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GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master in Music

Junle Li

Pittsburg State University

Pittsburg Kansas

May, 2016

GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL

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GRADUATE RECITAL

An Abstract of the Thesis by
Junle Li

This thesis contains information pertaining to my Graduate Piano Recital. This recital consists of the following works: Piano Sonata No. 31, Op. 110 by Ludwig van Beethoven; Scherzo No. 2, Op. 31 by Frédéric Chopin and Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36 by Sergei Rachmaninoff. This thesis contains biographical information of each composer. The thesis also includes an analysis of each composition and suggestions regarding the performance of each piece.

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Pittsburg State University
Pittsburg, Kansas

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Master Recital

Junle Li, Piano

Monday, April 25, 2016
McCray Recital Hall
5:30 p.m.

Program

Piano Sonata in A-flat Major, Op. 110, No. 30.....Ludwig van Beethoven
I. *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo* (1770 – 1827)
II. *Allegro molto*
III. *Adagio ma non troppo*

Scherzo in B-flat minor No. 2, Op.31Frédéric François Chopin
(1810 – 1849)

Intermission

Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36.....Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninoff
I. *Allegro agitato* (1873 – 1943)
II. *Non allegro - Lento*
III. *L'istesso Tempo - Allegro molto*

This recital is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music Performance degree for
Ms. Li.

The Department of Music is a constituent of the College of Arts and Sciences

CHAPTER I

Ludwig van Beethoven

Biography

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was a great composer and pianist of German origin. Beethoven was the most important composer to bridge the Classical and Romantic eras. His musical works had a profound influence on the development of music. His famous compositions include nine symphonies, thirty-two piano sonatas, five piano concertos, sixteen strings quartets, one violin concerto and violin sonatas. He also composed many chamber music works and songs.

Beethoven was born in Bonn into a troubled family situation. Due to financial hardship, from a young age he supported his family by playing the harpsichord. Beethoven demonstrated musical talent early. When he was four years old, he began to study harpsichord and piano from his father and Christian Gottlob Neefe.¹ Beethoven gave his first performance at the age of eight, and published his first composition, (the piano variations WoO. 63). At twelve years old, Beethoven became a clavichord player.

At seventeen, Beethoven visited Vienna where he played for Mozart for the first time. This brilliant performance received Mozart's high praise. Mozart said:

¹ Christian Gottlob Neefe was a German opera composer and conductor.

“keep an eye on him—he will make a noise in the world someday.”²Beethoven’s Vienna period started from 1778³. At this time, Beethoven’s life was very troubled. To earn money he taught some Viennese aristocrats and performed for them. From 1790, Beethoven began to study composition with Haydn. During this period he composed a lot of significant compositions, such as the Symphony No. 5 and the Moonlight Sonata. He also studied counterpoint and violin with Ignaz Schuppanzigh.⁴

At the age of twenty-six, Beethoven began to lose his hearing. Although he never regained his hearing, he achieved his artistic goals and composed many great compositions during that time. He further developed his structural ideals within the large scale sonata form and symphony. He employed a wide range of dynamic contrasts and expanded his use of chromatic harmonies. His musical concepts positively influenced future composers.

Beethoven’s Three Style Periods

Beethoven’s compositions can be divided into three period. The first period lasted from about 1790 to 1802, the second period from 1802 to 1814, and the last period from 1814 to 1827.

In his first period, Beethoven’s compositions reflected the classical characteristics he learned from Haydn and Mozart. The most important compositions of this period are Symphony No. 1 and No. 2, the set of six string quartets Op.18, the first two piano concertos and the first twelve piano sonatas, which include the *Pathétique* Sonata, Op. 13.

² K.Forney & J. Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music*, Eleventh ed. W.W .Norton &company, New York, London. January 15, 2011.

³ Cooper (2008).

⁴ Ignaz Schuppanzigh was a violinist, friend and teacher of Beethoven and leader of Count Razumovsky's private string quartet.

In the middle period, Beethoven's compositions reflected his own characteristics, expressed through the "heroic" style and struggle. He also expanded the traditional classical composing principles; his sonatas were now written on a large scale and he experimented with the classical sonata structure. For example, the Moonlight sonata (Op. 27, No. 2) is a "*sonata quasi una fantasia*," where the movements are slow-fast-fast and played without break. This period includes six symphonies (No. 3 - No. 8). Beethoven also composed his last three piano concertos, the triple Concerto, the violin concerto, five string quartets (No. 7 - No. 11), the piano sonatas No. 16 - No. 27 (which include the *Waldstein* and *Appassionata* Sonatas), and his only opera, *Fidelio*.

In the last period, Beethoven used the contrapuntal techniques of such masters as J.S. Bach and F. Handel. In his late compositions, there could be contrapuntal sections within a movement, or a whole movement could be a fugue in itself. The overture *The Consecration of the House*, also uses extensive counterpoint.

By early 1818, Beethoven's hearing became weaker due to his illness and he felt very helpless. At this point, Beethoven created new chromatic harmonies which foreshadowed characteristics of Romantic harmony. He also expanded the composition's length and scope and projected his helpless emotions through his music to express his destiny. Beethoven composed several song collections and the "*Hammerklavier*" Sonata, as well as the last two symphonies, including the ninth symphony. He added a chorus to the last movement of the Ninth symphony. In his final year of life, Beethoven devoted his energy to compose the *Missa Solemnis*. His final compositions included the last five string quartets, including the massive Große Fuge, and the last five piano sonatas.

The Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-flat major, Op. 110

Beethoven composed the Piano Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 110 in 1821. It was the second sonata from the group of sonatas Op. 109 - 111, composed during the years 1820 to 1822. This composition has three movements. The first movement is *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, the second movement, *Allegro molto*, is a fast scherzo, and the final movement includes a slow recitative and arioso, a fugue, a second arioso, and then a second fugue which establishes the conclusion. This composition not only contains a more complex individual emotion, but an ingenious structure as well. This work reflects Beethoven's miserable state and desire for a better life.

The First Movement

The first movement is marked *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*.⁵ This movement is in sonata form and Charles Rosen calls this movement's structure Haydnesque.⁶ The opening section is marked *con amabilità*. After a break on the dominant chord in m. 4, the cantabile theme is expressed. The transition section, in m. 12, uses an arpeggio demisemiquaver technique, and then the second theme (m. 28) begins in E-flat major which is the dominant of A-flat major. The exposition concludes at m. 45, and is not repeated.

The development section, (which Rosen calls "radically simple"⁷), borrows the original theme and places it in F minor. The theme is extended as the bass voice uses rising and falling scalar passages from ms. 47-63. At the same time, the

⁵ *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo* is at a moderate speed, and in a singing and very expressive style.

⁶ Charles Rosen (May 5, 1927 – December 9, 2012) was an American pianist and writer on music.

⁷ Charles Rosen (2002). *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas, A Short Companion*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press. ISBN 0-300-09070-6.

melody in the soprano employs the theme's rhythmic pattern to accumulate a feeling of sadness.

The recapitulation section begins at m. 63 as a restatement of the original theme and return to the tonic key of A-flat major. Beethoven employs arpeggio demisemiquavers to combine the original theme and the transition section (referring to m. 22). The theme gradually modulates to E major at ms. 68-69, and then with harmonic modulation returns to A-flat major at m. 80. The movement ends with a cantabile melody in the tonic key.

Performance Suggestions

In the first phrase of this first movement (Ex. 1), there are four voices and the melody is placed in the soprano. Therefore, the pianist needs to physically reinforce the soprano notes in the right hand in order to emphasize the melody. The pianist also needs to play with a deeper sound in order to express the peaceful and cantabile melody. In m. 3, the tenor voice fills in the soprano line to extend and support the melody. In m. 4, there is a fermata on the E-flat seventh chord which turns into a cadenza-like passage. Here the pianist must carefully create a sense of freedom with the tempo.

Ex. 1

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo.

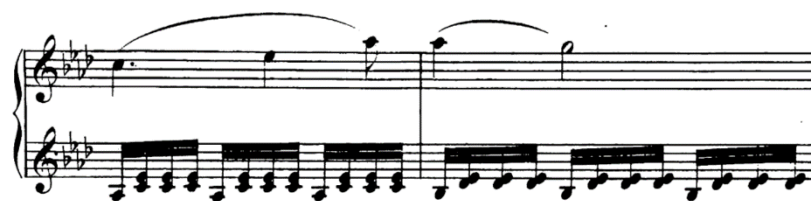
p con amabilità (sanft)

p

Componirt im Decbr. 1821.

In the second phrase (Ex. 2), the soprano has a cantabile melody and the bass voices have a chordal accompaniment. Careful balancing of the voices is needed.

Ex. 2



In m.12, the right hand has a lone arpeggiation; at the same time, there are chords in the lower voices. The pianist needs to control the right hand's arpeggiation so that it will be legato (Ex. 3). This technique tests the pianist's control. In the bass voice, the pedal must be released at each rest, therefore, the pianist has to keep a balance between controlling the legato and the pedal.

Ex.3



In m. 35 (Ex. 4), the melody, placed in the soprano, rises to C. As well, the bass line, which is chordal, is moving contrary to the soprano. To express the active texture and feelings of this passage, the pianist needs to make a crescendo with this long phrase. The challenge here is to keep the balance between the soprano and the bass line. The pianist is required to control all these elements to portray the feelings of sadness.

Ex. 4



In m. 51 (Ex. 5), the melody, sometimes appearing in chordal fashion, possesses the rhythm of the opening theme while the bass voice employs long legato passages in dialogue fashion. The pianist is required to shape each voice accordingly.

Ex. 5



In the recapitulation (Ex. 6), Beethoven placed a broken-chord arpeggiation in the bass voice to accompany the thematic material. In m. 60, the pianist needs to crescendo in order to express the heightened intensity as the theme appears in the lower voices.

Ex. 6



In m. 105 (Ex. 7), the movement ends with the arpeggiation which we have already heard several times. Here, the pianist is required to make the arpeggiation smooth and legato in order to represent the movement's peaceful ending.

Ex. 7



The Second Movement

The second movement is marked *Allegro molto*.⁸ Cooper notes that Beethoven employs two folk songs (*Unsa kätz häd kaz'ln g'habt* and *Ich bin lüderlich, du bist lüderlich*)⁹ in this movement. This movement's rhythm is very complicated with syncopations.¹⁰ This movement has three parts. The first part, ms. 1-41, is a scherzo in F minor. Beethoven uses contrasting dynamics, four bars of *piano* followed by four bars of *forte*. The second part, ms. 41-96, is a trio in D-flat major. Matthews described this section as having “abrupt leaps” and “perilous descents.”¹¹ The last part, ms. 97-144, repeats the scherzo and ends with a short coda which modulates from D flat major to F major.

Performance Suggestions:

In the first eight measures of this movement (Ex. 8), the challenge for the pianist is to clearly articulate the right hand's material and keep the bass line legato by alternating the fingering from 5-4-5-4.

Ex. 8



⁸ Denis Matthews (1967). *Beethoven Piano Sonatas*. London: BBC. ISBN 0-563-07304-7.

⁹ Martin Cooper (1970). *Beethoven, The Last Decade 1817–1827*. London: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-315310-6.

¹⁰ Donald Francis Tovey (1931). *A Companion to Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas*. London: Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. ISBN 1-86096-086-3. – revised edition 1998.

¹¹ Denis Matthews (1967). *Beethoven Piano Sonatas*. London: BBC. ISBN 0-563-07304-7.

In m. 10 (Ex. 9), there are many irregular accents in the bass line and the soprano employs staccato. The pianist needs to carefully balance the bass line and the soprano line.

In ms. 33-36 (Ex. 10), the pianist is required to express a huge contrast in dynamics.

Ex. 9



Ex. 10



In the second part, (Ex. 11), the soprano consists of rapid passage work and the bass line's notes are written in an off-beat manner. The pianist must project the contrasting dynamics within this fast passage work clearly while showing the rhythmic punctuation of the bass line.

Ex. 11



After the scherzo repeats, there is a short coda (Ex. 12). This movement ends with a soft passage which connects to the next movement. The pianist needs to execute a huge diminuendo to express the peaceful feelings.

Ex. 12



The Third Movement

The third movement is marked *Adagio, ma non troppo*. This movement consists of two slow arioso sections and two faster fugues. Brendel states that there are six sections: recitative, arioso, first fugue, arioso, fugue inversion, homophonic conclusion^{12 13}.

After the final F major chords of the coda of the second movement, this movement begins in B flat minor in ms. 1. From ms. 4-7, there is a slower recitativo. Some critics (including Rosen and Kinderman) call this recitative and arioso (ms. 4-27) “operatic,” because of the lyrical melody and orchestral accompaniment.^{14 15} The recitative is supported by many tempo changes to extend the sad feelings. Ms. 8-27 is an arioso section. In this section, the soprano expresses a sad melody with repeated chords in the bass line. Beethoven employs poignant harmonic changes to express the dolente feelings.

The third section is a three-voiced fugue (ms. 27-89), whose subject is built on a series of three rising intervals of a fourth and falling thirds in dotted quarter notes: A \flat - D \flat - B \flat - E \flat - C - F. The countersubject moves in stepwise motion with short

¹² Alfred Brendel (1990). *Music Sounded Out*. Robson (London). ISBN 0-86051-666-0.

¹³ Alfred Brendel KBE (born 5 January 1931) is an Austrian pianist, poet and author.

¹⁴ Charles Rosen (2002). *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas, A Short Companion*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press. ISBN 0-300-09070-6.

¹⁵ William Kindermann (2004). "Beethoven". In R. Larry Todd (ed.). *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Routledge. ISBN 0-415-96890-9.

ascents and descents in triplet figures. Fugal sections and other use of contrapuntal techniques is often used to express Beethoven's late period concept. (Ex. 13)

Ex. 13



In this section, the subject appears in many different keys. At the end of this section, Beethoven employs an extended E flat 7 chord (dominant of A-flat major), which then resolves to the G minor chord. This and the dynamic changes serve as bridges to the second arioso. (For analysis of Fugue I, see page 32.)

This second arioso, ms. 90-110, begins in G minor. The material is similar to the first arioso, however, compared with the first arioso, in the melodic line, there are rhythmic changes, such as, use of more thirty-second notes and rests. Additionally, there is often placement of melodic fragments on off-beats. These elements add sadness and a sobbing effect. The arioso ends with repeated G major chords, increasing in strength and intensity.

After the second arioso, the second fugue (ms. 111-187), in G major, begins with the subject in inverted form. In the middle of this section (m. 127), the key modulates to B-flat major. Throughout this second fugue the subject appears in inverted form, original form, augmented form, syncopated augmented form, in diminution and in double diminution. At m. 174, the diminuendo figure transforms to 16th notes and the subject is placed in the bass. At m.184, the roles alternate as the right hand plays the subject in three note chords and the 16th notes revert to the bass. The right hand's chords keep reaching a higher and higher register and arrive at the

A-flat major chord (m. 209). There is an extended arpeggiation and final chord. (For analysis of Fugue II, see page 33.)

In the beginning of this movement (Ex. 14), there is a *una corda* marking. The pianist needs to play very softly to express the dolente feelings and keep the chords soft and clear.

Ex. 14

Adagio, ma non troppo.

From m. 8 (Ex. 15), the soprano presents a dolente melody with repeated chords in the bass line. Because the melody is a single line and the bass line is made up of repeated chords, the pianist needs to keep a clear balance between the single line and the chords.

Ex. 15

Arioso dolente.

In the fugal section (Ex. 16), the subject and countersubject need to be legato. The challenge for the pianist is to balance the voices and generally project the subject and play the countersubject soft and legato.

Ex. 16

Allegro, ma non troppo.

At the end of the fugue section (Ex. 17), the shift in tonality needs to be supported by a huge dynamic change. This huge dynamic change supports the change in character and ushers in the second arioso.

Ex. 17



In the second arioso (Ex. 18), the material is similar with the first arioso, however, the melody uses different rhythmic patterns. The pianist needs to sustain a long line over all the punctuation of slurs and rests in the melodic phrase.

Ex. 18



In the second arioso (Ex. 19), the section ends with increasingly loud G major chords. The pianist needs to accumulate the energy and sound with a long pedal and then make a huge diminuendo to bridge the next fugue.

Ex. 19



In the second fugue (Ex. 20), the material employs the inverted form of the subject, and the pianist needs to play more softly than before. The pianist must keep control of the keys as they shape the individual voices.

Ex. 20



From this phrase (Ex. 21), the music is using faster passagework. Clear articulation is in order. At Ex. 22 the melody is stated in legato chords. Proper voicing is needed. At the end of this movement (Ex. 23), Beethoven uses arpeggiation to create a powerful ending. The pianist needs to effectively create this build-up.

Ex. 21



Ex. 22



Ex. 23



CHAPTER II

Frédéric François Chopin

Biography

Frédéric François Chopin was born in 1810 and died in 1849. His father Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin, was both Polish and French. Chopin was a composer and a virtuoso pianist of the Romantic era who wrote music mostly for the solo piano. He was the one of the greatest musicians of the Romantic era.

Chopin was born and grew up in the Duchy of Warsaw and he completed his musical and compositional studies in Warsaw. At the age of 7, he wrote his first composition (Polonaise) in Warsaw. At 20, he composed his two piano concertos (Op. 11 and Op. 21), before leaving Poland.

Chopin moved to Paris 1831. Thereafter, he spent the last 18 years of his life in Paris and never again returned to Poland. He acquired French citizenship in 1835. In Paris, Chopin obtained many opportunities to train his genius and achieve fame. During his years in Paris he built a relationship with Hector Berlioz. Chopin also built a relationship with the poet Adam Mickiewicz. Chopin created a great friendship with Franz Liszt and was admired by many musical contemporaries, including Robert Schumann. During these 18 years, Chopin only performed 30 public concerts and most of these concerts were in a Salon. He supported himself by

teaching piano and selling his compositions. From 1837-1847, Chopin had a relationship with the French writer, George Sand. This period was one of his most prolific ones. In the last years of his life, Chopin was supported by his admirer Jane Stirling, who arranged for him to visit Scotland in 1848. Through most of his life, Chopin suffered from poor health. He died in Paris in 1849.

Most of Chopin's music was for solo piano. Chopin's works were influenced by Polish folk music and Italian opera. His major piano works include two piano concertos, a few chamber pieces, and some Polish lyrical songs. He also wrote mazurkas, waltzes, nocturnes, polonaises, etudes, impromptus, scherzos, preludes and sonatas. Some compositions were published after his death. Chopin's piano compositions have a highly individual style. Through his compositions, he created a new style and new musical forms. He used novel harmonies and elaborate counter-rhythms. Chopin's melodic lines were very lyrical and expressive and his works were technically demanding. In his large piano works, Chopin was influenced by Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart and Clementi. He cited Bach and Mozart as the two most important composers in shaping his musical outlook.¹⁶

Chopin infused much of his music with Polish nationalism. He composed mazurkas, which were derived from a traditional Polish dance form. He also composed a series of seven polonaises which established a new standard for music in the form.¹⁷ Chopin's waltzes were also full of nationalistic traits.

Chopin employed poetic concepts and harmonies to express his sensitive emotions. His compositions influenced other composers in the late Romantic period.

¹⁶ Michałowski and Samson (n.d.), §6 para 7.

¹⁷ Szulc (1998), p. 115.

Scherzo

The scherzo in western classical music is a piece of music, which is often the third movement of a larger piece, such as a symphony, sonata or string quartet. In the Baroque era (c. 1600–c. 1750), there were also scherzos in vocal or instrumental pieces, such as, the *Scherzi musicali* (1607) of Claudio Monteverdi.

In the 19th century, the scherzo appeared as an independent orchestral composition. Additionally, in symphonies, sonatas, and string quartets, the scherzo replaced the 18th-century minuet as the third movement in a four-movement work. Unlike the 18th century minuet, the original dance for the aristocracy, the scherzo was replete with a rapid $\frac{3}{4}$ time and dynamic changes. Both the minuet and scherzo contain a contrasting section, the trio, and the minuet and scherzo possesses the format, (A – B – A^I).

In the 19th century, the scherzo was not necessarily used in larger works, but it was still a characteristically fast-moving piece of music. Brilliant effects and exhilarating rhythms in a brisk tempo appear in Felix Mendelssohn's scherzo from his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, while in the Chopin's four scherzos, dark moods with more lyrical trios were utilized.¹⁸

Chopin's Scherzo no. 2, op. 31 in B-flat minor

Chopin's Scherzo No. 2, Op. 31 was composed and published in 1837. It was the second in his group of four Scherzi. All of them are well known among pianists because of the technical difficulties they integrate. The piece is a single-movement post-Beethoven Scherzo-type of work divided into three sections (A – B – A^I). The first

¹⁸ Ferguson (1980), pp. 304–5.

section presents the first theme, the second section has one theme and a development/cadenza section. Following, is a recapitulation of the A section theme, and then a hasty coda marked *Piu Mosso* and *Marcato*, giving the piece the signature Chopin style of composition. The Scherzo No. 2 reflects all the emotional complexity residing in Chopin's spirit with all the contrasting and tumultuous change of affects as the piece progresses.¹⁹

Section A

The first section of Chopin's Scherzo No. 2 is marked *Presto* and *Sotto Voce*, introducing the first theme in B-flat minor in the first measure. There is a modulation into D-flat major at m. 48 to introduce the second theme. It is marked *ff* and *diminuendo* to show the agility and sensibility the musical idea requires.²⁰ Measures 62 and 64 are marked *poco ritenuto* and *con anima* respectively, to increase the haste of the climax point at m. 115, where an arpeggiated section closes the theme at m. 132 in a D-flat major chord. Then, both themes are recapitulated from m. 263 and towards the conclusion of the first section in the D-flat major key.²¹

Section B

The middle section, which starts at m. 263, is in A major. It introduces the subtle new contrasting theme. It is marked *Sostenuto sotto voce*, indicating a more calm and singing quality.²² It is written in a form that resembles the second movement from Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata in terms of character.²³ The consequent part of the theme is presented at m. 275. A new theme in C-sharp minor is presented at m. 308.

¹⁹ Eigeldinger (1988), pp. 18–20.

²⁰ Bellman (2000), pp. 149–50.

²¹ Müller-Streicher (1949).

²² Jones (1998a), p. 161.

²³ Rosen (1995), p. 83.

An arpeggiated progression follows at m. 338. It demands a light but passionate feeling indicated with *leggiero* and *crescendo*, giving the impression of a cadenza-like character to the whole progression.²⁴ A varied repetition of this theme starts at m. 470. It leads to a development section at m. 471, using the motivic materials from m. 308 and m. 338. Here is the most passionate moment of the composition, highly contrasting with the previous themes in terms of character and execution. The indications are demanding: *sempre forte*, accents, *agitato*, and tension and release through *crescendos* and *diminuendos*.

Section A^I

The final section of the composition is a recapitulation of the first themes exposed in the A section,²⁵ giving it a traditional close in terms of structure, very reminiscent of romantic composers of the period like Mendelssohn and Beethoven.²⁶ ²⁷It starts at m. 594 with a varied version of the initial motive, using only the arpeggiated B-flat minor triplet. The second theme recapitulation is an exact repetition. At m. 709, the final F – E octave movement serves as a pickup measure to the Coda. The Coda creates a new theme based on all the motives from the previous sections. *f* and *Piu Mosso* are marked to increase the dramatic ending leading up to the accentuated three final D-flat major chords.²⁸

Performance Suggestions

In m. 1 (Ex. 24), the first theme requires the pianist to delicately arpeggiate the B flat minor chord. In m. 5 a high contrast is needed as a forte is marked for the choral

²⁴ Brown (1980), p. 258.

²⁵ Temperley (1980), p. 305.

²⁶ Temperley (1980), p. 298.

²⁷ Hutchings (1968), p. 137.

²⁸ Rosen (1995), pp. 262–278.

melody. An insistent feeling and staccato mark the first beat of m. 9. In m. 49 (Ex. 25), relevance must be given to the lightness of the arpeggiated melodic line, paying special attention to the pedal use in the marked bass line.

M. 65 is marked *con anima* and a singing soprano must flow naturally. The arpeggiated bass line should only trace the harmonic material supporting the melody.

Ex. 24



Ex. 25



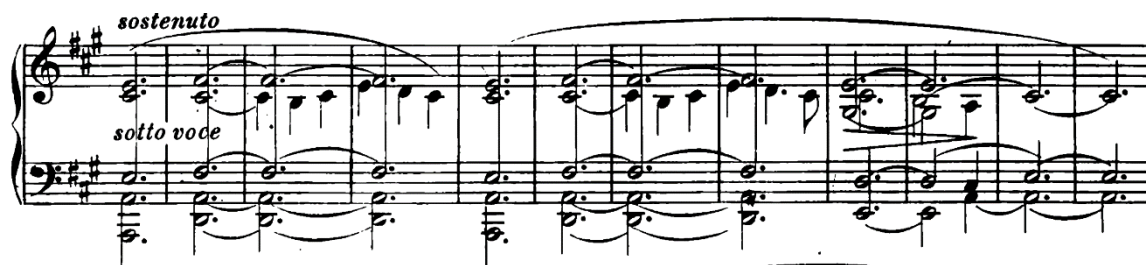
Ex. 26



In m. 263 (Ex. 27), the theme is brought into a chorale format. The pianist must be careful with the *sostenuto* indication and hold the notes for the duration that the piece demands. Special attention is required for the alto line which traces the thematic material, and should be projected within the texture. Measure 279 (Ex. 28), closes the

phrase with a cadenza-like arpeggio marked *delicatissimo*. It needs to be played as legato and as light as possible.

Ex. 27



Ex. 28



At m. 308 (Ex. 29), the new theme demands special care and shaping for the interaction between the melodic material of both the soprano and the alto lines, keeping a continuity and legato sense within each voice. Measure 332 (Ex. 30) gives the bass line the opportunity to perform a singing line and also to delineate the harmonic rhythm. The right hand is left to play ascending and descending material in *piano and leggiero* as the composer indicates.²⁹

Ex. 29



²⁹ Temperley (1980), p. 304.

Ex. 30



Ms. 470 (Ex. 31), brings the challenge of keeping continuity throughout the whole section. At the same time, the pianist must project the moments of tension and release and create the right amount of tension the development section demands. The *agitato* indication will take the dramatic mood of the section even further. The pianist must be careful to show the proper interaction between soprano and alto line again, while giving the accents the *marcato* character the composer indicates.

Ex. 31



In m. 709 (Ex. 32), a broken chord motive in *crescendo* opens up the Coda section. Legato playing and attention to the release of the pedal must be given in order to achieve the desired effect. The following *Piu Mosso* indication borrows the very first motive of the Scherzo in an accelerated way. It leads to the *stretto crescendo* motive that represents an exercise of balance and intense emotion at the same time. The last six chords (Ex. 33), will conclude the tension generated throughout the whole Coda. The accents must be present and lead to the huge jump which precedes the final D-flat major octave.

Ex. 32



Ex. 33



CHAPTER III

Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninoff

Biography

Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninoff was a Russian pianist, composer and conductor. He was born in 1873 in Semyonovo, Russia, and died in 1943, in Beverly Hills, USA. He was raised in a home where music was not absent, thanks to his father, grandfather and mother, piano players themselves. Rachmaninoff began to play the piano at the age four, due to casual lessons given by his mother.³⁰ Experiencing financial issues when Sergei was nine years old, the family moved to Saint Petersburg, where he started to take lessons at the Conservatoire. Later on, he moved to Moscow in order to broaden his horizons. Sergei stayed with his cousin, pianist and conductor Alexander Siloti, for the next three years. In 1885, under Siloti's advice, Rachmaninoff decided to take lessons from his cousin's master, Nikolai Zverev, remaining his pupil until 1888, at which time he started to take lessons from Siloti himself.^{31 32}

³⁰ Sylvester 2014, p. 2.

³¹ Nikolai Sergeyevevich Zverev (sometimes transliterated Nikolai Zveref; 1832 – 12 October [O.S. 30 September] 1893) was a Russian pianist and teacher known for his pupils Alexander Siloti, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Alexander Scriabin, Konstantin Igumnov, Alexander Goldenweiser, and others.

³² Patrick Piggott, 1973. *The Life and Music of John Field, 1782–1837, Creator of the Nocturne*. University of California Press. ISBN 978-0-520-02412-0.

Before his graduation in 1891, Rachmaninoff already had proved himself as a potential composer with one of his most popular piano pieces, the *Prelude in C sharp minor* (Op. 3, No. 2).³³ This small piece, part of a set of five pieces called *Morceaux de fantaisie*, was received well.³⁴ ³⁵ In 1892, Sergei graduated as a composer with *Aleko*, a Pushkin text-based opera about jealousy and a subsequent love tragedy.³⁶ Even though he thought the work was “sure to fail,” *Aleko* actually resulted in a great success. The piece earned Rachmaninoff a Gold Medal and a graduate diploma on May 29, 1892, at the age of 19. Rachmaninoff was officially declared a “free artist”.³⁷

In 1897, Rachmaninoff experienced one of the most defining events of his life. His *Symphony No. 1* (Op. 13, 1896) premiere was a total failure, and Rachmaninoff destroyed the original score (which he later reconstructed from a set of parts).³⁸ The depressive period into which he sank lasted 3 years, during which time Rachmaninoff composed almost nothing. Savva Mamontov³⁹ came as a savior during this dark time with a proposal, offering Rachmaninoff the position of assistant conductor for the 1897-1898 season, which the composer accepted immediately.

³³ "RACHMANINOV: Preludes Op. 23 / Cinq morceaux de fantaisie". Naxos Records. 2008. Retrieved 15 March 2008.

³⁴ "Martin Werner Plays: Schubert – Schumann – Grieg – Chopin – Rachmaninoff – Felder". Guild Music. 31 May 2007. Retrieved 15 March 2008.

³⁵ "Sergei Rachmaninoff – Composer page". Boosey & Hawkes. 2008. Retrieved 21 March 2008.

³⁶ Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (6 June [O.S. 26 May] 1799 – 10 February [O.S. 29 January] 1837) was a Russian poet, playwright, and novelist of the Romantic era who is considered by many to be the greatest Russian poet and the founder of modern Russian literature.

³⁷ Harrison.

³⁸ Kyui, Ts., "Tretiy russkiy simfonicheskiy kontsert," *Novosti i birzhevaya gazeta* (17 March 1897(o.s.)), 3.

³⁹ Savva Ivanovich Mamontov (Russian: Савва Ива́нович Ма́монтов, IPA: [ˈsavə ɪˈvanəvʲɪtɕ ˈmaməntəf]; 15 October [O.S. 3 October] 1841, Yalutorovsk – 6 April 1918, Moscow) was a famous Russian industrialist, merchant, entrepreneur, and patron of the arts.

Thanks to the composition of the second piano concerto, the following years proved to be a great lift for Rachmaninoff. In 1902, he finally managed to marry his first cousin, Natalia Satina. In 1904, after continuous success as a conductor, he accepted the role of conductor at the Bolshoi Theatre. He held this position until his political ideas lead to his resignation in 1906.

In 1909, Rachmaninoff decided to go the United States of America for his first tour. For this tour, he composed his *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30* as his calling card to get into the country.⁴⁰ The success of the concert cycle gave him the popularity he needed to make him a popular figure in musical circles. However, this would be the only time he visited America until his immigration from Russia.

In 1912, Rachmaninoff resigned his position as vice-president of the Russian Musical society due to a segregation case.⁴¹ During this period some of his most notable compositions were premiered: *The Isle of the Dead*, *The Bells* and a cappella works such as *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* and the *Vespers*.

The year 1917 set a point of no return in Rachmaninoff's life. The October Revolution made him realize that he wouldn't be able to live the life he expected with his family, so he opted for departure from Russia, never to return.⁴² He went to Helsinki, Finland and Copenhagen, Denmark, where he finally settled with his wife and daughters. His current economic situation demanded him to become a more resourceful musician, so he reinvented himself as a concert pianist, learning an entirely new repertoire in the process.

⁴⁰ Norris, 15:551.

⁴¹ Bertensson, 179.

⁴² Ibid., 176.

In November 1918, Rachmaninoff sailed to America in search of a new world of possibilities. His concert pianist activities became more time consuming thus leaving him less time for his own compositions. 1920 saw his first recordings at which time Rachmaninoff signed a contract with a company that paid him much needed money. The recordings are now considered for historical reference, for they capture the living legend he was to become.⁴³

In 1928, Rachmaninoff started to make friends with Russian pianist Vladimir Horowitz,^{44 45} who felt honored with the relationship being developed.

Rachmaninoff was Horowitz's youth idol as a pianist and composer. Horowitz was delighted to include many of Sergei's pieces in his concert programs, including all the Piano Concertos, as well as a special recording of his Piano Sonata No. 2.⁴⁶

In 1942, Rachmaninoff was diagnosed with advanced melanoma while on a concert tour. At the time of his last recital on February 17, 1943, his illness worsened and he died on March 28 of the same year.

Features of Rachmaninoff's Music

Rachmaninoff was famous for his virtuoso piano technique. His piano compositions reflect the piano technique he was capable of: thunderous chord playing, difficult fast passages in single and double notes, big leaps and jumps and widely spaced chords. Musically speaking, Rachmaninoff's music was full of the chants from the Russian Orthodox Church and the sounds imitating church bells.

⁴³ Norris, 15:554.

⁴⁴ Vladimir Samoylovich Horowitz [O.S. September 18] 1903 – November 5, 1989) was a Russian-born American classical pianist and composer.

⁴⁵ "About Wizard Horowitz, Who Will Return Soon", The Milwaukee Journal, 18 April 1943, p. 66.

⁴⁶ Plaskin, Glenn (1983) Horowitz—a biography. New York: William Morrow and Company. ISBN 0-688-01616-2. p. 107.

Rachmaninoff wrote his piano music in complex orchestral textures and he also had great command of counterpoint and fugal writing. His pieces were very carefully planned from a structural standpoint and the approach to the climaxes was of maximum importance. Rachmaninoff was also known for his warm and expressive melodic lines.

Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36

The Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36 was composed in 1913, when Rachmaninoff was 40 years old, and it was premiered in St. Petersburg in December, 1913. It was composed in the key of B-flat Minor. It was later revised in 1931 in a new and reduced version by the author. The composer was living in Rome in a house that Tchaikovsky used earlier.⁴⁷ His daughters contracted a fever that forced Rachmaninoff to move to Berlin for a better medical diagnosis. Upon regaining their health, the family returned to Russia where he finished the second piano sonata.⁴⁸

This Piano Sonata is written in three uninterrupted movements, giving it an element of cohesion and making for an innovative concept. Even though this sonata possesses many characteristics of the traditional three-movement sonata structure, Stein formulates a wide variety of possibilities for a better term, one of them being: “free form”. The “free form” concept is used by Rachmaninoff to release him from the boundaries of a predetermined structure.⁴⁹

This “free form” is manifested when it comes to putting the separate movements into a single one via modulating bridges, meter changes and tempo changes; the

⁴⁷ https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu1392292030&disposition=inline, p. 15

⁴⁸ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁹ Harrison.

transition between sections is smoothly applied via cadenza-like areas, connecting various key centers throughout the whole first movement.⁵⁰

The *Piano Sonata No. 2* can demonstrate a conservative structure when the three sections are analyzed separately:

The First Movement

Allegro agitato: The first movement consists of a generic allegro-sonata structure. The first theme is agitated and enthusiastic in the tonic key of B-flat minor. After a cadenza-like phrase, the second theme is presented in the key of D-flat major. Written in a ternary meter, the second theme is a lyrical melody derived from church chant. What follows is a very unstable development that goes through various key centers. It borrows some of the motives of the first two themes and turns it into new thematic material.⁵¹ The recapitulation starts as a slightly-varied version of the first two themes. It is followed by a final extension (ms. 118-124), that goes through tonal ambiguity until the coda restates the original B-flat minor key, bringing closure to the first movement. The schematic structure is A – B – A^I.⁵²

The Second Movement

Non allegro: Immediately after the last fermata, an introductory theme leads us into this movement with an ambiguous chord progression. This chord progression closes into a Dorian-type of cadence from D major into the main theme, which is in E minor and is very lyrical. This movement is in ternary form (A - B - A).⁵³ It also maintains

⁵⁰ https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu1392292030&disposition=inline, p, 41.

⁵¹ Ibid., 23.

⁵² Ibid., 27.

⁵³ Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Sonata Op. 36: Towards the Creation of an Alternative Performance Version.

thematic relation with the first movement quoting motives and other harmonic materials.⁵⁴

The Third Movement

Allegro molto: The third movement is again introduced by way of an interlude/transitional passage. This interlude echoes the one introducing the second movement, however there is a change of meter: while the second movement's interlude was in 4/4, the third movement's interlude is in 3/4 preparing us for the ternary meter of the final movement. Even when the ternary meter would suggest a Scherzo-type of movement, the structure resembles the sonata-allegro form, recycling material of the previous movements. This works as a cohesive element that links the whole musical piece.⁵⁵ The final movement theme is very fast and rhythmic, however, the second theme possesses a very lyrical and heartfelt melody accompanied by a rich harmonic texture. The development is divided into three sub sections, and similar to the exposition it takes material from the previous movements and the new themes introduced at the beginning of the third movement.⁵⁶ The recapitulation is in B flat major key, adding brightness to the general color of the whole piece. It concisely states a previous theme and then focuses primarily on the second theme. Next, a main rhythmic motive from the first movement (in augmented form) expands itself towards the final Coda. The Coda section moves chromatically through themes used in the first movement, as a form of recapitulation of the first musical ideas and conclusion of the piece.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu1392292030&disposition=inline, p, 32.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 55

Performance Suggestions

The whole sonata is played without break, as there is an interlude between the first and second movement and an interlude between the second and third movement. The pianist needs to plan these connections carefully and also must practice for the stamina and sustained concentration needed to play this entire piece with no respite. The pianist also needs to be aware of the chromatic and generally unstable harmonic writing of this piece and choose colors and shadings accordingly. The texture of this piece is thick, therefore the performer must carefully balance the multitude of voices (thinking often orchestrally), and carefully planning the pedaling.

Bringing out the prominent melodic lines is crucial. Sometimes these melodic lines are set in the middle voices (such as in ms. 28 – 33 of the second movement), which makes them even harder to project and shape. A whole gamut of technical display is required for this sonata: loud chordal playing, wide jumps and leaps, fast double note and chordal passages, brilliant and fast cadenza-like passages (such as in m. 62 of the second movement), and various other intricate passage work. Finally, the performer needs to be aware of and project the multitude of emotions, feelings and characters associated with this piece.

Chart 1: First Fugue

Measures	Subject	Key
Ms. 27 – 30	Bass	I (A flat major)
Ms. 30 - 36	Alto	V (E flat major)
Ms. 36 - 40	Soprano	I
Ms. 45 - 53	Bass line (in octaves)	V
Ms. 53 - 62	Alto	I
Ms. 62 - 72	Soprano	V
Ms. 73 - 81	Bass line (At ms. 76: sequenced)	V/iii
Ms. 88 - 91	Alto	IV
Ms. 91 - 100	Soprano (At ms. 93: partial imitation in bass)	I
Ms. 101 - 105	Bass line	V
Ms. 105 - 108	Soprano (as if)	I

Chart 2: Second Fugue

Measures	Subject	keys
Ms. 137 – 140	Inverted form in alto	G major (I)
Ms. 140 – 144	Inverted form in soprano	D major (V)
Ms. 144 – 148	Bass line in inverted form.	I
Ms. 148 – 153	Soprano in inverted form	V (heading for C minor)
Ms. 151 – 160	Bass in diminution. Soprano in original form (augmented). From Ms. 152, bass line and alto are in dialogue in original form (diminution)	C minor
Ms. 160 – 167	Ms. 160, Bass line in original form (augmented). Upper voices are in original form (diminution) with syncopation	C minor
Ms. 168-173	Voices are in both original and inverted form in double diminution. At m. 170, Alto has subject in inversion.	E flat major
Ms. 173-178	Bass line (original form)	A flat major
Ms. 178-182	Alto (original form)	E flat major
Ms. 184	Subject in upper voices (chordal form)	A flat major
Ms. 200	Tonic Pedal over which the subject mounts	

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