwell on the idea of a monastery or something of the sort...[174]

There are several reasons for this predicament. Although homosexuality was readily practised in Russia, it was still illegal — the punishment being exile to Siberia. As Poznansky points out, "there is little doubt that many of his colleagues [at the Conservatory], and certainly those closest to him, knew or guessed the true nature of his sexual preferences, a fact of which Tchaikovsky himself was well aware."[175] Tchaikovsky wrote in a letter to his brother Anatoly:

> He [Rubinstein] continues to think that I am maintained by his benefactions alone. Do you know what I see at the root of all this? Still the same thing. Blackmail! He's saying that with my shameful reputation I should thank my lucky stars that he keeps me on. Upon my word, it is so![176]

Another factor contributing to Tchaikovsky's unrest was that in August 1876 Tchaikovsky spent time living in close proximity to his father in Verbokvka (the small

[172] Ibid., p.102.
[173] Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Modest, 11-23 January 1876 (from Berlin). Cited in: Tchaikovsky, *Letters to his Family*, op. cit., p.100.
[174] Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Anatoly Tchaikovsky. Cited in Poznansky, "Unknown Tchaikovsky: A Reconstruction of Previously Censored Letters to His Brothers (1875-1879)", *Tchaikovsky and his World*, op. cit., p.61.
[175] Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky: The Quest for the Inner Man*, op. cit., p.176.
[176] Ibid., p176-7.

village adjoining the Davydov's (sister in laws') estate. As Alexander Poznansky remarks "it is not difficult to image the old man hounding his son with questions about when he was finally going to marry and the effect of this face-to-face prodding must have had on Tchaikovsky."[177] Tchaikovsky started to consider, more strongly, the possibility of marriage. In a letter to Modest he writes:

> Do you really think that I am not oppressed by this awareness that *they pity and forgive me,* when in fact I am guilty of nothing! And is it really not dreadful to think that people who love me can ever *be ashamed* of me! But, you see, this has happened a hundred times before and will happen a hundred times again. In a word, I should like my marriage or, in general, an open affair with a woman, to shut the mouths of various contemptible creatures whose opinion I do not value in the least but who can cause pain to the people close to me.[178]

On 6 July the following year (1877), Tchaikovsky married Anotonia Milyukova, a former conservatory student. The marriage was made on 'open terms', "promising his bride only a 'brotherly' love"[179] In a letter to his brother Anatoly two days after his wedding Tchaikovsky states that he and his wife "had conversations that further clarified our mutual relations ... I had reserved for myself complete freedom of action."[180] In a letter to Modest on the same day, he wrote that "I cannot say that I love her."[181] Needless to say the marriage was very short lived.

Tchaikovsky misanthropy can also be attributed to his artistic temperament. He once said "This music! This music! It's here in my head and won't let me sleep."[182] It does seem plausible that Tchaikovsky "was one of those happy few whose life organizes [*sic.*] itself in complete accordance with the demands of their consciousness and their inner nature."[183] Tchaikovsky's compositional process does support this notion. Tchaikovsky would usually keep a routine (that would essentially not change throughout his life[184]) that included composition and solitary walks. This lifestyle was consistent, whether working at the conservatory or on a vacation. In 1866, Tchaikovsky (when still living in Rubinstein's house) stated that

---

[177] Ibid., p.185.
[178] Ibid., p.186.
[179] Poznansky,
[180] Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Anatoly Tchaikovsky, 8 July 1877 (St. Petersburg). Cited in ibid., p.73.
[181] Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Modest Tchaikovsky, 8 July 1877 (St .Petersburg). Cited in ibid., p.78.
[182] Tchaikovsky. Cited in: Antony Hopkins (ed.) *Great Composers* (London, 1993), p.245.
[183] Hermann Lorche. Cited in ibid., p.107.
[184] Poznansky, *The Quest for the Inner Man*, op. cit., p.89.

> my days are very regular and this is how I pass them. I stir between 9 and 10. Still lazing in bed I talk to Rubinstein and then we have tea together; then I either give lessons from 11 to 1 or work at my symphony (which is not getting on very well) and in that case I stay in my room until half past two, when either Kashkin or Valsek visit me. At 2:30 I go to the Theatre Square to Ourmetin's bookshop to read the daily papers and from there I sometimes walk to the Kuznecky Most [Blacksmith's Bridge]. At 4.00 I mostly dine at the Tamovsky's or with Nilus (only three times in the last three weeks), or in the pub. After dinner I go for another walk or sit in my room. In the evening, I nearly always have tea with Tarnovskys and sometimes go to a club .. where I read the periodicals. I usually return home about 12, when I write my symphony, or letters, and read in bed till late.[185]

However, when Tchaikovsky had a need to compose he abandoned his routine. In December 1874 it appears that his whole 'scheduled' way of life is abandoned when he writes that "I work at my concerto [*Piano Concerto No.1*] without stopping and must finish it this week; so do not expect more than a few words from me..."[186]

The actual process of composition was not always an easy one. In November 1874, Tchaikovsky wrote "I am engrossed in the composition of a piano concerto [no.1] ... but it is not coming easily and well. I have, as a duty, to force my brain to invent piano passages, with the result that my nerves are very strained."[187] The need to complete the work, and the difficulty in achieving that goal would have added to his phases of depression. Yet, at other times, actually composing was what prevented Tchaikovsky from sinking into depression. A phrase that appears frequently in his letters is "if it had not been for steady work I would have gone into a profound state of melancholia."[188] Overall, this tends to support Poznansky's suggestion that "just as the slightest intrusion on his music and his work could plunge him into fits of despair and "misanthropy", so could his creative drive draw him out of despondency. Righting the balance was for him a necessary way of living."[189]

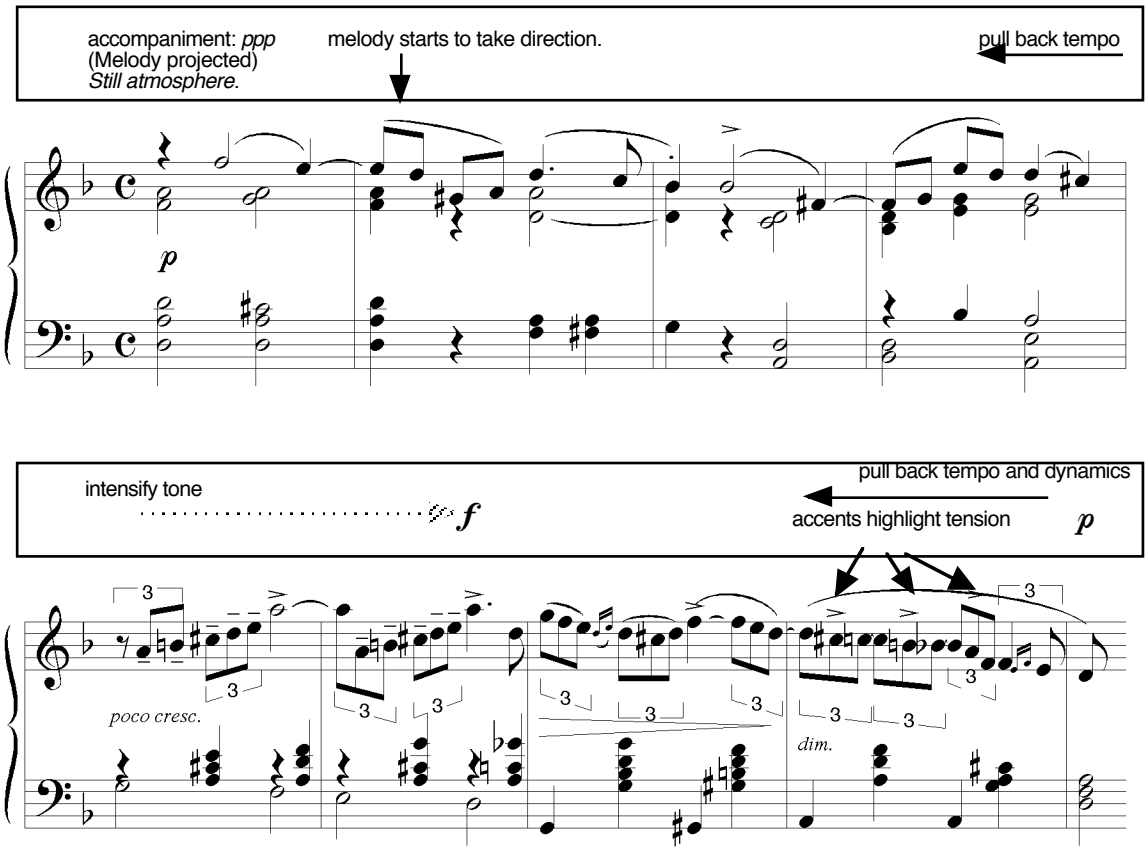
Poznansky also writes that "considerable caution is always required when

---

[185] Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Anatoly Tchaikovsky, 25 April 1866 (Moscow). Cited in: Tchaikovsky, *Letters to his Family*, op. cit., p.31.
[186] Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Modest Tchaikovsky, Middle of December (Moscow). Cited in: ibid., p.92.
[187] Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Anatoly Tchaikovsky, 21 November 1874 (Moscow). Cited in: ibid., p.88.
[188] Tchaikovsky, in a letter to Anatoly Tchaikovsky, 9 January 1875 (Moscow). Cited in: ibid., p.94.
[189] Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky: The Quest for the Inner Man*, p.107.

relating a musical composition directly to biographical tribulation, for a work of art nearly always obscures and transcends the experience that gives impetus to the composition."[190] However, upon considering the biographical and emotional backdrop of the work, the listener or performer can't help but think of Tchaikovsky's state when listening to "October" from *The Seasons*. From the bleak opening Tchaikovsky's bouts of loneliness and depression can be seen. Performers can enhance the music by creating a feeling of absolute stillness at the beginning. This can be achieved by keeping the accompaniment extremely soft. While the first two notes of the melody are projected, it is effective not to give the melody any particular sense of direction until the second bar. The music itself creates an effective enough picture — achieved with the thin texture and the pedal point. As the melody and harmonies start to move, from the second bar, performers can then appropriately shape the four-bar phrase. The answering four bars provide the opportunity to build the melody and supporting harmonies. The accents in bar 8 are particularly effective — they further create the impression that some kind of torment is being reflected in the music.

Figure 110: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "October", bars 1-9

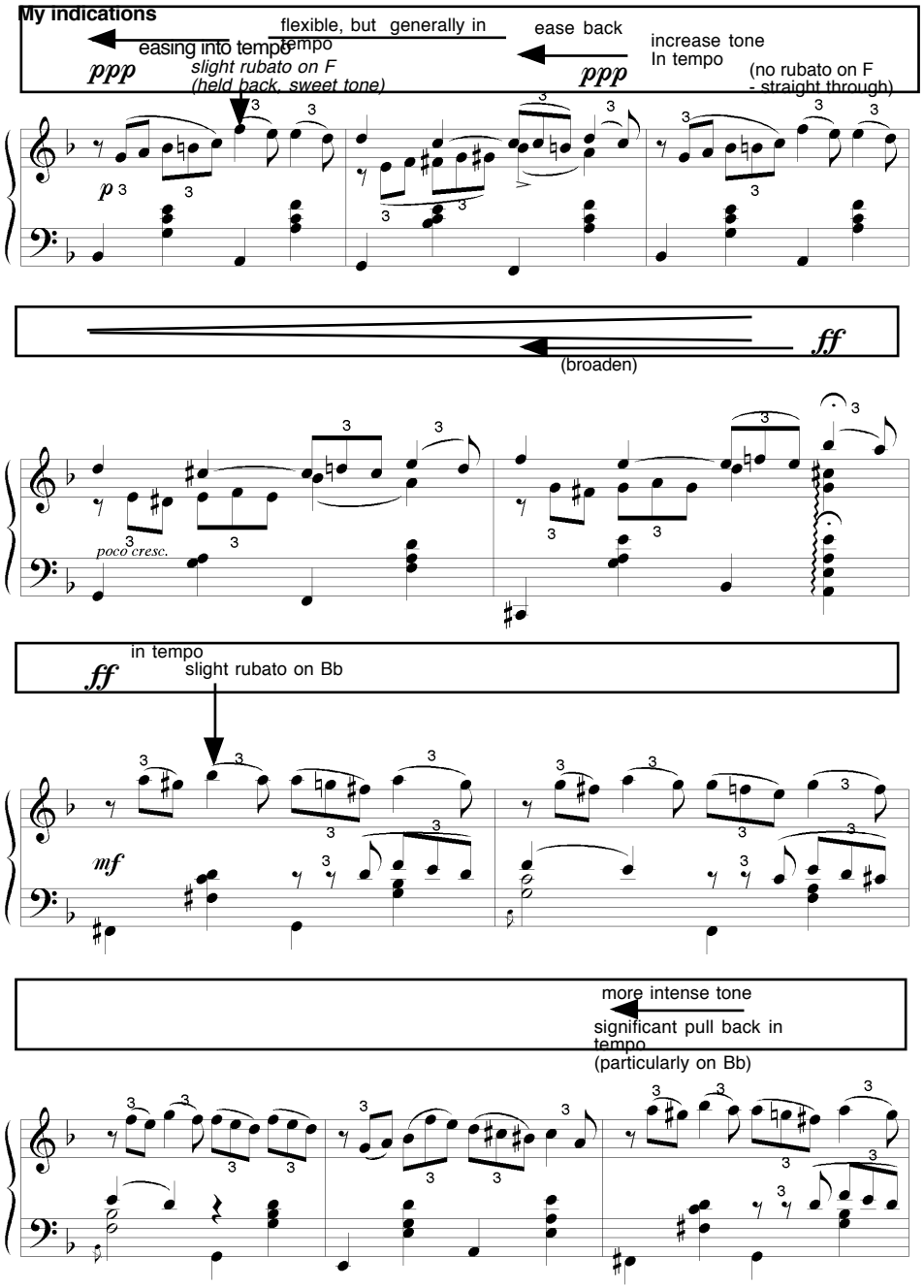


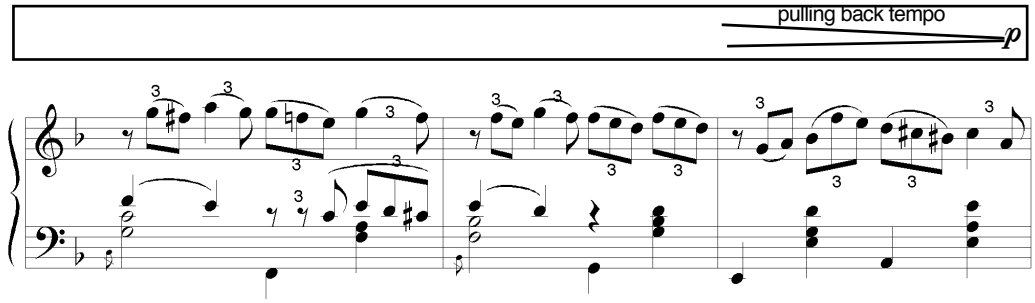
[190] Ibid., p.119.

Considering Tchaikovsky's state of mind, it is easy to see why the passionate middle section, which was discussed at the opening of the chapter, instinctively required expressions purely on musical grounds. Tchaikovsky's musical language is, directly or indirectly, the expression of a complex psychosis. As mentioned at the opening, Tchaikovsky's language relies particularly on harmonic intensity and repetition of material to create the climax. The performer's tools are *rubato*, melodic shaping, and expression of tone colours.

Page 135

Figure 111: Tchaikovsky – *The Seasons*, "October", bars 17-30





Naturally, the end result is a combination between Tchaikovsky's musical language, instinct on the performer's part (i.e., looking from a purely musical point of view), a kind of musical empathy (bearing in mind the social conditions, Tchaikovsky's biography, personality, etc.), the performer's own character and psychosis, the listener's (subconscious) relationship with the musical language, and if the listener is educated, an empathy (perhaps subconscious) with Tchaikovsky while hearing the music. This is what is wonderful about Tchaikovsky's music: it is so simple at face value, yet such an emotional charge is created when all these elements are combined in a performance.

MEDTNER: *Tales*

Attitude to art

Tchaikovsky's *Seasons* display how music can be programmatic in two senses: the literal (written program) and the psychological. This is also evident in the *Tales* of Nicolas Medtner. Before dealing specifically with Medtner's music, it is important to understand the composer's attitude to his art. Alexander Ossovsky, a colleague of Medtner's on the advisory board of the Russian Musical Press, describes Medtner as

> unusually attractive; infinitely modest, quiet, delicate, shy, like a little girl, with a sensitive lofty soul, he was in truth "a man not of this world", being in no way adapted to practical life. The very simplest of things seemed complicating to him, and he would embark on a philosophical analysis of them.[191]

"Philosophical analysis" was at the core of Medtner's musical thinking, and thereby his way of life. As Medtner puts it, although he was "obsessed with myself and my compositions ... however meagre my livelihood may be, it is my only livelihood, for apart from my music, apart from what I do in it, I am absolutely nothing."[192]

---

[191] Alexander Ossovsky. Cited in: Martyn, *Nicolas Medtner: His Life and His Music* (Hants, 1995), p.77.
[192] Medtner. Cited in: ibid., p.57.

For Medtner, "the whole justification of my single life, I think, is just this, to work on the material given [to] me by God."[193] The artist must have

> The kind of faith I, for example, only understand a man having in God when he feels him absolutely distinctly in his heart and does not recognize [*sic.*] Him as just some images beyond the clouds. That is how an artist must believe in art.[194]

This philosophy affected his compositional technique and style.

Medtner wrote:

> For nearly a year I have devoted myself exclusively to my calling — I am only composing ... I have an even greater and firmer belief than ever in my themes, or rather generally in my theme, but I suffer from the disproportionate amount of material itself compared to its rate of realization [*sic.*] ... Just familiarizing [sic.] myself with all the material, keeping it in mind and putting it in order, is an enormous task.[195]

This provides an insight into the composer's compositional procedure. Medtner kept notebooks to write down musical ideas. "He once explained that some of these ideas or 'motifs' would occur to him a second or third time after having been forgotten, whereupon he would note them down again. Such insistently recurring motifs he considered to be the most authentic and it was these he used in his compositions.[196]

Medtner's reference to the "rate of realization" is something that would trouble him frequently. In 1907 he wrote:

> I feel a kind of disorder, a kind of imbalance in myself. I want to work terribly but I cannot ... But I am not at all weak-willed — so, for example, no powers can force me to write a single note in order ... Isn't this talent to write to order indispensable? Really have not even the greatest composers sometimes written music to order as it were to clean out a channel through which whole streams of their innermost thoughts may then flow more freely and spontaneously? [...] I have never (or almost never) written a single exercise in composition ... I used to think this was normal ... But now I'm beginning to doubt. To develop a real technique one must write a great many exercises or compositions, it doesn't matter which. The latter, of course, is a thousand times better and more useful. But ... writing as I do, that is giving birth to each creation at intervals of nine months minimum, to develop a technique even by the end of one's life one would have to

[193] Ibid., p.133.
[194] Ibid., p.21.
[195] Ibid, p.134.
[196] Martyn, *Nicolas Medtner: His Life and Music*, op. cit., p.135.

> live as long as Methuselah. And since I really don't expect to reach the age of this venerable biblical patriarch but quite often wonder whether, with my poor state of nerves, I shall reach the age of forty, it turns out I should have been writing exercises, exercises, exercises.[197]

Medtner's comment on education significantly supports this notion, but also ends with a hint of his philosophy toward music:

> What a good thing that in conservatories where they have classes in harmony, fugue, and counterpoint, they haven't yet started a class in *inspiration*!! It should be kind of consecratory, and ought to treat of spiritual experience.[198]

Medtner stated that "consistency in work is just as important as in love, as in prayer."[199] As Robert Rimm points out "by communing daily with his craft and stretching his abilities in the service of an internal moral guidance, he fostered the means for inspired creativity."[200]

Naturally, Medtner's philosophy on musical taste rejected music written for or performed for virtuosic and/or commercial reasons. After graduating from the Moscow Conservatory in 1900 his teacher, Safonov, had organised a tour for him, playing Rubinstein's Concerto. However,

> when Medtner realized [*sic.*] that he would be expected not only to play the same musically empty Rubinstein Concerto everywhere he went, but to give recitals of uncongenial works merely to show off technique, he rebelled and to Safonov's great annoyances withdrew from the agreement ... It was the life of a travelling virtuoso, he wanted none of it; henceforth he decided, he would make his way in life as a composer. As for the Rubinstein Concerto, there was a story in that, needing the score no longer, he glued together every page and then threw the whole thing into a lumber room.[201]

Medtner's strong desire for artistic 'integrity' as a performer is also seen in an incident in 1910. Medtner was to play Beethoven's Fourth Concerto with conductor Willem Mengelberg. Mengelberg was not willing to use Medtner's tempi, so Medtner "slammed the piano shut, marched off, and refused to participate any further."[202] Needless to say, Medtner did no play in the concert that evening. Medtner sent a letter to a musical journal, which was reprinted in Moscow and St. Petersburg newspapers. What is most significant about this article, at least in terms of Medtner's philosophy, is

[197] Medtner. Cited in ibid., p.56-7.
[198] Medtner. Cited in Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight* (Oregon, 2002), p.138.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Rimm, op. cit., p.138.
[201] Martyn, *Medtner: His Life and Music*, op. cit., p.13
[202] Medtner, cited in ibid., p.78.

that passage which follows:

> In general this whole incident has a significance far exceeding the limits of the purely personal. To begin with, it is not unique in recent time. Not so long ago something similar blew up between the conductor Mr Fried and the great Wüllner...
>
> Both cases are equally typical. The first of them represents the attitude of a new breed of conductors towards the prerogatives of soloists. Gentlemen like Mr Fried imagined that in the future a soloist would have to adapt his interpretation to the intentions of the "impassioned temperament" of any musical sergeant major. The second case highlights the fact that no-one deserves the contempt with which Russian artists continue to be treated by foreign musical commercial travellers.
>
> The incident with me is, so to speak, two-sided: a soloist, in the person of myself, was insulted by the conductor giving himself airs; more importantly, a Russian artist was insulted by a visiting foreigner.[203]

The way in which Medtner labels Russians as "artists" and foreigners as "musical commercial travellers" would become increasingly dominant throughout his life. After leaving Russian due to the social conditions of the Russian Revolution (which will be dealt with in more detail later), Medtner spent some time in Berlin. There he wrote to his close friend Rachmaninoff:

> Whatever am I to do, even though I don't hear all this so-called music and have only just found myself in this atmosphere, I have felt as it were an electric spark, I have felt that I have landed in a world not my own and that I am absolutely unable to make myself go and pester this world in order to secure some kind of patronage. I swear this is not pride. It is only a true defence in my heart of that intimate core from which alone, in my view, can arise any artistic activity and which sinks into the earth beneath me with every bruising encounter with this alien atmosphere or, worse still, with the so-called marketplace of fashion, depriving me of the feeling of any ground under me at all.[204]

[203] Ibid., p.79.
[204] Ibid., p.148.

Rachmaninoff's reply shows the attitude of both composers: "as for the estrangement you feel, I must say that I feel it here [America] too ... I see very few real and sincere musicians around. It seems you may be the only one left."[205]

Medtner's dislike of commercialism can also be seen in this letter he wrote while in France in 1925 to his brother Alexander:

> In general, every contemporary circumstance of life is strongly conductive to making the artist either fall silent or produce the kind of outrages with which the market-place of art is now filled ... I feel that if now, after long years of disorderly sitting down to work, I don't surround myself with Kremlin walls against every outside circumstance, I really shall do nothing anymore ... If a bird in a cage breaks its wings against the roof and sides, even if set free it will still not fly. [...]
>
> The artistic idealism for which I am indebted to our Russian artistic education and which apparently has remained intact until recently in Russian alone, this idealism grows stronger, but faith in its realization, in its carrying through into life, sinks utterly, for, all around, everything and everybody merely profiteers in art.
>
> Success itself, such for example, as I had in America, gives me no satisfaction at all, despite its undoubted practical results — brilliant reviews and certain sum of money. It gives me no satisfaction precisely because it is practical and not to do with ideals. ... This may sound very pretentious but, as I see it, however insignificant an artist may be, provided that he really is an artist, for him his ideals are the most precious thing he has.[206]

Medtner would later develop his ideologies, and eventually publish a book in the 1930s called *The Muse and the Fashion*. In it, he discussed the nature of music and musical language and criticises modern music.[207] He states in the preface that the book is attacking the "stifling, explosive ideology which in our day has destroyed the connection between the artist's soul and his art."[208]

Apart from music, Medtner was also interested in poetry. W/hen choosing poems, even if just for epigraphs for his *Tales*, they would often be in keeping with his musical philosophy. An example this is his choice of "There lived in the world a poor knight", the opening line of a poem by Pushkin, as the epigraph for his *Tale*, op.34 no.4.

[205] Rachmaninoff. Cited in Martyn, *Medtner*, op. cit., p.148.
[206] Medtner, in a letter to Alexander Medtner, 26 April 1925. Cited in: Martyn, *Medtner*, op. cit., p.173.
[207] Martyn, *Medtner*, op. cit., p.216.
[208] Medtner, in the preface to *The Muse and the Fashion*. Cited in ibid., p.216.

In Tchaikovsky's *Seasons*, the epigraph could only be treated as a pictorial representation imposed by an individual upon the music. Medtner's music is more programmatic in the literal sense, so the program (and its relationship to the music) can be studied in greater detail.

The poem Medtner used for this tale is "about a paladin who, having devoted his life to serving the Mother of Christ, is finally rewarded by being admitted into Heaven."[209] This in itself is representative of Medtner's devotion to his religion, but it is the interpretation placed upon the poem in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* that is more significant in understanding Medtner's reasons for the choice of the poem.[210] When asked why she has a profound respect for the poem, the character Aglaya replies:

> in the poem the knight is described as a man of living up to an ideal all his life. That sort of thing is not to be found every day in the men of our times. In the poem ... the knight wore round his neck, instead of a scarf, a rosary. A device — A. N. B. — the meaning of which is not explained, is inscribed on his shield.[211]

A portion of the poem is cited in the novel (this is not from the beginning of the poem):

> Once there came a vision glorious
> Mystic, dreadful, wondrous fair;
> Burned itself into his spirit,
> And abode for ever there!
>
> Never more — from that sweet moment —
> Gazed he on womankind;
> He was dumb to love and wooing
> And to all their graces blind.
>
> Full of love for that sweet vision,
> Brave and pure he took the field;
> With his blood he stained the letters
> N. P. B. upon his shield.
>
> "Lumen caeli, sancta Rosa!"
> Shouting on the foe he fell,
> And like thunder rang his war-cry
> O'er the cowering infidel.
>
> Then within his distant castle,
> Home returned, he dreamed his days —

[209] Martyn, *Medtner*, op. cit., p.124.
[210] There is no direct link between *The Idiot* and Medtner's setting, however, the interpretation of the poem is a valuable one in understanding its meaning, and why Medtner may have chosen it.
[211] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot* (http://www.online-literature.com/dostoevsky/idiot/22).

Silent, sad — and when death took him
He was mad, the legend says.[212]

It is quite possible (though only speculation), that Medtner was attracted to the knight's commitment to his ideal (bearing in mind Medtner's views that a musician's "ideals are the most precious things he has.")[213]

Biographical influences

On other occasions, Medtner's *Tales* show a direct correlation to events occurring in his life. Considering Medtner's compositional process (a composition generally took some time to complete), it is not so much isolated events (or brief psychological states) that would affect his composition, but more long-term ones, such as the Russian Revolution.

Medtner shared the attitudes of the intelligentsia and the conservatives towards the new communist regime. There were food shortages in the city, transport shortages, the Conservatory (where Medtner taught) was unheated, and Medtner and Anna had to move in with his brother Karl's family to share resources. Medtner had to save his brother Karl, who was a former tsarist officer in the Red Army, from a firing squad. Discovering his brother was in prison, Medtner "rushed to the goal, sick with anxiety. He introduced himself to the woman officer in charge ... once identified as the brother of a luminary of Russian music, he [Karl] was set free."[214]

One positive event that did happen in the period was that he was able to marry his love, Anna, in 1919 (twenty-three years after meeting her). Anna had actually married his brother Emil in 1902. Nicolas Medtner had fallen in love with her previously and Anna reciprocated this love, and felt, even when she accepted Emil's marriage proposal, that "she could never be a proper wife to him"[215]). After admitting to Emil his feeling about Anna, in 1903, it was decided that Anna would continue to play the 'role' of wife to Emil purely for the sake of his career and the family, though Nicolas would live with Emil and Anna (eventually, with just Anna). It was not until 1909 that Medtner's parents knew of this strange marital arrangement. Medtner's mother was the "last barrier against him getting married to Anna."[216] His mother died in 1918, and on

[212] Dostoevsky, *The Idiot* (http://www.online-literature.com/dostoevsky/idiot/23).
[213] Medtner. Cited in: Martyn, *Medtner*, op. cit., p.216.
[214] Martyn, *Medtner*, op. cit., p.129.
[215] Anna Medtner. Cited in: ibid., p.133.
[216] Martyn, *Medtner*, op. cit., p.133.

the 21 June 1919 Medtner finally married Anna.

Nicolas and Anna spent the summers of 1918 and 1919 in the country, where the conditions were a little more tolerable. They stayed with Anna Troyanskaya at a cottage owned by her father in Bugry (south-west of Moscow). However, when they returned to Moscow in 1919 they discovered that their block of flats had been taken over by the factory which owned it and its occupants had been evicted.[217] Homeless, they were helped by Troyanskaya, who offered them the Bugry cottage. Medtner and his wife stayed there for seventeen months, and he was granted paid sabbatical from the conservatory.

In October of 1920, Medtner returned to Moscow, gave some concerts, and the next year, tried to negotiate for permission from the State Publishing House to publish his works with overseas publishers. He also managed to obtain an Estonian passport and in September 1921 left Moscow for Estonia.

At the Estonian border they were "detained for quarantine for ten days, sharing the squalor of a single room with 20 other occupants. While one slept the other had to watch for bugs, the unpleasantness of the situation made worse by a painful ear infection which Medtner developed.[218] After spending some time in Estonia, they obtained German visas, and left Estonia "armed only with some pieces of silverware to convert into currency, the clothes they stood in, and copies of the New Testament, Plato, and Pushkin."[219]

In Berlin, Medtner found it hard to get concert engagements, but he did manage to get some works published by Zimmermann. In a letter to his brother Alexander in 1922 Medtner wrote:

> our spirits have sunk at the hopeless futility of all my concert attempts ... I played very well and the success I had with the public is enormous. But the critics tore me to pieces, so that it's no use hoping for any successes in the future in this foul den of vice. Beside the fact that my muse is not wanted [...] I myself, as an alien, as a Russian ... cannot count on sympathy...[220]

By the summer of 1923, Medtner was living in Erquy, France. It was here that he

[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid., p.144.
[219] Ibid., p.145.
[220] Medtner, in a letter to Alexander Medtner, 20 April 1922. Cited in: ibid., p.149.

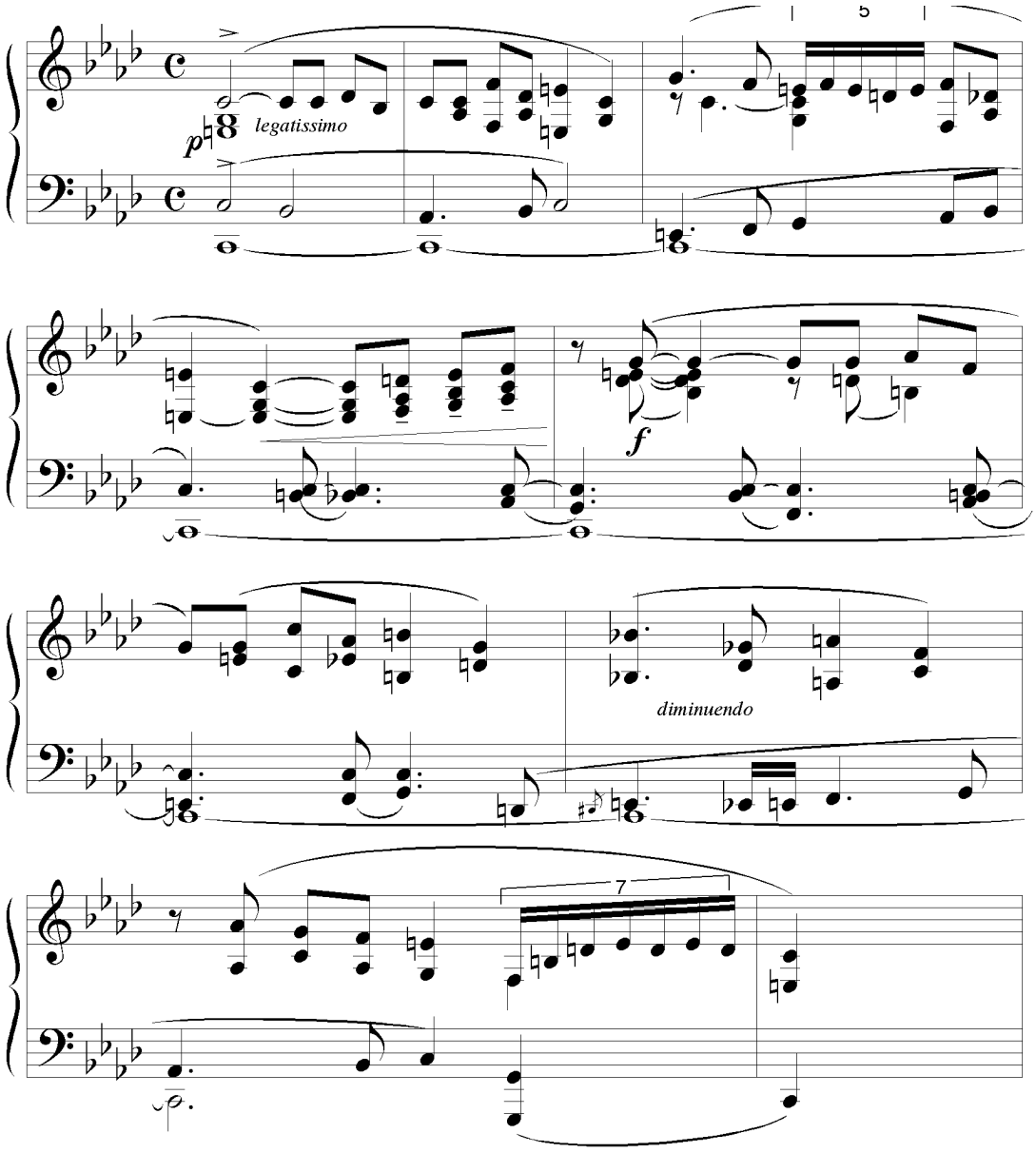
completed the opus 42 *Tales*.

It is no surprise that, considering this somewhat undesirable way of living in the past few years, Medtner's first tale in the opus 42 set was titled "Russian Tale". The idea was conceived in Bugry several years before (it was, in fact, dedicated to Anna Troyanovskaya). Exactly when it was completed is not known, though it was published in approximately 1923-4. It is likely that the work was not completed until closer to this time considering that: (1) the work wasn't published (other works were, and seeing he desperately needed income, it would be logical that Medtner would publish all his completed work); and (2) Medtner's compositional process lends itself towards reviving ideas from previous times (the *Forgotten Melodies* are the best examples of this). It is likely that, considering Medtner's homesickness and general feelings of alienation, his attention turned again to writing something distinctly Russian.

On a more philosophical level, the *Russian Folktale* also bears deeper significance: (1) Russian is not only Medtner's homeland but also symbolises a more cultured society; (2) Medtner, fed up with the commercialism and modernism of the city, wrote that "in our time the only place to live is a long way from centres and capitals, because these are like dens, the abscesses of a nonsensical, purposeless, self-sufficient, self-destructive civilization [*sic.*], which has as little in common with real culture as a clockwork doll with a human being."[221] Folk culture, and folk music, is more true to human nature than modern society and modern music. By using folk elements Medtner was in a way disconnecting himself from purely commercial or purely experimental sonorities of modern music. In any case, it is difficult to ignore the intensity of emotion in the opening bars of the *Russian Folktale*.

[221] Medtner. Cited in: ibid., p.156.

Page 145
Figure 112: Medtner – *Russian Folktale*, op.42, bars 1-9



What contributes to this emotional intensity? — an intensity which is found in all four *Tales* studied in this paper (opus 20 no.1, opus 34 no.2, opus 34 no.3, and opus 42 no.2). More importantly, from a performance perspective, how does the performer successfully interpret Medtner's musical language?

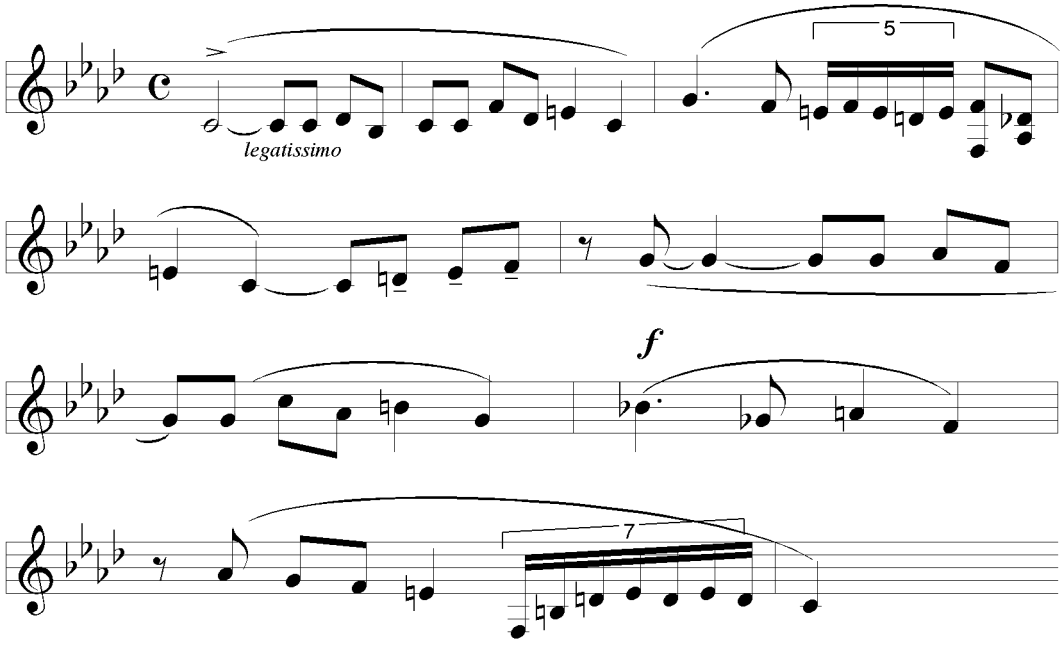
Communicating Medtner's musical language

Medtner's music is carefully thought out, intelligent music. It is often criticised for its lack of colour — the very element that other composers at the time were focusing on. Medtner wrote that "modern musicians whose work, intentionally or unintentionally, is lacking in subjective content have made a fetish of timbre ... They

have made sound, as such, the theme of music."[222] Unfortunately, this is probably one of the reasons that Medtner's music has not achieved the fame of the other composers. In many ways, the more the listener is familiar with Medtner's music, the better the experience will be. While the pianist has the opportunity to discover the new details on further performances, it should be remembered that the listener will probably only hear the work once, and if it doesn't make a good impression on them, they will most likely not make an effort to hear it again. The pianist, therefore, should draw the listener's attention to the subtleties of Medtner's music.

The opening of the *Russian Folktale* is a fine example of Medtner's craft. Although the work as a whole is in f minor, the opening section hovers around its upper tetrachord in its harmonic minor form (i.e., C, Db, E, F) — the intervals being minor second - augmented second - minor second. This sound is characteristic of the lament in Russian folk music: this is Medtner's obvious stylistic link between the music and the 'Russian' program. This in itself is an obvious cultural association that even second-rate composers would use.

Figure 113: Medtner – *Russian Folktale*, op.42, bars 1-9

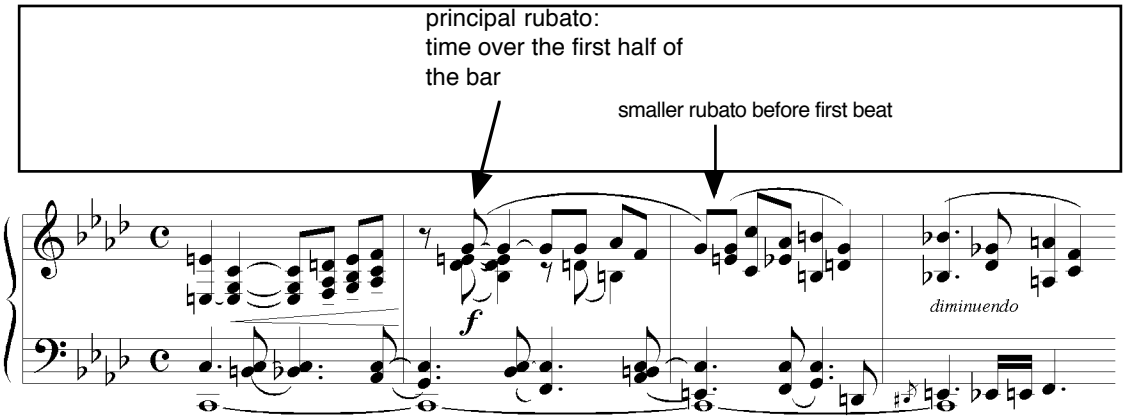


Yet Medtner intensifies the sound, primarily with harmonic and contrapuntal devices. The pedal point that lasts for almost the entire duration of the opening melody helps to create a darker, tenser atmosphere (see figure 112). With the lack of motion in the bass, the music becomes weighted, and the dissonances above more intense. The pedal point

[222] Medtner. Cited in: Rimm, op. cit., p.128.

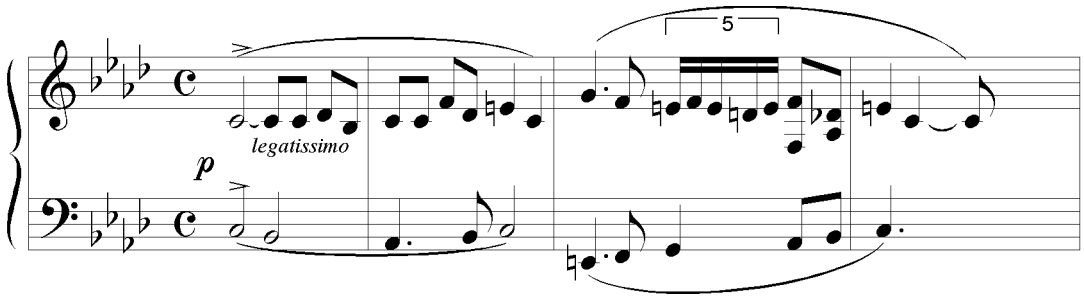
ends at the cadence, where the movement in the bass contributes to the more positive, consonant cadence into C major. For the performer, this is more a psychological issue than a practical one — with the note being held there is absolutely no way the performer can physically 'do' anything with the pedal point. However, being aware of its presence and effect will change the performer's mindset and interpretation of the upper parts. For example, the dissonance of the diminished triad against the pedal point can be highlighted with slight *rubato* and intensified tone.

Figure 114: Medtner – *Russian Folktale*, op.42, bars 4-7



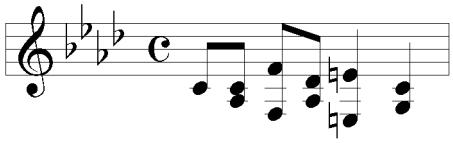
The counterpoint consistently placed against the theme in the left hand adds extra dimension and is the major source of harmonic foundation.

Figure 115: Medtner – *Russian Folktale*, op.42, bars 1-4



However, there are also more intricate countermelodies, such as in the second bar.

Figure 116: Medtner – *Russian Folktale*, op.42, bar 2

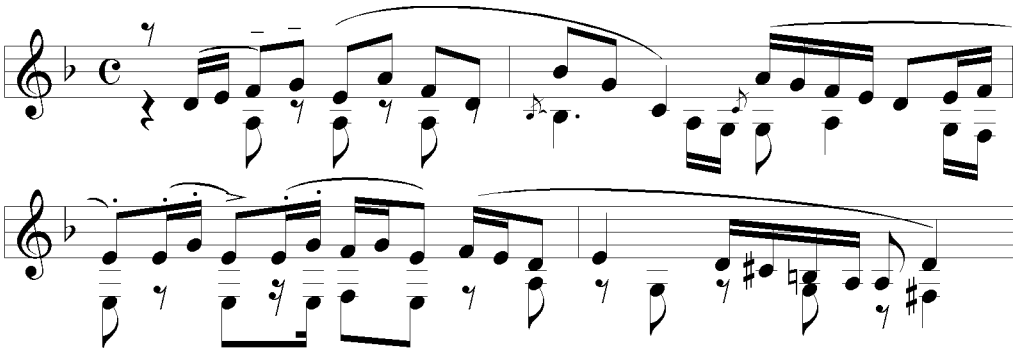


The very nature of this writing heightens the atmosphere: the melody already possesses the previously mentioned characteristic augmented second, but placed against it is a melody oscillating between minor thirds (one of the darkest intervals) and augmented

fourth (one of the most dissonant of intervals). Projecting this countermelody will create a grimmer atmosphere.

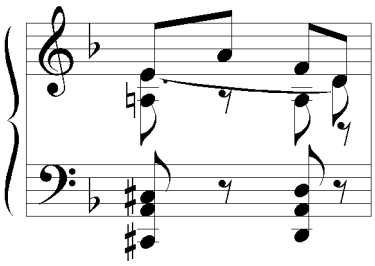
Subtle counterpoint in a deceivingly clear texture is a common feature of Medtner's works. For example, in the opening of the "poor knight" *Tale* (opus 34 no.4) there is an obvious counterpoint between the melody and the lower part of the right hand:

Figure 117: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 34 no.4, bars 1-4, reduction of principal melodies



However, there are many other more subtle melodies hidden in the texture. Some of these are indicated by Medtner: in the first bar, in addition to the two melodies indicated in figure 117, there is also a subtle E-D movement.

Figure 118: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 34 no.4, bar 1

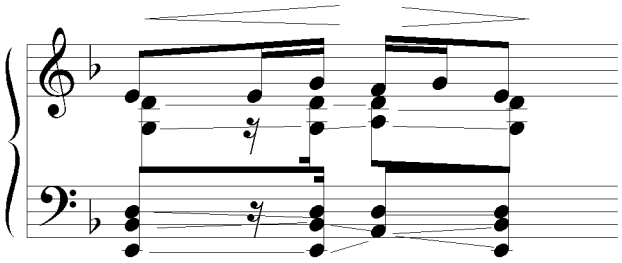


This serves several functions: (1) it is a countermelody; (2) it contrasts against the shorter nature of the other 'accompanying' parts; (3) it adds harmonic colour in an otherwise harmonically simple section (V6/5-I), it forms a 9-8 suspension against the chord. Being aware of the importance of these two, seemingly insignificant middle notes can make a tremendous difference to the sound of the bar, even making it sound more stately, pious, and representative of the 'poor knight' figure.

At other times, the subtle counterpoints aren't specifically notated by Medtner. In general chords should not be just thought of in the vertical sense, but also in their

contrapuntal possibilities. For example, the apparently simple third bar chord can be interpreted simply as a melody with chordal accompaniment — the result being somewhat dull. Alternatively, if the pianist looks at all the moving parts, there are actually three parts moving against the melody. The parts with a common note should also not be forgotten, as they provide stability in the harmonic texture which contrasts against the movement in the other parts.

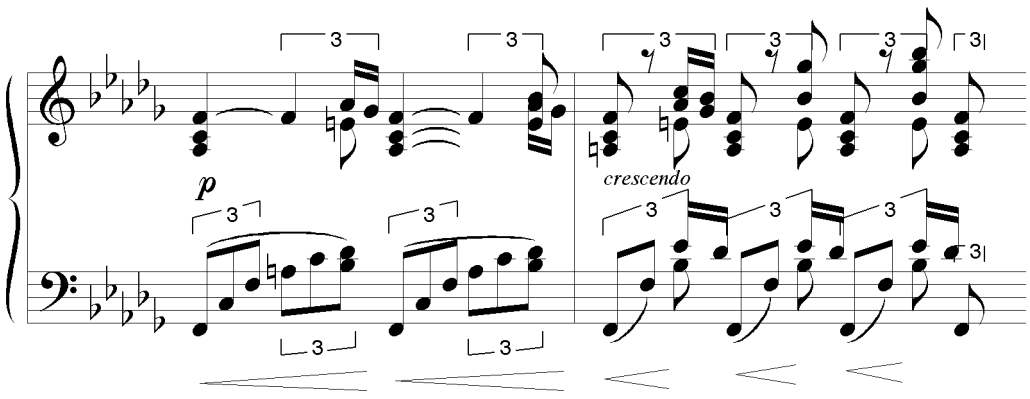
Figure 119: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 34 no.4, bar 3



Being aware of the intricate harmonic texture not only makes the bar sound more interesting, but also intensifies the *crescendo-diminuendo* effect that Medtner has indicated.

Pianists should use their harmonic knowledge and instinct when creating these harmonic colours. Most times, the direction of the counterpoint is easily visible by the layout of the notes on the page. At other times it is not. An example of this is found in the Bb minor *Tale* (opus 20 no.1)

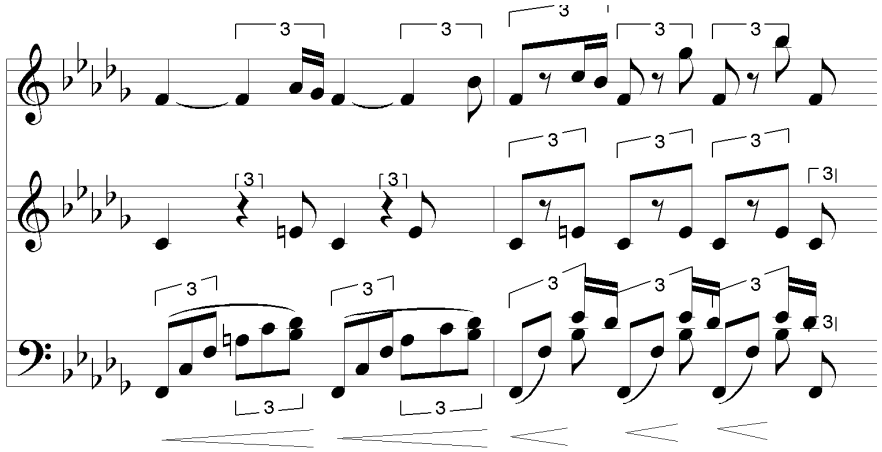
Figure 120: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 20 no.1, bars 9-10



Page 150

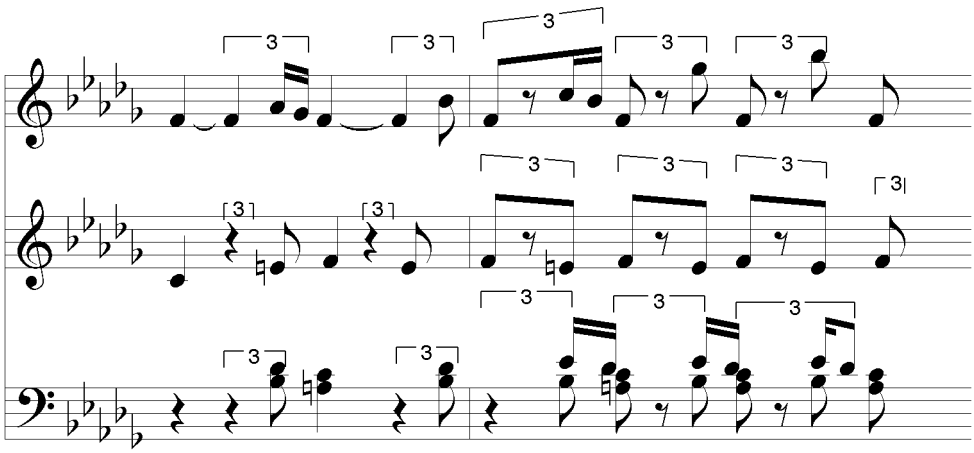
From the layout of the page, the counterpoint looks like this:

Figure 121: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 20 no.1, bars 9-10



However, this sound is quite awkward because the E, the leading note of F (which is currently being applied) does not resolve. In a case like this, pianists should consider what kind of sound Medtner is trying to create. In the *Russian Folktale*, where an intense, dark atmosphere is being created, not resolving the leading note may work. However, in the Bb minor *Tale*, the atmosphere is passionate, but a warm, positive passion: the leading note needs to resolve. When you look more closely at the score, the left hand significantly has the seventh of the diminished seventh — this too would need to resolve. From a purely technical point of view, the leading note in the right hand falls to the C, and the seventh in the left hand does not resolve. From a musical point of view, though, it is more successful for the leading note to resolve to the F (in the right hand), and the seventh to resolve down into the C (which is in the right hand).

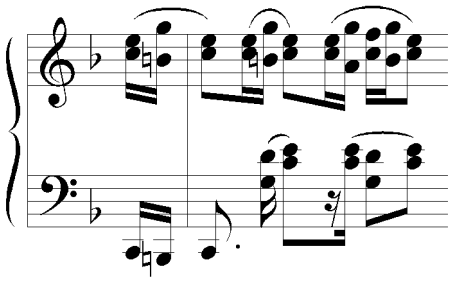
Figure 122: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 20 no.1, bars 9-10



In this case, being aware of these inner counterpoints allows the music to become more passionate — it is no longer merely two bars alternating between diminished seventh and tonic harmony disguised in virtuosic writing (a technique that has been used in plenty of virtuosic music from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries).

In general, the shaping of the melodic material, whether principal or countermelodies, is of vital importance in creating a successful performance of Medtner's music. Naturally, this applies in all melodies, but is particularly important in those melodies which are made up of motivic construction, or where counterpoint plays a role in large-scale shapes. In some cases, like in figure 123, there appears to be no conventional form of melodic shape. However, it does tend to lean instinctively toward the middle of the bar. Compositionally speaking, this is mainly created by the rhythm (the motion to the two quavers on the third beat [left hand]), and the harmonic motion (the 'perfect' cadence effect on the third beat emphasised by the rhythm).

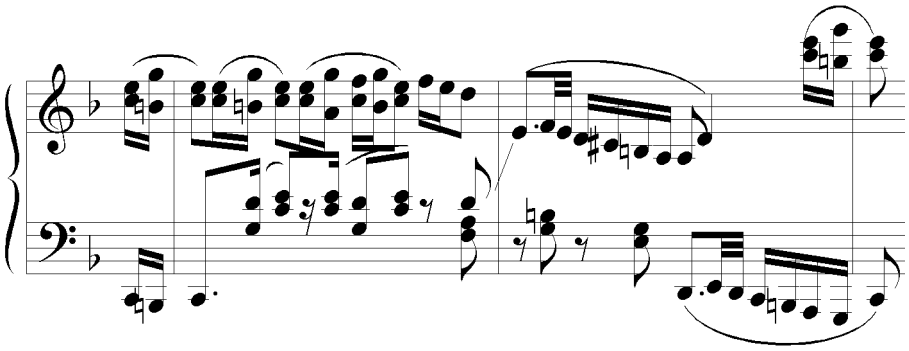
Figure 123: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 34 no.4, bar 10



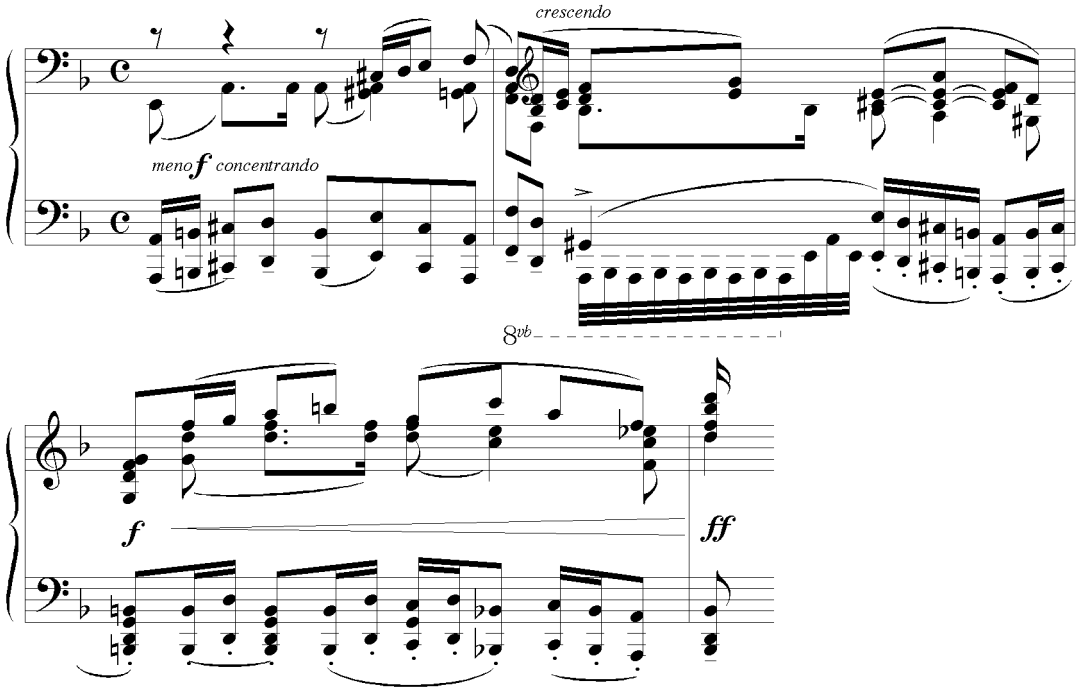
Performers can enhance this by creating this shape rather than thinking in smaller motives.

On a larger scale, though, the shape created in bar 10 is part of a two-bar shape. The danger in bars 10 and 11 (figure 124) is to to think of it in three parts: the three-note motif (first bar), the descending melodic material in the first half of bar 11 in the right hand, and the left hand passage imitating this in the second half of that bar. The result is somewhat lacking in interest. However, if the two bars are thought of as one large phrase, with each theme 'growing' out of the other (i.e., the performer creating a sense of overall direction, avoiding accentuation of the beat, etc.), the bars will make sense.

Page 152
Figure 124: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 34 no.4, bars 10-12



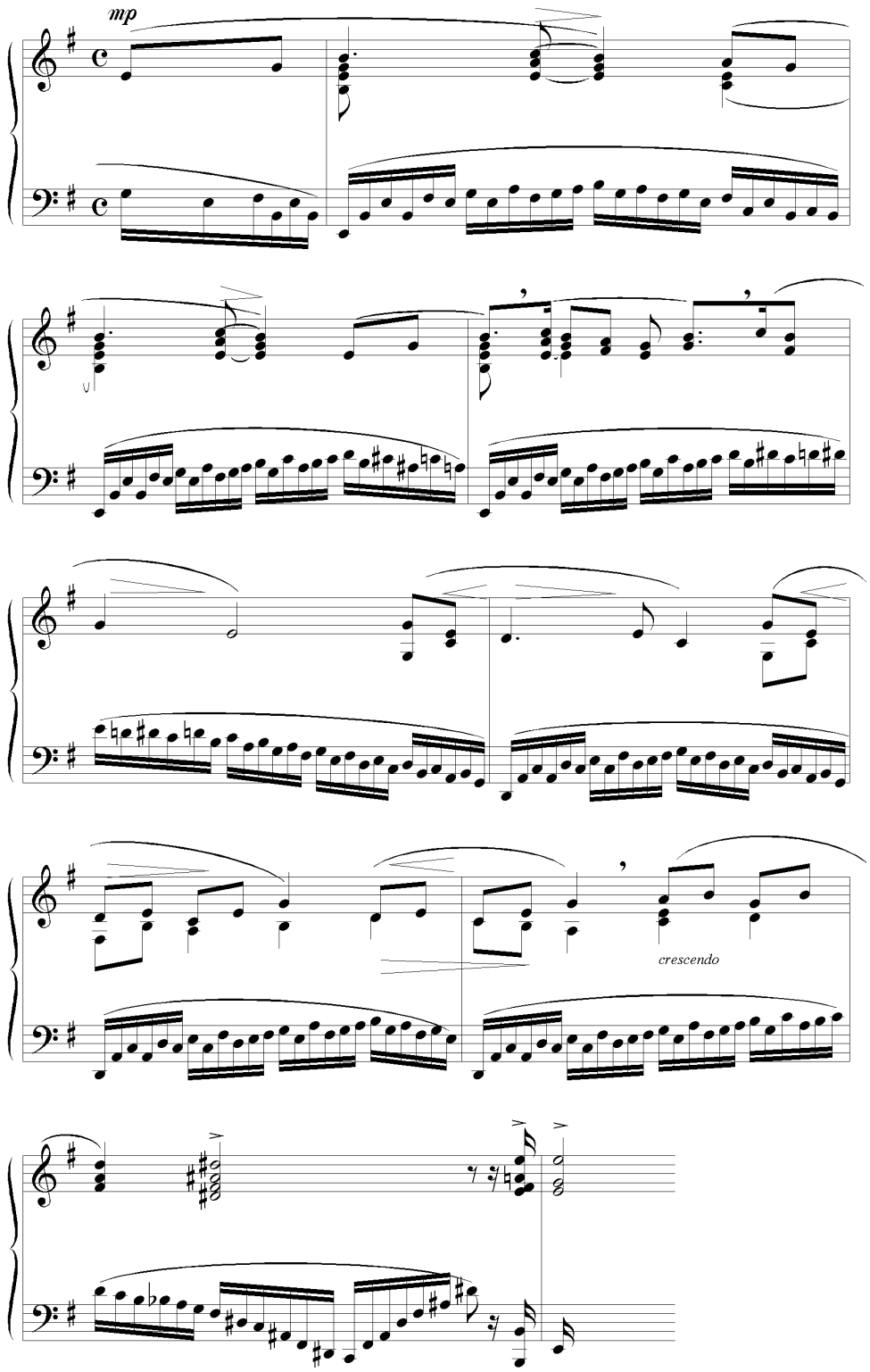
A similar example is found in an even more contrapuntal section of the same *Tale*.
Figure 125: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 34 no.4, bars 27-30



This section expands continuously rather than in 'blocks' of thematic material.

Medtner takes particular care in the notation of his music — particularly in the phrase markings. For example, in the opus 34 no. 2 *Tale*, Medtner's phrase and 'breath' indications (commas) serve to: (1) provide melodic shape; (2) make the melody more distinct from an otherwise consistent texture of flowing left hand passages.

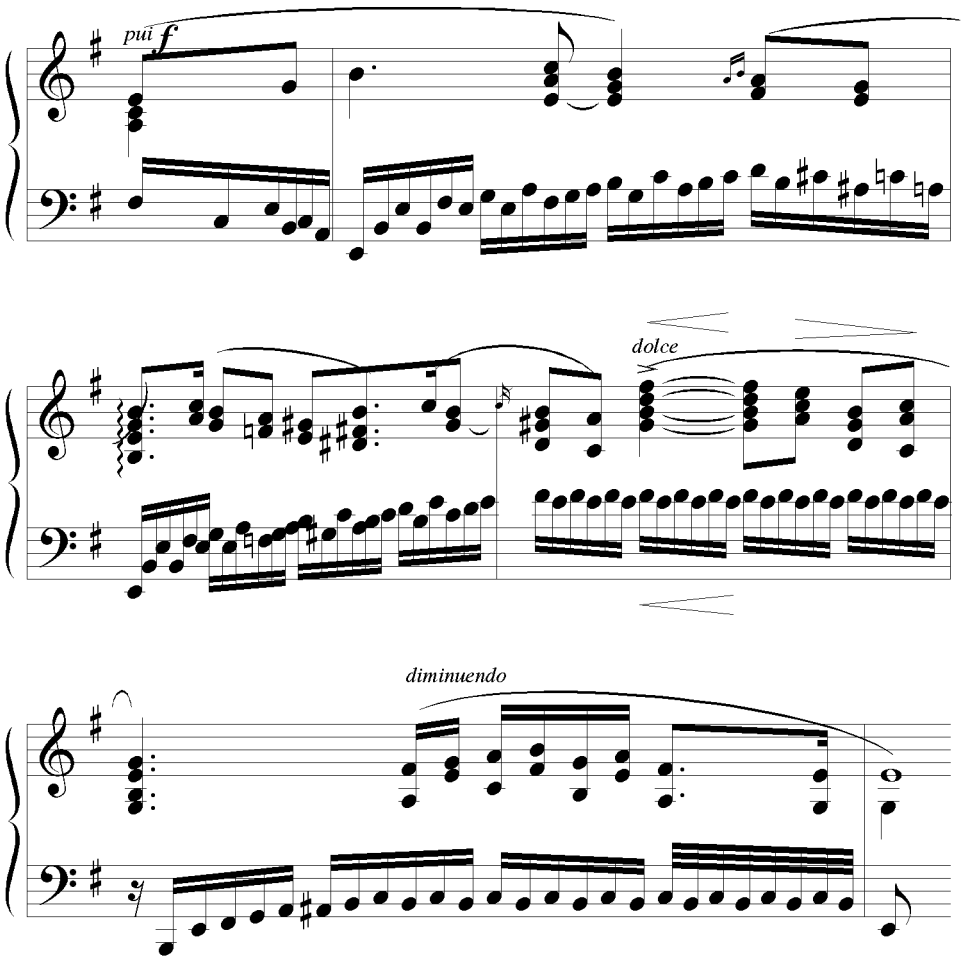
Page 153
Figure 126: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 34 no.2, bars 3-11



This does not imply that each phrase is an individual entity and should be individually shaped with a disregard for the overall musical shape: overall, the entire passage cited above is leading toward the end.

In other cases, Medtner's indications are more obscure. For example, in bar 14 of the E minor *Tale* (opus 34 no.2), Medtner simultaneously indicates that the right hand should play an accent, yet also play *dolce* in a passage marked *piu f*.

Figure 127: Medtner – *Tale*, opus 34 no.2, bars 12-15



One way to interpret this is to take note of the hairpin *crescendo* Medtner places above the accented note. This can be enhanced with the left hand. The notation of two separate crescendos (one for left and one of the right) shows Medtner's attention to detail. Why did Medtner indicate two crescendos, when that indicated in the right hand, on a single chord, is physically impossible on the piano? Its purpose is psychological: the performer should think a *crescendo* on that note (i.e., thinking through the phrase). If it were to be played on a wind instrument, where the *crescendo* is possible; the performer would most likely drop down in dynamics on the initial attack of the note to allow for the effect of the *crescendo* to be greater. A similar effect can be achieved on the piano: this is justified by several other factors: (1) the harmonic colour of the chord (a half diminished seventh) is distinctive from the surrounding harmonies, and colouring

it with a more subtle tone colour is effective (this is also supported by the *dolce* indication); (2) accent indications in this style of music not only imply an increased tone but also a little space (as seen so often in the *tenuto* markings in Rachmaninoff's music). So this accent can be interpreted primarily in the rhythmic rather than the dynamic sense (i.e., as an indication of a slight *rubato* to colour the tone colour). Naturally, this is not the only interpretation of this marking, but it does effectively achieve a pleasant colour to highlight the conclusion of the first section of the *Tale*.

Medtner's compositional language primarily rests on his use of harmony and counterpoint. Considering the detail in his works, it is no surprise that his compositional process was slow. What all this detail achieves is quite an intense emotion: such as is represented by the predominant use of awkward intervals to create angst in the *Russian Tale*, or the use of the 4-3 suspension evoking the regal nature of the "Poor Knight" tale. It is on this level of detail that Medtner creates the psychological state of the composition. Medtner's *Tales* are far from *Fairy Tales*, as they are commonly incorrectly referred to in the West. The fact that the opus 20 no.2 has no literary programmatic references whatsoever is particularly indicative of this. Even where they do have an extra-musical theme, it is a psychological theme rather than a descriptive one. Each of the programs Medtner chooses embraces an emotion: the opus 34 no.2 has the epigraph "When we have called a thing ours it departs us forever" (Tyutchev)'; the "poor knight" represents a faith in an individual's ideal (which is related to Medtner's philosophies on music); and the *Russian Tale* is an encapsulation of the Russian spirit rather than a more physical form of nationalism. Medtner goes beyond the commonly used 'encapsulations' of the states being created in the work (such as the expected augmented second in the melody of the *Russian Tale*, and a regal melody for the "poor knight"), and intensifies the emotion with his musical language — thus imposing his emotional and psychological state on the program. As with Tchaikovsky, once the performer is added to this chain of influences, the 'web' of emotions becomes even more complex. Although this music is not as readily accessible to the audience as Tchaikovsky's, if the performer communicates the subtleties of Medtner's musical language, the listener's experience of the music will be intensified.

THE RUSSIAN ELEGY

It is not difficult, considering the emotive musical language of Tchaikovsky and Medtner, to see the relationship between programmatic music and the genre of the elegy. In a way, the elegy is programmatic in the sense that the composer consciously identifies a lament as being the theme of the piece. Discussion of the "elegy" seldom seems out of context when discussing Russian music from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Fyodor Dostoevsky described, "there is an indispensable measure of suffering even in the happiness of the Russian people, for without it, its happiness is incomplete."[223] Even in the salon context in the nineteenth century, the majority of songs published, bought and sung were Russian:

> most of them are written in the minor mood — then and now considered more appropriate for the expression of elegiac moods, regret, and gentle sorrow than for raging, tragic grief ... Love songs are usually sad rather than triumphant; Tolstoy hinted that happy marriages are boring — and perhaps happy love as well. In Russia, the melancholy feeling of *toska*, or vague longing and regret, has been paramount, especially in the popular genres.[224]

Pushkin's *Elegy* is a fine literary example of the 'spirit' of the elegy.

> The mirth, now dead, that once was mudly bubbling,
> Like fumes of last night's cups is vaguely troubling;
> Not so the griefs that to those years belong:
> Like wine, I find, with age they grow more strong.
> My path is bleak — before me stretch my morrows:
> A tossing sea, foreboding toil and sorrows.
> And yet I do not wish to die, be sure;
> I want to live — think, suffer, and endure;
> And I shall know some savour of elation
> Amidst the cares, the woes, and the vexation:
> At times I shall be drunk on music still,
> Or at a moving tale my eyes will fill,
> And, as sad dusk folds down about my story,
> Love's farewell smile may shed a parting glory.[225]

The nature of each elegy, whether literary or musical, is of course individual, depending on the creator's character, biographical influences, and state of mind at the time: the influence of these factors is displayed in the elegies of Arensky and Rachmaninoff.

---

[223] Fydodor Dostoevsky. Cited in: *What Makes Russian Music Russian?* (http://sunday.mpr.org/features/0101_russianmusic/index.shtml).
[224] Richard Stites, "The Domestic Music: Music at the Home in the Twilight of Serfdom", *Intersections and Transpositions in Russian Music, Literature, and Society* (Illinois, 1998), p.189.
[225] Pushkin. Cited in: *The Poemes, Prose and Plays of Alexander Pushkin* (New York, 1936), p.72.

ARENSKY: *Elegy* (op.36, no.16)

Unfortunately, because of the lack of documentation available on Arensky, a close exploration into his emotional/psychological state at the time of writing the *Elegy* can not be undertaken. One recurring account of his personality, which would have had an influence on his music, however, was his nervousness. Tchaikovsky described him as "strange, unstable, and he is nervous unto sickness".[226] One of his students at the Moscow Conservatory (where he was a harmony teacher) described him as "nervous, with a smile on his clever, half Tartar face, always joking or snarling. All feared his laughter and adored his talent."[227] Perhaps due to his nervousness, "in the course of his tormented life he had never married nor formed any attachment of a romantic nature with a woman."[228] In his memoirs, Rimsky Korsakov wrote:

> According to all testimony, his life had run a dissipated course between wine and card playing, yet his activity as a composer was most fertile ... He did work much at composition, but that is just where he began to burn the candle at both ends. Revels, card-playing, health undermined by his mode of living, galloping consumption as the final result, dying at Nice, and death at last in Finland ... he will soon be forgotten.[229]

Arensky died at the age of 44, just over ten years after the composition of the *Elegy* (1894), of acute alcoholism.

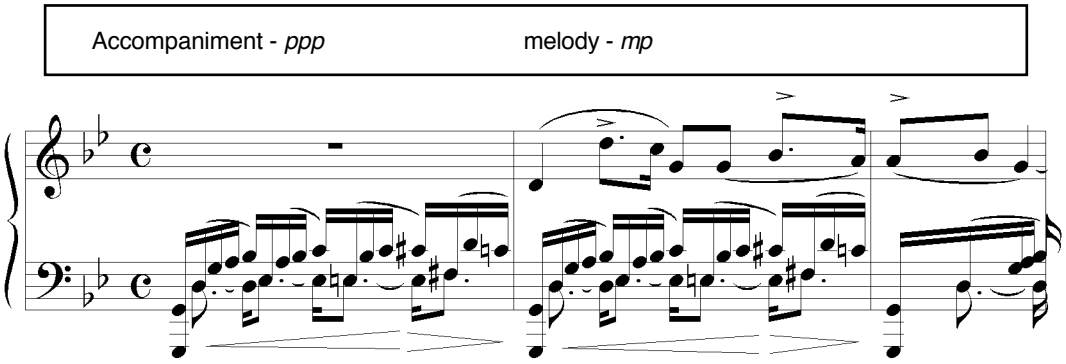
While too much speculation shouldn't be made about Arensky's state at the time he composed the *Elegy*, it is worthwhile noting that the melancholic musical language does appear to reflect his personality; it is plausible that it was written during one of his "bouts of depression."[230] Arensky's language is subtle. His music, like Medtner's, requires the performer to look beneath the surface.

Atmosphere and shape are important in Arensky's music. It can be effective to think of the opening bars as like a haze — the left hand is played as softly as possible, the rich tone of the elegiac melody grows out of this.

---

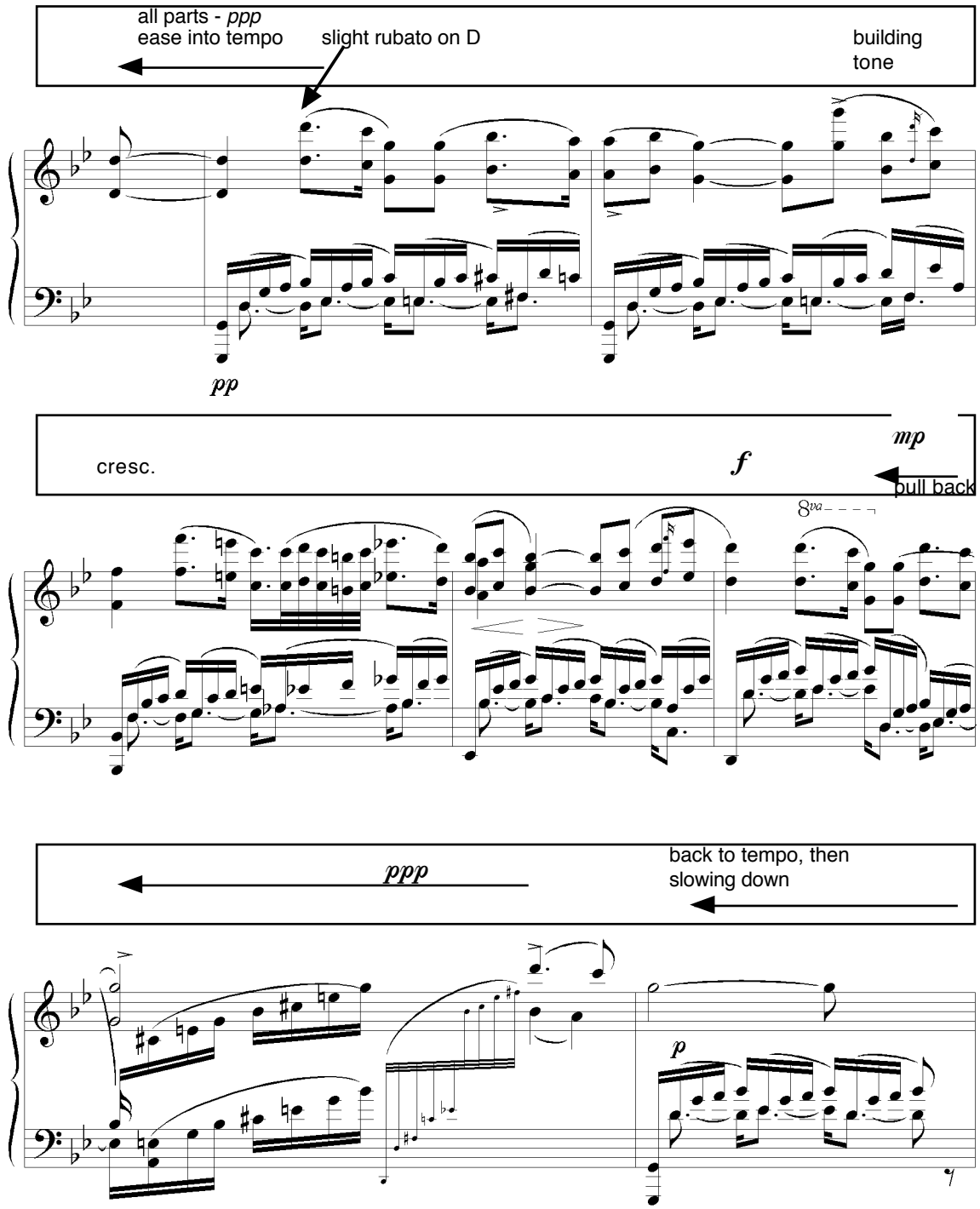
[226] Bowers, *Scriabin* (second edition), op. cit., p.65.
[227] Mikhail Bukinik. Cited in Bertensson and Leyda, *Rachmaninoff* (Indianna, 2001), p.27-8.
[228] Bowers, op. cit., p.65.
[229] Rimsky Korsakov. Cited in *Anton Arensky: Piano Music*. http://www.hyperion.records.co.uk/notes/67066.html.
[230] David Denton, program notes to *Tchaikovsky Piano Trio Op.50, Arensky Piano Trio Op.32* (Naxos, 1992), p.3.

Page 158
Figure 128: Arensky – *Elegy*, opus 36 no.16, bars 1-3



When the opening material returns after the climactic section, essentially the same as at the beginning only in octaves, it is very effective to start the melody (as well as the accompaniment), as soft as possible and slightly under tempo — moving back into tempo by the end of the bar, and progressing to a fuller tone by the second phrase. The performer can then continue to build until the climax in bar 25. This can then subside to a very soft atmosphere for the rolled chord, which instinctively wants to slow in tempo.

Page 159
Figure 129: Arensky – *Elegy*, opus 36 no.16, bars 21-27

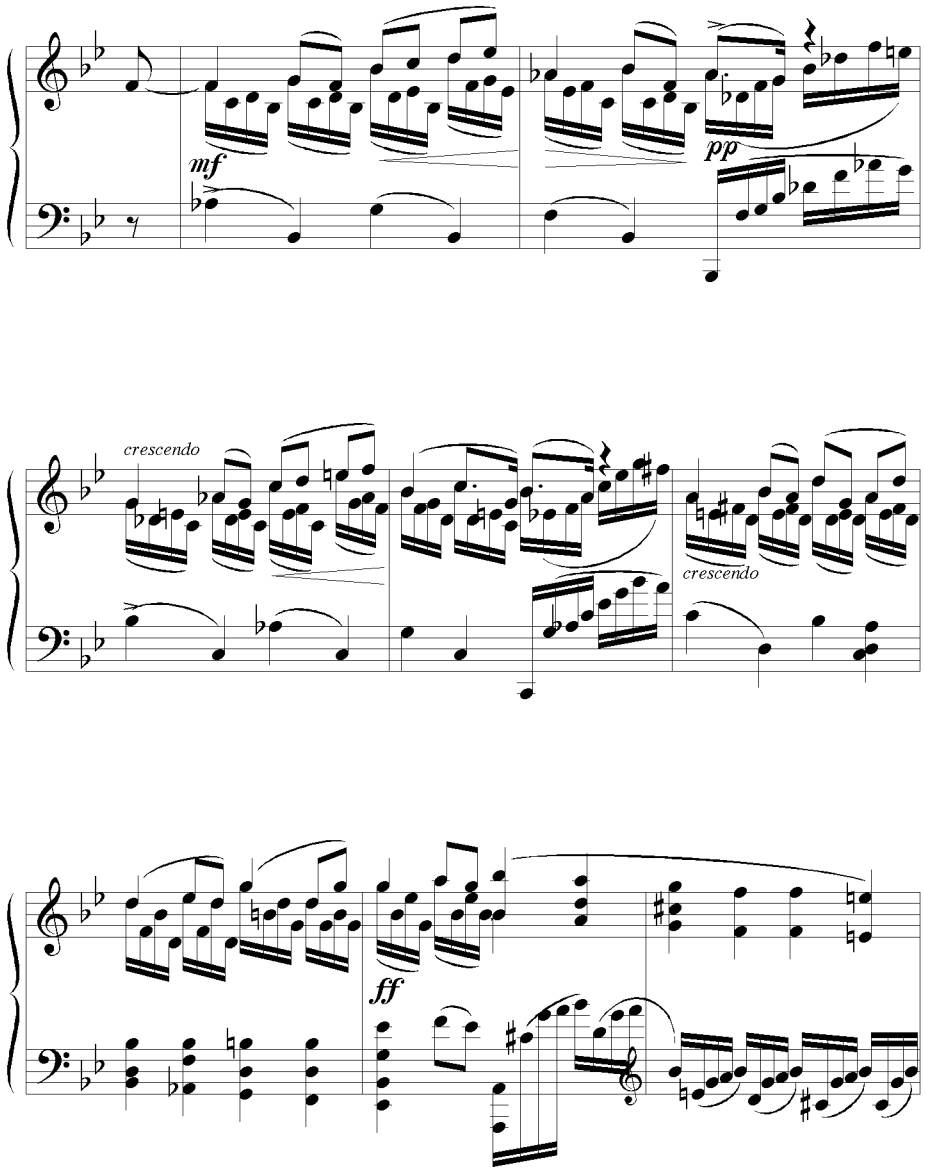


This shape is similar to the shape at the opening (where Arensky actually marked the expressive indications). The main difference in my interpretation in the second occurrence is that the extremes are further exaggerated: the melody starts softer, highlighted by *rubato*, the climax is larger, and the tempo reduction at the end is greater. The purpose of the first section (from a performer's/listener's point of view) is to

introduce the listener to the material. By the second occurrence, the listener will naturally be more receptive to the material (it is, at times, easier to be moved by something you are more familiar with), so the performer can add extra colours to the music: a technique that has been formalised in music for centuries (e.g., the *da capo* aria). In the case of the *da capo* aria, however, the main purpose of the embellishment in the repeated section is to display virtuosity. In this case, it is to contribute to the atmosphere with subtle colourations.

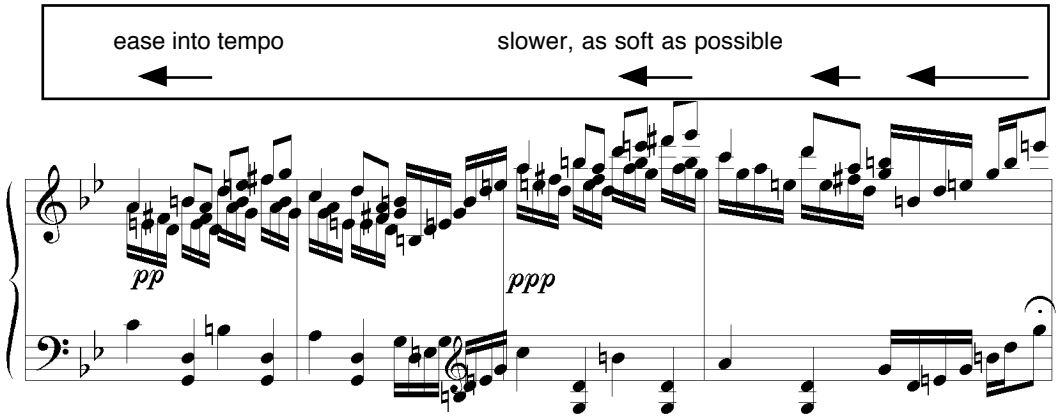
A similar effect is found in the coda. The coda begins with the material that was used in the passionate climax.

Page 161
Figure 130: Arensky – *Elegy*, op.36 no.16, bars 9-16



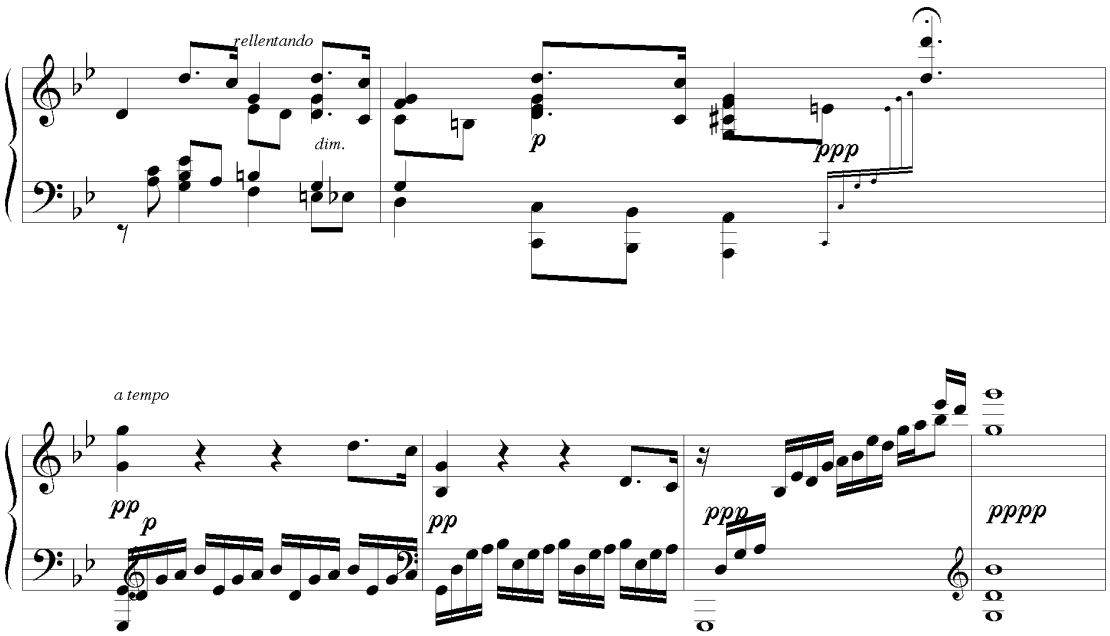
When it returns in the coda, however, the bleak nature of the 'elegy' is maintained: this is merely a distant echo of the previous theme. Pianists can highlight this, once again, by exaggerating the existing indications. It is effective to start the first bar at the marked *pianissimo*, easing into the tempo. When the material is repeated, the material is played as softly as possible, with a considerable use of *rubato*.

Page 162
Figure 131: Arensky – *Elegy*, opus 36 no.16, bars 28-31



This contrasts completely to the following *fortissimo* bars, which are the final cry of anguish (almost as if to say "I am fed up with this melancholy"), before the prevailing bleak atmosphere returns.

Figure 132: Arensky – *Elegy*, opus 36 no.16, bars 32-37



In Arensky's *Elegy*, the performer's interpretation is vital in contributing to the emotional effect of the work. Like Tchaikovsky's *Seasons*, if performed without imagination, the general emotion of Arensky would still penetrate, probably prompting the listener to think "nice tune". With its deserved interpretation, the psychological state of both Arensky and the performer can further move the listener's emotions.

RACHMANINOFF: *Elegy* (opus 3 no.1)

Rachmaninoff's *Elegy* displays a more outward, dramatic kind of melancholy than Arensky's. When considering Rachmaninoff's *Elegy*, it should be remembered that he was only nineteen when he wrote it. This does not undermine the depth of the work: accounts of his personality to this point imply that he had already formed his character. Nikolai Avierno wrote that

> I believe I am not wrong in saying that at the age of seventeen or eighteen, Rachmaninoff had a completely formed character: he was self-centred but not arrogant, he held himself with dignity, behaving simply and nicely with us, but there was no one with whom he could be said to be "fraternal". When I was later told that he was "haughty and conceited", I could assure everyone that I had never detected a trace of hauteur or conceit in him. Such an appearance, strange as it may seem, must have derived from his shyness.[231]

By this stage, music for Rachmaninoff (like Tchaikovsky), seems to have been a need — a force which was capable of pulling him out of depression. In 1891 he wrote "when I feel depressed, I can't do a thing — I can only work."[232] At another point, he wrote that "after the song I wrote to you about in my last letter, I also wrote a prélude for piano [F major]; after this prélude I have grown a little calmer and stronger in my weakened spirits. All is not as bad as the song."[233]

The period in which Rachmaninoff wrote the *Elegy* (1892) was not an entirely comfortable one. Having graduated from the Moscow Conservatory that year, Rachmaninoff had to establish his career as a freelance musician. His career had slowed to a "tortoise pace"[234] and Rachmaninoff had become, at times, understandably depressed. He wrote to Natalia Skalon:

> Your letters make me feel good, but otherwise I am in a foul mood, for I am definitely not well. This isn't the cause of my melancholy, the main thing being that I'm afraid to take to my bed completely. That would be quite untimely now. I've just started to be attracted to work, and suddenly all this has to be given up for some stupid reason — the lack of money to buy a winter coat. And besides, I hate to be ill away from home. A nuisance to oneself and a burden to others. For me there's nothing more unpleasant than that. I feel oppressed now. I can't move from here, for I am unable to get a permit [to change residence]. Every office I go to feeds me "tomorrow." They make me terribly angry.

[231] Nikolai Avierno, cited in Bertensson & Leyda, op. cit., p. 27.
[232] Rachmaninoff, cited in ibid., p.30.
[233] Ibid., p.37.
[234] Bertensson & Leyda, op. cit., p.49.

> Recently I've been getting to bed late and getting up early, so my head is now heavy — after playing I get terribly tired, and my head gets heavier and heavier. A sort of apathy for everything setting in. After playing I can't do anything, so the lecture I was planning was halted at the point where you heard about it.[235]

Although written a few months after the elegy was composed, a letter to Natalia Skalon in February 1893 reveals some issues which Rachmaninoff had perhaps pondered previously.

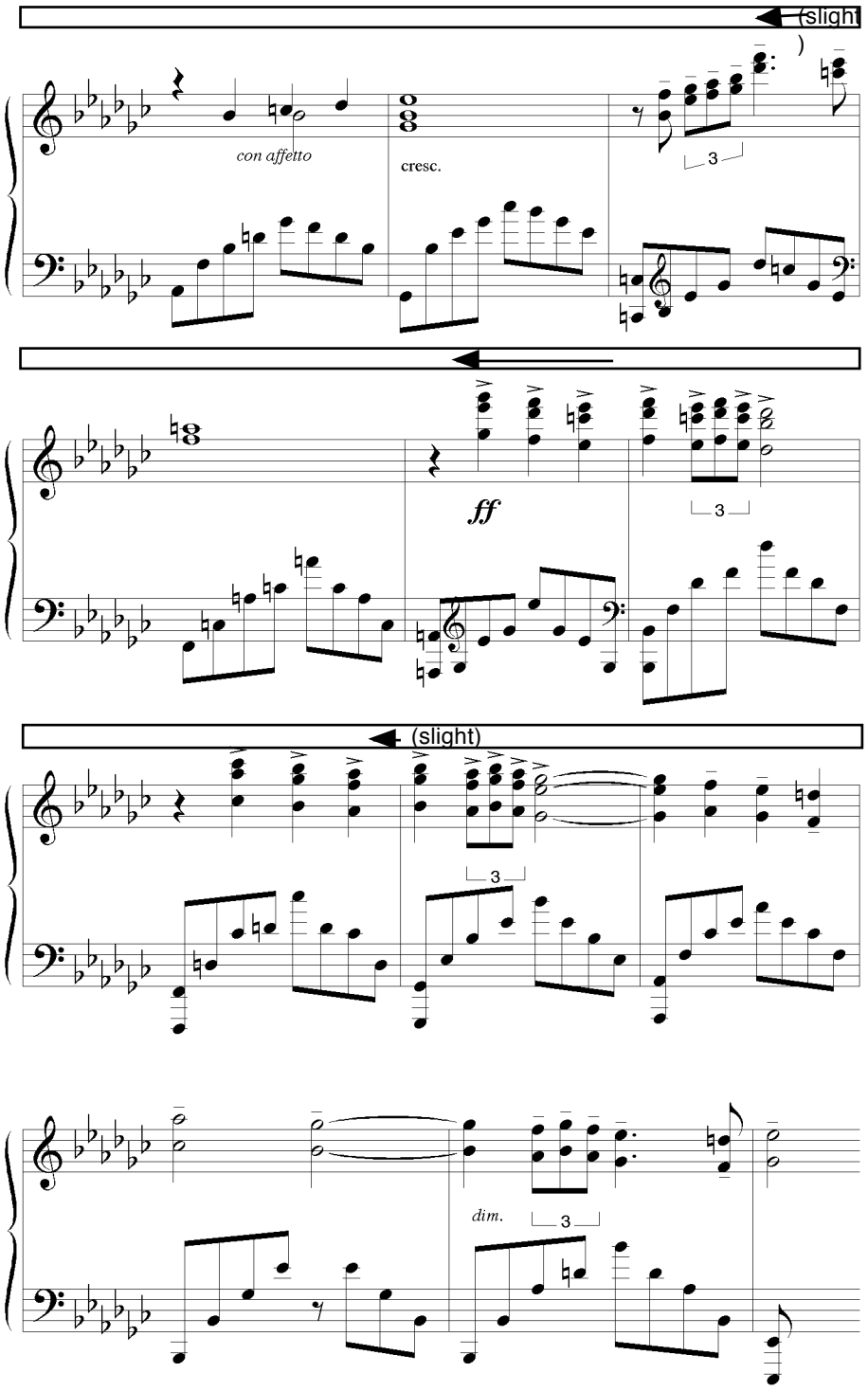
> You were not mistaken in believing that my silence was caused by difficulties in my life. That is the genuine truth. Yes, my soul bears a large burden of grief. It is unnecessary to dwell on it, for this will not eliminate it but merely increase it, to talk about it, and analyze [sic.] it.
>
> Actually, all my relatives seemed agreed on killing me and laying me in my coffin — not intentionally, of course, but simply through circumstances. My closest relatives console me in this way: my father lives a most senseless life; my mother is gravely ill; my older brother accumulates debts that God alone knows how he is to repay (in the present circumstances little hope can be placed on me); my younger brother is terribly lazy and is sure to be stuck for another year in his grade; my grandmother is at the point of death...
>
> You will tell me over and over: "Take treatments." But how can moral pain be treated? How can you change the whole nervous system which I've already tried to change with several nights of merrymaking and drunkenness? This didn't help ... People often tell me, and you too in your last letter: throw off this melancholy — at your age and with your talent, it's a shame. But everyone forgets that besides being (perhaps) a talented musician, I am also a man, like everyone else, demanding from life the same things that others do...[236]

This emotional state is clearly seen in his *Elegy*. Compositionally speaking, of all the works discussed in this chapter, this is one of the most direct in expressing its elegiac emotion. As in all Rachmaninoff's music, the overall emotional shape is already carefully paced (compositionally speaking). The performer's role is to intensify this given shape. This can be achieved by using *rubato* to heighten the climax:

---

[235] Rachmaninoff, cited in ibid., p.34-50.
[236] Ibid., p.52.

Figure 133: Rachmaninoff – *Elegy*, opus 3 no.1, bars 22-33



Rubato can be used in conjunction with tonal colour at certain moments, such as the start of a new thematic idea (figure 134a), or to highlight harmonic colours (figure 134b).

Figure 134a: Rachmaninoff – *Elegy*, opus 3 no.1, bars 18-21

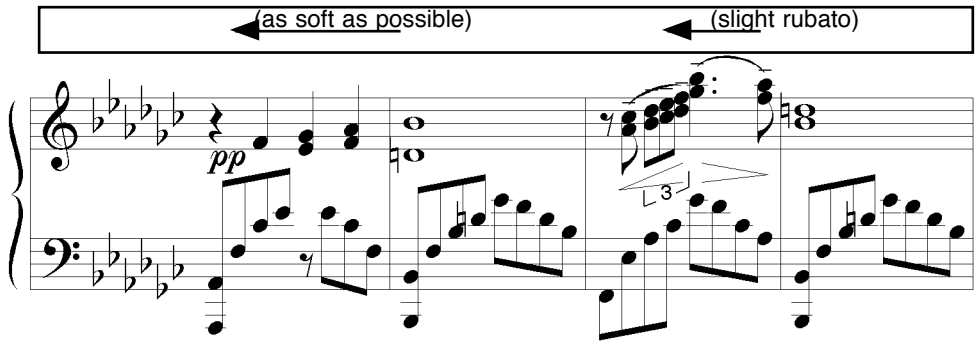
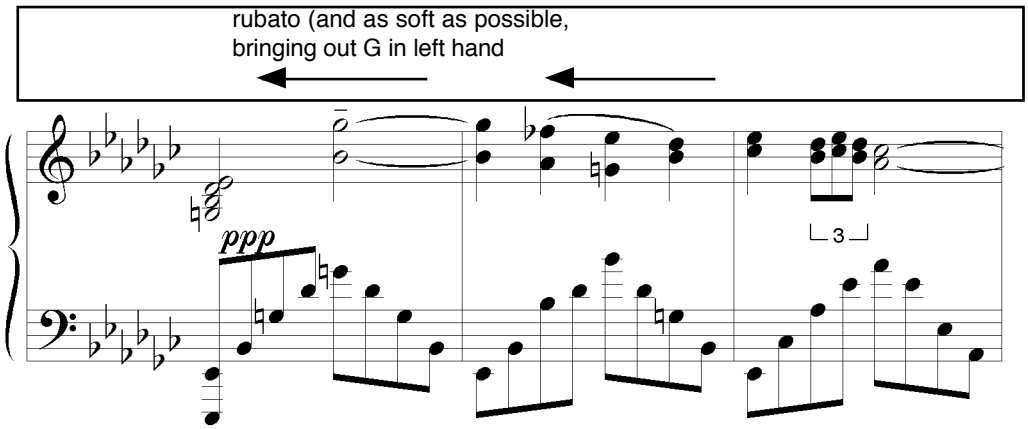
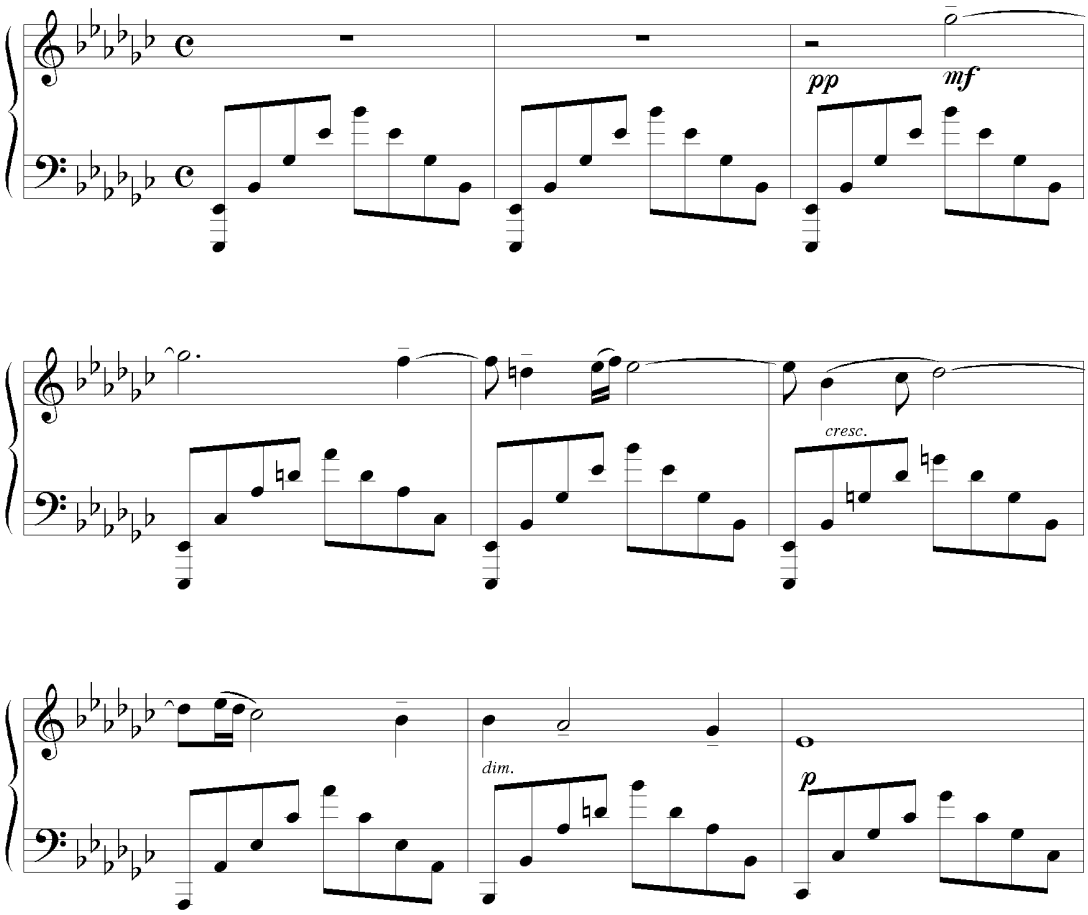


Figure 134b: Rachmaninoff – *Elegy*, opus 3 no.1, bars 90-2



As was found in the performance of Arensky's *Elegy*, it is also effective to explore the extreme colours of the piano's soft range. Even when playing softly, the elegiac element can be created by drawing attention to certain registers. For example, in the opening bars, it is effective to project the repeated E flats in the left hand — particularly for the opening six bars, which function as a pedal point that helps to create the sombre atmosphere. The other notes in the left hand can be played as soft as possible. The right hand will naturally project the melody in a rich tone.

Page 167
Figure 135: Rachmaninoff – *Elegy*, opus 3 no.1, bars 1-9



Once the bass completes the pedal point and moves onto the cadential figure, the other notes in the left hand can be brought up: this draws attention to the harmonic motion, and supports the shape of the phrase. Overall, the bass notes play an important role in creating a rich tone, particularly in the climaxes.

By studying the composer's personality and cultural and biographical influences at the time of composition, a correlation can be found between the psychological state of the works and the possible state of the composer. Given, in most of these works, a relatively simple musical language, the performer can intensify the emotion by drawing attention to the intricacies of the work: predominately harmonic and contrapuntal colours. The result is an increased intimacy with the work, and with the composer's psychosis — both for the performer and the listener experiencing the music. It is in this way, more than in any literary connotations, that these works a programmatic.

CHAPTER 4

THE RUSSIAN PIANO SONATA

The preceding chapters of this paper have demonstrated how both 'intimate' genres, such as the miniatures and programmatic music, and 'technical works' are imbued with the personalities and philosophies of the Russian composers. It is no surprise that this is also seen in the sonatas produced in this era. There are two principal benefits of including a study of the Russian sonata genre in this thesis. The most obvious is that it enables discussion of performance practice issues in larger scale Russian solo works (which constitute a substantial portion of the repertoire). More important, though, is the deeper significance of these larger scale works.

The sonata genre, for Romantic musicians, was seen as an ideal achievement in instrumental writing. The reasons for composers writing sonatas could be for a didactic purpose, or to promote themselves as a performer, but seldom for financial benefit. Schumann wrote in 1841 that the sonata "had to struggle with three powerful enemies ... the public reluctant to buy, the publisher reluctant to print, and the composers themselves thus continue (though perhaps for inner reasons), to write in an old-fashioned style."[237] The 'inner reasons' he mentions here could be reflective of an artist's desire for perfection. The sonata genre, Schumann states, requires "both capability of effort and artistic experience."[238] For composers like Nikolay Medtner and Alexander Scriabin, whose exploration of musical language had spiritual significance, the sonata can be seen as one of the most intense expressions of their emotions. A study of their musical language and its impact on performance practice will achieve a closer link between the performer and this emotion. This will be demonstrated through detailed analysis of Medtner's *Sonata in G minor* (opus 22) and Scriabin's *Sonata No.9 ("Black Mass")*.

The musical language of both Medtner and Scriabin is a personal one: both composers had little respect for other musical 'fashions' of the time, nor were they forced into conforming to one. Composers of the Soviet era, however, did not have this luxury. It is useful to see how the concept of the sonata changed in this period. This,

---

[237] Robert Schumann. Cited in: William Newmann, "Sonata, §IV, 1: Romantic, definitions", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1995), vol.17, p.492.
[238] Schumann. Cited in: Newmann, *The Sonata Since Beethoven* (Chapel Hill, 1969), p.61.

and its impact on performance practice, will be explored in the study of Dmitry Kabalevsky's *Sonata No.3* (opus 46), and the smaller scale *Sonatine* by Alexander Baltin.

MEDTNER: *Sonata in G minor* (opus 22)

Medtner's high regard for musical ideals has already been studied in considerable detail in Chapter 3. Prehn, in his article "Medtner and Art", captures Medtner's ideology appropriately:

> ...the most important article in Medtner's creed was that art is one of the most precious gifts of God to the human race and that the artist, as recipient of that gift, is first and foremost God's chosen servant and should work and act accordingly.[239]

In chapter 3, Medtner's slow compositional process was noted as being representative of a kind of consistent moral guidance.[240] The G minor *Sonata* is certainly consistent with this process. It was written over a period of almost ten years. The sketches of the first subject date back to 1901, when it was planned as a three-movement violin sonata. It was then developed into a "Concerto-Sonata" for solo piano. This was later abandoned as Medtner decided to include the F minor Prelude (a work from his student days) as an interlude in the development. It took Medtner three more versions for the composition to reach its final stage. The introduction was not added until after the rest of the sonata was complete. The sonata was completed in approximately 1909-10, and first performed in March 1910.

Medtner's ideology can most strongly be found in his musical language. To start to understand this language, it is valuable for performers to be aware of Medtner's ideas discussed in *The Muse and the Fashion*. Although it was written some time after the G minor sonata, Medtner's thoughts tend to have remained consistent throughout his life, so the approach is likely to be similar.

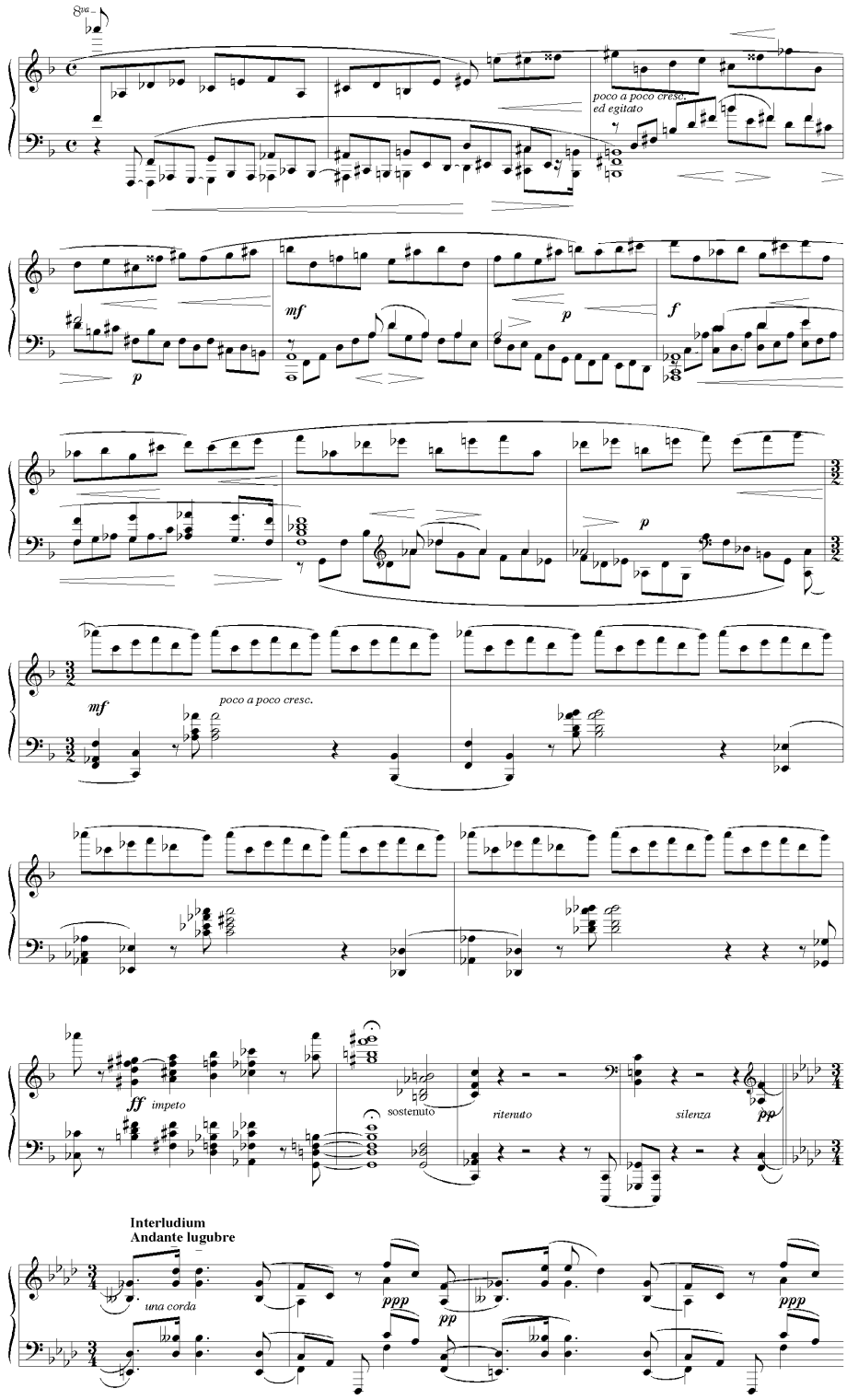
Medtner believed that "the true function of music is not to entertain or distract, but to attract, collect, hypnotically, concentrate the feelings and thoughts of the listener." A fine example of this can be found at the end of the development of the G

---

[239] Prehn, "Medtner and Art", *Nicolas Medtner: A Tribute to his Art and Personality*, ed. Richard Holt, p.189-90. Cited in: William Bloomquist, *The* Fairy Tales *of Nikolai Medtner* (Dissertation, 1993), p.150.
[240] Rimm, op. cit., p.138.

minor *Sonata*. The music builds in tempo and texture (Medtner's precise musical language will be discussed later in the paper), until it halts dramatically with a restatement of the opening material. This is followed by silence. The bleak interlude emerges from this silence (bar 197).

Figure 136: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 179-200



The inclusion of this 'interlude' before the recapitulation goes against the traditional principle of sonata form. Traditionally, the main purpose of the recapitulation is to serve as the release from the tension created by the development. In many respects, however, the interlude gives more meaning to the surrounding drama. The intensive build up becomes more a psychological one (a concept which will be expanded upon shortly). The effect of the following silence and interlude could be likened, as Barrie Martyn does, to a "profound spiritual questioning."[241]

This relates to a central concept in Medtner's theory of music: that it is a language of the senses. These

> can be reduced to similar correlative notions: unity and plurality; homogeneity (of plurality) and its diversity; simplicity and complexity; repose and motion; contemplation and action; light and shadow, etc.[242]

Naturally, for the performer, this implies that Medtner is seeking contrast: the G minor *Sonata* contains great potential for these contrasts through dramatic gestures. Such gestures are expected in large-scale virtuosic sonatas of the nineteenth-century. However, Medtner's language is a more subtle one. In *The Muse and the Fashion* Medtner constructs a table listing how he perceived music can play on the senses (shaded portion of figure 137). The 'fundamental' senses are listed ('Centre'), and how they can be expanded upon is listed under 'Encirclement'. Significantly, Medtner wrote that music must always gravitate "towards unity and simplicity through co-ordination."[243] The annotations on the right side of the column suggest ways these theories could be applied to performance practice.

---

[241] Martyn, *Medtner*, p.75.
[242] Medtner. Cited in: Bloomquist, op. cit., p.28.
[243] Ibid., p.29.

Figure 137:

MEDTNER'S ORIGINAL TABLE		***POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS IN PERFORMANCE PRACTICE***	
AN APPROXIMATE SCHEME OF THE FUNDAMENTAL SENSES OF THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE			
CENTRE	**ENCIRCLEMENT (gravitation)**	**CENTRE**	**ENCIRCLEMENT (gravitation)**
(1) The contemplated sound (heard by the inner ear)	the emitted or affixed sound	The performer's inner musical voice.	Achieving this inner voice on the piano. This is attained with an awareness of concepts 2-9.
(2) time, the plane of music (the horizontal line of harmony - the placement of musical sounds)	the movement in time of musical senses and elements (the vertical line of harmony - the capacity of musical sounds)	Tempo. Musical direction (phrasing). Attention to counterpoint.	Attention to individual sonorities of chords.
(3) the tonic (the root note of mode, scale, tonality)	the mode, the scale, the tonality	Awareness, in a melodic sense, of the function and colour of the tonic.	Awareness of tonality (in a linear sense) as a semiotic device (i.e., the expressive potentials of varying kinds and degrees of scales).
		Related to, but differing from, concept no.6	
(4) the diatonic scale (diatonism)	the chromatic scale (chromaticism)	Attention to uses of both these scales and exploration of the potential for psychological contrasts. This could be applied at various levels, from slight chromatic inflections, to more complex chromaticism.	
		Diatonicism generally used in more emotionally stable passages (as would be expected).	Uses of chromaticism as an intensifying device.
		Devices can be enhanced with rubato, tone colour, shaping, etc.	
(5) consonance (an interval)	dissonance (an interval)	Awareness, as a performer, of the expressive powers of intervals. Could be achieved through subtle rubatos, shifts in tone, etc.	
(6) the tonic (the fundamental triad)	the dominant (a triad that is the co-ordinate of tonality)	Awareness of the harmonic structure of the piece. In particular, the significance of the tonic chord (and note) as the most stable tonal area.	Awareness of the essential pulls of dominant to tonic.
(7) tonality	modulation	Awareness of the overall harmonic structure of the work and the psychological significance of those sections in the tonic.	Exploration of the potential of highlighting large-scale modulation through other colouristic devices.

(8) prototypes of consonant chords — the triads and their inversions	prototypes of dissonant chords — four note formations (chords of the seventh) and five-note formations (chords of the ninth) and their inversions.	Explorations of the differences in colours of inversions (i.e., particular attention to harmonic and contrapuntal colours in the bass).	Awareness of parts of the chords such as the 7th and 9th and their resolution (possibilities for counterpoint which is not specifically notated). Explorations of the differences in colours of inversions of dissonant chords (i.e., particular attention to harmonic and contrapuntal colours in the bass, and potential for that to interact with the dissonant note).
(9) prototypes of consonant and dissonant chords and their inversions.	casual harmonic formations (suspensions, anticipations, passing, auxiliary and sustained notes)	Attention to the subtleties of clear harmonic textures, where the colour is reliant purely on consonance and dissonance, colour through inversions.	Exploration of colours created by decorative devices.

The most striking aspect about Medtner's original table is the heavy emphasis on harmony — both in the vertical and the horizontal sense. This is not surprising, considering his music relies so much on these kinds of colours. The incredible attention to detail is noteworthy. It is useful to discuss in further detail specific examples of Medtner's theories and how they can be related to performance practice in the G minor *Sonata.*

(1) The contemplated sound and the emitted sound

Essentially, these two factors constitute the primary challenge for both the composer and performer. For the composer, his complete musical language must correlate to the emotion he is trying to communicate. This, in many ways, comes back to Schumann's concept of writing the sonata more out of an "inner need" than for any other reason. It also explains Medtner's slow compositional process and attention to detail — particularly in structure, harmony, and counterpoint.

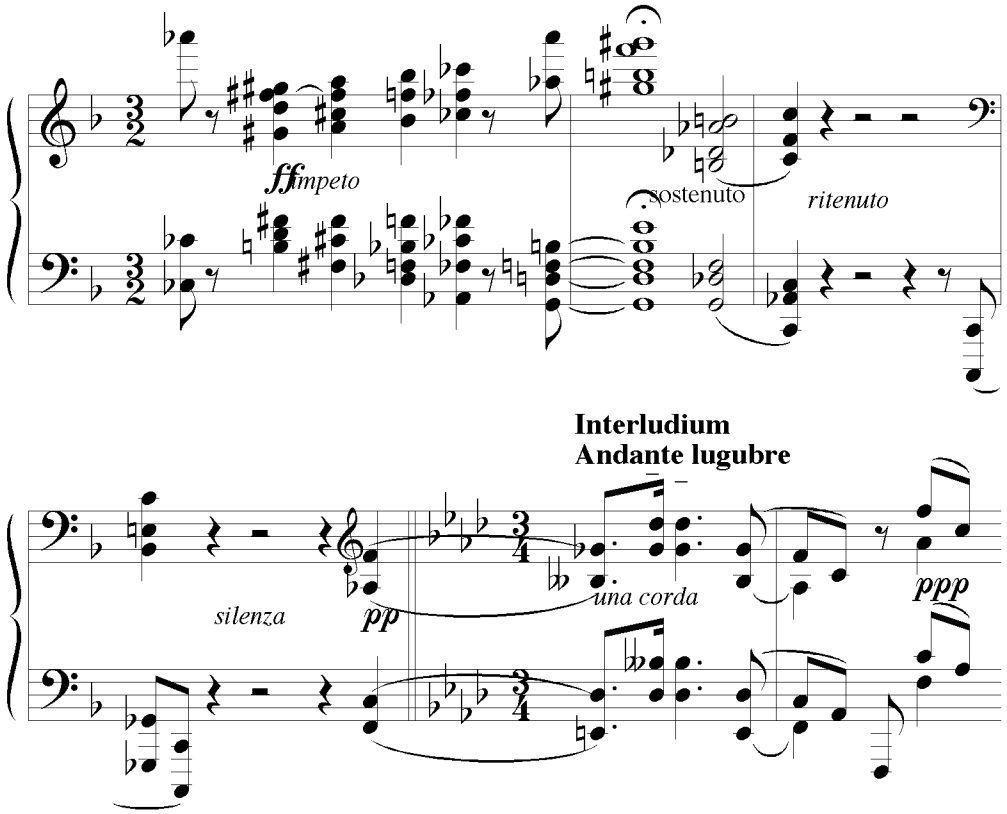
For performers, the challenge is similar to that posed when discussing the etude (chapter 2). Pianists must discipline themselves with technique to enable the contemplated sound to be communicated to the audience. This technique, however, should not be on a purely technical scale, but also encompassing a strong awareness of the emotive elements of the work. These are found, in part, in his descriptive expression markings — indications such as *poco a poco svegliando* ("awakening, little by little"), *acciaccato* ("full of pain"), and description of the second subject as *timidezza*

("timid"). The ultimate key to unlocking these emotions, however, is through the remaining eight more detailed fundamental senses.

(2) The horizontal versus the vertical planes of music

Essentially, the horizontal aspect of music is related to time and shape, though it can be analysed on several levels. The principle of time, for example, applies from large-scale tempo changes to subtle *rubatos*. At times, the most effective use of time can be with silence. The prime example of this is found between the development and the interlude.

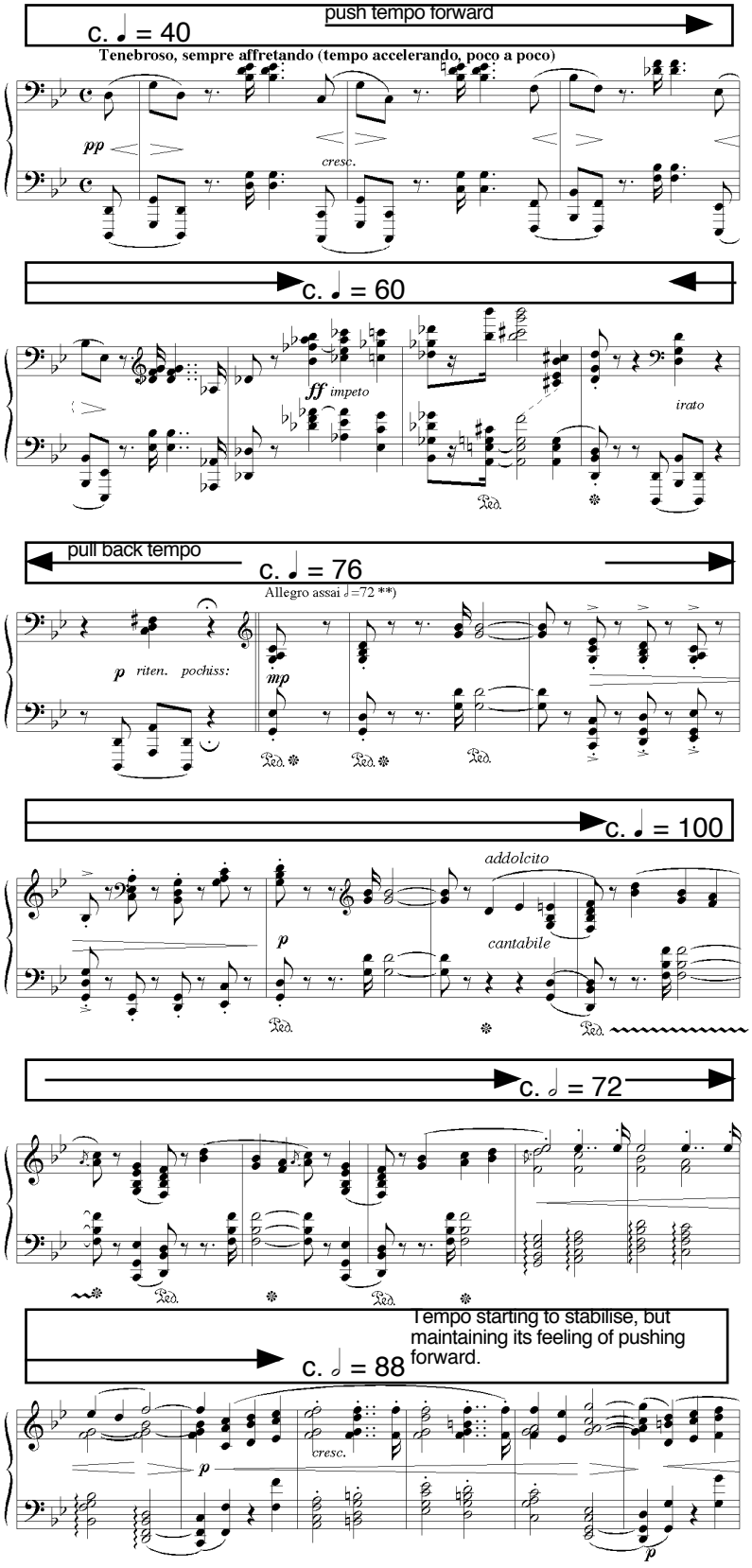
Figure 138: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 193-198

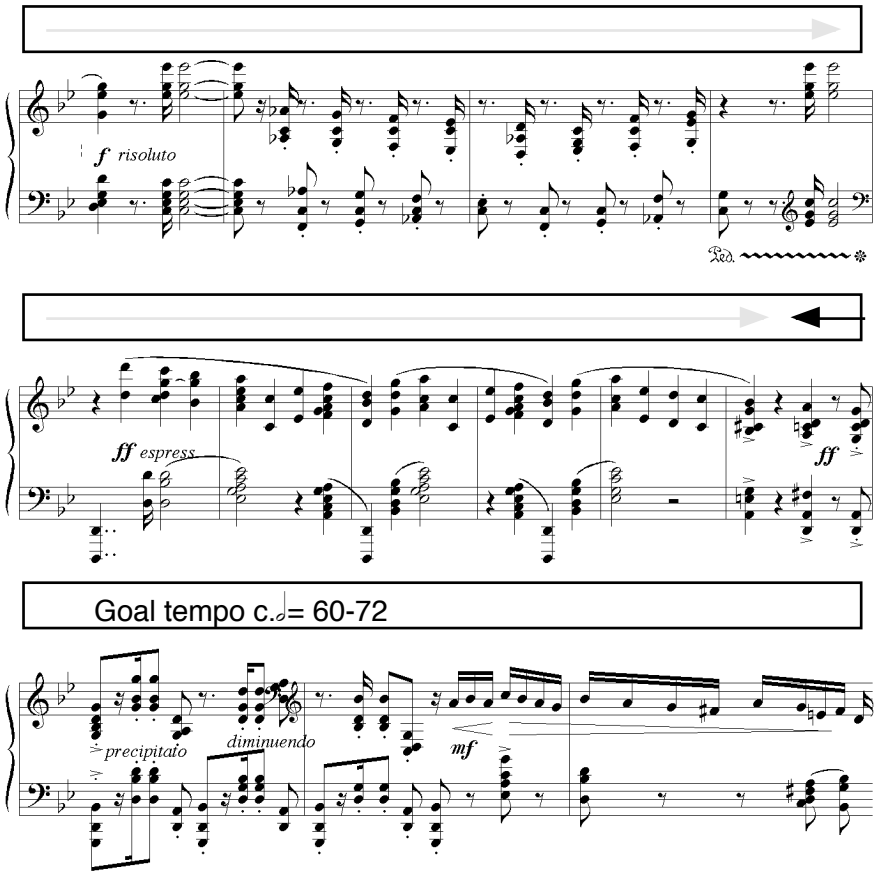


The amount of time taken over both these silences is completely instinctive. Medtner indicates that it is not to be 'measured' by placing a *ritenuto* in bar 195. By having the silence, Medtner is in fact achieving his goal of "hypnotically concentrating the feelings and thoughts of the listener", placing much more significance on the bleak nature of the interlude.

Another aspect of the horizontal plane of music is related not only to time, but also to shape. Medtner indicates that "all tempo changes should be gradual and unnoticed" (except for the interlude and the return to the *Allegro assai*). Performers have to decide the exact point where the new tempo is reached. In the opening of the sonata, for example, the work starts quite dark and slow (approximately ♩= 40 in my performance). A logical place for the new tempo of *Allegro assai* to stabilise is bar 36: this is due in part to the clear V13-I cadence here, marking the end of the harmonic shape of the whole first section. Also, bars 36-7 serve to 'announce' the start of the new thematic material in bar 37. A broad tempo map of this section is shown in figure 4. This chart does not include subtle *rubatos*.

Page 176
Figure 139: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 1-37



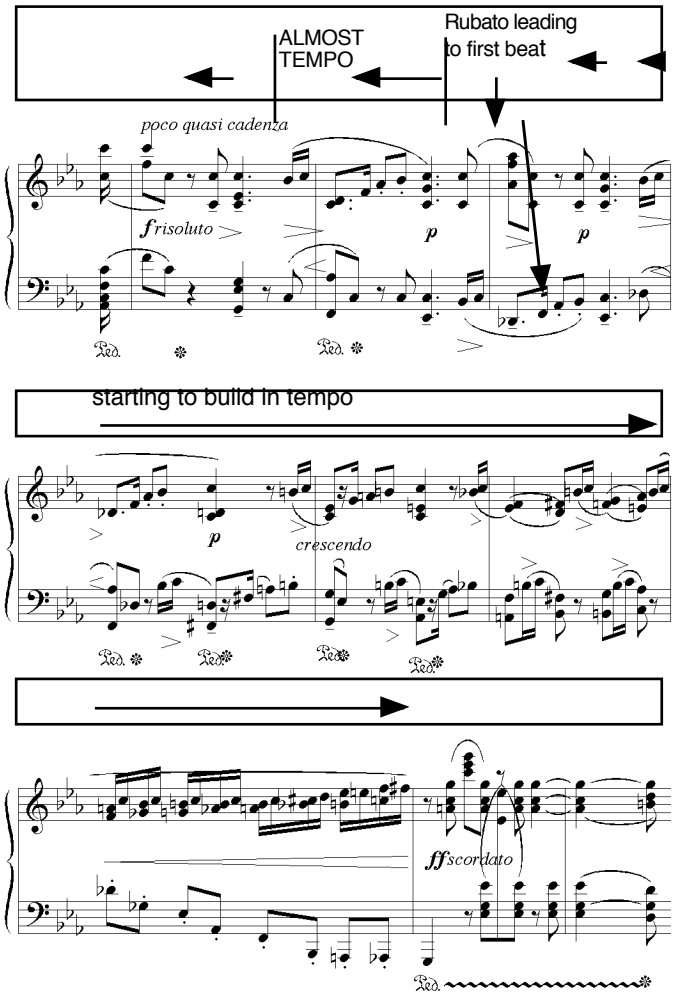


Effectively, on an emotional level, the transition between the opening and the more rapid passage has a narrative function. For this reason, it can be convincing, if the performer feels the need, to get slightly faster than the 'established' new tempo in the bars leading to 36 (particularly 31-6), pulling back slightly in bar 35, and establishing the new tempo in 36. This is particularly the case if the performer feels the overall tempo of the work (Medtner indicates 𝅗𝅥 = 72) is slightly too fast to enable the subtleties of Medtner's language (i.e., what is discussed in the third to ninth 'fundamental senses') to be convincingly communicated. Approximately 𝅗𝅥 = 60 still maintains the energy provided by the faster tempo, yet allows more attention to detail.

Apart from issues with the tempo, the opening 38 bars require an overall conception of the meta-phrase. This is achieved both through melodic direction, and overall shaping of dynamic levels.

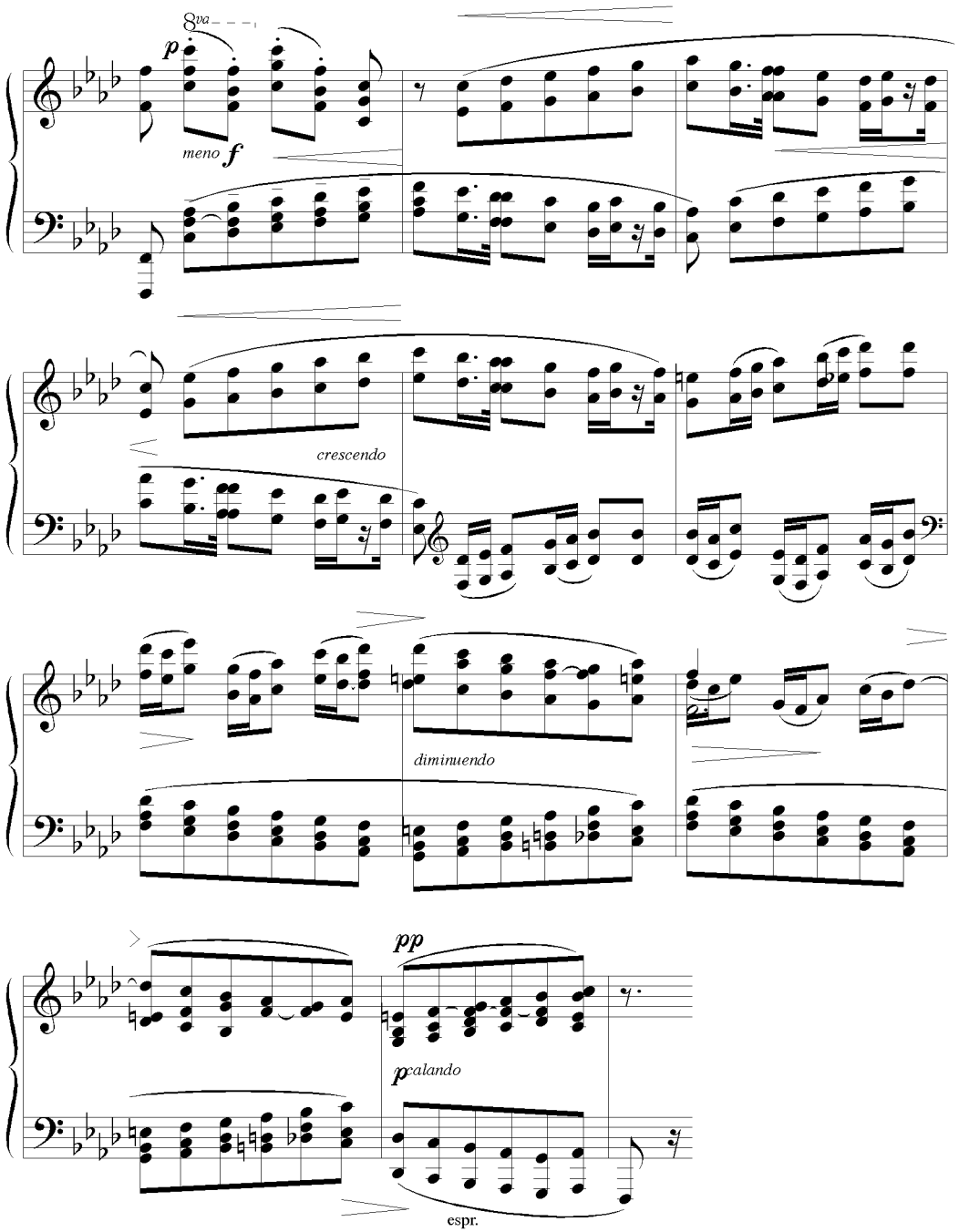
Another case where flexibility of tempo is important is in the *quasi cadenza* towards the end of the work. In addition to the indication *poco quasi cadenza*, the fact the writing is largely constructed of sequential treatment of short fragments suggests flexibility in tempo to maintain interest and direction. Application of this is fairly straight forward, generally starting slow, and logically increasing the tempo as the sequences rise.

Figure 140: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 354-363



Naturally, horizontal thought implies always ‘thinking through the phrase”. There are also many instances where this applies in contrapuntal textures. An obvious example of this is found in the interlude:

Page 179
Figure 141: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 245-255



As Medtner's dynamic and phrase markings indicate, the two distinct parts are best treated individually (i.e., in terms of shape). Naturally, though, this interlocking effect is part of the larger-scale arch shape. Horizontal thought also implies attention to counterpoint — a prominent feature of Medtner's music. This will be discussed in more detail in relation to the other fundamental senses.

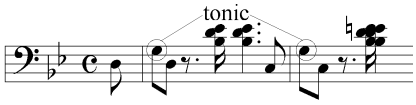
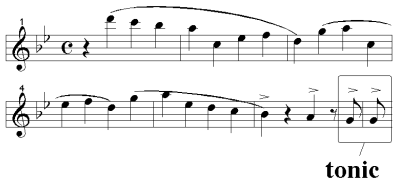
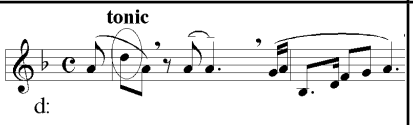
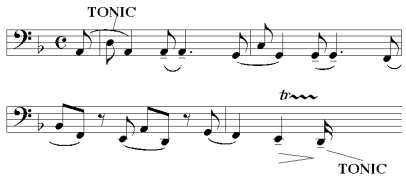
In suggesting, in his table of fundamental senses, that the vertical aspect should

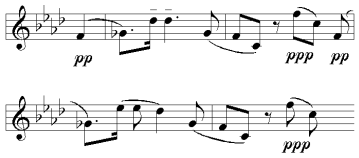
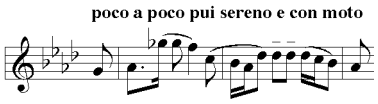
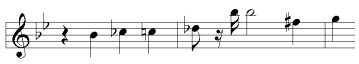
gravitate towards the horizontal, Medtner is implying that the vertical lines and sonorities of harmony are important, but should not distract from the overall shape of the work. Therefore, pianists should explore harmonic colours, that will be discussed in concepts 3-9, but these should never interfere with the direction of the melody.

(3) The tonic versus tonality

It is interesting that Medtner makes a clear distinction between the tonic, in terms of its function in the scale, and the tonic chord. On a purely linear plane, the tonic note (i.e., clearly functioning as the tonic, not in passing motion) is very seldom used. Figure 7 lists all the uses of the tonic in the G minor *Sonata*, its role, and how that can be applied to performance practice.

Figure 142: The tonic as a melodic device in Medtner's *Sonata in G minor*

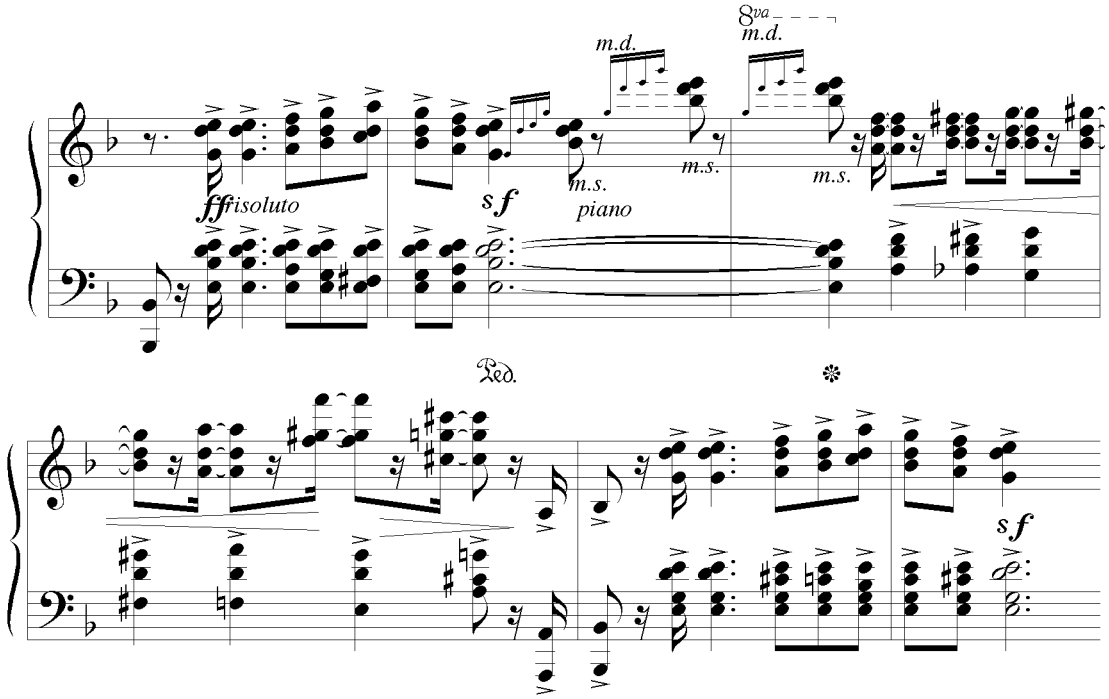
BAR	USE	FUNCTION	POSSIBLE APPLICATION IN PERFORMANCE PRACTICE
1-2		Initial dominant to tonic creates yearning effect for tonic, this is extended in the second motive.	Exaggerate the 'yearning' effect, particularly with dynamics.
THIS IS THE LAST PROMINENT TONIC NOTE UNTIL BAR 36			
36	 Excerpt starts at bar 30	This tonic is quite important, as it is the melodic resolution of all the tension created in the opening 36 bars.	Gives reason to pull back the preceding bars to mark the melodic cadence point — in particular, the tonic note.
95		Because this motive is developed into the second subject, it doesn't possess the same yearning effect as at the opening.	No particular need to draw attention to this tonic, though being aware of its stabilising qualities has advantages in creating a calmer emotional atmosphere.
bar 121	as above	as above	as above
bar 131 & 134 b.138 b.139 b.143	 Similar use of tonic to end phrase. Opening motif. Constant use of tonic on first beat of scalic bars.	Motive from opening used to start melody, stabilised this time by ending the four bar phrase on the tonic (of d). This is a logical stabilisation of key for the coda of the exposition.	Being aware of the effect of the tonic on the phrase. Ensuring that the end of the phrase resolves to the tonic note appropriately (perhaps coloured with slight *rubato*).

196-200 (also 204-6)		**INTERLUDE:** it is the 'hovering' around the tonic (f minor) that helps create such a bleak atmosphere (this also makes the surrounding chords seem more colourful).	Being aware of the psychological potential created by returning to the tonic. This can be enhanced by stillness in atmosphere.
209		Leading-note to tonic relationship in Ab is fundamental to the positive outlook of the new phrase. The return of the tonic at the end of the phrase affirms this mood.	In conjunction with other harmonic colours in the cadence, the tonic of the major key can be in some way coloured to highlight the new mood. Can be used in conjunction with the increase in tempo.
235		Similar to bar 209, except that because silence preceded it, it feels more timid than at the start.	Can slightly delay resolution of the tonic to help create this (in conjunction with tone colours, etc.)
328	SECOND SUBJECT MATERIAL	(same function as in exposition)	
423	 (reduction placed down an octave for ease of reading)	Appropriate ending on tonic for end of coda. Creates complete feel.	Ending with flair! (This tonic note takes care of itself!)

Considering the scale of the work, it is quite surprising to see just how little Medtner relies on the tonic functioning in the scalic sense, and it is interesting to note that when he does use it, there is a good reason for it.

The 'encirclement' of the the tonic theory could be interpreted in several ways. One of these is to look at the function of other degrees of the scale, and what kinds of roles they possess. For example, on a linear level, the fact that the melody in figure 143 is based around the second degree of the scale (d minor) contributes to its awkwardness. Even when there is a leading note in bar 84, the only resolution offered is essentially back to the 7th (if the lower parts were treated as 'accompaniment').

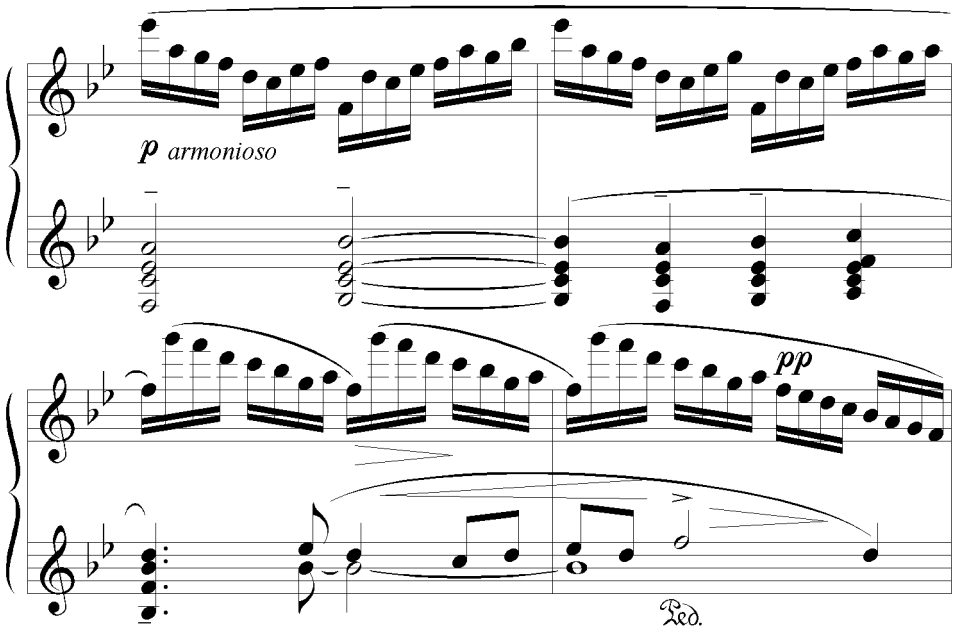
Figure 143: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op. 22, bars 81-86



Naturally, the chromaticism and underlying harmonies contribute also to this effect.

In a quite contrasting passage, it is the fact that the left hand melody in figure 144 hovers around the third that helps give it its graceful quality.

Figure 144: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, opus 22, bars 60-63



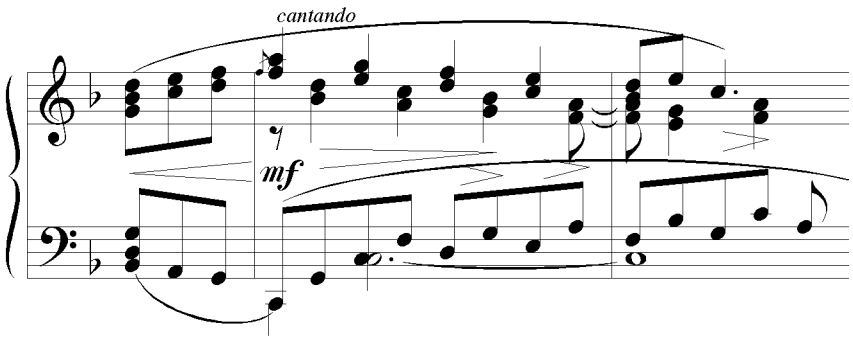
Pianists can enhance this with a rich melodic tone, paying particular attention to the melodic direction and the tone of the third (D).

The main advantages in placing such an emphasis on individual degrees of the scales are that it provides opportunity for new pianistic colour, and it also ensures that a sense of melodic direction is always maintained: it is impossible not to play with direction if aware of the principle tonal areas of the melody.

(4) Diatonic and chromatic scales

Once again, this discussion is related to scales in a linear sense, rather than a vertical one. There are two principal ways of studying this. One of these is to look at these scales used in their original form. For example, in the second subject area, Medtner places what is essentially a descending major scale in the melody, against an ascending scale (treating the movement in crotchet beats) in the left. The effect of this is quite sweet.

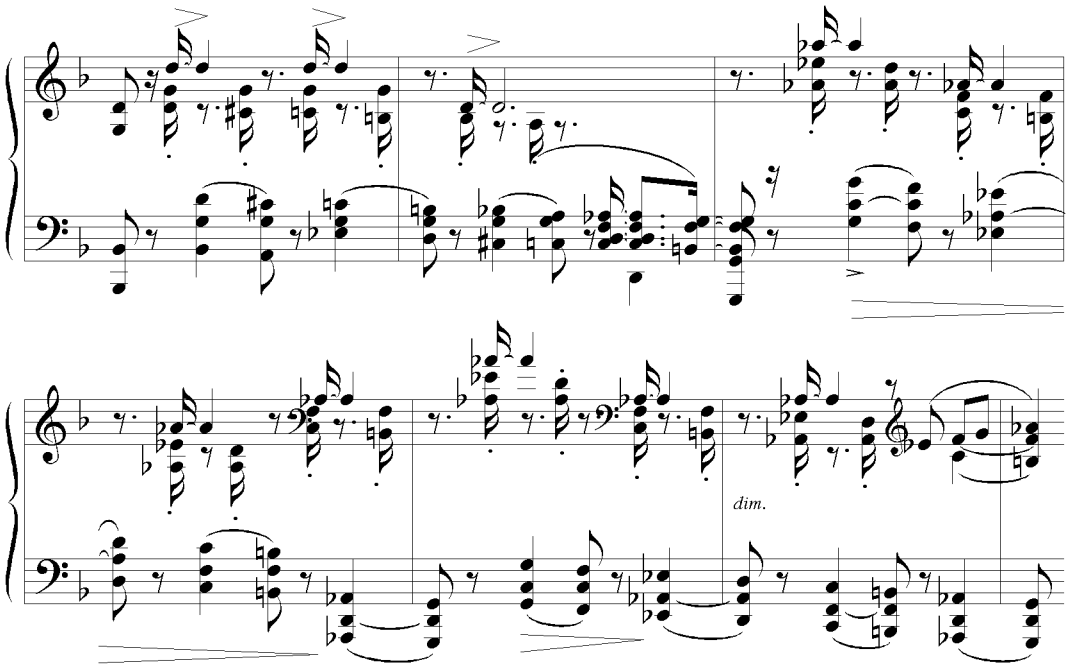
Figure 145: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, opus 22, bars 101-2



Pianists can enhance this with a rich tone, by paying attention to Medtner's hairpin *diminuendos*, and by ensuring that the scale in the left hand is audible to the listener.

Medtner uses the harmonic minor and chromatic scales for a somewhat darker effect. This is seen in the development.

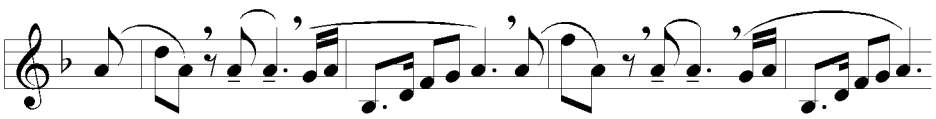
Figure 146: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 159



Descent is traditionally associated with an intensification of the darker emotions. Medtner uses the chromatic scale in the first two bars, he then intensifies this with the harmonic minor in the following four (the main reason why the sound is more intense is because of the augmented second present in this scale). Performers can enhance this by projecting the scalic part and maintaining a strong sense of direction through to the end of the phrase. This can be further heightened by emphasising the first note of the two note phrases in tone, at times with a slight *rubato* (holding back expected resolutions).

The other application of Medtner's concept of scales in the linear sense is how they are used in melodies. Once again, this is largely for psychological reasons. For example, where Medtner is seeking clearer emotions, he uses a more diatonic language (as would be expected). In such cases, pianists would most probably be instinctively aware of the atmosphere Medtner is trying to create, and promote this with a sweet tone and subtle nuances in phrasing.

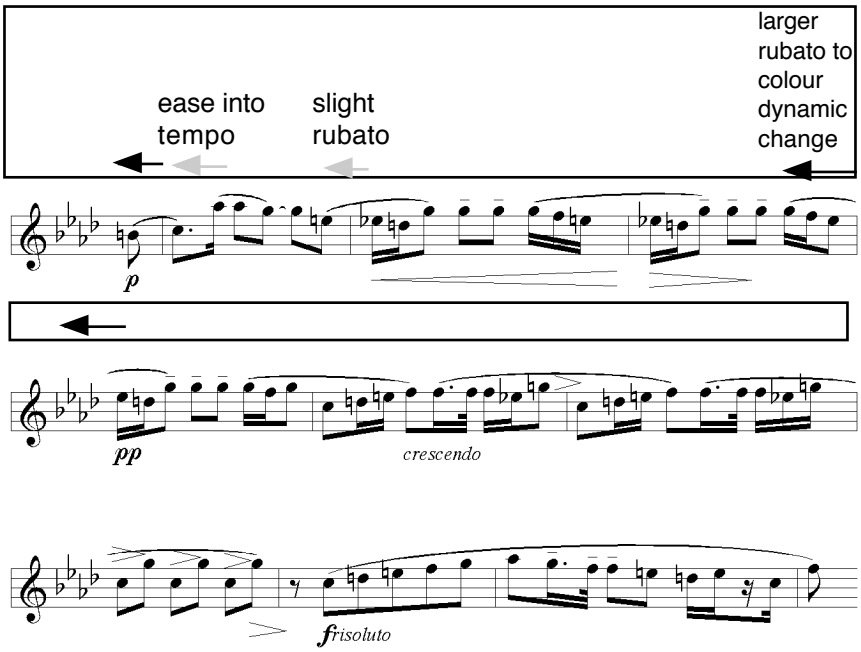
Figure 147: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, opus 22, bars 95-98



Chromaticism is more widely used in the interlude, though not in the tension-making sense that was mentioned in the discussion of figure 146. In this case, the chromaticism of the melody creates a sparse, bleak effect. This is also helped by the fact that the

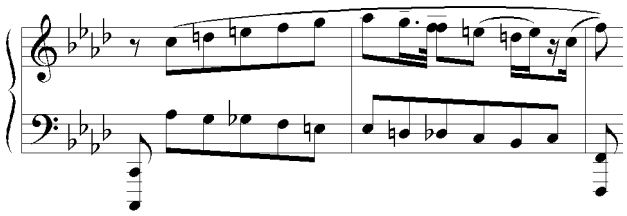
melody after the first bar is contained within the small range of a third. In this case, an awareness of the shape of the melody (partly indicated by Medtner's dynamic markings) is required. This can be enhanced with tempo fluctuations.

Figure 148: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 235-244



Immediately following this, Medtner creates a more positive emotion by using the F melodic minor scale. The opening notes give the illusion of light, being the first five notes of C major. This is reaffirmed by the tonic of C in the bass of the first bar, and is intensified by the somewhat more awkward Ab (sixth note of the melody). This is all heightened by the mostly chromatic scale Medtner places against it in the bass.

Figure 149: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 243-5 (reduction of outer parts)



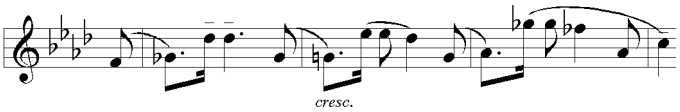
Pianists can magnify this effect by creating a much richer tone (to create the 'light' illusion), while maintaining the intensity by projecting the bass as well.

The study of scales and their applications has many uses in further exploring Medtner's psychological language. Being aware of the considerable impact the construction of the scale can have on the linear aspect of music will further heighten pianists' overall sense of colour and direction.

(5) Consonant and dissonant intervals

Awareness of the expressive qualities of intervals can also promote new pianistic colours. A device Medtner frequently uses to construct melodies is to apply different intervals to the same idea. This has the advantage of providing extra cohesion in the work. An example of this can be found in the interlude:

Figure 150: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 201-204



Medtner progressively applies increasingly dissonant intervals to the fragment — from the stableness of the perfect fifth, to the dissonance of the minor sixth, to the more dissonant minor seventh. The effect, logically, is the promotion of the direction of the melody. The minor seventh can be coloured with *rubato* to highlight both the individual dissonance of the interval, and the overall musical shape of the phrase.

(6) The tonic and dominant chords

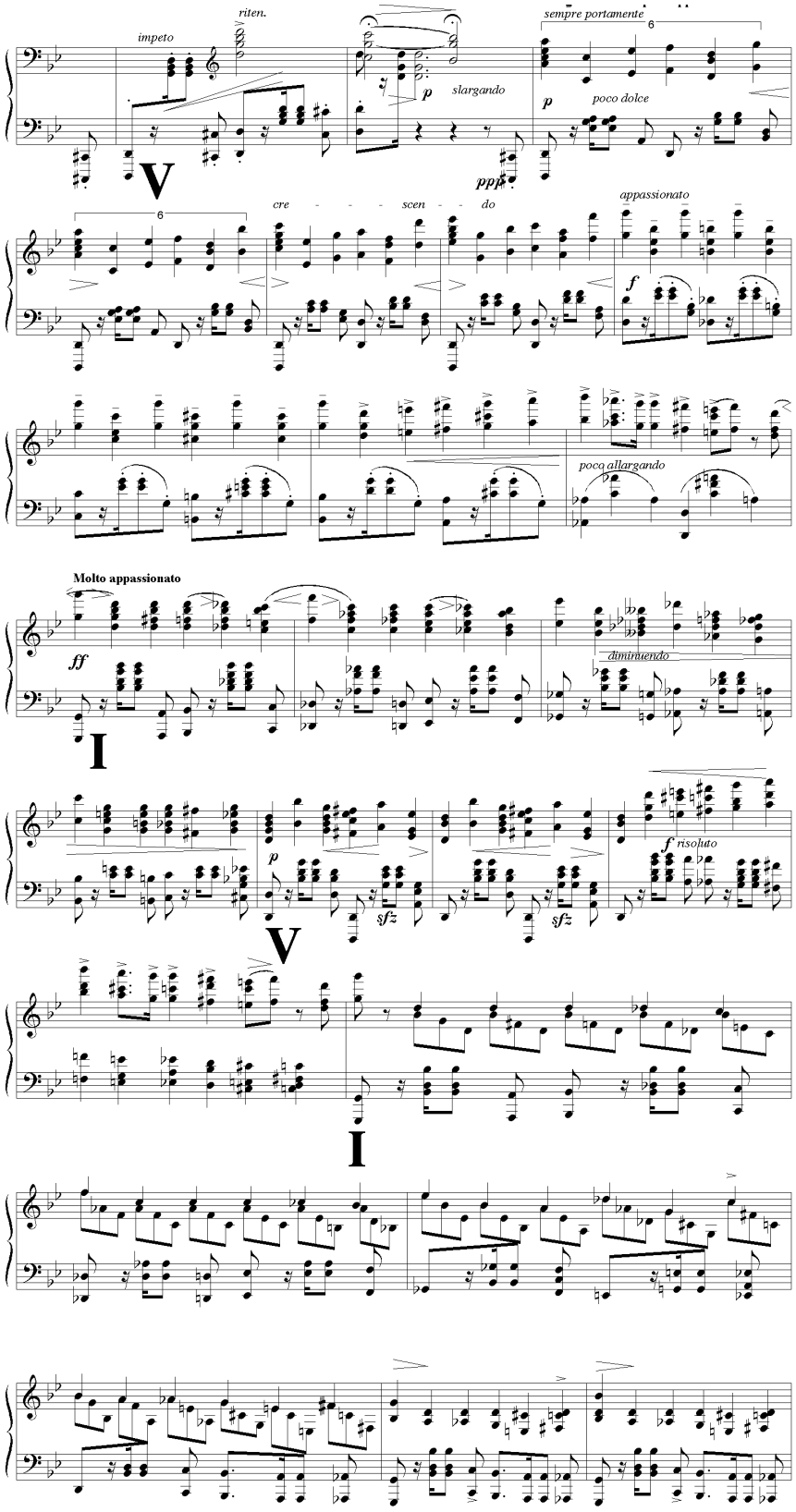
The main application of this theory, for large-scale works such as the sonata, is on a broad plane. The gravitation from dominant to tonic is mostly used to distinguish larger-scale sections. It is not surprising that there is a degree of of overlap here between discussion of the tonic chord and the tonic note. For example, the opening bars (1-36, figure 139) conclude with a very defined V13-I cadence. At the end of the exposition, the tonic of the key at this time is prolongated for some 16 bars (this is in d minor, the exposition, of course, ending in the dominant of the overall key of the work).

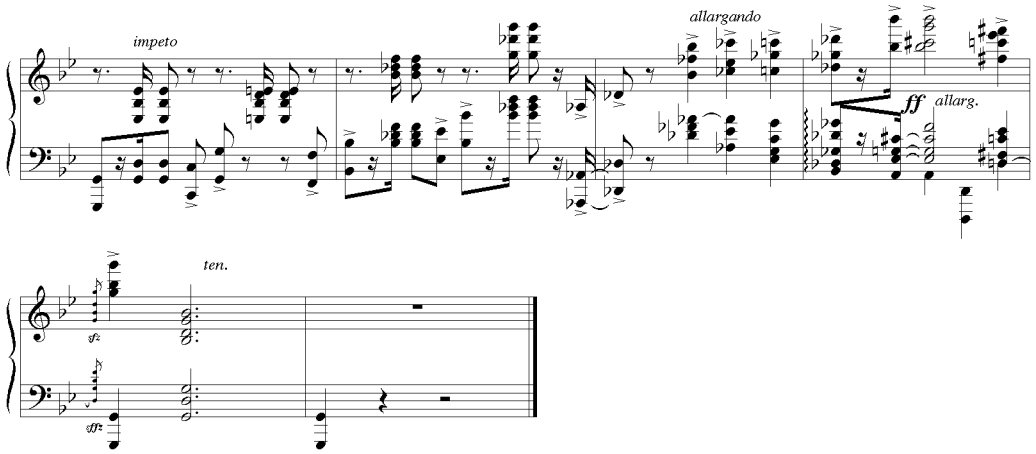
As would be expected, the grandest gravitation from dominant to tonic is seen in the final 30 bars. Performers can use this pull to make the build up for the final climax more intense. Bars 395 to 404 are dominant harmony. Performers can emphasise the cadence to the tonic in bar 405 by broadening the preceding bar (this is indicated by the *allargando* marking). When the harmony moves back to the dominant at bar 410, the new dynamic marking (*piano*) enables it to be treated as a new colour. Performers then only have four bars to build up to the final chord change at bar 413, where the music reaches the tonic for the final time.[244] From this point on, it is more a matter of maintaining the energy created by such an intensive build up, and propelled by the

[244] There is a V13-I cadence at the very end of the work, but this doesn't bear as much significance to the overall harmonic structure of the work.

increased speed and chromatic inflections.

Figure 151: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 395-424





(7) Tonality and modulation

The principle behind modulation is to provide new colour, and to strengthen the need for resolution back to the original key. Medtner's use of modulation is quite interesting to study. A broad perspective of the modulation scheme can be seen in figure 152.

Figure 152: Table of principal modulations in Medtner's *Sonata in G minor*, op.22

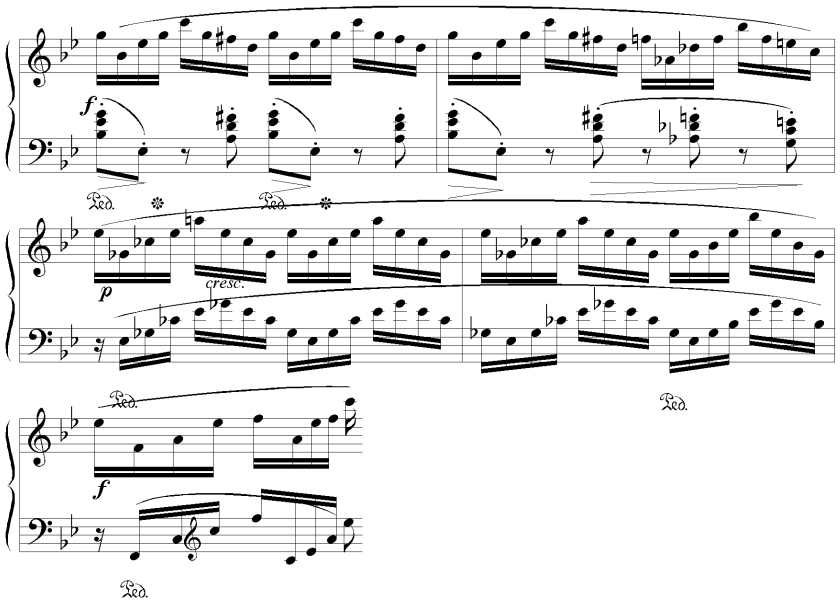
[NEXT PAGE]

Bar	**Structure**	**Key**	**Comments and possible applications to performance practice**
1	Introduction, then first subject of exposition	g min. (i)	Dark, intense — rich tone (can be enhanced by particular attention to the bass register).
58	Lyrical theme of first subject group	Bb maj. (III)	As Medtner indicates, 'graceful'. Considerably calmer. Lyrical tone, with light accompaniment texture, can assist creating this. (This section was previously discussed in reference to the function of the third in the melody).
81	*Preparing for second subject*	*d min. (v)*	
95	Second subject	d min. (v)	Calmer, can be assisted by a more lyrical tone, and with the absence of the pedal (Medtner's indication).
147	Development	*Many vague modulations. Quite ambiguous tonality.* Ends in F minor. The performer, here, should use the colours of the vague modulations (coupled with the textures Medtner uses here) to create as intense emotion as possible before the silence.	
197	Interlude	F minor (iv)	Bleak effect — created by chromatic vocabulary used here. The performer should start with a feeling of absolute stillness: this can be helped by using the *una corda*, and creating as much space (on the horizontal plane) as possible. As the phrase progresses, the music can intensify.
209	Positive theme of interlude	Ab (III of f min.)	Major key provides new 'light'. Gradually increasing the tempo (as Medtner indicated) and opening up the tone quality can help achieve this.
222	Middle theme of interlude	Db maj (bvi/f) This section ends in A major	A feeling of grandness.
235	Positive theme of interlude	c minor (iv/f)	Though less positive due to overall minor tonality. This can be enhanced by starting softer and using slightly more *rubato* than the first time.

Bar	**Structure**	**Key**	**Comments and possible applications to performance practice**
243	Contrapuntal build up to conclude interlude.	f min. (i/f = iv/G)	Although back in the tonic of the movement, the need for that to resolve back into the tonic of the overall sonata can be intensified by attention to the counterpoint and shape (the independence of parts, and the roles linear scales play in this was discussed earlier).
264	Recapitulation: first subject	a minor (ii)	The fact that this subject has not, as it traditionally would, arrived back at the tonic indicates that Medtner intended this to encompass new emotional tensions. This is achieved also through more complex textures, more abrupt chromatic shifts, etc.. Performers should keep the 'tension building' state of mind in this section.
293	Lyrical theme of first subject	*g min. (i)*	This movement to i is more in passing motion than a definite arrival at the tonic goal. Performers can apply similar approaches as in the exposition.
312	Setting up for second subject	c min. (iv)	
328	Second subject	c min. (iv)	Similar approaches can be taken as exposition.
374	Coda	g min. (i)	Large dominant to tonic goal in final bars, as discussed previously. Sense, as a performer, of overcoming the tonal battle present throughout the entire sonata (this is easily achieved, considering the nature of the musical language here).

Medtner's methods of modulating are often quite colourful. An example of this is the link between the energetic first half of the first subject, and the more lyrical second half. The clearest (and most beautiful) change occurs in bar 56, where the music moves abruptly into an apparent augmented sixth chord, which expands into dominant preparation of Bb, which then cadences appropriately.

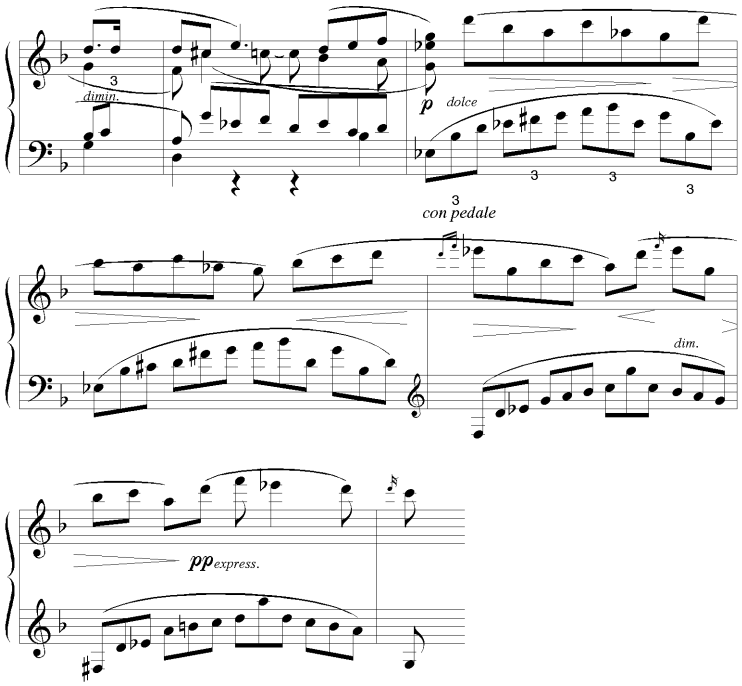
Page 192
Figure 152: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 54-58



This can be coloured pianistically by exaggerating the *piano* at the start of bar 56 (perhaps even using the *una corda* to change the quality of the sound). The *crescendo* can be guided not only by the harmonic progression in the vertical sense, but also the need for the upper note of the augmented sixth (A) to resolve up to the Bb.

Another example of a particularly colourful modulation is found in bar 109. Here, Medtner modulates quite abruptly from d minor to Eb major.

Figure 153: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, opus 22, bars 109-113



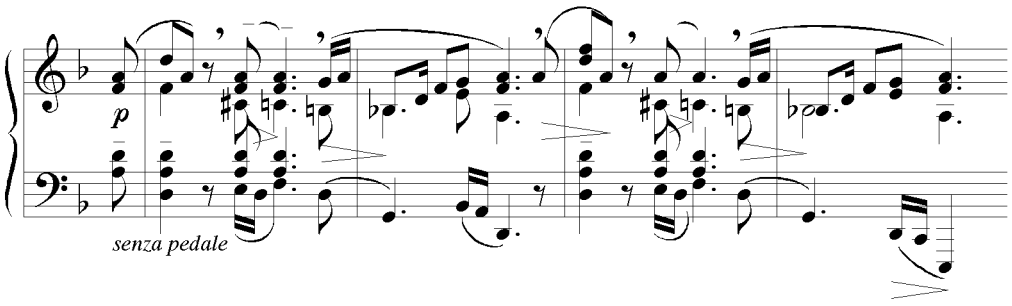
Medtner has obviously considered the potential for pianistic colour here. The preceding 14 bars (from the start of the second subject) have been marked *senza pedale*, so when the pedal is reintroduced at the modulation to Eb, the effect is quite refreshing.

(8) Prototypes of consonant chords (the triads and their inversions), and dissonant chords (chords of the seventh and ninth, and their inversions)

Medtner's attention to the quality of inversions of a chord once again shows his attention to detail in harmonic colour. The performer can use this approach not only to explore harmonic colour in the vertical sense, but also in the horizontal sense (i.e., the importance of the bass line).

An example of the prominent use of the root position chord is found in the second subject. Here, most of the harmonically functioning chords are in root position.

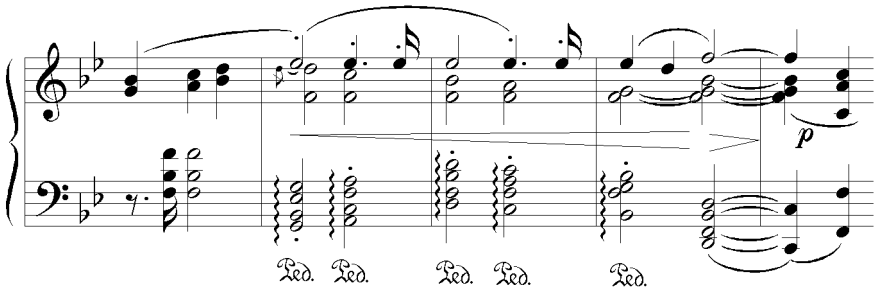
Figure 154: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 95-98



This gives the overall sound its stability. Awareness of the bass part here adds more dimension to the melody.

When first inversion chords are used in succession, however, it is often to promote a sense of movement in the music. An example of this can be found in bars 18-25.

Figure 155: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 17-29

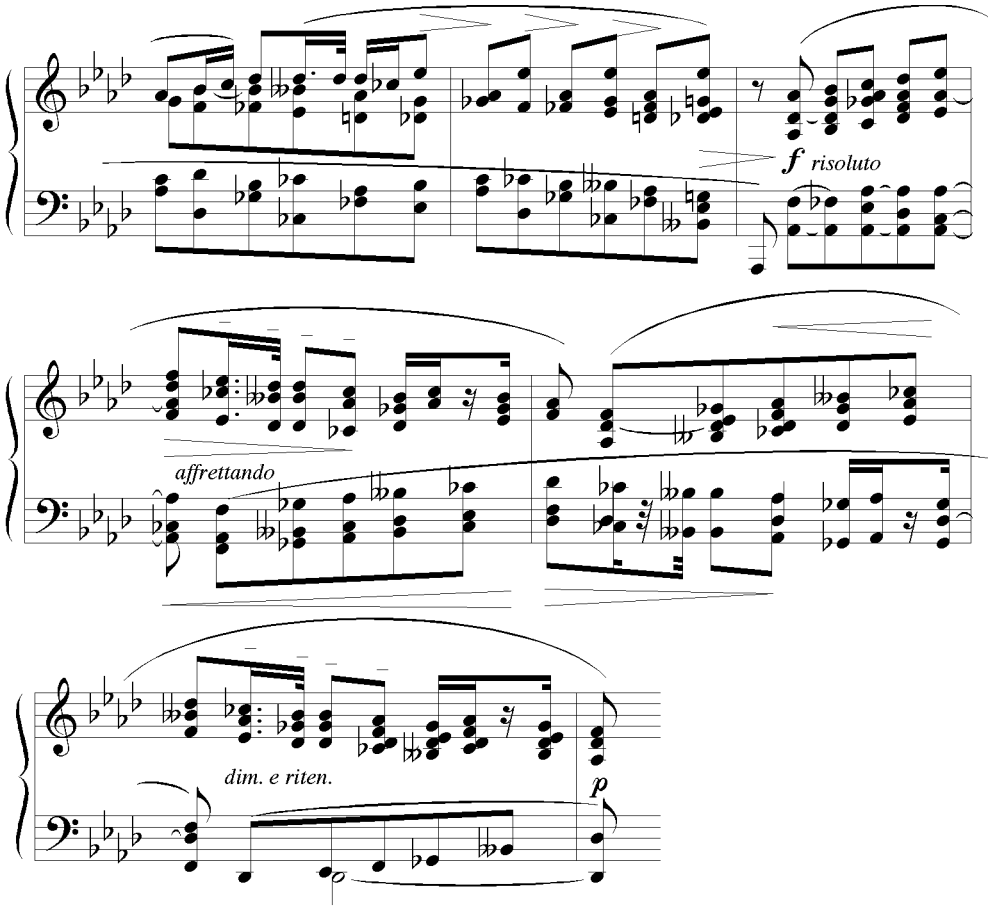


It is the quality of the 6/3 chord that pianists can enhance, in a melodic sense, to

intensify the music.

The 6/4 triad, with its strong associations with the cadential 6/4, is traditionally a tension creating device. A very effective use of the 6/4 chord can be found in the interlude (bar 218).

Figure 156: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 216-222

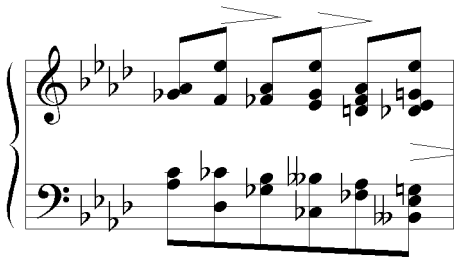


Here, the 6/4 chord serves as an emotional turning point between the anguish of the build up to that point (created largely by the chromatic nature of the writing), and the positivism of the following section (promoted largely by the initial use of the major scale in the melody). The 6/4 chord is the initial outburst of light, yet, because of the nature of the chord, it still propels the music through the remaining four bars. For pianists, the application of this information is largely psychological. Attempts to colour the chord more with *rubato* would interfere with the overall shape of the section. It could, however, be coloured with a more open tone.

There are also advantages in being aware of the dissonant notes in chords. A good example of this is in bar 217 of the interlude, where there is a chain of applied

seventh chords. The seventh of the chord alternates between being placed in the 'alto' and 'tenor' parts.

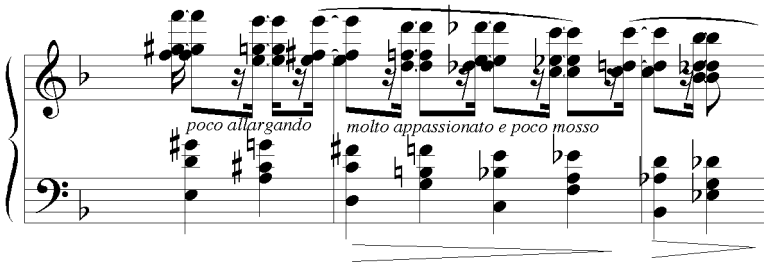
Figure 157: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 217



Projection of the seventh and its resolution helps to further create the distressed effect of the section.

Aside from the need of the dissonant notes, as an independent voice, to resolve, they also posses the power to create a richer harmonic texture. This can be seen in bars 88-91. Once again, this is a sequence of applied chords — this time, though, alternating between ninth and seventh chords.

Figure 158: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, opus 22, bars 88-90

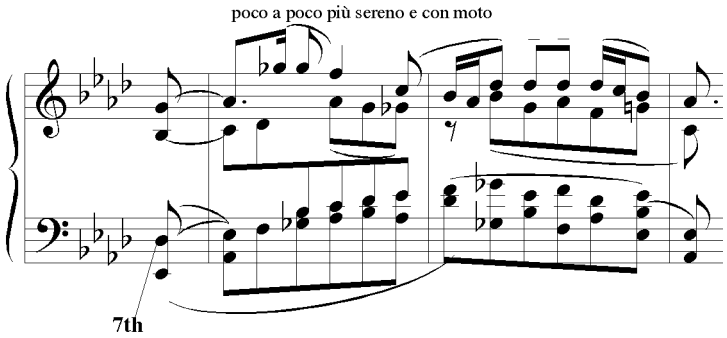


Projection of both the ninths, and sevenths (which are, at times, in inner part) can be combined with a full tone and observation of Medtner's *allargando* and *molto appassionato e poco mosso* indications to create the effect of the emotional turmoil in the musical language.

In other cases, it is the very fact that these dissonant notes don't resolve that creates colour. For example, it is the seventh rising in the first cadence (in conjunction with other aspects previously discussed) that helps create the more positive Ab major section of the interlude.

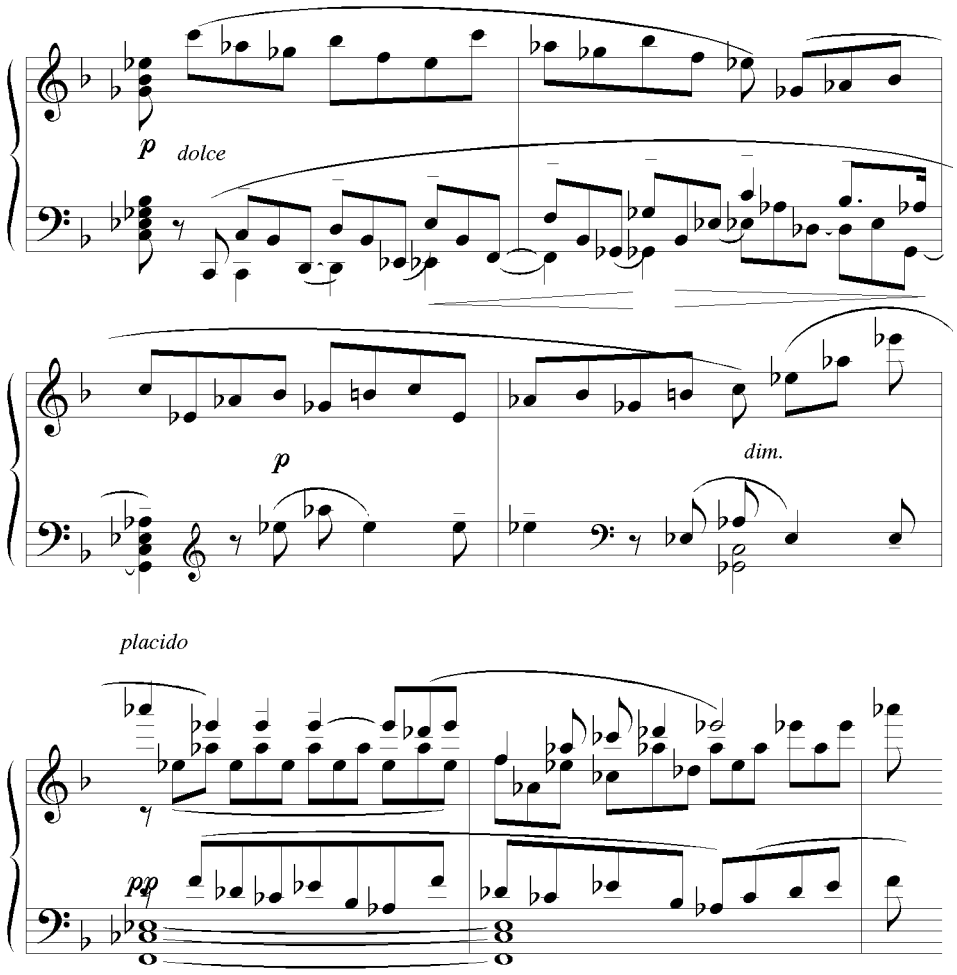
Page 196

Figure 159: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, opus 22, bars 209-211



In more extreme cases, unresolved seventh chords and ninth chords (on the first beat of every second bar) create a tonal ambiguity which creates an uneasiness at the start of the final build up in the development.

Figure 160: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, opus 22, bars 173-178



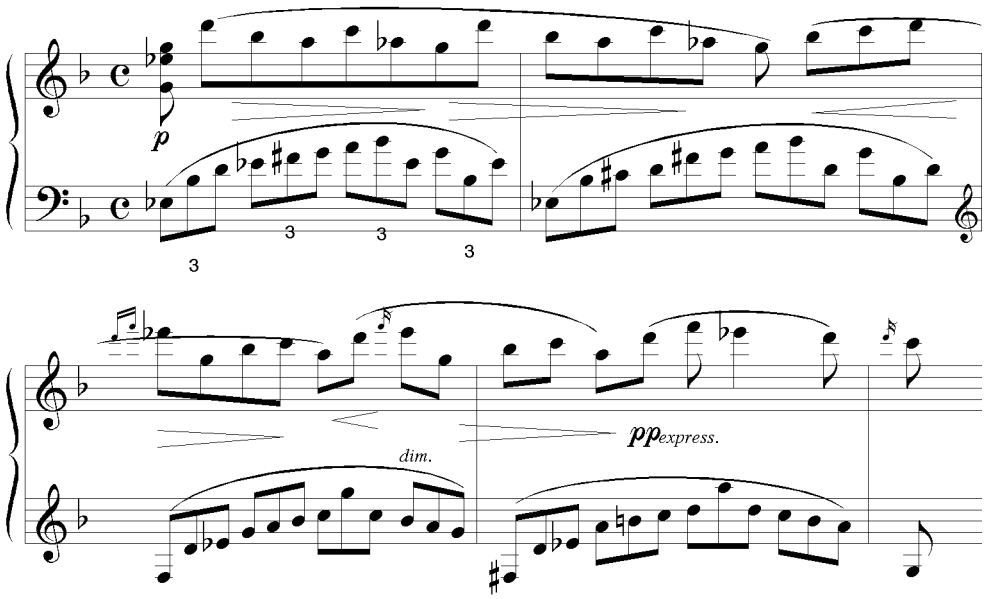
Pianists can promote this by being aware of the sonorities of these seventh chords — making sure they are audible to the listener.

(9) Prototypes of consonant and dissonant chords and their inversions versus casual harmonic formations

The last of Medtner's fundamental senses aligns with his overall conception of music — that detail should gravitate towards simplicity. Decoration — such as suspensions, passing notes, neighbour notes, etc. — should therefore never interfere with the overall shape created by concepts 1-8. This does not mean, however, that, when appropriate, it can not be used as a colouration device.

For example, the decorative notes in both the right and left hands make the passage from bar 109 so magical.

Figure 161: Medtner – *Sonata in G minor*, op.22, bars 109-113



Pianists do not need to colour this in any specific way, but a general awareness of decorative notes (perhaps enhanced with the occasional subtle *rubato*) can create the misty nature of the passage. This can also relate back to Medtner's fifth fundamental sense — consonant and dissonant triads — as it is the colourful combination of chromatic intervals that makes this section so magical.

OVERALL CONSIDERATIONS

When describing Medtner as a pianist, Harriet Moore Brower wrote that he is

> just a quiet man, who is artist to his fingertips, and who desires to give the results, in his playing and interpretation, of a lifetime of seriousness, earnest study, of devotion to the highest ideals of art, for the love of art; in short, one of the true musicians of his day and

generation.[245]

A similar sense of devotion to his ideal can be found in his approach to composition. An application of Medtner's nine fundamental senses to performance practice reveals the extreme depth of Medtner's musical language. Medtner's overall conception of hierarchical structures is very similar, not surprisingly, to Rachmaninoff's. With an acute awareness of musical colours available on various levels on both horizontal and vertical planes, pianists can gain insight into Medtner's fundamental emotional concepts for the *Sonata in G minor.*

SCRIABIN: Sonata No.9 (Black Mass), opus 68

Scriabin's musical philosophy (including his fascination with mysticism) has already been discussed in chapters 1 & 2. So far, the primary emotions explored have been related to the feeling of ecstasy. In Scriabin's later philosophy, however, he felt that the individual should never limit themselves to any one particular experience.

> You must experience everything. Every sensation is a source of knowledge and therefore valuable. It is a great mistake to shrink from sensation. You must experience all sensations to the fullest. Then you can stop being interested.[246]

This accounts for the exploration of more sinister areas of mysticism in his music. This is found particularly in his sixth and ninth *Sonatas.*

It is not completely out of social context for Scriabin to be exploring such subjects. Black Masses were practised in pre-Revolutionary, Rasputin Russia. Sadism and cannibalism were practised. Nikolai Sperlig, a friend of Scriabin, drank the human blood of wounded men and ate human flesh of soldiers at the front during World War I in an effort to derive mystical experience.

Scriabin's exploration of 'evil' forces, in comparison to these, is less extreme. The images of the "Black Mass" are conjured through the harmonic, rhythmic, and textural language of the sonata. It should be remembered that Scriabin didn't apply the title "Black Mass" to the sonata. This was suggested by his friend Alexi Podgaetsky. However, Scriabin did say that he was "practising sorcery" while playing it.[247]

---

[245] Harriet Moore Brower, *Modern Masters of the Keyboard* (London: MacMillan, 1926), p.144-5. Cited in: Bloomquist, op. cit., p.20.
[246] Scriabin. Cited in Bowers, *Scriabin* [first edition] (Tokyo, 1970), vol.2, p.98
[247] Bowers, *The New Scriabin*, op. cit., p.181.

Mysticism aside, Scriabin's musical language does have some parallels to that of Medtner — primarily the fact that he regarded music to be a language of the senses rather than of the mind. He wrote, in 1915, that "through music and color [sic.], with the aid of perfume, the human mind or soul can be lifted outside or above merely physical sensations into the region of purely abstract ecstasy and purely intellectual speculation."[248]

In an attempt to classify issues concerning performance practice in Scriabin's *Ninth Sonata*, it is best to initially divide the overall expression into two extremes: the 'satanic' and the 'ecstatic' elements.

THE SATANIC ELEMENT

Scriabin's concept of Satan is nowhere near as negative as displayed in the Western Christian tradition. Sabaneyeff describes that

> For Scriabin, it was not something wicked or bad at all. He was sympathetic to it and called it the 'creative spirit'. It was that which created everything from the world itself to the *Poem of Ecstasy*.
>
> "Satan", he said, "is the shivering of the universe which cannot gather all together in one place or unify. It is the principle of movement."

If Scriabin associates Satan with movement, then an exploration of the techniques that promote movement is vital to understanding Scriabin's overall musical language.

Movement, in music, is primarily created through some kind of tension. Because Scriabin's music focuses on colour, harmony plays a key role in producing this tension. Scriabin initially believed that "there is no difference between melody and harmony."[249] After experimenting with coloured lights representing the harmonies in *Prometheus*, however, Scriabin expressed a need for "contrapuntalism of all the different lines of art."[250] Thus, Medtner's principles of exploring harmony on both horizontal and vertical planes is relevant to Scriabin.

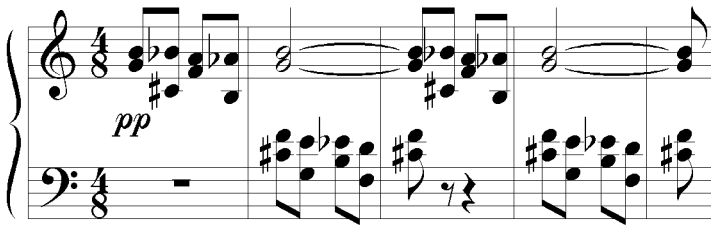
Not surprisingly, a key feature of Scriabin's harmonic language is the tritone —

---

[248] Scriabin. Cited in: Rimm, op.cit., p.115.
[249] Scriabin. Cited in: Bowers, *Scriabin*, second edition, op. cit., p.204.
[250] Scriabin. Cited in: ibid., p.205.

an interval associated traditionally with Satan. For example, in the opening bars, the tritone features on both a horizontal and vertical scale.

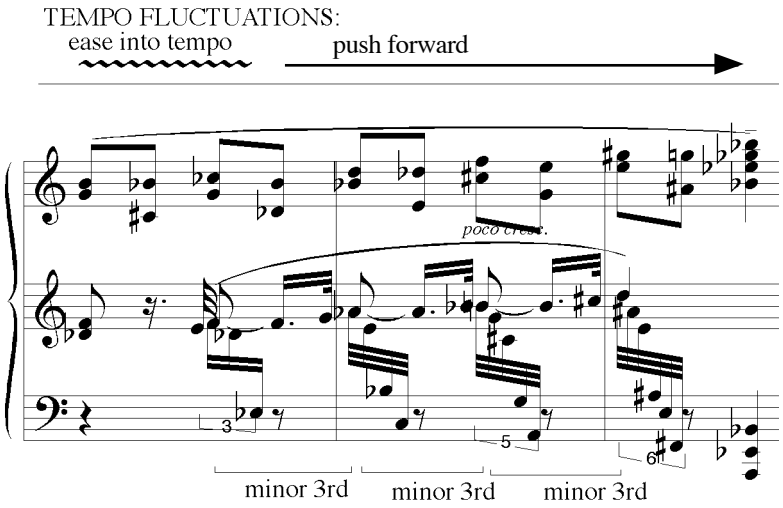
Figure 162: Scriabin – *Sonata No.9*, opus 68, bars 1-5



In conjunction with the G 'tonality' and the thin texture, what the tritone creates here is a sense of movement — not so much in the traditional sense, but more a kind of suspended atmosphere. Pianists can enhance this with a distant tone and overall feeling of space.

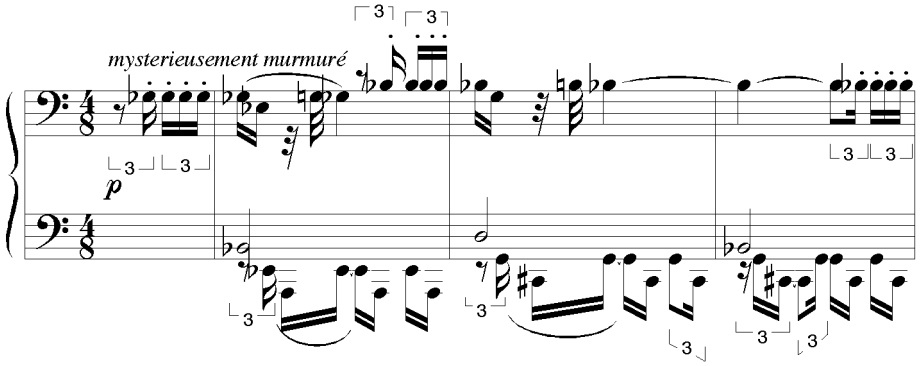
The other prominent interval is the minor third (or its enharmonic equivalent — in any case, the equal subdivision of the tritone). It is generally used as an intensifying device — i.e., to build material up sequentially (figure 163). This is used in conjunction with Scriabin's other primary movement-creating device — rhythm. Scriabin logically increases the division of the beat to promote an intensification of the overall emotion. Naturally, pianists can enhance this by increasing the tone, but also through *rubato* — easing into it, then having a slight *accelerando*.

Figure 163: Scriabin — *Sonata No.9*, opus 68, bars 5-7



Similar techniques are used in bars 8-10 (figure 164). This time, Scriabin uses the minor third figure both as a sequential device and as the basis of the melodic fragment. Pianists can project (in a sinister tone) the arpeggiated chord built of two tritones in the left hand. In both cases, it is effective for pianists to be conscious of Scriabin's juxtaposition of dividing the beat symmetrically and into three. This can be enhanced by promoting the smoother nature of the triplet. In the right hand this can be achieved by creating a slight *crescendo* through to the next beat. In the left, the lilting, more *legato* nature can be contrasted to the more rhythmic, almost stricter feel of the equal subdivision.

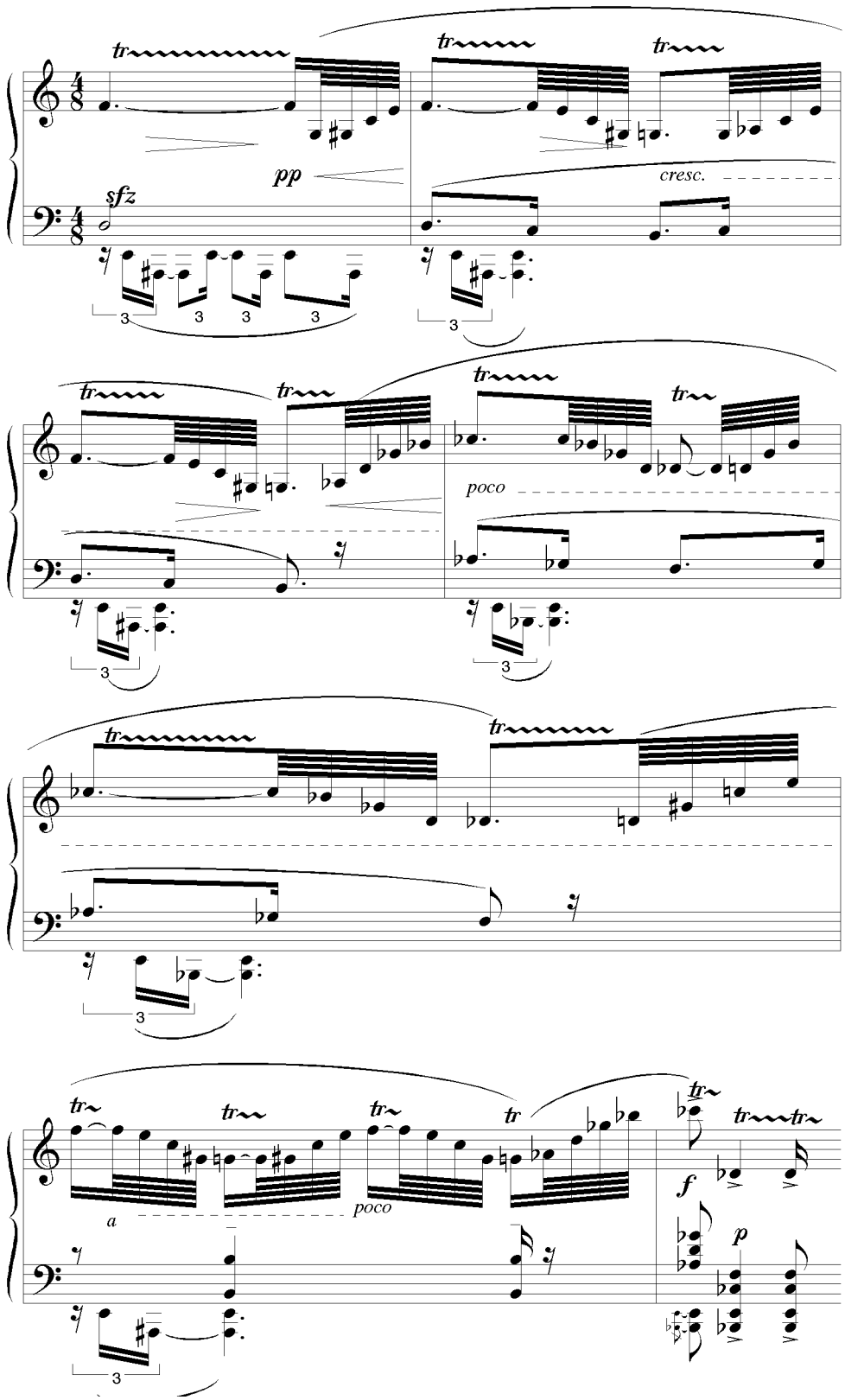
Figure 164: Scriabin — *Sonata No.9*, opus 68, bars 8-10



This can help achieve Scriabin's indication that those bars should be *mysterieusement mumuré* ("in a mysterious murmur").

Some of the most demonic moments in Scriabin's *Ninth Sonata* are found in those sections featuring trills.

Figure 165: Scriabin – *Sonata No.9*, opus 68, bars 24-30



Naturally, trills aren't the only element creating this effect. Figure 166 details the contributing factors, and lists ways they can be enhanced in performance.

Figure 166: Tension creating devices in bars 24-30 of Scriabin's *Sonata No.9*, opus 68

Device	**Comments and possible applications to performance practice**
Trills	Can be made more effective by observing Scriabin's dynamic markings.
Dynamic markings (particularly *cresc.* or *dim.* on trill or sudden changes, such as bar 30)	Exaggeration of these will create more tension.
Pedal point (left hand)	Projection of lower register of the piano will make sound more intense.
Diminished fifth 'interjections' in low register (left hand)	
Diminution of rhythmic values and repetition	E.g., bar 29 — the trill no longer rests for a whole quaver. This creates more tension. Pianists can heighten this by maintaining the *crescendo* throughout the bar.
Melody in the centre of the texture (upper left hand)	In particular, the projection of B's in bar 29 helps create the peak volume of the section.
The use of the diminished fifth as a sequential tool.	Previously, the minor third was used for this purpose (see discussion relating to figure 29). The wider spacing and more dissonant nature of the diminished fifth helps create a larger climax than previously attained. There is not really a direct way the performer can project this specific device, but it does complement the effects previously mentioned.

These techniques are used at other major climaxes in the work, only to a higher degree and on a more prolonged scale.

THE ECSTATIC ELEMENT

The main material in the *Ninth Sonata* that explores the ecstatic element is that derived from the second subject. Scriabin described the second subject as "dormant or dreaming saintliness."[251] Once again, a study of the subtleties of Scriabin's musical language will provide an insight into how performers can create this effect.

[251] Scriabin. Cited in: ibid., p.244.

The principal device creating the 'dreamy' effect is the harmony (once again on both the vertical and horizontal levels). Scriabin does retain some features from the more 'satanic' sections of the sonata. These include the occasional use of the tritone in chord construction, and the use of the minor third as a sequential device. However, his harmonic language is generally richer. For example, in the opening bars of the second subject, the most common chords are:

(1) tritone + diminished 4th + major 3rd (bar 35)

(2) major 2nd + major 3rd [+ perfect 8ve] (bars 36, 41, 45)

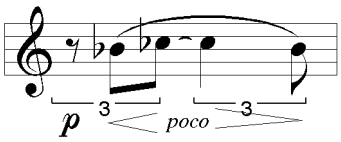
(3) major 2nd + major 3rd + perfect 5th (bars 37, 38, 40, 44)

(4) major 3rd + minor 3rd [i.e., a major triad] (bars 39, 43)

The overall sound of the chords is naturally more consonant than the more 'satanic' sections of the work. However, a deeper knowledge of the harmonic functions on the linear plane has a bearing on aspects of colour in performance practice.

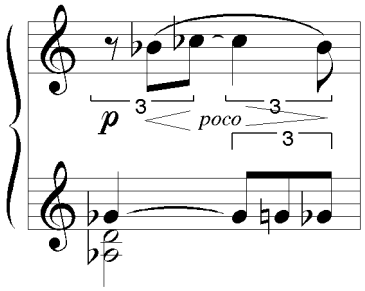
On a linear plane, the most prominent interval used in the second subject is the minor second — this creates a languid effect. Scriabin enhances this with dynamics (i.e., emphasising the middle note of the three-note figure).

Figure 167: Scriabin – *Sonata No.9*, op.68, bar 35 (right hand part)



The subtlety in musical inflection lies in how this middle note fits in with the vertical harmony of the bar: i.e., does it belong to the chord or not? At the outset, the 'middle' note is introduced as a dissonant note — the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* heightening the dissonance. The overall effect of this bar (in combination with the slightly more unstable chord construction) is slightly uneasy.

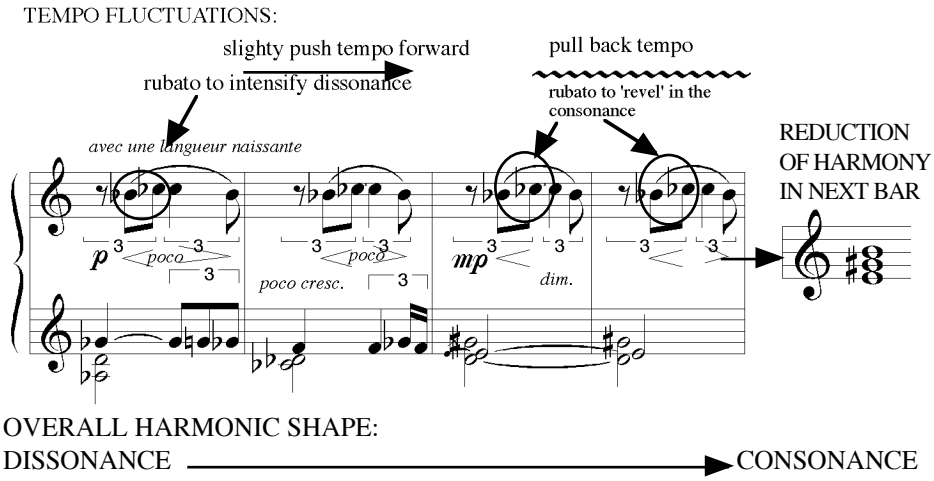
Figure 168: Scriabin – *Sonata No.9*, opus 68, bar 35



Scriabin maintains this slight uneasiness by repeating this motive over the changing harmonies (which, incidentally, move up in minor thirds — unifying this section with

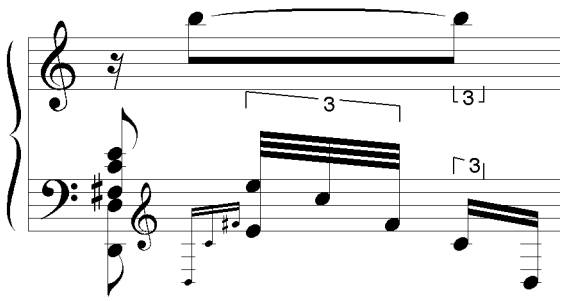
the rest of the sonata). However, the quality of the middle note changes. As the harmonies become increasingly consonant, the middle note shifts from being the dissonant note to a consonant colour (i.e., belonging to the chord). One way which pianists can highlight this consonance is by slightly delaying the resolution back to the more dissonant note. This also fits with the overall shape of the four-bar phrase which, largely because of this movement from dissonance to consonance, instinctively requires flexibility in tempo.

Figure 169: Scriabin – *Sonata No.9*, opus 68, bars 35-38



On some occasions, Scriabin's harmonic language can be particularly lush. An example of this is in bar 49 where Scriabin uses a ninth chord in the richest register of the piano.

Figure 170: Scriabin – *Sonata No.9*, opus 68, bar 49

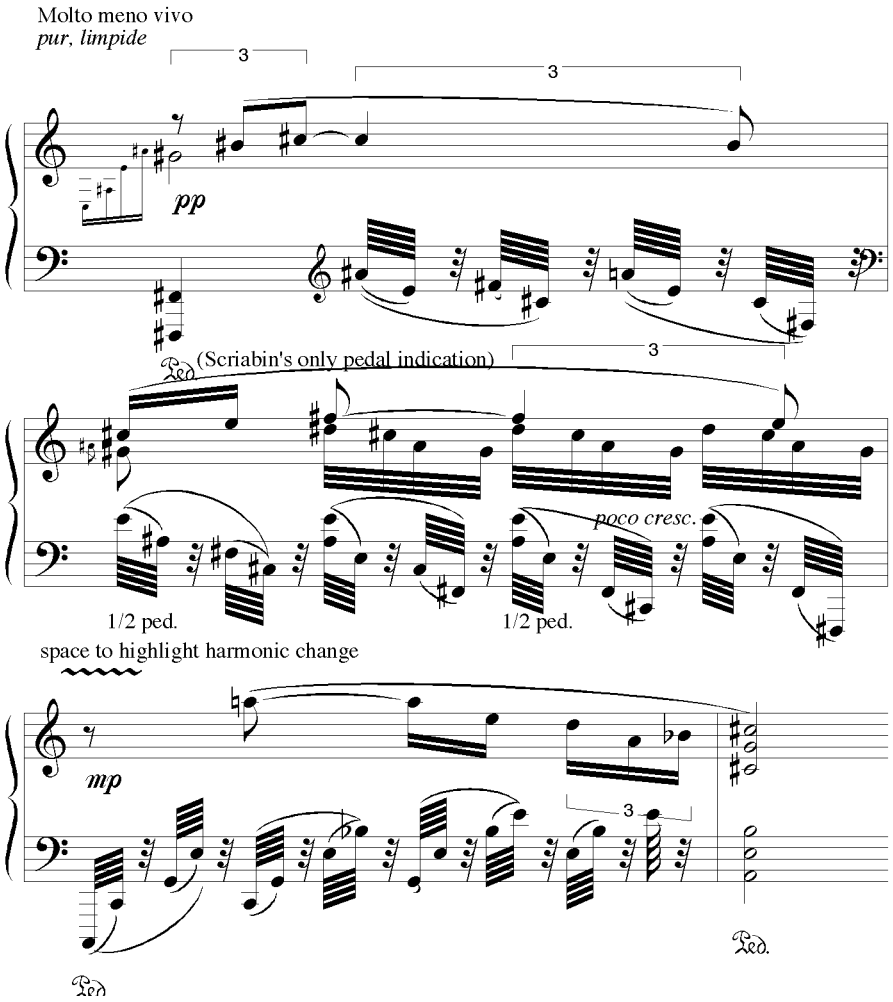


Pianists can enhance this with a warm tone.

In other cases, Scriabin is aiming for a more atmospheric effect (figure 171). An indication that Scriabin is thinking of the psychological state of this section is seen in his indication that it is to be "pure". From a compositional perspective, this is achieved through the hazy texture and the use of unresolved seventh chords (or in the case of bar

90, ninth chords) moving in slow harmonic rhythm. This creates a kind of suspended atmosphere. Pianists can enhance this by using the *una corda*, and making the hemi-demi-semiquaver movement in the left hand feel as distant as possible: i.e., the effect of these rapid rhythms is not to promote rhythm, but to add a 'haze' to the texture. Naturally, this can be enhanced with the pedal (as Scriabin indicates, though he doesn't indicate any pedal changes). Generally, somewhere between 1/2 and 3/4 changes are best — clearing the sound, while maintaining the hazy atmosphere. However, at bar 87 a complete pedal change is effective to colour the change in harmony — a slight *rubato* can also help achieve this. This pedal change also draws attention to the fact that there is a rest in the melody part (i.e., the pedalling is helping to create the phrasing).

Figure 171: Scriabin – *Sonata No.9*, opus 68, bar 49



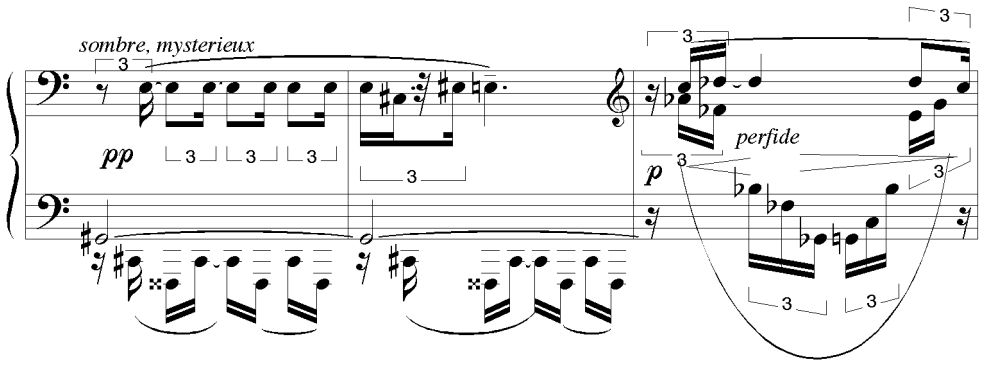
Overall, the 'ecstatic' element of Scriabin's *Ninth Sonata* is best highlighted through attention to harmonic colours, a flexibility in tempo, and subtle use of the pedal (all characteristics of Scriabin's playing, discussed in chapter 1).

THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THE SATANIC AND THE ECSTATIC

A central element in the psychological effect of Scriabin's music is the way he contrasts the Satanic and the ecstatic elements. In the development, Scriabin transforms the second subject from pure to satanic. This is indicated by his expression *avec une douceur de plus caressante et empoisonnèe* ("with profound gentleness more and more caressed and poisoned").

Essential to this transformation is the contrasts between the two subjects created from bar 93.

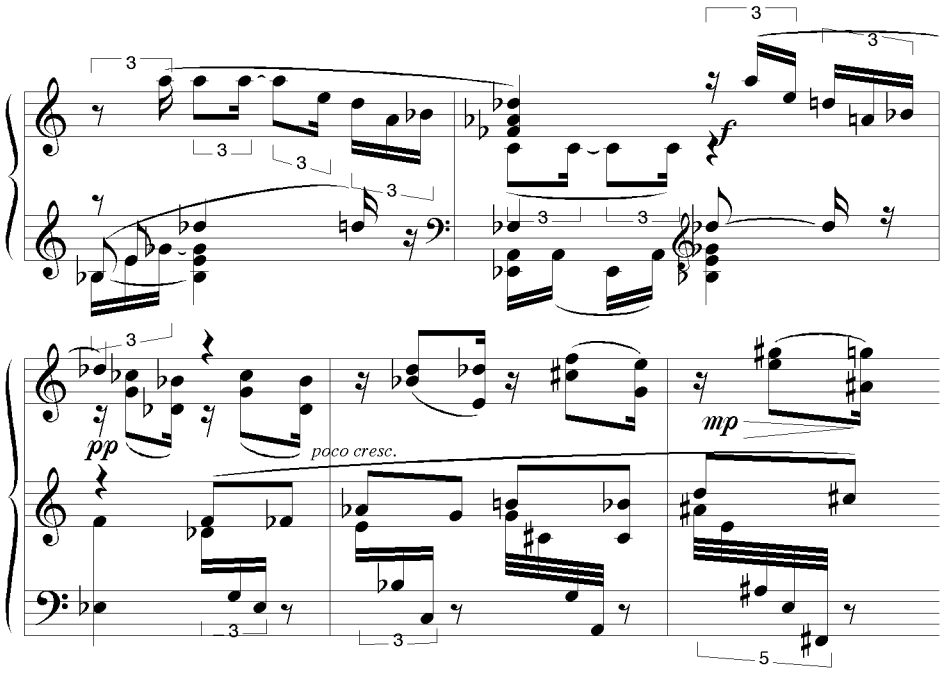
Figure 172: Scriabin – *Sonata No.9*, opus 68, bars 93-95



The initial contrast is quite obvious: the distinction between dark and lush harmonies, low and middle register, and so on. Pianists can enhance this primarily through contrasts in tone colour, as well as through juxtaposing the rhythmically sinister nature of the satanic with the more flexible nature of the second subject material.

The unexpected element is crucial in maintaining the 'satanic' battle against the ecstatic second subject. This is seen in places where the second subject, which is increasingly intensifying, is cut of suddenly by material from the first subject.

Page 208
Figure 173: Scriabin – *Sonata No.9*, op.69, bars 103-107



Although the music is dropping in dynamics, pianists must ensure that it doesn't lose its intensity. This can be achieved by maintaining a tight tone, and starting the following *crescendo* as soon as possible.

OVERALL CONSIDERATIONS

Scriabin's musical language is one of sensations. The *Sonata No.9* explores both the extremes — from ecstatic to satanic. Most importantly, the *Sonata* is a psychological drama: the satanic battles with the ecstatic and wins. It is the pianist's task to communicate this drama. The music itself is cleverly written, so in many ways, it speaks for itself. However, by exploring the detail, particularly in the harmonic colour and rhythm, a superior level of expression can be achieved.

KABALEVSKY: *Sonata No.3* (opus 46)

The sonata, as an 'ideal achievement' of expression for composers, demonstrates how the musical language of Medtner and Scriabin is closely linked to their personal philosophies of music. Kabalevsky's, on the other hand, is highly influenced by an external force: the Soviet regime. In Soviet ideology, art was not to be written for art's sake: it had to reflect the principles of the party.

The sonata, as a genre, is traditionally formalist. Unless a program is attached, it is incapable of containing socialist realism. Following the 1917 Revolution there was a major decline in the amount of music written for piano (including sonatas). However, after the dissolution of the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM) in 1931, there was a renewed interest in instrumental music. Even then, limitations were placed upon such work. To conform, many composers simply attached Soviet-related titles or programmes to works whose musical content had little or nothing to do with that ideology at all.[252] In the mid-1930s, Kabalevsky criticised such works, stating that they are "a remnant of the RAPM times ... the distrust of purely instrumental music which allegedly was incapable of fully reflecting our Soviet reality."[253] He continued to write that "it does not mean that all Soviet music must 'depict' and 'portray' concrete facts and occurrences — things of which, perhaps, music is not even capable. We must keep in mind the concrete ideo-emotional basis of creativity."[254]

So what is this "ideo-emotional basis" of Kabalevsky's creativity, and how is it reflected in his musical language? This relates to the Soviet conception of the artist's role in society. In his book *Music and education: a composer writes about musical education*, Kabalevsky describes that "when Lenin said that art had to arouse the artist in man, he was thinking of the artist as a creator, as a builder of new life."[255] Kabalevsky continues to describe that creativity is responsible for developments not only in the arts, but also in science, mathematics, teaching — in fact in every facet of life. It was vital, therefore, to encourage creative development, particularly in children, as "without creative imagination there can be no advance in any sphere of human activity."[256]

Music, therefore, possessed quite a central role in Soviet ideology, as it could express, and thus inspire "the strength of ideological conviction, of intellect, of feeling, and will."[257] Kabalevsky felt that many composers, without having experienced tragedy, were "exaggerating the idea of the importance of tragedy."[258] "Tragedy is not the sphere

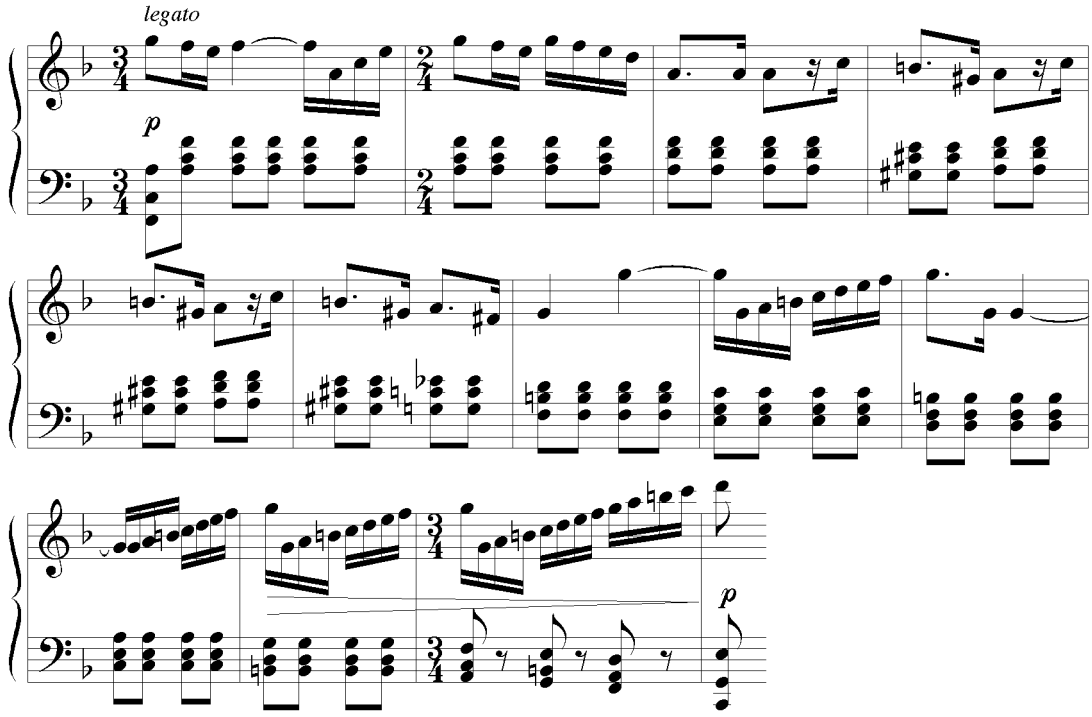
[252] Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917-1970* (London, 1972), p.157.
[253] Dmitry Kabalevsky, "O Sovetskoi Tematike, Stile i Muzykalnoi Kritike", *Sovetskaya Muzyka*, 1934: 4, pp.3-4. Cited in: ibid, p.158.
[254] Ibid,
[255] Kabalevsky, *Music and Education: A composer speaks about musical education* (London: 1988), p.52.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Kabalevsky, *Information Bulletin*, Union of Soviet Composers, 1960, I. Cited in: Schwarz, op. cit., p.327.
[258] Ibid.

of art adapted to the main features that are characteristic of our country's life and of the spirit of our people." The key to Kabalevsky's musical ideology, and thus his musical language, is rather to create "works that are connected with the image of contemporary man, his rich inner life, and clear optimistic outlook into the future."[259] It is the expression of this optimism in Kabalevsky's music that links what would be traditionally formalist works to the Soviet ideology. This is seen in his third *Sonata* (written in 1946).

Expression of optimism

From the outset, the *Sonata* is filled with cheerfulness.

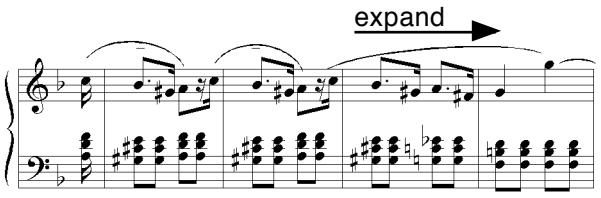
Figure 174: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, op.46, first movement, bars 1-13



The compositional techniques contributing to this cheerfulness, and how these can be heightened by the performer, are outlined in figure 175:

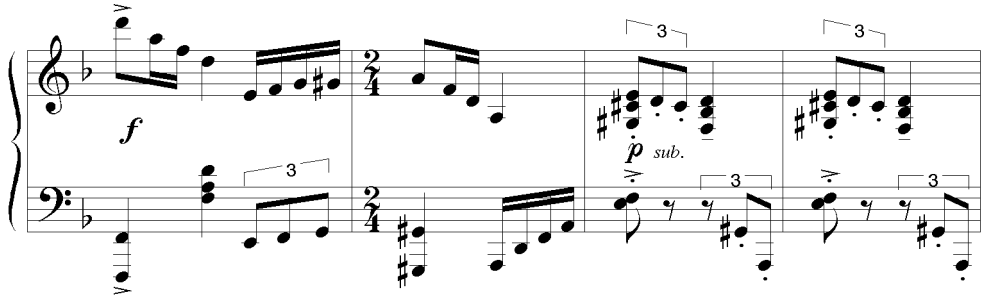
[259] Ibid.

Figure 175: "Optimistic" devices in the opening bars of Kabalevsky's *Sonata No.3* (first movement)

Device	**Comments and possible applications to performance practice**
Major tonality	The most obvious rhetorical device!
'Chugging' accompaniment	Maintains the light atmosphere. The fact that the chords are mostly in 6/3 inversion at the start (if not, in 6/4, often in a neighbouring function) helps maintain this mood. Pianists can enhance this with a light, detached touch.
Use of the ninth chord (bars 1-2)	The ninth chord is a naturally bright chord. Kabalevsky plays with it in two ways: he uses the 9-8 resolution as a melodic device, and also uses the arpeggiation up the ninth chord (end of bar 1). Pianists can supplement this with a light, yet still projecting, character of tone in the right hand.
'Quirky' chromaticism and repetition of melodic and harmonic material (e.g., bars 4-7)	The playful nature of these techniques can be highlighted through an awareness of phrasing (particularly the rests). It is effective to 'lean into' the B in the first two occurrences — in tone, and with a very slight *rubato*. The third time, the 'lean' can be less, as the motive expands into a fuller shape.  Note: Kabalevsky does not indicate any expressive markings on the score (see figure 174).
Dynamic indications	Exaggeration of these can help promote energy.

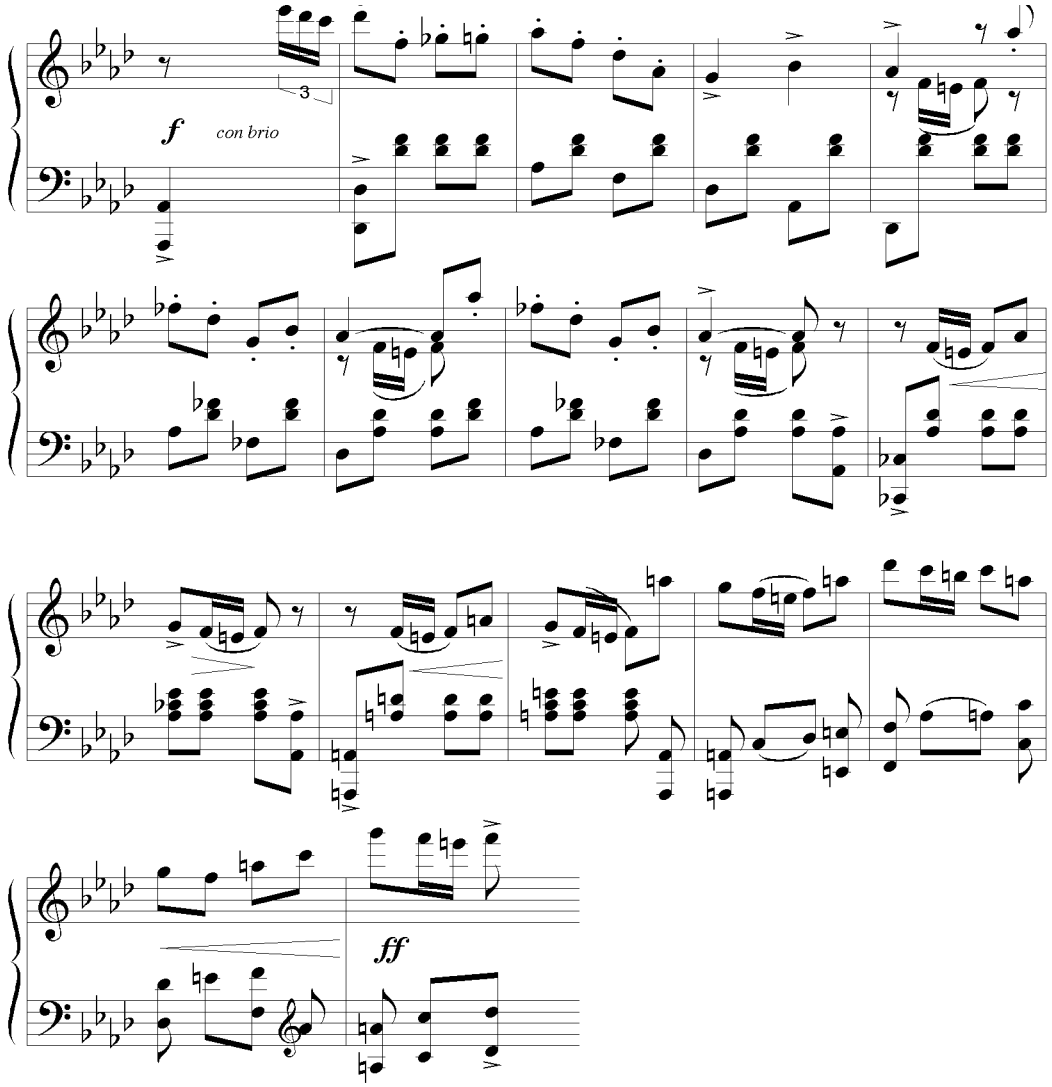
To maintain its energy, the sonata relies heavily on contrasting gestures. This is seen in bars 31-37, where pianists can exaggerate the contrast by paying attention to dynamic and articulation markings. Also, pianists can contrast, as in the Scriabin *Sonata*, the more rhythmical nature of the equal subdivision of the beat to the more playful nature (in this case) of the triplets.

Figure 176: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, op.46, first movement, bars 31-34



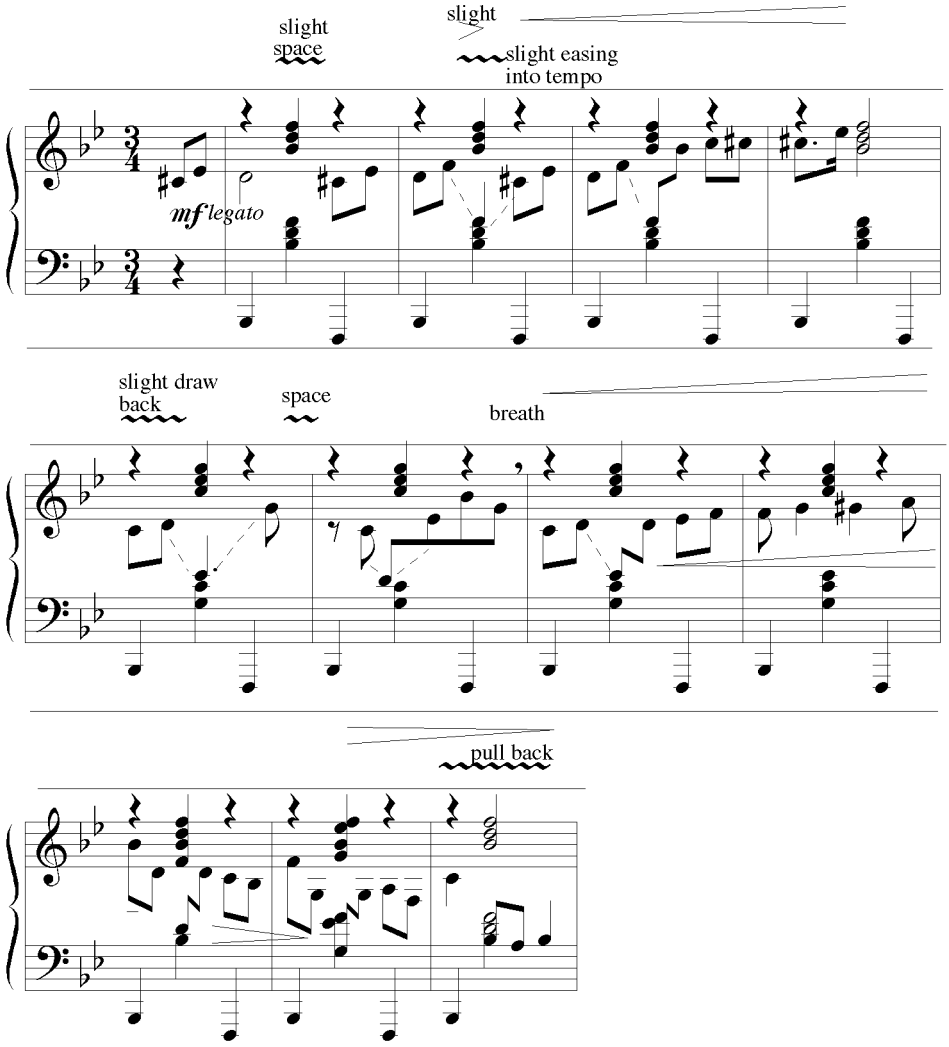
A similar cheerfulness is found in bars 65-80 of the third movement. Many of the musical techniques are similar to those used in the first movement: the light accompaniment, and the quirky chromaticism in conjunction with repetition (then expansion of) motives. In this case, the accents can highlight the cheeky nature of the theme.

Figure 177: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, op.46, third movement, bars 65-80



A very different kind of optimism is found in the opening of the second movement — it possesses a more warm-hearted, personal nature. This is created by the slow harmonic rhythm, the affirmation of the harmony in the bass (in the opening bars, this is dominant to tonic), the fact that the melody is centred around the third of the chord (the warmest colour of the chord), and also that it is written in a rich register of the piano. The performer can enhance this by creating a rich tone in the melody, and by keeping the surrounding parts to a minimum (creating atmosphere). In addition to Kabalevsky's expressive markings, pianists can express the nature of the movement by colouring the phrases with subtle dynamic inflections and *rubatos*.

Figure 178: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, op.46, second movement, bars 1-11

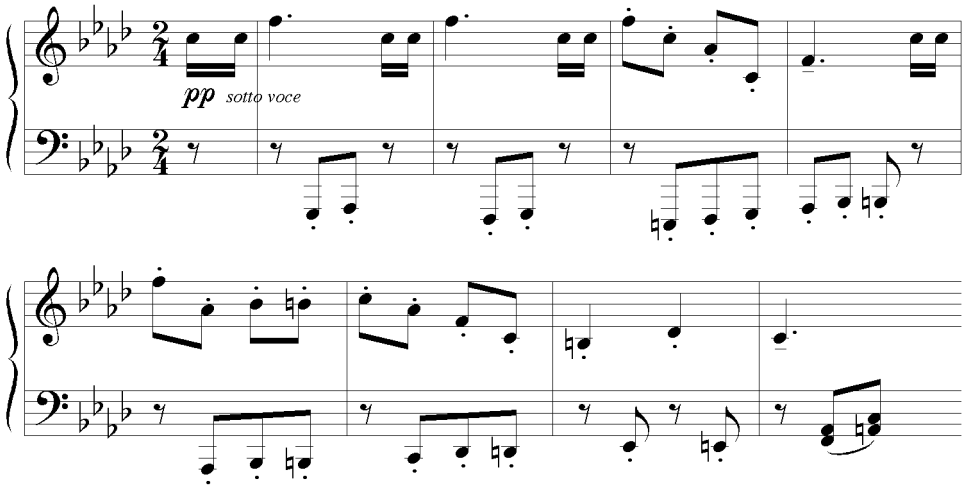


Opposing the optimism

Kabalevsky's third *Sonata* is far from being completely optimistic. The opening of the third movement, for example, is quite mysterious. This can be enhanced by a very tight, yet soft tone, a crisp *staccato*, and projection of the bass notes.

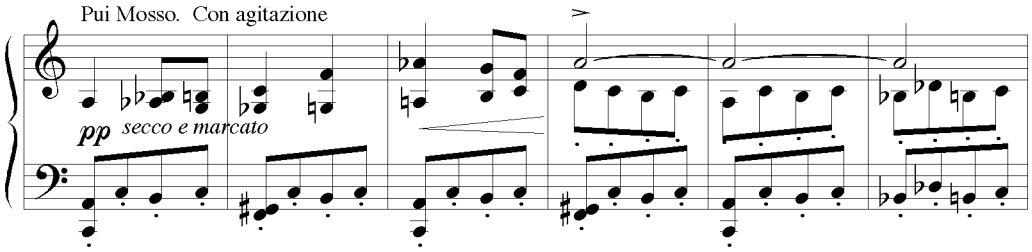
Page 214

Figure 179: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, op.46, third movement, bars 1-10



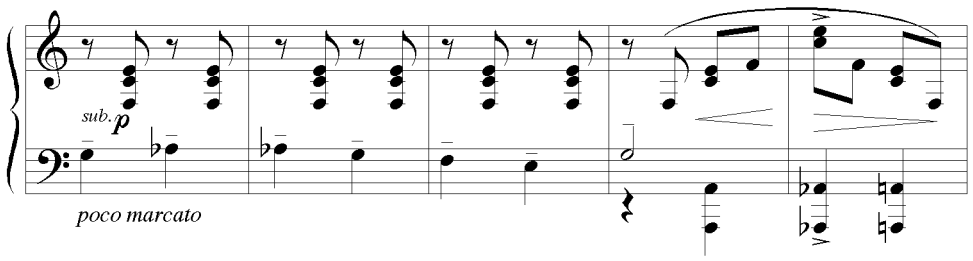
A similar approach is effective in the development of the first movement. Here, the atmosphere can also be heightened by the projection of the chromatic 'alto' part in the right hand and a slight emphasis on the first beat of each bar.

Figure 180: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, op.46, first movement, bars 123-128



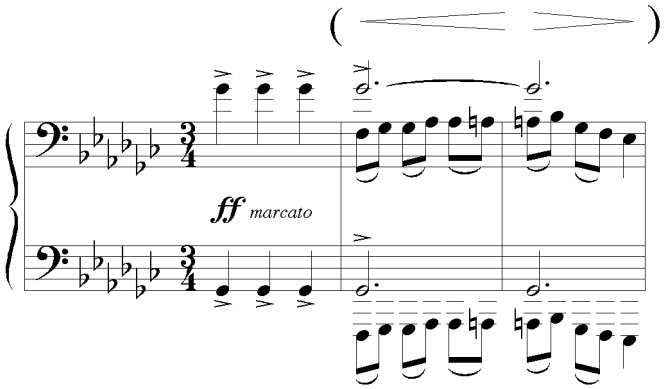
In both the first and third movements, once the development has started (where the bulk of the non-optimistic material occurs) it is important for pianists to maintain the tension. For example, even though the opening of the passage in figure 181 is marked *piano*, pianists should maintain a tight sound. This can be enhanced by a short *staccato* in the right hand chords. An exaggeration of the *crescendos* (highlighting the semitone figure in the bass) is also effective. It is important to maintain a sense of direction (in this case, by intensifying the tone) in bars 172-5 to effectively lead into the sequential treatment of this material from bar 176.

Figure 181: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, opus 46, first movement, bars 172-175



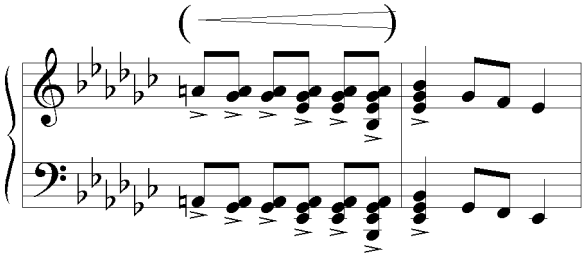
In the intensive development of the third movement, which is all essentially based around the same material, pianists can intensify Kabalevsky's existing expressive markings (which are mainly accents). For example, it is effective to create a surge in the quavers following the three accented, "announcing" notes of the development. This increases the energy of the section.

Figure 182: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, op.46, third movement, bars 106-8



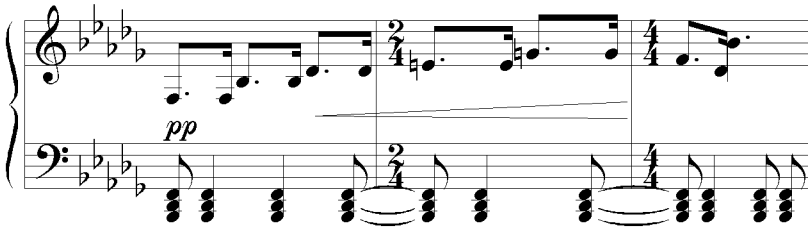
Similarly, pianists can intensify the arpeggiation of the diminished seventh by increase the tone through it.

Figure 183: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, opus 46, third movement, bars 117-118



The middle section of the second movement is less aggressive than the outer movements. However, similar performance techniques can be used to enhance the quite intense climax. The beginning of this section is, from a compositional perspective, structured quite simply: an arpeggiation of a Bb minor chord, followed by a diminished seventh of F in the right hand, against a quite haunting repeated Bb minor chord in the left.

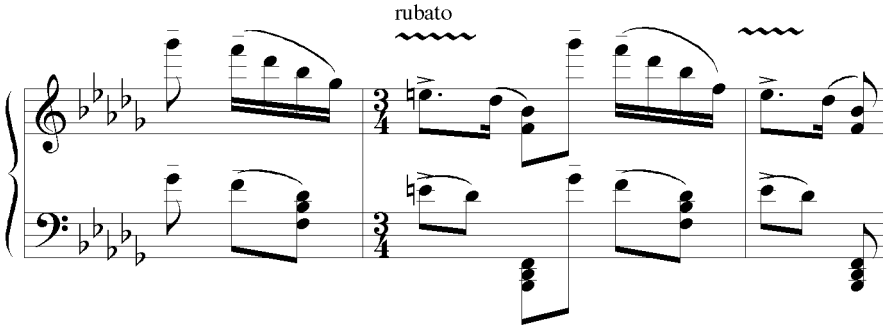
Figure 184: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, opus 46, second movement, bars 30-32



At the start of this section, the performer can explore the softest, most sinister range of the instrument (perhaps using the *una corda*). As the *crescendo* increases, it is crucial that the left hand intensifies with the right — almost like a persistent force, attempting to draw the harmonies of the right back to it (it does win, in bar 32).

Another effective intensifying tool that Kabalevsky uses is repetition: bars 35 and 36 are very similar — the only difference being that the first beat of bar 36 lands on an Eb rather than E natural. Pianists can enhance this with *rubato*. This not only draws attention to the altered note, but enhances the direction of the phrase: the purpose of the preceding notes, in both cases, is to fall and then 'lean into' the first beat of the bar.

Figure 185: Kabalevsky – *Sonata No.3*, opus 46, second movement, bars 34-36



Ideologically sound music — reinstating the optimism

The overall effect of these middle sections is somewhat like a test of strength. It is almost like a battle against the optimistic ideals (or, a test of strength of socialism). Ultimately, optimism wins and Kabalevsky characteristically returns, in the recapitulation, to the cheerful nature of the opening (in the third movement, the recapitulation is more optimistic than in the opening).

Kabalevsky was one of the few composers of the era who successfully managed to merge Soviet ideology with clever composition — particularly in a traditionally formalist structure. The performer does not necessarily need to maintain a 'socialist'

mindset when performing Kabalevsky's music — just as it is not essential to be thinking in the same 'mystical' mindset of Scriabin to perform his *Ninth Sonata*. It is essential to capture its optimism, vitality, and drive (through contrast) — the key characteristics of Kabalevsky's musical language: a language, that not only represents his socialist outlook, but also his tremendous enthusiasm for teaching. His compositions were also intended to, and certainly did in reality, promote enthusiasm for music in the education field. Both these ideologies merge (constantly) in his book *Music and Education*. Kabalevsky described the ultimate power of music in 1968 when he wrote: "Music is not simply an art! Music teaches mutual understanding, indicates humanitarian ideals, and helps mankind to safeguard peace."[260]

BALTIN: *Sonatine*

The early style of Alexander Baltin (born 1931) resembles earlier Soviet composers: particularly Kabalevsky, and also Prokofiev and Shostakovich. This can be attributed to his education and Soviet policy of the time. Baltin wrote the *Sonatine* in 1955, while a student at the Moscow Conservatory. This institution, among others, had been criticised several years before for their "formalist tendencies". The Resolution of 1948 stated that

> The fallacious, anti-national, formalist tendency in Soviet music exerts a pernicious influence on the ... education of young composers ... especially in the Moscow Conservatory ... where the formalistic tendency is predominant. Students are not inculcated in the respect for best traditions of Russian and Western classical music ... The creative output of many students of our conservatories consists of blind imitation of the music of Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and others.[261]

Composers were not encouraged to

> fight rigidly and sternly for sharp individualistic principles and tastes, for personal 'sediment' in invention so as not to be repetitious, not to resemble anyone, and to speak only in a personal idiom. Such composers ought to think hard about their future creative development.[262]

Although the cultural thaw after Stalin's death did result in fresh experimentation, Baltin's early style seems to resemble the clear optimism found in the music of 'Soviet' composers such as Kabalevsky. This may not necessarily be as a conscious desire to

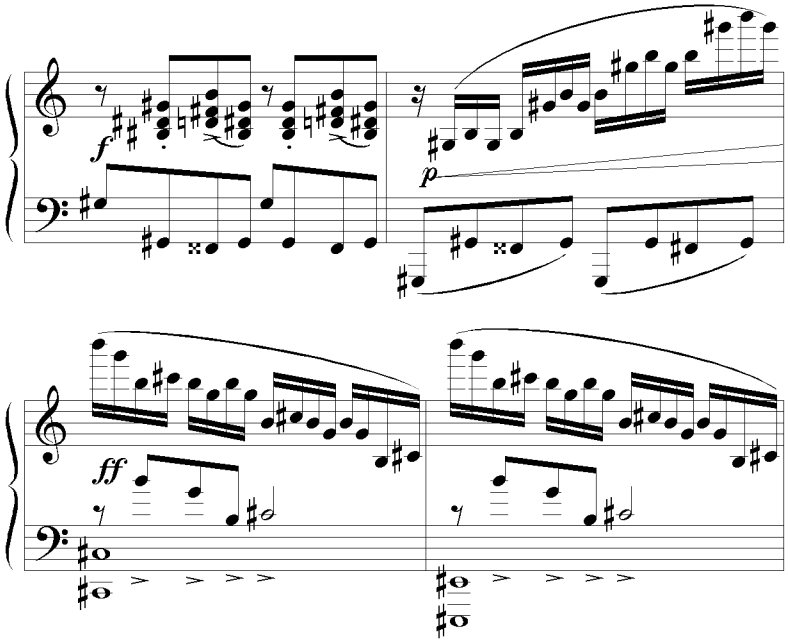
---

[260] Kabalevsky, op. cit., p.137.
[261] Resolution of 1948. Cited in: Schwarz, op. cit., p.222.
[262] Asafiev. Cited in: ibid., p.226-7.

represent socialist ideology — it is possible that the stylistic resemblance is purely based on the musical influence of such composers.

Given its clear texture and brevity, a successful performance of this light-hearted work is largely reliant on exaggeration of existing expressive markings. The most obvious of these is to exaggerate the dynamic markings.

Figure 186: Baltin – *Sonatine*, bars 73-76



Pianists can also experiment with changes in character of thematic material to maintain interest. At times, Baltin indicates such changes. For example, the first subject is marked *forte* at the very opening, then when it is repeated in the dominant in bar 10 it is marked *mezzo forte* and *grazioso*. The change in mood is created by the new key, the higher register (particularly the left hand) and the lighter nature of the accompaniment.

Figure 187a: Baltin – *Sonatine*, bars 1-5 (original occurrence)

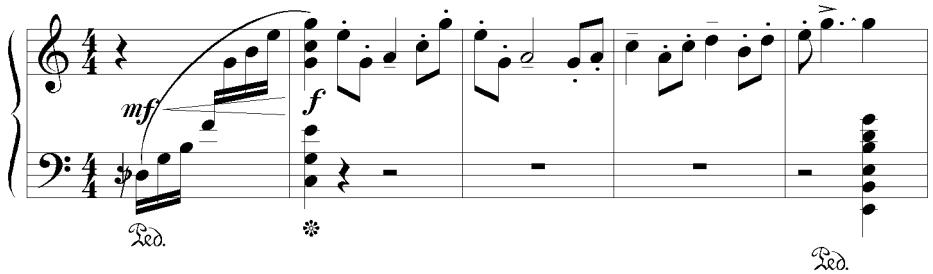
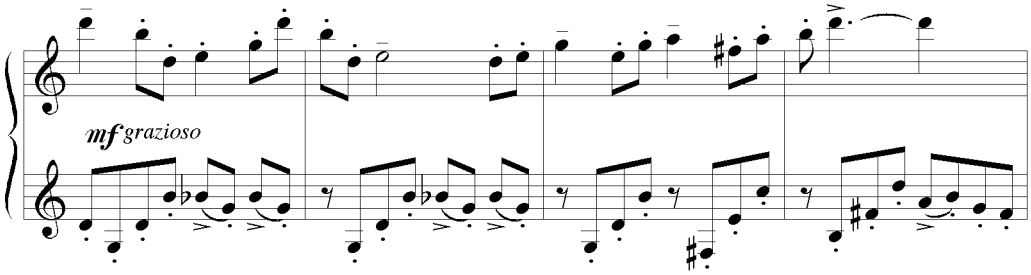


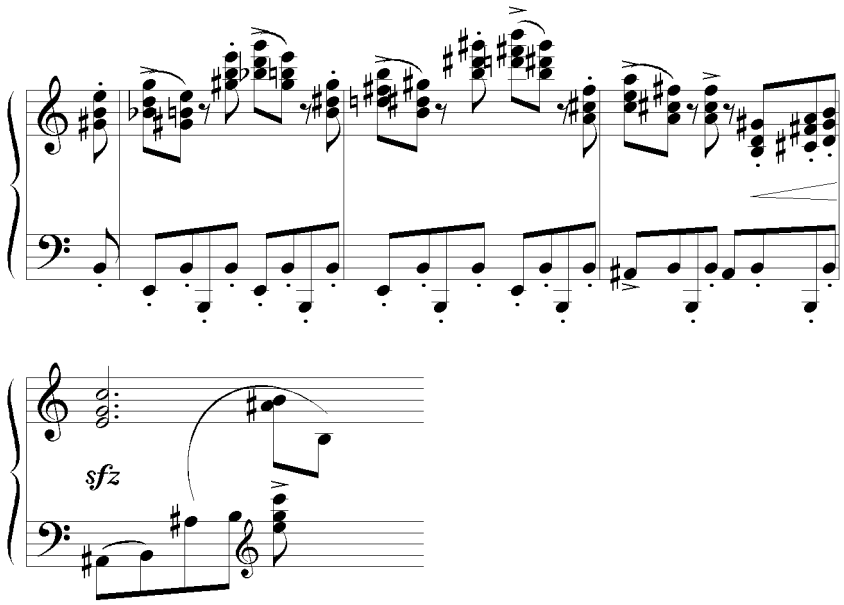
Figure 187b: Baltin – *Sonatine*, bars 10-13 (in dominant)



Pianists can exaggerate this by using a lighter touch, and by drawing attention to the accents on the colourful Bb in the left hand to maintain the more playful feel.

At other times, pianists can enhance Baltin's repetition of thematic material (where he indicates no change in expression) with subtle colours in dynamics and articulation. For example, in the coda of the exposition (figure 188) pianists can experiment with Baltin's constant imitation of material up one octave.

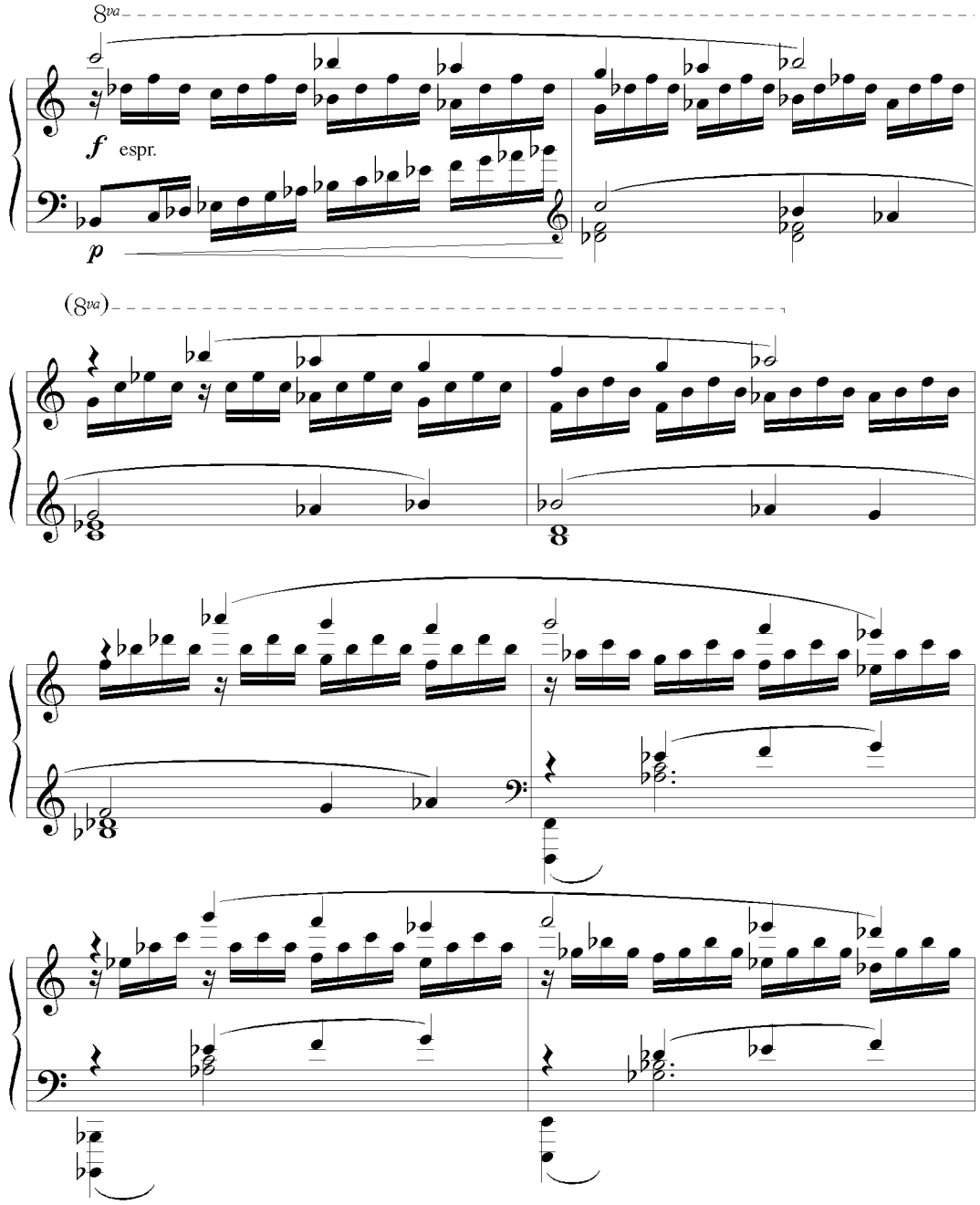
Figure 188: Baltin – *Sonatine*, bars 58-61



This is largely instinctive and difficult to graph on paper: the most obvious method is to explain it as an echo (or the reverse) in dynamics (e.g., *p* followed by *pp*). However, merely to do this would get a little too predictable. Pianists can also explore more subtle variances in tone colour, the amount of emphasis put on the accents, and other such devices to ensure that the character of each motive is always fresh. Pianists can also create interest by drawing attention to the left hand. This is effective at bar 60, where the left hand moves to an A#. The phrasing and the accent indicate that Baltin would like the texture enhanced by the left hand in that bar.

On a larger scale, pianists can exaggerate the contrasts between such lively sections and the more lush moments. For example, fullness of tone (particularly heightened by the initial *crescendo* in the left hand), interplay between the voices, and slight *rubatos* can enhance the climax towards the end of the recapitulation. When the lower register of the piano is introduced in bar 127, the rich nature of those notes can be explored.

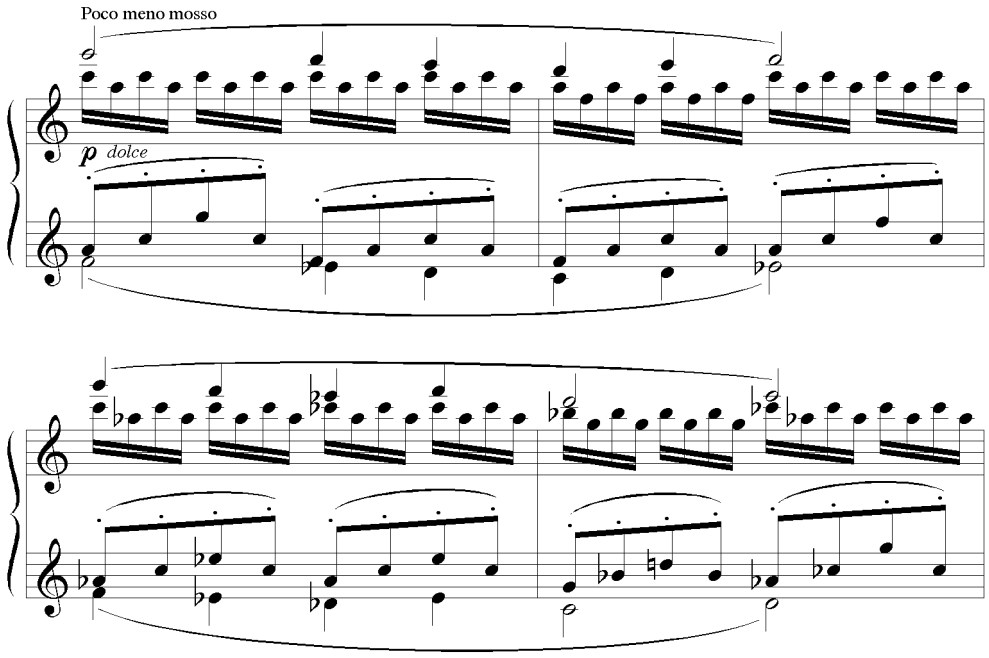
Figure 189: Baltin – *Sonatine*, bars 122-129



It is almost reminiscent of the climax of a film score, orchestrated with strings on the top part, with horns on the echo (not to mention the initial surge of sound by the *tutti* in the first bar). Because of the overall light-hearted nature of the work as a whole, it is virtually impossible for pianists to overdo the romanticism of the climax.

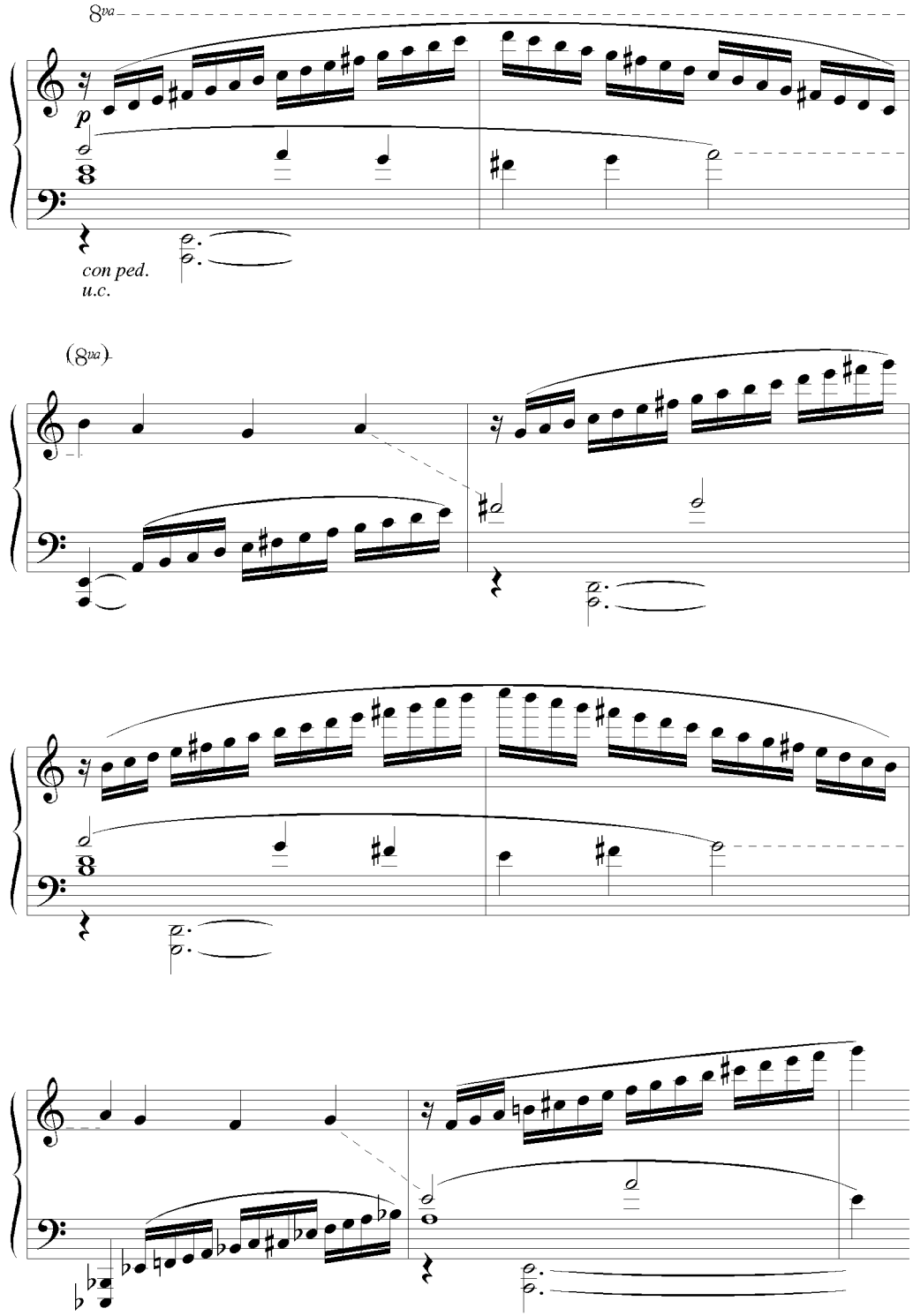
At other times, the lyrical moments can be more subtle. This is seen in figure 56, where it is effective to project the two outer voices moving in compound ninths, keeping the inner voices as soft as possible. Baltin's *staccato* indications for the upper part of the left hand, when used with the pedal, add an effective contrast to the other *legato* sounds being produced.

Figure 190: Baltin – *Sonatine*, bars 114-117



Baltin's pedal indications should be observed: at times they create quite distinctive pianistic colours. In the occurrence of the second subject in the development, Baltin indicates that the pedal should be used throughout. It is effective to ensure the lower bass notes (second beat of bar 86) resonant as long as possible. Half pedalling can be used to achieve this.

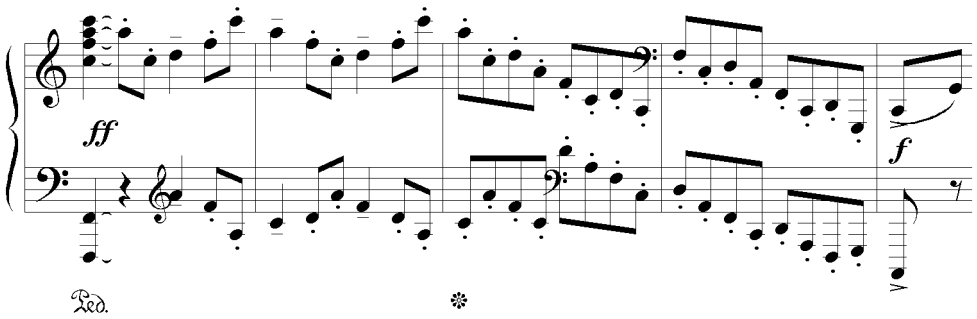
Figure 191: Baltin - *Sonatine*, bars 86-94



This pedalling, in conjunction with the scales surrounding the melody (which, considering the pedalling, should be kept as soft as possible) is quite atmospheric.

Another interesting use of the pedal is found at the beginnings of the codas of both the exposition and recapitulation. Here, Baltin indicates that the pedal should be held through the first two bars then released.

Figure 192: Baltin – *Sonatine*, bars 133-137



This has two main effects: it creates a bigger sound for the start of the coda (which in both cases is built up to in the preceding bars), and it contrasts more with the following two, which maintained a constant texture more or less arpeggiating down the piano.

The elements required to produce a successful, imaginative performance of Baltin's *Sonatine* are essentially indicated on the score. Pianists should exaggerate these and experiment with ways of enhancing the character of the thematic material and increasing the overall contrasts (i.e., drama) in the work.

The sonatas discussed in this paper display a wide variety of styles. Clearly, the composers' overall approach to music has considerable bearing on their musical language, and therefore to the way pianists should approach it. Kabalevsky and Baltin both possess an optimism and vitality in their musical style which tends to be best realised through attention to contrasts in the character of thematic material, dynamics, and attention to articulations. The music of Scriabin and Medtner, however, require more attention to detail. For both of these composers, who regarded music as a language of the senses, interpretation is largely related to the device that arguably has the biggest control over the senses — harmony (both on the vertical and horizontal planes). A focus on harmonic colour, structure, and shape reveals not only the incredible detail in which the sonatas of Scriabin and Medtner are constructed, but also increases the performer's understanding of these composers' musical language.

CONCLUSION

The repertoire studied in this paper displays the wide variety of approaches to musical style in Russian music. The advantage of a genre-based study is that it enables specific aspects of composers' approaches to be studied. The study of the piano miniature, in general, reveals the importance of spontaneity in creating an intimate or exciting performance. This should not interfere, however, with the overall compositional shape of the work (this is particularly the case with performances of Rachmaninoff's music).

The study of the etude reveals different conceptions of technique. The close link between technique and musical ideology (particularly in the music of Bortkiewicz, Rachmaninoff, and Scriabin) helps explain why the era produced so many Russian 'titans' of the piano. In general, the etude can be seen not as a tool of technical improvement, but as a means of trying to achieve musical perfection. The performer's approach to such works should therefore be primarily 'musically' focused.

Programmatic music and elegies illustrate the biographical, cultural and psychological influences on music. The very choice of the program often reveals the composer's approach to music (this is particularly found in Medtner's music). More importantly, the chapter reveals how composers had a distinct need for music as an outlet for their emotional hardships. The often relatively simple language found in these works can be dramatised by performers to communicate the extra-musical program (or psychological state) to the listener (naturally, this approach should be used in all the works studied in this paper).

The detailed study of musical rhetoric in the piano sonatas further emphasises the need for performers to study the intricacies of such composers' language. Such attention to detail will, once again, help create the emotional intensity of these works (particularly those of Medtner and Scriabin), or the more intentional optimism of Kabalevsky and Baltin.

Overall, the composers studied in this paper essentially display two approaches to music. On one hand, there is the musical idealism of Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, and

Medtner. Composers such as Liadoff and Arensky most likely shared these ideals — this is reflected in the intimacy of their style. The musical language of these composers is heavily reliant on their emotive use of melody, harmony, and overall musical shape. It is important for performers to study such detail so that they are aware of the often quite intense emotional 'message' of the works. On the other extreme, composers such as Shostakovich, Kabalevsky, Sorokin, Baltin (and even Prokofiev, in his cheekiness), in some ways, approach music more as a means of entertainment. Shostakovich stated that "I want to fight for the legitimate right of laughter in 'serious' music."[263] This does not imply that they were writing for commercial gain. These composers were also influenced by the external ideology of the Soviet regime,[264] which demanded that music should not express tragedy. The music of such composers generally relies on the exaggeration of contrasts, and an overall attention to musical colour to create the musical picture.

A successful approach to performance practice is not to take a purely musical approach, but to integrate this with a study of culture, biography, and ideology. In many ways, the purpose of composing, interpreting, or listening to music has two principle functions: feeling the experience, and educating oneself to improve that experience. As the Soviet teacher V. A. Suchomlinsky remarked: "musical education is not the education of the musician, but above all the education of the human being."[265]

[263] Shostakovich. Cited in: Fay, op. cit., p.77.
[264] The exception here is Prokofiev, who wrote his *Etudes* (op.2) in 1909.
[265] V. A. Suchomlinsky. Cited in: Kabalevsky, op. cit., p.19.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

KNOWN PUBLISHED WORKS OF KONSTANTIN STEPANOVICH SOROKIN

SOURCES

BNL - British National Library

DC - www.rscm.u-net.com/extr1.pdf - directory of composers.

DF - www.ovar.myweb.nl/sovrev/shchfan.html - David Fanning on Rodion Shchedrin and his Second Symphony

EP - *Konzertstücke des 20. Jahrhunderts aus Rüßland und Osteuropa* (Concert Pieces by Soviet Composers). Frankfurt: Edition Peters, 1974.

LC - Library of Congress.

MM - *Concert Pieces for Piano by Soviet Composers*, vol.1, Moscow: Muzyka Moscva, 1966.

COMPOSITIONS

PIANO SOLO:

INDIVIDUAL WORKS:

Etude, A minor (1980). Recorded on *P'esy dlia fortepiano* (works for piano) on the melodiia lable - c.1980 [LC]

Piano Concerto, op.42. Pub. 1970 (no other publication details provided) [LC]

Polyphonic Exercises for the Young: 24 Preludes and Fugues, Work 78. (i.e., opus 78?). Pub. Moscow: Soviet composer, 1978. [LC] [possibly written 1975 [DF], although this could be the op.75 Preludes and Fugues]

Preludes and Fugues, op.75. Pub. 1977 [LC] [possibly written 1975 [DF], although this could be the op.78 Preludes and Fugues]

Sonatina No.3, op.18, C minor. Pub. Moscow: Music State Publishing House, 1957 [LC]

Tanz (Dance), op.29, no.2. [EP]

Three Dances, from the ballet "The Ugly Duckling" by Kh. Anderson. Pub. Music State Publishing House, 1966 [MM]

Youth Concerto. Pub.1972 [LC]

COLLECTIONS:
Album of classical waltzes for piano. Pub. Moscow: Soviet Composer, 1969-77 (4 vol.) [LC]

Album of Sonatas for piano. Pub. Moscow: Music State Publishing House, 1970 [LC]

Compositions for piano. Pub. 1972 (publication is 182 pages) [LC]

Music for children (some for piano, four hands). Pub. Moscow: Soviet Composer [LC]

Selected foreign songs for piano forte (for piano, with words). Pub. Moscow: Soviet Composer, 1959 [LC]

Works for piano (original works and arrangements). Pub. Moscow: Soviet Composer, 1960 [LC]

PIANO DUET:
Lyric [poetry]: Classic and Modern Music for piano duet (original works and arrangements, in part with words). Pub. Moscow: Soviet Composer, 1963 [LC]

2 PIANOS - 4 HANDS:
Four dances from the ballet "[The] Ugly Duckling" by Kh. Anderson. Pub. Moscow: Music State Publishing House, 1963 [LC]

ORGAN:
Passacaglia and Fugue, op.91 (1978). Pub. *Soviet Organ Music IV*, 1982 [DC]

SONGS/CHORAL:
Hungarian Songs for voice and piano. Pub. Moscow: Soviet Composer, 1963 [LC]

CHAMBER:
Sonata for violin and piano, op.33. Pub. 1965 [LC]

ORCHESTRA:
Poem-Overture. pub.1970. [LC]

EDITORIAL WORK

Complete Preludes*, books 1 & 2/Claude Debussy*. Pub. Dover — 1989. Reprint of 1964 edition. Moscow: Music publishing house [LC]

Complete transcriptions of Wagner's Operas/Franz Liszt. Pub. Dover, in association with the American Liszt Society, 1981. Reprint of 1961 edition (Moscow: Music State Publishing House) [BNL]

Piano transcriptions from French and Italian operas/Franz Liszt. Pub. Dover, in association with the American Liszt Society, 1982. Reprint of 1958-1964 edition (Moscow: Music State Publishing House) [BNL]

APPENDIX 2

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF RACHMANINOFF'S PERFORMANCES[266] (1891-1917)

RACHMANINOFF'S PERFORMANCES BY OTHER COMPOSERS			**RACHMANINOFF'S PERFORMANCES OF HIS OWN WORKS**		
COMPOSER	**WORK**	**YEAR OF PERFOR-MANCE**	**WORK**	**YEAR OF COMP.**	**LOCATION/ DETAILS**
		17 Nov. 1891	*Russian Rhapsody for Two Pianos*	1891	Moscow. With Josef Lhévinne
		30 Jan 1892	*Trio élégiaque No.1* for piano, vln, & cello.	1892	Moscow (with David Kreyn, vln; Anatoli Brandukov, vc)
		30 Jan 1892	*Two Pieces* for cello and piano	1892	(with Anatoli Brandukov, vc)
		17 Mar. 1892	*Piano Concerto No.1*, opus 1	1891	Moscow (student orch. Moscow Conservatory)
		26 Sept. 1892	*Five Morceaux de fantaisie* for piano, opus 2	1892	Moscow
		28 Dec. 1892	*Five Morceaux de fantaisie* for piano, opus 2	1892	Kharkov
Brandukov	Three Pieces for Cello and Piano: "Feuille d album", "Mazurka", "On the Water" (accompanying Brandukov)	1892			
Chopin	*Berceuse* in D flat, opus 57	1892			
Chopin	*Etude* in A flat, op.10, no.10	1892			
Chopin	*Etude* in c minor, op.10, no.12 ("Revolutionary")	1892			
Chopin	*Scherzo No.1* in b minor, op.20	1892			
Chopin	*Waltz* in Db, opus 64, no.1	1892			

[266] Table compiled from information in Martyn, *Rachmaninoff*, op. cit., and Cunningham, op. cit.

Chopin	*Waltz* in A flat, opus 42	1892			
Davydov	*By the Fountain* for cello and piano (acc. Brandukov)	1892			
Davydov	*Farewell* for cello and piano (acc. Brandukov)	1892			
Godard	*En Courant*	1892			
Liszt	*Concert Study No.3* in D flat ("Un Sospiro"), G.144	1892			
Liszt	*Faust Waltz* (from *Gounod*), G.407	1892			
Liszt	*Hungarian Rhapsody no.12*, G.244	1892			
Liszt	*Valse Impromptu*, G.213	1892			
Pabst	*Fantasy on themes from Tchaikovsky's* Eugene Onegin.	1892			
Popper	*Two Pieces* for cello and piano (acc. Brandukov)	1892			
Rubinstein, A.	*Concerto No.4* in d minor, op.70 - 1st mve. only	1892			
Rubinstein, A.	*Barcarolle No.2* in a minor, op.45	1892			
Saint-Saëns	*Swan*, for cello and piano (acc. Brandukov)	1892			
Schumann	*Fantasiestücke,* op.12 no.1 - "Des Abends"	1892			
Schumann	*Fantasiestücke*, op.12 no.2 - "Aufschwung"	1892			
Tausig	*Etude*	1892			
Tausig	*Ungarische Zigeunerweisen*	1892			
Tchaikovsky	Nocturne in F major, op.10, no.1	1892			
Tchaikovsky	*Seasons*, op.37 no.10 - October, "Autumn Song"	1892			
Tchaikovsky	*Seasons*, op.37 no.11 - November, "Troika en traineaux"	1892			

Tchaikovsky	*Seasons*, op.37 no.3 - March, "Song of the Skylark"	1892			
Tchaikovsky	*Seasons*, op.37, no.6 - June "Barcarolle"	1892			
		27 Jan 1893	*Six Songs*, op.4	1893	Kharkov. With Mikhail A. Slonov.
		30 Nov. 1893	*Suite No.1 for Two Pianos*, op.4	1893	Moscow. With Pavel Pabst.
Arensky	*Esquisse in A flat*, op.24 no.3	1893			
Arensky	*Esquisse in F major*, op.24 no.1	1893			
Liszt	*Hungarian Rhapsody no.14*, G.244	1893			
Pabst	*Illustrations de l'opera "La Damne de Pique"*	1893			
Schumann	"Prophet Bird" from *Waldescenen*, op.82	1893			
Schumann	*Kreislerianna*, op.16	1893			
		31 Jan 1894	*Seven Morceaux de salon for piano*, op.10	1894	Moscow (4th-7th mve.)
		31 Jan 1894	*Six Songs*, op.4	1893	Moscow. With Elizaveta A. Lavrovskaya.
		31 Jan 1894	*Six Songs*, op.8	1893	Moscow. With Elizaveta A. Lavrovskaya.
		31 Jan 1894	*Trio élagiaque No.2* for piano, violin, and cello, op.9	1893	Moscow. Julius Conus, vln; Anatoli Brandukov, vlc.
Tchaikovsky	*Rêverie*, op.9 no.1	1894			
Arensky	*Barcarolle* in F major, op.36 no.11	1895			
Beethoven	*Sonata No.9* in a A major for vln & pf, op.47 (Kreutzer) (accompanying Teresina Tua)	1895			

Chopin	*Nocturne* in c minor, op.48 no.1	1895			
Chopin	*Nocturne* in E-flat, op.9 no.2 (arr. violin and piano, Sarasate) (accomp. Teresina Tua)	1895			
Glinka	*Lark* (arr. Balakirev)	1895			
Liszt	*Waldesrauschen*, G.145	1895			
Sarasate	*Dance*, for violin and piano (accomp. Teresina Tua)	1895			
Schubert	*Rondo* for violin and piano in b minor, D895 (accomp. Teresina Tua)	1895			
		19 April 1899	*Five Morceaux de fantaisie* for piano, op.2	1892	London (first 2 mve.) with *The Rock* (Philharmonic Society)
		9 March, 1900	*Twelve Songs*, op.21	1902 (completed)	Moscow (Lev Tolstoy's house). 1st song only. With Feodor Chaliapine, bass.
		2 Dec. 1900	*Piano Concerto No.2*, op.18	1901 (completed)	Moscow (2nd & 3rd mve.)
Dargomyzhsky	Song, *The Old Corporal* (acc. Chaliapin)	1900			
Dargomyzhsky	Song, *The Paladin* (acc. Chaliapin)	1900			
Glinka	Songs (accompanying Chaliapin)	1900			
Mozart	*Figaro*, Aria, "Husband open your eyes" (acc. Chaliapin)	1900			
Mussorgsky	Song*: Orphan Puppet Show Trepak* (acc. Chaliapin)	1900			

Rimsky-Korsakov	Songs (acc. Chaliapin): *O if thou could'st for one moment* (op.39 no.1), *Prophet* (op.49 no.2)	1900			
Rubinstein, A.	Song, *The Prisoner* (acc. Chaliapin)	1900			
Rubinstein, N.	*Valse et Tarantelle*, for two pianos (arr. Langer). With Goldenweiser.	1900			
Saint-Saëns	*Danse macabre* (arr. two pianos). With Siloti.	1900			
Schumann	Songs (accompanying Chaliapin)	1900			
Tchaikovsky	Song: *I bless you, forests*, op.47 no.5 (acc. Chaliapin)	1900			
		27 Oct. 1901	*Piano Concerto No.2*, op.18	1901	Moscow
		24 Nov. 1901	*Suite No.2* for two pianos, op.17	1901	Moscow, with Siloti
		2 Dec. 1901	*Sonata* for cello and piano, op.19	1901	Moscow, with Anatoli Brandukov
Tchaikovsky	*Piano Trio* in a minor, op.50 (with Ysaye and Branukov)	1901			
Vieuxtemps	*Concerto No.4* in d minor, op.31, arr. violin & piano (acc. Ysaye)	1901			
		10 Feb. 1903	*Ten Preludes* for piano, op.23	1903	Moscow
		10 Feb. 1903	*Variations on a Theme of Chopin* for piano, op.22	1903	Moscow
Arensky	Song, *Night*, op.17 no.4 (acc. Vera Petrova-Zvantseva)	1903			
Brahms	*Liebeslieder Walzer*, op.52 (with Siloti)	1903			

Ippolitov-Ivanov	Song, *Of What in the silence of the night* (acc. Vera Petrova-Zvantseva)	1903			
Mussorgsky	Song, *Gopark* (acc. Vera Petrova-Zvantseva)	1903			
Rimsky-Korsakov	Songs (acc. Nadezhda Zabela-Vrubel) *Look in thy garden* (op.41 no.4), *Nymph* (op.56 no.1)	1903			
Tchaikovsky	*Andante cantabile* from *Quartet No.1* in D major, op.11 (arr. for cello & piano). Acc. Brandukov.	1903			
Tchaikovsky	*Iolanta* – Iolana's Arioso (acc. Nadezhda Zabela-Vrubel)	1903			
Tchaikovsky	*The Made of Orleans* – Joan's Aria (acc. Vera Petrova-Zvantseva)	1903			
Tchaikovsky	*Mazeppa* - Maria's Lullaby (acc. Nadezhda Zabela-Vrubel)	1903			
Strauss, R.	Song, *Sie wissen's nicht*, op.49 no.5 (acc. Nezhdanova)	1908			
		28 Nov. 1909	*Piano Concerto No.3*, op.30	1909	New York, with New York SO
		Oct.-Nov. 1911	Six [originally nine] *Etudes Tableaux* for piano, op.33	1911	England (on tour)
		5 Dec. 1911	*Five Morceaux de fantaisie* for piano, op.2	1892	St. Petersburg (1st mve.)
		5 Dec. 1911	*Seven Morceaux de salon* for piano, op.10	1894	St .Petersburg (3rd & 5th movements)
		5 Dec. 1911	Six [originally nine] *Etudes Tableaux* for piano, op.33	1911	St. Petersburg
		5 Dec. 1911	*Sonata No.1* for piano, op.28	1907	St. Petersburg

		5 Dec. 1911	*Ten Preludes* for piano, op.23	1903	St. Petersburg
		5 Dec. 1911	*Thirteen Preludes* for piano, op.32	1910	St. Petersburg
		13 Dec. 1911	Six [originally nine] *Etudes Tableaux* for piano, op.33	1911	Moscow
Tchaikovsky	*Concerto No.1* in B flat minor, op.23	1911			
		23 Nov. 1913	"Lilacs", arr. for piano	1914?	St. Petersburg
		3 Dec. 1913	*Sonata No.2* for piano, op.36	1913	Moscow
Scriabin	*Concerto* in F-sharp minor, op.20	1915			
Scriabin	*Etude* in C sharp minor, op.42 no.5	1915			
Scriabin	*Etude* in D sharp minor, op.8 no.12	1915			
Scriabin	*Etude* in F sharp minor, op.42 no.3	1915			
Scriabin	*Fantasy* in b minor, op.28	1915			
Scriabin	*Poème* in F sharp major, op.32 no.1	1915			
Scriabin	*Prelude* in E major, op.11 no.9	1915			
Scriabin	*Prelude* in G major, op.11, no.3	1915			
Scriabin	*Prelude* in B flat major, op.11 no.21	1915			
Scriabin	*Prelude* in b minor, op.11 no.1	1915			
Scriabin	*Prelude* in C major, op.11 no.1	1915			
Scriabin	*Prelude* in c minor, op.11 no.20	1915			
Scriabin	*Prelude* in e flat minor, op.11 no.14	1915			
Scriabin	*Prelude* in F major, op.11, no.23	1915			
Scriabin	*Prelude* in f minor, op.11, no.18	1915			
Scriabin	*Prelude* in f sharp minor, op.11 no.8	1915			
Scriabin	*Satonic Poem*, op.36	1915			
Scriabin	*Sonata No.2* (Sonata-Fantasy) in g sharp minor	1915			

Scriabin	*Sonata No.5* in F sharp major, op.53	1915			
		24 Jan. 1916	Fourteen Songs, op.34	1912/1915	Moscow (no.14 - *Vocalise*), with Antonina Nezhdanova, sop.
		24 Oct. 1916	Six Songs, op.38	1916	Moscow, with Nina Koshetz, sop.
		29 Nov. 1916	Nine *Etudes Tableaux* for piano, op.33	1917 (completed)	St. Petersburg (8 selections)
		29 Nov. 1916	Six (originally nine) *Etudes Tableaux* for piano, op.33	1911	St. Petersburg (1, 2, 6, 9)
		29 Nov. 1916	*Sonata No.1* for piano, op.28	1907	St .Petersburg
		29 Nov. 1916	Ten *Preludes* for piano, op.32	1910	St. Petersburg
		21 Feb. 1917	Nine *Etudes Tableaux* for piano, op.39	1917	St. Petersburg

BIBLIOGRAPHY

LITERATURE

Abraham, Gerald (1976) *Eight Soviet Composers*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Andrew, Joe (1982) *Russian Writers and Society in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century*. London: Macmillan Press.

Bartlett, Rosamund (1998) "Tchaikovsky, Chekhov, and the Russian Elegy". *Tchaikovsky and His World* (edited by Leslie Kearney). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bertensson, Sergei and Leyda, Jay (2001) *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Bloomquist, William Charles (1993) *The* Fairy Tales *of Nikolai Medtner*. Doctor of Musical Arts thesis: The University of Texas.

Bolstein, Leon (1998) "Music as the Language of Psychological Realism: Tchaikovsky and Russian Art". *Tchaikovsky and his World* (edited by Leslie Kearney). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bowers, Faubion (1970) *Scriabin*. First edition (volumes 1 & 2). Tokyo: Kodansha International.

——— (1996) *Scriabin*. Second edition. New York: Dover.

——— (1973) *The New Scriabin*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Boyd, Malcolm. (1995) "Elegy". *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol.6 (edited by Stanely Sadie). London: Macmillan.

——— (1995) "Nikolay Karlovich Metner". *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol.12 (edited by Stanely Sadie). London: Macmillan.

Boyes, Katharine (1997) *The Months of the Year Portrayed in Piano Works by Fanny Hensel, Charles-Valentin, Alkan, Peter Tchaikovsky, and Judith Lang Zaimont.* DMA thesis: University of Cincinnati.

Brown, David (1995) "Anton Stepanovich Arensky". *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol.1 (edited by Stanely Sadie). London: Macmillan.

——— (1995) "Pytor Il'yich Tchaikovsky". *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol.18 (edited by Stanely Sadie). London: Macmillan.

——— (1982) *Tchaikovsky: A Biographical and Critical Study*. London: Victor Gollancz.

Calvocoressi, M. D. (1975) *A Survey of Russian Music*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Cooke, James (1976) *Great Pianists on Piano Playing*. Philadelphia: Theo Presser.

Cunningham, Robert (2001) *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Bio-Bibliography*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Fanning, David (ed.) (1995) *Shostakovich Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fay, Lauel (2000) *Shostakovich: A Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gerig, Reginald (1990) *Famous Pianists and their Technique*. Washington: Robert B. Luce Inc.

Gibb, James (1972) "The Growth of National Schools", *Keyboard Music* (edited by Denis Matthews). Middlesex: Pelican.

Gillespie, John & Gillespie, Anna (1995) *Notable Twentieth-Century Pianists.* Volume 2. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Ho, Allan and Feofanov, Dmitry. *Biographical Dictionary of Russian/Soviet Composers.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Hopkins, Antony (forward) (1993) *Great Composers.* London: Tiger Books.

Hoffman, Michel (1962) *Tchaikovsky*. London: John Calder.

Kabalevsky, Dmitri (1988) *Music and Education: A composer writes about musical education.* London: Unesco.

Keldïsh, Yury (1995) "Viktor Mikhalovich Belyayev". *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, volume 2 (edited by Stanely Sadie). London: Macmillan.

Klimovitsky, Arkadii (1998) "Tchaikovsky and the Russian Silver Age" (translated by Alice Dampman Humel). *Tchaikovsky and his World* (edited by Leslie Kearney). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Krebs, Stanely (1970) *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music.* London: George Allen and Unwin.

Leonard, Anthony (1968) *A History of Russian Music*. U. S. A.: Minerva Press.

Macdonald, Hugh (1978) *Skryabin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mach, Elyse (1988) *Great Contemporary Pianists Speak for Themselves*. Volumes 1 & 2. New York: Dover.

Martyn, Barrie (2000) *Nicolas Medtner: His Life and Music*. Hants: Scholar Press.

——— (1990) *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor.* Hants: Ashgate Publishing.

Martynov, Ivan (1969) *Dmitri Shostakovich: The Man and His Work* (translated by T. Guralsky). New York: Greenwood.

Minturn, Neil (1997) *The Music of Sergei Prokofiev*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Montagu-Nathan, M. (1970) *Contemporary Russian Composers*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Newmann, William (1969) *The Sonata Since Beethoven.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Norris, Geoffrey (1976) *Rakhmaninov.* London: J. M. Dent.

——— (1993) *Rachmaninoff.* Second edition. London: J. M. Dent.

——— (1995) "Sergey Rakhmaninov", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, volume 17 (edited by Stanely Sadie). London: Macmillan.

Olkhovsky, Andrey (1975) *Music Under the Soviets*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Poznansky, Alexander (1998) "Tchaikovsky: A Life Reconsidered". *Tchaikovsky and his World* (edited by Leslie Kearney). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

——— (1991) *Tchaikovsky: The Quest for the Inner Man*. New York: Schirmer Books.

——— (1999) *Tchaikovsky Through Others' Eyes*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

——— (1998) "Unknown Tchaikovsky: A Reconstruction of Previously Censored Letters to His Brothers (1875-1879)". *Tchaikovsky and his World* (edited by Leslie Kearney). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Poznansky, Alexander and Langston, Brett (2002) *The Tchaikovsky Handbook: A Guide to the Man and His Music*, volume 2. Bloomington: Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Prokofiev, Sergei (1979) *Prokofiev by Prokofiev: A Composer's Memoir*. Edited by David Appel, translated by Guy Daniels. New York: Doubleday and Company.

Pushkin, Alexander (1964) *The Poems and Plays of Alexander Pushkin* (edited by Avrahm Yarmolinsky). New York: Random House.

Rimm, Robert (2002) *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight*. Oregon: Amadeus Press.

Ruckman, Robert (1987) *The Etudes of Alexander Scriabin: A Performance Perspective.* Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services.

Sabaneyeff, Leonid (1975) *Modern Russian Composers*. Translated by Judith Joffe. New York: Da Capo Press.

Samuel, Claude (1971) *Prokofiev*. Translated by Miriam John. London: Calder and Boyars.

Schloezer, Boris (1987) *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic*. Translated by Nicolas Slonimsky. California: University of California Press.

Schonberg, Harold (1987) *The Great Pianists: from Mozart to the Present.* New York: Fireside.

Schwarz, Boris (1995) "Dmitry Shostakovich", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, volume 17 (edited by Stanely Sadie). London: Macmillan.

——— (1972) *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917-1970*. London: Barrie and Jenkins.

——— (1995) Sergei Bortkiewicz", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, volume 3 (edited by Stanely Sadie). London: Macmillan.

Seroff, Victor (1969) *Sergei Prokofiev: A Soviet Tragedy*. London: Leslie Frewin.

Shostakovich, Dmitri (1979) *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* (as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov). London: Hamish Hamilton.

Spencer, Jennifer (1995) "Anatol Konstantinovich Lyadov", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, volume 11 (edited by Stanely Sadie). London: Macmillan.

Stites, Richard (1998) "The Domestic Muse: Music at Home in the Twilight of Serfdom". *Intersections and Transpositions: Russian Music, Literature and Society* (edited by Andrew Wachtel). Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Swan, Alfred (1973) *Russian Music and its sources in chant and folk song*. London: John Baker Publications.

Tchaikovsky, Peter Illich (2000) *Tchaikovsky: Letters to His Family* (translated by Galina von Meck; additional annotations by Percy Young). New York: Cooper Square Press.

Thandani, Bhagwan (2001) *Recollections, Letters, and Documents [of] Sergei Bortkiewicz.* Canada: Cantext publications.

Volkoff, Vladimir (1975) *Tchaikovsky: A Self Portrait*. London: Robert Hale & Company.

Westerby, Herbert (no date provided) *Introduction to Russian Piano Music*. London: William Reeves.

WEBSITES

Anton Arensky (excerpts from the sleeve notes). http://www.hyperion-records-co.uk/notes/67066.html. Accessed 21 August 2002.

Cosmos – Meetings in Russia – incentives industry – festivals and competitions. http://www.guide.spg.ru/magazine/n01/22.html. Accessed 19 August 2002.

Directory of Composers. http://222.rscm.u-net.com-extr1.pdf. Accessed 15 March 2001.

The Piano-L list presents: Masterpieces of non-standard piano repertoire. http://www.kith.org/jimmosk/piano.html#Medtner. Accessed 1 April 2002.

Chasins, Abrahm. *As I Saw Rachmanin* http://home.flash.net/~park29/asiawrach.htm Accessed 8 March 2001.

Monich, Y. *The Conventionality of Beauty: to the 140th birth anniversary of the composer Anton Arensky.* http://www.vor.ru/culture/cultarch177_eng.html. Accessed 21 August 2002.

Poornam, Savita. *Important Russian Spring Holidays, Cutoms, and Traditions.* http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/tamareg/Holidays/HolidaysSpring.ht